Ansatsu Daigaku

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/19151092.

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning: Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Category: F/M, Gen, Multi
Fandom: Assassination Classroom, ANSATSU KYOUSHITSU
Relationship: Kayano Kaede/Shiota Nagisa, Shiota Nagisa/Yukimura Akari, Akabane Karma/Original Character(s), Touka Yada/Original Character(s), Irina Jelavić & Karasuma Tadaomi, Chiba Ryuunosuke/Hayami Rinka, Kanzaki Yukiko/Sugino Tomohito, Isogai Yuuma/Kataoka Megu, Maehara Hiroto/Okano Hinata, Taiga Okajima/Original Character(s), Terasaka Ryouma/Original Character(s)
Character: Shiota Nagisa, Shiota Nagisa's Parents, Akabane Karma, Kayano Kaede, Yukimura Akari, Original Male Character(s), Original Female Character(s), Sugino Tomohito, Kanzaki Yukiko, Isogai Yuuma, Kataoka Megu, Okano Hinata, Maehara Hiroto, Hayami Rinka, Chiba Ryuunosuke, Terasaka Ryouma, Muramatsu Takuya, Yoshida Taisei, Hazama Kirara, Sugaya Sousuke, Okuda Manami, Takebayashi Koutarou, Fuwa Yuzuki, Yada Touka, Horibe Itona, Mimura Kouki, Kurahashi Hinano, Kimura Masayoshi, Hara Sumire, Nakamura Rio, Ritsu (Assassination Classroom), Karasuma Tadaomi, Irina Jelavić, Koro sensei (Assassination Classroom), Yana gisawa Kotarou, Smog (Assassination Classroom), Grip (Assassination Classroom), Gastro (Assassination Classroom), Craig Houjou, Takaoka Akira
Additional Tags: Assassins & Hitmen, Crimes & Criminals, Yakuza, Espionage, Post-Canon, Canon Continuation, first
Series: Part 1 of Beyond the Classroom: The Assassination University Saga
Stats: Published: 2019-06-09 Completed: 2019-10-13 Chapters: 140/140 Words: 503282

Ansatsu Daigaku

by AzureDragoonGX

Summary

Ansatsu Daigaku (English Translation: Assassination University) is a fanfiction of the hit manga series, Ansatsu Kyoushitsu (Assassination Classroom) by Yusei Matsui. It follows all of the main cast (as well as appearances of other familiar old faces, with new ones certainly introduced) four years after their time in Kunugigaoka Junior High School. By now, a new crisis has been formed, stemming off of what they had strived to solve so long ago.

Thrust back into the adventure, AssClass, now going by the moniker of AssUniv, must retrain to become the best assassins on the planet and save the world from annihilation once more. Whether they embraced their new fate, or despise it, doesn't matter.

This is it. The final year (or two) of assassination. Nothing was left behind. Dangerous
substances. Rival assassins, old and new. New world order. Yakuza. Tentacles! Even zombies! It is a brief life, after all. But in this fleeting time, the twenty-nine students will once again learn: There’s nothing like standing on the edge of the cliff to death that tells you “you’re only young once.”

Ansatsu Kyoushitsu, it's original story, and its characters all belong to Yusei Matsui and Shonen Jump.

Notes

Hey guys! Stephen here~!

This was a long time in the making. I have been writing for the AssClass fandom since mid-2016, on DeviantArt. I have been thinking to port it onto AO3 for quite some time, so that it can gain the attention of a more writers-centered site, but things kept getting in the way. But now I've found some time to get chapters in and now's the time to start!

To note, this is my first fanfiction ever, and it took some time to get into the groove. Therefore, the first fifteen chapters will be pretty meh compared to the rest... Another 125 of them! xD Yep, this is a long, full manga series all done by me. Get ready for a ride!

BTW, it's not done. On DA, I've been preparing to publish the next, more centered continuation to this. ;D

- Azure ;)

A little disclaimer below, in case all of this wasn't obvious already. :P

*WARNING: "Ansatsu Daigaku" (aka Assassination University) takes place after [most of] Yusei Matsui's "Ansatsu Kyoushitsu" (aka Assassination Classroom). As such, it will be VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE to not relay spoilers in the story. If you do not wish to know how the manga ends, I advise that you do not read this and the future chapters until after you have read the final chapters of Matsui's manga.

That being said, "Ansatsu Daigaku" is a nonprofit fan-fiction. Its predecessor's story and characters all belong to Yusei Matsui, Viz Media, Shonen Jump, and Shueisha. Please support all future official releases. *END WARNING*
Space of Return

-Flashback-

Nagisa: *Aim well for the heart... The time... Has already come...* Brandishing a combat knife, sits on top of a prone tentacle monster, with a magnificent tie, stunning scholar's cap, and a smile that you just couldn't help but love.* For a live kill.

Class 3-E: *While holding on to each of the monster's tentacles, show signs of conflict and struggle. And not because the monster is resisting...*

Nagisa: *Memories of the past year, flashed before the entire class' eyes.*

*splash images (in order): Sugino throwing his fastest pitch, Okuda concocting a super serum, Chiba and Hayami locking arms, Kataoka brandishing her hairclip knife, Okano and Maehara "reconciling", Isogai winning a pole match with his team, Takebayashi being accepted to his second pick school, Kanzaki being saved, and many more*

Nagisa: *starts to raise the knife up in the air* Shaking... Can't stop... The Shaking...! *heartbeat rate skysrockets; eventually clutches both hands to the knife together to plunge it* "UWAAAAAAAAHHHH!!"

*Slippery sound*

...

-End Flashback-

Narrator: "And so, on that fateful day in the middle of March, the world saw the end of something that destroyed so much... And yet... Created a lot as well. On that day, Class 3-E of Kunugigaoka Junior-High School graduated, twenty-four hours ahead of the rest of their institute, and looked towards a new future they never thought they would have."

*Splash images of Chapters 178-180 with Former Class 3-E coming back to the Old Schoolhouse from which they studied in several years ago, and also some of the other students diving into their lines of work*

Narrator: "Since then, they have come lead those very lives with utter grace."

Kayano: [in dreamscape] *holds stomach* "I sincerely hope... That in the future... We'll all be able to pass these ideals down..."

Nagisa: [in dreamscape] *stands up to Paradise High School bully* "Kill? Good luck with that!! You have until graduation!"

Narrator: "But what of during the time in which their futures were still up in the air? What if their journeys to fully apply the art of killing and the bloodlust that comes with it wasn't yet complete, and another struggle awaited the former students of Class 3-E? This is that very story."

"Follow us as we explore the lives of these twenty-eight students and their teachers one more time. Watch them reencounter the killing curriculum on a whole other level - from an
Assassination Classroom... To an Assassination University."

-Four years later...-

Professor: “Iwata, can you tell me what this sentence’s format is?” *points to line of words on the whiteboard using poker*

Iwata: “Uh, ‘Something Does Something to Something’?”

Professor: “Common misconception. This filler statement has been known to slip up many, but SDS: ‘Something Does Something.’” *Points to another student.* “Nakano, can you tell me what this sentence’s format is?”

Nakano: “‘Something is Something’?”

Professor: “Correct. This final clause renames the subject perfectly.”

Nagisa: *Looks out the window of the classroom, supporting head with left hand* “...”

Professor: “Nagisa.”

Nagisa: “...”

Professor: “Nagisa, if you would please be kind.”

Nagisa: *Pays attention* “I’m sorry?”

Professor: “Can you tell me what this sentence is an example of?”

Nagisa: “... Something is.”

Professor: “Good.” *Moves away*

Nagisa: *Cross-armed, leans further onto the desk*

*Several minutes later; class ends*

Professor: “Remember, class: The due date for your final paper is on next Thursday, by the end of class. The day after that will be your final exam, worth twenty-five percent of your cumulative grade. I suggest you study up.”

Class: “Yes, sir.” *Rises up, socialize around the classroom, or leaves.*

Nagisa: *Packs up slowly, and leaves the room late* Four years... It’s been four years... *Walks outside, seeing the buildings of Sophia University running parallel with the sun high in the sky*

-Ansatsu Daigaku (aka Assassination University) title screen-

Nagisa: Time has become quite an illusion for me, and a puzzle as well. I feel it flying by... And yet it seems to drag on forever. I know it’s been almost half a decade, and yet it feels like it was just yesterday. And I have much to thank for such enigmatic conditions.

If I wound the clock back just two years, everyone here, and all of Japan for that matter, would’ve remembered exactly who I am. Not Nagisa Shiota, the manlet trap; Nagisa Shiota, the one who killed Korosensei. And who was Korosensei, you might ask? He was a lot of things. Some know
him as an assassin (and a damn good one at that). Many know him to be some crazy monster that ‘kidnapped’ twenty-eight students from Kunugigaoka Junior-High School. But to me and Former Class 3-E... He was our teacher.

Yeah, we too were surprised when we were first told this. And what was even more flabbergasting was that we were told to kill him. Kill the best assassin on the planet before he assassinates the Earth by the end of our academic year... For thirty billion yen. At first, we thought little of it and abided to the government’s demands. But Korosensei was still our teacher, and there were connections between him, the master, and us, the learners. Through our time trying to get to know, and kill him, we got to know ourselves and the ones around us. Sure, we came upon some very rough patches, with the entire rest of the school putting us down, and fellow assassins bumping in line to take a shot at our teacher. But it was still our year; the best year of our lives.

And then, at long last... The time came. That time brought us the last chance we had to personally kill our teacher. By now, we didn’t care about our problems. We didn’t care about the money. And we didn’t care about how the world would look at us. We had no reason, other than the request of our idol, to kill him. And when I was handpicked to do it... I did it.

We did our best to make a strong face to each other and our loved ones. But I knew it in my heart that I was hurting inside. Such a strong event that would never be publicized (as it would never be believed), coupled with the misunderstood, misinterpreted news coverage of the rest of the ordeal, eternally shuffled me. And all the questions from the special others... The questions about it... I thought it would never end.

It did eventually end. And then we had peace. And then one of my friends, Kaede Kayano, requested a public video chat for all of us to keep in touch. And hearing all of their voices was bittersweet. Briefly enough, I logged myself out. It wasn’t their faults, but this would never work for me. I just... Couldn’t bear to be reminded of the event again.

Eventually, I accepted Kayano and her only to speak with me. She was just about the only person who truly related to my pain, and sought to help me get better actively. She distracted me with academic work, acting projects, trivial social media concepts, and more. And they actually made an impact... A small one, though. I don’t wish to abandon everyone I would’ve died for to save, but I also don’t want them to subtly be the reason I die myself. No one gets it.

Nagisa: *phone beeps; checks it* Kayano: ‘Wanna chat today?’ I don’t want to give up. Kayano isn’t giving up on me. And I’m sure everyone else in Former Class 3-E doesn’t want to give up on me either. *types ‘Yeah, I’ll be on soon.’ and sends* Maybe this time, things will be different. *continues to walk down sidewalk.*

-But on the other side...-

Kayano: *Sits alone in front of her vanity, looking at her smartphone screen after sending her latest message to Nagisa before eventually staring into space. Though she should be the light in this strange darkness, she couldn't help eventually lessening her own beam.*

-Phone beeps.-

Kayano: *Takes notice of her device again; it was a message alert from Karma.*

Karma: Any luck so far?

Kayano: *Sighs heavily.* Nah. Nagisa-kun is still very worked up. He is still very much in his
own island. He told me earlier yesterday that he didn't even go back to spend Thanksgiving with them this time.

Karma: Ugh, what a mess.

Kayano: Which we cannot give up trying to clean up. Nagisa-kun was, and still is, our best friend, and we cannot allow him to wallow in despair alone. Otherwise, we would have failed Korosensei.

Karma: Fine. Still easier said than done.

Kayano: I don't see you throwing out ideas.

Karma: You're seeing the hopelessness of this, aren't you?

Kayano: You started it.

Karma: Okay, okay. How about we cool down a bit, huh?

Kayano: Fine. Catch up with you in a bit. *Sets her phone down, before putting her hand to her face.* God, I can't do this alone. Everyone's inevitably drifting apart... What more can we do?

Stage Crew: "Yukimura!"

Kayano: *Immediately perks up, looking over to the source of her identification.* "Yeah?"

Stage Crew: "You're up for the next scene in five."

Kayano: "Alright, tell the director I'll be there in three."

Stage Crew: "You got it." *Closes the covers.*

Kayano: *Gives her forehead a final rub before proceeding to the entrance to the set.*

Stunt Double: *While conversing with his actor double, he notices Kayano walk past him in a skeptical manner.*
Nagisa clearly didn’t handle assassinating Korosensei as well as he believed he would, and it seems to be leeching its bad influence on everyone else in former Class 3-E. Kayano and others are doing their best to keep it together... But will it last? Especially when unforeseen circumstances arise?

-One week later...-

Nagisa: *running out of the academic building* Oh man! It's online chat time again! *cuts the corner on the sidewalk* Gotta get back to my dorm! *continues down the pathway, entering residence hall, and climbing set of stairs leading to his room on the fourth floor, and unlocks the door.*

I live alone; as I’ve really come to realize, I don’t do too well with excess amounts of personal people anymore. I feel I can’t afford to bond with them, especially if they would soon find out about my past... Again. *puts jacket away, takes a carbonated water out of the fridge, and sits down at his computer desk; turns on laptop* This would actually be the first time I requested a video chat. Needless to say, every other time came from Kayano. But lately, I’m beginning to think there is hope for me to prove my class’ statement four years ago... ‘we will be fine.’ And she’ll definitely think I’ve gotten better if I started this time!

*goes on social media website and logs in; looks on the sidebar, seeing all of his other junior high friends* Someday I could show my face to them too. I can almost guarantee it. But I’ll need to see Kayano first. *Scrolls down his friend list* What? *sees that “Kaede Kayano” is offline.* Offline? She’s always on at 2 P.M. Also... It’s been a full day since she was last on. That’s some rather erratic behavior. Ah well... *sends a chat request for later times and logs off; takes a sip of water* Maybe tomorrow then?

-Nagisa proceeds to try again for the next several days to see if Kayano has logged in since then, but after five days and over twenty timed requests, it was all to no avail; Yukimura pretty much has dropped off the face of the Earth.-

-Five days later...-

Nagisa: She still hasn’t come on? This is unfounded. No doubt, I’m getting pretty worried. *looks over to the rest of his friend’s list* Maybe... *clicks on “Yukiko Kanzaki”*[message] “Hello Kanzaki-san. It has been awhile, hasn’t it? I just wanted to ask, would you happen to know what’s been going on with Kayano-san lately?”

-After a dozen, anxious seconds, Nagisa receives his awaited response.-

Kanzaki: [message] “Hi, Nagisa-kun! I know, it has been too long! <3 But as for Kayano-san, I haven’t heard from her either. Maybe she had to put in some extra study hours now that her filming schedule has loosened? We know it very well, the acting business is very arbitrary. :S If not that, I truly hope nothing bad has happened to her.”
Nagisa: [message] “Maybe. Thanks, Kanzaki-san. I’d like to get back you later.” *He exits out of the private chat log. Nagisa then scrolls up his contact list, before he clicks on Kataoka* [message] “Hey, Kataoka-san. Great to finally speak with you again. Have you heard from Kayano-san lately? I’ve been getting a little worried, as being offline for several days is unprecedented for her.”

Kataoka: [message] “Hello to you too, Nagisa. No, Kayano has not messaged me at all. Has something gone wrong with you and her? A sort of a recent falling out?”

Nagisa: [message] “It’s not like that. Sorry for bringing it up.” *scrolls up again and clicks on Sugino* [message] “Hey, Sugino! I hope you’re holding up well. Would you happen to have talked to Kayano at all in the last few days? She’s been acting sort of strangely, and I’m getting a bit anxious.”

Sugino: [message] “Man, Nagisa, where you’ve been? I’m doing very well, thank you very much. However, Kayano hasn’t gone my way at all. But I’m glad I wasn’t the only one who noticed that. You don’t think she’s in trouble, do you?”

Nagisa: Uh...

-Nagisa continues to swarm through much of the rest of Former Class 3-E, hoping to get some sorts of answers. But they all point toward the same conclusion...-

Yada: [message] “My, now that you bring it up...”

Hayami: [message] "I can't believe I didn't see it earlier..."

Hara: [message] “I’m quite concerned myself...”

Terasaka: [message] “You didn’t have anything to do with it yourself, did you?”

Isogai: [message] “I tried keeping a close eye, but this really slipped my mind. Maybe because I never expected it.”

Maehara: [message] “To be honest, I’ve been noticing a few more things off-beat lately too...”

Kurahashi: [message] “I really wish I knew, Nagisa-kun.”

Okano: [message] “Don’t be worried too much, Nagisa.”

Fuwa: [message] “I’ll get on the case about it!”

Nakamura: [message] “No one can put you on your toes but yourself... And me. >:] But yeah, my senses are tingling.”

Okuda: [message] “I’ll find some answers however I can.”

Takebayashi: [message] "Let's research on it.

Chiba: [message] "I was thinking multiple somethings was up..."


Nagisa: ...
-Several weeks later...-

-Despite the welcoming words of a lot of his longtime friends after such a distance in time and space, Nagisa is not entirely convinced to be calm of the situation at hand. He begins to grow drastically paranoid... Paranoid that it was something specifically about him. Maybe something to do with... Constantly pushing her away until now. And reasonably, she could only take so much before she just couldn’t anymore. And abandoned him entirely... Just as he always seemed to want. Just as he was starting to get better.-

-Nagisa wants to believe otherwise, as he believed that Yukimura would never give up on him; even she believed in it when she said it... At least he believed she believed it. But still, that strong defense should be enough to withhold that faith. But as far as he stands, it's barely holding up.-

Nagisa: *walking back after a gloomy day of classes, and holding onto a test packet in English; the grade is a borderline pass of 64 points out of 100.* I can't concentrate. I almost didn't make it through my major this semester. All that's racing in my mind is Kayano... I know I must have done something awful to have hurt her. And I have to make it up. Fate just needs to give me the chance, even though... Honestly, I don’t think I would even give one to the person I am right now...

*Walks slowly up the residence hall stairs to his room, and unlocks it; sets down all of his belongings and sits at his computer desk. Without looking, he places right hand over to where his mouse is, but he feels a papery texture opposite the material of the wired appliance.*

Huh? *Sees that it’s an envelope containing a pamphlet. Takes the folded paper out and unravels it*

“(reads) Tadaomi Karasuma’s Ultimate Survival Summer Internship! The Urban Jungle has tested your chances of academic survival. But my jungle will test the rest of your resolves. You better be ready to kill for your beliefs... Because I will do the same to make mine yours! Join - If you dare!”

*notices writing on the inner portion of the envelope upon further inspection.* “(reads) Nagisa; it is imperative that you sign up for this internship. More information will be given to you once the time comes. - Tadaomi Karasuma”

*looks at the two documents for a few seconds, before crumpling up both of them with a grip of his right hand filled with determination.*

-Several days later-

Nagisa: *sits on his bed in the dormitory, next to two filled bags of travel materials.* Today is the day. The bus will arrive at the university to take me to the Shinkansen, and then I take a two and a half hour ride to Kyoto, where Karasuma-sensei’s “internship” will be. I had no doubt in my mind when I went online and signed up that this is what I want. Just you wait, sensei. And you, Kayano. I’ll set everything right. On my own two feet.

*Sees that it's almost time for the bus, and leaves his dorm. Waits at a bench until it arrives, then rises up and gets on.*

Kanzaki/Sugino/Yada: "Hello/Hey/Hi, Nagisa-kun!" *jumps from behind hidden seats, waving their hands*

Nagisa: "!!?" *derp-faced at the realization.* The idea that I will be in close contact with
everyone from four years ago slipped my mind...

Yada: "Huh, he doesn't look very excited..."

Kanzaki: "Is he always like this, Sugino-kun?"

Sugino: "How the heck should I know? I haven't talked with him in so long, like you two."

Nagisa: ""

Yada: "So, yeah, Nagisa-kun, it's great to see you face to face again! And the same goes for everyone else once we get to the bullet train!"

Nagisa: "Yeah, whatever." *sets down luggage on seat across from him and takes a seat, opting not to converse*

Everyone else: *worried expressions*

Nagisa: *Looks out the vehicle's window* Kyoto Prefecture, here I come.
Kayano has disappeared, and everything Nagisa has been working for to look up again for once has drifted into the darkness yet again. But there's still a ray of hope, when Karasuma soon comes back with possibly a chance of finding her again, gathering all of the old Class 3-E again. Promising, hmm?

-The bus ride to the Shinkansen bullet train was a rather tame one. Nagisa, remained silent throughout most of the venture, aside from several "polite" requests to leave conversations whenever Yada, Kanzaki and Sugino tried to lighten the mood-

Sugino: "Hey, Nagisa," *leans over seat housing Nagisa* "Watched the game last night?"

Nagisa: "No."

Sugino: "Mind if I tell you who won, then?"

Nagisa: "Not at all."

Sugino: "Great then. The Swallows-"

Nagisa: "Okay, okay, I heard enough." *Looks around seat* "Driver, how much longer before we're at the station?"

Driver: "Still ten minutes or so."

Sugino: *laughs* "What's wrong, Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: "Nothing. Just worked up."

Sugino: "Over me about to spoil it for you, or me still trying to talk to you?"

Nagisa: "Can you just quit it, already?"

Sugino: *Man, what has crawled up his ass and died?*

Kanzaki: *Sitting two lanes behind Sugino, across from Yada; whispers* "Do you think that all of this has to do with Kayano-san?"

Yada: *Whispers* "It would be hard to think it was something else, to be honest. But saying it's only the disappearance of Kayano-san that set him off would probably be a lie."

Kanzaki: "Oh, yeah..." *puts her hand to her chin* "That's right..."

Yada: "And then there's the savage life of college, after all."
Kanzaki: "Ah, that too." *mind ticks* "I guess that means you haven't been able to find anything for you on the academic front, huh?"

Yada: *pouts* "No... I've been throwing out all the applications for business management everywhere. But no one is responding. Am I... Just not good enough?" *feels right-side bangs*

Kanzaki: "No, don't say that!" *pushes Yada's shoulder* "Of course you're good enough! Who can back her talking game the best? Keep her cool in a room full of men with two-bit suits?"

Yada: "Hmm..."

Kanzaki: "Would you think Irina-sensei would be proud of her star pupil talking like that about her skills?"

Yada: "Oh definitely not." *tilts head* "You have your point as well. Thanks, Kanzaki-san."

Kanzaki: "Anytime." *smiles widely*

-Bus ride concludes. Nagisa, Kanzaki, Yada, and Sugino get off the bus and into the train station.-

Yada: "Ah, Tokyo Station. A great sight to behold in the heart of the metropolis."

Sugino: "And we're going on the Shinkansen lines; the set and model of trams that defined the term 'bullet train!' Ah man, this is going to be fun!" *Pounded fist with approval*

Kanzaki: *Smiles*

Nagisa: *Stares at travel directions* "..." *Puts papers away, and continues off to the designated platform*

Yada: "Ah, Nagisa-kun-" *Holds out hand*

Sugino: "I guess we follow him. Come on, Kanzaki-san. Yada-san." *motions to trail*

-Nagisa and co. reach the platform, and board the train as scheduled at 1015 hours-

Yada: "Ooop, looks like we're on our way!"

Sugino: "Hell yeah we are! This is going to be fun!"

Yada: "Heheh. Not that I mind, however, but why is Karasuma-sensei's 'internship' in Kyoto?"

Sugino: "I couldn't begin to tell ya. Why do you wonder?"

Yada: "Nothing important. Just that it sounds important."

Kanzaki: *Laughs*

Yada: "There we go again. Kanzaki-san, what's up?"

Kanzaki: "You don't recall the significance of the platform we were just on? It has a lot to do
with us."

Sugino: "Huh? How so?"

Yada: "Uh..."

Nagisa: "1921; Takashi Hara; the first Commoner, Christian Prime Minister, was killed by a railway switchman at the station. More specifically, on a lane headed to Kyoto Station."

Yada: "Ah, an assassination..."

Sugino: "On our way to the 'Assassination Capital of the World,' Kyoto. It all fits together again."

Kanzaki: "Open our eyes, and that's what happens. One of our best lessons learned from four years ago."

Yada/Sugino: "Yeah..."

Nagisa: *looks back without turning for a second, before returning his attention to the front*

-The train makes a few stops along the 2.5-hour, nearly 500 kilometer ride to Kyoto Station, picking up a whole bunch of their other friends from their junior-high days.-

Yada: "Not going to lie, it's great to see all of you in person once more."

Hara: "Mutual, Yada-san."

Isogai: "Has everyone been holding up well enough, not taking into account recent developments?"

Maehara: "Eh, you could say that. But certainly there's room for betterment."

Chiba: "Keeping myself busy, personally. Who knew architecture was something fierce? Thank God Hayami-san is around for me."

Hayami: "You're giving me too much credit. I'm only around because I don't know what to do with myself."

Okajima: "'It's not like I wanted to go to the same high school and college as you... B-baka!" *laughs*

Hayami: "Hey!" *pouts, then crosses her arms*

Kataoka: "That's beautiful. What about the rest of you ladies?"

Hara: "I for one, was having the time of my life! College is the second best thing that's ever happened to me. I mean, buffet dining halls!? AH-MAZE-ING!" *raises fist into the air*

Yoshida: "Hara-san, did you gain a little more weight?"

Hara: *Gasps* "Yoshida-san! How dare you!" *Looks away a bit* "Just a bit. But I still feel
good about myself. And you don't fix what isn't broken, right? Right, everyone?"

Former Class 3-E: *crickets*

Terasaka: "I really hate to break it to you all, not really, but I feel as though we should be more concerned over a certain list of something else and its like rather than what's now in the past."

Nakamura: *Schoffs* "Who made you boss, Goliath?"

Karma: "Ah, let him have his fun, Nakamura. Terasaka's feelings are some of the only things he's got that define him."

Terasaka: "Yeah! Wait a minute..." *Realizes* "Fuck you too, Karma."

Karma: "I know you love me." *cat smile*

Fuwa: "Very nice, but yeah. We already have a 'common enemy' of problems right now that are so great that it brought us all closely-knit together again. That ought to take precedence."

Kurahashi: "You wouldn't be wrong; whatever that's been happening, it is big. I got a phone call from Irina-sensei talking about this, and she mentioned that she never saw Karasuma-sensei this discombobulated."

Kimura: "So what do you guys think will happen when we enter Karasuma's internship, then? Will we just be told what's going on?"

Okano: "Or are we going to be a part of something bigger?"

Hazama: "Like becoming adult assassins?"

Takebayashi: "Assassins again?" *looks up wildly, then repositions glasses* "Where would we even begin to refresh and regather our knowledge of the art?"

Sosuke: "I'm sure Karasuma-sensei's got something just for that, for us."

Mimura: "Even then, it's been awhile. Could we even bring ourselves to do it again? I mean, the bloodlust alone..."

All: "...

Yada: "I'm willing to find out anything I must, be it about our situation, what we must do, or both. And I'm sure we all accepted the 'internship' to do this to find out as well. Am I wrong?"

Karma: "Not for me at least."

Terasaka: "Same goes for me."

Kataoka: "And me."

All: "And us!"

Isogai: "Well, I'd say we can bring ourselves to take whatever fate will throw at us again. So,
let's go for the kill as always, right everyone?"

All: "YEAH!"

Nagisa: *looks back again.* They have the same motive as me... Maybe I can stop pushing them away now? ... Agh, I'll bide my time for now. I can't afford to get sidetracked. They're fine; what about Kayano?

Unknown College Student: *Sits all the way in the back, with a cap on his head, having heard the whole conversation between the entirety of the Former Class 3-E.*
Everyone's reunited with one goal in mind - to find and save Kayano from whatever has caused her disappearance. Wait, what? You're telling me there's more gone than that? Who!?

-The Shinkansen bullet train reaches Kyoto Station before long. They then start unloading their belongings from the cargo part of the tram. But one thing catches all of their eyes...-

All: *Stares at a Suzuki Hayabusa 2016 motorcycle in the storage area.*

Okuda: "Umm..."

Nakamura: "Does that belong to anyone?"

Muramatsu: "Totally not mine."

Sugino: "Don't do two-wheelers."

Isogai: "Definitely not on the guys side."

Kataoka: "Neither on the girls..."

Fuwa: "But we were the only passengers on the train!"

Chiba: "I surmise that someone left it behind from last time then."

Yoshida: "Unlucky for them, then!" *gooey-faced, goes towards the motorcycle*

Terasaka: "Get yourself together, Yoshida! We're former assassins; not thieves." *points at the vehicle* "That, stays where it is."

Yoshida: "Damnit!" *stomps and slaps his knee*

Karma: "I doubt you'd be able to take it to our meeting spot anyways." *scratches his temple*

Hayami: "Then I suppose we ought to get going."

Kanzaki: *looks around*

Yada: "Something wrong, Kanzaki-san?"

Kanzaki: *finds what she's looking for* "Look there."

Everyone else: *stares in that direction*
Nagisa: *descending down the escalator to the security checkpoints*

Everyone else: "DAMN NAGISA IS IGNORING US!" *absolutely shocked face* "GET 'EM!" *most of the cast chases after him, leaving behind Karma, Okuda, Kanzaki, and Kurahashi, who slowly trail them*

Unknown Student: *steps off the passenger end of the train and looks at Former Class 3-E, and then to the Hayabusa* "..." *pushes motorcycle further outside in the distance while...*

Nagisa: *waiting for the final bus to arrive*

Terasaka: "The fuck is wrong with you, Nagisa!? *catches up to him*

Everyone else: *stop right behind them*

Nagisa: *Does not turn around, and refuses to respond*

Terasaka: "Oh, so now you're above me so much, you can't talk to me!? Being the asshole is not your thing, you know!"

Nagisa: *Still ignores Terasaka*

Terasaka: "Why you little..." *lets go of belongings and starts walking over to him*

Okano: "Terasaka!"

Maehara: "Don't do anything stupid!"

Karma: *looks on seriously*

Terasaka: *grabs onto Nagisa's shoulder* "Now see here, Nagisa. I understand you having some 'conflictions' about recent events..."

Muramatsu: *To Hazama* "Is 'conflictions' even a word?"

Hazama: "No."

Terasaka: *looks back* "Shut up, guys!" *back to front* "But that doesn't permit you to pretend like we don't exist! Whether you like it or not, or even KNOW it or not, we're in this together, because we all felt that sting together! Now open your fucking eyes!"

Nagisa: *silent, until the bus comes* "Let, go."

Terasaka: *hesitates for a little bit before slowly takes his hand off* "You're going to see it eventually. How much you'll need us, and how much of an ASSHOLE you've been to us all this time."

Nagisa: *stores baggage into bus and gets on board ahead of everyone else.*

Terasaka: 'Fuckin' A..." *proceeds to put things in and climbs on*
Nakamura: "Will they kiss?"

Karma: "Ooooh, that'd be nice to show Nagisa once he calms down."

Everyone else: "YOU'RE DERIDING THIS!?" *absolutely shocked face*

-Without another scene, the many students get on the bus and make it to the 'internship' location; a large, open ground on and around Mount Atago and the ward Ukyo-Ku.-

-But the bus cannot leave the capital without seeing a bunch of special signs.-

Kimura: "Looks like they're still a major presence here, above all..."

Fuwa: "What do you mean, Kimura-kun?"

Kimura: *Points out the window.* "Look there; those black and white paste-on pages."

Kataoka: *Inspects it as closely as she can.* "Kanji for wisteria... and the borders are riddled with the eponymous plant."

Mimura: "What does it mean?"

Kimura: "I saw the design present on my father's old case files. That's the emblem of the Kato Family."

Sosuke: "Kato Family? Yakuza?"

Kimura: "Yup."

Fuwa: "A particularly dangerous bunch?"

Kimura: "Well, that's where it gets tricky. The Kato Family is a strong branch of the syndicates, but they are also charitable, peacekeeping, and their public personnel are everything pleasant. If there was a set of reasons why the Yakuza are celebrated amongst the rest of the domestic population, they would embody all of them. But cross them, and you won't last a day in their turf."

Kataoka: "Well, we're not here to dismantle a criminal network, so we shouldn't pose a threat to them. Let's pay mind to our own work, all."

-After a few more trivial conversations, the tour bus finally arrived at its destination. The students of Former Class 3-E all pile outside and begin walking into a specific, shrine-looking establishment on the mountain.-

Kanzaki: "Wow, the west side of Kyoto is quite different from the east; not nearly as many people, and all the temples. It's really quite beautiful."

Maehara: "We certainly didn't go to this part of Kyoto during our trip here. What a shame!" *puts hands behind his neck*

Okajima: "I heard the ladies around this ward are pretty damn fine as well. Whoo, this is a scene made in heaven!" *holds up high-power camera to his chest with excitement*
Kurahashi: "Put that away, Okajima-san; we'll probably have time for this during and after whatever it is we're doing here."

Adult man: "Maybe. maybe not."

Class 3-E: *look back with surprise* "Karasuma and Bitch-sensei!!!

Irina: "CLASS!!"

-They mutually dive into each other's arms, while Nagisa and Karasuma stick out of it.-

Muramatsu: "Damn, never thought I'd be so happy to see a bitch after so long!"

Everyone else: "ME TOO!" *They tighten their grip on the embrace. Some are even crying!*

Irina: "And I never thought I'd love to see my smartass students like this again!"

-They eventually let go.-

Kurahashi: "And make no mistake, Karasuma-sensei, it is very good to see you in person again too!"

Karasuma: *Crossed arms, and seriously-faced* "I feel the same way, even if I don't look it."

Boys of Class 3-E: *whispers* "Of course he is..."

Nagisa: "Okay, reunion's done." *walks out of Former Class 3-E crowd and up to Karasuma* "So why did you have us go all the way out here? What's going on?" *stops at three feet away from him*

Karasuma: *notices the strange change in Nagisa's character, but doesn't question it.* "Not here. Follow me." *turns around and starts walking deeper into the Mount Atago temple*

Fuwa: *Mind flared* "Something doesn't feel quite right..."

Sosuke: "You mean the fact that we're here?"

Fuwa: "No! ... I mean, yeah, but also, why would Karasuma and his Ministry of Defense rent an area here for our 'internship' activities? There are many, much more fitting places to do this."

Isogai: "Jeez, so many questions. But where will we get the answers to them?" *motions over to Karasuma walking away*

Kataoka: "Okay, okay, Isogai-kun, we get you. Huh, Bitch-sensei's right; we are smartasses." *smirks, then continues onwards*

Kurahashi: *stares intently at a particular area of Karasuma*

Yada: *looks in the same direction, finds what she's noticing, and starts patting her on the back of her neck.* "There there, Kurahashi-san. We all know of your pain."

Irina: *As they walk, she catches up to Karasuma, and grabs with her right hand onto the area at*
which covers the spot her pupils were looking at*

-Soon enough, they finally reach where they were meant to be; the inside of a training temple-

Karasuma: "Alright. Now we can start talking about what is going on."

Terasaka: "Why we gotta be so discreet? Are the disappearances part of something big and secret?"

Nagisa: *looks up* "Disappearances?"

Everyone else: *looks at Nagisa very surprisingly* "YOU DON'T KNOW?"

Nagisa: *looks around wildly with confusion and awe.*
So, not only is our familiar, pint-sized actor is gone, but so is an incredibly altruistic AI and a mobile hardware engineer! Yep, Horibe and Ritsu have also been 'nabbed. And The AssUniv Program will be on the case... But first they need to get back in shape, and with not a lot of time on their hands, they are putting their skills to the test with a new, mysterious ally.

Terasaka: "Why we gotta be so discreet? Are the disappearances part of something big and secret?"

Nagisa: *looks up* "Disappearances?"

Everyone else: *looks at Nagisa very surprisingly* "YOU DON'T KNOW?"

Nagisa: *looks around wildly* "Should I?"

Nakamura: "Uh, kind of! It has everything to do with us!"

Nagisa: "I knew that part! Kayano-san's missing! But the rest?"

Terasaka: "Wow, you so fucking narrow-minded..." *scoffs*

Nagisa: "What does that mean?"

Karma: "Look around, Nagisa. Tell us, aside from Kayano-san, who else is missing?"

Nagisa: *looks around at a very displeased Former Class 3-E, who are gawking at him in turn.* "Um... Itona-san. And..." *Mind flares up, looking at his phone* "Ritsu-chan."

Terasaka: "Now he gets it. Great job!" *sarcastically claps*

Hayami: "Alright, enough. It was Nagisa who raised up concern for this to begin with. We wouldn't have dug deeper if it weren't for him."

Nagisa: *stares into space with horror*

Karasuma: "What you all say is true. And yes, something big is happening that has made cause for their abductions. Something we should've been keeping a very close eye on."

Isogai: "Which is?"

Karasuma: "The Reclamation Society. A secret team of top-level researchers, scientists, and shot-callers of legal and illegal systems. Their goal is simple; they want to walk in the footsteps of Kotaro Yanagisawa's latest, make-or-break project. One that we all know everything there is to know about, for certain."

Nagisa: "..." Kotaro Yanagisawa was the man who made our teacher Korosensei the way he was. He was a shrewd, unethical man who sought nothing but results for his experiments; the latest of which being the ability to make a source of antimatter without massive energy requirements. Since
he had no set of morals, he researched the ability to generate such material in living things, from the rats that blew up most of our moon... To humans, like what was Korosensei before.

His experiment went awry when our teacher eventually unleashed all of his power as a result of the trials, and went rampant on his research facility, killing several scientists and many guards. Yanagisawa himself lost his left eye, and his fiancee (our former teacher, Aguri Yukimura), which prompted his desire to exact revenge on Korosensei. He had created elaborate schemes involving other humans, namely Itona, and the Second God of Death to assassinate 'the best assassin on the planet.' But he had failed, time and time again. The final time, he was sent through an anti-tentacle barrier made to stop his enemy, and was nearly killed. He now rests on some hospital bassinet, hoping to get lucky that leading scientist aficionados would ask him for the next big development in the industry. Without crediting him, naturally.

Kataoka: "So this 'Reclamation Society' wants to further the development of growing antimatter in living beings?"

Karasuma: "Not quite. They were far more interested in the accidental result of the experiments..."

Maehara: "They want to make another Korosensei!?"


Yada: "But the world leaders four years ago already said that the tentacles were impractical for military purposes."

Karasuma: "Of course they say that. Gain the decades of experience that I have and you will know that's just them making a mama bear sound like a cub." *getting very serious*

Irina: "Plus, we should mention again that a lot of the Reclamation Society is made from illegals, and ones who fell from stardom in their departments. This new start with something so absolutely important was just what they were looking for."

Chiba: "Shit... That really puts it into perspective."

Nakamura: "But why does that prompt the capture of our best friends?"

Karasuma: "Think about it."

Former Class 3-E: *ponders the subject, before they all get it* "They used the tentacles before!"

Karasuma: "Correct. Any information they get off of them about their experiences using the tentacles will be a one-up for them alone. And once they're not useful anymore..."

Nagisa: *angered expression at the acknowledged answer to that query.*

Kataoka: "Well I hate to sound like a downer, but it's already been some time since they disappeared. What if they already got all they wanted from them? We might be too late right as we speak."

Karasuma: "Don't worry about them just yet. The Reclamation Society does not have them. A third party does."

Yoshida: "Which would be?"
Unknown College Student: "A team of freelance assassins."

Class 3-E: *look back at the entrance where the voice came from. They gaze on a young, college student about their age. After removing his sunglasses and cap, his identification could be finalized: 5'10", Japanese, black hair with a few rare white tips, faded-jade eyes, and a stern expression they aren't new to.*

"WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU!?"

Unknown College Student: "Someone you want to call a good friend of yours. My name is Kazuhiko Ohno." *steps further into the room.*

Terasaka: "Oh yeah? Why's that? Because you play the 'bad guy' trope?" *cracks knuckles*

Fuwa: "Is this whole fanfiction about us mocking Terasaka for his misdeeds?" *looks to screen while thumbing at Terasaka*

Ohno: *Crosses his arms.* "Because I'm the other reason why you're all here. Without me, nothing could be done about what you were just told."

Isogai: "I'm finding that hard to believe. How so?"

Karasuma: "He is allowing us to work on this ground." *closes eyes with frustration*

Terasaka: "Grrr... And why would we need this ground?"

Ohno: *Throws his arms wide open.* "You need to become assassins again! Was it really that hard to figure out?"

Hara: "Whoa whoa whoa, become assassins again?"

Mimura: "So that really was why we came..."

Nakamura: "Um, guys? Random person knowing who we are and what we used to do?"

Ohno: "The public may have forgotten about," *Suddenly checks his watch.* "2016's news. But I haven't. Of course I know. But I can assure you your secret is safe with me."

Okuda: "Okay, Karasuma-sensei brought us here because of our curiosities, and Ohno-kun, if that's correct, is allowing it. But... Why did we need this ground to begin with?"

Karasuma: "The Ministry of Defense..." *Gets mad.* "Is not sanctioning this internship, like they did with your year with Korosensei. I'm about the only one who believes that the Reclamation Society even exists in the agency."

Irina: "Hey, don't forget me, Karasuma-kun!" *worried face*

Ohno: "Right, and so Karasuma here needed to fund and manage this work on his own. And he couldn't provide it all, without me."

Kataoka: "And what's in it for you?"

Ohno: "I help you out; assassination-wise."

Kurahashi: "Why would you want that?"
Ohno: "I have my reasons. And you need all the help you can get. I'm lending mine. That's all you need to know."

Class 3-E: "YEAH RIGHT, THAT'S ALL WE NEED TO KNOW!"

Karasuma: "Everyone, be nice. This is our one shot at setting things right."

Class 3-E: *look down*

Karma: "Can you pull your weight in this work?"

Ohno: *Tilts head.* "I'd like to think so."

Karma: "Then I suppose we have a deal." *offers hand*

Ohno: *Shakes his head with a grin.* "Not falling for it."

Everyone else: "!?

Karma: "He's not lying." *reveals his hand has an electric buzzer*

Karasuma: "Very good then. Also, Ohno is right in that a team of assassins have Kayano, Itona, and Ritsu on lock and key. They were, of course, hired to kidnap them to be taken to the Reclamation Society, but for whatever reason, they are holding out on completing the delivery until four months later. Most likely, they are withholding the transfer in the hopes of higher compensation, and the four months is a deadline for a satisfying price on their heads. That is our window of opportunity to intercept them."

"The bus will be waiting for you all to go back to Kyoto. We've booked a hotel to accommodate you for the duration of the Summer, while you come back here every day to relearn the ropes of assassination once more. That sounds good for everyone?"

Isogai: "That's great. Perfect even... Maybe."

-The students get back on the bus to head for their temporary lodgings-

Yoshida: *notices something out the window* "Whoa..."

Everyone else: *looks out window, noticing Ohno on the Hayabusa cruising along the same velocity as the bus at roughly 120 km/h.*

Karma: "Huh, so that's who the motorcycle belonged to."

-They eventually make it to Hotel Keihan, but before they can really settle...-

Ohno: "Anything else for me this time, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: "Must I always have something for you?" *walks in pace with him, pressing the elevator button to go up*

Ohno: "You have so far; why stop now?" *continues looking at elevator doors until they spring open*

Karasuma: *scoffs while moving into the compartment* "You and your conditioning." *elevator door starts to close*
Man: "Ah, hold that door!"

Karasuma: *presses "door open"*

Man: "Thank you." *gets inside and moves behind them*

Ohno/Karasuma: *nod to each other as the doors close.*

Man: *pulls out a knife and tries to stab Ohno from behind in the face. Ohno tilts his head out of the way while Karasuma turns around and hooks the man in the face. Recovering swiftly, the man then swings his knife wildly, causing Karasuma and Ohno to duck.*

Ohno/Karasuma: *double right straight the man after each of his wild attacks. When the man is reeling, the two double-spear him into the back wall, and then throw him straight into the elevator doors.*

Ohno: *takes the man's head, and drags it along the handlebar, before booting the man's head into the wall, putting him down.*

*elevator door opens*

Five students: *laughs at each other before looking at the elevator*
Disputable Space

Chapter Summary

Well, it seems as though things aren't entirely going to plan, when some random thug tried to attack newcomer Kato and Karasuma inside the elevator. Kato seems to have a very vindictive side to him as well, and while sending the AssUniv Program to another, safer hotel, he's going to settle the score.

Maehara: *holding an ice bucket* "So, where's the ice in this hotel again?"

Okano: "Third floor; eight down."

Mimura: "Gods, what a pain."

Kataoka: "Suck it up, guys. This'll be the least of our worries once we continue with assassination training tomorrow."

Isogai: "Well that's for certain..." *they all laugh*

-Elevator door opens, revealing Karasuma and Ohno had taken out a man in a suit within it.-

All five: *shocked face*

Ohno: "Nothing to see here; just us taking out the trash."

Kataoka: "What on Earth happened?"

Karasuma: "Man wanted to rob us; we just gave him what he deserved."

Maehara: "... Sounds about right."

Man: "Haha! I ain't dead yet!"

Ohno: *superkicks him in the chin*

Man's phone: *rings; reaches voicemail* [message] "Hey, Ihara-san. Waiting for your signal on the hit. Tell us how it's going ASAP, alright?"

Isogai: "Oh no, the guy's got friends outside."

Karasuma: *looks out windows, finding a bunch of people looking up towards their floor* "It's not safe here. God damn it!"

Ohno: "Then we'll have to relocate. I suggest Okura."

Everyone else: "Okura!?"
Ohno: "Don't worry about anything. Karasuma-sensei, just get them all there. And say my name at the door. You'll be fine."

Maehara: "What will you do?"

Ohno: "Bide you all some time."

Okano: "You can't possibly think you can handle them all, can you?"

Ohno: "Don't sweat that. I said I would help you guys, right? Now get out, and don't let them see you." *proceeds to go back into elevator and presses "first floor", closing the doors*

Karasuma: "Very well. Come on, kids." *goes to his room and unlocks it.* "Irina-san, it's time to-"

Irina: "My body is ready, Karasuma-sensei!" *sexually lying prone on bed, looking back, and then realizing that there's other company.* "!!!??"

Everyone else: *absolutely shocked face*

-After this little hiccup, everyone except Ohno evacuated the Hotel Keishan, and arrived at Hotel Okura without any other difficulties-

    Receptionist: "Ohno? Oh, of course! Right this way, all of you!"

    Karma: "Hm, our new friend Ohno seems to have connections."

    Okano: "It certainly brings up some new questions..."

    Nakamura: "Hey, if he gets us into a five-star hotel, he can keep whatever else he has to himself when it comes to me."

-They check in to their seemingly free rooms and get ready for the night-

-In Okuda, Kanzaki, Hayami, and Hara's room-

    Hara: "Room service is awesome~! <3"

    Kanzaki: "The lavatories are very luxurious, too."

    Hayami: "Cannot complain with this view either."

    Okuda: "All about this is too good to be true."

    *They all look at her*

    Kanzaki: "How so, Okuda-san?"

    Okuda: "Ohno-san... Everything about him."

    *They all look around*
Okuda: "He's a total mystery. Why does he willingly want the craziness of this life? More specifically, why is he treating us like we've been family for forever? Why did he just throw his life away back there?"

Other three: "..."

Hayami: Would it be that this is 'the leap of faith' thing that is supposed to make us trust him afterwards?"

Okuda: "I suppose it would depend on if it works or not."

Hayami: "So does it?"

Other three: "..."

Hara: "I think it's too early to say.

-Meanwhile elsewhere-

Ohno: *puts on street gear (white tank top, motorcycle leather jacket, slightly ragged jeans, and canvas shoes), and leaves building, going to his Hayabusa* (remembers) "Who do you work for?"

Man: "I don't squeal, little man." *cough*

Ohno: "Your mouth says that, but your arm says otherwise. Hey arm, what do you think?" *chops it*

Man: "AHHHH, Christ, man!"

Ohno: "Don't you bring God into this; this is a personal matter between me and whoever your boss is. Now tell me..." *coils arm* "Who do you work for?" *twists it even further*

Man: "AHHHHH! Hondo, from Skyclub, for the love of God!"

Ohno: "Thank you." *lets go and leaves*

(end memory) *saddles onto motorcycle and drives off, reaching the back alley of Skyclub, noticing some beggar sitting on one side of the pathway. Walks up to the tattered man* "Hey, you."

Beggar: *remains sleeping*

Ohno: "Hey." *snaps fingers, and lightly slaps him*

Beggar: *wakes up, and is shocked to see him*

Ohno: "Hey, hey, hey, calm down. I just want you to look after my motorcycle here. No matter what happens, you do not let this thing out of your sight, alright? No leaving where you're sitting right now, unless it starts moving. Okay? I'll make it worth your while."

Beggar: "Why not just let Skyclub's valet park it?"
Ohno: "He won't bring it out for me. So, can I trust you?"

Beggar: "... Okay."

Ohno: "Good. Like I said, I'll make it worth your while." *rises up and heads toward the club*

Bouncer: *notices Ohno and stops him* "Whoa, whoa whoa! Security check, buddy!"

Ohno: "Go ahead." *holds up hands for pat-down*

Bouncer: "Alright, you clean. Head on in."

Ohno: *walks in. nods his head to JTrance music as he walks through the dancefloor and recreational area to the VIP area*

Bouncer 2: "Hey, you!" *points at Ohno*

Ohno: *looks at him*

Bouncer 2: "You're definitely not on the list. Why are you here?"

Ohno: "I just need to have a talk with your boss, Hondo. It's something important."

Bouncer 2: "Hmm..." *Waves over* "Hey, Hondo-san!"

Hondo: *looks over and starts walking* "Hello! To what do I owe-" *breaks off when he finds that it is Ohno* "O-o-o-ohno-san. It's, uh..."


Hondo: "We have no more business to discuss. I'll have to ask you to leave."

Ohno: "Ain't happening until I get something across." *mad-faced*

Hondo: "Uh, guys? We got some customer remorse here!" *backs up*

Bouncers: *a dozen walk over to get in the way of Ohno, Bouncer 2, and Hondo*

Bouncer 3: "You definitely walked into Hell, my friend. And we are the Devils." *goes for a left hook*

Ohno: *grabs his hand with his right* "You're not the devils. You're all practice." *starts crushing hand with a clenched fist*

*Bouncer 2 tries to punch Ohno from Ohno’s right side, which Ohno avoids by pulling Bouncer 3 closer, causing his head to take the blow. He then side kicks Bouncer 2 away. Bouncer 4 grabs onto his left shoulder, which Ohno immediately reverses into an under-over arm wrench, causing Bouncer 4 to bend forward. A knee to the face puts an end to Bouncer 4.*

*Bouncers 5 and 6 team up to launch several strikes in succession, which Ohno blocks, then pulling on Bouncer 5’s kicking leg, causing him to trip Bouncer 6 forwards. Ohno then stomps on...*
Bouncer 5's leg just enough so that it dislocates the knee. Bouncer 6 tries to hook Ohno's leg while he's down, which Ohno notices, prompting him to backflip and land on Bouncer 6's hand, breaking it.*

*Bouncer 7 calls for reinforcements while Bouncer 8 and 9 charge in. Ohno strips his leather jacket and throws it at a staggering Bouncer 2. While he is dazed, he punches him right in the face, knocking Bouncer 2 down. Bouncer 8 tries a haymaker on Ohno, which Ohno pushes away from his face, and back kicking him when the momentum causes Bouncer 8 to fly out of view. Bouncer 9 favors a huge axe kick, which Ohno stops by placing his forearm on Bouncer 9's inner knee, and then lifting it a bit, causing Bouncer 9 to spring up into the air and land on his head. Bouncer 8 comes back and goes for a hook kick, which Ohno ducks under, followed by catching Bouncer 8's roundhouse kick, and pummeling him with punches until he falls down.*

*Bouncers 7 through 14 come marching in with several miscellaneous weapons. Ohno swings Bouncer 8 into Bouncers 7, 9, and 10, temporarily delaying them. Ohno then runs back to the public areas.* "EVERYONE GET OUT!" *looks back at the Bouncers, who try to slash him with knives and club him with pipes, which he completely avoids. Two low kicks knock down Bouncers 11 and 12, so Bouncer 13 with a knife and Bouncer 14 with two broken bottles continue their attack. Ohno grabs a medium-length foothold stool to block most of their attacks. Bouncer 13 tries to stab through the openings of the stool, which Ohno punishes by twisting the stool in a way that breaks his arm. Ohno then puts his back on Bouncer 13's, kicking Bouncer 7 in front of him, and putting Bouncer 13 between him and the rest.*

*Bouncer 7 charges in one more time, forcing Ohno to drop the stool right on top of him, trapping Bouncer 7 underneath. Ohno then breakdances around the stool to keep him down, and confuse the remaining security. Ohno then jump stomps on top of the stool, crushing it into Bouncer 7. Bouncer 9 runs in, only to be caught in a Sling Blade, which allows Ohno to also take his leather belt. Ohno whips Bouncers 10 and 11 in the torso, knocking them back. Bouncer 12 with a pipe, which Ohno stops by coiling the belt around his weapon hand. Ohno ballet twirls and then low kicks Bouncer 12's legs, causing Bouncer 12 to barrel roll six times before landing on his face. Using the spinning momentum, Ohno then proceeds to hit Bouncer 14 with the metal of the belt six times; the final strike breaking Bouncer 14's nose, and sending him flying.*

*Ohno drops the belt to combat Bouncer 11, who goes for a snap kick, which Ohno kicks back, breaking his momentum. Ohno then ducks under and grabs the same leg, forcing Bouncer 11 to fall on his face. He puts Bouncer 11 in a sharpshooter leg trap and then handsprings backwards, essentially Alabama Slamming Bouncer 11 through a glass-filled table with his legs. Bouncer 10 tries to get Ohno before he can get up with a low roundhouse kick, but Ohno turns it around and powerbombs him into the broken glass.*

*Bouncer 1 from outside, as well as Bouncers 15 through 20 from the coverage room enter the dancefloor* "Let's dance!" *Barrel rolls into a Baby Freeze Kick to knock over Bouncer 1, and then springs up into an L-Freeze kick on Bouncer 15, knocking the wind out of him. Bouncer 16 wildly hooks two times to the face, which Ohno avoids by whipping back, and then counters with a backfist-hook combo. Bouncer 16 joins the fray and goes for straight punches, which Ohno evades well enough before stinging Bouncer 16's chin and lip. Bouncer 17 and 18, who are on opposite sides of the wall 15 and 16 are making, strike so that Ohno now must block, but the last hit allows Ohno to spinning hook every one of them in the face. He follows it up with a 720 roundhouse kick with his left leg to knock out Bouncers 15 through 18.*

*Hondo, guarded by Bouncer 20, watches as Bouncer 19 goes for a punch, reversed into a Rainmaker lariat by Ohno. Finally, Bouncer 20 nervously moves up to Ohno, polka-dotted by the
blood of his foes, along with a few cuts of his own. Bouncer 20 then went for a hammer fist, which Ohno blocks, going for a left hook, which 20 deflects, and then punches Ohno clean in the face. Ohno steps back a bit, before looking back at Bouncer 20 menacingly. He then pats the spot where he got hit, allowing Bouncer 20 to hit him there repeatedly, with no results made. The last time, Ohno reverses the punch into an arm wringer, and then molded into a straightjacket DDT into the rim of the bartender's table.*

*wipes off his lip* "Now, tell me, Hondo. Why were you at Keishan? That wasn't family! That was friends!"

Hondo: *anxious tone* "Oh, I'm sorry. I thought they were family! You and your kind, all so young! It made sense in my head! But I get it now; I see, I won't do any more Joshing with them! I swear!"

Ohno: "How can I be so sure of that?" *grabs a beer bottle and breaks it with one hand in front of Hondo.* "Why must family dispute so much like this, huh? Why can't we all be friends? Is that too much to ask?"

Hondo: "Oh no! Not at all! It's almost implied, even! I mean, how well I was to your parents, I mean, we were friends, so by association, you and I are friends too! I just had a pride conflict going on, alright? You understand that when you have family of your own!"

Ohno: "I DID have family of my own. And I still have many reason to believe... Certain things about you Hondo. And I'll be getting to the bottom of it all sooner or later. But right now, I want your promise; you're not fucking with me and my crew for the rest of your days!"

Bouncer 1: "Get away from him, asshole!" *points .38 revolver at Ohno's back*

Ohno: *stands up and looks at Bouncer 1, unintimidated*

Bouncer 1: "L-look at all you did! You're gonna pay, bitch!"

Ohno: *continues to stare at him*

Bouncer 1: "Get on your knees!"

Ohno: *does not abide*

Bouncer 1: "On your knees, now!"

-Several minutes later-

Ohno: *partially painted by blood, walks out of the club, and back to the alleyway*

Beggar: *notices Ohno* "Woah, son. Uh, you got a little something-"

Ohno: *drops a 100-note package of 5k Yen notes at the Beggar's feet* "Don't spend it all in one place."

Beggar: "Whoa, seriously? Wait, why?"

Ohno: "You wanna know why, you do it and you'll find out. Okay? Have a nice evening." *puts
on motorcycle helmet and drives off*

-Meanwhile with Sugino, Chiba, Takebayashi, Isogai, Maehara, and Nagisa, as Ohno drives across town-

    Sugino: "So that's what happened?"

    Isogai: "Yep. It was totally weird."

    Takebayashi: "This Ohno character must be very caring, or at least very tolerant of us to willingly go out there like he did while us untrained folk escape." *refocuses glasses*

    Maehara: "Why would he, though? We only just met him."

    Sugino: "Obviously, there's more to this than we can see right now. For now, we gotta go with it."

    Takebayashi: "But what good reason would infer that?"

    Nagisa: "Because Karasuma-sensei does?"

    Other five: *looks at Nagisa with surprise*

    Isogai: "That is a good point; Karasuma is not easily deceived. And if Ohno is lying, he'd be in deep trouble."

    Chiba: "He already is in a lot of trouble, by just being around us. In fact, this new guy probably lives on having all this chaos around him."

    Takebayashi: "Hm, you're right about that, with Ohno intruding at inopportune times during conversation..." *Ohno: 'A team of assassins.'* "A good way with words..." *scene where he convinces Former Class 3-E that he can be trusted in this work* "And obviously thinks about us when something goes down." *'sacrifices himself' to the robbers*

    Isogai: "That actually reminds me of something..."

    *They all realize it's like Korosensei and shakes their heads.*

    Maehara: "No, that couldn't be... Could it?"
Now it's time to actually retrain the students of the AssUniv Program! Uh, wait a second... They're doing poorly!? Oh no, don't tell me they have physical difficulties just as much as they have inherent psychological ones!

After a splendid night and morning at Hotel Okura, Former Class 3-E got on the bus back to Mount Atago for their first days back into training-

The students all tried to get the persistent thoughts and ideas about their latest "friend" out of their minds, but that was easier said than done...-

Nagisa: "..." *lost in thought*

Sugino: "Nagisa-san..." *tries to lay a hand on Nagisa's shoulder, but resists, and returns to as he was*

Nagisa: *Isogai, Maehara, and Takebayashi do have strong points; this "Ohno" character seems to harbor many similarities to my... Victim, Korosensei. But what does that matter? As far as I'm concerned, Ohno only needs to be a helper; a helper in retrieving Kayano-san. And it's a good thing he is. I couldn't care less right now about anything else. *opens his eyes with determination, looking forward at the bus' direction.*

Kimura: "You guys deduced that?"

Maehara: "It makes sense, doesn't it?"

Yoshida: "Hell if I know. We thought a lot of things about certain people, then find out many of them were wrong."

Fuwa: "Hmm..." Need to keep this for later; it could be very important.

Terasaka: "Yeah. What did you guys expect of this? Our teacher reincarnated? Or transferred his essence into another person? Or something else entirely? Don't forget to mention; Korosensei's dead. That's certain."

Kataoka: "Hey!" *punches Terasaka on the tricep*

Terasaka: "What!?!" *rubs said tricep*

Kataoka: *motions over to Nagisa several rows in front*

Isogai: "Totally insensitive, Terasaka-san." *slouches back on seat*

Nakamura: "You might just make another 2-dimensional girl cry now." *grins*
Terasaka: "YOU Still REMEMBER THAT!?"

-Meanwhile, on the other side of the bus...-

Yada: "You're asking if I trust Ohno for willingly throwing himself into the fire?"

Hayami: *nods*

Yada: "Well, I think it depends on how he was at the time of staying behind."

Okano: "I can answer that." *moves into the conversation.* "He was calm about and cool about it. He didn't seem to do it to save face or anything. It sounded like he really cared for us."

Yada: "Hm, when you put it like that, I think his leap of faith worked."

Okuda: "It's that easy for you?"

Yada: "Well, he did something for us. People never really did things for us since Assassination Classroom, you know?"

Kurahashi: "Perhaps. He even provided us with a better retreat; he made sure everything was accounted for in this mini-mission of ours."

Mimura: "Which brings to mind, what if he thought that would happen? Is he even in on it?"

All: "Hrm..."

Irina: *sobbing, wearing her PJs, and cuddled into a corner of the bus* "My esteemed students will never look up to me again, and Karasuma will make me sleep on the couch of the hotel room now. Waaaaaah~."

-Soon enough, the bus returns them to the mountainside of Atago, and they immediately get ready for physicals.-

Karasuma: "Alright, everyone." *To the Former Class 3-E students sitting on the grass* "I understand that the lot of you have not undergone physical activity that is this strenuous in a long while, and we do not have a lot of time to make up all the ground that might've been lost from your separate ways. But you've all proven yourselves to be able to become some of the strongest assassins on the planet in just under a year, and did what no one else could've done. This speaks volumes about what you can do now that you're all older and wiser."

Sosuke: "We have three months to get our act together; that's one-quarter of the time we had last time, however. I don't think we can get that good again in such a short time."

Nagisa: *flatly* "We won't know unless we try."

Okano: "Just the words we wanted, but none of the enthusiasm we needed." *looks over*

Karma: "So where do we start?"

Karasuma: "Full-course runs. Get your staminas up."
Hara: *worried expression*

Muramatsu: "Alright; how long?"

Karasuma: "The rough circumference of Agase Pond." *points to body of water close to the bordering town*

Hazama, Okuda, Takebayashi: *gulp*

Nakamura: "Err... And how many times?"

Karasuma: "Today? Mm, ten times. And before 1400 hours."

All except Nagisa, Kimura, Okano, Kataoka, Karma, and Ohno: "THAT MUCH!?"

Karasuma: "Yes, that much. Remember what Sosuke said? If you have any chance of proving that statement wrong, it will be with taking this first big step." *crosses arms*

Yoshida: "Comprised of 100,000 smaller steps."

Ohno: "Then let's get started." *gets up and immediately runs towards the Pond*

Former Class 3-E: "..." *hesitates, and then follows him*

-The runs lasted until the last student made 10 laps out of the coastline of the pond - at 1431 hours.-

-Everyone but Ohno, Okano, and Kimura, totally exhausted, hunched over, sat, or lied down and created a symphony of deep breaths-

Karma: "Well, huff, shit..."

Nagisa: "Looks like, huff, we overexerted, huff, ourselves."

Karasuma: "Very good, everyone. But not great. It took you all thirty-one minutes longer than I allowed. And that means you'll be here thirty-one minutes longer into the night."

Chiba: "What more, huff, do you got for us?"

Karasuma: "Plenty, but since I really feel for all of you, I'll give a you a choice on what you want to do first. We can... Do basic knife retraining, muscle discipline, firearms handling, stretches-"

Yada/Kurahashi: *raise hands* "Stretches!"

Karasuma: "Are you certain?"

Irina: *smirks*

Yada: "Yes! We're certain! Right guys?"

Isogai: "That does sound like the least demanding..."
Kataoka: "Yes, we're certain."

Everyone else: "Bring it-erruhhh..."

Karasuma: "Hmm, you picked that over a cooldown period. I absolutely did not expect that."

Class 3-E: "WAIT, COOLDOWN PERIOD!?"

Karasuma: "But that's irrelevant! Alright, everyone! Come full circle for stretches!"

Class 3-E: "NO FAIR!" *very mad, raced over to their instructor*

Nagisa/Ohno: *looks at the crowd* [Ohno] Hmm, it seems they've gotten so mad that they've actually been reenergized. So this is what they call true bloodlust; the struggle for a goal they want... *looks at Nagisa, who doesn't notice the gaze, and continues to follow his team* Then there's him... What's his story for unprecedented behavior?

-And so, for another hour, the Former Class 3-E get tortured by their probably still-lovable instructor, before quickly pouncing on the chance to take a breather before the next exercise-

Karasuma: *handing out protein bars and bottled/sparkling water with Irina* "Good work, everyone. We will have a brief retirement of thirty minutes before the next regime. Savor it."

Terasaka: "Thank the Lord..." *falls back onto elbow-support and sighs into the air.*

Okajima: "Wow, what four years off the field can do to ya."

Kimura: "Depends on the field you traded it for. I, for one, am still feeling pretty strong about this."

Okano: "I ain't quitting either." *holding protein bar sideways in her mouth*

Maehara: "Where did most of our intensity go..."

Karma: *sitting on grass, having only taken a sip of water* "I see our new friend here is making himself at home." *nods over to the scene*

Ohno: *helping to give extra refreshments to some of Former Class 3-E*

Takebayashi: "Maybe he does really care about us..."

Hayami: "It's not like I trust him now, but he is getting some points there."

All the guys: *looks at Hayami with skepticism*

Nagisa: *looks at Ohno* All of these activities... And he doesn't even flinch. What has he been doing?

-After their recovery, the students are then handed small arms for their next lesson-

-Immediately, Former Class 3-E felt a strange spike in power upon contact with these guns.-
Chiba/Hayami: "!!" *widen their eyes upon holding onto two Heckler and Koch XM8 Sharpshooters*

Nagisa: *studies the Columbia River M16 Folders knife with a stunned expression*

Isogai: *looks at the slide of Heckler and Koch UCP pistol* "This is obviously made for training purposes..."

Kataoka: *looks at the magazines of said pistol* "And yet..."

Yada: "There's such an overwhelming feeling to them..." *shaking-worried over holding the pistol*

Fuwa: "You said that the Ministry of Defense was not sanctioning our actions, right Karasuma?"

Karasuma: "Correct. As such, me and Irina had to turn to a nice friend of ours, to provide these weapons."

Ohno: "..." *checks the chamber of one UCP*

Yoshida: "I'm not an arms engineering major, but I can already tell the craftsmanship is not necessarily made for government or military standards..."

Karasuma: "Indeed. My contact isn't a blue-collar laborer. He runs an arms business that builds, buys, and sells weapons made for the kill."

Mimura: "Sounds like we're getting the best help for this mission. Not sure if I'm grateful or terrified about that."

-Despite their initial awe, the students shake it off and continue through their training for the rest of the day. And while their P.E. left much to be desired, Former Class 3-E remained very strong on their firearms evaluations. Perhaps the concentration they had learned as a result of aging contributed to this very well.-

-8:31 P.M.-

Former Class 3-E: *Mentally and physically enervated; practically dead on the floor*

Nagisa: *criss-crossed, scratching the back of his neck*

Ohno: *on one knee, wiping the side of his head*

Karasuma: "Now that was some great work, all of you. And despite the extension, you all pulled through. I'd say we'll call it a day."

Irina: "The bus should almost be here; let's get back to Okura, everybody!"

Maehara, Okano, Mimura, Kataoka, Isogai: *Are suddenly reminded of what they saw last night and immediately faint*

Yada: "Wha- Kataoka-san!?
Fuwa: "Mimura?"

Sugino: "Guys!"

Kanzaki: *nudges Maehara and Okano* "Wake up, you all!"

Irina: "That's not going away anytime soon, is it?" *teary-eyed, wearing a crooked frown*

-Some got onto the bus slowly, some essentially flew into the bus, and then some were brought into the bus. But altogether, the students and teachers drove back to the five-star lodging-

Muramatsu: "Home, sweet home..."

Hara: "I just want to cry on my bed at this point."

Ohno: "That would be good for all of us; we'll need rest if we're going to get through the rest of this internship's grueling training. It's only going to get harder." *proceeds into the hotel.*

Okuda: "Not going to have dinner at the cafeteria with us, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Don't have the appetite. Maybe next time." *waves backwards while walking*

Former Class 3-E: "..."

Isogai: *looks back to Karasuma coming out of the bus* "Karasuma-sensei, what's the deal with Ohno?"

Karasuma: *confused* "Deal?"

Kataoka: "Yes. He has only been in our lives for a little more than 24 hours, and already he's made some sort of huge impact."

Karma: "Even Terasaka can notice that. Right, man?"

Terasaka: "Of course I've noticed... Wait, what does that mean?"

Fuwa: "Yeah, this fanfiction's comedy might just comprise 90% of the writer making fun of Terasaka-san."

Terasaka: "Gr, anyway, he comes in, saying he's the one allowing us to train. Fine, fair enough. Then, he says he wants to assassinate with us. What? It would be one thing if he was somewhere like us in skill, but the man passed every course you assigned, no drama!"

Karasuma: "I wouldn't know what the deal is with Ohno. Perhaps he genuinely wants to train, and has been looking for the perfect challenge? Or maybe he's looking for the excitement in life. Or maybe, he's trying to stick it to you all, best assassins on the planet." *crosses arms*

Former Class 3-E: "NO WAY HE'S OUT-STAGING US!" *angry/determined faces, moving towards the hotel entrance*

Karwasuma: *Looks up to the floor in
-Switching to Ohno's perspective, who has reached the floor the students are living on-

Ohno: *walks to the last room on one end of the corridors, and unlocks it with the room key. Opens the door, and then, just as he lets it go for it to swing back to a shut, he takes out a balisong knife and moves it behind him.*

Feminine voice: *points Heckler and Koch Tactical USP pistol at Ohno* "Missed me?"

Ohno: *hasn't moved knife away from her neck* "You really shouldn't be here... Naoko-san."

Naoko: "I'm sorry; just couldn't resist." *hasn't faltered aim*
Chapter Summary

After a long day, everyone in the AssUniv Program is dying to know who's been making them look like fools so much. Do they get answers? Speaking of answers, how did Kato leave Skyclub without a bullet in his body?

-Former Class 3-E wasted no time getting to Hotel Okura's Bar Chippendale to nourish themselves a bit better from this harsh day of training.-

Maehara: *takes a deep sip of home-brewed sake* "Ah, that really hits the spot!" *slouches back on the chair.*

Okano: "Don't hang over on us, Maehara." *leans forward in chair while holding onto an electrolyte-enhanced water bottle*

Sugino: "Eh, why bother with alcohol? Ramune is definitely the way to go!" *beckons the codd-neck bottled soda*

Terasaka: "Damn Ramune. Can never understand how they work." *tries to drink it, but the marble of the bottle keeps blocking the opening*

Chiba: *snickers* "All it takes is to hold the bottle at a precise ramp rather than just holding it upside down like you are."

Terasaka: *Biting the glass until he hears that* "What ramp?"

Hayami: "Try thirty-five degrees upwards."

Nakamura: "You would think that that was something someone would learn soon after encountering one..."

Former Class 3-E: *notices Isogai and Kataoka coming in*

Nagisa: *some distance from the rest of the team, sitting at the bar-table, turns his head to witness their arrival.*

Okuda: "Ah, Kataoka-san; Isogai-kun! We were wondering where you two went with Karasuma."

Isogai: "Just up to Karasuma and Bitch-sensei's NEW room..." *shakes his head*

Okano, Mimura, Maehara, Kataoka: *shake their heads as well*

Kurahashi: "And did you get what we were looking for?"
Kataoka: "More or less. We still have so little to go on."

Isogai: "Much like 'the good times' before, our interests have once again been piqued by one particular individual..."

Ohno: *sitting on the couch within his room, seemingly staring into space*

Isogai: "Kazuhiko Ohno."

Ohno: *continues to stare at Naoko, helping herself to an iced Asashi non-alcoholic Sake* "Please, make yourself right at home. Not like I mind the pseudo-younger sister of my mortal enemy in my room!"

Naoko: "Put a sock in it, Ohno. You owe me, as you recall."

Ohno: "Owe you, my ass."

Naoko: "Damn right you do. Remember?"

Ohno: "Pfft..."

-Return to Class 3-E-

Chiba: "What were you able to find out?"

Isogai: "It'd be best if we told it like this..." (Flashback)

*Karasuma: *takes out a briefcase from inside his room dresser*

Isogai: "What's in there, Karasuma-sensei?"

Karasuma: "Everything I know about Kazuhiko Ohno. Nothing will be unturned once I show you all of this. Are you sure you want to see it?"

Kataoka/Isogai: *nod to each other, and then to Karasuma*

Karasuma: "Very well." *unlocks briefcase, revealing a tied-up accordion folder. He removes the binding, and pulls out one layer of papers for the two to look over.*

Isogai: *picks up the packet, and turns over the cover page.* "What the..."

Kataoka: *looks over Isogai's shoulder* "What?"

Isogai: *finds that most of the text on the pages has been blotted with ink.* "What is..." *flips through more pages, finding the same result each time. He even takes the liberty of pulling out other packets of Ohno's records, with no change.*

Karasuma: "As I said before, I wouldn't know what the deal is with Ohno. Even though we've become decent acquaintances... So to speak, he's been very secretive of his life before encountering me. Though he's just a few months older than all of you, it is not an understatement to say that Ohno might just be in the top ten for the single most dangerous people on the planet. The fact that the Ministry of Defense has no concrete profile on him further reinforces this."
Isogai: "This is insane. He's insane..." *doesn't stop flipping pages.*

Kataoka: "So no sources exist on him? We show up well enough with one proper google search..."

Karasuma: "No. As far as public search engines are aware, no one named 'Kazuhiko Ohno' exists. International Affairs cite that he most certainly has not left East Asia, so no help there. And my department even tried hacking the LAN on his assets, but no private files with personal information could be gathered... Ohno has nothing to his name. Except..."

Isogai: *puts last packet down* "Except?"

Karasuma: "The day I first met Ohno. Six years ago. We were in Kagoshima Prefecture, where Ohno had been incarcerated on a hospital gurney."

Kataoka: "Incarcerated? You mean arrested?"

Karasuma: "Yes. For two accounts of first-degree murder."

Isogai/Kataoka: *totally bewildered* (Disrupt Flashback)

Terasaka: "Woah, wait a second!"

Mimura: "Ohno's a murderer!?"

Nagisa/Karma: *look on with surprise*

Hara: "Guys, keep your tones down. Want to freak out everyone else in the bar?"

Former Class 3-E: *bow their heads down to nullify their need to speak so loudly*

Isogai: (whisper) "There's more to it than that..." (Resume Flashback)

Karasuma: "Yes. Ohno had been convicted for two assassinations. I oversaw his indictment and subsequent transport into Okinawa International Penitentiary. But aside from his presence when police arrived at the crime scene, and the obvious evidence lying around, something was off... But then again, Ohno didn't have an average killer's psyche." *sighs* "Back then, he was much quieter, and more willing to abide to commands without rebuke. That served him well in being able to leave on good behavior in just a year, though he was supposed to face twenty-five."

Kataoka: "Then?"

Karasuma: "He became what you saw today. And we've been watching him at every turn for the last six years, and he hasn't even come close to getting in big trouble again."

Kataoka: "Hmm... What did his parents think of this?"

Karasuma: "The only profile we had of Ohno was after he was arrested, Kataoka. His parents may as well have never existed, and damn us if Ohno confessed who they really were during questioning."
Isogai: "Well, I must say I'm both worried and relieved. But I'd like a little more about his mindset during the time of his lockup."

Karasuma: "Ohno was silent, from capture, to trial, and then to relocation. He only opened his mouth once to say his name during interrogation. Nothing more, nothing less."

Isogai: "What killer functions like that?"

Karasuma: "That's all I know about Ohno. I hope you learned all that you wished. I advise you two to start your leisure for the night, as we still have some extreme regimes for the rest of the internship." *(stashes packets back into folder and puts it back inside the drawers.)* (End Flashback)

Former Class 3-E: "..."

Okuda: "What a cruel thing to have learned..."

Nakamura: "Suddenly, living here feels pretty awful..."

Terasaka: "That snake, lying to us about this."

Maehara: "He didn't exactly lie; he just didn't tell us this. And if we didn't ask, why would he?"

Yoshida: "You're defending him?"

Fuwa: "I might..." *holds her hand to her chin*

Yada: "What? Why?"

Fuwa: "Sure, killers come in all shapes and sizes. But come on; who could say that Okuda was a top-notch assassin with her heart so pure?"

Okuda: *holds her heart with pride*

Karma: "There is a clear difference between assassins and killers, but I get what you mean. We've been around people who've clearly had a body count on them, like Bitch-sensei, and we were never threatened. So why him?"

Fuwa: "And yet again, we see a connection to another of our late friend."

Kimura: "That's insane... How are we thinking like that?"

Nagisa: "Maybe we just miss him. Just like the others."

Sosuke: "Absence indeed makes the heart grow fonder..."

Ohno: *follows Naoko as she leans on his hotel wall and starts drinking, all while thinking about that moment she implied* (Flashback)

*Bouncer 1: "Get away from him, asshole!”* *points .38 revolver at Ohno's back*

*Ohno: *stands up and looks at Bouncer 1, unintimidated*
Bouncer 1: "L-look at all you did! You're gonna pay, bitch!"

Ohno: *continues to stare at him*

Bouncer 1: "Get on your knees!"

Ohno: *does not abide*

Bouncer 1: "On your knees, now!"

Ohno: "Put that away before you get hurt."

Bouncer 1: "And who's gonna make me?" *stiffens aim*

Ohno: *looks past Bouncer 1* "Are you done hiding?"

Naoko: "Hmph, you were never any fun."

Bouncer 1: *looks behind him, while keeping the .38 Special on Ohno* "Who's there!?"

Ohno: *dashes straight, reaching the faraway Bouncer within a second. He puts his right middle finger on the barrel of the revolver, and after a moderate amount of effort, he pushes his finger through, forcing the barrel of the gun to break and pop out of the gun entirely.*

   Bouncer 1: "Th' fuck!?"

   Ohno: *smacks the Bouncer with his own gun, moving him back*

Naoko: *springs out of cover to sweep kick Bouncer 1 at his legs*

   Ohno: *completes the attack by slamming Bouncer 1's head straight into the ground, knocking him out.* "Warned you." *to Hondo* "You, don't move." *to Naoko* "You... What are you doing here?"

   Naoko: "Is that how you formally greet someone who's known you for so long?"

   Ohno: "Longevity of time was never a strong suit of mine, Naoko. But even without that sort of perception, one wouldn't say," *Suddenly checks his watch.* "Nine years is that much time."

   Naoko: "Well, in the lives we lead, that's a long time."

   Ohno: "Thanks for the reminder. Now tell me why you're here."

   Naoko: *starts walking over to Ohno's work* "Hm... Gloves, so your prints are unidentifiable..."

   Ohno: *flexes his hands, enveloped by leather driving gloves*

   Naoko: *picks up a piece of Ohno's clothing that was ripped/cut in the brawl* "Take this to be appraised, and no one will get a clue. It's all custom-tailored; with fake tags to boot."
Ohno: *Comes back to the dance floor after picking up his discarded jacket from earlier*

Naoko: "And most frightening of all... Such precision that at any point you dropped DNA anywhere, it was diluted by other liquids. In essence, the bouncers in this night club practically beat themselves up."

Ohno: "Are you saying I'm some ghost?" *hoists his jacket behind him*

Naoko: "I'm saying your the best criminal on the planet, Ohno. Far better than the one Karasuma met nine years ago."

Ohno: "I wasn't a criminal then and I ain't one now. You've heard of settling scores, haven't you?"

Naoko: "And boy, did you develop a mouth since then, according to him."

Ohno: "What do you want, Naoko?"

Naoko: *turns to face him* "I'm here to take my older brother's side on this secret war. He thinks that he can send me away in order to keep me off the loop and off the grid, such that the Reclamation Society cannot get at me when the heat builds up. But no way that's happening. I stuck around for the deep times during AssClass, and I'm ready for more."

Ohno: "Not my diagnosis."

Naoko: "You keep acting like that, thinking that it still pisses us off so much. But we learned a long time ago why we really hate you. " *Gets close to Ohno, and pulls on the WWII-era dog tags that belong to Ohno* "It's because of this... Fucking thing! What it means, is why you will always be in deep with Karasuma-sensei. And while I'm not as concerned about it, he certainly is. And if you and him go completely at odds... So what I'm saying is... Be on your guard."

Ohno: *angry-faced* "Let... Go."

Naoko: *hesitates, and then releases the metal tag* "Just busting your balls. Relax. You started it, after all. No, but seriously, I'm here for the same reason you're here, and the rest of my classmates are. They just don't know everything about the issue yet, and before they do, I'd like to be able to find out as much as I can, so we need not lose any sleep worrying about it."

Ohno: "We don't need you being our anonymous source. I'm quite the detail-oriented person myself, and I've got my own crew for investigation."

Naoko: "Yes, but here's the difference between you all and me - I'm a cop. I can go to incriminating areas, and it's legal. You and your whelp go there, and I'll pen you all myself."

Ohno: "Like we're scared. But you know what? We'll play. " *goes over to Hondo* "Now, you..."

Hondo: "I- I get it, Ohno-kun! My boys won't trouble you, her, or anyone you care about anymore! We'll keep low!"

Ohno: "That's perfect. But..." *squats down, opens Hondo's sports coat and takes a packet of money from the inner pocket* "Don't mind if I do, unless you want the alternative..."
Hondo: "No, no, that's fine! Take it!"

Ohno: *stands straight up* "Alright, I'm taking my leave now. Officer." *two-finger salutes ironically*

Naoko: "I'm watching you, hoodlum."

Ohno: "Whatever." *Proceeds to leave Skyclub. Partially painted by the blood of the bout, he then walks back to where he parked his Hayabusa motorcycle, and throws down the pack of money he took from Hondo to the beggar watching over it.* "Don't spend it all in one place."

Beggar: "Whoa, seriously? Wait, why?"

Ohno: "You wanna know why, you do it and you'll find out. Okay? Have a nice evening." *puts on motorcycle helmet and drives off* (End flashback)

Naoko: "Besides, we've got important matters to discuss." *sips from the glass*

Ohno: "Found out more on our secret war?" *leans forward in chair*

Naoko: "You know about why Kayano and Horibe were taken, right? Being former subjects of the tentacles before?"

Ohno: "Yes. But if they want to get a sample from them, they'll be looking for a needle in a haystack. The cells of antimatter used to assign the tentacles to them have long dissolved by now." *mind clicks* "Ah, but you're talking about the other kidnapped."

Naoko: "Yep. Ritsu. Locked to one of their phones at the time of capture, and bound to the device while being questioned."

Ohno: "What would they want to know from her?"

*The two hear the elevator stop on their floor; Former Class 3-E are the only ones on this floor, so they know what's coming.*

Naoko: "They'll know I'm here before long. And Class 3-E's boys especially are big squealers; they can't notice me." *throws a mail on Ohno's hotel bed.* "Read that when you have time, and meet me at the designated spot written within." *starts to leave through his balcony window.*

Ohno: "Rappeling down?" *still seated*

Naoko: "Oh, you. *shoots two vertical cables, one attached to the rimmed roof above, and another all the way down to an alleyway of Okura. *'I'm watching you.' *eye-points, then slides down rope*

Ohno: *Waits a little bit before standing up, taking the envelope, and reads it. He is not too surprised at what he learns.*
At University or College, you can do all the extracurriculars you want, but there's no escaping the training of the mind too. The AssUniv Program realize this, as they get into a classroom on Mt. Atago. And if it doesn't go well... AssUniv might be over before it really begins!

-After a week of physical training, Former Class 3-E are heading back to Mount Atago for another round... Which does not sit well for everyone...-

*Half of the class sits dead in their bus seats.*

Sugino: "Are all of you okay?" *looking back over the cushion of his chair*

Hazama: "Too much..."

Hara: "The horror..." *almost tearing up*

Takebayashi: "Any more, and my thumbs will have sixes..."

Nakamura: "Before your abdominals do, or after?"

Takebayashi: "Does that matter?"

Nakamura: "No, maybe not."

Okano: "Have you all been sitting on the school desks throughout all these four years?"

Mimura: "No! Not at all!" *looks away a moment* "We had to get up to get to the next class and all..."

Isogai: "Go easy on them, all-stars. Don't take it for granted that this is very strenuous, even for a regular athlete."

Nagisa: "And we're running out of time." *staring straight ahead*

*They all stare at him*

Kataoka: "Yeah, I guess we are..."

*Eventually they make it to the Mountain*

Karasuma: "Alright, everyone. Today will be our most important lesson to date. It will be on improving our weakest aspect by far."
*Everyone gets very frantic*

Kurahashi: *nervously* "And that is?"

Karasuma: *puts on a very serious expression*

*All become VERY frantic*

Karasuma: *pulls out a manilla folder* "Academics."

Class 3-E: "ACADEMICS!?" *let the situation kick in* "Wait, academics?"

Karasuma: "Yes, academics. It says here that all of you, save for one or two, faced a large slump in the last month of schooling this year, and the average drop was half a grade. What happened?"

Class 3-E: *look at each other*

Kataoka: "I presume we all just got so preoccupied with the kidnappings that we couldn't concentrate on school..."

Nagisa: *remembers the borderline-passing grade he got in his English final*

Karasuma: "Hmm, that's understandable, and I sympathize very well. but that still doesn't change the fact that you're all wasting the crowning moments of your education. And that, Irina and I won't stand for."

Terasaka: "Forgive me for being so blunt, but why do our grades matter, Karasuma-sensei? We're here to learn assassination again, and we aren't in warped Class 3-E anymore."

Muramatsu: "I agree. This is Summer! The last thing on our minds right now is a boatload of written work!"

Karasuma: "Do you all recall that the best assassins you all have faced did their homework too? Irina? Lovro? Smog? God of Death? It obviously matters."

Irina: "Yeah, and also, do you think this is what our late, esteemed friend wanted to happen? For you to throw away all the effort you put into your futures just like that?"

Class 3-E: *remembers Korosensei*

Maehara: "You got us there..."

Fuwa: "So then, what are we doing that pertains to academics?"

Karasuma: "We need to see how you all are really doing as far as schooling goes. So, we start today with an aptitude test, giving a number of questions for any and all subjects focused on your majors and minors. Afterwards, we'll have a regular physical training, all while your tests are being graded. At the end of the day, you'll all see the results for yourself, and I'll decide what happens from there. Am I being clear?"

Class 3-E: *nods*
Ohno: "Alright. Everyone, into the great hall." *gets up and leads them to the building*

-The students take their seats to take the evaluation. Much frustration could be noticed throughout the assessment's duration, in the form of scratched brains, wiped faces, shaken heads, and even a pained yell to the sky, from a suspicious source.-

-Nagisa, as well as the more able-minded individuals such as Kanzaki, were even struggling a bit. One quick gaze around, however, and you can see Karma, who was sailing by the examination. Figures, Karma is a natural brainiac. But one is doing even better...-

Ohno: *stands up, and proceeds to place his exam onto the center table and leaves the room.*

Karma: *surprised by the development.*

Nagisa: That was fast... Twenty minutes... *glances at Karma's exam* Karma's barely halfway done alone.

-After another two hours, all of Class 3-E had gone through all of their exams. They went on outside, training in physicals and firearms while Karasuma and a few of his colleagues grade all of them.-

-By 8:10 P.M.-

Class 3-E: *still not used to the new training regime, all are bowing their heads with lassitude.*

Karasuma: "Alright, everyone." *walks out of the building with the grades and heads toward Former Class 3-E* "It's time."

Yoshida: "Oh hell no..." *lifts head off the ground, then plops it back again.*

Isogai: "How did we do?" *moves into a criss-cross position.*

Karasuma/Irina: *passes exams to them all*

Class 3-E: *much of them cringe at their results*

Kataoka: "I suppose this was unavoidable, given Karasuma's observations..." *lowers exam packet, revealing a 76%*

Sosuke: "Oh man..." *deathly stares at his 53%*

Terasaka: "Damn, I feel like Naruto is in front of me again as if I'm some idiot." *almost ready to rip his 22% papers*

Nagisa: *gazes at a 71% grade* Damn, didn't think I was this awful.

Karasuma: "I need not say, then, that I am very disappointed. Only two of you received a perfect evaluation."

Karma: *reads his 100 percentile, and then looks over at Ohno, who has a flawless performance as well.*
Karasuma: "What else do you have to say for yourselves? What would you say to Korosensei, should he be here now?"

Kanzaki: *bows her head in sorrow, holding out a 74% on her lap/knees* "We're sorry, Karasuma-sensei."

Karasuma: "Yeah, well, so am I. Which is why four days later, we are going to have another evaluation."

Class 3-E: "ANOTHER!?"

Karasuma: "Don't talk back! Indeed, another test. And if the group average is not above at least an 85, then I will not continue your assassin training, and I will just gather a team of my own to solve this situation."

Nagisa: Now let's be honest - if Karasuma really wanted to, and he had the right crew that complemented his skills to the fullest extent, they would solve any and all crises in matters of minutes; no problems, no excuses. But... That's not how WE run things. Former Class 3-E doesn't let anyone else do our dirty work. Not when we tried to assassinate our teacher, and not when the government tried to kill him when we were there to save him. So, when he throws a spiteful statement at us like this, we are totally disrespected. I truthfully would have been a little ticked from this remark myself, were it four years ago. But now that I have an assignment on my hands that means so much to me... There's a tenfold rage in me.

"Like Hell we're going to let that happen."

Karma: *looks at Nagisa for a second before returning attention to Karasuma* "Seconded. I didn't come off the bleachers dozens of miles away just to be put back on the same set here."

Terasaka: "Yeah! Fuck that!"

Isogai: "Looks like us guys have been rallied."

Kataoka: "And what about us gals?"

Females: "Hellyeah!"

Irina: "Ooo, it looks like our little treasures are all fired up! Better watch out, Karasuma-sama!"

Karasuma: "I back down only when I must." *he turns around and leaves*

-On the bus ride back-

Nagisa: We sure talked our new game up, but it didn't seem to sway Karasuma-sensei's belief in us in the slightest. To be perfectly honest, I'm not sure if even we believed it.

Sugino: "Damn, man..."

Fuwa: "We haven't been this bummed since we first started third year of junior high..."

Muramatsu: "And during that same instance, we had our favorite habits taken from us and been put in the doghouse..."
Yada: "Much like right now..."

Hara: "Come on, everyone! We got into that 'doghouse,' and we got ourselves right out! We did it before, we can do it again!"

Yoshida: "I really don't know about that, Hara-san. This was a pretty daunting exam."

Nagisa: "We have to. For Kayano's sake."

Class 3-E: *looks at Nagisa*

Terasaka: *grudgingly* "And Itona, and Ristu's."

Ohno: *looks at them with attention.*

-For the next few days, all of AssUniv hit all of the library material in Kyoto's many atheneums. They sneak a quick chapter read in between the daily physicals, as well as while we sit in Teppanyak for dinner, and during the middle of the nights. Even Karma joined the many for a few study sessions. But despite these opportunities, the students don't feel any closer to retaining all of their required knowledge.-

-The day before the next exam-

*Nagisa, Yada, Terasaka, Yoshida, Kanzaki, Kurahashi, and Maehara sit at conjoined tables at Kyoto Prefectural Library. Ohno is one floor above, listening to the "audio walls."*

Yoshida: *throws the book aside* "Gah! Enough!"

Nagisa: "Hush, Yoshida." *doesn't look up from his textbook*

Yoshida: "There is no way all of us are going to get an 85 or better at tomorrow's exam."

Kurahashi: "Not with that attitude, Yoshida! Come on, keep at it!" *puts the slab back in front of him.*

Terasaka: "Honestly, I don't see the point anymore either." *shuts his book and puts it down. He gets up, ready to leave*

Maehara: "What? That's it? You two are giving up already?"

Terasaka: "I don't have to take this shit anymore! Neither do you, Maehara-san. Or you, Kanzaki-san. If Karasuma-sensei really does want us to keep going for the kill, he'd train us regardless!"

Yada: "This isn't for him, Terasaka-san. This is for us! For our assassinating! You heard why this is so necessary!" *stands up*

Terasaka: "I'll never be that type of assassin, Yada-san. I don't have that kind of patience."

Nagisa: "It isn't about patience, Terasaka." *closes his book, standing up to match Terasaka.* "This is about our bloodlust. Wonder why we felt so dull when we first started training?"
Terasaka: "Because the training is apocalyptic?"

Nagisa: "Our hearts weren't in it! We so could've cruised through all of that! But we didn't have the desire for it. So he struck us where it hurt most. He wanted us to really produce new results. And now, in our hands, lies the chance for us to really show that we want this old life again! The bloodlust of assassins, in all of us! Are you saying you're rejecting what you have inside?"

Terasaka: *shakes head* "This bloodlust... It's long left us by now."

Ohno: *yells down* "Hey!"

The Seven: *look up the atrium to where Ohno is*

Ohno: *yells louder* " Trying to listen to some Rise Against here! And I'm sure all these folks wanna get their quiet time as well!"

Kanzaki: "But, Ohno-kun, now you're the loud one."

Ohno: "What's that, Kanzaki-san? I didn't quite catch that!"

Terasaka: "She said you're a loud ass piece of shit!"

Ohno: *comedically gasps* "Me!? Loud? If anyone's loud now, it's you, Terasaka!"

Terasaka: "Oh, you little!"

Ohno: "Listen, man! I'm just a few centimeters shorter than you! And I'm still above average Japanese male height! You looked up the facts, you could've known that!"

Terasaka: "Hey! What makes you think you can boss me around on academics like that?"

Ohno: "Maybe because I got a perfect on that last exam? And if you gave those books another shot, and you beat me in the next exam, then maybe you'll shut me up!"

Terasaka: "WHAT!? A chance to shut you up!? Ohoh, that's a cause I can get behind!"

Ohno: "Uh, my name is Ohno! Not Ohoh!"

Terasaka: "You just wait, sucker!" *sits back down, ferociously reading over the material*

The other six: *looks at the situation*

Maehara: "That was impressively effective."

Kanzaki: "Thank you for keeping Terasaka in line, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Fellow teammates have to stick together. Now, do any of you guys need a little 'bloodlusting'?

Yada: "Not us, Ohno-kun. But a lot of us are having some trouble getting this information in our heads."
Ohno: "Do you now?" *vaults over the glass fencing of the elevated floor and drops down to their level.* "How about I lend a bit of a hand?"

Kanzaki: "You tutor, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Not even once. But I'll try my hand at anything once. Now, let's see..."

Reader: *looks over a study desk's walls* "What a crazily boisterous bunch..."

-As it turns out, Ohno's instruction proved to be pretty good. Very good. Too good, in fact, that there are suddenly more people swarming into the very same library.-

Ohno: "And then the next level of valence electrons will have a total of..." *looks up as the rest of Class 3-E comes in and walks to their desk* "Uh, hey everyone. Fancy meeting you all here." *to the seated seven* "Did you all plan one large session?"

Yada: "Kind of. You were so good at teaching us all of this that we thought the rest of us should prosper from it. So I gave them a text."

Isogai: "And here we are."

Karma: "Ain't it grand?"

Ohno: "I reckon it is. So, everyone wants a little more insider knowledge?"

Sosuke: "What? You got a cheat sheet?"

Ohno: "Oh, no! God, no! Just the studying secrets everyday professors wouldn't teach you. But, we can't have a lesson here, or it'll disrupt the work of the public."

Reader: "Too late for that!" *looks up from the desk*

Ohno: "Right. So let's request an amphitheater to put a class in session." *walks over to the stairs.*

Class 3-E: "..."

Takebayashi: "My, how perceptions of people change greatly."

-The next day, 8:20 P.M.-

*Another rough day of physical training which followed, just like several days before, a mandatory examination. But somehow, as if a dormant pouch of adrenaline had just been injected into their systems, Class 3-E has taken the assassination conditioning much better. Gone are the days, now, that internees laid on the floor, about ready to die.*

Class 3-E: *attempt to regain breath, but all are still standing.*

Chiba: "Is it just me, or is this getting a little easier?"

Hayami: "We're just finally getting used to it; that's all."
Hazama: "A long time coming. But at least it finally came."

Yada: "Totally."

Isogai: *notices Karasuma coming closer* "Ah, Karasuma-sensei! You have our scores?"

Karasuma: "Of course." *holds the papers up in the air.* "And I have the class average as well. What would you like to see first?"

Class 3-E: *look at each other*­

Kataoka: "Lay it on us, Karasuma-sensei. What is our fate?"

Karasuma: "Alright... Between all of you, the mean is..."

Class 3-E: *simultaneous gulps*

Irina: "Sixty-five!"

Class 3-E: *background metaphorically cracks behind them in horror.*

Ohno: *realizes the situation and smirks*

Karasuma: "Irina-chan..."

Irina: "Sixty-five minutes on my phone left! Damn, shouldn't have gone with that plan!"

Class 3-E: *also realize the situation* "WHAT!?" *aim their UCP and XM8s at Irina*

Irina: "Whoa, hey! Don't aim those at me! Those guns, even in 'pacified' form, still terrify me too!"

Karasuma: "Yes, and your real average... Is an eighty-nine and a half."

Class 3-E: *silence... Followed by massive cheer*

Karasuma: "Your training will proceed." *smiles*

Nagisa: *couldn't help smiling a bit as well, which only Ohno seems to notice*

Karasuma: "And there's more."

Class 3-E: *look back at their instructor*

Karasuma: "I understand that you all had some seriously effective last-minute instruction for this exam, correct?"

Terasaka: "Ah- Well..." *scratches head*

Karasuma: "I see. And I also concur that the person responsible for it is within the crowd before me, isn't it?"
Class 3-E: *all look back at Ohno*

Ohno: "..."

Karasuma: "I see. Well, we can't say no to such efficiency. What would you all say if Ohno-kun became an academics professor for you all every few days of training? He will most certainly not mind in the slightest."

Nagisa: *He's our best shot. I'll gladly take the extra help.*

Isogai/Kataoka: "Greatly appreciated, Karasuma-sensei, and Ohno-ku, I mean, Ohno-sensei."

Ohno: "No, no such honorific will be necessary, Kataoka-san. I'm still a student in assassination as you all are."

Fuwa: "It'll probably take more than that to deter us, Korosensei-lite-san-" *realizes she slipped up.*

Class 3-E: *immediately notice the botch and widen their eyes with utter bewilderment.*

Ohno: *widens his eyes and opens his mouth with surprise as well.*
So it turns out Ohno does indeed have a secret agenda... With a fellow AssClass member that didn't show up for the AssUniv Program, Naoko? What could they possibly be doing together, behind the cover of night?

-The bus ride back to Kyoto's urban districts was full of awkward. For both the former students of Class 3-E, and their new teacher cross student. Silence enveloped the several-ton hunk of steel as it traveled back to Hotel Okura.-

-When it arrived back, all of the students cleaned up and descended the building to have dinner at Irifune restaurant. But the absolutely authentic daily special dishes and garden background aren't enough to overpower this strong atmosphere.-

Fuwa: *sips some green herbal tea, looking around as the six (Chiba, Hayami, Okuda, Mimura, Sosuke, and Okano) at her table stares at her. The rest can't help but give quick glances every few seconds at her. After her drink, Fuwa acknowledges the elephant in the room, audibly placing her cup onto its respective plate.* "Alright, guys; what's up?"

Sugino: "What do you think, Fuwa?"

Nakamura: "All of a sudden, you blurt out such a troublesome thought of ours in front of our teachers and Ohno-kun. They're bound to want to know what was that about soon enough, and we won't have any answers for them."

Takebayashi: *sighs, pushing his glasses back.* "I'll give the benefit of a doubt that something like this was going to happen sooner or later anyways. We all know we all were thinking it."

Kanzaki: "But to label someone we've only known for just over a week as someone we hold so dear... Is confounding."

Okuda: "He's come to deserve it. Despite so many obvious differences, we have come to see him as both something we embrace, and something we avoid... A certain term like 'Korosensei-Lite.' is a good way of interpreting it."

Yada: "How does one even become something like that? Something we are both attracted to, and repelled by?"

Karma: "That ought to be what we will want to find out. And since he's our teacher from hence forth, it should be easy to learn more about him."

Mimura: *notices another similarity, and raises his hand to say it.*

Terasaka: "Enough about their 'identicalities!'" *points at Mimura, prompting him to lower his hand.*
Nagisa: *looks on with attention.*

Kurahashi: "Um, speaking of Ohno-kun, where is he?"

Yada: "He said he was going to sleep early, because he knows that the next few days will be rougher for him, being both a student and a teacher. I suppose that makes sense." *holds up her teacup with both hands.* "I'll be lying if I said I wasn't intrigued by the coming lessons we're going to have."

Karma: "Meh." *holds a cup to his face.* "Everyone has their faults. And it's not like he'll have much for me."

-Ohno's hotel room, 9:10 P.M.-

Ohno: *Contemplating the opened letter on his bed, he sits on a chair leaning forward. After brooding long enough, he reads the last section quickly, checks his watch rapidly, folds up the paper, and places it in his back pocket. Ohno then puts on a new Alphonso faux-leather jacket, heads out the door, and descends by stairs to the Okura garage.*

*Once inside, he finds his Hayabusa in the garage, revs it up, and drives out.* Alright, Naoko... What do you want now?

-One of Kyoto's mountain roads, overlooking the rest of the city, 9:28 P.M.-

Naoko: *leaning on her JGSDF-issue motorcycle, watches the view of the Kyoto skyscrapers lighting up the night sky. Eventually sees Ohno drive into the parking area.* "Took you long enough."

Ohno: *takes off motorcycle helmet* "I'm..." *Checks his watch for several seconds.* "Two minutes early." *gets off the Suzuki Hayabusa, walking over to Naoko.*

Naoko: *stands upright.* "You're a little uptight. Did something happen?"

Ohno: "You... you're friends, they called me 'Korosensei-Lite-san.'"

Naoko: *widens her eyes.*

Ohno: "That was the name of your former teacher, isn't it?"

Naoko: "Yes, it was. But why on Earth would they say that?" *holds a hand to her chin.* "Do you remind them of him?"

Ohno: "How the Hell would I know if I make them think of someone that I don't know? But indeed, last I thought of it, I'm not a yellow octopus."

Naoko: "Hmm..." *studies Ohno*

Ohno: "Found what you were looking for?" *crosses his arms.*

Naoko: "Yeah, in a way. To be honest, you do remind me of someone, but not Korosensei."
Ohno: "Great. Just great. Now, why is it you called me here?"

Naoko: *pats her motorcycle.* "You and I will be getting some more personal information for what we have already uncovered. You read the letter, right?" *crosses her arms.*

Ohno: "Yeah. The Reclamation Society wants Ritsu because she has a very high chance of knowing where Shiro is... Aka, Kotaro Yanagisawa."

Naoko: "The disgraced scientist himself, bed-ridden, and without anything he holds dear left."

Ohno: "Except..."

Naoko: *smiles* "Except, his DNA, which has been believed to have melded with the Tentacle matter when he was thrown into the Anti-Sensei barrier. Having learned that Kayano and Itona's cells have been removed so long ago, Yanagisawa is their only shot at recreating the original formula."

Ohno: "Crazy-ass people. You have a lead?"

Naoko: "Let's start with the source: Who could've seen people that look like Kayano and Itona. They ought to know who brought them here, or at least... Who sanctioned it."

Ohno: "So we're looking for the bringers of the bringers."

Naoko: "Easy way of putting it."

Ohno: "And you have a lead for that?"

Naoko: *Puts her right hand on her hip.* "Damnit, Ohno. This is your city. You tell me who could." *turns to the edge of the barrier, watching the city nightlife again.*

Ohno: "You don't have a lead for what you want to know?"

Naoko: "Well..."

Ohno: "... Let's try Qita Kong." *Puts on his helmet and gets back on his Hayabusa, and zooms off.*

Naoko: "Qita Kong?" *Notices Ohno leaving.* "Ah, hey!" *activates her bluetooth on her left ear, puts on her own helmet, and gets on her motorcycle, following Ohno.*

-Kyoto Streets-

Naoko: *finds Ohno zig-zagging through the Kyoto freeways and copies the motions.* "Jesus, Ohno! What the Hell are you doing?"

Ohno: *speaking to his communication-compatible helmet.* "Hoping I can get away from you, while also knowing you'll keep up."

Naoko: "What? Why?"

Ohno: "Because you will."
Naoko: "No, before that."

Ohno: "Oh, that's because of your horrid vehicle."

Naoko: "What? My vehicle? What's wrong with it?"

Ohno: "It's a Kawasaki KLX250. A JSDF staple in their paraphernalia."

Naoko: "Yeah? So?"

Ohno: "It's too easy and basic! Dual-purpose, no advanced clutch, and only 250cc! I can't have you seen driving next to me, while I drive my beast!"

Naoko: "What the? Get back here!" *accelerates.*

Ohno: "Catch me if you can!" *laughs*

-Naoko tries to overtake Ohno, but he manages to reach this "Qita Kong" at least half a minute before Naoko reaches him.-

Naoko: "Huff huff... Why you..." *aggressively throws her helmet to the handle of her KLX.*

Ohno: *takes off helmet.* "Here we are."

Naoko: *looks in his direction.* "A poorly-tended alley?"

Ohno: "That which leads to a market square of diversity. If anything foreign has come into Japan, these guys will have it a day afterwards, at the latest. That's why it's called Qita Kong - Qita means 'Other,' as in, 'Other Hong Kong.'"

Naoko: "That's nice, but what we're looking for isn't tangible like that."

Ohno: "Uh, you know these guys go around to know what's new around these parts?"

Naoko: "Huh, that changes things quite a bit." *Again holds her hand to her chin.* "Well? Let's head in."

Ohno: "Hold it-" *interrupted by her advance.* "Naoko!"

-Inside Qita Kong-

Naoko: *comes across the central square of Qita Kong, and tries to go deeper, but is stopped by a gateman.*

Gateman: "Hey! Hold it right there!"

Naoko: "What?"

Gateman: "State your name and business... Interestingly."

Naoko: "Interestingly? What do you think I am? A stripper?"
Gateman: "That's not what I said, and meant."

Naoko: "Oh, I'm sure it isn't." *menacingly looks at him.*

Ohno: (speaking in Mandarin Chinese) "<Ah, there's my girlfriend!>"

Naoko/Gateman: "Huh!?"

Ohno: "<Ah, Naoko-san, why'd you go off like that?>" *holds her by the hip with one hand and lifts her hand with his other.*

Naoko: "Uweh~?" *blushes*

Ohno: *winks*

Naoko: *gulps* "<Uh, I was hoping to get us a reservation into here early, but I've just been having this tough time with this man at the gate.>"

Ohno: *studies the Gateman* "<Oh, I see. He does look pretty intimidating and stern.>"

Gateman: *looks offended* "<Sir, your 'girlfriend' is the one who got on the wrong foot with me. And she was speaking in Japanese as well.>"

Ohno: "<Oh, she just knows about the amazing Chinese restaurant here, but nothing about how to get in! Not gonna lie, she's not too bright.>"

Naoko: *twists the knuckles of Ohno's hand, hurting him a bit.*

Gateman: "<Hm...>"

Ohno: "<Please, she didn't mean anything by it.>"

Gateman: *crosses his arms.* "<Very well. Just state your name and business interestingly.>"

Ohno: *nods.* "<Kazuhiko Ohno. Here to enjoy a fine night with her here tonight.>"

Naoko: *blushes deeper.* "<Akimoto Naoko. Same reason as him.>"

Gateman: "<... Come on in then.>"

Ohno: "<Why thank you, sir.>" *holding Naoko, they proceed.*

Naoko: *After they cut two corners in between them and the Gateman, she breaks free from Ohno's grasp.* (Speaking in Japanese) "Hey! What the Hell was that, Ohno-Kun!?"

Ohno: (Speaking in Japanese) "That's why you should've waited for me to tell you everything. Qita Kong is the ONLY residential district for the diverse population that is not a foreign company president that is always on the black every month of the year."

Naoko: "What?"
Ohno: "What I'm saying is, this place is filled with immigrants who have no love for most of everyone else out there who scorns this place... Even the foreign people who have learned the language of this country for their own advantage."

Naoko: "So?"

Ohno: "SO, they want you speaking any language other than Japanese. To prove that you are not above them. That is what he meant by stating your identity interestingly."

Naoko: "What? That's all it takes to get in?"

Ohno: "For the front gate. But when we want to go to specific ethnic regions of Qita Kong, we will need to speak their respective language. Indians - Hindi. Vietnam - Vietnamese. You get it?"

Naoko: "Yeah. I do. How long have you known about this place and all that?"

Ohno: *checks his watch.* "For roughly three years, six months, and twelve days."

Naoko: "Huh. Now, where is the informant you have in mind?"

Ohno: "In the Korean sector. You can speak it, right?"

Naoko: "Are you joking?* smugly looks at him. * "Show me the way."

Ohno: *leads Naoko through the central square to Little Korea.*

LK Gateman: (speaking in Korean) "<Name and business?>"

Ohno: "<Kazuhiko Ohno. Here to see a business partner.>"

Naoko: *looks at Ohno, then back at the Gateman.* "<Akimoto Naoko. Here to witness the deal.>* "smiles innocently. *

LK Gateman: *nods* "<Proceed.>"

Ohno: *with Naoko, goes forward.*

Naoko: (speaking in Japanese) "Ugh, if only I could pull my badge..."

Ohno: "And you won't because you'll risk breaking trade ethics with our allies?"

Naoko: "No... Because I leave tracks behind for Karasuma to find me."

Ohno: "Woah... Biggest problem right there."

Naoko: "Just shut up." *continues to follow him.*
The personal investigation between young Ministry asset and young parolee continues! They meet another presumed ally - a Korean informant of some sorts, and begin following the crumb trail in search of who really kidnapped Kayano, Itona, and Ritsu. What they find next... is anyone's guess.

-Ohno and Naoko continue to travel deeper into Qita Kong, having past the security before Little Korea. It seems all that remains between the two and some new developments in their secret investigation was another alley.-

Naoko: "So have you gone to whoever this person who hands you information before?"

Ohno: "That I have. We worked to settle an estranged dispute between a Japanese dock company president and the Korean immigrant laborers who worked for him."

Naoko: "Really now? What happened?"

Ohno: "The president thought that his workers were stealing valuables from the freight crates."

Naoko: "Were they?"

Ohno: "No - actually, it was him who was caught with the larceny. It turns out that he was being payed by a Kangpae group, who wanted easy delivery of their illegal imports into Japan without the hassle of security checking. He gave the workers high enough raises so that they wouldn't suspect a thing when the crates came in and they were told not to inspect them. And, while the freight loads just sat there, empty, there was only the Koreans to blame, but who's Korean in the vicinity?"

Naoko: "Those longshoremen..."

Ohno: "Yep."

Naoko: "How long ago was that?"

Ohno: "September 2013..." *checks watch* "Almost three years ago."

Naoko: "Hmm, you kept busy during your time out of prison."

Ohno: "I ain't going back." *continues walking toward a Korean restaurant.*

Naoko: "Huh, so you were taking me to a restaurant."

Ohno: "I said a Chinese one though to save face. Come on."
-Ohno and Naoko enter the eatery, and though it is noticeably small, it is quite successful, with almost every seat in the layout filled.-

  Receptionist: (speaking in Korean) "<Hi! How many are with you tonight?>"
  Ohno: "<Just me, her, and your boss, please.>"
  Receptionist: "<The boss? May I have your name?>"
  Ohno: "<You don't need it. Just tell him 'it's at hand.' He'll understand.>"
  Receptionist: "<... Okay.>" *leaves the tall desk and moves to the far back, where her alleged boss is.*

  Naoko: (speaking in Japanese) "'It's at hand?'" *hand to her hip.*
  Ohno: "He's too analytical for his own good at times. He believes the right connection of events are happening for a doomsday to occur soon. And I'm the only one he said it to."
  Naoko: "Kinda like you... How soon?"
  Ohno: "Within our lifetime."
  Naoko: "Oh, so~ soon."
  Ohno: "Yeah, I wanted to say that too."
  Receptionist: (speaking in Korean) "<He has accepted that phrase. Right this way, sir and ma'am.>"
  Ohno/Naoko: *nods*

-The two make their way across the restaurant to the end, where Ohno's friend resided.-

  Ohno: (speaking in Korean) "<Thanks for your patience.>" *slides two, folded 5000 Yen banknotes into her hand.*

  Informant: (speaking in Japanese) "Oh, Ohno-kun. Always knows how to hook in the ladies."
  *turns to Naoko.* "And who might you be, miss? Certainly not Ohno's type, I'm certain."
  Naoko: "My name is Akimoto Naoko. I'm an agent of the Ministry of Defense. But today, and any other day that I interact with you, I am but a college student looking for answers."
  Informant: *looks at Ohno for a confirmation.*
  Ohno: "She's not a cop right now, and she can't go to the cops. Believe it."
  Informant: "This is so connected to the doomsday chain, meeting someone who paradoxes the very definition of authority like this."
  Ohno: "Hyun..."
Hyun: "Alright! Pleasure to meet you, miss." *holds out right hand.* "My name is simply
Hyun."

Naoko: *accepts the handshake.* "The pleasure is mine."

Hyun: "Yes. Would you like some tea, the two of you?" *waves at one of the waiters for a kettle
and three hand-sized cups.*

Ohno: "We won't stay for too long. We just need some of the information you gathered, as well
as a few new questions we might have."

Hyun: "Then one cup. I'll be coming with you anyways."

Naoko: "What? Why?"

Hyun: "I have reason to believe that there is someone from my country - someone higher up in
the ladder - pulling some strings in the Reclamation Society. I'm not giving Japan any more reason
to hate my country; I'm going to stop that someone. And my best bet is with this hardass vigilante
sitting next to you."

Naoko: "Hm, so we have some things in common. We hate Ohno, but we like and need him
too."

Hyun: *laughs* "Where did you find this girl, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Not important. What do you know?"

Hyun: "See what I mean?" *tidies up clothes* "Alright... Some of my boys have traveled cross-
country to pick up authentic products in the big cities that dot Japan. One of which is, of course,
Tokyo. And two of them were transporting some fresh Katsuyama Diamond... Until they
witnessed, inside the cover of a dark alley, some men dressed in black holding a little girl with
green hair and placing her in the backseat of an SUV. Photographic proof?" *places several photos
of the scene onto the table.* "That's Kaede Kayano, right? Five feet tall, the aforementioned
strange hair color, looks to be under ninety pounds?"

Naoko: *holds up one particular photo* "Yeah, that's her!" *tries to figure out the assailants.*

Ohno: "Do you know who those people are?"

Naoko: "Can't make them out..."

Hyun: "You don't need to. My men also got a photo on the SUV's license plate. It's a rental, and
the vehicle was abandoned in a river soon afterwards, but they took it to the company and they
agreed to give us their contact." *places several more pages of information onto the table, and then
drinks some tea.*

Naoko: *looks at each identification with curiosity.*

Ohno: "I know those guys. Naoko?"

Naoko: "I have heard of them. Apparently, they were some people Karasuma and Class 3-E had
dealt with before. But I wasn't around back then. Can you tell me anything about them, Ohno?"
Ohno: "Only that they're not a bunch I'd turn to, especially after this." *takes a sip of tea.*

Naoko: "Alright, that's fine." *To Hyun:* "And where are they now?"

Hyun: "My crew was in enough heat alone pulling this stunt, nearly getting the dealership to call the TMPD, miss. They had to pull out immediately, and so we couldn't chase them... But, they did end up showing themselves here in Kyoto."

Naoko: "Really? Where?"

Hyun: "As of three days ago, at a meat-packing building on the east side of the city."

Naoko: "Then let's go." *guzzles down her teacup and begins to leave, not taking any words from either man.*

Hyun: "Quite a direct individual, isn't she?"

Ohno: "She gets that from her older brother. Shall we?"

-Ohno and Naoko return to their motorcycles, and wait for Hyun drives to in a Renault Talisman. They trek the highways again to the designated area.-

Ohno: *speaking through radio-communications helmet* "Hey, Hyun. I see where a lot of the Intelligence money has been going. What mods on that Renault you have there?"

Hyun: "Ohno, my boy; traffic sign detection, blindspot alert, and 4control. This is cruising with style, and ease. Not idiot-proof, but pretty damn close."

Naoko: "You and your kind love cars too much... But, Hyun, if you think the world is ending, why spend the extra cash on something like that?"

Hyun: "It must be done to live our lives to the fullest we can, Naoko. And this is definitely a great way to live it." *speeds up.* "'Doomsday' waits for no one!"

Ohno: "'Blackguard' doesn't make you wait." *speeds up as well.*

Naoko: "Damnit, you guys!" *speeds up too.*

-Ohno, Naoko, and Hyun make it to the meat-packing plant... sooner than expected, thanks to the reckless race.-

Naoko: *breathes heavily* "Man, one of you auto nuts was enough!"

Ohno: *snickers* "Now who's being the hardass?"

Naoko: "Put a sock in it." *stands straight up.* "Alright. This is the place, Hyun?"

Hyun: "Indeed." *Takes out a Dragon-Camo Lionheart LH9 pistol.* "Let's waste them."

Naoko: *looks at Hyun and his pistol.* "WHAT?!"
Ohno: "Whoa there, Hyun. We need you out here, in case they try and escape."

Hyun: "Err, alright." *puts the gun down.*

Naoko: *holds her chest.* "Thank goodness..."

Ohno: *pulls out a military-grade Heckler and Koch UCP.* "Let's do this, Naoko."

Naoko: "Whoa there!" *grabs the gun by the bottom of the barrel. Ohno instinctively resists her attempt to disarm him and they are in a struggle for the firearm.* "No guns, Ohno! Not yet!"

Ohno: "Why not? The men in there are trained assassins!"

Naoko: "But workers are also in there, and you're going to cause a panic that leads to the cops coming this way, and notice a trail that brings them to me! And then Karasuma will know about it!"

Ohno: "Ugh... Always Karasuma with you. Never letting others into your world." *loosens grip on the UCP.* "You win, Naoko."

Naoko: *stows the gun into her handbag.* "Thank you. Now we're heading in." *goes inside.*

Hyun: "Good thing I'm staying out here, man." *kisses the barrel of the LH9.* "No one taking my pillow ornament. By the way, where's your true packaged-heat?"

Ohno: "Safely stashed. Had an idea she'd do that." *goes inside.*

-Inside the meat packaging plant.-

Naoko/Ohno: *stroll in through the backdoor.*

Worker 1: "H-hey! What are you two doing in here? You can't be in here!"

Ohno: "Show the lady some respect, fool." *pushes Worker 1 just enough to knock him off-balance, seeking footing on a wall.*

Naoko: *leads them up another floor, where more workers are distraught by their entrance.*

Worker 2: "What the?"

Worker 3: "Kids, this isn't an attraction! Get out!"

Ohno: "We need to speak with your superiors. Mind telling us where he is?"

Worker 3: "Why would you need an audience with Mr. Miyashiro?"

Naoko: "We have some questions for him." *instinctively goes to the pocket holding her badge, but hesitates.*

Worker 4: "What nerve. He wouldn't talk to some strangers like you!"

Ohno: "And he'd be speaking to some ominous trio he could have only met that day?"
Naoko: "Yeah, you all ought to know why Eastern Asia once held meat-butchery the lowest class of occupations. Secrets were said to be traded from cleaver to cleaver. Is it the same case here?"

Ohno: "That was so uncalled for..."

???: "But secrets are to be just that; secrets. For our eyes only." *steps down from his upper-floor office.* "But what does it matter if we had secrets? Your kind had them too. And so does he."

Ohno: "That depends. What are your secrets, Miyashiro?"

Miyashiro: "I don't squeal."

Naoko: *crosses her arms.* "Let me guess: Because of your undying loyalty to mere strangers?"

Miyashiro: "No~..." *snaps fingers.*

*Suddenly, a mini-army of thugs appear from the locker rooms, other offices, and alternate entrances. Some were armed with knives; others had pipes, and the rest pounded their fists.*

Miyashiro: "Because I will die by their hands as well."

Naoko: "As well?" *gasps, thinking about Itona and Kayano.* "WHO ELSE!?"

Miyashiro: "You two." *holds up a hand command, signaling the muscle to proceed.*

Ohno: "Huh... Reclamation Society underlings surrounding us... Still on that no-killing rule, Naoko?"

Naoko: *sighs some relief upon realizing her friends were not the subject.* "Yeah. Don't overdo it, Ohno."

Ohno: "I won't." *cracks knuckles.*

*Thug 1, holding a knife, goes straight towards Naoko. Naoko manages to duck under his lunge, falling into a single handstand, letting her legs coil around Thug 1's neck, throwing him off their elevated platform. Thug 2 tries to haymaker Ohno, but the latter finger-jabs Thug 2's neck, stunning him. He then clubs and hammer-fists Thug 2's ribcage, breaking his stamina and making him crumble onto the ground.

Thug 3 throws a large kick Naoko's way, only to have her move with the attack, and when Thug 3 puts his leg down, she spins a full 360 degrees to pull off a 540 kick that instantly knocks out the large man. Thug 4, lead pipe in hand, swung like a baseball bat at Ohno. He countered this by kicking his right leg up, blocking a lead pipe hit with his upper thigh and some extra hand pushing. He then drops it down so that the pipe was behind his right knee, forcing Thug 4 to follow its movement and duck his head. This left him open for a Thai clutch with devastating knees to the face; the last of which puts him down for good.

Thugs 5 and 6 decide to both try to get Naoko with knives, slashing in any direction the other
has not yet performed. But Naoko's small frame and supreme agility lets her flawlessly dance around every blow, and then uses simple akido locks to twist and pop the joints of her attackers, forcing them to drop their knives. She then front kicks Thug 5 away, prompting Thug 6 to counterattack with a charged straight punch. Naoko roundhouse kicks him Ong-Bak style to neutralize him, and as Thug 5 starts to get back up, she performs a Shining Wizard Knee that cleanly puts down the oversized man.

Thug 7 wields a knife while Thug 8 got creative and held a chain. While Thug 7 got close, Thug 8 swung the long link low to the ground, prompting both Ohno and Thug 7 to jump over it. Thug 7 then slashed diagonally downward, which Ohno also evaded, followed by a quick jab to Thug 7's ribcage. Attempting to recover, Thug 7 tried to slash backhand, and then lunged in a large arc, which Ohno ducked and kicked away respectively. Thug 7 then decided to slash overhead, which Ohno blocked. Thug 8 then decided to spin the chain head-level, causing Ohno to fall back and drop on his knees. The chain wraps around Thug 7's head, and the tail-end smashes straight into his face, knocking him out. His knife falls into Ohno's grip, who throws it into Thug 8's right thigh. Thug 8 yells in pain with the blade stuck in his leg, but is quickly shut up by an overhead tricking roundhouse kick that lands his face onto the floor.*

Miyashiro: *sensing that the remaining six of his "bodyguards" are not going to finish the problem, he decides to flee with one more of his security.*

Naoko: *holding Thug 9 in a standing Fujiwara Armlock, noticing Miyashiro fleeing.* "Ohno! Miyashiro is getting away!"

Ohno: *punches Thug 10 several feet away while looking in that direction.* "Me and Hyun will get him! Can you handle things here?"

Naoko: *upward-back kicks Thug 9 in the face, then intensifies the armlock with a wrist twist. Forward sweep kicks Thug 9's leg out, causing him to fall into a sitting position with the arm still badly coiled. She finishes with a shin to his face, smashing the back of his head to the floor. Smiles at Ohno.* "I'll be just fine."

Ohno: "Alright!" *sprints after Miyashiro and his guard.*

-Outside-

Ohno: *runs outside and finds Miyashiro and the Reclamation hired muscle inside a mid-size hydrogen car, speeding off.* "Shit!"

Hyun: "Hey, Ohno!" *drives out in front of Ohno, and throws open the passenger door.* "Inside! Now!"

Ohno: *jumps in. The Renault rockets away, after the Mirai. The chase leads to the busy streets of Kyoto.*

Hyun: "Well, I see where the hush money went for Miyashiro. What's the model, Ohno?"

Ohno: "It's a Toyota Mirai; production on it started only recently. Very high MPG of 66, two hydrogen fuel caps, and 0-60 in 9 seconds. A titan of small car manufacturing."

Hyun: "Huh... Shame you have to disable it."
Ohno: "With what? Naoko still has my gun."

Hyun: "But not mine. Glove compartment."

Ohno: *opens it up and takes out the LH9.* "Okay. Hold it steady, alright?"

Hyun: "With pleasure." *speeds up enough for Ohno to aim at the lower right tire of the car.*

Myashiro's guard: *peeks out of the passenger seat and sprays around with an IMI Uzi.*

Ohno: "Damn!" *hides back in the car.*

Hyun: *notices several bullets hit the hood and rims of his Renault.* (Curses in Korean) "<Th fuck!? My paint job!>" *sticks head out.* "You sons of bitches! You'll pay for this! You know how much it costs!?!"

Miyashiro's guard: *notices the driver and directs fire at the space.*

Ohno: *pulls Hyun by the collar.* "Get your ass back in here!"

Hyun: "Now what?"

Ohno: *unlocks the passenger door.* "Keep it steady."

Hyun: "Wha-"

Ohno: *pushes the door open and hangs off of the window edge while the car continues to go at almost 100 mph. He places the arch of his wrist and hand onto the sill and aims at Miyashiro's guard, ready to shoot at his right hand... But then remembers that Naoko does not want any deaths tonight, and instead aims at the fuel cap on the Mirai and fires a dead-eye shot at it.*

Hyun: "Ha! their MPG means nothing now! Get back in, Ohno! We're gonna follow them until they run out of juice!"

Ohno: *swings the door back into a close with him back in the shotgun seat.*

*The car chase continues until their car fails in the midst of a dead-end alleyway.*

Hyun: *pulls over right behind them.* "Well, that's all she wrote." *gets out.*

Ohno: "What a story." *gets out as well. Miyashiro's guard, who emptied the magazine of his uzi, tries to club Ohno with it, only to have it relinquished from him, and choked to sleep with it.*

Miyashiro: "O-o-o-okay, guys. Let's not get too crazy here..."

Hyun: "Crazy? You don't know what crazy is."

Ohno: "Oh boy..." *looks away, throwing the empty uzi onto the ground where the muscle lay.*

Hyun: "Crazy ain't something you have seen before. Nobody has. Craziness is the manifestation... Of all the scariest things you have ever seen... Then multiplied by a thousand. You don't know, what your greatest fear times a thousand is, but you know it... When you know it."
crouches down at Miyashiro with a tanto knife aimed at the sky, then puts it right on Miyashiro's shoulder. "I can't say I've seen crazy before... But I was pretty damn close, and it made me... Crazy." *slides his tanto blade back, while imitating the slicing sound.*

Miyashiro: *screams, before looking at his shoulder, finding no cuts.*

Hyun: "Oh, for what you and that guy did to my car, the 1000 cuts-thing is going to be very slow and painful for you..." *feels the point of his tanto while snickering madly.*

Ohno: *holds Hyun's shoulder.* "Now now, you won't permanently scar this man. He needs to get back to his job like nothing has happened. Just get the information we need out of him, and then set him free... The meanest way you can."

Hyun: *laughs.* "You're the boss." *puts away the tanto, and picks up Miyashiro by the necktie.* "I take it you can get home by your lonesome?"

Ohno: "Yeah. Thanks for the help, Hyun." *throws the Lionheart back to Hyun, who catches it with his free hand.*

Hyun: "Anytime!" *kicks Miyashiro into his backseat, and then gets in the car and reverses out of the alley.*

Ohno: *tunes his bluetooth to Naoko's secondary frequency.* "Hey Naoko."

Naoko: [message] "Yeah, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Hyun's got our man. Don't worry; he'll talk before long. Your half is done too?"

Naoko: [message] "Yep, all taken care of. The workers have shut up as well."

Ohno: "Don't worry, Naoko. We'll get that trio and make them bring your friends back before they're taken to the Society."


Ohno: *focuses on his ear.* "Come again, Naoko?"

Naoko: [message] "What about your Hayabusa?"

Ohno: "Keep it."

Naoko: [message] "Whoa, really?"

Ohno: "Yeah. Next time we meet, you better be driving it. Don't bring that sad excuse of an enduro up to me again."

Naoko: [message] "Of course..." *pauses again.*

Ohno: *holds the earpiece again.* "Something still on your mind?"

Naoko: [message] "You did great today, Ohno."
Ohno: "..."

Naoko: [message] "Well? Thank me?"

Ohno: "Thanks."

Naoko: [message] "You're welcome."

Ohno: "Now is my parole sentence cut because of this?"

Naoko: [message] "HA! Very funny, asshole. Call me when Hyun gets Miyashiro to come around."

Ohno: "Affirmative, captain!" *salutes, before ending the transmission.* "Well, time to head back."

???: "A car?" (speaks in Cantonese) "Of course!" (speaks in Japanese) "Right away."

Ohno: *waits four minutes before his contact drives in with a Lexus LFA. When the contact gets out, he hands him a layered envelope and motions toward the sports vehicle.*

"valet": "Don't go too crazy on this one, eh Kaz?"

Ohno: "Okay." *gets in and drives off.*
Business as usual for the AssUniv Program; they must continue to improve both physically and academically, with so little time before the Summer ends! And while some are showing such significant developments, there are still who tower above the rest... Just how might they react to that?

Plus, a special cameo!

-Ohno drives back to Okura without another hitch. He takes the elevator to the class' floor and goes to unlock the door to his room, until he notices something on his right arm.-

   Ohno: *pivots his right arm to see his inner wrist, bleeding slightly. Rubs his index finger over parts of the area.* "Damn..." *remembers a moment during the car chase in which a rock was sent flying by the pursued car, causing it to nick him on his shooting hand.* "They will undoubtedly see this..." *proceeds to unlock his room door.*

   ????: *A shrouded individual, hiding behind the corner of the hallway, oversees Ohno's entry.*

-The next day-

-The class get up again for another challenging day of assassination training, as well as their first day of mental acuity, with Ohno covering most of the academic subjects, as well as Irina-sensei restarting her linguistics and conversation classes. Karasuma-sensei is even putting some time in as a "day" tactics instructor after managing P.E., saying that Class 3-E's deadline is rapidly approaching, and so much precious information has yet to be instilled in them. Though what "day" means to them has not yet been discussed just yet...-

-At the training site-

   Karasuma: *It has only been a few weeks since the Summer has started, and yet in that small amount of time, every one of the remaining students I recovered have rallied coming into their own once more. *Gets into a ready stance.*

   Okano: *Measures up her plastic TeamAR15 tactical knife at Karasuma, held in icepick grip.*

   Karasuma: *For instance...*

   Okano: *After a few seconds, charges at Karasuma with a lunging strike. Karasuma pushes the blow away to the right, prompting Okano to sweep kick with her right heel. Karasuma jumps over this, and backs away when Okano proceeds with a no-handed cartwheel kick backwards. Not alleviating the pressure in the slightest, she dashes in again, jumping and twirling in the air, hiding her revolving elbows, miscellaneous kicks, and of course, knife slashes. Karasuma manages to block every hit until she grounds. Okano continues with a flash kick that nearly breaks Karasuma's guard, and then vaults over his shoulder, landing several feet behind him. As the two inch closer, Okano picks up her front leg as if for a kick, which Karasuma covers his head, but then Okano drops into a side-roll towards him, favoring his left. Her right leg goes in between his, and then
figure-fours with her other, trapping his left leg. She then presses downward, causing Karasuma to drop onto his chest, allowing Okano to slice on his back with the plastic.*

Karasuma: "Heh, good move, Okano." *gets up and dusts himself off, while Okano stands up and joyfully converses with Kanzaki and Yada.* Okano's four-dimensional attack grid, as a result of her gymnastics background, has only gotten better. Her move-set is easily overhauled thanks to numerous options present that she perceives, making it troublesome to predict and impossible to field-analyze. Applications of wrestling holds and transitions are also present in her high-flying repertoire, which can slip up even a trained soldier-agent like myself. "Next up - Kataoka."

Kataoka: *steps forth, thumb-spinning her TeamAR15.*

Karasuma: *Again gets into ready stance.* Kataoka maintains an almost masculine physique noted in AssClass that time ago, but with the true "gentlemen" of the aforementioned class now becoming more defined in that category, she required a new lean-to in order to stay on the top of the ladder. And that skill... Is almost unrivaled dexterity.

Kataoka: *steps forth, thumb-spinning her TeamAR15.*

Karasuma: *backhand slashes Kataoka, which he pulls away from. Shoulder-checks him, leaving her reeling for a 360 haymaker slash. Karasuma manages to recover his footing and hold her wrist before it makes contact. Kataoka pushes for plastic contact by switching to icepick grip for stabbing, but the blade's tip remains several inches from Karasuma's face. As he concentrates on that, Kataoka lets the knife slip from her hand, grabbing it with the other, and swiping horizontally. Karasuma pushes her just enough for the end to miss its mark. Unfazed, Kataoka continues this hand-switching game by slashing diagonally downward, then letting the momentum continue by throwing it behind her, allowing her right hand to grab it and stab backhandedly. Karasuma sidesteps this, making Kataoka show her back to him. Swiftly, Kataoka shifts her stabbing momentum from downward to sideways, which Karasuma blocks by grabbing her wrist. Kataoka holds her knife underhanded and spins it on her palm, forcing Karasuma backwards again. Finally, Kataoka throws the dagger in the air, and backfists Karasuma, with the belief that she switched hands and stabbed again. But it turns out that her throwing hand retrieved the knife instead, and she lunges it through the opening of Karasuma's block, hitting his shoulder.*

Karasuma: *notices the graze of the hit on his clavicle.* "Excellent, Kataoka." *relinquishes the block. Kataoka clenches a fist of satisfaction as she departs.* Kataoka mixes her deceptive strength with a great array of carefully constructed knife handling movements. Switching hands while moving is an expert maneuver, and yet she did it flawlessly. Not only that, but the ability to perform the weight-balancing test as an offensive motion is innovative. Then again, I should expect nothing less from the vice-leader of AssUniv. "Karma, you're up."

*Karases Karma's horizontal slashes.* Karma's knife fighting skills are not as disciplined as Kataoka or Isogai's are. That is why his score for it is comparatively low, but even still, he is a deadly combatant. Because... *Karma backhand diagonally slashes downward, putting his back to a pulling-back Karasuma. He then attempts a Pele kick, which Karasuma again steps away from. Karma continues the assault with a few more wild swings before trying to stab at the hipline, prompting a low-level block from Karasuma. Suddenly, Karasuma hears something from above, and they both look to see another knife falling. Karma grabs hold of it and almost cuts Karasuma before he pushes the other away. The backflip's centripetal force launched a concealed knife high into the air while I was distracted. These kinds of crafty moves are where Karma shines greatest. And it gets him closer... But not there just yet. *Smiles at Karma, who reciprocates the expression with glee.*

But then there's him. "Ohno. Get over here."
Ohno: *walks up with his hands in his pockets.*

Class 3-E: *actively watches Ohno as he steps forth.*

Ohno: "Get ready, old man." *pulls out two TeamAR15s from each pocket.*

Nagisa: *He's going to fight with four knives?*

Ohno: *takes one knife and throws it far behind Karasuma.* "I'll fight with these three, and BEAT you with that one over there." *points at the dagger sticking out of the ground.*

Karasuma: *doesn't bother to look at it. Smiles lightly instead.* "Bring it, then."

Ohno: *smiles back. Puts one knife into his mouth by the grip and runs straight at him with fury. Though there is a ferocity in each of Ohno's strikes, there is nonetheless a fluid momentum of an unrecognizable pattern. Meticulous spacial calculation is required when handling three knives at once; once Ohno was done with using one knife, he threw it up in the air and caught another knife as it fell - like a juggle of death. Doing this allowed him to neglect the "reversing process" of most thrusting strikes, thus shaving immobile recovery time for more stabs.

But Karasuma could still see them coming and managed to deflect the blows just enough. When he attempted to grab one of the knives himself, Ohno took a closer dagger and swung in a narrow arc towards the area below the freely-moving knife, prompting Karasuma to take his hand back. Ohno's hands were just large enough for him to laminate the falling knife into his filled hand, allowing him to slash again and throw the next knife in the air to continue the pursuit as if nothing had happened.

Then came a new trick: Ohno then swiped the dagger in another acute form, with the plastic blade nicking the pommel of the other blade, causing it to spin ferociously in the air. Ohno then 540-kicked it towards Karasuma's torso, in which the latter moved to the side to avoid. Ohno played to that side, taking one knife in icepick grip and attempting to run it into Karasuma's side. Karasuma pulled back, not any less vigilant even though Ohno has only two knives in his hands left.

Ohno waved his left-hand dagger overhead to Karasuma's face, and it was met with a quick block that provoked a drop of the blade. But then Ohno played the no-floor game, kicking the dagger on its hilt, causing it to lift up and attack Karasuma's upper leg. A rising knee countered that, pushing it in a spinning motion up and back, chest level. Ohno took his other knife, holding the blade end as it was the handle of a bat, and smashed the spinning blade even more upwards, essentially making it a sawblade in the air. And just as quickly, Ohno ducked down and slashed in a sweep towards Karasuma's heels. Karasuma was forced to jump and plank in the air so that the "sawblade" did not also hit him. Karasuma had a bounce in his step when he handsprung backwards, hoping to get some breathing room, but Ohno had none to give.

He dashed up again, with one knife left, and stabbed every square inch between him and Karasuma, still spotless. And then unprecedentedly, Ohno dropped to one knee and then to one hand to perform a handstand side-kick that knocked Karasuma up in the air a few inches. Ohno then cannonballed into him as he fell, leading to him in full mount on a supine Karasuma. One final swipe backhandedly with his third knife was done, attempting to cut his cranium. Karasuma was able to block it at the grip just in time, though Ohno's oblique strength pushed his head closer to...

The "killing" knife standing by its tip lodged into the ground!
Karasuma doesn't react to that fast enough and the blade of the fourth knife digs into his cheek.*

Class 3-E/Irina: *are flabbergasted by what just happened.*

Ohno: *gets up off of Karasuma.* "Told you." *drops the third knife right next to Karasuma and walks away.*

Karasuma: *gets up and dusts himself off.* Then there's Ohno... "Great work, Ohno. Isogai."

Class 3-E: *still looking at the departing Ohno.*

-Shaking off their superstitions, after knife training came small arms training.-

Karasuma: It didn't take very long for the former classmates to redevelop their skills with firearms either. Chiba, for example...

Chiba: *holds a Heckler & Koch XM8 Sharpshooter Rifle diagonally in front of him.*

Irina: *looks at the stopwatch.* "Three... Two... One... Light 'em up!"

Chiba: *holds the XM8 up to his face, right eye fixated on the scope and fires at 50-meter targets with deadly accuracy, up to the last marker.* "Done." *hand-signals the conclusion of the evaluation.*

Irina: *looks through a set of binoculars to see the targets.* "Well-done, Chiba!"

Karasuma: Chiba's eyes (and hair) have not floundered in the slightest during their time away from an ACOG. His range and accuracy remains top-notch, fit for a SWAT team's sniper squad. He stated that former assassin Red Eye kept him in the loop on the latest marksman developments, so he didn't require too much re-training on this front at all.

And I would be remiss to not mention Hayami...

Hayami: *holds another XM8 at the ready.*

Irina: "Now!" *hits the stopwatch.*

Hayami: *looks through the scope and one-shots several moving targets with ease.* "All done." *signals finish.*

Karasuma: Returning to Jazz soon after her retirement from being an assassin, and joining her high school's dance club soon after has preserved Hayami's kinetic vision. Despite her lack of range compared to Chiba, she remains a serious threat from all radii of combat, and has greater ease of spot-changing. Now, no target out of cover is safe when confronting her.

And there are a few dark horses within our band to enact some friendly competition. Like Fuwa.

Fuwa: *sits cross-legged as she fires rounds from the FERFRANS SOAR into multiple standing targets.* "Gotcha! (to others) Next app!"

Karasuma: Fuwa was well-noted for her unerring accuracy when sitting. But since only a few
situations maximized the versatility of this back then, this skill didn't fly well with most of us...

Fuwa: *sits on an enlarged skateboard and continues to fire at the same targets, still with impressive marksmanship.* "Nice! Next!" *gets onto a large elastic cloth, with Sugino, Isogai, Kataoka, and Maehara holding the corners of the cloth. They then pull on it, causing Fuwa to be launched in the air still in her criss-cross position. She flips in the air as she hits all the targets, with no decrease in precision.* "Yes!"

Karasuma: *But that has obviously since changed.*

**Now to Kimura, whose speed now plays a new purpose.**

Kimura: *loads a Heckler & Koch Mark 23 Mod 0 Phase II pistol and starts running parallel to one side of a maze of targets. He puts three rounds into three targets before cutting a dime to face the next set. Again, three for three. When faced with the next set, the ground was forbidden, prompting Kimura to run on the wall and shoot his targets. The final set required shots from a slide, a roll, and a cartwheel; all done flawlessly by Kimura.* "Done!"

Karasuma: *If Kimura and Hayami were enemies, it would be such a questionable conflict, the winner could only be decided with a coin flip, due to their conflicting skill-sets.*

**And recently, Nakamura has been taking a fascination with the "rhythmic walls" shooting test - the target is hidden behind multiple shutting gates that are only all open during a half-a-second interval at a random point in time.**

Nakamura: *aims a Heckler & Koch UCP at the target, currently hidden behind two walls, before one shuts and two take its place.*

Karasuma: *There is a pattern to it, but the mental power required to see it coming is-

*Pistol fire.*

Nakamura: *looks behind her, knowing she didn't fire.*

Karasuma: *sees that Ohno took Nakamura's turn, hitting the target with a round of his own UCP as if it was nothing.*

Ohno: *drops the gun.* "Ain't nobody got time for that." *leaves toward the classroom.*

Class 3-E: "WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT!?"

Karasuma: "..."

-Of course, the real chaos is in the classroom. As it always has been...-

Ohno: *on the whiteboard, finishes drawing a human circulatory diagram connected to adhesive chest pads.* "As shown here, the self-conducted defibrillator's adhesives can be placed in several positions to best apply an electrical current ranging from 200-1000 volts into the trembling heart muscle tissue, prompting its reactivation."

Okajima: *nods himself to sleep, causing him to let his pencil tap his desk.*
Ohno: "Hey Okajima." *flicks the dry erase marker's cap straight at him.*

Okajima: "Hu-" *just manages to hold his palm up to stop the cap.*

Ohno: *looks back with a light grin.* "Just making sure you're still paying attention." *returns his attention to the whiteboard.*

Karma: *smirks at that remark.*

-several minutes later...-

Ohno: *sketches a package of Semtex.* "Semtex, one of the most efficient plastic explosives to date, comprised of a multitude of compounds, most predominantly PETN and RDX. Unlike most plastics, it sees usage in more extreme climates and temperatures, can be operated underwater, and to this day, few methods are confirmed to detect it more than ninety percent of the time - making it one of the best detonation weapons for secret agents, terrorists, and, of course assassins."

Karma: *slouches back in his chair, pulling out a TeamAR15 knife and slings it at the back of Ohno's head.*

Ohno: *without looking, tilts his head so that the knife makes a white mark on the drawing before falling harmlessly to the ground.*

Irina/Class 3-E: "WHA!?"

Ohno: "Whoever that was is psychic, because they hit exactly what I was going to talk about; Semtex has seen a number of variants over the years, but in most cases, you can figure out which one you are working with because a dot of various color will always be in this spot. In this case, the white would mean it is a C4 hybrid." *looks back for a second and then back at the board.*

Karasuma: *closes his eyes.* If there was one good thing I could say about Ohno, it's that he is very hyper-tolerant. He can put up with anything, barely ever getting mad at anyone he thinks highly of. But that is not always the same the other way around...

-Then came Irina's linguistics class.-

Irina: *opens the class door, with Ohno coming in from behind him.* "Alright, everyone." *steps away from the door.* "Time to take your seats, all of you; my new and improved class is about to-

Nakamura: *aims at Ohno with a training UCP and fires a plastic BB at him.*

Ohno: *looks up to see the BB and takes it straight to the face, making his head flail back, and taking a step behind him, but otherwise unmoved.*

Former Class 3-E: "REEEE~!" *turns to Nakamura*

Irina: "What the shit!?" *looks totally bewildered.*

Karasuma: *unsurprised, arms remain crossed as he sees the scene unfold.*

Ohno: *whips his neck back forward, revealing the BB lodged in between his lips. He then spits*
it out of his mouth.*

Former Class 3-E: "WHAT!?" *some stood out of their seats in response to the event. Even Nakamura is scared.*

Karasuma: Remember when I said the "Rhythmic Walls" test required significant mental power? Well, Ohno can process information at up to five thousandths of a second... That BB bullet flying at him is practically a small ball thrown by a baby. All he needed to do from there was twist his lips in motion to the bullet to slow the BB to a stop, such that it does not drill his mouth too much. Truly one of the epitomes of supernatural abilities in regular human beings. But...

Ohno: *lower lip starts swelling, as well as flowing a small stream of crimson leading to his chin. He licks the source clean in an attempt to stop the bleeding, though to no avail.*

Karasuma: He is still purely human.

Ohno: "Well, ey geesh ey kant speekh mai ems an enfs twodee."

Class 3-E: *look at each other.* "Say what?"

Ohno: *bits his swelling lip, wincing slightly.* "I guess I can't speak my ehms ('m's) and ents ('n's) today." *takes his seat to await the lesson.*

Irina: *bewildered.* "Uh, okay then. Everyone, take the German textbook from within your desks and turn to Chapter Two..."

-Just before leaving Mount Atago...-

Karasuma: "Alright, you all. These shenanigans concerning Ohno has to stop."

Class 3-E: *most had their heads down while listening to Karasuma and Irina's lecture.*

Karasuma: "I'm aware that he isn't exactly your average nineteen-year-old college acquaintance, but he's working his hardest on this internsh-"

Yada: "Average nineteen-year-old?"

Karasuma/Irina: *look up, surprised.*

Takebayashi: "With all due respect, Karasuma-sensei, but our belief that Ohno was not your average nineteen-year-old left us long ago. Since he showed up following us on the bus, and even further when Isogai and Kataoka told us that he was a double-murder felon."

Kurahashi: "I'm worried about that, too, Karasuma-sensei. Just... Who are you introducing us to? Who are you defending here?"

Karasuma: "Compared to-" *was about to mention Irina, but then looks at her, who reciprocates with judging eyes, before turning back to Class 3-E.* "S-someone like Red Eye, Ohno is not-"

Isogai: "After some good thought on this, Karasuma-sensei, he's not like the killers we met before. Those guys - Red Eye, Ritsu... Even the God of Death, they had passion in their eyes when they killed, and there was method and reason to it. But we know nothing about Ohno's killings. Is
he a contract killer that got sloppy?"

Kataoka: "Unlikely. We all saw the way he fought you, Karasuma-sensei, and when he shot that target Nakamura was concentrating on for a long while. A guy like Ohno doesn't make mistakes."

Isogai: "Right. So he must be some sort of crazed, indiscriminate murderer, who we only just tolerate because your word is in favor of him! But how long will that last? And since he's in this secret war, why does he fight alongside us rather than against us? And since he is fighting with us, what is he trying to prove, beating us in our own games? Are you trying to tell us that that knife game he played was just for the Hell of it!"

Karasuma: "All I can say, for now, is that Ohno is not after you at all. I have his word that he would never harm any of you throughout this internship. And he offered his assistance in any way he could, which included him assisting in assassination whenever it arrived. Did it occur to you all that maybe he just wanted to show you that he wasn't a useless member to the team?"

Class 3-E: *thinks about that question.*

Karasuma: "Ohno clearly hasn't had the level of social interaction that you all had throughout your younger years, so his scale of ethics is understandably skewed. But up until I told you that piece of information, did you have any reason to be against Ohno? The man that ensured you all could continue training to become assassins? The man who allows you all to be on this ground? The man who is risking everything left in his life for you by doing all of those?"

Terasaka: "Tch... You drive a hard bargain, sensei. But you're right."

Maehara: "Yeah. He deserves our praise alone for letting us all come together again."

Okano: "Indeed. Also, I can see he likes to compete, when I saw him smile venomously at Karasuma-sensei. I don't think I'm going to let him go unrivaled. What about you guys?"

Karma: "Haha! Hell no!"

Karasuma: *It's good that they believe that. Now I just wish I could...*

- During the bus ride back -

Nagisa: *looks out the window during the trip.*

Okuda: *sitting next to Karma, Fuwa, Kanzaki, and Nakamura, looks at Nagisa, two seats behind. * "What ails him hasn't expired yet, has it?"

Fuwa: "That's a peculiar way to say that, Okuda-san. But yeah, it hasn't."

Nakamura: "I wish he could just get over it already. We're in pain too. And it ain't fun teasing him while he's like this!"

Kanzaki: "It's good to see you still care so much about him, Nakamura-san. After Terasaka-san's speaking for all of us as to neglecting Nagisa-san over this matter, I was afraid I might be the only one that still worried for him."
Nakamura: "I totally still care about him, Kanzaki-san. It's just a way of keep-" *Stops herself.*

Fuwa: "Excuse us, Nakamura-san?"

Nakamura: *Waves it away.* "No... It's nothing."

Kanzaki: "What about you, Karma? You've been Nagisa's friend for the longest time. What do you think about this?"

Karma: *looks at them, and then back outside the window.*

Okuda: "Karma-san? Have you also brought troubles on board?"

Karma: "Nothing as bad as Nagisa's, if this really damages him like this."

Nagisa: *starts getting a little ticked by those remarks being told behind his back.*

-At the Hotel Okura-

-The classmates and Ohno enjoy some Italian and French in Belcanto restaurant.-

Ohno: *finishes his coffee.* "Ah... Very good." *gets out of his seat, tipping the nearby waiter.* "Make sure their tabs are on me, alright?"

Waiter: "Of course, sir." *bows as Ohno leaves.*

Hayami: "Hm, there he goes again. Ready to sleep early."

Sosuke: "He has quite long days, right? Training, learning, teaching, and us arguing?"

Yoshida: "It doesn't make his behavior any less strange..." *gets up.* "I want to see if he really does go up to his dorm after he leaves."

Kataoka: "Spy on him?"

Yoshida: "Yeah. Karasuma still refused to tell us everything. Well, let's see if Mr. mystery can tell it for us. Or, at least show us."

Fuwa: "Ooooo, so interesting. I was curious on this for a long while too."

Kanzaki: "And what's to happen if he indeed is going back to his room?"

Yoshida: "Well he wouldn't be sleeping just yet. We can still get a little info from him."

Terasaka: "Sounds good, Yoshida-san. I'm in. And the rest of you?"

Class 3-E: *look around.* "Yeah."

-AssUniv leave the restaurant and get on the elevator taking them to their floor. But what awaits them once they get there is not quite what they were looking for.-
Lovro: "Hello, kids." *puts out a cigar and flicks it into a nearby trash can.*

Class 3-E: "LOVRO!?"
Ohno, Naoko, and Hyun continue their investigation, that takes them to the major hideout of the assassin trio that kidnapped Naoko's friends. What's still there at this time is anyone's guess.

-During the elevator ride to AssUniv's floor.-
Ohno: *speaking to his bluetooth.* "Hey, Lovro."

Lovro: [message] "Ohno... My target-to-be. What is it? Want me to send one of my boys on you early?"

Ohno: "Not exactly. You were called up by Karasuma-sensei, right?"

Lovro: [message] "That I was. He told me to come to Kyoto as soon as I could. And since you know that, you must be in on some Classroom secrets, aren't you?"

Ohno: "Yeah. Does that concern you?"

Lovro: [message] "Mmm, nah. It just means you have ethical protection until AssUniv is dissolved. So, what about my hiring?"

Ohno: "I need you to come in early. Instead of tomorrow night, you need to be here now."

Lovro: [message] "Oh? Not that I have a problem with it, but why?"

Ohno: "Maybe because we need it?"

Lovro: [message] "That can't be it, Ohno. Not all of it."

Ohno: *sighs* "Alright, you got me. They're onto me now; I know it. And I can't let them know about my work with Karasuma's sister just yet. So I'll need you to keep them busy."

Lovro: [message] "Hm... Hiding one of my enemy's secrets... Why not?"

Ohno: *gets out of elevator and heads to his room.* "Thank you. See you soon, Lovro."

Lovro: [message] "You know it."

Ohno: *ends call, then redials to 'Akimoto Naoko.*"Naoko."

Naoko: [message] "Hey Ohno. What happened? Hyun got something out of Miyashiro?"

Ohno: "He did. We're going to him now to be reassigned."
Naoko: [message] "Very well. Where to?"

Ohno: "Central district. He'll meet us just outside Kyoto Station for this."

Naoko: [message] "Cool. I'm on my way."

Ohno: "Make sure you're driving the Hayabusa."

Naoko: [message] "Wait, wh-" *end transmission.*

-Outside Kyoto Station, 9:40 P.M.-

Ohno: *sits on his Yamaha Midnight Star, leaning on the handlebars and one leg on the ground to balance. He looked around, waiting for Naoko and Hyun to arrive.*

Naoko: *drives in and parks on the same driveway.*

Ohno: "There you are. What took you so long?"

Naoko: *takes off her helmet.* "How long were you waiting?"

Ohno: *checks his watch actively.* "... Thirteen minutes."

Naoko: "Pff." *notices Ohno's lip has swelled and darkened a bit.* "Hey, what happened there? I didn't see you get hit there yesterday."

Ohno: "It wasn't from then. Don't bother with it." *waves it away.*

Naoko: *thinks about it a bit before casting it aside.* "Anyway, Hyun is still not here yet. I'd expect an informant to be quite punctual."

Ohno: "You've gotten quite acquainted to him."

Naoko: "Right now, he and you are the only ones I can really trust right now. Speaking of, how did he become an information broker?"

Ohno: "He was a former National Intelligence Agent. But what he saw during that time changed him. Made him, as he describes... Crazy."

Naoko: "Which is?"

Ohno: *looks at her for a bit before noticing Hyun's Renault behind her and gestures over to the scene. Naoko looks over to see Hyun get out.*

Hyun: "Ah, my assorted friends! I would say it's a pleasure to see all of you, but unfortunately, a meeting between a convict, a cop-turned convict, and a temporarily cop-turned convict is among the list of events to the Apocalypse. So I'm afraid I can't say it's a pleasure; it's quite a discomfort."

Naoko: "Are you serious?"

Ohno: "Deadly. But is it today, Hyun?"
Hyun: "Let me look deeper - Either of you drank orange juice today?"

Ohno/Naoko: *shake their heads "no."*

Hyun: "Ah, so no, not today. Every one major event, i.e. this meeting, must coincide with at least five sub-events. There were three that happened today, by God!" *holds his forehead.*

Ohno: "Very good then. So can you tell us about Miyashiro?"

Hyun: "Hm? Oh, yes! Miyashiro... Don't worry you two; he went back to his meat locker, with only the bare minimal of physical injury. His mental state, however... I think he'll need to make his company corporate now."

Naoko: "Very good. No one will suspect anything if he was away from the office for only a day."

Ohno: "But before you let him go, you did get something out of him, right? Something concerning the three that you showed us?"

Hyun: "That I have. He squealed easily, to be honest." *pulls out a Samsung Galaxy to read out his recorded notes.*

Ohno: "Ugh~..."

Naoko: [whispers] "Not a fan of Android?"

Ohno: [whispers] "Not a fan of smartphones period. Another day, I'll say."

Hyun: "Now, Miyashiro was never around the trio and your friends when they were at his compound, so he has little to tell us about what they were doing with Kaede and Itona. However, when the kidnappers did end up switching hideouts, they mentioned 'an area where the honest, hard day's work is always civil and budgeted' to be their next spot."

Naoko: "Why would those three entrust Miyashiro with that information, despite its enigma?"

Ohno: "Think about it, Naoko. Reclamation Society muscle were there. Most likely, the trio wanted them to know where they were if they came in earlier than planned, which they did. However, either some or all of them couldn't solve it, or they weren't going to play that game seemingly, and waited for the unforeseeable day in which they would return to the plant. But we came over first."

Hyun: "Well-thought, Ohno-kun. But do you think maybe they just waited around because... They just couldn't find the answer to that riddle?"

Naoko: "That is true... '...where the honest, hard day's work is always civil and budgeted.' That criteria could be for a lot of things."

Ohno: "Not necessarily. '...honest, hard day's work.' Well, the population that would say this about themselves and their friends the most are blue-collar people, which means they're talking about craftsmen and artisans. And the other two parts mention specifics for only truly one type of occupation. 'Budgeted' deals with how much the job is about at least saying that the people involved are being cost-efficient, and 'civil'... Civil is their kind of interaction."
Naoko: "Economically, and personally sound laborers... Construction workers?"

Ohno: "Bingo."

Hyun: "How the Hell did you get that, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Irrelevant. What we should be focusing on is which construction site."

Naoko: "Hm, well, they'd want an area with quite some privacy, so a soon-to-be skyscraper sounds good. But even there's only one being made as we speak right now, and it's all the way in Hokkaido. That couldn't be it."

Ohno: *looks at a disappointed Naoko, and then at Hyun's phone, with a hugely recognizable logo.* "Kyocera..."

Hyun/Naoko: *look up at him.*

Ohno: "Kyocera Headquarters is getting a foundational facelift to add a few more floors to the building, to make room for representatives of the SGS Tool Company; a firm they bought earlier this year. It's location made it too dangerous for the previous employees to continue working there until it is complete, which makes it perfect for a silent gathering, assuming you can buy, muscle, or sneak your way in."

Naoko: "Oh right; the second tallest building in the city. No doubt they'll be sound up there."

Hyun: "Man, I can collect information really well, but I so wish I can elaborate on it like you guys."

Ohno: "You'll get there, Hyun. Anyway, you still have your LH9?"

Hyun: "Never leaves my side." *reveals the Lionheart pistol, resting within the stitches and straps of a shoulder holster favoring his left side.*

Naoko: "Wha!?"

Ohno: "Good. This time I brought my bros." *pats the back of his leather jacket, indicating pieces of heat behind him.*

Naoko: "No! No no, who said we needed guns today? We're not making a scene today!"

Ohno: "We're going into a construction site, Naoko. And we're not sure if the only Reclamation Society folk we dealt with were only at Miyashiro's meat packing facility. If they weren't, they most likely sent their strongest and smartest team all over Kyoto, looking for the right spot for their next meet or clue... Including guns."

Naoko: "Well, yeah, but-

Ohno: "More than one hundred meters in the air, and the sound down in the bottom is dulled by the constant traffic and horns. They won't hear gunshots, and the civil engineers that see the casings tomorrow cannot follow the trail back to you. Because you..." *pulls out a Pardini PC/GT and spins it into her hand.* "Will be using this untraceable, multi-caliber pistol to help us out."
Naoko: *sighs* "Fine. But neither of you pull out your own guns and fire until either you are clearly being shot at, or I tell you to. Am I clear?" *stows the gun into her handbag.*

Ohno/Hyun: "Aye aye, captain." *salutes.*

-Without another thought, the three get back on their vehicles and travel to Takeda to get to the construction area.-

Ohno: "So, Naoko, how is having six times more CCs in a motorcycle than you're used to?"

Naoko: "It's a damn fun ride, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "... That's it?"

Naoko: "What?"

Ohno: "That's all you have to say? It's the last fastest-production motorcycle before the Gentlemen's Agreement! After the Hayabusa, speedsters who want to exceed 200 mph were struck a hard blow; for eight years, trade embargo, parts boycott, and so on were done to disallow the deadly velocities from spreading around the world. It's why the defense forces have to use those excuses for bikes; they're afraid any more and you'll get addicted to adrenaline! So I think you have more to say to a motorcycle that made you, YOU!"

Naoko: "... Well, I'm sorry then, Ohno-kun. But I'm going to have to disappoint you again. It's a fun ride, and I enjoy driving it. And I... Thank you for giving it to me. But that's all I can say."

Hyun: "You certainly are not Ohno's type, Naoko. No open fascination for the auto industry? You might of broke the young man's heart."

Ohno: "Ah, fuck you too Hyun. When we first met, you were quite like that too. And that was when you were thirty."

Hyun: "I don't hold on to the past as well as you, Ohno-kun. And frankly I don't want to."

Ohno: "Like that's my choice."

Naoko: "Hm..."

-They soon make it to the project area.-

Ohno: *parks after circling the entire foundation.* "I've done a scope of the ground. No workers, so we'll be able to get up no problem. There's also a set of elevators that move up to the first 'under construction' floor. Should be our way up, though we have no idea if the Reclamation Society or the trio of kidnappers have rigged or guarded it."

Naoko: "We won't have a choice about that matter. For now, all we can hope is for three things: There is no bad company up there, there is something there that at least gets us closer to getting Kayano and Itona back, and Karasuma won't have something to follow when we're done here."

Hyun: "Lady has her agenda. Let's go through with it." *walks to the vehicle entrance of the construction field. They soon get on a mechanized external elevator and take it to the high-rise
Hyun: *waiting to get to the top.* "So... You guys catch the baseball game?"

Naoko: "G-game? Oh, uh, yeah, I did. It was the, uh..."

Ohno: "Giants vs Swallows. And the Swallows, much in thanks to Yoshihisa Naruse's almost perfect pitching game, won out, 3-0."

Naoko: "Wow... Impressive." *tilts her shoulders back and forth a bit.*

Hyun: *facepalms.*

-Soon enough, they reach the top.-

Hyun: [whispers] "Alright. We should tread with caution, and see what we can find discreetly." *pulls out LH9.*

Ohno: [whispers] "Sounds good." *slowly walks forward.*

Naoko: *complies, also nervously getting her Pardini in her bag at the ready.*

Ohno: *as he looks around, he notices some oddities in the setting - there are no shell casings, magazines or stray bullets lying around, but some of the wood walls and steel beams and framework had strange imprints reminiscent of guns firing at them. Behind a stack of large tiles was an empty soup package...* Definitely not something civil engineers be having on the fly. And... Itona's headgear, hanging from the ceiling? [whispers] "Hey, guys. Up there." *gestures up to the item of interest.*

Naoko: *gasps* "That's Itona's bandanna! They've definitely been here!"

Hyun: "Shh! Quiet down!"

Ohno: "Too late." *Points at the elevator system. Someone's coming!*

Hyun: "Quick; hide!" *dive rolls behind a lamination of large boards.*

Ohno/Naoko: *cut a corner of the cement-bordered room and hide behind the future doorway.*

Reclamation Society Merc 1: *opens up the elevator door.* "Our patience is growing thin, Shinsuke."

Shinsuke: "Like that's my problem? I wasn't the one who invented this little game of scavenger hunt."

Merc 2: "Maybe not, but your 'little friend' is the one who's playing it."

Shinsuke: "And we'll need him to deal with the remaining clues to this game, since the trail has otherwise gone cold."

Merc 1: "Your man got a lot of our men battered and beaten, and sent to the slammer. He better be worth the trouble."
Shinsuke: "Oh he damn well is. At least, it'll be worth the trouble to me."

Ohno: [whispers] "That voice... And that given name..."

Naoko: [whispers] "Something wrong?"

Ohno: [whispers] "Shit..."

Naoko: "What? What?"

Merc 1: *aims his G36C, ordering fourteen more to do so.* "Who's there!?"

Naoko: "Oh no..." *pulls out her Pardini.* "What now?"

Ohno: "No choice. Stash that, and..."

Naoko: "A-and what?"

Ohno: "Dishevel your clothing." *proceeds to crease his shirt and jacket.*

Naoko: "!?" *After a few seconds, the two peacefully walk out of cover.*

Merc 2: "Who the fuck are you little kids?"

Ohno: "Sorry, sirs. We just wanted to have a private moment up here."

Naoko: "Nakano-kun, you promised there'd be no one up here!" *hugged Ohno's right arm. She had invested in their act quite well, too; her socks were of varying length, and her sleeveless top had one strap down.*

Ohno: "Please, gentlemen, we'll just leave." *supports Naoko as they start to walk to the elevators.*

Merc 3: *With Merc 4 and 5, they block their way.* "Well, so they must be the kids with the bikes outside."

Merc 2: "What do we do, sir?"

Merc 1: "Why, we can't afford any witnesses."

Ohno: "Is anyone going to notice that the last five sentences of these guys started with a 'w'?"

Hyun: *still hiding, but snickers lightly.*

Merc 1: "Shut up, lad! You two aren't going anywhere."

Naoko: "Nakano-kun! What's going to happen to us?" *she looks up to Ohno, with a secret expression in her eyes that are saying, "Really, what's going to happen?"*

Ohno: "I'll be okay; I mean it." *He stare-says back.*
Merc 1: "Yeah, keep telling yourself that." *gets closer, not leaving his training on them.*

Hyun: *peeks out of the left corner of his cover and throws a washer at a portable cement-roller.*

Shinsuke: "The Hell was that!?" *He, along with everyone else, looks back.*

Ohno/Naoko: "Now!" *whips his right arm so that Naoko flew to that side. Naoko throws out her Pardini in the air, while Ohno flips up his jacket and t-shirt to take out his signature pistols: dual Kimber Warrior IIIs, with sharkfin outlined Marui grips, interbred military suppressors, TLR-1 Tact-lights, light grey hammer and slide engravings, and custom-fed extended magazines fit for any common caliber.*

Mercs 1-5: *do not turn fast enough before Ohno and Naoko put them down with twenty shots, four for each, as is IC protocol. They slump to the floor, dropping their G36Cs and P2000s.*

Ohno/Naoko: *hides behind a pillar and falls behind a stack of cement blocks, respectively, as the other ten recover from the shock and shoot at the two detectives.*

Naoko: "Whoa!" *disrobes her bag and puts the strap to her shirt back up.*

Ohno: "Now, Hyun!"

Hyun: *springs up and snipes Mercs 6 and 7, killing them before they even fall down.*
"Reckoning is upon us, boys!" *He manages to state, just before ducking back down as the firefight goes his way.*

Naoko: *vaults over the cover while shooting, killing Merc 8 while the rest fall back into cover. She then rolls into cover behind a wall.*

Ohno: *notices Merc 9 try to flank and aims at Naoko. He takes aim and puts two bullets into his Mk 23, and his hand holding it. The shock causes him to fall down a hole in the floor.*

Naoko: "Never understood why buildings in pop cult had these weird openings when under construction."

Ohno: "I'll fill you in later."

Shinsuke: *notices things aren't going so well and starts running away to the elevators.*

Ohno: *notices this.* "Shit!" *Then observes Merc 10 looking up out of cover, and shoots at him to keep him down. He then reloads both pistols.* "Shinsuke~!" *shoots at him.*

Shinsuke: *ducks under the shots and safely makes it into the elevator. A third hanger sends in five more mercenaries, armed with VP9s, Mk 23s, and FABARMS to try and kill Ohno, Naoko, and Hyun. Ohno manages to shoot Shinsuke's arm, scratching it and keeping him from proceeding to descend.*

Hyun: "More company!"

Naoko: "Not for long!" *rolls into cover parallel to Hyun's to join him in the firefight.*
Ohno: *looks behind cover just enough to see a gas tank slightly behind a stack of bricks and a junction box on the wall near it.* Nice. *quickly aims at the tank, and then the electric panel, and shoots both at the same time. What follows are gas flow, electric sparks, and a mini explosion that knocks out at least Mercs 10 and 11. He then slides into cover behind cement mounds closer to his enemies.*

Mercs 16-20: *continue to shoot in sequence to keep both opponents down.*

Naoko: "You have anything to even the odds, Hyun!?"

Hyun: "Just the thing!" *pulls out of his pocket an MK3 Offensive hand grenade.*

Naoko: "No way! Someone will notice that!"

Hyun: "It won't damage anything... Too much." *pulls the pin and throws it in a lobbing arc, away from the gunfire, landing behind most of the Mercs. The impending detonation takes out Mercs 16, 17, and 18, but also sends concrete and wood splinters everywhere, forcing everyone to stay under."

Shinsuke: *recovers from the trauma and descends the elevator.*

Ohno: "This is taking too long." *sighs and steps out of cover, initiating "Point-Shooting Mode." In just 0.2 seconds, he marks Mercs 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, and 20, and in the next 2 seconds, puts two bullets in each one, putting them all down for good in no time.*

Naoko: "Whoa, Ohno!"

Ohno: "Make sure they're all gone! I'm going after Shinsuke!" *sprints to the third elevator and activates it. Reloads his Kimbers during the ride down.* I should've known... *The elevator door springs open on the very bottom, the first floor (which is also seeing renovations), and Ohno readies pistols to scope the setting. Shinsuke is nowhere around. After he moves past another corridor, a stray punch from the said pathway marks his cheek. Ohno falls onto the ground, coughing a little blood, with his Kimbers sliding away too far. *Cheap shot, Iwao.*

Iwao: "Aw, how did you know it was me, Ohno?"

Ohno: "I smelled you. You had the same stench you had when you came to me several months back." *gets up.*

Iwao: "As a friend back then, too. And I could've been like- No, a Brother, to you! But you cast me aside!"

Ohno: "You didn't fit the criteria. You were talented, yes, but you had faults too great for you to be enlisted into my team."

Iwao: "Like?"

Ohno: "You couldn't be trusted. Look where you are now."

Iwao: "Oh, you mean, being the personal bodyguard of your worst enemy?"

Ohno: "It has something to do with that."
Iwao: "Sure it does. You expect me to believe your crap?"

Ohno: "..."

Iwao: "Well, actually, I do. Because if there were things that you are better than me at, they were that you are clearly smarter, faster, and more charismatic. But one thing I know I'm better at is fighting. Stronger, sturdier. And you can't beat that!"

Ohno: *cracks knuckles.* "Wanna bet?" *wipes his lip, once again bleeding, as time slows a bit.*

(Boss Title Screen appears, while the Ryu ga Gotoku: Zero OST theme "Misery Comes On Beat" plays; click this into new tab to stay on this page. [link])

巌対和彦大野

Kazuhiko Ohno; Okinawa International Penitentiary Parolee

VS.

Iwao; Hired Muscle and Sworn Bodyguard of Shinsuke

Iwao: *time resumes as normal and he cracks his neck.*

Ohno: *finishes wiping his lip and goes into "Tumbler" Style.

They circle around a bit before locking into a Thai Clinch. Iwao starts pounding Ohno's left side while Ohno pounds Iwao's sides and ribs with knees. Iwao then tosses Ohno across the floor, who rolls back up into a fighting position. Iwao tries a huge clothesline on Ohno, but the latter manages to roll under it. He then quickly locks an arm into a chickenwing, hooks another arm across Iwao's mouth, and grips both hands together, trying to choke Iwao with one hand out. Iwao's strength permits him to spin Ohno out from behind him. Iwao then throws several straight punches, which Ohno evades, before holding onto one and locking a hanging cross armbreaker.

Iwao cries in pain for a bit before lifting Ohno up and throw him into a pillar. Ohno naturally breaks grip and falls to the floor. Not one to writhe in pain, he kips up and cleans up his shoes, getting into "B-Boy" Style. He sprints circles around Iwao, avoiding all of his revolving attacks, and then cutting a dime to baseball slide just underneath him. when Iwao ducks down to try to pick up Ohno from his head, Ohno lifts his right leg up and knocks Iwao on his head. Ohno then initiates a Windmill from his supine position, sweeping one of Iwao's legs and hitting him square in the cheeks three times with heels and insteps. Ohno gets back up and does a Knee-slid 540 kick that just barely misses.

Iwao takes the lead by locking in Ohno in a Full Nelson. Not waiting for his neck to pop out, Ohno dropped and crouched into a turtle guard, throwing Iwao forward and putting him into a seated position with his back turned. Ohno swiftly put a knee into the back of Iwao's head, and then roundhouse kicked him back to the lying-down position. Ohno tries to stomp on Iwao's head, but he holds out his hands to throw him off. Ohno does notice some sort of impact has been made as a result of the attack though...
Ohno taunts Iwao to come forward with a charging punch, only to be met with a spinning hook kick around its momentum that sends him reeling. Ohno gets back into a standing position and then unleashes a threatening roar, moving into the "Obliterator" Style. Ohno runs in, rolling underneath Iwao and grabbing a nearby large metal pipe, running in and recklessly slamming Iwao with it. Whenever Ohno stops cold from a hit, he switches revolutions and swings the other way. He then throws the pipe away and starts walking closer to where he stomped Iwao. Ohno distracts him by throwing some stray bricks that graze Iwao's head and shoulders. He also picks up an non-nailed down wooden board and smashes it on top of him, causing Iwao's head and shoulders to protrude from it. Iwao front kicks Ohno away and pushes the board off of him.

Ohno continues backtracking, but takes one step too much and the wooden ground gives way. Ohno quickly repositions his foot, but Iwao throws a large snap kick that knocks him far away. Iwao intends to finish with a stomp of his own. but Ohno moves his head just enough to avoid it. In fact, the stomp has so much force, that Iwao's leg gets stuck and falls through the wood laminations. Ohno quickly gets up, avoiding Iwao's flailing, and kicks his free leg. With him stunned, Ohno Dragon Screw Whips Iwao's leg into another set of wood on the ground, making him sunken and completely stuck in the ground. Ohno then takes two bricks and sandwich them on the temples of Iwao's cranium.

With his opponent all but surely beaten, Ohno pivots his wrists actively and activates his "God Hand" Style. Now with him towering over his 6'4" victim, Ohno starts a long combo, with almost five punches a second. Anything and everything boxing, kickboxing, and Muay Thai could teach you - jabs, punches, hooks, uppercuts, hammers, overheads, backfists, cobra punches, etc. - was done to put the hurt on Iwao. And then, to finish the fight, Ohno propels himself up from Iwao's shoulders and then rains down a 12-6 elbow on Iwao's forehead.*

Iwao: *head leaks a little blood as he aimlessly moves it.*

Ohno: *pushes Iwao over to put him down. He proceeds to get his pistols from off the ground and leaves the building. He aims his pistol outside but sees tire tracks that imply one vehicle has already left. Most likely Shinsuke.* "Damnit!"

Naoko: "Ohno-kun!" *runs over to him with Hyun, pistols still drawn.*

Hyun: "Ohno-kun, that mess on the first floor... Was that you?"

Ohno: *sighs, putting away his Kimber Warriors.* "Yeah, it was."

Naoko: *puts away her Pardini.* "What was it about, Ohno? This Shinsuke guy doesn't know any more about this case than we do."

Ohno: "It was... A personal matter for me. But for now I'll have to abandon it, I see."

Hyun: "Indeed. We searched that area time and time again, but found nothing that tells of where your friends and their kidnappers would be next."

Ohno: "Yeah. The trail, as Shinsuke described, has gone cold. But it wasn't without some interesting information."

Naoko: *finishes holding her head.* "Like what?"

Ohno: "I managed to recover Itona's bandanna. It's a bit crusted - like he was having some sort of a workout lately. And though there were clearly no reasons for struggle, the walls and pillars had bulletmarks on them. And a soup package? In a civil project area? All signs of pretty erratic
Naoko: "Which implies?"

Ohno: "Nothing to be certain of, but maybe this kidnapping isn't as hostile as we've thought. Maybe it's more of a... Guardianship."

Hyun: "Ohno might be speaking the truth. Why would the trio of abductors want to keep avoiding the Reclamation Society? Must their big ransom deal really happen at the end of the Summer?"

Naoko: "You guys are speaking nonsense! Why would Kayano, Itona, and Ritsu want to stay away from me and Class 3-E - Their diehard friends!? They're in trouble; I know it! And we gotta find them!"

Ohno: "Hate to break it to you, but we all have nothing. We'll just have to wait and see if any of them get sloppy enough for us to follow."

Hyun: "I hate waiting. I've done enough waiting on the Apocalypse alone."

Ohno: "Suck it up; we're all doing it. Now, I gotta get going." *gets on the Midnight Star.*

Naoko: "Uh, Ohno. Your Pardini." *holds it out.*

Ohno: "Again, keep it." *drives off.*

-The ride back to Hotel Okura took a lot longer than usual. It also had a noticeable sense of loss for Ohno, but he pushed on and made it home at ten minutes before midnight.-

Ohno: *gets off the elevator to his room. Suddenly hears a lot of yelling in the rooms sandwiching his.* "Hm, they're pretty resounding tonight." *Proceeds to unlock his door. As he opens his wardrobe and puts away his worn leather jacket...*

Nakamura/Nagisa: "I HATE THIS! I HATE ALL OF IT!!"

Ohno: *heard their yells through the divided balcony sections and looked outside. Silently, he took a seat on the outside to hear the next few minutes of an intense conversation.*
The special guest confronting most of the kids of AssUniv was none other than Lovro! The Russian mentor of Irina is back to provide further tutelage to the youth. But his style is, shall we say, much more rustic in nature. Can the students keep it together?

-Back on AssUniv's Floor in Hotel Okura...-

Lovro: "Hello, kids." *Puts out his cigar and flicks it into a nearby trash can.*

AssUniv: "LOVRO!?!"

Lovro: "That is indeed me. Missed me?"

Several Students: "Uh, well, yeah. Heheh..."

Maehara: "Not that it's bad to see you, but what are you doing here?"

Lovro: "Karasuma told you that he was your day tactics instructor, right?"

Karma: *reminisces on the very moment.* "Oh, so that's what he meant..."

Lovro: "Precisely. If he's your day teacher, or one of them, then I am your night instructor. Every other business day, starting tonight."

AssUniv: *looks at each other with shock.*

Lovro: "Well? What are you all waiting for? Get dressed, get ready, bring your gear, and come down to the service desk after all that. We'll be taking Karasuma's bus to another training area."

Nagisa: "..."

-AssUniv complies, getting into their training gear again and comes down to street-level to board the bus again.-

Yada: "Um, Lovro; where's Ohno-kun?"

Lovro: "Who?" *looks back slightly.*

Kurahashi: "Karasuma-sensei didn't tell you?"

Lovro: "Tell me what? All he said was for me to get my ass down here to better train you lot in the little amount of time left before something happens." *turns the bus.*

Isogai: "So Ohno-kun is cutting a class, huh?"
Hayami: "Well, he kinda did just show us that he doesn't really need training..."

Lovro: "What's that again? This Ohno person is a badass assassin?"

Terasaka: "Badass is pushing it. It only seems so because we're not quite back in terms of skill yet."

Lovro: "Well, sucks to be him, because tonight you're all getting skill that'll kill."

Mimura: "Ugh, what a bad murder pun..."

-The team eventually makes it to the factory district of Kyoto, and parks right outside a graffiti-riddled warehouse.-

Lovro: "Alright, y'all. Training time."

Muramatsu: *gets out of the bus.* "Damn..."

Nakamura: "This is our second training site?"

Lovro: "What? What's wrong with it?"

Okuda: "Not to be very rude, Lovro-sensei, but we're just much more acquainted with something... A little more."

Lovro: "Okay, I only did just get here; I couldn't pick out such an embellished area..."

Takebayashi: "That's probably the least of the problems concerning this area. What's more is that the building itself looks structurally unstable, and there's no telling what infestation inside might have."

Lovro: "Pff, come on, kids. No faith in your friendly neighborhood contract killer contractor? I have standards for renting areas too, you know. Now as for the non-standards, well... They got lost in the time, or lack thereof. Now come on in."

AssUniv: *look at each other before going on in.*

-Inside the warehouse...-

Nagisa: For three hours, we kept going at it with more assassin training... And it was gruesome. Not in Karasuma's extensively physical way, but it was extremely mentally exhausting. Lovro was hell-bent on training our minds when they were at the most drastic and desperate. I mean, take where I am for example...

Lovro: "Three... Two... One... Light him up!"

Hazama, Mimura, Maehara, Yoshida, and Kurahashi: *with trained paintball versions of Arsenal Strike Ones, shoots at the cover of Nagisa, holding onto his own high-velocity paintball gun.*

Nagisa: *when a can on top of the stack of boxes Nagisa is covering from flies off from being shot, Nagisa ducks his head even more.* Five on one shootouts... And I'm currently the
*Nagisa peeks his head up a bit after the fire died down, only to put it back down again when Yoshida fires it very close. Nagisa then pops out from the side of the cover and shoots at Yoshida, putting a paintball on his leg and eliminating him. Nagisa then slides over to a barrier closer to the four in a line. After a second flurry of paintballs, Nagisa shoots up and darts Mimura.*

Lovro: "Squad, you may now take cover!"

Hazama, Maehara, and Kurahashi: *runs to pillars and boxes to hide from all lines of fire.*

Nagisa: *steps out to shoot, and then his gun clicks.*

Kurahashi: *hears Nagisa's gun is empty and steps out from her cover to fire, only to get a paintball to her arm.*

Nagisa: *crouches back down and then rolls over to a tall stack of boxes, allowing him to finally stand.*

Maehara: *hand signals Hazama to move forward a bit while he keeps careful aim of Nagisa's cover.*

Hazama: *gets down at a barrier closer to the center.*

Maehara: *hears a sound go off where Nagisa previously was.* "Wha?" *aims there.*

Nagisa: *turns the far corner of his boxes cover and snipes Maehara.*

Hazama: *cover blown, stands up to shoot Nagisa, but is too late to the draw.*

Nagisa: *sighs.*

Lovro: "Not bad, Nagisa. Next set."

Nagisa: *steps off the field, away from the team he eliminated.* Of course, there are better.

Kimura: *vaults over a barricade while taking down Muramatsu, Okuda, and Nakamura.*

Hayami: *stands in one spot waiting for all five to move, sniping them down in record time.*

Nagisa: Then came the four-way dodging game. We must always mind our surroundings, right? *arm gets whacked by a bamboo stick. Continues to duck, weave, lift, and pull back from twig attacks from Hara, Isogai, Fuwa, and Sugino. Karma certainly has it down though...*

Karma: *almost flawlessly dodges Kataoka, Chiba, Okajima, and Kanzaki's assault.*

Nagisa: And the alligator game... To test bravery and reaction time when the window of opportunity is brief...

Yada, Hayami, Mimura, and Muramatsu: *stands around a tall box, with an (almost real) alligator mouth, where the head and neck lead to a bag.*

Hayami: *nervously readies her hand, awaiting the alligator mouth, powered by RC mechanics, to prop open. When it does so, she jumps on the chance, throwing her arm through its maw, and
then taking a soda can out from the adjoining bag and then taking it back just as quickly. Her clenched fist is nearly scratched by the alligator's tooth coming down on it. Sighs a breath of relief.*

Mimura: *With his turn to snatch his refreshment, he puts his arm up in wait of the opening for a bite.*

Nagisa: *Yep... This is indeed training from Hell. Like Karasuma-sensei's. But from a different level. Before today, we were ready with all the skills we needed. But we still lacked the motivation to go for the kill - Ohno, whether he wanted to or not, and his presentation demoralized us. But now... I feel the killing instinct coursing through me. For the first time, I feel ready to save Kayano.*

-Two and a half of the three hours had been handled, and now is the time for our final exercise of the night.-

Lovro: "Alright, now, kids. This is the final part of your regime for today. First, I'd like our two leader students to step up."

Isogai and Kataoka: *step forward.*

Lovro: "Good. Now, turn to your peers, and take turns picking your teammates."

Isogai and Kataoka: *nods to Lovro, then to each other.* "You first, Kataoka."

Kataoka: "Okay... Karma."

Karma: *walks over to behind Kataoka.*

Isogai: "Nagisa."

Nagisa: *steps behind Isogai.*

-The teams had been made.-
-Team Isogai: Isogai, Nagisa, Nakamura, Kanzaki, Sugino, Maehara, Takebayashi, Kurahashi, Okajima, Sosuke, Fuwa, and Kimura.-
-Team Kataoka: Kataoka, Karma, Okano, Hayami, Chiba, Yada, Terasaka, Yoshida, Muramatsu, Hazama, Hara, and Mimura. (Okuda opted to spectate)-

Isogai: "Okay. Now what?"

Lovro: "Team Isogai, take a black-painted knife, and Team Kataoka, take a white-painted knife. The final exercise is a full-scale knife fight."

AssUniv: "!?

Lovro: "Something wrong?"

Kimura: "You want us to fight against each other?"

Lovro: "Can that not be done? It's like a game of dodgeball; only with knives, not even made of metal. If you all were training with me back when Irina was my protege, I'd have you practice with real, sharp ones."
AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "Sounds like we have nothing to worry about. We've done it before, anyways. And we're still pretty well stuck together, right?"

AssUniv: *stares at Karma.*

Isogai: "I suppose... Okay. Let's do it." *goes over to the table and collects his teams' knives.*

-Once everyone has brandished their weapons, they all stood by each other, and across from the other team.-

Lovro: "Alright. One clear strike, showing your knife's paint on your opponent, will eliminate them. The match does not end until all of one team is wearing their enemy's colors. No head strikes, but all other aspects of the body are grounds. Am I clear?"

AssUniv: "Yessir!"

Lovro: "Alright. Get ready... Three, two, one, fight!"

(Title screen; Theme: Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST track "Archnemesis"; open in a new tab to stay on this page: [link] )

チーム片岡対チーム磯貝

Team Isogai vs Team Kataoka

Okano: *falls into a single handstand, balancing her painted knife in between her feet, and swings like a helicopter, slashing paint onto Okajima.*

Lovro: "Out!" *thumbs Okajima to get off the field.*

Team Isogai/Kataoka: *disperses quickly to prevent the same attack. The line-ups were as follows: Isogai vs Yada, Nagisa vs Terasaka, Nakamura vs Hara, Kanzaki vs Okano, Sugino vs Karma, Maehara vs Hayami, Takebayashi vs Chiba, Kurahashi vs Hazama, Sosuke vs Yoshida, Fuwa vs Mimura, and Kimura vs Muramatsu and Kataoka.*

Nagisa spins his knife around his thumb while circling with Terasaka. The latter opts to strike first, throwing a lunge set to hit Nagisa's left shoulder, which Nagisa blocks. He continues the assault by swing diagonally downward, which Nagisa sidesteps, and follows with a bolo horizontal swing set for Terasaka's chest. Miraculously, Terasaka limbos underneath it, and then backhand slashes behind him, which Nagisa jumps away from.

Takebayashi throws a wild forearm swing towards Chiba, who ducks under it and gashes it on Takebayashi's stomach, painting white on him.*
Lovro: "Out!"

Nakamura feints movements from the right to left before doing a flop-trick, and as she falls, she throws her knife at Hara, letting it graze her right arm and leave some black paint. Out. (Isogai team: 10. Kataoka team: 11.)

Kimura, with his good speed, lets him dodge most of Yoshida and Kataoka's attacks, and then slip up Yoshida such that he can stab him from the back as he's off-balance. But that also left him open for Kataoka to charging tackle him and cut him too. Double out. (Isogai: 9. Kataoka: 10.)

Fuwa throws an empty can at Mimura as a distraction which lets her slash his block. Out. (Isogai: 9. Kataoka: 9.)

Sugino puts up a tough fight with Karma, swinging his knife with good, controlled ferocity, but Karma's combat expertise kicks in and catches Sugino at the end of his pattern, scratching the blade on his shoulder blade. Out. (Isogai: 8. Kataoka: 9.)

Sosuke dodges a lunge by Muramatsu, and then paints a Henna on the exposed arm. Out. (8, 8)

Hazama throws a "creepy surprise onto the ground near Kurahashi, scaring her enough for Hazama to sneak in with a dip of white paint on her forearm. Out. (7, 8)

Nagisa then sweeps Terasaka with a drop toe hold when he runs at him, making him easy prey to a cut on the leg. Out. (7, 7)

With the teams losing ranks, they rally back to friendly territory and then line up again. The new one-on-ones are this: Isogai vs Yada, Nagisa vs Okano, Nakamura vs Karma, Kanzaki vs Hazama, Maehara vs Chiba, Sosuke vs Kataoka, and Fuwa vs Hayami.

Isogai manages to goad Yada into attacking prematurely, letting Isogai to parry it with a quick cut on her wrist. Out (7, 6)

Kataoka continues her charging style, bashing Sosuke and stabbing him like a rhinoceros all the while. Out. (6,6)

Hayami baseball slides under Fuwa when she does a horizontal swing, and as she goes behind, taps Fuwa's heel with white paint. Out. (5, 6)

Isogai and Maehara retreat next to each other, where they both silently agree to rolling tackle Chiba, and a joining Kataoka. It is successful, and the two are about to take them out with a downwards stab. Hayami sees this and throws her knife at Isogai, just before he can finish Kataoka. Maehara manages to eliminate Chiba, but Kataoka recovers in time to take out Maehara. Defenseless, Nakamura manages to slip a paint line on Hayami. Quadruple out. (3, 4)

Kanzaki uses V.A.T.S. to target Hazama's weakest spot and exploits it. Out. (3, 3)

And now, the finale: Nagisa, Kanzaki, and Nakamura vs Kataoka, Karma, and Okano.

Nakamura: *locks blades with Kataoka.*

Kanzaki: *while fighting Karma, Okano kicks Nagisa closer to Nakamura and Kataoka, then*
sweeps Kanzaki's legs.*

Nakamura: "Nagisa! Save Kanzaki-san!"

Nagisa: *looks back, realizing Kataoka has her back turned to him. Instead of complying, her slashes Kataoka's back. Out.*

Kanzaki: *Karma finishes her with a downward stab. Out.*

Nakamura: "You fucking asshole! What the Hell!?"

Nagisa: *scoffs, then looks back, only just able to dodge Okano, who flips over him and swipes in a wide arc that knicks the preoccupied Nakamura. Out. It is now just Nagisa vs Okano and Karma. Nagisa does the line-up approach, trying to angle his perspective such that he only has to fight one opponent at a time. But this does not work because when Okano is place behind, she travels to any place with an opening, and eventually dices Nagisa, much to his frustration, with a cut to his shin. Final Out.*

Lovro: "And that's game! Team Kataoka is the winner!"

Nagisa: *stomps in anger.*

Nakamura: "Oh, you're mad? You don't get to be mad, Nagisa!"

Karma: "..."

Nagisa: "..."

Kanzaki: "Nakamura-san, it's fine. It's like Lovro said; it's just-"

Nakamura: "It ain't fine, and it ain't just a game, Kanzaki-san! You'd be dead right now if this was real!"

Nagisa: "And so would you, complaining in the middle of the battlefield. If you just went with the flow like I did, we'd might've at least lasted a little longer." *throws the painted knife away.*

Okano: "Who'd want to do that with you, with the way you've been acting lately?"

Nagisa: "Say again?"

Karma: "Nothing."

Okano: "Bu-"

Karma: "Nothing. Now, we have a long day tomorrow, so let's get outta here."

AssUniv: *watches on with mixed vexation and uneasiness.*

-AssUniv gets back on the bus to head back to Hotel Okura. It was all aggressive silence from the ride, to the elevator up.-

Nagisa: *goes to unlock his room and opens the door to get in.*
Isogai: "Nagisa, wait."

Nagisa: *looks back.*

Isogai: "We're all coming in."

Nagisa: "No thank you." *goes in and attempts to slam the door shut.*

Terasaka: *holds his hand out to block it.* "You little..." *throws the door back fully open for all the guys to come in.*

Nakamura: *proceeds to do the same thing, until the entire female board copies the guys' actions, and force their way into her room.*

Nagisa/Nakamura: "Get out of my room. All of you."

Karma/Kataoka: "Not going to happen, Nagisa. We're getting down to the root of everything in this room tonight."

Nagisa/Nakamura: "What more would you like to know? You already know why I'm such a, quote, 'dick.'"

Terasaka/Okano: "That ain't all of it. You and I, and all of us here know that there's more to it than that."

Nagisa/Nakamura: "Is that so?"

Isogai/Kanzaki: "Look, Nagisa/Nakamura, we want to help you. It's for the good of our friends, too. But we can't do that if you don't open up to us."

Maehara/Hayami: "Why don't you just tell us this, since you're so full of it: What do you hate? What's making you so angry?"

Nagisa/Nakamura: "You really want to know?"

All: "Yeah."

Nagisa/Nakamura: "Are you REALLY sure?"

All: "YES!"

Nagisa/Nakamura: "I HATE THIS! I HATE ALL OF IT!"

Ohno: *sitting on the balcony that is in between the two balconies that the gender-specific rooms are yelling from.* "..."
Honestly, I have no idea what I was thinking when I wrote this chapter. I just wanted an angst fest after reaching the lowest of my time. XD

And a cool transition to the finale of this story's arc.

Nagisa/Nakamura: "I HATE THIS! I HATE ALL OF IT!"

-On the boy's side...-

Terasaka: "Well, that much was obvious. Only now we realize what a dumb question that was..."

Maehara: "And why does everything suck again?"

Nagisa: "Because Kayano isn't here. Without her, it's no fun..."

Terasaka: "Ah, you're so full of shit! Karma filled me in on your conversations with Kayano, who had to tell someone about them. You barely conversed with her at all over the webchat! You're like a little kid who got mad because someone told you you couldn't play with a certain toy anymore! Before, you were like whatever, but once it's been labeled, you miss it!"

Nagisa: "Screw you! Maybe I was more on the receiving end, but that didn't mean it didn't matter! I paid attention! I took her words and advice to heart! And with her help, I was actually beginning to feel better! I thought that's what you all wanted!"

Isogai: "And now that the person who told you everything was good is gone, everything has gone to shit, eh?"

Nagisa: "Precisely!"

Sugino: "So, Nagisa, let me get this straight. You're telling me that your concrete future - accepted to one of the best schools for education degrees, in the middle of the city of endless possibilities (Tokyo), and a joint co-ed with high schools across the nation - is void because of this?"

Nagisa: "Yeah! With how much I backed Kayano over the years, there's no way I can just pretend she wasn't a part of that new life! If she isn't around, it wouldn't have happened! And that applies until the day I die!"

Takebayashi: "That's so stupid..."

Nagisa: "Excuse me?"

Takebayashi: "You're throwing away something that the entire Southeast Asian young adult population would kill themselves for. No... Far greater even than that! Those guys and girls just
want to get into a college! They have NO idea of what they want to do just yet! I know, because I'm just like that too! Ever since I was rejected from my top pick, I literally decided to let fate carry me in a direction. And I've yet to get a definitive calling. But you've got it so long ago, and you're casting it aside just like that!? Without a good idea of what that means to someone like me!"

Terasaka: "I'm with four-eyes, Nagisa. I said I wanted to be a politician. But four years have passed, and I am no closer to that! You could teach the entire monkey population in China basic sentences before I could run for a spot in the Ministries! You know, if you and I could switch places success-wise, I would do it in a heartbeat, and not feel guilty about it because of how selfish you are! Yeah! You're not selfless for giving it to me, you're selfish!"

Sugino: "I'm outraged by your remark too, Nagisa! As a baseball player, I'm a hardworker! I'll work until my bones grind for what's important to me, and what's important is my next life! I want to get into the pro leagues! Nippon! But when the scouts were at my university, and they saw my pitch, they told me it wouldn't make cut! So I just kept trying, and I still am, to get it to their satisfaction, and then make it even better! In this world, there's only two ways to be: tough, or talent. Nagisa, when a talent does not do his talent, the tough get mad! And guess who's toughed it out up until now?"

Chiba: "Seeing the future isn't something special. I look far into it as well, to see how me as an architect will be. And it's doing fine. But damn me if I ever decided to turn my back on it, even if it ain't fun anymore. Nagisa, if you quit just because of this, you're just not "Gender" person we know and love anymore."

Karma: "Pipe down, you all! I'm doing just fine, trying to be a politician myself. And I must say... It feels like shit! For fuck's sake, I hate all the rules! The regulations! When we mudsling, I kind of expect actual mud! But I so much as crease a fellow politician's lapel, and my career is over! Why must the future be so important!?"

Okajima: "Ain't that such a good question! Photography major, and I'm being chastised back and forth for taking them! Is it wrong for me to try out my trade wherever I go? Even if it's at the mall?"

Kimura: "The world needs rules! Number one guideline for an aspiring cop like me! Rules make it not just important, but essential! Imagine if Korosensei didn't follow the rules! Huh? It pains me not to jump at every chance I get because of it, but even I have to take a second and check over what damage has been done, as a police officer."

Maehara: "I don't have the time to stay in one place like you, Kimura! I wasted three years of high school not specializing in any subject, because I didn't want to think about what I wanted to do! Then I came to college undecided, and one year passed by! I have three years left to know what I want before I begin wasting time in best decade of our lives! I can't slow down; I can only run faster! And I hope, wherever I run to, has what I'm looking for!"

Yoshida: "It ain't about pacing with me, you two! Karma, you're right; the future can go screw itself! I'm halfway there to being a great mechanic, striving one day to design the best motorcycle to date! But I can't get anywhere near them! No patrician in this country will willingly hand over their precious vehicle to a not-engineer like me! The closest I've got to one lately was Ohno's Hayabusa, which he, for some reason, ain't driving no more!"

Muramatsu: "Oh, it's true! It's true! If you don't got name, you don't mean shit in your industry! The only way for an unknown chef to make it big before I'm forty is to beat a known chef! But
how the Hell am I gonna do that!? I barely have my ramen recipes down."

Mimura: "The movie companies only want directors named Hitoshi and Nagoshi right now...

Sosuke: "Amen. Damn, that feeling sucks."

Isogai: "Not as much as knowing that you can't help your family, despite all of your success! Though I personally don't know what's my future yet, I'm almost certain with my good grades that it's going to be something good. But then the siblings tell me that our mother is now down with something bad, and she barely had enough to cover hospital bills! I wanted to go back and do something about it like I've always, but she begged us all to just keep studying. It hurts that I can't do anything!"

Male Students: "..."

-And on the girls' side...-

Okuda: "That much is observed. Now how so?"

Nakamura: "It's nothing like it used to be! Nagisa isn't the visibly vulnerable little guy he originally was! That person wouldn't act like a fucking buzzkill 24/7! He'd tell us what he sees when something clearly ain't right! And he wouldn't think twice when Kanzaki is in danger!"

Hara: "You're not wrong there..."

Nakamura: "Oh, but it's not just him! Where's the thrill of being an assassin? Karasuma and Bitch-sensei just make it feel like we must be assassins, and nothing else! There's no trips across the country or around the world to get our eyes stimulated! And that 'makes everyone uncomfortable' Ohno certainly ain't helping us feel at home here! Giving us a place to stay and a place to train isn't enough!"

Kataoka: "Nakamura, is that what you've been wanting all of this time? To return to the good 'ol days?"

Nakamura: "Am I in the wrong if I am? Do you know what my time away from the good 'ol days was? I had a study abroad program all the way in California, USA. My mastery of the English language, coupled with a flawless complexion if I do say so myself, garnered the attention of reality TV scouts, who wanted to appear in some comedy programs!"

Fuwa: "Hey, remember probably seeing one of those. What was it, 'Just for Giggles'? Ah, but don't quite see the problem here."

Nakamura: "The problem was that it was a serious comedy! You had to be on your toes because the next thing you know, you could be the next one in the hot seat! The pressure of worrying about that is exhausting! At least here, I was unchallenged. Okay, maybe Karma gave me a run for my money sometimes, but not because I screwed up! That's where I learned that I can't stand being serious! Never! I liked it here, where that didn't matter! But now it does, and I hate it!"

Hazama: "You really think you have it bad? Imagine your hysterical mother bashing you every other day for studying to be a librarian, and saying 'get a job that actually does help people!' You can't handle a few wise-ass commentators potentially mocking you? Give me a fucking break!"
Okano: "How do you it, Hazama? How do you be your own change, not letting anything else change you? Without a clear major in my mind, all I'm thinking about is the universe giving me a sign. Any sign! And then I got it - the sign of me coming back here after some tragic news. But then I realized something... I just keep letting my surroundings do the work for me! I want to move because of me and me alone! Why? Because when I purposefully move, I know I'm in control of my destiny! No more waiting!"

Okuda: "Change... Isn't always for the better you know..." *sigh* "I... wanted to prove to the legacy Korosensei left behind that I hadn't forgotten his lesson; conversation is just as important as every other aspect to chemistry. So, I mused through dictionary after dictionary and up my dialogue, making sure I could say something thirty different ways. But despite now being able to do that... My self-teaching has provided an external–side effect, which is a sort of emptiness, now that it has been complete. That maybe this wasn't actually what I wanted, or what Korosensei, or anyone else wanted..."

Fuwa: "At least you've been doing what you were doing because, at the time, you thought it was essential to the other thing you wanted to do, Okuda-san. Me on the other hand... I'm technically striving to be an editor for the news, and maybe TIME. But I'm just so distracted... I'm just critiquing manga all the time. What a waste, right? What if I do that once college is over? It's too much of a gamble."

Hayami: "Ah, you're fine, Fuwa-san. It's me who's in the deep. I've got my Jazz dancing, my business persona, and my sniping ability. But once an assassination is done, I saw that I didn't really have anything to go back to. It's not like I feel totally empty or anything, but I would have liked something to do in the life front. So, I followed Chiba around, from his high school to his college, and felt happy being able to support him as he got further in his career as an architect. And it's not like he abused my trust or anything, but now that I'm around him, I can't think about myself."

Kurahashi: "I can't stop thinking about myself... I want to respect Karasuma and Bitch-sensei's love life. They deserved it after all they've been together. I know why, but why? Why can't I ever be comfortable with it? Why do I just keep thinking somehow it'll work with me and him? Argh, I hate myself so much... What'll I do once I go insane from it?"

Yada: "Don't worry, Kurahashi-san. I'll be there for you... That's all I seem to be good at. Or was. I can't get anything going for myself. Nigh-perfect grades and Dean's List in a Business Major, and no one wants to take a chance on me. I then turned back to this, setting up the webchat that got us all together again. But look where it led us to now. God, maybe they were right in not scouting me. The one time I try hard to do something, it fails miserably..."

Hara: "No, Yada-san, this isn't your fault. It was mine. I thought I was making sure 100% of me was going to all of you, but I see clearly with the many issues presented so far that I haven't done enough. Now I know what that feeling I kept having was when I turned to competitive eating... Guilt from regret. Arguably the worst kind."

Kataoka: "No, Hara. You've given us all that you could in terms of motherly care. I should've stuck by as a leader to all of you... But I didn't... Because I worried more about my future. A future that I don't know yet. Isn't that pathetic? In an internal question over what's more important to me: what is, and what will be... 'Will be' takes it. It's called 'will be' for a reason, me! Damn!"

Okuda: "Well, it seems we all have some big problems..."
Female Students: "...

-After both genders expelled their most grieving wounds to everyone else, they silently agreed to leave it at that, going through the doors they forced themselves into and back to their own rooms.-

    Ohno: *scratches the back of his head while thinking about all that he heard.*

-The next day...-

- Class 3-E did not have a very good sleep that night, needless to say. And without a good sleep, they didn't train physically too well. Karasuma and Irina, who were out of Hotel Okura the whole time that night, watched with quite some unsatisfactory surprise as AssUniv falters and fumbles through assassination lessons once more.-

-Before Ohno's class...-

    Ohno: *looks outside from the window of his classroom, seeing all of AssUniv in horse stances with their hands extended and holding medicine balls as punishment for a disappointing show.*

    Karasuma: "Ohno!"

    Ohno: "What?"

    Karasuma: "Did you do something to dishearten them? They're completely wrecked!"

    Ohno: "I did nothing. I slept in, like I usually did."

    Karasuma: "Which means that..." *widens his eyes.* "Lovro! He did this, with whatever training he made them do!"

    Irina: "I wouldn't be too surprised..."

    Ohno: "You two, don't worry about a thing. I have this covered."

    Karasuma: "What? What are you scheming?"

    Ohno: "Just trust me, okay? Trust a murderer! Now get out of my classroom; it's almost time."

    Karasuma and Irina: "..." *depart.*

-A few minutes later...-

    Isogai: "Alright, guys, time for another academics class with Ohno-kun."

    Terasaka: "I don't think even his lessons and the antics that ensue will get our hopes up."

    Okuda: "We can at least watch and find out, everyone." *opens the door.*

    AssUniv: *eyes widen.*

    Ohno: *sitting on his teaching desk, his eyes have been blindfolded with a pure-white bandanna.* "Welcome, class. Take your seats."
AssUniv: "Uh..." *do so.*

Karma: *takes a seat several rows from where he originally sits.*

Ohno: "Someone's in a seat that's always been unoccupied. Can that person go to where they usually do? I know who you are."

Karma: *internally scoffs, before going to his regular spot.*

Ohno: "Thank you. I appreciate it."

Yada: "Um, Ohno-sensei, what's this about?"

Ohno: "Firstly, Yada-san, don't refer to me as Ohno-sensei. We're all assassins in training, so 'Ohno' is enough. And secondly, instead of the usual thing we do in academics class, this time, I'll let you guys ask the questions to the things you really want answers for."

Yoshida: "Really now?"

Ohno: "Yes. I'm blindfolded, because recently I've been getting a feeling that I intimidate you all with my stare. Whether that's true or not, I don't care. If this is what it takes for you to be unrestricted with me, than I'll do it. But of course, I have some other rules: You can't ask me any questions personal to me, and please, no attacking me with knives and guns."

AssUniv: *look at each other.*

Nagisa: What is this stunt? To show that he's impartial in every way to us, so now he thinks he can bond with us?

Ohno: "Alright. Questioning begins... Now."

Karma: "Hey Ohno, is this exercise a huge waste of time?"

Ohno: "Only if you let it."

Terasaka: "And how do we know if we're letting it?"

Ohno: "A wise man once told me 'don't ask questions for answers you don't want to hear.'"

Fuwa: "Who's the wise man who told you that?"

Ohno: "Are you sure that's what you really want to know?"

Fuwa: "Yes."

Ohno: "Are you REALLY sure?"

AssUniv: *realizes that Ohno had heard the whole thing last night.*

Fuwa: "On second thought, maybe not."
Ohno: "Okay. Next question."

Yada: "Um, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Yes?"

Yada: "I've been wanting to know the answer to this for a while now... I want a certain group to notice me. See me for all of my promise. But without any notable experience, they don't give me the chance. What should I do?"

Ohno: "I say... You encounter someone with notable experience. And then you get him to tell the world about you."

Yada: "But that's my problem. The people with notable experience don't encounter me."

Ohno: "Ah, for business maybe. But what about for something else? It's not like business is a closed topic; we talk about everything. Connections are closer that they may appear, Yada-san. Open your eyes."

Okuda: "Uh, Ohno... Has my language been an impediment to you at all?"

Ohno: "Why, negative, Okuda-san. Your vernacular is unmistakably unobjectionable. Actually, I quite exalt you for such a dialect; it has embellished my estate with a magnanimous amount of engrossment for our interests. And that ain't no gibberish."

Okuda: *smiles, then sits down again.*

Sugino: "Ohno - What do you make of a situation when you're good at something through skill, and you see someone who is naturally good at something, and they decide not to do that something."

Ohno: "Even for someone you care about, you shouldn't worry about that. It was their choice. You only worry about you and your skill; you worked hard to get to where you were, and I don't think you want to see it go down in flames."

Sugino: *looks over to Nagisa a bit.* "Thanks." *sits down.*

Isogai: "Ohno, I have trouble at home. I want to do something, but the trouble doesn't let me. I'm here with an anvil on my heart, and if something more happens, I won't forgive myself. What should I do?"

Ohno: "You're standing there, surrounded by more than twenty of your peers. And they have parents too. Are you telling me all your old folks aren't friends, who look out for each other just as much as you and they do?"

Isogai: "I... never thought about that!"

Kataoka: "Of course, Isogai. Your mother's condition didn't go unnoticed. We swept in as soon as we heard to help her out."

Isogai: "Yeah... I'm not alone. Thank you guys..." *tears a bit.*
Ohno: "Next."

Hara: "Ohno, is it okay that I feel partially responsible for the difficulties that ones close to me feel? I know almost certainly that I could've done something to regulate it."

Ohno: "You're a good friend, Hara-san. It's natural to feel bad when a friend does. But there comes a point when we all realize that the percentage of responsibility is too little for it to be blood on your hands when it goes wrong. If you're not the 51%, don't lose yourself and sleep over it."

Hara: *surprised by the answer.*

Ohno: "Besides, moping over a misfortune is not what matters. That's not what you should do as a friend. As a friend, you should be doing all you can to make them feel better afterwards. If their past and present is too large to manage, their future certainly isn't."

Hara: "Thank you, Ohno-kun."

Terasaka: "Hey, Ohno - What do you say to a person who keeps giving it his all, and never quite makes it?"

Ohno: "That's the raison d'etre of every politician, isn't it? Every few years, we have a general election in the House of Representatives to bring in the next Prime Minister of Japan, or reelect him. Out of usually nine politicians, only one takes the cake. Does that mean the other eight people are toast? Of course not; They were so close, they tasted it. And so long as it tasted good, they'd go for it. Basic life science that applies particularly well to diehard people like them."

Kurahashi: "Ohno... Have you ever loved someone you can't have?"

Ohno: "Personal question, but I'll answer it anyways. Yeah, I have."

Kurahashi: "What did you do about it?"

Ohno: "... I met them every day, with a nod, a wink, and a smile, and then I walked away. Because I cared about myself too much."

Kurahashi: "What?"

Ohno: "I cared about myself enough that I was not going to force myself to endure love-induced suffering. Yes, it hurt for me to let go, but if I didn't, I don't know if I would be here."

Kurahashi: "..." *sits.*

Yoshida: "Ohno! Where's your Hayabusa?"

Ohno: "In the shop. I wanted to give my Midnight Star, as well as my other rides, a taste of asphalt for once."

Yoshida: *almost leaves his dignity when he hears that Ohno had a Midnight Star motorcycle.* "T-thank you." *sits.*

Karma: "Ohno, have you ever done something for so long, then realized one day that this wasn't all that it hyped up to be? And if so, where did you go from there?"
Ohno: "I did... It bored the Hell out of me. But I told myself that the view of the mountain is best at its peak. The sides of it, they're good to see the sky above... Not if there's trees though. But at the unrestricted top, you can see how far you came, and how farther you can go. So, while I was pained with that activity, I just pushed to continue. Because I wanted to see the top."

Muramatsu: "Hey, Ohno, you said earlier that connections are an important factor to success in material arts? Could you elaborate on that?"

Ohno: "Yeah... I was once told money didn't matter; power was the one factor that decided your fate. Of course, that was only after I had become a USD billionaire..."

AssUniv: "Billionaire!?"

Ohno: "This place cost me almost 180 million yen (1.68 million USD), you know. But back to the point - Power. Those that have it are the valkyries of life. Those that don't, have to make way to the ones that do. Until we have a more perfect world, that's the only thing I swore to forever respect. It doesn't what kind of power it is; if you can get somewhere with it, I'll applaud you. And I adore quests for power; they are fun to watch. See how a man, or woman, without power develops once they gain it. So... No need to thank me for helping you out on your tight situations. It's all my pleasure."

AssUniv: *realizes the analogy and examples.*

Nagisa: "But Ohno," *stands up.* "You didn't say where you personally stood in terms of power. What would you say you are?"

Ohno: "...I'm weak. Or at least I want to be."

AssUniv: "!?

*Bell rings outside.*

Ohno: "Huh, my class is over." *takes off the blindfold.* "Guess its language time." *smiles.*

Nagisa: Whether he wanted to tell us why he's here, or why we're here, either way, he succeeded. Maybe he won in both.

Karasuma: *looking through an indoor window.* When they all got to look into Ohno's eyes again after the class, they didn't see a murderer. They didn't see a crazy, mysterious person. They saw just a person who, if not understood their drawbacks, didn't worry about them. And that person had a simple, philosophical counter to everything.

-Irina's language class, and Karasuma's tactics class went off without any of the previous impediments. It seemed as though AssUniv seemed to understand what was to be achieved in that room during that hour. -

-Back at Hotel Okura, in Karasuma and Irina's room-

Karasuma: "It took you this close to breaking all of your cover. But you put them back in the mood, at least for today. Uh, thanks."
Ohno: *bows.* "You're welcome."

Karasuma: "I also praise you for seeking the root of their difficulties and exposing it to us without sounding too invading. But that brings up another issue entirely; that stunt you pulled won't work forever, and their futures are something even you can't comprehend."

Ohno: "For good reason. But my plan isn't finished. By tomorrow night, I may not have solved their problems, but I will have at least appeased them. Just pushed them out of the way long enough to do what they came here to do."

Karasuma: "I'd really like to see that."

Ohno: "Oh you will. Because part of the plan is that tomorrow, you'll be with them the whole time, in urban Kyoto."

Karasuma: "What?"

Ohno: "They're badly shaken, especially after what happened in my classroom. They'll need to recuperate for a morning and afternoon, and with the stress and angst coursing through them, you can definitely agree."

Karasuma: "I... Suppose so."

Ohno: "Hey," *pats Karasuma on the shoulder.* "The deadline isn't for another month. We can suffice," *checks his watch.* "An additional eight hours of rest to provide for them. They deserve it. Or are you forgetting what else these assassins of yours are?"

Karasuma: "No, I'm not. But why can't I just leave Irina with them and tag along with you and see the second part of your plan?"

Ohno: "Oh, I don't think you wanna do that, not since hearing and reading sly notes in class about Irina's suggestive moment in the other hotel. Man, I must've really missed something," *checks his watch.* "Two months back when I went to save all your asses!"

Karasuma: "Okay, enough! Fine, I'll keep them occupied."

Ohno: "Thank you." *leaves the room. When he gets into his room, he closes the door and the balcony screens, and flips open his phone to dial Hyun.* "Hey, Hyun."

Hyun: "Yo, Ohno-kun!"

Ohno: "You kept busy with what I've been giving ya?"

Hyun: "Yeah, no doubt. But, Ohno, out of all the things I've amassed, I can't put two and two together between that Shinsuke guy and the Reclamation Society. They both have a common enemy - you, but how could Shinsuke have known the Reclamation Society wanted you?"

Ohno: "Most likely he didn't, since he didn't recognize me when I stepped out of the cover. He played the hunch, hearing of a local myth in Kyoto, known for dispensing his own sense of justice to anything that wrongs."

Hyun: "So you righted some wrong of his at one point?"
Ohno: "You can say that."

Hyun: "You're everywhere today, Ohno-kun. I'm going to need more information, lest I think this another major event of the Apocalypse timeline."

Ohno: "That's all you get today, Doomsday man. Thanks for sticking by my side all this time. I'll see you again when I can get more info on the case."

Hyun: "Do so, Ohno. For the sake of your country and mine." *hangs up.*

Ohno: *My country...* *lies back on his bed to contemplate that.*
Chapter Summary

Ohno's little stunt in the classroom seems to have brought a lot of attention to the psychological health of most of the student-assassins, and so Karasuma has decided to give them a brief, and I mean very brief, reprieve from training. Ohno, meanwhile, has one more matter to settle...

-Another morning, and everyone gets up to face another Hellish training day. Except...-

AssUniv: "Class is cancelled!"

Karasuma: "No, it's not cancelled. You're just having it much later; 4 P.M."

Yada: "Why's that, Karasuma-sensei?"

Karasuma: "I figured during your lackluster performances, and confirmed with the unique class you had with Ohno yesterday, that you all had some beasts in the basement going on. I'd like you give you all some time to appease them a bit. Sleep some more, take some walks, study, or whatever with the eight free hours you're getting, everyone. It'll be the only long break you're getting this Summer." *walks to the elevator.*

AssUniv: "..."

Nagisa: "What a waste of time. We should be training."

Karma: "I can't really deny that, actually."

Hazama: "Then go train. For me, I'm getting the most of this little hiatus." *walks to the elevator to return to her room.*

Sugino: "Amen to that." *goes to the breakfast area.*

-The rest of AssUniv starts scattering around the Hotel Okura for their R&R.-

-On the rooftops...-

Kataoka, Okano, Maehara, and Kimura: *free-running on Kyoto's low-rise.*

Okano: "You guys don't think that Karasuma is thinking of just sending us back, do you?" *swings off a non-clothed flag pole to another rooftop.*

Maehara: "Why would he? We're almost two months into this; we might as well end it. Karasuma likes to end things he starts." *runs and slides underneath a ventilation shaft, then off a roof to descend onto a lower roof.*
Kimura: "But Karasuma sees the spectrum of our limiting setbacks right now. They can't just be thrown away. He understands as much for us." *running jumps onto a tall roof's side, then front flip-lands onto another parapet ten feet on the other side of a high fall.*

Kataoka: "We've pulled through our fatal shortcomings before. With this routine's help before. We can do it again." *climbs over a tall wall, then precision-jumps to the next roof, rolling as she lands.*

All: *finish at the rooftop behind Hotel Okura. Some were a little winded, having not done a good run like that since their breakdown.*

Okano: "I don't know... Maybe this time there's more to it than that."

Kataoka: "..."

-At a nearby batting center-

Terasaka: "So what did you think of what Ohno said?"

Karma: "What about what Ohno said?"

Yoshida: "Maybe his Midnight Star! Yeah!"

Terasaka: "No, I was thinking of his answers to your specific questions."

Muramatsu: "I don't know what to think after that strange display..."

Sugino: *cracks a triple-run with the latest turn at bat.* "I think, that Ohno is right."

The Other Five: *stare at him from behind the cage and nets.*

Sugino: "What?" *turns his attention back to the automatic pitcher.* "Why shouldn't I think about myself? That's the reason why I got this far. And yet I'm still doing just fine around you guys, aren't I?"

Yoshida: "Just."

Terasaka: "Karma, he answered one of your personal questions. What's your response?"

Karma: *thinks about it for a moment.* "It was a very interesting analogy... But it makes a lot of sense. And he's right; achievers dealt with a lot of shit on their road to the future. But once they make it there, they became the ones who could look down on everything. I always knew I wanted that; I only know now how much I wanted it though. So hey, Ohno is of some help."

Sugino: "Unh!" *smashes a fastball pitch into a homerun monitor.* "What about you Muramatsu? About the power?"

Muramatsu: "It got me considering some stuff, surely. Connections have always been a driving force in the world; the best universities are heavily reliant on the amount of networking they have. So if I can find the chance to meet a great chef in my life, I can likely get myself somewhere."

Karma: "And you, Terasaka? You had something important answered too."
Terasaka: "Mmm... I won't say I'm a diehard for the PM position, but it is my top dream in life in comparison to much else. So, I'd say he nailed it with me as well."

All six: "..."

-At the Cafe Lec Court...-

Fuwa, Hazama, Kanzaki, Okuda, and Hayami: *sits at one round table enjoying some coffee.*

Hayami: "I still find the blindfold thing with Ohno unsettling..."

Kanzaki: "Why is that, Hayami-san?"

Hazama: "Maybe the lack of a reason why is the main cause."

Okuda: "Ohno-kun did mention that he couldn't help but feel as though we felt threatened by his gaze. I won't deny that allegation."

Hazama: "Neither will I, but there was still something that discomforted us with that."

Hayami: "I was led to believe it served a higher purpose."

Fuwa: "I got it! Ohno-kun was secretly telling us what his imperfection was!"

Other Five: "Come again?"

Fuwa: "He only sees everything now because he was once blinded by a perception of reality! We never get the big picture of all that is around us until we are thrown into the lower parts of that area and take it all in. Pay close attention to Ohno's words; didn't he sound like all of the questions he had to answer were tragic remembrances? It's just like those tales such as King Lear, The Matrix, and Daredevil! Hellyeah!"

Hazama: "I don't know if Daredevil is the best example of that..."

-Nagisa, having moved the furniture and tables in his room to the walls, practices some more knifework. Isogai consistently checks his phone, awaiting an "okay" message from his mother. Okajima cleans his specialized camera and reviews some of his previous shots. Kurahashi looks over her biology textbook, specifically the mating behaviors section. Sosuke starts drawing on his notepad an abstract of his practice UCP pistol, held up slightly by a Larsen Combatives knife. Takebayashi opens up his gigantic yearbook, given to him by a late teacher, and moves the mounds of pages to a reference area filled with some information that keeps him wondering. Chiba, finished with a sketch of the Kyoto Tower, actively checks his work. Nakamura plays an online video of her appearing in one of the TV shows, wincing at her "fake" smiles. Hara considers calling room service, but a few seconds into the call, and the staff asking her what she would like, she hangs up suddenly. Mimura looks over the latest script project he made before the Summer.

They all individually tackle the morning and afternoon, clearly with their inner demons still haunting them. But at least for now, they feel relieved.-

-Meanwhile...-
Ohno: *lying supine on his bed, with his phone right next to him, both staring up at the ceiling. He didn't get much sleep, but he's always been able to operate that way.*

*Phone rings. Ohno looks at it, and then answers.* "Shoot." *listens to viewer-inaudible dialogue.* "So it's ready, huh?" *listens.* "Alright. So it's all up to me now. Don't worry; I have it covered. See you soon." *hangs up. Gets up and puts on a new set of street clothes to hit the mysterious, possibly new show on the road.*

*goes down to the garage, picking out his Yamaha Midnight Star, and drives out, heading towards his Mount Atago settlement. He makes it there, before going into each of the assorted houses - the classroom, the indoor training arena (in case of heavy rain), the recreational room, barracks, armory, and so on. He finishes by sliding the door into a Jade Palace-styled martial arts dojo, with eight pillars, four on the right and left, supporting the slightly-windowed ceiling. At the far front from where he walked in, was an honorable layout of presumably special weapons, and kanji scriptures.*

*Walks into the dojo, before beginning to kindle a clove cigarette with his dragon lighter.*

_Hyun: *in memory.* "Do so, Ohno. For the sake of your country and mine."

Ohno: *inhalès, then exhales.* _My country, huh? Funny..._

???: *voice projects from behind him.* "Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *isn't surprised by the sudden guest.* "Well, what brings you here, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "You."

Ohno: *laughs.* "Heh, I knew before long your fascination for me would get so strong. But you gotta fight it, Naoko-san! Your former classmates could be coming here at any second, ready to blow your cover!"

Naoko: "No, they won't be. I've been keeping a good eye on you, you know, Ohno-kun. Ever since our last investigation with your friend Hyun."

Ohno: "Did you now?"

Naoko: "Yeah. Secretly bugging your classroom and hotel room during the time you were away from those locations, getting to hear all that you had to say to people that weren't me. You telling Karasuma that you have some big plan for today, and then you confirm with another friend of yours that it's happening tonight?"

Ohno: "You caught me; I was going to order a pizza and play the new Resident Evil with some college mates from Daikyodai. Come on, agent, take me away." *starts inhaling again.*

Naoko: "Stop bullshitting me!" *punches a pillar of the dojo, causing a large imprint on it.*

Ohno: "Hey, hey, don't damage my Santos Mahogany!"

Naoko: "You know something or things about this case that you aren't telling me. Like how you would even come to think of believing that my friends are not actually in any sort of trouble. They've been in danger since the Reclamation Society got their eyes on them."
Ohno: "You heard Hyun; they couldn't be in any real danger, or the kidnappers would have no use holding on to them. The Society would do all of the answer-seeking they'd need on their own."

Naoko: "And how could you know that? Unless, you were a part of it the whole time."

Ohno: "I am?"

Naoko: "Don't lie to me! Why did you suddenly volunteer your assets to our fight? Were you keeping track of all of us, so that you can help the kidnappers stay one step ahead? Keep everyone in one place and give them the Summer to get their hopes falsely up?"

Ohno: "Why would I want to terrorize a shaken band of college students, when I'm already doing that to a whole other, larger demographic?"

Naoko: "Because of that around your neck!" *points to Ohno's grandfather's dog tags.* "That accessory; the accessory of traitors!"

Ohno: *gets really mad, then eases it* "Don't you dare bring family into this..."

Naoko: "Then tell me what your plan is!"

Ohno: "I can't do that. the fewer people know it, the more likely AssUniv can pull it off." *starts waving the cigarette down below, causing the embers to die out. He then flicks it into a trash bin nearby.*

Naoko: "Damn you! If you won't talk, I'll make you!"

Ohno: "Oh? How will you do that?"

Naoko: "RAAAAAH!~" *sprints at nigh-superhuman speeds at Ohno.*

Ohno: *side-steps her charge.*

Naoko: *cuts on a dime so well, it makes an Olympic runner envious. She sneaks under Ohno's left arm, throws her hand underneath Ohno's shirt and tee, and pulls out one of his Kimber Warrior pistols.*

Ohno: *when they both turn to face each other, Ohno quickly does a simultaneous double hand-chop to disarm Naoko, and when the pistol falls, he throws his right leg underneath to catch it. Knowing Naoko will pull out her Pardini, He takes out his other Kimber and they both aim at each other, though Ohno is balancing himself to gently put his first Kimber onto the ground.*

Naoko: *still training her Pardini on Ohno.* "Once a criminal, always a criminal. Am I right?"

Ohno: *Kimber remains pointed at Naoko.* "There are things that a cop can do that a criminal can't do. But vice versa is also the same."

Naoko: "Yeah? Like what? Rob a bank? Drive cars as maniacally as you can? Murder?"

Ohno: *gets even madder, but controls it.* "You're so misguided. Too by the books."
Naoko: "Answer the question!"

Ohno: "You know, in all honesty, I hate guns. I don't like to solve things with them; they make everything too easy. Easy is boring. So, I'll tell you what; I'll throw my pistols to the side, and you do the same, and then we can use this dojo as it was supposed to. If you beat me, I'll confess to everything. Deal?"

Naoko: *shakes while aiming her pistol.* "Alright." *lowers her Pardini.*

Ohno: "That's more like it." *copies. They both then set down their custom handguns on the ceremonial table in the front. They move to the center, with their backs alongside each other. They then take two steps away.* Naoko's mind is totally wrought with confusion... Her inner world is collapsing at the reality of the situation. And it manifested as this. *Ohno and Naoko then turn to face each other.* I need to get some sense into her. One way or another. *Then, once something clicked in their minds, stopping their meditations, Ohno does a spinning hook kick to the air before returning to a bouncing tree-root stance, signifying the activation of his "B-Boy" Style. Naoko gets into the military textbook's fighting stance, with her fists at neck-level resembling that of a boxer.*

(Title Screen; Theme: Ryu Ga Gotoku: Ishin's OST Theme "Fiercest Warrior"; Click on a new tab to stay on this page)

秋元直子対和彦大野

Kazuhiko Ohno; Okinawa International Penitentiary Parolee

Vs

Akimoto Naoko; Ministry of Defense Common Institutions Agent

*Naoko again charges right in, throwing a quick, left-handed jab at Ohno, which the latter quickly bobs his head away from. Naoko does not wait for him to move again and launches a lightning roundhouse kick with her right leg. Ohno avoids it by "cutting a dime" and pivoting his head an obtuse angle, so that his longitude was parallel to the kick's trajectory, albeit just underneath it. He continues to follow the "current" of the attack, and no-hand cartwheels back to a proper standing position, to keep himself from leaning on his back leg too much.

Naoko, thrown for a loop on how quickly Ohno recovered from the first string of attacks, grew a little hasty and instinctively moved for a high left kick. Ohno saw it coming a mile away and crouched down to heel sweep Naoko's standing leg, causing her to trip. As she lays supine, Ohno frontflips in the air and attempts an overhead axe kick to Naoko's chest, which she blocks with her knees up. She pushes them up while rolling back up to a standing position. Ohno keeps the pressure on her with a full-line sprint. Naoko intends to put him down with a spinning hook, pivoting her lead foot an inverse 360 degrees to meet her heel in his face, but Ohno falls on his knees once more, evading the kick and landing a 540 as he stands upright again.*

Naoko: *walks backwards, putting her hand to her pinkened cheek.*
Ohno: "Jeez, it's like all you know about fighting came from a book. You know, while you were reading 'the book of police combat,' I was writing the book on how to defeat it!"

Naoko: *becomes more determined.* "Then how about you read me the first chapter?" *returns to form ready-stance.*

Ohno: *snickers* "Very well." *returns to his back-lean stance.*

*He leads this time, falling back onto one hand, which he leans to do air flares in place, winding him up like a drill that he sends at Naoko. The latter avoids with a dive-roll to one direction. She uses that moment for Ohno to get back into stance to dash towards him and double instep-kick to his chin. Ohno manages to bob his head away from both, but the top of his forehead is grazed by an axe kick as she drops back down to the floor. The impact regardless was so strong that Ohno slid back a decent distance - Naoko is way stronger than she looks.

Naoko pursues the briefly stunned Ohno, flying in with a side kick in the air. Ohno backs up until he is forced to lie supine, and dodge it on the ground, causing Naoko's leg to land a bit awkwardly as she falls on top of him. Ohno takes this moment to flip her off of him, and then backflip into a double knee drop that intends to crush her lungs. Naoko barrel-rolls just in side, and then sweeps a low roundhouse kick to damage Ohno's lower limbs. Ohno hops over this, and then stands on his head to do a modified 2000s spin, that catches Naoko's face with his ankle at least twice, causing her fall into a seated position. As she gets up again, Ohno moves forward with air flares and gremlin spins that trip up Naoko so that he can baseball-slide in for a drop toe hold, putting Naoko again prone on the hardwood.

Ohno lets go of Naoko's legs and rolls over towards Naoko's rising upper body, and lifts his foot for an instep to her temporal lobe. Naoko just manages to cover it up, but Ohno just moves his shin to the other side and constricts her in a suspended figure-four necklock. Naoko chokes a bit before refocusing and using her sheer power to get back on her feet and lift Ohno up, hanging as he was like a lobster bib. She then pokes her arm through one side and breaks the hold, and follows it up with a simultaneous forearm smash to Ohno's jewels. As Ohno responds, Naoko puts both of her hands on the back of his head and falls forward, driving Ohno's head into the ground. As he gets up, Naoko keeps her hold on his hair, and prepares to punt kick his face, but Ohno holds onto her hand, tucks his head into his chest, and then tilts, causing Naoko to be thrown a decent business away.

Ohno wipes his lips a bit before activating his "God Hand" style. He slides like a kickboxer towards Naoko, which slips her up enough to force a jump from her. Naoko quickly converts the involuntary leap into an angled roundhouse kick, that Ohno parries by putting his left hand to the back of his head and whipping his outwards elbow at her incoming shin. It didn't break her leg, but it was surely powerful, such that when she lands, it still stung with tremendous pain. As Naoko went on one knee to temporarily alleviate it, Ohno threw a right overhead punch intended for Naoko's temple, which she dodged by switching arm-lean. She could definitely feel his fist cause the strands of her hair in its way to bend immediately into a semi-square from the collision, and then return to free form.

Naoko then takes her good leg and spears Ohno with a side kick from the ground, giving her enough breathing room to pound some circulation into her bad limb and dull the pain. She rises up to her feet with no more difficulty. Ohno skid in and took the fight to the close upper-level; they both stood their ground as they avoided and blocked blows in an acute arc, and launched blows that only each other had a good chance at anticipating. Naoko then took a lead with a charging right
punch that Ohno limbos under, causing her to hit the pillar. She causes a huge mini-crater in the hardwood! Seeing Naoko continue with an other-hand backfist, he flanks it. They continue to exchange a series of boxing blows before a cross-punch reels the both and prompt them to step back.

Ohno recovered from the jaw-breaking blow and skated again over to his opponent to throw a tight uppercut, with added range from his last skip. Naoko jumped in an arc onto her hands to clear herself from the clout, and launched herself off the ground with a conjoined front kick that nearly pushes through Ohno's full-crouch coverup. Seeing the attack fail, she jumped off of Ohno's guard, using her sheer power to push the more experienced Ohno down. Ohno gets back up, but sees that Naoko is nowhere to be found. He looks around, unaware that Naoko has hid herself high up one of the many pillars in the dojo. When Ohno turns away just enough, Naoko swings herself off of the pillar to tackle him to the ground, just as he realizes her. Naoko, taking a full mount, starts pummeling Ohno's Keysi block, but begins to get frustrated that she cannot put a clean hit. Ohno mounts a return offensive, first by locking Naoko's last right punch between his left arm and his right shoulder, and then throwing a quick right hook that shakes Naoko, but she can't escape with her arm still trapped. This makes her vulnerable to a wushu backfist, and then finally an uppercut, before he pushes her off of him.

Ohno starts to get up, but then Naoko renews her resolve, and pounces on top of his back, and starts pummeling his head with punches, and hammer fists to his sides. Ohno goes into full turtle-guard to defend, but then Naoko slips her slender arms around his torso and locks them. She then deadlifts Ohno for an impressive German suplex that rattles Ohno's upper back. But Naoko did not release the belt; she back-rolled over Ohno and presses him up again for another German! Following a perfect bridge, textbook as it is, Naoko turns on her side back to a standing position to finish a trilogy of throws. But Ohno has had enough of that, switching to his "Tumbler" Style, and counters the final lift by coiling his leg behind hers, thus when she lifts up, she loses balance and Ohno falls on top of her.

Ohno, having almost switched the whole situation that happened just seconds ago, throws a few wild punches to Naoko, who is doing a good job deflecting them in a full-guard position. Ohno gets tired of this and forces himself up while holding onto the back of Naoko's head, picking her up like a baby carrier. Naoko breaks the legscissors on his waist to get into a standing Thai clinch with Ohno, but Ohno didn't leave it for long, sweeping Naoko's legs from the side, and driving Naoko's back to the ground with a powerful Okariaishi Harai into an Ura-Nage slam.

Ohno then kneels up over Naoko and hammer fists onto the ground around her. Naoko picks up her knee and rails it into his side, pushing him off. Naoko then goes to another pillar, runs up it, and jumps off for a bullet-time Cobra punch, which Ohno easily counters into an Uchi-mata. Naoko rolls through it and backflips onto the parallel pillar, shooting off of it for a 540 kick in the air. Ohno takes it full on, and recovers... Just in time to take Naoko's handstand shuriken kick, and a Tatsumaki Senpyukaku, which backs him up.*

Ohno: *in a low-handed Judo stance, panting.*

Naoko: *returns to the combatives boxer stance, also winded.*

Ohno: "Alright, Naoko. Now you've got me mad." *suddenly switches to an unprecedented fighting style... Naoko hasn't seen a bloodlust area anything like it before. Black on white flames emanated from him.*

Naoko: *trying to remain unfazed, she tightens her stance, and then, they silently agree to charge
each other once more. Ohno runs straight forward, lifting up a powered fist to his chest, while Naoko bounces off one pillar for a height and speed advantage. And just as they clash a Cobra Punch (Ohno) and an overhead instep kick (Naoko)...*

-Elsewhere-

    Karasuma: "I hope you all had a good morning and afternoon recuperating. But rest is over now, and we will be training hard all over again for the rest of the internship. Now, get yourselves ready, and be back here in front of Hotel Okura in two hours, before Lovro takes you on the bus to his warehouse for more training. This will continue for his scheduled three hours, and then we will return to Mount Atago."

    AssUniv: "Yessir." *bow as Karasuma leaves.*

    Okuda: "So..."

    Kurahashi: "So~..."

    Isogai: "So, did all of you guys get at least some things out of the systems?"

    Terasaka: "Eh, more or less."

    Nagisa: *Not even close... What's in my system is the reason I'm here. I have every right to put emotion into this, unlike everyone else.*
Searing Space

Chapter Summary

The aftermath from Ohno and Naoko's suspenseful clash is quite the fiery one, if I do say so myself! But what's more, with the ante raised, the AssUniv Program's primary objective is within close sight... Destiny is at hand, but are they ready to grip it?

-Ohno and Naoko, having fought for all of the noon and hours following, lay on the floor, facing the ceiling of his dojo, crowns of their heads just a few inches from making contact.-

Naoko: *breathes lightly from her mouth during her sleep.*

Ohno: *looks at the top of her head for a little bit before returning his face to a natural forward glance at the sky.* I hope I helped her really let it all out... *suddenly gets a stinging feeling, forcing him to grunt a bit. He then looks at his right inner forearm; the longus and brevis muscle-sections of his arm had been gashed diagonally four times. Remembers...*

*Naoko dodges a backfist by going onto a single handstand and throws an Au Batido roundhouse kick. Ohno, in his "black flames" stance, angles his body away from the kick. Naoko remains in a semi-sprawled position, getting on all fours and then arching her back inversely, performing a Scorpion kick. But Ohno sees it coming too early, and back-rolls off of Naoko's spine, ending up behind her as she stands. He then wraps his right arm around her neck for a Rear Naked Choke, but Naoko manages to get her forearm inside the choke area, preventing any pressure on her larynx. She then tries to stomp on one of Ohno's insteps, which he moves away from, but that allows Naoko to push his choking arm further out and Tiger claw it along the forearm, breaking free from the submission.*

Ohno: "Ugh..." *lets his right arm fall on his eyes.* I can't afford dealing with her all the time if she keeps doing this.

-At the training warehouse-

Yada: *put into a right-arm hammerlock by Sosuke, who points a training Arsenal Strike One at her right side. Then, she elbows Sosuke on his left and pivots her whole body counter-clockwise, causing Sosuke to shoot involuntarily away from her. She then picks up her ankle backwards, sweeping Sosuke's left foot, hooks her left arm across his chest, then hip-throws him to the ground. When he points his gun at her again, she manages to twist his wrist, letting it fall into her hand, and with her knee on top of him, she trains the pistol on his face.*

Kataoka: "You picked that up quickly, Yada-san." *claps.*

Yada: "It fits with the way I assassinate; smalltalk and low-profile moments are what I do best, before pouncing right when I must. Therefore I have to get these techniques quickly." *spins the pistol around her index finger before helping Sosuke up.*

Karma: "Sounds about right. I mean, look at tomboy sniper over there." *points to Hayami, who
has Okajima pointing an Arsenal straight to her forehead, while Kurahashi, Mimura, Nakamura, and Yoshida are circling her with their pistols also drawn.*

Hayami: *Goes limp while holding onto the barrel of Okajima's pistol, causing him to fall on top. The four did not expect that and shoot as if Hayami was still standing, tagging Okajima on the back of his neck. Hayami pushes Okajima off and then kicks the ground in an angle, letting her spin along the ground on her hip, and shoots all four in sequence before they can re-aim.*

Chiba: "You're kinetic dead-eye just keeps getting better, Hayami-san."

Hayami: *Gets up, blushing.* "Um, yeah. Thanks, Chiba-kun."

Okajima: *still pretending to be dead, sneaks a smartphone shot of Hayami's pinkened face.* "This, I'm looking back on."

Fuwa: *Holds her hands up as Sugino aims his pistol at her. Soon, Fuwa lowers her arms so that her sleeves can be seen into, though they're too shadowed to recognize anything. She then flicks her hand back towards her, and out comes a suction dart. Not anticipating that, Sugino barely moves his pistol in its direction, knocking it away from his grasp. Fuwa then sweeps in, "Dempsey Roll"-ing before a massive right hook on Sugino's cheek, sending him several feet back.*

Sugino: *rubs the side of his face.* "Ow! Fuwa-san!"

Fuwa: "Sorry! Got carried away, Sugino-kun."

Hazama: "No more Hajime no Ippo for you, Fuwa-san."

Nagisa: *turns his head back to the "hostage targets."*

-Inside another room in the warehouse.-

Lovro: "What? You're saying I did that?"

Karasuma: "Yeah, you did!"

Irina: "You really that surprised, Lovro? You and Olga practically did the same to me the first time!"

Lovro: "You still hold me on that?"

Irina: "At least a little! It wasn't the best days of my life; that's for certain!"

Karasuma: "Irina-san, enough." *holds his hand in front of her.* "But you, you made them totally vulnerable during your training last time!"

Lovro: "Well not so much now, huh? Look at them; if they did falter yesterday, it's certainly past them now!"

Irina: "For now. But what if you make it personal again? We don't know if we can fix it a second time."

Lovro: "Pfft~! Please, you two? Fixing emotional problems? Don't make me laugh!"
Karasuma: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Lovro: "You barely know anything about those kinds of things, Karasuma. You didn't solve your daughter's love problems four years ago, and it took you forever to notice Irina's advances. Sorry if I sound skeptical of your ability, but that's just not part of your skill-set." *to Irina* "And you... Still an emotional wreck, I see."

Irina: "Hey, it's tough when a good bunch of your students see you in the most weirdest of situations. I told you that already; thought you could put the pieces together."

Karasuma: "More importantly, Naoko is not my daughter! She's my adopted sister!"

Lovro: "Ooo~, sorry Mr. CIA. I guess that's just expectation when you're with someone almost half your age! Anyway, I'm pretty sure, from what I know of Ohno-kun, that he's the one who changed things. And he can keep doing it as long as he must."

Karasuma: "Damn Ohno-kun... He's the one who made me change the training schedule today, you know."

Irina: "Wait, what?" *turns to her husband.*

Lovro: "Oh really? Why would he do that?"

Karasuma: "Because it's all part of the plan to get AssUniv back together. I don't know about that though; they seem pretty connected, as you just said. This may just be another one of those psychology experiments he's been pulling with everyone."

Lovro: "He is pretty damn good at it."

Karasuma: "He's pretty damn good at a whole lot of things, but does that mean he's sufferable? He's one set of bunny-ears away from me thinking not. There must be someone I can handle that can do it all like he does."

Lovro: "Karasuma-san..." *twiddles his finger in front of him.* "Let the assassin contractor, with network everywhere, tell you that in terms of price, service, and ethics, no one - I mean no one, does things as well as Ohno does. Now that Korosensei is gone."

Irina: "Karasuma-kun... he's totally right."

Karasuma: "Spare me." *shakes his head as he leans his forearm on the window and watches his students keep training.* "It's almost the end of your shift; I'll round up the students and get them to Mount Atago. Care to join?"

Lovro: "Nah, this clock is along the line of many. I got my own things to finish, too."

Karasuma: "Alright. Take care, then." *leaves the room with Irina.*

Lovro: *smirks.*

-In the general area of the warehouse.-
Karasuma: "Very good, all of you. Now pack up your gear and get on the bus; we're going back to Ohno's mountain settlement."

Kimura: "That place just keeps getting weirder. Can't wait to see what Ohno-san has for us this time."

Kanzaki: "Then what are we waiting for?"

*AssUniv lines up to get on the bus and make their way to the mountain.*

-Back to Mount Atago...-

Ohno: *While still lying on the ground, looks at his watch.* Ooh, it's 4:42 P.M. Karasuma, Irina, and AssUniv will be coming anytime after 5. I'll need to get Naoko to leave now. *looks at Naoko's cranium again, seeing that she still has not moved since the draw of their duel. He then glances back at his ceiling, closes his eyes, breathes a long sigh, and then begins to give elbow support to himself.*

Naoko: *suddenly springs to life, backflipping so that she lands in a full mount on top of Ohno, and their faces are just a few inches away. Despite the intrusion of personal space, Ohno does not look uncomfortable or surprised in the slightest. But he actually kind of is a bit of both.*

Ohno: "Huh, so you're awake."

Naoko: "Shh~..." *puts a finger on Ohno's chest, and prods him to lie back down.* "You know, aside from you and onii-sama, I haven't had a lot of interaction with boys. Not just because I didn't know how to interact with them... But because Karasuma made sure they never went anywhere near me. Can you believe it? Those Reclamation Society guys have gotten to more bases in two nights than Former Class 3-E did in a year?"

Ohno: "Well, it sounds like he wasn't letting you live a full life."

Naoko: "Exactly. What's more though, people I go all out with physically are usually people I will go all out with personally. But I couldn't possibly do that with the enemy, you know? So..." *moves her finger along Ohno's chin-line.*

Ohno: *knee twitches in response.*

Naoko: "I found a way to give it all with you today. And it felt good." *picks up Ohno's chin.*

Ohno: "Um... You're welcome?"

Naoko: "How about we take it to the next level?" *sandwiches Ohno's temples and holds his head close to hers.*

Ohno: "And... Karasuma?"

Naoko: "He won't block me anymore. And he doesn't even know I'm here, remember?"

Ohno: "And Ministry Protocol?"

Naoko: "Unsanctioned mission. They're not involved."
Ohno: *flatly.* "That makes no sense."

Naoko: "Shh—... Face it, with all that we've been through these nine years, I should have known you were the one for me."

Ohno: "That childhood sweetheart statistic ain't helping your chances."

Naoko: "Then let me up it a bit..." *leans forward in what seems to be an attempt at an intimate kiss.*

Ohno: "Wait." *holds his hand in front of her face.*

Naoko: "Wha-?"

Ohno: *holds his hand close to his ear. What he hears unsettles him.* "Take cover!" *overpowers Naoko, and dives down to cover her. In the next second, a large rocket is heard flying into the airspace of the temple-like area, zooming towards an unconnected "machiya" and setting it ablaze!*

Naoko: "What the Hell!?" *pushes Ohno off of him to get up and look outside.*

Ohno: "We've been discovered! AssUniv has been leaked, and the Society is attacking! M202 FLASH rockets lighting up the evening sky!" *stands up, running towards the table to collect his Kimbers.*

Naoko: *Also gets up, looking at both Ohno and the burning scene, before another napalm rocket hits another house; this time, part of the line of of traditional roofs that went over the room they were in, and they were bound to be next.*

Ohno: "Here, Naoko!" *throws Naoko her Pardini in a frisbee motion, which she catches.*

Naoko: "What are you doing?"

Ohno: "We're getting out of here!"

Naoko: "Wait! I'm sorry, I pulled too many stunts there, and then I faked this as a last resort to make you talk, but then this happens, and there's no way you would've let this-"

Ohno: *puts his fingers to her upper lip.* "Shh... Now get out!"

Naoko: *pushes his hand away.* "It hasn't struck the front yet. I'm sure we can run through that."

Ohno: "Oh, no no! AssUniv may be on their way to here now! You should leave through the secret side exit I have!"

Naoko: *looks confused* "Since when did you care about my cover?"

Ohno: "Does that matter?"

Naoko: *nods* "Alright. Lead the-" *a rocket slams into the roof just a few feet away from the
pyramid-shaped tiling that was on top of them. The fire quickly traveled and enveloped one wall of the dojo.* "Ah~!!"

Ohno: "COME ON!" *takes her right wrist and pulls her in front of him as they run away from the wall towards one sliding door leading to an underpass. Another rocket hits the roof of the hallway, causing the two to jump over the railing of it and end up completely outside. Ohno and Naoko take cover behind a wall that they know is on the far side of the attacker. Ohno looks over the side, but immediately retreats when gunshots hit the hardwood.* "Shit! They got a sniper spotter!"

Naoko: "We won't be able to run across this gap to the other house with that going on, and the fire is catching up on us!"

Ohno: *looks back at where the projectiles are coming from.* "I got it. Naoko, run through and leave through a door in the granite walls, that can be opened by pressing on the protruding stone near it, once I give the signal." *runs back inside the house they are covering at.*

Naoko: "Wha-, Ohno-kun!" *tucks her head when another rocket hits the machiyas. After a few more seconds, she sees Ohno climbing up to the top of one roof and attracting the attention of the sniper, and using his bullet-time reaction speed to dodge the shots.*

Ohno: "NOW NAOKO!"

Naoko: "Okay!" *sprints past to the other cover.* "I'm good, Ohno-kun! Now follow me!"

Ohno: *begins to nod, but then senses another rocket coming... Right at him! Instinctively slides off and back underneath the cover of his roof, which finally gives way under the fire damage. With the inferno on all sides, Ohno has no choice but to run back into the houses as the roofs come crashing down, eventually having nowhere else to go. Touches his bluetooth earpiece.* "Naoko, get yourself out now, and you might be able to slip away! I'll catch up with you soon!" *A ceiling-supporting beam suddenly starts falling, and the transmission cuts off between the two.*

Naoko: *holds onto her comm-piece.* "Ohno-kun! Ohno-kun!" *no answer.* "Shit!" *looks at the house a bit, before deciding to comply to his demand and escapes the compound.* You better be still alive... Or I'll kill your ghost.

-Several minutes later...-

Driver: "What the...!?"

Karasuma: "What?" *looks in his direction, shocked at what he sees.*

Kataoka: "Oh my God..." *stares out the window.*

*The rest of the students follow suit, witnessing the blaze at Ohno's Mount Atago settlement. Some cover their mouths in horror, while others can't close them in their flabbergasted state.

The bus arrives on the scene, at a safe distance. The students soon see Ohno, taking a rest while leaning on the stone walls encircling his charred estate. He was clearly in the middle of the chaos prior.*

Isogai: "Ohno! What the Hell happened!?"
Ohno: *looks up a bit.* "An attack. They wanted to get rid of us."

Kurahashi: "Who? The Reclamation Society?"

Ohno: "No, not them... The kidnappers." *Gets up, with a little effort.* "We need to put this fire out before authorities show up. For personal reasons, I can't sugarcoat this with them."

Kataoka: "Yeah, right! Come on, guys; let's get the buckets at the water pump on the other side of this shrine, and extinguish the flames!"

*Everyone works together to douse the inferno and starve the flames, climbing up some of the stone walls and unburned platforms in order to get better throwing angles. After another fifteen minutes or so, the arson has subsided.*

*AssUniv is exhausted by the high-pressure situation, but some manage to get their priorities ahead of their limitations.*

Karma: "Okay, Ohno, your fears about the police are gone. Mind telling me what you know about this?"

Ohno: "That's the first thing that you ask? No 'are you alright?' 'Does anything hurt?'"

Nagisa: "Can't bring ourselves to be worried over a certified badass, Ohno."

Ohno: *swats that away.* "Yeah, I get it. The worst part about being strong is that no one asks if you're okay."

Kurahashi: "Ah, Ohno-kun, your arm!" *points to Ohno's right arm.*

Ohno: "This? Ain't a bad burn or bruise." *holds it up.*

Karma: "Wait a sec..." *squints eyes.*

Ohno: "Hm?" *looks at his forearm, and sees that the scratches had ripped off part of his... skin?* "Hm, no use hiding it anymore then..." *pulls off the partially torn elastic material off of his wrist.*

Mimura: "'Movie makeup skin?"

Ohno: "Yeah..." *reveals a tattoo hidden behind the casting; "囚人1225"*

Kanzaki: "'Prisoner 1225;' in Okinawan-ethnic script."

Ohno: "Yep. I suppose all your doubts about my starts are gone now." *stares at the black ink for a decent while, before looking at AssUniv again.*

AssUniv: "..."

Ohno: "But you know, that's not important now. At this point, Kayano, Itona, and Ritsu's kidnappers believe we're dead. They have no reason to keep delaying their trafficking deal with the Reclamation Society, and they'll finish it almost a month in advance of their original date."
Okuda: "How do you know that?"

Ohno: *picks up his bluetooth.* "My earpiece keeps track of the electrical signals going on in the vicinity, and allows me to tune in to them. Here's a message I listened in on while I escaped a searing fate." *Presses one part of the communicator.*

Unfamiliar voice: [message] "Alright. You Society folk, we tied up the last loose end before our deal, earlier than planned. We're ready to hand over the kids to you."

Society man: [message] "About damn time. We were getting tired of following your bread trail."

Assassin: [message] "Oh come on, you knew you loved it. Anyway, a big event is happening at the Kyoto International Conference Center three days from now. Get your boss and his wealthy sum here by that time, and bring him to the roof of that building, away from suspecting eyes, and we can complete the transfer. Like gentlemen."


Assassin: [message] "Save it for when it happens. Out."

Sugino: "Wow..."

Ohno: *puts down the bluetooth piece* "You see? We have a chance to complete our training, fulfill our goal, and tentatively save the world in one fell swoop. We have our chance, but we gotta act now; the party they mentioned is in just 72 hours. Are you all up for it?"

AssUniv: *look at each other with doubt.*

Ohno: "Look, guys. I can begin to understand what you've all been through. That's why I knew how to answer all of your problems back then. But I can't begin to understand what they mean to all of you, just like you all probably are for each other."

Hayami/Chiba: "!!"

Ohno: "So for now, all I can say is 'place your burdens down where you stand.'"

Karma: "!!"

Ohno: "We won't leave your baggage behind if you don't want to. They'll be there if you return. And I'm sure that by the time you do go back, it would be a more than just a problem. Maybe an answer along with it. Who knows? But first, put your pride for the past down, because the future is in our hands. Now, are you all with me?"

Hayami/Chiba: *remember*

Koro sensei: "You are surrounded by all your friends, who have dealt with the same results - the same failures as you, but remain with their resolves ever so strong. Their trigger fingers, like yours should be, remain calm even in the face of a miss."

Karma: *remembers*
Korosensei: "Put your pride down at your feet... Look directly at the blade - If the right intentions lie within, then it will still shine with all of its pride, even on the ground."

Karma: "I'm in."

AssUniv: *shocked to see Karma volunteer first. They also notice him moving his cardigan jacket and removing something invisible from his inner pocket, and open his hand as it falls to his side, as if dropping it to the Earth. *

Hayami/Chiba: "We're up too." *taps their foreheads with their index fingers; much like they did with the first real guns they've ever held, used to defeat a military gunman at Okinawa. *

Nagisa: *feels unproven.* "Yeah, so am I."

AssUniv: *look at Nagisa, then each other, and then step forward. *

Isogai: "I take it then, that you have a good idea what we have to do?"

Ohno: "You can say that. But you guys are what Karasuma called 'the best assassins on the planet.' I want your input."

Nakamura: "Hey, is a murderous college student who allegedly doesn't exist asking for help?"

Ohno: "That murderous college student who allegedly doesn't exist is indeed asking for help."

Karma: "Well, at least he's asking the best - described by our teacher, and our peer."

AssUniv: *smile.*

Kataoka: "So what is our plan?"

Ohno: *smiles.*

-70 hours later, at the highly-profiled organized event...-

*A white-on-black Lykan Hypersport pulls in on the front entrance to the Kyoto International Conference Center. The driver's door (on the right side, street side), opens up, and out comes a young man (face unrevealed) in a wool and polyester-blend black suit, who starts walking to the passenger seat. He holds his hand to a seated young lady, adorning a black-blue sash-bow-tied, nigh-knee-length evening dress, also sporting lustrous wedge-heel sneakers. She accepts the help up, and hoists a sharkbite handbag across her torso, overlapping the one strap on her left shoulder. The man walks by her left side, wrapping his hand around the small of her back and ending at her waist.*

Car Valet: "Whoa, is that a-"

Man: "Yes it is." *spins the keys along his index finger before letting it slip off, causing it to fly into the Valet's hands.* "Take good care of it."

Valet: *looks at the man as he passes, before back to the car.* "Sweet."

*The couple walks along the carpet to the front entrance, where a guard sits at a table while..."
another stands at the hallway before the paths to the other rooms, mainly the event hall that they will be going into.*

Guard 1: "Sir, ma'am, if I may." *holds up the detector.*

Lady: "Go right ahead." *gives her handbag to Guard 2, before holding her hands up for Guard 1 to inspect her person.*

Man: "Ladies... Always first." *Holds his hands up for the same inspection. The scanners and bag-checkers find nothing lethal.*

Guard 1: "Alright, you can head on in. Enjoy your night."

Couple: "Thank you." *hook their arms around each other again and walk in towards the event hall. They then come across a hallway leading to restrooms. They nod to each other and go into their respective lavatory. Separate scenes show them inspecting the booths, ensuring they are alone before going into one of them and taking something out of their wallets. They place it into their ears.*

Man: *holds his finger on the left side of the round earpiece.* "Black Collar, on the field. White Collar, do you copy?"

Lady: *does the same.* "White Collar, copy."

Man: "Good. No Collars, are you on the scene?"

Third Party 1: "We are!"

Third Party 2: "Alright, everyone. Let's commence Mission: Kyoto Caper!"
Infiltration Space

Chapter Summary

The AssUniv Program have their heading; Kyoto International Conference Center, to bust the trafficking of their three friends from the three assassins and the Reclamation Society. But before they can do that, they must legitimize their entry onto the very public scene. And that requires a bit of, um... Sexiness.

From both genders, I swear!

-A few hours after the fires on Mount Atago.-

Kanzaki: "What do we have here?"

Karasuma: *rolls out a large schematic.* "This is the floor layouts of the Kyoto International Conference Center. Remember, this is where the two factions of our enemies will be conspiring at."

Okano: "Remind us again why they are doing that there, as opposed to like a hotel room?"

Ohno: "Their exchange is too brief to be at a hotel room. What would the staff think that some random foreign people suddenly decided to leave on the same night? And they have no time to stay there for a few days to nullify that. But at the Center, they have a cover; normally the upper levels, and the roof, of the building would be off-limits to regular folk. In three days, however, the Center will be hosting a high-profile party celebrating Cyberdyne Inc.'s international acclaim for their completed HAL-6 medical robotic exoskeleton. Most of the security will be down there, making sure thieves don't steal the equipment; they won't be expecting people going up as much."

Karma: "'As much.' Good detail to note." *smirks.*

Nakamura: "Alright. So then, we're going to climb the outside walls to get up there and await the other uninvited guests that have our friends?"

Irina: "No, that won't work. I've been to this building before, and I've spotted all the cameras all around the infrastructure. There's no way we can get up there like that without being spotted. And if the staff don't see it then, they will before long, and it will easily trace back to us."

Karasuma: "Which is why we won't be doing that; at least not yet. Instead, you'll be attending the party, and finding a way to get up to this floor, where the electronics control room is. There, you can put down the blinders, and bug the cameras, allowing me and Irina, who has been banned for obvious reasons, to ascend the discreet way."

Fuwa: "Sounds great! Alright everyone, looks like we're going to suit up and refer to each other with just our given initial!"

Irina: "I'm afraid not all of you can go in. This gathering isn't a field trip. The majority of the people in there are almost double your age, naturally suspicious, and are not as prone to hysteria (no offense). One or two of you are more believable."
Yada: "Which two of us, then?"

Irina: *crosses arms.* "I was gonna pick you, Yada-san."

Yada: "M-me?"

Kurahashi: "You can totally talk your way out of anything, Yada-san! You got this!"

Yada: "I, suppose, but you learned quite a bit from Irina-sensei too. You should join me!"

Kurahashi: "No, I can't do that. I look much younger than you, so I'll stand out a lot. Also, this project's bioengineering process will not have a lot in the way for a biochemist like me. If I was an expert for it, I would have no wisdom for questioners."

Yada: "Hey, that's not true. I mean, if not you, then who?"

Ohno: "I'm going in as well. As you all have seen, I can influence whoever with what I have to say."

Yada: "!"

Ohno: "There's that, but I also know a thing or two about machines. I can handle things just fine when I find myself in a server room."

Karma: "Well alright. I guess our point man, and point woman, are set."

Yada: "..."

-Seamless transition back to the Conference Center-

Yada: *keeps pressing the earpiece.* "You have some connections, Black Collar."

Ohno: *reaches into the inner pockets of his blazer.* "What makes you say that, White Collar?"

Yada: *lifts up skirt just enough to pull out a TiSAS Zigana Sport pistol from her lace thigh holster.* "For one, you must have an on-call tailor to apply pure silver and cotton into pre-made garments, such that your little armory can go past security checks."

Ohno: "Well that's true. That's TechniCot you're wearing, Yada-san. Nice to the touch, looks good, and, best of all, shields anything behind it from electrical signals. Of course, silver is very conductive, so minimize any chances of generating static electricity." *Inspects his Kimber Warriors' slides, chambers, and magazine ports.*

Yada: *pinches a spare magazine from her other thigh holster, and pushes it into the grips.* "And the guards don't know about this?"

Ohno: *studies a special blue-hued bullet and places it into the magazine, and then pushes the plate up into the handgun.* "It is a relatively new development. And also, guards don't have the time to inspect shielding fabrics on every guest of an event like that."

Yada: *Stashes her pistol back into her right-leg holster. Reaches into her handbag again to take
out a lens carrying case. She moves up to the sink's mirror and prepares to put the lens into her left eye.* "Hm, sensible."

Ohno: *gets a similar lens into his left eye.* "Ah. Alright. Are you ready to go?"

Yada: "One sec." *applies something to her lips.* "Okay. Ready to go." *starts to leave the bathroom.*

-Ohno and Yada reunite outside the bathroom.-

Ohno: *notices something on Yada's face.* "You used some lip gloss?"

Yada: "Yeah. It's a party. Is that a problem?"

Ohno: "... No. Good thinking."

Yada: "Maybe you'd like a taste?" *playfully smirks.*

Ohno: "It's the flavored kind? Probably better suited." *turns away.*

Yada: *snickers* "Blushing, are you?"

Ohno: "Some other time."

Irina: [on mic] "Stop flirting you two, and get on with it! We don't want to end up sleeping in these bushes!"

Yada: "Oh, right!" *holds her earpiece.* "Sorry, everyone."

Terasaka: [on mic] "And when you are flirting, turn your mic off, damnit."

Nakamura: [on mic] "I don't know, I very much enjoyed that little exchange."

Ohno: "Mute mic." *taps his earpiece.*

Yada: "Same." *copies the action.* "Well, let's go in now."

Ohno: "Sounds good." *They then position themselves side by side, and wrap their closest arms around the back torso of the other. Conjoined, they head into the event hall of the Conference Center.* "Okay. Blink twice in rapid succession to start up the interface."

Yada: "Okay..." *flickers her eyes.* "Hn? Nothing happened."

Ohno: "Close your right eye."

Yada: *shuts her right eyelids to see through her left eye, which is now viewing the world in a slightly blue filter. On the top left, there was a short-range radar, with one yellow blip in the center, and another representing one near her. The top right has her location in the form of another yellow blip, with it within a 3-D model of the Conference Center.*

Ohno: "You seeing blue?"
Yada: "Oh yeah."

Ohno: "Good. With this, you'll always know where you are. Your vision will be normal until the lens receives neuron signals that your right eyelid is down. You can focus on the radar or the map by angling your line of sight towards either model as if it was before you."

Yada: "Maybe you should have made me practice a bit before we went into here."

Ohno: "Shh, we must be in character now." *looks around, giving a general smile.*

Yada: "Right." *smiles lightly as well. Remembers...*

Irina: "Yada-san, we've got just less than three days to get you prepared for this. Businessmen and investors have great memory. They hear you say something they are skeptical about, you can bet that when they are questioned of what happened up above will remember you."

Yada: "I understand that well enough."

Ohno: "And you know what to say during those situations, so we won't go down that road. What's most important now is that we both know how to trigger that dialogue when the time comes."

Yada: "How do we do that?"

Irina: "First, you must learn to control the conversation. It won't always be in your favor, but take the chance; if it works, you will have an easier time coming up with the right sentence when your time comes. And right now will be your first test."

Yada: "How-"

Ohno: *compresses Yada's shoulders and pivots her 90 degrees to the right, where Nakamura stands.*

Yada: "!!"

Irina: "Tsk tsk tsk... That won't work at all, my star pupil."

Nakamura: "Her face was all worth it." *hides her grin.*

Yada: "How would I start with that?"

Irina: "When you're walking around, you won't know who you come up to, or who comes up to you. The second the 'personal space' bubble is breached, you gotta act. Literally! Again!"

Ohno: *pivots Yada again another right angle, this time she stands before Karasuma.*

Yada: "Eek! K-k-karasuma-sensei?"

Irina: "Fail! Come on, Yada-san!"

Yada: "I'm sorry, but Karasuma was just an imposing character to confront so abruptly!"
Irina: "That... Is very true..."

Karasuma: "Um, Irina-san?"

Irina: *shakes her head back to her point.* "And businessmen aren't? Those calculating eyes of theirs were the bane of my existence for the longest time when I first started freelance assassination! You gotta get this right!"

Ohno: *whispers into Yada's ear.* "Just calm down. You got this. You are not below them, you are them."

Yada: *sighs, then nods.*

Irina: "Again!"

Ohno: *twists Yada to face Chiba.*

Yada: "Hello, I don't believe we met. Ms. Touka, Research Coordinator of the HAL-6 Development team." *offers her hand to shake.*

Chiba: "..." *accepts it.* "Mr. Ryunnosuke, HR Analyst. A pleasure."

Irina: *finger-snaps.* "That's the ticket!"

Yada: *smiles.*

Ohno: "Great work. Now onto step 2; what comes after. But remember, from step 1." *pivots her to someone else.*

Yada: *smiles.* "Hello, I don't believe we met. Ms. Touka, Research Coordinator of the HAL-6 Development team." *offers a handshake, and in a seamless transition...*

-Back to the Event Hall...-

Businessman: *accepts the handshake.* "The pleasure is all mine. Mr. Yashida, Neyu-Gn Inc. VP, and major investor of the HAL-6 Project." *to Ohno.* "And you must be..."

Ohno: "Mr. Ohno, Robotics Researcher." *offers a hand as well.*

Yashida: "Of course you are." *accepts one as well.*

Yada: "Have you read 'The Durian' today? They posted an article a few hours ago about a team of ATLAS rescue robots, which the HAL models are derived from, rescuing some of their creators from their own homes without being programmed to? And they didn't even have to; they just did it! Have they grown sentient?"

Ohno: "Ms. Touka, I can assure you that that is impossible. Believe the Robotics man."

Yashida: "Oh... Well, I haven't had the chance to read that. When I get the chance, I will look into that." *starts to leave.* "It's been great talking to you. I really enjoyed hearing about AI." *completes his departure.*
Ohno/Yada: *bow, then watch him leave.*

Yada: *smiles a little larger.*

Ohno: "Great smalltalk there."

Yada: "General topic, but still relevant to our purpose. The perfect thing to talk about with business consorts."

Ohno: "Felt good doing that?" *smirks while looking sideways.*

Yada: "I just know I'm on the right track now."

Ohno: "That's good. Would you like a little more practice, then?"

Yada: *looks at him.* "Can we?"

Ohno: "Let's ask 'Mission Control.'" *presses the earpiece.* "MC, permission to delay mission?"

Karasuma: [on mic] "What? No! What are you-" *gets cut off.*

Ohno: "We can." *motions over to another suited man walking towards them.*

Yada: *smiles with determination.*

-And with that, Yada, with Ohno's assistance, continues to interact with the other associates and partners of the project.-

Yada: "Have you heard that new R&D teams are finding that AIs learn better observing dogs? We may even have a medical-purpose suit for man's best friend soon if that goes well."

"The future is bright, when soon, the HAL research team intends on creating microscopic machines that fulfill purely internal human illnesses, so more able individuals need not feel encumbered by the full exosuit. Can you imagine a million machines inside you doing some work like that?"

"It's perfectly good enough that the HAL-6 can let humans perform basic bodily needs. But what if we want to help those people retain any particular hobbies they've had in the past? Hopefully the next stage of the project will be teaching the machines to accommodate extracurricular activity!"

-And every single time, she earned the smiles and professional nod and wink of every suit (and dress) she came across.-

Yada: *bows to her latest conversationalist.* Ah, I feel so alive doing this!

Ohno: *sneaks up behind her, placing his hand square on the small of her back.*

Yada: *quickly turns.* "Ah, Mr. Ohno! Fancy seeing you again!"

Ohno: *laughs.* "Very good, Yada-san. But I think you deserve a break." *holds up a champagne glass of non-alcoholic sparkling raspberry tea.*
Yada: "Oh, thank you~." *playfully seizes the glass, and takes a small sip.*

Ohno: *looks at her with care.* "You're really enjoying yourself."

Yada: "Ah~. Well, this is just what I've been waiting for. Granted, it's fake... But with what's real to me, this is all I'm getting, and I'm loving it."

Ohno: "Well, if you're that enthusiastic, it doesn't have to always be fa-"

Man: "Excuse me, mister."

Ohno/Yada: *turn around. Ohno instantly knows who he's speaking to.*

Ohno: "Well I'll be..." *starts smiling widely. He holds out his hand, which the man takes and shakes.*

Yada: "Care to introduce me to your friend, Mr. Ohno?"


Yada: *swallows quickly.* "Mr. Sasai!?" *offers her hand.* "Such a pleasure, sir!"

Sasai: *laughs.* "The pleasure is all mine, miss. Anyone who's a friend of Ohno's is a friend of mine."

Yada: "That's great. But, how do you two know each other?"

Sasai: "Ohno is one of the major engineering experts on the HAL team! He sent me blueprint after blueprint after blueprint that put all the functions together! For a bit, I feared I was the only one he talked to, never finding a soulmate. But I see I was wrong?"

Ohno: "WHAT?"

Yada: *giggles* "Oh, we're not tied down. Ohno and I are just as you said; friends."

Sasai: "Hm... I see." *senses the change in music.* "Oh! Ohno, do you hear that?"

Ohno: "I sure do. I'm going in." *walks closer to the center.*

Yada: "Ah, Ohno-kun-"

Sasai: "Come on, Ms. Yada. You don't want to miss this." *points toward Ohno's back. They both follow him.*

Ohno: *makes his way through the final barrier of bystanders, with him standing inside an open circle with three other suited dancers. Head starts bobbing to the beat of the Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kiwami theme *"Vertical Point"* *Oh yeah...*

*Once the interlude ends with "FEEL THE FORCE!" Ohno hops up for a knee drop, tucking his right leg behind his left knee. The ball of his right foot taps the floor, and then Ohno rolls on his shoulders into a windmill, using them to continue spinning for a few seconds. Once he stops, he freezes in a pike. He then drops both legs separately, just a few inches from the ground, and starts*
pivoting in a baby spin. Soon enough, he gets back on his shoulders, and kips up back to his feet. Ohno slows the tension a bit with a toprock shuffle, alternating criss cross of his legs in front of him, before raising his left knee up, going completely on his right foot, then the toes, and eventually collapsing on his right leg, falling on his back and propping himself up on his nape to perform a hollowback freeze. After a second, he popped on the back of his head, letting him backflip onto his feet again. He suicided again, falling sideways but landing on his back with his legs out like a snowman, he then propped himself on both hands, kept his right leg acute while hyper-extending his left, and making his left hand connect with the instep, making an L freeze. He then whips that outwards leg clockwise, letting go of the ground completely, and letting his head support him in a dreidel topspin, which translated into a hand lift, making way for a 2000 spin.*

Yada: Whoa... Ohno-kun... *Remembers.*

-On the upper floors of AEON Mall-

Kurahashi: "Come on, Yada-san! Let us see it!"

Yada: "I don't know... I'm not sure this is the one."

Kataoka: "We'll be the judge! Just come out already!"

Yada: "..." *steps away from the fitting room. She is wearing the blue-and-black prom-styled dress, with her right hand up to her chest.*

Hara: "Oh, my God! You look amazing!"

Yada: *blushes lightly.* *"R-really!?"

Okuda: "You'll be the bell of the ball in that."

Fuwa: "Damn right she will! White and gold really makes her moe points pop!"

AssUniv Females: "F-Fuwa-san!?"

Fuwa: "What? What's wrong with what I said?"

Hayami: "Does it matter? Your seeming colorblindness, or a ref to 'Lucky Star' are both flags."

Fuwa: "Heheh, flags..."

Yada: "Well, regardless, thank you, Fuwa-san. Do you all really mean it?"

Kataoka: "Of course we do, Yada-san. No one would look better in that than you. And especially because no one deserves it more than you."

Yada: *blushes again.* *"Oh no, I don't deserve this at all. Ohno-kun only insisted I picked one out for tomorrow night."

Nakamura: "Are you going to complain? Inside a Hugo Boss store?"

Yada: "Oh no, not at all!"
Kanzaki: "Even with the financial status my family is in, I wouldn't find myself in a store like this too much. Ohno-kun must have such a surplus steady income to afford coming here."

Okano: "He must really think that the best is what it takes to make this mission succeed. Down to the smallest detail has to be flawless. Even the apparel. Not going to lie, if you can supply it, then why not?"

Yada: "This dress does feel very nice to the touch... Like it was weaved with angel hair, except it's something much more lustrous. Jeez, what is even the price of this... Even him, will he let me pick this?"

Hazama: "Yada-san, unlike girls, when a guy says, 'I really don't care; pick whatever you like,' he really means it. So if this is the one for you, then for God's sake, pick it, and don't regret it."

Yada: "A... Alright. I better tell him then." *walks over to the benches outside the male dressing rooms.*

Maehara: "Oh, wow!"

Isogai: "That's a really good pick, Yada-san."

Okajima: "And the skirt is just long enough to be both conservative and loose, depending on how it's worn."

Yada: "Haha, thanks guys. Is Ohno-kun almost out?"

Ohno: "He is." *steps out of the corridors. He sported the jet-black two-piece suit; both buttons of the blazer remained unfastened, revealing the well-fitted white dress shirt with a clipped grey skinny tie.* "My, Yada-san, you look gorgeous."

Yada: *stunned by seeing Ohno in a polyester-mesh ensemble, but refocuses.* "And you're dashing."

Ohno: "Let me just get the tag then, and inform the clerk to put it and this on my tab. We'll want to get out of them too, to preserve them for tomorrow night. We can't afford to mess them up before then, of course." *holds out a hand to request the colored sticker on Yada's skirt. She pulls it off and gives it to him, prompting him to depart from the scene.*

Yada: "..." *continues to look at Ohno.*

Karma: "Does our friendly neighborhood businesswoman have her forte and dreams mixed together?"

Nakamura: *ironically gasps.* "That would be a crime scene."

Yada: "Wha?" *turns to them.* "I'm just worrying about the mission is all. What are you guys even talking about?"

Nagisa: "Hm, so that's what the stuff that Nakamura quips me about looks like."

-Return to the Conference Center.-
Ohno: *His 2000s spin has evolved into the one-handed 1990s. He pushes off the supporting hand to get onto two hands with his feet both arched inverted, resembling a scorpion. He then pumps off of them so he barrel rolls in the air, while keeping his legs in the air, and lands back on his hands 90 degrees to the right of where they originally were, performing two full revolutions of Taisuke Criticals. After the second set, he quickly flips on his spine for a back spin that slows to a grounding on his knees. He then slides along the side of his leg and one hand and starts doing 1.5 Air Flares; a leaping variant of the famous air flare b-boy move, where the dancer must land on his shoulders rolling through them to continue the kicking motion. Highly regarded as one of the most dangerous moves in the art, Ohno does this for another five times his back meets the ground. The song then ends just as the rolling motion causes him to land on his left foot, with his right taking a knee behind him. He, along with the rest of the daring crew, have completed an impromptu performance, to the applause of the many spectators.*

*understandably a bit tired and dizzy, Ohno exhales a decent amount. He gets up, and leaves the open area, with some cheers from the crowd, and he starts taking off his blazer and loosening his tie just a little.*

Yada: *catches up to him when he gets to the drinks table.* "That was incredible, Ohno-kun. How’d you get around to b-boying?"

Ohno: "My parents grew up on dance, and met each other in dance. The art has become quintessential in my coming to being, so I owe it quite a lot. The best service I can give it is by taking part in it myself, in the best way I know how."

Yada: "Wow. Everything you do has good reason." *begins to remember when she thought low of Ohno when she had found out that he was a convicted murderer.* Could he really have done that...?

Ohno: "Something on your mind?" *accepts a glass of tea from a waiter's platter and takes a sip while keeping his sights on Yada.*

Yada: *mind clicks.* "Oh! No, no, I was just thinking about... Maybe after this, you can have me meet Mr. Sasai again. For real that time, maybe?"

Ohno: "That's a great idea. Nothing like the chance of a good word from one of the thirty most wealthy people in all of Japan. You know what? It's gonna happen. Let's just finish this first."

Yada: *mind clicks again.* "The mission! Of course! We should get back on that now!"

Ohno: "Is that so?" *scoffs a little, then taps his mic.* "Hey, guys. We're ready to go now. Getting to the elevators now."

Yoshida: "Ah, about damn time! What the Hell were you t-"

Ohno: *mutes his earpiece.* "Alright. Now, to use the elevators, we must get security access in the forms of keycards, which only the building staff has." *eye-motions to one guard, standing watch at the model of the previous HAL-5, while another stands relatively close to the drink station across the Event Hall.* "Take your pick."

Yada: "Hmm... I'll take the drink guy." *finishes her champagne glass, which Ohno takes before
she departs. Greeting her way to the table, she soon reaches the man.* "Why, hello sir. Would you happen to be someone quite essential to this celebration's premise?"

Guard: "I'm afraid not, miss. I'm just a security guard for this event. See my name tag?"

Yada: "Oh, yes I do... Mr. Michisakari. A fine name. You wouldn't happen to be affiliated with the sake brand, would you?"

Michisakari: "Again, I'm afraid not. But damn if I would mind having a glass of that right about now."

Yada: "Oh? I think you might be in luck. I think they're about to bring out the alcohol for the night now."

Michisakari: "Really!? I, I mean, I guess it wouldn't hurt to get one on the job, right?"

Yada: "You're secret is safe with me. IF..."

Michisakari: "If?"

Yada: "You get one for me yourself. I know, walk with me over there." *starts cuddling the Guard's left wrist, almost tugging on him towards the service area.*

Michisakari: "Uh.. Fine."

*The two go to the drinks station. As it turns out, the brand was being provided at the tables. But when he turned around to give it to her, she was long gone. Yada had retreated to the Southern secondary halls, which they had to walk to get to the security-access elevators anyway.*

Yada: *Looks at the keycard, having used her light touch to attack the pressure points that numb Michisakari's arm just enough so that she could reach the item from his outer pocket.* "Well, at least he has two of his favorite now." *giggles.*

Ohno: "Who has two of favorite now?" *with one foot up on the wall they were leaning on, just a few feet from Yada. His taken keycard was held in his limped right hand."

Yada: "Ah, not important. How did you get yours?"

Ohno: "That guy from the HAL-5 exhibit? A simple cause-and effect; pushing one guy just enough so he bumps into him, and he knocks the piece over a bit, causing the arm plate to fall. He goes down to pick it up, I go help him. But he didn't think about his back pocket too much during that."

Yada: "Heh. Brute force as a distraction. Good to know the two can overlap."

Ohno: "Yep. Well, we have our heading, we have the requirements. Let's go." *with Yada, starts to walk towards the security-authorized elevators, but then stops dead in his tracks.*

Yada: *notices his hesitation.* "What's wrong?" *looks at him.*

Ohno: *Damn Shinsuke... Sending his men here...*
Yada: "Someone you recognize?"

Ohno: *grits his teeth.* "Sorry about this."

Yada: "Wha- ah~." *Gets pulled in by her waist, and is moved with her back to the same wall of
the hallway they were just on. Ohno puts his left hand flat onto the same wall, inches to the right of
her head, and then he caresses her face with his other hand and kisses her on the lips. "!

Ohno: *closes his eyes, suctioning on Yada's mouth just a little bit.*

Yada: *though bewildered, she quickly goes along with it, putting both of her arms on his
shoulders and joining them together behind his neck.*

Ohno: *keeps his eyes closed for a little while longer, before he senses the people of interest go
past them. As soon as he sees them cut the corner into the Event Hall, he releases the unrequested
peck.* "Sorry again, Yada-san."

Yada: *almost speechless.* "Don't... Worry about it. Did you not want to show your face to
someone?"

Ohno: "You can say that. But any further prying is a personal matter I'd like to keep to myself.
Can you still trust me, knowing that?"

Yada: *looks at him.* "O-of course."

Ohno: *exhales in relief.* "Thank you." *returns Yada to the middle of the hallway so that they
can continue en route to the elevators.* "Oh, and that lip gloss... It's Shatonishiki Cherry-flavored,
right?"

Yada: *is again surprised, but then smiles lightly again, feeling her lips.* "Good guess." *They
move through a smaller coordinator perpendicularly connected to the secondary one they were just
in, and simultaneously scan their keycards on the wall pads. The elevator opens up, and they both
get in. And as the doors shut again, Yada can't help to look away, at the panel, or the news
monitor. Anything... For any reason or another.*
Now that the public access floors have been cleared, Ohno and Yada have transitioned to full-on infiltration. They, naturally hit a few snags, but they eventually get it going regardless and allow everyone up. But the fight only begins from there.

-On the elevator ride up.-

Yada: *crouches down with both knees pointed at the ground, allowing her to dislodge the heel enhancements inhibiting her freedom of movement, and manipulates the sole so that it lies comfortably flat on the ground. Taps her earpiece while doing so.* "Okay, guys. Ohno-kun and I heading up to the fifth floor now."

Nakamura: [on mic] "Ah, about time. These shrubs have been getting to me for too long."

Okano: [on mic] "Yeah. I think this is the fifth time my skirt got caught by a sharp branch."

Okajima: *when view temporarily shifts to them, he covers his mouth, which harbors a mix of a "done f'ed up" and amused face.*

Ohno: "Suffer no longer. In just a matter of minutes, we'll both be in position; me at the control room, and Yada-san at Room 509. I will bring down the large window shutters for the premature montage presentation of the HAL-6. Yada will open up the windows in the adjoining room's wall to let you guys in once the cameras are down and all possible witnesses have been suppressed." *meanwhile re-inspects his Kimber Warrior IIs.*

Yada: *brandishes and chambers her TiSAS Zigana again. The elevator door opens, and both her and Ohno take cover on the adjacent elevator wall, surveying the hall before proceeding. Seeing on the blue lens that their destinations were polar from each other, they went different ways on the path, keeping careful hold of their firearms.* "Ohno-kun, I know we are going to be dealing with some muscle on this floor, but are our guns really the best thing for the job?"

Ohno: *taps his earpiece while keeping his right hand tightly clenched on the Kimber.* "You have nothing to worry about; though the construction is combat-grade and made to kill, that means null if not the right ammo is in it. And remember, we loaded ours with non-lethal stunner ammunition. They'll be out, but they'll be fine afterwards."

Yada: "Okay: I trust your word on that. I would hate to theoretically write down 'homicide' on my permanent record tonight." *holds her inox pistol up to her face as she covers behind a wall, looking at the standing guard at a T-intersection down the pathway.*

Ohno: "Like I said, 'don't worry.' Your conscience will be clear." *a door to the side of him opens, revealing a guard coming into the hallway. He instantly sees Ohno, and tries to take out his own pistol, but Ohno shoots him first without looking. The impending shock causes the man to jolt a bit, before falling forward. Ohno catches him before he causes a thud on the floor.*
Yada: *shuffles out of cover to point-shoot the guard from earlier, making him fall into the room he was in front of. Yada quickly, but stealthily walks over to kick his legs into the room, then shutting the door on it.* *Sweet dreams.* *Continues down her path, covering behind any and every wall and obstacle that could conceal her.*

Ohno: *continues to walk through the hallways en route to the Control Room, pacifying guards left and right. He is next seen choking one other guard to sleep as he finds himself in a semi-large, open, and decorated room, fitted with miscellaneous pieces of furniture, a coffee table, complimentary tables, pillars with artifacts of interest on them, and a crystal chandelier. He sees that across the room is the Electronics Server room that he must enter. But before he can take too many more steps towards it, a masculine figure clad in a white tunic, fitted fighting pants, and black Wing Chun shoes comes into view. Ohno is rather surprised to see him.* "Well, I couldn't even hazard to guess why you're here."

???: [speaking in Mandarin] "It's been some time... 'Miyamoto'-san."

-Elsewhere on the 5th floor.-

Yada: *lugs a grown man into a wardrobe outside in the halls, who has a compression mark on the back of his neck, hitting the bone where it connects with the rest of his body.* *In you go, come on.* Successfully manages to put the unconscious guard into the oversized cupboard and closes it.* Well, here's to hoping they don't go looking for anything and open that up. Why do people like to put these out in the public eye anyways? *shakes the thought aside, bows at the concealment device, and continues on her path to Room 509. Inspects one of the doors necessary to get in.* *Hm, keycard entry. Shouldn't be a problem...* *tries her authority-access key item and taps it on the wall, but the door doesn't unlock.* *Continues to try the card, but the light remains red.* *What, I'm not good enough for you?* *looks at the badge.* *I suppose KICC doesn't believe their security guards make good show-hosts.* *Puts it back in her handbag, and unmutes her microphone.* "Uh, guys, my stolen badge won't let me into the room. What do I do?"

Karasuma: [on mic] "That's no good. It seems the Conference Center is using a slightly different security layout than we have anticipated. Irina-san, do you know where do we go from here?"

Irina: [on mic] "Hm, this might be like the taller buildings or embassies that I have been working around before, you know... Me settling down. Each floor, or three, had one or two regional managers that had a higher-access pass. That way, guards can get into areas without having a guest speaker get in for them."

Yada: "Gotcha. Thank you." *mutes mic and sighs.* *Well, what now? How do I do go about that...* *Suddenly, a hand covers her mouth, and she is pulled backwards by another person.* "EMRPH!"

-Returning to the room before the Electronics Center.-

Ohno: *tries to contact Yada.* "White Collar? What was that about? White Collar!"

???: "Something wrong?"
Ohno: "Shut up, Guan Ying. I'm a bit occupied right here."

Ying: *growls* "Don't call me that! I call you Miyamoto-san! That's a respectful name for you!"

Ohno: "Oh, my apologies... Wushi Jieji. The Chinese Samurai."

Jieji: "Yes, that's more like it."

Ohno: *drops his earpiece issue.* "Alright. Greetings' over. Why are you here?"

Jieji: "I'm here for you, Miyamoto-san." *cracks his knuckles.* "For every piece of you."

Ohno: "Of course you are. Every time I meet you, all you want to do is fight. You don't even tell me why we fight. What have I done against you?"

Jieji: "You really don't know?" *smirks.* "I won't tell you now, since clearly you don't have the time, but you can at least know that it wasn't particularly you who wronged me."

Ohno: "Oh?"

Jieji: "No. It ran in the families. Our families. And now that it has befallen me, I have made it my mission to rectify it."

Ohno: "Fine. Fair enough. But then, how did you know I was here? The Triads, namely your branch, the "Blood-Oath Dragons" didn't have any desire collecting intelligence on me."

Jieji: "And that's half the reason why I left them. This new group, you see, had plenty of desire trying to find you. Namely because of one of our third-party sources. I know you know who that is."

Ohno: *For fuck's sake, Shinsuke...* *closes his eyes, and then looks back at Jieji again.* "Ah... Now I know who you belong to now. The same people who wants AssUniv's friends."

Jieji: "That's only a side job for me, Miyamoto-san. I joined only so I could fight you." *starts smiling venomously.*

Ohno: "Well either way, you're an obstacle in my path. Which means I'm going to have to stop you. Just like I'll do with the rest of the Reclamation Society." *gets into "God Hand" fighting stance.*

Jieji: "Good luck with that. But first, good luck with me." *falls into a Wing Chun stance.*

(Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kiwami theme *"Ogre Has Reborn*" plays)

対和彦大野[灌嬰/武士阶级]

Kazuhiko Ohno; Okinawa International Penitentiary Parolee
VS

Guan Ying/Wushi Jieji; Former "Blood-Oath Dragons"
Triads Enforcer

*Jieji turns his shoulders 90 degrees and throws a powerful right punch to Ohno's head, which Ohno twists in to avoid. He then tries to grab the wrist, but Jieji pulls it back in time and winds up a counter-clockwise windmill fist, which Ohno has to back from. When Jieji does that again, Ohno throws a right overhead that cancels out his opponent's backfist uppercut. Ohno then parallels his punch with an overhead roundhouse kick, which prompts Jieji to spinning hook kick it from Ohno's heel away. Jieji continued his "spin 2 win" routine and revolved another 360 degrees to land a high air roundhouse kick, which Ohno avoids with a perpendicular Dempsey Roll backwards.

Ohno waited to see Jieji's face again and completed the aforementioned evasive maneuver to throw a short-arc uppercut with his right. Jieji pillar-rolled towards Ohno's exposed side to dodge it, and throws a front kick that imprints the latter's ribcage. Ohno stumbles a little bit before refocusing, seeing Jieji fly at him with an air side kick. Ohno bobbed his head during a slide to go under it. When Jieji landed, Ohno took a small step forward with his left and hooked with his right, matching a significant body blow to Jieji. After a little "weak footing" of his own, Jieji recovered and met the coming Ohno with a face-level blade kick, which Ohno slipped to the side from. Jieji then brought his foot down with a hammer fist, creating a local tremor that put Ohno onto three limbs. When Ohno naturally got back up, he ate a forceful palm thrust to the chest that slid him several feet across the room.

Ohno looked up to see Jieji hop-dash with both of his hands making a rolling motion downwards. Ohno put his forearms in an X to block the axe-like swipes, but Jeiji didn't let his momentum stop cold, for when his last arm banged off the parry, he flopped to the side drunkenly, and re-firmed up with an elbow spiking Ohno's ribcage again. Ohno rubbed the spot even more, leaving him looking unprepared for a four-pedal bicycle kick. But Ohno was prepared, performing the same elbow guard that he used against Naoko to jolt Jieji's right shin at the final pedal. But Jieji's Wing Chun expertise allowed him to land properly on his one good foot, and start boxing Ohno like a wooden dummy. The faced-paced, simple-motion jabbing and thrusts were far different than most of the attacks thrown at Ohno lately, and he got himself tapped a few times, culminating with a front kick to his stomach with Jieji's bad leg, made good again by his chop to the distressed area just as it made impact with his opponent. Ohno wobbled back four paces once again, holding his torso in pain.*

Jieji: "Geez, Miyamoto, you've gotten soft. What happened? The ravages of criminal wars starting to get to you?"

Ohno: "You know, as a matter of fact, it has. I'm fighting wars you could only dream of right now, including one against yours."

Jieji: "Is that so? Well then, maybe I can finally get my first victory on you." *returns to Elephant fighting stance.*

Ohno: *sigh.* "Dream on, Jieji." *Ohno then tremors the ground with a planted stance, then roundhouse and hook kicks the air, before leaving his foot up in the air, signaling his shift into the
"B-Boy" style.*

-Meanwhile... (pause the music)-

Yada: *grunts lightly while being held by her forearm behind her, while the assailant, revealed to be one of the floor guards, brings her into the soundproof jail-room on the level, where another Head Guard kicked back at.*

Head Guard 1: *throws Yada into one of the jail cells and locks it.* "You strayed too far from the celebratory party, little girl. Assuming that's what you're even here for."

Yada: *looks back.* "Yes, I did. I just got lost when I joined some acquaintances to come up to this floor, only for them to suddenly disappear. I'm the victim here!"

Head Guard 1: "Tell that to the fact that I found this," *holds up her stolen keycard.* "Inside your bag. Also, we will be taking your phone, and leaving you here until we get the police on the case."

Head Guard 2: "Why not get them now?"

Head Guard 1: "Are you joking? With the event downstairs? We can't start spooking the guests right now." *throws the phone to him.*

Head Guard 2: "Oh, right." *catches it.*

Yada: *holds onto two of the bars with aggression, but it's all a work.* Not what I had in mind, getting in here, but now I know who the top dogs are. At least one of them should have the emergency access pass. Now, how do I get one off of them... How do I get out of here even... Wait a minute... "Hey, tough guys! Over here!"

H. Guard 1: "Now what do you want, lass?"

Yada: "I want my phone call! Give me my phone, and prove my innocence! I know the boss of Cyberdyne Inc. and he knows I'm here for that! This was just a stupid mistake of mine, following some bad strangers!"

H. Guard 2: "I don't think even he can put a spin that'll believe that."

Yada: "Try me. I can do so."

H. Guard 1: *feels his chin.* "Alright, little girl. You win. Have at it." *takes the phone and starts slowly walking towards her.*

Yada: "Thank you." *smiles as when he gets within grabbing distance, she takes his wrist and pulls him into the prison bars, briefly stunning him.*

H. Guard 2: "Hey, what the!" *tries to pull out his police-grade taser.*

Yada: *crouches down, pulling Guard 1's arm down and pushing the horizontal bar of the jail cell onto his neck. She then takes her tranquil TiSAS and fires at Guard 2, shocking him first, and causing him to slump back into his seat. She then pistol whips Guard 1 at the very tip of his head, knocking him out too,* "Night night." *explores Guard 1's pockets to find the keys and the badge
she needs, unlocking her exit, putting the guards behind the cell, and leaving the room. Touches her earpiece. *"Hey, everyone. I have the equipment now. I'll open up the windows ASAP. Black Collar, are you ready?"* *waits a bit.* "Ohno-kun?"

*Back at the fight (resume music)*

*Ohno ducks a spinning hook kick from Jieji, countering with a windmill sweep that drops Jieji on his behind. Before he can get back up, Ohno finishes his momentum with a spinning roundhouse kick to the back of Jieji's head, whiplashing it. Jieji uses a windmill of his own to get back up to a fighting stance. Ohno meets him with a Pele overhead kick, with his left leg completely tucked. When Jieji high blocks the extended right leg, Ohno angles his left to push kick Jieji in the face through the defense, while also front-flipping back into standing position. He turns around and does a brief running start that quickly transitions into a barrel rolling 1080-twist kick, which has his instep meet his opponent's crown three times; the last of which knocking him down onto his back.*

Jieji back-handsprings back up, only to see Ohno charge at him. Ohno pursues him again with a frontflip front kick that Jieji verts around. The former continues with a spinning backfist that again Jieji sidesteps, before pivoting his foot to avoid a monkey-like 360 straight. Now semi-behind his opponent, Jieji conjoins his hands, spiking his elbow that smashes into the back of Ohno's head. The forward stagger almost makes him eat Jieji's heel in a vertical split kick, if it weren't for a split-second limbo dodge. Regardless, he is unable to defend against a low-level, cheat sweep that puts Ohno supine. Jieji tries to finish with a powerful knee stomp to Ohno's throat, but the latter X-blocks his larynx right on time.

Switching to "Tumbler" style, Ohno pivots on the ground while holding onto Jieji's lower leg, prompting him to fall down right next to him. Ohno pursues him again with a frontflip front kick that Jieji verts around. Ohno tries getting up to mount on top of Jieji, but the latter picks up his left leg and taps Ohno's forehead, pushing him back down. Jieji hammer fists towards Ohno's stunned face, but Ohno catches his wrist to stop it. His close hand then takes the aforementioned wrist to set up a variation of the triangle armbar, but Jieji digs his finger into Ohno's other arm, hindering him. He then picks up his right leg and prepares to drop an axe kick on Ohno's stomach, which the latter used his free arm to push down, trapping it under his own right leg. They then break off all upper-body contact and continue to try and jab the other in their supine positions. Knowing that he cannot win like this, Jieji pushed off of his free leg to soar over Ohno. But all it took was the latter's constriction of the trapped leg for Jieji to break landing pattern and get into half guard with Ohno.

Ohno dodged a ground punch from Jieji, before tucking the latter's head toward him, trapping it in front of his attacking arm. Ohno arm's then overlapped them, and then compressed the keyhole, "Japanese neck-tying" him. Jieji choked and gagged, but eventually pushed Ohno onto his back, allowing Jieji to balance on his head and slip out of the tight squeeze. Back on his feet, he tried stomping on Ohno's head. Ohno switched back to "B-Boy" to bob his head just enough out of the way. He then picked up his legs and hooked them like backpack straps on Jieji. He did an air sit-up to meet Jieji and put his hands on the back of Jieji's neck and pulled down, while his legs pushed Jieji's arms back, creating tension on the shoulders and neck. Jieji eventually got out by getting onto his knees and headbutting Ohno. When he got up, Ohno monkey-packed on his chest to get onto his feet himself. He didn't stay upright for long, for then he flanked a knee to give his torso-level roundhouse kick extra momentum. This was enough to push Jieji into the couch, and left him with not too far to run as Ohno switched to "God Hand" and pummeled him into submission.

Jieji briefly found relief after taking a nearby vase and throwing it into Ohno's Keysi block, and a stray porcelain piece scratches his upper cheek. But Jieji couldn't so much as take a step after
standing back up before being back kicked back down, where Ohno continued hook after hook into Jieji's futile attempts to block. By the time Ohno readied for the final blow, Jieji had slipped off the sofa and was on three; one arm remained to keep him kneeling up to Ohno. But then two more knuckled into his chin later, and he slumped unconscious.*

Ohno: *pants heavily, taking a few steps away, before collapsing on his knees before the control room. His suit, though fitted with ballistic nylon and polyester for durability, was well worn out. Ohno had cuts all over him, and the left side of his head housed a stream of darkened blood.* *Fuck, the things I do to maintain the peace around here!* *He then slowly gets up and goes to the control room, where he swiftly finds the theatre switches to bring down the shudders and the lights. He then notices the camera footage outside and inside the complex, and erases the last hour and a half of footage, replacing it with replica footage from several hours back.*

Yada: *opens one window to see that the cover for her friends is set. Touches her earpiece.* "Hey, everyone! It's clear now! Get up here!"

Isogai: [on mic] "We're on it!" *With everyone else, jogs out of the shadows of the foliage. He, along with Chiba, Hayami, and Maehara, then take a knee to aim their military grade grapple launchers, shooting the metal hooks through the angled opening of the windows. Yada then puts the hook around the guard rails near the windows, allowing the tether rope to support each student's walk up to the floor.* "Good. Now Hayami and Chiba, take your positions on the hill vantage point, getting good view of the roof from afar as planned. We might need sniper support when we're up there."

Chiba/Hayami: "On it." *remove the grapple guns and run back to the shadows, disappearing past all the dark leaves.*

Irina: "I never thought I'd be back here anytime soon..."

Nakamura: "Why? Because you're banned?"

Irina: "No... Because none of my targets are ever here anymore. Except for, you know, now."

Karasuma: "Yada-san, where is Ohno-kun? Wait," *hits his earpiece.* "Ohno-kun; where the Hell are you?"

Ohno: [on mic] "Still at the control room. Be there in a sec."

Karma: "You two took your time."

Yada: "You can't rush art. Especially the art of assassination." *twiddles her finger.*

Irina: "Now that, you definitely got from me. My how my students have grown." *puts her hands up to her mouth.*

Nagisa: "Enough. Let's wait at the elevator for Ohno-kun."

-AssUniv make their ways to the elevator. It doesn't take too long before their silence is disturbed however...-

Yada: "Alright. Now we just need Black Collar. Huh, wonder what's taking-" *looks to the side and gasps. AssUniv concentrate over there to.*
Jieji: *leaning on the wall of a hallway before pushing off.* "Ah! So you're the bunch of kids who were forcing our sellers to postpone delivery! Y'all are going to pay, you hear?" *holds up his fist, before his other hand drops a needle of adrenaline, explaining his rapid recovery despite looking so beaten down.*

AssUniv: "WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?"

Jieji: "Who am I? I, am the infamous, Wushi-" *gets shot in the back with a taser bullet.*

Ohno: "I've had just about enough of you." *aims his Kimber at Jieji's nape while clutching his ribcage in pain. He then unloads the rest of his magazine on Jieji, forcing his Chinese rival down with several pumps of tranquilizing electricity. He then lightly prods Jieji's head just to be sure he's out.* "Thank God." *puts his Kimber behind him.* "So, penultimate floor?" *walks towards the lift.*

AssUniv: "UH..." *nod.*

-Once on the last floor the elevator can access (rooftop access is only by a staircase on the penultimate floor); A floor filled with guards, by the way.-

Karasuma: "Jesus, Ohno-kun. You are all banged up."

Ohno: "Which only emphasizes how much I didn't want to fight that guy again."

Fuwa: "You know him?"

Ohno: "No. He just got in the way."

Karma: "Fair enough. So now, where's the staircase?"

Yada: "Hold on." *closes her right eye, and focuses the 3-D map to see the stair model across an S-shaped corridor on the floor.* "Follow me."

*Silently pacing themselves through the hallway, they were discreetly met with patrolling security. Karasuma, Terasaka, and Yoshida got by pulling some away from view and putting them down with pure muscle. Fuwa and Nagisa pulled their underestimation tricks they were known for to pacify the next few. Okano and Kanzaki bounced off the walls to reach their targets in record time and knocking them out with devastating kicks. Irina managed to seduce four targets, leaving them easy pickings for the shock-rounds of Ohno, Yada, Isogai, and Maehara. Long story short, there were piles of sleepers in their wake as they finally reached the final ascender to their Summertime destiny.*

Terasaka: "Well that was fun."

Sugino: "Can you believe that our reason to be here is just behind a door up on a set of stairs before us?"

Nakamura: "We believed in an antimatter-ridden beast. We can believe it."

Nagisa: "Let's make the belief a reality." *starts going up.*
-And what awaited them up above was anything but what they expected. But they've come to expect that.-

Karasuma: *slams the rooftop door open.*

Italian-sounding man: *clad in a dark pinstripe suit, with his back turned to AssUniv.* "Aha! Our faithful business partners! At last we meet!" *turns around abruptly... surprised at what he sees.* "What!? Who th' fuck are you lot!?"

AssUniv: "THAT'S OUR LINE!"

Buyer: "Hm, twenty-plus little Japanese, all in one place! You all must be the friends of those kids our sellers kidnapped!" *stomps.* "Damn Jieji, letting himself get beaten by all these children and their chaperones! Useless prick!"

Karma: "So that's who he is..."

Kataoka: "The question is who are you?"

Buyer: "You will never need to know, nor will you ever know, since me and my boys will be disposing of you all before the deal goes down."

Karasuma: "His name is Francisco Grimaldi, a former minor Family Leader of the Italian Mafia."

Grimaldi: "What the!? How do you know that!?"

Karasuma: "Defense Agent, felon. My job is to know about any potential threat around here."

Grimaldi: "Hah. So you know my name and where I started. Matters not, since none of you are leaving these grounds alive. Brothers; get them!" *holds his hand out, orchestrating his twenty handgun and SMG-armed men to aim at the students.*

Karasuma: "Scatter! Now!"

*And then in the blink of an eye, the assassins in training disappeared. Behind fans, engines, pipes, ventilations, boxes, and whatever else could be used to hide behind.*

Grimaldi: "What!? Don't just stand there, find them!"

(Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kiwami theme "The Wicked" plays)

フランチェスコ・グリマルディ対暗殺大学

Assassination University

VS

Francisco Grimaldi (and his Hired Guns)
Karasuma, with Okajima, Nakamura, and Okuda, stands behind a large generator. Within field view are Irina coupled with her two prized students crouched behind a large box structure, Ohno with Nagisa, Karma, and Kataoka in the cover of separate vertical columns, Isogai and Maehara have covered a pathway. The rest have scattered themselves on the edges of the rooftop; some even hanging safely from the lip of the building. Isogai and Maehara see two of Grimaldi’s men coming through the aforementioned path. When they get close enough, the two spring out, kicking their Beretta and Uzi respectively out of their hands and then striking the chins with precise, powerful hooks, knocking them out. (18) The sounds of the brief struggle alerted the rest, causing them to shoot in that region, with the bullets ricocheting off metal and prompting everyone to take cover again. Isogai and Maehara retreat away to other walls, triggering a fire yet again.

One gunman decides to follow them, which leads to Okano, hanging from a nearby ledge, to lift her legs over the ledge and trip the man. Okano then kicks the MP5K away, and Hara Banzai drops on his upper back, expelling any wind the man had in his lungs. (17) One other gunman takes aim at the two girls, but a quick potshot from Ohno throws him back behind a metal sheet, giving them enough time to escape. Irina throws out her cardigan sweater over her cover, prompting gangsters to focus fire on it, leaving them open to Yada tapping them with stun rounds. (14) A gunner takes aim at her, but Kataoka shoots first, protecting her friend. (13)

Terasaka, Yoshida, and Muramatsu take a large, door-like metal plate on the ground, and run towards two gunners. The plate tanks all the 9mm bullets shot at it, and a rolling motion from the three guys squishes the Italians between the ground and the load. (11) Another trio points their sidearms at the now defenseless students, but Kanzaki trips one up by sliding her metal-meshed phone underneath one soldier as he steps toward them. He slips and lands on the back of his head. (10) The other two are flabbergasted long enough for Fuwa to spring out and trigger her sleeve darts, putting them to sleep. (8) The students then run back.

Okajima and Nagisa shatter two gunmen's senses with a quick camera flash and a clap respectively. Sugino then pitches two fastballs using rocks he compiled that nail them both on the foreheads. (6) The final shooters become very impatient and start firing madly, with two stray bullet scratching Irina and Yada. Karasuma fakes a surrender in front of the remaining men to avoid any dumb luck casualties, but Ohno and Hazama have his back. The former throws one of his Kimbers to Karasuma's raised hands, and then run-slides from the side of him, brandishing his other. Hazama sneaks behind the squad and shoots down two with stun rounds. (4) Ohno and Karasuma continue to put down the other four with eight shots each; two for each person, as is Defense protocol. (0)*

Grimaldi: "You all think you've won!?" *pulls out a modified Benelli B76 Sport. Meanwhile, reinforcements arrive and pinch AssUniv. Everyone except Karasuma, Nagisa, Karma, and Ohno are caught at gunpoint.* "Haha! Maybe this'll teach you kids! You don't mess with-!"

Ohno: *points his Kimber Warrior at the back of Grimaldi's cranium, having used the confusion of the garrison springing the rooftop entrance open to sneak behind it all and get behind the gang leader. Karasuma was close behind, and now stands aggressively aiming Ohno's modified pistol at the underlings, while Nagisa and Karma stood back to back guarding the two's flanks.* "We don't mess with who?" *to the gangsters.* "Get away from them! Drop your weapons!"

Grimaldi: "Kill them. This deal doesn't need me; kill them!"

Ohno: "Ooo, hard man, laying down his life for the cause. I must say, that's very OOC."
Grimaldi: "What?"

Ohno: "Then why come?" *back to the gangsters.* "Now drop your weapons!"

???: "ENOUGH!"

*The entire crowd goes silent, as they all look over to the same rooftop entrance and find three new men, dressed differently than everyone else. They had two smaller individuals in town, with bags over their heads.*

Nagisa: "!!"

Terasaka: "Well I'll be damned..."

Okuda: "Smog!"

Karma: "Grip!"

Karasuma: "Gastro..."

Gastro: "Surprising?" *with his Model 64 revolver still in his mouth, throws a female, most likely Kayano, in front of him. She kneels with a hostage-like slouch. Grip drops an alleged Itona next to her.* "Now, as we've just said, enough is enough!"

Grip: "You four, step away from our potential partners."

Nagisa/Karma/Ohno/Karasuma: "...

Gastro: *spins the six-shooter out of his mouth and aims it at the back of Kayano’s head.* "Want us to do it?"

Grimaldi: *laughs sinisterly.* "Looks like you've all been backed to a corner! It's two situations to one!"

Ohno: "Tsk..." *points his Kimber away from Grimaldi, and taps his temple three times. Karasuma lowers Ohno's other pistol, and Nagisa and Karma soon follow suit.*

Grimaldi: "That's mighty nice of you." *returns to aiming his Benelli at them.* "Took you all long enough. What happened?"

Gastro: "Honestly, we were watching these kids. You remember our declaration, right? Four and a half years ago?"

Nagisa: *I do... When we became the best assassins alive, they would challenge us again. It's because of them that our trip to Okinawa went down just fine, so we owed them as much. But not now! Of all times!*

Smog: "And do you know what we think of your performances?"

AssUniv: *still held at gunpoint by Grimaldi's men.* "Not really..."

Grip: "They were mighty fine. That flawless climb up is mighty deserving of two thumbs up!"
Gastro: "Meanwhile, I was inside, sitting on some couches, watching you," *points at Yada.* "And you," *then to Ohno.* "waltz your way through the dance floor to let that climbing happen. You guys got sidetracked, sure, but other than that, perfect! Ah, but not nearly quick enough. Here we are, taking our good time to get here, and the nonlethal assassination still remains un-assassinated!"

Grip: "I don't think we'll ever get the challenge we desired so much from these kids, guys."

Smog: "What a great shame. I've been waiting to use such a potent poison I've been concocting on someones so worthy..."

Grimonaldi: "Well, that was good to hear from you three. Now, let's finish them all, and go forward on our deal, and then make off while we still-

Gastro: "Whoa whoa whoa, what deal?"

Grimonaldi: "Uh... The deal you just said you were gonna have with me, us? You just said that a minute ago!"

Grip: "I didn't say that! I said, 'step away from our potential partners!'"

Grimonaldi: "So we're not?"

Gastro: "Why should we? We couldn't possibly deal with a group of fully-adult men who can't deal with a small group of college students! If twenty is such a problem, adding two more to your list would be catastrophic!"

Grimonaldi: "Ah-" *stops himself.*

Smog: "The more you guys wish to hold the power you so desperately desire, the more blind you are that it may well not be in your hand to begin with. Seriously, controlling antimatter is serious business, phony!"

Grimonaldi: "How dare you..."

Gastro: "Now seeing as how we just poured our hearts out on how both of you teams suck... I suppose no one deserves these little nuisances! Grip!"

Grip: "On it!" *claws his right hand and clenches the top of Kayano's head with it. He lifts her up so she levitates a bit off the ground.*

Nagisa: "NOOO!" *holds his hand out towards the scene. Needless to say, everyone seems totally frantic, including Ohno and Grimaldi.*
The end of the first arc is upon AO3! AssUniv is in big trouble, as Smog, Grip, and Gastro were revealed to be the kidnappers! And with the deal between them and Grimaldi of the Reclamation Society going sour, it seems there's no more reason to keep the three alive! Nagisa lets out a fearful scream of the impending fate... But was it enough to deter anything?

Gastro: "Now seeing as how we just poured our hearts out on how both of you teams suck... I suppose no one deserves these little nuisances! Grip!"

Grip: "On it!" *claws his right hand and clenches the top of Kayano's head with it. He lifts her up so she levitates a bit off the ground.*

Nagisa: "NOOO!" *holds his hand out towards the scene. Needless to say, everyone seems totally frantic, including Ohno and Grimaldi.*

Grip: *after holding up by the crown for a few seconds, then throws Kayano towards Grimaldi.*

Grimaldi: "What!?"

Kayano: *takes off her hood mid-flight and throws it on top of Grimaldi's head. She then knocks him out with a backhand to the edge of his chin.*

Ohno: *smiles, as he taps his earpiece twice. Just like that, the guards behind him and the non-captured three were instantly downed by electric rounds to the shoulders.*

Grimaldi Man: "What the?" *unconsciously, along with the rest of his men, take their aims off of the rest of AssUniv at Kayano, standing in front of Ohno, and a flabbergasted trio of Nagisa, Karma, and Karasuma.*

Gastro: *quick-draws and headshots six of the twelve hired guns.*

Itona: *Takes off his own hood, and throws a device in the air.* "Cover your ears!"

AssUniv/SGG: *plug their auditory functions. They faintly hear a loud screeching noise that instantly disables the remaining Italian muscle. One sensitive individual even has his left ear bleeding a bit. Once the sound dies down, the students and assassins relax.*

Kayano: "Nice work, you two!"

Itona: *picks up the device.* "Told you it would work, Kayano-san. Right, Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: "Affirmative. In fact, it wasn't a matter of how it would fail, as much as it was a matter of how successful it would be. I think we can all agree that we would not want to hurt our friends with
our ultimate trick."

Kayano: *snickers.* "Yeah, that's true."

AssUniv: *mouths wide open.*

Kayano: "Oh, we almost forgot! Hey guys! Look; we're totally fine!" *waves at them.*

AssUniv: "THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY!?"

Ritsu: "I don't think I... Follow..."

Karasuma: "Gastro! What's all this about?"

Gastro: "Can't see it yet, Karasuma-san? We didn't actually kidnap your little children. We rescued them."

Kataoka: "Rescued them?"

Grip: "Yeah. Before those Reclamation creeps got their hands on them!"

Isogai: "Why?"

Smog: "Because we still want the challenge that we placed on you all way back when."

Gastro: "You all actually believed that we were going to let it go just like that a second ago? Oh no, no no. We are men of our word, especially when it comes to assassination! It might not be tonight, and it might not be tomorrow, but we will be back to finish the job with you lot."

Grip: "Until then, though, let us just leave by saying that we not only kept your precious friends safe, but we also got them back in the killing mood; gave them some training of our own. Can't be nearly as versatile as anything Agent 007 and Resident Badass could orchestrate, but I think we just clearly saw that it does the job just fine."

Smog: "I guess that means we just outstayed our welcome." *starts going to the the edge of the roof with his partners.* "Toodles!"

Nagisa: "Hey, hold on a second!"

Gastro: *Model 64 still in his mouth.* "What is it, kid?"

Nagisa: "Why now? What made you think that this was the best time to go turncoat on your buyers, and return our friends to us?"

Grip: *points at Ohno.* "Why don't you ask him? You know, when we get to leave, before Karasuma-san ends up calling the cops on us."

Karasuma: "Believe me, I'm tempted." *looks at Ohno.* "But not because of you three..."

Smog: "I see we've really outstayed our welcome now. Now if you'll excuse us..."

Nakamura: "Wait!"
Gastro: "Now what?" *starts chewing the barrel a little more firmly.*

Nakamura: "What more do you know about what's going on here? You clearly knew enough that you had to go for our friends before the Society did."

Gastro: *scoffs* "I know what you'll really do, but I'll say it anyway. Stay out of the Reclamation Society's way now, kids. The way I see it, they've wasted enough time trying to get these three, so they will soon dismiss you all. Now they'll be going for the big daddy of their project."

Grip: "In other words, you're out of their way now. So stay out of the way!"

Smog: "We want you alive, so we can kill you, of course!" *sighs.* "I think that's good? Yes. Now, deploying dive-bed." *throws a small box to the ground, which expands into a huge white firefighter mattress. He takes a jump into it, with Grip close behind.*

Gastro: *turns back to AssUniv and salutes.* "Next time we meet, kids..." *imitates his throat being slit, before winking at them, and then falls backwards into the bed. When AssUniv runs to the edge to watch them from above, they have already disappeared, leaving no trace of evidence of their existence behind.*

Ohno: *talks to the earpiece.* "Hayami, Chiba, you see them?"

Hayami: [on mic] "Yep. Do we take them down?"

Ohno: "No, no, let them go. It's the least we can do for them after all this."

Chiba: [on mic] "Very well."

Ohno: "Thanks." *mutes his earbud. Then looks at AssUniv (minus the recently recovered three), who are aggressively staring at him.* "Yeah?"

Okuda: "Care to explain yourself, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Oh, I had contacted Hayami and Chiba on a private frequency, telling them not to shoot for any reason until I tapped my piece twice. Now they want to snipe our friends, but I advised against it."

Nakamura: *crosses her arms.* "Don't you mean your friends?"

Ohno: "My friends?" *looks down at a hooded Grimaldi.* "Oh! Yes! I almost forgot." *checks his watch.* "It's very late. Karasuma, is your Defense Embassy open at this time?"

Karasuma: *ticked* "I wish."

Ohno: "Right. So I'll bring little Grimaldi here to another place, and get something out of him. We'll let the security that we didn't knock out, as well as the impending police that they'll report to deal with the remaining underlings." *picks Grimaldi up over his shoulders. He then smashes a rappel rope onto the rim of the building, and then darts the another to the ground, tightening the tether for safe descent.* "Come on, Karasuma. I'll need your help to bring him."
Karasuma: *looks around for a bit.* "Very well."

Ohno: "See you guys back at Hotel Okura. I notified the bus driver to pick you guys up one block Eastward. Better get there now!"

Terasaka: "Hold on, we want answers!"

Isogai: "We just had three people leave us wanting! You two can't just-

Ohno/Karasuma: *both drop down the nylon cable.*

Isogai: "Do the same..." *sighs.*

Kayano: "Um, you guys want to know what's going on with Ohno-kun?"

Itona: "I'm sure that's pretty obvious, Kayano-san."

Ritsu: "Agreed. My sensors detect visible and invisible cues that pertain to a cumulative 96% of impatience for a desire or set of desires."

Karma: "I'm sure it's more than that... But are you implying you know how it is right now?"

Kayano: "Maybe not everything, but enough. Let's be on our way first."

-Meanwhile...-

Karasuma: *holding Grimaldi by the back of his collar (who has now discarded the hood), waits at the edge of the street on the far side of the block that the Conference Center is residing. Sees two citizens look at him with suspicion as they pass by.* "My friend had one too many drinks tonight. Just waiting for a ride home." *fake-smiles, though instead of calming them, it scares them off.* "Fucking Ohno... *picks his head up when he sees Ohno cut a corner on his Lykan Hypersport 2014 and stops right next to him.* "Who says all of our tax dollars go to the military?"

Ohno: "Says the person who accepted a 29 billion yen injection from their kids without a second thought. Get in!"

Karasuma: *throws Grimaldi in, and then gets in the shotgun seat. The Lykan burns out to the other direction and drives off.*

Ohno: "Oh, how I love you, W Motors. You know they only made seven of these? I was lucky getting the sixth one. I wanted another, but the police deserved it more."

Karasuma: "Cut the crap, Ohno! Tell me what you've been doing all this time."

Ohno: *smirks.* "What you'd expect out of a guy like me, Karasuma. Driving cool cars, wetting my pants seeing cooler cars, testing out my brothers, fighting the enemies of my brothers..."

Karasuma: "I meant your plan. This was all part of your plan, wasn't it?"

Ohno: "I think you'll need to be more specific. I'm kind of busy here." *takes a tight right turn.*

Karasuma: "Where do I even begin on specifying stuff that you do?"
Ohno: *checks his watch, whose face has been turned to the inner portion of his wrist, so that he can see it while driving.* "Try from the beginning. Whenever you think that was."

Karasuma: *stares at Ohno intently.* "The night you found out AssUniv had personal troubles.*

Ohno: *smiles.*

-On the bus ride-

Kayano: "Wow, you guys are amazingly attentive tonight." *view shows that the whole back left side of the bus has all twenty students sitting at nearby booths and peeking over the cushions of closer chairs, shoulder to shoulder.*

Mimura: "Understatement of the year."

Yada: "Now tell us the truth already!"

Itona: "Alright, alright. Now, let's see..."

We were all getting through the last of our semester time, much like you guys did. Ritsu was with me, helping to practice multi-source communication on my company's phones. Kayano meanwhile, was fulfilling her role on "Ite" as Laura Alisia Kay. But then...

Itona: *working on a phone model inside the company workshop, until he hears the door in the back open up. Does not look back, assuming it/they is/are someone else.* "Delivery service? The supplies are just left at the door, thank you."

Strangers: *continues to walk further into the shop.*

Itona: *hears the footsteps and looks up and back. The intruders have disappeared, but the door has not opened a second time, so they are still inside. He slowly gets up, taking a sharp screwdriver as a weapon, and slowly paces around the room looking attentively everywhere. He then hears something roll around the ground and hit a nearby assembly desk. He sneaks over there, and inspects what it is, only to find a gas grenade that emits knockout fumes. He inhales too much of it and passes out.*

Strangers: *revealed to be wearing gas masks, walk up to Itona and pick him up and leaving through the back.

Meanwhile, on Kayano's side...

Kayano: *looks at herself in front of a vanity mirror, psyching herself up for her role.*

Ritsu: "Worried, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "What? Me? Not at all."

Ritsu: "I detect an 20% raise in heart-rate BPM, which speaks otherwise."

Kayano: *picks up the phone from which Ritsu is coming from.* "Wow, you've become quite an eccentric AI since we got you all... 'studentalized.'"
Ritsu: "My research as of a week ago has discovered that the know-it-all personality type has once again gone in favor for the public."

Kayano: "Where did you do the research? On an anime?"

Ritsu: "Japanese media indeed takes up 25% of the material."

Kayano: "Of course." *sighs* "Well, I guess I do feel a bit worried. This is a role for something very special. A re-adaptation to one of the America’s favorite programs. I want to prove the world that remakes in other countries are not cursed to be awful."

Ritsu: "The signs are not in your favor; 95% of them do not do so well."

Kayano: *flatly stares at the phone.*

Ritsu: "But~ your determination variables have now spiked, and I believe if you maintain that standing, I’m sure you’ll be a highlight in the series."

Kayano: "Why, thank you."

Cameraman: *knocks on the dressing room door.* "Yukimura-san? If you are ready, we're going to shoot your next scene."

Kayano: *gasps* "Coming!" *looks back at Ritsu.* "Wish me luck!" *sets the phone down at the table and takes off.*

Ritsu: "Good luck, Kayano-san." *Is about to drift off the phone, but then hears the door be blocked by something.* "Hm?"

 Stranger: "Ritsu-san... We meet again."

Ritsu: "Do I know you?"

Stranger: "Maybe, if you saw my face..." *brings his head into the light.*

Ritsu: "!!"

-At the recording area-

Director: "And cut!"

Kayano: *inside the backseat of the chase vehicle, also (due to being in character) is in only her undergarments and Tec-9 shoulder holsters. She falls back into the cushions of the seats and sighs in relief.* "Phew... Great work, Narimiya-san."

Narimiya: *looks back.* "Yeah... Thanks."

Director: "Narimiya-san, Kayano-san, another two minutes, and we'll film the next part!"

Kayano/Narimiya: "Alright!"
"Narimiya-san, your phone has some unread messages!"

Narimiya: "Better check on that real quick. I'll be back in a sec, Kayano-san." *opens the driver's door and walks out.*

Kayano: "Yeah, you do that." *waits patiently in the car, until a stranger runs into the scene, and goes into the driver's seat.* "Whoa, hey, who are you!? What are you doing!?"

Stranger: "Throw this on." *throws her clothes to her face. Kayano swats it down, only to take a tranquilizing dart to her shoulder.* "Your friend." *tosses her phone back, landing on her lap.*

Ritsu: "Kayano-san, don't be alarmed."

Kayano: "Whaaaaaa~..." *falls asleep, also hearing the yells of the filming staff as the car skates out of the studio.*

And when we were brought somewhere secret, we were told about our private enemy #1 statuses, we were given two options: 1) return to our friends, and threaten their safety, or 2) stay with our kidnappers, soon found out to be Gastro, Grip, and Smog, who will bring us back fit to protect said friends when the time was right. Clearly, we opted for the latter, because we knew that you guys would be re-trained, so it was only fair that we did so as well. So that's what we did for the first two months of the Summer. But then, our assassin friends got a special call... -Returning to the Lykan Hypersport- Ohno: "You know, or at least I hope you know, Karasuma-san, that I *always* have a method to all of my madness. But do you know that I have always have a *set* of methods to go along with said madness?"

Karasuma: "Must I?"

Ohno: "You'll need to. Because this one was only the first of many that you'll see from me. For I have been planning every instance of this internship - observing every variable and numerically calculating the probability of future events - since the very beginning."

Karasuma: "That's another way of saying that you caused all of this, wasn't it?"

Ohno: "You can say that. Gastro, Grip, and Smog, they are Underworld friends of mine. You know, and I know that they are masters at their job. So I had them do the best thing barring assassination they do, and get the three AssUniv targets together, and make it look as suspicious as possible."

Karasuma: "You piece of shit... You made all of my students get their hearts ripped out because their peers were lost without a trace."

Ohno: "It worked out fine, didn't it?"

Karasuma: "You're lucky it did. So how does this relate to the days AssUniv did poorly?"

Ohno: "In all actuality, I didn't see this coming as a major factor in my speed-chess planning. Or maybe I did, and I wanted to deny it? Because either way, I reformatted the whole internship so that we can finish things earlier than planned. GGS would've had Kayano and Itona well prepared
by then, just as we have, AssUniv's problems would take the backseat, they can reunite, and we would've dealt our first major blow to our common enemy."

Karasuma: "Huh... With all the things you considered, You had more than just reasonable belief that plan would be a success. But doesn't that mean..." *widens his eyes.*

-Back on the bus-

AssUniv: "HE LET YOU GUYS TORCH HIS OWN HOUSE!?"

Itona: "Yep. It was all part of Ohno-kun's plan."

Nakamura: "You're telling me, that he let his 180 million yen estate burn down just so he could trigger the deal between your kidnappers and the Reclamation Society at an optimal time?"

Kayano: "Exactly. Me, Itona, GGS... Even Ritsu, were totally shocked that he was putting that onto the table."

Terasaka: "That Ohno guy continues to be the weirdest person we have met in a long while."

Okuda: "But one must consider how devoted Ohno-kun must be to our cause when he willingly lets such an event happen."

Ritsu: "That is indeed true. I have absolute recall on the first night in which I changed in Class 3-E... Korosensei, spending upwards of his entire teacher paycheck in order to modify my original chassis. All the things he had to sacrifice in order to help me was bewildering... But touching."

Itona: "Indeed. Korosensei let himself suffer so much in his quest to 'studentify' me."

Okano: "But Ohno-kun is clearly much..." *tries to say it, but fails.*

Yada: "Not anymore. He's not the scary murderer we know of anymore. He's our friend."

AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "Maybe you're only saying that because you had hours to be intimate with him at the Conference Center."

Yada: "WHA!?"

-Returning to Ohno and Karasuma, who have made it to Qita Kong. They pass through the foreign language tests from the front gate to Little Korea, still with the Italian in tow. Apparently security and citizens there do not mind the manhandling of a Western gangster that would've condescended them if he was awake anyways.-

Ohno: "Hyun!"

Hyun: "Ohno-kun? What brings you to the back of my restaurant today? And who is that-" *becomes alarmed, bringing his hand to his LH9 Pistol.* "Ohno-kun, why is he here?"

Ohno: "He's not after you, Hyun. Me and Karasuma just need a place to keep this guy, until the Ministry Embassy opens up."
Hyun: "Why do you wanna take him there?" *gets a closer look at the passed out Italian.* "Oh, that's why... Okay, right this way. I have the perfect spot for someone like him."

-The three of them go down to the basement. They sit Grimaldi down, tying his hands behind the back of the chair, and throw water at him.-

Grimaldi: *cough cough* "Che diavolo!? Dove cazzo sono io!?!"

Hyun: "Nuh uh uh; Korean or Japanese, son."

Grimaldi: *looks at the three.* "Who are you? Where am I?"

Ohno: "Just somewhere interim. Soon enough Karasuma here will take you to the Embassy. He won't need a reason to haul in a malevolent, radical gangster who killed, destroyed, and raped his way to the top 10 most wanted list worldwide."

Grimaldi: "Heheh... Guilty as charged."

Karasuma: "Shut up!" *repositions his tie.* "Now, we do have some questions that we want to ask before the government knows you're here."

Grimaldi: "Yeah, like I'll tell you anything, dog!"

Karasuma: "You little... What does the Reclamation Society know? Is the Mafia involved? I know you're a part of them."

Grimaldi: *laughs* "WAS, Mr. CIA. Left those guys a long time ago."

Ohno: "Right... Because you decided to join the Syndikat."

Hyun/Grimaldi: "!!"

Karasuma: "The Syndikat?"

Ohno: "The name of the illegal section of the Reclamation Society. Its hierarchy is constructed by three ethnically diverse mobsters and lobbyist. As of right now, I know two of them; Wushi Jieji, the Chinese guy that tried attacking you guys at the elevator, and you..."

Hyun: "And I have a good idea who the third is, but nobody cares for my word."

Grimaldi: "Well well, the mentally-limited super-criminal knows all about us."

Ohno: "The only way you could've known that... Is Shinsuke your third?"

Grimaldi: "Shinsuke? Not in the slightest. But he is involved."

Ohno: "Shit." *takes off.*

Hyun: "Ohno-kun? Where you going?"

Ohno: "I need time to think. Hyun, don't show him your crazy; we need him able to talk without
strain. And Karasuma, make sure you bring him to the Embassy once it's time."

Karasuma/Hyun: *nod*

Ohno: *leaves Qita Kong. Gets into the Lykan and drives back to Hotel Okura. His bluetooth rings all of a sudden* "Yeah?"

Naoko: [message] "Hey."

Ohno: *amused* "Hey."

Naoko: [message] "So I've got a message from Ritsu. She told me all about what happened with her, Kayano, and Itona."

Ohno: "Yeah? So?"

Naoko: [message] "You're a total bastard, letting me go on a wild goose chase like that and leading to nowhere."

Ohno: "I just couldn't let any more things or people obstruct my already windy plan. I didn't mean to harm anyone, especially you."

Naoko: [message] "Am I to believe that?"

Ohno: "I couldn't be more serious right now."

Naoko: [message] "Fine. You're lucky it all worked out."

Ohno: "Funny; your brother said the same thing."

Naoko: [message] "Karasuma-niisan... Is he overjoyed to see everyone together again?"

Ohno: "I saw a hint. But maybe if you join him and them, it'll turn into a full-blown smile."

Naoko: [message] "No... It's not time yet. I haven't done enough to prove my independence to him. Plus, I know you and me are not done. There is still a lot of work to do."

Ohno: "Which AssUniv will now be helping me with. you might as well join up."

Naoko: [message] "No. You continue playing day and night; day with them, night with me. No rest until this is all done."

Ohno: *checks his watch* "Could be a while."

Naoko: [message] "I got a while."

Ohno: "Fine then. I hope you know what you're doing."

Naoko: [message] "For all I know, it's all part of your plan."

Ohno: "You'll just have to wait and see. " *smirk.*
Naoko: [message] *gives a swift, playful scoff.* "Later."

Ohno: *ends the call and concentrates with the drive.* *This isn't over. Not by a longshot. So long as Shinsuke is around, and the Reclamation Society still stands, no one will be safe. We - AssUniv, need to stop them. And now that we are reunited, that's exactly what we'll do.*

*Ohno drives the Hypersport into the hotel garage and takes the elevator to the lobby. He walks in, only to find that Nagisa had pushed Kayano to the floor, much to the bewilderment of all the other students.*

Karma: "Th' fuck, Nagisa?"

Nagisa: *exhaling heavily.*

Kayano: *sits on the floor with shocked sadness.*

Ohno: *Great... Just GREAT.*

終了：「再会」アーク

End Arc 1 - "Reunion"
Kayano, Itōna, and Ritsu may have reunited with the group in full, but that doesn't mean everything is all hunky-doree!

**Begin: "Altogether" Arc**

Ohno: *Walks into the lobby of the Hotel Okura, hoping to join in on some of the festivities, only to find that Nagisa had pushed Kayano to the floor, much to the bewilderment of all the other students.*

Karma: "Th' fuck, Nagisa?"

Nagisa: *exhaling heavily.*

Kayano: *sits on the floor with shocked sadness.*

Ohno: *Great... Just GREAT.*

Nagisa: "Don't... Just, just don't."

Kayano: "Don't what?"

Nagisa: "Don't be acting sorry for reasons like that. Do you have any idea what I've been through? What we've all been through, because you guys thought it wasn't important to tell us what had happened?"

Itōna: "We understand your concern, Nagisa-kun, but the more people who knew about this, the less likely it would’ve worked."

Yada: "Nagisa-kun, they're right. We were all misguided into false sadness, but can't you just be happy that it's all behind us now?"

Nagisa: "No way! It's not just the fact that you all willingly separated from us, though that's still a very bad part, don't you misunderstand!"

Kayano: *Holds her heart.* "Then... What's the r-rest?"

Nagisa: *Refuses to answer, and walks out of the room, pushing aside Karma, and taking an elevator box to their assigned floor.*
Karma: "Get up, Kayano. He ain't worth your worry. Not right now, at least."

Kayano: *gets helped up and places her head on Karma's shoulder.*

Ohno: "WELL..." *steps into the light, since no one noticed him during the rancor.* "I see I missed quite a something while I was," *checks his watch.* "Interrogating an international criminal. And that something holds down, at least forty percent, blame on myself, given what happened," *checks his watch* "Three months ago."

Yada: "No, Ohno-kun, that's not true."

Terasaka: "Yeah, it might be. You were the one who told SGG to 'kidnap' them in the first place, right?"

Hayami: "He couldn't have known of the psychology complex that Nagisa currently has, though, and that this would be his reaction to such a swerve."

Ohno: "No, no, I'll say it. I'm sorry." *bows* "An ultimate plan always leaves some deatils behind, but that still isn't an excuse."

Ritsu: "Despite your humbleness, Ohno-kun, I have theorized that there would have been little percent chance that AssUniv would've been able to do this any other way on their own. We should be thanking you."

Kataoka: "Ritsu's right. You broke us apart, but you got us back together. And alive, while we are at it. So..." *bows.* "Thank you."

Ohno: "There is important information that me and Karasuma will have to tell all of you, and Irina-sensei..." *looks over to Irina, who has engrossed herself in the hotel's Grade-A champagne.* "But I see that it has to wait. So, first order, we have to get Nagisa back into a proper mind-set. Does anyone know why Nagisa has acted in such a way?"

AssUniv: *The rest perform a slightly less inclined bow, but no less amount of respect went into each one."

Karma: "So what now, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Reality, likes to take a break around us. A great number of AssUniv have come to learn that. Just like I did, when I, you all remember this, I revealed I had the antimatter tentacles in me. Throughout the many months I was a student in Class 3-E, I had always forced myself to believe this sentence as fact: 'Korosensei is a killer, the killer of my sister, and I must kill him.' I drilled that sentence into my mind daily. But I never thought that other sentences I heard would end up doing the same. 'I really adored sweets, like Kurahashi-san. I really enjoyed being friends with Kataoka-san and Yada-san. I really loved Nagisa-kun. I really admired Korosensei...' When
those sentences lodged into my mind too, the whole thing separated, into two realities. And it came to make me wonder, which reality was I going to follow? But it was clear from the start."

Fuwa: "Really, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Yeah... If my original reality could decide that a second could find its way, than obviously it was a reality worth living. The reality of the great connections I had with twenty-seven other amazing people, plus my killer teacher, was more desirable than the reality of a liar's kill."

Kataoka: "Oh, Kayano-san..." *hugged the small, green-haird girl. The rest of the females ended up colliding in a full embrace as well.*

Okajima: *takes a picture of bacchanal, and whispers.* "Hehehehehe..."

Yoshida: "Did any of you get that?"

Ohno: "Basically, Kayano believed in something. Then she believed in other things that would one day contradict that previous belief. Since she believed in those other things so easily despite that internal argument, it made sense that they were there for a reason. And that's why she chose them."

Nakamura: "Ah, so you're saying that Nagisa believed you were in trouble and everything is sad and whatnot. And now he believes you're not in trouble and all is very well in the world. But he's having trouble which part to believe?"

Kayano: "That's my best guess."

Maehara: "So our task is to force Nagisa to believe in the newest thing?"

Karma: "That won't be a problem. the only problem is, getting him out so we can do just that."

Ohno: "You guys have everything under control, I see. Well then, I'm sleeping in for the day."

Kanzaki: "Ohno-kun, wait!"

Sugino: "We can't ask for much more from you than what you've already given us, but you were quintessential in helping us bury our individual concerns! You should help us out with this."

Ohno: "There is a difference this issue and the others. You're all currently away from your own problems right now. Meanwhile, Nagisa-kun will be seeing his problem every day for a long while. You can't bury that. And this is also an issue I don't know well enough. At least, compared to you all. Kayano's explanation and your mutual sympathy makes me realize that it's something I had to be there to really know about, and unfortunately that time has passed. So, this one's all yours. I'm sorry, all." *bows.*

Karma: "That's fine by me. I think it's best we did this one ourselves."

Ohno: "Very good. Now, if you'll excuse me..." *turns around towards the elevators.*

Isogai: "Oh, and Ohno-san..."

Ohno: *turns around and looks at Isogai.*
Isogai: "You really burned down your 180 million yen home to let this all happen? (NOTE: I didn't do enough research on Kyoto real estate, and 80 million yen was not a "realistically outrageous" enough price. From this point on, all mentions of this will be 180 and not 80.)"

