The Sky That Accepts All

by Kaliade

Summary

Sixteen-year-old Sawada Tsunami, daughter of Sawada Nana and the always absent Iemitsu, wakes up one day to find up she now has a sadistic tutor in the form of an infant. Tsuna's hiding a bit of a secret from her family, though. It's not like she could just tell her mother, let alone her father, that she's in charge of a Yakuza group. Add the mafia, more hot guys than she can shake a stick at, and the poor girl is questioning just what god she angered in a previous life.

Notes

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Thank you SailorDyingWill, my very awesome beta.
You are a mafia heir

Chapter Notes

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Sawada Tsunami, daughter of Sawada Nana, woke to a brand-new, bright and sunny day. Her head rolled to the side and checked on the time. A groan, soft and worn out, bubbled up and escaped from her throat. Sitting upright, she ran a hand through her short, abnormally fluffy hair. The naturally spiky locks bent beneath the pressure before popping back up. She rubbed the sleep from her eyes and slipped out of bed. Lethargically, she grabbed one of the uniforms from her closet and got dressed. Glancing at the mirror that hung on the back of her door, she smiled and nodded to herself. Deciding to wear the boy’s uniform was the greatest decision she had ever made. Those skirts for the girl’s uniforms were way too short for someone as active and danger prone as her.

‘And to think,’ she thought as she eyed the red armband circling her gakuran’s right arm, ‘I only had to agree to be secretary for Hibari-senpai and his Discipline Committee.’

He rarely tried to bite her to death anymore!

She left her room, closing the door behind her, and sedately walked down the staircase. She didn’t have to be at Nami-High early for her duties today.

A sudden, foreboding chill ran down her spine.

She froze on the steps. Her pink tongue flicked out and wet her lips as she tried to figure out what her abnormal instincts were trying to warn her about. Her mother could be heard puttering about downstairs. The smells meant that breakfast was done or nearly there. Nothing out of the ordinary... and yet, her instincts kept blaring like a siren in the still of night.

“Mom?” Tsunami called out as she continued her trek down the stairs.

“Oh, Tsu-chan! I was just getting ready to wake you up.” Sawada Nana smiled at her from the kitchen doorway. “Oh! Tsu-chan, you won’t believe what came in with the paper today.”

Tsuna blinked and frowned. Her instincts flared up again. “What? Did that bastard send us something again?”

Nana frowned and gave her daughter a Look. “Now, Tsuna, there’s no reason to call your father that.”

“Never here.” Tsuna grit out between her teeth before sighing heavily, running a hand through her hair. Her shoulders drooped as she gave her mother a rather sad, knowing look. “I hate it when you cry over him, Mama.”

“Tsun...”

“Mom, please. I will never respect that bastard for what he’s done to you.”
Nana closed her eyes and sighed. She knew her daughter wouldn’t change her mind. Part of her heart broke when she thought about just how much her daughter hated, even despised, her father. There was no need to rehash that argument again. No one’s position would change. “No, it wasn’t anything from Iemitsu. No, I got this flier for a home tutor.”

Tsuna stared at her mother before placing her hand at her temple. “Mom, I don’t need a tutor. My grades are perfectly fine. They have been since I was 9.”

“But, Tsu-chan, listen to this.” Here Nana pulled the flier out of her apron pocket and held it up to read. “I can train your child to become the leader of the next generation. Doesn’t that sound interesting? You could become a leader.”

Once more that cold feeling ran down Tsuna’s spine. She fought back the urge to shudder. Her mother didn’t really need to know she was already sort-of, kind-of a leader already that she would really her dear, sweet, innocent mother not find out about. Nope. Not at all. This tutor thing had to go. Now.

“But I’m so busy with my activities with the Discipline Committee. I don’t know if I’ll have any extra time, Mom.”

Her mother only giggled. “Too late, Tsu-chan. I’ve already called them. They said someone would be over today. All we’ll have to provide is three meals a day and room and board.”

Tsuna opened her mouth to protest only to fall silent when the front bell rang. She tensed and turned to look at the door. Her mother giggled and scampered to let the person in. Something deep inside her told her that running would be futile.

The front door opened and in stepped a…baby? Tsuna blinked before going rapidly pale. Black suit? Check. Fedora? Check. Lizard… thing? Check. Yellow pacifier? Fucking double check. What the hell was the greatest hitman in the world doing at her door?

“Ciaossu.”

“Oh, aren’t you adorable.” Nana knelt down and was cooing over the toddler. “Are you lost?”

“I am the home tutor you called. My name is Reborn.”

Tsuna’s racing thoughts came to a complete, screeching halt. Her heart pounded in her chest and her eyes went wide. The baby stared up at her and a small smirk crossed its face. However, she could feel, sense, that the baby was confused by her reactions. Good. Maybe she could still get out of this.

“Mom, he has to be kidding. I mean, how could a baby be a tutor?” She glanced at the clock and frowned. “I’ve got to go or I’ll be late. I have no desire to spar with Hibari-senpai today.”

Not waiting for an answer, the 16-year-old girl grabbed her bag, put on her shoes, and out the door she went before she started to sprint down the street. Once more she was thankful for the fact she wore the boy’s uniform. That tiny piece of fabric the school insisted was a skirt would have already flown up and given everyone on the street a panty shot had she been wearing it. She growled at the thought and slowed down a bit. There wasn’t a real need to hurry. She had enough time to get to Nami-High before the first bell and Hibari-senpai hated rumpled uniforms just a little less than he abhorred lateness and crowding.

“We need to talk, Sawada Tsunami.”

She stopped in her tracks and looked behind her. Standing on a wall, Reborn looked down at her in
all his glory. She swallowed dryly and bowed her head in resignation. This was not going to end well.

“Ah, so what is a baby doing as a tutor? How did a baby become a tutor in the first place?”

“Actually I am a hitman.” He looked down at her and frowned when he noticed the forced reaction she was showing. The laughter was strained to his rather experienced ears. Her eyes too hard for what they should have been if Iemitsu’s file was to be believed. And why was she wearing the male uniform anyway? Potential gender identity issues on top of everything else. Well, he had worked with a lot less than what he was seeing with her. At least she was in somewhat good shape if that sprint of hers was anything to go by, and she had to have a bit of knowledge about handling paperwork if she was a secretary. Yes, he could work with this.

“Tsuna-chan!” a bright, female voice called from down another street. Tsuna’s head shot up and a smile, small but more real than any the hitman had seen on her face so far, formed.

“Kyoko-chan!”

“Ah, is this one of your late days?” The auburnette girl asked, smiling, as she ran over. Looking up at Reborn, she let out a high-pitched squee. “Oh, is he your brother, Tsuna-chan?”

“No.”

“I’m a hitman.” Tsuna frowned and looked over at him. Quirking an eyebrow she narrowed her eyes at him. The hitman smiled.

It wasn’t a nice one.

“That is so adorable.”

“I’m from the mafia.”

Tsuna sighed. Wasn’t he supposed to keep a low profile, being Mafia and all? “Come on, Kyoko-chan. We need to get to school before the bell rings, unless you want to deal with Hibari-senpai.”

The bubbly girl nodded to her friend and took off down the road. The younger of the Sasagawa children wasn’t nearly as fast as her brother, but the girl could cover ground when she needed to. Tsuna had incited the girl learn to run after poor Kyoko had nearly gotten caught by a group of bullies back when they were 13. The bullies had wanted revenge of Kyoko’s brother, Ryohei, but knew they wouldn’t be a match for the boxer and had chosen to go after his blaring weakness instead. It was that fight where Tsuna had used her recently learned fighting skills to fight off the group of five boys and had come to the attention of one Hibari Kyouya. Tsuna never wondered if it had been worth it as Kyoko was a good friend, a bit of a ditz but a good friend. Still, why did Hibari have to notice her?

She shook her head. No time to whine about it. She gave one last look to the baby, who was staring at her intently. She gave him a little wave and followed in Kyoko’s footsteps. Best not to be late. No need to get bitten to death after all.

Namimori High School wasn’t exactly the best school in the town. That titled belonged to Midori High, an all girl’s school Tsuna could have attended if she had better grades. Nami-High was good enough for her though with the fact that the teachers didn’t expect too much from their students. Her grades put her at the upper-middle of her class and her general attitude and the fact she was part of the Discipline Committee—and thus ‘Hibari’s woman’ according to a dozen or so rumors floating
around at any given time—kept most people away from her. The only reason Kyoko and her best friend Hana hung around her was the fact that Tsuna was willing to fight off bullies and thugs. Their friendship had grown from there, but Tsuna did keep a part of herself separate from them. No need to drag them down into her world.

A frown crossed Tsuna’s lips. There was a rather interesting gathering going on at the front gate. She looked around and the frown deepened. No members of the Disciplinary Committee present. Well, she pulled her jacket tightly across her frame, looks like she had a job to do. Perhaps Hibari would be attracted by the noise if she could just make one of them squeak like a small, fluffy animal.

“So what do you say, Kyoko? When should I pick you up?” The male voice was slimy and made Tsuna’s skin crawl. Only a handful of males could do that and only one attended Nami-High. Mochida Kensuke, captain of the kendo team and a self-proclaimed ladies man. Her lips pulled back in a snarl as she stalked forward. Some of her fellow students noticed the black gakuran and the red armband and quickly vacated the area. Sure, she wasn’t Hibari-senpai but where there was one member of the Committee, others were soon to follow, including their volatile leader.

She stood at the gates and looked over the scene. Mochida was leaning in on Kyoko’s personal space. He had what he must have thought was a flirtatious grin on his face. He looked constipated to her, but she was known to have a different idea of what was attractive in a male.

Mochida was not it.

Her attention turned to Kyoko. The auburnette was uncomfortable. She shifted from foot to foot and was leaning away from Mochida’s advance. She eyed his hand when he reached to place it on her shoulder. A flinch, probably not noticeable by the other students, crossed her face. That was all Tsuna needed to act.

“Mochida, back away from Sasagawa now.” Her voice rang through the air as she put as much of her authority in it as possible. The kendoist pulled back immediately, an ingrained reaction.

She could feel eyes on her back. The hitman had probably followed her. Wonderful.

The kendoist scrunched up his face. Tsuna thought the boy was trying to glare at her. “I wasn’t doing anything, Sawada.”

“You were making Sasagawa uncomfortable and your actions are creeping into sexual harassment territory,” she replied matter-of-fact. Her arms crossed over her chest. Her lips peeled up in a sneer as she watched his eyes go from her face to her chest. Hand flashing out, she smacked the boy upside the head. “My eyes are a bit further up, Mochida. Now back off or I’ll get Hibari on your case.”

The mention of the demon prefect caused everyone to go pale or sickly and start to scatter. Mochida glared at her and stomped away. Kyoko, and Hana who was rushing over from where some of the other girls in their class had waylaid her, watched silently as he left.

“Keep your eye out around him,” Tsuna warned the two girls. “He’s not going to give up until someone beats it into his brain that women are not possessions.”

“Probably you if he keeps pissing you off like this,” Hana nodded. “Well, we better get to class before the bell rings.”

Tsuna glanced behind her at an old tree that overlooked the schoolyard. “I’ll be there in a second. Go on without me.”

“Monkey?” Tsuna shook her head at Hana and waved the two girls to go on. Previous experience
with the rather standoffish girl made both Kyoko and Hana shrug to each other and wander toward the classroom.

Tsuna took a deep breath and turned to face the tree. She quirked an eyebrow and tapped her foot. There was a faint rustle and Reborn popped, seemingly out of nowhere, onto the school’s wall. Hitman and student stared at each other. Neither was willing to back down, but Tsuna knew one of them had to give. It might as well be her as her instinct told her the hitman wouldn’t be the first to move.

“Reborn.”

“Interesting way to deal with that boy.”

She snorted. “That boy thinks he’s a hotshot and a lady killer. The fact that he has three airhead girlfriends doesn’t help and I do not want one of my few female friends, especially one as innocent as Kyoko, to fall into his trap. Was there anything you needed or are you just going to stalk me all day?”

“I am observing, not stalking.”

“Same meaning, different words. What do you want, Reborn?”

“You’ll see, Tsunami. You’ll see.”

After Reborn's ominous little threat, Tsuna had hurried to her classroom before the first late bell. She rolled her head and shoulders to try to get the tenseness out of her muscles. The hitman put her on edge. Her instincts screamed and raged that he was a threat. She knew that. Hell, she knew his reputation, what little of it that actually made its way to Japan. The man was the go-to person if you needed someone offed. His prices were exorbitant, but well worth it if your target was difficult. He was also a playboy of some type, but she ignored that one. Who would want to be in a relationship with a baby?

Class droned on by at a snail’s pace. The teachers spoke in a monotone that put more than one student to sleep and the subject matter held very little interest for her. If it wasn’t for the fact she needed to get into a good university, she’d be asleep just like Yamamoto was. The only reason the teachers didn’t come down on him was his position as the star player of the baseball team.

“Did you hear?” Hana asked as she sidled over to her and Kyoko’s side during lunch. “Word going around is that Mochida is going to challenge you, Tsuna. He’s claiming your impugning on Kyoko’s honor with your less than pure intentions.”

“…He’s calling me a lesbian, isn’t he?”

A junior member of the kendo club stepped into the classroom and gulped audibly. All three girls turned to look at him. In his hand, clutched tightly in his fingers an envelope shook. The boy was shaking. Tears prickled at the corner of his eyes as he made a jittery approach toward Tsuna. The classroom went quiet. More than a few eyes had gone wide in surprise and glee as that particular rumor was looking to be true. Tsuna simply sighed and took the offered envelope. The kendo student muttered something, no one could quite understand what with how fast he had been talking, and flew out of the room as if the hounds of hell were on his tail.

“So…? Hana leaned over her friend’s shoulder and read the letter at the same time Tsuna did. “That boy really is an idiot monkey.”
A grim look crossed Tsuna’s face as she abandoned her bento and walked out the door. This wasn’t the first time she had been called a lesbian because of her friendship with Kyoko. Whispered words were a female teenager’s knife and gun. No, that’s not what was bothering her this time. It was the sheer audacity of Mochida to declare that the winner would get Kyoko as his prize, as if women were objects meant to be won and paraded around like things rather than people. Her blood boiled. This kind of thinking was something she had sought to eliminate from Namimori even if she had to bloody her fists in order to do so. Seems she still had a bit of work to do.

“Kusakabe-senpai,” she greeted the second-in-command of the Disciplinary Committee, “is Hibari-senpai in?”

“No. I take it this is about the Mochida rumor going around. Did he actually challenge you?”

She nodded and held up the paper. “To a kendo match despite the fact I know next to nothing about kendo. I want to see if I can borrow someone to be an impartial judge. I doubt the bastard has enough honor to not tamper with things.”

“I’ll make sure one of the boys is there, if just to keep an eye on him.” Kusakabe frowned and looked down at the papers, reports from various members. “There have been some disconcerting sightings involving the boy.”

“You want me to ask my girls to keep a look out?”

He shook his head. “It’s not gone that far, yet. Just tell them to be careful. There might be a new group trying to infringe on Namimori.”

“Then I’ll help chase them out just like I have every other time before.” She shrugged. “I’ll have the girls be more alert though. If it’s another yakuza group, they’ll go after the girls first.”

“Unless your reputation is spreading.”

She laughed. “Very funny. Well, I better get back to class. Just make sure someone is there to keep an eye on the idiot.”

Beady black eyes watched from a hidden room as she walked away. The diminutive figure inside smirked. Well now, this was interesting.

Classes were over. Tsuna made her way to the gym where the challenge had said to meet. A crowd had already started to gather. She could spot a few of her fellow Committee members lurking in the shadows. No Hibari-senpai though. The prefect had probably been briefed by Kusakabe and decided that she could handle such herbivores herself. More than likely he was lurking somewhere and watching. He always seemed interested in her fights and had regularly tried to bite her to death until they’d made their deal. Her dodging skills had vastly improved under his assaults. She rarely broke any bones anymore.

“So you showed up,” Mochida jeered from his place in the center of the gym. He was dressed in his kendo garb and waving around a shinai like an idiot. Really, how was this the captain of the kendo team?

“You are an idiot,” she stated blandly and walked toward him. Her steps were neither hurried in anticipation or slow in nervousness. They were steady, in time with her heart beat. “I don’t take kindly to people calling women objects.”

“Huh?”
“You said the prize was Kyoko. Have you thought that maybe Kyoko doesn’t want to be a prize? Did you ask her permission? Don’t answer that. I know the answer to that one. You didn’t.” She raged against him. A few girls in the audience gasped. She wondered if it was because of her words or the fact she was back-talking Mochida. A few girls, and boys to her surprise, nodded in agreement with her.

“Wait, you’re not here because I called you a lesbian?” The boy was honestly confused. His head tilted to the side like some kind of cute puppy. Tsuna had to suppressed a laugh. It came out as a strangled snort.

“I’ve been called a lesbian for a long time, Mochida. I learned not to let that bother me. Now are we going to do this or just stand here and snipe at each other?”

Mochida flushed and motioned for his teammates to drag out a shinai. It was obviously meant as a handicap for her considering the ones dragging it out were literally dragging it. They couldn’t lift the thing. She shook her head. She was not using that thing. One of the Committee members appeared next to her with a proper weapon. She inclined her head and took a step forward onto the battlefield. No need for armor. It would only slow her down.

“I want someone neutral to judge. Your actions now show you are without honor, Mochida the Cheater.”

“Cheater? I am not a cheater!”

“Your actions speak otherwise, but then what can you expect from someone stringing along three girls and trying to bag a fourth?”

The boy blanched as whispers broke out among the crowd. His face turned red as he flushed from either embarrassment or anger. A mix of the two, most likely. He made a motion to the judge. A second later the “match” had begun. She dodged out of the way on nimble feet and made a solid strike against his wrist. There wasn’t enough force to break the bones, but more than enough for Mochida to drop the shinai in pain. The judge didn’t call the point even if everyone knew Tsuna had won with that hit.

“Had to bribe or threaten your lackey, Mochida? Such a poor sport, but what can one expect from a cheater?”

The boy snarled and grabbed his shinai from the ground. With a roar he struck forward. Tsuna shifted stance and moved out of the way of the wild swing. Her eyes widened as he spun on his heel and tried to brain her with the bamboo sword. Gritting her teeth, she dodged backward and ducked to the side of the followup swing. Maybe she had gone a bit too far on that last comment.

