Chained In
by Luki

Summary

Tsuna has ascended to the Vongola throne, and become everything Reborn knew he could be. He has done everything Reborn could have ever expected of his student.

Except invite Reborn into the family.

Notes

So...I toyed with doing a sequel to 'Break These Chains on Me' for years, but I never quite managed to get a full fic together. Other fanfic ideas took more commitment than expected, or I wasn't sure how to solve an issue, and it more or less just got shoved to the side. However, this part is more or less a full fic, and so I'll share it with you before the year ends as a 'quasi-sequel'

It was the evening of Tsuna’s inheritance. Anyone who was anyone in the mafia world was waiting for the Vongola Decimo and his Guardians to appear. It was the hottest ticket in Italy right now.

Ironically, the guests of honour were the only ones who would happily have been anywhere else. In a room deep in the mansion, they were all sitting at a circular table, while Gokudera cracked open a bottle of sake. Everyone was silent as he poured the glasses – it was a testament to how serious the situation was that even Mukuro and Hibari were restraining themselves.

Once each glass was full, Gokudera sat by Tsuna’s side, and everyone picked up their glass. Tsuna hesitated, glancing over at the table.
“You know, it’s not too late to-“

“Tsun” Yamamoto interrupted, holding up a hand. “Yes, it is. None of us are walking away.”

His boss sighed. “Yeah, I know that. Part of me kind of hates you all for it.”

Most of them cracked a smile, and they raised their glasses.

“From tomorrow onwards, there’s only so many ways our lives can go” Tsuna began. “We either do the impossible and drag the Vongola back to its roots, we die trying, or…”

“Or we go to the extreme plan B” Ryohei chimes up.

“Just out of curiosity, anyone in favour of just going straight to plan Burn-it-to-the-ground?” Mukuro asked, free hand raised. “Because I am still a very big fan of that plan.”

“Hn, the only thing we’ve ever agreed upon” Hibari mutters, and Tsuna sighs.

“Guys, even if we wanted to, Plan B takes some setup, there’s no point in putting it into play right now. Put the weapons away.”

They did. Reluctantly.

Tsuna raised his glass again.

“To the last generation of Vongola.”

His guardians raised their own, three words on each of their lips.

“Let it burn.”

Contrary to popular belief, Reborn once had a family.

Oh he knows most of the underground seem to believe he’s either some Mafia experiment gone terrifyingly right, or that he came out of his mother’s womb armed with a gun and emancipation papers, but the truth is far more bland. He’d been born into a small family in Northern Italy, where his father had been a Guardian for the boss. His mother had taught him how to use a gun while his uncle taught him how to be a gentleman. His father on the other hand, had taught him how to serve – even from a young age, it had been clear Reborn would never be a leader. At most, he would be a right hand man. For all his talent and strength and intellect…he looked at his father and not his boss for his future. Leading seemed too much of a burden, he wanted to support the one strong enough to take it.

One day, his boss had summoned him to his office, and handed him a plane ticket. Reborn was being sent to train with his mother’s old master, and wasn’t to return before he allowed him to. On that day, Reborn could be sworn into the familia as a true member, and not just a child.

He’d been so excited. Even as his mother’s teacher had tossed him into horrifying test after test, he had taken everything and just asked for more. Every week he sent his family a letter, letting them know how much he was improving. They never replied, but he accepted that as part of the test. By the time he returned, his strength as a hitman would be unbeatable. Their family would go from nothing to an impenetrable force.

It took 3 years to win his freedom, and before he boarded the plane, he went shopping for gifts – he’d missed far too many Christmas and Birthdays and needed to make up for it. His mother had a
passion for glass figurines, and he found beautiful pieces in a small boutique.

They all shattered on the ground when he returned to find his home nothing but a burnt out husk.

A week after he’d been sent away, the entire family had been wiped out when two rival familias merged together and took out anyone in the area who wasn’t already loyal in a bid to establish power. It had been extremely effective – almost nobody in the area even remembered the family had even existed.

Reborn knows his boss knew. Reborn had been the youngest – the timing of his ‘training’ is far too suspicious to be anything but intentionally getting him out of the way. Now he’s all that remains – not even graves to visit.

That’s the day he became Reborn, the independent hitman – eventually the world’s greatest. Untouchable, unbeatable, the holy grail for all mafia bosses. They scurried around him, trying to get their claws into the force of nature that was elusive as a cloud, regardless of flame. No one could have him – the man he called boss had died long before Reborn emerged. The Vongola Ottavo and Nono had earned his eternal respect for never trying, and while he will always have a significant amount of fondness and pride for Dino, he has never regretted leaving his side to teach his next student.