Ohno: *smiles.* "Surprised? I told you; money is not important to me." *leaves for the elevator doors.*

AssUniv: *looks at each other with anticipation.*

The next day...

-Ohno, at the break of dawn, quickly gets up, getting dressed in another smoke suit and secretly gets out of the hotel. He got into his Mazda6 Skyactiv-D racing model car, and returned to Qita Kong. He passed through the two literal language barriers and went into the back of Hyun's restaurant, ready to pick up Karasuma and Grimaldi.-

Hyun: *notices Ohno coming.* "Ohno-kun. I see you put on a much better suit than yesterday."

Ohno: "Yeah, well, I need to give a good image when I head into the Defense Embassy today."

Hyun: "Wait, Ohno-kun, you're going there!? Man, they're going to lock you up in an instant!"

Ohno: *shakes his head while grinning.* "I'd like to see them try." *to Karasuma.* "You ready, then?"

Karasuma: "Been." *goes over to Ohno, who willingly puts up his hands to be cuffed.*

Hyun: "Hey!" *aches to take out his Lionheart LH9*

Ohno: "Calm down, Hyun. They'd want a head start. Though it won't help." *to Karasuma.* "The hood too, Karasuma-chan."

Karasuma: "Right..." *places a cowl over the head of Ohno. They then depart from Qita Kong, with Hyun supporting the arrest and departure. Karasuma obviously takes the wheel of the Mazda6, while Ohno and Grimaldi are in the back; the latter unconscious. He drives to the Ministry of Defense's Embassy in Kyoto. He lugs the two convicts out of the car and enters the just opened building.*

Receptionist: *looks up, surprised at what she sees.* "K-Karasuma-san!?

Defense Agents: *stop what they are doing and watch as Karasuma has two criminals in his hands and begins to take them to the interrogation room.* "Karasuma-san... Why is he here?... Who are those two he arrested?..."

Defense Officer?: "Karasuma, stop right there." *gets in the way of the three.*

Karasuma: "This doesn't concern you, Keiji Sanada."

Sanada: *scoffs* "As a Parliamentary Secretary of Defense Minister, anything that the agents below deal with is of my concern. Which is why I must ask, where were you for all of the last three
months?"

Karasuma: "I was doing an internship in this prefecture. I moonlight as a teacher, remember?"

Sanada: "And where are your students?"

Karasuma: "It's a weekend. They're at home."

Sanada: "Hm... Very well. And, during that time, you have come to do some Defense work too, huh?" *tries studying the two.* "Who are they?"

Karasuma: "This one is Francisco Grimaldi. You know, the former Italian Mob shot caller?"

Sanada: "Right. And what did he do?"

Karasuma: "The real question is 'what didn't he do'?"

Sanada: "Good point. And who might this-" *Sanada then tries flipping Ohno's hood up, but the criminal slaps the hand away.* "Whoa!" *instinctively takes his Heckler and Koch Mk23 Mod 0 pistol and points it at Ohno. The other Agents noticed this and pointed the guns at him.*

Karasuma: *backs away with Grimaldi, leaving the handcuffed Ohno at the center of the room, encircled with guns pointed at him.*

Ohno: *in an unrecognizable voice.* "If Dr. Claw from Inspector Gadget can keep his hat in jail, then I can keep my hood."

Sanada: "That's not going to happen. Now, who are-" *he pulls off the hood.* "YOU." *he backs away, falling onto all fours and aiming at him still. He aims the prototype pistol at the auralic form of the Azure Dragon of East Asian mythology.*

Ohno: *in his usual voice* "Me..." *breaks his toy handcuffs.* "What makes you guys think that you can point those guns at me?" *throws his hands out and looks around the entire embassy.* "Huh!?!"

Sanada: "Karasuma arrested you for something!" *aim begins to shudder.*

Ohno: "That!?!" *points at Karasuma* "That!?!" *laughs* "Karasuma wishes he had something on me. Just like you all do. But, wah waah, that will never happen, and you all know it! Admit it! This nineteen-year-old can stump all your asses! This nineteen-year-old can kick all your asses! And this nineteen-year-old saved all your asses, by supplying you all with those guns," *checks his watch* "four years ago! The very same guns that you have focused on me!" *runs over to Sanada* "So what's it gonna be, Sanada-san? Going to shoot me?"

Sanada: *aim continues to worsen.*

Ohno: "Come on, Secretary! Do it!" *rub his forehead.*

Sanada: "No..." *puts away his gun.* "All of you! Firearms down!"

Defense Agents: *groan as they holster their pistols.*
Ohno: "That was a good business move, Sanada. Shooting down an innocent, even if he's an ex-con, is bad for Defense PR. But, I would've also liked it the other way. At least now, I know that when you guys shoot me, you'll shoot me from the front, so I can see it coming. That's the most I can ask for from you guys."

Sanada: "Karasuma, why is he here?"

Karasuma: "He's here to help me interrogate Grimaldi. He's here for something illegal, obviously."

Ohno: "Yeah, that's another thing that surprises me. I had to do all your work! Me, a criminal; doing the Ministry's work! I have enough on my hands right now! And I can account for how occupied the Ministry of Defense is, with the crime rate and all, but you guys know you're in trouble when you must turn to a group with far less manpower and, if you can dare say it, far less ethics. Come on, Karasuma, I know the way to the interrogation rooms too." *about to cut a corner.* "I'll see you all later!" *waves away.*

Karasuma: *makes sure the other Agents cannot hear* "You really had to do that?"

Ohno: *checks his watch* "Seven years ago, Karasuma-san, I learned very well what I had to do. Don't you question me about that."

Karasuma: "Fine then."

-The two would-be partners get into Interrogation Room #3, slam Grimaldi onto the chair, and smack him awake.-

Grimaldi: *cough cough* "Where, where am I now?"

Ohno: "Hell, little man." *sits across from him.*

Karasuma: *stands leaning on a wall to the right of Ohno.*

Grimaldi: "Burned through your head the fact that Shinsuke is a part of our operation, runt?"

Ohno: "Slowly, but surely."

Grimaldi: "I can't truly say myself, not being in your shoes. But it must suck, trying your hardest to keep your deepest secrets hidden from any watchful eye. But now we, the Reclamation Society, know exactly what we're dealing with during our stay here in Japan. It's not a monster, and it's certainly not a seven-foot giant. It's just some kid and his pals."

Ohno: *grins.* "You think that's the deepest things about me?"

Grimaldi: "We put a face to the faceless image you made. A face you didn't want to be seen as. We won't have anything to fear now."

Ohno: "I think you only much more to fear right now. Because, this kid and his pals," *checks his watch* "Put you under the knife in no time flat just yesterday. And we can so do it again."

Grimaldi: "..."
Ohno: "But we can't, because we already did it. That's why you're here. And since you're here, and you talked about what's allegedly my deepest secret, allow me to tell Karasuma here something about you, that'd you prefer locked up in a suitcase under the bed."

Grimaldi: *looks up.*

Karasuma: "No."

Ohno/Grimaldi: *look over to him with surprise.*

Karasuma: "I'm tired of being fed all the details from you. So I did some digging of my own. Maybe it's not up to your standards, but we'll all be on a level field after it." *shakes a manilla folder. He takes a third chair from across the room and takes a seat between them.* "Francisco Grimaldi, 37, Male, Italian ethnicity, 5'7", presumably heterosexual-

Ohno: "Karasuma, he knows this. Get to the good part."

Karasuma: *looks sternly at Ohno for a second before sighing in compliance, flipping the pages to a biography of the former Mafia man.* "You were indeed in the Sicilian Mafia, and you went as far as being a Capo of your Clan. That reign ended up lasting a decent while, but you never sought a higher position. Maybe it was a lack of ambition during that time, or maybe it was the pleads of your foot soldiers. Or... That you were born in France."

Grimaldi: "!!"

Ohno: "You see, one thing gangs in Japan have over gangs in your country is that when they mean all of the oppressed people are welcome, they mean ALL of the oppressed."

Karasuma: "This is my time, Ohno." *slams the section of the table near Ohno.* "But that is true - You weren't allowed to get any further due to where you came from, hm? Not like that was your fault. Must have been sad. And made you shun any authority higher than yours."

Ohno: "You know, except for the one that smiles widely when they say they're going to make you Ringleader."

Karasuma: "Ohno!"

Grimaldi: "And that's exactly what they did! The Society made me one of their top dogs. And even in here, I remain a large threat to you all. These guys, they're as persistent and stubborn as you two are. Eventually, they'll find a way to get me out, and then the plan to recreate the ultimate weapon will go on as scheduled."

Ohno: "Are you done?" *fixes his necktie.* "We don't need to hear that part of your life."

Karasuma: "That is true." *closes the folder.* "We'd like you to fill us up on either of these things; the third Ringleader, and how Ohno's 'friend' Shinsuke fits into this."

Grimaldi: "Pft, you wouldn't believe either answers even if I told you."

Karasuma: "I'm considering it."

Ohno: "You guys are at a dead end, and as such, so are we." *kicks back, putting his Oxford
shoes onto the table. "Which means, we have all the time in the world right now to make you tell us."

Grimaldi: "That's what you think. But this stalemate won't last. I heard from your friend down in the slums getting word from his boys that Wushi Jieji had escaped the Conference Center before police showed up. That leaves two, very capable, and very dangerous bosses of our syndicate still roaming free, and gathering more intel on the tentacle project. The longer you stay with me, the more likely they'll succeed."

Ohno: "And once they peek too far out of cover, we're gonna round them up too. I know one of them already has done that."

Karasuma: "You best quit stalling. You have nowhere to go."

-Knock knock-

Karasuma: *gets up and opens the door.* "What is it?"

Sanada: "Your interrogation time is up. We're going to detain him now."

Karasuma: "No! This is our suspect!"

Sanada: "That you brought here. Don't worry; we'll let you see him, every week. Or other. I mean, you'll always know where to find him. but for now, we're getting properly prepped. So finish up and take..." *eyes Ohno.* "That, with you."

Ohno: "Classic. Agents, seeing the so-called 'street trash' as not even gender-specific. You're just butthurt that you can't control me, and you never will." *gets up and starts to leave, before stopping parallel to where Sanada is, and then jolting his movements towards the Secretary, frightening him.* "That's true nerves of steel, your boss has, Karasuma."

Karasuma: "He's not in my department."

Sanada: *watches the two mismatched people leave.*

Karasuma: *takes the passenger seat inside the Mazda6.*

Ohno: "That was fun. Now to check on AssUniv."

Karasuma: *looks surprised.* "What happened to them?"

Ohno: "You'll see." *pounds the gas pedal*

-Meanwhile, back at Hotel Okura at the same time-

AssUniv: *return to their floor after having their fill at Cafe Le Court.*

Maehara: "Nagisa didn't show up for breakfast..."

Kanzaki: "He must really be hurt about this..."

Muramatsu: "I still don't really get it. This was all he wanted. What's he have to be upset about?"
Hayami: "You haven't been paying too much attention. It's not anything external to Nagisa anymore. It's just an internal conflict now."

Kayano: "That happens to have external origins... And we got to help him through it."

Kataoka: "We can't do that very well if he doesn't give us a chance. He needs to get out of his room and confront us."

Karma: "Then let's get him out. I'm tired of all this." *walks over to Nagisa's room and knocks.*

Nagisa: "Who's there?"

Karma: *mouthes to Yada* "Fool him."

Yada: "Room service! Your friends ordered something for you!"

Nagisa: "Can't you read the door sign? I don't want to be disturbed."

Karma: "Too bad." *front kicks the metal of the door, forcing in open.* "Nagisa!"

Nagisa: "What the fuck, Karma?"

Karma: "Come on! You and me, rooftop! Now!"

Nagisa: "Why?"

Karma: "A talk among best friends! Come on!" *bearhugs Nagisa, and carries him to the elevators, which bring him to the penultimate floor, in which they walk to the staircase that brings them to the rooftop.* "Great! Now we're here!"

Nagisa: "Yeah, we're here. Why?"

Karma: "Because it's time to face the music, Nagisa. You have no reason to be mad at Kayano."

Nagisa: "Yeah, I've come to see that."

Karma: "If so, then why are you still sulking?"

Nagisa: "It's not at all something you can understand!"

Kayano: "Nagisa, you're just really torn up right now! I get it! I was there too!"

Nagisa: "That ain't it! You all don't get it!"

Karma: "If we can't get it, why can't we get it?"

Nagisa: "Because, it's not your problem! It's mine! And I'm dealing with it in my own way!" *begins to take his leave.* "This was a waste of time."

Karma: *gets shouldered by the constantly moving Nagisa as he heads toward the exit. Something snaps in him.* "Hey, Nagisa, one more thing."
Nagisa: *stops in his tracks, and then abruptly turns around.* "What-

Karma: *headbutts Nagisa, causing him to fall onto his bottom.* "That's it."

Nagisa: "Ow! What's your problem!"

Karma: "Your problem! It caused me pain, and now I'm going to solve it. And that involves you."

Nagisa: *starts getting up.* "That's wildly insensi-"

Karma: *sweeps Nagisa's front leg, causing him to fall over again.*

Nagisa: "Oof!"

Karma: "Doesn't make sense, huh? Sounds like a lot of things around us!"

Nagisa: *gets up and points at Karma.* "You're not going to get hurt by what I'm dealing wi-

Karma: *takes the pointing arm and flips him over.* "Yeah, that much is true."

Nagisa: *coughs, before going prone and starts getting up on all fours, then on one knee.*

Karma: "Come on! Shoe me what ails me!" *throws a wide roundhouse kick, which Nagisa blocks and traps on his shoulder.*

Nagisa: *tilts his shoulder downwards, causing torsion pain on Karma's ankle and knee, and making him fall down to Nagisa's level. He then releases it, and when they stand up again, they then throw cross counter punches to each other's faces.*

("Ryu Ga Gotoku Ishin!" OST Theme "For Your Sake" plays.)

渚塩田対カルマ赤羽

Karma Akabane; Politician in Training

V.S.

Nagisa Shiota; Korosensei's Killer

*The two students slide back due to each other's impacts. Nagisa takes the lead by throwing a right straight at Karma, who leaned back away from. He then taunted Nagisa to go again, which he did. This time, the blue-haired fighter launched a left hook, in which the last knuckle barely grazes Karma's cheek. Karma then decided to counterattack and throws a jab of his own; with enough force that a direct hit puts Nagisa back on his posterior again. But Nagisa gets back up to face the redhead again, and he takes the fight to the lower level, prompting a forward assault by Karma, but then kicking out Karma's stepping leg, tripping him just as he did earlier.
Nagisa then takes an elevated half mount to pound on Karma with vicious left overheads and hammer fists, though Karma manages to block the latter bunch and then pulls the bluehead close, allowing him to roll over and turn the tables on his best friend. He manages to make better use of the situation, until Nagisa picks his leg up and knees Karma's ribcage, forcing him off. Karma quickly recovers and tries throwing a massive knee smash of his own as Nagisa gets onto his knees. Nagisa manages to limbo underneath the attack, unbalancing the Redhead. Nagisa charges at him and jumps in the air to do a flying lariat that puts them both on their back. Nagisa is the first on his feet, and while Karma is shaking his head back to focus, he stomps on his stomach. The Redhead deadmans up, allowing Nagisa to throw a buzzsaw kick that clocks his forehead. The bluehead once again takes an elevated mounting position to pound Karma again, but it doesn't last long when Karma headbutts one punch at just the right angle, hurting Nagisa's own hand and breaking the grounding.

Karma gets up, goes under a right hook by Nagisa, and then chokeslams the latter onto the ground. He tries to stomp himself, but Nagisa manages to wriggle out of the way. He manages to recover, and Karma runs over to him. Nagisa feints this, and does a low dropkick that stings Karma's shin, but otherwise puts Nagisa once again on the ground. That works to his advantage, ultimately, when he wraps his legs around Karma's attacking arm and does a cross armbreaker from a suspended position. It makes Karma grunt in pain a bit before he uses sheer strength and lifts his best friend high into the air. He then swings around recklessly, eventually causing Nagisa to let go and roll around on the cement. Nagisa slowly gets up again, sensing Karma getting closer, and throws some wild punches, that never land a knuckle.

Karma blocks the last haymaker, brings Nagisa in for a bandolier hug, and then Black Hole slams him onto the ground. He then brings his hands together to double axe handle Nagisa's face, but the small bluehead evades the clubbing. A second attempt leaves the redhead open to Nagisa's left leg front kicking him off. They then simultaneously stand up, both bruised and bloody, taking firm right fists, running over, and clocking each other. But both block each other's attack, and are now locked in a test of strength.

殺すために行きなさい！

Go for the kill!

Karma twists 90 degrees so their arms are coiled, while he faces away from the struggle. He then drops his bridge, causing Nagisa to flip over him and land in a straightjacket choke. Karma then presses upwards, similar to Finn Balor's Bloody Sunday move, releases hold mid-air and slaps Nagisa's chest, causing Nagisa to crash onto the rooftop flat on his back, nearly knocking him out.

Karma takes the lead, picking Nagisa up by his collar, then arm wringing Nagisa, getting behind, applying a hammerlock, and then hooking around the bluehead's larynx, preparing to choke him out. Nagisa, after a brief struggle, manages to poke his right arm through the keyhole and breaks out, only for Karma to turn him around and perform a double-handed choke that Nagisa is too weak to pry out from. And the air is running out... Much like one snake coiling another like the latter was a weak twig...

-End theme-
Karma: *Reluctantly but incessantly, he continues to cringe Nagisa's throat.* Just surrender already!

Nagisa: *Maintains a fierce, but futile struggle.* No! *takes one hand behind him and grabs a training UCP pistol and secretly aims it at Karma.*

Karma: *eventually notices the pistol, realizing how similar of a situation they were both in four years ago, when Nagisa was choking him out, and Karma had gotten hold of a painted knife that he could've plunged into his best friend's back, ending the contest. But...*

Nagisa: *realizes he's reliving that same event, and suddenly his right arms aim worsens. His frown gets larger.*

Karma: *Accepting that he'll lose no matter what happens, he keeps the hold on tight as Nagisa moves his arm up.*

Nagisa: *doesn't try to hide it anymore as he points it straight to Karma's face.*

Ohno/Karasuma: *appear from the rooftop entrance/exit.* "!!"
Chapter Summary

Nagisa and Karma's fight concludes. Surprises still continue to amass, though!

Nagisa: *Puts the barrel of the UCP pistol right to Karma's face, while the latter continues to tighten his collar, choking him.*

Karma: "Do it."

Kayano: "Nagisa-kun!" *tries to run in, but Sugino pulls her back, shaking his head.*

Nagisa: *turns off the safety and moves his index finger onto the trigger, ready to fire a plastic bead into Karma's left eye.*

Karsummo: *looks on with conflict of the situation.*

Ohno: *Crosses arms while watching it unfold.* One must submit.... What's it going to be, you two?

Nagisa: *squeezes the trigger halfway.*

Karma: "Do it!" *wrings Nagisa's neck further.*

Nagisa: *His index finger remains where it is, but his hand starts uncontrollably wavering.* Da... Damn it!

-A UCP Pistol falls to the floor, making clinking sounds on the roof as it settles.-

Nagisa: *throws his hands out, capitulating the battle.*

Karma/AssUniv: *surprised. Karma accidentally lets go just enough for Nagisa to intelligibly speak.*

Nagisa: *gargled* "You win..."

Karma: *frowns at Nagisa while still keeping hold of Nagisa's shirt's neck hole.* "You think this was what it was about?"

Nagisa: "Nah... Just thought you deserved that being told to you, since I was told it before."

Karma: (remembers) *With a knife in hand he's ready to stab Nagisa, who's got him in an arm triangle choke. Time is running out, but one thrust will end the contest. However, he suddenly remembers what got them to fighting in the first place... What defined their friendship forever. He drops the knife next to them, and taps Nagisa's back.* "That's it... I surrender."

*Lets go of Nagisa, who falls on his back. Karma's wounds suddenly open up as well, and he goes*
onto one knee. Abruptly, they both black out.*

AssUniv: "Nagisa! Karma!"

-Half an hour later...-

Nagisa/Karma: *audible wincing*

Irina: "Ah, stop being babies, kids!" *holds a disinfecting cotton ball right next to the gash on Nagisa's head.*

Kurahashi: *prods Karma on his cheek with a cotton ball, causing him to lightly smack it away.* "How do you two go from shaking off each other's haymakers, to almost screaming at clouds touching you?"

AssUniv: *look on with awkward smiles.*

Karasuma: "Now that we have your mutually undivided attention, mind telling me why the Aces of AssUniv fought?"

Karma/Nagisa: "..."

Nagisa: "They wanted to help me face the truth; the one that truly exists. And they did." *looks at Karma, then Kayano, nodding at them to confirm his resolution.*

Karma: "Who said that was why I fought you, you little shit- Ha..." *could not complete that sentence without laughing, punching Nagisa's shoulder.*

Nagisa: "OW!" *holds his arm socket.*

Kayano: "Karma-kun, why?"

Karma: "Apologies, just thought it was heat of the moment."

Nagisa: "Urgh, so why did you fight me then?"

Karma: "Maybe I was dying for you to say that to me. A little void now complete."

Nagisa: *remembers that he kept complaining about a void within him during the "internship."* "Eff you too.." *looks away.*

Kataoka: "Peer love is a special thing. And we are bearing witness to it, everyone."

Terasaka: *grins* "Damn right we are."

Yada: "No love is better."

Okuda: "I'm certain Takebayashi-kun would be asserting a far different affection is superior."

Nakamura: "Huh, where is that guy anyways?"

Ohno: *opens up the doors to the lobby floor's help desk, where they resided.* "Hello everyone.
I hate to barge in on you all after a recently reconciled matter, but we have another problem."

Itona: "Always. Come to expect it by now."

Karasuma: "What now?"

Ohno: "Takebayashi-san... Has his mother here."

AssUniv: "... *totally flabbergasted.* "WHAT!?" *they all run out to follow Takebayashi on the lobby floor. Nagisa, Karma, Irina, Karasuma, and Ohno follow closely behind. They all get back to the front lobby of the Hotel Okura, where Takebayashi stood, like a whipped dog, before his demonically intimidating parent.*

Mrs. Takebayashi: "KOTARO! WHY ARE YOU HERE!?"

Takebayashi: "M-mother, please, this is a populated residence. You're going to cause a scene."

Mrs. Takebayashi: "I WOULDN'T BE HERE IF YOU WENT TO THE TOKYO RESEARCH INTERNSHIP AS YOU HAD STATED ON YOUR LETTER HOME!"

AssUniv: *sweat drops fall behind them.*

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Ah! Your friends are here too! My suspicions were correct then!"

Karasuma: "Mrs. Takebayashi." *steps out of the crowd and bows towards her.* "To what do we owe this honor?"

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Karasuma-sensei... I see you still remain quite reserved in every situation. I can't help but merit that, but in this instance, it is unwelcome. You of all people know very well why I'm here. Do you really think that I can let it slide, that my son is once again learning to become an assassin, lying to me in the process, and getting himself into a plethora of dangerous affairs?"

Karasuma: *looks back, having heard Ohno cough really loud, preventing non-AssUniv bystanders from hearing the word 'assassin' blurt out.* "I have, with all due respect, a distinct feeling that you underestimate how competent I am at not letting such dangerous affairs harm the students under me, Mrs. Takebayashi."

Irina: "Sounds about right. Takebayashi has not so much as lost a pair of glasses since he was forcibly enrolled in AssClass! Now he's older, and he's better! The chances of what you fear are practically null now!"

Mrs. Takebayashi: "We all know that your jobs are unpredictable ones! All of it is on chance! And chance is not a good thing in the place of my son becoming a transfer student!"

AssUniv: "Transfer student!?"

Takebayashi: "Transfer student?"

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Ah, you see!? You don't even tell your students all the changes that happen right in front of them! I can't allow my son to be in the company of someone with such small scope of the future."
Takebayashi: "Karasuma-sensei... Is that true? I'm, I'm not at Nihon anymore?"

Karasuma: "..."

Ohno: "Our scope may appear small. But the lens that we must see through are much different from yours." *steps out of the group, with his hands in his pockets.* "And like the parts of a car, they're not compatible with every scope."

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Who are you? You're not one of the students from Kunugigaoka."

Ohno: "Oh, no. I'm Kazuhiko Ohno. I'm the organizer and treasurer of this internship. And with this authoritative position, I too hold a responsibility to the students working here, be it their results, or their concerns."

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Hah! Spare me!"

Ohno: "I'm sorry, ma'am, but this is not a joke. There is precious work going on here. Especially from Takebayashi-san himself."

Mrs. Takebayashi: "And what would that be?"

Ohno: *smiles.* "Saving the world."

Mrs. Takebayashi: "You honestly expect me to believe-" *backs away when Ohno points outside.* "What?"

Ohno: "I'll show you, but it is classified info. These bystanders that you have attracted cannot know about it. So, if you please, we'll head to somewhere more discreet."

Mrs. Takebayashi: *thinks about it.* "My son comes too, then. If you don't convince me, not that I think you will, then I will pull him out right then and there."

Ohno: "Agreed. But let him take something with him first." *goes to Takebayashi, whispering into his ear. The bespectacled student looks honestly surprised by what he hears, but he nods and goes back up to the class' floor.* "Now, we can wait outside, in my car." *He lures her outside.*

AssUniv: "He settled that rather well..." *they then remember the transfer dilemma.* "Karasuma-sensei, Takebayashi is a transfer!?"

Irina: "Wwwwwwwwwwhat's so weird about that?" *looks away.*

Isogai: "Are we all... Transfers?"

Karasuma: Damnit... *grabs his forehead.*

Outside, Takebayashi had gotten what Ohno had told him to get, and then he gets inside Ohno's Lexus LS460, along with his mother. They take an awkwardly silent drive to a small pub. They head in, order some water, and take a seat.

Mrs. Takebayashi: "Okay. We're here, we lack the company. Now out with it."
Ohno: "Takebayashi-san's a genius, ma'am. But you probably already knew that."

M. Takebayashi: "Yeah! I've known that! That's why this stupid decision of his bothers me so!"

Ohno: "But what if this 'stupid' decision leads to countlessly saved lives?"

M. Takebayashi: "Assassin work could never do that! Yeah, you can save one or two souls with what you do, here or there, but it won't ever be how you describe."

Ohno: "Ma'am, I think you're presuming a little too much. I only said what Takebayashi is doing is saving the world. I didn't say that it involved assassination."

M. Takebayashi: "And you're going to tell me it isn't?"

Ohno: "Yes. It's about blood."

M. Takebayashi: "!!"

Takebayashi: "Mother..." *reaches into his back pocket, revealing a ripped-out page, with compounds and equations all over it.* "Do you understand what this is?" *He slides it along the table. *

M. Takebayashi: *takes out her glasses to read it. The contents shock her greatly.* "Kotaro, you've singled out molecular components and possible combinations in which you can create artificial blood, available to any type!?"

M. Takebayashi: *remembers that the base information behind these writings were given to him by Korosensei.* "Yes, mother."

M. Takebayashi: *at a loss for words, stuttering excessively.* "Well, that's incredible. Revolutionary. I guess it makes sense that you're with your friends then; you can test the blood once you're done on many examples of each type."

Takebayashi: "Yeah... That's it..."

Ohno: "See, ma'am? Takebayashi-san is on his way to making history. With all of his friends. I'm just here, funding it, making sure it happens. He knows what he wants. And I think you can respect that want. Can you?"

M. Takebayashi: "I... I guess. And, it's not like Kyoto Institute of Technology is a bad school either..."

Takebayashi: "I'm going to KIT!?"

???: "Not right now, you're not!"

Trio: *look back, and see four tough large guys standing over them.*

Ohno: "Can we help you?"

Man 1: "We overheard that you two are going to be making history."
Ohno: "Sonofa- Yeah. So?"

Man 2: "History's accolades tend to pay. A lot." *rubs his hands like there are bills in them.*

Man 3: "I reckon we just take those papers you have for ourselves; sell it to the right buyer."

Man 4: "And make some big, hard-earned bucks."

Ohno: "Whoa, whoa, hey. We're not looking for trouble. Okay? It's not even complete yet. How about, I just give you my wallet, and we can leave as friends?" *reaches into his left pocket.*

Man 1: "Not complete? Well we're going to change that. And by we, we mean you two. Think of that history you mentioned as incentive."

Ohno: "Shit..." *looks aside.*

Man 2: "Well? What do you two say? Or do we need to make you cooperate? Might even include this nice-looking lady across the table into the blackmail, too?"

Takebayashi: "Now hold on a second!" *takes off his glasses and stands up, matching his head with most of the men's chest levels.* "Nobody threatens my projects, and especially, nobody threatens my mother!"

Man 3: "Oof, we got a hero in the pub! And what is he going to do about it?"

Takebayashi: *contemplates starting the fight right now. He looks to Ohno, wondering why the certified badass is surprisingly much more submissive, only to see a sideways smile on him, confirming it's just an act.* "I'll assassinate you." *a knife suddenly appears within his sleeve under his wrist. He grabs hold of it and swipes it sideways, nearly cutting off Man 1's nose.*

M. Takebayashi: *surprised at what she sees.*

Bartender: *screams, holding someone smaller next to her. All the other customers had run off.*

Takebayashi: *kicks the stunned Man 1 into his three cohorts, causing Man 2 to fall over a table and flip over onto his face. Man 3 gets pushed to the side, while still standing, and Man 4 jumps back to avoid most impact. Takebayashi evades Man 3's wide hook, ducking down while cutting at Man 3's side, drawing blood. Takebayashi elbows Man 3 back towards the entrance.*

Man 4: *pulls out a knife of his own.* "Damn you, who do you think you are?"

Ohno: *aims a UCP pistol at Man 4.* "Someone who brought a gun to a knife fight. Now, you round up your boys, and you get out of here. We won't say a thing if you don't."

Man 4: "Damnit... Outworked by two kids..." *puts away the knife.* "Come on, we're getting out of here. You haven't seen the last of us, you hear!?" *all four then run out of the pub.*

Ohno: "Well, that was a mess." *Ohno puts away the pistol behind him, then looks at the two Takebayashis.*

Takebayashi: "Uh..." *puts away his knife, back deep into his sleeve. He also returns his spectacles to his face.* "I'm sorry that you had to see that, mother. It isn't all... Research with me."
*looks up.* "But, let me tell you one thing before you make your mind: what you saw just now, was not even thread of fear in me. Throughout all my time in Class 3-E four years ago, I had come to gain such a confidence, one that was far greater than I ever had, even before I got into my slump. It has wavered since then, but now, I feel it growing again. I have no doubt that I can juggle two life-altering jobs in the pursuit of what I want to be. Because I have to; one or the other is not an option."

M. Takebayashi: "... It is true that whatever happened during your senior year in Junior High was revolutionary. An E-class that stood up to their entire school... Do you really think you can do the same for the world?"

Ohno: "Must he repeat himself?"

M. Takebayashi: *sigh* "You're allowed to stay here."

Takebayashi: *takes off his glasses in relief.* "Thank you. *bows.*

M. Takebayashi: "Bring Kyoto to its knees, son. Or I'll pull you out." *starts leaving. She stares at Takebayashi one last time before closing the pub door, smiling all the same. She takes a taxi to the train station.*

Takebayashi: *puts them back on.* "Thank you, Ohno-san. I don't know what I would say to her if you were never involved."

Ohno: "You would've found a set of words. I only wanted you to say the ones that sounded right."

Takebayashi: "You see, that confidence I get from what you say to me. It, it reminds me of someone."

Ohno: "Your former teacher?"

Takebayashi: "Yeah... That's why I said I needed you."

Ohno: "Take it easy, tiger. Look, I'll call a cab to get you home. I gotta stay back here, pay for damages and whatnot. Alright?"

Takebayashi: "Yeah, yeah..." *steps outside.*

-Ten minutes later...-

Ohno: *wipes, then whips a perfectly repaired table with a washcloth.* "And there we go! Nice job, guys."

Men: *the same strong men that confronted him and the Takebayashis earlier were in the pub, helping to clean and replace furniture.*

Man 1: "Thanks a lot, boss."

Man 2: "Sir, you don't think we overdid anything?"

Ohno: "Nah, nah, my friend will be just fine at least. And I think that's all that his mother
wants."

???: "I know that's all that I want from someone taking care of my Hotaru..." *The woman who screamed at the chaos from earlier came out, with her presumed daughter Hotaru.*

Hotaru: "Mom..."

Ohno: "Miss Azusa." *bows, prompting all of the men behind him to bow too.* "My apologies for myself and my affiliates causing some property damage. It went a little further than I had anticipated."

Azusa: "Oh, that's alright. You warned me about it prematurely, of course."

Ohno: "On such short notice."

Azusa: "That's okay. We're just happy to help friends of one of our old customers."

Ohno: *arises.* "That reminds me. I also must apologize for my family not being able to help you during your debt crisis. You had dealt with a lecherous man threatening to take you and your daughter into trafficking. That kind of behavior from anyone is not tolerable on my turf."

Azusa: "I know you're a busy man, Ohno-kun. You couldn't possibly handle every issue in Kyoto, especially as a college student."

Ohno: "I have to. My persona says so." *goes up to Azusa and Hotaru.* "Here." *hands her an envelope, which contains a stacked bundle of 2 million yen.* "As I've mentioned before, you won't have to worry about money again."

Azusa: "Ohno-kun, we couldn't possibly take so much."

Ohno: "I insist. Don't make a career criminal take that a step further." *he puts the envelope in her hand, and then looks to Hotaru, giving her some ten thousand yen as well.* "A little something for you too, Hotaru-san."

Hotaru: "Thank you." *accepts the gift.*

-The door slams open.-

Mario: "MISS AZUSA! HOTARU!"

Seeker: "WE HEARD THERE WAS TROUBLE HERE!"

Chantha: "ARE YOU TWO ALRIGHT!?"

Futoshi: "Looks we were late to the party." *points at Ohno and his guys.*

Mario: "Hmm..." *puts knife away.* "I see the instigators have become the curators. No one else came in, so it must have been you, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Yeah, that's right. Don't worry; Miss Azusa and Hotaru are unharmed. My men made sure of it."
Seeker: "You have no right bringing them into your hassles."

Man 4: "You don't have a right talking to our boss like that!"

Mario: "You want to fight? Let's take it outside, we don't want the ladies to see it."

Ohno: "Calm your bloodlust, we're leaving." *signals the Men to depart. They all go their separate ways after closing the pub door.*

Azusa: "I'm sure there is some parts of you four that can warm up to that young man. As you have to one just like him years before."

Assassins: *look over to her with glee.* "O-o-o-o-o-of course we can! Eh, the next time! We'll get it!" *crowd around the two.*

Hotaru: "How about a drink until then?" *offers them all menus.*

Assassins: "HELLYEAH!"

-Back at Hotel Okura-

Karasuma: "So, you see, we had you all transferred to universities around Kyoto so that the odds of the same event would happen again, you see?"

Irina: "It's hard to coordinate with everyone when you're all halfway across the country, right?"

Terasaka: "That sounds reasonable enough..."

Maehara: "Not in Osaka anymore... Gonna miss that place."

Kataoka: "Looks like just another price to pay for this second life we lead. Not like we can do anything about that."

Chiba: "How can you be certain that this is where everything will unfold, though?"

Karasuma: "The Reclamation Society is after Dr. Yanagisawa, right? Well, there's no way he's not somewhere in the city. Bedridden men without any sort of influence can't move very far, you know?"

Hayami: "And how do you know that?"

Ohno: "Because of me, and my crew." *steps inside the room on their floor.* "Have you all come to accept this new direction?"

Yoshida: "Again, it's not anything we can change now."

Nagisa: "Why change it? Kyoto has some of the best schools."

Ohno: "Indeed. So, we can move onto the more pressing matter; the Reclamation Society's next step."

Karma: "Gastro said they're not after us now, right?"
Ohno: "Yeah. We might still be under their radar, but they're not going to go out of their way. Unless we give them a reason."

Karasuma: "And the reason will be, we find the doctor that started this all."

Irina: "And hide him ourselves. Whatever they want from him, they'll never find."

Kayano: "Sounds like a plan. Where is he?"

Karasuma, Irina, and Ohno: "Uh..."
-A week has passed since all the drama at Kyoto International and Hotel Okura had been resolved. AssUniv had not lost sight of what they came to do, which is training to be the best assassins once more. But since the hideout at Mount Atago had been burned down, where are they continuing their progression to perfection?-  

*Ohno:* "And here we are!" *opens up a warehouse door, showing a very refurbished interior, especially in comparison to the training warehouse that Lovro had been using. In fact, there is a bunch of materials tailor-made for their practice situated in a far corner, waiting to be used.* "What do you guys think? Not enough?"

*Kayano:* "Not enough? This is way more than enough!" *marvels at all that she sees.*

*Irina:* "I wish I trained in something like this. Olga had me practice in a motel ready to break if you so much as slam a door."

*Itona:* "Indeed. Though our standards are pretty low, considering that we trained in a meat-packing facility and an incomplete skyscraper." *looks around slowly with satisfaction.*

*Muramatsu:* "Not low enough. We trained with Lovro in the worst, rat-infested edifice in Kyoto!"

*Ohno:* "What? That's where he took you guys? Damn, I'm going to have a talk with him. In any case, any further training without hassle will be done here. I hope this at least serves as an acceptable replacement to the beautiful Mount Atago shrine."

*Yada:* "I think it can, Ohno-kun."

*Isogai:* "Well, what are we waiting for, everyone? Let's assassinate!"

*AssUniv:* *everyone pulls out a BB UCP pistol and points it at the sky.* "Yeah!"

*Karma:* *while keeping up with his former classmates, he and Nagisa look back at Ohno, who had stuck around to talk things over with Karasuma.* (To Nagisa) [No doubt, Nagisa, that Ohno is totally on our side. But he's still only giving us enough information for the current mission. The rest, possibly only Karasuma-sensei knows.]

*Nagisa:* [Perhaps, but not too much more in the areas that we are concerned. Finding Doctor Yanagisawa is such a tough task, even Ohno and his own group have not found him yet. I think we're going to face a brief hiatus until a development unearths.]
Karma: [I think that would be fine. We've gone on too much of a rollercoaster lately.]

Nagisa: [Damn right...] 

-Back to the present...-

-Irina, teaching her linguistics class to AssUniv in the manager's office area floors above the packaging floor, is oblivious to the silent whispers of her student personnel. And the information is totally of utmost importance.-

Nakamura: *mouthes* "Man, we only have a month left of our Summer, and we're stuck in here learning. That's what Fall is for."

Fuwa: "Whoa! Only a month of Summer left? That's insane! We haven't nearly done enough R&R!"

Nakamura: "More importantly, we haven't nearly done enough swimming."

Kataoka: "Swimming?"

Yada: "That surely sounds enticing..."

Isogai: "I'm sure we can spin it to sound very training-like."

Karma: "If it works, I'm game for a day at the beach."

Kayano: "Amen! I love the coasts of Kyoto!"

Nagisa: "If it'll get us closer, that would be beneficial."

Ohno: *In an inner voice* "That sounds way better than saying it's for training."

Irina: *offended due to the interruption* "Uh, what?"

Ohno: "We've got a little proposition to make." *gets up and opens the office window to look down below.* "Karasuma, get in here!"

Karasuma: *looks up and nods. He goes to the learning center.* "What is it?"

Karma: "We'd like a beach day."

Irina: *thrown back* "A beach day? Wow, reminds me of the last time we had a vacation, Karasuma-sama."

Karasuma: "That was three years ago."

Irina: *crosses arms and pouts* "Which is why I remember it fondly so."

Karasuma: *sighs* "I suppose that can work. You've all gotten to roughly the peak level you've reached during your third year of Junior High School. One cheat day should be fine. Irina is certainly on board too. Ohno? What do you think?"
Ohno: "Since when," *checks watch* "In the last seven years did you need the approval of the former criminal in me?" *kicks back onto a free desk in front of him with a smug smile.*

Karasuma: "I'll take that as a yes. Alright. Tomorrow, we'll take the day off and hit the coastline. Any that you all have in mind?"

Okajima: "Kotohiki Beach, perhaps? I think at this time, the majority of the people that frequent it will be almost gone. It'll make our relaxation that much more precious and exclusive. I got pictures of the sight too!" *opens up a binder album showing the sight to the students.*

Kayano: "Oooo, that looks like it'll work!"

Yoshida: "It's far though, from here to there. It's almost on the opposite side of the prefecture. Trains will take almost nine hours. Bus will take ages as well. It'll be a waste no matter when we leave."

Ohno: "That's not a bother. Yoshida, can you drive?"

Yoshida: "What? Uh, yeah."

Ohno: "And Itona? You have done parts distribution for your father's company, so I take it you can drive as well?"

Itona: "That is true."

Ohno: "We all know I can handle the wheel, and so can our two adults, Karasuma and Irina here. That's five vehicles. Pick the right ones, and we can all drive our way there. 2 hours. We go in the morning, and we'll have all day for the beach and its pastimes. That sound good?"

Nagisa: "Sounds like a plan, surely."

Ohno: "Very good." *checks watch.* "Let's finish today, and by dawn tomorrow, there will be five high-capacity SUVs in the front of Okura."

AssUniv: "Alright!"

-The next day...-

Ohno: "Okay, everyone here? Everyone all set?" *looks over the near-thirty strong crowd.*

Yada: "Yep. Everyone's bags are fully loaded."

Kayano: "Quite a surprise, too. Only an afternoon to go around the city to get whatever we were getting for this."

Itona: "And these are our rides?" *looks behind Ohno, Karasuma, and Irina, seeing five Land Rover Range Rover L405s lined up parallel to the curb they were on.*

Ohno: "They are. Sufficient?"

Yoshida: "Range Rovers? Hell yeah they are!" *runs up to one and feels the metallic hull.*
Ohno: "Great then. Let's not waste any time." *goes to the Range Rover second from the lead and opens the driver's seat.* "We'll leave it to you guys to choose seating arrangements."

AssUniv: *look between each other in thought*

-An hour later...-

-Halfway through the ride, the five SUVs are going heading Northward on the national highway to Kyotango, where Kotohiki Beach resides. Ohno's SUV has Yada, Kurahashi, Chiba, Hayami, Kimura, and Fuwa. Karasuma is driving Nagisa, Kayano, Karma, Kanzaki, Sugino, and Nakamura. Irina has Isogai, Kataoka, Maehara, Kimura, Okano, and Okuda. Yoshida has Terasaka, Hazama, Muramatsu, and Hara. Itona carries the remaining Takebayashi, Okajima, Mimura, and Sosuke.-

-Inside Yoshida's SUV-

Terasaka: "Well, I see the mechanical engineering part is not just for show."

Yoshida: "What? You thought my fascination for all things auto lately was bullshit?"

Muramatsu: "Oh, not at all. Just, you're handling this like a pro."

Yoshida: "You should see me handle a motorcycle. I'm a part of the arid mountain wind with that."

Hazama: "Like Ohno's Hayabusa?"

Yoshida: *almost drools.* "What I would give to ride that around. Just a second, if so."
*attention is very divided and he almost drifts into the right lane.* "Oh shit!" *corrects himself.* "Phew."

Hara: "Very professional, Yoshida-san." *laughs.*

-Inside Itona's SUV-

Sosuke: "Itona-san, you really did parts delivery for your phone company?"

Itona: "I did. It wasn't too bad, since the company was not too large back then. It still isn't really now, but we've gotten places in Tokyo and Osaka. They're far enough that I'd need to drive."

Mimura: "I reckon. boxes of metals would easily get lost on the train."

Takebayashi: "When did you learn to drive then?"

Itona: "During senior year high school. I wasn't planning on going to college, remember?"

Okajima: "And now you are. That bad?"

Itona: "I'm going to see. As of right now, though, I think I'll manage."

-Inside Irina's SUV-

Kimura: "Bitch-sensei, where does this vehicle stand in comparison to the ones you own?"
Irina: "It's far less expensive, surely. But I wouldn't drive those treasures onto a trip so risky, so I'd say these are just great."

Okuda: "What might be the extremity on the other end? Ferrari?"

Irina: "Could be. More on Maserati, though."

Maehara: "Maserati? Wow, Bitch-sensei, you're really giving the term exotic a name."

Irina: "Didn't I always... Why still the 'Bitch-sensei,' damnit!? Don't we know eachother eno-"

Isogai: "Bitch-sensei? What's wrong here?"

Irina: "Karasuma and Ohno are pulling off some erratic driving..."

-Ohno's SUV-

Ohno: "Everyone hold tight!" *confirms the locking of the doors and the windows. He then accelerates the vehicle to match Karasuma's speed. They both share a mean glare at each other, which the students in their company worriedly witness.*

-m.o.v.e. song "Gravity" plays, at 0:45-

Yada: *looks between her teacher and Ohno.* "Ohno-kun, please slow dow-" *Is interrupted when Ohno speeds up again and takes the lead in the same lane.*

Karasuma: *sees the turning corner just several hundred feet away, and changes gears mid-speed.* "Sit tight!" *switches to the right lane that Ohno's SUV was just on, though still a car length behind. When the corner hits, he cuts on a dime and nearly takes the lead on the turn... But Ohno's SUV refuses to yield the lane and they tap Ohno's hood with Karasuma's back bumper.*

Karasuma's passengers: "KARASUMA-SENSEI!?"

Karasuma: "Don't worry; watch."

Ohno's passengers: "YOU'RE GONNA KILL US!"

Ohno: "Shush!" *As his SUV tilts so it is horizontal along the path of the highway, he changes gears and drifts around the duration of the curve, his leading tires turned the opposite way. He eventually forces manual and turns completely around, spinning counterclockwise and returning to facing the right direction on the road and continues following close behind Karasuma.* "There, we're alive, and the car is just fine."

Kurahashi: "I think I'm gonna be sick..." *holds her stomach anxiously.*

Kimura: "How much longer..."

-Finally, the journey ends, and they make it to Kotohiki. Not without a few more close calls, but both Karasuma and Ohno were so competent as drivers that this didn't matter.-

Irina: *exhales with relief.* "We're finally here! And look, not too many people around; perfect
opportunity!

Ohno: "It sure is. Ready, everyone?"

AssUniv not in Ohno and Karasuma's SUVs: "Yeah!"

AssUniv in those SUVs: "Yeah..." *Fuwa gags and expels over the stone support of the highway's rest stop.*

Karasuma: "Alright, everyone, changing rooms are nearby. Get a move on!"

-They all do. Several minutes later, everyone runs towards the water with glee. It seems even what they've been lusting over for just about a full day is enough to change the most traumatized.-

-Everyone takes one swim around in the ocean before reemerging on the sandy coastline to pursue other beach pastimes.-

-Irina, Yada, Kanzaki, and Kurahashi... and Okajima-

Irina/Yada/Kanzaki/Kurahashi: *lay their backs on beach towels, lathering on sunscreen, taking in the Vitamin D on a secluded part of the shore.*

Kurahashi: "Ah, this is the life."

Kanzaki: "It is quite refreshing."

Yada: "Rejuvenating, even."

Irina: "And over here, we won't be bothered for a bit. Perfect." *sips a blue mojito then lies completely supine.*

Okajima: *a powerful Canon Rebel T6i captures some unapproved photos of the four ladies and hides the growing grin on his face. He manages to get very good angles of the "unburied treasure" by first lying prone on a rock some distance on the coast, then climbing atop two trees and doing a split between them.* "Wait until the guys on Da Forum see this." *plays back some of the photos.*

Nakamura: "I think they'll love it!" *speaks right into his ear, having climbed up another close tree.*

Okajima: "EEEEEEK!" *the jolt causes him to lose balance, and he front flips off the tree, landing on his back. Aside from a little sand hitting the frame, the camera was fine though.*

Irina/Yada/Kanzaki/Kurahashi: *hear the impact behind them and look back. They don't like what they see.*

-Nagisa, Sugino, Karma, Isogai, and Kataoka-

Sugino: "I got it!" *catches a blue and green frisbee in mid-air, rolling as he lands.* "Go long, Isogai!" *backhand whips the saucer towards the sky above him.*

Isogai: "Too easy." *grabs it with his right hand, and then quickly spins around to face Kataoka.* "Think fast!" *throws it at her.*
Kataoka: "That's the best you got?" *catches it several inches from her face.* "Try this, Nagisa!" *spins forward clockwise and then launches the disc into the air with deceptive strength.*

Nagisa: "Whoa..." *starts running back, keeping his eye on the frisbee.* "Don't worry, I'm gonna get it! I'm gonna." *The discus eventually lands in between the branches of a palm tree along the seaside, whose bark Nagisa ends up running face-first into.* "OW!"

Kataoka: "Oh, sorry Nagisa-kun!" *holds her mouth.* I'm so not lady-like...

Karma: *glances away, pushing a laugh he has on the matter back into his devilish maw.*

Sugino: "You okay, bro?" *runs over to Nagisa, picking him up to a seated position.*

Nagisa: "Urgh..." *holds his head to control the shaking and ringing.* "Yeah, I guess..." *looks up.* "Well, we're gonna have to get that." *The frisbee then disappears in set of speedlines that come at it.* "What?"

Kayano: "Don't worry, everyone. I got it." *walks over to them with the discus in her left hand.*

Isogai: "Thanks." *accepts the toy.* "Care to join us then, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Why not?" *smiles.*

Nagisa: "..."

-Kurahashi, Fuwa, Hara, and Hazama-

Fuwa/Kurahashi/Hara: *With Fuwa holding onto the fishing pole, they await for something to pull on the line. A minute later, something does.*

Fuwa: "Ah! Something!" *starts trying to pull it back, but the creature on the other end is strong.* "Ah, it's sliding or something; I can't reel it in!"

Kurahashi: "That doesn't sound like a fish..." *sounds skeptical.*

Hara: "Let me help a bit." *she bearhugs Fuwa from behind and starts walking back, which actually works, and with one final effort between the three, they throw the seafarer onto shore. "We got it! What is it, Kurahashi-san?"

Hazama: *gazes over to the three.*

Kurahashi: *studies the armored animal.* "Looks to be a tri-spine horeshoe crab." *the gravity of the situation gets to her.* "An animal that was granted protection in 1928. We should probably leave him alone."

Fuwa: "Aw... It was a good catch though."

Hara: "It is what it is. Now to return him."

Hazama: *walks over.* "Before you do that, can I see him for a second?" *does not wait for an answer and then picks up the crab.*
Hara: "Um, okay?" *she and the other two watch as she walks away with it. They then see her attach a tied cable to the crab, climbs up a short tree just above Muramatsu and Yoshida, and suspends the crab over them.*

Hazama: "Muramatsu-kun! Yoshida-kun! Look out, something coming for you!"

Muramatsu/Yoshida: "Hu-" *notices the small menace waving its many legs at them, causing them to panic crazily.* "AHHHH~!!" *flips over their folding chairs and runs off away from the shore, before realizing it was just a prank.* "Oh... Goddamnit!"

Hazama: "Hehe... Alright, I'll bring him back now." *drops down and holds the crab before her, before setting him down where the tide frequents, allowing it to swim away.*

Fuwa/Hara/Kurahashi: *sweat marks drop behind them.*

-Sosuke and Mimura-

Mimura: *with a Samsung HMX* "And here we are, ladies and gentlemen! The best sandcastle one person can make, in just under thirty minutes!" *narration as he records Sosuke creating a grain sculpture, detailed with ionic columns, windows with depth, fluer de lis graphics, domes, and even some people going into it down below. A fountain in front of it, accessible by a stone-imprinted bridge, is also present.* "Smile for the camera, Sosuke-kun."

Sosuke: *finishes the last touch, then looks up to the device and grins with two thumbs up.* "Might we try another thirty minutes and see what we can get there?" *notes the chaos.*

Mimura: "Hey, we already got 30; why not some more?"

Sosuke: "Cool!"

Irina: "You're not getting away!"

Okajima: *running away from the prior four, with his camera flinging around on his neck.*

Terasaka: *notices the chaos.* "What's this about?"

Nakamura: *goes over to him.* "Okajima has some pics you might like."

Terasaka: "What? Okajima-san, let me see that!" *runs over.*

Okajima: "Sure! Later!"

Terasaka: "No! Now!" *charges at him. The both are about to converge where Mimura and Sosuke are. When Terasaka tries tackling him, Okajima just stops in time, causing the former to crash into the castle, destroying it. Okajima continues his scape from the new five after him.*

Mimura/Sosuke: *speechless.*

-Hayami and Chiba-

Hayami/Chiba: "..."
*notices the Okajima incident.* "..."

*sees Nagisa slam into a tree.* "..."

*sees Hazama prank Muramatsu and Yoshida.* "..."

*sees Sosuke's sandcastle get ruined.* "..."

Hayami: "Weird?"

Chiba: "Weird."

Hayami *looks away, blushing as if they had the best conversation ever right there.*

-Ohno, Maehara, Kimura, and Okano-

Maehara: "Ohno-kun, hey!"

Ohno: "Yeah, guys?"

Kimura: "You're fast, we hear? How fast?"

Ohno: "I'd like to say pretty fast."

Okano: "Not faster than me, for sure."

Ohno: *smirks.* "We'll see."

Maehara: "I see you're thinking the same thing. We were going to have a race. You will join us, then?"

Ohno: "Of course."

The four: *line up behind a ditch in the sand, readying for Ritsu's counter*

Ritsu: "Three, two, one, GO!"

The four: *They all race, going around several landmarks in S and U shapes set in place by them and nature around the beach, with the assorted stones being the path they are supposed to take. During the third turn, Okano ends up driving her right leg into a weaker valley of sand, unbalancing her for a second. She quickly recovers with a front handspring, which causes her top to shift slightly out of place. When she repositions it, Maehara notices and he gets distracted, tripping over the rock signaling the next turn and eliminating himself from the race. The turn after this includes an angled palm tree, which Ohno and Kimura cut a dime on normally, while Okano spins around it like a lamppost and gains a little (but illegal) speed. Ohno, having cut his right wrist and revealing the fake skin from avoiding Maehara's dive earlier causes him to notice the wound, stopping him in his tracks. As such, Okano wins the race. However...*

Ritsu: "Okano, using centripetal force on the tree to give yourself momentum is cheating."

Okano: "What? Really?"
Ritsu: "You are disqualified. Kimura is the winner."

Kimura: "Aw yeah!" *Mario jumps in the air.*

Maehara: "Yeah. Meanwhile, I'm okay." *groans and lets his head fall onto the sand.*

-Yada, Kanzaki, Fuwa, and Hayami-

Kanzaki: "I don't think you told us of your adventures in the Conference Center when it was just you and Ohno, Yada-san."

Yada: "What? I haven't?"

Hayami: "No you have not. How was it?"

Yada: "Well it wasn't anything you wouldn't expect; it was another formal gathering that we've all been to at least once before, and Ohno was pretty much the same person as he was before, strangely informative, skilled and encouraging all at once. Can you believe how good of a dancer he is?"

Fuwa: "Ohno-kun has good rhythm? Well, that's no surprise; he's shown as much many times before."

Yada: "Yeah. And also... Remembers Ohno sneak-kissing her to avoid suspicion from a third-party. It seems there was more resulting purpose than just practical use that came from such an abrupt action however..."

Kanzaki: "What is it, Yada-san?"

Yada: *shakes the thought away.* "Nothing!"

Fuwa: "Are you sure?"

Yada: "Oh yeah, I'm-"

Yoshida: "Yada-san!" *runs until he is right in front of her, several inches away.*

Yada: "Ah! Yoshida-san!?"

Yoshida: "You were in that Lykan Hypersport 2014 that Ohno drove in during that day, right?"

Yada: *worriedly* "What? Yeah?"

Yoshida: "What was it like in there? Does it have Aerial Interface? Temp-regulating cushions?"

Yada: "Uh..."

-Irina and Karasuma-

Karasuma: *sits down right next to where Irina is, offering her a lime margarita.* "Here you are, as ordered."
Irina: *in an ironically regal voice.* "Ohoh, thank you." *accepts the drink, taking a sip.* "Ah, this is nice. We need more of these in our life, Karasuma-sama."

Karasuma: "More margaritas?"

Irina: *sits straight up firmly like a straightened metal ruler, and stares madly at him.*

Karasuma: "I'm joking. Yeah, I wouldn't mind more vacation days in the Ministry of Defense's policy."

Irina: "Can't you put yourself in a fake or very simple mission, like you did Naoko-san?"

Karasuma: "Hey, Naoko is pulling her weight on that assignment."

Itona: "Naoko-san?"

Karasuma: *shockingly looks back and sees Itona, Chiba, Karma, Nagisa, Nakamura, and Okano there.*

Karma: "Ah, that's a name I missed hearing."

Nagisa: "I'm sure we all have been missing that name going around."

Nakamura: "I know I have."

Okano: "Where is she, Karasuma-sensei?"

Karasuma: "Eh..."

Chiba: "She's easily made her place in our little circle. And she can handle her weight just fine."

Karma: "That's putting it lightly. Mhm..."

Nakamura: "So why isn't she here now, Karasuma-sensei?"

Karasuma: "Well..."

Irina: "Which is why our agency got her stacked with missions all around. Believe me, she wants to be here with you guys. ESPECIALLY here. But being the prodigy has its faults at times too."

Karasuma: "Indeed. I have her on call though, so you can contact her anytime you wish, though. Assuming she isn't in the middle of the mission."

Nagisa: "Aw... I guess that'll have to do." *They all leave to their own devices again.*

Karasuma: "Thank you for that, Irina-san."

Irina: "No problem. But I think you should just have faith in your sister and bring her back; she's tougher than she looks, you know."

Karasuma: "I know that. But tough is not enough to keep someone like Ohno at bay. I'm not
letting her anywhere near that menace."

Irina: "Wow, you're not sugarcoating a thing. Not that I expected that of you. But is Ohno that bad an influence to her?"

Karasuma: "Too much. If she ever speaks to him... He's dead."

Ohno: *while practicing some fishing, has heard the whole conversation between the two, and can't help grinning massively.*
Heat-Up Space

Chapter Summary

Obligatory sports-themed chapter. 'Nuff said again! ^^'

-With the clock striking 2 P.M., afternoon is in full swing. AssUniv was all over the shoreline, going about their sandy activities.

Kayano: *tanning along with Nagisa and Karma, she looks to the side, and notices Terasaka, Muramatsu, Yoshida, and Hazama trying to knock down a coconut from its stem in a tree. They prod it multiple times with a dead branch, before one precise strike causes it to just spring off and fall. By chance it drops full impact on Terasaka, which causes it to ricochet and hit Muramatsu in the face. It then zigzags again and smashes on Yoshida, sending all three onto their backs. Hazama is quite unimpressed.* "Hmm..."

Nagisa: *sits up straight* "Something wrong, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "How about we all play a pick-up game of volleyball?"

Karma: "Volleyball?" *head goes up.*

Kayano: "Yeah; that's a great beachside pastime, right?"

Ohno: "It sure is..." *walks over to them, carrying a Tachikara leather volleyball, official international issue.*

Karma: "Did you, always have that somewhere nearby?" *points at the ball.*

Ohno: "'Victory loves preparation.' Anyway, how about it? We just need two teams of five. Net's already set up over there." *points over to where Karasuma and Irina are, who are setting the poles on the net down within the sand. Itona and Sugino have put down dead branches as the painted lines of the court, overseen by Kataoka.* "Care to join us then?"

Nagisa/Kayano/Karma: *look between each other.* "Sounds good!" *all nod.*

-Some more AssUniv students gather together, while the rest look on from the sidelines. Nagisa, Kayano, Karma, Sugino, and Kanzaki are on one side while Ohno, Isogai, Kataoka, Maehara, and Okano are on the other.-

Maehara: *measures up the medium-sized ball towards the other team.* "You ready for the Maehara mayhem?"

Okano: *facepalms at that remark, whispering to herself* "Is there a chance I can go on the other team?"

Sugino: "Hit us with your best shot!" *pounds his left right fist.*
Maehara: "Very well!" *throws the volleyball up into the air. But before he can serve it with an overhead slap, the ball is hit by another and crashes into the sand closer to the coast of the beach.* "What the-" *looks the other side of the arena.*

Uniformed Male Young Adult: "You all are spread over our designated practice area. If you could all kindly move your activities on another part of the beach, that would be appreciated."

Kataoka: "Hold on, 'designated?' Who designates a spot on the beach?"

Karma: "Yeah. I don't see your names on this patch at all."

Terasaka: "What even are your names anyway?"

Ohno: "..."

Nakano: "Watanabe, Kojima" *thumbs to them.* "And myself, Nakano. We're Doshisha University's captains for the varsity male volleyball team."

Sanada: "Don't forget us. Men, sheesh. I'm Sanada, and these two are Takeshi and Shiroyuki. We're the female captains."

Isogai: "Very good, then. I'm Isogai, and they are-"

Nakano: "What's very good? We're not greeting to be friends. We're not greeting at all anyways; we're saying goodbye to you all as you leave."

Ohno: "..."

Okano: "You think you can impress us just because your some of the country's elites on the field?"

Sanada: "You better believe that, sister. And that's because of our pre-semester training on this coastline here."

Shiroyuki: "Which means we will need it. Far more than any of you."

Ohno: "That's interesting talk, coming from Japan's #1. You guys say you need to play volleyball far more than we do?"

Kojima: "What are you getting at, asswipe?"

Ohno: *quickly zooms over to Kojima, grabbing onto his chin and pushing it up, while his pinkie taps his Adam's Apple.*

Volleyball Teammates: "Wha-!?"

Ohno: "Are you all implying you need the skill more than we do?"

Watanabe: "T-that's preposterous! We've got all the skill we need! But everyone needs whetstones, you know!"
Nakano: "I get it. You think you're better than us."

Ohno: *lets go of Kojima* "Bingo."

Volleyball Teammates: *bursts into laughter.*

Isogai: "Ohno, what are you doing?"

Kataoka: "They're on a 24 win-streak. We can't beat them."

Ohno: "Just trust me on this." *turns back to them.* "I take your change in tone that you're thrilled by the development?"

Nakano: "If it means a challenge? Surely. But know that you're going to be put to the sand; six feet under."

Nagisa: *recognizes the death reference.* "Sounds like you have experience. Wouldn't mind getting to see it myself." *smiles deviously at them.*

Takeshi: "Heh, this lot are crazy beyond all reason. Let's bring them to reality!"

Karma: "Like to see you try."

-The two forces set up new nets, allowing up to five games, pair vs pair, to be played at once. There will be up to 11 games total, playing up to a score of 21, with the first team to win six games wins the match.-

-During the first four games, AssUniv's pairs are almost single-handedly overwhelmed by their opponent's refined expertise in the sport, winning them 21-9, 21-7, 21-16, and 21-17 respectively. Some of the competitors included the more athletic individuals like Sugino, Kimura, and Kanzaki, leaving their remaining very-skilled members numbered.-

-In the fifth game, Nagisa and Fuwa stepped up to the baseline, against Watanabe and a friend of his.-

Watanabe: "We're very close to making this a sweep. Better say your prayers!" *cracks knuckles.*

Nagisa: *does not look up, holding the ball in his hand.*

Watanabe: "What's the matter? Ashamed of defeat?"

Nagisa: *smiles discreetly.* These guys have no idea how much we've been observing their abilities. Even if they were holding back, we can see clearly their techniques, which was why we were close on the two latest games. And this time... Will be different. *throws the ball high in the air and then slaps it to the other side.*

Watanabe: *pitches the volleyball up, allowing his teammate to reposition it with another lift. Watanabe then jumps close to the net and smashes the ball as it falls high speeds towards the ground near Nagisa.*

Nagisa: *Does not try to counter that shot and allows it to hit the ground winning Watanabe a
Watanabe: "Gave up, have we?"

Nagisa: "Not really." *picks the ball up and goes back to the baseline, serving again.*

Watanabe: *He and his teammate once again do the same routine. But this time, just before he can smash, he suddenly stops cold, with his right hand held back, and the volleyball just falls on the top of his head.*

Kojima: "Watanabe! What the Hell are you doing?"

Watanabe: "I, I don't know! Just froze up all of a sudden! But that won't happen again; don't worry." *takes the ball and prepares to serve. Nagisa and Fuwa counter properly, but Nagisa's spike wasn't enough to put down the Doshisha pair and they retaliate. Watanabe goes for another net spike, but this time he gazes straight at his blocker, Nagisa. The latter's hands clearly are not high enough to effectively negate the attack, but something weakens the attack enough so that Nagisa can pong it back, dropping it to the floor on Doshisha's side.*

Nakano: "Watanabe! What was that!?"

Watanabe: *shakes it aside.* "Just got to polish up! I got this!" *hesitatingly holds up the serving ball at the two,* First, some sort of noise that paralyzes, and then that guy comes up at me with some deadly eyes? What on Earth is going on?"

Fuwa: *sees the serving ball fly way over her, though it will still be inside. She jumps and Matrix dodges in the air, and as the ball flies past her head, she blows with a near ludicrous amount of breath, causing the projectile to naturally shift just enough to land clear out of the "paint."*

Watanabe: "OUT!?" *jaw wide open past his mouth. He recovers later on and serves. Team AssUniv counter, which Doshisha do as well, before a spike seems to spell their point.*

Fuwa: *summons an anime cut-in image of herself in a battle stance, before she powerslides through the dunes of the sand and her hand props the volley ball up in a linear diagonal that skips the lob arc, allowing the perfectly positioned Nagisa to spike it before neither of Team Doshisha could see what had happened. Fuwa herself couldn't help but giggle at her Dengeki Climax move.*

Watanabe: *Just what ARE these people? What are they playing at...?*

-Soon enough, the game ends, with Nagisa and Fuwa winning at 21-10, thus starting the comeback. Okano displays her gymnastic background and uses a front flip kick to spike a high ball for a point, winning with Nakamura 21-4. Terasaka and Yoshida prove to be some sort of impenetrable wall, with their innovative defense strategies causing volleyballs to bounce off of them, and scoring them a 21-2. Finally, Isogai and Maehara's feint, dual impact, and tireless operation overwhelms their opponents, and winning 21-8.-

Nakano: "How is this happening...?"

Sanada: "Looks like we underestimated them..."

Shiroyuki: *bites her thumb.* "Clearly."
Ohno: "Well look at that! Tied up 4-4! Next game settles things! And I think I have an idea of what we should do with that."

Kojima: "And what's that?"

Ohno: "Six on six. Anybody we want, vs any of you. To twenty-one. Sounds like the perfect way to display one team's strength to the other, right?"

Nakano: "... Yeah, it does. Okay, you lot; we'll do it your way. It'll be all of us captains; we've already introduced ourselves. And you?"

AssUniv: *five step up.* "Kataoka. Itona. Hayami. Karma. Kayano. And myself, Ohno. We'll be your opponents." *The twelve all walk to the standalone court, with AssUniv, specifically Karma, holding the serving ball.*

Karma: "Here comes it!" *smash-serves the volleyball. Takeshi pitches it up, with Shiroyuki suspending it again in the air, for Sanada to perform a miraculous spike; there was a special spin on it that causes an S-trajectory, going right around the blocks of Kataoka and Kayano.*

Kayano: "What!?" *looks back at the ball, stopped on the ground.*

Ohno: *looks at the ball a bit before looking over to Hayami, who both nod to each other. Ohno then takes the ball to serve. The same counter happens, with Sanada again performing her S-attack, which again wins another point.* Just as I thought. Counterclockwise spin, which defies third-party diversions, and detracts from them. But there's a way around that... *serves one more time, and then the same thing happens.*

Hayami: *sees the movements of the volleyball and goes to counter it. Of course, it makes it look like her hand is just out of reach. But that's okay, because the ball then detracts towards the smashing hand of Karma, which sends it straight back, surprising all of Doshisha, and netting them a point too.* "Not this time." *she smirks a bit.*

Sanada: "Damn!"

Watanabe: "I got this." *When he goes to spike the ball, he strikes with such a force that a wind gust is formed, targeted straight at AssUniv's faces. Ohno and Karma are the only ones who see it coming and cover their faces, but the rest were stunned, and they are too far away to counter a spike sent towards Itona.*

Itona: *wipes his eyes.* "That ain't happening again." *takes the ball and serves. Watanabe goes for it again, and the wind gust move goes on again, but everyone's eyes are closed shut during this event. Normally any player(s) that do that will not see the spike going, but Kataoka takes the passive information of Ohno and Hayami, and relays it to the rest of the team, allowing them to counter the attack blindfolded, opening only after Karma spiked it back. After a few more back and forth attacks, AssUniv finally gain the upper hand when Karma's ultimate lob shot sends the volleyball very high into the air. Ohno, Kayano, and Kataoka create a jump boost with their right arms, allowing Itona to reach a great height and smash the volleyball with a very intense speed and strength, making it impossible to block, and it lands forming a crater on the other side of the field.* "How about that?"

Doshisha teammates: "This is something else..."
The game rages on, with each side briefly holding the lead and gaining an edge over the other. It moves on until both teams are 19-19. If one team wins another two points, then they win the match.

Kayano: *repels a low-angle spike to the ground by performing a front roll into a quick-freeze boomerang, which translates into a acute front handspring, with her heel kicking at the ball above her and keeping it high. She then backflips, letting her instep push the volley ball back towards, Itona, who double-axe-handles it aggressively towards Doshisha's field, gaining a point and setting up the final contest.*

Nagisa: "Match point!"

Nakano: "Can't believe it!" Damn... Looks like I've got to use my ace here. *cracks his knuckles and serves the ball. When it comes back to their side, Nakano prepares to perform a variation of Watanabe's power move. But rather than just a brute-force spike, the attack provides some impact, but an extra illusion that the hand motion inverses its direction (hand swinging right causes it to spike left). Hayami and Ohno are the only ones who notice it on their team, while the other four have jumped to block, unable to change movement and block.* Haha! The only two who saw it can't do anything about it! There's no way either can go around their teammates to counter it!

Ohno: *Rather than weave through, Ohno runs along the net of the court.*

Nakano: What!?

Ohno: *He then goes nigh-completely vertical and spins along the threaded surface of the standee, such that he faces his teammates when impact on the spike lands, and the gust harmlessly hits the back of his head. One more rotation gets him clear of the narrow passage between the net and Kataoka, Karma, Itona, and Kayano, and he finds himself right before the spike. A chest pump knocks the volleyball to the apex of Kataoka's jump, who reaches for the volleyball and taps it for victory.* "21. Game, set, match."

-The entire Doshisha joint team was flabbergasted, while AssUniv was cheering in a massive decorum.-

-While AssUniv crowded around their winning teammates, Nagisa and Ohno pulled themselves out of the crowd to talk to their rivals.-

Nakano: "Pff, what do you guys want?"

Sanada: " Came to gloat, have you?"

Shiroyuki: "Yeah, let us have it."

Nagisa/Ohno: *look at each other with ironic surprise.*

Ohno: "Gloat?"

Nagisa: "Why would we? As proud former E-Class students, we've developed no such ability for that thing. Most of us, anyway."

Sanada: "What?"
Ohno: "Look, the bottomline is, we know how to thank our opponents for a good game. So, good game." *offers his hand to Kojima. Nagisa hands one to Nakano. They both hesitantly accept the shake.* "See, that's good, right?"

Watanabe: "I guess. We're gonna know more coming out of this anyways."

Kojima: "What makes you think that?"

Watanabe: "Did you see how some of them played? They got moves; moves we'll want to match and watch for later."

Sanada: "I can get behind that. Right ladies?"

Takeshi: "Er... Yeah."

Shiroyuki: "It's a shame that nobody was recording the experience."

Nakano: "That's true." *holds his hips.* "Some things we can't picture twice..."

Okajima: "Ohno! Man, you have got to see yourself when you did that spike block!" *runs over to him, holding his camera up so that both of them and Nagisa can see. He then scrolls the pictures to show the frame motion of him wall-running on the net.*

Shiroyuki: "Wait a minute, you documented the games this whole time?"

Okajima: "What? Uh, yeah, I did."

Sanada: "That's great! We'd like to see those photos too, whenever available, of course."

Okajima: *starts holding his camera in a "my precious" grip.*

Ohno: "We'll send them to you. I'm sure they'll be on Okajima-san's blog wall too."

Shiroyuki: "Sounds enticing..." *playfully winks at Okajima, but the latter is too focused on his camera again to notice.*

Nakano: "Sweet! You know, if there's anything we can do for you in return, give us an Email back."

Ohno: *looks back at some of the students of AssUniv.* "That's good to know. I'll keep you all posted."

-AssUniv then freely hands over the game grounds so that Doshisha can practice their reinvigorated volleyball game even more. They spent the rest of their afternoon before dusk approached, and then left Kyotango's shore. They took one last gaze out to the sea before walking into the nearby urban settlement, realizing that their drivers are either worn out or drunk (Irina...)-

Terasaka: "Just great. So we're stuck here?"

Nakamura: "For the night. Don't act like it's the end of the world, man."

Sosuke: "It would be pretty uncomfortable to sleep in our SUVs though..."
Ohno: "Which is why we're not. I own a spa and inn near here. We can rest there for the day. Then get back, refreshed and ready for more assassin training." *points to a road.*

Takebayashi: *focuses on the "assassin training" part of that sentence.* "Ugh... Almost forgot about all that."

Fuwa: "I keep forgetting Ohno is a billionaire that owns everything he could possibly want. And then some, seeing as how he burned something expensive down." *remembers the burning settlement at Mount Atago.*

Yoshida: "Lead the way then, oh noble one."

Ohno: "Ohno-ble One.' I kinda like that. Not too much, but it does have a decent ring." *holds his chin about the nickname before dismissing it, as he leads them to the spas.*

Nagisa: "%..." *studies that behavior.* Now that's intriguing...
They've been thinking it a lot lately. Now it's time to put it to the test. Is Ohno really some incarnation of Korosensei?

-At a spa and inn that Ohno somehow owns, everyone has taken a quick shower, cleansing them before their custom appointment in the indoor spas. They, minus Irina and Karasuma, are all situated in a waiting room.-

Ohno: "Are the lot of us here? Peers at least? Good. I don't suppose you all want some drinks to refresh your inner systems?"

Kanzaki: "That would be lovely. Thank you, Ohno-kun."

Terasaka: "Yeah, I'm pretty parched too."

Ohno: "Very well. I'll be back with some bottles." *leaves the room.*

Nakamura: "Man, he's practically a slave to us, with how much he's done."

Nagisa: "I had a feeling you would think so." *looks over Nakamura.*

Sugino: "What? Why, Nagisa?"

Nagisa: "Isn't there someone else we know or KNEW who put us first, even beyond the fault line?"

AssUniv: *think for a second.*

Karma: "Huh, never thought of that."

Isogai: "Yeah, Ohno definitely has a weakness in us... I remember him revealing himself at the Kyoto International Conference Center, and he was utterly thrashed. And that was just a price to pay to bring us together."

Kataoka: "Don't forget when he threw himself at some intruders at the last hotel. And when he indirectly burned down his own Summer home. So many self-destructive behaviors, with the forethought about us."

Terasaka: "Damn, that just starts to make us feel bad about him."

Yada: "And to think Nakamura fired a BB at him and swelled his lower lip."

Nakamura: "Well, that just makes Terasaka's statement become even more mutual..." *scratches her head.*
Nagisa: "So we're all clear that this is something major that Ohno shares with Korosensei right? Well, what about the rest?"

Kanzaki: "Do you have the rest, Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: "Indeed I do." *takes out a small notebook in his robe. All of AssUniv crowd behind or to the side of him to see its contents.* "Let's see..."

-AssUniv automatically rule out Weaknesses #16, 17, 18, and 37.-

Kurahashi: "You don't need to be a biologist to know that Ohno-kun doesn't molt... Or regenerate..."

Kayano: "What if he did..." *taps her chin in thought.*

Hazama: "Would he look like he's crying every time he has to blow his nose?"

AssUniv: *remember that "MISLEADING" moment.* "Nope. Moving on..."

Nagisa: "Well we can already take down a bunch, but I think the best way we can find out what Korosensei and Ohno have in common is to force the situations. Anyone up for some innocent baiting?"

Kataoka: "Good thing you said 'innocent.' I speak for the ladies when I say 'we're in.'"

Isogai: "Count the guys in too."

Nagisa: "Alright. Now then, let's take a look..."

**Korosensei vs Kazuhiko Ohno - weaknesses? (The following take place during the course of AssUniv's night at the Spa and Inn, in no particular order, save for the last one (#40), which is aptly the last one tested. Otherwise, some of which take place before, during, and after the spa events, with some of the last occurring when only the male students remain in testing... For plot reasons. xD )**

-#1 When he tries to act cool, his weaknesses show.-

Karma: "No, no no. I can't say for sure if Ohno himself thinks he's cool when he does whatever he does, but needless to say, every time he's confident in his plan or abilities, which he has very good reason to be, he's nigh-flawless. Scratch that, Nagisa."

Nagisa: "Yeah, certainly." *blotches it away.*

-#2 He is surprisingly quick to panic.-

Maehara: "Nah, this isn't right either. Ohno's plan for the Summer with us was devised for just about four months, and he was able to improvise multiple times, multiple things at a time, in the blink of an eye. No panic, or at least, no show of it from him."

Nagisa: "Okay." *etches that out.*
Yada: "No way. Ohno couldn't have everything in his master plan work if he blew up at every trivial thing. Next."

Nagisa: *nod.*

Terasaka: "Seeing as how Ohno had been into a few fights just for our sake, including the one at the Conference Center, clearly he has a bite to his bark. And unless he's just for kicks, he must have a huge clout of a left hook."

Karma: "His confidence does stem from some sort of fighting mindset. I am eager to see it more sometime soon..."

Nagisa: "Very well."

---

Ohno, Okajima, and a few of the guys, following their turn inside the large spa room, bide their time in a lounge room. Ohno is reading a car magazine while Okajima was checking things on his phone, before he gets up to take a breather outside.

Okajima: *"accidentally" has a rolled-up magazine in the back pocket of his robe drop out. It rolls out upon impact and reveals the front cover of some mature-rated material.*

Ohno: *notices the visual and hearing cues of such event, and glances quickly at the fallen item.* "Okajima-san, you have dropped something on your way out."

Okajima: "Ah, I have? Silly me." *turns around and scratches his head.*

Other Guys: *subtly look over their diversionary possessions to watch the 'weakness' skit develop.*

Ohno: "Yes." * Goes to pick it up. * "You have dropped your..." * takes a look at the name and cover of the magazine. * "..."

Other Guys/Okajima: *lean in to get a closer look on Ohno's reaction.*

Ohno: "..." *paying more attention to what he's looking at.*

Okajima: "Uh, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: *suddenly starts blushing really badly, throwing the magazine into Okajima's hands, and runs out of the room in the blink of an eye.*

Maehara: "What the Hell?"

Muramatsu: "Seems as though 'boobs' are a weakness of Ohno's."
Yoshida: "But for a completely different reason - he's a prude."

Karma: "Interesting..." *holds his chin.*

---

**He is humble and subservient to his superiors.**

Kataoka: "We've no idea if Ohno has anyone of higher rank than him in whatever organization he's in, but if how Ohno interacts with Karasuma-sensei is any indication, it seems name or titles matter not to him; only what we do grants merit."

Nagisa: "That must be why he has commended us at times, perhaps. We're true people of action to him. Anyway..."

---

**He has no patience for wire puzzles.**

Ohno, in his room, is working on some sort of report on his laptop.

-Knock knock.-

Ohno: "It's open."

Sugino: "Hey, Ohno! We can't get this wire puzzle solved! Think you can help?" *tosses the ball of wire up in the air towards Ohno, who has not looked back at all.*

Ohno: *holds out his right hand and catches the prickly sphere without looking. He quickly makes contact with every part of its surface, all while his left hand and his eyes remain on his computer. When he then finds a crack in the wire's infrastructure, he taps it twice, and then pulls on the end, causing the whole puzzle to unwind itself. All of this in the span of five seconds.* "There you go."

Students: "HOW THE HELL DID YOU DO THAT!?"

---

**He gets motion sickness.**

Chiba: "Yeah, right." *he and Hayami remember being in Ohno's Range Rover on the way to Kotohiki Beach. The sudden turn causes them to shiver.*

Nagisa: "Okie-dokie..." *sweat mark on the back of his head goes down...*

---

**He can't sleep on a pillow other than his own.**

-Inside the dorm, all of the guys had already taken any and all beds in the group room. And they moved Ohno's things to the center of the room.-

Karma: *hears footsteps.* "He's coming. Positions, everyone." *He, including the rest, slouch back into all the mattresses. Isogai hits the light and jumps right into the nearest set."

Ohno: *opens the door to the room, but doesn't turn on the lights. He immediately notices all of the bunks occupied by the male students of AssUniv, and his possessions are collectively put into a pile on the table nearby. He goes and takes a few items from the mound, and then leaves, closing the door behind him. A faint sound of leather stretching can be heard on the opposite side of an*
Isogai: *slowly turns the light back on.* "Uh, he just left the room and crashed on the couch outside."

Sugino: "I almost feel bad for kicking him out of his own inn's beds."

Chiba: "I think I'll call him in, help him sort his stuff again."

Nagisa: "Weakness denied."

-#10 He worries about appearances.-

Kurahashi: "Unless he's doing something to earn the ire of Karasuma-sensei, I don't think Ohno does too much that takes into account his reputation too much..."

Yada: "True, but you gotta also note how much he wants us to trust him after all the shenanigans that's been happening."

Hara: "So is this a maybe?"

Nagisa: "I'd say no. Sure, he's investing time into crafting an image for us to welcome, but he also seems to test how far that welcome stays. It can be seen as concern, but I don't think he'll be destroyed if it turns out he took one step too much off the line. So, not in common."

-#11 He can't handle hot food.-

-Within the confines of the neighboring restaurant to the spa and inn, all of AssUniv are readying to pick an entree and eat and drink away the night.-

Chiba: *sitting to the right of Ohno, turns to him.* "So Ohno; do you, uh, like spicy food at all?"

Ohno: "Spicy food? Mmm, well it depends."

Yada: *sitting on his left turns to him as well.* "Oh yeah? How so?"

Ohno: "By amount of Scoville units. Anything like Serrano peppers, I can't handle..."

Nagisa: *gets a nod by Nakamura and Karma, which brings him to pick up his notebook to underline the weakness.*

Ohno: "But that's because there's not enough spice in it. I don't feel any capsaicin on my tongue."

Nagisa/Karma/Nakamura: *get a chill in their spines when they hear that statement.*

Sugino: "You must have either the best resistance nerves, or the worst senses in taste if that's the case, Ohno."

Ohno: "It's certainly skewed, I won't lie. But once we go to Habaneros, then now we're talking." *notices something on the menu.* "Ah, like this ghost chili curry." *signals to the nearby waiter.* "I'll have one of these, thank you." *hands the menu to him.*
Nagisa: *Nope.*

-#12 Getting wet.-

Terasaka: "We're in a spa owned by him. Next."

Nagisa: "Right..."

-#13 Juicy gossip.-

-Throughout the course of the night, AssUniv had themselves get into some very weird situations to legitimize certain talks about them that they conversed each other with in the attempt to get Ohno to become interested and seek the knowledge himself. But Okajima's carriage of a rare R-rated magazine, Okano's collection of wrestling DVDs, Okuda and Takebayashi's bad slip down the stairs, and even Nagisa and Kayano believed to have kissed for the first time in a while in the halls was not enough to pique him."

Nagisa: "I think we humiliated ourselves enough with this. Moving on."

-#14 Hackneyed plot developments make him cry.-

Fuwa: "Ohno-kun!"

Ohno: "Yes, Fuwa-san?" *does not take his eyes off of his computer.*

Fuwa: "Check this out; watch." *takes the laptop and opens up a fanfiction site, and has him read a brief one-shot for Black Bullet.*

Ohno: *reads through the whole thing.* "Was that really something extraordinary, Fuwa-san?"

Fuwa: "What? You didn't get emotional when Satomi had to say goodbye to Kisara?"

Ohno: "It made me sad, sure. But I won't bawl over that; the story didn't get me immersed into their characters. And that last development really didn't work for the innovative premise."

Fuwa: "Okay... Carry on then." *leaves Ohno to do what he will.*

-#19 When he returns to normal after a serious situation, he gets embarrassed.-

Yada: *gets embarrassed.* "We don't need to test this one; we know he doesn't already."

Nagisa: "Yada-san?"

Yada: "Please move on." *turns away.*

Nagisa: "Okay..."

-#20 He can only draw simple pictures.-

-Sosuke and Fuwa go up to Ohno, who's sitting at the bar of the inn.-
Fuwa: "Ohno-kun!"

Ohno: *looks over to them.* "Good evening, Fuwa-san. And to you as well, Sosuke-san."

Sosuke: "Hey, Ohno, did you look at the cafe tables outside earlier."

Ohno: "I haven't. What's there?"

Sosuke: "Look." *They slightly open the door to the outside, and all three peek at Hayami and Chiba, sitting at a metallic three-piece furniture, trying their best to initiate a moment between them.* "Isn't that great?"

Ohno: "Surely for them. But what have we to do with it?"

Fuwa: "Why don't you capture the moment? It'll help you get to know at least these two better, right?"

Ohno: "Uh, I guess so. Let me get my camera."

Sosuke: "Nooo!" *gets in his way.*

Ohno: "Why not?"

Sosuke: "Draw it out. Literally. I mean, there's hardly things you can trust and understand more than your own work, right?"

Ohno: *tilts his head a bit in approval.* "Very well. You have pen and paper?" *And after a few minutes of preparation, Ohno quickly studied the couple sipping their drinks and taking sideways glances away from each other and then sketched them. In just about five minutes, he was finished.* "There we are. To be honest, I do think I've gotten a better handle of Hayami-san and Chiba-san."

Fuwa: "Oo! Let us see!"

Ohno: *turns the page around, revealing a very stunning remodernism interpretation of the situation.*

Sosuke: "Wow... That is good..."

Ohno: "I think I better tell them I made that." *goes outside to notify Hayami and Chiba."

Sosuke/Fuwa: *slams open the boy's dorm's door.* "Scratch that."

#21 Heat fatigue.-

Ritsu: "I have superficial doubt over this being a weakness for Ohno-kun. It stemmed originally from Ohno choosing to wear a deep-diving shirt throughout our time at Kotohiki Beach, but his participation in the spa nullified that theory."

Nagisa: "That's for sure."
#22 He's strict about poolside manner.

Itona: "Doubt it. He did nothing to stop Okajima from trying to climb over the sacred walls that divided us and the women."

Kimura: "Heh, that might just be because he knew Okajima would face immediate retribution for his actions."

Okajima: *feels the large bump on the back of his head, fitted with a comedically large bandage.*

Nagisa: "Okay. That's off."

#23 He can't swim.

Kataoka: "He's not an underwater missile, but Ohno is pretty quick in the sea. He kept up with me and Kayano-san when we did laps along the coast."

Kayano: "And he was ready to do double too. Phew..."

Nagisa: "Then that leaves this weakness in the dust."

#24 He likes to gossip.

Sugino: "Not likely. I'm sure we can get rid of all of these gossip weaknesses; our earlier skits just don't do anything for them."

Nagisa: "Yeah. But at least that means we can keep a personal matter with him if we must."

#25 He is weak against the occult.

-Ohno, walking through the hallways of the inn, is heading to his dorm to attain a better concentration level for whatever he is working on on his laptop. Until he notices one room, Hazama and Kurahashi's room, has their door ajar.-

Ohno: *eases open the door a little bit.* "Hazama-san; Kurahashi-san, your door is unlocked. Was this intentional?" *notices what's going on within the confines of the room.*

Kayano: "Come insideeeeeee, Ohno-kun. *She, like Hazama, Kurahashi, Okano, Okuda, and Yada, had a druid-like hood over her head, concealing her face, and was part of a seated circle that surrounded a painted pentagram with multiple mysterious, cryptically-placed objects on top of it.* "Embrace the mysticcceeeeccc."

Ohno: "Come again?"

Kurahashi: "Do not fight ittttttttttt. Your interest has been enthrallllllled."

Yada: "You cannot begin to comprehend this matter, and for that you are weak to iiiiii-"

Ohno: "Which one of the five elements are you practicing?"
Okuda: "Yes, you are wea- Wait what?"

Cultists: *stare up at him.*

Ohno: "Which one is it? Taoism? Acu? Feng Shui?"

Cultists: "Uh...."

Okano: "Feng Shui?"

Ohno: "Ah. Well, let me be the embodiment of the Azure Dragon then." *takes a seat next to Yada and Kayano.*

Cultists: "... Sure..."

-Minutes later-

Hazama: *sighs.* "Scratch that, Nagisa."

Nagisa: "Okay then..."

-#26 If he can't gather people he feels worthless.-

Ritsu: "I will have to speak against that. Gastro, during our 'captivity,' mentioned the fact that they weren't the first three to be called up to start up the events of our situation, and if they refused, they wouldn't be the last. Ohno-kun may not be happy about not being able to collect people he likes, but it seems unlikely he will get destroyed if he can't."

Nagisa: "Sounds reasonable enough."

-#27 Tone-deafness.-

Hayami: "Ohno-kun had initially thought of having me and Chiba use chirping sounds to signal our readiness to fire over at the Conference Center. He probably wouldn't have if he was tone-deaf."

Nagisa: "Yeah."

-#28 He sucks at hiding.-

Yada: *blushes again.* "No, no he isn't." *regains her composure.* "He knows how to disappear in the blink of an eye even in plain sight with many gazes on him. And I know because I was one of them over in the Kyoto Conference Center."

Nagisa: "Very well then."

-#29 Gets carried away by official positions.-

Karma: "Call him the Defense Minister, the Surgeon General, or the Prime Minister himself; I doubt Ohno would care."
Nagisa: "He doesn't talk too much about what he does on the side does he?"

Kataoka: "He doesn't say much about himself, period."

Nagisa: "Indeed. So...

-#30 Heart.-

Terasaka: "Truly."

Nakamura: "Madly."

Nagisa: "Deeply. Anyway..."

-#31 Not related but acts like a doting parent.-

Yada: "This is an arguable issue, truthfully. On one hand, he's awfully considerate of how we're feeling right here and now, even if it is only for the betterment of the plan. But on the other, he doesn't always jump at helping us through it. Nagisa's breakdown was one of those times."

Nagisa: "I'm sure he'll be more overprotective in the days to come. So, weakness?"

Karma: "Maybe..."

-#32 Gets insurance to avoid getting hurt.-

Kayano/Itona: "HAHAHAHAHA~!!! No."

Nagisa: "Even when one would be allowed to get insurance; the time you and the assassins burned down his Atago settlement. Okay..."

-#33 He doesn't really know what "your own football" means.-

Hayami: "Ohno very much knows what that phrase means. He's more than kept to his own despite any inherent desire to know more about us and our deepest stories."

Kataoka: "Of course that's a double-edged sword; we shouldn't really be brute-forcing the truth from him then..."

Nagisa: "Well until we all hear him scream about problems like we did some time ago, I doubt we'll get something definitive about him unless he actively tells us. Otherwise..."

-#34 He sucks at reporting.-

Maehara: "Hmm, Ohno's an ace at telling us just what we need to know for a mission. The problem is, that's not all he has to say for us."

Karma: "So, good at reporting what needs to be reported at the current time. Bad at reporting what we want to know at the current time."
Nagisa: "Weakness?"

Isogai: "Let it go, guys. Don't pry the man so much, who's also given us all of this mostly from the goodness of his heart."

Nagisa: "Very well."

-#35 He suffers from road rage.-

Kimura: "Only when Karasuma is on a wheel next to him. Then they go all Initial D on us."

Hayami: "Remind us to put those two on opposite ends of the driving formation tomorrow morning."

Nagisa: "Maybe then we'll have decent, emotionless driving. So, no weakness."

-#38 Unintentionally adding insult to injury.-

Yoshida: "Aside from Karasuma again, who's a deliberate target of his ire, I don't think he's ever taunted anyone."

Nagisa: "Putting that aside then."

-#39 Completely oblivious to the mood in moments of high tension.-

Karma: "Are you joking? What have we been saying all this time?"

Nagisa: "Point was taken so long ago."

-And that's the end of those tests. Results: Korosensei VS Kazuhiko Ohno - Weaknesses? -

Nagisa: "Okay, well I think we have analyzed all of the weaknesses Korosensei once had and did our best at testing all of the possible ones on Ohno-kun." *wipes his forehead.*

Maehara: "Which only results in us learning little more than Ohno's defenses are far greater than an octopus monster's."

Takebayashi: "That ought to ring true evidence wise. Only two weaknesses are truly shared between them."

Sugino: "A heart and a consideration for us..."

Terasaka: "I think you're forgetting another two." *points at weakness #5.*

Isogai: "That aside, I can't help but think that's meaning something. Maybe we have to stop thinking Ohno is Korosensei."

Mimura: "I'm one to say that's easier said than done, despite the many, some of them obvious, differences."

Karma: "Ohno is Ohno. What else can he be?"
Ohno: *Opens the door into the group dormitory, noticing all of them are conspiring around the wooden table in the center of the room.* "Oh? What are you guys looming over?"

Guys: *Chills run down their spines.*

Isogai: "N-nothing!"

Takebayashi: *repositions his glasses.* "A-ain't too important."

Ohno: "But interesting enough that it gets you all riled up. What is it?"

Nagisa: "Y-you'll be very disappointed at what you discover."

Sugino: "Yeah, after all it's just..." *starts scrambling all the papers that they incidentally dropped, randomly picking one out of the scattered pile. He slowly reads out* "A girl's 'favorite guy' list?"

Male students: "What?" *They all look at it, including Ohno.*

Itona: "Hm, isn't that Kanzaki-san's handwriting?"

Nagisa: "It is. How did you get that, Sugino-san?"

Sugino: "It must have been when the two of us bumped into each other during-" *looks at Ohno for a sec, then regains his composure.* "During trips to the bathroom."

Karma: "Well, who's on top of this?"

Guys: *reads the last section, and sees that Isogai is #1, with Kataoka, Kurahashi, and Okuda all voting for him. His comments section reads: 'Ikemen, fashionable, multi-talented, and legitimately nice'*

Isogai: "Wow, cool!" *clenches a fist in the air.*

Chiba: *tears running down his... hair?* "Of course the Ikemen is the top pick..."

Sugino: "And next is..."

Guys: *#2 is Ohno; Yada, Fuwa, and Naoko had put their names next to his, stating in the comments section, 'Cooly mysterious, intensely loyal, and undoubtedly gives good times.'*

Ohno: "Hm, seems I've given quite the impression in only," *checks his watch.* "Three or so months."

Terasaka: *whispers* Lucky bastard.

Maehara: "Hey, the girls were able to get in contact with Naoko and have her place her name on this."

Mimura: "Great to know she's still kickin'."
Ohno: *looks away for a bit, hoping that no further discussion pertains to her.*

Sugino: "And then there's..."

Guys: *#3 is Nagisa; Kayano, and Kanzaki both voted, citing that Nagisa is "Always listening, and adorably persistent."*

Nagisa: "Damn, never would've thought that."

Karma: *This blue-haired fool barely knows how much influence he made on everyone here..."

Yoshida: "As this list goes on, I'm getting more and more depressed..."

Sugino: "Well we're all on it, so we might as well see where we-"

-The door to their room slams open. All of the guys look back towards the entrance... Which stood twelve young ladies, blush-red angry, and ready to turn blood-red... With their blood.-

Guys: *another chill runs down their spines.*

Girls: "GIVE US THAT PAPER!" *rush the guys. Instinctively, some jump out of the inn's window (1st and 2nd floor allowed this), while some took their chance, circling around the unstoppable force and escaping through the hallways. Chaos ensued for another 10 minutes.*

-15 minutes later-

Ohno: *sat back on his bed, now that the girls had cleared him of guilt from stealing the list (since the girls were only just testing a weakness on him). With that out of the way, he put on his bluetooth, and read through the messages and voicemails; one of them from Naoko, very recently.* *Oh dear, what does she want?* *presses the play button and listens.*

Naoko: [recording] "Ohno-kun, I've heard that you went to Kotohiki Beach with AssUniv, from the other students. Nice to see you like to slack off when we still have unfinished business here in Kyoto. Call me back when Grimaldi confesses something; oh yes, I know about him, Ohno-kun. Oh, and also, don't get the wrong idea about me voting for you; it only made sense I picked someone I don't know since I've displayed a lack of fondness for the other guys. See and hear you in a bit."

Ohno: *smirks.* *Lady, you don't know what you're missing. But that's not your fault.* *takes it off and stares into space on the ceiling, waiting to finally get a moment to rest.*
It looks like a volleyball game has granted Okajima and Ohno more than they thought it would!

- After their soothing day at Kyotango, basking in the beauty of Kotohik Beach, and sweating the pain and stress away with the spas nearby, AssUniv rose up early the next day to return to the Hotel Okura and the refurbished warehouse in order to resume their training. Despite groans of protest, the students have barely missed a beat in terms of performance and excelled for the longest day. One good night at Okura was all it took to get them back to the regular schedule once again.

  Ohno: *continues typing on his computer, until a knock knock occurs on his dormitory's door.* "Come in."

  Okajima: *opens the door.* "Ohno-kun! Just the guy I want to see."

  Ohno: *begins to close his laptop.* "Do you require something from me?"

  Okajima: "From you, of you, it don't matter." *He takes a seat next to him, holding his hand underneath the screen, so that he can pry it back open.* "What if I told you that you and I are going on a double date?" *Begins searching around on Twitter posts. He eventually finds what he's looking for, which is a bundle of self-portraits starring two identical young ladies.*

  Ohno: "Wait a second, Isn't one of those two a female player for Doshisha Varsity? One we played against in Kotohiki?"

  Okajima: "The left one; it's Shiroyuki Rina!" *squees.* "Turns out, she was really turned on by my photography. And she asked me out on a date."

  Ohno: "Where does the double come in?"

  Okajima: "Her twin sister right there is named Sayaka; cross-checked profiles between them tell that she's a Life Science student at Nagoya Women's University, who barely ever see each other. Now reunited after a year of schooling, they're practically inseparable."

  Ohno: *Is a bit worried about the Aichi/Nagoya part, but shakes it away.* "And you want me to help you separate them? As in, wingman?"

  Okajima: "They're identical twins; you clearly aren't getting the worse half."

  Ohno: "That remains to be seen. But... I'm in. When and where?"

  Okajima: "Shiroyuki and I agreed on tomorrow night, but we don't really have a 'where...' But if a certain guy sitting around who has shown to have a place everywhere we look was to suggest something..."
Ohno: *sigh* "How about 'Okonomiyaki Katsu'? Secluded section in a nice part of the town, and the dishes will really warm Sayaka to the Kyoto-Kansai feel. You feeling me?"

Okajima: "That's... Brilliant! Thanks; I'm gonna let them know right now. Thanks again." *gets up, takes out his phone and dials up Shiroyuki's phone number, leaving and closing the door behind him.*

Ohno: *shuts his laptop completely this time, grabbing his head in wonder of what he might be getting into, knowing how Okajima is towards the opposite gender.*

Okajima: "Oh, and Ohno." *opens the door abruptly again.*

Ohno: *looks up and to the side.* "Yeah?"

Okajima: "Can you provide a ride? For all of us? Not the bus; it'll make us look-

Ohno: "I can. You just worry about yourself until tomorrow night; everything else will be ready by then."

Okajima: "Great. Thanks again." *closes the door.*

-Ohno and Okajima go about the next day's morning and afternoon through their assassination and academics-related training. When the time finally came, the two men swiftly made final preparations.-

Okajima: *Dressed in a navy two-piece, two-button suit, waited outside Hotel Okura, watching the garage doors for signs of Ohno driving in. And seconds later, he had, in a very sleek vehicle (Aston-Martin Lagonda Taraf 2015) that gave off a James Bond vibe.* "Sweet ride, Ohno. I knew I could count on you." *bows down to look through the passenger window.*

Ohno: *rolls down the passenger window.* "Just as I can count on Aston-Martin. In you go, now."

Okajima: *Enters into the passenger's seat. He quickly notices that Ohno is dressed very casually; polyurethane leather jacket, motocross jeans, and military boots.* "Ohno-kun, going to a first date wearing stuff like that?"

Ohno: "I have to make you look good, right?"

Okajima: "Great point. Drive on, then. We're picking the Shiroyukis up at a bus hub close to Kyoto University."

-Ohno and Okajima drive to the designated location and wait for the two sisters to show up. Minutes after their arrival, they do, catching the eyes of the two standing outside in wait.-

Ohno: "That's them."

Okajima: *nods, then looks over to them, waving them over.* "Rina-san! Hey!"

S. Rina: "Ah! Okajima-kun!" *pulls Sayaka with her over to them.* "Hello, Okajima. And Ohno; great to see you as well."
Ohno: *nods.* "Likewise. This, must be Sayaka, yes?"

S. Sayaka: "Indeed. Pleasure to meet you." *offers her right hand.*

Ohno: "It's all mine." *Accepts and shakes it.*

S. Rina: "Wow, Okajima. You look quite, sophisticated tonight."

Okajima: "Heh, I try." *Subtly gives a sideways smile and wink to Ohno*

S. Rina: "Is that also your car?" *looks at the Lagonda.*

Okajima: *refocuses.* "Ah, well..."

Ohno: "Oh, it sure is."

S. Rina: "Wow! Can't wait for you to give me and Sayaka a ride to 'Katsu.'"

Okajima: "!!"

Ohno: "He can't do that today, unfortunately. He got a suspended license for speeding with his ride, which he's only had for a few days, getting a feel for it. So I'll be driving."

S. Rina: "Okajima lives life on the edge. Nice."

Okajima: "We'll take the back seats. Sayaka, you can accompany Ohno-kun in the front." *opens the passenger door to the luxury car for Rina. Ohno does the same for Sayaka.*

Ohno: *gets into the driver's position, and inserts the key into the ignition. He then turns to S. Sayaka.* "Ready for power?"

S. Sayaka: "If you think it'll impress." *crosses arms and looks to the window.*

Ohno: "I do." *twists the key, turning on the 540-hp, V12 automobile, and they drive off.*

-During the drive... The radio of the Aston-Martin played "1 Fire" by Dave Rodgers. The catchy tune that had a true 90s feel caught the aspiring ears of the ladies and Okajima.-

S. Rina: "Wow, this music really takes me back."

S. Sayaka: "Yeah it does for me too. Makes me really want to dance."

Okajima: "Heh, anyone that gets into this car with me shares that inclination."

S. Rina: "What is this genre, even? I forget what it's called."

Ohno: "It's Eurobeat. It started out in the UK - 1985, but the surge of popularity did not happen until the late 80s in Italy. 'By' them, 'for' us."

S. Rina: "Oh yeah. Back then, it was marketed as J-Euro. Wow, it's still popular today?"
Okajima: "Oh yeah; compilation albums still going wild. I know because of the modeling shots they do for the bulk of their covers."

S. Sayaka: "Good to know. What's your favorite song?"

Okajima: "What?"

S. Sayaka: "This is your car, and this was the default radio. What's your favorite? You must know many."

Okajima: "Oh yeah. Uh..."

Ohno: *lowers the volume in the implication of wanting to know what song he will say, but then he "gets impatient" and starts humming something familiar* "Da, da da, da da, dah..."

Okajima: *recognizes the tune.* "Heaven. DJ Sammy."

S. Rina: "I think you're cheating a bit there, Okajima-kun. That's Eurodance. But hey, I can't argue with that pick."

Okajima: *nods* "That's good."

S. Sayaka: *eyes Ohno for a bit before relaxing and returning her attention to the front.*

Ohno: *subtly notices the strange behavior.*

-A few minutes later, the two couples arrived at their destination; Okonomiyaki Katsu.-

S. Rina: "Oooo, Okonomiyaki?"

Okajima: "Yeah. Like it?"

S. Rina: "One of my favorites! Sayaka hasn't had too many before, though. You alright with this, sis?"

S. Sayaka: "Shit, I think I can spare having something unfamiliar for my younger sibling."

S. Rina: "Well alright then! Good pick, Okajima-san!"

Ohno: "Hey, let me park and we'll go in together, alright?" *parallel parks across the street a few leagues ahead. He opens the door to the passenger seat for Sayaka, while Okajima does the same for Rina. And so the two couples walk into the Okonomiyaki restaurant.*

-The doorman soon gets a spot for them and they take a seat at a private table, but then...-

Ohno: "Sir, mind if we divide us up? I'm sure us couples, having talked enough as a group, can pursue better opportunities separate now."

Okajima: *subtly winks to Ohno in approval.*

S. Sayaka: "Aw, but I've only been with my beloved sister for a day now." *starts clinging to Rina.*
S. Rina: "We still have a few days before you have to move back; don't be so doting." *gently pulls Sayaka off herself.*

Ohno: "I take it we're all on board then?"

S. Rina: *covers Sayak's mouth for a second.* "Yes."

Doorman: "Very well. Inoue, help me, please."

S. Rina: "Come on now, Okajima-kun." *pulls Okajima by his arm to follow the called-for waiter.*

Ohno: "After you." *offers Sayaka the lead in trailing the doorman to their table.*

S. Sayaka: *Sexist.

Ohno: "Pardon?"


-At Okajima and Rina's table.-

Waiter: "Please, take your time to pick your entrees for this evening."

Students: "Thank you." *They bow lightly to the waiter, who does the same, and then leaves for the open bar.*

S. Rina: "Wow, there's a lot of choices here." *scours the menu attentively.* "Okajima-kun, do you have an idea?"

Okajima: "I think I'm aching for a Beef pancake. You?"

S. Rina: "That does sound nice, but It's been a while since I've had one of these; I think I'll have a Combo; with cheese."

Waiter: "Excellent choices, sir and ma'am." *writes the orders down, then proceeds to turn on the hot plate at the center of the table before walking back to the open kitchen.*

S. Rina: "Oh, I should've guessed this was a cook-it-yourself."

Okajima: "Y-yeah..."

S. Rina: "No confidence in your cooking ability?" *smirks.*

Okajima: "I'll be honest, not one of my stronger arts..."

S. Rina: "Eh, everybody has their thing. I'll help you out."

-At Ohno and Sayaka's table.-

Ohno: "I'll be having a Pork soba, thank you."
Waiter: "Very good, sir. And you, miss?"

S. Sayaka: "Er, Combo Okonomiyaki."

Waiter: "Okay." *turns on the hot plate and leaves.*

Ohno: *takes a long glance at her, which she notices.*

S. Sayaka: "What?"

Ohno: "No thanks for the waiter? He's going through a lot of work to serve us while the rest of the customers are out there."

S. Sayaka: "He separated me and Rina, leaving her with that guy. And we're only paying them for the ingredients. They don't yet deserve my appreciation." *crosses her arms and looks away.*

Ohno: "Ah, there we go... I see your doting side is not one that is bubbly and airheaded. It's more the overprotective and judging kind." *takes a smug sip of water.*

S. Sayaka: "What do you expect, son? I've been missing my sis since we took different paths. I finally get her back, and this is what happens; she finds a guy who most definitely does not deserve her love."

Ohno: "And how do you know that?"

S. Sayaka: "Just look at your friend," *looks around the booth for a bit, then whispers* schmuck."

Ohno: "Well, haven't heard that one in a long while." *looks away for a bit.*

S. Sayaka: "And he's just like you; probably only in to stretch his pants a bit."

Ohno: "You have no distinct evidence of that. And at this sort of pace, you won't for a long while."

S. Sayaka: "I don't need evidence; it's almost a crystal-clear fact: 'sex' and 'sexual material' are all that men think about."

Ohno: "So you think that right now, all I'm thinking about is how I can sleep with you?"

S. Sayaka: "It crossed your mind now, didn't it?"

Ohno: "Guilty. But don't you think we think that because we're just tired of waiting for the one? Haven't you felt that?"

S. Sayaka: "No; the last thing I want to do is be around a man like that." *as the conversation continues, the waiter places the ingredients to the "couple's" dishes onto the hot plate.* "That's why I attended an all girls university."

Ohno: "Because you like the empowerment, don't you?"
S. Sayaka: "W-what?"

Ohno: "I got to learn more about you a bit last night; your school's website makes note of quite a few things, like the research teams, sports, and sororities. And I can't help but be amazed by how many of them have the same 2nd-in-command."

S. Sayaka: "Uh, yeah. Impressive, hm?"

Ohno: "You really, really missed her, huh?"

S. Sayaka: "She's... she's all I care about."

Ohno: "I'm not denying it; your actions show such a genuine care that it would melt a little child's heart. You're not afraid to cling to her in front of a group, and not only do you agree to have something you've never had before, but you know Rina-san so well that you ended up picking the same thing as her. Look." *points over to their table, where the waiter sets down the same sort of ingredients on S. Rina's side.*

S. Sayaka: "Yeah well, it's just not right; before college and so on, the only person Rina would turn to was myself. And I was more than willing to be her hero. But now she's going out of the nest."

Ohno: "And when you two separated, you wanted someone or someones that looked up to you like she does?"

S. Sayaka: "Yeah..."

Ohno: *laughs a bit, before taking some of his soba noodles off of the stove.* "Hey, I'm a guy, so my words maybe have no merit to you, but let me say this; the Okajima I knew before he asked me to join this double-date, he wouldn't be agreeing to dates. He was quite the man you were describing. But now I'm seeing a new aura in his eyes; I can see Rina-san's reflection off of his eyes when I see him look at her. This is definitely not some player crap going on." *takes a small chopstick-full of noodles and eats it.*

S. Sayaka: "You're right..." *collects her Okonomiyaki off of the stove, and holds a piece close to her mouth.* "Honestly, nothing seemed out of place when I heard him speak. Except a few times in which he seemed incompetent and not in tune to what he had arranged."

Ohno: "Oh, well that would be beca-" *puts down his chopsticks immediately.*

S. Sayaka: "Hm? You were sa-" *looks over to where Ohno is, seeing that some men invade the table that Rina and Okajima are.*

S. Rina: "Shindo? What the Devil are you doing here?"

Shindo: "I see what you meant when you said you wanted 'some time off.'"

Okajima: "What?"

S. Rina: "I said I wanted 'to break up!' And on that note, I have every right to be on dates with whomever I choose!"
Shindo: "Then choose me; I still know how to treat you right." *starts trapping Rina within the confines of her section of the booth.*

Okajima: "Hey! Get away from-" *gets pushed back into his spot by Shindo's backup.*

Shindo: "Let's begin the catch-up session, Rina-chan." *goes to grab Rina's left arm.*

S. Sayaka: *Grabs Shindo's wrist first, stopping him.*

Shindo: "What th-"

S. Sayaka: "Don't. Touch. My sister." *tightens her grip and then begins twisting.*

Shindo: "Guys, we've got someone-" *turns around, only to find that his two friends have been restrained by Ohno; one is hunched over due to a stepover shoulderlock, while the other was on his knees, in pain from a modified wrist-wrenching Kimura lock.* "What?"

S. Sayaka: "Walk away now, and we'll forget about all of this."

Shindo: "Like Hell I will." *muscles his way out of Sayaka's grip, and then tries to right hook her, though Sayaka counters it into a hammerlock wrench, then pushing him out in front of her. He runs into two chopsticks lightly pinching his Adam's Apple, held there by Ohno, who has kicked and tossed away the other two.* "Giikh!"

Ohno: "Had enough yet?"

Shindo: *chops the utensils down to the ground, which causes Ohno to roundhouse kick Shindo on his left temple. Sayaka takes over and prepares to smear his face onto the burning stove, but then Ohno places his porcelain plate in between.*

Ohno: "We can't be killing people in restaurants, Sayaka-san. Not on the first date at least."

Sayaka: "Fair enough." *picks up Shindo and kicks him away.* "Go away! Don't go near my sister again!" *she doesn't take her eyes off of him until he disappears. She sighs with relief.*

Ohno: "Well that was refreshing... Wouldn't you agree, Okajima-kun? Rina-san?"

Okajima: "Yeah, I'd say so too."

S. Rina: "Sorry for causing trouble for you two."

S. Sayaka: "Oh no, think nothing of that. It's only my job as the older sister."

Ohno: "It's not your only job though."

S. Sayaka: *looks at him for a bit.* "Maybe not, but I still won't half-ass it. And to ensure we won't be having similar issues in the future, Rina, I'd like to see your boyfriend's phone for any incriminating material."

Okajima: "!!"

S. Rina: "Niisan, is this really-"
S. Sayaka: "Not now, Rina. Okajima-kun, if you will..."

Okajima: *looks for a bit, before Ohno nods in acceptance.* "F-fine. Here you go." *Hands his device over.*

S. Sayaka: *Opens up his photos section seeing that it is devoid of any condescending material.* "Hmm..."

Ohno: "Told you you were worrying too much over nothing."

S. Sayaka: *sigh* "Suppose I was." *hands back Okajima's phone to him.* "Sorry for doting again, Rina."

S. Rina: "Hahah, that's nothing, niisan. I've missed you doing stuff like that all the time, honestly. Just like old times."

S. Sayaka: "Heh, it is."

Ohno: "It seems we've had the most excellent of double-dates, and it's only just started. How about the four of us return to our barely-touched dishes, hm?"

S. Rina: "That would be great."

-And so they did. Once the meals had filled their stomachs, Okajima and Ohno joint-paid for the bill, as well as any damages sustained in the brief fight they had, and then took off for the car. It was a more silent drive to the Shiroyuki apartment.-

S. Rina: "That was a fun time, guys. If this is any sign, Okajima-kun, then I'm going to love any future dates we have."

Ohno: "I'm sure he'd agree. I guess you're accounting for the fact that college is almost upon the four of us again, so there will be little time to see each other anytime soon."

S. Sayaka: "That's very astute. Let's not forget that I'm several hours away in Aichi Prefecture while you're all here."

Okajima: "Hey, whenever all of us can, we'll do this again. Until then, I know you're not leaving my mind anytime soon, Rina."

S. Rina: "Likewise. Well, see you then. Goodbye, Okajima-kun and Ohno-san." *waves and turns to her residence.*

Okajima: "Let me walk you in then." *gets out and leads her there.*

S. Sayaka: *Before proceeding to follow them.* "You know, Ohno-kun, you kind of remind me of someone from way back when..."

Ohno: "!!"

S. Sayaka: "He looked a decent bit like you, kept to himself, and nice enough; didn't feel indebted to anyone like that. I saw him everyday in Aichi International, mostly because he was"
always the first to leave... Until he mysteriously disappeared during the Summer before 7th grade..."

Ohno: "..."

S. Sayaka: "Ah, but he didn't really connect to many, myself included, so I don't quite miss him. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't curious about where his is. You're smart, Ohno-kun. Any ideas?"

Ohno: *shakes his head.*

S. Sayaka: "Didn't think so. Well, see you around sometime, Ohno-kun." *turns around and takes a few steps, before saying,* "And good game..."

Ohno: "..."

Okajima: *waves as he leaves the apartment, and then gets into the passenger seat.* "Ah. Another great day for the Taiga. Hahah."

Ohno: "And the 'Ohno-ble One.'" *looks at him.*

Okajima: "Hey? You okay? You look a little shaken by something."

Ohno: "Kind of distraught that I won't see Sayaka-san anytime soon."

Okajima: "Sucks to be you then. Me and Rina will be hitting it off at least another six times before this year is over. Just wish I still had some GP pics..."

Ohno: "That almost ruined the date for you, by the way."

Okajima: "Yeah yeah, I know. I gotta thank you for doing that so swiftly. Don't worry; I really know Rina-san means a lot to me, so it won't be happening again. The least I can do to repay you for this."

Ohno: "If you say so." *ignites the Lagonda and drives off.*

Okajima: "Man have I got the story for the rest of the guys..."

Ohno *glances at him for a second.* *I wonder when and how will I be able to tell mine...*
Test Driving Space

Chapter Summary

All the talk about the exotic vehicles Ohno has employed for use in all of the previous events can only go so far before Yoshida and co. must know just what else he has in the garage...

-AssUniv was not for ten minutes without one of Okajima's retelling of the events of his and Ohno's double date with one of the Doshisha Varsity volleyball players and her identical twin. Some were quite interested in it, while many of the others couldn't get it out of their minds. But for two particular students, a certain element caught their ears...-

Yoshida/Itona: "Tell us again... What vehicle were you four inside?"

Okajima: *sighs* "You guys, I've told that detail probably a hundred times already!"

Yoshida: "One more time, then!"

Okajima: "Alright... Ohno's Lagonda Taraf, 2016."

Itona: "Wow..." *turns over to Ohno, who had just finished quick-draw training.* "Ohno, where the Hell did you get a Lagonda?"

Ohno: *wipes his forehead.* "Oh, well, I bought it off a friend of mine that had attended an auction in Gaydon, England. Very good too, since he got the 184th of 200, and he had the 70th already."

Yoshida: "Can, can you show us it? As well as any other sweet rides you got?"

Ohno: "Of course. After training."

Nakamura: "Now that I'd like to see too."

Karma: "I think that's something all of us can agree on, to be frank."

Karasuma: "You all heard the parolee, everyone. Training first. Now continue."

-After training, the bus brought AssUniv back to the Hotel Okura. Ohno then led them to his private lockup connected to the building.-

Ohno: "Here we are - UGH." *unlocks the cage elevator, which causes many of the 29 within the cramped lift to just fall right out, landing on top of Ohno, who was in the front.* "Guess most of us didn't want to wait, hm?" *gets up holding his back a bit.*

Itona/Yoshida: "NOPE." *get up as well and look around. What they see makes their lower jaws drop like excess dead weight; any further, they would've hit the floor.* "HOLY SHIT."
Ohno: *scratches forehead.* "Yeah, that's about the reaction anybody other than me who's been down here had. This is one of four garages I have scattered around Kyoto too."

AssUniv: "ONE OF FOUR!?!" *their jaws drop too.*

Ohno: "Which is out of dozens more nationwide."

AssUniv: *some of the fainter of heart end up falling back at that final remark.*

Irina: "Wow, you have quite the money to burn throughout your young career. I guess I was one to talk, though."

Karasuma: "Of course he does, Irina-san; he literally burned money anyways."

Ohno: *sweat mark drops.* "Why does our plot constantly include that in discussion..."

Itona: "OHNO-KUN!"

Ohno: "Hm?"

Itona: "Is this an Acura NSX? A hybrid sports coupe that only came on market several months back?"

Ohno: "It is. But this has the layout and design of the 2014 concept rather than the standard model. I'm waiting for 2017's yearly make. Compared to most of my other expenditures, this one's price tag is rather tame; I wouldn't be surprised if the lot of you got one later on."

Muramatsu: "That might be a stretch."

Yoshida: "Eh, that's impressive, but LOOK AT THIS." *points to the Pagani Huayra 2015.*

Irina: "Whoa!" *runs over to it herself.* "Weren't these all sold out last year?"

Ohno: "I had a guy at a high-end auction who would reserve one of the last makes, had I given a steep up-front fee for it. I think it was worth it."

Maehara: "No doubt you'd impress anyone you'd want to in that."

Yada: *surprised by the statement, before seeing something catch her eye for the second time.* "Oh, there's the car Ohno and I were in before entering the Conference Center. It's a, Lykan Hypersport, right?"

Isogai: "That's not a car; that's a tank!"

Karasuma: "Might be the reason why a police department has one of these in its lockup."

Yoshida: "One of only seven in existence... A Lebanese Beauty, here in Japan. How?"

Ohno: "This one I just got lucky." *snickers.* "But I think it's high time you guys saw what you came for; the Lagonda." *walks over to the Taraf.*
Itona: "How do they put a V12 engine in this slick piece..."

Hazama: *aside* "I'm having a feeling these guys are just having way too much fun..."

Ohno: "It's certainly a mystery, considering how much leg room, among other luxuries, that it provides for the rear-seated passengers. Until I find out, why not just enjoy it?"

Yoshida: "Damn straight..." *caresses the window/windshield frame a little bit.* "Man, Ohno-kun, these are all great, but do you happen to have quite the selection in motorcycles, too?"

Ohno: "Certainly. Right this way." *walks to a slightly concealed door, and opens it, revealing 10 kick-standing two-wheelers.*

Yoshida: "Oh shit..." *takes the whole situation in.*

Itona: "Oh my damn, a Benelli Titanium, A Triumph Rocket III, and a Fischer MRX! Three different countries proudly being represented, not even including the rest in here!"

Ohno: "Don't get me wrong though, Japanese models are always a pleasure to get too, such as this Kawasaki Ninja H2R."

Yoshida: "Can, can I, get on it?" *preciously fondles it.*

Ohno: "How about we give it a ride?"

Yoshida: "SERIOUSLY?!"

Ohno: "It hasn't seen asphalt in quite a bit. It deserves some attention, and you clearly look ready to provide it. So why not?" *First collects the keys hanging on a bulletin wall, then goes to a helmet rack, picks out a black and white Airmada Icon helmet and throws it and the keys to him.* "There you go; go nuts."

Yoshida: "Alright then!" *puts on the helmet and starts it up.*

Kataoka: *is shocked by the revving ignition of the motorcycle.* "There's definitely some power in that vehicle."

Yoshida: "Where am I going, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "What do you mean, 'I'?" *gets on his Yamaha VMAX.* "Kinki Sports Land, by the way."

Kayano: "I assume you know the guy, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Must you even ask?" *smiles before putting on an HJC bluetooth helmet and starts up the powerful 1700cc engine underneath him.* "Itona, what are you doing down there? You're hyped, right?"

Itona: "Damn straight!"

Ohno: "Get a helmet and get on, then. The rest of you go back to the bus and have the driver take you to KSL, alright?"
Nagisa: "Very well."

Itona: "Okay..." *puts on a Torc helmet and climbs onto the back of the Yamaha.*

Ohno: "Very good. Yoshida, you ready?"

Yoshida: "Let's do this!"

Ohno: "Yes, sir!" *hits a pager on one of the keys, opening the garage door, leading through a winding passage that the three go through to reach the exit and hit the streets.*

Yoshida: "Wooo! this is livin'!"

Ohno: "Damn straight." *With Yoshida close behind, he accelerates and cuts a right turn in the direction towards the racecourse.* "At the pace we're going, it won't be long now to the tracks."

Yoshida: "Alright. And other than playing Need for Speed, what else will we be doing there?"

Ohno: "Well I'm sure you and Itona can find ways of making these two-wheelers even better, right?"

Itona: "You joking? Of course we can!"

Yoshida: "I take it you saw some defects in the H2R's design already then, Itona-san?"

Itona: "Not really defects; just limits, which given the politics and PR bullcrap behind them, it makes sense. But if some powerful figure were to tell us he don't give a rat's ass about that..."

Ohno: "I encouraged it; just do it when we get there."

Yoshida/Itona: "Awesome!" *They say as Ohno again guides them to the highways, speeding past the slower-by-comparison car traffic.*

-They arrive at Kink Sports Land, and after an initial run on the windy, twisting race-course, Itona gathered enough observation and information to locate a "limit" and remove it from the H2R.-

Itona: "Alright, now we just adjust the suspension, and there we go; 415 km/h is at hand."

Yoshida: "415!?"

Itona: "If you can handle it." *crosses arms and smugly smiles.*

Yoshida: "Of course I can! Just gotta get a bigger jacket; it's gonna be cold."

Ohno: "We will also need to go to the drag strip, next to the streets too; this turning course won't let you reach the speed we're hoping to achieve."

Itona: "What are we waiting for? Let's go!"

-And so they did. and Yoshida did end up living up to his promise, reaching 408 km/h by the finish line of the asphalt.-
Ohno: "Damn, that was intense."

Yoshida: "No, shit it was!"

Itona: "How-" *ahem* "How does it feel?"

Yoshida: *unzips the motorcross jacket.* "It's exhilarating. Heart rate still isn't dropping. Ohno, man, you get to do this every day; I'd kill for that."

Ohno: "Well you know, someone like me, who runs billionaire enterprises, doesn't have that kind of time all the time. But you are right that I wanna fly whenever I can."

Yoshida: "I'm sure you do. With a power like that, who wouldn't?"

Itona: *looks at Ohno.*

Yoshida: "You know, I said it before with everybody else, but I need to say it again. Thanks, Ohno."

Ohno: "Um, you're welcome, I guess. Any reason you're saying it now?"

Yoshida: "Firstly, for this. Secondly, and most importantly, you've given me a lot of hope for things: with you, bike culture is never dead. I've messed up before; you've messed up before, but got out swimmingly. And I feared I would never see the Terasaka Gang together, much less smile. But he, Itona here, Muramatsu, and I all got those back. Hazama is who she is, fine with however we are, so that's fine. The point is, I, like all of us, had one bad week that turned into one bad month that could've turned into one bad year. But you proved to us that if one bad week is all it takes to turn things to shit, one good week is all it takes to bring it all back. So thanks."

Ohno: "Wow... Thanks. I mean, you're welcome."

Itona: *Korosensei...*

Ohno: *hears the radio feedback in his bluetooth helmet* "Hold a second." *turns up the volume so all three can hear.*

Radio Op: "Headquarters, 211 and 487 are confirmed! Robbery at the Agede Pierre diamond store, suspects heading South in a stolen Maserati Gran Turismo! Requesting immediate backup!"

Ohno: "We're close. Yoshida, like to test the true abilities of the H2R now?"

Yoshida: "Wha? Yeah. Of course."

-"The Race of the Night" by Dave Rodgers begins-

Ohno: "Then let's do it. Itona, get on my VMAX and follow us." *gets on the second seat of the H2R, prompting Yoshida to get on. They all leave Kinki Sports Land, and Ohno directs them all headway towards the Turismo, with two cop cars right behind it."

Yoshida: "Hey, that's the one! Damn, they already scratched the masterpiece of a coupe up!"
Itona: "Oh, these guys have to pay for that."

Ohno: "We'll get there; just have patience." *the two motorcycles, rather than follow the pursuit, cut some corners and drive perpendicular to the Turismo for some time, before getting ahead and drove down an adjacent road, ready to intercept.*

Yoshida: "Okay! We're about to meet up with them! What now?"

Ohno: "Keep pace! When we hit the intersection, don't follow! Just keep going straight! Itona, take this left now and be ready to pick me up when I say so." *begins standing onto the H2R.*

Itona: "What do you mean, 'pick you up?'"

Ohno: "Now, Itona!"

Itona: *turns, getting out of view in seconds.*

Ohno: "Don't slow down, Yoshida-san!"

Yoshida: "We're gonna hit them!"

Ohno: "Trust me!"

Yoshida: ... *accelerates. The two forces converge right at the intersection, and in bullet-time, the H2R passes right behind the Turismo, while still having a few feet between it and the cop cars. A blink later, the police don't notice the difference between the other second and now; like the track-cycle had never been there. But there was a change...*

Cop 1: "What the fuck is this!?"

Cop 2: "Why's there a guy on top of the car!?!"

Ohno: *Using his hyper-information-processing ability, Ohno had jumped off the motorcycle and landed onto the roof of the Gran Turismo.* Heheh-Hellyeah... *Climbs up to the front rim of the windshield, and then hangs onto the passenger seat's door.*

Passenger Criminal: "What the shit!?"

Driver Criminal: "Don't curse at him! Get rid of him!"

Ohno: *avoids a hook punch by the passenger before grabbing his outstretched hand and slightly pulling him out of the car. Ohno then moves his hand in to unlock the passenger door. He tries opening it, but he sees the driver turn in to ram the left side of the car along a cement wall, which prompts him to push the passenger's head back in, and then slide back to grip the spoiler of the car, avoiding the deadly scrape. Ohno then opens up the trunk allowing him to enter the car from the rear, and knock out both criminals. the turismo continues to drive onto an overpass to an underground tunnel passage - one that Itona is about to enter. Ohno opens up the passenger door again to jump off the road, landing onto a container trunk. Itona drives in close to allow Ohno to again fall into it once they get into the bridge.*

-Song ends-
-Some minutes later, all three regroup at the back alley of the Hotel Okura.-
Yoshida: "Damn, that was sick! My heartbeat is still rising even though it's over!"

Itona: "Damn straight! Ohno-san, man, you were like Terminator or something! That was intense!"

Ohno: "I live for intense. You know that by now." *grins.*

Karasuma: "YOU ALL!"

Ohno: "Oh boy..."

Yoshida/Itona: *hesitantly look behind them.*

Karasuma: "I see Ohno has brought you into one of his own shenanigans. What were you thinking? A race throughout town, and then affiliating yourselves in an ongoing crime?"

Ohno: "Oh I did rope them into some shenanigans, but them being involved in a crime, whether by stopping it or helping it, is not one of them."

Karasuma: "And you think the police will believe that?"

Ohno: *lifts up his helmet, which reveals the latest buzz in the police radio.*

Radio Op: "Suspects have been taken into custody. The case of the 'man on the roof' of the suspect's vehicle has not been confirmed; officers involved in the chase might have been delusional. Further investigation might be required."

Ohno: *shrugs.* "Doesn't sound like three guys and two motorcycles to me."

Karasuma: *sighs* "You're really lucky."

Ohno: "Or I plan really well. I've had a lot of practice since leaving that jail, you know."

Karasuma: "Of course you did. Well, head back up; training is tomorrow, after all."

Itona: "Isn't it always?" *begins to take his leave.*

Ohno: "You said it." *follows*

Yoshida: "Hold on, Ohno-san."

Ohno: "Yes?"

Yoshida: "About jailtime, Ohno... Mind telling us what it was like? In Okinawa International? I've heard it's one of the worst prisons. For the inmates, anyway."

Ohno: "..."

Karasuma: *attentively looks at him.*

Ohno: *smiles.* "It was a highlight of my life. Now come on." *heads back inside.*
Karasuma: *Liar.* waits until the three students enter Hotel Okura from the back, then enters himself.*
Chapter Summary

The story is called Assassination University for a reason, you know! The Program, having realized they are now going to schools related to their majors within the former national capital to see what they're all like.

-Summertime came to an end before long, and the students of AssUniv within the last week and a half have readied themselves to study at the new schools that they have been transferred to, such that they remain local to Kyoto (city). The purpose of this was to ensure their late Junior High teacher's dream of preserving the futures of his students, so aside from the venue, not much has truly changed; everyone is going to universities that specialize in their respective career paths. For instance, the Artisans...-

-At Kyoto University of Art and Design-

Kayano/Hazama/Okano: *Stands up and bows after the Headmaster's speech.*

Sosuke/Maehara/Okajima/Sugino/Mimura/Muramatsu: *Copies the action soon after.*

-After leaving the speak-house.-

Okajima: "Woo! Pretty hyped for a new year here in Kyoto! Are you all?"

Kayano: *yawns while stretching.* "We could've made do without the hour-long convocation. Certainly wasn't the thing I regret not witnessing when I foregone going to college four years earlier."

Okano: "Yeah, it was a bit extensive and exhausting."

Maehara: "It's just today, everyone. After this, we're on our own; just how we want it. Man, what are the possibilities in a place this grand...?"

Muramatsu: "You can say that because you have no major yet. Us folk with something in mind have some rules to follow."

Sosuke: "Amen. Art major. Means I can't talk shit though." *scratches the back of his head and smirks slightly.*

Sugino: "Yeah. College just for the publicity for me too; aside from Physics and whatnot, not really any reason to excel in academics. Just need Nippon to see me in action."

Hazama: "This university has a great, diverse library, if I recall. All I need from them."

Kayano: "Oh come on, guys, I made a mistake saying my earlier statement; college is indeed for us. We're here, and we'll make the most out of it. Our heads have to be held high if we want to see
how things are looking up."

All: "Sounds great to us."

Maehara: "Karasuma and Bitch-sensei did a lot to make this happen. Best be grateful." *smiles widely.*

-At Doshisha University, for the Liberal Artists...-

Hara: *hooks her left arm around the shoulders and neck of nearby Kanzaki.* "Time has come, Kanzaki-san! We're going to be caretaker and caregiver, together! Frickin' incredible!"

Kanzaki: "It will be a pleasure studying in addition to training with you, Hara-san." *shares her smile.*

Yada: "I see that you two are very excited for the new year."

Hara: "Why just us two? Are you not, Yada-san?"

Yada: "Oh I am. Doshisha is amazing for business majors. Just don't have someone to act as my outlet for expressing my elation like you two do."

Kanzaki: "There will be a lot of people with the same major as you here, Yada-san. You'll find someone you'll like like that."

Yada: "Yeah, maybe..." *suddenly thinks of Ohno when Kanzaki says 'you'll like like that.'* "!!?"

Hara: "You know what's the best way to start the year? Checking what they have in the dining hall!" *points over to one of the school-sanctioned cafeterias.* "Let's dig in!"

Kanzaki: "Don't get ahead of yourself too much, Hara-san." *follows*

Yada: *continues staring into space for a moment before realizing her friends had gone on.* "Huh? Hey, Kanzaki-san! Hara-san!" *continues to think as she catches up.* "Ohno-kun is friends with Mr. Sasai, the CEO of Cyberdyne Inc. The former did agree to let me meet him on more professional terms at a later date... But Ohno is some businessman himself, since he's accumulated a massive wealth at his age. Huh, seems I already do have people I like like that..."

-At Kyoto Institute of Technology, the Scientists...-

-Ohno leads Itona, Chiba, Takebayashi, Okuda, Kurahashi, Hayami, and Yoshida out of the opening ceremony's hall.-

Ohno: *stretches out.* "Ah, feels nice to be out in the open again."

Yoshida: *holding onto a complimentary soda.* "A light sun welcomes us as we do! Future is looking bright, no pun intended."

Itona: "I don't see why I have to go to college suddenly, though... I won't be learning much more here than I would be at my old workplace."
Chiba: "Well, unless we or your father can build a whole new phone factory just for this occasion, we can't do anything about that."

Ohno: "If it becomes too oppressive, Itona-san, I could request your father a joint operation, funding the creation and refurbishing of such a place. But I fear that not only will it take a huge cut of the small business' revenue to make the deal, it won't be complete before our mission here is over."

Itona: "Okay, I get it, I get it. Maybe I'll just sleep through the classes."

Hayami: "You're lucky, Itona-san. At least you have classes that matter to your in-mind occupation. I don't even have an occupation in mind."

Takebayashi: "Oh here we go again... You're not really missing out having meaningful classes, Hayami-san."

Okuda: "So very seconded. By God, I wish Korosensei made the universal blood-type formula easy for the two of us. But not only that he didn't he recommended all these courses to accomplish with the notes to comprehend it!"

Kurahashi: "I've heard that my biology expertise might be a necessary stepping stone along with it, so I want to get ready for the day that you need me as well, you two."

Okuda: "That would be greatly appreciated."

AssUniv: *suddenly they close their eyes and begin thinking hard about something.*

Ohno: "Something wrong, you all?"

Itona: "All of us, except maybe Hayami-san, have a good reason to be in KIT. What's your reason, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "I like tech. I like to be around it."

Chiba: "You also like to do your own thing, as we can't help but notice. Having us not around during that sounds like the perfect opportunity. So why not take it?"

Ohno: "No leads yet. Besides, I've only got a limited time with you lot and the rest of your friends. I think it's best I warm up to you all."

Kurahashi: "Alright, then. Consider this the first warm-up topic: what are you studying?"

Ohno: "Advanced Mechatronics."

Yoshida: *hears the answer and spits out some of his soda.* "Mechatronics!?!"

Ohno: "Indeed. As one of the free-lance researchers at Cyberdyne Inc., I need to learn more and more about how to safely and effectually integrate pieces of technology to better aid individuals in going about their daily tasks. That's an issue that's always evolving."

Takebayashi: "Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold the phone; you work at Cyberdyne Inc.?"
Ohno: "Yeah, I said that when-" *pays real attention to the memory.* "Oh, I only said it to Yada-san. When we cut our comm-link."

Hayami: "Cyberdyne Inc. was the company hosting the special event at the Conference Center which you and Yada-san crashed."

Okuda: "Could our Ohno-kun have strategized even the venue into consideration of going about the reunion plan? I'd like to hazard a guess..." *holds her chin and smugly smiles at Ohno. Most of the rest follow suit.*

Ohno: "Okay, guys, that was pure luck to be honest. I'm not in charge of when they celebrate achievements."

Itona: "Hm, fair point."

Kurahashi: "Aw, and we thought Ohno was even more of a chess aficionado than we thought..."

Ohno: *waits as they pass by, then follows from behind.* But I can control how fast the project would complete, which would push the celebration's date... *smiles lightly.*

-At Ritsumeikan University, the Politicians...-

Karma/Terasaka/Isogai/Kataoka/Kimura: *Cross the street en route to reaching the citywide bus stop located within the campus.*

Karma: "Politicians, check in!"

Terasaka: "Checking in!" *Like Karma, raises a clenched hand into the air.*

Kimura: "Law Enforcers, report!" *waits a second.* "Reporting!" *raises a fist.*

Isogai/Kataoka: "People-who-have-no-idea-what-they'll-be-doing-but-they-do-know-the-general-area-they-wish-to-work-for, answer the call!" *wait a second.* "Answering!" *raise their fists as well.*

Karma: "That's quite a stretch..."

Kataoka: "Well, it is our situation right now. Korosensei and the two of us had hopes that we'd know what we wanted in life by the end of high school, but choices just kept coming and passing us by."

Isogai: "I guess we're both just assassin leaders... The nice ones at that, I feel we can add."

Kimura: Damn Ikemens!

Terasaka: "Maybe this is where bullheadedness shines; I've been wanting to become a politician because I didn't think about anything else. And now it's happening. Maybe you two should try that here."

Kataoka/Isogai: "... Nah."

Terasaka: *tears up a bit.* "I thought I just had a good point." *shys away for a bit.*
Karma: "That aside, any base thoughts? Criteria for the perfect jobs for you two?"

Isogai: "Well, Kataoka-san wants a 'feminine, but not too feminine'-like job." *turns to her.* "Maybe a lawyer?"

Kataoka: "Too much scandal. No thanks." *thinks a bit.* "You were very good at geography and social studies, Isogai-kun. Maybe go into public service or environmental welfare policy?"

Isogai: "I don't think I'd get much in either. I want to do something that I love, but I've got my struggling family to think about to." *sighs.* "You guys see our pain now?"

Kimura: "Definitely."

Karma: "Whatever will be done..." *puts his arms behind his head and starts whistling as they walk further."

Naoko: *walks out of the library along the same sidewalk to the one the Politicians. Immediately recognizing her old friends, she hides behind a large column of the library's front architecture, and waits until the group passes by.* Phew, that was close... They, especially Karma-kun, can't keep a secret... *She thinks to herself, while still looking on, envious of being able to chat with them sometime soon.*

-And finally, at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, for the Interpreters...-

Nagisa: *Nakamura carries him by his waist out to the commons of the campus. Fuwa follows closely behind, smiling all the same as the former does.* "Hey! Enough! Put me down, Nakamura-san."

Nakamura: *sets him down onto the grass.* "Very well!"

Nagisa: *shakes off the bad touch feeling.* "Any reason this time for that?"

Nakamura: "Not really; just doing the first of many acts for the new era of schooling happening between the two of us."

Fuwa: "With me being able to keep a close eye this time around."

Nagisa: "The first of many... Huh, that's great. That's really great."

Nakamura: "You want to know what's great? You, finally putting aside that emo side of yours from over the Summer while training with most of us."

Nagisa: "Emo? Jeez, I would say I was a pessimistic mess, but I wouldn't say emo."

Nakamura: "You joking? With all your playing with knives during that time, I figured if you weren't with Kayano in the next 48 hours, you would've cut yourself with them. Maybe accidentally, but another 24 would make it intentional."

Nagisa: "I love the lack of faith in me..." *looks away.*

Nakamura: "Need some time for yourself? We'd be happy to give you some. Come on, Fuwa-
san; let's get some frozen treats." *heads away.*

Nagisa: "Wait! I want some ice cr-" *gets shoved from the side, forcing him onto the grass.* "Agh... What the- Who are-?"

???: "Well, look who the cat dragged in..."

???: "A little, blue piece of roadkill."

Nagisa: *recognizes the voices.* "Oh great..."

???: *picks Nagisa up by his shirt.* "How's your day been, Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: "Tanaka, Takada, it's been perfect. But now, I don't think so, because it might end up becoming even better." *audaciously smiles.*

Takada: "You smug little..." *goes to land a hook punch on Nagisa from the side, but Nagisa's assassin instincts kick in and he ducks under, causing Tanaka to be hit instead. Nagisa then side kicks from the floor to push Takada aside.*

Nagisa: "You two want any more? You know what I can do."

Takada: "Not really. But he might."

Nagisa: "Who?" *backs up into the person in question. He turns around and sees a 6'4" undergraduate student.* "Whoa..."

Takada: "Meet Ogata, Nagisa. Collegiate wrestler here at this school."

Ogata: "Pushing around my friends are you?"

Nagisa: "Pushing? Nah, more like punching and kicking."

Ogata: "No difference to someone like me." *also picks up Nagisa by his collar, but with only one hand, and then tosses him across the lawn. As Nagisa gets up, Ogata Karelin Lifts him to a semi-sprawling position and then throws him towards a monument sticking out of the ground on the common area. As Nagisa gets up again, the three bullies surround him, much like the former two did during their junior high days.*

Nagisa: *cough cough.*

Takada: "We've been waiting for this for quite a while, Nagisa."

Ogata: *Starts coiling the head hole of Nagisa's shirt, choking him lightly.* "Now to teach you a lesson!"

Nagisa: "Ack... Keh..."

Ogata: "I'll kill you if you mess with us again, you hear!?"

Nagisa: *immediately pays attention to Ogata saying the word "kill" in his last sentence.* "Kill?!"
Tanaka/Takada: "Oh shit..."

Ogata: "You say something, pipsqueak?"

Nagisa: *makes an ear-piercing clicking noise with his tongue, which temporarily severs the link between Ogata's senses and the part of his mind that processes them. The braindead state lasts only for a second or two, but that is more than enough time for Nagisa to reverse the shirt grab into a short-arm double palm thrust to Ogata's chin. It exposes the latter's neck, which permits Nagisa's right hand to create a small claw that lightly digs into the flesh near Ogata's Adam's Apple.*

Tanaka/Takada: *completely mortified by what they are looking at.*

Nagisa: "Good luck." *turns to the other two.* "All of you." *smiles so widely, he has to close his eyes too.* "You have until graduation." *finally twists Ogata's nose around a bit playfully.* "If you all ever make it there." *then walks away to rejoin Nakamura and Fuwa, who had been watching the incident unfold.*

Nakamura: "Nice... I think you earned a reprieve from my antics."

Nagisa: "Good."

Nakamura: "For a day or two."

Nagisa: "..."

Nakamura: *pats him on the shoulder.* "Come on." *The three of them then continue on their walk.*

-With all of AssUniv together...-

Karma: "So, Nagisa, you scared the shit out of your two old bullies once again?"

Nagisa: "It's a habit I can't hope to kick anytime soon."

Nakamura: "And we're totally fine with that."

Maehara: "Man, all the individual stories we're having, makes me sad we're not going to the same school anymore."

Kurahashi: "It makes sense though. We couldn't derail our careers by going to schools not suited to our majors."

Yada: "Yeah, and the ones we're going to aren't very far from each other. If there is trouble, whatever it may be, it won't be hard for at least a few of us to get on the scene."

Isogai: "And that's the most we can ask for. Well, that, and Kyoto schools, and all of their deserved prestige."

Kataoka: "May we give our thanks, to our amazing former Junior High teachers for allowing this to happen?" *motions over to the back cushion being compressed by Karasuma and Irina.*
Irina: "That's great and all, but-

Ohno: *makes a subtle "scurrying"-like noise that catches the attention of Irina's animal gene, and then he looks away from the conversation, out the window towards the upcoming Hotel Okura.*

Irina: "It's been awhile since you given me praise like this. This appreciation feels extra nice now." *closes her eyes with glee.*

Karma: "Is that so... Bitch-Sensei?"

Irina: *immediately hears that.* "You just had to ruin the moment, did you?"

Terasaka: "Not to be blunt, but that's the second thing we do best."

Hazama: "What are you talking about; you're always blunt, Terasaka-san."

Maehara: "I like to think in a group of twenty-nine, we at least have one of those."

Fuwa: "Almost as if the fates willed it, hm?"

AssUniv: *Everyone cogitates about that question for a second, before they all laugh audibly, becoming aware of how weird and chance that their lives are.*

Ohno: *smirks slightly to the topic, before noticing something outside, in which many assorted cars, all painted in variants of dark grey, line up the sidewalks and alleyways to the Hotel Okura.*

"..."

Driver: "Here we are, everyone!"

Kayano: "Ah, great." *She, along with Nagisa and the others, rise out of their seats, gathering their instruments and head outside, walking into the front entrance of the hotel.*

Ohno: *follows along with the usual routine, until he looks through the glass doors and sees someone he recognizes as suspiciously hostile.* "Stop."

Nagisa: "What? Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: *sees the man he's gazing turn his conversation from the front desk to one of his colleagues. When his attention turns to the doorways, Ohno silently commands for AssUniv to take cover behind the walls on both sides.* "Hotel Okura is not safe anymore. We have to relocate."

AssUniv: "EEEEEH!!???"
New HQ Space

Chapter Summary

With Hotel Okura now deemed unsafe, and without many places to discreetly discuss their Program tactics, AssUniv must think about a new vantage point fast.

-After realizing that AssUniv's enemies had caught on to where they were hiding out within Kyoto, Japan, the students, along with their instructors, went quickly and discreetly back into the traveling bus, and Ohno had brought them to the Hyatt Regency Kyoto.

Front Deskman: "Ah! Ohno-kun! Great to see you on this fine night. Who is-" *looks behind him.*

Ohno: "I am owed a 'no-questions-asked' by the manager of this building, sir. I'd like to use it now."

Deskman: "Ah... Very well, Ohno. How many rooms would you need?"

Ohno: *goes close to the serviceman and says something silently into his ear. "Just give us the keys to all the rooms on fifth floor. Your manager has kept that level vacant, right?"


Kayano: "Ohno-kun's connections strike again."

Nakamura: "That's great and all, but I'll be missing the Hotel Okura a lot for days." *begins tearing up comically*

Fuwa: "Yeah, it was practically perfect." *comically tears up as well.*

Ohno: *sighs.* "Yeah, I can see why you've warmed up to a hotel we've been staying at for more than three years..." *looks aside.*

AssUniv: *Listened to what Ohno had just said.* ""!!?"

Karasuma: "Ohno..."

Ohno: *immediately realized that he messed up.* "Ah, did I say 'years?' I meant to say," *checks his watch* "'months.' Having a flashback to last time something like this happened, heheh... *scratches the back of his head.*

Okajima: "Yeah, well... You think some of them could possibly get our stuff from Okura? I have..." *Realizes he cannot identify certain things he has in his room.* "THINGS I need from there."

Maehara: "Yeah, we all do."
Ohno: "Don't worry; I'll get some of my boys to subtly get to the hotel and ship it all here. It will be done by overnight at the latest. But we have a far more pressing matter to discuss first. Let's get to our rooms, get settled, and we'll conference it together."

-An hour later, the students and teachers become accustomed to their new residence, and then they all gather together within Karasuma and Irina's room for the talk.-

Okano: *whispers* "I'm not sure I want to be in this room..."

Mimura: "Yeah, I think so too. I don't care if it isn't the same room."

Irina: *blushes a little when they finish that short conversation.*

Ohno: "Okay, everyone. So we dodged a very close bullet with relocating so the Reclamation Society or their supporters did not find out our previous headquarters, Hotel Okura. Don't worry about the staff there, either; they won't squeal, and they'll be safe from harm. But because of this incident, there is a very disadvantaging fact realized between all of us."

Terasaka: "There is? What is it?"

Hazama: "We'll have to speak it out guys, or our esteemed leader will never get it."

Isogai: "Terasaka-san, we can't crutch to the Hyatt Regency like we did with the Hotel Okura. If we let ourselves get too comfortable here, we'll make the same mistake we did at the last lodge, and bring too much unwanted attention."

Kataoka: "Ohno-kun might be able to reserve thirty-plus spots for us in every other 5-star hotel in this city. And though it'll impress us, or desensitize us, every single time, it's not healthy."

Nakamura: "That is true. I think we should only be sleeping in this place from now on."

Okajima: "Huh, so this, uh, conversation shouldn't be happening right now?"

Chiba: "Very funny, Okajima-kun. Yes, it shouldn't be."

Ohno: "Do we all have another way of discussing this together right now and later on, then? Not phone calls or texts, by the way. It must 100% private; exclusive only to you all."

AssUniv: *all look between each other, before nodding, knowing something perfect for the occasion. Yada pulls out her smartphone and begins typing on the screen's keyboard and sends. Everyone else's phones then give an audible, but unique noise for the message received. A few in the front then show their screens to Ohno.* [message] "Time to go on LINE, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *is surprised.*

-The next day...-

-With Ohno now adopting the LINE messaging application that AssUniv had used since their time in Kunugigaoka, the assassins in training no longer had to worry about blurring out potentially crucial information, and bystanders or hostiles overhearing the contents of it. It also allowed a good number of the students to remain in quick contact of each other, setting up chat rooms limited to
them within one university to relay reports around the campus. But, as many would say, some things are best said orally. And AssUniv realized soon that they had to find somewhere where that could happen...-

-The Scientists, sitting in their respective classes, pay attention to the lectures while passively awaiting the next message on their phones to arrive.-

   Yoshida: [message] "So, any luck with the sights we had in mind?"

   Hayami: [message] "The Interpreters (Nagisa/Fuwa/Nakamura) all took a look at the Gion Corner during their free time; it's no good with the level of silence everywhere. People could be overhearing too easily like that."

   Takebayashi: [message] "The Liberal Artists (Kanzaki/Yada/Hara) had looked for niches behind Kyoto Station Building, but the place is too populated everywhere. It may be the opposite of the Gion, but it's still out of the question."

   Itona: [message] "The Philosopher's Walk is far too isolated for the Politicians (Karma/Terasaka/Isogai/Kataoka/Kimura). And if we get in trouble there, we won't have many escape methods."

   Kurahashi: [message] "And by decree of the Artisans, Mt. Kurama's openness is ruled out."

   Chiba: [message] "Damn, that's almost all of our ideas."

   Yoshida: [message] "Well, shit. What do we do now?"

-There was a pause in the chatroom.-

   Ohno: [message] "Everyone. I have an idea. Not the best one I've had, though."

   Hayami: [message] "But it's the only one we'll have, so it's the best one for us. What is it?"

   Ohno: [message] "Gather at 85 Shinmachi St. tonight. Tell everyone else too. We'll scope it out, see if it's to our liking."

   Ohno: [message] "You will see. I recommend we keep Karasuma and Irina from seeing it until later, for reasons that will be apparent soon."

   Yoshida: *Looks back to Ohno, who is in the same class as him. Ohno gives one sideways gaze at him before returning his attention to the lecture about engine operation. Yoshida himself looks back on his phone, wondering what his peer has in store.*

   -At 6:30 P.M., at the address...-

   Yoshida: "Alright, so, if Ohno's address is correct..." *He, along with all of the other Scientists minus Ohno, is attentively staring at their GPS systems.* "It should be right here." *powers off the phone and stares straightforward, before looking to the side.*

   AssUniv: *Realize that they have all converged at the location at the exact same time.*
Kayano: "Wow... We all started walking to this place at roughly 6 P.M., and here we all are, thirty minutes later."

Karma: "Yeah, this site is, give or take, thirty minutes away from each of our colleges."

Sosuke: "Could it possibly be something Ohno had planned out too?"

Muramatsu: "Wouldn't be surprised if it was."

Nagisa: "What even is this place, anyways?"

AssUniv: *They all stare to the attraction across the street, which wears the address it has with neon pride; along with the street identification, in big Kanji and English characters reads...*

新葉陸橋

ナイトクラブ

New Leaf Overpass Nightclub

AssUniv: "...

Kataoka: "This is the place? A nightclub?"

Isogai: "A six-story nightclub... Though only 3 floors seem to be actively used for the venue."

Fuwa: "Hey, wait a second, I know this place! I never went in it before, but I had heard about how a rookie mangaka for Aria Magazine came up with his latest one-shot in this club!"

Kanzaki: "I've not much experience with attractions like these, so is a nightclub a sought-after place for that kind of concentration?"

Nagisa: "Not that I know of. Maybe he's getting ideas from a select audience this club invites?"

Okuda: "That is certainly a possible theory. Witness the individuals in waiting to get in." *points at the line of people who are not in the guest's list. Most of them don't seem to be much older or younger than AssUniv themselves, though there were a few outlying 30 year olds.*

Terasaka: "Really? A nightclub that caters to college students? I thought it was exclusively for adults."

Nakamura: "We can't let old guys have all the fun, I guess."

Maehara: "Oh, I'm looking at some of them alright..." *begins oogling at a brunette fourth from the front.*
Okano: *closes her eyes with irritation.*

Kayano: "Well, um," *looks at the clock on her phone.* "It's 6:35. We were supposed to get here at 6:30. Shall we head in?"

Karma: "Can't wait to see what's next for us."

-The students cross the street to the venue. They figured that if Ohno is really involved with this complex, they could skip the line entirely, and so they go to the Guest's List Bouncer. And though you'd expect him to be, the doorman was extra intimidating; nearly seven feet tall, visible black-ink tattoos on his forearms, and sporting a certain haircut akin to one from a foreign army... And yet he spoke fluent Japanese.-

Bouncer: "Names?"

Nagisa: "Nagisa Shiota?" *motions to Kayano.* "Kaede Kayano." *then to Karma* "Karma Akabane-"

Karma: "Hey look man, there's too many of us to call out. If we're correct, a friend of yours said a group like us would be coming, right?"

Bouncer: *retains his attention to the students as he takes out his radio communicator.* "Boss, some twenty-plus friends of yours, allegedly, at the door. Let them in?" *Waits for an answer.* "Got it." *puts the device away.* "You must've made a good impression on the boss. You can all come in."

AssUniv: "Thank you." *bow before heading in.*

Overspeaker: *starts a new song conveniently when they first enter the threshold.* "GAMES WE PLAY!*

-The interior of the nightclub is blasting a loud, but not overbearing level of Eurobeat music as they head deeper into the site. This particular song, "Games We Play" by Hotblade, gets a few of AssUniv in the mood.-

Sugino: "Hey, I'm liking this." *nods his head a bit.*

Okuda: "The tune is certainly intriguingly catching."

Chiba: "A little bit too upbeat, but that seems to be working to its advantage."

Hayami: "Rightfully so. Want to dance right now because of it."

Mimura: "Let's not put that off, then. Where's the dance floor?"

-They follow the obvious path that brings them to the main room. Isogai was correct in his analysis that only 3 floors were being used, with the second and third floors as atriums that allow patrons up there to see the stage and main dance floor below. Speaking of the dance floor, there looked to be almost 200 people scattered, grooving to the Eurobeat music, with many more appreciating it from their booths or chairs. There were two bars situated on the first level, one close to the entrance that they were just from, and one on the opposite side of that. A kitchen is set up behind the further
Kurahashi: "Wow, this is impressive."

Ritsu: "I have to agree. The audiovisual setup is very advanced too; I cannot traverse the electron paths so easily."

Muramatsu: "And Ohno supposedly owns this place? Is this how he's making so much?"

Itona: "The theme of the cabaret is quite universal; youthful vibes from its design, but music that spans up to three generations before ours. There's something for everyone here. For a price."

Karma: "It's a good business move. Surprised it hasn't been done before."

Hara: "Hey, the open-counter kitchen is serving up some pretty appetizing dishes."

Chiba: "Must have poached the best chefs from across the entirety of Japan's workforce."

Fuwa: "Maybe he searched even further than that. Look at the service people."

-The waiters and waitresses walking across the club are faithfully providing patrons with their refreshments. While some of them were indicatively Japanese, many were obviously ethnic to a nearby foreign nation. Malaysian or Filipino, possibly?-

Okajima: "I see we got exotic beauties roaming the floors. Man, if I wasn't locked down (with Shiroyuki), I'd be all over them."

Kataoka: "No so fast, Okajima-san. Look at the signs." *points to one that says, "Do not make intentional physical contact with the staff."* "And then look at the strong-looking guys lining up the back walls." *waves over to the muscle. They were just as threatening, if not more, than the bouncer, and diversely ethnic as the common staff.*

Kayano: "Damn, this place must be AAA with how much attention is put into every aspect of the venue."

Terasaka: "This is Ohno we're talking about, after all."

Kanzaki: "Would there be any reason why Korosensei did not include this attraction in our itineraries and yearbooks?"

Hayami: "It might've been overlooked because we weren't old enough yet, perhaps?"

Isogai: "Heh, well, even if this place does not meet our specs, at least it's a spot for general recreation."

Nagisa: "I wouldn't that. Not one bit. So, I think we might as well enjoy ourselves until the boss himself shows up-"

Waitress: *Drops her serving platter.* "AHHHH! LET GO!"

AssUniv: *pay their attention to the area of the lady's scream. The screech reaches the attention of the staff, who motion the DJ to turn off the music. Soon, all of the club pays attention to the
scene.

Customer: "Has pulled the waitress that just served him down onto his lap within the booth, and, while keeping her in by wrapping his arm around her waist, is attempting to dig through the bottom of her T-shirt towards her chest." "Come on, lady. With this many customers out there, you must have had a busy shift. Why not take a brief load off with me tonight?"

Waitress: "is only just keeping his groping hand from making contact, while ineffectually trying to pry the binding arm free." <Shouts in Filipino before returning to speaking in Japanese> "Let go, damn it!"

Waiter: "Hey!" "walks over to the booth." "Sir, clearly you have not paid attention to the rules listed on the plaque at each booth. You may not touch the staff like that!"

Customer: "notices the waiter, and lets go of the waitress, which urges her to run back behind the former." "Yeah? What are you going to do about it, little man?"

Waiter: "We can get the security on you if you're inclined."

Customer: "I'm one of your biggest buyers! You'll be kicking out the man that has been pumping millions of yen into this place for years?"

Waiter: "stands his ground, but does not give an answer."

Muramatsu: "Damn, is that true?"

Karma: "If so, he's basically untouchable. He'll have big say in boycotting this place."

Isogai: "Damn. What do we do?"

Nagisa: "Looks like it's up to us, then. Find the cha-" "notices someone walking down the stairs on the far side of the nightclub."

???: "clad in a Kenneth Cole grey peak label three-piece suit, and high-mouthed monk-strap black medallion boots, comes down to greet the 1st floor patrons... And aggressor."

AssUniv: It's Ohno-kun.

Ohno: "He walks over to the two service people." <Begins whispering to the two of them in Filipino, before motioning them to leave the floor, which they do. He then turns his attention to the Customer." "Your patronage is very well-appreciated, sir. But it's merely one of many that our Mai Nightclub chain has; the loss of one is of no harm to us."

Yada: "Nyrifu Rikkyo is part of a franchise?"

Customer: "Huh? What are you saying, pipsqueak?"

Ohno: "But of course, it doesn't have to be that way. Not if you agree to abiding by the rules we are enforcing."

Customer: "Why you... Who are you, huh? The manager?"
Ohno: "Oh, I'm not the main manager. That position belongs to my father. But while he's away taking care of disputes at our other sites, I've been left in charge of things here. And it just wouldn't be responsible of me to allow this to happen."

Customer: "Is that so? What will you do about it, then?"

Ohno: "...

Customer: "Tell me, huh!?" *rushes towards Ohno and throws a huge right hook... which meets nothing but air, as Ohno had limboed under the blow at the right moment.* "Huh!?" *Tries to backfist Ohno with the reverse of his left hand, but sidesteps it aside.*

Ohno: "Surely you jest at me. I will not raise a hand against a promised customer. After all... Who am I to generalize the actions of the patron, who is considered 'divine providence?" *bows.*

Customer: "Oh yeah!? Then what will you do!?" *returns into a fighting stance trained on Ohno.*

Ohno: *As Shakespeare puts it, 'as you like it.'* *Turns back to the DJ.* "Record man, play the Club Special. You know which one."

DJ: *clicks and points at Ohno as he switches discs and plays it.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku's "Receive You ~Tech Trance Arrange~" plays on the intercom.-

Customer: "Hm?" *looks around a bit as he listens.*

Ohno: "You seem to have a penchant for dancing. If so, won't you have this dance with me?" *bows with his right hand face-up in front of him, before putting his left foot back and stretching out his right hand, as if to accept another.*

Customer: "Heheh, let's see what you got." *runs towards Ohno, throwing a mean right roundhouse kick that Ohno bends one knee to duck under. The former quickly recovers and turns around to smash the floor with a left overhead punch, but he hits nothing but air. He looks around, trying to find Ohno, before the latter shows up at his left shoulder, scaring him for a second.*

Ohno: *Ohno is shown to have rolled in between the patron's legs when he outstretched them to kick, and not allowing himself to close the gap when he should've.* "Sir, you might've had enough fun for today, perhaps?"

Customer: *quickly backs away, and sets up another combo: a skipping side kick with his right, followed by a mule kick with his left, and a spinning heel kick with the same. But Ohno proved far too quick for that, moving his head to the left just enough so that the patron's Achilles lands harmlessly on his right shoulder. When the Mule kick approaches, Ohno pops up his right clavicle so the attack is high enough to limbo with little effort under. Seeing the customer was not done, Ohno feints covering his head like a B-Boy does, before falling into a back freeze on the floor, watching the heel fly right over him. He then holds the patron's standing leg in a three-quarter lock and kips-up, causing the patron to completely front-flip onto his feet again, but without a sense of Ohno's position once again.*

Ohno: *holds the man at the apex of his back, and looks around his left arm to meet his face.* "Do you need a reprieve?"
Customer: *shifts away again, hitting the table he was sitting at. He finds a culinary knife and brandishes it at Ohno, swiping a forehand slash to Ohno's face, followed by a swift lunge, a front-flip axe kick, low instep sweep kick, backhand slash to the chest, and finally an overhead cleave. Ohno bounces back by pulling away from the swipe, a bob to the right to avoid the lunge, an inverse sprawl drop to move his upper body clear from the axe kick, handstand to evade the sweep kick, a headspin to block the backhand slash with a light prod to the patron's cutting arm, and when the cleave comes, Ohno uses his shin to stop the wrist, and the attack, cold. He traps the arm with his left leg, and then twirls his whole body, causing the patron to lose grip of the knife, sending it across the floor, skidding harmlessly, and the latter moves to the opposite side.*

Ohno: *gets back on one knee.* "You are quite the leader in dance, sir."

Customer: "Shut up!" *takes a nearby wooden chair and flings it at Ohno. Seeing this, Ohno puts his left had onto the ground, and lifts himself up and jumps, performing a one-handed air chair flare (one of the most dangerous B-Boy moves). As he remains suspended in the air, the chair angles itself perfectly so that Ohno's body essentially sits in it as it makes contact with him. He uses his weight to land it fluidly, and then kicks on the ground to skate the chair closer to the person who threw it. Sensing a front kick to the back of his head as he came closer, Ohno slipped off the chair and performed a bridge with his legs and the chair's, tilting it so that the left pillar of the chair's back was tucked into the patron's left inner knee. He then pulled on the chair, forcing the man's left leg forward and tripping him to sit down on the chair. Ohno tactically rolls behind the chair before its front legs settled on the ground, and while the patron was confused, Ohno takes a towel out of his blazer's pocket.*

Ohno: "Towel, sir?" *pats the man's left shoulder with his right hand while offering the cloth on his left.*

Customer: "Grrr..." *There was trembling motion on the chair suggesting he wanted to get up, but for some reason most of his muscles refused to budge.* "What?"

Ohno: *begins wiping the older man's forehead.* "I see that the exhaustion and shock has restricted your movement. Oh, I do apologize for ruining your evening like so, sir. I suppose we cannot serve you any further now. The staff will see you out. I hope you will enjoy the rest of your night." *drops the cloth on his lap, as the menacing security pick the guy up from the stems of the chair. Ohno bows as the man leaves, much to the applause of all the other patrons in the room. He then leaves the dance floor, allowing everyone to groove once more.*

AssUniv: "..."

Fuwa: "Another badass Ohno moment. Really? Didn't this fanfiction have enough of those?"

AssUniv: "WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, FUWA-SAN!?!"

Nagisa: "I guess we ought to talk to him now." *The students all walk towards Ohno, who is caring for the two service people that the man heckled some time earlier.*

Ohno: <speaks in Filipino> "I'm sorry you have had to see that, Reyes-san. You can take the rest of the week off if you so wish."

Reyes: "It's okay, Ohno-sama. I'll be fine in an hour; don't worry."
Ohno: "If you say so. Cruz, take her to the lockers to recover, please."

Cruz: "Of course." *they both head back.*

Isogai: "That was some dance, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *turns around to face them.* "As the manager, I have to impress."

Okano: "Huh, so it's true, then; this is your place."

Ohno: *nods.* "But we're not using the whole thing if you don't want to. It's the third floor specifically that we could operate. Let me get that set up for you all." *bows before leaving to go upstairs.*

Terasaka: "The man always has something important going on..."

Karma: "Hard not to be, if he has to deal with something like what we just saw moments ago."

Nakamura: "Almost feel bad for the guy."

AssUniv: "..."

-When Ohno's Club Special ends, "Restarted Tonight" by Dave Rodgers plays on the intercom.-

Hayami: "Oh, I know this song..."

Yada: "So do I... Fell in love with it in the middle of the mall several months ago."

Kurahashi: "Let's enjoy it, then; have a good time while we wait for Ohno-kun."

Yoshida: "Already ahead of ya." *walks back into the group, drinking a lightly-alcoholic mojito.*

-The next day...-

AssUniv: *All of them lay and sit scattered around the Northwest booths of the second floor of the nightclub.*

Ohno: *causes an audio disturbance on the intercom that subtly wakes all of them up.*

AssUniv: *shake into consciousness.*

Sugino: *yawns.* "Uwoh, where am I?"


Kayano: "Whoa, we partied so hard, we knocked ourselves out!"

Kanzaki: "Reminds me too much of my old days... Not a good memory." *holds her head in pain.*

Ohno: "I had the staff bring you all up here and blocked off the section, so no trouble was
brought. I must say, most of you are good, harmless drunks. Either that, or you conform to authority well."

Karma: "I'm probably the former." *head collapses back over the booth's sill.*

Kataoka: "We did have a lot of practice on the latter, though." *sits straight up.*

Ohno: "That's not something I have a right to explore. Besides, I think you all want to see the HQ now, right?"

Nagisa: "Yeah~, that was our reason for being here through it all..." *stretches his back.*

Ohno: "Follow me." *walks upstairs, with the groggy AssUniv right behind him. They move to the third floor, which is labeled 'the VIP platform.' Inside, it looks like an entertainment publisher's Gold/Platinum record room for the most elite, with achievements lining the walls. A seventy-five-inch flatscreen was parallel to one of the shorter walls, and on an adjacent side were floor-tall windows showing the nightclub from down below.* "Here we are. The HQ I had in mind. Is it satisfactory?"

Chiba: "'Satisfactory?' Well let's see, it's secluded, devoid of any people except us."

Maehara: "And yet there are many downstairs, loud as Hell to wade off eavesdroppers."

Isogai: "Resources, refreshments are plentiful."

Okuda: "And it's nary a long walk from any one location in Kyoto city."

Nagisa: "Yeah, Ohno-kun. I think we have a winner."

Muramatsu: "Jeez, it's gonna be really fun to go from college to here every ni-" *realizes he just said college, which everyone else realizes too.*

Yoshida: "Oh shit! We have class!" *checks the time on his phone.*

Kimura: "We gotta get going! Where's our stuff!?"

Ohno: "Inside the storage room of the jacket-keep."

AssUniv: *Most of them get going. Except for the mentioned few.*

Ohno: "Um, Karma-san, Kayano-san, Okano-san, Kanzaki-san, Sosuke-san, and Itona-san,"

Itona: "Kind of in a hurry, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "I know, I know. That's why I'm not explaining it yet. But later on, I'll be asking you all to help me collect some data."

Okano: "What kind of data?"

Ohno: "You will know soon. Now go."

AssUniv: *nods, and then leaves.*
Ohno: *sighs, before going to a shelf and taking a box of clove cigarettes. He takes one out and
smokes it, before falling back onto a couch in the room.* This is risky. But it must work. *exhales
with relief, spewing a haze into the air. He then looks down the window at the empty nightclub.*
Chapter Summary

When an old memory kept under wraps resurfaces years later, fear strikes into one as the other finally learns the truth...

For those of you who have read source material for a mystery side-story called Puzzle Time in the AssClass volumes, this one will make more sense to you.

Chapter 30 - Past Life Space

-"The Race is the Game" by Hotblade plays on a zoomed-out boom box resting on one of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub's tables. All the while Ohno, by himself, is wiping clean the other surfaces before opening hour at 9 P.M.-

-Before long, some of AssUniv, comprising of the Liberal Artists (Yada, Kanzaki, and Hara) and some of the Artisans (Kayano, Hazama, Okano, Okajima, Sugino, and Sosuke) arrive at the nightclub early, and they walk into Ohno's work.-

Okajima: "Whatup, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Just getting the venue ready for tonight." *looks up, nods at the students, and then proceeds to clean the tables.*

Kayano: "Jesus, you're doing all this yourself?"

Ohno: "My staff did all the heavy lifting last night. I'm just getting the finishing touches. Club has a clean reputation to maintain, right?"

Kanzaki: "That is certainly a luxury to keep."

Hara: "Now that I think about it, is this what you do when you left the Hotel Okura at night after training?"

Ohno: "That a problem?" *flicks the table with the towel and then looks at them with a grin.*

Sugino: "I suppose not. Though it isn't exactly anyone's pleasurable MO to spend all of their evenings cleaning while listening to Eurobeat."

Ohno: "Well, for my parents, that was the dream come true."

Yada: "Oh, that's right; your parents found each other with dance."

Sosuke: "What? When did he say that?"

Ohno: "..." *uses a remote within his back pocket to shut off the boom box. He then turns
around to face them all.*

Hazama: "I'm sensing some secrets our two infiltrators are keeping from the likes of us..."

Yada: "Hey, it's not so much secrets; there wasn't any reason for them to be so, but there didn't arrive an opportunity to say it either."

Ohno: "Maybe it was a secret anyway. A little hush-hush I wanted only you to know." *crosses his arms.*

Yada: "Wait, what!? Really!? Ah, I'm sorry, Ohno-k-" *bows down forty-five degrees, before realizing what he was doing.* "Oh..."

AssUniv: *laugh about the subtle joke.*

Sugino: "Ohno's making fun of our satire of his secrets-talk about him."

Ohno: "In spite of that, I'm glad you remembered that from," *checks his watch.* "One and a half weeks ago, Yada-san."

Yada: "Well, uh, you're welcome, I suppose."

Ohno: *checks his watch again.* "Upper-bound class-start time is almost over for all of our universities." *To the Artisans.* "Are the rest of KyoUni of Art and Design set to arrive soon?"

Okano: "Yeah, I think Maehara's class ended just about thirty-five minutes ago. He and the rest of the gang should be coming any minute now."

-The front door opens up with audacity.-

Okano: "That's probably him now. Maehara-kun? Is that you?"

Maehara: "Okano-san!" *races down the staircase leading to the dance floor that the rest of the group are situated. Muramatsu and Mimura are right behind him.* "Mind telling me what this was about!?" *takes out his phone, selects the LINE app, and shows her a private conversation between him and Kimura during class today.*

Kimura: [message] "You know, I still haven't shaken off the craziness of two nights ago, Maehara-san. x_x Have you?"

Maehara: [message] "I don't have to; it'll be what what I'll be living off of later. ;]"

Kimura: [message] "Heh, whatever you say. >_<"

Maehara: [message] "What does that mean? ?-?"

Kimura: [message] "I guess you'll love people telling you things unconsciously, like yourself are. Some of those things are pretty weird tbh."

Maehara: [message] "Yeah? I surprisingly kept to my own that night. What did you listen into?"

Kimura: [message] "It was a blur, sure, but I felt as though Okano-san said something about you."
I think, hitting you in Junior High? ¯\_(ツ)_/¯ "

Maehara: [message] "WHAT!? Wait a sec, 'hit me,' or 'hit on me'? :0"

Kirmura: [message] "I'm very sure there was no 'on' in that sentence. :L"

Maehara: [message] "I don't believe this. //User MHiroto has left the server."

Okano: *Instantly covers her mouth when she realizes what is going on.*

Maehara: "Well!? Explain yourself!"

Okano: "Uh... It's a long story, Maehara-kun."

Maehara: "Then get started!"

Okano: "It's from a past life too, Maehara-kun! Are you really going to hold a grudge from that long ago?"

Maehara: "You wanted to kill me at one point! I'd like to at least know why!"

Okano: "Okay... You see, one day during our days in Class 3-E, you were once again boasting about one of your new conquests; this girl who goes to another Junior High school."

Maehara: "You're going to have to be a little more specific. That identifies more than 50% of my 'conquests.'"

Okano: "Yeah, uh, I think you mentioned that she was dirty blonde, almost five-feet tall-"

Ohno: "You're missing the point, Okano-san."

Okano: "Oh yeah. You were just so full of yourself that day, I wanted to take you down a notch or two. I mean, teach you a little lesson. So I... smacked you with my book bag. But I didn't think I had so much stuff in it such that it would make you fly ten feet away."

Kayano: "What do you have in there that would make it lethally heavy..."

Okano: "So, now you know."

Maehara: "Yeah, I do..." *looks to the side.*

Okano: "Does it make you, feel better at least?"

Maehara: "As if." *puts away his phone and walks out of the cabaret, bumping into Muramatsu as he leaves. They can hear a distant door slam some time later.*

Okajima: "I have a theory he's not feeling better at all."

Okano: "Oh, this terrible..." *puts her hand to her mouth again.*

Ohno: "Wow, you guys deal with some very turbulent issues."
Sugino: "You'd never dealt with breakups before?"

Ohno: "I don't exist, remember? I don't have the luxury of girlfriends with that depth."

Okano: "I have to win him back. I've dealt with Maehara-kun ignoring me like this before, and it practically killed me inside."

Mimura: *Along with the remaining AssUniv students, attempt to back away, which Ohno curiously observes.* "Good luck with that, we'll be..."

Okano: "You all have to help me."

AssUniv: *All try to raise a finger to object, but when Okano gives them a spiteful glare, they bow their heads, whispering.* Why us...?

Kayano: *picks her head up and turns to Ohno.* "Any complex plan for making Okano's wish come true, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "I have some ideas..." *holds his chin.*

-Throughout the next day, Okano and co. carry out those ideas of Ohno's... With very little success...-

Maehara: *shirtless, Kurahashi pulls out an outstretched paperclip out of his back.* "AHH!"

Kurahashi: *places a bandage over the small hole.* "Baby."

-And paperclips.-

Fuwa: *She, along with all who were within Nyurifu Rikkyo last night, are staring at a distance.* "Just what does the writer of this fanfiction think is in second-chance dates..."

Muramatsu: *To Ohno.* "I thought you said you had some ideas."

Ohno: "I did. I didn't say they would work. Remember, I haven't been around 'that intimate touch' in nine years, because the ones I've fallen for don't know I exist." *crosses arms.*

Hara: "You know, I think many would get tired of hearing that coming from him all the time, but given how true that last statement is, I can't actually help but feel sad for him."

Kanzaki: "Mysteriously being unable to confess your emotions for that long must have been terrible, that's true."

Ohno: *sigh.* "You get used to it after the third or fourth one you have to look away from."

Okano: *runs up to Maehara.* "Oh my gosh! Maehara-kun, when I heard what happened, I came running over as fast as I could! Are you okay?"

Maehara: "Cut the crap, Okano-san. I know you were somehow involved with all of this."

Okano: "I..." *sighs, giving up the attempt to argue that truth.* "It wasn't meant to go like that. You see, you were supposed to walk the other way looking to your right, and-"
Maehara: "Don't tell me about your plan! In fact, I'm sure whatever would've been the result would've upsetted me more."

Okano: "But, Maehara-ku-

Maehara: "Just get it straight through your head."

Okano: *looks down to the side.*

Maehara: "I hoped that was at least what an Amazing Monkey would be capable of."

Okano: "!!"

Sugino: "Uh oh."

Ohno: "??"

Okano: "Hey, now THAT was a little uncalled for."

Maehara: "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't quite recall what stirred this up. Should I repeat the sentence again?"

Okano: "Don't say it again!"

Maehara: "'I hoped that was at least what an Amazing Monkey would be capable of.'"

Okano: "Alright! I have an idea how to solve this! Settle all of our disputes! Want to know what it is!?!"

Maehara: "Enlighten me."

Okano: "Balancing test. I-beam. Suspended in the air. Headstanding! The first to touch the beam with anything other than their hands concedes! Deal?! *holds out her hand with fury.*

Maehara: "You got it!" *accepts the dealing handshake.*

AssUniv: "What."

-An hour later, AssUniv, altogether now, traverse the rooftops of Kyoto in search of a crane holding an I-beam into the air. At long last, they found one... held five stories above the streets.-

Okano/Maehara: *Without another word, both synchronize their ascension onto the platform so that the beam does not tilt and favor one side, and then flip into handstand positions, facing each other.*

Kataoka: "If they could just put the past behind them, they could still be one of the more stronger links between our motley crew."

Nakamura: "That's just life, I guess."

Terasaka: "Our lives, that is."
Nagisa: Jeez, I wonder how much trouble I could have saved everyone, not just Okano-san and Maehara-san, if I had just told him sooner. Maybe while we were all away, so there'd be no wrath to wreak. But I was going through my antisocial phase back then too, so that wouldn't have been the best time either...

Isogai: "So what now, best friend and his ex? You two just going to have a true talk with each other? Console everything?"

Maehara: "The time for talk had already passed, my friend. This is just me defending my case now."

Okano: "As if you ever had one."

Maehara: "It's not like what resulted of your case was something you were respectful about."

Okano: "Which is all the more reason it should be left in the past, like your case, and my horrid nickname!"

Maehara: "What nickname?"

Okano: "Grr..."

Ohno: "Do you all settle your turbulent issues like this?"

Kimura: "Of course we don't!"

Yoshida: "But it cannot be denied that these two are some of our most stubborn. A few weeks with us, and you won't be surprised if a similar problem forces them to bring things this far too."

Ohno: "Interesting."

AssUniv: "..."

-Five minutes pass, and neither has moved an inch.-

Mimura: *Yawn.*

Hazama: "Must we really watch them stand upside down for the duration?"

Kataoka: "AssUniv sticks together. We won't miss one's life-altering moments, let alone two's."

Karma: "Man, the unspoken oaths we made the day we became assassins in training..." *sits down on the edge of the building from which the crane lifting the I-beam in the air.*

-Another five minutes pass, and now, Maehara starts twitching slightly.-

Kanzaki: "Oh, Maehara-kun's losing concentration."

Takebayashi: *cleans and refocuses his glasses.* "Could this be the beginning of the end?"

Okano: *grins.* "Something wrong, Maehara-kun?"
Maehara: *rebalances himself before answering.* "There must be; you're frowning."

Okano: "What?" *tries to look at her face before realizing what he meant.* "Hey, that doesn't work if you're upside down too!"

Maehara: "Ah, you're right. But then again, there it is."

Okano: "Screw you!"

Maehara: "As you wish!" *pushes off of the beam so that he can spin 360 degrees in the air, like a screw, before landing in a perfect handstand. The compression causes a misbalance on the I-beam, which disturbs Okano's stance as well.*

Okano: "Whoa!" *repositions her hands to remain in the competition.*

Maehara: *snickers. Unbeknownst to everyone, the cable to the I-Beam at the tip of the crane is ripping.*

Okuda: "A rather underhanded trick by Maehara-kun turns the tables."

Hayami: "It's do or die when it comes to pride and prejudice with these two. They won't hold it against each other at the end of this."

-And several minutes later...-

AssUniv: *Flatly staring at the weirdest scene going on.*

Okano/Maehara: *Suddenly, the two competitors begin tearing up.*

Fuwa: *holding up a smartphone that is connected to a flatscreen via Bluetooth that Terasaka and Yoshida are supporting.* "Wouldn't you know it, playing the final episode of these two's favorite anime actually wrought them to their core!"

Okano/Maehara: *Wailing massively.*

Ohno: "I'm figuring you want to make the two more vulnerable so that one or both of them will capitulate?"

Fuwa: "Nah! Just wanted to make the standoff more entertaining."

Yada: "Regardless, it seems to be the case."

Okano: *shakes her head to loosen the last few tears.* "M-m-m-Maehara-kun..."

Maehara: *wildly swipes his head to the side.* "Don't do that, Okano-san. It's not like you."

Okano: "Y-you really don't know how much I've missed you, you know?" *sighs positively.*

Maehara: *laughs.* "You never made any sense with sentences like that. And it's only been a day."
Okano: "A day too long. Come here." *takes one hand forward towards Maehara, which causes more balance disruption.*

Maehara: "Whoa! Okano-san!" *hands forward to counteract the misdistribution.*

Okano: "We both take steps forward at the same time. Alright?"

Maehara: "Right. Okay..." *They both inch closer towards each other, but the higher pressure on the wire makes it rip even more. This time, noticeably, as the I-beam jerks.* "Wha-!"

Okano: "Ah!"

Ohno/Karma: *look up at the crane, noticing the tear point.*

Maehara: *The beam uncontrollably shakes again, this time causing Maehara to slip up and nearly fall off, though he grabs the lower lip of the beam just in time.* "Oh shit!"

Okano: *gently lies down on the beam to not pressure it.* "Maehara-kun!"

Nagisa: "Guys! Don't move! We'll come get you!"

Kayano: "How will we do that?"

Ohno: "Me and all the best climbers follow me up the crane. The stronger-armed of the rest of you, dislodge the rest of the wire and be ready to pull!" *starts climbing up the beam's lift to the edge of the platform. Kayano, Kimura, Isogai, Hayami, and Kanzaki are right behind him, with the last two trying to repair the wire.* "I'll ease the pressure on the rope, enough that the rest of you can climb down and extract them. Sound good?"

Kimura: "Very well!"

Ohno: *holds the latter section of the wire with cupped hands and pulls up, lifting the I-beam to original height. Isogai climbs over Ohno and wraps his legs around the tightly suspended rope to provide aid for Okano and Maehara. But the latter two take too long to climb up their part of the tether and Ohno starts losing grip underneath, and it begins shifting back down.*

Terasaka: "It's moving back; let's pull it up!"

Hayami: "Wait! We didn't mend the rope ye-"

-And when the powerhouses yanked the cord, it gave completely, and the beam started falling a storey.-

Okano/Maehara: "AHH!!"

Ohno: *Dives over, grabbing the remaining wire with his right hand. Isogai was rattled off of the same rope, but managed to grab Ohno's leg. Kimura and Kayano sandwich his left arm, with Hayami and Kanzaki holding them down on the crane.* "AAAGH!!" *feels the strain on his left side, all while his right arm pulses with rapidly amassing muscle in holding up the beam and his two peers.*
Okano: "What now?"

Ohno: "JUMP!"

Maehara: "It's too far!"

Ohno: "I'll swing! Isogai, use your legs to help me!"

Isogai: "R-right!" *throws his legs back and again criss-crosses his limbs behind the cord.* "Ready when you are!"

Ohno: "Karma, Terasaka Crew, be ready to catch them!"

Karma: "Bet on it." *stand at the edge, holding out their hands.*

Ohno: "On three, you two!" *Swings it back slightly.* "One..."

Ohno: "THREE!" *lashes the beam forward again.*

Ohno: *the beam goes the furthest back it can.* "Two..."

Okano/Maehara: *nod to each other and hook arms behind their necks.*

Ohno: *psych each other up to jump.*

Ohno: "THREE!" *lashes the beam forward again.*

Okano/Maehara: *take a leap of faith, managing to Roman handshake their friends in the air, who then lift them back up.*

Ohno: *looks down, and notices a construction dumpster just off the sidewalk. Using the remaining perpetual motion, he waits until the moment is right to drop it into the waste.*

Itona: "Well, the company will be missing that."

Ohno: *throws his other hand for the others above to hold onto.* "That's that. Isogai-san, get up there. I'm tired of hanging."

-Several minutes later, with everyone grounded on the roof.-

Ohno: *being tended to by Okuda and Kurahashi, has bandages tightly binding his arms and ribcage.* "Thanks for this, you two."

Kurahashi: "Damn, I'm surprised you didn't rip that many tendons during that. Maybe a day or two, and this'll be just fine again. Total miracle."

Karma: *You're right... It is a miracle. Ohno holding onto that I-beam, which must've weighed at least 300 lb., and with Okano-san and Maehara-san on top of it. Who is this guy, who continues to outclass us at every turn..."

Okuda: "Haha, maybe so, but I think our other witnesses are living another miracle." *points to Okano and Maehara, who are consistently pinning each other to the wall to take the dominant kiss position.*
AssUniv: "Aww-" *when the moment gets a little more ferocious, it turns to.* "Euuugh..."

Okano: *Relinquishes the last smooch.* "I see why Bitch-sensei named you #4 on the 'Kiss List.'"

Maehara: "WHAT!?" *turns to Nagisa.* "Bitch-sensei ranked me lower than you, and you didn't tell me-"

Okano: *pulls him back in to kiss again, which completely calms him down.*

Terasaka: "Safe to say they made up."

Kayano: "I think they've more than made up, hehee."

Kataoka: "I can see that too, surely."

Isogai: "How can you be so certain?"

Okano/Maehara: *stops kiss midway.* "Oh yes, we totally have." *immediately continues to finish the moment.*

Yada: *snickers* "That about covers it."

Ohno: *laughs a bit with his peers.* "Alright, well, we should get out of here before attention to the scene really becomes a-"

Karasuma: "Predicament?"

AssUniv: "EEEE!" *shiver as they turn around and see their instructor, with Irina right behind him, cross-armed.*

Karasuma: "I see all of your reckless behavior has not left you since the incident that forced you all to work at the orphanage. You all are at least lucky that there's no considerable damage this time around. And I would put you to punishment somehow else, but none of us can enforce it, since we must work on pinpointing Dr. Yanagisawa's location. But pull another stunt like this and you'll all be having words. Do you understand me?"

AssUniv: *bow.* "Yes sir!"

Karasuma: *looks over to Ohno.*

Ohno: *looks back equally.* "You run a very fun crew, Karasuma. Congratulations on finding yourself with them." *nods his head.*

Karasuma: "Psh... Come on, everyone, let's get out of here."
Chapter Summary

A couple well-liked by the AssUniv Program staff has just reconciled, but the novelty is beginning to wear off. Maehara and Okano better get themselves into their first grand date, or else their friends may just turn their assassin abilities on them! Luckily, they haven't lost all patience, and are ready to proceed with discreetly helping them construct said date...

-All of next day sees Maehara and Okano finding every free moment, whether after class, lunchtime, and so on, to passionately feed on their most primal emotions and expressions.-

-The Artisans sans those two arrive at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub on Friday evening, seeing Ohno continue to prepare the cabaret on his own, as usual, with Eurobeat music playing. "Fly Magic" by Jager in particular is playing on the radio.-

Ohno: "Hello, all."

Sugino: "Yes, hey Ohno-san."

Ohno: "You all seem fatigued. Any reason why?"

Sosuke: "Okano and Maehara don't waste a second anymore. You know why."

Kayano: "Eh, you can't blame 'em. It's been four years."

Muramatsu: "Yeah, it's not like it's affecting our grades."

Okajima: "In fact, it might be helping. Great consensual material for my cam. *pats the device.*

Ohno: "If it's distracting, maybe you should open up a moment for them to let it all loose again. Burn them out so that it passes for a little while."

Hazama: "What, like a date?"

Sugino: "That's, good. Yeah. They've only been together for a few days, but no first date for them yet."

Mimura: "Wow that's crazy. College really gets in the way?"

Kayano: "No, it's more like the two cannot agree on a good time for the both of them."

Artisans/Ohno: "..." *Ohno had turned off the boom box.*

Muramatsu: "Just how did the Alphas of their genders get together..."
Mimura: "Through Fuwa-san's smartphone."

Sugino: "Okay, enough about that. I'll message the rest of us, and we'll come up with ideas to make that first date worth it."

- With all of AssUniv gathered, the twenty-plus strong begin brainstorming about crafting the prefect date. But because Ohno had already been proven to not be a very experienced member on that front he was told to stay out of the room. Before long, however, all were stumped, and decided to go to an undoubted expert (and their assistant) on love...-

Irina: "You want me to help you get Okano and Maehara closer?" *Kararsuma is working on his terminal behind her.*

Nakamura: "That went without saying."

Yada: "Well, will you?"

Irina: "Why me?"

Karma: "You made," *points past her.* "That work."

Irina: "That... I did."

Kararsuma: "It took you quite a while, though. Don't forget how many rewrites to that story you had to make as well."

Irina: "*Inner world's glass bubble shatters with fury.* Of all the people I expected such a tragic line to say to me..."

Kararsuma: "Okay, let me cheer you up." *pushes aside his report, hugs Irina from behind and kisses her on the cheek, before going back to work.*

Irina: "!!" *stares into space as she brings her closer hand to the spot where she received the action, processing what just happened.*

Kurahashi: "..."

Kataoka: "Bitch-sensei, are you okay?"

Irina: "*Has completely frozen. Yada goes up to shake her shoulder, but one motion of contact is enough for the locks in her muscles to release and she falls back on the hotel bed.*"

AssUniv: "!?"

Takebayashi: "I'm under the notion that she can't help..."

Kararsuma: "I figured that would be the case. Honestly, I'm not disappointed about that. Irina wouldn't be experienced in Okano and Maehara's style of affection, from what I can understand."

Hara: "Fair enough, but now we're all out of options."

Kayano: "I think we can give them a simple date with the TV screen by this point. Not like any
deeper investment we make will be appreciated by those two for very long otherwise."

Okajima: "After all of that, this is what we settle upon..." *scratches his head.*

Nagisa: "Very well then. Do we know what we'd like them to see? It truly ought to be something none of us have ever seen."

Mimura/Hazama/Fuwa: *all look at each other and nod.* "We have some ideas..."

-The next day, Saturday morning, AssUniv head to Nyurifu Rikkyo, where Ohno has allowed them all to use the flatscreen on the VIP floor of the cabaret to test medias.-

Kimura: [message] "Alright, so what's up first?"

Fuwa: [message] "My pick; 'School Nights.' The spiritual successor to a visual novel game, exclusive to anime format. :3"

Hayami: [message] "The cover seems harmless enough. It might just work."

Ohno: *lays down a platter of many Boss coffees, CC Lemons, water, and Sake bottles, along with three large bowls of popcorn.* [message] "Refreshments for you all. We are marathoning, right?"

Kataoka: [message] "Right you are. Thanks, Ohno-kun. <3"

AssUniv: *while they wait for the disc to read.* "..."

Terasaka: [message] "Remind me why we're talking like this? :L" *prepares to pop the sake bottle.*

Nagisa: [message] "Something about not disturbing the atmosphere, be it sound or screen, of the work is my guess." *gets two Boss coffees, handing one to Kayano.*

Mimura: [message] "Exactly! Thank you! ☺" *As one of the guys in the middle, he puts one bowl of popcorn on his lap, where most of the people around him have already made a dent.*

Kayano: [message] "I can relate to that honestly. How many times we had to retake a scene because one guy showed up prematurely or not accordingly... It can be tiring AF. x.x"

Fuwa: [message] "We only want the best for 'the Alphas.' But to know they're getting the best, we need to as well."

Ohno: [message] "Let's get started then, shall we?" *takes a bottled water, unscrewing the cap and sips.*

-Several hours later, after seeing the last episode of the anime.-

AssUniv: *absolutely speechless.*

Fuwa: *stops the DVD player.* [message] "And that was the end of it. Think it'll be good? E:"

Isogai: [message] "Fuwa-san... Just what do you watch when we're not around? 😅"
Fuwa: [message] "What? What's wrong with it?"

Okuda: [message] "I mean no disrespect, but seeing the man die in the end by one of his lover's hands is not quite, dare I say, romantic."

Nakamura: [message] "It's a message, right? Love is fleeting, or something like that?"

Karma: [message] "Life, more like. >;]

Nagisa: [message] "Okay. My apologies, Fuwa-san, but this isn't the one. Anyone else have ideas?"

Hazama: [message] "I do."

-Hazama puts her disc into the player... 'The Varying Penumbras of Black.'-

AssUniv: *even more speechless following the conclusion of the two-plus hour movie.*

Kanzaki: *cannot stop covering her mouth from the mass vulgarity of the film.*

Ohno: *His face is completely red from seeing through that.*

Hazama: [message] "Having seen it now after some time, I realize it's an improvement over the book it was based on. That's pretty surprising to be honest. Good enough, though?"

Sugino: [message] "We say 'Alphas' a lot, but this is a level of dominance far beyond ranks like that! <:U"

Hara: [message] "Agreed. I wouldn't recommend that."

Hazama: [message] "Prudes. >_<"

Ritsu: "We are reaching three PM today, and I fear we won't settle on a suitable date format for our friends by its end."

Chiba: [message] "Is there not a love story that can engage us all?"

Mimura: [message] "I'm not hopeful on my chances right now, but this is what I've got. It's called 'Amaranthine Affection.'"


Sosuke: [message] "Name sounds like it's trying too hard to be frank."

Hazama: [message] "Which one? There's four subtitles."

Nagisa: *reads, 'Autumn Ticker,' 'Winter Shanty,' 'Summer Essence,' and 'Spring Swing.'*

Yoshida: [message] "The four seasons being represented? Sounds original."

Okajima: [message] "Maybe we'll at least get a few good scenery shots..."
-After watching all of 'Autumn Ticker'...-

  AssUniv Girls: *All of them are totally heartbroken. Even Nakamura is tearing up while the others are bawling out.*

  AssUniv Guys: *Many of them have to look to the side*

  Mimura: [message] "I doont recalle it bein thiss sad."

  Yada: [message] "How unfortunate all of the main characters' lives were..."

  Kataoka: [message] "The romance though... ;u;"

  Nagisa: [message] "You got our attention, Amaranthine. Mimura-san, how about Winter Shanty?"

  Mimura: [message] "Yeah, sure... One second..."

- With a heavy heart, they all get themselves ready to watch 'Winter Shanty.' And once it was over... -

  AssUniv: *audibly and textually crying.*

  Isogai: [message] "Mimura-san... When did you become such a monster? ;("

  Mimura: [message] "Hey, I'm suffering just as much as you are. >:v"

  Ritsu: "I haven't expressed this much since... You know."

  Itona: [message] "Yeah, neither have I. D:"

  Fuwa: [message] "I think if we want the Alphas to mellow up, this would be the series."

  Terasaka: [message] "Mimura-san, play the next series now."

  Mimura: [message] "You got it. Uh..." *holds up the remote.*

  Okano: *tearfully.* "No, don't do it yet."

  AssUniv: *blankly stares in front of them before looking to their right, finding Okano and Maehara sitting on the far side of the second couch together, with two of the drinks and a popcorn bowl.*

  Kurahashi: *begins texting, "What? You were he-" but then abandons that and looks at them.* "What? You were here this whole time?"

  Maehara: "At least when you started this franchise."

  Ohno: *opens the VIP room door.* "I saw them enter when I went out to restock our refreshments. I also had to get several boxes of tissues because they were bawling the amount of you all combined."
Nagisa: "And he didn't think to tell us."

Kayano: "Oh he thought to tell us. He just didn't go through with it."

Karma: "As usual."

Okano: "Okay, I'm ready for the third one." *wipes away her last tear.*

Maehara: "So am I." *Psychs himself up again.*

Kanzaki: "Are- Are you sure, you two? It seems to be taking quite a toll on you both."

Okano/Maehara: "If we say we want to see it, you will let us see it!" *voices almost break.*

Kimura: "That's our Alphas."

Mimura: "Proceeding then." *plays 'Summer Essence.*

-And as AssUniv watches the title appear, many of their phones vibrate ineffectually with over 20 text messages between Karasuma and Irina.-

Naoko: *Apparently having been given access to the camera feed from within Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, she too has been bawling her hideout of house and home, given how much she is a buff for any novel or such involving romance. She whispers to herself.* Goddamn Ohno-kun is such a tease, exploiting all my weaknesses like this.
Chapter Summary

Only a few chapters since they have taken to using LINE to meet up and coordinate their missions, the AssUniv Program cannot stop running into issues with even this plan. But when it's realized that this isn't quite a Reclamation Society attack, shenanigans are bound to ensue as they go and crack the mystery.

-Another day of classes at AssUniv's several universities. Ohno had quickly gotten through all the lessons in his classes and took class-passing tests so that he can have the time to prepare and run Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub at his own leisure. Yoshida was pretty upset that he wasn't able to sneak conversations during lectures to hear about the rest of Ohno's auto lockup, but he got over it in time. Mostly because everyone else in AssUniv, through the LINE messaging app, won't stop telling him to.-

-Yoshida of the Scientists, in his Robotics Class...-

Nakamura: [message] "Hey, you over it now? :-)"
Yoshida: [message] "Jesus Christ, what is this, your fiftieth time asking it? >:U"
Karma: [message] "Two-hundred-fifth if you count the rest of us. :J"
Fuwa: [message] "And four-hundred-twentieth counting the times a number of us said it at the same time. ^^"
Nagisa: [message] "Can't help but love how we're only so focused when we're being malicious. 😈"
Kayano: [message] "Yoshida-san, it really is quite simple. Just tell us you're truly over it, and we'll stop."
Yoshida: [message] "Fine. I'm over it. Happy?"
Terasaka: [message] "So you're not craving to learn more about the McLaren P1 Ohno-kun owns in one of his Kyoto lockups?"
Yoshida: [message] "... You're shitting me."
Nakamura: [message] "Surprised to say it, but that was a good touch, Terasaka. :E"
Kimura: [message] "I don't get it, Yoshida-san. If you want to talk to Ohno-kun about his cars so much, why don't you just message him on LINE, like we are?"
Ohno: [message] "<KOhno has come online> He didn't want to make the first move."
Muramatsu: [message] "Whatthefuck?"

Ohno: [message] "He's already flooded my phone with overnight calls, and bombarded me with questions in many previous nights. I guess he didn't want to do the same on an application. Am I correct, Yoshida-san?"

Yoshida: [message] "That's about the gist of it."

Takebyashi: [message] "Leave it to Ohno to be spot on as always. >_<"

Kataoka: [message] "Speaking of, what made you come online, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: [message] "I got a break from a rather peculiar project back at Nyurifu Rikkyo. During that intermission, I figured I give the more social aspect of this frequented media a try."

Karma: [message] "Well then, I hope you enjoy your stay. :V"

Ohno: [message] "Oop, got to go again. See you all at the club soon. <KOhno has come offline>"

Maehara: [message] "That guy always has something going on. How does he not get exhausted from all of it? x_x"

Sugino: [message] "Maybe he got num to it after seven years. Still impressive, without a doubt though."

Okuda: [message] "We already have one soul among us eager for answers. While he pursues that revelation, it wouldn't hurt for others to get theirs as well."

Yoshida: [message] "Enough about me and my car talk already! >:L"

Kanzaki: [message] "So long as it isn't too personal a query, I think that's a good idea."

-After classes, all of AssUniv move on, heading to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub and enjoying in the lively dance floor before Ohno calls them up post-preparation of the VIP platform. Up there, the faint sound of "Hyper Super Powers" by Fastway can be heard... If not for Fuwa blasting the audio of the TV screen while watching Peck on the Cheek for Him!-

Fuwa: "Aw, goddamnit, Izanami! You were about to make the ship with Nakajima perfectly!" *stomps the ground with enough force to cause the small table of refreshments to topple lightly.*

Kataoka: "Okay, calm down there, Fuwa-san." *quickly catches her and Isogai's water bottles before they cause wet messes on the carpet.*

Mimura: "I'll admit though, that seemed quite a waste of a good arc." *nonchalantly takes a swift sip of club soda.*

Chiba: "Why are we even watching this...?"

Karma: "We're still hitting dead ends on the Reclamation Society investigation. Might as well kill this time doing what we love."
Ohno: *comes out of the backroom door.* "Unfortunately true. The most we can hope to expect is that the Reclamation Society will make a move; not a very big one, but enough that we will notice." *sets down extra amounts of refreshments.*

Nagisa: "How big then?"

Ohno: "Small to medium scale robbery to fund their operations, jailbreak, something along those lines. The Ministry of Defence wouldn't suspect much, since they don't believe the Society exists."

Karasuma: "Also unfortunately true." *With Irina, he goes up the stairs and opens the door to the VIP Platform.* "I hope to open their eyes to this situation before long, so we can finally be sanctioned." *to Ohno.* "And we won't need you anymore."

Ohno: "Pfft, even if that does happen, there's a good chance that your Ministry will still want me involved. I've been looking into this war for a long length of time, and my team's research utilizes far too many exclusive terms. So even if you guys DID confiscate it, you wouldn't learn anything from it, without us."

Karasuma: *looks away and crosses his arms.* "Proud of that, are you?"

Irina: *giggles* "Five-years-ago me would've been so."

Ohno: *falls back along the spine of the couch.* "Damn, it feels good to be a parolee." *high-fives Irina with acceptance*

Isogai: *whispers to the rest of AssUniv* Are we ready to hear the internal disputes between the ultimate government agent and the perfect criminal?

Takebayashi: I don't the world is ready for their consistent banter.

Hayami: *looks around.* "Um, we've been forgetting about the same someone quite a bit lately."

AssUniv: "?" *Ohno lifts himself up.*

Nakamura: "You're right. Itona-san is missing."

Irina: "We found that guy just a few months ago, and now he's away again!?!"

Fuwa: "Maybe the writer of this series dos not know how to express Itona's traits properly...?"

AssUniv: "WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU SAYING!!?"

Fuwa/Mimura: "SHH!! Television here!"

Ohno: "Whoa, everyone. Calm down. Itona's been private chatting with me on the LINE messaging application. He's heavily invested on something and needs my help." *holds out his phone and provides the chatbox detailing such information.*

Kurahashi: "Ah, so that's your major project..."

Yoshida: *waterfalls come out of his eyes.* "I was really banking on you tricking out a Night
Rod Special...

Sugino: "Any reason in particular that he's keeping to himself?"

Ohno: "Not quite. He's asked me a few teach-related questions. I guess my major tends to attract that sort of pondering. But they're all kind of out there, so I can't really tell you what he's doing."

Kataoka: "Man, I really hope this isn't you doing the 'tell-as-little-as-necessary' thing..."

Okuda: *giggles.* "To be fair, have we ever identified Itona-san as a motor mouth for what he does?"

Kanzaki: "I guess we just have to wait until he's done to find out what's going on."

Ohno: "I'm fine with that. We're waiting as it is." * lays back to see Karasuma upside-down.* "Karasuma-senpai, what about you?"

Karasuma: "Hmph. So long as it doesn't affect his grades, and it doesn't keep him from weekend assassin training, then I'm fine with whatever Itona may be dealing with."

Fuwa: "Hey! Keep it down, you two! New episode of this tonight!" * Increases the volume right at the moment in which Sawamura happily exclaims upon seeing Izanami and Nakajima consoling their differences.* "Oooo..."

AssUniv: "!?"

Karasuma: "This side of Japanese media I will never understand..."

Irina: "Pfft, who actually thought that was a quality moan?"

Ohno: *blushes very badly and temporarily loses concentration on balancing along the back end of the couch, causing him to fall over. AssUniv all take watch of him down below.*

-The next day, in classes...-

-Yoshida, in robotics class...-

Yoshida: [message] "Wow, that thing last night, I think I could've lived without..."

Fuwa: [message] "If you're ecchi stuff is allowed to exist, my fujoshi stuff should at least be able to coexist! >:T"

Isogai: [message] "I'd rather both didn't..."

Mimura: [message] "'Anime was a mistake.' -Miyazaki"

???: [message] "<!70#@ has come online.>"

AssUniv: *all showcked to see that name pop up on their chatroom.*

Kataoka: [message] "Um, hello?" * seconds pass, but the mystery user does not answer.* "Who are you?" * Still no response.* "How did you get on this server? This one is secure and private!"
Mimura: [message] "Uh, what? :S"

????: [message] "!7^$ &00/V/@ \002{! <!70#@ has come offline.>"

Terasaka: [message] "What the f*** was that?"

Muramatsu: [message] "Could it be some hacker?"

Yada: [message] "Impossible! I invested quite a bit into this secure network! If someone did invade this chat, me and Knave are going to have words! >:0"

Ritsu: "That is not the case. I haven't been able to trace the location of the comments with the brief time the person has appeared in the chatroom, but it is not an unfamiliar one, I can assure you."

Karma: [message] "If it's only between us, I have an idea who that person may be..."

-After classes, AssUniv make their way, a little more hurriedly than usual, to Nyurifu Rikkyo. They barge right through to the VIP Platform Office room, where Ohno is working on some paperwork.-

Ohno: "Guys? You're earlier than usual today."

Kimura: "What kind of trick are you playing this time, Ohno?"

Ohno: *sets down his pen.* "Come again?"

Nakamura: "We have reasonable suspicion that you have something to say about all of this?" *sets up her phone to show the chatbox with the mystery user's several posted statements.*

Ohno: *reads them.* "Ah, you been getting those too?" *opens up his flip phone, revealing similar comments, such as "7l-\@/\( 40(\_\_ \@/@/\!", and "!^|_|_ |-|@\3 0/\3 /\0\23 7l-\@/\!&!"*

Nagisa: "Huh. That's awfully peculiar."

Ritsu: "I had doubts that Ohno-kun was the culprit. Ohno's IP is far different than most of AssUniv's, yes, but it was equally the same for the former half of the culprit's."

Kayano: "Well that's great. We're dead-ending again."

Ohno: *puts phone away.* "From the looks of things, guys, this guy will be back. Ritsu-san, make sure to check the latter half of the guy's IP really quickly when he does."

Okano: "Goddamn, so much waiting, man."

-And so they did wait. It took the next day, and then...-

Yoshida's professor: "And with this, all the material for your test exactly one week from now has been relayed. I expect you all to-"
Yoshida: *A high-pitched noise emits from his phone.*

Students: *cover their ears painfully.* "AH! WHAT IS THAT!?"

Yoshida: *Frantically picks up his phone, trying to find out what's wrong.* "What is this!?"

Yoshida's professor: "Yoshida, turn that thing down!"

Yoshida: "It was on vibrate!" *begins banging his phone on the desk.*

Students: "TURN IT OFF!"

Yoshida: *wedges a slim edge into the gap of the phone's frame, and then takes out the battery, stopping the noise.* "Phew..."

Student: "God, I thought we were before a Hellspawn..."

Yoshida: *starts gripping the parts of the phone tightly.*

-The students all gather at their usual block that connects them all; across the street from Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub.-

Hayami: "I see we've all been affected by the strange noise?"

Nakamura: "Damn right we did! I had to stick by for a long lecture by the professor after the class for it!"

Maehara: "He almost took my phone from me, too..."

Hara: "No one seems to notice that Karasuma and Irina have dealt with this as well." *thumbs over to AssUniv's instructors, standing behind their large crowd.*

Irina: "I thought I went deaf for a second!"

Karasuma: "This can be a gravely serious matter. I'd like to have this resolved immediately."

Karma: "Ritsu-chan, I hope you found out where that came from."

Ritsu: "I have. It's good to know that it came from the same device, because the IP was the same; I checked just to be sure."

Kataoka: "That's good. We can kill two birds with one stone tonight. Were does the IP lead?"

Ritsu: "Let's see... Huh."

Sugino: "Something wrong, Ritsu?"

Ritsu: "It's pointing to not too far ahead of our location."

AssUniv: *look forward, seeing the nightclub.*
Nagisa: "Nyurifu Rikkyo? In there, Ritsu?"

Ritsu: "It would appear so."

Terasaka: "Hm, so maybe Ohno was the culprit after all."

Chiba: "Yeah, he could just be using a device he hasn't shown us yet. Billionaire's advantages."

Kanzaki: "Wait a minute, everyone. I'm not too certain about this. Ohno-kun hasn't shown an interest for pranks."

Yada: "That's true. Ohno-kun also prides our learning experience too. Why would he try to sabotage it?"

AssUniv: *Already long heading into the entrance. Kanzaki and Yada pout before following along. They then reach the VIP platform once again. Their door-slamming has doubled since the last time they were agitated as well.* "OHNO-KUN!"

Ohno: *nods his pen to them.* "I knew reinforcing that door following multiple of your bloodlust rushes was a good idea. Gotta love it, guys; you make me think - a lot."

Karasuma: "Shut up, Ohno-kun. We know you're the one causing the phone chaos."

Ohno: "What?"

Fuwa: "Aha! No account of noise like he did with the enigmatic messages! He is responsible!"

Ohno: "Ritsu, scan this room."

Ritsu: "I already have. The IP of the device used does not match any of the electronics in this complex."

Muramatsu: "What? Damnit!"

Ohno: "Now that Ritsu found out that the location of the disturbance is somewhere in this edifice, however, I have an idea where in here it is. Follow me, you all." *stands up and goes through the employee halls, and heads to the basement.*

Maehara: "Didn't know this place existed."

Ohno: *abruptly stops and turns around like Ernest Borgnine.* "It doesn't." *Then continues pace.*

AssUniv: "...what."

Ohno: *they reach the end of the basement hallway, and then knocks on the door.*

???: "Who's there?"

Ohno: "Who do you think?"

???: "Ah. Team Leader. One second."
Karasuma: *ticks his eyebrow to that statement.*

???: *Opens the door, revealing himself, and Itona, sitting at several of the laboratory desks. Bows.* "Welcome."

Itona: *looks over to them.* "Ah, hey guys!"

Ohno: "Morita-san? Why are you here?"

Morita: *scratches head.* "Bishop couldn't open up her signals laboratory today, so she sent me to help Itona. We figured here was the best place to work on it."

Nagisa: Bishop?

Karma: "Care to explain a bit, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Alright - I was getting a few too many questions from Itona-san during the day. Some queries were also a bit above even my databanks, so I introduced him to someone who knows it better. She, Morita-san here, and I all belong to the same research team at Cyberdyne INC."

Kurahashi: "That's... Making a decent amount of sense."

Isogai: "And Ritsu...?"

Ritsu: "Undeniable. The IP is coming from Itona's phone."

Itona: "Ah, you must be talking about my new phone, huh? A German hypermodel! I was working with a bunch of Ohno-san's friends to make it fit for Japanese life! But then I had so much fun with it I wanted to take it to the next level!"

Kayano: *facepalms.* "Really now...?"

Itona: "I could not wait another day; this had to be complete now!" *holds up phone in the air.*

AssUniv: "..."

Itona: "?? Something wrong, guys?"

Ohno: "Case closed." *turns around to go back up to the VIP platform.*

Karasuma: "That's Irina's line." *follows him.*

Irina: "Seriously now!" *stamps the ground for a bit before also going back up.*

Itona: *backs to the far wall.* "What's going on...?"

Okano/Maehara: "Kanzaki-san, Hara-san, keep the doors barred."

Kanzaki/Hara: *reluctantly stand in the way of the backdoor.*

Itona: "Derp."
At the VIP platform.

Ohno: "Never a dull day when you're around those students. They cause a whole lot of things to happen."

Karasuma: "And I'd like to keep it that way. One further word out of you concerning Morita and Bishop would've been enough to confirm something of you for AssUniv."

Irina: "Tsk tsk. No matter how orchestrated Ohno is, he's very much a victim of dice rolls as we are."

Ohno: "What are you implying, Karasuma-san?"

Karasuma: "That you and your crew cause too much trouble too. Only your trouble is more global."

Ohno: "If it wasn't, I wouldn't be the factor in the shadow war that I am now."

Irina: "And the Society would be winning."

Karasuma: "..."

Ohno: "What do you want me to do about what just happened? Pretend it didn't?"

Karasuma: "That's a start. I'll tell you more about it later." *leaves.*

Irina: "Karasuma-sama!" *leaves with him, but not before giving Ohno a conflicted gaze.*

Ohno: *lights up a clove cigarette for the recent memory. His phone alerts of a new message soon, which he checks.* What to do with all of you...
Naoko's Space; Level One

Chapter Summary

More university adventures ensue in the "Reunion Arc". At Ritsumeikan, where the Politicians reside, a new third party presents itself to them. Could it possibly be... That long lost friend they had to disregard for some time in order to conduct their operation?

Could it be that character fans of the original series know little about, since she wasn't created by Matsui-sensei? Possibly.

Credits to Ayakass at DeviantArt, who gladly offered her character to my story (who you have seen a bit before, though now she will take prime stage), and do the art on the aforementioned website.

-The Politicians of AssUniv (Karma, Isogai, Kataoka, Terasaka, and Kimura), having dealt with most of their classes for the day, decide to roam the campus together in their brief pauses before the last batch.-

Isogai: "Ah, this sure brings back memories. Right guys?"

Kataoka: "Indeed. Going to school on the trails to the building together." *holds her chin to reminisce in the memory.*

Kimura: "All we need is a mountain to go up." *pumps the air.*

Terasaka: "HAHA- No we f'n don't!"

Karma: *slides himself a little further away from his friends.*

Kimura: *notices the shift.* "Something wrong, Karma-san?"

Karma: "Just that... If all we're ever going to talk about is how good life used to be, I'm going to be waiting around until it isn't." *supports his head from behind as he continues to walk forward.*

Isogai: "Well, you can't deny that it was, right?"

Terasaka: "If this was Kunugigaoka, we'd have none of those conspiracies this early in the year yet. Life would be much simpler."

Karma: "Simpler don't mean better. Honestly, I'd like things to be more complicated. It'd really give things a new flair."

Isogai: "Tell that to our career difficulties. The pure fact of complexity instant makes it worse than simpler." *nervously laughs, which Kataoka follows along with.*

Kimura: Damn Ikemen problems!
The rest of them snicker a bit. Again, Karma hangs back for a little bit to avoid four-year-old talk, looking instead towards the streets. All of them are distracted, which makes it easy for a certain someone to accidentally bump into an oblivious Karma.

"Oof!" *They both fall over.*

Look back, seeing Karma on the far side supine, across from someone else. There is a hood over the person's head, so all they could make out was her athletically-slim, feminine frame.

"My apologies, little lady. Should've been paying more attention; my fault."

repositions her clothing, mainly her hood, picks up her thrown bag, and runs off in the direction she was heading originally, offering no other time to Karma.

"A simple sign of gratitude for my damaged pride might be ni-" *breaks off when he notices something.*

*Walk back over to Karma.*

"What was that all about?"

"Something wrong, Karma-kun?"

"Can't help but think she looks familiar."

"She's got mighty fine legs, I'll give you that." *mind clicks.* "That I do recall..."

"Did you recognize her face?"

"I saw the lower half of it. There's a few I know who could have that chin. The pale-brown hair might narrow it down."

"Hey, wait a second." *compresses Karma's right arm for a bit before chasing after the woman.*

*look at each other before following along. The woman seems to have realized she is being followed and picks up speed. The students all head into an alleyway between two of Ritsumeikan's campus buildings, and the college girl seemingly disappears in its shadows.*

"WHAT THE HELL!?"

"Any reason for the wild goose chase, Terasaka-san?"

"We did see her go this way, though."

"Correct. And knowing that she can shake us off like this, coupled with how she looks..."

"I think we know who it is..." *picks up his phone and begins contacting the rest of the assassins in training on LINE.*

*sitting atop one of the cornering buildings, looking down on the group that gave
pursuit of her.*

-Hours later, at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...-

-"Dancing out of Danger" by Fastway plays-

    AssUniv: *slams open the door to the VIP office.*

    Ohno: "I will reiterate; having that door reinforced since you guys have frequented coming here was a very good business move."

    AssUniv except Politicians: *Tun to take seats at the two couches.* "IS IT TRUE? DID YOU SEE NAOKO-SAN!?"

    Ohno: *What?*

    Terasaka: "If it wasn't, there exists another assassin roaming within the same campuses as ours."

    Nagisa: "She didn't look anything like Chinese or Italian?"

    Karma: "No, her facials- her lower facials anyway, were certainly Japanese."

    Ohno: *shakes his head wildly to abandon his spacing thought.* "I wouldn't say neither the Society nor their supporters have anyone quite skilled like we are either, so at the very least, this person is a third-party."

    Nakamura: "Let's say it was Naoko-san; this is great, then!"

    Okano: "Next time you guys see her, you really ought to invite her in!"

    Itona: "I always felt 3-E wasn't truly 3-E without ALL of us."

    Karma: "Yeah, I don't know if that's going to happen."

    AssUniv: *stare at Karma with surprise.*

    Maehara: "Any reason why, Karma-san?"

    Karma: "Well for one, we can't be certain she was Naoko-san."

    Takebayashi: "But didn't you just say-"

    Kurahashi: "If we want to confirm this belief, why don't we contact Naoko directly?"

    Okuda: "That would be a simple solution, but unfortunately none of us carry the required information."

    Kimura: *sighs.* "Yeah; they certainly have their good reasons for it, but the Ministry kills any personal relations outside their programs you will have just like that."

    Karma: "..."
Sugino: "Might that be why Karasuma-sama could not bring Naoko-san into the AssUniv Program?"

Kayano: "Yeah; we're not sanctioned by them, so they have no obligation."

Ohno: "And the guy who is sanctioning it, I.E. me, has no idea of this Naoko person. Might you, eeh, tell me who she is?"

AssUniv: "..."

Hayami: "I have a feeling Naoko-san would totally hate a person like Ohno-kun. Which is probably why we didn't tell her everything at that hot spa."

Chiba: "Loathe him." *smirks.*

Ohno: *laughs a whole lot inside.* "What? Why?"

Yoshida: "Well, as Kimura-san mentioned, she is a Defense Agent. She is technically your enemy."

Muramatsu: "Meanwhile, she's legally related to Karasuma-sensei, so that makes it doubly true." *laughs.*

Ohno: "Hm, that would be a problem." *holds his chin.* "But you did say she was related to Karasuma somehow, right? Maybe get a secure line through him to get to her."

Nakamura: "That... Is not a bad plan."

Mimura: "Expecting any less from Ohno-kun?"

-And so, AssUniv contacts Karasuma (with Irina), who go to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub.-

Karasuma: *ticks.* "I'm not going to get used to passing by those bouncers of his."

Irina: "Just smile and wave, Karasuma-sama. It's what I do in general. Not even for seduction."

-They go up to the VIP Platform.-

Karasuma/Irina: "Hello class."

AssUniv: *Swarms their teachers.*

Irina: "WHOA WHOA WHOA!"

Karasuma: "What is this? Are you all trying to compensate for another misfortune that you all have caused?"

Ohno: *sweat mark drops down the back of his head.* "If I didn't know any better, I'd think you have very little faith in your students."

Isogai: "What? No, no no, Karasuma-sensei. We need you (and/or) Bitch-sensei to do us a favor."
Karasuma: "What might that be?"

Kurahashi: "Would you happen to know where Naoko-san is?"

Karasuma: "She's somewhere in Hokkaido, on mission. Why?"

Okano: "Allow us to talk to Naoko-san!"

Irina: "Huh? Why so suddenly?"

Nagisa: "We-
"Is stopped subtly by Karma, who reminds him that telling an Agent that one of their own might be somewhere other than where they believe could be threatening. "We're just eager."

Kataoka: "We know it's bad to contact her when we're not Defense personnel ourselves, but she at least deserves to hear from us personally that we haven't forgotten about her."

Karasuma: *Thinks on it for a moment before putting his hand into his pocket. "Fine."

Irina: *Gleefully hands her government-issue phone to Yada. "Here you go!" *Suddenly shifts to a serious drill sergeant tone. "You have one minute. " *shifts back to her playful tone. "Just kidding! Have a go."

Karasuma: "Wh- Hey!" *gently puts down Irina's phone. Then, he intensely stares at Ohno. The rest of AssUniv take notice and gaze at him too.*

Ohno: *looks around a bit to "clarify" that it is him they are looking at. "Something wrong?"

Karasuma: "I'm not putting you in the same room as Naoko."

AssUniv + Irina: *Casually look around Karasuma*"Even in voice form?"

Ohno: "Wow, she must really hate me. She doesn't even know me."

Karasuma: "It's called talking-about-missions-with-your-missions-with-colleagues.' She heard me, talking about you, and instantly disliked you."

Ohno: "Oh... AssUniv?"

AssUniv: "GET OUT!"

Ohno: "Alright, alright. I'm out. Need to patrol the club, anyways. " *stands up, stretches out, and then heads out the door.*

Irina: "That's a little harsh for someone who's giving us a whole lot..."

Maehara: "Yeah, that's true..."

Yada: *Speed-dials Naoko's secure phone number.*

Maehara: "Oh, this is going to be great!" *crowds around the small smartphone, put on speaker.*
Naoko: "Yes, Karasuma-nee-san?"

AssUniv: "NAOKO-SAN!"

Naoko: "WHOA!" *audibly stumbles over.* "Wait, is that you guys? Class 3-E?"

Terasaka: "The last of them before the program's termination."

Irina: "And your favorite teacher/older sister!"

Naoko: "That's a little iffy."

Kayano: "Don't blame you."

Irina: *the heart in her mind breaks.* "So cruel..."

Naoko: "Wow, it's so good to hear from you guys! What took you all so long to get in touch with me?"

Karma: "Well for one, you didn't give us any way to contact you conveniently."

Naoko: "Oh..."

Nagisa: "And all of us were distracted too. You heard that some of us were kidnapped, right?"

Naoko: "Oh yeah. I totally wanted to help you guys out but the Ministry of Defence had other plans. Karasuma-nee-san couldn't get to me first before they sent me across the country."

Isogai: "Hey hey, don't sweat it Naoko-san. The only thing that matters is that you're hearing us just fine, and vice versa."

Naoko: "I really hope yo see you all when I get my load of assignments done. If I do, that is."

Kimura: *nods at the rest of the Politicians.* "Speaking of assignments, can you tell us anything about the one you're currently on?"

Naoko: "You're walking on thin ice, Kimura-kun. If I say too much, I'll have to kill you. Heheh."

Karasuma: "Senior Agent, Chief Air Force, Karasuma grants clearance. Spill it out, Naoko."

Naoko: "Well now I have no choice, I guess. I'm tailing a group. Suspected ultranationalist operation. If briefing intel is correct, they'll be attending a black market deal to obtain powerful heavy weapons in preparation for a 'huge display.' Whatever that is."

Sugino: "Wow. Where's that?"

Naoko: "Kanagawa Prefecture."

Hazama: "Wow, that's almost five hours away."
Fuwa: "That's a big place. Don't lose track of them, you hear?"

Naoko: "Of course. Thanks for the advice."

AssUniv: "..."

Naoko: "Uh... Anything else you'd all like to say?"

Nakamura: "I, uh, think the Politicians have a little something to tell you."

Politicians: "!!"

Naoko: "Politicians?"

Politicians: "That'd be us, Naoko-san. Karma, Isogai, Kataoka, Terasaka, Kimura. Long story; we'll explain that later."

Karasuma: "..."

Isogai: "We must have been very distracted, or something, but we couldn't help but think that we saw someone that looked a lot like you."

Naoko: "Whoa, a doppelganger of me?"

Kataoka: "Yeah. Again, probably just us being lightheaded during the moment, but we all though to have seen someone with about your frame walking about."

Karasuma: "It would have to be someone else. Naoko doesn't disobey Ministry orders that come directly from the Minister, right?"

AssUniv: *surprised by the stern question.*

Naoko: "Yeah... Must be a total coincidence."

Karasuma: "Good."

Nagisa: "Well, um, I think that's all we had to say this time around. We'd like to call again when something new pops up."

Naoko: "Do so! I can't keep this serious face all the time or I think I'll go insane."

Karasuma: "My sister's a liar. She'll get used to it. They always do."

Naoko: "Hey, now, that's not a lot of fai-" *cut off by Karasuma pressing "end call" and handing the phone back to Irina.*

Karasuma: "Well that's that. Is there anything else you all need?"

AssUniv: "..."

Karasuma: "Very well. Remember to head to the warehouse tomorrow night for more training."
Irina." *heads out, with Irina.*

Ohno: *walks past the two Agents to get back into his office. He then looks at AssUniv.*
"Looks like you listened to a eulogy."

Karma: "..."

-Later that evening, when AssUniv had returned to the Hyatt Regency Kyoto...-

Ohno: *at his desk, spins his phone around his hand, before letting it turn upright, and then dials Naoko's phone number.*

Naoko: [message] "Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Why?"

Naoko: [message] "Why what?"

Ohno: "Why are you there?"

Naoko: [message] "Why am I where?"

Ohno: "You know you're going to be in a lot of trouble."

Naoko: [message] "I'm already in a lot of trouble."

Ohno: "Governmentally?"

Naoko: [message] "No! 'Karasuma-ly.'"

Ohno: "Of course."

Naoko: [message] "Look; I need my education just as much as they do, and maybe you do, but I'm not going all the way back to Tokyo and let my friends deal with this for a semester. I tracked the college best suited for my major is all I did. I didn't know your 'Politicians' were there."

Ohno: "Somehow, I doubt that."

Naoko: [message] "Not part of your plan, is it? Ha."

Ohno: "Whatever. You remaining undercover from even Karasuma's eyes is your plan and struggle; not mine."

Naoko: [message] "That's true. And I'm figuring that the conjunction of your call and AssUniv's earlier that day means that at least one of them believes I'm here."

Ohno: "Yeah, I could see it in some of their eyes. And I don't think they'll be stopping to confirm this for a long while. I think this might be the time for you to step into the light. The dim light that only the Shadow War sees, but the light nonetheless."

Naoko: [message] "No; I can handle this. I have to; that Karma-kun can't keep a secret. Especially in front of Karasuma-nee-san."
Ohno: "How could you possibly know that? Personal relationship in the past?"

Naoko: [message] "Let's go with that."

Ohno: "Alright then. What's your proposal?"

Naoko: [message] "I'll be much more discreet now; however it takes to make sure AssUniv's prying eyes do not notice me again."

Ohno: "Such a simple plan... Which will no doubt be foiled by complex factors."

Naoko: [message] "Shut up! It'll work; trust me." *hangs up.*

Ohno: *slowly puts down phone.* I give it four days, tops.

-At Ritsumeikan's dining hall, three days later...-

Naoko: *Enters through the back entrance.* I haven't actually given this campus' dining a chance yet. Everybody always goes on and on about how college has the worst base dishes, but this is a Kyoto university. Maybe there's- *Instantly notices The Politicians, who are sitting at the second collection of tables from the entrance.* Well, shit.
Naoko is forced to reveal her presence to the Politicians, in spite of her claims to stealth and quietness from her older, adopted brother Karasuma. And though the splinter faction of AssUniv Program affiliates seem rather chilled to see her in person again, the ace of the program, Karma, is acting weirdly around her. Whatever could that be about...

-Naoko, having her cover blown very soon after she had promised the reliability of her stealth against her old colleagues, capitulates to the stealth game, and sits down with some of her former classmates, The Politicians.-

Naoko: *holds and shakes her head.* "That so could've gone better..."
Terasaka: "Well it's no denying it then; the one Karma bumped into the other day was you."
Kataoka: "Did we have any doubts?"
Kimura: "Nah; we were 99% certain. 1% is lack of definitive evidence."
Karma: "...
Isogai: "So, um, why didn't you tell us that you were around?"

Naoko: *looks up, gripping her cup of herbal tea.* "Well, you heard the seriousness in Karasuma-sensei's voice during that conversation, right? I'll be in serious trouble if he found out I was off the grid."

Kataoka: "I think we mean when you collided into us earlier."

Naoko: "Usually, the fewer people who know about something, the better. Am I right?"

Politicians except Karma: *Suddenly think about Ohno, and how many times they all mentioned how Ohno only tells as much as necessary.* "Yeah... We can see that..."

Karma: "No I can't."

Naoko + AssUniv: *attentively stares at him.*

Kimura: "A-anyway, not that we're discouraged by it, but why are you here, knowing how much risk you're taking?"

Naoko: "You think I'm going to let you guys have all the fun without me? No way." *begins gripping her cup more firmly.* "More like, if any of you didn't leave this war in one piece, and I wasn't there, I'd forever haunt myself over what I could've done."
Kataoka: *snickers.* "Funny how that call we made to you several days ago was all about us telling you that we still worry about you, and yet here you are telling us this."

Karma: "And what fun, pray tell, did you partake in? If I happen to recall correctly, you weren't there during our fallout, Kyotango, the Conference Center, and so on."

Naoko: "Well, I did keep the Reclamation Society folk focused on getting you at bay for a good while. You know, you all make quite a scene every time you returned to Hotel Okura. It's actually a surprise no one major noticed up until just a little bit ago."

Isogai: "That's... A pretty good thing to have fun with. Though honestly, I was thinking Ohno-kun had that handled."

Naoko: "Ugh, don't speak that name in front of me..."

Terasaka: "Geez, that sounds like you really do hate him."

Naoko: *refocuses.* "Uh, well Karasuma alone hating him is reason enough for me to hate him. But he is a secret criminal too. If I could've helped it, I would've pulled you guys away from him now."

Kimura: "Have you seen him in person before?"

Naoko: *gulps.* "Actually, no. Just got facial information from Karasuma when he called me on the girl's behalf during Kyotango, for their listings. That was a crime scene in of itself, right?"

AssUniv: *groans.*

Karma: "Fair enough. What else?"

Naoko: "I also helped Karasuma-sensei pick out much of the training routines to better help the less physical of us until they reached their peak again, if that's the best term for it."

Terasaka: "You called that 'helpful!?' God, I can't imagine what's the base training you had in mind."

Naoko: "Maybe become a diplomat for the Ministry then; they'll give you a good rundown." *smiles widely."

Karma: "I'm sure the life of any Ministry Official is far more complex than that, right?"

Naoko: *stares sternly at him.* "Yeah; I guess so. What the Hell does that matter, though?"

Karma: *sits back.* "Oh, I'm just worried that Terasaka might not be able to keep up with it."

Terasaka: "What the fu-"

Isogai/Kimura: *keeps Terasaka from making a scene.*

Kataoka: "I think we'll get going before things get out of hand, and people here start paying attention. It has been real good catching up with you, Naoko-san, and I speak for the rest of us,
even the ones not here, that we await the day that you can join us for real."

Naoko: "That'll happen. You can count on it." *nods.*

Kimura: "Oh right, and for all future meetings in public, you have a preferred means of identifying yourself?"

Naoko: *takes out her student I.D. for Ritsumeikan University; it reads "Tomoyo Narimiya."*

Terasaka: "Hmph, simple enough."

Karma: "Not like we don't know where you are, anyways." *gets up and leaves last, but not before giving Naoko another one of his unimpressed frowns, which she definitely catches.*

Naoko: *Damn Karma-kun... This is why he can't keeps things a secret...* *Puts her card away, and then sips her tea again.*

-The next day, in the evening...-

Naoko: *walks into a mass lecture hall at 6:20 P.M., setting down her bag beside her and taking out several No. 2 pencils in preparation to take a major test for Psychology and Law.*

???: *sets down his backpack at a chair one seat to the left of her.*

Naoko: *Looks back over to that person, finding out that it's Karma. She almost instantly looks away, despite Karma doing very little to trouble her; he merely twirls his pencil while staring forward. After enough of, well, whatever was discomforting her, she gets up and moves to another spot in the hall. But before she can settle down there, Karma follows her! They repeat this all across the area until...*

Test Administrator: "You two! Enough!" *points at a set of three untaken seats.* "Sit at those two spots, and stay at them!"

Naoko: *sighs and nods, taking one end of the set, with Karma taking the other. Minutes later, the tests are distributed, and Naoko wastes no time in working through it. After being absorbed in the problems for over fifteen minutes, she takes an optical breather and looks around for a bit, before noticing Karma leagues ahead on the examination.* Wow, seriously? How's he ripping right through all of this? *Takes a deeper (innocent) look at some of Karma's work, and finds that he is barely answering all of the questions; just enough to get over sixty percent of the possible points in each question.* What the Hell...? *She continues work on her own test, but then sees Karma leave his spot; the first of the students to do so, and passes in his test, knowing very well that he had barely passed. Finally, he picks up his backpack and walks out of the lecture hall, making sure Naoko sees him.* Persistent bastard...

-An hour later...-

Karma: *Now that his obligations for the day are over, Karma walks his way to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, which is about to open up this evening for all the awaiting young adults. He passes through the VIP List entrance, and locates Ohno, talking with the Disc Jockey.* "Hey, Ohno!"

Ohno: *Notices Karma from afar. To the DJ.* "Make sure you take us higher, yes?"
DJ: "Don't worry about it." *puts on his sunglasses and turns to his equipment.*

Ohno: *jumps down from the stage.* "What's up, Karma-kun?"

Karma: "I need you to do me a favor."

Ohno: "Depends on the favor."

Karma: "Is your VIP List open?"

Ohno: "I can make space; truthfully, there's no upper limit. I just make it that way so no one floods our landlines."

Karma: "Very good. I'd like to add one more person to this party tonight."

Ohno: "Really now? Found yourself a date? Who is it?"

Karma: "Tomoyo Narimiya."

Ohno: "!" *refocuses.* "You have a means of contact?"

Karma: "She has an apartment phone number." *holds out a folded piece of paper, filled with research of a student's footprint within their college.*

Ohno: *should've known... I've heard the pseudonym before.* "Does she know you, Karma-kun?"

Karma: "Why the query?"

Ohno: "Well, this display here seems to make me believe you're stalking her."

Karma: "Let's say it's an old flame and leave it at that."

Ohno: "Alright then. I'll call her up."

-Inside his VIP office.-

Ohno: *dials the apartment number Karma had given him. While it rings, he watches Karma from above; the latter is situated at the second floor atrium, having a marginally alcoholic drink. Finally, the line connects.*

Naoko: "Hello?"

Ohno: "Hello, Tomoyo-san."

Naoko: "... Who is this?"

Ohno: "Head manager of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub. I presume you're heard of the name?"

Naoko: "That I have. To what do I owe this honor?"

Ohno: *Looks down to see Karma again.* "A really good friend of yours is inviting you to a night of Eurobeat."
Naoko: "..."

Ohno: "I'm fairly certain that if I were to fail in convincing you into having a visit later..."  
*checks watch.*  
"Tonight, then I will be pushed by this same friend to flood your devices with invites until you do. And just so you know, I don't mind doing that."

Naoko: "Well then, it seems I have no choice."

Ohno: "Very good. See you later,"  
*checks watch again.*  
"Tonight. Just say your name and they'll let you in, remember."

Naoko: "Alright."  
*hangs up.*

Ohno: *puts the phone down.*  

-A brief time later...-

-"Mad Desire ~ Platinum Version" by Mako plays-

Naoko: *After (almost) starting a little incident with the front-door bouncers, Naoko makes it into the nightclub.*  
*Jesus Christ, I didn't think I'd ever step foot in this place.*  
*Looks around,*  
noticing the indoor muscle and other staff.*  
*They're not my main focus tonight, but I should be wary; whether they all really do work for Ohno or not, they've sworn an alliance with a criminal. Which makes them criminals too. And I'm a notable agent, on their turf...*  
*Looks over to the jacket area.*  
*But I'm also a customer...*  
walks over to the desk and begins taking off her winter jacket, about to hand it over to the man.*  
"Take good care of it, please."

Clerk: "Of course, miss."  
takes the jacket and properly hangs it onto the rack.*

Naoko: *goes on to tip the Clerk early, but just after she places the several hundred yen into the container, she suddenly feels something down her spine.*  
"!!"  
*TURNS around at a respectful speed, so as not to attract the attention of anyone around her, but finds nobody behind.*  
*My imagination, I suppose. Or...*  
*Begins returning her wallet to her tweed winter shorts' back pocket, only to feel something already in there.*  
*What's this?*  
*Takes it out, realizing it's a piece of paper. She unfolds it twice to find the hidden message, addressed by...*

Karma: '"You walked out of my life for no good reason one time before. Now we're even. Enjoy your night.'"

Naoko: "..."  
*Begins crumpling up the paper with one hand, and builds up a subtle, but explosive bloodlust.*  
*You really thought... This would change anything...? At least I looked you in the eye when I spoke.*  
*Once the paper became a small ball, she tossed it into a nearby waste bin.*  
*By the end of this day, you WILL be doing the same at the very least!*  
*Heads into the main dancefloor,*  
knowing full well that Karma had went down there too.*  
*Now to find you... In the middle of a roughly six-hundred strong crowd of college students."

-And thus starts the game of cat and mouse. Karma soon realized that he was being tailed by Naoko. To ensure that his walkaway was absolute, he has to make sure he is not re-encountered. And since he has the head start against a much more perceptive and adept opponent, he is making it so. It also certainly helped that some other male college students had noticed Naoko, hoping to have their luck pay off on her... Only to be met with a bruised shin. The few times he was able to
stealthily witness that happen, despite how he feels, Karma laughed a bit.

Naoko: *elbows her way through more of the crowd.* I guess pure game is out of the option at this point. Well then, I'll have to bait him out. But how...? *Looks around, observing possible discerning options; stage-lights, sky view, and... Ohno? * He seems to be talking to some business partners or associates up there. Maybe... *wincing slightly.* I'm so not going to enjoy this. *Goes upstairs to meet with Ohno.* All I know about this is that... I know Karma-kun is watching. *Gets closer to Ohno.*

Ohno: "And so, gentlemen and ladies, supplying Nyurifu Rikkyo, and most of the other Mai Nightclubs in the Kansai Region, will certainly boost sales of your Kyushu Region Ramune by almost 20%. Think of the profits both you and us can make with that."

Businesspeople: *murmur with consideration.*

Ohno: "I know the attendance here and everywhere will absolutely love it; my diverse work pool have had the honor of testing the product many times before hand, and they have all enjoyed it. Undoubtedly, this genuine deal will..."

Naoko: *flicks a beverage olive toward Ohno, which he catches with his right hand. To save face, he scratches the back of his head.*

Ohno: "I will give you all some time to think about it. I do wish to have a definitive answer by the end of the night, if possible." *bows and departs. He heads toward the section of the fencing of the atrium where Naoko was leaning on.* "Is there a reason for you to be disrupting a business dealing that is one-hundred percent legal...?"

Naoko: "I still owe you something."

Ohno: "Was it the olive?" *starts handing it back, but is then pulled in, and Naoko gives him a full-on kiss on the lips.* "!!"

Naoko: *Seriously blushing, she nonetheless continues the action. She manages to give their faces enough distance to make proper eye-contact, from which she can optically tell him,* This is TOTALLY NOT what you think.

Ohno: You know nothing of how I think.

Karma: "HEY!" *As it turns out, he was indeed watching. Both the Prodigy and the Criminal hear him through the crowd, and as he storms his way to a means of going upstairs, they release.*

Ohno: You meant to make him jealous?

Naoko: I wanted his attention is all.

Ohno: There's no way you can prove one without the other with just this context...

Karma: *walks up to them both.* "So that's how you're going to play, is it, Naoko-san!?!"

Naoko: "I didn't come here to play, Karma-kun."

Karma: "That was quite a play you made on Ohno-kun!"
Ohno: "Unwarranted, unneeded, and unwanted, just so you know." *holds up his hand.*

Naoko: "That's the least of your worries tonight! I have to get some things straight with you, but not while you're a whiny asshole about all of it!"

Karma: "Oh great! This is going to be fun!"

Ohno: "People... Please calm down in my nightclub..."

Naoko: "You waited forever for this, didn't you? To make a joke about all of this?"

Karma: "How can I take anything about it seriously when you don't speak the truth?"

Ohno: "Guys, I have a deal going on. I'm going to call security..."

Naoko: "You could've just went straight to my face earlier that day!"

Karma: "You wouldn't tell me two years ago; why would I believe you would tell me yesterday!?"


Naoko: "Maybe things have changed!?" *begins getting pulled towards the exit by a Russian bouncer.*

Karma: "That's not what you said about the Ministry two years ago!" *being done the same by an African American.*

Naoko: "Fine then! It got complex, but options had opened up as a result!"

Karma: "If that were true, you'd go to me and say what it was! Instead, you kept me in the dark yet again!"

Ohno: *listens to their endless arguing as they leave the second floor and are evicted from the nightclub. Sighs before returning to the businesspeople.* "Okay, so, where were we?"

Businessman: "Those two don't represent the main demographic in this and all of your other nightclubs, right?"

Ohno: "Oh no, they were just having bad days. We're college people; we go through some angst at times. Ehhehe..."

Businessman: "If you imply yourself in that statement, I don't know if you can handle this arrangement fine..."

Ohno: *Goddamnit, you two...*

-Outside the nightclub, Karma and Naoko have continued their bickering.-

Naoko: *They argue to her motorcycle, the Hayabusa that Ohno had given her. She inexplicably gets on it.* "Get on!"
Karma: "I- What?"

Naoko: "Get on! We're not settling this on the streets!"

Karma: "Then where?"

Naoko: "I think you know."

Karma: *realizes.* "Ah. That place."

Naoko: "Good. Get on." *puts on her helmet.*

Karma: "What, I don't get a helmet?"

Naoko: "You're a tough guy; suck it up."

Karma: *shakes his head before getting on the second-seat.*

Naoko: *revs up the motorcycle and speeds off onto the main streets of Kyoto.*
Karma's enmity against his apparent ex Naoko has reached a critical boiling point, and when that happens, there really is only one way it's going to be resolved.

Especially when you're an alpha, and s/he is too.

-Naoko and Karma, riding along the hull of the former's Suzuki Hayabusa, are roaming Kyoto's streets, on their way to their mutual proving ground... Found out to be the warehouse from which Karasuma and Lovro trains AssUniv.-

Karma: "We're here..."

Naoko: "So we are." *takes off her helmet and dismounts the motorcycle. Karma copies.* "You have a purported billionaire sanctioning your training, and this is the place he puts you guys in?"

Karma: "Didn't you already know?"

Naoko: "Still makes me wonder."

Karma: "Well, it's quite furbished; tailor-made to our needs. Keep in mind, we became assassins in a schoolhouse. Or did you push that away too?" *Proceeds to go inside.*

Naoko: "..." *Follows him in.*

Lovro: *found to be inside, prepping some of the material on the arena floor.* "What's this? Karma? What are you doing here today... With, is that Karasuma's daughter?"

Naoko: "Sister."

Lovro: "Right... So? What is it?"

Karma: "We're here to resolve a personal matter between us. It'd be preferable that you weren't around here when we begin."

Lovro: *Looks between the two of them, noticing a heavy amount of powerful, but conflicted bloodlust.* Yeah, that would be best. "Very well. Have fun, man and lady." *picks up his materials and leaves out the back entrance.*

Karma/Naoko: "..." *Wait until they hear absolutely nothing to start sounding off on each other."

Naoko: *Turns around aggressively.* "You think subtly stating very critical lines while we're in front of our friends is a great way to get your message across!"

Karma: "It worked, didn't it? Here we are, doing exactly what I'd been hoping for all this time!"
Naoko: "They have enough problems! And when were you one to open up about your difficulties?"

Karma: "I just wanted to remind everyone how dangerous being in front of a Ministry Agent can be."

Naoko: "So that's it, is it? Would you have rather I stayed away?"

Karma: "It would certainly make things much simpler."

Naoko: "Then what was it about trying to find me no matter what for the past two years?"

Karma: "That was before I realized that the reason you gave me back then turned out to be so important to you!"

Naoko: "Yeah, well it's not the most important one. It was the most obvious one, though, so I kept with it all that time."

Karma: "Then why won't you tell me what's the most important one!?" *starts clenching his fist very compactly.* "I've put aside a lot of things throughout these past two years. Academics, a bit, relationships, a lot, and do you know why? Because I know that somewhere in that cold heart of yours, you didn't fully believe in how we broke up."

Naoko: "..."

Karma: "It's the classic fighting hero's story; he continues fighting to find the answer for why he fights. He risked all of that in his life for something he doesn't even know about. What kind of story would it be... If he doesn't find out what it was?"

Naoko: "The grandiose in your statement... Further reinforces my belief that if I told you anything more, you wouldn't keep it to yourself. But..." *Takes her jacket and shoulder holsters off, cracks her knuckles and stretches her back.*

Karma: "Now you're talking some sense." *rolls his neck around a few times before entering further into the arena.* "So, we're going to settle things as all couples do?"

Naoko: *picks up her right knee high enough to reach her far shoulder.* "They work, one way or another."

-They both circle around the assassination floor. "Smile Venomously" by Ryu Ga Gotoku 4 OST team begins, and the two combatants get into their respective fighting stances; Naoko with both clenched hands held at neck-level, and Karma with his forward hand at waist-level, and one close to his cheek. At 0:15, they both charge at each other, with Naoko going for a right overhead on Karma, who ducked low for an uppercut.-
Relations Student

VS

Karma Akabane - Ritsumeikan University Economics Student

*Karma takes the first lead, fully hooking his uppercut and locking in Naoko's arm within. He then falls backward, causing her to be dragged over him and landing with a roll some distance. She quickly turns around to see Karma charge again at her with a left straight punch to the face. She bobs her head to the right just enough to let it whip past her ear. Karma doesn't stop there, moving his fist high into the air to smash it down with a backfist. Naoko manages to pull her upper body back to dodge that as well. She returns some offense with a lifting snap kick in the middle of the evasion to target his exposed ribcage, but he holds his far hand just under the area to deflect it, pushing it back down.

Now with both standing on two feet and in close proximity, Naoko lashes out again with an overhead left round house kick, which Karma blocks with his tricep pushed onto his temple. In his crouched stance, he pivots his shoulders to throw a mean left body punch. But Naoko proved too quick for that; having put her left leg down just after the attack, and then pulling it again over his hand, preventing it from striking her abdomen. This also allows her to hop over the lowered arm, and perform a short-range spinning heel kick with her right, which lands perfectly on Karma's cheek.*

Karma: *Steps back a few feet, feeling the spot on his face that's about to start going red.*

Naoko: *Returns to a mid-height fighting stance.* "Good enough for you?"

Karma: *Rubs the spot a little more before waving it aside.* "Hardly." *He clenches his fists once again.*

*Karma moves forward, leaping up for a high knee which Naoko sidesteps. With her behind, Karma did a backwards hook kick that she limboed under. The rush continues into a left hook that finally meets Naoko's body, albeit blocked with a stiff self-clinch. This is just what Karma wanted though, keeping his left arm near Naoko and wrapping it around her head, and then swiftly chaining his right hand with it. He moved forward a bit to put Naoko off balance, and then compressed his arm circumference, locking her into a D'Arce Choke. Naoko gagged a little bit, noticing that Karma had switched fighting styles very quickly; something her textbooks never prepared her for. But she has dealt with such combat before, and quickly counters by rolling onto his back, applying a body scissors, and applies a Rear Naked Choke. She attempts to ground him to gain more leverage on the submission, but Karma retains two rigid legs to stand on. He then violently twists to smash Naoko backfirst onto the stone ground. He adds a rising elbow to her chin for good measure.

Karma gets up, but Naoko crosses her legs with his right still within, and then brings it towards herself, forcing him to fall over. She returns the favor, performing a falling elbow to the back of Karma's head as she takes a dominant position on her prone ex. She continues the pummel with clubbing hammer fists to the cranium of Karma, but the latter is able to hold out to turn himself
Naoko continued trying to punish Karma with a flurry of punches, which included one clean hook to her ex's face. But soon after, Karma countered by lifting his legs up to hook onto Naoko's shoulders like backpack straps, then pull down, pinning her onto the ground. Karma then pivots along the ground to wrench a kneebar. Naoko manages to brute force the submission long enough to give Karma a few kicks with her free leg, distracting him so that she can reverse into a heel hook. Karma groans a bit, lifting his pained left leg to bring Naoko upright, making her an easy target for a few clubbing blows to break up the lock. Both roll backwards to get back into a standing position.

Karma: *slaps his ankle for more circulation.* "You've learned a thing or two outside of your textbooks, huh?"

Naoko: *wipes her lip with her hand, which had opened due to some of Karma's punches.* "I've had some practice."

Karma: "That's good; you're going to need it."

*Naoko is now the one to rush back into the fray, but awaited an impulse attack by Karma, which came from him attempting a left overhead punch. She easily vaulted past, and placed Karma in a standing shoulder lock. He moves along with the leverage movement, causing Naoko to flip over him, albeit still landing on her feet. Still hunched over, Karma shoulder checks her, then wrapping his right arm around her right thigh, and then picking her up in a fireman's carry. He transitions the grapple into a crucifix belly-to-back hold, preparing to fall backwards and crush Naoko again onto the ground. But she countered with some fierce elbows to his temple, dropping her. She recovered enough to try a uppercut to sweep Karma's leg, but he picked it up and moved it out of the way just in time, making Naoko show her back to him. In an advantageous position, he starts with a low roundhouse kick, knowing that Naoko would instantly try to guard her upper body. Without putting his foot down, and Naoko having exposed her ribcage, he continues the motion into another roundhouse kick to the vulnerable bone area, and finishes with a side kick to her back. Naoko coughs a bit before continuing, calling on a back thrust kick to keep Karma from going in and attacking her from behind again. Karma pulls back just enough to avoid it, but that proves bad when she puts her foot back and then leaps into a backflip Pele kick that clocks him clean on the crown. He falls to one knee, and Naoko rolls toward him for a momentous right roundhouse kick, which Karma only just parries. Also not letting up, she slides her leg over the block and places her inner knee behind his neck, and then locks her arms around the far side of his neck, trapping his head and his right arm. She completes the maneuver with her grounded leg falling over Karma's back, initiating a Peruvian Necktie. After a few seconds of pressure, Karma stands up, lessening Naoko's leverage, and making her levitate, allowing him to change the angle of the coil so that it can't punish. As she tries to reposition the hold, Karma breaks free with a pummel of his own. A kip-up kick from Naoko prevents him from capitalizing on a supine opponent, however.

With both of them showing some fatigue, they both realize the next few moments are critical. Karma feints a torso-level block with a right-handed Cobra punch, cleanly hitting Naoko in her forehead. Naoko bounces back with a whiplash right hook that almost gets Karma off his feet. As his head is bowed down, she tries an instep kick to his nose, but he catches the leg and moves along it for a punish. Naoko manages to put up her knee for a short-range mule kick to stop whatever was to come of that, landing on one foot. Karma again feints, now doing a heel sweep kick that chops Naoko's one leg, but Naoko was still too agile, flipping right over it with impressive single-limb strength. This also allows her to lock in a Thai clinch, and knee Karma's head a few times. The last one made her jump in the air with force, but Karma managed to block
just enough to avoid breaks of any kind. And again, the flailing is another feint; he quickly spins into a backfist that meets the area next to Naoko's left eye, causing her to spin too. Turnabout is fair play, however, as Naoko uses the spin for a heel kick that catches Karma's neck again and puts him down. Naoko grabs her ankle and begins kneeling harder on her right, choking Karma in a single-leg Triangle. But suddenly she feels constrained too; Karma grabbed her sleeves as she fell, and pulled them across from his position - A combatives collar choke!*

-Battle song ends.-

Naoko/Karma: *attentively stare at each other during the stalemate of their fight. When one decides to wrench their lock even more, the other returns in their own way.*

Naoko: "Having fun yet?"

Karma: "Yeah."

Naoko: "How about now?" *Compresses the Leg Triangle choke.*

Karma: "Only if you are." *Tightens his collar choke. He then realizes that the fabric of Naoko's clothing is starting to rip.* "!!"

Naoko: "Which one of us will go to sleep first?"

Karma: "We'll see."

-They continue to apply pressure on their submissions. The constricting clothing around her larynx causes Naoko to start gagging lightly. Karma meanwhile is in worse shape, turning blue, and barely able to concentrate. But then he sees something that makes him internally crumple completely.-

Naoko: *Can't help looking away at this point, and she closes both eyes, forcing tears to run down her face in pain.*

Karma: *When he sees this, he comes to a tranquil realization... One that makes him start tearing too.* "But I don't want to see it."

Naoko: *Looks back at him, seeing the changed expression on his face.* "I never wanted to."

Naoko/Karma: *both know what they must do.* "One... Two... Three." *They both release their necklocks and lay supine to each other, seeing the roof of the warehouse.*

Karma: "Man... What a hypocrite I was."

Naoko: *Turns her head to see him.* "How so?"

Karma: "Two ways. One to myself, for not knowing wanting to admit that I've missed you. And two to Nagisa, for giving him shit when he did not react as he should when we rescued Kayano-san."

Naoko: "Hm, true, fighting the one you awaited for so long isn't a great welcome. But it was me who gave you so many problems lately. So, I'm sorry. For everything so far."
Karma: "I should be sorry too... The Ministry of Defence is definitely not the joke I made it to be." *sits up, which Naoko copies.*

Naoko: "So, you really skipped two years of relationships for me?"

Karma: "You don't know what you got until it's gone. I didn't want anything else after two years. I didn't want anything better. I wanted you." *finally manages to look Naoko in the eyes as he finishes that sentence.*

Naoko: *Blushes, breaking eye contact first.* "Well, you're in luck, then... I've been longing you too. All this time."

Karma: "Truly now?"

Naoko: "That's right. But unlike you, I don't know how to express words so well. Especially when it's towards other guys. I never truly interacted with the opposite gender until Class 3-E, remember?"

Karma: "Right..."

Naoko: "So, I, had commitment issues. It's weird... Not being able to tell your heart out. The Ministry wouldn't hear of it, as they should, and the criminals we lock up? Give me a break. No one before committed to me, so I never get the chance to commit to them. Therefore, I have no practice."

Karma: "Yeah."

Naoko: "Yeah. So when faced with critical decisions in relationships... I try to fade away. Why rely on me, who's never dealt with these things before, to deal with them?"

Karma: "I understand that notion, but when a guy chooses yo be with you, you ought to know that he believes you and he, not just you, are able to deal with them. Nobody wants to go halfway in relationships; it takes two halves, but there are no quarters in it. Each half must put one-hundred percent of itself into the relationship. That's how it works."

Naoko: "..."

Karma: "And if one half is having trouble, the other half helps them. Like right now." *looks at her again.* "You just told me your true reason for leaving, and I'm fine with it now. But do you think running away from commitment is the answer to it?"

Naoko: *looks back at him.*

Karma: "If you don't face it, how will you overcome it?." *spits to the far side of the arena.* "Of course, you won't be alone when you have to face it. You've got your significant other right there with you."

Naoko: "..."

Karma: "And, if it's possible, well," *scratches the back of his head.* "Maybe you'd like me to be that-"
Naoko: *pushes Karma back onto the ground and side mounts him, with her hand on his chest and their faces inches away.*

Karma: "N-Naoko?"

Naoko: "Shut up." *pulls herself in for a long-sought kiss, hold his head from behind to keep it from making contact with the floor. Karma quickly goes along with it, moving his hands to her waist and embracing the intimate gesture. The even goes on for another half-a-minute, before they release the kiss and cuddle their foreheads together.*

Karma: "Does this mean... We're back together?"

Naoko: "Well, that's a matter of-"

-They hear a car door closing.-

Naoko/Karma: *look at the door and windows leading to the outside.* Karasuma-sensei/neesan!

Karasuma: *walks closer to the doorways to the warehouse, only a dozen steps away.*

Karma: Hide!

Naoko: O-of course! But where!? There's no good cover!

Karasuma: *eight steps.*

Karma: The office upstairs!

Naoko: He might go up there; I'll be stuck!

Karasuma: *four steps.*

Karma: Behind the test dummy!

Naoko: Are you for real!? 

Karasuma: *inserts his key into the warehouse.*

Naoko/Karma: *zoomed-in shot of their eyes looking at the door.*
Naoko's Space; Final Level

Chapter Summary

Naoko and Karma reached a resolution... A rather romantic one, if this narrator is allowed to say. But of course, there's always a new thing that is bound to go wrong. For instance, a certain agent's big brother who will not take kindly to his sister being where he has forbidden?

-Karasuma gets out of his car, just some distance away from the large doors to the warehouse.-

Karasuma: *Irina says she left her alternate secure-access laptop up in the office here. Heh, she wanted to go get it herself, but this presents an opportunity for me; staying out of that "kitchen sink" for at least another hour.* *Advances towards the entrance, pulling out his set of keys.* *Who's crazy idea was it to not enforce the drinking age... If Naoko so much has touched an Asashi during our time away...* *inserts his key into the doorway and turns it, but realizes that the door is already unlocked.* *What's this?* *Wields his Agency-issue Minebea P9 pistol and takes a breach position. After a few seconds, he kicks the door open and scopes out the whole area, which has remained dark.* *"Who's in here!?"

Karma: *Steps out from behind a pillar of the warehouse arena supporting the office upstairs, holding his hands up when Karasuma points his gun at him.* *"H-hey there, Karasuma-sensei."

Karasuma: *Lowers his pistol before putting it away, walking closer towards his student.* "Karma? What are you doing here?"

Naoko: *Is standing on the supporting metal beams of the office's "flooring," almost directly above her legal brother. She had gotten up there after Karma gave her a last-minute boost jump upwards. However, the shadows are not dark enough to completely mask her, so if he looked up, she would be seen. And she can't move because one of the beams will creak...* *Pokes some of the bruises on Karma's arms and face, caused by Naoko.*

Karma: "I, was training. Putting in the extra effort. That's not against the Law, is it?"

Karasuma: "Of course not; I heavily recommend such behavior. But it's not so much like you..."

Karma: "Well, uh, things change, right? Life is complex, but that's what makes it better. Heheh..." *scratches his head.*

Karasuma: *Inspects his student more.* "Mind telling me what you've been doing to yourself?" *Pokes some of the bruises on Karma's arms and face, caused by Naoko.*

Karma: "No pain, no gain? Some high-risk assassination techniques I wanted to test out, pointed out by some Kayano-san, Okano-san, and Maehara-kun, and so on. Took me a few tries to get the hang of, and all these are the proof."

Karasuma: "Who else is here, Karma?"
Karma: "W-what?"

Karasuma: *Treads his thumb across Karma's neck, causing the latter to wince noticeably.* "Your larynx is seriously stressed, and it practically has a heartbeat with all of its blood. No self-training style I know of can potentially cause accidents like this. Which means, you didn't do this to yourself."

Karma: *holds his neck with concern.*

Karasuma: "So, as I've just asked, who else is here?"

Karma: *sighs.* "Shit... End of the line... *sighs.* "There is-

???: "Us."

Karma/Karasuma/Naoko: *All look over to the source of the voice, which emanated from a dark corner. The two men made it out to be Terasaka.*

Terasaka: "I was helping Karma work on his submission defense, hence the choking pains on him." *looks around the warehouse.* "Everybody, it's safe to come out now."

Isogai: *pops out from a window in the office.* "I was programming the test dummies to go at the max level. I think that might have been too much, so I went up here to safely pacify them."

Nagisa: *comes down from an upper corner of the warehouse using a vertical line launcher.* "And when Karma was done with that, we set up some ambush spots to help him practice counter-assassination. Guys?"

Kataoka/Kimura: *drop down their cables as well, bowing to their teacher once they've reached proper footing.* "Sensei."

Karma/Naoko: *left absolutely speechless.*

Karasuma: *satisfyingly nods.* "Alright. That..."

Politicians + Naoko/Nagisa: *attentively stare at him.*

Karasuma: "Checks out. I suppose I have no issue with it now."

AssUniv: *sigh a breath of relief.*

Karasuma: "Just one more question though."

AssUniv: "!!"

Karasuma: "What brought up your desire to extra training in the first place? Your complex matter can be addressed to me, mind you."

Karma: "Well...

???: "He barely passed a test in his major."
AssUniv: *Look over to the front entrance to the warehouse, where Ohno appears, having situated himself on the sill before entering. Most likely to be the final ambush on Karma as he leaves.*

Ohno: "He sought an escape during this time. A means to let out all of his stress. But all he found was punishment. Had it not been for his bloodlust, I believe he would've collapsed from training quickly."

Karma: "..."

Karasuma: "..."

AssUniv: *attentively starts at him again.*

Karasuma: "Karma, next time, you bring that news to me. Ohno doesn't know how to push you too hard the right way."

Karma: *sighs with relief again.* "Okay, Karasuma-sensei."

AssUniv: *That very concept is scary!!* "..."

Karasuma: "Of course, you're too tired now to take on a true training regime today, so your punishment will extend to tomorrow night. You better be ready then."

Karma: "Don't worry." *winks.*

Karasuma: "Very good." *To the rest of AssUniv.* "Do any of you need a ride back to the Hyatt Regency or the Nightclub?"

Ohno: "Don't you see the bus in the back? I brought them here; I'll bring them back."

Karasuma: "... Fine then. Make sure you all get rest, everyone." *leaves through the front entrance.*

AssUniv: *wait until they hear Karasuma's car revs up and takes off.* "Ahhhhh~~~..."

Ohno: "I'll admit, that was too close for comfort, even for my kinds of plans."

Nagisa: "Are you saying that all of this were variables you considered too?"

Ohno: "Certainly not all of them. But the second I found out about them, I knew something had to be done. Something about that person up there..." *Looks up to the place where Naoko is hiding. The Politicians' eyes follow the gaze to that location as well.*

Naoko: *Drops down from her ledge, wiping the sweat off of her forehead.* "I can't believe that actually worked."

Karma: "Yeah. But it wouldn't have happened without them." *looks to the rest of the Politicians.* "Were you all in on this?"

Kataoka: "We knew something was wrong the second you were shooting daggers with your eyes at Naoko-san, Karma-kun. And you did cause quite a scene at the nightclub earlier tonight."
Isogai: "So we decided to follow you two. Make sure you didn't end up killing each other."

Terasaka: "Nagisa took notice too, and kept it to himself. I guess he understands the severity of this situation as much as we do for him to be like that." *thumbs over to the blue-head.*

Kimura: "And when Karasuma-sensei showed up, we stayed out of sight until the time was right."

Naoko: "That's incredible of you all."

Karma: *To Ohno.* "And was Ohno-kun involved in your cover?"

Isogai: "Actually, no. We didn't know he was here either."

Ohno: "Managing the same nightclub for a great length of time gives you a spatial awareness. I can tell when a small group that you really know suddenly leave the venue. And when it's at a time," *checks his watch,* "that they don't usually do so, you get interested. So I followed you all."

Karma: "And how did you know about my bad test grade? I wouldn't be getting one until at least one week later."

Ohno: *snickers.* "What bad test grade?"

Kimura: *Did he really lie about that, or is he playing dumb? I can't tell anymore..."

Nagisa: "Well, I guess that explains all that needs explaining. Now, I guess we have to find out what we have to do in the future."

Karma: "I know what I want out of the future..." *starts pulling Naoko towards him from her hip.*

Naoko: *lays a hand on his chest.* "Same here." *cuddles her head on his clavicle for a second.*

Terasaka: "..."

Isogai: "Aside from that, however, we need to know if Naoko should present herself to the rest of AssUniv."

Ohno: "I know I have no ethos to say this, but I would recommend that Naoko-san stays out of sight from all of the other peers for now."

Kataoka: "No, I agree. Karasuma-sensei has more of a chance of finding out Naoko-san is here if the others know about this as well. For now, we need to keep our mouths shut about this. Since most of us study at Ritsumeikan, that shouldn't be a problem. Which leaves just our two outliers, Nagisa-kun and Ohno-kun."

Karma: "What's it going to be, you two? Will we have to silence you both?"

Nagisa: "Hey, hey, that won't be necessary. I'll be quiet about this."

Ohno: "If it means I get to play Karasuma for a fool down the road, I'm all eager to comply."
Kimura: "Okay. I guess that means we're all good. So how do we kill off the rumor we gave our friends?"

AssUniv: "Hmm...

-The next day, after classes, they all meet up at Nyurifu Rikkyo---

AssUniv sans Politicians: "REEEEEHHH--!?

Kataoka: *holding up her phone, whose screen reveals the "doppelganger" that she and the Ritsumeikan students met on that bump-into some time ago.* "That's right. We passed by this person again just yesterday, and we realized it wasn't Naoko-san. Over some coffee, of course."

Nakamura: "Man, what a damn shame."

Kayano: "A pity. Been wanting to see her after all this time."

Itona: "It sucks how the Ministry repays all of contributions like this, keeping her away from us and Karasuma-sensei."

Irina: "Don't forget me! I miss my sister-in-law too." *pouts and crosses her arms.*

Ohno: *Pops out of his storage door from the VIP Office Platform, carrying two glasses and a bottle of Dassai 50 Sake.* "There are a few upsides to this arrangement, however. For one, you know she's alive and well." *Pours a glass and gives it to Irina.* "And two..." *begins pouring himself a glass as well, until...*

Karasuma: "And two..." *Takes the glass after Ohno finishes serving.* "That it may be a sign that the Ministry legitimately cares about this Shadow War after all. And if they care, they believe it exists."

Kurahashi: "That's a start. A good start, I suppose."

Yada: "If they one day admit that to us, Karasuma-sensei, will we be able to gain true support from them?"

Karasuma: "Not necessarily. Keep in mind that very few Ministry officials other than myself presented themselves throughout the AssClass Program. And we've been causing quite a deal of trouble as well; they might secretly sanction us, but physical participation is out of the question. And even if they did become a third party, we'd probably be targets too."

Ohno: "What the Hell they be sanctioning if they did? I got all the money and resources we need." *pours another glass of wine.* "And what's more, they'd be too worried about the NWO that is The Reclamation Society to be shooting at us." *sips.*

Karasuma/Ohno: "..."

AssUniv: *This is getting too tense too fast!*

-Despite the bad blood that has been stirred back up from the incidents, the joint operation between Naoko, Ohno, Nagisa, and the Politicians was successful; no one besides them have any more
suspicion of the matter. And so, they all go about their school time without over-preoccupation; just enough preoccupation. Enough to have Naoko still wear a hoodie in public to obscure her face, and minimally meet the Politicians on the streets. It's only a few seconds of grace every few days or so, but it's enough to satisfy both ends. Well, almost both ends...-

Politicians/Naoko: *About to pass by each other, and while doing so, they give light nods. Between Naoko and Karma, a set of extra acute smiles is shared between them, and then they continue to look ahead.*

Karma: *bobs his head back and forth, whistling all the while.*

Isogai: "That is the walk of a man without a care in the world right now." *sighs.*

Kataoka: "Oh, he's got some cares. They all just concern a certain someone else."

Kimura: "Yeah; not him. Totally unlike you two. Y'all must be turbulent."

Terasaka: "..." *continues gazing back at the young woman with the hood, and then over to Karma, and then to where he's going, realizing that he almost bumped into another lady.* "Oops, sorry, miss." *steers clear to allow the stranger to proceed in her direction unhindered.*

Female student: "Thank you." *advances.*

Isogai: "Everything alright there, Terasaka-san?"

Karma: "Didn't run into some other long-lost classmate we used to have?" *with his hands on the back of his head, turns around aloofly.*

Terasaka: "Very funny. Let's just keep walking." *takes the lead.*

Naoko: *looks back, noticing the disturbance that Terasaka had caused, before going her way again.* There's obviously something wrong... He's thinking of something intensely... WHEN does he think intensely?

-Hours later...-

Terasaka: *left without a last class this day, he decides to bide his time on the rooftop of his last class' hall location. He leans on the fencing, seemingly with conflict.*

Naoko: *whistles while leaning on the rooftop door's sidesill.*

Terasaka: *looks back.* "Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "Narimiya-san." *jingles her school ID card.*

Terasaka: "Right, Narimiya-san. Uh, what are you doing here?"

Naoko: *walks up to him.*

Terasaka: *backs away a bit.* "Is something wrong?"

Naoko: "Not with me, but I know you do."
Terasaka: "!

Naoko: "No one's going to ask me about whatever it is; you can say it to me."

Terasaka: "... Nah, it wouldn't be right for me to say to anybody."

Naoko: "Try it. Why not?"

Terasaka: "It's hypocritical of me."

Naoko: "Okay. How so?"

Terasaka: "I... Was happy to see you again after all this time. But in the middle of my gracious state, I realized... I didn't know how to handle it. Which was the same reason I ribbed Nagisa. And, when Karma was being a hardass about you, him too. It's just that... How do you expect us to handle it?"

Naoko: "Well, how do you think I feel!?" *realizes her words.* "Ah... I think you earned yourself a reprieve, sir. For I too, am being hypocritical now. I never considered Karma's feelings about, our issue."

Terasaka: "Huh... So we're practically on the same boat?"

Naoko: *looks at him.* "Yeah. I guess so."

Terasaka: *looks away a bit, then back at her.* "If that's the case, maybe we can find out how to deal with it-"

Naoko: "I'm very sorry, Terasaka-san."

Terasaka: "For what?"

Naoko: "I know what you're saying. Or implying, rather. And there is definitely no easy way to say this, but I... Can never return your feelings for me."

Tries to reassure Terasaka with a few shoulder hugs.* "By now, you know that my heart is currently with another. And while we don't know each other much better than between me and you, I know that he can handle the less material issues we share better than us. This isn't why you suck, but can you say you can do that for me?"

Terasaka: *Attempts to raise a point to that, but he realizes she is right; he just doesn't understand these kinds of things at all.* "That is true..."

Naoko: "Yeah, it is. But you know what's also true? You deserve someone who can do the same for you. And that isn't me, sadly."

Terasaka: *looks up at her.*

Naoko: "It may be in bad taste for me to ask, but we'll be seeing each other far more in the near future, so it must be put to bed - are you okay with this?"

Terasaka: *looks away for a second.* "Heheh... Hahaha..."
Naoko: "Is that a 'yes'?

Terasaka: "I wanted to be free of the stress one way or another. Of course, I'll be out of practice for some time again on this fated problem, but I'll get to where you are someday."

Naoko: *smiles.* "Don't strive for where I am. Strive for where I will be. I know I am." *winks.*

Terasaka: "Oooh, seems like I have to start working on it now." *starts walking to the exit.* "Thanks, Naoko-san. For not giving up on us. On me." *finishes leaving.*

Naoko: *looks at the exit for a bit.*

-briiiiiing briiiiiing-

Naoko: *looks at her phone, noticing that it is Ohno, and answers it.* "Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Having fun with your reintroduction into your old life?"

Naoko: "It's pleasing."

Ohno: "I hope it was pleasing enough. Because you do know you cannot forget about Karasuma, right?"

Naoko: "I haven't forgotten. That's why we arranged my reintroduction like this."

Ohno: "And despite that and the dispelled rumors, he is on high alert. I have a good feeling he will be searching all third-party accounts and trade intelligence to keep a good track of you."

Naoko: "I have been considering this even before I came to see you at the start of the Summer. I had my cards, files, and so on recycle a set pattern with one variation every other month."

Ohno: "That won't be enough now; I told you, he's onto you now."

Naoko: "What do you want me to do? Not exist, like you do?"

Ohno: "That would be preferable, surely. But in case he breaks your cycle, you'll need to cancel any Kyoto-based subscriptions."

Naoko: "What, like my lodging at the campus? Where will I stay?"

Ohno: "My apartments are always an option. Karasuma would never get to you there."

Naoko: "But you can - at any time. And that I can't sleep under." *waits a moment.* "Hyun's. He should be able to make room for little old me in Little Korea, right?"

Ohno: "I reckon so. You'll have to keep your Agency ties REALLY low though; those folk aren't too kind to government."

Naoko: "I can do that. Heh, you must be disappointed you can't get your way with me now, huh?"
Ohno: "One day, my way. You'll see. I'll contact Hyun and tell him you'll be coming to crash. See you later."

Naoko: "Um, while you're here, Ohno-kun..."

Ohno: "Yes?"

Naoko: "Anything on Grimaldi yet? Has the Ministry got anything out of him?"

Ohno: "Not yet. Eyes on the prize first, Naoko-san; we need to find Yanigisawa's DNA. Keep up with Hyun like we last arranged; you've got no reason not to now."

Naoko: "Of course. Keep with Karasuma too then."

Ohno: "I will. Catch you later."

Naoko: "That's my line." *hangs up, sighing.* "One day, my way." Psh, like I'd let him try anything on me. Alright, time to clean out my apartment. *Exits the rooftop to reach his campus residence.*
Chiba has always been a punk rocker. I mean, just look at that hair! But with the genre rather niche, he's never really had anyone to enjoy it with... Until now?

-At Kyoto Institute of Technology...-

-Chiba and Hayami are in the middle of one of their mutual classes, Linear Programming. They both sit a fair distance away in the classroom, with Chiba just one row from the front while Hayami is two rows behind, and several desks to the right. The former is handling the lectures just fine, while the latter is struggling and falling behind.-

-Soon, the class ends, and the two leave the lecture together. In a brief time, they make it outside, and walk along the sidewalks to the dining area of the campus.-

    Hayami: "..." *looks towards the streets.*

    Chiba: "..." *looks toward the commons.*

-Even when it concerns star-crossed academics, neither can hold a conversation between each other for very long. In this instance, Chiba, aware of her academic decline, is afraid to bring up the sore subject, while Hayami, refusing to make him worry when asking for help on the subject.-

    Hayami: *Come on, Hayami! Say something! You need to!*

    Chiba: *This is a part of work, Chiba! You can't let her drift away!*

    Hayami/Chiba: *Continue crossing the street, close yet so far to the other.*

-This continues for a few minutes until they find the rest of their friends in the respective college, the Scientists (Yoshida, Itona, Takebayashi, Okuda, and Kurahashi), and begin heading towards Nyurifu Rikkyo to unwind for the day.-

    Yoshida: "What's up, longbang?"

    Chiba: "Eh, nothing much."

    Itona: "School got your tongue?"

    Chiba: "Damned if it did."

    Kurahashi: "What about you, Hayami-san? You're more quiet than usual."

    Hayami: "I have my reasons."
Okuda: "Oh, the woes we all harbor."

-And that's pretty much it between them all for the first half of the journey to the nightclub. The awkwardness between them all begins to boil over horrendously. Until...

Chiba: *feels the vibration of his phone.* "What's this?" *checks it.*

Itona: "Who is it?"

Chiba: "Karasuma-sensei." *answers it.* "Karasuma-sensei?"

Karasuma: "Hello, Chiba. Where are you?"

Chiba: "I'm with the rest of my classmates from KIT, heading towards Ohno's Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub. Is something wrong?"

Karasuma: "No, nothing's wrong. But you did receive a package."

Chiba: "A package? From whom?"

Karasuma: "Your parents."

Chiba: "Whoa..."

Karasuma: "Don't worry, I'm sure it's them; it went to me first, and I gave a basic inspection of the delivery without opening it. I left it in your hotel room. Go and get it when you have time."

Chiba: "I'll go do that. Thank you, sensei." *hangs up.* "My old people gave me something, and Karasuma-sensei brought it to the hotel."

Yoshida: "Maybe you should go check out what it is?"

Chiba: "Oh I will."

Scientists: *wait a little while as Chiba does not change course, even passing by a bus stop that could bring him towards the Hyatt Regency.*

Takebayashi: *refocuses his glasses.* "Maybe perhaps, you'd like to do that right now?"

Chiba: "Oh... Right. I guess I should."

Hayami: "Maybe not alone. Not sure if Society mooks might be watching. I'll come with."

-And so the two break off from the group, taking the bus using the stop they had just passed, which brings them to Hyatt. After a brief time, they reach their floor.-

Hayami: *steps out of the elevator with Chiba.* "Do you, uh, have any idea what it could be?"

Chiba: "Parents, Hayami-san. Who knows what they think?" *begins to take out his key just steps away from the room.*

Hayami: *theoretical awkward lines drop down her face.* *That's all you have to say...? Ah, I'm
Chiba: *unlocks his hotel suite, and enters, finding a small, rectangular cardboard box lying on the bed. He goes up to it and knifes the tape, allowing him to open it. The first thing on top is a folded letter with his name on it.* "A little handwritten message?" *reads the inside.*

Mr. Chiba: *Dear son, we truly hope that our silence over the matter of the AssUniv Program and your involvement was not misinterpreted as our negligence for you. Certainly, all that we could say would result in you steadfastly declining, and we can understand that, seeing how much the late AssClass Program had helped you grow. As such, we will miss you, and we will pray for you, but we will not pressure you. I trust that that is satisfactory. Give your enemy Hell, yeah? Sincerely, your father.*

Chiba: "..."

Hayami: "That's great of them, right Chiba?"

Chiba: "The allowance they sent me? Yeah, it's great."

Hayami: "!!"

Chiba: "Just kidding; yeah, it's, uh, sweet." *ruffles through the safety packaging.* "What else did they give?"

Hayami: *takes the letter on the side of the bed, noticing there's one flap not been opened.* "What is this?" *unfolds it and reads.*

Mr. Chiba: *P.S. Also, I'm sure whatever Mr. Karasuma and his instructing staff have for you can be quite demanding, and you might wish for a means to release some stress. So, we sent you a little gift, in addition to some spending money. Inside the package, you will find-

Chiba: "WHOA! HOLY SHIT!"

Hayami: *falls over due to shock, interrupting her reading.* "What!? What is it?"

Chiba: "A ticket to Osaka's Hurri-Quake!" *studies the small slip of reinforced paper extensively.*

Hayami: "Hurri-Quake?"

Chiba: "Hurri-Quake - one of the biggest music festivals for all things punk and alternative rock! I've been watching livestreams of these events since they started roughly a decade ago, but I never expected to get to go to one! Man, this is an awesome present! Thank you, old man!"

Hayami: *looks inside the box, with something catching her eye.* "Oh, uh Chiba?"

Chiba: *takes notice.* "What's up?"

Hayami: "There's another one." *points to the second ticket.*

Chiba: "Huh? Two of them?" *takes the other one out.*
Hayami: *picks up the letter from off the floor and finishes reading, aloud.*

Mr. Chiba: -two tickets to this years Hurri-Quake Festival, which we're sure you have been keeping track of in your spare time. One is for you, of course, but I also think that, at your age, you have begun to grasp ideas of a person or people who share your interests - I definitely had at the time. So, hand this to that someone. And have a good time with them, yes?

Chiba: "Huh... Another ticket..."

Hayami: *reads a second time through the P.S. and begins getting excited.*

Chiba: "A person... Who could that be...?"

Hayami: *almost begins leaping up with elation.*

Chiba: "I know almost thirty persons who match that. It shouldn't be too hard to find the one. Come on, Hayami-san; we're finally going to Nyurifu Rikkyo now." *leaves his room, also leaving a distraught Hayami behind.*

Hayami: *shakes her surprise away, closes the door on her way out, and works to keeps up.*

-They take another bus ride across the city, and arrive at Ohno's nightclub before long.-

-"Emotional Fire" by Denise plays through the intercom of the venue.-

-There, Chiba, with an annoyed follower not too far behind, begins asking all of his AssUniv classmates on the matter, confirming their stance about being rock buddies for the half-day event.-

Karma: "A concert, huh? I've got a grasp of the genre you're talking about since my parents have brought some memorabilia of it back at some points. But I don't think I'm the best one for the job."

Sugino: "Alternative rock? Eh, that's not me, Chiba-san. I'm more of a classic rock guy myself."

Kimura: "Me and Maehara-san already agreed to have a race with Kataoka and Okano across the rooftops before the December ice develops on them, and we're in deep training. Should be our time of fun in a hectic academic semester closing."

Sosuke: "The lack of colors perceivable in a concert of punk rock isn't my cup of tea, unfortunately."

Terasaka: "Sorry man; ordered a wrestling PPV on the Hyatt flatscreen; want to get my money's worth."

Hayami: *behind Chiba, awkwardly with her eyes closed.* At least he's only asking guys...

Maybe he didn't consider the other-

Kanzaki: "Rock is no longer my preference, sadly."

Hayami: Oh, come on!

Nakamura: "Me and Nagisa-kun have to study for a foreign language final. Now's not the best time."
-The word travels through to the rest of the students, but in the end, Chiba was unable to find the one among his lifelong peer friends.-

Chiba: *holds his cup of ramune with preoccupation at one of the high tables on the second floor, overlooking the atrium opening.* "..."

Hayami: *watching from afar, with her bottle of CC Lemon, wonders if she should go up to him and mention her interest in joining him in the festival. Every step from here to there seemed like a mile, however and when she was finally able to reach out for his close shoulder and say, "hey."*

-The Eurobeat of the nightclub fades down.-

AssUniv: *look over to the stage area, with all of the audience doing the same.*

DJ: "Alright, all you young ones. Word of God, aka the boss in this here establishment, tells of some foreign folk who are hoping to give us all quite a slew of live, A-list international performances down the road! So, to show our inherent appreciation, why don't I play you all some samples of similar detail? I'm sure you all heard this before!" *plays a new disc in his machine.*

-"Smile" by Avril Lavigne plays-

Audience: *cheers the change in tune and begin grooving in accordance.*

Chiba: "Are you kidding me...?" *looks over to the staircase, noticing Ohno and his tentative business partners going up to the third floor. He then begins following them up there.*

Hayami: Why does this keep happening to me...? *Trails him.*

-The two then remain at the last few steps before the reserved third floor, overhearing the conversation.-

Ohno: *motions to over the fencing of the atrium.* "You hearing all of this, guys? They love this stuff! You're going to get a lot of box office and extra sales if you provide your services here!"

Businessman: "I see that. But the question is, are you a deep fan?"

Ohno: "Say again?"

Businessman: "We deliver; you should know that. We deliver. So, during seasonal theme developments, can you really handle having punk rock blasting through your speakers across the span of many months at a time?"

Ohno: "Have you had people who couldn't?"

Businessman: "A fair few; this genre isn't for everyone. The specifics, the baseness, and so on can be deceptively overwhelming. Not to mention, it doesn't exactly scream a universally likened message. Your future dealings-

Ohno: "What do you care about my future dealings? The only thing you need be concerned of is this deal. And yes, I can have this playing through the walls of my office platform for great lengths. Because I am an avid fan."
Chiba: "!" *pays closer attention.*

Businessman: "What's your favorite band of the genre?"

Ohno: "What language?"

Chiba: *pays even closer attention.*

Businessman: *considers for a second.* "English."

Ohno: "Rise Against. Especially 'Re-Education (through Labor).'"

Chiba: *covers his mouth to prevent screaming aloud.*

Ohno: "But I'm all for some Sum 41 and Story of the Year. Dropkick Murphys too."

Chiba: *bites on his middle finger.*

Ohno: "And if we're talking Japan, ONE OK ROCK's 'The Beginning' is nice. 'Firecracker' by Ellegarden is great too."

Chiba: *lightly punches the walls.*

Ohno: "Need I go on?"

Businessman: ". . . Nope. I think you proved your devotion. Okay; I'll bring this review to the superiors, but I think your chances of sanctioning A-list rock performances here, and any other venue you own are high."

Ohno: "Awesome. Have a good day, sir." *mightily shakes hands with the businessman, following him and his co-workers down the stairs on their way to leave.*

Chiba: "He's the one."

Hayami: "Excuse-" *barely notices Chiba trail the crowd.* "Me..."

Ohno: "I hope to see you all soon." *shakes hands with the businessman one more time at the door, and then sees them depart.*

Chiba: "Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *turns around.* "Yes, Chiba-san?"

Chiba: "You never told me you were a hard rock fan."

Ohno: *snickers* "You never asked."

Chiba: "You really a ONE OK ROCK fanatic?"

Ohno: "I don't lie. But if I ever did, it wouldn't be about them. Their choruses always get me pumped."
Chiba: "Same, brother! What about, eh, Linkin Park?"

Ohno: "'Breaking the Habit' your fancy?"

Chiba: "Close, close; it's 'What I've Done' for me. How about the more spiritual side?"

Ohno: "Skillet's my one on that front. 'Rise' is my mayhem track."

Chiba: "Now that's the one! Man, you've got my rez there!"

Ohno: "Excellent. What can I do with it?"

Chiba: "You can redeem it..." *pulls out the two tickets to Hurri-Quake* "For one of these bad boys!"

Ohno: "Whoa... Hurri-Quake 2016..."

Chiba: "Uh-huh. You wanna bask in the revolution?"

Ohno: "... Sure. I've got some staff who can take over for a few nights."

Chiba: "Awesome!" *leaves one ticket in Ohno's outer chest pocket.* "That's yours then. You can arrange a ride there, right? Train can be awful around this Wintery time."

Ohno: "Of course. Leave that to me. Enjoy the rest of your night, eh?"

Chiba: "Yeah. Thanks." *leaves.*

Ohno: *looks over to a certain occupied corner before returning to the third floor, and then advancing to the VIP platform on the fourth floor. He sighs after taking four steps into the office, and then starts speaking to his back.* "Hello, Hayami-san."

Hayami: "That should've been me."

Ohno: "I know it should've. And it will be."

Hayami: "Damn right it will be-" *thinks about what she and he just said.* "Wait, what?"

Ohno: *turns around.* "It will..." *takes the ticket to Hurri-Quake 2016 out of his chest pocket and puts it into her left hand.* "Be you."

Hayami: "..." *looks down at her hand and then at him.*
Hurri-Quake Space; Final Level

Chapter Summary

Ah, the usual jealousy time story, subverted! Hayami is happy to take Ohno's place as Chiba's second for such an amazing punk rock concert. But is she really qualified to do so? Time to find out.

"Power of Sound" by Ace plays in the loudspeakers.

It was a Friday night, literally one full day since Ohno has given Hayami the ticket to Hurri-Quake. In between that time, Hayami had been reveling with the ticket in hand, gleeful for the opportunity for some up-close time with Chiba. This has translated to when they return to the Nightclub; the first of two visits leading to the opening of the festival Sunday night at the turn of college break week.

Hayami: *To not suspect Chiba, she sits inside a stall of the ladies' restrooms to read over the details of the admit-one once again. But then, her phone blares a message alert tone. She puts the paper away and takes a look on her screen, finding that Ohno has messaged her on LINE.*

Ohno: [message] "Can you meet with me up in the VIP office? Don't worry, Chiba's not there."

Hayami: Ohno-kun wants to meet with me? I wonder what for... [message] "Alright. I'll be up there in a second." *She puts her phone away, gets out of the stall and the bathrooms, and then heads towards the stairs of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, going up to the fourth floor, gently opening the door.* "Ohno-kun? What's up?"

Ohno: "Firstly, thank you for not slamming that door open." *throws her a bottle of water, which she catches.* "Secondly, may I see the Hurri-Quake ticket for a second. I won't be using it."

Hayami: "Um, sure?" *takes it out and hands it to Ohno.*

Ohno: *inspects the small piece of paper, noticing the worn condition.* "How much handling did you give this?"

Hayami: "I... just couldn't stop squeeing over it..." *scratches the back of her head before opening up her water bottle and taking a sip.*

Ohno: "Fair enough... Tell me, Hayami-san; do you have a strong level of immersion in the alternative genre?"

Hayami: *chokes in the middle of her sip.* "Well, I got some experience... Thirty Seconds to Mars? I've got a handle on them. Oh, and Imagine Dragons as well."

Ohno: "Is that it?"

Hayami: "Fall Out Boy?"
Ohno: "..."

Hayami: "If that's all you wanted to ask me, can I have my ticket back?"

Ohno: "I'm afraid I can't do that yet."

Hayami: "What!?!"

Ohno: "This ticket isn't getting the love it deserves."

Hayami: "Maybe you see it that way, but you willingly gave me the ticket earlier, so you'll have to suck it up."

Ohno: "I said 'it will be you.' Emphasis on 'will.' But that future tense," *checks his watch.* "Is not here yet."

Hayami: "Don't get the wrong idea, but sometimes you can be so literal, it makes some of us want to bang our heads on walls."

Ohno: "Hayami-san, do you know why Chiba-san picked me for this concert? Do you know why he did not even consider you for the event?"

Hayami: "Because I am considered 'unappreciative of the genre' to a diehard fan?"

Ohno: "Exactly. What do fanbase communities do best? They have each other's backs. Chiba calling me 'brother' when he passed me that ticket meant that he was totally okay with me being right there when he needs me. And the times that he needs me are callbacks, finishing sentences/song lyrics, keeping track of the latest buzz, and more, as far as Alternative and Punk Rock is concerned."

Hayami: "Wow... Is it really that diehard?"

Ohno: "When it involves those two genres, it especially is that diehard."

Hayami: "Hm... I know won't be able to do that for Chiba at Hurri-Quake..."

Ohno: "And Chiba knew that too. So he glossed over you."

Hayami: "Damn, man..."

Ohno: "But it doesn't have to be that way. Hell, it won't even be that way. I told you 'it will be you,' and I meant it. So, before," *checks his watch.* "Tomorrow night's opening of the festival, I will be giving you a crash course of the two rock genres. Just enough to make you compatible with Chiba or myself."

Hayami: "You think you can do it?"

Ohno: *snickers.* "First thing waking up next morning, you will be coming back here to have weekend class. I swear, after half an hour with me, you'll know better than to ask that question again. Enjoy the rest of your night."
Hayami: "Ooooookay..." *goes to leave, contemplating what he said.*

-The next day, Hayami snuck out of breakfast with the rest of AssUniv and went to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub to take up on Ohno's offer.-

Hayami: *steps into the VIP office.*

Ohno: "Ah, you're here. Good, I just set up the first exercise."

Hayami: "Cool. What is it?"

Ohno: "First, I want to instill some actual punk or alternative into you. So for now, we'll just be playing a track or two, and I want to hear what you have to say. Does that sound good?"

Hayami: "I suppose so." *takes a seat.*

Ohno: *turns on his boombox.*

"The Hell Song" by Sum 41 plays-

Ohno/Hayami: *nod their heads in unison as the song continues.*

Ohno: *turns to Hayami after a minute or so.* "So, what do you think?"

Hayami: "A steady, slightly-fast BPM of 174 or so... Metre is rather constant... Easy song to get into."

Ohno: "... Nice. Onto the next song then. And tell me, 'what is it that stands out to you?'" *goes up to the disc player and switches the song.*

"Our Time Now" by Plain White T's plays-

Hayami: "The BPM is a lot slower."

Ohno: "Don't read the specs, Hayami-san. What does the song say to you?"

Hayami: *listens into the lyrics as the chorus begins.* "They're telling me... To get up and get things done. Whatever things, without regard for the societal norms."

Ohno: "That's it; that's what I wanted you to find in these songs. The free, independent spirit of this subculture, the DIY belief, and the escape from all the BS in life is the running theme for these genres. Only after you've proven you can live on your own will the fans of this music, I.E. Chiba-san, allow you to live with them."

Hayami: "That's... Deep."

Ohno: "Right. So down the line, you're going to have to stand on your own two feet. Refuse to let Chiba be a lean-on. Think of, a crutch."

Hayami: "Right..."

-After a philosophy course, Ohno takes her out to Kyoto's market district, for some special
shopping...-

Hayami: "What is this place?"

Ohno: "A small-scale fashion store, tailor-made, no pun intended, for the umbrella topic of hard rock."

Hayami: *stares at all the lined-up apparel, which includes very-highly elevated heels, cut-out mesh tops, and many unnecessary pieces of leather on standard articles of clothing.* "You're dreaming if you think I'll be wearing any of this. Even for Chiba-kun."

Ohno: "That's the spirit, Hayami-san. But I wasn't expecting you to wear diehard outfits just yet. So there's a novice section over there." *points to a corner in the building, which houses some more universal clothing choices.*

Hayami: "Oh, well, that's decent." *Begins walking over to them.*

Ohno: "Pick anything your fancy. DIY, remember?" *Goes over to the clerk stand.* "Anything she gets will be on my tab."

Clerk: "Very well." *bows.*

Ohno: *Waits at the entrance for several minutes, when Hayami returns; her attire neatly packed into a paper bag.* "Got something?"

Hayami: "Oh yes. I think I might want to come back here sometime later too."

Ohno: "Great. But not now. We got a little more to do first."

Hayami: "Oh?"

Ohno: "Yes. Let's get back to the nightclub."

-After returning to Nyurifu Rikkyo...-

Hayami: "I got to learn to dance to alternative?"

Ohno: "Yes. Not too hard for a Jazz dancer like yourself, right?"

Hayami: "Learning a new style with just half a day left? I suppose, but I didn't even know alternative rock had a dance."

Ohno: "No? Then how did the alternative rock couples get together?"

Hayami: *drawing an absolute blank.* "...

Ohno: "Right. So, let's do some hybrid techniques." *puts his boombox onto the lip of the stage in front of the dance floor where the two are situated.*

-After a small demonstration practice, Ohno and Hayami come together to perform the routine as a pair.-
Ohno: "You ready?" *stands parallel-across from her.*

Hayami: *exhales.* "One way to find out."

Ohno: *nods. He then presses a button on a small remote pointed towards the radio.*

"Mr. Brightside" by The Killers plays.-

Ohno/Hayami: *Nod their heads in tune to the music, until ten seconds later when the vocals begin. Then, they first clap their right hands together, pull them back, and then clap again, but this time they clench palms, and Ohno motions his arm in a clockwise manner while stepping to the side, allowing Hayami to do a full frontflip in the air, letting go of his hand. and they end up back-to-back. From there, they lean backwards, creating a rough silhouette of a cursive m... though Hayami murks it by lifting her right leg up in an elegant motion. Ohno goes down deeper than Hayami, and once the back section of his head hits the ground, he pivots to a prone position and places his back onto Hayami's. He stands upright, allowing her to roll back with minimal support and ending up facing his back. Ohno tucks his right leg behind hers and pretends kicking it upwards (though Hayami more than lifts her leg before that happens). Off-balance, he throws his right hand back to catch Hayami's left, preventing her from falling, and pulling her into a prom-like pose with a little twist.*

Ohno: *whispers into her ear.* "You're still doing too many unnecessary movements." *then pushes her out.*

Hayami: "Right. Sorry." *at the apex of the short-arm push, she turns perpendicular in shoulders to Ohno, and tries really hard to not throw out her free hand. When she gets pulled back in for the 'Discus Princess,' She jumps with her knees tucked to allow Ohno to throw his arm behind her popliteal fossa, and support the middle of her back with his other, and then spins in place.*

Ohno: "Thinking of using this move tonight?"

Hayami: "I can only hope so."

Ohno: *nod. And they continue their routine...*

-And, at long last... The rock festival was upon everyone...-

Chiba: *Waiting outside Kyoto Station, checks his smartphone for a little while before Ohno shows up... Which he does, in a Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat 2015.*

Ohno: *Electronically opens up the passenger-side door.* "I see you're all set for Hurri-Quake."

Chiba: *Donning a black gothic-like suit with steel-floral details and chain accessories. He gets in.* "Not as much as you."

Ohno: *Sporting a shirt and tee combo, black and blue respectively, with silver wings graphics, combined with patchwork indigo skinny jeans, a skull buckle belt, and gray combat boots.* "Glad you think so."

Hayami: "Someone's forgetting someone." *appears from the backseat of the Charger. She had on a black-and-red floral embroidered long-sleeve button-down, a black leather and lace underbust corset, a matching pleated and plaid uniform skirt, and leggings whose faux-leather details create a
Chiba: "Whoa. Hayami-san?"

Hayami: "That's me."

Chiba: "I see that. What are you doing here?"

Ohno: "I saw her standing at a bus stop leading to this here station. I could tell, by the way she
dresses, she's heading to the same thing as we are. Isn't that right?" *looks back.*

Hayami: *nods.*

Chiba: "Hayami-san? You had a ticket to Hurri-Quake too?"

Hayami: "Yeah. Wanted to surprise you. I guess I did."

Chiba: "Yeah..."

Ohno: "Alright. Let's get going, shall we? We are..." *checks his watch.* "Roughly ninety
minutes away from the first performance." *shifts gears to drive and starts the long road to Osaka.*

Hayami/Chiba: "Let's rock!" *Both sit back and put on their seatbelts.*

-Roughly an hour later, they make it to the festival, able to squeeze into one of the few parking
spots remaining at the outdoors event. All throughout the time, however, the three kept a deep-
seated conversation that branched out from merely wanting to know the newest vocalist of a band
lately.-

Ohno: *stops in between a set of white lines.* "Okay! We're here!"

Hayami/Chiba: *Get out and stretch.* I'll be sure to dazzle Chiba with my well-practiced moves
tonight. Hehe...

Ohno: *locks the Charger.* "Alright, we enter... There." *walks over to the front gates, and they
line up to have their tickets redeemed. They all pass by without any difficulty.* "That was fun.
Now... Ah, the stage. And the drink bar too. Want to get some refreshments before it starts, guys?"

Chiba: "Of course."

Hayami: "Alright."

-The three of them get their drinks and find a good spot to see the stage. But then the crowd
develops and suddenly Ohno gets separated from the other man and woman.-

Chiba: "What the Hell? Where'd Ohno-kun go?"

Hayami: The crowd... It's too dense... How are we supposed to dance...

-Through the crowd is the intercom, saying that Zebrahead has come onto the stage. And after a
little prelude speech, they set up and start playing "Into You." The crowd roars in response.-
Chiba: (inaudible due to the crowd) "Aw yeah!" *starts headbanging wildly.*

Hayami: *Can't do any complex maneuvers...* Looks over to Chiba, having a good time with his simple motion, and starts copying.*

-After Zebrahead's thirty minutes are up, Story of the Year was next, starting with "Until the Day I Die." One more band before intermission, Skillet, plays "Awake and Alive."

-Ohno eventually reunites with the two of them at the drink bar when break time starts.-

-Chiba: "Bro, man, where'd you go?"

-Ohno: "You saw that crowd, right? I knew I should've brought the kindergarten rope."
*scratches head.*

-Hayami: "Yeah, speaking of the crowd, I haven't been able to find the restrooms in this festival. Care to guid me there, Ohno-kun?"

-Chiba: "Oh yeah, I reckon I should do that too."

-Ohno: *nods.* "Right this way."

-They make their way through the crowd, keeping hold of each other's hands this time, and reach the former barracks-esque lavatories.-

-Chiba: "Okay, see you all in about a minute. Or five, right?" *heads into the male facilities.*

-Hayami: *Waits until she sees that Chiba has fully entered, and then violently turns towards Ohno.* "Ohno-kun, you know that me and Chiba-kun could not dance at all during this concert?"

-Ohno: *scratches the back of his head.* "Yeah, I had thought so. The place I was proved too overcrowded for such activity too."

-Hayami: "Was there any chance it wouldn't have been so?"

-Ohno: *thinks about it a bit.* "Thirty-three percent chance. All rock concerts tend to attract major turnouts more often then not."

-Hayami: "Why did you have me practice the art's dance if you were inclined to believe that I wouldn't be utilizing it?"

-Ohno: "Because it's not your job as a fan to be prepared only for what is going to be. Tell me this: Was it truly unnecessary?"

-Hayami: "..."

-Ohno: "You must no less be ready to DIY at any time; that's the Modus Operandi of a punk or alternative rock fan. It's the purpose of being the crutch of another fan; the purpose of a true support; the purpose of being the foundation of another's free-form expression."

-Hayami: "!!" *Instantly realizes what she wants upon hearing that statement.* "You're... Are you sure?"
Ohno: "Only if you are."

Hayami: "Then I am." *nods, and bows.*

Ohno: "Great." *bows.*

Chiba: *gets out of the lavatories.* "Aw man, Ohno-kun, if you can help it, don't go in there. Someone graffitied the area so much, the aerosol has stifled the air."

Ohno: "I have a good set of kidneys. I should be fine throughout the night."

"Re:Make" by ONE OK ROCK can be heard playing on the stage.

Chiba: "Ooooooh, that's a beat I love hearing. Ready to rock out again, Hayami-san?"

Hayami: "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Chiba: "Likewise. Ohno-kun, you coming?"

Ohno: "I, uh, gotta refill this." *shakes soft-drink container.*

Chiba: "Tough break. Well, hope to find you in the crowd again." *Leaves with Hayami, who smiles with the comprehension that he has intentionally kept his distance from the two.*

Ohno: *Watches as they leave, then goes to return to the Charger. As he sits on the hood of the muscle car, he pulls out his flip phone and starts playing "Disconnected" by Hotblade* My brother just doesn't know me anymore, buying me a ticket for this... Concerts are no longer my thing... *looks back over to the illuminated stage as ONE OK ROCK continues to play to the crowd, including a happy couple in Hayami and Chiba.*

-Days later, back at the Kyoto Institute of Technology...-

Chiba/Hayami: *Having returned to classes, the two are partaking in the final assessment before the Finals in their (and AssUniv's) classes. The one is Linear Programming, and while Chiba is getting through just fine, Hayami is excelling, handing in her exam in record time, even impressing Chiba. As they get out, Hayami ends up going the other way of their usual path.*

Chiba: "Hayami-san? Architecture Psychology is this way."

Hayami: "I'm not taking that class anymore, Chiba-san."

Chiba: "Come again? This is the end of the semester."

Hayami: "It won't help me in the major I picked out for myself now."

Chiba: "Oh really? I'm happy for you. What would that be?"

Hayami: *smiles.* "Structural Engineer."

Chiba: *surprised by the assertion.*
Hayami: "But I'll still always be here for you. You can count on that." *bows.*

Chiba: "Thanks. For that. Those." *bows as well. They then go their separate ways, confident in their direction.*
Yada was promised back in Kyoto International Conference Center by Ohno to meet the CEO of Cyberdyne, Inc. Well, it's time for the mysterious outlaw to live up to his promise. And then some... Probably?

-Yada, having finished her Calculus class (last of the day), leaves the study halls and reaches the closest street of the campus. But someone waiting nearby there, leaning on the wall next to his Yamaha Midnight Star 1900, surprises her.-

Yada: "Ohno-kun? What are you doing here?"

Ohno: *hears his name being called and turns around.* "I had promised," *checks his watch.* "Just a few months ago to allow you to see Mr. Sasai on better terms, didn't I?"

Yada: *remembers when Ohno said that he would take her to see his good friend, the CEO of Cyberdyne Inc. Toshiyuki Sasai, after the Kyoto International Conference Center Mission.* "Now's the time?"

Ohno: "He is quite a busy man; if not now, it will have to be weeks later, and most likely at the headquarters, which is more than six hours away. And I feel that you've been very eager to get to better know the man all this time." *Throws her a Yamaha Race Blu helmet.*

Yada: *catches it, then looking at the motorcycle behind him.* "Will we be going in that?"

Ohno: "Ah... Still superstitious from our," *checks his watch.* "Kotohiki journey?"

Yada: *nervously grins.* "Can you blame me?"

Ohno: *scratches the back of his head.* "No, of course not. But you should know I'm not always like that. Especially with motorcycles. These things can be dangerous, you know?"

Yada: "Clearly. But then, why do you like them?"

Ohno: *smiles.* "Functions before fads."

Yada: "Good motto." *smiles as well.*

Ohno: "How about I promise you this." *jingles his dog tag necklace.* "I swear on my grandfather's name and its honor that I will satisfy your safety standards on the two drives to and from Cyberdyne Inc.'s development facility."

Yada: "... I trust you, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Excellent. Well, get on then." *puts on his Yamaha YMAX Modular helmet. and
straddles over the heavy two-wheeler. The start-up to the cruiser scares Yada, who was now in the sidecar.* "Don't worry, Yada-san. It doesn't bite."

Yada: *playfully ironic tone.* "Very funny, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *revs up the engine and takes off.*

Kanzaki/Hara: *Watch as the two drive off.* Are they a thing...?

-A drive across the city of Kyoto heading towards the development factory takes a decent while. During that time...-

Ohno: *keeps checking his watch as he proceeds towards the facility.*

Yada: *notices the repeated behavior.* "Are we running late, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Oh, no. Just my, er, OCD. Honestly, when you're as crazily active on the field as me, you start to lose track of time."

Yada: "That makes sense, I suppose. Ever thought of slowing down at one point?"

Ohno: "I never met one of those points before in my life."

Yada: "Oh come on, you never had someone you wanted to stay in place for? If you're always moving, no one will find you, even the ones you love the most."

Ohno: "..."

Yada: *refocuses.* "I'm sorry, if I brought up a sore subject for you."


Yada: *remembers that Ohno once talked about having to let go of a love interest at Mt. Atago's classroom.* "Oh man..."

Ohno: "Don't feel bad. It's all in the past now."

Yada: But you seem to carry your past everywhere, Ohno-kun. Does saying that really dismiss it...?

-Finally, they arrive at the Facility.-

Ohno: "We're here." *takes off his helmet.*

Yada: *takes off her helmet, shaking her hair loose.* "Looks nice enough. So, this is where you conducted your research?"

Ohno: "Oh yes. And wait until you see the interior." *places his helmet on the handlebars of the motorcycle. He then leads the way inside, and seeing the front desk's hall made Yada exclaim with joy.*
Yada: "Wow, you're right! It looks great!"

Ohno: "Yeah... It does." *goes up to the front clerk.* "Ms. Park."

Park: "Mr. Ohno! To what do I owe this honor?"

Ohno: "Mr. Sasai is in, yes? Me and my good friend Yada-san here have an appointment with him."

Park: "Oh yes, he is! I will get him on line now." *picks up a landline phone and calls Mr. Sasai's office.* "Mr. Sasai, Mr. Ohno and Ms. Yada are here to see you... Yeah? Yeah... Okay." *hangs up.* "Take the elevator to the third floor, and go to the right; he'll be right there."

Ohno: "Thank you, Ms. Park. After you, Yada-san."

Yada: "Of course." *steps over to the elevators and goes inside once one opens. Ohno follows suit and they make their way to the third floor. When Yada steps outside, the two go to the right side and find an office door. With a deep breath, she goes in with Ohno.*

Sasai: "Ah, Ohno-kun! And Yada-san! It's good to see you two again after some time." *offers his hand for a shake.*

Yada: "The pleasure is all mine, Mr. Sasai." *accepts the handshake.*

Sasai: "Well, let's start the tour, eh? You must be very piqued by how the HAL-6 came to be, hm? The origins of a fifteen-pound exoskeleton that looks nothing more than a science-fiction bodysuit are an interesting one."

Yada: "That does sound enticing."

Ohno: *leaning on the door sill with his hands crossed.* "I don't mind hearing it a second time, Mr. Sasai." *leaves first, followed by the other two.*

-The assembly line of building the HAL-6 exoskeletons spans three floors, from where they were on the third floor, to the fifth. Sasai and Ohno had no problem making Layman's Terms of the procedure, and only a few times Yada felt perplexed by the process.-

Sasai: "And that leads us... To one of these." *walks over to a final-product table, and picks up one of the bodysuits.* "Something that has changed millions of lives in hospitals, in hard-labor fields, everywhere really. Can you believe it?"

Yada: "It's great, Mr. Sasai." *feels the upper section of the soft apparel.* "How was the marketing of the Hal-6, however? Was there any competition? How was the budget and profits divided?"

Sasai: "Goodness, quite some business questions there."

Ohno: "The truly technical aspect of this billion-dollar company, Yada-san, cannot be explained here."

Sasai: "That's right. There's many others out there like yourself that are aspiring to hear such information... In it's most pithy terms, of course."
Yada: "widens her eyes." "Are you saying you will be giving a formal presentation to a university?"

Sasai: "Doshisha University, to be exact. Knowing the little I do about you, you are studying there, right Yada-san?"

Yada: *looks to Ohno for a second before answering.* "Indeed. Wow, that's going to be great. I can only imagine what we all can learn from you."

Sasai: "As a business move, that's a secondary goal. What I'm looking for most out of this are email addresses of potential future employees. I know you understand that motive."

Yada: *laughs.* "As much as you understand that I'll be the first name on that list."

Ohno: *awkwardly smiles. He then refocuses.* "Better get ready for then, right, Yada-san? Write down some more questions and whatnot?"

Yada: "Um, yeah. Yeah, I ought to get to that. I hope you'll be able to handle them, though I know you will, Mr. Sasai."

Sasai: "Of course. Well, it was a pleasure meeting you, Yada-san." *bows.*

Ohno: "Yada-san, I need to speak with Toshiyuki (Sasai) a little more, on a private business matter between the two of us. Can you wait at the motorcycle outside until then?"

Yada: "Of course. Do what you got to do." *waves goodbye and heads to the elevators.*

-After a few minutes upon returning to the Yamaha Midnight Star, Yada witnesses Ohno coming out, smiling happily to her, but not inclined to talk about what went down during the tour's aftermath.-

-The next day, at one of Doshisha University's speech halls...-

Yada: *sitting with some one-hundred-twenty other students, including Hara, cleans up her deck of flashcards filled with questions she has for the CEO of Cyberdyne Inc. incoming in a few minutes.*

Hara: "You're very excited for this, Yada-san."

Yada: "Well, it will really help for my major. And it's taking my mind away from finals too. You've taken some interest too, right Hara-san? Why are you here?"

Hara: "As a soon-to-be professional homemaker, I will soon be overseeing an organizational structure of some sort designed to maintain and manage a household. That structure may or may not come from what an elite businessman has to say to me."

Yada: "The amount of diverse words you just said, makes me really believe you are deftly attentive. That's good to hear." *They both smile to each other, before Yada continues to look to the stage-side doors.* "Now we just have to wait for him to get here..."

-Five minutes have passed, and yet Mr. Sasai hasn't yet made it to the talk.-
Yada: *Well, that's strange...* even more actively awaits the arrival.

Hara: "It isn't very professional to be so tardy..."

-The rest of the Doshisha undergraduate students remain confused about what is going on... Until the doors next to the front two desks and large whiteboard open up.-

???: *holding an easel and a large mound of diagram papers over his head, temporarily hiding his identity.* "I must apologize, all of you, but unfortunately, Mr. Toshiyuki Sasai of Cyberdyne Inc. could not make it to this session." *sets down the instruments with his back turned.*

Yada/Hara: *NO...

???: *turns around, revealing his face as Kazuhiko Ohno to the audience.*

Yada/Hara: *Eyes are ready to pop out.*

Ohno: "So, in his place, I will be pitching. My name is Mr. Ohno, for any who are unfamiliar. And I am one of the lead researchers for the HAL project." *finishes setting up the easel, whiteboard introduction and electronic presentation.*

Student 1: *murmurs* "Never heard of him."

Student 2: *whispers* "He's an engineer and a businessman?"

Student 3: "I think I've noticed him from somewhere else..."

Yada/Hara: *People are beginning to take notice...*

Student 4: "Um, Mr. Ohno? Aren't you also a manager at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub?"

Ohno: "That I am. Which is grounds for you all to realize that I indeed have business expertise to share with you all, despite my appearance being akin to the peers around you."

Yada: *That is a good point, but...*

Student 1: "Is being a nightclub manager and a cybernetics researcher possible? The fields sound so different."

Ohno: "They are. Which leads me to go to my first point before leading to the specifics of Cyberdyne Inc.'s business structure and Q&A; Cyberdyne Inc. is looking for people from all walks of life. Even for you all who are not business majors. We need you all to help us make the next generation of HAL..." *presses a button on his presentation remote, unveiling a slide with blueprints, and in big text,* "The HAL-7 exoskeleton."

Students: "Ooooooo...."

Student 2: *refocuses.* "Wait a second, why all walks of life, though? Wouldn't all you need be engineering and biology-related studies?"

Ohno: "Everything that exists is bound to what I like to call the 'umbrella principle.' Let's start
with those two subjects, engineering and biology. What do both of those fields require to be learned?"

Student 5: "Select types of math?"

Ohno: "That's right. Anything else?"

Student 6: "Simulated model construction?"

Ohno: "Perfect. You see, both mathematics and art are under the umbrellas that are engineering and biology. 'The umbrella principle' is oftentimes an adaptation of the Buddhist belief that 'everything is interconnected and interdependent.' They don't have to be related, but they can be when we want them too. And that's the same thing that happens when it concerns Cyberdyne Inc.'s HAL machines." *flips pages of the packet resting on the easel and points the desk camera at it, switching the projector view to the former.* "What do you see in the HAL-6 that most resembles what you take for granted every day?"

Yada: *raises hand.* "Clothes."

Ohno: *points to Yada.* "Yes! We many at Cyberdyne Inc. want to make the HAL project more and more like clothing, because what can be more accessible and convenient for the people who need it than the things they wear all the time?" *returns to the online projector and opens up the next slide. The next sentence comes up on screen.* "So, in order to emulate clothing, we have to consider the umbrella factors of clothing." *opens up a dry-erase marker.* "What goes into making... A... T-shirt? Everybody eager to answer, form a line right in front of me, if you please."

-Some thirty students took Ohno up on that offer, and wrote down what they were thinking right next to the T-shirt.-

Ohno: *Once the last person went back to their seat.* "Hmm... Yes, this is a great list. It really shows the diversity. Look at this, we got math, we got history, we got symbology, we got environmental science, we got chemistry, we got biology... Now, do you see why we need all walks of life? We need to know everything that a human can see and do. And we can only know all of that, when every human lends what they know about it."

Yada: *So that was how Mr. Sasai and Ohno were going to reel many people in!*

Ohno: *erases the whiteboard.* "Now... Onto some statistics, and then we can do Q&A." *takes his opened dry-erase marker.*

-The presentation continued to impress; every single one of the one-hundred-twenty students was engaged in the lecture.-

Ohno: *checks his watch.* "Ah, that's about all the time we have for the conference. Now, the last thing I'd like to do is ask if any of you are interested in writing your email addresses onto this binder of papers. By doing so, you will have access to the weekly stories within the company, as well as being available for career or internship opportunities at later dates. And though we are looking for business aficionados, there is something for everyone at Cyberdyne Inc. Thank you, and good evening."

Students: "..." *claps in mass appeal.*
Hara: *also clapping.* "Wow... Ohno-kun could be a college professor too if he so wanted."

Yada: *looks at Hara.* "Known that for ages. Remember our first few days here?" *looks back at Ohno, who now has a line of almost ninety students readying to put their names and addresses onto the columned papers.*

- Some time later, as Ohno was bringing the workload of presentation materials through the halls... -

Yada: "Ohno-ku- er, Mr. Ohno, wait up!" *catches up to him.*

Ohno: "Ms. Yada?" *turns around.*

Yada: "I-" *looks at the weight he's carrying.* "Wow, that's a lot of stuff. Maybe I should take a little bit?"

Ohno: "No, no, that's fine. I brought it all in here in one go before. I can bring it out."

Yada: "Maybe I just take that easel then." *pries the wooden support craft out of his left hand.* "There we go."

Ohno: "Is that all you came here for? To lessen my encumbering?"

Yada: "Oh, no. Um, I was just wondering about Mr. Sasai..."

Ohno: "I did say he was a busy man, Ms. Yada. He's already back at the company's headquarters in Tsukuba to handle a piled-up load of PR."

Yada: "Jeez. So he called you to fill in?"

Ohno: "He didn't think the students here, you above all, should have to wait an indefinite time. I don't think I could do as well as he does, but I gave it my best shot."

Yada: *scoffs* "Are you joking? That was amazing!"

Ohno: "If you say so." *refocuses.* "I know you didn't get all that you were looking for in the two times you faced the name Cyberdyne Inc. I promise I'm going to get you an in-depth analysis of the company at a later date."

Yada: "Don't make promises you can't keep, Ohno-kun-."

Ohno: "I will be keeping this one. One way or another, you'll have that tour. Before this Shadow War is over."

Yada: *snickers* "Okay. I await it." *refocuses and places her hand at her chin.* "Though, to be fair, I'm also eager to know what your firm has on the market. You are a billionaire too, if I recall correctly."

Ohno: *looks to the side.* "That's also a story for a later date. I think you've heard enough stories for today anyway."

Yada: *playfully shakes her head.* "You can never have enough."
Ohno: "I figured you'd say that. I said that once myself too." *checks his watch.* "Well, I'm heading back to Nyurifu Rikkyo now, doing the job I do best. What about you?"

Yada: *nods.* "Think I'll do the same."

Ohno: "Then maybe you'd to get there in style?"

Yada: *looks straight at him, gleefully grinning. They then walk through the remainder of the hallway to the lot, parallel to each other.*

Ohno: *looks at her for a little bit, before reminiscing...* 

-Back at Cyberdyne Inc.'s factory facility, just after Yada had taken an elevator ride down to the ground floor...-

Ohno: "I hope you know, Mr. Sasai, that you don't have that kind of time to waste."

Sasai: "Yeah, yeah, I know. It's just, I wanted to do something for Ms. Yada. Don't you?"

Ohno: "... Yeah, I do."

Sasai: *goes up to him.* "Ah, so there is something between you two?"

Ohno: "For the last time, no. There's just so much I'm not telling her. And that includes the agreement between our two firms, if I do recall?"

Sasai: "Right..."

Ohno: "Speaking of that... Anything wrong with the data and functions I've been giving you?"

Sasai: "Oh, no no! The data's information is spectacular. And your applications are extraordinary. Never thought they could actually be implemented until now. Such a fun project you brought upon me, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "That's good. How close are we to finalizing the finished products?"

Sasai: "Eh... It's going to be between a few months to half a year."

Ohno: "Aim for the middle. We need those ready as soon as possible."

Sasai: *bows.* "Of course. Is this all?"

Ohno: "It is." *bows.* "Have a good trip back to Tsukuba, Mr. Sasai." *leaves.*

-Back to the present... Ohno still feels conflict in his heart from his talk with Mr. Sasai yesterday, but he hides it again to ease tension in the room.-

-Minutes later, Ohno and Yada cruise out of one of the parking lots of Doshisha, in the next stage of the Lykan Hypersport (which they are both all too familiar with), the Fenyr Supersport. A confident smile he sees from Yada pushes Ohno to give the supercar some more speed, and they ride off towards the sunset (and the cabaret).-
Resuming Space

Chapter Summary

Ohno and Yada got their chance to be together, and so did Naoko and Karma, so who else? Nagisa and Kayano. But if they aren't as abrasive as the latter two, how will they progress in their bonds?

-All of AssUniv is in turmoil. With the semesters officially over in all of their colleges, the final assessments are well on top of them. Everyone does their hardest to stay on track and ace the examinations. And, with the help of Karasuma and Ohno (along with some extra studying along with Karma, and calling Naoko for some tips and trivia), they do so.-

-Nagisa walks out of his latest and last exam, for English.-

    Nagisa: *This one is definitely better than last final, at the very least. *stretches out.* I hope everyone else is doing great on their finals too. Well, time to head to Nyurifu Rikkyo... *Starts walking across the campus, eventually leaving it and taking to the sidewalks parallel to the streets.*

-Several minutes later...-

    Nagisa: *Waits at the traffic lights, in anticipation of the walk signal.*

    ???: "Nagisa-kun?"

    Nagisa: *turns around to face them.* "Ah, Kayano-san."

    Kayano: "Yyyyyyyep." *with her hands behind her, looks around for a bit, beginning to blush.*

    Nagisa: *Has a taste of awkwardness on his tongue as well, scratching the side of his head with one finger while looking away.*

- The walk signal changes to allow pedestrians to cross, which the two student-assassins notice some seconds later and power-stroll past. They then continue to walk alongside each other, while still trying not to make unnecessary eye-contact.-

    Kayano: "Um, Nagisa-kun."

    Nagisa: "Nah, Kayano-san. Let me start. I never got to apologize to you for being an ungrateful prick, did I?"

    Kayano: "Well you have been a naughty boy."

    Nagisa: "Right. So I think saying 'I'm sorry' now wouldn't be enough now. Obsolete, worn, so on."
Kayano: "It would have to come out sooner or later, right?"

Nagisa: "But I think to fully make it up to you, we should have some time together, get to really know what stands in our way."

Kayano: *chokes a bit* "What, like, uh, like a-a date?"

Nagisa: "Something along those lines."

Kayano: *squees internally.* "Sure that could work. Right now?"

Nagisa: "If that works for you."

Kayano: "Oh, it does."

Nagisa: "Great. Where to?"

Kayano: "I think just a long walk along Kyoto's nicer neighborhoods should be good enough. Come on; I'm leading." *takes the lead.*

Nagisa: "Alright. Oh, and what did you want to say? I figured you had something, since you started this conversation."

Kayano: "Oh, it's not important now. It can wait."

Nagisa: "... Alright." *They continue walking.*

-A minute later...-

Kayano: "Kind of funny, isn't it?"

Nagisa: "Huh? What is?"

Kayano: "Our friends keep talking about how what we have here in Kyoto has much in common to what he had at the mountain in Tokyo, yet so little. To me, it couldn't be any more similar."

Nagisa: "Why's that?"

Kayano: "Four years ago, I had you - a green-eyed, short, 'genderless' friend who had no idea what he wanted in life, but had extraordinary assassination abilities. And you had me - a green-haired, also short, and 'faceless' girl who was deceiving her whole class to keep an ultimate of secrets. Now in the present... Did any of that change?"

Nagisa: *thinks about how he had been forgoing his college grades, and how Kayano was hiding the fact that she wasn't actually kidnapped.* "I guess not..."

Kayano: "The only difference is that I got to see a side of you that no one else did. Last time, you saw my inner monster instead."

Nagisa: "Well, you know what Mark Twain said, right? 'History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.' Well, it surely rhymed throughout the Summer, didn't it."
Kayano: *giggles* "That's one way of looking at it."

Nagisa: *looks up.*

Kayano: "Something new on your mind?"

Nagisa: "Well, just that quote has me thinking... Will we ever get out of this?"

Kayano: "What, the 'Shadow War?' Of course we will."

Nagisa: "I mean, the shadows of the Shadow War. We fought one already. And now we're in the middle of another. If history does indeed rhyme nicely with the future, what's stopping us from being pulled into a third?"

Kayano: "... Well, that just means we have to eliminate any chances of it this time around. Leave no trace behind. We're assassins. That's our job, right?" *punches his shoulder lightly.*

Nagisa: "Yeah..." *rubs that shoulder a bit.* "You're right. We are assassins." *they continue walking.*

-A few minutes later, after chatting about less serious topics.-

Nagisa: *notices his smartphone vibrating.* "Oh, my phone is ringing?"

Kayano: "Oooo, who could it be?"

Nagisa: *picks it up and answers it.* "Hello?"

Sugino: [message] "Yo! Nagisa-kun!"

Nagisa: "Eh? Sugino-san?"

Nakamura: [message] "Nagisa, where you at? Got lost on your way to the nightclub, did you?"

Nagisa: *looks at Kayano, who mutually know that there is no way of explaining their time together without implication of being on a date.* "L-lost? No, no. We actually came to the nightclub early."

Terasaka: [message] "'We?' Who's we?"

Nagisa: "Me and Kayano-san. And uh, at the nightclub, Ohno-kun had us, uh, do a task of delivering supplies to him."

Karma: [message] "I'm surprised Ohno-kun is actually shorthanded. I guess less people in your workforce means more pay divided to you..."

Nagisa: "Yeah. So, we will be arriving later tonight."

Sugino: [message] *distantly, strained with effort noise* "Give me my phone, damnit." *coherently* "Okay. That's fine, I guess. Don't be too late, you hear? We celebrating. Finale of the finals are behind us now, yeah?"
Nagisa: *laughs.* "Yes of course. Best get to it. See you guys." *hangs up.*

Kayano: "What's happening?"

Nagisa: *looks forward into space for a bit before over to Kayano.* "You wouldn't happen to know if Ohno-kun has something he needs done?"

Kayano: *looks down for a bit before back at him.* "Well let's ask him." *dials in Ohno's phone number.*

Ohno: [message] "Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Hey, Ohno-kun. Me and Nagisa are just outside, painting the town for a little bit."
*realizes what she just said.* "There's nothing implicative of that, right?"

Ohno: *silence.*

Kayano: "Still there?"

Ohno: [message] "Why would there be?"

Kayano: *whispers to Nagisa while the phone's microphone is covered.* He's being totally serious!

Nagisa: *blankly awkward expression.*

Kayano: "Right. So, we were wondering if you needed something done while were, eheh, out on the field."

Ohno: [message] "I couldn't possibly trouble you with something like that."

Kayano: "Hey, we're not looking for a killing contract, Ohno-kun. Just like, uh, a delivery. Of food, parts, and whatnot. Pleasehelpus, we'reinajam."

Ohno: [message] "I see... I don't know how this will help you, but that's your business. As it turns out, there is something along those lines that you can do; I ordered something over at the Steakhouse and Sushi Bar," *a brief pause.* "A few minutes ago. It will need a pickup. The order is number," *Another pause.* "Seventy-Five."

Kayano: "We can do that. See you soon." *hangs up.* "Okay, let's pick up a sandwich, Nagisa-kun."

-They take a walk over to Kyoto's Steakhouse and Sushi Bar, and go inside to see the front-door clerk.-

Clerk: "Here you are; the order you numbered." *places the bag onto the front table.*

Nagisa: *stands on the balls of his feet to retrieve it.* "Thanks."

Clerk: *tucks his head close to Nagisa's and whispers.* But one will be all you need... *He then
eyes Kayano, who is sitting at the waiting area.*

Nagisa: "Right..." *leaves, signaling Kayano to come with.*

Kayano: *They walk a few blocks before noticing a bench nearby.* "Hey, how about we wait a bit? Make it really seem like an important delivery to our friends?" *points to the bench.*

Nagisa: "Yeah, that could work." *they both go over to it and have a seat.* "Feels nice, using your hands rather than your brain for a little bit." *Sighs, then opens up to inspect the bag for its contents, making sure it matched what they were looking for.* "What the..."

Kayano: "What's wrong?"

Nagisa: "There's two cheesesteak sandwiches in this bag." *takes one of them out, then shaking the bag, revealing another inside.*

Kayano: "How peculiar... Ohno-kun's a big eater?"

Nagisa: "Not that I know of... Huh, so that's what the clerk meant by 'one will be all you need...''"

Kayano: "I... Guess?"

Nagisa: "Ohno-kun did say he only wanted one sandwich, right? Maybe we got the wrong order number."

Kayano: "Not a chance with him. He probably planned this."

Nagisa: "But how could he know we'd look into the bag?"

Kayano: "Maybe he thought we'd get curious about what he'd be having."

Nagisa: "Well... Then I guess that leaves one question: what do we do with this sandwich? He probably won't be expecting two, after all."

Kayano: "Or will he...?"

Nagisa/Kayano: *They break their minds.*

Kayano: "You know what, let's just have it. Ohno's a skinny guy, he can make do with one sandwich. If not, tough; he's got a huge bar in the cabaret, too."

Nagisa: "Very well." *opens up the wrappers, revealing the cheesesteak being cut in half. He gives the left half to Kayano, and after a toast of the meal, they dig in.*

Kayano: *after first bite and chewing.* "More international meals... Like Korosensei used to have."

Nagisa: *swallows.* "Yep." *remembers that Ohno has an international work associate who had helped Itona with a phone project earlier, as well as the fact that the majority of the staff at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub are foreign.* "I guess when you work with a lot of overseas people, you got to get accustomed to their authentic lifestyles."
Kayano: "Nothing wrong with that, right? You're into English after all." *Takes another bite.*

Nagisa: "And you're in the KDrama scene." *Takes his other bite.*

Kayano: *snickers.* "Indeed." *looks at Nagisa, who has a small mess of cheese on his left cheek.* "Hey, hold still." *takes the napkin off of her lap and begins wiping it off.* "There we go, all better."

Nagisa: "Thanks."

Kayano: *smiles, putting the napkin to the side.* "No problem." *picks her sandwich up and goes to take another bite, but then a loose piece of cheesed beef falls off the bottom end. With no napkin, it will stain Kayano's skirt.*

Nagisa: *throws out his hand, catching the piece just a few centimeters above her lap.* "Gotcha." *sits upright again, slowly eating the piece.*

Kayano: "Thanks for that, Nagisa-kun. Cheese messes are some of the worst."

Nagisa: "Yeah... You're welcome..."

-They both look away from each other... Smiling to themselves.-

-Several minutes later, they had finished their halves and decided it's high time they actually got back to the nightclub.-

Nagisa: "Ah, that cheesesteak was delicious."

Kayano: "That is was. We'll have to go back on our own terms sometime."

Nagisa: "Yeah. It seems the English, or the Americans really had the right idea instead of-" *gets pulled behind the cover of an elevated park tree soil-bed.* "Kayano-san? What's going on?"

Kayano: "Look there!" *points diagonally over to across the street, to two people. If they weren't enough to surprise them, what they have with them is even more shocking.*
Nagisa and Kayano come across quite the big surprise after their huge pseudo-date.
But what could it possibly be? Another Rec Society attack? An interrupting, irrelevant
Lovro? Korosensei revived or reincarnated? Who knows?

-Nagisa and Kayano continue to peer over at the two they have just taken notice of... Irina and
Lovro?-

Nagisa: "Whoa... What are they doing out here?"

Kayano: "Shh... I'm trying to listen." *leans her right ear closer to the two.*

-In the distance...-

Irina: "And you're sure this is the right gift, Lovro?"

Lovro: "Don't you know your mate at all, Irina? He loves dogs; they are his favorite types of
animals."

Irina: "Yeah, I know that part. I mean... Hey," *whistles.*

-An Akita Inu dog, roughly two to three years old, runs out of the shop the two just came out of,
taking its place right at the feet of Irina.-

Nagisa/Kayano: *eyes bulge out.* WHAT?!

Irina: "You really think this one is the one for him?" *picks up the dog.*

Lovro: "He's a strong, independent, spirited dog, fit for the title of 'the samurai's favored pet.'
What's the problem?"

Irina: "That's what worries me; it is so strong it will bark belligerently at Karasuma-sama. As the
one thousand hounds before have..." *The dog moves its head to lick Irina's face.* "Hey, hey,

Lovro: "Like I said, Irina, he is a descendent of the dogs for the samurai. Strong, independent,
spirited... but obedient to whoever is stronger than it. So, only someone like Karasuma can steer
that behavior straight, hm?"

Akita Inu: "WOOF."

Irina: "I guess... No, I'm certain. This is the one for him." *sighs* "This is looking to be a great
anniversary of our marriage." *guides the dog into the backseat of her car, and once Lovro gets
into the passenger seat, she takes the driver position and goes off.*
Lovro: "Thought of a name for it yet?"

Irina: "I was thinking maybe Karasuma-sama should get that honor."

Lovro: "It will be difficult to train in five days if you can't identify it."

Irina: "We'll get it done. Don't worry."

Nagisa: *With Kayano, stands up as the car disappears around the corner.* "Wow, I can't believe it's already that time."

Kayano: "Heh, Karasuma and Bitch-sensei took their time after they started living with each other."

Nagisa/Kayano: *Begin thinking about the same thing very hard...* Oh... Things are going to be crazy...

-At long last, the duo make it to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub... With the takeout bag from Steakhouse and Sushi Bar.-

-"Heart of Stone" by Leslie Parrish plays in the loudspeakers-

Ohno: *standing in the hallway of the entrance area, sees Nagisa and Kayano enter the cabaret.* "Ah, there you guys are. I was expecting the worst, and stood here for a bit to see to you two personally."

Nagisa: *hand waves.* "No need to worry."

Kayano: "Yeah, we didn't face any threatening situations out there this afternoon."

Ohno: "Excellent. I also see that you have my ordered cheesesteak bag, right?"

Nagisa: "Wha- Oh, yes. We have it. Here you go." *hands the take-out bag to him.* "Um, you wouldn't happen to know where the rest of our friends are, would you?"

Ohno: "They're all up at the platform. They're all enjoying some fine wine after the conclusion of their finals." *opens up the take-out bag, and instantly realizes the missing sandwich.* Wha-

Kayano: "You heard the man, Nagisa-kun; let's go up there."

Nagisa: "Right." *They both leave onto the dancefloor.*

Ohno: Why is there only one sandwich? I ordered two, for me and Mikael, my head of security-

Mikael: "Mr. Ohno!" *places both of his hands on Ohno's shoulders and sticks his head close to the latter.* "Our delivery arrived, yes?"

Ohno: *sighs* "... Yes." *hands him the sole remaining cheesesteak.* "Here you go."

Mikael: "Thanks a ton, boss. Enjoy yours!" *leaves.*
Ohno: *turns around* "Of course..." *If I had one.* *facepalm.*

-Up at the VIP Office.-

Nagisa/Kayano: *open the doors to the fourth floor.*

Karma: "Ah! Here are our esteemed guests!" *holding a stem glass with a generous amount of Boars' View Pinot Noir Coast. Several bottles have been laid out on the floor, while several more are open on the coffee-tables.*

Sugino: "Nagisa-san! Welcome!" *raises his glass to him.*

Kataoka: "Kayano-san, good to see you." *sips following the greeting.*

Nagisa: "Guys, you're not going to believe what we saw out there on our way here."

Yoshida: "A Fenyr Supersport!?!"

AssUniv: *stare directly at him.*

Yoshida: "I've... Just been hearing someone has been driving one on these streets is all."

Yada: "Ah, I-"

Kayano: "Karasuma-sensei and Bitch-sensei are having their anniversary in a few days! We saw Irina get a gift for him."

AssUniv: *stand frozen.*

Yada: "Wow, what a time to be alive for them."

Maehara: "I must say, that's some pretty damn good news."

Kurahashi: "Subjective."

Kataoka: "What is Irina getting him?"

Nagisa: "A dog. A special-case dog most likely, since Karasuma will be a very special-case pet owner one way or another."

Terasaka: "Aw, that's cool. Totally want a dog. But hotel and the folks won't allow."

Mimura: "That's right, dogs are his favorite pet... It sounds like a perfect present for him."

Kayano: "And that's where the problem is of this development..."

AssUniv: *They all think about that event... And instantly realize what's wrong.* "Karasuma will forget to give Irina a present..."

Nagisa: "Weakness #1: Super Dense, after all..."

Yada: "Hey, we can't let that happen! Bitch-sensei deserves something good from him just as
much as he does from her."

Kayano: *grins.* "We were hoping you would think so. Which is why..."

AssUniv: *We will ALL do it for him!*

-Ohno arrives in the office.-

Ohno: "Nagisa-san, Kayano-san, can you explain to me why-" *notices everyone is super focused.* "I see you're all occupied. Carry on, then?" *goes over to his desk from across the room. He begins cleaning some glasses that AssUniv has put aside during their grace period.*

Okano: "Of course, our real issue right off the bat is what we think Karasuma-sensei could give Bitch-sensei..."

Kataoka: "She's a simple enough woman; in fact, I think she'll just be happy if Karasuma-sensei got her anything. At all."

Hayami: "That sounds about right. I think it need only be something she will definitely use or have."

Okajima: "She likes alcohol in her system, right? How about a great wine, then?"

Ritsu: *appears on Kayano's phone.* "Statistically, that is a very viable option. Observations on the orders coming through Amazon show that food, mostly in the form of chocolates and champagne, are the favored presents for occasions like these."

Isogai: "Okay... Just the problem of ethics; we can't order or purchase alcohol at official stores."

Ohno: "Oh, but I can. As my business name, of course. And I wouldn't mind helping out picking a perfect choice for you. Irina-sensei deserves it, of course." *looks up while wiping some more dirty glasses.*

AssUniv: *look at Ohno.* "..."