Amazing how rage can affect a person.

Her ears pricked. There was a familiar sound coming from behind her. A lump formed in her stomach. There was no denying the sound of a gun being cocked. She cursed mentally. Damn, she didn’t want to die fighting some ass like Mochida. Such a miserable death.

She heard a bang and turned her head.

The bullet slammed into her forehead and knocked her backward. Thankfully that pushed her out of Mochida’s strike. Pain radiated outward from the bullet’s entry spot. A rush of energy soon followed it. Strength welled up within her. Her muscles felt invigorated. The world slowed down to her perception. Her hands clenched around her shinai and she leapt to her feet. A moment later her
“clothing exploded off of her.

“Reborn! Defeat Mochida with my Dying Will!”

After that, she wasn’t entirely sure what happened. Witnesses, mainly Hana, would tell her that she hit Mochida hard enough to knock him unconscious and shatter her shinai. The judge was forced by the crowd to announce her the winner and the kendo club dragged their concussed leader off to the nurse’s office. All Tsuna remembered was the rush of power and then waking up to...she screeched as she crossed her arms over her chest and in front of her body. One of her fellow Committee members threw his jacket over her to preserve what little dignity she had left. Then they hustled her out of the gym to the Committee’s office. They kept spares of the school uniforms there.

Somehow, Tsuna knew that the entire chain of events could be blamed on Reborn. Her jaw clenched as she vowed to somehow get vengeance.

Tsuna grumbled to herself as she began the walk from the school. Bruises covered her arms. The Chairman had heard about what had happened in the gym and had dished out what he considered proper punishment for stripping in front of most of the student body. Her bruises had bruises.

“Interesting fight today, Tsunami.”

Reborn. She twitched. A weight pushed down on her head. Lips pulled back revealing teeth as she let out a low growl. She swiped up at the baby sitting on her head. She didn’t hit him, not that she expected to. Reborn landed in front of her.

“We need to talk, Tsunami.”

“Yes, about that stunt you pulled back in the gym. Why the hell did you shoot me? What did you shoot me with?”

“Ah, that was a Dying Will Bullet. It causes you to enter into a state of Dying Will.”

She closed her eyes and shook her head lightly. “I thought you were going to kill me, Mister World’s Greatest Hitman.”

“It would have if you had no regrets.”

Her eyes shot open and she stared at the smiling baby. A chill ran down her back and she took a small step backwards. There was the alarm feeling coming from her instincts again. Her jaw clenched as she looked around for an escape route.

“You’re not getting away, Tsunami.”

“Tsuna, it’s Tsuna.”

“I heard your classmates calling you something else: Mujona-Tsuna.”

She sighed and forced herself to relax. No one else was around. She could take a bit of time to talk to the hitman before going to the office. “They’re still saying that? I thought they stopped with that when we got out of Nami-Middle. Guess they just learned not to say that where I could hear.”

“Heartless-Tsuna? That must have an interesting story behind it, but never mind. We need to talk, Tsunami.”

“So talk.”
“Where we can’t be overheard.”

She looked at him and sighed. Well, there was one place they could go if he didn’t want to be overheard. “I know a place. Follow me and don’t be surprised. I’m betting that Bastard is the one who gave you information on me. He doesn’t have a clue. I made it a game to avoid his watchers when I was 10.”

Reborn nodded and jumped up onto the teen’s head again. Her eyebrow twitched but she gave up on getting him down from there. She knew that the hitman outclassed her skills by an order of magnitude she didn’t want to think of. The streets of Namimori passed by in a blur as she dodged around the busier commercial district and took to back alleys. The few thugs wandering around back there fled upon spotting her. A small smirk appeared on her face at the blatant fear. The working girls who were already wandering the streets gave her bright smiles and small waves as she passed and looking confused when they noticed the baby perched on her head. She shrugged and waved for them to go back to work.

Now, Reborn knew that Iemitsu was an idiot, but he had thought that the CEDEF had some skills in information gathering. Iemitsu’s staff should have noticed the little things about his daughter that made no sense. Prostitutes, for that was the only thing those dolled up women could be, welcomed the teenager with smiles and kind words. Thugs ran from her very presence. She wasn’t an idiot like his previous student or like how the information Iemitsu gave him said she should have been. She was confident but cold toward those that she didn’t think of as hers, like that brunette girl and her friend. That would be good if he could get her to think of Vongola as hers. Now he had to break it to her that she was the sole heir to the most powerful of the mafia famiglias. Somehow he doubted the fact that her father was involved in organized crime would surprise her.

The two stopped outside a rather nondescript building. It had very few windows and didn’t stick out from the other buildings around it. Tsuna fished out a key card and ran it through the reader. There was a beep and the light on the lock changed from red to green. The door opened with a gentle push. Inside was well lit if a bit empty. A handful of doors lined the hallway. A couple of men in suits moved between offices. At the sight of Tsuna, they bowed respectfully and got out of her way. She nodded to them, greeted a few by name, and made her way to an office at the end of the hall. Reborn hopped off her head and landed with all the grace of a large cat in one of the chairs. Tsuna crossed behind the rather expensive desk and sat down. She peered over her steepled hands at the baby and sighed.

“Well, what is so important you couldn’t say it in the street? I mean, I doubt you were sent here just to be my home tutor.”

“Very astute, Tsunami. That will serve you well. I was sent by Timoteo Vongola, the Ninth boss of the Vongola Family, to train you to become the Tenth boss.”

There was a pause. “What?!”
Tsuna leaned back in her chair and mentally cursed her progenitor. The Bastard was mafia. That really wasn’t a surprise. That he was Vongola was. Reborn looked far too amused with her reaction.

“How am I even considered for the position?” she asked.

Reborn grinned and pulled a family tree out of nowhere. She accepted it and laid it on the table. He pointed out the first name. “You are a direct descendant of Giotto, the First head of Vongola. He escaped to Japan after his cousin Ricardo overthrew him and turned the Vongola from a vigilante organization to a mafia one.”

“What happened to the Ninth’s children? I’m assuming he had some and that the Vongola are smart enough not to rely on a foreigner with only the barest blood ties to be the primary heir.”

“Enrico died in a gunfight. Massimo drowned and all we found of Federico were charred bones. You’re the only heir left, Tsunami.”

Her lips pressed into a tight line as her jaw clenched and teeth gnashed together. She reached out and pointed to a specific name just above hers in the family tree. “What about the bastard? From this, Iemitsu should inherit before me and he’s even involved with you already. A much better heir than me, wouldn’t you say?”

“Iemitsu is the leader of the Consulenza Esterna Della Famiglia, the CEDEF, that act as external advisors for the family. He is therefore ineligible to become the next boss.”

“Could he quit his job as CEDEF and take over?”

A grim smile crossed Reborn’s lips. “No. The laws of the Vongola family do not allow for such a thing except when the only possible heir is the head of the CEDEF. With you alive, there is another heir and Iemitsu cannot inherit.”

“Crap.” She fell back in her chair with a loud sigh. Arms crossed over her chest and a scowl formed on her face. She bit her lip and looked up at the baby. “I have no choice in this matter, do I?”

“I don’t fail missions.” In other words, yes, she had no choice. Her head tilted back and eyes slid shut. She could work with this. It wasn’t the first time a criminal organization had fallen into her lap.

“Look, there’s something you need to know,” she began but had to stop when a knock came at the door. “Enter!”

Enter Gokudera Hayato
A young man in a suit stepped in and looked at the baby before turning his attention to the teen. Reborn took note of the tattoos peeking out from behind the dark fabric. “Boss, Yamamoto is here. Do you want him to come in or should he go help Himura?”

“Send him in. I’m going to need him.”

“Yes, boss.”

The door shut and Reborn turned an amused look on her. “Boss?”

“I was 10 when I inadvertently took over the Akatora-Kai. Turns out they have a rule that if you kill the head you become the head.” She shrugged. “The fact I burned him and most of his commanders alive when they tried to kill me just cemented the fact that I am Boss in the minds of the lower ranks.”

Reborn blinked. Well, he hadn’t expected that exactly. “I see. So you already have some experience in running a family.”

She nodded happily. “We control roughly 80% of the sex trade in Namimori. I also keep other yakuza groups out. That took making a deal with the demon Hibari, but it was worth it.”

“Oh?” The baby seemed interested. That smile promised something Tsuna wasn’t sure she wanted to know about. The door opening caught both their attention. A young man with a shinai strapped to his back stepped in. He nodded to Tsuna and walked around to take up position behind her, a bodyguard.

“Yamamoto Takeshi, Reborn, my tutor sent by the Ninth head of Vongola. Reborn, Yamamoto Takeshi, my bodyguard for the past 3 years.”

“Nice to meet you.” Yamamoto chirped with a smile on his face. It was the smile that made even the most stoic of enemies shiver in fear and her allies nervous all at once.

“I see.” the baby hitman eyed the boy. He had an aura that was only too familiar to the Italian. He smirked. So the little Tenth had managed to find a natural assassin to be her bodyguard. A specialist in the way of the sword would be a good close-quarters bodyguard for a boss. His new student had more talent than no-good Dino did. Now it was just a matter of seeing if she could physically get up to snuff and learn the traditions that the Vongola held so dear. Oh, and access her flames at will. She had such bright, pure Sky Flames. The boy behind her would end up as a Guardian for the boss to be. He likely already was and they just didn’t know it.

“I’m guessing you saw the show this afternoon, Yamamoto?” She was grinning up at her bodyguard.

“I was surprised you were wearing pink.”

Her cheeks burned. “That wasn’t what I was talking about and it’s laundry day anyway.”

The swordsman placed a hand behind his head and laughed. “It was still surprising. Wasn’t that the set Rumiko gave you for your birthday?”

Tsuna rubbed her face in an effort to hide the blush. Why did Yamamoto always make her blush like this? He always seemed to be able to make her cheeks burn and body flush with just a few words. “Forget my underwear. Did you see what happened to Mochida? I was kind of out of it after my clothes went poof.”
“Ah,” the swordsman nodded. “You hit him, hard. It just took one strike and he was down. Nothing really spectacular, but the fire on your head was interesting. How did you do that, Tsuna? It looked kind of like what the others say you did to kill those old guys.”

“That was Sky Flame,” Reborn spoke up and grinned at the two. “I take it you consider him to be a part of your Family, Tsunami?”

“My life is Tsuna’s,” Yamamoto interjected. His tone changed from happiness to serious. He even went so far as to send a small glare at the baby hitman. “I belong to her.”

The hitman grinned. “I didn’t realize it was like that. Well done on gaining such a good looking, talented husband, Tsunami.”

The girl sputtered, her mouth opening and closing rapidly as she tried to formulate and answer. “Hiiieee! He didn’t mean it like that. Don’t take it the wrong way!”

Reborn chuckled, glad to finally get a rise out of the girl that had something in common with the report Iemitsu had sent. That little scream of hers was cute. He lifted both eyebrows as the girl squirmed in her chair. His eyes drifted upward and noticed the faint blush on her bodyguard’s face. So maybe he wasn’t that far off in his theory. The bodyguard was eying his boss with something a bit deeper than protectiveness. That could either be very good or a disaster in the making.

Yamamoto coughed lightly, bringing his boss’s attention to him. “Speaking of Rumiko, I saw her when I was coming in. She said she needs to talk to you. One of the girls is getting married and wants to know if they can borrow some of the men to help clean out her apartment.”

“I’ll get one of the boys to help her out. I can’t spare anymore than that though. Reports from Kusakabe show the possibility of a new group trying to encroach on our territory,” she nodded and turned her attention back to Reborn who’s smirk had grown with every word she said. “So, explain this flame thing to me. I know I’ve called up bright orange fire before, when I was in danger of dying. It’s part of the reason why I’m so feared by outside yakuza families.”

Reborn frowned. “Only when you’re in danger?”

“Three times to my memory, not including earlier if Yamamoto saw right.”

“Explain, in detail. There were no notes in Iemitsu’s reports.”

She snorted. “I doubt there was a lot in that report that was true. The first was when I got sold to the Akatora and I panicked and the fire killed off the boss and all of his under-bosses. The next two involved assassins from two separate families. That ended the same, me panicking and my opponents ending up burned to a crisp. Made it easy for my boys to clean up at least.”

The baby gave the girl a deadpanned look. “You were sold to the Akatora?”

She nodded as did Yamamoto. He had heard the story from what few older members had survived the purge when Tsuna had taken over. “Mom doesn’t exactly see the world the same way as normal people. I don’t think she even realized why the man in the dark suit was offering to pay her for my time. Mom told me to go with him and I, in my naivete, went with him. It wasn’t until we were in the warehouse that I started to realize something was wrong. I don’t remember much after the old boss tried to touch me. I just remember the urge to get away and fire and screams.”

Reborn hummed and nodded his head. So his student had broken through Nono’s seal in her panic. Truly remarkable. He smirked. Well, this should be easier than his last tutoring job. His new student had much more potential and already had some on the job training, as it were.
Yamamoto’s eye slid shut as he nodded. “Some of the older members who were there say Tsunami-hime sprouted fire on her hands and forehead and everything started to burn. The old boss burned up quick and his lieutenants followed when they tried to grab her as she escaped. The fire spread from them to the rest of the warehouse and the weapons they were smuggling in at the time exploded. That killed off over a third of the active members.”

“They’ve been following me ever since.” She nodded and gave a weary smile. “No matter how much I tried to get rid of them, the kept coming and bowing and scraping and I just gave up on stopping them.”

“Are you still running weapons then? Drugs? Human trafficking?” Reborn stared at her. His eyes had gone calculating. Those were the three big things that could get her banned from Mafia Land, not something Nono wanted. He could push her to stop if she was. He wasn’t the best for nothing.

“No. I stopped those as soon as I took over.” She shook her head and frowned. Her brow knit together as she thought about how much of a hassle that had been. There had been more than a few assassination attempts by her own people and she hadn’t had Yamamoto to protect her back then. She glanced down at her hands. So much blood had stained her delicate looking hands. Death walked with her and she with him.

“It didn’t go over well I take it?”

“No. A few attempts on my life and I learned rather quick how to shoot and where to stab to put a person down. I learned to use my environment, to use my fists to break bones and trusted my instincts to figure out who I could trust. The members that remained after that are loyal to me. I stopped the drug trade here. No one, even the bigger groups, sell drugs in Namimori.” Her frown turned into a feral grin. “I’m known for having a no tolerance policy on certain things like drugs and human trafficking. All of my girls are working in the industry by choice. It may be a stressed choice brought on by economic factors, but still, they have the option to leave if they so choose.”

The hitman nodded, pleased at her moral stance. Yes, Sawada Tsunami would make a very good Tenth. Just add some polish to her rough edges and find her a full complement of Guardians. The grin on his face could only be described as unholy. Tsuna had the sudden feeling she was going to regret this, regret ever meeting the baby hitman. One more thing to lay at the Bastard’s feet.

Tsuna watched as Reborn left her office. They had talked for a few hours, hashed out a training regimen she could deal with on top of her work, and got a basic explanation of how Vongola was set up. The Varia were well known, even in Japan. More than a few of her men looked up to the assassination squad in awe. The swordsman, Squalor or something or other, had a fan club. Yamamoto was a member, much to her amusement. The other divisions weren’t nearly as famous and required a bit more of an explanation. After two hours of talking, she’d asked the hitman to leave so she could get to work on things for the Akatora. The hitman, surprisingly, had agreed and congratulated her for taking care of her famiglia. Then the hitman had left, leaving only Yamamoto and her in the office.

“So, what’s the plan, Tsuna?” Takeshi asked. The light tension that had been in his body since he entered the room smoothed away. The hitman baby put him on edge. No surprise there. Like tended to recognize like. He leaned over the back of Tsuna’s chair, rested his hands on the top, and stared down at the top of her head.

“We go along with this,” she sighed and tilted her head forward. “I can’t see a way out of this. Damn that Bastard.”
He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the crown of her head. He smiled at the sigh that escaped her lips. The line of her shoulders relaxed and she leaned back against the chair. She worked too hard, worried about too many things. If this was what he could do to help her relax, he'd gladly do it. “Then we deal. I promised to stay by your side. I owe you my life.”

“Takeshi…” She breathed deeply and looked up at him. He smiled down at her.

“Don’t argue with me on this, Tsuna. I’ve made my choice. Dad agrees with me.”

“Tsuyoshi wanted to kill me when you told him you wanted to learn the sword to protect me.”

“No, he wanted to kill you because you were dragging me into the yakuza. When he realized you tried everything short of killing me to get rid of me, he decided you weren’t the worst option.” He paused and grinned down at her. “I think he’s expecting grandkids, though.”

“Considering the example he made for you, I don’t doubt it. At least the others wouldn’t speak up against it like what happened to him if it happens. They love you almost as much as they love me.”

She laughed and reached up for her bodyguard with one hand. He leaned down and brushed his lips against her own. Her hand traveled through his hair and mussed up the dark spikes. A faint blush formed on both their cheeks at the feel of the other’s lips pressed against their own. This wasn’t something Tsuna was willing to give up, no matter what the Vongola wanted. Takeshi’s absolute loyalty made her giddy inside and calmed the undulating inferno buried deep in her soul. After Reborn’s explanation of Dying Will Flames, it made sense. Obviously the swordsman had been claimed by her Sky Flame as a Guardian.

The two separated as the door opened and one of the lower members of the group entered with a stack of paperwork. Tsuna groaned and lowered her forehead to the top of the desk. Takeshi laughed. She hated paperwork. Paperwork, her greatest enemy.

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Tsuna sorted through the Discipline Committee’s files. There had been a small stack waiting for her when she arrived that morning. Hibari-senpai had greeted her with a tonfa to the head that she dodged automatically. Her instinct, Hyper Intuition according to Reborn, made avoiding the demon prefect easy. He huffed as she waved her fingers at him and went to work.

“Do you still want to spar Friday, Hibari-senpai?” she asked as she closed one of the filing cabinet drawers. It let out a shaking bang as it clicked shut. That drawer always stuck. She’d have to see if someone could fix that.

“Hn.”

“At five then? That should give us both enough time to get our rounds done?”