And what a student it had been. Sawada Tsunayoshi had been a car crash right from the start. There had been next to nothing to work with, and had the Vongola any other options Reborn would probably have recommended assassination and moving on.

But as time went by, as Reborn chipped away at years of apathy and acceptance of failure, as he brought in a support system the boy never had, coaxing out the incredible flame that had been sealed away for so long…Tsuna, the real Tsuna, had finally begun to thrive. Before Reborn had even realised it, he’d broken through even his walls. As the teen got older, and graduation edged closer and closer, Reborn had even begun to prepare for a future filled with Vongola.

Glancing though the throngs of people milling around the room, he manages to catch sight of the man across the hall. Reborn sipped mindlessly on the drink in hand, noticing how Tsuna was looking thin, eyes dim, and wondered if he can get close before any of the Guardians notice.

It’s just…

Tsuna was supposed to ask him.

Reborn had been almost certain how future events would go. Tsuna would, with admittedly some shrieking and panicking, go to Italy, inherit Vongola, and just before ascending the throne, ask Reborn to join Vongola. Reborn would smirk, let his student panic for a few moments, and then accept and watch his new Boss receive his destiny.

Somewhere, in a tiny little part of his mind labelled ‘morality’, he’d known that path had shrivelled up and burned away the day he came back to Namimori to find the ring box missing and Tsuna reading up on South America. But he’d ignored it, chosen to keep pushing because he didn’t know any other path.

He’d watched Tsuna over that month, bringing in Dino and watching him fight with Xanxus and his father. All the time looking for a moment of weakness. If Reborn could just find one chink in the armour, he could fix this – one hesitation and everything would go back to the way it was supposed to be.
There wasn’t a single one, and the part of him not getting strangled by the implications of that was rather proud of his student's ideals.

He had a choice to make. Tsuna was not coming back willingly. Reborn could either accept this and support the decision, or he could stick to his contract and help the Ninth back him into a corner.

In the end, his pride on never failing a mission won out over affection for his student. Vongola needed Tsuna; he needed Tsuna to be Vongola Tenth, and Tsuna would surpass even himself in the role.

It wasn’t until he saw the look on Tsuna’s face when Nono spelled out his options that he realised just how stupid he’d been.

Now, nearly five years later, Tsuna was everything Reborn had known he could be. Strong, charismatic and powerful, gliding through this banquet hall like the modern day king he was, Gokudera the perfect right hand at his side. Completely untouchable, no matter how much the masses wished it.

No matter how much Reborn wished it.

Five years on, and Tsuna still hadn’t asked Reborn to join Vongola. As it was, he’d had to use his contacts from the old guard to get an invitation to this party. A trick that was getting harder and harder to pull off – Tsuna and his Guardians were getting very good at hunting down his sources and cutting them out. He still shadows Tsuna four days out of seven, but Reborn’s well aware that the only reason he hasn’t been kicked out for good is the fact that Tsuna doesn’t actually have anyone strong enough to force him – not even Tsuna himself - without causing a scandal. So long as Reborn keeps his distance, the Tenth boss tolerates his presence, for now.

There’s a commotion on the other side of the room, and Reborn watches as Gokudera frowns, stepping away from Tsuna to deal with the issue. Tsuna’s eyes watch his right hand slip away, and Reborn scowls as Vittori, the second son of a low standing family, who had absolutely no right even standing in the same room as a Vongola, slips over with a pair of champagne glasses. To Reborn’s frustration, Tsuna accepts the glass, and while his eyes remain guarded, he smiles as the man introduces himself.

Reborn immediately drops his own glass on a passing tray and starts moving forward. The Tenth boss should never have to deal with such a low ranked peon, and if his Guardians aren’t going to extract him, Reborn will.

He makes his way through the crowd, but before he can get more than halfway there, he finds his way blocked, another glass almost pushed into his hand, and suddenly finds himself facing away from Tsuna and his leech.

“Ah, Reborn,” Yamamoto greets, no humour in his voice, though there’s a smile on his face. “I had no idea you would be here. Drink with an old friend?”

Reborn inwardly curses, eyes flitting to see if he can slip around, but the swordsman has any avenue cut off before he can confirm it.

“Now, now,” Yamamoto cheers. “You shouldn’t look so tense. This is a party.”