Ohno: *looks around him, confirming that he is the subject of their attention.* "Is there a problem?"

Terasaka: "You have to stay out of this, Ohno. This is a Class 3-E mission."

Sugino: "Hey, hey, hey, hey, don't completely rule him out; we may still need him to order our pick."

Ohno: "Why not?"

Nagisa: "Ohno-kun, we alone have to repay our two teachers for all they've helped us throughout the past four years. If we leave any part for you, it won't feel right."

Kayano: "That, and also, you're a billionaire; anything we could hope to get for them, you can get five-thousand times over."

Karma: "And, if the methods of stealth - which we will have to employ, go wrong, we would be
more likely to be able to get away with it than you would, given how Karasuma-sensei feels about you."

Ohno: *nods slowly.* "All fair points. Very well; I'll stay out of the way. But, I think I can still be a minimal help, as Sugino-san has reiterated from my earlier statement. Also, maybe you'd like a little reference..." *goes over to his wall of shelved books, and picks out a small binder.* "A catalog of this year's best-rated wines." *places it onto the coffee table, next to all of the empty and partially-empty bottles of wine.*

Kanzaki: *gets to first open it up.* "Impressive list..."

Nakamura: *looks at the next few pages.* "Whoa, you've got choices from all over the globe available!"

Ohno: "My nightclub is a tourist attraction secondly, after all." *crosses arms.*

Fuwa: "If we're really going to have Karasuma deliver wine, I don't think we'll have a problem getting him one now."

Sosuke: "Of course. What's the pick, though?"

AssUniv: "Let's see..." *vigorously flips through the pages.* "Too basic." *flip pages again.* "Too weird-sounding." *flips pages once again.* "Too long-named." *flips pages even more.*

Ohno: *Tears waterfalling out of his eyes.* "How do you guys grade wine when I'm not around...?"

Karma: "Whoa, hey guys, what about this one?" *points at it.*

AssUniv: *All look at the pick.*

Ohno: "Ugh..."

Nagisa: "Let's see, it's- It's uh, a 'Penfolds Grange Shiraz Four.'"

Nakamura: "It's a nice Australian name around America; heard it a few times myself, despite the less than flashy sticker. How'd it catch your eye, Karma-kun?"

Karma: "The folks."

Takebayashi: "Of course it's the folks... Well, whatever. If Karma-kun suggests a choice, I don't think there's any room to argue."

Terasaka: "Yessir. Okay, Ohno-san, if you will, we'd like to run this one through you and your system."

Ohno: "I highly suggest another wine or wine set, if possible."

AssUniv: "..."

Kanzaki: "Something the matter, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: "Well, I mean... Look at the price. 3,055 USD."
Chiba: "Yeah, uh, that's about... 358,000 JPY."

Okuda: "Holy Hell!"

Sugino: "You can say that again. A semi-pro baseball tournament prize is probably only a few tens of thousands of yen more than that."

Hazama: "What if we pooled all of our allowances recently given to us from the folks?"

Kimura: "Huh..." *takes out his check.* "I'm just shy of 19,000 yen myself. If the twenty-seven of us put all of that together, we'd more than afford the set."

Isogai: "Like every family has that much money to give their kid." *cries waterfalls.*

Karma: "Some of us have more than others to give. Let's just take it all out and calculate." *takes out a twenty-two-thousand yen note.*

-Altogether, the AssUniv crew places just about the amount required for the wine set, with just a few hundred yen extra.-

Nagisa: *scratches the back of his head.* "Wow, we really scraped the bottom of the barrel there."

Kayano: "It's worth it. For Karasuma and Bitch-sensei."

Kataoka: "Well, Ohno-kun. We've shown we can afford it. Now, if you can order the set..."

Ohno: "I can't do that."

AssUniv: "..."

Fuwa: "Why's that?"

Ohno: "Me and Penfolds Grange has some bad history..." *turns away.*

Mimura: "What sort of history...?"

Ohno: "They..."

AssUniv: *Pay close attention to him.*

Ohno "Refused to let me use their product in my bar pumps!!" *turns around at them.*

AssUniv: *poker-faced.*

Hayami: "That's all?"

Ohno: "Such a lackluster response!"

Okajima: "That's the bad history you have with them?"
Ohno: "You guys are not understanding the issue; my fault, of course. Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub is not allowed to serve Penfolds Grange because the distributor believes 'the finest wine should not be wasted on the young demographic that doesn't appreciate it enough!' It's insulting to us late teenagers and young adults!"

Okano: "Though I can't say I've ever been 'roasted' by an alcohol company, I can't really say it makes me hold a grudge against them..."

Nakamura: "Come on, Ohno-kun; stop being a petty sarge and order it for us. If it makes you feel any better, you're not paying for the thing at all. Isn't that enough?"

Ohno: "No..." *shakes head with emphasized lower lips of anger.*

AssUniv: "...

Karma: *stands up.* "Very well, then."

Ohno: *looks at him.* "What are you doing?"

Karma: *takes a pocketknife and starts scratching the VIP Office's door.*

Ohno: "Wah! Stop that! Do you have any idea how much I paid for that door ever since you guys arrived!?"

Karma: "Don't mind me; just redecorating."

Ohno: "You're drunk out of your mind; you're not even making a coherent picture with those etches." *cries waterfalls.*

Karma: "If you want me to stop, you can always oblige to ordering the PG."

Ohno: "Grr... Fine. I'll get you all the Penfolds Grange. ThankGodI'mnotinvolvedwiththis..." *opens up his flip-phone, dialing the distributor's number. Then, in a raspy Australian voice,* <in English> "Heyo, Mr. Lane! Yes, it's Mr. Ohno, from Cyberdyne Inc. and Nyurifu Rikkyo. I'd like to make an order; don't worry, it's a personal one. It's a Penfolds Grange Shiraz Four. Yep, I know it's a lot for one guy, but it ain't your business how I consume it. Look, I'm making you money, okay? Good. Send it to Cyberdyne's facility in Kyoto. Yeah? Good. Thank you." *Hangs up. In his regular voice,* <in Japanese> "It's on its way. I've sent it to my research office, but when it arrives in four days, I'll bring it here for you guys to prep. Happy? Good. Now stop grinding my door."

Karma: "Very well." *puts his knife away.*

AssUniv: *raise their wine glasses.* "Yeah!"
-True to Ohno's word, the shipment arrived just in time. The students involved with wrapping the present the way Karasuma-sensei would and the students being the red herring to their teachers are doing a fine job. The students doing reconnaissance however...-

Infiltration Students: *barges in on the VIP Platform door.* "GUYS!"

Ohno: "My precious door~..." *cries waterfalls*

AssUniv sans IS: "What's up, you all?" *stop what they are doing.*

IS: "We have a bit of a situation..."
Karasuma and Irina's anniversary rapidly approaches, and knowing how the former is like, the student-assassins of the AssUniv Program have taken it upon themselves to make sure everything goes down without a hitch! That involves getting a wine (that Ohno hates), and a means of making it look like it was given from one to the other. But how...?

-AssUniv take a quick ride back to the Hyatt Regency in Kyoto to see what the Infiltration Students are having an issue with, and realize that there... Is a do not disturb marker on the door.-

AssUniv: "..."

Sosuke: "How is this a problem, again?"

Okano: "It's been there..."

Maehara: "For four days!"

Nakamura: "Whoa, are you sure?"

Itona: "We are. I had installed a corner camera to watch over the door behind a hallway plant. No atom of the door has moved."

Kayano: "That might mean that Bitch-sensei isn't using this suite as her anniversary area."

Kataoka: "Yeah... That will pose as a problem for intercepting their rendezvous point before they do."

Kimura: "Well, any way we can find out?"

Ritsu: "There might be." *Appears on Kayano's smart-phone.*

Kayano: "Ritsu-chan?" *Brings her up to chest level.*

Ritsu: "We are aware of someone who has as much personal contact with Karasuma-sensei and Irina-sensei, yes?"

AssUniv: "... Ohno-kun."

Isogai: "Putting him on line now." *dials Ohno's flip-phone number.*

Ohno: [message] "Isogai-san."

Isogai: "Ohno-kun. Great. We have a little situation."
Ohno: [message] "You're telling me; you've left the horrid Penfolds product in the middle of my office. I'd put it aside, but I won't touch it. Not again, anyhow!"

Isogai: "Yeah, sorry about that Ohno-kun, we were in a rush. Anyways, during your talks with Karasuma-sensei and Bitch-sensei, did they happen to tell you anything notable?"

Ohno: [message] "If you're hoping to find out what's your next regime of training is, that's classified information."

Isogai: "No no no, I was thinking more along the lines of explicit personal detail."

Ohno: [message] "You mean what I like to use against Karasuma? Well, I haven't done that lately, because Irina-sensei has requested me to not rile him up as the anniversary draws closer. She also says I should organize a party in their Hyatt room if they so wish since it won't be used."

Isogai: "Did she say where they will be, if not there?"

Ohno: [message] "Uh... I do believe Irina said she bought her own house in Kyoto's Northern Higashiyama district. She even showed me what it looked like."

Isogai: "Good. Can we get a picture of it?"

Ohno: [message] "You're going to break in... Okay." *After a few seconds he spawns an image of the house, and the street it's on, to Isogai's phone.* "There. Now take your precious alcohol and put it there."

Isogai: "Point taken. We'll do that. Thanks for the pics. See you." *hangs up. Then, to AssUniv.* "Come on, guys, let's head back to the nightclub and scope our mark. Then prepare for tomorrow afternoon's mission."

-The team quickly returns to Nyurifu Rikkyo, picking up the Penfolds Grange before Ohno had a heart attack. They then took the internship bus all the way to the house's neighborhood and tracked down the estate. -

Chiba: *Takes several angular poses to get better looks at the exterior of the house. Talking through a walkie, granted by Ohno's security detail,* "Nicest place, even for a nice neighborhood. Japanese taxpayers treating their agents right."

Hayami: *Moves onto the porch, and stealthily looks through the window. Through the talkie,* "No one's inside, in case the lack of cars was sign enough. To be honest, I don't think anyone's been inside since the purchase; a plant is already beginning to wilt."

Maehara: *has climbed up the drainage pipes and shimmied across to look through the windows up above.* "Heh, I don't think Bitch-sensei looked upstairs yet; somebody left their Playboy magazine stash next to a dresser in this room."

Okano: *On the roof, tossing some snow onto Maehara's back.* "Would you focus? We have a thing to do here."

Kataoka: "That's right. We ought to get this done quickly, so we can ring it through with the rest of the team and make a perfect anniversary."
Maehara: *brushes off the excess snow.* "Alright, I get it. But hey, why didn't we just stick the PG once we found a way inside and used it?"

Isogai: *looks through the windows on the sides.* "Because we can't be certain Karasuma-sensei does not already know about this place, and might go inside tonight, ruining the surprise. Also, Bitch-sensei can almost certainly tell if some gift is a day old, judging by the amount of dust fallen on it by the day. It ruins the prestige."

Kimura: *hands on the ledge of a second-floor window.* "What does the poorest Ikemen know about prestige?" *laughs.*

AssUniv sans Kataoka: *laughs as well.*

Isogai: *can't help snickering a bit himself.* "Magazines on the wealthy. A student can dream, right?"

-After some time, and Maehara shimmying across the perimeter of the household, he and Okano happened to find something...-

Okano/Maehara: *pay attention to a set of windows, both adjacent to the wall and roof making up the surface area of the house.* "Hey guys, we have a way up and a way out." *They take pictures of the windows.*

-With their reconnaissance finished, they return to the nightclub (leaving the gift on the bus), and relay all the information they need to to the rest of their peers. The plan is simple enough: Obtain rooftop entry through usage of ladder, go through the rooftop window, keep to the walls, never touching the floor, and placing the PG wine set on the dinner table (with Karasuma's name on it), then leave through the side windows, allowing them to clean up the wet messes snowfall might bring before they depart. Six of them will be entering in (with three on standby in case they need assistance), while the rest of the student-assassins are on lookout and neighbor diversion. With the mission briefed, everyone toasts to even more Boar's View wine to cap off the night.-

-The next day...-

-With everything set, AssUniv takes the internship bus to the neighborhood at roughly 4 P.M. And the mission to save their sensei commences...-

AssUniv: *Now donning their face masks and/or hoods, and gloves, with Terasaka and Karma holding onto the two-story ladder, Nagisa carrying the wine, and Okano housing the final gift-wrapping materials, they discreetly make their way across the neighborhood to the house. Nagisa, Terasaka, Karma, Okano, Maehara, and Yada are the primary infiltrators, with Kayano, Kurahashi, and Yoshida being backup. The remaining students are surveying the rest of the household, using Itona's bi-wheel drone and Okajima's GoPro cameras, and the rest of the streets, in case they take suspicion of a break-in.*

Terasaka: *sets up the long ladder and they all climb up, minimally distressing the snow on the roof and preventing any unnecessary marks on the walls and windows. Talking on the walkie,* "Okay guys. We're heading on in."

Isogai: *holds the walkie to his mouth.* "Gotta." *To some of the idle peers.* "Can you guys go to behind the house where they entered and make a huge mound of snow?"
Sugino: "Why do that?"

Kataoka: "If things go sour, they might not have time to climb down the other side of the ladder; they might have to jump. Be better if you have a big pile to land on."

Sosuke: "Yeah we can do that. Have to measure density and all that though."

Hayami: "I'll be sure our tracks are covered." *They all leave to reach the backyard.*

-Meanwhile, indoors...-

Infiltrators: *Quickly slipping insulated backup soles to prevent water traces, the team takes to the edges along the walls, and walking parallel on them in any other case, all the way to the stairs.*

Yada: Okay, guys. We can't be on the ground once we reach the last step down. From here on out, hanging from the ceiling, bridging between corridors, standing on ledges, do what you got to do.

Maehara: We got it down. But you also got the present too, Nagisa-kun?

Nagisa: *taps his back.* I got it. Let's do this.

-The team then takes to a snake-like procedure, led by Okano, who first wedges her feet on one corner of the stairs, and her hands holding onto the other corner. She then pushes off one side of her limbs, flipping her over to the bad handles of locked cabinets, causing them to open slightly. She reaches over to another set of handles to the left, and then back jumps to a countertop, keeping her balance by lifting up on another set of cabinets. She shimmies her way to a section of the table where she can stand a little more upright.-

Terasaka: *The fourth of the crew to do the back jump, he makes the gap successfully, getting the arch of his boots to meet the edge. But he meets the cabinet mask-first, and loses balance, about to hit the floor.* Shit!

Okano/Maehara: No! Terasaka-san!

Nagisa: *The one in front of him, he quickly throws a hand to catch Terasaka's, only just being able to do so before his boots completely lose adhesion. The weight of his peer forces him off the countertop too!* Sh-shut up!

Karma: *The one behind Terasaka, he also relinquishes a hand to hold onto Terasaka's head. He sees that Nagisa has used his other hand to plant himself onto the island in the kitchen, supporting himself as well.* Man you're such a lightweight, Nagisa.

Nagisa: Sh-shut up!

Yada: Phew! *Wipes some sweat off of her forehead, being right next to Karma.*

Maehara: Come on now, Nagisa-kun. *Pulls Nagisa back by his backpack. Terasaka comes with him, perhaps with some help of a push by Karma, and the stealthy climb continues. The students on the countertops make sure to not step on any breakables lying on them.*
Okano continues the routine, halfway to the dining table. She hops over to the aforementioned island's exposed barstool, and then swings onto the hallway's borders which connects the kitchen to the dining room. She then jumps to the sturdily-built dinner table, rolling into a supine position with her feet floating past the edge of the table, and then scooting a chair out to stand on top of.

Okano: *I'm in position. Nagisa-kun, get over here.*

Nagisa: *Right.* *Does the same pendulum jump, landing a little more audibly than Okano, but no less without incident. He then sets down the wine, which Okano proceeds to place decorations on.* *Um, isn't the ribbon supposed to be on the corner?*

Okano: *What? No, the corner is for the to-from note.*

Nagisa: *Okay, so what about the other corner?*

Okano: *No no no! You can't put it over the international tag! She has to see that part!*

Nagisa: *It doesn't look right if the front sticker can barely be seen!*

Karma: *Come on, you two! We ain't got all day!*

Isogai: *Through the walkies.* *"That's right, guys. Some neighbors are beginning to take issue."* *Looks over to Nakamura and Hara dealing with a walking pedestrian.*

Nakamura: *To the bystander.* *"I think you've just been hallucinating, sir."

Hara: *Before the bystander gets to reply, Hara interrupts.* *"Yeah, it's just standard to redecorate a house... In the dark. Look, I'm a homemaker major, of course I know my stuff!"

Nagisa: *Point taken. So uh... Ah, how about this?* *Takes the ribbon and puts it on the bridges of the bottles.*

Okano: *That's... That actually looks pretty good. Nice.*

Terasaka: *Are we all good? Good! Now then, let's get out of here!* *They then comply, going back the way they came, with him and Maehara catching Nagisa, and then Okano on the long, high-angle jump back.*

???: *growl.*

Maehara: *Terasaka-kun... Please tell me... That was your stomach...*

Terasaka: *Whatever... Will you sleep at night...?*

-They all look back, realizing that the sound was the dog that Irina and Lovro bought!-

Nagisa: *Oh shit.*

Kataoka: "Guys? What is that?"

Yada: *It's the dog Bitch-sensei got!"*
Kayano: It doesn't sound like it's taking kindly to strangers!

Yoshida: We got no time for meet and greet tonight. Get away from it.

Terasaka: Easier said than done, blockhead! This dog is huge! We can barely avoid its attacks.

Isogai: "What's more, you guys will need to appease it somehow. We can't have an alarmed, barking dog implying a break-in!"

Okano: How the Hell we're going to do that?

Karma: We're going to need some backup. Kayano-san!

Kayano: We're on it! Come on, Kurahashi-san. Yoshida, you stay there, just in case.

Nagisa: Oh God, it's got my backpack! *He ineffectually tries to pull himself forward while the dog several pounds heavier than him pulls back.*

Okano/Maehara/Terasaka: *All take an article of Nagisa's clothing (and in Terasaka's case, his hair) and keep him from falling off the island.*

Nagisa: Something's going to rip, Goddamn this hurts!

Karma: *Takes a phone picture of the event.*

Yada: Really, Karma-kun?

Karma: It'll be funny one day. *Refocuses.* Hang on, guys, backup's coming.

Nagisa/Okano/Maehara/Terasaka: WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'RE DOING!!?

Isogai: "Guys! A car is pulling in!"

Infiltration Students: "!!"

Irina: *Pops out of the driver's seat, carrying a few bags of groceries.*

Kataoka: "It's Bitch-sensei!"

Infiltration: Ah fuck!

Yoshida: Lose that dog already!

Terasaka: We're trying!

-The sounds of footsteps on a porch are audible.-

Maehara: Welp, we're boned.

Okano: Goddamn-
-The door is one turn away from unlocking...-
In this (hopefully) thrilling finale of the fillers, Irina is about to get into her anniversary home, only to find an aggroed dog she just bought dealing with some masked infiltrators who happen to be a bunch of her students! How do they get out of this one...?

-Irina has placed the key to unlocking the door into place, and is about to turn it to unlock the entrance.-

Karma: Well, shit.

Kurahashi: *Having finally reached downstairs, quickly goes into the fridge and pulls out a cold piece of uncooked steak, throwing it across the kitchen and into the living room. The dog loses all sense and responsibility seeing the flesh soar through the air, relinquishing grip of Nagisa's backpack and storming over to the living room to chow down.*

Karma: Everyone keep still!

-Then the door opens.-

Irina: *Hears the sounds of heavy chomping.* "Wha?" *goes to the living room, completely ignoring the open kitchen, and seeing the Akita Inu dog munching on a large piece of meat.* "Hey! How did you get in the fridge? That was for me to cook for Karasuma-sama, damnit!" *continues indistinctly arguing.*

Kayano: Let's get going now. *They all run the reverse gauntlet that brought them to the countertops, stopping at the stairs to prevent walking noise, and wiping over any marks they could have left behind.*

Irina: "Whoa..."

AssUniv: *twitch with anxiety.*

Irina: "What is this..." *walks presumably over to the dining table.*

Yada: Pray to God she likes it...

Okano: Pray to God we get an opportunity out of this.

Irina: "'From... Karasuma-sama...?"

AssUniv: *attentively pay attention to the microphone/setting.*

Irina: *squees with absolute joy.* "Karasuma-sama got me something! WEEEEEEE~~~!!!
*Rolls around with the tag removed from the wine present. When the dog comes along to see what's going on, Irina rigorously plays around with it.*

Karma: *That settles that. And she's making enough noise for us to get up there, no drama. Let's go.* *They all continue to go upstairs, still as silently as possible.*

-AssUniv manages to reach the room of the two windows, covering all marks and kicking the carpet to reset the positioning of the fibers. Yoshida and Terasaka jump out of the side window, holding onto the hanging ladder, and landing on the huge mound some of their friends made. They are quickly followed by Nagisa, Yada, Okano, Kayano, and Kurahashi. Karma stays behind to clean up the last of the snow buildup before flipping out of the building himself. All the while, Irina is far too distracted with her assigned gift. And with that, the student-assassins of AssUniv make a break for it, running across two blocks to the internship bus they used to get there and leave the neighborhood.-

-Hours later, at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...-

-"Take Me to the Top" by David Essex plays.-

-AssUniv could not be any more commemoratory, having the more expensive Ridge Vineyards Monte Bello wine.-

Isogai/Kataoka: "A toast, you all..." *raise their glasses.* "To a job well done."

AssUniv: "Here here!" *Copy the action.*

Ohno: *At his desk, reluctantly raises a glass too.* "I must say, seeing and hearing the mission unfold, it was a nice op. And planned only by you all? Very impressive. You're all living the legend now, and it only took you guys," *checks his watch.* "Seven months to get back?"

Maehara: *playfully ironically.* "Great to have the fascination of a world-class criminal." *sits back on the couch.*

Yada: "And also a billionaire businessman." *sits upright.*

Terasaka: "Just how did he get that fortune, however?"

Ohno: "..."

Isogai: "Hey hey hey, lay off him, alright? He didn't have to help us, and this time around, he didn't want to help us. But he did anyways, and we couldn't be more grateful."

Kimura: "That sounds like our M.O. 24/7. To be grateful to Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "I can promise you it won't always be that way. I have to let Karasuma be right every once in a while." *checks his watch.* "I think I'm long due for one of those too..."

AssUniv: *How can such a vitriolic relationship stay in one piece like Karasuma-sensei and Ohno-kun's does?*

Yada: *Looks over to Kurahashi.* "You know, it was pretty cool of you to distract the dog, and Irina-sensei by extension."
Kurahashi: *slouches on the couch, while keeping her glass of Ridge upright.* "I was just making sure we wouldn't face a bitter lead wrath."

Okano: "It was good of you nonetheless. And we love you for that."

Kurahashi: *looks aside.* "Thanks..."

Karma: *looks around for a bit, before getting an email notification on his phone. He takes a look at it.* "Aw yeah, baby!"

Sugino: "What do we got, Karma-kun?"

Karma: "Perfect score in my major's class' final! Second year, first semester was totally rocked."

Nakamura: "Don't forget who's been giving you help lately."

Karma: *recognizes that as Naoko.* "Yeah, yeah. Secure-line calls on Karasuma-sensei's phone for days and all. Tutoring me, lecturing me, in a voice loud enough to be its own speaker mode."

Terasaka: "You were talking with Naoko-san a lot recently? Jesus, you need to stop hogging her all for yourself."

Nagisa: "All in good time, Terasaka-kun. In the meantime, maybe praise all the good we've been having lately?"

Kayano: "Yeah... Despite a strange Summer turn, things are looking up for all of us. Christmas and our teachers' Anniversary are just the whipped cream on top."

Isogai: "How about another toast then?"

Kataoka: "To a great next year!"

AssUniv: "Here here!* *They all raise glasses.*

Maehara: "I think we're running out here; Ohno, mind getting us a few more bottles of this stuff?"

Ohno: "Why not?" *gets up and goes into his private supply cellar room.*

-Not more than a minute later, the VIP platform door opens with a massive slam.-

AssUniv: "!!"

Karasuma: *appears from behind the threshold. And he looked quite pissed...*" 

AssUniv: *Absolutely terrified.*

Kurahashi: "K-k-k-k-Karasuma-sensei. A n-n-n-n-nice-"

Okuda: "S-sight, yes!"
Karasuma: *Calms down his aggressive aura.* "Students. A pleasure to see all of you as well..."

Sosuke: "What, uh, brings you here?"

Karasuma: "Well, I've gotten a call from Irina to reside at a certain address tonight rather than at the Hyatt Regency. I understood the action, and knew exactly what was coming."

AssUniv: WHAT!?

Karasuma: "I did have some practice, and I decided to get her a custom-tailored two-piece suit with a matching ponytail accessory..."

Nagisa: Wow, I'm a total idiot! Karasuma-sensei has already gone through three of these Anniversaries already! How could he have forgotten to bring a gift for bitch-sensei!?"

Karasuma: "And when I got to the destination, I found Irina on the floor with her apparent gift for me, growling and barking right at me. It led to a brief skirmish that led to the suit being torn, as you can see here." *holds up the bagged remains of a once fine suit.*

AssUniv: Oh this ain't good.

Karasuma: "There were no bite marks or such on Irina, so you might ask, 'how did she end up on the floor?' Well, it turns out she was drunk. On what? Several empty bottles of Penfolds Grange. Through her garbled speech, she happened to say, 'Thank you, Karasuma-sama, for this greatest of surprise gifts.' Though, I know I did not put that there."

AssUniv: We're in deep shit now!

Karasuma: "So, I'd really like to know... Who put this tagged item in our house, whose disheveled state has attracted the ire of the surrounding neighborhood?" *Holds up the to-from tag, from Karasuma to Irina.*

AssUniv: "..."

Karasuma: "If you admit it now, you won't have a toughest time. A really tough time, but not the toughest."

AssUniv: *They try uttering some speech, but before more than a fragmented word can come out...*

Ohno: "Oh my, Karasuma!" *Runs out of the cellar, putting an alcoholic product onto his desk. He then quickly makes contact with the bagged, ragged two-piece.* "How could you let such a fine ensemble be ruined like so?" *starts tearing up.*

Karasuma: "That's none of your business, Ohno."

Ohno: "Oh? But every great suit and what happens with them- how you use them, is my business." *tilts his head slightly.* "Like... That incident."

AssUniv/Karasuma: "Come again?"

Ohno: "Yep. I put the alcohol there," *checks his watch.* "Several hours ago. Proof? I know
exactly what it is; a Penfolds Grange Shiraz Four, with all four bottles starting fermentation sometime between 1985 and 1990."

Karasuma: *turns completely over to him.* "So it was you?"

Ohno: "Oh, yes. I knew for a," *checks his watch.* "Long while that your anniversary was coming, and I wanted to give you a peacemaker."

Karasuma: "And was, AssUniv in on it?"

Ohno: "Ohoh no."

AssUniv: "!?"

Ohno: "You really think they can afford Penfolds?"

AssUniv: *some of their veins pop.*

Karasuma: "That's a good point."

Ohno: "This, is their gift." *Takes one of the products he had off of his desk and hands it to him.* "Krug champagne for sharing. The lighter-weight version, at ten percent alcohol. Everybody pitched in, they gave the money to me, and I ordered it off of the Nightclub's name to get it. For you, and Irina-sensei."

Karasuma: *slowly accepts the gift.* "You all got this for us?"

Kayano: "Of course we did!" *laughs with a bit of nervousness.*

Karma: "Of course, we didn't have the nerve to sneak into your house to make it a surprise..."

Ohno: *grins even more smugly to that remark.* "I guess this is why Fate has us constantly at each other's throats. The opposite yields much worse results."

Karasuma: "..."

Ohno: *pushes the sharing set closer to Karasuma.* "Now you actually have something to personally give to Irina-sensei, yes?"

Karasuma: "Yeah..." *refocuses, and eases his menacing attitude.* "I better get back before she wakes up. We're not done though, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: "Oh I know." *crosses arms, before waving Karasuma away. He leaves.*

-After a few seconds from the time Karasuma closes the VIP platform door...-

AssUniv: *All sigh with relief.*

Takebayashi: *Takes off his glasses and itches his eyes.* "Wow, that was a close one."

Sugino: "Bottom of the Ninth with two outs and strikes, for sure."
Okuda: "Huh, good thing our Ace was around."

Muramatsu: "My heart felt ready to jump out of its chest!"

Nagisa: "We owe you quite a bit again, Ohno-kun."

Ohno: *exhales.* "Damn right you do. All of you. Making me say I, I, bought Penfolds Grange for personal use..."

Nakamura: "Go cry on your desk tonight if you're so upset." *laughs.*

Kanzaki: "It seems Nakamura-san is so intoxicated, her quips aren't so humorous anymore."

Yada: "Don't blame her, we're all dealing with it; It's the wine."

Karma: "Amazing how we can even sit straight..."

Ohno: "Speaking of the wine, you guys... You've all been delaying payment notes for about," *checks his watch.* "A week. I'm going to have to enforce the transaction policy now."

Terasaka: "Ah shit, seriously, Ohno?"

Ohno: "Yeah, seriously. You guys may get free lodging, but you have to pay for the refreshments like everyone else. So, pay up," *makes hand gestures for the Yen notes.*

Isogai: "Fair's fair. Okay, we should all have our allowances and can pool it into..." *Opens up his wallet mid-sentence and looks inside. He instantly remembers.* "Oh shit..."

Kataoka: *Sees Isogai is very worried, and opens her purse, seeing the same thing.* "Oh, that's right..."

Nagisa: *checks his wallet too.* "And it's not good..."

Karma: *holds his wallet upside down.* "We already compiled all of our allowances for the next few months into the Penfolds Grange wine. And now we can't pay the other bill."

Okano: "That's just the tip of the iceberg! That allowance was for textbooks, food, lecture necessities, and more!"

Ritsu: *appears on Kayano's phone.* "Oh no, that pales in comparison to how much wine we all had throughout this week. Ten bottles of Boar's View, today's seven (and counting) bottles of Ridge Vineyards, and-"

Kayano: "Not now, Ritsu-chan!" *powers down her phone.*

Maehara: "Well, we fucked up."

Ohno: "You can't pay?" *claps his hands together.*

AssUniv: "..."

Ohno: "Hm... There's other ways you can clear your debt..." *laughs maniacally.*
AssUniv: *Anxiously stare at him.*

Nagisa: *Oh God...!*

-A few weeks later, Second semester starting in January has started up, and all students are back in the universities where they belong. And during the end of their first week of their classes...-

-At Kyoto University of Foreign Studies...-

   Professor: "Alright, with the 'advanced conjugations' wrapped up, that brings us to the end of the week!" *closes his retractable pointer to a presentation on the big screen.* "Alright, students, I expect you all to have the assigned textbook by Monday of next week, and we will be going through the first four chapters then, leading us to Friday. Good evening to you all."

   Student 1: "Man, I can't afford a thirty-thousand yen brick like that. Can you?"

   Student 2: "You're joking, right?" *They two leave with their heads down.*

   Nagisa: *In the second row from the front, he puts away all of his writing utensils and closes his binder. He then looks back, seeing Nakamura and Fuwa. All three of them nod to each other and leave the lecture hall... For the bookstore. Nagisa puts his book onto the clerk's scanning table.* "Just this, please."

   Clerk: "Of course, sir. Thirty-thousand yen, if you will."

   Nagisa: "I got it." *takes out his wallet and hands him six 5,000 yen notes.*

   Nakamura: *Next in line, watching Nagisa from afar. She then whispers to Fuwa, who is next after her.* "He actually looks pretty cool when he's confident in something that actually matters."

   Fuwa: "Mhm." *looks away for a bit, feeling the awkward change in Nakamura's character.*

-Parallel to another series of events within KyoUni of Science and Technology's campus...-

   Metallurgist: "Here you are, you two. Uranium, triple-checked for stabilization, as ordered."

   Takebayashi: "Excellent."

   Okuda: *bows.* "Thank you for this service."

   Metallurgist: "Oh, no issue. Except, maybe in the price for such an item."

   Takebayashi: "What's the damage?"

   Metallurgist: *inspects it.* "For 20 kilos, I'd say, fifty-five-thousand yen."

   Scientists: "..."

   Okuda: "That will be all? I can afford this piece on my own, Takebayashi-kun."

   Metallurgist: "Whoa, seriously?"
Okuda: "Yes. Here you go." *hands him five ten-thousand notes and one five-thousand note.* "Thank you; take care." *The two leave.*

Metallurgist: *speechless at the lackluster reception, and staring at the graciously offered money bills.*

-Meanwhile, at Ritsumeikan University's campus...-

-Isogai, Kataoka, Kimura, Karma, and a mysterious, never-before-seen student are enjoying some tea and pastries at a cafe. But then that last student motions to get up and leave.-

Kataoka: "See you soon, okay?"

Isogai: "No, don't worry about the bill. We got it." *gestures to the four of them.*

Karma: "No no, I got it." *thumbs toward himself.*

Student: *giggles a bit before fully leaving.*

Kimura: "You do know we're going to make you get it since you said it, right?"

Karma: *thinks a bit.* "Whatever, I've got money now."

-All of their phones ring. They check them, seeing on LINE the text messages of Ohno.-

Ohno: [message] "Your shifts start thirty minutes from now. I recommend you all head to them now."

Isogai: *sighs.* "Well you heard the man."

Kimura: "Read. Read the man."

Karma: "Let's get to it." *lays down a few miscellaneous notes, followed by a ten-thousand yen tip under a teacup.*

-The five make their way... to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub! And they regroup with the rest of their friends! And once they're inside...-

-"Brand New World" by ACE plays-

Maehara: "Your order, man and beautiful?" *holds out a pen and paper.*

Lady: *exclaims with joy.*

Man: "Haha. We'll share a Pinot Rose and fried calamari." *He and her hands Maehara their menus.*

Maehara: "Uhuh." *finishes writing.* "Got it. We'll get you it in a bit." *winks to the lady and then walks off. He heads towards the kitchen area, passing by Kurahashi, Sugino, Kimura, and Nagisa...*
Customer: *choking.*

Kurahashi: "You three! Lift him up to his feet again!"

Nagisa/Sugino/Kimura: *with strenuous effort, they get the man onto his feet again. With that, Kurahashi takes her serving platter and bearhugs the man from behind, then pushing the platter on his plexus, in an attempt to eject the obstruction.*

Kurahashi: "Damn, I need a little more force!"

Kayano: *walks up.* "Brace yourself." *gives a quick, gloved punch to the platter, which causes a mini hot dog to fall out of the customer's mouth.* "Gotcha." *pats her fist.*

Customer: *supports himself on his table, coughing slightly.* "Bless you all..."

Sugino: *wipes his forehead.* "Of course, sir."

-Back to Maehara, who has finally made it to the kitchen.-

Maehara: "Hara-san! Muramatsu! We got a fried calamari order at Table 20!"

Hara/Muramatsu: "You got it!" *continue to cooking.*

Maehara: "Good. Ring twice when it's ready." *Leaves, heading over to the bar.* "Ohno-kun! Pinot Rose, if you please."

Ohno: "Coming your way." *flips a bottle in the air, landing harmlessly on its standing position in front of him, on a serving platter with three long-stemmed glasses.*

Maehara: *Takes one glass off.* "No thanks, man. Already hooked." *Takes the platter, just before hearing two dings from the serving bell. He heads back to the Kitchen, finding a fried calamari plate at the countertop.* "Looks great. Many thanks!" *Takes the dish as well, and heads towards the man and lady. He does his best to stay out of the way of Okajima, who is taking tourist photos of the customers (consensually) for advertising on the website, and the team of Okuda, Takebayashi, and Terasaka, who have found illegal chemicals in possession by a customer, and are throwing him out. Finally, he reaches the couple, and lays down their orders.* "Enjoy this," *sets down the calamari.* "And this," *Sets down the glasses and wine.* "And this." *He winks at the lady.*

Lady: "Will do." *nods.*

Man: "Try to, of course."

Hayami/Chiba/Itona: *Are in the security HQ of the cabaret, monitoring the fish-eye-upgraded security cameras; newer-generation programming that allows higher focus on certain subjects without degrading peripheral vision too much.*

Hayami: *Focuses on two people arguing visibly.* "Karma-kun, investigate a conversation at Table 24."

Karma: "Will do." *moves over there, expecting a drunken brawl, but it is nothing more than a possible breakup between a boy and girl.* "Harmless relationship banter, won't affect more than
two tables."

Chiba: "That's so sad. Well, carry on then."

Itona: *looks over to a side monitor, which reveals the car and motorcycle garage. He sees Yoshida parking a Ducati 1198 Panigale.* "No loitering or lollygagging, right Yoshida-san?"

Yoshida: *Turns off the Ducati’s engine, and takes off his helmet, looking around.* "No human loitering, yes. The cars, well... Maybe they want some company."

Ohno: "Keep that edge in check, Yoshida-san."

Yoshida: *groans.* "Yes, sir."

-As Isogai and Kataoka continue to work with their friends and the original staff as waiters and waitresses, Fuwa (the producer), Mimura (the director), Hazama (the writer), and Sosuke (the designer) collaborate with the disc jockey to start performing a theatre act set during the Sengoku Period, starring Kanzaki, Okano, Nakamura, and Maehara. Altogether, AssUniv puts on a rather fine night.-

-But then, at 2 A.M...-

-All of the student-assassins, the last people in the nightclub with Ohno, wait on the dance floor and its surrounding furniture, helping themselves to some complementary champagne.-

Karma: "Any big kick-outs, Terasaka-san?"

Terasaka: "Oh yes; a guy noticeably stalking a sorority. Booted him in the ass and out of the club I did."

Ritsu: *Through the loudspeakers.* "Correction: Terasaka-san had kicked the man on his lower back into the edges of the door, allowing the man to show himself out."

AssUniv: *laughs.*

Ohno: *Walks over to Yada, who has a cashier on the table at her table.* "Got everyone's pay together?"

Yada: "Hold on..." *double-checks with a calculator.* "Yep. Ideal cuts for everyone, with twenty-thousand yen taken out of each to pay for the wine debt. Okay, guys, come on over for your weekly salaries!"

-AssUniv all make their way there, forming a line to take their share.-

Nakamura: "Nice... Another cool twenty-eight K."

Ohno: "Yep. But that's not all; with this rate, I reckon you all would be clear of the order in," *checks his watch.* "Another week. Then you're all free men and women."

AssUniv: "..."

Ohno: "Is something wrong with that?"
Kayano: "Who works to only get half of the salary they should, Ohno-kun?"

Yoshida: "Especially when the job is so much fun?"

Ohno: *grins.*

Karma: "Ah, he gets it now."

Fuwa: "About damn time."

Nagisa: "If it's alright with you, Ohno-kun, we'd like to continue working here. Maybe not as frequently, but if we want a steady income again,"

Isogai: "Or if we wish to send some decent money back to their families,"

Nagisa: "Or that, we'll gladly let you manipulate us again."

Ohno: "Karasuma won't like that... Perfect. Okay. You guys have indefinite jobs now."

Yada: *Now I finally get to see how a billionaire operates. *closes her eyes with gleaming joy.*

Ohno: "Well, it's," *checks his watch.* "Pretty late. Thank God a weekend night. But it's high time we all went back to the Hyatt Regency. Bus is waiting out back; let's get on."

AssUniv: "Yessir!"

-And as they pile up on the bus... Over at the Regency, Karasuma and Irina are having their own good time.-

Karasuma: *Shirtless in the bathroom, he continues to shave any stubble along his upper lip and chin, before putting the utensils away in a drawer and heads to the bed, where Irina laid.*

Irina: "Ooooooo, now there's a lethal agent I recognize."

Karasuma: "Of course you do." *sits down next to her, before Irina's pulling forces him to lie down.* "You've sold that anniversary house, yes?"

Irina: "Yep. In better condition than how we left it."

Karasuma: *looks behind him.*

Irina: *smugly smiles.* "What? I meant me and Roxie."

Karasuma: "That's the name of the dog?"

Irina: "It can be. It's the one thing I remembered in that drunken state."

Karasuma: "I have no qualms against it."

Irina: "Then Roxie it is."
Karasuma: "You're leaving him in the care of Minami-chan, yes? She's certainly not allowed here."

Irina: "Yeah. We can see her anytime we want." *lays Karasuma on his back.* "But not yet." *lays her head on his chest.* "Not yet."

Karasuma: "I suppose we gave enough to the children."

Irina: *lifts her head to see Karasuma in the eyes again.* "Now for some 'us' time." *they then lean in for a kiss...*  

-Karasuma's smartphone rings, interrupting their intimate moment.-

Irina: "AW GODDAMNIT! What now!?" *kneels up.*

Karasuma: *gets up and takes a look.* "What the..."
In this reintroduction to the main story, Grimaldi of the Reclamation Society has found his way out of the jail he was thrust into earlier. But how? The AssUniv Program has a good idea from Karasuma, Irina, and Ohno. And none of them seem too happy about it...

-At a Police Station in Kyotango, Kyoto Prefecture...-

Police Lieutenant: *Slams through one of the double-jointed doors, with a complement of other cops. A SWAT Team that has recently arrived and traversed the corridors finds them and follows along. He has his pistol unholstered and is yelling on his radio communication.* "We have a break out! Seal all of the exits! Order all patrols back to the station!"

Officer on intercom: "What you have is what you got, Lieutenant! Our field officers are dealing with a huge mall bomb threat!"

Lieutenant: "Shit!" *puts his walkie-talkie back and continues running.*

Officer 1: "No reinforcements, sir?"

Lieutenant: "No. We just have to hold out before the JGSDF can arrive!" *They make it to a breach point, where they take cover along the indents and corners in the walls, awaiting the arrival of the escapee and his breakout crew. The suspense and anticipation is eating them inside out. They then hear gunshots coming from the other side of the metal, shut doors, and then silence.*

-Their Nambu 60 revolvers, HK USPS, and MP5s are still concentrated on the barricade, and they take especially extreme caution when a welder is shown to burn through it.-

Lieutenant: "Stay sharp, everyone!"

SWAT Captain: "Ready that stingball grenade, officer!" *looks back.*

SWAT Officer: "Yes sir!" *takes one out and pulls the pin, while holding onto the latch, awaiting the moment to release it.*

-The welder continues to carve a path large enough for the criminals to duck under and through. And it cuts the last corner before the metal makes the square...-

Lieutenant: "Ready..." *holds up his hand, about to shout an order.*

-But then a criminal, who was hiding in the janitor's closet (and the janitor with a hole in his forehead), comes out from around the corner and sweeps a stream of uzi fire on the hallway and the law enforcement personnel. The first victim is the SWAT badge carrying the rubber explosive. The rest of the force is easily able to dispatch the man, but...-
SWAT Captain: "The grenade!"

-And the explosive detonates, flying many rubber balls at the officers. A surge of incessant stinging pains run through the unarmored police officers while distracting the SWAT. The door is finally breached, conveniently at the same time the law enforcement is not ready, and they all get mowed down by assault rifle fire. And through the haze of the small arms’ barrels...-

Grimaldi: *steps out from the shadows, wielding a Chiappa Rhino 60DS revolver.* "Impressive."

Shinsuke: *steps out just after him, wielding a Heckler and Koch HK33.* "I hoped you'd say that. That mean I'm in?"

Grimaldi: "You got to get me fully out of here first. Unless you think we can fight a government army."

Shinsuke: "I could if I wanted to. But as you wish."

Grimaldi: "As we move on, I must ask, though."

Shinsuke: "Shoot." *blind-fires behind cover.*

Grimaldi: "You don't want to be involved with the DNA project, right?"

Shinsuke: "That's right."

Grimaldi: "So why are you helping us then?" *shoots at the upcoming officers.*

Shinsuke: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend. That's all I want to say on the matter."

Grimaldi: *thinks about the Society and Syndicat's enemies.* "Fine then..."

Shinsuke: "Yeah; fine."

Grimaldi: "You have some beef with little kids or something?"

Shinsuke: "What the Hell!?"

Grimaldi: "Okay, okay, enough about that. No need to say any more to me. I won't judge. Let's just get out of here."

Shinsuke: "Riiight..." *they both spring out of cover and shoot down some more of the Law.*

-The next day...-

-Karasuma and Irina read the news in their room service breakfast bundle.-

Karasuma: "Shit..."

Irina: "Oh, that's no good. But we've known that since last night." *Sees Karasuma get up and look out to the window.* "See, I told you we should've kept him close! We probably could've
stopped him! You know that saying; 'keep your friends close, and your enemies closer!'"

Karasuma: "Yeah, I get it. But it wasn't our decision to make..."

Irina: "sighs." "I know, Karasuma. The Ministry really doesn't want us to deal with this, do they?"

Karasuma: "They have to now." *starts dialing Secretary Sanada's phone number and puts him on line.* "Parliamentary Secretary."

Sanada: [message] "If you're here to gloat about the incident in Kyotango, Karasuma, then don't; that proves nothing."

Karasuma: "It's a conspiracy, Secretary. What do a band of Japanese criminals have to gain from an incarcerated Mafia otherwise?"

Sanada: "Arms trafficking; drug trafficking, you name it. Illegal business partners overseas is common for a group that big, Karasuma."

Karasuma: "Fine, fine. But either way, we still have a whole bunch of perpetrators on the run. Me and Irina are the closest agents to the scene; we will be handling the case."

Sanada: "Oh, you'd like that, wouldn't you? The next lead the Agency gets, I'll be sending someone to deal with it. You sit back and train those little menaces of yours for no reason again. Goodbye." *hangs up.*

Karasuma: *leaves the phone next to his ear for a few seconds, before Irina goes up to him and lowers it for him.*

Irina: "What're we going to do?"

Karasuma: "What they do best."

-Meanwhile, in Ohno's hotel suite, he has received very similar news through his laptop from some of his connections closer to the incident. And what it tells him surprises him. It infuriates him. It disturbs him...-

-Later that day, at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...-

-"I'll Never Break" by Ace plays in the boombox while Ohno vigorously cleans all the tables and chairs of the club before opening.-

-The students in AssUniv all come together and arrive at the club the same time, seeing Ohno go around the club to scrub it all down.-

Nagisa: "Wow, Ohno is really absorbed in his activity today."

Kayano: "Does he have a cleaning fetish?"

Karma: "What, like Korosensei?"

AssUniv: *all look to the side for a bit.*
Isogai: "Uh, Ohno-kun?"

Ohno: *while hanging upside down from the atrium's second floor to clean the other side of the window fencing.* "Yeah?"

Yada: "You, uh, look like you have a lot on your mind. You know, more than usual."

Ohno: "I've been told about what is our next operation. And it's getting me tense. It's not a kind of mission I've done in a long while."

Kataoka: "Oh? Karasuma told you?"

Ohno: "No. I told," *checks his watch.* "Myself. But I think Karasuma will tell all of us once he arrives."

Maehara: "That sounds unsettling..."

Nakamura: "Another war that's more than meets the eye... When will they stop?"

Fuwa: "When humans cease to exist... So we can stop writing about them." *looks to the side.* "Isn't that right?"

Sugino: "That mean we have stop working here for a little bit?"

Ohno: "Most likely. Including myself. We got excess staff for," *checks his watch.* "The next few days, so don't worry about this place going anywhere. In the meantime, would you guys like to help? I'll pay extra-time."

Okuda: *whistles.* "Cannot dispute that."

Hara: "Let's get it all done then and get home then."

-The track eventually stops. They all get a drink from the open bar and then wait up at the VIP office platform, where eventually Karasuma and Irina arrives.-

Karasuma: "Hello, students. I take it you all now know that the Shadow War we are waging with the Reclamation Society reached the next phase?"

Okano: "Oh yes. And now, we're hoping we can get the train moving and end it all before it piles up too highly, so if you will, Karasuma-sensei, Bitch-sensei, and Ohno-kun, please tell us what's going on."

Teachers: "..."

Karasuma: "Very well." *goes to Ohno's bulletin board within the office.* "Our next target..." *slams a piece of paper with a mugshot-like image onto the wall, pinning it with a tack.* "Is Shinsuke Shiohara, Oyabun of the Shiohara Family."

AssUniv: *All pay attention to that name and title.*

Terasaka: *scoffs.* "A Yakuza shot-caller..."
Karma: "A pretty notable name even for presumed 'Katagi,' surely."

Chiba: "I do recall Red Eye telling me about some of the rifles he used back in his day involving them."

Kanzaki: "Yeah... For bad reasons, of course."

Ohno: "Then I guess we'll be doing the world a favor by neutralizing him."

Kayano: *raises her hand.* "Of course that would be, but why specifically are we going after him?"

Irina: "Karasuma-sama and I got notification last night, which was confirmed in the news this morning that he was responsible for a police station breakout in Kyotango."

Kurahashi: "Wait, isn't Kyotango where the Ministry moved that Grimaldi guy?"

Karasuma: *looks aside.* "Yeah..."

Nagisa: *groan.*

Irina: "And whether he intended to or not, more likely intended than not, Grimaldi is listed as 'missing.' So, we're going to have to put finding Doctor Yanagisawa on hold; finding Shinsuke and making him pay for his conspiring will take precedence for now."

Okajima: "Didn't you just say Grimaldi is missing? Why don't we get him before that window closes instead?"

Ohno: "Grimaldi is a guy who learns from his mistakes. He has been deceived," *checks his watch.* "Once. He won't be so easy to play with the next time. At this point, it's clear he will only associate with fellow Reclamation Society or Syndicat (the RS' illegal subset) folks."

Isogai: "Okay, but it's not like we have any leads on Shinsuke either. This is his home turf, as a Yakuza."

Ohno: "And we will most definitely be hitting one of his strongholds too... The security will be heavy."

Karasuma: "Subsequently, while my Agency partners and I track him down, we will be going through even more training regimes."

AssUniv: *groan.*

-And that they do. AssUniv were all right to have selected classes that all end by 3 P.M., as their instructors all had them come to the warehouse, no matter the current obstruction, by 4 P.M. every day, in preparation for their toughest mission yet.-

-Within the warehouse...-

-Ohno, standing in the middle of the arena, stands unarmed and handcuffed against three knife-wielders (Nagisa, Yada, and Okano) and three baston-wielders (Karma, Kataoka, and Terasaka).-"
AssUniv: *standing several feet away, charge at him.*

-Ohno left back kicks Terasaka away and into Karma and Kataoka, stopping their charge cold. He then pivots the same leg to catch all of the knife wielders and keep their blade swipes just a centimeter away from his face. He finishes the push kick to have all six of them on one side, and then starts backing up, preventing them from circling him again. All students except Terasaka then duck, allowing the latter (who has borrowed Karma's baston) swings three times in rapid succession, which only the last strike grazes Ohno's face. Meanwhile, knife traps from the three seated in the front almost get Ohno's lower limbs. Kataoka and Okano take the sudden backing away from their opponent to quickly roll back behind him and strike.

Ohno sees Kataoka's stick coming first, and right hook kicks it so that it is tucked in his popliteal area. The remaining pivoting momentum causes Kataoka to lose the weapon completely, while Ohno uses it to deflect the knife strike. He then flips backwards with the baston coiled, forcing the guys and Yada to duck under to not get whacked in the head. When he lands right behind them, he goes prone and sweeps the arnis stick to misbalance all of them, creating an obstruction that Kataoka decides not to jump over. Okano does, however, and drives the plastic knife onto the ground where Ohno's head once was, with the rest of her body landing next to him. He instep kicks Okano's back to keep her grounded, and then shifts the baston into the gap between his back and his conjoined hands. Rolling backwards, the remaining five standing combatants have recovered and rush him down. A backflip stops them dead once again, followed by a backspin along the ground that trips up Terasaka (who stings his left arm in the fall) and has the former end up behind them.

Standing up, he 540 kicks an incoming knife out of Yada's grasp, having it slide harmlessly out of the arena, with a final shoulder check putting her down. He turns his back to Nagisa and Karma as they slash horizontally, so that the arnis stick he is holding parries them both. Kataoka, at its center, tries a front kick. Ohno, reminiscing on the nightclub incident from earlier, falls onto his knees and powerslides backwards, right underneath the kick, and using the gap between his head and shoulder to catch her shin and trip her. One front flip arnis stick slash is enough to eliminate her, leaving just Nagisa and Karma in the fray...

The two show quite the combined flurry teamwork, leaving no openings as any other duo might. And even if one did - such as when Ohno bows down and has Nagisa run into the stick's end, the other is quick to eliminate capitalization - as Karma tries an uppercut blow to smack Ohno in the face, which he only just fails to do. Ohno realizes he must not withhold any further, and when he limbos underneath a wild swing by Karma, he swift positions himself for Nagisa's axe-knife chop... by putting his lower head right in the way!

A low impact sound is heard, in which Ohno has caught the knife's edge with his teeth. He then flips over to catch Nagisa in a kneeling headscissors lock, losing his knife. Ohno throws it straight at Karma, who deflects it, but fails to see the two running towards him and accidentally jabs Nagisa in the stomach, injuring him. One final head prod by a dropping Ohno seals the contest.-

Nagisa: "Ow..."

Ohno: *looks back to see Nagisa writhing.* "I'm sorry I made you go into that, Nagisa-san."

Karasuma: "You have plenty more where that is coming from, Ohno; you've used too much force in all of your attacks on them."
Yada: "No, no, we're fine Karasuma-sensei."

Terasaka: "Sure, he could've held back."

Okano: "But he's only doing what we would in his situation."

Ohno: *snickers.* "Then you try it." *suddenly, the handcuffs fall out from behind him.*

AssUniv: \textit{Wait, did he just get out of the bindings without a key?}

Nagisa: A powerful ally...

Karma: \textit{Indeed. But isn't he a little too powerful? This isn't the first time he's done stuff like taking your knife like that.}

Kayano: \textit{You're right; remember he saved Maehara-kun and Okano-san by holding onto the super-heavy I beam?}

Nakamura: \textit{Or when he stopped my bullet with his mouth.}

Terasaka: \textit{Well, what twisted things let him do all of that...?}

Ohno: *wipes off the grime that accumulated on him from sliding and rolling along the arena's ground.*

-AssUniv: *slowly feed through their food and drink, too focused about their impending mission to go any faster.*

Yada: *clicks her mouth.* "Irina-sensei..."

-AssUniv: *all pay attention.*

Irina: *spits some coffee out.* "Someone finally referred to me as 'Irina-sensei!?' I can die so happy (again)..."

Yada: "Irina-sensei."

Irina: *refocuses.* "Yes, Yada?"

Yada: "You've worked with the Yakuza before. So you're the closest amongst us all to really knowing about the Shiohara Family. Maybe you even worked for them like Lovro outside is trying to find. Did you?"

Irina: "..."
AssUniv: *pay closer attention*

Irina: "No... I don't have that direct experience."

AssUniv: *look down.*

Irina: "But I have seen their boss and their big boys before. And I know quite a deal of how they operate."

AssUniv: *again look over to Irina.*

Irina: *shivers and looks to the side.* "The Yakuza aren't exactly a nice bunch, but if they were all truly family, Shinsuke would be the black sheep. His methods and business operation always want their clients to steam-clean their suits, feeling so dirty for employing them."

Kurahashi: "What do they do?"

Irina: *turns to them.* "Anything."

AssUniv: "!"

Irina: *closes her eyes.* "But they mostly stick to drugs and arms trafficking across the nation. Stories among the other lieutenants in the Families say so, at the very least. A shrewd, volatile businessman, who stops at nothing to get what he wants. What does he want? Something that makes him an extra buck... Or five-hundred-thousand of them."

Ohno: *not looking at the conversation, sits at the very back, watching the entrance to the warehouse.*

Irina: "The resources and income they have, buying off most of the core cities around the country, will definitely make them troublesome. Unfortunately, that's all I know off the top of my head."

AssUniv: "..."

Isogai: "It's helpful, but it won't give us an edge. Hm..." *turns to Ohno.* "What about you, Ohno-kun? You have anything to add?"

Ohno: *slams the table.* "Not now. I'll check some of my intel." *gets up and leaves the office, heading outside, passing by Karasuma. For the first time, they didn't bother looking at each other, as the student-assassins had observed.*

AssUniv: *look between them, and then nod to Irina.* "Wow, this is some serious stuff, if something like that happens."

Irina: "He's going to be some time, so maybe we should find answers somewhere else. Naoko, maybe?"
-A brief time before AssUniv concludes training, leading to Ohno leaving to speak with his "sources."

-At Qita Kong's Little Korea...-

Naoko: *She sleeps peacefully on a couch in the upper floors of Hyun's Tiger's Den Restaurant, with the remains of a Burger King number order, and her laptop closed on a coffee table next to her. An oversized sports jacket serves as her blanket, but it is starting to slip off the furniture, making contact with the floor.*

Hyun: *watches the young lady from across the room, leaning on the hallway gap, and drinking some coffee. The way she rests, she's definitely a girl first, agent second. For her sake, I hope it stays that way. *When he sees the jacket falls off a little more, he walks over and starts lifting it back up to Naoko's exposed shoulder.*

Naoko: *senses contact, and instinctively wakes up, gripping Hyun's extended arm, and then wringing it, causing him to bend over the couch. Her free hand goes close to her far shoulder holster housing the donated Pardini PC/GT9, but releases both holds upon realizing who it is.* "Hyun-san!? What were you doing!?!"

Hyun: "Just keeping you warm. With your makeshift comforter, of course." *shakes his arm free of the light pain.*

Naoko: "Oh... Well thank you, but I'd rather you didn't touch my jacket." *pulls her coat closer to herself.* "Or me, for that matter. You might make the wrong impression."

Hyun: "My apologies." *bows down.* "The jacket though... Sentimental value?"

Naoko: "Yeah..."

Hyun: "I can't say I've shared an experience like that. Government agent work has changed quite a bit."

Naoko: "Well, I'm not a regular government agent."

Hyun: *laughs* "That's for sure."

Naoko: *looks down in wonder.* Hyun certainly doesn't act like someone from South Korea's National Intelligence Service. But is it all because of his great time away from it?

Hyun: "Something wrong, kid?"

Naoko: "Don't call me that. But, if it's perfectly alright with you, why did you leave South Korea?"

Hyun: *refocuses upon hearing that question.* "I stand corrected. I do have things with sentimental value - my memories."
Naoko: "I-I'm sorry. That was unscrupulous of me to ask."

Hyun: "Ah, but if I never said that, it wouldn't have value. And anything with value is worth the attention paid to it, yes?"

Naoko: *sweat mark drops down her neck.* So outlandish! "Yeah... You're right..."

Hyun: *sits down on the couch.* "You'll want to sit back to hear about it."

Naoko: *sits down on the far side of the stretch.*

Hyun: "In a strange way, Naoko-san, you have more experience than me... You've had a changed outlook from a very young age... I presume? Mine wouldn't come until six years ago."

Naoko: "You were an agent for that long?"

Hyun: "It makes sense. I would be dead if it was double that time."

Naoko: "So you're a rogue?"

Hyun: "I am. I thought Ohno-kun told you that."

Naoko: "Pfff, you think that guy tells anyone anything?"

Hyun: *laughs.* "Good point."

Naoko: "But he did say what you saw made you... Crazy?"

Hyun: *looks straight at her.* "... That's right. And that's what made me run six years ago."

Naoko: *goes closer to him.* "What was it?"

Hyun: "It wasn't a what. It was a who."

Naoko: "Who?"

Hyun: "And a what."

Naoko: *another sweat mark drops.* "Fair enough. So, um, the subjects of interest?"

Hyun: "..."

Naoko: "Your secret is safe with me."

Hyun: "Do you know how it feels... When you come across one of the most hopeless situations your nation has ever seen... And when it becomes time for the government to deal with it... How they deal with it?"

Naoko: *looks away for a bit before back at him.* "Like the Korosensei incident?"

Hyun: *looks the same way.* "Yes. But only you and your peers were appalled by it; not your entire country. What I saw, would frenzy all of my country's peninsula. I had to stop it. And
because I reacted, I was ostracized."

Naoko: "You... fought to save your country. And in return, the country turned their back on you."

Hyun: "No, the government did. No company likes to say they screwed up when they hired someone, right?"

Naoko: "Ah... South Korea's public doesn't know about you."

Hyun: "Yes. But even then, I couldn't trust anyone. Not until I could find a group of people that understood that sordid affair."

Naoko: "Ohno-kun."

Hyun: "Qita Kong is the majority, but Ohno-kun is the one who resonates most with it. It's almost kind of sad, how many follow this path."

Naoko: "Why Ohno-kun? Was he-"

-Naoko's phone rings.-

Naoko: "Huh? Who's that?" *checks her phone, realizing that the subjects are AssUniv.* "A video-chat request by my friends. Hyun - out of the way, quickly!"

Hyun: "Ow, hey. Alright, alright, I'm going. I'll make sure everybody stays quiet too." *leaves.*

Naoko: *exhales, grooming her hair down, and then accepts the request.*

AssUniv: [message] "Hey Naoko-san!"

Naoko: *smiles.* "Hey, everyone."

Irina: [message] "Ah, my younger sister-in-law; how are you?"

Naoko: "Just fine, Bitch-sensei. And you?"

Irina: [message] *slight pause.* "Good too."

Kayano: [message] "My phone, come on! Ah, okay. Naoko-san, we'd like to ask you about something..."

Naoko: "Oh?"

-Meanwhile, on Qita Kong's outskirts...-

-Five motorcyclists cruise through the downtown districts of Kyoto, stopping at one of the side entrances of the neighborhood. Helmet removals reveal the leader to be Ohno, followed swiftly by four individuals - three men, one woman, all of whom seem to be at least several years older than him. And they all were carrying large holdalls of various types.-

-They pass through the lingual checkpoints in Qita Kong to make it to the Tiger's Den, coming in
from the kitchen.-

Ohno: "Hey! Hyun!"

Hyun: *appears from the staff-side doors.* "Ah, Ohno-kun! And your few friends." *goes up to them, embracing the first three.* "Satoshi Tsuchiya, otherwise known as Ohno's big bro."

Satoshi: "Hyun. Good to see you." *taps Hyun's back.*

Hyun: *To the next* "Miss Akiyama. A beautiful sight."

Miho: "Yes. but we've established this before; Miho. Call me Miho, please?" *also taps Hyun's back during the hug.*

Hyun: *that slap was enough to seriously sting him.* "Ah-Of course. Yes..." *Over to the next.* "Alan."

Walsh: *In a serious tone.* "And I prefer Walsh. Mr. Walsh, if you will." *laughs it off, hugging tightly.*

Hyun: "And... You are?"

Ohno: "Mister Richard Halle. Former Danish Naval Officer. Left for dead in a battlecruiser incident during a conflict in the Pacific."

Halle: "And I would be dead those eight months ago if not for Mr. Ohno. I owe him a great deal, just like most of us."

Hyun: "Of course you do. Well, welcome to the team." *The two handshake.*

Ohno: "Hyun, you know about what happened at Kyotango, right?"

Hyun: "Yeah... Police station breakout. They really should've listened to your Agency friends, hm?"

Ohno: "That matters not now. What does matter is that we find the people who broke Grimaldi out. And bring them to justice."

Hyun: "You mean the Shiohara Family?"

Miho: *begins to make a snarling expression on her face.*

Satoshi: *holds her wrist, and subtly shakes his head to calm her down.*

Ohno: "Yes. They've crossed far too many lines this time."

Miho: "If I may sir, that's the understatement of the year."

Halle: "Who knows? The year itself has only just begun."

Hyun: "Whatever the case, I'll be looking into it, Ohno-kun. In the meantime, how about I treat you all to some Korean noodles?"
Satoshi: "That sounds excellent."

Halle: "The Navy was cultural, but it wasn't this cultural."

Miho: *still thinking about the Shiohara Family, sighing before following the men.*

-Back to Naoko and her laptop...-

Naoko: "You want to know more about the Yakuza branch, the Shiohara Family?"

Karma: [message] "Yeah. Down here in Kyoto, they're our next targets."

Naoko: *That's old news to me; Agency is all about what they did right now. *Hm, Fate hasn't been kind to the lot of you. The Shioharas are not people to be trifled with. Hell, it's hard to even call some of them people. What's their involvement in all of this?"

Naoko: "That's a big scoop... Well then, what would you like to know?"

Kataoka: [message] "Gives us a little background first. Maybe something crucial will catch our ears. Something exploitable."

Naoko: "Okay, give me a second." *clicks out of full-screen and uses MoD's secure archives search to find all files related to the Shiohara Family.* "Okay. The Shiohara Family..."

Among the three umbrella branches that dominate the nation's underworld, the Ishida Clan, the Akamine Clan, and the Tanimoto Clan, the Shiohara Family is one from the Akamine web. And they're one of the strongest... A potent and venerable family, they have stakes of some sort across all the black and grey-area business markets. One thing is for sure; they're not amicable in the slightest. Shinsuke Shiohara, the current Oyabun who took his position as soon as his father grew terribly ill, never recovering. It was a shrewd, conservative business then; it's a shameless, open corporation now. Millions, to tens of millions, basically.

Perhaps their biggest, (in)famous achievement was taking over the small firearms market, one of the most important among the Yakuza, briefly in the middle 2000s. It lasted for three years, and channeled a whole lot of money across the three different Yakuza branches, making them all stronger, obviously upping their literal street cred. By the time the Kato Family returned to arms supremacy in 2011, The Shioharas had amassed a lot of deadly potential. Only God can know what they're doing now, as second from the top right now; no Yakuza likes to be silver, obviously. But what could they possibly be planning by keeping quiet for almost six years? Looks like the answer came from you all. The Shioharas had been conspiring with the Reclamation Society, more specifically, their illegal, outlined subset - The Syndikat. Maybe they believe in the whole DNA-Weapons thing, and its ability to usher in a new world order. But what's for sure... This Family wants to change the status quo, and put themselves back on top by any means necessary.

Naoko: *types vigorously.* "That seems to be enough of a bio, without going too deeply into the, more technical stuff, which surely won't matter unless you go undercover, which you all won't have time for. So anything from that pique your interest?"
Isogai: [message] "Hm, the mentioning of a rival of sorts to the Shioharas is notable. Can we learn more about the animosity between them?"

Naoko: "Honestly, there isn't much to tell. It's not just that I condone you all going to ask a fellow Yakuza family for help or anything, but it's also that they're a very elusive bunch; they appear in one city, and then move to another one many hours away; sometimes in conjunction even. And their leader... Not even the MoD knows who he, or she, is."

Karma: [message] "That's no surprise... As much as the recent notoriety the Shioharas have accumulated, which is nothing to overlook certainly, the Kato Family has a much more enigmatic - say 'unpredictable' - history. The public has rocky ties with them; the police ain't so kind either... Even the Yakuza have turned their back on them."

Kanzaki: [message] "Why's that?"

Naoko: "Because the word of God says they're all traitors."

AssUniv: "..."

Fuwa: [message] "That sounds like a good enough reason to have everyone hate you."

Maehara: [message] "Let's still hear about the conflict between the Shioharas and the Katos, Naoko-san. Finding out what they pursued, how they operated, so on, could be useful."

Naoko: *sighs.* "Okay... It says here that the two Families, unquestionably with different moral codes, never liked each other, and since they were in the same Clan, they had no political or ethical qualms about fighting out their problems. On specs alone, it was a struggle between numbers and strategy. In this case, numbers did outlast for a time... But a seeming long-term plan, filled with deceit and deception, even to their own brethren, allowed the Katos to carry on. Exploiting targets such as supply caches, which the Shioharas had made out of..." *the video chat is cut off.*

AssUniv: *sees the "CONNECTION LOST" sign on Kayano's screen.* "WHAT!?"

Naoko: *looks at her own "CONNECTION LOST" screen.* "What the..." *tries refreshing the Wi-Fi.* "Why isn't this..." *taps her screen lightly in a second attempt to refresh it. After failing again, she gets up and heads downstairs to meet with Hyun about the difficulty.*

-Down in the restaurant itself...-

Hyun/Halle/Walsh/Satoshi: *All conversing while having guksu jangguk dishes.*

Ohno/Miho: *keeping to themselves, Miho slowly has her noodles while observing her teammates, while Ohno cannot stop looking at his flip phone, which he kept underneath the table and on his lap.*

Miho: *notices the behavior and speaks to him through their minds.* "Something amiss, sir?"

Ohno: The service is suddenly very bad...

Miho: Could it be...?
Ohno: *Refocuses and speaks to Hyun.* "Hyun, may we all head into the kitchen?"

Hyun: *Looks at him, realizing there is a predicament.* "All of you, in the kitchen. Don't make a ruckus." *stands up, leading the other five into the staff side of the restaurant.* "What's up?"

Ohno: *Is about to answer, until...*

Naoko: *Descends down the staircase, leading into the kitchen. She is initially looking at her smartphone.* "Hyun! Why isn't the Wi-Fi or cell service working right now?" *looks up, seeing Ohno with his complement of a team.*

Satoshi/Miho: *gasps.* "An agent!" *go for their sidearms.*

Walsh/Halle: *Also keep their pistols ready.*

Ohno/Hyun: *get in front of them.* "WHOA WHOA WHOA! It's all cool!"

Chefs/Servers: *look at the commotion.*

Ohno: "Guys, put your guns away. Naoko-san is here for us, okay?"

Naoko: "Ah... Your brotherhood."

Miho: "Siblinghood."

Naoko: "Whatever you want to call it. Doesn't matter much around Ministry parts anyways."

Walsh: "What's that supposed to mean, little-"

Ohno: *stands even closer in front of them. He points at Walsh.* "Calm down, bro." *Then points to Naoko.* "And you, stop it. We're not doing our common enemy's work for them!"

Ohno's Team: "What?"

Hyun: "Yeah, I missed that part, Ohno-kun. What do you mean?"

Ohno: "I mean some group is sabotaging Qita Kong's network. Right, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: *looks at her smartphone, realizing someone like Hyun would always have good internet unless someone else caused trouble.* "Yeah..."

Hyun: *tries linking up his phone.* "Goddamnit, you're right."

Satoshi: "We got to get it back to working order. Find the jamming devices."

Halle: "Then let's get out there and break them!"

Ohno: *holds out his hand.* "No! This is a baiting scheme. They want to lure all of us out, while we cannot communicate with each other."

Hyun: "Well, if we get into a fight, we will need at least one of those jammers broken, or we
will be at a serious disadvantage."

   Ohno: *looks at Hyun.* "Carry on as usual. I'll go alone."

   Miho: "Boss, please-

   Ohno: "I have impunity on my side; don't worry." *puts on one of Hyun's flamboyantly-colored hats.* "Everyone stays here and acts as usual. But if you hear anything, don't hesitate to counterattack. Just don't go too far."

   Ohno's Team: "Yessir!"

   Naoko: "Wait a second, Ohno-kun. I'm coming with you."

   Ohno: "No; Karasuma might be on the way if a war goes down. You ready to blow your cover after all your friends have done?"

   Naoko: "Well..."

   Ohno: "Stay with Hyun and provide logistics once communications is back online."

   Naoko: "...Okay."

   Ohno: *Makes a hand gesture that looks like he is icepick-stabbing his heart, and then bows.*

   Ohno's Team: *They all copy the action, and in unison say,* "May our vices be another's virtue." *And with that, Ohno leaves through the front entrance of the Tiger's Den.*
Street-War Space

-Back at AssUniv's training warehouse...-

Kayano: *tries all that she can to renew the video chat.* "Damnit, it's not working! Ritsu, any luck?"

Ritsu: "I'm afraid not. It may be due in part to Naoko-san's government-secure connection, but I cannot redirect the signal in any way to recover the streaming network."

Irina: *looks worried.*

Terasaka: "Ugh, well that's just great!"

Chiba: "It sounded like we could have really learned something big..."

Nagisa: "Let's just wait a bit. It's not like we have a time limit right now."

Karasuma: "..." *Gets an alarm notice from one "Agent 113," which reads, "Look on the news." Perplexed, he turns on the office's flatscreen and tunes in to JNN.*

AssUniv: *pay attention to the sudden digital sound.*

Anchorman: "...Eyes in the sky are seeing the police lockdown in the Southeast Kyoto District now." *The screen shows live camera footage of the newscasters in the helicopter, watching a line of blue dividing roads and main corridors in two.*

Isogai: "Whoa, what's going on?"

Irina: "Hm, it looks to be downtown turmoil..." *gets a message on her phone.* "Huh?" *Checks it.*

Karasuma: *looks straight at Irina.*

Irina: "It is from Karasuma, who says, "Bring the students back to the Hyatt Regency; the nightclub if you can't do that." She looks at him, then to them, and nods.*

Karasuma: *nods in confirmation, then looks back at the screen.* "I'm going to retrieve Ohno before he gets himself wrapped up in the mess." *leaves the office, then the warehouse, into his agency-issue car, driving off.*

Anchorman: "We will be hearing from reporter Takeda Takashima, who is live and on the scene. Takashima-san, any updates on the situation?"

Reporter: "Oda, it's chaos in this area, spawned from mere suspicion! Seriously, only anonymous tips have been thrown out, and without any time to investigate, the police are unable to ascertain the reason for the ruckus! If it's a shootout, no bullets have flown in the last ten minutes. If it's a fist fight, there is no struggle out in the open. If it's a bomb threat, many people in the neighborhood don't seem to care. I have to tell you, Oda, this is unprecedented, and I don't like it."
Kataoka: "What could this be all about, then?"

Irina: *turns off the television screen.* "Come on, all. We need to get out of trouble right now. Participation will only harm our chances." *Gets everyone up to leave the warehouse. The bus outside is well ready and on its way to return to the hotel, but a line of blockades on most of the routes to the lodging dissatisfies them, and so they reroute to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub.*

-Meanwhile, back at Qita Kong...-

Suited Gangster: *Wearing the lapel pin that belongs to the Shiohara Family, he hangs a Vepr assault rifle in front of him, while guarding the entranceway to the roof of one motel.*

-A falling rock sound comes from another rooftop, landing on the steps and falling a few more leagues.-

Suit: *aims his rifle at the sight of the sound, instinctively thinking that it came from above. He continues aiming at the edge of the ceiling, before hearing another rock falls down across the corner en route to the staircase down below. Believing it to not be a common folk, he goes down the steps to investigate. Cutting the corner, he finds the dropped stone, picking it up, confused.*

???: "Hey!"

Suit: *Looks at where the sound originated. What he sees is a little Filipino kid on the roof.*

Child: <speaks in Filipino> "Kiss my ass!" *throws a rock straight at the Yakuza's face, hitting his mark perfectly.*

Suit: *wipes his forehead.* "You little shit!" *Goes to aim his Vepr at the adolescent.*

Ohno: *having hid on the other side of the lower stairs gap, he quickly runs in, grabbing the Suit's raised arms, and arm tossing him onto his his back in front of Ohno. He then locks in a Pentagram Choke, which puts the gangster down in a few seconds. He dusts himself off after he gets up. Then, he looks up to the kid.* <Speaks in Japanese> "Nice job, boy." *throws him an elastic-wrapped one-inch roll of five-thousand yen notes.*

Child: *catches it.* <Speaks in Japanese> "Thank you, Mr. Ohno!"

Ohno: *salutes.* "Just make sure you give it to your mother. I'll know if you don't." *pulls the Suit into a hallway and throws the rifle into a small gap. He then goes up the stairs unhindered.* There's not as many obstacles as I thought there'd be... That's only the fourth guard on the rooftops I had to pacify. *Minutes later, he is seen performing a diving forearm smash onto a guard with his back turned, several feet below him at the time. Then, when there are two guarding an overpass bridge to the next building, Ohno gets onto the upper stage, throws a large slab of building off one side, and jumps off the other. The two falling subjects are tied down with long pieces of cloth - long enough for Ohno to crash through the windows on his side of the overpass like rappelled infiltration soldiers. The force of the falling boulder also instantly unties the rope upon entry, so Ohno literally flies across the width of the bridge and into the two guards, who were investigating the falling object. One double-dropkick is enough for them to fall four stories. And as he gets up...]*

-Bang bang bang!-
Ohno: *looks over to the source of the sound.* Gunshots... A war is upon us. I have to get to that jammer now!

-After dealing with a few more planted gangsters, he finally makes it to the final rooftop. Across the palate is one of the jamming devices.-

Ohno: There is one. Destroying it alone should be enough for all of us to communicate. *Starts walking towards it, which involves going through the greenhouse placed there too.*

-Suddenly, the only remaining door in the way shuts, and there are the sounds of falling miscellaneous things going in front of it. Seconds later, the door Ohno went through also closes up, locked from the inside by whoever is also in there with him.-

???: "Been some time, Miyamoto-san..."

Ohno: "Jieji..." *clenches both of his fists.*

Jieji: "Surprised to see me, like last time?"

Ohno: "Honestly... Yes. I was starting to think that only Shinsuke's men were here."

Jieji: *gets ticked off.* "Stop... Ignoring me!" *slams the door with a furious fist.*

Ohno: "Oh, I'm not ignoring you. How can I, when you walk into my friend's neighborhood with a whole bunch of angry men, and a device to put them all in a wave of panic?"

Jieji: "They said it would lure them all out. But I knew, deep inside, that only you would come. I know this, because I know you so well. With our many battles together, you tend to pick up on some things."

Ohno: "That does pose an issue for my side's goals, doesn't it?"

Jieji: "That's okay; I'm going to end your contribution today anyways."

Ohno: *picks his chin up.* "Give it a shot. No pun intended." *takes off his belly holster, housing his two Kimber pistols and a backpack. He then hangs it on an irrigation pipe being suspended from the roof.*

Jieji: "That's more like it." *pounds his fist as they both walk closer towards each other. When they get within two steps, he sees Ohno turn to "B-Boy" mode, and they throw respective right punches that meet their cheeks.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST theme "Pledge of Demon" plays.-

大野一彦 対 武士杰

Kazuhiko Ohno; Okinawa International Penitentiary Parolee
Ohno and Jieji both recover from their respective blows by supporting themselves on the tables nearly covered by plants. Ohno gets ready again first and charges in for another punch. Jieji gives a quick low elbow to push Ohno away. As he falls back, Jieji tries taking the lead with a wide right hook, which Ohno blocks by lying on the table a little bit and lifting his left leg up to his face. He then front kicks Jieji away, who backs into another table across the narrow walking section.

Ohno: *He personally picked out this battle location...*

Ohno jumps up and tries to knee Jieji in his face, but he sidesteps, and sweeps the kicking leg. Ohno nearly falls off, but his one standing leg is strong enough to support him. When Jieji throws another hook to finish the fall, Ohno backflips onto the across table, keeping his legs tucked in just enough to avoid the pipes above. But he lands on the edge of a potted plant instead, which topples it and causes him to slide back onto the ground... Where Jieji greets him with a chop to his chest. The Chinese gangster continues to pummel Ohno, who picked up his hands in a cover-up, deflecting most of the damage. He then slips below the table tucking his right leg into the popliteal areas of Jieji's knees, causing the latter to taste the spilled dirt on the boards.

Ohno tries to get up again, but a sudden side kick that he barely limbos under puts him on the ground again. Jieji takes Ohno's right leg before it falls back down with the rest of him, pulling him along the ground and close enough to allow him to hammer fist Ohno's face. Ohno manages to cross-block it.

Ohno: *I can't windmill out of this; the tables are in the way!*

Jieji recovers from the failed attack, landing his entire shin onto Ohno's stomach. He goes for another one, but a pickup of both knees on Ohno's part prevents that. He then launches Jieji over him, giving himself enough time to get back on his feet. Jieji charges in again, throwing a right jab with north-south shoulder positioning. Ohno ducks under, putting his left hand on the soiled ground, and then lifts himself into a one-handed stand, then dropping his left leg into a flipped instep kick to hit Jieji's forehead. A high block from Jieji's free hand puts a stop to that, and a repositioned elbow smash with his attacking arm sends Ohno back. After a little writhing, the latter gets on one knee.

Ohno: *I need another type of agility... * Gets up, wiping his mouth, and then initiating "Boxer" stance.*

Ohno is the one to charge in this time, with Jieji launching a left hook, which the former bobs underneath. Bringing his head back up, Ohno blocks a left straight, and then weaves next to a right, pivoting his body like Jieji does for a left body hook. Jieji is stunned for a bit, allowing Ohno to spin counter-clockwise for an elbow strike to the face, and then turning the other way for a right back fist. Jieji shakes back into focus and punches with a left straight again, before jumping up for a forearm smash. Ohno blocks both, and then does an angular stomp to Jieji's exposed left foot. Having thrown his head forward, Jieji was exposed to a right uppercut that gets him tipsy again.

After backing a few steps, Jieji decides to up the ante. He pounds his two fists together and rushes in with even more ferocity. The first attack he throws isn't a punch, though - It was a well-
timed headbutt that Ohno barely manages to cover-up. Jieji repositions his head, then wraps his arms around Ohno's, trying to compression choke him. At its weird angle, Ohno is unable to sweep the legs, and his hands were trapped, which was fine since they were the only things keeping the choke from worsening. But then Jieji slams Ohno's head onto a plastic-pot of plants.

With his head briefly trapped in the dirt, Jieji throws any punches he can at Ohno's defenseless torso, targeting his ribcage mostly, but only one clean hit there lands, as Ohno again puts his arm in front of it. After he gets his head free, Jieji does a low roundhouse kick that trips Ohno again. But he takes a plant for the fall, and the container goes right into Jieji's face. That gives Ohno enough time to get back up, while Jieji looks back with aggression. He throws a mean right hook, which Ohno blocks by taking another plant and putting it in the way. The plant explodes with pottery and grime, which Ohno blows into Jieji's face yet again, stunning him and leaving him vulnerable to a skipping side kick. This propels Jieji to the other end of the greenhouse, and while getting up, he takes a narrow-width rake and a dibble. Using it as a polearm, he swings it horizontally and just above the plants, forcing Ohno to duck underneath. When he goes for an axe-smash, Ohno rolls over the right side of the table.

When Jieji attempts a lunge from across the table, Ohno successfully avoids the blow and grabs the close end of the rake, attempting to disarm his opponent. But Jieji takes the dibble and stabs the table where Ohno's hands were, with the latter having to let go to avoid it. Another wide swing, forces him to fall underneath the table. Ohno notices near him a leaf-shaped trowel and takes it. When he gets back up, he blocks the rake with the mini-shovel, with the metal unable to pass through the wide handle. Avoiding one dibble slash, he then props the rake up, causing its prongs to get stuck on the far side of some pipes. Distracted, Ohno dropkicks Jieji over the table before he can return the curved-handle knife back to him.

殺すために行きなさい！

Go for the kill!

Still on top of Jieji, Ohno pummels the gangster with hooks this time, only to be shoved off once more. But Jieji is clearly very stunned, and he misses the chance to block a high knee to the face, sending him back to where the tools were. It took Ohno a few seconds to realize that his rival was down and out, refusing to lower his guard until then.

-The battle song ends.-

Ohno: *walks with a little limp towards his hanging belongings and then the door that leads to the end of the rooftop with the jammer. Knowing that the door is completely blocked by junk, Ohno decides to leave the greenhouse through the window above it. He takes his time getting up after the small fall, and then takes one of his Kimber pistols, and then whips the jammer, breaking it. Ohno then falls on his chest and then turns over supine, lifting his hand to reach his bluetooth.* "This is Ohno. Can you hear me?"

Miho: [message] *slightly garbled.* "Mr. Ohno! Thank God."

Satoshi: [message] "We can hear you just fine, boss."
Ohno: "What's the status?"

Hyun: [message] "The Shiohara Family got impatient. They shot up most of the entrances to Qita Kong. That's five men at the very least, gone. And it's rising as we speak!"

-There was a faint scream.-

Hyun: [message] "You definitely heard that wherever you are, right?"

Miho: [message] "Fucking savages."

Ohno: "I'm sorry, Hyun. Now that our comms are back up, we can get our men out there."

Halle: [message] "Good shit; let's take the fight to them now!"

Miho: [message] "Plan of attack, sir?"

Ohno: "Divide and conquer. Make use of Qita Security's great knowledge of the map to create chokepoints. Make all but a few fights one on one. All the more interesting, right?" *supports himself up.*

Satoshi: [message] "That's our commander."

Ohno: "Yeah, well, we'll need some free streets in case something..." *looks over one side of the roof, noticing some of the Kyoto Police Department's personnel moving further through the "no man's land."* "Goes wrong..."

Miho: [message] "Mr. Ohno?"

Ohno: "Get your gear on, and contain the fight. I'll be with you all in a little bit." *hangs up the call. He then opens up his travel-size backpack, revealing sixteen pounds of military-grade gear...*

-In a minute or two, Ohno puts on a liquid kevlar and metallic microlattice infused vest, titanium-plated kneepads and elbowpads, cestus-weighted leather gloves, a utility belt housing four pistols and several EMP grenades, and trifocal goggles.-

Ohno: *Tries to run in the gear, but the pain from his fight with Jieji has considerably crippled him.* Come on, Ohno... Move. Move! *And with that small speech to himself, Ohno's muscles work completely in tune to how his mind wishes it to. And then, he looks over the side of the rooftop he just did earlier. He then backs away a little bit, and then runs towards the raised ledge. He then clears the whole roof, jumping to the nearby roof across the corridor, and then sliding down the roof to land on one below. He crashes through the window and runs through the abandoned hallway, en route to intercepting the police blockade...*

-At the close barrier...-

Karasuma: *Reaches that side of Qita Kong, realizing that one of Kyoto's major police lieutenants is stationed there. He gets out of the car and speaks with him.* "Lieutenant."

Police: *notice Karasuma behind the, and instantly bow.*

Lieutenant: "Defense Interim Chief." *finishes bowing.* "Do not worry, sir; we have the
problem contained."

Karasuma: "That's good. Any reason why we haven't moved forward yet?"

Lieutenant: "We have been, sir. Though there is indeed conflict, it doesn't seem to extend far beyond these blocks, running from here to the coastline. Once we have the SWAT on the scene, we'll go on in."

Karasuma: "Alright."

Ohno: "Not alright!"

Police/Karasuma: *look over to the voice. All of them are terrified.*

Lieutenant: *Widens his eyes.* "Well look who the cat dragged in..."

Ohno: "Karasuma! Get over here now!"

Karasuma: *begins walking over.*

Lieutenant: "Sir, you don't need to listen to scum like him. Say the word, and we'll shoot him down."

Ohno: "Fat chance. You could have a hundred of your boys, and it wouldn't happen."

Lieutenant: "You son of a-"

Karasuma: *points at the Lieutenant.* "Sir, I'll handle this!" *After seeing the leader nod in confirmation, he turns to Ohno, who is now right in front of him.* "I knew you were involved in this somehow, Ohno."

Ohno: "Where'd you get that idea? Because Hyun is a few doorsteps away!?"

Karasuma: "No... Because wherever you go, chaos follows."

Ohno: "Are you saying I caused all this!?"

Lieutenant: "That'd be awfully convenient!"

Karasuma: "Lieutenant!" *looks back.*

Lieutenant: *holds up his hands.*

Karasuma: "Now then... What brings you to the outskirts?"

Ohno: "Those men," *points to the police.* "Are dangerously close to the battlefield."

Karasuma: "Worried about them, are you?"

Ohno: "Of course not! But they're not coming any closer to Qita Kong!"

Karasuma: "SWAT is already on the way to plan the assault-"
Ohno: "They're staying right there!" *voice starts breaking from aggression.* "You're telling all of them to stay there!!"

Karasuma: *begins matching his anger.* "Why's that?"

Ohno: "Do you know just how many people's lives you will ruin if those red-collars storm in on this district?"

Karasuma: *thinks about it a bit, upon realizing that he meant Qita Kong's residents, who are mostly illegal immigrants.* "Oh..."

Ohno: "Right. If this community falls, me and Hyun will break off. But that doesn't matter, because he'll still lose. I'll lose. We'll lose. Japan will lose. The whole world will lose!"

Karasuma: "..."

Ohno: "Only you and I will be going in there."

Lieutenant: "Sir, please-

Karasuma: "Lieutenant... Get me a vest and a SCAR PDW." *is handed those equipment.* "Thank you. Now, once the SWAT arrive, they will fortify this area, and will apprehend anybody who appears around that corner that is not us! Am I clear?"

Police: "... Sir, yes sir!"

Karasuma: "There. My side won't be getting in the way. Happy?"

Ohno: *Still looking at the Lieutenant, then responds flatly.* "Delighted." *pulls out two of his Kimber pistols and pulls their slides back simultaneously with both hands.* "Let's have some fun, shall we?" *The two then run past said corner.*
-After dealing with a few Shiohara stragglers in the mix, followed by one proper, albeit brief skirmish later, Ohno and Karasuma make it to Hyun and Satoshi, who are guarding the West side of Qita Kong, with a sizable number the district's security.-

Satoshi: "Sir!" *motions him over, before realizing who he's with.*

Ohno: "Don't worry; he's with us."

Satoshi: *thinks about it for a second, before nodding.* "Okay!"

Karasuma: "The situation, Mr. Hyun?"

Hyun: "Up for debate. Aside from us, the rest of Ohno's team, and-" *instantly realizes that he almost said Naoko, who he knows should not be here.* "A few of my stronger guards, Shinsuke has the numbers with talent. But we are keeping them repulsed with better strategies. For now."

Ohno: "Can your men who are at the chokepoints and death traps fend on their own?"

Hyun: "They should!"

Ohno: "Then have all of them focus on those; we'll deal with the main streets; us and my team on the East." *holds his bluetooth.* "Does that sound good with you guys?"

Miho: [message] "Yessir!"

Walsh: [message] "Perfect; more fun for us!"

Halle: [message] "Hell's going to have a huge reservation list tonight!"

Ohno: "Great! Everyone, ready a flashbang and on my count, Miho and Halle, throw to Point A! Walsh and Satoshi, Point C!" *hands two flash grenades to Hyun and Karasuma.* "The rest and I on Point E!"

-They all pull the pins, but hold onto the handles, preventing detonation. And then, at one, they all throw at their designated marks. With all of the QK residents and militia on other streets, there was no possibility of friendly disruption. And the flashbangs make their marks on twenty close soldiers.-

Ohno's Team/Hyun/Karasuma: *All spring out of their spots, covering a lead debt on the distracted Shiohara soldiers. When more show themselves behind vehicles, walls, and such, everyone is quick to dispatch them. Very few manage to shoot even one of their own shots before being put down.

-A different perspective shows some of Qita Kong's security detail doing all that they can to repel the arriving soldiers. The Shioharas newer-age, officially blue-printed technology gets fried by their nicely-thrown EMP grenades. The men themselves get lured into some rundown, dimly-lit housing buildings, only to disappear from each other's view one by one. Ambushes from above, guns and fists alike, are also present, as are rooftop blitz plays. Despite the casualties, the Yakuza's
higher numbers continue to pool in, and every QK downed means another eight or so Shioharas continue fighting.

QK Officer: *shouts through a walkie talkie.* "Guys! Move all the remaining traps to 56th, 81st, 43rd, and 12th street East! We're going to push these assholes into the river!"

-And with that, the bulk of the QK retreat and disappear behind cut corners, forcing the Shioharas to keep pursuit.

Shiohara member 1: "They're turning tail! Haha!"

Shiohara member 2: "Day's not over yet, kyoudai! We must find that harbinger, and silence him for good! they're going to run to their most familiar ground, so follow them, and they'll takes us right to him!"

-Back with Ohno's team, Karasuma, Hyun, and... One of Hyun's men (read: young, short woman)? Regardless, the super-soldiers, super-criminals, and super-agents have advanced so close to the fray that neither can maintain purely ranged combat, and must resort to CQC as well.

Miho: *shoots down two mid-range gangsters with her HK XM8, before noticing one about to creep on her. She then shoves the buttplate of the firearm behind her, hitting the stomach of the goon. She then puts the barrel on his chin, but rather than fire, she takes the back of the man's head and then slams it downward, wedging the rifle briefly into his head. The resulting force causes him to almost backflip into the air.*

Walsh: *When two gangsters with knives charge him, he ducks under both swipes, and when the left stabs like an icepick downward, he sidesteps to the right. When the right goon tries the same, Walsh uses his AK-9 assault rifle to push him into the former goon, avoiding the blow. He then side kicks them down to the ground, unable to defend against a short burst of subsonic rounds.*

Assassin: *Baseball slides underneath the legs of one goon, shooting the other behind him in the forehead with the Beretta in her right hand. That mook forcibly looks up, instinctively shooting his Micro Galil into the air, and hitting the person she slid under on his ribcage and shoulder. She shoots her Pardini's bullet at his neck to ensure subjugation. The assassin then rolls to the right to avoid a third gangster's 2x4 plank smash. She quickly gets up and frontflip kicks the man's knee, all in the matter of an agile 2.8 seconds. The man lands just next to her, and when she sees a fourth with a lead pipe wanting to do the same, she flips the third over, and transitions to a side mount to evade it. She has also retrieved the flat board and smashes it horizontally into the fourth mook's face.*

Halle: *One gangster swings a wide piece of rebar to his head, which he ducks under. Another diagonally behind him comes along, so he shoulder checks the first mook some distance away. The second goes for a backhand diagonal slash with a sharp piece of metal, which he sidesteps, ending up behind him. Two more join in on a four-pronged, one-sided assault, but Halle manages to outlast long enough to melee three of them away. The last misses his Kesa-giri axe chop, which has him meet Halle's knee, stunning him. Halle keeps his free arm on the back of the bent-over gangster, and when the other three gets up, they are met with .40 S&W rounds fired from an HK MP5 MLI. He then inverse-fallaway slams the mook with him behind, landing onto two more chargers. Halle finishes those three with a frag grenade while walking away.*

Miho: *Has one person in a side headlock, another in a 2/3s leg triangle choke, and one more in a rifle-strap garrote at the time of the explosion.* "Hey, Walsh, the kid's good!"
Walsh: *Breaks the leg of one mook by stepping on the inner section of his tibia, before bandit-sweeping three other gangsters.* "That he is."

Assassin: *Doesn't bother with the conversation, running at high-speed towards one guy before he can pull out his dagger. She cradles underneath his punching arm, pivoting around his left side, and ending up back to back with him. She then lifts up the man's shins, tripping him, and finishes by giant-swinging him into a nearby traffic-light pole.*

Hyun: *Bandit-sweeps through three Shiohara hitmen, and when he sense his Desert Tech MDR running dry, he throws the rifle at one soldier. And as the latter is confused, Hyun swiftly pulls out his Lionheart pistol and headshots him. He then takes a stingball grenade on his person, and throws it into the air without releasing the pin. Another man tries running a knife into Hyun, but he sidesteps, so that he is behind the man as the grenade is still high up. Hyun then, with exceptional marksmanship, shoot the grenade, sending rubber balls everywhere.*

Karasuma: *As Hyun finishes off his hostage with two heart shots, Karasuma sees all the soldiers who exposed themselves by reacting to the explosive, taking them all out with his SCAR. Two others meet a similar fate when he spinning hook kicks them as they get closer, sending them to the floor, vulnerable to a few bullets to the chest. He comes across a corridor where six are forced to line up as they want for the streets. Karasuma invokes his concentrated strength and charges at all of them, barely slowing down as another gets rammed off their feet. He smashes them all into the far wall, with the last soldier firmly into the structure. The others weren't faring much better.*

Ohno: *Already surrounded by a three-foot-radius circle of disabled Yakuza, he arm-drags one soldier to the ground, before back-kicking two others into a car fire, using his falling momentum to smash two of his quadruplet Kimber Warriors onto the face of the first. He then anticipates a fourth coming, pivots his legs toward him, and then breaks the kneecap with another swift dropkick. While the man still stands, Ohno turns another 180 degrees, and slides underneath him head-first. He first lifts up his left leg, low-blowing the Yakuza, then quickly gets back up and jumps up so that he sits on the latter's shoulders, before falling back. The result is the gangster's head being piledriven right onto the asphalt.*

Miho: *Backflips, sending all three men flying behind her, into burning debris, through windows, and another pole. As she gets up, she finds one Yakuza coming at her, favoring a huge front kick. She bobs her head out of the way, but then hooks it into a three-quarter hold so that it is locked on her shoulder. A quick jab to the face stuns the man, allowing Miho to get his other leg, lifting him up in a powerbomb.* "Mr. Ohno!"

Ohno: *Hears his leading officer. He then runs up, getting a MK3 grenade. He then jumps up, flying towards the man, tucking the pin-dropped explosive into the man's jacket, and then assists Miho in launching the man into the air with a powerful roundhouse kick. He explodes like fireworks, while also sending shrapnel to the majority of the remaining soldiers.*

Shiohara Member 3: "These guys are not human!"

Shiohara Member 4: *On communicator.* "Where are our reinforcements!?!"

-Meanwhile, at the harbor-side of Qita Kong...-

-QK's security detail has caught the whole of the foolishly-pursuing Shiohara Family members in a
four-way pincer attack, blocking all possible exits except for the waters. As their numbers dwindle, it becomes clear that their objective in killing Hyun has failed, and they escape. The immigrant militia celebrates in response.

-Several dozen Shiohara Family members surrender to Qita Kong's forces, and they are all lined up in front of Ohno's Team, Hyun, and Karasuma.

Karasuma: *looks around.* Where'd that masked woman go?

Ohno: *Very angry.* "You are all going to pay for ruining this paradise."

Hyun: "Ah ah ah... Let me handle this." *looks over to them, even more angrily.* "You are ALL going to pay for RUINING this paradise!!"

Ohno: "What was your goal here? Causing shit like you usually do?"

Shiohara Member 5: "Boss knew our common enemy gets support from this guy." *motions over to Hyun.* "You cut the eyes first."

Miho: "How about I cut your eyes, you piece of shit?" *goes forward, being stopped by Satoshi holding her wrist again.*

Ohno: *To Hyun.* "This is getting too far out of hand."

Hyun: "You're telling me?" *checks his phone.* "Speaking of, I'm getting a few more rogue signals from afar on my Locator. It certainly isn't my men. I don't think we have all of these guys."

Ohno: *To Miho and Halle.* "Track him down. Bring him alive if you can."

Miho/Halle: "Yessir!" *Head in the firection that Hyun silently points to. After a minute of searching, they see one Shiohara member traversing the streets.* "Hey you! Stop!" *The man runs away. Hearing the footsteps, they chase him until he gets into another building seemingly evacuated. The two keep close, knowing that there could be multiple other gangsters in there.*

Halle: *Sees the same man.* "Hey!" *runs towards him, leaving Miho behind.*

Miho: "Halle! Wait!"

Halle: *After cutting a corner, the man runs into a room, which he does too. He finds the guy has taken one female QK resident hostage.* "Let her go!" *keeps his aim focused on him.*

Shiohara Member 6: *hiding behind the door, he shuts it.*

Halle: *Instinctive trains his aim at the door, which means turning his back to the hostage situation. He puts that gangster down with two shots to the leg and hip, but the guy he was chasing then takes his pistol at him and shoots him three times; once on his left arm and twice on the upper back not protected by the kevlar vest.* "Augh!" *kneels down before collapsing completely.*

Shiohara Member 7: *throws the woman aside and slowly walks up to the motionless Halle. Before he can put another shot into him, Miho crashes through the fragmented walls, shocking him. She capitalizes by jabbing her rifle's butt into his neck, crushing his windpipe. He keels onto the floor, dying from the inability to breathe.*
Miho: *worriedly looks at Halle, falling over to him.* "Halle! Come on, kid, get up!" *Knows that only the first aid from Hyun's team can help him. She then lifts him up her shoulders and starts running back.*

-Back at the interim relief site, some of QK's men and women tend to the injured. Some are more desperate than others to revive their fallen relatives, massively panicking and shouting in a number of Asian languages. The more able men begin piling up the corpses of their friends, as well as rolling aside the fallen Shioharas.-

Ohno: *tests the arm-weighting of one guard.* <Speaks in Mandarin.> "Can you keep your hand at this height?" *The patient nods.*

Hyun: <Speaks in Japanese.> "Karasuma, I trust that you will make sure we won't be charged with crimes, right?"

Karasuma: *sighs.* "Yes. Self-defense claims are all over this area, including on myself. You'll want me to keep the beat cops away for a little while, too?"

Hyun: "Yes. They only cause more trouble."

Karasuma: "Then who will prevent the Shioharas from attacking a second time?"

Hyun: "Ohno's guys. He doesn't have many, but he has enough." *He says, before looking behind Karasuma, where two people merged into one appear. He focuses on that event, and is mortified to see what has happened.*

Miho: "MR. OHNO!" *She continues to charge towards them.*

Qita Kong/Ohno's Team/Karasuma: *look over to her, realizing Halle is extremely wounded.*

Miho: *lays Halle on a table that Ohno and Hyun cleans out.*

Ohno: "Stay with me, soldier!" *unrolls some gauze, dipping it all into disinfectant.* "Any pieces of lead still in him, Miho?"

Miho: "It's all my fault, sir..."

Ohno: "Miho! Any shards!?"

Miho: "N-no. I got a close look first."

Ohno: "Walsh! Get the cauterizer to stop the bleeding!" *Hands the gauze to Hyun, who is awaiting to apply pressure.* *He's already lost so much!*

Halle: "Boss..."

Ohno: *Pushes against the two wounds to keep the blood from flowing any more.* "We didn't pull you out of that wreck." *checks his watch.* "Half a year ago for you to die on me now!"

Satoshi: "Sir..." *He and Walsh have realized it's inevitable. The latter turns off the cauterizer, which Ohno notices with worry.*
Halle: "You... Only you did..."

Ohno: "Halle!"

Halle: "Fight forever... Right, boss?" *Weakly starts moving his hand towards Ohno's right.*

Ohno: "Now, Hyun!"

Hyun: *hesitates, but then puts the bandage onto Halle's clean-entry holes once Ohno throws his hand aside.*

Halle: "Promise me... Fight forever..." *weakly grabs Ohno's right hand.*

Ohno: *Tears run down his face very frequently.*

Miho: *cannot stand to look at this point, crossing her arms and turning away.*

Halle: "Thanks for... Letting me." *His breathing becomes very slow, and then his head falls back on Ohno's support, his last exhale as his eyes close halfway.*

Ohno: *His heart sinks so deeply, he freezes for what felt like hours.*

Satoshi: *covers his face with his hand.*

Walsh: *slams the table with his fist. And then starts kicking nearby things with great ferocity.* "FUCK! NO!" *To the Shiohara Family members. *"ASSHOLES! ALL OF YOU!"

Ohno: *slowly moves his hand to close Halle's eyelids and mouth, then positioning his face to look perfectly upwards. His tears then begin to fall onto the latter's vest.*

Hyun: *Takes a fallen dark cloth and lays it over Halle.*

Miho: *lays a hand on Ohno's right shoulder.* "Sir, don't blame yourself; this was all my fault. I didn't keep close to him."

Ohno: *Tears lessen.* "I know you did all you could, Miho." *wipes his face.*

Karasuma: "..."

Naoko: *Standing on a rooftop, with most of her concealing assassin garb put aside. Given a clear view of the event, she has a sympathetic expression on her face as well.*

Ohno: "So... What now..." *leaves the table, as his team notices.*

Karasuma: *His mind flickers and his eyes widen with fear.* And here he is... The person I never wanted the students to become acquainted to...

Ohno: *walks over to the line of capitulated Shiohara henchmen. As he passes by each one.* "Furuya... Hirai... Fujii... Suko..." *Stops at the fifth one.* "Ozaki..." *lifts Ozaki up by his collar.* "You loved this little scene did you!!?"
Ozaki: *Is trying really hard to hide his anxiety.*

Ohno: "Bad news for you, 'first lieutenant.' You're coming with me. Karasuma, let's go."
*Begins to leave.* "Miho, call up IT to get some more of our people and secure Qita Kong until further notice."

Miho: "...Yessir."

Karasuma: *follows along. The two of them reach the blockade that they met at prior to the battle, surprising the police there.* "Everybody, clear the way!"

Police Lieutenant: "Karasuma! What happened?"

Ohno: "This Yakuza senior leader made the biggest mistake of his life. That's what happened." *continues to push him past the men in blue.* "Your car, yes Karasuma?"

Karasuma: "Yeah."

Ohno: *Opens up the trunk and throws the bound gangster into it. He prods the man's head up for a second, only to have the inner portion of the hood get slammed onto it.* "You want to drive?"

Karasuma: "I know you do." *throws the keys to him.*

-And with that, super-criminal and super-agent drive off, bewildering the cops.-

Karasuma: "Where are we going?"

Ohno: "Somewhere without any other sets of eyes." *Cuts a wild corner.*

Karasuma: "I see..." *Gets a text message from Irina.*

Irina: [message] "Have you found out anything?"

Karasuma: *Texts back.* "It was the Shiohara Family."

Ohno: "Don't spoil her too many details."

Karasuma: *looks straight at him.*

Ohno: "She's going to find out as much as we do in," *checks his watch by looking at it inversely turned, so that its face can be seen while driving.* "A few minutes."

Karasuma: *Gets another message from Irina.*

Irina: [message] "What? Why?"

Karasuma: *Thinks about his next message.* "You'll see."

Ohno: *Finds the spot he was looking for; underneath a large highway bridge that connects two land masses divided by a wide river. He gets out, followed swiftly by Karasuma.* "Turn on your car camera, Karasuma. I want them to see this."
Karasuma: *sighs, before complying. The device powers up with a red light near its dials.*

-Back at the nightclub...-

Irina: *looks uneasy following the latest text she received.*

Kurahashi: "Bitch-sensei... What's happened now?"

Irina: *shakes her head.* "You wouldn't want to know..."

Kurahashi: "Bitch-sensei, two of our teachers, the most skilled among us all too, are absolutely absorbed in this. And they are frantic about it too."

Karma: "Why is that the case?"

Irina: *clicks tongue.* "For Ohno, crime has standards... The Shioharas kept playing subpar. But Karasuma... He's been at this for a few months. That Yakuza Family is one of the few assets of the Reclamation Society that has an indisputable face. And he is seeking evidence of any kind that shoes that RS' Syndikat is affiliated to them. If he does that, the Ministry of Defense no longer has any reason to deny the Society's existence."

Isogai: "Damn..."

Terasaka: "A syndicate as powerful as the Shioharas definitely attracts haters..."

Nagisa: "It's still very strange, to feel how worked up Karasuma-sensei and Ohno-kun are. They always projected an atmosphere of untouchability." *holds his hand to his chin.*

Yada: *Looks around them all, before thinking about something else.* Wasn't there something taboo about the dealings that went on in Nyurifu Rikkyo or its records...? The Mai Nightclubs too, right? If I recall Japan-INC correctly, they mentioned an era of fluctuating black months; first of its kind... It ties in to the time the Shioharas got ahead... But why? *Also hand gestures for thought...*

Irina: *gets another text message from Karasuma.*

Karasuma: [message] "Open your laptop and watch the latest MoD secure streaming.*

Irina: *Agrees to do so, and clicks on the first live footage. The first thing that appears is Ohno, standing in front of the grille and hood of Karasuma's government-issue automobile.* "!!?"

AssUniv: *Having been requested to move in to see, they all converge and look at the screen.*

-Back at the interrogation stream.-

Ohno: "Cabinets of Japan, I hope you all are watching. Just so you all know, I haven't stolen this car and its camera; the owner, Tadaomi Karasuma, is right there, on your right." *Points and looks to the camera's right, at the off-screen agent.* "Say hello, Karasuma."

Karasuma: "Hey."

Naoko: *looking on her own laptop back at Qita Kong, with disbelief.*
Ohno: "Very good. Now, then, onto today's main event." *picks up someone who rested below the view of the camera. It was Ozaki, who has already been quite roughed up, even more before he was captured in the street battle.* "All you Ministry folk... You all ought to know exactly who this is. But for any that aren't aware... Kind sir, look at the camera, and say your name." *holds his head so that Ozaki must look at the camera.*

Ozaki: "...Juro Ozaki."

Ohno: "'Juro Ozaki.' And what is it that you do?"

Ozaki: "I'm... Senior Leader of the Shiohara Family."

AssUniv: "Shiohara!?"

Ohno: "Senior Leader. Nice... But, I'm a career criminal in Kyoto, and yet I don't hear that term come up too often as it concerns you. I hear something else more frequently. Karasuma, do you often hear the name paired with something else?"

Karasuma: "The Agency knows him best as 'Ozaki the Obariyon.'" [Obariyon - A Yokai that breaks the backs of human victims by becoming heavier and heavier as it rides on them.]

Ohno: *gasps while looking at Ozaki.* "You're an Obariyon!?"

Ozaki: *breathes more quickly.*

Ohno: "That couldn't possibly be directly correlated to a volatile personality and a steadfast torturer psychology that you enforce on all your defeated and submitted opponents, ruining thousands of lives, just like today. RIGHT!?"

AssUniv: "So that's what happened on the news today!"

Ozaki: *shivering very noticeably.*

Ohno: *puts his ear close to Ozaki's face.* "He's not answering. I guess this isn't him. Karasuma, did we get the right guy?"

Karasuma: "Database... Says otherwise. Unless there's two Ozakis with the same body type, hair, hairstyle, and facial features."

Ohno: *Satisfyingly sighs.* "Ah... So there's no denying it then. You are a key leader of one of the most notorious Families in Japanese organized crime. Reputation so big, no matter how you try to hide it, will present itself." *looks up to the sky.* "Ah, but we don't have the man behind it all. Where is that guy? To lead a mad bull like you, I figured he must have the biggest balls out there!" *grabs Ozaki by the chin and pinches with moderate effort.* "Shinsuke Shiohara. Where is he?"

Ozaki: *shows signs of displeasure.*

Karasuma: "Ohno, please-"

Ohno: "I'm helping you, Karasuma! Just you watch!" *to Ozaki.* "Where is he!?"
Ozaki: "Out of town!"

Ohno: "Why!?"

Ozaki: "Boss' friends... They know enough about you." *eyes over to Karasuma.* "And him. If we struck, we knew you two would seek us out. So Boss was taken somewhere."

Ohno: *Imperatively.* "WHERE."

Ozaki: "..."

Ohno: "Tell us!!" *slams Ozaki's head three times onto the hood of the car, making small dents each time.*

Ozaki: *After the last time, blood falls down his bruised left cheek, mouth, and a scratch on his nose bridge. He spits out some blood to clear his vocals.* "Ta...Na-be. The... abandoned... Prison."

Ohno: *nods in understanding.* "Tanabe... Abandoned prison. One of the many that were once inhabited, but then overrun by inmates. Then conquered by the great Drug Route era of the criminal underworld." *looks to the screen.* "Do you see... How easy it is?" *Waits a few seconds before bringing himself and Ozaki closer to the car camera.*

AssUniv: *back up on the close-up shot.*

Ohno: "Too easy. So easy, in fact, that it's suspicious." *Subtly looks into the glass of his watch.* "Several months ago, this man would've gladly faced the gallows. Now, the wrong gust of wind will blow him over. What kind of threat, friend or foe... Could do that?"

Karasuma: *Surprised by the last statement.* He just implied that the fulmination of the Reclamation Society is making cowards of Japan's scariest folk! Oh, that's good reasonable suspicion.

Ohno: *Pulls Ozaki off of the hood.* "Cut the stream off, Karasuma."

-And then the stream ends.-

AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "You're right, Nagisa and Kayano-san. This is the most unhinged and vulnerable we've ever seen them..."

Nagisa/Kayano: "That's not something we're happy to be right about..."

Yada: *continues to look at the screen with worry.*

-Ohno and Karasuma drop Ozaki, now a light shadow of his former self, at Kyoto's police station. Then, they reach the nightclub.-

Ohno/Karasuma: *Walk into the silent club, finding their peers/students sitting around on the tables located on the edges of the dance floor.*

AssUniv: *All look up at him.*
Ohno: "You all saw the memo, yes?"

Nagisa: "We saw way more than that, I'm afraid."

Sugino: "And it's getting us in a very reluctant state right now."

Ohno: *senses that AssUniv is ostracizing him and his hateful tendencies.* "That's fine; if you all are going to put prejudices first, then you can just sit back. I'll get the answers we're looking for alone."

Irina: "Ohno, you put the information where the whole Agency can see! They'll be all over that prison in Tanabe now; there's no way you can nab Shinsuke without dealing with them!"

Ohno: "Too bad they're going to the wrong Tanabe, right Karasuma?"

Karasuma: "Yes... He meant Kyotanabe. An hour away from here. See how old linguistics are still relevant?"

Maehara: "No offense, man; that ain't good enough."

Okano: "No gift is better than a blood-stained one."

Ohno: "Despite how much a person sacrifices to bring you it!?"

AssUniv: *look between each other.*

Ohno: *calms down.* "Give me a straight answer now - Will you help me? Remember, this is not your fight. This is not YOUR fight."

AssUniv: *Remember when they said that the Shadow War 'was not his [Ohno's] fight.'* "We're in. What's our jobs?"

Ohno: *continues to stare at all of them with contemplation.*
Chapter Summary

Now is the time to sack Shinsuke Shiohara's compound, in revenge for the attacks on Qita Kong. Despite their shaken faith and trust in Ohno, the AssUniv Program move forward with his plan. But was that the right choice, all things considered?

-At Kyotanabe's abandoned detention facility...-

-Ozaki the Obariyon's fragmented information was correct, and the plan between Ohno and Karasuma to fool the agency by feeding them on stream "false" information has led the entire search party to go for the wrong prison. But they won't know about that until it was much too late for them to reroute to Kyotanabe and apprehend Shinsuke Shiohara themselves, who has holed himself up in the drug den, overlooking the rest of the compound with the compiled camera and control feed.-

-Despite the loss of some of his stronger soldiers throughout the street war due to casualties or arrests, the Shiohara Family remains large enough to be a force to be reckoned with. Their numbers are also full of talent for combat, which, when coupled with a ferocious disposition and military-grade gear, makes them a very viable threat. And the majority of the faction after the Battle for Qita Kong has been stationed to guard the edifice.-

-On the North Wall...-

Shiohara Family member 1: *Holds a Barrett M95 anti-materiel rifle in cross-arm hold in front of him, overlooking the flat grounds in front of him, with another Yakuza favoring a Norinco NDM-86. But then, something catches his eye.* "Huh? What the Hell's that?"

Shiohara Family member 2: "I got that fool." *sets up his sniper and aims at the automobile.* "This guy's trying to ram us with a Lamborghini? That's a three-dimensional idiot right there..." *He then takes aim at the windshield, in an attempt to headshot the driver. But what he sees then perplexes him.* "Whoa..."

Shiohara Family member 1: "Who do you see, man? Cops?"

Shiohara Family member 2: "No... I got nobody!" *Moves his head up to look at the car free from his scope.* "There's nobody in the car!"

-The Lamborghini continues to tough out the surrounding obstacles on the flat ground as it attempts to ram the North Wall.-

Shiohara Family member 1: "Nobody? In that thing?"
Shiohara Family member 2: "Nobody. What should we do?"

Shiohara Family member 1: "It's getting too close. Shoot its tire or its gas to slow it down or something."

Shiohara Family member 2: "Alright." *Aims at the car again, centered on the back-right tire. He manages to snipe it in two rounds, causing the vehicle to spin out.* "Gotcha."

-But then, the car suddenly recovers and continues its course to hit the cement walls.-

SF member 2: "What the fuck!?" *Looks up again.*

-Now the Lamborghini had gotten too close, and then sideswipes the North Wall.-

SF member 1: *Looks over the wall to see the wreck.* "'What the fuck' is right..." *Takes a walkie.* "Boss, some prick rammed our den. Don't worry, shouldn't be a-

-And then the Lamborghini detonates, causing chassis shrapnel to fly everywhere.-

SF member 2: *Covers behind the lip of the wall.* "Whoa!"

SF member 1: *Falls over due to the shockwaves.*

Shiohara: [message] "What was that!?"

SF member 1: *To the walkie.* "An attack...?"

SF member 3: [message] "Boss, I got a car coming on the West side! A black... Maserati sedan!?"

SF member 4: [message] "Boss! No one's in it!" *Gasps.* "Take cover!"

-Another big boom could be heard.-

SF member 3: [message] "The Maserati just blew a hole in our fortification!

SF member 5: [message] "Another car! East side!"

SF member 6: [message] "Where are the attackers!?"

Shiohara: [message] "East and West stations, do not leave your posts; they could be baiting us. Regardless, any free men, go and keep to the South side in case another vehicle shows up."

???: *Through the radio.* "Uuuuugh..."

SF member 3: [message] "Who was that?"

SF member 5: [message] "Not one of us."

SF member 1: "It's coming from our side; I can hear it distantly... From the car?"

SF member 6: [message] "You said nobody was in there."
SF member 2: "Maybe we said wrong."

Shiohara: [message] "Go investigate. East and West, go check your wrecks."

-North, East, and West's teams all go down to check their melting cars. South side remains vigilant, watching their side of the border, until they believe they see their car coming at them - An Audi Q7.-

SF member 7: "Ha, one more for the Cardinal."

Shiohara: [message] "Stop it however you can."

SF member 8: "With pleasure." *Takes aim with his Barrett M82A1.*

-But then, the Audi divides into six.-

SF member 8: "What the Hell!?" *looks up.*

SF member 7: *Looks through his scope.* "They rode in a line, using the darkness, creating only one trail for us to look at! Take them out now!"

-But then, bullets start flying at the South Side's walls, forcing them to take cover. The cars then divide, going around the compound to meet the vulnerable sentries on the grounds of the East side.-

 AssUniv: *All pop out of the vehicles, wearing the same gear Ohno and his team wore at Qita Kong, and wielding either HK UCPs, VBR PDWs, or Magpul PDR-Cs. They naturally quick draw first, putting ten beads on each person, knocking them all to the floor. When the wall is secured, they, as an assault team, inspect the hole they created and head inside.*

 Itona: *holds up his drone remote and mic.* "Don't everyone thank me for getting those guys' attention at once..."

 Yoshida: *Tears rain from his eyes.* "So many amazing cars blown up tonight..."

 Nakamura: *Properly aims with both her hands tied to a UCP.* "This is a good start, Ohno-kun. Explosions, followed by non-lethal Rubber Shockers. Almost makes me believe in you again."

 Sugino: *Has his line of sight parallel to the barrel of a PDR-C.* "A little less Bond-like though, in comparison to the Conference Center that time ago. Is this really you?"

 Ohno: *Wielding his Kimber pistols, specially modified for this mission.* "I don't get it; you guys trust me or not?"

 Karasuma: *Holds onto a PDR-C.* "That's a first."

 Karma: *Sports dual VBRs.* "So? What's the plan now?"

 Ohno: *Looks around a bit.* "Enter through that door on the right. Incapacitate anybody who sees us, then disappear. This is a stealth mission, after all." *Leads the way to the door he pointed to. He, Terasaka, Karma, and Karasuma breach the door, putting down three guards holding the
area. With that, they all take cover, hiding in the shadows as more sentinels pass by. After a few minutes, it's clear that no one knows where AssUniv is now. He then drops off the ceiling slat he was hanging from, and heads over to a section of the wall and sets up a device.*

Nagisa: *Appears, along with several others, from behind a broken part of the inner wall.* "Jesus, my heart can't stop beating like a machine gun."

Ohno: *Finishes arming the subtle machine.* "Very good. Okay, everyone fully aware of our objectives?"

Kayano: *nods.* "Yeah. Primary mission #1: Locate Shinsuke Shiohara, and bust him."

Kataoka: *nods.* "Secondary objective #1: Find third-party evidence that explicitly points to the Shiohara Family's connection to the Syndikat for Karasuma-sensei."

Isogai: *nods.* "And secondary objective #2: Set up bombing devices on key areas of the prison's electronic infrastructure."

Ohno: "Good. I got that last part though, so just worry about the first two."

Karasuma: "The evidence can wait until we've secured Shiohara. For now, we have to get accustomed to the detention's grounds. Irina?"

Irina: "Got you." *Holds out a map of the prison.*

Yada/Kurahashi: Did you infiltrate this jail before?

Irina: "If Shinsuke is the shrewd, witty criminal we know him as, he's going to be in a place that allows him full control of the area, and an easy means of escape when things go wrong. In that instance, he's probably in the central surveillance room, using the cameras to keep watch over the corridors and halls of cages."

Sosuke: "Okay, so what would be the path of least resistance... And least cameras?"

Irina: *Is discreetly looking out the window.* "All areas will have backup en route to that location. This map doesn't tell us enough. But I'm pretty sure there is a blindspot that the central windows won't notice. If we circle around the edge of this compound to find it, we can utilize it."

Ohno: "That's good; some sights on the outer ends are essential bomb-rigging spots anyways."

Karasuma: "Then let's do it. Quietly though."

And so they did. There's still tension between AssUniv and Ohno, so he remains in the front line as they scout the outer region of the facility. Which is more than fine for him, as he takes down the bulk of the Shiohara security himself. One of them sees himself take a point-blank shock bullet straight to the eye. He is unable to yell out in pain due to Ohno covering his mouth.-

Yoshida: "Damn, man."

Ohno: *Goes to place another explosive on the wall.* "They wouldn't hesitate to do the same to us, only with much worse materials." *Finishes planting it.* "Okay, Irina, do you see the blindspot you were talking about yet?"
Irina: "I do. It's not from this side, though. I think we'll have to cross two more sets of jail cells before we're there."

Karasuma: "Let's not waste any more time, then."

-They continue their same direction, shocking, putting to sleep, or otherwise incapacitating any and all Yakuza that are in their way, and putting them into nearby holding cells, or hallway wardrobes. In the span of just a few minutes, they've gone past one more detention holding room.-

Irina: "Excellent; we're very close now."

Maehara: "Cool; we're halfway home."

Terasaka: "Hold on a second, guys; look there."

Okano: "Aw, shit."

Yada: "There won't be any way we can sneak past all of them once we get there, even with a head start from Irina's blindspot..."

Ohno: "As we are. But that's okay, because we're going to split up; make you guys harder to notice."

AssUniv: "What? How?"

Ohno: "Simple; me and Karasuma will break off, take the stairs that we recently just passed, and attack the tower from the bottom up. God-willingly, we'll meet up right on time to confront Mr. Shiohara together.

Karasuma: "Split up, Ohno? You don't know this area."

Ohno: "But Ritsu does, right?"

Ritsu: "Correct. I've been able to get a good e-layout of the compound thanks to-"

Ohno: *close his phone.* "See?"

Karasuma: "And why should I go and help you blow up this place?"

Ohno: *Can barely keep the blank face he's had up until the MoD Stream.* "I don't know when, but we'll be passing by a room that will illicit a strong reaction from you."

Karasuma: "Really now?"

Ohno: "Yeah. And I'll want you there to see it."

Karasuma: "If you're implying what I'm thinking, then okay."

Ohno: *Nods nervously.* "Alright. Godspeed, you all."

*salutes and bows before attempting to
take his leave.*

Nagisa: *Holds out his free hand.* "Now, hold on a second, Ohno-kun!"

Karma: "What makes you think we're going to just let you run off like that?"

Yada: *Eyes between the two forces with preoccupation.*

Ohno: *Turns around with exhaustion.* "I'm taking Karasuma with me. Isn't that enough?"

Karma: "Not quite."

Irina: *Tear in her eye.* "I think it might be too much..."

Isogai: "What makes us so sure that you'll return? Ensure you won't blow this place up while we're still in here?"

Ohno: *sighs, and looks away. The expression on his face was the most concerned and beseeching anyone has ever seen.*

Nakamura: "Well?"

Ohno: "Yada-san... Come here for a second."

Yada: *Looks around for a little bit.* "W-why me?"

Ohno: "It could be anyone else. But it just felt right to ask for you, given all of so far."

AssUniv: "..."

Yada: "Alright..." *goes up to him.*

Ohno: *Dislodges the metal bead on the right end of his dog tag necklace connecting to the left end. He then wraps the amulet's binding around Yada's neck. His voice begins to tremble.* "All of you know, that I have always worn this necklace wherever I go. As far as you're concerned, it means everything to me. I will not be leaving here without it safely back in my possession. That means no premature bombing. Which is why... You now need to stay safe, yes Yada-san?"

Yada: *looks at him through the eyes until he pulls his hands back to his person.* "Right..."
*She then looks at the identification, finding it to be a single, thick steel cartouche with gilding division along its width. The name on it reads in kanji script, "Kazuki Ohno."* "I'll take care of this."

Ohno: *bows with his hands clapped together.* "Thank you." *To the rest of AssUniv.* "Will you permit leave now?"

AssUniv: *look between each other for confirmation. they all nod without sequence.*

Okano: "You better be returning."

Karasuma: "I'll make sure he does. Now, remember your mission; corner Shinsuke and apprehend him." *He orders one more time before continuing to go down the hallway he and Ohno
have decided on and then descending the preceding staircase.*

Irina: "And there they go..."

Nagisa: *He and a few more skeptical continue to look at the two before they cut a corner and disappear from view.*

Karma: *Goes and takes a look at Ohno's dog tag himself.* "He's dreaming if he thinks this is enough to win our trust."

Okuda: "He's delusional if he ever ponders that thought; we're impossible to please when it comes to that. Do you all recall Okinawa?"

AssUniv: "Euuugh..." *Remember that they broke the trust of Korosensei so that they could make their assassination attempt even easier.*

Hayami: "But that's different. The world was at stake."

Chiba: "Hm, just like it is now?"

Nakamura: "Shut up, all of you. Let's just get this done."

Irina: *sighs.* "Okay, they're going to draw all the attention, so let's make a break for the overpass." *Points to the bridge leading to the central tower that they have been gunning for all this time.*

-Roughly a minute later, they see Ohno and Karasuma shooting up the outside grounds of the prison, downing dozens of guards in quick succession.-

Ohno/Karasuma: *First walk parallel to each other. Ohno's Kimber pistols are outstretched in a perpendicular angle, taking out guards coming from both sides of a larger pillar. Karasuma meanwhile uses his PDR-C to take down any remainders. When another door unlocks closer to Karasuma to allow more Yakuza sentries, Ohno takes them on, pushing Karasuma's head down to get a clear right-hand shot. Karasuma, annoyed, notices more guards coming from a wall favoring Ohno's side. He responds by pushing Ohno behind him, allowing him to open fire on the oncoming troops. Ohno naturally senses more troops coming from Karasuma's two-o-clock, so he kicks the popliteal area of Karasuma's right leg, putting him onto one knee and narrowly avoiding a string of bullets, as Ohno takes the opponents behind them and quickly reloads. Karasuma takes notice of the previous guards and snipes them down, and then pulls on Ohno's vest backwards so that he can Bandit-sweep the whole region of covering shooters. Ohno cartwheels out of the forced-limbo position, propelling a spray of bullets on his own. The momentum forces Karasuma to twist as if he was giving Ohno an arm toss, which allows the two of them to meet back-to-back, where they unload on the remaining amounts of security on the prison grounds. Ohno gives one last shot to a window on the third floor of the central tower, which spawns a falling man just afterward.*

Okajima: "Not going to lie, that was pretty badass."

Irina: "They make a pretty amazing team when they're not pointing those guns at each other."

Hazama: "We never get used to seeing how a common enemy makes so many wonders."

Mimura: "They probably could've done all of this alone; it would just take longer."
Isogai: "One thing's for sure; they've opened the path for us. Let's go."

-AssUniv stops watching the fireworks once the duo enter the tower from the bottom floor. AssUniv's underpass crosses second floors, so they have a brief lead to reaching the surveillance room on the fifth and final level before the roof. Their stealth mission boiled down to move-and-hide, along with the occasional non-lethal takedown of a few guards, since most were attending to the massive firefight caused by Ohno and Karasuma. Some required brute force, such as Terasaka and Yoshida charge-tackling one Yakuza right into a janitor's closet, a quick "carpe diem" such as Hayami and Chiba's tactical shooting of electric bullets, or a classic baiting around a corner, only to be swept in the face from student-assassins hanging from above.-

-This continued onward, until finally, AssUniv was on the fifth floor, which seemed to be all but two large rooms.-

Kurahashi: *Exhales exhaustingly.* "We finally made it."

Yada: "Is that correct, Bitch-sensei?"

Irina: *Double-checks the relevant section of the map.* "Yep. We just got to get past this room, and we'll be at their control center."

Karma: "Better be wary; there could still be a lot of baddies in there."

Nagisa: "If there is, wouldn't they know if we breach this door since there's no other way through here?"

Kataoka: "Nagisa-kun is correct; we could be walking into a death trap."

Itona: "Get me up there." *He points to a vent grille high up on the wall that also houses the door. With a boost from some of the guys, he places his wheel drone, which he had used earlier to bait the Wall sentinels, into the shaft. The RC easily traverses the metal passage, giving image to it as it passes through to the vent on the other side. It also happens to pass by a strange device located in a dead end.* "No idea what that is, but it ain't taking up space, so not bothering with it."

*Continues to explore the structure, eventually, they reach the other side, and are able to get as clear a picture as possible.* "There we go; that's what it looks like inside."

Sugino: "Lights are off in there..."

Chiba: *Points to one part of the screen.* "That's a perfect cover spot to ambush the door, but no one is there."

Terasaka: "Implying no one else is in there?"

Nakamura: *Puts a hand to her hip.* "Gee, what else?"

Kayano: "So there's no issue going in there then."

Isogai: "Good to know. Itona-san, get your RC back here and we'll head on in."

-AssUniv take a minute and then breach the door, still remaining vigilant as they venture deeper into the room.-
Kataoka: "Take the next door, Fuwa-san."

Fuwa: *Nods, before carefully laying a hand on the bar to push the door. But it won't budge.* "Um... I can't breach it."

Hara: "What do you mean? Put some back into it." *Goes to help open the door, but it still wouldn't give an inch. She inspects the door a little bit more.* "Oh, that's vexing..."

Yada: "What is?"

Itona: *Realizes, from closer inspection what is going on.* "Get the other door!"

-But before Kimura, the closest one to the entrance, could block the passage, the door had swung back into an ajar position, and then shut completely. He had tried to pry it back to its original position as well, but it was no use.-

Irina: "Oh shit... I knew this room was used for something, the second an animal instinct of mine flared up inside. But I didn't know it was for this!

-Suddenly, the lights turn on, and all of AssUniv is identifiably illuminated.-

Isogai: "A trap!?"

Itona: "Electronically-sealed doorways; there's no way out of here discreetly."

Terasaka: "Then let's go loud. One grenade straight to the door." *Moves his hand to his back pocket, attempting to take a fragmentation grenade he managed to pick up back at the lockup Ohno brought them to for gearing.*

???: "Do that, and you will all die in a matter of seconds, from VX poison gas."

AssUniv: "!!" *Look around, before Irina points to the security camera pointed at them from the bottom of the catwalk eight feet above.*

Shinsuke: "I've really underestimated all you kids. But I'm never without a fail-safe." *laughs a bit.* "Strange what my nemesis brings to the table every time we fight..."

AssUniv: "...What?"
Shiohara had something up his sleeve, wouldn't you know it!? While AssUniv split up from Karasuma and Ohno, the Yakuza had put the former in some kind of a trap. And it doesn't look good, as there now seems to be a war on two fronts thing going on! What can get them out of this pickle?

-Back at Qita Kong...-

-Hyun, Naoko, and a greater number of Ohno's Team led by Miho are tending to the neighborhood. Unable to leave due to the police blockades, some are readying pyres to cremate their loved ones, while others are wrapping them in wait for when they can safely leave and bury them properly.-

   Naoko: *wearing a medical mask, helps Hyun perform a light surgical operation, handing him scalpels and wiping his forehead. Once the ordeal was over...* "I didn't know you had medical experience, Hyun."

   Hyun: *Takes off his mask.* "I'm no M.D., for sure. But I've been in my fair share of nasty fights. And I learned a thing or two from the more medically-savvy, such as the tomboyish Trien Sisters in Little Vietnam, and Ohno-kun."

   Naoko: "Whoa, wait a second, Ohno is an M.D.??"

   Hyun: "What? No! But he is biomechatronics... He knows the human body and how it operates. Plus, if I've been in hundreds of fights, he's been in thousands. I trust him with my body more than I trust myself with it." *laughs.*

   Naoko: "That's a whole lot of trust to willingly give."

   Hyun: "Well, trust is something Ohno-kun prides most."

   Naoko: *Remembers her initial conversation with Hyun earlier that day, specifically the statement Hyun implied with Ohno.* "That pertains to what you were thinking about in Ohno, yes?"

   Hyun: *Looks right into her eyes.* "Yes."

   Naoko: "Why? How?"

   Hyun: "Dear, even I don't have all the answers. But let me tell you, the answers that I do have, they're not something anyone wants to hear."

   Naoko: *Thinks about that statement.*

   Hyun: "Honestly, though, I thought an agent like you could piece it together, given that you're
breathing right next to his associates."

Naoko: "What?" *Takes her smartphone and searches on the secure network of Ohno's friends. What she finds out about them as it pertains to Ohno shocks her greatly.*

-Ohno and Karasuma...-

Ohno: *Sprinting through the corridors of the compound's central tower along with Karasuma, capping every gangster he sees at their knees, he quickly reviews his surroundings in search of the many critical points within the prison that he places his specialized detonation devices. He finds the spot in this hall that he was looking for and puts one on.* "You're calibrating all of them to work at once, right Ritsu-san?"

Ritsu: *Appears on screen when Ohno opens up his flip-phone.* "That is affirmative, Ohno-kun. Though, I must stress, you're not correctly ref." *Is cut off when Ohno shuts his phone again.*

Ohno: "Thank you very much, Ritsu-san." *Leaves the pillar and returns to Karasuma's cover behind metal-reinforced desk.*

Karasuma: *snipes one thug on their right clavicle, knocking him out and sending him over the sandbags that others were using as cover.* "You've planted almost a dozen of those by now. Can we get to my side of the mission now?"

Ohno: "You'll get yours soon enough!" *Blindfires with his right Kimber Warrior pistol, taking down two other guards who started advancing.* "In fact, we're on our way to it right now."

Karasuma: "I should've known you would say that. Still have no idea what to do about it, though." *puts down another three. He then looks at Ohno, who tactically turns to combat some of the other goons. He still can't believe the slight change in his expressions and demeanor.* I have known Ohno for many years... I've never seen him this desperate before. That's scary... Never seeing a side of the most unpredictable man before... "Maybe at least tell me what the evidence is or looks like?"

Ohno: *Takes down four more shooters.* "Be careful what you wish for," *He says while minimally looking back at Karasuma. He then tries to reload using his chest pockets, but realizes the swarm has caused him to unload too often, and so resorts to his backups attached to his belt.*

-Back with AssUniv...-

Muramatsu: "Let us out, you fucking creep!" *Slams on the door they entered from.*

Itona: *Looking at his RC's camera footage.* "So that's the weird mound that you passed..."

Yoshida: "That roller can't help us, hmm?"

Itona: *Puts it away.* "No... Even if it does find an escape path, it can't open vents or transfer-hack on its own. Couldn't get it working yet."

Karma: *To the security camera on the metal catwalk.* "Boy, you're going to be put away for a long time if Karasuma-sensei confirms that you've used some chemicals on us."

Shinsuke: "Please, I've got far greater concerns than the wrath of your teacher. But that also
means you do as well."

Hayami: "What are we to believe from a Yakuza like you?"

Shinsuke: "It doesn't matter if you believe me, since you'll all expire in the next fifteen minutes or less anyways. But for the duration of that time, I've been thinking maybe you'd all like to contemplate about a few things. Like, for instance... How much do you really know about your good friend, Kazuhiko Ohno?"

AssUniv: *look directly up at the speakers with keenness.*

Shinsuke: "Heheheh... Got all of your attention, have I?"

Isogai: "I would've guessed you and Ohno-kun had some sort of history marked as bad blood, given he had thrashed a close associate of yours so much as we had observed."

Shinsuke: "Indeed. But that bad blood exists only because... Yakuza just don't take too kindly to traitors like him."

Irina: *Traitors?*

Kataoka: "Traitors?"

Shinsuke: "Oh, yes. Your friend is not only full of deceit; he's a backstabber; a miscreant, treasonist, turncoat, whatever you can define it, he is it."

Yada: "I don't believe you! Ohno-kun had proven himself many times-"

Shinsuke: 'Maybe I should go out and tell you all that Ohno is not his real family name. It's part of why he doesn't 'exist,' and no system has any records one such person. But it doesn't need to go that far to say that he's been lying to you from the beginning."

Kanzaki: "Maybe, but that doesn't mean he's a trai-"

Shinsuke: *intensively yells* "Oh yes it does!" *recovers his composure.* "And the main reason for changing his name came from his misdeeds; you are aware of them, aren't you?"

Sugino: "You mean his murder sentence?"

Shinsuke: "Might be; I'm sure he's had, or should have had many. In any case, Ohno-kun had been in a double-murder... And his victims, surprisingly enough, were his own parents!"

AssUniv: "!!"

Shinsuke: "Yes; think about that for a second."

Kurahashi: *looks aside.* "He hasn't always been very considerate of our families..."

Shinsuke: "Is that not deep enough for all of you? Let me give you all one more very important thing I know: Ohno's multi-billion-dollar business statistics and records."

Okano: "What of them?"
Shinsuke: "With rivals in the small arms business such as my Family rapidly on the rise, Ohno and his predecessors guaranteed their monopoly, trust-like status in the industry by buying any and all rights to distributing weapons legally, as well as using his group muscle to close off trafficking routes; if anyone wanted personal defense, he was the only person in Japan they could turn to. Billions of dollars, stolen from the public, handed to him. And once one system no longer worked, he shot it in the face and carried on with another. Profit through betrayal of the Japanese system; the worst kind of economic abuse. Whatever he's granted all of you doesn't sound too perfect anymore, does it?"

Nakamura: "Shit..."

Shinsuke: "I could go on and on about how much of a bad person Ohno is, but I think I've done my job on you all. I can only just reiterate what it is now. For instance, why is he not here with you? What if he knew this was going to happen?"

AssUniv: *look between each other.*

Chiba: "If he did, then the only reason he could've would be..."

Shinsuke: "... If he was a Society member himself. Remember, he's a traitor, and a very great one. The Reclamation Society would love having him build up and break down the best using partnerships in the effort to collect the perfect weapon. And he kept his status a secret by assisting you all throughout this time."

Hara: "What about all of the brutal takedowns of some of your muscle?"

Hazama: "That's probably the predator covering its tracks."

Kayano: "That aside, it can't ruled out that Ohno's plans are so well-thought-out, that he could've been with the Society all this time. We've come to expect the unexpected whenever we turn to him."

Shinsuke: "And for that reason alone, Ohno is not someone you can fully trust. Ever. Well, it seems that's all the chat time I have. I'll dial in later to hear your reactions just before the timed-gas emits. Bye!" *cut transmission.*

AssUniv: *look conflicted.*

-Back to Ohno and Karasuma...-

Ohno: *Looks back at Karasuma for just a second before turning back to the enemies before them.* "Ritsu-san, how far are we from the final marked destination on the map?" *Holds up his flip phone to see "her."*

Karasuma: "You mean my proof?"

Ohno: "Yes, that's another way of saying it."

Ritsu: "Roughly fifty meters away, around three corners."

Karasuma: "Any chance that you know that the corners are riddled with the same amount of"
thugs we're dealing with right now?"

Ritsu: "Ohno-kun's target is a high-priority asset for these criminals, so that would most likely be the case."

Karasuma: "Great..."

Ohno: "Isn't this your job? Tackling criminals?" *Blindfires again.*

Karasuma: "Not quite like this." *Snipes three in the head with shock rounds.*

Ohno: "Of course not..."

-Back with AssUniv, trapped in the VX room...-

Isogai: "Come on, everyone. He's only trying to make us unstable so he can witness a more satisfying death. Don't believe what he's been saying."

Nakamura: "This can't be ignored, Isogai. We've been fed some sort of filler material to keep our eyes and ears off the truth for quite some time. Shinsuke only just reminded us what we have been suspecting all along."

Okuda: "How convenient it was when Ohno-kun had decided to move forward with the Summer plans very soon after we had started to be at odds with him, thus masking himself as the lesser of two evils."

Maehara: "What about the battles we fought together? He's spilled more blood for this operation than all of us combined."

Yoshida: "That's survival, man. Just to prove a point, whatever it was."

Terasaka: "I don't know about you all, but I don't like to be kept in the dark until the end of every major mission we are to do going forward like this. I especially don't like it when the reason for that is because we're being fed bad information before that moment."

Karma: "Who does? Can't believe I lost my position to him."

Okano: "Maybe the worst part about all of that is having our enemies tell us about it first. He couldn't bring himself to say it to our faces, and confront whatever reception he gets from it."

Itona: "Valid point. When Kayano and I were told that we were captured for the sake of the perfect plan, he didn't show his face to us. That made it very hard for us to fully invest in it initially."

Kimura: "A con-man and double-agent... Man we seriously let our guards down here."

AssUniv: *The remaining members left unspoken remained so, almost all but convinced of their peers' words that the traitorous Ohno had just done his latest scheme. Some of the more benevolent AssUniv members even began to tear up at their unfortunate fate magnified fivefold by the realization. The more confrontational looked aside, ready to speak their defiance and loss of trust in Ohno.*
Irina: They're getting this all wrong... But I can't say that... It's not like they would believe me as it stands right now...

Yada: *Holds her chest and the dog tag necklace with a disheartened expression as she witnesses all of her friends slowly breaking down. She then looks at the WWII ID herself, before noticing something peculiar.* Huh?

Irina: *Notices the change in thought patterns of her protege.*

Karma: "What do you think?" *turns to Nagisa.*

Nagisa: *Was lost in thought until Karma interrupted that.* "What?"

AssUniv: *Looks between the two.*

Karma: "You haven't said your piece about all of this. You might as well, since we will all be dead in a matter of minutes anyways."

Nagisa: *sighs and crosses his arms.* "What do you want me to say?"

Karma: "That you distrust him too. Not just a little; a lot! And he never told us what we needed to hear right when we needed to hear it! Come on! As the valedictorian of AssClass! Unite the group! Speak your stance!"

Nagisa: *looks around his peers, who are eager for his answer.* Jesus Christ, how did all of this happen? *It was true that practically everywhere he looked, there were eyes that wanted him to say that they were deceived in the most bastardly of means. But then...* "Yada-san?"

Yada: *Does not look up at him. Instead, her eyes remain locked at whatever is engraved onto the dog tags she's wearing. Ohno's dog tags.*

Nagisa: *walks over to Yada.* "Yada-san, it's... It's best you don't look at that. It's not going to make things any easier now."

Yada: *finally looks at him.* "Nagisa-kun... You must see this." *holds out the ID so that only she and he can see it.*

Nagisa: *confused and reluctant as he was, he looked at it. And what he saw surprised him.* "Whoa..."

AssUniv: "Why the surprise? What's on that?" *crowds around to get their piece as well.* "Whoa..."

-Back to Ohno and Karasuma... Again...-

Karasuma: *Shakes one person off of his right arm, then slamming the one clutching his left onto a nearby wall as he walks over to where Ohno was, standing before an auditorium-sized dual doorway.* "I'm guessing whatever you wanted to find for me is behind that?"

Ohno: "How did you know? You're so smart."

Karasuma: "Shut up, asshole. Let's just get it done, and head back to the students."
Ohno: "But you know nothing of what needs to be done." *Forcibly opens up the left-hand door. Karasuma takes a peek inside and immediately is shocked at what shoots through his head.* "Heheheh, got you big time, didn't I...?"

-Returning to Shinsuke and AssUniv...-

Shinsuke: [Cue transmission] "And I'm back~! Now to see you all with your last ninety seconds liv~." *Abruptly sees them all standing in neat rows in front of the security camera, heads looking down.* "Whoa-ha! Well, good to see you're all sitting tight at least."

Karma: *Looks up.* "You already knew we couldn't move."

Shinsuke: "Right... Well? What's it like? Thinking about something just before death? What were you thinking about?"

Yada: *Looks up.* "What you were talking about."

Shinsuke: "Ah yes. And?"

Isogai: *Looks up.* "You raised some very good points."

Kataoka: *Looks up.* "But not good enough."

Shinsuke: *A slight beat before responding.* "Really now?"

Terasaka: *Looks up.* "Yeah. Really."

AssUniv: *Everyone stares straight at the lens now.*

Maehara: "It's true that Ohno needs the contents of his secrets to live."

Okano: "And that somewhere in them, something happened that skewed his ethical standards."

Fuwa: "But what do you expect when your best friend is a government agent, and your worst enemy is a Yakuza?"

Kayano: "Just like how he came to understand how our problems affect some of us, we'll begin to comprehend how his affect him. Once he comes around to opening up."

Itona: "We know stuff like that makes every human special."

Sugino: "Everybody has their specialties."

Kurahashi: "Ones arisen from situations and circumstances."

Nakamura: "Some traits standing above all others, making them invaluable to a society."

Nagisa: "And Ohno-kun's specialty, one of the most invaluable of them all... Is his ability to tell us what we need to know just when we need to know about it." *Holds up the dog tag necklace to the camera. The identification tag had been opened along the gilded-indent on its circumference, revealing something hidden within.*
Shinsuke: *Reads the dog tag's secrets.* Oh, you son of a bitch! "...Well, I guess I don't need to keep you all waiting any longer then. Prepare for the end, my adolescent fr-"

-BOOM-

Shinsuke: "Th' fuck!?"

AssUniv: *Stares over to where they heard the explosion.*
Chapter Summary

The culmination of this arc comes with the final twist, that will shake the core elements of this series for the rest of its duration. Get ready... Nothing will ever be the same.

-Ohno and Karasuma walk away from the auditorium blast-doors that they had opened last time they were seen...-

Ohno: *Holds up a remote bomb switch connected to many pounds of Semtex that they left in the auditorium-sized room. Before he flicks the metal lever upwards, he looks over to Karasuma. He then reluctantly offers the switch to him.* "Here. Go crazy, please."

Karasuma: *Looks at it for a second, then back at where they are going.* "Why me?"

Ohno: "I'm making you bear witness to something you don't want. I might as well let you do it."

Karasuma: "That makes zero sense."

Ohno: "Come on, Karasuma. We both know you love mayhem."

Karasuma: "What gave you that idea?"

Ohno: "You throw yourself into every bit of chaos that I - myself make. Sometimes you go along with it, sometimes you neutralize it. Most often, you make it even more chaotic. I don't know if it follows you, or you follow it, but you two are not very far away. So, how about this chaos?"

Karasuma: "...Fine, if it's going to shut you up." *Takes the switch, and then slowly moves the lever forward. A huge explosion behind them incinerates whatever was inside the large room.* "Damn it..." *Throws the switch behind him.*

Ohno: "What? You hate drugs. And guns, though the latter is ironic, since you're holding one right now."

Karasuma: "It could've been used to put this Shinsuke guy behind bars forever, and put the MoD on alert. They had the Syndikat tag..."

Ohno: "I promised you'd see the evidence. I didn't say you could take it. Now that it's gone, this den is meaningless; organized crime no longer has reason to host in Kyoto Prefecture anymore. Make your and my jobs easier."

Karasuma: "And my mission longer... But you are right..."

-Back to AssUniv and Shinsuke one more time...-
Shinsuke: "Th fuck!?"

AssUniv: *Looks over to where the explosion sounded off.*

Shinsuke: "Argh! That's it!" *Slams on his desk.* "Now be ready to be gassed!"

AssUniv: *Many cover their mouths, close their eyes, and painfully await the deadly, noxious fumes to come in. But 30 seconds in, Isogai inhales fully and suffers no physical consequences.*

Isogai: "Hey... No gas, guys."

AssUniv: *slowly get their hand away from their mouths and nose, and inhale the perfectly fine air.*

Shinsuke: "What? That was a short-term lethal gas!"

Ritsu: [through the compound's intercom] "Oh it was. All was. But it's all staying where it is."

AssUniv: "Ritsu-chan!" *They are all very relieved.*

Shinsuke: "What? Who is this?"

Ritsu: "That is none of your concern. What is now your concern is for you to follow the doorways to the roof of this compound."

Shinsuke: "Bitch! Why would I do that?"

Ohno: *Electronically unseals one doorway into the gas room.* "Got it!" *Opens it up, seeing all of AssUniv alive and well, and subtly happy.* "Great seeing all of you again." *walks over to them.*

AssUniv: *Some start tearing up as soon as they see him, much to the perplexity of Ohno. Some then dive onto him.* "We're sorry for doubting you so much, Ohno-kun!"

Ohno: "Oof!" *Feels pressured underneath a small football pile.* "Yes, yes, it's very good to see we're all alive and together, but did you all retain any belief that I, would let you guys, die?"

AssUniv: "Errr..."

Okano: "No. Not at all." *Shakes her head incessantly, while helping Ohno up from off the floor.*

Kanzaki: "At least some of us kept great faith in you." *Bows, eyes over to Yada as well, who looks away from the awkwardness.*

Ohno: "That's... Perfect. I'm very grateful for that."

Fuwa: "Feels awesome to have the appreciation of a very powerful Yaku-" *Immediately realizes she just said too much, just as AssUniv then look straight at her with utter shock.*
Ohno: *Notices.* "Ah, so you all know now."

Kayano: "Yes, but, that doesn't change anything now; we still trust you."

Terasaka: "And now we know a little more about you and your past. Just what we wanted to know."

Ohno?: "That's nice. I'm sure you all want to know more, but just wait for a few more hours, okay? There's something I must deal with first." *goes up to the security camera.* "Enjoyed the view, Shinsuke?"

Shinsuke: "Ohno... I guess there's no purpose calling you that anymore."

Ohno?: "No, not really. I'd be more concerned about you, though; you're cornered, and very soon, you won't be telling anyone about that. Now, all that's left is that we finish this. Go to the roof; now."

Shinsuke: "Hah! You think I'm cornered? Forget who practically owns this compound? I know this place like the back of my hand; I can slip away and be long gone in a minute."

Ohno?: "Maybe, if someone hasn't sabotaged all of the electric wiring to the settlement already." *Holds up his phone, which has connected to the rigging of the electronic devices he had placed all over the Compound.* "Now, only the pathways I choose open up."

AssUniv: *So that's what kind of explosives he was setting up earlier!*

Shinsuke: "What? Damn!"

Ohno?: "That's right. Now then, give into all your fears about the manifestation you created. Say your prayers for threatening the lives of my peers and partners. And then, follow the path to the roof. I'll be seeing you there." *Shoots the camera. Then walks over to Yada* "Yada-san, if I may..."

Yada: "O-of course." *Hands Ohno his dog tags, now closed, which he puts back on.*

Ohno?: "Thank you. Let's go, everyone." *Opens up the doorways, leading them all to the parapet of the drug cache. He sees Shinsuke standing on the far side of the canopy.* "Ah, so there really is a corporeal form to the face behind the screens. Been beginning to doubt that."

Shinsuke: *Completely ignores the taunt.* "Why do you resist? Why do you keep fighting!?"

Ohno?: "I never learned how to stay down."

Shinsuke: "The government hates you. The common citizen hates you. The Underworld hates you! All of Japan, everybody who you haven't already coerced hates you! At least everyone fears me too much to hate me! What's your reason!? Why do you live with that!?"

Ohno?: "Because for me, being on everyone's shit list feels not nearly as bad as allowing true business scum like you to continue to run operations. Running your illegal trafficking routes are bad enough, but your paranoia-rage streak knows no bounds; how many people did you bully into your work just to ruin them even more?"
Shinsuke: "The country would well remain as it was without your mysterious reformation! Who said Japan needed a savior?"

Ohno?: *Shakes his head.* "That's not what I am tonight." *Throws off his jacket and vest, and then takes off his T-shirt.* "Tonight, I'm your worst nightmare." *Pulls out a Gerber Remix Black Tanto folding knife, spinning it out into blade form, and then handing it to Karasuma without looking.* "Karasuma, cut it off. All off."

Karasuma: "What?" *Accepts the knife, knowing he cannot deny Ohno at this point.*

Ohno?: "The skin on my back."

AssUniv: *Flabbergasted at the line spoken.*

Karasuma: "... I guess now's as good as any." *Slowly takes a small jab at the top left, close to Ohno's shoulder, and sees that it is fake skin; the same movie skin that hid Ohno's forearm tattoo from Okinawa. He makes a long horizontal cut, and then peels it off.*

AssUniv: "Whoa..."

Ohno?: "It's been some time since the Irezumi tattoo on my back got to see the night or day... I'll let it embrace that feeling for a good while..." *Stretches his shoulders a bit, emphasizing the back tattoo of a Samurai standing amongst the falling of fully-blossomed Sakura petals falling down. A point where Karasuma accidentally cut too deeply spouts blood that follows along the outlines of the many petals. The Samurai predominantly covers his left and middle sections, looking down to avoid eye contact to what's in front of it; two lines of Kanji, which seem to create names of some sort...*

Shinsuke: Well, that pretty much confirms it. You were, and will always be, my ultimate enemy all this time."

Kato: "Yeah... I'm the person who survived one-and-a-half years in the worst jail in the world. I'm the person who created the most powerful Yakuza Family Japan had ever seen. I'm the person who's going to bring you in to face justice - I'm Kazuhiko Kato, Oyabun of the Kato Family, and Shateigashira of the Akamine Clan!"

Terasaka: "A touch overdramatic..." *Crosses his arms to combat the awkwardness of saying such a statement.*

Kato: "And now you have two options; 1) You can fight for your freedom by dueling me on this roof, or 2) You refuse, and I toss you off this roof before we all call the cops."

Shinuske: *Grumbles internally.* "Always with the choices, even when you were just a dreaded concept of the mind. Fine, I'll play your game." *Takes off his suit, revealing his Kagu-Tsuchi tattoo.* "Though to be frank, I'm not too keen on beating up a little kid." *Walks to the center of the makeshift arena on the roof.*

Kato: "That's okay; you're not going to." *Copies his action until they are just one mutual step away from each other.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kiwami’s OST "For Who's Sake"-
They then meditate for a few seconds, before Shinsuke goes into a variation of the Nippon Kempo stance, while Kato pounds his right fist in front of him. They emanate powerful blue and black/green auras respectively, and begin by locking a high right roundhouse kick (Shiohara) with a shin from a flying knee (Kato).

信介塩原対加藤和彦

Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Shinsuke Shiohara; Oyabun of the Shiohara Family

Once Kato ricochets off from the two kicks, he gets down low and tries a short-arc fixed sweep kick. Shiohara lifts his one targeted leg up just in time to avoid the entirety of the blow. Kato spinning-hook kicks as he rise up again, which Shinsuke pulls back from. The latter takes the lead this time by throwing a Savate kick, but Kato bobs his upper body away from it. Shinsuke continues the onslaught with a right body hook blow, which quickly translates into a huge hammer fist smash. Kato evades damage by lifting his knee to block the hook shot, and then cross blocks right above his forehead to parry the hammer.

With Shinsuke's ribcage temporarily exposed, Kato rams in with a shoulder check to the area, briefly stunning the former. But not for long, as Shiohara pivots out to avoid a spinning left backfist. He baits a reentry into the fray, narrowly avoiding a close-range jab and uppercut from Kato's left arm. He capitalizes by spinning back kicks Kato's stomach. But Kato saw it coming, sidestepping into Shinsuke's clockwise arc, and grabbing his kicking leg before it returns to the ground. He then continues the spinning motion while holding onto the leg, keeping Shiohara briefly in the air before slamming him face-first onto the platform. Kato tries to lock in a grapevine ankle lock, but Shiohara wriggles free, turns supine, and double-thrust kicks Kato off, giving him enough room to get back to his feet.

Kato keeps the fight close, skipping in for a left overhead roundhouse kick. Shinsuke, noticing the pace of the fight changing, slows it down with an abrupt blocking-pushover, forcing his opponent to kickflip over him. With his back turned, Kato throws a wide back calf kick to keep Shinsuke briefly away. Shinsuke pushes it away and attempts a standing rear naked choke. Kato manages to grip both of Shinsuke's arms and keep it inches from his neck to stop the submission, before dropping to his knees and throwing the latter over him. With Shinsuke now in sitout position, Kato locks in a supine inverted triangle, which chokes Shinsuke for a little while before he rolls over back onto his knees, and then using the newly-gained leverage advantage to life Ohno up in a flapjack slam.

Kato windmills back to his feet, meeting Shinsuke's face with his instep at least once on the way up. Ohno then baits Shinsuke this time, masking a run-off with a overhead backflip kick. He barrel-rolls along the ground, granting him centripetal momentum for a prone side kick to the chin. With Shinsuke reeling, this allows him to roll back close, get into a handstand, and L-freeze front kick Shinsuke. The force gives him enough distance to flex back into standing position and jump for a somersault axe kick, but his opponent manages to cross-block it just in time. He allows Kato
to return to the ground, before ending up behind him and playing dirty by pulling onto his dog tag necklace, pressuring Kato's trachea.

Shinsuke continues to choke Kato with his dog tag necklace, twisting it to minimize the strangling area. Daringly, Kato feels the beads to know which direction they are coiling, and cartwheels the other way, briefly easing the tension and straining Shinsuke's grip. Kato turns around so that he faces his nemesis, and then props his shoulder on Shinsuke's lower torso, allowing him to back body drop the latter onto the cement.

Kato: *Completely unwinds his necklace.* He's controlling the pace... I need to kill that control.

Kato resorts to a stance with one clenched fist right in front of his face, almost as if taunting Shinsuke to come towards him. The latter accepts that challenge, readying a jumping right forearm smash to Kato's nose. Kato nudges it just a little bit by arching his pointed elbow, diverting the blow to just his right. With Shinsuke technically behind him, he throws a backfist from his other side. But Shinsuke saw it coming, and quickly turned around to hold him into a sideways one-handed shoulder lock. Before any serious pressure could be applied, Kato reversed the resthold, first by affirming his elbow's perpendicular angle, then by traveling with the circular motion to perform a standing arm-trap triangle choke. Shinsuke desperately right hooks his way out of the compressive submission.

Kato returns to the fray with a left haymaker, which Shinsuke ducks under. He capitalizes on the evade with a high left knee to Kato's face, which only faces a clinch that almost becomes an exploder suplex, if not for the former's timely elbow to the back of the head. With Kato briefly dazed, Shinsuke ends up behind him again, wanting to perform a full-nelson suplex. But Kato whips his parietal bone back, right onto Shinsuke's nose, startling him now. The distance made from there allows Kato to jump backwards and enzuigiri kick Shinsuke, damaging the back of his head and putting him on one knee. Kato rolls back to get behind Shinsuke, and props him up to be promptly German suplexed, taking them both out for a concise amount of time.

As both fighters continue to recover from the high-impact takedown, Shinsuke supports his rising back to his feet with the nearby fencing. Kato shakes away his daze and charges after him with a flying forearm smash to the temple. Shinsuke adopts a Keysi block to neutralize the damage output, and leaves Kato vulnerable to a dominant Thai clinch, allowing Shinsuke to throw one mean forearm wipe, a few low kicks to Kato's shins, and finish with slamming Kato's head onto the railing.

Shinsuke: "Take this, you son of a bitch!"

Kato reels back a bit before swiftly recovering once again and elbow-jabbing Shinsuke's torso. With him bent forward, Ohno grips his head in a three-quarter's headlock, runs up the metal fence, and then lets gravity do its work, driving Shinsuke's face into the cement. Kato gets up first, and when he sees Shinsuke sit up, he runs in to smash his knee into the latter's face. Shinsuke lies back down to avoid it, and then bridge-front kicks Kato into the rails, nearly making him fall over and off the tower.

Shinsuke does not allow Kato to leave the border of the tower's roof, performing a right straight and pinning him there. A right overhead, a left knee thrust, a hammer elbow, and backfists are employed to pummel Kato into submission, but none meet their full mark. Kato manages to slip under just enough to get his upper body underneath the top metal bar, giving him more room to avoid the most major blows. When Shinsuke makes the mistake of trying another right hook to the
face, which Kato counters by grabbing. He then pins the attacking arm along the pipes, and then flips over the pipe, forcing Shinsuke bowed down, while Kato remains on the narrow ledge, which makes it easy for him to instep kick Shinsuke's face. And as the latter reels back to feel his forehead, Kato stands onto the metal fencing and diving lariats his rival.

Kato rolls back into a low-defense fighting stance, remaining vigilant despite it being all but clear that he has now won the fight. Shiohara gets up in little time again, but cannot keep his guard up, making him vulnerable to a right overhead punch... Except Kato never finishes the attack. Just before the fist reaches the crown of Shinsuke's head, he holds it there, and looks straight into his opponent's eyes; the psychological damage has run its course, and all of it accumulating puts him onto his knees without Kato having to lay another finger on him.

-Theme ends.-

Karma: *He held true to his statement... He became Shinsuke Shiohara's worst nightmare.*

Shinsuke: *Coughs some blood while fearfully looking at his victor.* "Finally... Going to take your revenge, are you?"

AssUniv/Karasuma/Irina: *Revenge?*

Kato: "I promised them I'd fight forever; not kill forever. That being said, nothing will make me happier than to see you live with all of my Family's imprisoned brothers. Goodnight." *One more lightning roundhouse kick to the side of the head puts Shinsuke down for the count. Kato noticeably breathes very heavily following the carpe diem moment, perhaps due to a mixture of the high-pressure situation, and any (if at all) lasting injuries he had sustained. Eventually he meditates the matter away, taking a long, deep breath, and then looks over to AssUniv.*

AssUniv: *All are reasonably superstitious of Kato, but they cheer him anyways for his victory.*

Karasuma: "Your jacket and pistols." *Tosses both sets back over to Kato, who catches them.*

Kayano: "That was epic, man."

Okano: "Loved those wrestling moves, Kato-kun."

Karma: "One friend to another... You got to learn how to fight. Look at that shiner."

Kato: "Yeah, yeah guys, settle down."

Kataoka: "So, what's next?"

Kato: "The agency will soon know they fucked up, and head here. I think it's best we leave before that happens."

Fuwa: "Wait, didn't you say you wanted Shiohara secured?"

Kato: "Oh, right. Karasuma." *Karasuma goes and places handcuffs on the wrists of the unconscious Shiohara, and lifts him on his shoulders, ready to carry him out.* "There; secured. Let's get going now." *Finishes strapping on all of his equipment and walks out, with the rest of the team close behind him. They return to where they entered, with the Audi SUVs they drove in with having been retrieved by some of Kato's brothers earlier in the night. Subsequently, they leave
through a classic; the internship bus back home. During the ride, Kato phones in Satoshi and Miho for a conference.* "Satoshi, Miho, how is Qita Kong?"

Hyun: [message] "We're all secure, Ohno-kun."

Miho: [message] "Exactly, Mr. Ohno, er, boss."

Kato: "Guys, Ohno is no longer an option now..."

Satoshi: [message] "Ah, everyone who matters knows now, huh?"

Kato: "Correct."

Hyun: [message] "Thank God, I was beginning to get tired of calling you that. It doesn't have the same ring as Kato-kun."

Kato: "So no more opposition in the neighborhood?"

Miho: [message] "No, sir. We'll do one last perimeter search, but we seriously doubt any more resistance will arrive, due to the police involvement on the outskirts. What about... Shiohara, boss?"

Kato: "... He won't bother any of us ever again."

-Everyone stayed silent for a few seconds.-

Miho: [message] "That's good news, boss. Do you want us to keep you company?"

Kato: "No... Remain at your posts, and keep the rest of the guys on hand. Goodbye." *Hangs up. He then looks up to the bus' ceiling, taking a deep breath once again.*

AssUniv: *All sitting behind him, awkwardly try to avoid breaking the quietness, spawned from the intense revelation they had just learned roughly an hour earlier.*

-The remainder of the drive back to Nyurifu Rikkyo was a solemn, ominous one. Both Karasuma and Irina were at unease of the situation as well, even after the vehicle made it behind the nightclub, which was closed for the night.-

AssUniv: *All walk inside.*

Kato: "If you guys want drinks, the bar and fountain area is still working." *Heads towards his office upstairs.*

Karma: "Kato, stop!"

Kato: *Stops just before taking a step onto the staircase.*

Terasaka: "You think you can just walk away after something like that?"

Kato: "You didn't let me finish."

Yada: "Kato-kun... We're eternally grateful for saving all of our lives like that, and making
another critical mission such a big success."

Kurahashi: "It could've been said that Shiohara was only an enemy for us because you were around, but if he wasn't, Karasuma wouldn't have had a chance of finding evidence of the Syndikat's existence. So, we're not even; we owe you a great debt."

Karasuma: "Yeah, still don't have that."

Kato: * Throws him a small wad of cocaine, which has the Syndikat logo. * "There; go nuts."

Karasuma: "I thought you said 'you wanted to see everything in that drug den burn.'"

Kato: "If this was what it took to make you shut up, while not breaking the order too much, then fine." *Proceeds to mimic Karasuma's eccentric motions as he flipped the Semtex switch back at the Compound.* "I didn't say I couldn't take it, mind you." *smirks.*

Karasuma: *Silently mouths.* Fuck you too.

Kato: "You know, you can alway try forcing a confession out of the guy sleeping in my bus."

Yada: "Okay, with that out of the way, and all the previous things being said, I think we all deserve to know what you and Shinsuke alluded to prior to, during, and after your fight."

Isogai: "I hate to pry, but that's right, Kato-kun. You know we trust you (enough to choose you over the rest of the Yakuza, at least), so tell us the truth; who are you?"

Kato: "..."

終わりの "再会"弧

End "Reunion" Arc
Now that Shiohara has been taken in, Ohno... Oh wait, his real name is Kato (WHOA) has brought everyone back to their HQ. But since he, like Korosensei, has had his past's aftermath bring all of his worst memories back into the forefront, the nosy AssUniv cannot help but wonder what this entails. To be fair, since they almost died yet again, there's little to dispute them wanting answers for why that was. But how will he respond?

中断：「悪魔の起源」

[Begin] Intermission: "Devil's Origins"

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Isogai: "I hate to pry, but that's right, Kato-kun. You know we trust you (enough to choose you over the rest of the Yakuza, at least), so tell us the truth; who are you?"

Kato: "..."

Karasuma/Irina: *Both look on with worry.*

Kato: *Finally sighs.* *Checks watch.* "Like I said," *Checks watch.* "Fifty-one seconds ago, you didn't let me finish. Once you've gotten refreshments, I wanted you all to come upstairs and see something." *Continues going upstairs.*

AssUniv: *Look between each other before taking a bottle of Boars' View and heading upstairs.*

Kato: *Awaits them at the footsteps before the locked room. He seems to activate something on his phone, which rests in his back pocket.* "How much do you all know? What has Shinsuke told you all?"

AssUniv: "..."

Irina: "Goddamn, you kids." *Steps forward.* "He says the murder victims we had heard about were your parents."

Kato: "!!" *Grips his dog tag necklace.* "You believed it?"

Nagisa: *Gulps.* "For a time. But once we took a look at your amulet, we pieced it together and knew that it didn't sound right."

Kato: "That's good. I have no indisputable proof of this, but I love everything about the grandfather I never got to see. That included his son and daughter-in-law, who gave everything for the only living link between them..." *Turns around and unlocks the door. He stops before opening the door, whispering to himself.* And yet I sometimes wonder why...

Kayano: "Um, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Right." *Finally opens the threshold for all. He goes to his computer desk in the VIP office, where he pounds on one section of the hardwood, causing a small button to show up underneath in the leg area of the platform. He presses up on it, and then his book wall opens up, revealing a small vault. He inputs a very long combination to unlock it, and inside are a set of miscellaneous items; most of them photo albums.* "You can take a quick look before I must look through them myself. Please don't move the photos around." *He scatters them onto the study and
Kataoka: "What? Why?"

Karasuma: *Clears his throat.* "Kato suffers from a mental condition that does not allow him to recognize time in the present passing."

AssUniv: *Look back at their teachers with confusion.*

Kato: *Flails his arms back and forth for a bit.* "I've been able to handle life like this using a wristwatch, quick calculation, and good memory. But if I don't see the images myself, I can risk telling things out of order, making it insensible and unintelligible. You've had this happen before, mind you."

AssUniv: *Remembers when Kato incorrectly recalled staying at Hotel Okura more than 2 years ago, though they were actually there six months ago.*

Nakamura: "So that's why you look at your watch so frequently."

Kato: "Correct. If we refer to something that is more than fifteen seconds into the past, I have to make a deduction. Again, without timestamps, though, it's just a disorganized library." *Looks away for a bit.*

Nagisa: *Hands him the first album.* "We want the full story first."

Kato: "Are you sure?" *Looks down at the book, then at Nagisa.*

Yada: *Pushes the miscellany closer to him.* "Definitely."

Kato: *Sighs* "Alright." *Opens up the front cover of the album, revealing his infant photos.* "This was me, a few days old, born on January 22, 1995, Nagoya - Aichi Prefecture, in a hospital that is now 17 years out of business. And from the very beginning, I was marked for at least one sort of trauma in my life. It's only natural for that to happen, when your mother is a district attorney, and your father is a Yakuza boss..."

[Remembrance time]
-Of course, I didn't know that back then. In the eyes of the world, and as such in my eyes, I was just a shut-in latchkey child. Since the age of four, I was told to go home immediately every day after school; no clubs, no buses, no friends. I wasn't allowed to go out during weeknights either. I merely ran straight back to a large penthouse, empty, except for myself and two "butlers." You get what I mean when I emphasize that. Never given the opportunity to make friends, I invested all my time, sometimes with the pushing of my parents and caretakers, into studying. Researching, experimenting, and learning to live on my own was on the bulletin every day. But there was always new developments, so it never felt tedious.-

*Kato, nine and a half years old at the moment, with the student name-tag on his backpack listed as "Kazuhiro Kato," unlocks the door to his penthouse and closes it behind him.*

Caregiver 1: "Good afternoon, young Master Kato. May I?"

Kato: "Thank you, Okada." *Hands him his backpack.* "It's only you and I today again, I take it?"
Caregiver Okada: "With Fukuda, sir. But yes, it looks to be that way, until nightfall comes, and your father comes to see you."

Kato: "..."

Caregiver Okada: "Is something the matter, sir?"

Kato: "No; just thinking about homework. It can wait for now, though."

Caregiver Okada: "Very well, sir. Shall I cook you a secondary lunch?"

Kato: "No thank you; I’ll do that myself." *Walks to the kitchen of the penthouse. He looks around for a bit before immediately taking the remote of a small TV screen out of a drawer and turning it on. Chatter from a live-action drama emanates from the device.*

-By the way, the loneliness that follows such a lifestyle I have led tends to catch up to you before long. I always needed some background noise to combat that feeling. Sometimes it stayed on well through the night, and my caregivers turned it off once I was deep asleep.-

Kato: "Working on some math homework, completing tens of problems in just a minute.*

-Back to my studies, however, there was obviously a purpose to it. Purposes, I mean. Again, I was uninformed of that. But I wasn’t hopeless; a deeper aptitude allowed me to reach deep down into the depths. It got me closer to getting an understanding of the situation that I was in. Every day, only one of my parents came home for the night. It alternated on what day that was; Monday - my father, Tuesday - my mother, then Wednesday is Father Day, and so on; you get the idea.-

-On Thursday night, when Kato's father, Kazuto, will come to the penthouse...-

Kato: *puts the finishing touches to a spaghetti and meatballs dinner for two, with just some minor aid by Fukuda.*

Caregiver Fukuda: "Very nicely done, sir."

Kato: "Thank you, Fukuda. I've made a surplus of this dish; you and Okada are more than welcome in having the rest."

Caregiver Fukuda: "Oh dear, sir, we cannot possibly accept that."

Kato: "Save that talk for when my father comes in, Fukuda."

Kazuto: "And he has." *Leans on a pathway's sill, watching the other two share their conversation. He looks very little like with Kato, with a lighter complexion than the latter, gray eyes to his green, thinner body-type, and well-groomed, shiny black hair contrasting Kato’s matte freeform.*

Kato: "Father." *Bows.*

Kazuto: *Smiles deeply, walking over to his son, and rubs the top of his head.* "Hello there, son. I take it you made this?"
Kato: "You needn't ask."

Kazuto: "I suppose so. Well then, let's dig in."

-A minute later...-

Kazuto: "You've become quite good at cooking, son."

Kato: *Smirks* "I've gotten a lot of practice. I just don't get a lot of reviews, so I'm never sure of
that statement."

Kazuto: "Well, then you can take it from me; this is great."

Kato: "Thank you, father." *Holds up a forkful of spaghetti in front of him, hesitant to put it in
his mouth due to his thoughts while staring at his father from across the table.* "Hm..."

Kazuto: "Something on your mind, son?"

Kato: "I've, uh, made quite a lot of this, in case you were very hungry following your rough day
at work. But if that's not the case, I was wondering if you could give mother a container of it for
her lunch tomorrow. There's one for you too, by the way."

Kazuto: *Surprised by the suggestion.*

Kato: "F-father?"

Kazuto: "I will try to, son. I cannot guarantee that I will be meeting her tomorrow."

Kato: "Alright then. Any reason why?"

Kazuto: "She's just a busy woman, son. Far more than me sometimes. We constantly have to
fight Time itself to give us some, but not every battle in that war has been won."

Kato: "That's... Understandable."

Kazuto: "But the point is that we never stop fighting our problems. The second you stop, you've
lost it all."

Kato: "..."

-That's first time I've heard that life-altering statement. The next occurred on the Tuesday
following... When my mother was around.-

-Another day, inside the same penthouse again, I was doing my homework for social studies, with
my mother Aiko Ka... Kurosawa, who had a penchant for history, right next to me to check my
answers. Like my father, she didn't have much resemblance to me either; she had long jet hair even
more lustrous than mine, was of lighter complexion, and had hazel eyes.-

Aiko: *Points to a question on a packet of papers before Kato.* "And the (20th Century) Treaty
of Portsmouth, named after which location, was signed on what date, which ended what war that
waged how long?"
Kato: *Blindfolded.* "The Treaty of Portsmouth, named after the identical shipyard, was signed on Sept. 5, 1905, ending the Russo-Japanese War that lasted one and a half years."

Aiko: *Claps twice.* "Very good, my son."

Kato: *Takes off his blindfold, before looking further on into the textbook. The next few lines of the context makes him snicker a little bit.*

Aiko: "Kazuhiko? What's so humorous?"

Kato: "Just that it seems as though every war starts because of one reason: both sides love something, and they fight each other to have it."

Aiko: "Oh..." *Giggles a bit too.* "Yeah, I must admit, that is a comical-inducing notice. What brings you to say that though, just after talking about a war so traumatic?"

Kato: "Japan and Russia both wanted good control of China after they quelled the Boxer Rebellion; Eastern Machuria's provinces were highly sought-after by the two. Japan felt entitled due to contributing most to the Eight-Nation Alliance, while Russia had stationed a good number of their unaffiliated 117,000 numbers around it. Clearly, they both loves something far too much."

Aiko: *Pats her son's shoulders.* "Good point, good point."

Kato: "Ah, but it doesn't stop there. What about the American Revolution? The love of their religious freedom from the Royal Throne and its church all the way across the Atlantic?"

Aiko: "Indeed..."

Kato: "Legends love to talk about it too. 'The Iliad's' conflict started from two men of different countries' love for a woman, right?"

Aiko: *Holds her hand over Kato's textbook.* "I get it, son. Love causes a lot of things; most notably war. Love can push men to fight forever for what they want..."

Kato: * Notices the similarity in her words to Kazuto Kato earlier.*

Aiko: "...But I'll be honest with you, like always, son. War is important; if history didn't have it, progression and evolution would be so slow, it would be as if it never happened at all."

Kato: "...Right..." *Stares at his tome again.*

Aiko: "And you won't even begin to believe how much fighting we had to have you." *Rests her arms on Kato's shoulders and having her hands meet on his chest, making him blush a bit.*

Kato: "'We...' You and father, right?"

Aiko: "Who else, darling?" *Now rests her temple on the parietal bone of Kato's skull.*

Kato: *Places his hand over hers, smiling affectionately.*

-And later on, I got to truly test that belligerent MO for the first time in my life.-
At kindergarten-through-middle school, Aichi International, Kato got the things he needed out of his locker and left the room into one of the many connecting hallways, on his way to his homeroom, but then...

Kato: *His year's main bully and his two friends notice Kato as they cross paths and redirects his course to bump shoulders, causing Kato to drop the bulk of his inventory. The two share a little glare before they simultaneously break gaze and return to their paths. While going to pick his stuff up, he whispers to himself.* Ignoramus...

Bully: *Turns around.* "What was that, Kato?" *By now, the rest of the students standing around keeping to themselves begin to pay attention. Some even begin to crowd around.*

Kato: "Not anything you'd understand, Takeuchi." *With all of his equipment gathered, he begins again to go his way, but then another two of Takeuchi's friends appear from that side of the crowd, preventing him from leaving.*

Takeuchi: "What's that supposed to mean, you little schmuck?" *Goes up to him, while the two friends who were previously following him guard the other end of the hallway, preventing Kato from getting away at either ends. He smacks down Kato's books again, grabs him by his collar's jacket, and then throws him towards the cement ridges before the windows.* "You, who never speaks to anybody, probably think you're too good for someone like me, huh? That's what you think, isn't it!?"

Kato: *Gets up, before leaving the support of the raised constructs.* "..."

Takeuchi: "Who are you to act all high and mighty? You live in a big, empty house with a broken family!"

Kato: "!!" *Looks up at him with a defensive expression, but still refuses to talk.*

Takeuchi: "That's why some butler always has to pick you up when you run late around here, huh!?"

Kato: "..."

Takeuchi: "Still nothing? Someone's got to teach you a little respect!" *Throws a wide right hook at Kato's face.*

Kato: *Falls onto one knee from the blow. His left cheek reddens very quickly, and he coughs a gruff two times.*

S. Rina/Sayaka: *Bear witness to the attack and are shocked at what they see.*

Kato: *Suddenly, a certain bunch of memories start playing in his head.*

<Repeating lines at least five times>
<Kazuto: "...[W]e never stop fighting our problems, son."

Aiko: "...Push men to fight forever..." >

Kato: *With renewed confidence, Kato hides his face to mask a lovable intent...*
Takeuchi: "Is that it!? Huh!?" *Throws another hook to the downed Kato.*

Kato: *Instinctively catches his wrist, stopping the attack dead.*

Takeuchi: "W-what?"

Kato: *Rising to his feet, he then pries the arm so that he has optimal leverage for impending pressure. He then allows Takeuchi to see his eyes, which have now been filled with a very powerful bloodlust - one saved only for hatred of his enemies.*

-Yes, I was a decent fighter as a kid, too. You tend to be so when you're raised by Yakuza, and you learn judo and karate from them, right?-

Kato: *He then proceeds to dig his thumb into the muscle tissue around the veins at Takeuchi's wrist, causing insufferable pain.*

Takeuchi: *Screams for two seconds, before recovering enough to throw another punch with his left.*

Kato: *Grabs that arm as well. He then switches grip so that his palm is on top of the top and bottom knuckles of Takeuchi's hand. He pivots his thumb and pinkie finger's tissue, causing Takeuchi's knuckles to roll out of natural placement, and causing even more pain. The anguish becomes so great that the bully shrinks down to supporting himself by his knees and elbows. The crowd of students, including Takeuchi's four friends, start backing away in fear. Kato finishes his nemesis off by arm dragging him such that Takeuchi's head smashes right into the cement of the raised platform, knocking him out.*

-A whistle blows. The crowd on the East side makes way so that two teachers could enter the circle, taking notice of Kato and the unconscious Takeuchi. Kato's bloodlust extinguishes just in time to find out what he had just done, and the trouble it has caused.-

-Minutes later, Kato sits in the principal's office, looking down and avoiding any contact with any other living souls in the dreaded room. His 'legal guardian' in the form of Fukuda comes in to address the situation with the head of the school, which seems was well enough such that Kato is left off with a warning, since he has never had a serious offense like this before. But he was not out of the woods just yet...-

-Back at the penthouse, Kato sits at the dinner table, being restrained to the chair by Fukuda to await the arrival of his mother that night. And when she does...-

Aiko: *Opens the door, takes off her shoes, and goes to the table.* "Kato, I've heard from Fukuda. You got in trouble today?"

Fukuda: "Kato got into a fight today, ma'am."

Aiko: *Takes one knee so her face is level with his.* "A fight?"

Kato: *Remains looking down at the table.* "...Yes."

Aiko: *Lays a hand on his lap.* "Kato, you know you can't get in trouble; it gets in the way of your studies. That being said, however, I feel it wasn't completely your fault. Does it have something to do with me and your father saying 'fight' all the time?"
Kato: "...Not entirely..."

Aiko: "Then what?"

Kato: *Looks at her.* "Mother, why do I never see you with father? Are we really a broken family?"

Fukuda/Aiko: "!!"

Kato: "And am I the reason? An adoption gone horribly wrong?"

Aiko: "Who said you're adopted, son?"

Kato: "We look nothing alike; it only took one gaze at a mirror reflecting myself and photos of you and father to find out! Now, is that why you two don't like to be around each other?"

Aiko: "..."

Kato: "Please tell me, mother."

Aiko: *Calms down.* "Kazuhiro... Our love story has been a very tough one... Our careers are not only extremely active and demanding, but they both call for different things; work for the both of us forces us to go to different places in the country. Sometimes, all the way across and onto other islands and regions. For that reason, you never see us together too often."

Kato: *Looks away again.*

Aiko: "But let me ask you something, son: think about someone you like."

Kato: *Begins thinking about one of the Shiroyuki Twins back at Aichi International.*

Aiko: "You got it? Now then, here's a 'would you rather:' See her for a few seconds? Or no seconds?"

Kato: *Looks down, silently saying what Aiko was believing he would answer with.*

Aiko: "You get it now? And why did you choose that option?"

Kato: "...Because it's something I'd fight for."

Aiko: "That's right. That's why your father and I keep things together; that's why we fight, and go the distance." *Stands up next to him.* "And hey, the span of seconds make moments like those all the more precious."

Kato: *Looks to her face.* "Thank you for telling me, mother."

Aiko: *Hugs her son tightly.* "Anything for you, dear."

Fukuda: *Joined soon by Okada, they genuinely smile to the reconciled event.*

-So now you know the situation I was raised with, from my perspective of course. It wasn't a
perfect family life, but I loved it nonetheless. Even if there were inherent lies within, which there were, I'd have no reason to be malicious against them.

-Now listen on as it all comes crashing down...-
So the beginning is revealed; Kato is the son of legendary Yakuza Kazuto Kato, and a woman named Aiko. He could very much be adopted, due to his very disparate appearance from them, but it cannot be described as distant, as they all clearly love each other. So Kato's blackguard behavior, skill-set, and culture is identified... But how exactly did he get agnostic, and vindictive?

Roughly two years later...-

-Now at eleven years old, I've been able to handle all of the problems of my youth on my own... Bullies, whether they target my borderline-foreign appearance or my lack of visible parentage, would never again turn a right knob. Staying out of the eyes of school officials and other students became simple enough, and grades... Just good enough to not get any attention.-

-But one thing still didn't change; I only saw one parent at a time. Until...-

-Kato returns to the penthouse after another cursory exit from Aichi International, which the Shiroyuki sisters notice.-

Kato: "Okada, Fukuda, I'm home." *Has his back turned while he proceeds to shut the door, lock it, and take off his shoes.*

Kazuto/Aiko: *In unison.* "Welcome home, son."

Kato: "Is utterly flabbergasted, hastily pivoting to meet the alienated voices, before taking the second to recognize them and realize who he is speaking to. And he couldn't be happier.* "Mom! Dad! You're, together!"

Kazuto: "Correct, son." *Winks and points to him.*

Aiko: "That weird?" *Holds her hip.*

Kato: *Crosses his arms with slight irritation.* "It's unprecedented at the very least."

Kazuto: "And it won't be the last. Son, we have been thinking long and hard about all about the time we didn't spend with you when you were younger, and realized we must remedy that."

Kato: "What are you saying?"

Aiko: *Bends her knees to match Kato's height.* "Would you like to go on a Summer vacation to Fukuoka?"

Kato: *Widens his eyes as he looks at her.*
Kazuto: *Takes one knee to look at him straight in the face as well.* "Kitakyushu, to be specific."

Kato: *Turns his head to look at him.*

Aiko: "Well, son? What say you?"

Kato: "Are you serious? Of course I'd love to go on a family vacation! Finally getting to live with you all like a family does!"

Okada: *Leaning on a wall with Fukuda. He clears his throat audibly.*

Kato: "UH, well, with real family."

Fukuda: *Handwaves it aside.* "Whatever, sir."

Kazuto: "Then it will be done. Finish school this year, and we'll be off to Fukuoka Prefecture in late May. Sounds great?"

Kato: "Extraordinary."

Brief... But it did live up to the word I had used to describe it. During the break, the three of us went to one of Japan's designated cities off the mainland. We briefly moved into a small house on the cliffside edge of the suburban area, and not too far from the coastline. It wasn't nearly as luxurious and furbished as the penthouse in Nagoya, but it didn't matter to me; I loved it all the same. Because my legitimate guardians were here.-

-The little things that any regular kid would do suddenly mattered so much to me; swimming years ago was not the same as swimming today. Neither was watching a movie on cable. And eating out... Actually, I never ate out until Kitakyushu. Sure, sometimes the parent that stayed home for the night with me brought pizza or fast food home, but I never had a waiter take my order. It clearly showed. But we laughed through it anyway.-

-And yeah, I remember every family-bonding moment we've had. But the most vivid one for me... Was in the Kawachi Fuji Gardens, just before the ultimate month of Spring had ended.-

Kato: *With his eyes covered by the hands of his mother, Aiko and Kazuto guide their son into the historical site.* "Mother? Father? Where are we?"

Aiko: "Patience, son. We're nearly there."

Kazuto: "Make sure you're not peeking."

Kato: *Audibly sniffs the air.* "It smells really nice around here. What is the fragrance?"

Aiko: "Heheh, you'll be seeing soon enough."

Eventually, the three arrive at a wooden bench, and they all take a seat. Aiko slowly sits meticulously adjacent to adjust her makeshift blindfold on Kato. She then moves her hands away, allowing him to see exactly where they are.-

Kato: *Is so utterly speechless by the beauty of his surroundings, his mouth is wide open.*
Kazuto: "Welcome to the Wisteria Tunnel, son."

Aiko: "Of course, this isn't it's greatest blooming; we just missed that date, to be honest. But I see you clearly don't mind." *Snuggles Kato.*

Kato: "So... Much... Wisteria..."

Kazuto: "It's extravagant, ain't it?" *Looks in the same direction as his son.* "Are you inspired in some way?"

Kato: "Me? How so?"

Kazuto: "Any way you could. You know, that famous Japanese figure you like so much-

Kato: "Miyamoto Musashi?"

Kazuto: "Yes. He lived here briefly, starting in 1634. Kokura Castle, more specifically."

Aiko: "Yep. And though it wasn't certain whether he frequented tunnels like these or not, he often sat around a mass of wisteria such as this, which brought him inspiration for the many themes present in his The Book of Five Rings."

Kato: "The Book of Fire..."

Aiko: *Laughs.* "That one is the most obvious, of course. Without any man-made obstructions, he believe anybody's vision could be set on nothing but the enemy before him. Very good... But there are implications in Water; Musashi praised adaptation and foresight; being able to handle any new situation that arose, and come across developments without having to see it. Well, if any enemy came to him in the middle of bright wisteria, you know he would see it coming, right?"

Kazuto: "But what is always my favorite between him and these flowers is The Book of Void; Perceiving what you cannot understand. Do you see it, son? What you can't comprehend?"

Kato: *Stares at a branch of wisteria that is being manipulated by the light breeze.* "It seems like... You're referring to a spiritual calling of some sort..."

Kazuto: "Indeed. A providence, enforced by the Ones Above. That's one of the many things in the Void, because we as a mass don't know if we should fight with it, or against it. Why would this wisteria fight to bloom only for a few weeks, then turn to lifeless for much longer? Everybody, even Musashi, spent a lifetime wondering with questions like that. And so, they had fought forever. That's why, we feel we must fight forever."

Kato: "..."

Aiko: "But I guess that's a story to be finished another day. We came to see the tunnels, so let's continue to do that."

Kato: *Looks between his father and mother, before smiling at both of them.* "Very well." *He leans his head on his father's shoulder, gazing again at the hanging flowers once more.*

-So many hints... How did I not get it sooner? Ah well...-
And then came that awry moment on one sunny day and clear night...

Kato: *Watching "Batman Begins" while snuggling with Aiko on the couch.*

Kazuto: *Walks into the family room where the lights of the screen act as the only illumination.* "Kazuhiro, son.*

Kato: *Focuses up and sits upright.* "Yes, father?"

Kazuto: "I regret to inform we've run out of popcorn in the cupboard." *Opens his wallet and takes three one-thousand yen notes.* "Would you mind going to the local convenience store to get us all some?"

Kato: "Sure!" *Takes the notes and takes his leave. The convenience store was half a dozen blocks away, but there was little to worry about in a nice-enough neighborhood. Kato did as he was told, collecting as many boxes of popcorn bags as his budget would permit, and then lined them up on the desk of the sales clerk. After properly paying and leaving, Kato couldn't help but notice the strobing lights of a police cruiser and an ambulance nearby across the street. A crowd has obstructed Kato’s view, but it was clear someone was seriously hurt or killed in the event. Knowing better than to get himself noticed, Kato left the area to return home, entering from the back entrance like he usually does.*

"Mother, father, I'm home!" *Sets the popcorn boxes down on the dining table. But the only response he receives is the chatter of the film.*

"Mom? Dad?" *Kato moves over to the family room, seeing that no one is there. He then goes to the kitchen, which is also vacant.*

Where are they... *Kato finally goes into their bedroom, finding drying blood along the sheets of the mattress and on the floor.* What!? He then follows the crimson trail to the connecting bathroom, finding Kazuto and Aiko, both sitting in front of the sink in a pool of blood. He had major gashes at the center of his torso, and she had a bullet-hole in her forehead, respectively.*

"MOM! DAD!" *He dashes right up to them, taking one knee in front of his father, trying to find any sign of life, though finding none. Knowing that both of them were gone, he falls back and begins crying hectically. After a few minutes, he looks around their lifeless bodies, and finds the tanto blade that was most definitely used to disembowel his father.* Why...!? Why them!?

There was a huge bang on the door.

Kato: Who is that!?

Police Officer 1: "This is police! We have been reported frantic disturbances in this house!"

Kato: The law enforcement! They can help! *Brandishing the "smoking gun," he runs out in the open of the kitchen leading to the family room, confronting the police officer that shouted moments earlier.* "Officer! Over here!"

And that... Was just about the stupidest thing I've ever done...

Police Officer 1: *Wielding a .38 special caliber firearm and a flashlight in a tactical stance, he
points it over to the source of the noise, that being Kato.* "Kid, put the knife down and put your hands up!"

Kato: *Keeps the knife raised.* "You misunderstand! Someone else killed them! They're in the bathroom; they used this!"

Police Officer 1: *A second officer also training his revolver joins right behind him.* "Son, put the weapon down!"

Kato: *Still has the knife in a "threatening" position.* "You have to find him! Her! Them, whoever they are!"

Police Officer 3: *One who has entered through the back door like Kato did ends up behind Kato. Knowing he will not drop the blade, he takes his baton and smashes it along the backside of Kato's head, as it connects to the stem and spine.*

Kato: "AGH!!" *Falls onto his face due to the impact. The weapon flies out of his hand, landing harmlessly a few feet in front of him. He soon loses consciousness...*

-Briefly back to the present...-

Kato: *Painfully holding the photo album, tears fall from his face and onto the laminated plastic.*

Kayano: *Sitting right next to him, places her hand on his shoulder.* "Hey, you okay, Kato-kun?"

Mimura: "Maybe all of this might be a little too rough to take in one sitting... Might we take a bre-

Kato: *Wipes his face.* "No. No, you all deserve answers now. I'll keep going. Now then..."

-Some time later...-

Kato: *Eventually comes to, lying supine, and seeing all white and bright lights. He groans quite a bit, though the sounds don't seem to alert anyone near him.* A hospital... Why am I here...? *Kato tries to sit upright by applying elbow support, but his right arm refuses to move more than a few inches. There was a clinking sound when he reached that limit too.*

What?

*Kato then looks down to his lower right arm, and finds that he is handcuffed to the gurney. He frantically then looks to his other arm, and finds his wrist is also firmly-bound. His legs were strapped down too.* "WHAT IS THIS!?" *Begins frenziedly flailing about in an attempt to get his limbs free.*

Female Nurse: *Gasps, dropping her clipboard when she turns and sees Kato yelling and moving.* "He's awake!"

Doctor: *Goes to a medical stand.* "Make sure he's down! I will sedate him!"

Medical Staff: *Many of the men go over to Kato and keep his arms and legs planted to the
Kato: "LET GO OF ME!" *Suddenly, Kato begins harnessing a mysterious strength; enough to compete against the leverage-advantaged, two-handed press of one physician assistant. Though he is surprised himself, he uses it to his advantage, forcing the PA's hands to slip off, and then use the handcuff chains to cause twisting pain on his arms.*

Physician's Assistant: "AAH!!"

Male Nurse: *Holding onto Kato's other arm, he tries to punch Kato in the head, but is met with a well-timed headbutt counter, which strains his hand much more than it pained Kato's cranium.*

Medical Staff: "DO IT NOW!"

Doctor: *Readies the needle, letting a little liquid to leak out before injecting it into Kato's still restrained shoulder. He backs away with the rest of the staff once the needle's contents have been emptied.*

Kato: "Ah... Ah, a...." *His right arm goes limp for a few seconds, and his active neck position relaxes, causing his head to lay back on the pillow. But then, he suddenly finds life in his upper body, with his right arm able to clench a fist, and his head can slowly be raised again.*

Physician's Assistant: "How can he still move!?"

Male Nurse: "Doctor, we need to administer more sedative!"

Doctor: "No! He's already gotten too high of a dose as it is! Any more can be fatal!"

Male Nurse: "Well we can't just leave him like this!"

Kato: *Continues to attempt to shake the shackles free.*

???: "Let me handle this." *Bows to the doctor, then pushes him aside, along with the nurse adjacent to him.* "You."

Kato: *Looks up and sees the then-twenty-three-year-old man, clad in a Japanese government-issued suit, and sporting spiky, black hair.*

-Yeah... You can guess who, right?-

Karasuma: "You need to calm down. I need you to start answering some questions."

Kato: *Does not relent on trying to break free.*

Karasuma: "Calm. Down." *Along with his raised voice, he pulls out his government-issue Minebea P9 pistol at him, though practicing proper trigger safety to avoid accidents.*

Kato: *Takes a look at the barrel of the pistol, and then something shoots through his mind.*

Aiko: "WHO IS THAT!?"

Kazuto: *Holds his torso from being stabbed.* "RUN, AIKO!"
Aiko: *Tries to first run past the killer, but he throws her back into the bedroom. She then goes into the bathroom to try and get through to the other doorway, leading to Kato’s bedroom. But she cannot unlock the door in time, when the assassin comes in. She turns around and finds the killer training a pistol straight at her, much like what’s happening to Kato right now...*

Kato: *Instantly, his muscles go limp, and his head falls back, onto the pillow, and his eyes close, fully going to sleep.*

Karasuma: "!?"

Male Nurse: "What happened?"

Doctor: *Inspectes the unconscious Kato.* "The sedative... Suddenly worked."

Female Nurse: "What? What do you mean?"

Physician’s Assistant: "The drug was delayed? How is that possible?"

Karasuma: *Puts his pistol away.* "..."

-I’ll be explaining how that is soon enough. For now...-

-Once I recovered from the physical trauma, I was brought straight to the interrogation room. Why?-  

Kato: *Sat on the other end of a wide steel table, with his hands cuffed and underneath the metalwork. His head was also arched down so that he sees the ground, and he remained completely silent.*

Karasuma: *Sat on the other end, laying his hand on a manilla folder of case files.* "Why did you hold that knife in front of the police, little kid?"

Kato: "..."

Karasuma: "You need to help yourself. Silence won’t win it over this time. You want to know why?"

Kato: "..."

Karasuma: "Given what everybody knows of the victims, there’s not much nationwide interest in this case. So, everyone who is interested wants to put it away as soon as possible."

Kato: "..."

Karasuma: "And to do that, they need a suspect. You were there, so they picked you. You won’t even try to work against that?"

Kato: *Involuntarily remembering...*

Kazuto/Aiko: *Aiko is screaming as Kazuto steps in front of her, facing the mystery assassin.*
Karasuma: "Hey! Answer me, little boy!"

Kato: *Having his memory interrupted by Karasuma's interjection, he then looks up at him with a menacing Kubrick stare.* "Don't call me that."

Karasuma: *Sits upright to combat the gaze.* "Care to actually tell me something of substance, then?"

Kato: "My name... is Kazuhiko Ohno."

Karasuma: "Right... So, Ohno, why were you there, and why did you linger around the bodies for hours?"

Kato: "..."

Karasuma: "Ugh, this again? Really?"

-Yep, I one-lined my pseudonym, which I have used for more than nine years, and said nothing more that day. The time came for my 'trial...' When I say that, it was more of the Ministry personally relaying the crime straight to me, with only Karasuma and judiciary agents as witnesses. And then they took me away... to Okinawa International Penitentiary, one of the worst maximum-security jailing facilities in the world.-
Retelling Space; Final? Level

Chapter Summary

Kato, indicted for the murders of Kazuto and Aiko, has been sent to Okinawa International Penitentiary, having met Karasuma in the meanwhile for (as-of-yet) unknown reasons. As part of legacy, we know that he spends 1.5 years here, and what came next was domination of the criminal world... But how, in spite of his new disadvantage?

-A prison bus, carrying only a few soon-to-be inmates, including an eleven-year-old boy, stops right in front of Okinawa International Penitentiary.-

-Okay, I guess I should explain this now, since the true backstory will reveal a lot by itself. You may already be wondering, even though I killed two people, if twenty years in a jail full of far more intense prisoners was overkill - it totally was. The reason I got pitched here was because the assassin's client had paid extra to the interpreters in my case to indict a much deeper sentence on me. No one saw the case anyways; no harm for any party... Except, well you know. But, I can't say it wasn't all bad, as you'll hear about soon enough...-

   Bus Driver: "First and last stop! Get out!"

-All of the inmates slowly make their way out of the vehicle. Ohno, already sporting his Okinawa-style script on the right forearm like everyone else, is one of the last to depart. The small line of criminals eventually converges with a huge pack of other eventual inmates. Kato keeps his eyes down, still in focus on his hands as he almost-unconsciously follows the formation.-

   Prison Warden: *Stands on a raised platform, surrounded by four of his guards.* "Hello, all scum from across the globe! Consider being placed here in Okinawa International an honor - Not so much the 'being scraped from the bottom of the barrel' kind of selection, but with its intense concentration, and with much more consideration. You all are the absolute worst the world has seen in the last year! And so, you'll be brought in to live with the absolute worst the world has seen in the last two years! And the last three! Four! Five! Ten! Twenty! I'd keep going, but I know nothing about the guys who have been here longer than that! Now, the rules are simple: No desecrating, no killing, and, by God, no fornicating with the assets of the prison; that means the men in jumpsuits that are all around you!"

   Prisoners: *Many remain silent, while the more wild ones whistle at the Warden's monologue, much to his disgust. Some of the less open murmur to what seems to be their friends and partners in crime.*

   Kato: *Tries to listen in on the Warden's speech, but his memories are becoming even more infecting... Despite his strong, unwavering concentration that he has maintained since the interrogation room, the involuntary memories are becoming unbearable... Kato is slowly losing grips with the present and its reality, and it might not be long before the past envelops all of his mind...*
Kato: "After a few more notes, the prisoners are guided to their cells, sharing bunks with from three to five others."

Cellmate 1: "Kato: *Gets pushed into Cage 211, where he takes a seat at the far-side bottom bunk. Two men, one definitively Japanese while the other is probably Thai, initially enter the cell after him.*"

Cellmate 1: "*Laughs to his friend.* "Look at this jailbait fool. What do you think he got time for?"

Cellmate 2: "Don't be shy about it; why don't you ask him?"

Cellmate 1: "You're right." *Takes a seat across from Kato.* "Hey, little tike. What you do to be-

Kato: "*Looks up to avoid gazing at his memories any further. This nonetheless shows his face to his cellmates.*"

Cellmate 1/2: "*Instantly shocked at who they see. They then immediately stand up and run over to him, laying one of their hands on both of his shoulders. They whisper at him,* *Kato-ani!*

Kato: "*Instantly focuses on his two cellmates near him, temporarily blocking the tragic memories again.* *!?"

Cellmate 1: "What are you doing here?"

Cellmate 2: "That doesn't matter, man. We'll have to keep him safe."

And then, Cellmate 3, unrelated to all of them, comes in.-

Cellmate 3: "*Stretches his back out.* "Alright, y'all. Who wants to par-" *Notices his three cellmates are having a misinterpreted time together.* "Aw, guess I was too late. Next time, then. I'll be on this top bunk, alright?" *Climbs up the bunk that Cellmates 1 and 2 originally sat at.*

All: "..."

Cellmate 1: "*To Kato.* Why did Inafune die? Why didn't he pick you up?"

Kato: "What!?!"

Cellmate 2: "He should've... *Snaps his fingers.* It must've been the hitman that capped our boss! He took Inafune out before it all!"

Cellmate 1: "Is that true, ani? Did that happen?"

Kato: "Wh-wh-who are you two? What are you talking about?"

Cellmates: "*Show their wrist tattoos: 1 has "Goya," and 2 has "Yeerum."* *We worked for your father. Kazuto Kato.*

Kato: "You did? What did he do? Why did he die?"
Kikuchi: An assassin did him in. We tried to get revenge, but the guy was one step ahead and baited us into a legal trap.

Goya: *Hugs Kato's shoulders.* Son... you don't know who your father is, do you?

Kato: "..."

Goya: I'll take that as a yes. I hate it to be me who tells you this, but... Your parents were Yakuza.

Kato: WHAT!?

Cellmate: *Mid-snore, wakes up from the interjection.* "Hey if you guys are going to be boisterously loud, you should warn me first, alright?" *Proceeds to go back to sleep.*

All: "..."

Goya: I suppose you have many wonderances... I can't answer them all. But here is what I do know...

-Goya and Kikuchi proceeded to tell me that my father, the Oyabun of the Kato Family, has been doing his best to stay out of sight from the men shooting daggers with their eyes for the last decade. They didn't, or couldn't, tell me why, though, and that's really the only thing that mattered to me back then. They also stated that my father had predicted that his run was about to lose course, and that someone was supposed to pick me up over at the convenience store and keep me safe in the event that it did. That only just raised more questions within my mind (the part that was still in the present, mind you), but at least I knew that I had friends down here... Brothers, rather, that even the other hardened inmates feared (and a lot of them), so I didn't have to worry about trouble... For a little while.-

-Nothing could save me from the night.-

-Kato, Goya, and Kikuchi, with their unaffiliated cellmate, all are sleeping under an unseen waxing gibbous.-

Kato: *In his subconscious, the tragic simulation of Kazuto and Aiko's murders continue to invade, seeping deeper into every section of his encephalon. The nightmare wakes him up viciously at midnight.*

Goya: *Notices the bunk shaking below him due to Kato waking up.* Kato-ani? Something wrong?

Kato: *Unable to hear him, Kato grips his head, trying to shake his cranium free of the dreadful thoughts.*


Kato: *The severe case subsides for a brief moment with the conclusion of the recollection, allowing Kato to see his brother for a second. He covers his face before handwaving Goya away, lying back down on the bunk bed. Goya reluctantly complies. they both then continue to try to get as much sleep as possible.*
-The next day...-

Kato: *Sits alone inside his cell, finding that his mental condition is deteriorating rapidly, is at the event horizon. The remembrances now play on loop not even seconds after its initial conclusion, and now he can’t even see what is physically right in front of him anymore.*

-Yeah, you can probably see, I wasn’t going to make it. In spite of all my efforts, my past was consuming everything. If another day passed by and I didn’t do anything, I would’ve gone insane from seeing the past one too many times. So, I had to do something.-

-... But what am I supposed to do?- 

Kato: *Gripping his intolerable head looking downwards, hearing the yells of his parents and the sounds of death coming from the unknown assassin.* STOP! TORTURING! ME! PLEASE!!

???: *Faintly.* "...[W]e never stop fighting our problems, son."

Kato: ... What...?

???: *Also faintly.* "...[M]en... [F]ight forever for what they want."

Kato: Mom? Dad? *Reaches out to each of them respectively, finding that his hands pass right through their projections.* Wait, I'm still living in my past... Then what is...

Kazuto/Aiko: *They repeat their phrases, albeit becoming louder every time. Eventually, their words begin to merge, and all Kato can concentrate on seconds later is, repeating many more times.* "Fight your problems forever!"

Kato: I... I'll...

Kazuto/Aiko: *They continue.*

Kato: I-I will...

**Kato/Kazuto/Aiko: Fight forever!**

Kato: *Shouts internally to the ceiling, with an ascended, undying resolve to fight against his mental condition. After a brief struggle, he shatters the metaphorical one-way mirror glass, back to the present. He exhales exhaustingly for a little while before testing to make sure he is back to reality, feeling the cement wall in his cell.* It... It worked... *He looks at his hand, which, for a few frames, shows the exact blood marks present on it when he was tending to his deceased parents.* But it won't last forever. I must fight it somehow else... *He clenches his fist, and then looks back at the beds, particularly where Goya and Yeerum resided.* I need their help...

-Kato waits for the two to return from their time outside in the open grounds.-

Goya: "Ah, Kato-ani. Are we intru-"

Kato: "No, brother. Actually, you couldn't have come at a better-"
-Not having a watch, which compensates for my life-ruining lack of chronological sense, to know how long I have been waiting for them sucked.-

Kato: "... Time."

Yeerum: "You have something for us?"

Kato: "No, for me. But it will involve you. Don't worry; it won't get you guys in trouble."

Goya: "Don't matter, sir; we'd follow you to Hell if you asked."

Kato: *Slightly smiles.* "Not that intense. I just need you guys to tell me... Where can I learn Tae-kwon-do?"

Goya/Yeerum: *Look between each other, before back at Kato with initial surprise... But instead of an eleven-and-a-half year-old boy, they see a glimpse of their former boss, Kazuto.* "We have some bros in here who can help with that..."

-My training with the inmate-for-life and fellow Kato Family member Seung-Gil was rough... I had come to never underestimate the impact of one's foot-blade as a striking-appendage ever again. But it also served to take my mind off of the memories, giving me something that required all of my body and brain to learn.-

-I was making progress... But so was the disorder. And learning TKD just wasn't enough anymore. So...-

Kato: "Oy, Yeerum-san! Nando-san! Teach me Muay Thai!"

-I would learn two martial arts at once. Take up even more concentration. And if that proved inadequate...-

Kato: "Medeiros-san! You know BJJ, right? Care to show me some techniques?"

-And if I needed more than three...-

Kato: "D'Cruz-san! Vale Tudo instructions, please!"

-Four martial arts... Then five when I picked up Arnis. Then six when I got into Pugilism. Then seven when I studied Hapkido. You get the idea. But it wasn't just combat sports; in the middle of their spars and grapples, I would also be studying languages; Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, you name it. Social studies amongst a group as ethnically diverse as the Yakuza was a gold mine for topics too. And I'd be affiliating as many of these as I could to ensure the disorder would not seep and ruin my mind, killing me from the inside out.-

-Now you might be wondering, 'how could I possibly have such a disciplined mind to learn all of these arts at any one point?' Well, as it turns out, the worst thing that has ever happened to me... Became my greatest weapon. With the loss of my sense of time passing by, the blow to the back of my head, caused by that cop's baton, has struck loose the neural limiters in my brain. These limiters are what stops you from going all out both mentally and physically because if you do so, you would overexert yourself, leading to death. But I had one factor granting me eternal stamina... Fear. Fear of relieving myself and seeing all of those awful things again. So, I did get tired, and I did start breaking bones or pushing psychic boundaries, but none of those moments were ever one
step too far; no limit was too high to ensure I would survive. Either my body just got used to being
worked like that all the time... Or I made it. Guess which happened first.-

-... Yeah, needless to say, my body got used to it. How? By creating separating more and more of
my gray matter and making more brains out of them. Parallel processing, the ability to
simultaneously perform many calculations and infer limitless observations at once, was made
possible by throwing one category of subjects into one mind, and another category in another. By
the end of the ordeal, in which I was able to cast my memory disorder and its effects into the last
"brain" I would need, I had gotten to my 20th. Nineteen brains, to operate a freed spirit. But I was
free.-

-And, in time... One and a half years later...-

-Within Okinawa International's open playground, a prisoner gets brutally beaten and tossed to
the ground near some others standing.-

   Prisoner: *Sits up with arm support, wiping his mouth with his free hand.* "Damn you, Kazama
   thugs!"

   Aggressor 1: *Stands by four of his supporters.* "Nothing personal on you, Ando. Just got beef
   with your boss, Kato. But since he's not here, you and your cronies will have to do." *Cracks his
   knuckles.*

   Ando: *Gets helped up by Goya and Yeerum.* "Huh, thanks guys."

   Goya: "Yeah, no sweat. Now, these guys..."

   Yeerum: "Damn Tae-Il and the others are in solitude for a bit. Must have been on the wrong end
   of a buyout. Shit, what to do..."

   ???: "Don't you worry about a thing, my brothers..." *Walks up to the scene, now with its own
   prisoner-cheering circle.*

- Kato steps out from behind the three of his sworn brothers.-

   Kato: "They're mine."

   Kazama Inmate 2: "Heheh, look at this crazy little kid!"

   Kazama Inmate 3: "Little guy has a deathwish!"

   Kazama Inmate 4: "Why don't we give him one?"

   Kato: "Try ME." *Cracks his neck with a light head tilt while his eyes remain closed. When he
   opens them up again, they flare with a brief red glow, the same kind of glow present when he
   fought back against Takeuchi the bully earlier. The glow, akin to a Bloodlust of Hatred.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST Theme "Fiercest Warrior Ver. 0" plays.-

加藤和彦 VS カザマ ファミリー メンバー
Kazuhiko Kato; Okinawa International Penitentiary Inmate

VS

Kazama Family Members/Inmates

-The presumed leader of the five-man pack sends one and only one of his burly partners over to fight Kato, who dwarfs him by almost a whole foot, and has almost half his width too. The former gives a quick scoff and a smirk at his diminutive opponent, before pushing Kato away just enough to start his first attack; a bell clap that could crush Kato's temples when smashed together. But Kato got to him first, throwing a quick slap to the man's larynx, forcing the prisoner to gag and stopping his attack dead.

Kato first launches a left knee smash to the inmate's right ribcage, and then throws a low left roundhouse kick to misplace the Kazama thug's right foot, putting him a little closer to Kato's height. The former tucks his head down and close to his chest, allowing him to throw menacing 12-6 elbows to the back of the head near where the brain stem is, causing severe harm. When the convict recovers from the initial surprise, he tries throwing a left hook to Kato's side, which he ducks under, using his downgraded size. The hyperextension of that motion also leaves him open to Kato's countering half-arc backfist and right haymaker, with a one-two right roundhouse and side kick enough to push him back closer towards his allies.

With the Kazama family now realizing that Kato was more of a threat than they had anticipated, the rest of them all join the fray. The leader and one other decide to run in and throw simultaneous straight punches toward Kato's face. The latter counters by jumping so that he balances his left foot on the goon's exposed mobile right knee, with his right hand clasping the wrist of the goon's punching arm as it approaches, avoiding both blows entirely. Kato's remaining leg proceeds to float over the wrist-grabbed arm, allowing him to enzuigiri-kick the goon, pushing him into the leader, stunning them. With extreme dexterity, Kato lands right on the kicking leg, allowing him to quickly notice one other thug coming up to skipping side kick him. Kato showcases his amazing muscle control by limboing on one foot to duck under the kick, briefly in that levitating position before collapsing on his knee.

That is what Kato wanted, however, as he pivots around so that once the third thug drops his foot, he is between the man's narrow leg-span. Before he could react, Kato knees him in the manhood, forcing him to bow over and get his chin wiped by a front kick. Kato's free leg gets dragged by the remaining unharmed thug, which Kato accepts under the action that the resulting motion allows him to arm-hook sweep the debilitated man's right leg. The fourth convict throws Kato's leg behind him so that he can proceed to a full mount over the teenager, but Kato barrel-rolls away from him as he pits his knee down. By now, the Kazama leader and his accompanying friend had recovered and rushed towards him again. His cohort goes first, swinging a massive haymaker and a snap kick at Kato, who pulls back and pushes down to evade damage respectively. The fourth rejoins the fray, appearing behind Kato and throws a right overhead at him. Kato senses the threat and bobs away from it.

The leader also butts in on the side trying to sweep Kato's exposed leg, causing the latter to enforce great footwork as he continues to dodge most of the upper-body blows from his colleagues, though some, such as a left hook to his cheek and a cut to his shoulder do make it through. Eventually, Kato crumples down into a star b-boy freeze and initiates a thrust windmill to keep all
at bay with a flurry of heel and thrust kicks; two of which hit the Kazama leader square in the face and knocking him back onto his feet. Kato then gets back onto one knee, ready to meet an unfortunate roundhouse kick that knocks him on the top-left side of his head. But Kato tanks it well, gripping the calf of the kicking leg. He rises up to his feet again and pivots the wrong way, causing the thugs leg to twist the knee and ankle out of position, causing agonizing pain as Kato lets go, allowing the thug to writhe along the ground. The other thug tries his luck again with another right rounded punch to Kato's back of skull, but is caught by Kato's right hand. From there, he swiftly changes grip and turns the mans arm so that his elbow points down onto Kato's shoulder. One push down breaks said elbow, allowing Kato to backfist the exposed ribcage, inverse-uppercut the chin, and then lay him out with an uranage mat slam.

Kato, bloodied and bruised from two sections of his face, comes across the Kazama inmate commander, who reveals a shiv that he gets introduced to by being slashed with it lightly on his clavicle. they then stare each other down as they are at their ready stances, circling the literally man-made circle. The convict throws a few quick stabs and cuts, with the last one giving enough time for Kato to stop the wrist and try to disarm. But then the knife artist hurriedly lets the knife fall out of his hand so it goes into his left, prompting Kato to move away when one more swipe comes close to slitting his waist section. The knife returns to his right hand when safe.-

Goya: *Rips off a rusted-bolted piece of metal from the bleachers in the outside grounds.* "Sir! Here!" *Throws the seating plank over to him.*

-Kato catches the piece just in time to block a diagonally-downward slash. It is quickly followed by the leader's uppercut-like lunge, which was met by a quick plank flick that throws pushes the attack aside, and allowing Kato to slap the leader in the face with it. The latter gets infuriated and switches hand grip to the left and tries a wild face slash, which Kato ducks under and smacks the exposed leg with the metal piece. He works his way up, smashing steel to stomach, and then steel to left arm, forcing the Kazama leader to drop his shiv. A left roundhouse kick in conjunction with a plank face smash coming towards it sandwiches the thug's head between the two hard places, knocking him out.-

-Battle OST ends.-

Kato: *Stands around the five wasted men all around him, and his grip loosened on the plank so that it rests partially on the ground. He then hears the whistles of the prison guards rapidly approaching the scene, quickly restraining a surrendering Kato. And as he passes by his Yakuza brethren.*

Yeerum: Don't forget to mention it, sir.

Kato: *Nods.*

-Kato is guided to a windowless interrogation room of the prison, where he is forced in.-

Warden: "Solitary!" *Slams the door shut while Kato is still on one knee.*

Kato: *Spits to the far corner and rises to his feet.* "Now that just ain't true..." *Barely looks at his shoulder.* "Right, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: *Appears from within the area that was hidden when the door slammed open, and then walks closer towards Kato.* "It took you one and a half years to finally develop a voice?"
Kato: *Is surprised by the 1.5 year count, since he doesn't know how long he's been inside anymore. But he proceeds to look forward, opposite where Karasuma is.* "Prison changes people."

Karasuma: "Indeed. Now then, you wanted me, now you got me. I want to know, why?"

Kato: "You're going to let me out. Legally."

Karasuma: "!!?"

Kato: "The deal I have in mind, it doesn't have to be a complete walk. You can leave me on parole for the remaining... Years if it makes it more plausible. But what is adamant is that... One week from now, I get my train ticket back to Tokyo, and no one will be hunting for me."

Karasuma: "What makes you think I'm going to accept a deal with results like that?"

Kato: *Turns around to meet Karasuma eye-to-eye.* "Because I've been nosing around in this ultimate jail you've got here, Karasuma, and I learned about a few things. Some things, that you've come to neglect mentioning when first seeing me. Which is quite a shame, since they seriously mattered in my case..."

Karasuma: "!!"

Kato: "Ah, but it was no defensive evidence, so I can see why you didn't. Either way, I'm sure there's something my parents had over the Ministry of Defense... Something, like a 'get-out-of-jail-free' card. One that would be used just in case he was ever out-gambit-ed. And, if my brothers in here - and my uncle out 'there-'"

Karasuma: "Your uncle?"

Kato: "Yes, my uncle. And if they are correct... My father never used that favor."

Karasuma: "No... That's not possible."

Kato: "I'm going to use that favor in his family name." *Lifts and reveals his prisoner tattoo to the agent.* "I won't be Inmate 1225 no more."

Karasuma: "If you really are what you say you are, I will put you down in the confines of this windowless, soundless room right now!"

Kato: "YOU WOULD'VE DONE IT BY NOW!" *Stands on the balls of his feet to get closer to Karasuma's height.* "But you didn't. Because somewhere in the shallow end of that small brain of yours, you knew you would be in my debt..." *Stands normally again, pacing to the far side wall.*

Karasuma: "You're right... I do owe you for not being able to get you out of this mess, back when I thought you were just some unfortunate kid."

Kato: "And what will you do?"

Karasuma: "I'm..." *Scoffs.* "God, I can't believe I'm about to say this."

Kato: "You'll what?"
Karasuma: *Clears his throat.* "I'm going to let you out. I can arrange for you to be on parole for the next twenty-three years, with myself and my team as your personal officers."

Kato: "That's a nice start, but why don't I sweeten the deal for your superiors? I and my fellow Family members can be pulled into any black-operations case..."

-This "no sense of time" shit really had me frustratingly dumbfounded, if you didn't already know.-

Kato: "... Four years from now."

Karasuma: "Seriously now?"

Kato: "Seriously."

Karasuma: "Why would you promise something like that?"

Kato: "Many reasons; family thing, personal family thing, eh it's also something to do to ease my active brothers' boredom-"

Karasuma: "You know what, I don't need to know. But you got a deal." *Offers his hand to shake on it.*

Kato: "Looks at the hand before walking past it towards the door. *"Then let's not waste any time telling the warden to get me out of here."

Karasuma: "..."

-The favor story is one for another day; this one has enough stories as it is. When the... Time is right, I will talk about it. Regardless, after spending one and a half years in one of the worst cesspools on the surface... I was out. The prison train pulled me into Tokyo, and kicked me out without a proper goodbye. Assholes. But, I was free; free to go see my uncle, get the answers I wanted all this time, and then... Plot revenge.-

-First, I found an old stash that Goya told me about that he personally kept concealed in a Tokyo alleyway. Inside was roughly seven-hundred-thousand yen; enough to get me anywhere and stay anywhere at least for a few days. Also within was a small foldout knife and a compact Springfield Armory Champion pistol, loaded with seven shots with another magazine. I stowed both and left, heading my way towards a destination marked with char on a piece of paper... Except, when I went to the address of my uncle's last residence here, it turns out it was sold for lease. Figures; the brothers who told me where he would be haven't been out on the field for some time.-

-So, I remembered my parents mentioning an old vacation home that he loved to stay at with his wife, down in Kanagawa Prefecture. Given how far it is from Nagoya, no wonder he didn't like to come see me too often. Eh, no bother with that now. I called for a cab that just stopped nearby...-

Kato: *Opens the passenger-side door once the blue car stops.* "Thank you, sir."

Driver: "No problem, kid. Where to?"

Kato: "Kanagawa? This address." *Hands him the piece of paper... Written with pencil.*
Obviously, the driver would know a Yakuza's address. So I wrote a new one that was three houses behind.

Driver: "...Okay. Buckle up, kid."

-Knock knock on the driver's window.-

Driver: "Huh?"

Man 1: *Stands with another man and a woman. They were all wearing fine, but rather flamboyant, intimidating clothing.* "Hey, man! Give us a ride to Ginza! We're in a hurry!"

Driver: "Son, I'm occupied. You see the sign? You see my passenger?"

Man 2: "Oh, that little guy?" *Opens the passenger door and pulls Kato out.*

Kato: "Ah, hey!" *Gets pushed to the ground nearby.*

Woman: "There, now you have no passenger, and you've vacant! Take us now!"

Driver: *Gets out of the cab.* "Hey, you can't do that to a customer!"

Man 1: *Tugs on the driver's collar and pushes him onto the hood of the vehicle.* "What's that? You're not going to take us?"

Man 2: "You better take us, man! NOW!" *Punches the driver square in the face.*

Driver: "Ahh!"

Kato: "!!!"

Woman: "Comply, man! C-O-M-P-L-Y!"

Man 2: "You heard the lady, asshole!" *Punches the driver again.*

Kato: *Rises to his feet.* Shit, what do I do? The last thing I need is for the cops to notice me, but I can't just watch them beat on the cab driver! *He gently nudges into moving forward, until...*

???: *A young mahogany-haired woman, clad in a white tee and crimson zipper corduroy, femininely but strongly built, nudges Kato aside.* "Stay back, kid." *She confronts the madmen and woman.* "Alright, you all! Pick on someone who can hit back, why don't you!"

Trio: *Look over to the woman, instantly realizing who she is.* "OH! Pardon me- I mean, us! We'll be on our way now, ma'am!" *Gently picks up and wipes the face of the driver, before leaving.*

Woman: *When they get out of view, she goes up to the driver, expressing her sympathy.* "You okay, sir?"

Driver: "Ah... Yes, I'm fine, miss. Thank you for your intervention."

Woman: "My duty. Stay safe now, you hear?"
Driver: "Yes, ma'am. Now, kid, I guess it's time we got going."

Woman: "Ah, yes. How extremely brave of you to step up if I didn't come along. But I don't think you know the half of what you were about to-" *Drops to one knee to meet Kato face to face. And then she realizes who he is, gasping all the while.*

Kato: "???"

Driver: "Kid, it's time."

Woman: "Go and find another customer, sir. I can take care of him."

Driver: *Knows better than to argue with her.* "Very well." *Bows and gets back in his car.*

Woman: "Kato-ani..."

Kato: You... Know who I am?

Woman: Of course... I worked with your father.

Kato: "..."

Woman: S-something wrong, sir?"

Kato: *Slowly backs away a bit.* "My father was a Yakuza. And he had enemies. Him being assassinated is proof of that. My brothers in prison had nothing to lose. What's your reason for me to trust you?"

Woman: *Felt hurt by Kato's disbelief.* "My brother... Your enemies don't even know about you."

Kato: "E-excuse me?"

Woman: "I can explain. Your uncle, in Kanagawa, can explain."

Kato: "..."

Woman: "Please, little brother. Please trust me."

Kato: *Exhales one last time and nods. They both get into an Audi A5 Convertible Coupe, and drive out of Tokyo.*
So Kato has gotten himself out of Okinawa International, and made his way back to Tokyo to find his uncle. But along the way, he comes across a strange woman who shows that she knows who he really is. Can SHE be really trusted, even when she says she can take him to his uncle, even though he has yet to mention him?

-Me and the woman had just driven out of the border of the metropolis, en route to Kanagawa.-

Kato: *Sitting in the passenger seat on the left side of the car, he actively looks out the windshield, while also giving quick glances to the young lady at times.*

Woman: *She notices this behavior.* "Something wrong, Kato-ani?"

Kato: *Refocuses.* "Why did you say that earlier?"

Woman: "Pardon?"

Kato: "Why did you say, 'my enemies don't even know I exist?'"

Woman: "Because it was true. The fact I know you exist means I'm not one of them."

Kato: "How can you be so sure?"

Woman: *Sighs.* "Your uncle can explain it much better than I can, but what I can infer is this: if they knew you were the son of a Yakuza boss, they probably would've stuck around to take you out too, right?"

Kato: "Well... Yeah. But wouldn't it have been easier for you to say something else?"

Woman: "Like what?"

Kato: "Like, 'if I wanted to kill you, I would've already.'"

Woman: *Abruptly stops the car and pulls over on the side of the rural road. She then pulls Kato in close, and, with a very insecure, breaking voice.* "Don't ever imply that I would do that to you! I won't ever do anything to harm you, much less kill you! Understand?"

Kato: *Sees the pain in her expression.* "I.. Understand."

Woman: "Good." *She releases Kato and continues driving.*

Kato: *Looks out his passenger window, away from the awkward atmosphere.*

Woman: *Exhales.* "We're just about twenty minutes away from your uncle now."
Kato: "Looks back for just a second, before back out the window. "Since I know you're never going to kill me, can I learn your name?"

Miho: "... Miho Akiyama; Tokyo Regional Lieutenant of the Kato Family."

Kato: "Miho..."

Miho: "Anything else you'd like to know?"

Kato: "Did you always know I was-"

Miho: "Since you were born."

Kato: "!!"

Miho: "Everyone in our small syndicate knew. Even the ones... Being tortured right now for Family secrets." *A tear drops down the side of the face Kato could see.* "The only important person that didn't know... Was you."

Kato: "!!"

-So many clues...-

-Eventually, we arrive at my uncle's vacation home.-

Kato: "Gets out of the Audi. "Yeah, this is definitely the place."

Miho: "Alright. I'll be waiting out here once you're done with him."

Kato: "Looks back at her. "What? You're not coming in?"

Miho: "Closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. "No."

Kato: "Why not?"

Miho: "...

Kato: "Ms. Miho, I demand an answer. As your -ani!"

Miho: "Shakes her head. "I don't need the guilt."

Kato: "'Guilt?' Why guilt? Were you supposed to keep my father and mother safe?"

Miho: "Holds her heart. More tears go down her face. "Always. And I failed."

Kato: "Now a tear runs down his cheek."

Miho: "I... I'm so sorry, sir. You probably want to-"

Kato: "Miho..."
Miho: "Sir?"

Kato: *Looks up at her with a small smile.* "Want a second chance?"

Miho: "Oh, Kato-ani..." *Almost literally feeling the forgiveness in Kato's inquiry, she rushes into a powerslide and hugs Kato. He accepts the embrace with outstretched arms.* "Thank you... Boss."

Kato: "AGH! Y-yeah..." *Is being suffocated by the lack of space while being snuggled by Miho.*

-And that, kids, is how I developed my prudent aversion to breasts.-

Kato: *Pushes her a fair distance so that he can communicate properly.* "Now will you come in with me?"

Miho: *Nods with enthusiasm.*

-And so, I proceeded to the main entrance, with Miho right behind me.-

Kato: *Was hesitant to lay a hand on the door.*

Miho: *Lays a hand on my shoulder and reassures Kato with another grin.* Do it.

Kato: *Commits, giving three knocks, with a half a second delay as instructed by his brethren.*

???: "I've been telling all of you; I'm not going to represent for the harassment fraud cases anymore!"

Kato: *Recognizes the voice.* "Uncle Norio?"

Norio: *There is a pause from within, recognizing the voice undoubtedly, then...* "Kaz Jr.?"

Kato: *Gulps.* "Y-yeah..."

Norio: *Slowly unlocks and opens the door. He first sees Miho, who is beaming at him with a half-smile. But then he looks down and sees his nephew.* "Kato..."

Kato: *Tears up.* "Norio." *Dives in to embrace his uncle.*

Norio: *Traps Kato with his arms.* "It's... Ah, it's great to see you alright, kid."

Kato: *Snivels.* "Don't... Call me that~."

Miho: *Wipes her lower eyelids once again.*

Norio: "I'll try, young sir." *Sections of his back jerk a bit.* "Oh my, you've gotten strong. At such an early age, too." *Refocuses.* "Ah but I'm getting a bit carried away, aren't I? Despite all the mind-boggling these crazy rumors gave me lately, you walked out of jail in such a miraculously low amount of time?"

Kato: *Releases grip.* "There's a little more to it than that. Mind if I come in?"
Norio: "Of course, nephew. Come on in." *Waves Kato in. He then takes a quick look to Miho, with a satisfactory gaze over safely bringing Kato here. With that, the latter also accepts the invitation.*

-AUpon first entering the living room, I came across two very important settings. Two ceremonial tables... One for Kazuto and Aiko, and another for Yuno Shiraishi, Norio's wife who made him a widower... By now, in the present - twelve years ago. The three of us paid our respects to the portraits on the shrines, and then we settled down for some tea, coffee, and what goes with them, all while I recounted my time in Okinawa International.-

-Back in the present...-

Kato: *His tears continue to form and the laminated pages of the album become more creased as he grips them more firmly.* Keep it together, Kato. Come on! *His arms rumble.*

Yada: *Bends down to look him in the eyes.* "Please, Kato-kun, if this is too much, we can take a break. There's nothing we have to hurry for."

Kato: "No... I must hold my end of the bargain." *Eases his grip, wipes his eyes again, and keeps going.*

Kato: *Fastens the leather straps of a watch that Norio had given him on his left wrist.* "Thank you, uncle. I must say, you were well-prepared in the event that you would encounter a man with no chronological, but maximum calculative sense."

Norio: "Well, everyone has to keep track of time. One of the few things that should be monitored indefinitely."

Kato: "I'm well aware. I've been lost without it for a long while."

Norio: *Refocuses.* "So, you intend to live up to your end of the bargain on that exchange?"

Kato: "A deal my father made with the government is what saved me, uncle; got me out. There is benefit from me and the Family repeating such an action, and a lot at that."

Norio: "I hope so, nephew."

Miho: "There better be. They barely register for me as it is."

Kato: *Looks between the two of them.* "..."

Norio: "Having second thoughts now, Kato?"

Kato: "No... I'm going through with it, uncle. But until I unravel what really went down between my folks, I will be at unease."

Norio: *Stammers.* "Nephew, that isn't exactly something you ought to know..."

Miho: *Looks worried.*

Kato: "Uncle, I'm in. There's no out for me; the next time I walk out that door," *Points to the
front entrance.* "I'm an Oyabun; leader of a potent Yakuza Family. The only difference is where I will take it from here. And the paths are reliant on what I know started this syndicate's downturn."

Norio: "...

Miho: "Kato-ani, that might be too painful of a recollect-"

Norio: "No, it isn't. Hell, the memories I have of your father telling me these tales time and time again leading up to this crisis are all that keep me from wishing I ended it all."

Kato: "He told you about it?"

Norio: "I was with him 70% of the way. The other 30%, he told me like I was a living journal. Now, if you really must now, then sit tight... Because there's a long list of entries..."

**Intermission #2: "When an Angel Dances with a Demon"**

- Before I begin, let me give you a little bit about the Kato Family history. Like most Yakuza, we didn't start as stereotypical, modernized Yakuza; our direct grandfather who, by way of you, is from nine generations ago. His name was Taro Kato, a former samurai who lost his master in a territory-invasion scam, in the late Edo Period (that makes us one of the oldest surviving Families). Having been forced to watch the Daimyo commit seppuku, Taro, along with his son Izo, and a battalion of uprooted ronin that he had allied with throughout his journey across Japan, rallied up to avenge their losses against the abusive 1%. Taro was successful in routing his master's killer, before the Tokugawa Shogunate arrived. Now, usually, hiring ronin to be led under a new master would be illegal, and all parties would be executed for such a crime. But the Shogun saw two things that contradicted that - Taro was not a master; he was a ronin. And also, nobody said anything against a ronin working with anyone else. For that, they were spared... And thus a relationship between Japan and its government, with us, would be born.-

- The Kato Family had been secretly employed by the Shogunate to act as a check of powers amongst all of the Imperial Families and the main military force for centuries. Every time a faction had been deemed suspicious, outdated, or otherwise lacking to the future of Japan, The Katos would arrive to investigate and rectify. Now, for that "all high and mighty" talk, you may think that sounded swell. But it was not an easy life; Taro and Izo both realized that you couldn't be honorable and chivalrous to all sets of eyes... Or at least, be seen as such. This would come in the form of the Katos being forced to work with their government to quell the Satsuma Rebellion; the last batch of Samurai. Brothers had to terminate brothers, but not before one brother identified the other as "traitors." Our great grandparents were said to have never relinquished that nightmare from their minds until their last breaths... But unification under one banner was what was good for his country-

- A little more than half a century (filled with even more "country vs. friends" decisions) passes, and in arrives your grandfather, Kazuo Kato. I don't know how much my brother told you about him, but my father was a legend; a member of the
Imperial Army during World War II, Kazuo led some of the first successful missions against the British-hired Gurkhas and was instrumental in capturing the key targets of the Dutch East Indies campaign. But when him and the rest of his Family intercepted SIGINT discovered that their homeland was being razed day after day by firebombs, he realized... Something was coming. You know what that was; we all do - the atomic bomb. Kazuo had sworn a duty to his people to protect them at all costs... And like his - our - ancestors before him, he knew what he had do. To literally keep his country whole, he defected to the Allies, confessing the Army’s plans at the Battle of Midway, and subtly started the downfall of the Pacific Offensive. Though two A-bombs did fall onto his native country, Kato's deeds would save what remained... Even if the public didn't think so.-

-And now that I have instructed you of all of this, may you keep it in mind when I tell you the tragedy that had befallen on my eldest, and only, brother... Kazuto Kato.-

-Roppongi, Tokyo, 1993-

-With the early years of the Lost Decade in full effect, Japan is more and more looking like a mess. The once thriving nightlife area of Roppongi, with entertainment alternatives everywhere closing down. Many others are in serious financial trouble as well, -

   Police: *A five-man complement of blue-clad red collars stroll through the pedestrian street, actively looking at the building signs. They eventually find the one they were looking for...*

葉の木月ナイトクラブ

Hano Kisetsu/Seasonal Leaf Nightclub

-Yeah... Compare it to my Nyurifu Rikkyo (New Leaf Overpass) Nightclub, and connect it to its franchise, the Mai (Leaf) clubs, and you would know that leaves are a big thing in my family. It's just there. Yeah, I know, I have big reasons for my existence, my interests, and my work. But this motif... I never knew the story about it, honestly. I just kept by it. Tradition, huh?-

-"Get Wild" by Dave Rodgers plays within the Nightclub.-

-But my taste in Eurobeat music, well... Let's just say this won't be the last time you hear early 90s songs in this backstory of a backstory.-

   Police: *They all enter, abruptly disrupting the moment between a man and his woman near the doors. Their stride was met with a decent amount of eyes as they travel further towards the center floor. They all scope different areas before recognizing their quarry; a man in slacks and a suit vest, cleaning a recently-occupied table. And when they go over to him, they pull their .38 caliber revolvers at him.* "Kato! We have a warrant for your arrest! Put your hands up and come quietly!"

   Kazuto?: *As they all look up at the surrendering waiter putting down his towel, they notice something as he turns around to face them.*

   -The first thing is... You can see where I got my excessive cleaning OCD from, right?-
-Describing Kazuto to all of you, you will realize, he would be seen as nothing like me, his son. He was over six-foot-two, thinner frame, paler-skinned, much shorter, straighter hair, and more exotic taste in suits. The only resemblance, the thing that every official in Japan feared... Was that beam.-

Kazuto: *The smug-like grin that has found its way in a select few confident and implacable people serves as a fear modifier to his partially-squinted Tsurime eyes, which gaze right into the souls of the officers.* "If you say so, boss."
Face it; there's no way of telling a biography without it coinciding with another's. Why exactly were Kato's parent's killed? Why is he in the Yakuza, which turns out to be a family business? Why does he know such a powerful lady? All because of what his immediate ancestors did. And their story begins here.

-After the cops successfully arrest Kazuto, they all proceed to the adjacent district police station. The handcuffed man in fine livery was pulled into a windowless interrogation room, accompanied by one cop.-

Kazuto: *Calmly takes a seat at the metal table on the far side of the door, in wait of his inquisitor. A minute or so later, that person in question does show up, prompting him to pay close attention.*

???: *A feminine voice addresses the cop within the room when she opens the room up.* "Local DA clearance. I will be the one questioning him."

Kazuto: *Studies the woman as she exclusively converses with the officer. Adorned in an off-white suit (directly in contrast to his black) made for a 5'3" light frame, accentuating her natural-hazel hair and bright jade eyes.*

Police Officer: "Okay. Great to have you, Miss Kurosawa."

Kurosawa: "The same to you." *Nods sideways before turning her attention to the seated man. She takes a seat on the opposite end to confront him... With a terrorizing, smirking gaze that Kazuto was already all too familiar with.*

Kazuto: *Shows his amusement over the powerful, valiant attempt and decides to copy. And once they've both been psyched up, a silent communication occurs...* I probably have no reason to ask, but you do know truly why you're here, yes?

Kurosawa: Absolutely.

Kazuto: Then there isn't any reason for that guy to be here. Tell him to take a hike, and then we can discuss matters.

Kurosawa: And why would I do that?

Kazuto: Because sometimes... *Temporarily closes his eyes to reveal a subtly ghastly aura of black; one only someone as analytical as Kurosawa could see.* Demons only show up when Angels can as well. But none are technically here right now.

Kurosawa: ... Fine, you win. *Turns her head to the cop standing afar.* "You may go, officer. He won't talk until you leave."
Police Officer: "Ma'am?"

Kurosawa: "Don't you worry; this type of guy 'doesn't shit where he eats,' if you get what I mean. And even if he did, you wouldn't have been the only level of security in this room. Now go get a coffee."

Police Officer: "Uh, very well then." *Proceeds to leave, closing the door behind him.*

Kazuto: “Good... Now, you can have a dance... with 'Japan's Fallen Angel.' And I'm sure to give a special performance fit to partnering with 'The Law's Demon.'” *Makes his black aura more visible, which begins to look like the fabrication of angel wings.*

Kurosawa: "Hope what you've just done isn't your best move, because it was pitiful.” *An aura of her own, mystified in white, is channeled from her corporeal form, and it takes the shape of dual horns on her crown and a small set of pointed fangs showing up when her grin grows larger.*

-Yep, that happened... What, you thought my Yakuza father was the demon in this relationship? I'm Yakuza; I'm painting it in a positive light whenever I can. Heheh, anyway...-

Kazuto: "Then you know that the warrant that got me in here was a set-up..."

Kurosawa: "You are far too organized to let something like that happen without you wanting to. The person who allegedly caught you with the larceny suspiciously disappeared too, to make matters easier for you."

Kazuto: "If it's any consolation, I wasn't that specific to that person on what I wanted them to do. Just that they blame me."

Kurosawa: "It isn't. But rather than continue to talk about what is not why you are here, why don't you tell me what is?"

Kazuto: "You already know."

Kurosawa: "I know that you were in the Kansai Region up until two weeks ago. And until now, you never really stuck by in the Greater Tokyo Area. Be it your ties to rural regions following a U.S.-ordered tour in a divided Thailand, or a great familial shame..."

Kazuto: *Begins getting ticked off.*

-I wasn't the first Kato to get ticked off being called a traitor, if that wasn't obvious. Norio was pretty upset too, but you'll know why he didn't handle too much of it soon.-

Kazuto: "You're looking too far back in time. How about... A month or so earlier. Something involving the Akamine and Ishida Clans that you dipped the edge of your foot into."

Kurosawa: *Refocuses.* "Ah... And you're telling me you're going to be one of the people I must disprove."

Kazuto: *Bows.* "Guilty as charged. But I can assure you, my Family, at least, is not."

Kurosawa: "Save your excuses for the courtroom." *Rises up.* "I guess it is best I leave you to"
prepare?"

Kazuto: "You'll need the time more than me." *Bows smugly.*

Kurosawa: "We'll see." *Leaves.*

-After the police were forced to let him go due to lack of evidence and witness, Kazuto made his quiet, lonesome way back to the Nightclub. One someone very familiar was waiting for him there...-

-In the distance, "Your Freedom" by Domino plays.-

Kazuto: *Comes in through the back alley entrance.* "I'm back, everyone."

???: "Brother!" *Walks up to him from the other side of the kitchen.*

Kazuto: *Refocuses.* "Ah, Norio. A great sight." *Embraces his biological sibling.* "You're back after a circumnavigation?"

Norio: "Oh, yes. But bro, I'm far more concerned about-"

Kazuto: "Where'd you and Yuno go this time? Bali?"


Kazuto: "I see, not that area. Panama, then? You and I know Spanish isn't your best lingo; good to get some authentic practice."

Norio: "I went to Cuba for that." <Speaks in Spanish> "No tienes que decirmes (You don't have to tell me)." <Resumes Japanese> "But Niisan, we must address this-"

Kazuto: "You were in the area, though. How about Aruba? Some Dutch would be nice."

Norio: *Pulls on his brother's arms.* "Get with the program, big bro! I'm back for a reason, and so are you, okay?"

Kazuto: *Slowly shakes his head and looks to the side.* <Speaks in Spanish> "En este tiempo, no tienes que decirmes tambien (Now, you don't have to tell me also)."

Norio: *Lets go of his brother, sighing before looking the same way, then back at him.* "You met the Clans' competition, right?"

Kazuto: "I did."

Norio: *Leans closer.* "Well? What did you think of him?"

Kazuto: *Amusingly looks at his younger brother.* "SHE... Can be a problem. Emphasis on 'clean.'"

Norio: "Whoa... Heard the rumors, but didn't think 'The Law's Demon' was actually female. Then again, we come to expect unforeseeable things with that name."
Kazuto: "Indeed. But gender does not play a factor in how devastating she can be; this is a woman who has incriminated three-hundred key Yakuza in the span of just one and a half years. And she is definitely not slowing down."

Norio: "Of course not. She's expanding too, since she finally felt brave enough to fight us.

Kazuto: "Right... The Ginza Brawl; Akamine vs Ishida, taking place within a high-end restaurant and its adjacent street. Roughly one-hundred-ten gangsters participated, and all apprehended... That includes ten of our very own."

Norio: "They're definitely innocent. If anything, they were reactants."

Kazuto: "You don't think I don't know that, Norio? I've extensively looked over the area; I've built quite a defense before you returned. And I'm going to right these wrongs. Not just for the Family, but for all of the Akamine Clan."

Norio: *Looks at him after spacing out.* "All of the Clan... That's why you're here. I've been wondering ever since I got a call from father. Usually, you'd just write up the defense and send it to Fukuda."

Kazuto: "They wanted me this time. They needed me. And I'm here to deliver, even if it puts me in the way of rotten tomatoes."

Norio: *Scoffs.* "You're saying those Thai Comms are not as scary as Tokyo?"

Kazuto: *In an ironic voice.* "Ohoh, look at me. I'm me, but three years younger and went to fifty more nations. I must mock whoever has been to less." *Joyously walks away.*


Kazuto: *Stops and turns around.* "I know that." *Holds Norio's shoulder.* "I'm sorry."

Norio: "That's alright. You know, after that Insurgency, there was nothing stopping you from following me and Yuna. Father was still in control back then. It was not until you-"

Kazuto: "I was tired of the rest of the world back then. Just wanted to focus on Japan. Didn't realize I'd be seen as focusing too much. Besides, with no one, intimate to go with, it wouldn't nearly be as much fun."

Norio: *Slowly nods.* "That's true. Well then, I guess you should really start dating."

Kazuto: *Looks around for a second before looking at his text messages.* "I know who I can start with..."

-The next day... The Trial of 'The Ginza Brawl' has begun.-

-Kazuto Kato, clad in a white pinstripe suit with a green business shirt, enters the Tokyo District Court. His two pins, one showcasing the "Fukuoka Wisteria Tunnel" and the other the "Ryukyu Kingdom Sigil" - The Kato Family and the Akamine Clan, respectively. Despite the panning reception he gets through the dagger-like eyes of the jury and spectators, he unflinchingly strolls over to the defendant desk.-
Lawyers: *All of them look over to Kazuto. They twist around, revealing the "rice-paddies near the Shimanto River;" the Yakuza pins of the Isihida Clan.* "Aw, look who finally showed up!"

Kazuto: "Happy to see all of you, too. Furuya, Tenzan, Kitao... Even you, Kazama."

Kazama: "What's that supposed to mean, prick?"

Kazuto: "It means, I'm actually trying to be nice to you, leech. Or are you far too blunt to get that?"

Kazama: "Why bother trying? We'd never get along."

Kazuto: "We better, or we're dead. Both of us. Neither got to kill the other. You want that?"

Kazama: "Gee, when you put it like that, you almost make me want to be war buddies with you again."

Kato: "What about battle buddies?"

Kazama: "...This battle."

Kato: "All I'm asking for." Though I should be asking for so much more...

Kazama: "Yeah, well don't get used to it. Once we're done here, we'll be back in this house. Or another one. Just not friends that time."

Kazuto: "Just as it should be." *Sits down.* "But for the time being, I think we'll be having our hands full."

Tenzan: "Really? We should be worried about-"

- The door opens up again; this time showing wall of security in front of the gray-suited young lady. They escort her to the plaintiff desk, which was barren for all the preparation time until now.-

Aiko: *Sets down her papers and looks over to the Yakuza/lawyers.* "Hey there, boys."

Kazuto: *Waves back, then looks over to the Ishida Clan members.* "Worried now?"

Kitao: "We'll wait to see the plans."

- And that is exactly what they did... And it forced Kitao to eat his words, when Aiko reveals five convincing findings revealing how the fifty of his Family's thugs were the first to cause third-party harm. Tenzan was the next to fall, when a family-wide witness claim testified against him due to identifying the guy who put their son in a coma. And then came the toppling of Furuya, who failed to dispute against one of his underling's testimonies (no doubt defecting due to getting a glimpse of Aiko's demonic aura...-

- And then there were just two... Me, and (Hideki) Kazama.-

Aiko: "Now, Awano, you know that the person involved with garrisoning the attack is within this room?"
Awano: *Nods.*

Aiko: "And you can identify that person?"

Awano: *Winks.* "Oh, yes ma'am."

Aiko: "Well then, you need not claim just yet; we got more pressing matters so far to deal with, such as your clothes stains." *Moves back to her desk to pull out another file.*

-I have absolutely no idea who I want to side with right now, aside from my own. If Aiko loses, Kazama, a "fun" enemy who has been a threat and haze to most of my potential members, goes free from a long-term oust. Or Kazama loses, and Aiko creeps that much closer to getting one step ahead of me... Where to stand, where to stand...-

Kazuto: *With one leg crossed over the other and pivoting the cushion of the chair, concentrates on the witness stand, where one of Kazama's lackeys is being inquired by Aiko.*

Kazama: *With his hand up at his mouth, he then makes a very light gesture, as if he was agreeing with something his mook just said. Except...*

Kazuto: *Notices the behavior.* What? *Looks immediately towards the witness. His movements are enough to trigger Aiko's nerves as well.*

Aiko: *Looks up, grinning.* "Something wrong, fellows?"

Kazuto/Kazama: *Look at her, then back at each other. After a few seconds, Kazuto stands up.*

Kazuto: "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, may I have your attention?"

Judge: "Kazuto Kato, sit down."

Kazuto: “Oh, I'm afraid I can't do that, supreme court; got leg issues; must always be on the move every hour, at the very least."

Aiko: What is he-

Kazuto: "But while I indulge in my perceived necessities, may I help you all in indulging yours. Let me just say, good luck with using the 'blood-on-the-shirt' evidence." *Points to Aiko.*

Aiko: *Holds her chest.* "Excuse me?"

Kazuto: *Slowly walks towards her.* "So what if a little crimson went on his shirt? Maybe it was just him lying next to one other Yakuza; doesn't even have to be my Clan. A big, nasty cut on a Yakuza that he stood too close to might have sprayed him too; doesn't mean he was guilty."

Aiko: "No, it's one of your Clan's boys, and this file is proof of it. The smoking gun also correlates directly to-"

Kazuto: "Oh? Who is the person?"

Aiko: "Homare Hirano."
Kazuto: Damn... Rest, my Hayashida Family bro. *Looks up in the air to think.* "Name, doesn’t sound familiar. And I know my brothers really well; they’re my Family, after all."

Kazama: *Takes off his glasses.* "Kazuto, that’s enough. Sit down."

Kazuto: "Not yet, Kazama. Let me prove to it to you all. Maybe I can gain some sympathy points?" *Waves to the jury, who lightly cringe at him.* "Ah... Can’t help to try."

Judge: "Your point, sir?"

Kazuto: "Ah, yes. Well, what I want to say is that Yakuza Family... Is like traditional family. There is a name to withhold, moments of grace to observe, and sacrifices to make. These are all mission-critical objectives for every Family, though; if just one of those things don’t exist in a syndicate, the syndicate will crumble."

Kazama/Awano: *Begin to get ticked.*

Kazuto: "Now, the middle one is easy; everyone likes to rejoice, right? Whenever we can, you all would love to sit back and enjoy a cold one. Or a soft drink, for you abstaining folk. We Yakuza are no different. And the reason is:" *Looks over to Aiko.* "All work and no play, makes Jack (and Jill) a very dull boy. ‘I don’t hire dull boys; they don’t work right.’ And Awano looks like a damn dull boy right now...

Aiko: *Crosses her arms.* "And the other two pillars?"

Kazuto: "Sacrifices... A Clan is made of Families. Think of the two World Wars’ alliances and how they pulled the world into war. The Families are the same thing; you threaten my uncles and nephews, I’m going to threaten you back." *Looks at the jury.* "Wouldn’t you all, too? And yet, Hirano isn’t making me lash out and threaten to do the same."

Aiko: Something’s wrong... That’s not true at all; he’s just not admitting it, and hiding it very well.

Kazuto: "Ah, and the last point... Reputation. This is the backbone. I say this, because every member of a Yakuza Family is vital to the operation of our separate businesses. So vital, in fact, that if just one of us is not doing our job, or not doing the job we want them to, there is a domino effect on who takes the blame for it. So, we ain’t allowed to spread drugs, for instance. I don’t spread drugs. Little Satoshi doesn’t. Big Miho doesn’t. But medium Mine does. And while medium Mine does get a problem on his hands... Everyone directly above him takes a piece of the poisonous cake too. So medium Mine screws over Big One Miho, Big Two Fukuda, Very Big Tatenashi, Huge Watari... And Massive me."

Aiko: Is he warning something...?

Kazuto: "I don’t know if you all know, but the Kato Family is prided with being very strong; nigh-untouchable, and nigh-impregnable. Hirano was not either of these, so it would be harming to us, but he also wasn’t a Kato. For that reason, my reputation remains adamant." *Looks over to Awano.* "Isn’t that right?"

Kazama: "!!"

Aiko: He’s talking Awano out of something!!?
Kazuto: "Ah, that's enough walking for now." *Takes his seat again.*

Judge: "Very good. Now then, Miss Kurosawa, please continue your stance."

Aiko: "Judge, may you inspect Mr. Awano's person again?"

Awano: "Pardon!?"

Judge: "Something the matter?"

Aiko: "In a courtroom, we can't be too careful, right? What if he kept something from the case that he kept from us, too?"

Judge: "Very well; officers, inspect Mr. Awano's pockets again."

Awano: "No! You have no right!"

Aiko: "Judge?"

Judge: "Warrant accepted. Flip them out, Awano."

Awano: "No! Get away from me!"

Officer: "Stand still, you filth!" *He and another pin him down to the witness stand, and another comes to inspect his attire. In a hidden pocket on the back of his jacket was a loaded .38 Special Caliber revolver!* "What the fuck!? How'd he get this!?"

Aiko: "!!"

Awano: "Get your hands off me!"

Judge: "We will delay the conclusion of 'The Ginza Brawl' trial for another month!" *Smacks the sound block with his gable.*

Aiko: *Is pulled back to the safety of her post by her personal security. She falls back on her desk's chair, revealing her shaken senses.*

Kazuto: *Stares at Kazama's man being pulled out of the courtroom, then at Kazama himself.*
Chapter Summary

It has now been revealed that the Yakuza side of the family comes from Kato's father, Kazuto. Who would've thought? Anyways, he's been dragged into the district police station for an as-of-yet unknown crime. Just what could it entail?

Nighttime of the same day of the cancelled "Ginza Brawl..."-

"Kiss Me Kiss Me Babe" by Virginelle plays within Hano Kisetsu Nightclub's loudspeakers.-

-Kazuto and Norio are discussing what had transpired within the Ginza Brawl's courtroom, half a day after it happened. The cabaret invoked a Mask Culture event, just to spice things up. The brothers themselves were wearing Kitsune masks.-

Norio: *Holds onto a stem-glass of a mojito.* "Damn, that actually happened?"

Kazuto: "Damn straight. It fucking pissed me off." *Takes a sip of Bacardi.* "But it's high time Kazama or one of his goons grew some balls. Still, I won't let the Kazama way be how this battle ends."

Norio: "The Clan's way rather? Or Clans'? Kazuto-anii, the guys... They're going to want to end it that way too, you know."

Kazuto: "If she is dealt with that way, she'll be a martyr; the Yakuza will be brought into a Hellish conflict, akin to one we all had just gotten out of. We need a Xanatos Gambit that will work in our favor."

Norio: "And that would be?"

Kazuto: *Shakes his head.* "The opportunity will present itself."

Norio: "Well it better be soon; with Awano down, I think they won't wait too long for the next attack. And don't you forget, she is quite a venerable enemy; she was able to get you to the table all the way from here. Who knows where she'll strike next..."

Kazuto: * Notices something near the larger, more private tables. * "What? Like right here, again?"

Norio: "WH-" *Spits out his mojito sip, but then cuts his interjection short to not cause a scene. He then looks over his older brother's shoulder, in his direction. They both gaze at a seven-strong complement of black-suited folk, who stand in front of a seated individual, adorning a white sundress and a OTN Noh Tengu mask.* "Well, I be damned! It is her!"

Kazuto: *Looks aside just enough to see his younger brother's face.* "Yeah, I got that figured."
Norio: "Damn, what do we do, anii-san? Do we kick her out? We might be starting something, but we got a territory defense.* Doesn't realize that his brother has left their table and is walking towards the event.* "What!?"

Kazuto: *Continues to walk towards Aiko until her guards, all sporting full-coverage Hyakki Yagyo masks, stand directly in his way.* "Wow, you guys are really looking the part! Just a couple inches shorter, I might lose you all in the crowd!"

Security Head: "You really think that's going to get you any closer?"

Aiko: "Take five, brothers. If Kazuto is half as smart as he believes, he wouldn't be causing trouble in his own nightclub. Isn't that right?"

Kazuto: "I prefer 'cabaret.' But she's right; not a big surprise."

Kazuto/Aiko: *Awkward silence between them.*

Aiko: "Aren't you going to ask if you can have a seat?"

Kazuto: "I'm wondering. Should I, as a piece of customer courtesy, or not, as the owner of the booth within a nightclub I own. Well, when in doubt... May I?"

Aiko: *Scooches over to give him room.* "Go ahead."

Kazuto: *Steps into the area and takes a seat next to her. Aiko motions to her security to give them a private conversation bubble.*

Aiko: "To what do I owe this honor, 'Fallen Angel'?"

Kazuto: "Well, 'Law's Demon,' I'm afraid I will have to apologize for my cohort's behavior."

Aiko: "Mr. Kazama?"

Kazuto: "Yeah. He's been an unconscionable, indecorous thorn by my side. You want everything that's wrong with the Yakuza, he's 90% of them. The remaining 10% that's good is his steadfast ambition and determination. But that just presents other problems... Such as trying to kill the competition before I did."

Aiko: "Huh, so I really do have a contract on my head."

Kazuto: "But you already knew that. All of that."

Aiko: "Kazama's not under your wing, though; let alone your clan. Why are you apologizing?"

Kazuto: "Because I want you to know that when I go on to defeating you, I'll be doing something far different."

Aiko: "Oh..."

Kazuto: "But yeah. I apologize. Do you accept it?"

Aiko: "... I accept."
Kazuto: "Well good. Now then, en-"

Aiko: "But honestly, it should be me, apologizing to you."

Kazuto: "Really? What for?"

Aiko: *Sighs* "For being right. Your guys were innocent."

Kazuto: "Wha-" *Remembers the interrogation.* "Ah..."

Aiko: "They were the ones who started the fight, but they were instigated. Some drunk Ishida folk were harassing some young ladies in the restaurant where it started, and the Kato Family stepped in to stop it, leading to a full-on Ginza Brawl. When those women came in to make witness claims to that, it was clear they weren't hired. We had no choice but to drop the case against you."

Kazuto: *Thinks about that for a second.* "Heh, I accept the apology then."

Aiko: "That's good. So, what now?"

Kazuto: "What?"

Aiko: "I still owe you, don't I? I hold greater blame for my incident than you do yours."

Kazuto: "Perhaps, but there's not exactly anything-"

Aiko: *Finishes the sentence.* "I can do for you? Are you for real?"

Kazuto: "What do you want to give? Your white flag? Both of us know that neither will be satisfied with that."

Aiko: "Then think of something else; you have a big brain."

Kazuto: "Hm..." *Looks around the nightclub, seeing all the usual; groups sitting at tables, drinking, eating, dancing with each other, and Norio cringing at his every move. Especially Norio cringing at his every move. But still, seeing Norio makes him quickly bring something back to mind.* "How about... A dance with the Demon?"

Aiko: "Eh I suppos-" *Pivots her head swiftly to look at him.* "WHAT!?"

Kazuto: "Exactly what it says on the tin, Aiko. I'd like to share a dance with you."

Aiko: "What makes you think-"

Kazuto: "You're telling me a flared, heavily-detailed skirt does not like to twirl every now and then?"

Aiko: *Looks at the hem of her dress for a second.* "What're you trying to say!?"

Kazuto: "Look, will you clear your debt with a harmless dance, or not?"

Aiko: "... Alright." *Stands up after Kazuto arises first, offering her a hand to support her
The two then move to the center of the dance floor. Though Kazuto is easily identified due to his prior live announcements in the nightclub, no one can recognize Aiko with her mask on, making this one-time cavort harmless to either of them.*

Kazuto: *He leads her to hardwood area, where tons of other couples, bachelors included, are cooling down after the last upbeat song. He motions over to the DJ, who puts on a special track, bringing the entire crowd back two good years.*

"King & Queen" by King and Queen begins playing in the speakers.-

Aiko: *Joins hands, facing Kazuto, who both circle around to begin the routine.* Ah, this song...

Kazuto: Love this track?

Aiko: *Pouts at him.* I like it. So what? *Ballet arm twists, so that Kazuto's elbow points upward.*

Kazuto: So even a demon wants familiarity? *Reverses the arm twist so that he hammerlocks her from behind.*

Aiko: I'm still only human. Demon's just a moniker. Just like you and Angel, right? *bends over, forcing Kazuto to copy. She hook kicks over him gracefully and repositions the short-arm hand-hold.*

Kazuto: Wait, I'm not actually an angel!? *Pulls her with a spin inwards, allowing him to hug her by the waist from behind, and get close and intimate to her face.*

Aiko: Oh... *Scoffs right at his face before crossing two palms with Kazuto and wind up for a no-handed cartwheel across the dance floor, copied by a couple other courageous pairs. They both land flawlessly.*

Kazuto: *Twirls Aiko this time.* To convince people you are a mask, you yourself must become it.

Aiko: *Releases hand and spins out into a crouch that she backflips out of.*

Kazuto: *Prompts Aiko to run at him, which she does. When she gets close, he places his hands across her back and spins her around in a high-angle princess carry.*

Aiko: Must be awful to constantly wear two faces.

Kazuto: Heh... I'm a man of many faces, lady. *Slowly sets her down, as the song begins to end.* But I can only begin to wonder... What are the representations of your faces.


-The song ends. "Victim of Love" by David Essex begins playing on the loudspeakers.-

Aiko: *Notices the music has died down.* Oh. Song over.

Kazuto: Indeed. I suppose your debt has been paid.
Aiko: *Her face's color normalizes.* That's good. Well, I suppose I'll be off.

Kazuto: Are you sure? I couldn't help but think you probably wanted to owe more there.

Aiko: What!? What gave you that idea?

Kazuto: Call it a rush of blood we had in the moment.

Aiko: Ugh, you people. *Departs. Though her walk was one of frustration, her head facing downward meant it was not absolute.*

Kazuto: I already knew she was interesting, but... *Continues staring longingly at her as she disappears into the crowd, and then heads back to where his younger brother was.*

Norio: "Niisan, you couldn't be in your right mind with that stunt right there!"

Kazuto: "Why not?" *Takes out a box of cigarettes.*

Norio: "What if she was secretly getting classified info from you? We both know she's a crafty one like that!"

Kazuto: "If you call a talk about how human are demons and angels classified, then it would be critical."

Norio: "'Demons and angels?' The Hell you on about?" *His mind clicks.* "Oh no... No you are not thinking that!"

Kazuto: "Thinking what?" *Lights one cigarette up.*

Norio: "You are not seriously suggesting you... Like Aiko, do you!?"

Kazuto: "Of course I like her, Norio."

Norio: *Flips a metaphorical table over.* "Oh, Gods..." *Unconsciously swipes his older brother's smoke out of his hand before he can close his lips on it, just so that he can smoke it instead. Kazuto is indifferent to the action and proceeds to light up another for himself.*

Kazuto: "For one, she's a hundred times smarter than your garden-variety lawyers; a definite plus to start."

Norio: "Yes, but still-!"

Kazuto: "She happens to know when to let go of something, too. Something Kazama could definitely learn."

Norio: "Ah, she gave up incriminating our boys? That's good- BUT THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT!"

Kazuto: *Hushes him with two fingers to the lips.* "AND, you were the one who said I should really begin to start dating, right?"

Norio: *Pushes his hand down.* "But why her!?
Kazuto: *Looks away, expelling smoke from his mouth. He then looks back at his phone for the text messages that got him to say the upcoming line the day before.* “Because she is who I started with.”

- The next few days saw less action; finding out in a superior court that the Law’s Demon was an extreme threat really began spooking the Yakuza. Knowing that they couldn’t afford any further losses, most Clans exercised katagi/civilian-style living; something the Kato Family had no problem doing... Or so Kazuto Kato had thought.-

Kazuto: *Within his nightclub’s manager’s office, Kazuto is clearing away paychecks to dole out and other sorts of paperwork. Though all of this is not so much an issue, some things still linger in his mind, making him put a greater effort into his routinized operation.*

That disheveled expression... That flattering sundress... That combative curiosity... How can all these beloved traits, be in such an antagonist? *Sits back after completing the latest sheet of paper. After lighting up another cigarette, his wired landline phone rings. Answering,* “HK Nightclub.”

Norio: "Niisan! Good to hear you!"

Kazuto: "Norio? What’s up? The mission over?"

Norio: "No! We had a fallout! I’m at the police station!”

Kazuto: *Sits upright.* "Whoa, what happened?"

Norio: "The targets were getting too loud; got every cop within a half-mile radius on all of us and them! Look, they bringing in the Law’s Demon to ask questions once I’m done with this phone call!"

Kazuto: "Aiko-san!? Okay, give me half an hour; I’ll get ready to get you and our boys out."

Norio: "Hey, you won’t be going just becau-" *The line cuts.*

-In twenty-eight of those thirty minutes, Kazuto had taken out one folder full of alibi material; one of five-hundred within an underground vault below the Nightclub’s first floor. All of them aptly fit to prove the “innocence” of each and every one of his Yakuza brothers. After studying up on it a bit, he raced inside a Lexus SC to the same police station he himself was inquired.-

Kazuto: *Escorted to the interrogation room, which already housed Norio, Aiko, and two of Aiko’s sentries.* "Aha! Right where I left you on that phone call, huh?” *Looks over to Aiko.* "And after a brief jig for you."

Norio: "Big bro..."

Aiko: *Lightly blushes again, hiding it under a ticked expression.* "Kazuto."

Kazuto: "Alright, Norio, let’s get you out of here."

Aiko: "You don’t even know why he’s here ye-"

Kazuto: "I don’t need to know what he did, because he didn’t do it. I just need to know he wasn’t
doing that. And I know he wasn't."

Norio: *Beat.*

Aiko: "Then do tell us what he was doing. With four of your guys."

Kazuto: Supplying, of course. Roppongi isn't the only kingdom my Clan owns. Though you and the guys in blue would rather say den, perhaps?"

Aiko: *Looks through the folder passed to her.* "Perhaps..."

Norio: *Looks between the two.* "So a-am I free?"

Aiko: "Yeah, you're free."

Kazuto: "You don't need to say it; I would've."

Norio: "So I can go?"

Kazuto: "Yeah you can."

Aiko: "I give the permission here."

Norio: *Beat.* "Is that all?"

Kazuto/Aiko: "GET OUT ALREADY!"

Norio: *Leaves so quickly, he leaves a dust cloud sharing his form where he was for a second.*

Kazuto/Aiko: *Tidy themselves back up after their collective uproar.*

Aiko: *Looks over to Kazuto with suspicion.* "Well?"

Kazuto: *Looks around a bit before confirming that he was the subject.* "Well, what?"

Aiko: "You did what you had to, and you were successful. Now get out."

Kazuto: *Cracks a small grin.* "Oh, you're just going to let that go?"

Aiko: *Motions to her security to briefly leave the room. Once they do so, she turns back to him and nods slowly.* "I'll be having the last laugh; don't you worry about that."

Kazuto: "I'm not denying it."

Aiko: "You'll..." *Beat.* "Wait, what?"

Kazuto: "But so will I."

Aiko: "What are you talking about?"

Kazuto: *Quickly looks to the left and right for a second.* "Maybe there's... Something, within..." *Makes wavy hand gestures.* "All of this, that lets us both come out ahead."
Aiko: "What might that be?"

Kazuto: *Opens his mouth to say something, but then closes it by holding his head up on the interrogating table, looking away.*

Aiko: *Tilts her head, judging "the Fallen Angel."* "Ah, I thought so. You're no good at intimacy either."

Kazuto: *Looks back at her.* "What makes you think that?"

Aiko: "You're trying to propose to me in an interrogation room, for one."

Kazuto: "Do you prefer in front of a camera?"

Aiko: "!!"

Kazuto: *Sits back.* "Yeah, I'm not too good. But we already know you're not so experienced either."

Aiko: *Closes her eyes and looks away, rubbing her forearm and blushing.*

Kazuto: "But we do both like each other."

Aiko: *Looks back at him.* "A-and we both hate the same people... To an extent."

Kazuto: "And we can dance."

Aiko: "And we like to talk."

Kazuto: "And we like to upstage the other."

Aiko: "And we like to know the other is alright with something major."

Kazuto: "And we can do this."

Aiko: "And-" *Beat. Her eyes widen.* "I can't believe my eyes and ears right now."

Kazuto: "Tell me, you want to finish that sentence."

Aiko: "...

Kazuto: *Holds out his hand for a handshake.* "Tell me you want to get better at this, with me. Tell me you don't want to die with one thing in your bucket list still left unchecked."

Aiko: *Hesitantly holds out her hand, and finally accepts the handshake, slowly forming a firm clench.* "And we can make this work. And nobody would have to know."

Kazuto: *Confidently smiles.*

-Yep... It's one of those "true-love-conquers-all" stories. But it's my parents' "true-love-conquers-all" story; one that kickstarted what would bring me here, so I must love it, no matter how much I
would be inclined to joke about it.

-And it's good that true love conquers all... Because my father is going to need it to pick the right choice in the next few days of this timeline.-
So Kazuto and Aiko have gone from bitter enemies across the divide of law and crime, and have now become, quite secretly, a thing. Surely they are happy about the arrangement, but when it begins merging discreetly with their own personal lives and work, what will win out in the end?

-For the next few days, Kazuto and Aiko had secretly dated, unbeknownst to all but Norio. The most unholy of relationships, no matter their faiths or ours, was blooming. Maybe that's why I feel so obligated to work with the Ministry whenever our goals are the same.-

-But all the time you were here, you might be wondering why am I helping you all. What is in it for me to save the world with AssUniv? Well, aside from having a world to live in, this will be your answer.-

-Your long answer. *Kato snickers.*-

-Kazuto returns to Hano Kisetsu Nightclub after a quick walk through Roppongi.-

Norio: *Smoking a Cuban cigar, exhaling just as Kazuto makes his way through the entrance.* "Niisan!"

Kazuto: "Little bro. What is that? Don't recall those being sold in any national drugstores."

Norio: *Runs up to his older brother and grabs him by the collars.* "Come on, man, get the dreams and fantasies out of your head! Return to reality already!"

Kazuto: *Inhales Norio's breath.* "Yep, that is definitely foreign. Where's it from?"

Norio: "Cuban cigar. Got it in Mexico, and we successfully smug-" *Beat.* "Kazuto! Don't change the subject! We're walking on thin ice here!"

Kazuto: *Sighs.* "Yeah, we are."

Norio: "Can you picture a good ending to what you are doing with Aiko-san, Nissan?"

Kazuto: "Honestly... Yeah."

Norio: *Crosses arms.* "I'd love to hear it."

Kazuto: "Either she becomes one of the Yakuza's defense attorneys, or I become an undercover op."

Norio: *Eyes widen.* "I'm about ready to explode."
Kazuto: "I can see you're tired of my tales, little bro. How about you tell me one of yours?"

Norio: "Huh, finally a sensible sentence." *Refocuses.* "Well, brother, before you were busy fraternizing, do you recall me and a crew of ours got pulled in and questioned, that you put a stop to?"

Kazuto: "Of course. You still didn't tell me why you went and let that happen, though."

Norio: "I very well did; you've just been too busy with the trial, which, to be fair, that was prior to all of this lovey-dovey nonsense, so I can agree with you being all distracted. Anyways, to remind you, we've been getting leads from our associates of a series drug deal going on scamming kids on the streets into becoming fellow dealers as well. But that was just a cover it seems, forged by the masterminds. One of them is a face we're all too familiar with... And other smaller heads of families in the Ishida Clan, like Tozawa and Oishi."

Kazuto: "What are they doing, affiliating with Kazama?"

Norio: "At the 'drug deal,' we found boats, and we found masses of people. But we didn't find any drugs, at least in distributional supply. They weren't trafficking illegal substances; they were trafficking people."

Kazuto: *Confused.* "Girls?"

Norio: "No; as much as we don't like them, that's not their style, we expect the young Shioharas to do that."

-Okay... That was just my extra little detail; you caught me.-

Norio: "When we got rounded up by the cops, one of their own got sucked in as well. Inside the wagon, we found out about the guy... He ain't from around here. Hell, he ain't even Japanese. He was Korean."

Kazuto: "Korean... The Kkangpae."

Norio: *Continues to smoke the Cuban cigar.* "Exactly. The underbelly of the Ishida Clan is rounding up foreign muscle. Maybe it's a power-balance tipper; maybe its a feint promotion mission."

Kazuto: "Maybe it's a ploy by the Korean thugs for an international takeover. Or... They just roll that way..." *Crosses his arms and leans to one side with awkward thought.*

Norio: "Well whatever way it is, it's a problem. We got to put a stop to it."

Kazuto: "That can be arranged. And I'm very into personally doing it, if it means you will no longer accost me for my ties with Aiko."

Norio: "WHAA- HOW- WHY-!" *Calms down, lifting his hands in a compensating manner.* "Okay! If you bust this... I will stop with it."

Kazuto: "Great."

Norio: "But you can't get Aiko in on it; outside of the Ishidas and the Akamines, only we could
Kazuto: *His pager starts beeping insistently.* "Hmm?" *Takes the electronic device out of his pocket and finds the number arrangement to correlate with a familiar face.* "What's this? Chairman Akamine wants to speak with me?"

Norio: "Better find out what he wants. I'll look after stuff down here; go give him a call."

Kazuto: *Nods. He then leaves to reach his office, and then dials the Akamine landline.* "Chairman Hiroki Akamine." *Bows, even though Akamine clearly cannot see it.*

Akamine: *Voice only.* "Kazuto Kato. Great that you got the pager notification."

Kazuto: "Yep. So, you wanted to speak with me?"

Akamine: "Yes. I'll meet you at your arms factory in Edogawa. Get there as soon as possible, alright?"

Kazuto: "Very well." *Hangs up. He then briefly relays the details to Norio, and then drives over to the head facility of his biggest trade - Kato Arms and R&D Manufacturing.*

-Well, back then, it was just Kato Munitions Manufacturing. The research and development part would not come for a little while later. Of course, more on that when it comes around.-

Akamine: *Smokes a Seven Stars cigarette and looking at the assembly line of arms production. He then notices Kazuto come along.* "Kato."

Kazuto: "Chairman." *Stops two steps away from him and bows.* "To what do I owe this honor?"

Akamine: "The other captains in our Alliance have taken notice of your men lingering in Ishida territory for some time. Might you explain why?"

Kazuto: "They noticed some regulars in our neighborhood being pulled in. If it was a drug distribution, I wouldn't be having it for them."

Akamine: "By all means, Kazuto, except when you threaten the current balance between two Clans who have had their first peace in over six years. You of all Yakuza know how long even a year can be for people like us."

Kazuto: "And you of all Yakuza know that the greatest enemy of the Underworld is time - not each other. Because time, sooner or later, brings about a wind of change; something not every Yakuza is ready to deal with when it must be."

Akamine: "Are you suggesting you're one that is?"

Kazuto: "Is it wrong to think I'm not?"

Akamine: "Trust us old men, Kato. Me, Joji Tanimoto, and Kouta Ishida. We know what's best for the syndicates. And a war, ignited between our subsets, is not one of that. So, if you notice a problem explicitly on your turf," *Takes a half-completed Minebea pistol off of the conveyor belt.* "Say, for instance, an Ishida takes this gun, then you can deal with it." *Sets it back down.*
"Otherwise, relax. Proactivity will not win you anything this time." *Takes his leave, with his security who were guarding each section following. Before he goes through the threshold, however, he stops.* "Need we remind you that almost everyone has forgotten it, right?"

Kazuto: "!!"

Akamine: "It would be pretty bad to repeat history this way. Even a Family as deep-rooted as yours may not survive the next rampage." *Finally departs from the facility.*

Kazuto: *Watches him exit the manufacturing building.* "..."

-So now you know; the Kato Family is no stranger to being pressured into doing nothing about something they know they should do something. But you also should know: we never do nothing.-

Kazuto: *Back in his office at Hano Kisetsu Nightclub, he consistently fiddles with the wired phone with one hand, while twirling a folded paper that reveals the digits to a certain lawyer.*

Norio: *Repeats in memory-scape.* "But you can't get Aiko in on it."

Kazuto: I get where he's coming from. The less people who know about something like this, the better. But there's nothing I or my Family can do to further a counteroffensive without disobeying the Chairman... *His hand gravitates over the phone handle.* She doesn't have to say it was me; they could've just been sloppy, and she caught it. I just need to give her an "anonymous" lead. *Picks up the phone and dials the digits. It rings through twice.* Come on, Aiko; I really need you here.

Aiko: *After the third ring, she answers.* "Hello?"


Aiko: "Ah, Kato-kun. Going to make the first move this time?"

Kazuto: "I'm afraid that will have to wait, Aiko-san. I have a situation."

Aiko: "Oh?"

Kazuto: "Yeah. Something done by the reigning Ishida Clan. Not one sanctioned by the leading Family, I don't believe. But if it runs its course, there will be chaos."

Aiko: "What is it?"

Kazuto: "I can't say too much. I cannot be involved in it, differing Clans and all."

Aiko: "I can't work on a lead with such little information, Kazuto."

Kazuto: "I've got names. And a type of crime to look for. Everything else is up to you. Can you take that?"

Aiko: "... We'll have to see. By the imperativeness in your tone, I take it this will be tough."

Kazuto: "Yeah, even for you. They've been keeping it a secret for only God knows how long."
Aiko: "Then I think I'll need a few more eyes and ears to help me unravel it. Your guys were the ones who found out about it; you should help me."

Kazuto: "Didn't you just hear what I just asserted? I can't participate; my stake in the Yakuza is on the line."

Aiko: "I'll reiterate; I can't take them down with a big lack of information. Warrants don't come out just like that."

Kazuto: "... Call me again when you need help. When you really, really need it. I'll consider it then."

Aiko: "Very well. Goodbye." *Hangs up.*

Kazuto: *Lingers holding it up to his ear for some time before slowly setting it down.*

Norio: *Enters the room just as the phone handle makes contact with the rest of the frame.* "Ah, niisan. We got another report from the guys at Akita." *Looks outside the office for a bit before subtly closing it.*

Kazuto: "What is it?"

Norio: "Hey, look, we both know we aren't allowed to meddle in the affairs of the Ishida Clan, right?"

Kazuto: "Right. Get to the point."

Norio: *Beat, with a theoretical sweat drop falling down.* "Now you probably know how I feel." *Refocusses.* "Anyways, the Akamine Clan didn't say we couldn't meddle in the affairs of our fellow Clan-mates, huh? The ones who have been dealing with some of the overseas work the Ishida Clan have been working on, yeah?"

Kazuto: "They got dirt on the Kazama, Tozawa, and/or Oishi?"

Norio: "Indeed they do, for all three. It was a hefty sum to buy it over, but it might be worth it! We can finally take a commanding lead over that asshole now. Plus, saving Japan and all that. Am I right?"

Kazuto: "..."

Norio: *Notices the strange behavior.* "Hey, what's wrong? I thought you'd be thrilled about this information!"

Kazuto: "Sorry, brother, just thinking about all of this. A lot to take in, you know."

Norio: "Yeah, I guess I can see that. But it's all great news! No way this can bite back!"

Kazuto: "Do only the Families that gave us this leverage know about the exchange?"

Norio: "What?" *Puts his hand to his chin to think about it.* "Actually, now that you say it, they did confirm that. When they too got the announcement from Chairman Akamine, they probably didn't want to tell them they have been spying on Ishida folk for some time now. Damn, I should've
put that as extra leverage to lessen the price."

Kazuto: "No, that's quite all right, brother. Get it to me as soon as possible and we'll decide what to do with it when the time comes."

Norio: *Clicks his tongue and snaps his fingers towards his older brother.* "You got it, Mr. Oyabun sir." *He then takes his leave.*

Kazuto: "..." *Then takes out a carton of cigarettes and sets one alight. And as he exhales, expelling the smoke for the first time, he looks up to the ceiling of the nightclub, wondering...* 

War... Is it actually good for something this time?
Prequel Space; Fourth Level

Chapter Summary

It was on one strange day in January of 1995 that Kato was born in Aichi (Nagoya, specifically). This chapter will reveal to you all how that came to be. Immediately.

-After another small time-skip... Bringing us into the start of the year 1994. Yeah, we're roughly a year away from me being born. You ought to know what that means, right? We have about three months before Kazuto and Aiko spent a night together and had me.-

-Nothing has really changed until this time frame, though; aside from the acquisition of evidence against Kazuto's hated rival Kazama, as well as his alleged associates Tozawa and Osihi, business was as usual for the Kato Family and Ours Lawyers (Aiko's firm). After a few months of pre-arrangement, "The Law's Demon" was successful in getting warrants and starting up the pre-trial for the three lieutenants. Kazuto, as he swore to Chairman Akamine, and had asserted to Aiko, was paying them a wide berth, keeping to business on his fronts.-

-Finally, the time came to put the Ishida turncoats away. Though obviously keeping it to themselves, the Akamine Clan's members were watching the case, hopeful of seeing their rivals being cut down a leg or three. Kazuto was in for the same ordeal, stating for the same ideal, though we all know why really he wanted this to succeed.-

-But I'd like to remind you that while Kazuto knew what was to be discovered from this Ishida partnership, Aiko did not... At least initially.-

Kazuto: *On the phone with Aiko on the other line.* "Keep looking for it, Aiko."

Aiko: "Come on. You're going to tell me unpaid royalties to the construction tool patents they bought out years ago is not the worst on Oishi?"

Kazuto: "It has nothing to do with Kazama. You need to get all three of them in one act, Aiko. If any one of them, especially Kazama, goes free from this trial, the remainder can organize what they have planned, and this will all be for naught."

Aiko: "Ugh... Fine, fine. You really sure you can't just give me a tip? An anonymous tip?"

Kazuto: "Any significant tip I can give you, Chairman Akamine will know it was me who gave it to you. And word like that spreads sooner or later. I can't help you, Aiko-san."

Aiko: "Pff... Someday, I know you're going to have to choose, Kazuto-san."

Kazuto: "You can't honestly make me choose between you and my brethren."

Aiko: "I'm not talking about myself, Kazuto-san. It's your loyalty to the Yakuza, or to your
country. Goodbye." *Hangs up.*

Kazuto: What?

-Days have passed without the two speaking to each other. Whether it was so that both could focus on what they must, or their lover's spat was just that brutal, no one could say. Hey, these are the two who bore a hot-cold kid like me; their furies could be absolutely subtle even at its worst if they wanted to. I know that because sometimes, I messed up... *Kato shivers.*-

-A anyway, Kazuto knew what she meant by that statement in a quick hindsight. But what he couldn't see was why the viewpoints of the two factions could be so different. So he sought to change that; make them reconsider.-

-Kazuto had driven his Mitsubishi 3000 GT all the way to the outskirts of Tokyo, to the isolated, secure household of the Akamine Clan. After a brief inspection by the leader's personal security, Kazuto was allowed in.-

Kazuto: *Briefly looks around the traditional architectural design before finding Akamine and his wife kneeling in the kendo training dojo.* "Chairman Akamine." *Bows, before turning to the woman.* "And Sumiko." *Bows to her.*

A. Sumiko: *Nods.* "Very good to see you, Kato-san."

Akamine: "To what do we owe this honor, Kato?"

Kazuto: *Kneels down in front of them.* "Chairman... I'd like you to re-

Little Kid: "Mommy!" *Runs over to Sumiko.*

-Oh, right... That's Yuuji Akamine, son of these two, and the, as of now, current Chairman of the Akamine Clan. He's just about... Eight years older than me, making him the youngest Chairman of the three Clans currently. Just wanted to let you all know; the Yakuza wasn't full of young guys like me. Maybe that's why I'm still allowed to be among the subsets of the Akamines.-

A. Sumiko: "Yuuji!" *Embraces her son.*

Akamine: "Sumiko, it's best you leave this talk between us men." *Notices Yuuji give him a suspicious gaze.* "Eh, Older men. So, if you please."

A. Sumiko: "Of course." *Stands up, leading a reluctant Yuuji with her.*

Kazuto: *Waits until they both disappear behind the corner, then continues.* "Yuuji looks like he's growing up nicely."

Akamine: "He's a bright kid. No doubt he'll win the next chair once I step down..." *Looks around quickly.* "One way or another."

Kazuto: "Then he should be a fine leader."

Akamine: "Leaders need advisors. You really ought to bring one of your own someday."

Kazuto: *Hand-waves that aside.* "Okay, enough future talk. Now, Chairman..." *Bows in his
kneeling stance.* "I'd like for you to reconsider the trespass ban we have with the Ishida Clan."

Akamine: "A daring request after three of their front-line families had recently been detained."

Kazuto: *Rises up again.* "I have taken that into consideration, Chairman. The Ishida Clan and the authorities are on high alert, but the former is in a very weakened state. We can definitely push back their territory-

Akamine: "You actually want to start a war? That's very unlike you, Kato. Very much unlike all Katos."

Kazuto: "Well..."

Akamine: "But it is unlike the public's view of the Kato Family. Not of my view."

Kazuto: *Looks up again at him.* "Does that mean?"

Akamine: "The answer will still be no. I figure, after your time in Thailand combatting the insurgency would fulfill your... Contribution to your family's bloodlust."

Kazuto: *Rises up immediately.* "Is that your way of seeing the Kato Family in the view of the public!?"

Akamine: "Calm down, Kato; I didn't mean to provoke you." *Refocuses with a serious demeanor.* "But one is inclined to believe in the causality of your ancestry for war. Your founding father and his son rose to fame from a revenge conflict, then they started a war against their own kind to cement the new government."

Kazuto: "Don't lecture me about my family. That's what I do." *Turns to an ironic tone.* "Oohohoo, my grandfather, a World War II disgrace!"

Akamine: "And yet, he possibly saved millions of lives on his own. I think we can all agree with him back then that we didn't want to see our loved ones sharpen bamboo and fight like those soldiers did."

Kazuto: *Sighs.* "I'll never be able to know for sure. The war was over before I even went around."

Akamine: "Well, regardless, the country owes the Kato Family an impassable debt. That's no matter how I look at it."

Kazuto: "Then grant me this favor. Break the silence. It doesn't have to be against the whole Clan; just make my targets' atrocities public."

Akamine: "You're without one last bit of information. Also, no matter how I look at it, the Kato Family should just sit back and wait for their debt to be paid. Not to add to an already massive sum." *Snaps fingers.*

Kazuto: "!!" *Looks behind him, finding a squad of Akamine's brothers lining up behind him.*

Akamine: "Kazuto, please do not resist. This is not from a Chairman to his Captain, but from friend to friend. We just need you out of command for a few days until everything concerning the
Ishida Clan settles."

Kazuto: "You're kidding!"

Akamine: "I wish I was. But your displayed conviction today finalized my thoughts about this issue; The delicate peace we have just established must be retained, even if a war hero's legacy must be appeased."

Kazuto: *Cannot believe what is happening. He then pounds the ground with his fist.* "Damn it!"

-My father ceased struggle after that. The Akamine Family brought him over to a small apartment complex in Itabashi, where Kazuto was forced to stay until the trial was over. All of Aiko's phone calls, gradually becoming more insistent as they were, could only be answered by Norio, who was made aware of what had transpired between the Akamines and his older brother. Though my uncle had already seemed to have lost faith, barely being able to respond to Aiko's pleads, Kazuto had not yet given up. Inside the barely-windowed building, Kazuto was looking all through, thinking over all of his possible actions. Even turning into a mole for the government became an option for a second. Thank God it didn't have to go that far, though, because he came up with the ultimate one. One where a war between the Akamines and the Ishidas would most likely not happen, the disaster would be averted, and the country as a whole would not hate the Kato Family once again. But it wasn't going to be pretty.-

Kazuto: I got it! *Gets up, and kicks open his rooms door to the hallway outside.*

Akamine Family Member #1: "Mr. Kato, if you please, wait until your travel ban has been lifted."

Kazuto: * Vigorously waves the air in front of him. *"Cannot be done, brother! We have in the horizon something detrimental to everything we hold dear, and I'm not about to let it come to pass!"

-Yep... Even when the world is at stake, we of the Kato Family love to go all out when even remotely appropriate. My grandfather did it to make him more enigmatic and convincing towards the Allies, our founders used it for mass appeal of the Meiji. There are even stories of us creating a stage in the middle of the Tsushima strait to orchestrate a play of the Japanese's decisive victory over the Russians there. Needless to say, I've taken a thing or two from that, as you all have noticed.-

Akamine Family member 2: "You heard our boss, Mr. Kato; you're not going anywhere near no-man's-land. Don't make us stop you more than we already have." *He, along with member 1, and a group of his brothers who have hear the commotion have now crowded the exits of the hallway that Kazuto was in.*

Kazuto: "You all make a very fine wall. That's great when you need to defend things. But where are the windows? The windows, for the winds of change!" *Flings his blazer jacket to his left, and his shirt-tie combination to the right; obstructing the views of up to three Akamine members, and revealing his Zugaikotsu Irezumi.*

-Yeah, my father had a skull on his back (death is known as the biggest change any one person will ever witness). *Kato speaks to himself.* What a flamboyant man. *Back in speaking tone.* But of course, what he was going for when he got this tattoo was marking himself as the representation
for a great shift in the paradigms of what it meant to be a Yakuza; a modification that would send the Kato Family back to its roots as a paramilitary force for the good of Japan. And Kato was going to enforce that shift even if it meant he was going at odds, at least for a while, with one of his best friends.

-Also, just because my father was more of a smartass than a bodybuilder, did not mean he couldn't tangle with the best of his day. He was a U.S.-trained soldier, after all.-

(Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST "Tusk" plays.)

加藤カズト
VS
アカマンファミリー

Kazuto Kato - Oyabun of the Kato Family ('78 to '06)
VS
The Akamine Family

Kato pounced forward, sensing the Akamine member will slam the former's discarded garb downward, and initiates the brawl with a high cobra punch to the side of his head. As that Family member reels back, the two right next to him snap out of their surprise and try punching him in return. Kato, in a low Judo stance, ducks underneath both blows, grabbing onto one of their arms, and pulling them into each other. Seeing the men behind him coming towards him, Kato then hip-tosses the same man into them, knocking them all over.

Kato quickly goes to take his leave, running down the left-side stairs. When one man opens the door along the way down the next floor, Kazuto drops into a slide that smashes his soles right into the Yakuza's shin as it steps out. The latter takes a knee and leans his head on the sideways sill of the door, only to get his face caved in by the violent slam of the door as Kazuto gets up and continues his escape.

Down another floor, one Yakuza tries to take him on the stairs, starting with a haymaker hook. Kazuto holds up a forearm to block it and then uses his pointed elbow formed by the maneuver to whip the Family member in turn, forcing him to fall down the stairs. With more coming down, Kazuto gaps the stairs over to the next descending section and runs through the corridors once more.

-Can I just note that my father was so eccentric and so set on the details that he remembered every important sequence of the fight, and told it to my uncle, who, arguably more impressively, remembered all of this?‐
Kazuto ran into another blockade of Akamine troopers, and finds he must stand and fight once more. Two Yakuza combine an overhead punch and a roundhouse shin kick respectively, which Kazuto lifts his leg and arm to parry. When the attacks settle, he pivots his leg to stomp, driving his foot into the exposed kneecap of the kicking Yakuza. With his leg broken and Kazuto's still up, he side kicks him away, making the fight a one-on-one with the remainder. Kazuto drops to one knee and swiftly jabs at the man's solar plexus, stunning him and making him bend over. Kazuto finishes it by making a perpendicular headlock and pulling down, flipping the Yakuza over him, and ultimately laying supine with the Kazuto in a side mount over him. A flex-compression of the latter's arm puts him to sleep, just in time for the earlier reinforcements to make their way down and find him. Kazuto flings some nearby dislocated bricks at them to slow their advance and continues his withdrawal.

Taking a quick glimpse out the window has him realize that he has one floor to go before he is on street level again. But in his way to the final staircase is yet another group; this time a two-by-two squadron. Kazuto runs up until he senses the front soldier will throw a high hook kick, which he limbos under. Kazuto stops the leg from falling back to its normal position, keeping it locked high into the air, and pushing it towards the kicker's head, slipping him up and forcing him to land on the back of his neck, also creating good distance between him and the two behind. With his focus turning to the remaining front-line fighter, who throws a quick one-two jab-straight, then uppercut combination, Kazuto pats down the first two blows, then performs a 12-6 elbow smash to counter the uppercutting fist. This was perhaps done to break a knuckle or two, but the shock of the innovative perfect guard was enough for Kazuto to take advantage, keeping the chain up with a ramming headbutt and front dropkick.

The other two made it past their fallen and engaged Kazuto. However, much like the ones before them, their dual combos proved ineffective against the highly-trained Kazuto, who kicks one aside and breaks the arm of the other. When the first one gets back up, he is met with a powerful hook punch, and a face slam into the rim of the window. Kazuto advances to the lobby, steals all sets of keys from the stand, and runs out. He signals one car with the unlock, and goes to it, just as one scout arrives to intervene. He is met with a fast doorslam into his face, and he measures up a front kick after reeling back some leagues. Kazuto grabs the leg and pulls it in through the smashed window, cutting the thigh muscle, but intent on trapping the man, allowing Kazuto to pummel the Yakuza away, leaving him as an unconscious, crimson mask on the ground. Kazuto then drives off before the garrison could cause any further mayhem.

-Battle OST ends.-

-Over at Aiko's flat...-

Aiko: *Unable to confirm what exactly she needed to find confronting the Kazama Family, she stares into space looking at her laptop's word document of files. That is, until her wired phone rang once again. She picked it up and held it to her right ear.* "Hello?"

Kato: *Standing inside a payphone booth. He periodically looks around in case any on-field Akamine Family members are roaming about. He's also still shirtless.* "Aiko-san! It's me!"

Aiko: *Sits upright upon recognizing the voice.* "Kato-kun? Where've you been?"

Kato: "No time to explain; Aiko-san, you were right."

Aiko: "About what?"
Kato: "It was my country versus my people. Our- My country is what's at stake after all!"

Aiko: "What will you do?"

Kato: "I'll tell you what you need. And I'll give you what you need to prove it."

Aiko: "What? Are you safe from your fears of doing so now?"

Kato: "Safe as I can be."

Aiko: "Will being an opaque witness work?"

Kato: "I'll still be made, but not by the public themselves."

Aiko: "Then... Your superiors-?"

Kato: "You'll obviously be in trouble too, but I'll be who they want on their platter most."

Aiko: "Your family spent generations under that hatred. Can you really be so?"

Kato: "So long as I can fight."

Aiko: "... Okay... Then tell me."

Kato: "Uh, let me get somewhere more secretive first. I'll call you again in an hour."

-And at his secluded spot, he handed Aiko the information she required. With one of his own anonymously sending over the file reports to her, she was able to prove to the jury the Kazama Family's misdeeds. The other two syndicates fell similarly, and with them the smuggled Khangpae also came along. Whatever conflict was about to rise was expunged; even the Yakuza had to admit that. But another fact was readily apparent; only someone from the Akamine Clan could be the unknown witness. And within the Akamine Clan, the culprit is all too easy to determine.-

-My father was never the same after that day, as my uncle had stated... Though he knew he was the one being awfully betrayed, there was still the fact of the matter that he was the traitor - against his Family's lifeline no less. Talk about what one would do for their country, huh? Well that's why my loyalty is to Japan; not its government. I know many say something similar to that, but no one knows how deep-seated the words are for me.-

-But I'm not even born yet in this time, right? Well, by this event, we are nine months away from my birthdate...-

-"Bad Boy" by DJ NRG plays inside an empty Hano Kisetsu Nightclub. Kazuto sat alone, holding his head in grace, and rendered unable to speak due to what he did. But then Aiko, wearing a similar sundress to that one special occasion they experienced together, goads him into having another private dance again. They persisted their muted behavior, only allowing their emotions to carry them through their interaction.-

-Aiko was probably the only person indivisibly and genuinely glad that Kazuto chose to be a silent witness. From there, their relationship skyrocketed, blossoming even more than either could have
ever thought. In fact, Kazuto's thoughts of Aiko were about the only ones that were not worrying if he made the right decision that fateful night. And then, of course, he was operating what remained of a dwindling syndicate, plagued with Kyoudai defections, business sabotage, and contract pulling. It's a surprise he was able to keep the Kato Family going for a decade while I grew up, with the push of the Shiohara Family slowly rising up, finally creating that heavily-favored opponent.-

-Ah! I'm losing track... Again. Well, you know what unrelated people do when they take their relationship to the next level... Right? They... Well... They- They did something... A-and well... Had me. On one of their nights together. By accident.-
Chapter Summary

Having a kid is all well and good. Training them to be as good as you are in both fields is a priceless experience. Nurturing a good conscience within them and seeing it prosper is miraculous. But how did they do it without giving it away that their son... Was their son?

-Kazuto and Aiko... Two wanted people in the Underworld, for differing, yet equally demanding reasons. Chairman Akamine, in his last-minute attempt to prevent a war between the two Clans, ratted out the Kato Family, which led to their targeting, and the subsequent debilitation and erosion of the faction. If they were eliminated, it signaled the end of the conflict, and both sides could return to their all too precious peace.-

-Kazuto feigned taking a retreat to Nagoya of Aichi Prefecture, finally ridding himself of the Greater Tokyo Area for the next... Several years. You probably understood by now, but he was very averse of the place even before what transpired. Aiko was given leave by her Our Lawyers firm for the massive win the case against the Ishida Clan she had. She also went to Nagoya. And then, in that long-forgotten hospital, away from any prying eyes, I was born. An accident, and illegitimate, but a son to the Law's Demon and the Japan's Fallen Angel. Hence, my nickname across the Metropolitan area is "The Kazmanian Devil (of Aichi)."-

-Of course, I'm also the son of the two most hunted-for people in the nation, and if they knew I was breathing, I would be a target. So, when my parents found out I was an embryo long ago, they were in the midst of concocting a very complex - and delicate - plan. One designed very finely in tune to their abilities at hiding the truth in the most honest of ways.-

-They started with my birth records; Aiko bought off the hospital's land rights so that Kazuto could level the facility in a... Year or two, while also having guaranteed the silence of the employees directly involved. In exchange for a good pension for everyone following the hospital's termination, they were also given the information written down when I first drew breath, before it could be seen by anyone else. My blood type, exact time, and whose parents I belonged to, were on a colored sheet that was promptly burned up. Just like that, any chance of being properly registered on the grid Japan had set up, or on any system for that matter, was gone. All that remained, well, you'll see in a second.-

-Kazuto and Aiko also knew that I would eventually look something like them once I grew up, so they researched on a whole bunch of home remedies and minor practices that can alter my appearance overtime. My originally poor eyesight was eradicated by consumed carrots, I took up middleweight bodybuilding early, played outside all the time, you get the idea. So, when I tell you I was a tanned, short, well-defined, and eye-diluted pre-teen before my pale, tree-built, sharp-eyed father, you can see why the resemblance is distant.-

-So now you know why I don't exist, why the Ministry of Defense and all other intelligence agencies deny my presence, and why Yakuza absolutely fear the Kato Family. It was a game of who knows what, and the winner was who knew more. In that case, even though they were just
about to waste away, my Family was in the lead; everyone who remained knew about me while no one else did, and the ones who didn't remain were left wanting. And as Miho stated, I was the only one who was (in it) who didn't.

-But why didn't I know? Surely, even a kid like me would quickly come to realize that he would be something like a ghost if no one could keep a security track on him. Well, that's because the world would be led to believe I was someone else. And as a kid, you believe what the world does. When my parents were grooming me to be someone other than myself, they had someone in mind... My older cousin. Remember the name tag on my backpack? "Kazuhiro Kato." I was taking his name while he was studying abroad with my aunt and uncle.

Kato: *Stands up in the middle of the conversation concerning this topic within Norio's living room.* "Wait... WHAT!? WHAT THE HELL!?

Miho: *Sets her tea down.* "Kato-ani, please calm down!"

Kato: "I... I look like your son, uncle!?!"

Norio: *Stands up, taking a closer look at Kato.* "Immaculately."

Kato: "H-how-"

???: "I'm home!" *The door to the front opens, and he is surprised at the first person he sees.*

Kato/???: *All of a sudden, both of them feel as though they are looking at a projection of their form. Kato and his cousin then continue to play the mirror game, realizing that they are linked perfectly in a family way.* "WHAT IS THIS!?"

Norio: "Kazuhiro, step down! It's alright!"

Kato: "You're my cousin!?!"

Kazuhiro: "You're MY cousin!?!"

Miho: "This is why they shouldn't have met." *Facepalms.*

Norio: "You both need to learn to live with it, you two. Like it or not, you're the first identical cousins."

-Past time is interrupted.-

AssUniv: "REEEEEHHHH!!?"

Kato: *Slowly nods.* "It's true. You just need to look at the last album's first few pages."

Nakamura: *Opens up that album, and flips through to find both Kato and Kazuhiro in the same photo, on an unchartered plane flight that, according to the description, is en route to Malaysia. Another photo shows them being group-hugged by an excited Miho and Satoshi for a close-up establishing shot.* "That is uncanny."

Kurahashi: *Exhales with perplexity.* "'Identical cousins...' Fate really had something in store for you."
Karasuma: "I sense you're almost finished, Kato. End it."

Kato: "Very well."

-Return to the past.-

-So in my early years, whenever I had to show my face to the Grid, I took up my older cousin's persona, which was why my parents referred to me as Kazuhiro when they were around. Overtime, when he did not want associations, I adopted the surname of Ohno, like I did when I was jailed.-

-But that just leaves one thing... How did Kato... Become Kazuhiko Kato?-  

Kato: *Holds his head, just like his older cousin in the living room.* "Damn... What to even say about this."

Kazuhiro: *Snickers lightly.* "It explains why we never met, that's for sure."

Norio: "Yep... You wouldn't believe how many close calls both Kazuto and I have made when referring to one of you two."

Kato: *Lifts his head up to look at him.* "I'm forever grateful to them for doing all this for me. But... Why?"

Miho: "Pardon?"

Kato: "Why did they go so far, in the end paying the ultimate price for me!?"

Norio: "Nephew, calm dow-"

Kato: "WHY!?"

Miho: "Kato-ani!"

Kato: "It's one thing that they loved each other; I have no reason to say why they shouldn't. But when they found out they were having me, why didn't they stop it!? I can't help but feel as though I'm the reason their lives sucked from that point on!"

Miho: *Stands up.* "That's not true, ani!"

Kato: "They not only had to look behind their own backs twice more than they did already, they had to look over mine! That definitely was not a fun job! WHY DID THEY KEEP DOING IT!?"

Kazuhiro: "Cousin..."

Kato: "WHY AM I ALIVE!?"

-There was a dead silence for a few seconds.-

Norio: "Because Kazuto and Aiko were happy."

Kato: *With tears running down his face, he glimpses over to him.* "W-what?"
Norio: "You know your parents' modus operandi, right? 'Fight forever.' That's what they were doing. And what were they fighting for?"

Kato: *Snivels, awaiting an answer.*

Norio: "To have a happy family, even for one instant."

Kato: "!!"

Norio: "Not only did we not believe in killing fetuses, Kazuto and Aiko loved you very much. The distance between themselves was great, and they could not be seen together, but they were happy to be united in some way... Your way. At that point, all they wanted to do was prove it to you. That's why you three really went to Fukuoka Prefecture." *Slouches into his hands.* "And during that time, I happened upon this phone call."

-Further remembrance time.-

Norio: *His home phone within view of the living room rings. After the second string of sound, he picks it up.* "Urgh, niisan? What are you doing..." *Holds up his wrist, looking at the watch (while he still owned it).* "Calling at midnight?"

Kazuto: "I'm sorry, brother, but if I didn't speak with you now, I'd never will again."

Norio: *Eyes suddenly widen.* "What?"

Kazuto: "The fight's over. Aiko and I, we've done all that we needed to."

Norio: "What? No! No, you're not done living! You still have Kazuhiko to take care of!"

Kazuto: "I got one of our own waiting near the convenience store I know he'll be going to right about now. He'll pick him up; keep him safe."

Norio: "No! There must be something else you can-"

Kazuto: "We can't keep pulling our son into these games. He doesn't deserve that. He's already been living a sub-par life; one that isn't even his. But if we go away... He'll be free. He'll be safe."

Norio: "But he won't be happy."

Kazuto: "Yeah, well..."

Aiko: *Takes the phone.* "He'll be scarred, but he will live. And even the deepest scars will fade."

Norio: "But-"

Kazuto: *Reclaims the phone.* "One day, Norio, if you must, you can tell him all about this. Maybe it will bring him at peace with our passing."

Norio: "..."
Kazuto: "Well, that's that. I can tell the assassin is rapidly approaching." *Audibly sighs.* "Goodbye, brother."

Aiko: "It was fun being sister-in-law to you and Yuuna, Norio-san."

Norio: "The feeling..." *Tears run down his face.* "Is mutual." *Wipes it away.* "See you on the headlines." *Hangs up.*

-Back to the living room.-

Kato: *Is dumbfounded by what he had heard.* So... My parents were happy in death?

Norio: "And that was the last time I ever heard from them."

Miho: *Is obviously tearing up as well.*

Kazuhiro: *Crosses his arm and looks away, eyes closed.*

Kato: *Falls back onto his chair.* "..."

Norio: "Well, nephew, that was everything about your parents. So, what now?"

Kato: *Holds his head as more tears go down, but then he wipes them away with determination. He then stands up, and walks over to his parents' shrine, turning his back on the other three in the room.*

Norio: *Stands up and goes up to him.* "Nephew, if you still think you want to run the Kato Family, I must seriously request you to reconsider. Both of your parents wanted you to be out. But if you dip a toe in this business, the rest of your body will be submerged, and it will stay that way! Only drowning will end it!"

Kato: *Seemingly ignores him, instead bowing his head to his parents' portraits again.* "They fought forever. You're fighting forever right now. Your father - my grandfather - fought forever too. We all fight forever; that's just what the Kato Family does. It's just a matter of what we fight for."

Miho: "Kato-ani... What are you saying?"

Kato: "Uncle, you're fighting to keep what father had been building alive. Well, I'll fight to finish it."

Norio: "That's basically the same thing! And it's still something I will refuse with all of my might!"

Kato: *Turns to him.* "Nothing you can do can keep me from what I've set myself on! After all, my parents set me free!"

Norio: "!!"

Kato: "They implied I could be anything. So I'll be a Yakuza!"

Kazuhiro: "Such conviction... Wow."
Kazuhiro: "But do you even know where to start?"

Miho: "I know; let's go waste the guys that ordered your parents' deaths, Kato-ani."

-Shiohara Family. Not too hard to figure out, right?-

Kato: *Thinks.* "No... We can't do that. I haven't ever been in the syndicate until now, but I'm rather certain killing a big-shot, which I'm sure is who killed my father and mother, won't sit well with whoever's above us."

Norio: "You learn fast, nephew."

Kato: *Nods.* "So, if we really want revenge, we got to do it... Legally. Tell me, uncle; what did the clients gain from Kazuto's death?"

Norio: *Sighs.* "Control over the arms industry and trafficking, as it concerns the Yakuza and domestic distribution across Japan as a whole. Also, lieutenant position, or Shateigashira, in our respective Clan."

Kato: "I see... That's quite a sum. I still hate them for it, but I can see why they did it."

Kazuhiro: "So we're going to retake the top of the small munitions market?"

Kato: "Yes."

Miho: "How do you plan on doing that?"

Kato: "The answer's in me as a whole; something new to the grand scheme."

Norio: "That is true; the inclusion of Eurobeat music, something foreign to Japan, during the late millennium had skyrocketed the Mai nightclub scene that your father established."

Miho: "Hey, but newer ain't always better. The replacement of Germany's Weimar Republic is proof of that."

Kato: "Very true. But new doesn't always have to imply recent. It just has to be something that hasn't been seen before."

Kazuhiro: "You're losing me, cuz."

Kato: "What if this handgun..." *Takes out the pistol he got from the Tokyo stash.* "Was a real-life Dredd Lawgiver?" *Spins it around his index finger. As the narration continues, a seamless time-skip happens in which the compact pistol becomes Kato's Kimber Warrior II pistol. He fastens a G-Shock analog, which starkly contrasts the Omega watch his uncle had gifted him. The dog tags of his grandfather, gifted to him by Norio, had briefly been seen, but then a wider, thicker metal piece replaced it, implying the original tags had been layered in a modern, foreign cover."

-And that's how the Kato Family's arm business got back on its feet... As it most concerns all of us, anyway (the whole sequence is overly complex, as is any business plan, and is best left to be
explained when we are not focused on something else). My uncle and I dug through our family's archives working with the key governments and private companies that we had been allied with at one point or another, in search of military technologies that have been scrapped over the years. The Heckler & Koch UCP pistols that we commonly use? Their designers cancelled the project in... 2009. Their XM8 assault rifles? Only reached the prototype stage. We bought off the blueprints, and Miho, an arms engineer, was able to design mass-production versions, in addition to some base modifications that remedied the possible reasons behind their shelvings. Because the companies wanted nothing to do with us (not to mention these aren't their line of products anymore), no royalties needed to be paid. So, no useless cuts had to be paid, and all the revenue could be directed into restoring the Kato Family's ruined assets.-

-The reconstruction of some shut-down Mai nightclubs, the opening of the R&D team in the arms manufacturing, IT, and so on allowed us to get ahead, without stepping too far into the light. Our arms building was, of course, the bread and butter of our fight plan. What brought tens of millions (in USD) in sales would eventually reach a billion (though a decent cut went to our Clan's Chairman, so high hundred-millions rather).-

-Our head count was tiny, though. Expanding the businesses any further would require more minds. Able minds, with able bodies as a plus. But keep in mind, my family had been turned against many times before. I wasn't going to let that happen on a grand scale to me, which meant we needed brothers more than numbers. After most of the individuals we would need went through the meticulous algorithm my uncle and I had crafted (dubbed the "Fifty-Layer Background Check"), we would still be outnumbered from the top Families one to two-hundred... But it was all we needed. If everyone had a craft, and they had reason to believe in us, they belonged. That's not something you can say for every other Yakuza out there.-

-So, I had created the ultimate Yakuza Family, completing what my father and uncle both wanted. Now what was I to do with it? Well, use it to save Japan. And the rest of the world. For the next... Four years after we reached prime status (that would be around the time you all assassinated Korosensei), we would continue the duty to safeguard the necessary evolution of our home country. The mission finely in tune, resonating with the statement my forefathers had cemented.-

-Returns to the present.-

Kato: *Flips to the last page of the penultimate album, with the previous albums creating a mountain on the coffee table.* "And there it was..." *The last page houses the only remaining piece of his birth records, behind lamination. It was his birth name, "Kazuhiko," with a suspicious "K-" right after it, though the rest of the surname is burned off.* "They named me as a prince of harmony. So fitting, huh? Hoping I would finally be the one that didn't start a war in the Family..."

AssUniv: "..." *Cannot concentrate on that sentence, as they are still very overwhelmed by everything Kato had to live through.*

Kato: *Abruptly stands up. and walks to the gold-record wall, where another secret button moves the wall and reveals a planning board, showing every transaction and every business path Kato had taken to preserve and enhance his Family. He then hammers his right fist and forearm onto the wall.* "So, that's my story. The one I'm stuck with for life. I don't regret a thing about it, nor do I want any different one. Honestly, there's only one thing I want to add to it. It's not wishing my Family wasn't gilded with war, or that everybody would never fully respect us because of what we did, or even that we wouldn't be Yakuza. No... Such a revision I want can never be made in the way those can."
Karasuma/Irina: *Look on with empathy.*

Naoko: *Listening through the phone conversation that Kato had secretly started just before the entered the office. Her expression in reaction to what she heard is also understandably mortified.*

AssUniv: *Looks at him sorrowfully.*

Kato: "I wished my parents would still be with me." *Headbutts his arm, and bawls quietly over it.*

Yada: A tear goes down her left eye seeing Kato crumple like this for what felt like ages, and when it runs its course, she instinctively gets up and runs over to Kato, hugging him along his waist and chest from behind.*

Kato: *Slowly looks up at his wall, noticing the embrace.*

Isogai/Kataoka: *Look at each other, prompting the other to also go up to him and place hands on his shoulders.* "That definitely took a lot of effort. Thanks for telling us this, man."

Kato: *Wipes his eyes for the last time, and turns around once Yada releases her embrace. He nods to the two, then looks back at the former.* "I'm grateful for that, Yada-san."

Yada: *Nods slightly.*

Kato: *To the rest of AssUniv. He's lightly holding his grandfather's dog tag necklace as he continues to speak.* "I'm not perfect; far from it. But I work really hard for all of this. That's why I must request that you never again question your faith in me. Because we are definitely on the same side, no matter how this Shadow War unfolds."

AssUniv: *They take a quick look at each other before looking at him again and nod.*

Yada: "We promise, Kato-kun."

Kato: "Thank you." *Bows.* "Back to business. I hate to add to an already overwhelming amount of required information, but I have one more surprise for all of you."

Kanzaki: *Refocuses.* "A surprise?"

Maehara: *Scoffs.* "Nothing new for us. Except for what the surprise might be."

Kato: "That will be all. Let's get some sleep back at the Hyatt, and then the next," *Checks his watch.* "Morning I'll bring you all to see something. Now, let's get going." *Ends his "phone call" with Naoko, and leads them out.*

Nagisa: *Once again, we saw a new teacher in a whole new light. But unlike last time this happened, we know what we must do. All of us.*
So after revealing everything about how he is the way he is, and why he fights for Japan and its people, Kato reveals to the now-enlightened AssUniv Program members, informing them that he has a surprise in store for them the next day. Just what could it be?

The day after listening to Kato's backstory...

-Karasuma, first thing in the morning, dropped off Shiohara at Kyoto's police department. It wasn't too hard for the guys in blue to link him with the breakout some time earlier, leading to his own lockup. Though the escapee has still successfully retreated, Grimaldi and the Reclamation Society will still be without a strong, eyes-everywhere proponent, slowing their lead as the Shadow War moves on.-

Nagisa: We didn't get too much sleep that night... There wasn't much night left to begin with, honestly. But I think we're able to make up the course hours that we'll miss for today somehow. Less surprisingly, however, was the fact that we weren't all that much tired (most of us anyway). For now, what's on our minds was what Kato wanted to show us first thing today. The man with many surprises... All of which are so reminiscent. What's he got for us this time?

Kato: *Sees them all get onto the bus. Not wanting to let the awkwardness between them grow, he breaks the silence immediately.* "Hey, all."

AssUniv: *All of them flatly stare at him.*

Kato: "Yeah, figured I'd get a reaction like that."

Nakamura: "Where'd you get that idea? You really think we'd look at you the same way after hearing something so tragic?"

Kato: "Oh, I didn't think otherwise of that. Irina-sensei already told me that the last time you guys heard something sad, you didn't talk to that person afterwards for roughly;" *Checks his watch.* "A month."

AssUniv: Korosensei...

Kato: "But I did hope our brief conversation following my memory lane exploration meant we would skip that."

Itona: "It may not be the case, but it's a reasonable assumption."

Sugino: "Is it really not? Unlike last time, we don't have a distance gap."

Kanzaki: "And the combined insistence to our mission hasn't been wavered by what we heard."
Terasaka: "Enough! Are we cool with Kato-san, are we not?"

Karma: "Silly Terasaka. Of course we're fine with him."

Yada: *Exhales satisfyingly.* "Good to hear. Now, Kato-kun, you said you had something to show us today?"

Kato: "Yeah, I probably should have reiterated; it's both a something, and someones. But the something is first and foremost, so get ready; we'll be going very soon." *Sits back properly onto the cushions of his booth.* "I think you'll all be taken for a loop once you realize what it is." *Snickers menacingly.*

AssUniv: *Sweat marks metaphorically droop down their foreheads.*

Nagisa: He's... Quick to getting back to normal. But he's done pretty much everything with speed, so that makes sense... I suppose?

-Once Karasuma and Irina had gotten on board, the bus took its path to the business district, and stopped by a large facility building whose design seems to imply a recreational clubhouse. Google-lite, in nature.-

Hara: "This is the place? An unorthodox administrative office?"

Kato: "Come on, guys. What do you take the Kato Family for? You ought to know that we can hide even the greatest secrets right under everyone's noses. Creating a facade; a front in this, like this is no exception."

Karma: "That's awfully fitting, now that you say it."

Kato: "But the best part is; it ain't no front. Everything we do here is legit and goes straight to the records of the R&D. The only thing this hides is who's behind it all - Who's within this building."

Mimura: "And that would be?"

Kato: "Those would be the Captains of the Kato Family. Come along, everybody." *Steps out of the bus and leads AssUniv through the main entrance. From there, they take some flights of stairs, before reaching a loft-sized floor filled with technology, scrap parts, and planning tables/boards. Also within the confines are several adult individuals, both foreign and akin to Japan in race.*

Adults in room: *Miho was among the several in the large room. The other five are another Japanese man, along with a taller British male, yet another male seemingly from Eastern Europe, a short Scandinavian woman, and an American man. All except the Japanese man and the Scandinavian woman were caught in an arm wrestling game, where Miho was holding her own against the remaining men. The other two, meanwhile, were playing a heated game of Go. When they eventually notice the student-assassins' presence, they rise up and bow to the emerging Kato. Despite their ethnicities, they all speak perfect Japanese* "Oyabun sir; a good sight."

Kato: *Bows lightly in turn.* "Arise, guys."

Nakamura: "Wow, that Brit looks strapping!"
British Man: *Face takes a light red shade.* "Wha-?"

Okajima: *Oodles at the Scandinavian.* "I know I'm hitched right now, but..."

Scandinavian Woman: *Nervously twirls her hair in response to that meek implication.* "Uh..."

Kato: *Looks between the two forces.* "You all done?" *Waits for a few seconds.* "Okay, good. Now, AssUniv, meet the Captains of the Kato Family in the Kansai Region: Miho Akiyama, whom you've heard in my backstory. Within our technological enterprise, she's the leader of our arms engineering. Obviously a very important job within the circle."

Miho: *Bows.* "Hello, friends of Kato-ani. I speak for all of us when I say thank you for taking care of him when we couldn't come near."

Isogai: "Uh, that's not necessary. We're glad to have his help; it's only fair."

Kato: "Okay... Now here's Satoshi Tsuchiya. An aerospace engineer in his previous career, he excels at material science and noise control; both things we're keen on adapting further on in the R&D."

Satoshi: *Nods.* "Hi."

Kato: *Beat.* "Yeah, he's not much of a talker to anyone outside the Family." *Notices Karasuma's suspicious behavior.* "Uh, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: *Looks attentively at the two previously mentioned.* "Miho... Akiyama. And Satoshi... Tsuchiya?"

Miho: *Puts her far hand on her hip.* "Uh, yeah. That's our names; don't wear it out."

Karasuma: "Really? You two look very familiar..."

Miho/Satoshi: "!!"

Kato: "So astute, Karasuma." *To his Brother and Sister.* "He's not going to pull you two in, don't worry."

Miho: "Sorry, sir. Wasn't afraid of Mr. CIA here. Just what I'd have to do if he did."

Karasuma: "Just because you're a woman, I wouldn't hold back."

Miho: "Hah! Sexist."

Kato: "And it wouldn't matter. She has the same amount of muscle control as me, so she'd be a good rival for you." *To AssUniv.* "I can see you're all bewildered by what's been happening."

AssUniv: *Sweat marks drop down the backs of their heads.*

Kato: "Live with early Millennials long enough, and this becomes commonplace. Anyways, Miho and Satoshi are former JSDF; Ground and Air, respectively. They both had their reasons for discharging, and its best those matters stay behind. Also, like me and the others in this room,
they're actively using pseudonyms, because just being near me is dangerous enough for who they care about, sadly."

Karasuma: *Gets one look at them before returning to Irina's side.* "Whatever."

Miho/Satoshi: *Pout at Karasuma's remarks.*

Kato: *Walks over to the tall British man.* "This beast is Edward Bellamy. Once a Special Air Service Soldier for Great Britain, who specialized in forceable entry and destructive imagination. Had to opt out after a government-miscalculated error prevented him from successfully saturating an enemy compound in the outskirts of Northern Ireland, so he travelled around the world as a mercenary. He found his dutiful calling with us," *Checks his watch... Again.* "Four years ago."

Bellamy: *With a very gentlemanly voice.* "Salutations, all."

Nakamura: "Wow, his voice is even grander than everything else about him!"

Bellamy: *Was taken aback.* "Pardon?"

Itona: "You were also the one who had sent someone to help me work my German phone, right?"

Bellamy: *Refocuses.* "No, you must be talking about my close associate Bishop. That's more her and her team's expertise."

Itona: "Ah. Nevermind then."

Kato: "Moving on, here's Dmitir Opatz; Bosnian War Spy, much in the same realm as Irina-sensei. But he's claimed to have worked in the northeast region of the country, so I doubt you two have met."

Irina: *She studies Dmitir as he does to her.* "Yeah, we didn't meet; nuh-uh. But the guys I seduced did have some smalltime talk about you. Nicknamed you as a 'Kresnik.' (Vampire Hunter)"

Opatz: *Scoffs.* "Surprised someone still remembers that name."

Irina: "So how'd you end up here?"

Opatz: "Why should I-"

Kato: "-A-after the war, Opatz went underground to avoid being marked for the terrible war crimes of the conflict. When he walked into our operations," *Yet again checks his watch.* "Two years ago, he found us a beneficiary. He also pulls his weight as a Physics checker... Surprisingly."

Opatz: *Holds out his fist in a beckoning manner.* "Physics is in EVERYTHING!"

Kato: "Yes!" *Copies the action.*

Karma: "Why did we ever doubt the goodness in you?"

AssUniv: "We were really off." *Even more sweat marks.*
Kato: "On to Katalina Nylen; Swedish Customs Service Scientist, once tasked with building non-invasive tech that allows us to observe for hazardous goods in bags and concealments. Unfortunately, a powerful high-class asshole didn't take too kindly to her refusing to give him a free pass and had the agency fire her."

Nylen: "Handwaves it aside. "It's all good, Kato-ani. I got to meet you because of it, wanting to help build advanced goggle-gear."

Kato: "And she's very forgiving. Makes me remind myself what I want to be someday."

Okano: "Something other than a billionaire Yakuza?"

Kato: "A tranquil billionaire Yakuza would be nice to be, thank you very much. Eh, duty calls."

*To the last American male.* "Last but not least, Phillip Franco. U.S. Navy SEAL - Team Six's engineer."

Franco: "Oyabun, sir, people are not supposed to know Team Six exists and is active right now."

Kato: "You left," *Checks his watch* "Five years ago; who knows it still is?"

Karasuma/Irina: *The Ministry certainly doesn't... We better have a talk with the American Embassy after this!*

Maehara: "You're a fair distance from your old element. What's your story?"

Franco: "It may pay to be a winner, but it didn't pay to upstage your shadowing CIA Agent who was also your old college rival. He put a bad word in and ongoing pressure forced my exile. Just before I got to train with the Commandos too. Goddamn." *Pouts and crosses his arms.*

Fuwa: "I can't help but notice that most of these Captain's stories share one similarity, while our two JSDF soldiers imply the same thing. They've all been dishonorably discharged from their original positions."

Kato: "That's a great observation, Fuwa-san. We all know of betrayal in at least one form. That's how I know I could trust them to make their own honest answers in the 50-Layer Background Check that I had all of them take. That way, the only thing I had to worry about is if they passed or not."

Opatz: "Oof, that was intense." *Shakes his head, then holds it.*

Kurahashi: "Yeah, I bet it was."

Kataoka: "But that's just how it goes in a 'brothers/sisters over numbers' world. You all are like that to Kato-kun then, right?"

Miho: "Enthusiastically nods." "We'd happily follow our boss to Enma's domain and back. Us and the rest of the 1000+ strong Family."

Sugino: "Refocuses." "I also notice, you said that this was just the Kansai Region of Kato Family Captains?"
Kato: "That's also true. My Captain's Circle is comprised of myself, my uncle, my older cousin, and twenty of our brothers and sisters deemed Captains. Aside from those of us here, the rest are scattered around the country, keeping logs of observation on the field. They're backed by fifty Lieutenants, and another 1,000 between us. We usually lay low, heads down, sleeper agent-like, until a situation calls. In fact, one of my Captains was a stunt double in the set filming the movie you were kidnapped from, Kayano. He was tasked with making sure you kept showing up."

Kayano: *Eyes widen.* "Really!? Wow, it must be that Teshima guy, doing that low-angle building skydive. Utterly fearless, he is."

Kato: "Heh, yeah he is. But alas, we've met the who's. Now you guys need to see the what."

Franco: *Refocuses.* "But sir, they're not done yet."

Kato: *Turns to him.* "I know they're not. We don't need them; we're just going to see the prototypes, the process, the like."

Miho: *Crosses her arms.* "They're not going to be impressed."

Nylen: *Tilts her head quickly.* "I don't know; just the concept pages are interesting enough."

Terasaka: "Enough! What is this... 'What?'"

Kato: *To Terasaka.* "Yada, Hara, have you all considered just why I'm a lead researcher and salesperson for Cyberdyne Inc.? Aside from the college credit that I wouldn't really need, or that I'm very good at those jobs?"

Hara: Why is this on us...?

Yada: * Raises her hand to her chin.* Why... Cyberdyne Inc. is known for their powered exoskeletons designed to help ailing, disabled patients. *Mind flickers.* "Oh! You're making armor with Mr. Sasai, aren't you?"

Kato: *Snaps fingers and points, while also winking.* "Bingo."

Okano: "Ah, that's why you really wanted to collect data on our physicals and performance during the college semester!" *Recalls herself wearing biomedical tech as she scaled, ran, and otherwise traversed low-rise buildings, all being observed by Kato and the other subjects.*

Mimura: "Whoa, like our super gym clothes during AssClass?"

Kato: *Surprised.* "'S-super gym clothes?' Are you referring to the stealth suits I made for Karasuma, which then got overhauled for a more feminine option?" No idea who thought that was a good idea.

Karasuma: Take a good guess, Mr. know-it-all. *Eyes over to Irina, who is confused by the vexed expressions pointed at her, mostly from the more prideful female audience.*

Kimura: "You made those? Damn, those were great! Made us feel like we could do anything when we wore them!"

Muramatsu: *Crosses arms.* "That's because we really could."
Kato: "Heh, well regardless, I'm glad you liked them. I was just glad back then that was my favor fulfilled to Karasuma and the Ministry."

Nagisa: *Oh yeah, that's right; Kato-san had promised Karasuma a favor for letting him out on early parole... That favor may seem one-sided, but even so, Kato's contribution was invaluable; we never could've done what we had to without it. That must be where the favor completes.*

Kato: "But now, we're about to make those... 'Super gym clothes,' obsolete."

Isogai: *Eyes widen.* "We're going to get... P-power armor?"

Kato: *Makes hesitant hand gestures.* "Well, semi-power armor. In that we're not putting a battery on it; far too distinguishable and cumbersome for stealth missions like ours. But you'll still be able to do all sorts of miracles with this gear. Come along, everybody."

-And into the next room of the R&D center shows a small assembly room, in which the blueprints for AssUniv's new suits are scattered around. Materials are being tested on one side, along with an engineering desk adjacent.-

Kato: "This is the production area for your newest armor sets: KAM Assault and Tactics, or AtTac, suits." *Takes a thin, flexible, dark-grey sheet, not of metal or ceramics.* "On the outside, we have just a shell of armor with advanced, but unadjustable features. Of course, when graphene, the recently discovered bulletproof carbon structure, is in the mix, why would you want to change it?"

Itona: *Whistles.* "Graphene? Can't ask for much better than that. Though most's wallets would say otherwise..."

Kato: "Not mine." *Laughs a bit before continuing.* "But hybridizing bulletproof material armor from military projects worldwide with physically-enhancing sensor technology produces some rather daring products. Supervised by the engineers behind me..." *Thumbs over to his Captains.* "We make the daring possible. With the completed product, you can tackle any kind of beast."

Chiba: "That's a strange way of putting it, but there's clearly a passion to it. That makes our minds very eager."

Takebayashi: "But your previous work makes our expectations high."

Okuda: "We can only hope you'll impress, Kato-kun."

Kato: "Oh, I will. We will."

Takebayashi: *Looks over to the side, where something else catches his eye.* "What's that?"

Kato: *Sets down the fragmented armor and looks over that way.* "Ah, some side project I've been working on." *He goes over to it and picks it up. It consisted of three major straps of leather; two of them make loops on the ends of the third. A small, rounded piece of metal was also attached, albeit on the other side, and lay along the third strap.* "This is the most concealable, non-invasive firearm you can have."
Maehara: *Perplexed.* "That's oddly specific."

Karasauma: "But accurate. We do recall what the God of Death had, correct?"

Nagisa: *Remembers.* Oh! The Reaper's Scythe! The God of Death had a small-caliber bullet loaded in a mechanism within his index finger. I guess that's what's called invasive...

Kato: *Begins putting it on.* "There is a.50 caliber AE bullet inside this barrel, with gunpowder at the very back. Attach this string to your middle finger..." *He does so.* "Then aim with your palm facing your target..." *Looks over to a bullseye at a far-side wall.* "Then pull back to flint it." *Whips his fingers back towards him... But nothing happens.*

AssUnv/Captains: *Beat.*

Chiba: "Nothing happened."

Kato: *Inspects his device.* "Well that can't be right. The powder was definitely-" *Opens the back end, causing smoke to emit, almost blowing into Kato's face.*

AssUniv: "..."

Yoshida: "I suddenly don't feel so confident in these armors."

Miho: *Looks over to them.* "Don't be. We'll make it work." *Bows.*

Kato: *Sighs, while cleaning and taking off the forearm-gun.* "Alright, We did what we had to. I think it's best we head back-"

???: *A voice projects from behind all of them.* "Kazuhiko!"

Kato: *Looks behind AssUniv, who have all turned around to see the man walking toward them.* "Uncle." *Walks towards him.*

Norio: *Slaps Kato square on his left cheek.*

AssUniv: "!!"

Norio: "What were you thinking, attacking Shinsuke's compound like that?"

Kato: *Moves his head back to its normal position, while also feeling the pinked shiner he just received.* "Retribution, uncle. We lost one of our own to him, not to mention some of the lives at Qita Kong to their assault."

Norio: "Then you should have run it by me and the Clan! We would settle this, without dragging katagi (TN: civilians; he's implying AssUniv) into your fits of bloodlust. Now I have to speak before the Akamine Family and all of our remaining subsidiaries for the loss of a still-able
Lieutenant."

Karasuma: "Keep talking like that, and you might be next."

Norio: *Looks over to Karasuma.* "Hey, what the-"

Kato: *Goes in between them.* "NO! You two are on the same side; you will not be at odds with each other!"

Norio: *Pushes Kato's hand down, ceasing his struggle and sighs.* "Nephew... Settling a personal dispute is one thing, and its provocation is understandable. But it wasn't immediately a part of your Shadow War. And when it leads to you enlisting government folk to help you out, clearly there's something going over the edge. And it's reminding me too much of what happened in the past."

AssUniv: *Stare at the heated conversation with trepidation.*

Kato: *Stares attentively at him.* "I can understand your view, uncle. But this situation is far different. Karasuma needs me just as much as I need him." *Looks over to Karasuma.* "Even you can't deny it."

Karasuma: *Looks at him for a few seconds before shaking his head, agreeing to the statement.*

Kato: "I'm not making an enemy of you, uncle. But I'm doing all that I must. And working with the government and katagi is better than on our own. All of our family before us knew that."

Norio: "..." *Turns around to leave.* "Fine. Do what you must. I'll keep the men in the loop."
*Fully leaves.*

Nylen: *Looks over to the student-assassins.* "Sorry you all had to see that, ladies and gentlemen. Kato-ani hasn't had the best relationship with his uncle since things really changed within the Family. Most of us weren't around then, so we can't understand, but it should be made clear you guys aren't in the middle of it."

Kato: *Does not pay attention to the conversation, merely seeing his angry relative off.*

Nagisa: Uncle and nephew both have perfectly good points of view. Who wouldn't be upset their family is leading such a dangerous life, even if they want to? But it makes us wonder from time to time... Is doing your duty really that obligatory?

Kato: "Like I said, we're done here." *To the Captains.* "Make haste on the AtTac suits, guys."

Kato Family: *Bows.* "Of course, sir."

Kato: *Back to AssUniv.* "Let's get out of here."

-And so, Kato, with another internal conflict having been revealed, calmly brings the student-assassins, Karasuma, and Irina back to the tour bus, and they make their return trip to the Hyatt Regency. There was no more time to mope around or be distracted; Dr. Yanagisawa awaits somewhere...-
End: Devil's Origins
After a long trip through memory lane and a tell-tale sign of what's to come in the future, the AssUnive Program are all clear to move on with their major project's objective - that is, locate the creator of the Tentacles DNA, Dr. Kotaro Yanagisawa. But how do they proceed with that?

-After everything returned to normal, having recovered from Kato's personally-connected past revealed, Qita Kong finally recovering from its ordeal, and Shiohara being placed in Ministry Custody, AssUniv got back into their daily routines triumphantly a week later. The search for something or someone who would happen to know about one Dr. Kotaro Yanagisawa raged on. A large bulk of the resources combined between all of the Program (which meant basically Kato's Yakuza Family) went into finding that something or someone...-

-But little did they know, that something or someone was to find them.-

-At Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...-

-"Without You" by Madison plays in the overhead loudspeakers of the building.-

-AssUniv reclaimed their positions at the cabaret venue; the same ones they took up in order to repay their pleasurable, yet sizable debt to Kato in what seemed like so long ago. Despite all that, the student-assassins were all too eager to return to this life after so much of their latest one, and it was very much business as usual. The culinary pair Muramatsu and Hara continued to impress with their exceptionally well-made dishes served to customers, Isogai, Maehara, and Kataoka led the table staff to excellence, and Yoshida continued to nearly implode seeing every exotic car that drives into the asphalt in front of the building. And when the music died down, everybody could always expect an amazing picture brought to them by the team of Fuwa, Sosuke, Mimura, and Hazama. And, well... You get the idea. Everyone's having fun, doing what they do best.-

-But in the management offices, where Nakamura and Yada deal with on-phone directed calls, competitive administration and the like...-

    Yada: *Is on the phone with a customer using a set of operator's earphones.* "I understand, sir. Okay, we've got you and your two guests a reservation for a prime spot on the third floor. That's set for tomorrow, at nine. We're good! Have a great day, sir!" *Presses the line button on the phone, switching her to another prospective patron.* "Hello? Ah, a pleasure, sir. How can I help you?"

    Nakamura: *Similarly on the phone using her headset* "I gotcha, dearest. You and your guy friend will get your booth situated close to the nice drink bar on the second. Friday evening; be here!" *Hangs up by clicking a button on the left earmuff.*

    Yada: *Looks over to Nakamura. She then blocks her microphone so that no one else can hear.* "Come on, Nakamura-san. You got to be more formal with customers. Nyurifu Rikkyo is meant to be very professional, so it must act like it."
Nakamura: *Looks over to her.* "Kato-kun can handle the complaints. He can handle anything. He can handle us, for one."

Yada: "Ah, you are right about that. But does that mean he should?"

Nakamura: "That's just how the cookie crumbles." *Line rings on her right ear.* "Hush, got to take this." *Picks up the line by clicking another button.* "Hello, welcome to the hotline for Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, the main Kansai branch of the Mai Nightclub Chain. May I take your name, and your date and time of reservation?"

Caller: "..." *This goes on for a few seconds.*

Nakamura: *Confused, she holds her microphone antennae closer to her mouth.* "Um, sir? Or Ma'am? What can I do for you?"

Caller: "..." *It lingers for another several seconds.*

Nakamura: *Covers her microphone and leans over to Yada.* "What's the etiquette for a silent caller? Prank them back or-"

Yada: *Looks at her with total befuddlement.* "What?"

Caller: *Speaks in a low, mature masculine voice.* "Ma'am."

Nakamura: "Ah-" *Releases her speaker.* "Yes, sir? How can I help you?"

Caller: "Go and have a talk with your manager."