“Hn.” He nodded and exited the Committee’s room to hunt down rule breakers and other assorted herbivores in need of biting. She let out a soft sigh. That boy drove her crazy. Did he really have no idea how normal people interacted? At least she knew how to blend in with the normal people despite her being raised by a yakuza organization for almost seven years.

“Mujona-Tsuna.” The baby’s voice came from the ventilation at the top of the room. She looked up and raised an eyebrow at the flash of orange, black, and green. The grate popped off and the baby jumped down without making a sound. Leon looked up at her from his customary place on the hitman’s hat. She swore the lizard was smiling at her.

“Just Tsuna, Reborn. No need to call me heartless if you haven’t seen how heartless I can be.” She
smiled down at him. He stared back. She dropped the grin and sighed. “What do you want, Reborn? I’m a bit busy at the moment.”

“A boss is never too busy to talk a subordinate, Mujona-Tsuna.”

“Well, it’s a good thing you aren’t my subordinate then, eh?”

The fedora tilted over the tutor’s eyes and her intuition blared out a warning. “You know what I meant, Mujona-Tsuna.”

“Ah, maybe, but seriously, what are you doing here, Reborn?”

“Be careful. I’ve gotten word from my sources that someone may be coming to take you out, Mujona-Tsuna.”

She snorted. “Tell me something new, …but I promise I’ll be on the lookout for anyone suspicious.”

“Good. Warn your swordsman as well.”

She smiled at the baby. “He’s always watching out for me.”

“A good quality in a Guardian.”

She shook her head slightly and leaned against the side of the filing cabinet. “Have you figured out what Flame he is? We know I’m a Sky, but what about him?”

“I’m thinking he’s a Rain. He shows all the classic signs and his father was a well known one.”

“Yamamoto Tsuyoshi still has quite the reputation among the yakuza. Half my men are terrified of him. The other half worship the ground he walks on. I think they spend most of their earnings at Takesushi just to catch a glimpse of the man holding a knife.”

“… Your subordinates are strange, Mujona-Tsuna.”

“Tell me about it.”

The baby allowed her to finish her morning duties with only the slightest bit of interference. Really, being shot at wasn’t the worst thing he could have done. Watching Kusakabe, who had come in after the hitman put away his gun in favor of trying to brain her with a mallet, twitch at every noise made her laugh. She finished her job with an ease that Reborn made a mental note of. He’d have to see if she could handle a bit of a different pressure at a later date. Now was the time to get his plan underway. Tsuna smiled beatifically at the hitman as he put away the mallet and headed off to class.

The teacher stood at the front and looked over her students sitting in their desks. “We have a new student joining us from Italy. I hope you all will be willing to help him as he adjusts to life here in Japan.” She motioned to the hall and a teen entered.

Tsuna’s instincts warned her about the danger the boy posed. He may not have looked like much with shoulder length silver hair, pale skin that definitely marked him as a foreigner, and bright eyes. Still something about him, the scowl most likely, set her off immediately. Her female classmate squealed over the boy’s looks. Tsuna and her two female friends weren’t among the lot. Hana and Kyoko had noticed the subtle movements from their friend and became wary of the new boy. Tsuna always was a good judge of character.

“This is Gokudera Hayato. Gokudera, you can sit in the empty seat.”
The silveret glanced at the teacher before stalking forward. The teacher tried to gain his attention as he approached Tsuna’s desk. Her stomach dropped. She glanced over at Yamamoto and bit back a curse. The swordsman had gone tense. He too noticed where the silveret was stalking toward.

Tsuna waved her hand low and motioned for him to hold his ground. This silveret had to have been brought in by Reborn. Probably someone with deep mafia ties. She did not need to be starting a war with the mafia.

Gokudera stopped at her desk. She looked up at him. She wouldn’t look away. The boy moved fast and with a deft motion had flung her desk over. She still didn’t break eye contact. He snorted and sneer down at her as he walked on by to his desk. Their classmates watched the interaction with wide eyes. No one was quite sure what happened but more than a few were worried for the new guy. Tsuna didn’t get the nickname ‘heartless’ for nothing.

Lunchtime arrived in no time and the class was still on edge from the actions of the silveret and the many potential reactions Tsuna could take for the offense. Yamamoto stuck close to his boss’s side and stared the other teen down, daring him to come near the girl again. Gokudera smirked at him and returned his stare with a heated glare. Tsuna ignored the posturing of the males as she talked to her two female friends. Kyoko was obviously concerned with what had happened but could tell Tsuna was keeping her mouth shut about it. Obviously she knew why the Italian had issues with her. Hana on the other hand wasn’t nearly as willing to let the topic go. The acerbic girl kept asking questions until Tsuna got tired of it and left the classroom. She’d get some silence in the Discipline Committee’s room. She just had to avoid annoying Hibari-senpai.

“Sawada Tsunami.” Well, there went that hope. She sighed and turned around to face Gokudera Hayato.

“Gokudera.”

He looked her up and down from head to toe and sneered. “You aren’t fit to be Vongola Decimo.”

“Tell that to the Ninth and Reborn. I don’t exactly have a choice in the matter.” She smirked at him. “So what is a mafia man doing here? Did a certain pacifier wearing toddler ask you to come?”

The silveret tensed for a moment. “Che. I was told if I killed you, I’ll be in line to become heir.”

“I take it you want a fight then?” He nodded and went to pull out what she thought was a weapon. “Not here. We can fight after school in the woods just outside of Namimori. I may be a member of the Disciplinary Committee, but I am not risking pissing off Hibari-senpai. The man has no problem beating us half to death if we annoy him.”

“Coward.”

“Realist, I’m a realist. Now go. Shoo. You have the time and place of your challenge. Ask Reborn if you want to know more. He obviously planned this.” She turned around to walk away and froze. “Oh, and don’t stay anywhere with Yamamoto Takeshi alone. He’ll probably try to gut you.”

“Who?” The silveret was confused. This was not how he thought this meeting was going to go. She grinned at him. It wasn’t a nice one. “A swordsman sworn to myself. Reborn says he’s a natural born hitman, so there is that. Just, try not to be left alone with him. He tends to be a bit overprotective and would take initiative to take you out before you can hurt me.”

“He’s your right hand then?” The Italian sneered. So that position was already taken. Impressive
for someone as new to the mafia as the Vongola heir was rumored to be.

“ I hate paperwork,” Yamamoto spoke up from behind Gokudera. The silveret let out an unmanly yelp and spun around to face him. Swears poured out of his lips as he tried to figure out just how the smiling teen managed to sneak up on him. “I’m just a bodyguard. The position of her second is open, if you want it Gokudera.”

“ Like I said, bodyguard and natural hitman. Now you’d better get back to the classroom. I’ve got to warn Kusakabe-senpai that I’ll be needing to leave early. And Yamamoto, don’t hurt him. I want a fair fight. Give him directions to the training ground.”

“ Sure thing, Tsuna.” He nodded with a wide smile on his face. Gokudera looked over at him and gulped at the steely glint forming in the other teen’s eyes. That look promised something the Italian wasn’t looking forward to.

“ Don’t scare him off either. Reborn brought him here for a reason,” Tsuna commanded as she smiled at her bodyguard. Yamamoto stared at her for a moment in utter innocence. She shifted her weight, placed her hand on her hip, and gave the boy a look she had learned from her mother. The swordsman winced before sighing and nodded his acquiescence. She beamed at him and ignored the blush that crossed both boys’ faces. She waved them off back to the classroom and walked down the hall despite wanting to skip. Skipping down the halls was against the rules, after all.

“Kusakabe-senpai?” Tsuna called out as she opened the door to the Committee’s claimed room. She looked around and frowned at the emptiness. Now where had he gone?

“ Herbivore.” And there explained why no one was in. Tsuna swore her heart stopped. She spun around and caught herself before she fell face first into the demon prefect himself, Hibari Kyouya.

“ Hibari-senpai.”

The prefect deigned not to answer and stared at the only girl in his Discipline Committee. She made a good secretary and didn’t crowd. She also wasn’t quite a herbivore. He had seen her show her fangs whenever the streetwalkers that looked to her for protection were hurt. The sight of the small teen taking down a handful of adult men looked amazing and had made his blood race just a bit. No, this girl was not a herbivore but wasn’t quite at the level of a carnivore. Now this oddity of a person was standing before him nervous and shifting from foot to foot.

“ My father’s sins have come home to roost.” She spat out her words. The girl was known for having a dislike, and that was the gentle term, of her father. Her eyes lit up in aggression. The prefect felt that familiar rush of blood that appeared whenever she revealed her fangs and claws.

“ Explain.”

She sighed and ran a hand through her hair. “The new boy, the Italian, he’s been sent to test me for taking over the family business. I’ve also been sent someone who is like the man you refuse to acknowledge as blood.”

His eyes widened. “A baby in a black suit?”

“ You’ve seen him then. His name’s Reborn and he’s supposed to be teaching me what I need to know to take over the family back in Italy.”

So the mafia was involved, the prefect thought to himself and felt a smirk come over his face. He watched as she shivered at the look. The possibility of new opponents, stronger opponents, made his
“I’m answering Gokudera’s challenge in the woods outside the city after school and need leave of my duties.”

The prefect frowned before shrugging. She was taking the fight out of his city and there was the matter of the agreement between them. “Keep the fighting away from Namimori proper.”

“Yes, sir.” She bowed to the prefect and hurried out the room. Hibari’s coldness always made her nervous. There was little she could do if the boy wanted to stop her from fighting or wanted to fight her himself. Those tonfa hurt.

“A boss shouldn’t run away from an encounter like a dog with its tail between its legs,” Reborn’s voice came from nearby. She stopped and glanced upward. How did he get on her head without her noticing? That took some skill. To be expected of the world’s greatest hitman, though.

“Hibari-senpai and I have an agreement. I keep my business from damaging Namimori and he doesn’t bite my people to death. I consider it courtesy to treat him like a sleeping tiger protecting his territory.”

Reborn hummed and jumped to the ground in front of her. “So you warned him about your fight?”

“I let him know I’m not going to be available for my duties this afternoon. Also a good idea to let him know that there may be people coming after me in the future.”

“And he would be concerned about assassins going after you? I didn’t realize you had two men wrapped around your fingers, Mujona-Tsuna.”

Her face flushed and she brought up her hands as if to wave off an attack. “Oh no, no no no no no. Hibari-senpai and I are not like that. He’s more concerned with any assassin that may be coming after me getting the citizens of Namimori involved or causing damage to his precious city or school.”

The hitman simply smiled up at her. She had a feeling he wasn’t buying her words. That or he was planning something that would be humiliating, like his stunt with the bullet during Mochida’s fight. She was getting leers from her male classmates when they thought she wasn’t looking. At least they were properly terrified of her, so she didn’t need to worry about them approaching her with offers. Had anyone gotten any bright ideas, she would have demonstrated just what her girls had taught her, or let Takeshi have them. That would have been amusing.

“Look, I know you’re planning something, Reborn, but I need to get back to class and make sure Yamamoto hasn’t disregarded my request.” She stepped around the baby-sized hitman and hurried down the hall. The hairs on the back of her neck rose. She froze mid step and turned to face him once again.

“What was that bit about someone like me, Mujona-Tsuna?”

She sucked in a soft breath. “I’ve met Fon.”

“Oh?” Reborn definitely wanted more information.

“He’s Hibari-senpai’s uncle through his mother. As you can guess from your eavesdropping, Hibari-senpai doesn’t recognize him as a relation. I met him when the Triads tried to push their business into Namimori and nearly took out a few of my businesses. The Hibari family weren’t very happy with the Triads daring to enter their territory and Hibari-senpai’s mother called in her brother.” A tiny smile bloomed on her face at the memory of the infant sized martial artist. “That man is
poetry in motion even as a baby.”

“Is that so?”

The warning bell rang. She looked up and gave the hitman a nod before heading back toward the classroom. The hitman just watched her go, a thoughtful look on his face. Yes, Sawada Tsunami wasn’t anything like he expected. That wasn’t a bad thing. No, not a bad thing at all.

A breeze blew through the trees. It was a musical sound to Tsuna as she walked toward the place she had told Gokudera about. Beside her, quiet and smiling like he usually was, walked Takeshi. He had both eyes closed and his arms crossed behind his head. He knew exactly where they were going. There was a little clearing just off the beaten path that Tsuna and a few other members of the Akatora-Kai used for training. A few minutes after they stepped off the path that became obvious. Bark had been torn from trees in spots. Slashes marred the trunks of several trees. Those were from her knife lessons with Yasuhara. The young man, new to the Akatora, had a way with knives that was magic and had been charged with teaching her in case she needed to use a weapon besides her fists. She had two knives strapped to her legs and one at the small of her back at the moment.

“Talk your time. What’s he doing here?” Gokudera sneered at the duo as they entered the clearing. He was smoking a cigarette and messing with a lighter in one of his hands. The other rested in a pocket, more than likely ready to pull out a weapon.

“He’s here to witness. You’re lucky he was able to convince the others he was good enough.” She frowned and looked around the clearing. Her eyes narrowed as she peered into the trees. A sigh escaped her mouth. “At least that’s what I was told. Everyone, this is an official challenge! So stay the fuck out of my fight!”

“But boss…” The whine came from the handful of her men from their hiding spots. She rolled her eyes toward the heavens, asking whatever kami would listen for patience from her unruly subordinates.

“No buts. You’re welcome to watch, but no one is to interfere. Yamamoto will be enforcing this.”

The swordsman blinked and smiled at his boss. From years of being around the boy, she could tell he did not like this. He had wanted to stay close and was planning on sneaking up behind the Italian to take him out while she distracted him. Too bad his boss knew him so well.

Tsuna smiled as her men muttered and complained loudly. She knew they wouldn’t interfere now that she’d ordered them not to. Her grin turned sharp as she noticed the unnerved look on her opponent’s face, but he at least had the wherewithal to not look around like an idiot in the hopes of spotting her men. His hands remained steady even as she noticed a slight sheen of sweat form on his forehead.

Gokudera was having a mild panic attack. He had not noticed anyone surrounding him, but sure enough, he had become surrounded by people who called the willowy girl in front of him boss. They weren’t Vongola. Reborn would have warned him if anyone had come to assist the Decimo candidate. The hitman respected his mentor, the perverted doctor, enough not to send him into an ambush. So these people had to be already loyal to the girl. The fact that the dark haired boy, Yama-something, didn’t look happy with the order to stay out of the fight just made the Italian more nervous. There was something about the smiling Japanese boy that just made Gokudera want to back away slowly and look for escape routes. Of course, if these men were here, if they had been here since he’d arrived, it also meant that the explosives he’d planted around the area were most likely defused. Damn.
“So, are we going to do this or not, Gokudera Hayato?”

“Yeah. We are.” He moved. Yamamoto jumped back as Tsuna surged forward and dodged out of the way of something that had been thrown. The following explosion made her stomach drop. She glanced back and winced at the charred earth where she had just been standing. Looking back, she cursed as she recognized what was in the silveret’s hands. Explosives. He was a damn explosives expert.

“Fuck.” She managed to dance out of the way of another explosive. This wouldn’t do.

“You’re not fit to become the Juudaime.” He threw two explosives this time.

She shrugged and leapt to the side. Her body fell into a roll. She popped up and was forced to keep moving. More explosives followed in her wake. Jumping behind a tree, she took a moment to plan. The Italian was saying something but words were not important at the time. He was keeping her too busy to think. She leapt out of her hiding spot as she heard the hissing of a bevy of explosives. The tree exploded. Wooden shrapnel filled the air. Absently she listened to the words her men were calling out. They were simultaneously impressed and disdaining the Italian’s fighting style.

She looked over at the silveret. That’s when the light went on in her head. He was trying to keep her away. Every time she got close he backed up and tried to keep her at a distance. A good tactic for a long-to-mid range fighter, but one that blared out to her senses. A shark like grin crossed her face and he began to sweat. That look promised nothing but pain. Still, she hadn’t even had a chance to get close enough to hit him.

She now had a basic idea of his fighting style. Time to move in and see how his close-quarter skills was. Feet flew over the ground as she got close to him. Then came the plethora of bombs. She cursed and jumped back. How the hell was he lighting those damn things so quickly? Her hands blurred as she snuffed out the few sticks that had landed next to her. The fire burned, of course, but she was used to worse.

“Pathetic,” the Italian teen sneered at her. She bared her teeth as another explosion rocked the wooded area. He smirked at her and brought out an armload of dynamite. “I can’t believe that the Ninth is really planning on handing over the Vongola to you. Best to take care of you now rather than let some other assassin do it later. Triple bomb.”

Later, Tsuna would wonder just what had happened, and Hayato would refuse to tell her, his face flushing as he stuttered out denials and nonsensical words as he tried to escape the questions on just what the hell happened to make him drop that many sticks of dynamite.

Takeshi would swear to his dying day it was a combination of the fact the silveret realized he could see down Tsuna’s shirt and that his boss had chosen to wear another of Rumiko’s gifts, a rather risque lacy piece masquerading as a bra.

Tsuna stared at the lit dynamite as Gokudera tried to scramble away. “Oh, fuck.” There would be no avoiding that blast. She and her opponent were going to die.

Click.

She turned her head and met the end of Reborn’s gun. He smiled at her. “Act as if your life depends on it.”

Bang! “Reborn! Put out the fuses with my Dying Will!”

Everything went fuzzy for a bit. Her memories after getting shot in the head were always like that it
seemed. She came back to herself and looked down at the unlit dynamite. Surrounded by the
dynamite, knelt Gokudera Hayato. The boy stared up at her with wide eyes before he bowed low,
his forehead nearly touching the ground.

“I apologize.” He bowed again. “You are worthy of being the Juudaime.”

Tsuna sighed and knelt before the silveret. She tilted his head up and smile at him. “I forgive you,
Gokudera Hayato.”

“Um, Tsuna?” Takeshi called. His voice sounded unusually strained. She turned to look at her
bodyguard and got a jacket thrown in her face. “You may want to put that on before he passes out
from all the blood rushing to his face.”

She blinked before her eyes widened. She looked down and cursed. Her clothing, the bullet. She
was going to kill Reborn. Some way, some how, she was going to get even with the demonic
toddler if it was the last thing she did. She turned back to the silveret and frowned as he toppled over
to the side with the brightest flush she had even seen on his face.