“A party in which your boss is distracted and unguarded,” Reborn snaps, because Yamamoto should have been making his way to Tsuna, rather than keeping Reborn from doing the same.
However, Yamamoto just looks at him with a strange expression. Reborn feels his rage rising when he realises it’s the exact same expression he used to give Tsuna and his Guardians-in-training when they said something stupid.

“Tsuna is doing just fine,” Yamamoto interrupts. “He’s known Vittori’s been angling for an introduction for a while. Look.”

His head jerks in the direction of his boss, and Reborn’s face is ice as he sees Ryohei Sasagawa happily push into the conversation, and start enthusiastically shaking Vittori’s hand. His rambunctiousness is clearly unexpected, and the man is so overwhelmed, he doesn’t even noticed when Tsuna steps back, Gokudera stepping back to his side like clockwork.

“His family have been angling for a better trade deal with their off-brand drugs, but we haven’t been able to prove if they’re just pirated or fake,” Yamamoto explains. “Sasagawa took personal offence. He’ll have the answer by the end of the night.”

Yamamoto then turns and gives Reborn a sharp smile, eyes closed.

“You really don’t need to interfere,” he says. “Tsuna’s doing just fine without you.”

It is, without a doubt, the sharpest cut he’s ever seen the swordsman make, and it takes everything the hitman has not to react. Yamamoto nods in satisfaction, and moves on, looking to be joining Gokudera at Tsuna’s side.

“Let’s not have the conversation again, okay, baby?”

Reborn clenches his teeth. Both at the dismissal, and at the old nickname that has long since become an insult to the Arcobaleno.

“That’s not your decision, Takeshi.”

The swordsman stills, and turns to face Reborn again, that sharp smile still in place.

“I don’t think you have the right to use that name these days.”

“And you don’t have the authority to make decisions for your boss,” Reborn snipes back. “Tsunayoshi is my student. It’s my duty to watch out for him.”

Yamamoto is not longer smiling. He gives Reborn a long, hard stare, before spinning on his heel and walking into the crowd. Reborn smirks and sips from the glass.

While Yamamoto Takeshi has always been his favourite of the Guardians, he has no qualms about putting him back in his place.

Later that night, when the party is dying down and guests are all extracting themselves, Gokudera approaches Reborn with a summons to the Tenth’s main office. If Gokudera didn’t look like he’d bitten into a lemon at being made to give the invitation, Reborn would have thought it fake. In all the years Tsuna has been in power, Reborn has never been in his office – either from invitation or force.

As such, he’s a little nervous when Gokudera opens the door. More so when the right hand remains outside.

“This is a conversation for the two of you only,” is the only explanation the Italian offers, pulling
out a cigarette as he stands guard.

When he walks in, Tsuna is already at his desk, elbows on the polished and his fingers twined together. To be honest, he looks exhausted, and not just from the party. Reborn quickly crushes the frustration building up – if Tsuna would just let him help then some of that stress might fade from his shoulders, but he’s not here to fight.

Yet.

“Vongola Decimo,” he greets, removing his hat and giving a short bow. “It’s been a while.”

“Not long enough,” Tsuna replies, and Reborn feels himself sag. It’s going to be one of those conversations. The ones that made up the majority before Tsuna graduated university.

Before Reborn can speak, and try to defuse the apparent anger (he’s long since learned that it’s always best to get ahead in this sort of situation), Tsuna looks him straight in the eye, and gives an order.

“I’m going to make this as clear as possible” Tsuna begins. “I want you to leave the grounds and not come back.”

Reborn’s eyes widen. “Tsuna-“

“Despite what you seem to think, you are not a member of Vongola” Tsuna continues. “And it’s becoming apparent you don’t understand this, so I’m spelling it out for you. Once you leave this room, you have one hour to remove any belongings you may have and vacate the premises. If you are spotted on the grounds again without an invitation, my men will be under orders to shoot on site. If Vongola require your services, we shall go through a middleman contract as per Independent Hitman law.”

“You can’t do that,” Reborn says, ignoring the part of his brain that’s practically gasping at the talkback. “I am one of the Arcobaleno, openly allied with you. Publicly denouncing me in such a way will cause the Vongola damages for months.”

Tsuna gives a harsh laugh.

“I’m aware of that. Which is why I’ve held my tongue for years. Let you prance about this building you have no right to be in. I had hoped you would be smart enough to extract yourself after my Guardians did everything they could to cut you out, but apparently your IQ is controlled by your ego.”

“What do you think-”

“Don’t you dare!”