Nakamura: *Beat.* "Uh, are you sure that will help you?" *Eyes over to Yada, who is also very curious about the conversation now.*

Caller: "That's the only thing that can." *Hangs up.*

Nakamura: *Has the most dumbfounded expression.*

Yada: "What's wrong, Nakamura-san?"

Nakamura: *Rises from her rolling chair.* "I'm going to get Karasuma-sensei and Kato-kun. Be right back." *Leaves the room.*

Yada: *Her gaze lingers at Nakamura's frame until she disappears behind the walls. Yada then looks at the operating machine connected to Nakamura's discarded headset, and finds a private number and ID.* What the...

-Outside the nightclub...-

-Kato and Miho proceed to smack some sense into an entire drunk semi-pro baseball team in the alley behind the club's kitchen.-

Kato: *Front kicks the last guy so that he slides into his defeated friends on one side of the painted asphalt.* "This'll teach you to not use my glasses as baseballs. You would think seeing one
smash over a man's head would be reason enough, though." *Wipes his hands on a towel he pulled out of his inner blazer pocket.*

Baseball player: *Has a massive bruise on his forehead that's preventing full eye opening on his left. He struggles to mutter as he gets back up onto his knees* "We're very sorry! Please stop!"

Kato: *Finishes cleaning.* "Very well." *To Miho.* "That's good enough, Miho-san."

Miho: *Has two of the players on her shoulders in an Argentine backbreaker, while one more had his arm wrapped horribly on her right leg, resulting in a powerful shoulder lock.* "Too bad. Getting tired of giving weak messages to assholes." *Unwinds the third player's arm and snap-kicks him aside. The two on her shoulders get tossed forward with him. She then flicks some of her stray mahogany hair aside.*

Kato: "Get up and get out of here!" *They comply.*

Miho: "And don't come back! We know your faces!"

Kato: *They stand idle for a little bit. He then turns over to Miho.* "That was a great volley combo, Miho. Have you taught him that?"

Miho: *Looks over to him.* "I'm more concerned you know it first. That being said, you're improving even more, adapting a style of your own, and your submissions are wrecking. Impressive."

Kato: *Scratches the back of his head.* "Heh, I don't slow down, as you know."

Miho: "..."

Karasuma: *Appears opening the kitchen's backside door. Nakamura is worriedly right next to him.* "Kato."

Kato: *He and Miho both turn around.* "What's up?"

Karasuma: "Something new..."

**Begin: "Search for Yanagisawa" Arc**

-Back at the Hyatt Regency Hotel...-

-Everyone of AssUniv, following their time and effort at Nyurifu Rikkyo, await answers about the suspicious call in Karasuma and Irina's presidential suite. The ice-bucket folk still have not forgotten what could possibly be happening every so often in this room, however, and refuse to be near the mattress for that reason.-

AssUniv: *Some sit or stand, looking around and between each other, contemplating the significance of the event that looms on the horizon. Kato stands vigilant outside on the balcony,
speaking to his allies on his flip phone in privacy. The rest all refocus when Karasuma and Irina come into the room, having unraveled all that they needed to.*

Isogai: "Karasuma-sensei; what have we found out?"

Karasuma: "While the suspicion of whether the caller truly knows of Dr. Yanagisawa and where we can start to look for him cannot be extinguished, we have traced their location, and uncovered their private number. Whoever they are, we will soon find out. They ought to realize it's better not to play pranks on us."

Kato: *Closes his flip phone and reenters the room.* "Oh, it wasn't a prank, I can assure you."

Irina: "You seem awfully sure."

Karma: *Crosses arms.* "That's true. And it implies something else, doesn't it?"

Kato: *Nods.* "After my IT team had also traced their location, I've had some of my brothers and sisters scope out the household and its surrounding area. It's Dr. Yanagisawa's family most certainly."

Nagisa: "It's almost like they weren't even trying to hide themselves from us."

Kayano: "Hardly the worst thing the family can do." Damn that guy and his mistreatment of my family...

Hayami: "No; all belief of that should've left the front door once they decided to call us. Them using a private number only served to make sure only we would know it was them."

Terasaka: "Okay, so where they at?"

Irina: "Izumo's agricultural area, in Shimane Prefecture."

Hayami: "That's a far distance from here. Even for our eyes."

Maehara: "It makes our next move even harder to make. They could still be playing us for fools."

Okano: "That wouldn't explain why they would call us personally."

Okuda: "Given the time between us just coming across the cabaret and now, that is problematic to question."

Takebayashi: *Repositions his glasses.* "True, they needed affirmation. But could they be working for their relative? Or even worse, the Reclamation Society?"

Sugino: "Yeah, they could even be working for both as far as we know. We aren't even aware if Dr. Yanagisawa wants to see us or not."

Nakamura: "They could even be their own force, who just wants to make us and the Society fight for the information."

Kanzaki: "Gods, that would be dreadful."
Muramatsu: *Slouches back, leaning his back and head on the bedside wall.* "Damn right. I don't know about you guys, but I'm starting to get tired of finding people."

Yoshida: "Yeah; for once, I'd like them to want to come to us."

Hazama: "They did, right here. Kind of."

Kataoka: "Everyone, this isn't helping, going everywhere at once."

Kato: *You guys only notice this kind of thing now...?*

Karasuma: *Twenty-eight minds tend to do that when they aren't run from the same code of honor, Kato.*

Kataoka: "Let's review every detail that we know about this proposition."

Nagisa: "I got them right here." *Taps his notepad.* "Now... We got the mysterious call from, as we've confirmed recently, the Yanagisawa family. Them withholding their names was so that they would know it's us by finding out ourselves. They say they have possibly vital information regarding how to find Dr. Yanagisawa, but cannot make sense of it themselves. We still know not why they wish to help, and who else is aware of these details." *Turns over the written page.* "That should cover it, everyone."

Kurahashi: "I don't know... It still seems too out there. Too good to be true."

Maehara: "But then, what's good enough?"

Kurahashi: "Well..."

Kato: "Let's just say this; we have no other leads."

AssUniv: "..."

Karasuma: "Tomorrow, the weekend begins. Let's go hear them out at least."

Irina: "Yeah, guys. Have some faith. And if it ends up being misplaced, we can get ourselves out; we're all adept assassins now."

Kato: "Yeah. And I can get some of my Yakuza brothers and sisters near the region to keep a watchful eye. Even an area as devoid of population as Shimane Prefecture will have eyes. Alright. Everyone, get some sleep; we leave first thing ten A.M."

AssUniv: *Groan briefly.* "Wait, ten?"

Karma: "Heh, would've expected something far stricter with our crazy firm guy."

Kato: *Looks down while crossing his arms and his eyes closed.* "I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that three-dimensional joke. Let's get to our respective dorms now." *Leaves. When he knows he's alone at his room, he again flips open his phone, now to call Hyun. * "Hyun, thanks for helping out on such short notice there."
Hyun: "No problem, man. Honestly, anything to keep me distracted from the sadness in Qita right now."

Kato: *Hesitates for a bit.* "I'm very sorry about that, Hyun. I... Just lost control there. And I let-"

Hyun: "Hey, don't sweat it man. I understand difficulties. And we all got faults. I mean, ain't exactly been all about the doomsday lately..."

Kato: "The Kato Family and I will personally make it up to you. You have my word."

Hyun: "Very good. Now, is that all you wanted to tell me?"

Kato: "No... AssUniv is going to go on another big assignment. If it's exactly what I'm thinking it will be like in my mind(s), then we might need your eyes and ears for the next week or two. Stay within arm's reach."

Hyun: "You got it. Oh, and about Naoko-san..."

Kato: "Yeah? What is it?"

Hyun: *Doesn't answer. Instead, the sounds of the phone being passed over, even if reluctantly, can be heard.*

Naoko: "Expect me to tail, Kato-kun. I'm playing more of my part in the Shadow War starting now."

Kato: "I wouldn't have expected to hear that, after recent events."

Naoko: "Well believe it. Oh, and... Take care, Kato-kun."

Kato: *Speaks in an ironic tone.* "Of AssUniv?"

Naoko: "Goddamnit, why are you so full of quips, even when I'm trying to be sentimental?"

Kato: "..."


Kato: *Slowly closes his flip phone.* That's just how I deal with war...

-The next day...-

-The road from Kyoto's capital to Izumo, Shimane was a long four and a half hours, but it was also the fastest possible route, so AssUniv took a step onto their hired bus to get there.-

-During the ride...-

Fuwa: *Looks over to her adjacent chair, occupied by Sosuke.* "You know, if we are to really sell the fact that all of us knew what we had to when confronting the Yanagisawa Family, we ought to know their given names."
Kato: *With Yada beside him, they look behind.* "Ah. I'm surprised that never came up during our talk last night. They're a family of three: The man of the house Takeda, his wife Harumi, and their other child and younger sister of Kotaro, Amaya."

Isogai: *Leans forward across the walking section.* "Wow, he has a sister?"

Kayano: *Looks out the window, opposite the direction of the conversation. And, in an ironic tone.* "Tragic."

Nagisa: *Looks over to her.* "Kayano-san..."

Hazama: "Any chance she is just as vile as Yanagisawa is?"

Karasuma: "Unlikely. For the family as a whole for that matter, seeing as how his inheritance to the family's legacy is gone. They didn't want anything to do with him for four years."

Irina: "But I suppose times change your familial views?"

Kato: *Closes his eyes.* "They do."

Yada: *Looks at Kato again.* Kato-kun...

-The remainder of the ride brought less-significant conversations. Finally, they arrived at Izumo, where it was just another ten minutes to find the street of the address. And from then... There was just a street-cross and ten steps to the suburban middle-class house...-
The rest of the Yanagisawa Family have revealed themselves! And they have provided AssUniv with a new lead to find the vile doctor. Let's see if they can be trusted, and what their information entails.

-AssUniv gathered outside in front of the mid-sized residence, allegedly belonging to the Yanagisawas.-

Sugino: "Uh, is this it?"

Takebayashi: "It does seem underwhelming, doesn't it?"

Yada: "Yeah. It's by no means an awful-looking home; actually quite decent. But 'decent' is barely what you think of when you think of a home name like Yanagisawa."

Kayano: *Can't help maintaining a subtly aggressive aura pointed in front of her.*

Kato: *Looks around.* "Doesn't look like we have any traps or Society scouts lying about..."

Nagisa: "Well then, let's get on with it."

-They all walk up the stone path up to the front door. Nagisa rang the doorbell, and there they waited for ten seconds or so before an answer rang from the other side.-

Resident: *Does not open the door, thus cannot see the student-assassins. He has the same voice from the caller yesterday.* "Who's there?"

Kato: "Order from Nyurifu Rikkyo. Just," *Almost goes to check his watch to keep up with the joke.* "Last night, we do take-out now."

Resident: *Finally opens the door.* "Ah... I knew you'd all find out who you were talking to."

Terasaka: *Suddenly remembers how none of them were able to find out what they must until Kato and Karasuma intervened. He, along with some of the other ashamed students hold their heads.* "Of course. Yeah..."

Y. Takeda: "You all already know by now, but I'm Takeda Yanagisawa. Please, come on in."

-AssUniv do so. All Twenty-eight of them, followed by their three mentors. There is a very insufficient number of available seats for all of them and the family, so most of the men take to standing, preparing for whatever conversation is coming.-

Y. Takeda: *Appears around the corner.* "Sorry for the wait."
Y. Harumi: "Please, enjoy some tea." *Sets down a large platter of cups with tea bags boiling in hot water.*

Y. Amaya: *Sets down an almost-identical plate.* "And enjoy your stay." *Bows.*

AssUniv: *All stare at the drinks; not even close to touching them.*

Y. Harumi: "Um, is something wrong?"

Irina: "Who do you think we are, ladies and gents? We're all assassins; trained in the arts of hidden attacks. You really think we're going to fall for what we do best?"

Y. Amaya: *Gasps.* "You're accusing us!?"

Kato: *Stops leaning on the sill of the wall.* "What you did yesterday made us full of doubts and suspicions. Right now, you're going to extinguish them for us." *Takes three cups in a seemingly random order.* "I offer first sips to you all."

Yanagisawas: *Accept the cups.*

Y. Amaya: "This is not how you treat your hosts..."

Karasuma: "We have more to lose than you three do. And if I'm correct, I know the reason why that's the case. And for that reason, you're going to drink those without fear."

Yanagisawas: *Sigh.* "Very well." *They all slowly take a sip of their drinks. They let the hot fluids settle a bit.* "There we are."

Kato: "Very nice." *Takes the cups from them. He hands one to Karasuma (the one that Takeda drank from), and he takes the other two. One approving gesture later, and the student-assassins all go for their own on the platter.*

Karasuma: "Thanks, I guess." *Wipes the area he knows Takeda sipped from.* "You all seemed troubled by being accepted gifts, even if they were originally your own."

Isogai: *Gets the idea.* "That must be because you haven't received them in so long, isn't it?"

Y. Harumi: "Well..."

Y. Takeda: "You probably had something figured, hm? About how we're here and not in a high-end Hokkaido resort?"

AssUniv: *Metaphorical sweat drops fall from the back of their heads.* "That's a bit specific..."

Y. Takeda: "But true. The Yanagisawa family once had a name good enough to be everywhere. We were all a welcome sight at most of the advanced science committees and meetings, and a smile for our contributions was at every turn. But that all changed when it became public that our son was with his fiancee-"

Kayano: *Stands up.* "She has a name!"

Yanagisawas: "!!"
Nagisa: Kayano, please settle down!

Y. Harumi: *Looks over to Kayano with preoccupation.* "Which we're aware of; Aguri Yukimura."

Y. Amaya: "You must be the secret sister of her, judging by your reaction, hm?" *Bows.* "Our sincerest apologies."

Kayano: *Begrudgingly sits back down.* "I accept it..."

Y. Harumi: "Thank you." *Refocuses.* "And so, our son, committing atrocities, and his creation causing chaos for a full year. When everyone found that out; nothing was the same; our legacy was tainted, and many took to great lengths to take their frustrations out on our name. We looked to Shimane for seclusion."

Y. Takeda: "And in this seclusion, we came to find out exactly how much we lost..."

Y. Amaya: "It wasn't our foregone assets or fallen grace that was our reconsideration point. It was the fact that Kotaro is somewhere out there, in a hospital, nursing home, or whatever, probably getting way worse. He's awful, but he's family."

Y. Takeda: "And family sticks together."

Kato: "!!"

Y. Takeda: "Therefore, the reason we called was because we need you to help us find him."

AssUniv: "...

Okano: "I hope that wasn't your way of sympathizing a psychotic scientist to us."

Maehara: "Yeah, especially after he spent ages trying to kill our teacher, as well as causing the suffering of a great many of us."

Kato: *Hand-waves to calm them down.* "But we at least see that we have no more reason to worry for their motives," *Sets down his two emptied cups on the countertop nearby.* "We don't all agree on the incentive, but we all want Dr. Yanagisawa. So we're going to agree to it." *Turns to the ticked student-assassins.* "Right, guys?"

AssUniv: *The more brash folks pout.* "Yes..."

Kanzaki: *Refocuses.* "But it's going to be substantially difficult to track him down. We've been trying to do that for quite some time already."

Sugino: *Scratches the back of his head.* "How does a permanently bedridden guy disappear like that anyway?"

Y. Takeda: "We know not of his methods; far less than you all, in fact."
Y. Harumi: "But we do have a postcard from him, with, shall we say, cryptic contents. Amaya."

Y. Amaya: "Yes."

*Goes through a drawer off-screen and hands it to Kato. Kato then passes it to Isogai, who holds it out so that all of AssUniv can crowd around it.*

Isogai: *Reads the cover.* "Greetings from Saitama."

Kataoka: "Any hospitals or institutes to note there?"

Karasuma: "Far too many. Go on and read the back."

Isogai: *Turns the postcard over.* "My family...

I write all of this with a significant amount of doubt flowing through my head. Throughout the past two years-

Irina: "Wow, this is two years old? Man, you three took some time to get us on the-"

AssUniv: "QUIET, BITCH-SENSEI!"

The Yanagisawas: "!!"

Karasuma: *Manifests an intimidating aura.* "Students..."

Mimura: *Like the rest, he sits upright out of intimidation.* "So, Isogai. W-what's next?"

Isogai: *Continues reading.*

...Throughout the past two years, it has raced through my mind whether you still really hate me or not. Or if you're scared. Or even both. But somewhere in me, and not a lot of it, I feel as though you miss me. Well I'd like to ask of you this: Don't be. I am not in the need or desire to be missed and/or found. Trust me, the place I was in, reminds me of this: [004B 4549 4149]. And as far as I can see, It's just a deep-seated reminder of all of my many failures. Especially the awful laughing noises. So take care. - Kotaro."

Chiba: "Well, that's barely helpful, if at all."

Kurahashi: "Looks like Dr. Yanagisawa didn't want us to find him. Or anyone else, for that matter."

Irina: "Well, he is being hunted down by some of the most dangerous people on the planet. That only makes sense."

Kato: "Let me see it." *Requests the card, which Isogai hands back. He takes a quick read through it. He then taps its edge on his finger as he speaks,* "You guys didn't suspect this code he wrote out?"

Y. Takeda: "It didn't make sense to us in any way. We thought maybe a Hospital ID, or a room number-

Kato: *To Takeda.* "Mr. Yanagisawa, Not you." *To AssUniv.* "So?"
Hayami: "Well what could we get out of it, if the family couldn't?"

Itona: "Yeah, it's just some," *Refocuses.* "Weird... Code..."

Kato: *Throws the postcard over to him like a frisbee.* "You seem to know. Maybe by its arrangement, or the letter in the middle of it, or another."

Itona: *Looks over the postcard himself.* "The words 'as' and 'see,' along with the 'c' in 'can' were underlined, then erased! And if you put them in order, you get the mashup, 'ascsee,' or in coding, ASCII."

Yada: "Really now?"

Nakamura: "Damn scientists, always resorting to some weird things to keep secrets."

Itona: "Now that it's clear this is in ASCII, we know what type it is too; the use of letters most definitely means Hexadecimal order; counting by means of 0-15 (0-9, then the letters A-F). So, if we are to read these numbers right..." *Itona takes the next minute to decode the clue.* "K-E-I-A-I."

Okajima: "What the Hell's 'Keiai'?"

Fuwa: *On her smartphone (Kato is clearly showing discontent).* "I got it! It's a hospital in Saitama!"

Sugino: "Cool! We finally got a location!"

The Yanagisawas: *How did they-?*

Nagisa: "Could Dr. Yanagisawa really be there, though? His writing here seems to indicate he isn't anymore."

Karma: "We're not expecting him to be. But he definitely has something we want us or his family to see there."

Sosuke: "Like what?"

Karma: "Whatever would be considered a 'reminder of his failures.'" *Points to the similar words on the postcard.*

-Outside the Yanagisawa household, AssUniv gathers to discuss their plan of attack.-

Mimura: "So, we're all going to Saitama to find some clues?"

Kimura: "Wait, we're all going?"

Irina: "That's probably ill-advised. Eyes, especially ones that are trained, are easily attracted to larger structures."

Kataoka: "Very true. For now, we should probably operate in small cells. Most of us stick around at a base in Tokyo, while the rest of us pick up on leads, then relay it to the rest of us."
Karasuma: "That sounds professionally well-handled. But just in case, within these small squads should be one of us mentors."

Kato: "Not a problem; I'll always be participating."

Karasuma: "I was talking about Irina and myself..."

Kato: "Always got to keep an eye on me, don't you? I'm very flattered."

Karasuma: "Necessary attention is always the most-wanted one."

AssUniv: *Still at it!?*

-From there, the student-assassins rented suites at Green Rich (of course Kato had stake somewhere here), and pick who else amongst them will be taking a long, eight-hour train ride to the Greater Tokyo Area at midnight tonight. The rest will be going to Kato's uncle's house (who had reluctantly agreed to let it be a base of operations for the time being; if everything happened across the nation, it would be beneficial to return to somewhere that wasn't half a day away.) in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. The loadout for this leg of the mission came down to: Kato, Nagisa, Itona, Yoshida, Yada, Kurahashi, and Irina.-

Kato: *Is in the middle of a phone call with Miho.* "It's under control, Miho. It's not like we haven't been to all these places before. Plus, all our closest brothers and sisters are never too far... Yeah? Very well; I'll keep to it. Take care, now." *Ends the call by closing his flip phone, then slouches back on his study chair.*

-There was a knock on his door. Kato gets up to answer it, finding Yada.-

Yada: *Perks up immediately with a smile.* "Hi."

Kato: *Puzzled.* "Hello, Yada-san. Do you need something?"

Yada: "Sorry for intruding at this hour; I just need to talk to you for a bit. Can I come in?"

Kato: "Of course." *Lets her inside, closing the door behind her after a few seconds. He waits until she takes a seat on the mattress. She was already in her sleeping attire (Victoria shorts and tank-top), and her hair was down from its ponytail, still showing moisture from a recent shower. Kato did his best to ignore it.* "So, what did you need to talk about?"

Yada: "Kato-kun, I'd like to first say that AssUniv is staying true to trusting you indefinitely. And we certainly didn't see anything so far that would impugn it. But... I couldn't help but notice that you've been quite open to the words of the Yanagisawas."

Kato: "That... Is an issue?"

Yada: "Of course not, Kato-kun. But you seem too convinced."

Kato: "I don't have anything to compare their accounts on."

Yada: *Refocuses.* "Are you believing in the family reason?"
Kato: "!!"

Yada: *Nudges some stray locks away from her face.* "I get that you're very into family values, Kato-kun, and you sympathize greatly with it. But not everyone has that sense of duty. A lot of us have had... Issues that made that apparent in the past. Like Nagisa-kun, Kayano-san, Kanzaki-san, Takebayashi-kun..."

Kato: *Looks aside for a bit, but back to her.* "What about you?"

Yada: *Remembers her ill brother, who she and the rest of her family stuck by with through thick and thin, which had initially resulted in her falling behind and going to Class 3-E in Kunugigaoka.* "..."

Kato: *Settles down.* "You want me to stay vigilant with them?"

Yada: "Yeah. Just be careful. Okay?" *Stands up, and heads to the door, while laying a hand on Kato's shoulder, using distance to release her grip.* "Goodnight, Kato-kun."

Kato: "You too." *Nods. He stares at the door until it closes completely.*
Chapter Summary

The first clue will be taking a set of the AssUniv Program to Keiai Hospital, hopefully to find clues as to Dr. Yanagisawa's whereabouts. You might be able to figure something with the chapter's title...

The next day, the team got ready and went into the West train line, ready for a nine-hour journey through multiple stations to Saitama Prefecture. By the time they made it to Tsuruse Station, it was already the middle of the afternoon.

Itona: *Yawns just after everybody makes it out of the station.* "Damn, that was a long trip, even by train."

Kurahashi: *Pulls her "We pretty much crossed the country's horizontal distance with it."*

Irina: "Alright, children, settle down. The rest of us got just a little shorter trip for them, from Shimane to Kanagawa."

Nagisa: "Man, wish we had Korosensei's Mach 20 speeds right about now."

Kato: *Makes a cracking sound with his neck.* "Okay; you guys all rested? We'll get to one of my lockups, get one of my vehicles, and reach Keiai Hospital, awaiting whatever is there for us. If we hurry, we can make it with," *Checks his watch.* "Four hours until dark."

Yoshida: "Oh, can we pick one out?"

Yada: *Finishes stretching her arm and waist by leaning to one side.* "It'll have to be big; fit for seven or more people. I don't think that will match your criteria, Yoshida-san."

Yoshida: "Maybe; we'll see."

Kato: "Very well, then. This way, everybody." *Crosses the street from the train station.*

Naoko: *Initially covered by a very large hood, she watches her peers, older sister-in-law, and Kato all leave the transport and begins to follow.*

-AssUniv Squad 1 reach Kato's one (of six) garages in Saitama, from which is filled with Humvees, SUVs, and vans. Through the insistence of Yoshida and Itona, as well as the personal approvals of Irina, Yada, and Kato himself, they went with the seven-seater Maserati Levante 2017.-

-With Kato at the wheel, they reach Keiai Hospital, parking on the street across its front entrance. They remained there for the next three hours, leading to the sky turning golden, then eventually dark. With no lead after investigating the grounds to the best of their ability.-

-Back in the car, Kato, Yoshida, Itona, and Yada are waiting around, while Nagisa, Kurahashi, and
Irina are out looking for products of interest around the facility.

Kato: *Bides his time by tapping his hand on the steering wheel and checking his watch constantly.*

Yoshida/Itona: *Peer over the driver seat. Yoshida's hand reaches over and tries to start the car again, only to be stopped by Kato.*

Kato: "Come on, man. Cut that out."

Yada: "Yeah, guys; you've freaked out six loiterers and three seated people already by the constant car activations. Not to be rude, but it's actually surprising the hospital hasn't taken notice of this awkward behavior yet."

Yoshida: "We just need to hear the custom engine again!"

Itona: "Seconded! Just one more time, please!"

Kato: "Even a powerhouse motor will get worn down much more quickly if you keep turning it on and off, guys. And I don't technically get new ones for free, you know."

Yoshida/Itona: *Look at him longingly, with Kato forced to look back with guilt.*

Kato: *Is brute-forced into complying. He looks back to Yada.* "You alright with one more ignition, Yada-san?"

Yada: *Looks diagonally downward.* "Perhaps... Oh what the Hell; let's do it!"

Kato: *Turns the Maserati smart key over, revving up the engine and starting up the Levante with a monstrous roar.* "Ooh.. It is only just starting to lose its charm this time around..."

Yoshida/Itona: "Not anytime soon for us!"

Yada: "I'll admit; impressive."

Kato: *Smiles at the three, until he notices the rest returning.* "Ah, everybody. Found anything?"

Kurahashi: "Nothing of interest. Hospital staff getting mad at us probably too."

Irina: "This is the right hospital, right?"

Yada: *Takes out the postcard, reading it through again.* "Yeah; as far as the clues go. It's not like anything else could be any closer, right?"

Itona: "A medical institution has billions of places to hide things. Hell, they have so many, they need the secrets of patients to fill them up."

Yoshida: *Curiously looks at Itona.* "Is that really what goes on in there...?"

Irina: "We need to narrow our search, then. Make billions into hundred-millions, and then go from there."
Nagisa: *Remembers an important detail pertaining to that subject.* "I know how we can start that. Wasn't there a strange, outlying sentence in that message on the postcard?"

Kato: "You're referring to the laughing, right?"

Yada: *Refocuses.* "Oh yeah; '...[T]he awful laughing noises.'"

Kurahashi: "So we just got to find the source of the noises, then?"

Irina: "What could produce sounds like that, though?"

AssUniv: *Think to themselves.*

Kato: *Looks at his steering wheel, before paying attention to the sound of the motor of the Levante running. Then, he hears another sound incoming.* "Hm?"

Oh...

Yada: *Notices Kato's strange behavior.* "You're not thinking so hard; that's a sign that you suspect something, right?"

Kato: *Nods.* "Yoshida, Itona, tell me what you think the incoming sound reminds you of."

Yoshida/Itona: *Look between each other, then at Kato. The rest of AssUniv follow suit.* "What incoming sound?"

-Before anybody can say anything else, the noise presents itself; on the other side of the large road, a quartet of modified sports cars zoom by. They produce an annoying racket as they pass by. The patients at the hospital seem irritated by it as well.-

Kurahashi: "Wow, they're going so fast! That's dangerous!"

Irina: *Man, I missed going to events like that. Way more exciting than circuits.*

Kato: "So, guys. What's that noise?"

Yoshida/Itona: *Scoff.* "Sounds like they're taunting us..."

Nagisa: "Laughing at us."

Kato: "Exactly. Get in, everybody; we got to catch up to them."

-With everyone situated in the Levante, they take a large U-turn and speed through the traffic to get the racers back in view... Albeit at the expense of some of the student-assassins' ease. From there, they just needed to follow them until they reached their finish line, where the rest of their friends and patrons were residing...-

Irina: "Ah! They're stopping there!"

Kurahashi: "And there's the rest of their crew!"

Kato: *Pulls over the SUV roughly ten feet from their circle. He gets out and heads over to them, with AssUniv very close behind.*
Race winner: *Has two girls flanking him as he holds up a bottle of champagne.* "Hahah! Told you, Shirashiki; you're the 'Silver Shura' for a reason."

Shirashiki: "I know..." *Points at his hair.* "It's the mane! You only won, Sagawa, because you brute-forced my line!"

Osada: *Exhales smoke from his cigarette.* "Your fault for letting that happen."

Sagawa: "Hey, if you want a rematch with the 'Shura Saga,' I'm ready anytime."

Kato: "Hey! Dragracers!"

Racers: *Look over in his direction.*

Sagawa: "Ah, we have spectators. Or gamblers?"

Shirashiki: "Whatever they are, the girls are pretty... Pretty too."

Kurahashi: "Why... Thank you?"

Irina: "We're not here to spectate, or to gamble. We're here to ask some questions!"


Shirashiki: "Nah, maybe they wonder if we're single."

Yoshida: *Looks over to Sagawa.* "What about you?"

Sagawa: "Hey, what makes you think you can boss me around like that? My life is a personal affair!"

Kato: "What'll it take for you to comply?"

Sagawa: "How about... A race? We're about to have another one with some adepts coming this way now. What do you all think?" *Looks over to the crowd. They roar in response.* "Any of you
guys win it, I'll let you all in on a little secret."

Itona: "A-a race?"

Osada: "Yeah. One long lap around Fujimi. Up to it?"

Kato: *Grins.* "That sounds lovely."

Shirashiki: "Hey, wait a second. What do we get if we win, eh?"

Sagawa: "Well, aside from beating a bunch of kids..." *Holds his chin.* "I know... Your lady friends there have to be the starters of this race. And if any of us win, they all must spend a day with us."

Kato: "!!"

Students: "WHAT!?"

Irina: "Perverts..." But still...

Sagawa: *Stands up and meets Kato at face level.* "How about it, hotshot?"

Kato: Damn... I can bet on human ability... But human life? What do I say...

Irina: "We accept."

Kato: *Subtly looks over to her.*

Students: "HUH!?"

Shirashiki: "Sounds like a fair deal to me; you're on!"

Osada: "The race is a long one, with a bunch of turns. Some queens going to be scattered along the lot to heed caution on the less-noticeable drifts. You'll be getting navigators."

Kato: *Refocuses.* "No, we're not trusting whoever you're bringing us. Just give us two scrolls and the four of us will take two slots."

Sagawa: *Laughs.* "Very well." *Looks over to their Levante.* "But you're not going to race with that, are you?"

Kato: "Don't you worry about what we will race with. But no, not that. When do we have to be here?"

Osada: *Exhales.* "Half an hour."

Kato: "We can do that." *To AssUniv.* "Come on, guys."

Nagisa: "We'll set this straight, ladies. You have our word."

Irina: *Walks up to the racing management, pulling Yada and Kurahashi with her. There is quite a passionate ambition in her eyes.* "You wouldn't happen to have proper racing start gear, would
you?"

Kurahashi: *A shadow forms over her eyes.* "Eek!!"

Yada: *Sweat marks, both metaphorical and literal, drop from her face.* "And a changing room, at the very least?"

-Kato drives the guys to one of his other lockups within Saitama... Filled with sports cars of many brands.-

Yoshida/Itona: *Eyes are once again about to pop out of their sockets.* "HOLY SHIT!!"

Kato: "Finish your drooling quickly, you two. We only have," *Checks his watch.* "Another 20 minutes before the race." *His right arm is held at his back, without anyone noticing. After a few more seconds, he lets it hang free.*

Yoshida: *Peers over to one side of the hall.* "A Porsche 981!? And a Lexus LC!?"

Itona: "That's nothing! Look at this Lotus Evora 400! And this LaFerrari!" *Strokes the hood of the Ferrari, until looks to his right and is left speechless by the next one in line.* "AND- And, an Agera RS!?"

Yoshida: *Looks over.* "Shut. Up." *He walks over to it with Itona.*

Kato: *Takes the key to a McLaren. He notices the two and points straight at them.* "Hey, don't touch my Koenigsegg! They're my favorite!"

Yoshida/Itona: *Immediately refocus and move away.* "Our apologies..."

Kato: *Sighs.* "It's alright. Not too many get to see them, so I know they have a certain charm."

Nagisa: "Kato-kun, these all look like great rides, but do you really think we can win this?"

Kato: *Looks over to Nagisa.* "We have to." *Too much is at stake now... Like before...* *He then returns his attention to the rest.* "Come on, you lot. Which one you guys want to ride in?"

Yoshida/Itona: "Uh... Huh... Ehh..." *They mimic each other's head movements, inspecting each ride. They finally come across one that they simultaneously agree on. Kato nods to them once they've made their silent confirmation and tosses them the keys.*

-Back at the starting line...-

Irina/Yada/Kurahashi: *Dressed as surprisingly conservative race queens, with knee-high boots, grunge-graphic tank-tops, cropped moto leather jackets, and the like. Irina seems rather disappointed about the endeavor, while Kurahashi is a little less distraught. Yada tries to readjust her gear into a more comfortable position.*

Yada: *Gets her bra correctly-positioned.* "Well, at least they did have a legitimate dressing room."

Kurahashi: *Lines up the edge of her skirt to her thigh.* "And the attire is modest enough..."
Irina: *After the end of the Mid Night Club, things like this have become much less frequent. A total shame, really. I really wanted to be one like an idol.* *Looks to the side, noticing AssUniv's two cars wheeling in.* "Ah, here are the guys."

AssUniv Guys: *Walk towards the Girls, with the xenon lights of the McLaren 540C (Driver Kato and Navigator Nagisa), and a Ferrari 488 Spider (Yoshida and Itona) shining behind them. Though they absorb this initial badass demeanor, which saves their spirits when they find that the Girls are barely different in appearance.* "Aw, really?"

Yada: *Pleasantly sighs as she sees the disappointed men, then takes a flirtatious pose.* "Like them?"

Yoshida: "What happened to the idol gear? These aren't official-looking race queen fatigues."

Kurahashi: "Well, this isn't an official racing circuit, of course. Plus, drag racing isn't such an embraced topic, after all. So in an effort to attract as little undue attention as possible, they get all the girls dressed just differently enough to be noticed by the racers."

Irina: "This is wrong..." *Sniffles to the side.* "All wrong."

Itona: "I'm disheartened..."

Kato: *Nods, looking happy that the outfits were not so "showy."* "Well, I think you three certainly look nice regardless." *Notices Yada bows to him, which he nods again to, then refocuses.* "I only hope that we can prevent you all from staying that way."

Yoshida: "Now that you say that, yeah. Worst case scenario, we'll be going back on our word though. We're not letting you all get into danger."

Irina: "Hey, I accepted the bet because I totally have faith in y'all."

Kato: "!!"

Sagawa: "Ah, so that's your racers. I'll admit; impressive. But I hope you all know how to ride them."

Shirashiki: *Whistles to the Girls.* "I hope you don't."

Kurahashi: *Looks offended again.*

Kato: "We'll show you what we got. Now get everything set up, why don't you?"

-And that's exactly what happened... Along with a suspicious case of one helmeted racer piloting a Jaguar F-Type disappearing in an alleyway, before nonchalantly returning to the scene. Irina stayed behind to actually start the race while Yada, Kurahashi, and the other Race Queens were brought by the managing staff around Fujimi. Kato/Nagisa and Yoshida/Itona line up with the other teams, altogether eight cars. Through the quick lottery, Kato drew sixth while Yoshida was third. Sagawa was fourth, Shirashiki was first, and Osada was seventh.-

Kato: *Revs the engine of his McLaren and focuses all mirrors, paying due attention to the Jaguar behind him.*
Nagisa: "Something wrong, Kato-san?"

Kato: *Refocuses.* "No, no. Just psyching myself up."

Nagisa: *Looks at the navigation book, before gazing at the roof and sighing.* "I hope I can do this."

Kato: "You're good with directions, Nagisa-kun. If the stories about the AssClass Valedictorian is anything to go by."

Nagisa: *Beat. Casually stares at Kato.* "I'm actually far more concerned about my nausea of the radical driving to come."

Itona: *Reads through the book as well, but can't help but notice that Yoshida's arms are shaking considerably.* "Nervous, Yoshida-san?"

Yoshida: "Uh... Are you?"

Itona: "I have no room for doubt in this contest."

Yoshida: "Really now?"

Itona: "If I did, I would've conceded right now, like I did with the God of Death."

Yoshida: *Beat.* "Reassuring."

Irina: *Steps up in front of the first and second racers, brandishing two flags. As she counts, the screen cuts to all eight cars.* "Alright! Three! Two! One! Gogogo!" *Swings down with all of her might. The cars speed past her.*

-"Just Say Yeah" by Kaioh plays in everyone of AssUniv's heads as they drive.-

Nagisa: *Man, somehow I knew this would happen.*

Yoshida: *Can't say it's not getting me pumped though.*

Itona: *I do say it's rather fitting.*

Kato: *Time to do this then!*

Team Kato/Nagisa are quick to overtake most of their leaders, already drifting to keep their line and reach fourth, playing level speed with Team Yoshida/Itona. Kato and Yoshida exchange gestures that seemingly approve Kato's overtaking, bringing him third, behind Sagawa and Shirashiki. The first wild turn, which has Kurahashi and one race queen on the other side of the street hold up large white signs that read "Hard left here!" sees every racer get through, but Yoshida nearly skids into a passing, uninvolved car. The helmeted driver takes their broken line, now being just behind Kato, Shirashiki and Sagawa.

Sagawa tries to cut through Shirashiki's right in order to pass, but the latter switches lanes, forcing Sagawa to retreat briefly. Kato takes a chance and moves forward as well, but is cut off again, leading to the runner-ups to be at the same level. Kato sees a car he will collide with in his lane, and so is forced to take a U-turn gap to drive on the other side. Despite Nagisa's queasiness,
Kato shows no fear dodging every incoming vehicle, though leaving a honking steel mess in his wake. He manages to use the smoothened curb in an oncoming curve to jump into the lead.

Yoshida, who had to slow down during the previous turn, is now second to last as Osada swiftly pushed forward. The former Slowly picks up the face and sees Osada in his crosshairs, but then all racers come across the next heavy turn from the queens, prompting a large U-turn. Yoshida stays in line by hugging the back at turning much quicker than all others, which helps them pass three others, including Osada and returning to form. When they try to get closer, however, the car in front of them makes a hard brake, almost to hit them! Yoshida manages to evade with a small bump and scrapes, but there is definitely some issues.

The helmeted driver notices the screeching noise behind her and slows down to meet them. Kato no longer sees the Jaguar in his mirrors, and realizes too that something is wrong. With a little of Nagisa's requesting, he drifts down, allowing the two racers to pass him. He finally sees Yoshida, being pinned down by one driver's aggression. Kato looks at the helmet, eyes to visor, and they both agree to pin the car; Kato lines up in front while the latter takes the left, pushing him all the way to the right, and Yoshida gets to pass... Along with Osada.

They resume the contest, which reaches the third and penultimate hard right spin, notified by Yada. Kato quickly realizes by the fact that the two leaders slow down that it isn't just a twist; they're going down a hill. Kato follows suit as the rounding comes around, as does helmet and Yoshida, but then the driver they ousted earlier bumps the back of Yoshida's car, keeping him from curtailing. The helmeted driver sees it and commits to its turn early, despite the pleas of the passenger navigator. While in the pure sideways drift state, the car's tail bumper nicks the hood of the aggressor's, causing him to move out to the left and stabilizing Yoshida's pace. He then whips his wheel clockwise, and lands on the bottom properly, though the speed of the Jaguar causes it to hit his hull a bit as well.

The final turn, within view now, merges with the 100 m stretch that comes directly after, and by then Yoshida has taken third, while Kato and helmet are behind, guarding against future attacks. Osada's slow-pace driving up until now creates a brooding effect that AssUniv feel, and while Kato and helmet's nerves of steel leave them unaffected, Yoshida is having trouble, and his wheels wobble. The former preserve his line, shifting him properly into drift route on the turn.

Yoshida takes full advantage of the rounding, giving him the perfect merge and make a beeline sprint with maximum possible speed. With Kato and the helmeted driver covering his back bumper and flanks, Yoshida had no trouble blowing past both Sagawa and Shirashiki, making full use of the Ferrari's intense top speeds, and through the finish line.

-The song ends just as all of the cars pile up around the crowded area.-

Nagisa: "Awesome! Yoshida won it!"

Kato: "That he did. Go on and celebrate with your friends." *Gets out of the car with him.

Nagisa heads over to Yoshida and Itona, while the Girls from a spectating car pulls over near them. He subtly notices the Jaguar making itself scarce, but pays no further mind for the abrupt ally as he walks over to Sagawa.* "Well, Sagawa-san, it looks like we prevailed."

Sagawa: "...Of course you did..."

Kato: "Yep. Now, spill it. What did you and your colleagues come across," *Checks his watch.* "Two years ago?"
Sagawa: *Looks at him.* "Alright; I concede. I'm allegedly, indirectly, responsible for stopping an old guy's heart as I passed by, barely missing him in a speedy run. I've been thinking about the incident ever since, and that's why me and management agree to have race queens be sidewalk watch when we can spare it."

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "That's not at all what we were hoping to hear."

???: "Perhaps that's because the truth is not one that can be spoken here." *Someone in decorated racing fatigues walks up to them.* "Hello, little guy. My name is Fuse."

Kato: *Looks past his height-related insult.* "I'm presuming how you spoke implies you know what I'm talking about?"

Fuse: "Indeed I do. Sagawa was not the guy you were looking for; just a poor, talented sod I've been training and overseeing."

Sagawa: "What was that, old man!?" *Beat.* "Wait, 'talented'? Oh okay, we're good."

Fuse: "The truth is, I've had a run-in with a certain someone. Maybe the person you are looking for. He knew what he was talking about, similar to us; a great success brings about a great challenge; one that we must face to keep it. If we had ever again found something that could be that challenge, it would present us with someone that we should focus on. And though you didn't win the race, I sense there's a huge ambition in you."

Kato: *Stares at him determinedly.*

Fuse: "...Right. Well, and that person should be given this." *He takes an envelope out of his inner blazer pocket and hands it to Kato.* "This is what I was given two years ago. I hope this will help you in your search."

Kato: "Thanks. Also, do you happen to recall what the courie-"

- The sirens of police automobiles come into focus, pulling over not too far from the racing circle. -

Officer: "This is the Saitama police! Hands in the air!"

Sagawa: "Shit! Cops! You have a wire, boy!?"

Kato: "No! Not at all!"

Fuse: "Let's just get out of here!"

Kato: "GUYS! Get in the car!" *He yells to Yoshida, Itona, and Nagisa, who all get into the 488. When confronted, Irina pulls out her Ministry badge in front of the cops, covering for herself, Yada, and Kurahashi. Kato sprints back to his McLaren, hip-tossing one close cop to buy him some time. He then drives off in a brief chase to lose the pursuing authorities. After a little while, he shook them off.* Good... *Looks at the envelope he has received.* Maybe someone else should see this... *He takes out his flip phone and dials a number.*

Helmeted Driver: *Has also evaded the police, and is residing in a dark alleyway inside the Jaguar car.* Phew... It was bad enough I had to watch Yoshida-san's back through all that. Now
I'm a fugitive. Just great. *Notices the phone ringing.* Hm? What's this?
Showdown Space

Chapter Summary

One dragrace later, and AssUnive is one step closer to finding Dr. Yanagisawa. But where will it take them now?

-Back at Norio Kato's Kanagawa home, where all of AssUniv regathered...-

Kataoka: "You three got to be race queens?"

Yada: "Yeah! It was pretty fun!"

Irina: "Pff, if you could even call it that. The attires were anything but."

Okajima: *Nosebleeds.* "We really missed out..."

Sugino: "But you did get what we needed to keep this up, right?"

Kato: "Indeed we did." *Sets down the piece of paper from Fuse's envelope.* "The clue right here. Irina-sensei and I had the time to look it over on the way here, and we are pretty certain of who they mean."

Hayami: "Who?"

Nagisa: "It looks to be that none of the leads are coming from messages hidden in walls; they all come from people. We got the first one from the Yanagisawas, and we got this one from the dragracing manager. It's likely the next one will be given to us from another person, who is an inverse representation of another stage of Dr. Yanagisawa's downfall."

Fuwa: "Damn, it's like extremely high-stakes The Amazing Race."

Isogai: "Except I don't think it will take us any further from Saitama. Again, it's not like a bedridden man can go very far, right?"

Maehara: "I think we're starting to doubt that statement now."

Kato: "I think we should start with Izumo, and go from there regardless. Any final thoughts?" *Waits for a few seconds.* "Okay then, let's figure out who's coming with me and Irina-sensei," *Checks his watch.* "The next morning?"

Karasuma: "What? We're not alternating, Irina?"

Irina: *Stammers.* "Uh, well, I, eheh-"

Kato: *Answers for her.* "She realized I have three different Lamborghini cars in one of my lockups, and she's all too eager to drive it, especially now that we're all but certain we will be
returning to roughly the same area."

Karasuma: *Beat.* "Oh..."

Yoshida: "Wait, she didn't come with us to your garage there. How did she-"

Irina: "While you guys were fast asleep on the train, it came up while he and I were deciphering."

Karasuma: "It sounds like you and him are really hitting it off now."

Irina: *Sighs.* "Come on, Karasuma-sama; don't get jealous. You don't get to be; it's the lady's job!"

Kato: "Is it?"

Kataoka: "Yeah, is it?" *Scratches her head.*

Isogai: "That aside, who's next to explore?"

-The team was arranged in the minutes following. In addition to Kato and Irina, there would be Kayano, Sugino, Okajima, Mimura, Isogai, and Kanzaki. One good night later, and they were back on the 1.5-hour train to get to Fujimi once more.-

Irina: *Sits in the same booth as Kato, who is looking out the window on the clear, sunny day.* Thanks for the cover last night, Kato-kun.

Kato: That's great and all, but I wish more for your reticence of, *Checks his watch.* Last night. I hope that served some further incentive.

Irina: I already told you, I'd keep it a secret. Geez, you kids; no faith in your elders. *Crosses her arms and looks away from him.*

Kato: *Holds his head as his arm maintains elbow support on the window sill. He then starts remembering what transpired then...*-

-While still in Saitama Prefecture...-

Helmeted Driver: *Sits on the hood of the Jaguar F-Type that was operated during the race. It eventually notices Kato, in his McLaren, pull up next to it.*

Kato: *Gets out of his car.* "We only got, *Checks his watch.* A few minutes. Let's get down to it."

Helmeted Driver: *She steps off the car and takes off the motorcycle helmet, unraveling her chestnut hair.* "You have a new lead?"

Kato: "Yes, Naoko-san." *Pulls the envelope out of his back pocket. He opens it up and unfolds the letter, written almost identically to the back of the postcard that the Yanagisawa family had given him.* "Let's take a look, shall we?"
Revenge is a dish best served cold... As was implied in my job description, I never should have served it at all. I suppose I just envy a population that can do that on an asphalt platter. If only they can just spare me now. - Kotaro

Kato: "So the second thing he lost was revenge..."

Naoko: "Pardon?"

Kato: "When I was given this clue, Fuse inexplicably talked about how he had been forming his career within the dragracing community, and that the person he came across was a threat to it. Unlike Dr. Yanagisawa, he handled it properly."

Naoko: "So... If we're to solve the puzzles, we must do what he didn't? The ego on that guy."

Kato: "I suppose you, like your peers, still aren't so close to him."

Naoko: "He put me in the hospital, and catalyzed our teacher's death. I think that's just ordinary."

Kato: "Maybe."

Naoko: "So, what could he possibly be meaning here?"

Kato: "It seems to indicate that what's next isn't as professional; no suits or coats, like dragracing can have."

Naoko: "Hmm, that's a wild analysis."

Kato: "Most professional occupations don't really allow their employees to stick it like Dr. Yanagisawa tried to, without the consequences he also faced as a result. Take your position, for instance; you can't outwardly oppose your government, yeah?"

Naoko: *Gets ticked.* "Shut up." *Refocuses.* "So, not something that takes place in a building, but not driving either. It's still a street job, judging by the 'asphalt platter,' so who else could we be looking for?"

Kato: *Thinks.* "Hmm..." *Smirks.*

Naoko: "What? You got something?"

Kato: "Look for us in the public park, *Checks his watch.* Tomorrow morning. I'm going to affirm my hypothesis. *Puts away the letter and envelope back into his inner jacket pocket.*"

Naoko: "Oh, like you can't tell me now?" *Sighs.* "But I guess that was never really your strong suit." *Stretches her arms and sides.* "Well, I guess our time is up. I better get this Jaguar car back, and return to my Hayabusa..."

???: *Their voice projects from behind them.* "Oh really? Why's that?"

Kato/Naoko: "!!" *Look behind, and find Irina, still clad in her "race queen" gear.* "Irina-sensei!?"
Irina: *Behind her is a dragracing management van, which she had commandeered after calling off the cops and went around searching for the Guys who were forced to flee.* "I see you're getting outside help for these cases. That's good, except when your sources are foreign. Too foreign."

Kato/Naoko: *Metaphorical sweat marks fall down in reaction to the irony of that statement.*

Naoko: *Refocusses.* "Irina-neesan, I can explain."

Irina: *Holds out her hand.* "Speak no more."

Naoko: "!!"

Irina: "If Karasuma-sama comes to me asking, I don't have to lie... Too much."

Naoko: *Forms a small smile and bows.* "Thank you, oneechan."

Irina: "But, if and when he does find out, he's not going to be very pleased. And not just because you're here, mind you.*Crosses arms and eyes Kato.* "You're here, after all."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "Not like I can control that."

Irina: "Very true. Okay, I'm going to try my hardest to get the heat off you guys, including the rest of the kids. Looks like we're going to have to rely on the two of you a lot anyways, but y'all can't focus if you're being smothered by them all the time."

Kato/Naoko: "Thank you."

-End of remembrance.-

Kato: *Refocusses on the present time, first by checking his watch to see it is 10:50 A.M., and then finding that the train has now arrived at Fujimi.*

Okajima: *Snaps photos through his own window.* "Damn, Saitama looks just as lively as the rest of the Greater Tokyo Area." *Looks over to the rest of AssUniv.* "Any chance we might be able to see the Thirteen Buddhas?"

Kayano: "Not the time right now, Okajima-san; we got a mission on our hands."

Sugino: "Heh, why should we? Kyoto already has more than enough of them."

Kanzaki: "The temples in Saitama are especially noteworthy, if I recall. But the one of Great Buddha a fair distance from Kato's uncle's home is probably even greater. I would very much like to see that before we depart too."

Mimura: "Maybe we can when we get back."

Karma: "Give a good prayer that we all get through this while we're at it."

-The train comes to a halt.* "Okay, let's go."

-AssUniv gets off the locomotive and gets out of the station.-
Isogai: "Kato-kun, which way?"

Kato: *Takes a quick scope around, pointing towards a street.* "The park in mind should be this way."

Okajima: "No no no... Where's the Lamborghinis?"

Kato: *Remembers that he told AssUniv that he had the Lamborghini vehicles in Saitama. Which explained why he had a memory of Yoshida and Itona going nuts that they did not get the draws to come around this time.* "Ah... Well, this way then." *Leads them to a perpendicular street.*

Irina: *Follows a fair distance behind them, allowing herself to audibly whisper,* Yes!!

-At the garage...-

Kato: *Gets out of the elevator.* "Here we are." *Lights illuminate a Lamborghini Gallardo LP 550-2, Huracan LP 640-4, and Aventador LP 700-4.*

Sugino: *Eyes bulge out.* "Damn; you weren't joking!"

Kayano: "You realize only now, Sugino-san?" *Laughs.*

Sugino: "I didn't doubt he had them, but not all of them in one place like this."

Mimura: "And this is only one lockup. He's got hundreds more, possibly with a dozen others!"

Kato: "Not quite; these are about a third of the total I own. No doubt because Lamborghini doesn't produce too many of their cars."

Irina: "So... Beautiful..." *Caresses the windshield and hood of the Gallardo.*

Kato: "Be sure to enjoy these moments, guys. We'll be taking an SUV when we get out of here." *Much to the "aws" of the guys and Irina.*

-And so, in a Cadillac Escalade, AssUniv went their way towards Katsusehara Memorial Park.-

Kato: *Takes a turn which makes the park come within view.* "There it is."

Kayano: "What makes you think wha- I mean who we're looking for would be here?"

Irina: "Yeah, I'm kind of stumped on that, too."

Kato: *Continues to look at the park, with its attractions and playground parts reflecting the sunlight.* "..."

Isogai: *Nudges Kato.* "Hey; you there, man?"

Kato: *Refocuses.* "Yeah.. Yeah." *Takes a turn to cut the next corner of the perimeter of the park.* "I just... Felt something for a second." Almost... An out-of-body experience with this place...

Sugino: "You're creeping us out, Kato-kun. Let's just get this over with."
They park on one of the adjacent streets. Moving past the kids playing around in the more colorful section, AssUniv advances to the trails of benches.

Kanzaki: *Notices some of the children running around, goading their parents and/or grandparents.* "Heheh, I remember that being such a norm."

Sugino: *Looks the same way.* "Oh? Back when we were just adolescents that had no care in the world?"

Kanzaki: "Yes. And our older relatives had to take care for us. Raise us, help get us through anything we came across."

Kato/Irina: "Yeah, if we're lucky..." *Scratches the backs of their heads, remembering their parents-away problems.*

Kanzaki: *Refocuses.* "But now here we are, with more developed, matured minds, and we can see now that our parents are starting to become less able to take care of themselves, let alone us. And though they all put us through some tough times, I still feel I want to help them, as well as many of the struggling, as best I can. If not out of obligation, then out of joy; the joy to see sights like that go on."

Mimura: "That's why you're wanting to become a caregiver, right?"

Kanzaki: *Holds her chest.* "Yeah... A nurse, to nurture the ones who have nurtured. Help them become their own nurturers too, if Fate permits."

Kayano: *Pounces Kanzaki from behind, slightly shocking her.* "It seems reservation harbors ambition, with a promise of altruism, hm?"

Kanzaki: *Blushes.* "Kayano-san, please don't tease me like that."

Kato: * Notices AssUniv's small scene while he remains vigilant of any special details. During his search, he notices a certain white motorcycle, with a helmeted operator standing nearby. *You came across a very good bunch, Naoko-san. *Looks aside, seeing three high school students crowding around, perhaps dealing something.* Drugs? Oh, they better not be... *Walks over to them.* "Hey! You three! What have you all got there?"

HS Student 1: *He, along with his two acquaintances quickly turn to face him.* "What's it to you?"

HS Student 2: "A-anyway, why would we tell?"

HS Student 3: "Y-you really need to mind your own business, sir!"

Kato: * Kids... Never do something without compensation. They don't deserve my bloodlust... *Tucks his hand into the inner pocket of his Calvin Klein moto jacket.* "You really want to start something, you three?"

HS Students: He's got a piece!? "Okay, okay! It's ad-fliers!"
Kato: *Takes his hand out of his jacket.* "Ad-fliers?"

HS Student 2: "Y-yeah! We're promoting an event happening tonight."

Kato: "What kind?"

HS Student 3: "Dance! B-boy dancing mostly."

HS Student 2: "A-and these fliers had a redeemable for 1000 yen of their merch!"

Kato: "I see... Give me one." *Takes it when a nervous hand gravitates towards him.* "And you wouldn't happen to be using this to deal anything else, right?"

HS Student 1: "W-what? No! No, we're not. It ain't cool anymore anyways!"

HS Student 3: "Sir, my older bro is losing himself on those kinds of things now! No way I'm making that mistake!"

Kato: "Good. Then you guys can go." *Leaves, returning to AssUniv, looking at the flier.* "Hey, everybody."

Isogai: "Hm? Found something pertaining to our mission?"

Kato: "I believe so. We just need to show up here..." *Checks his watch.* "Six hours from now."

Okajima: "Very well! Let's go see the temples then!"

-Six hours later...-

-AssUniv return to Katsusehara, and find that the bulk of the population there have now formed a large mass, all facing something.-

Sugino: "That's the dance meet-up!"

Okajima: "Yep, you can definitely tell with the blaring electro and disco music."

Kato: *Definitely feels like home... But I've never lived here before. So weird...*

Irina: "Anyway, let's go have a talk with some of the organizers."

-AssUniv sneaks to the backstage of the area, where the sound team and the management resided.-

Isogai: *Notices one dancer on the dance-floor pulling off a long string of Taisuke Criticals.* "Wow, these guys have got some serious moves."

Mimura: "Their camerawork is extraordinary too; me and Okajima-san will definitely have to look out for more of these meets sometime."

Irina: "Hey; who's in charge here?"

Manager: *Notices the student-assassins and their two mentors. He walks over to them.* "That
would be me. But you all shouldn't be here. Besides, backstage isn't as fun as the media makes it out to be."

Kato: "What's your name, sir? This is a very important matter."

Midorikawa: "M-Midorikawa. An important matter? Are we being shut down in this venue?"

Kato: "No; this is about," *Checks his watch.* "Two years ago, and it wasn't your fault, or your label's."

Midorikawa: "What even does that mean?"

Kayano: "You seem not too kind towards strangers."

Midorikawa: "Well that's what happens when they show up so suddenly on established ground!"

Kayano: "Even so, you seem extra cautious. Has someone similar done the same to you and/or your crew?"

Dancer: *One, probably in his early twenties like Kato and the student-assassins are, reaches the back of the venue, energy drink in hand. He slouches onto his manager's shoulder when he arrives.* "Hey, Midorikawa! What's going on here? Unruly fans?"

Midorikawa: "It's alright, Hide. We're just settling a matter of business; it doesn't include you."

Kanzaki: *Hide...?*

Hide: *Hm?* *Notices her.* *Oh...*

Kato: "Hide, have you been with Midorikawa long?"

Hide: "Huh? Well, yeah you can say that. I suppose this just shows how close we are."

Kayano: "Which means you two did see something, right? Two years ago?"

Hide: "Two years ago..." *Thinks.*

Midorikawa: "Hey, we're not at liberty to discuss the personal matters of this label, and its faculty, like Hide."

Hide: *Scoffs.* "Not without a challenge, maybe. How about it, though? If I place second in one of my favorite arcade games after this, we'll tell you what we know."

Sugino: "We can take you up on that. Kato-kun, show him your moves!"

Hide: "Uh-uh; I get to pick the opponent. And I choose... You." *Points at Kanzaki.*

Kanzaki: "!!" *The rest of AssUniv are taken aback.*

Hide: "I think you know why, don't you, miss?"

Kanzaki: *Refocuses, taking up a determined expression.* "Indeed I do. Where is your game?"
Hide: *Looks to the right, pointing with his drink still in hand.* "Club Saga, one block that way. Wait for me there."

Kanzaki: *Steps forward.* "I will."

-The two factions leave each other to their own devices, in which AssUniv all situate at the large arcade. All eyes are on Kanzaki as she studies the specialized DDR machine that they'll most likely play on.-

Kayano: "Is it safe to say you knew of this Hide guy back during your gaming days, Kanzaki-san?"

Kanzaki: *Nods, and sighs sadly.* "That is true. And he's half the reason why my gaming affected my academic abilities towards the end of my second year in Kunugigaoka. the other half was myself being proud enough to keep at it."

Sugino: "Keep at what, Kanzaki-san?"

Kanzaki: *Looks back at them.* "When I went to the arcade, I didn't leave thinking I was going to come back time and time again. I wanted to go just enough times to get away from responsibility, kind of like someone else in my family... And when you have a knack for games, you tend to leave your mark there - high scores. But then, they started getting taken down. By someone with the letters "H-I-D." I became determined to change that, and so while practicing on a DDR machine much like this, I actually came across HID, known as Hide. We had a dance competition, and he won almost flawlessly. His... Arrogant remarks, coupled with my more aggressive demeanor back then, made me strive to beat him." *Looks down.* "But I was unable to do so before sacrificing studying time, and caught some unwanted attention..."

Kayano: *Remembers the high school students who kidnapped Kanzaki and herself while they were in Kyoto, who had an image of Kanzaki in her rebel attire on the dance machine.*

Kanzaki: "And, of course, my fallout with school, dropping me into the E Class. My motivation lessened, and soon I forgot all about him. Until now."

Sugino: "Oh... I'm sorry, Kanzaki-san."

Kanzaki: *Cheers up with a small smile.* "It's alright, Sugino-san. It led to me meeting you and the rest of the AssClass."

Sugino: *Blushes madly.* "Ah- Yeah! It did! Heheh..."

Kato: "So now you want to settle the score?"

Kanzaki: *Looks determined.* "In one of my last acts as a delinquent... I'm going to take care of this." *For my grandmother!*

Mimura: "So badass..."

Irina: "That's my longtime student."

-AssUniv waits a little longer beforeHide shows up. After a brief encounter, they take their places
on the dance-pads. They also put on specialized wristbands and anklets, which will capture the extra movements they can make in addition to their d-pad presses, boosting their score. Once fully calibrated, the randomizer selects the hardest difficulty, with the track "The Lost One's Weeping" by Neru.-

Mimura: "You can do this, Kanzaki-san!"

Kayano: "We believe in you!"

Sugino: "Yeah; all the way!"

Kanzaki: *Nods to them, seconds before the song starts. She takes one sideways glance to Hide, who gives her a rival's grin. And then the battle starts, with them smashing an imaginary guitar.*

神崎由紀子 VS 秀樹

Yukiko Kanzaki; Doshisha University General Nursing Student

VS

Hide[ki]; B-boy

During the contest, in which Kanzaki and Hide both flawlessly get through the prompts that appear on the screen, while also adding twists, flicks, and all other sorts of optional flair to their routines. For instance, During a slower section, Kanzaki manages to simulate a windmill twirl into a no-handed cartwheel that perfectly syncs to the next pad-press, while Hide does the same with freeze handstands.

Kanzaki: *Ah, the lyrics of this song... If this was me before AssClass, I would most definitely falter. *She sees Hide go down for elbow pops, before stopping in a single armchair freeze, then backflipping.* But I'm beyond outside circumstances like those. So long as I get to dance, so long as I can play, so long... *Sprawls down into a turtle backspin, leaning just enough so that her body can compress the plates. She eventually transitions into a double-handed L-freeze, handspringing backward back into her standing position to stomp the hold prompt with authority.* So long as I can care for the people I hold dear, and I continue to do so, then it matters not where I was before.

- The song ends with the both of them settling in the same pose.-

Kanzaki: *I just needed to be reminded of that.* *Smiles at the screen, while AssUniv applause with great audacity.* "Well, who took care of who, Hide-kun?" *Looks over to him.*

Hide: "Let's see." *Motions over to the monitors. The scores read, for HID, 95720.* "Damn, missed three and two bads."

Kanzaki: *Oh no, I know I missed two.* *But then, KAN's score is revealed, being 95750. She is
beyond relieved.*

Sugino: "She did it!" *Raises two fists with fury.*

Kayano: "Damn right she did!" *Hypes it up with Sugino at arm's reach.*

Kato: *Crosses his arms with satisfaction.* That was rad.

Manager: *Slowly claps.* "That was a great contest, the two of you. Nothing to be ashamed of for that display, Hide."

Hide: *Nods.* "Yeah, you're right." *Turns to Kanzaki, offering a handshake.* "It may be just my shifting focus, but I'm glad to see I've inspired a superior opponent."

Kanzaki: *Smiles fully as well, accepting the respectful gesture.*

Midorikawa: *Goes over to Isogai.* "Hide and I did come across someones two years ago. They left us with this." *Pulls out another envelope and hands it to him.*

Isogai: *Takes it.* "Hm, just like the one from the racers previously."

Hide: *Steps off the machine.* "Whoa-oh! We don't need to know. Have fun, kids." *Departs with Midorikawa.*

Irina: *Waits for them to leave.* "Heh, we can worry about the specifics later; let's head back to Kanagawa after a long day."

-On a car ride home...-

Kanzaki: *Was so exhausted from her brief ordeal, that she was feeling lightheaded on the journey back to the train station. Without risking anything, they decide to take Kato's SUV back; she's been sleeping in the backseat, along with Sugino and Isogai. Okajima and the rest are behind them in the trunk seats, cramped as they are.*

Irina: *Looks back from the shotgun seat.* "Who says Kanzaki has bad luck with guys?"

Sugino: *Gazes at Irina with slight disappointment.* "S-sensei!"

Kayano: So envious~...

Kato: *Looks back for a bit while driving away.* "..."

-Some time later, in Tokyo's suburban district...-

-A male lawyer looks through the news in one household, while the lady of the house goes out to fetch the mail. One particular envelope intrigues her, though...-

Kanzaki's mother: "Akihisa, take a look at this." *Slides the letter over to him on the dining table.*

Kanzaki's father: "What is-" *Reads the ID on the envelope. He then swiftly snatches it and thoroughly reads the letter's contents.* Dear Mr. and Mrs. Kanzaki...
I'd first like to thank you both for allowing your young daughter to continue her work with myself and Mr. Karasuma. I am very certain, as a person with family values myself, that it was not an easy decision to make. Regardless, you two may still be preoccupied for Miss Kanzaki; if not for the present dangers, then for her future. I'd like to put those fears to rest now; at the conclusion of our missions, and her graduation from college and nursing school, she will have no problem finding proper work in the Kansai Region, should you let her live that fair distance away. She may refuse when I do indeed tell her this, but you all will know that this offer will always be on the table; as a head start, or a fallback. - KO

Kanzaki's father: "Hmm..."

Kanzaki's mother: "Do you think it's any cause for concern?"

Kanzaki's father: *Shakes his head.* "I don't think so. Our Kanzaki is in good hands, even if mysterious." *Closes the letter.*

-Back in Fujiya Hotel...-

Kanzaki: *Sleeps peacefully on her bed, as if a great, familiar weight has been alleviated from her chest. Sugino, who had carried her from the car, passed out upon completion of his assignment and rested on the floor below.*
Chapter Summary

Third clue time! Oh wait, intermission first?

-Back at the Sheraton (Due to the... Lack of room in a old-time summer house, AssUniv are resting out of danger in yet another hotel, and their base of operations will be Norio's home) in Kanagawa, it has been announced that AssUniv will be taking a free day tomorrow, as the bulk of the student-assassins are beginning to feel fatigue from the constant to-and-from that this mission entailed. They are about to ask Kato how exactly he could live doing this for almost half his life, and then realize... That is Kato they are talking about.-

-Kato, in his hotel room, is currently interacting through a secure online chatroom with some of his kyoudai across Japan's many regions. On the top of the member's list include usernames akin to Miho, Satoshi, Bishop, Peja, and Michael.-

   Kato: *Types.* "Have any of the Reclamation Society's Big Three turned up on our or Qita Kong's grid?"

   Miho: "Not in Kyoto, boss. :]

   Satoshi: "Nothing new, as of returning to Osaka."

   Bishop: "The Hokkaido region is clear. <3"

   Michael: "No word in Okinawa. >_<"

   Kato: "Alright. Stay vigilant, everyone. For the first time, we're in the lead of this Shadow War; let's keep it that way."

   Bishop: "Boss sir, not that I doubt the ability of your friends, but are a bunch of kids really the key to this? :L"

   Kato: *Coyly scoffs, before typing.* "Bishop-san... I'm the same age as them."

   Michael: "HAHA. good point, Oyabun. ;D"

   Kato: "And also, as we recall, they are the ones who stopped a global antimatter crisis," *Hesitates while typing.* "Four years ago. When they were in their teens. They can hold their own."

   Miho: "Even so, watch yourself, Kato-ani. My soldier's intuition tells me there are going to be trying times ahead. For a lot of us, if not all of us."

   Kato: "I understand. Thank you, Miho. [bow emote]"
Satoshi: "Is the meeting adjourned?"

Kato: "For now. Keep your bluetooth pieces charged and on, everyone." *Closes his laptop. He then slouches back on his chair, before going for a clove cigarette. One is in his mouth before his flip-phone rang. He picks it up.* Naoko-san? What is she calling for? Doesn't matter; better respond before she calls a hundred times.* Answers.* "Naoko-san? What's up?"

Naoko: *Voice only.* "Kato-kun. You're in Kanagawa prefecture right now, right?"

Kato: "Yeah... I mean, I did tell you we were based here for the time being, right?"

Naoko: "Yeah you did. That's good though, because I'm there too."

Hyun: *Distantly.* "Me too."

Kato: *Sits upright.* "Whoa, Hyun? You're out of Kyoto's Qita Kong?"

Hyun: *Sounds of taking the phone quickly.* "Right, Kato-kun. And I'm here for some crucial details."

Naoko: *Takes it back.* "We'll be waiting for you at the Qita Kong in this city. Get there first thing tomorrow morning."

Kato: "Very well." *Nods.* "Well then," *Checks his watch.* "Goodnight." *Closes his flip-phone.* Important details, she says? It might be about the Society...

-The AssUniv members all take their long-due rest for the night. True to his word, as soon as light dawned on Mt. Fuji, he got ready, took one of his parked cars from the garage, and went for the High Street.-

-Meanwhile, the rest of AssUniv have awoken, and are having breakfast in the dining hall downstairs. Their large class size is divided between several six-seated circular tables.-

Isogai: "Wow, this is a prime, prime batch of bacon. What a luxury!" *Can't get enough of it.*

Kataoka: *Metaphorical sweat drops.* "Isogai-kun, stop putting some pieces into a wrap of napkin; your family is not in that much trouble anymore..." *Politely grabs the concealing.*

Terasaka: "Mm, you're telling me though. These sausage patties are absolutely enamoring."

Karma: "I hope this brownie hasn't been laced; I'm happy little Terasaka is learning new words!"

Sugino: *Distant from the initial conversation and with two filled plates of scrambled eggs and home fries in both hands, he offers one to Kanzaki and sits down across from her.* "This should get you through an exhausting night, Kanzaki-san."

Kanzaki: *Bows in her chair slightly.* "Thank you, Sugino-san." *They both clap their hands, give a quick prayer, and enjoy.*

Kayano: *Looks longingly over to the two of them.* Soooooo envious~~~...

Nagisa: *Metaphorical sweat marks fall down the back of his head as he pats the green-haired
girl's upper back.* There there, Kayano-san.

Karazuma/Irina: *Walk over to the tables housing AssUniv as they are enjoying their breakfast.*

Maehara: *Notices them.* "Uh oh, everyone; get ready. We're about to have very crucial information dropped on us."

Okano: *Throws her baked breakfast burrito onto her platter with legitimate frustration.* "Oh, Goddamnit! Just this once, can we have a nice rest day to ourselves?"

Irina: "Jesus, you guys need to calm down! Nothing major this time."

Nakamura: "Really?"

Karazuma: "Affirmative. Just something optional; I got a call from Kato's uncle; he says that he and his nephew have recently permitted Dr. Yanagisawa's family to reside in the Summer House that we're planning at. I figure it's because it's been made all but clear that the Doctor himself is somewhere in the Greater Tokyo Area."

Karma: "So they're going to be listening in as we plan out everything?"

Kataoka: "Yeah, that sounds a little sketchy to me. They could still be spies."

Yada: "Hey, come on guys, we've made the mistake of accusing people who have been helping us before. And some of them are sitting here with us right now."

AssUniv: *All eye Kayano, then Kayano's phone (Ritsu), then Itona, and then Irina.*

Fuwa: "That is definitely true. Also, Kato's Yakuza family will know if something's up in their own establishment first; that's to be expected in something of a small PMC-esque faction like them."

Karazuma: "That's right. So, in this rest day, I think it's best we calm their nerves about today as well; also to see if they have any further to say about this crucial matter."

Kurahashi: "Ohoh, honey-trap talking, hm?"

Hazama: "What are we to find?"

Irina: "Nothing truly. Maybe it might help to know again why they're helping us or something like that."

Isogai: *Thinks a bit about the passive assignment.* "Okay, I guess we're up for that. Right, everyone? Ready to kill it?"

Kayano: "..."

Karma: *Looks around.* "Hey, where's Kato-kun?"

Irina: "!!" *Looks around subtly.* He's doing something with Naoko-san, isn't he?

Karazuma: "Irina, something up?"
Irina: "Hm?" *Refocuses.* "Ah! No, just as curious where that little Yakuza is as everybody else." *Those two will be the end of me...*

-While they finish their meals and head over to Norio's vacation home, Kato makes it to Kanagawa Prefecture's regional Qita Kong. Unlike the main hub in Kyoto, this one was very much not a looker. Kato made sure not to step into mysterious substances as he made his way through the alleyways and lingual checkpoints. Finally, he reached the Korean sector, and rendezvoused with Hyun and Naoko. -

Kato: *Steps into the room.* "Hyun; Naoko-san, I'm here." *Looks over to the two of them, noticing that Hyun is donning his Noh Theatre mask.* "What are you doing, wearing that in here?"

Hyun: "Had to do some outside shopping. Couldn't afford to let the public see me. I still don't think I'm safe, even in here."

Naoko: *Crosses her arms.* "I don't think you've got anything to worry about; I've been operating just fine without having to conceal my face."

Hyun: *Hesitately pulls off his red visor.* "I've not the youth and the time to take the chance. And your superiors probably would not kill you if they caught you, Naoko-san, unlike myself."

Kato: *Stares at Naoko.* "Easy there, Hyun. Naoko-san can't handle the darker aspect of defense agencies; for her, ignorance is bliss."

Naoko: "Why, you...

Kato: *Looks over to Hyun.* "Now, Hyun, why did you call me over here? Better yet, why are you here? I don't think the damage done to Kyoto's sector has been repaired yet."

Hyun: "No, no it hasn't. But they don't need me to help them keep calm and carry on. Rather, I'm here because Naoko-san believes there is something I can do here that would be crucial for you two's efforts. Something only I can do."

Kato: "What might that be?"

-Meanwhile, at Norio Kato's vacation home...-

-The Yanagisawa family has quickly settled in at the large hideout, tidying up the areas AssUniv has recently pushed everything aside to so that they had enough room for planning and briefing. The student-assassins themselves were lending a hand to such an effort, while also chatting up the separated relatives. -

-For instance, in the dining room, where Amaya was preparing a platter of hand-stirred lemonade for the workers. Kayano, Yada, Kanzaki, and Okuda were helping her distribute them. -

Okuda: *Hesitates a bit, with her pitcher hand levitating upright, before breaking the silence.* "Henceforth-

Y. Amaya: *Looks over to her.* "Huh?"

Okuda: "Is something amiss?"
Y. Amaya: "Were you talking to me, uh, Okuda?"

Okuda: "I beg your- I mean, yes, I was."

Y. Amaya: "Very well. What about?"

Kayano/Kanzaki/Yada: *Listen attentively as they continue to perform their tasks.*

Okuda: "Perhaps we can discuss, say, interests, even in the former sense?"

Y. Amaya: "'Interests?' Do you mean hobbies?"

Okuda: "You can describe it as such."

Y. Amaya: "Ah. Well, as you know, the family was once big in the medical trade. That kind of took up the bulk of our time, since knowledge in biology, human biology specifically, is always in demand."

Okuda: "That went without statement."

Y. Amaya: "So, to answer your question, never really got into hobbies. Sorry I'm a boring-enough person, Okuda."

Okuda: "Do not apologize for something like such. More than enough souls have already."

*Bows to her, before leaving with a platter of eight servings of lemonade.*

Y. Amaya: ...Wait, what did she mean by that...!?\n
Kayano: If you guys "weren't so occupied," maybe you could've kept your son in check! *Grips one of the lemonade containers noticeably more firmly. the integrity of the glass itself seemed in question.*

Yada: *Taps Kayano's wrist a bit.* Careful there, Kayano-san. Don't want to make another mess.

Kanzaki: Oh my...

Kayano: *Eases her compression.* It's just statements like that, acting like they aren't even responsible for what had happened...

-Meanwhile, with Takeda, who was piling up taped-up cardboard boxes in one room, was in the company of Isogai, Maehara, Kataoka, Nagisa, and the Terasaka Group.-

Nagisa: *Tries to lift a very heavy box of electronic appliances... Very heavy for him alone, judging by his very strained grunts while trying to press it upwards from a squatted position.*

Kataoka: *Unknowingly lifting the same box due to being on the other side, Nagisa almost flips over when the box elevates. Seeing that she is clearly still stronger than Nagisa, her confidence in being a "proper woman" continues to decrease, evident by the streams of water coming down her closed eyes.*
Isogai: "Mr. Yanagisawa, not that we personally would have a problem with it..."

Y. Takeda: "But what?"

Maehara: "Why decide to pack everything you had up and move over here, of all places?"

Y. Takeda: "I figured this area would be more rational to situate than anywhere else. What would be at odds with that?"

Terasaka: "The fact that maybe a Yakza family are some of the only people that are scarier than whoever could be after you?"

Y. Takeda: "Hm, perhaps. But they've yet to show us something to fear. Unless this house they offered us was something of a cursed home..."

Hazama: "Cursed, you say? *Looks around, before branching off to see if the house really is so.*

Nagisa: If anything's haunted here, it would be that shrine to Kato's parents, allegedly in this house. But I can see why they moved that out of this housing, if they were going to allow us and the Yanagisawa family here. *Looks over to Mr. Yanagisawa.* And they don't seem to be aware of that artifact, despite that statement, so I highly doubt they are spies against the Kato Family...

Y. Takeda: "Plus, no way to cash-talk hotel desks. Everything's cards. And cards have IDs. Can't let information like that out so easily."

Yoshida: "That makes sense, I guess."

Maehara: "Then again, now that you're so much closer to the action, will you actually be partaking in something now?"

Y. Takeda: "We might speak to some of our fellow family friends; the ones that haven't gone to hate us yet. Provide some assistance any way they can for us, and for you all."

Kataoka: *Sets down the very heavy box nearby Isogai.* I don't take issue to that statement at all; sounds legit. What about you, Isogai-kun?

Isogai: No, it sounds proper to me too. Hm, maybe they really are just eager to find their son.

-Meanwhile, back at the Qita Kong, at the last threshold of Little Korea in Kanagawa...-

Kato: *Passes by the border, nodding to the Korean language guard, and then looking back at Hyun and Naoko.* "You know, Naoko-san, we're playing very close to the chest now. Are you really sure you want to do it like this?"

Naoko: *Nods confidently at him.* "I do. Make sure she knows."

Hyun: *Takes out his smartphone.* "I better get to work then; could take a day or two to get it up."

Kato: "Very well; I'll get it through to her. See you."
Naoko: "In your peripherals." *The three go their separate ways.*

-Kato makes his way to his Uncle's vacation home, all too aware of the mass audience that is about to greet him. But before he does arrive...-

-Harumi Yanagisawa was wiping clean some dishes, while Karma, Okano, and Hayami were doing the same to some nearby windows, while Sugino, Nakamura, and Sosuke were handling dusting on various sections of the same room and the one adjacent.-

    Nakamura: *Finishes collecting the dust particles on one high shelf of a dresser.* "So, uh, Harumi-san..."

    Harumi: *Is startled by the sudden break of silence, so much so that she ends up dropping the porcelain cup she was working with.* "Hu- Oh!"

    Okano: *Practically teleports from her position on the platform to wipe one nearby window to catch the mug before it hit the floor.* "Gotcha! Phew, that was a close one."

    Harumi: "My God, you guys are skilled. We definitely reached out to the right people."

    Karma: "Damn straight you did." *Looks aside, noticing Okano handing Harumi back the dish, before continuing his work.*

    Nakamura: *Scoffs with an impish expression.* "Well, that went without saying." *Refocuses.* "But you already knew all about that. We'd like to know all about something else in exchange."

    Harumi: *Wipes her hands dry after completing the pile.* "Like?"

    Nakamura: "Why do you need to see your older brother?"

    Harumi: "Are you kidding? It's my older brother! He's in trouble with a lot of people; a lot of dangerous people. We need to see him alive at least once before he dies!"

    Hayami: *Stops what she's wiping.* "But why?"

    Harumi: "Why else?"

    Sugino: "Enlighten us, Harumi-san."

    Harumi: "Familial love. What, family not important to you all?"

    Sosuke: *Wait, when did she suddenly become something like Kato-san?"

    Nakamura: No wonder Kato-kun agreed and believed in them so easily.

    Hayami: Regardless, there's passion in her words. Resolute passion. She clearly means what she says.

    Karma: Best not to bend it any further then. "Yes, Harumi-san. Family does very much matter to us."

    Okano: "We know it certainly matters to Kayano-san, despite her better judgement..."
Harumi: *Hesitates, looking down.* “Right... I shouldn't have even asked that..."

-Kato arrives through the front doorway. Karasuma and Irina, who were scoping the three different scenarios, nods in acknowledgement of his entry. After a quick up-to-speed conversation with a number of the student-assassins and the Yanagisawa household, they were free to get through the next clue, opened by Kato himself.-

Kato: "Okay, guys, the next clue, given to us by Hide and his manager Midorikawa. What do we have here..."

_In this prison of a medical institute, the loud clamors of some more-defined men can easily be heard across departments. They cannot stop talking about the rivalries they have with each other. Maybe they should consider their bills first._

Kimura: "I don't think Dr. Yanagisawa is trying to be very subtle anymore here."

Y. Takeda: "Our son probably believes that we all know where this is going by now."

Kurahashi: "So it's still in Saitama Prefecture, and within Fujimi as well, since this is Keiai he's a presumably talking about."

Karasuma: "Couple this with the fact that Saitama is on high alert for street fistfights right now, and we've got an investigation once more."

Irina: "It shouldn't be too hard to find someone or ones that knows where this is held. Just a little effort, just like last time."

Kato: "Then it's settled. Another night here, and first thing, we're back in Fujimi."

Karasuma: *Rolls his neck.* "Good to finally be able to leave the area for once, even if I have to do it with you."

Kato/Irina: "!!" *Look between each other, well aware of what they must do. Kato has also already told Irina about the mysterious plan Naoko and Hyun have constructed, and currently setting up to be put into action in the coming days.* "Well..."
Rival's Space

Chapter Summary

A dragrace circuit, a b-boy rally... What could possibly be next in Dr. Yanagisawa's twisted clue hunt?

-After another night at their hotel in Kanagawa, the newly formed team, consisting of Kato, Irina (yes, those two again), Karma, Isogai, Kataoka, Terasaka, and Kimura, board a train all the way back to Fujimi, Saitama.-

Kato: *Gets off the monorail adjacent to Irina.* *I'm rather surprised you were able to keep Karasuma "grounded" at Kanagawa again.*

Irina: *It was really hard work...*

-Flashback within the couple's hotel room in the Sheraton of Yokosuka...-

Irina: *Furiously brandishes the ownership papers of Roxie.* *"I'M GOING TO RETURN HER TO THE SHOP IF YOU DON'T ACCEPT THESE TERMS!!"

Karasuma: *Absolutely bewildered.* *"!!"

-End flashback.-

Kato: *Did not know of that detail.* *I'm sure it was. So then, you'll be fine with what's going to go down?"

Irina: *I need to place trust in my younger sister-in-law if Karasuma won't someday. I think I should start now.*

Kato: *Nods in respect to that.* *That's commendable.*

-The team proceeds to leave Fujimi train station, pick out a new car from one of Kato's many lockups (this time a three-row Lexus LX) and drive around the city.-

Kato: *Yes, I feel something being here... Almost like my voice has a calling...* *Dozes off with these thoughts as he instinctively drives through the roads and lanes.* *Ah! Can't get sidetracked.*

-But as they drive around, they realize... They don't have a destination.-

Kimura: "So... Where are we going?"

Irina: "Uh, we are... Well, there's... Kato, where are we going?"

Kato: *Takes a turn.* *"Back to the park."*
Isogai: "The fight club will be hanging out there? Sounds a little too public, if Irina's foreword is anything to go by."

Kato: *Stops at a red light.* "No, the fights don't happen there; there's a reason why street fights have a nickname of 'underground.' But there should definitely be patrons of the events roaming about up there. House gamblers who want to poach loose wallets of their notes, etcetera etcetera. They'll know where it is."

Karma: "Ooooh, smart."

Terasaka: "Damn, people will bet on anything. Some of the fighters may even be placing bets on themselves."

Kataoka: "Strange, cruel world, especially when entertainment is made of multiple people legitimately beating the crap out of each other."

-Eventually, the SUV makes it back to the park where they found out about the b-boy dancing festival. After asking around multiple groups of people, the student-assassins finally encountered someone that had more than an idea of what they were looking for.-

Karma: "You aren't screwing around with us, are you, buddy?"

Suited Man: "No! No! I know what you seek! Please don't hurt me!"

Kato: "We're in no mood for stuff like that. Just explain."

Suited Man: "Okay-okay. The underground circuits are called the Hades Arenas; they have four store fronts that I know of around the city; the one closest to here is Len's Appliances. Just prove your interest in the art and they'll escort you down there."

Kataoka: "How do we prove ourselves?"

Suited Man: "Several ways; know the main event, a special phrase at each front that changes daily, put blood on your money, so on."

Kimura: "What is it today?"

Suited Man: "'Star-Cross Counter Champ.' There, you got what you wanted. Now, let me go already."

Irina: "Get out of here then." *He does so.*

Isogai: "I sure hope some people in the Arenas don't like that guy. Otherwise we might've made some dangerous, immediate enemies."

Kato: "Our greater-scope enemies are far more threatening than a city-wide circuit's officials; don't worry about it."

Karma: "So, we got a name, and we got a way in."

Irina: "Places like these, just like the racing circles and the dance events, only begin to operate at night, since the more lucrative watchers are busy with work. We'll chill a bit, and then head to
Len’s to get to Hades, alright students?"

AssUniv: "Roger!"

-After lingering about around Fujimi, it soon became dusk, prompting AssUniv to get directions from walking pedestrians to get to Len's Appliances. When they enter...-

Clerk: *Looks up from his hardware-electronics work when the student-assisants and their mentors go through the windowed threshold.* "Ah, welcome to Len's Appliances! I'm the eponymous Len! We got phones, TVs, Blu-Rays, Cooling Units, and more. All have a repair service available here too if you need it!"

Karma: "All well and good, sir. But we're up for a different utility right now."

Len: "Now now, don't overlook these perfect phones with unlimited data plans! You've faced the edges of high-speed 4G LTE before, right? One of you, at least?"

Kato: "Star-Cross Counter Champ."

Len: *Sighs.* "No true soul ever comes here for the other arts." *Gets out from behind the windowed display counters and unlocked a door leading down a floor or two.* "Go on; have fun..."

Irina: *Raised eyebrow.* "Okay... Come on, kids." *They all venture down there. Immediately they are engulfed by the radical sounds of the roaring spectators, yelling at the competitors in the steel-caged, hexagonal ring, who are both bloodied and bruised from trading blows.*

Kimura: "Jesus, these guys are obscenely brutal."

Kataoka: *Winces.* "Almost disgusting in a way."

Isogai: *Looks to the side of the cage.* "That looks to be more of the potential fighters, waiting in queue or something."

Karma: "If they're on the list, it seems there's unisex fighting involved too. Geez."

Kato: "I personally hate to say it, but money does have a way of transgressing any and all barriers."

-They eventually make it all the way downstairs, and then, after a few minutes of gazing around, they head to the betting table and have them call over their coordinator/manager.-

Fightclub Manager: "What's this? You need to know if we had seen some strange customers in the past?"

Isogai: "Indeed. Specifically, someone from roughly two years ago."

Kataoka: "That, and they might have given you or the management at the time something; most likely a letter."

Fightclub Manager: "Wow..." *Scoffs.* "That's pretty bold of kids like you, just coming in here, demanding something from the Hades Arenas."
Karma: "I see a constant characteristic with all of these letter-holders..."

Kato: *Sighs.* "What do you want, Mr. Manager?"

Fightclub Manager: "The grand prize cannot be just be given away. Otherwise the other tourneys will have their prestige ruined, you know?"

AssUniv: "..."

Isogai: "Ah... We're going to have to fight."

Kataoka: "In the most risky circuit too, it seems."

Fightclub Manager: "That's right. And I got to tell you, the guys in there have been feuding for ages. They're not going to just let little ones like you take a prize they've been eyeing for years."

Kato: "..."

Irina: "We'll still take that chance. Now, any other rules in your little game?"

Fightclub Manager: "Four of you join the loner who just enlisted, forming a five-person team, and participate in sets of large team battles, in front of the several-hundred strong audience. You'll recognize her for her theatre mask. Other than that, no weapons; anything goes from there on out."

Kato: "Good to know. Lock us in." *He gestures to AssUniv to form a small huddle to decide on the four who's going in.*

Irina: "Kato-kun, Karma, you two are our best fighters, so you two should be the prime picks."

Kato/Karma: "No problem."

Terasaka: "I've gotten my fair share of fights, and I'm pretty strong too. I'm going in."

Isogai: *Nods to the previous three and then looks over to the last two.* "Kataoka-san and Kimura-san, if it's alright with you, I'll take the anchor. I want to see if I can pull off my better moves without Maehara-san around."

Kataoka: "Do what you got to do, Isogai-kun."

Kato: "Alright, you all, let's go to the lineup." *They break the circle and the fighting student-assassins move towards the waiting area. They were met only with very agitated and angry (and scarred/poorly maintained) faces that have no patience for jokes.*

Karma: "I sure hope this other teammate is very skilled too; if the muscles on those guys and girls aren't for show, then we'll really need all the help we can get."

Terasaka: "Hey, a female wearing a mask, right? That her?" *Points over to someone matching that description. The woman in question is giving them all a poignant stare.*

Isogai: "How long has she been looking at us?"

Masked Woman: *She stops leaning on the wall and walks over to them. She arrives without
speaking a word.*

Kato: "Hey; what's your name, lady?"

Masked Woman: "..."

Karma: "Silent type, huh? I like that."

Isogai: "I suppose it only matters that she can fight."

Terasaka: *Gives a quick glance.* "She seems genetically hard-coded to."

Masked Woman: "!!"

Kato: *Oh boy...*

-The arena bells ring, signaling the end of the previous battle.-

Karma: "Sounds like the main event is about to begin."

Isogai: "Are we the first seed?"

Kato: "If we weren't before, we are now. It'll leave the manager without any excuses anyways, so long as we play this fairly."

Masked Woman: *Proceeds to the cage without the student-assassins.*

Terasaka: "She's in a hurry." *And her posture and walk are rather similar...*

Isogai: "Let's not keep her waiting then..."

-The four guys follow her inside. They all wait on one side of the hexagonal ring, before the other team, comprised of five foreign males of pure muscle, come in from the other side.-

Kato: "Judging by appearance, they seem to be a mix of Taiwanese and Indian. Be mindful of their strikes."

Karma: "Understood." *Cracks his knuckles.*

Announcer: "Alright, everyone; let's get ready to rumble~!"

Referee: *Standing outside the cage.* "Are you ready, Team A?"

AssUniv: *Nod.*

Referee: *To the foreign.* "Are you ready?"

Fighters: *Roar in response.*

Referee: "Okay ring the bell!" *Ding ding.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku: Kiwami's OST "Ruthless Octagon" plays.-
AssUniv (Kato, Karma, Terasaka, Isogai, and Masked Woman)

VS

Hades Arenas Combatants

AssUniv and the combatants divide and conquer; Kato, Isogai, and Terasaka all take on one of the three Taiwanese brawlers while the lady and Karma handle their own Indian fighters. Kato is easily able to outpace his opponent in "God Hand" style, dancing between every strike coming his way and dishing out proper counters, punch for punch. A wild right hook was one of the last mistakes of the opponent, wherein Kato ducked under and landed a punishing four hit combination before stunning him with a bladed foot stomp and continuing the assault again; his last strike causing the Taiwanese back to the cage.

Isogai took a much more defensive routine, dodging his rival's strikes and playing an outside style until the latter slowed down. Then, like an assassin, he swooped in with deadly precision, striking critical areas on his victim's joints and head. Gifted with far less strength than his colleagues, they don't faze the opponent as much, and the fight continues the back and forth of throwing blows. Situationally inverted, Isogai is the one with his back on the steel, but this is what he wanted, forcing the fighter to harm only himself with punches and kicks that get stopped by the unforgiving metal. The fragmentation in his defenses opened a whole new set of offensive opportunities for the field-leader of AssUniv.

Terasaka was not as punch-oriented as the rest due to his wrestling background, so he opted to tank a few sway punches with his turtle guard up so that he can get close and initialize grappling offense. He begins with a quick bear hug, before rolling around and lifting the Taiwanese up and dropping his lower torso onto his pointed knee. The opponent springs forward a bit, making him a victim of a chop block to the back of his left leg. Now bent over, Terasaka made this a pure ground game by clotheslining the back nape and pressing the Taiwanese's face onto the mat. A three-point mount and pummel put him in the advantage.

Karma jumped the gun much more swiftly than all the others; his assassination came from beating his opponent to the punch. When the Indian tried a move, Karma made sure he would regret it - a long-winding clout was met with a quicker jab or slap. A hammer fist to rock the shin behind a lightning roundhouse kick. A skipping side kick to the midsection to interrupt an overhead punch. And so on; as always, Karma shows his rivals just how outclassed they are with his refined skill and clever ability strategy.

But the mysterious woman was not far behind, if at all. She telegraphed the attacks of her opponent very well, even knowing an upcoming right straight punch can be perfectly opposed with a headbutt using her durable theatre mask, temporarily disabling his hand. This made him easy pickings for unblockable, spinning and flipping kicks. She laid her opponent out with a thrust kick straight to his chin, sending him flying head-first to one part of the cage, right around the same time everyone else finished, such as Kato doing an aided backflip on the wall and snap kicking.
downwards on the crown of his opponent before landing three-point, and Karma smashing his opponent's head right into the cage.

Though their fighting styles sought quick elimination, the style behind their moves seemed to grab the attention of the audience they were fighting for. Irina was beginning to get deaf by the amount of cheers. With the crowd on their side, AssUniv manages to ride through the next several sets of five-man (with some women) teams, only suffering minor injuries to all members.

-OST dies down temporarily.-

AU Fighters: *Recover their footing and breath after another tough round of fights.*

Announcer: "Unbelievable! These junior newcomers are deceptively adept fighters, causing quite a riot in this here establishment!"

Fightclub Manager: *Spectates at a distance with his arms crossed.*

Announcer: "They have moved on to the final fight of the tourney, the last team in the draw, and- It seems, it just so happens that it's the rising stars versus our grand champions!"

Isogai: "Well that's dramatic."

Karma: "Exciting, more like."

Announcer: "These men are behind the acts that critically wounded twenty-five previous challengers! Their leader is a former Chinese Wushu champion!"

Kato: *Oh... MY GOD!*

Announcer: "Introducing~, Wushi Jieji! And his coalition!"

Jieji: *Steps out of the shadows of the other side of the arenas, to a fanfare of pyrotechnics. Four other Chinese folk are trailing him as he progresses toward the cage.*

Karma: "Hey, isn't that the guy that you tazed back at the Conference Center, Kato?"

Kato: "Yes... Yes it is." *Is clearly very ticked.*

Masked Woman: "..."

Jieji: *Steps with the theatrics and looks straight at Kato.* <Speaks in Mandarin.> "Surprised to see me, Miyamoto?"

Kato: <Speaks in Mandarin.> "A bit." *He takes a brief glance at the masked woman, who is able to understand the conversation.*

Isogai: "They're speaking in another language."

Karma: "Must be something personal between them that they don't want us or the crowd to hear."

Kato: <Continues to speak in Mandarin.> "How are you even here?"
Jieji: "How do you think I keep myself in prime shape while still being just one step behind you?"

Kato: "You go to every fight club I happen to be near the night before or something?"

Jieji: "Eyes everywhere; you make enough credit, people in these places will do anything for you. But you already knew that, hm?"

Kato: "Yeah, I did. Never thought you'd tell me that. You know, with your whole blood-knight persona for me."

Jieji: "To have another fight with you, I'll do anything I have to."

Kato: "Well I sure hope it was worth it, because this ends now." *Throws his light jacket off and lets it hang on top of their side of the cage.*

Jieji: "We'll see about that." *They both get into a readied fighting stance.*


AssUniv: "Right..." *Take their own fighting stances.*

Jieji: "I'll end our rivalry here, Miyamoto!" *He and his team take a coordinated Wushu stance.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "(Fan-Named) Charming Cruelty" plays.-

加藤和彦VS维史杰

Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Wushi Jieji; One of the Reclamation Society's Big Three

Kato charges straight for the former Triad, throwing a superman punch right out of the gates. Jieji sees it coming and tugs the wrist of the striking arm in a combative parry, forcing Kato to show his back. The latter rolls forward before Jieji has any chance to capitalize. By now, both sides have gone at odds with each other, forming a circle within the hexagonal circle that Kato and Jieji will continue their fight in.

Jieji leads this time, starting with an overhead chop, which Kato blocks with a high forearm. This was used to open a path for the Society Lieutenant to thrust a tiger claw straight at Kato's face, which was stopped by a wrist grab of the latter's own. Kato breaks the offensive line, throwing both of Jieji's arms above their heads, springs upward, and pivots mid-air to deliver a front kickboxing dropkick. Jieji, showing insane leg strength, limbos perfectly under the heavy attack. Kato lands lightly on his back, and barrel-rolls to the side to avoid a backflip bird-stomp by Jieji,
Kato continues the assault, switching to "B-Boy" style and tries some Capoeira-like attacks, such as the starting spinning hook kick translated to a reverse elbow. But Jieji counters with a quick block to the kick and tanks the elbow, wrapping his arm over it and pushing Kato's back down into a bow, applying pressure to Kato's shoulder. Kato escapes with a quick sweep to the close leg, slipping up Jieji, who barely avoids a back kick to the back of his head. Kato runs forward for a double snap kick, both of which were tapped down by Jieji, before falling down onto his hand, switching to his other one quickly and throwing a thrust kick from his lowered position towards Jieji's chest, which makes its mark. Kato uses the impact to handspring back onto his feet, getting into the fray once more, feints a short left hook to allow a right scorpion kick. But Jieji notices the setup and catches the heel on his right shoulder, pulling it back and prompting Kato to flip onto the ground to avoid a forced split. Kato pushes Jieji away before his supine position could be compromised in that instance.

Kato starts again, deciding to aim lower and sweep-kicks the legs of Jieji, hoping to lock a drop toe hold and put this into a pure ground game. He does manage to catch the sole standing leg when Jieji tries for a flamingo punch. But the Chinese Samurai wanted that; he twists his joints slightly, and takes his lifted leg to kick Kato back down onto the ground. Jieji locks Kato's already coiled legs behind his knee in an inverse Muta lock, and then proceeds to pummel the back of Kato's head.

Kato: He's worked on his joint locks...

Left without no other option, Kato switches to "Tumbler" and manages to roll over, neutralizing the hold's effects and leaving Jieji destabilized; open to a few punches to escape. Kato gets back up and X-blocks his way into a shoulder tackle, lifting Jieji up, and throwing him into the cage nearby. Kato throws a front kick that only meets the steel; luckily he keeps the knee bent, preventing a possible leg break by Jieji. When the Society Lieutenant tries to make another grapple game by grasping the Yakuza's right clavicle and finding the pressure point,, Kato stylishly rolls under the arm, bending Jieji forward, and causing him to finally flip over with another wild sweep kick.

Jieji swiftly gets back onto one knee, and blocks another incoming knee lift by Kato with both arms. He grabs the calf and falls to his side and pulls downward, causing Kato to roll over him. Jieji tries to attack from his risen kneeling stance, but a double thrust kick from the supine position by Kato stopped that. Kato caught Jieji's leg as he fell back, tucked closer, stood back up, and Alabama slammed Jieji face-first onto the steel cage. Jieji bounced back into Kato's arms for a perfectly bridged German suplex. Kato rolled back to keep the hold of the waist, and though one back elbow made its mark on his face, Kato remained undeterred in blocking the next pointed attack, lifting Jieji up and then pressing him back down in a belly-to-back mat slam. Kato gets a good pincer attack of elbow drop and knee lift, sandwiching Jieji's head, before The Triad props him off.

Kato slides down for a basement dropkick, but Jieji pushes up and floats over Kato's attack. Abruptly, Kato stops cold mid-skid (digging his lower knee into the mat), such that he is just under the Chinese Samurai. Jieji tries to punish this with a knee drop, but Kato picks up one of his own to deflect it. This also leaves him open for a wrap of Kato's hands behind Jieji's neck, forcing an electric choke that puts the latter's forehead to his thigh. As Jieji tries to pry the hold apart, Kato rolls forward, putting Jieji on his back, and the compromised situation leaves him vulnerable to a string of downward punches, followed by a snap powerbomb, ending the contest, right around the same time AssUniv had dealt with their own opposition.
All of the AssUniv fighters and the Masked Woman regroup with each other, most of them quite ecstatic about their victory.

Kato: *Sighs with relief that they were able to get through the entire circuit, until he senses a disturbance and notices Jieji getting back up.*

Jieji: *Speaking in Mandarin.> "So, this is how the crusade ends? Very well then... End it, Miyamoto."

Kato: *Sighs.* "With pleasure." *With an aura of Hatred Bloodlust, he steps forward for a second, but then quickly glances back at the student-assassins. Suddenly, the ambience dials down.* "But without reason."

Jieji: "Eh?"

Kato: "Our rivalry's not over; I still don't know why we're rivals to begin with. And until I know that reason, there's no point in killing you; it'll just be another regret I'll have later." *Walks out of the cage. The student-assassins soon follow him.*

Karma: *Speaking in Japanese.> "Hey, what were you two talking about?"

Kato: "Gee, can a guy keep just a few secrets to himself? I told you all my early biography already."

Isogai: "Yakuza boss has a point."

Terasaka: "Deadly combination, that is." *Looks around a bit, before noticing that the Masked Woman is missing.* "Hm? where'd she go?"

- Despite the query, the four guys shrug the situation off and find that Irina, Kataoka, and Kimura have gotten the letter from the fight club manager. With no more reason to remain, they all leave the area, passing by the still disappointed Len, who delivers a deadpan "enjoy your evening" as they fully exit the store.-

Kimura: "Is there ever going to be a time in which we find what we are looking for before night falls?"

Karma: "Why do that? Saitama actually looks pretty nice in the evening."

Kataoka: "Indeed it does. But it makes our return trips long and tiring."

Terasaka: "Might we suggest staying in Fujimi then?"

Kato: *Just recently stepped away from Irina.* "I'd advise against that, since that was Reclamation Society that we just fought. They know there's something or someone we both are looking for here, so if the less we persist in this city, the better."

Isogai: "Very well, onto the trains then."
-The doors on the train in Fujimi Station close. Irina and the student-assassins are on board, relieved to be returning to Kanagawa a quicker and more seamless way. But then...-

    Isogai: *Looks around a bit.* "Hey wait a second; where's Kato-san?"

    Kataoka: *Copies his head-turning behavior.* "Yeah, where is he?"

    Irina: "..."

-Back outside Fujimi Station...-

    Kato: *Walks out of the front entrance and opens up his flip phone to call someone.* "Alright, Hyun. Do it." *After waiting a few seconds, he closes up his device again and puts it back in his pocket.*

    Masked Woman: *Appears at his right side, as they both gaze at the busy nightlife street in front of them.*

    Kato: "We now have some time - emphasis on," *Checks his watch.* "'Some.' Let's get to work."

    Masked Woman: *Takes off her mask, revealing herself to be Naoko.* "Yeah... Let's."
After dealing with Jieji again, Kato privately sends away the rest of the AssUniv Program so that he can deal with the final few clues as the Reclamation Society begins picking up the traces they've been leaving behind. Teaming up with Naoko (who remains inconspicuous in the effort) should prove beneficial, but on paper never always meshes with real life...

-Back on the train going from Fujimi, Saitama to Yokosuka, Kanagawa...-

Isogai: "Where is Kato-san? Did he not get on the train with us?"

Terasaka: "I didn't have him in view when we got on; there was a decently-sized crowd."

Kataoka: "Yeah; it would've been hard to recognize anyone in that stampede."

Kimura: "Bitch-sensei, did you see him?"

Irina: *Is currently holding a phone up to her right ear. She blocks the microphone for a second.* "Shh; I'm on the phone right now." *Resumes the conversation through the device.* "Yes, Karasuma-sama?"

Karasuma: *Voice only.* "The Ministry had received a set of anonymous tips; all of them are traced calls to landlines around Saitama. You know what that means, right?"

Irina: *Sighs.* "Yeah... Either the Society has caught up with us somehow, whether by working through similar tells, or by trailing us very loosely, or the gift-givers were moles to the local PD. Their contribution to our investigation, despite the deals we've made with them, were without incentive, so I was suspicious still."

Karasuma: "Confirmed. Even our several-strong team is too loud now. How shall we proceed now?"

Irina: "Kato has been informed of this situation."

Karasuma: "Has the rest of the field students?"

Irina: "Not yet; though I think they're listening right behind me right now..."

Kataoka: *Is standing high up so that she can support her head on Irina's shoulders. Terasaka and Kimura are right next to her.* I think we've been compromised!

Kimura: *You think...?"

Karma: "I don't know what to say about our stealthiness; I think this was the quietest we've ever
been and yet we're still hot on someone's radar."

Irina: "Blocks the microphone again.* "Can you kids be quiet? Besides, it's that is why we keep being noticed; all y'all are far too excitable."

Terasaka: "That... Is a very good point."

Irina: "Resumes conversation with Karasuma.* "So, Kato knows, and so he's decided to sweep through the remainder of the letters and keep us definitively in the lead."

Karasuma: "I'm not so sure about that."

Irina: "Let your hatred of him go, Karasuma-sama. This isn't Kato's first time doing things on his own. We know he's totally capable, and we know he'll be back. Let it go."

Karasuma: "... Very well. Get everyone else back to Kanagawa then. We'll await further details there."

Irina: "Understood; already on the way. See you soon." *Kisses the microphone and then ends the conversation.*

Kimura: "Damn, this just doesn't feel right."

Isogai: "It's what it must be."

Irina: "... Kato, Naoko, your window has opened. Don't waste the opportunity..."

-Meanwhile, Kato and Naoko, on their motorcycles (A Yamaha Midnight Star Raider and Suzuki Hayabusa respectively), are just leaving Fujimi and are on the roads to the Tokyo Metropolitan Area.-

-Kato's left ear is fitted with a cell earpiece, separate from the radio/audio player integrated into his helmet, which is playing "In the Rhythm of the Night" by Cindy.-

Naoko: *Wearing a bluetooth within her motorcycle helmet. Her two-wheeler is just a mid-sized car's length behind Kato's.* "How are you so sure that the next letter's clue points to the Japanese capital?"

Kato: "I'm not certain. But the letter makes it all but clear that his failures in Saitama are behind Dr. Yanagisawa now."

Naoko: "Ah right... That was a major theme behind the previous letters. If I recall, the first represented his loss of his career, and the second was his loss of revenge."

Kato: "Yep. And this latest one was about the loss of rivalry; the test was designed to see how powerful of a connection I had to a longtime nemesis, and if it was precious enough for me to retain."

Naoko: "Judging by how you reacted, I guess you passed."

Kato: "As much as I hate to admit it."
Naoko: "So, why do you think the next loss is somewhere else?"

Kato: "Because of the words within the letter..."

As I spend my days listening to those street rabbles' drivel, I'm reminded of what led me to lose my privileges. It reminds me of my lack of passion; sense of occasion. The spectrum of light that we both saw, but did not mutually understand. If I wasn't there first... Neither would you. - Kotaro Yanagisawa.

Naoko: "Huh... Well he couldn't be any more obvious then."

Kato: "Yep... He's referring to his time in Tokyo."

Naoko: "Where in? There's almost fourteen million possible souls that could hold the next clue there."

Kato: "The Rainbow Bridge. It matches the 'spectrum of light' description that was mentioned here.

Naoko: "And his 'lack of passion? sense of occasion?"

Kato: "Well, if the last one was about enemies..."

Naoko: Love? Really now?

-The song fades out.-

-The two bikers reach the metropolis before the break of dawn. With the minimal traffic of the morning, the criminal-agent duo are easily and promptly able to reach the Rainbow Bridge.-

-The two stop and rest at the Shibaura end of the bridge, looking over its white pillars.-

Naoko: "Well, here we are."

Kato: "Yep... For some of the older folk in the Kato Family, this place has got some history."

Naoko: "Really? I don't recall you saying your father was big in this area."

Kato: "Nightclub life, Naoko-san. Shibaura was a huge neon light back during the Bubble Period of," *Checks his watch.* "The 1980s, and my father liked to capitalize on that. And now, here it stands today, filled with high-rise residential buildings. My old man loved the area so much, he made sure the money made here went to the right places, even though he believed he would never set foot there."

Naoko: *Ticked.* "That supposed to get me jealous?"

Kato: *Looks at her.* "What are you talking about?"

Naoko: *Handwaves.* "Forget it. Let's just go take a look."

Kato: *Shrugs.* "Very well. Chances are, our target is someone just standing around or on the bridge. Bonus points if they're making a display of some sorts." *With Naoko, he proceeds to the
area's station to access the walkway sections of the Rainbow Bridge.*

-For the next few hours, the inconspicuous investigators wandered through the two sections. The sun only began to reach its maximum height in the sky, but there was still no new illumination to their search there.-

-They stop at the coast-side area on the other side of the bridge, distraught at finding nothing of interest, other than street artists, tourists, and the atypical photographer.-

Naoko: "I didn't see anything out of the ordinary; did you?"

Kato: *Is holding his hand to his chin. After a few seconds, he shakes his head.* "No; I didn't."

Naoko: "And are you still sure that the person and their subject is here?"

Kato: *Begins to take out a clove cigarette, putting it into his mouth.* "I'm certain on that end."
*Puts back the carton before reaching into his back pocket for a lighter.*

Naoko: *Hastily rushes over to him, stealing the cigarette from out of his mouth, and throwing it into the nearby trash can.*

Kato: "Hey, what the Hell, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "I should be saying the same for you! In fact, I will be right now!"

Kato: "Pardon?"

Naoko: "What the fuck are we doing, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Uh, we're looking for Dr. Yanagisawa?"

Naoko: "No, Kato-kun! You're looking too far into the future! What are we doing right now?"

Kato: "We're looking for the letter he left for people like us."

Naoko: "Right! One letter leads to another; one clue leads to another. It never leads to the writer himself!"

Kato: "You have a better idea, then?"

Naoko: *Scoffs.* "If you're going to go on a wild goose chase, you do it your damn self! You've been shoving all these myriad works on my old friends like it's their jobs!"

Kato: "I don't hear them complaining. And as you know, I have been; long before. For," *Checks his watch.* "Eight years!"

Naoko: "Ever since AssUniv got close to finding out more about you, you've been playing it up as if you were a part of the program the whole time!"

Kato: "How so?"

Naoko: *Holds her forehead.* "Like our late teacher, just deciding to tell us everything about
you. What you've been through and why you're our mentor... God it makes me sick!

Kato: *Stands straight and takes a volatile step towards her.* "Hey, how the fuck do you think I feel!? Do you think I would've done something about that if I could!??"

Naoko: "Why did you have to tell me? Why did you open your phone so that I could hear that!? You want to make me cry for you?"

Kato: *Grips his grandfather's dog tag.* "Maybe you wouldn't call my family traitors after that!"

Naoko: *Scoffs again.* "At least you have a backstory, Kato-kun!" *Aggressively looks over to the Tokyo Bay that Rainbow Bridge crosses, overlapping her arms across her chest.*

Kato: *His puzzled expression shows his aggressive aura dissipating, as he takes another step closer.* "What does that mean? You're telling me you don't have a backstory?"

Naoko: "No; of course I do, you asshole! But I don't remember it, at all! I got a jacket from my father, who was also a Defense agent, and a daring assertion from who is my alleged mother four years ago. That's it! And it's eating me inside that I don't know how those two correlate!"

Kato: *Mind flickers.* "Hmph... So we're not so different, then?"

Naoko: *Is almost going to tear up, looking straight at him.* "Now what are you on about?"

Kato: "I was in the dark about my past not," *Checks his watch.* "Too long ago. And you seem to have very violent secrets, as I do. You and I are also hopelessly attached to the people we know will get involved one way or another. You're just going through all of these phases much slower than I am." *Grits his teeth.* "Geez, now I know why I've been ribbing you for some time."

Naoko: "What? What are you thinking?"

Kato: *Was I seeing the myself I hated due to incompetence?* "I'm thinking, if Fate had been kinder, we'd be much better friends than we are now." *Goes behind her, and embraces around her waistline.*

Naoko: "EH!?" *Looks at his limbs caressing her torso.*

Kato: "You know how much a hug helps in a time of poor emotive state?" *Thanks for them, Miho, Uncle... And Yada.*

Naoko: "I never asked for..." *Tries to break free for a few seconds, before she relents. They both then silently agree to take a seat at the raised ledge that overlooks the bay's formless water.* "You see the past, and the present at the same time, right?"

Kato: "...I do."

Naoko: "And you can predict the future with your meticulous planning."

Kato: "I think there's a little more to it than that..."

Naoko: "Can you tell me there's a future where all of this goes right? All of it?"
Kato: *Elects not to answer.*

-A random flash engulfs the vision of both Kato and Naoko.-

Kato/Naoko: "THE FUCK!/?AHH!"

Photographer: *Standing in front of them (they did not notice because they were looking at the river by turning their heads to the right).* "Ah, my apologies. Did I frighten you young ones?"

Naoko: *Stands up off of Kato, who supported her from the stone ledge when they fell back.* "Yeah; kind of!"

Photographer: "Again, I am truly sorry. But I needed to capture that moment."

Kato: *Dusts himself off.* "Might we ask why?"

Photographer: "I've only seen such a gripping story within a camera lens once before."

Naoko: "Well, that's not hard when we're around each other." *Snickers lightly."

Kato: "Wait, who were the subjects in that piece?"

Photographer: "Oh, they didn't tell me their names. Besides, it was more than four years ago; I would've forgotten them by now. You know, old brain and all..." *Scratches his white hair.*

Naoko: "Four years ago?"

Kato: "But do you still have the print?"

Photographer: "I... Do."

-The duo follow the photographer back to his station. He ruffles through his stall's cabinets in search of the photo.-

Kato: "Tell me, sir; are you always operating in this general area?"

Photographer: "Oh yes; have been for the past three decades. All the common passerbys know my name by now; 'Akiyoshi the Shutterbug.'"

Naoko: Ah, so that would explain how Dr. Yanagisawa would give it to someone at Rainbow Bridge. Otherwise, it would be very unlikely our schedule would coincide with the holder's.

Aki: "Ah! Here it is!" *Pulls one large depiction out of the files.* "Here you are; just a tiny peek, of course!"

Kato/Naoko: "Of course." *They take a look, realizing that the subjects are exactly who they believed they were: sitting nearly the exact same way that they did, wearing the same expressions (conflict in their views of the current situation), and the sun being a direct ninety degrees different in position from where it was with Kato and Naoko... Well, maybe eighty-nine. But either way, the similarities were virtually impeccable; the only stark differences were who were replaced: Kotaro Yanagisawa and Aguri Yukimura.* "That's them!"
Aki: "They were recently engaged, in what little I recall. They didn't see eye to eye, like you two do."

Naoko: "We didn't think so either. Is there any more to this?"

Aki: "Turn it around."

Kato: *Flips the photo over, finding a letter tapped to the other side.* "May we?"

Aki: "They told me I'd know who to give that to once I saw them. You two fit."

Naoko: *Pries it off.* "Thank you." *Bows, then leaves. Kato follows. When they are back on the Rainbow Bridge to get back to their parked motorcycles, they continue to read the clue.* "Here we are..."

I built everything on sand... My love life, my career, my competition, my vengeance...
And I paid for it dearly. I couldn't be the angler I needed to be. Now I can only hope the ground I find myself in is more rigid, and yet, forgivable. Either way, I suppose whoever I'm writing this to is on the way there now. Well, see you there. - Kotaro Yanagisawa

Naoko: "Rigid ground, hm? Not for long."

Kato: "We're not finding him to kill him, Naoko-san."

Naoko: "Oh I'm aware. But Lord knows he's not going to be completely off the hook. I don't care if he's bedridden."

Kato: *Ignores the last few sentences.* "Judging by the first few words... Say, how many Christian churches and cathedrals are there in Tokyo?"

Naoko: *Looks at him with a perplexed look.* "Dozens?"

Kato: "How many large, notable ones?"

Naoko: "At least five?"

Kato: "Any of them have the names Matthew or Andrew?"

Naoko: "Uh..."

Kato: "Forget it; allow me." *Takes out his flip phone, searching for the Church of Matthew in Tokyo, finding none.* "Okay, Andrew then." *Searches that instead, and finds St. Andrew's Cathedral some distance away.* "There we are."

Naoko: "What makes you say he's there?"

Kato: *Puts away the folded letter.* "You know your Biblical history, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "Uh... You said Matthew, a Gospel, because of the sand thing, right?"

Kato: "That's correct."
Naoko: "And, Andrew..." *Winces.* "Got nothing there."

Kato: "Andrew was a prime figure in Matthew's Book. He was one of two fishermen in the story that became 'fishers of men;' people following Jesus that would attract other souls to be caught by the Cross."

Naoko: "Ah... Dr. Yanagisawa's poor charisma and lack of passion meant that he did not have that alluring edge."

Kato: "Yep. Alright, the place is only several minutes off. Let's get to it."

Naoko: "Of course, of course. But first, Kato-kun..." *Pulls on his arm, stopping and turning him around.* "Did you really mean it?"

Kato: "What?"

Naoko: "Do you really think we could've been even greater friends than we are now?"

Kato: "Thinks for a second.* "Not anymore; we just became such great friends right now."

Naoko: *Beat.* "Wha?"

Kato: "Unless you don't want us to be." *Smirks, heading toward the motorcycle stands.*

Naoko: "No- I didn't say that." *Lets him walk away.* Goddamnit, Kato-kun!
Kato and Naoko seemed to have found and deciphered the final letter written by Dr. Yanagisawa! It's time to finally meet up with the twisted, unscrupulous scientist.

-On the AssUniv bus...-

Karasuma: "Alright, everyone; we all know what's going on?"

Karma: "Well, we know enough."

Okano: "Kato-kun says he's cracked it all down?"

Irina: "He did. Allegedly, Dr. Yanagisawa is in St. Andrew's Cathedral in Tokyo."

Hayami: "Why there of all places?"

Hazama: "Praying for his soul's forgiveness 24/7, perhaps?"

Kayano: *Aside.* "That'll be a stretch."

Isogai: "Has Kato-kun actually gone in to confirm that himself?"

Irina: "No; he thinks you all should do that first."

Kataoka: "Then there's a chance that it will only lead to another clue then?"

Karasuma: "If the theory he shared with you all is correct, then he's certain that this is the end of the road. We're low on chances right now too, so we're hoping he's right anyway."

Nagisa: *It's been almost a year since we've signed up to be in the AssUniv Program... And finally, we're on the verge of ending it.*

-The traveling bus finally arrives across the street from the named Cathedral, adjacent to Kato, who was situated nearby his VMAX motorcycle.-

Terasaka: "There he is!"

Kato: "Took you all long enough. All of you."

Maehara: "Yeah, well, we're still taking steps to make sure the local authorities aren't tracking us down."

Nakamura: *Looks over to the large crossed building.* "So, this is it, isn't it?"
Kato: "Extremely sure of it."

Takebayashi: "Let's not waste time then."

Irina: *While they are all walking, she moves up closer to Kato.* Kato-kun, where's Naoko-san? I didn't sense her nearby, like last time.

Kato: Uh, about that...

-After returning to their motorcycles back in Shibaura Pier...-

Kato: "You're not going to the Cathedral?"

Naoko: *Straddles over her Hayabusa.* "You want me to get noticed by the part of AssUniv that don't know? A church is not like the crowded park or the enigmatic clubs; you stick out like a sore thumb."

Kato: "Then what should we do? You want a wire tap and eye cam?"

Naoko: "Nah; I need to check on something anyway. The Saitama police feed has been noticing strange activity in all of the areas near the places that we encountered the letter holders. Sudden cancellations of dance show tours, police cracking down on the illegal racing, Len's Appliances store being burned down... This is serious business."

Kato: "Hmm, that is vexing."

Naoko: "I'm going back there, make sure they're fine. We may need their testimonies at some point, if this all goes well. But that can't happen if they've abruptly been silenced."

Kato: "Stay safe, then. Call me back after the end of this day; I'll have the details ready for you."

Naoko: "Going to kiss me goodbye?"

Kato: "We're good friends, but not that good."

Naoko: *Puts on her helmet, muffling her voice slightly.* "Then are we not such great friends?" *Revs up the Hayabusa and drives off.*

-Back to the present...-

Irina: I don't think I needed to hear that last part.

Kato: I think it'd be good you heard we weren't playing around when you and Karasuma weren't looking.

Irina: To think you'd quip like that! *Refocuses.* But still, I think Naoko would've been eager to see him again. She's had quite a grudge.

-The many student-assassins and their mentors finally walk into the Anglican establishment.-

Kanzaki: I think's very fortunate that most of our higher academics and raising had taught at
least most of us under protestantism.

Yada: Yeah. Otherwise, some of us might be acting like vampires right now.

Okajima: Hiss~!

Yada/Kanzaki: We spoke too soon...

-Soon enough, a bishop appears before the college students from behind the walls nearby the altar.-

    Bishop: "Ah, hello young ones. I am Bishop Fujiwara. Tell me, do you all seek the Anglican practice?"

    Kato: "Not immediately, clergyman." *Bows with clasped hands at him.*

    Sugino: Kato-kun's pretty religious, doing that shamefully, huh?

    Fuwa: He runs a very ethnically diverse syndicate and is attached to all of its members. I figure he has to enthusiastically accept a lot of differing faiths and beliefs as a result.

    Kato: "Rather, we're wondering if you are offering refuge to someone here, cleric."

    Fujiwara: *Hesitates to answer.* "I'm afraid that's not a question I can answer."

    Kayano: "Why not? A vow of secrecy?"

    Fujiwara: "Well-"

    Maehara: "Father, we don't have the time for this; can't we just take a look back there?"

    Fujiwara: "Not without jurisdiction. I apologize, all of you."

    Kato: He's devout; not going to be easy to crack. Hm... *Notices one of the student-assassins are missing.* "Wait, what?" *Pivots his head vigorously.* "Yada-san?"

    Hara: *Points behind Kato.* "There she is. What's she-"

    Yada: *Has kneeled in the closest section before the altar and her hands are meshed together close to her face.*

    AssUniv: WHAT!?

    Kanzaki: "Oh, right. Yada-san has noted that her ailing brother had been relocated to Red Cross Hospital in Kyoto, sometime during the academic year. She regularly visited while she was in the city, but since we've spent some days outside, she might be seriously concerned right now."

    Sosuke: *Is reminded of that trick during the AssClass Cops N' Robbers game that allowed a bulk of the students to escape once.* "Wait, so she wasn't kidding about that four years ago?"

    Kurahashi: "I've never actually seen her so vulnerable like that..."
Yada: *Exhales upon completing her prayer. She then looks back, having noticed that all of AssUniv was watching her.* "EH!?* Immediately realizes she's also in a church and covers her mouth.* Sorry for the interjection, Bishop Fujiwara.*

Fujiwara: "It's alright... I suppose you're all fit to see the situation now."

Muramatsu: "Really? Just like that?"

Fujiwara: "The last test, as he had described, was for the incomers to display a sign of weakness; something that was to be forgiven."

Kato: Ah... *The obvious final part of the last letter... Though obvious is a disputable word; I don't think I would've come up with that...*

Fujiwara: "Right this way, gentlemen and ladies."

-The clergyman takes the many students through the cathedral to the other side, into its infirmary.-

Nagisa/Kayano: *The first outsiders to enter the room, they were taken aback to their discovery.* "!!* Once the rest come in, they are equally bewildered, though the surprise is only short-lived.*

???: "Ah... Great. Just when, after four years, I was finally done dealing with all of you..."

Karasuma: "Dr. Kotaro Yanagisawa... Shiro."

Yanagisawa: *His entire body still unable to function after the time gap, he rests on a wheeled gurney, surrounded by multiple IV stands and monitoring equipment.* "No please; just stay in my peripherals. It's not like I need to see you all."

Itona: "That's because you don't." *Crosses arms.*

Kayano: "Yeah, prick."

Nagisa: *Lays a hand on Kayano's shoulder, calming her.* "Language, Kayano-san! We're in a cathedral."

Irina: "We need to relocate him anyways; make it easier for the others to meet up with him." *Takes out her phone.*

Yanagisawa: "Aw, I was getting used to being here. Just as I remember; you kids ruin everything."

AssUniv: *Metaphorical sweat drops.* If he really did learn his lesson from so long ago, he's really trying hard to hide it...

-Before long, an authorized EMT ambulance reaches St. Andrew's Cathedral, properly extracts Dr. Yanagisawa, and brings him to a private ICU room in NTT Medical Center. The student-assassins are quick to tail the emergency vehicle.-

-Once initial entry, identification, and inspection were complete, AssUniv was free to speak with the paralyzed scientist in a more open setting.-
AssUniv: *Stand and sit across the room from the multi-tubed antagonist.*

Yanagisawa: *Tries to roll his one good eye down to see the students as well as possible.* "Well? No talking; questioning? Just going to stare at me, make me feel guilty? If so, it won't work."

Maehara: "Whoa, he's just like Tsuchiya-chan from all that time ago; has a decent exterior, but is still blackhearted through and through."

Kato: "Come on, guys; we sought him out for answers."

Isogai: "Alright... Let's start with... What happened with your research? It got turned down by the worlds' governments."

Yanagisawa: "Since when do criminals follow laws?"

AssUniv: *Briefly gaze at Kato before letting him continue.*

Yanagisawa: "You think terrorists or black-collar warlords care what the leading scientists deem unfit for weapons? They've seen in the worldwide news what my work is capable of once harnessed. But first they need to get it. So, years of tracking what little remained down ensued."

Fuwa: "You probably really liked being in the center of attention again, huh?"

Kataoka: "True.. It would show physical evidence that your depraved work on our late, precious sensei would not go to waste."

Yanagisawa: "HA! Don't make me laugh! No seriously, don't; it hurts."

Kayano: "Shut the fuck up, you unscrupulous dick!" *Tries to go towards him, but is pulled back by Hara, Okuda, Kurahashi, and Yada.*

Yanagisawa: "Ooo! Happy evening to you too!"

Nakamura: "No joking this time, doctor; you could really make do with showing the lone younger sister some respect."

Yanagisawa: "Oh... You're right. But I already did. I already wrote in a letter I failed my love, right? I meant it."

Kayano: "AM I TO EXPECT SOLACE FROM THAT!?"

Nagisa: "!"

Karasuma: "Kayano, you should withdraw from this conference. Okuda, Takebayashi, and Hara, follow her on a stroll around the center."

Okuda/Takebayashi/Hara: "Of course, sensei." *They, with Kayano in tow, leave the room.*

Yanagisawa: "Anger issues."
Karma: "Much like old you." *Refocuses.* "So, what was so humorous about Kataoka's statement?"

Yanagisawa: "I got to hear all about how much Korosensei got to help all of you, and how you got to see him as someone so dear. But you like to forget that I made Korosensei. I made him into that lovable monster - that sympathetic assassin that made all you nothings into somethings. Tell me, would you still have loved him if he remained as he was when I first saw him?"

AssUniv: "..."

Yanagisawa: "I didn't think so. We wouldn't even be here. All of us!"

Nagisa: "Stop changing the subject! You're bringing us nowhere with this!"

Yanagisawa: "Oh, that's not what I want to do. No, sir; not at all."

Maehara: "Oh yeah? Why's that? Why you wanted to help us?"

Yanagisawa: "I didn't want you kids. But, you all seem to be the only ones on the good side of this... War, shall I say?"

Irina: "Why do you care about that?"

Yanagisawa: "Believe me, it's not because I'm sympathetic to the good side. But what follows on the bad side is far less appealing."

Kato: "That's obvious; you would've been able to either attract or contact the Society easily if you had wanted to. Instead you hid, and not from us because we now know you didn't know we were hunting you down. So if not us, you fear who else is hunting you, I.E. the Reclamation Society."

Yanagisawa: *Beat.* "Who is that? Who are you?"

AssUniv: They never met...

Yanagisawa: "But you are right, I suppose."

Chiba: "It's not like you fear death or anything, though; you've cheated it multiple times, and you have one foot in the grave already."

Yanagisawa: "True. But there are far scarier things than death; you all know that very well. One of those things is the leader of this Society."

Isogai: "Hey, we don't know who the leader of the Reclamation Society is, right?"

Kato: "No. We only encountered two of the Big Three Lieutenants. None of them have any prior history or motive with mutated DNA."

Yanagisawa: "Seriously, who is that person?"

Sugino: "We'd ask the same about who you're referring to. But I suppose it matters little now that we have it and he or she doesn't."
Yanagisawa: "Uh... What's it?"

Itona: "The DNA, doctor. Your DNA - The mutated Tentacle DNA that is or was a part of you."

Yanagisawa: "Ah, that. Well, sorry to disappoint, for some of you again, but... I don't have that. Not anymore."

AssUniv: "..." *Loud beat.* "WHAT?!"

-Meanwhile, back in Saitama...-

Naoko: *Drives her Hayabusa motorcycle into the suburban area of Saitama Prefecture. She takes off her helmet after turning the engine off and looks around the fenced front-lawn neighborhood.* Huh? Where is everybody? *She gets off her vehicle, takes a look at her smartphone, and searches for a proper address on the outer walls of the houses nearby, eventually finding the allegedly correct one.* It's weird that Fuse wants me to find him here... But he must be in trouble, if he's only answering my calls at this current time. *She moves up to the right house, and proceeds to knock, but finds that the entry door is already open, so she decides to go straight inside, noticing it is a multi-family establishment."

"Hello? Fuse? Are you in here?" *She treads further inside.* This place... *Naoko notices the first family's complex's entrance, and knocks on it. When there is no answer, against her better judgment, she turns the knob, finding it unlocked. One quick look confirms her suspicions.* This place is devoid of residents... *She closes the door and goes upstairs, believing Fuse to be deeper in the building. She gets up to the second floor, and sees the next door. Again, a quick two knocks, but no answer, so Naoko opens that door too. This time, however, there does seem to be signs of residence.* Car magazines, posters, spare parts... Yeah, this would definitely be Fuse's place. But where is the lord himself? *Entering the house, she looks through the living room's shelves nearby the window, before finding a strange thing on said window.* Huh? Something didn't look right. *A quick inspection has her find that the window has a small smudge on it, recently wiped.* Why are his shelves so dirty, but his window is so clean? And yet, there's this- *Immediately realizes that the smudge is a faint red.* Oh no!

Masked Men: *Three appear from behind the walls adjacent to the room; one from outside the apartment, another from the dining room, and one, closest to Naoko, the bathroom. The latest immediately goes for the just-turning secret agent, and tries to hook his arm around her neck. Naoko manages to pry the man's limb away long enough for a front kick to push him back and tries to take out and aim one of her shoulder-holstered guns. But she soon discerns just how fast her aggressors are, with the next nearest one reaching her very hastily and throws a surprise left hook. She instinctively evades the blow, but is caught by feint and the man's left hand goes back to the original winding position and launches a low, yet powerful left underarm punch straight to her plexus.*

Naoko: "AUGH!" *Briefly screams in pain, spitting out in front of her. Unable to control her breathing, she collapses onto her knees and hands, dropping her Pardini pistol.* What!!? That was a pro's move!

Masked Man 1: *Recovers from the front kick and goes toward her, snickering.* "She's got tricks, but she's still too green."

Masked Man 2: *The only one who didn't fight Naoko yet approaches.* "No underestimating
her, man. She is still Karasuma's little sis."

Naoko: *Coughs again.* Karasuma? Who are these people!? 

Masked Man 3: *While Naoko is unable to react, he takes away the loose pistol, as well as her shoulder holsters, housing a Beretta 92FS Vertec and spare magazines.* "No more surprises, guys. Agent Naoko is down and is unarmed. Though, a Pardini? She's mixing up with some convicts; no other way she could get one of these."

Masked Man 2: "That just means she won't be missed by the Ministry itself." *Handwaves it aside.*

Masked Man 1: "Regardless, we're good." *Looks over to 2.* "Radio it in, while we constrain her."

Masked Man 2: "Will do." *Reaches behind him to get a walkie-talkie.*

Naoko: *She continues coughing while the two guys drag her along her knees by pulling on her arms.* AssUniv's not safe! I have to warn the guys! *When she feels recovered enough, she throws her legs forward, conjoining them in front of 3's closer limb, tripping him. Naoko uses this surprise to throw a grounded left roundhouse kick at 1. But he saw it coming and grabs her foot, blocking the attack. While still holding onto her right arm, he throws her into the wall of the hallway, smashing her side into the weak pastel. 3 has rolled through his blunder and is right next to Naoko when she drops to the ground. He tries to stomp her left knee to cripple her movements, but Naoko gets it out of the way just in time, and side kicks from a supine position to get him away. She turns around and blocks a snap kick from 1 with her hands, using the impact to launch her back to her feet. She spins around in a back kick that is easily stopped by the man, who throws it back down and elbows her spine when she stands upright.*

*Naoko is forced into 3 again, just as 2 hears the conflict and steps outside next to 1, and the two close the gap in the fight. 3 attempts a hook-punches on her, but she ducks under just in time. Naoko tries a reverse elbow swing and tries to run under the stunned's arms to the stairs, but 3's far leg heel-sweeps into Naoko's instep, forcing her onto the hardwood. She tries not to continue the fight and escape, but 1 has her extended leg in an ankle lock, keeping her in place. Naoko has no time trying to counter this before 3 gets to her and drops a 12-6 elbow onto her upper back, crashing her into the ground again. She tries to get up again, but then 2 pulls out something, gives it to 3, and rolls with her so that he has a bodyscissors lock, a right-arm crossface chickenwing on Naoko. It is revealed 3 has a sedative drug in a needle, which he plunges into Naoko's distressed arm. She yells in pain again, but it is muffled due to 2's hand over her mouth. After a few seconds, her struggle to pry free weakens.* No... Can't... Fall... Asleep... Damnit... *Her efforts finally cease, with her free arm falling limp to the nearby ground, and her head dozing off.* "..."

Masked Man 2: *Holds his sleeper on Naoko for another minute to make sure the defense agent was not faking. When he was certain she was unconscious, he releases his grip, and finally radios it in with his two colleagues nearby.* "HQ, we finally seized the elusive asset. We will proceed with extraction and return to the designated outpost." *Stops for a second for an answer from the other line.* "Affirmative." *Shuts off the walkie-talkie. He looks to Masked Man 1.* "You, dispose of her transport, then wait for us in the alley." * Watches him leave, before referring to Masked Man 3.* "Alright, let's bind her up and get her into the vehicle, guys." *Reaches into the side pocket of his slacks.*

-After a few minutes, in the alleyway outside, the two ski-masked people carry the unconscious
Naoko, who has been bound with duct tape, has her ankles and knees joined together, while her hands were moved behind her back and restricted by the wrists. Finally, in case she tried to scream during the ride, three strips were placed along her closed jaws. The men store her in the trunk of their SUV and leave the desolate neighborhood.
Chapter Summary

Dr. Yanagisawa has been recovered by the AssUniv Program and the latter are in the lead over the Reclamation Society. Except... He doesn't have the Tentacles DNA!?
Also, after coming across a new opposing force, Naoko (of all people) is overwhelmed and captured?!?

-Kayano continues her walk around NTT Hospital, alongside Okuda, Takebayashi, and Hara.-

Kayano: *Leads the way with an aggressive stride through the second floor hallways.*

Hara: *Takes something out of her pocket.* "Want something to eat, Kayano-san? Might help the calming."

Okuda: *Gasps looking at the energy bar.* "Hara-san! To think you would smuggle a piece in here?"

Hara: "Pardon?"

Takebayashi: "I took a look in the vending machine; that certainly wasn't in there. It wouldn't happen to have any allergens, yes?"

Hara: "Oh, no!" *Waits a few seconds, before looking at the label's ingredients.* "No, no it doesn't. Anyway, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: *Tilts her neck to the side.* "Oh, very well." *Takes the energy bar, opens it up, and takes a bite.*

Okuda: *Notices the passing of a doctor, his bedridden patient, and several nurses across the far hall.* "Is that sight something someone ever becomes accustomed to? Of course, barring the medics themselves?"

Hara: *Looks in Okuda's direction.* "I reckon not."

Takebayashi: "It's a tough time, shared by more people close to us than we think. Yada-san, for one, is dealing with it. And I'm sure our parents would be devastated if the Program turned sour, despite our sensei's best efforts."

Okuda: "Ever more fearful, I must say, is that they never get to say goodbye.

Hara: "Yeah... If the end's inevitable, we should all at least get to say and receive a farewell. Everyone deserves at least that."

Takebayashi: "It would be a total shame..." *Notices Kayano.* "If you never got it."
Kayano: *Painfully holds her forehead, one bite away from finishing the snack.* "But I suppose I don't think anybody does not deserves theirs just because I didn't get mine, yeah?"

Okuda/Hara/Takebayashi: "..."

Kayano: *Sighs.* "I'm sorry you all had to see that, guys."

Okuda: "Don't sweat the small stuff, Kayano-san. We know you're encumbered with an almost unmatched agony."

Hara: "But ring it by us anyways; teams will help you through what you can't alone."

Kayano: "I forgot such a crucial Korosensei lesson... At least I didn't nearly kill someone doing it this time."

Okuda: "Heh, glad we've been able to exorcise that demon."

Takebayashi: *Readjusts his glasses.* "Now we can worry about the demon that seeks to kill all of us, and all we care about."

Kayano: *Beams, before finishing the bar, throwing the wrapper away, and crossing her arms as she looks to the side.* "I think we should all just be happy. Everything's under control now..."

-Meanwhile...-

AssUniv: "WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'YOU DON'T HAVE IT'!?"

Doctors/Nurses: *Standing outside, mortified.*

Kato: *Stands at the threshold of the room, giving a forced grin at them all.* "Sorry for the outburst; they're quite elated he's alive; carry on with your duties, doctors." *Slides back inside and closes the door behind him.*

Isogai: *Metaphorical sweat drop.* "Let's do that again: Dr. Yanagisawa, are you serious when you say that you do not have your mutated DNA?"

Yanagisawa: "Yes; the doctors that attended to me very soon after surgically removed what remained of that microorganism in me."

Kurahashi: "And did they, dispose of it?"

Yanagisawa: "Hell if I know; I was unconscious at the time."

AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "Something's not adding up, doctor." *Goes up to him.* "You don't have your research with you, you are without any of the resources you've used against us in the past, and you can't even move an inch from where you lay on your hospital bed... And yet, you've removed your strain of Tentacle DNA, moved across the country, and laid down all of these crazy clues leading us to where you are." *Positions himself so Yanagisawa can look straight at him with his good eye.* "The question is, with how you are now, how did you do that?"
Kataoka: "Ah, that is a very obscure query we've had for awhile - the details of your disappearance, Dr. Yanagisawa."

Yanagisawa: "I guess I haven't disappointed you all enough - I had help getting around, of course. But... I don't remember from whom."

Terasaka: "Oh, for fuck's sake..."

Nagisa: *Puts his hand to his chin.* "I figure that whoever has been helping Dr. Yanagisawa would have been around during the time of the Final Assassination; otherwise how could they have known when he needed critical medical attention? For that reason, a few suspects come up; some agent or agents of the Ministry of Defense, Lovro, or... *Shivers.* I don't even want to think about that group.

Kato: *Notices Nagisa's preoccupation and begins thinking himself.* The letter holders were afraid of who gave them the letters... And they would recognize a man stuck on a gurney. Which means, it wasn't Dr. Yanagisawa who gave them those parchments. It was far worse. Hm, I'll wait for her to call me about what she finds with Fuse first. I better get the other loose ends done first. "Got to make a call; sit tight, everyone."

Karasuma: *Mind flickers.* "Thank you for reminding me; got to keep tabs on a 'certain someone.' You going outside, Kato? I'll follow."

Kato: *Is a bit surprised, but handwaves it aside.* "Very well." *Both say their goodbyes to the student-assassins and Irina, before making their ways to the elevator. Once out into the lobby, they take out their respective phones.* "My conversations' kind of private, so pay a wide berth to this, why don't you?"

Karasuma: "I wouldn't have let you within ten meters of my conference anyways." *They then go through separate entrances and take the flanks of the Medical Center's front area.*

Kato: *Shrugs and dials up Mr. Yanagisawa.* "Takeda, we've confirmed the finding of your son. He's being treated at Tokyo's NTT Medical."

Takeda: *Voice only.* "Ah, v-very good news, Kato-san. We'll be on our way from your place. Don't worry; we kept it in perfect condition, and didn't go where we weren't supposed to."

Kato: "Great. See you there soon." *Hangs up. He then dials Hyun's number.* "Hyun."

Hyun: "Hello, Kato-kun. If you're calling about the consequences of Naoko's stunt, don't worry; it hasn't caused any lasting damage. The rest of the Ministry played exactly how we thought it would; dispelling the nationwide rumors just so they can deny the ongoing existence of the Shadow War."

Kato: "And? What of the foreign feedback?"

Hyun: "Eh, we got traces. All seems to be from negligible sources, though. I'll review them anyways, though."

Kato: "Alright. Talk to you soon." *Hangs up. He then scrolls through the caller log, not finding Naoko in the recent list.* She's taking her, *Checks his watch.* Time. Ah well... *Begins to light up a kretek smoke. He softly exhales one puff, but then his flip phone rings. When he looks at the
ID, it is his uncle Norio. Reluctantly, he picks it up.* "Uncle?"

Norio: "Hey, nephew. I had heard from the Yanagisawas and Hyun that the mission's over."

Kato: "Yeah, it is."

Norio: "So is everything done, then? Are you good?"

Kato: "Well, it's n-"

Norio: "Good. Nephew, I know I've been a bit of a tough uncle lately. Embarrassed you in front of your peers earlier. But you know I'm just afraid for you, Kaz. Always has been."

Kato: "I know. You don't want outside influences consume me like it did my father and grandfather."

Norio: "Corner; not consume. But remember that when it concerns solving any sort of emotive crisis, family is the only absolute."

Kato: "..."

Norio: *Sighs.* "You seem to be a little hasty right now, so I'll carry on this conversation later. Have fun, nephew."

Kato: "W-wa-wait, Uncle. You're back at the Summer home, right?"

Norio: "I am."

Kato: "The home is perfectly fine, as the Yanagisawas mentioned, right?"

Norio: "Oh yeah; some glasses that I've kept unwashed for ages suddenly look like the ones I and Yuna got back in France twenty-three years ago. Also, the lawn and garden's freshly tended, and all trashes have been taken out-

Kato: "Wait, the trash was taken out? How? The weekly trash takeout would be," *Checks his watch.* "Three days from now."

Norio: "By God, you're right." *Sounds of him rushing around.* "I thought I smelled a menace when I got out of the car." *More rushing.* "Aha! Left a little landfill just behind an edge of the home's overlook! But why would they..."

Kato: "What? Why'd you stop?"

Norio: *Sounds of disgust as he rummages.* "A few torn wrappers of... Semtex!"

Kato: *Mind flickers.* "Gotta go, Uncle!" *Closes his phone and rushes to the hospital parking lot.* "I must find the Yanagisawas and stop them before they reach the center!" *He gets onto his Yamaha VMAX and drives off.*

Karasuma: *On the other side of the hospital, has called Naoko for the third time.* This is not right at all... Where is she? *Finally, the ringing ends.* "Ah, Naoko. Where have you been? Why haven't you answered any of my earlier cal..."
Man: "Poor Naoko-san is quite busy at the moment. And you will be too, in just a second..."

Karasuma: "!!!" *His surprised expression is matched only by a furious frown just a few seconds later.*

-Meanwhile, in the middle of Tokyo's busy roads...-

Kato: *Hyun's too busy, but I do got my IT department; they've got eyes on all the busy districts. They know Yanagisawa's car and its plate, and they can tell me which intersection they stop at. I'll cross it with my own road and intercept them, before they reach the NTT Medical Center. *But after setting his plan in motion, there is still some large weight on his chest or back. It seriously occupies his many minds, such that he is really giving his all in making sure he's paying attention to the road.* Why... Why is this happening...? *He doesn't get to complete the thought, as when he notices within his right-side peripherals, the impending arrival of a full-size sedan. Kato jumps off just in time, but is launched by the collision, throwing his minimally-protected body onto the asphalt. He rolls to reduce the impact, but is still a little shaken by the attack.*

???: *When Kato takes a look over to the car that crashed into his VMAX, the driver and his four friends get out. And the pain running through Kato is matched only by his severe aggression upon facial recognition. He grimaces at him as the citizens nearby begin running off or gathering around.* "Miyamoto, Miyamoto, Miyamoto..."

Kato: *Manages to stand upright on one knee after holding his lightly-injured arm for a little while.* "Jieji... This is a really bad time right now..."

Jieji: "Sorry, Miyamoto-san, but after such a great battle between you, me, my guys, and your little friends, I just couldn't resist coming back for seconds. Especially, after you allowed me to get another chance."

Kato: "Not this time, Jieji. I've truly had enough now!" *Pulls out one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols and aims at Jieji.*

Jieji: "Fine, shoot me. But you won't ever get your answers. Like, say, where your friends will be..."

Kato: "!!" *He eases his pressure on the pistol's trigger.* My friends? Did he kidnap Naoko-san? How dare he... *Puts his pistol back into his holster, and throws the whole set aside.* "I'm not holding back this time." *Gets into a new ready stance.*

Jieji: *Taunts Kato with fake armwaves of chills coursing through him.*

Kato: *Projects a black aura of his Hatred Bloodlust.* "Prepare yourself!"

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 5's OST "Receive And Slash You" plays.-

加藤和彦VS武史杰济

Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family
Wushi Jieji; One of the Big Three of the Reclamation Society

Jieji's four lackeys from the Hades Arenas earlier charge at Kato first, deciding to combine their varied set of strikes. Kato objects to this, and dives low for a handstand double heel sweep, acting like a gigantically blunt axe that chops their legs off. On the floor, two are victims of a round-off double knee-drop to the upper back and chest respectively, knocking them both out. The other two get back up before Kato can get at them, and one throws a spinning roundhouse kick to the crouched Yakuza. Kato ducks even deeper, and rolls into a b-boy baby freeze, side kicking the one from a supine position, and then rising into a somersault inverted snap kick to the bowed head, taking him down. Kato lands softly on one leg and his upper back, using his other leg's foot to block an axe kick from the final mook. With his lower torso exposed, a quick backfist punished the vulnerability, forcing the Chinese man's head forward. Kato locked his legs into a headscissor with the skull, pivoted his whole body, and then pulled downwards, driving the man's head into the asphalt.

Jieji: *Claps at the display.* "You weren't kidding."

Kato: *Gets back onto his feet.* "I got somewhere I need to be."

The two rivals decide not to waste any more time and proceed with their own fight; Jieji didn't want to admit it, but he's also fighting with a short time limit; he knows the Society won't be bailing him out of jailtime due to his many previous defeats. As such, he had no qualms about trying to take Kato out immediately with a three-point spinning hook to the temple. But Kato saw it coming a mile away and bobbed to the right just enough to glide under the kick. Kato bounced back with the returning momentum channeled into a vicious right hook. But Jieji rises up to block it with crossed forearms, and then pushes back. Kato realizes that Jieji has studied up further on grapples and locks, working taijiquan into his repertoire, and swiftly moves his left arm behind his right, rooting the force.

Kato pushes back, and twists so that his left arm can throw an elbow. But Jieji splits from the exchange temporarily, misbalancing Kato and leaving his elbow roughly an inch off-target. Fortunately, he recovers just in time to block left-arm first from another clash that Jieji aims to swing a left shoulder, even being able to divert it aside just enough to sidestep and breaking the crossing once more. When they meet again, Kato plucks the guard downwards, exposing Jieji to an unorthodox scorpion kick with his left. Jieji bobs to the far side to avoid most of the blow, and uses his crouched stance to land a shoulder thrust into Kato's crossed arms and chest. The lifting momentum was painful, but it also brought Kato's kicking leg back, and a wild snap kick put Jieji down a peg. Kato landed back on his feet again just as Jieji falls on his back from the impact.

Jieji sits up, moving his head right into a rolling front dropkick by Kato. A quick transition allows the latter to reach a full mount and initiate a rapid pummel to the Chinese Samurai's face. Jieji outlasts the assault and manages a hip bridge to throw Kato off of him. But Kato keeps head control as he lies supine in front of him, and when Jieji turns, Kato does the same and floats over, putting Jieji on the weaker side of a reverse north-south position. Kato throws a few knee lifts to the shoulders and crown of the former Triad, and some elbows to the midsection. Jieji breaks the combination with double-arm push upwards, forcing another game of pushing hands. Their kneeling positions transition to standing once more, and Kato wastes no time trying to break out with low, light sweeps of Jieji's leading leg, but the latter continues to step away. Jieji's arm closer
to himself whips behind Kato's head, locking it place for a back-roll toss, but Kato lands in a bridge of his own feet, and Kato pivots around in this position before dropping Jieji with a spinning hangman's neckbreaker.

Kato again doesn't let Jieji get a moment's breath, attempting a high-angle headscissor DDT onto the asphalt, but Jieji stops the pendulum momentum cold, placing Kato square on the ground and giving a quick kick to the head. He blocks Kato's reactionary front kick and drops a shin onto Kato's ribcage as recompense. Jieji then channels a chi within him to throw a deceptively powerful palm strike straight onto Kato's forehead. It would no doubt have been a killing blow if it had connected; when it reached the street, it caused a light tremor and a five-path crack along the black, manmade stone.

But it didn't connect, for Kato had spun around Jieji's exposed left leg, throwing his right arm in between it and Jieji's right leg. He hugs the lower limb, and pulls downward, causing Jieji to fall over him. Jieji rolls back to a kneeling stance just in time for eht coup de grace; a sprung-up skipping superkick to the chin; Jieji's body is thrown back into a lightpost situated nearby.

-OST ends.-

Kato: *Spits aside.* And stay down this time! *Wipes his mouth, before getting a notice on his phone, which he checks. His heart skips a beat upon realizing what he's being reminded of.* Oh shit! The Yanagisawas! They're almost there; Jieji and Naoko must wait, I have got to stop them! *Looks around, noticing the stopped car that Jieji and his men used to trash his Yamaha VMAX. Without a second thought, he takes the keys out from the unconscious Jieji's jacket, starts up the vehicle, and races off towards the institute.*

Jieji: *Still sitting at the lightpost from where Kato had left him at the conclusion of the fight, his head was still bowed... But his max suddenly sprouted an upwards concave curve.* "Heheheheh... So that's what he's like when all the chips are down..."

Kato: *Now far away from the previous combat situation, lucid that he has no time to stop at red lights or slowing down in less-lane streets, Kato throws the master textbook on street safety out the window of the now-ninety-mph sedan.* Come on... Come on!!

-But, despite Kato's best vehicular efforts...-

-BOOM.-

Kato: *Stops Jieji's car dead in its tracks, gets out, and surveys the damage done to NTT Medical Center's ninth floor from afar.* No... That couldn't be...! * He immediately gets back into the car and drives closer towards the doomed area...*
Uninterrupted Space

Chapter Summary

Just when you think everything's going right, it all goes to shit. Dr. Yanagisawa has had help from an as-of-yet unknown force, Naoko's been subdued, the rest of the Yanagisawa family have been revealed to be revenge bombers, and Jieji has kept Kato from reaching the medical center and stopping the significant act arson. But where was the rest of the AssUniv members?

-Before the incident, back on the ninth floor of the NTT Medical Center...-

Kayano/Hara/Takebayashi/Okuda: *Returned to the hospital room, moments after the elevator housing Kato and Karasuma had gone down.* "We're back~!" *Notice the flat, even sad expressions on their peers' faces when they hear no fanfare for their arrival.* "Huh? What's up, guys?"

Maehara: "Close the door first; don't want anything being heard by those outside." *Shuts the door behind them.* "Dr. Yanagisawa there... Doesn't have his DNA."

Kayano/Hara/Takebayashi/Okuda: *Loud beat.* "WH-!"

Nagisa/Yoshida/Hayami/Chiba: *Cover all of their mouths before they can finish the interjection.*

Isogai: "Sorry for that, you four, but we can't afford another uproar after all of us had caused something much worse earlier."

Hara: "He doesn't have his mutated DNA?"

Yanagisawa: "I didn't think the ones being taught by that ultra-fast octopus would be this slow."

Kayano: *Vents one heavy breath before letting it go.*

Okuda: "How could you not, though?"

Yanagisawa: "Hello! Surgeons! Took it out while I was sedated." *Scoffs.* "Good riddance, anyways."

Nagisa: "I just don't believe it though. You know the truth! You brought us all out here for a reason!"

Karma: "!!"

Nagisa: "Why you or your friends help lay down clues like this? What if your family had given them to the Society instead? They'd find you eventually with them! Why bring us all the way here for nothing, aware that everybody has antipathy for you?"
Yanagisawa: "Because no matter what, you'll be facing the guy I don't want to get the DNA, wherever it is."

Kataoka: "Who?"

Yanagisawa: "One of my many assistants at the Research Facility five years ago... Yuzuru Machida."

-Yanagisawa remembers select moments of that time when he was leading the antimatter project on Korosensei. Ones such as when Machida volunteered to personally monitor the imprisoned master assassin; when he was justifiably turned down due to expendability, he lashes out at the scientist that advised against it. He also showed blase expressions to the critical injuries of two other scientists after rats infused with antimatter exploded right in their faces. Also, Yanagisawa was quickly contacted about how one scientist was forced to back out from a certain research position that Machida craved for (and soon got); because his right hand was pierced by something sharp and infected. The camera reveals Machida was the one responsible; a crimson-crusted cheese knife was within the keyboard-compartment of his personal desk.-

Yanagisawa: "The guy was arguably even more mental than I; at least I knew who I hated. Machida, no one was safe from his wrath. You would be his best friend one day, then first on the kill list the next. Heh, must come from his time as a biology and chemistry specialist during Operation Ocean Shield..."

Kayano: *Steps forward.* "Every scientist who encountered Korosensei in that facility died that day. How is a friend of yours still roaming?"

Yanagisawa: "Dr. Machida was the only one who wanted to continue work on the instilled antimatter project even after we had realized the cataclysmic results of a test subject dying with those cells still inside. As an expert in biochemicals that can enhance performance with age, he believed he could at least extend the countdown... What a mad scientist. We would probably have been dead unless a gentleman's agreement with our firm allowed us to enforce security to keep Machida under house arrest. He was let go of the company just the day before everything went awry. He's still mad as ever, probably even more, but worse still, he's alive."

Kimura: "And he wants what remains of the DNA to work it into a weapon of mass destruction..."

Karma: "As the kingpin of the nebulous evil syndicate known as the Reclamation Society?"

Yanagisawa: "I wouldn't deny that theory; he's possibly one of only a handful that could complete the project now."

Irina: "Well, now, that's at least informative."

Isogai: *Claps and dusts off his hands.* "Well, this has been a fun time. I guess we'll let you rest, now, Doctor. At least, until the rest arrive.* He leads the bulk of them in departing the hospital room.*

Nagisa: "..." *Follows the rest of his peers in leaving.*

Yanagisawa: *Beat.* "What? Rest?"
Hayami: "Yeah, your family. They've been dying to see you. Bye." *The last one of AssUniv to leave the room, begins to shut the door.*

Yanagisawa: "They know where I am!? N-no! They can't come h-here! Y-you have to keep them aw-"

-The door shuts, muting his stammering from the rest of the facility.-

-In the elevators...-

Irina: "... Karasuma and Kato have been out for a lot longer than a phone call. Maybe they're having multiple? They better not have clashed... Hm? *Looks back, finding her proteges.*

AssUniv: *All seem to be disheveled and agitated.*

Irina: *Turns back to look at them.* "What's up with all of you?"

AssUniv: "Our search continues..."

Kayano: "And this time we don't know where to look..."

Karma: "Man, the whole situation is a mess."

Nagisa: "It is what it is, guys. And at least, if the DNA is truly forever gone, it means the society has next to nothing that we haven't already seen."

Isogai: "Good point; we got nothing else to be scared of, so long as we know they will never get what they need."

Kanzaki: *Exhales satisfyingly while holding her chest.* "That's quite a relief."

Kataoka: "We just got to beat them in the rest of this Shadow War. We got through the first half just fine, I don't think it should be too hard to tackle the rest."

Isogai: "Only if we're ready to go for the kill." *Looks back.* "Well, everyone? What say you?"

AssUniv: "Let's do it!"

-But once the elevator comes down to the lobby and they all get out...-

Hayami/Chiba: "!!"

Sugino: *Notices the two snipers' surprised expressions.* "Something up, you two?" *His query earns the interest of the rest of their peers.*

Chiba: *Points towards a group of men.* "Do those guys look weird to you all?"

Terasaka: "Oh... Good eye. They do look pretty shady."

Hara: "And not just because of possible illness, I take it?"
Karma: "Nah... These guys are dirty bad guys. Society folk."

Yada: "Could that be why Kato and Karasuma loitered outside? Try and throw the bunch of them off track when we caused such a ruckus?"

Maehara: "Whatever their reasons, they're not here right now. And that's troubling."

Irina: "That's right; they're not here. Which means we must take this into our own hands. These guys cannot search through this hospital and reach Dr. Yanagisawa. So what will we do?"

AssUniv: *All look between each other, before settling on one goal, nodding all the same.*

Isogai: *Begins a chain of smiles.* "We're going to assassinate them."

Kataoka: *Grins with the rest of them.* "I take it we got a plan, despite losing our personal planner?"

Nagisa: "I think we got some ideas..." *Looks around for props and inspiration.*

-After a few minutes...-

Suspicious Man 1: *Stands with three of his colleagues. He had just been told by the front desk that the ICU unit's sudden influx of patients (some with suspiciously similar features to recurring personas), has blocked off all visiting chances; they must wait around for a little bit.* "Gah, what a waste of time." *Checks his watch frustratingly.*

Suspicious Man 2: "Easy, man. It's not like the disabled doctor's going anywhere."

Suspicious Man 3: "Didn't he already? Or are you trying to tell me he was always in a public hospital?"

Suspicious Man 4: "Ambulances - best, natural reason, I should think?"

-They all refocus when they begin hearing awful hacking from two emerging people.-

Kayano/Yada: *Having removed their hair accessories and donned (conservative) patient gowns, they are making their way through the more secluded part of the lobby that the Society men are around, uncontrollably coughing everywhere.* "Excuse us, please! Oh, we're so sorry about that!"

Suspicious Man 2: "Hey, little kids, you should really do more to cover your mouths~"
*Suddenly Yada falls and leans over his lower torso and coughs point-blank onto his clothes. She quickly rolls off and coughs onto 1 as well. Kayano does something similar to 3 and 4.* "What th-?"

Suspicious Man 3: "Goddamn insensitive Japanese girls!" *Is almost tempted to push Kayano forcibly by her head off of him.*

Suspicious Man 4: *Holds his shirt so that he can take a look at the affected area.* "What did those two have?"

Kurahashi: *After a few seconds, appears from outside the crowd, donning a lab coat, stethoscope, and glasses. She gasps when she sees Yada and Kayano nearby.* "There you two are!
What are you doing out of your beds!?

Yada: "Needed to get a replacement juice..." *Coughs again.*

Kayano: "Seconded." *Coughs as well.*

Kurahashi: "Just ring the remote next time!" *Puts on some medical gloves and begins nudging them.* "Back upstairs with you two; come on!" *Watches them disappear behind the nearby hallway corner. Yada and Kayano immediately run off when they know they're not being observed... Interestingly, with needles concealed in their sleeves...*

Suspicious Man 1: *Goes up to Kurahashi, who turns around to see them.* "Excuse me, doctor, were they afflicted with something major?"

Kurahashi: "Oh, did they get you lot? Oh dear, there is great cause for concern; they are gravely ill; they have reached a major stage in it, and coughing's the consequence. If you have made immediate contact, you'd begin having itchy rashes now!"

Suspicious Man 4: "Well, they did cough all over us, but I'm not feeling..." *He suddenly has an urge to irritate a certain spot on his side; the same place he got injected.* "Oh, oh, I'm getting the rashes!"

Suspicious Man 2: *Rubs his lower back.* "Ah, me too!"

Kurahashi: "Oh dear. Any of you also feeling dry eyes? Sensitivity to light? Scotomas?"

Suspicious Man 1: "I'm not too fond of that bright bulb, now that you mention it..."

Suspicious Man 3: *Blinks rapidly.* "What's happening?"

Kurahashi: "Oh no; you're all infected too; goddamn those ladies!" *Aside.* "Hey, you four!"

Isogai/Maehara/Kataoka/Sugino: *Dressed as nurses with medical masks. They look behind them when they hear their cue.*

Kurahashi: "We got some R-Sixes! Get them on beds and wheel them to the ICU; I'll handle the reports!"

Isogai/Maehara/Kataoka/Sugino: "Yes, ma'am!" *They get four gurneys and have the Society men get onto them, before they ride off.*

Suspicious Man 4: "Hey, ain't there supposed to be a second man for every bed steering?"

Isogai: "Uh, no time, sir. R-Sixes can get bad at the drop of a dime."

Maehara: "Agreed; we must get you lot to seek medical attention immediately."

Sugino: "Yes, yes, you two are all right. But..." *They all stop their rollers inside a dead-end hallway behind the elevators.* "The assistants must deal with this conscious condition."

Suspicious Men: "Wha-?"
Kataoka: "Agreed. Assistants?"

Terasaka Group: *Similarly dressed to the nurses, these physician assistants are armed with heavy books that they all simultaneously slam on the foreheads of the Society muscle, "sedating" them.* "Hope you're all insured..."

Kataoka: "Good work, you PAs. The Doc can now perform the operation."

Kurahashi: *Sneaks around.* "Eheh, only thanks to Okuda and Takebayashi's emergency serums."

Irina: *Steps out of the shadows.* "I must say this, kids: for being so on the fly, you all nailed that."

Ritsu: [On Kayano's phone] "That even got me excited, though I could barely witness anything."

Yada/Kayano: *Appear afterwards as well. Yada bows to Irina.* "Thank you, instructor."

Hayami/Chiba: *Speaking through the earpieces all of them are wearing. They are watching the situation from afar, while Kanzaki, Fuwa, Okajima, and Mimura are on the technical field, surveying undercover.* "Hey, guys! We have a few more like them incoming; let's give them the ultimate treatment too."

Okano: *Wearing a gown herself, with Nakamura.* "No problem; we'd all better take point, mix it up and keep the cameras and eyewitnesses from smelling a rat." *Nakamura taps the serum needle near her, creating small drops of the liquid."

Karma: *Puts on his rectangular glasses, in addition to a white long jacket.* "On it. Nagisa, you good?"

Nagisa: *Puts on his medical mask, next to Hara, Kimura, and Sosuke.* "But of course."

-And after another two sweeps, AssUniv secures NTT Medical Center of the potentially dangerous, who have piled up in the alleyway the "nurses" keep dragging them to. An "Arrest us!" paper sign is placed on the top person on the pile, once they get discovered by someone going there for an emergency gurney or wheelchair, which will no doubt happen by the end of the day.-

-They all get out of the institute, and cross the street to the nearby park, feeling triumphant.-

Nakamura: "Ah, that felt good."

Sosuke: "Actually assassinating people?"

Fuwa: "Just what we needed. Now we feel empowered."

Hazama: "Caught in our web."

Karma: "Now our side's got the ball - sorry."

Nagisa: "Face off against us anytime they want; won't matter."

Irina: "That movie's too old for the lot of you..."
AssUniv: "..." *They all begin laughing satisfyingly.*

Okajima: *Finishes her interval.* "Who knew we'd feel this good about saving Shiro's skin?"

Yoshida: "Heh, let's be honest; we just hate someone else even more right now."

Maehara: "Yep. But let's be fair, we're being generous; if we really did not care about him we could push him out in the open and wait for the bad guys to show up."

Nagisa: "Sounds like something Karasuma and Kato would do, if not for collateral damage."

Irina: "Let's leave it on the table, in case we get impatient... Maybe?" *Confirms the joke with a grin. They all begin to laugh again...*

-But then, an explosion within the floor of NTT Medical Center happens anyway behind AssUniv... Nine stories up. Citizens passing by run opposite of the building when smaller stones falling become the prelude to a larger, heavier drop of rubble in the vicinity below.-

AssUniv: *Wide-eyed, frozen in their tracks.*

Nagisa: ...*What?*

-Some time later, the authorities and firemen have arrived on the scene. AssUniv, like all the nearby citizens, have been moved to the least possible distance from the sight, across the street. They are still able to gaze at the sheer damage and its remaining smoke cloud.-

Sugino: "Damn... We... We failed?"

Nakamura: *Shakes her head.* "That just ain't right... Not at all."

Kayano: "I always thought of wanting him dead, but... I never thought of its effects."

Itona: "It's flabbergasting to think that he's just gone, after all that's happened." *Recalls his time being given the "strength" by Shiro from much earlier.* "The guy survived many encounters with a supernatural being, becoming one himself, playing us all for fools, and then, boom, he's gone."

Okuda: "Literally."

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's phone.* "And we are still without the knowledge or the artifact that we require, and will now probably never acquire."

Irina: "Yeah, with him gone, we won't ever find out who has the DNA now..."

Nagisa: *And just like that, our advantage was gone... And yet...*

-Kato arrives in the damaged sedan he stole from the Chinese, very close to where the student-assassins were. He rapidly leaves the automobile-

Kato: "Everyone!"

Yada: "Kato-kun? It's great to see you weren't caught in this attack!"
Isogai: "True, but where were you? We could've really used your help in there."

Kato: "You mean you all came across the Yanagisawas as they went up to their son's room?"

Okano: "Huh? Uh, no. We were kind of occu-"

Karma: *Steps up.* "Actually, we did. Well, I and Nagisa did. They passed by the front desk and went into the elevator, no distractions. Also, we were, as Okano-san was about to say, occupied."

Kato: "You didn't try to stop them?"

Kimura: "What? Why would we stop them? Aside from perhaps saving their lives, of course, but we didn't know there were more Society folk already up there. That's why we were occupied, by the way."

Kato: "There were undercover Syndikat members in the Medical Center?"

Kayano: "Yeah; we tried holding them within the lower areas and neutralizing them there, but it seems we failed. And now all of the Yanagisawa family are dead."

Kato: "No... It wasn't a Society muscle that did this, guys... My Family found evidence nearby the Summer Home that my Uncle owns. Those guys were just a fortunate coincidence, and the local TMPD can and will pin it on them, but the Yanagisawas are the true culprits."

Yada: "What? Kato-kun, are you sure?"

Kato: *Looks to the ground on the side.* "..."

Kanzaki: *Holds her mouth.* "That's horrible..."

Kato: "Discommoding. It's hard to believe, be assured. Family values, out the window; just like that."

Yada: *That's right... To see direct relatives kill each other like this.. It'd be undyingly hard for such a bloodline-focused man like Kato to absorb.*

Karma: "Even that doesn't sound quite right. We were tending to that same Summer Home with those three. And Harumi was Hellbent on finding her older brother, and not in the vengeful way."

Nakamura: "Yeah, that's just not adding up..."

Kato: "Really now?"

Sugino: "Certain, Kato-kun!" *Motions over the previous two, along with Okano, Hayami, and Sosuke.* "We all heard her; that kind of focus and determination cannot be feigned at all!"

Kato: *If Harumi was like that, then why did they blow the place up? *Mind flickers.* Unless...* *Is distracted when they all see a gurney roll out of the lobby.*

EMT 1: *Pushing the bed.* "Doctor; this young lady was in the elevator during the time the
bomb went off!"

EMT 2: *Pulls it closer to said doctor.* "She has some trauma to the back of her neck!"

Nagisa: *Manages to get a good look of the will-be patient once they position it properly.* "That's Harumi!"

Chiba: *Gasps.* "You're right."

Terasaka: "What does that mean? She got cold feet?"

Hazama: "Why think that, when she never wanted to do it?"

Nakamura: "What if she really did, and was the only one who got out?"

Kato: "No... If Karma and co.'s words are correct, which we have no reason to doubt, then Harumi never thought of killing her brother. But her parents probably did. And that's why they prepared Semtex in my Uncle's home." *To AssUniv.* "Does it make sense now why they would want to clean up a stranger's house?"

Fuwa: "Yeah... Their hands would have a reason to look pasty or powdered if they were hard at housework, such as lifting boxes. If not, they'd be clean, like washing the dishes."

Maehara: "And they kept the fact that they were playing with fire from their only daughter? Sheesh..."

Kato: *Looks awful again.*

Irina: "Well, we shouldn't go up to Harumi right now; she doesn't seem to be in any condition for questioning herself. And if you're right, Kato-san, then she's in for a huge left hook down the road."

Isogai: *Shakes his head as they all see the medical staff put her into an ambulance.* "What do we even do now?"

-AssUniv notices a slick jet-black Toyota Avalon slow down and stop right in front of them. The driver is Karasuma, and he doesn't look too happy...-

Karasuma: *Lowers the window and furiously stares at Kato.* "YOU; IN THE CAR, NOW!"

Irina: *Gasps, almost covering her mouth, before realizing she doesn't want to concern the students who don't know yet.* Don't tell me!

Kato: "..." *To Karma and Terasaka.* "You two will want to follow."

Karma/Terasaka: "Are we going to-"

Karasuma: "NOW!"

Karma/Terasaka: *Know better than to tempt their sensei’s sanity any further.* "Okay!"

AssUniv: *The rest of them are absolutely terrified as their three friends get into their mentor's vehicle and race off.*
Irina: *Shakes her head of the whole affair.* Naoko... Please be alright...
Naoko: *Having been under a deep, forced slumber for some time, her whole body stirs a bit and her eyes twitch.* "Mmph..." *Her eyelids slowly open up, and she adjusts to the lights scattered around beaming on her.*

Masked Man 1: *Lightly kicks her ankles in her sitting position. Behind him are another ten or so similarly hooded people; the three closest of which are dressed like the ones that kidnapped her with 1.* "Took you long enough, princess."

Naoko: "Nngh..." *Finally able to process the situation around her, she looks to where she was tapped; her ankles have been bound together by steel link chains and a lock, similarly to her wrists, knotted together, above her head and attached to a fishhook above. Three layers of tape were still over her mouth, preventing her from crying out in pain or for help.* Right... These guys caught me... Urgh! *Feeling a familiar, yet sudden surge of pain from her left ribcage, forcing her eyebrows to wobble again.* W-what's happened to me? I don't normally feel this strained!

Masked Man 2: "Hm, we might've put too much of our 'weak juice' into her; she's feeling the pain so much, she's passing out."

Naoko: *Keeps her head down when her eyes reopen with realization.* What? "Weak juice?"

Masked Man 3: "Matters little to us. We just need to send some messages." *Walks toward Naoko, who's leaning on the the white-tiled wall and surrounded by dangerous instruments meant for gutting, as evident by the blood on and around them. The man passes by all of this and stands over the captured secret agent.* "Now onto you..." *He takes a knee to match her height a little more.*

Naoko: *Refusing to give him eye contact, she keeps her head bowed and looks to her right side.*

Masked Man 3: "Hey! Look at me!"
Naoko: *Refuses to comply.*

Masked Man 3: "Look at me when I talk to you!" *Forcibly lays a hand on her chin and attempts to pry her face forward.*

Naoko: "ERMPH!" *She resists the pulling with all of her remaining might.*

Masked Man 3: "Tough girl, aren't you?" *Continues nudging until he gets tired of it, lets go of Naoko's chin, and instead opts to slap her far cheek; so hard, she turns her head anyways.*

Naoko: "MMF!" *She breathes a little more heavily as the exposed skin on her affected face begins to pink.*

Masked Man 3: *Grabs her forehead and some of her hair nearby and pushes it into the wall.*

"Gonna be a good girl now?"

Naoko: *After a few more seconds, she slowly reveals her eyes and looks at him defiantly.*

Masked Man 3: "Good, good." *Lets go of Naoko's head, and then proceeds to her ankles. He produces a key from his back pocket and pushes it into the lock.* "Boss says you don't need these any more. I personally think he's full of it, but we won't have to worry about that, now will we?" *He unfastens the chain link from the lock's loop and unravels it off of her legs.* "There ya go; get comfy. Lord knows you need it.. If you dare to believe in him." *Rolls up the free chain and walks off.*

Naoko: *Moves her feet some distance and relaxes her bent knees to ease her joints a bit.* *These guys are just playing dumb... They know Karasuma; they know I am his sister... And they know I can kick. But they know they can handle it, and I won't risk that. Could they... Is their boss-?"

Masked Man 4: "I'm guessing you know now that another 'him' is on his way, right?"

Naoko: "Mmh?"

Masked Man 4: "Yep. And let's just say he's paying a ransom; it could also be consolation for the medical bills of four yesteryears... But some things are going to happen first." *Motions over to a wall on the far side.*

Naoko: FOUR yesteryears? No mistaking it; these guys are the-"EMPH!" *Tries to gasp when suddenly, the fishhook that is keeping her in place moves forward, dragging her lower and some of her upper legs along the tiled ground.*

Masked Man 1: "Heheh... 'things.'" *Cracks his left hand's knuckles.*

Naoko: *Her bindings stop right in front of the tables laid out with instruments. The hook then raises, forcing her off of her kneeling position, and elevates high enough that Naoko can barely keep the ball of her foot on the ground when still limp.*

Masked Man 4: "By that," *Goes away from the controls for the hooks.* "We mean, 'making you worthy of a display.' And it starts, with this." *Nods to 1.*

Masked Man 1: *Nods back, looks over to Naoko, and proceeds to backfist her right in the ribcage that she had groaned about previously.*
Naoko: *Her head whips upwards, her legs quickly launch close to the rest of her body, and her arms lift her up off the floor temporarily due to bending.* "MMMMFH!"

Masked Man 1: *When she returns to her original position, he then throws a hook punch into Naoko's left cheekbone.*

Naoko: *Her face moves with the fist that came in contact, making her look right for a second. She eventually returns to her previous state, albeit worse for wear.*

Masked Man 2: "My turn, buddy." *Pushes 1 aside, and brandishes a taser. But not just any one taser; the one she had in her long-length shoulder purse.* "Little girl, anybody ever tell you not to play with lightning?" *He presses it into Naoko's left side and triggers it, causing a surge of electricity to surge through her. She tries to yell out in pain through her gag, but it's a little more than a muffled moan once produced as waves. He moves the taser away for a little bit, waiting for the captured agent to regain feeling in her body again, before shooting another interval. He does this two more times, and is about to do it again.*

Naoko: *Before the device is jabbed onto her shirt, she abruptly throws her head back in agony once more.*

Masked Man 2: *Looks behind Naoko.* "Goddamn it, man."

Masked Man 3: *Now in front of Naoko before 2, he's wielding a modern karambit knife in his right hand, which he had used to slit the inner left thigh of Naoko, causing her wail of distress, and a dislodged pipe in his other.* "You're being too slow. Besides, it's my turn." *His hand moves almost faster than anyone could see, and it whisks right next to Naoko's arms. Suddenly, the area just under her wrists open with more slim cuts, though not far enough to reach the bone just centimeters away. Again, she grieves the injury noticeably.* "Like that? How about this?" *Now on her right side facing the opposite direction, he smashes the aforementioned pipe into Naoko's heels; if not for her nigh-supernatural durability, they'd be broken. But the swing definitely, thanks to the vulnerability serum, hurt a lot.*

Naoko: *Her head bows, leaning most of it away from her purely vertical arms. Masked Man 4 comes close and claps both of her ears, traumatizing her anew with high-pitched sounds. They are killed off by the sudden jolt brought by a hammer fist right on the top of her head. Now her whole body bends forward, creating a corner that 3's knee strikes straight into.*

Masked Man 3: *Looks at Naoko, forced to return to her standing position due to her bindings, but keeping her head down.* "Aw, was that all we had to do?"

Naoko: "Mmmm..." *Refuses to face them.*

Masked Man 4: *Pushes 3 aside and goes before Naoko.* "Answer, miss CSI." *Lays a hand on her neck area underneath her ear, and rips off the layers of tape on her mouth.*

Naoko: "NNGH!" *Grits her teeth. Suddenly, certain sounds become much more noticeable, reinforced by her light, but uncontrollable shivering.*

Masked Man 4: "There we go. But just to be sure..." *Throws the adhesive aside and then pitches her chin upwards. He then looks straight into her face, finding what they all were looking for.*
Naoko: *No... Why did I let myself do this? *Due to the extreme amount of agony she was in, streams were trailing down her jowls, emanating from her shut eyelids.*

Masked Man 1: "Yep, just what we're looking for. Set it up, mates."

Naoko: *Just like your profile... You cruel bastards...!*

-Meanwhile... Karasuma is continuing to drive Kato, Karma, and Terasaka towards the unknown destination.-

Karasuma: *Menacingly pays attention to the road, concentrating entirely on the turns he has to make and the signs he has to discern. He seems to have already been given a destination, but he believes the journey was far enough for him to have done the task (and the side objective of gathering some backup in the form of AssUniv) he had to.,* "..."

Kato: *Sitting in the passenger seat, knowing better than to trigger Karasuma this time around.*

Karma/Terasaka: *In the backseats, try not to ease the acute tension between the two before them... And possibly, between all of them. But it becomes too much for Terasaka to bear, and anxiously looks for something to talk about, such as,* "Ah. Karasuma-sensei, what's with this briefcase?"

Karasuma: "Don't touch it!" *Doesn't look back, though the intensity of his reactive voice would've liked to say otherwise.*

Kato: *Looks back a bit, reassuring the two, before mouthing the words, "don't freak out" to them when he sits back properly and interjects himself into the new conversation.* "That's filled with cash isn't it?"

Karasuma: "Oh, can smell notes because you have trillions of them, can you?" *Makes a wide turn that almost crashes Kato's head into the side window. The two behind them are not in a much better wear.*

Kato: "It's ransom?"

Karma: *Ransom?*

Karasuma: *Hesitates.* "They'd like to call it that..."

Terasaka: "Ransom for whom?"

Karasuma: "I think you know. You all do." *Gives a Kubrick stare to the rearview mirror, which he knew could see the two clearly.*

Karma/Terasaka: *He knows about Naoko now!*

Kato: *Looks between the two factions.* "Who has her? The Society?"

Karasuma: "No; it's not someone you personally know."

Kato: "Try me."
Karasuma: *Before he can answer, his phone rings within his suit jacket's inner pocket.* "Your answer's probably in there; get it."

Kato: "You certain you're not going to bite my arm off if I reach in there?"

Karasuma: "No promises."

Kato: "Very well." *Takes the phone and answers the video call.* "Multimedia message." *Holds it so that he and Karasuma can watch. Karma and Terasaka lean forward to see as well. And what they all see mortifyingly affront them.*

-When they open up the live, one-sided message, what first appears on screen is one of the Masked Men, standing behind the still semi-suspended Naoko. Her head was down and many of her wounds were visible, but they could still see the rise and fall of her body breathing heavily.-

Masked Man 2: "Hello, Karasuma-sensei. Just called in, reporting on if you got what we came for or not..."

Karasuma: *Takes quick glances at the screen as he continues driving.*

Masked Man 2: "But that seems a little, shall we say, lacking to the intent. I feel as though you might be finding whatever means you can to turn this deal around. Heh, guess how I got that feeling." *Pushes Naoko's right temple aside to spite Karasuma.*

Terasaka: "Assholes!"

Karma: *Aggressively staring at the screen.*

Masked Man 2: "So, we went around and had a round, while we made things a little more clear." *His pushing hand then reaches behind, grabs a hold of the lower end of her disheveled hair, and pulls down, forcing Naoko to look up.*

Naoko: "Erg!" *Her face reveals all of the discomfort, especially evident by the tears now beginning to dry up, which was zoomed in by the cameraman. But her eyes were still closed.*

Masked Man 2: "It's not nice to not look the people in the eye, princess." *Pinches on Naoko's chin so hard that she obliges to look at the device.*

Naoko: *New tears begin to form.* "I... I'm sorry, brother. Please don't-!"

Masked Man 2: *Slaps her before she can finish.*

Naoko: "Daah~!"

Karma: "I'm gonna kill them!"

Masked Man 2: *When all the tension dies down, he goes behind the capurted agent.* "Now, Karasuma-sensei... Try anything you like, but something other than simply coming alone with our money..." *Brandishes a knife.* "Well, to give you an idea..." *Covers Naoko's mouth as he slices horizontally just underneath her left-side chest.*
Naoko: *Screams into his gloved palm.*

Karasuma: *Grits his teeth hearing her ear-breaking cry, which Kato notices with discontent eyes.*

Masked Man 2: "Now you got it, yes? Well, see you soon. Cut it." *The message ends.*

Kato: "..." *Puts the cover over the phone, puts it into the cupholder, and continues to look forward.* "They seem to be in a slaughterhouse for Tokyo's seafood."

Karasuma: "Old. News." *Sees the highway sign for the nearby harbor and takes it.* "We're about to reach the place; you all should pray you have a plan of attack."

Terasaka: "Plan? We don't even know who they are!"

Kato: "I think you do. If Karasuma and Naoko-san are correct, you've fought them before."

Karma: "No..."

-Back to the slaughterhouse...-

Naoko: *Still hanging from the fishhook, but there's now more restraining effort on the chains.* *Come on...*

Masked Man 1: "Hey, look at that, everybody; little miss CIA is trying to escape."

Masked Man 4: "That she is. And yet, I don't think she put any thought into what will happen if she actually does break free."

Masked Man 2: "Despite us already implying it." *Waves the knife around her upper body and face again.* "Well, young lady? What you plan on doing once you're done with... That?"

Naoko: "You... Intend to rob me of everything I care about." *Feels her chains begin to slip and loosen.* "It doesn't matter if I die doing it; if I live without this, I'll never be able to look myself in the mirror again!" *In a surprise, she kicks off the ground with the ball of her right foot. Her left, already bent and raised up to her body, stretches out and side kicks 2 in his chest; her right leg snap kicks the knife out of his had and away from everyone. Naoko completes the motion, using her momentum to slip the chain link off of the hook, landing into a struggling three-point stance. Her hands are still knotted to it, having no time to unfasten, but she's still determined to fight back regardless.*

Masked Man 1: *Stands up, aligning with the other three and the several others nearby.* "Dumb move, kiddo." *Charges in, and tries to instantly put Naoko down with a roundhouse kick. Naoko puts up her metal-wrapped forearms to block, pushing it into the man's shin, causing him to wince instead. Naoko then front kicks him aside.*

Masked Man 2: *He goes up to her next, throwing a right overhead punch before a spinning back kick and a skipping side kick. Naoko uses both of her palms to block the punch, and falls backwards to avoid the kicks. He is compromised by the strange evasion, which Naoko capitalizes by rising back up to knee 2 in his manhood. She slides underneath him fully and stomps on his left medial joint to temporarily keep him down.*
Masked Men 3/4: *Deciding not to play any more games, one goes in front of her, and the other behind. Naoko tries to hook kick her back opponent so that he returns in front of her, but he sees it coming, blocking it and grabbing her foot before it can reach the ground. Naoko bounces off her remaining leg and back kicks him off, while landing on her chest on the tiles below. Her front opponent tries sweep kicking her face, but Naokopushes off so her face floats just over the kick. When she returns to a plank, she breaks into a forward roll and front kicks him away. But her initial advantage does not last; 1 recovers, and Naoko tries to roundhouse kick him with her left along the ribs, but he stops it, and when he sees the cut to her thigh that 3 gave her, he jabs at it, and Naoko's standing leg buckles from the pain. She struggles to get up, but forgoes it when 1 tries to apply a full mount, opting instead to pick her good leg's knee up and rolling backwards, pushing him aside. 2 Has also recovered on the side, something Naoko did not see, and it blindsides her with a sharp right hook to the temple, and again she's on the floor. 3 and 4 are back up, and they are very ticked; one of them takes a baton and slams it on the collapsed Naoko while the other three are stomping and/or downward punching. Naoko has no choice but to get into a turtle guard, but she's eventually pushed over, making it into a sort of fetal guard...?

Masked Man 4: "Heh, guess that's the end of that. Alright, you two, hold her legs. And you, keep her arms on the side." *1 and 2 wrap their arms around her ankles and knees respectively. 3 pins Naoko's restrained hands at her hip and coils, preventing any joint movement for the agent.* "I'll just tell the boss we had an accident; no ransom is worth this!" *One of his hands overlaps Naoko's throat like a skintight collar while his other covers her mouth and nose.* "Sorry girl; that's just how it ends in your world and mine." *He firmly presses down.*

Naoko: *Tries to flail around and slip the pressure, but she's much too weak. She's once again losing consciousness, and can feel death looming. But she remains defiant until the impending end, her eyes retaining an aggressive expression. Until they do slowly do not...*

-A series of distant slumping sounds are heard.-

Masked Man 5: *Stands in the outskirts, along with 6, 7, 8, and 9.* "Huh? What's that?"

Masked Man 6: "Car outside?"

Masked Man 7: "Didn't hear our two boys greet them."

-Then, the sound of a rolling object produces. It reveals itself from out of the shadows as a small metal ball. All of them remain vigilant of the archaism, which was a good idea as it soon explodes into a surge of electricity.-

Masked Man 8: *Covers his face with his forearm.* "Agh!"

Masked Man 9: *Does the same.* "The fuck!?"

-The moment's distraction forced most of the men to drop their arms, and allowed Karma and Terasaka to swoop in, push the four men aside, and recover Naoko, pulling her back to one side of the squared room filled with deadly tools and the remains of past operations.-

Karma: *Holds Naoko in his arms. He unwinds Naoko's wrist chains doing so.* "Naoko-san! Speak to us!"

Naoko: *Having fainted just before the timely arrival, she strains opening her eyes once again.* "Karma...Kun?"
Kato: *Appears with Karasuma behind the two, looking in the distance.* "Let me look at her."
*Tries to step forward, but Karasuma stops him.* "Hey, I got medical experience; you want to deny your sister pro attention?"

Karasuma: *Hesitates, but then steps aside, allowing him to proceed.*

Masked Man 3: "Karasuma, we did mean there would be consequences for going against protocol. We can still shoot you all, of course!"

Kato: *Looks up briefly.* "Oh please; even you guys don't have guns; the PD would round you up quicker than my Yakuza!" *That thug has a conflicted expression on his face just before they break contact. Kato then looks back to Naoko.* "Oh geez, what did they do to you, Naoko-san?"

Terasaka: *Cracks his knuckles.* "The same things we're going to do to them."

Karma: "I'd like to say the same, but we're in over their head. We may not be outgunned, but we are outnumbered, and most of us are outclassed."

Karasuma: "."

Kato: *Naoko-san, we're really going to need your help here.*

Naoko: *Kato...?*

Kato: *Forgive me for this, Naoko-san.* *Pulls out a small needle and injects it into her close shoulder.*

Naoko: *Her eyes suddenly spring open and she lets out a twisted scream that transitions into a roar.*

Karasuma: "N-Naoko?"

Karma/Terasaka: *Look back with shock.*

Naoko: *She gets back to her feet in no time flat for a woman in critical condition... In fact, she seems to be looking better than she ever was before. Her aggression has returned, now with a power to actually see it through - a purple-black aura can be seen by the student-assassins, making them a little anxious.*

Masked Man 9: *He and his colleagues are already in a fighting stance.* "Adrenaline?"

Kato: "Living in the;" *Checks his watch.* "Nineties still? Something much safer. Ah, but best not to get that into your head right now."

Karasuma: "No... Fists go first." *He gets an aura of his own; pure white, while Kato gets into his blue "God Hand" stance.*

Kato: *Looks at him a bit, and then to Naoko. He seems briefly concerned for the both of them, but sees he has no time to waste. Instead he pounds his right fist.* "Let's go!"

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 5's OST Theme "Hailstorm" plays.-
Naoko immediately dives into the fray, taking on 5 and 6 at once. Karma and Terasaka are handling 1 and 2 (who are still slightly weakened from their previous clash), Karasuma handles 4 and 7, leaving Kato with 3 and 8. Naoko was the swiftest to deal with her opponents, despite dealing with the purely freshest combatants on the other side, first side-stepping the over-under attack pattern that the two applied. She then midair-rolls back in with a twist 720 kick; her two feet's blades or heels make their mark on each of their faces at least once; one more than other arguably from how much longer he writhes from the impact. Subsequently, she focuses on the other, turning with the turning kick coming from her left and gripping it to misbalance him, landing on his face. One back kick to keep the stunned man away, she goes for a full mount on the turned-over 6, who keeps his leg in the way to prevent it. She drops that thought, instead letting the defense happen, putting all her weight onto that leg, grabbing her right foot with her left hand behind 6's head, and then rolling over, locking 6 in an electric triangle. His head was completely exposed to a brutal pummel and a heel hook that breaks his ankle. Naoko releases her prey before contending with 5's axe kick to her supine position; deflected with a shin tangent to the trajectory. He too tries to full mount, but Naoko defends differently; she evades the starting punch, forcing the hand to hit the ground, and using the hesitation to lock a triangular headscissor. 5 chokes a bit before trying to lift Naoko for a powerbomb counter. Naoko twists over in reaction, transitioning her submission into a modified Pentagram Choke. Keep her hold for a little bit, she uses her legs to prop him up briefly; just long enough to drive the back of his neck back down. Finally, she rolls backwards to apply a nape-ripping Can Opener hold, and a double axe handle smash to the face, knocking him out.

Karasuma shows just why he's AssUniv's head sensei, displaying a much more disciplined offense that takes a little more time, but is still deadly effective; he beats both 4 and 7 to their punches with simultaneous claps to the sides of their necks' isthmuses, stopping them dead in their tracks. He throws a massive haymaker that drills past the cheekbones of both fighters, backing away when one throws an unwieldy kick for breathing room. Karasuma won't let up for too long, however, as he cobra punches immediately after he sees the danger subside, clocking 7 and knocking him onto the ground briefly. 4 does not see it coming, and is caught in stomp-aided wrist lock that forces him into one knee. A snap kick to the face with Karasuma's other leg would have taken him out, but 4 does recover in time to block it. Karasuma goes the extra mile with him, completely breaking the elbow he was controlling, and then diving punch 4's face and sandwiching it to the ground. Still pent up with pugnacity, he pummels the fallen soldier a little more just to make sure he stays down... A little too much, as he almost doesn't see 7 coming with a wallop of his own. Thankfully for everybody, Naoko zooms in and stops the clout, wringing her arm underneath 7's, cuffing his radius, and pulling back. Karasuma gives a quick nod (though Naoko's
beast-like demeanor exhibits no such kind of reaction), and Karasuma rises up with spinning backfist with enough strength to turn him around. Karasuma then hooks his right arm under 7's and across his chest, and then hip tosses him over, landing on his face, and giving a 12-6 elbow onto the nape to finish the job.

Kato's convict edge and soldier training granted him a marginal hybrid advantage over the soldiers unaware of the style. Kato ducks under both 3 and 8's face-level hooks, avoiding the latter's blow and pushing it ahead so that 8's forced to react somehow - in his case, catching it just in time. Kato throws a swift, short-range uppercut underneath the limb bridge, 3 is immediately finished afterwards with the side shoulder lock translating into a cradle suplex lift, which he angles so that his back faces Kato's right. He then drops to his right knee, smashing it into the back of 3's neck, and the impact strains the already-bent back too. 8 was all that remained, but not for long when Kato, switching back to "B-Boy" style, counters a Thai knee clinch by throwing him into the nearby tiled wall. Kato throws a quick right straight to the chin for the daze, and then a reverse elbow to the eye for impact, and intends to finish with a step-up enzuigiri once he bounces back towards him. But Naoko beats him to the punch, running off the same wall, using it to backflip so that she lands on his shoulders with her knees. She pivots around to drive 8's crown straight into the ground with extra force. Kato was about to give her a cross look about it, but he noticed he wasn't about to give it to the Naoko he knew... Especially after she sprinted off to steal another takedown.

Karma and Terasaka weren't handling so badly either, dividing and conquering whenever they must, and pulling off cooperative offense at the best moments. Karma budges 1 back with a shoulder tackle, providing room for a basement dropkick to the front shin. Terasaka bumps 2 to the side and clocks 1 as he bows down with a clothesline to the back of the head. When 2 comes racing back, Karma, while still on the ground, barrel rolls until he is within legshot, and catches 2's lower limbs in a drop toe hold, making the latter land on his face. Terasaka sees it, reaches over, and Karelin Lifts the fallen 2, sending him in a parabolic curve back to the ground, but onto his back this time. Terasaka tries for a side-into-full mount, but a timely knee lift by 2 prevents that. Karma was there to capitalize, getting back up to launch a low flying knee smash to the side of 2's head as he turns over and gets up from his hands, putting him down for the time being. They finally finish 1 when he groggily returns to his feet, with Terasaka taking a knee and thrusting the point of his elbow into 1's torso, making him bend over. He pivots around 1, and performs a lifting full nelson bomb, dropping his chin into Karma's two shoes lifted from his supine, grounded position.

-Theme ends.-

Terasaka: *So exhausted, he almost collapses.* "That... Went too well."

Karma: "Don't let up just yet, Terasaka. You can't before these guys." *Remains in a firm fighting stance.*

Kato: *Punts one struggling thug on his crown.* "I doubt it now." *Looks aside nearby.* "They probably don't want to provoke another attack from that beast of a woman."

Naoko: *Heavily breathes as she scopes nearby.*

Karasuma: *Takes a knee on top of one of the Masked Men, putting handcuffs onto him behind his back.* "What the Hell did you give her?"

Kato: "Nothing that has that side effect. Unless the person could have done it all this time."

Karasuma: *Naoko could have fought like that when she had to? Ignoring all rules, pain, and
Naoko: *Seemingly realizing that the coast is clear, her muscles ease, she herself gasps, and her legs give, making her fall over unconscious.*

Kato: "!!" *Swivels around and catches her before she lands on her head.*

Karasuma: "Karma; Terasaka, keep watch!" *Goes over to the other two.* "Naoko, hang on..."

Naoko: *Remains motionless in Kato's carry.*

-Roughly an hour later...-

-Karasuma races with a Ministry-sanctioned Medical Team and a Emergency Medical Physician, who are pushing a hospital bed carrying the critically wounded Naoko through the Self-Defense Forces Central Hospital... In the heart of Japan's midpoint between the Tokyo Metropolis and Kanagawa.-

Naoko: *Has an oxygen mask on her face, and with her eyes still closed, her head rocks on the stretcher as it rolls through the halls. *

Karasuma: "You're going to be alright, Naoko! Just keep fighting it!" *Continues to follow the hospital bed until it moves past the revolving doors of the emergency operating room. Then, unfit for the person he has chosen to be, he abruptly falls to his knees gripping the edge of the door's window, clearly in serious emotional pain over the event. He gets up just in time to turn around.*

AssUniv: *Rapidly go up to Karasuma, all now fully aware of the situation.*

Irina: "Karasuma-sama, is Naoko doing okay?"

Nakamura: "How is she even here right now?"

Okano: "Who did this to her?"

Nagisa: "How long have you known about this event?"

Kato: *Steps in front of all of the bewildered student-assassins.* "Alright, enough, all of you. Karasuma doesn't know the half of what's been going on. And even if he did, he clearly cannot answer any questions right now."

Karasuma: "..."

Kato: "Judging by her injuries, she's probably going to be in there for a few hours. The Politicians and I can answer some of the other questions while we wait for her to get out."

AssUniv: "The Politicians?" *Immediately look over to their peers in Ritsumeikan University.*

Politicians: "Eheheh... Uh oh."

-And so, Kato, Irina, Kimura, Isogai, Kataoka, Terasaka, and Karma went on to explain how Naoko has secretly been a major factor in the Shadow War since its beginnings, and has defied Karasuma's (and by definition, the Ministry of Defense's) orders of staying out of the action to help
out her lifelong friends. They were obviously very cross about her subjectively needlessly throwing herself into such a dangerous position in the conflict, but they were even more aggravated by their fellow teammates for helping her keep that secret from them. This division between them would not last however, as once Naoko was transported to the ICU, they all knew she deserved better than a bunch of arguing friends.

-And an hour after that...-

Naoko: *After having a successful treatment, she is breathing much more easily, with the seamless rise and fall of her chest as she does so. Several bandages of differing types are scattered all over her visible body, from her cheek's taped gauze and forehead wrapping, to bandages overlapping her wrists and a shoulder bind, perhaps supporting her rib damage. As such, it is reasonable to believe she is still dormant in her supine position on the mattress, and is expected to be so for the rest of the night.*

Karasuma: *With Irina as the only ones allowed to see her past visiting hours, Karasuma sits right next to her, holding her hand and awaiting her coming to again. Irina decides to go get them some drinks while they wait, so she departs with a fleeting grab of Karasuma's shoulder, and a caress of Naoko's face. Karasuma remains by Naoko's side... Until...*

Naoko: *Her eyes tense a little before opening into a small vesica. A brief scan is followed by looking at Karasuma's head bowed onto her hand laying near her bedsheet-concealed hip.* "K-Kara...suma..."

Karasuma: *Lifts his head up when he hears his name, and looks straight at her.* "Naoko!?"

Naoko: "Onii."

Karasuma: *Jumps out of his chair and pushes himself onto Naoko's upper body; gently of course, given her condition.* "Oh, sister, I thought I lost you. I've begged it - all this time, not like this."

Naoko: *Almost tears up again, but resists it.* "Well... I do have you to thank... For that."

Karasuma: *Pulls himself back.* "You've grown into a fine young warrior."

Naoko: *Makes a small smile at him.*

Irina: *Practically invisible to the two of them, while still holding four bottles of soft drink.* "..." *She closes the door as silently as she can, before leaving the beverages on the table near where most of the student-assassins were waiting.* "She's awake."

AssUniv: *All are overjoyed to hear that.*

Maehara: "What are we waiting for? Let's go see her!"

Kato: *Takes three of the drinks.* "Hold on; Naoko won't recover well if you all smother her. One at a time, and I'll go first."

Hayami: "Why you?"

Kato: "I can handle Karasuma if I must."
Kato: *Goes inside as noticeably as he can, attracting the attention of stepbrother and sister.*

Naoko: "Kato-kun..."

Karasuma: *Looks very displeased to see him.* "...

Kato: "Good to see you made it, Naoko-san. Want something sweet? I think we can let the docs have a heart attack for once." *Goes over to the top right corner of the bed, attempting to approach close enough to hand her a cola. But Karasuma immediately gets in the way.*

Karasuma: "I'll be giving her that, thank you very much." *Takes it out of his hands, preventing him from getting any closer.*

Kato: *Lets him do so, then setting one for him down on the adjustable table. He moves to the window on the far side, opening his sole bottle.*

Karasuma: "Take a sip, Naoko." *Slowly pours some of the soft drink into Naoko's mouth after removing the oxygen mask. A drop of the sugary substance falls down the left side of her face, but he stops it with a timely hand swipe. He leaves the open bottle at her nighttable, taking his own, and matching Kato's view of the outside.*

Kato: *Takes a deep swig of his soda.* "It's been an interesting," *Checks his watch.* "Ten months, eighteen days, and four hours that we've been working together. If you must know now."

Karasuma: *Takes a deep breath.* "To think that the two people I believed I had a firm grasp on within wingspan's reach, opposite ends, were actually much further up one of the same arm, and consorting with each other."

Kato: "If we weren't consorting, Karasuma, we'd be losing right now. And you wouldn't have been able to get someone who can tell you who has the Dr. Yanagisawa DNA."

Karasuma: *Turns to him immediately.* "And you think that changes anything?"

Kato: *Slowly turns to match his eye contact.* "I'd like to think so. Also, who are you to say she shouldn't help out?"

Naoko: *Slouches her head to the side so that she can see them.* "Yeah..."

Karasuma: "That's not something you deserve to know. I think a better question is, 'why did you want to help her defy me in the first place?''"

Naoko: "Hey, it wasn't-"

Kato: *Scoffs.* "I did say I wanted you to confess your presence earlier, right, Naoko-san?" *Looks over to her.*

Karasuma: "!!" *Throws a mean left hook straight at Kato, who is sent flying into the far wall from where Naoko is situated.*
Naoko: *Gasps.* "You, two!"

Karasuma: "HOW DARE YOU SPEAK LIKE THAT! DO YOU NOT CARE!? IS THIS ALL A GAME TO YOU!?"

AssUniv: *Just outside, spring up when they hear the sudden spike of intensity within the room.*

Kato: *Wipes his lip of the dripping blood. He gives a nigh-equally aggressive stare at Karasuma, gripping his grandfather's dog tag.* "Really? A game!? YOU DARE THINK I SEE THIS* AS A GAME? I LOST LOVED ONES TO THE WARS WE WAGED; WHO DID YOU LOSE, HUH!?"

Naoko: "S-stop!"

Karasuma: "OH BOO HOO YOU! LIKE YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT I DID IN MY WARS! WHAT I'VE SEEN!" *They both match each other's next movements, taking the throats of who's in front of them. However, while Karasuma threatens a tilt-snap by pressuring his thumb, Kato seeks ripping the line open, digging his two top fingers into the side.*

Kato: *Is lifted back up to his feet.* "OH GEE I WONDER WHY I DON'T KNOW!"

Naoko: *Begins mustering more of her reserved strength.*

Karasuma: "WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU SAYING!?"

Kato: "WHAT AREN'T YOU SAYING!? TO ME!? TO THOSE GUYS OUT THERE!? TO WHO'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU!?"

Naoko: "I SAID STOP, BOTH OF YOU!"

AssUniv: "!!"

Kato/Karasuma: *Look over to Naoko, releasing their grips on each other's necks.*

Naoko: *Using her second wind, she rises from her bed to sit upright, able to look at them properly, albeit struggling initially.*

Karasuma: "Naoko, you shouldn't do that; you're still hurt!"

Naoko: *Lashes out at both of them.* "Shut up! I'm talking now!"

Kato: "..."

Naoko: "Kato-kun... Why must you always do this to people like us? I get you don't like intelligence agencies, but we're on your side! We didn't cause your family's problems, nor did we commit them - and we're not trying to destroy their legacies at all. You have no reason to provoke us so much! You have no reason to make Karasuma so much more needled than he already is!"

Kato: *Looks aside, crossing his arms.*

Naoko: "And Karasuma. Kato-kun wasn't wrong; you've kept a lot of things from us - all of us!
You took your time to tell everyone about the Shadow War, you neglected to mention how Kato-kun was a high-profile Yakuza who had helped us before. But worst of all... Worst of all, you've kept from me what I should have been remembering all my life!

Karasuma: *Clearly hurt by the monologue.* "Naoko...!"

Naoko: *Begins tearing up again.* "Karasuma... What happened to Hiiro Akimoto? What happened to my father!? Why does Kato-kun, the most enigmatic man in the world, have to be second place in telling us where he came from!? Why are you - the person I trusted the most, last in the list!??"

Kato: "That's enough, Naoko-san."

Naoko: *Covers her face with both hands.* "I wanted to be just like you, Karasuma. So strong, so unbreakable... If something did break me, like it is now, I wouldn't show it doing so. But I don't even know what it is!" *Cries even more.*

Karasuma: *Walks back over to her and cuddles her in his arms.* "Naoko... I didn't know, all this time, it hurt that much..."

Kato: "..." *He senses his time in there is over. He first dares to tempt the tiger and lays a hand on Karasuma's upper back with support. He then leaves, slowly opening the door to the room, seeing AssUniv just outside.*

Nagisa: "Kato-san? You're bleeding."

Kato: *Wipes his lip once more.* "They're ready to see you now. I'm going to take a walk." *Leaves.*

AssUniv: *Without a second thought, they enter the room.* "Naoko-san!"

Naoko: *Looks to the entrance.* "Hey, guys..."

Karasuma: *Looks up from Naoko's shoulder.* "Where's Kato?"

Nakamura: *Thumbs to the threshold.* "He just left."

Sugino: *Preoccupied.* "He's not done with us, right?"

Kato: *Reaches the lavatory areas, attempting to push out a clove cigarette, which he puts into his mouth and is about to light. But before he can, he finds Irina leaning on the wall nearby.*

Irina: *She was also hesitating to smoke, with her left hand shaking the roll in her hand. She then finds Kato staring at her.*

Kato: *Knowing he must, he abstains from the cigarette, putting it back into the carton.* "I'm good."

Irina: *Realizes that he's also implying that Naoko and Karasuma are fine too.* "Then so am I." *She extinguishes her smoke and throws it away.*

-And one more hour past, with AssUniv properly settled in Naoko's room...-
Naoko: *Now sits upright without issue, surrounded from every visible direction by her peers; Karma being the closest. She turns her head to him.* "God, I must look so bad in front of you now, don't I?"

Karma: *Licks his index finger, takes a lock of her hair in front of her face and puts it behind her ear.* "There; only thing imperfect about you - gone." *He rubs the top of Naoko's head very softly.*

Naoko: *Smiles so widely, she has to close her eyes.* "Not afraid of a few scars on a woman, are you?"

Karma: "Could have a million. So long as I recompense for all of them."

Naoko: *Giggles to that remark.*

AssUniv Girls: *All huddle around.* "D'AWWW~!!"

AssUniv Guys: *Look aside.* "Meh..."

Maehara: "What I'm not getting about this is, why would they try to kill you, Naoko, if a ransom was coming?"

Naoko: "It wasn't for me. Them torturing me was just further incentive for what they really wanted Karasuma to pay for."

Karma: "You're right; they hurt you too well to be regular thugs. They knew you on the outside like a book."

Fuwa: "That's..." *Mind flickers.* "Frightening."

Irina: *Snaps her fingers.* "Come on, all of you; listen up!" *Looks over to Kato, who has produced a whiteboard within the room.*

Kato: *Finishes some marker sketches and sticking pieces of paper onto the canvas.* "Alright, everyone. We're going after a team we all could argue to be the most dangerous human threat we will ever face; for most of you, this will be the second time you knock on death's door."

AssUniv: *Some gulp.*

Isogai: "But that just means you've outlasted them in the past. And though there is every reason to believe they've gotten stronger since, so have all of us. They've been beaten before, they can be again."

Kataoka: "We won't have the advantage we used to back then, but I think a secret weapon can tip the odds in our favor once more."

Kato: "This is asking a lot to each and every one of you; some of us might not make it through. And yet, there's no half-assing this assassination; if you step up, you're committing everything to it. Are you all comfortable with that? Speak now if you aren't."

-Everyone remains silent for a moment.-
Yada: "Kato-kun, it's been realized lately that you do have short-sights in your operations."

Fuwa: "Yeah; you're a sucker for a family sob story."

Kato: "...

Yada: "And you still can't quite tell us everything, even if you're not the only one." *Looks at Naoko.*

Naoko: *Facepalms.*

Yada: "But I think there's still at least one absolute with you; your plans for infiltration and attack are still undefeated. So, if you are committing to us still even after what had just happened, then we'd love for you to go for the kill alongside us. Everything about us."

Kato: *Slowly grins.* "I hoped so. Then I think we're ready for Phase One of my plan, starting..." *Checks his watch.* "Now."

AssUniv: *Beat.* "What?"

Nagisa: *Remembers what had happened before the Yanagisawa Family showed up.* Ah...

Kato: "I'm inclined to think even Craig Houjou won't know what'll hit him and his band of mercs."
Chapter Summary

The Wolfpack have been revealed to be the ones who ambushed and hurt Naoko. You know what that means... The perpetrator is the Divine Soldier, Craig Houjou. The AssUniv Program have got their hands full with this new threat, who have proven themselves to be the third party who had helped get Dr. Yanagisawa into hiding, and possibly preserve his Tentacles DNA. Time to take it back.

-In the Neo-Wolfpack's maximum-security bastion's security room...-

Wolfpack Captain: "Camera crew, what's your status?"

Wolfpack Operator 1: "CCTV on outside's got nothing of interest, sir."

Wolfpack Operator 2: "Nor inside, sir."

Wolfpack Captain: "Even infrared and night vision filters don't pick up anything?"

Wolfpack Operators: "No, sir. Completely barren."

Wolfpack Captain: "Okay." *Takes a walkie. "Air radar picking up on stuff?"

Wolfpack Operator 3: "Just a military plane; they've frequented practice around an epicenter several hundred miles West of here."

Wolfpack Captain: "Fair enough." *Switches to a different frequency.* "Ground team; any movement?"

Wolfpack Sentry 1: "Nah; the movement is just rodents."

Wolfpack Sentry 2: "Now hold the phone, man; look at this."

Wolfpack Captain: "What? What is it?"

Wolfpack Sentry 2: "No idea what it is... Makes roughly the same seismic signal as the animals, but they're more frequent."

Wolfpack Captain: "Well where's it going?"

Wolfpack Sentry 1: "Going... Into the drainage pipes of our garrison!"

Wolfpack Captain: "Where does that pipe lead to in here?"

Wolfpack Sentry 2: "South-East side, second-level basement!"
Wolfpack Captain: "Keep watch for other disturbances." *To the nearby stationary guards.*
"Gather up most of the other men; every third and fourth of a complement you find, and bring them with you!"

Wolfpack Guards: *Salute.* "SIR, YESSIR!"

Wolfpack Captain: *Pulls back the slide of his Five-seveN.* "We made a mistake of underestimating these kids last time; let's remind them who the best team is." *Follows the militia outside the control room.*

-A good two dozen or three of the Neo-Wolfpack mercenaries runs down to the lower-level areas to confront the underground arrival of their rivals... Except, when they hear the murmuring of voices just outside the strong doors in which the pipelines lead to, kicking the door open reveals nothing but a two-wheeled car.-

Wolfpack 1: *Like his teammates, he still has a N4 Diplomat rifle aimed at it.* "Really? A drone?"

Wolfpack 2: "Hey hey, careful; it may explode or something."

Wolfpack 3: "Why's it fidgeting?"

-Before anyone could answer, the drone stops moving, and suddenly a compartment in its back opens up, revealing a modified signal jammer, that instead emits intruder disruptions, triggering all of the security systems present within the fortress, from their seismic radar static, to the cameras going haywire. The stronghold's fire alarm blares as well.-

Wolfpack Captain: "Agh! What the Hell!?"

Intercom: *Voice only.* "We've been breached! Source is on the South-East subterranean edge, final level! All reserve units, converge to that point!" *Everybody listening in complies.*

Wolfpack Captain: "No no no!" *Tries to take his walkie to cancel that order, but the jammer has scrambled his technology as well.* "Shit!"

-Meanwhile, above ground... Much higher above ground...-

-AssUniv are preparing strapped gear onto their persons, while standing within a military Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules aircraft.-

Karasuma: *Seemingly attaches a large, disk-like object onto his back. Like the rest, his torso is completely shrouded by shadow, while the rest of his body is outlined by silhouettes, revealing his motions.* "A heavily personalized and modified militia-like organization," *Looks at Kato.* "And the best you can do at this moment is a Super Hercules?"

Kato: *His gestures imply he is tightening the velcro-fastened gloves on his hands.* "Anything better, or more exotic would be easily seen. At least, with a military aircraft, people will cast aside doubt; because 'it's the military.'"

Satoshi: *He, along with a Kato Family Lieutenant, are piloting the fixed-wing plane, wearing a headset so that he can speak through intercom on the craft.* "You dissing your program's toys, Karasuma?"
Karasuma: "Nah; just expected something more."

Kato: "You had your chance with expectations. You and Irina." *Begins walking away towards the other end of the plane.*

Irina: "Hey, I stand by that idea still; the girls needed that upgrade."

Kataoka: *Pulls the slide of an unknown pistol back.* "You can call those armors many things, but an upgrade isn't one of them."

Kayano: *Looks down onto the silhouette her form casts.* "Yep. But these, though..."

Kato: "Oh, you haven't seen anything yet." *Types on a wall-mounted keyboard.*

Isogai: "So you say..." *Scratches the back of his head, letting his currently unknown rifle rest by his side.* "Are we really doing this?"

Karasuma: *Stretches out his arms and shoulders.* "When aerial-entry stealth is of the essence, soldiers HAHO jump. High Altitude, High Opening. This isn't much different."

Okano: "Eh, 'not much different?' We're not using parachutes!"

Kimura: *Beckons with a similarly-shaped disk on him.* "Yeah; how are we sure these will work?"

Satoshi: *Voice only.* "True, they've primarily been deployed for drone-assisted attacks in the 90s. But they carry much more weight; you'll see for yourself soon."

Nakamura: "Orrr die trying..."

Kato: *Closes up the keyboard, then proceeds even further towards the tail.* "You guys want to test it? Let's test it." *Presses a large button that opens up the hangar area of the plane.*

Naoko: "Whoa, Kato-kun!" *She, like the rest, stick back to avoid any chance of being sucked into the powerful wind currents.*

Kato: *Does not audibly answer, instead reaching the edge of the deploy hangar.*

Yada: "Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Turns around, taking a quick scan of everyone. And then, giving his last gaze over to Karasuma and Irina, he puts on some eyewear and a mask, and gives a short salute before falling out back-first out of the plane.*

AssUniv: "!!"

Karasuma: *Scoffs, before whispering.* "Asshole." *To Irina and Naoko, after they all put on their facewear.* "Come on, Irina and Naoko."

Irina/Naoko: *Nod to him.* "Alright." *All three of them run to the edge and jump out, with a few causal synchronized somersaults before spreading out their limbs to slow their fall.*
Satoshi: *Voice only.* "You'll miss the fortress if you linger any longer!"

Maehara: "Heh, when they do it like that, it seems pretty fun."

Okano: *Throws away all of her earlier doubt.* "Let's not waste any more time then!" *Throws herself up to Maehara, giving him a quick kiss (which he is pleasantly stunned by, to say the least), before grabbing some strap around his neck and pulling him towards the opening. She then tosses him out.*

Maehara: "Wha- HEY!" *Realizes his situation as he begins falling twenty-thousand feet down. He is quick to equip his secondary gear before facing the drag of skydiving.*

Okano: *She gives herself a running start out of the aircraft, pulling off a standing shooting star press out of the Super Hercules.* "Woo~!"

Karma: *Laughs.* "Any way we can top that display?"

Nakamura: "Maybe by catching a semi-naked Nagisa while in free-fall."

Nagisa: *Instinctively covers himself.* "Absolutely not!"

Terasaka: "Fuck it; let's just do this!" *Stows away all departments and with his eponymous group heads out. Nagisa, Kayano, and Karma were next, then Isogai and Kataoka, followed by Sugino and Kanzaki, trailed by everyone else.*

Kato: *For the past ten seconds, he was falling head-first, keeping his limbs close to his body. But then, something he senses causes him to turn around and starfish. Seeing the fortress, he leads the infiltration group down an unmarked route towards the blindspot they will be landing on. Then, when he checks his wrist, he makes the call.* "Everyone, deploy!" *He spins out so that his arm can reach the disk behind him; everyone else follows suit. He presses on a small button that makes the craft enlarge and sprout aerial properties. Then, when Kato holds it above him, it immediately produces its own flight pattern, slowing down his advance onto the ground like a parachute.*

Yoshida: "Wow, these cyphers actually work really nice!"

Kurahashi: "Indeed; no arm strain and proper descent pattern, just like flying planks in the cartoons."

Karasuma: "I remember back when these things were made by the U.S. could only carry fifty pounds."

Kato: *Turns back to see him, though their conversation is purely by modified radio-signals.* "You living in," *Looks up at his wrist.* "The 1980s, Karasuma? Do you know how much technology has evolved?"

Karasuma: "No, but I'm inclined to believe you do, despite living in the 80s too."

Kato: "Aw... Is it the music?"
Nagisa: "Not to be rude, Kato-kun, but..."

-Kato's equipment is playing some of his "Hype playlist," currently on the track "Face Down" by Hotblade.-

Kato: "Ah; forgive me for that." *Lowers the volume of the soundtrack.*

Kayano: "Heheh, too farsighted again, Kato-kun?"

Irina: "Or distracted?"

Kato: *Hesitates.* "We're about to find out." *Aside.* "Hayami-san, Chiba-san, we're almost at point. Have the lingering guards been dealt with?"

Hayami: *Positioned on a large branch on a high tree near the fortress.* "East side is clear. Chiba?"

Chiba: *Inside a natural trench on the North side.* "North is secure."

Kato: "Alright; Itona-san, pick them up and converge on the NE point."

Itona: "Good to go." *Puts away the RC to the Drone and starts up his Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG 6x6, going around to pick up Hayami and Chiba.*

Isogai: "Looks like Phase One is a success."

Hara: "Like the rest of our plans."

Hazama: "The question is, will Phase Two?"

Irina: *Remembers all the times AssClass/Univ's plans have failed midway through, such as hooking her up with Karasuma, and groans at that remark.* "Geez..."

Kato: "Everyone get ready; we'll be dropping at the ten meter mark."

AssUniv: "Yessir!"

-At the proper elevation, Kato lets go of the advanced cypher, dropping roughly 33 feet into a rolling three-point stance. He quickly scopes around, noticing all of the guards that Hayami and Chiba pacified. As everyone begins reaching the roof, Kato and the early arrivals begin readying their primary armament; the base of the rifle slung across their torso folds out its stock and a screw-in barrel reveals it to be a modified HK433 rifle.-

Hayami/Chiba/Itona: *Mysteriously appear on the East Side (while the AMG vehicle remained just below the facade), where they become initial targets by Kato's newly-formed long gun, before easing the tension. Itona was similarly armed to Kato, while Hayami and Chiba carried AIAW Covert rifles.* "We won the race."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "Please." *Looks back, seeing all of AssUniv gathered. Some were still getting their weapons ready.* "Everyone down?"

AssUniv: *They all nod to that question.*
Kato: "Good." *He raises his forearm and presses on a lit-up section, causing all of the cyphers to fly off.*

Fuwa: *Waves them goodbye.* "Thanks for the lift!"

Satoshi: *Does not know she's talking about the flying personnel vehicles.* "You're welcome."

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's InReTs screen.* "Much appreciated."

AssUniv: *Beat, interrupting their loading of their own HK433s, Maxim 9s, and B+T APC10s.*

Kato: "Cutting you from the comm after this, Satoshi. Minimizing the trace chance."

Satoshi: "Understood; returning to regional post and relaying orders to the rest. Good luck, sir."

*RLine is cut.*

Ritsu: "Our line is now limited to a triple-encrypted, mile-wide radius."

Kato: "Thanks, Ritsu." *Finishes loading the HK433 and putting on a silencer.* "Alright, everyone. It's go time."

Isogai: "For the kill!"

AssUniv: *In their best quiet voice.* "Yeah!"

- AssUniv proceeded to infiltrate through the stairs... Some of them. Others took to rappelling hooks and intruders through carefully-cut windows, or swinging to reach the scaffolding of a high-level entry. In every scenario, there were some patrolling sentries, always two, at the very least, in any one area of focus. They seemed very well-trained, as infinitely described by AssUniv's mentors, and fit to be protecting the ultimate weapon of mass destruction, probably housed in the fortress' containment areas. Still, however, they were between the student-assassins and their ultimate goal, so they had to be taken down.-

-On the stairs side, after identifying the positions of their foes through the door using the goggles' X-ray functionality, the team of Isogai, Maehara, Fuwa, Nakamura, Kato, and Irina burst through the staircase's doorway, wherein Nakamura throws a small, enigmatic device onto the second-furthest enemy, instantly knocking him out. The furthest sentry gets put down by a shock round coming out of Kato's Kimber Warrior II, while Fuwa and Irina handle any other souls more than six body-widths away with quickfire bursts. The closest two are handled with some swift, successive stunrod action. In a matter of seconds, the frontal assault team easily incapacitates the defense in the priority hallway leading to the central bridge.-

-Meanwhile, on the scaffold entry team, Naoko led Kimura, Okano, Kataoka, Hayami, Chiba, and Okajima through the perimeter of the infrastructure... Which seemingly included a very far jump across a deep fall to another ledge. But one cut later reveals the team easily getting past. They reach a set of abandoned doors to make their way in within the attic. Hayami and Chiba again take a high ground as the rest of their team progresses, providing cover fire against sudden influx of security, before rejoining. They eventually came across their destination, right around the same time as the others did, but only after they high-dived and "assassinated" the sentries below them... With their palms?-
The lower-window squad of every remaining AssUniv, led by Karasuma, focused on providing chokepoints as they made their way back upstairs, preventing or delaying hostiles from converging at vulnerable areas, as well as monitoring their alternate routes. Mimura got to work on placing rotating cameras, though how he does so is not yet seen, while Sugino and Kanzaki appear past him, finished with their own trap. Muramatsu and Yoshida narrowly finish their own device before they hear footsteps of approaching mercenaries. Frantically, they all take cover, despite not having enough corners, boxes, or otherwise hiding spots to do so... And yet they have all disappeared from the hallway. In addition, when the soldiers do walk past, they are subsequently taken down without manual elimination (again, somehow). The ground team continues to lay traps until they too reach the central hallway and rendezvous with the other two.-

Nakamura: "Strange, I remember these guys being a little tougher."

Okuda: "It's a little too peculiar..."

Kato: "We recognize any of them?"

Kayano: "Say what?"

Sugaya: "He means if they're the same bunch of Wolfpack that we fought on the mountain. Tell you the truth, though, I don't think so."

Karma: "Yeah, I'd recognize most of them, especially the guy with the eyepatch. I pulled off a lot of their masks, giving them some other things to cry about." #Spawns a devilish smile.*

Naoko: "Oh, brother..."

Kato: "So they're newbies, perhaps?"

Karasuma: "That wouldn't make much sense if they know we're coming."

Irina: "All to our advantage. And look, we're just a hallway away."

Nagisa: "Don't jinx us, Bitch-sensei. We all remember the last time we said we had an advantage."

Isogai: "We'll get through this one way or another."

They then walk up to the large set of arena doors.-

Kayano: "Ritsu, you've been able to recover a sonar layout of this building right?"

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's... forearm.* "Correct."

Kataoka: "Any other way we can get past this? It looks to be a death room."

Ritsu: "Not without compromising the wall integrity, which would surely be detrimental in its own right."

Mimura: "We could be walking right into a pit to Hell for all we know."

Terasaka: "I think we're already in Hell."
Kayano: "Well, thanks anyways, Ritsu." *Sighs.* "Let's do this."

-Without another thought, AssUniv breach through the threshold, guns at the ready. They don't immediately enter the room, of course, awaiting a sound cue to advance. But it wouldn't be from any of them...-

???: "Very good, all of you. Impressive, even." *A clapping sound, presumably from the same person, was heard immediately after.*

AssUniv: *All lined up along the walls and each other.* "!!"

???: "Why don't you just come in, already? We promise we won't start the fireworks like this!"

Isogai: *Whispers.* **What do we do?**

Kato: *Let's give him what he wants.* *Shimmies over to the rim of the doors, then holds out his right arm; it isn't shredded at that instant.* "You're serious, aren't you?"

???: "Haha. Always."

Karasuma: *We were going to confront him at some point; let's play along for now.* "Very well; we're coming in."

-And so, the student-assassins entered the large, mid-floor arena. It was not the heavily-geared mercenaries standing in a proper formation on the other side, their weapons, or even the suspicious strongbox on the ground in front of them that they witnessed first, oh no. The first subject they laid their eyes on, and refused to break sight from, was "The Divine Soldier."-

Craig: "See? I'm nothing if a man of my word."

Irina: "Maybe you and Kato-kun here, being so similar, can have have a night out drinking."

Kato: "..."

Craig: *Repositions his glasses.* "Come on, why the hostility? I'm giving you what you wanted." *Motions over to the strongbox.*

AssUniv: *All look at the container.*

Sugino: "Yanagisawa's mutated DNA is in there?"

Craig: "Yep. That container has a pressurized cryogenic chamber, set to preserve the DNA in a frozen state. Until, of course, the right moment. Now go on; take it."

Nagisa: *Takes a few steps forward, treading lighter and lighter as he gets closer to the box. He keeps taking quick glances at the mercenaries when he gets nearer... And his heartbeat skyrocketed.*** "..."

Craig: "Go ahead; have it!"

Nagisa: *Snatches the handle quickly and moves back to his team.* "May we?"
Craig: "Very well. Make it quick."

Karma: *While Nagisa holds onto the bottom, he opens up the latches of the strongbox, releasing excess cold air out. When she finally turns the top over, the sample, inside a sealed glass cylinder, is found; a petrified, multi-appendage mold of dark yellow cells.* "Kayano, it's been some time, but, do you think...?"

Kayano: *Takes a look over some of her peers who are also gazing at the substance.* "No doubt; that's the DNA."

Craig: "I may be a beast, but I'm also a man of my word!" *To Karasuma.* "How about you, Mr. MoD?"

Karasuma: "Oh, your men got the money. They just have it in our personal jail cell too."

Craig: "Right... Well then. I'm sure you all have been eager to learn about some things, haven't you?"

Mimura: "Lords knows how many times that phrase has been delivered somehow around us."

Isogai: "We are curious, though; you're the one who's been helping Dr. Yanagisawa all this time?"

Craig: *Shakes his head.* "The whole time..."

-Remembrance time-

-Four and a half years ago, Craig Houjou has just been defeated and restrained by AssClass, whose members have proceeded up the mountain to reach their beloved Korosensei.-

Craig: So that is... The team called "Class 3-E..." *Facing his defeat with dignity, he takes a rest for half an hour to regain his strength. When it does completely rejuvenate, his eyes flair with fury as he breaks from his bindings almost effortlessly.* I'm eager for another round, but I've my men to account for. Mark my words, students - we will be back. *He leaves the deep-end of Kunugigaoka Mountain in search of his incapacitated mercenaries. After removing the torturous mechanisms of his one-eyed captain (Mishima) and shaking him awake, he caught sight of something flying through the sky.* "What's this?" *He takes up his HK G36C, leaving his comrades to rest along a large tree and investigates the estimated crash site. Upon reaching the destination, he found a broken, melting man lying in a soft crater.* "Heh, so you faced those kids too, huh?"

Yanagisawa: *Unable to speak, due to being unconscious from the shock and pain of being sent through the Anti-Sensei barriers.*

Craig: "Need a hospital visit, buddy?"

Yanagisawa: *Still not talking.*

Craig: "Okay; come on." *Ignoring the burning of the fallen Yanagisawa, he proceeds to take the scientist to a medical institute... Initially unaware of the remains of Tentacle DNA in his left arm; the last part to escape the bubble, and as such did not hit the material.*
Returning to the Wolfpack and literally pulling them on a makeshift sled, he takes them and the hoisted Yanagisawa to a general hospital.

Craig: *At the emergency desk.* "Yes, so how long are the docs thinking my men will be here? We got other missions overseas and all..."

Front Desk: "Sir, one of your colleagues has intense trauma on the back of his head. He's expected to be down for two months."

-Who was it that sat on the back of his head while holding something heavy, by the way? (Hara looks aside) Well whatever...-

Craig: "It'll take that long? Can't it be done faster?"

Front Desk: "I'm sorry, sir, but I should say it before the docs do: it can either be done fast, or done right. Until then, just sit tight."

Craig: "Please tell me you rhymed on purpose... I love that!" *Actively walks back to the lounge nearby, takes a magazine on hunting in Japan's southern regions, and bides his time.*

AssUniv: "GET TO THE POINT ALREADY!"

Craig: "Okay okay. Sheesh, you impatient kids."

Past Craig: *Magically turns up in the large room where all of his teammates are being tended to. Then there's Yanagisawa hogging up the operating room, with his "very urgent" surgery. He watches, once it concludes, the heavily-casted scientist get whisked off, along with a strangely-filled jar, and follows them.* "Heyheyhey, where you taking him? He's one of mine."

Doctor: *Pulls off his medical mask.* "You see him? He's going to be in some intensive care; maybe for the rest of his life." *To the assistants.* "We gotta get him on emergency life support, STAT."

PA: "Yessir."

Craig: "Won't that, the crazy meds and all... Kill his memory?"

Doctor: "Sir, he's not going to want to remember anything that happened. That's a favor."

Craig: *Takes a quick look at the sample to the side of the bandaged man, then back at the doc.* "I need to tell him some stuff, then. Confession. Can I take him to a private for a second? Hook up some painkiller there?"

Doctor: "Sir... Ah, very well."

-The medical staff made it possible for the still-alive Yanagisawa to briefly have an isolated chamber, where Craig was. The doctors had, in haste when they saw a commotion with another rampant patient, neglected to account for the mysterious substance they were hoping to research... Leaving Craig to take it, along with a small freezer box for preserving DNA, which he has put the jar in. Oh, and a sedative.-

Craig: *Shakes Yanagisawa's shoulder.* "Hey; wake up."
Yanagisawa: *Stirs awake.* "Hu- Wha- Wher-"

Craig: "Snap out of it."

Yanagisawa: *Looks at the mercenary.* "Who are you?"

Craig: "Someone who just lost to the same Class 3-E that presumably defeated you."

Yanagisawa: "What? What do you want from me?"

Craig: "Information," *Holds up the sample.* "What is this?"

Yanagisawa: "W-why should I tell you?"

Craig: *Goes to disconnect the IV poles and turn off the life support.*

Yanagisawa: "Wh- No! Okay, okay. That's... That's tentacle DNA."

Craig: "Tentacle DNA?"

Yanagisawa: "Yeah; you know, Korosensei DNA."

Craig: "Right..." *Beat.* "That was inside you?"

Yanagisawa: "It was..."

Craig: *Thinks for a bit.* "Can I have it?"

Yanagisawa: *Eyes over to him.* "Man?"

Craig: "Why? Do you want it?"

Yanagisawa: "No, no! Just... Watch yourself with it; people's going to go after it."

Craig: "I can take care of myself. Besides, I want a certain group of people to find me again. Though honestly, I'm more concerned for you, the creator of this stuff and all."

Yanagisawa: "... Good point."

Craig: "It looks like we can help each other here. I can get you away from the heat, and you can help me attract the group I'm looking for later."

Yanagisawa: "I don't know the people you're looking for."

Craig: "Oh you do; you've seen them before..."

-And that's how the relationship started. As I had predicted, the pharmacology that the doctors used on Yanagisawa resulted in him eventually forgetting who was helping him hide; and from that point, me and my boys were moving him anonymously. Of course, this was not until he was able to finish writing his letters, originally designed for his parents. But I also subtly made it so that anyone could work them through.-
Yanagisawa: *Is reciting the words he wishes for Craig's mercenary to write.* "...it has raced through my mind whether you still really hate me or not. Or if you're scared. Or even both. But Harumi, somewhere in me-

Craig: "Whoa whoa whoa."

Yanagisawa: "W-what? What?"

Craig: "Harumi?"

Yanagisawa: "My sister. I figured she'd be the one to read this at the later time, give or take between the rest of my family."

Craig: "Don't be singling her out. She might be, uh, very alarmed by such direct language."

Yanagisawa: "Oh?"

Craig: *Slowly nods.* "Oh yes..."

AssUniv: *Metaphorical sweat drops.* "Such great charisma..."

Craig: "Thank you! Ah, but alas, we had the moment set up, and we just had to wait. But you know us, greatest mercs in the world! We didn't sit on our asses while you guys retrained. For the next four years, we redoubled our regimen. Ran up all the mountains, braved all the monsoons, and suffered the snowstorms, all to get our revenge on all of you. And... We studied."

Irina: *Beat.* "I'm sorry, what?"

Craig: "Well, it worked on all of you schoolboys and schoolgirls, right?"

Isogai: "We're not going to say you're wrong..."

Craig: "Oh, is it the subjects? No we weren't learning academics again; that's past us in military ed. No, sir, we studied on you all."

Karasuma: "Oh yeah? Who's your source?"

Craig: "Heheh." *Snaps his fingers.*

-Then, to the horror of every student-assassin in there, as well as the utter surprise inherent within Karasuma and Irina's eyes, the second most-unwanted figure AssUniv ever wanted to return, well, returned.-

Takaoka: *The former JASDF Trainer, clad in even more scars across his face as ever, appears from behind a far door, brandishing two knives, one in each hand.* "It's been some time... My children."

Nagisa: "!!" *His face is totally mortified.*

Karasuma: *Is very ticked.* "You..."
Naoko: "How did you break out of Defense's prisons?"

Takaoka: "Bailed. By these guys. They knew they needed someone who knew you all like it's on the back of their hand. And now, they're more than ready, with my instruction, to get at them." *To the Neo-Wolfpack veterans.* "Show 'em, boys!"

Wolfpack Vets: *Temporarily remove their upper armor and shirts, revealing a heavy sum of cuts and bruises.*

AssUniv: *The girls are noticeably horrified by the wounds on their enemies. The guys are meanwhile appalled.*

Wolfpack Vet 1: "No pain..."

Wolfpack Vet 2: "No gain." *They all put down their uniforms in unison.*

Craig: "Well, I think that's all we need to catch up on. Let's settle this, shall we?"

Kato: *Eventually, everyone refocuses with intense determination.* "Bring it."
Craig... and Takaoka?! Just great! At least there seems to be a good amount of sport to be had on both sides, however. So, how will all the forces decide to settle this?

*NOTE: The following chapters 73, 74, and most of 75 will be taking place at the same instance.*

Craig: "So, kids? How will we do this?"

Takaoka: "Yes; pray tell."

Kato: *Does not look over.* "Karasuma."

Karasuma: "Yeah?"

Kato: "I'm thinking I want to take the lead here." *Steps forward, tilting his neck to make a crack.* "Care to join me?"

Karasuma: "Heh, be my pleasure. I've been wanting to take Craig down ever since I heard my students do the same." *Matches the movement, adding in a few pops of his knuckles.*

Naoko: "If Karasuma is going in, I'm gam-

Irina: *Pulls back her sister-in-law.* Not this time, sis.

Naoko: Irina?

Irina: You're still haven't fully recovered; you won't last.

Naoko: Damnit...

Craig: "Oh, how is that fair? Two on one? Blasphemy!"

Kato: "On the contrary; me and Karasuma both know neither of us can beat you on our own."

AssUniv: "What!?

Karasuma: "..."

Craig: "Really now?"

Kato: "Yeah... We may be on opposite ends of the spectrum, but we're still organized folk, who have no idea how to fight unhinged at one-hundred percent. Like you do. We can be unpredictable, but we can never be transcendent in terms of combat." *Looks back at Naoko.*
Naoko: "!!" *Remembers when Kato and Karasuma witnessed her lay waste to the mercenaries in the fish slaughterhouse due to her beast status.*

Nagisa: *Remembers when Karasuma first stated that "The Divine Soldier" was at a league of his own in terms of what he does; Craig was measured to be roughly three-times stronger than the former.*

Craig: "And you think you'll even it up together?"

Kato: "The good thing about order? If a unit of it isn't enough, you'll definitely be able to add another measure of it in." *Pulls Karasuma towards him.* "Can your agents of chaos say the same?"

Craig: *Thinks for a moment.* "Touche."

Takaoka: "Aw, not going to include me in that action? Ah, that's okay; I wanted a piece of all you kids, anyways."

Irina: *Stands up before most of the other student-assassins.* "In your dreams, freak."

Nagisa/Kayano/Karma: *Step in front of all of them.*

Irina: "!?

Karma: "Sorry, Bitch-sensei."

Kayano: "But this will be our fight. And ours alone."

Nagisa: "Last time, this person was moments away from killing our best friends. We won't let that happen again."

Nagisa/Kayano/Karma: "We'll make you surrender!"

Takaoka: "How brave... And quaint. Very well; I accept. Let's move to more private pastures."

Wolfpack Vets: "I think that leaves us with you lot."

AssUniv sans Trio and Duo: *Some gulp.*

Merc 1: "To make it fair to all of you, how about a ten-second head start?"

Merc 2: "Starting, now!"

Irina: "Come on, everyone!"

Naoko: "Let's retreat!

-The remaining twenty-six original student-assassins leave the arena and through the blast door. After ten seconds, the mercs begin pursuit.-

Craig: *Waits a bit after everyone leaves.* "Want to make a friendly set of bets on their
respective conflicts?"

Kato: "I don't gamble on human life like that."

Karasuma: "I don't gamble, period."

Craig: "A pity."

-Meanswhile, the student-assassins, led by Irina and Naoko, retreat into the cover-infested storage and distribution areas of the fortress. With Kimura currently holding onto the DNA strongbox on his vacuum backpack, they all hide in and around the surrounding area.-

Irina: "They're rapidly approaching!" *Takes cover behind a container's closed door, holding a Maxim 9 close to her face.*

Naoko: "Everyone, get ready!" *Pulls back the bolt of her suppressed HK 433. Then, much like everyone else, her suit uses its Chameleon Effect to match the setting's credentials, just as the mercenaries arrive on scene.*

Merc 1: "Damn... Disappeared again, have they?"

Merc 2: "They can't run from us; we know this ground!"

Merc 3: "Come out, come out, wherever you are..."

Naoko: Yeah, you know this ground... But then again, so do we. And we'll prove it to you!

Irina: Remember, everyone; this is not a battle in the truest sense - this is an assassination!

AssUniv: Yes ma'am!

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST "Get Them" plays.-

暗殺大学VSネオウルフパック

Assassination University

VS

The Neo-Wolfpack

-Playing to their mentor (and peer)'s orders, the student-assassins have used their head-start advantage to break the line of sight, and mask their presence from the oncoming soldiers. Their intention was to turn the game of predator and prey around; the chasers will subsequently be turned into the chased. But it all starts with them waiting at all the right moments, such as when the mercenary group realizes their sense of position awareness for their enemies is gone, and they split up to locate their opponents.
One two-man branch of the squadron investigates a narrow pathway between two large storage containers, Norinco CQ-M4 rifles at the ready. Knowing very well that one of the student-assassins had ran through here just moments earlier, they remain very vigilant, scoping their flanks, rear view, and even above the containers for their foes. But little did they know that their enemies could still very well see them, which was not apparent until they were about to cut the corner, before they get tagged by shock rounds from two different HK433 rifles from both sides of the corridor.

**KAM AtTac Suits Erebus/Achlys**

**Weight:** 6.8-8.4 lb. (3.084-3.81 kg)  
**Material(s):** Graphene, Aramid, Elastane, TechniCot, Gore-Tex, Dyneema, Microlattice, Hardened Carbon Fiber, etc.  
**Type:** Semi-Powered Exoskeleton Armor (suit's defensive properties are independent of its rechargeable power supply known as the KERS G-MOscillator [a sensory device that essentially converts kinetic energy into electrical power]; Most Special Functionalities require this power unless otherwise stated.)

**Special Functionalities:**

- Octo-Ink: Utilizing the heat-regulating properties of Gore-Tex, signals-masking of TechniCot, and HCF's color-mutating options, the KAM AtTac Suits can match the color, temperature, and even the texture of any surrounding area, after the InReTs ([In]vader's [Re]ferencing [T]ools) completes analysis of the perimeter's composition. The armor subsequently applies the same traits after a minute of installing the information onto the system. Unexpected mutations in the situation are automatically re-rendered within half a second of the distortion.

The two culprits are revealed to be Sosuke and Nakamura, whose Octo-Ink slowly contrasts the dark containers that they protrude from. They go up to each other, mildly clashing elbows before leaving the area, as they know others will come to survey it.

Meanwhile, on another side of the "battleground," Maehara is seen sprinting through.-

Maehara: *Audibly pants, sprinting through an atrium section, before finding himself behind one more safe corner. He sees another level ledge that he can again get back into hiding on, but a fifteen feet gap of a twelve-foot drop is in the way. To himself,* "Okay... Okay. Rock and roll."

-He presses on his InReTs touchpad, and suddenly his suit gives a very subtle whirring sound. He then throws his entire body onto the far left wall, with his legs hitting it first. Rather than naturally drag down the sheer surface, his legs seemingly stick.

- **EM-Traverse:** Nanites in the suit's limbs and appendages allow voluntary electromagnetic attraction to almost any surface, regardless of angle of inclination, secondary substance, etc., so long as it at least makes some contact to the wall the user wishes to traverse on. This even allows users to run on water by warping the molecules to provide footholds where they are, and more easily manipulate comprised atomic structures, but these functions require a lot of energy from the KERS G-MO.

He continues with his running momentum to wall-run the entire chasm and frontflip onto the aforementioned ledge, and hiding behind a wall, confusing the just-arriving soldiers.-

Merc 4: "What the Hell!?!"
Merc 5: "Where the fuck did he go!?" *Both are actively searching everywhere nearby.*

-As the two mercs remain perplexed, Okano rushes in from a very high scaffolding, before swan-diving off. Her first target is thrown a little disk, which is zoomed in to reveal it has tasing properties, that connects to the top of his head, giving him an invisible shock before he is forced to collapse as Okano puts all her weight into a seated senton drop.

- Shock Pads: On the gloves of the suits are small, electrified saucers that have enough current to knock out any regular individual bare or lightly-layered who it becomes attached to. The users can directly apply the pad by palm-to-body contact (wherin the disk automatically ejects after use to make way for a still-charged disk), or can be nicked off using leverage by the user's fingers, and thrown within five seconds of dislodge for a ranged, yet same desired effect. As the gloves are external to the suit itself, it does not require KERS G-MO to function.

Okano quickly throws out her HK23 Mod 0.1 silenced pistol to incapacitate the other guard, who never heard her coming until that exact moment, due to the nanomachines providing antinoise to her movements.-

Okano: *Speaks to the InReTs.* "Two down."

Merc 6: "Aha! Got you!"

Okano: "Huh!?" *Looks back.*

Merc 7: *Both have their N4 Diplomats trained on her.* "Don't move!"

Okano: Shit... *Slowly moves her hands up, behind her head, with hr back still turned to them.*

Mercs: *They slowly walk to her, passing by the same storage wall that Maehara seemingly disappeared from.*

Hara: *Standing on top of said storage, she runs over and does a diving crossbody on the both of them. The added force by the lattice armored areas on her back are enough to take the soldiers out. To Hara's surprise, one of them turned out to be the same person she dropped a boulder (and herself, of course) on four years ago, which she discreetly apologized for the two months recovery mentioned earlier. Then, with Okano, they ditch the area of commotion.*

-Meanwhile, closer to the center of the conflict... Naoko and Kataoka have seemingly found each other in another chase, and decide to converge their enemies. Okuda and Takebayashi are found guarding both sides of the corridor the other two are running through (which also has a long metal table standing at the end, as a package opening station). Kataoka reads this on her InReTs, and after a silent agreement of a new plan brewing by Naoko, the two nod at each other.

Naoko and Kataoka proceed to slide underneath the table, sweeping the front legs of the furniture with their arms, causing it to fall over and provide cover. When Naoko's lower arm and ribcage make contact with the rough floor, she makes a quick wince, referencing her mere days-old treatment, but she's still set to continue. They goad Okuda and Takebayashi to run behind, just as the soldiers arrive within view. They open fire on the table, which the four are using to get close enough - close enough for the bespectacled duo to dart the three soldiers down. Reinforcements come just as Okuda believes the coast is clear, and she narrowly avoids a shot meant for her when Kataoka takes her arm and pulls her back; the bullet just singes the outer tricep section, covered by an enhanced ballistic shield.
Ballistic Shield: If the user ever finds themselves compromised and in an open-conflict situation, they will still have added defensive measures in such an event. The user's left forearm has a fold-out mechanism that crafts a modified small bulletproof shield. It's oval shape is not meant to defend the whole body like regular shields (which would be too heavy to integrate), and rather holds the user's upper organs in higher regard. If combined with waist-level cover and armed with one-handed projectile armaments, this shield allows for much safer sight-shooting. In addition, the shield has a pointed edge that protrudes from above the user's fist, doubling its usage also as a surprise CQC weapon.

The suppressing fire by the new three mercenaries prevents the ground student-assassins from doing the same thing, forcing them to back the table up. But then, the three are soon eliminated too... By a certain, mature group.

On another side, Kimura gets compromised when the power supply of his KERS G-MO runs dry, and his Octo-Ink automatically disables... Just as he's about to run past an opening right in front of three investigating mercs. The four of them take a moment to realize their situation, and then Kimura sprints with the DNA box in his free hand, with the other three in hot pursuit.-

Kimura: *Realizes on his InReTs (an AC-charged device independent of the kinetically-powered suit) that he's coming up on three stationary allied blips.* Yada! Bitch-sensei!

Yada: *She and her mentor are crouched down, setting up some unknown devices, before answering the comm.* Kimura-kun?

Irina: Oh, shit! Yada, your trap good?

Yada: I do. *Flicks her finger on a low-set tripwire.* We'll help you shake them, Kimura-kun!

Kimura: *Appears around the corner.* "GOOD! You can start now!" *Runs right past them, prompting them to do the same. They split up at the fork in the road, with Yada now in possession of the strongbox, while Kimura branches off and jumps into a tampered storage container.*

-The soldiers show up from behind the edge too, and witness the three fleeing. They reach the hall the two ladies have laid a trap with, and noticing the thin cord, jump over it to bypass. But the first few who did come across another wire that was highly-set (by Irina) that takes one of them out, while the other is temporarily grounded. The third takes his LHR combat knife to lacerate the string mid-jump and continues pursuit. The one beginning to stand tries doing the same, but another force pulls him back down. It's a set of hands on his ankle closest to the wall, and when he looks into the shadowed section, a deadly spider-like gaze (coming from Hazama). She continues to pull him into the abyss, such that only his head and shoulders protrude. From there, Kanzaki, who was atop the ascended structure the whole time, flips off and gives a running start to a basement dropkick that strikes the top of the soldier's head with concussive force.

Kanzaki continues with her momentum and springs back onto her feet for a run. She rendezvous with Sugino, who was caught in a blind firefight, where Kanzaki passes him a spherical stingball grenade, which he uses to split-second curveball pitch into the hub area where four Wolfpack members resided. The resulting non-lethal fragmentation exposed the hired guns, allowing Okajima, Muramatsu, and Yoshida to pick them off from camouflaged level positions. Kanzaki and Sugino run off when their position becomes flanked; Sugino suffers a chance shot to his suit's right thigh section, but the bullet's impact merely falls off; the graphene and aramid sheets greatly
bolster the damage across the suit with negligible damage.

-Meanwhile, back where Naoko, Kataoka, Okuda, and Takebayashi were...

Chiba/Hayami: *Their AW Covert rifles spout some smoke, taking down the last three enemies in the previous area from two elevated positions some fair distance away from each other.* *Tangos down.* "!!" *Chiba looks to his right, and finds that an intuitive four-man squad has traced his two shots and are reaching the pathway he took to get up there.* *Shit. Mimura, ready the Echo point trap.*

Mimura: *Sitting inside an ajar storage container on top of three others, using his InReTs as a camera feed and providing logistics.* *Gotcha.* *Presses on the touchpad, arming the mysterious device.*

-When he sees the soldiers in view of the nano-cameras, he triggers the machines just below, sending an electric surge through anyone who passes by the "silk wire" corridor, knocking two of them out before they even fall to the ground.

- **Nano-cameras:** Security tech that was inspired when Kato took a look at "the world's smallest cameras" from a certain movie about underage agents. These cameras, despite their name, are not actually nano-sized (and therefore not the smallest); more seemingly micro-sized, but have very minimalistic properties that also utilize carbon fiber's cosmetic qualities to make it blend into virtually any surface. All activated cameras are pre-programmed to provide feed to every InReTs screen within a half-mile radius. Users need only to plant the back end of the camera to a wall to utilize them. They can be safely removed by using a slim edge to pry the adhesive off.

- **Stun-Net:** Another piece of "nanotech" (again, more along the lines of micro). With the realization that taser shockwaves were too situational to be effective, while flash, chaff, and caltrop explosives being too easily perceptible, a research project was conducted to create a set of machines that could apply the universality and efficiency of both nonlethal weapons. The result is the Stun-Net, formed by setting the machines along the outline of a corridor, that spreads a trampoline-like field (net sounds better) of electrical energy with a current strong enough to strike through the orifices of incomers, hitting the neurons and temporarily disabling them, thereby shutting down their systems. The "net" can be formed using multiple shapes in accordance to the architecture of the passageway they are defending. However, they are noticeable for the spawning points of the net's outline being slightly more luminescent, exposing the sources.

When the remaining two realize the rigged nature of the path, they notice where it is coming from, and shoot at the emitters. This disables the joint device, allowing the duo to advance. They give immediately sack the vantage spot, only to find that their target is gone... Because he was floating right above them, Combining his EM-Traverse and Octo-Ink modules to remain hidden; long enough, of course, to drop down and give a Stun Pad to one soldier, putting him down. The other one realizes the act, and tries to recompense it, but is similarly taken down by a dropping Hayami, who was hanging from a recently-produced cable that had allowed her to swiftly reach Chiba's spot.

- **Pivoting Wire Wrest:** An external gadget of the suits (and thus does not require power from the KERS G-MO), this device consists of a rolled-up supply of smoothened steel cable and two titanium hooks at its ends. When the user presses one hook into a flat
section, the other hook can be shot out and embed into another like surface up to thirty feet away. For further application, the device can use the roller's dials to change the direction of the second hook such that the angle of the wire is between 270-90. This allows the wire wrest to reach most places even the EM-Traverse cannot (or is disabled).

The two get up, dust themselves off, and then hook their shooting arms, with the same sense of achievement they've felt long before. But then they see a sniper's bullet, coming from a modified PSG-1 with confident hands, just barely miss the both of them, and go back into hiding. Chiba nods to Hayami, giving her the go ahead to dive out of the sniper's nest, while he himself throws a dropped pistol from one of the fallen mercenaries into the air for the sniper to shoot. Hayami lands in three-point stance on a far wall (covered from the sniper with an adjacent surface), and sees one straggling soldier hear the commotion at the nest. This prompts her to take the awkward shooting angle with her Covert and deadeye the man in the back before he can proceed. Chiba and Hayami then nod to each other, wherein Chiba throws another paperweight that the Wolfpack Sniper takes out; this one turns out to be a smoke grenade that ignites. The sniper, using a thermal scope, is not at all deterred by the diversion and continues to leave himself in position to strike... Which is unfortunate when Hayami appears from around the corner to tap the sniper on his flank with a bullet of her own.

Hayami: *To her comm line,* "You're clear, Chiba-kun! Get outta there!"

Chiba: "Understood." *Throws his covert rifle behind him in the same place he originally held the Cypher transort, wherein it magically floats on his back, and begins following the same route Hayami did.*

- **Vaccum Carry:** The circuitry visible in the back of the suit all connect, aside from the internalized gadgets and the KERS G-Mo power supply, to a circular array on the back. This array is also a special R&D project, with which to utilize the kinetic applications of zero-point energy (the lowest possible vibrational energy in a physics system even at the point of absolute zero). This energy being manipulated in a small field of one and a half foot from the array anchors this energy inherent within the molecules of a desired object, allowing it to retain its position and condition so long as it is activated. This way, the user can carry practically any object or subject, so long as the encumbering nature does not compromise its faculty (I.E. it could theoretically lift a house, but how will you get a house on your back?). Aside from the EM-Traverse and Octo-Ink, this functionality requires the most energy to use and maintain, and should be used very sparingly.

Hayami and Chiba eventually return to ground level, where the former happens upon two more soldiers, with their backs turned and facing her old perch. Without a second thought, Hayami puts her Covert behind her, and pulls out two TDI Kard pistols, and then jumps in a no-handed cartwheel across the hallway, using her kinetic vision to pick them off while in the air and upside down. When the downs are confirmed, she urges Chiba to advance, and they proceed closer to their next targets.

-A trio of the Wolfpack mercenaries track Kimura's movements at the fork in the road, and find that he went into the aforementioned storage container, evident by one part of the door still being open. The professionals discreetly stalk the complex, before prying it open and scoping the narrow section... Only to find yet another drone there!

Merc 8: "What?"
The drone then has a small set of lights appear from the top, and then produce a powerful string of strobe lights that temporarily blind the three. Then, from the adjacent walls, "Octo-Ink-ed" Muramatsu and Yoshida appear, with the former chop-blocking two of the soldiers so that their heads peek out - all the more easier for Yoshida to slam them together and taking them out. The straggler gets picked off by Itona, whose InReTs screen shows him being the drone operator. He jumps up and locks the merc in a reverse hurricanrana, giving him a pivot advantage and drop-release of the hold throws the merc's head into the nearby metal walls. The three give quick respect to each other before rendezvousing with their other teammates.

The remaining eight Neo-Wolfpack members are keeping together to investigate, finding that their branching brothers are being dwindled. Their diamond-formation makes them nigh-impregnable as they traverse like a siege engine through the storage area. If one laid witness to an exposed student-assassin, at least another three would notice as well. The excess numbers also meant all aerial entries would be well-guarded. And the front line, now aware of the Stun Net and Wire Wrest traps, made sure to check the walls for any external pieces of equipment. In essence, there was very few plans of attack that remain effective for AssUniv... Emphasis on very few. -

Isogai: *Suddenly, he appears from behind a corner (though, strangely, the higher strand of his ahoge has been reversed, and a wound present on his right cheek now exposed with his training mask off has moved). He attracts all of the soldiers' attentions by beckoning the blokes, and then snapping his fingers twice.*

Merc 9: "There's one of them! Take him down!" *He, like four of the others, took up their AR derivative firearms and opened fire on the lone leader of AssUniv. And they shred the image of him into pieces...*

Isogai: "Heheh."

Mers: "What the!?!" *Look back, and find Isogai, alive and well behind them. The other side, it turns out, was a mobile wall screen projecting Isogai's camera appearance. The snap of his fingers was a pre-recorded sound imposed on another set of micro-machines embedded onto the wall right behind it, visible when the screen falls over from bullet impact.*

- **Throw Voice -** Yet another piece of external nanotech. Despite its name, these micro machines are not limited to projecting faraway voices, and can reproduce any sound, be it natural or artificial. The programming was originally intended to allow sixth-level voice clearance (the producer of the voice as a password does not need to be in front of the machine), making it more accessible to infiltrate without enemy expectations, but the lack of live microphone feed scrapped that plan. Still, the hard-coded, recorded dialogue from up to ten seconds of data proves effective for distractions and diversions.

-The real Isogai, proper ahoge and all, immediately sprints off. The soldiers, knowing they will never get the student-assassins in their passive formation, break into an arrowhead and chase after him. Isogai ends up passing by a perpendicular case, where the shadows leave... a lack of free space, to say the least. The leader of the male student-assassins doesn't seem to mind, regardless, and he vaults over a familiar-looking metal table since moved from another scene, taking cover right behind it, and next to three who have long used it - Kataoka and Naoko.

The soldiers follow suit, making sure to still take note of small pieces of machinery that is not supposed to be there. For that reason, they continue their pursuit, knowing very well that Isogai is hiding behind the bullet-riddled structure. But when all but two have passed by the aforementioned corridor, the terminal duo immediately drop like flies. As it turns out, Fuwa, in her signature cross-
legged position, had taken one out of them. The other was eliminated by a pull-in to the other side by Sosuke, who was left open for a lead pipe swing to the face, courtesy of Sugino.

The sounds of both pacifications cause the soldiers to look back, briefly neglecting the table. That is when Maehara and Okano, atop the tall towers of containers, hold both ends of two loose wire wrests. They pull back with all of their might, where it is revealed they are tied to the bottom legs of the table. When it flips over, it is revealed that Terasaka is stuck to the bottom of the table. He immediately switches off his EM-Traverse to fly towards the unaware soldiers with centripetal inertial velocity. This momentum, along with outstretched arms, allows him to take down the closest soldier with his back turned. Terasaka then barrel rolls away from the line of fire.

The mercs look back again (correctly assuming that Fuwa [taken to safety by Nakamura] and Sugaya/Sugino [climbed away] left the rear fighting scene) to strike at the three who are now coverless. Two, thanks to Isogai and Kataoka's draw, were downed, but Naoko's enemy got a chance shot that hit her left upper arm, causing more strain in that already compromised section. The two leaders know what they must do, where Kataoka pushes Naoko back into a corner's cover while Isogai keeps them safe with a Ballistic Shield.

Five remain, but not for long when Sugino throws a Hail Mary of a flashbang that lands just in front of the pack, detonating before they can even discern its shape. The resulting glare wrecks the group's senses, making it impossible to notice three women walk up to them...-

Kurahashi: *Steps out of view first, going up behind her designated target, prying away the extra layers around the man's neck and poking the mastoid process and the carotid simultaneously, before finishing with a slap of the ear for exponential effect. The man slumps over, hitting his head on the ground and knocking himself out, being unable to move.*

Yada: *Takes a stun rod from out of her side holster, and charges it up before powersliding past her victim, jabbing his left leg with the prod. She quickly arises to backhand the other leg, smashing its inner knee with an electric baton swing. With him now bowed down and their backs turned, Yada continues the onslaught with an arm throwback over her head, thrusting the baton into the back of his head, causing him to jitter once more. She delivers the coup de grace with a turning tennis-like smash to the top of his head.*

Irina: *Produces a largely-folded blanket... From her mouth, and quickly outstretches it. She then revolves around the remaining three enemies, letting the sheet envelop and constrict them. Only their shoulders and heads could still be seen. The three young ladies then kicked a bit... Low, causing them all to fall on their knees and forming a little human three-faced pillar.* "Okay, girls! You know what to do!"

Yada/Kurahashi: "Yes, sensei!"

Irina/Yada/Kurahashi: *All three of them pull off their modified "Combos of Affection;" Irina's is the classic, original French Kiss (a peck on each cheek, still complete with a hint of tongue). Meanwhile Yada had a high-angle Marshmallow Hell, where the merc's face had much less breathing area. Kurahashi matched theirs with a Punishing Prostration (the act of "purifying" a man's more-dirty desires by giving them psychic treatment; most popularly, as she does here, through direct forehead contact).*

Mercs: *All of Kurahashi's 44, Yada's 52, and Irina's 68-hit combos all put them down as easily as the shock rounds, stun nets, and so on. They all collapse on each other, heads down to represent their unconscious status.*

-OST ends.-
Irina: *Wipes her forehead.* "Well, that takes care of that!"

Yada: *Holds her heart, panting.* "You were incredible, sensei!"

Kurahashi: "What's incredible is you breaking past fifty in that combo, Yada-san."

Yada: "Really?"

Naoko: *Recovers from her poor rib condition.* "I can still only manage thirty-two..."

Kataoka: *Hugs her from behind.* "I'm serious this time; I'm done with this program. I'm going and gone, but only if you are."

AssUniv Guys: "..."

Terasaka: "You think this was what the internet guys call 'a pyrrhic victory'?"

Maehara: "What? When did you learn that word?"

Ritsu: *Appears on Terasaka's InReTs screen.* "The war is not yet over on our colleagues' sides. There may still be hope yet in a decisive positive conclusion."

Kimura: "Nice. Not to mention, we still got the DNA box." *Shakes the strongbox in his hand around a bit.*

Terasaka: *Steps out of the group for a second, and speaking with a hyped, hammy manner.* "Everyone, everyone, let me just say, I've never been the best at math."

Nakamura: "Pff, that's a surprise."

Terasaka: *Holds his finger in front of her.* "Point being, I'm not quite sure what the addition of our score currently is."

Okano: *Copies Terasaka's motions and voice style.* "Oh, need you remind us? I doubt it barely even matters now."

Sugino: "I don't think so; I think it's worth hearing just for the pleasantry!"

Fuwa: "You are absolutely right; who dares to tell it?"

Okajima: "Chiba, you good with numbers; what's the damage?"

Chiba: "Heh... 2-0."

Okuda: "Against whom?"

Naoko: "The greatest mercs ever."

Kimura: "And who's in favor?"

AssUniv: *Their voices raise as they all pool their hands together.* "AssUniv!"

Irina: *Shakes her head.* "Ah, you kids. Love you all so much."

Naoko: *Looks over to her.* "More than me?"

Irina: *Looks aside with blush.*
Yada: *Noticing that the tension about the combos has died down, and her peers and mentor are briefly celebrating their victory.* Barring a successful business venture, this is all I ever wanted from the future. A happy group of former classmates. Kato-kun... You've helped me achieve that. Thank you... And I pray for your success in what we all can say is a cruel melee ahead. And the same goes for you three, Nagisa-kun, Karma-kun, and Kayano-san. Please be the people of your word...
Chapter Summary

At the same time that most of the AssUniv team deal with the majority of the Neo-Wolfpack mercenaries, and Kato and Karasuma team up to take on the Divine Soldier, Nagisa, Kayano, and Karma reserve themselves for a duel with Takaoka, in an effort to prevent him from hurting any more of their friends. But can they really defeat him now that he's become that much more... Maniacal?

-Away from their peers and their mentors, Nagisa, Kayano, and Karma follow the unhinged Takaoka through a medium-length hall to another like-sized arena to the one Kato and Karasuma reserved for their battle with Craig.-

Takaoka: *Pushes open the door.* "Here we are! How nice is it, young boys and girls?"

Kayano: *Peeks inside.* "It'll do, I guess."

Takaoka: "Terrific!" *Takes the first step inside. He makes sure to look behind himself, making sure the student-assassins wouldn't try to, well, do their thing and end their climactic clash prematurely.* "You better be very sure about it, kids."

Nagisa: *His heart continues to rise in beat, wanting very badly to capitalize on the moment. He then looks back to his peers.*

Karma: *Shakes his head against it.* You assassinated him once, and twice. But he's wise to it all now.

Kayano: Yeah; the stun-clap trick, the weapon switch, all of it you can't rely on; you need to wait for us now.

Nagisa: *Nods to the statements.*

Takaoka: "Coming in, are you three?" *Now fully well inside the arena.*

AssUniv: *All step inside, taking a look around the empty area before assuming their positions. They stretch out their backs and arms thoroughly.*

Takaoka: *Pulls out his devilish-looking knife before them.* "Ready or not... Here I come."

Kayano: "Geez, can you be any creepier?"

Karma: "He can't be more subhuman if he tried."

Nagisa: He's been a perceived rival of Karasuma for a reason that we never got to see before... Until now. But Takaoka, you're threatening more than my friends this time; you're threatening the world. I won't underestimate you... But I will defeat you! *Double takes Karma and Kayano.*
"Guys, follow my lead; we can get through this!"

Karma/Kayano: "Roger!"

-All three of them ready their TeamAR-15 knives (with stun-rods still safely holstered) before their veiny foe, who was wearing the nastiest grin he's ever sprouted across his face to date, brandishing his wicked MTech M8054 knife himself.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST "With Vengeance" plays.-

塩田渚、茅野楓、赤羽カルマVS高岡明

Nagisa Shiota, Kaede Kayano, and Karma Akabane VS

Akira Takaoka

-The three student-assassins begin by circling their larger opponent, who gives each one of them aside glances, but is otherwise indifferent to the stalking behavior. Nagisa manages to get completely behind Takaoka (while Kayano is on Takaoka's right flank and Karma facing him in a thirty-degree incline, and dares for a lethal lunge. Takaoka immediately turns around and deflects the stab with a backhanded, underarm swing, causing Nagisa's right arm to be thrown away from his body, defenseless to an aside side kick that propels him back. He rolls behind to prevent himself from laying out on the ground.

Karma and Kayano decide to capitalize on the pivotal moment, both charging in with crossed slashes at their former "father..." But Takaoka is far too savvy for such basic techniques and wildly kept them both at bay with a haymaker. Kayano and Karma's stunt and combative intuition allow them to escape this first blow, but Takaoka seemingly predicted this too, taking advantage of Kayano's sprawled position to launch a big stomp onto her. She just manages to barrel-roll aside.

Once again, the three student-assassins are surrounding their nemesis. Only one thing is different - which side has the psychological edge. Despite it all, the valedictorian trio try again, this time all at once; Nagisa a backhand diagonal slash, Karma a sidestepping downward diagonal, and Kayano a superman stab. The former JASDF trainer remains undeterred, backing off from Karma's attack, while parrying and riposting Kayano's attack so that she almost harmlessly flies by him. Nagisa once again takes the worst of the exchange, earning himself yet another deflection, but this time a cut on his cutting arm rather than a kick. Kayano tries to return the favor after a deceptive recovery with a returning backhand side slash to the face, but Takaoka blocks it and cuts at her outer tricep, almost making her drop the knife.

Kayano backs out for a moment, letting Karma take the lead again, reentering the fray with a flying instep kick before landing with a downward slash. Takaoka slaps down the punt, and catches Karma's wrist on the way down. The latter lands on his feet, attempting a swift knee, but it is also snatched. Thus, nothing saves Karma from being slammed hard onto the ground with a fisherman's suplex. His limp arm briefly levitating in the air in shock from the impact gets bladed on the forearm, which he throws back close this body, as he pivots all of hisself away from Takaoka.
Nagisa and Kayano have recovered to match their respective slashes, but even a shadow-set technique prove ineffective as Takaoka has trained commonly under multi-assault settings; for instance, an angled roundhouse kick to push Kayano into Nagisa has far more range than a front outstretched knife. In effect, all three of the college students again laid on the ground. When Takaoka walks over to deliver an icepick swipe into the ground where the two are, impaling them into the floor. But Kayano sees it coming once more, clutching Nagisa's leg, and rolling to the side again. This motion has it so that only the edge of Nagisa's arm, behind a ballistic shield too late to form, gets skinned, with the rest of the knife only meeting stone. Kayano has Nagisa's limb coordinate with hers for a double supine side kick that repulses the wicked trainer back. Karma has now regained his footing, returning to his teammates and helping the lady up. Nagisa gets to his feet, clutching his bad arm all the while.-

Nagisa: *Mind flickers.* Oh...

Takaoka: *Laughs menacingly.* "Come on, Four to five years later, and this is all that three prime little children can accomplish? Barely any dust has left my shirt!"

Karma: Shit, this isn't working...

Kayano: Our armors won't last much longer with how much he's cutting into us, much less ourselves.

Nagisa: Not like we're supposed to take the hits... Let's try something else.

AssUniv: Right! *All three rush at Takaoka in an arrowhead formation.*

Takaoka: "Heheh..." *Readies his already blood-stained knife for another exchange.*

-Nagisa is the point-man, winding up his weapon arm for an overhead slash on Takaoka. The latter raises up to block the incoming attack, but then Kayano appears within millimeters to the right of Nagisa and does a sidestepping slash. Takaoka barely has enough time to react in which a cut reveals itself on his rounded torso. Karma keeps him from resting by throwing a follow-up lunge at him... Only this too is a feint for Nagisa to front-flip over and axe kick their mentor's former colleague. This forces Takaoka reeling back, cautiously rubbing the back of his head.-

Takaoka: "Ah, playing like that, my children? Don't worry; father knows how to play that rough too!" *Spins his MTech knife around on his right hand before firmly grasping it again.*

Nagisa: "..."

-The student-assassins continue again. Takaoka does end up living up to his promise, wherein every attempt to bait-and-switch leads to Takaoka ducking out of both attacks. Such failed onslaughts, such as Kayano leapfrogging over Karma after they both tried a horizontal forehand cut, leaves them both off-balance, and Takaoka needs only thrust his shoulder into Kayano to propel her back as if she had run into a bullet train, knocking Karma off his feet too. When they recover, Nagisa and Karma try a swivel-hinge attack (the leader continues to move forward, while the rear is back-to-back with him and pivots to add extra momentum to a backhand swing), but Takaoka had ample time to parry the leader Karma's slash and boot Nagisa away, before trying to gash Karma's exposed torso. When the latter narrowly avoids it, his free-arm's forearm takes a back-up attack instead, almost giving the ballistic shield a crack and driving him back.
Once again, the three AssUniv members find themselves in trouble.

Nagisa/Kayano/Karma: *Stand by each other in ready positions, panting even more.*

Takaoka: "Well, that fizzled up, didn't it? Got any more surprises?" *His mind flickers.* "Ah, first thing's first - from here on out, my five-feet radius is now a kill zone. Tread very lightly, my children."

Kayano: Shit... Fighting him outright is no longer an option, lest we get gutted...

Karma: Who'd a thunk?

Nagisa: Then we're falling back on what we do best! *He puts away his knife, like the other two, and then they press on their InReTs touchpad to activate Octo-Ink; suddenly, all of them fade out into the colors of their surroundings, which eventually makes them fully invisible when they flee the scene towards the doors or walls.*

Takaoka: "Oh... Now that's a fun new trick..." *Eerily looks around, trying to discern concrete from aramid.* "Really? The nightmare that is Nagisa Shiota, resorting to such cowardly tactics such as these?"

Nagisa: *Within the veil of his Octo-Ink, he grows ticked by Takaoka's taunts. but he knows this is what he must do, so he relents his urge.*

-The succeeding moments were very critical; the trio needed to make sure they made not one sound, attuning their movements with their boots' antinoise nanites, therby making no signs for Takaoka to follow; purposefully making him move around the empty stadium.

But then... a side-storage door on the overlook opened up. One that was filled with an array of boxes and other props that would better help the three student-assassins to hide.-

Takaoka: "Aha!" *Throws his MTech knife straight at the section of the wall close to where the first door opened. It makes a clanking sound as it drives into the surface.* "Aw... I missed." *Takes out an identical knife from his other holster.* "No matter; you all will come out again soon." *Instinctively turns around, believing an aura of a snake there.* "Oh, was someone trying to get me just now?"

Kayano: *Is holding back her very quick breaths, with the knife turning out to be within just a few inches of her head. She looks over to Karma, on the other side of the doors. They both nod, and spring into action, toppling the equipment overboard.*

Takaoka: "What?" *He covers his upper body when all of the heavy loads start falling all around him. He then turns around.* "Haha, nice try!" *Backhand slashes viciously behind him. But all he greets is air.* "'!!" *Looks up, finding that the third (revealed to be Nagisa) who he had sensed behind him earlier had jumped high into the air when he crossed the five-foot radius. Flipping over Takaoka himself, he then swiped downward, laying a small cut across his right clavicle.* "Agh, damnit!" *He hooks the air all around him to prevent that third from attacking again.*

Kayano: *Using the noise that the objects have made when impacting the ground to allow her an undetected landing, she dashes in to the stunned Takaoka and baseball-slides underneath his haymakers. With her knife in her close hand, she scrapes Takaoka's leg with a slash of her own, zooming on by him and out of reach.*
Takaoka: *Briefly looks to his wounded limb, before slapping at it and looking around with deliberation.* "Very funny, you lot. Make yourselves a brief moment of pure advantage, and a set of places to hide from dear old me. I think I did a good job raising you all. Good-for-nothings became somethings, or something like that."

Kayano: *Hides behind a crumpled wooden box, the closest to Takaoka.* *Ugh, shut up already!*

Karma: *Don't worry; I intend to.* *Rolls over to the next cover spot.*

Takaoka: *Looks back, exactly where Karma was. In a singsongy voice.* "What was that?"

Karma: *Eep...*

Nagisa: *Threw a broken slab of the ground over to behind another piece of cover that Takaoka's view is opposite of.*

Takaoka: *Looks behind him again.* "Ohoh?"

Karma: *Now!* *Springs out of cover and rushes Takaoka.*

Takaoka: "Really?" *Launches a back kick to the face towards Karma's direction... But it never makes contact with any solid object.* "!?"

Karma: *Stops dead in his tracks a few feet away, so that he didn't even have to dodge the attack.*

Nagisa: *Pops out from behind a fallen locker, throwing another chipped piece at Takaoka, stunning him for a double-team attack; Nagisa dives towards the Special Forces trainer throwing his right knee up, while Karma sprints on the ground, extending his arm into a clothesline. They attack Takaoka's head simultaneously, sandwiching it with maximum impact.*

Takaoka: "Shit!" *Rubs his head again.*

Nagisa: *In a last-ditch effort while Takaoka remains gazing at the other two, Nagisa books it to him, going for a powerful prod poke to Takaoka's chest on Kayano's behalf.* "!!"

Takaoka: "Too slow!" *Holding his recently-acquired prod backwards, he propels it behind him, and with his superior reach, it hits Nagisa's exposed ribcage, freezing him in position.*
Nagisa: *Notably shivers and stutters with his voice, unable to move.* Ud oh.

Takaoka: *Turns around and stabs Nagisa in the chest with his MTech knife. It lodges into Nagisa probably three inches in; more than enough distance to pierce a vital organ.*

Nagisa: "Urgh..." *Dropping his rod, he slowly falls to his knees before slumping over. His last thought was how his current situation mirrored the fateful battle he and Former Class 3-E witnessed...*

Koro-sensei: *While battling a Tentacles-enhanced Kayano, he purposefully allows her to strike him right on the chest, allowing someone from the student body to distract her while she is focused on reveling in her "victory..."

Karma/Kayano: *Wielding their stun-rods still, they take the opportunity to attack Takaoka (remembering how Nagisa was the one who did something similar four years ago). This time, they actually make contact with his flesh, ramming the tasers into his back.*

Takaoka: *His own voice stutters for a little bit and his muscles stiffen, but otherwise he remains fine.* "Too bad, you two..."

Karma: What? Is his psychotic state...!?*

Takaoka: "I'm not. About. To let some cheap tricks. GET IN THE WAY OF GETTING EVEN!" *Violently swings his elbow back. The most pointed part of the joint clocks Kayano in the cheek, knocking her out and sending her backwards.*

Karma: *Looks behind.* Kayano-san!

Takaoka: "Down goes you too!" *Backfists Karma aside. He then slowly walks over to the fallen, supine Kayano. If I have to put an end to you two before him, then so be it." *Cracks his knuckles before feeling the tip of his knife again, still going towards her. When he's close enough, he raises the weapon up high.* "Goodbye, Kayano." *But before he brings it down, his body freezes too - not by a stun gun, mind you.*

Nagisa: *Struggling to stand with the knife still in him, he manages to pull off his first, perfect God of Death Clap Stun Technique, having predicted that Takaoka's consciousness wavelengths would peak at some point after he had successfully "killed" him. When it does, a Neko-damashi would severely sever the link between mind and body, leaving them paralyzed for some time. With his job fulfilled, he falls over one more time.*

Takaoka: "Why... Why can't I act!? Ah!" *His eyes being the only thing that can move, and he sees Karma standing.*

Karma: *With a pained sprint, Karma winds up a powerful bicycle kick that smashes into the side of Takaoka's head, putting him down for good.* "RAAAH~!!"

Kayano: "HAAH!" *Revealing herself to be only half-reeled (again, much like in the past against the 2nd God of Death), she pops out of her crumpled state, spinning in the air to give a powerful spinning hook kick to the other side of Takaoka's head. Another pincer attack that, without his insanity-enhanced psychological state, spells his subjugation.*

-OST ends.-
Takaoka, still very much feeling the combination attack by Karma and Kayano, is laid out face-up on the ground now far from the trio of student-assassins. The two who dealt the final blow inch towards him slowly, still brandishing both of their weapons with tight, clenched hands.

Kayano: "He's down for good this time, right, Karma-kun?"

Karma: *Looks over so that he could see Takaoka's slumped-back face without having to get any closer.* "He certainly looks it. Honestly, I can't tell if we just violated the no-kill policy or not..."

Kayano: *Sighs with relief, holding her chest.* "He's been without a stable mind for quite some time, and that unstable one seems to have kept him up for months. I think we're actually doing him a favor of making him rest like that..."

Karma: "Aw..." *Puts away his melee weapons.* "Maybe we should wake him up again, and make him stare into Nagisa's smile one more time, traumatize him anew.-" *Mind flickers.*

Kayano/Karma: *Kayano instantly realizes it as well and they both look back to see Nagisa, still fallen supine, and the MTech knife still protruding from his chest.* "NAGISA!!"

Nagisa: "..." *His head was turned back away from the two of them until they went up and propped him back to a supported sit-up position. His groaning as a direct result of the involuntary movement was welcoming to the two colleagues.*

Kayano: "Nagisa-kun! Does it hurt a lot?"

Nagisa: "H-honestly..." *Grunts.* "I feel numb."

Kayano/Karma: *Beat.* "What?"

Nagisa: "Yeah... I mean... Takaoka's other hits on me must have suppressed how I feel for this thing in me."

Kayano: *Gasp.* "Could that be because you're actually dying?"

Karma: *Pats Nagisa's chest.* "Nonsense; not enough blood."

Kayano: "Then..." *While Karma holds Nagisa down, Kayano carefully takes out the knife... Some more blood did sprout out, but it is revealed that the KAM AtTac Suit had dented most of the blow, only allowing the tip to go in seven centimeters into Nagisa's skin; a little less than half the distance necessary to pierce his heart.* "Wow..."

Nagisa: *Looks at the blood spot.* "H-how?"

Karma: "The armors... The chemically-enhanced carbon fibers expand internally when sections are compromised. They stretched out without Takaoka even realizing it..."

Kayano: "That's incredible."

Nagisa: "Uh... Guys?"
Karma/Kayano: "OH! YOU'RE BLEEDING!" *Karma takes his gloves' Shock-Pads, using up their energy to make his gloves very hot. He then jabs his thumb into Nagisa's chest wound. Kayano's hand covered Nagisa's mouth so that he didn't yell out in pain as the wound cauterized.* "Well, there we are. Feel better, Nagisa?"

Nagisa: "Maybe... A little. Can't really move, though."

Karma: "Pussy. Teddy Roosevelt made a speech with that kind of injury." *Throws Nagisa's close arm over him and lifts the blue-haired assassin up.* "Come on; let's get out of here."

Kayano: "Let's just hope the rest of our friends have seen as much fortune as we have..."

-They all hear a sudden crash.-

Nagisa/Karma/Kayano: "!!?"
The Neo-Wolfpack was trounced by the AssUniv team led by Naoko and Irina, and Takaoka was subjugated by Nagisa, Karma, and Kayano. All that remains now was Craig... But if any pair can put him down for the count in a straight-up brawl, it would surely be Kato and Karasuma.

Craig cracks his knuckles with silent joy while Kato and Karasuma stretch a separate set of muscles on their arms, before all three get into deep fighting stances and charge at the other with fury.

Kato: *Stretching his shoulder with an opposite turn.* "You're not taking off your glasses?"

Craig: *Pounds his right fist.* "I like to not show my ace so quickly."

Karasuma: *Rounding out his upper body with a pendulum lateral flexion.* "The last time you did that, you got put down."

Craig: "Ah, but I'm not underestimating you two. I barely know you, and I don't know you at all either. That's unlike last time."

Kato: *Finishes his stretch and taps Karasuma's tricep.* "Merc has a point."

Karasuma: "...

Craig: "Alright... Let's make this a fun one." *Pops his neck with a good tilt. Then, he gets into a mid-guarding stance, with his far arm close to his solar plexus, while his attacking arm holds out a palm to his opponents.*

Kato: *Rolls his neck instead, before activating his yellow-aura "God Hand" style, throwing a stray straight punch before taking up a high kickboxing stance.* "Like I said," *Checks his watch.* "Earlier... Bring it. Right, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: "Hmph." *Both hands form a fist and are guided towards his chest, forming a guarded SF CQC stance.*

-After they meditate for a little time, accumulating their strength, both forces charge at each other. Both Kato and Karasuma manifest their enhanced ballistic shields and rush at the host of the beast, leaf-points directed at his throat.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku Kiwami's OST "Flirt With Bomb" plays.-

唐津忠臣と加藤和彦VSクレイグ・ホー
Tadaomi Karasuma; Japan Air Self-Defense Forces Chief of Staff
and Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family
VS
Craig Houjou; Leading Commander of the Neo-Wolfpack

Just when they both meet, Craig raises up his opened hands to grip both sharpened edges of Kato and Karasuma's shields. He tosses aside Kato's, before redirecting Karasuma's so that it swipes toward Kato's head. The latter manages to limbo underneath the attack, while the hyperextended Karasuma gets front kicked aside, and the leg travels to roundhouse Kato in the head. He just manages to place his shield underneath him so that it blocks most of the impact, transferring it mostly to his return to an erect stance.

While briefly on his own, Kato takes the lead on Craig, throwing a high-angle right overhead punch, which the latter avoids by jolting to the left. Kato ignores his own recovery time to throw another attack; a "B-Boy" style-triggering cross-shoulder scorpion kick with his left, aimed at Craig's head. The Divine Soldier succeeds in blocking the strike, but the recoil impact allows Kato to bounce back into a split kick that Craig picks his foot up to avoid. Craig finds his moment to attack back, with a swift roundhouse kick to the Yakuza's lowered face. Kato ducks this by falling onto his side, letting his enemy's foot fly over him, and then windmills in his fallen position to regain the flurry. What he did not expect, however, was Craig being able to block one critical kick in the pattern, stopping Kato in an involuntary baby freeze pose, and allowing him to side kick Kato, sending him rolling and sliding along the ground.

Karasuma hops over Kato as he progresses toward the mercenary, flying towards him with a right snap kick that Craig slaps down with his left palm. As Karasuma returns wholly to the floor, Craig throws a right knee into Karasuma's midsection. Karasuma catches it in a pincer between his left elbow and a right knee of his own, stopping it dead. He then pushes the attack aside with his free hand, giving inverse momentum to a fierce right cross punch to the face. Craig takes a blocking left hand of his own, putting it open right in front of his nose to catch the attack. Then, in a swift motion, Craig pivots his wrist clockwise, forcing Karasuma's shoulder in a bad position that also makes him bow. Craig intends to use this hazardous position to throw a lifting snap kick to his face. Karasuma gets his left arm, fitted with the ballistic shield, to defend, merely rolling over the stopped limb to nullify the pressure and break the shoulderlock.

Karasuma returns to his feet right next to Kato, who briefly look at each other, and then rush Craig simultaneously; Kato again takes the lead in front of Karasuma to form an attack line directed towards the Divine Soldier. Craig begins with a right roundhouse kick large enough to take down both of them, but Kato, now back in "God Hand" style, defends with a pivot right hook, landing on Craig's thigh and ricocheting the collision. Karasuma exploits the recovery time to throw a successful cobra punch over Kato. Craig tries to return the favor with a powerful left hook to knock Kato away; the latter pushes it aside with a pointed elbow-block that numbs the former's
wrist, followed swiftly by Karasuma's leapfrog-assist spinning hook. Kato delivers a similar one when Craig tries a right haymaker; Kato's curved right boot pushes it on its way too fast to cause any damage, and exposes his back; perfect for Karasuma to rush in with a front kick to Craig's small.

Kato, "B-Boy" once more, charges toward the reeling Craig, who barely shows signs of being truly damaged. Craig sees it coming and tries a side kick to Kato's face; the latter baseball slides underneath the blow. Kato swiftly redirects and somersault dropkicks Craig's nearby knee, forcing him to crouch. Kato spins around so that he is horizontal to him, and then throws a right backfist to his chest. Craig manages to block this, but this was a feint strike to allow his left foot to be placed where the former's mouth is. Karasuma runs in with a sliding roundhouse kick that hammers Craig's head into the wedge that is Kato, sandwiching it.

Just as soon as Craig hits the ground supine, he back handsprings back onto his feet. Kato also rises up as well and, switching to "Tumbler" style, Kato pulls back from Craig's overhead chop and spinning roundhouse, before Kato lifts himself up onto Craig's left shoulder, and locking his legs underneath the latter's right armpit - a modified triangular headscissor. Kato then throws his weight forward, throwing Craig down onto the ground supine, which Kato translates into a Fujiwara arnbar on Craig's left. Karasuma prevents Craig from getting up by repeatedly kicking Craig's shins just as he using them for leverage. Craig eventually sees it coming again, and drop toe-holds Karasuma onto his face, while rolling backwards to reverse Kato's pressure on the hold; the latter sprawls away before Craig punches the ground where he was, making a crack in the concrete.

Kato backs himself away towards the arena's back doors, where Craig follows him and attempts a flying knee. Kato sidesteps the attack, forcing the Divine Soldier through the exit. Kato and Karasuma come to investigate, finding that it leads to the narrow metal scaffolding of the vehicular depot one level below. Karasuma ends up getting too close to the threshold, and Craig, now without one of the lens in his glasses, pulls him past, using the surprise to launch him into the metal bars. Craig then tries to slam the blast door into Kato, but the latter backs away at the very last second, then kicking it open again so that Craig can no longer surprise him. When Craig tries a left straight to hit Kato's right cheekbone, Kato bobs backwards again and takes his arm to pull him across, leaving him on the other side of a recovering Karasuma and himself. Criminal and Cop realize they cannot use their left and right arms if they are completely parallel, so Kato again takes the lead.

Kato switches to "B-Boy" and whips his ballistic shield to deflect a right straight punch by Craig. With his right side exposed, Kato performed a right foot jumping rolling savate kick to Craig's chest. Karasuma ducks under the high leap to be in charge, rising back to a regular standing position with a right uppercut that makes its mark. Karasuma then blocks with his shield Keysi style and then clinches the back of Craig's head, pulling it in for a big knee to the nose. Craig is barely fazed by the venture and clutches Karasuma's head too; this time throwing it onto the metal fence, making Karasuma bleed on his right temple. Karasuma leans on the left-side wall in a very acute arc, giving Kato little walk room to advance on Craig. But that doesn't matter for him as he leaps in between the middle and top bars of the railing and using its leverage for a powerful, nigh-impossible to block overhead kick from the awkward position.

As Kato settles back down, he sees Craig trying to chop his peeked head off with an axe kick. Kato rolls his torso along the middle bar to allow his foot to only hit the metal grid below. Craig tries to follow up with a sliding knee smash to the side of the head, but then Kato rolls onto his stomach and pulls his head out of the way; he was now completely on the other side of the scaffold. Craig tries to knock him off with a right hook across the top bar to hit Kato's chest, but Kato drops down and slides himself back onto the grid with the middle and lower bars, between
Craig's legs. Kato lifts up his right leg to snap kick Craig's back, which he intends to return with a large stomp. Kato holds his shield in an incline so that the boot slides across it and hits the ground instead of his face, and then he smashes his right elbow into Craig's left shin. Had enough of these antics, Craig outright mounts Kato and tries applying a cross-shoulder collar choke, but Kato is able to resist the submission until Karasuma recovers and backfists the side of Craig's head, knocking him off of the Criminal.

As Craig and Kato both get back up, Kato sprints again towards the Ultimate Predator. He avoids all attacks with a two-step wall-run, leading into a cartwheel blade kick with his left, that grazes Craig's left clavicle. Craig tries chopping him down with a low heel sweep kick that makes its way even past the railing, but Kato jumps onto the top bar to avoid it; Karasuma slides back to avoid the strike too. Craig then hammer fists towards Kato crouched on the narrow platform, but all he meets is the bar he was just on, which bends into a V from the impact; Kato had backflipped and landed back on his right-side wall. Kato somersaults off onto his two feet on the grid when Craig continues with an unaided Mule kick to that same spot on the wall, and then Kato shield-bashes him into the railing. Kato then dives through the middle and top bar while grabbing across Craig's right thigh, driving into the metal and causing further damage, while Kato regrips the top to stay on the platform, that he vaults over to return to safety. Craig limps off his leaning position.

Kato briefly reverts to his "Tumbler" style to try for a suspended triangular choke, diving in to lock his legs in a hurricanrana around Craig's neck and on top of his shoulders. Craig rejects this, and brutally powerbombs Kato onto the grid. Karasuma vaults around Kato's supine position, ducks under Craig's left haymaker, and then tackles Craig's left shin in a chop block. Karasuma subsequently moves back up to an erect position, and locking the attacked leg in a standing ankle lock. Craig grunts in pain for a second, before attempting to get up to one leg. Kato sees Craig prepare for a countermeasure, so he charges in and again attempts a standing chokehold, only instead of locking his legs around his head, Kato throws his left across his shoulders, cupping the back of his knee on his windpipe, tucking his left boot on his right knee, then using his arms to hug behind Craig's head, and then he straightens his body - a modified Koji clutch. Craig maintains his stance despite the excessive weight on one side, and even side kicks Karasuma aside, stomping his twisted foot to regain circulation. With Kato still wrenching the hold, the Divine Soldier whips him twice into the wall to break the hold.

Craig dive punches into a mount on Kato and proceeds to pummel him. Kato, again, is able to resist the attacks long enough for Karasuma to intervene, slamming a double axe handle strike onto the upper back of Craig, and then laying him with his back on the railing. Craig headbutts Karasuma's chest to push him aside onto another part of the rails, but by then Kato is on his feet, returning to "God Hand" style and throws a wild right elbow smash to his face. Craig rebounds with a right hook, but Kato moves with it and throws a right turning reverse elbow that clocks the former's temple. Kato turns back around and launches a left backfist, followed immediately by a right overhead, and then a right backhand punch, and a high left roundhouse in tandem. With Craig reeling, Kato sees his chance and clotheslines him over the top, taking them both off the metal platform.

Craig manages to catch the low bar to prevent a hard twelve-foot drop. Kato does the same, only instead hanging onto Craig's left leg. The former realizes this, especially after the Criminal begins clubbing at Craig's back. Craig attempts a little retaliation, but it is expunged when Karasuma begins attacking his hands. After one too many stomps, Craig is forced to let go, and the two hit the ground; The Divine Soldier makes a rolling landing to make some distance from Kato.

Karasuma drops down from the scaffolding to meet Kato, who rises up from his three-point stance. Craig does similarly, and they both look at eachother with pure antagonism. They all seem
to nod to the same thing, as they all reach into their respective pockets/holsters, and pull out weapons to vary the scenario; for Kato (now in "Trickster" style) and Karasuma, they were 21" telescopic steel batons, and for Craig, a foldout Strider F34 knife. The three circle around for a little bit, before Kato and Karasuma advance. Craig deflects Kato's premier overhead whack before pushing aside Karasuma's horizontal swipe. Craig throws his knife all around at neck level, prompting the closer Kato to put his baton vertically close to him to block it; Karasuma backs away to avoid all impact. Craig then kicks Kato away and focuses on Karasuma; he begins with a diagonal upwards forehand slash that the latter sidesteps. Craig then refocuses the momentum and delivers a fencing-style lunge that Karasuma pulls back from. Craig then lets go of the blade, letting it flip in the air for a time, breaking the pattern, and then resuming with a catch backhand horizontal slash that Karasuma ducks.

Craig sees Kato coming from behind him, which prompts him to turn around, throwing a back kick that Karasuma blocks, sending him back a league. He then blocks diagonally an uppercut-like attack with Kato's baton, which Kato uses to turn around the other way and attack with a horizontal backhand bash. Craig turns his knife from under the metal stick over, letting Kato's cudgel to travel back to Craig's left. He then swipes a forehand hack that Kato bows under. Craig lowers his right hand and throws a backhanded uppercut slice that Kato back handsprings to avoid. When Kato returns to his feet, Craig comes back at him with a diving overhead slash that the former parries sideways, narrowly avoiding an involuntary brain surgery. Craig quickly recovers from the rebound and goes for twisting lunge; a special attack whose obtuse, adjustable trajectory makes it nigh-impossible to perfectly defend against. This is because it relies solely on such a brief observation time that most won't have the opportunity for - doubly so if they don't know it's coming. But Kato channels his twentyfold processing to be the first, and he sees where the knife will try to stick; he stacks his baton right at that point, and as Fate would have it, Craig ends up hitting the tip of the bludgeon instead. The resulting impact sends the two away from each other.

Craig pulls back from a flanking slash by Karasuma, and Kato soon joins the latter. Craig manages to dodge and parry all of their combined pummel, and then some, kicking at the shin of Karasuma, tripping him down so that he makes the situation easier to handle. Kato keeps the pressure on the Divine Soldier, even managing a clean, cross grip-slam to the temple of Craig's head, but the Ultimate Predator manages to disarm Kato in the succeeding interval, and headbutting him to the ground. Kato is saved from a swift stab by Karasuma kicking Craig's wrist back up just in time, while smacking his baton on Craig's cranium as it goes back up. Craig turns to him to continue the epic clash. Karasuma too, however, is eventually pulled away from his own weapon; during one exchange that locks both of their forearms together, and one blocks the other's weapon by the wrists, Craig drops his knife underneath the exchange, wresting his free arm away and cutting Karasuma's armed wrist. This makes him let go, and stuns him for a precious few seconds.

Craig swings high, trying a wild slash that will cut past Karasuma's eyes. Kato, returning to "Tumbler" style, gets back in time, getting in front of his legal partner, and redirecting the attack in an attempt to flip the Divine Soldier. It fails, however, and Craig drops his knife again to have it meet with his lower arm. and then waving it through his lower torso. Kato miraculously saves himself from a bloody mess, backing his whole body away, but the tip still wades through his armor and cuts a portion of his waist. Craig tosses the wounded Kato over to the side, just as Karasuma finally manages to kick the knife out of his hands. They share a brief duel of punches and low kicks, including a short interval where both hit each other in the stomachs as powerfully as they can. Six hooks, seven hooks, eight, nine... Until the thirteenth haymaker makes the Cop keel down. Grinning at his brief victory, Craig has Karasuma hoisted up and pushed to lean on a nearby wall, as Kato, prone on the ground, watches in pain.-
Craig: "Let's see you get out of this!" *Laughs while getting into one of the nearby parked trucks, starting it up, and then putting into high gear, closing in on Karasuma, still leaning himself on the depot's concrete wall.*

Kato: *Recovers, getting to his feet, and makes a beeline towards Karasuma, who has pushed himself off the wall in an attempt to regain footing. He then dives into him, using his weight to move the Cop out of the way of the makeshift battering ram. When they conclude with a rolling land on the ground, the sides of Kato and Karasuma's face are millimeters away from the tires and skirts of the truck. Kato covers Karasuma from the frags of the nearby impact of Craig's truck onto the stone wall, utterly annihilating it.*

-OST temporarily stops.-

-Kato, on top of the saving situation, is the first to stand, clawing his way to his feet. He helps Karasuma up after him, and dust themselves off of the dust and rubble that went flying at them in the wake of the truck crash. When it all settled down, both faltered towards the carnage, able to witness the Divine Soldier, kicking the APC's door open, causing it to fall out. Both Cop and Criminal return to a ready stance, as Craig drops out of the machine. He looks straight at the two of them with complete antagonism... But that's not what they are intimidated by.-

Karasuma: *His glasses!*

Craig: *Is already aware that the only lens remaining on his spectacles are cracked beyond repair and comprehensive sight.* "Huh, I guess that's another way of letting the Beast out..." *He touches a bleeding spot on the back of his head.*

Kato: *Looks down at his AtTac Suit, and Karasuma's.* "Just when our armors have become merely encumbering..." *He then takes out his .50 caliber Forearm Gun from a side pocket, and then unzips the torso part off, along with his undershirt. Once again, his "Risen Samurai" irezumi sees the light... Of night. Karasuma follows suit, going bare as well.*

Craig: "Oh, is it commando time? Or is the gear very heavy?"

Kato: "Well, it is dead weight..." *Begins strapping the modified sleeve tech onto his left arm.*

Craig: "I see... Then let me strip as well!" *Takes off his broken lens, unleashing his Beast mode. He then literally rips his body armor off with two simple movements. Now, all three of them were exposed to the dangerous urban elements.*

Karasuma: *Is startled by the sudden spike of intensity in the room.* "I don't suppose you have something similar?"

Kato: *I do... I don't think I've earned its use yet, but we can't afford another moment to lose. *Closes his eyes, meditating on the foundations of all of his previous fighting styles - God Hand, B-Boy, Tumbler, and Trickster. Merging all styles' most effective moves, a new style has awakened, evident by him opening his eyes once more, with a resounding fury.* "Haah!" *Gets into an Arnis ready stance, complete with a new black-on-green blazing aura, before settling into the Serada guard stance.*

Craig: *Notices the "transformation" and smiles at the new challenge.*

Karasuma: "What do you call this?" *Gets back into his CQC back-leaning stance.*
Kato: "Resurrection. It only happens once an Eon." *To Craig.* "Time to finish this."

Craig: "I couldn't agree more." *Gets into a modified Krav Maga fighting stance, with his claws for hands now a little lower and further from his body. His legs are also spread out more, showing his lack of reliance on pure footwork from here on out.*

-When the three find themselves mutually ready to continue the struggle, they all run right at each other once more. This time, Craig lifts a foot for Kato to run into. The latter slips underneath it before swiftly returning to his feet and cheat-540 kicks at Craig, while Karasuma attempts a Cobra punch from the other side. Craig holds up his arms into a double Keysi guard to block both with a combined trembling impact. Their auras, with Kato manifesting a two-tone samurai, Karasuma a hunting animal, and Craig a legendary game creature, envelop them and their surroundings.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST "Two Dragons" plays.-

唐津忠臣と加藤和彦VSクレイグ・ホージジャー

Tadaomi "Straight-Lace" Karasuma and "The Kazmanian Devil" Kazuhiko Kato

VS

"The Divine Soldier" Craig Houjou

-Both members of the AssUniv side bounce off of the Divine Soldier post-impact, returning to the vehicle depot and keeping their sole target in a pincer attack. Kato tries a right straight on Craig, who puts up a Keysi block. But Kato is deceptively faster in this ultimate attack mode; he feints the attack in a blur, moving out of it and launching instead a left uppercut, going right around the tricep block and clocking Craig's chin. With him briefly compromised, Karasuma gets in a clean roundhouse kick to the back of his head, planting the Divine Soldier. Kato attempts a reverse full mount to maintain control of the pace, but Craig quickly escapes and trips him up, while keeping the former in the way of an advancing Karasuma. Kato then does a headspin kick to make some distance himself. Karasuma dives over the turbine maneuver, clotheslining Craig on the way down. The former rolls forward and confronts Craig as they both stand up, which serves merely as a distraction for Kato to sweep up behind, traveling all around Craig's body in a tilt-a-whirl headscissor, before driving his head into the ground with his legs, and applies an inverse gogoplata. Karasuma prevents him from moving for a bit with a grapevine leglock. This works for some time, but then Craig begins kicking Karasuma with his free leg, breaking out of that submission, before rolling backwards to nullify the pressure of Kato's hold. Kato handsprings back up, hitting Craig with a kip-up kick, and takes him down a peg with a heel sweep to ankle, followed swiftly by a basement dropkick to the shin. With Craig bent over, Kato rolls over him for a rear-naked choke, but the former overpowers the hold. Agitated, Kato instead opts to 12-6 elbow smash Craig's clavicles, before he is arrow-tossed over. A good lift-up snap kick that Craig deters keeps him from
being mounted another time.

Karasuma again chop-blocks Craig's leg from under him, and as he sits, Karasuma throws a massive punt kick to his chest and face. Craig falls over the other way to avoid the attack and then curls his arm around Karasuma's far leg and throws him into the ground in a schoolboy roll-up. As Karasuma rolls backwards from the trip technique, Craig springs back to his feet and throws a brutal thrust kick to Karasuma's chin; the impact makes him hit the nearby wall dividing depot and corridor. Craig sees Kato try and jump him again, and counters by throwing him into Karasuma. And then, with a head full of ox steam...-

-OST pauses.-

-Naoko, Irina, and the bulk of AssUniv's student-assassins traverse, and eventually rendezvous with Nagisa, Karma, and Kayano at one of the fortress' many intersections for their hallways.-

Naoko: "Ah! There's Nagisa-kun and the others!"

Karma: "Naoko-san." *Pulls Nagisa in the general direction. When Sugino and Maehara take the lead to help Nagisa, Karma releases his hold of him. Naoko is quick to go after him.* "He-hey, I'm wounded."

Naoko: "That makes two of us. You really let Takaoka do that to you?"

Kayano: "He got stronger..."

Mimura: "Well, shit. That's the last thing we need."

Irina: "But both sides of us are alive, so I presume we both won. That's a good streak we got going. Now, we can only hope Karasuma and Kato can make a perfec-"

-The three all slam right through a section of the wall nearby them.-

AssUniv: "WHOA!!" *Watch in awe as the three most destructive humans they have ever known literally throw each other into the walls like ragdolls, and drive them into the ground. Eventually, Craig front dropkicks both Kato and Karasuma into the nearby blast door (which leads to the outside third-level outlook overlooking the North side). With them leaning there in an attempt to recover, the Divine Soldier psychs himself up to charge them through the structure, powerful enough to break the hinges.*

Kato/Karasuma: *See the mercenary coming, and both pop out of their position so that they can duck under Craig's arms. Their opponent ends up running into them, but that's just what they want, as they hook their close arms across the adjacent leg, and then jab their own shoulders into Craig's torso. With the right position set, both Super Criminal and Cop stand up straight, lifting Craig briefly into the air across their backs, and then fall behind; the end result being the Divine Soldier as the first to make contact through the doors. And likewise, it did make them crash right through the barricade, breaking it and flying out to the fenced deck. Everyone is reeling from the impact.*

AssUniv: "WHAT!?" *Everyone is absolutely aghast by the apocalyptic display and consequence. When they felt ready enough, they decided to look from around the corner. All three men are still on the ground, writhing for a second.*

Naoko: *When she sees her older brother-in-law clutch his forehead as he laid supine, she too
started feeling a similar pain.* "You were right, Irina-sensei. This I definitely wasn't ready for."

Karma: "I don't think anybody is. Maybe even them."

Irina: *Is too busy holding her mouth at the horror of seeing Karasuma so hurt.*

Nagisa: *Manages to walk into view on his own, despite Kayano's worry.* "I think I've been left easy..."

Yada: *She is also mortifyingly covering her mouth.* Sensei! Kato-kun!

Kato: *After a few heavy breaths, his eyes open wide, and then he rolls into a three-point stance, gazing at Craig with a samurai's killing intent.*

Craig: *Shares an equally sadistic gaze, in the form akin to a legendary hunting animal.*

Karasuma: Looks like we're beyond words now. *Rises to his feet and refocuses. The two of them do the same.*

-OST continues.-

-Kato takes charge once more. Craig tries to put him down with a right overhead roundhouse kick, that which Kato runs low under to avoid. Karasuma lets the attack flow and pushes it further to his side, leaving the Divine Soldier off-guard for a left hook to his right cheekbone. The punch pushes him closer to a low 720 kick to his stomach, landed by Kato.-

Kato: I'm finishing this here! *He and Karasuma begin setting up a situation in which Kato can utilize a point-blank Forearm Gun shot on Craig.*

-Karasuma keeps Craig busy with a series of boxing intervals, where Kato stalks multiple areas around and behind Craig to psyche him out. Kato never gets too close to be caught in a strike of his own, but close enough for Craig to acknowledge its danger and being forced to break view of the threat in front of him. Thus, with the psychological and physical damage piling up and softening the Ultimate Predator, Karasuma leads the combat-assassination with this first phase; a rose, flying towards the recently punched Craig, as a distraction.-

Karasuma: I was saving that for Irina... You better have made this worth it, Kato!

-Kato then runs right in, ready to execute phase two; no, not the gunshot itself, but a neko-damashi of his own! the soundwave attack hits the soft-entry point of the ears due to its very low generation point, maximizing first-level effect. Kato then rises back up to his feet and spins around, throwing out his right hand.-

Kato: This ends now! *Aims his Forearm gun, with the white loop of the activation string flying onto his ring finger and readying to pull back to unleash the lethal payload. But he then sees something, and it forces him to break aim and pull his arm back; it was a chance series of claw attacks by Craig. It only just manages to hit Kato's inner wrist, forcing him to retreat back. When he looks back on it, the string has been severed, and the barrel was slit - all because of the Divine Soldier's nails!* Damnit... *Puts the sidearm back behind him.*

Karasuma: "Well, that was a waste."
They resume; Craig continues in a much more beastly manner, manifesting a more feral move-set, including rabid bandicoot-like kicks and tiger-esque claw swipes. One of each of these manages to make its own mark on Kato and Karasuma during their respective exchanges; for Kato, a five-way trail along his chest spreading roughly two and a half inches (though not as critical as his prior waist injury), and for Karasuma, a suspended side kick to the shoulder, briefly putting it out of place. While Karasuma operates the wound with a Ministry technique, Kato battles through both his fresh wound, and outpaces a punching duel with a backhand elbow strike. Craig turns with the impact of the blow and throws a crane kick that pushes Kato back; he is kept from falling by Karasuma, with his bad arm, repaired.

Kato fails a spinning hook kick when Craig stomps on his standing leg's inner knee, putting him briefly down. Karasuma resumes the action with a sliding body blow on the Divine Soldier, followed by a backfist. Craig ducks under the latter blow and Dempsey rolls for a surprising uppercut that takes Karasuma down. Kato restlessly gets back up, avoiding Craig's lariat, floating over his back, and then locking an inverse grapevine on Craig's torso, while wrenching a Kimura lock on Craig's left arm, attempting to break it. Kato gives an elbow check to the Ultimate Predator's cranium occasionally to prevent countermeasures, while Karasuma eventually recovers and lay out some strikes to Craig's back. Craig turns around, whipping Kato into Karasuma and then kicking in an acute arc to trip the latter, while spinning back around for a spinebuster. Craig gets back up nearby, only for Karasuma to pul his shins up and lock them under his arms. He then spins around himself, initiating a reverse giant swing. As Craig revolves around and round, Kato runs in and performs a low flying knee that smashes right into the side of Craig's head as he's being released. The collision was so whiplashed and audible that even AssUniv, hanging back, winced and pulled away.

But Craig's still going! He gets on all fours, ready for more. Kato, having opened up his waist wound even more from the all-out flying strike, is still on his knees, covering it. Therefore, Karasuma is there to give Craig some more concussive force, in a flying knee of his own. This one goes straight to Craig's chest, and sends him towards the railing overlooking the cliffside section of the fortress. Craig stops himself from fully hitting the metal, but then Karasuma feints an open-palm strike that practically summons Kato, who bearhugs him while twisting behind, using his self-detrimental momentum to propel the Divine Soldier even further to the edge; this motion drives Craig's head right into the top of the bars, causing a ringing noise like a smack of a cathedral bell.

With Craig now all on the fences, an equally exhausted Kato and Karasuma nod in agreement, knowing they intend to keep him there. In a very quick, compounded interval, Kato starts this by flying with a leverage-assisted right hook straight to the Divine Soldier's face. It makes its mark, but Craig is barely fazed, returning a hook of his won to push Kato further to his left. Karasuma, still on Craig's right, throws a midsection roundhouse kick, preventing him from leaving the edge. Craig twisting-thrust kicked Karasuma away, but Kato is quick to return with a right straight that softens his left cheek. He is immediately repelled again with a front kick to his waist. Karasuma recovers in time for a pushing shoulder thrust, driving Craig's spine back onto the metal barricade. Craig briefly counters with a 12-6 elbow onto the back of Karasuma's head. Kato skipping side kicks Craig's chest after Karasuma staggers away. Craig backhands Kato so that he once again leans on the fence. Karasuma violently wiped his forearm along the mercenary's cheekbone, which Craig counters with a whipped headbutt. Craig's head gets no break from Kato though, who uses the leverage of the fence to throw a gliding roundhouse kick. When he gets back down, Craig left blade kicks Kato's right shin, putting him onto one knee. But Karasuma finally ends the back-and-forth with a stomp onto the Divine Soldier's compromised knee, disabling it.
Karasuma helps Kato up as Craig helps himself using the railing. Both Criminal and Cop then grip both shoulders of the Ultimate Predator, then pinches hard; digging into his flesh. They then pull in the same direction with their opposite, weak arms, so that Craig passed by Karasuma's right and Kato's left.-

Kato/Karasuma: "This is it!" *They wind up two punches towards the stunned Craig, which both make their mark with enough combined impact that sends the Divine Soldier flying across the outlook.*

Craig: "Euuuugh..." *His upper body still didn't know when to quit until it all temporarily shuts down, having his body fully collapse into a rested supine position on the concrete.*

-OST ends.-

-Kato and Karasuma, with the battle officially over, both begin keeling over from the pain of the climactic conflict. Kato takes one knee, gripping his chest wounds in pain, while Karasuma keeps one knee while clutching his severe rib injuries... Which are only marginally superior to the extreme headaches they have.-

AssUniv/Irina: *Cannot even cheer the victory due to the situation.* "Karasuma-sensei!/Kato-kun!/Karasuma-sama!" *All of them gather around their scarred mentors. Irina, Naoko, and Kurahashi are quick to tend to their relative (and former love interest), while Yada, Maehara, and Isogai manage their peer.*

Irina: *Studies her bloody husband with extreme preoccupation.* "Karasuma-sama, are you bleeding internally!? Let me look at your eyes! Any bad nerve damage!?"

Karasuma: *Has no power to stop his wife from moving his head and limbs with little consideration for his sore condition. As a result, he repeatedly gives wincing noises.* "Ah- Oh, Eh, Irina, that's- Ow, that's not helping!"

Maehara: "What about you, Kato-san?"

Kato: *Grunts.* "Well, let's see: uh, multiple multiple contusions all around, probably a mild concussion, hemorrhaging from orifices made and natural, a nasty chest laceration near the cardiac, as well as one near the left radius, and around my Iliac crest, paresthesia in my right hand, potentially a sprained right ankle, moderate chance of being infected by an STI due to Craig's own blood getting on my-"

Nakamura: "Okay, soldier; too much information."

Kato: *Nods weakly.* "Right, I'm sorry."

Yada: "Don't be; look at yourself."

Isogai: "Yeah. Come on, let's get you and Karasuma-sensei up." *He and Maehara help lift Kato onto his own two feet again, though Kato's right foot does levitate without the option of putting any pressure on it. Karasuma is similarly floated, with Naoko and Irina underneath both of his arms in a like manner.*

Craig: *While he's still lying down, he begins cracking up for no apparent reason.*
AssUniv: "!!" *All of them turn around; some of them immediately take out their knives and pistols out of instinct, while the others have their hands at the ready.*

Craig: *Begins sitting up.* "Ah, that was fun, ladies and gents."

Okano: "You want some more?"

Craig: *Happily sighs.* "Oh, I would. But it's clear I've lost this one, and I know when to fold them." *Reaches into a side pocket, revealing a hard glasses case that gives him a brand-new pair that he puts on."

Terasaka: *Is reluctant to re-holster his equipment.* "Then why are you laughing?"

Craig: "Because now me and my boys are free. You got to give your all, and so did we. That's all what we really wanted." *Points at the box held by Kimura.* "Not that thing, for sure."

Kayano: "Huh... Well, I guess it was worth it for you, then."

Craig: *Nods.* "It certainly was."

Sosuke: "What's with all the bloodlust you three just had then?"

Craig: "Heat of the moment. Also, how'd any of us know it'd end like this?"

Nagisa: "So, what are you going to do now?"

Craig: *Rises up to one knee.* "Honestly, I have no idea. We are still top-grade mercenaries, but there won't be many clients who would buy up our services after this little debacle..."

Kato: "Then why not join up with the Ministry?"

Craig: "Come again?"

AssUniv: *Beat.* "What?"

Karasuma: "Yes, I'm a little surprised by that too."

Kato: "There's no war on payment, you'll always have jobs lined up, and we can always call on you when we must. Basically, a third-party bureaucratic faction, like my Yakuza. What do you think? What do you say?"

Craig: "Why would you want my any my boys' help? Just a minute ago, all of us were trying to kill you lot."

Kato: *Grins.* "You guys certainly don't seem to hate us. Probably somewhere we can see, you harbor a sort of respect and admiration for us as worthy rivals and allies. If you can't beat them, join 'em. Or something like that, yeah?"

Craig: *Remembers the time he praised the students of AssClass for easily defeating him.* "Hm..."
Kato: "That, and we might need your help in finding out more about the Reclamation Society, since you've contacted them before, no doubt. Karasuma probably wants to know why you're three times stronger than him and me."

Karasuma: "..."

Kato: "And we could always have more training on open conflict in case any of us ever needs it."

Mimura: "Kato-san is never an assassin more than he is a soldier, is he?"

Nakamura: "Soldier? I thought he was a criminal." *Snickers.*

Craig: "When you put it like that... I think the Neo-Wolfpack can swallow their pride. Okay! Starting today, this Merc commander is now a government-sanctioned hit squad, answering directly to those guys!" *Points to Kato and Karasuma.*

Irina: "Short talk meaning he's on our side now. Nice." *Smiles along with the rest of AssUniv.*

Karma: *Does a triple-take in between Craig, Kato, and Karasuma.* "Anyone realizing that this, entirely dramatic, and yet, hopeful situation is undercut by the fact that none of the three big talkers in the conversation can stand?"

AssUniv/Craig: "..." *After a little bit, they all laugh at the remark.*

Yada: *Lifts Kimura's hand.* "But what matters most is that we now own this." *Motions to the cryogenic container housing the Tentacle DNA.*
Chapter Summary

Retrieval achieved! Main enemy kept down a peg! New, very strong ally gained!

Now let's celebrate! But only if everyone gets with the program...

If you haven't noticed by this point, there is a budding romance between Kato and Yada, and it has reached the noticing phase now. :J

-After the Divine Soldier's second defeat, Craig, now being offered a new position without fear of the future, whether representational or functional, went back deeper into the fortress to regather and appease his men. They were surprised with what their Commander had to say to them at first, but they warmed up to the idea with time. AssUniv seems to know that so long as they have a good open conflict for them, they can rely on the Wolves; they were more blood-knights than mercenaries, anyways.

Karasuma was keen to make his way with Nagisa, Kayano, and Karma back to where they last left Takaoka (still unconscious on the ground), to personally arrest him and place him in solitary confinement of the Ministry's detention center, but Irina noted his poor condition at the current moment and did it herself. Outside of the Neo-Wolfpack's sentinel, everyone watched as the armored bus took him away. This time, there would be no mistakes; this time, somehow, someway, they knew they wouldn't cross paths with him again.

At their mentor's request, all stray pieces of armor still identifiable and assessable were recovered. They don't know why they had to do that.

Finally, the student-assassins and mentors of AssUniv, having their victory confirmed by their recently enemy-turned-ally, walk out of the fortress with impunity. Heavily celebrated and euphoric impunity.-

Fuwa: *Charges up a gleeful jump into the air.* "Awrrwww yeah! That was totally wicked!"

Mimura: *Being the closest to her, he is heavily surprised by the sudden spring.* "Whoa! Calm down there, Fuwa-san."

Maehara: "Hey, let her have it. Let us have it, for that matter." *Reassures Mimura with a friendly pat on the shoulder.*

Okano: "Yeah; we just went through pretty much the zenith of our assassin careers right here!" *Dives onto Maehara's back.*

Terasaka: "And a pure victory at that; no tragedy, and no doubts in our minds."

Muramatsu: "Amen, man."

Nakamura: "And, no twists or swerves that derail everything we set to accomplish, and have
accomplished."

Kataoka: "Hey! Don't jinx us! We're not at the safety of our ride yet; there could still be something wrong with this."

-Everyone stands still for a moment, looking around with preoccupation in case some sort of Deus Ex Machina or something to happen.-

Nakamura: "AUGH!" *Drops down to one knee, clutching her chest in allegedly very serious pain.*

AssUniv: "Nakamura-san!"

Karasuma/Irina: *As the latter carries the former.* "!!"

Nakamura: *In a singsongy voice.* "Ohoh, I'm dying... Please help me..." *Laughs it off.* "The looks on all of your faces."

Terasaka: "Damn, you're a hardcore tease."

Kanzaki: "But we love you all the same, like the rest of us."

AssUniv: *Sigh with relief.*

Kato: "Tell me, my friends." *Still leaning on Isogai.* "Did the twists happen before I showed up," *Checks his watch.* "Half a decade later?"

Nagisa: *Also leaning on Karma, he begins remembering, along with the rest of his friends, of the times in which unforeseeable factors caused the emergence of the second God of Death (along with Irina's brief betrayal), as well as the requirement of Koro-sensei's death with a super weapon they never would believe Japan had.*

AssUniv: "Nah... Not at all."

Kato: "Okay; it's me then. I'm sorry."

Kimura: "Dude, are you sorry about this?" *Holds up Dr. Yanagisawa's surgically removed DNA.*

Kato: "..."

Yada: "Yeah, cheer up, Kato-kun. you're still undefeated in infiltration."

Naoko: "And you built one Hell of an Assault and Tactics suit."

Kato: "Yeah, well..."

Fuwa: "Man, I'm still so pumped right now!"

Sugino: "Join the club; we all are."

Ritsu: "I am certain for a fact that this club does not exist, or its site at least doesn't. But I would
be eager to join if it does."

Terasaka: *Looks over to the quiet Itona.* "You ecstatic, man?"

Itona: "Yes; I am too."

Kayano: "Yeah... So am I. I'm just so excited, that I could... I could...!" *Pulls Nagisa closer to her and straight-out kisses him.*

AssUniv: "!!?"

Nagisa: *Is subject to a thirty-hit combo and passes out.*

Kayano: *Realizes too late what she just did.* "OH!" *Releases Nagisa, who collapses forward, would've hit the ground were it not for Karma's supporting arm. His other arm, needless to say, was recording this event.* "Nagisa-kun, are you okay!?"

Nagisa: "Ehhhhh~..." *Unable to function on the ground.*

Karma: "Ah, that's going on the scrapbook." *Cherishes the clip.*

Naoko: "This one too." *As Karma turns around to notice the new situation, Naoko uses her agency arts to reposition Karma's hand in a way that it captures the moment; the moment that she kisses him square on the lips with zealous joy.*

Karma: *Nearly collapses too.* "Whew... That was something."

Okuda: "I disagree; that's a sight." *Points to the mature couple of AssUniv.*

Hayami/Chiba: *Are competing with the two previous couples, kissing behind all of their peers in a long, loving entwining.*

Sosuke: "That's a sight, but this is a masterpiece." *Looks aside, over to another couple.*

Okano/Maehara: *Okano is currently mounting the latter on the ground, and giving machine-gun kisses to him all over his upper body. He can barely handle it; it practically tickles him.* "OHMYGOD! OKANO-SAN, STOP IT! THE SENSES! I CAN'T HANDLE IT!"

Hazama: "Definitely a contender, that one. But *this* should take the cake." *Points to Okajima.*

Okajima: *Kissing straight to his phone. When he releases it, some of the student-assassins can notice the screen; he is having an intimate moment with the dialing screen to Rina Shiroyuki.* "There; I said it, girl."

Shiroyuki: *Voice only.* "Hehe, thanks. But what brought it up?"

Okajima: "Oh, just some, er, schoolwork I finally got through. I just needed to unwind."

Shiroyuki: 'Oh? Do you need me to visit your residence to make it a little easier?"

Okajima: "Oh that won't be necessary. Goodbye!" *Gives another, smaller smooch goodbye. He
then gives a small grin.*

Nakamura: "Damn, I really wish I got that moment." *Crosses her arms in frustration.*

Hara: "Well, there are others, like them..." *Refers to Sugino and Kanzaki, in which the former hovers rather closely to the latter, but pulls back at the last second when he senses he's in focus (Kanzaki doesn't think much of it)* "Then there's... That." *Kurahashi looking away after failing to get to Karasuma before Irina does.* "And... What the!?"

Yada: *Was equally filled with elation like the rest of them, she closed her eyes shut and up and kissed Kato. Without any warning, without any intent to get him at all (which was to say, not to get anyone for that matter)!*

Kato: *Currently has no strength to resist.* "!?"

AssUniv: *Everyone, including the couples still kissing each other, break off from their earlier observations to gaze at it.*

Yada: *Eventually realizes what's she's doing while slowly opening her eyes.* "!!"
*Immediately pulls herself away from Kato. Her face is one of utter astonishment, and she stutters while barely mustering small words.*

Kato: *Conversely, he is absolutely speechless.*

-An hour later... Everyone was on the bus ride back. Kato and Yada were on opposite ends of the bus; him in the back-left side, and Yada in the front-right, both facing and looking out their windows. The atmosphere of awkwardness within the elongated vehicle has spread to all in between them, who have elected not to speak in fear of making it even worse. It was just like it was, back after they had just trounced Shinsuke Shiohara. Of course, there's no possibility of bad blood like last time, however...-

-Finally, the bus arrives back at Kyoto's Hyatt Regency. All of the student-assassins unload from the transport like a swarm of eager children.-

Okano: "Ah, home sweet home!"

Mimura: "No place like it!"

Kataoka: "How shall we paint the night, everyone?"

Itona: "I do recall there being a pool; competition online against the Ritz-Carlton, I believe?"

Kurahashi: "Hey I remember that; there's also a hot spa right next to it!"

Terasaka: "That does sound very enjoyable, but at this hour, they're probably filled to the brim right now; we'd never get a moment to ourselves that we can just replenish."

Karma: "Oh we wouldn't, if not for..." *Turns around slowly to look at Kato, who owns the majority shares of the hotel.* "Hello, Endo-san. Yeah; the pool and spa; I'll be reserving that area for,”

Kato: *Rolls his eyes in a playful manner, before taking out his phone, and speed-dialing the manager of the hotel.* "Hello, Endo-san. Yeah; the pool and spa; I'll be reserving that area for,“
*Checks his watch.* "Tonight. Notify the people there that they're getting a free buffet of The Grill's World BBQ for the duration of operating hours. Don't worry, I'll pay the whole bill. Bye."

*Hangs up and bows to his peers.* "You got it."

Nakamura: "Connections, connections. Let's get ready, everybody!" *All of AssUniv head in through the front entrance to the elevators, getting back to their floor.*

Naoko: "Not going to lie; that's pretty awesome. Thanks, Kato-kun." *Leaves with her friends.*

Karasuma: *Stares at his students before they leave his sight.* "The crazy things you do for those kids."

Irina: "I only wish we had reason to spoil them that much."

Kato: "Hey, I'm doing what I can, when I can." *Turns around.* "But the best gift you can give right now far exceeds anything of mine."

Karasuma: "What's that?"

Kato: "A little something called 'closure.'"

Karasuma: *Knows what he means.*

Irina: *Intimately hugs her husband.* "You know you have to eventually."

Karasuma: "I know I do... Best get ready for it."

Irina: "Let me help you." *They both head inside.*

Kato: *Sighs for the last time as they depart, before opening up the side-hull of the bus.*

To get back to work, for however long the night will grant me...

-Meanwhile, some time later...-

-The elevators to the East side of the Hyatt Regency erupted open; out came swarms of young adults, storming the now vacant pool and spa areas.-

Kimura: *Sprinting to the deep end, nearly losing one of his sandals.* "First one in!"

Okano: "Too slow!" *Leapfrogs over Kimura, before performing a double somersault into the water, mere moments before he cannonballed.*

Kayano: "Hey hey! Don't forget about us!" *She, with most of the other student-assassins, jump in.*

Terasaka: *Feels his heel smash into the bottom of the enclosed body after jumping in. He quickly rises back up in response.* "Really? Eight feet is the deep end? This is discriminatory for six-foot guys!"

Naoko: *Stands high and dry right next to a sign that says, "DO NOT DIVE."* "I'm sure that was the furthest thing from their mind."
Fuwa: "Yeah yeah, blah blah, Itona-san, you brought the drone, right?"

Itona: *Also has entered the waters yet, he walks over to a bag on a folding chair.* "I did. Catch, Karma-san." * Throws the RC to him, which he does. Itona throws out a quad-pod flying machine with a pivoting camera on its bottom into the air above him.*

Karma: *Tilts the vertical joystick on the remote (above water) to make the drone retain its altitude.* "Heh, this will never not be damn cool."

Isogai: *Beckons over.* "Alright! It's ready! Itona-san, get here!"

Itona: *Suicide dives into the water right in front of them, resurfaces, and appears in front of the whole group."

Kataoka: "Smile, everyone!" *Karma then presses the Action button of the device.*

-The student-assassins continue to enjoy themselves following the photo-op: Kataoka, Okano, and the more sportive folk are practicing their butterfly stroke, while less-serious ones like Fuwa perform simple doggie paddles, and finally others like Nakamura merely loiter around the edges, conversing.-

Kanzaki: *Returns to the poolside and walks toward the nearest group of Kurahashi, Okajima, Sosuke, Chiba, and Hayami, hugging a large amount of assorted, bottled drinks.* "Anyone thirsty?"

Maehara: *Climbs out of the pool.* "Ha! Try everyone!" *With most of the other student-assassins, heads towards Kanzaki, eager for a CC Lemon.*

Sugino: "Hey hey! Don't intimidate Kanzaki-san with your massive crowding!" *Beckons some of them over to himself, brandishing a similar amount of fluids, which he sets down onto a table. When they leave with their desired refreshment, Sugino takes notice of Kanzaki conversing, empty-handed, with Yada and Hara. He takes a green tea canned drink from off his table, knowing Kanzaki loves that flavor, and starts walking towards her.* *It may not have been right hours earlier, but there's no time like now! Everything is set; please God, give me this blessing, and earn her recognition! *Ever step after feels meters longer than the last, at which point he feels he needs to pick up the speed. Mid-jog, however, and he loses traction on a very wet section, causing him to slip and throw the cold soft drink into the air while he attempts to rebalance himself.* *Oh no!"

Kayano: *Jumps up from out of nowhere to catch the aluminum as it begins falling back down to the ground, landing close to where Sugino was.* "There you are, Sugino-kun."

Sugino: *Accepts the returned can.* "Thank you so much, Kayano-san."

Kayano: *Looks behind her quickly to see Kanzaki. She then gets in close to Sugino and whispers,* *Go get her, tiger.*

Sugino: *Is initially surprised to hear that sentence, but then gets what she meant, and triumphantly proceeds towards Kanzaki. When he comes within five meters of her, he promptly opens the drink... Not knowing the throw and drop has caused the carbonation to become volatile.* "Hey, Kanzaki-sa-!" *Gets blasted in the face by the green tea soda.* "AGH!"

Kanzaki: *Looks behind her, realizing that Sugino is covered in a foreign liquid.* "Oh my gosh,
Sugino-kun!* Takes a napkin off of a nearby table and begins wiping off his face.* "Are you okay? Did it get into your eyes or anything?"

Sugino: "No, uh..." *Realizes he did end up getting her recognition; just another one.* "No... Just all over my skin and such. I can just jump in to get it off, too."

Kanzaki: "You'll probably still feel a little sticky; let me get it all off first." *Continues wiping Sugino's face.*

Sugino: *Oh, don't worry about that...*

-Meanwhile, Nagisa, on the opposite side of the scene, enjoys a Ramune. His chest wound really did turn out to be much less devastating, given its very small entry; a simple overlap of five band-aids were enough to cover it.-

Terasaka: *With the rest of the group.* "Hey, Nagisa!"

Nagisa: *Looks back.* "Yeah, Terasaka?"

Muramatsu: "Want to make some history?"

Nagisa: *Stands up from the edge of the pool.* "What kind?"

Yoshida: "The record-breaking kind."

Nagisa: "Oh? What record?"

Terasaka: "The biggest splash one!" *Takes Nagisa's Ramune from out of his hand, safely tossing it over to the faraway Hazama, and then props Nagisa up onto his shoulders.*

Nagisa: "WHOA!"

Muramatsu/Yoshida: *Raise a respective, opposite arm so that they cross across Nagisa's torso.* "Now, Itona!"

Itona: *Takes a running start, and jumps up to reach Nagisa's elevation, throwing his arm around Nagisa's neck and pushing him down hard, in conjunction with Terasaka, Yoshida, and Muramatsu's triple powerbomb into the water. The resulting splash was spectacular, needless to say.*

Nagisa: *Quickly resurfaces right next to Itona.* "AH! JESUS, GUYS!"

Terasaka: "Hey; don't knock it!" *Whips his arm forward, unknowingly still holding something.* "You loved it!" *He, Yoshida, and Muramatsu all laughed before they realized that Terasaka was holding a cloth of some sort.* "!!?"

Muramatsu: *Looks at Terasaka's holding hand, and immediately straightens up.*

Yoshida: "Oh-!"

Nagisa: * Watches it too, and is absolutely mortified, blushing until he looks like a strawberry growing in the water.* "OH MY GOD!"
Karma: *Holds up his smartphone for another priceless moment.* "Definitely holding onto that one."

Naoko: *Looks aside to Karma with a metaphorical sweat drop.* "Karma-kun..."

Kayano: "Hey! Don't just stand there! Give him his trunks!" *Springs lightly to get the swimwear from out of Terasaka's lowered grip, and then tosses it to the blue-haired boy.*

Nagisa: *Swiftly takes the clothing under the surface of the pool.* "No one saw anything, right?"

Chiba: "I wish I didn't..." *Is looking the opposite way.*

Isogai: "Chiba could see a a five yen coin half-a-kilometer away; he doesn't count, Nagisa-san."

Nagisa: "Okay... That's good." *Looks relieved.*

Nakamura: *Resurfaces like a submarine right behind him.* "Now I have more reason to believe you're a guy, Nagisa."

Nagisa: "!!" *Shiveringly turns around.*

Nakamura: *Grins madly.* "Still had my doubts since five years ago."

Sosuke: "Hey, watch out with the water over here!" *Is sitting right next to Mimura and Hazama around a table cluttered with notebooks and stray pieces of paper.*

Fuwa: "What's all that?"

Mimura: "The drafts for a one-shot based on our recent experience!"

Hazama: "And it could make do without the wet prose."

Kataoka: "

Hazama: "Hey, you aren't much better, Kataoka-san; your splashes are par their level."

Kataoka: *Shadows creep over her eyes.* Not true... Not true at all...

-Naoko shook her head and washed her hands of these needlessly troubling matters. she returns to her relaxing recliner spot, right next to Irina and Karasuma; the latter getting a special, Serbian massage.-

Naoko: *Sits on her folding chair, facing her older siblings.* "Karasuma-niisan, you're feeling better yes?"

Karasuma: "Yes, Naoko. But, I'm far more concerned about what's between us, to be honest."

Irina: "Come on; think about yourself for a second."

Naoko: "What do you mean though, Karasuma-nii?"
Karasuma: "I know you want to know about... What happened those many years ago. But are you sure you're ready to know?"

Naoko: *Taken aback.* "Ready?"

Karasuma: "If you're doubting yourself, Naoko, then it probably means you aren't yet ready."

Naoko: "Agh, but when will I? It's been so long, as you implied."

Irina: "Fate will tell you when it's time, Naoko. Playing God on this matter will only make you more hurt about it."

Karasuma: "But that's okay. I'm not ready yet either."

Naoko: "Yeah... You were very much hurt about what it was too."

Karasuma: "I can guarantee you that I will be ready in some time. I will try to make it as soon as possible. But until then, can you at least pretend we're proper legal siblings?"

Naoko: *Smiles.* "You've always been something of a brother to me, Karasuma-nii."

*Embraces her older brother very softly.*

Irina: "Why am I always left out of things?" *Joins in on the hug. Their collective strength has Karasuma give a silent, pained reaction.*

Yada: *Standing nearby, holding onto her Mitsuya Cider soda, she suddenly realizes the lack of a certain something in the atmosphere.* "Huh? What's missing from this picture...? *Thinks for a bit, before realizing exactly what it is; who it is, rather. She then walks up to her two mentors.* "Karasuma-sensei, Irina-sensei, where's Kato-kun?"

Irina: "Kato?"

Karasuma: "I didn't see him since we all went up to our suites to prepare for this."

Yada: "He stayed behind?"

Naoko: "Kato-kun has worked with me a few times before; he's not really into long goodbyes or celebrations."

Karasuma: *Quickly looks over to her.* "A few times before?"

Yada: "Hmm..." *Departs the poolside, towards the elevators.*

Karasuma: "What help did Kato give you during those few times?"

Naoko: "You already know he's very smart; he's one Hell of a detective. And chances were he knew the streets better than anybody."

Karasuma: "How long has this been going?"

Naoko: "Well, since I left Karma-kun for that out of Japan assignment, and returning for one job
Karasuma: "You've got to be kidding..."

-In Kato's hotel room, the chorus of Dave & Domino's "Friday Night" can be heard in high volume.-

Kato: "While the small fridge near his desk houses the glowing cryogenic container, he is carefully trying to fix the damaged Shock Disks function on his left glove. A misplaced and/or mistimed stab by his metal precision tool causes a bright spark within the room and stings him with a quick jolt of dormant electricity. "Agh! Damnit!" *Waves his fingers free from the pain. He slouches back in his chair succeeding that, looking at his work, before also looking over to his broken forearm gun, cracked ballistic shield, clawed personal upper armor, lack of protection along the waistline, and ongoing development projects on the gadgets... And that's not considering the assessment and repair of all the other AtTac suits that sustained notably heavy damage.* Not going to be done with everything by... Tonight. Damn it..."

-Yada gets out of the elevator, walks over, and knocks on Kato's room door.-

Kato: "Hm? *Shows strain as he gets up, and looks through the eyehole to see that it is Yada. He instantly opens the door.* "Yada-san? Your friends are all downstairs; what are you doing here?"

Yada: "What are you doing here?"

Kato: "What?"

Yada: *Refocuses.* "I'm sorry; mind if I?" *Moves her upper body a little into the room.*

Kato: "Uh, of course." *As she steps inside, leaning on the nearby wall while he returns to his revolving chair, Kato realizes that Yada is wearing the bare minimal to be conservative; her soft, almost translucent white cover-up, well, covers up her orange two-piece swimsuit. Quickly glaring down has him notice matching flip-flops adorning her athletically slim legs. When he returns to looking at her upper body, a certain pair of "assets" makes him blush badly, for which he then takes an aside glance to abandon his lecherous thoughts, well-hidden (or so he thinks) by his cover of turning down the music. *"What's on your mind, Yada-san?"

Yada: *Never notices Kato's awkward behavior due to scoping the nearby desk, with many broken pieces of equipment, engineering tools, and an active laptop currently on a Word screen.* "What is all of this, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Assessment of the damages sustained to the AtTac suits, helping me find out what went wrong and set it right." *Stretches out his right arm, strenuously, to reach the shredded forearm gun.* "I know I want and will make this work." *Puts it aside.* "And then there's writing a queue report for modifications on several of the functionalities and gadgets we've tested-"

Yada: "Whoa, enough, Kato-kun. Ever thought enough was enough for one night?"

Kato: "Not when the night was," *Checks his watch* "This young."

Yada: *Walks over and takes a seat next to him, and takes a personal look at his watch.* "You call the night young at midnight?"
Kato: "It's only darkest just before the dawn."

Yada: "Heh, wrong." *Steps back.* "And also, why are you afraid?"

Kato: "Afraid?"

Yada: "Why are you constantly doing something? Why must you constantly soothe your brain's curiosity, and satisfy your body's impulse to act, even when you know it's past a fault? When it potentially costs you an arm and a leg?"

Kato: "Heh, now you're wrong; my body can handle it. Due to unlocking 100% brain capacity, and activating 100% of my muscle usage as a result, I also have full control over the systems in my person. I can accelerate tissue repair, purge most moderate-level poisons, and heal broken bones in relative days, and get back to work like it was nothing to begin with."

Yada: *Shakes her head.* "But that's no way to live. Why don't you slow down?"

Kato: *Turns away.*

Yada: *Notices.* "Hey, I'm sorry if I said something wrong there."