“Someone, gather him up please.” She sighed and stood up. The jacket was wrapped around her
body and hid her undergarments. “Take him back to the office. And can someone find me some
clothing, please?”
I'm sorry this took so long. I've had some issues in real life. My mother has had to have a total knee replacement and I've been taking care of her. Add in this time of year is hectic at work, and I just haven't had the time nor inclination to write much.

Tsuna groaned as she pulled on her school uniform. Her muscles burned. Why had she decided to agree to the crazy hitman’s training? The baby was a sadist and seemed far too pleased whenever she ended up collapsing in a pile at the end of a training/torture session. At least he was willing to give her time every day to take care of Akatora business, though her second, Yuusuke, was getting better at running things without her constant input. The older man was one of the few remaining from the previous boss’s reign. He would be taking over for her when she eventually left Japan for Italy. None of her men were willing to see her go but were more than pleased that she was inheriting such a strong position.

“What are your plans today, Tsunami?” the hitman asked as she pulled her gakuran over her shoulders. Taking a moment to adjust her Discipline Committee armband, she turned to face her demonic baby tutor.

“Well, I think I’m introducing Gokudera to the higher ranks of the Akatora so he doesn’t attack them if they approach me on the street. He met a lot of the lower ranks after he woke up at the office after our fight, but most of my senior advisors were out doing other things that day. They want to meet him and get a feel for my newest subordinate even if he is more my subordinate on the mafia side than the yakuza. Then I have paperwork to do. Maybe someone will have found out who’s stupid enough to try to make a move on my territory.”

“You’re still having issues with that?” The hitman jumped from his position on her vanity to her shoulder.

She looked over at him and sighed. They had been working on getting information on whoever it was trying to encroach on her territory for the past two weeks. “It’s like they’re smoke. My girls are keeping an eye on their customers. Though we have gotten a couple of offers from outsiders to buy some of our establishments. They could be attached to this mystery group, so I’m reluctant to even meet with them.”

“Tsu-chan, you need to get going or you’ll be late!” Nana called from downstairs. The teen sighed and made her way down the stairs with the baby on her shoulder.

“Tsunami, be careful.” Reborn warned her with a smirk on his face. “My contacts tell me that there may some hitmen from Europe coming after you. Turns out word that the Decimo candidate is in Japan has been leaked.”

“Any ideas on who did the leaking?” She waved goodbye to her mother and jogged out the door and down the street.

“We’re searching for them.” Reborn reassured the teen and jumped from her shoulder to a nearby garden wall. “I have some contacts to meet to deal with this, but be on the lookout for any assassins.”
“Like I usually do anyway? Sometimes I wonder if you forget I’m a yakuza boss and have danced this dance before.”

“I wasn’t expecting a student like you.”

“Blame that on the Bastard.”

The smirk on the hitman’s face turned dark and foreboding. “Oh, trust me, I will and he will feel the depth of my annoyance. Again, be careful, Tsunami.”

The baby bounded off. Tsuna watched him go before allowing herself to relax. Really, Reborn set off every single fight-or-flight instinct she had. Still, at least he was starting to call her Tsunami instead of Mujona-Tsuna. She must have impressed him during training the previous day. Probably how she had bent over backwards in order to avoid an overhand swing of his Leon-hammer and follow it up with a kick that almost got him. Rumiko’s insistence that she learn to contort herself into uncomfortable positions and fight in them had paid dividends.

“Sawada!” a loud, male voice boomed ahead of her. Her head snapped up. She knew that voice. The head of white hair only confirmed it. Sasagawa Ryohei, Kyoko’s older brother, captain of the Namimori boxing team—taking the Championship for the past two years—and generally nice guy who loved fighting a bit too much for his family’s peace of mind. Some people considered the boy a borderline thug. The bandage over his nose that covered an interesting scar did make him look the part.

“Sasagawa-san, are you out for your morning run?”

“I am! Are you heading to school?”

“Committee duties. You’d better hurry before you’re late. Hibari-senpai won’t be gentle if you are.”

“Hibari is Extreme, but I wouldn’t want Kyoko to worry about me if she saw us sparring to the Extreme again.”

Tsuna blinked and hid a smirk. So the boxer still called Hibari trying to beat the crap out of him sparring. Sometimes she wondered how the boxer’s brain worked or if his years of boxing had caused brain damage. Then again, it wasn’t like Kyoko had a firm grasp on reality either. Maybe it was a Sasagawa family trait?

“Well, I won’t keep you. Have a nice run.” She waved goodbye to her friend’s brother and headed toward the school. She heard the boy yell something about Extreme behind her as he headed off to finish his morning run.

Thanks to the early hour of the morning—school wasn’t even going to start for at least another hour and a half—there was little foot traffic. Only a few women going to do their shopping wandered about.

Cling-ling.

Tsuna turned toward the noise of a bicycle bell and froze. A woman with pink hair stopped next to her and smiled. Something about that smile caused a shiver to run down her spine. Best to be wary of this mystery woman.

“You look thirsty,” the woman said and shoved a can of soda into her hands. “Here.” With those words, the woman pedaled off.
Tsuna looked down at the can and back up in the direction the woman had rode off in. Shaking her head, the teen threw the can into a nearby trash can. Really, as if she was that stupid. Such a poor--

There was a hissing noise. Tsuna turned around and stared incredulously as purple smoke rose out of a swiftly melting trash can. She frowned and let out a long breath. OK, so not exactly the poorest attempt ever. Worrying her lower lip between her teeth, she decided to head for the relative safety of the school. Hibari would want to know about someone this potentially damaging being in the area and more eyes on the look out would only keep her safer.

“I hate poison specialists.” she muttered as she continued on her way, this time going much faster than before. “The cowards.”

“The trash can melted?” Takeshi muttered softly as he stared at Tsuna. She nodded and took another bite of her lunch.

“Yeah, purple smoke and everything. Just keep an eye out for a woman with rose pink hair wandering around. I’ve already warned Hibari.”

The swordsman winced. “How did that go?”

“We have a meeting scheduled after school.”

“Meeting?”

“Committee term for Hibari going to bite me to death later.”

“And I have baseball practice after school.”

She shrugged. “He won’t kill me. Bruise me and maybe break a bone or two, but he does appreciate how frank I am when it comes to Akatora dealings with him. I think he just wants to blow off some steam since he’s been having the same luck as us when it comes to finding out just who is trying to invade Namimori.”

The door to the classroom opened and Gokudera stumbled in. He didn’t look too good. He looked like he’d had a run in with Hibari. The girls of the class swarmed. The Italian shouted and waved his arms about in an effort to escape the horde of hormonal teenage girls. Tsuna and Takeshi chuckled as he managed to stumble away and landed in a chair next to them. Yamamoto turned his chair slightly and smiled at the horde of females. They blushed and stammered at the sight of the two heartthrobs of the class being in such close proximity. Most of them turned away to hide the bright blushes on their faces and the crowd dispersed.

“I still don’t know how you can do that.” Tsuna said as she set her chopsticks down.

“Juudaime, I am so sorry I was unable to walk you to school today.” Gokudera bowed in his seat to his boss.

Tsuna rolled her eyes and shook her head. “It’s fine, Gokudera. I have to come to school earlier than most due to my work with the Discipline Committee. And stop calling me Juudaime. It’s Tsuna or Tsunami.”

“Bu-but Juudaime is Juudaime.” the silveret whimpered. Again Tsuna got the image of a puppy superimposed over the Italian.

“And calling me that could be a lead for the police if certain information gets to them.”
Takeshi turned back around to the two and eyed the Italian. “You could call her Tsuna-hime like the rest of us do.”

At the bright look on the silveret’s face, she had the sudden urge to plant her head in her hands; she let the urge take her. Takeshi was not helping. She peered up between her fingers and glared at the swordsman. He grinned at her. It was a grin she only saw when he was teasing her. How the hell the boy could have so many different grins that meant different things? That she could understand them all made her wonder about her mental health.

“Us? You mean them?” Gokudera finally asked after his emotions finally worked through the annoyance with her swordsman being so familiar and having a special name for Juudaime.

Tsuna straightened, her hand dropped away from her face. Turning to face the Italian, she frowned. “We need to talk about that. I have a meeting with Hibari after school. We can talk after that.”

Takeshi snorted but fell silent at the look his boss was shooting him. He smiled sheepishly and backed away from the annoyed glare slowly. He turned his attention back to his food and bowed his head so he wouldn’t have to meet those eyes.

“Just meet me outside the gates around 5. Yamamoto, you’ll come by after baseball practice? I have a feeling I’m going to need you later. If I’m late, keep him company, OK?”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.” Her brow twitched.

“Don’t call her that, you idiot.” Gokudera growled at the other teen. Takeshi looked up at him and smiled widely. “Oi, are you paying attention, idiot.”

“That’s enough, Gokudera,” Tsuna reached out and placed a hand on the enraged teen’s shoulder. He instantly backed down into his seat. “Don’t cause a scene. Just meet me after school at the gates.”

“Yes, Juu-- Tsu-Tsuna-hime.”

Tsuna repressed a groan and her face met the flesh of her hands once again. She glanced out from between her fingers and glared at her swordsman. His shoulders were shaking in silent laughter. Why did she keep him around again? He looked up from beneath his bangs and smiled at her. Her heart fluttered in her chest. Oh yeah, that’s why.

Gokudera noticed the blush on her face and instantly started to sulk. The hormonal horde squealed at the sight and sent nasty, jealousy filled looks at the brunette sitting beside him. Tsuna smirked and gave the girls a tiny finger wave. Those that had seen the results of the last time she went off on someone shivered and looked away. The smirk grew. Good, they remembered their last lesson. Do not mess with the Alpha Female. There was a reason she was the only female in the Discipline Committee.

Gokudera leaned against the wall beside the school gate. A lit cigarette hung from his lips as he waited for his boss. A good right hand man was always at the place their boss asked for them to be. He inhaled the sweet smoke and let it out slowly. It burned from his throat to his lungs and back again, a feeling he had come to enjoy since he started smoking.

“Ah, Gokudera, you’re still waiting. Tsuna hasn’t shown up yet?” Yamamoto asked as he jogged up to the lounging Italian. His hair, normally in spikes, lay flat against his head due to it being soaking
wet. A wrapped bundle rested over his shoulder. Something, experience with hitmen who had eclectic tastes in weaponry most likely, told him that whatever was in that bundle was not something he wanted to see.

“Idiot, Tsuna-hime is taking her time.”

Yamamoto hummed and leaned next to the smoking boy. “She did have a meeting with Hibari today, so we could be waiting for a while.”

“Who said you could stand so close to me, idiot?” the Italian grumbled and moved away from the disquieting Japanese teen.

“Yo, Yamamoto, we’re going to go to the arcade. Want to come with?” a group of teens called as they walked through the gate.

Yamamoto smiled brightly and waved at them. “Can’t today. I’ve got something planned. Maybe later.”

“See you!” The pack of boys turned and walked off down the street.

“Who the fuck were they, idiot?” the Italian grumbled as he shifted from foot to foot. Why was Tsuna-hime so late? He glanced down at a watch on his wrist. 5:32.

“The baseball team.” Yamamoto answered before he leaned over the Italian. His attention went to the roof of the school. Eyes narrowing, his smile wavered for a moment. “No word from Tsuna?”

“That’s none of your business, idiot.”

“Yes, actually, it is.” The Japanese teen easily slid from his civilian, eternally happy persona into one that made the lower ranked members of the Akatora shiver and their enemies piss themselves. “Tsuna is my reason for living.”

The Italian sucked in another breath of smoke before throwing his burnt up cigarette on the ground. He crushed it beneath his shoe. “I didn’t realize you two were like that.”

Yamamoto leaned back and stared at the Italian for a moment before a flush formed on his cheeks and rushed down his neck. “Ah, we’re not exactly... It’s not- We’re not-!”

The Italian snorted at the stuttering teen and pulled out another cigarette. His hands went to one of his lighters as he gave the other teen an amused look.

Yamamoto sighed and shut his eyes tightly. “Look, a lot of people know this, but I don’t like talking about it. A few years ago I was stupid and tried to kill myself for a stupid reason. Tsuna stopped me and I’ve been at her side since.”

Gokudera watched the other teen shift self-consciously. Well, that was a surprise. Sky attraction at work, maybe? From what information Reborn had willingly supplied after the fight, the Japanese teen had a strong Rain Flame like his father, who happened to be a rather famous bodyguard in yakuza circles. The boy was pedigree.

A loud noise caught both of the boy’s attention. Heads snapped to look up at the roof of the school. A panel of metal fencing had broken away and fallen to the ground resulting in a loud crash. A black haired boy holding two baton-like weapons turned to strike at someone just out of sight.

“What the hell?” Gokudera gaped at the sight.
Yamamoto snorted and shook his head ruefully. “Whatever Tsuna had to tell Hibari must have pissed him off again.”

“What?”

“That was Hibari Kyoya. I think you had a run in with him earlier. He runs the Discipline Committee that pretty much runs the entire town. He and Tsuna have a deal of some kind where he ignores what we - that is, the Akatora - do and Tsuna helps with information running and the like. It works until Hibari gets pissed and then Tsuna has to play with him.”

“Wait, you mean Tsuna-hime is up there with him?”

His head bobbed. “Yep.”

Gokudera stared blankly at Yamamoto before flicking his cigarette at the smiling boy and racing for the school. Tsuna-hime was in danger. He had to protect her. Footsteps echoed behind him. The idiot was probably running after him. Some ‘loyal bodyguard’, letting Tsuna-hime be set upon by a Neanderthal.

The halls of the school blurred past as the Italian sprinted full out for the stairs leading to the roof. A stick of dynamite dropped into his hand from its hiding place. He was going in armed and ready. Tsuna-hime was relying on him. He took the stairs two at a time and flung himself at the heavy door barring the way to the roof.

“Tsuna-hime!” Gokudera shouted as he ran through the doorway. There was a flash of pain and then darkness.

“Hn.”

“He’s new, hasn’t learned all the rules yet.”

“Teach him or I’ll bite him to death.”

Tsuna sighed and leaned against the wall next to the door. Bruises had already begun to form on her arms from where she had blocked Hibari’s hits. The prefect also sported bruises and a few cuts that could have only been caused by fingernails being raked across his face.

A few second later Takeshi popped up in the doorway. He bowed slightly to the annoyed prefect and shook his head at the sight of the Italian laying on the ground. Tsuna waved for him to pick up the unconscious bomber.

“Take him to my house. We’ll wait for him to wake up there before heading to the office and introducing him to the upper ranks.” She turned back to the prefect and gave him a bland smile. “Sorry about the scratches. I really don’t like being pinned.”

“Omnivore.”

“We can spar again next week. I’ve got to get back to my men and see if anyone has found anything about the ones trying to infiltrate Namimori.”

“Hn.”

She bowed slightly, looking ever so much the prim and proper Japanese school girl if she hadn’t been wearing the boy’s uniform. She grabbed her jacket, which had been thrown to the side early in the fight. Yamamoto, remaining silent, bowed slightly as he adjusted his hold on Gokudera who
rested across his shoulder like one of the sacks of rice his dad usually made him haul around the shop. The two plus their unconscious companion headed through the door and down the stairs before Hibari could attack them for crowding.

The prefect watched them go and smirked. Huffing lightly, he looked upward at the endless sky. The little herbivore finally showed her true colors. A vicious beast hid beneath that soft exterior and those claws of her hurt. The girl wasn’t a rather aggressive herbivore like he had originally believed, she was a rather sneaky omnivore hiding as a herbivore. So she had a brash new male for her herd. Interesting even if he didn’t seem to be that strong. It would be entertaining to watch her handling him if what he had seen was any indication of the boy’s normal attitude. The omnivore would be driven up the wall in a month tops. Her frustration would result in much more fun sessions. His smile turned into a feral smirk at the thought.

“Mom, you home?” Tsuna asked as she opened the door to home. She paused in the doorway. No answer. So Nana was probably out at the market or something similar. At least she wouldn’t be around to ask questions about the unconscious Gokudera or to make certain comments about her and Takeshi.

“So where’s the kid?” her swordsman asked as he let the Italian drop onto the soft cushions.

Tsuna frowned at his casual disregard of the silveret. Seems he was still a bit bitter about Gokudera trying to kill her. “I have no idea. We didn’t have anything planned for today and he had contacts to talk to. He could be anywhere.”

“I’m here, Tsunami.” The squeaky voice coming from nowhere made both teens jump. Tsuna dropped into a defensive stance while Yamamoto moved to put himself between danger and her. They both paused at the sight of the baby in his little suit and forced themselves to relax even as adrenaline rushed through their blood.

“Reborn, how many times are we going to have to ask that you not do that?” Tsuna muttered as she covered her face with one hand.

The hitman ignored the question—not that she expected it to be answered anyway—and hopped to the back of the couch to look down on the still out cold Italian. “What happened to him?”

“A run in with Hibari-senpai.” she stated and looked over her shoulder at Takeshi. “Why didn’t you stop him, anyway?”

The swordsman snorted even as a wide smile curled over his lips. “Have you seen him run? He’s fast.”

She hummed and rested her crossed arms on the back of the couch. Looking down, she smiled lightly. Gokudera looked so at peace. His face failed to have the tenseness that seemed to be constantly present in the silveret. She had to resist the urge to reach out and run her hand through those oddly colored, soft looking locks. Her lips twitched and she leaned back.

“Faster than you, Takeshi?”

“He took me by surprise. I wasn’t expecting him to go running off to face Hibari like a madman.” the swordsman muttered and stepped up behind his boss. He had seen the look on her face, that sort of dreamy-needy look he had often seen turned in his direction when she thought he wasn’t watching.
Well, it looked like he was going to have to share her. Surprisingly that didn’t bother him as much as he thought it would. What was this strange stirring he felt when he looked at the normally loud, caustic bomber?

“Well, Tsunami, what are you planning for his punishment? He did go against your orders, after all.” The hitman had a smirk on his face and his fedora tilted in such a way it shadowed his eyes.

Gazing out the corner of her eye at the baby, she frowned. “A lecture on not pissing off Hibari, considering he’s the closest thing the Akatora have as an ally.”