Reborn freezes, looking at orange eyes and a flame on Tsuna’s forehead, before suddenly realising his hand had been reaching for Leon. The chameleon at least, had the sense to run to the other side of his hat. His hand drops, and he bites down the shame at such a childish response, while Tsuna drops himself out of dying will. This man is not his student anymore - he should not be reacting like this. What the hell is wrong with him?

“I think that proves my point well enough,” Tsuna says. “At this point, I’ve established myself as the Tenth. Most of our current dealings were negotiated by myself or my Guardians. We’ve proved our goals and plans, all without your input. Cutting you out will be scandalous, and we might lose a few contracts, but it is something we will weather. And will come out stronger for doing. So leave.
Go do whatever the fuck this is to Dino. He actually wants you around.”

Reborn mentally counts to ten, and keeps his eyes locked on his former student. He does not look happy that Reborn isn’t moving.

“I can’t do that Tsuna,” he says. “The Vongola is where I’ve thrown myself. Dino knows that. Everyone in Italy knows that. I can’t walk away from you.”

It’s the wrong thing to say, because Tsuna is flaring straight into dying will again, the walls shaking from the force of his next words.

“I am not your boss!” he howls. “This is not your family! Leave me alone!”

“Yes you are!” Reborn yells back, refusing to buckle under the pressure. “You have been for years. I don’t care if you never make it official, I don’t care if you reject it, you are my boss, the only man I’ll follow. Even if you kick me out, I’ll just watch you from outside the grounds. You want rid of me? You’ll have to kill me first.”

Tsuna is gripping the back of his chair tightly, wisps of smoke starting to appear from the wood.

“Where the hell was this loyalty when I needed it?” Tsuna asks. “When Timoteo had me in a corner and I needed someone at my back? Don’t pretend you give a damn about me Reborn, at the end of the day, you’ll always put the job first. You can’t not.”

Reborn winced at that. “You’re right” he admits. “But there is nothing I can do to change that. So if I forced you into that chair, at least let me repay it by helping you survive it.”

To his dismay, Tsuna just shakes his head. “I can’t trust you Reborn” he says. “My trusted are loyal to me, not Vongola, no matter what they swore. There’s too much mafia in you for me to believe you wouldn’t shoot me if you thought I was a threat to Vongola. And I assure you, by mafia standards that is all I am.”

With some effort, he lets go of his chair, choosing to ignore the burn marks he’s caused and heads for the door.

“Don’t come back Reborn” Tsuna orders, dying will falling. “This is my final warning. I don’t want you in the Vongola. You’re too dangerous to keep around.”

Reborn stays still as the man moves past him, before clenching his fists and gritting his teeth.

“Then let me swear loyalty to you. Not Vongola. Not the Decimo. To you.”

Tsuna freezes, hand on the doorknob, and slowly turns to face his former tutor, disbelief on his face. Reborn turns to meet his eyes, before dropping to one knee, head bowed and hat clasped in his hand.

“I swear loyalty to you, Sawada Tsunayoshi” Reborn states. “Whatever plans you have, whatever decisions you make, I will stand by them, no matter the consequences. I will protect you, I swear it.”

The man doesn’t answer, and Reborn forces his face to stay blank. If Tsuna still rejects him…he doesn’t know how he’ll take it. The days of the solo life are so far behind him now…he can’t lose this.

If it turns out he lost it years ago, he might just put Leon in his mouth and go join his old family. A
fitting end to an old dog like him.

It feels like he’s kneeling for hours, but finally, mercifully, Tsuna is walking towards him, and Reborn raises his head, heart lifting when he sees Tsuna holding out his hand adorned with the sky ring. He takes it in his own, and kisses the stone before pulling back, gratitude shining in his eyes.

“Thank you,” he says. He’s never meant anything more.

Tsuna sighs, dropping to the ground next to him, looking more like the exasperated teen he remembers than the boss he is.

“You’ll regret that one day.”

Reborn shakes his head. “I won’t.”

His boss gives a broken laugh and leans into him, dropping his head on Reborn’s shoulder. It’s closer than Tsuna has let himself get in years, and it takes everything the Hitman has not to clamp his arms around the man and not let go.

“God, the others are not going to be happy about this,” Tsuna mutters. “Though I think Hibari might have just won money.”

“I’ll explain it to them,” Reborn says with a smile, and Tsuna shifts his head to meet Reborn’s eyes again.

“I’m still not inviting you into the family” he warns. “If you’re loyal to me, you’re not Vongola. Remember that.”

Reborn smiled, the weight he'd been carrying five years finally starting to lift, and risks one arm curving round the man’s back, hand resting on his shoulder.

“That’s just fine with me.”

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