Kato: "No, you didn't. It's... It's because I always think so much and so quickly is why I'm here. Why I can finally help people. As I am now, I'm a strong that I am satisfied with; I can help people, not just myself. Back when I was slow, I couldn't even do that."

Yada: "Oh... You're afraid of slowing down because you fear pain and insanity might attack you in your relaxing period."

Kato: "..."

Yada: "I understand that, but... You can't keep going on like this, I mean, just using regular home remedies because your body doesn't allow foreign medicines and whatnot."

Kato: *Stands up, and reveals his bandaged areas.* "This is all I need; all I ever did need. And if I really wanted to, I could activate my endorphins. But they're a sort of high for me; in a time that I want to remain sharp, that's not advised." *Suddenly grunts in pain and clutches his right waist.*

Yada: "Kato-kun!" *Goes up to him, having him release the injury, and find that the bandage is reddening; Kato stretching earlier opened it.* "Oh my God, I better replace the gauze."

Kato: "I... Can do that myself."

Yada: "No! You've done many things today. Some were done right, and some were done wrong; this is one of them, and I will rectify it now. Sit on the bed." *Points to the mattress.*

Kato: "But-" *Relinquishes his sense to protest, and instead complies.*

-For the next few minutes, Yada removes Kato's coverings all across his torso, replacing them with fresher gauze, and concealing a decent amount of the Irezumi on Kato's back. The Yakuza made some stinging, reactionary noises to some of Yada's stiffer moments, but did not outright complain.-
Kato: *Yada lines bandages across his chest-claw wounds.* "You said I did a few things wrong," *Checks his watch.* "Today; what were they?"

Yada: "Well, you still didn't fulfill your promise to have me see Mr. Sasai for a personal business meeting."

Kato: "..."

Yada: "But, you showed me quite a bit of your, more lucrative ventures, so I think that's the least noteworthy among them. This is the second, of course; you trying to put on this many bandages by yourself. It don't matter if you're a doctor; they get help for things too, you know."

Kato: "Fair point. And then?"

Yada: "Well... You're not celebrating with us. You're back to doing the next thing on your list, still keeping an eye on us and taking care of us, but not reveling with us."

Kato: "Oh?"

Yada: "Yeah. You're something like a big brother who's always there when we need you most. But not when we want you most. Sometimes, that's more important to the basis of a big brother and his kin."

Kato: "How so?"

Yada: "The big brother, or sister, that does both will know that anything their kin asks of them is worth a need, even if it's also a want."

Kato: "Sounds like you have experience."

Yada: "I did all I could for my brother..." *Remembers checking in on him earlier last year in the hospital.* "And, well... I did try my best in keeping my friends together through and through before. Always there to lend a hand in assassination, and still sticking around for the drinks on tab. As I should; everything's a ten on the sliding scale of importance of an elder sibling."

Kato: "..." *Is that how it is with me and my past? Am I more than just an attendant for it...? If I am, then... Maybe just this once..."

Yada: *Finishes applying the latest layer of bandages across Kato's torso, fastening it on his back.* "And, there, we, are." *Steps back and claps her hands together as if tidying up.* "Properly wrapped, with help. If you're going to rely solely on remedies, Kato-kun, at least let others know about it. Even you need help at times, huh?"

Kato: *Head is hunched forward, further away from Yada.* "..."

Yada: *Puzzled.* "Hm? Kato-kun?" *Returns to being right behind him, and then revolves around Kato to see his face.* "Are you alright?"

Kato: *His eyes float over to gaze at Yada, and in an instant, he turns around, hugs around her upper arms and chest, and gently cants her onto the bed, on her back.*

Yada: "Oh!" *Closes her eyes during the short time the move happens. When she reopens them,
she finds Kato, with a mile-long, distracted stare, hovering just above her by his hands and knees; one of the latter was in between her legs. *"K-Kato...Kun?"

Kato: *His left hand slowly moves behind her, inside her now-open white outerwear, reaching to the small of her back.*

Yada: *Exclaims when she feels his appendages lightly caress the otherwise invisible area, pulling his lower and middle body closer to hers. *What... What is he doing?*

Kato: *He then takes his other hand to greet the one closes to him, interlocking the fingers.*

Yada: *gives a sideways glance to their joined hands. *Is... Is he-!?*

Kato: *His eyes now completely close, making him look that much more unaware of the situation; especially evident when his forehead falls down to pressure Yada's cheek and neck.*

Yada: *Mind flickers.* Oh... Kato-kun's under an endorphin rush... Inhibiting the transmission of pain signals coursing through his body and replacing them with... Feelings of pleasure...

Kato: *His head returns to the original state again before he slowly falls from the fixed height, moving his mouth inch by inch to hers.*

Yada: He's-!? *Acts alarmed for a second, but reconsiders.* This could be considered assault... But I don't want to see him in pain either... *Closes her eyes and bites her lower lip a bit, before sharing his feelings and copying his action, lifting her head closer to his. *If he does something worse, I'll protest. For now though, I want to help you however I can... Kato-kun. *She begins to form her lips in tune with what's to come.*

Kato: *They come within an inch of making a vase, when Kato's mind resumes control after he regains clarity in his sight. Seeing that he's about to kiss Yada in his dominant position mortifies him, wrestling his hand free just to cover his mouth with it.*

Yada: *Feels the sudden motion in her hand and opens her eyes again, seeing Kato's very embarrassed expression.*

Kato: *Rolls off of her, laying supine right next to her. He covers his eyes with his forearm.* "Oh God, I'm so sorry I did that to you, Yada-san."

Yada: Rises up to rest on her side. *"Don't worry about it, Kato-kun. You didn't do anything very bad to me."*

Kato: *Takes his arm off of his face and turns his head to look at her. *"I touched you on your back and held up your hand, without your permission. What kind of person just does that alone?"

Yada: *Grins.* "Someone who wants to take me to dance?"

Kato: "..."

Yada: *Giggles.* "Even when in mating mode, you're an utter, subtle sweetie."

Kato: "W-what?"
Yada: "You could've ravished my neck with kisses, or fondled my legs and chest, among... Other things. Instead, you invite me to a formal and seek just one innocent kiss. That's nothing to be ashamed of. It's very gallant of you."

Kato: *Beat, and then he snickers.* "Gallant?"

Yada: "Yeah. Like a big brother still trying to hold up his protective side, even when younger brother isn't around. Which reminds me... You're still not too good of a big brother, even so."
*Rolls off of the bed.*

Kato: *Begins to sit upright.* "Hey, whe-"

Yada: "No! Don't you dare move from that bed! You're in serious pain, and your mind is tired; I can tell. You're going to sleep."

Kato: "Wait, what-"

Yada: *Points at him.* "Ah! No moving! And," *Takes Kato's flip phone from out of his left hand.* "No talking with your Yakuza family. You've done enough for one day. Rest."

Kato: "But-"

Yada: *Holds up a finger to her mouth.* "No talking back!"

Kato: "!!"

Yada: "I'll get the guys downstairs to staple you to that bed if it means you will spend the night actually on a mattress. But I don't think we want to do that! So, surrender to big sister, big brother, for she knows best!"

Kato: *Understands, letting his head fall back onto the cot's pillow.* "Okay, Yada-san."

Yada: *Her serious demeanor returns to cheerful.* "Great!" *Moves her body closer to his for a second. She whispers into his ear,* "This makes us even." *Kisses the top of Kato's forehead.*

Kato: Wh- *Instantly remembers the time in which he forced a kiss onto Yada back at the Kyoto International Conference Center.* Oh...

Yada: *Releases, walking to the door. Before she lays a hand on the handle, she turns around, with a pointed finger.* "Remember, no moving." *She then leaves.*

Kato: *Nods before she departs. He then looks up to the ceiling of his room, by himself.* Her words and actions are so refractory, yet so dulcet... It reminds me of how my childhood once was. Before it all, of course. Hehe... The AssUniv community is filled with even more mysteries than I... Funner ones, too. *Relaxes his eyes and slouches further into the bed.*

Yada: *Revealed to be right outside, attempting to hear into the room she just left by placing her right ear onto the wall on the other side... For more than five minutes.* Gah, what am I doing? Kato-kun is a man of his word; he's sleeping just as he should be. *Turns around, leaning her back on the wall. She abruptly notices that her heart is still racing with its beat. She holds onto her chest in an attempt to calm it.* Geez, what's up with me? Am I still very excited from our win earlier this night? It doesn't feel purely that, though...
Suddenly, the phone in her hand rings, briefly alarming her.

Yada: *Huh!? Looks at the top screen of Kato's flip-phone, realizing that the caller is Norio, his uncle. After a little thought, she answers the call.*

Norio: *Voice only, starts speaking before Yada can even react.* "Hello, nephew. I take it you appearing online on our personal K-Odec, and Satoshi's personal vouch, that all went well tonight?"

Yada: "Um, hello Mr. Norio."

Norio: "Huh? Who are you, young lady? Wait, I think I recall something Kazuhiko had told me awhile back; is this, er, Yada-san?"

Yada: "Yes, it is."

Norio: "Ah... Great to finally hear you in person; a heavenly voice."

Yada: "Oh! Uh, thank you."

Norio: "Kazuhiko speaks very highly of you, Yada-san. And yet his tales are laden with subliminal messages that have helped me learn how admirable you are even beyond his description. The most special among them, I hear you've done very well to assuage my nephew's more self-damaging tendencies and quirks."

Yada: *Giggles.* "Well, I don't know if I'm a big help, but Kato-kun does seem more appreciative of what his talents produce, compared to just weeks before. I'm liable to think we've been assisting that as a whole." *Sigh.* "If only he could stick around long enough to notice it; that's what I'd like to work on with him most."

Norio: "Really? Tell me; why do you have his phone now?"

Yada: "!!"

Norio: "Kazuhiko never lets that leave a meter-radius from his person. And judging by him not eager to answer right now, that threshold has passed... Basically, you already succeeded, Yada-san, where many, including myself, have not."

Yada: "Wow... You really think so?"

Norio: "He's really lucky to have you."

Yada: *Her voice stutters for a second.* "Wh-? Rea-?"

Norio: "I'm going to assume you've made him rest up, and I'm not going to disturb that. When he wakes up and inevitably comes to you for the phone, please tell him to call me."

Yada: "I will; don't worry."

Norio: "May we speak again soon."
Yada: "Yeah... Goodbye, Mr. Norio." *Hangs up.* A world seemingly so cruel to make such a family as their's was kind enough to have us meet... *Finding she has nothing more for her there, she leaves the wall adjacent to Kato's room, returning to her own quarters. She gives Kato's door one last look.* Have a good rest, Kato-kun. *Firmly closes her room's door.*
In this final chapter of the current arc, Kato has finally resolved to invest as much personally to the program as he does professionally, much in thanks to Yada, who showed him it does more harm than good that way. Festivities are over for now, though, since the team still very much needs to make sure what they got is the DNA, and if there is anything they can do to expunge it.

-Two days have passed since AssUniv was victorious against the team of the Neo-Wolfpack and Akira Takaoka, and the successful recovery of Dr. Yanagisawa's mutated Tentacle DNA; the ample, minimum time described by the Kato Family's lead experts on biomedical and chemical studies, former Navy SEAL Phillip Franco and DEA Agent Ramon Alvarez. Kato himself and the other members of the program ride their soon-to-be-storied bus to the Kyoto prefectural research facility.-

-Kato and Yada, having put aside all of the obstructions in their relationship, are now able to sit in the same row of chairs on the vehicle, though with both still preferring window spots, they are on opposite ends. For this reason, Kimura was Kato's neighbor, while Hara was Yada's.-

Hara: *Continues to gaze at the Yakuza ringleader, surprised by his much more hopeful-seeming outlook, even going on to converse with Mimura, Sosuke, and Okano.* "Well, would you look at that."

Yada: *Notices her sentence and looks on over, giving a small giggle.* "Yeah, that's something."

Hara: "You never did tell us what you said or did with him up there."

Yada: "Some things are best left-" *Refocuses.* "Wait, why 'did'?"

Hara: *Gasp.* "Did you?"

Yada: *Is taken aback.* "No! That's crazy!" *But we were close... Maybe."

Hara: "Heh, if you say so."

Naoko: *Appears over the two ladies' back-support. She has a lordly expression to go with her tone and volume of voice.* "Thank God you didn't. You can do so much better than Kato-kun."

Kato: *Hears the deliberately loud statement.* "And how would you know that?"

Naoko: "!!"

Karasuma: "Don't joke like that, Kato."

Irina: "Though for your sake, it better be a joke."
Kato: "Indeed it is." *Returns to his original seating position.*

Karma: *Double-takes them.* "That's the end of that."

Hara: "Still super smooth, I see."

Yada: *Nods to the conclusion of the conversation, and then looks back towards her nearby window.* Speaking of that, it was good to dispel Mr. Norio's belief in that; Kato himself was bewildered his uncle would put that on the table... Though I was fortunate to know why...

-Eventually, the AssUniv Program reach the facility they visited once before. After a few security checks and corridors passed by, Kato leads the lot of them (and Miho, who joins them after the baggage scan) to the high-confidential testing labs, currently booked by Franco and Alvarez, who were donning scientist grabs and greeting the student-assassins who made a crowd.-

Franco/Alvarez: "Oyabun." *Bow to their Leader.* "Ms. Akiyama." *Bow to the Secondary Captain as well."

Kato/Miho: "Captains." *Bows to them as well.*

Nakamura: "So much respect in this room."

Naoko: "Even the Ministry isn't like this."

Karasuma: "We don't have to be."

Alvarez: *Looks over to Karasuma.* "That's what I thought about the DEA. Look what happened."

Irina: *Looks around a bit before shrugging.* "What?"

Alvarez: "Oh right, you don't know; the Cartels buddied up to most of my boys; if I didn't sacrifice my position taking the lot of them down with me, the U.S. border might've seen a lot more coke on their side. Luckily, I wasn't alone in the drug war even after I was ousted."

Mimura: "My God."

Miho: "Oh, we would like to have God on our side; so long as we can."

Kayano: *Looks over to Franco.* "And what about you?"

Franco: "I got off easy; discharge. When I took a hard concussion during one tour, they deemed me unfit to keep going. Used retirement benefits to travel around. I always missed the chase though, so when I saw the Kato Family in action, well... I couldn't resist."

Nagisa: Kato attracts and hires a very certain mindset. Figures, only a true brother would collect other true brothers. And sisters.

Kato: "Good to be reminded of that, Captains. Now, what have you got for us? Where's the Tentacle DNA?"
Franco: "Right this way, sir."

-The two scientists make their way to a set of cubed containment capsules. In each one was a very small sliver of the Tentacle DNA; most of them remain still in their units.-

Takebayashi: "I see you've moved it out from the cryogenic strongbox, but are still keeping it in frozen stasis."

Alvarez: "Indeed. Risking to lower the temperature to more than eight degrees Celsius at any point will accelerate its instability; might blow us all sky high, along with the rest of the prefecture."

Karma: "It must be just as hard, though, to test on DNA that keeps crackling with crippling levels of ice."

Alvarez: "Well when we must, we heat it up just enough, like with this one." *Motions over to a fragment of Tentacle DNA, where it is freely moving around within the confines of its solitude.*

Kurahashi: "Whoa, the antimatter, uh, matter can move?"

Franco: "Indeed. It made some of the initial tests we've only concluded yesterday difficult to perform. However, with, um, Ms. Okuda's report, this might've been to be expected."

Sugino: "Really? Why's that, Okuda-san?"

Okuda: *Repositions her glasses politely.* "Well, the genes, we all comprehend, have a sense of sentience; a sense of purpose. Korosensei, Itona-san, and Kayano-san all witnessed that firsthand. And similar to all organisms, it recognizes when it's threatened, and does its utmost to persevere. In this instance, manifesting its purpose to be finding a host to instill that purpose."

Karma: "So it's moving because it wants to move to someone who can use it?"

Isogai: "That's pretty damn scary."

Kataoka: "How do you get rid of something like that? Use the same weaknesses Nagisa had found earlier?"

Alvarez: "Unfortunately not, young lady. Mr. Shiota's notes were useful in our assessment, but the, ahem, more critical weaknesses of this matter is no longer relevant."

Nagisa: "What?"

Franco: "Yes." *Taps his knuckles on one of the units.* "The mutation of the Tentacle DNA is far more severe than any of us could have imagined."

Kato: "How does it react now?"

Franco: "As a direct result of coming in contact with the anti-sensei walls, and surviving alongside its original host Dr. Yanagisawa, the DNA has used its sentience to develop an augmented resistance to it."

Terasaka: "Anti-sensei BBs don't work on it anymore!?"
Franco: "Indeed. And that's not all; water now only expands the cytoplasms of the DNA, rather than render it sluggish. There are still certain waves of light energy that this new strain is vulnerable to, but unless blasted with a very high voltage, the most it will do is slow, rather than stun. The regeneration speed of cell destruction is amplified two-fold from its previous state. A modified molecular structure implies it has reactionary hardening abilities, granting it increased strength in comparison to previous users."

Miho: "I didn't join in on the research until very recently... But I'm inclined to believe in the impossible, too; the UN's Lance of the Heavens, tragic enough to say, most likely won't kill these cells either."

AssUniv: *Look significantly unsettled by the description of the genetic code.*

Franco: "And most disturbingly, it is heavily theorized that the DNA, once attached to a compatible species, can proceed to develop and sustain itself even after its host expires."

Maehara: "It wants to do its job that badly!?"

Okuda: "Whoever contracts this agent becomes a NEMESIS, basically."

Naoko: "What will it take to bring it down?"

Alvarez: "A neutralizing agent is currently in the developmental phase in our facilities nationwide. And with the periodic assistance of Ms. Okuda and Mr. Takebayashi, it is only a matter of time before it can be finalized."

Irina: "Heh, well so long as we have what's left of the DNA, we have all the time in the world."

Kato: "Until the counter-agent is produced, however, we must defend the Tentacle DNA. Soon enough, Dr. Machida will know that we have it, and they will be trying all they can to take it from us."

Miho: "Don't worry about any open conflict between them; we know you're assassins, so that's not your forte. We'll do most of the heavy lifting; any Reclamation Society or Syndikat folk that dare show their face will be ousted."

Karasuma: "Then what are we to do?"

Kato: "Mostly, we're to make sure the project remains a secret to everybody; remember, the fewer people who know about it, the better. And of course, if we happen upon anybody suspicious, we're liable to take them down."

Okano: "You don't sound very pleased to say stuff like that, Kato-kun."

Kato: *Brushes through his hair backwards and then scratches his nape while giving a little grin, which Miho mysteriously reacts weirdly to,* "I admit, I'm rather flustered by the fact that we have little things on paper that we have to do." *Looks subtly and briefly towards Yada.* "But I'm just going to have to live with that - for now."

Yada: *Smiles lightly to that statement.*
Naoko: "Well, what else do we do in the meantime, then?"

Terasaka: "Study?"

AssUniv: *All save for Kato, Okuda, Kanzaki, Naoko, and their seniors look at Terasaka with shadows over their eyes, before bursting into a fit of laughter befitting their awkward answer.*

Nakamura: "So you can make a good one-word joke!"

Kimura: "Sorry, but I don't want to be reminded of my forensic serology final coming in a week, thank you very much."

Chiba: "Or my many design-related assessments."

Hayami: "And my cooperative Geotechnics... Exam."

Nagisa: "Or my... Shakespeare final..."

AssUniv: *Immediately realize that the end of their Spring semester is rapidly approaching.*

"HOW DID THIS HAPPEN!?"

Irina: "We've invested quite some time on our assassination training, it seems."

Karasuma: "What a mishap on our part."

Karma: "Heh, our academics snuck up on us like true assassins."

Isogai: "And they're going to kill our futures if we don't kill them first."

Kato: "Then we should do something about it."

Kayano: "Right. What do we got?"

Nagisa: *Clasps his hands together.* "A week-long series of midnight-hour super-duper tutoring sessions!"

Naoko: "Ah, like those ones we've had many times during AssClass; missed those."

Karma: "You did miss a few while you were living with Kato-kun."

Naoko: *Turns to him, blushing.* "That did not happen!"

Kato: *Looks aside.* "The truth is so brutal."

Naoko: *Scoffs.* "As if!"

Kato: *Looks at Karasuma soon after.* "You're pretty tame with that one."

Karasuma: "Well, since I know you're serious, I'm not going to give you the satisfaction."

Kato: "Right..."
Mimura: "So... Tutoring, right? We help each other in our strongest fields and whatnot?"

Kataoka: *Nods.* "That's usually how it goes. We should probably get ready for it."

Sugino: "Straight away!"

Isogai: "To the bus, everybody?"

-And just like that, the student-assassins left the maximum-security area like an infestation. Only the Kato Family, Karasuma, and Irina remained.-

Karasuma: "It's days like these that I kind of miss that creature."

Kato: "I'm never enough, am I?"

Miho: "That's not true, boss!"

Irina: "You didn't know Korosensei, Kato-san. He was something else, and that's an understatement."

Kato: "Of course he was, and I don't deny that. But he wasn't the minimum, he was the zenith. I'm at least the minimum."

Karasuma: "At least you know your place." *Begins to leave, with Irina.*

Kato: *Crosses his arms.* "Do you?"

Karasuma: *Stops dead in his tracks.* "I thought Naoko advised you not to start personal attacks again..."

Kato: "I'm actually very curious about your answer this time."

Karasuma: "..."

Irina: "Karasuma-sama."

Karasuma: "You've left us wanting so many times before. I'm long due for turning the tables again." *Finishes leaving.*

Kato: "..."

Franco: "Sir?"

Kato: "I'm alright. Just keep working on the agent, you two." *To Miho.* "And keep the lot of the Syndikat away from us, please."

Miho: *Bows, just like Franco and Alvarez.* "Of course, Oyabun."

Franco: "But, sir, must we really-"

Kato: "But that's that." *Bows as well.* "I'm leaving you wanting still, Karasuma. More than you, or anyone thinks."
-Several days later... AssUniv is hot on their teaching sessions with each other. Kato holds the universal FAQ/trivia sections in his Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub's VIP platform, easily being able to answer three questions at once (one voice for the first, one hand for the second, and the last hand for the final). Karma and Naoko hold up for similar exercises, though they lean more for the social studies; Chiba and Maehara keep their peers guessing regarding math, Okuda and Takebayashi promote science, Kanzaki boasts a focus on history, and so on. It was bitter work, but its members still found the mental training enjoyable, no doubt due to several sets of noodle incidents and accidental mishaps that occurred in between, which also happened to help keep their enthusiasm and concentration in check.-

-By the time of their exams in all of their respective universities, the student-assassins of AssUniv were more than ready for the assessment. Their voices of confidence literally resounded with every imprint of their writing utensil on the papers. As they proceeded through their respective tests, they couldn't help but recall that fateful moment they all had five years ago, when they were all in the same school, and found themselves troubled. Fortunately, much has changed between now and then, and the older and wiser AssClass alumni, in between the questions before them, begin to wonder how they were ever put to the wall of the arena all that time ago with problems so simple.-

-Now in the heart of May, Spring semester is over, grades have been put up, and AssUniv is now free to relax for the first time in a long while; they’d take operating hours at the nightclub to attending classes and being shot at, after all. For once, they need not worry about neither the fate of the world they are living on, nor what they will eventually do with it. They can just be the nineteen/twenty-year-olds that they were.-

-In the nightclub, "Don't Let Me Down (Extended Mix)" by Madison plays on the loudspeakers.-

-Kato, once again taking up regional managership at Nyurifu Rikkyo, overlooks his peers working around the venue, alongside assistant manager Yada. Hara and Muramatsu are currently in a game to one-up each other's dishes; speed, quality, and resources are all a factor. Isogai and Kataoka's serving staff prove themselves troubled by their competition, barely able to keep up with the advance orders. Chiba and Hayami continue to be working just fine with their upgraded fisheye cameras, coordinated by Ritsu. Itona sits idly by, waiting for his time to operate the stage equipment in accordance to Hazama, Sosuke, Fuwa, and Mimura's direction. Yep, all was very all well and good.-

-But the crowning moment is having to witness Irina, briefly taking over the music venue, and playing the piano live to the packed audience, clearly entranced by her art and appearance.-

    Yada: "Is this something like an olive branch from Karasuma to you, letting Irina-sensei play in your club?"

    Kato: "I would think the branch would be that Naoko-san was here." *Eyes over to the young secret agent, who is currently moonlighting as a secondary head of security, alongside her boyfriend Karma. Miho is seen lecturing them after they allegedly PDA'ed inside the coat check.*

    Yada: "True, true. Still, though, it feels good, right?"

    Kato: *Crosses arms.* "Actually, yeah. Nice to feel appreciated."

    Yada: *Her hands go behind her back.* "Hehe. Told you."
Kato: "..."

Yada: "Something else on your mind, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "That kiss you gave me on the forehead a," *Checks his watch.* "Few days earlier... That didn't make us even. You're ahead now."

Yada: "What?" *Remembers kissing Kato square on the lips just after leaving the Fortress of the Neo-Wolfpack.* "Oh yeah. Does that prove we're invaluable, being able to beat you in some things?"

Kato: "You don't need that instance to tell me that sentence."

Yada: "Well, what are you going to do?"

Kato: *Looks aside.* "I, uh, I gotta go back up."

Yada: "What?"

Kato: "I got to go up to my study for a little bit."

Yada: "Hey, what's the rush? The night's actually still young this time around."

Kato: *Looks around for a bit.* "I won't be," *Checks his watch.* "Very long. I... I don't know. I just need to go up and check on something. Keep watch of the club in my stead, please?"

Yada: *Reluctantly smiles.* "Alright. Don't take long."

Kato: "Will do." *Kato then leaves the first floor to ascend all the way to the VIP Platform. He unlocks the door, finding no one inside, and then locks himself in again. Leaning on nearby wall, He slowly takes out an envelope from his inner blazer pocket. the address of the sender is an obvious hoax, but the name is real enough - Craig Houjou.*

-A few days earlier...-

*Kato: *Is walking with the Divine Soldier as they leave Qita Kong (the former wanted Craig to have personal access to their K-Odec frequency in case they needed third-party support on the drop of a dime.* "So, in essence, not everybody on my side are that happy to have you on the team. I'm sure you know why."

Craig: *Refocuses his new glasses, which still have a few tags.*"Oh, I do. I suppose I should say sorry?"

Kato: "That would be a start."

Craig: "For what, though? I should note that the guys that caught little miss agent were new recruits trying to prove themselves. They failed, obviously."

Kato: "Not so obvious to me."

Craig: "You think we just kill anyone we take off the streets? No; we're mercenaries! We get less jobs, less money if we're unreliable like that. Just like if we're seen as incompetent."
Kato: "And the people involved with the Letters?"

Craig: "It was staged. What she saw at that abandoned complex was a poured blood vial on the window. We got everybody out of that neighborhood too, mind you."

Kato: "Alright. What about the arson at the electronics store?"

Craig: "You know you loved it."

Kato: *Sigh.* "You're right."

Craig: "Anything else?"

Kato: "Not on this. I've wanted to ask if you have anything that can help us learn more about Dr. Machida. I feel as though you've probably seen or talked to the guy in the past, since you shot up from a nobody to the person to him in a blink of an eye."

Craig: "Don't you hate how much that DNA is worth? But yeah, I've happened to talk to him. Also got a few pics of him, thanks to the late Dr. Yanagisawa. What more you want to know, though?"

Kato: "The guy's in charge of the most dangerous worldwide organization on the planet right now; what couldn't you want to know more of?"

Craig: "Fair. I'll send some I.D. over later."

Kato: "Good. We won't be needing your help in the foreseeable future; has the Ministry got you something to do until then?"

Craig: "Black-ops border patrol. LAME. But it'll pass time."

Kato: "Go to it then. Earn them six-digits."

-End memory.-

Kato: Interception; now our side's got the ball, sorry. *Holds onto a photo that Craig had sent over to him by request. It pans over to reveal itself to be Yuzuru Machida. He then throws it onto his study desk so that it leans face-up on his screen., and then proceeds to pour himself a malt glass of Yamazaki Limited 2017 whiskey.* What will you do, Dr. Machida? I'm really eager to find out. *Tips his drink to the smug face on the image before him, and takes a long sip.*

終わり - 「柳沢を探す」弧

End - "Search for Yanagisawa" Arc
Chapter Summary

In a return with a whole new arc, Kato and Okajima find themselves reliving a double scenario that they've had in the Summer before. Since it is so similar to what it was before, one can only imagine what might happen. But not everything is a copy...

-It is now mid-May; two weeks since the Fortress Infiltration Mission, for the mutated Dr. Yanagisawa DNA. The AssUniv Program was successful in obtaining the asset, befriending the original holders, and become that much closer to saving the world from the destructive hands of the Reclamation Society and the Syndikat.-

-But for now, the fate of their academic futures, and the world's, was not an immediate concern. Summer break came at the end of the Spring Semester at their Kyoto-centered universities, and with it, relief. That of which is now the only thing on the minds of the student-assassins of AssUniv, save for training to keep them sharp.-

始める - 「DNAの防衛」アーク

Begin - "Defense of DNA" Arc

-"Lonely Love" by Sophie plays on Nyurifu Rikkyo's loudspeakers.-

-Kato, clad in a pure black suit, again takes a walk around the corridors and dance floors of his nightclub, making sure all of his employees are doing their jobs, and all of the customers are enjoying themselves while adhering to the rules. He finds nothing especially of note, and so resides to the second floor bar and enjoying a nice glass of Bacardi rum, alongside other regular patrons.-

Kato: "...And then, the jock is like, 'hey man, don't you know who I am? I'm not one to be pushed.' And I was saying, 'You're also not the one who does the pushing, especially when you throw glasses in my club.'"

Patrons: *Intoxicatingly laugh to the end of that story.*

Kato: *Takes a sip.* "So I hope none of you plan on practicing your pitch in here."

Patron 1: "Ohoh, no siree."

Patron 2: "Don't you worry about that; we ain't no snobby baseball guys."

Miho: *Holding a whole bottle of Jack Daniel's Old No. 7, goes up to all of the now loosely-suited young men.* "You better hope not." *Takes one long swig of her drink.*
Patrons: "!!" *Become very vigilant when they realize who they are now talking to.*

Kato: *Snickers lightly.*

Okajima: *Tugs on Kato's shoulder, pulling him aside to a quieter corridor within the nightclub.* "Hey, man."

Kato: "Okajima-san? What's up?"

Okajima: "Ready for round 2?"

Kato: "Round 2?" *Remembers immediately.* "Ah, Rina-san's sister, Sayaka-san, is coming back to Kyoto now, is she?"

Okajima: "Yeeep. Double date once more?"

Kato: "Just so you can spend more alone time with Rina-san even when Sayaka-san is around?"

Okajima: *Innocent alone time.* "Seems to take offense to the last statement.*

Kato: "Alright; I'll wingman again if you want. Where is it?"

Okajima: "Well, we can't do it here because there's good chance people will call you something else... So I was thinking another club. The Kitsune Kyoto, for instance. That's... Not a conflict of devotion or anything, right?"

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "Absolutely not. Spending money across the city pumps new life into its economy, after all."

Okajima: "Uh, right! So, you're free now?"

Kato: "Hold on." *Puts on his bluetooth, and puts Yada on line.* "Yada-san."

Yada: *Shown to be inside the call center within the nightclub. She refocuses her microphone antennae.* "Kato-kun? What's going on?"

Kato: "I'm going to go out for a bit; have a look around town. Can you do the managerial rounds for the," *Checks his watch.* "Rest of the night in my place?"

Yada: "O-of course. But the call center?"

Kato: "Nakamura-san is there, right? Have her take all clients."

Yada: "That's quite, excuse me, droll of you, Kato-kun. Nakamura-san, you're cool with this, right? Ah, good."

Kato: "I hear approval. Alright; go on and make a quick round in the venue, report any problems to Miho-san, please."

Yada: "You got it, boss." *Cuts the transmission.*

Kato: "Great." *Closes his phone. He then looks over to Okajima.* "Shall we?"
Okajima: "Lead the way."

-The two then proceed down to the garage floors, where Yoshida is taking selfies of himself nearby some of the more luxurious models, before straightening up when the manager himself walks about. Kato quickly ruffles through a secret cabinet of keys to pick out one for a nearby Bentley Flying Spur W12 sedan. He starts it up and drives out of the nightclub.-

Kato: "Okay; let's go pick them up. Where to?"

Okajima: "Kyoto Station, like last time."

-And they make their way there, to the tune of "Make Up Your Mind" by Dave Rodgers on the radio. Eventually, they arrive at the street in front of the Station's East entrance. Rina, who got there by bike, was still waiting for her older sister to arrive.-

Okajima: "Aha! There's Rina-san!" *Gets out of the car to go up to her.* "Rina-san!"

S. Rina: *Turns her head to see him.* "Okajima-kun!" *The two embrace fully.* "It's good to see you once again after another year of academics has passed!" *Turns to Kato.* "And Ohno-kun, good to see you two!"

Kato: *Nods.*

Okajima: "Girl, you have no idea."

S. Rina: "And now that we can just relax and enjoy ourselves once more, I'm really thinking we should start it off right."

Kato: "!!?"

S. Rina: "You have a thought, Okajima-kun?"

S. Sayaka: *Appears from the entrance and walks towards the conversation, right behind her sister.* "Yes, Okajima-kun. You have a thought?"

Okajima: "!!" *Refocuses.* "Uh, yeah! I got a thought. How about a nightclub?"

S. Rina: "Oh yeah!" *Turns to Sayaka.* "Sayaka-san, you've heard of the Kyoto nightlife; it is exhilarating!"

S. Sayaka: "So I have heard." *To Okajima.* "What club?"

Okajima: *Shrugs.* "Kurama Kyoto?"

S. Rina: "Ah, that's a good spot. I believe it's number two in the capital; the only one higher is Nyurifu Rikkyo!"

Kato: *Closes his eyes for an atypical amount of time as a subtle reaction to that statement.*

S. Rina: "I'd love to go there! What say you, neesan?"
S. Sayaka: "Oh, why not? Ohno-kun, are you driving once more?"

Kato: "You're referring to Okajima-kun's still-revoked license, I presume? But yes; I'll be driving. It's my car this time after all." *Opens up the passenger seat for Sayaka to enter.* "After you, milady."

S. Sayaka: "You're full of it." *Takes a seat.*

Kato: "Pray tell, I'm filled with what?" *Closes the door gently next to her.*

S. Sayaka: *Supports her head on the opened window sill, positioned so that her index and middle finger were extended and placed behind her ear; the other two remain bent and resting on her chin-line.* "Surprises."

Kato: "!!" *Immediately starts remembering events from more than nine years ago; the scene is recreated in the middle of Aichi International School, where Kato, as Kazuhiro, sits in the center back of the old classroom. The partially-unintelligible murmurs of the grade-school teacher are being blurred by him taking a longing stare directly to his left at Sayaka, far younger then (but no less attractive), looking out the window of the area with the same motion.*

Okajima: *Looks strangely at Kato.* "Uh, K- Ohno-san, you good?"

Kato: *Refocuses, checking his watch to find that he's still in the middle of the present day.* "Right." *Claps his hands.* "Let's get going, shall we?"

-Everyone gets into the Flying Spur and they make their way through Kyoto's lit streets, all to the tunes of "Superstar" by Go 2 & DJ Boss, and "Heart's On Fire" by David Dima. Eventually, they make it to the nightclub.-

S. Rina: *Is far too eager to get out to get in line.* "Come on, Okajima-kun!" *Tugs on his arm.*

Okajima: "Agh, hey!" *Turns to Kato.* "I suppose you can handle parking, right?"

Kato: "Leave it to me."

Okajima: "Alright then."

S. Rina: "See you soon!" *Closes the back-right door.*

Kato: *Continues driving ahead, though passing the nearby parking garage to Kurama Kyoto and continuing straight ahead.*

S. Sayaka: *Looks at the garage as it passes by.* "Uh, you missed it."

Kato: "We're not sticking around."

S. Sayaka: "What!?"

Kato: "I'm going to really show you around."

S. Sayaka: *Gasp.* "Are you kidnapping me!?!"
Kato: "*Gives a very quick aside glance.* "...

S. Sayaka: "*Looks very angry.* "Unlock. This door. Let me out!"

Kato: "I'm not abducting you. I really want to show you around."

S. Sayaka: "*As she's trying to pry the passenger door open.* "!?

Kato: "You got to see an okonomiyaki restaurant during the one time you were here. I'd hardly call that the zenith of Kyoto's culture."

S. Sayaka: "Well... You got better than a nightclub in mind?"

Kato: "Okajima-kun wouldn't have any of it."

S. Sayaka: "*Scoffs.* "What could you really tell me about Kyoto? I at least know you don't have the accent, so you're not from around here either."

Kato: "You'll see."

-From there, Kato continued to bring Sayaka around the assassination capital of the country; they took a visit to Heian Shrine (which was open late for the concluding ceremonies of Vesak), where they gave a quick prayer to one of the most important sites of Japan's history. Then they proceeded towards a traditional Japanese handicraft shop, where Kato comped a hinamatsuri for Sayaka. There came a chance to try out an experimental sake; one of the mainstays of the former capital, before settling fully with two packs of street yudofu, allowing them to walk through the Philosopher's Path and have a seat to enjoy it.-

S. Sayaka: "*Takes a bite of the yudofu.* "Wow, this delicious dish is made from boiled tofu and kelp?"

Kato: "*Looks straight ahead, having already finished his portable dish.* "Indeed."

S. Sayaka: "Alright, I take it back; you are pretty versed in this culture; I'm learning quite bit going out with you."

Kato: "I'm not from around here, but I did have," *Checks his watch.* "Plenty of time to learn all of thi-" *Beat. He turns to her quickly, which she notices.* "going out with' me?"

S. Sayaka: "Yeah. This has been a date, right?"

Kato: "... Yeah... You're right." *Looks down, then to the side at the trees that are beginning to lose their Hanami bloom.* "*Why is this so hard? I didn't bat an eye last time we met... Is this really because... I was really in love with her before everything happened?"

S. Sayaka: "Wait a second..."

Kato: "*Breaks off from that train of thought to notice Sayaka's change in demeanor.* "What is it?"

S. Sayaka: "*Furiously throws her yudofu container into a nearby trash can. She immediately*
returns to point straight at Kato.* "YOU!"

Kato: *Curious.* "Me?"

S. Sayaka: "You've been doing this to keep me away from Okajima-kun!"

Kato: "What?"

S. Sayaka: "He's with Rina right now, being a total sleazeball, isn't he!?"

Kato: *Oh...*

S. Sayaka: "He better not have done anything to my little sister! You're taking me there now!"

Kato: *Nods.* "Alright."

-They urgently return to the Flying Spur and are immediately on a literal crash course back to Kurama Kyoto.-

S. Sayaka: *Grumbling in the passenger's spot.* "For his sake, and yours, Okajima-kun better not be doing anything naughty to Rina..."

Kato: "By any chance, if they are, and I do emphasize 'if,' could there be a scenario in which Rina asked him for... You know?"

S. Sayaka: "No way!"

Kato: "How are you so sure? You know what she's like when entranced, or intoxicated?"

S. Sayaka: "Are you saying drunk consent IS consent?"

Kato: "Some of the world's most famous, beloved couples got and/or stayed together through drink and dance before. It isn't as jarring as you'd think that one thing was brought upon by such an event."

S. Sayaka: "You expect me to believe that?"

Kato: "You're telling me a nightclub or bar is not to interact with others?"

S. Sayaka: "It's to interact with your truly significant other. Not a sleazeball."

Kato: "You keep using that word, and yet I thought you already verified that Okajima-san is not one of them."

S. Sayaka: "What are you getting at with that?"

Kato: "I think the second you consented he's a good boyfriend was the second you consented he could have a moment with your little sister."

S. Sayaka: "Well it ain't happening tonight. Now pick it up."

Kato: "..." *Accelerates.*
They make it to Kurama Kyoto. The fact that there was a line waiting to go in slipped Sayaka's mind at first, and she was unsure how they were going to get in without being kicked out, but Kato had it covered while she looked away from the venue for thought.

"Terminal" by Ayumi Hamasaki plays in the nightclub's loudspeakers.

Kato: "Wow, this is some beat." *Nods his head in tune.*

S. Sayaka: "Alright, where are they?" *Looks around actively.*

Kato: *Goes to whisper into her ear.* "Why don't you get a drink first, before the staff believes you're some lunatic or cop?"

S. Sayaka: *Pushes him aside.* "I don't need your advice!"

Security: *Notices the violent behavior and walks over to them.* "Ma'am, is something wrong?"

S. Sayaka: "Eh!?"

Kato: *Quickly grabs Syaka's close hand.* "Oh no; just a spat on a fellow lady she hated, and I was just telling her to calm down."

S. Sayaka: *Pivots her grip to lightly sting Kato.*

Kato: *Closes his eyes gleefully.* "Carry on your duties, sir."

Security: "If you say so." *Leaves.*

S. Sayaka: *Waits for him to disappear into the crowd before shaking Kato's hand away.* "That was your fault, you know."

Kato: "What? Keeping us from being booted?"

S. Sayaka: *Scoffs.* "How'd you know about that anyway?"

Kato: "Not my first run-in with the rulebook. Now, about that drink..."

The pseudo-couple go to get their drinks. After one sip, Sayaka did indeed feel as though there were less threatening eyes pointed at her... Though there was still the bachelors.

Sayaka: *Scans the dancefloor.* "They're not there..."

Kato: "Why are you looking here if you think they're... Doing it?"

Sayaka: "M-maybe they... Didn't start." *Refocuses.* "They better not have started!"

Kato: "Regardless, we'll have to go up. There's private rooms there; they'll probably have rented one out if they wanted a moment to themselves."

They indeed do just that; up the stairs, and through the long hallway of lounge rooms. The rooms soundproofed and without occupancy names or windows, so Kato and Sayaka were forced to knock
on every door to attract the attendants' attention. This has led to the thresholds revealing a lone
operator who's helping himself to all of the finest winery, to a pair of off-duty staff sleeping in, to
subtle signs of a assortment of illegal drugs being ingested by a set of three. -

S. Sayaka: *They proceed to the next door to knock.* "This is what happens in all Kyoto
nightclubs?"

Kato: "Don't say that sentence again. And there's not many better places around the world."
*Knocks on the door.*

-After a few seconds, the door opens... To reveal Okajima!-

Okajima: *Does not look at the two of them as he answers the door, as he is bowing his head.*
"Please forgive us!"

Kato/Sayaka: "WHAT!?"

Okajima: *Looks up upon recognizing the voices.* "Oh! Ohno-san! Sayaka-san!"

S. Rina: "Neesan!"

S. Sayaka: *Recognizes that they are not only all fully clothed, but they are wearing vinyl gloves
too.* "What... Were you guys doing in there?"

Okajima: "Ah; appreciating the merchandise."

Kato: *Concentrates on a wine stain on Okajima's shirt.* "Is that what you call this?"

- S. Sayaka: *Pushes her little sister aside to see the private room for herself; it is completely
wrecked, with wine bottles broken everywhere, the plasma screen destroyed, only one light
functioning, the couch shredded, and so on.* "What the fu-?"

Kato: "What is all of this?"

Okajima: "Well... I had another friend, who's going through some strange times right now... He
owns another nightclub, and I wanted to help him a little bit. As a thanks of some sort, for being a
good friend."

Kato: "..."

S. Rina: "We thought it best that we should give this club a little distraction with this."

S. Sayaka: "Oh..."

Kato: 'I'm sure your friend feels this is very considerate... But he might also find it disturbing."

Okajima: "Maybe you're right... Might some comical staff pics help?" *Holds out his camera,
scrolling through the digital film to show frames of the security guards having alcohol thrown into
their faces, the manager chewing out one server, and the silhouette of a very unfortunate
situation... *

S. Sayaka: "Heheh, these are pretty nice." *Refocuses.* "So nothing's going on... Too much,
between you two?"

S. Rina: "What? Of course not!"

Okajima: "Excuse me?"

S. Sayaka: *Blushes.* "Right... I think I've seen enough today. I'll be at the car." *Departs.*

Okajima: "Ohno-san, what the Hell's going on?"

Kato: "I'll take care of it. You two keep enjoying yourselves; we'll wait." *Leaves as well.*

-Back at the Bentley sedan...-

Kato: *Returns to the driver's seat of the vehicle, looking outside his close window so that he does not see Sayaka as she enters the passenger's seat. He supports his head with his arm between it and the window sill.*

S. Sayaka: *Closes the passenger door, completing her entry.* "I made quite the fool of myself, didn't I?"

Kato: "Eh..."

S. Sayaka: "Look, Ohno-kun, I'm sorry for constantly accusing you and your friends of everything... You've been nothing but an honest, nice guy, and I've just been the most paranoid jerk lately. So I say, let's start your Kyoto tour all over again, huh? Show me a real date; you may just get a kiss for it." *Winks.*

Kato: "!!" *Blushes deeply.*

S. Sayaka: "Oh, that's a new face. I didn't know you could get flustered, Ohno-kun."

Kato: "I'm sorry, Sayaka-san, but I can't do that."


Kato: "Sayaka-san, let me ask you something."

S. Sayaka: "What?"

Kato: "Do you remember your time in Aichi International?"

S. Sayaka: "Aichi International? How did-" *Mind flickers.* "Oh right, I did tell you I went there before... Well, yeah. I remember that time."

Kato: "And do you remember a man named Minoru Takeuchi? Who he's like?"

S. Sayaka: "How do you...? Yeah, I do. I remember too that he was a total dick, well, up until the weird incident in fifth year."

Kato: "What happened then?"
S. Sayaka: "Well, Takeuchi started a fight with... That person who I told you about; the one who always goes to and from school, not stopping to talk to anyone; suddenly disappeared before the seventh year. He knew how to handle himself, and he made Takeuchi pay for testing it." *Shakes her head.* "But wait, why are you making me..."

Kato: *Turns his head to look at her, with the same gaze of his Hatred Bloodlust that he used on Takeuchi; the same one he knew the Shiroyuki Sisters saw when they were some of the many witnesses to the event.*

S. Sayaka: *Immediately realizes that Kazuhiko Ohno in the present is indeed Kazuhiro Kato from her past.* "You... YOU-!"

Kato: *Relinquishes his Hatred Bloodlust.* "I'll take you to your sister's place; she and Okajima had me know in case they ever got in trouble." *Starts up the Audi and gets going.*

S. Sayaka: *Sinks into her seat as she looks at Kato with utter disbelief. Neither of them say another word to each other, not even a goodbye, when they arrive at the destination, and Sayaka slowly departs and disappears from view through the complex's front entrance.*

Kato: *Proceeds to drive off, ready to chauffeur Okajima and Rina when they are finished with their own business.*
One romance is forced to go down the drain... But does that mean another has to go with it?

Hayami and Chiba have always had problems keeping their relationship together when they couldn't find anything they could talk about. This time, however, their friends are ready to keep it from happening again.

-With the academic year for all college students finished, there was many who rejoiced, like the many members of the AssUniv Program. There were many who were indifferent, such as Kato; business was business, as usual. But there were also the discouraged... Such as Chiba and Hayami.-

-It should be noted that they do not miss the college stress and the ludicrous assessments... They do miss discussing it every now and then. Now that Chiba is an architect in all but name, and Hayami is dead-set on being a structural engineer, this only made sense. But now the projects are done, and they can only look at the Olympics design portals for 2020 for so long. The punk and alternative interest they recently begun sharing has yielded nothing new either... Which means the two stoic snipers are now without topics to talk about on any of their get-togethers.-

-Within Nyurifu Rikkyo, the loudspeakers play "Kingdom of Rock" by Dave Rodgers.-

Chiba/Hayami: *Both sit at a third-floor high-stool table, looking away from each other and fiddling with the straws in their drinks, possibly feeling very uneasy about their situation.*

AssUniv: *Scattered all around the area, taking notice at the pair, with metaphorical sweat drops falling down the backs of their heads.* "They're not doing too well..."

Kanzaki: "I fear they have not accepted the requirement of silence for intimate relationships yet."

Terasaka: *Stumped.* "What?"

Isogai: "Inevitably, Terasaka-san, a couple will become so attached with each other that they could sit in a quiet room just looking at each other, and they'll be totally cool with it."

Okano: *Referring to herself and Maehara.* "We're not there yet..."

Maehara: "Life's too short to be quiet just because you want to!"

Nagisa: *Aside.* "Didn't Kanzaki-san just say silence is a requirement?"

Naoko: "Well, until Hayami-san and Chiba-kun do grow past that obstacle, I say we should help them."

Fuwa: "Right... But where do we start?"
AssUniv: *Shadows appear over their eyes.* "..."

-All go up to the fourth floor VIP platform to get Kato on this... Until they realize there is a sign on the door that reads: "Locked; Manager is near the coat check if you need him." But then turning the sign around and take the glued piece of paper saying the same thing reads: "AssUniv, I'll be down in the basement, repairing and augmenting our KAM AtTac Suits, having put this off for long enough. This will most likely occupy me for the rest of the evening. Unless there is something of utmost concern, I must ask not to be disturbed."-

Kayano: "Well, that's helpful..."

Kurahashi: "Who should we go to now?"

Yada: "Irina-sensei, maybe?"

AssUniv: *Initially, they all laugh at the idea of doing that, before they simultaneously stop and consider it.*

-After just a little bit of time, they seek out Irina, who they find chilling by herself at the second-floor bar.-

Yada: "Irina-sensei, we need your help!"

Irina: *Looking a bit flustered while tensely holding her glass of mojito.* "O-on what?"

Nakamura: "On keeping our two friends from dying of boredom."

Irina: *Beat.* "What?"

Kataoka: "Chiba-kun and Hayami-san are having trouble communicating ever since school stopped. They need to talk to each other more. Do you have any tips for us on how we can make that happen?"

Irina: "Oh... Sorry, everybody, but I can't help with that. It sounds long, and I've got to work harder on making it up to Karasuma after recent revelations." *Briefly eyes over to Naoko, who can't help but try to break gaze from.*

Itona: * Raises his hand.* "Why aren't you doing that right now, then?"

Irina: "I just tried, okay? But he's a hard man to shake; you all know that!"

Naoko: "Oh, so true..."

- With yet another loss of a potential allies for this mission, AssUniv realize now that they will have to rely on themselves.-

-Kurahashi, with common knowledge that Yada had often danced to Jazz alongside Hayami before, believes that the former can bring it up again around Hayami to get the ball rolling with Chiba. This is despite the protests that they were relatively silent even still back then, but Yada commits to the plan anyways.-
"Listen to My Heart" by Lolita plays on the loudspeakers.

-Yada takes a tall stool and brings it over to the table the two are residing, magazine in hand.-

Yada: "Hey, Hayami-san! Look what I found in Kato-kun's archives!" *Holds out the cover in front of the tsundere sniper's face; it is a literal Jazz magazine dating back to the late 80s.* "Can you imagine the buzz behind the genre that was made that long ago? Want to read it through? With Chiba-kun too? We'll have to take it to a little quieter, secluded area though, as we won't be able to really read well here." *Gazes around the third floor for available spots.*

Hayami/Chiba: "..."

Yada: *Refocuses on them.* "Hayami-san? You heard?"

Hayami: "I did; I just don't really want to budge from here."

Yada: "I see... Very well." *Gasps silently to herself.* Could it be she no longer likes Jazz!? Or are we ourselves drifting further apart too!? Oh, Hayami-san, what have we become! *Sobbingly departs from the site.*

Mimura: "That didn't work..."

-Back to the drawing board...-

Okajima: *Pounds his palm.* "I got it!"

Kataoka: "Of all people!?"

Okajima: *Pouts* "What does that mean?"

Sosuke: "Forget it; what have you got?"

Okajima: "Okay... Well, Hayami-san and Chiba-san both have it in for me whenever I talk about something perverted, right?"

Okano: "Yeah. So?"

Okajima: "So... I think I can get them to unite and really feel comfortable talking to each other again if I can simultaneously trigger them with my interest at the same place!"

Okuda: "Self-scapegoating for the sake of another union..."

Kurahashi: "That may just be awful and crazy enough to work."

Sugino: "It's worth a shot. Get on out there."

-Okajima does just that, holding a secondary camera filled with... Suggestive images, to say the least.-

Okajima: *Is within two meters of the sniper duo as he declares his greetings.* "Chiba-kun! Come take a look at-!"
Chiba/Hayami: "No." *Without even looking at Okajima, they thrust their palms into his head and chest simultaneously.*

AssUniv: "WHAT!!"

Okajima: *Falls over onto his back.* "Oof!" *When he reopens his eyes, he realizes his camera is sent flying into the air, before crashing into the ground several feet away and breaking. He immediately runs up to its remains and cries as he holds them in his hands.* "Noo! I hardly knew you all!"

Itona: "Wait; didn't he-?"

Okajima: *Tearfully and tightly embraces the fragmented lens and its frame.* "I never backed you girls up on a drive!"

Nakamura: "That's just sad..."

Karma: "On three accounts."

Naoko: *Sighs.* "Next?"

-Kanzaki was next to take stage.-

Kanzaki: "Everyone, I think I have a new idea. I've known for a while that Hayami-san liked reading; I could notice her peering over to witness the covers on the books I rented out from the local library during our days at Kunugigaoka Junior High. I don't know why she ever tried to talk to me first about them, however..."

Okajima: *Slouches back on his chair and looks away with a load of guilt written on his face.*

Isogai: "Kanzaki-san, Yada-san tried doing the same thing with an old magazine; do you really think a few books can succeed where that failed?"

Kanzaki: "Hayami-san and Chiba-kun have both noted their interest in a certain series; Twelfth Hour Byroad. With an upcoming television series coming up based on it, they've been wanting to find a copy of the book for awhile; I think if I were to read it near them, they'd be piqued and engage."

Sugino: "Forgive my language, Kanzaki-san, but that's damn good thinking there!"

Kanzaki: *Giggles in response.*

Nakamura: Suck-up.

Yada: "We'd all love to see this work, Kanzaki-san, so I'm going to give you some tips against our foiled attempts; let them come to you, rather than you to them."

Okajima: "Oh yeah; don't want to be shoved over like I did."

Sugino: "To think anyone would push Kanzaki-san like that, though, is preposterous."

Fuwa: Very sucky-uppy.
Kanzaki: "Thank you, you two. I will heed that advice." *Leaves.*

-Kanzaki proceeds to a booth on the third floor, situated just four meters away from the table that the duo are at. Taking out the paperback book from her small cross-body purse was enough to intrigue Hayami, which Chiba saw and got interested in as well. Kanzaki opened up the literature, with the covers pointed straight at the sniper duo. Quite clearly, she is about to make them interact again... Until...-

Sugino: "!?!" *Looks past Kanzaki across from her booth table.*

Patron 1: *Has taken the seat at Kanzaki's table.* "Hey there, pretty lady. By yourself tonight?"

Kanzaki: *Notices the fellow college student, closing her book and beginning to blush up.* "Oh, uh-"

Patron 2: *Appears from behind Kanzaki, looking over the back support of her spot.* "What's your name, first?"

Kanzaki: *Is becoming even more flustered.* "Oh, Kanzaki. But I'm-

Patron 3: *Lays his hand on the book resting on the table.* "Ah, a read-y type. You should know, I'm into those."

Nagisa: "What the Hell is going on here? Why is everyone suddenly swarming Kanzaki-san now?"

Karma: "Geez, as if Kanzaki-san's regularly reserved personality wasn't enough, the calm, soothing feel of a book both physically and mentally makes her an appealing target for alpha-style bachelors."

Okano: "The poor lady has no idea what to do..."

Sugino: *How dare they!* *Leaves the cover of their stakeout booths to confront the unruly males.* "Hey, you three!"

Kanzaki: "!!"

Patrons: *Look over to Sugino.* "What's your beef, buzzkill?"

Sugino: "Ka-" *Clears his throat.* "The lady clearly doesn't want you troubling her. Leave her alone."

Patrons: *Surround him.* "Make us, roadkill."

Hayami/Chiba: *Brandishing nightclub-security telescopic batons, and appearing behind everyone.* "With pleasure."

Patrons: *Look back slowly, and cower in fear.* "EEP!" *They immediately run off.*

Kanzaki: *Sighs with relief.* "Thank you for that, all of you."
Sugino: *Shakes his head.* "Don't you worry about that; they were asking for it." *Turns over to the sniper duo.* "Right, you tw-" *He and Kanzaki realize they are back at their tall table... And they soon know why too.*

Karma: "Hm, it seems that in their frantic haste, that one drunkard had taken the book due to never changing his grip when he touched the piece."

Nagisa: "Hayami-san and Chiba-san both knew that when they returned to their natural habitat too..."

AssUniv: "JUST OUR LUCK!"

-After many more repeated attempts, from Itona asking for camera aid on his newest drone model, to Yoshida wondering if there is a convenient structure to mounting a scope on a motorcycle helmet, and then some. Finally, it became clear that the solution to Chiba and Hayami's situation would not come tonight. So they slept off the frustration of their failures and decided to try again when Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub opened up for the evening tomorrow. When time did not give them the answer they were looking for, the student-assassins had concluded they should merely monitor the sniper duo's activity for the night... Until they arrived later than them, and they were not at the tall-stool table!-

Terasaka: "What the Hell? Where'd they go!?"

Sosuke: "Where could they have gone?"

Kayano: "I know who might know that." *Takes out her smartphone.* "Ritsu!"

Ritsu: *Appears on the screen.* "Hello everybody!"

Nakamura: *Looks over Kayano's shoulder.* "Aha, our 24/7 e-footprint finder."

Kataoka: *Bows forward closer to Kayano's phone.* "Ritsu, can you cycle through the CCTV in the nightclub to find Hayami-san and Chiba-kun?"

Ritsu: "I'm already aware of their whereabouts; they reserved a private booth."

Yoshida: "What? What are they doing in there?"

Ritsu: "PDA."

AssUniv: "!!"

Isogai: "Really now?"

Maehara: "Hours earlier, they're having trouble talking, and now they're smooching up the place?"

Karma: "This brings a whole new meaning to hot and cold... Or hot to cold."

Naoko: *Metaphorical sweat drop.* "Somewhere in there is a mean implication, Karma-kun..."

- The next day, during the brief break of their obligatory assassination training...-
Hayami was being swarmed with questions by the rest of the ladies of AssUniv.

Hayami: "Sooooo... You all know we had a special moment last night, huh?"

Okano: "Needless to say, we are chock full of wonders."

Naoko: "But the most prominent one is, how'd it come to that so quickly? Weren't you and Chiba-kun in a bad phase just a little earlier?"

Hayami: "Oh we were. But we came across some, shall we say, revelations, during that interval."

Hazama: "What kind of revelations?"

Hayami: "Well..."

-Remembrance time.-

*Conversing to each other only through their eyes.*

Hayami: You've been taking notice at how much our friends have been trying to interact with us today, right?

Chiba: Who couldn't?

Hayami: They care so much about us in our compromised state.

Chiba: It's like five years ago.

Hayami: Heh, yeah. Only they are trying to really help us through this time.

Chiba: Do you think they succeeded?

Hayami: Seeing as how we're communicating now, I'd say so. But not in the way they imagined...

Chiba: That just means... Guess what, Hayami?

Hayami: What?

Chiba: *Gives a light grin.* We just took our relationship to the next level. At long last.

Hayami: *Smiles with him.* Oh, you're absolutely right...

-End remembrance.-

Hayami: "So, we're finally content with being silently in love with each other; it makes us realize that when we do converse, it will be that much more precious. And we learned that thanks to you guys. So, thanks."

Fuwa: *Prods her elbows on the nearest ladies.* "You hear that? We helped!"
Kanzaki: "It's a nice, fuzzy feeling."

Kayano: "Just don't go quiet on us, alright? We don't get that quiet links like you and Chiba-kun do."

Naoko: "Yeah, especially on me; Lord knows I need to listen to you all a lot more after all this time."

Hayami: "Heh, will do."

Nakamura: "How do you think this conversation is going for the guys?"

AssUniv girls: "Hm..."

-On the other side of the lounging area, where the guys were R&Ring...-

Karma: "Pleasure to see you embrace your more effeminate side, Chiba."

Terasaka: "That sounds a little nuts to me..."

Nagisa: "How do I break the silence against Sakura-chan, like you did, Chiba-san?"

Takebayahshi: "That is the epitome of 2D girls..."

Maehara: "You think you can help me do the same with Okano-san?"

Chiba: "You guys..."
Hara has a secret tendency to act as the team mother for her fellow AssUniv Program members, aptly fitting for her great home-economics skills. And it will surely serve her well when she completes college and pursues her dream to be a professional homemaker. But that has to start somewhere. Kato may have a chance to help with that.

-Another two A.M. tick marks yet another end of the hours to enjoy at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub; it's closing time.-

-"Loving Eurobeat" by Dejo and Bon plays on a small boom box situated on a dancefloor table.-

-Kato, as the regional manager, makes a thorough round of the venue, making sure every piece of waste has been disposed, every stain wiped, and every piece of furniture pristine. Of course, all of the fellow employees were originally there to do that, but always made all of that sure for himself.-

-But one thing he did not expect to find still there was one other worker; inside the kitchen.-

\[ \text{Kato: *Walks through the double-hinged doors leading to the cooking area of the club.* "Hara-san?"} \]

\[ \text{Hara: *Is seen washing what now remains a small stack of dishes.* "Oh! Hi, Kato-kun!"} \]

\[ \text{Kato: "I've already seen," *Checks his watch.* "Everyone else off, including our peers; you're not on the clock now, Hara-san."} \]

\[ \text{Hara: "Oh that's alright; I wasn't going to do much when I get back to the Hyatt Regency anyways. Better, more meaningful stuff to do here."} \]

\[ \text{Kato: "How long has this been going on?"} \]

\[ \text{Hara: "Since we continued our active employment here."} \]

\[ \text{Kato: "That would be..." *Checks his watch.* "Almost two months? What required that much attention?"} \]

\[ \text{Hara: "A lot, really!" *Goes over to one.* "Take this for example." *She opens up most of the left-side head-level cabinets, revealing all of the porcelain and glass are arranged much more professionally.* "No more fumbling; much more in-and-out dish taking, as it should be."} \]

\[ \text{Kato: *Nods with impressment.*} \]

\[ \text{Hara: "Plus, lined the walls up with a non-flammable spray I got from a DIY construction store, along with some disposable tear-resistant gloves, so risks are much less for the guys and gals in} \]
here."

Kato: "Nice."

Hara: "And for the waiters and waitresses, I asked some of the Captains to get the grip-tech you used on our suits to form gloves that they wear that will never unintentionally let go of the platters. Very efficient, if I do say so myself."

Kato: "I'd say so too. Your intent when you're finished here is to go into homemaking, yes?"

Hara: "Well, it will start with that; but I'm hoping to ascend into its management later."

Kato: *Holds his hand to his chin with a little grin.* "I see... Anyways, it is," *Checks his watch.* "Late right now, so save whatever else you need to do for another evening."

-The next morning at the Hyatt Regency...-

Hara: *Having a conversation with Kato as he and she take opposing sides of the opened room door.* "Huh? Really?"

Kato: "Yeah; some of the Kato Family in Nara Prefecture needs help getting their building standards straight. We have some savvy folk down there, but no true experts, perhaps like you. What do you say? Care to give it a shot?"

Hara: "You want me to homemake a whole barracks?"

Kato: "Oh no no; it's a hotel."

Hara: "!!"

Kato: "Karasuma and Irina have both given you a three-day leave from training to pursue this activity if you wish to partake, so you won't be missing anything either way. But you'll need to decide now."

Hara: "This... Could be just the moment I need to break into the industry, isn't it?"

Kato: "It could, I won't lie."

Hara: "Then by all means, I'm taking it."

Kato: "Very good; we'll be departing at," *Checks his watch.* "Noon. You should get what you'll need, give a quick notification and goodbye to your friends, as I'll be doing the same, and we'll be on the first train there."

Hara: "Sounds like a plan."

-At noon, both Kato and Hara left Kyoto on a 1.25-hour journey to the capital Nara. While Kato looked over his netbook's screen, Hara gazed out the window to look at the new prefecture. The vast sky she witnesses outside is enough for her to realize that there is opportunity everywhere; not just in Kyoto, or Tokyo, or even in Nara where they are going; everyone's always going to need a good home. She briefly takes a stare at the distracted Kato, wondering if he has ever thought the same thing when he conducts his operations for the Yakuza overseas...-
They eventually arrive in Nara, and after briefly setting themselves up at the Nikko, soon decide to take up their tasks. Kato had another reason to be in Nara, of course; all of his R&D facilities were given the specifications of the Mutated Tentacle DNA and were told to create their best counteragent; he would be going to each to see what progress was made, starting with this one.

Hara would not be on her own at this experimental residential area, however; Kato had three of his Captains oversee the development: Junichi Arai, a former civil engineer for Chiyoda Corp., Barach Adelman, former IDF Matkal Commando, and Ralph Von Aachen, former mechanical engineer for the GSG-9. They will be Hara's assistants and bodyguards for the duration of this practice.

Hara reaches the address she was assigned to, finding the mid-sized danchi hotel there. Three people of different ethnicities were there to greet her as she gets out of the bus.

German Man: "Hello there; you must be Hara Sumire, yes?"

Hara: "Yes. And by your accent, you're Mr. Aachen?"

Aachen: "Nods." "Indeed."

Adelman: "And I'm Adelman. You can address me as Barach if you wish."

Arai: "As the only Japanese guy here, it makes sense I'm Junichi Arai."

Hara: "Gives a small laugh."

Arai: "I try for a little humor."

Hara: "You all speak pretty funnily. Very familiar to how your leader does. Did you, get it from him?"

Aachen: "Heh, maybe we caught a bit of it. But we were mostly like this."

Adelman: "We have plenty reason to have differing patterns than others; we are Yakuza after all."

Hara: "Right... So, this danchi?"

Arai: "Ah yes. Miss Hara, as you can probably tell, this building is slated to house a large bunch of our brothers and sisters, as well as potential newcomers. We picked a danchi-style interior to make it look more bureaucratic; nobody likes to bother the government."

Adelman: "Plus, it still has that company-to-employee relationship that is one inch short of family. We're also a family too." *All three cling in a semicircle shoulder huddle.*

Hara: "Nods." "Duly noted."

Crechen: "So the exterior and the layout of the interior cannot be manipulated in any way. But, any cosmetic choices, new furniture placements, and so on, so forth are all yours."

Hara: "Let me take a look then."
The four of them enter the building, looking through the rooms Hara and a small team would have to modify. They were dorm-dominant, with half of the available space there reserved for sleep; which makes sense when nobody is really meant to stay in these for too long on any given day. The other half consisted of a 30% dining table area (though it might be used far more for mission handling), a 10% kitchen, 5% bathroom, and 5% washer area, which also leads to the balcony outside.

Hara: "Seems like a simple start."

Adelman: "Well, none of us are truly artisans."

Aachen: "But it should mean it will be easy for you to modify, right?"

Hara: "Should be." *Turns around to look them all in the eyes.* "You guys got any preferences?"

Arai: "Uh, concealed boxes for tools, and weapons-"""

Adelman: "Oh, especially the weapons, man." *Turns his head to Von Aachen.*

Aachen: "Hey, you scaring off your date with an HK416 is your fault."

Adelman: "It was yours! I held it up to make you put it away!"

Hara: "Um, sirs-!"

Aachen: "You didn't have to throw it in the air!"

Adelman: "You wanted to know which one was out!"

Hara: "Capt-"

Arai: *Hand-gestures her to stop.* "Shut both your traps! Show some respect for the new young lady!"

Hara: 'New young lady?'

Adelman: "Ah, right." *Refocuses.* "Miss Hara, we'd like a means to hide our utilities."

Aachen: "Good for nobody who comes in here to see those things we carry."

Hara: "Anything else?"

Adelman: "Multi-hazard countermeasures in every room would be nice too; if one of us causes a small explosion, at least we don't have to bother everyone else with it."

Hara: "Okay, so, like a fire extinguisher in every spot?"

Aachen: "More than that; non-flammable and cuttable everything."

Adelman: "Along with some defusing kits, packed hazmats..."

Arai: "Oh, oxygen tanks too, maybe behind the dressers?"
Hara: *Is befuddled by the combined response.*

Arai: "What do you say, Miss Hara? Up for the task?"

Hara: "Uh, sure. Show me to the team and we'll start getting to work on it."

-But the damage to Hara's concentration on the project had been unintentionally done by her own clients. She tried throwing out possible iterations of the suggestions for the housing, but nothing seemed to make sense, nor prove satisfactory to her standards. Hara was not sure how she was to relate to them regarding such wild answers compared to, well, what kind of house she'd be expecting to manage in the future.-

-Today proved to be disappointing in terms of development. Hara would have to return to Nikko and spend the night by herself, as Kato called in noting his extended stay at the prefectural research facility to oversee a potential counteragent. She was only left with the encouraging words of the Yakuza boss, which was not truly enough, as the morning after was not too great either.-

-Faced with an event horizon decision, Hara decides to call up Kato once more at noon.-

   Kato: "Hara-san? What's going on?"

   Hara: "I can't do it..."

   Kato: "What?"

   Hara: "I can't be the homemaker here."

   Kato: "What happened? Did my Captains offend you?"

   Hara: "Oh God, no. It's just... I asked them what they might like in a renovation and redecoration... but I have no idea how I should put this into the room's perspective. Everything I think of wouldn't seem fit to my standard."

   Kato: "Forgive me, Hara-san."

   Hara: "Huh? For what?"

   Kato: "'Your' standard?"

   Hara: "'My standard'?"

   Kato: "This is your homemaking project, Hara-san. But this won't be your home."

   Hara: "!!"

   Kato: "And if this isn't yours, then you know it will be set to different standards - Yakuza standards."

   Hara: "Right..."

   Kato: "You need to be able to observe and comprehend these different viewpoints. You wouldn't
give an upscale residential area a suburban backyard, lest it full of statues and fountains. So what is fitting and ideal for the mind of a Yakuza?"

Hara: "I think... I have an idea now. Thanks; talk to you soon." *Hangs up.* Okay... Working time. *Goes over to her contractual teammates.* "Everyone; new plan. We've got some big things setting in now; contact an engineering crew."

-And for the next twelve hours, the whole crew was hard at work. Bitter work. But they got all the alpha designs that they really wanted to ready, and Hara was able to send them home just before midnight. She herself decided to spend the night in one of the danchi building's rooms, with the on-call approval of Kato (who was, and still is, doing the same thing at his own site).-

-In the morning of Hara's final day in Nara...-

-The three eccentric Captains of the Kato Family park outside and enter the danchi building.-

Hara: *Wakes up in response to the clamors once the three are inside.* Oh! They're here! *Goes to the service intercom and presses the microphone button.* "Hey everybody! Come on up to the fourth; I'll tell you all about the new stuff we laid out."

Aachen: *Works one of the intercoms in the lobby.* Alright, Miss Hara; we're on our way. *Gestures to Adelman and Arai to go up.*

Hara: *Rendezvous with them when they reach the floor.* Hello, Captains.

Adelman: "Why call us that? We're not your Captains."

Hara: "Well, you guys are just too official to refer to you by, well, 'you guys,' right?"

Arai: "She raises a good concern; this Program is a high priority to the Boss, too; she might even be on our level, if not a bit more."

Aachen: "Which is all the more reason for her to just converse with us familiarly. So, Miss Hara-"

Adelman: Just after he says that?

Aachen: "I see you and the team we assigned were pretty hard at work the last two days, hm?"

Hara: "Oh, very. The first thing was that a danchi, like a real, non-Yakuza hotel, needed a form of communication global to it, right? So, an intercom. Even strangers coming in here won't believe it to be a barracks with this as the central system."

Arai: *Snaps his fingers before pointing at her.* "That is indeed smart."

Adelman: "I'm really liking where this is going, presuming it's only the start."

Aachen: "Go on, Miss Hara; don't leave us hanging with your idea of an ideal Yakuza home. Keep going!"

Hara: "Sure; let's see, next is-"
-But before she could indeed continue, there is an ensuing shattering sound from down below.-

Captains: *Instinctively pull out their sidearms, situated from their waist (Adelman), belly (Arai), and shoulder (Aachen) holsters respectively.*

Hara: *Crouches down.* This was not part of my surprise!

Arai: *Takes a knee to face her.* We didn't think so, to clarify.

Aachen: Who do you think they are, Adelman?

Adelman: *Slowly makes his way to the stair case and uses its bouncing echoes to discern the voices.* Robbers, most definitely. I guess they figure that this newly-made danchi got a lot of rents.

Hara: Well, I mean, who wouldn't?

Arai: Very well; they shouldn't be too tough; we can get them right now; full force even, if we must.

Hara: *Suddenly, scenarios play out in her mind.* You guys can do that, but I think there's a way all of us can show what we've got.

Captains: How's that?

-While Hara relays the instructions to three of the Captains of the Kato Family, the eight robbers continue to rummage through the lobby's base contents, disappointed by the lack of things to really pillage.-

Robber 1: "Man, there's barely anything here."

Robber 2: "Should've known that construction company leaving yesterday meant it wasn't really ready yet."

Robber 3: "Keep it down, guys; there were many here, and they were working on furbishing this place; there's something of value here!"

Robber 4: "There better be."

Robber 5: "Next time, be sure to scope out a place before you decide it's pilfer-worthy."

Robber 6: "'Piilfer-worthy?'"

Robber 7: "Got a better word, dumbass?"

Robber 8: "Hey, lay off; let's just find whatever we can."

-They go up one floor, looking through every room.-

Robber 1: "Hey, someone's been here, guys." *Is on one knee, looking down at the ground.*

Robber 3: "How are you so sure?"
Robber 1: "Smudge right here." *Rubs his index finger along the ground.* "And, call me crazy, but i think the ground is a bit hollow." *Rises up and takes a step on the hardwood; the sound barely gives off such a notion.*

Robber 3: "A secret cache?"

Robber 1: *Turns to him.* "Heheh, most definitely."

Adelman: *Revealed to be inside the wardrobe that they've not the time to look into yet, pushes on a special button in the wall (accessible through a secret opening), which causes the hollow floor to open up, forcing Robber 1 into the hole.*

Robber 1: "!!" *His feet immediately fall onto a small rolling cart that rolls deeper into the floor's structure, forcing most of him into the hollow ground, such that by the time the cart reaches its course, he is sitting with only his shoulders up above the floor.*

Robber 3: "Whoa, what the-!"

Adelman: *In his left hand is a remote which automatically closes the doors to all of the second floor's dorms, electronically locking them all in. He then springs out of the wardrobe, sprinting over to 3, but not before punting 1 in the head, and smashing his pistol's magazine into the former's face.*

-Arai, Aachen, and Hara were able to deal with Robbers 2 and 4 through 7 similarly in the rooms that they were hiding in. By chance, 6 was able to escape the worst of their wrath and tries busting through the danchi room's window, but is, rather unfortunately, met with a net that auto-generates an electric current in response to glass fragmentation. Their screams in terror and pain bewilder 8, who was trying his hardest to pry open 1 and 3's door open. Eventually, the anxiety becomes too great for him that he abandons his partners in crime and intends to escape through the stairs he went up. Adelman's remote, however, also activated the steps' countermeasures, in the form of knee-high star barriers. They immediately fold out of their imprint of the stair walls to smack 8 in his lower legs, tripping him over and sending him tumbling down the stairs, knocking himself out.-

-An hour later...-

-An Aston Martin Vanquish Volante drives into the front lot of the Kato Family's danchi building, which spawns Kazuhiko, brandishing one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols. He scopes out the whole lobby before proceeding to the stairs, but not before noticing the poor robber with a large lump on his head from his aforementioned fall. Kato sighed with relief upon finding that Hara and his three regional Captains had the situation under control.-

-Another hour later...-

-The four men and woman saw to the robbers being arrested and taken away from the parking lot.-

Kato: *Turns to Hara and bows.* "I offer you my apologies, Hara-san. I was genuinely not expecting sour company to hinder our business here."

Hara: "You don't have to apologize, Kato-kun. It's just like you said; you couldn't have known."

Aachen: "We made sure nothing hurt her, boss."
Kato: "Very good on you; all of you. Did Hara-san impress?"

Adelman: *Looks at Hara for a bit before returning attention to the Oyabun.* "Oh, I think so."

Arai: "Way above."

Kato: "That's nice." *To Hara.* "You learned a bit about the industry you chose too, right?"

Hara: "Oh yeah... To look through your - a Yakuza's - eyes for a day, well... It made me find a whole new conviction."

Kato: "That's great. I'll be looking forward to hiring you for future, housing projects, subtle and more, later on when you're," *Checks his watch.* "Done with school and all, Hara-san."

Hara: "Heh, emphasis on 'subtle'?"

Kato: "Uh, yeah. Let's say that."

-They returned to the hotel to gather all of their belongings and then walked over to the train station to take them back to Kyoto.-
Fourth-Wall Space

Chapter Summary

Even I like to take potshots at myself from time to time. Whether I can bounce back from them is up to you, reader.

-Morning is about to dawn on a new day for AssUniv in Kyoto. All of the student-assassins, as well as their mentors, are sleeping in their respective rooms' mattresses. A lot can be told by how such individuals sleep, such as how Kato has a lot of his personalized technology all around him, signifying his intense brainwork, or Naoko adding a second layer with her father's coat, wanting the warmth of a certain answer, or Nagisa's personal knife resting next to his leg, alluding to his tendencies, or Karasuma and Irina sleeping back to back, showing issues still standing. But then moving onto Fuwa, who is hard at work becoming an aspiring Jump editor, has notebooks and mangas everywhere. Now, ont-

Fuwa: *Before the camera can pan away from her, she immediately reaches out for it and pulls it back to herself.*

Nguyen: "What the-!?"

Fuwa: "Hold it right there, Writer-kun!"

Nguyen: *Is taken aback.* "You know I'm here?"

Fuwa: "Of course I do! You're writing this as we speak! Even the words I'm telling you right now!"

Nguyen: "Oh. Right. But you're not supposed to do this much!"

Fuwa: "I know, I'm not. I just need to talk to you about something!"

Nguyen: "Tell me when you're all off the clock. Now..." *Begins moving the camera.*

Fuwa: "No! They're going to see this!" *Pulls the camera back.*

Nguyen: "Let go!" *Repeatedly tries to move the camera, only for Fuwa to repeatedly pry it back onto her.* "Damn, how are you doing this?"

Fuwa: *Springs out of bed.* "This is important, Writer-kun! I'll show you!"

Nguyen: *While I take a look at this C++ again.*

Fuwa: "What was that?"

Nguyen: "I mean, can you at least take a shower and change first?"
Fuwa: "Ugh, fine."

-Some time later, after preparations were complete...-

Nguyen: *Is typing so furiously, the AssUniv universe can audibly hear it as if it was a series of gunshots reverberating in the distance.* "Alright; we're ready. Now, what do you really, really need to talk to me about?"

Fuwa: "That's easy, Writer-kun! It's about this fanfic."

Nguyen: *Stops typing for a second.* "This fanfic? What about it?"

Fuwa: "It's shit."

Nguyen: "What!?"

Fuwa: "I mean, this fanfic is clearly just around for granting all of your personal wishes! There's not a lot of stuff up to snuff in Ansatsu Daigaku."

Nguyen: "Oh really? Name one thing I blatantly put there just cause it appeals to me!"

Fuwa: "Uh, me in just my sleepwear, and then the succeeding shower scene?"

Nguyen: "That's only because you keep making the camera follow you! And I'll be sure to remove it before I submit this chapter."

Fuwa: "Oh please, if you didn't want to do that, you could've done panning close-up shots of all of us during the morning!"

Nguyen: "I've done that enough times already. Breakfast, going down elevators, what have you!"

Fuwa: "Oh, you can never have enough of something like that for a Shonen series. How many times does it show up?"

Nguyen: "Let's agree to disagree. Now is that entirely why Ansatsu Daigaku is, *Cough.* "Shit?"

Fuwa: *Puts on a pair of glasses and takes out her notebook from hammerspace.* "Oh, that's just the tip of the iceberg."

Nguyen: *When have you been writing all of that?*

Fuwa: "First order of business: AssUniv is a continuation fic. One set four years into the future of the original series."

Nguyen: "Yeah. What's that got to do with anything?"

Fuwa: "A lot can happen in four years; you implied that with everything you said in the starting chapters."

Nguyen: "Yes, that is true. And?"
Fuwa: "Why continue something that ended practically perfectly? Everyone learned the lessons they needed to, and the ending and aftermath, though bittersweet, was the ultimate closer. No need to change it."

Nguyen: "That's very true, and we can all thank the godly mangaka that is Yusei Matsui for it; a large cast getting every resolution flawlessly? Damn amazing. But no great, complete story ever really needs a continuation, as that is just how a story works. It just doesn't stop many, like myself from trying. And if it is done properly, it can show respectable devotion to the original source material, which is why people like me even begun writing it. We're promoting the series in our own ways; nothing wrong with that."

Fuwa: "Maybe true, but you're also promoting your own; you can practically make anything you want happen with that kind of scenario, right?"

Nguyen: "Oh. You think I made it possible, I.E. an excuse, for everyone to act differently than how they used to?"

Fuwa: "Ding ding ding! Good answer, Writer-kun!"

Nguyen: "Hah. You are partially right; I used that as an emergency anthropic principle in case anyone went too far OOC. Eh, not that I wanted that to happen, just that I'm a beginner at all this, after all." *Clears his throat.* "Besides, nobody is the exact same person from four years ago; do you still love the exact same manga as your absolute favorite from that time still?"

Fuwa: "Tilts her head." "Doraemon's re-dub of the English dub... I see your point. And maybe there is another good reason; we're supposed to be tackling the tough days of college with us already at the bottom - again."

Nguyen: "Right; at a psychological low, only to be reminded of the progress you've all made long ago, and rise up again, only higher this time."

Fuwa: "Maybe that would be alright, if you actually showed the college portion of it a bit more."

Nguyen: "What?"

Fuwa: "This story's title literally translates to 'Assassination University,' and there's barely been any university!"

Nguyen: "Well, it was to be expected. This is very unlike 'Assassination Classroom,' yes. But that only goes to show how varying and challenging a higher education becomes. Unlike junior high school, which is only determined by region, universities have preferences; they specialize. Toho University in Tokyo does natural sciences, while Aoyama Gakuin favored law."

Fuwa: "Yes yes yes, having us go to different schools allowed us to prosper our education even at our new base of operations. But that doesn't explain why you never show us actually studying material or come up with tips to work out the academic difficulties."

Nguyen: "Actually, it kind of does. Not every solution works for every major, especially when there are almost thirty different ones across five universities. What currently stands as a 140-chapter series could easily transcend beyond the original series' tenure and extend to maybe two-hundred if I put that in. I know, 140 alone is gutsy. But two-hundred is a stretch for a starting fanfic'er like me. And I have another reason for minimizing the academic portion of the series."
Fuwa: "Oh yeah? Why is that?"

Nguyen: "Simple: networks, and internships. Learning up is all well and good, but what really matters when you're in four-year is that you really get out there; meet up with people, and do the work you plan to do later on. Experience can be the greatest teacher; Korosensei probably would've said so. The only thing you could be missing is the opportunity. But luckily, a billionaire has many of those."

Fuwa: "Ah yes; Kato-kun..."

Nguyen: "What?"

Fuwa: "Eh, we'll get back to him. For now, let's talk about how Daigaku is a darker, more down-to-earth story. How you replaced many of our personalities for a time with brooding depression, inherent from countless misfortunes that predate the events of the series. What's up with that?"

Nguyen: "I'll give you that; I really don't know how to write a complete, light-hearted story that pieces all together nicely. But thankfully, I don't need to; the chilling conclusion to AssClass prior to the aftermath proved that though Class 3-E is physically ready for the world, they are without the emotional crutch, Korosensei. And without the charm and innocence they had before the manga, evident by how the openings of the anime's two seasons evolved, I couldn't possibly fully replicate that feeling."

Fuwa: "Hm... Everybody did say they'll be alright in the end, but they didn't say when they will be. Let me guess: you're going to explain the Hell out of the next part too, ain't you?"

Nguyen: "What? Now you're saying you hate that I explain things a lot?"

Fuwa: "Come on, treat us like adults! We don't need you certifying things all the time for us!"

Nguyen: "If I did that, the chapter consisting of KAM AtTac suit functionalities would eventually be rife full of confusion. And the explanations are meant to play up the fact that unlike the God of Death and the primary appearances of the Tentacle DNA, what AssUniv is facing this time around is very much mortal rather than immortal. Korosensei taught and trained his students, like you, so that they could prepared for issues like those. And they're starting to prove it."

Fuwa: "Wow... Always a way out, huh? Like how you're going to tell me how we're supposed to be involved with the issues of the Yakuza?"

Nguyen: "The same way the Ministry of Defense associates with a bunch of student-assassins, Fuwa-san. If government agents' problems are their problems, then the opposite can be true. And that's all I'm going to say on it... For now."

Fuwa: "Oooooo... Spoilers for upcoming revelations, hm? How much more of a Marty Stu can you make Kazuhiko Kato-kun, eh?"

Nguyen: "Ah-" *Is taken aback.* "What!?!"

Fuwa: "You heard me, author-insert!"

Nguyen: *How is that worse that Writer-kun somehow!?
Fuwa: "How many things did you use to finely characterize Kato-kun, hm? Here's an apt description of how he stands out: " *Holds out her hand to count the "things."* "Billionaire. Yakuza. Good guy despite being a Yakuza. Crippled badass. Troubled past. Ace at everything he does. Better at everything than his peers are. Dude magnet. Chick magnet. God of being praised. Due to situation, has no reason to interact with us student-assassins at all. And, arguably worst of all, a total copycat of all the most important characters."

Nguyen: *Shakes his head with vigor before exhaling.* "Well! You done?"

Fuwa: "Heh, by all means, dig your way out of this one."

Nguyen: "Alright..." *Knuckles audibly crack.* "You might be correct, that Kato's achievements, as well as his situation in the story, were too well-earned, and have an allure that comes to a fault. But at his most basic, Kato is not a wish-fulfillment character. He gets all the attention in the beginning because he was something like what AssClass faced before; a callback to what they thought originally. His backstory is complex, but its intent is coherent; it explains his motivations and convictions as well as his drawbacks. Very much unlike main characters Karasuma, Irina, and Korosensei himself, Kato is in a whole different level than the student-assassins because he's been fighting wars all his life, instead of just a year-long instruction. His appearance only seeks to better the lives of his peers rather than consume them, as evident by the times he legitimately goes out of his way to help them pursue their careers." *Exhales.*

Fuwa: "That all you got?"

Nguyen: "And, I mean, he hasn't had sex with anyone yet."

Fuwa: *Perks up.* "Oh, perfect!"

Nguyen: *Beat.* "Wait, what?"

Fuwa: "Alright, no; that wasn't the crucial factor. But I get that you've thought a lot of this through. Ansatsu Daigaku is as much its own story as it is a new part to Ansatsu Kyoushitsu, and Kato-kun is at least someone sufferable. I mean, I'm living right next to him, I have to."

Nguyen: "Uh-huh... And done!" *Audibly slams his finger on his keyboard.* "The firewalls have been updated; I am overwriting your control over my cameras. You won't be able to ever do this again."

Fuwa: "I didn't even use any coding to reach your cameras..."

Nguyen: "Yeah, well guess what? Any way you manipulate my equipment in the future will result in a blast of the universe's moon; internally destroying your world."

Fuwa: "Been there, seen that, Author-kun." *Mind flickers.* "Also, damn, you're pretty evil on the inside."

Nguyen: "Says the woman that threatened that I was purely a rule-of-cool writer. Bye bye."

*Cuts the two-way microphone on the camera so that she can no longer directly speak to him.*

Fuwa: "..." *Looks straight at the audience.* "Quite an attractive personality, Stephen Nguyen has. Doesn't he, bachelorettes?"
-Fuwa cleans up her room while the one camera moves past her room, through Nguyen's control, to Kanzaki's room... Just after she had just taken a shower, and is covered up only by her bath towel.-

    Nguyen: "EGH!!" *Immediately blushes up, just like how Kato would.*

    Fuwa: "I KNEW IT!"

    Nguyen: *Goddamnit...!

-In the little time that followed... One full in-universe day to be accurate, the writer of Ansatsu Daigaku Stephen Nguyen had re-revised the coding behind his equipment's security, making sure no one, especially Fuwa, could ever even look at the props again. Fuwa also seemed to have kept a secret promise to not notify AssUniv that she had this... Talk, and from that point on, the status quo remained God.-
Stuff-Strutting Space

Chapter Summary

After seeing just how good Kanzaki was during the investigation to find and locate Dr. Yanagisawa, Sugino was very impressed by his longtime crush. He might've just found a new something to hopefully pique her interest in him too?

Credits to Zenta for the content that will become obvious once you read it.

-Approaching noon on another Summer day, Nagisa, Kayano, Karma, Nakamura, Kanzaki, Fuwa, and Sugino all stride purposefully along the streets of Kyoto en route to the Game Panic videogame arcade.-

  Sugino: *Picks up the pace to the venue.* "Come on, Kanzaki-san! The arcade is just a block away!"

  Kanzaki: *Trying to keep up.* "Okay, Sugino-kun! Please, slow down!"

  Fuwa: *Like the rest of the student-assassins, is left behind in their dust.* "Heh, since when did Sugino-san become such a kid?"

  Karma: "Poor sod, he is. Really wants to either impress Kanzaki-san..."

  Nakamura: "Or show her his love. Either way, he'll again look like the ultimate fool."

  Kayano: *Bumps her elbows on the both of them.* "Come on, you jesters. We've been wanting these two to have their moment for ages. At least try to look happy for them, for the right reasons?"

  Nagisa: "And if not for them, then maybe what they're making? I've heard earlier from Sugino-san that they'll-"

  Sugino: "Ah, here we are!” *Opens up the door for Kanzaki.* "Ladies first."

  Kanzaki: "Oh, thank you.” *Proceeds inside.*

  Sugino: Alright! This is my chance! ...My, twentieth, but this one won't slip out of my fingers this time!

  Kanzaki: "So, we're here. I take your insistence coming here to believe you have a game in mind?"

  Sugino: "Hm? Oh, yes I do! How about some DDR Ace?” *Begins walking towards the machines.*

  Kanzaki: *Follows him.* "That sounds great! I've been very interested in replaying it ever since I returned to it during the Search!"
Sugino: "You were amazing there; it made me want to pick up the trade too!"

Kanzaki: "Really? Then how about a few versus rounds; you and me?"

Sugino: *Blushes up inside.* "That sounds absolutely-" *They finally reach the large set of boards, only to find that a sharply-dressed couple, probably several years older than them, have already taken the area.*

-The chorus to "SHION" by DJ YOSHITAKA plays loudly through the device's speakers, only dulled out at times by the furious steps of the players.-

AssUniv: *Reach the area and realize the situation as well.*

Sugino: Damnit, really?

Kanzaki: "Ah well; We'll just have to wait our turn, Sugino-kun."

Sugino: "Yeah... Okay."

-And so they did wait. The song ended moments later, leading to the aftermath, in which the couple's numbers, on the highest difficulty, set the new record for the machine.-

Kayano: "Wow, these two are extraordinary on that thing."

Nagisa: "That's damn impressive, especially after the strap-in technology overhaul has made perfect scores extremely difficult."

Kanzaki: *Covers her mouth.* "They're remarkable..."

Sugino: "Yeah, we'll have a tough act to follow. But that's just our concern."

-Once the results screen disappeared, Sugino and Kanzaki both awaited them getting off. But then the couple didn't; they proceeded to select another song from the list.-

Sugino: *Breaks out of the AssUniv crowd.* "Hey! Let someone(s) else have a go!"

Dancing Man: *Hardly looks back.* "Heh."

Dancing Woman: "What would be the point, man?"

AssUniv sans Sugino and Kanzaki: "!?

Sugino: "The Hell does that mean?"

Dancing Man: "Idiot; means you won't beat our scores, not matter how hard you try."

Sugino: "!!"

Dancing Woman: "Save it for the pros, why don't you?"

Sugino: "Who are you to say that? What gives you the right?"
Dancing Couple: *Both turn around, revealing their faces fully.* "Know us now?"

Sugino/Kanzaki: *Look between each other; the latter seems rather uncomfortable that she can verify them, so Sugino says it for her.* "Maybe sadly, but no."

Dancing Couple: "Ah, well-" *Beat.* "Wait, what!? Really?"

Karma: "I know you guys - Haruto and Maki." *To AssUniv.* "They're prizewinning dance stars in the Japan DanceSport Federation. Gone internationally when foreign festivals started having them co-host alongside others. My parents often saw such events when they traveled."

Haruto/Maki: *Scoffs.* "Thank you! Sheesh!"

Sugino: "That's hardly relevant, pricks. Now get off the machine and give someone else a round."

Haruto: "Ooo, did we touch a nerve?"

Kanzaki: "..."

Sugino: "Look, we just want to have a good time; that's what games are for."

Maki: "Uh, wrong. Again! These games are for competition, or practice for competition! So if you're not going to sign up for one, then you ought to wait until we're done!"

Nagisa: "Obviously you didn't come to just any arcade to utterly destroy the competition there. What are you practicing for?"

Haruto: "The Kurenai Cotillion Open, a week from now. Held in Hyogo. In preparation for the Dekansho Bon Dancing Festival. Tourney of sixteen pairs, dancing their heart out and competing against everyone at once for the perfect ten."

Kanzaki: "Then let us strut our stuff on that fine dancefloor."

Maki: "Excuse me?"

Kanzaki: *Determinedly looks at her.* "We're signing up for that open. We'll see you there. And we're going to beat you at your own game!"

Haruto/Maki: *Condescendingly laugh.* "Really now?"

Kanzaki: "Believe it. I just need to find myself a partner."

Haruto: "Your chances won't be high, unless someone from 'Dancing With the Stars' owes you a favor."

Kanzaki: "Don't need that; just you watch."

Haruto/Maki: "Heh, very well. Better run along to sign up for it, though we still don't think it'll matter in the end."

AssUniv: *Boil up with a hot blood-lustful rage.*
An hour later, at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...

"Dance Dance" by Cherry plays on the loudspeakers.

The troupe from the arcade have addressed the entire situation to the rest of AssUniv over a set of sofas and a coffee table laden with high-grade sake bottles and glasses of water. Their bloodlust similarly amasses to theirs.

Okuda: "Wow, such disrespectful diction from performing exemplars."

Kataoka: "No way we take that lying down."

Nakamura: "Oh don't worry; those two are so going down."

Fuwa: *Giggles.* "I think 'getting down' was always their intent."

Terasaka: "Alright, they're going to be served."

Karma: "Similar problem."

Maehara: *Holds hands up.* "They'll lose. Simple as that."

Kato: *Is preparing a platter of eight Juyondai sake-filled glasses.* "Before we make such assertive statements, maybe we should confirm a game plan?" *Walks up to them and sets down glasses to the select student-assassins.*

Mimura: "True that. We should start by finding Kanzaki-san a partner." *Sips his rice wine.*

Yada: "If it's for dance, than you don't need to look any further than Kato-kun. Remember, his parents got together on dance. And we're in the middle of a dance-oriented club that he owns."

Kato: "Thank you for those compliments, Yada-san, but I doubt I'm best for the task."

Muramatsu: "Really?"

Hayami: "I think Kato-kun is saying is that to prevent that duo from undercutting Kanzaki-san because she got a secret legend in the dance biz, we should probably only choose the guys who were with her in that arcade."

Chiba: "Jeez, that leaves us with Nagisa, Karma, and Sugino."

Kayano: *Giggles.* "Not Nagisa-kun. Sorry man, but somehow your light-step wasn't made for the ballroom."

Nagisa: "I.. Have no qualms about that saying."

Naoko: "Don't put Karma in dance shoes; he's going to break something."

Karma: "I hope you're implying the floor or the nearby vases." *Laughs it off.*

Kanzaki: "Sugino-kun, you performed on stage with me multiple times before. Would you like
to do so again?"

Sugino: *For a brief second, he lost all of his irritation for the competition and once again fanboied about the fact that Kanzaki is asking him to do stuff.* "H-how could I say no?"

Karma: *To Naoko secretly.* You do know you only said what you did so that Sugino-san could be with Kanzaki-san, right?"

Naoko: For only one instance, you being a harmful dancer is not the biggest reason for you not to go up there. All I'll say...

Kato: "Good that got by," *Checks his watch.* "Quickly. Now, onto the next stage; the dance strategy."

Kanzaki: "You cannot dance for or with us outright, Kato-kun, but you can help us come up with the routine." *To Hayami, Kayano, and Yada.* "You three have a good art for it too, so your assistance would be appreciated."

Yada: "Of course, Kanzaki-san! We'll help however we can."

Sugino: *Remembers the gravity of his situation.* "May we start with some dancing tips first?"

-And so it began; Kanzaki and Sugino amplified their move-set in pairs ballroom dance with their noted peers, while the less-experienced student-assassins picked out a proper song on a laptop... Which was much harder than it looked. It took almost four hours until...

Terasaka: "Okay guys, this is getting us nowhere."

Okano: "You never really realize just how many songs there are out there in the world."

Hazama: "Might I suggest we base our selection from something our duo would most likely like to dance to?"

AssUniv: "..." *Teleport to the dance team.* "What kind of song would you guys like to dance to?"

Kanzaki/Sugino: "What kind?"

Kato: "We're going for a more energetic, house-oriented dance style."

Sosuke: "That's still going to leave us with a couple hundred choices."

Nakamura: "How about context? What's the story?"

Sugino: "The lyrics, hm?" *Holds his chin.*

Kanzaki: "..." *Looks over at Nagisa and Kayano.* "Oh, I think I know one." *Goes over to the laptop, typing in a few words, and highlighting the choice.* "We'd like that one."

Kimura: *Looks at it for a bit.* "Well alright then." *The rest off AssUniv depart.*

Kato: *Notices Kanzaki's brief change.* "What's that song about?"
Kanzaki: "Right now, let's just say that it concerns love."

Yada: "Hehe, like any popular song."

- With no further distractions, the duo continued their training, until they had regrown their familiarity with the art. They then listened through the selected song, and got to work crafting the routine. It took a full day to concoct, but it did come together, and they tried their luck implementing it.

- Kanzaki was excelling at the work presented to her, making great progress and boosting her game in just a matter of days. Sugino, however, was falling behind. It was initially harmless and easily treatable, such as a slight misstep or one arm going up when it's not supposed to. But such events also lead to one such as...

  Sugino: "..." *In the middle of rehearsal of the later moments of the routine, he and Kanzaki are twirling to a certain spot marked on the floor. When they reach it, he pivots even further while Kanzaki remains still, causing him to end up directly behind her. He then lifts her up into the air, lightly plying her back with his shoulder, while sweeping up her legs with his arms.* *Come on...* *Now suspended and on his right shoulder, Sugino tries to spin her around, shifting the weight to his left, and then letting her back rest across his wingspan. However, Sugino's right hand misses catching Kanzaki's crossed legs, and in his concentration to move it over, his left arm accidentally lets go of Kanzaki's upper-body, causing her to start falling head-first.*

    Kanzaki: "!!"

    Sugino: "Shit!" *He finds himself unable to catch her in time.*

    Kato: *Is immediately in the fray, sliding on his back and arcing his far elbow-pit in a way that it hugs the back of Kanzaki's neck (bent forward as she falls), while the rest of her body falls onto his own.* *I gotcha, Kanzaki-san; don't worry."

    Kanzaki: *Exhales with relief.* "Thank you, Kato-kun."

    Yada: "Oh boy. That could've been messy."

    Hayami: *To Sugino.* "Sugino-kun, that is the fourth time you've fumbled this latest move. And this time, you nearly killed Kanzaki-san with it!"

    Sugino: "..." *Runs off.*

    AssUniv Dancers: "Sugino-kun?" *Watch him depart, entering the upper-floor corridor of the dance hall Kato rented out for their practice.*

    Kato: "That's not good." *Turns off the CD radio.*

    Kayano: "You think he just needs time to cool down?"

    Hayami: "Well that's the thing: we don't have that kind of time."

    Yada: "That's fine too - we really should try to help him with this slump."
Kayano: "Yeah, but how?"

AssUniv Dancers: "Hmm..."

Kato: "Ladies."

AssUniv Dancers: "Hm?"

Kato: "Kanzaki-san has already left in search for Sugino-san."

AssUniv Dancers: "EHHHHH!?"

-Meanwhile...-

Sugino: *Has retreated to the rooftop of the building, reflecting on the recent situation.*

Kanzaki: *Opens the door and scans the section before finding Sugino on it.* "Sugino-kun!"

Sugino: *Turns around slightly.* "Kanzaki-san..."

Kanzaki: "If you're concerned that you might've or would've hurt me, don't be. I'm perfectly fine."

Sugino: "It's not that, Kanzaki-san. Especially now."

Kanzaki: "Hm, I thought as much."

Sugino: "What?"

Kanzaki: "To be honest, I've actually been worried about you for a while."

Sugino: "You were worried about me?"

Kanzaki: "Yeah. It was when I saw you were in such a troubled state seeing Haruto and Maki."

Sugino: *Is in disbelief as he listens to this.*

Kanzaki: "Honestly, I didn't really want to defeat them because they hurt my pride as a gamer or something. It's because they hurt you."

Sugino: "Damn."

Kanzaki: "You've always been very concerned about me, Sugino-kun. I wanted to return the favor for once. I felt this was the best way to do that."

Sugino: "..."

Kanzaki: "But if you're preoccupied by this too, we don't have to do it."

Sugino: "Forgive me, Kanzaki-san, but that's not possible."

Kanzaki: "Huh?"
Sugino: "You put a lot of faith in yourself lately. You encouraged yourself to take on HID, had the confidence to remain by Kato's side, and now this. All of it without any of us having to encourage you ourselves. That's an incredible three-for-three, and I really want to make sure you see it through."

Kanzaki: "Sugino-kun..."

Sugino: "I admit, I'm not great at this, Kanzaki-san. So you might be carrying me through all of it, but I want you to know that I'm trying."

Kanzaki: "Heheh... In the referenced words of Okuda-san, 'do or do not. There is no try.'"

Sugino: "Hm?"

Kanzaki: *Immediately pushes Sugino's upper back down and turns around, tucking the small of her back onto his right shoulder.* "Do it!"

Sugino: "!!" *Does it.*

AssUniv: *Slowly open the rooftop door in a stealthy attempt to find their friends. Not only do they do that, but they also lay witness to Sugino finally blowing past his previous obstacle.* "Whoa..."

-Yes, Sugino and Kanzaki together finally pulled the move off. Afterwards, they returned to the dance hall and trained their hearts out for the rest of the time until the Kurenai Cotillion.-

-Then, at the venue itself...-

-Having signed up for the open tournament late, Sugino and Kanzaki were the last team to take the stage, while Haruto and Maki performed second with "Love Impact" by MAX. Given their fan appeal and applause, it is likely they are the tough act to follow even thirteen dances later. But it doesn't phase Sugino and Kanzaki at all.-

-All of AssUniv, having been able to get seats with Kato's influence, look on as their peers, clad in an active-enhanced crimson suit and an asymmetrical grey-on-black flared dress respectively, reach the platform, situating themselves close to the front and centering themselves so that they are six feet to the left and right of each other.-

-"Loneliness Loop" by Zenta plays.-

\[
\text{Itoshisa no kizuguchi wa hane wo nakushita tori no you} \\
\text{nee doushite nee anata wa sonna ni kanashiku warau no?} \\
\text{[When Love wounds me, I feel like a bird with clipped wings,} \\
\text{Why - oh why - do you wear such a somber smile?]}
\]

-Sugino and Kanzaki begin by looking up, back-handspringing several feet behind and clasping their own hands together. They then take a three-point, and then a mutual side-roll that transitions into an interval of flares, rising back up to their feet, frontflipping towards each other, and crossing arms while pushing their backs against each other. They then pace five times in the opposite direction to set up the next verse.-
Doko wo tsukuroeba ano ko mitai ni waraeru no
doko wo naoshitara ano hi mitai ni dakishimete kureru no
[What can I do so that we may smile like before again?
What can I set right so that you would hold me like that day?]

-Kanzaki turns around wistfully towards Sugino, who has his own back turned, with her raising a
hand as if beckoning him and singing her pleas. Her hand reaches his left shoulder, where his head
is motioned towards. But he merely turns his attention the other way and walks forward to make
Kanzaki lose her grip. Her hand then pulls back towards her heart, hugging herself a bit before
leap-spinning her arms away. As she finishes the last sentence, Sugino grabs her left hand mid-
pivot, causing him to fall into Kanzaki's motion and rolling when they both land, getting back to
their feet.-

Tachikirenai kodoku to kanashimi no loop
photo frame no anata ni pinto ga awanai
[I'm stuck in a loop of loneliness and grief,
Your face loses focus in this photo frame of mine.]

-As Kanzaki sings being stuck in a loop, Sugino is twirling her around and under their interlocked
arms. He then whips the motion even harder, propelling Kanzaki off her feet and performing a full
barrel roll in the air, then landing on one foot. Sugino then lets go and gently nudges Kanzaki a fair
distance away and begins walking in the opposite direction, stopping double the distance away.
The spinning leaves Kanzaki temporarily unable to focus on Sugino, even when framing her
eyeview with a set of right-angled thumbs and index fingers. Before the chorus begins, Kanzaki
does a forward split, grounding her "out of focus" before front-handspringing towards Sugino.-

Itoshisa no kizuguchi wa hane wo nakushita tori no you
nee doushite nee anata wa sonna ni kanashiku warau no?
[When Love wounds me, I feel like a bird with clipped wings,
Why - oh why - do you wear such a somber smile?]

-Sugino running-slides low and appears to sweep Kanzaki's legs from under her (Kanzaki leapt up
just in time), breaking her fall with high-angle frontflip three-point landing, imitating how she is
grounded like a bird with bad wings. During the instrumental, Sugino and Kanzaki both quickly
transition to their separate ground game. The former falls into a floating gremlin spin that quickly
transitions into a leg-extended headspin and then a full on windmill, while the latter falls onto her
overlapped hands for a 2000s spin (the momentum is just enough to keep the hem of her skirt at a
modest area), slowing into a 1990s, then a set of elbow spins.-

Kakikesenai itami to koukai no loop
photo frame no watashi ga setsunaku nijimu
[I'm stuck in a loop of pain and regret,
I too am beginning to blur out of the photo frame.]

-Kanzaki and Sugino return to their feet without freezing, with Sugino's character finally embracing
being in love with Kanzaki's once more. His mimicked twirl from earlier now has much more
enthusiasm put into it, and he does not leave Kanzaki as she begins falling over from unsteadiness,
instead holding her up on her upper back. Kanzaki begins looking at her close hand while lifted,
unable to recognize it.-

Itsu no hi ka kono namida ga anata wo furimukaseru to
itsu no hi ka kono kizu ni anata ga kizuku to (inoru no)
[I hope one day you will notice my tears and look back,
I hope one day you will realize I'm in pain (I pray).]

-Sugino, still holding Kanzaki’s back, takes center stage, prepping the move he had been stuck on. He clockwise-wipes his hand over the air above Kanzaki, freeing her of her vertigo, before lifting her up on his one shoulder in a belly-to-back. He then shifts her weight across to his other shoulder, lines her up along his arm span, before rolling her across his bent neck back in front of him in a princess carry. Sugino then whips her up several feet higher into the air, like straightening a large cloth while a ball was on it, allowing Kanzaki to corkscrew flip multiple times before making a three-point landing. She hops up high enough for Sugino to run low and front-flip using only his head onto his knees before the audience. Kanzaki, now far behind, ballet spins, slowly throwing her hands out to cause a vortex of sakura petals (digitally rendered) into the sky, which Sugino seems to be able to keep flying using his air flares. When he pushes a little extra during the end of this stanza, his suit jacket practically rips from his body and is flung into the petal storm.-

-Itoshisa no kizuguchi wa hane wo nakushita tori no you
nee doushite nee anata wa sonna ni kanashiku warau no?

[When Love wounds me, I feel like a bird with clipped wings,
Why - oh why - do you wear such a somber smile?]

-In the closing segments of the song, Sugino's jacket still floats in the air while he Taisuke Criticals wind up at it (in reality, the set team has hooked the jacket to remain suspended). While he continues "flare-ing," Kanzaki makes background event with a spinning star float-over one way, and a standing phoenix-pentagram dive. Sugino bounces off his final flare, performing a drill kick into the air before bringing his feet back down and landing soles-first. Kanzaki no-hand cartwheels toward him, just as the jacket begins descending. Sugino throws his right arm up in the air to bring it through that socket, while Kanzaki helps him get his left arm inside. Just before the song ends, Sugino pivots behind Kanzaki and puts his hands in front of her face. He slowly reveals a small-stemmed, fully-bloomed rose from his left sleeve, which he then places on top of Kanzaki’s right ear.-

-The crowd in the Open showed their appreciation for the display, which put a large smile on Kanzaki and Sugino's faces as they left the stage.-

Kayano: "They stole the show, I reckon."

Nagisa: "Quite a dance for quite a song."

Nakamura: Do they even know the song is about them?

Fuwa: Let's let it play out before we ruin it for them.

Terasaka: "Definitely the most entertaining display of the night."

Kato: "Hm hmm..."

Yada: "Kato-kun? Something up?"

Kato: "I think I found a problem in our program."

Hayami: *Eyes widen.* "Oh..."

Nagisa: "Why? What's going on?"

-Before they could answer, the judges called up all of the dance pairs to come back onto the stage to decide the top three. Kanzaki and Sugino were among them, as well as Haruto and Maki. Then
came the time to decide third place...

Announcer: "Good people here tonight, the judges have locked in their statements. We will now decide the winner of this year's Kurenai Cotillion Open! Now, the bronze medal winner is..."

Dance Pairs/Crowd/AssUniv: *Await the decision.*

Announcer: "Yukiko Kanzaki and Tomohito Sugino!"

Haruto/Maki: *Give a set of slight, malicious smirks.*

Kanzaki/Sugino: *Both nod to the decision with acceptance.*

Judge 1: "Kanzaki, Sugino, there's no question you've held one of the best performances we've ever seen."

Judge 2: "And if this competition was judged just a little differently, you two probably would've won it; there was a significant amount of effort we saw in this work, and by God, we definitely saw it."

Judge 3: "However, we couldn't help but notice that this wasn't purely a dance performance, with how much the stage technics was implemented."

Judge 1: "We couldn't really say you two deserved a higher rank than this, with the scales to grade you and the others so different now."

Sugino: "We understand."

Kanzaki: "Thank you."

Announcer: "Okay! Now, for our first place winner..."

Haruto/Maki: "..."

Announcer: "Kurisu Tendo and Junji Ando!"

Haruto/Maki: *Metaphorical lightning strike.*

Karma: "Oh, now they sound familiar."

Nagisa: "Karma?"

Karma: "Tendo and Ando are a highly-known, even moreso than Haruto and Maki, who have consistently lobbied with the Olympic heads to make ballroom dancing a recognized sport. They have a very subtle way of winning the crowd over mid-performance that not everyone understands yet. It's extraordinary, honestly; I got to see them too with my parents once. It makes sense they would win this Open; this is leagues below their usual standard."

AssUniv: *Utterly flabbergasted by the sheer amount of prose description Karma gave off in just a short time.* "Right..."

-With that, the Open was over. Kanzaki and Sugino leave with their friends toward their serviced travel bus for a short ride back to Kyoto. The performance they pulled off exhausted them greatly, resulting in the two of them taking up one booth purely for a nap. AssUniv couldn't help but crack up a bit to the convenience.-
Brothers for Blood Space

Chapter Summary

As we continue this *cough* filler arc, Kato seems to have found another one of his old acquaintances in his home turf. Using that term lightly, of course. What sort of shenanigans may commence when they interact?

Ownership of several characters featured here belong to Team SEGA and their Yakuza/Ryu Ga Gotoku series.

P.S. As you can clearly tell, there has been a lot of writing elements derived from said series in this one. Muchos gracios to them overall!

-In the middle of the streets of Kyoto, a man clad in a snakeskin jacket, tight leather pants, metal-tipped smart shoes, and a graphic eyepatch covering his left, walks about. Though he uses his genuine, unique grin to try and charm a pack of ladies nearby, they too, like everyone else on the street, are intimidated, since everything about him screams ax-crazy Yakuza. And everyone knows it. Which is why, when he goes to a food cart and calls for crab meat on a stick, the chef gives him it on the house. When he finds one person who found a ten-thousand yen note off the ground, he immediately hands it over to him when asked about it. When he sees a man being mugged by three, the three only need to see the Yakuza once before they throw the victim's wallet back to him.-

-Yep, everyone stops and stares at him; with respectable worry and distance included. Well, all but one...-

???: *With a familiar voice, he makes a step that puts him just six feet away from the gangster.* "Goro Majima..."

Majima: * Notices his name being called and looks behind himself.* "Ah, Kato-chan!"

Kato: *Clad in a graphic tee-leather jacket with motorcycle jean combo, confronts the Mad Dog.* "Taking a break from being the wild card for our kind in downtown Tokyo?"

Majima: "Eh, it's nice to see other things from time to time."

Kato: "Sure. But not when you terrorize the lives of the people in another team's turf."

Majima: "What? 'Terrorizing?' I'm not doing that; I'm an upstanding citizen, y'know!"

Kato: "Tell that to how many people are quaking just looking at you."

Majima: *Makes a hard turn to see the people on his left.* "I guess they just fell out of my sight. Sorry, everybody!"

Kato: "This requires recompense, 'y'know."
Majima: "Aw, Kato-chan! Don't be like that! You shouldn't terrify the people any more than they already are with a street fight!" *Crosses arms.* "Though, I got to say, I would love a good fight right about now. Really, ever since Kiryu-chan retired..."

Kato: "A fight? I was going to say you should literally pay for reparations. Especially," *Checks his watch.* Yesterday, when you, your underlings, and your junior leader Daisaku Minami sold out the second floor bar and played a little rough."

Majima: "Huh, did we? I didn't take out my bat, did I?"

Kato: "But if you really want to fight, we can go. I'll make it fine with the locals. Ready that bat." *Slides out a Microtech Troodon knife and whips out a Fury sixteen-inch telescopic baton.*

Majima: "By instinct, unsheathes a Cold Steel tanto blade and rolls out a Nike aluminum bat."

"Oh, this is not going to incite a war, will it?"

Kato: "Don't give me that, Majima. Keep note, we're from different umbrellas, and as said earlier, this is my backyard. Neither side will care too much that we cross blades for just a moment."

Majima: "That sounds amazing. Well, let's bring it."

Kato/Majima: "Get ready... Kato-chan/Majima!" *Both roar at each other.*

(Ryu Ga Gotoku 4's OST "Receive and Bite You" plays.)

加藤和彦VSマジマゴロ

Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Goro Majima; Patriarch of the Majima Family

Kato and Majima begin by getting into their respective dual weapons stances; for Kato, that was a front-leaning Abierta stance (knife and baton diagonally parallel), while Majima took a much more open stance, crouched low with his knife high in the air, but far from the middle, while his bat was almost touching the ground in front of him. Majima initiates the battle by trying to jolt Kato with a quick bat stab to his plexus. But Kato circles it out of the way with his baton, leaving Majima partially exposed for a spiraling tactical stab. Majima showcases great defense too, irregularly guarding with the gripside of his bat, raising it to prop the Troodon knife out of the way. Kato wasn't fazed though, reverting his knifehold from hammer to icepick, and trying to stab under the bat, which Majima swipes with his tanto to cancel and put distance.

Majima tries a Pele kick to close his gap, but fails to make its mark, with Majima crouching down involuntarily right next to Kato. The latter thinks to kneem on his temple to punish the mistake, but Majima puts up his knife towards Kato's face to abort the revenge. He does it again when Kato attempts a backfist-like whack with his baton, but the longer-ranged baseball bat gets in
the way as well. Kato feints striking high one more time, making Majima put up his bat, only for it to be hook-kicked aside and get a baton whack to his left shoulder blade. Majima shakes it off, crane-stepping in retaliation and swinging his bat with the momentum, pushing Kato aside.

Kato finds his opportunity in shin sweep-kicking Majima, which he backs away and picks his foot up to avoid. This was a set-up for Kato to plunge his Microtech knife into his chest, which was stopped by Majima holding his bat with both hands. Kato sweeps again, and practically STOs Majima to the ground with his tactical knife still close to the latter's upper body. but Majima's sleight of hand lets it miss completely, and making the dagger indent into the ground. Distracted, Kato falls victim to a small headbutt, leaving his knife there, and brandishing his baton more defensively. Despite this, it was Kato who stepped forth again, but not to immediately strike; his baton was backwards-launched high into the air. Majima tries his signature beyblade move, spinning both his tanto and bat viciously around him, which Kato baseball slides underneath and retrieves his Microtech blade behind Majima. The latter soon realizes his opponent before him and blocks a 12-6 slash with a horizontal hold of his bat, throwing it aside when he pulls his bat back down. This leaves Kato partially open to a short-arm Kesagiri slash of his tanto, but Kato Dempsey Rolls right under it, using this curving momentum to deliver a haymaker sideways slash that translated well into a V-slash on Majima's right; he pulls back and blocks the last part. Kato lets his knife slip out of his hands and into his left, and Majima expects a low cut. But instead, Kato gets his right hand down, his left throws the knife back to it, and jumps up in a means similar to an onheahed roundhouse. It was not a kick however, as Kato's left hand gets his thrown baton and he smashes both of his weapons onto Majima... His bat however, which had been raised just on time again. The One-Eyed Yakuza front kicks Kato away.

Kato, who has now returned knife and baton to their original positions, now knows that he has to remove the long-range advantage of Majima's aluminum bat in order to seal the deal. He goads the one-eyed slugger into lunging with his tanto blade, which Kato sidesteps, facing Majima's exposed back. Majima instinctively whips the bat behind him to create more distance. Rather than pull back like last time, however, Kato instead pops forward and raises his knife/left arm so that the tip of his elbow meets Majima's tricep. Kato then quickly floats his arm over his opponent's, restraining it, and switches grip on his knife to an icepick, such that the blade was digging on Majima's arm as he moved and pulled back. Majima knows what's happening and tries to threaten Kato away with his own blade, but Kato's baton parries accordingly. Kato finally jerks his Microtech fully back towards him and knees the following Majima in the stomach to push him back, and making the ultimatum of keeping the bat or save his arm. Naturally, Majima returns his hand to his chest before it can be severed, giving up the blunt weapon that Kato kicks away. Majima seems smugly impressed by Kato's arms-stripping ability, and rattles the knife in his other hand in a taunting matter.

Kato dashes in and throws an uppercut baton whack, which Majima deflects with a 12-6 slash. He then crouches underneath two quick horizontal swipes by Kato's knife, followed by evading a high-low baton combo. Majima sees his opportunity to do the same with Kato when he whips down with his right-handed baton, aiming for the top of Majima's head. Majima clutches Kato's wrist, stopping the attack dead, and tries to rounding-cut Kato's wrist to disarm him, but Kato was one step ahead, throwing his left hand toward the clash, and spinning his Troodon knife around his palm. This scares Majima from going through with the attack as the knife nears, releasing Kato's arm. He finds his next chance when Kato misses a high jab with the baton to Majima's head, where he, with the tanto in icepick grip, is fancily swordplayed clockwise (Majima's perspective), and the tip of the baton ends up in his hand. Believing Kato won't let go of the handle, he then tries to chop his knife at the area to remove a finger or two. But he again miscalculates; Kato's youthful, superior strength skews Majima's cutting angle, and it turns out he was the one who has to let go, or risk losing an appendage himself.
Majima realizes that he might be trying to take away the wrong weapon and charges in again. He feints going for the baton again, trying to stun Kato with a high-arc axe kick to the chin, which Kato bobs from just in time. Seeing the exposed hamstring, Kato seizes the opportunity to gash into it, believing Majima cannot pull back or put weight on it to counter from his position. He was correct, but that wasn't how Majima would counter; he keeps the leg straight while flash-kick handspringing into a crouched position, curing his trajectory just enough so Kato would miss the cut. He also would see Kato retaliate with a low-level blunt maneuver, which he side-rolls away from, ending up behind Kato. When Kato quickly turns around (as Majima sees, the only way Kato can turn around), he's already sprung up and put a little spin, readying for a 540 kick that perfectly foils Kato's knife lunge. The metal-tipped smart shoe meets the back of Kato's hand while the shin hits the flat side of the blade, causing both a stinging sensation on the Oyabun while the knife flies out of his grip, skidding harmlessly into a nearby clothes shop.

Kato shakes his hand clean of any remaining pain and uses it to support a block of a heavy tanto swing, given extra momentum by Majima's jump. When the Patriarch returns to the ground, he lets his knife slide under the telescopic baton, ending the exchange and putting Kato slightly off-balance. Majima sees him fall forward a bit, and plans to disembowel Kato. But Kato's target was closer; Majima's forearms. He temporarily switches his armed hand and whacks the knife arm while also dodging along with it, avoiding all damage and stunning Majima long enough for a side kick that pushes him away. Angered, Majima rushes Kato, who does the same, both having their weapons in front and their guarding hands close. This results in both baton and dagger bouncing off each other, moving into the paths of their pushing arms, sending both weapons into the air. Kato and Majima spring up into the air, hoping to be the one to catch both arms.

When they both land, it is revealed both Majima and Kato have a full hand... But the knifefighter and the arnis practitioner roles have switched. Majima, hammer-gripping the baton, backhand swings behind him, hoping Kato had moved forward in range. Kato, dagger in icepick grip, pulls back just to be sure, and steps in for an overhead stab and a backhand horizontal slash, which Majima avoids. They circle each other a little bit, before Majima tries his own blunt lunge, which Kato telegraphs by turning his right foot and bows his head. His left hand, holding the knife, rams the tanto's pommel into Majima's wrist, paralyzing him briefly. The pivoting motion Kato does lets him get his unarmed right hand across Majima's chest and hip toss him to the ground, with Majima's knife arm still in a lock. A quick twist lets him snatch his baton back, but Kato gives up the knife when he too is grounded by a rising spinning hook kick, which tucks the blunt side of the tanto into his popliteal, which Majima returns to his armed hand. Majima tries to keep his acrobatic routine by powersliding low for an inverse grapevine sweep on Kato's right leg, but Kato pulls it out just in time and stomps Majima back prone onto the ground.

Majima turns over, kips-up almost immediately and starts windmilling wildly. The swinging power move keeps Kato at bay for a quick time, but then Majima starts advancing on him with it as well. Kato sees a brief spot of weakness during the motion, and baseball slides into it, breaking Majima's groove. He quickly readapts it into a leg-extended headspin, which clocks Kato in the face with one heel. As Kato back-rolls away from it to avoid the rest, Majima stops spinning and tactically rolls toward him with ballistic intent.

Kato continues to back away as Majima dominates the low-ground game, rolling through each of his incredibly swift X-slashes to where Kato's kneecaps would be. By the fifth roll once again, Kato has calculated the average time Majima's non-attacking time (aka his rolling time) is, and does a sharp-arc somersault over Majima's final destination, landing right behind him. Majima, mid-revolution only sees the misplacement of Kato from typical view and manages to dodge just enough to avoid a critical horizontal blow to his back; his free left arm takes the bulbous tip
instead. Majima creates space once more by wildly overhead slashing in front of him, making him back away.

Majima spurts towards Kato once more, feinting an inverse Kesagiri slash and a left straight punch with an inverse knife-fall, throwing the blade behind and above his left arm and catching it with his right hand and attempting a head-level backhand stab. Kato falls for the vain double strike but nonetheless prevents his face from being impaled by matching Majima's forearm positioning, clashing perpendicularly and preventing him from straightening it and extending the attack. Kato turns over his hand to make the baton line up behind Majima's knife arm, and Kato's free hand clutches the tip, trapping it. From there, he arm drags Majima over, but the latter lands on his feet and heel sweeps Kato onto his back. Majima again tries a dominating stab, but Kato gets his head out of the way just in time, once again getting his arm under Majima's and pommel-smacks the latter back.

Kato: *Giving a light exhale, he rises back up to his feet, collapses the remaining telescopic baton and pivots the handle in between his five right-hand fingers, occasionally letting it return into hammer grip.* "Haha... That the best you got, old man?"

Majima: *Palm-spins his tanto knife with intense speed.* "Hey, first off, I was nerfed at your age." *Taps the non-sharp end on his eyepatch.* "Second, there's still life in me yet; only fifty-plus. Finally, you'll get there."

Kato: *Extends the baton once more.* "Maybe I could live with that, if I retained all of my sanity until then."

Majima: *Threatens with the point of the knife again.* "HEY! What the Hell does that mean?"

Kato: *Takes the serada-guard stance.* "I didn't say you lost all of it..."

Majima: *Rips off his snakeskin coat with his left hand, exposing his Hannya Irezumi.* "You'll pay for that!"

Kato: *His left hand throws his leather jacket and t-shirt off, revealing his Samurai Irezumi.* "You'll still be paying for yours."

And with that, the two manifest their strongest battle auras and charge each other, weapon in hand. A metallic, clashing sound happens...

Some time later, back at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...

Interestingly, the club tonight is feeling a much higher fever than usual. The music from the speakers can be heard almost eight blocks away. Entering the venue has us realize that there are two occupants on the stage, performing the highest honors of karaoke...

Hayami/Chiba/Nakamura/Yada: *They are situated in their personal security and calling-center room, witnessing the cameras. They are in such a state of voiceless shock, their mouths are attempting to replace their chins for the bottoms of their heads.*

Majima: *His face appears on the fisheye cam overlooking the performance area, enlarging it. He laughs maniacally at it. Then, when singing and dancing in tune to "GET to the Top!" by Hidenori Shoji, along with a digitally rendered group of backups...* "Buchi kowashite kyou kara TRY AGAIN! [Break past the rules and try again!] Wakare tsugeyou itsu mo no TRAUMA e! [Say
'sayonara' to the daily trauma!]

Kato: *Appears behind Majima in a fit of perceived magic, copying all of the movements.*
"Lame-iro shita ashita e FLY AWAY! [Fly away to a sparkling tomorrow!] Me no mae ni wa kagayaku SHINING GATE! [Where what'll be in front of you is a shining gate!]

Kato/Majima: *Singing together.* "Yume no GOAL e hashiri dasou [Reach that goal you've always dreamt of]; Kinou yori takai basho e GET TO THE TOP! [Find yourself above yesterday - Get to the top!]

*They then complete the remainder of the song's instrumentals, using the special monitors to simulate the backups and other techics in the scenes required, until they reach the end, in which they disappear, leaving Kato to perform an E-point to Majima raising an uppercut fist into the air.*

Audience: *All are equally aghast. The catalysts (namely the squads of Yakuza within the crowd) all begin clapping, eventually goading the rest to do the same. Even AssUniv has to admit a performance well-performed, though they might need to wash their eyes still.*

Kato: *With the routine over, Kato hooks his arm around Majima's neck, getting a good laugh in, and then leaves him to get all the attention. To the crowd, with his headset microphone,* "You all know you loved it!"

Audience: *Look between each other before positively roaring up.*

Kato: "Anyone else want to give it a shot!??" *Throws up his fist, holding another microphone, ready to answer the public.*

Audience: *A swarm of "Me!" or "I!" or "Yes!" erupt.*

Kato: *To his personal DJ.* Choose one already, man! *Leaves the stage.*

Maehara: *Shakes the cobwebs out of his head.* "Well that, was something."

Fuwa: "Where it matters, Kato-kun has no shame."

Kanzaki: "Even in the face of audacity." *Giggles.*

Nagisa: "Where's he going?" * Watches Kato walk over to a special table.*

-At said table, a bunch of Majima's personal friends are there.-

Kiryu/Haruka/Yuta/Saejima/Akiyama: *The Kamurocho regulars, having a sabbatical in Kyoto, are enjoying themselves.*

Kato: *Goes up to all the former Yakuza/Yakuza affiliates.* "I suppose this is a fit way to settle all of our matters."

Kiryu: "I'm glad this ended nonviolently."

Haruka: *Cuddles herself closely between her adopted father (Kiryu) and husband (Yuta).* "Not many times that that happens."

Yuta: "What I'd give to make it more frequent."
Kato: "You guys up for a round of the new-style karaoke yourselves?"

Kiryu: "Hm, though Haruka would disagree, my singing days have past."

Haruka: "If Majima-kun can do it, Kiryu, you can."

Kiryu: "Just not tonight."

Haruka: "Don't think I haven't seen you lullabying Haruto; you really do still got it."

Yuta: *Deepens his embrace on his wife.* "Says the former pop idol."

Kato: *Turns to the other side of the table.* "What about you guys?"

Saejima: *Is bent forward, toward the table, holding onto one of his drinks.* "You'll probably have to talk to me again after five cans before I'll be going up there."

Akiyama: *Smoking a cigarette, leaning back on the lounge chairs.* "Ha! Kato-san, I'll bet you 400,000 yen he'll go up before three."

Kato: *Snaps fingers at him.* "You're on."

Yuta: "I'll put my Yuan in that gamble."

Haruka: "Yuta-kun..."

Saejima: "Hey hey! I'm no casino table!"

Majima: "Yahaha! I'll beg to differ, kyoudai!" *Walks up to the team.*

Haruka: "Majima-san! A great show today."

Majima: "Aw, you think so? I'm totally flattered!" *To Kato.* "Do you think so too, Mr. Oyabun?"

Kato: "Hey, don't call me by that here. But yeah, it was nice. It clears you of your debt to me."

Majima: "Heheh, nice to be free of strings."

Kato: "Oh you got that right. You can intrude unannounced, Majima-san, but you cannot make trouble. Understand?"

Majima: "Oh, you wound me, Kato-chan!"

Kiryu: "He means it, Majima-san. Leave his people be."

Majima: "Ooo... Anything for you, Kiryu-chan."

Kato: *Bows.* "Thank you. All of you. Enjoy the rest of your night." *Leaves.*

Yuta: "We'll be sure to visit again soon!"
Saejima: "Your other venues too." *Raises a bottle.*

Kato: *As he walks away, he gives a small smirk.* Always nice to be around some old company...
Enforcing Space

Chapter Summary

Naoko and Kimura. In the near future, these two will represent both the public and private sectors of Japan's law enforcement. But as they youthful, bright-eyed rookies right now, there is still much they have yet to learn about the criminal justice field. With the permission of Karasuma, they might just get to learn more about it. Perhaps maybe even the darker side of it! Who am I kidding these days...

"Stop the Fire" by Vicky Vale plays on the loudspeakers.

-It is another regular day working a Summer full-time shift at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub for AssUniv's student-assassins. Everyone is enjoying their own duties just fine while making a very honest and decent buck. It was not quite the calling they had in mind, but when they could not take any legitimate, genuine internships this Summer as well, this was definitely something befitting their skills just a little bit. Even Naoko gets to join in the fun now that she no longer has to hide around, now joining Karma as the occasional interim lieutenants of security detail. Their similar positions usually mean they have some time laid out for themselves, which is a definite-plus... Unless Karasuma made rounds of his own. Getting caught would turn the plus into a minus in a heartbeat.-

-But aside from that, there were not really any major concerns on the minds of the student-assassins. Well, almost no major concerns...-

-Kimura, still on duty as a waiter, moves to an off-duty Naoko, who has occupied her own high-stool table with a bottled beer on the second floor, regarding a very special issue.

Naoko: "What's that? You want to know what 'true justice' is?"

Kimura: "Yeah." *Looks around for a bit, before returning his attention to her.* "You think I can sit down with you for a sec?"

Naoko: "Don't be worried if Karma-kun sees you with me."

Kimura: *Beat.* "Not him."

Naoko: *Gives a satisfied reaction face upon realizing who Kimura is preoccupied with.* "Give him a heart attack, I dare you."

Kimura: "Alright..." *Takes a seat.* "Well, can you tell me?"

Naoko: "Honestly..." *Looks at Kimura sorrowfully.* "I can't. I wouldn't know where to start."

Kimura: "Yeah... Can't blame you there."

Naoko: "Why be curious about such a thing, of all times?"
Kimura: "Well, recent events have been quite the food for thought, wouldn't you say?"

Naoko: *Thinks about it aside for a bit.* "You're right about that. It's crazy when for almost all your life, you trust in your friends to do the right thing more than the authorities."

Kimura: "Oh, don't lecture me on that; my father is a cop, but he's no paragon."

Naoko: "Mhm."

Kimura: "It's more than just who does it, though; I'm sure you're aware. What do they do?"

Naoko: "This about Kato-kun again? Yeah, I've fought on both sides of law-bringing before. I clearly don't believe that justice through legislation is the only way. But I also just can't believe the secret organization way that Kato practices is the best there is."

Kimura: *Surprised.* "I... Wasn't really talking about Kato-kun there. I was referring to ourselves and what we do. I mean, you think about five years ago, the time when we thought adults were useless and we did things, at best, ignoring authorities, and at worst, fighting against said authorities. Make sense?"

Naoko: "Uh... Yeah. Of course."

Kimura: "Ah. But what you were saying is quite the root of the conundrum. Anything we can do to change that?"

Naoko: "Maybe..."

-The next day, during breakfast at the Hyatt Regency...-

Karasuma: "Hm? You two want to shadow a police officer for life experience?"

Naoko: "Well, yeah."

Kimura: "If we can pick, we'd like one who has remarkable achievement and long service."

Karasuma: *Sits back.* "I understand Kimura wanting to see what his career would be like... But why you, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: *Is without words for a second.* "Anything to get away from Kato-kun; been near him enough to last a month already."

Karasuma: "..."

Kimura: *Really?*

Naoko: *Well, Karasuma-niisan hates him.*

Karasuma: "Very well. I'll make contact with the Kyoto PD. There should be someone interested."

Naoko/Kimura: *Bow.* "Thank you, Karasuma-sensei."
-Within an hour, the police station responded; Naoko and Kimura took the local train lines to it and waited in front of the entrance for their shadower. The man in blue arrives before long.-

   Officer: "Ah, you must be the students that Karasuma recommended."

   Naoko/Kimura: *Both look back to see the officer, before bowing.* "Good day to you, sir. I'm Akimoto Naoko/Kimura Justice."

   Sakamoto: "And you can call me Sakamoto. Officer Kyo Sakamoto. I must say, it's a pleasure to see some aspiring law enforcement-hopefuls."

   Naoko: "Wait, Officer Sakamoto? You're a legend!"

   Kimura: "Oh yeah... Just over thirty-years of proud service, with several awards for excellence."

   Sakamoto: "Ah, fans too! That's always appreciated. I can probably assume you're going to really pay attention to the work today, yes?"

   Naoko: "Oh, you can say that."

   Sakamoto: "Well then, to my cruiser!" *Leads the way.*

   Kimura: *To Naoko.* Hey, you really think we'll learn what 'true justice' is from him?

   Naoko: If not from him, then who? *Proceeds to follow Officer Sakamoto, which Kimura slowly copies.*

-The first few hours of the day saw the two student-assassins undergo regular police cases and activities: chasing store robberies, settling street disputes that have escalated into full-on brawls, and sniffing out drug caches in warranted households.-

   Kimura: *Along with Naoko, sitting in the backseat of the cruiser, he turns to her once more.* Hey Naoko-san, are you learning anything from all this?

   Naoko: Oh, a decent amount. Remember, the Ministry had me do a lot more undercover stuff than actually any constable work. I knew the rules would be very different, but not really how. They just don't mix; no wonder Kato and Karasuma butt heads in more than just principle. *Sighs.* What about you?

   Kimura: Nah, this isn't anything new for me; We already knew all these people were int he wrong, and that's why we're arresting them. I'd really much rather prefer a case that we can actually analyze for a change - see the original perpetrator, forensic data, anything.

   Naoko: Well, the shift is still young. You may get your wish.

   Sakamoto: *Looks at the two with the rearview mirror.* "Hey! You two alright back there?"

   Naoko/Kimura: *Refocus.* "Yes, sir!"

   Sakamoto: "I think we dealt with all the small fry police codes... Now onto something a little more, shall we say, serious."
Naoko: "Oh? What might that be, sir?"

Sakamoto: *Stops the car and looks back completely at them.* "Cracking down on the Kato Family."

Kimura: "Wow that does sound in-" *Beat.*

Naoko/Kimura: *Wait, what!?*

Sakamoto: "'In-?' What was that, Kimura?"

Kimura: "Uh, my apologies, I had a gag reflex. I was going to say it was 'interesting.'"

Sakamoto: "Aye, indeed it is. But you do know who the Kato Family is, yes?"

Naoko/Kimura: *Look between each other.* "Oh, yes we do... They're Yakuza, right?"

Sakamoto: "Not just any Yakuza; they're the top brass. Just short of the Chairman's position of the Akamine Clan."

Naoko: "Oh yeah; I read about that. In some of the syndicates' branded magazines."

Sakamoto: "Biased bullshit, those are. But if what they say is true, then at least it doesn't lie all the time."

Kimura: "So, how are we going to, you know, 'crack down on the Kato Family?'"

Sakamoto: "We're going to arrest one of their Captains. The toughest among them, of which we will handle today, is Miho Akiyama..."

Naoko/Kimura: "!!"

Sakamoto: *Continues driving.* "Or, by her real name, Miharu Nishiki..."

Naoko/Kimura: *Look between each other with surprise once more.*

Naoko: *Turns her attention to Sakamoto.* "Miho Akiyama? 'The Kurenai Nadeshiko'"

Sakamoto: "Got that from the magazine too, did you? Well, at least you know a bit about her. Former JGSDF, doubly specialized in munitions engineering and close-quarters combat; dishonorably discharged after just three years of service, and tried to disappear for a few months... Before finding herself with a Karajishi Irezumi, and part of the Kato Family's force."

Kimura: "If she disappeared, how'd you find out Miharu was Miho?"

Sakamoto: "It's a staple among the Kato Family, distinct from almost all other Yakuza in their region, to use pseudonyms. The rest of the mob often call them cowards or badly humble... In Miho's case, she's protecting her husband; Keitaro Nishiki."

Naoko: "Wait a minute, are you saying Miho Akiyama is married to the light-heavyweight champion of ZST and Deep MMA?"
Sakamoto: "That's what I'm saying. They've been separated for a while, though."

Kimura: "Oh, well..."

Sakamoto: "Or that's exactly what she wants you to think. We're going to his house now."

Kimura: "Huh? Why are we going there? Ask him questions about Miho?"

Sakamoto: "You really think he'd admit being personally related to the Yakuza? Of course not! We're going to bait Miho out using him."

Naoko/Kimura: "!!"

Sakamoto: "Miho's a woman in a man's business... And yet she's a hundred times stronger than your average gangster. Many cops have tried to pin her down; none so far have succeeded."

Naoko: "Whoa, seriously?"

Sakamoto: "Quickly pulls out an archive in the police database." "Take a look at this CCTV footage."

Naoko/Kimura: "They both lean forward and watch; they are flabbergasted by Akiyama's outstanding display of modern, hybrid street combat, performing three simultaneous wrist locks using one arm and an ankle lock on another with her other arm. She needs only flick the other arm to twist the ankle, and quickly knocks the other three out with a trailing left hook. Another guy appears on screen and tries to baton-swipe her, but she blocks it on her forearm, breaking it, and low heel-sweep kicks the man's forward leg, causing the foot to move forward and force him to do a vertical split; he is immediately taken out with a roundhouse kick to the face."

Kimura: "She's even better than her husband..."

Sakamoto: "No kidding. There's another seven men in that sequence; they're all taken out in under a minute. Heh, many cops have turned down trying to nab her ever since... But I've kept an active file."

Naoko: "How long have you been trying to find her?"

Sakamoto: "By now, eleven years. I've interrogated her parents, her former sarges, anybody who had close contact with her since she was born... but they've all cut contact with Miho. Except for one. "Sees the street sign." We're getting close."

Kimura: "I get that Miho is a bad person and all, especially how you described her, but wouldn't it make more sense to get another of the Kato Family's lesser-able members and downsize them that way?"

Sakamoto: "Oh we have before. But they proved unable to answer our most lingering question."

Naoko: "Which is?"

Sakamoto: "Just who is the Oyabun of the Kato Family?"
Naoko/Kimura: *Metaphorical sweat drops.* **Of course...**

Sakamoto: "Ah, we're here." *Looks back.* "Okay, you two follow me. I'll handle Mr. Nishiki."

Naoko/Kimura: *Clearly reluctant to go through with this.* "Okay..." *They get out of the cruiser and walk a few steps behind the police officer. They reach the front entrance, which Sakamoto knocks.*

Sakamoto: "Keitaro! Open up! We got a warrant for your arrest on account of illegal arms possession of a Heckler & Koch USP!"

Naoko: A **USP pistol... Most likely an emergency stash for Miho.**

Keitaro: "What? Officer Sakamoto again?"

Sakamoto: "Open up or I'll kick it down!"

Keitaro: "Hey, that won't be necessary." *Slowly opens the door, revealing himself.* "Now, you can turn this house inside out, but you won't find a gun her-"

Sakamoto: "Shut up." *Turns Keitaro around and immediately handcuffs him.*

Naoko/Kimura: "!!"

Keitaro: "Hey! What the fuck are you doing!?"

Sakamoto: "I said shut up! Move your ass to the cruiser!" *To Naoko and Kimura.* "You two, go inside and find the stash. I'll keep mister champ company." *Kicks Keitaro off his own front porch.*

Keitaro: "I'm going, I'm going! Jesus!"

Naoko: *Come on, Kimura-kun; we shouldn't hesitate. It might do worse.*

Kimura: **Right...** *They both head inside and go up to the second floor. When he is certain that Officer Sakamoto is not looking at them, he immediately pulls out his phone to call Kato, explaining to him the situation.* "So, Kato-san, we're in a really big pickle. Miho's life is blown."

Naoko: *Inside Keitaro's bedroom, she deduces, through the light scratches made on the floor were done by the nightstand on top of it. She proceeds to move it out of the way, and then uses her Gerber knife to pry the lamination between two weak boards away. Lifting one reveals the ammunition box housing a USP pistol.* "There we are."

Kimura: *Off-phone.* "Oh jeez." *Back to phone.* "Kato-san, we really don't want to help Officer Sakamoto. What do we do?"

Kato: *Voice only.* "Thanks for your notification and concern; I'm going to get on scene in about... ten minutes. Delay revealing anything to the police officer while you can; it sounds like he's only staying here so long as Keitaro is a victim of the Law."

Naoko: *Rises up and moves the phone to her.* "Are you sure? Officer Sakamoto looks to not care any less about Keitaro-san, only wanting to get Miho. What if he does something to him?"
Kato: "Oh, if Keitaro-san has followed Miho's procedure, there can only be so much good that does for little Officer Sakamoto..."

Naoko: "You know what's happening even when you're not even there... Figures. Alright, we'll do it."

Kimura: *Hangs up the smartphone.*

Sakamoto: *Using his megaphone outside.* "Hey juniors, did you find what we are looking for yet?"

Naoko/Kimura: *Look at the ammunition box for a second, then at each other. Naoko then opens up the window facing the street and calls out to the Officer.* "Nothing yet, Officer! Keitaro has left quite a mess all over his most frequented rooms!"

Sakamoto: *Swiftly turns around to Keitaro, now sitting in the police cruiser.* "Why is that, hm? You got something to hide?"

Keitaro: "No! Come on, officer; I don't stick around her long enough to clean up; I got fights all over Japan to work!"

Sakamoto: "Don't give me that crap!" *Opens the door and pulls Keitaro out, behind the car from where the two student-assassins can't see, and throws one wide hook at the prizefighter's face.*

Keitaro: *Coughs.* "The fuck was that for?"

Sakamoto: *Shakes his hand.* "You're an undefeated MMA champ, and you can't take a punch?" *Throws another.*

Kimura: *Looks over Naoko's shoulder.* "He's beating him real good!"

Naoko: *They both pull their heads back inside, thinking about the situation in the same room, with the handgun in the middle.* "This is not good at all. What should we do...?"

-But before they can settle on a new course of action, two gunshots resound in the setting.-

Naoko/Kimura: *Both jump up slightly from the sounds. They then return to the window, finding a masked woman standing above Officer Sakamoto. Without a second thought, they leave the second floor and charge at her with their issued firearms and badges at her.* "Freeze!"

Miho: *Immediately reveals herself by removing her mask.* "AssUniv..."

Naoko: *Lowers her gun.* "Miho?"

Miho: "Don't worry; both guys are just knocked out..."

-An hour later...-

-Keitaro has been moved to the backup house he and Miho share in Kyoto. The latter sits outside on the front entrance steps with Naoko and Kimura, reflecting on the events.-
Miho: "Keitaro-kun is who you'd call a childhood sweetheart for me... We grew up together. I was born in 1974 as Miharu Aoyama-

Kimura: "Whoa, 1974? You're in your forties?"

Miho: "Yep; I'm really looking it now, aren't I?"

Naoko: *Has a denying expression.* "No, you- We pegged as in your early thirties, at the very least. And Keitaro is thirty-six, according to his Wiki, so we didn't think much of the gap."

Miho: "Haha, Keitaro's faking it; he's actually forty-three - older than me."

Kimura/Naoko: *That's a massive bombshell waiting to happen!*

Miho: "Anyway, I was born without neural limiters, so I could use 100% of my muscles. I got into fights often because I was always accidentally breaking stuff; they thought I was showing off. Nobody really liked me as a result, except for Keitaro-kun, who was always interested in combat. We sparred a bit with each other ourselves, before my parents tried to close it off, saying I should pursue better things. I would have none of it though, and once I finished high school, I cut all ties with them; the JSDF would be my family."

Naoko: "Not Keitaro?"

Miho: "I didn't want my biological family to talk with Keitaro's to try and find me. So at first, I stayed away from him. When I was few years into the Yakuza, I found him again. We talked, we drank, we made out, and we made love. And then we married. That was about 1997."

Kimura: "By that time, the JSDF weren't your family either, though."

Miho: "Well, you know me and Satoshi were dishonorably discharged. For me, well, women in the army was still a touchy subject back then. One male private in my regiment tried his luck, only to get a bruised jaw in return. The sergeant walked in on all this a moment too late, and singled me out. Bastards, all of them."

Naoko: "That sucks."

Miho: "I wandered for a bit... I wanted a purpose. The feeling of being needed. Being loved, for being the person I am, because how could I be anybody else? The Kato Family, as you two know very well by now, doesn't care for our past mistakes and problems. They will stand by you unconditionally, like a real family should, provided you do the same." *Lifts up her shirt a bit to reveal the lower-detail of her Karajishi Irezumi, which envelops seemingly all of her back and intruding around her waist.* "This tattoo complements with a mirror copy that Satoshi wears. It's meant to be a set of guardians that chase away evil spirits from temples. It proves my undying duty to protect what I love most - my family. Keitaro-kun, Kato-ani, and all of Japan." *Puts her shirt down.* "Now you're one of twenty-two to know."

Naoko/Kimura: *Begin realizing even more true justice is being so much harder to describe.*

Miho: "Don't go about retelling this to anybody; you'll hurt more than just yourself." *Sighs with relief.* "Heh, I can literally see the growth in both you, AssUniv, and us, the Family, through all the stuff we do together."
Kimura: "Say what?"

Miho: "I was just like an inverted Karasuma, believing the Kato Family should always keep to
themselves, or we'd be in deep shit. But I mean, Kato-ani has only become even better, even
stronger, and even wiser since he's interacted with you all. He'll actually enjoy more than five beers
with us in one sitting now. And I can tell he's changed your minds a bit too."

Naoko/Kimura: "Well..."

Miho: "Ah, that's enough about that and this, though." *Rises up.* "I better make sure Keitaro-
kun is okay."

Naoko: "Oh, uh, Miho? One more question."

Miho: "What is it?"

Naoko: "What made you decide three years after you were in the Yakuza that you wanted to
rekindle a romantic relationship with your old friend? Even with hiding from your family and being
in a syndicate that lets you have romantic ties, that's very atypical."

Miho: *Laughs.* "I guess it was just me being stupid. I kept thinking it could work between me
and another, both as we are in the Yakuza, but it wasn't meant to be."

Kimura: "Wh-"

Naoko: *Holds his wrist to prevent him from making Miho say it was Kazuto.*

Miho: "Huh, not like I'd say Keitaro-kun is a backup, though. Shit just happened. But not all of it
turned that way; I still get chances from time to time." *Looks at them.* "Goodbye." *Leaves the
front porch.*

Naoko: *Head tilts in confusion.* "Wait, what did she mean by, 'she still gets chances?' if
Kazuto is deceased?" *Mind flickers.* "Oh my God..."

Kimura: *Realizes what Naoko is saying.* "That's insane... Especially since they don't look like
each other, presuming Kato-san is right."

Naoko: "Oh, he wouldn't lie about family..." *And if it's not his likeness, then its his mannerisms
that Miho-san adores... The hair-scratching, the head tilting, even the smile... It seems Miho too is
locked in the past. For her love life's sake, I hope she finds peace with it soon.

Miho: *Once inside the backup house, she hugs Keitaro in their family room before falling onto
the nearby sofa. A German Shepherd dog, with tags identifying him as "Ronin," runs into the room
and dives onto the both of them. All three are clearly happy to spend time together.*

Naoko: *Both have shaken off their disbelief and return to briefly sitting on the front porch's
steps.* "All other things aside, I think we ended this day knowing even less about what "true justice"
is...

Kimura: But that's only because "true justice" doesn't exist. Not so much as true heroes and
villains exist.
Naoko: Right... We've seen many who should be the bad guys to us; Korosensei, Irina, Lovro, other assassins. And if you think about it, Yanagisawa believed he was avenging Aguri. By itself, that's not wrong.

Kimura: The Ministry of Defense's agents have been our foe before too, but they are still good guys.

Naoko: Indeed. That's why rulebooks change between types of cops. And different rules are used for different cases.

Kimura: And us, as auxiliaries, aren't meant to make the rules; only follow them. And enforce them. Leave it to those Ministry folks to make them better, get closer to the best justice we can ever have.

Naoko: I'd almost like to say that's a gross oversimplification... But I think I'll be intruding on Karma's future position if I do. *Giggles.* Alright, let's get out of here.

-Meanwhile...-

Sakamoto: "Ergh..." *Holds his head as he rises up, still feeling the stiff hit that Miho clocked him with on the top of his head. When he opens his eyes, he is met with a very chilling reception.* "EEK!"

Masked Man: *A man with very (strangely) familiar physicals stares straight into Officer Sakamoto's eyes with his own, fury-filled irises. His Hatred Bloodlust absolutely terrifies the man in blue. Then, masking his voice with an notorious one from an otherwise acclaimed 2005 film...* "You wanted me. Now you got me."

Sakamoto: "Y-you!?"

Masked Man: *Nods.* "You and the Force are done going after Keitaro."

Sakamoto: "Okay! Alright! It was only me to begin with; the station really didn't want me to anyway! I'm gone now!" *Gets inside his cruiser and leaves as quickly as he came.*

Masked Man: "...* Heheh, that never gets old.*
Chapter Summary

Muramatsu, Hazama, and Sosuke all want their chance to get some of the Kato Family touch on their careers after so many of their friends and colleagues have gotten their taste. Kato is all but willing to comply, but some enhancement opportunities may have suddenly taken a strange turn when the Yakuza oyabun believes an infiltrator keeps popping up wherever he goes...

-"Bushido" by Peter Roe (feat. Uyanga Bold) plays over the loudspeakers.-

-It is event night in Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub. Usually, manager Kato is keen to hiring special talent groups, local and established alike, to perform on stage for the entertainment of on average 5,000 people a night. However, since AssUniv had been hired to work at the Kyoto-based establishment, a certain team had been regulars in providing quality shows, mainly in the form of beautifully rendered, written, and executed live-action plays.-

-For instance, the latest one is named "Red Sun Over Dystopia," which depicts a longstanding feudal war between four clans of Samurai (each led by Isogai, Maehara, Sugino, and Kanzaki's characters respectively), instigated by a corrupt Shogun (played by Karma). Upon finding out they are being played, they all unite to battle their common enemy, as well as his consummate allies, of which cause the deaths of Isogai and Maehara's characters, leaving Sugino and Kanzaki to handle Karma. They are successful, but Sugino sacrifices himself to ensure Kanzaki could land a killing blow. She is left crying while holding hi, up in her arms, unsure how to make peace and quiet in the crazed world they as warmongers have made without everyone and everything else to help.-

Crowd: *Some absolutely teary-eyed, some outright shocked, many others simply impressed, all vigorously clap as the production team and cast make a wave bow after the set-up on-stage has been cleared.*

AssUniv Stage Crew: *After heading backstage and thanking their peers who took time out of working their usual department, all take to the VIP Lounge on the top floor to have a private drink to themselves.*

Mimura: *Raises a glass of Yamazaki 1984 up in the air.* "To another great production, everybody."

Itona: *Like everyone else, he too raises a glass.* "Indeed. It truly felt like a job well done."

Fuwa: "Definitely sending a one-shot of this to Jump after all this!"

Hazama/Sosuke: "Yeah..."

Fuwa: *Looks over to them following their mild celebratory exclamation.* "What's up with you guys?"
Hazama: "Eh, there's nothing wrong with writing for a couple thousand people."

Sosuke: "And seeing a whole bunch of others that Kato hires are great. But this, isn't the extent of our talents."

Hazama: "We'd very much like to see events devoted purely for what we're invested in."

Kato: "Appears from the personal wine room in the lounge, holding a bottle of Dom Perignon."

"Then why don't you?"

Sosuke: "Kato-san? What are you-?"

Kato: "The security room and call center wanted a little something special for their finish today."

*Lightly shakes the bottle.* "But Hazama-san, and Sosuke-san, you do know there are a bunch of art and writing expos around Kyoto prefecture, right? Of course, the most proper, high-profile ones require quite an entry fee, but that's when having a friend with deep pockets helps, right?"

Hazama: "What's the catch, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Do you need one?"

Sosuke: "No! Of course not."

Kato: "Great. Who wants to go," *Checks his watch.* first?"

-After some initial disagreement, it was decided that Hazama would have her day before Sosuke's. She and Kato attend a semi-private Writers in Kyoto convention in ROHM Theatre, listening to the English-centric stories written by this year's winners. It was an enjoyable afternoon and evening for the to-be-librarian, but Kato couldn't help but keep the feeling that they were being watched from time to time. He subtly looks around finding nothing suspicious, however. It was much ado about nothing, as nothing disturbed the day after all.-

-Back at the VIP Lounge of Nyurifu Rikkyo the next day, all of the other student-assassins, enjoying some Zinfandel red wine, were told by Hazama about her meet with the international writers from the convention (she would've liked to keep it under wraps, but Sosuke, eager to know that Kato was really bringing them to nice places, wanted to truly hear about it).-

Muramatsu: *When Hazama notified that Kato was involved in it,* "Wait a minute." *Looks over to Kato, leaning himself on the wall near the wine room.* "Kato-san, you're getting some of us some all-expenses-paid trips to the arts of Kyoto and you didn't tell me?"

Kato: *Finishes sipping.* "You never asked before." *Checks his watch just to make sure.*

Muramatsu: "Heh, screw you." *Sips some more wine.* "Got any food-oriented socials, particularly in the ramen department? After all, Kyoto has a remarkable subculture for the dish..."

Nakamura: "That was so bipolar."

Kato: "Sure, I can think of an event." *Looks over to Sosuke.* "But Sosuke-san has first queue," *Checks his watch and looks up.* "Yes he does."

Sosuke: "Nice."
Muramatsu: *Shit.*

-The next day, Kato woke up Sosuke early to take a visit to the Morning Gallery Kyoto, a place filled with acclaimed pieces made in recent memory, and a set of desk spots to interview some of the noteworthy contemporary artists who made them. Sosuke obviously was very excited. Kato, however, once again felt preoccupied, and couldn't enjoy the nigh-priceless works of art as well as everyone else. He looked around a surreal spiral, looked past a black thread maze-like pinwheel, and even both on a "waterfall" of variously-colored buttons found in many rhythmic games. But nothing was out of place... Except for a guy who had too much of the complimentary alcohol.-

-Then came Muramatsu's turn just the next day, going to the area in and around Menbakaichidai for attendance to the fire-ramen biannual, which has attracted many recognized chefs. Muramatsu was fortunate to battle through some of the tougher crowds to get bowls to try out the higher-rated meals (Kato was obviously able to make layaway of his own bowls with the chefs). As they sat down to have a few bites, Kato once more thought there was an unidentified risk about. When Muramatsu bowed his head into one dish, Kato aggressively looked back. This time, there was something that stood out... Well, kinda. For a split second in between the crowd, Kato could see a man whose face was concealed by a reddish mask. He disappeared as quickly as he came into view, and Kato thought better than to make a disturbance to find him again. But he knew that was the person who emitted the auras he sensed from the previous ventures. What could he be wanting...?-

Muramatsu: *Done with his slurping, he notices Kato acting erratically.* "Kato-san? What's up? See anybody from the Reclamation Society?"

Kato: *Turns back to him.* "No, something else caught my eye." *Rises up and walks over to a mobile bulletin stand. He slides a pamphlet out from a clear shelf at the waist level and returns to their table.* "This." *Shows it to Muramatsu.*

Muramatsu: *Reads the contents.* "Oh, another convention?"

Kato: "Indeed. One for everything you, Hazama-san, and Sosuke-san have seen so far. Art, literature, and food, all in one."

Muramatsu: *Continues reading.* "And its an open entry?"

Kato: "Yep. You guys can even join in on the fun, making your best works and stacking them up against like-minded individuals."

Muramatsu: "That sounds great."

Kato: "It's, "Checks his watch." In a week. When you and I are done here, we'll head back, notify the two, and I reckon y'all should get ready for its festivities."

Muramatsu: "Truly."

Kato: "... I really did notice that, and I'm not certain about anything right now, so I didn't have to lie. But the Society could be about too... Maybe to scout the talent? I don't know, something just doesn't feel right."

-For the next several days, the trio were hard at work getting their entries into their respective
opens ready. Hazama spent several intervals of hours staring at her laptop screen, first wondering what types of one-shots and prints to develop, as well as filling in the many blocks (Nakamura, Kanzaki, and Hayami help with some ideas of their own). Sosuke meanwhile was scrapping many good pieces of paper trying to sketch the perfect graphite reference for a modernist gallery (Fuwa and Okajima were there to critique, strangely enough). And Muramatsu has locked himself inside his Hyatt Regency suite's personal kitchen experimenting with recipes his family had conceived (the rest of the Terasaka Group were getting ingredients for him so that he doesn't need to leave).

-Finally, the week passed, and everyone was more or less ready for the tricolor convention. Held in Hyogo, the four (as always of course, with the permission of Karasuma), were to head there with Kato's Alfa Romeo Stelvio SUV. They arrive in the middle of the pack before opening time, able to get everything they wanted to show off ready just on time for the attendees to take a look at. They would not be able to support each other easily as each department had them sell in different spots within the venue. However, judging by the expressions on most of the customers' faces, the three were receiving positive reception, and were glad to have made it to the convention.

-Meanwhile, Kato took the time to look around for himself as a true appraiser. He was a man of culture, after all, and he was keen on taking in as much of it around here as possible... That is, until...

Kato: *Donning smoke aviators and while leaning himself on a pillar to enjoy a guksu-soba hybrid noodle, he gazes upward after a good slurp. And a quick scan of the audience makes him sense a familiar, yet daunting aura once more. He hastily begins looking around in an attempt to find the ominously-dressed man from the previous ventures.* Where are you...? *He finally finds one person who fits the bill; wearing a white fedora, presumably over the red mask seen earlier.* Gotcha. *Throws his noodle box away and starts treading through the crowd over to the Society spy. However, the man proved to be far more capable of wading through the sea of people as Kato had anticipated, and the Yakuza boss had a tough time keeping track of him.* What the Hell? How is he moving like that?

-Kato continues to barely manage to keep the white-suited, white-hatted, presumably-masked man in his line of sight, who only disappears for a moment because a head gets in the way. He was beginning to realize that this person has been doing this long before... But for what purpose? If the Society folk were to scout talent, it would be more along far-away view rather than close-quarters. Kato had no time to figure it out, as now, every time he reaches the spot where he saw the marked man last, he has seemingly teleported to another spot!

-Finally, Kato did indeed lose him, in which he saw the white-clad individual allegedly taking a right turn. Copying that movement leads the Oyabun to... Hazama's Calligraphy Wall?

Hazama: *Notices Kato appear in her bubble of people. Without alarming the others, she takes to her bluetooth earpiece to contact him.* "Fancy meeting you here, Kato-kun."

Kato: *Looks around upon hearing Hazama's voice, finding her in the corner of his eye.* "Hazama-san; good to see you. Quick question; did you happen to see a roughly 185-cm man in a white suit and a matching large-rimmed, fedora with a black stripe pass by?"

Hazama: "Huh, funny you should mention that. Someone who matches that description to the letter, no pun intended, just helped me out with some of my prints."

Kato: "He- He did?"
Hazama: "Oh yes. He showed me a select few techniques that could make the penmanship and brushing more traditionally authentic. All speedy and with little effort."

Kato: "Really now?"

Hazama: "Oh yes; when I'm done with the next batch, I could be selling them for almost double!"

Kato: "Well that's great. But do you know where the guy went?"

Hazama: "Ah, you did just miss him after all; he went leftwards, towards the art department and the like."

Kato: "Great. Thanks." *they cut off their personal frequency as he continues to pursue the mysterious... aiding individual. He catches sight of the sharply-dressed man moments later and tries to give a hastier chase towards him... Only to have a surplus of the crowd form a line in front of him. By the time Kato does get through them all, a little more roughly than usual, the man has reached another crossroads in the hallways and takes a left. Kato copies the action, and soon walks into... Sosuke's Modernism Wall.*

Sosuke: *In the middle of haggling with two other invested customers. He notices Kato stepping close, and turns on his microphone.* "Kato-san! Do me a favor and disperse this crowd for me, please?"

Kato: "Sosuke-san? What are you on about?"

Sosuke: "I need time to redo a mistake from a lot of my artbooks on Spectacular Sensei Saito!"

Kato: "That's a surprise. How'd you find out?"

Sosuke: "An even more diehard fan of the series' style came up to me and pointed it out! I was using bee yellow in an area of the character's costume that should have been dandelion yellow!"

Kato: "That's... Rough, man."

Sosuke: "Right?"

Kato: "Can you describe who did that?"

Sosuke: "Oh, uh, he was in a white suit, fedora, had a dark mask on."

Kato: "That's who I'm looking for; where did he go, Sosuke-san?"

Sosuke: "Um, I think he proceeded past my right, going to the food department. When you find him, tell him I said, 'thanks!' But first, clear this group of people for me?"

Kato: "Oh, of course." *Stealthily places closed signs over all of the artpieces on market.* "He's down for a minute, everybody! Go bother another!"

Crowd: *All groan as they leave.*

Sosuke: "Gee, I hope that didn't take a stab at my sales for the day... But you did your job, Kato-
San. Good luck on your search.*

Kato: "Thanks." *He heeded the directions, and found the suit before long once again. Kato was not hesitating anymore; he was going to catch this man if it was the last thing he would do... Today. When the masked man disappeared again having taken a right turn, Kato did so as well, and he happened upon, unsurprisingly, Muramatsu's Ramen Bar. Kato taps his earpiece to connect to his frequency.* "Muramatsu-san."

Muramatsu: *While one hand stirs the noodles, the other goes to his bluetooth.* "Kato-san? Where are you in this pack? Want to have a new, limited edition meal, on the house?"

Kato: "Uh, no. I gotta be somewh-* Mind flickers.* "New meal?"

Muramatsu: "Yep; I just came upon some great advice from some guy in a distinct white suit; though he was wearing a mask, so I couldn't see his face." *Locates Kato amongst the patrons, pours some broth and noodle into a small sample bowl and hands it to him.* "Here, have a shot!"

Kato: "No no no, I really got to-"

Muramatsu: "Come on, man; just a shot."

Kato: *Steps forth.* "Alright." *Accepts the sample and drinks.* "Whoa, you're right. This is great."

Muramatsu: "Damn right it is; that guy told me of a way better way to mold the ingredients together!"

Kato: *Checks his watch, using calculations to find out that he had been searching for the white-

-Kato takes to the balcony of the second floor within the convention building, leaning over the railing and thinking about what had just happened.-

Kato: *Checks his watch, using calculations to find out that he had been searching for the white-
clad masked man for more than an hour.* Well, that's that. If he was really going to get somebody, he would've by now. Egh, sometimes I wonder what I do with my life aside from biomechatronics and running a crossover business. *Feels a vibration in his chest pocket, coming from his flip-phone. He opens it up to find a text message; its sender is Hyun. Hesitantly, he opens it up and reads.*

Hyun: *Text only.* "Hey, Kato-kun! I'm at this tricolor convention in this region, and it is LIT! But also, I happened upon some of your friends there too. They got some good stuff going on, but they all had room to improve. Do take the time to visit their booths for their new product, courtesy of a special Korean touch, eh? - Hyu/

Kato: "..." WAIT, WHAT? *Beat.* Wait a minute, what am I saying? Hyun's a former NIS agent; he could've been anything he wanted to be before he left. I mean, hello? Tacky Korean-patriot jacket? Theatre mask? Geez... It's sad that he got grounded, though. I think I would've loved meeting the guy he used to be as well... *Puts away his flip-phone and continues to look at the parking lot.* At least the others are having an amazing time.

-Night fell on the event, and everyone had to start packing up. Kato assisted Muramatsu, Hazama, and Sosuke in doing so, getting it all on the SUV, and riding back to Kyoto's Hyatt Regency.-
Yada's done a lot to help out many of the members of the AssUniv Program, keeping them from despairing through thick and thin in between their time from Assassination Classroom and now. She has had a decent amount of practice too; she did fall into Class 3-E for allocating much of her time to helping out her constantly ill younger brother, after all. Maybe it's time someone helped her out a little more with that.

Thus truly begins the canon ship tease of Kazuhiko Kato and Touka Yada. ;)

"Love Is In The Air" by Nuage plays in the loudspeakers.

-It is another day in which AssUniv is on-duty at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub. All is going very well, and the student-assassins are very invested in their respective duties on this Thursday evening. That is... Except for Yada.-

Yada: "..." *Wearing her managerial badge and is helping Nakamura handle the call center. In between calls, she looks a little hesitant, eyes often peering rapidly around her surroundings.*

Nakamura: *Clicks her pen underneath Yada's face, snapping her out of it.* "Hey, Yada-san; having a seizure?"

Yada: *Mind clearing, she shakes her head to refresh, before looking over to Nakamura.* "Oh, no. Thanks for your concern though."

Nakamura: *Refocuses her microphone.* "Then what is it?"

Yada: "$I, um, would like for you to accompany me. For a little browsing, and shopping, tomorrow afternoon. On Friday." *Turns to her with eager, soulful eyes.* "Would you?"

Nakamura: *Exhaling while smiling.* "$Oh, Yada-san. You know I would totally be down for that, especially with you."

Yada: "Really?"

Nakamura: "$But I got plans tomorrow. A long-term tease plan is about to take a head tonight."

Yada: "$Aw..." *Briefly silent.* "$On Nagisa-kun, right?"

Nakamura: "$You're so smart." *Softly taps Yada's close earphone.* "$Sorry, Yada-san. You'll find your partner, though. Nobody dislikes you."

Yada: "...

-With Nakamura scratched off the list of possibilities, Yada, as assistant manager, took to her other befitting duties, which, say, involved overseeing some of her friends as they went about their own
duties. And in the middle of making sure everything was all well and good, she had time to offer them the same invitation. But all answers were right around the same.-

Karma: "No can do, Yada. Naoko and I are going to see Operation: Dynamo at MOVIX, then settle at a little cafe afterwards."

Naoko: *Slowly nods.* "We got a lot more catching up to do."

Muramatsu: "None of us," *Gestures to himself and the rest of the Terasaka Group, sans Yoshida mysteriously.* "Can't join you, Yada-san. They challenged me to make my spiciest ramen yet and serve it for lunch tomorrow. They'll be out for five hours at least, I reckon."

Isogai: "With all due respect, got to decline, Yada-san. Kataoka-san and I will be diving into other lists of career opportunities tomorrow."

Hayami/Chiba: *Are too busy stare-talking at each other to answer Yada properly. The latter deduces that since they have gotten used to communicating in such a way, they've been engrossed in doing it whenever possible... Which is as sweet as it is frustrating in terms of Yada's situation at the current hour.*

Nagisa: "Yada-san, I'd love to, but Kayano-san already got me to help her bring and set up props at a soon-to-be shooting area for her agency."

Yada: *Imaginary sweat drops fall from the back of her head.* \textit{I hope you don't get pranked during that, honestly...}

Sugino: "Sorry; Kanzaki-san wanted to make it up to me for joining her on one of her own ventures, so she agreed to play some at the batting center tomorrow afternoon. Would hate to leave that loose end against her."

Mimura: "Fuwa-san, Sosuke-san, and Okajima-san will be working with me on the next big play we're hosting here. It could take the whole day, let alone the afternoon."

Hara: "Muramatsu-san wanted me to help him out with some cooking, as well as medical help tomorrow. I've yet to get more details beyond that, but I'm already very concerned. So I got Kurahashi-san to help me too. Even so, still I'm worried..."

Okuda: "My sincerest apologies; Takebayashi-kun and I are spending the day at the library researching a biology project between us."

Okano: 'Maehara-kun is taking me out... On a race across Kyoto's skyline, seeing who's the fastest of the Big Four. I'll be too tired to do anything else that day, sadly."

Kimura: "Oh I know who that is - Me!"

Irina: *Waterfalls are going down her closed eyes.* "I still really need to make it up to that straight-laced husband of mine..."

Ritsu: *On Yada's phone, answering despite seemingly not asked about the opportunity yet.* "Kato-kun has stated that he would like me to explore a sample network of his; test my security and connection abilities."
Yada: "Fair enough." Did I just get rejected by a friendly AI?

-After all of her good friends have been crossed out, Yada was demoralized. She waded through the remainder of the shift, until 2 A.M. and stuck around still, until she was the only one left... Allegedly.-

Yada: *The entire nightclub devoid of souls and cleaned, she sat on one table located near the dance floor, next to a now-empty bottle of Hiroki sake, and barely able to keep her head up with her arm. Her assassin instincts kick in when she senses somebody come up to her, and her eyes open with vigor and look around.* "!!"

???: *Sets down a glass of water in front of her, between the bottle.* "A good drink of H2O before bed will prevent that hangover, Yada-san."

Yada: *She is briefly stunned for a second, before relaxing.* "Thank you, Kato-kun." *Accepts the cup and takes a sip.*

Kato: "May I?"

Yada: *Finishes her initial sip.* "Of course." *Scoots over, allowing the club owner to sit next to her.* "You never got drunk before; how'd you know about the water-thing?"

Kato: "I can't get drunk, but that doesn't mean my blood-siblings can't. They've got all kinds of tricks, and we get to see them all in action."

Yada: "Ah; makes sense."

Kato: "You're a little more tired at," *Checks his watch.* "2 A.M. than usual, Yada-san. Had a tough day of work?"

Yada: "Oh, no. I've just been, a little restless today."

Kato: *Leans closer.* "What's wrong?"

Yada: "I... Wanted to get some of my friends to help me out with a little shopping, well now is, today. But they all said they had plans for it than conflicted, so they had to refuse."

Kato: "That can be vexing, I'm sure. What's the shopping for?"

Yada: "My younger brother - Akihisa."

Kato: *Taken aback.* "Oh. Forgive me, but you said he's ill, right?"

Yada: "Yeah. He's having his next, most crucial operation at Red Cross tomorrow evening. I want to give him a little gift before it, like at three or something, to show him that I'm rooting for him as he goes through the doors. But all through this week, I haven't had a clue what to get him."

Kato: "Wow, that's very considerate of you. Were your friends meant to draw inspiration?"

Yada: "I hoped. But they're all too-" *Thinks for a moment, then checks her phone's timekeeping system.* "Occupied today."
Kato: *Notices her little nod to his own quirk and laughs a bit before continuing the conversation.* "Well... If you really need someone to accompany you to the bazaars, I'm available."

Yada: *Looks straight at him.* "Really? You're not busy?"

Kato: "Not in the," *Checks his watch.* "Afternoon."


Kato: "Anything for my peers.‖ *Laughs a bit too. In his moment of less control, His hand floats upward and falls flat onto Yada's close hand.* "OH-1!‖ *Realizes his hand now overlaps Yada's.*

Yada: *Notices it too, and begins blushing.*

Kato: *Immediately removes it, bringing it under his other arm and looking aside.*

Yada: *Tries to defuse the situation.* "So... we'll be taking your car, then? Your idea probably being a W Motors car, yes?"

Kato: *Has a beat while turning around.* "I...‖ *Holds his finger up in frozen hesitation.*

Yada: *Puzzled.* "Kato-kun? Something the matter?"

Kato: "No... I just think we can maximize the value of this journey traveling by train."

Yada: "Train?"

Kato: "Yes! Always nice to feel some actual cold steel from time to time. How about it; exactly," *Checks his watch.* "Noon, at the Kitayama train-stop? From there, anywhere you'll need to go! What do you say?‖ *Holds his hand out for a shake.*

Yada: "...‖ *Looks at Kato's hand before up at him again, before accepting the shake.* "We have an accord."

Kato: "Great!‖ *They let go.* "Let's have a good time, shall we?‖ *Smirks.*

Yada: "Always when around you, Kato-kun.‖ *Copies the smile.*

-The next day...-

Kato: *While leaning on a telephone pole just outside Kitayama station, he is flipping a steel-colored, non-nicotine vape pen around the fingers of his left hand. He eventually notices Yada walking across the street to reach the train-stop and joins her as she is about to enter.* "Fancy meeting you here, young, gorgeous miss."

Yada: *Playfully scoffs.* "Flattery will get you everywhere, sir."

Kato: "So, where to? I'm thinking the Nishiki Market downtown. A lot of great souvenirs for tourists were bought there, and since you and your brother aren't from here, it'd be fitting."

Yada: "I don't actually have a destination; I've burned through a lot, to be honest. Whatever you
got for me works greatly."

Kato: "Sounds good. Let's get going." *Proceed deeper into the stop.*

-After a twenty-minute train ride, they arrive at the closest station to the market, and spend a good hour perusing the available products.-

Kato: "How about a nice watch, made from Seiko?" *Takes a second look at the all-steel model.* "That is," *Checks his watch.* "Four seconds inaccurate..." Oof, do these sellers even care about their timekeepers?

Yada: "Haha, not unless I was going to let you pay for it. Which I'm not; it's my gift, from me to him."

Kato: *Puts the watch away.* "Fair enough. So, any of the other things play to your interests?"

Yada: "I don't know... I'm having second thoughts on all of them."

Kato: *Picks something up.* "How about this little teddy bear?" *Reads out the sentence that is a graphic on its t-shirt.* "'You will always be my honey.' Huh?"

Yada: *Imaginary sweat drops.* "Forgive me, Kato-kun, I don't think that is something for a family member..."

Kato: "It isn't? Is that why Kazuhiro didn't talk to me for a full, *Checks his watch.* Day after giving him that kangaroo plushie that said, "All Aussie is you being fantastic?"

Yada: "And even by itself, I'm not sure."

Kato: "Okay..." *Sets it aside. and picks a smaller thing up. He then begins spinning it around his index finger.* "How about a limited-edition, pointed fidget spinner?"

Yada: "Fidget spinners?"

Kato: *Lets it spin on his two pinched fingers a little longer.* "Yeah, I guess not..." *Puts it down.* "I know; how about we change the scenery a bit - get our tastes varied?"

Yada: "You have another district in mind?"

Kato: "Shinkyogoku. The tags are a lot more manageable too."

Yada: "Heh, alright."

-The duo proceeded to walk another seven minutes across several blocks en route to the new shopping district. And the results of them browsing there proved to yield... Right around the same.-

Yada: *Continues to ruffle through a variety of possible presents throughout one of several stores she's been to in the vicinity.*

Kato: *Goes up to her with another prospective item.* "Try this personal disc/USB player. Perfect all-around entertainment when online isn't possible or convenient. He might like this a lot." Especially if he comes across any enemy signal-tracers!
Yada: *Feels the device.* "This could work. But I think it's missing something."

Kato: *Looks a little displeased.* "That's fair; what does it lack, though?"

Yada: "I'm not certain. It doesn't seem fully appropriate."

Kato: "Okay, Yada-san." *Sets down the player.* "All this is ridiculous."

Yada: "What's the issue?"

Kato: "What's with this obsession to make everything perfect for your little brother?"

Yada: "Obsession?"

Kato: "Yada-san, I never had a sibling; my older cousin was the only equivalent. We share a close bond, and we sometimes do/give things, for/to each other. But we also know we don't always hit the mark."

Yada: "I get that. But I can't miss the mark; not this time, when he might not ever see me again."

Kato: "That doesn't matter. What does matter is that you know that you've done your best in hitting that mark. And I know that... Because you taught me that."

Yada: "!!"

Kato: "Akihisa-san ultimately just wants you most of all, Yada-san. But he won't get you if you just keep sticking around here. A fitting gift is just to emphasize that.

Yada: *Smiles and crosses her arms.* "... It seems as though you've done this speech before."

Kato: *Tilts his head and looks aside.* "I've come across many last-talks in this line. Though I've never said anything like this."

Yada: *Remembers he's a Yakuza who has warred multiple times.* "Right..." *Takes another look at all of the nearby things on-sale, wherein something piques her newly-invested interest.* "I think I have a good idea what that gift should be now..." *Walks off-screen towards it. *


-With the "perfect" present chosen and payed for, Kato and Yada gleefully return to Kawaramachi Station, taking yet another train for eleven minutes to Tofukuji, and then another six-minute walk to Red Cross Hospital.-

Yada: *Letting the present slowly slide from side to side in her paper bag as she walks with Kato into the institute entrance. After a little bit, she turns to him.* "Will I ever get to hear fully why you don't want to drive a car today?"

Kato: *Playfully scoffs.* "Maybe later."

Yada: *laughs.* "You're impossible."
Kato: "I try." *They both continue to laugh. He notices a few colorful pieces of paper lining the walls and an ambulance in full-blast, preparing to leave the medical facility. He shrugs it all off while looking back at Yada, however.*

-Now in the hospital, Yada, who is well-recognized by the front-desk staff by now, easily gets visiting passes for the two of them towards the Intensive Care Unit, where Akihisa is residing.-

Yada: *Notices a nurse that she recognizes.* "Ah! Miss Hasegawa!" *Walks up to her.*

Hasegawa: *Turns around abruptly.* "OH-! Um..."

Kato: *What was that?*

Yada: "K-" *Ahem.* "Ohno-kun, this is Nurse Ayako Hasegawa. Hasegawa, Ohno-kun."

Hasegawa: "Oh my, pleasure to meet you." *Offers a handshake.*

Kato: *Nods and accepts.* "The pleasure is with me."

Hasegawa: *Mind flickers.* "Oh, Yada-san! Did you happen to notice the fliers up today? Haagen-Dazs is giving away a free small cup of their ice cream for everybody today! You should go down and get a scoop!"

Yada: "Heheh, maybe later. I really want to see Akihisa first."

Hasegawa: "No, I insist!" *To Kato.* "You too, Ohno-kun! Make it a date; share a spoonful of your respective flavors with each other."

Kato: *Bows forward, as in to take in the words more easily.* "D-date?"

Yada: *Puzzled.* "Miss Hasegawa? Why are you acting like this?"

Hasegawa: *Quickly stammers.* "Yada-chan... You just need to-"

Kato: *Refocuses and steps forth.* "Miss Hasegawa, with all due respect, answer the question!"

Hasegawa: "Yada-chan, your brother is, not here."

Yada: *Her smile fades completely.* "Uh, what?"

Hasegawa: "Your brother's condition worsened. We called immediately for his surgical operation, but some of our doctors haven't arrived yet. He couldn't wait, so we transferred him to Teishin. The ambulance was just about ready by the time you got into this department."

Yada: *Mortified.* "My brother... Is dying?"

Kato: *Looks back at her with preoccupation.*

Hasegawa: "I'm sorry I'm the one to tell you this, Yada-chan."

Yada: *Looks down with shock.* "I'm... Too late..." *A tear forms and nearly trails away from
Kato: *Experiences a quick slideshow of all the times he was too late for family, from taking the hints of his parents' true lives, to heeding the wise advice of his uncle long due. Double-taking between his watch (keeping him in the present hour), and Yada, he grows an aggressive expression.* "To Hell with 'too late.'"

Yada: *Looks up at Kato.* "Huh?"

Kato: *Flicks open his flip-phone, and speed-dials, putting it up to his right ear.* "Good meeting you, Miss. Yada-san, let's go!" *His left hand grabs Yada's wrist, pulling her with him towards the exit.*

Yada: "Wha- Ah!" *Is forced to follow him.*

Kato: *As soon as the ringer stops, he immediately speaks.* "Yoshida-san!"

Yoshida: *Voice only.* "Hey Kato-san! I'm working; don't you-"

Kato: "What are you driving, and where are you!?"

Yoshida: *Stammers.* "N-Nissan GT-R 2016! Near Kamo River!"

Kato: "Good! You're near Red Cross! Get there! And get in the backseat once you do!"

Yoshida: "What's wrong?"

Kato: "Just do it!" *Hangs up. He reassures Yada while accessing another thing on his phone.* "Come on, Yada-san!"

Yada: *Having only seen Kato so distressed once before, knows the principle of what he's doing.* "Okay!"

-They sprint outside the medical facility in record time, and find Yoshida pulling in just as they reach the curb. Kato does not wait for the vehicle to completely stop, and instead twists his watch around his wrist, and runs faster, before high-jumping over the hardtop of the vehicle and throwing open the driver's door.-

Kato: "Backseat, Yoshida-san!" *Storms in.*

Yoshida: "Yeah! Okay!" *Falls backwards.*

Kato: *Readies his seatbelt.* "Yada-san!"

Yada: "Coming!" *Enters the passenger seat. She barely gets her seatbelt clicked before the car drives through (Yoshida meanwhile smacks the back of his head on the back).* "It's a fifteen minute ride to Teishin, right?"

Kato: *Takes a quick right turn.* "Fourteen if you go the right way right!" *Periodically looks at his phone and watch, in addition to the road.*

Yada: *Looks at him.* "What's the right way to go, the right way?"
Kato: *Answers with his driving, not slowing down at the red light.*

Yoshida: "Kato-san, what are you doing!?"

Kato: "Just watch." *At the right moment, the traffic light turns green (immediately turning red for the others), and the car zooms past all the others who did not immediately realize it.*

Yada: "Is that... A trick of yours?"

Kato: "No tricks; just skill." *Smirks lightly to that as he keeps going.*

-Kato proceeded to indirectly compete with the ambulance, technically neck and neck with it. A car accident unrelated to Kato's aggressive driving patterns causes the trio to take yet another detour to the institute, also adding more precious few seconds into their time. Yada would make sure that she regurgitated out the window mid-ride, as she would most likely not have any time to do so once they got to Kyoto Teishin... Which was correct as they arrived at the front entrance exactly four seconds before the ambulance pulled over in the ER lot access.-

Yada: *Gets out of the car.* "They're already unloading my brother from the emergency vehicle!"

Yoshida: *Belches outside the Nissan.* "Whut es even goin' on!?"

Kato: *Tending to his car valet.* "Go, Yada-san! I'll catch up with you!"

Yada: "Right!" *Runs towards the EMTs, gift still in hand. She safely nudges a nurse aside following the medics and doctor taking him deeper into the medical facility. When she gets close enough, *"Stop!"

Akihisa: *Wearing an oxygen mask, opens his eyes when he hears and recognizes his sister's voice.* "Neechan?"

Nurse 2: *Tries to block Yada's path.* "Hey, you can't be here!"

Yada: *Goes under his arm, reaching the wheeled gurney.* "Akihisa! I'm here!"

EMT 1: "You're going to have to step aside, miss."

EMT 2: "Ma'am, you need to leave these premises."

Yada: *Safely puts down the bagged present.* "No! I'm his older sister; I need to show him something!"

Akihisa: *Looks around perplexingly.* "Hn?"

Doctor: "Somebody please remove her!"

Nurses: "This way, miss!" *Two take Yada's arms and pry her back.*

Yada: "No! Please! Let me see him!"
Nurses: "After the operation!"

Yada: *The gurney continues its course while Yada is forcefully being restrained.* "No! Don't-!"

-Then, in the blink of an eye, the two nurses holding Yada down were immediately pacified. Their slumping bodies as they hit the floor for a quick nap alarmed the other medical staff in the room, including the EMTs and doctor next to Akihisa.-

Kato: *Is wearing a very triggered expression on his face as he leads the way for Yada, who has picked up her gift again.* "That's enough."

EMTs 1 and 2: "Hey, you can't be here eith-"

Kato: *Slaps his hands on their clavicles swiftly, stunning them, and then shoving them onto a nearby pillar. His left arm then rubs on the struck areas, close to their necks. His right hand meanwhile reveals his daimon.* "Kato Family! Everybody settle the fuck down! And not a word about it!"

Medics: *Immediately realize they are dealing with a member of the regional mafia (though they don't know who are of what rank), and back away from the Yakuza.*

Kato: *Looks at Yada.* "Do it."

Yada: *Nods and goes up to the gurney (the other EMTs repulse).* "Hey, little bro."

Akihisa: "Yada-nee. You, kept your promise."

Yada: *Tearing up.* "Of course I would. I'm going to make sure you make it."

Akihisa: *Laughs a bit, causing strain.* "Really?"

Yada: "And I got something for you." *Opens up her paper bag, and shows it to him - a picture frame, holding the two of them when they were much younger with Yada hugging him from behind, and a caption saying, "Family First."* "Now you can never say I won't be there for you." *Puts it underneath his pillow.*

Akihisa: "Thank you, big sis."

Yada: "Always." *Backs away. To the EMTs.* "Alright, I'm done."

EMTs/Doctor: *All, including the two Kato restrained, slowly return to the mobile stretcher and push it deeper down the room.*

Kato: *Holds Yada's shoulder.* "Hey, we should go and wait." *Back to the rest of the staff.* "Remember; not a word!"

Medics: *Bow in respect to that accord.*

-Yada and Kato both leave the ER and head to the waiting area near the front desk. The latter repeatedly looks at his watch, which Yada doesn't really notice until late into the procedure. She passes it off as his condition and continues to pray for her little brother. Kato himself seems
unwilling to outright abandon her here, but decides to leave Yada on her own for a bit while he takes Yoshida back to the Hyatt Regency... And give a call to Hyun, thanking him for temporarily seizing control of the traffic lights in Kyoto.-

-Finally, when it reaches eight P.M...-

Doctor: *Leaves the operating room and removes his medical mask near the duo.*

Yada: "Doctor!" *Both she and Kato stand up and go to him.* "How is my brother?"

Doctor: "It was a success; your brother's sticking around."

Yada: *Is very relieved to hear that.* "Oh, thank God!"

Kato: "I noticed in the ER Akihisa had chest wraps and a tank-mask; was it lung or heart-related?"

Doctor: "Well, heart."

Kato: "So CAD?"

Doctor: "Exactly."

Yada: *Double-takes between them.*

Kato: "Did you completely clear the arteries?"

Doctor: "Not completely; we risk breaking the vessels if we brush that close."

Kato: "Do you plan to do so another way?"

Doctor: "I presume you have one?"

Kato: *Looks at the doctor silently for a few seconds.* "Maybe try strictly pescetarian for Akihisa to start. Not everything must be radical, Doc." *To Yada.* "You're good, Yada-san?"

Yada: "Um... Yeah."

Kato: "Let your brother rest up, then. We should get out of here."

-Without another mishap, the two return to the Nissan GT-R, both restless after their uproar at roughly 8:30 P.M.-

Kato: *Checks his watch while both of them are head-supporting with their door-sills.* "What a," *Checks his watch.* "Day."

Yada: "Indeed..." *Refocuses.* "I guess it doesn't need to be said, but thank you, Kato-kun. For staying by me all this time. I only asked for an afternoon, but you've more than held up your end of the bargain."

Kato: "..."
Yada: "I guess you really did mean you didn't have plans for today, huh? Appreciate that a lot."

Kato: *Sighs.* "I actually did have plans."

Yada: *Beat.* "Wait, what!?"

Kato: "I was planning on attending a special show tonight..." *Checks his watch.* "Right now really."

Yada: "W-what show?"

Kato: "Koenigsegg's International. Held at the Kyoto International Conference Center to get owners, enthusiasts, and other associates together. They even hold up auctions and other related picks. It was why I didn't want to drive today - all of my love for cars today would've gone wholly to my custom Koenigsegg One:1."

Yada: "Wait, I thought-" *Immediately begins remembering of their talk at the Nightclub, and realize that Kato only freed up his afternoon; he never mentioned anything about the night.* "Oh..."

Kato: "Yeah..."

Yada: "Well... Why stay with me? Back there, you didn't need to."

Kato: *Laughs.* "Because you're worth it."

Yada: *Begins blushing and scoffs.* "E-excuse me?"

Kato: "You're worth it."

Yada: *Looks away temporarily.* "Well, I guess I'm glad you chose me over a car..."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "I chose you over a car brand. And this particular car brand is worth hundreds of millions of dollars."

Yada: "Yeah, I figured; Koenigsegg's average MSRP is 2.5 million USD."

Kato: *Points at him.* "But you, are worth billions."

Yada: *Blushes even more.* "What? Really?"

Kato: "Believe me, you are well-scouted, seeing all of your work at the Nightclub; easing multiethnic relations, smooth-talking more recognized talent to perform more often, and so on... You know I look far into the future while also seeing the past, Yada-san."

Yada: "Oh yeah."

Kato: "Then you know that I definitely believe staying on your good side is a great perk for later."

Yada: "Okay..."
Kato: "Yeah."

Yada: *Giggles.* "Thanks for saying that. You really know how to make a girl sound perfect."

Kato: *Shows Miho on his flip-phone's contacts.* "I've had a lot of practice." *They both laugh.*

-There was a brief silence between the two of them for a little bit.-

Yada: "Say, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Hm?"

Yada: "Are you very late to this, Koenigseggs International?"

Kato: "Uh, no, I'm," *Checks his watch.* "Thirty-two minutes tardy. Why?"

Yada: *Lightly smirks.* "Well, I was thinking... Maybe you could show up, even if late."

Kato: *Laughs.* "I'm usually something they're not; good timekeepers."

Yada: "Heheh. Oh, no one wears a watch like you do, Kato-kun."

Kato: "That being said," *Looks at her.* "We'll be glad to be late."

Yada: *Beat. Upon taking in the last sentence she widens her eyes in disbelief at him.*

Kato: *Smiles.* "In style."

Yada: *Her shock turns into joy as she straps back in, and Kato turns the car back on, setting up a GPS to a random address; the location of one of his lockups. This one in particular had a special, customized two-seater inside...*

-From there, Kato and Yada cruised into a personal tailor shop (that Kato's Family [obviously] owned), picking out proper clothing for the occasion. For Kato, that was a metallic, steel-gray slim suit, unbuttoned to reveal a clipped crimson tie, and accessorized by a matching fedora, cane, full-coverage black leather gloves, a Piguet watch, and metal-meshed smart shoes. Yada leaves the dressing room donning a blue, knee-length asymmetrical chiffon dress, with a matching flower hairclip making a side ponytail, white metal-soled/heeled strappy heels, a set of black/silver bracelets and pewter watch adorning her wrists, amethyst dangling dichroic earrings, and a hip-length sharkskin purse replacing her original bag.-

Yada: "Is... Is it too much?"

Kato: *Flicks his fedora up.* "Never."

Yada: *Holds her chest with a pleasant sigh.* "Flattery does get you everywhere."

Kato: *Smiles.* "In fact, you could make do with a little more." *Walks up to her until they are within inches of each other.*

Yada: *Is surprised, especially when he takes another step and places both his hands on her
shoulders, which she counters by pushing him back by his chest. *"Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Shh..." *Produces a necklace that he places across Yada, and fastens in the back. The amulet is a tree-caged cut of violet spinel (roughly matching Yada's eyes), that glows by itself in the dark.* "What do you think?"

Yada: *Stops compressing Kato and then feels and looks at the emblem.* "It's very nice..."

Kato: "What do you really think?"

Yada: "That you're still winning me over?"

Kato: *Laughs, which she copies.* "Let's get going; it's," *Checks his watch.* "Now almost forty-eight minutes past opening."

Yada: "Time to go to a place wearing a suit, tie, and dress that we were actually invited to for once." *It was her turn to cause them both to laugh.*

-Kato opened the passenger door for Yada to get in, and started up the black/orange Koenigsegg One:1 2015. Then, smiling at each other, they made their way to where it all began between them - the Conference Center, for their newest adventure together.-
**Photobombing Space**

Chapter Summary

In this conclusion to the long-running mini arc, Kato must truly confront the demons of his past that continue to age alongside him, when the Shiroyuki twins are brought back into the scene with Okajima, in spite of Sayaka's hopes for otherwise. Will he make the same mistakes that pushed everyone else away like last time?

"Jump Into The Yellow" by Ana & LOL play on the loudspeakers.-

After many bonus days of working at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, the student-assassins of AssUniv are finally with quite a sum of money, and decided to budget a good portion of it... Into buying some of Kato's grander drinks.-

Short-sighted, maybe, but it could not be said that the student-assassins weren't enjoying themselves. And Kato was in on it, holding up a glass of Screaming Eagle whenever everyone else does.-

Okajima: *After the latest mutual sip, he gets up and goes over to Kato.* "Hey, Kato-kun, mind if I speak with you?"

Kataoka: *Is pouring Kanzaki another glass, until the bottle ran dry after one last drop.* "Oh no, tap's empty!"

Kato: *Snaps his fingers and points at her.* "Not to worry; I got you covered." *To Okajima.* "Okajima-san, we can talk as we walk." *Gets up off the back-support of the nearby couch and heads toward the wine room. Okajima follows him. Once they are inside, Kato begins unlocking a windowed shelf.* "What do you need, Okajima-san?"

Okajima: *Takes a brief sip.* "Kato-kun, what happened between you and Sayaka-san?"

Kato: *Freezes for a brief moment.* "Me and Sayaka-san?"

Okajima: "Yeah; I can't help but feel as though what that is is why Rina and I haven't been talking too much lately."

Kato: *Pulls the desired bottle out, closes the shelf, and looks at Okajima.* "Whoa whoa whoa, you and Rina-san aren't communicating anymore?"

Okajima: "Uh-huh. I fear she's drifting away from me due to realizing your breakup with her sister."

Kato: *Maybe it's true I don't confirm this just yet. "I... Had no clue. But I know how we can find out."

Okajima: "How?"
Kato: *Checks his watch.* "Tomorrow after morning training, let's go down to Nagoya. We'll confront them about this."

Okajima: "I was hoping you'd say that. I was afraid I'd have to get sleazy again to make you help!"

Kato: *Sweat drops.* *You'd only be hurting yourself by doing that...*

-The next day, at noon, Kato and Okajima got the okay to head back to the former's hometown - Aichi's capital. After a roughly-ninety minute train ride, Kato got out his GranTurismo and they drove into the area around the Aichi International School.-

Okajima: "How come you know the Shiroyukis live here?"

Kato: "I don't; this is an assumption, and when we get to the local commons that I once frequented (by running past them), we might be able to ask around and confirm they still do."

Okajima: "And how would you know that-" *Remembers parts of Kato's backstory revealing he was born, raised, learned, and "loved" here.* "Wait a minute, you went to the same school as them! They know this now, don't they?"

Kato: "..."

Okajima: "You told them you're a Yakuza!?"

Kato: "Only Sayaka-san was informed. She doesn't exactly know that last part, though. It was up to her if she told her younger sister. We're going to find out soon anyways."

Okajima: *Slouches back in the passenger seat.* "Oh, I can't believe this."

-Kato's plan payed off, as he came to recognize a longtime old-timing citizen sitting outside her nearby residence, who, through observance, knew practically everything that happened in the neighborhood. She would know if the sisters were still around or not.-

Kato: *Walks up to her front porch.*

Woman: *Refocuses her glasses.* "Who are you, young man? And what can I help you with?"

Kato: *Sweat drops.* "She doesn't recognize me? I'm an old friend of Sayaka and Rina Shiroyuki. I haven't visited them in a while and I wondered if they still live here. Would you happen to know?"

Woman: "That voice..."

Kato: "!!"

Woman: "So you're looking for the Shiroyuki sisters?"

Kato: *Sweat drops.* "Yes."

Tozawa: "Well listen up to Old Miss Tozawa, siree. They are still around."
Kato: "Is that right?"

Tozawa: "Yep~. Their parents gave them control of their old estate for an indefinite time while they settled business matters in Miyazaki."

Kato: "I see. Thank you." *Prepares to leave.*

Tozawa: "Hold on there, I recognize you now, young boy."

Kato: *Halts, but does not turn around.* "D-do you?"

Tozawa: "You wouldn't be the one who dropped out..."

Kato: *Another sweat mark is about to trail down his face.*

Tozawa: "... From Nagoya International High?"

Kato: *What? "Um, no, that's not me."

Tozawa: *Looking discouraged.* "Oh, it seems my senses are failing me. I could've sworn I felt a dangerous aura."

Kato: *Uh... "I'm leaving now; thank you though, Miss Tozawa."

Tozawa: "Anytime, young'un."

Kato: *Dangerous, huh? She wouldn't be wrong. But... It's not like I was bearing fangs to her... Right? *Shakes it away.* Okay, let's go.*

-Knowing now that Rina and Sayaka both still live where they used to, Kato retrieves Okajima and they both head over to the decently-sized estate. The sun began to set, and both couldn't help but feel a heavy weight on them as they pull over and park, and getting out of the vehicle to reach the front door, as if they were about to meet their soulmates' fathers.-

Kato: *After enough lingering, he musters the courage to knock on the door.*

S. Sayaka: *Opens the door.* "Hello?" *Realizes it is a waving Kato and Okajima and gasps.*

S. Rina: *Unseen, in the other room.* "Who is it, Sayaka-nee?"

S. Sayaka: *Her surprise turns to dissent.* "Nobody, Rina." *Starts closing the door.*

Okajima: "Hey, hold on a second!" *Blocks the door.* "Rina-san!"

S. Rina: "Okajima-kun!?"

S. Sayaka: *Not wanting to expose her disapproval of this, she merely looks over to Kato with disgust, which he is currently indifferent to.*

S. Rina: *Appears from behind the door, and finds Okajima. She immediately plows onto him.* "Okajima-kun!"
Okajima: *Hugs her over her shoulders.* "Whoa, hey Rina-san. I was beginning to think you've been serving up another by now."

S. Rina: *Releases her embrace.* "Wait, what? Why?"

Okajima: *Confused.* "I've been calling you. For weeks by now. You never picked up, you never called back, nothing."

Kato: *Looks over to Sayaka, knowing she changed Okajima's contact on her sister's phone to ignore.*

S. Rina: "How could you have had any time to do that?"

S. Sayaka: "Rina."

Okajima: "Why, wouldn't I have time to do that?"

S. Rina: "You had a big, very important photoshoot project to do, and you weren't to be disturbed."

Okajima: "Who told you that?"

S. Rina: *Immediately realizes something's up once again. She turns to Sayaka.* "Big sis... You lied?"

S. Sayaka: "Rina, please let me expla-"

S. Rina: *Is holding back her tears.* "I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU! ONCE AGAIN, YOU DOTE ON MY LIFE!"

Kato: "..."

S. Sayaka: "Rina!"

S. Rina: *Pushes all in the way aside to leave the front area and runs off.*

S. Sayaka: "RINA! WAIT!"

Okajima: "Rina-san, where are you-!?"

Kato: "!!"

S. Rina: *Unhooks a bicycle near them, gets on, and rides away.*

Okajima: "Damn, she's pretty fast on that bike!"

Kato: "All the more reason we should catch up and find her." *To Okajima.* "Okajima-san, you should take to the hobbyist volleyball courts around the town! We all calm down best doing what we love!"

Okajima: "I gotcha!" *Leaves the front porch and runs into the streets towards Rina's last-seen location.*
Kato: "Sayaka-san, to my car?"

S. Sayaka: *Sneers at him before begrudgingly nodding, and following him to his vehicle.*

-While they are driving in their attempt to find Rina...-

Kato: "Any place that you think your sister would frequent when she feels down otherwise?"

S. Sayaka: *Refuses to look at him, instead out the window.* "This is all your fault."

Kato: *Sighs.* "Very helpful."

S. Sayaka: "You're judging me."

Kato: "No, I'm not."

S. Sayaka: "Why would I believe that?"

Kato: "I know why you didn't want to tell her," *Checks his watch, turned around.* "Earlier. I'd find it tough to tell someone as well."

S. Sayaka: "That too is your fault."

Kato: "As if I could help it."

S. Sayaka: "Why'd you come back into our lives, huh? You want to ruin our lives even more?"

Kato: "You blind? I'm trying to save them here right now. And I could do better at that if you would help me."

S. Sayaka: "All about you; classic sleazeball tendency - only caring about yourself." *Slouches back in the passenger seat.* "You're a more shrewd boy when something actually ticks you..."

Kato: "..."

S. Sayaka: "But at least I know you're serious."

Kato: * Brushes that aside. * "Rina-san's much more mobile on her bike. We've lost her in this latest crowd." * Lets go of the driving wheel.*

S. Sayaka: "Then we're going on foot. Park." * As soon as Kato does, she immediately gets out of the vehicle.*

Kato: "Again, do you know anywhere she would hide out?"

S. Sayaka: "Well, she always did like a pizza place near here, but I doubt that's much of a hideout. Maybe a-"

Okajima: * Runs toward them. * "Hey guys!"

Kato: * Turns around to see him. * "Okajima-san?"
S. Sayaka: "Why aren't you at the courts?"

Okajima: "I was going to, but then I..." *Puts his hands behind him and skirts his shoe along the ground.*

S. Sayaka: "Oh please..."

Kato: "Okajima-san, this is totally not the time for shooting photos for your blog."

Okajima: "I was entranced, okay? The lights they have, contrasting the dark of the evening so well, it just grew on me!"

S. Sayaka: "You want a bump to grow on you, too?"

Okajima: "Just take a look!" *Turns the camera's screen towards them to show the miscellaneous shots he's taken. Kato and Sayaka barely take the time to consider any of them... Until one such shot catches Kato's eye.*

Kato: "Wait, hold it to this photo." *Leans forward to clutch the camera into his hands. He points towards a group of people; several rather-large, rough-looking men who are surrounding a young lady with very familiar characteristics and clothing from earlier.* "That's her."

Okajima: "Whoa, really?"

S. Sayaka: *Leans in very close to Kato to get the closest look.* "Oh my God, that is her!" *Grabs Okajima by his collar.* "Where did you take this, you sleazeball?!?"

Okajima: "Whoawhoawhoawhoawhoaoawhoaoa! Nearby Nayabashi Yoichi!"

Kato: "The night market of Aichi."

S. Sayaka: "It's not far! Let's get going!"

-The three of them sprint to the destination. From there, using the photo's context clues and Okajima's personal memory of the factors regarding how he had taken that shot, they reach the exact spot, and travel in the frame's direction. A further walk notes a small alleyway, where one quick glance was enough for Sayaka to gasp again and run further into it. When Kato and Okajima followed her, they came across her bowing down to look at a discarded bicycle - Rina's bicycle.-

S. Sayaka: "This is not a good sign..."

Okajima: *Looks further.* "The alley splits into two..."

Kato: "We won't have," *Checks his watch.* "Enough time to explore both together; we'll split."

S. Sayaka: *Points toward the rightmost lane.* "Okajima-san, you're going that way. You will contact me two minutes before you find her. Clear?"

Okajima: *Salutes.* "C-clear!"

Kato: "I suppose you're with me, Sayaka-san. Let's go." *Both leave. After a minute or so of
S. Rina: *Offscreen, around a corner.* "Goddamnit! Let me go!"

S. Sayaka: *Is about to cry out Rina's name, but a hand goes to her mouth.* "!!" *She turns around to find Kato covering it, wanting to sneak around to first get a look at Rina's aggressors. Though she silently berates Kato for intruding on her personal space, she reluctantly nods and hugs the nearby wall with him.*

Thug 1: "Yikes, boss, she's just like how you described."

Thug 2: "Idiot! That was the other girl!"

Thug 3: "You really think we'd get the lion's score with this one, boss?"

Thug Leader: *Walks up to all of them, letting a bat lean on his shoulder. His appearance makes both Shiroyuki sisters and Kato groan with resentment.* "I do believe it's 'the lion's share,' man. But yeah; she's worth it."

S. Rina: *Head drops a bit.* "Takeuchi?"

Thug 1: "What? Boss, she knows your name?"

Thug 2: "Idiot again! He said he went to school with her!"

Thug 3: "Well yeah, until he dropped just a few years ago."

Takeuchi: "You all done?" *To Rina.* "Yeah, it's me, Rina. And if you cooperate, this will all be over soon."

S. Sayaka: *Uh, WHAT!?*

Kato: *Shh!!*

S. Rina: *Begins slowly covering herself.* "Excuse me?"

S. Sayaka: *Storms out of her hiding spot; Kato, who had tried to keep her from leaving, initially stays where he is.* "Yeah! *Excuse you!?"

Thug 1: "Who're you!?"

Thug 2: "Idiot, idiot, idiot! You see the resemblance? It's her sister!"

Thug 3: *Double-takes between the two ladies.* "Appearance only, it seems."

Takeuchi: "Ah, Sayaka."

S. Sayaka: "Takeuchi, what were you doing with my younger sister?"

Takeuchi: "A shakedown! Your family comes from good money, as you so well know by now. And I need some of it!"
S. Sayaka: *A vein pops.* "Why didn't you just ask?"

Takeuchi: *Arrogantly snickers.* "Look at me! You're going to tell me you were really going to loan one?"

S. Sayaka: 'I'm certainly not going to now. Now hand my sister over!'

Thugs: *All brandish weapons; 1 gets out a knife, while 2 and 3 reach for a 2x4 and lead pipe respectively.*

S. Sayaka: *She feels threatened for the first time in this encounter.*

Takeuchi: "We had better plans for her if she didn't comply, Sayaka. But with you here, it's all that much sweeter." *He and Thug 1 begin going up to her, while 3 and 4 threaten Rina still.*

Kato: *Readies his Kimber Warrior II pistol and aims, exposing only his arm from the wall he's hiding from.* "Alright, that's enough."

Shiroyukis: Kato/Ohno-kun!? You own a gun!?

Thug 4: "What the fuck!?”

Thug 3: "A piece!?”

Takeuchi: *To Sayaka.* "You brought help!?”

Kato: "You could say that." *Comes out of the cover.* "Once an asshole, always one, huh?"

Takeuchi: "Screw you! You don't know me!"

Kato: *He doesn’t remember me?

S. Sayaka: "But I do, and he's right!"

Takeuchi: "Does it sound asshole-like to help your mother!?”

Shiroyukis/Kato: "... What?"

Thug 1: "Boss?"

Takeuchi: *Exhales through his nose to avoid breaking down.* "You know I left before I completed my first year at high school, Rina and Sayaka. But that's just the tip of the iceberg! I left, because my fool of an older brother died of drug overdose! My mother, living on her own, fell into shock, and she could barely take care of herself!"

S. Rina: *Feels conflicted.* "Jesus...

Takeuchi: *Turns to her.* "You can pray to Him as much as you want! It won't give me the money to help her, though! I didn't have time to get a diploma; I needed the other paper! And nothing worked quite like these criminal activities did!"

Kato: *Also feeling conflicted.* "..."
Takeuchi: *Scoffs and spits to one side.* "Oh, look at all of you... Acting so high and mighty, looking down on us believing we're just pieces of shit for doing what we do, never knowing why we do what we do! Some of us criminals are nonstandard dicks, perhaps yes, but we didn't choose this! Not one bit! That's saying something!"

Thug 1: "Unwanted brain surgery, causing horrible debt and redevelopment!"

Thug 2: "Racism against Chinese-born Japanese blood!"

Thug 3: "Only known guardian killed in action soon after childbirth!"

S. Sayaka: *Goddamn, you're impossible. All of you.*

Takeuchi: "So what's it going to be!? You're going to give me the money? Both of you? Or do I have to beat it out of you!?"

Kato: *His hand is frozen in place; he couldn't stop aiming, but he also couldn't pull the trigger.* Takeuchi... *All of your bad behavior is because of a poor sibling? Fuck, I'm such a sucker for stuff like this... I can't just beat him down now... But what should I do?* *His eyes float over to the right.*

S. Sayaka: *She also sees it, past Rina and the thugs; Okajima is hanging himself from over a covered steel fence.* "He changes the brightness of his custom camera's flash and aims it at the whole cast.*

Kato: "GET DOWN!" *His pistol arm hooks over his eyes, while his other arm curls around the back of Sayaka's neck, forcing her down too. Rina heeds his direction and takes a knee while covering her face.*

-Suddenly the entire area is engulfed in a powerful flash of light, stunning and disorienting all of the thugs.-

Thug 2: "ARGH! CAN'T SEE!"

Takeuchi: "WHAT THE SHIT!?"

S. Sayaka: *Both immediately spring out of their position to charge at the four thugs. Sayaka immediately kicks 1's knife out of his hands and hip-tosses him over. When he lands on the ground, she her arm around him and applies a traditional sleeper hold. After a quick gag and choke along with ineffective flailing, Thug 1 drops in ten seconds.*

Kato: *First backhand-punches Takeuchi while grabbing his armed hand's wrist, giving him easy access to the bat. Takeuchi takes a knee to react to his pain while Kato engages his two remaining cohorts. The one with a lead pipe was wildly swinging in reaction to the makeshift flashbang finds his attack pattern stop dead as Kato parries it with the bat in such a way that it hyperextends across his chest, allowing Kato to whack the thug's own head with it; he front kicks him face-first into the ground to finish him. Onto the 2x4, Kato slams the baseball bat into the popliteal area, and then backhanding it into his shin, crippling the thug and leaving him on his knees. Not for long, however, as Kato roundhouse kicks him in the face, laying him out cold. Finally, he returns to Takeuchi, whose right arm gets hooked in a Kimura-like position by his old bat, which he then throws into the nearby wall, straining it. As he reels in that new pain, Kato takes the back of his
head and compresses his face onto his knee, taking him out non-lethally. All three were down in
the same amount of time Sayaka took for Thug 1... Which the Shiroyukis witness, and are shocked
by.*

S. Rina: "Damn, Ohno-kun, I knew you could fight, but really, you've got some mean moves."

S. Sayaka: The silent ones are always deadliest...

Kato: *Clears his throat.* "I'm sorry you both had to see that."

S. Rina: "It's alright. W-who did that, though?"

Okajima: *Hops over the fence.* "I did. I wasn't going to let them do anything to you before
these two could do anything about it."

S. Rina: "Oh..." *Hugs Okajima.*

Okajima: *Laughs.* "I don't think I'll ever get tired of this."

S. Rina: *To her sister.* "Sayaka-nee, you heard that?"

S. Sayaka: *Silently stutters. She looks at Okajima for a second, then at Kato (who nods at her),
and then back at Okajima.* "Yeah... I did. Thanks for your, contributions, Okajima-san."

Kato: "This is endearing and all, but we should probably head back home where it's safe.
Sayaka-san, you know where the car is; lead them there. I'll catch up in a second."

S. Rina: "Ohno-kun, what else are you going to do?"

Kato: "Nothing bad, nothing major. Just get going.* "Without another word, they do so. When
they've completely left, Kato goes up to each of them, putting one-hundred-thousand Yen into each
of their pockets. Then, to Takeuchi, he slips four-hundred-thousand into the inner flap of his
jacket.* Abandon this path, Takeuchi. Even you don't deserve to be on it. *Leaves, but not before
leaving one more message to all of them, giving a false threat of what will happen if they return to
crime.*

-Finally, back at the house's front porch, Rina, who still wanted to know why her sister lied to her,
was told of Ohno actually being Kato; the same one who ran away before the seventh grade at
Aichi International. She took the truth rather well, as she walked up to who she now knows as
Kazuhiro Kato, and embraces him. Perhaps as atonement for some personal implications she knew
came from the Kato he once was...-

Kato: *They both mutually release their hug.* "Okay, that was... That was nice. Thank you for
understanding."

S. Rina: "Of course. Though, it may be hard to ask, but why did you have to leave?"

S. Sayaka: *Leaning on a pillar on the porch area.* "Oh yeah; I didn't find out what that was
either. Care to explain?"

Kato: "Well, it's..."
Okajima: *Stands up and turns to them after sitting on the front steps.* "Kato-san had to move, ladies. Government work between his family."

Kato: *Gestures satisfyingly.* "Exactly."

S. Rina: "Damn, it must be pretty deep if you have to change your real name."

S. Sayaka: *Looks aside.* "I guess... That was to protect the people you cared about, hm? Along with your military-like skillset?"

Kato: *Hesitates before answering.* "Yeah."

S. Rina: "I knew that kid who ran all over the place was a caring guy." *Stretches out.* "Ah, well, I learned quite a bit today."

Okajima: "I think we all did."

S. Rina: "Oh, totally." *Walks over to her older sister.* "I learned that protection comes in many forms... But they all have the same intent." *Embraces Sayaka as well.*

S. Sayaka: *Overlaps her hug.* "Selfishness can't always be bad, when I want people like you all in my life, right?"

Okajima: "I can't let things linger like I did recently; I need to finish what I start." *When Rina stops hugging her sister, he kisses her on the forehead.* "I'm coming back if you don't respond again, you know."

S. Rina: "Maybe I'll do it just for that." *Giggles.*

Kato: "And I know now I can't just cut old ties if I'm still just a backyard away."

S. Rina: "I think this calls for a champagne celebration! I got just the one; a gift from the Japan Volleyball Association - Lanson Black Label champagne from France, and four engraved stem glasses! I'll dig it out!" *Heads inside.*

Okajima: "I'll help you with that." *Goes inside as well.*

Kato: "I'll make sure they-" *Is interrupted by Sayaka grabbing his waving wrist.* "Sayaka-san?"

S. Sayaka: * Stops tugging on him.* "Look, Kato-kun, I'm sorry my sister and I could not return the feelings you had for us almost a decade ago..."

Kato: "...

S. Sayaka: "And I'm also sorry I still can't do so, even now."

Kato: "Really?"

S. Sayaka: *Nods.* "Yes. But don't just think it's only because it's unsafe, Kato-kun. I can tell that it wouldn't matter if I could, since your patient love for me has long passed."
Kato: "Wait, that's not-

S. Sayaka: *Holds her index finger to his mouth.* "Maybe deep down, there's a little part of you that still wishes you could be with me. But that piece has been moved. By something, or someone, else. Someone who understands everything of who you are much more than I do."

Kato: "..."

S. Sayaka: *Removes her finger.* "But hey, if you're not bringing a war to our house, I'm glad to still be friends with you. Next time you're in Nagoya, how about we hit up the old diner most of our peers used to love?"

Kato: "That sounds nice. Thanks."

S. Sayaka: *Laughs.* "I still think there's a little bit of sleazeball in you, though..."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "You always ruin the better moments."

S. Sayaka: "But the best has yet to happen. Come inside." *Heads into the household.*

Kato: "... That's not all I learned though... Takeuchi was once my nemesis - my most-hated enemy... And yet, in many categories, he was just like me. Could we, no... I really am dangerous. Very dangerous... *With many things still on his mind, he walks inside, able to put up a light smile again.*
Taking a break from the students of the AssUniv Program and Kato, its resource allocator, the other mentors in Karasuma and Irina take center stage, mostly so that the married couple can talk through their differences and get past the little fiasco that was Irina withholding her knowledge of Naoko's presence all throughout the search for Dr. Yanagisawa. It's a long-awaited peace.

-At the Ministry of Defense Kyoto Prefectural Embassy...-

Sanada: *Straightens out the papers from a stringed folder by hitting their edges on the table.* "So... You two know why you're both here today?"

Karasuma/Irina: *Both are sitting across the hardwood surface from him. Karasuma retains a steadfast soldier persona, barely reacting to anything Secretary Sanada had to say prior. Irina, meanwhile, is a little more shaken by the gravity of the situation being set.*

Sanada: *Puts on his glasses and looks at the next page.* "I take your silence to mean 'yes.' So then, you can explain the situation regarding Agent Naoko Akimoto, hm? Her defying government regulation and all?"

Irina: *Is ticked.* "You won't like what he has to say.

Karasuma: "She was under my orders, Secretary. Agent Naoko was to remain undercover for my assignments, while my other teammates across the nation dealt with some of her wet work."

Sanada: *To Irina.* "Is that true?"

Irina: "Of course it is."

Sanada: "Right... Well, is there any reason you thought you could just override a Special Advisor's order?"

Irina: *Is ticked.* "You won't like what he has to say."

Sanada: *To Irina.* "I'm talking to Agent Karasuma, Agent Jelavic." *Back to Karasuma.* "Well?"

Karasuma: "It was necessary to my mission here."

Sanada: *Exasperatedly sighs.*

Irina: *Told you."
Sanada: "You're chasing a chicken, you two." *Stands up a little more.* "I'd have you on desk in Tokyo right now if many weren't lining you up to be a future Chief of Staff. Hell, I'd probably have you clean out that desk, after all the mayhem you have been causing!"

Irina: "But?"
Sanada: "But instead, I have to put up with this nonsense all of you are doing."
Karasuma: "We have more than enough evidence to not make our missions nonsense, Secretary."
Sanada: "It takes more than some custom logos and drugs in their printed bags to prove anything, Agent. But you know, since I'm such a nice Secretary, I think you can continue doing it. Agent Naoko, however, will be relocated."
Irina: "On what grounds?"
Sanada: "On the grounds that she has a large mound of busywork that she left behind!
Karasuma: *His hand under the table forms a fist.*
Sanada: "You'll have the car-ride from your HQ to the airport to say your goodbyes and all that, and then you're free to-"
Karasuma: "Secretary Sanada."
Sanada: "Yes, Agent?"
Karasuma: "Agent Naoko. Stays."
Sanada: "Excuse me?"
Irina: "We'll do the equivalent of her work. That will allow her sleep on this patch of land, right?"
Sanada: "You seriously think I'll take that instead?"
Karasuma: "Secretary, this is your chance to actually endorse something that will matter."
Sanada: "How dare... Fine then. One, large assignment - for the both of you - to clear Agent Naoko's card. Be on the plane I mark tonight for tomorrow, and the intel will be ready for you."
Karasuma/Irina: *Both stand up, bow at Sanada, and leave.*
-At the Hyatt Regency late at night...-
Karasuma: "You two can handle the training and so on with AssUniv for the next few days, yes?"
Kato/Naoko: *Look between each other before back at Karasuma.* "Of course/No problem."
Irina: "That's great."
Naoko: "May I ask what brought this up, though?"

Karasuma: *It would probably be best that we don't tell her that we're doing this assignment because of her; it might make her actions unpredictable.* "Naoko-san, it's just something from the regional Secretary. It won't last long; we'll be back before you even know it."

Kato: "About time you took a little sabbatical after I've done so these past few weeks. Have a good one, huh?"

Irina: "Why thank you, Kato-kun." *To Karasuma.* "What do you say, Karasuma-sama?"

Karasuma: "Good luck keeping those kids in line." *Heads towards the bathroom.*

Irina: *Goddamnit, Karasuma!* *To the younger adults.* "You two have been working with each other for several years by now. You can handle two more days like that, right?"

Naoko: "I'd say so."

Kato: "Won't be an issue."

Irina: "Good then! Dismissed." *They all bow to each other, with Kato and Naoko leaving. When the door closes, she proceeds to the bathroom where Karasuma still was.* "They're gone."

Karasuma: "There's so many things I'm not ready for. It makes me sick."

Irina: "More sick than being a friend to Kato-kun?"

Karasuma: *Turns around nonchalantly.* "Not yet."

Irina: "Oh..."

-The next day, Karasuma and Irina arrived at a private hangar in Kansai International. A private jet was available within, with Suzume, a member of Karasuma's old team, ready in the cockpit.-

Suzume: "Good to see you again, Agent." *Salutes.*

Karasuma: *Nods in approval.* "Good to be back."

Irina: *Appears between them.* "For a little bit, of course."

Suzume: "The briefing laptop is on the second desk in the passenger area. We'll be going in 0005."

Karasuma/Irina: "Okay." *Travel deeper into the jet. After leaving their bags on the chairs of the opposite side of the aircraft, They take a seat near the table and open up the device. A brief voice, fingerprint, and facial recognition followed before the audiovisual message started.*

Recording: "Welcome, Agents Tadaomi Karasuma and Irina Jelavic. This mission is a joint operation between the Japanese Ministry of Defense and the South Korean National Intelligence Service."
Irina: NIS? What do you think, Karasuma? Staged political intervention? Or North Korean infiltration?

Karasuma: There's few things your average Korean would trust with a Japanese. Let's see if this is one of them.

Recording: *Shows detailed diagrams along with five agent profiles in succession.* "Central intelligence confirms the theft by North Korea of internal reports that list the true identities of ten of our Agents undercover in and around South and East Asia. Five other Agents seen here have crossed the border in an attempt to reclaim the data, but have disappeared and presumably been abducted by the SOF. RGB details that they will release the sensitive information if their payment of an obscene amount does not arrive in the next 48 hours. Your mission is to siege and/or infiltrate the targeted locations alongside senior NIS escort Alan Jeong-Tang, that are hinted to have the filed data, and acquire them. As a secondary objective, if the five Agents are anywhere in the aforementioned targeted locations, extract them and bring them back across the border. Good luck, Agents." *Message pop-up automatically closes.*

Karasuma: This looks to be one of them.

Irina: The people on that list might be ones I would've been tasked to wipe out only five years ago...

Karasuma: Getting cold feet, Irina?

Irina: No, of course not. Honestly, it feels nice to be on the other side this time.

Karasuma: Then we should get prepared. Let's look at our loadout.

-They begin preparing their multipurpose devices and begins constructing an initial plan of attack before nightfall hits the plane, and they decide to rest up in the nigh-pitch-black area before arriving on the peninsula.-

Irina: *Has reclined her chair all the way back to lie on with a blanket covering her.*

Karasuma: *Briefly looking at her before staring into the space in front of him.* Sideways, one hand in her hair (so that she can grab the stiletto hidden within), other in the blanket (to reach for her thigh-holstered derringer), breathing entirely through her mouth... She has not changed one bit since I've first met her. *Snuggles deeper into his seventy-degree reclined chair.* Not that I mind...

-His phone vibrates within his side pocket in his slacks.-

Karasuma: Hn? *Takes it out of his pocket and looks at the screen.* A private number? *Reluctantly answers it.* "Hello?"

Caller: "Karasuma."

Karasuma: *Mind flickers.* "I recognize that voice. Hyun?"

Hyun: "In the flesh. Or rather, the sound."

Karasuma: "How'd you get this number?"
Hyun: "Kato-kun."

Karasuma: "Right... So, why are you calling?"

Hyun: "Anything about my home country concerns me, Karasuma."

Karasuma: "How are you-" *Mind flickers again.* "You intercepting secure NIS calls to this region, aren't you?"

Hyun: "Why wouldn't I? I'm being manhunted right now. Just so you know, this is a check on the doomsday list."

Karasuma: "Us going to Korea?"

Hyun: "No... Calling an active agent of a nation's intelligence agency. But I can see why you'd think the former..."

Karasuma: "So I take it you know what me and Irina will be doing, yes?"

Hyun: "Yeah... Picking up some of my once-brothers, and reclaiming an employee report before the RGB divulges it, hm?"

Karasuma: "Expected nothing less from a former SIGINT agent."

Hyun: "Now, that doesn't alarm me, Karasuma. But what does is the fact that you're getting help for it."

Karasuma: "Why's that?"

Hyun: "I mean, they definitely did it before with quite a sum of their own folk, yeah? Why are they risking even more? True, you'd like the help, but it's suspect still."

Karasuma: "Maybe just because they don't trust me? You know that kind of thinking perfectly."

Hyun: "Hey, that's only because your precursors did it first!" *Audibly clears his throat.* "Anyway, perhaps that is the case, but I'd still be wary of the man, man. Everything changes when you've seen some shit, you know?"

Karasuma: "I've already seen some shit. Thanks for the warning though."

Hyun: "I'll still be available if you need me... Oh, except you can't contact me. Besides, I've got to prepare for that impending doom. You know what, I'll just call in from time to time. Bye."

*Karasuma hangs up.*

-Cab Driver: *With his ID facing the passengers as "Jeong Kim," he turns around to face the exotic people who just came into his ride.* "Where to?"
Karasuma: "Gung Ye Castle."

Cab Driver: "Very well." *Turns around, readying to drive.* "DMZ, you Hellhole, here we come."

-The cab driver's real name was revealed to Karasuma and Irina as soon as they left all type of civilian population; Yung Tae-Yong, an agent of North Korean Affairs within the NIS. Having participated in many tours past the Zone and being one of only two to survive within all of them, he was a keen fit to be an escort for the duo as they siege the many compounds in search of what they must find.-

-After a quick re-briefing with the leading commander in charge there, Karasuma and Irina are given the go-ahead. They suit up in their personal KAM AtTac Erebus & Achlys suits (of which initially surprise the soldiers there) and take one more wheeled transport, in the form of an APC, bringing them past the threshold.-

Tae-Yong: "Those armors you're carrying; not standard-issue, are they?"

Karasuma/Irina: *Look down at their gear, then at each other, before back at Tae-Yong.* "Why else are we wearing them?"

Tae-Yong: "Okay then..."

Karasuma: "So, Agent Tae-Yong; one of the few to elude Korean counteroffensives for almost two decades?"

Tae-Yong: "Don't exaggerate what already is, Karasuma; I'm one of two. And if this goes bad, I'll be the only one left."

Irina: "One of the hostages is the other one?"

Tae-Yong: "Sadly. You already know his and the other's names, so I'll just say it's Lim."

Karasuma: "Ever get lonely?"

Tae-Yong: "I'm already not calling you two agents, Karasuma and Irina. When you face something equivalent to a May-December Romance, you got to speed things up."

Irina: "How sweet of you."

Tae-Yong: "Hmm."

Karasuma: Really now? *Puts his hand to his chin.*

Tae-Yong: "You got like, uh, special plan to deal with these compounds? We only have four hours to invade each; time's running out."

Irina: "Roof entry blitz play. Do it in two."

Tae-Yong: "Don't those only work on armored bank cars?"
Karasuma: "Anything's possible, if you strike quick, hard, and unexpectedly. Once their order is de-established, it should be easy to reach the rooms of interest, in search of the distressed agents and a report."

Tae-Yong: "That's a tall assumption."

Irina: "Crazy enough to work."

Tae-Yong: "Let's hope."

Karasuma/Irina: *We don't have to hope - we've lived it.*

Tae-Yong: *Looks out the window.* *"We're only twenty or so minutes off. Any more you got to get off your chest?"

Irina: "Yeah." *To the driver.* *"Keep that engine hot."

-And so, Soldier and Assassin would go on to live it again; Karasuma and Irina show off their suits' capabilities and their own talents as they mop up the wet work at each location, with Karasuma easily wiping out a mini Corps of NKSOF and Irina assassinating a good number, laying the seeds for more to come. Tae-Yong wasn't exactly incompetent either, but he didn't seem to compare, which was alarming, to say the least.-

-One by one, the North Korean Military had less outposts. Word to other settlements would not be able to reach in time due to how fast they were all trailblazing, and it looked as if they could finish this in only a day's time.-

-As they traveled to one of the last compounds, still empty-handed from their prior attacks, Tae-Yong remained dumbfounded.-

Tae-Yong: "Well well, the Japanese have really set a new bar with folks like you."

Karasuma: "I've got another friend who would love to hear that."

Irina: "Karasuma..."

Tae-Yong: "Is that so? Alright, I got to make a little call to the Commander back in the DMZ. Be back in a second." *Travels into the passenger seat of their personal APC.*

Irina: *Continues to look around the vehicle's interior.*

Karasuma: *What's up, Irina?*

Irina: *I'm just thinking... We've really changed and all, after all.*

Karasuma: *Oh? How's that?*

Irina: *Remember five years ago? I would've done this very exact thing we're doing right now, only in my own way. And for a measly amount of cash and maybe the favor of a politician; you'd know why.*

Karasuma: *Contract within a contract? Inception at its deadliest.*
Irina: But instead, I'm doing this for my sister-in-law. And I couldn't be happier.

Karasuma: Yeah, I can tell. *Sighs.* I guess I should really stop pretending to be mad at you for earlier errors. You've done worse anyways.

Irina: Oh, I'm so happy you- Well...

Karasuma: I changed a bit too, now that you say it. Once upon a time, I thought I could get away with wiping out the students if it meant the world would be saved. Now, I will always find another way... Even if it puts me alongside a Devil.

Irina: That we wish you'd let go of... *Mind flickers.* Of course, my change was much more dramatic and dynamic.

Karasuma: Of course.

Irina: But you've always been that way too, or at least before you met me.

Karasuma: "..."

Irina: It makes me wonder what brought it up.

Karasuma: All I'll say is that it involves Naoko.

Irina: Well... DUH!

-Later...-

"Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Tonight" by Annalise plays in the loudspeakers, muffled by the proofing of the higher floor.-

Karasuma/Irina: *Both sit back in the VIP Platform of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub. * "And that's the end of our story. Needless to say, we're back together fully again. And we couldn't be happier right about now." *They then share a brief kiss together... In front of the eager student-assassins.*

AssUniv: *Beat.* "Wait, What!?

Sugino: "Senseis, you can't possibly believe that we believe that's the end of the overseas adventure you've had!"

Irina: "Hm? Oh yes! We forgot to mention, Tae-Yong the recruiter was a corrupt-ass NIS agent who wanted to frame the deaths of the five other, captured NIS agents, as well as the acquisition of the data of all of their employees undercover across the oceans on us Japanese-administrated."

Karasuma: "Luckily, someone higher up in the intelligence agency was one step ahead of Tae-Yong, and so we only had to deal with his small regiment. When reinforcements confronted the three of us when we trekked all the way back to the DMZ border, the smug prick got his."

Irina: "Then we just had to hand over the guys and their unopened data, and the rest was history."
Naoko: "Why leave out such a detail, you two?"

Karasuma: "Unlike a certain someone, we don't believe in talking your ears off."

Kato: *Clad in his manager's suit, is taking a brief break kicking back on his study desk and drinking a Bacardi Mojito.* "I may be guilty there, but you can try filing that to the parole officer."

Karasuma: "I am your parole officer. A very special-case parole officer, but one nonetheless."

Kato: "And yet you can do nothing with the information." *Takes another deep sip from the bottle.*

Karasuma: "Eh."

Mimura: "Why would the South Koreans want to instigate Japan in this so much if they're already so concerned with North Korea, however?"

Hayami: "Maybe they might see it as a means of killing two birds with one stone."

Kanzaki: "It's saddening to keep being reminded of how turbulent the relations between us neighboring nations are."

Itona: "I reckon you can't begin to like other nation's people if it is difficult to like your own. And every country in history lives through that period at least once."

Kataoka: "That's pretty true. It's kind of happening right now in a lot of countries too."

Nagisa: "Which is why I'm glad to call myself a Japanese, but I'm elated to call myself an AssUniv native. And I'm not alone in that, am I?"

Karma: "Heh, Hell no you ain't."

Kayano: "Oh yeah."

Isogai: *Tilts neck.* "To that!" *Rises a glass.*

Karasuma/Irina: *Decide to pitch in.* "Here here."

Kato: *Still sitting far away at his study desk while raising a glass, he secretly phones up Hyun (who, even though Karasuma and Irina did not mention him, knows he was involved) on his bluetooth.* "Hyun?"

Hyun: *Voice only.* "DOOM!"

Kato: *Silently presses his hand on his hurt eardrum.* "Thanks for the memo."

Hyun: "Oh, sorry about that Kato. I thought Karasuma was calling me again. I didn't have the patience to check the IDs today."

Kato: "Oh? That's very unlike you. What happened?"

Hyun: "It was... About what Karasuma was calling me about."
Kato: "The joint op he and Irina-sensei did recently?"

Hyun: "Yeah. I've been looking into the files of the name of his escort in that mission... Everything was correlated to when I, well... I-"

Kato: "You leaving the NIS?"

Hyun: "Yeah..."

Kato: "Does Karasuma know that?"

Hyun: "He only knows I'm superstitious of it. I don't have all the facts, but I can-"

Kato: "You don't need to tell me yet, Hyun. Unless it is a valid concern in the immediate-" *Checks his watch.* "Time. With how we are right now, we've no time to look for the needle. I'm sorry."

Hyun: "Hey, I'm not discouraged. I ain't too keen on tackling this anytime soon. So, until next time."

Kato: "Yeah." *Hangs up.* A look into Hyun's past is inherent within what just occurred in the last twenty-four hours... I'd be lying if I wasn't very intrigued by the mystery right now...
After the events of the previous chapter, Karasuma and Irina can safely say that their marital relationship is back on track. That might sound all well and good for most of the rest of the AssUniv Program, but at least one of them isn't all that excited about it. That would happen to be Kurahashi, who has always had a crush on her sensei. But now that that is all but assuredly irreconcilable, there's nothing she can do but move on. Thankfully, her friends and peers are eager to try and help her out. Emphasis on try.

-"Give Me The Night" by Cherry plays on the loudspeakers.-

-The good nights spent at Nyurifu Rikkyu Nightclub had just gotten a little bit sweeter, when Karasuma and Irina, now with their latest, greatest obstacle in their relationship now behind them, can comfortably share a high-stool table and two drinks together, do just that with a mirrored smile.-

-Meanwhile there is some of AssUniv (Nagisa, Karma, Naoko, Kayano, Yada, and Kurahashi specifically), who are monitoring their time together to make sure it is of genuine grace, much like they did with many of their other friends and peers some times before.-

Karma: "Well, no doubt about it now." *Takes a slow sip of his bar glass of Hibiki whisky.*

Naoko: *Scoffs.* "As if there was any doubt for my brother-in-law?"

Kayano: "Excuse me, but there was all the doubt." *She along with the rest of AssUniv laugh.*

Yada: *Giggles.* "That's just too cold. Right, Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: *Nods.* "Just a little bit."

Yada: "And right, Kurahashi-san?" *Looks over to her.*

Kurahashi: *Her eyes and the rest of her upper-face are completely enveloped by a shadow, but it's crystal clear that she's looking on at Karasuma and Irina with a seemingly broken heart.* "..."

AssUniv: *Everyone present lose their comedic, humorous expressions.* "Ooh..."

-It took some effort to move Kurahashi away from the scene, and once she finally had her line of sight of the two of them broken, she had a thousand-yard stare at wherever her neck allowed it to rest. Her peers left her in a private booth on the third floor before returning to the rest of their friends in the VIP platform, telling them all of the situation.-

Hayami: *Lightly slams down her glass of Suntory Toki Whisky onto the table.* "Oh my, that's a predicament."
Kanzaki: *Lets her Hana Kizakura sake rest on her lap.* "Disheartening. Pardon my unintentional pun."

Terasaka: "Honestly though, we knew this was going to happen sooner or later. If she didn't want it, maybe she should've advanced." *Mind flickers.* "Oh wait, didn't she actually do something earlier that helped make sure they stayed together?"

Mimura: *Begins remembering of their Anniversary heist, in which Kurahashi was instrumental in making sure Irina never found out they infiltrated their rented estate. Everyone else starts recalling too.* "Oh yeah..."

Hara: "Damn, whose side are you on, Terasaka-kun?"

Terasaka: "I'm supposed to pick sides?"

Chiba: "No, no you're not. These two factions, we don't want to be on the bad sides of either."

Naoko: "And if we can't change what's remedied between my big bro and sis..."

Nagisa: "Then we can only help Kurahashi-san come to terms with it."

Nakamura: "I'm figuring it's pointless to ask, but do we have any ideas how we can do that?"

AssUniv: "..."

Kato: "We should probably start by setting up a perimeter. If we..." *Checks his watch.* "No, we haven't done so already.* *Sets down a new bottle of Zuisen King spirit next to the student-assassins.*

Muramatsu: *Finishes his sip of Kirin beer.* "What? A perimeter?"

Kato: "Yes. Ground rules that we must employ whenever engaging this situation with our unknowing client."

Maehara: "Like what?"

Kato: *Tongue clicks.* "For instance, not saying words like 'crush,' 'affair,' or 'amor' around Kurahashi-san. It'll remind her of all too bad and recent memories and the like."

AssUniv: "..."

Korosensei: *Regarding the time when Takebayashi failed to pass his entrance exams into his primary high school back during late third-year at Kunugigaoka Junior High.* "Nobody say 'fail' or 'mess up!'"

Kato: *Is suddenly shoved out of the VIP Platform, with the door violently slamming behind him.* "!?"

Mimura: "Never again."

AssUniv: "AGREED!"
Kayano: "Poor Kato-kun though."

Naoko: *Still remembers her pretty awful remark from earlier and pouts with crossed arms.* "You've got no ethos to say that!"

Yoshida: "So, um..." *Claps his hands together.* "Any other ideas?"

Yada: "I know her best; why don't you let me take the lead?"

-With all of their friends watching, Yada sits across the table from Kurahashi at the private booth.-

Yada: *Waves.* "Hey, you."

Kurahashi: *Does not look over immediately.* "Hey."

Yada: "Don't worry; I didn't come alone." *Looks to her right, which Kurahashi slowly peers over to.*

Waitress: *A Filipino woman in service-uniform paces over to the two student-assassins.* "Here you are, miss and missus." *She sets down an incredibly large tray of bottles and cans onto their table.* "Enjoy your night." *Bows before leaving.*

Kurahashi: *Casually reviews all of the items on the set platter.* "How are you able to afford all of this...?"

Yada: *Looks aside, remembering that she was able to guilt a recently shaken Kato into funding AssUniv's efforts to help their good friend.* "A good man has given me a comp for the night. Anyway, ever tried this gin?" *Lifts one out of the pile and gives it to her.*

Kurahashi: *Reads the label.* "I don't think so..."

Yada: "Give it a shot then!" *Sides a shot glass over to her.*

Kurahashi: "You think it'll make me feel better?"

Yada: "We'll never know unless you try." Types of alcohol have various effects on various people. Everyone has their mellow taste; their honest taste, their aggressive taste, and so on. I have to find which one makes you more... Understanding.

Kurahashi: *Savors the gin and tonic for a few seconds.* "Huh, it's nice."

Yada: "Anything else?"

Kurahashi: "Well, I mean, I guess my spirits are kind of, uh, lifted?"

Yada: *It's a start! *Then how about this? A brandy?"

Kurahashi: "Ooo..."

-Yada and Kurahashi continued to take small sips and shots of the various alcoholic products served to them. After ten minutes or so, Yada had to do some business from the build-up, and
when she returned, she had come across...

Yada: "Ah, that was well-needed." *Turns over towards the booth.* "Now, Kurahashi-san, what's ne- HUWHA!?

Kurahashi: *Her whole upper body has rested across the table, with her face turned away from Yada.* "Shh, you're very loud... I'm down for a nap; sleep this proof off."

Yada: *Looks over to all of the disorganized alcoholic drinks; most have been emptied out.* "Kurahashi-san, you really drank all of this!!"

Kurahashi: "Please, shush! I'm out for another thirty minutes - or so. Save all until then, huh?" *Fully returns to her slumber.*

Yada: *An imaginary bead of sweat trails down the back of her neck.* Well, that didn't work.

-Some of AssUniv produced a small blanket to cover Kurahashi while she rested more comfortably on the cushions of the private booth. Taking her word for it, they decided to use the half-hour to think upon a new way of helping her.-

-After roughly thirty minutes...-

-"What You Need" by Manuel plays on the loudspeakers.-

Isogai/Kataoka: "Hey! Kurahashi-san~!

Kurahashi: *Slowly wakes up.* "Y-yes?"

Isogai: "We couldn't help but notice downstairs some guys are in a little trouble."

Kataoka: "We think they might be choking! They could use your medical expertise!"

Kurahashi: "Really now...?" *Shakingly gets up.* "Well then, let's get to it."

Isogai: "Okay! Here's to hoping keeping Kurahashi's mind off the breakup can help her get better...

Kataoka: And what diverts her attention better than her passion?

-The two lead the estranged, drunken little lady down to the second floor. There, they encounter the two male patrons (alongside several of their friends) who are experiencing difficulties.-

Customer 1/2: *The two guys were coughing and holding their throats with strain.*

Customer 3: *As one of the girls, was supporting one of the struggling patrons.* "Hey! What's wrong with them?"

Customer 4: *The other of the girls, was supporting the other one.* "This just happened all of a sudden!"

AssUniv: *Hayami and Chiba, having shot suppressed, ice-like obstruction balls into the customers' drinks using their personalized, non-lethal HK Mk. 23 Mod 0s, just like they did six
years ago to help Maehara's scapegoating girlfriend, are covering themselves up with a set of fold-out menus.

Kurahashi: "...

Customer 5: *Looks around vigorously.* "Anybody know CPR!"

Kataoka: "Well, Kurahashi-san? Up for the task?"

Customer 3: "Someone help!"

Isogai: *Along with Kataoka, turn around to where they last saw their friend, only to find her walking away, back towards the stairs.*

Hayami/Chiba: *Looking up at the situation, beginning to think what Isogai and Kataoka are as well.* *Damn, we should've picked a table of people who weren't comprised of couples!*

Nagisa: *Um, you guys? Two people are still asphyxiating.*

Kato: *As he sorrowfully strolls through his nightclub, he comes across the five in trouble.* "Choking issues? Not on my watch!" *Runs up to them, orders the two young ladies aside, and positions the two suffocating guys into a double German suplex grapple, with his arms just long enough to hook around them. He then compresses the circle, reigniting both of their gag reflexes. After another two presses, they were able to cough the remainder of their problems away.* "Haha!"

Customer 1: *Continues coughing.* "That's...."

Customer 2: *Coughing still.* "Thank you, sir."

Customer 3/4: "You saved him!/Many thanks to you, sir!" *Both go up to Kato; one then goes up close to his face and kisses him on the cheek.*

Kato: "Oh, uh... Thanks for that."

Kataoka: *Wait, one of them are not a couple?*

Kato: "On my way!" *Looks in the way of what he believes was a very distant scream, in which he goes on to be the big damn hero again, leaving the original scene.*

Okano: *How did we let that slip past us...?*

Okuda: *Do we have any other possible propositions?*

Nakamura: *Watch and learn, boys and girls.* *Appears from around the corner of the staircase leading to the third floor, blocking Kurahashi's path.* "Heyhey, Kurahashi-san!"

Kurahashi: "Leave me alone, I'm really tired... And drunk."

Nakamura: "I'm betting someone downstairs would really like something like that, right?"

Kurahashi: "... Excuse me?"
Nakamura: "So you're done with one love... Why don't we help you find another?"

Kurahashi: "No, that's not neces-

Nakamura: *Hooks her arm across Kurahashi's shoulders.* "Come on; one quick scan through the bachelor pool; I'm sure we'll find someone you find at least fits your checklist. Come on!" *They continue strolling down to the street floor.*

Karma: *It seems brute force works, as always.*

Mimura: *We've always been pretty good at it.*

Fuwa: *Nakamura, introducing Kurahashi to someone new. That's a common move for rebounds. But often effective.*

Kimura: *Yeah, I can't see it going wrong; the worst happens, she has spent hours thinking of something else. The best case, she leaves with a guy's digits. It's practically foolproof.*

Naoko: *Hold on, everybody... Did we see my bro and sis-in-law still on the third floor?*

Terasaka: *Uh, no, they're gone from there. Why do you ask?*

Sugino: *Wait, if they're not on the third, and we didn't see them around on the second, and they have never gone up to the VIP Platform... Where did they go?*

AssUniv: *Beat.* "Ah shit!"

-And so Nakamura brought Kurahashi down to the premier dance floor... And within a few seconds, Kurahashi's prying eyes were able to locate Karasuma and Irina favoring two seats on the bar without fail. Her freezing up was enough for Nakamura to realize it as well.-

Nakamura: "Oh my God." *Quickly turns back to her wingwoman.* "Kurahashi-san, don't fret; this wasn't intended, but we can make it better. Just stay-"

Kurahashi: *Is now beyond words, she leaves for the floor's lavatories.*

Nakamura: *Watches her leave.* "Oh come on- Kurahashi-san, please! Just stay- Stay with me, dammit! Argh!" *Pouts and lightly stomps at the lack of control she is facing.*

Hazama: *This situation keeps on going from bad to worse.*

Okajima: *She's gone to the bathrooms. You think she's going to just sit in a stall and cry it out?*

Muramatsu: *I couldn't imagine anything else.*

Yada: *Anybody think we should console her? It is our fault she's worse-off now...*

Ritsu: *Through Kayano's phone.* "I would not recommend that."

AssUniv: *Beat.* "RITSU?" *Kayano lifts up her smartphone to more casually speak with her.*
Ritsu: "By this point, Kurahashi has taken your assistance to heart. And now, like many times before with others she knows, she can use it to find the answer she seeks."

Nagisa: "Hmm... Just like how Korosensei would've wanted us, huh?"

Kayano: "Damn, how long that's been going on right under our noses."

Naoko: "Well, you heard the A.I. everyone; give Kurahashi-san her time and space."

-And so the student-assassins did just that. They would not see their little-miss biologist for the rest of the night at Nyurifū Rikkō. Ritsu would notify them that Kurahashi had left for her Hyatt Regency suite early, meaning they would have to meet up with her again during breakfast time tomorrow.-

-Kurahashi still remained with an ambiguously blank expression on her face... But one thing was different. she was not looking down anymore.-

Kurahashi: "Mmm..." *Was gazing every so often at Mimura, Kimura, Yoshida, Kato... Even Takebayashi. And the rest of the single men sitting at the buffet table.*

Kataoka: "Hey, you're looking at all the guys, aren't you?"

Kurahashi: "What? Of course not."

Kataoka: "You're moving on, aren't you?"

Kurahashi: "Well... Yeah."

Kataoka: "You had a revelation of sorts, in the bathroom back at the club?"

Kurahashi: "Yes. And it was.... There's always another insect to discover out there."

Kataoka: "That's... A nice analogy. But good."

Kurahashi: "And, until I find my favorite insect, I'm always eager to help a couple sleazebags seize their day."

Kataoka: "Sweat droplets fall behind her and a shadow goes over her eyes.* "Oh..."

Kurahashi: *Noticeably peers over to Kato as she finishes that sentence."

Yada: *Takes notice of this, and speaks to Kato from across the table.* Kato-kun, what'd you do?

Kato: *Shrugs.* The only incriminating thing I did last night was handle something with the Shiroyukis... You probably know about this from Okajima-san, but me and Sayaka-san broke up - you know, technically, since we were never really a thing. Apparently, Rina-san didn't know about it, and she made that little scream after I handled the choking customers and one grateful female patron kissed me for it.

Yada: Was that over the phone?
Kato: I can see why that'd be easily misinterpreted... *Begins remembering how his lines to Rina were...*

Kato: *Speaking on his flip-phone.* "How could I know you would be seeing this today?"

S. Rina: *Speaking on her smartphone, outside the club. Sayaka is shaking her head of the madness nearby.* "We wanted to surprise you; You beat me to it, though, cheating on my sister like that!"

Kato: "Me and Sayaka-san broke up, and it was an amicable one! I thought she would tell you!"

S. Rina: "And that's why you don't say it to me?"

Kato: "Please, that was only for another Shiroyuki to decide!"

Kurahashi: *Keeps the bathroom door ajar when she heard this during her exit.*

S. Rina: "When did you and she make a rule like this- No, big sis, you don't just keep hiding stuff from me!"

Kato: "Don't act all crazy; that's why we didn't tell you!"

-They both continue to clamor about the dubious situation, which in Kurahashi's ears, was just a course in cheating.-

Kato: *Looks over to Kurahashi, who has now returned to her meal.* Why me...?
Television Space; First Level

Chapter Summary

In the beginning of this several-chapter mini-arc, Kayano is faced with the reminder that she has to own up to suddenly leaving her media roles from the beginning of the series, and how might the executives of her agency might interpret from that. It goes about as crazily as you may expect.

Kato: *Looks over to Kurahashi, who has now returned to her meal.* Why me...?

-During the very same breakfast that Kato ended up saying this, a special deal was about to go down for many of the student-assassins...-

Kayano: *Finishes a spoonful of her corn flakes cereal before feeling her smartphone vibrate on her lap. She checks on it, surprised at what the caller ID indicates.* "Huh?"

Nagisa: "Who is it, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "You."

Nagisa: "W-what?"

Kayano: "You butt-dialed me."

Nagisa: *Takes out his own smartphone to make sure.* "Oh, shit!"

Karma: "Kayano-san, you shouldn't have told him; we all would like to know what Nagisa's depths sound like."

Nagisa: *Has his mouth so wide open, his lower lip almost replaces his chinline.*"I know I would!"

Nakamura: "Ugh! Guys, we're eating right now!"

Sosuke: "Oh God, I can't get that out of my mind now!"

Karma: *Snaps his fingers and points at him.* "Mission accomplished."

Naoko: *Crosses her arms after being unable to hold onto her multigrain bagel.* "You might've done better than you expected."

Mimura: "Quick! Someone bring another thing up!"

Kato: "Don't mention the topic again; even loosely! Set the perim-"
Fuwa: "Don't make us throw you out of the room again!"

Kato: *Clears his throat and keeps quiet.*

Kayano: *Her phone rings once more.*

Nakamura: "Nagisa's ass again?"

Nagisa: *His hand still hovers in front of him.* "I still have my phone out."

Kayano: "It's my agency. The casting agency for movies; shush!" *Answers the call.* "Hello?"

AssUniv: *All listen attentively.*

Kayano: "Watari? Yes, hello! It's been some time. Yes? Oh..."

AssUniv: *Are leaning closer and closer to the conversation.*

Kayano: "Really now? Uh-huh... Uh-huh..."

Chiba: *Any chance she might be doing this on purpose?*

Ritsu: *Instantly appears on Nagisa's smartphone.* "I'm inclined to believe we deserve it, after how many times we've intruded on private conversations of those around us."

Nagisa: "AHH!" *Falls out of his chair from Ritsu's abrupt appearance; his phone flies into the air, and is caught by the neighboring Sugino.*

Karma: "We taught you to do that, Ritsu-chan!"

Naoko: "Karma..."

Ritsu: "No you didn't."

Kayano: *Did not notice the incident at all.* "Okay! Thanks for the heads-up. Bye!" *Hangs up.*

Mimura: "What's the story, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Streak of White, a television drama greenlit by my agency. A fictional account during Sengoku Japan, former Miko Mochizuki Chiyome is employed by Oda Nobunaga to assassinate the generals and commanders of Shingen Takeda and Uesuji Kenshin during the latter stages of their campaigns. The eponymous 'Streak of White' is both the luster of her hair at the right angle, and her trademark assassination attack with a katana or cane sword, which was so extremely fast that the sword turned white hot."

Hazama: "That story doesn't sound half-bad."

Nagisa: *Struggles to get back up.* "And I take it, you've accepted the role?"

Kayano: "Oh, of course!"
Kato: "You have closer commitments right now, Kayano-san."

Kayano: "The publishers only want to start with a television movie for the time being; once they find out if it did really well, they'll greenlight a go for the rest of the series, which could take a year or two. It's not going to get in the way of anything!"

Isogai: "Heh, then I don't see it being an issue."

Mimura: "You think we can actually appear on set to see how it all goes down?"

Kayano: "I don't see why not."

Fuwa: "Whoa whoa whoa, were actually going to a studio?"

Karasuma: "You are?"

AssUniv: "!!" *Look over to Karasuma with Irina in tow, who have just entered the room.*

Kurahashi: "Uh well-

Karasuma: "It's one thing to send a few of you around the nation like I have been before, but..."

Kayano: "Karasuma-sensei, the filming will be taking place in Kyoto; Kato's backyard!"

Kato: "That would've been a good sentence to walk into, senseis."

Karasuma: "Hm..."

AssUniv: *Many of them line up in files and ranks with very pleading expressions.*

Irina: "Oh, look at them." *Cuddles all over Karasuma's right arm.* "Well, Karasuma-sama?"

Karasuma: "Fine, we can suffice this too."

AssUniv: *All cheer.*

Kayano: "Come on, everybody; let's finish up breakfast and get ready!"

-And so they did. A tour bus ride later brought them on scene in Kyoto's Studio Park. All were bewildered by the traditionally oriental features.-

Kimura: "Wow, did we take a time machine back to the feudal times?"

Mimura: "Toei Company spares no expense when they make their various media projects. A great number of their historically-themed films have been made here."

Terasaka: "Why do it here though, when the rest of Kyoto looks old enough?"

Kayano: "Many still do. But there's less refining you'd have to do if you can pull off the shoots here. Less disturbances and greater freedom of miscellaneous editing doesn't hurt either."

Kato: "So this is where some of my Brothers and Sisters worked for a little while..."
Kataoka: *Mind flickers.* "Oh yeah; some of your Family members are undercover as various live-action talent. One was even working with Kayano's agency before we were regathered."

Kato: "Yeah; it was Teshima."

Teshima?: *Hears his name called out from afar.* "Somebody call me?" *Recognizes that his boss is here.* "OH!" *Stands straight up.* "Oya-"

AssUniv: *All, including Kato but excluding Karasuma, also stand straight and make silent gestures.*

Teshima: *Realizes he almost blurted a dangerous fact out and refocuses. He then walks up to the student-assassins.* "Okay. Hello, all!" *Looks over to Kayano.* "And you, Kayano-san. Welcome back."

Kayano: *Bows.* "Good to be back."

Teshima: "Did our boss hire you and all of your peers for this?"

Kayano: "Um, no, he only called for me. But my friends were all eager to see how it all went down, so I brought them along."

Director: *Walks up to the crowd.* "Is that so?"

Kayano: *Along with Teshima, bows to him.* "Ah, Director Oogami. A pleasure to be working with you again."

Oogami: "Of course. You still remember the script we had prepared a few months back?"

Kayano: "Oh yes, I do. And by God, I am so eager to perform some of the stunts arranged then. I'm aching to know what the choreographers have thought up since then, too!"

Teshima: "Excuse me, Kayano-san, but stunts?"

Kayano: "Huh?"

Oogami: "Kayano-san, the last time you performed a stunt, you... Nobody knows what happened to you."

Kayano: "Oh..."

Teshima: "Yeah, you just called back in our Agency one day, fit as a fiddle, but offering nothing in the way of explaining what went wrong, and what happened to that SUV that carried you off." *Looks away nonchalantly to hide his understanding of the situation.*

Kato: *Does the same while crossing his arms.*

Oogami: "I don't want to be the next big name that faces the ramifications of that menace."

Kayano: "So I’m not going to do some crazy stuff?"
Oogami: "The lead role is still yours, but during actual combat and other fast-paced sequences, a stunt double will have to take your place."

Kayano: "Damn, that sucks!"

Nagisa: "Maybe so, but all isn't lost, Kayano-san. You're recognized enough to have a personal SD, right?"

Kayano: "I never hired one; I've been doing my own stunts for ages! God, just because of one bad apple incident..."

Oogami: "We could probably pass one of your lady friends here, if you want to narrow the search."

Isogai: "That definitely sounds like a good idea."

Kataoka: "But none of us know too much about stunt-doubling."

Teshima: "Eh, a lot of it's real stunts, of course. When it gets a little more mechanical, like using harnesses, we'll give you guys a crash course. So, who'll help their BFF here?"

Kato: *Oh dear... The irony when I find how outdated my speech patterns are...* 

Kayano: *Turns around to look in between her friends.* "Uh, Okano-san? You always got a leg-up over me in our practices anyway."

Okano: "Me? I don't know..."

Maehara: "Go for it, Okano-chan! It'll be fun!"

Okano: *Gulps.* "What can I expect as primary for this course?"

Oogami: "Quick-paced action; we're leaning on Chiyome being an acrobatic swordfighter that also makes use of her slash-resistant guards and steel-laced hair. Some free-running is in the works as well."

AssUniv: *Steel-laced hair!?* 

Kato: *I need to keep notes on this; Miho-san would love that!*

Okano: "Well, you definitely have my attention..." *Refocuses with a smile.* "And my interests."

- With the introduction now done, Okano was pulled into the makeup area, letting the crew groom herself and Kayano to look identical to each other, in the form of a fictional representation of a fictional sixteenth-century historic figure. Getting a taste of the movie magic for herself in the form of getting some to alter her face slightly to match Kayano's, she couldn't help but wonder how Kato lived with having it all on. But the thought was quickly expunged when the crew opted to get the bust dimensions matched too... Oops.-

- Now on set, Okano has shown to own the stunt screen; her great sense of a three-dimensional combat diagram aided her well in providing very fluid cartwheels, flips, wall throws, and the speed
of the Streak of White technique. Everyone on set was impressed, especially during one of the last assassinations, in which Chiyome was to drive Katsunaga Irobe into a broken, staked spear on the ground with a perfectly-countered Uranage judo-slam after a protracted combat sequence. Instead...-

Katsunaga SD: *With the two of them within three feet of the lodged spear, he, with Okano's character trying to snap his neck in the prior cut, tries to dislodge her, attempting to throw her off into a set of horse spikes.*

Okano: *When she is fully in motion, as directed, she stops it dead by placing the tip of her foot onto just the side of the spike, and then pushing off, with the intent of picking her knees up onto Norimasa's shoulders and pressing him onto the spear.*

Katsunaga SD: *While Okano is putting all of her weight on him, he is backing up towards the spear. However, he ends up slipping and falling backwards far too early, and might miss the weapon entirely.*

Okano: *Slaps on Norimasa, as part of the cues in case of necessary impromptu, and then leans forward to completely rest her legs on his clavicles. She then attempts a frontflip over, taking Norimasa with him; this results in a reverse headscissor takedown that makes the other stunt-double backflip and land chest-first into the pike (a dummy pike, of course).*

Oogami: "Cut!"

Okano: *Gets up and immediately offers a hand to her fellow worker.* "You good, man?"

Katsunaga SD: *Accepts the help up.* "Oh, all good. Thanks."

Sugino: "That was incredible!"

Terasaka: "Masterfully done, I'll say."

Maehara: "Just to be clear, we all saw that, right?"

Kataoka: "Yep; they made something out of nothing!"

Kato: "Consummate professionals."

Okano: "Eheh, thanks guys."

-But beginner's luck would soon run dry, in a way, when Okano's next stunt involved her discreetly skating on the ground as she holds onto a rope trailing a carriage, attempting to get onto it. Once she does so, her target realizes someone's up there and sends one guard up there...

Okano: *Notices the sentry clamber onto the top of the wagon and readies a tanto when he unsheathes a odachi.* Oko okay... Just, a simple maneuver; I got this!

Guard SD: *First begins by lunging twice; once to Okano's left side, and another at her right leg. Okano easily avoids them both - the latter with a well-timed tanto parry - while laying low. He then pulls the large blade back and backhand swings, attempting to chop Okano's limbs off with a haymaker swing.*
Okano: *Gives a quick jump to avoid the low blow. Of course, since the cart is still at high speed, Okano slowly floats away from it until she drops back down and grabs the edge. She's quickly climbing back up, only to find the guard stepping forward to forehand swing at her. She ducks under one more time, and find his arced arm very close; close enough to pull him off the cart.*

Oogami: "Cut!"

Okano: *When the cart rolls to a slow, she drops off and urgently jogs over to the other stunt double.* "That wasn't rough, was it?"

Guard SD: *Is rubbing the back of his head.* "No such thing as 'non-rough.' That being said, I'll be good. Thanks."

Maehara: *Huh...

Kayano: "Oh, I so wanted to do that!"

Karma: *Waves up and down slowly.* "Wait your turn."

Naoko: "If there wasn't so much more to a casting than this, I probably wouldn't mind doing it in between missions."

Kato: "Unfortunately, backstage politics is involved in almost any art. Doubly so when there's money to be had from taking part in it. That's why I make sure the Kato Family maintains a neutral standing; just pure logic and decision."

Yada: "Technically, though, that also makes you and your siblings the most dangerous party around. It can be a tough act to maintain."

Kato: "I'm willing to take that risk. And all the people that must are willing as well."

Yada: *But will you let the ones who don't, Kato-kun? Like us?*

-Then came one of the last, but most dangerous stunt came from an air assassination, where Okano was to eagle dive onto a crowd of four, easily dispatching the three sentinels before disarming and holding up Uesugi Norimasa by his neck with her blade, brought up there by a short-range Streak of White technique.-

Okano: *Inhales and exhales hastily.* *Three... Two... One, go!* *Gets a running start from the top of a low-roofed house. She frontflips into the fray, whipping her katana right-backwards, level with the first victim's neck. The second death came from one foolish guard who attempted a left uppercut slash with his naginata, only to be stopped dead by a horizontal block with her sword, and trailing the blade up the pole's length, leading it straight to his chest. The last guard gets the chance to strike Okano in the back, which the latter responds to by whisking her hair around the blade, locking it within her... locks, and then bending forward, with the idea that the edited metal-laced hair strands would tether the blade. This motion leads him straight into her own sword, which impales his heart. Finally, she counters Norimasa's own attempt to attack by no-hand cartwheeling her close heel into his face, knocking him down. She back handsprings to avoid a possible reaction, and when she realizes he has none and is instead hastily returning to his dropped blade, she performs the Streak of White to bring her blade just to his neck, but not touching it.* *Phew!*
Oogami: "And cut!"

Okano: *Lowers the prop sword.* "Everybody's fine?"

Stunt Doubles: *All give sounds of approval.*

Okano: "Oh, what a relief..." *That one took me a few takes, but I'm really fulfilled now. That makes sense, right?*

Maehara: "Hmm..."

Chiba: "Such an adept display of technique."

Kato: "Wow."

-And then, when all of the stunts and shoots for the day were completed, all of the student-assassins and the named crew regathered near the entrance of the Studio Park.-

Oogami: "For your first time, Okano, that was a very good set you've done."

Okano: *Bows.* "Thank you, Mr. director."

Oogami: "Ever thinking of getting into the choreography sector? Even moonlighting?"

Okano: "Maybe later on. This, well, it interested me pretty well. But I've got something on my mind for awhile now; I want to fulfill it first."

Teshima: "A shame. Oh well."

Oogami: "Kayano-chan, are all of your friends skilled like this?"

Kayano: "Uh, you can say that, yeah. Why?"

Oogami: "I can be references for them to take a look at, or even partake in some of the other media opportunities happening around the region." *Looks at the rest of the cast.* "You all have shows and films you like, right?"

Terasaka: "What kind of question is that? 'New Japan Pro.'"

Kimura: "'(The) Last Cop.'"

Chiba: "'Future Weapons.'"

Fuwa: "'Doraemon.'"

Kato/Yada: "'Bight of the Basilisks.'" *Both realize they said the exact same thing at the same time and look at each other with surprise for a second, before dismissing it and looking straight ahead.*

Teshima: "!?"

Oogami: "Silly me. Either way, I could help you all get into shows like those; just have Kayano-
chan give me a call and I'll set it up."

AssUniv: *All bow.* "Thank you."

- On the bus ride back to the Hyatt Regency... -

Maehara: *Sits right next to Okano on one of the two-seating booths.* "I can't but notice, Okano..."

Okano: *Is looking out the window at the time.* "Hm?"

Maehara: "I couldn't help but notice, you've been more prudent about what you do with your body lately."

Okajima: *Appears from over the back support of their chair.* "That's what she said."

Okano: *Discreetly vertical-split kicks Okajima back into his own spot.* "Really?"

Maehara: "Don't give me that, Okano. You can't hide what you haven't been doing a lot of until now; you've been thinking about this."

Okano: *Gasps.* "How dare you!"

Maehara: "Will you refute it?"

Okano: *Dispels her brief anger and looks aside.* "No... I can't help but notice that unlike AssClass, there seems to be a feeling of how my actions can and will have consequences, and permanent ones at that. It's as if, you mess up once, and everything just crumbles. And no amount of free, elastic movement that I'm capable of seems to liberate it."

Maehara: "That's... A strong lesson you learned, I guess. But you're not going to forget being yourself, right? This isn't you any more than that wasn't; there should be a way you can be both impulsive and mindful."

Okano: *Snickers.* "I already got that middle ground - you."

Maehara: *Also grins.* "Really now?"

Okano: "You just bring that out of me." *Rests her head on his shoulder.* "In fact, you did, just twenty seconds ago."

Maehara: *Repositions his arm so that it wraps around her, while her cranium now leans on his chest.* "I always like to be that."

Okano: "What?"

Maehara: "Something that reminds girls of the past."

Okano: *A vein pops when she realizes that was a joke to his previous casanova days, she then gives a light stomp to his left instep.*

Maehara: *His only sign of reaction to that attack was a tear going down the right side of his
face; otherwise he was still smiling with eyes closed, while the bus continues to take them home.*
Television Space; Second Level

Chapter Summary

The camera spotlight continues as Maehara wants to take up on Oogami’s offer of further career-enhancement in the realm of show-business. What’s his fancy? Modeling. Wait, what?

-By the time the tour bus of AssUniv returns to the Hyatt Regency, it was sundown, and everybody was just getting ready to have an evening meal at one of the hotel’s restaurant spots. During the ordering time, however...-

Kayano: *Is looking through the menu to The Muses... Attempting to ignore the fact that Maehara diagonally across from her has been staring at her with pleading eyes for almost half-an-hour by now. She finally capitulates.* "Okay, Maehara-kun. What do you need?"

Maehara: "Can I be the first to use one of your Agency/Director privileges?"

Terasaka: *Him and most of the rest of the Group begin to stand up.* "Hey wait! Why does he get first go?"

Okano: *Slams her knife on the table, embedding its blade onto the hardwoord (which a waiter notices with worry).* "Ready to fight for it?"

Terasaka: *They all dismiss the notion quickly.*

Kato: "Popular Cult is a big, wide world, Maehara. You have an industry to look into?"

Maehara: "Mhm... Modeling."

AssUniv: *Beat.* "Modeling?"

Okajima: "All the things you can do with a camera, and you want to do the one where you just stand still?"

Maehara: "...And, watch as all the girls swoon at you."

Okano: *Elbows him in the tricep.* "He means, it’s popular. And you all knew he wanted to do whatever’s popular, and stays that way." *Refocuses.* "Of course, we know that because of another matter..."

Maehara: "H-hey, it's not my fault a female stunt double thought I was chiseled!"

Kato: "This aside, Is the previous true?" *Looks around.*

Nagisa: "Oh yes..."
Kayano: "Well, I mean, I'm not going to say no..."

Maehara: "Awesome." *Sits back triumphantly.*

Kayano: "If I may interject still, and no, I'm not an expert on this, but I hear modeling is cruel business. And you're not exactly the meanest one around, Maehara-kun. I hope you know what you're getting into."

Kato: "To be frank, all types of media has executives who can be considered tough as nails. I once recall," *Checks his watch.* "A year ago when Teshima was having a speakerphone conversation with the talent search committee for a converted KDrama... Except it wasn't on speakerphone. The lashing was very real."

Kayano: "Eh, that's very true."

Maehara: "You're no devil yourself, Kayano-san, and you survived. So why can't I?"

Isogai: "That's the spirit."

AssUniv: "Then let's do it."

-And they did... Well, Maehara, with Kayano and Teshima's help, did. After contacting Director Oogami for one of those favors he confirmed to grant, they got their locale - an open competition for BRAVO Modeling agency in the heart of Nara Prefecture's capital. After several initial interviews in a day, Maehara was deemed applicable.-

-The first trial for Maehara and the others was a test runway, showcasing a line of variously-designed, colored suits crafted by competing fashion designers themselves.-

Maehara: *Briefly fiddles with his blue plaid suit.* "Well, I think my eyes are really going to pop with this..." *Looks up, over to the other, mostly older models. One, clad in black with a shiny green pearlescent matching his jet high-fade quiff.* "Hey, that looks great on ya, man."

Model 1: *Briefly fiddles with his blue plaid suit.* "Well, I think my eyes are really going to pop with this..." *Looks up, over to the other, mostly older models. One, clad in black with a shiny green pearlescent matching his jet high-fade quiff.* "Hey, that looks great on ya, man."

Maehara: "Ah, you're wel-" *Beat.* "Wait, what?"

Model 2: *Donning a orange with onyx gilded pockets and lapels.* "Heh, we got an idiot here, everybody."

Maehara: "Excuse me?"

Model 3: "Hey!" *Points at Model 2, before eventually looking at Maehara.* "It's the idiots that are more likely to get picked."

Maehara: "Uh, what?"

Model 1: "Dumb, sub-handsome... You're done, man. Done. It's just a matter of time."

Maehara: "!?"
Maehara claims this was all that went his way, along with some cliche Social Darwinist quote. However, as AssUniv will soon find, they believe it was something way worse. Only Maehara himself knows the answer. Regardless...-

A bulk of the student-assassins are sitting in the rows of folding chairs awaiting the debut of their peer on the runway.

Kayano: *Is checking up on data from her smartphone.* "According to Maehara-kun's text from before he took to the prep room, his line-up should be corresponding to this point of the show."

Fuwa: "After all that showed up previously, he's got a tough set of acts to follow."

Sosuke: "All of the designs were very interesting, at least."

Terasaka: "I'm not really getting what the art is for the people wearing them, though; are we supposed to laud them for maintaining their physiques, or for the poses they make, which can be uncommon, but not exactly unique to them?"

AssUniv: *All look at him.*

Kataoka: "Terasaka-kun, that's actually a pretty deep train of thought."

Nakamura: "Just for that... I've got nothing. You hit a pretty good one right now."

Karma: "Modeling is a literal version of showcasing your writing, if that makes sense; anybody can probably do what you've done, but how will you present it? That's the best way to say it."

Okano: "Maehara-kun's a simple-enough man; he'll pick that up and do it like it was second-nature."

Kato: "It's good you believe that, because it looks like he's next." *Gestures them to look at the source of the elevated participants.*

Maehara: *Appears from around the left corner. When prompted to turn right, he does so...*

Kato: "!!"


Kato: "There was just a moment of hesitation from him; the judges of this modeling competition will be noting that."

Yada: "Are you sure, Kato-kun? Nobody knows how to focus on an instance of time quite like you, you know."

Karma: "Maybe not, but one thing is all it takes..."

Maehara: *Ends up misstepping due to taking that extra fault, causing disorder in the routine, and his foot ends up faltering. He does manage to regain his stance, but the tripping has not been left unnoticed. *

Kato: "Oh, they definitely got that."
-Maehara's friends wouldn't let him have the end of it when he returns to them and discuss what went down, especially after the realization that he's received the second-to-last score for the tourney. During that time of hearing how bad he was (at least, how he subjectively heard it), Maehara had been developing something new - Something he hadn't experienced before... An inferiority complex.-

-Maehara knew something needed to change if he wanted to turn his placement around. Then he remembered just what was a constant, as was described by some of his fellow student-assassins before...-

-With the next challenge a fitness model gallery that will take the place of a dozen or so pages on the upcoming issue of Tarzan Magazine. Kato made sure to get express copies of the issue before it was released, thanks to some aces up his sleeve.-

Itona: *He and the rest of the Terasaka Group are holding up boxes with a Tarzan publication logo on them, appearing through the backdoor to the Nightclub.* "The issue for us is out now."

Kayano: *She and the other AssUniv members refocus when they show up.* "Ah; great!"

Takebayashi: *Notices the already-high number of magazines in one box alone, while there are still four more.* "That's a lot for just us, isn't it?"

Nagisa: "Kato-kun says that he often gets tons of the newest covers as his myriad of a family often like to give a read when they're not training or studying. That reminds me, he was keen on doing this to begin with when we proposed it to him."

Yada: "Oh yes; he even mentioned that Miho always gets a new issue, just to give a rant to her fellow Brothers and Sisters how wrong most of the trainers writing on these are... Oh, and someone she really likes is on this constantly."

Kimura/Naoko: *Both look away when they realize who it is.*

Isogai: "So then, the, uh... BRAVO block..." *Takes out one of the magazines and starts sifting through until he finds the sections.* "Got it; page thirty-one, everybody."

AssUniv: *All flip to the designated page. They find Maehara the third one shown, and he's illustrated... A lot differently.*

Hara: "Well, that's flattering." *Looking at a page in which Maehara is within a cable crossover machine, his arms are currently hyperextended to reveal his whole, ripped torso.*

Kimura: "We would know - we helped give him that."

Isogai: *Laughs.* "Are you kidding? Then what's this?" *Shows an image of Maehara running on the skillmill, with the camera directly on his right flank. If that wasn't enough, there are wrist and ankle weights strapped to him.*

Mimura: "You guys think this is part of what an assassin magazine would have?" *Maehara is seen now throwing a flying knee to the midsection equivalent of a hanging sandbag. Said target..."
bends right at that moment with a one-hundred-fifty-five degree angle.*

Lovro: *Appears from behind the corner of a wall.* "Those exist... And no, that's not on it. Some guy called Ezio is always on it."

AssUniv: "Lovro!?"

Lovro: "Oop, got another mission to do; see you all... Soon." *Leaves as quickly as he came.*

Fuwa: *Like the rest of her friends, she shakes that strange feeling off. Then, she shows the last one, in which Maehara grits his teeth closely to the camera while he is pulling down on the tricep ropes.* "That's Okano-san's boyfriend, right there."

Terasaka: *laughs.*"That one's priceless."

Nagisa: *Skims through the rest of the selection.* "It looks like a lot of them were sharing the same, eh, edge, that Maehara-kun was portraying. But he might still be overdoing it a bit, I think."

Okano: *Enters the room they are all in.* "Guys; girls."

Kayano: *Turns around to see her.* "Ah, Okano-san! Come on over and see Maehara-kun's images; they have a sort of flair to them."

Okano: "I don't need to see them - I already did. And I'm... Living it right now."

Karma: "Uh, what? Method acting for his shots?"

Okano: *Looks up.* "I think it's way more than just that... I think he underestimated the business' bite."

Yoshida: "Well, no one can say we never told him..."

Okano: "Guys - that's not helping! Ugh, whatever!" *Starts dialing on her smartphone.*

Kanzaki: "What are you doing, Okano-san?"

Okano: "Calling Maehara-kun, please be quiet." *Ringing ends.* "Maehara."

Maehara: *Voice only, in all of its extra-aggressive nature.* "Can't speak right now, Okano. I'm getting the details for the next project." *Hangs up immediately.*

Okano: *Smacks her thigh as the phone comes down onto it.* "Figures. He goes from penultimate to third, and suddenly I'm just forgotten."

Nakamura: "Even though you're playing second to something else."

Okano: *Gets overly ticked and leaves with a set of stomps.*

Kato: *Gets pushed aside as he walks in himself. He looks at AssUniv with puzzlement.*

-When the briefing was over, Maehara told all about the matter; the final challenge was using a budget fixed and given to them by BRAVO to star in any sort of third-party advertising; the
-Befitting his... Transformation, Maehara picked up something else that was very angry in nature, and also takes three-quarters of his cut - a still shot that would be in a commercial for Deity to Die 4 (a game in which the protagonist seeks ultimate vengeance against the Gods of his faith for turning against him when he needed them most).

Maehara: *Is preparing to leave the hotel to reach the photography studio for the shot, until he finds Okano camping outside his door.* "Hey, Okano-san." *Continues to walk past her.*

Okano: *Flips over him and stands in his way.* "Stop, Maehara-kun."

Maehara: "Okano-san, I don't have time for this; the shoot is in half-"

Okano: "Don't do it, Maehara-kun."

Maehara: "W-what?"

Okano: "Or should I not even call you that, because whoever you are, you're not Maehara-kun?"

Maehara: "Okano, what the Hell?"

Okano: "What'd you say to me three days ago, hm? That what I've been doing the opposite of made me too different from myself." *Is almost about to let out a tear, which she covers by holding her face and looking away.* "Oh God... Did I do this to you? Did I make it okay?"

Maehara: *All of his longstanding coldness drops.* "No. Come on, Okano-san, this-"

Okano: *Looks back at him.* "What?"

Maehara: *Sighs.* "This wasn't your fault. Not at all." *Looks aside.* "I guess I was just envious after I saw I was performing subpar while you could always do what you set out to at that Studio Park. I was just ready to replicate that however possible. The cold path seemed to work the best."

Okano: *Scoffs.* "You were jealous of me?"

Maehara: "Competition is just how our relationship functions, after all; you remember the kiss war, right?"

Okano: "Heheh, I'm leading it that right now; that one we had before our Wolfpack Battle is the leader."

Maehara: "Ah- Damnit." *Scratches the back of his head.*

Okano: "So what happens now? Can you reconsider a franchise?"

Maehara: "Well, I'm certainly not going for DtDIV now... But I already greenlit my appearance today. Cancelling now won't let me refund my budget. I can only pick something very low-rate or unreviewed now."

Okano: "Aw man, that sucks."
Maehara: "Well, I'll just have to live with that. And since you are why I'm inevitably losing this comp, how about you help me pick one out?"

Okano: "This won't put you in the lead." *Smiles before following him.*

-Maehara put the rest of his eggs into an unrecognized basket, still giving it his all in the project, and let Faith take over from there.-

-Two days later, the deadline of the results...-

-"Minimal Love" by Nathalie plays on the loudspeakers.-

AssUniv: *All of them are enjoying some... Non-alcoholic products, from canned lemonade to bottles of apple cider.*

Kato: *Bursts into the room from the main entrance, package in hand.* "Hey, Maehara-kun, you've got a..." *Notices the atypical assortment.* "Oh? No alcohol, everybody?"

Nagisa: "We've been noticing we've had a lot of barley lately."

Okuda: "Do not neglect the wheat."

Isogai: "So, a little change this time around; stuff that won't be too tough on our livers..."

Kataoka: "And not too tough on our wallets either. Eheh, no offense, Kato-kun."

Kato: "Ah, you're still paying; just a little less."

Maehara: *Finishes his sip of water, looking at Kato's hand.* "I take it you were going to say that's mine?"

Kato: "Indeed." *Tosses it over, which he catches and begins opening up. He takes a quick vape where he is while the rest of their peers crowd around Maehara.*

Maehara: "Okay... First thing's first; the offer letter." *Takes it out of the package, exhaling loudly.* "Well then, let's see what we've got here..." *Casually opens it up.*

Okano: "What's it say, Maehara-kun?"

Maehara: *Slowly opens his eyes to the print.* "I..."

AssUniv: *All lean in even closer.*

Maehara: "Didn't get in."

AssUniv: *All show discouragement and sympathy.*

Maehara: "I figured I wouldn't have been elected already, though; the Agency did say they were going as safely as they could; why risk a no-rate like what I picked out?"

Naoko: "That sounds so unfair... It would be true."
Kato: "Very true."

Okano: *Reads it right next to him.* "Though this is strange; apparently the company you posed for really liked the shots you did with them!"

Kayano: "Oh! May we see?"

Maehara: "Alright..." *Takes out the secondary content; a manilla folder.*

AssUniv: *Scatter the images out of the packet for all of them to see. The printed logo is one for CovertUre, the newest company in providing luxury/minimalist/tactical phone covers for all models of Android and Apple devices. The main shot is Maehara taking cover at a wall and looking at the camera, clad in a Bond-esque grey suit, a smartphone with an urban-military retractable stand cover in one hand, and a silenced Walther PPK in the other. Another depicted him behind a high barricade, awaiting the arrival of two mercenaries; his hand holding the phone in icepick is close to his face, with a pivoting tactical knife rolled out. In all instances, Maehara either has his cool, charming smile, or a thoughtful, strictly determined gaze.*

Sugino: "It's easy to see why; these kind of rock."

Kanzaki: "You look really cool, Maehara-kun."

Maehara: "Heheh, thanks."

Okano: *Reads the next document on the other side of the folder.* "Maehara-kun, it says here that CovertUre will not only be putting these up on any walls and boards they got, but they'll also be sending these prints to all the other modeling agencies within the country. So you might not get to be in BRAVO, but there's others who will gladly be taking you!"

Maehara: "That's... Wow, that's amazing."

Karma: "All's well that ends well, for the two Alphas."

Nakamura: "Of course it does; it was bound to happen eventually."

Maehara/Okano: *Both turn simultaneously towards them.* "WHAT DOES THAT MEAN!?!"
Goodness comes in threes, but in this case, you get double the package! In the form of Kataoka and Isogai, who have yet to really find their career niche since leaving the Assassination Classroom. That changes... Tonight.

-N"Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Tonight" by Annalise plays on the loudspeakers.-

-On another evening in which the student-assassins of AssUniv are working their loosely-scheduled shifts at Kato's Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub.-

Muramatsu: *Impatiently sets down a plate of staked grilled chicken onto the countertop of the kitchen and touches the earpod in his left.* "Isogai! Kataoka! What's keeping you two? We got one dish here and three others about to finish!"

Isogai/Kataoka: "Sorry!" *Both appear promptly at the open threshold. Kataoka accepts the first and second dishes, while Isogai collects the later.*

Hara: *Have given over the latter two meals.* "You guys are a little off the ball today."

Isogai: "Sorry; a lot on mind lately." *Leaves.*

-The rest of the night there roughly resembled that, akin to the moderate rain happening just outside. And it does not go unnoticed (as usual) by the rest of their friends. So, after they were to be given their paychecks for the week of work at 2 A.M. the next day...-

AssUniv: *Abruptly altogether, in a square formation.* "What's up, Isogai-san/Katoaka-san?"

Isogai/Kataoka: *All stand rigid at the sudden interrogation.*

Karma: Never gets old.

Isogai: *Snickers.* "So even we can't keep our demons hidden, huh?"

Kato: *From afar, crossing his arms.* "I can't even keep my secrets; you all know I exist."

Nakamura: *Turns around.* "And we literally begged you to death to tell us... Oh wait, we kinda did. Whatever."

Kataoka: "Okano-san, Hayami-san, Maehara-kun, and a whole bunch of you... You guys now know what you want."

Kimura: "Ah; you two have been worrying about what you both could be doing when you're finally out of college and all."
Naoko: "I forget, Kataoka-san, you wanted to take up a feminine-lite job, and you were going for something related to social studies, right Isogai-kun?" *It's been a while since we talked about stuff this deep.*

Isogai: "That's it, more or less."

Kayano: "Hm... We still have a few more chances with Director Oogami. Maybe you'd like something on the big screen... Or a whole bunch of screens for that matter?"

Kataoka: "Oh, we've considered it a little, but nothing's really appealing to us."

Kanzaki: "Really? Though the topics are admittedly vague, I would probably believe you two could organize great television shows of some sort."

Isogai: "Eh, maybe, but I don't think the hosts and creators of those shows get too many benefits."

Kataoka: "And the amount of prominent female presence... Is a little too low for my taste."

Maehara: "Acting perhaps?"

Isogai: "Nah; we'd like to play as ourselves all we can; not something else. Just in our nature."

Chiba: "Hm, those are some developments."

Kato: *After giving off another vapor-ring from his pen, he begins going around to pick up something the cleaning crew has left during their activity; a newspaper. He then takes it to the nearby recycling bin.*

Kataoka: *Notices Kato's actions.* "Hey, Isogai-kun..."

Isogai: "Yeah?"

Kataoka: "How about newscasting?"

Isogai: "Working for the news?"

-Without reason to dispute the idea, both Isogai and Kataoka were open to at least give the particular media a try. Kayano pulls out her next card from Director Oogami, permitting them a set of performance evaluations at All-Nippon News Network; weatherman and field reporter, respectively.-

-The next day...-

-AssUniv's tour bus brought them to Osaka Prefecture, where the broadcasting station of ABC's ANN for all of the Kansai Region was. As this was an evaluation set for three days, Kato had rented out a room for them at the Intercontinental. Yes... Room. Singular; allegedly, Kato was keen on holding onto most of the economic favor he had in the Osaka perimeter due to some past Yakuza concerns.-

Isogai/Kataoka: *Having gotten over the surprise that they will be living together for a little bit, they begin unpacking.*
But it seems not at all a major matter for the duo.

Finally, the hour came for them to encounter their employer; after a little briefing, they were sent off on their respective assignments; Isogai to the green screen of an AC'd recording room, and Kataoka to a street block close to the coast in the semi-strong winds and increasingly-heavy rain. Their story to deliver today was simple, but dynamic - address concerns of the typhoon about to brush the prefecture's capital.

Isogai: *Is on a phone conversation with Kataoka backstage.* "Hey, are you sure you're okay with this, Kataoka-san? You're hitting the crazy stuff out there. Even some of the producers have been wondering if it's too much for you as a newcomer."

Kataoka: "All reporters will be going through some strange stuff sooner or later. I'll be making the most with this; don't worry about me."

Isogai: "Okay. We'll be relying on you then."

Kataoka: "Of course; talk to you soon." *Both hang up at the same time.*

-AssUniv back in Kyoto tune in to the afternoon coverage of the weather, which was mentioned by Ritsu to be what their friends would be newscasting. After the initial anchor presentation, it was onto the forecast for the next week... Isogai.-

Isogai: *After being introduced by the male anchor Adachi, he begins positioning his hand around the divisions of days filled with data about the highs and lows.* "Thank you, Adachi-san. It comes as no surprise that today and tomorrow are probably not ideal Summer days, both with a high amount of rain - just about eight inches, and it's only the start; a brief, cloudy relapse follows into Thursday afternoon, and then the full extent of Typhoon Minduy will be experienced in the Kansai Region, taking us through to the end of the weekend and Monday. As for temperatures, highs are around . Now onto Kataoka for the live analysis of the storm. Kataoka-san."

Kataoka: *Waits a second to ensure the screen displayed would change to her camera's coverage.* "Thank you, Isogai-san. Now he wasn't kidding around, everyone; this stage of the typhoon season has been a surprise; we're barely into July, but winds and drops are almost hitting late August levels of intensity. You can just listen to the drops hitting this traffic light right next to us..." *Gestures over to the metal post, for the cameraman to look at.* "And make it akin to the sound of hail in regards to what's coming in just a week or so. It's only the start..."

Chiba: "Well, they're pretty good at telling us stuff."

Hayami: "They look perfectly in sync too somehow; Isogai's info directly correlated well for Kataoka's explanation."

Fuwa: "Let's see if they can keep it up."

Kataoka: "It's highly recommended that you stay indoors for this brief attack and wait for the interlude before the next storm to complete any and all errands. And then-" *Notices a black Toyota 4Runner begin to lose control as the excessive amount of water forces the grooves of the wheels to slip off the asphalt. The vehicle is now slipping off at an angle off the road and is intruding on their sidewalk, towards them!* "LOOK OUT!" *Drops her microphone, taking cameraman's secondary arm and then pulling him towards her. The camera drops, but at a position..."
that its clear both people ended up behind it. Meanwhile, the SUV stops itself on the lightpole, as
determined by the electronic.*

   Isogai: *On his headset.* "KATAOKA-SAN! Are you alright!?!"

   Kataoka: *Pulls out the secondary microphone placed on the camera.* "Oh, I'm okay; Hirata-san
   here is good too."

   Adachi: "Wow, Kataoka-san; that was some quick thinking and response. We're glad you were
   there."

   Kataoka: "Glad to be here, Adachi-san." *Gets up and begins moving towards the vehicle.*
   "Sir? Sir are you alright??"

   Adachi: "We'll be moving on to another reporter on the scene in Sakai for this Typhoon prelude
   coverage. Hiiragi-san..."

   AssUniv: "..." *Reality sets in.* "WHAT!??"

-That one, one-worded query translated into many, some by Isogai himself, when the they retreated
to their hotel stay in Osaka and initiated a phone conversation with their friends across the Kansai
Region. The field reporter went on to note that the driver did not notice a fogged section of his
windshield that his right wheels were rolling into a deceptively large puddle of water, overflowing
the grooves and making him lose control. Ultimately, however, all of the other student-assassins
were just glad to hear that she and her team there were safe from the incident.-

-When they readied themselves again for the day, Isogai and Kataoka were prepping for another
interesting day documenting the impending weather... However, instead...-

   Isogai/Kataoka: "SAY WHAT!??"

   Adachi: "You heard me right; do my job."

   Isogai: "The anchor position, right?"

   Adachi: *Laughs.* "What else?!" *Begins taking a quick smoke break.* "You two made a big
   impression, and only on your first day here!" *Looks back at them.* "Huh? why the long face? My
   job ain't up to snuff for you two??"

   Kataoka: "I don't think we'll impress like yesterday enough to match you on the front desk."

   Adachi: "Ah, I've been hoping for a reason to have a sabbatical anyways; take it. Show them
   you're both born leaders, huh?"

   Isogai/Kataoka: *Both look a little uneasy, gazing at each other, before returning their attention
to Adachi.* "Very well."

-And so, the two de-facto heads of the dividing genders within AssUniv stepped up to the plate -
the arced table from which hundreds of thousands, if not millions, see first whenever they tune into
the channel in the morning.-

   Isogai/Kataoka: *Both sit rigid at the raised platform table... Frantically trying not to make their
looks around the studio look noticeable.*

Cameraman: "Alright, and we're live in three... Two... One." *Hand-points towards the two of them.*

Isogai/Kataoka: *Briefly look at each other for a splitsecond before the camera's lights and the man behind it signal the judgement call.*

Isogai: "G-good morning, everybody. I am A- Isogai Yuma."

Kataoka: "And I am Kataoka Megu. Welcome to All-Nippon News."

Isogai: "Our top story today c-comes from Haneda Airport, unveiling the completion of its newest," *Takes a look at the newsfeed report papers on the table.* "Bio-metric security on recognizing its plane's passengers-"

Kataoka: "Y-yes!" *Pauses a second upon realizing she bumped in heads with Isogai. In an attempt to save the situation, she turns to read the paper too.* "With no human interaction or supervision required, cameras live-feeding your face right before the travel gate will attempt to m-match it with the photo on your passport. Naturally, if it's valid, the gates will slide open."

Isogai: "A-and," *Has noticed he talked too early too.* "The process will only take ten min- uh, seconds to do. Time is of the essence, especially for the event it's being designed for; the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, anyone?"

Kataoka: "Oh, I wouldn't want to be in line for hours trying to get on one craft, that's for sure. Uh, not that I, need to, since I live there."

Isogai: "Ah-eheh, employee integrity, Kataoka-san. Now, onto the next coverage..."

-Meanwhile AssUniv was watching the news again from a Hyatt Regency Room...-

Nakamura: "You can tell they're nervous."

Chiba: "They keep talking over each other and butting heads."

Nagisa: "Eh, at least they're making time."

Mimura: "Maybe it'll get better as the broadcast goes on."

-But it didn't; the awkwardness and tension between Isogai and Kataoka was still too great for them to grow past this time around. So, while the job was done, everyone knew something was wrong. Fortunately, the producers of the newscast knew that the problem wasn't due to incompetence, but from their own personal obstacles. As such, on their final day on the network, they will allow Isogai and Kataoka a second chance at the anchor.-

-That night, at their suite within the Intercontinental...-

Kataoka: *Sits down at the dining table adjacent to Isogai.* "Alright, Isogai-kun. We need to get this right."

Isogai: "Yeah; we need to be able to put on a classic together."
Kataoka: "Right. So, we're going to rehearse this... In front of you guys." *Turns over to a tablet with live webcam feed to the rest of their friends.* "That cool with all of you?"

Naoko: "You can count on us."

Yada: "However, this information, isn't there a level of personal withholding until the news actually reveals it?"

Isogai: *Points to them.* "That will stay your little secret, won't it?"

Kato: "Confirmed. Now, whenever you're ready."

Isogai/Kataoka: "Very well." *Both prepare themselves, focus the papers together, and prepare their opening speech.*

-Which... Was not much better. Cue the second run, and little benefit arrived again. And then a third, and fourth...-

Isogai: *Frustratingly sips his glass of water.* "This isn't going well, is it?"

Kayano: "Well... Yeah."

Fuwa: "I think you guys are just playing this too safely; both of you seem to be crutching on the other to have adequate leadership in the flow of the program where you know you aren't so well at."

Yada: "I'm sensing that too; you guys need to coordinate much more, know right then and there who's better at relaying this info."

Kataoka: "Good advice, you two, but that's easier said than done."

Isogai: "Yeah; it seems at the worst of times, we both feel confident in the presented stuff, which results in us both speaking at the same time."

Kataoka: "That's not something we can plan for, even with the information here. Details will arrive just before the cast with the prompter as well."

Sugino: "Who knew the drafting of sports players happens to affect the casting of news anchorpeople as well."

Muramatsu: "What's that mean?"

Sugino: "Well you know a draft is to ensure not too many all-stars of a game are on the same team, right?"

Isogai: "Thanks for the subtle complement, Sugino-san..."

Kataoka: "But it seems true that team chemistry is really the most important factor."

Kimura: ... Really? REALLY?
Isogai: "Alright, now. Thanks for the help everybody." *Stands up and goes over to turn off the live conversation.*

AssUniv: "Good luck you guys." *End conversation.*

Kataoka: "*Takes a long sip of her cup of water and then goes up to Isogai, still standing.* "You alright, Isogai-kun?"

Isogai: "Yeah... I mean, I think we both still proved what we set out to."

Kataoka: "Oh we did. We just really wanted to prove it to everyone else."

Isogai: "It only matters that we know that, right?"

Kataoka: "I suppose that's true."

Isogai: "Then all that's left is for us to die well."

Kataoka: "Haha. 'Die well.'"

Isogai: "By going for the kill like we always do." *Beat.*

Kataoka: "*Her mind flickers, at the same time in which they both have a startling revelation.*

-The next day... AssUniv prepare to watch their friends' final broadcast on All-Nippon News Network...-

Mimura: "Alright, they're live in three, two, one..."

Isogai: "*Both he and Kataoka appear on screen following the title screen's transition scene.* "Hello everyone. I'm Isogai Yuma,"

Kataoka: "And I'm Kataoka Megu."

Isogai: "And our top story tonight comes from Reuters."

Kataoka: "The top international news agency reports about a possible breach in some of our most universally-used systems."

AssUniv: "*Upon hearing the confidence and content within their words, they all begin tuning in a lot more attentively.*

Isogai: "Wi-Fi is something all of our most common devices use every day, but they could just be what ruins said devices for all of you."

Kataoka: "As researchers say there holds risks of hackers finding means of hijacking private conversations."

Isogai: "Particularly on WPA2 keywords, though it's likely any Wi-Fi network can cause this."

Kataoka: "It's unclear how easily a black or grey-hat hacker can access this type of information using this flaw."
Isogai: "Or if it has long been a problem. As of yet, no direct direction has been given to victims such as you and I, save for switching to wired ethernet whenever possible."

Kataoka: "Save for one option."

AssUniv: *All pay even closer attention.*

Isogai/Kataoka: "Install that next software update on your devices." *After a brief pause, they move onto the next page of their papers and prompters.* "And next on this morning's feed..."

AssUniv: *After listening and watching that portion of the broadcast.* "...

Maehara: "That was damn incredible!"

Kanzaki: "I was hooked all the way through."

Nakamura: "Kind of ticked they were putting ideas into our heads like that..."

Nagisa: "But it only served as a perfect means to leave it open..."

Karma: "For them to cut it off."

Kato: "The perfect assassination staged as a news report."

-Now back at the Hyatt Regency's lobby...-

Isogai: "After our performance, the casting team was so impressed by the broadcast that they guaranteed jobs starting as reporters for us."

Naoko: "Wow, really?"

Kataoka: "Oh yeah. We just need to ride out our time in college first."

Kato: "That'll go by in a blink of an eye."

Karma: "Still, being excited about it for two years sounds awkward."

Isogai: "Well, maybe so, but I think we're both feeling another thing..." *Turns to Kataoka.*

Kataoka: *Looks at him as well.* "I'm thinking so too."

AssUniv: *Double-take between them with utter surprise.*

Isogai: "We're just glad we finally know what we want to do with our lives."

Kataoka: "Befitting our rigid standards. Thank God it happened sooner or later."

Nagisa: "Heh... With all that's been going on, it'd be weird if none of us never got what we were looking for before this was all over."

Isogai/Kataoka: "Yeah..." *Both laugh about their fortunes.*
Kimura: *Damn ikemens...*
In the conclusion of this mini-arc, we have Terasaka taking up Oogami's final favor. And what does he want to do? NJPW. Or its indie circuits. Huh?

Kudos to all you pro wrestling fans. It's still real to us, dammit! -_0

-In The Fire of Victory" by Ace plays on the loudspeakers.-

-As if there was ever any doubt before, the student-assassins were simply drinking and conversing in the VIP platform; the thing they'd always be doing in Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub if they weren't working in it.-

Kayano: *Appears from the wine cellar's door into the room; her phone in her left hand implies she had just finished a private conversation.* "Alright, everybody. Got some good news for all of you from Director Oogami."

Karma: "Lay it on us, Kayano."

Kayano: "Firstly, critical consensus across fifty major reviewers pre-release all say Streak of White has highly positive reception!"

AssUniv: *All cheer.*

Okano: "Any word on the stunts and action scenes, Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Oh, I bet you'd be wondering how that went, Okano-san. But don't you worry, the natural, fluid action was one of the big pros as well."

Okano: "Awesome!"

Kayano: "On another related note, apparently and strangely, the production company for the movie has accepted a brief partnership with Maehara's former shoot with CovertUre."

Maehara: *Nearly chokes on his latest sip of Bacardi.* "Say what?"

Kayano: "Oh yeah; it's totally bizarre. And I'm going to have to return to the studios for some little product-promotional shots."

Kato: *Appears from the secret entrance into the room, allegedly having heard the entire conversation thus far.* "It seems as though time gaps of technology are of subtle, nominal consequence, especially if it means a rather unorganized company initially will inevitably make it big by following a widely-recognized trail."

Nakamura: "Don't expect that that partnership won't blow up the online communities against the production, though."
Nagisa: "Seeing how tough the entertainment industry heads are, I think they'll be able to handle that."

Kataoka: "It'd be just as random, but is there any chance All-Nippon News will cover the premiere screening?"

Kayano: "This movie's been made primarily in Kansai; of course they will!"

Isogai: "Heh, if only we were still there." *Begins sipping some hard lemonade.*

Kimura: "Any other things we need to know?"

Kayano: "Well, Director Oogami says he's going to move over to Hokkaido in about a week to film another two films, which means if we want to use another industry favor, it will have to be now. So, anyone else want to take a look at what goes on behind the scenes?"

AssUniv: "..." *All look between each other with perplexity.*

Terasaka: "What do you got on pro wrestling?"

AssUniv: *All look over to him, allegedly with judging eyes."

Terasaka: *Looks at them all back just as judgmentally, whether deserved or not.* "So I still like the sport; big deal."

Kayano: "What made you single out that business, Terasaka-kun?"

Terasaka: "While Isogai-san and Kataoka-san were doing their news broadcast, the little underbar that tells you some of the stuff they already mentioned instead showed an advertisement for Frontier Fighters Professional Wrestling's talent search in the Kansai Region."

Nakamura: "Let me guess: You want in on the contest?"

Terasaka: "It doesn't have to be; I just want to see it from the stands. Tickets have ceased sale now; was done in an hour actually, if the online fan-forums are correct."

Kayano: "Don't sweat it, Terasaka-kun; I think Oogami can find a way to get you in as a contestant."

Terasaka: "Really? Sweet."

Okano: "You still know how to pro wrestle, right Terasaka-kun?"

Terasaka: "I might be a little rusty. You guys can definitely help me out with that, right?"

AssUniv: *Beat, before everyone begins cracking their knuckles.*

Terasaka: "Uh, guys?"

-After a good day of training put in, they all proceed to the Kobe World Memorial Hall; the venue of the dark events. Terasaka, donning a wrestling attire very closely resembling Johnny Mundo's,
was awaiting his turn to do battle with another open-invite newcomer.

Terasaka: *Backstage, he is humming the tune to his selected wrestling theme; "As Brutal As It Ever Was" by TeknoAXE.*

Wrestler: *But before Terasaka is to enter the ring, the first one who enters is one dressed in reverse Kill-Bill colored wrestling shorts, boots, and gloves, to the theme of "Fit of Rage" by TeknoAXE. He also sported an oriental tiger tattoo on his left arm... And his presumed valet on the other.*

Announcer: "Introducing first, accompanied to the ring by Aohime, it is 'The Big Boss,' Acid Faith!"

AssUniv: *All situated close to the barricades near one of the posts of the ring.*

Kurahashi: "Ugh, I think that guy tried a little too hard to get here before."

Kimura: "What's with the female wrestler? Isn't this an all male search?"

Mimura: "Probably just there to shoot the win for Acid Faith here."

Kato/Okano: "..." *Both have just recently dealt with a man and a lady who were trying to bargain for their seats.* Jeez, what was that about?

Acid Faith/Aohime: *Just before they both proceed to move into the ring, they move over to Kato and Okano.*

Kato/Okano: "???

Acid Faith/Aohime: *After a few judging expressions, most likely posing for the cameramen that are following their movements, they then push the two over unceremoniously.*

Kato: *Restabilizes himself very quickly, while ensuring that Okano does not fall over into her assigned folding chair.* The fuck!? *Immediately vaults over the barricade to confront the two in the ring.*

Acid Faith: *When Kato's hand lays on his far shoulder (away from Aohime), he looks back and sees the one he pushed down right behind him.*

Kato: *From there, Kato immediately short-arm dropkicks Acid Faith over (which seemingly pauses the latter's wrestling theme). Aohime escapes to the safety of ringside while Faith recovers and confronts Kato in the ring.*

AssUniv: Wait, what?

Terasaka: *Recognizes that the theme for Acid Faith has subsided and arranges to get out as well... Until he realizes that Kato is in the ring with said opponent.* "What the-!?"

-Acid Faith begins the real moment of combat by attempting to clothesline Kato. But he ducks under just in time, putting Faith in a compromised position with his back turned. Kato then tries a sleeper hold, but the wrestler manages to get his arms close to his head in retaliation, nullifying the submission's leverage. He snapmare takedowns Kato over him and onto the latter's back, but a good
kip-up kick puts some distance between them again. Kato proved much too fast for the larger Acid Faith to grab, rolling and baseball-sliding underneath all of the Big Boss' grapples.

When Acid Faith attempted to charge at Kato in the center of the ring, the latter fell down low and hooked his legs to pinch between the Big Boss' in a drop toe hold, driving the former's face into the mat. While prone, Kato showcased his Olympic/Military wrestling experience, able to spin around the back of the other grappler and stopping all attempts to leverage back to a standing position. When a leg tried to get onto one knee, Kato's elbow was there to apply extra downwards pressure. When the hand hit its palm to the mat to press out, Kato's leg kicks the elbow straight, and then traps it in his knee, while cupping his hands together in front of Faith's face and pulling back - a Crippler Crossface.

Acid Faith roars in pain for a little bit before rolling back with the applied pressure, causing Kato to break the hold and handspring back as well. Kato was the aggressor this time, charging with with a lariat. However, Acid Faith's girth was not just for show, and he tanked the attack without moving more than a half-step (of course, Kato was holding back his 100% muscle control). Faith then proceeds to big boot Kato, who blocks all of the damage with his forearms; the push still forced him over and rolled back. Faith then attempted a spear before Kato re-straightened completely, but Kato caught the charge and concentrated all of the force to his triceps cupping Faith's shoulders. Kato then lowered the former swiftly to the mat and elbow-dropped the back of his head before stepping back.-

Aohime: *Reaches from under the ring for a steel chair, throwing it inside, preparing to hit Kato from behind with it.*

Okano: "!!" *From ringside as well, sweeps inside and meets Aohime in the ring at a right angle, allowing the latter to recognize her. As Aohime turns over to redirect the chair strike, Okano basement dropkicks her at the kneecap, causing her to fall into a three-point stance and drop the foreign weapon to her side close to the guys. Okano barrel rolls from her supine position over to Aohime and snap kicks her on the temple, causing the latter to fall out of the ring. Okano rolls out to join her.*

-Back to the male wrestlers, Faith attempts a series of punching strikes, missing every hook and uppercut he swung. The latest was a right European upper, which Kato blocked by pressing his closer tricep against Faith's attacking shoulder, "choking" the move and giving it no effective range. He then proceeds to translate it into a hammerlock, stressing the shoulder joint. Faith slides under Kato's arms to escape and throws a huge lariat at neck-level at Kato. The crooked-arm version of the running strike was just what Kato anticipated however, while he blocked the attack with his armpit tucked into the shoulder point; the rest of the arm never comes in contact with his clavicle. While distracted, Kato throws a reverse elbow with his unblocked arm, stunning him, and then grabbing the close arm's wrist with it, followed by gripping his own wrist, creating a Kimura lock.

Meanwhile at ringside, Aohime throws a front kick to Okano, who catches it. This was a feint for a lightning enzuigiri, but Okano ducks under that as well, causing Aohime to fall flat on her face. Okano still maintained control of the left leg and applied an ankle lock. Aohime manages to kick her way out of the submission, wherein Okano moves over to the corner made by steel ring steps and ring apron. Aohime then rushes in for a shoulder charge, but Okano does a split jump to clear her bullheaded opponent and driving her into the steel. With Aohime reeling, she was easy pickings for Okano to jump off the apron to Phoenix seated senton onto her shoulders, leading to a twisting hurricanrana driver onto the outside hard-mats.
Finally, Acid Faith counters the lock by sweeping Kato over and tries to stomp on his face while down; he manages to roll away just in time. Faith then takes from one page in his handbook, pulling out his signature discus bicycle kick. Kato, however, sees it coming a mile away and not only high blocks the hamstring before it could straighten alongside the rest of the leg, and reverse sweep kicks Faith's standing leg, causing him to fall onto his back hard. To conclude the contest, Kato sliding-rushes his knee into Faith's face as he tries to get back up instinctively, and then begins wrapping Faith's left leg so that the thigh is facing his shin, while the calf gets tucked in his knee. The right leg then overlaps his left and is trapped within the rest of Kato's leg. He then falls over while pivoting to his right side, flipping Faith onto his side, but also causing Kato's right leg to compress Faith's left leg onto his other's, with excruciating pain. Without being able to reach the ropes, he is forced to tap out... To a non-rung contest.

Kato: *Releases the hold and rolls out of the ring.* "Pick your battles better, punk!" *Helps Okano, who was still sitting on the ground, up to her feet, from which they then return to their posts.*

Terasaka: *What the fuck is going on...?*

-After the rest of the event, Frontier's staff came by and confronted AssUniv about the mishap. As it turns out, there were to be some hired stuntpeople sitting in the seats that Kato and Okano were in, who were to be taking the spots that they took instead. However, the selling division accidentally did not reserve those seats, resulting in them unintentionally receiving them legitimately. They were going to intervene when outside, unrecognized talent stormed the ring to confront their roster members, but after seeing there was no legitimate harm, the pop from the rest of the crowd, and how much skill the two of them had with the pro-wrestling craft, they decided to wait it out a bit. In fact, they were so impressed by the antics that...-

Terasaka: "THEY OFFERED YOU TWO POSITIONS IN THE DRAFT?"

Okano: "Heheh, yeah!"

Kato: "But neither of us will be participating though; not really our interest, no matter how good we are at it."

Terasaka: "Well, thank you! God, if you stole another spotlight from me..."

Nakamura: "You weren't making yourself out to be much of a poster-boy either way, though!" *Laughs.*

Terasaka: "What's that mean? I can't give as good as a show as they did earlier?"

Kayano: "No offense, Terasaka-kun, but you aren't much for the more technical, four-dimensional move-sets they used."

Isogai: "Yeah, you're kind of just... Another big brute."

Okano: "And Lord knows, there's too many of those in this business."

Fuwa: *If only one company would know when to quit with an archetype like this...*

Terasaka: "So you think you saved me from elimination this time - is that it?"
Kataoka: "The guy you were about to fight is even larger than you..."

Terasaka: *Beat.*

Maehara: "But I figure that if you want to ensure your chances of getting as far as you can in this talent search, you probably will have to boost your repertoire and create a unique, popular gimmick."

Terasaka: "Ugh, you guys make it sound like I don't know that, and it's easy! But there's a reason why that exists, right? Not everyone, even the good and the great, can come up with those, especially both at the same time!"

Kanzaki: "Well, maybe not on your own, Terasaka-kun."

Kato: "But how about alongside the rest of us?"

Hazama: "It's almost our jobs at this point, anyways."

Terasaka: "Well then... How can I say no?"

Yoshida: "Hey, now he's finally getting it!"

Terasaka: "But no 'setting me up to fail' routes!"

Karma: *Takes a notebook off a nearby table and throws it behind him.* "Welp, I got nothing."

Naoko: "Karma-kun..."

Kato: "All for your benefit. I swear."

Terasaka: *Sighs with great relief.* "Alright; what y'all got?"

-After another good round of training put in within a private gym rented out by Frontier, AssUniv not only augmented Terasaka's brutish move-set, but also worked with him on notepads in bringing his promotional and starpower game up. Finally, when the second round of match-ups arrived...-

-Terasaka's next contest was a triple threat, against the likes of "Starbreaker" Tetsuo Nikaido and "Oboroguruma" Hiroyuki Tendo. Both have played their entrances, including Tendo's "Hardliner Rush Down" by TeknoAXE and Nikaido's licensed track.-

-Finally, it's Terasaka's turn to arrive to the ring... to the tune of "Who's Laughing Now" by Goldfinger; a strong contrast to the many metal-oriented tracks used by the other wrestlers.-

Nikaido/Tendo: *Both show hand gestures and facial expressions that say, "What the Hell's this??*"*

Terasaka: *Finally shows up behind the right side (relative to the audience's point of view), wearing pale white paint all across his visible skin (the rest covered by mismatched, multicolor Muay Thai shorts and battle-vest, and his face has been painted to resemble a certain disfigured, legendary comic-book character. He waves wildly on the stage to the many giving a surprising standing ovation, eventually throwing off his seemingly signature purple trench coat and starts jogging hysterically down to the ring (all while his opponents are utterly dumbfounded).*
When the theatrics finally died down, it was time for the three of them to fight. The referee for the contest slid into the ring, made sure all of the contestants were ready, and ordered to ring the bell. At first, the trio circled around, hoping to psych out the other, before Nikaido and Tendo slowly realized again who they were sharing this arena with and both pivoted to face Terasaka. The latter gives a wide crack of a grin to the both of them, almost looking nervously, until they both try to chop him down with a clothesline. Terasaka forward rolls (with the comedic twist of putting most of his weight on the upper neck/head [safely]) while doing so, avoiding both of them. All of them turn back to look each other face-to-face again, in which Tendo on the right side of the duo attempts another haymaker. Terasaka pulls back just enough to avoid the entirety of the blow, but also uses his left wrist to hyper-extend the attack, causing Tendo's fist to nigh-impossibly hit Nikaido in the cheek. While he goes to the side to assess his damage, Terasaka concentrates on Tendo, front dropkicking him into the closest corner. Kipping back up to meet him, Terasaka feints a charging forearm smash while Tendo is situated there, which the latter readies to block properly. But Terasaka stops midway, and instead opts for a two-eye poke. Terasaka fittingly laughs at the cop-out, turning around to realize Nikaido's ready for more.

The latter readies for a vertical body press onto Terasaka, but he sidesteps it, causing him to fly into Tendo, still at the turnbuckle. They both sandwich together, and while they were conjoined, it was Terasaka's turn to stinger splash them, doing even more damage. When they both flop out of the angle, Terasaka first bends Nikaido over so that he can sideways chop Tendo across his face, stressing the eye damage some more, and then does a Mountain bomb on Nikaido. He keeps the body-lock on the latter, and rolls across him, picking him back up for a deadlift vertical suplex. Terasaka drops him midway into the motion, lining Nikaido's body across his right shoulder, and falling onto his knees to stress the latter's back. Still not done, Terasaka laughs while rising back up to his feet and whips him around in a modified airplane spin, causing Nikaido to inadvertently heel kick Tendo across the face once more.

The spinning momentum translates into a full blown Giant Swing, and Terasaka spins him around and around until he smashes Nikaido's upper body into the bottom turnbuckle of another corner. Terasaka grins again when he meets up again with Tendo, who tries to put him down with a big boot kick. Terasaka catches the attack, and then reverse-elbows him on the chin, putting him onto his back. While still holding onto his kicking leg, Terasaka then begins twisting all of Tendo's limbs together like a pretzel and then turns him over; the latter now looks like a newbie yoga practitioner who got stuck and fell in the wrong place; a soccer ball ready to be punted. Terasaka in fact readies for such an attack to Tendo's temple, but then he realizes Nikaido is no longer reeling, so he gives a good back kick to his chest, putting him down again. Finally, the time came and Terasaka whips his right instep into the top of Tendo's head, freeing him of his man-made binds but also taking him out of the contest, as he rolls out of the ring.

Terasaka immediately turns around and charges in with a Bronco Buster on Nikaido, smashing his face with his... Lower abdominal area. Rolling back from the attack, Nikaido crumples further, sliding down the turnbuckle, but is stopped when Terasaka grabs both of his legs and pulls up. Nikaido uses natural wrestling sense and grabs the middle ropes, but Terasaka had him well-scouted; the Alley-Oop powerbomb necessitated his clinging. But if the backslam was not enough, Terasaka also puts one of his legs in between the limb gap to emphasize more damage to the torso... Particularly in his own lower abdominal area. To finish this contest, Terasaka pulls out his, according to the commentators, patented, "Contortionist's Bridge"; He flips Nikaido from supine to prone, and then tucks one of Nikaido's ankle behind his other leg's knee. He then puts his boot onto the heel, trapping that leg, while cupping the instep of the other leg, and then falls back - A modified Haas of Pain. Nikaido is forced to stand on one of his shoulders and across the side of his face due to the submission, while his pulled instep attempts to touch the back of his head. After a
dozen seconds, Nikaido cannot take it anymore, and taps out.-

Announcer: *While Terasaka rolls away and begins celebrating while his theme plays.* "Here is your winner and finalist for the FFPW Talent Search, 2016... TERASAKA RYOMA!"

AssUniv: "..."

Sugino: "That was either the most awesome thing I've seen in my life, or the scariest."

Okajima: "I'm inclined to argue the latter."

-Despite the intentional nay-say of his friends, it was clear that there was something going with this gimmick, with the crowd loving the playful wrestling style, and it impressing the superiors of Frontier Fighters well enough that Terasaka has enough background points to actually proceed in the program. But if only that was all there was to the issues present...-

-Before training at the final event...-

Terasaka: *Walks into the training area, where Kato was resting on the middle rope.* "Yo! Kato-kun!"

Kato: *Points at him.* "Terasaka! That gimmick working wonders, right?"

Terasaka: *Sighs.* "Yes, it is; the public loves it and all, the moveset is conveniently nice, and much more. But honestly, I wasn't thinking myself to be a crazy, deadly jester."

Okano: *Sitting on the top turnbuckle.* "Funny; that's exactly what Nakamura-san might say you are."

Terasaka: *Teresa: I did not leave my wrestling DVD around for you to find and love just for you to start heckling me..."

Kato: "That's totally cool, Terasaka-san. This wasn't supposed to be the finale anyway."

Terasaka: *Beat.* "Really? Why?"

Kato: "Because I think you've all been realizing." *Checks his watch.* "For this Summer so far that the answer to many of you and your friend's problems have a thing in common..."

Okano: *Looks at him.* "There is?"

Terasaka: "What's that?"

Kato: "Let's get to work on the move-set and it may be clearer from there."

Terasaka: "Huh, alright. where do we start?"

Kato: "Knee strikes."

Terasaka: "Hey, that doesn't sound too bad-

Kato: "No no no... All strikes to the knee."
Okano: "Just so you know, that's a list a mile or so long; best we get started."

Terasaka: *A sweat mark falls down the back of his head.*

-Another grueling day of training... Always warranted, but never wanted. Nevertheless, it's not something they're unfamiliar with, so Terasaka decide to huff about it once and trucked on. True to Kato's words, Terasaka (and Okano) did end up finding out what the answer was...-

-Finally, on the main event of the talent search competition...-

-Another triple threat match ensued, this team between the winners of each group. In Group A, there is Kazuri Okabe, "The Barnstormer," known for his great hybridization of light grapples and grounded strikes. In Group B there was Terasaka. Finally, in Group C, there was Hiroki Taniguchi, "The High-Fly Falcon," who utilizes a deadly combination of aerial attacks.-

-With Terasaka listed as appearing to the ring first, everyone in the crowd, perhaps including some AssUniv members who knew better, were readying to pop to the killer clown gimmick they saw last time. But instead of the Ska Punk they heard prior, they come across "I Have You In My Reticule" by TeknoAXE; not quite the same as the other rock tracks present in the other two's themes, but more an industrial suspense track, signifying the arrival of a very dangerous, yet subtle and silent enemy.-

Terasaka: *Appears from the right side of the titantron again, walking into the red targeting HUD, as if it was a sniper scope, but then he pulls out a prop gun and shoots. In reality it is a blank, but the shot makes it look like the scope cracks and blood engulfs the tron; classic assassin outclassing. The lights finally transition into an array of black and white flashes, imitating massive, precise gunfire inherent in a multitalented mercenary, and a clean, minimalist black suit with red tie - a required component of the hitman's business.*

Karma: "Heh, where on Earth did he come up with a character like that..."

Yada: "It's a mystery, Karma-kun."

Kato: "The greatest of them all."

Terasaka: *He arrives into the ring, ripping off his suit to reveal his original wrestling attire, albeit now finished in a metallic black coloring, vaguely resembling a bulletproof vest.*

-Taniguchi and Okabe also entered the ring, and the match started up; the contest was much less one-sided than Terasaka's last match, with him getting his fair share of close-calls and big bumps. There was even an instance at the fifteen-minute mark where Terasaka planned to ultra-plex a stunned Taniguchi off the top turnbuckle into a table on the outside of the ring, only for Okabe to interfere and combine it with a sitout powerbomb, taking out all three of them.-

-At the seventeen-minute mark, Terasaka climbs onto the ring apron on one side, while Okabe, who had rolled in earlier, recovers and attempts to throw him back inside as well. While being picked up, Terasaka drops off from the apron, driving Okabe's face into the top rope, stunning him. When Terasaka tries to capitalize on it by sliding back in however, Taniguchi catches his leg and pulls him back out, and throws a quick enzuigiri kick, dropping Terasaka. The latter then enters the ring in his place and attempts a clothesline. Okabe ducks under it and applies a waistlock for a German suplex, topped with a bridge pin. Taniguchi manages to kick out at the two-count, but
Okabe does not release the grapple and instead pulls him back to try a Barnstormer lariat takedown. Taniguchi ducks under it just in time for the finisher to miss, and Shining Wizard's the back of Okabe's head, taking him down.

Taniguchi rolls to the apron of the ring and stands back up, preparing for a springboard Sling Blade to a recovering Okabe. But Terasaka pulls Taniguchi's legs off the structure, causing his chin to drop onto the lightly-covered wooden frame. Terasaka then spinning hook kicks Taniguchi's head to the ground. Terasaka however, gets caught by Okabe's Atomic slingshot senton to the outside, with enough force to drive him into the steel barricades. Okabe then throws Terasaka back inside, and attempts to apply a cross-legged STF crossface submission, but Terasaka's precision abilities (key to his assassin gimmick) lets him break the weakest point of the hold - the hands coming together in front of him. The submission was over before it even began, and Okabe falls victim to a roll-over by Terasaka, who repositions their crossed legs and performs kneebar/inverted cloverleaf combination. With his entire lower body disabled, Okabe cannot make it to the bottom rope to break the hold. But he wouldn't need to, as Taniguch rested up and then springboard elbow drops onto the chest of Terasaka, releasing the submission. Taniguchi then tries to pin the latter, but he kicks out just in time.

Taniguchi clambers onto the top turnbuckle, readying a top-rope Sling Blade to whoever gets up first. Okabe turns out to be the first, and he jumps off the elevated platform with a spin to give his neckbreaker slam extra momentum. But Okabe scouts it and catches Taniguchi right when he has his back completely turned. Okabe grabs his far wrist from behind, pulls back, causing Taniguchi to violently turn back and lariats with his other arm - a perfect, countering Barnstormer takedown. It took a lot out of Okabe however, as he bows to a three-point stance while Taniguchi was sent flying almost to the other side of the ring. Before Okabe can get even close to him for the cover, however, the second he gets back to both feet, Terasaka is right on top of him with his right boot on the back of his brain stem, and mid-leap, drives his foot down, smashing Okabe face-first into the mat. the commentators reveal that to be named the "Six Feet Under." Covering Okabe for the 1-2-3 seals the deal.

Announcer: *Speaking above Terasaka's theme playing in the background.* "Here is your winner of the 2017 Frontier Fighters Professional Wrestling Talent Search... Terasaka Ryoma!"

Terasaka: *After selling his recovery for a little bit, he revels in his victory alongside a very vocal audience, which includes his own friends, who are standing up and clapping to him. He is beyond elated by the events that have transpired.* So, this is what it's like, eh?

-At the end, Frontier naturally offered Terasaka a contract to join the personnel of one of the greatest professional wrestling promotions in the world. But since this was only more of an interest or hobby for him (at least, at the time), he decided to turn it down... For now.-

"King of the World" by David Dima plays in the loudspeakers.

-Now back at the nightclub...-

Kayano: "Well everybody, Director Oogami is now on airplane mode as he journeys to Hokkaido for even more A-rate filming. Our era of being behind the spotlights is over."

Karasuma: "It would've been better if we were under no lights at all, but it seems as though there was quite a lot for a good chunk of you by partaking in all of this."

Irina: "Some established careers, some moonlights, and elucidation on the illumination of one of
the world's most popular businesses."

Muramatsu: "You really serious about leaving professional wrestling on the table, Terasaka?"

Terasaka: "I had a lot of fun with it. And it's not like it's unheard of for politicians to be involved with the craft."

Kato: "That's true, especially in the United States, where some legends like Rhyno and Ludvig Borga were parts of political parties."

Karma: "That sounds just wild enough to be true."

Naoko: "Are you so different, Karma? Any of us?"

Terasaka: "In any case, I've got a long way to go before I'll be thinking of doing it, so I'll just, ride the tide for now."

Fuwa: "You don't think your one-hit wonder didn't make an impression on the veterans of Frontier? One that think they need to bring you down to size or anything like that?"

Terasaka: "Come on, I'm just a kid. Who would think that?"

-Meanwhile, in a stadium for a live-event of Frontier...-

Kendall Sigma: *His name was on a personal locker room door that is explored. Inside there, he marvels at the footage from the latest talent search, particularly at his finishing move.* "I await more competition like you this year... Terasaka Ryoma." *He makes a Caliber Club point at the screen just as the video finishes.*
Evolution Space

Chapter Summary

It is a foregone conclusion that Okuda and Takebayashi will be lauded by scientific experts the world over for their research in discovering the nanopaste that will help create universal blood for any and all. But all of that starts with one dig into the details. And that begins today.

-It is early in the morning at the Hyatt Regency in Feudal Japan's capital. Some of the members of AssUniv are preparing themselves for the day already, while others were getting just a little more shuteye than their colleagues. This includes Takebayashi, who is deep within his suite's bedsheets, with his prescription glasses resting on the top of his nearby nightstand.-

-The hanging doorknocker hits the wood of Takebayashi's entrance multiple times.-

   Takebayashi: *Huh?* Opens up and rubs his eyes a bit before putting on his glasses and moving to the door. He opens it up to find that Okuda, still clad in her own pajamas, was the one who has been knocking.* "Okuda-san? What's going on?"

   Okuda: "Takebayashi-kun... The moment is upon us now."

   Takebayashi: *Refocuses his specs in confusion.* "Come again?"

   Okuda: "We may be facing a lifetime of queries like that in this subject, Takebayashi-kun. It would be benign to be prepared to address at least a portion of them right now." *Walks up to him, looking up as she gets closer and he gets bigger.*

   Takebayashi: "Uh, that's great; how about you begin by addressing this one?"

   Okuda: *Looks puzzled.* "I'm referring to our big biochemical work."

   Takebayashi: *Beat.* "Oh..."

-Later, during breakfast...-

   Kato: *Finishes sipping his orange juice.* "Eh? You two want to go back to the R&D department that made the Erebus and Achlys armors?"

   Takebayashi/Okuda: "Most correct."

   Kato: "Do you guys need a large experimental room for a personal project of yours? We're only," *Checks his watch.* "A third into our Summer break and all, so I wouldn't expect it to be college-related."

   Okuda: "Also verified. You obviously can reminisce on the moment that you dealt with Takebayashi-kun here's frenzied mother, yes?"
Kato: *Remembers that he had helped to ensure Takebayashi would not be pulled out of the AssUniv Program because his overprotective mother did not want him "consorting" with the allegedly (and legitimately) dangerous Karasuma.* "I do recall that. So, the two of you will be getting a head start on the project to create a universal blood type?"

Takebayashi: "Well-

Kato: "That's such an amazing project, by the way. Lord knows a person like me, who is a sac of rare O-type blood, could really use something like that."

Okuda: "But of course; all of the costly conflicts you and your syndicate partake in take a heavy toll, right?"

Kato: "Indeed, but I was thinking more about... When I start re-researching neurosurgery to apply micromachines and mentally-controlled kinetics into an ailing individual. O-types would be exempt because any excess blood they can get isn't always there."

Okuda: *Refocuses her glasses as well.* "Oh..."

Takebayashi: "Does that mean we can briefly use your laboratories' utilities?"

Kato: "What? Oh, of course. I'll phone in Ramon, the current rotating head of the department in Kyoto, that you're coming. You better prepare your stuff now, and I'll drive you on over."

Okuda: "Sounds like a plan."

-After around an hour to get everything ready, Kato and the two got into the former's Porsche Macan and drove over to the same brick-built front that AssUniv went to earlier to meet the KAM Suits' co-creators.-

Kato: *Along with Okuda and Takebayashi, goes through the five subtle glass doors that act as multiple stages of high-level security, such as malpractice drug detection and facial scan. They finally reach an elevator on the other side.* "Alright; the biological subdivision is on the eighth floor."

Takebayashi: "And by that, you mean eight as an Excess-III code like last time we were here, and we're really going to the fifth floor?"

Kato: "Yes."

Okuda: "And that the button we press in the machine to take us to that level is not the one with a five on it, but rather the one that has the vague stray marks resembling the shape of an upside-down five, which could instead be interpreted as a convenient lightning bolt?"

Kato: "Very good - you both are getting this real well. I'll come pick you guys up at the end of the day. Good luck with your research, you two." *Leaves the way they came, while taking a huff from his silver vaporizer.*

Takebayashi: *Refocuses his glasses.* "Okuda-san, ready to meet some gangster scientists and engineers?"
Okuda: "Most certainly." *They both call for the elevator, and get in.*

-After a brief, but meticulous process to utilize the true controls of the elevator later, the two bespectacled members of AssUniv walk out of the vertically-moving box and walk into a sterilizing chamber, and then into the laboratories itself. Five coated people, four male and one female, were there to greet them upon the formers' arrival.-

Alvarez: *Identified by his recognizable facial features, and the two of them eyeing the patch above his coat's chest pocket.* "Ah, and these must be the boss' friends." *He, along with the other four, place a fist onto the center of their chest and then bow.*

Okuda/Takebayashi: *Also bow, albeit without the syndicate gesture.* "Nice to meet you again, Mr. Alvarez, and your partners."

Alvarez: "Aw, have nice of you to remember me!" *Turns to his cohorts.* "See what I mean, everybody? Nice young people, the Boss has allied."

Kendrick: *Her tag could be seen in the same place; if the acronym was to be believed, she was the secondary leader of the research division here.* "It's not as rare as you all think. Japan's demographics just doesn't have that many teenagers-to-young adults, all of you."

Cain: *Turns over to Royce and Heller, all of whom had identification patches as well.* "Then they still have a lot of bad apples."

Royce: "For the generation that have faced the Lost Score head-on for most of their lives, I think they got out rather fine."

Heller: "Yeah; who says some cynicism is bad?"

Kendrick: *Snickers.* "One who has that kind of optimistic commentary."

Alvarez: "This is why us chemists, physicists, and such are not politicians, everyone."

Okuda: *It seems as though we are once more reminded of how idiosyncratic Kato-kun's legion is, much like himself.*

Takebayashi: *Seriously? I woke up this morning today believing I would come across white-hat criminals engaging in a philosophical conversation of the Japanese population's distribution of age...* *Refocuses his glasses.* That was good, right?

Okuda: *Satisfactory.*

Alvarez: *Refocuses, and turns back to the two AssUniv student-assassins.* "I suppose now, the two of you want to get started with this big project of yours, right?"

Heller: "What even is this revolutionary assignment, huh?"

Takebayashi: "Um..."

Okuda: "It's not that we don't trust individuals Kato-kun trusts, but we would like to remain the most specific details of our lives' work undisclosed."
Royce: *Fiddles with a set of stringed fidget balls.* "Oh, we can understand and respect that. We all have our own personal works behind us that we wanted to or wish we wanted to keep a secret too."

Takebayashi: "What? Why?"

Kendrick: *Steps in between them.* "Now now, there is little time to have smalltalk, even when the day has only just started." *Turns to the duo.* "Let me show you to your workstation. When you need a little bit of our collaboration, don't hesitate to walk on over and ask for us, okay?"

Okuda/Takebayashi: "Of course; thank you." *They begin following the vice-head to their set of desks.*

-For the next six hours until their division's lunchtime at two P.M., Okuda and Takebayashi were hard at work, deciphering the odd models and encryptions behind the data their former teacher Korosensei had created, providing a base challenge to get them ready for the samples within. They had gotten through the first two levels of the codification and were granted access to the first two models to be put into biolab simulations. The latest experiment proved to be an hour-long, lengthy procedure, which they decided to wait away the time by having lunch with the other biochemists.-

Alvarez: *Looks across to see two other subdivisions of the Kato Family's R&D on downtime - the Ecologists and the Systems Theorists.* "You know, you can tell those two groups over there," *Alludes to them, which the rest of the Biochemists take notice of subtly.* "...Are what they are working for, just by what they eat."

Cain: "And how is that, Cap?"

Takebayashi: "Could it be because the Theorists know exactly what they want, and how much of it, for the next five years of their lives have already been planned out by themselves, which is represented by the divisions of the platters they make through their green beans?"

Okuda: "And the Ecologists are only having fruits and vegetables so that they know their inner processes can handle the work environment at its toughest upcoming interval from two to four?"

Alvarez: *Looks at them with amusement.* "Hey, you two hit it on the dot!"

Kendrick: "I'm impressed you're keeping up with us. Though that makes sense if you're keeping up with our Boss."

Cain: "Damn Boss sees way too much out of each and every one of us... Huge impressions, probably begun by his own huge achievements."

Okuda: "Then it seems like high impressions between you two is a mutually-led path."

Heller: "It is, though our stuff couldn't compare to what he did. Wait, not even - what he did for us alone is incomparable."

Takebayashi: "That couldn't be completely true; tell us you biggest accomplishments. We can bet they have some weight on him."

Royce: "That's only because Boss allows it to weigh on him; never needs to, because we're always on his side."
Alvarez: "But our works do have their own good stories. I'll start with mine. As you know, I'm a former DEA Agent in the United States, and I was to be disgraced after I took down a bunch of my fellow partners when I realized they're on a Cartel's payroll and allowing the drugs being smuggled into the North. Now, the reason that was happening was because they believed I'd be too distracted working on making a hybridization of virtually all types of transport containers with dissolving, heat-sensitive signatures. Under infrared sight, they will give off special hues when they come in contact with most popular illegal drugs."

Takebayashi: "And you finished it?"

Alvarez: "Oh Hell yeah I did. After they ousted me, of course. Oh well; means nobody knows we got the better tech, that will actually be able to help millions, if not tens of. But still, if the Boss didn't give me the chance to complete it, then it wouldn't have happened. That's why he has a one up on me most of all."

Okuda/Takebayashi: *Look amazed.*

Kendrick: "I guess I'm next; former intern at CERN, right here."

Okuda: "CERN!?"

Kendrick: "Oh yes. Before working primarily in, y'know, biochemistry, I was merely a Scot girl who had high hopes for working on the Large Hadron Collider. Accidentally speaking out of turn during a conference there mooted those chances, however. But before that happened, I was deeply learned in higher-energy particle physics and their many applications. Of particular interest to me is the ability to make many accommodating, artificial valves to ease the processes of heart surgery. Regular heart surgery for that matter. Well, what about those people who are oriented the other way, and the valves are completely reversed? I put into thought the ability to not leave out the hundred-thousands that still matter by creating a possibility that they too may partake in a heart surgery, using donors of either side, with no more risks than a regular one. Now, I've only met a handful of people who needed such an operation before, but I tell you, I'm definitely bringing this to light once the world is fully ready."

Takebayashi: Wow...

Cain: "Am I up? Okay - NASA. Researcher on climatology, because we all know astronauts and space-industry scientists need to know pretty much everything in order to live all the way up there. Anyways, the news was given bad information roughly two years ago; we didn't just find out Venus was at one point inhabitable at the time, we knew for ages! We just didn't want to say it aloud, because there was nothing we could do to make it habitable again. Well, I've been working on terrestrial machines that allowed climate control according to our preferential atmospherics. I unfortunately had to back out of the initial model however when an assistant of mine had his mouse accidentally overslide, resulting in a calculation in a simulation run to error and the whole process blew up in our faces. But, I rebuilt. Never looked back. I can proudly say I contributed a good amount to our survival, on another planet if not this one."

Okuda: "Extraordinary."

Royce: "NRDC researcher here. Mine wasn't so much, especially compared to these guys. I just proposed an idea to Judges that we could mass-transport our emitting carbon-dioxide gases to the forests that unanimously want it, to make their trees grow. How, you may ask? Solidifying
them completely, using zero-point energy integration method to retain their original condition and composition no matter what; you kids know that stuff from the KAM AtTac Suits Boss made, right?"

Takebayashi/Okuda: *Both nod.*

Royce: "Yeah. So, it's easy to carry our CO2 across great distances without misplacing it. It's unlike the containers that you see in those soda-making machines or airsoft pistols, because the air is solidified by case-only, so if you accidentally break the seal, it won't get freezing cold. Much safer to transport for that reason too. And we can more easily cut our carbon footprints with it. But... Social scientists find natural scientists maniacal, so I was shamed out of the courtroom. The NRDC, they're nice and good people, but they can't interfere in a huge judge's decision, so they didn't. Whatever though; I'm free to pursue my dream now."