Reborn was about to comment on such a weak punishment before he noticed the slight wince on the swordsman’s face. Well, wasn’t that interesting? “A lecture, Tsunami? How weak. He needs a firmer hand if you want your subordinates to listen to you.”

She grinned. It wasn’t a nice one. She turned bright, shining eyes that promised pain and agony to him. “Oh, my lectures usually involve a bit more than most. The last person I had to lecture ended up a gibbering wreck for a week.”

“Please don’t remind me,” Yamamoto muttered and rubbed the bridge of his nose. “You didn’t have to deal with the aftermath, Tsuna-hime.”

“Don’t call me Tsuna-hime.”

“But you are our princess.” Yamamoto stated as he draped his arm over her smaller frame. She stumbled at the sudden weigh and barely managed to catch herself on the back of the couch. Turning her head, she gave the mischievous swordsman a deadpan stare. He simply smiled in return and rested his chin on her shoulder. It was strange to her. Takeshi rarely showed his attraction to her around others; outsiders. No matter how much the baby had been around in the last few weeks, he was still an outsider to both of them.

“Ugh.” Gokudera moaned as he began to wake up. His hand went to his head where he had been hit. Then his bright green eyes opened and he sat up as if he had been electrocuted. “Juudaime!”

Tsuna reached out and steadied the boy. His attention instantly turned to her. He stared at her and Yamamoto for a moment. His face swiftly flushed as anger, annoyance and a bit of sadness filled his eyes. He puffed up like an annoyed cat and his mouth opened and shut rapidly without a sound coming out.

“Oi, idiot, let go of Juudaime!”

Yamamoto only laughed and held tighter to her. “Did you have a nice nap, Gokudera?”

Before the silveret could retaliate, Tsuna intervened. She did not want to be caught in the middle of a pissing match. “I thought I told you not to call me Juudaime, Gokudera.”

He paused, his eyes went wide and his skin paled, before he started bowing to her from his sitting position. “I am so sorry, Tsuna-hime. I fail at being your right hand.”

“You’ll get it eventually, Gokudera.”

“Shut up, idiot.”

“Both of you be quiet.” Tsuna did not want any arguments. The boys both winced and did as she commanded. Gently, she pushed Takshi back off her shoulder and looked over the bomber. “Are you OK, Gokudera? I know how hard Hibari-senpai can hit.”
“I’m fine. Tsuna-hime does not need to be concerned with me.”

She sighed and patted the silveret’s hair. “You are one of mine, Gokudera. I protect what is mine and I keep them in good health. Please, tell me if you’re hurt or sick or if you need anything. I will not throw you away. I promise.”

Reborn nodded and smirked at the girl’s words. Yes, very good boss material. Seems being in charge of a yakuza group had given her ample experience at dealing with touchy subordinates with bad backgrounds. Now just to polish it, find her Guardians, and teach her more of the finer points of flame manipulation. Maybe he should shoot her with another Dying Will Bullet at the next training session. She was almost able to access Dying Will Mode on her own. She just needed a bit of a push. He’d be delighted to provide that push for her.

“Tsuna-hime,” Gokudera whimpered and looked up at his precious, kind boss with teary eyes. He had never had anyone so worried about him before. He sniffled as he forced himself not to cry at her concern. He couldn’t bother his Tsuna-hime.

Ding dong.

The doorbell was his savior. He turned and winced at the pain that lanced through his head. He hissed and pressed a hand to the side of his head. Tsuna looked over toward the front door and back to him.

“Takeshi, go get some aspirin from the first aid kit. Gokudera, stay put. I’ll go see who’s at the door. Reborn,” she paused and looked at the hitman. Leon had changed into a mallet again and that pain promising smirk was on the baby’s face again. “Do whatever you want.”

Leon shifted back into a chameleon. Reborn pouted before hopping onto his student’s shoulder. He hadn’t had a chance at training/torturing her yet, but if he was right, the visitor behind door number one would be just the thing to test his precious student.

“Hello…” Tsuna opened the door and froze. There was the poison woman. Her pink hair was really distinctive.

“Vongola Pizza.” the woman chirped happily. She had a pizza box in her arms. Then she noticed the baby sitting on Tsuna’s shoulder. “Reborn!”

“Bianchi.”

“You know her?” Tsuna tilted her head slightly so as to have both assassins in her sight.

“She’s my fourth lover.” Tsuna felt her eyes go wide at the declaration. Her eyes flashed between the two as they discussed something. She wasn’t really paying attention. The pink haired woman was… did that make her a pedophile? What the hell?

“-if the Decimo is murd-- dies , then you’ll be free.”

Tsuna cursed mentally as her instincts screamed at her to move. She barely managed to dodge the box as it was thrown at her. Reborn hopped off her shoulder as she tucked into a roll and watched the box and its obviously poisonous contents went sailing over her head. Hopping back up on to her feet, she glared at the would-be assassin. This was starting to get annoying.

“Gokudera!” Yamamoto shouted. A chill ran down Tsuna’s spine. She turned and stared at the sight of the silver haired bomber collapsed on the ground clenching at his stomach. Had the woman...? Had she actually...? Her temper, normally kept under tight control, snapped. No one hurts those
under her rule. No one. The pink haired bitch would burn.

At once Bianchi knew she had made a mistake. She recognized her brother as he lay on the floor moaning in pain. It seemed the Vongola heir had taken in her dear brother. The girl was obviously a strong Sky if the sheer heaviness of her Flame suffusing the air and trying to choke out Bianchi’s will was any sign. The woman gasped for air and fell backward out of the doorway into the outside air.

“I am going to kill you.” Tsuna announced as she turned her attention back on the woman. Her eyes, both Bianchi and Reborn noticed instantly, had turned cold as ice. The teen’s entire countenance all but yelled to run and flee in the face of her rage. A shiver ran down Bianchi’s spine at the look.

“Takeshi, see to Hayato. She’s mine.” The acid in her tone burned. It was also Bianchi’s cue to run. Scrambling to her feet with far less grace than she usually had, the poison chef ran. That little voice she had cultivated over her time as a hitwoman screamed to run, to hide, to get the hell out of there.

Tsuna wasn’t having any of that. Springing up onto her feet, she raced after the escaping woman like a cheetah on the hunt. Bianchi, though faster than a civilian, was made more for flexibility and getting close enough to her targets to give them a taste of her poison. Tsuna, however, lived and died by running and striking hard and fast. She was a fighter and had trained to be so. Her legs pumped as she sprinted toward her prey. Getting within reach, her hand curled into claws and grasped at the rose haired woman’s shirt. With a hard pull of the fabric, she stood over the grounded poison mistress and lifted her leg. She stomped with as much force as she was able.

Bianchi rolled out of the way and sprang up onto her feet. Pupils blown wide as she tried to figure out how to get away from the enraged Vongola heir. Tsuna wasn’t going to give her a chance. Taking initiative, she struck forward and kept the hits coming. Bianchi frantically blocked or dodged out of the unconsciously Flame enhanced hits. She couldn’t keep that up for long though. Each hit burned away at the fabric of her shirt and seared the skin beneath.

“Tsunami, stop.” Reborn appeared with a kick aimed at his student’s head. This was not what he had planned when he let slip his location to his informants. He knew the information would get to Bianchi and that she’d follow him to Namimori. The reaction of his student, that cold rage and ruthlessness that reminded him of Nono at his worst, was not expected at all.

Tsuna turned a snarl on him and swiped at him with a Flame wreathed hand. The Sun Arcobaleno narrowed his eyes and moved. Faster than the Vongola heir could react, the hitman collided with her head and she dropped like a stone.

“Bianchi, get out of here. I’ll contact you when she doesn’t want to kill you at first sight.”

“Y-yes, Reborn.” The words were gasped out and breathy. Tsuna could hear feet pound the pavement and head away as fast as the runner could go.

Tsun groaned and slowly sat up. “What the hell, Reborn?”

The baby hitman stared down at her as she struggled to her feet. “Go take care of your men, Mujona-Tsuna.”

“Fuck you.”

“Go.” At the command, a jolt raced down her spine. The emptiness in his eyes made her freeze in place. He stared down at her for a few seconds more before bounding off to wherever it was that baby hitmen went to. She sat there, her heart finally beating again after her fright before getting up
and going back inside. Reborn was right, she did have a man to check on.

“Takeshi?” she called as she stepped inside. She blinked when she saw the wall where the pizza had hit. It wasn’t anywhere near where Hayato had been standing so how…?

“In here, Tsuna,” Takeshi called from the sitting room. “Gokudera’s fine.”

A rush of breath left her lungs as she finally relaxed. Her shoulders drooped. Her stomach twisted violently. Acid burbled up in her mouth as she forced herself not to vomit. A wince twisted over her face.

“You OK?” Takeshi asked as she entered the sitting room and flopped onto a chair.

“Side effect of going into a rage. I’ll be fine in a bit.”

“Tsuna-hime, I’m so sorry for worrying you.” Gokudera said in a voice just shy of a shout.

“It’s fine, Gokudera. I tend to be a bit protective of my people.”

The Italian nodded solemnly, his eyes sparkling in amazement. “That’s a sign of a good Sky.”

Tsuna wasn’t quite sure how to respond to that. Time to change the topic. “So, why did you collapse? I thought you were hurt?”

He shook his head and rest his arms on his knees. “That was my older sister, Bianchi.”

“That was your sister?” Yamamoto gaped before laughing tightly. “Well, why’d she attack Tsuna then?”

“That we can blame on Reborn,” Tsuna informed him before turning her attention back on the Italian. “Why the reaction to her then?”

“Well, see, I…” the silveret bit his lip and peered up at her from beneath his bangs. Tsuna met his gaze and smiled gently. She stood up and sat down next to him. He looked away and tensed when she placed a gentle hand on his arm.

“Please, Hayato, I need to understand, especially after how I could have killed her.”

The words came in a deluge. He hadn’t had a good childhood. As a bastard child, the only male child of his father and thus the heir, pressure had been placed on him. His sister had forced her poison cooking on him on their shared father’s orders. Traumatized didn’t properly describe it. Now whenever he saw his sister, he reacted as if poisoned by her food. His stomach cramped and he fell to the ground weaker than a newborn kitten.

“Lovely,” Tsuna muttered and leaned back. “I just tried to kill your sister.”

“She was trying to kill you and we aren’t that close,” he shrugged.

She sighed and sat back upright. Sharing a glance with the silent and serious swordsman, she nodded. “Look, let’s put this out of mind for now. I’m not in the mood to deal with the senior advisors at the moment so Takeshi and I can walk you home so you can recover.”

Red flushed across the Italian’s face. “You don’t need to do that, Tsuna-hime.”

Yamamoto chuckled. “We want to, though. We need to know where you live, Gokudera.”
“Shut up, sword-idiot!”

“Don’t fight.” Tsuna interposed herself between the two. If this meant she had to climb over Gokudera’s lap, she didn’t notice. She did notice when his face turned a bright red color.

“Y-yes, Tsuna-hime.”

Takeshi just laughed.

“I can’t believe he was living there.” Tsuna complained as she and Takeshi walked down the road back to her house. Sweat wet their clothing and hair clung to skin. Their muscles burned, but that wasn’t what was fueling her annoyance.

“Mah, I’m surprised he was living there, and did you see his face when Rumiko smashed his face in her cleavage?” The swordsman laughed brightly. The woman who kept the Akatora’s prostitutes happy, healthy and manageable often ignored personal boundaries. Shoving someone’s head in her surgically altered breasts to shut them up was something she was rather known for among the Akatora.

“I think he’s finally understanding that I am not going to abandon him. It’s actually kind of sad.” She frowned and tilted her head back to look up at the sunset painted sky. “How many times has he been kicked for him to constantly act as if he is going to be struck or turned on? Makes me wonder about the honor of a mafia family.”

Takeshi snorted, a strangled agreement. “At least you’ll take care of him now.”

She glanced at him and smiled. “You have no problems with that? I know how you feel about me, Takeshi.”

“I know.” The swordsman flushed. “I talked to Dad after the kid explained the flame thing. Dad said that it wasn’t unknown for a Sky, especially beautiful female Skies, to attract many lovers. I can deal with that.”

“The fact that Hayato isn’t bad to look at isn’t coloring your decision at all?” She laughed as he stumbled, flushing the brightest color she had ever seen on his face. A small victory for her. “Just be cautious with him, Takeshi. He isn’t used to your brand of attention and will probably try to hurt you up the moment you touch him in any way.”

“I know.”

Takeshi waved to Tsuna as she stepped into her house. The door shut softly behind her and she leaned back against it. Her hands shook at her sides. They had been shaking since she had confronted the Poison Scorpion. For the amount of annoyance and dislike Hayato held for his sister, he sure knew a lot about her recent accomplishments.

“Tsunami.” She looked up and frowned at the serious look on her tutor’s face. She hadn’t forgiven him for kicking her in the head. Yeah, she understood why he had, but it still hurt.

“Reborn. Mom’s not back yet?”

“I sent her out to get dinner instead of cooking. Now come upstairs. There’s someone you need to speak to.”

Her lips pressed together as she looked upward. She had a good idea who the hitman had brought in.
She looked back down at her tutor and winced. She wasn’t going to be getting out of this by the look on his face.

“Yes, Reborn.”

The silence from the hitman unnerved her. He stared up at her, nodded, and led the way up the stairs. Tsuna’s jaw clenched as every instinct told her she was not going to enjoy the coming meeting. Her heart beat an odd rhythm as it sped up and she tried to slow it down with the power of her mind. It half-way worked. Every step upward to her room made it pound faster and faster. The door loomed ahead and opened with a rough creaking sound with the slightest touch from the baby hitman.

“Reborn!”

“Hello, Poison Scorpion Bianchi,” Tsuna greeted the girl in a flat tone.

The poison specialist stood in the center of the room and shifted nervously. Her hands twitched. Pianist fingers, a feature she shared with her brother, intertwined. Skin turned a slightly pale color. It seemed the assassin hadn’t gotten over her near miss with the young Vongola heir.

“Vongola.”

Tsuna turned her attention from the poison mistress to her tutor. “Is there a reason she’s here in my room in my house where my mother, who knows nothing about the mafia or organized crime in general, could walk in at any moment?”

“Hm. She’s here to apologize.” Reborn shrugged. Leon clambered down his arm and turned into a familiar gun. “And you are going to accept it, Tsunami.”

Her lips pressed into a tight line. Her fingers curled into a fist as the muscles in her shoulders tensed. Jaw clenched and teeth gnashed together. She turned a dark glare on the oh-so-nervous woman. Her lips turned up into a sneer even as she inclined her head ever so slightly.

“I am sorry for attacking you in your home, Vongola Decima.” Bianchi stated and bowed just slightly.

“I see,” Tsuna’s voice stayed flat and cold. Her flames rose within her. Bianchi inhaled sharply at the feeling of Sky Flames suffusing the air. “I’ll accept your apology as long as you understand that if you ever try to strike out against me or mine, I will end you. No questions asked. No tears shed. Even Reborn will not be able to stop me.”

“Understood.”

“Well then,” Reborn’s voice cut through the uncomfortable silence following the Vongola heiress’s declaration, “I’ll get you your room set up, Bianchi.”

Tsuna’s head snapped over to her tutor. “Wait, room? What room?”

“Bianchi will be staying here from now on.”

“Oh hell no. She is not staying here. I do not want her around my mother!”

“Nana’s already met her and agreed to house her here.”

“But, what…? Oh forget it. You’ll just do it without my agreement.”

“Glad you figured that out.” Reborn grinned and Leon shifted back into a chameleon that shuffled up
onto the fedora’s brim. “Now what took you so long? I overheard you and Yamamoto were going to take Gokudera to his apartment.”

Tsuna’s eyebrow twitched as she turned her full attention on her tutor. Bianchi wasn’t as much a threat with her vow. “Have you seen the place he was living in?”

The hitman nodded. “The Sakura Apartments. The owner is one of Vongola’s informants. I told him to get a place there.”

“The place is trash and the owner is an asshole I would love to put down like a rabid animal. I was not leaving one of my people there.” Tsuna’s voice swiftly changed from slightly annoyed to full on anger. “That asshole would have changed the locks or left the place to be burglarized just to piss me off.”

Reborn frowned. “You’ve had dealings with him before?”

“Ah, Reborn?” Bianchi interrupted. She looked about as happy as Tsuna did. “Are you telling me you sent my brother to stay in an unsafe location?”

Before the hitman could respond, Tsuna turned and nodded fiercely. “That’s what he did. I called in some of my men and we moved him to a spare apartment that just became open.”

“Your men?” Bianchi frowned. “I thought you had only known about being the Vongola heiress for a few weeks. How have you got men you are so sure are loyal to you?”

A smirked slithered across Tsuna’s lips. “May I properly introduce myself, I’m Sawada Tsunami, head of the Akatora-gumi and Vongola heiress. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“So you moved him to a place you own?”

“Yeah. One of my girls got married and moved out of her apartment. Usually I leave the apartments to the working girls who work in my establishments, but I was not leaving Hayato there.”

Reborn’s eyes lit with an unholy light. “It’s Hayato now, is it? That makes three boys wrapped around your little finger.”

“Hie!” The high pitch shriek made him and Bianchi both wince. “It is not like that and you know it!”

“Whatever you say, Tsunami.” That smirk on his lips told her the baby wasn’t going to let this subject go.

Bianchi frowned, her brow knitting together before a great big smile crossed her face. “Reborn, why didn’t you tell me about her boy troubles? Oh, don’t worry, Sawada, I’ll help you really impress those boys and make them worship you.”

“Bianchi, that’s not what he meant. Bianchi!” And thus did the Sawada household gain a new member and Tsuna gained a new headache. Once more, she reaffirmed her vow to somehow, someway get vengeance on the tutor from hell.
Ok, so this took far longer than I thought it would. I got hit by writer's block hard at the end of last month and then lost 2/3 of what I wrote a few weeks ago and have been trying to re-create what I had originally put down. I am not entirely happy with this chapter and it hasn't been read over by my beta yet. I wanted to get you guys something before April starts. Hopefully I'll have the next chapter done earlier.

Warning: I am not a fan of Haru and that shows this chapter. Fair warning.

Tsuna sighed in pleasure as Takeshi rubbed a bruise salve over her much abused back. Training with Reborn had gone beyond annoying and into hellish over the course of the workout. Gokudera lay face down in the dirt. Only his occasional limb twitches showed he was alive. He'd be next up for first aid.

Tsuna, having fought Hayato previously, knew the boy needed more training and asked her tutor from hell to train her boys beside her. Takeshi never said no to a training session and his father had promised to go easy on him after he found out just who was going to do the training. Tsuyoshi had heard about Reborn’s ideas of training and actually felt a bit sorry for his son and his girlfriend/boss. Still, the training under his father allowed to teenage swordsman to be the least affected of the trio.

“Why did you shoot me with another of those bullets, Reborn?” Tsuna lifted her head slightly to look at her tutor perched on a high tree limb. “I thought I was getting better at manipulating my flame.”

“You are getting better at flame manipulation, but you fail at entering Hyper Dying Will Mode. That’s what the bullets are training your body to do, Tsunami.”

“Still, isn’t a bullet every session a bit much?”

“No.”

“Sadist. You just like shooting me.”

Knowing the battle to be over and having gotten the last word in despite the vicious smirk being flashed in her direction, she bowed her head and let Takeshi finish rubbing in the bruise salve Reborn had supplied. The sharp, medical scent of eucalyptus and camphor filled the air and the salve felt delightfully cool on her skin. Large, calloused hands kneaded her skin in an effort to push the medicinal blend into her skin. Against her will, tiny moans and sighs of pleasure escaped her lips as her swordsman finished the massage by giving her a shoulder rub.

“You sound like you’re in the middle of sex with all the moaning, Tsunami,” Reborn stated from his lofty perch. A red blush crossed all three teenager’s face. Gokudera lifted his head and sent a heated glare at the swordsman. His muscles quivered as he tried to move, but ended up falling back down face first into the ground.

“I’m louder when I’m having sex,” she stated bluntly. All the males turned their attention to her as
one. Hayato and Reborn both dragged their eyes from her up to Takeshi, who had turned a bright red.

“I’m going to kill you, sword idiot,” Hayato promised with murder glowing in his eyes like the fires of hell. Tiny wisps of storm flame ignited on the tips of his fingers.

“What makes you think it was him?”

“Then who?” the Italian asked and turned slightly scandalized look on her. She levered herself upward, which gave the silveret a rather nice view of her bare chest, and smiled. It wasn’t a nice smile.

“It’s not your business. I was not taken advantage of, so drop the subject.”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.” The Italian was contrite and obviously only agreeing because she ordered him. He wanted to track down the man that had deflowered his stunning boss and take away his ability to enjoy women ever again. He had enough plans on how to go about that from his time with Trident Shamal. It was amazing just how many different variations on the same threat scorned women and overprotective fathers were willing to attempt to make reality.

Reborn smiled down on the three, his gaze particularly locking onto his student. “So you already know how to play that game then, Tsunami?”

Titling her head back, showing off the gentle curve of her throat and forcing her unclad chest forward as she stretched, she grinning up at him. Hayato, who had a very nice view of her chest being suddenly positioned into a pose out of a dirty magazine, whimpered and let his head fall back to the ground. A tiny trickle of blood ran out his nose.

“Reborn, I was practically raised by prostitutes since I was 10. They made certain I knew how to use what nature and luck gave me when I went through puberty. There are precious few things that can truly embarrass me.”

“You are very comfortable baring yourself in front of these two.”

“Unlike when you made my clothing blow up in front of my entire class, I trust these two. My lack of caring if they see me nude or semi-nude is just an extension of that.”

“Sensible.” He nodded.

She curled herself around and sat up, legs crossed in front of her. She showed no sign of being embarrassed for being topless or pantless. Her underwear, plain white that day, kept her from flashing her privates at the boys. “If it helps them get used to the sight, even better. I don’t want them being distracted in case someone attacks me when I’m changing or bathing or something.”

“I think you may be giving Gokudera anemia with the nosebleed he’s got,” Takeshi stated as he leaned over her shoulder. His clothed, muscled chest pressing into her bare back as he tried to get a better look at the embarrassed silveret who still had his face pressed against the ground. From the angle they were at, they could see a faint trickle of crimson blood dripping from the Italian boy’s nose.

“Shut up, sword idiot.”

“Tsunami-hime!” a young male voice called out from the trees.

Tsuna was on her feet in a second. “Here. What is it?”
A young man with tiger stripe tattoos decorating his knuckles and curling up his arms dashed out of the tree line, stared at her topless state for a beat before swallowing thickly. “Word from Yuusuke, Tsuna-hime. Someone just tried to attack some of ours down by the river.”

“Injuries?”

“Only scrapes and bruises. Daichi’s got them bandaged up, but Yuusuke wanted me to get you immediately.”

She nodded and shared a brief glance with Takeshi. He inclined his head and stood to gather up his equipment and clothes. Gokudera groaned on the ground but peel himself up. He rose to sitting and stared at Tsuna, waiting for instructions. Absently he rubbed away the small amount of blood on his upper lip.

“Go tell Yuusuke I’m on my way. I want to know what the attackers looked like, their preferred weapons, and get teams searching outward from the river. I’ll contact Hibari on the way. His people might have caught sight of them.” Tsuna grabbed the sports bra that Takeshi held out her her and shrugged it on. The young Akatora member, Watanabe Kazuki if she remembered right, looked a lot more comfortable with her breasts being covered. He bowed to her, eyed the baby in the tree warily, and took off back through the trees to report to Yuusuke.

“Reborn,” she started as she grabbed her shirt that had been thrown to the side earlier in training, “are you willing to assist the Akatora with this, or are you going to sit this out?”

“You need to deal with your own problems, Tsunami, though I will step in if you are going to die.”

Tsuna hummed and nodded as her jacket, torn slightly but still usable though she’d never be able to wear it to school again for fear of Hibari, came over her shoulders. “That’s least I can ask for. Come on. I want to see how our own are doing and figure out where those swine have scuttled off to.”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.” Both her boys chimed as one. Hayato jerked back in surprise before glaring and snarling at the swordsman. The Japanese boy laughed and grinned. Tsuna ignored them and strode with purpose out the training area. Her lips twitched. It was time to hunt.

If there was one thing Tsuna had learned to appreciate about the Akatora, it was their ability to move and plan under fire. Since her ascent to the leader, the men had gotten to practice quite a lot. Weapons were distributed. Communications went on line. No one was allowed to go out on their own, not even herself. Thankfully she had Takeshi to stand at her side and the most recent addition of Gokudera made her men relax even more. They wanted their princess alive, thank you very much. The girl had turned the Akatora-Kai from slowly dying out to competitors underneath an idiot with delusions of grandeur into something just bordering on respectable. It was hard to see just where the legal business had started to intersect with illegal gains, but it sure as hell was more profitable than gun running and constantly having to worry about the cops coming down on them hard.

“Tsunami-sama,” Yuusuke greeted his young boss as she strode into the headquarters main operation room. Her chestnut hair fell limply and clung to her skin. She had taken a shower and changed into something more acceptable for a yakuza boss than a high school uniform. Gokudera had changed into the punk in pried clothing he felt more natural in and Takeshi looked fetching and deadly in his suit with Shigure Kintoki slung over his shoulder.

“Any updates?”
Yuusuke, a man in his late 20s to early 30s who had been with the Akatora since he was a teenager, frowned and shook his head. “Two muggings, civilians, with the same pattern as the ones who hit ours and no suspects forthcoming. There’s no sign of the ones who attacked Ryouga and his boys either. If it wasn’t for the fact our boys got such a bad beating, I’d say these people don’t exist.”

Tsuna hummed and leaned over the table where various papers, reports, and maps lay in a cluttered but understandable mess. “Hit and run tactics?”

“That’s what we’re thinking.”

She hummed. Her lips pressed into a tight line as she pulled a map closer. Tiny red dots clustered around the river. Two more red dots marked spots nearby the cluster. Her men and where they had been found on the ground. Nostrils flared as she inhaled deeply. She looked up and met her second’s gaze.

“Have the girls checked in?”

“We got word from Rumiko 10 minutes ago. Everyone of her street girls are accounted for. The ones working at the shops report no problems and will be going home in groups. She and a handful of her more intelligent girls are on their way to help coordinate and free up more of the boys to go hunting.”

Tsuna groaned and placed her face in her hands. “This is going to be a fucking nightmare.”

“Tsuna-hime…” Gokudera muttered. His shoulder muscles twitched as he forced himself not to reach out on comfort her. She needed to looked strong for her people. He couldn’t ruin her image. He was a good right hand. He couldn’t undermine the boss’s authority. God did she look like she could use a hug right then.

She sighed and wiped her hand down her face. “Yamamoto, go talk to your father. He might have heard something. Then go and back up the boys in the shopping areas. We do not need this turning on the civilians and bringing the Rather of the skylark down upon us.”

“Yes, Tsunami.” Takeshi gave her a grim smile, his entire body shifting from happy person to just shy of committing mass murder. A few of the Akatora members nearby shivered at the sight. Takeshi became like this for only a few reasons and every time those reasons involved copious amounts of blood and pain. He stood there for a moment before heading off to his father’s shop.

“Gokudera, I want you to go back up Rumiko and the girls at your apartment building. There’s a good chance they’ll go after them there to get at us.”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.”

“And Gokudera, I’m giving you permission to blow any attackers to kingdom come. We can deal with the consequences later.”

The Italian gave a nod and took off. His boss had spoken. A small, feral smile crossed his lips. He’d have to dig into his stash, maybe even see which if any of the girls in the building had a decent throwing arm and the steadiest hands. Plans began to run through is mind. That feral smile turned much darker and predatory. His boss wanted all opposition obliterated. He would be certain hes got her wish.

Yuusuke watched as the silver haired boy hurried out of the war room. That boy honestly terrified the career yakuza. Only crazy people specialized in explosives and the boy reveled in it. He had been one of the ones to help the boy move from his previous apartment to the new one owned by the Akatora. He had never seen so much chemistry paraphernalia not related to drug making in one place.
before. The boy, the crazy boy, made his own bombs. Fucking insane mafia brat.

“That boy worries me.”

“You’re not the only one,” Tsuna said and rubbed the bridge of her nose. “He’s a bit too willing to please. Says a bit about his previous life, eh?”

Yuusuke nodded and looked over his boss. The little girl who had become a young woman under his eyes stood strong, proud and ready to defend her people. This attack would be answered twice over and he knew it. Every one in the Akatora knew it.

“Keep me posted,” she said and stepped away from the table. “I’m going to go see Kusakabe to see if the DC has found anything. He hadn’t when I last called in but it’s best for the alliance for me to go in person. Hibari should be on the warpath as well, so warn everyone out on the streets that the Skylark is hunting.”

“Will you be OK by yourself? Do you want me to send any of the boys with you?”

She shook her head. “It’ll be better if I go alone. If Hibari is with Kusakabe, well, you know how he hates crowding.”

Yuusuke frowned. “That boy is not right in the head.”

“And I am? How many people have I set on fire again?”

He was quiet for just a moment. “Be careful.”

“Always. Keep me informed.”

Tsuna walked down the street. Her mind raced and eyes darted about as she kept an eye out for any ambush. Her fingers twitched as she suppressed the urge to check her hidden knives. No need to alert anyone that anything was wrong.

“You look tense, Tsunami.”

“Holy crap! Don’t do that, Reborn!”

The baby sized hitman grinned up at her as she placed a hand over her heart. “Jumpy, Tsunami?”

“Oh, shut up.”

The grin on the baby hitman’s face grew. “So any new news from your men?”

“Nothing yet. I have everyone looking for information if they aren’t keeping watch on our businesses or protecting our girls. Gokudera’s keeping watch on the girls in his apartment building. Takeshi’s going to see if his dad’s heard anything and then going to back up the boys in the shopping district. I’m going to meet with Kusakabe to see if the DC knows anything and hopefully dodge Hibari. He’s going to be on the warpath.”

“And you’re worried he will go after you?”

She frowned and shook her head. “Maybe. I’m not willing to poke the sleeping tiger, but whoever attacked us is more than willing. The angry tiger isn’t something I want to face.”
“And he’s gone on the warpath because your men were attacked?”

Again she shook her head. “There were other attacks on people not involved with the Akatora. That’s what will have him raging. Speaking of, I need to meet Kusakabe at the school.”

She turned around and walked away. A second later a weight landed on her shoulder. She looked at the baby hitman sitting on her shoulder like a rather deformed parrot. Leon skittered over the brim of the fedora and flicked his tongue against her cheek. Her lips twitched at the ticklish feeling. Sometimes she wondered what such a sweet animal like Leon was doing with such an asshole like Reborn.

“Because he likes me.”

“Stop reading my mind.”

The two fell quiet. Tsuna relaxed ever so slightly. She trusted Reborn to protect her so he didn’t fail his job. The hitman had said he did not fail his missions and she knew the Ninth had made her safety part of his mission to make her into the next Vongola head. Thus she could relax, at least a little.

“He’s so cute.” A high pitched female squeal made every nerve stand at attention. Tsuna’s head snapped up and took a step back as her mind was blaring “Fangirl Alert!” over and over. Her hand instantly landed on one of her hidden knives.

“Oh, what’s your name?” a teenage girl with dark brown hair squealed as she got right up in Tsuna’s personal space. The Akatora boss shivered at the starry eyed look in the girl’s eyes.

“Ah, who are you?” Tsuna took a step back. Her eyes darted around the area. Maybe someone could take this crazy girl away.

“Oh, my name’s Miura Haru. Now who is this cute little guy?”

“I’m Reborn.”

“So cute!”

Tsuna stared at the crazy girl. “Ah, do you want something?”

“Can I hug you?” the crazy girl asked the baby hitman. Tsuna’s intuition suddenly blared a warning. This was not going to end well.

“No. I’m a hitman.”

The crazy girl froze. “What?”

“I’m in the mafia.”

Tsuna groaned and dragged a hand over her face. Wasn’t he supposed to keep his trap shut about that? Didn’t the mafia have a vow of silence or something?

Danger!

Tsuna’s hand flashed up. Her hand curled tightly around a dainty, feminine wrist. Automatically moving, Tsuna twisted the girl’s captured arm behind her back and had her kneeling on the ground a second later. The girl let out a shriek on pain as she was forced to knee on the rough pavement.

“Nice take down, Tsunami.”
“Shut it, Reborn. This is your fault.”

“Let me go!” The crazy girl thrashed as she tried to break Tsuna’s iron grip.

“You don’t get to hit people. It’s not nice and you never know if they’ll hit back,” Tsuna growled at her captive but did let her go. She also took a step back in the event the crazy girl was stupid enough to attack again.

“You evil person. How could you taint such a pure and innocent baby?” Miura Haru raged at Tsuna but refrained from striking her again. Her grip hurt.

Tsuna blinked and looked at Reborn before looking back at the fuming crazy girl. “You think he’s innocent?”

“He’s a baby. Of course he’s innocent and sweet and kind.”

Tsuna stared blankly at the crazy girl. She stared to chuckle and that swiftly turned into a full on laugh. Reborn, innocent, sweet, or caring? Her lungs burned and a pain started to form in her side. The crazy girl just stared at her with a dumbfounded look. So crazy girl wasn’t just crazy, she was delusional.

“I…but…why are you laughing? Such a sweet and innocent being shouldn’t be left with a crazy person like you.”

“Oh, girl, you have no idea what you are talking about.”

“I-I-I, you, I am going to take that baby away from you.”

“Yeah, good luck with that,” Tsuna wheezed as she turned to leave. Reborn smirked and turned the most innocent look she had ever seen on his face toward the crazy girl. The girl shouted something. Tsuna couldn’t tell with how hard she was laughing. That kind of comedy was something she desperately needed, but now time to get back to work. Kusakabe awaited. With any luck, Hibari wouldn’t be anywhere nearby.

Tsuna ducked around another tonfa strike. Hibari snapped and snarled at her as she dodged out of the way. Her meeting with Kusakabe had been interrupted by a rather annoyed skylark. Tsuna barely had the warning of being bitten to death before the first attack. She had dodged out of the way and a running battle had begun. She hadn’t been able to dodge every attack. Her arms still stung from the last hit she had blocked lest she get brained. Hibari really wasn’t pulling his hits today.

She needed to end this before she ended up in a hospital.

She spun around on her heel and ducked under and overhead hit. Ducking inside his guard, she landed a hard hit to his midsection. The hit which would have left most people gasping for breath or throwing up. Hibari just backed up a step and an unholy light filled his eyes. That was not what she wanted.

The hits came faster but thankfully not harder. Hibari seemed to be testing her ration time. Sweat dripped down the back of her neck as her chest heaved. She needed to stop this fast. She was tiring too quickly. Her tongue lashed out, wetting dry, cracking lips as she planned just how to do that.

The strike came from the side, aimed at her ribs. One arm lowered, blocking the hit, but she didn’t
stop there. Using the momentum of the swing, she pushed the attack at an angle the prefect had not expected. His eyes widened ever so slightly as she moved and struck her own attack on his exposed elbow. She hit the nerve and smirked as his hand spasmed open in response. The tonfa hit the ground with an audible thunk. His nostril flared as he tried to hit her with his remaining weapon. She let out a grunt as the steel tonfa hit her in the side. There was a moment of blankness as the pain rang in her head. A second later, she was pinned to the hallway wall by the much larger prefect’s body.

“Omnivore,” Hibari growled as he pressed the remaining tonfa against her throat.

“Hibari.” Their eyes met in a challenging stare down.

“Get rid of those herbivores, omnivore.”

She smiled up at him, her lips pulling back to reveal teeth. “Oh, those men aren’t herbivores, Hibari. They’re scavengers, less than herbivores, existing purely on the remains of society.”

The prefect stared at her for a moment before grunting and lowering his weapon. He didn’t step back though. Tsuna leaned further back against the wall. The prefect kept staring at her. It was getting unnerving. She got the distinct feeling the boy wanted to do something to her, but she wasn’t entirely sure what. His nostril flared as he took in a deep breath and took a step back.

“Go see Kusakabe.”

“Good hunting,” she said as the temperamental boy walked away. As soon as his back disappeared around a corner, she slumped, winced, and pressed a hand against her aching side. The boy had not been pulling his hits. Gingerly poking the injured area, she let out a hiss. Taking a deep breath, she noted with a mild bit of pleasure that her ribs didn’t feel cracked or broken, just bruised. With ginger steps, she made her way back to the reception room the Discipline Committee had taken over.