Takebayashi/Okuda: *Both notably look down.*

Heller: "And finally there's me; one of many of Elevate Aircraft's aerospace engineers... Before I turned to biology, of course. In case you're wondering how I made the transition, I should note I came from a family of pharmacists, and I just wanted a brief stint of distinction; something to call my own for a brief moment. Anyways, the company was wondering for a long while how they were going to operate an "Uber of the Blues" project inexpensively. Well, to make short-length air fare an easily-affordable commodity, you need to make your jets with inexpensive, yet reliable parts. And for the life of me, I don't know why it didn't come up earlier, but VTOLs and purely-electric power makes a whole lot of damn sense! The organization of many small-capacity passenger flights to cut the time of transportation by land from two hours to just sixteen minutes is upon us, and I shared a piece of the glory on it."

Okuda/Takebayashi: "Huh..."

Kendrick: *Checks her watch.* "Uh oh, looks like that the end of our off-duty time. We better finish up and resume our projects."

Biochemists: "Right."

-Okuda and Takebayashi at least tried to resume their collaborative efforts, but their concentration took a big dive. Having heard all of the revolutionary achievements of the Kato Family members in front of them, they became overwhelmed.-

Okuda/Takebayashi: *Are standing almost frozen as they hold up their instruments.* "...

Okuda: That's only a very small sample of Kato's criminal syndicate...

Takebayashi: And yet they've done some legendary stuff.

Okuda/Takebayashi: How could our work even compare? To theirs? To the rest of the Kato Family?

Alvarez: *Appears from behind them, clutching their close shoulders between them.* "How goes the work, you two?"

Okuda/Takebayashi: "!!"
Alvarez: *Laughs.* "It seems even very well-trained assassins can be surprised easily at times. Now, what do we have here..." *Looks over some of the work the two have done.* "What kind of information is this? numerical and logistical encryption?"

Okuda: "Our... Information broker is a bit of a paranoid..."

Alvarez: "Well... It seems with the things you were able to decrypt so far, you've unraveled some good stuff. And it seems from the antigen-removal process that this is not only to create a universal blood type, but also to make non-universal, well, universal. That's great!"

Takebayashi: *Takes a second look at the compound diagrams, noticing that there was never any instance of anything related to blood on the drawings.* "Wait, how did you-?"

Alvarez: "I called up the Boss. He filled me in on what you guys were doing." *Crosses his arms.* "I guess I could see why you would want to keep it a secret; nobody could steal your idea and so on, like it did to a lot of Kato Family members, and probably tens of thousands, if not hundreds of, of other brilliant people out there in the world."

Okuda: "Well..."

Alvarez: "You probably felt a little less-inclined to tell others when you heard just who were there to help you huh? We got a forest saver, a multi-functional heart surgeon, the ultimate anti-drug inventor and so on. 'How do you compete with that,' right?"

Okuda/Takebayashi: "..."

Alvarez: "Well, you don't."

Takebayashi: *Refocuses his glasses.* "What?"

Alvarez: "This is one more thing I learned from being with my Boss, and because he learned it first, he will always be the one ahead. There are good leaders, there are better leaders. Kato is a great leader, but there's obviously a reason why he isn't the Chairman of the Akamine Clan. So he's not the best. But when it comes to leading others, you don't need to be the best; there's no competition between leaders. There's just the leader, and the led. And the led need to be led by the leader, above all."

Okuda/Takebayashi: *Both look up with realization.*

Alvarez: "Now if I were to compare that to our biochemistry work, I'd say that it would be impractical to gauge a CO2 transporter with a universal blood-type. Tell me now, who would do that? Who that really matters to you? Instead, the people would just properly take both innovations and use them, because they now, or will, need it. Maybe more need one invention more than the other; so what? You helped a population - that's good enough. You helped the leader, of innovation."

Okuda/Takebayashi: "..."

Alvarez: "Maybe my Boss could give you a better version of that speech; he tends to be able to do that. But I'm here, and I guess you can always talk to him to get one out of him. Ah well; I gotta get back to my work with a cross-species genetics project with Lieutenant Kelso. Bye." *Leaves.*
Okuda: *He's correct, as you're aware.*

Takebayashi: *Right. We need only prove ourselves this is something worth doing. We can't control who can take us up on our service.*

Okuda: *Then let's make it something they'll definitely take notice of.* *The two of them continue to work - much harder than ever before.*

-By the time at the evening in which Kato came to drive them back to Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub and cool down alongside the rest of their friends, Okuda and Takebayashi had gotten through ten pages of hidden revelations and are currently putting into motion three experiments with them. There was still almost five-hundred-sixty pages remaining that could allow them to even greenlight a mass-produced version of this universal blood, and another roughly five-hundred-eighty pages in order to perfect it as an indistinguishable line of life-saving products for the next century... But Okuda and Takebayashi know it will all be worth it in the end - this will be their biggest mark on the world between just the two of them.*-
Chapter Summary

Taking a break from the legacy AssClass members, this chapter highlights a bit of what Kato used to do before financing the AssUniv Program and befriending a bunch of people his age. This includes dealing with many people much older than him in missions overseas to stop international incidents and crises.

-"Get Me Power" by Mega NRG Man plays on the loudspeakers.-

-It would not be a regular AssUniv night if it wasn't spent at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub somehow or another. In tonight's case, it was working a full-time shift, with all of AssUniv donning respective uniforms and performing their own specialist tasks around the nightclub.-

-Yep, nothing was too out of the ordinary for the student-assassins. But for Kato...-

    Kato: *Sits on one side of his VIP Platform's office while Yada sits across from him. They are both looking over a folder of papers that came from a looped-string folder.* "I see... This is how much they're investing in the up and coming Middle-Eastern cuisine that is," *Checks his watch.* "Now in 2016 trending in the mainland?"

    Yada: *Slides one paper across the table over to him.* "Yep. Most likely, it'll be a limited setback, but we'll still see a drop in attendance and therefore sales for a few months. It's also too late to start adhering to it ourselves and risk looking like copycats and lose even more big supporters."

    Kato: "What about alcohol-related expenditures?"

    Yada: "Now that Summer is hitting mid-season, patrons are starting to become more conscious about their cash, saving it for, well, other things that bolster their no-school entertainment. Wine sales will dip a bit too."

    Kato: "I see... No way to make more this month than last, is there?"

    Yada: "Well, no."

    Kato: "Which is why..."

    Yada: *Looks up at him, smiling.* "We open up that subscription plan, granting loyal customers considerable benefits such as discounted tabs, multiples sign-ins, and priority parking. And by doing that, most club enthusiasts of our appropriate demographic will be reminded why there's none better than Nyurifu Rikkyo."

    Kato: *Snaps his fingers and points at her.* "You're getting very good at this - I love that."

    Yada: "Well, it's only my life career." *Giggles.*
Kato: "*laughs a bit to that too while inhaling on his steel vaporizer.*

Yada: "Hey, I only just now noticed, you're not smoking anymore; you've been huffing a pure-vapor pen."

Kato: "Oh, this?" *spins it around the fingers on his right hand.* "I was thinking of trying to be a Millenial for once. It's not so bad."

Yada: "No offense, Kato-kun, but you have a long way to go to being an average Millenial. But, all of us do. Aside from the year we're born, I doubt anyone can give a unanimously accurate description of one."

Kato: "Is that so? Well I got," *checks his watch.* "time to figure it out."

-But before any more could be said, Kato's flip-phone vibrated on the table they were working on.-

Kato: "Hm?" *picks it up, whips it open and places it up to his ear.* "Hello? Miho-san? Uh-huh..."

Yada: "..." *sits attentively to the conversation.*

Kato: "Gotcha. Let me contact you later on the answer. Yes, I know that's very atypical of me, but there is more to consider now. Goodbye." *hangs up and replaces his phone on a clean section on the table.*

Yada: "Miho called, Kato-kun? What was the information?"

Kato: "Oh, she was notifying me of a mission; like the rest of my blood-siblings, I've partaken in a great number of them myself. It seems it's my queue again, but I don't think I'll go for it; I'd have to leave the country for a," *checks his watch.* "few crucial days and such."

Yada: "Hey, if you don't want to go to that, that's fine, but at least be clear about why. And if it's because of us, don't let it be."

Kato: "Looks at her.* "Yada-san?"

Yada: "You've been acting a little stranger lately; many of us are noticing it. Yeah, you've been changing to interact better with us, and that's great. But you still need to be you at least once in a while too; how about you go through with one of those big missions again, to keep your tastes varied?"

Kato: "Yada-san... Is this because AssUniv, including yourself, needs a break from me?"

Yada: "I- Well, some time away wouldn't kill us either."

Kato: "Alright then; just the push I need. I presume I can entrust the care of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub to you while I'm gone, yes?"

Yada: "Of course." *salutes like a Kato Family member and bows.*

Kato: "*smiles to that.*"
Kato called it a night before the shift was done, leaving the rest of the time to Yada, and went back to the Hyatt Regency to prepare and rest up.

Kato: *Speed-dials Hyun (after having told Miho he will be participating) while looking through several profiles on his study desk, which included Miho and Satoshi, as well as Ralph Dalsing, a former GSG-9 Sniper/Mechanic, Giles Chevrier, a former French DGSE nautical engineer, Arianna Bishop, a former MI6 Logistics Quartermaster, and... Kazuhiro Kato, Kazuhiko's older, identical cousin. When the ringing ends,* "Hyun."

Hyun: "Hey, Kato-kun! Feels good, getting back in the game for a little bit, hm?"

Kato: "Hyun, what would you know about being back on the field?"

Hyun: "Alright alright, you smartass. You want to know more about this mission now, right?"

Kato: "Indeed. What do you got?"

Hyun: "You know of the fabled substance, Red Mercury yes?"

Kato: *Becomes more attentive upon hearing the term.* "Red Mercury’? A nuclear substance created during the Cold War era, in order to enrich and conceal the nuclear signatures of Uranium isotope with various Mercury compounds such as fulminate, such that it is impossible to find through any second or thirdhand means?"

Hyun: "That's the one. And it's no secret that the Chinese Triad had been looking for the stash of one within their own grounds, correct?"

Kato: "Obviously not."

Hyun: "Well, there is a courier for Malaysian intelligence that holds the encrypted location of the Red Mercury source, put there by the Soviet Union during the build-up to their belligerence with the United States. Naturally, we are to assume it is somewhere around the sites that the Chinese excavation workers have recently, in like two years, have been uncovering, down near the coast and next to , but that's a large haystack for a needle to hide in. This courier's bag of content is the key to finding it."

Kato: "And you want my team and I to find it, or else the doomsday clock moves up?"

Hyun: *laughs.* "You know me so well."

Kato: "Would you like to take a look at it once it has been retrieved, before it is all turned into nuclear batteries?"

Hyun: "You've got to be kidding me..."

Kato: "I was; it's a joke man. I know I'd be giving you a heart attack to make you see it up close."

Hyun: "No! Oh God, no! I was talking about the other part! Nuclear batteries!?" *Sighs.* "Actually, you know what? That's okay - I'm overreacting here. Just find the combined device and make it... Non-explodable. In exchange, as you know, another favor from me to you, and a log of
the Tanimoto Chair's private phone conversations from the past three months."

Kato: "Very good. I'll be in touch upon mission completion."

Hyun: "Good luck, man." *Hangs up.*

Kato: *Closes his flip-phone and takes out his dual Kimber Warrior II pistols, inspecting them in preparation for any need of combat in the upcoming assignment. He then goes into a small closet and breaks a hole through one side of the plastered wall to gather an ammunition box filled with many spare, loaded magazines for .45 calibers.* "..."

-The next day, early in the morning, Kato left early, before even Karasuma and Irina were assembling the student-assassins. He got out his Audi A8 Full-Size 2017, and drove all the way to the private airfield, where a Boeing Globemaster III, and five very varied individuals were standing about, waiting for him.-

Kato: *Gets out of his A8, parking it within the aerocraft lockup, and walking outside, Thule duffle bag strapped across his torso.*

Kazuhiro: *Wearing a similar duffel bag in backpack form, is sitting on a large wooden crate of gear before he recognizes his younger cousin walking over, in which he jumps off and walks up to him too.* "Kazuhiko!

Kato: *They both meet at a middle ground... Looking at each other like mirror images.* "Kazuhiro." *They both then hook their arms across the back of each others' necks as an affectionate gesture.* "Older cousin, are you sure about joining this mission?"

Kazuhiro: "Hey, just because I'm not as good as you, doesn't mean you can keep me in the back." *Thumb-flips his Kato Family emblem pin into the palm of his hand.* "I'm born into this business, much like you; I'm going to do my part."

Kato: "Very well... Cuz."

Miho: *Goes between them and pulls them even closer together.* "Don't worry, Kato-ani; neither of you are going to get caught in any serious shit, if I got a say in it."

Satoshi: *Takes the handle of his duffel bag and throws it up into the air, before letting it rest across his right shoulder.* "The same goes for me, Boss. I'd advise exercising extra caution this time around, since you haven't partaken in these type of assignments in a while. Right, Chevrier-san?"

Chevrier: *The blond, quiff-styled with shadow Frenchman laughed a bit.* "You can say that, but I doubt Boss will just kick back and let us take care of it on his queue."

Kato: "Hell no. I'm going to prove to all of you I haven't gotten soft after staying in Japan all this," *Checks his watch.* "Seemingly long time."

Bishop: *A British woman with braided, medium-length copper hair claps her hands together.* "Sounds like a splendid idea."

Dalsing: *The German hazel-haired sniper crosses his arms.* "Expect nothing less from the Boss."
Satoshi: "No less."

Miho: "I see we're all very eager now. Let's get everything loaded up then; it's a decent time to Malaysia."

-Satoshi takes the pilot's seat while everyone else sits back in the loading area awaiting their arrival at the international destination.-

Kazuhiro: *Is leaning most of his upper back onto the inner hull of the aircraft, one foot up on the platform most of them are sitting on, and all while holding onto a securing tether hanging above with one hand.* "Yo, Kazuhiko!"

Kato: *Closes his flip-phone accordingly.* "Yes?"

Kazuhiro: *Sits properly.* "When did you start breaking words like you did earlier?"

Kato: *After a second's thought, recognizes that he means when he called Kazuhiro "Cuz."* "Oh, well, just a side effect of being with some new company who frequent similar traits. It's not demeaning or insulting at all, is it? I could stop if-"

Kazuhiro: *Laughs.* "No, not at all, cousin. It's just the first I've ever heard you say that. Not bad, maybe actually good really. Lord knows my father has been waiting forever for you to actually cut loose and do stuff like that. I tried to remain indifferent, but I won't lie it's nice to actually see you smile for something other than a job well done."

Kato: *Scratches the back of his head.* "Well, when you put it like that, you make me sound like the ultimate workaholic."

Kato Family sans Miho: "That's because you are!"

Kato: *Half-facepalms.*

Miho: "But it's not like it was a bad thing to begin with either."

Satoshi: "I fear he may be outgrowing us..."

Kato: "Really funny, Satoshi-san. Fat chance."

Kazuhiro: "Alright everyone, stop bullying my kin. How about we discuss, eh..."

Kato/Kazuhiro: "Our last mission to Malaysia?"

Miho: "Oh, that was a great one!"

Chevrier: "That was before me; what happened?"

Dalsing: I wasn't there at the time, but if I recall Boss correctly, it concerned a spoonful of SU-gar, some rigging tape, a fragmented .45 caliber bullet... And of course, Miho-san kicking hundreds of asses."

-After a roughly four hour ride on the Globemaster III's cruising speed, Satoshi directs the aircraft
towards a privately-owned airfield on the nation's mainland peninsula (whose owners were paid off discreetly to allow their descent), just several dozen miles away from the capital. A Toyota 4Runner was arranged for them right off the walkway to the streets nearby, allowing the seven Kato Family members to drive the rest of the way in.-

-Now in Kuala Lampur, the Kato Family all check into their two hotel suites (Chevrier, Bishop, and Satoshi for one, while Miho, Dalsing, and the Katos for the other) across the hall from each other, and get all of their "tourist gear" ready for an afternoon surveying the area.-

Dalsing: *Wearing a cap and shades while also carrying a fully-stored backpack, goes up to the viewing deck floor of the Petronas Twin Towers alongside a tour group. As soon as he can, he walks over to the windows facing the North side and takes a quick glance of the busy interconnecting streets creating a makeshift perimeter of the Petaling Street. Even though the mere distance horizontally was roughly three kilometers, Dalsing witnessed it with the clarity of a hawk... Though if he needs to focus more, a pair of Nikon binoculars don't hurt either. while holding it to his eyes, he whispered into his right earpod.* "'Eagle' has view of the field. Are all of you set?"

Chevrier: *Flips two ringgits to a (female) street vendor in exchange for a ripe gala apple. As he cannot speak Malay reliably, he merely snaps his fingers and points to her as a sign of confirmed payment. It seems to work.* "'Breton' scoping the outsides on the South. Bored as fuck, will add."

Satoshi: *Is sitting down while taking a sip from his straw in a cup full of lemon iced tea.* "'Raptor' securing the North side of the circumference."

Bishop: *Is actively typing on her Lenovo laptop in a Starbucks.* "'Mistress' is good; Eagle, I've also activated the micro-cameras on those two's glasses. Their visual feed should be available to you... Now."

Kato/Kazuhiro: *Posing as identical twin (siblings) with matching glasses designs, they are traveling through the bazaar, making sure to explore it inside and out... When they are not being hounded by Malaysian regulars (mostly female) who find their first real connection to "Megane Anime twins."* "'Caster'/Pollux' on-scene."

Dalsing: *Holds out his phone to view the vertical split-screen between the two's glasses-cameras.* "Yep, I can see that."

Kato: *Scopes around slowly, letting Dalsing and himself see all there is to see.* "Let us know if you want us to get a closer look. I doubt that's necessary, but nothing should be left to chance."

Kazuhiro: "Such a shame, you not taking the time to look at the rest of the capital from all the way up there."

Dalsing: "Maybe next time, Pollux. When I retire."

Chevrier: "Caster, do we have decent-enough retirement plans for that?"

Kato: "It is now."

Miho: "Best Caster." *Is watching the main entrance of the Petaling Street flea market from a secluded alleyway... The same alleyway which apparently holds the collectively unconscious entirety of Kuala Lumpur's second most-dangerous street gang.* "Anyway, 'Tiger' is in position."
Kato: "Very good; we're all netted together. We have just about an hour to get whatever other data we can from this reconnaissance before we should retreat. So let's get to it."

Kato Family: "Roger!"

-After that hour passed by, the team did end up leaving their posts, having collected all that they needed to. They then returned to their hotel, where they had a little time for R&R before the next morning's mission.-

Kazuhiro: *Holding onto his bottle of Guinness beer.* "...And that's when my old man had to apologize to a group of female Malaysian high-schoolers, the hard way - all because he complimented their ability with English!" *Laughs.*

Dalsing: "Bow and all?"

Kazuhiro: "Bow and all!"

Kato: "My uncle would do anything to keep good rep everywhere." *Rubs his forehead on the top of his hand holding his Guinness can. He then looks over to his older cousin with this same position.* "How would you keep in line someone who is always keeping in line in every other regard?"

Kazuhiro: "Be more of me and less of you, 'cuz." *Laughs again.*

Miho: *Standing on the same side of Kazuhiro, able to see Kato look over the latter like that, and once again is reminded of how similar Kazuhiho's traits and behavioristics are to Kazuto's. She then begins hovering slightly towards him, until...*

Satoshi: *Standing right next to her, pulls on her wrist back.* You have a husband to go back to, Miho-san.

Miho: *Refocuses embarrassingly.* "No, that can't be all to it."

Kato: "Miho-san, you know I can't say 'no' to kin."

Satoshi: "It seems our Boss cannot defeat the 'keep in line.' So now he's joining it."

Chevrier: *Ironic toned.* "Turncoat!"

Kato: *Jokingly clutches his grandfather's dog tags and makes an exaggerated pout and displeased expression.* "Don't you dare..."

-The rest of the night went about similarly. The next day arrived before long, and the team returned to their posts (save for Dalsing, who now took his Shock-Out fed SIG SG 556 DMR to an abandoned complex's discreet window).-

Chevrier: *Wearing a unique, striped fedora, he moves up to the main entrance of the market, with both biological Katos watching the inside from above, while Satoshi and Miho are on the floor level with the street. He immediately identifies the contact by noticing the courier's bag he has equipped, and using an image on his phone given to him by Hyun earlier, and joins the flood of people right next to them.* "Hey look out, man!" *His watch, turned inside out, produces a small
little spike pointed toward him. His arm with the wrist needle then pulls over to the contact's far side, thereby saving him from being run over by an oncoming bicyclist from behind.*

Contact: "Oh, thank you, sir."

Chevrier: "No problem, man." *They both then go into Petaling Street, in which he begins noticing that the contact is beginning to feel a little woozy. Chevrier then retracts the needle, which lets out a few stray drops of a mysterious liquid.* "Hey, man, you don't look so good."

Contact: *His free hand goes up to his forehead, checking how heavy his upper body feels.*

Chevrier: *Begins orientating the contact to a bench close to the main entrance of the bazaar.* "Take a breather, why don't ya?" *Sets him down on the bench, taking the bag with the Red Mercury's location off his shoulders. He then covers the contact's face with his fedora.* "You'll be good as new in a few hours, huh?" *Bids him adieu and begins walking toward the other exit.* "Got the intel; moving towards the extraction point." *But before he can reach that exit, he immediately begins turning around towards another.*

Miho: *Notices the erratic behavior and looks over that way too.* "Oh, we should have known..."

Satoshi: *Looks the same way as well.* "Royal Malaysia Police. Here to defuse a bombastic situation before it even can happen."

Dalsing: *Keeps his scope focused on the outside.* "Could the Contact have been meeting up with someone within that bureau?"

Bishop: "We'd have no reason to believe otherwise."

Chevrier: "Pray to God they haven't fortified all side-routes..."

Kazuhiro: *Is power-walking away with Kato, after realizing they have been detected by a certain group.* "Guys, that's not all we need to be concerned with; we're not alone up here either."

Miho: "More federal police, Caster and Pollux?"

Kato: "No... Triads." *He then looks over subtly to his older cousin; they both nod to each other, from which Kazuhiro takes out his service-issue Glock 18, and shoots a blank up to the sky; everyone not within the three named factions begin scattering in panic as a result. The Triads following the "twins" end up startled by the display, allowing Kato to sweep back, taking out one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols fed also with Shock-Out filled magazines, to take all of them down.*

Chevrier: *Upon hearing the noise of the gunshots upstairs, he immediately makes a run for the outside, only to find more RMP officers barring it. With no way to go back either, Chevrier assesses his situation and finds a means to go further up the building, first by jumping onto a vendor's ice-cream freezer, vaulting onto the wooden tent of a clothes dealer, and finally a leap of faith to the window sill of the second floor. The Officers realize the parkour-esque escape and begin rallying to cover all the stairways and elevators he could use to get down.*

Kato/Kazuhiro: *The latter is ahead in a sprint while the former continues shooting back and knocking out Triads that chase them. Kazuhiro ends up having to handle two of his own when he
nearly runs into a lariat by one of them that were already in front. He manages to duck under it and engage them both with dual Arnis sticks (that he picked up after a tour of the Philippines with his family). He blocks one hook from the other and then whacks both of their shins, followed by synchronized strikes to their chests, then head. The final strike even makes them butt heads, knocking each other down for the count. Kato runs over to him, giving a brief look of satisfaction for his older cousin's competence, and then they continue to run off, until they notice something a tad peculiar...*

Chevrier: *He runs by the two Katos and continues to zoom past, as the RMP officers continue to give pursuit (Kazuhiro and Kato manage to hide their weapons before the agency's personnel notice them). He continues to go upstairs, taking down a few more straggling and leading officers along the way until he gets to the rooftop of the establishment, and without any more room to run.*

RMP Officer: "FREEZE!" *He, along with a team of three other officers, train their SIG Sauer P226 semiautomatic pistols on the former DGSE.*

Chevrier: *Holds his hands up to surrender after turning around.* "Alright, you win. Want this?" *Begins unslinging the knapsack from across his shoulders.* "Take it." *Throws it over to one of the RMP. He then falls back through the window he just had a worry about... Which the closest police officer realizes is a four-story drop onto an already formed stunt-mattress. The DGSE soldier pops the gadget, disallowing them to follow, which irritates them madly when they realize that the knapsack is empty! He laughs as he runs off into the nearby street crowd, making it impossible for the RMP officers to fire on him.*

Kazuhiro: *Is shown to be holding the small, circular strongbox that was inside the courier's bag's second flap, which he then replaces into his jacket's zipper pocket. He runs alongside his younger cousin out to the deck of the market and plan to jump back down to street level... Until Triads nearby that sector of the district find them and open fire. Both he and Kato duck down and briefly shoot back, until Miho and Satoshi are shown to disable them in their fierce defense of their Boss and family.*

RMP Officers: *Their investigation takes them outside, in which they quickly decipher that the "twins" are involved with the crime sequence.* "HEY YOU TWO! STOP RIGHT THERE!

Kato/Kazuhiro: *They both immediately jump off the deck, landing onto the service eighteen-wheeler truck's containers. A simple slide-off the side allows them to enter the first floor again and they begin running off towards Miho and Satoshi, who have arranged a less-conspicuous route towards the extraction point.*

Kato Family: *With Kato, Kazuhiro, Miho, Satoshi, and Chevrier all together, the cover fire of Dalsing (who has picked off the four officers closest to catching up with his team), and Bishop, who has piggybacked CCTV control to monitor government-vehicle and badge activity and supports her team's progressing escape.*

Bishop: "All of you! there is a delivery truck load-up happening in a nearby parking garage! One didn't have room and is filling a floor below; hijack it and flee with the cover of the line!"

Kato: "Roger!" *They proceed through an illuminated alley, where two cops were there to greet them; Kazuhiro and Kato slide down low to avoid the aiming trajectory of their Vektor SP1 pistols, and then clothesline low to trip them. Miho and Satoshi follow close behind and punt the top of their heads, knocking them out as they follow the Katos; Chevrier is right behind.*
Kato Family: *When they reach the garage and head up to the second floor, they find the deliverymen replenishing their stock. Swiftly, they all confront the tan-dressed men, knocking them all down for the count, and then stashing them on the nearby staircase while they commandeer their vehicle. Satoshi drives while the other four hide within the storage area, joining the line of other trucks. By the time the RMP servicemen and vehicles arrive at the last known location, they are beyond perplexed as to where the suspects ran off to.*

-Several minutes later...-

Kato: *Puts his hand to the earpod in his right ear.* "Eagle, Mistress, we have successfully evaded Malaysia's government pursuit; Satoshi will find an appropriate time to break off from the group and proceed to our Port Klang escape point."

Bishop: "Very good; Me and Eagle will rendezvous with you later on in China. Have a nice nautical journey, Boss."

Kato: "Will do." *Turns to the rest of his team.* "Cuz, got the box still?"

Kazuhiro: *Unzips and pulls it out.* "Oh yeah."

Miho: "Great job, ani and Boss. But this is not over yet."

Chevrier: "China, here we come."
In the part two of this standalone story, Kato, his cousin, and their team have successfully acquired the locator for the almighty weapon they must find (and disable). But even after they do make claim to it, there must always be trouble...

-The team of Miho Akiyama, Satoshi Tsuchiya, Giles Chevrier, Kazuhiro and Kazuhiko Kato all make their way by Lazzara motor boat to a less-recognized coast on the edge of China facing the South Sea. As it was not too inhabited and without any well-recognized landmarks (especially as the day turned to the evening), there was one person there to show them where to dock the transport... And subsequently discard to remove any evidence of their arrival.

Kato: *While everyone else watches the seacraft sink deeper into the water, he bows to the new individual.* "Good to see you again, Peja."

Peja: *Bows.* "The feeling is mutual, Boss."

Chevrier: "Wait, Captain Breghevan? Former Nepalese Gurkha?"

Peja: *Cracks a grin.* "From Hong Kong. The group is native to there, but remember that they are full of mercs from all over; like a foreign legion in the Western European nations."

Miho: "But after having to drop due to a a bad eye, he became a Captain for this syndicate alongside Satoshi and I, offering his great knowledge of human and physical geography into our nice little mix of science, engineering, social studies and whatnot."

Kato: *Inhales on his vaporizer.* "Which is why he's the one helping us find this specific coast; one the People's Republic armies and organized crime most likely won't expect an infiltration from."

Peja: *Nods.* "Correct. If we just head a little more westward, we can even find an alternate entrance into the quarry that the Triads are excavating, in search of the Red Mercury. From there, however, we'll need to rely on the coordinates or directions that the Contact's data had."

Kato: "Cuz, let's see it."

Kazuhiro: "Of course." *Takes out the box again, which upon opening reveals a faintly-decorated lens. Earlier analysis must have been made to find that it fits onto a certain size of flashlight properly, and when shining the beam onto one part of the hilly region, the details are realized.*

Chevrier: "That's where it is, huh?"

Satoshi: "If intercepted intel on the Triads here was correct, that is about half a mile away from their actual current search site."
Peja: "All better for us then; we can slide in and out of there just fine."

Kato: "Let's get on with it, before the-" *Checks his watch.* "Night becomes old."

- Peja's imported Chevrolet Tahoe is fired up and the Kato Family members all get on to drive several miles to the quarry destination. After a quick review of the Triad sentry movements, the six move forward to Peja's described "alternate entrance" - more like a sludge-emptying depot. There were obviously no nearby workers to cause a water-rock-mixed mess that needed cleaning, so the channel was only filled with the mixture up to their ankles. Regardless, they got through it, and after reviewing the directions found on the flashlight lens accessory, they traverse the maze of an underground quarry until they find the exact spot.-

Kazuhiro: "According to the data, we should be right on top of the Red Mercury stash."

Kato: *Takes a knee to feel the ground at their feet.* "Mine-workers have been walking right over one of the most dangerous nuclear weapons in the world for God knows how long..."

Satoshi: "Let's rectify it then; Miho-san, Kazuhiro-ani, Kato-ani, grab some digging tools; the rest of us," *Points to himself, Chevrier, and Peja.* "Will have your backs."

Kato Family: "Roger."

-The three Kato Family members watched the several entryways leading to this spot of the quarry while the other three dug into the ground in search of the Red Mercury. Chevrier found some time to contact Dalsing and Bishop (who have now turned off airplane mode and are in Meixian Airport in Guangdong Province [the same province the rest are in]) that they've uncovered the malicious chemical substance, and they should reach their final extraction point and wait for them, presuming they get there first.-

Kazuhiro: *His shovel makes a metallic noise.* "Oh!"

Kato/Kazuhiro/Miho: *All set aside their tools and brush aside the remaining excess dirt with their hands. Eventually, the edge of a medium-sized strongbox is observed, and after a little more digging, they are able to unearth the entire structure. The other three move in closer upon finding the case seeing light. Miho slowly opens up the container... And there it is, in a crimson-red rock formation reminiscent of cinnabar, which is probably what the semi-liquid compound is partially made of.*

Chevrier: "It does exist."

Peja: "These red, stone-like specimens are capable of statewide destruction in catalyzed doses exceeding 500 milligrams."

Kato: "That's never going to come to pass. We just need to dismantle it before anyone else can get their hands on it. Captain Alvarez mentions that the procedure to do so requires very meticulous handling, so we need to bring it back to him."

Chevrier: "Let's get out of here, then."

-And they do so. Because of the relative separation and isolation between them and the Triads still working elsewhere, the Kato Family was able to leave unnoticed. They drove back to the coastline
and followed the roads along the edge to the second motorboat that Peja had hidden. When they
had gotten to within a half a mile of their destination, they had heard that Dalsing and Bishop have
experienced traffic congestion within the urban area of the province and will be arriving at the
extraction point late. For that reason, the team stops where they are and camp out until they can
converge at a simultaneous point of time.-

-The best way to remain off the grid after just getting off it was to do nothing that would connect to
the system... And the best way to exercise that would be to do nothing at all. As such, the majority
of the Kato Family members are taking the time to catch up on their sleeping habits; even the
strongest warriors needed their rest and recreation. Almost all of them it seems, however...-

Kato: *Leans on the side of the SUV, replacing the vapor in his steel pen. He then huffs it in and
exhales in such a way that he can form a plethora of Os traveling upwards.* There we go...
Kazuhiro says that's a very common Philippine move. It's certainly a unique one. I wonder if it can
be chained into other tricks. *Looks over to the nearby coastline, and decides to take a walk on it,
under the illumination of a full moon, taking his earpiece out to contemplate.* Of course, that's not
the only thing on my mind right now...

???: * Watches Kato from the top of one grassy dune as he strolls through the sands of the
coastline.*

Kato: "!!" *Puts away his vaporizer and refocuses with determination, with his right hand slowly
gravitating towards one of the Kimber Warrior II pistols strapped to the small of his back.*
"Alright. Whoever you are, get out here!"

Jieji: *Reveals himself to be the one hiding from above, dropping down to the sand.* "Still as
sharp as ever, Miyamoto-kun."

Kato: *Gets ticked initially, but assuages his aggression temporarily.* "I've been having bad
feelings ever since my older cousin and I detected and identified Chinese Triads in Malaysia, who
would not have known the Contact was going to a market district to conduct business with the
national bureau... Unless someone with greater reach and resources knew, and told them."

Jieji: *Rolls up his sleeve, revealing a representation of the Vermilion Dragon coiling around the
entirety of his right arm. Within the spiral motion is an etched slit moving from his arm's radius to
nearly the wrist, and the artificial blood coming from it drips onto the brush-like tail of the
Dragon.* Once a Blood-Oath Dragon, forever one. Good thing the Society and its Syndikat is co-
committed."

Kato: "I would ask if all you ever cared about was the subjugation of so many people, but I
already know the answer to that; you're just a blood-knight with minimal sense of honor, and
whose only goal is to fight me."

Jieji: *Gets a little ticked himself.* "What a shallow thought, Miyamoto-kun! To say that I am
without a great sense of honor, when I am so much like you - the most honorable there is!"

Kato: "Prove it! Why fight me all the time!? What are you seeking to better through singling me
out!?"

Jieji: *Crosses his arms.* "Don't look at me like that, Miyamoto-kun. It's not like I wanted to
target you specifically. You're just the one who is closest to the one I would like to fight the most."
Kato: *Picks his head up with curiosity.* "Excuse me?"

Jieji: "Miya- No... Kato-kun. Do you recall the history of your earliest ancestor?"

Kato: *Looks at him with disbelief.* "How do you-!? *Shakes his head.* "Disgraced ronin Taro Kato and his oldest son Izo rallied a legion of similarly uprooted samurai and took back his deceased master's land from a corrupt group of Imperial Officers."

Jieji: "And do you know the names of those Officers?"

Kato: *Looks at him with disbelief.* "Kutsuki... Shimura... Tamura..."

Jieji: *Points at him.* "That's the one... Tamura..."

Kato: *Is even more flabbergasted.* "No."

Jieji: "But yes. For my real name is Guan Ying, as you've been able to uncover long ago... But up until two generations before myself, my family lived as descendents of the now-defunct Tamura Clan!"

Kato: "..."

Jieji: "Yeah, I figured you wouldn't have much to say about that. So I'll keep going - For the past six generations, my family, all of it, was born and raised in China. But the first, Akihiro Tamura, a once-high ranking advisor, was a Japanese native, forced out after he had to bandwagon with the other ill-minded politicians that formed your master's circle of relations to the Shogunate. But, as you know traditional customs throughout history oh so well, you know that not just the head of the family gets punished, right?"

Kato: "The rest of Tamura's family..."

Jieji: "His wife, his siblings, and all of their combined children, totaling somewhere around twenty at the time, are all deported to China; the territory of their enemy... Because of your family's efforts."

Kato: *Grits his teeth to that.*

Jieji: "The history gets foggy after that... But it's believed that not even seven of them survive the first year there, whether by international dispute, culture shock, or another. Whatever did remain, though, was made stronger." <Begins speaking in Mandarin.> "My family endured so much in the next two centuries. I don't know how they could handle it for so long, when I couldn't even keep my true face since I was ten, when my mother - a direct relative of the bloodline, told me about it, and died of unrelated causes merely days later. But I swore to them that I wouldn't let their efforts to survive be for naught... I swore revenge for this tragedy, even if it killed me. And since I can't go back in time to personally kill Taro... I'm stuck with having to kill you."

Kato: *Is fighting back his tears from falling.* "...H-...How!?

Jieji: "You fascinate me though, Kato-kun. I've never met another Kato before, obviously, so I'm inclined to believe that you're the blueprint for all who came before, and after. And if that's the case, then they probably couldn't pick a better mold - intelligence, compassion, strength, initiative, you're everything a great Japanese daimyo would have to be. And that's what makes you a very fun
rival for so long. I admit I even had doubts about wanting to carry the deed on you... But I can't
delay my family's need of vengeance just because I want to." <Returns to speaking in Japanese.>
"You understand that kind of logic really well, right?"

Kato: *Half-heartedly.* "Yes."

Jieji: *Cracks his knuckles.* "Then you know that the time for talking has passed; it's time to
fight."

Kato: I-I can't fight you. I'm... I'm in the wrong, aren't I?

Jieji: *Charges in, throwing a discus right hook straight at Kato's face. And he... Just takes it.*
"Hn?"

Kato: *Flies several feet away from the blow, slowly getting back up, but not retaliating.*

Jieji: "What is this, Miyamoto-kun? Fight me!"

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "No..."

Jieji: "Why not!?"

Kato: "You deserve revenge. I'm giving it to you."

Jieji: "It's not fulfilling if you don't fight back."

Kato: "I don't have a reason to. I did something wrong to you. I'd only make myself look worse."

Jieji: "Oh, you really make this so hard on me; you're so perfectly honorable. But you know
now, how does that make me feel!?"

Kato: "..."

Jieji: *Mind flickers.* "Ah, I know... Say Miyamoto-kun, you're not the only one I need to take
my revenge on."

Kato: "?"

Jieji: "Now, you see, uh, right about now, my old Triad friends and their allies are probably
going to find out that the Red Mercury is gone, and be looking for your team along the coastline; a
viable means of escape in this area. They're probably going to bite it, and when they do, I'll be
moving forward, after I'm done with you, of course! Moving forward... Towards the rest of your
family."

Kato: *Closes his eyes.* Not... Don't do this.

Jieji: "And once your family, the crime syndicate, is finished, all that remains will be your
biological family. I've heard about how before you came, there was still a Kato left - Norio. Your
uncle, I imagine? I will kill him too. And..."

Kato: *Slowly looks up at him with rage.* Don't... Finish.
Jieji: "Anything that remains of his family as well. Kazuhiro."

Kato: **THAT'S IT!** *Unleashes his Hatred Bloodlust, and gives Jieji a huge penance stare while he gets into his "Trickster" battle stance; one that the latter was hoping for.*

Jieji: "Now that's more like it." *Returns to his new fighting pose, leaning heavily on his back leg while his front leg is arched, and both of his arms are bent and protecting all areas of his torso.*

-When the moment was right, both fighters charged at each other with all they have.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 5's OST **"Christmas Night Raid"** plays in the background.-

**加藤和彦 VS 武史杰基**

**Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family**

**VS**

**Wushi Jieji; Reclamation Society Big Three #1**

Both Jieji's right and Kato's left clash and immediately bounce back upon impact. From there, Kato proceeds to throw a flurry of other swift punches such as a left uppercut and a right hook, intending on planting Jieji with every blow. However, Jieji's definitely no stranger to boxing, and telegraphs all of Kato's movements, before taking his final left overhead and tries to hip toss him over. Kato counters by planting his weight just in time, and attempts a hammer fist straight on the top of Jieji's head as punishment. What he did not anticipate was for Jieji to suddenly sink deeper into the ground that he already was, avoiding the blow entirely. And in his surprised state, the latter had no problem quickly getting back up and finishing his hip tossing maneuver, sending Kato across roughly two yards.

Kato tried to windmill back into his fighting stance, as he usually does, but found himself stopped midway. One look at what hit his shoulders that cut the momentum of his returning to feet made him realize - he's on sand; not gravel. And sand's particles have much more give in it than the streets ever did. Knowing now that he cannot do many of his b-boy tricks, Kato gets back up the regular way, turning around just in time to witness Jieji charging straight in, arms up to his face to defend against a rising knee reprisal he knew Kato would do next. Now with his right shoulder firmly placed on Kato's torso, he commits to a double leg takedown, returning Jieji's opponent to the sand and getting into a dominant position for pummeling. Kato takes a good two punches before recovering and avoiding a few more upper-body strikes before Jieji turns from the former's face to his legs, which have locked in a full-guard to prevent him from advancing into a full mount. Two good elbows to Kato's right thigh was enough to break that guard, and Jieji stepped over the bad leg to plant himself deeper on his opponent. But by then, Kato turns to his "Tumbler" style and simultaneously clutches both the back of Jieji's collar and around his advancing leg, allowing him to suplex him over and off of himself.

Kato again tried to get up acrobatically, this time with a kip-up. He does manage to do so this time, but not nearly as cleanly as before. Jieji rolls over back to his feet and immediately rushes
Kato again. Still in "Tumbler" stance, Kato hard-counters by crouching down low just before Jieji grabs, allowing him to rise up and take Jieji by the stomach and lifting him up onto his right shoulder briefly into the air. Kato then drops to his right side, in a spinebuster motion that gets him in the side mount. Kato makes the mistake of lifting himself up a bit in this position due to frustrations inherent from his blocked mounted strikes, resulting in Jieji having the room to get his hands out to wrap behind Kato and reverse the mount. Kato wasn't about to let the same disadvantage happen again, and kneed Jieji badly on his close ribcage, making him back away.

Kato finds that Jieji is still stunned by that last attack, which dares him to change into "B-Boy" style to take his turn to charge him this time. Jieji pivots to meet him just in time for Kato to get onto the closest shoulder he finds, and attempts to lock his legs together underneath the far armpit. But Jieji gets his arm under the final locking leg instead, and clutches Kato's front limb before the other can go over his far shoulder. This allowed Jieji to powerbomb Kato onto the sand. Jieji tries to stomp Kato onto his face as he lies there, but he back-rolls away before it makes contact. Kato then runs in once more, and tries to slide underneath Jieji's high roundhouse kick, trying to arm-sweep Jieji's only standing leg as he goes past... Except he's still on sand, which means he stops when the sand amasses into a dune where his legs are, and only his lower body makes it past the former Triad.

Jieji laughs a bit as he pendulum-backfists Kato, preventing him from reacting to his sudden situation. He then choke-lifts Kato back onto his feet and headbutts him. Kato, turning to "God Hand" stance, blocks the second forehead-whip, and chops Jieji's forearms, forcing him to remove his hands from his larynx. Kato then proceeds to throw a spinning backfist of his own, which Jieji ducks under, allowing him to charge a rising spinning hook kick, a revert right cross punch, a left spinning hook, and finally a left overhead roundhouse kick. Kato pulls back from the first hook, pushes aside the right punch, Dempsey rolls the final hook, and then high-blocks the roundhouse. Keeping the leg in the air, Kato pivots around, switching limb-holding and allowing his close elbow to smash right into Jieji's stomach.

Jieji acts seriously hurt for a second before recovering, forcing his leg back down and then puts Kato's exposed neck into a side headlock. He then proceeds into a forward somersault with the grapple locked in, bringing them both to the ground, much to Kato's obvious disadvantage. The latter instinctively tries to rise back up, but Jieji's leg rises up first and snap kicks him back into his supine position. Jieji doesn't let up an inch, trying to give Kato an elbow smash of his own straight to his cheek, but Kato catches it just in time. Underneath it, Kato attempts a backfist, which is similarly caught. Jieji's right foot-blade to Kato's stomach breaks the exchange as they try again to one-each other purely from lying down. It continues again until Jieji's right leg then tucks inclose to himself to attempt a side kick straight to Kato's hip. The latter give a small hop to avoid the entirety of the blow, and it seems as though he will be able to put all of his weight onto the limb. But Jieji uses a special leg technique that shakes it considerably; when against the dunes of sand, this allows his leg to fall underneath it just enough for Kato to land on them rather than his leg.

In addition, the kick gained its power from Jieji getting off his side for more leverage. This meant that while Kato is still on his back, Jieji was midway into getting into yet another mount, and was unstoppable at that point. Jieji pummeled Kato down once more, with Kato unable to get out as the ground failed to give him a bridge breakout. That is, until the latter realized that he could use the properties of the sand as well, fidgeting in the little room he had to burrow down and give enough room for him to squirm right out from under Jieji's mount and bulldogging him into the sand when he turned back. Jieji takes one swipe at his face to remove the most obstructive particles and throws an aggressive front kick at Kato when they are both fully standing. Kato catches it and attempts to break the limb with his elbow, but Jieji is still stacking all of his attacks greatly, and throws a diagonally-downward forehand hammer fist at Kato's head. With his attacking arm
already raised there, Kato had no choice but to block the blow using that arm and let go of Jieji's leg.

Jieji throws a massive right haymaker that Kato saw a mile away, ducking under it and pulling Jieji's back close. He then locks in a left hammerlock on Jieji, props his other arm behind him, and winds up his right forearm for an acute lariat takedown. But just before his arm makes contact with Jieji's neck, the latter's free arm gets back to its natural position and elbows Kato's clavicle, stunning him. He then elbows him in the forehead to push him back and release the hammerlock.

In the final stages of the fight, Kato, now in "B-Boy" stance, puts a little more thought into this fight and comes to realize that he cannot adapt to these grounds as well as Jieji is in such little time, and therefore he must make the ground more to his style. He begins this by low sweep-kicking Jieji's legs, which the latter uses tumbling legwork to avoid. Kato then transitions into a sprawl onto the sand, quickly throwing his jacket off of himself and performing a headspin, with his low heel meeting Jieji's knee. Because the motion was spread across the fabric, Kato was not drilling his upper body into the ground. He also goes for a 2000s spin, with similar results on Jieji's face. Kato handsprings back onto his feet and whips the metal parts of his jacket around and onto Jieji. He catches the accessory, however, pulling it in for him to forearm-smash to Kato's cheek.

As Kato falls backwards, he puts the jacket behind him. His other motions make Jieji realize that he is attempting a thrust windmill, which he cracks a grin at. The jacket proved useful in allowing Kato to perform a number of his best moves that required solid ground to perform, but windmililing would still be impossible; the momentum will only cause the jacket to contract into him. Knowing this, he goes right in and tries to give a good punch to Kato's face once he stops spinning... Only he did all of that knowing that would happen! Once the coat creased into a spiral on his back, Kato sprang back up before the spinning motion stopped completely. When this happened, and Jieji's arm went through the coat, it got constricted!

Kato has his back turned to Jieji as the arm rests on his right shoulder. From there, he first rises up with an instep stomp to Jieji's right, followed by a left elbow smash to his ribcage. Kato once again moves back behind Jieji and sets up the hammerlock acute lariat once again, but this time the hammerlock is leveraged by Kato's elbow rather than his hand, which is free to hold onto the end of his jacket, trapping Jieji's other arm. This allows him to clock Jieji in the upper chest with a perfect counter-clockwise clothesline, ending the contest.

-OST ends.-

Kato: *Rises back up to his feet, spitting some excess blood build-up in his mouth from the head attacks.* Asshole... I really didn't want to do that! *Holds onto his knees to catch his breath again... Until he realizes something and refocuses.* Wait, my blood-siblings! *He immediately starts running back to the SUV.*

-Minutes later...-

Kato: *Sneaks on the lower-elevated sand regions of the setting, Kimber Warrior II pistols in hand. He has passed by the earliest of abandoned cars, but has yet to hear gunfire, so the fighting has yet to start most likely. When he took a chance and peeked over the grassy hills, he saw the SUV was not there anymore.* The Hell? Where did they go? And- *Goes into his jeans' back pocket for his earpiece... Only to realize that it broke in the fight he just had with Jieji.* Shit! I guess I'll have to risk a nonsecure ca- *Hears treads and looks in the direction of the source.*

-The SUV in question has been racing across the uninhabited coastline in an attempt to shake the
Kato: *What the fuck is going on!?* *Turns around to notice another car joining the fray really close. With his right Kimber, he takes aim at the far back tire of that sedan, and fires two shots. One hits the hubcap, but the other one pierces the rubber, and the car easily loses control at its high speed, crashing into a nearby hill. Kato shot at all who tried to limp out of the automobile.*

Miho: "KATO-ANI!" *She yells from the passenger seat of the SUV. Having noticed the mess Kato caused during that instance, she directs for Satoshi to drive them right in front of him.* "Everyone, we're holding the line here. All your weapons are primed!!"

Kato Family: "Yes ma'am!" *All mobilize, leaving the vehicle on Kato's side and taking cover.*

Miho: *Turns to Kato.* "And you, Bo-" *Realizes that Kato has clearly been in a struggle, and is bleeding on the right side of his head.* "Oh my God! Kato-ani, what happened to you!?"

*Immediately checks on his face.*

Kato: "I'm alright; just got into a little scuffle with a large Triad regiment while I was on my walk."

Satoshi: "Melee scuffle? I guess that'd mean they don't have guns."

Chevrier: "More power to us-"

-But then, guns do start firing and ricocheting off the far side of their SUV and crashed sedan.-

Kazuhiro: "I think you jinxed us, guys!"

Miho: "By the sounds, I'm thinking they're equipped with Norinco Type 54s and Uzis. Great for crowd control and blindfire; it'll be tough finding a moment to shoot back!"

Kato: "Right. But while some dispense their ammo, some more might be flanking us. That moment needs to come soon!"

Kazuhiro: "Maybe an explosive?"

Peja: *Carrying the Red Mercury briefcase.* "We used all our grenades to cover our demolitions entry into the compound!"

Chevrier: "Oh shit..."

-While enemy fire continues to rain down on the six, another vehicle - a military humvee, rams into the scene from the Triad's side, mowing through some of the mid-size cars and putting all of the gangsters in a frenzy, halting their assault for a little bit. There was someone on the top, using the .50 BMG gun.-

Miho: "Dalsing-san! Bishop-san!"

Dalsing: "Are we interrupting?" *Laughs a bit while Swiss-cheesing a bulk of the Triads.*

Bishop: *Revealed to be the one driving, she touches her earpiece.* "I see your vehicle's busted; we can accommodate all, but one will have to hang in the trunk."
Kato: "That'll be me. Chevrier-san, your rifle?"

Satoshi: "You sure, Boss?"

Kato: *Grins.* "Oh, I'm sure. On my mark, we all head to you two. Three... Two... One, GO!"
*They all vault over the cover vehicles and sprint to the humvee...*

-And after another struggle, the Kato Family was successful in reaching their final boat to leave China's borders... And bring the Red Mercury back to Japan, where the R&D department will execute the process to neutralize its threat. Kato called in Hyun, who confirmed the rewards for a job well-done... And noting that the Doomsday Clock has been pushed back a little bit, sure. It was a fun ride for Kato, who had his first taste of tours in a long while. But now, it was time to return to work...-

-"Colours of You" by ACE play in the loudspeakers.-

Kato: *A quick montage showcased Kato doing his regulated patrols around the Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub he owns, making sure everything is alright between his customers and his staff. When he confirmed it to be so, he decided to take a little retreat from the loud music, which apparently not even his VIP Platform could provide, as he holds onto its doorhandle for a second before he lets go and takes several floors up to the roof. Now that he can gaze into the night's sky, he takes the time for a little vape break.*

Yada: *Having just got up there as well.* "Well, that's very unlike you."

Kato: *Turns around.* "Yada-san. How'd you-"

Yada: "Ritsu-chan noted you made a strange move on the CCTV this time and contacted me."
*Refocuses with a teasing expression.* "You're not thinking of it, are you?"

Kato: *Looks back again, noticing the edge of the building.* "Maybe..." *Laughs.*

Yada: *Laughs a bit before changing the subject.* "Your uncle and Miho-san all noted a good job you've done in that latest mission, especially for your first time in so long. You must be missing it even more now, huh?"

Kato: "Why do you say that?"

Yada: "You seemed a little tired of the loud music in the club."

Kato: "Ah, I guess I got used to the midnight silence of a hotel room. I'll get my groove back, don't you worry."

Yada: "Fair enough, then. Anything else bothering you, though?"

Kato: *Thinks about that for a second.* "Nothing that you need to be concerned about, Yada-san. You should tend to everybody else now."

Yada: "Okay... Don't take too long up here, alright?"

Yada: *Looks aside for a thought, then back at him, and decides to bow like his Family would. She giggles once she finishes up.* "Always wondered what that was like." *Leaves for downstairs.*

Kato: *Couldn't help but crack a smile for a second, before remembering why he was up here, turning around to face the now gibbous moon.* "... No one needs to know about my turmoil... My family... Isn't as purely good as I initially believed... And am I subject to that judgement as well?
Basilisks' Space

Chapter Summary

Kato and Yada partake in their biggest step bonding with each other by investing their all into an activity/form of entertainment they both mutually and equally enjoy...

Inspiration for this episode comes from Shark Tank; the TV show all about investments for up and coming companies in need for a little push to make them great, or even amazing.

-"Carry On Carry On" by Nuage plays on a boombox.-

-Kato kept his word about eventually getting himself reacquainted with the louder nightlife. A full shift being head manager at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub went by in a flash. Before he knew it, it was already time to do his personal round of cleaning the venue after everyone else has left... Well, after almost everyone has left.-

   Kato: *Hanging upside down with his specialized harness, he is cleaning up a soda-dripping stain on the glass fencing of the second-floor atrium.* "You know, you really don't have to help me with all of this. I've been used to doing this on my own. It's not like last time, when I was a cripple and all; I really can and should be doing this myself."

   Yada: *Revealed to be on the second floor, immediately going to the edge of the opening and looking down at him from that position.* "I'm a 'regional manager' too, you know. And if I'm to do the job right, I have to do all I can. And I know what all is, by watching you do it."

   Kato: *Imaginary sweat drops fall from the back of his head.* "And you know I can't claim I don't do all... Smart."

   Yada: "Careful now, Kato-kun! We're getting wise to all of your best truth tricks now!"

   Kato: *Looks up at her with a grin of audacity.* "You're talking to a guy who has been hiding his existence for more than two decades. You barely memorized a chapter in an encyclopedia collection, where the next eight volumes the rest you have yet to even see."

   Yada: "We're fast learners; show us more and you'll get in trouble." *Returns to cleaning up the other side of the glass.*

   Kato: "Heh." *Continues cleaning the other.*

   ???: *Opens the back entrance into the kitchen room and calls out a name.* "Kato-ani!"

   Kato: *Recognizes the voice.* "Walsh?"

   Yada: "Hm?" *Curiously peeks over the edge of the atrium as one of Kato's blood-siblings arrives on scene.*
Walsh: "Kato-ani; where are you?" *Looks around upon entering the dancefloor area.*

Kato: *The rope and pulley of his harness brings him down to Walsh's face-level, similar to the scene in Spider-Man.* "Walsh, what's up?"

Walsh: *Briefly startled, but refocuses.* "It's about an invitation, Boss. To the set of 'Bight of the Basilisks.'"

Yada: *Covers her mouth with excitement.* "'Bight of the Basilisks'!?!"

Walsh: *Gets his hand close to his front holster for his Glock 18.* "Who's there!?"

Kato: *Pushes down his Lieutenant's pistol.* "Just Yada-san, brother. You know her; the whole Family does."

Walsh: "Oh!" *Puts away his firearm.* "My apologies, Miss Yada." *Looks around a bit before realizing she's above.*

Yada: *Salutes to them.* "No worries."

Kato: "So, an invitation to the billionaires' show..."

Yada: "You should totally take it, Kato-kun! Oh, I bet you have, seeing as though it's your favorite-" *Beat.* "Though, I haven't actually seen you, or anyone working for Kato Arms on it, actually."

Kato: "Yeah, that's for a reason, Yada-san. Kato Arms is well-known for being Yakuza-affiliated. Nobody really knows how, except for people like you of course, but I've been trying to keep it that way whenever possible. Accepting offers like these that are full of publicity are kind of against that notion." *Turns to Walsh, still upside-down.* "The offer still stands, but we'll be declining, Walsh-san."

Walsh: "Well, actually we already accepted the invitation, Kato-ani."

Kato: *Turns over to process that information.* "What?"

Walsh: "Yeah, you see, they sent the invitation about two months ago, and at the time Hyun and his Logistics team were helping the IT department go over their net-email security, and when they accidentally re-sent themseles the flood of our mail messages, they cleared the queue by accepting all of them. We never thought to recheck because at the time, it was the slow, non-tax season... But an email to join the show was in that list!"

Kato: "I see... And this little notice we have here is just a reminder that it'll be happening in," *Checks his watch.* "About a week. Much too late to cancel respectfully, and any chance of ditching unannounced will only cause detriment. What should we do..."

Yada: *Walks downstairs to meet the three of them.* "You have a bypass, right Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Turns to her with an epiphany.* "Oh..."

Yada: *Perplexed.* "Kato-kun?"
Yada probably knew what was going to be told to her once they returned to the Hyatt Regency, but she was never ready for its delivery; she was about to ascend from a fangirl of her favorite reality show into one of its guest hosts.

One week later...

At the set of the "Bight of the Basilisks" studio, a suspiciously familiar Lykan Hypersport drives onto the scene.

TV Producer 1: "Man, I'm never getting tired of seeing that car..."

Yada: *Appears from the driver's side of the vehicle, and in a dark blue slim business suit with a red shirt underneath. Her hair has also been styled into a bun, and she has a chest pin on, with the name "Maiko Araya."* "Hello again, Mr. Ito!"

Ito: "Heh, I see you're all business today?" *Takes a small glance at the car again before back at Yada/Araya.*

TV Producer 2: "Everybody's very game inside that studio; you'll be needing that edge, Miss Araya."

Ito: "Ah! Miss Araya, this is my co-producer, Obata. While I excel mostly on the artsy work of the show, such as the intro we filmed with you three days back, the bread and butter of our programming is mostly done by him."

Obata: *Holds out his hand.* "Pleasure to meet you."

Yada: *Accepts.* "The pleasure is all mine."

Ito: "Are you ready to join your fellow Basilisks?"

Yada: "Of course; let's do it." *While walking with the two TV producers into the building, she begins thinking back to her extra training for this occasion with Kato prior.*

Kato: "Don't worry about any recognition problems once you get deep into business by your own name, Yada-san; the best entrepreneurs never make assumptions about achievement like that with the new blood; it's only after you've passed the proving ground do they truly remember you."

Yada: "Okay, but is your 'Maiko Araya' going to be discouraged she is misrepresented?"

Kato: "All of the 'Maiko Araya's in the world will be glad you're portraying her, Yada-san, but none of them are from my group."

Yada: "Right, she's merely a name. Presumably in events like this."

Kato: *Laughs.* "You're memorized another paragraph of that book now."

Yada: "But I'll need to learn a little more from another textbook of yours, Kato-kun. If I'm really to really sell my position to those pros, and even make this a worthwhile visit for Kato Arms, I'm going to need to boost my knowledge a little more."

Kato: "I don't know..."
Yada: "K-Kato-kun!?!"

Kato: "I'm worried you'll replace me someday."

Yada: *Giggles.* "Kato-kun, this is not the time."

Kato: *Amusingly throws his hands up in the air.* "Alright, the billionaire's crash course is about to begin, complete with sections on venture capital, SIPs, risk aversion, and driving supercars."

Yada: "Heh, bring it-" *Beat.* "Wait, what?"

-Minutes later, Yada and the producers reach the filming room for the reality show, resembling a very personalized, decorated conference room for a crime film's Fiction 500 character. The other four Basilisks (along with Yada makes the standard five), were already waiting there.-

Billionaires: *All of them look over to their guest host, a tad disappointed. Though they wore name tags, Yada has seen the show more than enough to properly identify them by appearance alone; Fujita (COO of Unislo), Yugito (Chief Analyst of Aero Finance), Itami (CEO of Centerpiece Auto Parts), and Shiraki (Chairman of Zenta Restaurant Holdings).*

Yada: *Was trying really hard not to squee watching them all.*

Fujita: "Itami, you owe me two million Yen. The founder's a no-show."

Itami: "Should've known." *Takes out his wallet and hands him the money.*

Shiraki: "So you're Miss Maiko Araya? The Head of Market Analysis for Kato Arms & R&D?"

Yada: "That's me."

Yugito: *Notably reveals her judging eyes.* "You're probably not much."

Yada: *Alarmed and taken back.* "Uh, excuse me?"

Fujita: "She's probably right; you look way too green, way too young."

Shiraki: "It's as if whoever's running KAM just took a business major from his associate's college."

Yada: What the Hell?

Fujita: "No offense to them, but I'm willing to bet you're even wearing an earbud so that the real experts can get their decisions to you."

Yada: *Is not actually wearing an earbud, but does have a skin-colored rubber accessory between her right ear and her hairline (thus being well-covered). When sounds produced from a connected microphone are to be projected, the machines within the piece, it will vibrate the stapes of the user so that only they can hear them. She also has a wire worn just in front of her underwear to capture the conversations.* "Well, as you can see," *Shows both of her ears.* "No bluetooth. I'm here blind, because I'm all I need."
Yugito: "Yeah, we'll see."

Yada: "Hmph." *As she takes her seat on one mahogany leather lounger, she also takes out a pair of glasses with a similar incision within the center bridge of the frame... small enough to fit a certain microgadget.*

Itami: *Subtly scoots over to get closer to Yada.* "Don't worry, Miss Araya. There's no ill will against you; just the lot of us are very distraught that we've never seen the CEO of your company. We hear he's something of a shy demon."

Yada: "That's just how he is. Like all of us, he enjoys his privacy." *Refocuses.* "Alright, let's begin."

Kato: *Hearing and seeing the whole thing.* Well, I'm still right they didn't assume out of familiarity...

-After a little time, the first small-business owner came into the Bight; Teruya, leader for a group that seeks to eliminate the hassle of sunlight coming into the household and affecting how you see your television screen; the television itself will cover it, installing a rollable sheet of durable LEDs at the top of the window that can be pulled down to perform anything a plasma screen can; how bright it is outside makes the screen even stronger. CurtainCall, for when the show, game, or whatever's on an HDMI port has only just begun.

Yada: "So, Teruya, with a year and a half under your belt working on this, how much have you made selling these installations?"

Teruya: "Mm, roughly about eight million JPY."

Kato: That's not too high.

Yada: Need to hear what the unit price is first. "What are you selling them for?"

Teruya: "For basically anyone, really. We all eventually face having to turn or shift when our screens are covered by white. But I mean, our market is usually dominated by people such as den dwellers in any room of the house, business directors or analysts who are presenting their information from high floors in glass buildings."

Yada: *Stammers.* "I mean price."

Yugito: "Hey hey hey, Araya, are you saying demographics don't matter?"

Yada: "That's not what I meant."

Shiraki: "Then don't be confusing our prey."

Yada: *Laughs it off.* Alright there, I'll keep it in mind."

Fujita: "You also need to consider, unlike you, we always have it in mind."

Teruya: *Feels like a third wheel.* "I have no problems answering that."
Yada: *Hm, so that's how it is, huh? Okay, I can play past that...*

-The next entrepreneur is Wada, founder of Membrane; explanations and demonstrations revealed that a thin, malleable, and clear poncho-like sheet with fabric-clinging technology on one side, allowing people to perform their dirtiest tasks with their favorite (multipurpose) clothes and not worry about them being ruined.-

Fujita: *Already seems set to bring Wada in as a business partner. "...And is there any chance the Membranes themselves will cause damage to the clothing they are applied to?"

Itami: "He asks because his clothing is very much precious to him." *Fujita laughs to that.*

Wada: *Laughs. "It's advised that the layer is slowly pried off your clothing, lest it might snag. Otherwise, no this doesn't hurt it."

Yada: "But what if one of our heavy-duty workloads can slip through the gap and pry it themselves?"

Wada: "Oh! Um-"

Yada: "Maybe this scenario causes something worse for ourselves altogether, but what if a piercing strike, like from jagged metal edges from trying to fix the old gutters of a suburban home, and tears through the Membrane?"

Wada: "We didn't, actually test that too much. We'd have to reconsider the process."

Yada: "Come back to the Bight when all the corners are considered, unless you can take a deal with them here. Until then, I'm out." *Looks to the other Basilisks. She lightly grins at how she exposed a major flaw that they have now realized, and are now keen on refusing... Especially Fujita, who had made an offer before all the cards were known.*

-A pair of Uenos came in this time; advertising their product to help people enjoy the easing of massaging/heating chairs experience at almost anywhere they can sit; the transportable comfort of OmniRolf.-

Itami: "And this can even work in the car, driving and whatnot?"

Mr. Ueno: "Oh yes; the straps and control pad have three proper positions, depending on the size of the chairs."

Yada: "And how does the energy recharge? You never make assumptions with battery life; it's life or death at times, as all of us who have smartphones can imagine."

Ms. Ueno: "It's a wall-mounted charger, and the pads can persist on standby for a maximum of half a day; at full power in constant use, it is about four hours."

Yada: "I see; do you plan on making portable chargers for the portable models, like there is for smartphones."

Mr. Ueno: "Um, no, we didn't think of that. We didn't think our chairs were like smartphones, honestly."
Yada: "When you think of something that is omni-adjective, sooner or later you relate it to phones. These things," *Takes out her smartphone.* "Do pretty much everything for us nowadays. So it's a good comparison tool."

Basilisks: *All look to her with genuine impressment.*

Yada: "Invest with me, gentleman and lady, and we can push for such a universal objective to be made."

But the best (at least in Yada and Kato's eyes) was for last; Matsuura was a former Lockheed Martin engineer who had found a means to replicate the base model of the company with an added function of making almost every piece required to build the aircraft interchangeable with the construction for other multipurpose planes.-

Yada: *Kato's team would really love to have this... Right?*

Kato: *Yada-san! You must outbid for that!*

Yada: *Yep, there it is. Alright, let's do this.* *Refocuses.* "Matsuura, your idea of as close a thing as universal plane schematics that can work with a wide variety of parts really is a brilliant idea."

Matsuura: "Really?"

Yada: "Yes! That's why those AR15s my company sells are the hot commodity! The Picatinny rails on those, especially the HK416/7s and our newest HK433 adaptation, allow us to make a sniper rifle, a shotgun, a grenade launcher even, out of an assault rifle."

Shiraki: "Shameless advertising!"

Yada: *Turns to him.* "Only because it fits the situation!" *Turns back.* "And the point from it comes in the form of just imagining what the defense industry will be pumped with once this reaches their markets."

Yugito: "He's got a brilliant idea, and made it into this company. What makes you think he won't find what he needs - what you offer, from another arms partner?"

Yada: "Because he came here."

Matsuura: *Is taken aback.*

Fujita: "Oh... You haven't partnered with anyone mostly because you don't know who you want with you?"

Matsuura: "Yeah. I saw this happen to an entrepreneur who made it possible for a Taxi replacement company to actually own the vehicles in their distribution of mass-transportation. However, Uber and the like saw it, and were able to replicate it into their own and make the same amount he did, except they never put any up-front into its development."

Itami: "It's certainly unfair, but that is certainly smart of them; they're making R&D out of you and that person."

Matsuura: "Exactly. I figured, if I got to the aquarium ceiling," *Thematic of the show's name,
there is a video-simulated aquarium of miscellaneous aquatic predators swimming in the ground.*
"I would have a very personal talk with a partner I would definitely work with."

Yada: "Well, you're definitely getting that. And I'll have you know, nobody keeps secrets like my boss."

Kato: *Smiles to that statement.*

Matsuura: "That's definitely true."

Yada: "Mr. Matsuura, I'm going to make you an offer. Eighty-five million JPY, a few thousand extra then you were asking for..."

Matsuura: "That's excellent!"

Yada: "But, you really will devote it to marketing the applications, leveraging other third-party contracts, and working with my R&D division to give the models a line for even greater diversity. And due to the big step we are taking to ensure its success, that eighty-five will come at a huge divide, compared to what you were willing to risk - thirty percent."

Kato: *Exhales sharply at that statement.*

Matsuura: *Was hoping to trade only fifteen percent of his company.* "Well..." *Focuses up.* "Araya, you've got a deal." *Goes over to her to shake her hand and hug.*

Yada: *Stands up and accepts it.* "I know, I'm very excited to be working with you!" *They both bid each other goodbye. She then looks back to the other Basilisks, who have definitely changed attitude.*

Itami: "I guess we were really wrong about you, Ms. Araya."

Yugito: "Young blood is taking over; it's scary."

Yada: * Notices the new signs of respect they have for her now; a farcry from before, and can't help but grin again at them. She takes a seat again to hear through the rest of the entrepreneur pitches for the recording session today.*

-Yada triumphantly drives to Nyurifu Rikkyo, arriving at roughly 5 P.M.-

Kato: *Is shown waiting at the back door, all while repeatedly starting a certain video on his flip-phone with a smile.*

BotB Narrator: "... This time, on 'Bight of the Basilisks,' we have guest Maiko Araya, the Chief Market Analyst for Kato Arms Manufacturing - the leader in international arms sales. Despite her youth, she is responsible for the majority of the company's fifteen percent revenue increase during the interval just after the conclusion of the Lost Score." *This is said while Yada walks through a sample assembly line for the newest HK433 assault rifle, drives (Kato's) Hypersport supercar onto the scene, and writing a series of complex algorithms on a glass wall for a marketing calculation.*

Yada: "We the people of KAM speak for ourselves with three things. Our numbers, our guts, and our respite. Every single one of us... Is a discreet, but deadly predator, ready to seize the
moment of maximum profit at the drop of a case." *Lets one bullet shell casing fall from her standing position in the next cut of the montage.*

Yada: *Enters the venue through the back entrance just as soon as Kato finishes his latest replay.*

Kato: *Puts his phone away.* "There she is."

Yada: "Kato-kun! Oh my God, thank you for letting me do that! It was incredible!"

Kato: "Hearing and seeing all of it, I'd say you were incredible!"

Yada: "Oh, you!"

Kato: "I'm serious! You securing that deal with Matsuura was immortally incredible. I can already imagine the look on Satoshi's face when I secure the vetting process of the partnering company!"

Yada: *With a teasing expression.* "Satoshi has more looks than just indiffERENCE?"

Kato: *Beat.* "Okay fine. But he'll be elated. And so will the rest of the Family! Our arms reach will now increase by almost ten percent. And when word gets around that we're mass-producing these modifiable, multipurpose aircrafts, international market goes up fifteen!" *Steps back and gives Yada some space.* "But you had that in mind when you upped that offer, huh?"

Yada: "Truthfully, I had half of that going in. I'm just glad I made the right choices."

Kato: *Goes back to her, picking up her right hand in an achieving gesture.* "Damn right you did. And know you're going to see the changes for yourself once you qualify for the firm's head positions... Under your real name too."

Yada: *Listens to that last sentence.* "Oh, wow... Wow!" *Exhales sharply for a moment.* "I'll still need to go by Araya for just a little bit more, to work the vetting processes I've given you, but great!" *Smiles alongside him with the end of that remark... Before noticing they are holding hands and blushes again. This time however, she is far less reddened by it.*

Kato: *Notices the same thing after she does.* "Oh, look at that."

Yada: *Her blood-gushing expression fades out.* "Yeah... I guess we've had too many incidents like this to keep being flustered about it."

Kato: *Lets go.* "It may not come as a surprise, Yada-san, but even as a CEO, I never find many moments to shake hands with other like-minded individuals too often."


Kato: "Point being, I'll never forget this one we just had."

Yada: "I don't think I will either."

Kato: "That's good." *He then motions over for the two of them to retire to the VIP platform upstairs.* "So then, when can we expect that episode you're in to air?"
Yada: "They say in about a week or so."

Kato: "Ah; we'll all be sure to tune in to that." *They leave through the kitchen's double-hinged doors together.*
The "Perfect" Date Space

Chapter Summary

There's always been something between Karma and Naoko since the AssUniv Program began, but work and peers always seemed to get in the way of them actually getting to sit down and have a moment together. Now that things have certainly settled down a tad, their friends have decided to make it up to them and enforce a scenario where that becomes possible. Is it going to flawless? Certainly!... Very likely!... Maybe... Maybe not.

But we all know how to find out.

-"Do You Believe In Love" by Norma Sheffield plays in the loudspeakers.-

-In a period of off-duty on an impromptu extra shift between only them, the two executive bouncers of Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, Naoko and Karma, are finding themselves with a moment with each other - an intimate moment together, as it can be described.-

Karma: *Sits across from Naoko on a high-stool table on the second floor, tapping his right fingers on his bottle of Yuengling Traditional.* "I heard you and Kato's boys had a little fun outside the venue, hm?"

Naoko: *Playfully fiddles with the straw of her gin and tonic.* "Define fun, Karma-kun."

Karma: "I'll say it as my source, Ritsu-chan, did."

Ritsu: *Appears on the screen of Naoko's phone, which was also resting on the table.* "That would be me!" *Disappears as quickly as she came.*

Karma: "Right... A brief, futile struggle of four already-drunk line-jumpers that most likely have been forced to exit three bars before coming here, and were sent packing by a girl that could fit through a mousehole?"

Naoko: *Cracks a small laugh.* "That's quite an audacious description from a security monitor."

Ritsu: *Appears briefly on her phone again.* "Correction: the ultimate security monitor." *Disappears.*

Karma: *Beat.* "Are Kato and his IT personalizing Ritsu's operating personality or something? This is some very bombastic vocabulary."

Naoko: "We'll find out later." *Refocuses.* "Anywho, what's the appeal of a girl who can fit through a mousehole to someone like you?"

Karma: "Uh-uh; it's 'a bigshot like me.'"

Naoko: "Well, what is it... 'Bigshot'?”
Karma: "Let's find out." *He and Naoko then begin leaning in close, within inches of each other's faces...*

Karasuma: *Slides a few Yen notes with such force along the table that they perfectly lie underneath Karma's beer bottle.*

Karma/Naoko: *Both look at him with surprise.* "K-Karasuma!?"

Karasuma: "Break time's over; time to get back to work, both of you. Naoko, back with me guarding the entrances." *Begins walking away without another word, knowing full well she will comply.*

Naoko: *Looks quickly back at Karma, who hastily nods for her to leave, which she complies.*

Karma: **So close, damnit!** *A Taiwanese waitress comes by when he notices the forced tip, which he seconds and lets her clean up the table.*

Nakamura: *Is watching from the third floor.* "..."

-Meanwhile...-

AssUnv: *All enjoying some lemonade, hard or not, while partaking in their favorite of VIP Platform pastimes... Save for speaking about random topics, of course.*

Fuwa: *Slaps down her hand.* "Four of a Kind! Haha!"

Terasaka: "Goddamn! Why did I fold!? I had the same!"

Fuwa: "Better than when you folded to my bluffed straight! Now hand over that fourteen-K pot!" *Starts counting the notes in a stack.* "All of you in for another set?"

Isogai: "I lost enough money today, thank you very much..."

Yada: "I'm getting you next time, Fuwa. All part of the plan."

Kato: *Spectating from his study desk afar; he tilts his lemonade bottle.* "The Master plan!" *Snickers.*

Hazama: "There's a plan to gambling?"

Kayano: "I know nothing of plans, but I know for sure I'm getting back double next game, Fuwa-san!"

Fuwa: "Oh you can try." *Starts dealing out the deck to most of the other AssUniv students; Chiba, Hayami, Sugino, and Kimura were among the ones who did not announce.*

Kanzaki: "Good luck, Sugino-kun."

Sugino: "Eh, I'll do my best."

Nakamura: *Appears from the main entrance to the VIP Platform.* "Hey, guys. There's
something serious going on right now."

Mimura: "No offense, Nakamura-san, but when isn't there something serious?"

Kato: "When there's something even more serious; namely the Tentacle DNA."

Kayano: "Of course..."

Nakamura: "Guys, I'm not joking this time."

Nagisa: "Alright, Nakamura-san, what is it?"

Nakamura: "Karma-kun and Naoko-san were having their proper moment to themselves in a long while during the breaks of their extra shifts."

Maehara: "Whoa, their first proper moment? What do you call them cuddling together while we're all in this room?"

Hara: "To be fair, those instances could be anything but proper. And even if it was, it'd be awkward, what with the bulk of us constantly annoying them about it all."

Kayano: "Oh, that's true."

Nakamura: "Listen, guys!" *Refocuses.* "But that certainly is true; part of the reason they've separated from us tonight was just so they could have it... And have the money for those next few. Anyway, Karasuma stopped them before it could get anywhere."

Kurahashi: "That's tragic."

Isogai: "It's that overprotective, older sibling instinct, isn't it? Can't say I blame Karasuma-sensei if so."

Okuda: *Re-adjusts her glasses with preoccupation.* "Most definitely; it'd be difficult to imagine any overseer of an attractive female to willingly hand her over to a known small-town delinquent."

Yoshida: "At the same time, though, we're adults now, which means they're adults too! They should have every right to be with who they want!"

Kimura: "You going to be the one to say that to Karasuma-sensei? Any of us, for that matter?"

AssUniv: "..." *They all then gravitate their attention to Kato, sitting afar.*

Kato: "You all know that outside of missions, Karasuma takes all of my words with a grain of salt. No, not even; he takes it with an atom of the sodium within the compounds to make salt."

Fuwa: "Hm, but what if Kato's statements make Karasuma believe there is a love triangle between him, Karma-san, and Naoko-san, and then he lets it happen anyways just to watch all pairs' relationships implode and-"

Kayano: "Highly unlikely, given how straight-shooting Karasuma-sensei is. That is a Kato-kun-type of plan though."
Okajima: "I think we're getting the perspective all wrong, guys. We shouldn't change Karasuma-sensei's mind; we should just divert it."

Kataoka: "That didn't work too well last time, and it involved Naoko-san again as well."

Maehara: "Yeah, but only because of third-party issues." *Referring to the Neo-Wolfpack.* Thank God we're done fighting them.

Mimura: "So how do we distract him?"

Kato: "I'll talk his ear off, if you want."

Nagisa: "You'll need to really engage him this time, Kato-san."

Sugino: "Yeah - like a date." *He and some of the student-assassins crack up. *

Kato: "Or a night out with the Brothers."

Sosuke: *Refocuses.* "Or that."

Kayano: "Very good! Now, to bring Karma-kun and Naoko-san somewhere that makes up for all of their previous, foiled attempts!"

Hayami: "Sushi sound good?"

Chiba: "Good call; with the many ways you can eat it, they can have any type of date they'd wish."

Muramatsu: "And I know just the place - Sushi Wakon! Nice lighting for a romantic evening..."

Isogai: "Alright. We'll tell them when we return to the Hyatt, and tomorrow evening is one they're going to remember... Courtesy of us!"

AssUniv: "Yeah!"

Hazama: *Notices her leader has been unnaturally quiet.* "What's wrong, Terasaka-kun? You've been a ghost this whole conversation, and not even a cool one from suspense novels."

Terasaka: "It's the alcohol."

- With the plan now in setup phase, Kato goes downstairs to invite Karasuma for a little team-bonding exercise.-

Karasuma: *Notices Kato leaving his nightclub through the VIP entrance.* "Oh... Boss-kun."

Kato: *Takes a whiff of his vaporizer and exhales, looking over to him.* "Associate."

Karasuma: *Bows very robotically to him.* "To what, do I owe this honor?"

Kato: "I've been thinking... We should start getting onto the right foot with each other."

Karasuma: *Surprised.* "How now?"
Kato: "I've been thinking for a long while... I think. Wait a sec-" *Checks his watch.* "Yep! A long while, on our team-up fight against Craig before the start of the Summer. How we were able to accomplish a feat like that..."

Karasuma: "And what resulted from that thought?"

Kato: "The revelation that bashing brothers work best when they are more brothers than they are ones who bash."

Karasuma: "Why's that?"

Kato: "Do you recall either of us quipping at each other for even one second when we fought together against the Divine Soldier?"

Karasuma: "No, but that's only because we were too busy dodging punches."

Kato: "Do you even believe what you just said? Either of us would have found the time to do so." *Refocuses.* "But we still didn't. Because I think you believe in what's between us just as much as I do."

Karasuma: "Hmm... Your faith is not easily corrupted, true... Alright; what are you thinking?"

Kato: "Food and drink together? We can make it somewhere neutral too, if you still despise my club."

Karasuma: "Fair. But what if we find ourselves without words for a moment? Who fills the gap?"

Kato: "Way ahead of ya; I was going to get some of my blood-siblings and allies in on this night out too."

Karasuma: "Whoa whoa whoa, I'm not going to be sitting with a bunch of your dagger-staring brothers."

Kato: "And sister."

Karasuma: "Right... And sister. If you get friends, so will I. Irina's coming with."

Kato: "You better tell her."

Karasuma: "Oh, I'll tell her. After this shift."

Kato: "Don't overexert yourself." *Lightly waves goodbye before walking back into the club.*

Karasuma: *Ironic...*

-Now that Karasuma will be heavily... Engaged, by Kato the next evening, AssUniv can confirm to their two lovestruck-restrained friends that they would be having no problems having their perfect date together at a traditionally-styled sushi bar.-

Naoko: *Clad in a little-black dress with lace-embroided halter and fuchsia hem lining and
underlap, she sits with both legs crossed in the backseat of a limo.* "Tell me something, driver."

Driver: *Unwinds the blackened window to look back at Naoko, revealing herself underneath the chauffeur garb to be Yada.* "Yes?"

Naoko: "When did you learned to drive?"

Yada: "Well, I got a permit; not a license yet. Kato had me practice with his super-car lineup to get ready to be a worthwhile entrepreneur, like how I posed as one in an upcoming 'Bight of the Basilisks' episode."

Naoko: "Of course he did. Well, it's working wonders for you, at least. Though I'd prefer I got to Wakon by myself."

Yada: "Naoko-san, we've been troubling you and Karma-kun for quite some time; how about this time we help you two, and you let us?"

Naoko: "Very well." *Looks away.*

Yada: *A few minutes later, they reach the high-profile restaurant, and Yada personally opens the door for Naoko to step out.* "Here we are, miss."

Naoko: "Oh, why thank you." *Steps outside with a little help, and after Naoko deals with the front doorman, the next thing she sees inside is Karma, donning a jet tuxedo and standing at an isolated table for two.*

Karma: *Grins.* "Hey there, cutie."

Naoko: "Hey to you too, hotshot." *Continues walking up to him until they meet within three inches from each other. They then embrace and kiss for a few seconds before releasing.*

Karma: "One night of three hours, and a comped session of the sushi buffet, just for us."

Naoko: "We've got the best friends."

Karma: "We'll tell them that after this is over."

Naoko: "Then let's get started." *She walks over to her respective seat, which Karma pulls out for her to accept. When he takes his chair, they both raise their cups of iced water and clink it together.*

-Meanwhile, across the prefectural capital...-

Kato: *Walking on the sidewalk with his silver vape pen in his mouth, leading Karasuma and Irina to their recreational destination.*

Karasuma: "Remind us again why we're not going to wherever we are by driving and instead been strolling Kyoto for roughly half an hour?"

Kato: *Looks back with his arms supporting his head, vaporizer still hanging from his teeth.* "Didn't you say," *Checks his watch and returns his arm behind him.* "Earlier this afternoon that you've been getting tired of hearing me gloat about my cars? Come on, Karasuma-san; I'm putting
a step forward here! One hand on the olive branch!"

Karasuma: "..."

Irina: "It's well-appreciated, Kato-kun. Now we don't have to fear you disrupting the center of gravity with your drift-heavy driving everytime we make out in your vehicle."

Kato: "To be fair, between the two of us, I'm not the one who made you carsick, and almost get into an accident."

Karasuma: "What?" *Turns to Irina.* "Irina, you told that to him?"

Irina: "It wasn't the weird drifting race you and Kato-kun made to Kotohiki Beach that actually threw me in for a loop, it was the fact that you dropped all driving laws to do it. I felt distraught, but I did eventually reconnect, you know."

Karasuma: "Oh? We're definitely going to be talking more about this when we reach that bistro." *Turns to Kato.* "Speaking of, are we almost there?"

Kato: "Indeed." *Looks distantly across the street to the Basinette-5; a tavern with an exotic, hybridized exterior, combining Greek, Italian, Turkish, and Levantine designs. It's front sign claims it has a major side-focus on Mediterranean cuisine.*

Irina: "Hey, this place actually looks pretty nice!"

Karasuma: "Mediterranean? Not bad. I suppose I should've expected as much, since you and your Family, one of many cultures, would frequent somewhere anyone could enjoy."

Miho: "Oh you damn right we frequent a place like this!" *She leans on Satoshi and Kazuhiro as they walk closer to the trio. Opatz, and Alvarez are following closely behind them.*

Irina: *Lightly gasps when she notices Miho.* *The Karasuma expy!*

Kato: "Brothers; sisters; cousin." *Bows.*

Kato Family: "Oyabun." *Bow as well.*

Karasuma: "Are we all here? Are we set to head into the tavern?"

Kato: "Hm, not yet. We're still missing someone."

???: *Donning a white suit... with his red Korean theatre mask.* "Not anymore."

Karasuma: "Hyun?"

Hyun: "Indeed. Sorry, but I wear this outside of Qita Kong and Kato's territory. I need to stay off the system, lest-"

Kato Family: "We know; the doomsday inches closer."

Kato: "Alright; now we're all present and accounted for. Let's rent out the party table, everyone." *Leads the whole pack inside. On one side of the arrowhead formation, the Kato Family show a
little uneasiness towards the other side consisting of Karasuma and Irina, who share a level of discord proceeding too.*

-Returning to Karma and Naoko...-

Naoko: *Finishes chewing and swallows.* "Karma-kun, you've tried this oshizushi? It's to die for."

Karma: *Is holding a piece of nigirizushi within the ends of his chopstick.* "Osaka-style is always good, but I have had it quite a sum of times before. You should instead try out this press spread." *Slides over a small platter of the sushi he just picked off of.*

Naoko: *Picks one up and bites into it.* "Oh, you're right! That is good!"

Karma: "Heh, what did the Ministry's undercover work teach you on cultures barring languages, if not this?"

Naoko: "Some basic cooking of a country's traditional ingredients and etiquette. Nothing on an enthusiast's level. Also, keep in mind, I'm under Karasuma's wing, who is practically eating super instant-noodl-" *Realizes she mentioned Karasuma.* "!!"

Karma: "What're you so afraid of, Naoko? Speak of the soldier won't make him suddenly appear; all mourning movies say that." *Laughs.* "Just exaggerating that, Naoko."

Naoko: *Laughs.* "Yeah. But I can't imagine what'd he say if he saw me in this." *Looks down at her halter.*

Karma: *Looks too.* "I'm already pretty surprised, honestly. I think I've only seen you in a dress once before."

Naoko: "Recently after we rekindled, I did do some talking with my sister-in-law, asking him what'd probably impress you best."

Karma: "I appreciate the great thought. And it does certainly impress... Like you usually do."

Naoko: "Thank you, and-" *Beat.* "Wait, what does that last part mean?"

Karma: *Refocuses.* "Oh, I'm sorry. That wasn't anything."

Naoko: "Karma-kun, when you speak about something semi-important, its's either in sing-song, or lie. And I do loathe it when you lie..."

Karma: "..."

-Back with the Kato Family and the Karasuma couple...-

Irina: *Plays around with her parmesan carbonara dish while innocently flirting with Opatz.* "And how did you end up escaping that POW massacre in Vranica, Mr. Opatz?"

Opatz: *Takes a quick sip of Ursus beer before continuing.* "Fair miss, if you're really from the region I'm from, than you know that these Yugoslav Wars liked their prison rooms to be in buildings highly-compromised foundations."
Irina: "Oh~, so you squeezed through the cracks, didn't you?"

Alvarez: *Laughs while holding onto a piece of lechazo.* "Well, that's certainly one way of looking at it!"

Karasuma: *Jabs his fork a few times through his Greek salad.* "Hey, no fraternizing right in front of me, Irina."

Kazuhiro: "Oh come on, Karasuma-sama! Irina and Opatz-san are just bonding over a good topic between them. It's not cheating, and you don't have to be jealous about it."

Opatz: "Mmm, maybe a little bit."

Irina: "Ditto."

Karasuma: "Psh..." *Refocuses, taking a look between the two Katos; on his left, identified by his dog tag necklace, is Kazuhiko, while on the other side is Kazuhiro.* "I still can't quite grasp the idea that you two are merely cousins."

Kato: "What do you mean, 'merely'? You saying bonds between cousins are weak?"

Kazuhiro: "Oh, that's some major-ass BS, Karasuma-sama! I think you need to apologize!"

Miho: "You want me to make him?"

Karasuma: "That's not what I meant; calm down. It's surprising that Kato and his albums weren't kidding; it took a lot of minimally invasive procedures and luck, but you two by age thirteen finally look so much like each other, and you just continue to grow that way."

Hyun: "Let me tell, when I first saw these two together, I had quite the crazier set of words, Karasuma."

Kato: "It was definitely uncanny as Hell at first, but we more than live with it well."

Kazuhiro: "Yeah, especially because even then, I'm still the hotter one." *Elbows his younger cousin, which they both grin to.*

Satoshi: "There's still a greater appeal somewhere for cooler souls, Kazuhiro-ani."

Miho: "Oh, definitely." *Controls herself from gravitating towards her Oyabun any further.*

Irina: "So, Miho-chan."

Miho: "Whoa, 'Miho-chan'? I should note, I'm actually older than all of you."

Irina: "Okay okay! Miho-san, let me just ask you something."

Miho: "Shoot."

Irina: "Is that hair color natural?"
Miho: *Clutches her burgundy hair.* "Wh-!? Of course it is!"

Irina: "You think I could have a strand to make... A wig of it?"

Miho: "Excuse me!?"

Irina: "I'm just horsing around; It's really nice-looking, and I imagine it feeling like velvet."

Miho: "Oh... Uh, you're blonde hair is definitely attractive too. Unlike the other guys we have, you're obviously very conscious about that mane, which is a definite plus."

Irina: *Curls together her own hair as well.* "Oh, why thank you!" She complimented me within a cumulative several hours of knowing each other? Oh, she's not a Karasuma expy then; she's a friend.

Karasuma: "..." This day I didn't really expect too much of. But... I have been learning counters to my own Toshu-Kakuto fighting style, what truly affects culturally diplomatic affairs across Japan's foreign relations, and explanations of some of the JSDF's more controversial events. And Irina's having a lot of fun too; maybe a little more than I'd like, but it's better than none. This... I'm actually very glad I attended this.

Kato: *Looks up from his beef bourguignon dish.* "That's a new look, Karasuma."

Irina: *Looks over to her husband.* "I know that face; that's when you realized something."

Karasuma: "..."

-Returning to Naoko and Karma one more time...-

Naoko: "That's unbelievable, Karma-kun."

Karma: "But it's also true; I never did anything impressive."

Naoko: "You're the one who topped Asano-kun."

Karma: "Only because you threw the final exams so that Asano focused only on me. And even then, it wasn't just me; you've been helping me out quite a bit on that too."

Naoko: "I didn't take the test for you, Karma-kun. And also, what about you taking down Takaoka one last time?"

Karma: "Nah, what finally took him out wasn't my plan, but Nagisa's. Face it like I have; I'm never going to instill the excitement that I have for you back to you, like you do to me."

Naoko: "You don't have to do that; you've already impressed me a good deal before, and it never required you to be peerless. It just required that you were there."

Karma: "..."

Naoko: "Or was it just an excuse?"

Karma: "Naoko-san-"
Naoko: "You still want to be-" *Phone rings. She takes it out of her handbag and realizes that the ID lists Karasuma. She looks up at Karma, telepathically relaying the information over to him, before picking it up.* "Hello, Karasuma-nii?"

Karasuma: "Naoko-san, I realize lately, I've been a little unfair..."

Naoko: "Oh?"

Karasuma: "Yes. I've been thinking that by limiting your interaction at this point, I'd be helping to retrain your constant growth. But, I've been learning today that as much as you can gain from observing perfectionists and paragons, there may still be some stuff only delinquents can yield."

Naoko: *Huh...* "What does that mean?"

Karasuma: "It means, I won't be stepping in the way of your relationship with Karma any further."

Naoko: "Really?"

Karasuma: "If... He can accept and complete my challenge."

Naoko/Karma: *Huh?*
The "Perfect" Escape Space

Chapter Summary

Karasuma has admitted to Naoko and Karma last chapter that he is entirely willing to stop being the dotng big brother who refuses to allow his sister to get into any relationships. But before he will do so, he must find proof that Karma is a person worthy of Naoko - enter, Karasuma's challenge of cat and mice. I can only imagine how that's going to go down...

-The next day...-

-Karma and Naoko appear from out of Fujimi Station, all the way in Saitama prefecture. They then load some light luggage into a trunk of a facelifted Buick LaCrosse (that has a humorous "DON'T STEAL" sign on the passenger-side window that Naoko casually takes off). They get in themselves, start up the vehicle, and drive out, heading towards the outskirts of city.-

Naoko: *While Karma drives to the border, she looks outside the window and begins reminiscing...*

-Within Karasuma and Irina's Hyatt Regency suite...-

_Karma: "A game of cat and mouse?"

_Irina: "...

_Karasuma: "Correct. I'm the cat, while you and Naoko will be the mice. More specifically, Naoko will be the golden mouse."

_Naoko: "What does that mean?"

_Karasuma: "It means that if I catch you within the duration of twenty-four hours, Karma loses the game."

_Karma: "Ah, so if Naoko really means so much to me, then I should prove show my love - prove I'm able to keep her safe."

_Karasuma: "Yes. But not just from any Average Joe; it will be against me, a super-soldier who's not keen on giving over a younger, adopted sister. Of course, there's no challenge if we start right now, so some rules will be placed: you have a six-hour head-start (which won't factor into the overall time limit) beginning at dawn, and while anything goes for you two, I won't be able to use my Fifth Freedom to chase you out of places."

_Naoko: "Alright, but what if we decide we will spend the time in a hotel room? You can't extort the hotel staff to know what room we go into."

_Karasuma: "You will be allowed to remain in one designated room for four hours with no
penalty; after that, the twenty-four hour game time pauses, and you will have to mobilize to run it again. Kato and his family have placed beacons on you two to determine this. Oh, and speaking of Kato, he and his resources are legally off-limits; this means you can’t call him, and you can’t use his name to allow you into spots I can’t reach." *Turns to Kato.* "You won’t be starting the conversation either, yes?"

    Kato: *Looks over to the two "mice."* "Agreed."

    Naoko: "..." *Turns to Karma.* "Karma-kun... What do you say?"

    Karma: *Nods.* "I accept this challenge." *Turns to Naoko.* I'm finally going to impress you with this, Naoko-san.

    Naoko: Karma-kun...

    Karasuma: "Alright; I'll leave you two to prepare. If you're smart, I'd expect you two gone three hours ago. Now get to it."

    Karma: *Glances over to Naoko a few times while watching the road.* "This place, where you stayed while we were all going through the clues to find Dr. Yanagisawa... It's close?"

    Naoko: "Hm? Oh, uh, we're roughly ten minutes off. Let me see the road; I'll get us there."

-Almost ten minutes later, they finally do reach the small lodging; Shiki Hotel. It was not too large, especially compared to the five-stars Kato has had them live in for a while - only four floors. After a brief check-in, the two get a room together, and decide to wait out the first four hours of their time.-

    Karma: "..." *Fiddles around with the wrapper of a water bottle he took out from the fridge while deep in thought, sitting on a lounge chair overlooking the outside windows.*

    Naoko: *Is sitting a fair distance away from him on the bed.* "You're wondering, aren't you?"

    Karma: "Of what?"

    Naoko: "If we can really do this?"

    Karma: "No; I'm wondering if I can really do this. Remember, Naoko-san, you're definitely involved in this game, but who's being challenged - who's being tested right now is myself."

    Naoko: "I want you to win just as much as you do. That's why I offered this location when we got things going."

    Karma: "And I appreciate it. But from here on out, it's my game. So please, just follow my lead."

    Naoko: *He's hardly listening to me...* *Rises up from the mattress and walks over to right behind Karma and the back-support of the chair. She then leans forward and wraps her arms across his shoulders.* "This is all to impress both me and Karasuma-nii, and expunge a complex...But can you promise me this is all you will do? Nothing else will be as rash?"

    Karma: *Clutches Naoko's right arm.* "I promise you that."
Naoko: *Smiles.* "Great." *She leans further down and kisses Karma on the cheek.* "We didn't have time to clean up today, of course, so I'm going to take a shower and all that."

Karma: "By all means."

Naoko: "See you soon." *Closes the bathroom door.*

Karma: *Lingers for a little bit before hearing Naoko turn the water on behind the wall. He then decides to get up and take a closer look at the outside, predominantly filled with a large sky over the nearby parking lot. He first gazes at the Buick on the left side of the hotel's main entrance, close to their window.* *It took an extra sum to get it there, but if we needed a quick, urgent getaway, that's right where we need it. And Karasuma doesn't know we have a car now, so he has no fair reason to sabotage it. Though honestly, I'd be surprised anyone would find us in a relatively isolated hotel, even someone like Karasuma.* *Looks at another car coming into the lot; it was black, it was a Toyota, and it had unique license plates.* *No...* *The car parks very closely, but not right next to, their Buick.* *NO...* *When it turns off, and the driver comes out, the first notable traits Karma can decipher is the man's dark suit and his trademark spiky black hair.* *NO! Goddamnit!*

Karasuma: *Walks into Shiki Hotel, heading towards the main lounge, taking a seat that allows him to see the stairs and elevators.* *Irina explained during the plane ride back from the Korean borders about the rest of what she was hiding to keep Naoko's mission details a secret. Part of that included this small hotel that she booked a room in to easily appear to the search party for Dr. Yanagisawa when they needed to. It's very likely Naoko has decided to use this place again since she knows she didn't tell me. Of course I might be wasting time. But this is worth one shot."

Karma: "Oh shit..." *Begins repacking and closing their luggage.*

Naoko: *Gets out of the shower room, wearing only a towel to cover herself. She immediately notices Karma's frantic behavior.* "Karma-kun? What's going on?"

Karma: "Karasuma-sensei's here; we have to get ready to get going."

Naoko: "What!? He's here already?"

Karma: "Yeah; get back into something comfortable; we got to go." *Goes into Naoko's baggage, taking out sweatpants, an undershirt, and hoodie.* "Here we are." *Tosses the combo to her.*

Naoko: "Ah-!" *Catches it with one hand, while the other maintains holding onto her towel.* "Karma-kun, we've still got a good three hours or so left before the clock pauses, and Karasuma has no way of reaching us up here; why leave now?"

Karma: "That is three hours for him to find out how he can stop us from escaping this place. And if we can't leave this place, we will eventually lose! Get with the program Naoko. And get changed already!"

Naoko: "..."

-Naoko does get changed back into a new attire and within minutes they leave the suite. They first venture through the main staircase, before realizing that its first-floor entry goes to the corridor ending where the elevators are; the moment they walk past them, Karasuma will see them. They
then return to the stairs, realizing there is a basement entry. While dodging the staff circling around in there, Karma and Naoko eventually find a staircase doorway leading back to the outside at ground-level.

Naoko: "Phew! We're out!"

Karma: "Yes, yes we are. Now, to the car." *They both jog over to the Buick.*

Naoko: * Notices the Toyota Crown with government licenses. * "Oh God, you're right!"

Karma: "Enough gazing; get in!" *They both get into the LaCrosse and drive out.* "Dodged a bullet... Felt great, but wouldn't want to do it again, if it's all the same to you."

Naoko: "Mutual. But I don't think we'll have a choice." *Refocuses.* "Clearly, I'm not good at hiding from Karasuma-nii. What do you think?"

Karma: "I got a spot. In Fukushima. This is our only car, and I feel we'll need it, so we'll be driving three hours or so; get some rest."

Naoko: "Alright... Say, you don't think Karasuma already knows we're not in there anymore... Would he?"

Karma: "How would he?"

Karasuma: "..." *Checks his watch.* It's been several minutes. *Proceeds to do his periodic interval of checking his vehicle's cameras on the windshields, mirrors, and ornaments; the latest feed shows the two he's gunning for running through the lot to their car, which he now identifies as the Buick LaCrosse.* Not bad, Karma. But you'll have to do better than that. *Gets up and leaves the hotel's front lobby.*

-The long drive from Saitama to Fukushima went quietly, with Karma remaining silent as Naoko got some rest.-

Karma: *Parks outside the city for a little bit, and nudges Naoko awake.* "Hey, Naoko-san, we're almost there."

Naoko: *Stirs awake.* "Huh?" *Looks out the passenger window and windshield.* "Oh... Is this Fukushima?"

Karma: "The prefecture. More specifically, this is the outskirts of Soma. Back when I was younger and traveled with my parents, we often liked to come here into the more rural communities for fruit-picking, as well as their many traditional festivals. Our seasonal home is not too far."

Naoko: "By all means, Karma-kun. Lead the way."

Karma: *Cracks a small grin.* "With pleasure." *Continues driving.*

-A few minutes later, Karma parks the Buick across the street from a large estate on top of a small hill, overlooking the rest of the region.-

Karma: *Kicks over a medium-large-sized rock near the front entrance, revealing a key stamped
into the soil underneath, which he pries out to unlock the door. He and Naoko enter the house, with
the latter realizing it to be designed with Meiji architecture in its interior. Both set down their
belongings near the traditional dining table. He then turns over to the windows in-line with the
front door.* "Alright. You didn't really get to finish cleaning up, so, I'll wait out and watch the
roads while-"

Naoko: *Grabs his hand to stop him from proceeding, forcing him to look back.* "No. You
clean up, get changed, and have a proper meal. I'll watch out while you do so."

Karma: "Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "You need every advantage you have to get through the rest of this game, Karma-kun.
And that starts with peace of mind - a warm shower, works wonder to do that."

Karma: *Looks around in his own house.* "You think a vacation home this oriental would have
the mechanics of a shower?" *Begins walking to one particular direction.* "You're damn right
there is."

Naoko: *Laughs before looking over to where Karma was going.*

-The duo took turns watching all sides of the household, while the off-duty one washed up, got
changed, and ate up.-

Karma: *In his bathrobe, sits on a rocking chair outside the vacation home scoping the Buick.*

Naoko: *Off-screen, inside the house.* "Karma-kun."

Karma: *Looks back, then to the car again.* "Yeah?"

Naoko: "Want to get into these kimonos?"

Karma: "Kimonos? What about-?"

Naoko: "If we do lose, Karma-kun, I would like it to be in style. But I don't see it likely, at least
right now."

Karma: "Alright then." *Stands up and heads inside. The two of them move to Karma's parents'
room, where the two help each other straighten out several parts of the garment, and tie the obis.*

Naoko: *Seeing Karma in a daimyo-esque robe has her look away, her face noticeably
reddening.*

Karma: "Something the issue?"

Naoko: "Just... That it's my turn. You get something to eat now." *Walks out to the living
room.*

Karma: * Watches her leave until she gets out of sight.* "Hmph..."

-They keep exchanging intervals into the evening.-

Karma: *Continues watching outside, with the time now at 7 P.M.; almost half of the time limit
Naoko's turn. *Gets up and heads inside.* "Naoko-" *Upon entering the master bedroom, he breaks off.*

Naoko: *Is fast asleep on the king-size mattress, with her father's jacket on top of her. Her face did not look ordinarily unconscious, with her eyebrows twitching, as if in conflict.*

Karma: "..." *Against his better judgment, he decides to lie on the other side and cuddle alongside her, sharing a brief moment of intimacy to expel the overwhelming sense of urgency. But that too must be dispelled when the sounds of blanks are fired off.*

Naoko: "HUH!?" *Springs to an upright kneeling position upon hearing the noise, forcing Karma off the bed. She immediately notices she knocked him off and looks to him; judging by him rubbing the back of his head, Karma had hit the nightstand there on the way down.* "Karma-kun!? What were you doing? What was that?"

Karma: "Relax, Naoko-san. That was just the starting guns fired by the people organizing the Soma horse races."

Naoko: "Oh... Wait, were you just, er, spooning me?"

Karma: "You looked a little unsettled. I tried to console you somehow."

Naoko: "Unsettled." *Beat.* "My jacket! Where-"

Karma: "You mean this?" *Lifts it off the ground.*

Naoko: *Exhales with relief.*

Karma: "Not yours, is it? I would guess... Your father's?"

Naoko: *Takes it back.* "Yeah."

Karma: "Karasuma-sensei still owes you an explanation, doesn't he?"

Naoko: "Yep, he does."

Karma: "You think you're ready for the answers now?"

Naoko: "You're not the only one who has things to prove, it seems, Karma-kun. It's true; I think if I can make a difference here, really show I can stand on my own, then I should be able to learn the truth of what happened."

Karma: "A lofty goal. But one to aspire to, surely."

Naoko: "I've only had the courage to reignite my goal after seeing how far you'd go for yours, Karma-kun. So, what I'm saying is... You're impressing me. Right now." *Gets off the bed and stands straight next to him, who has risen off the ground.*

Karma: *Sighs.* "Now that feels nice." *After a few more moments, the two kiss.*

Naoko: "This day's been rough. How about we enjoy ourselves a bit in the festivities?"
Karma: *Grins.* "And stand amongst the big crowds as cover. Sounds good."
The Final Decision Space

Chapter Summary

With the cat and mouse game not doing as well as either Karma or Naoko have hoped, they both are beginning to realize the true nature of the contest and are readying themselves to deal with it as it should be. Perhaps Karasuma might just be pleasantly surprised by this new course they are taking, too.

-After the inner demons holding back the relationship between their hosts, Karma and Naoko, have been seemingly appeased, the duo decide to walk out of the safety of Karma’s vacation home to Soma’s horse festival. It looked like the two of them could finally have a chance to unwind, liberating themselves, if for only a moment, from the anxiety they have of a very game Karasuma chasing after them.-

-But after a few small pastimes and games, they realized that their problems were far from over, and it didn't just involve Karasuma.-

Karma: *Walks onto an arcing, oriental bridge overlooking the nearby lagoon, from which Naoko is standing on to gaze at.* "Surprise." *Holds out a paper tray of tsukune chicken yakitori to her.*

Naoko: *Smiles.* "Thank you." *Accepts the street food and takes a bite.* "Heh, this is pretty nice."

Karma: *Goes through one himself.* "Yeah? I thought so.

Naoko: "Well, except for-" *Realizes something she didn't anticipate is within the meat, and spits it out into a napkin.* "Cartilage?"

Karma: "Not a fan." *Realizes he forgot something pretty important.*

Naoko: "Karma-kun, you know I dislike that part of the chicken!"

Karma: "I'm sorry, I just didn't rec-"

Naoko: *Looks aside, before returning her gaze to him.* "Karma-kun, it's one thing that you're impressing my older brother, but you're running away from him with a girl you barely can bother to know!"

Karma: "Hey, that's not true! Now, I apologize for forgetting you dislike that part of the food, because I did know before. But you know why I forgot? You don't give me a chance to know for sure."

Naoko: "What?"

Karma: "You're never straightforward about this stuff; you always have me figure things out.
Maybe you're challenging me, and I guess I liked the challenge, but when you get ticked off at something like this, which, compared to what we're going through right now, is so very trivial, that kind of ticks me off back at you!"

Naoko: "Hey!"

Karma: "And that's onto another thing too, you know! Part of the reason why I vented so much at you back when nobody knew you were in Kyoto, was because you never before did something that could be considered wrong! Unlike me, which you can always find an issue with."

Naoko: "That's ridiculous!"

Karma: "Is it? Or does it perfectly explain why I'm trying to impress you and Karasuma so much? Because you claim I'm already sufficient, but actually think I'm never enough."

Naoko: "IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!"

Karma: "!!"

Naoko: "You... Are worth it. Always were. And not for a second would I want to leave you for anything... Again. But it has happened before, and it happened in an instant."

Karma: "..."

Naoko: "No matter what, Karma-kun, I'm an agent for the Japanese government. So I have to go places you can't follow." *Refocuses.* "What I try to do here is give you reasons not to want to keep making this harder on yourself, and me, when these things end up happening! We dodged a bullet last time, but that won't happen again!"

Karma: "You're still doing this... Even now?"

Naoko: "What does that mean?"

Karma/Naoko: *They continue arguing.*

People: *Nearby look over to the two.*

Resident 1: "Hey, isn't that Akabane's son?"

Resident 2: "Is it his girlfriend? They seem to be taking issue."

Resident 3: "You think they're early spouses?"

Resident 2: "You think they're early spouses?"

Resident 1: "Well, they certainly have the old-arguing part down."

-The arguments in question eventually dissolved into apathy when the two reduced themselves to the point of a mutual hug. Karma decided that to get their minds off-track, they would watch the next horse race. Once it was over (and Karma had lost a good several-thousand yen), they decided enough was enough and head back to the vacation home... By now, it was 9:30 P.M., with roughly fifteen hours left before the game is over.-
Naoko: *Holding onto Karma's arm and resting her head on his close shoulder, she looks around a bit while the two stroll through the end of the festival's perimeter.* "!!" *Tightens her grip.*

Karma: *Looks to her.* "What's up?"

Naoko: "Eyes over there." *Nudges him in a general direction.*

Karma: *Gazes that way, and notices another government vehicle.* "No way..."

Naoko: "Karasuma-nii always has a way. I reckon he called your parents, talking about places you might pick outside Kyoto."

Karma: "Damn, pulling out all of the stops."

Naoko: "What do we do? Judging by his road entry, he most likely didn't see the house and the car. Should we return there?"

Karma: "He will eventually... Ah, you head back, get everything ready, then start up the car. Wait for some directions after."


Karma: "..." *Looks back at the agency car and gets behind a wall.* It's risky, but I need to see Karasuma-sensei again for this plan to work. When he gets back to his car, I'll reveal myself to him.* *Pulls back from the cover of the corner.*

-Thirty minutes later...-

Karasuma: *After patrolling around the Soma Horses Festival, he heads back to his car, looking through the active computer there.* They were definitely here, some of the betting records at the quarter-races showed Karma's name. And they were recent too, so they probably are still nearby... *Looks up to the streets and notices someone that looks a lot like Karma from behind. He cuts the corner of the street.* Hmm... *Starts up the Toyota Avalon and slowly drives to follow Karma around the corner... And the next... And the next. And then a long walkway.*

Karma: *Stops at the road lane leading to the rural region, putting something away into this daimyo kimono.* "Heh, no faking anything here this time, huh?"

Karasuma: *Steps out of the car.* "What's the angle this time, Karma? Self-sacrifice? Yeah, I don't get to steal back my sister so quickly, but she's not exactly running away with you anymore, is she?"

Karma: *Turns around.* "I guess not. She is nearby though, if you're wondering."

Karasuma: *Refocuses.* "So, what's going to happen?"

Karma: "We're going to fight."

Karasuma: "While you're in that?"

Karma: "If you like."
Karasuma: "Very well."

Karma: "One handicap, though."

Karasuma: "What's that?"

Karma: "Your first move, cannot be a grab or a jump." *Pats his kimono.* "I really don't want to get this dirty, huh?"

Karasuma: "Is that so? Alright then. I don't need to start with those anyway."

Karma: "Good." *Reveals his phone again; though it was too far to discern the conversation, it was clear with the implication he was giving directions to someone. And he was.*

Karasuma: *Sees headlights growing from behind him and turns around. Naoko is in the Buick, driving at accelerating speed right towards them! Because of his oath, he could not jump and grab the vehicle, so he side-rolls as a last resort.*

Karma: *Runs in the direction the car was still going as it slows down. He then gets into the passenger seat and speeds by.*

Karasuma: *Attempts to get back into his car to chase after him, but realizes mid-burnout acceleration that Karma had sabotaged the tires to no longer handle such pressure and they pop after that speed-up.* Oh, Goddamn!

Naoko: *Continues following the roads while Karma settles into the shotgun seat.* "That was too damn close, you know!"

Karma: "Tell me about it!"

Naoko: "What's the next play? I messed up, you did too; is there anywhere that's safe?"

Karma: "No. None that is indefinitely for Karasuma-sensei. Everybody knows that, most surely."

Naoko: *Looks over to him.* "So what're we going to do?"

Karma: *Thinks for a moment.* "Back to Kyoto."

Naoko: "Really?"

Karma: *Checks the time on his smartphone.* "Near midnight... twelve hours left. Yeah, that's enough time for the both of us."

Naoko: "I guess; it's roughly a ten-hour train ride."

Karma: "Let's drop off the car along the way then."

Naoko: "Where?"

Karma: "I know the place; let's just get to a interregional station."
-And that's what they did; Karma and Naoko left the car behind and bought tickets to return to the city that reunited them. About an hour later, Karasuma naturally had figured the two would reach a place that allowed them to leave quickly, as they would not risk staying at a gas station with him so close behind. He was about to get on with his usual investigating routine, scouring the floors for like footprints and recent destinations... Until he notices the Buick LaCrosse parked nearby the station! When he goes to it, he realizes there is a note in a plastic bag clipped to the windshield by the wipers. Clearly not the color or preparation of a ticket, Karasuma pries it out and reads: "WAREHOUSE. COME GET US." Karasuma looked a tad confused at first, before smiling and gets on the next train.-

-Nine hours and forty-five minutes pass to reach Kyoto and the training warehouse. If Karma and Naoko remain by each others' sides for the next ten minutes, they win the game. The two wait within the training warehouse, like they implied they would.-

Karma: *Getting tired of looking at the entrance to the facility, he turns his attention to Naoko.* "Well, here we are again, about to confront Karasuma-sensei again."

Naoko: *Puts her hands behind her and looks around a bit.* "Yeah, here we are again." *Takes focus in her sight even more.* "But this time, no one is going to be getting in the way. Nobody is going to be helping us. We're all on our own."

Karma: "Yeah... Last time, we weren't good enough to one-up Karasuma-sensei on our own. But a lot has changed since then; we've greatly improved ourselves."

Naoko: "Definitely; be it physically and mentally, we've made good progress; the best anyone else can hope for."

Karma: "Apparently anyone but ourselves."

Naoko: "Yes, but that's a given for everyone."

Karma: "So now, with no eyes on us, we'll finally make the impression we were hoping for?"

Naoko: "Yep, using nothing but our own skills, and the trust and knowledge we have in each other."

Karma: "And it will be enough."

Naoko: *Slowly places the palm of her left hand to his closest.* "Count on it."

-A few seconds after that, a car could be heard pulling over in the parking space outside, causing the two student-assassins refocus. After a few taps and bangs as security check, the door slowly opened up.-

Karasuma: "Am I to be expecting any gate traps?"

Karma: "No, Karasuma-sensei. Nothing worth your time here, except us."

Karasuma: *Fully steps inside.* "I see that. And why? Giving up?"

Naoko: "Far from it, Karasuma-ani. We're taking a stand."
Karasuma: "Oh?"

Karma: "Yeah. We both know it is possible to hide from you longer than twenty-four hours, but not for much longer than that. That doesn't matter though, because probably deep inside, none of us would have been comfortable with the game resulting in that."

Naoko: "I know I wouldn't. I won't be able to ask again about my father if that happened."

Karasuma: "!!"

Karma: "Naoko's a fighter, so I'll be too. In the last ten minutes of this game, we'll show it to you." *Both Naoko and he begin taking off their jackets.*

Karasuma: "Hmph, interesting. But Naoko, you're not concerned that all it takes for me to win this contest is to pull you away from Karma by more than ten meters away?"

Naoko: *Cracks her knuckles.* "I'd like to see you try, bro."

Karasuma: *Takes off his suit's blazer and tie.* "You all definitely have the poise to back up your confidence. But will both be enough? Let's find out." *All three of them get into a fighting stance and after a few seconds they charge in to engage their opponent(s).*

(Yakuza 5's OST "The Mutual Fists" plays in the background.)

赤羽カルマと秋元尚子VSタダミ・カラスマ

Karma Akabane; Ritsumeikan University Economics Student

and

Naoko Akimoto; Ritsumeikan University International Relations Student

VS

Tadaomi Karasuma; Ministry of Defense JASDF Vice-Chief of Staff

Karma and Naoko deliver the first joint-attack with Karma sliding low to catch Karasuma's ankles in a drop toe hold, while Naoko performs a cheat-somersault kick, covering all aspects of the close fray and limiting Karasuma's options... except for hopping backwards, away from both attacks. Naoko lands right in front of the slowing Karma, defending his rise back up to his feet. Karasuma is quick to return the assault, looking to charge back in with a rising snap kick, which Karma steps up to low-block. But then the smart shoe pulls back and Karasuma's opposite fist flies
forward - an exaggerated Cobra punch, going straight for Karma, who's too deep to defend. Thankfully, Naoko saw it coming and catches it with her outer left forearm (held in a Keysi-esque block). The suddenly dead impact allowed Karma to side kick low and give the forces some space.

Karma and Naoko both run towards their mentor, with Naoko taking the lead this time. She picks up some speed and falls into a right-kneeslide; with only one leg along the ground, she automatically pivots around and appears behind her brother-in-law within a two-second interval, and, with Karma, form a pincer attack on him. This comes in the form of Karma's high knee and Naoko's heel-sweep kick, which Karasuma avoids by mule kicking Naoko when she turns her back on him for momentum in her blow, hitting her ribcage and sending her back some ways. Karma's face-level strike meanwhile is absorbed by Karasuma's cross-block, and when he inevitably falls back to the ground, a knee lift to his chest was waiting for him. And it hurt; Karma collapses to all fours from the strike.

Karasuma looks to take one of his students out with a right hook to the chinline, but Naoko recovered just in time to prevent that, jumping up high and placing one of her legs on his free shoulder, while her other leg hooks around his raised hand, locking it in place with her cupped-together hands. When the attack again stopped dead, she arced forward, intending to twist takedown into a modified, inverted triangle choke. Karma ensured Karasuma fell onto his back by rolling into his legs while he leaned over with his sister. Now on the ground, Naoko compressed the submission with all of her might, but her brother boasted excellent grapple defense and was beginning to break the lock, lifting her leg off from the other. Before he could finish, he could see Karma rising back up and trying for a few attacks to his midsection, which he blocked with his knees a few times. When it came down to a double knee drop, Karasuma kicked along the ground to reposition himself, making Karma miss completely.

With Karma briefly addressing his scratched caps, Karasuma managed to flip himself over, transitioning Naoko's hold into a traditional triangle. However, she would have no leverage with her brother rising to his feet and lifting her in a powerbomb. Karma, who fell onto his back while writhing, front-kicked on Karasuma's inner knee, causing him to buckle and fall into a three-point. He also released Naoko from the position, but from his standing height, that was a near six-foot fall that didn't tickle, especially with weak ribs, which she clutched in pain. Karma had recovered finally to try and knee Karasuma in the face while he was still bowed down, only to miss when Karasuma stands up again and pushes the former's whole body aside. When he lands, Karasuma pulls on his far arm back and throws a roundhouse kick, turning against how Karma would for extra momentum. Karma sees it coming and limboes underneath. The former scouted that, though, and in his circular motion also set up an axe kick that Karma had no way to avoid, leading to his body being outlined by Karasuma's leg all the way to the ground.

Karma coughs and spits out a few drops of blood, but holds onto Karasuma's kicking leg as it was on his chest. With the surprise in play, he then back-rolls, taking the latter's foot with him, and forcing Karasuma to split forward. Naoko, who has also rested up, dashes in from behind, smashing her elbow into the back of her brother's head. It definitely had quite an impact and damaged Karasuma a bit, but when he falls to his side, he immediately stands onto his shoulder (with both his hands as balancers), lifting Karma, who's still clutching his front leg, up into the air. He then whips his leg up, causing Karma to fly right off towards Naoko. Unsure of how to react (with all options either hurting herself or him), Naoko ends up taking her boyfriend in the torso, and they slide back a little bit.

Karasuma kip-ups back to his feet while his two protégés claw back onto their own. Knowing that he's running out of time (his watch indicates that there are only four minutes left), he's done screwing around... Now at his 80%, he whips out a telescopic baton and rushes at the couple again,
swiping forehand horizontally at the face-levels of them. Karma and Naoko both duck under it, and intend on a rising shoulder tackle. Karasuma wasn't as fast as his reflexes this time around, only managing to redirect the motion of his cudgel so that Naoko's shoulder would hit it, but Karma on the other side managed to check his acromion straight into his chest. Karasuma backs away to assess his damage, before seeing his sister's date closing the gap again, and lashes the baton backhand at face and knee-levels. Karma pulls back of both.

Naoko joins his side again, putting a baton of her own into Karma's hand. Now with everyone armed, they slowly pace towards their opponents. Naoko proceeds with an overhead chop of her nightstick, which Karasuma sidesteps and sweep-kicks low, tripping Naoko. Karma prevents him from punishing the misstep by attempting a backfist, following it with a forehanded pommel strike, which Karasuma blocks with both hands. With his torso exposed, the teacher delivers another knee to Karma's upper body, and tosses him back to where he started, dividing the duo. Naoko returns to the fray spinning a full 360 degrees before smashing the tip of her baton right into Karasuma's leg. Surprisingly, it moves up lessening the impact but also trips her opponent up, leading her to follow the strike with another sweep. Karasuma falls over, but immediately rolls back to recover, right next to Karma, who tries again in striking him with the cudgel. But Karasuma telegraphed it and grabbed the other edge and hip tosses Karma over with it, disarming him, and finishing with a small punt kick to his waist. With his back turned, however, Naoko saw her moment to strike again, batting her weapon several times across it, not realizing that the telescopic function cracked, and shattered on the fifth slap.

Naoko, surprised by her baton breaking off of Karasuma's back, leaves herself exposed to a wild backfist that sends her rolling across the cold ground for a little bit, before finally stopping supine; her turned-away head and closed eyes indicate she's out of it now. Karasuma knows this and begins walking over to her, until Karma gets back up and Lou-Thesz Presses his back, combining it with an elbow smash to the nape. He keeps the bodyscissors locked in, allowing him to continue wailing on his mentor with a flurry of hooks, straights, and even some 12-6s, but it doesn't last when Karasuma's brute strength snapmares Karma overboard and back onto the ground. He's quick to respond with a Pele kick while supine, but Karasuma catches it and then flips Karma over. He finishes with a strong knuckle thrust into a part of Karma's knee, suddenly (and temporarily) paralyzing it, with Karma finding this out as soon as his leg is released and he tries to get up.

With Karma unable to act, Karasuma's attention returns to Naoko, who was still lying unconsciously with her head turned away from them. Karasuma, with only dozens of seconds left, wastes no time in ending the contest prematurely, pulling on Naoko's close ankle and dragging her along the ground for the ten meter distance. He manages to open the door, but right at that moment, Naoko reawakens with fury in her eyes, returning her lifted leg back to her body. Not expecting resistance but still clutching her ankle firmly, is pulled back, and with a kick to his back leg, trips over and lands on her. This is just what she wanted, however, wriggling her other limb free and trapping Karasuma in another triangle choke! Karasuma gags a bit before recovering enough to begin defending the submission, going for another powerbomb to break free...

Until Karma, who's revealed to have worn a leg braces to prevent pressure point manipulation, dives low, appearing upside-down, vining his Karasuma's left leg with both of his own and pulling down, causing the former to fall back down. Naoko's back again slams onto the ground, and she whips her head back gagging a little blood, but she refuses to release the choke; meanwhile Karma locks in an inverse heel hook to keep his mentor grounded. Despite the major pain, Karasuma is already showing signs of breaking free, getting onto his other knee and begin hammer-fisting both set of legs of his students, forcing them to release the hold...

-OST ends, once the phone that was keeping time for the three of them throughout the bout sounds
off like an alarm.-

Karasuma: *Midway into clubbing his way out of Karma's leghold.* "!!"

Karma/Naoko: *Both release their submissions and catch their breath while on their backs.*

Karasuma: *Clutches his strained muscles while rising to his feet and backing away so that he could look at the two with a light smile.* "Congratulations you two, for winning the game."

Karma/Naoko: *Both get up to their feet by helping each other, so happy for the other, they were temporarily mute.*

Kato: *Appears suddenly from around the corner of the open warehouse door.* "Great work, you two! Well done!" *Claps as he enters.*

Karasuma: *Looks over to him.* "What are you doing here?"

Kato: "You kidding, Karasuma? This is Kyoto; my prime turf! If these two made it here when they notably wouldn't, you can bet your ass I'd notice." *Returns his attention to Karma and Naoko.* "And good timing too; it seems you two need an emergency medic."

Naoko: "Oh, that's not necessary, Kato-kun; we only got small injuries. They would all go away come next morni-" *Suddenly groans and clutches her damaged ribs.*

Karma: *Holds Naoko up to keep her standing.* "I thought so; that was the ribcage that was already softened by those Neo-Wolfpack mercs. You heal fast, but nothing stops it from getting just as hurt again."

Karasuma: *Tends to his sister as well.* "I didn't believe I did that much damage; I'm really sorry, sis."

Naoko: "Ergh, it's all good, Karasuma-ani."

Kato: "Hey, let me take a look." *Also gets close.*

-Kato tended to all of the injuries Karma and Naoko sustained (and even one of Karasuma's, on his face no less) using his biomedical knowledge, and then drove them back to the Hyatt (in a new-year Mercedes-Benz CLS), while Karasuma followed closely behind.-

Kato: *Occasionally looks at his turned-around watch while driving.* "So, to the winner goes the spoils. What may those be?" *Sees in his rearview mirror the two of them in the backseats.*

Karma: "Well, first that I may be permitted to do this without fear of a doting big brother." *Kisses Naoko on the lips.*

Naoko: "Plus one, surely."

Karma: "But also, the stakes did go up too, because now, Karasuma-sensei owes Naoko a story."

Kato: "Oh, the father story?"

Naoko: "Yep."
Kato: "Any chance I could listen in on the details of that when it arrives?"

Naoko: *Sweat marks fall down the back of her head.* "It's such sensitive information, though..."

Karma: "We'll figure stuff like that out later; let's just get back to our friends first."

Kato: "Yes, sir." *Continues driving, while the other two make silhouette vases again.*

-The four of them arrive before long at the Hyatt Regency, with Kato pulling over right in front of... A Toyota Century Royal limousine? Karasuma pulls over in front of the three of them meanwhile.-

Naoko: "Oh, who may that be?" *Looks out her close window.*

Karma: "The Prime Minister?" *Looks from over her shoulder.*

Kato: "Nah; the hubcaps are different from the government make."

Naoko: "Well, whatever; we're not the only ones with suites here anyway."

Karma: "Yes, but we're the only ones with a celebration for us planned in the lobby!"

Kato: "Then what are you waiting for? Me to grow a sense of time?" *Checks his watch.* "Get in there!"

Karma/Naoko: *The two of them spring out of the passenger door and run into the Regency.* "Hey, everybo-!" *Refocus upon realizing that AssUniv (with Irina at the center), despite their dress and the signs they made for the event, are not quite in a festive mood. They look in their direction and realize exactly why...*

???: *A woman in a black-grey sheath dress, designer feathered hat, ebony-framed amber blockers, and chain suede pump heels, sat cross-legged, next to two suited men, presumably her bodyguards. She sets down her stem glass of Ace of Spades champagne when the two look over to her.* "My, my... You've been having quite the time of your life here haven't you, Naoko?"

Naoko: *Instantly recognizes the voice and is frantically surprised.* "Ch-Chiaki?"

Chiaki: *Rises up to her feet and walks up to Naoko, with her suits close behind.* "The correct identification is 'mother,' Naoko."

AssUniv: *Everyone is speechless, including Karasuma and Kato, who just opened up to join in on the fun.*
Princess' Space

Chapter Summary

Karasuma has given his blessing to the relationship between his younger sister Naoko and his student Karma... But the plot thickens with a severe twist that brings around Naoko's biological, but estranged, mother Chiaki! Lore tells us of how badly their last meeting together, back when they were known as the Assassination Classroom, was - Heaven knows what could be in store next!

-Four and a half years ago...-

-Just after the assassination attempt orchestrated by Shiro and Itona, with Terasaka's help in sabotaging the man (or Octopus)-made pool, Naoko (who was the closest to the incident, injuring her to an unconscious state) was sent to the local hospital. After all of her other peers wished her well and left her room, several more people went into her room. One was her legal brother, Karasuma, and a few others were her classmates (Karma, Nagisa, and Terasaka), and the other... Was her biological mother. The one who abandoned her and her father during her time of infancy. Obviously, she's back in her life, at least for the moment, but it was for more than to just personally hand over a bouquet full of assorted yellow flowers...-

Naoko's Mother: *Noticeably angered by what an off-screen Karasuma had just told and gestured about to her.* "What... Did you just say?"

AssClass guys: "..." *All stand next to their bedridden classmate, knowing not to speak out against the irate adults, but still wanting to be beside their troubled peer.*

Karasuma: "My apologies, Mrs. Akimoto, but Naoko will remain in my custody. In the custody of the Ministry."

Naoko's Mother: "H-how dare you! I'm giving my daughter the chance of something big; future heiress to one of the top companies in Japan; a trait I'd entrust to no other but myself and my new husband. And you're refusing to let her take it!"

Karasuma: *Takes an aside glance to the students, particularly to Naoko.* "Judging by her expression, she doesn't seem to actually want your proposition." *Returns his attention to Naoko's mother.* "But in support of that, the safest and securest hands for Naoko is our own."

Naoko's Mother: *Looks aside to Naoko as well; she still had her set of bandages on, not to mention sitting on a gurney.* "Clearly not."

Karasuma: "Which, despite your claimed resources and unfamiliarity with the prior situation, I would doubt you could handle better."

Naoko's Mother: "With me, she'd never have to deal with that."

Karasuma: "Is that so? Then why is she with me?"
Naoko: "!?!"

Naoko's Mother: *Obviously takes major offense to that statement.* "Well then... I guess this talk is over." *Recollects the rest of her things and heads to the door. She opens it, but stops at the threshold for a moment.* "I may be the one that ultimately brought her here, but if anything I have to say about my ex-husband and his career is even remotely meaningful to you all, then I'll also be the one who gets her out. Mark my words." *Slams the door as she exits.*

Naoko: "!!" *Looks at the door for a bit, before looking back at Karasuma.*

Karasuma: *Sighs, and looks Naoko's way too; his eyes say not to worry about this issue, but as one that has suddenly rekindled after many years of questioning that led to apathy, it was not one that Naoko would keep unanswered forever.*

-AssUniv: *Everyone is speechless, including Karasuma and Kato, who just opened up to join in on the fun which has long died out.*

Chiaki: *A woman in a black-grey sheath dress, designer feathered hat, ebony-framed amber blockers, and chain suede pump heels, sat cross-legged, next to two suited men, presumably her bodyguards. She sets down her stem glass of Ace of Spades champagne when the two look over to her.* "My, my... You've been having quite the time of your life here haven't you, Naoko?"

Naoko: *Instantly recognizes the voice and is frantically surprised.* "Ch-Chiaki?"

Chiaki: *Rises up to her feet and walks up to Naoko, with her suits close behind.* "The correct identification is 'mother,' Naoko."

AssUniv: *Everyone is speechless, including Karasuma and Kato, who just opened up to join in on the fun which has long died out.*

Naoko: "W-what are you doing here... Mother?"

Chiaki: "I started here for one thing, but it seems I'm now in two; congratulations on whatever you've accomplished." *Holds out her hand for an innocent-enough shake.*

Naoko: *Slowly and cautiously accepts it.* "Thank you."

Chiaki: "It is time, Naoko."

Naoko: "Time for what?"

Chiaki: "Time for you to work under me and your stepfather now."

AssUniv: "!!"

Chiaki: "As you already know, me and your new old man have been running a very successful
glass-engineering company called Viber-Optic...

Kato: *An imaginary sweat mark falls down the back of his head.* Viber-Optic... One of the leaders in ongoing research regarding more efficient, applicable optical fibers. Things we use in practically any industry these days from computer-networking to solar cells.

Yada: *Is seemingly thinking the same thing as Kato at the current moment.* Billions of USD revenue go through the company due to their inexpensive, mass-produced variant on the market for industries right now. The CEO (Naoko's stepfather), though a Sub in most other circumstances (which explains how Naoko's mother can be, and is, so liberal with her actions), is a Dom oligopolist in Japan; one that could outbid even Kato if they cross paths in a prolific transaction. I reckon they even crossed paths before. *Looks subtly over to Kato, who is preoccupied.*

Chiaki: "...Unlike your agency life, which is full of uncertainties, most notably the uncertainty if you'll see a tomorrow, a life managing in our business is very secure. You'll never have to worry about anything again."

Naoko: "You know that Karasuma-ani would never let anything bad happen to me."

Chiaki: *Proceeds to rub a bandage on Naoko's cheek.* "Oh, I'm sure he did all he could to not make this worse."

Karasuma: *Closes his eyes and sighs.*

Chiaki: *Wraps her arm around Naoko's neck and places her hand on her close shoulder.* "You know, Naoko, I'm actually pretty proud of you, Naoko. You got to see a lot of things, you've grown up really well, and you've acquired a nice set of convictions, if they are a bit misguided. And maybe I never could have given you all of that if you stood by my side instead of Hiiro's..."

Naoko: *Is holding back a tear.* "..."

Chiaki: *Pushes off from her.* "But you've learned all that you've could've from this path you're on. There is no more to be had from staying with the Ministry; you have everything to lose now, at stake for no progress in anything worth the time for it."

Irina: *Remembers when she had thought the same as Chiaki did four and a half years ago (while she was corrupted by the second God of Death) and grits her teeth lightly to the statement similar to that.*

Chiaki: "So, I want to give you a new path to walk on; something that will broaden your horizons even more. Free you on three levels. Come with me and experience this new life. What do you say?"

Naoko: "Ch- Mother..."

Chiaki: "Yes?"

Naoko: "I'm right where I want to be. On a road with many curls and an unknown destination... But full of friends I know will walk beside me. Friends that can secure their future without sacrifices. Friends that, miraculously, I know better than my own mother."

AssUniv: *Some give a very light smile to that.*
Chiaki: *Lets go of her daughter.* "Well then... Is that how you really feel?"

Naoko: "Yes, mother. I'm staying here."

Chiaki: *Looks up at her.* "Let me prove you wrong then, huh?"

Naoko: "What?"

Chiaki: "Are you sure your friends have everything set for them? Viber-Optic's got a lot of weight - a lot of say, in almost any business imaginable. Imagine what they can do to a bunch of boys and girls who don't even hold a candle to their word. That being my word."

Irina: *Whispers under her breath.* "That's low..."

Karma: "What on Earth-"

Chiaki: "But that's not all I'll black-ball if you continue to refuse, Naoko. Remember that your agency has a very loose leash. Though it'd obviously be bad to everyone, including Viber, to outright ruin the Ministry, we can oust all of the prime characters in the cabinet, causing an extreme overhaul... All because of some secret documents I have in vault. Including, the file about your father's death. We've got so much of that, just so you know."

Naoko: "!!"

Kato: What an ultimatum...

Chiaki: "Tomorrow morning, I will have a limo just like the one you saw coming in stop right where it is right now. If you aren't in it by nine A.M. of that same day, then I will release the libel and black records out to the public, destroying everything you still hold dear." *With her suits, they begin to take their leave.* "You know I'm only doing this because I care." *Finally leaves the hotel, with her bodyguards nudging aside Kato (Karasuma willingly steps aside, after Chiaki gives him a light smirk).*

Naoko: "Is so distraught, she does not even watch her exit. When the hotel door closes shut, there is so much theoretical weight on her that she falls onto her knees."

AssUniv: "Naoko-san!" *All of them go to comfort their peer.*

Kato: *Sweeps off the suit's handmark on his chest, until he notices Karasuma, almost, if not equally, troubled by the situation.*

-Now in the afternoon, up on AssUniv's floor, all of the students and mentors are gathered within Karasuma and Irina's suite.-

Terasaka: "Can we all agree that Naoko's mother has clearly crossed a lot of lines with her reintroduction here?"

AssUniv: "Agreed."

Nakamura: "Sorry, Naoko-san."
Naoko: *Shakes her head.* "Oh, none taken."

Chiba: "But it changes very little; what Mrs. Akimoto has declared is something very grave."

Hayami: "A lot of things are at risk; we could face exclusion from any and all careers we'd ever head into."

Fuwa: "And just after all this fanfic has done to secure them, too!"

AssUniv: "Are you hearing what you're saying, Fuwa-san?!"

Karasauma: "She's not lying about how much leverage she currently has over the Ministry of Defense, too. There's no doubt we'd eventually bounce back, but when they return to investigate why this happened in the first place, my team in particular will be at risk for what will be described as 'poor mission handling.' And since we're so connected to all of you, it will only hurt your futures more."

Naoko: *Clutches her forehead in pain.*

Yada: *Right next to Naoko, monitoring her condition.* "Naoko-san...

Mimura: "So then, we only have two choices."

Kataoka: "Say goodbye to Naoko-san, or flip burgers."

Okano: "This just isn't right..."

Maehara: "Isn't there something we can do? We've cheated death, for God's sake! How can this be worse?"

Terasaka: *Stands up.* "I'm not going to let this pass; Naoko-san, you're staying here. Even if I have to give up being a politician."

Naoko: *Looks up at him.* "Terasaka-kun..."

Irina: "The assertion is endearing, Terasaka, but you can't do that. Korosensei definitely wouldn't have let you."

Terasaka: "I-I don't care! The only thing that has been going well for me, save a moonlight pro-wrestling tenure, is what's been going on right here, between me and all of you. I'm not going to give an inch to lose any of it - Any of you!"

Yoshida: "Calm down, bro! It's not going to come to that."

Terasaka: "How can you be so sure?"

Kimura: "Have we really seen all of our options? Are we sure there's no way out?"

Sosuke: "Hasn't there been someone that often got a bright idea and a very complex plan and process during these types of extreme moments?"

Itona: "Kato-san."
AssUniv: *Beat, before looking over to Kato.*

Kato: *Exhales his vapor with a little more effort than usual.* "I'm out of luck too, guys and gals."

Karma: "Really? Can't you do something, like uh, 'Sakoiya' or something like that?"

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's phone, using a special alarm to promote her sudden intrusion.* "Sorry, Karma-kun, but the correct term is 'sokaiya.'"

Kato: *Is taken aback.* "Yes, but it'll take too long; Viber-Optic has its own share of highly-competent developers. And even if my team does break into the archives, Viber has all the time before sharehold meetings to increase their stock prices; with their demand so inelastic, they can do so whenever they want. I'm not willing to cash out tens of millions only to get three percent of any company. Ugh, that Mrs. Akimoto and her inventive husband, grey-hat oligopolists, but not limited at all just because they're the only ones without 8-9-3." *Beat, looking at his bewildered peers.* "And all of that happens in a span of a week, at least."

Irina: "You sound very uneasy about this, Kato."

Kato: "I'm having a tough time remembering the rules, as I never needed to pull that card...." *Checks his watch.* "In a long while. Not since I was only starting to become a billionaire."

Yada: "Kato-kun..."

Kato: "So, long story short, there's nothing I can do."

Sugino: "Shit..."

Kanzaki: "So what do we do?"

Naoko: "If Kato-kun cannot get us out of this, then that's that." *Stands up and takes her leave.*

Kurahashi: "Wait, where are you going?"

Naoko: "Packing up." *Leaves, closing the door behind her.*

Karma: "Hey, wait a-"

-But the door closes before he could finish that sentence.-

Karma: *Mouth is still wide open.* "..."

Karasuma/Irina: *The latter comforts her husband, who looks down, just like the rest of the student-assassins.*

Kato: *Sighs, before also leaving the room.* "She's going to want some company, at least in a little bit." *Closes the door as well.*

-For the next few hours, everyone left Naoko alone, as instructed. Later in the afternoon as it was turning evening, everyone, one by one or in pairs, came into Naoko's room as she was preparing
her things to say their proper, longer goodbyes to her before the next morning.

Terasaka: *Stands before Naoko's front door, at roughly eight-fifty P.M. He then knock on the door.*

Naoko: "Come in."

Terasaka: *Obliges, opening the door at the minimal ajar position such that he could enter the room, closing behind him immediately.* "Naoko."

Naoko: "Terasaka-kun."

Terasaka: "Is there any way I can talk you out of this?"

Naoko: *Stares at him blankly for a moment.* "Take a seat on that lounger right now."

Terasaka: "Okay..." *Sits down on the padded chair.*

Naoko: *Flicks him on the head repeatedly, causing him to flinch a bit before he catches her wrist to force her to stop.*

Terasaka: "Ow, ow ow! Hey- Ow! What are you doing!"

Naoko: "You. Are. An. Idiot!" *Pulls her arm back, forcing Terasaka to let go.* "Why do you want to be with me so much? I can't help you through this; I can't even help myself through this!"

Terasaka: "We find a way - We always do!"

Naoko: "What makes this time so special? What urges you to seek that kind of resolution so much?"

Terasaka: "Ah-" *Halts speaking, shaking his head and looking aside.*

Naoko: *Refocuses, seeing his hesitation.* "Are you really still stuck on me?"

Terasaka: "I really tried, Naoko-san... I respect you, I respect Karma, and I understand how much you two mean to each other, especially now. But I still can't stop thinking of that small chance that I can still be with you. Maybe it's not even there and I'm just going insane, but I'll never know unless you're still a permanence in my life. Is that the right word? 'Permanence'? Yeah, yeah it is. And that's not what'll be if I let you leave like this."

Naoko: *Sighs.* "Terasaka-kun... You've been a great friend of mine, and you'll always be. Nothing will change that."

Terasaka: "Oh no..."

Naoko: *Shakes head.* "But it'll only be that between you and me. We both have very different career paths and very different preferred means to achieve them. Our best interests and motivations just do not match up." *Looks at him directly in the eye.* "And now that I've said this, can you finally give up this fruitless quest? I don't even care if you hate me after you leave that door, but if it doesn't allow you to leave here without a true future regret, then... I'm afraid you're just delusional, and need to get help."
Terasaka: "..."

Naoko: "Please, Terasaka-kun. Don't let me be the reason you never make it as a politician. Or a wrestler."

Terasaka: *Gets up from the lounger.* "Very well. I guess I should be thankful you got me to my senses."

Naoko: *Gets up closer to him.*

Terasaka: "Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "I'm not giving you a kiss goodbye, as a partner. But as a good friend, I will be giving you a hug." *Embraces him.*

Terasaka: *Hugs her back.* "This is nice. Nice enough, perhaps."

Naoko: "I really hope so."

-Terasaka eventually had to let go, and he left with a sense of content for his situation he had not felt in a long time. It eventually came for another young man to give his proper farewells as well...-

Kato: *On his turn, now nine P.M. (as indicated by his open flip-phone), he slowly walks into the room.*

Naoko: *Is in the middle of looking through a photo album that Okajima and the rest of her friends made and gave to her on his turn.* "Oh, Kato-kun. It's-" *Breaks off when Kato interrupts.*

Kato: *Looks over to a side of the suite for a second before returning his eyes to Naoko.* <Speaking in Mandarin.> "Speak like this; we're going to be talking about some sensitive information."

Naoko: "Eh?" *Clears her throat, putting down the album.* <Speaking in Mandarin.> "What?"

Kato: *Walks towards her.* "It's tough letting go, isn't it?"

Naoko: "Letting go?"

Kato: "Yes. I can't say I truly know how you feel, because... I never let anything go. Everything, all my memories, all my connections, they follow me whether I like it or not."

Naoko: "Well, you're still right. It was tough, yes, but I knew the second my mother made that sentence that my only option was to leave."

Kato: "That may be. But are you willing to really leave it all behind? Never contact us, never see us again?"

Naoko: "Goddamnit, Kato-kun, I have no choice! What do you want me to say!?"

Kato: "I want you to tell me if you can live with that. With you having the last word, without making that last moment you have with the person you care about most one to forever remember!"
Naoko: "Kato-kun... This is..."

Kato: "Tell me!"

Naoko: "I can't!" *Sits on the bed, holding her face.* "Not again!"

Kato: *Looks over to an open closet, realizing what she means.* "I thought so." *Sits right next to her.* "No one should ever go through with that."

Naoko: "How... Would you say goodbye? Return to the past, and make it something bittersweet?"

Kato: *Thinks for a moment.* "Just one long hug, in between my parents, and say 'I love you.'"

Naoko: "Simple."

Kato: "Thank you."

Naoko: *Gets up off the bed and strolls to the balcony, with Kato doing the same.* "Then that's what I'll do, with my older brother... And sister. And to Karma as well. Maybe, no, certainly."

Kato: *Looks out to the sky for a bit with her, before slowly gravitating back.* "That's good. Really good. But you're missing a little something that will make it great."

Naoko: *Turns to him.* "What?"

Kato: *Picks it out of the closet he saw earlier.* "This."

Naoko: "!?"

-Half a minute later...-

Karma: *Leans on the wall outside, waiting for his turn after Kato's.*

Kato: *Leaves the room.* "She's all yours."

Karma: "$I heard foreign screaming; you didn't, uh...?"

Kato: "$No. Not at all." *Looks at him.* "$But do me a favor; you know she's vulnerable. So don't go too far, okay?"

Karma: "$Shrugs and nods. "Okay." *When Kato nods back and exits the hall, Karma walks in.* "Naoko..."

Naoko: "$Hello, Karma-kun..."

Karma: "$He looks up, realizing that Naoko has dressed down; only a satin kimono is covering her. She was again sitting on the bed, this time with her legs crossed, accentuating the point where the robe folds. Also not too far away was her earlier discarded casual clothing.* "$Naoko, what-"
Naoko: "Come here, Karma-kun."

Karma: "Why?"

Naoko: "Karma, this is our last chance. We can never see each other again, so before our relationship dies by poor communication again, I want to end it on a high note."

Karma: "That's a strong point..." *Goes up to Naoko, who's now stood up to match.* "Are you sure?"

Naoko: *Cups her arms around the back of his neck and whispers in his ear.* "Let's do it."

Karma: *After hearing her opinion, he elects not to dispute it any further and concedes, starting by caressing the small of her back. He then slowly lifts her up and drops her down off-screen (presumably onto the bed). Meanwhile, inside the closet that Kato took the article out of earlier, there was also the sports coat that belonged to Naoko's father, still hanging there, practically watching the two...*

-And so, Karma and Naoko spent the night together. Karasuma was hoping to get his turn for a proper goodbye with Naoko, but Irina spent her turn before it observing and listening in, and convinced him to wait until the next morning.-

-Speaking of the next morning, the limousine arranged by Chiaki was right there, waiting for Naoko, starting at seven A.M. Naturally, Naoko took her time getting through cleaning up (as well as sneaking Karma back to his room earlier to act as if nothing really happened), and having breakfast, before it became 8:45 A.M.-

Naoko: *Wearing a backpack, duffel bag, and rolling one more piece of luggage out of the Hyatt Regency and onto the sidewalk, she hugs all of her female peers and friends one more time, as well as many of the guys (she naturally shys away from Okajima though, even if he didn't have any perverted intent by this point whatsoever).*

Naoko: *Strolls to Kato next.* "Have any wise, blackguard comments for me?"

Kato: *Thinks for a moment.* "You still owe me a pistol and a 'cycle."

Naoko: *Smirks.* "You mean the mercs do."

Kato: "You're coming to money soon; fulton them to me when you have enough."

Naoko: "Hmph, in your dreams." *Sighs.* "We've never been the most amicable allies, but I'm happy to say I cannot imagine what my recent life would be like without you."

Kato: "I won't forget any of it; not one moment." *Offers a hand, but instead gets a whole forearm for a Roman shake. They then nod to each other and leave it at that.*

Terasaka: *Holds his hands in front of him and looks away as Naoko moves up to him.*

Naoko: *Sighs and looks at him.* "I think I may be missing you as a guy friend most of all..."

Terasaka: "Heh, then you should know the only reason why I didn't go through with boycotting this action."
Naoko: "What's that?"

Terasaka: "You'd kick my ass after committing to it."

Naoko: *Laughs.*

Terasaka: *They mutually hug.* "I love ya, Naoko-san. Whether you're a mile away, or a thousand."

Naoko: *Releases.* "Damn straight." *Transitions to Karma.* "We've had a lot of fun, didn't we?"

Karma: "It... Seemed so brief. Too brief."

Naoko: "The best things are fleeting; we know that very well by now." *They both kiss traditionally, and then Naoko releases to kiss on his cheek.* "Promise me you don't clean that at least for another week."

Karma: "Eh, worth it."

Naoko: "Nice." *Finishes her walk down the lane with Karasuma and Irina.* "You two..."

Karasuma/Irina: "..." *Both look down for a little bit.*

Chiaki: *Waiting on the far side of the limo, she looks at her three alleged relatives with apathy.*

Naoko: "You two did everything you could to make me feel at home wherever I was, when everything about my old home either went lost or got ruined. And I almost ruined it with a bunch of difficult requests."

Irina: "It's okay; it balances out me making you my princess-plaything."

Naoko: "Nah that was good; I'm both delighted and frantic every time you seize that opportunity." *Refocuses.* "So, with these last moments, I want to salvage what remains, brother and sister. I love you, Irina-nee and Karasuma-ani, until the day I die." *Drops all of her luggage and tightly compresses the two of them into her, which they accept.*

Karasuma: *Rests his head onto her shoulder and whispers.* "Do you still want to know?"

Naoko: *Looks up and releases her embrace with surprise; Irina oddly does the same.*

Chiaki: "Excuse me?" *Steps out from behind the car.* "Naoko, be mindful that it won't matter if he tells you right here, right now."

Naoko: *Double-takes between her adopted guardian and her biological mother.*

Karma: "HEY!" *Steps in between the two forces.* "You don't talk to her like that until that stretch is out of the city!"

Chiaki: "Cheeky little bastard, just give me a reason!"
Isogai/Kataoka: "Karma/-kun, stop!"

Karma: "She has four minutes left! You let her savor them!"

Chiaki: "That kind of story can't be told by mouth in just four minutes; that's why I have the written file ready to send online. I could do it right now, along with your lost cause of a career if you want!"

Karma: "If it'll give them the remaining time, knock yourself out!"

AssUniv: "KARMA!"

Chiaki: "Very well!" *Takes out her phone, calling her husband.* "Junji, do it."

AssUniv: *Most of them gulp and close their eyes, while the more stern such as Karasuma drop a bead of sweat down their heads.*

Chiaki: *Her determined expression eventually turns perplexed.* "What? What do you mean, you can't publicize it?"

AssUniv: *Suddenly, all of them look between each other with equal confusion.*

Chiaki: *Looks at her phone.* "It's making you publish our business specs instead!? Why!? How could you do that!?!"

Kato: "Well well, look who didn't cover all of their bases."

All Sans Kato: *They all look to Kato, who steps forth.*

Chiaki: "Who are you!?"

Kato: "I represent all of your Viber-Optic partnerships gone wrong, Mrs. Akimoto. You see, the fact that your company never trusted anyone since, say, you married into its business, has not gone unnoticed by your collective cartels and collusions."

Chiaki: "What does that mean?"

Kato: "It means that they would have no qualms giving out business details if they knew for a fact that someone could make use of them and ensure they aren't hurt any more... And no, that wasn't me." *Looks to his peers, who know that Kato in fact said there was nothing he could do. He.* "Instead, it was a friend of mine, who's kind of camera-shy; he took a look at what they told him, and one major thing stood out to him - the fact that Viber-Optic uses pointer accessors for their, as you describe, many many files."

Chiaki: "!!"

Kato: "Smart when you have many records, sure... But it's damn lazy. And many know how to punish that kind of behavior. It just takes time with a secure network like yours, so for the time being, one just needs to trick and distract the system long enough for them to neutralize it. And they do that... By exposing it."
Chiaki: "You little-!"

Kato: "As we speak right," *Checks his watch.* "Now, files concerning how you buried many previous, developing optical fiber firms are uploading to the most read, relied on sites right now with recognized pseudonyms. That's happening in just," *Checks his watch.* "Thirty seconds. You have until then to make one of two choices: let it happen and see your company fold and die a most slow death, or ask my friend to stop the upload, and leave it in the hands of the keyboard readers, aka..." *Eyes over to Karasuma and Irina.*

Chiaki: "..."

Kato: "And that means..."

Karma: "Naoko goes free."

Naoko: *Is utterly speechless over what just happened, just like the rest of her friends and peers.*

Chiaki: "Stop it."

Kato: "Sorry, I have tinnitus, you'll have to speak up."

Kurahashi: *Scoffs.* Like that has anything to do with deafness!

Chiaki: "I said stop the upload!"

Kato: "Very well." *Sends an abort text to his camera-shy friend.*
Space of Unveiling

Chapter Summary

With some foreign help (literally!), Naoko is allowed to stay with her friends and family despite her mother Chiaki's dreadful ultimatum. But Karasuma did promise a story that Naoko had forgotten, so he must deliver, even with all the immediate pressure gone.

-In the moments that followed, Viber-Optic was saved a major self-inflicting blow with Kato's friend (revealed to be Hyun when Karasuma joins their conversation in private) canceling the web upload... In exchange for wiring most of the files to the Ministry (particularly, to Karasuma's main team). With Chiaki's personal print and signature on most of them, it was easy for the prefectural police to take her into custody for conspiracy and foreign aggression (Japan's equivalent of treason against the state). With a backdoor to their file engine still there, Viber-Optic would also be put on leverage if they ever decided to post inflammatory comments about AssUniv again as well. But for Junji Akimoto, that was a small price to pay for keeping his still-strong company in its current state.-

-The student-assassins of AssUniv wasted no time first dogpiling Kato with joy for his intervention, but then getting back up to merge with their longtime friend, who was here to stay. Irina even joined in on the fun... But Karasuma merely helped Kato back up to his feet and went back inside the Hyatt Regency, as discreetly as he could. Naoko noticed and was curious, but it would have to wait when her friends and peers forced her to accept a treating to a buffet in The Grill.-

-Several hours later...-

Karasuma: "..." *Is shown to be in his room, tapping on an open notebook and looking at a secure chat log between himself and his division on his laptop. He hears a knock on his door, so he walks over to open it; Naoko was in front, flanked by Kato and Irina, and the rest of AssUniv behind her.*

Naoko: "Hi... Big bro."

Karasuma: "You came for the truth now, yeah?"

Naoko: "Affirmative."

Karasuma: "Alright. Take a seat, all of you. I had the files sent to me; I'll reiterate it as we read."

AssUniv: *All of them once again pile up inside the suite, readying to hear what is most likely a tragic story.*

Karasuma: *Takes the notebook nearby where the laptop once was, sighs, and begins.* "So, let's rewind the clock back thirteen years, in the heart of the Tokyo Metropolis..."
-It was the year 2003, and I was just ending my rookie interval with the Ministry of Defense. Guess who's my veteran trainer? Hiiro Akimoto - Naoko's biological father. And damn, was he amazing... I guess to form a super soldier, you had to be one yourself. But he had some dark secrets; I didn't stress the issue as he was my superior, but it was eating him away inside. And this day was a prelude to it all going bad.-

-And it started at its night.-

Criminal: *Panting and fleeing the scene of the crime with a crusted knife in hand, he looks back on the sidewalks nearby Tokyo Harbor to see Hiiro and Karasuma chasing after him.*

Hiiro: *Running side by side with his protege.* "Tadaomi, take this right and try to find a moment to flank him! I'll keep him in my sights, relaying you the details on the fly!"

Karasuma: "Roger!" *Cuts the corner.*

Criminal: *Continues running into the docks of the harbor itself, hoping to shake off his pursuers behind the many storage containers. He manages to get three corners between him and Hiiro (and Karasuma, who vaulted over one fenced section to catch up, still many paces behind), throwing over coolers and barrels to impede their progress.*

Hiiro: *Sees that the suspect has gone down a small set of stairs, so he follows the higher lane and catches up to him, before diving off onto him. They both quickly get back up and the knife-wielding suspect tries to lunge at him; he responds first with a sidestep. When the criminal then tries to forehand slash his face, he catches the forearm and hip tosses him over, twisting the arm to make him release the weapon, then turning him over and placing his knee onto his upper back while retaining the wristhold.*

Karasuma: *With a USP pistol in hand when he arrives.* "Oh..."

Hiiro: *Exhales a little.* "Good work, Tadaomi."

-In the next thirty minutes, the duo brought the criminal back into public view, in time for the TMPD to arrest him. All of it, much to the collective praise of the pedestrians nearby. The two agents then return to Hiiro's car - a government-modified Infiniti Q45, now nearly nine P.M.-

Karasuma: "What's next, huh?"

Hiiro: *A little distracted when he responds.* "Pardon?"

Karasuma: "We have five minutes or so; just enough time to nab one more 'special case criminal.' Though I want to boot the ass of whoever thought these convicts are anything special."

Hiiro: "Five minutes is also enough time to return to HQ and sign off for the day, so that's what we'll do."

Karasuma: "Hey come on, what about this one right here?" *Takes out a manilla folder within the car's glove compartment.* "'Kato Family.' Yakuza, causing some sort of a disturbance. That sounds good, right? We hate Yakuza anyways; let's do it."

Hiiro: "It's not threatening common welfare right now; we're leaving it." *Starts up the car and heads to the Ministry building.*
The two reach headquarters, and Karasuma departs for a bit to leave the case files with the investigative section. Hiiro, now out of view of any eyes, cautiously takes a powerful antidepressant from a box within his jacket pocket. He then takes an elevator to another floor and walks to a rather isolated section of the building... Into the office of someone definitely highly-ranked.

Hiiro: *Steps inside and stands properly with his hands behind him.* "Private Secretary Iwasaki."

Iwasaki: *Is sitting at his office chair turned to look out the window. He turns back when he hears Hiiro's voice.* "Ah, Hiiro." *Stands up and meets with him face to face.* "How was your day? Any bad guys of particular note?"

Hiiro: "No, sir."

Iwasaki: "No? Does that mean they didn't put much of a fight, or they didn't run?"

Hiiro: "Today was a bit of both."

Iwasaki: "Ah. That's a shame..." *Pats on his shoulder a little bit, looking down and to the side, before quickly refocusing.* "Want something a little more interesting?"

Hiiro: "My shift is almost done."

Iwasaki: "Eh, this'll only take a minute. He's waiting for some attention directly a floor below." *Whispers into his ear skeptically.* "Give him the usual, huh? He's had three cups of coffee already." *Finally hands him a manilla folder of the suspect in question.*

Hiiro: "Very well." *Leaves.*

Iwasaki: "You're the best, Hiiro!" *Waves him goodbye.*

Hiiro: *Reaches the interrogation room where the suspect in question has been waiting.*

Suspect: *Looks at Hiiro when he enters.* "Ah; about damn time."

Hiiro: "Watch your language in the Ministry building, sir." *Sets down his folder.* "So, the file of your arrest reads that you brandished a nailed bat at another citizen?"

Suspect: "I don't deny that, but I never hit the man; I just wanted everyone to see his fraud, especially your agency."

Hiiro: "Why's that?"

Suspect: "So you'll look at this!" *Tosses out a bunch of papers from his jacket's inner pocket.* "The man I attacked, Mr. Fudo Sugai, is a black-hat hack who has been sabotaging my business ventures for more than six years! Scaring away potential employees, connected boycotts, aggressive commerce fraud, and more! All that, right here, should be enough for you to nab him along with me; I don't care! I just want him off the streets, to see him pay for what he's done!" *Walks over to the corner of the interrogation room, facing away from Hiiro to calm down.*
Hiiro: "..." *Collects all of the evidence into his folder.* "I understand."

Suspect: "Yeah?" *Claps his hands and turns around.* "Thanks; now go take-" *Suddenly, his left wrist gets ensnared by cuffs and is pulled behind him, along with his right arm.* "What th-!?"

Hiiro: "Sir, you're under arrest for disturbing a piece and threatening first-degree assault." *Finishes restraining the individual.*

Suspect: "And- Ergh! What about him!"

Hiiro: *Says nothing as he places the suspect back onto his respective chair at the table, taking his folder with him and leaves the room.*

Suspect: "HEY! Come back-" *He finishes his sentence with an unintelligible muffle as the door closes and locks as Hiiro exits. On the way through the rest of the interrogation cells, he could see the true criminal of the situation, who lets out a cocky smirk to Hiiro as he passes by.*

-After reporting the "success" of an administration of justice to Iwasaki (which got him a nice-enough hug and a packed envelope), and spending some time to dismiss themselves from active duty, the two then head back to Hiiro's complex at the edge of the metropolis. And there, waiting to greet them at the front door...-

Naoko: *Now a seven-year-old girl, dives into her father's arms as soon as he opens the front door.* "Daddy!"

Hiiro: *Lets out a small smile while rubbing the top of his daughter's head.* "Hey, I could've been a bad guy, you know."

Naoko: "Unlikely!" *Steps out.* "Nobody comes to this home this late and steals your key!" *Turns to Karsuma behind Hiiro and gasps.* "Mr. Karasuma!" *Hugs him too.*

Karasuma: *Pats the back of her neck while stuck in the embrace.* "Very bright there, what you said, kid."

Hiiro: "Naoko, you set the table up, right?"

Naoko: "Yes I did; Mr. Karasuma, will you be joining us?"

Karasuma: "Looks like I can't say no."

-After a few minutes, all three helped prepare dinner; traditional Vietnamese pho. They set it down on the dining table, gave a blessing and thanks, and then wasted no time digging in.-

Naoko: *Speaks while she is midway through chewing.* "So father, what big crimes did you deal with today? Stopped a murder? Returned a large sum of stolen money? Tell me!"

Hiiro: *Remembers his latest arrest.* "You could say we stopped a murder."

Karasuma: "Oh yeah, Naoko. We stopped a knife-wielding maniac; he did get a stab into his victim, but he fled once we caught notice and gave chase."

Naoko: *Swallows a part of her meal.* "Justice in the nick of time! Love it!"
Karsumi: "I bet you do, the Hero's daughter." *The two of them smile.*

Hiiro: *Smiles briefly at the same time, though his expression straightens when he recalls the rest of the details...*

-Hiiro and Naoko bid Karasuma goodbye a little after dinner is finished and they mutually clean up. Afterwards, the two got ready to sleep... Together, with father side by side with his daughter.-

Naoko: *Breaks the flow of Karasuma's retelling, sinking her elbows into her lap as she clutches her upper face in pain.*

Yada/Kurahashi: "Naoko-san!" *The two closest tend to her.*

Naoko: *Her thumb and index finger wipe away her saddened tears.* "I'm alright. Please continue."

Kato: *Looks back with his eyes only.* "..."

Karasuma: *Shows some preoccupation as well, but obliges.*

-Morning soon arrived, however, and Hiiro had to wake up early for another long, tragic day. He tried not waking Naoko up as he got out of the bed and getting ready. Changing into his suit within the bathroom, he realized he had forgotten his necktie, and goes back into the bedroom to retrieve it... Only to find Naoko standing in front of him, holding said necktie and a step-ladder.-

Naoko: "Allow me, father." *Sets up the step-ladder, matching Hiiro at chest-level and ties the accessory around him.*

Hiiro: *Cannot help but smile again.* "Practice, for when you get into the career yourself?"

Naoko: "You're the perfect Man of the Law, father... I'm going to be the perfect Woman of the Law."

Hiiro: "Well... You're already on the right track. The fast track."

Naoko: *Smiles widely before finishing the tie. She then hugs her father deeply.* "I love you, daddy."

Hiiro: *Lays his left arm across her back.* "I love you too, princess."

-Hiiro bids his daughter adieu and drives back to the Ministry of Defense's headquarters to look over and turn in the reports of his division.-

Hiiro: *Is trekking the steps to the front door, which would have been no issue if it weren't for some of the other agents taking a little smoke break right in outside of it, who get in his way.*

Agent 1: *Exhales some haze as Hiiro comes into view.* "Oh, look who it is!" *Flicks his cigarette away.*

Agent 2: *Flicks his cigarette away too.* "The 'Yes Man!'" *Both laugh.*
Hiiro: "Give me a break; let me in." *He nudges the two aside to allow himself entry. The heckling didn't stop at the front gate, however, as when he begins settling his things down on his desk, more arrive to get a piece of him.*

Karasuma: *When he sees Hiiro arrive, he initially goes for him to brief him on the next set of cases, until he realizes already a crowd has formed around his mentor.*

Agent 3: "Iwasaki's golden boy, in the flesh."

Hiiro: *Waves his stringed folder at face-level.* "Give it a rest, guys. I've got work to do."

Agent 4: "Oh yeah? Who gave it to ya?"

Agent 5: "Your better half of friends with benefits, I reckon!"

Agent 6: "I wouldn't be certain about the 'benefits' part, man."

Agent 7: "No, We know Hiiro takes no wood; just the green!"

Hiiro: "!!" *Had enough, He throws a surprise punch straight into Agent 7's face, sending him flying into another desk area. Before the rest had time to process what had transpired, Hiiro was already on 5, twisting his close forearm into a pretzel before putting it behind him in a hammerlock and hooking his remaining arm across 5's neck, putting him against his bullying cohorts.*

Building Security: *They all come jogging in; Karasuma sees them coming and makes way. One blows a whistle while the remaining complement of them surround the agents.* "Let him go!"

Hiiro: *After some hesitation, He releases 5.*

-The ensuing detention for Hiiro and the other agents were brutish, especially with the idea that the disciplinary staff, who also did not take kindly to the former's better pay, were all too kind to have a go at him... Which was, until Iwasaki, who had been informed by Karasuma, who mentioned he was provoked into attacking, Iwasaki clears the room of everyone except himself and Hiiro, and reminds the latter that putting out of commission two workhorses was not very sportsmanlike, and that maybe the next time, he won't be bailing Hiiro out of another pickle; Naoko might be waiting for a long time at home for her father to come home...-

Hiiro: *Is driving home at nine again, having completed his assigned desk-work and participated in a few of the assignments Karasuma showed him following the hearing.*

Iwasaki: *In Hiiro's thoughtscape.* "Remember that you have a reputation to uphold, Hiiro. But if the mantle's too tough, maybe another Akimoto can take over..." *Leaving the room as he speaks that last part.*

Hiiro: *Slams the wheel of the car after remembering that statement one too many times, which results in him almost crashing into the car in front of him at an unnoticed red light. He soon notices the extra levels of traffic congestion along his usual route, and decides to drive an alternate path. At a red light, he reads out the street intersecting the one he's on.* 7-Chomi-17... Wait a second... *Suddenly recognizes that address in an aside memory. Realizing where it came from, when it becomes green, he decides at the split-second moment to turn left on it... En route to the Kato Family's regional post within Minato Ward... More specifically, Roppongi. He reaches the
site he was hoping for, takes another antidepressant, and begins walking through, hiding his Ministry badge as he walks toward the hidden Kato Family offices.

AssUniv in the present are all on high alert when they suddenly hear the Kato name a lot in the story. Karasuma even begins tensing a bit, making it clear that all of his animosity for Kato was somewhere within the other half of the tale.

Kato Member 1: *Notices Hiiro coming, alerts his friend, and they both get up to confront him.* "Whoa! Hey, hotshot!"

Kato Member 2: "Hey, you look familiar."

Hiiro: "I need to speak with your Oyabun."

Kato Member 1: "Who are you to demand such a thing?"

Hiiro: "One who works for the same thing your leader colluded with in the past."

Kato Member 2: "Ah, I know who you are now... Well anyways, you still need to be frisked."

???: "Ah, that won't be necessary, boys." *Appears from the close corner of the doorway, revealed to be a mahogany-haired young woman.*

Hiiro: "???

Yes, that's Captain Miho Akiyama. But back then, she was just a Regional Lieutenant.

AssUniv: "Wait, what!?"

Nagisa: "If we're reading this correctly, and figuring things out from Kato's own backstory, then Captain Miho has barely changed appearance in over twenty-two years!"

Kayano: "How old is she!?"

Kato: "She wouldn't want anybody to know that she's a longtime christmas cake." *Whistles as he leans back on his study chair.* "I probably shouldn't have said that..."

Naoko/Kimura: *Look between each other, being the only ones other than Kato and Karasuma who know how old Miho actually is.*

Miho: "Hm?" *Across the city, while conversing with the research staff at the regional Kato Arms factory, she suddenly breaks off and looks into the air, wondering if she heard her name being mentioned in an ill light.*

Mimura: "Eh... Let's just carry on."

Miho escorts Hiiro into the front desk of their Family Recruitment Offices.

Miho: *Kicks back on the desk, offering him to have a seat, but he remained adamant about standing.* "To what do we owe the pleasure of your company, Mr. Akimoto?"

Hiiro: "I need to speak with your boss, Kazuto."
Miho: "He's not here; down in Kanagawa I'm afraid."

Hiiro: "Will he be coming here?"

Miho: "Depends on if you have a good reason."

Hiiro: "It's only for his eyes and ears."

Miho: *Sits properly.* "Like we're going to let you sit alone with our Boss."

Hiiro: "Look, I just need him. Can you, put him on a call, so I can convince him?"

Miho: *Thinks for a bit before pulling out a home phone and tossing it to him.*

Hiiro: "Thank you. You have a lava-" *Miho points to it, which he walks over to, locking the door so that the conversation can happen privately. He dials the number written on the battery lid keyed to the Oyabun and places it to his ear, waiting for the ringing to end.*

Kazuto: "Miho; something wrong?"

Hiiro: "Not Miho, but something is wrong."

Kazuto: "Who is speaking?"

Hiiro: "Hiiro Akimoto."

Kazuto: "Ah... The Defense Hero."

Hiiro: "In the voice, 'Japan's Fallen Angel.'"

Kazuto: "So we know each other... What do you want?"

Hiiro: "I want your help."

Kazuto: "My help? Why not the help of your colleagues?"

Hiiro: "They won't help me for this."

Kazuto: "Hm... That's not a lie you Agency guys would pull so frequently, if at all."

Hiiro: "Yes. So, will you come to Tokyo to hear me out?"

Kazuto: "Well, you've got my attention. And I do have reason to skip out on family for a weekend. Alright, Hiiro, I'll see you at the same time right now - in a day."

Hiiro: "Very well."

Kazuto: "And remember, Hiiro. You called me out. Not the other way around. Know that I won't hesitate to bury you if a certain something is, shall we say... Lacking."

Hiiro: "I understand. Goodbye." *Hangs up. He leaves after giving back the phone to Miho.*
A day later, Hiiro returns to the HQ, with Kazuto there to greet him as soon as he enters the door.

Kazuto: "Ah, Hiiro!" *Throws out his hands, as if to have a hug with him.*

AssUniv in the present cannot help but look over to Kato, as if he was a mirror to his father.

Hiiro: "Maybe after our work together is done."

Kazuto: "Aw..." *Deflates, putting his arms back down.*

Hiiro: "Do we have a place where we can speak privately?"

Kazuto: "Of course." *Pulls Hiiro... towards the lavatories, which Hiiro was less than pleased about. He puts up the "Do not disturb" sign for his brethren and sister to abide by.* "Alright. You have half an hour to commit me. What do you want?"

Hiiro: "I want to take down Secretary Iwasaki."

Kazuto: *Is surprised by the answer.*

Hiiro: "Are you going to help me?"

Kazuto: "Heh, you threw a curveball, Mr. CSI. Whew! The Agency's Double-0... Wants to kill his own boss."

Hiiro: "I can understand you being hesitant. Not just because it sounds tough, but your family does have history working under his program for some time..."

Kazuto: "Heh, his program? No no no, we worked for the Kansai Sectors; there's a reason why I'm not here too often, you know. But part is because all of us know how much of a lying scumbag Iwasaki is, too; he put a good amount of promising talent in your Ministry just because he hated my guts. Nothing new I suppose though."

Hiiro: "So you'll help?"

Kazuto: "Well, you know I have indisputable reason to decommission Iwasaki... But what about you? What's telling me you're not just setting me up? And coming here isn't good enough to save a burial, mind you."

Hiiro: *Sighs.* "Iwasaki ruined my life's work."

Kazuto: *Tilts head.* "Go on."

Hiiro: "It's, uh, a long story."

Kazuto: *Lays a hand on his shoulder, grabbing his attention.* "Asshat."

Hiiro: "!?

Kazuto: "The Kato Family are absolute fans of long stories! Spill it!" *Pushes Hiiro's shoulder
Hiiro: "Fine!" *Sighs. While telling of the details, he begins remembering scenic images of notable significance.* "I had a wife a long while back. We had a daughter, but a little after she had two candles on the cake, my wife left, and I had to take care of my only other love alone."

Kazuto: "And an SDF salary wasn't good enough, huh?"

Hiiro: *Shakes head.* "Nah... I was doing all I could to keep us afloat - second, third jobs when off-duty, requesting colleague loans, overtime hours - but it was all leading to a losing battle. I was fearing I would have to give her up to welfare... But then came Iwasaki, who confronted me in the middle of the night, with a job that he'd like only me to accomplish. With a pay six times the usual amount."

Kazuto: "Sounds like a dream come true."

-Kato facepalmed over the fact that his father could not keep quiet while a friend of his was talking about some deep stuff.-

Hiiro: "You could say so. Well, there was no reason to deny administering justice anyways, especially after I read that the missing culprit had a rap sheet about murder and mutilation alone as long as his arm. I go to the last known location, however, and I find him sitting right there... Bound to a steel chair, and held at gunpoint by another of Iwasaki's men. He goes on and tells me that this man was definitely guilty of hundreds of things, but he couldn't be legitimately brought into the public because of his brother's 'donation.' So, with some more corrupt guys showing up outside in case I try to play smart, I have a sadistic choice to make: walk away, and the culprit is incarcerated; his brother complains, I get singled out and arrested for treason... Or kill him, administering justice, the Ministry holds for all repercussions, and I get a large injection of assets. Well, you know what I picked right? It wasn't easy though, despite the dangers of the other option."

Kazuto: "Someone's been looking up to you; I understand."

Hiiro: "Yeah... Anyway, when I got back the next day, Iwasaki pulled me back, told me how proud he was over a job well done, and had no problem putting sum from his personal account into mine. Of course, however, this money only further added weight onto my shoulders, when Iwasaki would come back hours later with another blackbag assignment for me. And suddenly, I was stuck; I could care for my daughter, but only under these ops that I knew were wrong. But I couldn't tell anybody that, because at the best, it'll end my career. And at the worst... She'd be in danger. So, I stayed quiet about my collaboration, and pushed away everyone, including my daughter and my protege, because of my own guilt that I've been carrying for more than five years."

Kazuto: "..."

Hiiro: "I'm fucking stupid, aren't I?"

Kazuto: *Shakes head.* "Yeah. What kind of crazy sicko doesn't realize that working on the lower spectrum of a nation's societal infrastructure could make them not walk out the same person?"

Hiiro: *Stands up to him.* "Your wartime activity in Thailand doesn't compare to this."
Kazuto: "Takes a low stool nearby so that he can stand up level to him as well." "Let's agree to disagree."

Hiiro: "Steps out first." "So you're going to help."

Kazuto: "Steps off the platform." "Full support."

Hiiro: "Do you have a plan?"

Kazuto: "Who do you think I am?"

-Hiiro called Naoko back home to conceal his disappearance under the guise of working extra hours again, so that he could refine their strategy to take down Secretary Iwasaki the next day, as well as acquiring all of the necessary assets to the operation. The Kato Family continued to work well into the next morning and early afternoon, and phoned in Hiiro as soon as they were ready.-

Hiiro: "As soon as he gets the call, he drives back to the Ministry HQ. He drops off his finished case files at the head desk and immediately guns for Iwasaki's office, opening the door with nary but a single knock." *

Iwasaki: "Turns around on his pivoting chair abruptly." "Oh, you're very eager today."

Hiiro: "Only when we have a chance of being blown." *Takes a small packet out from his suit jacket's inner pocket.*

Iwasaki: "What?"

Hiiro: "That good business friend you had me protect by arresting that other guy the other night? He was found dead in his home."

Iwasaki: "Stands up." "You're joking. How?"

Hiiro: "Shakes head." "Gunshot to the head; looks to be a suicide."

Iwasaki: "Damnit... Anybody else know?"

Hiiro: "Only us."

Iwasaki: "And how did you?"

Hiiro: "It was my week to check up on him like the rest of the team does."

Iwasaki: "Huh, right... Okay, go back there, investigate the scene, and find a way to clean it up before the police show up there."

Hiiro: "And what if I see another thing I'm not supposed to?"

Iwasaki: "Clever... Alright, I'll be coming with you." *Grabs his jacket as they both leave the office. Hiiro discreetly takes another antidepressant behind his superior's back.*

Karasuma: "Watches as they both pass by, and he catches up to his mentor." "Akimoto, what's going on? Are you in trouble again?"
Hiiro: *Handwaves it.* "Don't you worry, Karasuma. Just stay working at your desk; promise me, alright?"

Karasuma: "Yessir." *Begins breaking off from the trajectory back to his office, until Hiiro stops and holds onto his close forearm.* "?”

Hiiro: *Brings his mouth close to his ear.* "Come to the warehouse tonight at eight, before we head to my place, and I'll answer everything."

Karasuma: *Turns to him to process the information for a second, before continuing his way.*

Iwasaki: "Come on now, Hiiro!"

Hiiro: *Catches up to the Secretary as they exit the floor.*

-The drive to Iwasaki's associate was a silent one that turned the day for the two of them into four-thirty P.M. They went inside, finding the estate to still not be intruded on by anyone else, given the lack of police tape.-

Iwasaki: "Hiiro, stay outside; I'm going to make sure I pick up everything you shouldn't."

Hiiro: "Roger." *When they get to the front door, he stands and watches the other side.*

-Iwasaki: *Goes in, shimmying across the cover of the walls and surveying the damage... Only to realize there was no sort of damage. Confused, he even begins checking on the shelves of books, wondering if anything had been taken or moved, but even it was spotless. *Not robbers... Grudge murder? Maybe. Huh... *Suddenly hears signs of a struggle in the capitalist's personal study room. He thinks to call Karasuma, but he is uncertain if the documents he is looking for will be in the room they'll be intruding, so he decides to infiltrate it by himself, service USP pistol in hand. When he is fully ready, he kicks open the office door, with the first thing he sees being Sugai himself, alive and well, but bound and gagged with tape to his chair. Iwasaki, stunned by the discovery, hastily walks in to question him... But a pistol-whip to the temple, courtesy of a hidden Kazuto's M9 Beretta.*-

-Half an hour later...-

-Iwasaki: *Wakes up, finding out that he was sitting right next to his business "partner" and was similarly restrained, while Kazuto paced around them (and the desk and chair they were positioned at).*

-Kazuto: *Is fiddling through a stapled packet of papers.* "You have well-protected, if not good, reasons for wanting to bury me, Secretary Iwasaki. I should've known you wouldn't have been much better to your company favorites."

-Hiiro: "..." *Is leaning on the far wall, with crossed arms.*

-Iwasaki: *When he confirms himself that who's speaking to him is Kazuto, and notices that Hiiro is allegedly on his side, he angrily tries to speak through his OTM gag.*

-Kazuto: "It's amazing how much you trust your bread and butter, sir." * Stops picking pieces out of the pile and throws the rest of the papers onto the far chair across the door from Hiiro. He then..."
slides the ones he pulled onto the table right next to Iwasaki. *"Was it compensation? To confirm you wouldn't turn on a guy who always gave you the funds to control your own private police?"

Iwasaki/Associate: *They both look at each other with preoccupation.*

Kazuto: "You had the green, the up and coming, the struggling - like Hiiro here - and the subordinary all work for you under a false guide on justice just for job security and aggressive personal interest..." *After a little bit, he slams his hand on the table right next to Iwasaki and comes up very close to his head.* "It's guys in this biz like you, who sometimes make me ask myself, 'why am I still doing what I do?'" *Leaves the room.*

Hiiro: *Gets back to standing properly.* *"The cops are coming, Secretary. The evidence they find right next to you will put you and him away for life." *Bows.* *"I'm sorry it had to be this way, but as you told me, I have a reputation to uphold - My daughter's." *Finally leaves the room as well, constructing a small-scale time bomb with a steel pipe, nails, and the clock alarm in the kitchen; a loud and dangerous-enough object to attract witnesses and the local authorities.*

Iwasaki: *Tries to yell at Hiiro at the top of his lungs as the office door closes.*

Naoko: *Breaks again, covering her mouth in sadness, this time at the foregone conclusion from her father's reforming words.*

Kato: *Springs out of his chair and embraces her, much to everyone's shock, especially Karasuma's.* "I might be the last person you want being nice to you, but I'm really sorry for what my family caused."

Naoko: *Accepts the hug anyways.* *"You didn't know... Right?"

Kato: "%No... But I think I know why Karasuma hates me now."

Karasuma: "%..."

Isogai: "%Forgive me, sensei, but that's just the tiniest bit petty."

Irina: *Immediately shifts her chair in between the two of them to protect Isogai.*

Karasuma: "It's a little more than that."

Naoko: "%Then, Karasuma-nii... Finish the story. How does my father die?" *Kato releases his hug and she nudges him aside to look up determinedly at her adopted brother.*

Karasuma: "%Alright..."

-Hiiro and Kazuto both walk out of the house, getting ready to bid each other farewell as Hiiro gets into his car.-

Kazuto: "%It hasn't been long, but it's been a lot of fun teaming with you to administer justice, Hiiro-chan."

Hiiro: "%I won't deny that, truth be told."

Kazuto: "%Still, you'll be holding your end of the bargain, yes?"
Hiro: "Yeah. The Agency owes you one."

Kazuto: "Correction: The Ministry of Defense owes any of my whole family one."

Hiro: "But only one. And you better save it for something good; I won't be giving you another."

Kazuto: "How are you so sure?"

Hiro: "Next time, I'm gunning for you."

Kazuto: *Laughs.* "That sounds golden.* *Backs away to allow the car the room to leave.* "Well, see you later then."

Hiro: *Two-finger salutes and drives off.*

-That favor, is the one that Kazuhiko Ohno used to get out of Okinawa International Penitentiary No. 5. And that's why I hate you so, Kato; I always hoped that I could keep one against the people I believed caused my mentor's death. Well, it was an illogical hope anyways, knowing that transcendent planning runs in a Kato's genes. Now...-

Hiro: *On the way to driving to the warehouse where he said he would rendezvous with his protege, Hiros stops at the high bridge overlooking Tokyo Bay. He takes the box of antidepressants out from the glove department, and gets out of the car to have it with the fresh air. But in a split second, he thinks about it a little more, and instead opts to throw it off the ledge, watching as it falls and disappears into the dark water. When he was certain he couldn't see it anymore, he gives a relieving sigh and goes back into the car. He takes a notebook out from the still-open glove compartment, and with a good hour and forty-five minutes before meeting Karasuma, he begins writing all of the things that happened recently, leading to his ultimate turn just a moment ago.*

-Time soon came, however, and Hiros drove to the warehouse to meet up with his partner in justice.-

Karasuma: *Waiting inside, looks over to the entrance when the doors open up again.* "Mentor."

Hiro: "Karasuma."

Karasuma: "What's been going on? Why the sudden increase in secrecy? On top of your, er, usual level of secrecy, that is."

Hiro: "There's just been quite a bit happening recently... And way before too." *Walks deeper into the room, past his protege.* "Before I get into it, I just want to mellow out again; think about good times - better times."

Karasuma: "In here?" *Scoffs.* "What are those? The first time I hip-tossed you for real? Complete your patented 'Course of Death' in eighteen seconds?" *Mind flickers.* "Actually, this is the first time I've ever seen you get nostalgic. Naoko says you used to do that all the time."

Hiro: "Really? Then I don't do it enough anymore - it feels great. Must've mellowed. Really mellowed." *Begins reaching for the notebook he had written on in his inner pocket.* "I'll be happy to tell you about it no-" *Breaks off when he notices behind Karasuma (facing him) the door
opening up, and not because of nighttime wind. He runs up to his protege, pushing his upper body down to make way for his USP pistol to take aim at the intruder... But the assassin was faster, shooting Hiiro fatally along the edge of his heart.*

   Karasuma: *Having instinctively readied his pistol when he saw the crazed look in Hiiro's eyes, he then shoots through his jacket, pointed at the door, nailing the assassin in his neck. He shoots one more time, putting a 9mm into the assassin's cheek.*

-Meanwhile...-

   Police Officer 1: *Walks over to a recently-arrived squad car that spawns two more officers.*

   P.O. 2: *The driver steps out and starts the conversation.* "We got the 203; what happened?"

   P.O. 1: "Mayhem caused by sudden nailbomb detonation; when we got inside, witnessed two restrained individuals. One seemed to have used the phone unhooked to call someone; unknown number. We begun untying them, but saw evidence next to them linking to blackmailing, so we instead re-restrained them. He then went manic, stole one of our pistols and critically wounded two of us before the rest shot him down." *Points back at the house.* "You can see him there."

   P.O. 3: "Do we recognize the suspect?"

   P.O. 1: "You're not going to like what you hear..."

-Returning to the warehouse...-

   Karasuma: *The assassin collapses as Karasuma looks back with his pistol trained properly. After another moment, he turns back to his wounded mentor.* "Mr. Akimoto!" *Tries closing the chest wound in vain.* "I, I can't stop the bleeding!"

   Hiiro: *Coughs out a sum of blood.* "Karasuma... Lis-listen well."

   Karasuma: "What is it?"

   Hiiro: "My inner pocket... Other side."

   Karasuma: *Explores the pocket, finding the notebook.* "What's this?"

   Hiiro: "Read. Later. Kara-" *Coughs.* "-suma, please... Take in Naoko. Tell her when... She can handle it."

   Karasuma: "Of course. Anything else?"

   Hiiro: *Looks away from Karasuma a bit.* "Funny... Am I blessed... Or Cursed?" *Breathes his last a moment after saying that line, his eyes relaxing to a middle ajar opening and his lips stiffen.*

   Karasuma: *Sighs, holding his forehead in pain with one hand while his other still supported his recently-deceased teacher.*

-A few days later, the Ministry of Defense arranges for Hiiro's funeral, which is attended by many of the agency's past, older members. At the gravesite with the coffin being descended into the hole
Naoko: *Clad in a little black dress and holding a crumpling lily with both hands on her chest, she has an obviously hurt expression written on her face as she continues to stare blankly at the etchings.*

Karasuma: *Finally decides to move closer to the grave, right beside Naoko, and laying a hand on her close shoulder.* "I'm really sorry, Naoko. I couldn't watch his back as well as he deserved."

Naoko: *Lets her lily go and watches it fly to the ground right next to the stone.* "My father... He died doing good... Right, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: *Sighs.* "Yeah. He did."

Naoko: "Then he died in the name of justice. As I believed he would." *Hugs Karasuma's waist.* "When it's my time, I will do the same. Karasuma, you know my father in this regard better than anyone; teach me to be like him. Promise me you'll teach me."

Karasuma: "..." *His hand on her shoulder turns into a arm across her shoulders, bowing down to stand level with her as they take one last long look at Hiiro's gravestone.* "I promise... Princess."

And that's how it begins and ends, Naoko. The story of your father, a great agent, an even better man, who just made a few honest mistakes, and interacted with the wrong people at the wrongest time. Life would never be kind to him, even when he had always deserved it.

Karasuma: *Having finished, he stands up and meets level with Kato, while addressing AssUniv as a whole.* "Korosensei once told you kids that the true reason for all of my strength is because of 'a deep rage hidden in my heart.' That rage... Stems from the bond most of us have." *Declares between himself, Kato, Naoko, and Irina.* "The fact that neither cannot exist without the other, no one could do their job. Bringing up the idea that the highest enforcers couldn't actually administer justice without good men posing as criminals themselves, it made me sick."

Kato: *Looks up at Karasuma with a blank expression.*

Karasuma: *Lingers keeping that same stare at Kato for a bit before turning to Naoko, who has arisen from her seated position, compressing her shoulders.* "I had thought that I would be keeping you safe by not letting you interact with people like Kato, Naoko. That you wouldn't meet such a sad, cruel fate. If you had..." *Shuts his eyes firmly, with his right letting out a single tear.* "I could never begin to forgive myself."

Naoko: *Bows her head before offering her adopted brother a handshake, to his surprise.* "Thank you, Karasuma-nii. For keeping my father's request as best you could. I can finally put all of this behind me now."

Karasuma: *Slowly accepts the shake.*

Naoko: "But I also think during this time, that we both learned how important getting to know the other side fully is. Especially when they turn out to be connected to who you become all along."
Kato: "..."

Naoko: *One more time for today, she dives into Karasuma's arms.* "I love you, bro."

Karasuma: "The feeling's mutual, Naoko."

AssUniv: *All of them couldn't help a small smile at the two finally acting like loving siblings, with some of the girls even giving a giggle, looking at how happy their friend is.*

Irina: "Aw, this is sweet... But I think you're forgetting someone."

Naoko: "Oh! Yeah... Karma!"

Karma: *Scoffs and jumps into the fray as well.*

Irina: *Turns black and white.*

-Following today, Karasuma, Naoko, and Kato finally buried the hatchet between their families. The former also finally embraced the idea of having Karma as a future brother-in-law, and abided to his other promise from the Game to not to step in the way of his and Naoko's relationship anymore... Which included letting Naoko sleeping in the same room as Karma (Irina had a tough time getting him to fall asleep, though).-

-But there was one more person who wasn't ready to fall asleep that night. He actively checked his watch past midnight, clearly preoccupied by what the next few days would entail.-
Part One of the mini-arc that will bring together my OC (Kazuhiko Kato) with Yada (finally; goddamn, right?)

Kato is reminded of a tradition he once dealt with prior to AssUniv thanks to recent events that struck quite close to his personal life. He relays enough to Yada to explain his brief, impending absence, but after some insistence from a third party, the latter decides to come along for reasons known only to them. Will this be for the best?

The day after Karasuma and Naoko confronted their mutual past, all finally seemed well between guardian and adopted sibling... And it was. Everyone of AssUniv had a good night's sleep with a fulfilling conclusion on yet another pressing matter... Except for one.-

Yada: *Sleeps peacefully inside her suite's king-size mattress, until knocks can be heard from the other side of her door at six A.M. sharp.* *Huh? Who could that cruel person be, who wakes a lady up this early in a Summer morning?* *Stretches a little, springs out of bed (revealing her light-pink kimono) and opens her room's door; it was Kato.* "Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Hi, Yada-san. May I come in?"

Yada: "Um," *Looks back at the rest of the room, before back at him.* "Of course." *Leads him inside, letting him settle while she ensures her kimono covers her body modestly.* "What's on your mind?"

Kato: *Briefly looks at her lower legs that weren't overlapped by her kimono, exhaling to expunge his ill thoughts.* "Yada-san, I'd like for you to take up the interim managerial position at Nyurifu Rikkyo again for another week. I have to go away for a bit."

Yada: "Oh? Not that I'm ungrateful for the experience, but what'll be keeping you?"

Kato: "Seeing Karasuma and Naoko coming together as family again, it reminded me that I needed to visit Fukuoka again."

Yada: "Fukuoka?" *Mind flickers.* "Oh, your, I'm sorry, you and your parents went there for vacation during the Summer?"

Kato: "Yes, Yada-san. And every year, on the week that they left this world, Miho and I go back there to tribute my parents. I made an exception last year because Karasuma and I knew AssUniv needed to come first, which is all the more reason to make sure I attend this time."

Yada: "That's very thoughtful of you."

Kato: "Yeah. But it means I'll be away for the week, so I need someone to manage the club, and keep the staff and the rest of AssUniv in check. As the self-proclaimed big sister of the tribe and having seen your expertise firsthand, I thought you could do both just fine."
Yada: "Of course I can. Don't worry about it; I'll keep everything running for you when you get back."

Kato: *Gets up to leave.* "Great." *Suddenly looks into his jacket's pocket.* "Oh, and to make it up to you for disturbing your sleep, I went down and got your mail." *Hands it to her.*

Yada: *Accepts it.* "Oh, thanks."

Kato: "Don't even mention it." *Bows his head to her and exits, closing the door behind him.*

Yada: *Looks at her mail, moving through the addressed information on each envelope, until one unfamiliar one is found within; it is for her, but has no stamp or sender.* "Hm? *Leaves the rest on one side of the study table and sits down to open this letter. She briefly reads its content and is surprised by what it says.*

-An hour and a half later...-

Kato: *With everything he needed packed up into a courier's bag and one duffel, he takes the elevator down Hyatt Regency to the ground level and walks out the front door to his white Opel Insignia; one that Miho prepared and has ready at the sidewalk. But he stops in his tracks when he notices someone else right next to the vehicle.* "Yada-san?"

Yada: *Sitting on her aluminum carry-on and has a sharkbite hip-length (w/ legstrap) purse on when Kato gets closer.* "Hello again, Kato-kun."

Kato: *To Miho.* "Miho, what's going on?"

Miho: "When miss Yada heard you tell your story about what we do on this week, she was actually very intrigued... And also concerned for you. She wanted to tag along, and so she contacted me."

Yada: *Scratches the back of her head.* "It would've been a little too awkward to go back and ask you. Miho arranged for one of your Lieutenants, I think his name is Mr. Tseng, to temporarily handle the week. You're not mad, are you?"

Kato: "I can't be mad at you, Yada-san. In fact, I think I might be a little happier that you're coming with us." *Walks closer to her.*

Yada: *When he's close enough, they both Roman handshake.*

Kato: *Releases the shake.* "Well then, let me help you get this into the car."

Miho: "Allow me." *Discreetly unstraps Kato's courier's bag and hooks it around herself, while prying his duffel out of his hands and finally taking up Yada's luggage - all at once, and opens up the trunk.*

Yada: *Looks over to Miho, who was covering her smile with her trunk-stuffing. Yada*
reciprocates the gesture, indicating a collusion between the women, before she herself hops into the backseat.*

-The ensuing eight-hour car ride from Japan's feudal capital to the nation's currently fifth-largest city in the world. After three hours, Kato and Miho switched drivers, allowing the former his hands to work on the final iteration of the KAM AtTac Suits' hood - as Yada had noted alongside some of her friends, the hood tended to snag on longer hairstyles, so he sought a fix. And with Yada close by, it was optimal to test. The results seemed sufficient, judging by her reaction, which Miho grinned to.-

-"Fairy Tale" by Cherry plays in the car's radio.-

-That occupation of time lasted until the final hour, and by then, they were on the bridge to reach Kyushu Island, which Fukuoka was on.-

Yada: *Leans forward and looks over the cushioning of the driver's seat to Miho.* "I'm sorry I didn't think to ask this earlier, but is there anything else I have to know coming into Fukuoka? Namely, uh, the situation of the vacation home?"

Miho: "Oh that is certainly something to shed light on."

Kato: "Indeed. Yada-san, you should know that in the ensuing events, my uncle Norio sold the estate in an effort to combat the Kato Family's struggling assets while I was in prison. When I brought the Family back to its prime," *Checks his watch.* "In 2011, I re-bought the rights to the land, rather glad that the house remained unchanged..."

Yada: *Notices Kato's hesitation.* "And?"

Kato: "Norio and Kazuhiro didn't want to move in due to its history, and it was too big for just the two of us. So we set up a relationship with a family of caretakers - The Hanamuras, consisting of Haru, Mikio, and their only son Kenta - who live there while we're everywhere else."

Yada: "Oh, some other company while we're here?"

Miho: "That's not bad, is it, Yada?"

Yada: "Oh, of course not! All of the Kato Family's associates so far have been nothing but altruistic. They shouldn't be any different."

Miho: ""Altruistic..."* *Snickers.* "Everyone seems to like you, Kato."

Kato: "Scoffs.* "It's nothing; just how far a little respect to all you meet will go."

Yada: "..."

Kato: "Anyways, we are going to pick it up first, right?"

Miho: "Must you even ask, Boss?"

Yada: "I'm sorry, what? We're picking something up?"

Kato: "Turns to her.* "Oh, Miho, she needs to see it now."
Miho: *Smiles.* "Don't worry."

-Upon reaching the main streets of the designated city, Miho drove them into one of Kato's lock-ups. Within the same garage, they took the elevator to the next floor, into a similarly-designed carport... Filled entirely with both foreign and domestic muscle cars that date back to the 1970s.-

Yada: "Whoa..."

Kato: "While I'm mostly a supercar nut, Miho enjoys her old-time strength."

Miho: "It's saddening that they're falling behind in today's market..." *Slides her hand across the hood of a white-blue 1971 Chrysler 300.*

Yada: "True, they got style and decent speed, but often not as nice as modernized sports cars, and a lower MPG to boot."

Kato: "Still, the feel of the old times is definitely nice, once in a while, and while we're only sticking around the boundaries of the city, one of these will be all we need." *To Miho.* "So, which one?"

Miho: "Since you skipped out last time, Kato-ani, I was thinking your favorite - The '72 Impala SS." *Points.*

Kato: *Laughs.* "Nice." *Turns to Yada.* "What do you think?"

Yada: *Smiles.* "Let's do it." *They both stroll over to the muscle car.*

-The convertible practically blasts out of the garage door as soon as it opens. And so, the trio continue to make their fated way to the house that changed Kato's life forever. It took only less than half an hour, but for Kato, it felt like eternity.-

-The second they got the Impala into the house's driveway, the Hanamuras were coming out the front door to greet them.-

Haru/Mikio/Kenta: "Good evening, Kato!"

Kato: *Along with Miho, waves to them.* "Hello, Mrs. Hanamura, Mr. Hanamura, and Kenta."

Kenta: "Mr. Kato!" *Runs to him, locking his arms across his waist. Kato then pets him across the top of his head slowly.* "You skipped a year; I missed you so much!"


Kenta: "Thanks to your help, Mr. Kato! Thanks a lot!"

Kato: "No, that's just because you only listen to me. Your parents have been telling you to drink your low-fat milk ages ago."

Yada: *Laughs at this sense of familiarity between the families.*

Mikio: *The man of the house goes over to them.* "I suppose the two of you have no problems
with your belongings, so I need not even ask if you need help getting them in.*

Kato/Miho: *Shake their heads simultaneously.* "Nope."

Mikio: "Indeed." *Turns to Yada.* "And how about you, miss-" *Breaks off when he realizes he's speaking to her.*

Yada: "?"

Haru: "Oh my..."

Kenta: "Mr. Kato, is that your, uh, what do the older kids say, um, friendgirl?"

Yada: *Blushes and gasps.*

Kato: *Blushes as well.* "No, man. She's just a good friend."

Haru: "Hm... Very well. What is your name, miss?"

Yada: *Dispels her reddened state.* "Touka Yada." *Bows.* "Thank you for having me."

Haru: *Smiles widely while bowing.* "With pleasure."

Mikio: "Then, would you still like your belongings brought in?"

Yada: "I'm good, thank you."

Kato: "Mr. Hanamura, now it's time for us to ask something rhetorical: the one room in here that has been unoccupied since Miho was visiting last year. it still is, right?"

Mikio: "Oh yes, per your agreement, sir."

Miho: "Very good; let's set it up again, Kato-ani."

Yada: "It's nice to finally stretch after eight hours in a car..." *Follows Kato and Miho when they both signal for them to start walking in.*

Haru: *She couldn't help looking at Yada's figure as she passes by.* Miho's definitely the epitome of older beauty, but Yada is very pretty herself. They deny it, but maybe, just maybe...

-The Kyoto trio walk into the house, with Yada realizing it to be a homey abode with a good number of connected rooms such as the kitchen being able to see the living room, and the main bedrooms are connected by a small, narrow hallway a little past. The room Kato and Miho were implying was just past the separate dining room, and it was revealed to be another guest room, complete with a king-size, an isolated bathroom, and naturally... the shrine Norio made to his older brother and Aiko. But before they get to that, there's still some notably missing things.-

Miho: "Oh, I forgot about this.."

Yada: "What is it-" *Breaks off, realizing what it is.* "Oh, there's only one bed, isn't there?"

Kato: *Sets down a book from the nightstand.* "That's fine; We can inflate a spare bed we
stashed underneath this." *To Yada.* "Would you like the firm mattress to yourself, Yada-san?"

Yada: "That's not necessary, Kato-kun. You take it; I'm assuming you and Miho have done that enough times before, yes?"

Kato: "If you say so. I must apologize too, though, that there's not a true changing room in here; If you need your privacy, I'm afraid you'll have to occupy the lavatory."

Yada: "I can live with that. Thank you."

Kato: "Very good."

-After they settled everything, Kato led the ladies in relighting some scented candles to place on the shrine, and then organizing a multi-religious prayer to his parents, which ran on for almost twenty minutes. Kato noticeably had a little issue getting through the latter verses of a scripture towards the end of this time, but Yada assured him, and he manages to power through, with a trailing tear coming down from his left eye.-

Haru: *Knocks on the closed door a little after the tribute.* "Dinnertime! Mizutaki!"

Miho: "Ohohoh, authentic Fukuoka cuisine! Nice!"

Kato: "Haru knows timing well." *To Yada, who is washing her face.

Yada: "I heard! That sounds great." *Wipes her face dry and walks over to the entrance, finding that Kato has stopped dead right in front of the other side. The table was set, but Haru was away, most likely to call the rest of her family. Kato meanwhile was fixated on something adjacent to the room.* "Huh? Kato-kun? What's wrong?"

Kato: "Look at what she left." *Picks the products up - they are revealed to be a squirt bottle filled with a water-based lubricant and a chain of bagged latex condoms.* What?

Yada: *Is alarmed by the sudden arrival of such instruments.* I... I just don't know, Kato-kun.

Kato: Miho-san, will you be expecting Keitaro later?

Miho: *Looks up from the other side of the bed, sliding her luggage under it.* Um, no. Why do you- *Widens her eyes when she sees the protection and coating.* Oh...

Yada: Wait, who's Keitaro?

-Kato ultimately came to the conclusion that it was for him and Yada, despite their initial protests. He was going to reiterate the countered information, but... It was dinnertime, so Yada convinced him to let it go, instead taking the products into the room to save face.-

-After dinner, Kato took a study table to work on more parts to the KAM AtTac Suits, while Miho oversaw his research laptop and her own, along with a tablet seemingly connected to her fellow Captains across the nation; Yada was left to speak to her friends a bit when they were off-duty working at Nyurifu Rikkyo, giving a little managerial input too.-

-It became time to sleep, however, and the trio did just that; Yada took the lower, makeshift mattress while Kato and Miho committed to the master bed; she was a little... Unconsciously
Yada: *Stirs awake with twitching eyebrows, with the sunlight's rays from recently unsealed windows pouring into the room. She rises up to a proper seating position, allowing her to see the surface of the king-size... And realizing that Kato and Miho were missing.*  *Huh?*  *Rises up to her feet, going over to the alarm clock, seeing the L.E.D.s producing a 5:45 A.M. timing.*  *Early-risers. Figures.*  *Yada also hears the sounds of cooking happening in the house, and walks to the kitchen to find Haru already awake herself, cooking omurice.*  "Good morning, Mrs. Hanamura."

Haru: *Looks back.*  "Ah! Good morning, Yada. Sleep well?"

Yada: "I did, yes. Thank you for your care."

Haru: "It's no big deal."

Yada: "Does Kato-kun and Miho often wake up earlier than this?"

Haru: "Oh yes; they go on a fifteen-mile jog to start the day."  *Giggles.*  "Them being superhuman, it only takes them about seventy minutes. You'll meet with them again in about forty-five minutes."

Yada: *Laughs.*  "They are strong men and women."  *Refocuses.*  "Did your wake-up routine correlate at the beginning to theirs?"

Haru: "Ohoh, no. I only got used to waking up at this hour after the Kato Family came into our lives. But I have to tell you, it's better to be waking up to this than sleeping in the cold."

Yada: *Refocuses again.*  "Come again?"

Haru: "Oh, Kato didn't tell you?"  *Clears her throat.*  "Five years ago, my husband, son, and I got evicted from our condominium due to missing a mortgage payment. Just one, mind you; it kinda sucked."

Yada: "I imagine; most loaners in this country are afraid of you turning to another bank or something."

Haru: "You may as well have been there - you hit it on the dot. But someone who really was there was Kato - he was doing one of his own jogs and saw us throwing a lot of stuff out. With Fukuoka being a great place to live, he asked why we wanted to leave, and I told him this... And then, he gave us an offer we couldn't refuse."

Yada: "Live here, free of charge, so long as one room stayed unchanged."

Haru: "Yep. My husband and I knew he was Yakuza, especially when he was running with Miho. And we definitely were a little skeptical at the beginning... But Kato proved to us that if you were going to be in any Yakuza's debt, it should be his."

Yada: "That much is certainly true."

Haru: "And that's why we're amicable together. But, what's also nice is what you get to learn of an Oyabun's softer side."
Yada: "Softer?"

Haru: "It's always nice to see him pay for any damages we legitimately didn't expect, and any arguing he hears is immediately dispelled by him. It's... Almost as if, he's making a perfect family out of us."

Yada: "Looks down at that remark." "..."

Haru: "If I were him, though, I'd spend more time trying to give that love to someone else."

Yada: "!

Haru: "But enough about that. I bet you're hungry right now - have a fried-rice omelette."
*Shows a plate of omurice to her.*

Yada: "Oh, thanks."

-After having breakfast, Yada walks back into her and the Kato Family’s quarters, noticing once more the bagged condoms and water-based lubricant. She easily put that behind her as she walks closer to the king-sized mattress, neatly rearranged by the soldiers before they left for a morning run.-

Yada: *I want to help Kato-kun, and he probably wants me to, with his hesitation between comments and asking me a lot of things. But he can’t seem to muster the strength. Therefore I need to find out myself, or I can’t do anything... *Looks under the bedsheets, pillows, and unopened luggage for clues.* Miho-san did say she would help me open him up, but she didn’t exactly tell me how... *While tidying back up the bed, she notices one leather-covered book on the nightstand that she is certain had changed position from the time she fell asleep to now, and it wasn’t because of her. She picked it up and took a look on the first page, realizing it to be a journal of some sorts.* Kato-kun keeps records of his daily activity here? Why? He has eidetic memory.*She then flips past the page to the first log.*

Kazuto: “It’s been too long since we have last spoken to each other, son.”

Yada: "Wait, WHAT!? *Reads the date of the entry; July 14th, 2012.* Kazuto is speaking to Kato-kun somehow? *After giving it some thought, she realizes the truth.* Oh... Kato-kun, these are your dreams in this place, aren’t they? *Continues reading.*

Kato: “I still remember exactly what you said to me as your last words. And yours.”

Yada: Kato-kun’s mother, Aiko, is in the sequences as well? *Continues reading.*

Kazuto: “I suppose you are discouraged that we didn’t give you last words that really meant more, hm?”

Aiko: “I would’ve like to have given your phone a voicemail saying ‘We love you,’ son. But whoever would’ve taken our belongings could trace it, even if they were deleted.”

Kato: “I know why you did everything, and yet it changes nothing for me.”

Kazuto: “We understand you’re upset, son. We never gave you the choices you should’ve.”
Kato: “That also changes nothing, father.”

Aiko: “Then are you mad at us, son?”

Kazuto: "I wouldn't blame you."

Kato: “No! No... I'm just mad at Shiohara. For what he did to you.”

Kazuto: "Why is that? You've already made it possible for you to bury him."

Aiko: "I don't condone it, but it's true you've made the scenario for a perfect revenge. And yet you didn't commit to it."

Kato: "I... I honestly don't know. It's not a phase or anything, and my rage isn't gone. But I have reason to believe there's something to be had by keeping him alive."

Aiko: "So then you're angry with yourself for not knowing what that reason is?"

Kato: "Maybe. I don't fully know what's making me tick anymore."

Kazuto: "The right thing done for the wrong reasons, can be a wrong thing, son. I'm sure you've heard that before."

Kato: "Then what do I do, father? Just let everything bad that happens around me... Happen?"

Kazuto: “That’s up to you, son.”

Aiko: “Remember, Kazuhiko, we’ll be watching you.”*The term, "ENG LOG 1" followed on the next line.*

Yada: *Bites her lower lip.* Poor Kato-kun... When he knows no other cause, he turns only to what he knows best - his Hatred (Bloodlust)... Is he trying to grow past it now? Let's see... *Moves on to read the next few logs, which travel through similar conversations and themes.*

Kato: "Father, mother, I think you'll be glad to know that I've finally buried my anger against my enemies."

Aiko: "That is good to hear."

Kazuto: "But what has replaced it, son?"

Kato: "The same motivation many Katos have been powered by before - a duty to serve Japan. In my case, both to protect my homeland, and secure its balanced future."

Kazuto: "Those are some lofty goals."

Aiko: "It's not that we're advising you against making a difference in the world, Kazuhiko..."

Kato: "But what?"

Kazuto: "How are you so sure that after one year, you're cured of hating somebody?"
Kato: "Amongst the Kato Family, I've pushed for much better relations with everyone. I'm setting up bonds with the local population. No one I find is beyond a talk; almost everyone's redeemable. I've not had a reason to be mad yet."

Aiko: "Except... During your Family's missions, yes?"

Kato: "Ah, well, I mean-"

Kazuto: "You can't escape the thrill of having hot blood, can you, son?"

Aiko: "He got that from you, by the way."

Kato: "Is there really anything wrong with enjoying getting your blood pumped sometimes? Father, you've gotten into a few fights you wanted to be in yourself - Norio told me."

Kazuto: "Accursed younger brother..." *Scoffs.* "But I've come to find that one fight that you want will eventually lead to one you don't want. I've seen that firsthand."

Kato: "What do you mean?"

Aiko: "Son... You just need to believe." "END LOG 2."

Yada: *Turns to LOG 3.*

Kazuto: "I've been thinking of something, son."

Kato: "Have you?"

Aiko: "We have. We can't help but notice that through all of your more favored, interested conflicts, all of them required you to do something."

Kato: "What was that?"

Kazuto: "Being fast, son."

Kato: "Say what?"

Aiko: "You think that your enemies are bringing out the best in you, by keeping you on your toes and desperately wanting you to push your limits day by day." *Sighs.* "I suppose, since I was a lawyer that battles others, there's truth in that."

Kazuto: "I won't refute it; I was a Yakuza who only looked good if everyone else looked bad."

Kato: "Then is it truly bad for me to do something similar?"

Aiko: "Not yet. But like we said before, son, there's causality."

Kazuto: "First, you want to be fast. But maybe next time, you want to be strong. Then the next, next time, you want to be determined. And then you want to be furious. All over again."

Kato: "No, I told you, I buried that side of me. All of my mission handling is pure determination;
Aiko: "That's not what your counterattack plots against the Naito Family sound like, son."

Kato: "That's logic; when someone pushes on your turf, you push back. Maybe I was angered, but it was a necessary anger. Just enough to urge me to act against an injustice."

Kazuto: "Oh, so the injustice alone isn't enough? It had to be personal?"

Kato: "You know it's not like that! My Family and I help people all the time! All other criminals are too afraid in my turf to do anything that would see the light now! That's great, right?"

Aiko: "So any internal dispute you don't see is not your problem? How are you different from the cops you condescend?"

Kato: "Well..."

Kazuto: "Keep us posted." *END LOG 3.*

Yada: *He seems to write these once a year, and by skipping the last, it means he has written this one just last night.* *She proceeds to look onto its page, but immediately realizes the scratchier writing style (for himself, while Kazuto and Aiko are still written majestically) and less-organized style; something was especially wrong this time.*

Kazuto: “Son, as you know, we’ve been watching you as you grow up into a young adult. Everything you’ve become, and everything around you, and about you.”

Aiko: “But more importantly, we’ve been keeping track of what you’ve been thinking about, and honestly, all of it makes us very sad - just as much as it makes you sad.”

Kato: “For the first time, father, mother, I’ve lost some faith in what I’m doing. It's different from what it was previously.”

Kazuto: "Tell us about it."

Kato: “I'm not only admitting that I still have hatred problems. But I always knew that during my hatred, I was doing good, so it was at least a little okay. Or so I thought I knew. Now, I angrily fought back against someone, and when I look back prior, during, and after the ordeal... I don't think he deserved it. Not all of it. When I'm at my angriest, I often incur the most penalties on what I care for most.”

Aiko: “There’s nothing worth our time in this world that is without sacrifice, Kazuhiko.”

Kazuto: “I’m glad that you’re concerned though, son. If you were desensitized to your actions as they were, I would be very worried about you.”

Kato: “But I’m not just taking lives, my parents. I’m not just injuring them, shaming them. I’m ruining them. Just like-”

Kazuto: “Yes... I suppose how our ancestor Taro handled the corrupt advisors’ families of his time is very similar.”
Kato: “It makes me also realize something else in my long career: How many fathers have I killed, mother? How many widows did I make, father? I’m causing my tragedy on everybody with my antipathy, when no one shared nearly as much contempt.”

Kazuto: “All of that is very regrettable, son. But that’s just a sign, Kazuhiko.”

Aiko: “Son, you are one of the strongest, smartest, fastest, most decisive, moral, and magnetic people the world has ever seen. This has won you many great allies, and confidence in not just your previous goals, but everything else you will ever plan to do. However, it also puts you in a very critical place - you hold so much power that you end up responsible for everything around you, and whether you’re happy or angry, it will be ultimately on you... Just like your ancestors before you.”

Kato: “It’s too much to handle.”

Kazuto: “Nobody would say something like this would be easy, son. And it’s also unfair; becoming Oyabun and being a paragon of Japan is too much for a mere teenager to inherit; it was almost too much for me even when I took the role at age twenty-seven.”

Aiko: “That’s why we don’t, and will never blame you for wanting to give it up.”

Kato: “But you’ll always say I can’t rid myself of these duties?”

Kazuto: “Kazuhiko, this is what we must do, until the days we die.”

Kato: “What if I can’t? What if I do something wrong, like I did before?”

Aiko: “My son, you did nothing wrong; you never made the choice to exile Jieji’s family.”

Kato: “But what if I end up doing something similar? I can’t live with myself if that happens; something horrible happens to someone that never wished ill of myself, while I myself got caught up in a raged moment.”

Kazuto: “We can’t help there, Kazuhiko.”

Aiko: “We can only believe in you. Which you must do as well; believe that you won’t make that mistake; our mistakes.”

Kato: “Even more weight on my shoulders? Adding to the amount you’ve already given me?”

Kazuto: “Son... You’re not alone. You just have to believe.” *"END LOG 4."*

Yada: *Covers her mouth at the sheer amount of pain Kato is now going through.* How awful...

-Yada sat at the dining table, waiting for Kato and Mhio to come back from their jog.-

Kato: "We're back." *Closes the front door behind him after he lets Miho inside.*

Yada: *Gets up upon hearing his voice.* "Kato-kun."

Kato: *Walks into the dining room, wiping off his sweat with a towel.* "Huh?"

Yada: *Taps Kato's journal onto her outer thigh, emphasizing its presence to him.*
Kato: *Notices it, then looks at Yada with surprise.* "You..."

Yada: *Dives into his arms, hugging him across his shoulders firmly.*

Kato: *Is speechless about the invasion of his privacy and the sudden act of sympathy to him.*

Miho: "..." *Watches the two young adults reconciling after both of their initial shocks. She noticed that the Hanamura parents were getting a sneak peek of the moment as well, to which she warned them to be quiet.*

Yada: "I'm sorry, Kato-kun... I... I really want to help you through this."

Kato: "..." *Sighs.* "That would be appreciated." *Pries her loose to look her in the eye.* "Where do we start?"

Yada: "Anywhere. Anytime and everytime, we'll look into what drives you; what urges you to act now. We'll get to the bottom of this and find what will work best in the future; I promise you."

Kato: *Looks down, biting his lower lip.* "That sounds great." *Smiles to her.*

Yada: *Smiles back.* "AssUniv needs its big bro at his best. And big sis will get you there." *Knowing Kato often offers his hand to shake on an agreement first, she jumps the gun on it and holds her hand out.*

Kato: *Accepts it.*
THIS IS IT, BOYS AND GALS! KatoXYada forever, baby!!

Yada is now fully caught up on the troubles that consume Kato at this current time, and after expressing her great sympathies over them, she has declared that she will do anything in her power to help him through all of the trauma, as they spend a week in the home where everything for the Kato Family went awry. Will she succeed?

...

I mean, of course she will. I got no tolerance for perpetually broken bois (even though I like to write them).

-After the awkward first day and beginning of the second, Kato and Yada were free to make good progress in what the latter had been urged to work on for this week in Fukuoka with the Hanamuras - help one of the strongest people in the world out on an issue he cannot simply punch his way out of. Whenever there was a chance to assist or counsel Kato, Yada was there.-

  Yada: *She is actively cutting string onions and cilantro into little bits on a board.* "Maybe your hatred isn't gone, but can you say with certainty that any other sort of motivation comes ahead of it?"

  Kato: *Is stirring the rice within the skillet as Yada slides the well-chopped greens into it.* "I can say that."

  Yada: "That's good." *Laughs.* "Kind of a dumb question from me, honestly; you've only showed something frightening to us only once before."

  Kato: "That's still one times too many though."

  Yada: "Is your aggression a sign of care too? You did later tell us one of your sworn brothers died during that day."

  Kato: "Well, yeah."

  Yada: "Hm..."

-Later on, while playing with Kenta...-

  Kato: *Tosses the frisbee in a wide arc high into the air.*

  Kenta: "I'm gonna get that for sure!" *Runs at it, watching it briefly pass him by way above him.*

  Yada: *Speaks through the bluetooth so that she could be heard by Kato even from their fair
"Could all of this be done out of fear? Is there something first and foremost that you would be afraid to lose if you didn't do all of this?"

Kato: "I once thought it was my mind, but you proved that I can work slow. Maybe it could be all that I've done before; we both seem to know how easily the bad side of the world can make the good stuff seem small."

Kenta: "Hah! Caught it! To you, Miss Yada!" *Gives a little running start towards her and throws the frisbee backhanded.*

Yada: "Oh, your mistake, kiddo!" *Stops the disk by forming a V between her left hand's fingers.*

Kenta: "Woah, how did you do that?"

Yada: "I'll tell you later, Kenta. To you, Kato-kun." *Backhand throws it towards him, all the while continuing their motivational conversation.* "Ah, so is it maybe that you're out to prove yourself too? You're just as much a worthy Kato as your father or the others before?"

Kato: *Looking away and at his earpiece, he nevertheless holds out his index finger at the right place so that the frisbee's inner edge latches and spins along it.* "That's likely too; family honor is definitely a good factor since Japan's prehistory." *To Kenta.* "Heads up, K!" *Whips the disk forehanded, creating an S-curve relatively heading Kenta's way.*

Kenta: "Aw! Stop doing things I can't do!" *Chases the frisbee again.*

-Yada even partakes in Kato's pastimes with Miho, such as joining them in their early fifteen-mile jog... But she does find it hard to keep up and counsel Kato at the same time. She even tries getting into their sparring and grappling routine, but...-

Yada: *Clutches her left shoulder, which has been well-wrapped with restricting tape.*

Kato: "I'm sorry about that, Yada-san. I... I'm too used to doing that Brazilian hip-toss hard because Miho's often my opponent."

Miho: *Smacks the back of his head.* "Bad Boss! You need to know restraint for the lesser-experienced."

Yada: "Don't worry; it's not bad at all."

Kato: "Maybe as payment, I can treat you to a dinner night out?"

Yada: *Is speechless for a second, with a little blush.*

Haru: "Excellent suggestion!" *Pops into the room and interjects before Yada can even answer.*

Miho: "Mrs. Hanamura?"

Haru: "We have the perfect choice for just the two of you, with a nice little coupon to go with it!"

Kato: "A nicely wound-up pitch, with some assist." *To Yada.* "How is it, Yada-san?"
-At the (romantically) dimly-lit restaurant...-

Yada: "*Shrugs.* "Okay!"

Kato: *Clad in a silver suit, brings himself back to a designated table where Yada, dressed in a similar attire to her Koenigsegg meet (albeit the color scheme has changed to a dark purple).* "I suppose there's a causality to me going to the lavatories?"

Yada: *Laughs within her closed lips while leaning over the wine bottle.* "Out of necessity, given that almost nobody could resist this Dom Perignon, or want to, for that matter." *Giggles.* "Or, for the ladies, something as nice as this, coming from a gentleman like you." *Settles the bottle and taps the cylindrical golden, engraved ponytail cuff attached to her hair.*

Kato: *Laughs.* "You deserve it, Yada-san." *Refocuses.* "But if that's so, then could me becoming more aggressive as a result of a faster, darker sequence... Could that be out of necessity?"

Yada: "I think your parents are trying to tell you that being mad at something - anything - can only be justified in the heat of the moments, and when time takes its course, you'll eventually find a reason to regret it. As you have now."

Kato: Okay, but what about, uh, you? What if something happened to you? I would naturally get pissed, and I would want revenge. I don't think I'll regret taking an eye for an eye. Wouldn't you relate, if something happened to the rest of AssUniv?"

Yada: *Looks aside.* "I can't say that I wouldn't want something bad to happen to the people that hurt my friends." *Looks back at him.* "So you knew the answer. One of the better answers too, since you handled this before, and came out much better for it."

Kato: *Nods.* "You're referring to how I dealt with Shiohara."

Yada: "Yeah... You knew every consequence that would terminate you when you wanted vengeance. Every farsighted impediment to your goal was considered. That's definitely the difference between you and a lot of people."

Kato: "Are you agreeing with it?"

Yada: "I'm saying that the less you think about revenge, the better you are for it. Until AssUniv walked into your life, you were distracted by your farsightedness. We brought the closeness back to you, in the form of care and joy. But you can't have those without suffering. Hitting it close to the chest like this so frequently for you lately caused your state - they're repeatedly bringing those sort of thoughts to your head."

Kato: "..."

Yada: "Obviously it isn't good that this happened, but I won't say it's bad either. We'd most likely agree to any reason you'd be mad."

Kato: "We're still missing something."

Yada: "Yeah..." *Notices Kato is becoming a little more moody, so she claps her hands right in front of him to wake him up.* "We'll find it; we've a little more than a day left here, but so much
more time back at Kyoto. As long as it takes."

Kato: "Thanks." *They both clink glasses and take a sip.*

-Following Kato and Yada's mutual resolution, on the next day...-

Miho: "You want us to babysit Kenta?"

Mikio: "It would be perfect if you could."

Haru: "A friend of ours is getting married on pretty much the other side of the city; Kenta isn't too much a fan of white clothes, and tends to make a ruckus when he has to stand still, so we need to keep him at home in most cases. We'd ordinarily hire someone to take care of him, but since the three of you are living here for the time being, you think you all could?"

Kato/Miho: *Look between each other, knowing they have next-to-no experience with taking care of children on their own.*

Yada: "We can do that; for the day."

Kenta: "Yay!" *Runs to Yada's side.* "All day with Mr. Kato and his friends!"

Kato: *Sighs.* "You can count on us."

Haru: "Awesome. Good luck." *Her husband and her leave through the front door.*

Kato: "Did you do this for your younger brother before, Yada-san?"

Yada: "Well, yeah. Maybe it's been a long since I did it, since my parents didn't want to sacrifice grades. Either way, he was a handful as an ill boy, so this shouldn't be harder."

Miho: "We'll be following your lead, then."

-The trio continued to feed, play with, help study, and generally tend to Kenta as the day went on, proceeding to the afternoon.-

Kenta: *While playing Smash 4 with Yada.* "Miss Yada, can I get another glass of orange juice? I'm a little thirsty."

Kato: "Coming right up, K." *Stands up from the spectator's chair and heads to the fridge. Opening it, however, yields a near-empty carton.* "Oh no; not enough for a glass."

Miho: "No worries, Kenta. We'll get you that glass in half an hour; there's a nearby." *Looks to Kato urgently.*

Kato: *Realizes that the convenience store Miho is alluding to is the same one where he got popcorn a decade ago.* "We can go there."

Miho: "I'll go with you."

Kato: "Yada-san, you'll be fine taking care of Kenta alone for a bit, right?"
Yada: "Of course! See you soon!"

Kenta: "Bye Mr. Kato and Mrs. Akiyama!"

-Kato and Miho took a stroll about seven blocks away to the fated store. He quickly buys the replenishing OG stock and heads outside, where Miho was leaning on the wall and waiting.-

Miho: "We're good? Then let's get going."

Kato: "Yeah, just... Just one second." *Gazes over to the crossroads that the store was adjacent to.* "..."

Miho: "Boss?"

Kato: *The visual is reformatted into the scene so many years ago, in which Kato as an eleven-year-old saw a crowd form, concealing the death of an old Kato Family member.* "That's where the person died."

Miho: *Swallows.* "Inafune."

Kato: "Yeah. I never wanted to say his name out of respect to you, Miho-san. You knew him while I didn't."

Miho: "That doesn't matter, Kato-ani. You're hurt as much as I am."

Kato: "Only because he died for me. It's commitment without intimacy - empty..." *Mind flickers.* "Love."

Miho: "You can't gauge familiarity like that, Boss. Especially when you still feel bad."

Kato: "You're right. And that's why I know what's been pushing me now."

Miho: *Refocuses.* "Oh?"

Kato: "Even before I had rage..." *Turns to Miho.* "Thank you, Miho. For letting me love you." *Walks up to her. Since he couldn't hug due to the full hands, he instead places his head on her right shoulder for a second.*

Miho: "!?" *Eventually accepts the intimate gesture and pets his back mane.* "You're welcome. I think we should hurry and go tell Miss Yada your discovery now."

Kato: "Definitely."

-And so, Boss and Captain did so, walking back to the vacation home.-

Kato: "We're back!" *He announces. However, all of the rooms were silent with emptiness. Realizing something's wrong, he sets down the juice on the nearby table and rushes to the living room where Yada and Kenta were situated last time.* "!!"

Miho: "Oh no..."

Kato: *Pays attention to the plasma screen still on, and the indented prints on the carpets that
correlate to defined structure - shoes.* "No..."

-Meanwhile, in a windowless room of an unknown house...-

Yada: *Stirs awake, finding herself upright with the room she's in. She coughs a bit, unsure of its cause. When she fully comes to, she realizes that there's an OTM gag in her mouth, preventing her from screaming or saying anything coherent. Meanwhile, she's sitting parallel-legged on a grimy mattress, her ankles bound by tough, corded rope and her wrists put close by cable ties and held above her head, connected to bindings on the ceiling.* *What is this!? Where's Kenta!?*

-The metal door to the room opens up, revealing four different people. Yada ended up recognizing most of them by their clothing and their masks, though one was unfamiliar; probably the one that knocked her out from behind.-

Kidnapper 1: "Well well, the lady's awake."

Yada: *Shows defiance against her abductors.* "MMPH!"

Kidnapper 2: "You're wondering about the kid, huh? Well don't worry; we haven't hurt him."

Yada: *Does not relent in her fit against them.*

Kidnapper 3: "That neck feel nice after I used it to put you to sleep?"

Yada: "Ermhh..." *Thinking about her recently compressed carotids causes her to wince a bit, closing one eye. She also deduces that it was that which was causing her coughing when she regained consciousness.*

Kidnapper 4: "Stealing those diamonds and metal in that master room is a good find alone, but nabbing you and that kid should fetch a generous ransom as well. At least that's what the boss says."

Kidnapper 1: "Likely; that house was huge. They should have loads to spare."

Yada: *Returns to looking aggressively at them.*

Kidnapper 2: "Just thought to let you know about what we did; your safety hinges on what they do, after all. Come on, boys." *Leaves the room, along with 1 and 4.*

Kidnapper 3: *Turns to the door for a second, before looking back at Yada, slowly walking up to her.* "I didn't think much of it first off, but looking at you now... You look pretty damn fine."

Yada: "Mmf?"

Kidnapper 3: *Goes behind her, and places his hands on her breasts.*

Yada: "EMMF! MMPH!" *Exclaims in protest from the grope.*

Kidnapper 3: "Ah... You are a nice catch too." *Pulls back hands, intent on moving it down her back and to her posterior.*

Yada: "Rrrmf.." *Closes her eyes in strain as the thief continues to have his way with her,
reaching the small of her back.*

Kidnapper 2: *Off-screen in the next room.* "Hey! Black! Get over here, the boss needs us!"

Kidnapper 3: "Coming!" *Pats Yada on the top of her head before leaving. He blows her a kiss before closing the door.*

Yada: *Continues to show discontent with her situation.*

-Back at the house...-

Kato/Miho: *Their eyes are closed as they picture the room in their minds.*

Yada: *Having gone for a bathroom break after an active eight rounds with Kenta, she goes out to meet with him again. However, during that instance, the kidnappers have attacked, coming through the far back door, snuck up on Kenta from behind, and terrified him into a silent state, such that when Yada gets there, she's stunned by the new people for a second. That is when one kidnapper pushes through the cover of a sliding closet (which puts the rollers out of socket) leading to the room and tries to apprehend her. With the best of her ability, Yada manages to break free, most likely elbowing the man aside and causing him to break the nearby flower vase on the island sill. She takes the nearby wooden umbrella on the same sill to wade away the abductors, but this is negated when another dives low and sweeps Yada's legs over. As she tries to get up, her first attacker pounces on top and applies a rear naked choke; she tries to break free, knocking over a high stool and kicking a nearby table out of place, but eventually passes out and is taken along with Kenta. The alleged leader then, judging by the lined prints on the ground, goes over to the couch, presumably to leave something there for others to find...*

Kato/Miho: *Kato holds out the note that the two were able to find behind the couch. The paper was written using glued, chopped lettering.* "12-Chome-Wataru - Bring no less than 950,000,000 JPY."

Miho: "How dare they... Hardly better than the traffickers we take down in a morning."

Kato: *Angered, he crushes the letter in his hands into a ball.* "Miho, contact the Hanamuras, acquire them, secure them, and keep them safe. I'll be going to the site, and getting Kenta and Yada-san back."

Miho: "Are you sure that's how you want to play it?"

Kato: 'I'm sure.' *Leaves.*

-Returning to the kidnapper's house...-

Yada: Okay... They should be absorbed enough in their conversation by now. *Pulls herself up to stand properly on her knees, such that her hands could reach anywhere on her head, including her ponytail cuff. She worked its moving parts to unequip it, and reassembled it into something else entirely - a concealable tactical knife.* Thank you, Kato-kun! *Places the blade perpendicular to the cables connecting her hands, and winds it back and forth, eventually cutting herself loose. She does the same with her roped ankles, and then hops off the bed, removing her OTM gag and using an elastic band on her right arm to keep her hair back together in a ponytail. She investigates the door, finding it to open seamlessly. They certainly didn't expect me to get free. My advantage then: I need to find Kenta, and maybe who these people are. *In her crouched stance, sneakily
stalks around the hallways of the household, opening up every door discreetly in an effort to find Kenta. She eventually does, when she opens one close to the staircase leading downstairs.*

Kenta: *Bound with cable ties and OTM-ed himself, he notices Yada and immediately lightens up.*

Yada: *Before he could call out, Yada immediately holds a finger to her mouth.* Shh!! *Goes up to him, lowering his gag.* Please don't speak, Kenta; you will alarm them. I need you to be strong; I'm putting this gag back on, in case they come to meet you again. When I know who these people are, I'll come back and I'll get you out of here. *Replaces Kenta's gag after he nods.* Good boy. *Leaves, deciding to head downstairs, knowing that there is a hallway before it leads to the centered rooms right where the front door was. Along the way, she also realizes that her purse was hanging from a hook, and she retrieves it, finding that most of her belongings, namely her phone, were still there. She immediately calls Kato when she finds the kidnappers conversing with each other.* Kato! I'm fine, don't worry. I've gotten out of my binds and am scouting who kidnapped me and Kenta; they look to be maybe a bit older than us; their masks are off now. None seem to have guns either; just melee weapons. How many? Five total. Though, if there's four here, then- "Kya!" *A blunt object hits the far-side of her head, and she falls over from her hiding spot, with the four being alarmed by their partner knocking Yada out.*

-Roughly six minutes later, Kato drives in, stopping the Chevelle (while Miho had borrowed the Hanamura's traveling minivan) across the street from the named address. He had a large roll of paper notes in his right hand as he walked the steps to the kidnappers' house.-

Kato: *Slowly opens the door.*

Kidnapper Boss: "Ah, finally! Someone showed up at last."

Kato: "..." *Closes the door behind him and turns to face the kidnappers. While he was certainly in a triggered state just by looking at them, what set him off on the inside was who were with them; Kenta was held at knifepoint by the 2nd, while at the feet of 4 was a supine Yada; her face was turned to him, and there was a sign of trauma in the form of a reddened, bulged spot on the side of her head.*

Kidnapper 1: "You got our money, big boy?"

Kato: *Holds up the large roll, revealing it to be almost two inches in radius.*

Kidnapper 3: *Punches 4's tricep.* "Oh yeah, that's definitely a lot of cash."

Kidnapper Boss: "Well then, boy; hand it over."

Kato: *Looks at Kenta, who was holding back his fearful tears as much as possible, and Yada, who was allegedly unconscious.* "Here." *Without a second thought, he throws it up, for 4 to catch.*

Yada: *A second after Kato says only one word, she immediately wakes up. Her cuff-knife, put in her pocket before 4 believed he took her out, is taken out and driven right into his boot, piercing right through.*

Kidnapper 4: *Screams in pain as he falls back.*
Yada: *While the rest were distracted, with 2 even letting go of Kenta due to surprise (which results in the child falling out of danger), Yada catches the pipe 4 held and throws it straight at 2, hitting him square in the face and taking him out too. She also catches the coil of yen and rolls through the remaining three, first driving one end of the cylinder into the Boss' leg while tripping up 1 and 2 with a split kick, and pushing the roll into their thighs as well. When she gets up, none of them could move, and after twenty-five seconds, the three of them were out. The roll had a protruding one-inch needle, which dripped with a suspicious, sedating liquid, most likely an advancement of such chemicals used in surgical operations.*

Kato: *Proceeds to exhale out his vaporizer's fluid.* "Planned to perfection, Yada-san?"
*Remembers his side of the phone conversation, revealing that he was continuing to relay details to Yada about what she should do while she talked about the meet.*

Yada: "Yeah." *Turns to him. She realizes she has some dust on her hair, and brushes it off, before looking at Kato again with a smile.*

Kenta: *Gets up, pulls off his OTM gag and runs into Kato's arms.* "Mr. Kato! You saved me!"

Kato: "Hey, it wasn't just me, you know."

Kenta: "I know!" *To Yada.* "Thank you, Miss Yada!"

Yada: *Puts her left hand onto her hip.* "No problem, Kenta."

Kato: "The Hanamuras will be calling the cops soon; let's get out of here."

-Kato drove Yada and Kenta back to the house. Miho, who was given the okay to bring Kenta's parents back soon after this, was with them to greet the younger group when they pulled into the driveway.-

Haru/Mikio: "KENTA, SON!" *Run to the car, practically lifting Kenta out of the convertible and into their arms. Son hugged mother and father just as deeply, with tears going down all of their faces.* "Thank the Lord you're okay!"

Kenta: "Mommy! Daddy! I love you so much!"

Haru: "We love you too, son!" *Hugs even deeper.*

Kato/Yada: *Both look at the family for a little bit, before turning to Miho, who gave them a thumbs-up. Kato smiles to that.*

-After a tough evening, time quickly passed by for everyone, reaching 10:45 P.M. Kato, Miho, and Yada took turns washing up, with cold water so as to not disrupt their sleep schedules. Haru and Mikio stuck by their child while he was dozing off into young, early slumber.-

Kato: *The last one to wash up, he got out, seeing Miho has returned off-screen to Mikio and Haru, as protocol to determine what associates of the Kato Family would do after an incident like this. As such, this leaves him alone with Yada, who was wearing just sleep shorts and a spaghetti string top, and was finishing drying up her long hair. But the most notable thing in his eyes right now was her face blemish.* "Does that hurt?"

Yada: *Realizes he's talking about her bruise.* "Not anymore. I can already feel it alleviating."
Kato: "Sits right next to her and places his hand on her face to get a closer look. "It'll still need a bandage." *Turns to the nightstand and opens up a drawer to collect a paper box of band-aids, unsealing one to put it right over her affected area.*

Yada: "Thanks." *Puts her hand up to his to feel the bandage.*

Kato: "His heart suddenly racing when their two hands connect, he immediately gets up and looks to the side.*

Yada: *Stands up to match him.* "Kato-kun? What's wrong?"

Kato: "I... I just think, you'd be glad to know that I know why I do everything I do now."

Yada: "Oh?"

Kato: "Yeah..." *Sighs, looking up.* "I think about when I was only a junior-high student. Sure, I had martial might, and I used it to beat the local bully. But that meant nothing to older people who controls the Japan around me. My parents noted this in the past, and told me to adhere to the standards of conduct befitting my stature at the time. All of us had these kinds of talks before, whether to obey your parents, or not push 'it' and risk the loss of your school life or career. So, when I used my skills before it was time, I saw the consequences - risking my existence's exposure."

Yada: "Hm... A commander's dilemma. Why they never break the rules of engagement even in hot and dirty conflict."

Kato: *Corresponding to that statement, he clenches his grandfather's dog tags into his right fist.* "And then, when I was in Okinawa, feeling responsible for not letting my family's legacy rot in a crude, cruel jail cell... And when I was out, I recognize just what it took to get my family's honor back to its prime. Nobody said I needed to; many now would wish I never did it. But I knew deep in my heart, that it was both what I wanted to do, and what I must do. Even better than that, it's a want beyond my revel for battle, or to sate my rage against enemies."

Yada: *Goes up to his back, still turned to her.*

Kato: "Before I had anything close to power, I had responsibility. Something my parents taught me. Before they died. Something everyone will always feel, and therefore get an urge to act. And their will to act grants them their strength.* *Releases his necklace and turns to Yada with a satisfied expression on his face.* "I run on responsibility. To you, to my Family, to AssUniv, to Japan. It's why I fight wars that aren't inherently mine, and why I get mad when I can't keep to it. It may not always be in front of me, but I'm never losing sight of it again."

Yada: *Smiles at him.* "That's excellent. I'm really happy for you."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "By getting me through this week, you've proven how much more invaluable you are, Yada-san. Even compared to a billionaire."

Yada: "Oh, now you're really being ridiculous, Kato-kun. You've done a lot for my life too."

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "Not nearly enough."
Yada: "Then how do you think of filling the rest?"

Kato/Yada: *After a few seconds of standing in front and looking at each other, they embrace deeply. Heads fall on each’s shoulders, before they make enough distance to gravitate for a right-angled kiss; one they finally consented to each other for.*

Miho/Haru/Mikio: *Look through the ajar doorway to the room from afar with awe.*

Kato/Yada: *Not relinquishing their French, Kato slowly trails his hands from Yada's upper back to her waist, while Yada moves her arms over Kato's and reaches around his shoulders and cupping at the back of his neck. They then release for a few moments so that they can fall onto the king-size together. After helping to remove each other's unnecessary clothing (such as Yada's pants, allowing him greater access to her hips, and Kato's shirt, exposing his Miyamoto Irezumi) they continue to fondle and mush faces once more... Unaware that there are five others are watching them; two, in fact, are also in that very room.*

Miho: I guess I'll be taking the couch outside...

-The next morning, the trio were quick to saying one last, swift prayer to the shrine of Kato's parents, and packing up their things in preparation to leave Fukuoka. Miho fires up the Chevelle one last time for the year in the designated city.-

Kenta: *Waves to the three vigorously.* "See you soon, Mr. Kato!"

Kato: *Salutes to the little kid, which he reciprocates, before going into the Impala's backseat with Yada.*

Haru: *With Mikio, goes up to the chassis of the car, looking to Kato.* "We can't thank you enough - all of you, for saving Kenta from those men. And," *Sighs.* "No matter what, even though you're a Yakuza, dangerous even by their standards, you'll always have a place in our family too."

Kato: "Thank you."

Miho: "Alright. Let's get going, shall we?" *Puts the foreign muscle in reverse, and begins driving out to the edge. All the while, Kato and Yada stare distantly to their respective sides of the car in complete silence; something she notices when she looks into her rearview mirror. Returning the Chevelle to the lock-up and transitioning back to the Opel Insignia, she starts up that car too.* "Okay; we all hooked in? All set?" *Looks into the rearview mirror again.*

Kato/Yada: *This time when Miho looks back, they're in the rear seats kissing each other once more; Kato caresses and presses on her waist while Yada compresses his cheeks.*

Miho: "..." *She eventually smiles to her Boss' good fortune, turning on the automobile's audio system and tuning into his favorite station, with the volume playing low as she drives out of the garage and the light fills the car.*

-"Wait For You (Dancefloor Night Mix)" by ACE plays on the radio.-

Kato/Yada: *Continue to make out as they leave the borders of the prefectural capital.*

-Now, back at Nyurifu Rikkyo...-
"Come Alive" by ACE & Seastar plays over the loudspeakers.

-AssUniv all regroup at the VIP Platform, hoping to hear all about the week their two resident big siblings had on Kyushu Island.

Nagisa: "So, how was you two's trip?"

Kato/Yada: "Look between each other with monotone expressions."

Kato: *Looks at Nagisa.* "It was refreshing for myself. Yada-san?"

Yada: "Intriguing."

Terasaka: "Really? That's all you can say about the matter? No context, nothing?"

Muramatsu: "Yeah; Yada-san, you just leave a conference message for all of us, and you think that's all we'd want to know?"

Nakamura: "Of course not, Terasaka and Muramatsu. That's definitely not all they have to say. They're just leaving the best parts out."

Karma: "I don't think so, Nakamura-san; we have both observed enough to conclude that these two are far too 'prude-y' to have done such prose as you seem to highly imply."

AssUniv: *Altogether laugh at the comical remark.*

Kato/Yada: *Nonchalantly fiddle with their opened bottled drinks and looking aside within the room and its windows, before again finding their sights at each other, and giving their own little smirks.*

Kayano: *In the middle of her laughter, she notices their behaviors.* "Whoa, wait a second..."

Kato/Yada: *Both produce their most coyly complaisant attention faces at Kayano. The expression does not go unnoticed by the rest of their friends, who have broken out of their fit.*

Sugino: "NO..."

Kanzaki: *Covers her mouth.* "Oh my..."

Maehara: "That's nuts."

Okano: "That's insane."

Hara: *To Yada.* "Did you really?"

Yada: *Looks up.* "It's a secret."

Kimura: *Slouches back.* "Ha! So you didn't." *Then looks at Kato, and suddenly doesn't feel so certain.* "I think..."

Kato: *His smile grows, rolling his eyes to trip up all of them even more.*
Karma: "What a development..." *Deviously holds his chin.*

Kurahashi: "Come on, guys; stop having fun with this. Just tell us: you two did it or not?"

Kato/Yada: *Both close their eyes to think about their answer.*

-Returning to the morning of today...-

-A slow pan showcasing the personal room reveals that none of the clothes Kato and Yada were wearing during the incident had been replaced; they still scattered the ground from being pulled off the king-sized bed, though it seems a sati sleepwear sleeveless top and Covington shorts have joined them. Then there was the sets of pistols (Kato's dual Kimber Warrior Mk. IIs and Yada's TiSAS Zigan C40 Sport) placed on the table near the fold-out bed - all have been properly field-stripped, but have yet to be cleaned or lubricated, with the required materials still sitting on the nearby nightstand. Onto the large, waist-level dresser, there was the string of bagged condoms and bottle of water-based lubricant. Only... There was one opened, now "condom-less" bag, and the plastic container had a fair amount less that what was originally perceived, with both instruments having been moved from where they once were.-

-Finally, there was Kato and Yada themselves... Under the sheets of the aforementioned king-sized bed. Befitting the fact that their previous garbs are now on the floor, the two were covered only by each other and the bedsheet, though Kato was still wearing his grandfather's dog tags, resting on the mattress with him. He laid on his side opposite Yada's, with them facing each other; they were in close contact, with Kato's entrenched arm forming elbow support for Yada's head, and the other covering her shoulder area. Yada's close arm held onto her newfound headrest while the other went under Kato's own limb to feel his upper back. To complete the intimacy, Kato's face smushed against Yada's forehead, almost like a prolonged peck to the area, which she was seen smiling to. To match the gesture, she pitched her upper leg onto Kato's side, with her knee high up onto his ribcage, and her calf linked to the curve of his back.-

-Further still, there are scenes depicting the aftermath - the trip back to Kyoto. When they were finished making out, they were seen stopping at local pit-stops or notable landmarks, documenting their adventure with photos. When it was Kato's turn to drive, Yada was allowed the passenger seat, and they were seen hold hands across the centerpiece. Towards the end, they had returned to the backseat, resting up with their bodies leaning on each other. The carefully reconstructed hoods that Kato had updated for the KAM AtTac Suits were covering their heads to block the sunlight.-

-Returning to the present...-

Kato/Yada: *After thinking about it, they both shake their heads.* "I think we'll leave this to your imaginations."

Nakamura: "How dare you toy with the jester. You lot are treading on dangerous waters." *Crosses her arms and pouts.*

Nagisa: "..."
Well, that's a highly suggestive name if I ever did type one. Hindsight 20/20.

Anyways, just as Karma, Karasuma, and Naoko have reminded Kato of foods for thought, Kato and Yada have rekindled old cogitations for Nagisa and his relationship with Kayano. It certainly isn't as obviously turbulent as the formers' is, but does that mean it will be any easier to make pleasant? We shall see.

-"Really Love Ya" by Nathalie plays on the loudspeakers.-

-Two weeks have passed since Kato and Yada's time in Fukuoka, but with yet another revision to the relationships between the members of AssUniv yields... Roughly around the same thing as before. Despite it all, life working at Nyurifu Rikkyo remained very similar.-

-Oh, but off-duty's another story. Notably, on pay day for the student-assassins...-

Yada: *Is calculating everyone's pay for the two week's cumulative hours of work, and giving each their own slip, with which to give to Kato in order to personally hand them over their cash in accordance to the number.*

Kataoka: "Another job well done..." *Places her roll of yen into a zipper section of her purse.*

Isogai: "Another sweet payout well-earned." *Thumb-flips his roll into his shirt's chest pocket.* "And to be given to the folks."

Yada: *With herself being the only one not paid yet, She prints out her slip and walks up to Kato.* "I do believe compensation is in order." *Hands him the strip of paper.*

Kato: *Inspect it with slit eyes before looking back at Yada.* "Paper..." *Places a roll of 38,000 JPY onto the high table.* "For paper."

Yada: *Picks up and manipulates the banded package with skepticism.* "I don't think this covers all of my good work here, boss."

Kato: "You're pulling on my lapels, sweetheart. But if you insist..." *They both lean in to kiss.*

Karasuma: *With Irina, they are at the distance, leaning on the sill which leads up to the front exit.* "I never knew Kato had it in him to be able to find a steady girlfriend."

Irina: "Heh, what a great joke about one of your friends..." *Laughs for a bit, followed by a beat, moving only her eyes to look at Karasuma.* "That was a friend's joke, right?"

Karma: *Sitting adjacent with Naoko with his arm across her shoulders and nearby the latter's siblings.* "Naoko-san, you have something to say about how bad Kato is as a partner again?"
Naoko: *Smiles with unease.* "Is it too late to say I was wrong?"

Irina: "Oh! Fancying him now, are you?"

Karma: "Very funny, Bitch-sensei!" *Laughs a bit too, before having a beat, and turns his attention to Naoko.* "Right?"

Naoko: "No, I'm not crushing on him. I just think that I was blind to who Kato really was as a really good person underneath all of his criminal fluff. It probably helps that the lot of us were probably responsible for bringing those hidden depths out of him."

Karma: "Ah... Good to know."

Naoko: "Hey, come on; you're the first, foremost, and only devil for me." *Leans her back fully onto Karma's chest.*

Nagisa: "..." *Looks at his check, then over at Kayano... Who seemed to be slobbering all over her own.*

Karma: "Oh, and here's the longtime scoop - what will Nagisa do for Kayano now...?"

-The next morning, on one of the rare days off from any sort of training in assassination (save for all those other times the student-assassins got to skip to look through their careers), Kayano left the Hyatt Regency on her own to reach an Italian sweets cafe that had recently opened up in Kyoto... At least, she thought she was on her own.-

Kayano: *Humming a cheerful tune, she walks down the long sidewalks en route to an Agostini's Confectionery.*

Nagisa: *Stealthily hides behind the trees, telephone poles, and lightpoles that she passes by, hoping to intercept her right before she enters.*

Nakamura: *Appears as a stealthy peek over Nagisa.* "WHAT are you doing?"

Nagisa: *Turns white and nearly screams his cover away before turning back hastily, realizing that the rest of his friends and peers were with her.* "What? Why are you all here?"

Sugino: "Nagisa, man, why are you here?"

Kanzaki: "You could be so much further down this sidewalk."

Okuda: "Indeed; parallel with good Kayano-san there!"

Nagisa: "Uh- Well, I'm kinda-" *Sighs.* "You're going to help; all of you, aren't you?"

Terasaka: "Careful, he's learning, everyone!"

Kimura: "About damn time."

Nagisa: "Alright; what's the game plan?"

Yada: "Did you plan on doing anything after encountering her at the Agostini's?"
Nagisa: "I was leaving that to chance."

Ritsu: *Appears on Karma's phone.* "That's a very large thing to leave with chance."

-Just as Kayano was about to open the door to the confectionary, Nagisa went about as planned, beating her to the threshold and opening up first.-

Kayano: "Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: "Huh?" *Turns around.* "Oh! Kayano-san! You've been attracted by Agostini's as well?"

Kayano: *Scoffs.* "Remember who you're talking to; I was the one who orchestrated the construction of a building-sized pudding."

Nagisa: "Silly me. Well, would you like to enjoy some sweets together, now that that is what we are... Right now?"

Kayano: "Hehe. Alright." *They both go in.*

Mimura: *Hiding behind a wall, with the rest of the student-assassins.* "Ugh... What made him think that was a good line?"

Nakamura: "I'm not letting him hear the end of it. After this, though."

Itona: "Alright, there's no way we can get even remotely close to the cafe, since Kayano-san knows all of our hiding tricks."

Kanzaki: "I'm still not sure why we thought she wouldn't notice us slowly amass in their area that one time..."

Itona: "So, the little micromachines that Kato, thank you for that, let me borrow for this mission and hidden high up on Nagisa-san's forehead will allow us to have perfect coverage." *Opens up his modified laptop to take in the audiovisual feed. The first thing they see is Nagisa looking ahead - to a bathroom stall's door.*

AssUniv: *Most of them develop shadows over their eyes upon realizing what's in their view. The rest merely close their eyes, either to expel their sudden feelings about the memory, or to awkwardly laugh it away.*

-After an initial mishap, the student-assassins reorganize behind the screen and watch as Nagisa and Kayano proceed to select their sweets, with the former even comping a particular piece for the latter, and settling down at a small table for a bite.-

Kayano: "Hey, Nagisa-kun, I know that we recently got a fresh sum of money again, but this Summer pudding is probably half of it. I hope you can take that bite out of your savings."

Nagisa: "Oh, it's nothing. Barely make a dent, unlike what we'll do to it."

Terasaka: "Does Nagisa dismissing your loan like that piss you off at all, Kato?"
Kato: "I loaned him the money for that purpose. My opinion for money no longer mine at the current time doesn't matter."

Kurahashi: "I think you're tiptoeing, Kato-kun. How you really feel?"

Yada: "Lay it on us, Kato-kun."

Kato: "Alright, it kind of sucks."

Chiba: "Ah, now you sound like an actual billionaire."

Kayano: "Heheh, you're right about that." They both take a fork and slice into opposite sides of it. When Kayano finishes first, she opts to move her portion right in front of Nagisa's face. "I think it's fair I repay you by feeding you the first part, hm?"

Nagisa: "How about together?"

Kayano: "No, come on; I was first to offer, AND, I'm the lady." Moves her fork closer to his face. "Now, have at it."

Nagisa: *Sets down his utensil with a little smile.* "Alright; because you asked, though." With his mouth open, he bites down on the metal, scraping the Summer pudding into his maw. "Oh, this is definitely worth the price."

Kayano: *Retracts her hand and utensil.* "You're not making me wish we fed each other now, are you?"

Nagisa: "By all means, Kayano-san, have a piece yourself."

Kayano: *Does so.* "Oh yeah. Great choice, Nagisa-kun."

Nagisa: "My pleasure."

Kayano: *Mind flickers.* "Oh, you know, the producers have sent out two new trailers for the premiere of the movie just two days ago!"

Nagisa: "'Streak of White?'"

Kayano: "That's the flim! Look at one of them here!" Takes out her phone and opens up the video on YT, then holds it out horizontally for the two of them to watch... And AssUniv. *

Mimura: "Oh boy, that does look good."

Hazama: "Mhm. Makes you wish Mochzuki Chiyome was an actual person with hot-white shiny hair."

Nagisa: *The video finished, he is taken aback, falling onto the back support of his chair.* "Wow, that was awesome!"

Kayano: "Hey, thank you." Puts her phone away. *

Nagisa: "When's the premiere?"
Kayano: "One more week! Oh, in fact, it's going to be here in Kyoto! I'll be sure to invite all of us to it; maybe the twins that Okajima and Kato-kun have befriended, and even some of our acquaintances from way back when!"

Nagisa: "Yeah, that'd be amazing!"

Kayano: "Indeed - getting all of the old band, such as Sakura-chan, Mr. Matsukata, Red Eye, Lovro-

Lovro: *Lowers his menu nearby.* "I'm right here."

AssUniv: *Collectively, even though all of them are obviously separated.* "WHAT!??"

Lovro: *Raises his menu again.*

Kayano: "Okay then... Uh, Yuji too. Nagisa-kun, how about your parents? You think they'll be happy to attend?"

Nagisa: "After so much in these last four years, they'd be happy to partake in anything with me. But we're separate from them for a reason, so it's best not to invite them - I'll just buy out a limited edition box set and watch it with them when it's all over."

Kayano: "Ah. Right. I, uh, never thought too much about parental, or guardian concerns, I suppose. It's mostly because of, well-

Nagisa: *Holds out his hand to her, interrupting the borderline-poor topic.* "That's enough about that, Kayano-san. We're here for sweet joy, so let's have the rest of it then, huh?"

Kayano: *Nods.* "Right." *Regains her smile, which Nagisa reciprocates.*

Sugino: "Ooo, dodged a bullet there."

Kato: "Only expect as much from him. It's," *Checks his watch.* "Not too long ago when you guys called him the resident killjoy."

Fuwa: "That's right. If he wants to reform others, he'd first have to have learned how to change it within himself."

-When the duo have had their fill of the sugary platters, they put the rest into a white box and left. They proceeded to the cultural district of Kyoto, recognizing the Matsuri festival going on.-

Nagisa: "Hey, I didn't know they were still throwing the Gion. Doesn't it end at the end of July, less than a week ago?"

Kayano: "I think they're making up for a few days of bad weather." *Turns to him and giggles.* "Want to end it?"

Nagisa: *Turns to her.* "End what?"

Kayano: "Don't you remember? The last time we were at a Matsuri together, it was at Okinawa, and we were playing the ball-hooking game. We played until the last one in the pool, and ended up
tying."

Nagisa: "Oh yeah, that is right. I did manage to tie that up, but I can't help but think you've had a way with that hook before, Kayano-san. Working for some unknown semi-pro league before AssClass?"

Kayano: "Oh, nothing like that. When I was taking my break from acting during my childhood, I liked to go to several of these a year with my sister... Before she..." *Looks aside.*

Nagisa: *Realizes it's coming back again.* "So, ball-scooping, huh? That sounds fun."

Kayano: *Turns back to him with arrogance, instantly and without the emotions of mere seconds ago.* "Hah, 'fun?' I'm playing for keeps this time, Nagisa-kun. I've got much lighter hands than you ever will."

Nagisa: "We'll just see about that." *They both walk over to the first booth they see that provides the game.*

-The ensuing minutes were an epic interval. Flailing bodies were flying everywhere, pieces of curved, jagged metal were raised and subsequently dropped (or the other way around), latching onto any orifice that they needed to. Clearly, despite being outnumbered, the odds were against the many, for these two, bloodlust-filled folk were too much for the lot of them to bear.-

-Nagisa and Kayano continue to lob balls with loose, minuscule loops attached to them behind their backs and into a small reserve pool, with a fixed barrier to indicate their respective collections.-

Kato: "Such a grand display of dexterity and precision."

Yada: "Yeah, old news, Kato-kun. We've all had our good moments."

Fuwa: "You're hardly worthy to talk, Yada-san, what with that lucky shot on Hayami-san five years ago."

Yada: "Hey, I'll have you know that did take some doing; she wasn't right in front of me."

Hayami: "That much is true. It's best to leave it at that."

Kato: *Moves close to Yada's face.* Do I need to know why you shot Hayami-san all that time ago? Was it merely a paintball session for practice?

Yada: You know, I think you could call it that.

Terasaka: "Excuse us, lovebirds, but we have a competition to watch."

Nagisa/Kayano: "..." *Both were without an ounce of doubt or fogged thought impeding their determination as they continued to take out all of the floating balls in single, swift strokes. As requested to the organizer, one ball was taken out, making it an odd number - there would be a definitive winner. Much to the owner's surprise, the two were coming down on that final ball, with there being nine left after three minutes. Then seven seconds later... Then five, then three. After Nagisa whips back his last one, he notices for a moment that Kayano throws the ball behind her across her chest and over the other shoulder - something she hasn't yet done before. It throws Nagisa for a loop, especially as the arc it travels makes it seem as though the ball would fling
towards his face. With that in mind, Nagisa naturally shifts just enough to avoid it... Until he also
notices Kayano pulling it back just enough so that it would miss Nagisa no matter his dodging. It
was just the change in timing for him, resulting in a slightly slower rebound, allowing Kayano to
steal the last ball and claim it in her territory.*

Kayano: *Smiles smugly and with her eyes closed.* "Hehe, I won!"

Nagisa: *Throws his hook such that it latches to the rim of the central tub.* "No way; you
cheated."

Kayano: "Heh, prove it, little man; where's the rule that says I can't nearly smack you in the face
with a ball?"

Nagisa: *Unable to retain his far-fetched angry state any longer after comprehending that
remark, he breaks into a small fit of laughter, which Kayano reciprocates.* "Alright, you won. It's
set in stone. Thanks for the game." *Bows.*

Kayano: "Oo, how humble." *Nods in response.*

Stall Worker: *Holds out dozens of boxed prizes.* "Well, you two technically beat the grand
prize marker at least six times each, so you both have earned these. I'm afraid that in the time frame
of this competition, I couldn't really get you anything special for being the real winner, miss."

Kayano: *Accepts her half.* "Oh, that's quite alright, thank you."

Nagisa: *Accepts his half.* "I'm actually kind of disappointed, beyond my loss; Hayami-san and
Chiba-san got banned from the shooting stall that long ago due to their skill. It would've been nice
if we were treated the same."

Hayami/Chiba: *Both facepalm themselves due to their lack of professionalism during that
segment; a sight that the rest of the student-assassins witness with relative nostalgic high.*

Kayano: "Let's find a place to put all this stuff, and-" *Notices her lips are dry.* "This brief
struggle has still gotten me pretty thirsty."

Nagisa: "It might also be the sweets, particularly the stale dough of that Summer pudding."
*Notices the box of pastries near him and tries latching its loop(s) onto one of his fingers, still
wedged into the rest of the boxes he's got.*

Kayano: "You would be right... Okay, find that place, and get some, uh, ramune? Good with
you?"

Nagisa: "That sounds good."

-Their... get-together transitions to a table right next to a large maple tree. After setting the prizes
down, they then proceed to a nearby stall, getting original/lemon-flavored ramune and have a seat
to enjoy them.-

Nagisa: *Finishes his latest sip with a satisfying sigh.*

Kayano: "Ramune is always an excellent refresher."
Nagisa: "Heh, well there's a reason its bottle design is a symbol for Japanese Summer."

Kayano: Indeed, but, does it really have to be like this? I remember, as a child, I couldn't quite drink it right. I always-

Nagisa: *Presses on her hand to interrupt her.* "Codd-neck bottles see rare use anywhere else but in ramune. It's just a more complex sealing method to most, but it's, uh, legacy for us. And we appreciate legacy."

Kayano: *Smiles.* "That we do." *Sighs.*

Nagisa: "I know, Kayano-san. It's been tough trying to move on. And it's especially notable given how Kato-san has shown he has as well; on a matter no less serious, but so much more quickly."

Kayano: "You know I haven't recovered when you find that I'm still going by my alias and not my real name. Ever since I've met that man who always lives in the past, I keep being reminded of my own. It damn well hurts." *Looks aside.* "And I don't blame Kato-kun; he's a very nice guy and he doesn't wish ill on any of us, particularly like this. But..."

Nagisa: "Hm..."

Kato: *Listening to the conversation with empathy.* "..."

Kayano: "Somehow, I need to learn how to celebrate her life, not keep moping about her death." *Looks back at Nagisa.* "Because her legacy for everyone is her sweet memories; not the sour ones, right?"

Nagisa: "True enough."

Kayano: "Well then... Here's to legacy. Whatever it may be."

Nagisa: "To legacy." *They both clink bottles and take a sip.*

Kayano: *Sighs pleasantly after her final sip.* "So..."

Nagisa: *Swallows abruptly from the next word said.* "'So?"

Kayano: "When are our friends going to reveal themselves here?" *Looks around.*

Nagisa: "'!!"

Kayano: *Flings one chopstick on the table straight towards Nagisa's forehead; the point hits the camera, breaking its lens and the parts fall onto the table... Micro-sized, of course, but still visible to her.*

AssUniv: *With beads of sweat figuratively falling down the backs of their heads, they all reveal themselves from behind an extra-large stall nearby.* "That was very uncalled for!"

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's phone.* "I dislike agreeing, Kayano-san. I almost thought I was being attacked on a meta scale there."
Fuwa: "I wonder if the cameras on the devices of you readers have thought that too just now."

AssUniv: "FUWA-SAN!?"

Nagisa: "Eheheheh... Oops."

Kayano: "Yet again, our friends just cannot get away from being some wild card in our time together, can they?"

Karma: "Hey, at least we don't discriminate."

Sugino: "That, we do not."

Itona: *Closes his laptop.* "Be it between all of us, our mentors, or our peers, we're always there."

Kayano: *Pouts.* "That hardly makes it okay..."

Isogai: "Hey, if you think about it, this reminds me of something."

Kataoka: "Wait, you mean like the old days? A, shall we say, 'legacy'?" *Some laugh to that. *

Kayano: *Despite still being mad, she scoffs with some joy.* "Don't twist our words, damnit! And even so, it's barely that."

Nakamura: "Oh? How about this, then?" *Flings a chopstick straight to a fairly-tall arching branch directly above the table. Its point hits the side of a box full of assorted nuts, resulting in it falling straight on top of Nagisa and dumping the entirety of its contents onto him.*

Nagisa: "EMPH!" *His painful grunt is muffled by the box falling and trapping his head in it.*

Kayano: "NAGISA-KUN!?" *Stands up and immediately goes to his side.*

Nagisa: "Euuuuh~..."

Nakamura: "Oh wait a minute, that's not right..." *AssUniv walk closer to the incident.*

Kanzaki: "Nakamura-san, this was a little worse of a prank than we believed you'd give."

Nakamura: "I know, I'm kinda surprised."

Kayano: *When she pulls the box off of Nagisa's head, it's revealed the bottom has an interlayer metal sheet.* "Nakamura-san, did you get this box from a float's prop area?"

Karma: "Oh..."

Kato/Kurahashi: *Run up to Nagisa, addressing his injury. They say in unison.* "Moderate head trauma; might cause a large contusion."

Kurahashi: "Lets get him to a hospital!"

Kato: "I got better; let him rest a bit, clean the mess, and disperse. I'll get my car. Kayano-san,
with me."

Kayano: "Got it." *They leave.*
Space to Let Go

Chapter Summary

A continuation of the previous chapter, this is where all of AssUniv comes together to realize just what they want to do next once the AssUniv Program is over and they get to go back to their previous lives.

In case you're wondering, this chapter will include foreshadowing of the main series' epilogue.

-In the ensuing moments following Nakamura's prank on Nagisa gone wrong, Kato started up his Cadillac CT6, and, with Kayano also inside, they returned to the Matsuri and picked up Nagisa, en route to taking him to somewhere... "better" than a hospital.-

-AssUniv meanwhile were told to retreat back to their base of operations in the Hyatt Regency to not draw attention to themselves. For Naoko, that meant returning to her room to call an already hectic day... A day.-

Naoko: *Walks towards her suite, separating from Maehara, Okano, Kataoka, and Isogai who had gone up with her.* A nap would do some good... Before I wreck Karma for getting back at Nagisa-kun for something so petty. Seriously, a box dump prank just because he's been trolling about his love? I swear, he's lovable for probably the wrongest reasons. *Reaches her door and lays a hand on it, before hearing the door across from her swing open.* "Huh?" *Quickly turns back.* "Karasuma-nii? Irina?"

Karasuma/Irina: *Both lean on the far wall, with their suite's door slowly closing.* "Hello, Naoko/little sis."

Naoko: *Feeling confronted.* "What's this about?"

Karasuma: "Has all of the dust settled yet, Naoko?"

Naoko: "'Dust?'* Mind flickers.* "Oh, you mean the debacle and revelation from a week ago? Oh, that's definitely water over the bridge now. In fact, it was that the moment the day was done."

Irina: "Are you sure?"

Naoko: "Yeah. Didn't you see me? Gleefully hugging your husband?"

Karasuma: "So everything about that day is alright?"

Naoko: "Scoffs with a smile.* "Are you just going to ask me the same question for ten minutes?"

Karasuma: "No, Naoko, we were intending on something a little more."

Naoko: "And what's that?"
Irina: "Paying all who still matter a visit."

Naoko: *Thinks on that statement for a little bit, before realizing who they meant by that.* "No..."

Karasuma: "Naoko..."

Naoko: "No, not her."

Irina: "You think we'd want to see her too? No, but we need to, because you need to."

Naoko: "Why? It won't matter what I say to her; she's just going to loathe me more and more after every word."

Karasuma: "Technically, she's already at her limit. But we're just going to have to deal with that."

Naoko: *Stutters to a pause, looking aside and clutches her forehead.* "Do we really?"

Irina: "Oh, that we must."

Naoko: "I've already had a pretty trying day. The, uh, the kids, as you say--"

Karasuma: "They're not concerned with this. Come on." *Proceeds to the elevator of the floor along with Irina. Naoko reluctantly follows them.*

-Meanwhile...-

"Don't Close Your Eyes" by Dave & Domino play at lounge volume in the intercom.

-As it turns out, what Kato had in mind for Nagisa and Kayano was a more private medical facility, run by his own Kato family. No need for I.D. tracks for friends of the family or political retraction of care - you are guaranteed first-rate care for whatever ails you, and no one you don't want to tell will know... The perfect institution for someone secretive like Kato.-

Kayano: *With Kato, they stand just outside Nagisa's room. She can't help but notice the many different types of people passing by in the hallways of this black-market hospital.* "You know, there are illegal doctors personally hired by various Yakuza for their crazy jobs, and then there's Yakuza who build their own hospitals, to actually be hospitals."

Kato: *Lets out a huff of vapor.* "Does that really sound so crazy?"

Kayano: *Smiles.* "Eh, you know what I mean."

Kato: *Laughs a bit.* "Just appealing to the trend of thought."

Kayano: "So is everything here a signature brand?"

Kato: "No, not everything is made by us here. I guess it's the oligopolist in me who's wanting to cut any and all costs I can afford to cut, but we import a few things from some other research and medical institutions here. After all, if it's proven to work, and it performs just as well since day one, then what is the reason to change it?"
Kayano: "For an evolutionary, you're pretty clingy to old values. We've been noticing that for a long while."

Kato: "The job of the Kato Family is to oversee the development of Japan. Sometimes that means pushing the nation to the level of technology we are selling, but in most cases, it means keeping the nation on the right, unimpeded track. Maintain the status quo."

Kayano: "Is that right? It still sounds like you're promoting polar opposites."

Kato: "If that's the case, I suppose you haven't seen all of Japan in your two hands too often before. That's something I've had to visualize since I was," *Checks his watch.* "Thirteen years old."

Kayano: *scoffs.* "Are you ever going to stop sounding so sinister? You've already asked us not to think you're evil or something."

Kato: *Laughs again, before refocusing and taking a look at his watch's dials.* "If I gave a good diagnosis, I'd say he's ready to see you now. I'm going to the head desk to collect his discharge information." *Bows, puts on the medical mask that was around his neck, and leaves.*

Kayano: "Sounds like a plan."

Kato: *Proceeds to leave the hospital for an open-air vape and, judging by what else he pulled out, a phone call.*

Kayano: *Enters fully into Nagisa's room.* "Hey, Nagisa-AHHH!"

Kato: *Pulls the privacy sheet between the two of them.* "TAKE THAT OFF! NOW!"

Nagisa: '"Take that off?' What off?"

Kayano: "YOUR SHIRT! NOW!"

Nagisa: *Looks at the light-pink, collared shirt the hospital had given him as lithe, comfort clothing to refresh him. After a little bit, he takes it off and hides it under the gurney's blankets.* "It's off!"

Kayano: *Slowly retracts the privacy sheet. When she confirms that Nagisa was not wearing the shirt (I.E. shirtless), she reverts to her original self, like nothing had happened.* "Great. Very great."

Nagisa: *Is absolutely speechless.*

-Karasuma: "Get in." *He enters the driver's seat of his agency-issue car, with Irina on the shotgun side, and Naoko in the backseat.* "Alright, we're onto the route to KPPD jail."
Naoko: *And to see my mother again...* *Sighs and falls back on the back cushions.*

Irina: *Looks back towards her younger sister.* "So, Naoko. you have the words ready?"

Naoko: "Oh, I've got the words."

Irina: "Then tell me; I'll refine them for you."

Naoko: "Okay... Well, with her threatening to ruin our lives, all of them, including ones she otherwise had no quarrel with, I'm really tempted to let it all out on her from across the shatterproof window."

Karasuma: *Briefly looks back through the rearview mirror.* "Is that so?"

Naoko: "Yeah. When I see her, I'm going to expose her for the vile woman she is. The very thing she created is her downfall, whether she's behind bars or not in a couple or so years."

Irina: "And that 'vile woman' is your mother?"

Naoko: "She just so happens to be; it's not the point. I'm just going to burst."

Irina: "No you're not."

Naoko: *Beat, before looking up at her sister-in-law.* "Come again?"

Irina: "No you're not."

Naoko: "What do you mean by that."

Irina: "You're not going to overreact to your mother, for whatever reason."

Naoko: *Stutters an incoherent sentence.* "Really?"

Irina: *Looks back with intensity.* "Really."

Naoko: "!!"

-Returning to Nagisa and Kayano, who have transitioned to the private facility's cafeteria, where the two have gotten cups of coffee.-

Nagisa: "So, about what happened back in my room..."

Kayano: "If it's all the same with you, I'd rather not talk about it."

Nagisa: "Alright, so we don't have to." *Takes a sip in sync with her own.* "Then, how about we talk about how over the top Nakamura-san and Karma were with that prank on me-

Kayano: "Okay, if you must know!" *Sets down her cup forcibly.*

Nagisa: "!"
Kayano: *Looks aside.* "When I found out that my sister died, I raced all the way to that research facility she and Dr. Yanagisawa were working at. Now you know that later I discovered what else remained of the Tentacle research, but on the day that she died and I arrived, EMTs were there with their ambulances. I cam just in time to see them wheeling bodies away. I couldn't find my older sister in the flesh, but on a gurney that already had the hood covered, there was the mangled remains of the shirt she wore on that day - that plain, old, pink shirt she decided to wear rather than her usual lame stuff - on top of a bodybag. Now, I don't correlate everything pink to it, but the shirt you had is uncannily familiar to it, and I can't pin its message to anything other than death of a loved one now. And I definitely don't want that out of you." *Lets out a single tear down her right eye.*

Nagisa: *First comforts her by hugging her neck from across the table, before letting go.* "I understand. It's, like, a legacy, hm?"

Kayano: "Hm?" *Looks up at him with perplexity.*

Nagisa: "Tell you what; I'm probably free to go now, so you wait outside, I'll get Kato-san, and we'll be going somewhere private."

Kayano: "Oh, that sounds eerie."

Nagisa: "It won't be; I promise. So? You up for it?"

Kayano: "Anything for a possibly-concussed man." *Finishes her cup of coffee and throws it away before leaving Nagisa at the table.* "See you soon. Outside."

Nagisa: *Tips his cup to that.*

-However, Kato was already outside, and he was actively on a call conversation right now.-

Kato: "Amaya; I know that me calling you might be in your worst interest, but understand that it must be done, now that we're certain you're of a better sound mind, and impartial to rough questions."

Y. Amaya: "What more do you want from me? You know I didn't know anything about my parents wanting to kill my older brother."

Kato: "No, but you do know that your family has been in a tough spot due to your older brother's actions. So tough, in fact, that it caused the closest people between you to turn against each other."

Y. Amaya: "What would you have done!?"

Kato: "Stick by my relative. Family is always first."

Y. Amaya: "Hmph. You don't need to say that to the only one who believed so too. So, is that all?"

Kato: "Not quite; there is more. It's not a consolation and it doesn't bring back your family, but I can assure you that we got what we needed to through seeing your older brother. And we're just one step away from ending it."

Y. Amaya: "That's supposed to make me feel better?"
Kato: "No. you should be discouraged. At least for now. Because I'm eliminating what remains of the Yanagisawa Family's legacy. Your brother's dreams will be destroyed."

Y. Amaya: "..."

Kato: "And so, you never need to worry about his again. And you can begin to forge your family's legacy anew."

Y. Amaya: "What?"

Kato: "You're an aspiring biologist, just like Kotaro. And you've been shamed, disgraced. No one'll be coming to give their good will or deed to you. Except us. The people who believe in second chances."

Y. Amaya: "What, you're giving me a job?"

Kato: "You can call it that. What you can also call it is security, cause, career, protection, revival, and most of all, family. So, what say you?"

Y. Amaya: "I-it won't hurt to be around someone who cares, at least."

Kato: "That's good to hear. Keep close to your phone in the coming days; I will personally relay you details of your entry into the Family."


Kato: *Folds his flip-phone, puts it away, and huffs more from his vaporizer, before noticing the hospital entry doors swing open; Kayano emerges from out of them.* "Kayano-san?"

Kayano: "Kato-kun! What are you doing out here? I thought you were still inside the facility, maybe helping in the service clinic or another, given how long you were gone."

Kato: "My Lieutenants working there didn't like me doing it in there, so I'm doing it out here."

*Exhales four rings flawlessly.* "So, Nagisa-san's being discharged now?"

Kayano: "He's already good to go; he's looking for you, actually. He intends for us to go somewhere, but he didn't say where yet. Uh..."

Nagisa: "I'm ready!" *Appears from the same sliding doors.* "Oh, Kato-san is already out here! Great! Get your car; we have a heading!"

Kato: "Where to?"

Nagisa: "Mount Atago!"

Kayano: "What?"

-On the other side of the prefectural capital, Karasuma has finally reached the police department, allowing Naoko to come in and have a chat with her incarcerated mother - Chiaki Akimoto.-

Naoko: "..." *Her hand shivers in an attempt to reach the door handle of the interrogation room.*
Irina: *Reassures Naoko by compressing her shoulders. She then whispers into her ear.* *You can do it. I believe in you.* *Taps them to end the prep talk, which seems to have done the trick.*

Naoko: *With stern confidence, she opens the door. She then sees her mother, with cuffs on her wrists, sitting quietly at the interrogating desk, which she soon takes a seat at across from her.*

Chiaki: "Well, ain't this a surprise."

Naoko: "..." *Continues to look at her with an unreadably empty expression.*

Chiaki: "This your interrogation technique? It needs some work."

Naoko: *Looks aside with raised eyebrows, washing her hands of her mother's snarky commentary.*

Chiaki: "If you're trying to make me sorry, it's not going to happen. I still believe I did everything right by you."

Naoko: *Looks back at her actively.* "I agree."

Chiaki: *Pauses with a curious expression on her face upon hearing her counter.*

Naoko: "No seriously, I agree that you did right by me. Perfectly." *Shrugs.* "I even have to thank you for it - you allowed the independence to grow, and permitted me to finally open my eyes to the world around me. It took so long to realize it, but the real world is so much bigger than the one I left in here." *Points to her brain.* "And it's thanks to you for letting me find that out - again."

Chiaki: "Hmph..."

Naoko: *Stands up.* "I'm not saying 'farewell,' because I know sometime later we will be seeing each other again." *Smiles.* "But when that happens, I think that we can both find a middle ground where we can begin to learn who the other is once more. Like I did with Hiiro Akimoto after our last confrontation."

Chiaki: "... That does sound like a nice first thing to do out of prison."

Naoko: "I thought you'd say so. So, I'll say 'goodbye for now.' And here's to being a proper mother-daughter relationship later." *Leaves.*

Chiaki: *Too soon to revert to a more loving side and fully accept this arrangement, she merely watches her daughter with the same dull expression Naoko walked in with as she departs. When the door closes, she looks out to the mosaic windows bringing light high up the wall.*

Naoko: *Feeling suddenly very heavy, she leans back on the door, clutching her forehead.*

Irina: "Naoko..." *Helps her up.*

Karasuma: *Cross-armed.* "That was good work, Naoko." *Pats her on the head.*

Naoko: *Beams to her older siblings.* "I'm really tired now; can we head back?"
Irina: "Of course. Let's go home."

Karasuma: "Right." *They all prep to leave.*

-Finally, Kato, Nagisa, and Kayano all reach the location where the AssUniv Program started - Mount Atago. They then proceeded to a tall tree overlooking the training area they were once collected into.-

Kayano: "Huh, so this is the place you and a lot of our friends trained one Summer ago."

Nagisa: "Indeed. Now..." *Takes out a little zip-bag of hand sanitizer, opening it and leaving it on the ground. He then also takes a match, lights it up, and drops it onto the bag, lighting a small campfire.*

Kayano: *Is taken aback by the cinders.* "Whoa, Nagisa-kun!"

Nagisa: *Looks around.* "Alright, all of you; come on out!"

AssUniv: *Revealed to have come here due to Ritsu getting a quick message by Nagisa, they all show themselves and walk up to the fire.*

Kayano: "What is this?"

Nagisa: *Turns to her.* "It's legacy." *He puts back the matches, and then takes out the lumpy portion of his jacket; the pink shirt he was wearing back at the private hospital earlier.*

Kayano: "Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: *Doesn't answer as he throws it into the fire, watching as it burns.* "One legacy dies... So another may arise."

Karma: *God, who taught him to rhyme?*

Nakamura: *I'm the best in English for a reason...*

Nagisa: *Turns back to Kayano.* "Now that we both have let go of the past, we can celebrate and honor the memories we've had in them."

Fuwa: "Well, that's good for the two of you, but what's in it for us?"

Maehara: "Yeah, I was kind of concerned when you said we should come here after so long ago since we were..."

Itona: "I was not here before." *Looks over to the charred settlement.* "Is that really the settlement Kato-san burned?"

Terasaka: "More on that later."

Nagisa: *Turns to AssUniv.* "This does still concern you guys. You guys share our memories just as much as we do in yours. All of them have one thing in common."
Kanzaki: *Mind flickers.* "The Class-E schoolhouse."

Karma: "Ah... We can't preserve the bad legacies, and we cannot physically keep the one we want the most, so you plan on retaining the next best thing - Kunugigaoka's End."

Nagisa: "That's right - A small hub on the top of some mountain people never ever wanted to scale. It's not because it's something no one wants, or no one cares about, or we care about - it's our last link to the start of the best things we've ever lived for. Let us pay back to it, so that maybe someday, when we're all very successful and accomplished all that we wanted to, we may look back on it in the best shape as it was."

Yada: "Heheh, take care of the old schoolhouse like it did for us. When should we do it?"

Kayano: "I think, every Summer. After all this is finished. It is 'the End' that would be endless. Because of us."

Okuda: "Well, I daresay that is the M.O. of a legacy."

Nagisa: "Are we all in on it?"

Kimura: "We're just missing Naoko-san, who said she is, or was, in business with Karasuma-sensei right now, but I reckon she'd wholly agree with this if she were here."

Nagisa: "Awesome. So then, let us all huddle in on it." *He and all of the student-assassins converge, clutching shoulders.*

Yada: *Notices Kato has stayed behind.* "Hey, Kato-kun!"

Kato: "No, I'm not AssClass, I don't have this intimate commitment."

Terasaka: "Hey, that's bull, Kato!"

Isogai: "You've proven you're every bit an AssUniv member, like us."

Kataoka: "Which means you're every bit an AssClass member, like us."

Kurahashi: "Get in here!"

Kato: *Laughs, before slowly joining in.*

Nagisa: "So, everybody, let's recap:"

AssUniv: *All look between each other with glee.*

Nagisa: "We are assassins..."

AssUniv: "And our target... Is our future."

-While this is happening, Karasuma and Irina are shown to have escorted Naoko back to her suite, letting her get some sleep. They then close the door and are chatting outside.-

Karasuma: "I gotta say, that was really good of you to do this for Naoko."
Irina: "She's my sister; what am I supposed to do?"

Karasuma: "I don't talk too much about my parents; they certainly like me, but they stopped caring what happened after I joined the Ministry. So for you to tell her how much weight higher family carries was good."

Irina: "I was too young to fully know my parents before they got killed by militants. Unlike Naoko's situation, she still has a shot at knowing one of them; I'm not letting her willingly throw it away. It's not perfect, but it is better than always being mad about it." *Shrugs with a scoff.* "Of course, what do I know? I'm just some Honey Trap assassin, who could make any sentence sound right in the ears."

Karasuma: *Takes a step closer.* "You're a wonderful woman." *Hugs her hips.*

Irina: "Oooh, Karasuma-sama..." *Puts her arms onto his shoulders. After nudging foreheads together for a bit, she passionately kisses him.*

Karasuma: *Kisses Irina back. When they both release, they head into their respective suite, closing the door quickly behind them, but not before leaving a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the outer doorknob.*
Space to Prepare Welcomes

Chapter Summary

A simple enough chapter, made to give most of the side characters that have appeared so far a last spot in the limelight and prep you all for the upcoming stream of arcs that will bring this series to its conclusion.

Also, major event for certain two main characters from AssClass! ;D

-In one interval of the evening, one week since AssUniv has confirmed how they would preserve their legacy, we see multiple pairings going about their night in various ways...-

Nagisa/Kayano: *Kayano helps Nagisa restyle his hair, imagining what he might look like once he must make his debut into the teaching world. She shows him multiple scenarios, akin to acting wig photos, and replacing the two band son Nagisa's hair to make the temporary impression such that he can confirm what he really wants. Nagisa eventually settles on a regular short look, no accessories, and more kept forehead bangs. Kayano finds this rather boring, but she trusts her soulmate's judgment.*

Chiba/Hayami: *The two of them reserved the Olympic track's center for their range shooting using airsofts. They covered the basics from standing, one-knee, and prone, to more situational shots such as from the electric chair wrestling position and while bodyscissoring the other from the side. They also took to a quick-fire challenge where both would even swiftly reload for the other when they run out. None of their BBs and pellets ever miss.*

Isogai/Kataoka: *Having bought a box of pizza from a local parlor, they both walk back to the Hyatt Regency. While having a respective slice, they boot up a free action movie on the streaming service. After a good laugh and awe of the flick, they put up another one, but the sounds of the cinema are drowned out for the duo, as they both fall into each other for a French that overloads their senses just enough to focus only on each other.*

Karma/Naoko: *In a mock-rematch of roughly three-quarters of a year ago, the two are in Karma's suite, suplexing each other onto the bed, Biel throwing onto the lounger, practicing mounts on the blanket floor, and more. When the dust settles, agent concedes to helping politician out with one future prank for a certain idiot of the class - calling his cell on a private number, and with Naoko impersonating Ayumi Hamasaki, half-assedly confirming her interest in Teresaka's "singing talent." Needless to say, the latter knew what was going on swiftly... Enough...*

Maehara/Okano: *Having reserved the rooftop, the duo engage in a makeshift athletics course to see who really is the quickest of the Big Four (After Kimura and Kataoka bow out [read "don't care who wins"]). It is eventually decided on another handstand challenge on a balancing beam like last time they challenged each other (safely on the center of the roof, however), which leads to Okano just winning after Maehara finds a large spider crawling on his right hand.*

Kato/Yada: *They are originally in the fitness center floor of the Hyatt, with Kato and Yada doing a variety of paired exercises - simply-coordinated ones such as Kato throwing a medicine ball to Yada as she sits up on an elevated machine and cross-clapping pushups... To more
dangerous ones such as Kato doing one-handed push-ups while Yada maintains a handstand on his shoulder blades, and Kato doing pull-ups while Yada, crossing her legs behind him, does the same. The other fitness enthusiasts can't help but take a few gazes at the couple tear through the room together.*

Karasuma/Irina: *As a recreation of the scene they tried in the beginning of last Summer, Karasuma walks into his and Irina's suite to the room barely lit by candles, rose petals all over the bed, and the latter, barely clad in satin, lying on the bed. Karasuma seems to protest the situation, seemingly to imply from a pull-down calendar in the room that they had already done something like this recently, but Irina doesn't listen, untying his neck accessory and pulling his unbuttoned collar towards the mattress.*

-No matter the pair's prior situations, the end result is more or less the same: all of them transition to one suite, dress down, and cuddle on a hotel-issue king-size. When it proceeds to the next day, all of them were bundled together under the bedsheets; Nagisa and Kayano slept on their sides, not touching, but facing each other. Chiba and Hayami, as the consummate professionals they are, sleep on their backs; their only concession is holding close hands together above the sheets. Isogai and Kataoka are sleeping away from each other, but their lower backs do make contact. Karma and Naoko were in the shingles position, with the man resting his head on the woman's shoulder. Maehara and Okano were in a more troubling position, with elbows and upper arms separating their upper bodies, but their close legs remain in a relative pretzel. Kato's elbow instead provides support for Yada's cranium, who nudges her temple with his, and holding his hand above the sheet. Karasuma and Irina showcase the most reliant position, with Irina's limbs acting like multiple constrictors on Karasuma's body, and her head directly on his chest.-

-Most end up waking at relatively the same time, due to a synchronized alarm that signals their early training reserved just for today...-

Kato: *Checks his watch, and then gently gets his elbow out from under Yada's head. He pats the top of her head for a little bit, and then proceeds to the bathroom.* Well, today's the day...

-And the day was premiere day in Kyoto. The premiere of the highly-acclaimed, highly-anticipated Streak of White in all theaters. Kayano had invited them all a week earlier to the event. Since they are still not to draw too much attention to themselves, however AssUniv sneaks in as merely PR guests or Location Scouts for the movie, and appear on the other side of the barricades (the star [Kayano] claims to have bowed out from appearing due to family concerns).-

AssUniv: *Behind the waist-level steel fences and clad in minimalist suits and dresses, All watch as Director Oogami and the rest of the prime members of the cast and crew make their way down the red carpet, posing for the many flashes coming at them.*

Kayano: "Aw, I so wish I could be there right now."

Karma: "We all have a part to play, Kayano-san."

Okano: "Hey, uh, do stunt doubles of the main actors and actresses often get to go through those lanes?"

Mimura: " Usually only the personal SDs of triple-As. Otherwise, the most direct definition is that they think you're not important enough."

Kato: "Heh, who're they to judge? They're one of the most pivotal cogs in the gears of the
Teshima: *Appears from behind, with Miho and Satoshi in tow.* "Too bad there's a good many spares, K- Uh, Ohno-san!"

AssUniv: *Look back.* "Oh!"

Miho: "Good to meet with all of you again, esteemed friends of our Boss."

Kato: "Miho, Satoshi, Teshima." *Lightly bows with a clenched fist across his chest. They repeat the gesture.* "Teshima, I suppose you invited them up to see the movie on the big screen?"

Teshima: "Yeah, well, actually, they came to me to want to see it."

Kato: "Oh?" *To Miho.* "That's rather unlike you, Miho. Aren't you more of a Blu-Ray at home fan?"

Miho: "Oh I am, but I think there's something to be had with seeing a flick the same time as everyone else."

Sosuke: "You think?" *Scoffs.*

Karasuma: "..."

Irina: *Nudges him with her elbow.* "Come on, Karasuma-sama; if you've come to like Kato, you need to come out and at least respect his brothers and sisters."

Karasuma: "Fine." *Steps forth, getting the trio's attention.* "Miho, Satoshi."

Miho/Satoshi: *Both former JSDF look at the Ministry agent with puzzlement.*

Karasuma: "You don't ever have to worry about what's between myself and your Boss; we've buried that hatchet."

Irina: *Ahems while kicking Karasuma's heel gently.*

Karasuma: "A-and, maybe there's such a thing as a respect for chivalry and loyalty among dishonorable discharges. Because I'm giving it right now." *Bows.* "I hope that you remains a powerful ally of Kato for the indefinite future, as we will be."

Satoshi: *Crosses arms.* "Well... That's at least good to hear."

Miho: *Laughs a bit.* "Who are you, and what have you done to that strait-laced, spiky-haired consummate professional?"

Kato: "Alright, alright, leave it, you two. We're friends now; that's what matters. And friends shake hands; not bow."

Karasuma: *Stands upright upon hearing that, and then leaves out a hand for Miho to accept. After a little bit, she does.*

Terasaka: "Hey guys, all of the people coming from the cars have now gone in."
Nakamura: "Oh, time to get autographs, if you're into that sort of thing."

Sugino: "Are you not?"

Nakamura: "I would one of tens of thousands; I'd never get one."

Maehara: "Not with that attitude you won't! Come on: let's sneak to the front!"

Isogai: "Hm... Maybe a signature can fetch some great send-home money." *Pulls out a piece of paper from hammerspace.* "I gots to have it." *Walks like a zombie towards the concessions.*

Kataoka: *A figurative sweat drop falls down the back of her head.* "Ah; Isogai-kun! Wait!" *Follows him.*

AssUniv: *Some of them.* "Yeah!" *They leave for the concessions and swag. The mentors, the Kato Family, Nagisa, Naoko, Kayano, Karma, Nakamura, Hayami, Chiba, Okuda, Takebayashi, Yada, Kurahashi, and the Terasaka Group are the only ones staying where they are.*

Itona: "Is there something for the ones not interested in souvenirs to do while we wait for the screening?"

Yada: "I'm afraid not, Itona-san; the most we can do now is find out seats and chat with any of the other guests."

Kurahashi: "That shouldn't be a problem, though; Kayano-san invited most of our good friends and acquaintances throughout the years, right?"

Kayano: "I sure did; they should be around there somewhere."

Terasaka: "Well it beats sticking out here; let's go on in." *Leads the way inside.*

Miho: *Catches Kato's closest shoulder as they all head in.* "Kato-ani, if I may, can I speak to you in private?"

Kato: "Of course." *They both head in, and proceed to the theatre room with their allies.*

AssUniv had found their bearings, and looked around, before noticing a certain person of interest, noticeably wearing a cap in addition to his smoke double-breasted suit.

Nagisa: *With Karma and Nakamura flanking him.* "Yuji-san!"

Yuji: "Ah, Nagisa-ch- Uh, I mean -san!"

Nagisa: "'Chan?' Oh right..."

Karma: "If only..."

Yuji: "Thanks for the invite, all of you. This movie definitely had me doubting a few times; Nagisa-san of all people knows how I can read faces, so ordinarily I skip movies because they're often not too discreet..."
Kayano: *Imaginary sweat drops fall down the back of her head.* You're not really selling your deservingness here, Yuji-kun...

Yuji: "But you all definitely have surprised me before, so any production with your contributions should be decent."

Okano: "Why thank you, buddy."

Yuji: "Alright, look, I have my reserved spot all the way down there." *Points to a lower-floor folder.* "So once the picture starts, I'm unfortunately going to be a fair distance away. So if I don't get to see any of you again, know that you all rock, and I'll be rooting for you guys to finish... Whatever it is you guys are doing." *Puts two thumbs up and departs well with the other student-assassins.*

-Once one familiar face has left, another steps right up to replace it.-

Female: "NAGISA!"

Nagisa: "Huh?" *Looks back upon hearing his name being declared again. The second he does, however, he is subsequently glomped.* "WHOA!" *Nearly falls over due to the sudden force.* "Sakura?"

Sakura: "The definitive, we can say!"

Kanzaki: "It is great to see you again, Sakura-san."

Sakura: "Nice to see all of you, surely. I really should've gotten around to personally thanking you for giving us a large sum of your, ahem, 'winnings' from five years ago to fund the cram school. Many more students are becoming able to stand up on their own two feet again after so many setbacks, and find the friends that can replace the ones they lost in regular."

Yada: "Heheh, that's not something you need to thank us for; we were obliged."

Kurahashi: "But we did like it."

Fuwa: "Oh, because we do know where they're coming from."

Terasaka: "Stand up for the little guys, because we were once little guys too. Count on it."

Kayano: "That's great and all, but what about you? Oh wow, look at you!" *Gets a full-body scan.* "You've really grown into your own, now starting high school; much more height, long, well-kept pink hair, and..." *Breaks off when she realizes something wider has developed for Sakura. She exhales her frustration.*

Sakura: "Yep; becoming a really fine young woman. What do you think, Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: *Shakes his head.* "Well, you're not lying."

Kayano: *Finding an innocent way of "winning" her "dispute," she hugs Nagisa's closest arm.* "Of course he isn't."

Sakura: "!?"
Nagisa: "Kayano-san..."
Sakura: "W-when did this start?"
Kayano: *Steps forward and answers before Nagisa could.* "During this Summer."
Sakura: "That right, isn't it?"
Nagisa: *Double-takes between them.* "That's true too, but it did happen on the la-
Sakura: *Interrupts him unintentionally.* "Alright... That's fine."
Nagisa: "Come again?"

Sakura: "It's fine! I'll be back. More triumphantly, and better than ever. You'll see - you'll both see." *Refocuses,* "I hope you all have a great day." *Departs, much to the confusion of Nagisa.
The rest of AssUniv present, however, were estranged for a whole other reason.*

-Two down, allegedly another four to go!-

???: "There's that blue-hair."
Nagisa: *Immediately realizes he's being identified.* Why am I so popular!? *Turns around.*
Smog/Grip/Gastro/Red Eye: *All wave.* "Hello~."
AssUniv: "!!"
Gastro: *Since he cannot publicly bite on his gun without the other guests being freaked out, he is currently chewing on 7.62x55mmR shell casing-designed pen.* "How're all of you keeping after that one bad Summer?"
Kimura: "Well, we're not dead."
Smog: "Clearly. Excellent, by the way."
Hara: "Uh, thank you?"
Grip: *Cracks his knuckles.* "So... When will we get it?"
Okano: "Get what?"
Gastro: "Our rematch."
AssUniv: *Imaginary sweat drops fall from the backs of all of their heads.* "You three are all still on that?"
Smog: "We did confirm this to all of you almost a year ago."
Isogai: "We can't break this to you guys any better, honestly; we're not interested in anything about assassination beyond knowing enough to handle what's right in front of us."
Kataoka: "Indeed; once we're done with our business in this world, we're gone for good."

Gastro: *Takes the pen out of his mouth.* "And how can we keep reiterating? We've got you all on our reticule. When you all are at your best, we would be back for an assassination game."

Sugino: *Scratches the back of his head.* They're kind of dense...

Okuda: *Is there no simple escape from this debacle?*

Sosuke: *Any chance we can just call security to separate them from us?*

Lovro: *Appears behind the three assassins.* "Come on everybody; not in here."

Smog/Grip/Gastro: *Notice their contractor and refocus.* "!!"

Nagisa: "Lovro!"

Lovro: "Sorry, everybody for only making such sporadic appearances like I have. Once you guys hit your prime again, there really wasn't much for me. I've just been keeping contact with the rest of my clients and sweepers." *Pats the chests of the three he has appeared behind.* "I guess I should've been checking a little more closely, huh?"

Gastro: "No, no that's not necessary."

Grip: "We don't need to be scolded about that Okinawa incident again..."

AssUniv: *All gulp over that sordid affair from all that time ago.*

Lovro: "Then you also know that you'll all need to dispel that little demand for vengeance? You guys know from me that killing with a personal motive is suicide, in career and physicality."

Smog: "Of course, of course."

Nagisa: "So we're good?"

Gastro: *Puts his pen back in his mouth.* "We're good."

Karma: "A pity."

Fuwa: "Pretty disappointing, really." *Looks behind, as if at a low-self-esteemed writer.*

Grip: "Sure is. Ah well."

Red Eye: *Goes up to the amateur sniper duo.* "Chiba; those SCOPE magazines been finding you well?"

Chiba: "Affirmative."

Hayami: "Red Eye-san, we never got to ask, but are you still practicing sniping and all even though you're not an assassin anymore?"
Red Eye: "I still go to the range from time to time. Helps to put in the hours before hunting season... Oh wait, hunting season is all-year long when you travel around everywhere." *Looks at them more attentively.* "You two ever think of doing that later on, keeping to your skills?"

Chiba: "It's not completely off the table."

Hayami: "But I doubt we'll find the immediate time to do that with the upcoming construction projects before us."

Red Eye: "Very well. But if you do decide to do so, give me a call; I'll be glad to tackle a bear issue with you two."

Chiba: "Of course."

Okajima: *Sluggishly returns to his friends and peers.* "Whew..."

Yoshida: *Notices him.* "Okajima?"

Muramatsu: "Man, what the Hell happened to you? You look like shit."

Okajima: "Man, inviting Rina to this was great and all, but I think she has a rose-tinted lens for this sort of thing. She just didn't stop fangirling over everything they had to offer in this luxury theatre!"

Mimura: "Oh, that can be brutal; I don't blame ya."

Takebayashi: "How'd you get her to stop?"

Okajima: "Sayaka calmed her down. She made a cover too, claiming that there was a forgotten appointment for them tonight too. Ugh, I love her, but she can be tough to deal with sometimes."

Kurahashi: "Speaking of Sayaka, what's become of her relationship with Kato-kun?"

Yada: "They're amicable; as it turns out, they were former schoolmates, so they trying to make things easy with each other without committing to anything too heavy. Which is good, since he's with me now."

Terasaka: "Yeah, still not seeing how that happened..."

-Meanwhile, while briefly looking down at the rest of the theatre from the fencing of the guest's second floor...-

Miho: *Leans on the sill with a partial seating position.* "I've been telling you for ages your smoking was a self-destructive behavior. And here you are, just been a little over a year with that crew, and you've finally wizened up."

Kato: *Leans with his forearms on the sill. He laughs slightly as he pulls his silver vape pen out of his mouth and exhales.* "You're not getting jealous, are you Miho?"

Miho: *Crosses her arms and scoffs.* "No, of course not. I'm just acknowledging that you're actually having a better time now, with a group more akin to your demographics. As it should be."
Kato: "But I'm never going to grow out of being around old people, Miho. Don't you worry about that."

Miho: "Hmm..."

Kato: *Looks over to her.* "Is something else the issue, Miho?"

Miho: *Gets closer to her Oyabun, now standing straight at her. Being 6'3" while Kato was just shy of 6' himself, she looks down at him or a bit with a small, proud smile before hugging him across his neck for a brief moment.*

Kato: "Whoa, uh, okay."

Miho: *Lets go and returns the previous space.* "I'm sorry, Kato-ani. I just needed to... Do it for one last time."

Kato: "Huh?"

Miho: "I've finally kicked it; I can go back to Keitaro just fine now." *Tilts her head with acceptance.* "Of course, I need to wait for him to return from his Deep MMA tour, but that'll just make me want him more."

Kato: "Well, I'm very happy for you, but what exactly did you 'kick'?"

Miho: "I'll always be there for you, Boss. And I love you as I should." *Checks her phone's digital clock.* "Well, that's all I needed to do here; I'll go and tell Teshima-kun I need to check on the new designs at our department. Do send me a Blu-Ray copy of the movie if the swag shop has it, hm?"

Kato: "Okay, but you didn't re-" *Breaks off anyway.* "You know what, yeah; I'll get you one."

Miho: *Bows, and then brushes her hand through the right side of Kato's hair; almost as if styling it a little bit. She then looks past him, over to the AssUniv student-assassins; particularly Yada. Kato notices this and looks her way. With his left ear close, she whispers into it.* Go show her why she picked her man well, yeah? *Leaves after patting his shoulders.*

Kato: *Does not need to turn around to know his main captain has already disappeared from public view mere seconds later.* Definitely. *Goes to walking to return to the fray with his peers, until one more guest catches his eye; he is sitting almost completely motionless on one bleacher. He joins him at his closest, rightmost spot.* "You know, the white suit and red mask is conspicuous here."

Hyun: *Is identified by his voice behind that mask.* "I pass as a cult-favored internet movie blogger. I've made that cover legitimate a few years ago, if you must know."

Kato: *Scoffs a bit before looking away, over to the screen.* "I didn't give you an invite, so did Teshima offer one to you?"

Hyun: "He did; we both know how much I love cinema."

Kato: "Right..."
Hyun: "You know, it's little things like this that make me realize a little something, Kato-kun."

Kato: "What's that?"

Hyun: "We're both men of great misfortune. For you, always frantic; always paranoid of the criminal underworld. And I, ousted, disgraced by my organization. Both poor standings cause us to become just a little bit better at what we do best, just so we can extend our lifespan by just enough to do what we want to. And I do mean want; there wouldn't be much we need."

Kato: "Because what we need expires far too easily, especially when on your doomsday clock?"

Hyun: "You can say that. Ultimately though, my point is that I never would have expected that one day I'd be sitting in an oriental theater like this, right next to someone I know well, and believed the same. And we weren't here to kill each other."

Kato: *Slowly reaches into his inner jacket's pocket.* "Don't speak so soon; who knows?"

Hyun: "Nice try, Kato-kun. I'm very grateful, though, that I lived to see a day that happened. And is happening right now."

Kato: "Well, it wasn't my doing. But you're welcome."

Hyun: "Indeed. Which is why I think that very soon, I can finally give it back somehow. Namely, something I've never told anyone."

Kato: *Beat, then looks at Hyun with skepticism.*

Hyun: "Not here and not now, though; too many people that could possibly hear this. And I need to collect all of my thoughts. I don't have the processing speed that you do, after all."

Kato: "Fair enough. You never needed to tell me this, though; everyone deserves their set of secrets."

Hyun: "You see, man? This is why you brought back my faith in the Japanese. And until I kick the bucket too, I have no problems allying with you."

Kato: "Thanks. It means a lot." *They both clash backfists, and with that Kato leaves for the group again.*

Yada: *Notices his re-arrival.* "Kato-kun, what did Miho-san have to say? Was it all good news? You don't have to go for another out-of-country mission to save the world, do you?"

*Kracks a bit upon saying the latter part of that sentence.*

Kato: "No, nothing like that. She just told me she loves me, like a true older sibling from what I can gather. Not sure why she had to say that though; I thought it was always that way."

Naoko/Kimura: *Hearing this from the side, they realize what Miho originally thought/wanted her feelings for Kato were, and they nonchalantly look away, hoping Kato doesn't suspect them (he doesn't).*

Yada: "Oh?"
Kato: *Looks at Yada with a smile.* "I guess what she wanted to do was give her blessing to our relationship."

Yada: "Ooo, how nice of her." *They both hug and draw their heads close, colliding foreheads.*

Muramatsu: "Ugh, PDA."

Hazama: "Hey, seen far worse examples."

-After a little more reprieve, it was now movie time. And the picture was... Glorious. It wasn't in 3D, but everyone felt an urge to duck or pull back due to the masterful camerawork whenever Chiyome, with her metal-laced, lustrous hair, swung it. the effects of her Streak of White technique were also well-drawn. Kayano's performance as the fictional kunoichi (during speaking intervals) was excellent, Overall, everyone had a reason to enjoy the flick as they sat in the leather seating. Well, almost everyone...-

Irina: "... !?" *While watching some of the last rising action in the film before the big climax, she suddenly begins having issues, clutching her chest with difficulty.*

Karasuma: *Suddenly notices Irina's motions.* "?"

Irina: *She then brings her hand to her mouth, and quickly ejects from her seat, leaving the room.*

AssUniv: *All turn over to see one of their mentors leaving. Clearly an urgent matter, they too file out of the stadium in search of Irina... Fortunately, all of them took the back seats to ensure no one looks their way during the premiere.*

-They chase Irina, still clutching her maw, to the closest set of lavatories, which she enters.-

Karasuma: "Ladies, if it's not too much trouble..."

Naoko: "Of course." *To AssUniv's female student-assassins.* "Girls, let's go."

-After a minute or two, Irina comes out through their escort. They all chill out in the preceding hallway.-

Kimura: "Bitch-sensei, what was that just now?"

Okuda: *Steps forth.* "That was an unfortunate case of nausea."

Muramatsu: "Vomit? Why vomit? Yeah, the movie is gory..."

Itona: "Especially the executions."

Hazama: "But it's certainly not on horror levels and sometimes the flick wusses out on the better details."

Kurahashi: "How about we let her speak her piece, huh?" *To Irina.* "Bitch-sensei, any reason why?"

Irina: "Oh, kids... I don't think soon I'll be able to call you kids anymore."
AssUniv: *All take a serious turn.*

Kataoka: "Are you dying, Bitch-sensei?"

Isogai: "Longtime fatal illness? Karasuma-sensei, why didn't you tell us?"

Karasuma: "I don't know anything about this." *To Irina.* "Irina, what's up?"

Irina: "Well, the latest thing that was up was what I had for lunch, Karasuma-sama. But before that, there was also some headaches, some constipation, not wanting coffee, a-and..."

Fuwa: "'And?'"

Irina: *Looks up at them.* "A missed period."

AssUniv: *All of them are massively surprised; some of the less mature guys squick after taking the time to think about it.*

Kato: "Wait, if I recall most of the instances for all of those symptoms correctly, than that would mean..." *Eyes widen.*

Irina: "I'm pregnant."

AssUniv: *Are even more surprised now. Naoko and Karasuma are especially flabbergasted. After a few seconds, they then break the silence with a combined...* "WOW! Congratulations!"

Yada: "That's so great to hear!"

Naoko: *Breaks the silence.* "Wow!" *Goes up to her older sister, feeling her abdominals.* "Another one for the family..."

Terasaka: "Is there some sort of irony to be had by a honey-trap assassin getting pregnant?"

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's phone.* "I wouldn't say irony; it would be more of an inconvenience, given Irina-sensei's former occupation."

Irina: "That is very true." *Looks to Karasuma and beams so widely, she needs to close her eyes.* "It's a good thing I took a career turn."

Naoko: "Irina-nee, does this mean you'll have to bow out from the AssUniv Program until you deliver your child?"

Hara: "Pregnancy isn't that demanding, Naoko-san. Many eventual mothers can find themselves running marathons even into their third trimesters. Irina-sensei can do just as well as she is once she gets over her symptoms for another few months."

Karasuma: "I'm not sure if I would still want her to."

Irina: "You longed for an Amazon, Karasuma-sama. I'm going to give one to ya." *Winks.*

Karasuma: "You'll be so much more in just a short while, if not already."
Irina: "Oh, you.* They meet each other by face and chest, much to the joy of their students.*

Kato: *Crosses his arms and looks away with a grin as well.* Ah, how I wish this partnership can never end..

-Meanwhile...-

-A sinister, battle and chemically-worn hand sets down a metallic home phone down hard on the table.-

???: "Our latest contact has agreed to the set-up. Is everything else ready, Grimaldi?"

Grimaldi: *Bows.* "Of course, sir. The lower Families in the Tanimoto Clan are committing to what we want them to."

???: "And Jieji, you're going to keep pressuring little Kato, right?"

Jieji: "Oh, of course I am."

???: "Very good. Then the rest rides on me and your last." *Turns to a dark corner.* "Go and get it done, Byung-Sung."

Byung-Sung: *Appears from out of the dark corner; he is clad in a light-grey two-button suit with a bright blue shirt. True to his surname, he is definitively Korean, modeled slightly like Lee Byung-Him.* "On it."

終わり： "DNAの防衛"アーク

End: "Defense of DNA" Arc
Space to Rebound

Chapter Summary

This chapter marks the first in a three-arc consecutive string to the climax and finale of AssUniv! x)

With a return to form, AssUniv are tackling yet another year of advanced schooling, juggling the academic grind with their jobs at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub and their intense training to remain as some of the greatest assassins on the planet. And while they have a head-start on this Shadow War they are waging against the Reclamation Society, Kato finds that a new crisis, one that he and his Family have had much experience dealing with, must deal with. But now that he is very much a changed man since the last time this was dealt with, how might he go about it now?

"Reborn My Fire" by Cherry plays on the loudspeakers.

-We are at the turn of the year with Summer officially over. That's right, it's been one and a half years since the Kato Family and the AssUniv Program have joined forces in the Shadow War against the Reclamation Society. In that brief amount of time, much has happened, from surprise hospital bombings and fights against divine soldiers, to biographical retellings and atypical [F]amily trauma, and finally to important scientific requisitions.

And yet, the student-assassins of AssUniv remain very composed and understanding of the situation. They find little to complain about with all of the success of their operations so far... Save for the return of higher schooling for another year. But with the momentum they've gotten in the previous two semesters, and their handling of the aforementioned stress, the young adults feel very confident in their ability to blow past whatever comes next... Well, it certainly helps that a good number of them have found someone that can both keep them in check and console their levels of angst if it does end up becoming too much. And also, there's always their jobs at Nyurifu Rikkyo to help them take their minds off things.

???: *A strangely-familiar man clad in an open black suit, with a silver vaporizer twirling in his right hand, patrols through the venue, en route to the dancefloor, and, after finding it to be of typical standing (thanks to a red-haired boy that the man is familiar with beckoning him... While standing in front of a squabble between some more staff and a drunk customer), proceeds to the second floor. There, he finds a rather strange individual; clad in dark red off-shoulder dress with bell sleeves and gem-embellished neckline, she leaned on the glass sill overlooking the atrium section. Her kobicha-colored hair was notably styled in a ponytail using a golden cuff. Unsure of what might arise if the individual was left alone, the man goes up to her for a little questioning. "Excuse me miss."

Yada: *Turns her head to reveal herself.* "Yes?"

Kato: *A slow pan up to his face reveals himself as well.* "Forgive me, but I'm the manager of this establishment, and I am certain that unless my executive advisor of HR has gone behind my back again in the last," *Checks his watch.* "five weeks, no new talent was hired for the hostess role."
Yada: "Hm, I'm sure that was the case."

Kato: *Looks troubled by that candid sentence.* "And yet, there you were, just on stage," *Checks his watch.* "Minutes ago, giving an impromptu one-free call at the bar for all currently in my nightclub."

Yada: *She turns to him with crossed arms, still leaning on the fencing.* "I verify that too."

Kato: "But you're not among the hostess list."

Yada: *Retains her complaisant expressions.* "You have a point, sir?"

Kato: "The point is I wanted to ask you... 'Why?'"

Yada: "'Why?'' *Scoffs before looking aside.* I was beginning to think that there needed to be a slight injection of the public's taste in your little establishment, ensuring them of its quality and flavor, so that they would know that only the best comes from your feed." *Returns to look back at him.* "Think of it as a little gratuitous act, from me to you."

Kato: *Raises an eyebrow.* "I'd be more appreciative of your charity, if it didn't allow everyone to request my highest-tier, most lucrative alcohol."

Yada: *Almost breaks into a small fit of laughter.* "Are you kidding me!?" *She takes a bottle from the table.* "You're telling me this is one of your best shots? No... You may be playing some of the scouts of other clubs for fools here, manager-kun, but you're not tricking me. You're saving the best for last. So that the memories your customers tell their friends will pale in comparison to what you really give them later on." *Leans deeper onto the glass sill, looking down at the flickering-light dancefloor.* "At least, that'll be on your mind now."

Kato: "How can you tell if I have scouts here?"

Yada: "God, do I have to spell out everything for you?" *Switches stances and faces the fencing.* "That guy's at a booth that can survey the events at your bar, dancefloor, kitchen serving area, and most of the atrium. And all he does is enjoy the view and drink water. Suspicious? Then how about that out-of-fashion big guy with two girls who look like they were just off the street, sticking close to the bar to check its details? Or the boy who refuses to take off his jacket, especially on one of the last hot days of the year, and continuously looks into it whenever staff passes him by?"

Kato: "That guy I got. Planted a little frequency disrupter on his jacket, so now all he tells of is feedback from the nearest fast-food place."

Yada: "That's actually pretty nice. So you're not a useless manager after all."

Kato: *A small smile begins to grow, finishing with a scoff of his own.* "Interesting business move, for a patron."

Yada: *Closes her eyes satisfactorily.* "Why thank you."

Kato: *Looks around her for a bit.* "Say, are you just as good at regular customer activities as you are at regular producer activities?"
Yada: *Smiles more widely.* "Only one way to find out." *Holds out her hand to him.*

Kato: *Reciprocates, taking her hand and twirling her around twice before her back falls onto his chest.*

-After this peculiar roleplay comes the slow-burning, yet potent, foreplay that a Yakuza produces with a katagi he has miraculously (say "dangerously") fallen for, from within the confines of an isolated, private staff room.-

Hayami: *Can be heard from the crossed bluetooth earpieces next to the two.* "Kato-kun, Yada-san, whenever you're ready, we have a pair of strangely-colored suits being followed by a full complement of shades. Either of you called on someone special today?"

Kato: *Looks at their discarded earbuds, letting go of Yada.* "Ah, must be the Yamazaki talent relations officials, coming here to discuss next-level product distribution, as well as a new line of paid promotional events to co-attract our collective fanbases. I organized this meet with them," *Checks his watch.* "A week ago."

Yada: *Lightens up upon hearing the name in the sentence.* "Yamazaki Distillery? Oh, can I take them? It's not everyday you can speak with the specialists from a company that sells four-digit products in a matter of hours." *Takes back her earpiece.*

Kato: "Even then, you'd still be overqualified to take them." *Shows the door.* "But go ahead."

Yada: *Bows.* "Thanks." *She then gives him one last kiss on the cheek before leaving the secondary office area.*

Kato: *Collects his headset and walks out as well, about to head back to the first floor to give another patrol.*

-Beep beep! Beep beep!-

Kato: *Touches his bluetooth from the alerting message.* "Nakamura-san, what's that?"

Nakamura: "Secure call like it usually is."

Kato: *Rolls his eyes with a grin.* "From who?"

Nakamura: "Looks to be your uncle, sir. Patching him to you now."

Kato: "Hold on; let me get somewhere not so loud first." *Changes direction and proceeds to the currently vacant VIP Platform.* "Alright, go."

???: *Another male voice answered the call.* "Greetings, Watchdog."

Kato: "!!" *His surprised expression soon turns to one of determined aggression.*
Begin: "Prelude to Bloodshed" Arc

-Osaka, Osaka Prefecture, Japan...-

-"Army of the Skies" by Peter Roe plays on an automobile radio. It's screen graphic indicates it to be part of the soundtrack for the movie *Streak of White*, Kayano's returning film.-

-An assortment of immaculate black Mercedes-Benz vehicles - SUVs, limousines, and sedans, in that order - wheel past several key landmarks in the capital of the prefecture; Umeda Sky Building, Osaka Securities Exchange, Hideyoshi Castle, Tsutentaku, and Osaka City University, en route to a currently unknown destination. Shots and camera cuts of the cars indicate custom modifications to their base models, with reinforced chassises, perfectly-grooved multi-terrain tires, step-up side skirts.-

-After being verified by a set of road patrol guards for a very polished tarmac path, the long line moves again, heading towards a private exchange center close to the cliffside facing Osaka's capital with a perfect view of the entire city. They make their stop at the white paint curb, and the people who come out are all adult men, thirty and up, clad in black and white suits, and sporting a certain decorative emblem on their left-side lapels. The passenger of the lead car wore a starkly-colored ensemble, and had the engraving of a mountain with a snow-dipped peak on his pin - a telltale sign of the Akamine Clan. He awaits everyone else, who all looked much older than him, from the cars behind his to come out and face him... including Norio Kato, donning an onyx two-button.-

???: *Bows to the gathering audience.* "It is great of all of you to show up for another one of these big, little talks we have." *Rises back to upright standing position, showing his face.*

赤嶺雄二

Yuuji Akamine - Oyabun of the Akamine Family, Chairman of the Akamine Clan

Akamine: "How about we head in and get through all of the matters, while the day's still young?" *He beckoned the suits to the entrance. All fifteen of them, including Akamine himself, soon converged at its doors.*

-The men transitioned to a traditional Yakuza conference room, with leather loungers, a carpet representing a famous Floating World scene, and an ornately-detailed pair of chandeliers above them for lighting. Akamine, being the director, was right at leader's spot between the two lines of chairs, with Norio just a seat away on his right.-

???: "Is there ever really any need for these kinds of conversations other than to just speak formally between each other, Chairman? We always know it's just a reiteration of what you've said before." *The grey-suited man with a lapel emblem depicting the shuriken-like logo of the late Ryukyu Kingdom slouched further into his seat.*
Enmei Kiyabu - Oyabun of the Kiyabu Family, an Akamine Clan Subsidiary (Soba Distribution)

Akamine: "There's always something new to talk about here, Kiyabu. That is what comes with an economic division as varied and volatile as ours."

???: "With all of the due respect, Chairman: quit patronizing us." *The dark-blue three-piece man had one leg up and a hand-supported temple. His emblem depicted a closed-out hilly range with a rice paddy hat resting on one elevated stake.*

Takeo Uchida - Saiko-Comon of the Uchida Family, an Akamine Clan Subsidiary (Longshoring)

Uchida: "You know full well that we're still not quite blowing past the quotas long established at the start of this fiscal year."

Akamine: "That is also true. But the Clan's growth is still exponentially greater than our rivals, the Tanimotos and the Ishidas. And that's all in part of your contributions to an ongoing economic growth, in a, as you recall me saying, volatile division."

???: "Who do you really like to praise for that success, Chairman?" The one man not falling into his chair meshed his hands together in front of him leaning forward. His pin shined with the light coming through the windows, reflecting the stone-plated hand on top of it.*

Mugen Fujita - President of the Fujita Consortium, an Akamine Clan Crossover Branch (Talent Relations)

Fujita: "You've always had favorites, Chairman Akamine. No point in going around it."

Akamine: "Can it not be denied that the implied faction has been the one who allowed the lot of us to recover? Never once let us down in a financial market and dispute?"

Kiyabu: "Like money was always everything."
Akamine: *Continued on as if the aside remark was never muttered.* "Who are not the ones who wished to start the dealings today, to give the others a chance to speak of their own ventures?" *Turns to the individual.* "Isn't that right, Norio?"

Norio: *The Shateigashira remained attentive of the conversation from the side up to this point. "That is correct."

Uchida: "Hardly matter what you think. The true Oyabun of your branch is obviously putting the words into your mouth."

Norio: "What true 'Oyabun'? I'm the only leader of my Family now."

Fujita: "You're not fooling anyone!"

Akamine: *Gives a paradoxical grin.* "Tell me, my fellow partners in crime: if your implied repugnance of this select person is so significant, then why are you buttering up to his subset's profits?"

Uchida: "Because we all know now that he's no saint amongst the Yakuza himself; that two-bit was instrumental in Shinsuke being buried by the cops, forcing his Family to disband."

Fujita: "It only took so long for us to figure out because someone's been helping to cover up the tracks and protect the witnesses. Someone who's miraculously choosing not to be here today." *He eyes the only chair empty - the one between Norio and Akamine.*

Norio: *Turns a little more aggressive.* "You're calling me and my Family traitors?"

Kiyabu: "Of course... Not because of you though, you fucking clown!"

Akamine: "There will be no such profanity from anyone in this establishment!"

Fujita: "What, we got to wait for everyone to grow up?"

Norio: *Cracks a grin.* "And maybe for you to grow a pair."

Kiyabu: *Stands up.* "Shut your damn mouth!"

Akamine: "Respect the customs, all of you!"

-The Chairman's interjection causes everyone to simmer down, and for Kiyabu to fall back into his lounger.-

Akamine: "As I've mentioned, these meetings always has something new to say every time. And the biggest one today does concern what you all were just conversing about."

Yakuza: *The lot of them, Norio included, all turn to their superior.*

Akamine: "Yes, I am aware that the Kato Family did not grant any quarter or support for the Shiohara Family when they were being pursued by the regional police, the Ministry of Defense, and the local Qita Kong chapter in Kyoto. For turning on brothers, a just punishment will be carried out."
Norio: *Frowns noticeably.* *Nephew, I sure hope it was worth it for you...*

Akamine: "Now, onto the other matters at hand-

-But before the Chairman could continue on, the main doors on the far side slammed open with urgency. All of the leading syndicate officials jolted their heads toward the motion. There, Miho, Bellamy, and Katalina all bolted into the room.-

Katalina: "Chairman Akamine, we have a grave concern to address to you!" *The three Kato Family captains stop within a respectful distance just before the supreme command of the Clan.*

Kiyabu: *Stands up again.* "Hey! this is a matter only for the syndicate bosses! Vice staff are not allowed to enter this room!"

Fujita: "And for two of them to be women, one being too many already."

Miho: *Turns to Fujita.* "Cry about it at your fucking brothels, dipshit."

Fujita: *How dare...*

Norio: "Show my esteemed Family some respect!"

Uchida: "You're not one to demand anything from anyone!"

Akamine: "QUIET!" *Slams his right fist onto the corresponding wooden arm rest. The impact was so severe that the polished wood makes a visible fault line, and the sound from doing so echoes around the room.* "All of you, ready to dismiss imperative information due to your bad blood. What then if what they have to say is of utmost importance to the fates of your operations, and you willingly pushed it aside!?"

-Everyone remains silent at the youngest man's wise interjection.-

Akamine: *Calms down.* "Kato Family Captains, what news are you bringing forth?"

Bellamy: "Chairman Akamine, we have just received word that Daichi Hayashida, Wakagashira of the Hayashida Family, has gone rampant, laying waste to the security and staff of the Kiyabu Family's Kobe-planted ramen facility, destroying a good amount of the machines and product, and stealing a crucial amount of their business records in Kansai."

Kiyabu: *Stands up.* "What!?

Uchida: "I guess that explains why Akira hasn't shown up today." *Everyone again looks at the only empty seat in the conference.*

Fujita: "Damn weak chin must have ran off once he found out he'd be in front of the tac-light."

Akamine: "Hm, this is grave news indeed." *Stands up with his arm extended as if for an order.* "Everyone, chairman's decree: Daichi Hayashida must be hunted down and brought to justice, dead or alive. Before this breakthrough, I was to inform you all of a tone shift coming through within the Tanimoto and Ishida Clans. I'm not certain of anything yet, but we must be ready for whatever's to come soon from either or both sides. So I necessitate this manhunt to conclude immediately. And for that, everyone needs to mobilize and cooperate. Can I expect this
from all of you?" 

Yakuza: "*The leaders look between each other, now that the three Captains have retreated to the far side of the room, they then turned back to the Chairman and simultaneously nod.*

Akamine: "Excellent. Well then, I declare this assembly adjourned."

-Everyone then proceeds to leave the special meeting area. Once Norio rises up off his chair and walks amongst the large group en route back to the parker cars, he reaches into his inner jacket pocket to get his sunglasses... Though it takes him an enigmatically long time to do so.-

-Meanwhile, back in Kyoto, specifically the Institute of Technology...-

Professor: "*In a classroom currently hosting Fluid Mechanics, writing down the laconic definition that she is currently lecturing.* "And so, while it is theoretically possible that the effects of liquid helium can be retained in a wide variety of practical applications from sustainable hypercooling or for something cooler such as, say, zero-point energy manipulation, we have yet to find a way to truly utilize these effects. Leading physicists at CERN and chemists from around the world are still actively researching, and believe we may yet find this technology in our grasp in several years. Still, it'll be your job to know of its possible uses in the next exam."

Itona/Yoshida: "Oh, if only she knew. *Both look over to Kato, only to find him sidetracked, which naturally freaks them out internally.*

Kato: "..." *His left ear covered by his bluetooth (for the millionth time), he had been hearing the whole conference while taking notes. He is so focused on the audio log, however that he is staring a thousand meters ahead at the tiled ground.*

???: "*A man resembling a slightly-younger Hiroyuki Sanada, wearing traditional jiu-jitsu uniform, stood above his opponent.* "Come on; again!"

Kato: "*A fourteen-year-old version of him wearing a similar garb sat on the ground wiping blood from his lower lip, defeated but not distraught. He quickly rises back up to confront him again. His eyes then flared that same bright red that shows when Kato unleashes his Hatred Bloodlust.*

Kato: "*Just as their fists are about to clash in the dreamscape, he snaps out of it, continuing to write on his notebook.*

-Several hours later, at Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub...-

-"Skyline" by Leslie Parrish plays on the loudspeakers.-

-At Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub once more, this time the student-assassins had a day off, and they were enjoying it in the VIP Platform to the fullest. Or maybe a little bit beyond that? For it was one week that has passed since the dreaded aftermath of examination week. And around them were a great many packs and cans of Premium Malts Suntory beer.-

-Karasuma and Irina, however, were left out of that action, acting as entrance security as they regularly are.-

Karasuma/Irina: "Boss." *They both hand gesture as if to tip their caps as Kato two-finger
salutes and walks back into his nightclub.*

Kato: *Exhales five perfect rings of vapor and twirls the pen once he reaches the central dancefloor, before looking over to the staircase.*

Kataoka: "Alright, everyone! Listen up; Isogai-kun's got something to say to all us before we really kick things to a higher-" *Refocuses... Or at least tries to.* "Su-Sugino-kun, stop sniffing Kanzaki-san's hair!"

Sugino: *With them both sitting on the floor leaning on one couch, he scooches as far back as he can.* "Sorry~."

Kanzaki: *Turns back to him.* "Aw..."

Kataoka: *Giggles with pink cheeks.* "As I was saying, before we get things to a higher gear, Isogai-kun, if you will." *Sweeps her hand towards him at the other side of the furniture arrangement.*

Isogai: *Stands up from the leather couch after a second attempt and paces around everyone.* "Gent-gentlemen and ladies: We have survived the first month and a half- Half... Three-quarters? Let'sgowiththat- Since school started up for the lot of us yet again. And then some for all of us, not none of us, have all, totally, by God, absolutely, positively, indisputably, in-inexplicably..."

Nakamura: "Is-hic! Is there going to be a verb at the end of that sentence of yours? Hic!" *She proceeds to almost empty her can of Suntory following that statement, letting out a beergasm to be envious of by everyone else.*

Isogai: "Very well." *Clears his throat.* "Where was I- Oh yes! Indisputably, aced all of our goddamn tests, for the Lord is our witness!"

AssUniv: *Some of the student body cheers, while others whistle. The more passive folk pleasantly nod, as they all give their approval of that line.*

Isogai: "And so..." *He gives his can briefly to Kataoka and proceeds to rise up onto the coffee table between the two sofas and three loungers, politely shooing Kanzaki and Sugino to make way. Once he confirms his elevated stance, he accepts his beer back.* "So, let me, in a language that, everybody here, can easily understand, say that we will definitely, be putting our forefathers to shame with how much yeast and barley we down tonight. For... We work hard (AssUniv: "YES!"), and we play hard (AssUniv: "YES!")!" *Raises the aluminum and then tips it upside down over his mouth. He precisely angles the beer's descent properly into his maw, but he bends over so much that he falls off the table. Fortunately, Karma and Maehara were there to catch him in a double princess-carry.*

Kimura: *Finishes his sip.* "You damn, devilish ikemen though, Isogai-san!" * Throws it over Nagisa's ducked head so that it swishes into the afar recycling bin.* "The year 1963 called; it wants its Grass Roots back!"

Terasaka: "Yeah!" *Throws his empty can on the hard floor with miraculous accuracy so that it bounces off and flies into the bin as well.* "Tatum and Hill were on the next line; their drug's going back too!"

Terasaka Group: "Word." *All raise their jars.*
Naoko: *Takes another big swig of her Suntory and stops just as Karma returns to her side.* "Of course, you only got that 100 on Advanced Macroeconomic Theory because of my illustrious tutelage."

Karma: *Scoffs.* "Please, I three-digited that like it was reducing that much in just one round of darts." *Raises his drinking hand.*

Naoko: *Keeps his arm from reaching fully.* "Because of me. You owe me." *Begins straddling over Karma, pushing him deeper into the sofa.*

Karma: "Oh man, you kinda turn into a Kato-san when you get really drunk; it's actually kind of a turn-off." *Looks away from Naoko.*

Naoko: *Still holding his forearm, she whips it behind his head in a Anaconda Vice-like setup position, which also forces him to look at her.* "Ah! How dare!" *She then "punishes" him by sandwiching his head between their clenched hands... And her face.*

Okuda: "That's, eheheh, hardly a discovery."

Takebayashi: "True enough; she has as much romantic sense as Kato-san."

Naoko: *Breaks off for a bit.* "You two want a wallop too?" *Continues on.*

Kato: *Enters the room after yet another one of his reflective patrols around the vicinity, exhaling even more fog.*

Itona: "Speak of the devil, and there he is."

Kato: *Realizes that he is being put into focus and joins the rest of the student-assassins at the grouped furniture. He takes a can from the various open packs lying around.* "I see you all are getting considerably wasted," *Checks his watch.* "Once again. Only this time around, it's being done with much more affordable products."

Yada: "Of course, Kato-kun! We're not making the same mistake of owing a billionaire a great debt again, after all!"

Fuwa: "Though that didn't really end so badly. If we knew what was the effect of that cause, I'd say it would be pretty encouraged, actually."

Okano: "That. Although, maybe a better way could be us goading Yada-san to convince you to comp some Boar's View!" *Snickers.*

Maehara: "Aw, damn your loudness! Now he knows that, and we cannot actually try it out!" *Kicks the coffee table lightly.*

Okano: *Viciously turns to him.* "Then you should've stopped me, idiot!" *Punches him on the shoulder.*

Kato: *Goes up to Yada.* "Yada-san, is it possible that we can speak privately for a little bit?"

Kayano: "Oh, now we've done it; we've made his VIP room into a loud, unprofessional mess,
and now he's asking Yada-san how to best lecture us! Someone quickly, do something!"

Nagisa: *Turns to her.* "Like what?"

Kurahashi: "Mimura-kun, Sosuke-kun, you're closest! Take Yada-san and hide quickly! He won't learn the secret Karasuma lectures then!"

Kato: "At ease, everyone. Mind you, you're talking to someone who's going to be steam-cleaning the entire venue tomorrow at noon anyways. Besides, I still think you guys leaving anything from Penfolds Grange on my desk is the worst thing you all have ever done to me. In any case, I just need to talk about something personal with Yada-san."

Okajima: "If it's really that then yeah... 'Talk.' Like I do with Rina." *Laughs.*

Chiba: "Or maybe is he really going to consider releasing the Boar's View?"

Hara: "Oooh!" *Pulls Yada in close.* "You must succeed, Yada-san!"

Kato: *Cracks a grin.* "Maybe it's that, maybe it isn't. Yada-san, one way to find out."

Yada: "Alright, I'm coming." *Gets up from the sofa and follows Kato.*

AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "We really need to find out how they hooked up one day."

AssUniv: "AGREED!"

Nakamura: "But first, more beer!"

AssUniv: "YEAH!"

Kato: *Pulls Yada outside the VIP Platform into the privacy of the wine stockroom, closing the door behind them and turning to her anxiously.* "Yada-san, I know you're not in a completely right mind right now, but I'm desperate for your wisdom on a matter. And I don't think it requires you to truly know all of what's happening. At least not," *Checks his watch.* "Yet. So can you help me?"

Yada: "Hm..." *Tries to focus, getting past her imaginary, fizzed goggles to see Kato a little more clearly.*

Kato: "Please, Yada-san. I really need your help on this."

Yada: *Smiles at him.* "Oh, alright. But I'd like something first."

Kato: "What's that?"

Yada: *Points to the far wall.* "That."

Kato: *Looks over and realizes that she's gesturing to his protective glass cabinet that shields his limited edition collection of Karuizawa bottles.*

Yada: *When they get closer, she motions again; this time to specify the Spirit of Asama, 48%
bottle in particular. "I get a taste of that."

Kato: "Scoffs. "That's easy enough. No drama." Proceeds to unlock the case, taking it out, and pouring a little ball glass. Whew... Good thing I don't leave the 1981 Vintage on obvious display, lest I must ask her to pay at least a quarter of the lowest MSRP that she can find. "Before you sleep on the glass however, to my query."

Yada: "I'm all... All ears." Proceeds to concentrate... Or tries to.

Kato: "Clears his throat. "I have a friend, Yada-san. A fr-"

Yada: "Should I be jealous?"

Kato: "Beat. "Wha-? How-? No, it's not like that."

Yada: "Hugs him. "Oh, you're too sweet; you can't even think of cheating on me."

Kato: "Yes, yes I am." Refocuses, gently pushing her back to upright standing. "So, a friend of a friend, really. And my first friend I was once very bonded with. So this friend of a friend, he goes and does something. Something I am not sure entirely of the context yet, but I know will not end well for him and all of whom he cares for in any way. But I feel that if I try to impede him in any way, I could get into some serious trouble myself. What's more, my friend of a friend is very much like me; not easily convinced and/or corrected. It might not ever be worth the effort, but I do owe him a good deal. So I want to help him, in any way I can, if I can." Looks at her again. "So, what do you think?"

Yada: "Well, Kato-kun..." Scratches her head, before laying her hand on his shoulder and pulling him in close. Either to reassure him, or to catch herself from falling. "I would say, if this guy, whoever he is, means that much to you, and you're certain of the situation like you are, then you know that he has to be set straight. Set back on the better, smarter path. Despite your claims, I don't think you need me to tell you what you want to do, and I doubt you will be very much cleared up well if you don't do it. I wouldn't advise dying for this man, though."

Kato: "His face slowly gravitates to looking down on the ground below. "Hmm..."

Yada: "Looks him in the eyes from down below. "Hey..." Picks his chin up. "Come on, lighten up. You've made great progress, and you've learned a good deal. How about you pass it on to your other loved ones?"

Kato: "Smiles back to her. "That sounds good. You proved I could turn a new leaf; no one's a worse lost cause than me."

Yada: "Amazing. But you know what's even better?" Obtusely points at the filled Karuizawa glass still in Kato's hand.

Kato: "Right. You definitely earned it." Hands it to her, sturdily positioning it so that she doesn't end up dropping or spilling any. "I'll be giving you the first sip of the Yamazaki 50-Year when it arrives after your successful partnership deal, too."

Yada: "Closes her eyes with glee, before reopening to look at him. "You're the best, Kato-kun." Leans forward to try and kiss him."
Kato: *Intentionally avoids meeting lips.* "Sorry, Yada-san, not when you're intoxicated and I'm not. It's not right."

Yada: *Offers up the second swig of the glass.* "Want to change that?"

Kato: "Another time. That's all yours." *Puts away the rest of the bottle.*

Yada: "Suit yourself." *Begins leaving the stockroom.*

Kato: * Watches her leave.* "...

-After it reached 2 A.M. and the club closed, with everyone returning to the Hyatt Regency...-

Kato: * Lying down on the top layer of his bed, staring at the ceiling.* It's official then. I'll find Daichi before anyone else does, find out what this is really for, and stop him. *Continues gazing into space until his flip-phone vibrates on the nightstand. He flicks it open, seeing a text message.* This rambling again? *Shuts his phone and tosses it aside.* It's my choice.
Chapter Summary

Now that Kato is fully committed to working against the rogue operation conducted by his longtime family friend Daichi Hayashida, Kato (with Yada's blessing) knows to start now, before anyone else in the Akamine Clan can get very far with their own investigation. His first stop is the ramen-making facility that was assaulted by Hayashida as announced within the Yakuza clan's summon. What could he possibly find that serves as clues for this hunt, however?

-The next day...-

-Kato was quick to wake up early in the morning to double down on his new, unofficial assignment... Even though there was another lump in the second bed of his suite when the door closed. He discreetly reached the staircase of the Hyatt Regency and descended down to the lockup, wherein he pulled out his Lexus RC 2016 and drove out to reach the destination mentioned during the Akamine Clan's Osaka conference, ninety minutes away.-

-Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan...-

-The same Lexus vehicle pulls over in a covered alley across the street from Kiyabu Ramen No. 5; the coast-planted noodle-packaging facility that was terrorized by Daichi Hayashida less than two days ago.-

Kato: *Comes out of the driver's seat, wearing a closed zipper hoodie, dark-wash reinforced jeans, the KAM face mask, military boots, and full coverage kevlar SWAT gloves. His decorated Kimber pistols were again in his small-of-the-back holster, just underneath the clothes' rim. *No suits for me this time around, sorry Kenneth Cole. Don't want to attract the attention you give for now.* *He pulls out his customized flip-phone and speed-dials a randomly-generated number. After one ring, the call is answered.* "Hyun."

Hyun: *Voice only.* "Heyhey, Kato-kun. I'm afraid if you're eager to hear the little story I promised you about a month or so ago, I'm going to have to need a little more time. Things in Qita Kong have suddenly gotten a little more hectic and-

Kato: "That's not necessary Hyun. Look, I'm on a very off-the-record black-bag operation."

Hyun: "Heh, what else is new?"

Kato: "It's unknown to all but some of my Captains and you."

Hyun: "Whoa... Okay."

Kato: "I need you to divert any feed I get from their comms to your own or Satoshi. I'd rather they not grow concerned with my lack of activity," *Checks his watch.* "At this current time."
Hyun: "Of course. I won't deign to ask what you're brewing up down... Wherever you are, but do take care of yourself over there, alright? I won't face the apocalypse with anyone else but you."

Kato: "You're the best; thanks. Talk to you later." *He hangs up and puts his flip-phone away. He then blinked his eyes twice, and shut his right to see the interface of the tactical lens he was wearing alongside Yada more than a year ago in Kyoto, eyeing/highlighting the "X-Ray" vision option.* Good to keep track of their movements behind number-layered obstructions. Heh, let's do this. *Proceeds on foot to the facility.*

-Kato finds a worker's sneak access through the initial gate, which he uses to avoid the surprising amount of security in the outside vicinity. He eventually slithers from storage containers and boxes to stay out of sight, until he happens upon the truck-loading gates - a perfect stealth entrance, albeit requiring a little more movement within the compound before the packaging center would be discovered. Kato was not going to take the risk of breaking his covert streak just yet, so he decided to explore that pathway, after pulling in the lone, stationary guard holding down that open pathway, knocking him out with a tight sleeper hold and leaving him in a nearby lidded laundry basket.-

Kato: *Reached a corner of packed ramen boxes, giving him indefinite cover in the narrow corridor. He looks back at the outside with confusion.* A lot of Yakuza with sticks and blades standing outside. I get doubling up on a place after it was attacked, but someone like Hayashida doesn't forget what he came here for; whatever he did, took, and whatever, it was all he needed. And they should know that, unless Kiyabu is being unnecessarily prudent. *Continues trekking the hallway, making use of his acute hearing and X-ray vision to see if anybody was making their way close by. When the rows were clear, Kato recalled the signs and proceeded deeper into the compound.*

Kato: *Eventually reaches the entrance to the main assembly area, and run-slides from the lipped wall to an unused packaging longtable, shrouded in one of the building's larger shadows. He remains in a three-point stance behind the working bench once the motion concludes.* Well, here I am. *He looks up, noticing the regional office area overlooking the work from above.* Got to get in there... *Utilizes his X-ray vision to see the movement of the factory and assembly-line workers in the compound and travels accordingly.*

*Eventually, he does reach the central office, and looks through the door window. The room was entirely vacant for the moment, though any signs of a break-in have mostly been cleaned up by the staff... Except for the poorly-wiped blood on the floor, leaving an obvious shade of pink. Beyond this, he found extra joy that the factory's security camera feed came from this room too. This is definitely the place. Now to... Wait a second. *Looks back to the stairs with X-ray mode.* I can't be certain any one person around her might go back into this office, and if they do while I'm in there, I won't get away without trouble. *Looks around, before noticing the nearby fire alarm. An idea forming in his minds, Kato sneaks over to the machine, tampering with it on a remote drop using a wavelength hijacker. He then returns to his closest position to the office door and readies to sound the protocol, actively looking at his watch again. Okay; everything's all set now. In three... Two... One...*

-But a sudden sensation stops Kato before he can flick down the switch.-

Kato: "!!" *Looks into his inner hoodie pocket, realizing it to be his flip-phone. The outside screen reveals it to be Itona. He picks it up by pressing the answer button on his bluetooth... Before the vibration sound could not alert a sudden duo of officers walking close by.*

Itona: "Hey, Kato-san. Got a little question for you on macroeconomics. I know you wanted us to
text, but this would be too open-ended, discussion-raising and whatnot; typing seems inefficient. Huh, the lack of rigidity in these topics unlike regular sciences. So, I really need to know now, why is inflation and unemployment inversely related? Shouldn’t a bad economic situation result in bad social status?"

Kato: "...Cannot answer... They're going to hear... But then Itona will know something's up, bring the rest into this..."

Itona: "Kato-san? You're there right? I know you answered."

Kato: *Beads of sweat begin trailing down his face, as he begins wondering what's better for the situation at hand. He seems ready to answer the question himself, with his right fist tightening, prepping an ambush after the noise he makes.*

Kato?: "Yeah, I'm here. Unemployment and inflation are inversely related because the levels of inflation that we are studying are never to the degree of the situations we usually find inflation to be such an issue, such as post WWI Germany or, more recently, Zimbabwe." *In a bit of twin magic, Kato is back at his nightclub, cleaning it out like he usually does. Upside down during this instance, in fact.* "When you have unemployment, you have a lot of people working, getting a lot of money. When they do, they expend, right? Banks begin giving out a lot more loans and credit to help extend this spending spree. With an excess amount of liquid assets being injected as a result, inflation begins to rise. Inversely, if inflation was the first marker, then banks will raise their interest rates to combat it, so the circulation of money slows down. However, it often also causes a recession, resulting in many jobs before and after being lost, raising unemployment. Get it?"

Kato: *The one at the factory keeps his breath held, even when the workers look to be leaving the platform.*

Kato?: "Of course, like you say, nothing is set in stone for this social science. This is just the usual trend, but for us and many other countries who have gone on to discover this have found, we aren't very likely to break this trend."

Itona: "Still, that makes a lot of sense. Thanks for that."

Kato?: "Anytime." *Hangs up.*

Kato: *When he hears a second ending sound, coupled with the duo finally departing, he breathed a sigh of relief.* Thank you, cuz. Good to have use for spare wires to keep up with your friends' issues so that when we switch, I'm not too far behind.

Hyun: "There you are, you two. Concurrent phone lines within your identical flip-phones... For identical cousins."

Kato/Kazuhiro: *Both take their respective devices, putting them in their pockets, and bowing to the Korean.* "Thank you, Hyun."

Hyun: "Any reason you needed me to break out my signals tomes? I like the practice, but you've got an IT..."

Kato: "There's an entity I don't want to realize some new development in my devices that traces back to our specific structures. If it's from you, it'll look officially programmed if seen."
Hyun: "Aha... Making and keeping new secrets from the people who already know a bunch of your old ones... Only you could make such a campy-sounding idea work on this grand of a scale."

Kato: "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

Hyun: "By the way, Kato-kun, you should know now, since I gave you the tap to the Tanimoto Clan's call feed, that something's really brewing within the Yakuza, yeah?"

Kato: "Oh, I know."

Hyun: "Are you going to do something about it? I'm not going to stop you if you do, but... I wouldn't want you to overexert yourself out on the field. Just a moment ago, everything was in place. Now there's a high chance of it all boiling over."

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "Don't you worry about that." *They bow one more time and leave Qita Kong. Following this, he turns to Kazuhiro.* "A lot of success relies on you, man. This is where the many," *Checks his watch.* "Years of us being the same person comes into play. You can do it."

Kazuhiro: *Sighs.* "You're right. I'll keep things in order while you conduct your investigation. Bring him back to pass judgment, yeah?"

Kato: "You can bet on it, cuz." *The both of them then collide the blades of their hands, formed into a spiral with their fists clenched, onto their chest areas in front of their respective hearts.*

Kato: *Refocuses.* *Anyways, let's do this. Three... Two... One.* *Presses the remote switch.*

-What follows is a large sounding off of a single, extended, annoying chord that consumed the entire building's atmosphere.-

Factory Worker 1: "Fire drill?" *Looks away from his mechanical arm control panel.*

Factory Worker 2: "An impromptu one, if so. This wasn't on the schedule for the next few months." *Sets down his clipboard.*

Factory Worker 3: "Hey, I'm not complaining. Are you?" *Throws his packaging tape tool aside and begins mobilizing to leave the workplace. Many others soon follow suit, forming a few set of large lines at the available public exits.*

-Kato waited at his covert position for a few minutes and continued to survey the surroundings until he was certain that no one else was in the vicinity. From there, he then stepped out and returned to the regional office, whereupon he quickly cracked the numerical entry keypad thanks to algorithmic extraction, and entered the area to take a closer look at the evidence.-

Kato: *Hmm...* *Kato looked at the crime scene while he sabotaged the security camera footage.* *Blood wiped away just for the piece of mind. Almost like they didn't care about it... Or rather, they staged it?* *Takes a knee right next to the mess to take a closer look.* *There's no center of impact for this blood splatter. It's been muddled by the mopping, but...* *Drags a vinyl-gloved index finger across the central areas of the liquid.* *Absolutely no high-concentration depth anywhere, which would be the case if blood was actually spilt unwillingly from the body. And if that's not the case... This happened willingly.* *He stands.* *Daichi did not hurt or kill anyone, at
least in this room; the Kiyabu Family are staging this. Which probably means... *Begins rummaging through the office area's file cabinets, desks, and shelves, before eventually finding what he was looking for by popping open the room's fridge's door and looking between the insulation and interior shelving.* There we are... Business records since 2010. It wasn't a sort of larceny. But it was indisputable that he was here, and was looking for something. What was it?

*He looked deeper into the fridge gap and found something else; a package of bag noodles - Kiyabu Ramen made, of course.* Now why would Kiyabu hide this in here? *He turns it around and pivots his viewing angle, and folds over the prior flaps, before taking issue with the colored circles.* The package has red, gold, black, and white inks, as is the scheme of Kiyabu Ramen, but... There's no traces of green on it anywhere. So why is it in a circle on the other side of this layer? *He then looks back at the ground, where the swished blood still lay.* Oh... Hm. Better take a box with me then. *Kato proceeds back downstairs, breaking open one to find it having an assortment of packages with the same green circle, and took it with him outside, using the dock's unorthodox cover to evade witnesses and the emergency staff arriving on the scene in response to the triggered fire alarm.*

*He finally safely and discreetly returns to the back alley where his Lexus is parked. He gets to it, opening the door and stashing the box of Kiyabu Ramen into his backseat.* To think I'd ever have this stuff in my car...

???: *Another individual walks into the same alley, heading straight for Kato, who was still bowed down with most of his upper body between the open door and the hull. By the time the latter finally took notice of him, surprised as he was, the former was quick to push-kick the door, slamming it right into him, perhaps sandwiching his body to the rest of the automobile.*

Kato: *Instinctively gets out of the way just in time, with the car completing its close instead. He sees his assailant immediately follow up with a spinning back kick, which he blocks, but sends him away from his vehicle.*

???: *He then quickly followed with a car bounce-off roundhouse, which Kato ducked under; the latter attempted a leg-trap powerbomb of a sort when he rose back upright, but the unknown predator swiped his close fist back and stunned him into forgetting the attack. This built distance between the two as Kato steadied himself again with his clutched head while the attacker rolled and handsprung back to his own stance.*

Kato: *After neglecting the latest strike, he takes a look at his foe. And he is very displeased.* "Jieji. Again."

Jieji: *Cracks his knuckles merely by tightening his fists.* "You knew we would meet again after how our last fight ended. After the Akamine Clan has become so super-organized lately and mobilized force after force, The Reclamation Society knew you'd be involved somehow."

Kato: "You're right, though not for the reason you believe."

Jieji: "Really? Then you won't be too discouraged that I've gotten even better now? Even without the advantage of sand from before, I daresay I can match you blow-for-blow in many fields now. I'm very excited to test my new skills out."

Kato: "..." *They begin pacing around a mutual circle illustrating the center of their conflict.*

Jieji: *Looks at his opponent straight through the pupils.* "Plus, I can see I won't have to worry
about you holding back again. Or let me get the first few hits willingly." *Begins bouncing when they stop.*

Kato: "You made me swallow my heart that," *Checks his watch.* "Day on the Chinese shore, Jieji. I was very unsure of myself, for one of the first times in my life. And then you provoked the very thing that made me reflect such behavior." *Looks away for a moment, before closing his eyes, sighing, and looking back at Jieji with determination.* "But not anymore."

Jieji: *A grin begins forming on his face.* "I see... Excellent."

Kato: "I'm going to fight Jieji, if I must. I believe fully in what I must accomplish, and I must will myself to get through whatever stops me - the right way, of course. Which is also why I have to at least try to convince you not to fight again." *He takes a step forward.* "Your reasons for wanting revenge are very justified. And you know someone as twisted as myself understands - there's only one thing that would make them that twisted. But you cannot really think it all ends with you feeling absolutely fulfilled with your plan? Hundreds of years of transferred anger... Hatred, even - extinguished in an instant? No; you're going to find something else to resent. You'll feed on your own disdain for it, fueling you as you keep on sinking deeper and deeper until all that is behind you is just an innocent sea of blood and bodies. We've both had crimson on our hands, sure, but at least we could clean that because it was still somehow tainted. The second you touch this new blood... It'll change you forever. So please, not for my life, but for the others you target if you stop me... Forget this endless suffering. Expunge your quest for revenge."

Jieji: "Oh, Miyamoto-san... I don't hate you; I told you that. I can hardly even hate your family because of how much I've come to like you. But tradition is absolute, and so are the emotions one feels for them - my family's vengeance must be upheld; my thoughts be bloody, or nothing worth." *Scoffs.* "I do appreciate your patience, though. By now, you would've been one of my high-school friends, who was done trying to convince me not to mope about my sister's death."

Kato: *Begins thinking about the times Kazuto and Aiko looked even the slightest bit exasperated by him nearly breaking his adolescent cover, as well as Norio, Kazuhiro, and Miho's sometimes conflicted expressions from his rash actions and darker monologues. He then checks his watch to bring himself back into the present.* "The people closest to me have always been patient in dealing with my damned self in the past. It never felt right to not be the same way for everyone else."

Jieji: "I can never get enough of that kind of respect, Miyamoto-san. So do me a favor and give me my share... In the form of accepting this street brawl." *Gets into his fighting stance; a take on Bruce Lee's southpaw-open boxing position with his left hand forming protruding knuckles, and hopping rhythmically back and forth.*

Kato: *Readies himself as well.* "I," *Checks his watch.* "Told you I'm not letting you get in my way, Jieji. I'm going to keep my word."

- With Kato bouncing into "B-Boy" style, he then charges at Jieji, who does the same. The Yakuza floats over the slide-kicking Triad with a cartwheel heel kick, and when they both return to their feet, facing away from each other, Kato springs up again and delivers a 180 enzuigiri kick. Jieji answers with an obtuse roundhouse of his own, and they both catch each other's shins with simultaneous X-blocks.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku: 6's OST "Body and Soul" plays.-
Kazuhiko Kato - Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Wushi Jieji - One of the Big Three of The Reclamation Society

Kato returns to his feet soon after the impact, and sprawls into a one-cycle 2000s spin to make room. He rises back up to his feet as Jieji continues coming towards him to close the fray. He attempts to begin again with a snap flash kick, but Jieji saw it coming, and threw an oblique leg kick that reverted all of the former's momentum and forced him to instead lean forward, open for a custom Thai clinch, that is followed with a series of short-arc uppercuts. Kato escapes with a monkey flip that sees Jieji land on his two feet two meters behind the former.

Kato sprang back in, this time waiting for Jieji to answer, which he did with a right hook. Kato countered with a step-up, getting too close for the obtuse blow to deliver any lasting damage. Between his opponent's raised fist and head, Kato clutched both and delivered a laminated snapmare, followed by lifting his far leg behind Jieji's nape and cupping his hands together at the chin - a reverse Koji Clutch. After a few seconds, Jieji escapes the hold, but as he stands, his striking arm remained trapped, allowing Kato to Japanese arm drag him back down to the ground. As he recovered, Kato set up a short-arc 540 kick to the forehead, which the Syndikat member saw coming ad ducked. This was just what the Oyabun wanted, however, as once he landed behind Jieji, he immediately followed up with an instep sweep kick that threw one of the latter's feet high into the air, misbalancing him. Jieji no-hand cartwheels away to regain his rigid standing.

Kato attempts another 540 kick at Jieji, but the latter stop-hits him with a well-timed high knee, knocking some wind out of the Yakuza's chest. The Triad follows it up with three straights; the first one makes its mark completely, but Kato slaps aside the other two. Still stuck behind Jieji's raised knee, he immediately slaps it down to close the gap for a straight-hook combo. But once Jieji's leg plops back down, he spins in place and smashes his right carpus (compacted by a formed fist) into the section just under Kato's matching knee. The former completes the counter with an aside side kick that gets Kato away just in time such that his left hook misses by a mere inch. With the fray-distance well-controlled again, Jieji unloads on a five-strong series of lightning-roundhouse kicks leading up from midsection to face. Kato puts up his check-guard to absorb most of the blows.

Kato caught the last kick in the swift string, and began twisting it the way it came, preparing to launch it off of his shoulders and flip Jieji mid-air. This motion allowed the Triad to find momentum for a sequential roundhouse kick with the other leg, but a well-timed duck by Kato avoided all damage. The forced backflip went off unabated. As Jieji was dropping back down, Kato attempted to finish things with a spinning back kick to the chin with so much momentum that he falls onto a three-point stance following the conclusion of the strike. However, Jieji had seen the move coming mid-fall, and blocked it with a very tight Keysi block; so tight to the rest of his body that some transferred concussive force still rocked his head. But it was worth it to see Kato's vulnerable position when one knee down, which he exploits with an overhead roundhouse kick.
beyond Kato's current peripherals at the time of inception. The resulting attack slams into Kato's
temporal line on his skull, but thankfully does not wedge too far into it, due to his left hand
forming a fist behind him that pushed the instep away. Now in "God Hand" stance, Kato rose with
a point-blank uppercut, pulling Jieji into it by slapping the latter's kicking foot back down to force
a bow. Jieji pivots around his leading leg to avoid the entirety of the attack, and ends up behind
Kato, only to be met with a fast reverse elbow with the Yakuza's other arm.

But the surprise edge doesn't last long. Jieji returns with a one-two leading straight, followed by
a southpaw cross. Kato blocks all three of these blows and then attempts a spinning backfist... That
breaks down when Jieji, with a lowered stance, then throws a right hook straight at the former's
right ribcage. This seriously staggers the Yakuza, who hardly sees the Triad's punching elbow
bend further, and the closed palm facing down; Jieji was setting up for a crushing back knuckle.
Kato put his guard back up just on time... Only to see it broken by the powerful blow. And to see
him rolling back because of a succeeding right shoulder tackle.

Kato recovers well enough in time to see Jieji attempt another one-two combination, which the
Yakuza naturally parries. He was much more wary than previously, however, as he ensures he
reads the Triad's movements, seeing his side shuffle to go to his side in record time to continue the
string, with another right jab, left high roundhouse, and revert hook kick. Kato sidesteps, ducks,
and pulls back to avoid the entirety of that. This maneuver also permitted him to charge up a
powerful bolo punch coming perpendicular to Jieji's returning head. The significant strike makes
its mark and the Triad falls to one knee before getting himself back up to continue on, watching the
Oyabun wipe the blood off of his lower lip.

To keep up the fancy footwork that got him the initial advantage, Jieji again tries to trick Kato
with another shuffle; this time stationary, perhaps to feint a high kick like he has done before, and
instead opts for a spinning back kick. The latter sees it coming, taking the passing ankle and
hyperextends its thrust, causing the former to lose footing and fall onto all fours. While stunned at
his sudden change of stance, his left cheek falls victim to a sequential right straight to it. Jieji
barrel-rolls the opposite way to keep himself from taking any further damage.

Seeing that the majority of his "points" came from strikes succeeding small grapples, Kato
reformatted his strategy for one more oriented to clinch fighting, knowing full well Jieji prefers
open-area techniques. But when he first calls upon one, having ducked under Jieji's left hook to
lock in a Thai to do so, the Triad rejects this by bowing his guarded head so that the Yakuza's
hands slide off. His head bowed too to try and keep the hold, allowing Jieji to hook it into a front
facelock. From there, the Syndikat lifted up his far heel behind him, smashing the achilles onto
Kato's forehead. It reels the Yakuza, but the former refuses to let go, wanting a second hit. When
he goes for it again, however, Kato breaks the joined-hand grip, and spins out of the facelock so
that he comes out properly standing with a wristhold on his opponent, who bows down to ease the
pressure. This time with the other's head visible, Kato dashes in with a raised right knee, colliding it
with the parietal bone.

Kato telegraphs a right front kick from the Syndikat member, catching it with his left arm.
Reverting to "Tumbler," he dragon-screws the limb again, this time expecting Jieji to lift up his
other leg for a mule kick, and instead switching grip and slapping the heel back down. With Jieji's
knee bent and pointed down, Kato steps over with his left and crouched slightly - this resulted in
Jieji's right leg bending awkwardly, with his inner knee cupped with Kato's left, and his instep
trapped on Kato's other knee. Kato completes the submission with a hook of the Triad's left arm
behind him, trapped by the former's side headlock and compressing for a highbrow choke. Jieji
eventually breaks out of the hold by getting his other arm from behind Kato's back to break the
hand grip.
But the Triad was not done there. After lowering his stance too, he was able to escape the
toehold, and then roll forward clutching Kato's left ankle, pulling it forward and forcing a vertical
split on the latter. After his somersault, Jieji attempted a supine front kick to Kato's chin while he
was in a vulnerable position, which made most of its mark on Kato's closest cheek when he saw it
right on the nick of time. The impact nonetheless pushes him onto his back and resets his leg
positioning. Jieji kips-up and frontflips for a knee drop on Kato's chest, but the latter rolls out of the
way just in time.

Jieji tries again with another high kick, but Kato blocks it with one hand, and invades Jieji's
centerline with his other, open to embrace the latter's throat. Kato picks him up off the floor with
limb and neck, and then slams him straight into the alley wall, throwing a headbutt in for good
measure. Jieji retracts his free foot so that its ball plants onto the wall, and giving it a thrust for a
massive right snap kick. But Kato sees it coming, applying a Dempsey Roll with his "Tumbler"
horse stance, seeing the instep miss his centerline, and slapping his left armpit; the impact
definitely stung, but it hardly fazed the Yakuza, who then closed the gap to trap the foot and
controlling both of Jieji's lower limbs. Kato then stepped away from the wall and repositioned
Jieji's head (since he still had the choke locked in) so that the Triad was basically a SWAT team
battering ram, and drove his head into the bricks again, dropping him once the ordeal was over.

Jieji kipped-up and heel swept to give him some space. Kato reverted to "B-Boy" and tried for a
flying high knee to return, but Jieji sees it coming and delivers a right overhead punch that clocks
the former's forehead, before the joint's point could even form. Kato lands back where he took off,
clutching his head in pain. Believing he has the commanding lead in the fight again, the Syndikat
member delivers another same-leg lightning-roundhouse combination, tagging up Kato's matching
leg, stomach, shoulder, and finally, on Kato's temple. The last costly mistake on Jieji's part,
however, as Kato refused to let the now properly-pointed leg leave his shoulders, and avoided the
Triad's upper body defensive blows to sweep out the other leg, and perform a massive one-shoulder
powerbomb onto the gravel. Just as Jieji's back smashed onto the ground, Kato immediately
straightened up and delivered one of his most aggressive stomps, directly to the middle-right
section of the former's face. His neck turned with the boot while his nose and forehead took the
brunt of the impact, finally knocking Jieji out and keeping him down.

-OST ends.-

Kato: *After a little moment watching Jieji to make sure he wasn't going to get back up, Kato
begins to leave, picking back up the marked bags of ramen that he had dropped earlier. He gazes
back at the fallen Syndikat member one more time.* You should really find something better to do
than revenge sometime, Jieji. It gives you nothing but an unfulfilled, inexperienced life. That's why,
for all of your skill, you're still not beating me. *As he gets back into the Lexus and begins driving
off, cleaning his bloodied, dirtied face, he starts thinking more and more about what he had just
thought.*

Kato: "..." *The younger Kato donning a training uniform that was seen earlier is once again
exhausted, bruised, and on his knees as Daichi Hayashida stood over him. Kato's hands were
clensed in dual fists, but they couldn't be lifted from the floor.*

Hayashida: "Come on; is that all you got!?!" *As they were simulating a real street brawl
evident from the lesson boards near them, Hayashida was about to finish things with a decisive
right overhead, which Kato could hardly react to.*

Miho: *She, as herself six years younger... Though you wouldn't really know that unless told
given her slowed aging, gets in the way, clutching Hayashida’s attacking wrist and stopping the fist just before it could make contact with her Oyabun’s face. When he gave her a determined aside expression, she gave an equally aggressive, yet direct one in turn. * “Enough, Hayashida-aniki. He’s not yours to hurt like that.”

Hayashida: *Retracts his fist, breaking Miho’s grip. He then turns around and walks back to his starting position on the matted arena.* "You’ve learned a lot from your time in Okinawa, so you’re skill is definitely up there. Do you know why you keep losing then?"

Kato: "..."

Hayashida: "You have a one-track mind. You refuse to see anything else. When you stop doing what you want and devote purely to what you need, you’ll find that you are never going to succeed."

Miho: "What’s that mean?"

Hayashida: "Ever wonder why in those JRPGs that many get the worst endings? Because they never explored enough. You can say it’s just a developer’s way of making everyone do everything in their games, but look at it realistically, it also makes sense. You now know so much more than you ever could before, you’ve found many new ways to approach a situation - some better than others, and thanks to the contained stories, you’re not always thinking about your sole goal, and instead furthering it in small steps. I’ve heard you’ve been trying to do that, and you are in a way, but there’s a difference between those Heroes and you - they’re stepping around, rather than stepping directly ahead. And that’s why, while you are heading in the right direction, you’re getting the worst ending rather than any better ending."

Kato: *Politely smacks away Miho’s help up, rising to his feet on his own.* "What I plan to do with my refined power is the business of myself and my Family, Hayashida. You only know about it because my father trusted you and your father."

Hayashida: "Maybe you should’ve looked to your cousin and uncle’s instruction first, perchance?" *Turns around.*

Kato: "You’re right here, and you’re on the clock. I’ll settle for lectures later." *Raises his fists at his face again.*

Miho: *Preoccupied, she turns back to Kato.* "Kato-ani, are you-"

Kato: "Please don’t interfere, Miho-san."

Miho: *After a moment, she nodded, though with a hint of pain within her compliance, and backed away from the circle.*

Hayashida: "Is that really your ‘God Hand’ stance? Worse than before; no excuse." *Gives off a special dark-blue aura and dashes toward Kato.*

Kato: *Stares a thousand meters ahead at the windshield after concluding the memory, driving on instinct at that point.* "You were right, Hayashida-san. And that’s why I not only I need to stop you... I can stop you. *Refocuses and continues driving.*"
Chapter Summary

Kato's investigation at Kiyabu Ramen did not go entirely smoothly, thanks to a sudden interjection from an old rival, but Kato nonetheless got what he wanted. And as shown, Kazuhiro, his identical older cousin, is filling in for him within the realms of AssUniv's mutual perspectives, and seems to be doing quite a good job at replicating his kin's quirks and antics. Speaking of AssUniv, however, they too have a role to play and a story to tell... But what story is that?

-As found from earlier, the era of two "Kazuhiko Katos" has taken effect; one has returned to Kyoto at roughly 4 P.M. and is taking a nap from his very long day. He thankfully didn't have to explain his damaged self as he took the Hyatt Regency's elevator to the AssUniv-only floor and travel to his suite, as it was only noon; all of the student-assassins were in the middle of their school day and Karasuma and Irina were working with Lovro at the training warehouse to create more training routines during the weekend. Also, it was a night that AssUniv would be working at Nyurifu Rikkyo... Alongside the other "Kazuhiko Kato"...-

Kato: *As soon as his suite door closes, he unstraps his small-of-the-back holster, flinging it and its contents onto the study desk. He also unequips his hoodie, whose inner pocket held his Bluetooth, letting it hang on a spinning chair. He gives his face a quick wash in the bathroom and then finally falls onto his bed.* *I'm going to bloody these bedsheets... But there's worse things going on right...* *Checks his watch.* *Now...* *Before he can actually settle in, his flip-phone vibrates, inciting Kato to answer.* *"Yes...?"

Alvarez: "Hello sir. It's Alvarez, as you know. I know, you've been trying to neglect it lately..."

Kato: "Go on..."

Alvarez: "But you know, they've been asking about it a lot lately too. Is there any chance you could reconsider your stance on the matter? I'm with you no matter what, but it's really tough to continue supporting this facade, Oyabun. Especially against them."

Kato: "They want to know, they can ask me. They know I can't tell a lie worth a damn... But only after I've finished a little power nap."

Alvarez: "Nap? That's a first for you, Boss. Of course, with all due respect."

Kato: "Times change, and so do I. I won't make it a regular thing though. But for now," *Checks his watch.* "Good afternoon." *Shuts his flip-phone, ending the conversation, and then throws it to the nightstand, with it hitting the alarm clock before settling on the surface.* *I don't like this either. If only my uncle, cousin, and Miho knew..."

-Meanwhile...-

"I'm Gonna Carry On" by Nuage plays on the loudspeakers.
Kazuhiro: *Dressed exactly like Kato usually does as a regional manager, metal watch and earpiece included, he even mimicked his younger cousin's smily impression as he rhythmically maintained his bubbly patrol around the main floor, keeping track of the situations lying around and staying on top of the statuses of his friends/employees.*

Kurahashi: *Finishes wrapping up a customer's bladed arm with bandages.* "You're lucky it was a very superficial laceration. And that the recently broken glass that caused it here fell into three clean pieces, so there weren't any fragments in the gash."

Customer 1: "Well, that's good to hear..." *Scratches the back of his head.*

Nagisa: *To another affected person.* "Be sure to be mindful of your surroundings from now on, with people possibly running real close while you are picking up such potentially dangerous objects like that from now on." *Bows.*

Customer 2: *Bows in response.* "Of course. My apologies for the carelessness."

Kataoka: *Bends over along with Nagisa and Kurahashi before looking between the two patrons,* "Perhaps we can return you two to your pleasant nights with two replacement drinks, on the house?"

Customers: *Double-take to each other.* "We're not saying no."

Kataoka: *Smiles.* "Excellent. this way then." *Gestures them to the bar; they proceed towards it.*

Nagisa: "Kurahashi, keep a look out; I'll be helping Kataoka-san ease the tension."

Kurahashi: *Nods.* "Understood." *Watches her two friends leave.*

Kazuhiro: *Slowly creeps from across the right horizon of Kurahashi's peripherals.* "Something happened, Kurahashi-san?"

Kurahashi: *Realizes she has been stalked and repulses back from where Kato emerged, becoming rather flustered.* "Oh, Jesus! Kato-kun, don't do that to me. You're even more a sleazebag than I thought, maybe!"

Kazuhiro: "You-" *Realizes that this was a memory not associated with him and plays along.* "I'm sure you enjoyed it a bit, regardless."

Kurahashi: "Well, it brought me back, at least." *Refocuses.* "And, someone accidentally bladed the other with a broken glass."

Kazuhiro: "The three of you ensured it wasn't on our part?"

Kurahashi: "In the natural way, of course."

Kazuhiro: "Great to know. Keep up the good work." *Bows.*

Kurahashi: *Bows.* "You know it." *Leaves.*
Kazuhiro: *Watches her disappear in the crowds, until his bluetooth sounds an alert. He answers with a press of a button.* "Yes?"

Hayami: "Hey there, Kato-kun. Ritsu-chan has notified us of some sort of disturbance. An important one at that; Level 8 Clearance, so she's technically not allowed to tell us, if you can believe that."

Kazuhiro: "I did have that implemented, so I do believe it."

Chiba: "A little hush-hush, huh? We won't pry too much then. Transferring you to Ritsu now."

Kazuhiro: "Thanks, you two."

Ritsu: *Is put on Kato's private bluetooth line.* "Kato-kun, we've had someone rent out the VIP Platform... You know, someone other than ourselves. And they definitely do not seem to be someone in the festive mood like everyone else on the other three floors is. Yada-san, as assistant manager, has come to personally greet him and introduce him to the pastimes too, but he has refused any company in the room aside from 'a certain someone.' I figure it would be you, given how important you are to the establishment."

Kazuhiro: "I'll check it out. Thanks." *Cuts the transmission. He then walks upstairs, heading towards the VIP Platform, before finding Yada waiting at the 3rd floor staircase, looking a bit troubled.*

Yada: "Kato-kun."

Kazuhiro: "Hello, Yada-san. Do you know who's up there?"

Yada: "One person. He didn't give me a name. Just said that he wouldn't be accepting anyone going up to that Platform unless it was someone right. If I were to infer anything from the small glimpses, I'd say he was a special sort of client. Probably knows what's really at work here..."

Kazuhiro: "Hmm..."

Yada: *Comes close to Kato, whispering into his close ear.* Do you think this could be a Reclamation Society threat?

Kazuhiro: *Puts some distance, shaking his head.* "I don't think so. We've shown them what happens if they give us a chance, like he'd be doing right now if he was one of them. And plus, they don't even know about this establishment anyway, or it would've been leveled long ago."

Yada: *Nods.* "You have a point..."

Kazuhiro: "I'll not keep him waiting any further now."

Yada: "Good luck." *Leans in closer to kiss him, but Kato, unintentionally or not, turns a cold shoulder, leaving her a little confused.*

Kazuhiro: *Takes a deep breath, and knocks on the VIP Platform door.*

Client: *Muffled by the obstruction between him and Kato.* "Who is this?"
Kazuhiro: "The manager."

Client: "Well, come on in then."

Kazuhiro: *Turns the knob and walks in, closing the door behind him. His tone and expression remain the same even after finding out who he is speaking to, though he bows accordingly.* "Chairman Akamine."

Akamine: *Rises up from the leather sofa.* "Kato, my dear friend. No need for formalities; you're the boss here, anyhow." *Comes up to him and cups his lowered shoulders with a sense of familiarity.*

Kazuhiro: *Returns to an upright stance and gestures back to the furniture, sitting down for their conversation.*

Akamine: *Pulls out a Cuban cigar from his inner pocket along with a dragon-engraved lighter.* "Mind if I? You can have one too."

Kazuhiro: "Fortunately, I quit." *Reveals his silver vape pen. "But you still may, but you'll need to steam this room after."

Akamine: "I did say you're the boss..." *Lights the cheroot. And exhales some vapor before continuing.* "It's... Interesting to find that your door to this Platform has been heavily reinforced. Had someone who broke it down a few times before?"

Kazuhiro: *Recalls the times Kato told of when AssUniv, in the early stages, had repeatedly kicked, shoulder-bashed, and otherwise slammed the entrance open and closed.* "You can say that. But we aren't here to discuss doors, are we?"

Akamine: "Straight to the point. I'm beginning to think you're going to age faster than I do in just a little bit of time, boy. But very well. You do know of the young men and ladies of the Assassination Classroom, do you?"

Kazuhiro: "I'm sorry, I'm not aware of them at all."

Akamine: *Looks genuinely perplexed.* "Huh?"

Kazuhiro: "I speak true."

Akamine: *Laughs.* "Well well, Kato. You know, my late old man Hiroki had always said there were two constants of the biological Kato Family leaders, such as yourself and your father: One, they never tell a meaningful lie, and two, they are not very liked by their peers. But it seems we've finally found one who doesn't abide by either rule."

Kazuhiro: "I'm not lying."

Akamine: "Okay, now it's just getting irritating. And you need not be so defensive about them, Kato. The Clan has been well aware of the twenty-nine students that killed one of the most dangerous men in the criminal underworld for a- Well, I can't say long time, because for the old guys, and yourself of course, that's just a blink..."

Kazuhiro: "..."
Akamine: *Notices Kazuhiro's silence.* "Ah there we go. If you do know them, you've been working with them even, and are even in contact with them, don't say anything."

Kazuhiro: *Remains silent.*

Akamine: "Excellent. If it is possible, I would like to meet with them. Not here; the matter is to be discussed only at my territory. I know you understand that notion, having such private matters yourself."

Kazuhiro: "Why do you want to see them?"

Akamine: "Are you kidding, Kato? It's probably the same reason you're with them; they assassinated the God of Death. They can pretty much do anything, given the time and resources."

Kazuhiro: "So can my syndicate, if you so desire. I know you know that, for we've done such tasks for you before."

Akamine: "Heh, yes, I know your band is competent. But they're easily identified by who we're dealing with with just a glimpse..."

Kazuhiro: "..."

Akamine: "Your relatively new company, however, is not." *Stands up.* "I mean them no harm, if that didn't go through already. If you accept on their behalf, then you'll know where to find me."

Kazuhiro: *Rises up as well so that they can bow in sequence. Kato finally watches as Akamine leaves the Platform, and looks aside with deep thought.* Can I really do this...? My cousin just wanted me to keep them none the wiser, and yet Chairman Akamine wants me to bring him just a block away from his own work... Jesus, it's as if I actually was the Kato Family Oyabun; a sadistic choice between doing so or not doing so...

-When the night at Nyurifu Rikkyo concluded, Kazuhiro conceded to telling everyone that the important visitor was his boss in the Akamine Clan, and that he had come in peace to request their aid. And there was great rejoicing... Left much to be desired during the remainder of the night. -

-The next day, on the ride across the Prefectures, the student-assassins remain just a little bit suspicious of the new situation going on. -

Okano: *Directing her conversation starter to Maehara (her booth-mate), Fuwa, Naoko, Sugino, Kanzaki, Karma, and Kimura.* "Does anyone else feel anything strange about going to meet a Yakuza Chairman?"

Naoko: "It's not encountering a Yakuza that's the main preoccupation on my mind. It's the fact that we were invited."

Karma: "Yeah... It could be an Al Capone dinner-style assassination. Check around when we arrive to see if there's no baseball bats and shit."

Sugino: "Honestly, the idea does unsettle me a bit." *Turns to Kanzaki.* "What about you, Kanzaki-san?"
Kanzaki: "I'm not."

AssUniv: *Look at her with surprise.* "Really now?"

Kanzaki: "Kato-kun made us a promise, along with a promise we made to him - that through his commitments and honesty, that we never second-guess his faith in us again. To this day, Kato-kun has not once lied to us. So we shouldn't be doubting his guidance."

AssUniv: "..."

Isogai: *Seated with Kataoka behind Sugino and Kanzaki, he joins the conversation.* "She is right, you know. Kato-kun's circle of trust doesn't spread far beyond us or his Family. For him to invest himself fully to whoever we're about to meet, well, I don't think we have much to fear."

Naoko: "I hope you're right. Myself, I'll be keeping the federal instincts; not once getting too comfortable... Though we have another who'll be just like that too, only much sterner..." *Eyes over to Karasuma seated in front, who retains his determined expression looking forward. Irina, naturally more carefree, lays her head on his close shoulder.*

Maehara: "Reliability and faith is great and all, but did Kato-san also tell us of anything we get out of this? Surely, the Yakuza don't mean not to compensate us when we don't have any personal stake in these affairs yet."

Okuda: *Appear from the chairs in front of everyone else, with Takebayashi at her side.* "I theorize that perchance our resurgence in popularity is the key here, ladies and gentlemen. And maybe, to avoid such circumstances of the SGG (Smog Grip Gastro), the Akamine Clan and the Kato Family hope to buy off our services so others do not try to locate us."

Kimura: "... What?"

Fuwa: "I think Okuda-san is trying to say that the assassin world goes hand in hand with the criminal underworld parallel to it. And like the SGG, expert assassins themselves, we'd be a hot commodity for hire, especially now that the legitimacy factor has been reclaimed and word has gone around of young people pulling off impressive hits and heists. Take the Neo-Wolfpack's defeat, for example. Tell me someone didn't hear about that. The Akamines are proof of that, and it'd be best to take their favor than anyone else's, if not Kato's own."

Sugino: "I guess, that makes sense?"

Kazuhiro: "..." *Supports his head with his arm on the window sill, looking through the glass and watching the surroundings of the vehicle.*

Yada: "..." *Seated right next to Kazuhiro, she continues looking at him with some sense of unease.*

Kazuhiro: *Notices it.* "Something wrong, Yada-san?"

Yada: *Shakes her head.* "No. Just wondering what we could take away from this. This is, as you very well know, very far off from guarding the Mutated strain of Tentacle DNA. Until your team has completed the eradicating agent, of course."

Kazuhiro: "Development is a little slower than I like, and we've been running out of things to do.
I'm finding lately now too that the further we are away from the samples, the safer it is; we ourselves put quite some attention to it." *Refocuses.* "But to this matter itself, a favor that the Akamine Family owes is a great, economical power, Yada-san. The Reclamation Society will have to think twice if they find not just a thousand, but ten thousand, are lining up between them and their goal."

Yada: "That's fair..."

Kazuhiro: *Smirks.* "And plus... Wouldn't you say I've been in too many fights that aren't really mine? Where's your part?"

Yada: *Looks up and ironically scoffs at him.* "How dare you put that against us." *The tension eases and she motions to clutch the back of Kato's head, attempting to pull him in for a kiss.*

Kazuhiro: *His Bluetooth blares an alert message just before their lips make contact. As such he pulls back, pushing aside Yada's hand.* "Wait a moment." *Looks up at his flip-phone.* "Ah, Miho. Got to take this, sorry Yada-san." *Puts his phone away and presses the answer button on his earpiece.* "Hey, Miho. Yeah... Yeah, I hear you..."

Yada: *He's been acting rather strangely...

Kazuhiro: *His phone actually hasn't rung, as within Kato's left pocket was a remote that when he pressed, triggered the sound on his device.* You're a sweet girl, Yada-san, and definitely my type. But no cavalier ruts in another man's garden. Especially their relative's.

-Osaka, Osaka Prefecture, Japan...-

-Soon enough, AssUniv, in their immortalized travel bus, reaches their destination; a back alley where across the street is the ONE: Shot Theater. Kazuhiro leads them into the establishment, taking a specialized elevator to the higher floors, into the executive offices area. After a small walk through the corridors to the last one and a quick guard check (wherein Kato set aside his Kimber (working replicas of course, since Kazuhiko had his true copies beside him) and Karasuma and Irina, reluctantly, their issues), they are permitted entry to the luxurious living quarters of the 2nd strongest man in the Japanese criminal world.-

Kazuhiro: *Bows as soon as they are all inside the lodging and finds Akamine seated like a shogun there, waiting for them.* "Chairman."

AssUniv: *Minus Karasuma and Irina, they all double-take between each other before also bowing.*

Akamine: *The smirk he had when they had been shown in grows bigger.* "How good of you to answer the call, Kato. We always know we could depend on you to deliver."

Kazuhiro: *Stands upright.* "You need not make it sound like we're the only ones in here."

Akamine: "Of course." *Turns to the student-assassins.* "Ladies and gentlemen, I am Yuuji Akamine, Chairman of the Akamine Clan. I'm sure my most eccentric enforcer has made it clear to all of you in the moments preceding, but I'd like to reiterate now: you will find no ill will or trouble from us," *Pivots his head to Karasuma.* "Would that be enough to convince you that there is no threat, Ministry Vice Chief?"
Karasuma: "...

Akamine: *Turns to Irina, puzzlingly.* "Why do you look so familiar, though?"

Irina: *Closes her eyes to conceal her surprise at finding that Yuuji is alluding to the time that she has worked with the Clan under Hiroki before, when Yuuji was in his adolescent and early-teen years.* "Probably a mere coincidence, with all due respect, sir."

Akamine: "Right..."

Kazuhiro: "If I may, sir. 'Us'?"

Akamine: "Indeed." *Turns his head to a hallway adjacent to him.* "Are you very much finished?"

???: *A mature, feminine voice answers.* "I very much hope so."

Akamine: "Then come along and take your spot."

Kazuhiro: *Looks back to address the student-assassins of the brief conversation.* *Mirei Akamine; his wife. There was romance on the set between the Chairman and her after cooperating on one project in the black before he took the reins. She knows the cinematic industry like no one else, which he saves her for now that policy is on his top mind in the Clan.*

Mirei: *Comes into general view. Keeping to her husband's traditional vibe, she is wearing a crimson yukata... Albeit improperly, if the sleeves trailing her tricep are anything to come by. When she turns her back to them to take the elevated step up to the seating spot, she definitively flashes the upper sections of her own Irezumi: a Ho-O/Fenghuang. She clears any abstruseness (or enhances it) with her noticeable smile.* "Hello, class."

ミレイ赤峰

Mirei Akamine - Wife of the Oyabun of the Akamine Family

AssUniv: *The more impulsive of the faction bite their lower lip to not react to the (un)intentionally sultry display.*

Mirei: *Transitions to a grin, showing some devious teeth.* "Come now kids, you need not be so humble and stoic. Well, not as much as this."

Karma: "We'll try, at least."

Kazuhiro: "Everybody's here. So let us hear our mission."

Mirei: "Fair enough. I understand that while you were never there, you had been listening in through your uncle Norio that one individual very dear to us has taken a dark turn."

Kazuhiro: "Yeah, I've heard. Daichi Hayashida. Our hearts ache."
Akamine: "To all those who are unfamiliar, Daichi is the 2nd in command of the Hayashida Family - Oyabun honors go to his father, Akira, who is pushing senile years now... Which, for us, is the early 50s. Back to Daichi however, he is a former U.S. Navy SEAL, specialized in hand combat and warrior psychology. A believer of right makes might is the predominant reason for him leaving the country for a little while to see how the elite serves their country. He didn't quite find what he was looking for out there, however, leading to him being decommissioned from service early and returning home. This may be why he's always had a sort of chip on his shoulder, even though no one in particular ever gave him legitimate reason to grudge."

Fuwa: *Brings her finger to her chin.* "He sounds a lot like Kato and his group, cut from the same cloth as them."

Mirei: "You can say that, to be honest. He owns up to everything he does, never with one single regret. And he makes the most of those actions, too." *Turns to her husband.* "Out of all the deals you made, Yuuji, only Kato and Daichi always ever followed through with theirs."

Akamine: *Nods.* "Yes yes, you need not remind me." *Refocuses.* "His adventures weren't for naught, however. When he took managerial positions in his father's syndicate, he realized that transitioning the original fish market that they had to the black-market fighting arena with gambling ring could prove to be more lucrative... Especially even if he named himself champ and made everyone bet on defeating him. Aspiring open challengers and inspired investors could commit to their passions to their heart's content. The prospect was very popular, and in just a few years, the Hayashida Family remains one of the most profitable in the Clan, behind only our theater work and Kato's small arms mogul."

Kazuhiro: *Looks down.* "We both took pages out of the same book, so we learned the same stuff, though since one has one page and not the other, sometimes we slowed a bit. What I needed to learn slower than he did was the fact that money wasn't everything. Daichi never felt too comfortable being just a mouthpiece, a prizefighter, and the occasional bodyguard. I think his inner demons followed him here from California, and they continued to whisper into his ear the lust for a meaningful battle, until it was too much to bear."

Mirei: "And that is probably the cause for Daichi's sudden rampage before that conference."

Nagisa: "With respect, Chairman, do you want us to track him down?"

Kazuhiro: "!!" *Pivots only his eyes over to Nagisa after he makes that query.*

Akamine: "Not quite. We understand tracking is part of an ace contract killer's skillset, but we require another skill entirely - intel gathering."

Mirei: "You remember that we have mentioned Daichi's father, yes? Akira was not present in the said conference that revealed that Daichi had gone rampant. This leads us to believe that he knows of the cause of his son's mayhem, even if he is not directly involved."

Isogai: "And you wish for us to investigate on his matters? Find a way, perhaps to catch him speaking about the matter with someone?"

Akamine: "That is the idea, yes. The task requires discretion, adaptation, coordination, and dexterity. All qualities great assassins have. All qualities, I'm sure you all possess. And so, can I enlist your aid?"
Kazuhiro: *Breathes a silent sigh of relief, then turns around to face them.* "What do you think, everyone?"

AssUniv: *Look between each other again.*

Yada: "If this really matters to you, Kato-kun, then we can't say no."

Mimura: "So long as the Hayashida Family aren't anything like yours or the Neo-Wolfpack."

Kazuhiro: *Smirks.* "Nah, not that. Fighters and thugs, maybe, but not mercs, and not soldiers. Hayashida would be the only major threat. Let's do this, guys." *Turns back to Akamine.* "You know which HQ Akira is sticking around at now?"

Akamine: "But of course."
Kazuhiro and AssUniv have been contracted by the Akamine Clan's two heads, Yuuji and Mirei Akamine, to investigate the Daichi outbreak as well. They are being led away from Kato's own intel-gathering however, as instead of looking into the Kiyabu Ramen facility, they are instead told to look into a first-person resource - Daichi's father Akira. Now is the time to find out how exactly they can learn more about this event. But first they must find out how to break into one of the main buildings of one of the most prudent Yakuza Families in Japan (barring Kato's ofc).

-Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, Japan...-

-Knowing now that Akira Hayashida has taken up refuge in the Hayashida Fightclub in this core city, AssUniv wasted no time traveling there to begin their reconnaissance.-

Okano: *Paired with Maehara, she scales to a rooftop on the south corner of the target brick building. She gets a little agitated that the latter has not yet made it to the peak yet, looking down at him.* "Any day now, Maehara-kun."

Maehara: "Shut up, you know you've won those street races many times before." *Puts a hand onto the lip of the edge.* "I could do it faster if you'd give me a hand, too."

Okano: *Takes his hand and pulls up.* "You're a goddamn man; why can't you lift your own fat ass?"

Maehara: *Finally stands at the top alongside her.* "Alright, drop it. I take back what I said." *Takes out a walkie-talkie from his inner shirt pocket.* "S. Cardinal have made it to their marker. How about the rest of you?"

Kanzaki: *Both she and Sugino take their first steps over their parapet on the East side.* "E. Cardinal, ready."

Chiba: *Taking turns climbing a roof-access ladder, he and Hayami make it to a flat summit of their own.* "W. Cardinal, on standby."

Fuwa: *Mimura gives her a boost to the top of their building, and in return gives Mimura a hand up the wall in turn.* "N. Pole, here."

Maehara: *Scopes out the target building from his angle.* "Alright. You guys know the drill; are there any places that we could enter from the upper levels? Stealth modes won't work with the amount of color variance at the front doors."

Sugino: "We're looking for any good openings sure, but there aren't really any on our side. The only open window is too level and close to any prying eyes. The other windows are bolted down or heavily netted; some of them even both." How does having both help at all, though?
Chiba: "Same here; no side infiltration possible. Unless we can turn into garden snakes."

Okano: "I'd say the South's a no-go, Maehara-kun. Dozens of people at any given moment on these spectating roofs, if not on the adjoining sidewalk and street. Plus, it looks to be where the patrons' front line will trail if it becomes long enough. Far too many witnesses."

Mimura: *Carefully scopes his side with binoculars.* "I hate to say it everybody, but looks like we're in a jam here, too-"

Fuwa: *Grasps Mimura's close shoulder.* "Hey-hey, Mimura-kun, how about that window?"

Mimura: *Looks that way; finding another open auditorium window; this one however, did not share the amount of light and noise that the others were lush with.* "Scratch that last statement, guys. There's a possibility with this one." *Puts down his binoculars and takes out his talkie.* "Itona-san, can you send an aerial drone to take a closer look at it?"

Itona: "You got it." *Seated at a cafe with Kazuhiro, both had laptop screens to look at. For the former, the activation of a helicopter drone prompted its camera feed to appear, and Itona carefully piloted it towards Mimura and Fuwa, who then pointed out the window they had in question. After a few more moments, the machine was floating just in front of the fold-open porthole.* "This is good, guys. Really good. The window is just underneath a laminated section of the upper floor, so no one above can see you. The far-sided folk on the same floor will be focused on the fight down below, so it's unlikely you'll be sighted on the way either."

Okano: "That's all we need anyways, right? Just make sure we get in unnoticed? Once we're in there, our suits can camouflage us for a good while, especially now that Kato-kun has revamped the suit's recharge ability with solar power in addition to that G-MO-whatever it is."

Hayami: "To get in, yes. But we still cannot waste time once we get in there. We'll need to know the layout perfectly coming in."

Kanzaki: "And that's why we're keeping track of Kayano-san down below..." *Keeps her attention on the lower horizon of her target view.*

Kayano: *Donning a peaked hood, is leaning on the wall connected to the fightclub building. She speaks into a communicating node directly behind her ear.* "Guys, no one is passing by this section at this moment. Am I clear from the sky?"

Sugino: *Using binoculars of his own to carefully glance over the other nearby canopies.* "You're free to begin climbing, Kayano-san."

Kayano: "Awesome." *Gears her fingers, stretching them out, and takes a small walk away from the facade. When she turns around, she bolts straight at it, taking four steps on the vertical surface before clutching the first protruding edge available, and continued to scale upward until she took one large leap to a ledge that housed the face-level junction box that she was looking for. After a quick bout of lockpicking, she cracked it open.* "I'm at the doorstep. Ritsu-chan, how do I upload you into this thing?"

Ritsu: "Take the supplied ethernet adaptor, plug it into the yellow-squared cavity of that box on your upper left, and connect it to this phone."
Kayano: *Takes the multi-faced, black cord out of her purse, inserting it into the identified socket and her smartphone.* "Alright, Ritsu-chan, give us some public access to some buried information."

Kazuhiro: *After a few moments, the screen before him flairs with new activity.* "Okay, all crisp now. I'm sorry I gotta crutch on you two today, by the way. Any other time this happens, I'd be all over it, but I'd be I.D.-ed rather easily by any of Hayashida's folk, so I must confide in you two."

Kayano: "And we won't be disappointing, Kato-kun. You have my live feed too, right?"

Kazuhiro: *Drags a second pop-up feed to take a half of his screen.* "Yeah I see it. Leave Ritsu-chan on the top of that fuse switch box; you'll need two hands for this next task. Now get those pliers and spare wires ready too."

Kayano: *Takes out the tools, leaving them on the lower outline of the box.* "Got 'em. Now what?"

Kazuhiro: "What's the blue breadboard serial?"

Kayano: *Checks the below section to find its identification.* "A2333S."

Kazuhiro: "See that in your netscape, Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: *Is inside a maze-like sort of electrical pathways. She's currently at the beginning, looking at three different circuits.* "I'm afraid not, Kato-kun. The serial of the only breadboard in view is C7843U."

Kazuhiro: "Ah, right! That's the green breadboard to its left, Kayano-san. Take one of the supplied wires and plug an end into any of the blue-dotted sections on the left of that board. Then place the other end either around the metal stake connected to the ethernet box you put Ritsu-chan to, or an adjacent reset-sized hole in the structure."

Kayano: "I'm not going to get shocked, am I?" *She cuts the wire she used with the pliers."

Kazuhiro: "It'll tickle if anything; the point of these boxes is to give the wires a safe place. Can't be safe for us if not safe for them."

Kayano: *After slow, prudent placement, she breathes a sigh of relief that no cold rebuttal was delivered.* "God, this is actually pretty nerve-wracking, despite your words. Can you reach the blue breadboard now, Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: "I see it, thank you." *Travels to the newest path.*

Kazuhiro: "Great news, Ritsu-chan." *Cracks a small smirk.* "And for you, Kayano-san; by the looks of things, just another three of those 'nerve-wracking' wire transfers to go... Sorry, that's a bad joke- not even one really." *His smile fades into a cringing frown.*

Kayano: "Oh boy..."

-Meanwhile...-
Karasuma: *Alongside Naoko, Karma, and Irina scoping the outside in pairs. Yada and Kataoka, Isogai and Okajima, and Terasaka and Hara were also surveying the vicinity, on their own private frequency.* "Upfront security is, as we expect, pretty heavy. Karma, Naoko, you see any patrols and/or suspicious, planted men?"

Karma: "Nobody. Sensible, I think; everyone would want to be seeing the amazing fight inside." *Turns to Naoko at his side.* "Heh, remember when we were at a black-market fightclub, Naoko-san?"

Naoko: "I did. It was horrible. We were contestants."

Irina: "Indeed. That place was all-things atrocious."

Naoko: "Oh, you misunderstand, sis-in-law. It wasn't the grim and gore, Bitch-nee. It was how bad the lot of the fighters were. Being a combatant in that cage was an insult of skill."

Karasuma: *Cracks a small grin.* "That's my sister..."

Irina: "Ugh, can't believe this is happening." *Refocuses.* "So, no curious set of eyes other than our own?"

Karma: "Looks like it. Heh, it shouldn't be too tough to get the drop anyway, even if there is passersby."

Karasuma: "You sound like that came from prior experience, Karma. Pray tell, is that what you said when you and the rest of your peers organized an infiltration of mine and Irina's anniversary house?"

Naoko/Irina: "Wait, you did that?"

Karma: "Um..."

After gaining the information they needed to on the arena's exterior, AssUniv retired to their hideout for the afternoon - several suites of the Yumotokan. But for the time being, they were all in one, having one last briefing before resting up for the night raid.-

Terasaka: "North side, fourth floor window. A band of us come in from there, another team from the front entrance. And we're all there to gather whatever information we need..."

Nakamura: "Great observation, Sherlock. What part of that was hard to grasp?"

Terasaka: "What's difficult to process is why we're even infiltrating it at all if the hack Kayano made with help from Kato and Ritsu set all of their information into open sources. Wouldn't the other information we're being told to look for be in there? Why not just claim it right there? And why not just use it to seize control of any cameras in there?"

Kazuhiro: "Very unlikely. Business internal secrets would be limited to an LAN that can only be accessed by computers within the building. The only thing they'd share with the wires in that box is power, and you can't hack through just currents. Alternatively, if we were to claim the security feed of that building, just like if we tried to hack and steal his data from before, Hayashida would smell a rat; my rat."
Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's smartphone screen.* "What is more, what we were really looking for was the real name and other specifications of the building, after all of its contract and lease papers were, according to Kato-kun, long burned off, since Akira and Daichi knew they were never going to sell off properties like this one. I've been using a modifying searching algorithm with the data we've acquired on the semi-public site we made to find any online records and schematics of the structure."

Kayano: *Holds up her smartphone.* "Ritsu-chan, have you completed that search?"

Ritsu: "I have indeed, Kayano-san. Uploading to Kato's fourth-level database now."

Kazuhiro: *Accesses said archive on his laptop, opening the map files for them all to see.* "Hmm..."

Yada: "Uh oh..."

Kurahashi: "The dreaded Kato-skeptical face."

Kazuhiro: "Ritsu-chan, when was this blueprint made?"

Ritsu: "This image was first sent into other OSINT sources on March 4th, 2012, at 7:35 A.M., 23 seconds into the minute, though they've since been deleted about two years ago."

Kazuhiro: "I see. I've been into the building several times before in the moments past, and its layout has been rapidly overhauled since this. For instance, that lavatory hall has been reverted into a secondary elevator path."

Sosuke: "If you knew that, what's the point of finding blueprints?"

Kazuhiro: "I don't trust my past memories that much to be reliable. The last time I was there was several years ago. Things change like they have shown here, from blueprint to recall."

Terasaka: "Does that mean we have obsolete information?"

Kazuhiro: "Not quite. Ritsu-chan, apply a sonar filter."

Ritsu: "Oh, smart, Kato-kun." *She then creates a new image on Kayano's screen, uploading it to Kato's terminal.*

Kimura: "What's that going to do?"

Kazuhiro: "You guys know how dolphins and bats use their, er, echolocation to navigate, right? I wrote Ritsu-chan a sonar-emission program that spouts noises with a frequency ranging from twenty to... Twenty-five hertz. Most people wouldn't hear that, especially if their ears are drowned out by cheers and boos. The sounds' wavelength is piercing due to the low Hz, which means it travels through membrane-like objects, I.E. flesh, and is only impeded by walls and floors. Transmitting these noises at all available outlets in the building, which we could access on the junction box without raising suspicion, gives us a perfect copy of the structure's interior." *After a little editing, he superimposes the image, with the wave impacts colored light blue, on top of the schematics.* "... As we can see here."

Sugino: "Heh, that's pretty cool."
Karasuma: "The last major component of our operation is here; excellent. Now, let's relay the mission details one more time."

Kataoka: "Right." *She and Isogai nod to each other and rise up.* "Okay, just so that everyone is sure about everything, the Public party consists of Kato-kun, Yada-san, Kurahashi-san, Nagisakun, Kayano-san, and Sugino-kun, while the Private party contains Nakamura-san, Kanzaki-san, Okano-san, Karma-kun, myself, and Isogai-kun. The Public will be entering undercover, posing as Kato's er, lack of a better term, harem, acting as spotters and fixers to updating situations within the arena. The Private will be wearing the KAM AtTac suits and enter through the window that we picked out earlier to gain intel from areas the Public team won't be able to reach."

Isogai: "The rest of us will be-

Kato: *Coughs loudly.*

AssUniv: *All look back at him in surprise.*

Kato: *It is revealed that he accidentally misused his silver vaporizer pen, resulting in his gag. He continues to clear his throat with a few more wheezes and wipes his lips.* "My bad. Please continue."

Isogai: "Alright. The rest of us will be handling external getaway and scouting. If Akira find out about our operation and plans to escape or something like that, we'll be there to intercept him. Any questions?"

AssUniv: *All remain silent. *

Kazuhiro: "May the Force be with us."

-After a good rest, dusk approached. and the fightclub was opening for a prime night of high-stakes, high-bets. It was going to be a party the uninvited AssUniv planned on crashing...-

-The organized entertainment was long underway already, with two battle-hardened men duking it out. According to the scattered set of status screens, the fighter in red and black trunks was "Stalritter" Johnson and his opponent in gilded blue was "Golden Boy" Gracie.-

-Kazuhiro and the rest of the Public team, once more clad in some classy attires (their first collective time since the Streak of White premiere) roamed in, with just as an entitled demeanor as all other big-shots in the building.-

AssUniv Public: *Walk up to a security desk frisking patrons and taking down their names.*

Deskman: "Name and business being here."

Kazuhiro: *Leans in close and whispers.* "Kato Family. All you need to know."

Deskman: *Hesitatingly looks up, realizing who he's talking to. When he does, he also leans in towards his customer.* "You, you all. You're all a bit young for that kind of gig... Right?"

Kazuhiro: "Depends on who you're asking... Son."
Deskman: *Concedes with a pulling back of his upper body with acceptance.* "Very well, Mr., uh, Ito and your pluses." *Writes down the forged name and allows him entry.* "Head on in."

AssUniv Public: *All enter deeper into the compound.*

Yada: *Gets close to whisper into Kazuhiro's right ear as they stroll deeper into the establishment.* I know he put down a handle, but is it alright that you mentioned that you were a part of the Kato Family there, Kato-kun?

Kazuhiro: *Turns to her with reassurance.* I played on a little hunch there, Yada-san. Only Hayashida himself would have reason to suspect me, especially if he finds out that he suddenly has a security breach that we were planning earlier. At least up to this point, his subordinates trust the Kato Family wholeheartedly, so I was banking on that. And it worked. *They all form a small circle to lend their ears to the center.* Then let's all get into position. And when we are, we'll call out the Private Team to move in.

AssUniv Public: Got it. *All of them split into pairs, taking organized thirds of the observing fences in the circular stadium on the penultimate accessible floor, able to observe almost all of what's going on.*

Ritsu: *Appears on a smartphone outside the fight club.* "Kayano-san and the rest of the Public Team have made the signal. We shall proceed."

Isogai: "You heard the AI, everybody. Let's go in for the kill."

AssUniv Private: "Roger." *They then all put on their KAM AtTac masks and tactical monocles (a one-eyed goggle variation from the original designs) and jumped the rooftops in the middle of the night towards the North wall, focusing on the window they had identified earlier in the day.*

-It didn't take too long for the outside team to discreetly reach the threshold, and with the Public Team watching and concealing their entry, they have successfully wallcrawled into the compound. They climb/jump their way to their secluded vantage spots (noticed by their undercover allies while trekking the area) and closed in on key conversations and figures - specifically, Akira himself.-

Kazuhiro: *Leaning on the atrium railing of the fifth floor, taking aside glances to the fight itself and everywhere else, something eventually catches his eye. He pulls on Yada's closest arm to alert her to the presence.* There he is.

Yada: *Looks his way.*

H. Akira: *Clad in a closed white pinstripe suit over a cyan shirt and purple diamond necktie, he descends from some stairs, taking an establishing scan of his venue, perhaps to make a personal patrol like Kato does in his own nightclub.*


Kazuhiro: Akira's all about image. *Leans in close to Yada's communication node, located directly behind her ear.* "Everyone, Akira Hayashida has been spotted. Ritsu-chan, take a clip of our contact lenses' recordings and bring it to everyone's phones so they all know too. Remember everybody, we're to tail him and acquire any information we can for the Akamine Clan.”
AssUniv: "Roger."

-And so they did. At various distances, levels, and angles, the student-assassins tailed Akira, watching as he interacted with a few distinguishable, yet irrelevant customers, harmlessly speak with his bar and gambling staff, and then finally stopping to take a section of the barricades to see the top-card battles for the evening. Clearly, there was nothing going by stalking their target at the moment.-

Isogai: *Follows the again-mobile Akira by wall crawling on the ceiling of their floor... Until his right foot doesn't hit a metal support beam. Instinctively to readjust himself in the situation, his greaves lose electromagnetic ability. Unfortunately, since he was as much horizontal as he was vertical, so when he did that, his lower body fell from the surface... Into the crowd.*

Patron: *Gets kicked in the back of his head by an invisible Isogai as a result of the falter.* "D'ah!" *Bends forward.*

Kurahashi: "!!" *Violently turns to her right, noticing the man in pain, before looking back up at the now corrected Isogai, who briefly unequips his mask, mouthing "I'm sorry!" to her. She then looks back at the stranger when he stands straight again.*

Patron: *Turns around after feeling his affected area for a little bit, believing Kurahashi to be the instigator. His large imposing stature made him tower over the young woman, implying he was more than just a customer.* "You did that, little lady?"

Kurahashi: *Subtly bit her lower lip.* "I... Well..."

Patron: "That wasn't very nice, you know." *Begins cracking knuckles.*

Kataoka: *Is on a faraway wall section, aiming her Shock-Out round-fed Kard pistol at the suit.* Don't worry, Kurahashi-san. If he so much as lifts a fist, we'll take him down.

Kazuhiro: Don't do that, guys. Akira's taken notice of this event. Makes sense; he's probably seen enough outside conflicts in his conflicts house. If you knock that guy out, Kurahashi might be pulled out and ID'ed.

Okano: *Holsters her UCP pistol in accordance.* What do we do then?

Kazuhiro: Leave it to me. *Nods to Yada, who reciprocates, and he proceeds alone. He then clutches the man's close wrist.*

Patron: "Hm?" *Turns to face Kazuhiro.*

Kazuhiro: "Oh boy, did my Plus-One cause some trouble?"

Patron: "Huh? This girl's with you?"

Kazuhiro: *Nods.* "Indeed she is. Has she troubled you?"

Patron: "She struck the back of my head."

Kazuhiro: "Oh dear, she probably thought you were her ex."
Kurahashi: *An imaginary needle scratches in her mind.*

Patron: "What?"

Kazuhiro: "She can be rather... Vindictive." *Pulls aside a part of his suit and shirt at his neck/clavicle area, revealing a diagonal claw scratch ending at his chest.* "But I'll tell you what: how's a full roll of 10,000-yen notes sound in defusing this matter? All three of us are just here to enjoy a pleasant... Bloody evening." *Takes out one such roll, four-centimeters in radius, and holds it at waist level of the man.*

Patron: "Boy, you're troubled already." *Accepts the payment.* "But alright."

Kazuhiro: "Don't gamble it all away tonight, champ."

Patron: *Cracks a grin.* "I was thinking all in one pot." *Pats Kazuhiro's close shoulder as he passes by to leave the confrontation.*

Kazuhiro: * Brushes the mark away as he watches the man disappear deeper into the crowd.*

Kurahashi: * Goes up close to Kazuhiro.* *Thanks for that, Kato-kun. That could've gotten hairy. But it's far from over; Akira's moving closer now.* *Gestures over to the other part of the interior.*

Kazuhiro: *I see. Reach Yada-san, Kurahashi-san. I'll deal with him.*

Yada: Whoa, are you kidding, Kato-kun? He sees you, he'll know something's up!

Kazuhiro: *I know what I'm doing, don't worry. Now go, Kurahashi-san.* *Nudges her aside just before Akira can get another good look of the scene.*

Akira: *Arrives to initiate conversation.* "Kato?"

Kazuhiro: *Slightly bows.* "Hayashida."

Akira: "What are you doing here?"

Kazuhiro: *Gestures toward the battle ring.* "Seeing the competition."

Akira: *Looks that way for a bit.* "I should've known. It's what everyone else is here for..." *Turns to him.* "Had a drink yet?"

Kazuhiro: "None of your selection today is my fancy..."

Akira: *Looks at Kazuhiro at a new, skeptical angle.*

Kazuhiro: *Matches his gaze.* "You lose something over here, hotshot?"

Akira: *Returns to a purely upright stance.* "Not really." *Refocuses.* "I got something for you then. Coming?"

Kazuhiro: *Nods. They then begin heading back upstairs. During that time, Kazuhiro taps on his communications node twice, alerting Ritsu and the others to listen in on his feedback. They finally reach their destination; the regional Family head offices, on the top floor of the establishment.*
Akira: *After Kazuhiro steps into the small room, he closes the door behind him. He then quickly walks past the fellow Yakuza, clutching his shoulder in reassurance for a moment, before reaching his side desk, fittingly decorated with a limited-edition Rocks glass set and decanter filled with a deluxe, golden-brown alcohol. He pours some of it into two of the stout, cylindrical glasses and brings one into Kazuhiro's hands. Before he can even say thanks, Akira immediately takes a sip.* "As you usually do." *He then beckons Kato to take one of his own.*

Kazuhiro: "..." *He finally brings the brandy to his mouth.*

Akira: *Forms a grin.* "Yeah, you like that, huh?"

Kazuhiro: *Takes a noticeable amount of time to savor the liquid.* "Hennessy?"

Akira: "Heh, not just any. Cognac Richard. I must say though, I figured you would've known exactly the one immediately."

Kazuhiro: "Hmph, after having so many, all of the variants tend to blend into each other. Appreciated, though."

Akira: "Ahh." *Walks back behind his central desk, filled glass in hand.*

Kazuhiro: *Double-takes between Akira's back and the drink in his hand.* "So you pulled me in here, closed the door, and offered something really sweet to me. I'm guessing what you really want to speak to me about is deadly serious, so do tell."

Akira: "Straight to the business, then?" *Turns around actively towards Kazuhiro again.* "Very well. You ought to know all about the very rocky situation right now within the Akamine Clan, yes?"

Kazuhiro: "Of course. Your little soldier boy Daichi has caused no small amount of trouble for our syndicate."

Akira: *Takes a long sip and sighs.* "Yes, that is true. Saves me some breath talking about stuff you already know then."

Kazuhiro: "What I can also gather is that you're not involved in whatever rampant scheme your son has caused. It wouldn't have been beneficial for you to be standing relatively in the open like this otherwise."

Akira: "Indeed. But that has an underlying scheme too, as you've gathered. I want you to do something."

Kazuhiro: *His expression remains neutral.* "Do tell."

Akira: "Find Daichi for me."

Kazuhiro: "An interesting request."

Akira: "You're the only other one other than myself that Daichi trusts, Kato-kun. Which means you're the most likely candidate to make him step down from the ledge from which he'll wreak havoc on the Clan."
Kazuhiro: "Why talk him down?"

Akira: *Takes note of that short interrogation.* "You know that if the rest of the Clan gets to him first, he'll be lynched. I'm certain you're not going to do the same; Daichi deserves a chance at explaining himself. And you're the ultimate believer of second chances."

Kazuhiro: *Swishes the liquid of his glass.* "..."

Yada: *Listening in on the conversation from the outside.* This must have been what Kato-kun wanted to do earlier, and asked me about... I hope. I was really out of it that day. Regardless, Kato-kun trusts the Hayashida Family, so there's almost certainly no way he's going to refuse here.

Kazuhiro: *Looks at Akira directly.* "I'll be finding him, Akira."

Akira: "Perfect."

Kazuhiro: "But not with your help."

Yada: "!!" *Eyes widen when she hears "Kato" refuse to help his friend.*

Akira: *Tilts his head, swishing his ball glass.* "Excuse me?"

Kazuhiro: "I'm not with those vindictive folk, but I am finding Daichi my own way, and it's not to bring him through the trouble of being properly detained. Someone as fully-frenzied as Daichi now would probably want that anyways. He has got to be eliminated."

Akira: "Now look here, Kato-"

Kazuhiro: *Steps forward menacingly.* "You look here! The Kato Family doesn't owe the Hayashida Family anything. Especially when you refused to help us during the Shiohara era."

Akira: "I know. I deeply regret that. But the Shiohara Family was quickly on the way of being the top brass at the time. You know someone who showed their discontent with an aspiring group would be-"

Kazuhiro: "There's more, Akira. How about when you conspired with mortal enemies of my father so that your boys during the Ginza Brawl would get out of some jail time when he wasn't a part of the defense team anymore?"

Akira: "You're kidding me."

Kazuhiro: *Moves up to Akira, passing him back his almost-untouched brandy straight to his chest.* "No, I'm not. And you definitely don't have anything worth a favor for, so I'm not helping you. Goodbye." *Walks out. When he's back in the noise of the crowd, he takes to his comm system again.* Guys, we're done here. Nothing more to learn. Let's get out.

AssUniv: *The pairs double-take between each other, creating their collective silence for a brief interval after Kazuhiro made his assertion. they then finally answered.* Fair enough.

-Kazuhiro regathered the rest of the Public Team while the Private Team made their way out the same way they came out, unseen.-
Nagisa: *The last of the pack strolling out of the venue, his phone suddenly begins ringing. He takes to a faraway corner to answer it.* "Hello?"

Hiromi: "Nagisa."

Nagisa: *Taken aback.* "Mother?"

Hiromi: "Hello son."

Nagisa: "Is something wrong?"

Hiromi: "I know I'm not supposed to contact you this way, son. It's just... I really needed to hear your voice after this long while."

Nagisa: "Mother..."

Hiromi: "I've been very worried about your well-being, Nagisa. Whatever you've been brought into, with Karasuma-sensei claiming that it's even worse than last time, and it's taking even longer now that it's been one and a half years, it takes its toll on a mother, Nagisa. And your father too, but I reckon he's holding up a bit better, given how he understood your situation more easily before."

Nagisa: "Don't you worry, mother. Nothing's going to happen to us. And I'll make sure nothing bad happens to you too."

Hiromi: "That's all well and good, but I just need you to come back to me one day, son. We haven't had the chance to truly be that family we were hoping we'd be, because, well..."

Nagisa: "..."

Hiromi: "I'm sorry, son. I, I don't blame you for that interval."

Nagisa: "No, you're right, mother. I wasn't invested like you two were. But I've changed. And I cannot wait to give my share of that experience to you and father as well. Once AssUniv's business is finished."

Hiromi: "That's... Excellent."

Nagisa: "See you soon, mother."

Hiromi: "I sure hope so. *Hangs up.*

Nagisa: *Puts away his phone.* Oof, to be reminded of my emo self less than two years ago... Alright, better get out of here.

-Nagisa finally concludes his walk out of the venue... And yet finds none of his friends and peers around waiting for him!-

Nagisa: What!? They left me behind!? *Immediately begins searching around, frantically searching for his fellow student-assassins. But then he notices something on the ground nearby. A communications node, which, given the skin-safe adhesive's shape, was forcibly ripped off.* Ah shit...
Sometimes the best way to keep up with your main characters is to put them right in the middle of what they are constantly dealing with. In this case, it is Kato having to contend with many other Yakuza Families; after all, the rest of the organized Japanese criminal underworld is not exactly such good acquaintances with honorable men and women.

So, it's cleanup duty time. And the mess to sweep up... Are a bunch of negligible bloodstains waiting to drop.

-Concurrent with the time in which Kato went back to the Hyatt Regency in Kyoto and took his power-nap, Kazuhiro and the AssUniv Program had visited the Akamine Clan. Now it was early dawn again and Kato was well-rested and ready to proceed with his investigation.-

Kato: *Yada-san's probably going to be glad to hear I actually took a four-hour additional rest without seeing my phone... That is, after she's done being mad that I've been lying to her. Well, we'll cross that bridge when it comes.* *He rises up from his bed, throwing the packed, bloody sheets into the laundry basket, and proceeds to his study desk, where he had laid out the leads he had acquired from Kiyabu Ramen No. 5.* *Now, what secrets may your product have, Kiyabu?* *He's about to begin inspecting one of the packages.*

-But before he could proceed too far, an electronic device begins ringing.-

Kato: *Looks at his flip-phone, still resting at his nightstand. He then takes to his Bluetooth accessory, placing it on his left ear, and presses its answer button, establishing the mutual line.* *"Kato."

KF IT: "Morning, boss. We have a concern."


KF IT: "A number of KAM AtTac Emergency Suit beacons have flared in the last few minutes. We are currently tracking their movements, and two are moving at high speeds around downtown Kyoto capital."

Kato: "What? Send any other available garrisons to the alerted vicinities. I will track down the mobile one."

KF IT: "At once, Boss. Good luck." *Hangs up.*

Kato: *Rises up from his study chair, getting a replacement jacket. He then looks at the work desk again, with his Kimber Warrior II pistols on one side and the possible clues on the other. *This is going to have to wait.* *He stashes his guns in his holster and leaves his room, heading down to the garage to pick out his Lexus LS 500.*
-Following the blips on his flip-hone screen, Kato hastily drives around Kyoto to attempt to converge at their location.

  Kato: *He finds his chance when he stops on a T-turn that the two blaring, dotted signals are implying to meet at.* Now, what's causing my Family trouble in our own territory? *He gets his answer when another sedan - a Merecedes-Benz CLS W218 - passes by him at incredible velocity. It is for an few instant moments, but there was connection - Kato saw exactly who were in the car: Tsuchiya and Bellamy, who witnessed their boss on the adjacent street. After they sped by him, another few vehicles were in pursuit; four civilian-use APCs, to be exact.* What the Hell is this!? *Reignites his car's engine and follows the chaos.*

  -As Kato's vehicle catches up, he's noticing that neither Bellamy nor Tsuchiya were trying to fight back against the aggressors pursuing and shooting at them. Unable to accurately identify who they are from behind, Kato begins shifting gears and speeding up to catch one of them as they were popping out of their drive-by window. When one does, Kato reaches out and grabs his arm from below, and uses his returning weight to throw him out of the vehicle and onto the far side of his windshield. Kato completes his motions by shooting the back-left tire of the APC with AP rounds, causing it to veer out of control and crash into a collected post on the street. The remaining aggressor of that automobile is barely able to hang on when Kato drastically slows down in the ensuing events and gets a face-full of pavement when he flies off the hood, but that was enough time for Kato to process and identify the man; a lowly foot-soldier of the Higuchi-Oba Alliance - a Tanimoto Clan subsidiary.-

  Kato: What the fuck!? What are Tanimoto's boys doing in our territory, let alone the Akamine Clan's? *He wonders as he continues to follow the remaining three vehicles chasing his two Family Captains.*

  -The other APCs eventually realize the loss of their allied vehicle and deem Kato the cause. Not wanting to lose sight of their prey but also wanting to deal with their sudden, new threat, some of the passengers train their guns at the boss. Despite juggling his driving, however, Kato's quick-draw far surpasses any of their focused aiming and he picks off the lot of them as they turn back to face him.-

    Kato: *His Bluetooth once more rings, which he answers with his driving hand.*

    Bellamy: "Boss! We know that's you back there!"

    Kato: "Bellamy. You and Tsuchiya having trouble?"

    Tsuchiya: "You can say that. Though not for too long."

    Bellamy: "We're bringing these guys into a trap!"

    Kato: "Do you really need to? I'm dispatching quite a bunch of them down here."

  -But just after Kato says that, the number of filled vehicles multiply; some of them even show up behind Kato's Lexus.-

    Kato: "Hm, a whole invasion army, huh?"

    Tsuchiya: "It's absolute chaos, sir!"
Kato: "This is vexing. I'll be taking a detour; where will we converge again?"

Bellamy: "Senryo Ave 112! The nearby industrial plant!"

Kato: "That's about," *Checks his watch.* "One and half minutes from now? Got it." *Puts the call on hold and then makes a drift to the left. Some of the APCs predictably follow him. Kato's game of cat-and-mouse takes his pursuers into the highway, and the former's ace pass and pacing skills make it very difficult for the Higuchi-Oba Alliance members to line up a good shot at his bulletproof Lexus. When he finally leads them off the speedway, Kato again makes a bunch of sharp, yet wide turns; each of which giving him enough time to focus a bullet-time shot to the hostile APCs, while minimizing their opportunities to put a bead on him.*

-Soon enough, Kato reaches the location described by his Captain. He was the later one to arrive, as the gunfire has already started raining down in the vicinity. Kato enters the fray by drifting his Lexus into two of the enemy gunmen, flipping them over his vehicle, and using its centripetal momentum to toss him out of the chassis, into a rolling landing right next to another foe.-

Kato: *When rises upright, he immediately hooks his right leg around the startled Tanimoto Yakuza's left and rolls forward once again, tripping him. Kato, now seated next to his nearest prone enemy, shoots another coming out from behind the cover of his armored truck before capping the aforementioned with a point-blank back shot.*

Tsuchiya: "Kato-ani, Get behind this!" *He beckons his boss to reach their covered location.*

Kato: *Complies, vaulting over the barricade and crouching right next to his comrades.*

-Despite the mounting reinforcements greatly outnumbering the Oyabun, two Captains, and roughly dozen other Kato Family members on their side, the gap in skill and technology along with their knowledge of the area proves to be the Higuchi-Oba Alliance's downfall as they advance from their cornered position and repulse the shooters until they cannot push back any more. When that happened, the Kato Family still pulled in close, drawing on their CQC combat to detain and capture their foes. Kato was the first to take not one, but two down as he twist-disarms them both in a cross-arm side-lock strip, a short-angle roundhouse kick straight to their exposed ribcages and finally a double hip-toss. Bellamy and Tsuchiya each take down one of their own, one with a sprawl/back cuff combination, and another with a shoulder omoplata respectively.-

-In the minutes that followed, the reinforcements that Kato had called for earlier had arrived, now where they were, to take the Higuchi-Oba Alliance members into custody, while Bellamy and Tsuchiya dusted themselves off and Kato tended to any of his Brothers and Sisters' licked wounds.-

Kato: *Looks over to Tsuchiya as he wraps bandages around one Lieutenant's forearm.* "You know, it's only a guess, and we're still going to question them in," *Checks his watch.* "A couple hours anyway, but I want to hear your take on this situation."

Bellamy: *Turns around to see the new conversation-starter.* "I'm thinking it too, boss." *Pats one wounded Brother on the back before getting closer to the two.* "The Higuchi-Oba Alliance... Very automotive-heavy in their profits. Hence they souped up their cars like so here. They wanted our bigger attractions and mechanical partnerships, it seems."

Tsuchiya: *Is putting on a variety of extra Emergency gear, specifically a set of ballistic bracers and kick guards.* "Picking now of all times to go for them, knowing the Family Oyabun's most-prized collection is resting easy all around the city he prides himself with the most..."
Kato: "It can't be a coincidence. And it's most definitely not the last time it's going to happen," *Checks his watch.* "For this week alone even. We need to be on guard for any future inevitabilities."

-But then, all of their phones sounded the alarm once more.-

Bellamy: *Takes his smartphone and answers.* "Yeah?" *Listens. After a few seconds, his eyes widen.* "Got it. We'll be there."

Tsuchiya: *Stands upright.* "More trouble?"

Bellamy: "Indeed. Our Brothers and Sisters at the scene were able to identify them too. Namba Family."

Kato: "Of the Ishida Clan. After our pharmacological studies, most definitely."

Bellamy: "They're going to need it after we're done with them." *Pounds his right fist.*

Kato: *Rises to his feet as well.* "Let's bring it to him. To my car, you two!"

-The boss-captain-captain combination take the Lexus across the prefectural capital to the service district, finding a small, brief conflict going on between two forces, with their cohorts watching from opposite sides.-

Kato: *Donning a OTN skull mask to conceal his identity as he walks onto the scene with Bellamy and Tsuchiya.* "HEY! The fuck is this!?

Namba Member 1: "Ah, the life of the party has shown up. See that, guys?" *Looks over to his forty-strong crew, some of which were brandishing a variety of improvised weapons, from lead pipes to trash cans.*

Bellamy: "You're on our turf, assholes."

Tsuchiya: "That means you're out of your element."

Kato: "Clear out or bleed." *Unleashes a blue "God Hand" aura. They then join their brethren, now totaling twenty-eight themselves, on one side while they prepare with ready stances to battle the invaders.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 2: KIWAMI's OST "Rebellious Phase" plays.-

加藤ファミリー VS 難波ファミリー

The Kato Family - an Akamine Clan subsidiary

VS

The Namba Family - an Ishida Clan subsidiary
-Kato immediately rushes forward, urging the rest of his Family to do so as well. Again, they all realized that they were the outnumbered ones in the conflict, but that was merely an afterthought for them; no one knows how to face stacked odds better than any of them.

When the conflict settled into its relative shape, Kato stood against four combatants (2, 5, 12, 26). He began by weaving underneath a wild horizontal metal bat swing by 5. His over-swing due to the strike's failure to make contact results in 12, wielding two brass knuckles, to duck as well. With 2, a tanto knife artist, and 26, a steel pipe lancer, backing away to not get hit themselves, Kato was free to get in close, keeping 5 from readjusting his arms, and using a Dempsey Roll to enhance his right hook at the exposed ribcage. 12 notices his comrade getting attacked and launch a metal weight towards Kato's legs, forcing the latter to shuffle away. 5 still feels the impact of that underarm attack and falls back, but 2 and 26 make sure he stays upright and they both form a wall right in front of Kato.

Kato dodges multiple slashes from 2 and staff lunges from 26. He pushes 2's latest overhead slash, along with the rest of the attacker, to the side with a side kick, allowing him to focus on 26; he too falters with a badly-timed thrust, catching the pole and pulling it in close for a left elbow to the nose. 26 blocks the point of the blow with his hand, but Kato turns his arm over so that the attack transitions into a backfist. With 26 stunned, Kato attempted twisting his wrist to disarm the Yakuza, but 2 had recovered and threw another slash at the former's hand gripping the pipe, forcing him to let go and back away for a bit.

Tsuchiya and Bellamy stuck close by while eight others engaged them (1, 7, 18, 21, 29, 32, 34, 35). For the time being, they handled equal halves of their aggressors separately, with the two Captains easily dancing in between and around the various weapon attacks the Namba Family members threw at them, while they delivered their first few of the thousand cuts. But then the time soon came for cooperation, with the duo mutually grabbing forearms. Bellamy then swung Tsuchiya at whatever's in front of him, where the latter pointed his feet to make a massive roundhouse kick at the four there. Bellamy releases mid swing so that Tsuchiya lands in a dropkick-stomp onto 18 and returns to stance in front of 29, 34, and 35.

Bellamy has ben revealed to have taken the small knife found from within Tsuchiya's added vambrace, and uses it to easily parry a number of 1 and 7's own knife attacks; one of which allowed him to disarm 7 with a turnabout deflection slash and a shoulder check to temporarily put him out of commission. 32, with a tire iron, tries an overhead swing to Bellamy's crown, but misses when the former SAS gets too close for impact, opting for a lifting cross-legged knee breaker. To add insult to injury, Bellamy forces the now-crippled man to stand, with a lifting hammerlock and pivoting him so that 21 (with a short lead pipe) and 1 must forego their initial attacks.

The stalemate ends when Bellamy dropkicks 32 at 21, with them both falling over upon collision. The former SAS now contends with 1 for the time being, deflecting his initial two lunges and forcing the latter to limbo underneath his swift backhand horizontal. After a few more brief exchanges, 1 makes the mistake of trying to punish the Brit throwing a blocked midsection roundhouse kick with a knife slash. Bellamy easily catches it and pivots around to the back-right section, throwing another backhand slash, but this time across the thigh. This forces 1 to kneel, but Bellamy keeps his weapon hand high so that he can boot it out of his grip with a turn so that they now face opposite ways, transitioning swiftly into the Brit finishing the Namba Family member with a deadlift Uranage. Following this, Bellamy sees 7 begin to get up again, clutching his wounded knife arm, and so throws his dagger at him, impaling the same hand and forcing him to fall back once more; this time for good.
Returning to Kato, he pushes down the swift one-two of 12's brass punches, and does a small blade shin kick to unbalance him. Kato then goes for a Cobra punch as the latter's head bows forward, but he picks up his arms in an X-block just in time. 12 then pushes the attack back and upward and throws a large left hook that makes Kato limbo in a perpendicular position to avoid. This strange angle made it easy for 12 to try for an opposite-hand uppercut, but the Oyabun had already shifted into "B-Boy" style so that he can trick 540 roll away from the attack. 12 attempts to close the gap quickly so that he can use his brass knuckles more efficiently, which Kato is more than willing to comply... Albeit not on the same level, as he dashes into a crouched stance and then rolls backward, clutching his close ankle and rising up, tripping 12 onto his face.

2 returned to the fray with another tanto thrust. The Oyabun bobbed his head out of the way easily and cross-countered with a right straight. 2 Backs away a bit by the attack and tries again with a back hand Kesagiri chop, but Kato Dempsey Rolls to evade the attack and holds down the wrist with his close hand. Seeing his chance, Kato gives a stunning headbutt, landing clean on his nose. The former then twists the weapon wrist, weakening the latter's grip on his knife, which in turn allowed Kato to smack it out, letting it skid harmlessly along the ground. Still having control of the arm, he pulls in close for a a pointed elbow to the ribcage and finally pivoting around so that Kato's other arm can hook across 2's chest, while the rest of his body was directly behind him. From there, all it took for 2 to fall over was for Kato to bow, tipping the Namba Family member over his own body. The latter rolls back upon neck impact with the ground, stunned once more.-

Kato: "Sit down." *He one-liners as he quickly pulls out a Shock Pad and lobs it straight into the face of the foot soldier he had just tripped.*

Namba Member 2: *Once the current is projected from the disk, he screams in pain as he attempts to pry it off his cheek. He fails to do so and the electricity soon knocks him out, making him fall from his knees onto his face.*

-Kato then sees 5 and 12 charge at him with simultaneous punches, which Kato, now in "Tumbler" mode, answers with a double monkey flip. Kato then cross their arms across his center and then rolls forward, bringing them both back up to their feet, only to be Alabama Slammed back into the ground. 5 was finished thanks to a succeeding stomp to the face, but 12 punched Kato's next boot away. He didn't last too much longer, however, when 12 messes up his overhead, performing a rolling landing to nullify a hip toss attack and returning with a Cobra Punch that was countered into a rapid Ushigoroshi; the succeeding knee strike to the back of his head took 12 out of the contest.

Tsuchiya parried 34 and 35's high-low simultaneous pipe attacks with a Keysi block and leg check respectively. With his right leg still raised, Tsuchiya roundhouse kicked 35 on the open temple and stomped the pipe out of his grip. Briefly dealing with only 34, Tsuchiya pivots around an uppercut swipe and sweep kicks upwards, lifting 34's close leg up high. The former JASDF catches the ankle and Dragon Screws it, flipping the Namba Family member onto the ground face-first. A knee drop to his nape sealed the deal. 35 tried to recompense with his reclaimed pipe, but Tsuchiya stiffly counters with a flying double knee press and rebound double-foot stomp to his chest, knocking all the wind out of his opponent.

Now dealing only with the sledgehammer-wielding 29, Tsuchiya dodges two weight lunges and a 360 swing at face-level, and delivers a low-midsection set of roundhouse kicks. After a brief reaction, 29 pommel-whacks him with enough force to turn him around, wherein Tsuchiya was vulnerable to a handle choke.

Bellamy senses his comrade is in a little bind before returning his attention to 21 and 32. He exploits 32's already weakened leg with a blade kick that has enough impact to dislocate his knee,
forcing him to crumple back down onto the ground. 21 seeks to avenge the loss with a charging overhead attack but Bellamy throws his arm even higher to keep his wrist from falling down. The former SAS’ other hand palm strikes the Namba Family member across the cheek, sending him reeling, leaving him free to be moved and thrown to a certain position... Such as, say, right in front of Tsuchiya, who uses him as a makeshift wall to backflip over his choke and sleeper-slamming 29's head into the ground - again, another stomp to the side of the forehead keeps him down.

The dropkick Tsuchiya used made 21 drop his pipe and pushes himself toward Bellamy, who tucks his right shoulder deep into the former's abdominals. He then lifts 21 up into the spinebuster position and turns around so that 21's face was exposed to Tsuchiya. The former JASDF sees this, and takes up 29's sledgehammer, holding it like a javelin, and runs up to slam its weight right into 21’s face, forcing him to launch right off Bellamy's hold. Naturally, he was finished.

26 was all that remained for Kato, but not for long when Kato, in his "Trickster" style, easily disarms him in the manner of which he would've further explored had 2 not intervened. 26 hesitates between running away or continuing to try and fight. He opts for the latter, where he tries to run in close before the Oyabun could swing the long polearm, but he does not anticipate a strike to his crown from the other side of the staff. Kato then runs the front end between his legs, pulling back to trip him up, and completely making him fall over with another far end diagonal strike. A twisting overhead whack to the forehead ends the contest.-

-OST ends.-

-Much in thanks to their superiors' inspiring strength, the rest of the Kato Family gained the advantage against their more-even opponents. It wasn't flawless; two of the Family members were seriously injured and the others endured some minor wounds, but at the end of the conflict, only about half of the Namba Family attack party were able enough to retreat.-

Kato: *Uses his old cigarette lighter to ignite the end of a cauterizing stick, preparing to jab it onto an area of her bloodied hipline, as a result of a chance stab.* "Hold your breath; this will hurt."

KF Member: *She covers her mouth with both hands.*

Kato: *Pokes her unnatural waist cavity, which incites her muffled screaming. After a few seconds, Kato releases the pressure.* "You'll be good now, yeah?"

KF Member: "Affirmative, Boss. Thanks for your concern."

Kato: "Great." *Rises back up, looking around before finding Tsuchiya and Bellamy reporting with their regional officers.* "Have we noticed any suspicions," *Checks his watch.* "These last few days that could've led to these events?"

Bellamy: "Nothing that we don't already know, sir."

Tsuchiya: "It still doesn't make too much sense, Boss."

Kato: "Yeah, there is not enough reasonable suspicion in this matter." *Puts his right hand to his chin.* "The Tanimoto and Ishida boys want our tech, sure enough, but they dared not strike when the Akamine Clan is strong. There is claim that we could be in a weakened state soon, but certainly not right now. They could not know just yet that there is turmoil and discord within our ranks."

Bellamy: "Then how do they know?"
Kato: *Thinks for a moment, before his eyes flicker and he snaps his fingers.* "I think I may have the answer."

KF Regional Officer: *Gets feedback from his radio headset, noticeably clutching his left earpiece.* "Sir, Captains Bellamy and Tsuchiya, we've got another disturbance."

Kato/Bellamy/Tsuchiya: *All turn to him.*

KF Regional Officer: "It's another distress beacon from the Emergency Gear. Only... It's Miho's."

Kato: "!!" *He does not hesitate to look at his flip-phone to find where the signal is.* "Come on, guys."

Bellamy/Tsuchiya: *Both nod and follow their Boss to his car.*

-It was swift, silent trip to another cardinal of Kyoto capital, more specifically into a nondescript alleyway maze. Befitting her nature, lines and mounds of bodies were laying on the ground.-

Kato: *She certainly didn't go down without a fight.*

Bellamy: *You should've known, sir.*

Tsuchiya: *Quick autopsy, but the only guys who are definitively dead were shot by the same caliber as the line of guns lying around her. It seems Miho only indirectly killed some folk here. Developed a bit more of a softer side, perhaps?*

Kato: *Interesting... As they venture deeper, they eventually come across, judging by the sudden resurgence of blood on the ground, a kill-line trap.* Could it really...? *Tosses a discarded can out into the open. It is immediately sniped out of the air.* "Miho, is that you?"

Miho: "Kato-ani?"

-The three boys slowly walked out of the corner, witnessing Miho, sitting and leaning on the far wall. Her right arm alone was wielding an 80 lb. General Dynamic LMG, as her left shoulder area was shot; just a few centimeters above any part of her heart.-

Kato: "Miho!" *Runs up to her, quickly inspecting her wound.*

Miho: "Great to see you, Boss."

Bellamy: *Looks around a bit before returning eye contact with his fellow Captain.* "So you're the one who single-handedly chased away the Fujita Family members? Their IDs and Family colors are scattered all over the walls."

Kato: "Now you should've known that, Captain Bellamy." *Continues to press on the wound.*

Miho: *Grins.* "Anyways, yeah. They faked trying to grab two young girls off the street... They were paid decoys though, to set me up; Fujita was really after me."

Tsuchiya: "You've always been a prime target. The traffickers have been dying to get a taste of
you."

Kato: "You showed them though why you're constantly off the market."

Miho: "Uh huh, though I'm kind of disappointed with this result."

Kato: *Seemingly ignores that last statement and sighs a breath of relief.* "Ah, so good to see."
*Looks Miho in the eye.* "Shot's not nearly deep enough to require an amputation; just two days with double-layer gauze, given your enhanced healing. You're getting better at instinctively calling on tissue hyperfunctions; it's almost as fast as your natural reaction speed now."

Miho: "Oh, now you're lecturing me on how to work my body's limits? Maybe I've already passed on."

Kato: *His expression briefly turns stern.* "Don't joke like that."

Miho: *Refocuses.* "Right. I'm sorry, Kato-ani."

Kato: "It's okay. But that does bring to mind... Maybe you're still having trouble, er, adjusting, to what you've realized about a month ago?"

Miho: "It's been tough, I can admit. Harder than a lot of things I've physically dealt with before. I'll manage though, Boss. Don't you worry."

Kato: *Hesitates, looking down, before returning his attention to her.* "You... Sound like you need some time off."

Miho: *Eyes widen.* "What?"

Kato: "Keitaro has just won his twenty-eighth fight at ZST; the last one maybe before... You know, what've you and he have been seeking for," *Checks his watch.* "Many years. You should really see him and together be an actual married couple before he takes off."

Miho: *Nudges Kato's hands off of her shoulder/clavicle.* "I can't do that. Look at what's going on. And the entire mess with Yanagisawa-"

Kato: "Your concern is very heartwarming, Miho. But if it's as dangerous as you claim it is, then I'm going to need all of you. Restored, revitalized... Maybe even reborn. I know, that sounds awful of me to say..."

Miho: "No, it's not really like that, Kato-ani. But I-"

Kato: "Miho... You, my uncle, and my cousin have been trying to show me for ages how valuable taking it slow can be. Have a taste of it yourself."

Miho: *Looks down, sighing, before smiling at Kato.* "Your father... You have his sense of surprise, Kazuhiko-ani."

Kato: *Grins.* "Thanks for the compliment, I guess." *Helps her up to her feet, then turns to Tsuchiya, tossing him the keys as he gets closer.* "Walk with her to my Lexus, take her home, then see her off before the train ride to Keitaro in Shizuoka, yeah Tuschiya?"
Tsuchiya: "Of course, Boss." *To Miho.* "Need help getting there?"

Miho: *Gestures Kato to stop supporting her, during which he goes behind and backs away.* "Oh, I'll manage." *Gives her bullet wound one last rub before letting go, nodding to Tsuchiya for him to get going, following when he does. She turns back one last time before she puts a corner between herself and Kato, and shares a last gaze into Kato's eyes before her hiatus.*

Kato: *Checks his watch.* "I know that. Right now you really want me to be the one taking the break here... A really long one. *Closes his eyes in reflection.* But you really don't have to worry about me, Miho- Miharu. Not anymore. Save yourself that pain.

Bellamy: *Comes closer.* "Now what's going to happen, sir?"

Kato: *Opens his eyes again and looks to Bellamy.* "As we inferred," *Checks his watch.* "Earlier on, this series of events was probably just the beginning. We need to double down on all the security around here. More of our patrols, bring back the regional leadership sleeper agents. Also to contact Hyun and the rest of Qita Kong to get a better eye on the Kansai region."

Bellamy: *Places a fist across his chest and bows.* "Of course, sir."

Kato: "Can you, Alvarez, and the rest handle yourselves with these squabbles for the rest of this week? My own Op's not finished yet."

Bellamy: *Bows again.* "Their rising presence is alarming, but if they're all going to be smalltime, we'll hardly need your help again, Boss. Go ahead and go about your business, sir."

Kato: "Excellent. Thanks." *Walks away from the district, coming up to a nearby private garage, and picking out a Ferrari 488, driving himself back to the Hyatt Regency to complete his investigation.*

-Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture...-

-Later this evening, Miho was shown to have fully complied with Kato's leave order, and after tracking down where Keitaro was going to stay following his post-match conference, makes her way there first.-

Keitaro: *Clad in a silver jacket with gold tie, he unlocks his suite's door and comes into the dark set of rooms. He treks to the closest closet, taking off his brown brogues and preparing to place them into the missing section on the top rack... Except said section was already filled, by female shoes no less!* *What the-*?

-A pen tapping on the dining room table could be heard in the relative distance.-

Keitaro: *Alarmed to an intruder's presence, he slowly creeps around the corner to reach the source of the noise, before realizing who he was confronting.* "Miha- Uh, Miho..."

Miho: *Does not audibly answer, instead rising up from the chair and turning around to face him, smiling.*

Keitaro: *Scratches the back of his head, holding up his smartphone.* "I was going to c-call you about this latest win against Ojiro. I just wanted to shake out the little p-punch lisp I got from fighting him..."
Miho: *More insistently taps on the table, but this time making not so crisp a sound, as if she was hitting something on top of it instead.*

Keitaro: "What's that?" *Goes up to her and looks at the opened envelope and unfolded letter down below. He picks up the document and gives it a quick read, widening his eyes to what he sees.* "No way, I've been scouted?"

Miho: *Continues grinning at him, while also hugging his shoulder/neck area from behind.*

Keitaro: *Puts the document down and turns around to face her.* "I can't believe I got in."

Miho: *Leans in to kiss her husband for an extended period in their standing position, only releasing for a little while to whistle at a corner of the room, signaling someone on all fours to run into the scene as well.*

Ronin: *Barks twice as he comes out of the ajar door of Keitaro's bedroom and dives onto his two owners, licking their faces in turn. Miho supports him from down below so that his head remains at face-level for the two of them.*

Keitaro: *His smirk widens.* "Ronin!" *They take their escapades to the nearby living room couch, as Miho briefly leaves to collect the complimentary champagne in the kitchen.* "Ah, stop it, snake-tongue!"

Miho: *Cracks up a bit to that remark of Ronin, settling down right next to them on the sofa. She pours two glasses and hands one to Keitaro once he puts Ronin back down on the ground.*

Keitaro: *Inspects the glass a bit with a smile and then turning to his wife.* "Cheers."

Miho: *Enthusiastically clinks glasses with her husband.*
So Kazuhiko seems to be in control of his own situation concerning this Akamine struggle... But wait, what about Kazuhiro? Last we saw/inferred, he and a bunch of AssUniv got abducted! What's happening to them in the meantime?!

-Returning to AssUniv's perspective, the Public infiltration team, minus Nagisa, have been abducted by an unknown faction, and are currently bound and blindfolded inside the back of a currently mobile van trekking through the clear night streets of Otsu. The windows in the back storage area where they were kept showed the series of street light's illumination that sometimes hit some of their covered sets of eyes.-

-In an unspecified time later, the van arrived at its destination; a very dim, isolated dead end in a drivable alleyway. The next thing the Public Team of student-assassins knew, they were set down and tied up (though given that Hayashida knew of Kato and his abilities, he was given handcuffs instead) to standard metal chairs in the middle of a dark processing room.-

Hayashida Family Member 1: "Take off their blindfolds."

Hayashida Family: *2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 proceed to pull/untie them off of the student-assassins. When the five could process again, they noticed a few more were in the vicinity; 7 through 25; some of which were still masked.*

Kayano: "Oh God..."

Hayashida Family Member 2: *Smirks.* "The little lady know what she's in now?"

Kayano: "Not that. With the blindfold off, now I gotta see that freak's face." *Gestures to 5.*

Kazuhiro: "Oh, that's Konno. I told Akira he could come to my regional medical clinics to get it fixed." *Snickers.*

-The rest of AssUniv in the place started cracking up too, though Yada holds a sort of hesitant chuckle.-

Hayashida Family Member 3: "Oh you think this is funny?"

Hayashida Family Member 4: *Goes up to Kazuhiro, pulling back on his hair so that they can look eye-to-eye.* "What a cocky little shit you've become, huh?"

Kazuhiro: *Retains his smile even with 4's implied threats.* "I reckon so. Guess I have to when I get used to being in the lead so often."

Hayashida Family Member 6: "Look at that, boys. That's the face of a guy who thinks he's got this all planned out; he's holding all the cards." *They then had their turn of laughter, minus one or
Hayashida Family Member 7: *Goes up to Sugino, taking out and aiming a Glock at his forehead.* "Did you plan for this, wiseass!?"

-But before Kazuhiro could line up an answer, another door opened up from the other side.-

Hayashida: *Still off-screen up until the other half of his sentence.* "I thought I told you all, that you were not to make a fuss so early."

AssUniv: *They all look over to the source of the new voice.*

Hayashida: *Sees 7 still having his pistol trained on Sugino.* "Oh for Christ's- Get that gun away from him, idiot!" *7 retracts his arm.* "Thank you. I'm supposed to encourage Kato-kun with this, everybody. If you actually proceeded with ending the boy's life prematurely, then any chance of having him join in would have been expunged."

Kazuhiro: "My- Father always said that you were a stubborn one. That's probably why he never bothered trying to convince you of anything."

Hayashida: "Well, your father definitely knows a thing or two about being unswayable, doesn't he? You got that off of him." *Goes closer to Kazuhiro.* "Now, Kato-kun, I didn't want to put out this card, because it was never going to work for you without proof. But here's the proof now. And it's the real reason why I don't want anyone else to stop Daichi."

Kazuhiro: *Shakes his handcuffed arms, making a set of clanging sounds.* "I'm not going anywhere right now, but that doesn't mean I have time to waste. What are you getting at?"

Hayashida: "Look to your friends there, Kato-kun. This was to be a Yakuza-only affair. Now you've brought katagi into the operation, and the rest of the syndicate is going to have to wipe them out to keep their order and their condition."

Kazuhiro: "You think Daichi's little rampage is for the opportunity to do something similar?"

Hayashida: "Miraculous of a statement as it may be, the Yakuza is best when it is left alone and leaves the rest alone."

Kazuhiro: "And you aim to make me help you by telling me this, how?"

Hayashida: "Like I said, Kato-kun, your friends there will be put to the chopping block. If they're found out to be working with you and me in any way. Unfortunately, the chances of that has become high, especially now that we've captured your likeness with them high up here now. We're happy to get rid of them, provided you help me stop Daichi from bringing other foreign entities into the mix too, without him dying somehow."

AssUniv: "..." *All of their eyes look to their peer, each with a degree of defiance in their gaze, showing that they are definitely taking the situation seriously now. Though they probably have their own stances on this issue and are seeing the picture of the situation mutate, they seem to stand by whatever their friend stands by after going through all of his thoughts.*

Kazuhiro: "No deal, Akira. Whatever you're afraid of that is alien to the Yakuza, it's hardly justified. It sounds just like what my- Norio told me about you when my father was being hung to
Hayashida: *Facepalms with frustration.*

Kazuhiro: "Also, my friends volunteered to this; they know what they've signed up for. And above all, even the Yakuza needs help sometimes."

Hayashida: "This is ridiculous." *Stands up and begins leaving.* "Fine. I'll just have to keep you here for a bit; no one in the Akamine Clan but you could possibly find Daichi before I can. And I'm not going to kill your friends, but I will allow my soldiers to rough them up a bit if you try to escape."

Yada: "You don't frighten us, and neither do any of them."

Hayashida Family Member 3: "I guess this young woman needs a little example of what we can do." *Flips out a Ka-Bar knife, brandishing it lightly around the student-assassins.*

Kurahashi: "This is so going to Nippon when we get out of this."

Hayashida Family Member 5: "Hah, good luck with that. This place may as well not exist, four you lot have no idea of where you are."

AssUniv: *Their expressions all turn serious once more.*

Hayashida: *Backs up a bit, seemingly agreeing to let the threats run their course for the time being.*

Hayashida Family Member 2: "Indeed. We can cut all of your pretty faces, and no one will ever know!"

AssUniv: "..." *Double-take between each other for a moment, before suddenly having a fit of laughter.*

Hayashida Family: *All of them, Akira included, are very perplexed.*

Kazuhiro: "Did you hear him? Eheheh, 'you lot have not an idea of where you are.'"

Kayano: "Absolutely priceless, Kato-kun!"

Sugino: "Please don't joke like that, Hayashida Family. You're gonna kill me!"

Kurahashi: *Laughs a little harder.* "You're not going to die; I just need to jab an epinephrine into your arm!"

Hayashida: "Do you mind telling me what is so hilarious? Any of you?"

Kazuhiro: *Is continuing to grin while stopping from laughing to answer the questions.* "You got us on lockdown. In a seemingly very unknown place, and no one is ever going to find us..." * Stops laughing mid-sentence.* "Are you sure about that?"

Hayashida: *Is taken aback before immediately turning to his men who abducted them.* "I thought you scanned them for all of their devices, of which includes transmitters and bugs!"
Hayashida Family Member 2: "We did! No doubt about that!"

Kayano: "Oh, you did. There's none on us."

Sugino: "But we know all of the turns you guys made in that van, and how long it takes to reach one intersection after another."

Kazuhiro: "Indeed, during this hour of relative non-traffic no less, so we can minimize any leaps in logic to your variance of top speed... And you all have every reason to abide by the limit, yes?"

Hayashida Family Members: *The kidnapping team all look between each other in disbelief over their victims' ability at analysis.*

Kazuhiro: "So let's recap all of this then: After tying us up, you drove straight for about thirty seconds, then took a left. You followed with an immediate right. You then drove for almost a minute and turned right. Forty-five seconds, a left, then another right again. Thirty again, then right. In essence, you all made a weaving spiral to try and throw us off, and made it to a destination that you could've gotten to directly in just under two minutes, given this traffic. That also explains why Akira over there could've easily made his dramatic entrance at any time maximum effect was available; he got here before we did and waited for just the right time."

Kayano: *Looks at Kazuhiro with bewilderment.*

Hayashida: *Begins leaving.* "Give Kato a little prize for his good work."

Hayashida Family Member 20: *Masked, he steps forward from the distance.* "I'll do it."

*Slides an LHR knife out of his holster and walks over to Kazuhiro. He first puts its tip onto his forehead, pushing it a little bit and allowing a blood drop to trail from the source.*

Kazuhiro: *Pulls his head away from the dagger, slouching his head to the left, but also returning gaze at the thug.*

Hayashida Family Member 20: "Get back up." *Pulls Kazuhiro's cranium back to its original position, for another wound. He then goes behind him and raises the blade up to Kazuhiro's left shoulder, but then he lets it slide off, allowing it to fall into Kazuhiro's left hand.*

Kazuhiro: *Kazuhiro catches it in icepick grip (the blade point facing away from his back), and then moves his right hand counter-clockwise so that the cuff chain wraps around the knife. When that was confirmed, he tilted the knife away from his right hand, which also moved opposite, to break the link, freeing his hands.*

Hayashida Family: *All of the Yakuza in the room were surprised by the betrayal and the escape feat, forcing them all to hesitate just for a moment too long in the heat of the impending conflict.*

Kazuhiro: *Uses the knife to snap the handcuffs attaching his left leg to the chair he was on and then tossed the knife in a manner that it would land in Yada's hands. When he sees the closest Hayashida Family members (2, 3, and 4) come towards him, he rises up and spinning hook kicks the air with his right leg so that the chair followed his heel and smashed into 2 and 3 at upper-arm level, while 4 backed away just in time. As the furthest left as a result of the impact, Kazuhiro then palm strikes 2 and Cobra Punches him to the ground. Turning with his momentum to slam the metal chair into 4's lower leg, forcing him to fall into a three-point stance. When 3 recovers, he
charges in and lands a solid right hook onto Kazuhiro’s left cheek, but the latter powers through his pain and claws the former's head, gripping with his thumb muscle on his left eye (and using his finger leverage to push it deeper) and pulls up. This is while Kazuhiro also takes the bowed head of 4 and slams it onto his rising right knee, taking him out. 3 meanwhile is incapacitated by a short-arm broad shoulder thrust straight into his chin.*

Hayashida Family Member 20: *When the others closest to the student-assassins (1, 5, 6, 7) get close as well, he begins by front push-kicking 5 away. 6 attempts to flank, which 20 decides to defend by taking a knee and lifting the former into a rising over-shoulder hip toss; he is taken out immediately after by a lifting arm into quick jab that slides across his face. 7 and 1 try their luck together, but 20 counters them, first by blade kicking 1’s shin so that he trips and falls onto his face. As he recovers, 7 is dealt with by a failed elbow strike being punished by a modified standing windshield choke; his freakish strength has the former lose consciousness and fall from the hold like a pile of rocks in seconds. 1 gets onto all fours again, but an acute back kick to his temple knocks him out too. 5 recovers finally, but it is too late for 20 was right on top of him with a palm-to-palm wrist lock, transitioned behind his head to expose his throat, which is promptly struck to defeat him.*

AssUniv Public: *Yada had successfully cut off her own bindings and was proceeding with Kurahashi's and everyone else's by the time the other two had dealt with the initial threats. When they had a brief rebuff, 20 stomps on the leg of the chair connected to Kazuhiro's other cuff, contracting its material and allowing him to slide the ring off of it, now finally free of any impediments.]*

Kayano: "Great Plan C, Kato-kun. And Karasuma." *She massages her recently-bound joints, as do many of the rest and converge close.*

Karasuma: *Takes off his ski mask to reveal his identity.* "After seeing the indisputable success it had back at the Kyoto Center, this had been in the back of my mind for a while."

Kazuhiro: *Cracks a laugh while wiping his lip, which had been bleeding since the stray punch to his face by 3.* "Heh, so you've been liking some of my tricks since then, have you?"

Hayashida Family: "Surround them!"

AssUniv Public: *Realizing again they weren't quite out of the woods just yet they all keep close as the rest of the Hayashida Family members within the complex arrive on their level and threaten them.*

Hayashida Family Member 10: "None of you are getting out of here!"

Kurahashi: "Just to be certain.. We never needed beacons, did we?"

Kazuhiro: *Grins.* "Where's the faith?"

Karasuma: "Up above."

-As soon as their statements concluded, a team of others, clad in KAM AtTac Suits, rained down from the shadows and corners of the compound to swarm the Yakuza. Their means of incapacitating their unsuspecting foes non-lethally included pistol-whips, sleeper holds, rifle chokes, and Shock-Out shots. With the second battle over before it even began, all parties still standing confronted each other.-
Isogai: "Somebody call the cavalry?"

Kayano: "Great that you answered."

Nagisa: "Thank God, you all are fine." *Goes up to Kayano and embraces her deeply, which she accepts.*

Yada: "Not that there would be much doubt."

Kazuhiro: "Do any of you happen to know where Akira went?"

Karma: "Nah, he fled too soon. You guys were more our concern anyways."

Kazuhiro: "That's fine, I guess. Yuuji ought to know where he's gone if we ask him again."

Fuwa: "Hmm..."

Irina: "We're all good and we have a new lead. Let's get on out of here then."

-Moments later, The Public and Private AssUniv Teams walk out of the dark building and corridor, entering the (secondary) escape bus. As they're driving away, however...-

Kazuhiro: *Slouches on the cushions in the back.* "What a night, huh guys?"

AssUniv: "..." *Nagisa, Karma, Yada, Kayano, and Naoko all look at each other for a moment, before all of them brandish pistols at Kazuhiro.*

Kazuhiro: "!?"

Yada: "Who are you!? You're not Kato-kun!"

Kayano: "Drop the act. It was very convincing, and you have much of the wit to back your performance up. But you have too much intuition; you correctly claiming the time it would take for Hayashida to show up where we were taken could only be replicated by the real Kato-kun if he had access to his watch, which you didn't even bother to look at."

Karma: "That punch you took; Kato so wouldn't have gotten hit by that."

Fuwa: "What's more, you unexpectedly gagged after attempting a trick vape pen puff. Kato-kun would never have made a mistake like that now that he's been practicing for months."

Naoko: "You also have a very minimal, but still noticeable lack of familiarity with your fellow Yakuza. Why would you refer to Chairman Akamine with 'Yuuji'? And what about your steadfast conviction against Hayashida himself? You sound like you already want to murder him."

Yada: "And I know Kato-kun wouldn't because earlier on, he personally came to me, asking us if he should really help him; not kill him. So, who the fuck are you!?" *Trains her gun on him a little more insistently.*

Kazuhiro: *Massive amounts of sweat marks trail from the back of his head.* "Well..."
Karasuma: "Wait a moment, kids. If this isn't Kazuhiko, then who else could he be?"

Nagisa: *Mind flickers.* "Kazuhiro?"

Kazuhiro: *Gulps.*

-A few hours earlier, back at the Kyoto Hyatt Regency...-

Kato: *Opens and closes the door to his suite, finally finding his chance to take a look at the Kiyabu Ramen packages he had acquired earlier. Now to no longer put this off anymore. He sits down and takes a bag ramen, again looking at the mysterious green dot palette. He takes to a magnifier, blacklighting, and even a composition check to locate any hidden materials or messages... But there was no success.* There's nothing that would constitute reason to have this color on their packages. I guess it's just a mark to inform their allies, and the true secrets are somewhere within. *He then opens up one back, sliding the stiff noodle carefully out and onto the table. He manipulates it similarly to how he did when it was behind a plastic membrane.* Certainly edible... If you must. Entirely normal, for that matter.

*He then sets it down on the table again and feels the rounded ridges on one side of the noodle.* Wait a second... *Gives a closer scan of the indentations of the package. He then goes on to write the characters he feels on a notebook, realizing that it forms a reverse kanji.* Whoa... *Kato then takes his Troodon tactical knife, cutting one of his left fingers to gain just enough blood to coat one side of the noodle. He then presses it onto another piece of notebook paper. Once he releases it, a full paragraph of kanji characters were stamped onto the page.*

Well I'll be. *Checks his watch.* Guess that's where years of collecting the collusion and protection money's been going to, making a machine that can radically customize the curls of the noodles. *Gives the message a brief scan.* It's not perfect though... As is the case for any bag ramen, stiff noodle breaks. Going to have to decipher some oddities. Or paste one at least a little better.

-Kato continued to , recording his progress down on another page.-

Kato: *Looks at one fragmented kanji.* "Cow"? No, noon. *Looks at another one.* "Look behind the ‘rinse’"? Wait, maybe that's supposed to be alcohol. *Gazes at another set.* "Do not... 'arrow' it...." I hope it means "lose it".

-In a brief amount of time, Kato had decrypted the clue.-

Kato: *Reads out the corrected Kanji paragraph.* "Noon, October 4th. We have your materials in an orange storage container within South Bay 12. Look behind the alcohol in front of them. Do not lose it. We are very close to making things much better from here on out." - EK *Nudges the notebook aside.* Traitors. Kiyabu and Uchida. And Fujita must’ve been the one who’s been allowing small deposits of Tanimoto and Ishida foot-soldiers into Akamine Clan territory, specifically into areas owned by my Family so that their conflicts, by tradition, don’t concern even Yuuji. It’s a middle to large-scale collusion, with the three Families having been communicating orders or information using the ramen packages that would be distributed to their conspirators, culminating in them finding exactly what they need. Well, I’m sure they’ll mind if I get to take a look first. *Gets up to wash and freshen up before he proceeds to leave his suite once more.* Hayashida is trying to expose this with his arson and robbery; that’s... That's so me. And I'm not losing another old man to the greater good.
Thanks to the Kiyabu Ramen clues, Kato now knows that the Yakuza Families that were significantly loud within the latest Akamine Clan summon are involved with a conspiracy, bidding to overthrow the top brass of the syndicate and working alongside the Tanimoto and Ishida Clans. It's vital that Kato deals with this... Regardless of not knowing why exactly his Family's friend Hayashida is involved in it.

-Toba, Mie Prefecture...-

-Having found out all that he needed to from the Kiyabu Ramen packages, Kato dressed in even more inconspicuous gear and made off for the Mie Prefecture's predominantly coastal fishing city; home to one of Uchida's major locations for his Admiral Longshoring firm.-

Kato: *Steps out of his Infiniti Q70 wearing a bandana mask over his lower face. He fastens his full-coverage Kevlar gloves in front of his target.* Alright, so if I'm right about this, the Kiyabu has been using ramen formations to send very subtle directions and other intel to the Yakuza outside the Akamine Clan. He has conspired with Uchida to help him anonymously distribute these messages, and Fujita, as the Clan's PR faction, allowed scribes from the enemy Clans to enter into our territory to authenticate these matters. If I can confirm these with any incriminating material that Uchida may have agreed to send back from those other Families, then I can at least reduce Hayashida's punishment for instigating a war. Hopefully I can get him to give up committing to his final act altogether... We'll see. *He takes out his flip-phone, texting a message, and sending, before proceeding.*

-The first obstruction in Kato's way to the marked storage container is the large, laminated metal wall, with barbed wire lining its top. Its only opening is the gate guarded by at least four workers at one instance, and they know to look under the truck and within every barrel. The only way in that was to fight. But Kato did not want a casualty count so early, so he begins by climbing up a discreet side of the wall to catch the edge with a three-step climb. His free hand then reaches behind him to acquire a special tool he has brought out for this operation; a high-frequency serrated knife.-

Kato: Hm... They are definitely going to know they had a break-in if I cut this down. Better refrain. *Puts it back behind him. He then pulls himself up and down on the wall a bit, setting up for a vertical leap over the rest of the fencing and wire. He does an additional frontflip over the obstacle, landing in a roll and immediately maneuvers to the cover of a pyramid of stacked barrels. Security is very tight... *Checks his watch. They've probably taken the precaution and doubled down on patrols after the inexplicable fire emergency at Kiyabu. Not going to be an issue for me, however.

-In the coming minutes, Kato weaves in and around cover. In one narrow corridor, he stood behind a stack of wooden boxes as two workers were walking his way. When they were close enough, Kato sprung out, seizing the closest one with a left arm around his neck and pulling him behind the boxes. His ally was immediately dealt with by Kato's other hand training a Shock-Out-loaded
Kimber and shooting him in the face, forcing him to fall into a standing metal trunk; his inertia forces the lid container to fall back upright and roll into a wall. The one stuck in a sleeper hold faded out quickly too, drooping down to the ground behind the cover.

Later on, Kato had to confront another patrolling group; four of them, only this time he was the one pursuing them. When he was ready, he began by first sprinting up and kick-slamming the last one's face into the asphalt. The other three naturally were stunned by the sudden assault, and another did not get to shake off his frozen state before he took a thrown baton to the forehead. Kato uses another telescopic club and performs a sequential low-high combo to take out the third, and finally a throat pullover, exposing his chest to a pommel thrust, smashing the wind out of his torso.-

Kato: Man, after hitting the big leagues... Eh, not going to get too overconfident here. *Retracts his baton with a downward prod at the ground.* *Almost at the section of containers I'm looking for.* *Proceeds onward.*

- The next few minutes yielded a similar one-sided nature between Kato and the rest of the personnel patrolling Uchida's Admiral location. One by one, they discreetly fell in accordance to his effective and precise process. Security cameras and lightpoles were similarly dealt with, thanks to a bagful of Hyun-programmed magnetic security bugs. To buy him some more time, Kato even began fitting the fallen sentinels into a myriad of containers to remove the evidence.-

And at long last, Kato has reached edge of the Southern region, where the vicinity of his search zone begins.-

Kato: *Locates his first orange container and pulls out the high-frequency cutter upon approaching it.* I reckon Fujita and Kiyabu's men would've given the infiltrating Tanimoto and Ishida Clan members a tour and reveal to them which orange container was the one they needed throughout this collusion's tenure. I don't get that luxury, unfortunately, so I'm just going to have to cut through each one until I find what needs to be found. *Powers up the serrated knife and softly jabs it into the top of the padded lock on the doors, sawing it open with little effort and without a ruckus.*

- But when he pulled out the hinges, it wasn't alcohol that was in front of everything else...-

Kato: What the Hell? Collector's edition figmas and nendodroids? Who would send their collection like this? *Takes up a limited-edition Transformer stand-up.* This one's little blaster is so going to snap with this poor packaging absorbing the blow of falling off a stack... *Shakes his head actively and drops the figure back into the partially-opened box he had taken it from.* Man, when did I start contemplating toys so much? *Shuts the two storage doors shut.* Better find the right container.

-And so Kato did. The next orange depository he encountered was ultimately full of a deluxe variety of yard tools, with another being nearly brimmed by random sports memorabilia, primarily from 90s baseball. Kato did happen upon a container that turned up a wall of alcohol (boxes of canned beer, specifically) when he first opened it up, but moving to the other side of it yielded only a bunch of kegs. Throwing aside his agitation at the unintentional copout, Kato continued to search the rest of the vicinity.

Until finally...-

Kato: *Cuts down the lock to yet another citrus-colored cache. What greeted him on the other side of its doors was another wall of alcohol... Except, after moving aside one shelf of the boxed
wine, there was a pathway.* Oh? *Proceeds deeper into the steel structure, finding a bunch of heavy plastic lidded boxes.* My my, what do we have here? *Opens one of the boxes up, and finds the material that the secret ramen message was alluding to.* I thought so... All of this leverage on Akamine, all throughout his Family's history... *Continues to flip through the stapled pages.* Holy Hell... Some of these records have been around since the Clan even, *Checks his watch.* Started, including the shady three-way deal that actually put them into power. You ever thought of having something called a private life, Chairman?

*When he finished his reading, he spends a moment within the silent container for a bit before going back outside to think.* Okay, obviously this cannot get outside of the Akamine territory. But I'm just not getting the picture too well... Hayashida found out just as much as I did here, and would come to find this information sooner or later... But what tracks is he covering by creating an arson-robbery as he goes and finds out about this? He could've easily just sneaked his way in like I did. And even if he wanted to warn Akamine under the slim chance that he couldn't solve it himself, he could've been upfront; Yuuji trusts him like he trusts me. So why the chaos...? *Suddenly, his mind flickers, and he turns back quickly at the still-open container.* What on Earth...?

-But before even Kato could think for another moment, an unexpected bright white flash envelops his sight and a loud bang consumes his ears range. The resulting stun leaves him vulnerable to a bad whack to the back of his head (in a similar vein to what had happened almost ten years ago).-

-A minute later...-

Kato: *Stirs awake, clenching a pair of fists as he opens his eyes and wakes up, picking his face up from off the ground. When he can process his surroundings, he immediately realizes a shadow is forming in front of him, despite it being nighttime. He repositions his mask and hat, then looks back to the illumination's source, finding that, to his horror, the container has been lit aflame. He immediately kips-up to get a closer look at the arson.* What the Hell? The evidence has been set alight?

Uchida Family: "THERE HE IS!"

Kato: *Turns around to find the staff and Yakuza that he had not encountered earlier have converged on the scene. At roughly twenty-five strong stretching the comprehensible distance, some were brandishing an assortment of improvised weapons, from chained fish hooks and harpoons to tire irons. One in the back even was brandishing an activated cement saw.*

Uchida Family Member 1: "Who the Hell are you?"

Uchida Family Member 2: "You're the one who broke into our container there?"

Uchida Family Member 3: "And blew it the fuck up!?"

Kato: *Remains silent, slowly getting into a ready stance confronting the mass amount of men.*

Uchida Family Member 4: "He totally did it, guys! Let's waste him!"

-They all charge towards their unknown, mysterious intruder and arsonist... Not knowing that being unable to identify the man is hardly the worst thing they've misunderstood today.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku II: KIWAMI's OST "Bad Fortune Flower" plays.-
Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Uchida Family Members

Kato takes a step up to interrupt the closest Yakuza's running pattern, forcing him to re-step and swing his tire iron a little bit too early. This forced error allowed Kato to easily counter, catching the other end of the metal rod with his gloved hand and hook-punching the aggressor's face with his other. When a closer, unarmed cohort comes within the fray, Kato pivoted behind his first victim, applying a hammerlock/wristlock combination (forcing the first to drop his weapon), and turning so that Kato could back kick the next foe into several of his friends. Kato then finished off the first one by clutching the back of his head while standing side-by-side with him, and finally chopping his legs with a backwards heel kick, forcing him to fall headfirst without safeguard.

The fallen's friends rallied again, but Kato was the first to get the drop on the first pack, kicking the fallen tire iron straight at one of four; despite blocking to absorb the metallic damage, he falls onto his back and the Oyabun briefly contends with three. He begins with a drop toehold on the closest one, driving him onto the weight of the sledgehammer he was holding. Kato then limboed underneath a punt kick, letting it trail past him and having the fourth opponent expose his back. Still lying down, Kato pivoted his body so that he ran perpendicular to the aggressor, and then wrapped his arm around one of his legs and to trip him over. When he rolled back to a kneeling stance, Kato had sprung back up to his feet and delivered a low-angle superkick to the forehead. A 2x4 wielder helps his friend recover and they both rush the unknown Yakuza, though they are dropped by a double Monkey Flip aided by the horizontally-held wooden beam. Having seized the weapon for himself, he wildly swung it to nearly take off the heads of the last two.

Kato continued his escape of the docks, encountering a six-man group. He quickly whipped out a southpaw brass knuckle and one of his telescopic batons to engage them; first with a lightning-fast Cobra punch passing by the closest one to instantly knock him out. He then followed with a Dempsey Roll behind a forehand lead pipe swing and throwing a kidney punch to the exposed side, swiftly succeeded by an instep sweep kick that put the poor laborer prone. Two workers with machetes took Kato's flanks and attempted to simultaneously slice him vertically, but the Oyabun blocks them with a perpendicular knuckle and a swat-down by his baton. Kato raised the other end of the nightstick soon after and slapped it square across the first's right cheek, pushing aside with a side kick. The former turned to the other with a lunge of the rounded weight straight into the latter's solar plexus, ending him with an acute left hook to the temple. Kato returned to being right on top.

The next two were close enough for Kato to instantly calculate a spinning baton throw that hits them both in sequence. And after an arm wringer to reposition them to be adjacent, the former delivered a wild, bladed backfist that intersected both of their chins.

Three others had heard the recent conflict and converged on the scene. But Kato had heard them first and ambushed them with a wall run; at its height, he easily punted the first encroacher's head to dreamland. The next two soon met similar fates when Kato exposed one's bowed head with a
shin kick, taking it into his side headlock and ramming it into a nearby storage container. The other tried to pounce on the Oyabun with his back on the wall, but the latter easily counters, slamming him into the wall instead and charging a left straight. However, the other was faster than anybody thought, bobbing his head just out of the way, and making brass hit steel - and make a hole in it too.

Kato quickly retracted his hand, parts of the yellow weight falling from his palm as a result of the high-impact attack shattering it. The remaining laborer tried for a huge left hook at Kato's face, but the latter ducked through and weaved in a massive knee-lift in turn, breaking a rib and knocking the wind out of him; Kato finishes the former's commitment with the ground with a falling snapmare takedown.

Kato advanced even further, sliding underneath a 2x4 horizontal swing, and also gripping it from under to initiate a modified arm-twist toss. Seizing the beam for himself once again, he low roundhouses the man's temple, and holds it onto his back so that it is the point of attack when he front flips into a senton onto the next two. Quickly rising up following this, he then falls into a three point stance for a backhand swing to a man's kneecaps, followed swiftly by a barrel-roll overhead strike with such impact that the wood breaks upon contact.

As Kato rose back up to his feet, he looked back just in time to see the one wielding a rollerblade saw run towards him. The latter attempts to eviscerate him with a wild haymaker slash, but Kato ducked under. He avoided another set of barbaric swings targeting his neck and chest, and tried disarming him after a close-stopped forehand side cut. Kato has to abort the motions, however, when the operator manages to push-kick him away and almost lacerate diagonally on his torso had it not been for a well-timed back-roll. After a few more evasions, Kato sets up a chance to use his high-frequency cutter, charging up its ability after yet another sidestep. When it was ready, Kato pulled it out from his back pocket and sliced through the joint area of the power tool between the saw-blade and engine, letting the disk fall harmlessly to the floor and rendering it useless. The operator, stunned by the development, a well-placed spinning heel kick to the chin put him down.

Reinforcements were rapidly arriving, but Kato was only a dozen or so meters away from the exit and easily escaped back to his car, putting good distance between him and Toba. Some pursuing vehicles were able to follow him across the city, but their inability to replicate a significant number of Kato's drifts and shifts, and an escape to the interstate roads proved a big success as no other familiar automobiles appear on Kato's rearview mirror.-

-OST ends.-

-Having escaped the chaos at the coast, Kato pulls over at a highway pitstop overlooking another side of the ocean.-

Kato: *Takes a moment to collect all of his thoughts inside the car.*

Kato: *Now laden with even more bruises and cuts across his face and arms, he sits at a low table across from Daichi, attempting to enjoy a post-training tea brew. Which he is concentrating hard on at the moment.*

Daichi: *Sets down his cup after a light sip, with his eyes closed.* "Are you actually trying?"

Kato: *Looks up at him.* "Of course I was."

Daichi: *Opens his eyes at him.* "This is not about our sparring matches, Kato. Are you
Kato: "It's fine."

Daichi: "Is that all you have to say about it?"

Kato: "What more do I need to say? I like it."

Daichi: "Saying is not believing, much like how hearing is not always listening. Your expression seems to indicate you're resisting. In fact, I'm inclined to believe you're actually trying to dislike it instead."

Kato: "Apologies, Daichi, if I don't always find there is time to contemplate a liquid."

Daichi: "'A liquid'? Yeah, you're absolutely sabotaging your attempts to grasp the concept."

Kato: "You're going to tell me that looking deeper into a drink will get me out of seeing a bad ending?"

Daichi: "That's not the point. What is with you and not wanting a more historic time on this Earth?"

Kato: "You know why."

Daichi: "I know why, I don't know what is the urging factor of it. Being determined for revenge does not have one archetype, and not all of the archetypes are impatient, cold kids. Especially the ones who happen to be hundred-millionaires."

Kato: "I already told you, Daichi. That's my business."

Daichi: *Takes another sip of his tea.* "Whether it is or not, human lives are much too short to be spent causing trouble whenever you can. Actually enjoy the finer points in life, Kato. Like your father did. It's half the reason he did not become an emotionless wreck after-"

Kato: "Do NOT talk about that time."

Daichi: *Merely sighs to the threat.* "Fine. But that past is in your blood, boy, and you'll have to contend with it someday. And given how you are now, I reckon you will need someone to at least start that tackling for you. I'll be curious for the longest while who that is going to be..."

Kato: "Don't hold your breath on me telling you about it." *Takes his own cup of tea and takes a long drink.*

Kato: *Looks back at his watch to bring his mind back to the present. Exhaling with some effort, he looks outside his car windows to find a landline telephone stand nearby. With another deep breath expelled, he left his Infiniti and walks over to the payphone, putting in a quarter and dialing a certain number. After a little wait, the line was answered by someone familiar.*

Daichi: "Only a few know this number I've got."

Kato: "I know."
Daichi: "Ah... Kato. Been some time."

Kato: *Looks at his watch.* "Less than you think."

Daichi: "Whatever could you mean?"

Kato: "You cannot play dumb; everyone's been after you as you've been after something else."

Daichi: "That hardly answers my question."

Kato: "Your disappearance coinciding with sudden misfortunes happening all across the Akamine Clan is surprisingly," *Checks his watch.* "Well-timed otherwise."

Daichi: "Ah, still blaming everyone else for everything that's gone wrong."

Kato: "It helps a bit that I'm not the only one blaming you. Besides, everyone knows too."

Daichi: "They're never going to find me. And now that the last card's gone, neither will you."

Kato: *Scoffs.* "Are you sure?"

Daichi: "?"

Kato: "You're certain you've set fire to all the dirt?"

Daichi: "..."

Kato: "You probably got it all for the Akamines, but there's one probably not accounted for regarding another party. Namely, one that has all of the transaction secrets from a lucrative slush fund that the IJA once used to fund development of the Number-13 class battleships. One that was vital to the renovations that the Hayashida Family have been gifted with by you-know-who." *Pauses, before continuing.* "I reckon this is one of the most important pieces of information for the Clan; something the outside forces might pay a heavy sum for, especially to ensure their superior benefit to some strange collusion..."

Daichi: "That's treason, Kato. You wouldn't ever do it."

Kato: "I'm a Kato, Hayashida. We know many more ways to show our loyalty, at the cost of others. You know that."

Daichi: "..."

Kato: "Well?"

Daichi: "I do know that. So now what?"


Daichi: "When?"

Kato: "Sit and wait for me." *Hangs up.*
"Closer Look" Space

Chapter Summary

The chapter in which everyone begins converging on this new plot.

Two chapters ago, The AssUniv Program caught on to the situation, outing Kazuhiro as a decoy of his younger cousin, and realizing this investigation is a lot deeper than they have all realized. What might be their next objectives after finding this out?

-After an initial interrogation, the AssUniv Program were able to confirm that Kazuhiko Kato was indeed not among their ranks during their mission; it was Kazuhiro Kato, masquerading as his younger cousin for the latter's currently unknown goals. Naturally, not much else of his word was taken with any substantial belief, and the only consolation his relative's friends give is being willing to hear out his father, and Kazuhiko's uncle, Norio, who certainly had known about the deception all this time.-

-On the way back to Kyoto...-

Kazuhiro: *Is being carefully watched in the back of the van by half a dozen of the AssUniv members. After the initial interrogation, he is shown to have a deeply reddened left cheek, with its shape vaguely representing the partial image of an outstretched hand. His expression holds no shame, however; just disappointment.*

Nakamura: *Looks from under to see Kazuhiro's bowed face more clearly.* "Looks like you're beating yourself up even more than we did."

Kazuhiro: "It's to be expected; I failed my cousin."

Naoko: "You know, you match the intensity of his convictions, but not all of his directions. You could've held on longer with this act in spite of that handicap, if you also had his restraint."

Yada: "Yeah; you know deep inside that Kato-kun wouldn't have been so critical of his longtime friends, even if he was and now is at odds with them. But you have a more personal stake against them, it seems, and just couldn't hold it down."

Kazuhiro: "Heh... I see you guys are really starting to know Kazuhiko very well. I underestimated you all."

Karma: "A few life-or-death situations tend to bring us together, as you know."

Kazuhiro: *Looks up uneasily at the student-assassins.* "Will we be cool?"

Kimura: "It's going to have to take a little longer than one cooldown conversation to extinguish what's currently in between us."

Kayano: "Yeah, you're not really off the hook yet, mate."
Kazuhiro: *Bows again.* "I understand..."

Yada: *Looks away for a bit, before sighing and looking back at Kazuhiro.* "If I'm grateful for anything about this, it is, that, you didn't make me unintentionally cheat on Kato-kun."

Kazuhiro: *Eventually grows a small smile to that.* "I couldn't do that to him. Not to my cousin's first, and only true love."

Kurahashi: "Acknowledging you have lines you won't cross..."

Fuwa: "You definitely got that down from Kato-kun as well."

Isogai: "Which probably means Kato hasn't crossed any of his either."

Kataoka: "And we may be having much ado about nothing."

Maehara: "But we'll still need to hear the full truth too."

-Finally, after a forty-minute ride back to Kyoto, the student-assassins storm their way into Kato Arms, thanks in part to Kazuhiro's membership card, climbing up the many secret steps to Norio's regional office.-

Norio: *Sitting at his center desk, he looks up at the slamming open of his named door and instantly realizes what is going on.* "Oh dear..."

Kazuhiro: *Bows.* "I'm sorry, father."

Norio: "No no son, you did the best you could. Kazuhiko and I couldn't ask for anything more."

Isogai: "But with all due respect, sir, we can."

Kataoka: "Once more, we're finding ourselves not being given the bigger picture just yet. All of a sudden, your nephew bows out from our Program for some time, entrusting his position to his cousin, to go off on his own crusade, just as we were about to be given one ourselves?"

Norio: *Sharply exhales.* "I won't deny that my- No, we have been deceiving you. Are you truly angered by this?"

Nagisa: *Scratches the back of his head.* "Well, we can't say that. Kato-kun made us promise him never to believe he'd do this out of malice against us. He ensured us that whatever he did would certainly be in our favor in return."

Yada: "Yeah. Maybe we're more annoyed than anything."

Nakamura: "And we can figure that it was his idea for you two to keep it down low, so you're not the ones we're ticked with, if at all."

Norio: "Well... That takes a weight off."

Karasuma: "So what is Kato hiding from all of us?"

Norio: *Sighs.* "There's an internal conflict brewing within the Akamine Clan. It has been so
for a long while, and with the advent of the bad blood accumulating from almost two decades of Yakuza peace, no doubt due to the new Reclamation Society party going around, though we don't know why or how, my nephew wanted to investigate. He deemed it his issue and his alone, even isolated his Family, to deal with this threat. So you can see why he didn't want to trouble you all with it; in any way possible, this did not look like your fight.

AssUniv: "..."

Karma: "With all due respect, Mr. Kato, that's horseshit."

Naoko: "Indeed. The second you said this concerned the Reclamation Society, we became involved too. Nobody has a track record like we do in expunging their schemes and threats."

Norio: "Maybe so, but that doesn't mean you lot deserve to wade into the Yakuza shit pits for your answers and your gains. Nobody, especially katagi, deserve that. And Kato believed that. Hence, why you're here, and he's-"

Yada: "God knows where?"

Norio: "..."

Kanzaki: "We haven't ever been this deep in the criminal underworld. That much is true, Mr. Kato."

Sugino: "And so, there's so much about it that we don't know."

Kataoka: "But we've been trained and taught by Korosensei, sir."

Isogai: "And one of the biggest things he taught us is to not have fear about taking one step forward."

Nagisa: "To not be afraid of the unknown."

Yada: "Like Kato-kun."

Norio: *Scoffs, looking at the ball glass of whiskey on his desk.*

Irina: *Crosses her arms.* "You and your boy are going to have to snap your fingers and get the rest of your Brothers and Sisters to stop us, sir. Unless you've changed your mind about not including us."

Norio: *Gears his fingers in thought to that statement, looking over to Kazuhiro, who slowly nods in approval.* "Well, if you all are that dead-set on it, you won't find any kind of resistance like that from me."

Naoko: "Then what happens now?"

Kazuhiro: *Exhales.* "We are still to report to the Akamine Family about our findings."

Terasaka: "Which are nil?"

Nakamura: "They clearly know more than they are letting on, too. Any other impact that we can
have on this case would be from what they know.

Isogai: "Would we also want to contact Kato about this? He's been at this a lot longer than we have, so he'd surely have information too."

Karasuma: "I've been trying since we were on our way back to Kyoto, students. Even went by his hacker friend in Qita Kong, but I've gotten nothing to show for it. He's outright unavailable right now."

Kataoka: "Then the Akamines are our only lead right now. Let's head back to them."

-The student-assassins then took their travel bus and returned to the ONE: Shot Theater to confront Yuuji and Mirei once more.-

AssUniv: *All pool into the room through the door's narrow passageway.*

Yuuji: "Ah, the Assassination University. Have you found out anything of interest about Akira's association to his son's rampage?"

Maehara: "A decent sum, sir."

Mirei: "Have you alerted him?"

Sosuke: *Gulps.* "What has made you think that, ma'am?"

Mirei: "Nobody in our signal operations can make contact with any of the primary leaders of their syndicate."

Kimura: "They might've seen us that one time during the operation..." *Whistles aside.*

Yuuji: "That can be very grave in the long run; Hayashida would no doubt believe the Kato Family and I would be at fault, since no one else within the Yakuza would employ such folk like you."

Naoko: "I'll be honest with you, Chairman. Given what we've learned during that time, worrying about Akira should be the least of your problems."

Mirei: "Can you explain, miss?"

Yada: "Daichi's father is not associated at all with his acts of treason, that much we can confirm. And he's not supporting the attacks either. But he does want his son to stop, and he wants Kato-kun to do it, because he's the only one he believes will show him mercy."

Yuuji: *Shakes his head.* "I don't blame him. But I reckon Hayashida's offer was refused."

Terasaka: "How do you know that, Chairman?"

Yuuji: "Kazuhiro wasn't fooling me. And knowing him, he didn't think Hayashida deserved any chance of redemption."

Kayano: *Looks away.* "Right on the dot."
Yuuji: "So why might this be a significant concern?"

Maehara: "You think you're out of the woods right now, Chairman, but it's really likely that the
instigators of the people against Daichi will be going for you next. they're going to blame you for
not keeping a straight head on and turning a blind eye for your silver boy's faults."

Okano: "And for that reason, you shouldn't keep putting it all down on Akira Hayashida. He's
making very frantic actions now, and bringing himself into the open for destroying the Family's
reputation."

Mirei: *Turns to her husband with her mouth covered by one hand.* "Oh my. Yuuji, that is very
vexing."

Yuuji: *Looks aside.* "It is indeed." *Looks back at AssUniv.* "The only way we can salvage
any face now is that we publicly announce and exercise our discontent with the Hayashidas."

Irina: "What may that include, Chairman, if you don't mind me asking?"

Yuuji: "Two ways; either the Hayashida Family's assets are moved entirely into independent
inventory for a later auction and it has a chance of being revitalized in another industry, or the
Family is forced to disband. And it all depends on whether Daichi is alive in the next twenty-four
hours."

Kataoka: "We totally know which one Akira and Daichi would rather have..."

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's phone.* "Kayano-san!"

Kayano: *Takes out her smartphone.* "What is it, Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: "There's newsfeed and CCTV coverage that I've been looking into since Mirei Akamine
had mentioned that Akira, among other notable Hayashida leaders, have become unavailable for
faraway communication. If you'll look here..." *Brings splitscreens onto Kayano's device,
depicting someone very similar in appearance to Akira getting off the train and out of Shinjuku
Station, before calling for a cab.* "His final destination is unknown, but I am still tracking his
vehicle's license plate as we speak."

Naoko: "Whether he knows or not, he's going to bring a whole lot of our mutual enemies with
him into the Greater Tokyo Area."

Yuuji: "Then you all know what you must do, right?"

AssUniv: *Look between each other before turning back to the Akamine Chairman and
bowing.*

Nagisa: Back home...?

-The student-assassins mobilized, returning to the Hyatt Regency one more time to collect the rest
of their gear and hopped on their travel bus for a trip to the nation's capital and sole Metropolis...-

-A few hours later, in Tokyo...-

Kato: *Clad in a black David August two-piece suit with white business shirt and clipped, smoke
tie, he steps out from Takashimiyia Times Square's entrance, pulling on his sleeves and putting on metal-framed din glasses. The second he finishes focusing through the nonprescribed lenses, he happens upon one truly unexpected event for him; the AssUniv tour-bus runs right by the busy Shinjuku Station and surrounding area.* What are they doing here? *Facepalms.* Something's gone wrong... Well, before something else goes wrong... *Gets into his Nissan GT-R and follows the vehicle.*

Nagisa: *Sits right next to Kayano on the same booth of the travel bus. She has her phone out depicting their digital peer.* "Ritsu-chan, have you found out where Akira Hayashida has taken refuge now?"

Ritsu: "I have, Nagisa-kun." *Changes the smartphone screen to a print-screened Google Map, with her image directing the observations on the top right.* "CCTV shows that Akira had gone into the New National Theatre Tokyo."

Muramatsu: "Why would he think to go in there? Any good live shows going on?"

Terasaka: *Searches the schedule of upcoming showings in the venue.* "Nothing seems highly popular and-or signature."

Kato: *Voice interrupts on the bus' intercom.* "That's not quite the point. Akira wouldn't like anything being played there, since the art direction is far too, shall we say, bureaucratic for him."

AssUniv: *All look up at the surround system's various speakers laid out around the vehicle.* "Kato/-kun!?"

Kato: "Right behind you."

AssUniv: *All of them look back to see Kato's sports car closely following their tail. The driver pulls over on a long stretch of road, which the latter also replicates, allowing all of the AssUniv Program to meet face-to-face.*

Karma: *Takes a close look at Kato's attire the second he gets out of the Nissan.* "Yep, that's definitely the real Kato-kun. Your cousin wears your suits well, but you never give them a chance to wear you. Something he could never replicate."

Kato: *Finishes his latest puff from his engraved silver vaporizer.* "Just as I thought the moment I saw this bus traveling through these parts."

Okano: "Yeah, we're not sure about you for doing that, just so you know."

Kato: *Takes off his glasses with preoccupation.* "I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen. I was hoping I could do this myself."

Yada: *Makes way for herself between the crowd formed by her peers.* "Kato-kun..."

Kato: "Yada-san?"

Yada: "Practice what you preach."

Kato: *Is legitimately confused.* "What?"
Yada: "You've shown us how to stand on our own two feet again after Korosensei, and that's great. Excellent, even. But we had to remind ourselves of this little detail: you need to reach out once you can go your own way. You did that before, and you should be doing it again now. Because true collaboration is a two-way street."

Isogai: "We'll go through Hell for you, Kato. Just as we do for every member of AssClass, because we know you'd do the same."

Kataoka: "And it just sucks that you won't let us do that."

Kato: "Sighs." "You guys haven't seen enough of the world to be willing to cast off your lives."

Maehara: "Then that's our problem; our choice."

Kato: "Looks aside with thought for a moment, before gazing back at them and nodding." "Alright."

Naoko: "Sees Kayano is about to open her mouth, and pushes her index finger at it." "No bother asking if Kato-kun has a plan or not. Right?"

Kato: "Crosses his arms." "Well, I was already here to confront Daichi." "Puts his glasses back on." "This whole garb was to help bypass Tocho's security all the way to the twenty-seventh floor. What are you all here for?"

Karasuma: "Akira Hayashida has his worst enemies closing in on his locations, including now. We were instructed by your Chairman to keep him safe until the manhunt dies down."

Kato: "Then I must make haste; Daichi is the center of all of this chaos. I need to stop him."

Ritsu: "Appears on Kayano's smartphone again." "That is heavily recommended. Shinjuku camera coverage is showing a good amount of gruff men leaving the stations, probably in search of Akira now that they know both primary members of the Hayashida Family are in Tokyo."

Kato: "Then the plan's obvious, everybody. You all secure Hayashida long enough until I can deal with his son. Compared to the Neo-Wolfpack," "Checks his watch." "Several months ago, whoever's coming after him will be a Sunday stroll."

Yada: "Hold on; you won't be in as much trouble if someone seconds your words. I'm coming with."

Kato: "I taught you that, didn't I?"

Yada: "Nods enthusiastically." "Mhm."

Kato: "Well then, Isogai-san, on your mark."

Isogai: "Nods." "Right." "To AssUniv." "Everyone, let's go for the kill."

AssUniv: "Roger!"
Well, that certainly went by a little more smoothly than everybody anticipated. Perhaps there is a higher understanding of the operation?

Regardless, Kato and AssUniv have synergized and formulated a new strategy to deal with all of the ongoing problems taking place in the metropolis in Tokyo; for most of AssUniv, the many Families that are gunning for the fleeing Akira Hayashida. For Kato and Yada, the infiltration they must take in order for the former to meet up with his old mentor...

-In Northern Shibuya...-

Hayashida Family Member 1: *Inside a front security room of the New National Theatre Tokyo along with five others, they all sit idly by, kicking back on their metal chairs. Some were catching up on counting sheep, while others were playing cards or surfing the web.*

-A knock is at their door.-

Hayashida Family: *All of them tense up a bit at the alarming sound.*

Hayashida Family Member 2: *Gestures to 3.* "Go answer it."

Hayashida Family Member 3: *Nods, rising up and walking towards the door. He looks through the eyehole of the threshold, but there is no one standing in front of the other side. As such, he slowly opens it up, pulling the gateway open and looking out. A left-side combing revealed three unconscious men, with their upper limbs bound behind them and their heads bowed.* "What the..." *Goes out to investigate them.*

Hayashida Family Member 5: *Yawns.* "What'd you find, man?"

Hayashida Family Member 3: *Arrives back in, closing the door behind him.* "Someone left some men totally out of it right on our front porch. They got Domen pins on them."

Hayashida Family Member 6: "No way, the Domen Family is also gunning for our boss?"

Hayashida Family Member 4: "Great that there's less of them to worry about, but... Who just left them with us?"

-But before anyone could answer...-

-CRASH!-

Okano/Isogai/Maehara: *The three of them, clad in their KAM AtTac suits, broke from the glass ceiling directly above the group. They all land right next to one, who were too stunned to react to a Shock-Pad palm strike. Okano gets an additional casualty after immediately downing her first
victim by wallspinning over the cards table and taking the standing Yakuza's head with both of her hands and slamming the neck onto the concrete ground.*

Itona/Kataoka/Nagisa: *The first kicks down the entering door for the other two, having destroyed its hinges with a specialized jackhammer. Kataoka, the first to cross the threshold, she is right next to one of the initially remaining two, who she detains with a modified rear naked choke, gaining extra leverage with her Daewoo XK10 SMG. Nagisa picks off the other one, just getting out of his chair, with two Shock-Out rounds of his Colt SCAMP automatic pistol.*

Hayashida Family Members: *Three more come in from deeper within the complex that the AssUniv members have infiltrated, but they were easily dealt with by a side-window ambush right next to them, courtesy of Kayano, Karma, and Kanzaki. A myriad of CQC and bursts of non-lethal gunfire sealed the deal, bringing the reinforcements to the floor.*

Okano: *Briefly removes her lower mask and moves her goggles to her forehead.* "I gotta say, that was way too easy."

Maehara: *Sighs while loading his KRISS KARD pistol.* "After spending all our recent time as assassins fighting former soldiers and mercenaries, we should've come to expect this. It's like a boxer, even the most average one, fighting barroom brawlers."

Itona: "Or a level 105 Bloodborne player in a NG+ playthrough's introductory area."

Isonai: *Beat.* "Or that. Sure."

Kataoka: *Turns to Nagisa.* "Nagisa-kun."

Nagisa: "Or it." *Presses on his InReTs forearm touchpad and then clutches his left earpiece.* "Kayano-san, Karma, Naoko-san, and Karasuma-sensei, are the other Families that Ritsu-chan identified been neutralized?"

Kayano: *Standing and holding her headset alongside Sugino, Okuda, Kurahashi, Hara, and Sosuke. The men were finishing up the ties restraining a decent complement of unconscious suits, while the ladies were writing signs with similar messages akin to "ARREST ME."* "Heh, let's just say the Kurata Family won't be finding Hayashida anytime soon."

Karma: "You can say the same for the Tanji Family's nightlife party." *Is pouring drops of Tabasco sauce (conveniently retrieved from the Hyatt Regency and packed into his KAM AtTac backpack prior to leaving) into the perpetually-open eyes of one Family member. Nakamura was grinning lightly to the act, while Mimura, Fuwa, Okajima, and Kimura cringed massively.*

Naoko: "The Domen Family has been secured." *She reports as she transports one of them to the curb of the adjacent sidewalk, kicking his inner knees so that he is forced to kneel, parallel with several of his fellow Brethren. Kanzaki, Takebayashi, and the Terasaka Group were training their weapons at the rest.* "Kato-kun's going to either be very happy or upset that so many of his syndicate friends are doing some time, though not as much as we are for doing his work."

Karasuma: "The Uyeda Family has been routed - Confirmed." *Has his knee on top of a mound of four Yakuza (mimicking the several other man-made hills lying around), flipping one off of the other as he slaps on pairs after pairs of handcuffs. Irina, Hayami and Chiba were both bewildered and impressed, though given these student-assassins' serious demeanors (not to mention some... Hairy obstructions), only one of them really showed it.*
Naoko: "That aside Nagisa-kun, how are you and the rest on extracting Hayashida?"

Nagisa: "We're almost there. We're just about to meet up with him, in fact. One more door."

Kayano: "Keep us posted, Nagisa-kun." *They all end transmission.*

AssUniv: *The rest of the team with Nagisa makes for the walls parallel to the aperture. After a series of silent nods, they breach the threshold with a Mute Charge. When it detonates, throwing the metal door into the room they are infiltrating, they immediately charge in, guns at the ready, taking any last threats by surprise... Except there were none left to deal with. The explosive's sound-deafening properties wear off just as the student-assassins confronting their target lower their weapons in confusion.*

Akira: *Throughout the scene he has his back turned to them and towards the 2nd floor window. He has sensed that his hearing has returned, confirming it by slapping himself on the forearm and waiting for its sound. He then raises his hands up high.* "Got nothing that can hurt you all, in case you're wondering. If Akamine and Kato especially knows better than trying to kill you all, then there's no way I got any shot."

Okano: *Looks aside in thought a bit before returning his gaze to Hayashida.* "The Hell are you talking about?"

Maehara: "How do you know about our ties to Akamine? We never said we were allied with him."

Isogai: "And why are you so close to where Daichi and Kato agreed to settle things?"

Akira: "Why indeed..." *Looks up toward the upper boundary of the large windows.*

Nagisa: *Creeps closer to Hayashida's lancet, and looked the way he did. In the distance was the Government Building; only about a six-minute drive away.* "You can even see it."

Akira: "And yet I couldn't stop the storm on the horizon." *Closes his eyes, which produces a stream under one of them.* "The things we do, hm? Does anyone ever understand the opportunity costs we face?"

AssUniv: "..."

-Meanwhile, at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building...-

Kato/Yada: *The both of them, with Yada having changed into a proper business suit complete with an above-knee matching skirt, dark tights, vanity specs and 1" heels, power-walk through the front entrances of the assembly building and into the citizen's plaza of the region. In addition, Kato had a very-stuffed travel backpack slung behind him.*

Kato: *Hands are being watched by eyes of all shapes, sizes, and compositions now. Don't lose sight of where we're going and don't make any unnatural movements. Checks his watch.* For the time being, we're not students or assassins anymore; we're aspiring lawyers.

Yada: *Eyes several other suits sitting about, chatting with each other.* Of course. Lead on.
Kato: *With Yada in tow, they continue through to the first main building.* Alright, if I was Daichi, which, *Checks his watch.* Several years of training under him makes me hope I am, he's taken a room or lounge on the 27th floor observing the Southern side.

Yada: Beyond that, how are you so certain?

Kato: It reminds us of the old days. Daichi and I don't let go.

Yada: *Remains silent after that answer, hiding her unease by scratching the hair on the back of her head.*

-Eventually, the duo makes into the center tower. Thanks to the TechniCot tri-weave within their business suits and storage (akin to the last time Kato and Yada infiltrated a formally private event together), they pass through the metal detection lanes with ease, with the guards never noticing the KAM AtTac Suit and Kimber II pistols in the rucksack, or the Zigana strapped to Yada's inner thigh.-

-The two then contend with the front deskmen and women.-

Deskwoman: "Hello, ma'am and sir. May I please have your names and purpose(s) for your visit?"

Kato: "Hideki Nakahara. Defendant lawyer meeting his client here to discuss case updates. Due to a confidentiality agreement, I cannot discuss the matters of this case any further to you."

Deskwoman: "That's fair, Mr. Nakahara. but may I ask who your client is, sir?"

Kato: "I'm sure that," *Checks his watch.* "In good time, you're going to hear the name, and see me right next to the holder of it." *Leans closer towards the secretary.* "The best kept secrets are best left until the end, even we don't know where that is." *Returns to an upright stance.* "So I trust my reticence can be appreciated right now?"

Deskwoman: "Well, if you put it that way, of course sir."

Yada: *Takes an aside glance at Kato, noticing a bloodlust aura. Not Kato's usual set of dark-green flames, however, but an ethereal, black manifestation: demon horns, sharp-growing upper canines, and a slender tail are constructed on his person... Almost like how he described his mother's lawyering expressions. And that surprises her.*

Deskwoman: *Turns to Yada.* "And your name, miss?"

Yada: *Refocuses.* "Junko Ryuga. Transcriber of their conversation."

Deskwoman: *Finishes writing down their names.* "Okay. Here are your visiting passes. Have a good day." *Slides the passes along the desk towards the two of them. She finishes with a pleasant nod.*

Kato/Yada: *Bow, then accept the papers.* "Thank you."

-They then proceed to the elevators of the right-side observation tower, letting the doors close before they move even another inch.-
Kato: *As they are psyching themselves up and preparing inside the elevator,* "Tell me something, Yada-san."

Yada: *Finishes putting on her tactical contact lens in her right eye.* "Yeah?"

Kato: *Checks on his Kimber Warrior from within his inner jacket pocket.* "Do you believe in fate?"

Yada: "Fate?"

Kato: "Yes. The idea that events that are about to and will happen have already been predetermined."

Yada: *Thinks for a moment.* "I don't think so."

Kato: "Really now?"

Yada: "Korosensei taught us the carpe diem - make our days our own. If we didn't get to learn this, then we would've been led to believe our destinies were just to be subservient to the ridiculous Kunugigaoka E-Class system and be the pariahs that no one deserved to be. Some fate, right?"

Kato: "Very good point. But don't you ever think for a moment that someone, or ones even, have already been making the choices for us, and we're just living up to them without fully knowing what they entail?"

Yada: *Cracks a smile.* "What are you saying? You planned having me and my friends help you all this time?"

Kato: "Oh no no, no plan. Not by me or anyone we could comprehend. And at least, it wasn't in the deciders' thought process when they made those choices. It's just how it was going to go down."

Yada: "Wow, are you listening to yourself?"

Kato: *Looks directly at her in puzzlement.*

Yada: * Throws the backpack Kato originally wore behind her.* "Who even are you? The Kato-kun I know did not fear the tragedies of a destiny he didn't want; he used it as an urge to forge a new destiny that he was satisfied with."

Kato: "Hmm... That's just what I needed to hear."

Yada: "I hope so. That doesn't mean I fully condone what's happening next though, mind you."

*Turns back to the the front of the elevator.*

Kato: "Right." *Does the same.* I also didn't say that I feared whatever Fate might be having in store for me, though.

-Their shared elevator reaches the 26th floor; one below their final destination. With Ritsu's aid, Kato deadlocked the entry to the 27th floor with a series of button redirections for any other users, and then took the staircase to the level itself.-
Kato: Alright, Yada. A new X-Ray program has been implemented into the lens. Be sure to wink twice to activate it when you need to. *Hotwires the cameras to replay the same feed. He then takes out his Kimber Warrior II pistol.*

Yada: *Takes the TiSAS Zigana under her skirt out and pulls back its slide.* Right. Let's begin.

-The duo splits up, carefully treading through the hallways locating every government official on the floor with their extrasensory technology. They were all handled in a variety of ways between the two of them, ranging from simple Shock-Out/Pad as soon as they bash through the threshold, to disturbances that make their targets cross it instead. Yada even performed a bait trap luring four individuals into the nearby men's bathroom so that they could all be incapacitated by a Stun-Net from the ceiling that manifested as it dropped to the ground, encircling its victims. Kato was naturally more simple yet surgical, catching the open attention of four officers and their two sentries with a faulty light before disabling them with highly-precise CQC blows to the pressure points that debilitated their senses and systems. The only hindrance was that he too needed to bring his casualties into the bathroom to keep them out of the way of the ensuing operation. Not that lifting was ever an issue for a one-hundred-precent muscle-practitioner...-

Kato: *Meets back up with Yada in the hall before the designated lounge room that he will confront Daichi.* "Everyone's out?"

Yada: *Nods.* "Nobody conscious but the two of us on this floor." *Eyes the door for a moment.* "And Daichi."

Kato: "Good. I trust you can make sure it will stay that way; wouldn't want anyone else to get in our way."

Yada: "..."

Kato: "You still want to convince me not to fight him, don't you?"

Yada: "I just don't want you doing something you regret again. The last time you did, you were hardly yourself; retreating within, feeling very insecure... Thinking about it now is really scary. We can see we're coming close to the end of all this, and if you're not- Mmh?"

Kato: *Kisses her on the lips to silence her. After a prolonged moment, he releases.* "Funny... It seems like only a moment ago I was telling something like that to Miho." *Checks his watch.* "Just before I told her that I'll be alright if she will be."

Yada: *Beat, then giggles.* "Who is the person that will worry about me despite knowing how capable I am, then?"

Kato: *Cracks his first fully-natural grin in a long while.* "No matter what happens in there, I'm still going to be me."

Yada: *Looks a little more ensured about Kato's condition.* "Okay, Kato-kun. Then go finish what you've started."

Kato: "Thanks." *They mutually two-finger salute and go their separate ways. Just before Kato reaches his door, he watches Yada walk down the aisle before disappearing behind the corner that leads to the staircase.* Great idea, Kazuhiko, thinking of pushing a girl like that away, and render yourself forever alone again. *Repositions all of his suit's accessories before laying his hand on the
door handle, twisting it to let himself into the observation room.

Daichi: *Is shown to be at the high-stool drink station of the lounge room, making some hot herbal tea in a kettle for two. He was adorned with a dark-blue suit with vest. Tieless, but something still hung from his neck and rested on his shirt's chest area; his Navy SEAL dog tag necklace.* "Took you long enough to get everything ready."

Kato: *Retains his determined expression as he walks deeper into the room, closing the door behind him.* "No thanks to you."

Daichi: "I already did a lot; reserved this room and directed security to investigate the many floors above us about a bomb-like smell. So long as we play nice, we've got maybe an hour to settle things."

Kato: *Moves to the windows overlooking the front of the Government Building. He also subtly checks his watch to see what time an hour would take them to.* "According to you, how nice?"

Daichi: *Turns around with the platter of hot tea and two cups in hand.* "Nice enough that we can start with some ginseng. Take a seat."

Kato: *Turns around as well, looking at him in the eye. When Daichi indeed takes a spot on the sofa, laying the platter on the coffee table before him, Kato finds his own directly across from him.*

Daichi: *Pours the golden-brown drink into the two cups, sliding one close to Kato and picking up his own.* "On your mark."

Kato: *Takes his cup into his hand, raising it high.* "To a great," *Checks his watch, and then out the window.* "Evening." *They then take one long sip simultaneously.*

Daichi: *Finishes his swig.* "I thought you didn't revel in the thrill of such situations anymore. Or at least, you were trying not to."

Kato: "I'm not. I'm just mentioning that in the pursuit of my life goal, this day is going to be significant."

Daichi: "I see. Defeating a terrorist and keeping the order."

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "It doesn't boil you to say that, knowing that I have something you wanted so desperately to get rid of?"

Daichi: "Then where truly is it?"

Kato: *Takes another sip.* "You'll have to find out the hard way."

Daichi: "Which is to say you don't have it. And it's actually gone."

Kato: *Beat, then refocuses.* "Any reason why you'd do such a thing?"

Daichi: "Do you have a reason? Because I have a good feeling it'd be the same as mine."

Kato: "Even if that were the case, you'd have more reasons not to do it than I would."
Daichi: "That's just my choice then."

Kato: "An intentionally irrational one."

Daichi: "People naturally act irrationally. Such as when they disobey a four-way stop sign, or make sacrifices for their kin. You're a master of those decisions now that I think about it."
*Pauses.* "You enjoying that tea, by the way?"

Kato: "Would you be proud if I said 'yes'?"

Daichi: "I wouldn't say that. On the contrary, I'd say you would be acting irrationally yet again. Why bother enjoying anything when you're so close to death in the eyes of history?"

Kato: "Any chance I get, even if it was for an instant, I would love to blind those eyes with how much I can shine."

Daichi: "Then I don't see why I shouldn't want to either."

Kato: "You don't know what it's like to have the other eyes of history judge you. That's why you shouldn't."

Daichi: *Grows a little ticked.* "Don't I?"

Kato: *Matches his opponent's intensity.* "No. You don't."

Daichi: "Then let me live and learn, and find out that way."

Kato: "There will be no escape after even one trip down to those depths."

Daichi: "Sounds like a great challenge for me."

Kato: "I've got an even better one for you."

Daichi: *Cracks a smile.* "Okay. Let's not waste any more time then." *Puts his cup to his mouth.*

Kato: "Let's." *Finishes his drink. They simultaneously slam their containers onto the coffee table.*
Prepare yourself to perhaps the most epic clash in the series since Kato and Karasuma vs Craig. ;o

Now that Kato and Hayashida have met, there is obviously going to be a fight. Mentor vs Student. A duel for all the marbles. For keeps. But to the death?

-After the conclusion of their nice little chat, Kato and Daichi rise up from the two sofas, and proceed to walk to the open center of the room; a long rectangular section of free floor between the furniture and the drink bar.-

    Kato: *Pulls on his suit's sleeves and checks his watch.* "This is your last chance, Daichi. Quit following this doomed road you've put yourself on, or you'll find yourself without anything you could love indefinitely ever again."

    Daichi: *Laughs.* "I lost everything I could've loved a long time ago, kid... Including you. You know I wanted to skip the whole wife thing and harbor just a son, right?"

    Kato: *Nods.* "That's why you were always eager to help train me."

    Daichi: "But you never opened up. You always kept the best image of your father close to heart. And so you never saw me that way."

    Kato: "Was I wrong to be like that? I was never so vocal about it, but you did have discontent with my father. Norio told me and my cuz all about it," *Checks his watch.* "Several years ago."

    Daichi: "..."

    Kato: *Shakes his head.* "You know what? Enough about this." *Closes his eyes and manifests his orange "God Hand" aura, completed with a brief one-two flurry before returning them both close to his cheeks.*

    Daichi: "I taught you that stance, you know." *Throws an acute left hook and shifts down low into a CQC fighting pose, with his right fist going across to almost overlap his chin, while his other clenched fist was facing Kato.*

-After they psych each other up, both Kato and Daichi charge towards each other with a focused straight punch; their knuckles match like gears as the waves of their initial power travels between each other and toward their targets, which only serves to tense them up further for the confrontation.-

-Ryu Ga Gotoku: KIWAMI 2's OST "The Omerta" plays.-
加藤和彦VS林田大地

Kazuhiko Kato; Oyabun of the Kato Family

VS

Daichi Hayashida; Captain of the Hayashida Family

Both SEAL and assassin back away, returning their fists to their original positions. Kato initially tries to take the lead, bringing in his swarmer roots with a quick dash... Which is promptly rejected by a well-timed pivot straight; the punch intersecting Kato as he passes by where Daichi once was. Thankfully, Kato had kept his guard up during the downward lunge, such that his forearm absorbs most of the impact and he just gets pushed back.

Daichi leads this time, going for a right hook targeting Kato's ribcage. The latter sees it coming and nudges it aside with minimal movement of his adjacent pointed elbow. The redirection leaves Daichi open for an opposite hand straight to the face... But it is hand-blocked right on time and reversed into a crooked wrist lock, destroying Kato's stance and exposing his entire upper body for a short-arm lariat. Kato counters by quickly repositioning his feet, moving from parallel to perpendicular, and allowing him to duck under the massive clothesline and twisting back his trapped arm... Which was exactly what Daichi wanted, seeing Kato's rear leg exposed like that allowed for an oblique leg kick to Kato's calf, bringing him briefly to one knee. Kato twists his upper body and throws his left arm behind the back of his head just in time to deflect a downward right straight, and rise quickly back up with a spinning backfist, which is pulled back from by its target.

Kato wastes no time attempting to return to the fray, going from horizontal to vertical with a sharp left uppercut. Daichi rejects this with a rising elbow that keeps Kato's arm straight up in the air, finally exposing the ribcage to a ramming elbow smash... Which Kato miraculously stops with a clenched fist behind his back; the top two knuckles moving before his other bones just in time. Kato capitalizes on the surprising outcome by trapping the re-straightened arm by its elbow and sets up an elbow bash of his own, towards Daichi's nose. The latter blocks with his forearm just in time, and then floats over the attacking joint to reach the back of his head and form a clinch with Kato's arm still crooked.

Kato's trapping arm reaches behind Daichi in response, which no longer stops two short hooks from damaging his left ribcage. Daichi continues the one-sided pummel until Kato picks up his knee to absorb the blow, from which Daichi takes the boxing clinch to another level, spinning Kato back and forth before positioning him to a nearby wall and knee-pushing him into it. After Kato briefly bounces off of it, he sees Daichi set up a powerful punch that can crush the throat in front of it. Naturally, Kato gets himself out of the way, and the blow smashes right into the bricks instead, creating a small crater. Kato briefly looks back at the damage before returning his attention to Daichi and cravate-pulling his head into the obstruction, stunning him for a right overhead that again puts some distance.

This would prove to be his mistake, however, as Kato found it difficult to return into Daichi's refocused centerline. It began with a forward Dempsey Roll, with Kato leaning forward for an uppercut, only to be met with a rising elbow as his head was bowed. Daichi's concluding back
knuckle was X-blocked by the latter just in time, but the former continued to rake in the points when Kato tries to initiate a clinch, only to be instantly pushed back. Kato knows Daichi would often capitalize with an overhead, but still gets clocked by it anyway due to a side shuffle shifting its trajectory past predictability. The next time, Kato anticipates the upcoming counterpunch, dodging the initial right straight that Daichi goes for that overlaps with his left jab, and then setting up a right bolo. But Daichi has switched stance mid-swing, and now leads with his left, and delivers a low left jab straight to his exposed ribcage before Kato can complete the nonstandard attack. The latter bows down and urges himself to pull back from a signature wild haymaker. It once again puts Kato into the distance, but not without realizing something.

With the unexplained realization, a new flame flares in his eyes, rushing forward again. Daichi, with a superior reach, exploits it with a fast winding jab directed towards Kato's centerline... Only it completely misses when Kato's shoulders twist to become completely perpendicular to his own, leading to the arm flying behind Kato's back and the closest shoulder rams right into Daichi's chest. Kato then continues with an elbow jab and point-blank uppercut with the same arm. Kato tries to change the momentum even further with a leading Cobra punch, but Daichi recovers and check kicks Kato's lower shin, taking him off-balance for a bit; the latter exploits the given back with a rabbit hook... Which is promptly blocked, by a Dempsey reverse elbow in between the two front knuckles!

Daichi moves back to assess his hand and wrist damage, but Kato gives him no time to, dashing forward once more. When the former sees the latter begin to put his foot down for another punch, Daichi believes he can again punish a swarmer's entry with a turning elbow at cheek level. But the latter has taken a page out of Jieji's book once again; once the stance was ready, rather than raise his arm up as anticipated, he then slides the blade of his foot into Daichi's shin; the result being that the SEAL is forced to miss, and the last point of his elbow minimally scratches Kato's face. The attack still left a slim, visible cut on the cheek it pressed, leaving to the imagination what it might've done had it fully connected. Kato does not fall on those thoughts, as he soon returns with a massive right haymaker that breaks through Daichi's guard and repulses him even further.

Daichi quickly recovers, ducks in low and launches a haymaker of his own, which is deflected with yet another nudging elbow, which Kato turns through for a left backfist, matching bolo punch and finally a left overhead that puts Daichi onto his back roughly two meters away.

Realizing that his current style has been adapted to, Daichi swaps to his freeform, purple aura style - Rushdown. Kato senses this and reverts to his B-Boy. After a few steps forward from both combatants, Kato initiates the fray with a spinning hook kick that Daichi pulls back from. The latter sets up an enzuigiri kick to the face, but Kato slides his kicking foot further from where it landed, naturally making him shorter, and have the step-up roundhouse fly right over his head. The method of enzuigiri executed by Daichi also forced him to show his back following delivery, which Kato punished by snap kicking at the heel. Daichi raise his affected leg up just in time, absorbing a little more damage, but letting the attack lift his knee into the chamber position and immediately repulse Kato with a side kick.

Kato and Daichi measured each other up again, getting closer with each step. The latter initiated the second interval with a high roundhouse kick which the former cartwheeled under. Daichi then twisted the other way with a low instep sweep followed immediately with a midsection spinning hook. KAto was able to avoid both with a well-timed, precise backflip over the first strike and under the second. When he landed he sprung up close, forcing Daichi's hand and urging him to perform a circular axe kick. Again, Kato ducks under this and pivots around Daichi, clutching his head in a three-quarter hold and falling forward in a parallel snapmare. Daichi was seated, exposing his face briefly for a roundhouse. Not long enough unfortunately, as Daichi falls supine to let the
attack float over him and making Kato show his back. Kato quickly transitions before an exploit could be made with a handstand falling knee, but it is avoided. With him on all fours, Daichi sets up a booting front kick, which is pulled back from by Kato, who then takes the other side once more and Schoolboy roll-ups Daichi, such that when he rises back upright, he eats a superkick. But Daichi anticipated it and rose back up with a block and used the stunned motion to deliver that front kick again; this time making the mark... But Kato caught it!

Kato attempts to counter the blocked front kick with a 12-6 elbow at the joint, but Daichi retracts his knee, pulling Kato in. He then clutches his former protege's raised right wrist and left clavicle, trapping him for a same knee to the chest. Daichi then puts his foot down, arm-twists around Kato and barrel-rolls in mid-air for a 720 roundhouse at nose-level. Kato sees the wild strike just in time and falls into a sprawl. When Daichi lands, he goes for an inverse heel sweep, which Daichi avoids by hopping again. Kato's legs were then in a perfect position for a single-handstand double roundhouse, and though they were still blocked, left him with an opportunity to stand parallel and STO sweep. Daichi saw this and launched a high point-blank roundhouse of his own, which Kato limboed under, deciding to take the other side and perform an inverse STO instead.

With Daichi on his back, Kato moved in for a moonsault stomp, but back rolls upon impact with the ground instead of the former's chest. Daichi uses that moment of vulnerability to his advantage, delivering a step-up knee that is just pivoted away from by Kato. Now back to back, they briefly exchange acute, short-range attacks, from backfists to mule kicks, before Daichi catches Kato's right leg between his own and twists over for an Achilles Lock. Kato manages to get his other leg out from under Daichi's second and nudes his knee on the trapping Achilles to break the hold. They both roll away from each other and Daichi closes the fray with another front kick, hoping that Kato will again try to break it, wherein he could perform the same knee. But Kato was awaiting the chamber maneuver, Pushing up and wrapping his right leg around Daichi's upper right thigh, and using his forward-rolling momentum to flip Daichi over too - into a Calf Slicer.

Daichi seals up from the pain of the compression lock, and being unable to neither swing nor kick at Kato's modified positioning, resorted to the risky rollover, breaking the hold when Kato's trapping leg slips out upon repositioning. From there, Daichi's other leg gets a front kick to Kato's face. Again, Kato rolls back from the impact and then performs a rising thrust windmill to keep Daichi at bay. He transitions into a 1990s spin to continue the repulser, until Daichi rejects the motion by executing a flying side kick towards Kato's upside-down midsection. Kato bends his handstanding arm, bringing his whole body down to avoid the long-reach strike. In his sprawl, he sees the Navy SEAL land past him, fit for a barrel-roll legsweep kick, until the older Yakuza hops over it, setting up his signature move; a somersault axe kick. Kato rises up to a three-point stance, realizes the powerful attack incoming, and puts up his high block just in time... Which didn't help too much, as the impact of the heel on his forearm was massive, causing Kato to temporarily have no feeling in it.

With his primary B-boy ability momentarily crippled, Kato kipped-up back to his feet, slapped his affected arm, and then blocked another supine front kick with a pointed knee, before pulling back from a rising flash kick. Kato accurately predicts the next high right roundhouse kick incoming, and catches it with his opposite inner knee as it assumed the hook kick position. The younger Yakuza then put said knee down to ground the grapple, but is forced to let go when Daichi rejects a potential legbreaker with a low-angle hook kick of his own. Kato again slaps his radius to pump circulation into the arm before turning his attention back to Daichi.

the critical moment comes when Kato and Daichi both begin matching a multitude of blows, form both low and high roundhouses, to heel kicks, to jumping heel kicks, and finally to high knees. When they repel each other following the latest clash, they then 540 trick in the air for one
last freeform kick: for Daichi, an inverse heel kick. For Kato, a Pele snap kick. It looked like the two’s feet would again intersect and intercept, until Kato twisted himself even further in mid-air and slowed the strike just enough so his kicking leg would cross Daichi’s in front of it, leading to Daichi being slammed down to the ground and negating his kick.

Both men took some time to claw back up their feet, but upon doing so, Daichi ran up and speared Kato through the lounge room door and across the corridor into the regular observation room (which Yada had thankfully vacated prior to the men’s fight). Tossed further down the linear path, he arriving back on his feet, Kato immediately reverts to his Tumbler style to contend with Daichi’s Commando style. As they usually do, they begin by slowly inching closer, until Kato strikes first, attempting to lock the double-collar immediately. Daichi rejects this with two wrist-ups, blocking the hand-mesh behind his neck, and pushes them both away, leaving Kato’s throat momentarily open for a forearm, with Daichi’s other arm trapping the back of his head; a standing reverse Guillotine Choke. Kato put his left arm close to his neck just in time, preventing the sudden crushing of his larynx, but remaining trapped in the compression lock until he dropped low and tossed Daichi over him.

Now on their backs, Kato attempted Naoko’s old mounting technique, back-handspringing onto the supine Daichi with a full mount. But Daichi sees it coming, and puts up a boot, stopping him by the chest. Standing again, Kato swats it aside, but Daichi uses his other foot to kick Kato’s close leg away, causing him to fall straight into the Triangle. The younger Yakuza coughs before getting back on his feet and and flipping Daichi over to force a release. Kato immediately sprawled on top of Daichi as he was on all fours and pitched a bit to the side with a gutwrench for the Karelin Lift. Upon landing, Daichi took Kato’s leg again, pushing down and forcing Kato to lay prone in front of him. The former goes for an ankle lock, but Kato bridges, giving his free leg enough room to go under his trapped and sweep Daichi’s own, making him fall over again perpendicular to himself. This created an opportunity for an inverted grapevine kidneybar, but Daichi rises to a kneeling stance, keeping the targeted knee pointed. The younger Yakuza then turned to a cravate headlock, cupping his hands in front of Daichi’s Adam’s Apple for the leg-trap hangman’s choke. Again, Daichi breaks out forcibly, taking his trapped leg with him.

Both competitors return to their standing positions, circling around in the large room. This time, Daichi goes to start up their next interval, throwing his arms forward for the single collar tie. He meets nothing but air, however, when Kato rolls diagonally forward, taking one of Daichi’s ankles with him, forcing a horizontal split. The younger Yakuza then slings his legs back up, attempting to hook his opponent’s neck. When it catches Daichi’s close arm instead, Kato pivots with it, forcing the bent arm behind Daichi, whose forehead is now forcibly on the ground, and initiating an omoplata. Daichi rolls through, tossing Kato over himself while holding onto his trapping leg for a heel hook. Kato flips over to match the position of his ankle, nullifying the submission, and then flips over again for a vertical kidneybar. Out of desperation, Daichi tears a small portion of his slacks to prevent the hold from reaching its locked position, allowing him to slip his leg clean out of the grip.

Kato keeps the pressure on by rising to his feet and leaping up for a falling triangle choke, but is reversed into a powerbomb. Daichi does not release his right leg, stepping forward, flipping Kato onto his face and performs his own calf slicer, using the back of his neck as the compressing limb. Kato reverses the hold by pulling on Daichi’s free instep, forcing him to fall forward and momentarily stop the pressure. As Kato pulls his lower limb back to himself, he uses his other foot to boot Daichi in the lowered face.

Daichi recovers faster than the former would think. Now back on their feet, he exploits Kato's exposed back with a hammerlock. Kato ducks under, leading to Daichi moving in front of him, fit
for a fireman's carry lift. The Navy SEAL counters into a full nelson. Kato exploited the smooth nature of his clothes this time, sacrificing armpit stitches to slip underneath the latter's arms. Kato then backflips over Daichi's outstretched right arm, landing behind him in an inverted facelock. Daichi instinctively raises an arm to defend, but Kato merely catches it and spins with its original direction, slamming Daichi's face in a rolling cutter motion onto the nearby coffee table. Daichi falls off the other side, close to a sofa.

Kato slowly walks towards Daichi as the latter begins crawling to a leather couch for vertical support. He takes out his telescopic baton, which was holstered within his slacks behind him, whipping it out when he gets very close. Evidently transitioning into his Trickster style, he raises the blunt weapon up for a momentous blow... Until he notices something, stepping back and slamming his baton back down on something close to his torso. It turned out to be Daichi's knife; a Cold Steel fixed tactical tanto knife.

Daichi steps away from the crouch towards Kato, metal meeting or floating near metal. Kato starts with a feint, goading and evading the initial horizontal cut, and goes for a backhand whack reprisal to Daichi's far temple, which he guards by putting up his free hand before his head. They then clash weapons again with simultaneous upward slashes, which Kato seeks to exploit with a sudden shoulder check. With Daichi off-balance, Kato goes in for a spinning forehand Kesagiri swipe of his baton, which is sidestepped. With Kato's back turned to him, Daichi attempts to grapple in close to slit the younger Yakuza's throat. Thankfully, Kato wields the baton in icepick grip, emphasizing the bulbous pommel and bashes it like a pressure-point jabber into Daichi's weapon forearm before the blade can get anywhere near his neck. A backwards headbutt repulses Daichi again.

When Kato closes the distance again, Daichi takes a fistful of paper trays and throws them at Kato, who blocks his upper body with his free arm to their hard-plastic impacts. Daichi exploits the initial defense for an overhead slash. Kato sees it coming and pivots around his back leg, flanking the attack and letting the Navy SEAL fly past him. Daichi defends his back by throwing his left leg behind a chair and kicking it towards Kato, forcing him to stumble, which is capitalized by a superkick to the chest. Kato falls flat onto his back, and has the legs of said chair trap his body on the ground. Daichi attempts a decapitating horizontal cut along the outline of the furniture, but Kato manages to slip his upper body underneath the flat section just in time. He then bridges up to tip the chair over, but Daichi puts more of his foot down, keeping Kato supine. When he goes to stomp on the younger Yakuza's knee instead, Kato starfishes both of his legs and then toeholds Daichi onto the back support of the stool. a backhand whip of the chair further did damage to the older Yakuza's face.

Kato springs forward again, but is forced to slide under when Daichi summons a new weapon to his left hand; a karambit. Kato takes another stool and flings it at Daichi, trying a feint attack of his own, which was immediately repelled when Daichi catches the baton with a high block with his regular knife, and sends for a karmabit slit on the younger Yakuza's wrist. Kato attempts to intervene with his free hand, but Daichi intercepts it, tossing it aside before going through with the initial attack anyway. The cut forces Kato to drop his weapon; Daichi kicks it further down the observation deck away from its former wielder. Kato pulls back from two quick neck-level slashes, but eventually finds the glass sill of the North-side windows. This forces him to spin along the edge to avoid an uppercut slash, which Daichi soon follows with a horizontal backhand stab, which only hits the glass supporting beam, breaking it. He also breaks the leaning ledge too with a similar, downward jab.

Kato slips back to the doorside of the room with Daichi very close, and between him and his baton. Having gripped a piece of the broken silicon, Kato propels it like a bat-arang at him, which
cuts his forearm, but does not stop the overall advance. Kato falls back on a secretary desk, not looking behind him as he hopes to find some support before Daichi's overhead stab reaches him... And he does, with an extensively-thick leather ledger gets in the way of the blade and his face. Kato kicks Daichi away and retakes proper standing, blocking several more lunges and cuts, before using the book's spine as a blunt ram against Daichi's left forearm and then pushing Daichi back on the window with a leather cover slam to the cheek and temple, throwing several punches from the other side to transfer the damage. Daichi recovers, swatting the ledger-hand aside and throwing a fast knife-cut to the eyes, which Kato must spin with to avoid, falling onto one knee. Daichi again tries a downward stab; this time when Kato blocks it, the point of the karambit barely protrudes from the other side, close to impaling Kato's left eye.

But it stops just enough so that Kato twists the book over, pressuring the wrist and making Daichi roll aside, letting go of the curved knife. Kato tosses the book like a frisbee at Daichi as he too rolls to reach his baton again, but it doesn't nearly buy the time he hoped for as Daichi is right on top of him, chokeslamming him onto the glass again. Kato whips his cudgel at the wrist of the hold, forcing a release, but not staving a left hook that puts Kato in danger for yet another head-level slash with the other hand.

The blade stops dead from Kato's irregular guard, holding his hammer-grip baton upside down and leaving the protruding pommel in front of his throat, which blocks the knife. Kato also put down his far foot with effort to keep his stance, noticeably making a crack and exposing one floor tile. He then pushes the attack back, and turns around while picking up the moved floorpiece. Kato then attempts a kesagiri pommel thrust, but is stopped by a forearm. Kato slips the baton underneath, which Daichi spots first, putting his left hand low to catch the weapon first. This is just what Kato wanted, however, as the Navy SEAL's face was open for a panel smack, which breaks upon impact. Kato immediately retrieves his fallen nightstick, just as Daichi finishes rubbing his temple.

Kato and Daichi parry another set of each others' blows in an attempt to one-up the other, before digging their CQC weapons deep into another test of strength. Before a true victor could be determined in that front, Kato lets the strength of the clash push his baton behind his hand, completing half of the motion for an icepick grip. This causes Daichi's blade to draw dangerously close to Kato's larynx, which he avoids by limboing. Now, Daichi was not only misbalanced, but he was showing his back this time, such that he didn't have enough time to process a backhand horizontal swing to his face coming. Kato then jumps up and clutches one end of the channeled light's metal frame, ripping the ceiling connector from it, and pushing it down, creating a swinging flail-like attack that again smacks the Navy SEAL's upper body. The flashes also distract Daichi, prompting Kato to kick the tanto knife aside, leaving the older Yakuza vulnerable to a forearm whack, backhand side-neck strike, and pommel thrust to the chest all in quick succession. The second attack in this string actually resulted in the chutes of the telescopic baton to break, rendering it almost useless as Kato tossed it aside following the final attack, just as Daichi rises up onto one knee.-

-OST pauses.-

Daichi: *Still in his three-point stance, he soon rises back up to his feet, concentrating all of the excess blood in his mouth and spitting it aside.* "You've certainly learned a bit more of the world beyond your blood-red eyes."

Kato: *(Scoffs, relaxing from his "Trickster" stance a bit to move his dislocated finger back into place, ensuring its cooperation by forming a tight fist following the procedure.* "There's a lot you can see in just," *(Checks his watch, now with some noticeable scratches as a result of the scuffle.*)
"Half a decade. If you have the aptitude to notice it."

Daichi: "Heh." *Stands straight up too, noticing the rags that were his suit jacket and business shirt.* "I guess we won't be needing these anymore." *Takes each end of the button lining of his top and rips it open, repulsing its tattered remains behind him.*

Kato: *Complying to the change in the situation at the same time as his opponent, Kato clutches the contents forming his upper clothing from his waist and hoists it completely over himself.*

Daichi: *His back is revealed to be decorated with a golden-yellow dragon dominating a rainy, cloudy background that lay on top of his shoulders, triceps, and chest. The dragon also had wings; a rarity for East Asian myth, which narrowed down which legendary creature of Japan his Irezumi was based on...* "You are still far behind; you can't begin to fathom the number of sights I've seen."

Kato: *Rolls his shoulder blades, accentuating his "Risen Samurai" Irezumi's figure and names.* "Care to prove that?"

Daichi: "Gladly." *Crouches a bit and forms a classic Special Forces ready position, with his hands raised while his head is bowed in between them, minimizing any of his vulnerable spots. A bright yellow aura emanates from him, which Kato definitely feels.*

Kato: *Concentrates his black-on-green combat aura as he goes into a modified serada stance, with his right fist concealing most of his face while his left was extended towards his rival.*

-When they were ready, they rushed in towards each other, clashing right forearms. Attention is paid to their adjacent faces adorning confrontational expressions, followed by their dog tags, which sprung past them due to the inertia, and finally to the Irezumis on their backs.-

-OST resumes; Ryu Ga Gotoku: KIWAMI 2's OST "Ultimate Warrior" plays.-

加藤和彦VS林田大地

Kazuhiko Kato; The Samurai who must protect the people he has sworn to

VS

Daichi Hayashida; The Yinglong that must fulfill the duty it is responding to

When they both step back, Kato immediately takes the lead with a spinning hook kick, which is pulled back without a step by Daichi. Kato lands in a way that sets up an immediate single-handstand roundhouse kick; this time Daichi puts up is knee to block. When Kato rises back up to proper standing, Daichi throws a left haymaker, which Kato spins like a yo-yo under, easily setting up a Pele kick upon the arm extending across Daichi’s body. The Navy SEAL's highly-raised, bent
arms serve well in defending this attack. But Kato, now prone on the ground, flipped supine and attacks the ankle with a quick thrust kick, which opened up Daichi to a snap kick to the chin.

Daichi takes the foot before it can drop back down and swings Kato into the nearby pillar. Kato manages to position his free leg to right behind him so that most of his body doesn't dangerously contact the stone. It even provided Kato with a foothold for a higher off-the-wall roundhouse kick. Daichi keeps the hands up and catches the leg, slams the rest of Kato down face-first, and sets up for an ankle lock. The younger instinctively turns over, booting Daichi's trapping arm off of his limb. Rising back to his feet, Daichi approached again with a right overhead Kato answers with a shoulder check and tuck, eliminating the any advantage of the punch, and then hip tosses Daichi over so that he lands into an outstretched seating position.

Kato quickly capitalized with a seated abdominal stretch, putting Daichi's left arm under his right, and trapping the other arm behind his right leg as he pulled the older Yakuza's head the other way. Daichi shifted his hip position to nullify the wrenching potential, which also let him slip out of the hold and into a Northern Lights suplex. The Seal backflips over to get into the full mount but Kato kicks him away. The latter then kips-up and avoids three fast flurries by Daichi before being able to move close with a hangman's clutch around the the SEAL's head. He then spins to the side while falling into a three-point stance, driving Daichi's bridge into it, and stunning him enough for a jumping spinning back kick. Daichi merely takes the impact, but does not fall over, frustrating Kato, who wails on him with a series of downward jabs that eventually transition to unhinged, clubbing blows.

Daichi eventually ends the pummel by slowly rising back up to his feet with an explosive breakout followed swiftly with a right backfist. Kato backs away to avoid it, but the reverting momentum sets up Daichi's powerful left straight. Rather than pull back once more, Kato takes it head-on... Literally, throwing a headbutt to confront the back two knuckles, stopping the attack dead, and stunning the Navy SEAL long enough for a left short uppercut to the chin. As Daichi reels back, Kato springs forward, which the former responds to with an emergency right hook. Kato blocks it with a pointed elbow hitting the forearm, pushing it back where it came from and exposing Daichi's centerline for an elbow jab. The Navy SEAL counters with a spinning elbow, causing both of their bladed joints to meet and intercepting Kato's strike.

Daichi immediately launches a deadly reprisal in the form of a high roundhouse kick to Kato's temple from his backside. Kato ducks and throws his free hand behind his head to grip the flying leg and pulls back, forcing Daichi into a vertical split. Kato follows up with his usual lightning roundhouse to the temporal bone, but the older Yakuza falls back to avoid it, forcing the younger Yakuza to show his back. Daichi exploits this with yet another trip-up with cupped hands. Kato learns from the last few times, catching his knees and landing on all fours rather than on his chest, but this was just what Daichi wanted, feinting a clavicle strike by hooking his left arm around Kato's, but then transitioning to wrapping his other arm across the latter's neck and cranking back while dropping deeper into his seated position onto his opponent's back. When he felt ready to wrench it in further, he lets go of the left arm and puts his own free arm behind his back and gearing it with his trapping hand. Kato gags before getting his lower right arm behind Daichi's close leg, and then clutching Daichi's head with his head, such that when he slips further underneath, the SEAL's forehead falls onto the tiles.

Kato massages his neck as Daichi rises back up to his feet; his head, like Daichi's, has given up trying to hold back small bursts of blood, which have now trailed down both Yakuza's faces. The end was drawing near for the both of them. Kato rolled his knuckles as Daichi pounded his, and they both dashed into the fray, pushing aside, ducking, and Dempsey-rolling each other's punches before Daichi counters the latest right straight with a perfectly-timed reverse elbow. Kato reacts
with a notable wince and pulls back, shaking his right hand, which Daichi attempts to exploit, seeing no other hand reprisal by Kato, with a left rising uppercut. But Kato was going to respond, for when he reopened his eyes with flair, he then immediately tightened his leg's muscles, spinning his back left leg further away from his opponent. Daichi's own eyes widened as he realized that the younger Yakuza has stolen his move, but closes them again for the upcoming right check hook that makes him fall over. It was a flash knockdown, though, as Daichi windmills back to his feet.

Kato lowers his hands to emphasize his kicking repertoire, raising one knee high. Daichi takes the taunt and runs in. Kato immediately puts the foot back down and spins around, seemingly for a 540 kick. Daichi pulls back naturally, but the younger Yakuza feints the move the whole time, landing on his hands and knees and then back-handspringing, clutching the instep as he passes behind the Navy SEAL, and trips him once more. Kato suddenly frontflips, initiating a 450 stomp, which the older Yakuza rolls aside from. As Kato rises back up to his feet, Daichi attempts to lay him out with an overhead right roundhouse. Kato pushes it down, and applies the hangman's neckbreaker position, trying for the reverse standing shiranui. When Daichi's midsection elbow and right-on-left legvine prevents that, Kato opts instead for a European uppercut to the back of the head. making him bow forward and away from the latter. Kato then takes the elbowing arm, ducking under it and then ballet twisting it so that Daichi spins in place, giving inverse momentum for a thunderous jumping scissor-hook kick, putting Daichi down.

Daichi punches the ground back up to a standing position, as Kato back handsprings into action. They go in for a test of strength, battling each other for under-arm control. A series of underhooks and arm forearm pullaways, and acute upper-body blows follow, before the older Yakuza breaks off from the clinch and dives low for a spinebuster takedown. He tries to lift Kato up high to complete the wrestling move, but the younger Yakuza stalls the lift, sandbagging his weight back on the far side, and then lifting his knee and dropping his elbow simultaneously on Daichi's front and back chest. Now stunned. Kato falls back, Monkey-Flipping the Navy SEAL over himself, finally making the Naoko backflip mount, and landing one clean punch before hoisting Daichi on his right shoulder and driving him back down with an uranage mat slam through the coffee table.

Daichi again rises back up, having taken a metal framing piece of the broken table whose slim edge functions practically as a small machete. Kato back rolls away from the overhead impact, having clutched a leg of the furniture whose relative shape resembles a standard tonfa. Kato holds it like so, blocking each of Daichi's next high-high-mid-high-low cuts; after the last one is stalled also by his shin pushing against the forearm, Kato exploits the opening with a tonfa-like sideways swipe to the face. Daichi rubs his cheek a bit before continuing. Kato anticipates the return, catching a lunge attempt between the wood and his forearm, trapping Daichi's. Kato then grabs the other side of the table-leg, and bends forward, pressuring the Navy SEAL's ulna, and forcing him to drop the metal piece. Kato chops down on Daichi's elbow, bring his head close for a tonfa chop, succeeded by a front kick that propels him past a door in the observation room, leading to a carpeted colloquium area.

Finally, Samurai and Yinglong, again getting up from his one knee, stared each other down in the long conference room. Both men had just one more powerful gift to give, which they showed to the other by clenching a right fist. When they were both ready, they ran towards each other. The auras of their Irezumi practically sprung out of their backs, manifesting into their sheer will and determination, as they come within centimeters of butting heads, and launch their strongest-remaining punches; Daichi's overhead against Kato's uppercut. The Yinglong's arm naturally had further reach, so he knew he would hit Kato first, which he did. But not nearly enough, for Kato had set up a cross counter along with his outside power-punch motion. The side of his face grazes the last knuckle of the blow, causing a small, straight cut to appear on that side. Which paled in comparison to the utterly devastating blow that Daichi's chin was just too close to avoid. The
attack sends him flying, eventually crashing into the centered, sturdy study desk at the other end of the conference room.

-OST ends.-
Chapter Summary

The aftermath to the duel (and execution) between Kato against Hayashida, the former is kept in dull-eyes state while everyone else reflects on the drama that followed. No doubt, these turns of events have changed the state of the program forever... But just how?

-During Kato and Daichi's climactic battle...-

Yada: *In the bathrooms of the thirty-fifth floor, she finishes tying her boots and placing her business suit neatly into the travel backpack. She soon gets out of a stall wearing her KAM AtTac Saga suit. After checking the fastening of her gloves, she then looked to her hood, repeatedly moving it on and off from her head, noticing that her ponytail and scalp are lightly brushed.* No more hair-pulling, and now no static, split ends, or tangling. Great additions since our time in Fukuoka, Kato-kun. *Looks onto her InReTs screen.* "Ritsu-chan, how are we on the building's camera feed?"

Ritsu: "Our recycled footage is holding, but I'm beginning to think that the technicians and guards will be getting suspicious soon. Of course, I'm only an A.I., so there's no way I can compute when their intrigue will get the better of them."

Yada: "That's alright, Ritsu-chan. What matters is how fast do you think they'll reach here, given an average stair speed? Kato's complex, spatial algorithms make good work there, right?"

Ritsu: "Indeed they do, Yada-san. I estimate once they are alerted to a disturbance on the 36th or 35th floors, they'll mobilize to contain the threat in about six minutes."

Yada: "Six? Wow, that's plenty of time to escape. Thanks for the tip, Ritsu-chan."

Ritsu: "Anytime, Yada-san."

Yada: *Puts down her operational arm, and begins inspecting her TiSAS pistol again, until she hears the muffled yelling of a Navy SEAL-turned-Yakuza forcibly send another Yakuza down the halls above her.* Kato-kun, you promised to still be you. You can't be that if you die, so please don't...

-Later on...-

-Kato, audibly panting after their long-winded duel, remained with a damaged, but ready fighting stance trained on Daichi, who sat leaning on a conference room study desk, his head bowed.-

Kato: "Your dream of being a Kato, and saving the world as one of the disgraced, is over, Daichi."

Daichi: *Cracks up a bit.* "You think this alone ends things?" *Looks up at his former protege
with a bloodied grin.* "Everything's already been set in motion." *Begins supporting his slow, pained rise back up to his feet.* "More than you can realize right now."

Kato: *Is so grimaced, he has to close his eyes for a bit.* "I still don't see why you thought being a scapegoat for a matter like this was necessary. You could have easily shown this without making yourself a sacrifice! The worst that could've happened was that we'd have a medium-sized street war! That's not worth your life!"

Daichi: "Heh, then you haven't been speaking to your fellow syndicate officers. Though that's no surprise anymore."

Kato: *Is noticeably confused.* "What does that mean?"

-Meanwhile at the Theatre...-

Isogai: "Oh, so that's why you said bringing outside forces always ruins the Yakuza."

Akira: *Shakes the ice in his now-empty ball glass. His bottle of bourbon also ran dry.* "The Akamine Clan was changed forever, the moment this ghost known as the Syndikat attached itself to the other two Clans, and most of our unruly subordinates. They whispered into their ears like snakes, goading them to turn everything against their capital."

Maehara: "Kato knows all about that kind of feeling."

Akira: "My son always knew a way for us to win something in the darkest times. He just never knew a way where we didn't lose something either. So extreme, he became, ever since the injustices he face in the Navy SEALs affected him. And he believed maybe by doing this, he wouldn't hurt me anymore... Little did he know this is the worst thing he ever could do to me."

Okano: "If I didn't know any better, and I don't think I do, it looks like he saved your life."

Akira: "And he's also robbing me of everything left that I could care about. Why else would I threaten and beg Kazuhiro and a bunch of you into helping to save my son?"

AssUniv: "..."

Nagisa: *Then gets an InReTs secure call, which he answers.*

Karasuma: "Nagisa, have you and your team secured Akira?"

Nagisa: "He's safe, sensei. All threats have been neutralized."

Akira: "You kids don't understand; I am not safe, for I am soon to face the raven. Chairman Akamine should've told you all about my choices, and you can put together what I'll be doing..." *Stands up, holding out his wrists.* "Take me away. I can't stand seeing that Tocho building anymore."

Itona: *Cuffs him, and the rest of the team begins extraction of the Hayashida Family Oyabun.*

AssUniv: *The rest of the student-assassins and mentors, who were also linked to the call, listen on the Yakuza's cryptic words, and stand shaken, wondering if for all of the progress they've made in this struggle been for a losing effort in some capacity.*
-Returning to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building...-

Kato: "No way... The Akamine Clan would never fall to something like that."

Daichi: "Our syndicate isn't what it once was. It became crutched. Can you guess by what?"

Kato: "..."

Daichi: "Don't see too much trouble in sharing the load every once in a while now, huh? Thought you were doing everyone favors all this time?"

Kato: "So it's my fault? Being a person that wanted tranquility? To do right by everyone? That's my fatal mistake?"

Daichi: "Only ones crazier than you are wowed by your ability to escape messes that you yourself made or sought out."

Kato: "It's still a skill. And it still has purpose." *Checks his watch.* "I can still turn this around. And I could use your help."

Daichi: "You need to leave well enough alone." *Pushes off the desk, standing on his own.* "You've done enough. Destroyed enough."

Kato: "And let you die in shame just to make a point?"

Daichi: "There's only one way anyone can prevent that now. And it seems only you can do that." *Takes a heavy step toward Kato.*

Kato: *Takes out his Kimber Warrior II pistol, holstered secretly behind his slack's waistline, and trains it at Daichi.*

Daichi: *Continues moving towards Kato... Until he takes a step past the younger Yakuza, trying for the open door.*

Kato: *Though his iron sights remain aimed at the older Yakuza, Kato's gun hand shakes erratically.*

Daichi: "The window's closing."

Kato: "!!" *Takes Daichi by the back of his SEAL dog tags, throwing him back onto the ground right in front of the study desk.*

Daichi: *Looks up at Kato, seeing his teared-up face and inability to truly focus his shot.* "So there was always some man left in you, and not robot. It's a grace in this time, at least." *Gets back up and tries his leave again.*

Kato: "STOP!" *Shoulder checks Daichi back to where he started. His gun is still in the latter's general direction.*

Daichi: "You know what you have to do. I'll do mine." *Continues forward.*
Kato: "STAY THERE!"

Daichi: "Never." *Takes one more step that puts him just within a meter of Kato.*

Kato: *Heavily grinds his teeth as Daichi stands just before him.*

-BANG!-

Yada: *Looks up at her ceiling again, hearing the gunshot.*

Ritsu: "Yada-san, the radio frequencies and security cam feed are red-hot. Guards are mobilizing on the 35th and 36th floors now."

Yada: "Right. I gotta pick up Kato-kun." *Pulls on her hood, and with her TiSAS pistol in center axis relock, proceeds to the stairs. When she makes it to the next floor, she follows the carnage from the lounge room to the observation room, and finally into the conference room, where she finds the seriously-wounded Kato.* "Kato-kun!" *Holsters her pistol, tending to her boyfriend, giving some aside glances to the Navy SEAL, laying prone with a bloody hole through his cardiac.*

Kato: *Has seemingly shut down for a time due to the act he had just committed, as his pistol had fallen out of his grip and is resting on the ground and his eyes refuse to blink to stop staring a thousand yards ahead at the carpeted ground.*

Yada: "Kato-kun, we can't stay here. I know you're troubled, but the guards are coming!"

-The distant sounds of the men chattering and marching up the stairs were audible.-

Yada: "We've got to move, Kato-kun! Can you stand!?"

Kato: *Is unable to answer, still not responding to stimuli.*

Yada: "Damnit..." *Seizes the stray pistol, and briefly tends to the nearby windows, looking for any escape opportunities. Once she believes she has found one, she elbows the glass, breaking it. She then pulls out a Pivoting Wire Wrest and slams one of the titanium wedges into the metal section underneath it, and adjusts the other hook's angle so that it passes over the upper balcony three floors ahead, lodging itself into another metal section.* "Come on, Kato-kun." * Throws his arm over her nape and shoulder, and then uses the glove's adhesive wire properties to hoist them both up to the viewing ledge. She then uses an InReTs command to call back the wire's contents, removing the evidence that they were there.*

Security Guards: *With their sets of Glock 18s, M1911s, and MP5s, the suited and vested guards all arrive on the vacant floor, finding no threats, but a great deal of arson and an alleged murder.*

Yada: *Sighs, as she begins muting the radio chatter that she hears from the guards down below as they continue to scope the other floors for any evidence. All the while she looks at Kato, knowing that there was more to his shutdown than killing his fellow kyoudai.*

-The next day...-

-Most of the student-assassins, having left their prior battlefields as quickly as they came, all gather around a government-issue laptop in a grand suite of the Cerulean Tower Tokyu Hotel. Karasuma,
Irina, and Naoko were pulled in for a special conference within the Metropolitan area to address the happenings in the region. The latter was wearing a camera-feed contact lens and a microphone fitted on her watch.

Sanada: *Having finished showing video evidence on a wall-mounted plasma screen, including a news report about the damage sustained in the tourist section of the Government Building, he tosses the remote back onto the oval desk.* "... And with all of this shown here, I find that all three of your presences here to be more than just a mere coincidence."

Irina: "Secretary, if I may interject at this time, there is more to it than mere coincidence at work here. It's the Syndikat, the underworld presence of the Reclamation Society. Like we've been trying to tell you all this time."

Sanada: "Agh, again with this horseshit."

Naoko: "It's not noise and fabrication, Secretary. The Syndikat is real, and it has caused much of the damage to our nation's infrastructure for a considerable amount of time. Right, Karasuma-nii?"

Karasuma: *Remains silent; it seems he has had his fill of trying to convince his superior officer.*

Naoko: *Is hesitant after Karasuma's reticence, so she turns back to Sanada.* "Minister, we've-

Sanada: *Slams the table.* "Enough! You've all been causing more than enough trouble lately. You think I'm the only one that wants to bring you three back in? Practically the entire damn Ministry except for Karasuma's little bird cell wants to disavow you, let alone stop you!"

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: *Remain stoically silent, staring straight at their Secretary.*

Sanada: *Settles himself.* "Of course, you are the late Akimoto's protege, and the retiring Air Force Chief of Staff has been letting you off lately so that you can still be groomed to be his heir of the position. Even they have their limits, though; there's only so much collateral that legacy cards can allow us to overlook."

Irina: "We're no strangers to ultimatums. What's ours this time?"

Sanada: "You have one last chance to prove that the Reclamation Society or the Syndikat exist. That, or hand your resignation to federal jurisdiction. Fail to do either of these, and Karasuma's swearing-in as the next Chief of Staff is revoked, and you will all be tried for causing the arson and manslaughter that you've done for the last three years."

Naoko: *Raises her hand.* "If I may, sir."

Sanada: *Looks at and interrupts her.* "You may not."

Irina: *Older sister instincts kick in, prompting her to lean forward.* "Hey! Don't talk to your field agents like that!"

Sanada: "And don't talk to your superior like that."

Irina: "Hmph." *Slouches back.* "Just for the record, your deal sounds like thousands that we've
Sanada: "Because you haven't heard all of it. Here's the rest: Until this point on, at exactly..." *Checks his shelf clock.* "9:27 P.M., forty-three seconds into the minute," *Looks straight at the three with contempt.* "ONE day from now, you have the chance to prove you lot are not a bunch of crazy liars who need to seek reinstitution and instruction."

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: "!!"

Sanada: "I'd advise leaving, if you are to find your evidence in time." *Shoos them away before putting on his working glasses and picking up his pen to begin signing some other documents laid out in front of him.*

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: "..." *All rise up, bow, and then leave the Secretary's office, before departing from the Ministry HQ altogether.*

-Fifteen minutes later...-

-All of AssUniv were now out of the presidential suite, favoring the seated hallways adjacent to another rented room on the floor.-

Yada: *Steps out of the marked suite, awaited by the rest of her friends and peers, who get up upon her arrival. She is noticeably shaken by something she had just witnessed.*

Kurahashi: "Yada-san... How's Kato-kun?"

Yada: *Refocuses.* "He's recovered. Despite all the cuts, some bruises, and other injuries that I've seen on him, nothing looked as bad as that time I tended to him after fighting Craig and the Neo-Wolfpack."

Kayano: "How is he, psychologically?"

Yada: "He's doing better on that part too, having retrieved a grasp of the present-er, as best as he usually does. But that's not all we've had to deal with; Kato also received a phone call from his uncle Norio regarding the Hayashida Family and the ones that Kato had been investigating. He's also been calling one Hyun about similar matters."

Karma: "A Korean name? What's that about?"

Yada: "He left it at he's an ally. Didn't say any more."

Nagisa: "Fair enough, expected as much. And before that part? What happened?"

Yada: "The Hayashida Family has officially disbanded, per Akira's decision. He wasn't keen on letting what his son built go to the group that killed him... But more importantly, Akira just lost the will to keep going in this awful underworld. He's apparently booked a quick flight out of the country; Norio expects that he is never to return."

Nakamura: "I'm sure we're the only ones who actually feel sympathy for him."

Isogai: "And what about the Families that Daichi exposed? What became of them?"
Yada: "They also were ousted from the Clan. They won't care though; they're just going to join the other two Clans, as they probably would've done once the Akamine Clan was no more."

Karma: "That's the definition of a 'pyrrhic victory', isn't it?"

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's smartphone.* "An example; not so much a definition."

Kataoka: "This is all tragic, everyone, but we need to keep our heads on straight. What do we know? We know that the Reclamation Society is trying to goad the two enemy Clans of Kato's umbrella syndicate to team up and destroy the latter, thereby allowing the chaos and opportunity to hunt down the Mutated Tentacle DNA. We still owe all of our devotion to safeguarding The Legacy."

Maehara: "Where the Hell would we go from there?"

-But before anyone could answer, Kato appears from the same door that Yada left from.-

Yada: "Kato-kun..."

Kato: *Sighs.* "That's a very good question, Maehara-san." *Checks his watch.* "And I've given it quite some thought ever since I came to and got here."

Mimura: "Well, lay it on us."

-Three more people now enter the conversation, though Karasuma again looks displeased at the circumstances.-

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: *Their elevator's bell could be heard in the distance on the floor. The student-assassins then look over, before finding these three getting out and reaching them.*

Karma: "Naoko-san, that was..." *Exhales.*

Naoko: *Shakes her head.* "Yeah, I wouldn't even begin to explain what that was."

Kanzaki: "We're sorry for putting you, senseis and Naoko-san, in this terrible predicament."

Naoko: "Don't be, Kanzaki-san. It's not your fault."

Karasuma: "No, no it isn't." *His head finally rises up and gazes straight.*

Irina: *Looks back at her husband.*

Karasuma: "It's yours." *Stares daggers at Kato.*

Kato: *Stands straight after having been leaning on the nearby wall.* "It was you most of all who I wanted to stay out of my affairs and out of this war-torn city, you know."

Karasuma: "So I should just stay away from the Greater Tokyo Area every time you decide you want to shoot somebody on one of the top floors of its Metropolitan Government Building?"

Kato: "Damn Daichi didn't give me a choice. And you should know better to do so, given a Kato's track record."
Karasuma: *Forcibly grabs Kato by the collar; everyone tenses up at the sudden action.* "And you - myself as well - should have known this better too: We don't get to set the choices, Kato. We are only given them, and we have to choose from them."

Kato: *This time, he doesn't reprise the action, only letting Karasuma's fist settle deeper into his shirt.* "Then you're not going to mind that I made another executive decision, won't you?"

Karasuma: "..." *Continues to give one long, menacing stare at Kato.*

Kato: *Matches it.* "I'm sure you're going to like what I have to hear this time."

Karasuma: *Slowly lets go of Kato's collar.* "I'll indulge you. Hell, nothing can be worse than almost half an hour ago. Spill it."

Kato: *Readjusts his upper clothing.* "Thank you." *Turns to AssUniv.* "So, where is the coalition between the Kato Family and the AssUniv Program going to reach the next stage of the Shadow War?"

AssUniv: *All listen attentively to their peer/mentor.*

Kato: *Retains his apathetic expression as he mutters his next sentence.* "We will become a collective Black Operations Force for the Ministry."

-There was dead silence for a second.-

AssUniv: *The student-assassins, without Naoko, all band together to form their collective interjection.* "WHAT!?"

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: *All three had purely white eyes at the remark as well.*

Isogai: "What are you saying, Kato-san?"

Kato: "Just what it says on the tin. I want the Kato Family, and its associates - one of those being the student-assassins of Assassination University - to delegate further direction of their operations to the Ministry of Defense."

Fuwa: "Can't believe what I'm hearing..."

Terasaka: "Makes two of us."

Nakamura: "And probably the rest of us."

Kato: "I know your disbelief and doubt. But I gave this a lot of thought, everyone. Every second of the last," *Checks his watch.* "Six hours, devoted to it. And I'm not seeing any other way."

Kataoka: "Why?"

Kato: "We've been stockpiling the Reclamation Society's equipment for upwards of several months, ever since we've recovered the Mutated Tentacles DNA and forced the Society to make the next few moves. Beyond their excursions coercing the Yakuza, they've also tried to hit us directly but discreetly. Nothing that Miho's security detail couldn't have spotted, however. Failing
that, there's also the Tentacles DNA, which the enemy faction is after. It's presence as a modified antimatter vessel will draw national attention."

AssUniv: "..." *All look between each other with puzzlement.*

Kato: "And that's not mentioning that the Japanese infrastructure still holds some semblance of reverence to my Family's holdings. Even though I'm just some lowly Yakuza in his eyes, Secretary Sanada will definitely have to believe that the Syndikat or the Reclamation Society exists at that point. Karasuma's career will be safe, and we will be both supported and encouraged to finish of the Shadow War and ensure victory."

"That... Sounds good with all of you, right?"

-The rest of AssUniv contemplate the inquiry.-

Karasuma: "I am on a short leash, and I've been frustrated to the point of my own self-deprecation that I haven't yet been able to show anything for my efforts in ending a legacy so that all you kids have the chance to make yours." *Sighs.* "Kato, I concur with this movement."

Kato: *Bows.* "Thank you."

Irina: "As a former assassin, I've caused enough chaos to last the next three lifetimes I will experience. Of course, the only reason I've been able to realize that was because I shitted on where I ate and almost paid the ultimate price for it, but I suppose that separates the assassins that will live from the ones who will die. And I wouldn't have fallen in love, and well..." *Rubs her stomach.* "...If someone didn't bring some order into my life." *Smiles at Karasuma.* "Kato-kun, I'm supporting this too."

Kato: *Nods to that approval. He then turns to his peers.* "How about you all?"

Nagisa: *Steps forth for everyone else.* "No, Kato. We cannot approve of this."

Kato: *Understandably positions his head in an attentive manner.*

Karma: "We've known all too well that the Japanese government, especially if Karasuma became unhinged enough to do this himself, could resolve this with less sacrifices than we might have to make. Otherwise, I wouldn't be trying to join their economic industry."

Isogai: "But that's not the point, Kato. The Ministry of Defense has screwed us. All of us. Over and over again. Kidnapped most of us against our will, left us to the wind on recovering from the Assassination Classroom, and above all, they're the reason why we had to kill Korosensei in the first place. So that their damn Lance of the Heavens didn't kill him instead."

Kataoka: "What's more, we can attribute many of the antagonists that we've faced were prominent because of the government's incompetence or reluctance. Dr. Yanagisawa as Shiro, Takaoka, Principal Asano, they all had free rein to keep terrorizing us because nobody higher up tried to stop them, at least until we exposed their crimes. Dr. Machida and the Big Three are the latest of such cases; the Ministry could have found out about them and stopped them if they just listened to Karasuma and focused up."

Okano: "In essence, we're not willingly going to sacrifice any of our freedoms to those lying, or foolish, bastards."
Kato: "These are all understandable criticisms, but it paints losing a liberty as a permanent, significant thing, which it isn't. I wouldn't have gotten out of Okinawa International Penitentiary No. 2," *Checks his watch.* "About eight years ago the man you see before you today if I didn't taste what it's like to not have those freedoms you are referring to. It felt horrible yes, but in its place I found stability, order - these and many more I modeled the Kato Family from once I got out. All of the careful, intricate set of plans and speed chessplay that you've seen over the last," *Checks his watch.* "One and a half years, is because I traded a freedom. Not forever; just long enough for it to pay off in a big way. And this is no different; we're not going to be liaisons for the Ministry indefinitely; once the Shadow War is up, we'll be free and safe."

Nakamura: "I know this will be in poor taste, Kato-kun, but... Not forever? Like your ancestors before you?"

Kato: *Looks down in consideration, recalling that Kazuo, Taro, and Izo never exactly finished their service for the governing bodies during their time. And those who did get their leave, like Kazuto, didn't truly feel like that side of them ever left them. But then he turns to Yada.* "Come on, Yada-san. Tell me you're with this."

Yada: *Hesitates, before slowly shaking her head.* "I'm sorry, Kato-kun. I must draw the line here; AssUniv needs to be on its own, for it won't truly be us if we're a part of something like that."

Kato: *Sighs, before staring into her eyes with the slightest beam, showing he is not judging her.* "Alright..."

Karma: *Looks to his side, finding no one there. He then looks over to find Naoko having moved to in front of her adopted older brother.* "Naoko-san? Why aren't you...?"

Naoko: "Karma-kun, for all of the Ministry's shortcomings, they all can be remedied, if we're the ones to make them. I don't condone them hiring the Wolfpack to bring you in so that you wouldn't complicate the Final Assassination, but I can't do anything about that if I'm out where they won't listen to me. For them to acknowledge me, I need to be where they cannot ignore me. So I'm on Kato's side."

Karma: *Eventually caves into breaking a small grin.* "That's a Woman of the Law, the Prodigy. That's my girlfriend for sure..." *Refocuses.* "But she's also that who is on the other side..."

Karasauma: "Clearly, a division like this cannot stand in the AssUniv Program. But I've known better than to try and convince either side purely by diplomacy alone, given how intractable my students are."

Kato: "But that also means you know of a way to settle a class like this that is in civil discord."

Irina: *Smiles.* "Oh, that can't be any more true."

Karasauma: *Smirks.* "Indeed." *Turns to everyone.* "Assassination University, we are not, nor are we able, to participate any further in the Shadow War. Unless the whole team commits to one viewpoint. The winner's."

AssUniv: *The student-assassins all look between each other, realizing what's about to come. Some of the more bloodthirsty begin grinning.*
Civil War Space; Level One

Chapter Summary

In this several-part mini-arc, I attempt my own take on one of AssClass' most popular arcs - The Class Civil War!

After Hayashida's death converted itself into a tragic example of inconspicuous problem-solving, the message seemed to resonate extremely with Kato's mindset. He seems intent on changing the game of the Shadow War that will hopefully maximize the positive results chances in the conflict... But the methods stand in the way of the rest of AssUniv's ideals. Since they cannot proceed divided, they must all be convinced to fight for one directive... And the only way to do that is to show why the other way is superior.

Kato, with the support of fellow Mentors Karasuma and Irina, and latest Student Naoko, oppose the rest of the Students of the AssUniv Program. And it is settled on the same mountain they settled something similar before...

-Meanwhile in Osaka...-

-Akamine stands, watching the sky view of the Kansai regional capital from his ONE: Shot Theatre office, contemplating something.-

Byung-Sung: *Is shown to be sitting on a leather lounge chair, left foot on top of his right knee, and smoking.* "You're not as dumb as you are young... I admit, I underestimated you."

Akamine: "..." *Refuses to look back at the Korean Big Three Member.*

Byung-Sung: "Of course, how you dealt with with the rat you smelt was another matter. Throwing one of your most trusted under the bus so that the stench was exposed, and then all of them could be cut out like a tumor. You know, even for me, that's cold."

Akamine: "Cold? You're the one who turned them against me."

Byung-Sung: "No, they've always had that deep in them. I just gave a little... Push."

Akamine: "You mean incentive."

Byung-Sung: "It's human nature, mate. We always do what's in our best interests. Or what we believe to be in our best interests. For instance, they believed conspiring against you would make things better, but they never would've expected you to be able to one-up them."

Akamine: "They knew better; you ensured them otherwise."

Byung-Sung: "Which means I believed so as well. Again, I underestimated you."

Akamine: *Remains silent.*
Byung-Sung: "But now you have to do what's in your best interests. Again."

Akamine: "Or what?"

Byung-Sung: "You know what. Those underbellies were just the tip of an iceberg you've seen many times before. The other guys, however..."

Akamine: "Those guys?"

Byung-Sung: "Well, you're also familiar with them, but they're even less ideal. All it takes is a small push again."

Akamine: "And you believe my best interest to be?" *Finally turns around to look at the Korean in the eye.*

Byung-Sung: *Exhales smoke vapor and smirks.*

-The next day... 9:58 A.M...-

-Kato is shown to be sitting on a wooden ledge, clad in his KAM AtTac Mimir gear, in the middle of a seeming rocky forest. He is spinning his open flip-phone along the palm of his right hand, and twirling one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols on the index finger of the other.-

Kato: "..." *Eventually settles his flip-phone, showing his call log; the one who tops the list was Hyun.*

始まり:「戦争期」弧

Begin: "The Warring Period" Arc

-Several hours earlier, as the sun was creeping over the mountainous horizon...-

*Hyun: "It didn't work out as well as you had hoped, huh?"

Kato: "No, no it didn't. No one's to blame but myself, however; the AssUniv Program has been taught very well."

Hyun: "I wonder by who."

Kato: "I don't teach intuition, Hyun. Those students had that since forever."

Hyun: "That's good. Smart of them. So what now?"

Kato: "I need to step back from the front lines for a bit. Can you hold down your fort and scope the outside?"

Hyun: "I always am. Hoping to resolve some fires you've made by withholding some info
again from those kids?"

Kato: "In the end, you can say that."

Hyun: "Heh, then don't let me keep you."

Kato: "One more thing, Hyun."

Hyun: "Hm?"

Kato: *Clutches and rubs his eyes before continuing.* "There's a great chance now, that the storm the Yakuza, myself included, has weathered, Qita Kong might be a target again. Stay safe, man."

Hyun: "Worried about me? Well don't be; I've endured many years past my prime on the run from the agency I once worked for. I decide how I go. And besides, we're in Bizarro World now if I've been the one who remained skeptical of you until just recently. That's-"

Kato: *Scoffs.* "I know. Doomsday is pushed forward."

Hyun: "You stay safe. And don't do anything rash." *Hangs up.*

Kato: *Shuts his flip-phone.* A little too late for that. *He pauses before reopening the phone and begins spinning it around.*

-Back to the present...-

Kato: *After reminiscing, he notices a full complement of hoods approaching.* "Ah, the gang's all here, at precisely," *Checks his watch.* "10 A.M., as ordered."

AssUniv: *As they all reach the properly-razed section, they begin taking off their masks and hoods.*

Isogai: "Well, everyone, here we are again..."

Nagisa: *Is the next after Nakamura to take off his headgear and get a clear view of the unnaturally triangular sky horizon before him.* The Old Schoolhouse...

-Kato rose up from the roof of the place and dropped down to ground level. The place where Class 3-E was learned, and met Korosensei. After several years of neglect, the schoolhouse has seen better days, with some of the replaced wooden roofings expanding past the others, woodpecking damage on the pillars, and untended, faded windows.-

Kato: *Moves over to Karasuma, Irina, and Naoko, who were noticeably distant from their students.* "Great to see you all. Naoko-san, you ready to really stretch that suit out after having to take it easy the last few times?"

Naoko: "Oh yeah. This Saga's going to have to keep up with me this time."

Kato: "Oh, it'll be able to, don't you worry. By the way..." *Spins out a familiar pistol and hands it to her.*
Naoko: *Scoffs as a large smile forms from her mouth.* "A replica Pardini PC/GT." *Insppects and measures up the pistol.*

Kato: "An exact copy. You've been very comfortable shooting with it before, so I figured it might give you an edge." *To Karasuma.* "You didn't happen to expel any trade secrets, have you?"

Karasuma: "An interesting claim coming from you. All in all, they didn't learn anything from us, but we didn't exactly learn anything from them either. Save for our lack of numbers, which isn't really a handicap at all, this will be a fair contest."

Irina: "They better not fire at my belly. No matter how armored this is, and how many pads I've placed. I've got an embryo in there."

Terasaka: *Joins in the huddle with his fellow student-assassins.* "Alright everyone, did we all see our parents face-to-face before coming here today? Because I have a strange feeling fighting any of the ones we face today will result in us never coming back."

Nakamura: "When'd you become such a pussy, Terasaka-kun?"

Kataoka: "They're not going to go easy on us, sure. But we have the numbers advantage. And aside from Karasuma-sensei and Naoko-san, nobody knows Kunugigaoka Mountain like we do. We got this."

Kayano: "Nagisa-kun and Karma-kun, you two have spent the night formulating a base plan for the lot of us, right?"

Karma: "Oh yeah. We'll show them what we can do real soon."

Isogai: "We can second that. They came to us to finalize the strategy, and we were pretty pleasantly surprised. So many things considered for this assassination."

Maehara: "You can only expect as much from our AssClass valedictorian and the vice."

Fuwa: "Emphasis on vice."

Karma: *Turns to her.* "Hey-"

-Once the briefings were over, both sides came together for a relay of the rules.-

Ritsu: *Appears on a large set-up projector and screen for everyone to see.* "Hello again everyone. Now, for this AssCla- I mean, AssUniv Civil War, we will be competing under traditional team elimination deathmatch rules. Each participant will have a set of flags hanging from their waist which represent their hitpoints. If all of these are forcibly taken away by an enemy assassin, the victim will be eliminated. In addition, being knifed or shot by LuxBend ballistics, coming from a friend or foe, will count as lives lost."

AssUniv: *All of them begin putting on their sashes and activating a certain part of the suits, making their suits shine a vibrant layer before it dissipates; the color depended on whose side they were on.*

Ritsu: "To account for the fact that there are far more Students than there are Mentors in this
match-up, each Student gets only two lives, while the Mentors all get four of their own. Of course, if you are shot in the head, that will count as an instant-assassination in the game as it mirrors real life."

Kato: "There are no rules for the living of assassination naturally, so whatever it takes for you to get the 'W' is fair game - hacking, hunting, trailing or straight up killing. Just don't take it too far. And those who have been 'assassinated,' shut off your suit and your InReTs and return immediately to this Schoolhouse, to await the end of the game. Heh, the Assassin Games. The winner will decide the fate of the Kato Family and the AssUniv Program. Does everyone agree to these terms?"

AssUniv: *All raise their guns and shout.* "YESSIR!"

Kato: *Alongside Karasuma, he goes up to Nagisa and Karma.* "Best of luck."

Karma: "You'll need it."

*They all bump fists before departing alongside their team to their respective sides of the Mountain.*

-Several minutes later...-

Ritsu: "Alright, Assassination University. The Assassin Games will begin in three..."

Kato: *Finishes loading his XM8 Sharpshooter and puts up his headgear.*

Ritsu: "Two..."

Nagisa: *Finishes balancing a fixed MTech tactical knife on his finger, backhand-holstering it into his leg-pocket and pulls back his UCP pistol's slide.*

Ritsu: "One..."

Kato/Nagisa: *Both stare toward their next destination with utter determination.*

Ritsu: "Begin!"

AssUniv: *Both Students and Mentors charge forward, venturing deeper into the rocky forest that was Kunugigaoka Mountain.*

-Though it had always been present, the natural ambiance of sound enveloped everyone's auditory senses as the game began.-

チームの学生VSチームのメンター

Team Students

VS

Team Mentors
The Students team immediately divide into cells of two, five, and six and go various ways into the darker parts of the mountain's forest. Some of the splinter groups begin settling in their initial positions, documented on their InReTs maps.

Several minutes earlier...

Isogai: "Okay everyone, this is the plan." *Directs everyone to look onto their on-board computers as a split-screen of a data table and aforementioned map of Kunugigaoka Mountain pop up.* "We will be dividing into six uneven groups: two six-person assault teams, picked out to ambush our Mentors, two support teams of five and six respectively to assist in maintaining the numbers game and apply pressure, and a pair of snipers and spotters to cover retreats, pick off withdrawals, and spot our next locations."

Karma: "I'm leading AG1. Hara, Nakamura, Sugino, Terasaka, and Itona, you're on me. We'll be engaging the first attackers; most definitely this will be Karasuma. Terasaka, don't wet your pants from that order."

Terasaka: "Fuck you."

Isogai: "I'm organizing AG2, alongside Kataoka, Fuwa, Mimura, Okano, and Maehara. Kato is certainly the other first opponent to cross no-man's-land, and we'll be waiting on him to strike."

Kurahashi: "It looks like I've got Okajima, Sosuke, Takebayashi, Muramatsu, and Hazama for Su- SG1. We've got AG1's backs."

Nagisa: "Indeed. I'll be behind AG2 with Yada, Kayano, Kimura, and Okuda."

Isogai: "Chiba, you have Yoshida as your spotter. Hayami, Kanzaki. Keep our perimeters, peripherals, flanks, fisheye, however to identify our invisible sides ambush-free. And if you get attacked, signal your distress beacons so we can converge on your locations immediately."

Kataoka: "Everyone know what they're doing?"

AssUniv: *All of them go against their traditionally interjection-filled approvals and instead opt for small nods of understanding. Some needed more help then others to do so, though.*

Isogai: *Puts on his hood and mask.* "Then let's go for the kill."

-Back in the present, AG1 and AG2 are the leaders of the packs, climbing stone walls, knotted branches, and anything scaleable to traverse deeper into the Mountain's variable geography.

Isogai: *Covers behind a large tree trunk, marginally pitching his head around the bark to see what's before him. Finding nothing but brown, grey, and green, all of it undeniably natural, he turns back to his group, several meters afar, signaling them to proceed onward.* We must tread very lightly; Karasuma-sensei and Naoko both know this Mountain like the back of their hands. Bitch-sensei will get good geo-analysis from Karasuma-sensei, and Kato is a fast learner, plus he came here earlier; probably so that he could scan the entire mountain. Being extremely outnumbered seems like a major disadvantage, but that's almost not the case; they can be everywhere here just as easily was all of us can. *Turns back to facing what's opposite him, turning off the safety of his Desert Tech MDR.* That's why we must hit them hard; eliminate the chance of them executing anything big.
-CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK.-

Isogai: *Turns back immediately upon hearing a flurry of suppressed rifle rounds, knowing he wasn't hit by anything.*

Fuwa/Mimura: *Both of them rise up from the bushes they were using to cover their advance; their hoods (and for Mimura, his chest area as well) were struck by LuxBend bullets, which made their suits emit a glowing orange hue.* #1,2

Isogai: *Looks onto his InReTs to monitor the remains of his team's movement behind hard cover, preventing their opponent from assassinating any more of them.* Who is that!? *Moves to his integrated headset after selecting a name on the computer.* Hayami-san!

Hayami: Shush. *Is on a V-section of a tree, XM8 Sharpshooter rifle in her hands. She fires a LuxBend round of her own at a certain canopy in a set of trees in front of Isogai's team.*

Kanzaki: *Is seated on a flanking branch of the same tree that Hayami was on.* You hit Karasuma!

Karasuma: *Notices his right arm has been nicked by a bullet. He immediately rises up from his forward-leaning vantage spot and retreats.*

Hayami: !! *Tries to put another bead on Karasuma, but after several misses he disappears into the dense foliage dozens of meters later.* Shit. AG1, you're clear. That was Karasuma.

Isogai: You know where he ran off to?

Hayami: It'd take too long to climb the sheer rocky cliff. I'd say Karasuma-sensei went for the slithering pass a little ways over. Your East.

Karma: SG1, SG2, mind pursuing that? One takes the pass itself for an in-depth view while the other goes around and above it to spot any pitfalls.

Kurahashi: We can do that. Let's go, guys.

-Meanwhile...

Fuwa: *Stomps with frustration.* "Goddamnit, I knew I was going to be the Sacrificial Lion!"

Mimura: Fuwa-san! You can't give the rest of them away!

Fuwa: Just two and a half minutes into the games... A whole bag of tricks wasted!

Mimura: Yes yes yes, let's vent as we go back to the Schoolhouse... *Drags Fuwa by the arm towards the peak of the mountain.*
Part Two begins; already two of the Students have been eliminated, but Karasuma on the Mentors team has been wounded, leaving him with three lives left. It's still anybody's game!

-Kato Family Lieutenants Walsh and Teshima were the lead guardsmen for one of their boss' Kyoto lockups. Specifically, the one that housed his personal favorite Koenigsegg One:1.-

Teshima: *Hangs up a set of Acura NSX keys on the same hook of a wall Kato left them a week ago; the nearby driving/maintenance log shows that it had multiple operators since, resulting in it being in the "wrong position."* "To that new bingo card, we can now add 'plays FGO to the point of being better than us after just a week,' Walsh."

Walsh: *Is kicking back on the security monitors desk.* "I ain't ashamed; don't have that on my mobile."

Teshima: "Shame? Who said anything about being envious? I'm just happy he's having fun."

Walsh: "Well I won't deny that. Back when we were just starting, he was too much of... Us, actually."

Teshima: "Yeah. Now he actually passes as a man in his young twenties: Going to premieres, having a love interest, collaborating with people his age rather than double that."

Walsh: "I get it; he's always listened to the tune as he passed by; now he's actually immersing himself in the music. It's nice."

Teshima: "You think, maybe, our boss might not want to be our boss if he keeps doing that?"

Walsh: "Well he won't cast you to the streets, if that's what you're wondering."

Teshima: "Then what will he do when he realizes he likes the katagi life more?"

Walsh: "That, I can't say. Maybe we'll have to ask him."

-Knock knock on the garage shutters.-

Teshima/Walsh: *Both move their hands to their holstered pistols.*

Akamine: *On the other side of the metal sheets.* "I know Kato has left some men back there."

Teshima/Walsh: *Immediately put away their firearms.* "Chairman?" *Teshima lets him, along with his security suits, in.*

Akamine: "Kato wouldn't happen to be here, would he?"

Walsh: "No, sir. He's out on assignment right now."
Akamine: "Indeed. Matters not though; the time has come."

Teshima/Walsh: "???"

-Meanwhile in Tokyo...-

-The remains of AG2, led by Isogai, stay behind to lick their wounds, while AG1 and the two SGs proceed onward.-

Kurahashi: *Is the point of her team's hidden arrowhead as they traverse a pass surrounded by tall rocks on both sides, with the belief that the Mentors Team, particularly Karasuma, has been using this track to reach their side of the assassination field very quickly. She checks her InReTs, finding that SG2, directed by Nagisa, is moving around the narrow uphill trail to eliminate overhead chokepoints.* Some things have changed, certainly. We're capturing flags, not ones placed on opposite sides, but on ourselves. So naturally, we have no reason to be pushing forward, since we're not trying for an automatic win in this game; the only reasons we could move forward is for irrational ones, for the best course of action is to remain where we are and let them come to us. But its these exact reasons why animals don't get assassinated by other animals. For why we humans assassinate can oftentimes be very irrational itself...

-The team eventually reaches the end of the trail which diverges into more open forest. When SG1 looks at their InReTs again, they find that SG2 is now right in front of them; up on the trees' taller branches.-

Kurahashi: *Turns on her radio comm.* "Nagisa-kun, no chokepoints, pincers anywhere?"

Nagisa: *Puts his hand up to his ear.* "We didn't see anything. Nothing artificial in this whole region. You should be safe to proceed forward."

Kurahashi: "Alright. Cover our crowns." *Turns off her comm. She then signals her team to diverge into a larger blanket and push onward, pistols and rifles in hand.*

Okuda: *Jumps from one large branch to another within the canopies on the left flank of her fellow teammates. She continues trying to scope the area underneath her with her bifocal goggles, which Takebayashi was patrolling.* Still don't see anything... It's bizarre, they were just here. It makes sense they wouldn't leave like a wrapper, but there's not even any copper traces or residue, which the LuxBend bullets are made of. Karasuma covered up his wound as he retreated? *She tries to concentrate by leaning on the trunk, before feeling no give on its bark.* "Hm?" *Looks at where she laid her hand on the bark, letting go of it in the meantime.*

???: *A feminine hand then presses on her InReTs, of which now says "ARMED."

Okuda: *Her bifocal goggles now flare with activity, recognizing what she just touched... Was a mine! She has just enough time to gasp.*

-BANG!-

Okuda: *Is struck point-blank by a flashbang, sending her flying off the branch.*

Takebayashi: Okuda? *Looks up upon hearing the above crack and steps back a bit, not realizing he just turned his back on a flashbang of his own. When it detonates, it blows him forward, but he manages to remain on his feet... Until Okuda lands on top of him and they both fall down the rockier side of the plateau. Their collective mass eventually lands into an outstretched blanket tied below the cliff; when they do, the strings give and the blanket traps them both as they land even further below into ground level.*
Takebayashi/Okuda: A Carpet Trap!? *Both try quickly to get free, but are unable to do so before something pointy strikes them both several times. Though the cloth was not pierced, their suits still gave off concentrated points of discoloration.* #3,4

Irina: *After she was certain she had knifed the two of them enough times to be assassinated, she unfolds them out of the sheet.* "Alas, poor be-spectacles. I didn't break any of them, did I?"

Okuda: *Helps Takebayashi.* "No, Bitch-sensei. No you didn't."

Irina: "That's good to hear. I'm not used to playing that easy... Kanzaki and Hayami can attest to that." *Scratches the back of her head while simultaneously taking a step back.*

-A bullet grazes past Irina's face.-

Hayami: *Her eyes pure white without irises, it's unclear what she is more ticked by; the flashback, or the fact that she had just missed because Irina used a coincidental trick so suddenly and unpredictably to avoid the headshot.*

Irina: "WHOOP! Gotta go!" *Runs off.*

-Meanwhile...-

Kurahashi: What was that!? *Frantically turns, with the rest of her team when they hear the explosives go off.*

Kayano: *On another knotted tree, she does a rescan of the surrounding area. What she now finds disturbs her.* Everyone! There're mines!

Nagisa: *Double-checks it himself.* These explosives must have used and older version of the Octo-Ink Mk. II technology that are suits are using, so their appearance and material looked normal. Then when the time was right, the devices were armed, and now they whirr with activity...

Okajima: Anybody step on one of them?

Hazama: We can wire wrest up to SG2 personnel, without having to move another inch in this little field.

Sosuke: It's a little too late for that...

Kurahashi: *Looks over to Sosuke, finding that he is twisting the ball of his foot on one of the mines.* Oh boy...

Kimura: What's the harm? What if that's just a flashbang too, like the two we've heard. Those can't eliminate us.

Yada: You want to make that bet, Kimura-kun? It could have been Kato who put these here, tricking us into believing we could set these all off... And then we get blasted by paint. All of us eliminated.

Kayano: You would know best... But we can't leave Sosuke-kun here.

Nagisa: Everyone but Sosuke-san, wire wrest away. Then, when we're off your InReTs radar, Sosuke-san, fire off your EMP. you'll be free to leave.

Kurahashi: But he'll be without any faculties for the remainder of the Assassin Games!
Sosuke: Kurahashi-san, it's okay. Just get on out of here. I still have our cloth dyes, so I won't be without camo at least.

Kurahashi: Okay. *Signals for everyone to grapple up to where SG1 was and they all run the gauntlet of bark to further reach enemy territory.*

-A few minutes later, a suit's EMP can be heard being discharged. Despite their want to rejoin him, Kurahashi and Nagisa thought against it, knowing that one of the Mentors may have been waiting for just an isolated opportunity like that.-

Muramatsu/Hazama: *The two of them were protecting the two support teams' backsides, they were marginally behind everyone else as they made the jump from a low-hanging branch to a collection of logs and vines forming a sort of ramp back down to the ground.*

Muramatsu: *His KAM AtTac Mimir suit's power supply gives out with his left foot's landing, causing it to slip backward, intent on taking the rest of his body with it.* WHOA-!!

Hazama: !! *Instinctively catches Muramatsu's arm the moment he begins flailing to prevent him from falling. When she realizes he weighs more than she'd like, she also uses her EM-Traverse to hold onto a convenient vertical log for leverage. She eventually pulls him back up to solid footing.* You fat fuck. Lay off the Ramen tryouts.

Muramatsu: Sitting around reading ain't making you lose kilos either.

-They eventually mutually concede, laughing and bumping fists all the while.-

Hazama: Alright, let's not keep them waiting. *They both begin descending from the ledge.*

-But unbeknownst to them, the rod that Hazama had pulled out of place attempting to keep Muramatsu proper, had nicked something underneath the ledge. A moment later, their platform crumples, and they fall down the first side anyways.-

Muramatsu: *Shakes his head back awake.* Are you going to blame that on my fat lard too?

Hazama: *As she is rising back up to her feet, she notices something.* I don't think so...

Muramatsu: *Looks her way, finding something that shines amidst the broken pile.*

-CLACK CLACK!-

Muramatsu/Hazama: *Both of them bow down and wince upon getting shot in both of their right arms. They cover their wounds and turn towards the source, with only enough time to realize that it was Naoko, who is now getting the drop on them, knifing them both in quick succession (a la Edward Kenway in Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag) to finish them off.* #5,6

Naoko: "Sorry, my friends. It is just the game we play." *Salutes her fallen comrades, both with a pair of discolored dots on their suits, before taking out her Pardini pistol and running off as quickly as she came.*

Muramatsu: *Sits up first to watch her leave.* "Damn, she hasn't lost a beat."

Hazama: "Our leader better watch out." *Accepts Muramatsu's help up as they both depart for the Schoolhouse.*

Kurahashi: *In the middle of the exploring joint effort, she's realizing that the back duo have not
caught up to them.* Hey guys, what happened to Muramatsu-kun and Hazama-san?

Okajima: Not again...

-The sounds of ruffled leaves can be heard.-

Kurahashi/Okajima: *Both pull out their Ballistic Shields and pistols. They nod to each other and immediately open fire on the shrub.*

Irina: "AH!" *Rises up, showing that her Ballistic Shield had protected her from the bulletstorm's damage, but not from its impact, in which she falls over the edge they had just climbed.*

Kurahashi: *Immediately runs to that edge to pick off her personal Mentor as she falls.*

Okajima: Uh- Kurahashi-san, wait!

Kurahashi: "!?!" *Does not see her sensei anywhere to be found down below... But she does feel her lower torso getting pelted twice by LuxBend rounds. It's revealed that there was a drilled hole through the dirt at the edge and that Irina had used her EM-Traverse to stage a fall off the cliff, where instead she landed on an alcove where she could get a clear shot at whoever tried following her.* #7 "Ah, shit!"

Okajima: *Realizing the ambush, and being the last one on his team now that his leader had been eliminated, he runs off.*

Irina: *Climbs back up the ledge, making sure she sees Okajima's tail before she relaxes.* "No hard feelings, Kurahashi?"

Kurahashi: "No hard feelings." *Turns off her suit's powers.* "See you back at the top." *Begins walking away.*

-Elsewhere...-

Chiba: *Is scoping AG1's surroundings alongside one Yoshida wielding binoculars, until he gets a comm call. He answers.* Go for SD1.

Nagisa: Chiba-san, Muramatsu and Hazama are down. We've lost a good number here and we could use some cover fire.

Karma: You'll always have us on your reticule anyways, Chiba. Go help the support teams.


Yoshida: Right. *They both get up from their prone positions and proceed.*

-The sniper and spotter EM-Traverse roughly the same path that their predecessors/peers have, hoping to reach the remains of the support groups in record time, while also remaining vigilant in case one of the four hyper-competent Mentors might be stalking about.-

Chiba: *Now takes a three-point position while aiming his bolt action DVL-10 in front of him.*

Yoshida: *Realizes that they are about to go through a mountainous hourglass pass.* You have my back, right?

Chiba: Go for it. *Adjusts his scope's zoom.*
Yoshida: *Nods, arming his Micro Dynamic Compact. He treks the grounds slowly, making sure the corners did not yield an enemy KAM ATac suit, though finding none.*

Chiba: "..." *Zooms a little closer at the trees Yoshida was about to go between.* Yoshida-san, don't!

Yoshida: Huh?

-An InReTs computer shows "ARMED."-

Yoshida: *Once he walks past the trees, he is struck by the invisible Stun-Net, locking all of his biological systems and making him crash onto the floor, unable to react for a minute. All the time a nearby Naoko needed to double-tap Yoshida with her Pardini.* #8

Chiba: *Hears the silenced gunshots and sees where they were coming from but was unable to pinpoint the true source, as the corners of the hourglass pass prevented him from getting a lock-on of his target. He takes out his FN Five-seveN in case the assassin tried ambushing him as well, and he wouldn't pull back the bolt of his rifle in time... Which was all for naught when he sees Naoko begin running away on the rocky road above. He tries a long-distance shot, but misses it after the secret agent suddenly bows; seemingly to duck under a protruding wooden point. With the coast clear, he pulls back the loading bolt of his sniper rifle and runs up to the still-incapacitated Yoshida.* "Sorry mate."

Yoshida: "You did your best. Frankly I should've seen it coming."

Chiba: "The Nets have been downgraded for this match; you should be able to walk soon."

Yoshida: "No use for an assassin to pick up dead guys, even his friends, right? Get on out of here."

Chiba: "See ya." *Bows, and leaves.*

Yoshida: "Godspeed." * Watches Chiba sprint off. He then double-takes between his flanks and, when his strength returned to him, begins taking the high road back up to the peak.*
Part three is here, and the entire Terasaka Group has been taken out. In exchange, Kato has taken a pelting, and Naoko's been assassinated by Karma! The Assassin Games are heating up!!

-Meanwhile in Ibaraki Prefecture...-

Miho: *Her eyes flare up, and she quickly sits straight up from the bed she was on, looking around, before realizing nothing was wrong with the surroundings.* What did I just feel...?

Keitaro: *Sleeping right next to her, he recognizes that Miho has suddenly woken up.* Miharu? What's up?

Miho: *Initially turns to her husband with a shocked face, but relaxes into an affectionate smile.* Oh, it was nothing.

Keitaro: *Snickers.* Ah I get it, you think your parents might find you now that you're so close to them, huh? No chance; my old man and woman don't even know I'm here right now.

Miho: *Internally rolls with it.* Yeah, you're right. I thought so too though; I guess I just don't outgrow soldier vigilance.

Keitaro: *Proceeds to snuggle deeper into his fetal sleeping position.* That's why I didn't go into the JSDF...

Miho: *Spoons him.* And that's why you almost lost your win streak at four.

Keitaro: "Well..."

Miho: "Come on now; celebration time is over. We need to begin training you for your debut in The Ultimate Fighter. You're forgetting that it's only a few months from now." *Pushes on his upper back significantly insistingly.*

Keitaro: "In the afternoon. You tired me out already last night." *Refuses to break from his curl.*

Miho: "Uh uh, that's no excuse. Come on! On the bed if we must!" *Forcibly turns her husband onto his back and pries his arms away from each other.*

Keitaro: *Is too slow to stop his wife from full-mounting him.* Miharu? I thought we were-

Miho: *Then turns over and applies a Gogoplata choke.*

Keitaro: "ACK!" *Immediately slaps his hand on her lower leg twice.*
Miho: *Releases her hold.* "See that? I'm ZST Welterweight Champ now! For the guys!"

Keitaro: *Cranks his neck a bit as he postures up over Miho.* "Hey, I was the drowsy one who wasn't ready."

Miho: "You ready now?"

Keitaro: "Yeah..."

Miho: *Immediately locks him in another hold; this time a cravate choke, with her left knee tucked into her husband's chest and her right leg trapping his knees as she pulls down the back of his neck.*

Keitaro: *Taps out again. He falls over after his wife releases him.* "Goddamnit!"

Miho: *Singsong.* "Still a lot to learn..."

Keitaro: *Sighs.* "Alright. Let's really start."

Miho: "Okay!" *Begins to think about what she just felt again.* Kato-ani... You're not pushing away your family and friends again, are you?

-Returning to Kunugigaoka Mountain, where the Assassin Games have gone for an hour and a half...-

-While the two support teams covered the Eastern front of the assassination field, AG1 continued their advance on the West.-

Nakamura: *Carefully patrols one region with Kimura ahead of the rest of their squad, both with MSBS Radon rifles trained in front of them. She eventually notice something... Different about a certain bush in their horizon. She then gently nudges Kimura, bringing attention to the thicket.* Kimura-kun. You notice that shrub in the middle of the sunlight?

Kimura: *Focuses his attention at the round hedge.* It looks like it's changing its shading area repeatedly. *Their minds collectively flicker, looking at each other, then back at the bush and training their assault rifles at the bush, opening fire.*

Kato: *Rolls out of the bush just in time, shooting an XM8 sniper round while upside down in doing so. While it wasn't near close to marking either Nakamura or Kimura, it does make them turn away and fall over, giving Kato the advantage in escaping the compromised situation.*

Nakamura: He's getting away! Get up, let's get him! *Rises back up and gives chase, along with Kimura.*

Karma: *He and the rest of AG1 eventually get to the same area, having heard the brief burst of bullets.* Nakamura? Kimura? *Does to his comm unit to attempt to establish a radio conversation... Until he opts against it. He then notices Itona about to as well.* Don't do it!

Terasaka: Why not?

Karma: They've been one step ahead of us from the start, and I wonder why...
Itona: *His eyes widen, frantically moving his hand away from the device.*

-The two cats chase the mouse away from their attack team, through and over trees, before eventually reaching a standalone, steep peak. The two Students silently agree to take both directions of the rounded path, hoping to catch Kato in a loose pincer attack... But when they meet up again on the other side, neither of them have found him!-

Nakamura: *Alongside Kimura, actively scopes the upper levels with her Radon.* The Hell did he run off to?

Kimura: He's fast; not that fast though. If he climbed, we would've seen him. But we didn't.

Nakamura: So what happened?

Kimura: *Turns back where he came.* He stopped midway, and waited for us to be together, so that he could shoot us both down.

Kato: "Yeah, that's exactly what happened!"

Nakamura/Kimura: *Both turn their way towards the voice's source, finding a shadow fly off towards the left. Realizing they've been duped in some form, they both give chase again towards their target... Until they both get tripped!*

Kato: *Is shown to have little piles of assorted dirt, broken branches, and mud on his hood and upper clothing. He has seemingly burrowed through a hole formed by the exposed roots of a huge base tree and the ground underneath it to lose his pursuers' line of sight. He then carefully trekked to right in front of the group, and prepared his Pivoting Wire Wrest, waiting for the right time to straighten it out to pull on their ankles. In addition, he had an antenna microphone on, linked with a Throw Voice microchip.*

Karasuma: *Revealed to be the one who placed the microtech where Nakamura and Kimura heard it, and was the one who was the shadow form they had seen. He swiftly EM-traverses up the side of a tree, Five-seveN in hand, and double-taps Nakamura. Kimura manages to roll away from the first two shots, but a basement dropkick by Kato to the former's midsection keeps him in place for the second set of precise shooting.* *#9,10 "Got caught in a Kansas City Shuffle, kids. Kato didn't lie though, of course."

Kato: "Good thing you didn't ask." *Snickers, before he and Karasuma depart.*

Nakamura: "Our mentors relied on us knowing we were being punked, but not knowing how..."

Kimura: "It must be a curse to always be thinking like this..."

-Elsewhere...-

-Irina, dual Sa. 361 Skorpions in hand, is seen scouring another side of Kunugigaoka Mountain. She crouches down to investigate something of interest laid on the ground. The snapping of some twigs, and unnatural depressions in the ground suggest faint, but visible-enough tracks. She rises back up to proper standing, following the footprints to their maker.-

Okajima: *Observes her using Nano-cameras... While his hood steams with heat.*
Sosuke: Okajima-san, your infrared is off the charts right now. I thought you're hitched?

Okajima: I am, I'm just getting material to leave on this Mountain when I'm 28 and whatnot.

Sosuke: Don't you already have enough?

Okajima: You can never have too much, if that's what you mean.

Sosuke: Well... Could you show me? For tactical reasons, of course. Since Kataoka wants Bitch-sensei all to herself.

Okajima: Alright... *Begins preparing his InReTs to share his camera feed.*

-The sound of a Five-seveN's barrel prodding on Okajima's hood alerts him of his truly regrettable fate.-

-THWACK!-

Irina: *Is alarmed by Karasuma suddenly executing the voyeuring student.* #11

Sosuke: *Rises up in pain from inside a bush, clutching his headset; apparently, Karasuma had angrily played a ringtone at full volume into Okajima's communicator, blasting the high pitch straight into Sosuke's comm.*

Irina: "!!" *Trains one of her Skorpions in his direction and unloads its magazine, pelting Sosuke at least five times with the volley. She then begins to reload the firearm, putting the other Skorpion into her mouth before doing so.* #12

Kataoka: *Having hidden behind a rock and watching her little plan backfire, she decides here and now to leap off from the large boulder and gain an air assassination, knife in hand, on Irina. Karasuma could not pick her off due to a bad shooting angle, which makes her believe that she has this one in the bag, even if Irina turns around to notice the threat. Except...*

Irina: "?" *Looks over, without taking the submachine-gun out of her maw. It somehow makes Kataoka remember seeing a truly... Unsettling scene when they were still briefly at Hotel Keihan, as well as the special visit on AssClass graduation day.*

Kataoka: *The jarring sum of these collective, painful memories make her hesitate just a tiny bit, but enough for Irina to react accordingly; Kataoka's forearm pushes on her Mentor rather than the point of her knife when she lands, and Irina has enough time to take her other Skorpion and shoot her down with LuxBend rounds.* #13

Irina: "Whew!" *Wipes the beads of sweat from her forehead.* "That's so unlike you, to have a thousand-meter stare mid-assassination, Kataoka. What happened?"

Kataoka: *Feels the several places of suit discoloration with disappointment.* "I was just feeling weak. That's all."

Irina: "If you don't want to talk about it, fine. Karasuma, let's go." *The Mentors leave.*

Kataoka: *She continues to form and eventually relax a clenched fist.* Taken down due to utter
foolishness again! It's like I'm jinxed whenever I cross paths with Bitch-sensei!

-Meanwhile... Again...-

-AG1, now using the LINE app on their phones to communicate and their InReTs radar to coordinate, finds its remnants Karma, Hara, Itona, and Terasaka going through a relatively flat patch of understory.-

Itona: *His bifocal goggles raise an alert for him, prompting him to switch hands for his Patriot Ordnance PSG and look at his InReTs.* Karma, we've got a bogey approaching.

Karma: *With Terasaka peeking over his shoulders, he also takes a look at the live camera feed of Itona's flying drone. He then turns his eyes back towards him for a moment.* I recognize that set of legs anywhere. What about you?

Terasaka: Do you have a fuckin' off-switch? I'm not sure how she lives with you.

Karma: *Begins walking away.* We have our ways.

Terasaka: I hope you have one she doesn't know of, otherwise we might become just as buggered as the lot of us before.

Karma: *Abruptly turns back at him.* You still haven't answered the question, so I'm sure you don't recall. Maybe you need a reminder? When she shows up from the Southeast, you and Itona will be taking her on. You at least know how she operates very well.

Terasaka: And what'll you be doing?

Karma: Watching how two friends battle. I didn't get to see that too well when I fought Nagisa, so it should be the spectacle our friends said it was if I just spectate this time. Come on, Hara. *Leaps up to a high-hanging branch.*

Hara: Good luck, Terasaka-kun. Itona-kun. *Wallruns up another tree.*

Terasaka: *Exasperated, turns around to Itona.* You cool with this?

Itona: We were going to face her sooner or later. Might as well take her down now.

-A few minutes later, there was a sudden change of the winds as it became clear that the Ministry's Prodigy was approaching. Terasaka was very keen on observing that, and his shaky trigger discipline on his MDR began wavering.-

Itona: Keep your nerve, boss.

Terasaka: You weren't there the last time Naoko pointed a gun at me; she can get very carried away because she thinks I can take it; you don't know what it's like. *Beat.* I mean, I totally can, but it's not like I'm bending head over heels just to take it, yeah? You get me, right? Right?

Itona: It's alright boss, I get you.

Terasaka: Well good. *Hears a twig snap, causing him to violently turn around.* What was that!?
Itona: *To the shadows, boss!* *Pulls on Terasaka's back-portion of his KAM AtTac Suit, making it hug the bark of a very large, dense tree. The two of them still couldn't find the secret agent, but they could hear her one place, and then the next, with each of her steps seemingly breaking a twig of swishing the leaves of a bush.*

*Where the Hell is she?* *Then takes to his InReTs to access the flying drone, but the second he boots up its camera again, its shown to have a cracked screen but is still operating; the problem is, it is looking at them!* *What?* *Turns his head to scan their perimeter, eventually finding the heli-operated craft lying on the ground from afar.*

Terasaka: *She took that down, didn't she?*

Itona: *We got no eyes, and we're compromised. We need to change the scene immediately.*

Naoko: *Too late.* *Like an eagle, she dives from high up, thrust-kicking Terasaka aside, and using her other leg's knee to knock aside Itona's firearm and safely applying a full mount. She first begins by slashing the white-hair across the forehead and temple, and then pulls one of his flags off from his waist, eliminating him.* #14

Terasaka: *Frantically takes out his Five-seveN and attempts to aim it at Naoko, but the latter was much faster, dashing forward and rolling into an acute spinning hook kick that propels the sidearm aside, she then falls into a drop toehold, making Terasaka fall on his face. When he sees Naoko attempt a downward stab, he rolls away again and pulls out his own tactical knife.*

Naoko: *Begins the exchange by catching Terasaka's knife hand by the wrist, exposing his ribs for a horizontal cut. After taking a step back, Terasaka continues with a series of slashes, all of which were blocked by Naoko. He then pulls off a Winter Soldier shuffle, throwing his knife into the air. The confused Naoko later predicts the obviously incoming upper lunge, but Terasaka diverges at the last moment, eyeing Naoko's left-sided sash and pulls it off. She realizes this and clutches that side, hesitating before a chest-level stab. This time, she was the one who stepped back.*

Terasaka: *Feeling confident that they were both at half lives, he dashes in again. After another brief interval, he brute-forces Naoko in throwing one of her signature high kicks, hoping for a single-leg takedown. However, Naoko anticipated that, and feinted the apex of her kicking leg's lift, dropping it back down across Terasaka's exposed nape. She then jumps off so that she now sits in an electric chair position on his shoulders, with her ankles crossed blocking the latter's knife arm from reaching up to her, and plunges her knife into his chest, finally eliminating him.* "Durgh-!" #15

Naoko: *Backflips off of him.* "Sorry if that was a little intense, Terasaka-kun. You've certainly been an attentive friend; had to go through some pages I have only turned a few times before."

Terasaka: "Well..."

-CLACKCLACKCLACKCLACK.-

Naoko: *Moves forward unanticipatedly, realizing that she had just been shot in the back at least twice.* #16

Karma: "Aw, how touching. Naoko, do remember who's your boyfriend though."

Naoko: *Is initially shocked, but she dismisses it with the hint of a smile.* "You're definitely
getting jealous."

Karma: *Looks to the side.* "I'll make it up to you later if you wish."

Naoko: "If you want; I'm just happy that was a clean kill."

Terasaka: "Not you too. Why does everyone want to speak like this in front of me?" *Turns back to Itona, who was watching the scene in the background.* Plus, why did she target my entire team first?
Civil War Space; Level Four

Chapter Summary

The Students are beginning to grow wise to many of the Mentors tricks, and it comes to a head when Irina and Karasuma meet some quite terrible fates! But does it match the blowback that many of the Students receive? Or does it surpass that?

-Back at the Old Schoolhouse...-

-Many of the Team Students members sat with an air of disappointment and unease.-

-Naoko turns up on the far side of the school's commons.-

Nakamura: *Gestures with rubbing fingers toward Fuwa, who begrudgingly hands her roughly 100,000 JPY of notes.*

Mimura: "Naoko-san, it's good to see you. We were almost afraid this was just some survival exercise, and that we weren't supposed to fight back against our Mentors."

Naoko: "Well, we weren't infallible. It's just a matter between us who was closest to being so. I guess I was the worst off."

Hazama: "I wouldn't say so. We had a special thing going for Bitch-sensei. It was just a matter of time, and she didn't find it before you did."

Naoko: "And what would that be?"

Kurahashi: "Well, let's just say that it didn't quite work out so well for yellow antimatter octopuses, but it might prove perfect for young honey-trap assassins..."

Naoko: "Pudding?"

Sosuke: "Why would you think that one? We weren't spending all of our briefing concocting a giant parfait."

Naoko: "Showing a video full of old shame and flying in water jetpacks?"

Itona: "H-how?"

Naoko: "Look guys, we've had many plots, and all but one failed."

Okajima: "Well then this time like before, it seems good only has to win once."

Naoko: "So which one?"

-Concurrently...-
Irina had found nearby Kataoka that more of the Students team was nearby. She followed the path like she had done before, actively double-taking between it and the area in front of her... Until she hears a splash. As she just realized then, the trail was eventually leading her to the pool that Korosensei made for the students of AssClass almost an eternity ago. By now, due to unintentional neglect, it had become a bit of a frog pond with lily pads and fallen leaves on its horizon.

Irina: *Inspects the droplets of water on the elevated surface, as well as the lack of obvious marine life.* *There's definitely some of those kids in there...* *Takes out a spherical explosive device, with the engraving "LuxBend shrapnel" on its shell. She arms the ball and rolls it into the pool, runs to a cover spot behind a round boulder, and aims her Skorpion at the surface. A few seconds later, much of the pool's contents was blasted up like a geyser. The waters also throw a set of splashes toward Irina, which hit the rock, but she remained confused, as none of the students jumped out seeing the impending danger.* *Where are they?*

-Suddenly, two sets of white-hot eyes appeared behind the Serbian Mentor. What also glimmered in their shadows was straight reflections of carbon steel. They revealed themselves with a lightning-fast sprint towards their target: Yada, her old protege and Hara. Then came the other two, Maehara and Okano, who had their Ballistic Shields over thick vegetation covering to shield them from the shrapnel, who jumped out of the water and rushed forward. Eliminating the need for a protracted battle, all four plunged their CQC weapons simultaneously into Irina's back.-

Irina: "OW! Must you really stab me that hard? I got an embryo in me right now; I'd really kill you lot if you jabbed me like that into my stomach!"

Okano: "Lesson's got to hurt, Mentor! The fountain you created obscured everything for you!"

Maehara: "But I mean, she wasn't quite wrong in thinking that. We just came from the place she attacked."

Hara: "In case she instead opted to jump in after you."

Irina: "You all can be total brats sometimes... I wouldn't have it any other way."

Yada: "Thank you, Bitch-sensei."

Irina: "I could do without that, though."

-Meanwhile...-

Isogai: *While scanning the surroundings alongside Nagisa, Sugino, and Karma, he gets a LINE message from Maehara announcing Irina's subjugation.* *Gentlemen, only Kato and Karasuma-sensei remain.*

Sugino: Yes, Isogai. Only them.

Karma: They'll be the nightmare you imply, Sugino, if we let them get close. Even I wouldn't dare try my luck against either one in close-quarters. But if we can pick them off from afar, then we've got this. *Types in a message on LINE.* Hayami, Chiba, get into positions. Kato and Karasuma are on their way. Take them down as they approach.

Chiba/Hayami: Affirmative/Roger.
Karasuma: *Checking on his InReTs, he has discovered that Irina has turned off her KAM AtTac Suit's technology, meaning he and Kato, who was situated nearby, were the only Mentors left.* They're mobilizing to finish this fight.

Kato: *Is looking with his scope to find Hayami and Chiba both on the move, just beyond his XM8's range.* And they're going to have Chiba and Hayami put us down to do it. Smart move.

Karasuma: You got something smarter, I reckon. Because we can't ignore them; they'll turn us to cheese before we know it. But we won't beat them to their vantage point, so we'll have to take them head-on in some capacity anyway.

Kato: Indeed I do. Don't follow my lead and stay right here, out of sight. *Throws his Sharpshooter behind him and slides down the hill they were spectating on.*

Karasuma: What are you up to now? *Falls back behind the large tree next to him.*

-A few minutes later, the revelation came to light. Kato's master plan to combat the sniper circles was... Crawling very slowly towards them and the support groups that they were assisting.-

Karasuma: *Is monitoring Kato's movements on his InReTs map.* The fuck are you doing?

Kato: Performing my brilliant plan. Here, look at this. *Presses on his own touchpad.*

Karasuma: *Sees the data appear on his radar; the sniper's locations, along with Hayami's spotter (Kanzaki), Sugino, and the three remaining Leaders.* Hm... Good work.

Kato: Right?

Kanzaki: "!!" *Notices the prone Kato and fires her PSG rounds at him. Kato manages to cover his face to prevent headshots, and instead taking a LuxBend shot to his left shoulder. She then goes to Sugino to alert him of the threat.*

Kato: *Realizing he's been compromised, He springs back to his feet and sprints back the way he came.*

Hayami: *After lining up a shot, she finds that Kato's ability of rapid pacing is beyond her kinetic eye abilities.* Isogai-kun, Kanzaki-san and Sugino-kun have ID'ed Kato sneaking on us and is giving chase.

Isogai: Help them. Isolate him from Karasuma, and we can deal with them easier.

Hayami: Roger that. *Gets up with her XM8 and begins following Kanzaki's tail.*

Kato: *Ends up running past Karasuma and the tree he was told to remain at, and they both share a momentary aside glance before Kato disappears in his run, with the three Students pursuing him.*

Karasuma: Chiba's still out there, and he believes I'll be attacking from the other side... He won't even have the time to pull back the DVL's bolt for a second shot. *Reloads his MDR Compact and advances toward the other faction.*
Kato: *Continues to escape the three Students and their LuxBend bullets. Being the best of the sheer climbers and practitioners of tight traversal amongst AssUniv's ranks, Kato was easily able to flank the line of sight of his chasers, and soon enough the hunt ends with Kato now being safely above his trio of assassins.*

Kanzaki/Sugino/Hayami: *All of them watch each others' peripherals as they investigate the grounds from where they had last seen Kato.*

Kato: *Silently slides down from his raven's perch and arms yet another Throw Voice micro-machine, making the sound of a series of wooden and leafed stomps be heard from afar.*

Kanzaki: *The closest one to the sudden sound, she breaks off from the group to inspect. She tracks the sounds down to behind a lower cover ledge, which she ambushes, only to find no soul there. The sounds persist still, however, and further investigation reveals the Throw-Voice machine, connected to a sturdy dead branch.*

Kato: *Using his Wire Wrest as a harness line from his new vantage spot, he descends upside down rapidly to catch Kanzaki unawares in a North-South Cobra Clutch, pulling her back up where he was. Her struggle couldn't yield her freedom, but it did leave a sign in the form of a fallen knife that Kato knocked away before she went higher.* #18

Sugino: *Hears the carbon steel weapon fall to the ground and making an artificial noise. He runs up to the same spot, finding the discarded knife.* "Kanzaki-san? Where'd you go?!"

Kato: *Sits with Kanzaki on another tree altogether, who now has two slits across her suit's neck and chest area. He prompts her for a quick vow of silence with a finger to his lips, which she responds to with a silent giggle and nod.*

-Meanwhile...-

Chiba: *Still keeping his distance from the rest of the teams, he nevertheless retains a keen eye on what's in front of the lot of them, awaiting either Karasuma or Kato to eventually appear on his reticle. Until something seems off on his goggles' interface.* What's this? The local wind velocity and trajectory have considerably changed. And now they're back to what they were before. *Turns toward where the winds were coming from and finds Karasuma rapidly approaching. He quickly takes aim with his DVL-10 bolt-action rifle.*

-TOOHK!-

Chiba: *The LuxBend bullet shows a small projectile explosion to confirm contact with the enemy, where it looks like Karasuma's head was. Chiba cracks a small grin at his handiwork... Until he realizes that there was no prime discoloration on Karasuma's hood or mask; he had hit the back of Karasuma's raised hand; the sacrifice of a life to prevent an instant-assassination and throw him off! Chiba frantically goes to pull back the bolt of his sniper rifle, but Karasuma was right on top of him, kicking the lightweight, suppressed long gun aside. Chiba side rolls away from Karasuma's layout punt kick, able to take out both his Five-seveN and MT tactical knife, but could not take aim a third time, firing past Karasuma when the latter pushes the barrel to his flank, then twist-disarming the knife and icepick-stabbing Chiba twice with it in the ribcage, making him fall back.* #19

Karasuma: "Good shot, Chiba. But you needed more than one to take me down." *Shakes the
remaining stinging of his left hand and pushes backward, towards the Leaders Team.*

-Returning to Sugino and Hayami, the duo were sticking close, knowing now that being so loose was how Kanzaki was assassinated. Sugino takes the point, scoping a whole one-hundred degrees.-

Kato: *Using EM-Traverse to remain on a shady, elevated section of a larger hardwood, he eventually drops down between Sugino and Hayami, shooting at the latter's face-level to make her fall back to avoid. Sugino turns around right on time for a rock to the face, had he not put up his Ballistic Shield just in time. He fires off while in the Keysi position devoted to the Shield's construction, but hits nothing for Kato rolls toward him, making a much smaller, mobile target to hit. Kato springs back up to his feet right in front of him and immediately engages in some brief gun kata, with the two of them firing suppressed bullets left, right, and everywhere else.*

Hayami: *Gets back up to line up her XM8, but cannot get a good shot at Kato while Sugino remains in the fray with the former.*

Kato: *Eventually gains the upper hand when Sugino's rifle runs dry earlier due to Kato forcing an extended burst fire with involuntary finger control, and stuns him with a Shield uppercut before knife-lunging his cheek. This provides enough distance for Kato to fire off another shot with his Kimber Warrior II, distorting Sugino's left shoulder and making him fall over.* #20

Hayami: *Sees her chance to shoot Kato, but her intended headshot is met by a Ballistic Shield deflection, as Kato had rolled through the shot and fired one of his own using his other Kimber, distracting Hayami once again and buying enough time yet again to close the distance. Hayami was not hopeless still, however, foregoing her shooting habits by immediately turning over her HK rifle and attempting to strike Kato in the face with its stock. Kato sees it coming and blocks it with his shield. Pushing it aside gives Hayami the momentum for a surprise knife slash straight out of its holster, which Kato pulls back from. He takes aim with his left Kimber, but Hayami's rifle was returning back close to her and hammers it out of his hand. As she tries to focus her firearm this time, it is intercepted by a well-timed kick by Kato, who had taken the knife out of his chest pocket and attempts an icepick stab. Hayami sidesteps it and rams the stock into Kato's midsection. Kato steps back and gives space for Hayami's rifle barrel to straighten, but Kato again pushes it down. Hayami is forced to let go of the handguard to push Kato's own hand down and push him into the nearby tree with her rifle as a secondary wall. Kato anticipates this, firing off his Forearm Gun... With smoky results. The haze definitely hurt Hayami, however, which made it easy in turning the exchange around and instead pinning Hayami to the bark. She tries for another lunge, but Kato's right Kimber picatinny rail serves as an battleaxe's beard to knock it aside and serves as half the motion for the handgun to be fired behind his back, plunging a single LuxBend bullet into Hayami's waistline.* #21

Kato: *Having dealt with Hayami, he goes for his fallen Kimber, but senses another soul nearby and trains a single pistol at them; it was Kayano, who has initiated a Mexican Standoff. Neither side was going to leave without at least one life being taken off their tally it seems... the man noticed something surprising in the distance.*

Kayano: *Noticing his shock, she makes the mistake of turning around, which was punished by Kato front-kicking her sidearm away and throwing his free arm around her neck in a hostage maneuver. The third party is revealed to be Karma, who wasn't expecting Kayano to also be there, resulting in many of his shots hitting her instead.* #22

Karma: *Discouraged, he escapes the conflict.*
Kato: *Puts two slugs into Kayano's back to un-complicate matters.* "Sorry about that, Kayano-san."

Kayano: "Don't lose sleep. Had I been in your position, I probably would've done the same."

Kato: *Salutes her, then runs off, activating his communicator again.* Karasuma, my sniper's down. How about you?

Karasuma: Chiba is assassinated. Let's reconvene to handle the rest.

Kato: I got ya. *Turns it off and begins running to the center stage. Just as he reaches his destination however, he turns back with his Kimber Warrior and aims at the canopy of a nearby tree, where Yada was.*

Yada: *Both of them refuse to say anything to each other as they both point their pistols the other way. Their eyes speak for them - of the pain, joy, thrill, rage, confusion, misery, and all in between, that the two faced together. They both seem Hell-bent on doing what they must, and yet neither is ready to flex their trigger fingers.*

-CLACK!-

Yada: *Her right shin gets struck by a LuxBend bullet, forcing her to slip off of the tree she was perched on.*

Karasuma: "Stay focused, Kato! I'm after Hara now." *Leaves as quickly as he came.*

Kato: *Refocusing, he runs up to Yada, pulling off one of her flags.* #23

Yada: *Realizes that she's just been eliminated.* "Would you have lost had he not shown up?" *Accepts some help up.*

Kato: "Let's just say, I've been in this," *Almost goes for his watch, but decides against it.* "...Long enough to understand even deeper that just because you can do everything, doesn't mean you should."

Yada: "I'm just a dead woman right now, of course, but if they could have points to deliver, could your statement possibly include selling souls?"

Kato: *Hesitates and does not answer, before walking away.*

-Returning to Karasuma...-

Karasuma: *Follows the heavy tracks of one Hara as it takes him to a crater-like area of Kunugigaoka Mountain.*

Hara: *Holding a large rock and up on a high branch, she is ready to play to her strengths and pull off her patented "Anvil-Drop" assassination. She gains momentum as she falls like a piano right above Karasuma.*

Karasuma: *Back-rolls just in time to avoid the assassination, who then shoots Hara in the back twice.* #24 "Knew that was coming..."
-But then, something falls out of Hara's pocket.-

Karasuma: *live grenade!?* *He attempts to escape its radius (while Hara wraps herself in the ballistic blanket that held her boulder), but realizes that other primed explosives have been laid out in the area.* *Oh shi-

-BOOM!-
Civil War Space; Final Level

Chapter Summary

The finale of the Assassin Games are here! Only Kato remains on the Mentors Team to oppose Nagisa, Karma, Okano, Maehara, and Isogai! How will this end?!

How will the next thing begin?

-Karasuma's entire KAM AtTac Mimir Suit, as a result of the massive blast, has been discolored. By mutual agreement, though he technically would have had one life left from this one-time attack, Karasuma was deemed assassinated.-  #25

Karma: *Sees the smoke clouds dissipate from afar.* Man, that was actually pretty cathartic to do.

Nagisa: Ritsu-chan relayed us the details. That definitely eliminated Karasuma-sensei.

Isogai: Then all who's left is Kato, us, Okano, and Maehara-san.

Nagisa: Only thing though, he's the most elusive of them, however. Don't see how we're going to find him.

-Nagisa was not lying, and everyone else knew it; the five remaining Students all converged and hunted together, in search of the Kazmanian Devil, and yet no luck found. Hours went by and it became almost dusk. Until...-

Maehara: *Using the infrared of his bifocal goggles, he comes across something interesting.* Hey guys, turn on infrareds and look this way.

AssUniv: *All turn on the light filter and gaze at the nearby boulder. They find a message on the hard place, written in unstably-burning nanopaste: "COME TO THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE."*

Karma: Gutsy little show-off... He wants to take us down right in front of everyone else.

Maehara: He always was a bit of a ham, after all.

Isogai: What's clear is we're not going to find him anywhere else; we're going to have to give him what he wants, or this just won't end.

Okano: And if the entire section is rigged?

Nagisa: There's five of us; what can he do that could take us all out so abruptly?

-Roughly ten minutes later...-

Students: *The five of them all arrive at the Schoolhouse from the front. They all take off their
headgear in confusion.*

Terasaka: "Whoa, what are you all doing here?"

Nakamura: "Don't tell us Kato-kun took you all down in one fell swoop."

Isogai: "He's the reason we're here, but not because we've been eliminated."

Kataoka: "He's lured you all here?"

Okano: "Yeah, and yet judging by your responses, you all don't even know he's here."

Kayano: "What do you reckon he'd want to do?"

-The entrance door springs open.-

Kato: "That's the billion-dollar question, isn't it?" *Steps out from the shadows; his faded jade eyes showcasing a brightness and pulsating energy that the student-assassins haven't seen in a decent while.*

Isogai: *Signals for all of them to aim their guns at Kato.*

Kato: "Oh, so this is how the Assassin Games ends, everybody? An execution for exemption? A baptism for laxity? Is this what will be the," *Checks his watch.* "First of many showings of Freedom's liberating power?"

AssUniv: "..."

Kato: "I want my money's worth! None of you over there got to show your colors! Do something about it! Or will I be assassinated as a martyr?"

Nagisa: *This is so wrong...

Karma: *But so right.*

-Simultaneously, all five of the Students let go of their firearms, letting them fall onto the ground. They then pull out their fold-out Recon knives.-

Kato: "That's more like it." *His massive grin intensifies, with him putting one of his fixed CRKT tactical blades' into his mouth. He then takes out two more and attaches them upside down so that they now clamp onto his flags. Finally, two Microtech Troodon knives are slid out, each taking one of his hands.* "Geh readi, efreyone. You're in fuh ah show."

AssUniv: *All of them line up with their knives before them, ready to confront their last Mentor as he sprints toward them.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "Bug's Warrior" plays.-

加藤和彦VSチームの学生
Kazuhiko Kato; Team Mentors Member

VS

Team Students; Nagisa, Karma, Isogai, Maehara, Okano

Kato's first move after getting a running start was to break the line that the five students had formed without taking a gash. To do this he jumped up high, looking to dive right into their fray, but instead it gave him the sideways momentum for a barrel-roll sweep kick, tripping up Nagisa and Maehara, and Isogai was push-kicked over as well, while Okano and Karma, who were at the ends, back away. Kato swiftly rises back up to his feet, deflecting one of Okano's slashes so that she ends up running into Karma, briefly locking those two. Isogai was next for a horizontal cut at face level, which the former ducks under, tucking his shoulder into his plexus, and then straightens, throwing Isogai up into the air, leaving him helpless for a chest slash. Nagisa and Maehara's shin-level reprisals force Kato to hop back, and Okano somersaults over them for her own aerial ambush, which Kato sidesteps. She attempts a handstand kick to throw Kato off, but the latter is no stranger to such a strategy and rejects it with a knee to the chest, knocking her onto her back, and vulnerable for a rolling cut vertically across her torso.

Maehara, risen again, tries for a neck laceration, which Kato blocks by tilting his head so that the knife in his mouth was perpendicular to it. With the attack stopped dead, he then headbutts Maehara and Drunken front kicks him back. Now supine, Karma goes for a diving stab on Kato, which meets only dirt when the latter slides away, coming up to Nagisa. The blue-haired man finds the chance to steal a Flag when he uses his dimmutive shape to fly underneath a savate kick, but the knife attached to his waist rises up due to the jumping elevation, and comes down back on the flag at the point where he is supposed to grab it, forcing Nagisa to abort his plan.

Isogai is the next to take a big cut when he forgets about the knife in Kato's mouth when he lunges in, now taking its blade to his temple. He learns in the next exchange, after Kato had repulsed the rest, by kicking the blade section so that it twists out of his maw's grip, but a mistimed follow-up icpick stab results in him being hip tossed over towards his allies, and Kato descends his blade in a zig-zag motion up Isogai's arm, concluding at the ribcage area and giving the first fatal wound. When Isogai attempts a lift-up kick to counter, Kato answers with a block, followed by a stretch muffler lift, exposing his stomach for a disemboweling cut.

Kato now backs away, letting Isogai fall back to the ground (and find his way off the battlefield). Realizing what he wants to do next, he begins sticking the pommels of his Troodon knives into his suit for a brief time, allowing his hands free rein to take a smoke grenade out from behind him and pull the pin. When the device falls to the ground, the surroundings are engulfed in a white haze. Some of the remaining four try to rush Kato before it fully develops, but they only make contact with his silhouette, which deforms into a natural gust pattern afterwards.-

Kato: "The second you try to put your goggles back on, you're dead. So don't." *His voice echoes around the area, so nobody knows where it really is coming from.*

Karma: *Daring to act against God, his hand slowly moves to his goggles hanging like a necklace, which results in a knife being thrown and stuck directly in front of his right foot.* "He definitely means it." *Picks it up and stashes it behind him.*
Okano: "I hate it when he means it."

-The four Students continued to cautiously tread the obscure grounds, hoping to find Kato somewhere in the fog before he found them. Wishful thinking, unfortunately, and Kato begins by using a series of atmospheric noises to throw everyone off. He then quite literally throws afterward, by launching another of his fixed CRKT knives toward Maehara. This results in the blade sticking into his shoulder, which he pries off in frustration, representing a life lost regardless.

Maehara remains on high alert following his significant damage, unaware that Okano was going to be the next victim. She too remains vigilant, perhaps so much so that she repeatedly turns around frantically to prevent the Yakuza from getting the drop on her. This does not help when the Kazmanian Devil remains low with a silent stride, able to sneak up with relative impunity. Kato appears behind her and pulls her back deep into the haze. The neck area of her suit shows stress as she is forced to evacuate the area. #27

Maehara hears the sounds of a reverse thrust coming from a knife and swings wildly in its direction. It was certain he wasn't sure if he might actually be trying to attack his fellow colleagues, but there were perhaps too many questions running through his head already to mind... Which nevertheless leaves him even more vulnerable to a behind strike; a downward carve down his brain stem, in fact. #28

Having dealt the damage he wanted to, Kato then presses on his InReTs, which seemingly activates some fans from the other side of the Schoolhouse's windows, blowing away the smoke, and revealing the final three competitors: Kato, with two lives left, against Nagisa and Karma, also with two lives apiece. Being the superior combatant, Kato easily sees through most of their knife tricks, and them between his arm span to prevent effective collaboration. The blue and red-hair cannot risk losing another life; they back away from Kato and reconvene, realizing they require a master plan of assassination to end this battle swiftly.

They initially try a traditional Isogai/Maehara double-lunge, but a simple outwards parry makes it so that Karma's knife almost gashes at Nagisa's face. On Karma's flank, the redhair throws a mule kick followed by an icepick stab, but Kato blocks both with ease and slides his knife arm across Karma's own, until his blade stops an inch away from his mouth; this would've marked the loss of one of Karma's lives had Kato not shown willing restraint. Karma pushes it away and tries for a downward kesagiri slash, which Kato reverses into a shoulder lock, with his knife again going down the former's arm, and stopping before it carves through his nape.

Nagisa finds that moment during Kato's whirlwind of destruction to try and get a shot on him. The latter lets Karma go and pushes him away, turning his attention to the bluehair. A mistimed lunge by the Nagisa results in his arm getting stuck in a pincer trap between Kato's forearm and the blade, which would undoubtedly leave a mark if the Yakuza finds a chance to pull back. Nagisa doesn't let that happen, relaxing his arm and letting it slip out from the bottom... But that means losing his knife in the process. Kato takes the CQC weapon before it falls and tosses it back to him. Nagisa hesitates to return into the fray until Karma gets back to his side.

Karma and Nagisa both nod to each other, seemingly having one last trick up their sleeves. Nagisa remains in the outskirts while Karma briefly engages Kato.-

Kayano: *He's going for it!*

Naoko: *The Clap-Stunner?*
Yada: You did say he finally perfected the move while fighting Takaoka. They're definitely facing someone much more dangerous than him this time, so why not give it a shot?

Chiba: Kato knows all about the move, however, and Nagisa cannot feint the technique like he did against Takaoka. How he aims to pull it off here will surely be grand in its own way.

-Karma continues to pressure Kato with a series of cutting motions that are close enough to pressure the latter's mind, while his attention is still divided between the two of them. Kato is not worried, however, as his mind has already cleared for the upcoming nerve attack. After all, he is a master of all of his body's systems; such foreign disruption alone could not harm him.

Nagisa finds his chance, just as Karma is kicked away, and rushes forward. Kato naturally sees it coming and it looks to be a bust when he lethally glares back... Until the move happens behind him! Karma performed the Neko-damashi as he was repulsed! And with attention divided again, Nagisa finally pulls of his, much stronger Clap-Stun, which seemingly fires a beam straight into Kato's brain.-

Irina: Whoa, one after the other!

Terasaka: Making a move unexpected by having them expect one anyways, but give them the other.

Nakamura: That's an AssClass/AssUniv-only concoction.

Karasuma: *Remains vigilant with his crossed arms.* "...

-Kato is only instantaneously immobilized, but an instant has always been all that the student-assassins needed, and this time was no different. Karma runs in immediately, hoping to run him through simultaneously with Nagisa. Kato still recovers enough to twist his waist so that both of their knives miss. They abort to their second objective of grabbing flags. Nagisa finds himself unable to as the centripetal motion of Kato's torso sends the waist-lodged knife careening very close to his face due to his small stature. Karma had more luck, finding the right moment while the dagger on his side is lifted, allowing him to take the flag. The two forces end up sliding to the opposite sides of a primed Kato, and finding their first batch of success, they seem insistent on doing it again... Except for one problem.

Another cloth falls next to Kato on his right side. Karma's right-waist flag had also been taken from the struggle. The redhair scoffs at that, only to realizing his hip has also been punctured. Karma has been eliminated.- #29

Kato: "Almost got me, there. But Nagisa-san, you're the last one. What do you have left for us, Valedictorian?" *His almost Glasglow-like grin has faded, replaced by an expression of pure seriousness and determination.*

Nagisa: *Realizes the loss of Karma, but remains focused on Kato in case he initiates a rush. When he doesn't, Nagisa runs in himself, but is immediately repelled by a a knife pointed at his chest. Nagisa pushes it aside and goes up anyways, leading to his dagger being forcibly turning against him, and cutting at his wrist. Nagisa steps back and accepts his knife back after Kato again tosses it back to him.* Clap-Stun won't work on someone this determined, and he won't fall for any more feint attacks I could make at this point... *He drops all of his thoughts as he again closes the fray... His knife is not only immediately rejected but as it is pushed aside, Kato immediately
follows with a right kitchen sink knee strike and then a left hook to the temple. The concussive blows make Nagisa fall onto his back, and Kayano to look away for a brief time. Still, after a few seconds, the blue-haired man finds the will in him to get back up for another.*

Kato: "You still want to fight, despite how much it could be killing you inside?"

Nagisa: *Finally rises back to a pair of strong feet, rubbing his bruised cheek.* "That's just the thing, Kato-san. The world doesn't tell me when I'm done. Only I can. Only I do."

Kato: "!!" *Sprints one last time towards Nagisa, who has readied up again with his knife in abierta stance.*

AssUniv: *The finale of the ordeal happens off-screen, but all of them are utterly surprised by what had happened next.*

OST ends.-

-Several minutes later...-

AssUniv: *All of the students and mentors were together in front of the old Class-E Schoolhouse, facing the same direction. As expected, Nagisa was the one who lost that duel, with his Octo-Ink involuntarily showing discoloration as a result from Kato's Catalyst-infused knife.*

Kato: *Stands on the elevated entrance platform of the run-down building, gathering the attention of his peers.* "Alright everyone. There is no denial of the results; we have a clear victor, and that was Team Mentors... Specifically, me." *Cracks a smirk.*

Karasuma: *Crosses his arms a little more frustratingly at that remark.*

Kato: *His expression turns normally serious immediately afterward.* "But it should be asked," *Checks his watch.* "One more time... Are all of you okay with this, and the decree of the established rules?"

Karma: "Don't overstay your welcome, Kato, but at the same time, we agreed to it."

Okano: "This ain't the first time a lot of us had to swallow our pride, admit someone was the better person that day."

Kataoka: "The assassin world... Suddenly enemies one instance, friends again the next."

Terasaka: *Laughs.* "Heh, I'm not entirely convinced that we just fought this only because we knew once we vented everything out, we could be true buddies once again. We've done it many times before."

Kato: "That a yes?"

Nagisa: "It is, Kato. Give us the pill and we'll take it."

Kato: *Nods.* "Alright..." *Rubs his palms together.*

Kayano: "Oh boy, I think he's overdoing it just like you warned, Karma-kun."
Fuwa: "Of course he is. I wonder why..." *Looks aside at something that makes a sparkle from within the grass.*

Kato: "The AssUniv Program..." *Dramatic pause along with a large inhale.*

AssUniv: *Some of them take a deep breath, allowing themselves to better resign to their decree.*

Kato: "BOIIIIIIIII." *Clears his throat.* "The AssUniv Program..."

AssUniv: "SAY IT ALREADY!"

Kato: *Gestures to settle down.* "Alright, alright." *Clears his throat.* "The AssUniv Program..."

AssUniv: *Again listen attentively.*

Kato: "... Shall be renamed to 'THE, AssUniv Program'."

-All of the student-assassins turn black and white.-

AssUniv: "HUUUUHHH!!!?"

Kato: "That's all the lot of you have to do; agree to be a part of something now called THE AssUniv Program, and own up to everything it entails. That latter half shall be no problem for you, actually. In fact, it's really funny, you've been doing a lot of it," *Checks his watch.* "Recently, under the old name of The AssUniv Program. In fact, I don't think you need to change a thing; whatever you all and we got here is damn impressive."

Karasuma/Irina/Naoko: *All of the other Mentors are flabbergasted.*

Isogai: "Kato-san, we're not going to join the Defense Ministry?"

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "Nah."

Sosuke: "But you and the Mentors fought just so that you could do that!"

Kato: "Ah ah ah, the rules were that the surviving winner or winners decide the fate of the AssUniv Program. You made the mistake of believing that all this time my decision was to bring you all into the Japanese infrastructure."

Yoshida: "Well, wasn't it?"

Kato: "Tilts his head in approval." "It was, until just," *Checks his watch.* "Recently, when I was reminded that order and freedom can coexist, and should. For I wasn't exactly the law-abider when I was behind reinforced steel and concrete down in Okinawa. And now, I'm looking back these last," *Checks his watch.* "Eight years, and I find myself not quite being the ideal parolee either."

Karasuma: "Oh, that can't be denied..."

Kato: "In taking a bunch of these liberties with the many rules and laws, I'm finding that while
order made the man, it was freedom that set him on the path. What's more, society doesn't dictate what it means to be liberated, just like how you all picked your careers in spite of what anyone else thought, including your own parents for some of you."

AssUniv: *Those who know who they are remain significantly attentive of Kato's monologue.*

Kato: "I still believe we need an enlightened world more than we need a free world, but maybe that doesn't mean we can't have the last one first. If it teaches these kinds of lessons to hard-headed folk like me. And maybe eventually, dare we say, a free world will enlighten us enough to make all of us realize we want that enlightened world someday."

Yada: "Well, you weren't the first to understand that, Kato-kun." *Goes up to him. With one caress of his cheek, they've easily reconciled the division between them.*

Kato: *Pulls her in close by the waist, then looks over to his fellow Mentors.* "Look at you guys, agape with madness. You all will be alright?"

Karasaki: "..." *Looks like he's about to protest, but throws his left hand into the air, casting it off. "Fuck it, you always have a method to your madness. I'm sure you have one here too."

Naoko: *Crosses her arms.* "I really hope you know what you're doing this time, though. And it shows itself fast."

Irina: *Pulls Karasaki close to her and aggressively looks at Kato.* "Because you know that you just denied Karasaki here his immaculate proof, with less than half a day before he's going to lose his senior position."

Kato: "I know. I've already got a plan going. It's going to involve yet another joint effort between you, the Ass-I'm sorry, THE AssUniv Program, and the Kato Family. It's going to be unstoppable."

-But before any more details could be divulged, the sounds of panting could be heard in the distance.-

AssUniv: *All curiously look over to the foot-paved trail that used to take them to the peak of the mountain... Eventually finding a short, blonde, Scandinavian woman arrive on scene.*

Kato: "Nylen?"

Nylen: "Boss! We've compiled a report for you from Bishop." *Bows to AssUniv.* "Hello, children." *Refocuses.* "Boss, this is really serious."

Kato: "I've been busy, Kat. Couldn't you have sent it to Teshima?"

Nylen: "No. Because, boss, this is the primary of the report..." *Slowly hands him an opened envelope.*

Kato: *Accepts the envelope, finding a folded parchment inside with the Akamine seal stamped on the top right. His heart goes up to his throat upon realizing almost certainly what this is going to be. "Oh, boy..."

Yada: "Kato-kun, what is it?"
Kato: *With a deep exhale, he unfolds the three-divisions and reads the traditional calligraphy on the inside.* "No good deed goes unpunished. I ousted three corrupt Families, and brought the Hayashida crisis to bed for the Clan. But there's one thing they cannot let go; I put away the other of our top earners, Shiohara, and my Family pays the price."

Terasaka: "What does that mean, Kato?"

Kato: "The Kato Family has been disbanded. I have lost my status as a Yakuza; katagi once more. And all of my assets have been pooled into the Akamine inventory. Yuuji had long known that he couldn't find everything we've stashed if he had erased me from the whiteboard first, which means he had hunted down my fellow Captains and Lieutenants, and found most of the caches that way. I'm probably already hearing one Yakuza drive away with my Koenigsegg right now. I'm young, and penniless." *Checks his watch to make sure he isn't eleven years old.* "Again."

Yada: "Kato-kun, I don't know what to say. I'm so sorry."

Kato: *Turns around.* "Don't be." *Kisses her on the lips and turns back to Nylen.* "Katalina, I cannot order you anymore. But if you're free, it would mean a lot to me if you will put all of our third-party contacts into incognito protection. When they finish rummaging through our primary resources, they will get caught up in it, and they don't deserve the hassle."

Nylen: *Salutes and bows.* "Sir, consider it done."

Kato: *They both compress foreheads, before he lets her go. He then takes his suit backpack and begins walking off too.*

Isogai: "Kato, what are you doing?"

Kato: "There's still a job to do. The Syndikat and the Reclamation Society's damage has not been undone. He had manipulated the two Clans to stand on the same side of a line in the sand, and once they hear that the three strongest Families of the Akamines have been disbanded, they will know that this is their moment to get rid of that branch. They're going to war, and it'll be a massacre. I cannot let that happen."

Naoko: "Do you even know where they're going to wage this war?"

-Before he could answer, the distant sounds of car crashes, screaming, and standalone gunshots could be heard.-

Kato: "Where else but in Tokyo, if not because it is such a troubled city, or because I'm in it right now? It doesn't matter, really." *Walks further.*

Yada: *Goes in front of him to impede him.* "Kato-kun, if anything these last few weeks indicate something-"

Kato: "Yuuji's worth it, Yada-san, despite what he did to me. That's enough to go to help him, but there's also the wonder of who will stand against Machida once all three Clans go down too. So I must go." *Continues onward.*

Yada: *Snaps, grabbing his wrist before he gets too far.* "Kato, you know you're not going to survive. Not on your own."
Kato: "I know."

Kataoka: "If you do, then you need to bring us along! It's our fight so long as it involves any member, direct or honorary, of AssUniv, which you are. Right, Naoko-san and Karasuma-sensei?"

Naoko: *Turns to Karasuma.* "Brother?"

Karasuma: *This time, he does not even need to think about it before nodding.*

Kato: "That's great to hear, everyone, but your fight isn't on that battlefield. It's at this facility."
*Presses on his InReTs touchpad.*

AssUniv: *All of them look at their own interfaces, finding a map of Roppongi, Tokyo, with a yellow blip on the bottom-left section.*

Kato: "That's where my biochemical team left the Mutated Tentacle DNA after Alvarez was finished experimenting on it; we thought a fresh new set of eyes might be useful in getting the ball of eradication running. But I'm certain that while fellow Yakuza are busy tearing each other to shreds, the Reclamation Society would be putting all of their strength into raiding all of our research facilities." *Compresses Yada by her triceps.* "If they leave with that DNA, Yada-san, it's game over."

Maehara: "You want us to fortify that facility?"

Kato: "Now that sounds more like your fight, right?"

Isogai: "Well... Yeah."

Kato: "If I'm still your Mentor, than that's my decree. Godspeed, all of you." *Turns back toward his direction once more.*

Yada: *Stands in his way one more time.* "Wait." *Looks him in the eyes.*

Kato: "You know I'm really patient, but we all must make haste, for the Syndikat could be all over the Metropolis right now."

Yada: *Believing this will be the last time she sees him, she lays her lips on his this time, hoping it will provide him with the incentive to get out of his next mission alive.* "Good luck."

Kato: "You too." *To AssUniv.* "It's been an honor, everyone." *Finally leaves.*

Isogai: "Alright, everyone. Let's make our sensei proud."
The final act of AssUniv is upon us in the heart of Tokyo, and all members of the Program have their mission. Kato stands alone to solve the latest, biggest internal crisis of the Yakuza while his peers undertake the protection of the Tentacles DNA. The coming hours are oh so critical for the future; can they do it?

-In Kashima, Ibaraki Prefecture...-

Attention is paid to the dresser in their living quarters, which rocks just a tiny bit, but enough to be noticeable.

Miho: "Come on, you can do better than that, Champ!"

Keitaro: "Never- ERGH! Needed to before!"

Miho: "Your upcoming opponent Hitodama has not had a single submission loss before, UFC or Deep alike. I wonder why? You cannot relent for a second on this! You need to be able to hold this for a whole round!"

Keitaro: "Five minutes? You nuts?"

Miho: "No, I'm determined. And you should be too! You want to win that title someday, right?"

Keitaro: *Painfully sighs.* "Yes."

Miho: "Then prove it!"

Keitaro: *Gets some sort of second wind and yells it out.* "Gaaah!"

Miho: "That's more like it! Now a little more! Come on!"

Miho/Keitaro: *They both begin grunting very loudly. Ronin the German Shepherd even collapses his ears to suppress the strained sounds. Their cries reach out to the front of their Ibaraki Prefecture yard, where people strolling faintly sense it, growing a bit more unsettling all the while.*

-Then, after another minute or two, their strained cries ended.-

Miho: *Rests supine, breathing only slightly audibly, her right elbow pushing Keitaro's chin away while her head rested on his left arm. The right side of her chest was being caressed by his hand.* "That's... More like it... Keitaro."

Keitaro: *Panting even more drastically.* "Does... That mean my Twister will actually do the trick?"
Miho: "Why... Do you ask?"

Keitaro: "It's hard to tell... When you don't tap to it."

Miho: "Turns over and claws up his torso to meet Keitaro face to face." "If you can keep it locked in for that long against me, then surely, well, at least the rest of the UFC guys won't give you much trouble at all."

Keitaro: "Awe...Some."

Miho: "Of course you are, future light-heavyweight champ."

Keitaro: "That'll only be because of... You." "They both lean in to passionately kiss, which they retain for almost ten seconds, before..."

-"You Got Me Spellbound" by Leslie Parrish as a ringtone plays in the room.-

Miho: "Huh?" "She and Keitaro both look over to the right-side night-table, where Miho's Casio G'zone Commando smartphone lay. As the closer one, her husband picks it up and hands it to her, finding the caller ID to be "UNAVAILABLE"." "Certainly not any one of my contacts."

Kaitaro: "Could it be dangerous call then? A scam?"

Miho: "Sigh. "I'll take my chances." "Answers the call, pushing some of her hair out of the way of her ear. "Hello?"

Kato: "Now regularly-clothed (his KAM AtTac Suit now in his backpack), he is frantically holding onto the Tokyo phone booth he is currently operating. "Miho-san. Great to hear from you."

Miho: "Eyes widen, with her now sitting upright. "KATO-ANI!?"

Kaitaro: "Also sits up. "Your boss?"

Miho: "What happened? Why did you not keep your calls as you said?"

Kato: "There's been... "Checks his watch. "Difficulties, Miho-san."

Miho: "You're telling me? Hey, just say the word, boss, and I'll-"

Kato: "And I'm not your boss anymore, Miho-san."

Miho: "What? Of course you are; what are you-"

Kato: "You didn't read the envelope yet. Good."

Miho: "What? Envelope? What do you mean by tha-" "Her mind flickers as she looks back down her memory lane, finding a time in which he was helping her get to his Lexus. During that time, Kato moved behind her and backed away, which is part of traditional reverse-pickpocket conduit code. "What did you do, Kato-ani?"
Kato: *Does not respond to that query.* "Miho-san, once you end this phone call, I need you to read the contents of that envelope, I didn't say 'want,' or 'order;' this is not a command. All I can say is that I need you to read it. And I need you to do what it says."

Miho: "Kato-ani, explain; what's going on?"

Kato: "I can't say it here. Please trust me, sister."

Miho: *Remains silent in preoccupied confusion.*

Kato: "And Miho-san... Once you do read it, if you even decide to, you'll know that there are many problems that will arise from my request. As such, you have good reason not to commit to the deeds. I'll fully understand if you don't. But... It's the world that is at stake, Miho-san. And I won't know if you do, because in the next," *Checks his watch.* "Twenty-four hours, I'm going to be dead. No matter what happens though, Miho-san... I'll always love you, big sis. I'll never forget how much you did for me."

Miho: "Excuse me; you'll die!? You're going too fast, just tell me what is going on, Kato-" -Line drops.-

- *Line drops.*

Miho: *Her eyes dilate in absolute fear and sadness.* "-ani...?"

Keitaro: "M-Miho?"

Miho: *Throws her phone to Keitaro, who falls back upon catching due to the surprise, and runs over to her closet, still within the room and in the latter's view.* "I know it's still in those pair of pants; didn't wash them either, so it's not ruined."

Keitaro: *Sits back up again.* "Miho..."

Miho: "Aha!" *Pulls the envelope out of the back pocket.* "Broken seal... He gave it to me that way..." *Proceeds to partly pull the paper out, but then looks back at him.* "Keitaro... We've only had a week's reunion after much time apart..."

Keitaro: "Which was my fault, Miho. Going here, going there, all to fight for what's still going to be pocket change compared to what you make."

Miho: "That's not the point, Kei!"

Kaitaro: "Look, Miho. Clearly, your friend's in trouble. Do what you have to, and head out. I'll be right here, waiting for you this time."

Miho: *Lightly bites her lower lip.* "Thanks." *She gets her change of clothes, gives one last kiss to both Keitaro ad Ronin, and heads out to the front porch. There, she again pulls out the folded paper, which opens up to reveal a smaller note. What's on the both scripts significantly shocks her.* Kato... What have you given me, and what have you gotten yourself into...!?"

Kato: *Takes a deep breath before tossing in another JPY coin into the payphone. His next call reaches voicemail, so he begins recording his message.* "Uncle... Cousin. This is the end. All I can hope for is that you'll be in good hands after the mess in Tokyo is over. I'm sure Miho-san will ensure that nothing bad happens to you two... The bad that I've caused. I'm really sorry for making
mayhem of your lives, from the day I resurfaced. I really needed you again, but... Maybe you..." *Breaks down, unable to complete his sentence immediately.* "I'm sorry. I love you, and I need to let you go." *Hangs up. After taking a moment to regain his composure, he purposefully strides through the dirty alleyways of Shinagawa Ward en route to a critical destination, backpack in hand.* *Tokyo's Qita Kong district is in this ward, and Hyun has told me he'd be here. I have to believe he's the only set of eyes and ears I can trust now, and yet he hasn't been answering any of my calls lately. If he wants to see me face-to-face, then he's got it.* *Proceeds onwards and cuts a corner, but is stopped dead in his tracks soon afterward.*

-Meanwhile with the rest of AssUniv...-

AssUniv: *Their immortal tour bus is cruising through Marunouchi, reaching the highlighted Kato Arms and R&D Manufacturing facility on a Tokyo Metropolitan map. They too had taken off their KAM AtTac Mimir and Saga suits to enhance overall discretion. They were all mostly silent with reflection and conviction, however.*

Yada: *Looks out the window, in the direction of Shibuya Crossing, with an anxious expression.*

Kurahashi: *Reassures her with a pat on the shoulder.* "Hey, chin up, huh? Kato-kun's pretty much immortal. He'll find a way through this."

Yada: "I just hate the fact that nobody's on his side as he crosses the finish line. He saved the Akamine Clan just a day ago, and he's about to save the rest of the Yakuza, along with all of Japan. But nobody is going out of their way to help him; save him."

Isogai: *In front of them both, looks back to them.* "I think Kato had always known that, Yadasan. The Kato Family never got their due of thanks throughout history, did they?"

Kataoka: *Joins Isogai in peeking over their back support.* "Does he deserve to dare his life to get such gratitude? Such loyalty that he has long given them before?"

Nagisa: *With Kayano behind the four, does not turn to them as he too looks out the window.* "The world is unfair. We know this better than most. But most don't get to choose how they go. So in a way, Kato's pretty blessed right now."

AssUniv: *Hearing this allows them to feel more content with having to abandon Kato, though they still have an uneasy atmosphere about it.*

Karasuma: *Speaks aloud to Irina and Naoko without turning to them.* "Those words are too true."

Naoko/Irina: *Look to him, noticing that he is alluding to how Hiiro had died so many years earlier.*

-Eventually, the tour bus arrives at its destination. The AssUniv Program put on their KAM AtTac Suits inside the vehicle, getting out and immediately scouting the several possible entrances, before scaling the darkest walls. Ensuring that there weren't already any Syndikat forces in the building, they then used Kato's alternate exit in (assuming that his keycode and card entry have been cleared through Akamine's supervision).-

AssUniv: *All begin pooling out from the lever-action wall leading them into a file storage room*
within the facility. One breach later, they were in the control area, where they were going to begin fortifying the factory's defenses. Until...*

Y. Amaya: "And it seems, through heavy research of viral cross-species transmissions, there is-" *Notices the student-assassins and breaks off. The audience she was lecturing to, which included a few that the group knew to be a part of the Kato Family, turned back as well.*

AssUniv: "WHAT!?"

-Returning to Kato...-

Jieji: *Is revealed to be the obstruction keeping Kato from QK.* "Finally, you've shown up."

Kato: "You of all people knew that I would." *Looks around a bit before returning his attention to him.* "No one else but you?"

Jieji: *Shakes his head.* "Not my style anymore. Besides, with this being my last chance to kill you, The Reclamation Society won't afford me backup. They're all investing in the effort to take out your so-called relatives."

Kato: *Tosses aside his backpack.* "I'm not going to let that happen. I am ending both our war and the ones within."

Jieji: "I'm sure you'll try. That's one of the best things about you; why I envy your youth, not get bored with fighting you, and always get back up so long as I can still raise a limb. So long as you won't give up, I won't."

Kato: "Jieji... Do you really believe in the Society's plans?"

Jieji: "What's this? You already know the answer to that."

Kato: "I'm going to spill as little blood as I can tonight. I owe this country that much in my efforts to protect it. So why kill someone who has no intention of destroying it? Jieji... Tell me if you do believe in destroying the world."

Jieji: "..."

Kato: "I understand you're really here to take revenge. And I can sympathize; for almost as long as I can remember, I wanted Shiohara eliminated for what he did to my Family. But I understood my wrath was not worth the sorrow of everyone around me. And you've always labeled me as something so high and mighty. Can't you believe in the same?"

Jieji: "Maybe... Man, if Fate had only strung us just a little differently, we would have been the best of mates. Just like you are with that Korean fellow... What was his name... Hyun, right?"

Kato: Tsk...

Jieji: "Sorry, kid. This is how it ends between us." *Cracks knuckles.*

Kato: "So you've... Confirmed your stance?" *Raises his fists up to his face in "God Hand" Style.*
Jieji: "Yep... I sympathize with the Society. I am one of their lieutenants, after all. One of their Big Three."

Kato: *Sighs.* "I didn't want this. This final battle."

Jieji: "The ultimate of our many quarrels. Let's see who takes all the marbles, hm?"

Kato: "I won't be holding back... To protect the people I love."

Jieji: "And I won't hold back. To avenge the people I loved."

-They psych each other up with their aggressively squinting eyes for a few seconds.-

Kato/Jieji: "LET'S GO!!" *Jieji throws a very quick right straight that makes his shoulders parallel, which Kato dodges inwards. Kato attempts a low right hook at waist level which is nudged out of range by a chest push. The latter then forms a pointed right elbow that he violently swings towards Jieji's face, which he copies, resulting in the apex of their radiuses clashing together.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 0's OST "Oath of Enma" plays.-

加藤和彦VS乌士杰吉

Kazuhiko Kato - The Man Who Must Prevent The War He Started

VS

Wushi Jieji - The Man With One Last Chance For Revenge

Kato and Jieji hold their ground, barely moving centimeters away from each other after their elbows bounce away. Jieji then begins with a low roundhouse, which Kato lifts his leg up to block. The disgraced Big Three Lieutenant then moves high up, throwing a one-two hook outside the former Yakuza's cover-up, and swiftly follows it with a left haymaker that would break through the guard. Kato doesn't take a chance with it and pulls back. He waits for the punch to cross over his opponent's chest due to accidental overswing and immediately runs in close for a punishing overhead. But Jieji was ready for that, retracting his arm back to his midsection and then pointing his punching arm's shoulder in an upward dash that bashes into Kato's chin. Stunning the younger competitor worked like a charm, and Jieji to perform a swift back knuckle, which set up the one-inch gap for a wrist pop that both hit Kato's nose.

Kato steps back, depressing one nostril and blowing blood out of the other before continuing. Clearly, Jieji is pulling no stops in defeating him this time. He switches to "Tumbler" and feints a high clinch, instead opting for a side split by holding onto Jieji's ankle as he rolls to his flank. When Jieji realizes this, he abruptly brings his other foot close to the action and then falls backward, thereby eliminating any advantage given. He then pulls his affected leg towards him,
packing most of Kato onto his sole and launching him off with a thrust kick. Kato rolls back into a fighting stance, surprised at the latest failure. The former Triad leads this time, hoping to open guard with a dashing Superman punch. Kato finds his moment to angle his clavicle line properly, and Jieji instead dives into his fireman's carry. The former wastes no time spinning his opponent around and slamming Jieji's face onto his raised knee. Kato trips the former Triad up with a double-leg takedown and applies a kneeling figure-four leglock. Jieji grunts in pain a bit before pulling on the back of Kato's head and headbutting him to break the lock.

Kato and Jieji are once again at a distance, which is closed by Jieji when he throws a flying side kick. The move is sidestepped by Kato, but Jieji's attack reaches its apex right in front of the former Yakuza rather than far away like before. Thus, Kato's attempt at clutching the waist from behind is thwarted by a diagonal chop at his head. Not one to show his back during a fight, Kato rolls back, ending up on the other side of Jieji again and attempts another grapple. Jieji rejects it again, this time with a sidestep under and around Kato's arms, and then mule kicking him away.

Having had enough, Kato resorts to "B-Boy" and faces Jieji once again. When the former Triad tries for another diving straight, Kato lets Jieji's momentum be his doom, using a single-leg matrix dodge to evade the strike, while also using his arms to keep Jieji flying straight... Into a wall. Kato pivots his standing foot to roll back into a bent-forward position, just as the Big Three Lieutenant falls back from the concrete. The younger competitor runs up the same obstruction and throws a spinning wheel kick, with his latter raised leg connecting on his opponent's temple. Jieji steps back again from the sheer momentum of the strike, but recovers enough to see Kato rising back up. He throws a rolling savate kick, followed by an instep sweep kick. Kato Dempsey's underneath the first strike and picks up his closest leg to completely avoid the low kick, then sprints forward for a step-up enzuigiri that caps Jieji on the top of his head.

Jieji slaps the ground while getting back up, gaining a second wind. Kato attempts to put him back down again with a cartwheel roundhouse, but Jieji blocks it and side kicks his hip, putting him supine. Jieji goes for a backflip bird stomp, which Kato gets his head out of the way just in time of. His body now behind and perpendicular to the former Triad's, he uses it, along with an arm thrown in front of the latter, to trip him over. When he rolls back onto his knees, he looks to be ripe for the pickings of a superkick, but Jieji bobs his own head away from the strike. It wasn't the only move, however, as Kato retracts the leg and goes for a single handstand while throwing his other leg in a short-angle spinning hook kick; that one connects like a charm, and Jieji falls onto his back.

Kato gets back up, now in "God Hand" stance. Jieji senses it and starts up the brawl with a frontflip axe kick, which is promptly backed away from. Jieji continues his vertical momentum with a windmill hammer fist, then a drunken straight punch, and a standing spinning hook kick. Kato sidesteps the next two strikes and limbos underneath the third, side shuffling behind his opponent. Jieji responds with another mule kick, of which Kato, having learned his mistake, slaps down to evade. Jieji then throws a heavy roundhouse from his back leg so momentously that he unintentionally cannot retain the face-to-face any longer. While ducked under and Jieji's back is turned, Kato cups his hands in front of the latter's standing instep and pulls back, dropping Jieji on his face.

Jieji rolls forward to prevent Kato from capitalizing on his prone position, and closes the gap quickly, with a rolling elbow smash. This breaks Kato's X-guard, but Kato leaps back to negate any further damage. He sprints in this time with a right overhead. The former Triad sidesteps behind Kato to avoid this, and then ducks under a reverse spinning backfist by Kato. Jieji tries for a front hook kick, but Kato counters with a well-timed swinging elbow of his own, ramming his radius into the popliteal of Jieji’s leg, stopping the attack dead. Failing that, Jieji then tries to put the latter
down with an overhead right roundhouse kick. Kato responds first with a small limbo, but also extending his leg in a low roundhouse kick to the former's standing leg, forcing him to kneel and abort his next strike. Jieji struggles to get up this time, but manages to catch Kato's straight and attempts to punish with a ramming headbutt. Kato catches his forehead just before it connects with his own, and lifts it up to expose the plexus to a body hook. The attack has him shift slightly to the left of Jieji, which opens up an opportunity for a reverse elbow, swinging back forward with an elbow uppercut, and finally an opposite-hand Cobra Punch, which sends the Big Three Lieutenant flying.

Currently in "Tumbler" style when the former Triad quickly gets back onto his feet, Kato goes for the waistline again. Jieji manages to shake Kato off, throwing him in front of himself. A temporary setback, as Kato ducks under Jieji's swinging Eagle Claw in response, and gains the back control again. The former Yakuza then throws a nasty headbutt to the back of the former Triad's nape, stunning him long enough for a German suplex. The former O'Connor rolls through the wrestling maneuver, goes with one arm, and his other hand grasps Jieji's opposite, unwinding him in a ripcord high knee. Kato, now in full mount due to how he landed the wristlock short-arm strike, pummels Jieji's face, throwing straight after straight. And when they begin getting blocked consistently, he resorts to hooks. Then to 12-6 elbows, before the former Triad finds the strength to bridge, allowing him to get his soles onto Kato's hipbone and move the latter just out of punching range.

But Kato does not relent; when pushed off by Jieji's kicking, he then pulls on both limbs, tucking them deep onto his shoulders. Jieji knows what's coming and attempts to elbow Kato's head as it gets close but a premature lift followed by a knee to the back made for a good rejection. Kato then begins lifting him higher up into the air, following it swiftly with slamming him down in a thunderous powerbomb. Jieji snaps his head back upon impact, spitting blood into the air. Again, Kato doesn't stop there, deadlifting his opponent off the ground and performing yet another. With the power of three, Kato powerbombs Jieji one more time, releasing the former Triad before he hits the ground and letting him roll onto his face to temporarily ease his spinal strain.

With Jieji once again rising to his feet after yet another string of brutal attacks, Kato realized that he must definitively break his eternal rival. He allows Jieji to get back up and initiate a charging straight. Kato, now in "God Hand" stance once more, bobs his head to the left, outside of range, and throws an uppercut underneath the unbent arm, stunning the Chinese boxer. From there, Kato takes a step forward so that his right foot was now behind Jieji's matching inner knee. Stomping down puts the former Triad on one knee, and, by Kato holding onto his punching wrist, leaves the elbow undefended to a nape-assisted break.

The disgraced Big Three rolls away and grumbly caresses his now disjointed right arm, finding it useless. Kato lowers his guard a bit when it seems to have hindered Jieji enough, but that looks to be a feint when the Triad then goes up again, throwing a massive left haymaker. Kato ducks under it and pushes down an attempted right knee lift to his lowered face. Kato, with his face back up high, anticipates Jieji's incoming jab and reverts to his "B-Boy" style, blade-kicking Jieji back onto three-point stance and motioning the arm into a Kimura position. Kato turns parallel to Jieji and throws his leg around to hold the position of the arm, and then falls down while keeping Jieji's upper body and face straight up, dislocating his other shoulder in a very modified omoplata.

Jieji again yells in pain, hesitatingly getting back up to his feet, but nevertheless being able to do so, surprising Kato again. Jieji ignores the stinging once more and attempts a tornado kick that easily transitions into a spin-out instep sweep kick rolled-over into a jumping savate. Kato backs away from all but the last, catching the heel of the kick and slamming it down with the rest of the Triad's body. From there, Kato locks in an ankle lock that he immediately twists past the breaking
point, again eliciting a strained response from his opponent. Kato doesn't finish there, however, as he then pulls the affected leg underneath Jieji's other. Kato then puts his right leg in the figure-four gap, while his left knee pressures the bent leg's ankle still. Having clutched the unaffected leg and putting its knee onto his own shin, all the former Yakuza had to do was pull down enough for the knee to break and the fibula-tibia combo were angled the completely wrong way. Kato rolls out of the hold, slowly rising back to his feet as Jieji finds his neutral lying position after experiencing subsequent, excruciating limb-breakers.

-OST ends.-

-Kato stands over his defeated foe, with an elbow, a shoulder, and both kneecaps bending the wrong ways.-

Jieji: *Painfully coughs aside.* "Is that all? I told you, you need to kill me."

Kato: "I'll make you a deal; get up, and then I'll kill you."

Jieji: *Summons the strength to actually roll the shoulder and waist joints of his limbs, and even turns himself over despite the uneven bends, but cannot rise onto his feet.*

Kato: *After Jieji falls onto his face for the second time, he goes to pick up his backpack again and begins walking his way.*

Jieji: "I'm. Not. Finished yet, Miyamoto!"

Kato: "This is how you let go, Jieji- no... Ying. So that one day you wouldn't end up motionless in a gutter, like where you are now. You don't kill, you don't give up. No... You just let go."

*Leaves him behind, but not before setting up a standing long nail on the ground.* Huh... At least he'll be out of the way for the time being. Now, Qita Kong.

-He eventually arrives in the illegal district, only to find it in relative disarray, with the murmurs of foreigners filling the atmosphere.-

Qita Kong Security Guard: *Notices Kato arriving and jogs up to him.* <Speaks in Cantonese.> "Kato! Come quick!"

Kato: <Also speaks in Cantonese.> "What's happened?"

QK Security Guard: "Hyun. He's..." *Bites his lower lip.*

Kato: *More insistingly.* "What happened?"

-A minute later, Kato had been taken to the medical clinic of the neighborhood. On one of the first beds was Hyun.-

Kato: "Hyun!" *Goes up to him, noticing the artificial, bloody orifice in his torso.* "A flat stab to your liver?"

Hyun: *Coughs.* "That friends of yours. He showed up, looking for you. I wouldn't give you up, naturally, so I stood in his way. With a pistol. Heh, he field-stripped it like it was nothing. And the boys helping me, they're in the other room. All good for them, though. Not so much for me."
Kato: "Why? He had no knife when we fought."

Hyun: "So you took him down; good. Well, the knife was mine. Truth be told, he did it by accident, just out of reflex when he saw me in his peripherals, twisting the knife back in my direction. He only wanted to threaten me, but then I stepped over his stopping leg and... Ran myself through. That's when he too ran off, seeing that killing your best friend didn't summon you like it always should."

Kato: "Why is no one helping you anymore? The funeral pyres practically already being made!?"

Hyun: "I don't have a lot of time; already lost too much blood inside my body. Nothing anyone can do. Even you."

Kato: "Don't say that, man. Come on." *Begins leaving to get medical supplies.*

Hyun: *Catches his wrist before he truly leaves.* "Kato, stay. I'm the old man in this story; let me have my way."

Kato: *His expression for preoccupation does not truly complement his internal feelings.* "Hyun..."

Hyun: "Now, Kato-kun. Before I go-"

Kato: "Don't. Say that."

Hyun: "Kato... Before I go..."
Now that Kato has dealt with his longtime, family-feuding rival for the final time, Kato realizes a big loss he has accumulated, which rocks him to his core... Just in time for his critical moment with all of the major Yakuza umbrellas. Can he bounce back with enough clout to save the day?

Hyun: "Kato-kun... Before I go-"

Kato: "Don't. Say that."

Hyun: "Kato, before I go... I need to tell you what I should've told you a long time ago. When you were just as loyal and respectful as you are now, and I was too paranoid that I looked past it."

Kato: *Decides against arguing with him any further.* "I'm all ears."

Hyun: *Takes a deep breath.*

-Dae-Gu: *Despite its strain, he cracks a laugh.* "But it seems, you can't outrun your past. They finally caught up with me. I was too kind; the only way anyone disappears is if they stop helping people. My past never let me let go of everyone else. I just had to build Qita Kong. I just had to help illegal foreigners in this country. I just had to connect with a Japanese lobotomite. And this is my reward for accepting that first fact."
Kato: "Hyun..."

Dae-Gu: "If the NIS really wanted you dead, they have their way, Kato-kun. So don't be discouraged."

Kato: "Who in particular?"

Dae-Gu: *Gestures for Kato to get in close so that no one else gets to hear.* Kim Byung-Sung. He ordered your Chinese pal to come here and cut off your remaining support, and was behind the entire effort to turn the Yakuza against each other.

Kato: "Then he's still around here, ready to finish the job."

Dae-Gu: *With his remaining strength, grabs Kato's forearm insistingly.* "Don't let him."

Kato: *Nods.* <In Korean> "I promise."

Dae-Gu: "Doomsday... Waits for no-one." *Cracks a smile, and then passes, his head relaxing on the medical pillow, and his grip slowly releasing from Kato's sleeve. He saves his friend the trouble of closing his eyes by doing it for him.*

Kato: *After a brief period of mourning, Kato steps away from the gurney. He is allowed into Hyun's office, and finds a weapons cache he and the Harbinger agreed to keep in case of an emergency. It included a Gemtech Integral assault rifle (and a dozen spare magazines filled with .300 Blackout ammunition), along with an ST Kinetics CPW (similarly with obscene amounts of 9mm dakka). Finally, there was Hyun's signature, personalized Lionheart LH9, loaded in .40 S&W.* Let's do this together, mate. One more time. *He then changes into his fully-charged KAM AtTac Suit again, and loads all of the weapons into the travel sack. He also notices one more box being kept in the secret wall where he found the cache, and proceeds to open it. Finally, he leaves QK, reassuring the stunned foreigners with a small beam and a promise of evacuation as he departs, with a bag of guns in one hand... And a boombox in the other.*

-And now, at Shibuya Crossing...-

Kato: *When he hears bullets sounding, he accelerates his trek to the battlefield, though from the distance, he has found that the bullets are already being shot into the air; each Clan was still on their sides of the field, with nobody yet in the middle - in no-mans-land. All three were just waiting for a reason to come to blows.*

Ishida Clan: *One higher-up of the syndicate takes a megaphone and a raised platform to get his point across.* "Yuji, we know you're back there somewhere! And we know you're sitting on a throne of gold plates and silver bullets that don't belong to you!"

Akamine Clan: *Another lieutenant gets up to confront that assertion.* "Neither would it belong to you!"

Tanimoto Clan: *One of their colors comes up to match the prior two.* "On the contrary; we lost a lot of manpower in your turf. Why is that?"

Akamine Clan: "Because you let them invade!"

Ishida Clan: "We were given permission! You attacked us!"
Akamine: "We've had ample proof they were conspiring against the lot of us! Funded by some of your dirtier lot!"

Tanimoto Clan: "That changes nothing! You're responsible for your lands!"

Ishida: "And we demand compensation! Over your dead bodies if we must!"

Akamine Clan: "Oh it must! This gentleman's agreement of peace is no more, because of you two!"

Kato: *Notices the reporting helicopters above the Crossing as he scopes the surroundings. When he discerned who was wearing the Akamine Clan's colors and who wasn't, he flanked the entire scene to reach them, moving past a large amount of suits gearing up with revolvers, compact pistols and assorted, improvised melee weapons.* "YUUJI!"

Akamine Clan: *All of the men the Clan brought up to face the conflict look back, seeing a small young man wearing, as far as they're concerned a space suit, walk among their ranks. There are common mutters of "Who [the fuck] is this?" and its like.*

A. Yuuji: *Hears his name being called out and turns back as well. Realizing from the moment he processed the voice who it was, he retains composed as the caller storms in close.*

Kato: *Stops in front of his former Chairman.* "Yuuji, what's the situation?"

A. Yuuji: "What more do you need to know? We wagered our honors, assigned a battleground, and here we are, without any side being able to swallow their prides and walk away now."

Kato: *Moves up close to the Chairman.* "You're leaving something out."

Akamine Clan member: *Steps up to the two of them.* "Hey! Who are you to accuse our boss of anything!?"

Kato: "The one who made you all richer." *Steps away and looks at his detractor.*

Akamine Clan member: *Realizing that they are gazing at Kazuhiko Kato, they all get chills in their blood.*

A. Yuuji: *Points deep across no-mans-land and into the crowds on the other side.* "Satoru and Rikiya are standing back, like I am. Naturally, the battle's going to end real soon if any one of us were to go down early."

Kato: "If it must." *Begins walking past Yuuji.*

A. Yuuji: *Confused.* "Hey, where are you going?"

Kato: *Turns back, putting on Hyun's sunglasses and turning on the newly-acquired boombox and smirking.* "To introduce myself." *Before the cassette boots up, Kato also takes the Akamine Clan announcer's megaphone and plugs a jack into the microphone of the device so that the audio plays through its horn as well... Which is revealed to be "No Easy Way Out" by Robert Tepper.*

-The rancorous Ishida and Tanimoto Clans alike all calm down when they hear the abrupt, foreign
music playing around them, thanks to the architecture rebounding the sound across Shibuya Crossing. They all are equally flabbergasted as the Akamine Clan members just were, especially when the source of the song comes when a black-clad little man appears from the latter's front lines just as the chorus begins.

Kato: *Holding the radio on his left shoulder as he headbangs and hand horns to the center of no-mans-land, which, other than him, boasted a variety of abandoned vehicles and other places of suitable cover. He could also be seen actively mouthing the lyrics to the song. Once the chorus ends, he turns off the audio machine, setting it down right behind him, and takes to the megaphone it was connected to.* "Satoru Ishida, Rikiya Tanimoto, I know you're both back there somewhere. Just as much as you two know Yuuji is back where I just," *Checks his watch.* "Was. Do you two really want to cause an unprecedented amount of chaos on this fine capital today?"

Tanimoto Clan: *The same announcer from earlier takes to his platform.* "Oh, excuse us-Excuse me really but," *Clears his throat.* "WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?"

Kato: *Cracks a grin before putting his mouth close to the microphone again.* "You know me best as 'The Kazmanian Devil of Aichi'."

-Both the Tanimoto and Ishida Clans take a moment to process the sentence just spoken to them...

Ishida Clan: *Their common announcer takes to his bullhorn as well.* "YOU!? Kazuhiko Kato!? Don't make us laugh, boy!"

Kato: "..." *He retains his smile as he lets the other two Clans have their fit from an understandably comical situation.*

Tanimoto Clan: "So this is the boy who's been causing all of us so much fucking trouble over the course of almost a decade, huh? Some small, twig-looking kid, wearing his Star Wars suit?"

Kato: *Looks down at his mission gear and shows an approving mouth gesture.*

Ishida Clan: "So that's who Miho's always been bowing too. She'd still be taller though!"

Ishida Clan 2: "And more of a man too!"

Kato: *Gestures with a rolling arm to continue letting them have their fun.*

Tanimoto Clan: "Oh is he getting impatient? Well don't be mate, because this is actually good for you!"

Ishida Clan: "Indeed! For if you were really speaking the truth, you'd be worse off! The son of a shit fuckin' traitor."

Kato: *Finally breaks off from his happy-go-lucky mood, feeling his dog tag necklace from the other side of his KAM AtTac Suit.*

Tanimoto Clan: "Not to mention, we'd be beyond obligated to kill you for all that you've done. And your fathers before you."

Kato: "Speaking of which, what could you, the insufferable, ungrateful assholes that you are,
possibly know of what my forefathers have done?"

Ishida Clan: "All we know is that we're worse off, kid." *Refocuses.* "And who are you to speak to us like that? Really, who are you!??"

Kato: "I'm the one who incarcerated Shiohara!"