“He caught you, then?” Kusakabe asked as she appeared in the doorway.

“Yes, but I didn’t get any broken bones this time,” she said before sliding down into an empty chair. “Please tell me you have something. I’d take anything at the moment.”

Kusakabe lips twitched up into a smirk. “One of our contacts may have found something. One of the stores by the river has external security cameras and the owner was more than willing to hand the recordings over. I sent a copy to your phone a few minutes ago.”

Pulling her phone out of her bra—it was one of the best places for a woman to hide objects—she found the footage and watched it silently. Her eyes widened as two men in short sleeved t-shirts with tattoos decorating their entire arms. Yakuza. Well, now she knew who it was causing problems. The tattoos themselves were vaguely familiar as well. Certain yakuza groups favored certain tattoos. Most members of the Akatora had tiger stripes if not a full on tiger somewhere on their body for example. Her brows knit together as she sent the footage on to Yuusuke. He’d be the one most likely to recognize those tattoos.

“Recognize them?”

“No, but I’m betting Yuusuke or Rumiko will or can tell us which family they’re from.”

The DC second-in-command frowned and looked up at her. “I thought the yakuza were more, well, civilized than this. Don’t your kind have rules or something you’re supposed to follow.”

She put her phone back in her bra and frowned. “We do. If I can find out which group is behind this, I can get the other yakuza families to exile, if not outright extinguish, the idiots doing this. Acting like
this, attacking in broad daylight and attacking civilians to boot, will lead to the police cracking down
on all of us. I may be considered among the softer bosses, but I do not put up with this kind of shit.”

“I’ve never heard you curse.” His tone was contemplative, as if he couldn’t quite figure out how to
assimilate this bit of information about her.

“You’ve never seen me this mad before.” She shrugged. “Look, I’m going to go check on some of
my men in person before heading back to Akatora HQ to see if anyone there has figured anything
out. If you get any new information, no matter how small, send it to me. I’ll make sure my people do
the same for you.”

Tsuna leaned back in her chair. A plethora of maps and reports lay scattered in a mess over her desk.
She could hear her men moving up and down the halls of the Akatora HQ. No one had found
anything about the attackers yet. She was starting to get annoyed. How could two people just
disappear like that?

“Tsuna?” Takeshi asked as he pushed her office door open. He covered his mouth and yawned.

She looked up at him and gave a smile that showed exactly how weary she was. “How are things
looking out there?”

The swordsman shrugged. “Nothing much. Rumiko sent her girls home to rest and sent a few more
of the men to replace Gokudera. He should be in soon, too. Where’s the baby?”

“Reborn disappeared earlier this afternoon after I had an encounter with a crazy girl.” She rolled her
eyes outward the heaven for a second before shrugging. “I’m not exactly worried about the safety of
the world’s greatest hit man.”

“Isn’t he supposed to be protecting you, though?”

She shrugged again. “He’s probably been keeping an eye on me from a distance. He seems to be a
rather sink-or-swim type of teacher and would probably let assassins get just close enough to scare
me before jumping in.”

“That is not right.”

She shrugged. “I’m not relying on him to save me. As far as I’m concerned, he’s here to teach me
about mafia culture, history, etc. that I’ll need when I take over Vongola. You know, the things that I
had shoved down my throat my first year as boss of the Akatora.”

“Tsuna-hime?” Hayato asked as he peered in from the hall. He smiled at her and then turned an
annoyed glare on the swordsman.

Tsuna waved him in. “Come in, Gokudera. Take a seat. You look a little worn out.”

He did look something. “Worn out” only touched the surface. His hair, normally kept combed, stuck
out at odd angles. His skin was pale and hands shook lightly. His clothing was rumpled and
wrinkled, but that she wrote off from him having done something like running from his apartment to
the Akatora HQ.

“That crazy woman,” the Italian teen moaned as he dropped into one of the chairs. A second later
Takeshi sat down next to him. He glared and gave a half-hearted snarl.
“Rumiko?” the swordsman asked with a laugh and wide grin. “You know she only does it because it bothers you.”

“Crazy woman,” the Italian continued to mumble as he dragged a hand across his face.

“At least she doesn’t leave lipstick kisses on your cheeks.” Tsuna gave her swordsman a pointed look. He looked away with a flush on his cheeks. Hayato looked up between the two and snorted at the blushing swordsman.

“Tsuna-sama!” a call came from the hall. A moment later she was on her feet and rushing out the door. A group of her men were gathered outside on of the meeting rooms. They parted as she rushed forward. Behind her, Takeshi and Hayato followed at a quick clip.

“What is it?” she demanded as she stepped into the room. Yuusuke looked up from the paper covered table and gave his boss a vicious, predatory smile.

“Please tell me you’re grinning because you found them,” Tsuna demanded as she walked to stand opposite her second.

The older man frowned slightly and shook his head. “I don’t have a location, but I do have something just as important, the family.”

Everyone fell silent as they looked at their boss. Her lips twitched from a frown to a pleased smile. Yuusuke nodded, his grin returning, as he pushed a picture lifted straight from the security footage Kusakabe had sent. He tapped one figure.

“That’s Minami Kenta. He’s an enforcer for the Fuuma-Kai.” Yuusuke leaned back but kept his gaze on the picture. “They’re bad news, boss. Most of their money comes from drug running. Rumor has them being producers or importers of a good portion of the meth in Yamanashi prefecture. What money they don’t get from drugs comes from a combination of human trafficking and gun running.”

Everyone was silent.

“Fuck.” Tsuna growled and slammed both of her hands on the table. Her men jerked at the loud sound.

“Boss?” Yuusuke licked his lips as she bowed her head. The few longer strands of her hair fell down in her face.

She inhaled deeply and stood back up straight. “Have our more technologically inclined find out if Minami is staying nearby. Keep security up on our businesses. No one goes anywhere alone. If you find the asshole or his accomplice, feel free to dump their bodies in the river. The Fuuma-Kai can identify their bodies downstream. Yuusuke, send that information to Kusakabe. Having an actual name to target will make Hibari back off us a bit.”

“Yes, boss,” the men stated as one and began to disperse until only Yuusuke, Takeshi, and Hayato were in the room.

“You should head home, Tsuna-sama,” Yuusuke stated as he began to organize the papers in front of him.

Tsuna frowned and opened her mouth.

“He’s right, pretty.” A female voice came from behind her. Turning, Tsuna met the concerned gaze of Takanaka Rumiko. The older woman had her arms folded under her generous bosom as she
walked into the room. Hayato flinched at the woman’s voice and shied away as the woman stepped by him.

“Rumiko.”

“Tsunami, you need to go get rest and not make your mother worried. You remember what happened to Nana the last time that happened.”

Takeshi, Tsuna and Yuusuke all sucked in a sharp breath. Tsuna grit her teeth but reluctantly nodded. Hayato frowned. There was something here he hadn’t been told. Still he kept his mouth shut. Tsuna-hime would say something when she was ready. Plus staying silent made him invisible to the crazy woman.

“Fine. I’ll head home.”

“And you’ll let these two strapping boys escort you.”

“Rumiko,” Tsuna whined.

“We are not letting you go anywhere alone, Tsunami. It’s too dangerous. If you fall, so do we.”

Tsuna frowned but nodded reluctantly. “Alright. They can take me home.”

“Good.” The older woman turned to face the two boys and smiled widely. “Now, you two are not to let anything bother Tsunami-chan. You got that?”

“Yes, Rumiko,” Takeshi stated with a nod. Hayato just frantically nodded and leaned back as the woman leaned into his personal space. The wide grin on her face became much wider. The Italian had no chance to react before a pair of arms wrapped around his shoulders and pulled him face first into her large chest. His arms waved about frantically as he tried to find purchase to escape even as Rumiko cuddled him tighter and tighter to her body.

Tsuna tapped her subordinate on the shoulder. “Rumiko, let him go before you suffocate him.”

“But he’s so cute,” the woman whined but let him go. He backed away with a gasp. “Do you realize how much he could make in a day of work?”

“Not interested,” he snapped, his face flushing a bright red.

“Shame. Like I said, you’d make a mint. Are you sure you don’t want to do some work on the side? I mean, I can guarantee that your customers wouldn’t get violent or anything. You’d just have to get used to the taste a bit.”

“Fuck no. I’m not interested in guys, you bitch.”

Tsuna’s eyes instantly tracked to Takeshi. He hid his wince rather well, but experience told Tsuna he was going to be sulking over that statement for a while. She’d have to stay close to him in case he fell into depression again.

“Rumiko, leave him be. Hayato, she does this to make you react. She gets a kick out of it,” Tsuna stated and walked around the woman. “Let’s go before Mom gets worried.”

“Tsuna-hime?”

“Let’s go.”
“Yes, Tsuna-hime.”

“How is your new apartment, Gokudera? I haven’t thought to ask you since we moved you in,” Tsuna skied as she, Hayato and Takeshi walked toward her house. The two boys stayed by her sides with Takeshi walking just a step behind them as he was used to.

“It’s nice, better than that other place,” Hayato shrugged even as his eyes kept scanning the surrounding area. His fingers twitched slightly.

“And the girls you share a building with can’t be that bad, either,” Takeshi said with a laugh. Tsuna thought it sounded off for his usual jovial laugh.

“Well, they are nice,” Hayato said and flushed.

“They know I’ve claimed you as mine.” Tsuna cracked her neck and stretched her arms above her head.

“Y-yours,” the Italian choked out.

Takeshi and her both looked at him and then looked at each other. What had cause that reaction?

“Yeah. You’re one of my men who spends a lot of time around me. They’ve probably heard about my ascension to the Vongola heir and have figured out you’re here for that purpose, maybe as a bodyguard or something.”

“O-oh.”

Takeshi grinned and placed an arm around her and Hayato’s shoulders. “They know you’re important to Tsuna and treat you as such.”

The Italian pushed at the arm draped across him. It refused to move. “Let me go, idiot.”

“Nope.”

The Italian pulled out a stick of dynamite. “I’m going to-”

“Hush.” Tsuna had gone tense. Both boys looked at her and then turned their attention to their surroundings. They were close to the bridge spanned the river that they needed to cross to get to Tsuna’s house. Something was making her intuition ping.

“There you are!” a female voice cried into the night. Tsuna blinked and stared. There was a girl in some sort of tree costume standing to the side of the bridge.

“Who the hell are you?” Hayato growled and took position in front of Tsuna. Tsuna could feel Takeshi tensing behind her. The entire air of the area turned hostile in a moment.

“I’m Mira Haru,” the tree girl stated and pointed at Tsuna with one of her twig covered limbs.

“Oh, he crazy girl,” Tsuna said and smiled.

“Crazy girl?” Takeshi asked as he leaned over her shoulder to stare at the costumed girl.

“She thinks Reborn is sweet and innocent. Hence the crazy girl moniker.”
“What?” Both boys turned to look between Tsuna and Haru.

“He’s a sweet and innocent baby. You’re corrupting him!”

“Like I said, crazy.”

Hayato peered at the girl and scoffed. “She’s delusional.”

Tsuna nodded. “That’s a given.”

“You scoundrel. What have you done to that sweet baby?”

That set off the Italian and his temper. “Hey, don’t you dare insult, Tsuna-hime.”

“Hime? How could you call someone like that hime?”

“Tsuna-hime is better than you will ever be.”

“Oh yeah…” and thus did the shouting match between Hayato and Haru begin.

Meanwhile, Tsuna remained tense. Her intuition was still blaring a warning. Haru, as crazy as she was, wasn’t the reason for the warning. Takeshi noticed her tenseness and tensed himself. He took to scanning the area and placed a hand on his weapon. He would be ready when she gave the word.

“Well, well, look what we’ve got here.” A male voice, smarmy and full of arrogance, came out from the darkness. Tsuna turned in the direction of the sound. Two men stood in the shadows cast by the streetlights. From what she could see, the men matched the same body profiles as the two attackers. Her mouth went dry even as her mind went calm and calculating.

“Wah, who are you?” Haru asked as she broke off from her argument with the Italian. Hayato, having realized what was happening, shifted into a fighting stance. His hands rested over the places he hid his bombs, and a calculating gleam shone in his eyes. His lips moved silently. Angles and distances raced through his head as he figured out just what kind of explosives would be useful in this situation.

“You Sawada?” one of the men asked.

“I am.”

“Well, what do you know, Boss was right about you.”

Tsuna remained silent. She had no need or want to respond to the unspoken taunt. She glared. Pink tongue flicked out to wet dry lips. Muscles tensed further as the men stepped out of the shadows into the light. A sharp inhale came from behind her followed by the sound of Takeshi unsheathing his weapon. The men both stopped in their steps and stared at what she knew without looking was sharp steel wielded by ice cold eyes.

“What do you want?” Tsuna ground out. She glanced out the corner of her eyes at the civilian standing to the side. Hopefully these two would have the wherewi-

The two men pulled out knives.

“What?” Haru let out a shriek and stumbled backwards.

“You idiots,” Tsuna hissed. Then everything got chaotic. The two enemy yakuza laughed and rushed the group of teens. Hayato pushed the shrieking civilian back and ducked under a rather
clumsy slash. A small, low yield explosive appeared in his hand as if magic and lit. He moved fast with surety only experience could bring as he shoved the explosive down the man’s shirt. The pathetic example of yakuza let out a shout and danced around like a crazy person. The explosive rolled out of the shirt and fell to the ground before exploding in a loud bang and leaving a faint scorch mark.

Meanwhile, Tsuna and Takeshi were facing the more larger of the two men. The tattoos on his arms shimmered in the streetlight. Takeshi blocked the knife with his own blade as Tsuna got in close and hit the vulnerable areas. Ribs cracked beneath her hands. The man stumbled backwards. Takeshi took advantage of the distraction and struck out. Steel met flesh. The copper scent of blood bloomed in the air. A wild, predatory grin came across Tsuna’s face. Takeshi could take care of that one.

“I'll back Gokudera up. Put him down, Takeshi.”

“As you say, Tsunami-hime.” The cold words made goosebumps rise. Takeshi had entered his danger zone.

Turing from what would be a one sided fight, she looked over at Hayato. The blood instantly drained from her face. Her hands curled into fists.

“Let me go!” Haru screamed and kicked as the man grabbed her by the shoulders and placed the knife against her throat. Hayato was crumpled on the ground a short distance away with one hand over his stomach. Thankfully there didn’t seem to be any blood, but Tsuna couldn’t be certain from where she was.

A cold rage, familiar and sharp as any blade, burned in her stomach. Her eyes tracked from the Italian to the enemy yakuza. He grinned at her and pressed the blade closer to Haru’s throat. The girl had gone quiet. Her eyes widened to show white complete around her irises. Tsuna could tell the girl stood right on the precipice of fainting, and the man holding her hostage was daring Tsuna to act, to move against him before he could slash the civilian’s throat.

“You are scum,” the Akatora boss growled. A surge of heat curled through her. Her eyesight sharpened. Mind raced and all her senses took in information far faster than normal. Everything went sharper, more real. She absently noted what was happening, but her focus was on the armed man in front of her and the hostage. She knew, somehow, that she could move before the man could react. Muscles tensed before relaxing. The man smirked and opened his mouth.

He never got the chance to speak.

Tsuna moved, crossed the distance far faster than she should have ever been able to, and slammed into both the yakuza thug and Haru. Unfortunately she was going a bit too fast and hit a bit too hard. The man and the two girls with him fell over the edge of the bridge into the water below. Tsuna felt the edge of a blade dig into her arms while a second pair on hands scrambled at her neck. The smell of burning flesh and screams both male and female filled her senses. Then the water came over their heads in one teeth jarring hit.

Tsuna didn’t know what happen next. One moment she was in the water. The next she stared at the night sky on the riverbank with Haru, in her ruined costume, beside her and a half-charred up corpse bobbing at their feet.

“Tsuna!” she heard two voices call to her. She blinked and sat up. That clear edge to her vision remained. A faint headache started to form between her eyes as she looked up the riverbank. Takeshi and Hayato hurried down to her side. Blood decorated Takeshi’s face and arms. He’d have to throw out that shirt, she idly noted as North boys skidded down next to her. Hayato held a hand over his
stomach. She had been right. There was no blood on the Italian boy.

“Tsun,” Takeshi managed to get out between heaving breaths.

“I’m OK,” the words sounded strange to her, as if not actually being in her own voice. “I’m OK. Check her over.”

“She’s fine, Tsunami.” Everyone blinked and turned. Reborn sat beside Haru’s side and was checking the unconscious girl over. “Congratulations, by the way.”

“Huh?” the Akatora boss sat up with the help of her two boys. Reborn smirked as Leon glowed and changed into a mirror. He held it up. Tsuna gasped. There on her forehead a tiny orange flame flickered.

“Seems you’ve unlocked Hyper Dying Will Mode. Congratulations, Tsunami.”

“Did you manage to get her home?” Tsuna spoke into a cell phone as she paced in her room. Takeshi and Hayato had both insisted she go home and rest when the rest of the Akatora came to clean up the fight scene and get rid of the bodies. Unsurprisingly, the rest of the Akatora agreed with them. Reborn had escorted her back home all while explaining just how much worse, in her opinion, the training was going to get now that she had activated HDW mode on her own.

“Yeah,” one of the men she had sent to take the Haru girl home replied. “We told her dad she had tripped in her costume and fell in the river. Don’t think he believed us, but he’s smart enough not to say anything.”

“Good. Have a nice night, then.”

“You too, hime.”

She set the phone down on her desk before sitting on her edge of her bed. A hand went up to her messed hair. Her mother had not been happy to see her condition but had calmed down when Reborn said she had helped save a girl from drowning. Still that look in her mom’s eyes, as quickly as it had flashed and disappeared, made the yakuza boss uncomfortable.

“Tsuna?” Takeshi peeked in her room.

“Takeshi? When did you get here? Shouldn’t you be heading home?”

“I-Tsuna,” he muttered and stepped into her room. He bit his lip and fell silent as he stared at her.

Frowning she stood up. “Takeshi?”

Arms came around her a moment later. She found herself pulled tightly against her swordsman. Her hands pressed up against his firm, muscled chest. She could feel him rubbing his face against the top of her head even as he held her tighter. He was saying something that she couldn’t make out.