-Suddenly, everyone grows silent, when they realize that an ignorant little kid just mentioned something only a higher-brand Yakuza could know.-

Kato: "I brought the toxic Josei Alliance's nation down in a one-night operation! Tanimoto, your Malaysia Job, inherently bad from the start because the local Mafia was involved, was busted because of me! When Yanagawa's rivers stained red from Ando blood, you all called me the 'Killer of Kyushu'! The 'Hokkaido Hunter Hitman' - you gave me that nickname, Ishida, when Jingweon hired-guns who were out to kill you kept appearing subjugated on your doorstep! Your latest Tokyo Incursion was a complete failure - you know why now! And most recently, I set up former Navy SEAL Daichi Hayashida to be killed high up on the Tocho building, knowing that soon enough, the whole world would be watching..."

Yakuza: *All three sides look on at Kato with bewilderment.*

Kato: "And if any of you - ANY - of you still either don't believe me, want to kill me, or truly-madly-deeply want to start a war just for the kicks, then come on over here... And whisper it into my ear."

-The Japanese umbrella syndicates all remain silent once more... Until eight brave, or foolish, Families from within the Tanimoto and Ishida ranks shove their way out into the open to confront Kato, their ranks numbering twenty-nine.-

Kato: *Realizing he couldn't promote the peace he had hoped for between the three Clans, he begins looking down, staring a thousand meters at the road in front of him, as the Families move closer.*

Yakuza 1: *Four of which move closer to their foe while the rest of their cohorts encircle them.* "Look at the hotshot, everyone."

Yakuza 2: "We're going to teach you boy, to respect your elders."

Yakuza 3: "And to not fuck in our affairs!"

Yakuza 4: "Enough waiting!" *Runs forward before all of the rest, charging up a right straight punch.*

Kato: *Sensing that the fourth Yakuza's face is the closest thing when he encroaches on his range, the former throws a lightning-fast right jab straight to the nose, before the latter could even straighten out his arm.*

Yakuza 4: "GGK!" *Head whips back as he cups his bridge. Blood streamed like a waterfall down his face and palms.*

Yakuza: *The other three were surprised by the sudden reprisal and grow more determined to teach Kato a lesson, they all enter the fray at the same time, throwing fists and kicks at the same
Kato: *Dodges and deflects all of them with ease, until the third one attempts a large left hook, which he then parries so that it swings at his closest-right comrade, which skates across the latter's upper lip. Kato pulls the arm so that the attacker then falls forward onto his other ally, allowing him time to deal with the punched individual with a flying right knee. Kato swiftly turns back to the others, beginning by throwing a right elbow into the third's back. The second tries to haymaker Kato as three lowers, but the latter ducks under it too. He then puppets the third's limp arm upwards, connecting it with two's jewels. With him too bowed forward, Kato pulls the third's head back up, causing a noggin-knocker. Kato senses the fourth returning with another charging punch, but is repelled once again, this time with a lifted sole for a mule kick that he runs his chin right into, knocking himself out. Kato finishes off the remainders by turning three around so that he faced the same way as two, and then hooked behind them for a double German suplex, driving their necks straight onto the asphalt.*

Yakuza: *Realizing that Kato is now the real deal, six of them brandish weapons - two with lead pipes, three wielding tantos, and another with a sledgehammer - to engage him.*

Kato: *Noticing that the battle has changed, Kato pulls out a telescopic baton, wielding it in his right hand. When one of the knife-wielders attempted to run in first, Kato threatened him back with a pointed baton. Ignoring the warning, the Yakuza pushes it aside and continues on, and gets a reverse-pommel to the side of his neck for his troubles, immediately falling to the floor. A pipe fighter tries for an overhead swing next, but is blocked at the forearm, which Kato transitions into a shoulder lock. Another two daggers come at him from two sides, so Kato, while still holding onto his second victim, throws him into one of them while front hook kicking the other in the cheek. Now given space, Kato steps on the bent-over Yakuza's front foot and then pivots forward with the arm, dislocating it vertically. The pushed Yakuza tries for a lunge at Kato's face, which the latter ducks under so that the attacking arm now rested along his shoulders. Kato twisted his close arm around it and pushed down, stressing the shoulder and gaining sidelock control of the elbow, before falling further down and breaking the joint. Kato takes the knife he was forced to let go of and throws it at the sledgehammer wielder, who puts the metal handle up just in time to block. Kato catches a sideways swing of the other pipe holder, and then Giant Swings him so that his heel connects with the last blader, before dropping the first's chin on his elevated knee. Exploiting the sledgehammer's hesitation, Kato rolled towards him, slapping his ankles with his baton, and working his way up around his polearm, before taking the weight of the hammer to the man's jugular and then slamming forward, so that the stick hits the ground and the metal crushes his Adam's Apple. The man falls on his face, clutching at the point of impact.*

Yakuza: *The remainder of the thirty run back behind their Clan's front lines, who are then urged to take out whatever guns they have and open fire on Kato. As soon as the latter sees them going for a pistol, he sprints behind a car standing on its side that blocks both sides' shots.*

Akamine Clan Member: *The rest of the syndicate, despite their disbelief at Kato's competency, show displeasure in doing nothing. One of them turns back to their Chairman.* "Sir, are we really going to let a katagi fight our battle? I know it rules out a war, but this doesn't look right."

A. Yuuji: "Ease your tension, you. A Kato is not one whose orders you defy... Especially this one. You know that because I wouldn't go against them either. He knows what he's doing."

Kato: *Takes his Gemtech from his backpack, priming it for combat. He hears ten different sets of guns, and gives a quick glance to locate them all, before they open fire again on him. He then unloads an entire magazine of blind-fire to keep everyone from moving. When it runs empty, he
immediately throws it at his feet and takes to two of his Kimber Warrior IIs. Finally, in a Method of Loci, he visualizes the positions of the ten main aggressors, and turns around, unloading .40 caliber round after round into each Yakuza twice in the span of just three seconds. Despite the double-taps, all of them receive non-life-threatening injuries, with most shots hitting their forearms, hands, outer sides of their shoulders and hips.*

Yakuza: *With even more of their brethren taken down, both Clans send more down; this time twenty-five, three of which had automatic SMGs on-hand. Kato answers with the holtering of both his pistols and brandishing his CPW submachinegun alongside the Ballistic Shield coming from his KAM AtTac Suit. He then takes up his "Loci-Shooting" practice again, spatially recognizing all hostiles and their weakpoints, and shooting accordingly, not wasting a single shot to inaccuracy as he mows them all down one by one. In another ten seconds, everyone who came to greet him the second time was writhing on the ground next to their discarded weapons, clutching their bloody wounds. Then came the next thirty; this time one of their automatics outpaces Kato's train of thought, pelting him twice along his waistline.*

-Meanwhile on the Ishida standby mob...-

Ishida Clan Member 1: *Cannot stop shaking some thoughts out of his head. He then turns to his supreme superior.* "Chairman, is this right?"

S. Ishida: "What is, man?"

Ishida Clan Member 2: "This boy's hardly innocent, but he's still katagi. We don't kill them if they don't attack first. And what he did, well, it's almost like he did us favors. The Josei Alliance screwed us out of billions during the late 2000s. Those Hitmen needed to go, as well, and the Andos humiliated you out of forming a deal with 21st."

S. Ishida: "Close your heart to it, mate. This must be done."

-Back to no-mans-land...-

Kato: *Now no longer able to stave off reloading time, he falls back fully behind the car, and placing fresh new magazines into all of his firearms. He clutches his Integral close, preparing himself to confront the next major wave, until he senses yet another arriving. He aims his assault rifle up in the air in its direction, not truly knowing who it was just yet.*

-What followed was a brief drizzle of missiles raining down seemingly from the heavens onto the areas in front of the thirty; fifty-five if counting the garrison that decided to join them to ensure Kato would be subjugated. Some of the men are sent flying from the detonations’ impacts, though their blasts are contained enough to cause mere craters and non-nailed objects are pushed relative distances.-

Kato: *Covers himself carefully as the projectiles fly past him and blow things up from behind.* Pzf-3 Bunkerfaust rockets!? Who the Hell fired them? *His internal query was answered with the arrival of titanium stakes being driven into the grounds next to him, straightening out the metallic cables that they were connected to.*

-From there, a small legion of auxiliaries with special-forces gear zipline downright next to him. If it wasn't the explosives that paused the skirmish, their debuts were certainly the cause.-

???: *Reveals himself to be Craig when he takes off his bulletproof helmet and skullfaced
"Man, this shit looks fun!" *Repositions his spectacles so that they remain high up on the bridge of his nose.*

Kato: *Is utterly surprised by the Neo-Wolfpack's arrival.* "Craig! What the fuck are you doing here?" *Accepts some help up to his feet from the Divine Soldier himself.*

Craig: "The TMPD outside raised the threat alert - either they knew they were in over their heads or they were too pusillanimous to take on the challenge themselves. Emphasis on the 'PUSSY' part. Heh, regardless, the Ministry sent their very own foreign legion to battle the threat, so here we are. And since you're a citizen in danger, we know we're fighting the right people right now."

Kato: "Karasuma told you I'm not Yakuza anymore?"

Craig: "We've got our ways of finding out. So, need the hand?"

Kato: "It's well-appreciated, Craig. I reckon just the two of us could put them all down alone."

Craig: "Very enticing, surely. But my boys need some entertainment after being left on standby patrols for the longest while since our scuffle. So I'm not calling for their retreat. No, sir."

Kato: "Fair enough, but try not to kill any of them over there; they're all misguided."

Craig: "Hmm, keeping criminals alive? That's a surprise. But at the same time, you're probably going to have to tell them that too." *Points to a scene in which molotov cocktails were being propelled at a mobilizing legion of Tanimoto gunmen.*

Kato: *Looks over, noticing that another group has joined the battle. Kato knew the instant he saw the patches on their shoulders who they were - foreign muscle bearing QK's Red Chrysanthemum in a White Rectangle, with a bottom caption reading "WE ARE JAPAN TOO." He instantly tunes in his hood's bluetooth function to their frequency.* "You boys followed me too?"

Qita Kong Operator: "Sorry to have defied you, Kato, sir. But Hyun meant a lot to us too, and if the fate of this country meant so much to him, then quite frankly, it means a lot to us. We're standing by you to defend it, sir."

Kato: "Thanks for the backup, all of you. But for right now, I just need you guys to stay on my coattails. Once we know another skirmish is about to happen, we will go about with actual fighting."

QK Operator: "Very well, sir."

Craig: *Extends his cabled microphone on his headset.* "Hold your fire, ladies." *Notices that the Tanimoto and Ishida Clan sentinels have not been trying to fight back.* "Kato, there any reason they're not doing anything? It's almost like they just saw Enma."

Kato: *Copies his line of sight.* "Well, your dark-armored, masked men that are clearly much better trained for an all-out war would certainly unnerve them, but I wouldn't think it would put their tails between their legs immediately. In fact, I know of only two things that would explain these erratic movements, or lack thereof. Either an earthquake is happening, or-"

-Before Kato could finish his duology of suggestions, another force made their appearance known,
by recklessly driving an immortalized tour bus into the area, and stopping right in front of the cars Kato and the Neo-Wolfpack were covering behind.-

AssUniv: *With Karasuma revealed to be at the wheel, the KAM-clad student-assassins all scramble out of the bus' exit, forming some lines before Kato.* "Assassination University, reporting for duty."

Nakamura: "Yep, this feels so right right now."

Kato: *His neck cranks out of puzzlement yet again.* "You guys too?"
Ultimate Team-Up Space

Chapter Summary

It turns out, Kato is not as alone as he saw, or made, himself to be, as The Neo-Wolfpack and Qita Kong's residents both showed up to help him settle the differences between the three Yakuza Clans. And for some reason, so did the AssUniv Program! What could that possibly be about? And is anyone else out there on the horizon?

Kato: "You guys too?"

Fuwa: "Before anything, can we just address the elephant in the other room, and ask why you have Dr. Yanagisawa's sister next to the worst antimatter weapon in the world?"

Kato: *Shadows move over his eyes in dumbfounded bemusement.*

Nagisa: *Shakes his head.* "Enough about that. We're here to help you out, Kato."

Naoko: *Looks around, noticing both the Neo-Wolfpack and QK staff in attendance.* "Looks like we're a little late to the party however." *Grows rigid when she notices who is among Craig's ranks, pulling on Kato's close arm.* You know, that guy broke one of my ribs, right?

Neo-Wolfpack: *The soldier in question was notably trying not to make eye contact with the young Ministry Agent.*

Kato: *Turns to Craig.* "Secure the perimeter. Let's not have any Yakuza breathing behind our backs." *The Neo-Wolfpack nods and leave the area. He then checks his watch.* "I thought I told you all that the Mutated strain of Tentacle DNA was priority number one for you all."

Karma: "Oh it still is, and you're number two, Kato. Always gotta save our number twos."

Kato: "And what about number one?"

Irina: "It's protected, Kato-kun."

Kato: "By who?"

Terasaka: "Tried accessing your old frequency, you idiot?"

Kato: *Swivels on his InReTs and accesses his bluetooth to listen in. Immediately, he is swarmed by the otherwise-deafening chatter of folk on the other end. For a computer of a mind that Kato has, however, he was able to discern every single one of the voices as part of his Kato Family of old; more specifically, his biological research division in the Greater Tokyo Area.* "Those are my blood-brothers and sisters."

Yada: *Nods.* "Indeed they are, Kato-kun. They're still working on the antimatter and guarding it while you're fighting the good fight. Because they believe in your fight, just like everyone else"
Kato: "Smiles slightly and speaks aside.* "Then Miho-san decided to help me. One last time."

Kataoka: "What was that, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Nothing, nothing." *Refocuses.* "So, my blood-siblings are going to continue brewing the reagent." *Checks his watch.* "I wish I could be there to see it complete."

Maehara: "Well, Kato, not all of them are doing that."

Kato: "What do you mean?"

Craig: *Yells aloud.* "Super-powerful former-JGSDF she-soldier incoming!"

???: *Someone is shown storming through a splinter pack of Ishida Clan members; they were basically an irate bull ramming and goring black, grey, and blue suits out of her path; some several feet into the air. They were wearing KAM AtTac gear (which was notably bulkier and better-meshed for combat than the Mimir/Saga Suits), though the outline of her figure was certifiably female. She stops dead in her tracks, holding three criminals on each of her shoulders in front of all of the AssUniv Program. She then twists on a small switch on the back section of her full-coverage helmet which reveals her face - Miho's* "Kato."

Kato: *His heart moves up to his throat and is about ready to cry.*

Okano: *To others.* "That's one Hell of a woman.

Terasaka: *Who're the idiots of the past twenty years that passed her by?"

Naoko/Kimura: *Silently whistle their knowledge away.*

Miho: *Spin-tosses the six men off her clavicles, who all groan as they hit the ground, much to her apathy.* "You missed me?"

Kato: *Is so overcome with her arrival, gravitating towards her with open arms for a mid-battle embrace.* "Miho..."

Miho: "Kato-ani..." *She too goes toward her subject, almost to complete the hug... Until she swiftly changes stance and immediately lifts a pointed knee, jabbing it directly into Kato's chest.*

Kato: "DURGH!" *Despite the KAM AtTac Suit's layered armor, Kato feels enough out of the blow's impact that it forces him to his knees.*

AssUniv: "!!"

Miho: *With Kato's head bowed, she points and yells at him.* "Don't you ever do anything that you have these last few days ever again! Don't you willingly throw yourself into a ludicrously sacrificial plan, don't you modify such a plan so that you are the only one who pays for it, and most importantly, don't you ever believe for one microsecond that I am just going to let you hang to dry!"

Kato: *Slowly rises to one knee, continuing to cough his pain away. His face still did not meet
any of Miho's upper body yet.

Miho: "In the eight years that I have known the real you, and you knew me, the most prevalent among that vast archival resource is that I swore an oath to you, Kazuhiko! To all of your family, even: my body serves as your walls, protecting you from everything you expect... And not expect."

Kato: *Grits his teeth, and his breathing became slightly more sharp.*

Miho: *Holds the back of her head to cope with the high pressure.* "Kazuhiko, I cannot bear to let another Kato die like this again. You were strong like your father, and I made sure you could become stronger. So that that something like that never happened again! And you almost threw it away!"

Kato: *A couple tears actually fall from his face, hitting the street below.*

Miho: *Hugs him tightly.* "Kazuhiko, I cannot bear to let another Kato die like this again. You were strong like your father, and I made sure you could become stronger. So that that something like that never happened again! And you almost threw it away!"

Kato: *Unable to relent anymore, he goes high against Miho's low and cries onto her elevated shoulder, so that none of his peers could see.*

AssUniv: *All of the student-assassins, Karasuma, and Irina remain vigilant due to the heat of the previous battle still warming the atmosphere, but they also, Yada especially, empathically look on at the scene; watching two members of a family-by-choice reconcile.*

Miho: *She too has tears running down her face. She eventually pushes him back a bit so that they could see each other eye-to-eye.* "You're amazing, Kato-ani. You've made miracles happen, from becoming the ultimate crimefighter, to inspiring the once-most crestfallen like myself to take action. And you have many more of these feats to do. Don't throw them away."

Kato: *Wipes his eyes for a moment, before she does the same for herself and him.* "I'm really sorry, Miho. I just wanted to stop hurting you; after everything, you're owed that much at least."

Miho: "I told you; you're worth it. Skipped heartbeats and all."

Kato: *Cracks a smile to that.*

Miho: "Now... Let's kick some ass, huh?"

Karasuma: "Hey you two. I don't know if that's a viable course now. You probably haven't noticed, but no more bullets are flying."

-They all look up towards the sky, finding it clear of any such sounds.-

Kato: "That's right... They probably lost what remained of their pairs after they found out Miho and her legion has entered the battlefield, and are certainly not on their side."

Miho: *Cracks a smile to that.* "The Yakuza never really knew how to handle confident
women."

Yada: "Does that mean there's no more war? Between the three Clans?"

Kato: "Good question. Let's ask them." *Takes to his megaphone inside his backpack.* "Tanimoto, Ishida, what's up? You're not afraid of having a little less of a numbers advantage, are ya?"

Ishida: *The Chairman takes the bullhorn from his old announcer.* "Would it be crazy to say that we're getting 'Nam-level flashbacks here, Kato? Yet again, we're finding one of the Problem Children of the Yakuza standing in our way... Apparently to save our ways."

Muramatsu: "Huh, so all Yakuza speak like that..."

Itona: "Hm, I believe Kato still has a more unorthodox speech pattern."

Tanimoto: "I guess there was always a true reason why we never tried hunting you down after all those acts the Kato Family performed against our many operations in the past. And not because you're in charge of a private army. There was no lie all of it helped us in the end. We just never wanted to acknowledge it, because we were... Are, stubborn old men. However, seeing you alongside a considerable, respectable league of allies and supporters, however, has got us realizing something more too. Akamine, you're noticing it too, aren't you?"

A. Yuuji: "Yes, yes I am."

Ishida: "So how about, we call this war off, and consider-" *Bright beams of light from above shoot down on his face, cutting off his sentence.*

Everyone: *All of them look up, noticing that one of the reporting helicopters has descended from airspace closer to the scene. A loud, bellowing voice seemingly comes out from it.*

Helicopter: "Oh, ain't this precious?"

Kayano: "Kato-kun, please tell me this is one of your backup plans."

Kato: *Is utterly stumped.* "I don't tell meaningful lies."

Helicopter: "We made a deal, Ishida! Tanimoto! You can destroy your greatest nemesis and his most effective asset right now, and then reap the rewards! What the fuck is this shit?"

Irina: "Karasuma, do you recognize this voice?"

Karasuma: "Yeah; Byung-Sung."

Kato: *Turns to them.* "You know that name? Part of Hyun's last words were that someone in the NIS named that was leading the charge against him." *Mind flickers.* "He was the one who," *Checks his watch.* "Recently broke the Yakuza's peace."

Irina: "If so, that's the greatest thing he ever did. Byung-Sung's on the list of desperate agents trying to find their urban legend within intel archives. Especially after the NIS publicly refused any contribution by him in strategically positioning Korean ships during-" *Mind flickers.*
Karasuma: *Recalls Operation Ocean Shield.* "So that's how they know each other..."

Ishida: *Points his amplifier up at the chopper.* "It seems you either overestimated our enmity, or underestimated the respects inherent in our rivalries, Korean. Either way, we're afraid we'll have to decline your deal. It was never your riches to grant anyways."

Byung-Sung: "You're going to regret this treachery! Grimaldi!"

-Concurrent with his threat, an earthquake of APCs around the Shibuya Crossing area suddenly debut, along with a legion of SWAT-like armed men appearing from the nearby rooftops, and throwing thermite bombs. The aircraft also yields a side-mounted minigun that unloads lead all around the area. The horrific combination of these treacherous instruments cause a mass panic in the region.-

Miho: *Along with everyone else, covers her face from the dust and grime being blasted towards and around them.* "Karasuma, move your stretch so that it will connect with this eighteen! Kato, help me!"

Kato/Karasuma: *Both nod; Kato and Miho jab their fingers into the hull and then use their strength to push the huge trailer so that its grille contacts the nearby bus' nose being pushed similarly by Karasuma. Naoko eventually joins her brother-in-law in prying the vehicle forward.*

AssUniv: *All of them had colossally agape mouths at the sight of superhuman feats of strength. They refocus when the act results in them being able to wade off the initial firestorm.*

Miho: *A stray bullet by chance flies between he gap of the truck and storage and past her face, lodging into the ground.* "Denied our research, they probably think the end of us vile Yakuza will have to suffice!"

Kato: "Looks like we're going to have another war on our hands, AssUniv. Still have that fight in you all?"

AssUniv: *They all nod.*

Kato: "Then let's do this. We're not the outnumbered ones anymore." *Accesses QK’s frequency.* "Li, Trinh, Fung, whoever's in charge right now, push back, find any wounded not bearing Syndikat colors and tend to them. The Yakuza and us will do the bulk of the fighting."

QK Operator: "Very well, sir!"

Kato: *Switches to Neo-Wolfpack frequency.* "Craig, secure our perimeter and fall back on Qita Kong's forces. You can tell who they are by their medical positions and foreign appearance. This is a Yakuza battle."

Craig: "Worry not, no other lives will be lost on our watch!"

Miho: *Clutches his shoulder.* "I assume you want to rally up the three Clans, have them all unite against the Reclamation Society here and now?"

Kato: *Smiles.* "Is that too much to ask?"

Miho: "It will take some doing. What's our go in the meanwhile?"
Kato: "You're your own boss, Miho. And between the two of us, you're the only soldier. Do what you think."

Miho: "One last time, then. For old time's sake."

Kato: *Nods.* "Alright." *Accesses his InReTs, seeing the strength of the mobilized Kato Family totaling about two-hundred.* "You amassed a great force in just half a day. I was right to name you Head Captain. Attract the Society's attention, draw them out of the corners and into the open. They have better equipment than most we've dealt with, but they cannot beat your regime."

Miho: "Thanks for the vote of faith. What about you and your peers?"

Kato: "As assassins, we're going to go for the neck." *To AssUniv.* "We'll see the least resistance if we travel through by the rooftops. It'll also offer us a positioning advantage when we find where Grimaldi and Byung-Sung are, so that taking them down will be a breeze."

Nakamura: "Kato-kun, I think you're forgetting that helicopter."

Kato: "No, I haven't. I'm just, well, what I have planned for it is pretty messed up."

Karma: "That's how we know it's going to work."

Miho: *Bows to meet Kato at equal face level.* "We just got together again; don't die a hero, at least not tonight, huh?"

Kato: "Don't count on it." *They then hug one last time, before Miho goes on her way. Once he's done watching her leave, he then accesses Akamine's personal frequency.* "You're not taking this attack on our customs lying down, are you, Yuuji?"

A. Yuuji: "Of course not. No more cold war is perfect for me; now I don't have to feel bad for spilling some blood."

Kato: "You and me both. You think there's any chance I can turn Tanimoto and Ishida too?"

A. Yuuji: "You joking? They just got betrayed. They probably would be delighted to fight alongside their destroyer."

Kato: "Just the confirmation I needed." *Piggybacks Tanimoto's frequency and overwrites it to Ishida's temporarily.* "You two, get your men back in formation and fight back, Goddamnit! You're Yakuza; one of the most immortal things of Japan. Show them why!"

Tanimoto: "Remember when you had that kind of burning passion, Ishida?"

Ishida: "I don't remember a time that I didn't. But regardless, ready for a little gentleman's agreement?"

Tanimoto: "Oh yeah. Kato, would you kindly cut off that fucking snake's head? We'll handle the heat."

Kato: "My pleasure." *To AssUniv.* "We got the okay from eight-nine-three. It's all up to us now, gentlemen and ladies."
Isogai: "Alright everyone, gather around." *AssUniv form one large circle.* "Sound it off, Valedictorian."

Nagisa: "We are assassins. And our target... Is our sensei’s enemy."
Now is the time to see the fallout of all of Kato’s good intentions. Everyone he absolutely cares about in the present, in the thick of one terrible mess. Welp, time to get them all out. Right the wrongs. And bring the story into its final stage.

-The helicopter with the minigun continues to patrol the area, trying to locate standalone enemies and discharge dozens, if not hundreds, of .50 BMG ammunition.

Karasuma: *Having climbed to the far edge of a building, he finds the roof still too low to reach even the landing gear of the aircraft. Still, anything was better than letting the helicopter's armament continue to terrorize the ground forces, so he vaults over the lip and fires his HK433 at its hull.*

Helicopter: *Turns around upon realizing it's being fired at, allowing its minigun operator to aim at him. Karasuma immediately throws his rifle back behind him and bolts in the other direction. A massive hailstorm of heavy cartridges land all around the Ministry's Super-Soldier, with one even jabbing into his outstretched left arm, cracking his Ballistic Shield. He cuts a corner and continues along the building's roof, while the bullets diagonally accommodate the change in trajectory.*

Karasuma: *Eventually slips down the edge of the building, falling into a set of covered side scaffolding that is only several feet above a railroad. Knowing they won't be able to target him with a sky view, the aircraft begins flying lower to shoot level.*

Irina: *When the helicopter comes into view from cutting the corner of the building, she appears from the open window of a tower from across the street and fires a Panzerfaust anti-air rocket at it.*

Helicopter: *Notices the rocket flying at them from behind and veers further to the left to avoid it, now hovering partially above the train lines, the missile flies past all obstructions and detonates in the skies above the a pack of the Yakuza and NWO fighting. It unleashes a quick flurry on the source, forcing Irina to retreat back into the building.*

Naoko: *Is shown standing on a balcony on the far side of the Crossing, with an experimental Barrett XM108 sniper rifle. She scopes both the fuel tank and back rotors, both heavily fortified by titanium-alloyed sheets, and fires at them. The metal hull handles their impacts, but the aircraft shows notable dents and is pushed back. The helicopter again pivots to attack its new aggressor, who covers under the reinforced concrete lip to avoid the gunfire, scrambling back inside as soon as she's clear.*

Helicopter: *Finding themselves without any more enemies in view, they take the time staying in the area trying to find their targets.*

Kato: *Is revealed to be on the other side of the helicopter, using his EM-Traversal to remain on the hull. Naoko's sniper bullets were so that they couldn't hear or feel him jumping onto it. Like a
lizard, he crawls under to the utility helicopter's other side. He takes out his HF tactical knife and
dlices off the minigun mount of the aircraft in one stroke. Its operator, having been leaning on its
controls, loses balance, yelping just before Kato then pulls him out, making him land almost
twenty meters below onto the asphalt. The copilot recognizes the threat and fires handgun rounds
at the edge, preventing Kato from climbing up. That wasn't his idea however, as he begins
retreating back where he came, so that their skidding trick along the railroad does not squish him.
When the pilots believe their sticky problem is gone and rise back up, Kato appears from the other
side, punching the cracked cockpit glass and knocking out the copilot, and threatens the other with
his Kimber. A quick gaze at both of their faces makes him realize Grimaldi was never on the
aircraft, so he caps the last operator with a ShockOut round and drops back down onto the train
lines, watching the aircraft crash into the nearby, abandoned train stop. The ordeal dealt with, he
goes to his communicator.* Tango's down, but neither Byung-Sung nor Grimaldi were on it; it was
just a voice projection. All of you set?

Isogai: All set. Climbing the ALBION now. *Gestures to his fellow student-assassins to begin
scaling the glass walls.*

Irina: You kids wouldn't happen to know where Byung-Sung and Grimaldi actually are, hm?

Itona: I've been working with Ritsu to temporarily seize control of all the CCTV, monitors, and
light-pole microphones in the area. Most of it's noise.

Ritsu: *Appears on everyone's InReTs screens.* "But if we're to cross-match Grimaldi's auditory
data from the earlier call-out, a voice matches it on the road nicknamed 'Love Letter Alley'."

Okajima: Aw, that's going to be some rooftop spelunking trip. And that's not mentioning any
angry, foreign soldiers we'll deal with along the way.

Okano: Quit complaining. We can so take them.

Naoko: *Throws her sniper rifle behind her.* We'll meet you all on the ALBION and get there
together.

Karasuma: Agreed. *Lets go of his bluetooth and jumps up to the next floor of scaffolding he
was waiting on.*

Kato: *Clicks his tongue and jumps from the guardrails of the train lines, propelling himself
onto the side of KELLYS LABO.*

Miho: *Is on ground-level, already surrounded by dozens of groaning men of various ages. She
handles a splinter cell of SWAT-dressed auxiliaries with a metal trash-can throw, knocking two
immediately out, before she throws a similar knee that she gave to Kato into another's torso, laying
him out in a pool of his own vomit. The remaining two get strung up by one of their own rifle
slings, which Miho proceeds to hang onto a protruding point on a light-pole - short enough for
them to keep one foot's ball on the ground to ease carotid pressure, but not enough to ease tension
of the strap's knot so that they could untie themselves. After a brief engagement with another four
soldiers' arms simultaneously in the same position in a standing triangle armbar and continuing to
apply the pressure, she takes a moment to gaze above and find Kato diving through the air. It may
have been just her and the fabrications of her mind, but for a moment, she saw ethereally large
white, feathered wings sprout from his back; very much like the combat aura that Kazuto Kato of
old often exhibited. She is puzzled for a moment, even ending the test of strength with the men by
breaking their elbows concurrently so that she can concentrate on it. She shakes her head and looks
at Kato again, finding the aura gone.* Huh... Could you be any more like your father, Kazuhiko? * Notices the next batch and continues fighting.*

-A minute later, all of the AssUniv Program have reached their rendezvous point.-

Okuda: "Enlighten us, Kato-kun. Have you conspired with Fate so that you could present us with not one, but two feats of transhuman abilities?"

Kato: *Smirks.* "Have I also mentioned I fought my Chinese nemesis before those?"

Yada: "Ah, I was wondering why the Big Three was incomplete here." *Mind flickers.* "Kato-kun, did you-?"

Kato: "I left that up to him - he'd have crawled out of the alley we fought in, or dropped his head on a sharp nail I kept standing to end it all. I deigned myself in leaving him like that, but he left me no other choice; I could not bring myself to directly kill him after recent food for thought."

Irina: "You might've chose the wrong occupation all your life to be soft, Kato-kun. But then again, you are out."

Kato: "Indeed. Well, a war's end is waiting on us. Let's end it."

-The crew proceed to run through the large ceiling, encountering some remaining traces of Syndikat muscle providing cover fire on the fighting from above. When they encounter their first duo up close, Isogai and Maehara take the lead, coming up from behind their respective foes, cupping the set of Syndikat jaws, and fire point-blank Shock-Out handgun rounds into their backs, putting them both down immediately. A wary trio overheard the silenced gunshots and made way for investigation, only to be met with a simultaneous takedown trifecta; Okano cartwheels her two heels to smack at one soldier's temple from behind, forcing him to fall. Naoko threw all of her weight into a flying triangle chokehold, using her momentum to topple the foreign soldier. Terasaka did the same, albeit targeting the leg with a diving chop block from behind, forcing a kneel, followed swiftly by a deadlift hip-toss that puts him onto his back. A double-tap later, all three were taking a nap as well.-

-The AssUniv Program continue through their path of least resistance, leaping from the large ALBION plaza building at its Louis Vitton side to the smaller ITS'DEMO on the west. Though the soldiers there were too focused on the chaos down below to notice their descent, Kato marked them all with his eyes mid-fall, and transmitted the data to everyone else onto their InReTs screens. With everyone on the same page, they took to various vantage points to contend with all eight of their unwary opponents in one fell swoop. Sugino, Kanzaki, Yada, Karma, and Itona all slide, dive, roll, or otherwise enter the fray right behind them, pelting them all at various sections of their backs with Shock-Out rounds. When one did not immediately go down and attempted a reprisal, AssUniv overcommitted slightly to completing the subjugation, with another seven members of the crew (Hara, Kurahashi, Hazama, Nakamura, Yoshida, Okuda, Takebayashi, and a jumpy Irina) at their spread-out locations delivering an electric case of assassin brutality. Not that anyone was going to protest against it...-

-The student-assassins once again must gap their way to Love-Letter Alley, from the IT'SDEMO to Adidas Brand Core Shibuya. This time, the Syndikat muscle on the ceilings, six this time, was aware of their presence, even catching Kimura, who was the last one to jump across, as he was in the air, exposing their entryway and initiating a brief gunfight. Kato capped an advancing auxiliary with a Kimber round to the instep, forcing the man to kneel. This exposed his head to a sliding
knee, courtesy of Kataoka. Karasuma had taken Fuwa into one of his arm's grasp cross-legged, and when notified by a scouting Hayami, ran across three AC units, when there was one present at each interval. Both of them put one bead into each, fulfilling the soldier's double-tap that took all of the Syndikat men down. The final two were dispatched by Chiba and Hayami, after Sosuke and Mimura exposed their locations with dummy explosives.-

-One last leap got the many college students and their mentors onto the Familymart, which included...-

Fuwa: *As she climbs to the lip of the roof, she notices a sign on the side, which makes her gasp.* Baskin' Robbins!

Mimura: *Leaps over to the edge just to the right of her.* Fuwa-san, focus! *After some extra bickering, the duo then vault over the edge.*

-Now, what stood in the way of Assassination University and a perfect spectator's spot on the Syndikat's mobile command center were ten more foreigners, who have now been alerted about their fallen scouts from the earlier buildings. Though the student-assassins outnumbered their foes, causing any sort of ruckus would most certainly scare off Grimaldi and Byung-Sung too, so they resort to their silently efficient CQC. Irina takes a stray steel plate from the ground and covers behind a long roof entryway just in time before three armed men advanced past it. When they do, she whips out a garrote and throws it in front of the (protected) neck of the last one past. She throws the steel plate so that its edge hits the first turning soldier in the head, knocking him clean out. Irina double-knotted the neck snare and placed its ends under her armpit so that she can use her other hand, which was necessary for her to whip out a Pivoting Wire Wrest, bashing it into her Ballistic Shield, and firing the other hook into the man's layered chest. She calls back the wire, propelling the soldier towards her, and meeting his face with a Shield bash that takes him down. Irina finally takes care of her hostage with a Shock Pad to the eye, covering his mouth to muffle the screaming.-

-Another five were taken down clean by the Terasaka Group, air-assassinating all of their targets simultaneously as they tried to follow a retreating Naoko through a chute of extra-large AC units. The final two, more vigilant than their cohorts, took to the highest point on the mountainous-esque rooftop, seeing glimpses of their enemies as they dispatched their colleagues, but never quite being able to line up a shot with their electrically-powered suppressed snipers. But then, they find something staying still; a Circle Game (by a grinning Maehara)! But their rifles fail! As they check their firearms, Karma and Nagisa, both with de-powered KAM AtTac Suits brandish shock batons, handgagging their foes and jabbing the end into their backs. They then toss the two over the edge, allowing them to fall into the grasps of their peers down below. Soon enough, they rounded up all of the evil foreigners into one location on the roof that the TMPD will undoubtably investigate once the street war ends.-

AssUniv: *All of them reconvene on the ceiling away from the Syndikat soldiers.*

Okano: *Sighs.* "Why can't anyone ever measure up to be even half the challenge that the Neo-Wolfpack was?"

Karasuma: "That's just how the cookie crumbles, kids. Look, I'm disappointed that I haven't had a great fight since Craig."

Kato: "Sometimes, you need to be careful of what you wish for, Karasuma."
Kayano: *Looks on her InReTs screen.* "Ritsu-chan? Is the disruptive feedback gone? Can you hook us into the Syndikat Big Three's comm line more comfortably?"

Ritsu: "I can indeed, Kayano-senpai. Piggybacking frequency now..."

-After a little bit of static, a connection was established. No conversations were running through at the time, however, so Itona then proceeds to overtake the controls, accessing its offline microphone.-

Byung-Sung: "It was high time we parted."

-BANG!-

AssUniv: *All jump up when they heard the nearby gunshot at the turn of the alleyway.*

Yoshida: "Secret enemies at their gates?"

Okuda: "Would not explain why no other firearms are discharging."

Terasaka: "Then how could this be explained?"

Yada: *Notices her close right flank is void of souls, and looks back, noticing Kato has advanced to the edge overlooking the last section of security before the enemy's HQ.* "Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Ritsu-chan, can you notify Miho about this position? Have them take the opposite side and cut off the Northwestern extension; leave them with no clean way to escape."

Ritsu: "I will." *Leaves Kayano's InReTs screen.*

Isogai: *Along with the rest of AssUniv, they scope the congestion of SWAT-like foreigners down below.* "Thinking of keeping our element of surprise again, Kato?"

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "Not this time. Byung-Sung's getting desperate, and I want to show him just how right he is for being so." *Turns off the safety of his HK433 and turns back.* "Everyone, let's run the walls."

AssUniv: *All look to each other with glee.*

-After one more discreet incursion, using the Pivoting Wire Wrest to allow roughly half of them to reach the set of buildings across the street, they all then use their EM-Traverse to take irregular, yet dominant shooting positions against their many foes. Karma and Nagisa, who still had disabled suits, were riding on Naoko and Kayano's Vacuum Carry servos as they travelled. One by one, Shock-Out bullet by bullet, Syndikat muscle crashed to the ground. There would be some resistance, but it could not keep up with their gravity-defying movements.-

Byung-Sung, along with his final wave of men, trains his Desert Eagle to the entrance to the Alley. It was all for naught, however, as Kato leaps from an off-screen corner to the other building across from it. While doing so, his Lionheart LH9 shot blasts the heavy handgun out of the Korean's hands. When his close guards draw closer to eliminate him, the rest of the student-assassins arrive to pick them off.-

Byung-Sung: *Grips his hand to ensure there wasn't any burn or tension on it as a result of the
"God fucking damn it!"

Kato: "Argue about it to someone who cares, Byung-Sung." *Notices Grimaldi, motionless on the floor and surrounded by a pool of blood, presumably his own.* "What was your beef with him?"

Byung-Sung: "Him? Everything. For one thing, he was a criminal; NIS agents don't take kindly to them, unless we need to work with them. And even then, we're not exactly on altruistic terms."

Kato: "He was indisputably your ally, though. Is that really how you treat your cohorts? How does that make you all feel?"

Byung-Sung: *Spits in Grimaldi's direction.* "He was a disgrace to everyone he ever knew; no one's going to miss him. Besides, all he was looking for was to get back at a bunch of crooked suits with the ultimate crime of the century."

Irina: *Still has her face concealed by her tactical hood and mask.* "Says the chump who's looking for national recognition."

Byung-Sung: *Suddenly turns humorously skeptical.* "I'm sorry, did we meet before? I can't help but feel as though I've heard this voice."

Irina: "!!" *Remembers they must remain incognito for the duration of the street war and keeps her mouth shut.*

Kato: "Not your concern, mate. If you really hate criminals so much, you should be very upset that one of the best is right in front of you."

Byung-Sung: "Ah yes... Kazuhiko Kato. 'Kazuto's Problem Son'. The Kazmanian Devil, who with the help of his band of Watcher Angels, brought the criminal underworld to its knees. And he turns out to be not Devil nor even man, but merely some kid whose ego outgrew him a decade ago."

Kato: "Is that envy speaking?"

Byung-Sung: "Hah! Only pariahs wish they were you! People like me don't have time to waste being jealous of others anymore! I had already gotten everything one could be envious of: money and power. All that a man needs after is a legend; an ambition that proves he scorched the Earth."

Kato: "And you plan for destroying the Yakuza and unleashing the Tentacle DNA to prove it, huh?"

Byung-Sung: "'Unleash the DNA'? You have bad information, boy. I'm going to steal it back, returning it to the world leaders to be hailed the Hero and earn my services rendered."

Kato: "That's as hypocritical as you can get. To think Dae-Gu died before you did."

Byung-Sung: "Machida is going to have garrisons to support this extended conflict in just several minutes. I just need to keep on trucking until then. And you're not going to stop me. Not you or any of your cronies back there!"

Karma: "This fuckin' Korean-" *Steps forth after the taunt.*
Kato: *Holds out his arm to stop him.* "He's mine. Cover the secondary exits and isolate the reinforcements. Do not let them get here and support what remains of the opposition."

AssUniv: *All of them, still with their identities concealed, look between each other and nod. They then mobilize and retreat from the scene.*

Byung-Sung: "Heh, sending your underlings away? How brave, but utterly fruitless."

Kato: "Ironic of you to say that, for I know you've done the same at one point before."

Byung-Sung: "And how do you figure that?"

Kato: "You need a reason to compare your allies and enemies to shit. If you were always apathetic, you wouldn't bother with the rationalization."

Byung-Sung: "..."

Kato: "But enough about that; it won't divert our confrontation, though for your sake, it should. You've done your homework, enough at least, on me right? Then as much as you want not to admit it, you know the stories, the legends; you know what has happened to the people who have crossed my Clan, their beliefs, and threatened the lives of my Family. Right now, you're going to have just a taste of what that entails."

Byung-Sung: "I'm going to take my chances with that threat. You certainly have seen your share of battles throughout this day, and paying the price for it. I'm sure I can defeat you now."

Kato: *Is indeed feeling the fatigue of participating in the Assassin Games, then fighting Wushi Jieji for the last time, then engaging almost seventy people on his own, and finally leading the assassination operation, but remains attentively active before his opponent.* "You're going to lose that bet."

Byung-Sung: "Prove it, you arrogant little shit." *Rolls his shoulders.*

Kato: *Throws aside all of his firearms, including his Kimbers and Lionheart, and steps back, setting up the fray.*

Ritsu: *Briefly appears on Kato's touchpad.* "Kato-kun, I'd like to report, Miho is not alone in-

Kato: "Not now, Ritsu-chan." *Turns off his screen. He then cracks his neck and readies into his "God Hand" stance.*

Byung-Sung: *Removes his tie and falls into a Pellegrini Hapkido stance, with both hands open at plexus level facing Kato.*

-The sounds of both Yakuza and Syndikat soldiers cheering their contenders on engulfed the area. When he was ready, Kato first sprang in with a far-reaching Cobra punch. Byung-Sung was ready for it, sliding to the side. Kato lands anticipating the evasion and charges up a pivoting left straight in succession. The Korean sees it coming and circularly twists it into a vertical dislocating lock. Kato instinctively frontflips to neutralize the advantage, and then ducks under a midsection roundhouse kick, rising back up with a reverse spinning backfist, which Byung-Sung backs away from. They then return to their fighting stances with the distance between them closing once again.-
加藤和彦 VS

Kazuhiko Kato; Okinawa International Penitentiary Parolee VS

Byung-Sung Kim; One of the Big Three of the Reclamation Society

Byung-Sung leads, with a front thrust kick kick to Kato's midriff. Kato sidesteps so that the heel flies past his front. He catches said heel with his far arm and attempts a knee break, but the Agent pulls his leg back so that Kato's body again ends up in front of his sole, and then re-kicks, pushing the ex-Yakuza away. Byung-Sung puts his front foot down and then spins for a 540 kick that Kato only just manages to Keysi-block. Despite his sideways momentum stopped, the Korean then takes his other foot for a flying back kick underneath the guard, again one-upping Kato with another push. Kato rubs his torso, slapping some circulation back into it before continuing the contest.

Kato turns to his "B-Boy" style and initiates a standing spinning hook kick. He anticipates the Agent limboing backwards and throwing a low roundhouse kick to sweep him, which is why he throws his right arm down to the asphalt right in front of his matching shin to block it. After putting his foot down, Kato then spins over for a single-handstand roundhouse, which was promptly pulled back from. Byung-Sung was right on top of his opponent following this second drop, tackling him to the ground. The Korean flips Kato from supine to prone and locks a kneeling Fujiwara armbar, which Kato rolls backward to flip his opponent over and release the hold. Kato continues with the barreling to throw a Listo kick, which Byung-Sung blocked from his crouched position.

Kato takes a three-point with a backfist to Byung-Sung's midsection, which was again parried with the latter's arms. He then clutches onto the arm and pushes down, again stressing the arm, and then pushing on the local pressure point for deeper pain. Kato realizes this quickly and pivots his arm so that the joint points back down, neutralizing the lock's advantage. He then spins over, clutching the same arm and falling down, arm-dragging Byung-Sung over him using his own weight. The Agent is swift to return to his feet after the forced roll and sees his opponent get close, leading to him throwing a jumping back kick. Kato ducks under to avoid, and travels through with a no-handed cartwheel, with said hands being used to target his enemy's right leg. The intent was to bring it with him as he fell, leading to a forced split, but whether Kato had diminishing strength, or Byung-Sung had successfully defended the motion, the limb refused to give. The Korean repositioned his foot, wrestling it free and threw a stomp. Kato caught the sole to negate the damage, but the arm was once again the target for yet another wringer.

Kato's attempt to roll out of this armbar gets him into a seated position that Byung-Sung was looking for, into a single bow-and-arrow and headlock hold. Kato grabs the popliteal of the Agent's kneeling leg and pulls it forward, making Byung-Sung catch himself to regain balance. This leaves him open to eating a reverse elbow as Kato then rises back to his feet. Byung-Sung sends his
reprisal with a front kick to Kato's own kneepit. Stunned, Byung-Sung rises back up, wrapping his right leg over Kato's, prying the ex-Yakuza's left arm behind him, and then pulling back on Kato's back-left neck muscle downward - an abdominal side-chancery.

With Kato stuck in Byung-Sung's half-cravate, the close-side of his face was exposed for a series of chin and cheekbone punches, sandwitching the head into his forearm. Kato props his trapped leg up to reposition his own, bringing it back in front of it and eliminating the abdominal advantage. It also gave Kato time to pry away Byung-Sung's clinging hand and sweep backwards, slamming the Agent's face onto the cement. Byung-Sung barrel-rolls away, looking up at Kato with a disgusted face as he wipes away the blood trailing down from his mouth. Kato again starts, throwing another heel kick, though keeping the angle acute, so that he could speedily place it back down and duck under the Korean's returning circular axe kick. Kato's hand catches the foot just before it lands, surprising the Korean.

This hesitation plays into Kato's tactic well, with him throwing it way behind his opponent, making him involuntarily spin in place, and his hand as he returns to facing Kato is a target for an over-the-shoulder hip toss. Byung-Sung tries to reverse this first by bouncing to his feet, twisting the short-arm and pulling Kato in for a knee lift, but the ex-Yakuza elbows the thigh muscle to stop the attack cold. The latter then clutches around the former's waist, showing some brief "Tumbler" vibes, and pitching him up. Kato drops to his knees so that Byung-Sung's legs feel the full brunt of being driven purely vertically onto hard ground. Once again, Byung-Sung takes too long to assess his damage, and eats a double Scorpion Kick to the face from Kato, who reverted back to "B-Boy" just as quickly.

Byung-Sung rolls back immediately from falling down, showing aggression for the ruination of his face. He goes in, feinting Kato into diving forward with a clinch grab, which he ducks under. A mule kick to the nape was thrown by the Korean as an immediate counter, but Kato gets his head out of the way and hooks his arms where it originally was, catching the ankle. He then twirls over to face Byung-Sung again, which causes the latter to barrel-roll in mid-air. Thanks to his implicit taekwondo routes, Byung-Sung manages to regain footing, but the stiff landing results him being unable to evade a low windmill kick that trips him up and crash onto the floor back-first.

As the Agent begins rising back up, Kato throws the same handstand roundhouse he did earlier, and when he sees Byung-Sung again counter for the shoulder charge, he pushes off from his far leg for a back-to-back roll, ending up right behind the Korean. The latter has no chance to turn around before eating a spinning hook to the nape. The impact of the kick sends him crashing to the ground face-first, and Kato uses his stand-up time to shift to "Tumbler" style. Byung-Sung cleans his face once more and runs in, missing a flying knee, but catching Kato's left arm as he descends, pushing down on the knuckles to make the ex-Yakuza's palm touch the wrist. Kato does not bother defending this as Byung-Sung was going to transition to the elbow anyways, so the former instead keeps a rigid, bent arm and pulls it back, headbutting the Korean and breaking the wristlock.

Again, Byung-Sung hits the floor, but manages to roll out of the way of Kato's knee drop. The Korean dashes back into the fray, with them both locking in a collar and elbow tie-up once more. The Korean attempts another underarm wringer toss, but Kato learned from his mistake, leaning back and raising his arm to end up behind the pivoting Byung-Sung and eliminate the leverage of the throw. Kato then lines the waist with his own arms, headbutting the back of the Agent's head, stunning the latter long enough for a German suplex. The ex-Yakuza O'Connor rolls through while maintaining the waistline, also seizing the Korean's right wrist with his left hand. Kato then switches to "God Hand" style again, pulling back on the arm and untwisting Byung-Sung into a ripcord short-arm uppercut. Byung-Sung blocks it with a lift up of his left leg breaking the trajectory, and then he wrestles his wrist free, so that he can reverse it into a wristlock himself. This
was a painful transition to pull Kato in close, going for the excruciating pressure point present on
the side of Kato's neck. Pressing down naturally repulses Kato, but Byung-Sung maintains the
attack, watching the ex-Yakuza begin to crumble from the immobilizing stinging.

But then, the muscle stiffens, and begins pushing back against the thumb's pressure. Byung-
Sung senses it, glimpsing at the miracle, and then to Kato's face, seeing a smile form. Kato then
tilts his head, trapping the Korean's hand between his temple and clavicle and putting his whole
body off-balance. This exposed Byung-Sung's chest to a puncer elbow-knee combination. Kato
then released the hand, but held onto his wrist with his own hand, spinning the Agent around
before twirling under its outstretched reach and then pulling back, swiftly turning Byung-Sung into
a powerful superkick to the face. The Agent is sent flying, nearly hitting his crown on the curb, out
like a light.

-OST ends.-

Kato: *Almost takes a knee from exhaustion, but summons the strength to remain standing,
actively watching Byung-Sung attempt to rise back to his feet, but only finding enough to kneel.*
"You think apathy is the epitome of self-improvement. But recall that the people around you are
always the reason you get better. And your inability to recognize that is the source of your hyp-"

Ritsu: *Appears again on Kato's InReTs screen.* "Is now a good time, Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Looks at his touchpad.* "Ritsu? What is it?" *I was having a monologue.

Ritsu: "I was going to say earlier that Miho was not the only one leading the charge of the Kato
Family."

Kato: "What?"

Byung-Sung: "Heh... You're realizing it now, aren't you? For no matter how hard you fight, you
still can't stop me - stop us! Machida is going to storm in with a fresh new army, to finally stomp
you Yakuza scum!"

Kato: "It'd be great if that scientist finally showed his face, so that doesn't discourage me,
honestly. Now pipe up, I'm trying to concentrate." *To Ritsu.* "What do you mean by that, Ritsu-
chan?"

???: *A familiar voice bellows.* "Exactly what it says on the tin... Cuz."

Kato/Byung-Sung: *Both look back, finding that a KAM armored Kazuhiro and Norio have
entered the scene, with Miho, Dalsing, and the front lines of the Kato Family in tow.*

Kazuhiro: *Holsters his pistol.* "You miss us, man?"

Kato: "Uncle... Cuz."

Norio: *Holds up his phone, revealing the voicemail from the payphone that Kato sent just
before the street war.* "The fuck is this, Kazuhiko?"

Kato: "..."

Norio: "You think that after you went through Hell to come find me so long ago, you can just up
Kazuhiro: "It don't work like that, 'Hiko."

Norio: "Right. You think you have it bad? I blasted through a heart attack thinking my brother's bastard son kicked the bucket!" *Refocuses.* "Kid, you can hurt me, because by God millions more have already done so; I won't look at you any differently. But there's only one way to break me, and the only way I let that happen is over my fucking dead body, because then I know you're joining me soon. We're all the blood we got, Kazuhiko. We're diehard kin. And if this is where we all die, then so be it."

Kato: *Looks down.*

Kazuhiro: *Goes up to him, looking at his face from below.* "Oh man, what's this suit done to ya?" *Pitches his cousin's face back to horizontal level. He then licks his fingers and wipes away the blood streams and flows around the area.* "Can't let Yada-chan see you like that; she and the rest of AssUniv would kill me." *When Kato beams at his identical relative, he grins all the same.*

Yada: "Kato-kun!" *The Program runs up to them at the T-intersection.* "Two big things. First," *Breaks off upon seeing it pop up, having her point at it for Kato to observe.*

Yakuza: *All three Clans, represented by their respective Chairman leading the charge, all swarm each road to the converging point.*

Kato: "Hm, I must have taken so many head hits, I didn't hear the gunfire and yelling die down." *To a still unrecognized Yada.* "It's over?"

Yada: "Yes! We searched, we scanned, but there are no new reinforcements in sight. Byung-Sung was lying."

Byung-Sung: "What!?"

Kato: "You heard right, Byung-Sung. Machida left you all alone, just like you wanted."

Akamine/Ishida/Tanimoto: *All walk up past their armies (though each had their own personal security guard in tow) to the fray of the conversation.* "Well, not all alone... He crossed three of the strongest Yakuza clans in all of Japan. That's not something you do to make everyone leave you alone..."

Kato: *Stands in their way.* "Sorry, guys, but we can't have this guy disappear into your devil pits. He has to answer for one more heinous crime." *To AssUniv.* "TK, book him."

Karasuma: *Realize that his initials were identified and goes up behind Byung-Sung to place some specialized cuffs.*

Chairmen: *All look in between each other during this interval.*

Akamine: *To Kato.* "That's the second time you dared to contest against us. If my old man was here, he'd say that's very much like your father." *Turns to the other two.* "What about you grandpas?"

Ishida: *Nods with Tanimoto.* "Yep, very much like your father." *Snickers.* "You know,
Kazuhiko, we old men attain a level of perspective; for most, that's synonymous with stubbornness. And that's what we would've been labelled as to, had we not had the level of humility we had today... Because your father instilled that in all of us."

Kato: "What does this mean?"

Akamine: "We think it's about time we stopped overlooking what you and your family have done to keep the balance - the peace, between all three of us, our factions and our predecessors for the past eleven generations. Now we can't bring your ancestors back from the grave to give them a medal, so we have to make do with you."

Kato: *Still looks confused.*

Akamine: "We want to establish a new branch of the Kansai Chapter of Yakuza. The Kato Alliance - a check and balance of the Japanese syndicates all over the world."

Tanimoto: "Think of yourself as a Ninkyodo Court - What sets us apart from the rest of those so-called AAA criminals, as you know Kato, is that we have a rulebook. You are going to make sure we all stick to it. Not just for ourselves, but the rest of this country; after all, we made a vow to help the common citizen, right?" *Looks around, noticing the property damage everywhere.* "This hardly looks like help, so I think we need some education on that matter. And we think you and your band are the best teachers for that."

Norio/Kazuhiro: *Are so surprised, they are silent with covered, agape mouths.*

Miho: *Finally seeing her lifelong sworn brother get the appreciation he deserved, she too covers her mouth; her eyes filling, but not streaming with tears with being so proud and happy. Her fellow underlings are equally ecstatic.*

Kato: "That's... Incredible. I feel totally honored... But you know I can't accept it."

Akamine: *Looks aside in a double-take.* "Now what?"

Kato: "You need to be an Oyabun of a Yakuza Family before you can ascend to a Clan or Alliance, right? But I'm not an Oyabun anymore."

Miho: *Snickers.*

Kato: *Turns around, finding her laughing a little harder.* "Miho? What's that about?"

Miho: "Kato-kun, you said you'd never tell meaningful lies. But you just did."

Kato: "What do you-" *Mind flickers, and he begins rewinding in his memories, checking his watch meanwhile, to recall that when they embraced upon first reuniting again, he went high and she went low. Kato then throws his hand behind him and realizes that there is something in his back bag that holds his last spare handgun magazines - an open envelope!* "You..."

Miho: "Only a Kato should be running the Kato Family in the long run." *She puts her hands behind her with glee.*

Norio: "And it just wouldn't be the same without our Devil of a relative on the top spot."
Kazuhiro: "It's on you, cuz." *Gets briefly choked by Miho hooking her arm across his neck in collective celebration, but coughs a grin.*

Kato: *Triple-takes slowly between the envelope, his relatives, and the Chairmen.* "I guess if you're all supporting my return, then I suppose it's a Yakuza's life for me."

Miho: "A Chairman's life for you... Kato-ani." *Bows to him.*

Kato: *Properly reads through the terms of the open envelope, and turns back to the three other Chairmen.* "What I really meant to say earlier was, 'who am I, as an Oyabun, to shun a gift like this'?

Akamine: *Along with the other two Chairmen, briefly look at their soon-to-be equal with a face that just screams, "Is it too late to take it back?" Regardless, he goes up to his friend from youth, with a hastily-written letter.* "We'll have the properly-inked document and the ceremony later. Your kind clearly waited long enough for this."

Kato: *Accepts the record and Roman handshakes his former Chairman, before going up to the rest of the Akamine Clan, and presents both of his documents of leadership.*

Everyone: *All clap, a la "Ryu Ga Gotoku 6: Clan Creator Gameplay" at 8:33 at the impromptu crowning ceremony. Qita Kong's residents, and the Neo-Wolfpack, were also on the outlines of the crowds.*

Yada: *You didn't run away from the celebration again... I'm really happy for you, Kato-kun.*

-Meanwhile...-

-Tokyo's Chapter of Qita Kong had been evacuated, with the able-bodied men who sent out to join Kato only beginning to leave Shibuya Crossing, and the citizens that remained were moved thanks to a Kato Family regiment being called in to bring them to safety in case the conflict escalated. All that remained were a few neon lights not turned off, some unlocked doors, and Jieji, still laying on the ground with all of his limbs fractured. Having elected not to take the suicide route that Kato presented him, he instead takes, with a laborious crawl, to the wall to rest up.-

Jieji: *His eyes open up with strain upon hearing footsteps.*

Machida: *A slow crane shot reveals him, along with a five-man band of Syndikat soldiers.* "Grimaldi's going to be put six feet under where we can no longer reach, and Byung-Sung's too well to be taken. And there you are... Looks like the Big Three is at its end."

Jieji: "I... Won't make excuses."

Machida: "That's okay. I need you for something else."

Jieji: "???

Machida: "Boys, pick him up."
We have reached endgame, ladies and gentlemen. Kato has now been reinstated as Oyabun for the Kato Family, but also ascended to the rank of Chairman to bring the total of top Yakuza umbrella clans to four, with the advent of the Kato Alliance. But while the Reclamation Society was dealt a major blow with their failure to eliminate all of their enemies during the great Tokyo street war, they are still out there somewhere, and that necessitates their end.

 Somehow. Some way.

-It has been ten days since the Tokyo Terror (as Nippon News would come to call the street war) occurred. With Karasuma's supervision, the nation was slowly on the path to looking beyond the mayhem. Still incognito thanks to their KAM AtTac gear, AssUniv was able to slip away from the capital, back to relatively safe refuge in Kyoto. With ample evidence from CCTV, body cameras and recorded microphones capturing the blatant Syndikat identification, on top of any physical evidence in the form of phone logs and tech, Karasuma was able to convince Secretary Sanada and all other skeptical Ministry officers before the twenty-four hour time limit of the Reclamation Society's existence. The Defense Agents mobilized to locate and seize any foreign assets of the Syndikat and eliminating Machida, in case he decided to escape the country following the latest operation's failure. The Neo-Wolfpack were to be the point-man foreign legion for these foreign observations.

For almost single-handedly combatting this global crime ring all this time, Karasuma's reputation in the Ministry was redeemed, and his promotion to full on Chief of Air Staff would be pushed to just around the corner. Naoko's punishment for her unsanctioned undercover operations, after being delayed by Karasuma and Irina earlier in the Summer, was also nullified, no doubt due to her own stake in the crusade. Secretary Sanada was actually a little proud, truth be told, but knowing that Karasuma probably wouldn't want anything further to do with him now that the latter was going to go higher, the former gave the future Chief his space. Perhaps one day, enough time will come to dispel the disgust due to deep distrust.

Grimaldi's corpse was recovered by the TMPD and JSDF, after they were finally brave enough to enter the war zone. He further served to show there was a larger, sinister object at work in Japan, as the denying of international Mafia rings of their involvement would imply something else as to his ventures here. Karasuma arranged to have Grimaldi buried in an unspecified grave somewhere in the country, giving him just enough of the recognition he so desired that said Mafia, and the Reclamation Society, never did.

Kato returned to the abandoned QK district in the Greater Tokyo Area, to find it still abandoned, as he had expected. But the nail he left behind showed non-use, and Jieji was nowhere to be found. The new Chairman was very confused, and made the thought that the vengeful former Triad willed himself to escape the metropolis; a belief so comical that in regards to the indomitable Jieji, it was entirely possible.

Speaking of Qita Kong, however, the Tokyo Chapter found a new home in the Roppongi streets.
adjacent with the Hano Kisetsu Nightclub - Kazuto's prime establishment from 1985 to 1994. It wasn't a perfect fix, but Kato hoped that they would be at home without their beloved harbinger; the link of illegal neighborhoods, for the time being, had to operate all on their own.

Norio, Kazuhiro, Miho, Bellamy, Peja, and many of the Kato Alliance's veteran Captains and Lieutenants were sent out of Japan to establish Alliance regional HQs, vastly improving their international outreach and opening up more regionally-locked trading relationships, including those of other defense agencies (especially after Karasuma put the good word in). The future of the Family's operations, needless to say, will be set for generations to come.-

-But the most important piece within the pile of news was about Kato himself now that he has his little Kato Alliance. Ever the foreman of every movement within his syndicate, Kato was hard at work in making the formation work. On AssUniv's side, however, this translated to him being out of Kyoto - a lot of the time. Though they knew they had to be patient, they were a little sad that their honorary AssUniv member was not among them... Just a little, however, as Yada got them one shot each of Karuizawa during one session of their working hours.-

終わり：「戦争期」弧

End: "The Warring Period" Arc

始める：フィナーレ

Begin: Finale

-"I'm Not Dreaming" by Pamsy plays on the loudspeakers.-

-Nyurifu Rikyyo Nightclub is just about to begin its evening operation, with a mile-long line awaiting entry into the venue.-

Yada: *Is going through the start-up costs, along with entertainment employment and any lawsuits in anticipation for the latest outing at a booth table close to the bar table and dance floor.*

Kataoka: "We get it, Yada-san, you miss him."
Yada: *Is so stunned, she sits straight, and the pen flies out of her grasp.* "Ah-!

Nakamura: *Looks over from the other side of Yada's booth.* "Heheh, high-strung as ever."

Yada: "I'm busy, okay? Busy writing in your pays for the week. You disturb me again, I may accidentally take off a zero without noticing!"

Karma: "Oh, that's below the belt for a joke..."

Kurahashi: "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Okay, Yada. Calm down." *With cautious gestures, she sits down right next to her, sliding a mug across the table.* "Maybe some coffee will lighten your mood?"

Yada: *Slowly expels her redness and reluctantly accepts the caffeine.* "Thanks."

Naoko: "An interesting situation we have found ourselves, hm? Missing a criminal?"

Mimura: "What kind of makes it funny is that no word from anyone for ten days usually makes us believe the perp thinks he's too good for us now."

Hazama: "Ah, but Kato-kun isn't just anyone. He probably finds all of the attention he now has sickening."

Maehara: "From thousands knowing who he really is to tens of millions. Not many can say they've had that transition before. Much less for the people who have seen them go through it either."

Okano: "Is that to say that we need to not be so mad that he hasn't spoken to us since the Tokyo Terror?"

Terasaka: "Yeah; all we heard is that he wants us out of the Tokyo heat while he fixes the chaos and completes the Eradication Agent for the mutated DNA. That's it. Then we just get this Walsh fellow that comes to the Hyatt Regency each morning saying 'Kato is fine'. Of course, we all already knew that..."

Nagisa: *Moves to the center of everyone.* "Look everyone, this is just anger born of worry. I know, because many of you were all the same way for me when we first started the Program."

AssUniv: "..." *All of them remain silent in agreement.*

Kayano: "We'd also have to worry about how Kato-kun feels, everyone. Maybe not to the degree Hazama-san describes, but Kato-kun would definitely prefer hanging with us more than them."

Irina: *Walks down the stairs.* "I hope we're not just saying that because we're surrounded by the lot of his staff and security."

Karma: *Notices the foreign muscle cracking their knuckles.* "We're not badmouthing him; calm your pythons down, huh?"

Security: "Eh..." *Ease up.*

Karasuma: *Powerwalks into and out of the scene.* "Fifteen minutes, everyone. Tidy up and
let's get ready to work."

AssUniv: *All of them take notice and begin cleaning everything up.*

-The music slowly fades out and transitions so that "No Gravity For Love" by ACE & Elly plays on the loudspeakers.-

???: *A young man clad in an unusually custom-tailored formal suit walks into the establishment. His two-piece consisted of white material for both his slacks and three-button jacket, with black stitching outlines and red-blue lapels; it seemed so out of place, even for a Yakuza, so it is most likely worn due to a lost bet, or a another such promise. Regardless, he vapes and twirls his silver pen and walks his way deeper into the venue, before stopping at the primary area of the first floor. The security there begin moving in, but then ease up when they realize who it is.*

Kurahashi: *With the coffee mug, puts it into the sink of the bar floor, before noticing the strange-suited individual approaching.* "Hey, how'd you get in here? We're about to open, you need to-" *Finally recognizes him.* "Kato-kun!"

AssUniv: *All of them immediately perk up upon hearing that name out of context; Yada especially, as she swiftly turns around while holding the calculator and ledger.* "Kato/-kun!" *They then move in close around him.*

Kato: *Gestures passively.* "Okay, everyone, calm down." *Checks his watch.* "It's only been a good number of months, but I've still had my share of being dog-piled."

Naoko: *Grins.* "Hah! The tongue on this guy..."

Nakamura: "Not to mention the suit he's wearing too. What the Hell is that, Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Inspects his attire attentively.* "I'm just feeling... Patriotic today. Why? You don't think a billionaire can't wear something tacky and totally out of being once in a while?"

Fuwa: *Whispers to Yada.* *You're in love with that guy, by the way.*

Yada: *Refocuses.* "Kato-kun, how is being one of the Chairmen for the Yakuza?"

Kato: *Does not stop gazing at Yada.* "Man, I'm really feeling the long-distance drought that has killed many of those relationships."

Yada: *Her eyes glowed with determination.* "Glad you said so." *Sets down the business tools on the nearby booth.* "So am I." *They both embrace and make out in front of everyone.*

AssUniv: *All look away awkwardly.*

Nagisa: "So... Kato. Chairman's life?"

Kato: *Breaks off.* "The hardest part with being among the top brass of the Japanese crime syndicates is having to show your worth, your strength to them. Not subtly, like the Kato Family has done for the past," *Checks his watch.* "Three hundred years, give or take. Setting up embassies, new recruiting agencies, form networks with fellow peacekeeping organizations and
even intel operations, it's all the stuff that my Brothers and Sisters were able to live without and still do the job just as well, if not better. Still, there will be use for these investments, else why do they use them?"

Naoko: "How's the rest of your crew? Miho's probably really upset you and her need to separate again."

Kimura: "I know they share something precious, but what about Kato's true relatives, Naoko-san?"

Yada: "No, Norio and Kazuhiro are used to not seeing him so often."

Kato: "Very true, Yada-san. And Naoko, Miho didn't take it well. She's afraid I'm going to kill myself again."

Kayano: "If you did, I reckon she'd zoom straight back to where you keeled over and personally kick Death back to wherever he came from."

Terasaka: "You know, this is great and all, catching up, but we do have priorities to keep track of. Namely, a certain reason why the AssUniv Program exists?"

Fuwa: "When the Hell did Terasaka-kun become the straight man?"

Kato: "Oh, it matters not. I nearly forgot that was why I was here."

Okuda: "Aw, this banter was not purely a social call..."

Kato: "Amaya Yanagisawa has shown her expertise with this ordeal, working meticulously with Alvarez. Maybe her brother was secretly sending her development details during the experimentation. Regardless, she has pushed the Eradicating Agent's completion to just the final leg; the 'live-subject' phase, to see if the cure works even when hybridized with compatible DNA."

Takebayashi: "That certainly sounds like great news."

Kato: "Indeed. Well, you all just need to stick around in this little joint for a few more days, and then you can return to your old routines, as true college students going through the next," *Checks his watch.* "One and a half years, putting this behind you."

AssUniv: *All turn cold. Yada especially covers her mouth and repulses away from him.*

Nagisa: "Wait, Kato? That's it?"

Kato: *Looks perplexed.* "Yes. What more could there be?"

Isogai: "Kato, it's not over for us! Machida and what remains of his Reclamation Society is still out there! We have to deal with them, or Korosensei's legacy will always be a risk to the world!"

Kato: "Not if we get rid of what they're after. Machida couldn't make the DNA himself, or he would've already."

Kataoka: "Even if anyone could convince him of that, he's not going to stop. That's just how a terrorist like him operates."
Kato: "You think I don't know how a terrorist operates? I've brought down many more than all of you did, Naoko and Karasuma included."

Karasuma: "..." *Remains cross-armed.*

Kato: "And I know that Machida would remain at large after the DNA's extermination... But that wasn't your problem for a long while."

Okano: "The Hell do you mean by that?"

Kato: "Remember, you all agreed to delegate. The Kato Family contends with the Reclamation Society in the long-term."

Chiba: "But only because we were occupied."

Hayami: "Indeed. We have every reason to join the hunt again."

Kato: *Grows very ticked.* "No. No, you don't. You've had your share of underworld mayhem to last a lifetime. No, more than five lifetimes. You wish to wade so willy-nilly into conflicts that even seasoned veterans develop new traumatic moments they wake up to in the middle of the night. But they're still the best shot in this war, so do me a favor: Leave it to the pros, and keep out of their way."

-After hearing their peer raise his voice, most of the student-assassins are taken aback.-

Yada: "Goddamnit, Kato-kun..."

Kato: *Turns to her.* "Yada-san, I should've known you would be more than a little hurt by this..."

Yada: "What, who made you like this? Someone who's so willing to throw aside their past with others? A meaningful past, not just to you, but so many all around you? Because Kazuhiko Kato-kun certainly did not learn this by himself."

Kato: *Looks down.* "You did."

Yada: *Eyes widen.* "Me!?!"

Kato: *Checks his watch before looking back at her.* "I learned to let go of the crippling parts of my past thanks to you. When it hurts me the most, so that I can still stand strong and do the right thing - uphold my responsibility to safeguard those that I care for most."

Yada: "Ah... I see." *Covers her face, about to shy away and cry.*

Kurahashi: "Yada-san..." *She, Hara, and Kanzaki all go up to comfort her.* "The fuck was that, Kato-kun?"

Maehara: "Someone's defending their heartlessness by claiming his heart bleeds for all of us."

Naoko: "I guess I was right all along - Yakuza are freaks."
Kato: "Come on, everyone~"

Isogai: "If that's how you really feel, Kato, then just leave."

Kataoka: "It's just what you wanted, anyways." *Joins the girl recovery group. AssUniv collectively leaves the conversation.*

Kato: "..."

Karasuma: "The last time they were this disgusted by their Sensei, Kato, he was framed."

Irina: "I'd really like to see how you can get out of this one."

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "I don't have to. I'm not their mentor anymore." *To Karasuma and Irina, offering them a handshake.* "Stay safe, huh? We need you on Chief. And you to... Er..."

Irina: *Recognizes his intentional loss for words.* "Fuck you too." *Accepts the handshake anyways.* "Best of luck with the Chairman struggle."

Karasuma: *Also accepts a hand.* "I'll do my job. I can only hope you do yours."

Kato: "Bet on it. See ya." *Leaves Nyurifu Rikkyo Nightclub, huffing his vaporizer even more laboriously as he reaches his pre-production Aston Martin V8 Vantage.* *Time to return to Tokyo.* *He opens up the driver's door.*

-An hour into his journey...-

Kato: *While driving well above the speed limit, he dangerously dares to begin to daydream.* It aches my heart that I still cannot tell the students of AssUniv all that I am planning, but I can't give them hints or urge to keep following me. I need to push them away, like I... Pushed Miho, my uncle, and my cuz... Letting Machida escape was my fault, and I will pay for it alone. I will hunt him down to doomsday if I must. But I can’t ask that of everyone else... Can I? *His doubtful musing results in him only just noticing he is about to run into the bumper of the driver in front of him, and he rams his brakes fast enough to avoid the collision, albeit very narrowly.* Phew! Been touching a lot of close calls lately, haven't I? I'm either really distracted, really busy, really tired, really worried, or a lethal combination of them all. *Continues driving.*

-After another roughly five hours of surprisingly reckless driving, Kato makes it to the Greater Tokyo Area once again. A quick check of his watch reveals it was two A.M. by then. Kato parks across the street of the regional HQ of his Alliance, in Suginami Ward, preparing to meet with Satoshi and contact the rest of his Captains, who are mostly overseas. Until...-

Satoshi: *Runs up to the sliding elevator doors as soon as they open and reveal his boss.* "Chairman!"

Kato: *Is instantly puzzled.* "Satoshi? What's going on?"

Satoshi: "Disaster, sir. All of the central metropolis is in a panic. The TMPD and the local precinct have been sacked; all of the criminals are out and about, the patrolling police and those that survived are pushed into the manhunts to recollect them, but they're also being divided to investigate a series of sewer explosions and tremors."
Kato: "This is a cover, isn't it?"

Satoshi: "No definitive proof of that, Chairman sir. But wouldn't it look convenient as a
desperate last-ditch effort to steal the DNA, especially now that our staff has thinned to
accommodate our larger surroundings?"

Kato: "Have you rectified that? Brought others nearby?"

Satoshi: *Waves worriedly.* "Sir... There's no one else here to garrison. Alvarez is out there
trying to contain the madness."

Kato: "No, but there's us. We're going to hold the forts, in case Reclamation Society begin
showing their noses." *Pulls out one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols, pulling back the slide.* "I'll
take the facility in Shinjuku. You fortify the Minato building."

Satoshi: "After you, Chairman." *Slides his HK USP out of his shoulder holster.*

-The two rush back out of the building, transitioning to their cruisers and blasting through the
urban roads of Tokyo. Kato is finally able to notice and overhear the new breed of chaos inherent
in the area, with yelling, fallen lamps, spraypaint, and bulletholes abound. Still, the Chairman
cannot waste time dealing with the individual bouts, as time is of the essence and something that
could prove much more volatile is at risk.-

-Kato quickly puts a stop to his Vantage in front of the research facility and storms in realizing that
the staff and security there have been overtaken; this includes some recent hires along with
longtime veterans, who now have garroted throats and Swiss-made chests. Kato gives a quick
prayer for them all as he proceeds onward, following the carnage to, strangely, the cafeteria.-

Kato: *Marginally prods open the large double-revolving door to investigate the large
recreational area... Only to find it mostly barren, and the tables having been pushed to the nearby
walls. The one other soul in the room faced away from him, donning a dark blue pinstripe Brioni
and seemingly watching a blank screen.* "Byung-Sung?"

Byung-Sung: *Looks back just for a moment, revealing himself to Kato.*
Kato once more pushed away a set of people very dear to him for the sake of ending things the way that he hopes to. It had surely broken his heart to have done so, but it surely seems to be done. Meanwhile, the Reclamation Society has bounced back, with most of the Kato Alliance having gone international and left many of their assets in the homeland undefended. KAto goes to deal with the latest break-in, only to find one soul there still...

-The recently-promoted Chairman of the newly-formed Kato Alliance remains vigilant against his latest and final Big Three rival.-

Kato: *Keeps his Kimber trained actively on the Korean.* "Where's the DNA? And the rest of your men?"

Byung-Sung: "I'm afraid you've just missed them. But that doesn't mean they don't still want to talk to you." *A remote falls into his right hand, which he points at the screen, turning it on. When it renders, a camera conversation's interface pops up, and seconds later, a connection is made to a nondescript location... It's subject being Machida.*

Machida: "Hello!"

Kato: "Still hiding behind monitors and microphones, I see."

Machida: "Hey hey hey, I'll have you know I was at the forefront of raiding all of your precious R&D labs, okay? Need proof? How about this?" *Presents a special numberpad-locked strongbox, which is very familiar to Kato.*

Kato: *Intensely grits his teeth.* The last of the mutated Tentacle DNA...

Machida: *Sets it back down.* "Byung-Sung must have told you we were just minutes from meeting. Of course I've got a tight schedule, especially now that I've discovered what you've left on it, on top of its military-grade security. Even when we most certainly get what we want, you always find a way to remain a thorn by our sides."

Kato: "Your mistake for never having backups to your grand schemes, Machida. And if you're just," *Checks his watch.* "Minutes away, we don't really need to wait too much longer to meet in person."

Machida: "Oh, as much as I'd love to meet the new Chairman in town, I'm afraid I'd have to push back that encounter. To never. Because Byung-Sung's going to keep you company."

Kato: "Please, you know he can't beat me, and I can easily slip from his grasp from within this room. I'll be on top of you before you even know it."
Machida: "I don't doubt any of those words, Kato. Not even how you described Byung-Sung's ineptitude. Because I wholeheartedly agree with what you said to him that day during the Tokyo Terror. Remember?"

Kato: *Beings flashbacking to the time he fought the NIS agent. Before and after the confrontation, attention was paid to the latter's lack of empathy for his situation - the people, friend or foe, around him. Particularly because it draws from an origin not unlike his own...*

Machida: "Wonder how he got that way?" *Snickers before continuing.* "Before he joined my Society, little Kim here was a very little underling for his country's agency. A bright, but green kid who did not yet know of the deepest, darkest vices of working for a defense body. Not until all of a sudden, his superior officer suddenly disappeared in a mission across the Demilitarized Zone investigating new nuclear developments. The next day, Kim was appointed the newest leading officer."

Byung-Sung: "..."

Machida: "'Well, what's wrong with that', You might ask? Well think of it this way: Is money won really sweeter than money earned? Byung-Sung questioned that a lot throughout the rest of his primary time with the NIS, and it tore him up inside: he didn't feel he deserved his position. Old friends felt too intimidated to interact, and the more vile ribbed him for the donation he was given. And when the years passed and no other critical operation was in sight, Byung-Sung found he could never prove himself. Heh, you were right, Kato: Byung-Sung has become a hypocrite, because his attempt to find self-worth has resulted in him believing the opinion of others is the purest example of it. And that is hypocritical, because he loathes made, popular men like you and me. Hell, even Grimaldi; that man set the world record for being the longest-living French-Italian mobster."

Kato: *Attentively listens while still keeping his pistol trained.*

Machida: "Now obviously, that didn't come to bite him in the rear just yet, so Kim as a man looked invincible. But that was never true." *Turns to the side and gestures.* "Bring her in here." *An auburn-haired young lady, notably bloated (as if pregnant) and similar in appearance to the Korean comes onto the screen behind Machida. Her hands were bound behind her back and there was a knotted cleave gag in her mouth.*

Byung-Sung: *Tenses up, which Kato notices.*

Machida: *Forcibly pulls the woman in close, who yelps in response.* "When Byung-Sung thought only other agent's opinions mattered, guess who went under the radar: his family. Notably, his wife and sole child - a daughter named Iseul. Before the long-term fiasco, they were a loving trio. But then the agency life got worse and worse, and he began to drift away - even sleeping under his desk during nights, to the point that he practically forgot them outright. Which is why the news of his love dying of brain cancer eventually caught up and hit him like a truck. His daughter was only twelve at the time, in 2001."

Byung-Sung: *Closes his eyes and looks away, in pain from hearing about his loss again.*

Machida: "A federal review of Kim's parenting obviously led to Iseul here being put into the care of her grandparents. Kim naturally tried to defy these orders, albeit in the most half-assedly way possible: sending money, gifts, anonymous references for work interviews, extending his insurance benefits, and more. But his receiver, to his utter surprise, refused them all; to the former's
realization, Kim not appearing for his own wife's funeral service was the last straw for young Iseul. Tired of being neglected, she decided not to care anymore. She would raise herself, gain a successful career in aerospace engineering, find love, get married, and prepare to have a kid, all while never inviting her father back into her life."

Iseul: *Attempts to struggle out of her bindings and the grasp of the Syndikat security, to no avail.*

Machida: "Calm down, milady. Now, when Kim was at his wit's end, he turned to me; he wanted to secure a future where his quest was over and he could return triumphantly to a father's life with his daughter. All of this effort he put into the Reclamation Society was in a glory-or-death approach. Heh... Then he realized, as we were calling him from within his cell just a few days ago, that glory was the apocalypse. He begged for insurance of his daughter's survival from the impact; too bad he didn't specify how we were to ensure that. So we took an initiative. Ambush her loft in Seoul, put her husband in intensive care, kidnap her, and bring her with us, since we're not aiming to be killed off by some Tentacles. Of course, if Byung-Sung doesn't want to keep doing what we want him to because this is unsatisfactory, well... Let's just say I won't be too bothered."

Kato: *Is so disgusted by Machida's actions that he's tempted to not aim his pistol at Byung-Sung any longer and instead race off to find the ex-Ocean Shield operative.*

Machida: "And that brings us to where we are now. Iseul's life hangs in the balance. Two of you are in that room right now; only one leaves alive after ten minutes, starting now. If not..." *Raises a hand, which signals the nearby security guard to pry off the lady's gag. She is immediately dissuaded from screaming for help by a suppressed Walther P22 practically drilling into her head.*

Kato: *Lowers his aim.* "Byung-Sung..."

Byung-Sung: *His limp hands soon clench fists. He then turns to his nearby table, where a carbon steel Santoku knife rested. He seizes the improvised weapon and brandishes it towards Kato.* "Just what you wanted ten days ago, Kazuhiko Kato. Me, fighting for someone other than myself. Feel honored yet? Then just let me kill you so you can remain that way forever!"

Kato: *Looks reluctant to fight, let alone kill, Byung-Sung, but after putting away his handgun he moves into "B-Boy" stance.* "There's still more I have to do, Byung-Sung. So I'm not dying here."

Iseul: *Finally musters the bravery to yell out.* "F-father!"


-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "DESTINY" plays.-

加藤和彦 VS

Kazuhiko Kato; The One Fighting for Many

VS
Byung-Sung Kim; The One Fighting for One

The first thing coming Kato's way was a diagonal, downward slash of Byung-Sung's knife, which the former side twirls away from to avoid. The Korean immediately follows it with a returning backhand horizontal slash, which Kato then limbo under. During said motion, the Chairman attempts to snatch the forearm as it flies over him, hoping to backflip over it and catch Byung-Sung off-guard, but all he could grab was the onion skins of the motion; the arm has long flown past him in real time. To prevent another reprisal, the Chairman crutches on a side roll to make some distance.

Byung-Sung switches the icepick grip and throws a forehand horizontal slash this time, followed by a backhand stab. Kato pulls back and Dempsey Rolls to avoid both blows. The rounded motion allowed him to fall into a single cartwheel, throwing his front leg into a thrust kick onto the Agent's chest. Byung-Sung is pushed back, but brushes off the attack, ready for more, while Kato falls into an inclined laying position. When Byung-Sung attempts to punt Kato's ribcage from the perpendicular placement, the latter barrel-rolled further away, returning to standing just in time to block a medium roundhouse kick to his chest. The Chairman attempts to strike back, throwing a heavy haymaker going for the Agent's temple, but it is diverted with a looping arm pushing it into a side shoulder lock with one hand.

The Korean knows attempting to break the limb would only result in a critical reprisal, so instead he decides for a smaller, simpler attack; a slit of the arm. Kato anticipates this and sees the ease of the lock being his moment to retract his body before it gets carved. But for whatever reason, he wasn't fast enough, and his wrist gets cut to the edge of the bone. Kato shakes it off and throws an oblique scorpion kick to put some distance away. Kato then initiates a barrel-roll leg sweep, which Byung-Sung jumps over. An initially bad move, as the Chairman then pulls a foot out and boots the Agent in the ass. When Kato tries a few more raised kicks from his supine position, they are repulsed with some discouraging knife strokes, so he then goes for the legs, hoping to hook one and put his opponent to the ground. Byung-Sung rejects this with a no-handed cartwheel over Kato, slicing into the latter's thigh as he passes by. Kato rolls the other way from where his foe landed, opening the fray once more.-

Machida: *Looks agitated, checking his watch condescendingly.* "As much enjoyment as I get from seeing two men beat the ever-loving shit out of each other, so I'm pushing the envelope too; you two have three minutes left. If neither of you aren't on the floor by then, then Iseul will."

-Feeling the sense of urgency in his conflict once more, the father sprints forward with a kitchen knife lunge to the neck. But Kato had Dempsey Rolled to the left, easily evading the strike and reverting to "God Hand" stance. Kato delivers a crippling left hook to the kidney, forcing a cough out of the Agent and leaving him vulnerable to a backfist to the knee, further making the latter crouch. This exposed the face to a back knuckle, and finally a winded uppercut with the far arm. Byung-Sung walked back a bit from the pain, and sees Kato dash in, pulling back from a one-two flurry. After another set, the Chairman's straight is blocked and caught, with Byung-Sung seemingly wanting to slit it again. Kato learns from that mistake and attempts a hook with his other arm to attack the hand as it gets into position... Except that was not the intent at all. Byung Sung moves the knife to the other side of the arm and raises high, slashing at Kato's close face instead! The latter naturally pulls back, but that doesn't seem to stop a small gush of blood from splashing onto the ground.

Byung-Sung's latest attack did not reach nearly as deep as he had hoped, however, for a ticked
Kato soon turned his whole front back towards his opponent, revealing the cut wound along his chinline. The latter wiped away the initial streams and moves in close for another showdown, turning to "Tumbler" style in the process. Another lunge by the Korean sees the knife wrist get caught and twisted, forcing him to let go and losing balance. The second the blade makes contact with the ground and makes a little chime, Kato rolls the affected arm around in front of its owner, disorienting Byung-Sung for the next attack; a powerful shoulder bash.

Byung-Sung drastically crawls away, towards the knife on the ground. But as soon as he lays a hand on the handle, the blade is wedged into the ground by a smart shoe. Kato, in "Risen Samurai" mode, stands on top of the weapon end. He punts the Agent's face, sending him away from the weapon, which is further repulsed by a footslide the other direction. Now it was just between Kato and Byung-Sung, with nothing else to get in the way. The Korean attempts to recoup his losses with a pressure point clutch aimed at the Chairman's maw area, but Kato catches it easily enough before a thumb can tear into his gums. Manipulating the thumb has the Agent bend back and forth in a little dance, until the latter tries to break free with a Pele kick as he limbo for the last time; though Kato blocks it Keysi-style, Byung-Sung does get free of the joint hold. He then attempts an other-hand hook punch to the cheek, which is redirected with a well-timed elbow-bender, which sees the outer palm slap its owner in the face. Kato maintains control of the sensitive joint and twists it the wrong way to make Byung-Sung fly, crashing through a stack of immaculate plates.

Byung-Sung struggles to get up from around the mess of porcelain around him, until he notices his daughter on the screen again, and wills himself onto his feet with a cry of rage. Once more, he rushes at Kato with a flurry of kicks. He begins aiming really high too, with a 720 kick-set and backflip crescent hook, probably looking for the fast knockout. But Kato easily avoids them all. When the Korean begins remaining grounded, obviously showing fatigue, his kicks are stopped dead by well-timed, well-placed blocking knees. Until one time, in which Kato uses his left elbow to push aside an axe kick thigh before the ankle can crash down on his crown. Byung-Sung catches the elbow as it loses tension and falls back to Kato's side, putting it into a sideways compression hold, almost like a modified hammerlock.

Kato rejects the transitional armlock and pivots the other way to throw a reverse elbow that clocks Byung-Sung right on the close temple. Stunned, Kato seized the Korean and Biel tosses him into the thick dividing glass to the buffet lines. The thick, clear walls make a large crack but Byung-Sung falls back just in front of it without breaking. He gets back up and recognizes Kato leading with a massive, high-velocity straight. Though still not right in the head, the Agent manages to clutch the joints of the punch and give enough spatial awareness for his face to move away from, though his cheek still kissed the back knuckle. The rest of the punch landed within the crack, with the glass finally giving and shattering into many pieces, like the plates from before.

Byung-Sung could finally process completely, and what he first saw as the several-inch glass falls shocks him anew. Realizing his attack missed, Kato instinctively ducks his head with his back turned to evade a high roundhouse kick. Byung-Sung feints putting his foot back down in front of Kato and instead launches an angled standing savate kick to the Chairman's bowed chin. The attack lifts up Kato's face, but does little else. Byung-Sung's eyes shrink in terrified response. Kato attempts to hook him with a turning far-arm swing, which Byung-Sung ducks under, setting up another cheat 720 roundhouse. The instep slaps Kato on the lower neck area perfectly... But does not faze. The Korean retracts his leg with even more anxiety, avoiding a front kick with a side-roll underneath. Kato turns back seeing Byung-Sung setting up an uppercut, which he intends to block with a 12-6 elbow smash. He misses however when he doesn't anticipate the Agent switching hands, now throwing the rising attack with his left and making contact with the lower jaw one more time.
Byung-Sung began forming a smirk with his recent string of successes at his opponent's expense, but it was not to last. To his horror, Kato's face, let alone the rest of his body, refused to budge. Byung-Sung's punches have devolved in strength significantly throughout the bout. Whether it was physically from all of the exhaustion, or psychologically from finding he can never kill someone like Kato, it mattered not; the second he felt his front two knuckles break rather than Kato's jaw, Byung-Sung knew he had lost the battle.

-OST ends.-

Byung-Sung: *As soon as his knees hit the floor and his fist no longer pushes against Kato's face, his bloody hands also fall to the ground. He begins crying over his defeat and what it now entails.*

Machida: "Ah, a pity this result was... For that NIS agent of course."

Kato: *Certainly looks conflicted about the situation, looking at his hysterical foe from above, before turning to the plasma screen.* "He's on the floor, not looking to stand up, Machida. Just like you asked. Now, release Iseul."

Machida: "Unfortunately, we can all still see movement from poor little Kim. And before I demanded a defeat, I demanded a death. Luckily for the both of you, there's still ten seconds left. Kato, if you want Iseul to live, commit to your deed and kill your opponent."

Byung-Sung: *Grits his teeth discreetly.*

Kato: *Gulps, taking a split second to process the order.*

Byung-Sung: "Hey!"

-Everyone looks over to the NIS agent, who now had a large shard of glass in his hand.-

Byung-Sung: *Puts the sharp silicon up to the side of his neck.*

Iseul: "NO!"

Byung-Sung: "I love you, cupcake." *Shoves the glass point into the side of his throat. Blood begins flowing from the newly-formed cavity and the agent begins choking, falling back onto his knees.*

Iseul: *Cries and closes her eyes looking away.*

Kato: *Briefly shifts towards him, though finding futility in the matter.* "!!"

Byung-Sung: *He then goes to threes, with one hand still stuck at his throat. But he musters the strength to look back at the TV, seeing his daughter one last time before rolling over, instinctively struggling to get air.*

Machida: "Very good. Kim did something nice for you, Kato: he made the choice for you. And now we'll keep to our bargain... After, of course, my battle-weary men have had some time to release some stress. And I become the grandparent Kim could never have been."

Iseul: *Yelps at the remarks as she is pulled away from the screen.*
Byung-Sung: *His hearing still working, when he hears those words, his slit eyes widen just a little bit to show his distraught.*

Kato: *His fists, also bloodied, tighten in grip with antipathy.*

Machida: "Enjoy the new world order, Kato. That is, if you're still-"

Kato: *Having heard enough, he takes his Kimber pistol and shoots the camera and screen, forcibly ending the transmission. He stows the firearm and then turns to the fallen Byung-Sung.*

Byung-Sung: *Under his strained breaths, he weakly takes his free hand onto Kato's bent knee, mucking it with his blood (though the suit was already pretty ruined by then anyways).*

Kato: "Suffer no more, mate." *Pulls the shard out and presses his forearm onto the larynx (or what remains of it).*

Byung-Sung: *Chokes more loudly, instinctively trying to struggle. Eventually, his other, crimson-crusted hand falls to the floor limp.*

-Minutes later...-

Kato: *Walks out of the facility, wiping his face of the hardened red across his face. He also finds that his RWB tie has been chopped, and discards the disconnected section. He then goes into his pocket, taking out his flip-phone, about to call somebody, until he realizes something. *Wait... I sent Miho out to the States, Bellamy to the Mediterranean... Satoshi and Alvarez are too busy dealing with the trouble, The Neo-Wolfpack are out on assignment, Qita Kong needs to recoup their losses, and I can no longer expect backup from Akamine or Hayashida... I don't have anyone else to turn to. But I can't take down Machida and his goons alone. *Checks his watch.* A record, isn't it? How short it's been since I have to eat my words? Heh... *Dials and puts the device up to his ear.* "Hello, AssUniv? I'm sorry to disturb on cover-working night, but this is urgent. Come to Tokyo; there is one last job for the Program..."

-It was silent but for just a moment.-

Kato: *Suddenly he turns red and he looks at his phone.* "Wait, I said that? Okay, I'm sorry, but this is a very desperate time right now; just check the news! Come on, don't be those guys and girls..."
Space for the Final Prelude

Chapter Summary

The endgame of the endgame. Kato has truly ended all of the Big Three with his latest victory over Byung-Sung. On that matter, however, Machida is still at large and is doing all that he can to claim the Tentacles DNA and produce his newest pet project. Kato has his obligations to stop him, but without Qita Kong, The Neo-Wolfpack, and his blood-brothers and sisters to stand by him now, who can he turn to for the necessary help?

-Five hours later...-

-Dawn has arrived and The AssUniv tour bus peeks over Mount Jinba heading towards the heart of the Japanese capital... And its passengers are easily able to see the remains of the great chaos that occurred as the night drew on. -

Driver: "Hn?"

Karasuma: *Peeks over the driver's side to see the situation for himself.* "A JSDF blockade. Should've known."

Naoko: "Why is there still a gridlock? Domestic Ministry intel claims all of the criminals and their activities have been extinguished."

Irina: "It must be Sanada's imperatives, now that he knows the DNA and the Reclamation Society are real."

-As the long vehicle draws in close, the soldiers standing at the broken toll road order it to stop.-

Isogai: "Karasuma-sensei, they're making us stop. Are we going to be told to go back?"

Karasuma: "Not if I have anything to say about it." *Rises up once the bus comes to a halt, going outside to confront the servicemen and women.*

JSDF Soldier 1: *He, along with the rest of his colleagues, bring their hands close to their weapons.* "Stop right there, citizen!"

Karasuma: "Chief Tadaomi Karasuma. I'm giving this tour bus executive authority to enter the city."

JSDF Soldier 2: *Eases up.* "C-Chief Karasuma? What are you doing here, sir?"

Karasuma: "I'm afraid I'm not allowed to disclose that information at this time. Now, permit my convoy entry."

JSDF Soldier 1: *Nods.* "Very well sir. But I must implore you to be swift when conducting
your business in the metropolis."

Karasuma: "Explain, officer."

JSDF Soldier 1: "The TMPD had been given an anonymous tip about the resurgence of the antimatter superweapon, the Tentacles. You know, like five years ago. The chief of the HQ transmitted the information to the Ministry of Defense, who escalated the threat level. Their laboratory experts have been told to prepare their ultimate countermeasure of old."

Karasuma: "Thinks for a moment. "The Lance of the Heavens project... But that kill sat cannot harm pure living organisms; only the antimatter material and what it's attached to."

JSDF Soldier 2: "Perplexed. "Ah, you didn't know, Karasuma, sir?"

Karasuma: "Know what?"

JSDF Soldier 1: "Chief, the Lance was significantly modified on orders of Secretary Sanada, after being given an adept report on the evolution of the new Tentacles matter. The experts were hoping they could manipulate the photons of the beam so that the original result would remain, but it's been nine days and the crisis has already reached an international level; any threshold of restraint was tossed out the window in favor of an ensured eradication of the Tentacles."

Karasuma: "So if we take too long... We too will burn."

JSDF Soldier 2: "I'm afraid so, Chief."

Karasuma: "How long do we have?"

JSDF Soldier 1: "The satellite will be moved into position by nine P.M. The data being sent to modify the satellite is being decrypted by the processor as we speak. To prevent misfire, charging will not occur until it is pointed directly at the metropolis. We expect that to be eleven."

Karasuma: "You claim it's much stronger this time? What will happen to Tokyo if it's discharged?"

JSDF Soldier 2: "Razed to the ground."

Karasuma: "Okay... Tell the operators of the satellite to keep an active watch of the ground, okay? If they see my distress beacon emit a signal, you will know the threat has been neutralized and the Lance need not rain down Hell. Alright?"

JSDF Soldier 1: "You intend to stop this yourself, or die trying, Chief?"

Karasuma: "I will stop it."

JSDF Soldier 1: "Salutes, along with 2. "Very well, Chief. Good luck."

Karasuma: "Salutes as well and returns into the bus, now granted entry as the soldiers back off. "Drive, sir."

Driver: "Okay. "Presses on the gas pedal."
Kataoka: "You've been out there for a little while, Karasuma-sensei. What was that about?"

Karasuma: "I'll deliver on the way."

AssUniv: *All converge towards their mentor, as the travel bus goes deeper down the road into Tokyo.*

-An hour later, AssUniv had been relayed the crucial information. The more jumpy, reasonably afraid that in less than 24 hours they all might be fried, took the news gravely, but well enough to still function. Any raving was dispelled by the sets of property damage as they passed through the abandoned streets. As instructed, the tour bus parks across the street from the Hano Kisetsu Nightclub; Kazuto Kato's prime establishment.-

Nakamura: *The second she steps off, a molotov could be seen in the air, just landing before where she'd walk out to.* "EEE!"

???: *Dozens of masked, shaded, but blatantly foreign men step out from the various covers to ambush the vehicle.*

Karasuma: *Pulls Nakamura back and takes point instead.* "Hey! Qita Kong residents - that's who you all are, right?"

QK Leader: "Karasuma!" *Orders the rest of his men to stand down.* "What you be doing here?"

Kurahashi: *To Yada.* I know they may have just been fighting for their lives in their new neighborhood, but was it too much for Kato to ask QK to cool down before we got here so they didn't think we were thugs and thieves too?

Yada: I'm hoping it's just a phase that he's been looking so distracted lately.

Karasuma: "We're here to help Kato defeat our enemies for the last time... Though it seems we're going to help you and your people, hm? Since you cannot leave without getting incarcerated."

QK Leader: "Smart of you noticing, Karasuma. Ay, no legality, may as well be walking into cells ourselves."

Karasuma: "I take it Kato's in there?" *Gestures to the nightclub.*

QK Leader: "Yes yes yes. Meet with him. Stop this, err, Reclamation Society together, huh?"

Naoko: "Count on it." *To the bus door.* "Come on, everyone; it's safe, just a misunderstanding."

AssUniv: *Trepidatiously trek outside the vehicle.*

Nagisa: *To the driver.* "We don't plan on disintegrating tonight, but if we otherwise don't meet, thank you for your tireless service for all of us."

Driver: *Removes his mask, revealing himself to be Lovro.* "You're very welcome."

AssUniv: "WHAT!?"
Lovro: "Are you too surprised that your true driver would be too afraid to make the journey to a capital that's been attacked on a grand scale two times, and is now just about to be attacked a third time? No no no..."

Kayano: "Can't fault him with that logic."

Lovro: *Presents his smartphone, depicting their real driver on a conversation-streaming app.* "But he did get to hear what you just said."

Driver: *Waves.* "Hello kids. Thanks for the compliment. I'll gladly wheel the rest of you when you return to Kansai."

Maehara: "We'll take you up on that. Individually, to make up for you lack of appearance, heh."

Driver: "I have no objections. See you all soon." *Shuts off his app.*

Lovro: *Puts away that device.* "I've been away for far too long; not anymore. This time, I'm going to circulate around the area to see if I can't find any other people that need to escape a possibly incoming Hell. And if you need a quick getaway, I'm just a call away." *Tosses a Nokia phone to Nagisa, which only has one contact.*

Irina: "Well appreciated, mentor. Thanks."

Lovro: "Hmph." *Shuts the bus door and drives off.*

-Without any more distractions, the AssUniv Program, with skeptically large backpacks in hand, enter the nightclub. When they descend to the entrance to the dance floor area, they find someone very familiar sitting nearby...-

Karma: "There's Mr. Know-It-All."

Kato: *Looks up following. Despite the gruesome fight he had earlier with Byung-Sung, there are no bruises, scratches, cuts, or otherwise marks anywhere on his body.* "AssUniv. Good of you to arrive."

Terasaka: "You didn't tell us the world was at stake, we might not have come in the first place."

Kato: "I apologize, everyone. I realize I've been inconsiderate, overconfident, and out of control. I'm making no attempt to excuse any of it, but I'm just trying, okay? I've never been used to my life changing more than the world around me.

Yada: *Still looks quite unimpressed.* "You've had a lot of nerve lately, Kato-kun."

Itona: "Hm, but what would a hierarchical leader be without at least some ego?"

Naoko: "A really, really dumb king."

Kato: "I'm not sure which statement was derogatory..."

Yada: *Sighs her frustration away, finally genuinely smiling at him for the first time since last night.* "Well, a king always needs subjects. In particular, a royal advisor."
Karasuma: "Enough, kids." *To Kato.* "What's the situation?"

Kato: "As you know, the Reclamation Society, and Dr. Machida, has our Tentacle DNA samples, thanks to drawing out my thinned forces to quell the chaos of a breakout that also released Byung-Sung for the final mission."

Karma: "That suited dick? Where's him?"

Kato: "..."

Fuwa: "You happened. Fair enough."

Kato: "But also, due to the breakout, the TMPD, the Ministry had rallied up to lock Japan out all land, air, and sea transports. With the remaining aid of my Kato Alliance in the metropolis, nobody else is coming into the city... Or out."

Chiba: "That's how the Ministry knows the DNA is in the city..."

Kato: "Of course, they don't know its exact location."

AssUniv: *Beat.*

Okano: "You do!?"

Kato: "Yes. The New National Stadium, still being made for the 2020 Olympics. That's where they intend to activate the DNA's abilities, so that it can easily be facilitated, especially if it decides to go out of control."

Yoshida: "How are you so sure about that?"

Kato: "Machida may be a control freak, but even he's starting to get jumpy. He may just decide being able to reliably direct the beast he creates is a secondary step that can be found once his NWO has been realized."

Hara: "That's probably not what Yoshida-kun was thinking of, Kato-kun. More on how you're so certain of that?"

Okuda: "Indeed. There are many other vicinities that fit the prior criterion."

Kato: "Without the surveillance. We've invaded labs, prisons, military strongholds. They're not going to try anything in stuff they know we've totally sacked before. And since all the other domes have sustained critical damage during the riots, that was their only option."

Irina: *Holds her chin with suspicion.* "Let me guess... You closed all of those arenas down personally?"

Kato: *Smirks.* "What? Several accounts of arson against my home country capital? How dare you accuse me of such."

Terasaka: "Great; we know where he is then; let's waste him."
Kato: "No, not yet."

Karma: "I'm sorry, what?"

Kato: "I'll repeat: We must wait before proceeding on our foes."

Karasuma: "Damnit, Kato. We're working on borrowed time once more. In case you haven't heard when you told our superiors all about the mutated DNA, we have until almost midnight tonight before their Lance of the Heavens Mk. II fires down."

Kayano: "And I'm sure you know of its old iteration, Kato-kun. This is a super-souped-up version, and it's going to incinerate Tokyo, and everything in it. Unless we clear it ourselves first."

Kato: "I know of the risks, alright? You think you were all the first people to suggest that the recently displaced Qita Kong should flee this area?"

Mimura: "Then what's the good reason why we're not going to take them down right now?"

Kato: *Pauses for a moment to scope all of the AssUniv member watching him.* "This is their life goal, everyone. And they'll see and hear us coming during the day; the windows, the many cameras, the architecture echoing every noise, they'll smoke us out. We must wait until night, when they're only just getting to work. Speaking of that, we don't have to worry about them getting it done until then."

Hayami: "How do you know?"

Kato: *Grins.* "A fifty-digit AES code, anyone?"

Itona: "Oh... Even the fastest computers will take all day to crack something that long."

Kato: "And remember, the strongbox that houses the DNA is keeping it cryogenically frozen, and our recent string of experiments have made the DNA volatile if heated beyond natural trends; they will have to wait to cool it down."

Okano: "So not only are we waiting for nighttime, so are they..."

Isogai: "But since that's the case, what's stopping Machida from sending out guys to take us out beforehand instead?"

Kato: *Grins.* "Because, as we all know, last time, it didn't work. Machida's playing very prudently until he can make his pet project, with what little garrisons he has left."

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's smartphone.* "Hello, everyone?"

Kayano: *Takes out her device.* "What's up, Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: "There have been a lot of questions briefing us about why this confrontation is what it is, but I believe we are missing the more important details of this operation - specifically, the how."

Sosuke: *Scratches the back of his head.* "Oof, almost forgot about that. I mean, we've promised a subjugation, but we have no idea we're going to eradicate the DNA once we take it back."
Kato: "Of course we do. Amaya Yanagisawa had completed the eradication agent and weaponized it. In fact, she was the one who gave the Ministry the, heh, 'anonymous' tip about the details of the Tentacles DNA, sending out her particle-enhancement equation to have the Lance produce a similar, if more deadly, result." *Moves to the corner with a mountain of supplies initially underneath a large cloth. He breaks open one box, revealing a variety of calibers of bullets emitting a purple hue.* "Shoot this into the DNA, and it'll turn into sparkles." *He then digs deeper into another container, pulling out a smaller, plastic box.* "Remember the Stun-Net? This plays the same way, only instead of striking nerve cells, it attacks antimatter. We can set these up at all the possible exits, and if the guy holding the DNA runs past, he'll never know he's just carrying a paperweight at that point." *He then takes out a set of syringes.* "Of course, if we're only satisfied with an extermination by our own hands, then we can take out the DNA with a careful injection of the fluid." *One more box reveals a set of aerosol cans.* "If by some chance the Tentacles DNA gets on you, this spray-on to you KAM AtTac Suits will burn it up immediately. Basically Shiro's Robes for the old version of his research."

Kurahashi: "This is a lot of well-prepared stuff..."

Kato: *Sets down the latest equipment and sighs.* "I've been hearing that all of you were dying for the grandest challenge that you never had since the Neo-Wolfpack, and that even the Tokyo Terror didn't really measure up to all of your standards. This, I won't lie-"

Nakamura: "Oh, like always?"

Kato: *Beat.* "I won't lie, this may be that challenge. And as such, there's nothing we can expect going in. We have to be absolutely top-notch this time around, and everyone must not have one doubt about going on. If you do, Karasuma will call a military transport to get you out of here before the operation begins." *Clicks tongue with a smirk.* "But... This is all falling on deaf ears, isn't it?"

Karma: "As I said: Mr. Know-It-All. All crippling worries we had for this mission went out the window the second we agreed to come here, Kato."

Yada: "We're ready to finish the job. Really finish it."

Kato: "Absolutely sure?"

Irina: "Goddamnit kid, are you gonna finish speaking before I go into labor?"

Kato: *Nods.* "Very good then. Well, let's all freshen up, read into any more we can about the New National and our opponents, and then get into gear in anticipation for tonight."

AssUniv: *All raise an arm.* "Yeah!"

-The crew take to the shower floor of the building (for a very 90s venue in Japan, this was a requirement), re-energized themselves with some (non-alcoholic) drinks from the bar, and formed a circle around a mesh of tables that were nearly overladen with maps, schematics, stray ammunition, weapons, cans, and other gear.-

-With the briefing completed, the team takes to individual sections of the old nightclub to get ready. Established pairs were helping each other put on their armored suits and ready their weapons. Isogai and Kataoka made sure communication lines and InReTs interfaces were up to
date. Maehara and Okano made sure their suits retained proper exoskeleton connection to maximize suit usage. Sugino and Kanzaki armed a relative truckload of circular explosives of some kind, throwing them to each of their friends and peers as they came close. Naoko and Karma jury-rigged their own suits to be able to launch even more devastating punches and kicks, using finger and instep-sized sacs of graphene shots to harden their impact (as a nearby reinforced pillar [much to Kato's chagrin] soon found out). Hayami and Chiba measure up the scopes of their team's weapons, ensuring 100% accuracy given proper aim; their own sniper rifles were double-scoped for excelled multipurpose marksmanship. Okuda and Takebayashi take turns spraying on the Anti-Tentacles coating onto their apparel and everyone's knives. Nagisa and Kayano each do each other's hair, hoping to be as much themselves as they can be for this coming finale. Yada tightened the straps of Kato's forearm tech, including refastening the foldout Ballistic Shield into place. In exchange, Kato reaches behind her and pulls her hood over her head, seeing the internal cloth slide across her hair seamlessly, not disturbing one lock as it moves into place. Before Irina zips up her suit, Karasuma, as his silhouette indicates, lays a kiss on her abdominals, hoping that it transmitted to the embryo behind it. Afterwards, he places some custom padding between it and the suit, giving it a light, reassuring tap.

Nagisa: "..." *Is holding his phone out in front of him, hesitating to press dial.

Kayano: *Helps Nagisa form a fist with his free hand, reassuring him to go through with his next action, along with a silent smile.*

Nagisa: *After beaming back, he proceeds to press the green button, and bringing his phone to his ear, awaiting the finishing dial.*

Hiromi: "Nagisa!"

Nagisa: "Hi mom. Karasuma's confirmed it; you are out of Tokyo, thank God."

Nagisa's Father: "And you, son? You're currently in the city, yeah?"

Nagisa: "Yes, father."

Hiromi: "Out to save the world again, are you?"

Nagisa: *Bites his lower lip.* "Yes... I am."

Nagisa's Father: "If you're with the rest of your friends and allies, I suppose we shouldn't be too concerned."

Nagisa: "I wouldn't be with anyone else when the situation gets rough... But once this is over and when I come back, - when - I'll be more than happy to spend the next five years making it up to you two."

Hiromi: "Oh, Nagisa... I still need to make up another ten when it came to all that happened before."

Nagisa's Father: "Ditto."

Hiromi: *Laughs.* "We're a bunch of broken blue-heads, aren't we?"

Nagisa's Father: "Nagisa, you claim you want to be something ideal for the two of us, but I think
you've realized, along with the both of us, that the worst of it all lately has been this lack of communication. I haven't seen her laugh in a good while."

Nagisa: "That just tells of how much we deserve each other." *Rubs his eyes a bit.* "Mother, father, I'm going to have to go soon. If there's anything else that needs to get off our chests, it should be done now."

Hiromi/Nagisa's Father: *Pause for a moment.* "We love you, son. Never forget that."

Nagisa: "Shit... I want to say that too, but it'll sound like I'm not coming back."

Nagisa's Father: "Son."

Nagisa: *Thinks in silence for a moment.* "I know. Keep the band-aid on our family ties secure until I get back... With a cable of reinforced titanium to renew those ties."

Nagisa's Father: "That sounds swell, Nagisa."

Hiromi: "See you soon... Son." *End conversation.*

Nagisa: *Puts his phone to sleep, putting it back behind him. Kayano takes his free hand between her own, reassuring him of a job well done, and seemingly ensuring him that his promise will be kept. Nagisa can only smile to that set of implications, as they snuggle foreheads.*

Okajima: *Double takes between the bluehead and his own phone.* "Well, you certainly went above and beyond to express your intimacy. I was hoping just a text and a voicemail would've been good enough for Rina."

Nagisa/Kayano: *Both with purely white eyes look over to their mood-killer. The rest of AssUniv look on with confusion.*

-Once the awkwardness died down and day turned to evening, and then night, at exactly 8 P.M. the members of the AssUniv Program trekked the roughly thirty minutes to the stadium in Shinjuku. The residents of Qita Kong lined up the Roppongi streets, watching Kato and his peers leave the district to save the rest of Tokyo. Though it was still indeed under construction, the arena was certainly complete and sturdy enough to accommodate a good number of visitors, if they were, naturally, unwelcome. -

AssUniv: *Hoping to take the closest blindspot of the New National Stadium, the students and mentors travel through the forest-like Northern side. They appear from the shadows and foliage, witnessing an alcove of a very illuminated concrete room.*

Ritsu: *Appears on Kayano's InReTs screen.* "That must be the underground parking facilities, constructed first for contractual reasons."

Karasuma: "That's where we're going to enter to infiltrate the stadium undetected."

Terasaka: "I sure hope so; that doesn't quite look like an area that we can sneak through with its park lighting."

Karma: "Scared?"
Naoko: "Not again, Karma-kun..."

Chiba: *Cycles through the optical filters of his bifocal goggles.* "Certainly no one down there. Itona, you can bug those cameras with a well-placed rat drone inside the ventilation shafts, right?"

Itona: "I've already got one looking for a pipe as we speak."

Kato: "Excellent. We should be clear to head in then."

Kataoka: "Alright, everyone. The Tentacles is just within our grasp; we're not going to let it go again, not for the Society, or anyone else."

Kataoka: "Bear in mind to make good use of all of your equipment to locate and destroy the Tentacles DNA, and to disable any sentries in your way. Make no mistake; this time, we're really going for the kill." *To Nagisa.* "Valedictorian, sound off our creed."

Nagisa: *Looks at Isogai with an aura mixed with glee and smug, before proceeding.* "We are assassins." *Stands up, gazing up at the sheer height of the massive New National Stadium.* "And our target... Is our sensei's legacy."
Space For The Final Infiltration

Chapter Summary

The AssUniv Program's final rodeo. The Reclamation Society's final push to unleash the truest power of the Mutated strain of Tentacles DNA. Something's gotta give.

- The students and mentors of the AssUniv Program stealthily trek across the underground parking lot, heading to the set of stairs taking them to inside the New National Stadium.

  Kato: *Despite there being ample confirmation of no conscious souls in the urban acreage, he takes a peek into each of the side windows of every car that they pass by anyways.*

  Takebayashi: *Taps him on the shoulder after the eleventh time for elaboration.* You're not thinking that Machida and his men left the DNA in the back of one of their cars, are you?

  Kato: Not quite. There's something else they've taken however, and I want to get it back. *Slides to the next vehicle, this time finding what he was looking for.* Excellent. We're getting away with their rides anyways, so I'm coming back for this later. Let's proceed to the top.

- And so they did. The thirty-two strong crew splits up into halves to snake across the two spiraling staircases on the East and West ends. In order to guarantee eradication of the DNA, divide and conquer was deemed necessary to apply EA-modified nets across all exit pathways and windows.

  RS Guard 1: *Is patiently but vigilantly waiting near the East side emergency staircase on the first level of bleachers and concessions. But then the door behind him produces a knock. He puzzlingly looks back, .* "We got a situation?"

  Kato: *In a lower tone.* "Yeah, I'd say so; gotta get back in position so I'll show you what I know and you can take it to the big guy."

  RS Guard 1: *Even more perplexed this time, he opens the door ajar.* "The big guy is not here; you should know tha-"

  Karma/Kato/Yada: *The first pulls the Guard's riot mask down, allowing the other to shove his Shock-Pad palm directly to his face, muffling his holler of pain and keeping him from crashing onto the floor. The last catches his falling weapon when it slips out of the soldier's hand. When the latter fully goes limp, Kato pulls him in, to be handcuffed to the metal staircase bars.*

  Karma: *Looks at the unconscious guard one more time before closing the stair doors.* "Dumbass."

  Naoko: "Of course the top dog is not alongside his pack; he'd much rather take the carcass."

  Maehara: "But then, who's preparing the DNA for his experiments?"

  Okano: "We might just find out."
-The West End team deals with a similar occurrence, though with them being led by Karasuma and Naoko, the subjugation of their two foes was much more upfront and forcible, with one being sweep slammed face-first into the concrete by the Chief, while another took a sliding low blow from a honey-trap, which bowed him for a curb-stomp from another young agent. It was essentially quite the case of federal brutality, if anyone cared right now.-

-The teams proceeded past the ticket gates (not paying and turnstile-hopping, of course), as they contend with even more unwary security. There were signs of things going on inside the stadium, from the local light towers and construction lights at the center of the area and faint sounds of metal clanking, but the sheer set of eyes in the area prevented them from taking a deep peek from beyond the wide-arc pathways leading to the bleachers.-

Kurahashi: *It sounds like they're already in the thick of their work, Kato-kun.*

Kato: *With Yoshida, they are arming the micromachines to set up the EA-modified nets across the circumference/outline of the passageway.* Ah, that's just them getting ready. The DNA must remain on the natural defrosting trend or else it'll become unstable, and it'll take very long to melt something cryogenic back to normal. *Finishes applying the adhesive of his half of the projecting machines and walks back a fair distance away from them.* Yoshida, arm it.

Yoshida: Armed. *Presses on his InReTs screen, and the net then briefly forms a purple field, before dissipating into invisibility.*

Okano: So, these fields; you claimed people can pass through these while holding the DNA and never know it was erased, yeah? So if we passed through, we'd also be fine?

Kato: Yes. Unlike the lance, the concentration of photons here are minimally hazardous; the worst it can do to you is a moderate tan.

Fuwa: Is that so? Then you should put it up for commercial selling afterwards. College students and billionaires in the Summer would love an antimatter tanning machine in their houses and dorms.

Yada: *That's an excellent idea. To Kato.* Why didn't you think of that, eh?

Kato: Kind of busy here.

Yada: Hmph, never stopped you before.

Kataoka: Eyes on the prize, ladies. Let's get to the next corridor. *Reloads her HK433 and proceeds.*

-Itona and Chiba oversee the placement of the EA-modified nets for the West End, as they continue to vanquish their foes unsuspecting of their arrival until they're on top of them... For one instance with Isogai and Maehara crawling across the ceiling to air assassinate four foes simultaneously, the cases were literal, too.-

-After more than an hour, the student-assassins were successful in remaining silent while arranging more and more chokepoints. They move up from the less-sloped first level to the thin second layer. Past that, the teams converged to just around the corner from each other and were almost done filtering the top spectator's area's exits.-
Karma: If this mad scientist doesn't look past his work soon, he's going to realize it'll all be for naught.

Okano: Yeah, you worry about that creep who's somehow crazier than Shiro. The rest of us will wallow in despair over how we've still yet to meet a proper challenge by these Syndikat men.

Ritsu: *Appears on everyone's InReTs screens.* It's been a personal joy of mine to be able to develop humanlike emotions that can flare like such, but I can hardly see the logic in having them be fierce at this moment in time.

Mimura: I agree; are we really asking for difficulty in a quest to save our capital?

Nakamura: We've all been hyped up for something that will actually test us, you know. *To Kato.* Come on, Kato-kun: What gives?

Kato: *Finishes arming a new wall of Eradication Agent photons.* Honestly, I'm pretty surprised and disappointed too. I was sure he was really going to bring his top game into this. And if it's this, then, well... It's pitiable.

Karasuma: Looking at all of this, I almost can't believe I'm just a more subdued version of my students.

Irina: It has its charm, Karasuma.

Naoko: If we're all done here, we still got a few more paths to go. And also, the atrium needs to be covered.

Kato: That open roof, I got a little plan for. We're going to need better-

-But then, the local television screen near the concessions where the East and West End teams were, along with the rest of the monitors lining the arena, flared on.-

Machida: "Hello, Assassination University."

AssUniv: "!!" *All of them stand at attention, realizing they've been discovered. They also look up at the ceilings and other floors, noticing that the dim illumination that was at default during their sneaking has now reached full brightness.*

Machida: "What would I be, as a former soldier, to not know you were coming and trying to sabotage our plan, by gridlocking my prize piece to within the confines of the closed stadium? I have been patiently watching-"

Kimura: "Like you always do? Risking your men like that?"

Machida: "They know of those risks. They also know you lot don't kill, so they're not scared of you and what you're capable of. Anyways, I've been watching you lot trump my security, in an attempt to destroy the DNA and slip by completely undetected, before I can complete my work."

Kato: "Bet on it, Machida. Even if you sent everything you have left against us now - that being big, burly boys armed to the teeth with knives, guns, whatever - you'll still lose. Nothing's stopping us from reaching the Tentacles DNA once more."
Machida: "Oh, I don't need to worry about all of you kids trying to reach the DNA anymore. As a matter of fact, I'd actually be delighted if you encountered it again immediately."

Naoko: *Steps closer to her team's monitor.* "I'm sorry, what?"

Machida: "You see, my project is already complete; Project Zero just needs to really wake up."

AssUniv: "!?" *Are all in disbelief by that statement.*

Isogai: *Snaps out of his initial shock.* "You lie! You've seen the records Kato left when you stole the last of the DNA; if you had already made it work, this stadium would have been turned into a crater!"

Machida: "Of course, of course. It's like drinking cold water on a hot day, only on a much grander scale; the DNA goes into shock, loses sentient control, and detonates. I'd be half the madman you all believe me to be if I actually ignored these warning signs." *Clicks tongue.* "But thanks to evolution, biology has known that there is always at least one exception to every hard-coded rule of our world. For instance, what if instead of waiting for the DNA to cool down, I froze a host; the DNA's will-be vessel, and reach equilibrium down the middle?"

Terasaka: "... What?"

Kato: *His pupils dilate and he looks down with anxiety.* "You subjected someone to subzero temperatures just to quicken the process..."

Machida: "I'm surprised you never thought about that, Kato."

Yada: *Hugs her boyfriend's arm with confidence.* "Because he's not a complete monster like you!"

Machida: "I don't see why being twisted just the other way is not at least as bad as your friend's own crookedness. But I digress."

-The sounds of metal being viciously banged on and ripped apart can be heard within the stadium. Screaming can also be heard in conjunction with rapid footsteps, though one was cut short.-

Kato: "!!" *Recognizes the cries.*

Machida: "Shall I show you just what you're dealing with this evening?" *Puts up a sort of remote, which, when he presses one of its buttons, switches to a web camera displaying the makeshift operating room. It depicted a humanoid-like creature, sprouting and retracting the eponymous Tentacles from every body part it had. Another camera's angle showed the damage it had already done, from the cryogenic freezer holding its host now crumpled into a ball, metal stakes and bars being lodged into the ground and walls. But what's more, there were two dead people in the vicinity; scientists who were forced to implement the DNA into the beast that assassinated them.*

Kato: "Royce! Cain!" *Kato forms two very tight fists, in addition to closing his eyes and looking away.*

Okuda/Takebayashi: *As the only other ones who have gotten to know the Biological team
members of Kato's R&D, they too sympathize.*

Machida: "I feel you've neglected to pay attention to the star of the show, Kato."

Kato: "Wills himself to look back up at the monitor, focusing on Project Zero. When by chance it turns to face the screen (before it instantaneously turns away due to lack of care), Kato looks back on this observational memory, carefully inspecting beyond the fire-wavy hair, the glowing veins on its face, and shriveled cheeks due to the freezing. What he finds equally upsets him.* "Jieji!"

Machida: "Thats right. We picked up the mess you left at old QK district, and made it into something Jieji always wished he could become; something that can easily kill you. So really, we granted him the best of favors. Of course, the powers come at a price; he actually died midway through the process of implanting every one of his cells with the Tentacles."

Okuda: "But it's well-noted by now that the virus can live on past the death of its host, due to latching onto the skeletal system."

Machida: "Astute description, little lady. As such, Jieji's not quite on speaking terms with anyone... Though really, is anyone truly themselves after a bout of being gone?"

Kato: "You degenerate son of a bitch!"

Machida: "That's funny-sounding, coming from you."

Kato: "!!" *The insult on his mother forcibly warrants a punch at the nearest screen, breaking it.*

Machida: "The Olympic Community is going to make you pay for that you know. But maybe even they will eventually be disappointed, because..."

-WOOSHS!

AssUniv: *All of them heard the noise and freeze up.*

Kimura: *The closest to the latest EA-Field armed, he nervously looks over the concrete corner to look at the noise's source; Project Zero has arrived to right before them on the pathway to the bleachers.* "EEP-!"

Project Zero: *Once he's seen Kimura, he proceeds to throw a Tentacle at supersonic speeds at his target. For as much as Kimura was a fast little guy, there was no way he could avoid the attack stunned as he is. But the jab is stopped dead, when PZ realizes that his own flesh was being burned.*

Machida: "Hm, so your countermeasures do hold up against Project Zero in some form. No matter; it will stop at nothing to kill all of you. And you won't be able to stop him."

Project Zero: *Tries again to break through the barrier with its own bare material, to no avail.*

Kataoka: *Frantically presses on her InReTs screen, and blows onto her microphone.*

Project Zero: * Falls for the Throw Voice gadget that she had placed all the way back at the
spectator's side of the ticket gates and zooms over there, hopefully to take out an easier target.*

Kato: "Ritsu-chan, jam the receiver signal, deadlock seal any attempts to re-hack the audio."

Ritsu: "On it."

Machida: *His screens, including the central spectating monitor, continue to indicate he is still speaking, but there is stone silence. He too realizes this and looks around suspiciously as to how that happened.*

Muramatsu: "You said we have to get a better something, Kato, and you don't lie. What do we need better?"

Kato: *Shakes off his inner conflicts.* "Jie- Zero doesn't seem to realize there's other ways it can reach us, since a few more corridors are still unmanned. It also isn't looking above, at the currently-open atrium. It escapes through there, and it's game over." *To Yada.* "Take them out."

Yada: *Knows what he means, reaching behind her and taking out a small box of special 7.62 caliber bullets.*

Kato: "These are imbued with the properties of the AE-Field projectors, but they have the ability of being installed from afar. We fire about five of these into the rim of the open roof, and PZ won't be able to escape. The only problem is we can't see the roof from these concession floors."

Maehara: *Heart sinks.* "You mean we need to go out past the AE-Fields we've already set up, where that thing can get us in order to fire those where we need to!?"

Kato: *Gulps.* "You wanted to know."

Naoko: "We only got a few of these rounds, and, if it recognizes we've stepped past these Fields, even less time to aim and discharge them. We should entrust this duty to the most confident marksmen and women among us. I'll take initiative and be one."

Chiba: "Naturally, I'm up for a long-distance bead too."

Hayami: "A very swift shot to an unmarked spot and we need to remain mobile? Sounds like my kind of handiwork."

Karasuma: "Remember who has been training your trigger fingers, all of you. I can be the penultimate shooter."

Kato: "And I'll take the anchor round. Everyone else, think of how you might be able to help us get right back behind these Fields once we've done our job, as we all get into position."

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "Qui Garde Un Secret" plays.-

暗殺大学VSプロジェクトゼロ

Assassination University
The thirty-two students and mentors of AssUniv split into three groups of six and two groups of seven, with each one being led by their designated marksman. With there being no conscious security remaining, there is only the matter of remaining quiet so as not to attract Project Zero's ire. Further implements of local explosives, Throw Voices, and even set-up nose traps are used to divert the monster's attention if stealth was out of the question.

Satoshi: *Initiates a conversation from Kato's InReTs screen, as the latter travels with Yada, Sugino, Kanzaki, Kurahashi, and Sosuke.* "Chairman sir, we have some bad news. The Metropolis' airspace has been invaded by a set of cargobobs flying at HAHO jump levels. We can only assume they are backup for Machida's operation and will descend on your location soon. We cannot provide any countermeasure due to the risks of providing even more means of letting the enemy escape from Tokyo with the DNA."

Kato: "Understood. Thanks, Satoshi." *Closes the call, then reinitiating the live comm with the rest of AssUniv.* "You heard that, everyone?"

Isogai: *Running alongside the rest of Chiba's team.* "We heard. Everybody, it's best we get this done quickly and flawlessly so PZ doesn't leave while we're really distracted by more forces."

Kurahashi: *The team arrives at the area before their vantage point.* The only passageways without EA-Fields... Really don't want to be around these halls for too long.

Kanzaki: The more pressing concern would be if Project Zero appeared here.

Sugino: Kanzaki-san's right. Which is why we need to be quiet; let everyone else take their shots first. Then we can clog this up and trap PZ inside the arena once Kato finishes the job.

Sosuke: *Observes Project Zero using some micro-cameras.* Kato, Project Zero is definitely faster and stronger than Korosensei, and probably even the 2nd God of Death - it's been a while since we gauged either's specs. But those two could also do some pretty supernatural things.

Yada: Right. Laser beams, adhesive mucus, liquefaction, white light bomb, these were all possible beyond the use of weaponized appendages and massive cellular regeneration... But PZ's not doing any of them. Kato-kun, what's going on?

Kato: *Sighs.* My Family always knows how to pull through on their job to safeguard the world's evolution, even if it is the last thing they do.

Kanzaki: Kato-kun?

Kato: Everyone, when you saw my deceased R&D faculty on those CCTVs, you should also see some vial and needle laying on the ground due to the carnage. That's an amnesia drug. Royce and Heller induced an episode of blackout on Jieji before they were forced to instill the Tentacles DNA into him, causing the virus to infect circulatory and skeletal cells that have no idea what it can do. And the Tentacles are decentralized organisms, that being any one cell can operate the host. If none of them can access the memories of their abilities, save for the base, essential ones, they can't
transmit information to use them.

Sugino: *Huh... Clever.*

Yada: *Let's hope it never finds out it can do that. Or Machida doesn't find a way to show it how.*

Kato: *Takes out some more EA-Field micromachines.* *Let's lay up all but one while we wait, hm?*

-Meanwhile...-

Naoko: *Slaps her HK433 now that a single Net-Round has been put into its barrel. She tugs on the cable latching onto his suit's back, which is connected to the Pivoting Wire Wrest, held collectively by the entire male Terasaka Group. Hazama stands at the other titanium hook, having used the adhesive properties of her EM-Traverse gloves to keep it in place.* *You guys sure about this?*

Terasaka: *We ever steer you wrong? Have I ever?*

Naoko: *Her eyes turn white with agitation.*

Terasaka Group: *All join in stone-silent judgment.*

Terasaka: *You want to wait until Project Zero realizes us? On with it, Naoko!*

Naoko: *Sighs her frustration away, and prudently walks to just before the EA-Field. Then, with all doubts pushed out of her, she charges out, already staring down her Trijicon 4x32 ACOG scope, so that it only takes a swift two-eye swivel in order to see her target... And fires.*

-The bullet zooms at sonic-transcending velocities, hitting the rim of the open roof.-

Project Zero: *Having been continuously duped by Throw-Voice snapping, it turns the complete opposite way when it hears a firearm discharge, seeing Naoko out in the open.*

Naoko: *’Nownownownownownownownownow!’ *Is backtracking as much as she can before the Wire Wrest pulls her back.*

Yoshida: *Presses on the retractor button, making the handle of the gadget take back the long coil.*

Naoko: *Is recoiled towards the EA-Field... Just as Project Zero practically teleports to right in front of her. It then punches out another Tentacle that looks to protrude right through her brain, coming within millimeters of contact... Until its tip begins melting. The rest of Naoko, aghast and hyperventilating as she were, flies back to the safety of the concessions floor, while PZ further assesses his inability to attack the student-assassins.*

Terasaka: *'Partial mission success?’ *He anxiously grins while helping his team reassure Naoko further.*

-Chiba's Team...-

Chiba: *Looks to the corner where Hayami’s Team operated.* *Looks like Naoko and the
Terasaka Group's plan worked. You guys better be ready to pull me back once I make the shot; I don't move as fast as Naoko does.

Kataoka: *Rest assured, you'll be safe, Chiba. Right guys?* *Looks back to Maehara, Okano, Kimura, and Nakamura, who nod in agreement.*

Chiba: *Okay, then hook me in.* *Feels Nakamura press the titanium hook into one of his magazine pouches. There is even some kick from the other hook being fired into the far wall.*

Nakamura: *Looks Chiba in the eyes from over his side.* *Is this the most action you've had in the rear this year, Hayami included?*

Chiba: *You all deemed me professional during our many adventures together. I am going to live up to that remark and professionally look past that snide comment.* *Steps forward, exhales, and crosses the barrier to line up his shot. It only took an instant with his Accuracy International AW Covert, and the specialize 7.62 round is driven into the roof, right on target.* *Now!*

Project Zero: *Traces the smoke trail and the original point of the sound to find Chiba, being sent back behind cover. By the time it got to here Chiba was, the latter was already mostly behind the micromachines.*

Okano: "Hahah, better luck next time!"

Kimura: "Gotta be faster than that!"

Project Zero: *Its expression remains indifferent to the taunts.*

Nakamura: "Thank God he prefers to kill us rather than play poker." *Turns her back to face the rest of her team.*

Project Zero: *Shows itself to be winding up a punch. It wouldn't have mattered on any other occasion, but this time it wasn't just a tentacle being raised this time.*

Kimura: *He and the rest of his peers realize it.* "Nakamura, get out of the way!!"

Project Zero: *Throws a bowling ball-sized slab of concrete at Nakamura.*

Nakamura: *Has just enough time to look back at the jagged rock come at her, and throw her hand before her face.*

Kimura: *With a Ballistic Shield folded out, uses the slim edge to punch the rock into smaller portions. Despite this, the extreme velocities of the projectiles smashing into him and Nakamura in the face are enough to twist their heads the other ways and temporarily knock them out.*

Kataoka: "Get them behind the pillars!" *Takes Nakamura while Chiba takes Kimura. All six of them narrowly avoid an even larger slab, and two bleacher chairs, before inferring that it isn't going to hit them anymore and leaves.* *It's learning, everyone. It knows it can't go through these EA-Fields, so it's taking things that can and its sending it through the fields. The Wire Wrest is not enough.*

-Hayami's Team...-
Hayami: *After a new plan had been concocted, she could be seen placing the special Net-Round into her Accuracy International AW Covert.* 

Everyone, are the new charges set?

Isogai/Karma/Mimura/Kayano: *After firing four Net-Rounds into the furthest part of the walls making the path to the bleachers, they all give a thumbs up to her.*

Hara: If we got this right, you should also have more time than the two before in order to take the shot, Hayami-san.

Hayami: Not going to need it; just need enough time to secure backup. *Walks past the first EA-Field, and going before the latest one, taking aim and firing the third crucial bullet.*

Project Zero: *Sees Hayami and naturally flies over there. It gets too close and loses its foot to staying too long in the burning field. It backs up, taking some time to regenerate the appendage, but then produces a jagged metal bar from behind it.*

Hayami: *As soon as she sees it can pierce the invisible curtain, she begins retreating.*

Project Zero: *Throws the metal rod like a javelin, with pinpoint accuracy into Hayami's shoulder blade.*

Isogai/Karma: *Both dashed behind Hayami, producing their Ballistic Shields to guard her; the rod bounces off from the aegises, lodging itself instead onto the roof. They then make sure they get Hayami back behind thicker concrete, along with everyone else.*

Okajima/Hara: *Both blindfire back, making Project Zero dodge away.* 

It's still thinking it needs to overdodge, thankfully. But it's still way too fast!

-Karasuma's Team...-

Karasuma: We may have a fix for that. We just need a guinea pig to test the theory, and since I'm next, I'll be it. *Sprints onto the scene, having also a new protected layer of EA-Fields in his way as he takes aim.*

Project Zero: *Blasts towards him, this time with a large boulder of artificial rock.*

Nagisa/Fuwa/Okuda/Takebayashi: *The last two spray a veil of EA-aerosol into the area near Karasuma (who has not even flinched from the monster's arrival), so that when the first two activate their flashlights, the photons are altered. The photochemistry forms a hazardous filter for any sort of Tentacles DNA. In fact, its specific wavelength not only burns PZ, but also freezes it like it used to for Korosensei, causing it to fall back down to the arena... With the boulder falling on top of it.*

Katasuma: *He too suffered some burning, but he refused to allow it to impede his shot, firing with unerring accuracy into the wall... At the same time another one was also planted, completing the set.* What's this? *Looks over to Kato, who was exposed purely to the arena, but still having taken his shot.* Grown impatient with our handiwork, Kato?

Kato: If PZ is briefly down for the count, why wouldn't we try to get as many advantages in before it gets back up?

Irina: Can't fault that.
Itona: *Ritsu-chan, now would be a good time to arm the ceiling Field.*

Ritsu: *At once.* *Arms the bullet EA-Fields high above the arena, closing the hole and allowing PZ with no other ways to escape the arena.*

PZ: *The boulder it was under begins to tremor.*

Karasuma: *It's stirring; Kato, get back into the concessions area. We'll then converge on the technical booth, using the bright lights and EA-Smoke grenades to carpet PZ while it is trapped in the stadium.*

Kato: *Got it.* *Turns back and attempts to jog back into the walking area.*

Sugino: *Arms the last opening with an EA-Field.* *Come on, Kato!*

-But then, the boulder that was originally going to be used on Karasuma falls right in front of Kato, who skids to a halt, and breaking him away from his escape route.-

Kato: "!!" *Slowly turns back, realizing Project Zero has made him his target this time.*

Yada: "KATO-KUN!" *Runs up to the large wedging piece.*

Kurahashi: "To the next vantage point!" *The rest of the team runs one way.*

Kato: *Backs up onto the recently-placed slab as PZ also draws closer.* "Any story about how much you want to kill me again? Huh, Jieji?"

Project Zero: *Answers with simultaneous high-low Tentacle swipes, attempting to slice off either Kato's legs, his head, or both.*

Kato: *Though it took everything out of his twentyfold mind processing, Kato could see the appendages coming at peak human reaction time, and hopped over one, hovering sideways just under the other.*

Project Zero: *Responds by taking a third Tentacle, seizing one of his ankles and tossing him past the bleachers.*

Kato: "Whoa-!!" *Is sent flying onto the sports field, tumbling through the rugged tartan track and turf. His rifle's tether strap flings off his shoulder during the motions and the weapon slides beyond his reach. He groans as he gets back up with some struggle.* *Soccer grass!? What cheapskate's paying for this field? Oh wait it may just be tentative... Ah-!!* *Notices immediately that Project Zero has landed back on ground level.*

AssUniv: *Most of the groups come close to converging on one specific corridor to see Kato standing face-to-face with PZ.*

Project Zero: *Notices that its wrapping Tentacle had caused the tip to melt, due to the aerosol spray. After regenerating it, PZ looks over to the lab coats and other apparel from the deceased silents, taking an instant to wrap up all of its Tentacles, much to Kato's chagrin.*

Kato: *Quickly whips out one of his Kimber Warrior II pistols, and unloads an entire magazine.*
of EA-infused rounds at PZ. Though he can track the monster, it evades much too fast to be hit, with the latter making a sort of zig-zagging motion as it closes in. When the first pistol runs dry, Kato goes for his other, to avoid reload time. But even that took too long, for PZ lashes one of its Tentacles at the hand, ricocheting the handgun away.*

Project Zero: *Throws another appendage straight at Kato's chest, which he manages to sidestep. When another Tentacle is sent to smash into the ground he's standing on, Kato rolls away, taking out his fixed tactical knife, coated in aerosol, while doing so.*

Kato: *Dodges another downwards strike, slicing at the appendage as it retracts, which causes another burn... That is soon healed up. He evades another three strikes and sees his chance to punish the fourth, until a fifth gets in his way at face-level. Kato turns his head away just in time, and the Tentacle only slices a bit into his mask at the cheek section. His twisting motion makes him fall onto one knee.*

Hazama: Tch. Yet another fight he picked that he can't win.

Naoko: Yeah... Kato-kun is a special kind of human. But a human can't beat whatever Project Zero is.

Yada: *Worriedly double-takes between them and Kato.*

Kato: *Slowly rises back onto two feet, backing away even more when Project Zero creeps up further.*

Isogai: Maybe not, alone. But with a little help? *Begins lifting his rifle's scope to his eyes.*

Irina: *Forcibly lowers it.* Don't! You might hit Kato with PZ being so quick, regarding anything you want to throw at it!

Kato: *Dodges almost a dozen more attacks, being able to snip PZ twice during, before he finally begins getting overwhelmed; cognitively exhausted from constantly activating his highest order of reflexes, Kato momentarily shuts down mid-battle; his eyes flicker back into an open, awake moment when one more Tentacle flies his way, smacking him hard on the side of the chin.*

"DAAH!"

AssUniv: *Everyone, especially Yada, became extremely unnerved when they saw the latest attack, which broke Kato's mask and goggles, make the attachments fall to the floor, close to where their owner's knees too dropped.*

Kato: *His head is pulled upwards, bringing the rest of his body with it. PZ then lets go, however, to use another Tentacle as a drill, spiking it straight through his solar plexus.*

-OST Pauses.-

Kato: "KEEGH!" *Whips his head back at the impaling blow.*

Yada: "NO!" *Tries to run out to the bleachers toward her significant other, but Kurahashi and Hara pull her back before she can move past the protection of the EA-Fields.*

AssUniv: "!!"
Space For The Final Battle

Chapter Summary

Now is really not the time to be reading these summaries, right? I can't even make one right now, because everything that happens here and now is too important to give away!

Kato: *After being drilled by Project Zero, he briefly directs his face back down to cough a large stream of blood onto the grass. He then weakly makes eye contact with his old nemesis-turned pet project.*

Project Zero: *Twists its protruding Tentacle so that it cause more pain and tears through more of Kato's tissue, making him scream again in pain and fall to his knees, futilely attempting to pry the body part out.*

Karma: *Winces.* "Such a goddamn slaughter."

Terasaka: *Grits his teeth.* "And it wasn't even a fair fight..."

Machida: *On the central monitor, he overlooks the killing stroke with smug satisfaction.*

Project Zero: *When Kato collapses entirely onto his knees, which were pointed away due to the trembling weight, it retracts its Tentacle. The former looks its way one last time, prompting the latter to lash one more Tentacle at him, apparently swiping at his throat, which makes Kato drop face-first, entirely motionless. Though this whole event happened in an instant, as Kato fell onto the soil, he began experiencing all of his most impactful memories again, including the first time he used his Hatred Bloodlust, gazing at the Shiroyuki Twins during class, battling his way out of Okinawa (against the prisoners and Karasuma), watching Halle die, having all of AssUniv turn against him due to Shiohara, learning the truth behind Jieji's rage, being forced to kill Daichi Hayashida, and, worst of all, seeing the corpses of his parents after a Fukuoka assassination.*

Yada: *Streams run down her eyes at the sight of the slaying. She then holds her mouth in deep anguish, but it does not mute her sobbing.*

Project Zero: *It hears her after also listening to Kato's heartrate decrease to a flatline, among the rest of her peers, and looks their way, slowly walking to the destination. Before it does so, however, it looks back at the deceased Kato with a skeptical head tilt, before looking back at the AssUniv Program, basically teleporting right in front of them and the EA-Field.*

AssUniv: *They all back away and hide behind the thick concrete, believing PZ will throw more junk at them. When nothing comes their way, Karasuma and Nagisa look back, seeing PZ not focused on them, but at the Field itself.*

Project Zero: *Notices the little lumps of the micromachines that produce the EA-Field for this corridor. It immediately tries to destroy it with a Tentacle, but again gets a stinging sensation. Realizing that's not working, it instead goes back for a piece of broken concrete and begins*
slamming it into one of devices.*

Itona: "Don't let it destroy those!"

Kayano/Nakamura/Isogai/Maehara/Kataoka/Fuwa: *All fire dozens of EA-Rounds at Project Zero as it reclaims the improvised bludgeoning weapon. Unfortunately, it has learned to dodge at smaller ranges from before while fighting Kato, so the rain of lead does not make it retreat like it used to. In fact, it has even learned to do everything it needs to while dodging, picking back up the stone, aiming its throw, throwing, then repeat.*

Nagisa: "Go for the rock after it throws it!" *Points his HK433 at the rock just before it falls back onto the ground, slowly chipping away at it with each .300 Blackout round. The rest of the AssUniv members do the same, eventually causing enough damage to the concrete so that when PZ launches it at the device again, it shatters upon impact.*

Project Zero: *Indifferent to its weapon breaking, it goes back to the field, picking up another; another jagged metal bar.*

AssUniv: "!!" *Are in panic over PZ now claiming a weapon they cannot break in time.*

Project Zero: *Continues jabbing one end of the rod onto the already-damaged micromachine. It's latest strike saw the EA-Field briefly dissipate before reconnecting. The monster notices it is close to breaking the wall and proceeds to strike again.*

Okajima: "This is it, isn't it?" *Gulps.*

Karasuma: "Kids, get behind me!" *Stands in front of the rest of the AssUniv Program. Irina, despite his initial displeasure, silently joins him.*

Students: *All of the pairs gather close to each other, equally preoccupied as their bachelor(ettes). Even Ritsu isolates herself to Kayano's InReTs screen and looks away, anticipating pain coming her way.*

Project Zero: *Lifts up its Tentacle one more time to whack the machine... But it stops dead in its tracks.*

AssUniv: "???

Mimura: "Something we did?"

Project Zero: *Looks back towards the stadium, laying down the metal bar.*

Hayami: *Shoots a replacement micromachine into the wall just above the nearly-broken one and turns back to Itona.* "We can redirect the power of that one to this one, right?"

Muramatsu: *Tugs hard on Itona's shoulder.* "Tell us we can."

Itona: * Brushes his hand off.* "Of course!" *Presses on his InReTs screen, arming the machine; the EA-Field changes shape slightly, but it still covers all but a slim doorslip.*

Sugino: "Why weren't we doing that while it was breaking that piece?"
Itona: "It could bat them away and be a waste of effort."

Kanzaki: "So what is Project Zero doing now?"

Project Zero: *Jumps back onto the grass.*

AssUniv: *All of them peek over the edge to see what's going on.*

Project Zero: *Skeptically walks closer to Kato, who still hasn't moved.*

Kato: *His heart suddenly starts beating again; faster and faster, which PZ senses. During the next few moments, Kato's minds continue looking down memory lane, now recalling burying the hatchet with Karasuma and Naoko, gaining closure with Rina and Sayaka, the taking of the DNA from the Neo-Wolfpack, being dogpiled by the Students of AssUniv, Miho passionately hugging Kato in the middle of Shibuya Crossing, both times he went to Kyoto International Conference Center with a certain someone, and Kato and Yada mutually agreeing to a kiss in Fukuoka. It's not until he remembers when he saw the Wisteria Tunnels with his parents, however, seeing them smile at him together that everything turns back on. He gasps with life, clenching his fists and pushing his upper body off the ground.*

Machida: *On the central monitor, shows noticeable surprise at the revival.*

AssUniv: *A splinter group consisting of Yada, Nagisa, Kanzaki, Sugino, Yoshida, Maehara, and Okano take to the neighboring corridor to get a better view of the situation. They all show a combination of the maximum levels of astonishment and awe.*

Kato: *Rises back up to a proper kneeling position, revealing his gaping torso wound, which doesn't seem to bother him now. The KAM AtTac Suit was a hindrance, however, which was why he started unzipping and tearing the upper portion off. That was when the hole in his body began closing, recreating his own flesh. Even his Irezumi returned properly.*

Project Zero: *Watches Kato as he rises back up to his feet and faces it.*

Kato: *His eyes hidden behind shadows and closed the whole time, they spring open in a Kubrick stare at PZ. And they flare up with a bright set of red eyes... A familiar set of bright red eyes. Completed with a less than familiar smile...*

Yada: *Remains in silent awe of what's happening before everyone.*

Kato: "You want to kill a Kato... You're going to have to try harder than that!" *Throws down a stomp of power, unleashing a lethal black-red aura, along with something beyond any human, even transhuman, abilities. For what protruded from his back... Were Tentacles!*

Project Zero: *Feels the massive gusts of winds coming its way and briefly covers its face with its forearm.*

Machida: *Leans forward on his monitor when he sees what just happened.*

Kato: *His Tentacles, like PZ's, retract into the rest of his body.* "Let's do this." *Does not wait to charge in, throwing six Tentacles in front of him to make a point targeting PZ's chest. The latter manages to block it with an equal number of appendages, but Kato then spreads his Tentacles away, and using the other two Tentacles to propel him forward in a chest smash. The subsequent
body slam attack sends PZ flying into the concrete wall, making a deep indent in it.*

Project Zero: *Claws its way out of its it-sized wall, staring back at Kato and delivering a dashing strike of its own. but Kato sidesteps it, causing PZ to hit and almost crash into the wall on the other side. Kato completes the violent collision, delivering a big boot to the back of PZ's head, deepening the crater. He gives it one last jolt with a quick-charge, Tentacle-assisted dropkick. PZ finds the need to fight back excessive and bounces out of the corner, slamming the back of Kato's head into *

Karasuma: "Always full of surprises..."

Naoko: "That's why he made us fill up his magazines and discharge aerosol grenades."

Terasaka: *The one furthest way from the action in the stadium, he readily hears the noise happening outside it. He curiously turns around, finding the reinforcements Satoshi mentioned earlier, apparently heading to the far side of the stadium from them.* "No time to ogle, everyone. We've got company." *Physically directs all nearby to the oncoming helicopters.*

Maehara: "Going to ruin our one and a half hours of hard work, are they?"

Okuda: "Sabotaging the Field riggings, liberating their horror! We cannot permit that!"

Okano: "Damn right; we won't let them!"

Kayano: *Looks amongst her peers, before noticing Nagisa sidetracked again.* "Nagisa-kun?"

Nagisa: "..." *Not focusing on the drama behind him, he instead continues watching the chaos between Kato and Project Zero. Begins remembering of the last time he and his friends and peers had witnessed a battle of such epic proportions... When Korosensei fought his protege, the God of Death, and Dr. Yanagisawa, who were both enhanced by Tentacle DNA, all in an effort so that they could overwhelm him. When the same striking pattern happens between Kato and Project Zero, the memory practically comes to life, and the KRISS KARD pistol he's holding close to his face begins lowering to his waist.*

Nakamura: *Looks over to Nagisa, who's still clearly a little shaken.* "Hey!" *Everyone else breaks contact from each other and over to the two of them.* "What are you doing!?"

Nagisa: *Breaks from his reminiscence to look over to Nakamura, who's walking over to him.*

Karma: *Realizing what Nakamura is calling Nagisa out on.* "You're not thinking of dropping that gun again, are you?" *Walks over to him as well.*

Nagisa: "!!" *Remembers that in his helpless state five years ago, he let go of an Anti-Sensei 1911, letting it fall onto the ground close to where his knees similarly collapsed.*

Kayano: "Don't do it, Nagisa-kun. Don't give up; this isn't like before." *Cups her hands together on Nagisa's armed hand.*

Kataoka: "She's right, you know. We're not the same junior-high students that couldn't help our teacher five years ago."

Terasaka: "Damn right we're not!"
Terasaka Group: *All raise a clenched rifle.* "Word!"

Isogai: "No, we're way stronger. Which means we can make a difference. And we're going to prove it right here; we're going to save our friend!"

Sugino: "We can't outright assist Kato as he fights that monstrosity, but we can make it easier for him."

Kanzaki: "We'll provide all the support we can to him! The job was to get those lights working, right?"

Hayami: "Plus... We need to deal with the Society's garrison coming right for us, too." *She and Chiba point to differing directions showing variously-armed grunts pooling out from their choppers.*

Nagisa: *Inspired by his peers' words, he reaffirms his grasp of the pistol.* "You're right. All of you."

Maehara: *Slaps his HK433. Many follow suit.* "Heh, of course we are!"

Irina: *Tearfully pulls back the slide of her UCP pistol.* "I love you kids. So damn much. I need to say that just once, in case we don't make it out of this altogether and alive."

AssUniv: *All look at her with a beat.*

Karma: "How kind of you to share this with us... Bitch-sensei."

Irina: *Becomes ticked.* "Okay, the novelty has come and gone."

Karasuma: "That's enough small-talk, everyone. We've got a lot of work to do, and probably not too much time." *Steps out towards the edge of the spectating window of the circular hallways.* "We're going to split into two leaking cells again, and dispatching all of the enemy squads we come across en-route to all of the top-floor paths to the bleachers and the collective control booth. Each of you still have some aerosol grenades on your vacuum-packs; I expect all of them to be off of you ten minutes ago; am I clear!?"

AssUniv: *Salute.* "YESSIR!"

Isogai/Kataoka: "Let's go for the kill!"

AssUniv: *All roar again, before splitting. They all go up to the next floor, finding that the Society's soldiers are also there, and the firefight is about to start, with which they get into cover.*

Kato/Project Zero: *Bouncing off after their next hypersonic clash, they both land on opposite sides of the audience barricades. They stare at each other, one with confident aggression and the other with consistent apathy for just a moment, and then clash once more.*

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "The Way of Life" plays.-

暗殺大学VSプロジェクトゼロと埋め立て協
Kato and PZ ricochet back, with Kato taking the lead by turning the other way of the motion, throwing a backhand uppercut Tentacle whip. PZ blocks it, but the impact forces it upwards. Kato air tackles PZ, breaking past its grid-like Tentacle block with a three-Tentacle drill and driving his shoulder into the Latter’s sternum. The charging attack sends the colliding duo into a set of bleachers. Kato attempts a few mounted punches from his elevated position, connecting with the first two before they were being blocked and PZ turns it around, slamming Kato's body deeper into the pit. It takes a three-piece section of the Ruthville and slams them onto him. Kato beats him to the punch - literally, by jabbing it in the nose, stunning it like a caress would for a shark. This bought Kato the minimal time necessary to whack the Tentacles holding the seats with his own, making them crash right on top of PZ's head, and kicking him off.

As PZ floated into the air, Kato again dove after him, clutching him into a high mat slam back onto the soil, creating a small crater. Kato stood back up and delivered a heavy stomp to the face, which PZ blocked with a concentration of two appendages, flipping him after the overpower. As Kato restabilizes himself, PZ takes its turn launching, shooting like a missile straight at the enhanced Chairman and then throwing him towards a set of bleachers close to a nearby corridor. He takes some time to recover, but then PZ body slams him again, in an exchange that brings him close to the EA-Field there. The monster seems to realize the similarities between itself and Kato, and deduces that forcing the latter into the barrier will harm him just the same as well. Its theory does not complete then, for a bullet that had to go through its head zips past and hits the concession wall. This distracted PZ into a dodge, allowing Kato bend over and throw it into the Field instead. PZ was quick to pull itself back, but not before brushing off the burning sensation on its forehead. Kato spun it behind him and mule-kicked it back into the arena's depths.

But the fray didn't stay there for long; somehow during the exchange, PZ was able to scan every corridor and finds one that did not have a sniper on the other side. With this identified, PZ finishes blocking and swipes low towards Kato's instep, tripping the latter up and making him fly into the former's embrace. PZ then threw him overboard, belly-to-belly suplex style towards the passageway it decided on. An unhinged, unavoidable charge, with PZ even clenching Kato's throat ensured a collision into what was considered a deadly EA-Field, especially if any of the head or core hit it. It certainly seemed as much to a few of the AssUniv members who stopped to take a look. But then Kato throws his foot back behind him (a la Jieji in one of their many bouts), and pushes against the field. PZ looked straight into Kato's eyes with disbelief as it charged in deeper, even pushing the latter's exposed back onto it; this produced some melting that trailed down Kato and fell onto the floor, but not to the degree it had been earlier. Kato uses this surprise to his advantage, throwing a powerful snap kick from the wind-up position to create distance. With the coast temporarily clear, the Chairman was free to relax the cells behind him, and the nominal burning he felt during that time regenerated away.

Meanwhile, six of the Reclamation Society have reached ground level, trying to locate the now-
scattered AssUniv members. When the first two armed baddies pass through the hall, they were immediately pelted by Shock-Out rounds to the far sides of their faces, immediately putting them down non-lethally. The next two, understandably believing the aggressors to be lined on the walls on the other side of the door, rush past it to scope down the area... Only they don't find anyone there, thanks to Octo-Ink camouflaging. Instead, they are pulled away from view and across the horizontal frames. Their final cohorts attempt to find out where they went, but once they passed through the seeming death trap, they too face dangers, in the form of being pounced on, and shot point-blank on their backs. The Terasaka Group, plus Naoko, were revealed to be the perpetrators, and once their unconscious prey have been stuffed into a NY Hotdog booth, Hazama and Muramatsu tossed their aerosol grenades into the air.

Other teams were briefly fortunate for not being on the floor the rest of AssUniv was on; the lights that brightened the concession floors have been shot at by the student-assassins as they traveled to their posts prior, so the attack team waded through darkness for the mostly. They were massively duped, however, as they attempted to track down the hasty movements of the Students and Mentors, as their Throw Voice micromachines transmitted. Quite a bunch of them led to the lavatories and kitchens/stands, which required going through door frames, turning specific knobs and/or turning on certain facilities... Nothing that couldn't be rigged by Stun-Nets, Shock Pads, tranquilizing ammunition, and well-placed shrapnel explosives.

When attack teams began venturing deeper into the top floor, much like the six before, the rest of AssUniv was waiting for them. Stepping up their game with an eight man troupe on the East side, the Reclamation take very prudent strides across the concessions. They looked in front, behind, and all around them... But they forgot to look above yet again. This time, one of the channelled lights fell on top of one of them, knocking the closest middle-man on the crown and making him fall down. This forcibly separated the two groups, but what was more important was that it also made them look at their line in the sand. That was when both Karasuma and Irina revealed themselves. Going back to one of her old tricks, Irina rolls into view, taking a corded string wrapped around her wrist with her. It was revealed to be connected to transparent fishing line which the past three were standing on top of, causing them to be swept off their feet and hang upside-down, helpless against a series of Shock-Out rounds. The other four fall victim to collateral damage, with Karasuma first Shock-Padding the closest one to him while pivoting around to toss him into the other. The super-soldier then whips out his KRISS KARD and cycles between Mozambique Drills on the remaining duo.

Irina drew a short end of the stick, however, for she does not anticipate blunt-force trauma from LEDs being not enough to put down a Reclamation Society soldier she turned her back to. He was charging in with renewed strength, knife in hand. Irina turns back just in time, pulling back to avoid a neck level slash, which the man transitions into a plexus stab that makes contact and digs into the first few layers of the suit... And into the protective sheets Karasuma reinforced earlier to protect the embryo. This left the man confused as to the fatality of his assault, and Irina irate at him for attacking that section. In a brief fit of long-due bloodlust, she first viciously knees the soldier in the face, with enough impact to shatter his mask. She then proceeds to pull him towards a concession stand, taking the knife out of her armor and stabbing his left hand onto it. She then shuts his cries of pains with almost a dozen head slams onto the countertop; by the time she lets go, the man's brain had long said "screw this" and shut down, making his whole body slump onto the ground. Now done venting, she looks over to Karasuma, who hesitantly throws up a thumbs up while nonchalantly pin-pulling and lobbing Field explosives into the passageway. Once the awkwardness subsided, they contacted the rest of their awaiting team and proceeded onward.
Space For The Final Battle; Final Level

Chapter Summary

Ditto summary for the previous chapter.

-Ryu Ga Gotoku 6's OST "The Way of Life" continues from the last chapter.-

-Kato and Project Zero continue to parry and evading each other's attacks, until one exchange has Kato flick his head just out of the way of a rolling Tentacle strike... Which was a high feint for another impaler to his lower torso. Unfazed, Kato whips out a Tentacle of his own, slicing PZ's leg, and making it fall to one knee. He then spits closer to the fray, delivering a back elbow during the fluid motion, and knotting the protruding Tentacle so that it remained stuck to him. When Kato swiveled back the way he came, it propelled PZ towards him, opening up its face to a series of one-tos, until PZ moisturized the knotted Tentacle, letting itself slip free and kicking Kato away.

Kato swiftly tries to close the fray with a dashing Tentacle punch, but PZ was ready for it... By not even dodging. Instead, it used the same trick Kato exhibited; hardening its external skin to absorb the blow, only causing PZ to step back. Kato was flabbergasted from seeing PZ learn his ability to avoid critical damage from the EA-Field so early, and attempts to go around it, wrapping two of his Tentacles around PZ's torso and drilling it into the ground. PZ's reinforced its head this time, and instead used the downward momentum to burrow deeper, and the next few moments see it fly back out right underneath the Chairman, sending them both flying. Kato's wild horizontal swing in mid-air forces PZ to pull back and prevent any capitalization on their free-fall back to level air.

-Meanwhile, a four-man party of Reclamation Society thugs breach a set of shut auditorium doors to pass through from one section of concessions to another. After a quick HK416 iron-sights scan of the grounds finding broken lights but no hostiles, they proceed... Unaware that one of their targets was above the outline of the entrance out of danger from the blast, and dropped down silently when the last one passed by. They then stomp the popliteal of the last man, dislocating his knee, and muffling his pained cries with a gloved hand. As his three cohorts realize the ambush, the assassin seizes the last man's automatic, and fire at the legs of his colleagues, similarly crippling them. Another, appearing from an alcove in the halls, double-tapped the three with Shock-Outs, while the first assassin 12-6 elbow smashed a now-exposed face to knock their first target out.-

Maehara: *Steps out from his shadowed corner, moving back his goggles and mask when Okano, the first assassin, does the same.* "Good distraction, Okano."

Okano: *Holds her hip.* "Next time, you're going in harm's way; be a man."

Maehara: "Aren't we already?" *Refocuses, going over to the nearby corridor to watch Kato and PZ again for a little bit.* "He's giving his all, but PZ has peerless stamina; if Kato keeps fighting a war of attrition that he usually does, he's going to lose the advantage."

Okano: *Does the same and looks over. Her mind then flickers.* "I know! Why hasn't Kato-kun
been using any of those special moves that the Tentacles grant? The defense molt, or the white light beam?"

Maehara: "It's too risky. Remember that PZ doesn't know that it can do those attacks; if it sees Kato do it, however, then it knows it can. Remember seeing Kato harden his Tentacle DNA to resist the EA-Field's burning effect when PZ slammed him into it? Now PZ's been strengthening its flesh just as often as he is. He does this so carelessly, and Kato may as well have just given his opponent a new trump card. So, he's saving them. Waiting for the right time to use them. Where he knows it'll work best."

Okano: "For fighting such a one-track beast, Kato-kun needs to remain so cerebral. Can he keep it up until we're all set?"

Maehara: "We can only hope. And believe. " *Reloads his HK433.* "Come on, we need to set down some more aerosols."

-The AssUniv teams clobbered (as Karma and Kataoka exhibited), punted (which Naoko and Kayano shown), knifed (demonstrated by Nagisa and Isogai), shot (evidenced by a rolling [cross-legged] Fuwa and Hayami as she performed a meteora on another soldier), and otherwise continues to overwhelm their opposition. As they did so, Kato continued bringing the fight to PZ, with them both crystalizing their skin frequently and effectively when avoiding each other wasn't possible.-

Beginning to believe it has Kato's fighting style locked down, it allows the latter to blow past a tempered block with an unanticipated uppercut, and a leg-lift flipover. PZ rolls back and returns straight just to see Kato diving in with a Cobra punch. PZ defends by staking down its fossilized feet to keep itself from being sent back when its arms in an X-block absorb the punishment... Which it did, but Kato wasn't finished; his form suddenly begins running, as if his chemical viscosity had suddenly shifted to low. An assortment of Students and Mentors take an aside glance, inferring that Kato had just activated liquefaction; one of Korosensei's old abilities.

Kato's runny form flows across PZ's body, with most of it appearing behind him; the rest was used to pressure the beast's feet out of the ground. When Kato became semisolid again, he had PZ in a full nelson and threw him back in dragon suplex, crashing a bent neck straight into the tartan. Kato attempts a high moonsault double-foot stomp but PZ was long gone, and the former didn't even get the chance to look around. PZ learned how to turn fluid as well, and used it to flow towards Kato mid-drop, and traveled up his body until it all concentrated on his head. Then, once Kato landed, PZ turned back to humanoid shape, with its foot (and some Tentacles pressing down on the instep) placed square on Kato's nape, curb-stomping it into the ground. He attempted another such stomp, but Kato slid out of the way and continued the traditional bout.

AssUniv continued the fight to control the multiple corridors and reach the control booth against the remains of the attack party

With human limbs, octopus limbs, evasions, hardenings, and liquefying at their disposal, Kato and PZ's exchanges became much more varied, with PZ turning liquid to detach and re-attach its head after it gets lobbed off by a powerful spinning backfist, and Kato solidifying to defend against an aerial storm of stretchy-limb punches. Though it looked like they were dead even to everyone else, Kato was barely holding out without resorting to any new tricks. He found a brief advantage, however, when he was able to counter an oncoming Tentacle punch with an arm wringer, flipping PZ onto the ground. The Chairman was then able to keep PZ down long enough for Hayami, as she passed by, to shoot a stray EA-round that severs the limb. Now free, PZ jumps away towards the center of the arena to regenerate and recollect its thoughts... Not seeing Kato's Dynamic Entry
coming, due to its slowed reaction speed!

This gives way to a critical point in the battle, as Kato continues to pummel a vulnerable PZ, finishing with two leaping pumphandle neckbreakers. The Chairman begins somersaulting very quickly and dashes parallel, attempting to saw the beast in two, but only managing to make a dividing line when the latter fully recovers and sidesteps. Turnabout is fair play, unfortunately, as moments later, one of Kato's Tentacles gets caught while he himself was stunned by a forehead punch. When PZ violently whips the stray appendage towards a bleacher bar to keep him in place, Kato knows he cannot afford being stuck, but he also cannot wrest his limb free. So he hardens up the Tentacle, such that when PZ tries bending it, it breaks off instead. Kato takes the quick surprise for a swift chest slam and superkick into a nearby EA-Field, to buy himself time to regenerate the limb.

But the damage had been done; PZ could see that Kato was slowing down after using up energy to rejuvenate so much matter, while clobbering him in a similar manner. Once full focus was regained, the Yakuza catches the next few limbs coming at him, twisting them outwards, which pulls the beast into a forward dropkick. PZ quickly rebounds and goes for Kato as he's still lying down, jumping up for a dropping Tentacle drill on the latter when he sends out some of his own elastic appendages to thwart it. The Yakuza tries to roll out of the way but swiftly finds himself cornered as the monster had taken metal sheets out of the broken reinforced concrete during the battle and staked them nearby, trapping him.

Kato is forced to resort to another ability PZ does not know of yet. He summons a laser out of a Tentacle protruding from his right hand, and an unknowing PZ falls right on it, blazing its chest as it is sent to the floor back-first. It begins getting back up, just in time to see Kato begin throwing sliced pieces of the metal sheets that had trapped him before towards it. Having learned something else it can do, PZ puts it to the test, using the red laser as a cutter that splits the metal pieces again, with each flying past the other side of it. The last, largest chunk, however, broke apart to reveal Kato diving in (with just enough pivot to avoid the vertical laser line) and tackling PZ, rolling into the full mount. After a quick flurry and headbutt for good measure, Kato holds down PZ's throat, keeping its head in place for another red laser. PZ rejects this, and sprouts a small Tentacle from the side of its head that fires its laser before the Chairman can focus his own. In fact, PZ targeted that Tentacle, and blasted it off, also pushing Kato off it as he focuses on regenerating the limb.

To the best of his ability, Kato Dempsey Rolls aside a dashing lunge towards his face, allowing PZ to again fly past him and eliminating the disadvantage of his briefly-stunted reaction time. It's the Chairman now that dives in, with a backfist that the beast decides to bob its head the other way from. As anticipated, it forgoes its close arm, which Kato uses his other limb to hook, repositioning it into a waistlock ripcord lariat. Kato maintains the hold for another wild haymaker, but on the third, PZ uses its laser to cut Kato's arm off again. Nothing a regeneration couldn't bring back, but clearly endurance was becoming a harsh issue late into the battle, and he could've made do without another stint of limited speed.

In the meantime, AssUniv finally finish dealing with the ground teams and deliver the last of their required explosives, only to realize there remains just one more conventional threat standing in their way; one of the attack choppers that brought down most of the Syndikat soldiers. An initial minigun storm forces the Students and Mentors into hiding from the vehicle-grade Tac-Light, allowing the aircraft to cycle around in search of them. Despite the most advanced in infrared, X-ray, and bioelectric filtering, none of the bird's operators can find anything after showing their hand... Until one of their targets decided to show their hand too! A giggling Maehara throws out a curved pinkie finger with a flex. The insulted minigun operator fires on the open window where it appeared, even though the hand was long gone. Seconds later on another side, another obscene
gesture went the gunner's way; a thumb between the clenched index and middle fingers (allegedly from Okano) - the fig-sign, though the wiggling thumb was to indicate a deeper, if sullied, meaning... Regardless, it angered the operator into firing again, still gaining no hits. The last straw comes from Karma, evident from his padded glove, that flashes the Shocker straight at the pilots, inciting another rash firestorm.

These were all the necessary distractions for Itona to successfully operate his flying drone, which was in cloaked circulation around the New National Stadium to fly underneath and latch onto the hull of the helicopter, and initiate a hack. Ritsu overrode the controls of the aircraft, forcing the machine into landing, but not before creating a white noise using the helicopter's myriad of sound FX to knock the pilots out.

Itona: *Looks up from his InReTs screen.* "The bird's down!"

Terasaka: "Hmph, fly more like. Not much worse than the little mites it's brought down."

Chiba: *Looks around.* "Looks to be that there are no more enemies standing in our way."

Kayano: "Then there's one job left to do!"

Isogai: "Right, Kayano-san. Everyone, to the control booth!"

-The Mentors and Students all converge into the technician's area. Though the lights pointing at the arena were full operational, Itona and Ritsu were quick to reroute the current distributed across the concessions and pre-ticketing areas into the stadium LEDs.-

Nagisa: *Points at a set of adjustment sliders.* "Them! Those are the controls for the inner torches."

Karma: *Nods, then turns to Yada, who was standing just outside the booth.* "We're all set! Tell Kato!"

Yada: *Holds her hands in a megaphone-like manner pointed towards the battlefield.* "Kato-kun, cover yourself!"

Kato: *After blocking the latest chest-level swipe, he looks up to recognize Yada warning him with a suspicious blur. He then ducks under the other side head hook, and short-arm pulls so that he begins sliding low, tripping PZ and making it fall onto its face. Kato continued gliding along the tartan until he had a good distance from his identical foe, and was around a good amount of metal and concrete debris, forming a small hemisphere that would completely shut him from everything else.*

Yada: *Looks back over the Students.* "He's good! Do it!"

Nagisa/Karma/Kayano: *All three of them slide their hands up on the large section of sliders.* -With that, the lights illuminating the arena flickered with activity before sustaining its rays, pointing down on the tartan track and grass, and on PZ and Kato's shielding boulders. To the point that it was too much for the naked (pure human) eye, and all of them needed to put back on their goggles.-

Fuwa: "They're on! And PZ's standing in the middle; it's dead!"
AssUniv: *All of them become pumped by their successful mission.*

-Except... PZ was not burning, melting, disintegrating, or otherwise suffering from a combination of the three!-

Kataoka: *Holds her earpiece.* "Uh, guys, the lights aren't hurting it!"

AssUniv: *All become cold and look back at the arena, finding PZ not even slowed down as it pummels around Kato's obstructive protection.*

Itona: *Pulls his goggles back in front of his eyes and examines the venue's composition. Aside from concrete smoke and the Tentacle composition, there was no artificial matter in the air.* "Everyone, the grenades we placed have not expelled any Eradication Agent into the stadium."

Mimura: *Becomes drastically frantic like a lot of his peers.* "How can that be!?"

Karma: *Runs over to the passageway where he knows one grenade was set down and decides to investigate it. The grenade had disappeared.* "What the Hell!? They've been moved!"

Nagisa/Kayano: *Realize why they heard the sounds of faint hissing coming from above them, despite no way to access the roof. They both turn on the X-Ray filters of their goggles and look up.* "Oh man/boy..."

AssUniv: *All look over to Nagisa and Kayano, doing the same and looking towards the ceiling. They find cylindrically-outlined objects behind the top layer of the stadium.* "The grenades!"

Naoko: "PZ must be lobbing those explosives past the atrium whenever it recognizes them coming into the arena. It's smart of course; clothing its Tentacles to be able to touch them at least long enough to discard them."

Hazama: "It wouldn't be much of a hassle for any of us to climb up there, right?"

Mimura: "It wouldn't matter we triggered them the moment we threw them; by now the ozone has dispersed the Eradication Agent aerosol across the atmosphere to the point of nullification."

Karasuma: "Worse still, we can only assume that PZ will continue to do that in spite of Kato distracting it for as long as he can."

Irina: "And we haven't many of them left to waste..." *Okuda, Kurahashi, and Sugino show the only three remaining AE-aerosol bombs.*

Yada: *Looks over to PZ and Kato again; after avoiding three long lunges of Tentacles at him with some bullet-time pivots, before eating a red laser to the torso, which puts him briefly down to one knee. He manages to roll out of the way of another Tentacle slam, buying time to regenerate the damage at his midsection, but it's clear from the attrition that Kato's running out of options.* "Then we need to detonate them right in front of PZ. By the time it can kick a can away, the gas would already be all over it."

Kataoka: "And how are we going to-" *Mind flickers and eyes widen.* "No! That's suicide!"

Yada: "You want to wait until that thing kills Kato-kun?"
Kimura: "Yada, that's a valid case, but you take one step into that battlefield and you're going to kiss the shinkaisen at top speed."

Karasuma: "I forbid it, Yada."

Yada: *Turns to her mentor with determination, cycling between her peers as well.* "If what all of you say is true, then ground me - once I wake up with a lost arm in the hospital." *Takes the three explosives and runs to the stairs.*

AssUniv: *Look between each other, and then follow her.*

Nakamura: "Need a Wire Wrest like what we did before?"

Fuwa: "Ill-advised. Best failure case is that PZ cuts it and we can't pull her back. Worst case, it pulls some of us into the battle instead."

Karma: "And using the flashlight-smoke combination like during the atrium shooting won't work because PZ won't stay close enough for Yada's self-Aerosol bomb if she's shielded like that."

Yada: "It looks like I just have to take a leap of faith here, guys."

Kurahashi: "Well then... Godspeed?" *Nervously smiles, with the rest of the Students.*

Yada: *Beams back.* "Thanks." *Looks back at the last EA-Field before reaching the team entrance to the arena, and, after taking a deep breath, sprints into the area.*

Project Zero: *Backhands Kato aside, and notices Yada now in view, and out of the safety of the EA-Fields. It instinctively charges toward her, and the tip of its clothed Tentacle comes within millimeters of her exposed forehead, as the winds of Mach 20 speed forcibly push her hood behind her... But then it is pulled back in the nick of time, by Kato's own Tentacle holding onto its humanoid right foot!*  

Yada: *The beast's appendage flicks unpredictably in spite of the defensive maneuver, and Yada takes it at the occipital section of her head, which also causes her ponytail cuff to break and loosen out her hair. Her running pattern breaks, with her falling to a knee, but she recovers as fast as she can to continue reaching PZ on her own terms.*

Project Zero: *Seemingly ignoring its involuntary sliding back at the time, it fires off its red laser at Yada, tagging her shoulder before Kato recognizes it and crushes it with his fist and the ground. It regenerates the matter in another formed limb, but its reaction is broken as a result.*

Yada: *Holds her affected shoulder briefly but still wills herself onwards.*

Kato: *He sees one more appendage go for Yada and catches it, tying all of PZ's other protruding Tentacles into a large bow behind it, which also restrain its arms. He then finishes by pulling down PZ's (or rather, Jieji's old) pants until they go the other way, still hiding its feet. The waistline then falls over PZ's face, briefly trapped behind its chin. Kato then rolls over PZ towards Yada.* "Now!"

Yada: *Tosses her belt of EA-Field grenades toward PZ. A close-up reveals that all of the looped pins are attached to a single cord that Yada was still holding. Kato then molts, covering..."
both her and himself in the protective coating, and the latter pulls back, removing all of the pins.*

Project Zero: *Unhooks its pants from its head just in time to see gas expelling from the cans in front of it.*

-The burning was so intense that PZ grew white-hot - so much so that its form could not be seen beyond the glow it emitted. After a few seconds, PZ, with its last strength, lashed Tentacles all around, using its wind to dilute the aerosol and diminishing the burning to a halt.-

Kato: *Pulls the protective membrane off himself and uses it to bring Yada (still otherwise layered in anti-Tentacle coating) back behind the Fields. He then, with clothed hands and Tentacles (made from the material of his deceased Brethren's lab coats), returns to PZ, who has not risen from one knee, and was melting and blistering all over. Judging from its exhaustive breathing, it ran out of energy to even rejuvenate the wounds.* "I made a mistake thinking I only had to do just enough against you, Jieji. I have to make sure you don't come back this time. For your sake."

-After declaring his intent, the Students and Mentors throw out their S.A.A.U.S.O knives to the field - yes, the ones that AssClass once used to try to kill a yellow octopus, with one succeeding. Implying from the moisture on it, they too were drenched in Eradication Agent.-

Kato: *Takes one in each available appendage and begins stabbing Project Zero everywhere at extreme speeds, teleporting everywhere around the latter's body out of order. Then, when there were only two floppy knives remained, Kato identified their targets; the center of the forehead and the heart. He gets a running start, and impales both places simultaneously, taking a step back to check his work.*

Project Zero: *Has remained motionless since the latest strikes, and begins disintegrating into shiny particles from its feet up. Then, when a torso was all that remained, its mouth stuttered.* "I-I-I-

Kato: "?" *Steps closer.*

Project Zero: *Is now only a chest up. The knives below fell onto the ground.* "I... Wan-ted."

Kato: *Pulls up on the forehead knife so that PZ looked up too. Only... It wasn't PZ anymore.*

Jieji: *Has only a neck and head left.* "... To-be free."

Kato: "A great wish." *Proceeds to close Jieji's eyes.* "May you have peace with your liberty."

Jieji: *His eyes falling apart last, light particles rose to the sky, somehow either passing through the stadium ceiling or the atrium.*

Machida: *The central monitor of New National Stadium shows his discontent, resulting in him leaving, cutting off the power to his transmission, turning the screen black.*

Kato: *With the ordeal now over, he falls back onto the ground, taking a bunch of deep breaths, as AssUniv crowds around him.*

Yada: "Kato-kun!" *Slides to his side. Her gloves have been removed so that she could hold him.*
Kato: *Floats his eyes her way.* "Hey, Yada-san..."

Hazama: "Overexerted yourself a little too much there, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Well you know."

Fuwa: *Grins.* "Kato-kun's always been one to be lighting the candle at both ends because his is as long as the width of Russia."

Terasaka: *Smirks.* "Just like his ego."

Karma: *Crosses his arms smugly.* "Still pales in comparison to yours, Terasaka."

Isogai: "Okay guys, great jokes and all, truly, but we gotta get outta here. Kato, we'll get on of the Fields down so you can get-"

Kato: "No... Take it out now."

Irina: "Whoa, really, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Our goal was to never let the DNA out of this hub, right?"

Maehara: "Yeah, but, if we cure you of the Tentacles now..."

Kurahashi: "Your human-reverted mind and body will take the residual damage of the punishment you took while still a Tentacle monster. You might go into a fatal shock or spasm to death!"

Kato: "I'll be fine. Administer the dose."

Kurahashi: *Pulls out a non-lethal EA syringe, but hesitates to bring it closer to Kato.* "Kurahashi-san..."

Kurahashi: *Finally urged and reassured by her peers, she kneels close to Kato and jabs the needle into his heart.*

Kato: *Abruptly with a blink, his eyes revert from the vermilion red back to his original jade green. The second after, Kato began convulsing badly from the otherworldly pain, as tragically expected.*

AssUniv: *Some looked away to cope; others covered their mouths or drew closer with worry.*

Kato: *The erratic shaking settles after half a minute, and Kato continues to take deep breaths.*

Nakamura: "Well, he's still alive."

Yada: *Pulls him closer.* "Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Eyes remain closed.* "Yeah... I'm still here. Can't, really move though."

Mimura: *Scoffs.* "Who would want to?"
Isogai: "Maehara, take his left arm." *Goes up to Kato's right side.*

Maehara: *They both help him up.* "Take it easy, tiger. We'll get you outta here, huh?"

Kayano: "To the cars, then?"

-The AssUniv triumphantly begin leaving the Olympic-grade arena, taking one last look at all of the property damage they caused (though some was wholly the Reclamation Society's fault as well). A good number of them became inclined to wonder what the contractors would have to say to the Olympic committee members once this Tentacle crisis was resolved...-

Nagisa: *Follows closely behind everyone else. He suddenly grows skeptical and puts his right hand to his chin with deep thought.* Why does it feel like we've been missing something important that we'd have to do? Eh, think about on the drive out of this quarantine.

-But before he and the rest of his friends and peers could do so, they all stop dead in their tracks in the middle of the parking lot.-

Karasuma: "!!" *He, Irina, and Naoko all ready their sidearms. Karma, Nagisa, Kayano, Isogai, Kataoka, Maehara, and Okano reactively copy the action.* "We know you're there; come on out!"

Reclamation Society: *Roughly fifteen of them show up from behind some low-suspension cars and garage pillars.* "Nothing flies past Japan's beloved Chief of Air Staff, it seems."

Karma: "You guys are all that's left? It's a shame, really; you guys are super sloppy."

Okano: "Yeah, we didn't even need any of our gadgets to know you were all there."

RS Soldier 1: "Perhaps that was the idea?"

Nagisa: *Lowers his trained aim.* "You want something from us."

RS Soldier 2: *Points at him.* "Sherlock Award to the diminutive bluehead over there!"

Kataoka: "What's the point, huh? Project Zero is gone. Kato-kun here does not have the DNA anymore! The Tentacles have been exterminated for good! Your whole attempt to stage a New World Order has failed!"

RS Soldier 3: "Not quite true."

Sugino: "I'd really love to see how you're going to prove us otherwise."

RS Soldier 4: "We could, but we shall leave it to our boss." *Pulls out his walkie-talkie.*

Machida: "Hello again, Assassination University."

Terasaka: "Not surprised; the coward yet again hides behind some technology."

Machida: "And that's the reason why I'm still kicking while your friend is barely awake."

Kato: "..."
Machida: "But this conversation is not about splitting hairs about what makes a good leader. This is an arrangement."

Kimura: "A deal?"

Machida: "Yes. Shall we present the stakes?"

RS Soldier 1/2: "Yessir." *Both of them go to a shaded-out SUV, apparently both getting something out of it.*

AssUniv: "!!"

RS Soldier 1: *Lugs Iseul in front of him, at gunpoint.*

Machida: "Let's start with the obvious: Iseul Byung-Sung. Kim's only child, whose life was on the line when Kato over there fought her father in the facility my men sacked in order to obtain the DNA."

Iseul: *Seems to have stopped crying long ago by now, with the tears drying to crust on her face, looking defiantly at her captives, and then towards AssUniv when forced to.*

Irina: *What a bastard...

Machida: "Naturally she has nothing to do with this, especially now that Kim is no longer with us... Or anyone for that matter. So, it matters not to us if we leave her to you or continue to keep her for ourselves. But I will offer her up to you all because I have a good feeling you will want to take us up on our other offer. Show it."

RS Soldier 2: *Presents a strongbox with numberpad, similar to the one Machida showed Kato back in the facility.*

Machida: "Be honest, you all thought you actually got rid of all of the DNA, didn't you?"

Okano: "That's your best shot, doctor!? Lying to us about having more mutated antimatter?"

Kato: "..."

Yada: "Let the woman go!"

Machida: "Your disbelief wounds me, for you know that I do not lie, like Kato does. But no matter. If you don't believe me, then we can just go ahead and kill Iseul here on the spot. Men."

RS Soldiers: *I keeps his pistol's barrel in contact with the back of Iseul's head. Meanwhile, the rest of the soldiers tightened their aim on the rest of AssUniv.*

AssUniv: *Do the same.*

Machida: "Last chance: One."

Reclamation Society: *Are stone-cold about keeping their rifles pointed at college students.
Machida: "Two."

AssUniv: *Do not relent their focus either.*

Kato: "Stop."

Kayano: "What is it, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "They're not lying."

Yada: "Kato-kun?"

Kato: "The facility that Machida's men attacked indeed held two strongboxes, both of which contained the mutated strains of Tentacle DNA. I arranged this so that cracking one of the encryptions on the box did not immediately give them the other, buying us time."

Naoko: "And you never thought to tell us this going in?"

Kato: *Shakes his head.* "You never asked."

Isogai: *To the RS soldiers.* "Even if that is the case, you stood to have greater gain by never telling us you had the final remains of the DNA. Why show us?"

Machida: "Because Kato put on a special protection that only he can accurately solve one-hundred percent of the time."

Karasuma: "Kato?"

Kato: "It's true. I made one much harder, with the intent for only I to solve. Any attempt to visualize its coding for the algorithm past the initial terminal sequence would result in an immediate detonation of the box, so no hints for invaders either."

Machida: "Hence, the deal: Kato for Iseul. But after this initial lack of trust, there must be a little more compensation from you. If you want Iseul to live, you must give up your weapons. I am also aware of your suits' ability for EMPs, knowing they knock out the advantages of your gear. Fire one off. And we'll gladly continue negotiations."

Karasuma: *Damnit, I've gone soft.* *Lowers his aim.* "Stand down."

AssUniv: *After a few more moments, they too relieve their aim. Several soldiers all go around them, seizing their equipment.*

Machida: "Smart decision. Now throw off an EMP. If it's more incentive, it won't fry the strongbox."

Okuda: "How might that be considered 'incentive'?"

Machida: *Beat.* "I suppose it isn't. Your problem, though."

AssUniv: *All of them look between each other, before eventually caving, allowing Nagisa to fire off a short-range EMP in the middle of them, which disables all of their faculties.*
Machida: "Now the stage is set. Boys, take Kato."

Yada: *Gets in the way of the three that get close to him.* "You'll have to pry him from my dead hands."

RS Soldier 3: "Boss?"

Machida: "No need for bloodshed; this actually works well anyways. Take her too."

Yada: "!?!" *Briefly resists their grip.*

Karasuma: "You only wanted Kato!" *Begins inching toward them, but Irina holds his wrist insistingly.*

Machida: "You never asked if that's all I wanted. But what does it matter, now that you're holding none of the cards?"

Kato/Yada: *Both of them are pulled from their colleagues toward the back of a van.*

Machida: "Five of them will go with the two to their final destination. The remainder will stay here to keep you all company, until we've confirmed Kato's part in the deal is over. Sounds fair?"

AssUniv: "..."

Machida: "Good." *Cuts transmission.*

Kato/Yada: *Are thrown into the back of the van, which revs up to depart from the garage. The second the latter begins getting up, she is thrown to the inner side chassis, and a few back headbangs to the metal knocks her out. Now none of them can keep track of the van's movements, in case they ever find the chance to relay them back to their friends.*

-The van, which also had the super-protected DNA, drove off, while AssUniv were forced to sit, along with Iseul, surrounded by the truly final remains of their enemy.-
Space For The True Final Battle

Chapter Summary

This... This is the chapter where it all ends. At the bleakest, darkest hour... One must dare with not just their life, but with everyone else's lives that there is a shimmer - even the tiniest shimmer - of hope.

-The van pulls over in a nondescript alley adjacent to a Tokyo warehouse. With Kato unable to focus and Yada unconscious, the mercenaries had an easy time taking them out from the back and into the repository.-

  Yada: "Ngh..." *Eventually stirs awake, lifting her head from its forward fold. A brief scan once vision faculty returns for her reveals that she has been bound vertical spread-eagle style, with her wrists locked by long chains coming from both sides, and her ankles shackled to a metal bar in between. In addition, her KAM AtTac Suit was unzipped, exposing her upper body and undershirt. She futilely attempts to break free, before hearing a gunshot reverberate throughout the room.*

    Kato: "Urgh..."

  Yada: *She looks that way, to find one of the Reclamation Society soldiers having rammed the barrel of his Taurus PT92 into Kato's right thigh and fired off a round into it. She gasps seeing Kato (similarly bound and with a bag over his head) in pain again - especially so when she discovers that wasn't all they did to him so far; cuts across his arm and torso, along with taser prod marks, could be seen.* "Hey! What the Hell are you doing!?"

    RS Soldier 2: *Looks her way.* "Ah, the bitch is awake."

  Yada: *Looks all around, finding the five that accompanied them to this location are allied with another four individuals.* "What's all this? Kato agreed to help you!"

    RS Soldier 3: "He is, in a way." *Goes to a plasma screen on the opposite side of a metal table, turning it on. It reveals Machida once more.*

      Machida: *Waves excitedly.* "Hello! Oh- Please excuse my elation. The EMP-proof walkie-talkie, without its visuals, just wasn't doing it for me."

    Yada: *Grits her teeth.* "You got Kato, and you made him agree to open the box. Why are you doing this!?"

      Machida: "Oh you're right... What's the point of torturing a little petty crook who actually fails at crime, instead committing to stopping it, after he has repeatedly interfered in affairs that are infinitely beyond his worth?"

    Yada: Petty asshole...

      Machida: "Actions have consequences. You two understand this, most definitely, but I don't
quite think you know how far this essence of action-reaction can reach. I do - I have known it all of my life. I used it to inspire my regiment to begin using weaponized, artificial pollution to attack Pirate locations, and begin the rationalization of raising the ultimate threshold of war, so that we may continue to evolve the way we fight for what we want or believe in - that is the creed of my New World Order."

Yada: "Continues trying to break herself free." "Kato and his Family have been taking war far beyond the public eye's view without having to resort to such drastic measures - cut me the bullshit, doctor!"

Machida: "Do you call such street wars, with all of their domestic casualties, and operations with high risk, successes in evolving combat? I don't think so. Why? Because they, Kato among them, love too many things about this world. Kim was his antithesis, in that he loved too little, allowing hatred to strengthen him until he got desperate. But even the other extreme is detrimental; Kato spread himself too thin, cares about so much, but has not the strength to save it all. So, the best is the middle. But what's the middle? This - just loving what is to come. Something I can't grow desperate over because no one can destroy it, and something that doesn't require me to be everywhere."

RS Soldier 4: "Seizes a lead pipe and slams it on the right temple of Kato."

Kato: "His head now violently pushed the other way, he makes a spitting sound."

Yada: "Looks at them." "Hey!"

Machida: "Ignore her; keep going."

RS Soldier 4: "Nods, and then slams the pipe roughly a dozen more times; most were horizontal swipes to the head (with one devastating overhead to the crown), though there were some limb whacks (with one breaking his left arm), and midsection shots."

RS Soldier 5: "Nudges his cohort aside. Brandishing a blow torch and a drill, he burns and impales Kato, leaving several circles of burned skin and small artificial orifices all around him."

Yada: "Hearing her boyfriend scream loudly after the fourth fiery jab, she looks away, only to have one mercenary behind her push her head back towards him."

RS Soldier 6: "Signifying his turn, he instructs one nearby to splash Kato with a bucketful of water, and runs at him with a taser."

-After the third surge and Kato's subsequent cry of pain, a liquid could be seen flowing from the extent of his KAM AtTac pants, breaking off from there to fall down the other side of his boots and make small puddles.-

RS Soldier 2: "Heh, he let himself go."

Machida: "Then I suppose it is time."

RS Soldier 5: "Recognizing the implicit command, he goes over to remove the bag over Kato's head."

Kato: "Takes his deepest breath now that he is open to fresh air again."
Yada: *Gazes at him with preoccupation. He looks back with the slightest bit of determined reassurance... Which doesn't seem to be enough.*

Machida: "Are you ready to unlock our treasure, Kato?"

Kato: "..."

RS Soldier 2: "Answer!" *Throws a right straight to his cheek.*

Yada: *Wincs initially.* "Kato-kun, please don't give in!"

RS Soldier 7: *Being the closest to her, he delivers a powerful body hook to her.*

Yada: "AAH~!" *Her legs fly off the floor.*

Kato: "!!" *Floats his eyes over.*

RS Soldier 7: "Shut your mouth, bitch!"

Machida: "No, it's fine! I think Kato's reticence was meant to remind me of what options I gave Kato. Now I should remind him again what the consequences of each of those actions are. Boys."

RS Soldier 6: *Appears behind Yada, pulling further of her suit down, with her lower underwear now showing.*

Yada: "WHAT TH-MMH!" *6 then handgags her while hugging her hips to prevent her from shaking.*

RS Soldier 7: *In front of her, he then takes out a serrated knife and caresses the flat side of it horizontally across her waistline, before tipping the blade lower, pointing at her womanhood.*

Yada: *Realizing what he's about to do to her, she begins resisting 6's grip even more actively, though it still wasn't working.*

RS Soldier 7: "You better clinch up." *Slowly brings the tip of the dagger closer.*

Yada: *Closes her eyes to the impending deflowering.*

Kato: "I'll do it."

-There was a brief silence across the room.-

Machida: *Looks over to Kato, with his head now bowed.* "Took about damn time."

Kato: *Briefly looks at the grief-stricken, but untouched Yada, before looking down.* "I'll go open it. Just... Release me from these restraints."

Yada: "NN! NNN!" *6 releases his grip, clearing her mouth.* "Kato-kun!"

Kato: *Voice breaking.* "I'm sorry... Yada-san."
Machida: "Very well. Unbind him, you two."

Guards: *Open the shackles so that the once-crucified Kato falls on his face straight to the floor.*

Kato: *Muffled by the ground.* "OOFUH!"

Yada: *Screams at them.* "You couldn't bring him to the table!?"

Machida: "That wasn't a part of the negotiation. Now poor Kato-kun must **crawl** his way to the table and take his spot."

RS Soldiers: *4 and 5 unhook Kato's ankles from the bar restraint, then back away.*

Kato: *Makes a clenched fist upon recovering. He also manages to look up, getting the furniture into focus. With the preparations set, he proceeds to claw his way over, grunting and wincing with ever strenuous effort.*

RS Solider 1: "Ha! Look at the once-smug kid!"

RS Soldier 2: "Now acting like a dog. How pathetic."

RS Soldier 3: "Samurai were in your family, kid? They don't carry themselves like that, you little shit!"

Yada: *Tries to break herself free. Finding that impossible once more, she still can't bear to see Kato like this, and turns away again, but then mercenary 7 near her aims his rifle at her, forcing her to grudgingly look back up at him.*

Kato: *Still crawling, he reaches legs of his wooden chair. He then weakly lays a hand on the chair's support, and tries to pull himself up there.*

Machida: "Looks like even ghosts can break, and be rendered tools. Good to know in the foreseeable future."

Kato: *He attempts to stand on his knees with the furniture's support, but the chair falls over on the other side due to his push. He falls prone again as a result.* "Ugh!"

Yada: "This display gets you nothing! Help him up there and you'll get the DNA quicker!"

RS Soldier 7: *Smacks her on the cheek.* "Shut up, you bitch! It's just as the doctor said: This sod set us back for too many years to count; he's paying for it now! And if I had it my way, I would've wasted him right now!"

Machida: "Now now, Kaine. That's no way to talk to Kato's concubine. But any more speaking out of turn, and you will die on the spot!"

Yada: *Disgustingly remarks to those two statements.*

Kato: *Sets up the chair again, and finally manages to get his back on top of the sitting portion. Using the little legpower he has, he repositions to be able to sit properly, albeit staying above the horizon of the table by slouching onto it. Not surprisingly, he's also still breathing very heavily.*
Machida: "Well well, you did it. Not bad for a crippled, sadistically mental kid. But you know what will really impress? Opening that strongbox; the right way. Get to it, Kato-kun."

Kato: *Picks up his head, and looks at the specially-locked box. He takes a quick glance at his left wrist, realizing he doesn't have his watch anymore.* "What's... The time?"

Machida: *Beat.* "What?"

Kato: "What's the goddamn- URGH!" *Hurt himself in the middle of his interjection.*

Yada: "He needs to know the time, he's saying!"

Machida: "Oh right... The mutating combination, is it?"

Kato: "With... Seventy-five numbers, as you recall."

Machida: *Checks his own watch.* "10:48 P.M. Now on with it."

Kato: *Gives a puzzling look.*

Machida: "Oh, what now?"

Yada: "He's going to forget what button he pushed last if he doesn't know the seconds as it goes on!"

Machida: "Oh, I'm not going to be a timer like that for him. Just do it, you needy asshole!"

Yada: "Can't you just see, doctor!? HE CAN'T DO THAT! Let me go to him and count the seconds for him!"

Machida: "Oh no; not falling for something like that."

Kato: "The lock... resets at every... 00:05 minutes. Do you think, like this... I can push seventy-five buttons... In that amount of time by myself?" *Weakly tries to reach the keypad.*

Machida: "..."

Yada: "I'm already unarmed; you know that! Let. Me. Near. Him."

Machida: "Very well; you'll both be dead once we know it's in there anyways." *Signals for the guards near Yada to release her. She comforts her reddened wrists a bit before zipping her suit back up to cover her underwear and walking over to Kato.* "It's 10:49. You better enjoy the next six minutes, max together, for it will be your last. Unless, of course, you believe in that whole afterlife thing."

Kato: "Yada-san, let me look above the box... So I can see him."

Yada: *After taking her seat and scooting closer to him, she takes both arms of Kato so that he slouches back onto his chair.*

Kato: "Ah, there you are... Anyways, I've believed in a lot of things throughout my life. Yada-
san here, and her friends... They have a way with making you believe in theirs as well. That's why... I don't believe in the afterlife. I believe in them. The magic they are capable of."

Yada: "!!" Really...?

Machida: "Then you've been really misguided."

Kato: "We'll see."

Machida: "Yes, we will." *Checks his watch for the final time.* "Fifty. Do it, you two."

Kato: *Can be seen thinking hard to himself, knowing which new combination was made as a result of the mutating algorithm. When he gets it, he falls back forward, so that his hand is close to the keypad. His other hand takes a dollop of his own blood to write "10:50" in front, as a reminder. Yada supports his arm so that it can press any of the numbers.*

Yada: "One. Two. Three. Four." *Is counting in tune to the seconds that go by. She resets at the fifteen second mark, which is the maximum amount of time in which Kato can recollect the previous event without having to check the time for himself.*

Kato: *Uses small movements with his index finger to guide Yada's hand so that it gravitates towards the desired number. Each time Yada's count resets, Kato makes a blood line, coupled with the number of digits he pressed, with his other hand to keep track of the fifteen-second intervals.*


RS Soldier 1: "Man, how were we ever losing to kids like these...?"

Machida: "I can tell you why, Bernoulli. They're resourceful, implacable, and connected. But they'll all be dead too."

-Back at the stadium...-

-AssUniv is still held at medium-range gunpoint by the remains of the Syndikat.-

Kurahashi: *Is seen wrapping bandages on Iseul's arm.* "So... You're that NIS agent's daughter, huh?"

Iseul: *Does not respond beyond a few winces from the treatment.*

Terasaka: "Hopefully your apple fell far from the tree..."

Iseul: *Slits her eyes to that statement.*

Nakamura: "Insensitive, much?"

RS Solider 9: "Quiet!"

Naoko: *Whispers to Karasuma without turning to him.* Not much of a talker, is she?

Karasuma: In about ten minutes, none of us will be.
Irina: You'd think these muscly guys would be more concerned... Or, do they even know?

-But somewhere else in Tokyo, at long last...-

Kato: *Completes the combination's newest code, after twelve intervals of fifteen seconds.* "One." *Presses the one key. He then levitates his index finger near the enter key. But before he presses it, he turns his eyes over to Yada.*

Yada: "Eleven. Twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen." *She looks very conflicted with Kato's actions, but she also trusts him wholeheartedly.* "One."

Kato: *Without any further doubt, he presses the final button. The strongbox makes a high-pitched noise, coinciding with a bright green light, perhaps signifying correct key entry.* "There."

Machida: "I admit. That was impressive. But now, to make sure you didn't scam us."

Kato: "..."

Yada: "It's something special, Dr. Machida. your friends will have to quickly claim it once it is exposed to the outside air."

Machida: "Oh, is that a jab at how I don't have anyone frozen up to take the DNA? Very well; guards, ready the containers."

RS Soldiers: *Two of them move in once the strongbox hisses and releases a quick burst of cryogenic vapor, and prepare a freezer of their own.*

Kato/Yada: *The latter keeps the former supported as they continue looking at the unlocked strongbox.*

RS Soldier 3: *Flips the top of the box over, allowing more of the smoke to be expelled. But when it dissipates...* "Huh?"

Machida: "Go on boys, take it."

-Inside, the first thing everyone pays attention to is a custom-designed, screened device; notably not even without any bit of cold damage.-

Ritsu: *Appears on the screen.* "Tit-for-tat, eye for an eye, you took my friends', so now I'll take yours."

Yada: *Covers her eyes and Kato's with both of her hands.*

Ritsu: *Disappears from the screen and emits a super-bright white light, which blinds the top two soldiers. The light is so glistening, in fact, that everyone had to close their eyes and look away after seeing them.*

Yada: *Knowing exactly when Ritsu would finish strobing so dangerously, she opens her eyes again, kicking Kato's chair out of danger and taking the dropped spare strongbox and slamming it across both of the nearby soldier's faces, knocking them all out. She then reaches into the unlocked box to take out a Shock-Out loaded H&K UCP pistol, which she uses to pacify the rest, who were still reeling from the extreme lighting. when the coast was clear, she turned back to her boyfriend.*
"Kato, we gotta get out of here!"

Kato: "Argh!" *Grunts when Yada lifts his right arm up for a side carry.*

Yada: "Come on, work with me, Kato-kun!" *They both take to the exit.*

-Meanwhile...-

-AssUniv and Iseul Bung-Sung remain the captives of the ten Society mercenaries, with only four minutes remaining before the Lance Spear of the Heavens Mk. II annihilates Tokyo in an effort to eradicate all of the mutated strain of Tentacle DNA... Except it really is all gone, but Karasuma and the rest cannot quite get it to them just yet.-

Nakamura: *Falls back with her hands supporting her head.* "Nyaah, this is so boring!"

RS Soldiers: *Beat, while keeping their aim on them all.*

Karma: *Does the same.* "Indeed, we're going to die of lack of stimuli before this exchange ends."

Terasaka: "Right, you two. That's the right idea - prefer that these esteemed gym boys shoot us to death; that-that's exactly what the rest of us had in mind."

RS Soldier 10: "Enough, little wretches!"

-The paging sound on an EMP-proof walkie-talkie broke the instilled silence.-

RS Soldier 11: *Takes the device out.* "Must be the Boss. Looks like the work's done." *Walks over to the communications device.*

RS Soldiers: *All mumble with glee.*

AssUniv: *Carefully, but subtly pay attention to 11 bringing the communicator to his ear. As soon as he does so, they all put back on their hoods, and Kurahashi proceeds to cover Iseul's ears.*

RS Soldiers: *All of them, 11 included, do not notice the sudden actions in time, and when 11 goes to answer the call, ear-piercing static blasts around the vicinity, echoing on the garage walls to cripple all of the mercs.*

AssUniv: *Karasuma, Naoko, Irina, Nagisa, Kayano, Karma, Isogai, Maehara, Kataoka, and Okano spring up from their seated position, each of them taking on one of the stunned soldiers, arranging them all into rough circle and force-firing one shot from their firearms aimed at the next one, tapping them all in the close knees and crippling them, which also left them vulnerable to face-washing curb stomp to knock them all out.*

Iseul: *Is utterly flabbergasted, though she isn't sure by what specifically, from the improvised planning, swift execution, or extremely effective coordination.*

Kayano: *Picks up the dropped communicator.* "We owe you big time once more, Ritsu-chan."

Ritsu: "I only wish the speaker on this device had enough power for an instant knockout white noise to save you all the extra trouble..."
Karasuma: *After dealing with his foe, he sprints over to the SUV where the soldiers had stashed all of their equipment, quickly scouring the trunk to find his homing beacon, and activating it.*

-At the Tokyo quarantine toll, now at 10:59...-

JSDF Soldier 1: *Holding onto his headset's earpiece, concentrating on a conversation before turning to his leading officer.* "Major Kajiwara, the Lance Mk. II has now fully charged. The Ministers need only your observed confirmation to call down the orbital strike, sir."

Kajiwara: *Does not break sight from the Tokyo metropolis, still trying to hold onto any hope that he needs not activate the project... Until it ran dry.* "Alright. Tell the boys to fire, man."

JSDF Soldier 1: *Looks back at his microphone slowly.* "Very well." *Turns on his comm.* "This is Metro Control to HQ. You are cl-"

JSDF Soldier 1: *Swiftly looks toward his comrade (along with Kajiwara), and then back at his microphone.* "DISENGAGE! THIS IS METRO CONTROL TO HQ, TENTACLES ARE CONFIRMED ELIMINATED! DISENGAGE!"

-Though the silence after the revised order was a mere second, the on-site defense personnel were frantic for seeming ages.-

Radio Op: "HQ to Metro Control. Order received. Lance Project is powering down."

JSDF: *All of them celebrate.*

Kajiwara: *Settles down.* "Alright gentlemen, this also means we're slated to return to Tokyo. Ide, gather the medics and extraction staff. Our priority is Chief of Air Staff Karasuma and his Assassination University Program."

JSDF: "Yessir!"

Karasuma: *Having changed the frequency of the enemy's walkie-talkie, hears the good news from Metro Control. He breathes a sigh of relief.* "We're safe, everyone."

AssUniv: *Also celebrate euphorically.*

Karasuma: *Returns to the communicator.* "AssUniv to Metro Control. We are at NNS Olympic. However, there remains a small, forced splinter faction of two that were brought to an unknown location. I request a swift search party for them."

-Yada, with a seriously-wounded Kato in tow, successfully made it out of the run-down warehouse.-

Yada: *Notably pants and grunts with effort pulling both Kato's weight and her own.* "We're going to get through this, Kato-kun."
Kato: *The weight of his injuries beginning to really take their toll, Kato can barely keep his head straight and put some pressure on each step, lessening how much work Yada gives.*

Yada: "If we can just get back to public view, we're good; the Reclamation Society cannot proceed with their mission now. We just need to survive. And we will. Right, Kato-kun?"

Kato: "." *Is focusing all of his energy into merely moving, hence his silence.*

Yada: "Keep it together; I'll get you out of here." *She continues to pull Kato through to the street side of the warehouse, noticing the highway ramps and lucid lightpoles adjacent. She eagerly pushes forward a little more, until...*

-A gunshot sound reverberates through the air around them.-

Kato: *Slumps over, beyond Yada's catching grasp. The bullet that succeeds the sound of the notable shot has lodged into Kato's right tricep; far from Yada's side.*

Yada: *Turns around quickly, realizing that the shooter was Dr. Machida, armed with a nickel-engraved 1911 himself. When he turns his aim to her, Yada turns around with a Shock-Pad disk throw, which the doctor bats away with his barrel. This provided enough distraction for Yada to fall into a roll, taking out a combat knife from behind her, with her crouched form and non-level sight making her a harder target. When she gets close enough, she attempts a drop toe hold sweep... Which Machida telegraphs and pulls his foot out of accordingly. Knowing he can easily re-aim at her stopped frame, she rolls back towards him, and uses the momentum to snap kick the gun away from her, and giving enough time for her to get up. Now back upright and the fray close, Yada takes her left-handed icpick knife and swipes to the right with it, targeting his waistline. But Machida's NATO soldier training was still second-nature to him, and he was able to counter the attempt with ease. Yada realizes she must first soften him up before going for the kill-hit, and so implements some more kicks and grapples, like a heel sweep kick, high knee, or headlock takedown. But Machida was too strong; he kicked back her sweep, sidestepped her high knee and countered with a backhand, and reversed the headlock into an inverse double-leg takedown. The last instance had Yada twist Machida's shooting arm, and try to elbow smash its pointed center to disarm him, but Machida rolled through, and Japanese arm drags her over instead. She rolled through the landing, but does not turn around fast enough, finding Machida right on top of her, and backhand pistol-whipping Yada square in the face. Unconsciously, she spins into a fall onto her side, and her knife flying out of her grip, sliding harmlessly far away.*

Machida: "Goddamn assassins. Can't put up a good fight when it counts." *Slowly walks over to Yada, who is still trying to rise to her feet.* "You still end up getting the best gear, though. I ran a composition scan of the gear we had you discard before coming here. Graphene, elastane, aramid, and Gore-Tex all in one. Heavy resistance to many forms of conventional damage and fit for almost any instance regardless of unintentional injury. Very good... But there's a reason why bulletproof people still try to avoid shots." *Places the barrel of his Five-seveN onto Yada's outer left thigh.* "Especially at point-blank range." *Fires.*

Yada: "KYAAA~!!" *Screams horribly in pain, as the bullet, at maximum-possible power, pierces right through her armor, and gives a clean tear through her thigh muscles. she clutches the wound intensively, as blood begins dripping out.*

Machida: *Crouches down.* "Oh, did that hurt?" *His free hand casts Yada's arm aside, allowing him access to the bullethole wound. He then drives a surgically-gloved thumb into it.* "Clean flesh wound. No cut femoral, if that makes the pill easier to swallow."
Yada: *Screams even more from the improvised torture session, which Kato sees.*

Machida: "More importantly though, you, and you, almost got me. And what's more, you all brought me out from behind the screens, because your massive annoyance was enough to ruin all of my manpower. And I applaud you for that. Now my chances of a New World Order are gone, and I can tell that the authorities are just some ways away. I've lost. But I can at least take you all down first." *Presses the gun barrel on Yada again, but this time on the back of her head.* "And I'm starting with you."

Yada: *Visibly closing her eyes, gritting her teeth, and crying in anticipation.*

Kato: "Machida!"

Machida: *Turns around.*

Kato: *Claws his way to standing on his knees, injured as he was. His left arm had a few straps on it, though the rest of it was covered by both of his hands.* "I... Got one last surprise. For you." *Begins lifting a rattling fist toward Dr. Machida.*

Machida: *Lets go of Yada, walking towards Kato.*

Kato: *As Machida's chest/head go higher as he gets closer, he lifts his fist up higher, still with jolted aim.*

Machida: *Had enough of the antics, he fires a .45 caliber straight into his chest, specifically where his heart seemingly was.*

Kato: *Bows over his head for a second, as if to look at the bullethole. He then coughs a large wad of blood, and then falls back.*

Machida: "I was thinking of saving you for last so we could resume the fun from inside the warehouse, but seeing you remain so defiant like that made me realize it wasn't going to last. It seems like that really was your last surprise, hm?"

Kato: *Floats his eyes over to see Machida, and begins relieving his left fist. He weakly opens it entirely to reveal... Nothing! the forearm straps were just straps.*

Machida: *Notices.* "A bluff?" *Immediately feels something dig into his back.* "DIGH-!"

Yada: *Having gotten onto her strained knees herself, her left arm was stretched out, having aimed and fired the real Forearm Gun, now working properly, and having fired a .50 caliber horse-tranquilizer bullet.*

Machida: *Attempts to lift his 1911 to point at Yada, but ends up dropping it instead. Thus, he tries walking to her, but collapses to all fours.* "You're... Fucking kidding." *Finally passes out, falling onto his face. His glasses break doing so.*

Yada: *The pain catching up to her, she too falls to her hands, but then remembers Kato, who was still fully slumped back.* "KATO!" *Crawls to his side, pitching his back up. She then reveals Kato's dog tags, having also been the last of the things she had taken from the strongbox, putting it into Kato's close hand and tightening the grip.* "Stay with me here!"
Kato: "Just as planned..." *Due to his lack of strength, only his eyes float over to Yada.* "Yeah?"

Yada: *Bites her lip to expel the tension in her unstable face and breaking voice.* "Yes... The plan, all of it. It worked like a charm. Now all you have to do is stay alive, Kato-kun."

Kato: *Reverts to looking back towards the sky.* "No lights... On. Stars... Everywhere.*

Yada: *Looks up to see it as well.* "Yeah, yeah you're right. But Kato-kun, please focus on me. Don't slip."

Kato: 'I'm not alone..."

Yada: *Despite everything, she musters a scoff.* "Why would you think so? I'm here, you're not alone, not at all."

Kato: "My greatest fear... Dying alone."

Yada: *Again bites her lip.* "Kato-kun, please don't say that. You're not alone, and you're not dying!"

Kato: *Again looks her weakly in the eyes.* "Thank you... Yada-san."

Yada: "Oh, stop it!"

Kato: "Thank you for being... A part of my life." *His eyes close, his smile wanes, his grip on Yada's hand weakens, and his head falls the other way limp, exhaling one more time that day.*

Yada: *Her heart skips a beat.* "Kato-kun!" *Further compresses his hand.* "Wake up, Kato-kun!" *Finding that to be in vain after a few moments, she lets go and embraces him across his clavicle and tricep, leaning her head on his shoulder, now being drenched by her tears (though it was equal, since his blood was splattering across her torso).* "Kato-kun, please... I know, and I understand, that you're in great pain, and you want to sleep it off. But please... Wake up. At least until we know you'll live. We already lost one mentor- no, more than that. An amazing friend and someone we loved, to the monsters they fought. We cannot lose another; we can't handle the pain of another loss like that. So please... Kato-kun, wake up!"

Kato: *Doesn't respond in any way.*

Yada: *Closes her eyes in great pain.* "KATO!"

-At that point, the medical JSDF search party were just some blocks away. Having heard a woman's cries, they race over to its source.-
Retrograde Space

Chapter Summary

The climax has come and gone... But there were many steps taken that readers have not witnessed yet that led us to this point. How did those fare?

-Nine and a half days ago...-

Kato: *Is seated in the center of a dim, single-bulb hanging light, with his head down, and cupping his crown with both of his hands.* "Yada-san, and the rest of you in here... Shall I tell you of how I met Korosensei, and how he changed my life forever, like he did to all of yours?"

-Five years ago...-

-In Kyoto, Class 3-E were enjoying their brief field trip to the assassination capital of Japan, along with coordinating their attempts to eliminate their almighty teacher along with Red Eye.-

-Meanwhile...-

Shiohara Family Thug: *Identified by his Yakuza emblem depicting the sky-reflecting Egawa coastline, he lies down amongst nine of his unconscious Brothers, across from a small, baseball-capped and bandana-masked man, with not a scratch on him.*

???: *Said identity-concealed man nods to a trio of high school girls, which apparently signals them to leave the nondescript alley the confrontation was allegedly happening in.*

Shiohara Family Thug: *Begins retreating back upon seeing the man slowly walk closer toward him.* "Whoa, we're really sorry mate! We didn't know they were your girls!

???: *Stomps on the Yakuza's ankle, keeping him put until he moves to the latter's side, crouching down and pulling back on his head so that they can have a close face-to-face conversation. His voice was artificially distorted.* "'My ladies? Your ladies?' Yakuza have gotten really materialistic, haven't they?" *Rips off the marked lapel pin, giving it a quick look.* "Especially the Shioharas."

Shiohara Family Thug: "Then what do you want, man? We're just doing the work our Boss pegged us with."

Kato: "It sure looked that way when I spotted you and your boys' smirks as you began pulling those ladies from the Club SEGA. Working for that scummy Shinsuke long enough, and you become scum yourself. The kind that you can't purify..." *Firmly grips the thug's neck, in spite of his futile struggles.* "But you can clean up," *Presses on a certain area on his throat, which instantly knocks the thug out. Moments later, the man has cable-tied them all to the nearby pipe, and dropped a phone in front of them that was currently having a call with 110 (The number for the police). He then leaves the alley himself, taking off his face cover and voice-altering mask, showing himself to be a seventeen-year-old Kazuhiko Kato.* "M, Kyoto Station is all clear now,"
Miho: *Revealed to be M (and to have looked the same as she will look five years later), she clutches her microphone... As she stands next to dozens of other Shiohara muscle with comically-large bruises on their bodies.* "The district is good. Most definitely, we will not be seeing any more Shiohara insurgents coming into our turf for a good while. Unless they want more Brothers in the clink."

Kato: "I'm surprised we had to remove so much muscle; Shiohara should already be running out of contracts; how many more souls could he possibly be buying? Unless he's handing it I.O.U.s?"

Miho: "Well, Shiohara has a huge off-record contract for you. Heh, we've long lost count of how many assassins he's sent our way to try and put you down, hm?"

Kato: "It doesn't help them that Shinsuke himself doesn't even know who he wants to assassinate. Ah well, patrol's over then. Proceed to the rendezvous point and we'll return to base."

Miho: "Meet you there, Kato-ani."

Kato: *Proceeds walking after unequipping the communicator. But along the way, he glances back, and realizes he's being followed. Keeping sleeper status, he continues strolling, until he cuts a corner into another tight alley. When he knows the line of sight was broken, he free-runs through the urban jungle, even going up on a low rooftop, before falling into a familiar lot and dashing into an open doorway - an emergency exit for a B-list theatre. Shutting it behind him, he backs away four steps, pulling out his Kimber Warrior (Mk. I at the time), awaiting his pursuer to open it... Until his baseball cap flies off his head and realizes he wasn't alone in the deserted section.*

???: *Has glowing red eyes and a massive cartoonish smile as he looks at Kato from behind.* "Fufufu, not bad, not bad at all, especially for a minor such as yourself."

Kato: "!?"

-Minutes later...-

-Kato and his... Otherworldly chaser have moved to a public-private nabe hotpot restaurant nearby where they had first encountered each other.-

Korosensei: *Repeatedly blows on his latest hotpot.*

Kato: *Is looking aside.* "Was it a mistake for me to pick a hotpot place, since you apparently cannot handle hot food?"

Korosensei: *Continues blowing for a little bit before answering.* "Not at all! I must thank you for introducing me to this place! I must come back after an interval of sweets! And other things..."

Kato: "Right... So you're that unvanquishable flying entity that crashed a U.N. party," *Checks his watch.* "A bunch of weeks ago."

Korosensei: "The one and only. I'm sure you know this all too well, but it's always nice to have a stage that you know very important people will pay attention to. A great achievement to perform, especially repeatedly too."
Kato: "Well you can also put this into your list of accolades: the first assassin to ever find out and catch the Kato Family's alleged leader."

Korosensei: "Is that so? Well keep it, because I'm not an assassin anymore."

Kato: *Looks up with confusion.* "You've not been hired to kill me?"

Korosensei: "Absolutely not! I'm just here to educate my students of the wonders of this amazing city." *Turns red and develops popped veins with anger.* "Hey, are you implying you believe this outfit to just be a cover!?"

Kato: "Anything goes when it comes to nine-feet-tall, anthropomorphic octopuses, Korosensei. For instance, the fact that you were certified to teach, or how that translates to you going at supernatural speeds."

Korosensei: *Calm down.* "Ah... Astute observation, my friend. I can't quite spell it out, but the situation is most bizarre indeed."

Kato: "Hmph. So you're not here to kill me, but you didn't know while chasing me that I was going to treat you to something you'd end up loving. All you wanted was this nice little conversation?"

Korosensei: "Indeed." *Begins blowing on another hotpot.*

Kato: "Again, anything goes, but what could you possibly want to talk to me about?"

Korosensei: *Is too busy blowing again.*

Kato: *Patiently waits for him to finish.*

Korosensei: *Finishes.* "Kato, as you've told me you know, I was an assassin. But what you probably don't know is that I was once the best assassin on the planet, known as the God of Death."

Kato: "The God of Death was always a question mark, even for the CIA and their like; tough luck for my organization to find out about that."

Korosensei: "Fair enough. But what you also must know is that I have had more bodies dropped than I could ever count before... But now that I'm this, I can count - it's one-thousand-twelve."

Kato: "Your point?"

Korosensei: "My point is, among those one-thousand-twelve, there is a top-tier Yakuza and a former unstoppable district attorney."

Kato: "!?" *Looks at him with skepticism.*

Korosensei: "In the past, I assassinated your father and mother, Kazuhiko Kato."

Kato: *His eyes squint with a combination of lethal aggression and horror.*

Korosensei: "I see you're overcome with natural indignation. Your right hand is holding your
handgun again, under the table."

Kato: *He subtly looks to his trembling grip.*

Korosensei: "Obviously your intent is crystal-clear, but I'm surprised you're not practically exploding with how much bloodlust I'm sensing is coming from you. You must have been holding back your Hatred for a long time. That's not healthy!"

Kato: "Your concern is mildly warming my heart."

Korosensei: "How about this, then?" *Bows across the table.* "I apologize for murdering them. It was never anything personal. Just a part of the promise to deliver as the best assassin on the planet."

Kato: "How can you expect me not to have second thoughts about letting it all out when you say stuff like that?"

Korosensei: "I guess I didn't think that through, huh? Tell me, however: what do you think happened on the day I killed them?"

Kato: *Confused.* "What do you mean?"

Korosensei: "Did you think that your parents hated me with their dying breath? Or terrified? Tried to defend themselves?"

Kato: "..."

Korosensei: "I was there. I can tell you. If you'd like to listen."

Kato: *Relaxes his grip on his pistol from under the table.*

Korosensei: "Very good. Now then..."

-Back during the year 2006...-

God of Death: *Back in his human form, he is in his false-plated car, trailing Inafune's car as it pulls over across the street from a familiar convenience store. He immediately gets out and knocks on the Yakuza's window.* "Hello, sir? Are you familiar with this area? I am having trouble finding this location, could you show me?"

Inafune: "Yeah, I guess." *Opens the window to look at the assassin's map.* "Ah, the Space casino? Ah you just gotta get on Chome-12, then get on the freeway for three minutes at top speed, and it'll be on your right."

God of Death: "I'm sorry, could you like point and show? I'm terrible with street names."

Inafune: *Agrees, getting out of his car, holding the map.* "Okay, so Chome-12," *Looks away from Korosensei to point at a road.* "Just a mile down this one and then you'll see a set of traffic lights for Ch-" *Is lethally injected in the back by Korosensei. His cries of pain are muffled by the latter's gloved hand. The drugs act very quickly, leaving Inafune incapacitated in seconds. Korosensei slowly lets him down onto the asphalt near his car as he closes his eyes and then proceeds back into his own car, after taking his wallet.*
God of Death: *While driving away, a small note was found inside the wallet, which revealed the address of the vacation home that the Kato Family was living in at the time. He drives to one block away and stealthily walks the rest of the way to the vacation home, finding the roof window open and getting in that way. He continues to scope all of the corners and corridors, before finally finding his targets sitting on their bed together.*

Kazuto: *Both he and Aiko look over to where the assassin was hiding.* "Oh, it's that time already?"

God of Death: *Surprised to have been sensed, but does not show it, not even moving a muscle.*

Aiko: "We know you're there; come on out. We're not going to resist."

God of Death: *After a brief stint of processing the situation, he walks out, silenced pistol in hand, meeting his targets face-to-face.*

Kazuto: "You out-gambitted us. Identifying and eliminating our escape out of here."

God of Death: "That guy? Inafune? He made a pit-stop before he was going to show up where you two were. Some getaway."

Aiko: "Well, not many can be as professional as you or us."

God of Death: "So you're both okay that I'm going to do this?"

Kazuto: "We've lived the dream; that's enough for us." *Holds Aiko's hand tightly.* "I know, this isn't a part of the hitman protocol, but do you take requests from your victims?"

God of Death: "It depends. What do you want?"

Kazuto: "Three things: One, to make it look unprofessional; leave a mess. Two, for mine to be painful; a twisted knife in my ribs is what I had in mind. And three, hers to be painless, like a shot in the head." *Turns to Aiko.* "That sound good for you, honey?"

Aiko: "Fine by me."

Kazuto: "Well, assassin? Think you're up for it?"

God of Death: "Not many times in this line of work do you meet people who were awaiting their killings. And even rarer to find those few who have the audacity to ask for how they want to go." *Smiles.* "I'll do it."

Kazuto: "Excellent. One moment please." *He and Aiko kiss on the lips and look into each other's eyes one last time.* "I'm opening another nightclub wherever I go next, and I'll be dancing in it until you show up again."

Aiko: "Always leave those lights on and hold your breath. I'll be seeing you there."

*Korosensei's suppressor rubs up on her temple.*

-And having done my job, I left the estate. Had I stayed a few more minutes, I reckon I would have
met you earlier, Kazuhiko, but for the time being, I never found out you existed. For the rest of my time as a pure human. I'd hear talks about another Kato running around some years later, but I was busy with a protege by then, and nobody ever gave enough information to track you down, so I didn't bother.

Korosensei: "But now that I'm something that can go at Mach 20, it's much easier now to get to the bottom of rumors. For instance, when I roam around at such speeds and happen upon conversations of multiracial people who keep talking to one 'Kato-ani'..."

Kato: "What did you...?"

Korosensei: "Relax, I didn't attack them either. I commend your sense of loyalty and devotion to your colleagues, however; in spite of you looking nothing like your father, you're every bit like him."

Kato: *Looks away.* "So my parents were content from the moment they made a phone call, to just before they ate the barrel..."

Korosensei: "Those were the feelings of people who had a Xanatos Gambit in their hands - their best kept secret, you, never being known by any human mind that shouldn't know. And you've owned up to the persona and stuck by it really well. They knew that when they left you, and that's how they knew, antimatter octopus notwithstanding, that you'd be just fine."

Kato: "Well... Thanks, I guess. Is that all of why you're here, speaking to me?"

Korosensei: *Has proceeded to cool down yet another hotpot.*

Kato: *Decides to bide his time by lighting a clove... Until the cigarette disappears from his mouth.*

Korosensei: *Waves the cigarette in the air to his side.* "My apologies, but I could not possibly live with calling myself a teacher for young people if I allowed a young person just like them to begin smoking right in front of me."

Kato: Notices his carton of kreteks was also taken, and becomes slightly agitated.*

Korosensei: "Back to your query, however, I am not done. There's just one thing: I have no place to ask of this from you, but I fear no one of your caliber would have your patience."

Kato: "And how do you know I have patience?"

Korosensei: "You haven't ordered a hit on Shiohara, even though you clearly have the funds, the resources, and knocked him off the connections list! Almost no one's going to care that Shiohara would be gone now, and yet you still sit on delivering the coup de grace."

Kato: "Shiohara hasn't suffered enough yet. I've shuffled his deck and removed any trump cards he could possibly use to turn the tables. Now his syndicate limps on like Gotham City does. When all it can do is crawl by a finger - that's when I finish Shinsuke off."

Korosensei: "Sounds astigmatic."

Kato: *Looks up at him with confusion.*
Korosensei: "Ever thought that maybe there was a better revenge out there?"

Kato: "Like what?"

Korosensei: "Say, just leave him be?"

Kato: "Why the Hell would I do that?"

Korosensei: "Well, first off, you might actually be able to take that weight off your chest and breath."

Kato: "...

Korosensei: "But also, you've enjoyed seeing the destruction of Shinsuke Shiohara to this point. Wouldn't you still enjoy it today and tomorrow?"

Kato: "What would you have me do instead?"

Korosensei: "What you've been doing! Nothing needs to change; all you have to do is realize that when you started to have fun by leading this Yakuza, you actually had a little. And it didn't concern the finality of such destruction... Mostly."

Kato: *Still looks on with confusion.*

Korosensei: "Believe it or not, Kato, but you're looking at a person who used to be just like you: Long ago, I devoted all my life to one field - the art of assassination. It was a diverse field, sure, and I thrived from it. But when it mattered to me most, it failed me. No, knowledge cannot be blamed for anything. Which means I failed. Because I had the chance to save what I cared for most."

Kato: "Someone else?"

Korosensei: *Remains silent at Kato's interruption, then looks to the side. Though his comically large smile persisted on his perfectly round face, he clearly has internal pain in him.* "The problem was, all I knew was how to take lives. Not one thing on how to save them."

Kato: "That's rough."

Korosensei: *Turns back to Kato.* "Now, I have a second chance, which my students have graciously accepted. Beyond their desire for the enormous prize on my head. I finally get to know how it feels to offer someone else an open hand of assistance rather than a killing clenched fist. And let me tell you... It feels amazing."

Kato: *Thinks for a moment.* "You know, if you could one day open a conversation to a fellow stranger with that story, I think you'll find the patience you were looking for in me from any other rational person you meet."

Korosensei: "If you believe that, then I know you can appreciate and practice this lesson far better than I ever could. For nobody was more backwards than myself."

Kato: *Scratches the back of his head.* "Where do you think I could start?"
Korosensei: "Where do you think? Your Family encompasses almost all of the known sciences. You can do anything you put your mind into."

Kato: "Well, I always thought power armor in military fiction would be fun and useful pet projects. You ever played 'Metal Gear' or 'Splinter Cell'?" *Beat.* "On second thought, you might not. Anyway, I would love to one day take the dare to make their suits, if not a stronger version."

Korosensei: "Sounds excellent."

-Ring ring!-

Kato: *Looks toward his bluetooth earpiece on the table. He quickly puts it on his left ear and answers.* "Go for KK."

Tsuchiya: "Kato-ani, some of our street agents have sighted some punk-esque high schoolers wearing uniforms not unlike the ones from the girls you saved to be lugging around two junior-high uniformed girls. We suspect foul play was involved."

Korosensei: *Appears near Kato's other ear for a whisper.* Ask what color and pattern the uniforms are. Oh, and the hair colors!

Kato: *Glances to the right before continuing.* "Any distinguishing features, Tsuchiya?"

Tsuchiya: "The ladies had a grey uniform with black outlines. One was green-haired, short, not so, well... Endowed. The other had long black hair, and had an elegant stride beyond being forced to move."

Korosensei: *Turns Red.* "MY STUDENTS!" *Flies out of the room."

Tsuchiya: "What was that, Kato-ani?"

Kato: *Looks the way he left.* "Nothing, Tsuchiya. Do not engage; I have a feeling justice will come to their kidnappers in just a few moments."

Tsuchiya: "Interesting, Oyabun sir. You've not been one to turn down a chance to exact justice yourself."

Kato: "I know it sounds bad, but just roll with it, okay? After all, we're only human."

Tsuchiya: "Very well sir. Returning to HQ. *Cuts transmission."

Kato: *Takes off his bluetooth. He arises, and begins putting Yen notes onto the table in preparation to leave, but the second he turns away from it, Korosensei is back, standing before him and looking down.* "Whoa, why are you here? You have students to save!"

Korosensei: "Indeed I do. But I must also ask one more thing of you first."

Kato: "What?"

Korosensei: "With your biochemical team, find a way to destroy my cells."
Kato: *Beat.* "Excuse me?"

Korosensei: *Holds out a Tentacle, dropping a vial into Kato's hand.* "This matter right here, whether I want to or not, will destroy the Earth in less than a year. I want you to find a way to eradicate them before that happens. Far beyond what the S.A.A.U.S.O. can deliver."

Kato: *Clenches a fist around it and looks back up.* "My R&D can look into it. We could definitely make a permanent burner too. But I don't think we have enough time to make one that doesn't kill you."

Korosensei: "That matters not. Just make it possible to kill that."

Kato: "But why-"

Korosensei: "Toodles!" *Flies off again.*

-Korosensei periodically checked up on me from time to time as the school year passed by, especially when Karasuma commissioned Kato Arms Manufacturing to develop the, ahem, Super Gym Clothes. But we never really had reason to have more meaningful conversations after that, so that one time during your field trip may as well have been the first and last time we ever spoke.-

-Back to nine days before the present...-

Kato: "And after that, I had one last reparation to give to the Ministry after providing the armors; hand over my research on the Tentacles, so that they could make the Lance. Apparently, they ignored the part where my team too found out Korosensei wasn't actually a bomb anymore - Beyond their lack of empathy and morality even for their own, you can see why I don't really like intelligence agencies, hm? And so, I ended up sitting on files upon files of how to exterminate Tentacle DNA, and never again found a use for it... Until," *Checks his watch.* "Three years after and the one Yuzuru Machida became a hot name among the mercenary and criminal world. It wasn't too hard to gather enough intel to find that Machida was a former scientist in Dr. Yanagisawa's facility and was intent on finishing the job, despite the consequences. Having sworn to use the fruits of my labor to make the world a better place as Korosensei has taught me, I knew I had to do all I can to stop him." *Sighs.* "Which brings me to the most gripping fact: the Eradication Agent was long complete."

AssUniv: *All gasp, mouths agape.*

Kato: "You have heard correctly. It took maybe another," *Checks his watch.* "Week or two after we reclaimed the mutated strain from Craig and the Neo-Wolfpack to refine, but the bottomline is - we had, and still have, all the chance to destroy Korosensei's legacy right now."

Naoko: *Arms crossed, turns to him with one of her most menacing stares, though her voice remained normal.* "Then what are you waiting for?"

Kato: "I wondered what would happen after we erased the DNA, and the Reclamation Society was still out there. I had a feeling that even if I sent them a little note telling them 'Oooo, we beat you to it; we destroyed your dream! Happy days!', they still wouldn't stop. Hence, I left the DNA as a sort of bargaining chip - I could be certain of what they were coming for the next time they attacked Japan. Lure them in with the real thing... And assassinate them."

Terasaka: *Rises up.* "If you think that's all you need to tell us after we just stuck our necks out
for you at Shibuya and you tell us all that before, you deserve a fucking baseball bat to the head!"

Kato: "I agree."

Kayano: "Of course you-" *Beat.* "Wait, what?" *Terasaka sits back down.*

Kato: "Which is why, I'm telling you my plan right now. For as close to my chest that I want to play this," *Checks his watch.* "Next card, I know I cannot do it alone. I don't trust the Neo-Wolfpack well enough for this mission, Qita Kong needs time to mourn, and I can't bear to even relay the details to my Family, especially Miho, which is why I sent them off. So that just leaves all of you. All of you, who rekindled the legacy Korosensei placed in me." *Smirks.* "And, at least for a time, pegged me as Korosensei."

Karasuma: *His fingers are geared in front of him in thought. When Irina reassures him by leaning on his back, he turns to his students.* "Once more, your mentor... Teacher, needs all of you. What do you say to that, everyone?"

-There was a brief silence.-

Yada: *Stands up.* "What's your plan?"

Kato: *Rubs his chin.* "Two strongboxes, one with all that remains of the Mutated Tentacles and one filled with something else, will be present in one of the Tokyo research facilities that will remain in active use despite the latest crisis. This will attract Machida and his forces, who believe that most of the Kato Alliance's best guys and girls are far away - which he isn't wrong with. Once he gets what he came for, he will expose himself with the heavy amount of activity he must do to create his project. That's when we take him out."

Kimura: "Hold on, you're planning on letting him take the DNA!? That's the one thing we've been trying not to let them do!"

Kato: "I understand the risks; the doctor stands more than zero-percent chance of being able to do something with what I willingly offer him. Which is why I am covering that base too." *Rubs his hands together.* "Amaya Yanagisawa has really found herself at one with my biochemical team, as you saw when you showed up at the facility. She mentioned later that," *Checks his watch.* "Day that she was lecturing the team on cross-species mutations. I put her in charge of finding a way to most effectively implement the Tentacle DNA into a human body, without sacrificing internal stability and overall safety."

Kurahashi: *Picks her head up.* "You want to inject yourself with some of the DNA!"

Kato: *Nods.* "Yes. For all of our training and experience, Hell because of our experience, we know for a fact that as we are, we cannot defeat something enhanced with Tentacle DNA. Unless we become something more."

Isogai: "Do you know for a fact that it'll work?"

Kato: "No. The experiment still needs a live-subject."

Yada: "Then how do know it won't kill you!?"

Kato: "Because if anyone is going to be able to attune themselves to whatever the Tentacles need
short of being a complete slate, it would be the person who, at his best, can process at twenty times
the peak human reaction time, and is in control of all of his body's internal systems."

Nagisa: "He's right. It's not impossible for anyone to get used to the Tentacles, as Kayano and
Itona have. But they took more than just a week or two in order to get it down. We don't have more
than two weeks."

Kato: "How right you are. But there's still a part you all can play, for as much as my research has
taken me regarding this Tentacle DNA, nobody knows what it's capable of better than the
Assassination Classroom."

Karma: "What, we're going to train you once you have the DNA in you?"

Kato: "Are you against it?"

Kanzaki: "It won't take away from such high levels of danger, but I reckon it could be fun all the
same." *Claps her hands together.*

Sugino: *Quickly looks over to Kanzaki.* "Yeah, for once, we gotta teach you something. Whatever
could be bad about that?"

AssUniv: *All chuckle briefly.*

Kato: "If we're to do this, you all need to be off Tokyo's grid for," *Checks his watch.* "Some
time. Returned to Kyoto, perhaps, working at Nyurifu Rikkyo. I will come late at night every night
to refine my abilities with the DNA inside the warehouse we've been training at. In the meantime, I
can gauge RS activity by continuing to send out more and more of my Brothers and Sisters across
the seas, until they find themselves brave enough to conduct an attack. I will also be making some
special equipment for us to at least contain the situation."

Nakamura: "So aside from holding your hand, or Tentacle in this case, we just need to stay on
top of our game and please the locals?"

Kato: *Laughs.* "If it's too much for you, I reckon I still have some staff lying around."

Kataoka: *Gestures settling down.* "Alright alright, we got it down."

Kato: *Pulls out an advance medical syringe, mounted on a trigger system. He looks at it with
anticipation, as does the rest of AssUniv.* "My first lesson, from you all to me: What can I expect
when I first put this in me?"

Itona: "Pain."

AssUniv: *All form shadows over their eyes.*

Itona: "A lot of it. The compound feels like it burns your insides before it settles in your
bloodstream."

Kayano: "But also, you will hear a voice. A very powerful voice. And it will ask you what you
want to become. Before it can do anything for you, you will need to answer that question."

Kato: "'What I want to become', huh? Will I answer aloud?"
Kayano/Itona: *Look between each other with confusion.* "You know, we don't actually know. We were alone when we put the DNA in, and too focused on the DNA itself to notice."

Terasaka: "Weirdos."

Kato: "Then let's find out." *Places the needle on his inner tricep skin and looks up.* "Everyone's looking, right?"

AssUniv: *All patiently wait.*

Kato: *With a deep breath, he presses down on the plunger. Seconds later, as was stated, he did indeed feel boiling bubbling, and he closes his eyes to keep it under control. And then...*

Tentacles: *What do you want to become...?*

Kato: *Answers internally.* I want... To be worthy.
Chapter Summary

Reminiscence time is over. What has happened after the events of the climax?

Is he dead? How's everyone else?

-Two days after the AssUniv Program defeated Dr. Machida and the Reclamation Society...-

-"Listen To My Heart" by Lolita plays.-

Kato: *His heavily patched head is whipped back and to the side of a large white pillow, facing a medical stand, which also has a sill housing a small radio playing the recognized tune. As if the music turned something on within him, he meekly opens his eyes, gazing at the audio box. A slight lift of the head allows him to see his EKG monitor, and a glance down allows limited vision of his left arm. With some trembling, he raises the limb to get a closer look at the various pieces of technology on it.*

Kanzaki: *Sitting on the other side of him reading a Dengeki magazine, she sees Kato lift his arm, and immediately covers her mouth with shock, dropping the literature. Though obviously not in bad shape as he was, she had her fair share of battle wounds, with bandages wrapped across her forearm and a right-handed immobilizing glove.* "Kato-kun!"

Kato: *Lets his hand fall back onto the gurney and rolls his head to look at her.* "Kanzaki-san?"

Kanzaki: *Stands up.* "Thank the Gods you're awake, Kato-kun. I'll get the others." *Begins leaving.*

Kato: "Hold. How long was I out?"

Kanzaki: *Turns back quickly.* "Two days. Stay put." *Fully leaves the room.*

Kato: "Wai-" *Holds out a hand, but is interrupted by the door closing. He then looks back at his nightstand, finding that in addition to the radio, there was his real grandfather's dog tags. He moves his hand over to it and clutches the necklace.*

Yada: *Blasts the door open, half-empty energy drink bottle in hand, and a gauze on her cheekbone (from the pistol-whip she received fighting Machida). The second she sees Kato leer over to her, she forcibly shoves the refreshment into Naoko's grasp and practically dives into Kato, embracing him deeply.* "OhmyGod, Kato-kun! Thank you for waking up! We were all worried sick!"

Kato: *Wincs and speaks with a compressed voice.* "Yes, it's amazing to see you too."

Yada: "OH-!" *Releases Kato, settling for holding his hand (which also held his necklace) instead.* "Sorry, Kato-kun."
Kato: "It's alright." *Turns to the rest of AssUniv.* "And it's also great to see you all too."

AssUniv: *All of them, Karasuma included, give a light smile in response. Like Kanzaki, they all had personal treasures they kept from the previous ordeal, whether they wanted them or not.*

Kato: *Looks around again, sighing.* "Where are we?"

Kataoka: "TMU Medical Hospital. Once we called off the Lance strike, JSDF started rolling in. Along with incarceration personnel, first aid groups arrived. By God you needed it."

Terasaka: "Us too." *Looks at his medically-casted left arm.*

Kato: "So is the metropolis back to normal?"

Mimura: "As if any society on Earth could go back to the way it once was after a one-two of crises like those."

Irina: "But it is regaining its population, and the people are beginning to return to their old lives."

Kato: "So then, Machida?"

Karasuma: "Solitary confinement inside the MoD's maximum security Hi-G. Same place we put Shiohara and Takaoa. Don't worry, though, no way they can interact. Though one more will be joining him on the truck soon."

Kato: "Then it looks like..."

Karasuma: "Yes. The, err, THE, AssUniv Program was a massive success."

AssUniv: *First begin raising wildly celebrating fists, but then realize they're in a hospital, and resolve for just quieter fist bumps and embraces.*

Maehara: "Of course, we probably just cost Japan it's #1 arena for the Olympics."

Okano: "Karasuma-sensei, any way we can pin our half of the damages on the Reclamation Society?"

Karasuma: "We just saved the nation's capital, students. I reckon so. In fact, the UN might even pay for full reparations so the Olympic debt will be clear before the Games even begin. We won't end up struggling to recuperate like many countries before."

Maehara/Okano: "Awesome."

Kato: "..." *Looks to the outside windows with a frown after briefly reveling himself.*

Yada: *Notices it.* "Kato-kun? What's wrong?"

Kato: "Ah-!" *Refocuses.* "I can't walk yet. I can feel it as I'm trying to will myself off this bed. I guess even," *Lifts his arm as if it had his watch on. Recognizing that it didn't, he gazes around the room before squinting at a wall-mounted clock, which Takebayashi revealed after moving himself out of the way.* "Forty-eight hours is not enough to break the amount of fatigue and pain I
had accumulated."

Isogai: "You already did so much, Kato. You don't need to get up right now."

Yada: "Isogai-kun's right, Kato-kun. We mopped up all that remains of the Reclamation Society, while your Alliance is tearing up all the foreign syndicates that have ever caused Japan harm."

Kato: "Sits upright.* "Oh God, Miho! Argh, how will I face her? I promised her, Norio, and my cuz I wouldn't throw my life away so recklessly..."

Yada: "Before she heard all the details, she left an unimaginable number of voicemails on your phone. Your uncle was here earlier, listening to some himself, and mentioned quite a bunch were still coherent even though bullets and grenades could be heard as well."

Kato: "Smiles.* "Well, we all know nothing's going to stop Miho from getting back to me."

Naoko: "I'm sure she's settled down though, now that she knows you're okay. Otherwise she'd never have left your side, instead of staying in... Wherever you sent her."

Kato: "That's... Marvelous to hear."

-A brief silence envelops the whole room... Until a nurse walks in, assuming Kato was still unconscious. When she realizes that's not the case, everyone politely shoos her away.-

Kimura: "So what happens now?"

AssUniv: *All turn to him.*

Okuda: "I surmise our greatest preoccupation..."

Karasuma: "Correct. Now that the Shadow War is over and the Reclamation Society has been quelled, there's not really a reason to continue conducting THE AssUniv Program."

AssUniv: *All of them wear initially sad expressions... Except for one.*

Nagisa: *Looks around for a bit.* "Whoa whoa whoa..."

AssUniv: *Now they turn to him.*

Nagisa: *Cracks a grin.* "For the first time in five years... We finally feel ready to tackle the future before us. Isn't that amazing?"

Karma: *Scoffs.* "Hah... Yeah, maybe after so much time back together, perhaps some time apart won't be so bad. The last things on our career path, we really should do on our own."

Isogai: "That's very true, unless you have a collaborative job, like myself." *Holds Kataoka's hand, which she giggles to.*

Kayano: "Hehe, that aside, it's nice to see we've practically reversed now; Nagisa-kun's the one who's not overly moody."

Nagisa: *Is reminded of earlier.* "Mm..."
Nakamura: "Not that we're ever going to forget emo you." *Hooks her arm across his shoulders.*

Hayami/Chiba: *Glance at each other.*

Chiba: *Holds a hand towards the forming couples. As with before, they spoke with silence.* Want to do the same?

Hayami: I was beginning to believe you'd never ask. *Places her raised hand on top of his. They then take a simultaneous step forward, bringing their hands back subtly down to their sides.*

Chiba: I'll always be glad you're always at my side.

Hayami: *Scoffs.* That's because you know you'll crumble without me holding you up. *Chiba lightly grins too.*

Maehara: *To Okano.* "You've got your gymnastics team to return to, huh?"

Okano: "Hm, who knows if they still want me? I did leave so suddenly all that time ago."

Maehara: "You're pretty persuasive. I'm sure you'll brute-force your way back in."

Okano: *Squints at him.* "You trying to make me prefer your attention with this little farce?"

Maehara: "What?"

Okano: "Since when did you ever care about my troupe?"

Maehara: "Ugh, we were having a moment..."

Okano: "More like you were having a moment. Who do you think you are, you insufferable, little excuse of-"

Maehara: "Hush." *He then swoops in for a cooldown kiss, which Okano initially protests, but embraces.*

Naoko: *Goes up to Karma.* "You really sure you can handle becoming a federal treasurer without me, though?"

Karma: "If you can continue to be the Greatest Woman of the Law, without me." *Playfully fiddles with her left locks.*

Naoko: *Equally playfully swats his hand aside.* "Don't mistake my concern for desperation. I dropped you before; I can do it again."

Karma: *An imaginary arrow strikes through his heart... Which he promptly breaks off and pulls further in until it falls out the other side.*

Nagisa: *Turns to Kayano.* "I'd hope for the same for you, but... You're already at the top of your career, or almost."
Kayano: "It's okay, Nagisa-kun. You need the space. More than that, you also need to see your parents by yourself."

There was audible crying, but no one visible within the room were doing so.-

Kayano: "It's coming from my bag...

*Pulls out her smart-phone, revealing a teared-up Ritsu.* "Ritsu-chan?"

Ritsu: "Oh, I'm so sorry... All of this is heartwarming, and I cannot fault any of the logic either... But I just can't shake off the feeling I'm really going to miss all of us being together like this for the last time."

Terasaka: *Sneaks behind Kayano and peering over her shoulder until she notices.* "Can I just, for the record, state that I didn't make her cry this time, and that it was all of you two?" *Gestures to Kayano and Nagisa.*

Terasaka Group: *All turn an imaginary key on their temples.* "Right-clicked, saved!"

Kurahashi: *Looks around for a bit with heavy focus, before gazing at Irina's stomach. She then gleefully claps her hands together.* "I have an idea! We still have a job to do!"

Sosuke: "What's that?"

Kurahashi: *Points to Irina.* "We have to keep her safe!"

Irina: *Puts her hand to her chest.* "Excuse me?"

Fuwa: "Right!" *Comes close and rubs her hand on her abdominals.* "We have to protect whoever's coming!"

AssUniv: *All look between each other again, this time happily.*

Karma: "Well, the semester's not over yet either; I'm game to stick around until then." *Turns to Nagisa.* "What about you?"

Nagisa: *Smirks.* "Why not? But I will be seeing my parents immediately after this first."

Irina: "I'm due by the end of the semester; that sounds like perfect timing."

Kato: "Sounds like we have a unanimous decision. THE AssUniv Program continues."

Kayano: "Four more months, full of spring courses, nightclub shifts, incessant checkups on Bitch-sensei..."

Irina: *Shadows go over her eyes.* "Even in a hospital?"

Kayano: "Infinite possibilities for some miraculous memories. Name me a better combination - I'll wait."

Isogai: "Alright. Hands in, everybody." *Throws out his own, over the lower half of the gurney Kato was seated on, so that he too could join in on the collective.*
Kataoka: *After placing one of her own there, she then holds Isogai's other with her other.*

AssUniv: *The rest, Karasuma and Irina included, pool their appendages (and the couples follow Isogai and Kataoka's example).*

Karma: "Sound it off, Valedictorian."

Nagisa: *Looks to Kayano, and then sighs.* "We are Assassins..."

AssUniv: *All smile at him.*

Nagisa: "And our target... Is whoever dares to try and tear us apart."

- With the confidential, the formalities and the general casual over, AssUniv decided to scatter around the institute in order to have some private time. This left Yada inside Kato's room. -

Kato: *Now filled with significantly more vigor, inspects his right arm, which has his medical identification tag.* "I think they got my name wrong. Who is this 'Kazuhiko Ohno' ?"

Yada: *Is looking out the window at the time and cracks a grin.* "Well, as much as Tokyo got to know who Kazuhiko Kato really is, he still doesn't have an E-footprint. Plus, Kazuhiro Kato is most certainly not in Japan at the moment. So, we had to go based off of KIT's records - a Biomechatronics major who happens to look just like you."

Kato: *Sets his arm down and looks at her with a smile.* "If he looks every bit like me, then how do you know I'm really who you love?"

Yada: *Seductively pitches one of her legs (the one that Machida had shot, now patched up) over the gurney and on top of one of his own. "I played with a clone before: let's just say there's never going to be another like you." *Kisses him.*

Kato: *Releases.* "There's one more thing I have to ask, however."

Yada: *Tilts her head.* "What's that?"

Kato: "Did the medics find anyone else in Tokyo with us? Someone other than QK, Lovro, and the Syndikat?"

-A few minutes later.-

-Kato and Yada requested a wheelchair, after it was clear Kato still couldn't walk on his own (he was now wearing his dog tag necklace too). They then traversed deeper into the hospital, necessitating an elevator ride, before they happened upon their destination; another patient's room.-

Yada: *Knocks on the door.*

???: *A feminine voice answers.* "Come in?"

Yada: *Opens the door, and then wheels Kato in.* "Hello Iseul."

Iseul: *Squints at them.* "Oh, you."
???: "Who is it?"

Kato: *Is moved deeper into the room, past the curtain keeping them from seeing each other.* "Byung-Sung, it is I."

Byung-Sung: *Is shown to have a large, taped bandage on the side of his neck he stabbed himself in, among other healing supplies all over his body.* "Oh, you."

Yada: *Brings her hand to her cheek.* Like father, like daughter?

Byung-Sung: "What are you here for? A thank you for saving me? Inserting enough of your mutating, but dissolving cells to keep me alive?"

Kato: "Your gratitude is not necessary. I did what was right, and that's enough for me."

Iseul: "Then what are you here for?"

Kato: "Iseul, I have details about the fate of your father," *Checks the time using Yada's phone.* "Once he's out of the hospital."

Byung-Sung: "You don't need to say anything. I already know I'm going into the deepest darkest place of Japan's detention. Either that, or I'll be handed back to South Korea and be tried for treason. Likely a tree is waiting for me."

Kato: "Not necessarily. Karasuma mentions that the NIS disavowed after you appeared on the big screen during the Tokyo Terror. They want nothing more to do with you. You're not allowed to return to your homeland, even to be punished."

Iseul: "Damn..."

Kato: "But you're not without hope. If you stand as witness against Machida once the U.N. calls him into the IJC, your own sentence will be lessened. A life sentence for many accounts of murder, and arson, but in twenty-five years, you can get parole. And also, rather than Hi-G, you get to spend time in Okinawa International. Not much better, but the scenery from out the barred windows is nice. Plus, Iseul can actually visit you often."

Byung-Sung: "How is this supposed to make me feel better?"

Kato: "Are you trying to tell me that you sticking glass into your pharynx was not a gesture of affection for your daughter?" *Turns to Iseul.* "And are you trying to tell me that your every scowl pointed at me is not because you thought I caused the death of someone you actually did love?"

Byung-Sung/Iseul: "..."

Kato: "Prison has a way of making people realize how much they miss who and what they cannot be with when they're on the other side. Indisputably, family is everything; don't throw it away again."

Iseul: *Thinks for a moment, before turning to her dad.* "Father, I can work on my employer's hyperspace project overseas. No matter what my painkiller-filled Daejin has to say. If you would have me."
Byung-Sung: *Sighs.* "How can I say no?" *To Kato.* "Alright, I'll take your offer."

Kato: "I'll be sure to tell Karasuma that." *Bends forward a little bit for a bow, which Yada copies, and they both leave the room.*

Yada: *As she continues to wheel him back to the elevator, she brings her lips close to Kato's ear.* "I know Byung-Sung was an unfortunate other end of the spectrum like yourself, but do you really think he deserves a second chance?"

Kato: "A really great person once said to himself, '[J]ust because someone stumbles and loses their way, doesn't mean they're lost forever. Sometimes we need a little help.' Everyone deserves a second chance, even if it comes back to bite the offerer."

Yada: *Scoffs.* "Professor X?"

Kato: "Humans are the miracles of the world. Unlike any other animal, our natures can always be changed. Many times it can be for worse... But we don't know what's a bad apple unless we know what's a good apple. And it's always worth the shot to find out."

Yada: *Presses on the wall button.* "That bite-back part... That because we weren't always following your lead?"

Kato: "Like I said... Always worth the shot."

Yada: *Smiles, pushing Kato into an open elevator.* "Thanks for helping us get our second shot."

Kato: *Looks back.* "Thank you for reminding me of mine."

-The second they returned to Kato's room, Yada closed the door, and locked Kato's wheels in place.-

Yada: *Moves to a paper gift bag on the far infirmary table.* "You know... You were going to treat me to the spoils of the Yamazaki deal when they arrived, right?"

Kato: *Picks his head up, concentrating on the bag.*

Yada: *Pulls out the unknown prize, revealing it to be a Yamazaki Fifty Year, putting a smile on the man's face. She also reveals two scotch glasses, putting them into Kato's hands, and pouring the golden brown drink into both of them.* "I'm sure that saving the free world means we can bypass a little drinking ban for patients, right?"

Kato: *Hands Yada her glass, after which they both clink them together.* "Time to find out." *They both simultaneously take a sip.*
Chapter Summary

THE AssUniv Program has resolved to remain together as a group for a whole new purpose now that the Reclamation Society has been quelled. Four more months of niceties... But all good things come to an end.

'Three months later, April 2018...-

-A white-on-black Lykan Hypersport pulls over in a space of the visiter's parking lot of NTT Hospital, which has long recovered from its bombing almost a year ago, in the same matter that the vehicle did more than a year ago. Once more a young man in a sharp, all-blue suit comes out of the driver's side, and once more he helps a young lady clad in mostly red out of the passenger side. They reach the back entrance and follow the corridors to the front lobby...-

-Okay, I guess there's no two ways about it. That's Kato and Yada. And you know who they're coming to see is Irina. Don't mind me; carry on.-

Receptionist: "Ah, the Labor Delivery ward? For Mrs. Jelavic? You made good time; they are just about to start. To get there, take the East elevators and reach floor five. Take a right just out the box, and follow the yellow hallways."

Kato/Yada: *Bow.* "Thank you." *Together they comply to the directions.*

Yada: *As the elevator doors close, her hands are behind her as she glances to him, cross-armed himself.* "Can't believe it's almost here."

Kato: "...

Yada: "You think Miho will one day have a kid with Keitaro too? They're both genetic gold mines no doubt, in spite of their ages."

Kato: *Smirks.* "Who knows? It's up to them."

Yada: "Indeed. And if it was up to you, would you like a kid?"

Kato: *His smile fades, as he looks at the ground.* "...

Yada: "Maybe not right now, but once you've had your fun and the world gives you another break like it has recently?"

Kato: "I don't know."

Yada: *Reassuringly smiles.* "Maybe it's alright that you don't. It's not an easy question to answer so suddenly. Though..." *The elevator doors open before she can finish her next sentence. She decides to let it go and gestures to have them both proceed.*
Kato/Yada: *Eventually, they happen across the waiting area, which was utterly filled to the brim.*

Kurahashi: *Rises up.* "Yada! Kato-kun!"

AssUniv: *All inattentive members focus up when they hear their names.*

Yada: "Hey, Kurahashi." *Bows to the rest.* "Everyone. Glad to see you all here."

Kato: "Karasuma's with Irina?"

Naoko: "Indeed. About five minutes ago. Doctors predicted it'll take about seven hours."

Kato: "That's going to go by in just the blink of an eye."

Terasaka: *Has gotten through half of the magazine stand waiting.* "You sure about that?"

Isogai: "More people are certainly going to show up, so we're going to have our hands full conversing."

Hazama: "Massive social interaction... Just excellent."

Okano: "Do we know who we can expect?"

Kataoka: "Well let's see, uh, most of our parents have already shown up, mothers comforting Irina on the process, and fathers to calm him down. Nagisa-kun, your parents said they'd be showing up again to wait out this with you towards the end. Along with that, we are also awaiting the SGG (Smog, Grip, and Gastro). Matsukata and Sakura-chan have also accepted the invites, and so did Opatz."

Kato: "My damn Captain begged to show up. I guess he really bonded with Irina during their time in that Mediterranean place."

Kimura: "Anyone else?"

Yada: "My brother Akihisa got a transfer request to come see me and Irina-sensei's child, but he won't be around until tomorrow."

Isogai: "Lovro was slated to show up too, in fact, he said he'd be here right about now."

-A section of the ceiling shakes, alerting all of AssUniv as they look up. The piece then moves out of place and disappears behind the rest.-

???: "Ask and you shall receive." *Drops from the open ceiling, revealing himself.*

AssUniv: "LOVRO!?!"

Lovro: *Rises up to an upright position.* "The one and only. So, Irina's in the OR?"

Maehara: "Yes..."
Lovro: "Can't be helped, then. She must wait, as will all of you, which means so must we."

Takebayashi: "'We'?"

???: *Appears from inside a storage closet that has no other visible entryways. As she opens the door, she performs the Dark Souls I "Well, What is it?" taunt, while retaining a rather reserved voice.* "Hello, Assassination University. My name is Olga."

Yada: "Olga? Irina-sensei's assassin trainer?"

Olga: *Bows.* "The very same."

Kurahashi: "Well, thanks for helping her get into our lives."

Hara: "Since she never knew her mother really well, she must be seeing you as a similar figure. You proud she's about to become one herself?"

Olga: "Honestly, I'm disappointed the skills I've given are not of use right now."

Terasaka: *Like the rest of the room, he deflate.* "Oh..."

Olga: "But, I could I am glad to see at least one of my proteges do something I have not, as they grow closer to outliving me. As you all know, the assassin world can be so tragically arbitrary..."

Kataoka: "Yeah. That's what we were thinking." *Pulls collar.*

Yada: "So are you overall happy?"

Olga: *Smiles wider.* "Let's go with that."

-From there, the rest of AssUniv's good friends throughout the years showed up. The expected, such as Opatz, the Shiroyuki Twins, Sakura and Matsukata, were warmly welcomed, while the impromptus, such as Yuji and Craig, were a set of marvelous, if also dastardly shocking, surprises.-

???: *Are right around the corner.* "Are we fashionably late?"

Everyone: *Looks towards the pathway.*

A. Gakuho: *The Principal, with his devious-as-ever smile, pops out from the side, with his son at his side.* "We apologize for the sudden arrivals."

Karma: *Develops a smug expression.* "Asano..."

A. Gakushu: *Matches it.* "Akabane."

A. Gakuho: "'Why might I be here,' you ask?"

AssUniv: *All of them have shadows over their eyes.* "We didn't ask..."

A. Gakuho: "Surprising as it may seem, I do value the well-beings of my faculty, present and past. Even during my time in Kunugigaoka. Which is why I'm here to send Irina my good graces. My son would like to as well, since she was in some capacity instrumental to making you two
"Karma/Naoko] such powerful, enjoyable academic rivals. It's really funny really, how he started -"

A. Gakushu: "Ahem, father...?"

A. Gakuho: "Right. We have limited time as it is." *Back to AssUniv.* "I'll relay the details later at my own discretion."

Okano: "That aside, I suppose that makes sense..."

A. Gakushu: "*Goes up to Karma and Naoko.* "So, what was the fire?"

Naoko: "Excuse me?"

A. Gakushu: "Please, you're going to tell me Karma left one of our latest squabbles of wit for any reason other than the world was at stake?"

Karma: "*Looks to Naoko with a reassuring shrug.*"

Naoko: "Get into a Ministry. Then you'll get to know all about what went down."

A. Gakushu: "*A pity... Well, it is at least nice to see you two back together. Can I expect you both to return Senior year for my victory lap?*"

Karma: "*Oh you're going to pass the finish line, no doubt. But I'm going to do it with a triple backflip.*"

Naoko: "*Not ambitious enough, both of you. I have a corkscrew shooting star in mind.*"

A. Gakushu: "*Looks confidently at Naoko, then back to Karma.* "I missed this."

Karma: "*We'll make you eat those words. And have you mouth-feed it to the Virutuosos too.*"

A. Gakushu: "*Again, I'd like to see you try.*" *They all bow.*

-One menacing force was apparently not enough today, however.-

???: "*The combination of hard leather and strange clickers touching the ground grew louder.*"

Kayano: "*Someone else?*

Miho: *Reveals herself, with a leashed Ronin the German Shepherd in tow.*

Fuwa: *Gasps.* "Doggie!"

Hayami/Kurahashi: *Perk up.*

Kato: "*Miho.*" *Bows with a clenched fist over his heart, which she copies. He then straightens and looks at the canine.* "Hey, Ronin!"

Ronin: *Bites down on the leash and guides his owner to Kato, who begins the petting sequence to make him fall onto its side. Some of the interested AssUniv members get close to also pet him.*
Kato: "Look at this champ." *Continues caressing the Shepherd's head, then looks up to Miho.* "He been missing you as you go on assignment?"

Miho: "A bit. He got distracted for a bit though, when Keitaro and him starred in a promo video for his UFC debut. He's even got his new alias - 'The Countdown' Keitaro Nishiki. Get it? Because once you're in the Octagon with him, you're on borrowed time."

Terasaka: *Gestures flatly and approvingly while shaking his head.* "Of course!"

Kato: "Oh yeah? Did it already happen? How'd he do? What was the final move?"

Miho: "Hah, Keitaro won first round, Submission with the drop bicep cutter in a minute-thirty. Professional streak extends to twenty-eight and zip."

Kato: "Impressive! Haven't seen a drop version in a long while."

Miho: "Smiles, then looks to the final doors before the Labor Delivery section.* "She going to take much longer?"

Kataoka: "If the doctors are right from the start, still going to be an hour and a half."

Miho: "Looks at her smartphone with worry.* "Hm, even that's cutting it close for me. I still gotta head back, return Ronin, actually celebrate with Keitaro, and then go on the next sortie. If I'm going to do all that, I gotta go in about two minutes."

Okano: "We'll make sure Bitch-sensei gets your blessing."

Miho: "Having not heard that derogatory term before, she merely gives it an incredulous stare and rolls with it.* "Excellent." *To Kato,* "But Kato-ani, could I speak with you... Again?"

Kato: "Having not spoken face-to-face alone since the Tokyo Terror, imaginary sweat drops flow down the back of his head.* "Very well." *They both cut the corner.*

Nakamura: "She gonna kill her Chairman?"

Karma: "She's one of a few who can more than 51% of the time."

Yada: "Ah! How cruel of you guys!"

Ronin: "Curiously tilts his head at the many students in wonder.*

Kato: "Now a private-enough distance from the rest of the crew, he sighs.* Look, Miho, I'm sorry I had to go back on my promise. I swear, it will the last time. I just needed to finish this, while I knew for a fact they were going to strike back where I knew they would. I know, there was so much risk, and it could've ended so badly, but it needed to end.

Miho: Kato-ani... *Takes a knee and embraces his midsection, resting her head on his chest.*

Kato: "After hesitating, he places his hands over her shoulders.*

Miho: At this point, I'm just happy you're happy, and safe. It's one of the only reasons I'm looking back on that latest gamble with a smile."
Kato: *smiles.* *Of course.*

Miho: *Good. Send Yada my regards too, huh? I'm going to fetch Ronin.* *Leaves.*

Kato: *"..."*

-Soon enough, twenty minutes was all that was left. But before they passed, AssUniv encountered their final set of guests. A pair of blueheads.-

Nagisa: *Turns back after Kayano points past him. He sees his mother Hiromi and father.*

Hiromi/Nagisa's father: *Both clutch each other as they focus on their son.*

Nagisa: *Walks through the silence of the entire room to confront his parents, without breaking said silence save for the sounds of his footsteps. After roughly a dozen seconds of them looking each other in the eyes, they deeply embrace.*

Yada: *Whispers to Kato.* *I suppose they, like Chiba-kun and Hayami-san, are just excited to be around each other; words cannot even begin to express them. You think so?*

Kato: *I reckon. I'm no stranger to untold affection, and I can assure you it can oftentimes prove to be more potent than told affection.*

Kayano: *Along with the rest, looks on with joy.* *Nagisa-kun... You deserve this.*

-And finally, at long last, the operation was over.-

Karasuma: *In scrubs and has a medical mask and hat adorning his head and face, he walked out the long hall, with something absolutely, undeniably precious in his arms.* *"It's a girl..."*

AssUniv: *All focus up one more time. Since they all had the practice, once Karasuma stops in front of them, they all just slowly crowd around.*

Karasuma: *When he was ready, he lowered his grip and pivoted the subject's face to everyone else.*

AssUniv: *Some of the more enthusiastic could not help letting out an "aw~".*

-The reveal moves to, as Karasuma had ordered, a trio patient's room, learning from the mistakes of trying to fit everyone comfortably into a small one patient room. By then, Irina had recovered, and she could elatedly hold her child in her arms.-

Kurahashi: "Have you thought of the name?"
Naoko: "What you talking about? Of course they did!" *Beat, then turns to Irina.* "You did, right?"

Irina: *Shows teeth with a smile.* "Oh, that's been a back-of-the-mind ponder for the longest time. It took us a while to mutually agree on a certain name for a boy, and one for a girl."

Hara: "Well, what's the one?"

Karasuma: *First shares a happy glance with Irina before continuing.* "Chiasa Karasuma. A Thousand Mornings of the Raven. Not until we've counted these mornings to exactly that number will we ever let her go."

Isogai: "Did you get that from us?"

Karasuma: *Smiles.* "An endless legacy... No doubt that's what we'll make of Chiasa. In her own way, naturally."

Irina: "Okajima, take a shot of us bundled up together. Don't worry about my hair."

Okajima: "Alright." *Focuses his camera, as Irina pulls Karasuma's face close, and she raises Chiasa up so all of their faces are nearby.* "Steady... Say cheese." *Takes the shot, not realizing he forgot something...*

Chiasa: *After the sudden bright light, she begins crying.*

Irina: "Wha-!?"

Sosuke: "Idiot! You forgot to turn off the flash!"

Okajima: "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to!"

Kataoka: "Guys, stop yelling in front of the baby."

-After Karasuma forced the students to help Irina calm Chiasa back down, Okajima (with flash now disabled) continued to take shots, with each and everyone inside the room getting one with the mother and child (Itona took the reins when it was Okajima's turn).-

Kato: *Initially shows great happiness in seeing Karasuma and Irina's grand moment, but as the event draws on, his smile begins fading.*

Irina: "Kato-kun, your turn."

Kato: *Refocusses.* "You sure about this, Karasuma?"

Karasuma: *Goes up to him with some facade of confrontation.* "Of course I am." *Offers a handshake.*

Kato: *Accepts it, and pulls in for a brohug to boot. Releasing, he then moves in close to Irina, putting his hand close to Chiasa so that she could play with it, and smiles brightly as Okajima takes the photo.*

Okajima: *Lowers the device.* "Done." *Shows it to Kato and Irina.*
Kato: *Though he initially shows approval at the composition, internally he feels conflict with the image. He returns to his original position, continuing to hold onto that troubled expression.*

Irina: "Hold onto Chiasa for a second, Karasuma dear." *Hands the child over to a startled Karasuma to stretch her back out.*

Okajima: *Notices Karasuma's exaggerated faltering.* "Oh that's so going into the scrapbook!" *Photographs Karasuma with his wobbly carry.*

Irina: *Finishes refreshing.* "Ah, can't wait for the discharge at 24 hours. Being stuck to a bed without a mate lying next to is just not me."

Nakamura: *Puts her hands behind her head.* "That mean you're ready to be swarmed by an endless amount of home visits and voicemails by our mothers about how delighted to know there's another inspiring matron joining their ranks?"

Irina: *Refocuses.* "Um..."

Isogai: "Not to mention once they're through buttering you up, they're probably going to have you go on a shopping spree with them all over Tokyo for the best baby supplies, from carriages to formula."

Irina: *Sweat marks start trailing down her head.* "Well, that's only for the best..."

Kataoka: "And then the invites to the daycares, playgrounds, and parks come up once she has learned to walk. Not even a second email is large enough for that upcoming inbox."

Hara: "Ooo, that's delightful! Maybe little Chiasa might just meet her best friend at those places like I did with Yoshida-kun!"

Irina: *Her mind finally breaks and defaults to a crudely open-smiling face, made all the more ridiculous by her hair still being split-ended to be going every which way imaginable.*

Okajima: "Oh, so is that!" *Takes a picture of her. He then shows it to the rest of AssUniv.* "See 'em and watch 'em weep."

AssUniv: *All crack up again.*

Kato: *Looks between the two photos of who are the real parents of Chiasa, and then vividly remembers the photo of himself right next to the baby. And though his was definitely more resplendent and responsible, he just wasn't the perfect parent in the picture.* "I'm sorry, I need to go to the bathroom." *Leaves.*

Yada: *Seeing Kato make more of a haste than usual to reach the lavatories, she begins wanting to follow him.* "I need to as well. Excuse me." *Goes through before the door closes.*

Karma: *Looks at them until they completely disappear, then turns back to the rest of the Program.* "Which side of the bathrooms do you think they're both going to?"

AssUniv: *All crack up again.*
Megane...-

Kato: *Goes to get a cub of water from the bubbler, crushing the now-empty cup in his hands, looking up and sighing.*

Yada: "Kato-kun?"

Kato: *Perfectly tosses the cup into the nearby disposal bin, turning to Yada.* "Yes?"

Yada: "What's wrong? Ever since you got close to Chiasa, you were beginning to go haywire."

Kato: *Grits his teeth.* "It's reminding me... I wanted to do something after all of this."

Yada: "What is it?"

Kato: "Come with me if you want to know."

-They then leave NTT Medical Center, going back into his Lykan Hypersport. After a thirty-five minute drive, the vehicle pulls over at the destination - Yanaka Reien, the cemetery. As it's known for, the April floors were scattered with many cherry blossoms as if it was in Kyoto.-

Kato: *With Yada, reaches a certain two grave markers, which, on the left, identifies Kazuto and Yuna Kato. Aiko Kurosawa adorned the right.*

Yada: "Your parents? Buried in Tokyo, of all places?"

Kato: "The first chance my uncle got, he claimed their bodies from the Fukuoka morgue and brought them here. In life, they were ostracized out of this metropolis, in spite of all that they've done for it. Norio and I believed that there was no reason why it shouldn't reward them at least a return in death." *Pulls out the Kato Alliance emblem on his lapel. He takes a knee in front of pastes the pin right next to his father's name on the stone.* "Father, mother, the people have vindicated your past, and your hopes and dreams have been fulfilled far past I imagine you believed they would... Are you proud of me?"

Yada: "Of course they are." *Takes a knee next to him, hooking her arm across his shoulders.*

Kato: *Holds her hand close to his clavicle.* "Regardless of the case, I will always be proud of you. For it's because of my love for you two that willed me to break the wall of vengeance in front of my heart, and renew the Kato's vows for a truer, greater world. I hope that when it's my time, we may finally be a true family again." *Puts his face into his hand.*

Yada: *Clinches her embrace deeper, refusing to relent even when Kato makes to leave by rising up.*

Kato: "Don't think I'm not grateful for AssUniv either, Yada-san. My subdued hatred could've consumed me without you and your friends' joy keeping it in check, until you finally expunged it."

Yada: "Enough." *Keeps the hug tight for a little longer.* "So... What's next for the immortal Kazuhiko Kato?"

Kato: *Smiles, pushing Yada back so they can look at each other.* "It's high time I rejoined my Brothers and Sisters in operations overseas. Namely building up other manufactories of KAM, and..."
clean up the streets from the trafficking syndicates that other branches of the Yakuza have been using to launder drug schemes illegal to the Ninkyodo."

Yada: "Full plate, huh? Can only imagine how you'd look when you drop by from time to time back here or in Kyoto; It's always been strange to see you more tired than anyone else on any given moment."

Kato: *Pauses at that remark.*

Yada: *Confused.* "Kato-kun?"

Kato: "Let's head back." *Attempts to pull Yada with him back to the entrance.*

Yada: *Frees herself.* "No!"

Kato: *Turns back, exasperated.*

Yada: "What was that?"

Kato: "It's nothing, I'm just jaded with having to get ready for that."

Yada: "Again, cut the crap, Kato-kun. I knew something was up the second you saw Chiasa."

Kato: *Looks aside.* "..."

Yada: "Something about that that makes you not to want come back and see us at a later time?"

Kato: *Gulps, then looks at her.* "Do you remember how Karasuma and Irina looked when they were holding Chiasa?"

Yada: *Recalls.* "Of course I do. They looked utterly absurd."

Kato: "And yet they are parents. Now remember how I looked."

Yada: "What's wrong with it? You looked amazing! Like you could actually be a very responsible parent."

Kato: "But I wouldn't be. I'm not ready to be a father, and I fear I never will be."

Yada: *Puts her hand to her hip.* "And what does that," *Her mind begins realizing what he means.* "Have to do... With this...?"

Kato: "I nearly lost you, Yada-san. When Machida put his pistol to the back of your head. At first I didn't even know if I screamed out his name to get his attention; that means I didn't know if I stopped him from killing you."

Yada: "You were really hurt; who could've? And besides, you did do it. See? Here I am, just fine."

Kato: "Can you tell me with complete confidence... That nothing even worse will happen?"

Yada: *Now she remains silent.*
Kato: "I thought so. I need to cut these ties before they strangle me."

Yada: "Why do you think that's your decision to make? What if you're not the only neck stuck inside that ties' loop?"

Kato: "That's why I need to get mine out. Then you too can escape it."

Yada: "Still doesn't explain why the two necks can't remain close afterwards."

Kato: *Remains silent.*

Yada: "This is a new level of selfish, Kato-kun. I know, because I'll admit too, I've been selfish throughout my time around you: Way earlier, I chose to agree with my fears of an unknown future over your beatnik assurance. And when the Assassin Games happened, I confirmed my stance, even though it went against yours. But both times, like the others, I expected it wasn't meant to be forever; we'd reconcile, we'd compromise, and we'd be back together like the issue never really existed. But look at you; dissenting opinion, and for that you want to disappear from our lives."

Kato: "When the hitmen first started coming their way while they had me, I'm sure Kazuto and Aiko were wondering if they made the right choice by sticking together and not sending me to a boy's home."

Yada: "It was their choice. And it's not going to happen again."

Kato: "History rhymes, Yada-san."

Yada: "We learned how to make it free verse. Both of us. From Korosensei."

Kato: "..."

Yada: "But I guess I cannot stop a world-class Yakuza from doing whatever the Hell he likes. What I can do is make you tell everyone else first. Take us back. *Goes past him back to the car.*"

Kato: *Gulps, then follows.*

-Another forty minutes later...-

Kato: *Pulls over the W Motors hypercar in front of the Medical Center. He helps Yada out of the car.*

Yada: *Takes a few steps closer to the entrance.* "Alright... Let's go up there and face the music, and that means the AssUniv Program is over, we all go our separate ways, and remember your honorary membership while you go on to forget about it.*Begins turning back.* "Hope you've thought of the speech." *When she turns back, Kato has disappeared. She rapidly looks around, not finding him anywhere. She then pulls her upper body into the abandoned Hypersport, finding it without souls, but with a folded note that wasn't there before. She opens it up, reading:*"

Kato: *I'm sorry. I won't ever forget. P.S. This is all yours. - KK*

Yada: *Tightly grips the note with anger as if ready to crush it, before loosening her grip and instead holding her face with grief. She decides to slowly walk back into the hospital, alone.*
Space to Tie Up Loose Ends

Chapter Summary

So the conclusion to THE AssUniv Program ends on a bittersweet note. The team gains a new member to their troupe... But they lose one too. Just as the final year of university approaches the lot of them.

And we know the endpoints for many of the classmates of 3-E at Kunugigaoka Junior High... But where'd the rest go?

-Two years later...-

-Just four years ago, the members of Assassination University were only just grinding through their first years of college. Given another four semesters once again as the unstoppable pack they once were, however, and each one once more found their way, regaining their top-notch grades and going through with specialized opportunities and routines in order to better learn about the work environments that their careers were going to take them. The momentum they received was so significant that even after they separated following the conclusion of the Program, each individual member was readily able to further thrive from where they left off, and make a lasting impression for their potential employers on what would be, for most of them, the final years of their academic careers.-

-As we all probably know, Nagisa became just who he said he'd want to be: a teacher, like Korosensei before him. Kayano continued to showcase a thriving cinematic career, with many partnerships and contracts, including the hit series *Dragonfly*, coming her way since the critically-acclaimed *Streak of White*. Karma and Terasaka begun their times as various politicians, and while the former feels at home with being responsible for Japan's largest vault, the latter found being the lackey of a veteran spokesperson somewhat tiresome. Feeling the back strain as a result of a BattlefieldTM wrestling match just last night doesn't help matters. Not that he was going to give up that side-passion anytime soon, though. After a stint of an exchange program in London, Nakamura joined them in government, investing in becoming an interpreter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Okuda and Takebayashi continue the work they got a head-start in at KAM's Kyoto biolabs; to make a universal, artificial blood type. There still remains quite a bit of encryption before they can even begin to experiment on the formulas, but a life's work could hardly be considered so if it was a Rome a day. And naturally, it would all be worth it when it was all over.-

-Kanzaki happily serves as one of the primary caretakers for the elderly at Sunshine Nursing Center; in fact, as she wheels an older Matsukata through the halls, she waves over to a known Kato Alliance official at the floor desk with glee. Sugino plans to break the walls of the semi-pro Nippon baseball league for any and all who've also faced the academic rock bottom... And had their fill of being love-drunk (not that that's still the case for him today... I hope?). The Hinas, Kurahashi and Okano, lead a ecosystem expedition and gymnastics band respectively on separate occasions across the now-landmarked Kunugigaoka Mountain. Hazama is enjoying the peace and quiet in her local library; she seems very grateful of her time protecting Tokyo as AssUniv just for the purpose of keeping this place safe until she could take it over. Sosuke had been hired up as a primary muralist for an upcoming high-profile art festival, hosted by some of the most creative minds across the world. Yoshida, Muramatsu, and Itona all took up their family businesses, and
cooperate however they can, when they can.

-But what of the rest?-  

**Kimura's Tale**

Kimura: *Steps out of a police cruiser in Omotesando, along with a, judging by the decorated uniform, distinguished veteran police officer.*

Shinkawa: *Addresses Kimura.* "Alright, Kimura. As you know, we're responding to a disturbance happening on this street, specifically inside a street-open fast-fashion store. Dispatch claims its just a manic episode from the common customer, but despite the low risk, it's more than a decent start to get your feet wet all the same."

Kimura: *Taps his thigh and looking around with slight disappointment.* "I was just thinking that."

Shinkawa: "Very good. Come along, now." *Gestures him to catch up as they traverse the sidewalk, getting close to the site, when...*

-Gunshots reverberate through the vicinity.-

Kimura/Shinkawa: *Both tense up, running faster to the location and bringing their dominant hands to their standard-issue handguns.*

Criminals: *Two robbers, with large travel bags hanging from their shoulders, back out of the store continuing to fire some 9mm rounds into it.*

Shinkawa: "Freeze!" *With Kimura, trains his pistol toward them.*

Criminals: *Realizing the cops, they turn their firearms their way and fire while retreating the other way.*

Kimura/Shinkawa: *Both get behind cover across from each other (a parallel-parked car and a building alcove respectively). When Kimura sees his moment, he takes aim at the closer robber and fires at the shin, putting a bead cleanly through the muscle.*

Criminal 1: "AGH!" *Immediately falls over.*

Kimura: *Before he can do the same with the other, the latter takes a child hostage, complicating the shot. He throws the adolescent aside once he gets into an alleyway.* "Shit!"

Customer: "The robbers shot someone! Call an ambulance!"

Shinkawa: "Get the other guy! I'll deal with this mess!" *Pushes forward.*

Kimura: "Yessir!" *Sprints past at breakneck velocity, cutting the corner to said alleyway, after seeing the citizen mob on the other side of the passage confirming the criminal wasn't waiting close to the other side.*

Robber: *He springs out of the cover behind a dumpster and opens fire on Kimura, missing every shot. Realizing this and running empty, he throws the gun (which Kimura sidesteps as he
gets closer) and continues to run.*

Kimura: "You're only making this harder on yourself!" *Sprints harder, gaining on the robber, who even lets go of the extra weight of his plunder to try and escape. He gets up a leaning ladder to reach the ceiling of a short building, kicking it down. Before it falls, Kimura dives into the higher section, making it fall back the other way and leaning once more on the roof lip, allowing him to pursue further.*

Criminal: *Makes a jump to another rooftop barely, catching the edge and pulling himself up. As he sprints further, he looks back to find Kimura has made that jump flawlessly. The chase continues until both stop at the edge facing the adjacent street three floors down. With no other way out, the robber takes a sharp sheet of roof metal and swings at him.*

Kimura: *Slides under the horizontal swipe, pulling out a tonfa baton, and using it to block the next strike, sliding the weapon through to get close. He then throws his leg over the robbers joined arms, compressing it to make him let go of the improvised blade. He then transitions it into a boost, bringing Kimura into an electric chair position on the criminal, before falling forward, driving the head into the roof and knocking him out.* "I warned you." *Holstering his baton in favor of a set of handcuffs.*

-Minutes later...-

Kimura: *Closes the backseat door of a police cruiser on the two armed robbers.*

Shinkawa: "Very good work, Kimura. No doubt the rest of the station will hear about your efforts today."

Kimura: *Bows.* "Thank you." *They then begin to get into the front seats.*

Police Officers: *As the reinforcements, they look on at them beginning to take their leave.*

Police Officer 1: "Remember when we saw that guy tear up the obstacle course during training?"

Police Officer 2: "And sweep the rooms so swiftly, his partner did nothing?"

Police Officer 1: "Gods know I'm envious when he got through the top three in the class, but if this is a sign of things to come, I reckon our streets are going to be in good hands."

Kimura: *As he recall what has happened in the heat of the moment, he makes a crack of a grin looking out the window.*

Isogai and Kataoka's Tale

-At All-Nippon News EX Station, in Minato Ward, Tokyo...-

News Director: "We'll be live in five minutes, everyone!" *To the front cameraman.* "The camera good?"

Cameraman: "More than good, sir."

News Director: *Looks up to the technical booth.* "Crisp, coherent audio?"
Technicians: *After carefully assessing the feedback, they give a thumbs up.*

News Director: "Excellent. Then all we're waiting on are our Anchors. Where are they?"

Kataoka: "Here we are!" *Along with Isogai, they both speed-walk from the cosmetics department to the grand desk.*

Isogai: *They both take a seat.* "Sorry we're so late."

News Director: "Late? Hell, I'm used to old newscasters only showing up just thirty seconds before. You two make a good record in comparison. But I reckon that's going to change for you two first-timers real soon; this is the morning primetime, after all."

Isogai: *They glance to each other before looking back at him.* "With all due respect sir... I don't think you'll have to worry about that."

News Director: "Is that so? Well, we'll see." *Goes to tend to another matter.*

Isogai/Kataoka: *Both open their folders, briefly looking over the material they are about to present. They both also give out a quick yawn.*

Kataoka: Nervous?

Isogai: *Don't know what to feel. It's a rush.*

Kataoka: You think they might've called us up too soon?

Isogai: They wouldn't have done it if they didn't believe in us.

Kataoka: Yep. Must've made quite an impression on the nighttime news director to have us moved with a raise.

Isogai: How about we just show them they didn't make a mistake, hm?

Kataoka: Right... It took us two decades to find out what we wanted to do. We're not about to let it go.

News Director: *Returns to view.* "Okay, we are live in five seconds!"

Isogai: *As the director counts down.* We don't normally do it when we have such a large audience, but... Let's go for the kill.

Kataoka: Lead on.

News Director: "...One, hit it!" *Points toward the Anchor Desk.*

Isogai: "Hello everyone, and welcome to All-Nippon Tokyo. I'm Yuuma Isogai..."

Kataoka: "And I'm Megu Kataoka."

Isogai: "Bringing you all the latest updates of the Greater Tokyo Area."
Kataoka: "Our top story tonight, the chilling conclusion of the crusade of an axe-wielding madman on the coastline of Kanagawa."

Maehara's Tale

- Shibuya Ward...-

Maehara: *Now in the Yoyogi District, he is seen standing amongst an ensemble of fellow models, as if teaching them.* "Alright, newbies. You all know this, but we're going in an all-out war against BRAVO in just a couple hours for control of the central ward stadiums. So, it makes sense to keep acknowledging the stakes."

Model 1: *Raises a hand.* "Maehara, isn't BRAVO an agency you've been at before?"

Maehara: "Oh yes, and I regret every second I wasn't busy working with one of their clients, because otherwise I just had to deal with the overall hater-ade within the room, and it was awful."

Model 2: "Yeah well, sir, we haven't been without such occasions in our search competitions either."

Maehara: "We're going to show them better, guys and gals. They think can live in the glory of a bygone era of aggressive masculinity. But let me tell you what I lost to during that 2017 BRAVO open, okay? A former varsity swimmer who posed as the once very-angry cover character for Deity to Die 4, beat my shots with CovertUre phone cases."

Model 3: "Ah, that game was fun. Doesn't beat out its next title title, though."

Maehara: "Ah but let's talk about that next title, hm? Kronos decides to take everything down a notch, and rather than frown on the cover, he gives the slightest hint of a smile. Want to know who didn't really get it the second time, and was promptly taken off the prime BRAVO lineup?"

Model 1: "2017's search winner?"

Maehara: "Right! You see, those guys who think they're strong, are not understanding the turn of the businesses. That's why I'm not making you guys to be strong, I'm making you all to be smart. So, why do you think we're suddenly more reserved?"

Model 4: "Could it be because... Oh, because of the terrorism acts in recent memory?"

Maehara: "Very good. Looks like we're already halfway there. Read the surroundings, everyone. See how the fanbase is going to see you. We learn how to do this, and in just a few days, BRAVO is going to wish they named themselves ALPHA, because when we've wiped the floor with them, they're going to be called ZETA!"

Models: *All raise a controlled fist in the air in rally.*

Maehara: "Testify! Let's make true men out of all of you!"

Fuwa's Tale

- Weekly Shonen Jump Workshop...-
The entire floor was clamoring in celebration, as two young workers were raising a silver, beaked, saltshaker-like trophy.

Floor Manager: "...And it is with great honor that we present the Grand Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize to Hideo Suwabe and Junji Nakajima, for their co-creation innovation, A Billion Seconds in One!"

Suwabe/Nakajima: *Both get blasted with jetstreams of champagne. They had matching smiles on their faces however, and that's what matters.*

Mangaka 1: *Stands alongside a co-worker enjoying the event.* "Gave that work a read yourself? It was intense."

Mangaka 2: "Even that phrase is a disservice, man. The influence of speed in each of the MC's actions were breathtaking. Like that moment he predicted every time he was going to get shot if he dodged a certain way, and used it to evade an entire SMG magazine at near point-blank range."

Mangaka 1: "Or when he turns on the pistons and slams his enemy's throat into the wall while still across the alley."

Mangaka 2: "Hah, Yeah. The story's no slouch either; you actually sympathize with the guy's journey to escape the swarm of bounty hunters after him, while pieces of his past indicate what he regrets most about his time before having precognition, only to realize the flipside's not so great either."

Mangaka 1: "Indeed. All the effort put into being able to brute-force every outcome with efficiency, and yet he could never understand his loved one's problem, because speed is not one of the answers."

Mangaka 2: "How do you think they were able to refine the pacing and fluidity of their action and plot so well?"

Mangaka 1: "We all know; they're under Fuwa; that editor with 100% approval rating."

Mangaka 2: "Yeah yeah yeah, but also, she's no stranger to giving her past clients a quick rise. This just happened to be the best yet, with all her career still ahead of her. How does she do it?"

Fuwa: *With a glass of champagne in hand, she reveals herself with a head pivot towards the two artists' direction.* Because she lived it.

Okajima's Tale

-Creative X-Change Enterprises...-

Okajima: *Sits on the other side of an interview desk, awaiting the response from the main employer of the floor.*

Interviewer: *Looks over the folder full of Okajima's professional shots. They all depict many of the members of the Terasaka Group as they go about their new businesses, from Muramatsu tending to ramen patrons and Yoshida posing next to a humvee he himself repaired, to Itona implementing a new microchip compatible with any post-2017 smartphone. It also included the
shots Maehara used for his resume when getting into BRAVO.* "These are quite some nice compositions, Okajima."

Okajima: "Thank you, sir."

Interviewer: *Closes the folder and sets it down, looking at Okajima.* "You certainly have talent, young one. But most of your type often want to go into photojournalism. So I need to ask, why do you want to work here?"

Okajima: "There's an aura of exclusivity and appreciation for the craft when you aren't lining up with fellow photographers to find the best pose of the up and coming athlete, or visions of the war. I guess what I'm trying to say here is, I've had my fill of what images can do to shock us - disturb us. Right now, I want to show how images can interest us. And X-Change does that better than the rest."

Interviewer: "Hm..."

Okajima: "..."

Interviewer: "Well, alright. In just a bit of time, we'll contact you about your employment. I'm almost certain you're in, but we gotta make it official. We'll get you in on the first available project too. Some private shots with the up and coming Olympians for the AAA magazines. Emphasis on private, yeah?"

Okajima: "That would be excellent, sir." *Handshakes with him before departing on those good terms. Once he's out of the building, he takes out his phone and dials.* "Hey, Rina!"

S. Rina: "Okajima-kun! How'd it go, huh?"

Okajima: "They say I got a really good chance! It looks like I'm going to be able to be a part of you and Sayaka's cinematography team when you debut in the international event!"

S. Rina: "Ah, that's going to be awesome! Do make sure you make me look good, okay?"

Okajima: "No way anybody can make you look bad."

S. Rina: "Hehehe. Alright, gotta continue practicing. See you soon, yeah?"

Okajima: "See you soon. Don't overwork yourself." *Hangs up, cracking a smile before continuing to depart from the premises.*

**Chiba and Hayami's Tale**

-After a brief stint of independent advertising and accommodating low-level client projects, Chiba and Hayami are invited to Nikken Sekkei architectural firm to discuss employment based on the performance of their latest task...-

Chiba/Hayami: *Sit outside the building's offices, going over the detailed report of the next assignment.*

Hayami: *Speaking to Chiba with silence.* **Renovations and expansions for the railroad stations and airports for the upcoming Games...**
Chiba: *I have a feeling a lot of our friends have been working on similar stuff lately.*

Hayami: *You have an idea on how to make them look nice?*

Chiba: *Starting with Haneda, since that's the most populous airfield in Tokyo, we'd have to build up large bridges for a second international terminal. Said terminal and its connectors, I imagine, could look like orientally designed with a the Pillars of Moral Character, akin to say the Parthenon or Supreme Court. Each is adorned, rather than with Corinthian engravings, with prime examples of each moral, and keep it peaked like a mountain to give the space and strength of such characteristics.*

Hayami: *Sets down her papers and takes Chiba's close hand.* *I imagine all of this is OSHA compliant? We're the ones who are going to take this Docomomo and their contractors; it wouldn't be right that we're signing men to their deaths.*

Chiba: *Of course. Only about dozen people died building said Parthenon.*

Hayami: *Of course. And we're sure it's going to stick around?*

Chiba: *Damned if reinforced aramid carbon fibers reinforcing reflective concrete is going to fall to a couple tsunamis and/or earthquakes. The light weight also lets us install some pretty neat security detail for sniffing out bombs, and the architecture, if your structural engineering complies, will give way to some of the best camera placements.*

Hayami: *Hm, we only just got this project, and we're already almost there.*

Chiba: *Gets up.* *Let's win them over, then.*

Hayami: *Walks up to him.* *Always got your back.*

Chiba: *That's how I know we can wade this storm.* *They walk their way.*

Hara's Tale

-Taito Ward...-

-With the increase of population only just a sign of the spike due to the Olympics to come, The Kato Alliance wants to capitalize on the huge influx of tourism, while also helping them find a way to stay near the live events. How do they do both? Offer up their lodging for the interval! But before they do that, they need to revise their old apartments, because, honestly... No family living there will find a need for small fridge secret compartments. Among other tactical advantages and implements.-

Franco: *Opens one of said fridges up, revealing a hidden assault rifle, three pistols, and their accommodating ammunition.* "Must I?"

Hara: *Her arms crossed, she nods.* "Sorry, mate. We'll find another home for them, unless you're going to need them for your next sortie."

Franco: *Sighs, taking the plaque of weaponry out.* "Very well."
Dalsing: "Hara-sama, I've almost completed the rewiring of this hidden switch."

Hara: *Looks over, seeing the shifted bookshelf revealing an extra room on the side.*

Dalsing: "I just wonder how we're going to cover that with something mundane afterwards."

Hara: "How about a second light? Most of everyone who's coming isn't going to be used to the dark happening so soon."

Crawford: *Appears from behind the corner of the secret room.* "We certainly adapted quickly."

Hara: "You're soldiers; that's part of the job description. And that's exactly why we're changing this room up."

Crawford: "Right..." *Disappears.*

Sadik: *One knee on the ground, he's holding onto a small transponder connected to two non-laminated slats of floor wood.* "We can't just cover up this floor cart shelf with, like a carpet?"

Hara: "Can't risk a kid not triple-tapping on it by mistake, Mr. Sadik. Cut the signal receiver."

Sadik: "Man, being a citizen must be pretty boring." *Removes said small transponder.*

Hara: "They just have a smaller patience for mystery. Don't tell me you never were like that before."

Sadik: *Clicks his tongue.* "I was afraid of Santa. I get your point."

Yakuza: *Snickers.*

Hara: "You were afraid of Santa?"

Sadik: "He invaded your house and gave you wrapped boxes. What if they were bombs?"

Dalsing: * Stops laughing for a second.* "So why hasn't your neighbor's house been detonated yet?"

Sadik: "If Santa torched every house, he would've been caught ages ago... At least that's what thirteen-year-old me said."

Hara: *Couldn't help cracking up.*

Crawford: "Oh, poor Sadik..."

**Mimura's Tale**

-Just before a movie set positioned on Ikebukuro...-

Mimura: *Frantically holds a smartphone to his head, which was wearing a very forced, crooked smile born of extreme preoccupation.* "Are you really sure about this, Kayano-san?" *Listens for a little while.* "Yeah, I know, use your real name when I come up to them. But you really think
they've gotten the memo? What if they show me out on the spot?" *Listens again.* "No, I do not
doubt your influence, you out of your mind after how you helped people like Maehara-san? This is
just-" *Listens for the last time.* "You're right. I'll just do it. It's going to be great. And once I'm
done, I'll tell you all about how great it was. And then I'll tell the rest. Yes, bye." *Hangs up. He
then proceeds deeper into the settlement, finally finding who he was looking for within.* "Director
Miike?"

Miike: *Turns around, revealing himself to be T. Miike.* "Who are- Oh, you're the one Aguri
Yukimura said would be coming, because she knows you're a huge fan of me, hm? Your name is,
uh, Koki Mimura?"

Mimura: "Yes sir. And I am quite a big fan."

Miike: "Mm, prove it." *Turns completely facing him.* "Immortals with outlandish swords."

Mimura: *Shakes his head.* "Blade of the Immortal."

Miike: *Nods approvingly.* "A Lord looking for excitement."

Mimura: *A drop goes down the side of his neck.* "13 Assassins."

Miike: *Points.* "Ah, you're beginning to sweat. How about, toppling the underworld with the
underbelly?"

Mimura: *Cracks a huge grin.* "Fudoh."

Miike: "So you are a fan."

Mimura: "Very much so, sir." *Why were all of them about assassins...?*

Miike: "I suppose you're not here to talk about projects I once directed however, hm? You want
to know what I'm doing now?"

Mimura: "Naturally, sir."

Miike: "Then look out for trailers."

Mimura: "Wha-?"

Miike: "I'm joking."

Mimura: "Oh." *Laughs.*

Miike: *Joins a brief fit.* "But, these are trade secrets. If I'm divulge them to you..."

Mimura: *Looks at it with shock mixed with glee and accepts.* "Of course I'll join the team!"
Miike: "Excellent!" *Leads Mimura deeper into the set.* "This set is for a soft reboot of the recently-completed, hit Shonen Jump series. I think you know the one - *A Billion Seconds in One*?"

Mimura: "Oh yeah I know about that one!"

Miike: "Yes, the studio wanted to capitalize on its success immediately with a live-action adaptation. I think, since I've seen quite a bunch of your own work around these parts and in Kyoto, that I'll be pushing you into a co-producer's role."

Mimura: *Is flabbergasted.* "So soon!?"

Miike: "Of course! If Yukimura is impressed by your creative input, I don't see why I shouldn't. Now, Sosuke Ike**** isn't here today due to being out of the current scene, but I believe you may be very pleased to see who's going to play Razor. Takeshi Kit***, get over here!"

Takeshi: *Looks his way.*

Mimura: *His mouth almost hits the floor.*

Takeshi: *Enters the conversation.* "Who do we have here?"

Miike: "Beat, this is Mimura, our newest producer for this movie."

Takeshi: "That right?" *To Mimura.* "Hope you have the stomach for it, newbie." *Offers his hand too.*

Mimura: *Picks up his mouth from off the ground and shakes again.* "I hope you'll find that I am."

**Naoko's Tale**

-In the Ministry of Defense HQ, Shibuya...-

MoD Trainees: *At least twelve of them were standing at the ready in a windowless hall.*

Naoko: *Slams open a door indicating her arrival.* "Morning, men and ladies. Welcome to recruitment! I'm Special Agent Naoko Akimoto, currently stationed under Common Institutions. I will be your drill instructor!"

MoD Trainees: *Most of the men look unimpressed by their short, unimposing, peer mentor.*

Naoko: "For three months, you will be under my regimen and leadership. If you all survive the camp, you will all become fully-fledged members of this agency and be deemed worthy to serve your country in its darkest conflicts, both domestic and foreign! IF, you survive. You all come from the best your region, prefecture, city, university, what have you, has to offer, and so expectations of stature are high. Your job will be to surpass them, and if you abide, I will make sure you do."

MoD Trainee 1: "Excuse me, miss, but what can you tell us about stature?"

MoD Trainee 2: "And are you sure you're not a part of the 'take your daughter to work' day program?"
MoD Trainee 4/5: *Both laugh at their two colleague's remarks.*

Naoko: *Her eyes squint and turn completely white for the moment.*

MoD Trainee 3: "What's a lady like you know about being a hardened secret agent?"

Naoko: "Very well." *Pivots to the five of them, with her hands still behind her.* "Kijima, Hironaka, Domen, Hiiragi, and Juba, step forward."

MoD Trainees 1-5: *All glance at each other before complying.*

Naoko: "All of you are Meiji Law major graduates, I understand? Top honors? Star athletes in your own rights in baseball and football?"

MoD Trainees: "Yes, ma'am!"

Naoko: "Very well... Take your fighting positions."

MoD Trainees: "Ma'am?"

Naoko: "Go on!"

MoD Trainees: *All of them get into a combat pose.*

Naoko: "Very good... Now: Try to cleanly hit me."

MoD Trainee 1: *Either eager or knows better than to question her again, he moves forward with a flying right straight.*

Naoko: *Throws an open hand at him, jabbing her fingers at his eyes. He does manage to close them, but the attack stunned him regardless, which leaves him open to a succeeding punch to his chest, putting him onto his back.*

MoD Trainees 2-5: *Seeing their cohort go down easily, they all begin swarming her.*

Naoko: *Throws a wide spinning hook to put them all at a distance. As she returns her foot, 5 (furthest on the right) throws a left punch of his own. Naoko bobs her upper body to the far side, and then grips his passing wrist with her right arm from underneath, creating an obtuse pivot point. Naoko then oblique kicks his heels, lifting him enough into the air for a swinging toss, which again provides crowd control. She slams him down right in front of everyone else and delivers a left downward punch to his chin. Naoko steps over him to simultaneously check-block a low roundhouse by 4 (on the right) and pull back from a left hook from 2, resulting in him overswinging and smashing into 4's cheek. Realizing his blunder, he takes too long to notice Naoko kicking his popliteal, forcing him to kneel; she keeps hold of his right arm and 12-6 elbow smashes his clavicle, while raising said limb, creating excruciating (but brief) pain that made 2 crumple to the ground. 4 was still stunned, letting Naoko take his left leg and swing it in a inverted twisting kick that saw his sole imprint 3's incoming lower face, pushing him back. The spinning moved 4's upper body into the exposed inverted facelock, where Naoko then delivered another downwards elbow, this time to the chest. 3 was finally handled after he too went for a hook; Naoko ducked under, and threw one of her arms back, so that her tricep caught the inner of the elbow. This guided her hand to 3’s wrist, which she clutched and lifted upwards, completing a transition into a standing..."
side shoulder lock. The forced torsion was bad enough for the unwary trainee, but then came the arm-wringer flip, completed first by a light roundhouse kick to his falling torso, and once he was on the ground, a knee onto his chest. She completes the spar with a mock set up for a wristlock. After the scuffle, she dusts herself off and backs away from her mess.* "Let me tell you something, Meiji grads."

MoD Trainees 1-5: *Most were still on the ground, groaning in pain.*

Naoko: "You all have a long road ahead to becoming agents for the Ministry of Defense. Think this is the worst? You still have extreme NLP, the Karasuma Routine, the Course of Death! Now get up off your asses and get back into to formation!"

MoD Trainees 1-5: *All slowly return rigid.*

Naoko: "Read my lips, you five and anyone else who think they have everything sorted out and are all the more smug for it. I've been in this business way longer than you all may ever be in this building combined, and mark my words: just when you have all the answers, the questions change. Forget anything about what you learned about this place before you came here: This isn't Hell, this is where the Devil sends you when even Hell doesn't want you! But survive this Worse-Than-Hell... And there may be hope for this country yet. Am I CLEAR to all of you now!?"

MoD Trainees: "Ma'am, yes ma'am!"

Naoko: "Then let's start; give me a hundred single-hand push-ups; because it's all of your first days, I'll let you use your dominant hand! Tomorrow, we work the other! Now drop down!"

MoD Trainees: *All comply.*

Naoko: *Paces in front of them.* "So while we're all being attentive and candid, let me explain a few things. This building, with its ever-changing answers. Do you know what I mean by that? Why are you all here? For the benefits? Maybe. The nice pay? Enticing. But one way or another, the job description says you're going to be doing good by your country. What it doesn't tell you is that there are many ways to incur consequences." *Head whips at Trainee 3.* "HEY! You call that a push-up, man!?!"

MoD Trainee 3: "Hand's been twisted well by you, ma'am!"

Naoko: "Then switch!" *After he does so, she continues.* "So, you may be the most obedient auxiliary, but still realize that all that you did only contributed to the extension of a tumor. Rebel, and you'll indirectly institute an over-corrective regime within your division. So where's the limit? What situation's best? This is why you're in Worse-Than-Hell; the physcials are nothing without the answer - they're just there so you can carry it out! The answer to escape each level is nothing like the other before. Show it, and prove to us you're a Great Man or Woman of the Law! Am I being clear?"

MoD Trainees: *Struggling and stuttering.* "Ma'am, yes ma'am!"

Naoko: "Good. Keep going!"

Karasuma: *Is shown to be watching the session happen on his computer.* She's very much like her old man, it's scary... I hope she doesn't take too long of a break from active duty, but the agency could make do with this new legion she is training...
-Clearly, everyone else seems to be doing just as well. But there still remains one more story to tell...-
Distant Space

Chapter Summary

Only one story from the previous chapter remained unanswered...

Yada's Tale

-In Shinbashi, Minato Ward, Tokyo, during the same time interval as everyone else...-

-Yada sits alongside roughly another dozen of like-minded individuals at an oval desk, having just finished a lecture with a certain familiar peer...-

Kazuhiro: *Checks his smartphone clock.* "It looks like our time here is up. Having just given you all this precious information, not a moment too soon. Economical timing, hm?"

Subjects: *All give a quick snicker.*

Kazuhiro: "Now as all of you know, all of you are certified careers with KAM, after having dealt with the Fifty-Layer Background Check and been extensively quizzed on your knowledge of the industry you're about to walk into. This new year of recruitment is among the most talented and skilled we've seen in the company's history, and we'd like to show our appreciation for that; the most effective and efficient among you will be presented with the CFO chair."

Subjects: *All of them are pleasantly surprised by what's up for grabs.*

Kazuhiro: "As such, while you can rest easy with your job security in the foreseeable future, I reckon you all believe the stakes to remain ever so high. Show us how you can stand out to make this company better, and you'll be merited proportionately."

Subjects: *All rise and bow.*

Kazuhiro: "Meeting adjourned."

-Outside the meeting hall building, in the parking lot...-

Subject 1: *He walks with two others from the lecture, who were also guys.* "Man, where do we start with this?"

Subject 2: "Just our age, and yet he definitely has the experience that allows him that kind of confidence when presenting to us..."

Subject 3: "I was hoping I'd just blend it; this company, rocking as it is, just seemed right to do well."

Subject 1: "But you can't scoff away an opportunity to reach one of the tops of this corporation!"
Subject 2: "But it's as you said: Where do we start?"

Subject 3: "There's almost like no openings from the inside."

Subject 2: "You think it was just one guy who was able to get it all together? The 50 Layers, the extensive security clearance we had to do on the way in and out, and all the covered bases of the operation, where it seems as though any action we actually take to change it only hinders it? You think all of it is just the brainchild of one brain?"

Subject 1: "Get real! How could one regular guy or gal make all of this? This was multi-mind perfection."

Subject 2: "And the COO wants us to make it better?"

Subject 3: "Indeed..."

Subject 1: "Let's think about after a few cold ones. To my car." *They head towards a Mercedes-Benz CLS 2018.*

-But before they could cross the next lane of the lot to reach it, a car zips past them. A white-on-black Lykan Hypersport. And it catches their eyes as it takes a stop at the arm booth.-

Subject 2: "Whoa, who's got that hot rod?"

Subject 1: *All take a closer look as someone pops out of the driver-side window to show their ID tag to the scanner. They find it to be a young lady with dark brown hair tied up into a ponytail so that the longest strands touch the short of her back.* "Oh it's her, from our recruitment period. That Yada woman, if I recall her surname correctly."

Subject 3: "The Seijo University graduate huh? Didn't she only spend a year there, though?"

Subject 2: "Yeah yeah, I recall. She spent most of her undergraduates in Ritsumeikan."

Yada: *Speeds off in her hypercar.*

-She eventually returns to her alleged home, a small industrial tower turned residential building. One of the highest floors, she unlocks the door to a very roomy, decorated, New York-styled loft.-

Yada: Well... Time to get to work.

-A few hours later...-

-It has become nighttime, and Yada was continuing to brainstorm innovative topics and how they could be pitched to the company.-

Yada: *Is typing on her laptop, stopping every so often and putting her hand to her chin, in deep thought.*

-As this happens another window keeps scrolling up, due to her friends putting up more live chat messages.-

Kayano: "The Summer's coming up. Ready to do it again, everyone?"
Kimura: "Been ready."

Nakamura: "So sorry, everybody. Can't make it this time around; promised to see Oxford Centre with my fellow 'exchangees' during that weekend. Send me some pics, yeah? <3"

Terasaka: "How dare. You're the one who's supposed to send us back some images! We'll be putting you on litter cleanup next year!"

Karma: "But big boy, you're not showing up either. Because if I recall from seeing a certain poster for Wrestle Castle XV, Kendall Sigma has a certain opponent."

Terasaka: "... *Chats again.* "I hate you."

Hayami: "Good idea, Terasaka-kun. We'll make sure to give all you missing ones littering cleanup duty next time."

Muramatsu: "Shit."

Itona: "Literally."

Yada: *Takes periodic glances at the chat screen, giggling at the latest exchange. As she's going through her next interval of long typing, her chat server blares a private message alert. Finding it to be from Nagisa, she opens up the secondary box.*

Nagisa: "Hey, Yada-san."

Yada: *Types.* "Nagisa-kun? What's up? You going to show up for the big thing?"

Nagisa: "About that, I'm going to have to decline. The school wanted me to start Summer sessions, so I'll have to pass as I work up a new curriculum. Sorry, Yada-san."

Yada: "Hey, if that's what's keeping you, no problem. So, what did you also want to talk about?"

Nagisa: "Have you talked to Kato ever since the disappearance?"

Yada: *Her hands retreat from the keyboard for a second as her pupils shrink a bit.*

Nagisa: "We're not asking you two to become lovers again. It's just tough having these feelings, you know? Wondering if by remaining friends with one, we're hurting the other? The last thing we'd want is to hurt either of you."

Yada: "You don't have to worry about that. I cannot determine who you're friends with."

Nagisa: "I'm glad you think that way, Yada-san. But still, it's so strange having this aura of mystery whenever we open up this whole-group K-odec chatroom, and only one of you chats at all."

Yada: *Pauses again, looking aside.*

Nagisa: "I'm the biggest hypocrite for saying this, Yada-san. But poor communication kills; you don't begin speaking again with him soon, you might lose him not only as someone you once
loved, but also someone you do love. I almost forced that with you guys and my parents; I never want to bear witness to it again."

Yada: "Then why isn't it also Kato's job to try and break the silence too? He's never that busy."

Nagisa: "Maybe there's not a true reason why he should do it over you. But you have proclaimed that your life's work was to keep AssClass together through thick and thin, Yada-san. That didn't waver when we upgraded to AssUniv. Is there any chance that maybe, Kato, in spite of why you don't like him, still deserves to be kept in the loop of how you've been doing, honorary member and all?"

Yada: *Reads over those set of messages over and over with thought.*

Nagisa: "Ah, but it's your choice, Yada-san. Remember, we care about you, and we'll never forget what you've done to keep us sane. Hope to see you again soon."

Yada: "Of course. Bye."

Nagisa: *Ends conversation.*

Yada: "..." *Facepalms with frustration.*

-The next day...-

-After the latest recruitment boosting activity, seeing all of the newbie subjects work with the engineering departments and technical writing teams to actively pitch how-to functions of the operation, Yada yet again drives out of the lot of the training building, heading to NTT Medical Center.-

Akihisa: *Sits upright on his hospital gurney.* "You got another gift for me, sis?"

Yada: "Indeed I do, little brother. Feast your eyes on this." *Pulls the wrapped gift out of her purse.*

Akihisa: *Opens it up.* "Oh my God, the entire nine seasons of the original Shin-Suji!? Signed by Nak-imada!?!"

Yada: *Takes a seat next to him.* "Nurses said you were getting into the rebooted series after its been airing on those TVs. I reckon you'd like to see where it all began more."

Akihisa: "Definitely playing to my interests, onee. Thank you." *Opens arms for a hug.*

Yada: "Anything for you, Akihisa." *Embraces him, before they both let go and settle back to their original positions.*

Akihisa: *Tilts his head when he takes a closer look at his sister's face.*

Yada: *Perplexed.* "Akihisa? Something on my face?"

Akihisa: "Yeah. A long expression. What's wrong?"

Yada: "Ah. It's been a long day, maybe?"
Akihisa: "I don't think so - you're used to those. You've been thinking about that day again?"

Yada: "No I haven't."

Akihisa: "Listen, big sis, if you want someone to stand with you, I'm right here. I'll get in the way, tell Kato to piss off."

Yada: "You don't need to do that and worry yourself, Akihisa. It's totally fine."

Akihisa: "Then why can't you even act like it anymore?"

Yada: *Bites her lower lip.*

Akihisa: "I love you, Onee. I'm always going to be there for you. Just like you have been for me, keeping me happy with your gifts and visits. I'm going to do all I can to make you happy too. You just need to tell me how - What will make you happy? How do I kill your sadness?"

Yada: *Not knowing the answer yet, she concedes a handhold with her brother, kissing him on the forehead goodbye.*

-Back at the loft...-

Yada: *After taking a quick, refreshing shower, she sits down with a cup of hot ginseng tea and continues to try and type her way further with coming up with the right idea for the weekend subject pitch, as she looks at the scrolling chatroom.*

Mimura: "Do we know who's bringing what?"

Okajima: "How's that going to matter?"

Fuwa: "Well we don't want everyone bringing just sponges and no soap. ^(0.0)>"

Kataoka: "Well at least some of us had that concern coming in. Isogai-kun and I have got the mops and brooms."

Kimura: "I'll bring the hose and excess towels."

Sosuke: "I reckon me, Maehara, and Hara can get some spare lumber and roof shillings if the schoolhouse itself is damaged."

Yada: *Her smile begins to return as she pays deeper attention elsewhere.* Everyone's coming back together. It's amazing.

Naoko: *Appears for the first time on the log.* "That won't be necessary. I'll fund the compensation for damages and give you the proper supplies to fix them. They'll be inside the building when you arrive."

Yada: *Notices her message.*

Kayano: "You're going to do that, Naoko? 8D"
Naoko: "The least I can do for not being able to show up that weekend. Recruitment training for the MoD is keeping me."

Chiba: "If that's what you're peddling, it should more than be enough to save you from litter pickup next year."

Terasaka: 'HEY!'

Yada: *Gives another light crack before initiating a private chat with Naoko.* "Hey Naoko-san."

Naoko: "Yada-san?"

Yada: "Naoko, on the field, through logistics, or even on here, have you been in contact with Kato-kun?"

Naoko: "Kato? Yeah, I've spoken to him a few times since. Before I returned to Shinjuku and headquaters, me and him got around on a few more international missions, saving the free world and that kind of jazz."

Yada: "How is he?"

Naoko: "Well you know, business like usual." *Waits a moment.* "Ah, you're wondering if he's winning the breakup?"

Yada: *Blushes.* "Of course not!"

Naoko: "Whatever you say. So I guess you still haven't spoken with him, hm?"

Yada: "No. I'm afraid we haven't."

Naoko: "A shame. After being the collective MVPs of the AssUniv Program for almost the entire duration, isolation between you two is saddening."

Yada: *Sighs, taking her hands off the keyboard.*

Naoko: "As much as I never wanted to admit it before that second Summer, you two did look good together."

Yada: *Begins typing again.* "All good things come to an end, Naoko."

Naoko: "That's not true - what about the endless legacy we have been preserving?"

Yada: *Waits.*

Naoko: "You know, Kato taught me to always be honest about my feelings when I'm upset. If Kato genuinely does not give you the satisfaction of life, then that's fine. But make sure you tell yourself that very clearly. You need to kill doubt in a flash, like Korosensei did, otherwise it'll hurt you real bad down the road."

Yada: "!!" *The latest message resonates within her.*

Naoko: "Just my two cents, though. See you around." *Ends conversation.*
Yada: *Slouches back on her chair.* *Kill doubt, hm? Well there's an easy way to do that...* *Moves her cursor over Kato's tag, with the invisible light on, but still doesn't go through with opening up a window, as her mind flickers.* *But there's another way. Kill doubt... Kill doubt...* *Her smile returns and she actively switches windows and begins typing.*

-Now at the end of the week...-

Kazuhiro: *Moves to the presentation screen.* "Very good work, all of you. You all really do live up to being the best new generation of impressarios for KAM R&D. It seems the firm's future is secured for decades to come."

Subjects: *All quietly clamor between each other.*

Kazuhiro: No doubt, many of your ideas have inspired our creative team, with many of the innovations being revamped with some of our other tech to be redistributed by other means. But there's one crisp, clean idea among them that needs no such alteration, and that's why its brainstormer is leaving this building today as one of this firm's COOs." *Presses on a remote and reveals the presentation and report.* "Secondary-biometric smartguns. First requires hand-compression to unlock the primary safety, so no drop-firing. Impressive, but already been done before. What's next intrigues all of us - rather than a handprint codification, this handgun requires voice control - speaking a certain keyword towards the firearm's interbred microphone. The receiver only recognizes live audio's acoustics, and when it recognizes certain frequencies in our unique voices, the gun's micromachines will lever off the mechanisms of discharge, allowing selective user fire. Weaknesses were introduced by the gun owners having their speech muffled or nullified, which would pose a problem for federal and private military forces, but this is specifically catering to our prudent civilian demographic, and it was acknowledged that any chance the person was captured and gagged, they wouldn't have had a chance to begin with unlocking their gun, hence meaning that was beyond their control anyways. Finally, because we have already been working on the inexpensive, non-electrically-powered production of the micromachines devoted to such a kind of biometric security, implementing them into all future firearms will be convenient, swift, and economical; the MSRP's of our models may just be one dollar higher as a result - something no sensible gun owner is going to lose their minds over."

Subjects: *All look on with impressment.*

Kazuhiro: "Who delivered this idea, you ask?" *Presses to the next slide, revealing their face.* "Touka Yada." *Gestures to her and begins clapping.* "Acknowledge the success, everyone."

Subjects: *All turn to face their winning colleague and applause as well.*

Yada: *Humbly appreciates the collective kudos of the crowd.*

Kazuhiro: "For coming to the root of the universal problem with civilians carrying firearms across the world, and suffocating the biggest issue most enthusiasts have with trying to program gun control into their most-prized possessions, I'm awarding her with the CFO placard." *Presents it from out of his inner jacket pocket and hands it to her.* "Congratulations."

Yada: *Accepts it.* "Thank you very much, Mr. Kato." *Finds the idea of identifying Kazuhiro with Mr., like many times before, strange, but she smiles it away.*

-Once she was out and into her car, Yada immediately phoned up her parents and brother. Though
the conversation was muted out, everyone looked very pleased. The big sister of AssClass/AssUniv then proceeded to tell her other "little siblings," in one massive group conversation that erupted the Lykan Hypersport in a stadium-level appreciative uproar.-

-At night again, she eventually makes her way back home, after gleefully conversing her success to all of her former classmates. As she parks her car in the garage under the loft building, her phone scrolls down her custom list of contacts again to tell the last important person in her life... Which happens to be Kazuhiko Kato's number!-

Yada: *Turns off the Hypersport's engine and pays deeper attention to the contact highlighted on her phone. She slouches deeper into her seat and looks away, pondering over what she should do next. She first decides to go up to her residence. Climbing the stairs proved a little more tiresome than usual, no doubt because of her euphoric episode alongside her lifelong friends on the phone, but she eventually made it. Closing the door quickly behind her as she usually does, she sets down her purse and all other belongings on the kitchen table and then takes a seat at her lounge chair, once again taking a look at Kato's number.* He already knows; he wouldn't need to hear it from me, right? But he remains a good friend of mine. He has every right to be told it as everyone else does... *After wondering long enough, she rises up from the chair.* I've held the hatchet long enough; Kato should be delighted no matter what. *She walks to her bedside to see the portraits she's left there and dials. But after the call is made...*

-The default "new call!" sounds of a flip-phone are produced. And they reverberate throughout the room with crisp resonance.-

Yada: *Her eyes widen as she realizes she's not alone in her apartment, but she doesn't turn around.*

????: *Would be revealing himself for their hand held the phone that was blaring throughout the otherwise silent room. They then go on to flip it open, ending the ringing sounds, but do not speak into the microphone.*

Yada: *Her mouth was ajar, in shock as the "conversation" went on. She couldn't even hear the footsteps of the unknown individual and does not sense him coming up to her to... Hug her waist, and close their flip-phone in front of her. Her initial scare turns into satisfaction, as she hangs up too, throwing her phone onto the bed and turning around to face the person. Then, behind silhouettes, they kiss.*

-The next morning...-

Yada: *Her alarm clock's morning chime awakens her. After a brief stirring and a back stretch, she opens her eyes with a squint. She lifts the pillow her head is resting on slightly, as if to look for something. Not finding it there, she then resolves to turn and look back just enough... To realize that she is alone on the bed.* An hour or a few... Is better than zero hours. *She fully turns back to her original side sleeping position, and flings a hand onto the alarm in an attempt to snooze it... Until her hand stops in its tracks because of something above the box.* Hm? *Lifts her head off the pillow in confusion, finding that a smaller, velveted box has blocked her swing. She goes through with snoozing the alarm and then picks up the smaller box, eventually opening it up. The contents inside force her other hand to cover her mouth, burying the rest of her face in the pillow and letting out a high-pitched squee.*
The finale of AssUniv!!

But only the beginning of things to come...

After all, when one thing ends, something else begins too.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Roughly a week later...-

-Inside Kato Arms and R&D Manufacturing regional HQ, on the 50th floor of Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, Minato Ward, Tokyo...

Ito: *A standing suited CFO, identified by the biometric ID tag pinned to his left chest, closes his retractable pointer.* "In essence, though R&D makes the reasonable claim that such investment may prove to be more lucrative than we'd like, integration of injectable nanomachines into a person's hand that sends out HF thoughts as perfectly-live audio signals beyond the reception of the naked ear could prove to expand the definition of Miss Yada's voice-activated smartguns. This way, if a captured gun owner with his mouth muffled breaks free and reclaims his gun, he needs not pry off his muffling in order to get ready to fire. This base-covering... Will most definitely accelerate profits on every demographic, and start our push to a gross revenue of over twenty billion. Are we all clear on the specifics?"

Kazuhiro: *Shown to be also among the high-level officials in the room, actively listening.*

Yada: *Raises her hand.* "How soon can we begin brainstorming the updates to the firearms built to understand our neuro-cognitive speech?"

Miho: *Revealed to be on the other side, spectating the presentation.* "Tonight, if need be. I'll be sure to send the transmissions and audit the research, on your call."

Ito: "Excellent. Anything else?"

-Now the entire room remains silent this time.-

Ito: "Alright then, let's go make a difference."

-They all form a fist over their chest and bow to each other. By this point, however, it has turned five P.M., and many of the suits were beginning to take their leave, including Yada, who was the last to leave after cleaning up her laptop and purse.-

Yada: *As she walks past the threshold of one of the conference rooms, her assassin instincts flare up and she vigorously turns to her right, finding one young, male employee hiding on the
*Other side of the fully-blinded windows.*

Employee: "EUH!" *Briefly repulses when he sees Yada with widened eyes viciously looks his way.*

Yada: *Calms down when she recognizes who it is.* "Nakanishi?"

Nakanishi: *Swiftly tidies himself up.* "Yes, yes. That's me."

Yada: "You really shouldn't try to sneak up on a lady, Nakanishi."

Nakanishi: *Scratches the back of his head.* "You're right, I'm sorry about that."

Yada: "So?"

Nakanishi: "So what?" *Mind flickers.* "Oh, right! Are you, um, free? This coming weekend?"

Yada: "Well, not on the Saturday, but Sunday yeah. Why do you ask?"

Nakanishi: "Ah, well, y'know, If you'd like, I, uh, I would too. If you would like, I'd love to go on a date with you. Perhaps going in and around Harajuku and enjoy the vibrant nightlife?"

Yada: *Giggles.* "We could still enjoy the evening there, Nakanishi."

Nakanishi: "Really? Great!"

Yada: *Shows her spread left hand, revealing a silver and blue steel promise ring.* "But I fear it's not going to be the date you imagine."

Nakanishi: *Realizes it and deflates.* "Oh, I understand..."

Yada: *Shakes her head.* "Don't worry though; I reckon you'd still be pleased to join me there on Sunday."

Nakanishi: "How so?"

Yada: "If you thought that little speech is the best way to get a woman to go on a date with you, then you're going to be glad to find out even better ways. From me."

Nakanishi: *Is taken aback.* "Yeah, I guess I'm not too good with it."

Yada: "Forgive me, but was I the first you proffered?"

Nakanishi: *Looks defeated.* "Yes..."

Yada: "Then it's no wonder, and it's nothing to be ashamed of." *Moves in close to him, pinching on his chin a little.*

Nakanishi: "!?

Yada: *Brings her face slightly close to his.* "Negotiation and reception... Our best weapons in society. They must always be well-tempered. And I'll make sure I can sharpen up yours." *Pulls
back to a respectable distance.* "So, Sunday, Harajuku?"

Nakanishi: *Stiffens up.* "Sunday. Harajuku."

Yada: *Smiles to him as she leaves.* "Marvelous." *Leaves.*

Nakanishi: *Once he confirms that she has turned the corner and they can no longer see each other, his upright stance immediately falters, and he takes a deep breath.* What a woman! I cannot begin to imagine who's the lucky guy wearing the other band that can tame that tigress!

Yada: *Leaves the Mori Tower, heading to the adjoining parking lot, when she gets an alert on her smartphone. As she continues her way, she takes a look, revealing the reason to be a LINE app private message, issued out by Kayano, highlighting everyone who's slated to appear's names with the information next saying:*

Kayano: "Hey hey everyone! Remember tomorrow at 9 A.M., we will be going up Kunugigaoka Mountain! Don't be late! ^(0u0)^"

Yada: *Smiles to the reminder and gets into her Hypersport.*

-The next morning...-

-All of the available students reached Kunugigaoka Mountain, passing by several signs that show "Property Sold", along with finer print saying "Property of Kazuhiko K." They meet up with the early Kayano and begin doing their civic duty for a truly perennial edifice.-

-Of course, we know how the story goes. After a a good amount of time spent cleaning, the graduates of Assassination University began a large water fight with the flailing hose, widening everyone's smiles.-

-But then things get a tad more serious...-

Yada: *Shows up after Hara leaves Kayano's side.* "Was I hearing you right, Kayano-san? You and Nagisa-kun are taking a break?"

Kayano: "You heard well. Nagisa-kun wants to focus on his work for the time being. Not much of himself is left for me, let alone time, and he knows that. So he's cutting me off until he can give more of himself."

Yada: "Not unreasonable thinking, is it?"

Kayano: *Scoffs.* "I guess not. You think he ever will look back though, and see what he's missing?"

Yada: *Begins playing with her promise band.* "Well... Yeah."

Kayano: *Notices it.* "Oh~... You two made up?"

Yada: "Well, in a way..."

-A week ago...-
Yada: *Is in the shower as she has a, as she recalls, one-sided conversation with someone on the other side of the blinders.* "You never stopped thinking about me? I guess I don't want to toot my own horn, but you did claim I was your first love, so I can understand how the opposite would be difficult." *Waits a moment in silence, cleaning her back.* "So, that breakup we had - You took my opinion to heart and as a result, never thought we actually broke up? Well, you could have at least told me. I mean, you taught Naoko-san to be honest with her feelings; couldn't you do the same for yourself?" *Waits again, while shampooing her hair.* "Fine, you win; I've never considered how difficult it is to think about your feelings when you're busy busting drug dens. But it's been a year!" *Turns away from the faucet to let the water wash away the foam.* "Oh that wasn't the point? Ah, you said you never stopped. So for a whole year, you didn't know what your feelings were telling you. And that's why, for one night... You're here?"

-Roughly ten minutes later...-

Yada: *Having dried and changed down, she is now on her bed. It's too dark to see the person she is speaking to, who was covering most of her body with shadows.* "What if you don't get the answers you were looking for tonight?" *Waits.* "Yeah, I suppose it's a win-win for the both of us anyways. We also will be able to look each other in the eyes no matter where our relationship goes from here. Well... I'm sure there's no harm in breaking out the old book of tricks, hm?" *She pushes the unknown man's face back up, allowing them to see each other in the eyes. Yada's own make a quick, sliding gleam across the circumference, which disappears when she closes them and again pulls the man's head in.*

-Back in the present...-

Kayano: *Her eyes were completely white.* "Yes... That really clears the air..."

Yada: "Simplicity? In our love lives? I think you signed up for the wrong Programs, Yukimura."

Kayano: "Alright, alright. So you two spent one night together, and he was gone the next morning, leaving no evidence he was ever there, save for a little box that housed that?" *Points to the ring.*

Yada: "It's the work that makes the man in a woman's eyes, it seems. He did leave me that night, but I didn't feel bad, because it's something I helped make. It's like how you helped push Nagisa-kun forward for his career, yeah?"

Kayano: "Now you're going to make me regret it a bit."

Yada: *They both laugh.* "They'll recognize that detail I just explained one day. And when they do, they'll never leave our sides."

Kayano: "You see, most girls would be glad to hear that. But they wouldn't realize that means we're the ones in for a ride."

Yada: *Giggles again.* "Count on it."

Kayano: *Eventually breaks a laugh too.* "You're right, though. I'm not afraid to do that with him again."

Yada: "To the void and beyond with our most benevolently mysterious marriages."
Kayano: "If you say so."

Fuwa: "Hey, you two!"

Yada/Kayano: *Both turn back.*

Fuwa: "After this little bout, we still got a decent bit left to do! You're going to help, right?"

Yada/Kayano: *Both look at each other, smiling, and return to the Old Schoolhouse.* "Most surely!"

Yada: I'll do all the work before me, and I'll have a Hell of a time. I'll gladly take on this unknown future before me. Whether it's with you, Kato-kun, or without you... Though, I think we both know very well which is going to be more fun for us.

-Meanwhile...-

-Los Angeles, California, The United States of America...-

-Inside a more undeveloped part of the neighborhoods of one of USA's more notorious cities, it's business as usual, with street gangs and cliques casually conversing, while other groups and demographics go about their own businesses.-

Adolescent: *Rides a small banana-seat bicycle down a sidewalk, passing by a local liquor store. Two people, a short man and a tall woman, in large hoodies and slightly baggy pants were there leaning on the wall.*

Kato: *Revealed to be the short man, he goes up to the cycling kid, taking a knee to meet him at face-level with a reassuring smile.* "Hey there, champ. What are you doing here? Didn't you hear the memo?"

Adolescent: *Shakes his head.*

Kato: "Oh man, then it's good we met. You should know that there's news reports of big, poisonous, hazy smog going down in and around this area. You better go and ride out of here. Do you have a place you can crash for the evening?"

Adolescent: *Nods.*

Kato: "Parents?" *Gets a shaken head.* "Grandparents?" *Shakes head.* "Best friends'?

Adolescent: *Nods.*

Kato: "Aha. Good friends are hard to come by. Head there, and stay there. You see anyone else you really know, tell them not to come here either, for it'll be too dangerous, okay?" *Rises back up after he nods again.* "Go on then." *Watches the child leave.*

Miho: *Reveals herself by taking the hood off from her head, coming up to Kato and turning on her communicator.* "Bellamy, Walsh, that everybody worth saving in this neighborhood?"

Bellamy: *Revealed to be on top of a house with a small, concealable lip.* "Everyone who took the mass notice earlier with concern are now gone."
Walsh: *Is shown to be hiding from behind the corner of another house.* "And that was the last person I’d reckon you could convince."

Chevrier: *Now brandishing a Captain's pin.* "Then the only guys, and maybe girls, left are the ones who are running their op?"

Alvarez: "Time to get payback for them killing some of the only good DEA left."

Kato: "Let's converge, then." *Gestures to Miho and we both begin walking to the center of the street.*

Miho: *As they trek down it, Miho disrobes the sweater, revealing a set of KAM Praetorian armor; a newest upgrade to the original suits designed for Kato Family conflicts. Before discarding the extra clothing, she also produces a HS VHS assault rifle from within.*

Kato: *He presses on a certain section of the hoodie's collar instead of taking it off. Internally, a transmitter glows red, and the adjoining driver produces an overlapping layer that comprises the original KAM AtTac suits properties. The update was certified by the finished formation showing a clear "Mk. II" printed in white on the chest patch, once everything else of the clothing's foundation was recognized. Kato swings his backpack in front of him, taking out an SSG Commando rifle.*

Bellamy/Walsh/Chevrier/Alvarez: *All of the men eventually catch up and walk parallel with their colleague and boss, having suited up identically to Miho.*

Kato: *Just before they confront the traffickers who are recognizing who they are and what they're about to do, he turns his head around, winking at whatever's behind him, before putting on his hood and a paintball mask that has similarly transmuted into the tactical goggles and mouth cover and charges alongside his Family at the upcoming drug den.*

終わり。「フィナーレ」

End: "Finale"

Narrator: "And that's the end. The end of the struggles Assassination University would ever have to face regarding the shadows of Assassination Classroom. Along with the end of what internally troubled them before, the end of what could ever terrorize them personally as well. Peace, confidence, and contentment with their situation would be at their hand, and there would be no reason to refute it any more. These Students, and their Mentors too, have learned to eliminate their doubts, and became all that much better for it - daringly, this might be the full application of the art of killing to their curriculums that we had imagined they would find on this long journey. And so, after this long journey... I bid you adieu."

終わり。
The End.

Directed, Written, Produced, whatever else you can do to lead the construction of a story to, etc. - Stephen Nguyen, aka AzureDragoonGX
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Ansatsu Daigaku contains original material by Yusei Matsui of Shonen Jump and Shueisha publishing.

Author's Note:

Because you can never say enough "thank you"s, I'd like to say one more to Yusei Matsui, for being such a divine manga-ka and being the inspiration for so many aspiring artists and writers such as myself with his especially thought-provoking, quirky works. Ansatsu Kyoushitsu will always have a place in my heart as one of the ultimate works that combines thrilling suspense, wacky comedy, interesting dynamics of character, intense world-building, a huge medley of unique characters, and an over-arching, compelling story - all things I had hoped I could at least replicate on the smallest scale in my own. If I could be told I succeeded at at least that by any one of you, let alone Matsui-senpai, then I cam more than content with this work.

But speaking of and most of all, thank you to all who have taken the time to read this. This story was a thrill to write for the past two and a half years. I hope to see you all again soon. To those who celebrate it also, happy Thanksgiving!

What do I intend to do next after completing this? Well, my AO3 profile would like to continue my Boku no Hero's The Disaster Duology. So there's that. I may think about putting this work onto there as well, but I need to think deeper about that.

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I hope everyone who has been following this series for the past few months (on AO3 anyways; if you came from DA, thank you so much for continued support for the past ~3 years!!). I wholly appreciate it!

Now if you did come from DA too, you know that I have been writing the sequel series and posting it weekly on the site. In about a month I will be posting it onto this site to continue the "Beyond the Classroom" saga.

But in addition, I am also posting something for BnHA (again). Once I complete the first arc, the series will also come here too! Stay tuned!! ;)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!