“Takeshi, what?”

“I thought I had lost you,” he managed to choke out as he pulled away from her hair. Letting go with one hand, he tilted her head up to stare straight into her eyes. “Please, please don’t do that to me again. I don’t think my heart could handle it.”
“Oh, Takeshi,” she sighed and lifted one of her hands up to the side of his face. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to worry you.”

“Just, don’t do that to me again, Tsuna. Please. I thought-I saw you go over the bridge and,” he continued to babble. Tsuna’s heart broke. She knew Takeshi relied on her for the stability she brought to his life. Seeing her do something that reckless, doing something he couldn’t help her with, must have been terrifying.

“Oh, Takeshi,” she murmured and placed a finger over his babbling lips. He fell silent. “I am so sorry.”

Now that she could see him closer, she realized just how rattled her bodyguard was. His eyes were wild and filled with fear, fear for her. Tanned skin turned a sickly pale color. He was trembling. It made her heart hurt.

“Takeshi,” she whispered and lifted herself up. Lips gently pressed against lips. Both his arms fell around her shoulders again and pulled her as close to his body as he could. Her hands glided up from his chest to his shoulders and around his neck. The swordsman kissed her with all his worth.

Neither noticed the eyes watching them from the hall before turning away and disappearing back to the first floor. Neither saw the agony in those eyes either.

Chapter End Notes

I want to address something I’ve been asked in multiple reviews. That is, why is Tsunami taking such crap from Reborn? I’m paraphrasing here, but I feel like you all deserve my explanation. In cannon, Tsuna has no real idea just what Reborn is capable of and so rebels, fights back as best he can, or at least that’s how I see it. Tsunami on the other hand is already a crime boss, and she knows exactly what Reborn's reputation is.

To put it simply, she is afraid to go against Reborn too hard and risk him turning his more impressive skills on her or her people. Using Hibari-speak, Reborn is a bigger, more deadly predator and Tsunami is being very careful around him lest he attack her pack. I promise, this will change, but it's going to take a chapter or two.
Ok, so this took longer than expected. sorry. I've been having some issues in real life lately and it's effected my writing. On a better note, I'm setting up a tumblr account for my fanfics. It's kaliade.tumblr.com. It's only getting started, but feel free to come by and look. I'll have updates on my writing posted there along with ideas and other stuff.

Tsuna let out a relaxed sigh as she sipped at her lukewarm tea. It had been hot when the server first delivered it, but her attention had been taken up by the most amazing, delicious chocolate tart with raspberry sauce in existence. Hana and Kyoko nibbled on the last bits of their indulgent treats. It was the third Monday of the month and thus Indulgence Day, the one day of the month all three girls didn't worry about what they ate and they went out together to one of the many cafes in Namimori. Each girl had their own preferences when it came to sweets. Hana loved chocolate, the darker the better. Kyoko preferred the more fruity concoctions. Tsuna was a chocolate lover much like Hana but, unlike her friend, had no preference when it came to the type of chocolate.

"So, Tsuna," Hana took a sip from her coffee, "what is going on between you and that monkey?"

"You'll need to be a little more specific, Hana. You call everyone a monkey." Tsuna grinned slightly even though inside she was sweating. She did not want to discuss this with her civilian friends. They wouldn't understand the precarious position she had found herself in lately.

"She means Gokudera, Tsuna-chan." Kyoko chirped as she ate the last bit of her strawberry cake. "He's been acting really odd lately."

"He's probably just adjusting to living in Japan. He's from Italy, remember? It's probably just culture shock."

The two civilian girls exchanged looks before turning their attention back to their friend. Tsuna broke out in a cold sweat. Kyoko looked as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth while Hana's eyes glinted with a sadistic gleam. Oh this was not good. Her eyes flickered across the cafe. There had to be an escape route that would leave her with a bit of dignity.

"Well, Gokudera is acting a bit...shall we say aggressive whenever you're around." Hana smirked like the cat who had eaten the canary and was finishing off the fish for dessert. Tsuna idly noted the girl could be a top rated interrogator if she put her mind to it.

"Oh, yes. I saw him yelling at Yamamoto the other day for just putting an arm over his shoulder." Kyoko frowned and put her hand on her chin in a thinking pose. "I almost thought they'd come to blows. He was yelling that much."

"I don't see what this has to do with me? Why would I know why Gokudera's acting so aggressive?"

"Because he's in love with you."

The words sent a dagger straight into Tsuna's heart. She winced. It wouldn't have been noticeable if Kyoko and Hana hadn't spent so much time around her, but unfortunately the two civilian girls knew her tells. Worse, the two girls knew it.
Tsuna let out a sigh and dropped her gaze to the tabletop. "I know."

"Then why haven't you done anything about it?" Hana growled and set her cup down hard.

"It's not nice to string a boy along like that, Tsuna-chan." Kyoko's disapproving frown made the yakuza boss wince again.

"It's not that simple."

"Yes it is. You're dating Yamamoto. You aren't available for dating." Kyoko paused and frowned. "Well, unless you break up with Yamamoto and if you do that, I don't think we can be friends anymore."

Hana nodded. "Yeah, think about how your monkey must feel seeing that monkey pine after you."

Tsuna blushed slightly and dropped her head further. Oh, this was going to be so embarrassing, but the girls could handle this. At least, she hoped they could. Takeshi and she had discussed telling their civilian friends about the exact nature of their relationship but hadn't made any plans about how to tell them. Well, it looked like it was now or never.

"Considering Takeshi's asked me if I think Hayato has a nice ass, I don't think he minds too much."

The girls were silent and staring.

"What?"

Of course Hana had to break the silence.

"Takeshi and I...oh, how can I put this? Our relationship is rather open. We're allowed to see other people outside of each other so long as the other knows about it. One of our more favorite things to do is rate other people by their hotness level. We both agree Hayato is pretty high up there."

Kyoko's jaw dropped open even as a bright red flush covered her face. A tiny squeak escaped her mouth. Hana didn't look any better, though she had the wherewithall to cover her face with one hand. As the hand slid down her face, it revealed a glare that could send underclassmen running.

"You are insane."

Tsuna shrugged. "It works for Takeshi and me."

"And this has what to do with how Gokudera's been acting? If you're both that into him, why haven't you said anything?"

"Because Hayato emphatically states he's straight."

Hana frowned and stared at her crazy friend. "You sound like you doubt that."

"I do. No man who is that pretty and takes that much time keeping up his appearance is completely straight." Tsuna shrugged and lifted her head up. Her skin burned with the faint blush she knew was there. A smile, wicked and promising things neither civilian girl wanted to think about, graced her lips. "Besides, I've noticed his eyes tend to wander when we watch Takeshi train or play sports. Takeshi deserves him just as much as I do."

"Ok?" Kyoko was very confused and flustered by the topic.

"Then why is he doing all the yelling and fighting?"
Tsuna frowned. This was coming back around to topics she did not want her friends digging into. Damn it. She was going to have to be really careful how she said this or it would blow up in her face. She just knew it. "Look, Hayato isn't from a very nice family. He and his sister do not get along. The less said about his father the better. I get the feeling his step-mother, that's his sister's mother, didn't treat him all that well. He's been bitten and banged up by those who should have protected and cherished him."

She frowned. Her fists clenched as she thought about what had been done to her Storm Guardian. Her instincts, the instincts of a very powerful and protective Sky as Reborn had explained during one of their lessons, was demanding she go and ensure the threats to him never had a chance to get a hold of him again. Bianchi had learned that lesson well and had taken to carrying around a mask so she could slip it on whenever Hayato appeared. It did help his reactions to his sister, which was probably the only thing that kept Tsuna from going on a rampage every time the two were together.

"So he's like an abused dog?" Kyoko asked. "I mean, he's being loyal and loving to the first person to show him kindness while snarling and snapping at anyone else who comes close?"

"Yes." The alarm on Tsuna's phone went off. She glanced down at the screen and frowned. "I've got to go."

"Is everything ok?" Kyoko tried to lean over to see the screen. Tsuna turned it away so she couldn't.

"Yeah, it's nothing bad, just something I need to take care of." She dug some money out of her purse and left if on the table before standing up. "I'll see you two later."

Tsuna huffed and wiped her hands off on her pants. Three thugs lay beaten on the ground. Four women, all street walkers, stood around them. One in a rather nice pale blue ensemble spat on the pile of bodies. Tsuna let out a strangled, amused snort.

"So, when did they start bothering you all? I only got the call from Rumiko a few minutes ago." The yakuza boss took a moment to look over her girls and frown. "They didn't injure any of you, did they?"

"No, hime." the prostitute in the blue clothing, Etsuko Tsuna believed, answered for the group. "Natsume noticed them loitering around the area and alerted Rumiko. They didn't really try anything until just before you got here. Yun managed to do something to the one that tried to grab her, and then we all pounced, just like we were taught."

"Good job. It didn't look like you were having problems taking care of them, but I wasn't about to take chances." Tsuna nodded and smiled at her girls. "It's my job to protect you all."

The girls all smiled at her. One of the men on the ground groaned only for the reinforced heel of a shoe to collide with his head. He soon rejoined his fellows in the land of pain and agony induced unconsciousness.

Tsuna made sure her girls knew how to defend themselves.

"What should we do with them?" another of the girls asked as she peered down at the groaning men.

"Did they say anything when they grabbed you, Yun?" Tsuna looked at the girl who had been grabbed first.
The girl, the youngest of all of Tsuna's working girls and the only full blooded Chinese of this group, shook her head. "Nothing more than the usual wanting to show a whore her place and crap like that. I don't think they're connected with anyone. Just a bunch of punks."

"Idiots is more like it." Etsuko muttered and kicked at the men again.

Tsuna froze suddenly. Her Intuition blared a warning. Her entire body tensed. She spun around, eyes watching for any threat. Her girls reacted and got themselves into defensive positions.

"Omnivore."

"Crap, Hibari-senpai, don't scare me like that," Tsuna glared at the head of the Discipline Committee. Slowly her body relaxed into a more neutral state. Yeah, Hibari was prone to fighting her, but he wouldn't intentionally try to kill her. There was no need to treat him like an enemy.

"Hn. Explain, omnivore."

"They," Tsuna motioned toward the moaning pile of bodies, "tried to jump one of my girls. The others didn't take too well to that, called me and cornered the bastards. We then proceeded to beat the crap out of them."

The prefect stayed silent but his eyes tracked from the fallen men to Tsuna's street girls. His eyes narrowed slightly for a moment. Tsuna's hands clenched at her side. She shifted her weight ever so slightly and his attention turned right back to her again. He stared at her for a long second.

"You owe me a fight, omnivore." With those parting words he turned and walked out of the alley. Tsuna relaxed only once he was completely out of sight. She could hear her girls let out sighs of relief as the demonic prefect vanished from sight.

"How can you deal with him, boss?"

"He scares the fuck out of me."

"Me, too."

Tsuna shook her head and let out a small chuckle as she turned to face her girls. "It's nerve wracking but important for our operations to continue smoothly if we have a member of the Hibari clan working with us or at least not against us. Stick to the law of not harming anyone in Namimori or bring negativity to the name and he's willing to let a bit slide by."

The girls did not look reassured by that.

"Well," Tsuna clapped her hands together, "I'll leave you girls to get back to work. We'll just leave them there for now."

"Okay, boss." Etsuko said for the group. The girls fixed their clothing, patted down their hair, and pulled compact mirrors out of their purses to check their faces. Tsuna gave them all a bright smile before heading out of the alley herself. There was no need for her to stay around and monitor them. They were perfectly able to handle themselves and get themselves back in order. Tsuna, despite every effort of Rumiko, wasn't exactly the best with makeup and its application. Thankfully the older woman had agreed she was unlikely to need the skill with how nature had graced her with beauty.

Tsuna thought the woman had laid that line on a bit thick. Yuusuke had agreed and gotten punched by the older woman for it.
The commercial district of Namimori was a bustle of late afternoon traffic. Kids and teenagers meandered down the streets. People ducked in and out of shops. The members of the Committee could be seen keeping peaceful watch over everything. Tsuna waved to her fellow DC members as she walked by. They inclined their heads slightly in respect but kept their attention on the people. One never knew where trouble would be coming from, and they did not want to let Hibari down.

Tsuna was broken out of her thoughts as something hit her legs. She looked down. A young Chinese girl had stumbled into her.

"Hey, be careful. Are your parents around here somewhere?" Tsuna asked and froze as she suddenly recognized the clothing the girl was wearing. The red shirt, the black pants, and her hair tied back in a tiny braid instantly brought to mind the Arcobaleno Fon. The yakuza boss had heard he had a very young, female apprentice. A sinking feeling began to form in her stomach.

The girl shook her head and bowed in apology. "Sorry, sorry. I-Pin looking for someone."

"I-Pin?" Tsuna frowned. Yeah, that was the name her contacts had told her to be on the lookout for. "I take it you are Fon's student? What do the Triads want in my territory?"

The little girl froze. Her eyes widened as she took a step back in surprise. "How you know shifu?"

"I'm the Great Tiger of the Akatora," Tsuna stated and shrugged. "Hopefully you'll be better behaved than the previous Triad members who tried to invade my territory."

"I-Pin sorry. The girl bowed. "They not say this claimed territory."

Tsuna waved her hand in dismissal and motioned for the pint sized assassin to follow her away from the crowd. "As long as you're not going after one of mine or a civilian, I have no issues with you being here. Fon has my respect and some of it bleeds over onto you as his student. So who were you sent after?"

"Oh." I-Pin pulled a photo out of a hidden pocket and held it up to the yakuza boss. Tsuna took the photo and frowned. A familiar face stared up at her. Her lips curled into a silent snarl as her teeth gnashed together. The assassin took a startled step back at the sudden change in emotion.

"He's dead. I killed him a while back for attacking civilians in my territory. What the hell do the Triads want with a thug from the Fuuma-kai?"

"Ah, I-Pin not know, was told that he bad man and he here. The assassin took the photograph back. "You kill him?"

Tsuna frowned and crossed her arms over her chest. "Yeah, burned him alive."

"Ah, Flames?"

"Sky Flame."

I-Pin let out a tiny gasp and said something in what Tsuna assumed was Chinese. It was in a dialect she didn't quite understand, not that her Chinese was that good in the first place. The little assassin bowed deeply.

"I-Pin more sorry. No mean intrude on Sky Territory."

"It's OK. I have the feeling whoever sent you here knew about it and didn't tell you. Tsuna frowned and pulled out her phone. "Do you want to call your Master to see what you should do now?"
"Yes, please."

Tsuna stood to the side and waited. The girl was chattering in rapid Chinese. Whatever was being said wasn't something the girl wanted to hear. The look on her face and the twisting emotion there told the yakuza that much. Her Intuition drew connections between all the little bits of information she had heard, be they rumor or fact, and an idea was starting to form in her mind. The child assassin probably hadn't been given the mission to assassinate the Fuuma-kai thug by Fon.

"Um, Shifu wish speak to you," I-Pin said as she held up the cell phone. Her eyes were uncertain and just a bit misty with unshed tears.

"Hello."

"Hello, Sawada Tsunami. My apologies for my apprentice coming into your territory unannounced."

"Ah, Master Fon, it is fine. She has caused no trouble."

"Still, I feel responsible for her."

Tsuna paused and frowned. "I take it you did not assign her this task?"

"No, she has been out of my tutelage for several months now. I fear the Triads are already forcing her to do assassinations at her age."

"May I assume this is not what you want for her?"

"You are correct."

Tsuna hummed and looked down at the worried child assassin. A crease formed between her brows as she thought about what was not being said. "Have you heard the latest news about my position? One of your colleagues is living with me now. Reborn."

The baby sized martial artist went silent for a moment to digest her words. "I see. I had heard he was going to teach the Vongola heir."

"Heiress and he is."

"Ah." Fon was silent once more. "Then, may I ask a favor of you, Vongola?"

A smile flitted across her lips. "I have a feeling I know what it is, but do ask. I will try everything within my power to make it come true."

"Will you take in my wayward apprentice and protect her until she is old enough to make an informed decision on what she wants to be?"

The smile on her face turned soft. The martial artist truly cared for his apprentice. She glanced down at the girl and nodded. A tiny thread of cold rage ran through her as she thought of being forced to kill at that age. Even she had been 10 when she had her first kill. I-Pin couldn't have been more than five. "I would be happy to. My mother will enjoy the company."

"Thank you then, Vongola. I shall owe you a favor. Let me explain this to my apprentice."

"Good day to you, Master Fon." Tsuna handed the phone down to the wide-eyed girl. I-Pin spoke to her master for a few minutes longer before hanging up the phone and handing back to the yakuza boss.
"Shifu say I go with you."

"Then let's go. I'll introduce you to my mother and maybe get us both some snacks."

"Mom, I'm home and I've brought a guest," Tsuna called as she opened the door and motioned for I-Pin to walk inside. Both girls took off their shoes and stepped further into the house.

"Oh, Tsu-chan!" her mother called from the kitchen, "Who did you bring home? One of your male friends, or maybe Hana-chan or Kyoko-chan?"

Tsuna leaned against the kitchen doorway and watched as her mother flitted across the kitchen like a bird. A shiver ran down her spine as she saw the almost glassy look her mother's eyes had taken.

"No, Mom, none of them. I brought, well, do you remember last year when the Hibari family invited me over for a celebration?"

"Oh, yes. That was quite kind of them. I know their boy is your friend. He'd make such a nice boyfriend for my Tsu-chan," her mother said in that sort of half-there whimsical way that made Tsuna worried.

"Well, one of their cousin's has a daughter they wanted to let stay in Japan for a while—educational reasons, you know?—and asked if we could house her for the duration. Is that OK, Mom?"

It was like a switch had been flipped. Tsuna let out a soft sigh as she saw her mother come back to herself and the glassy look in her eyes vanish. The woman stumbled a bit, grabbed a hold of one of the counters, and looked around in a light daze. She met her daughter's eyes and winced ever so slightly. Her eyes wandered down and she stared at the red clad Chinese girl. Her eyebrows narrowed together as she tried to figure out just who the little girl was before Tsuna's words finally made way through her head.

"Oh, Tsu-chan, yes that's fine. We can set her up in the smaller bedroom." Nana nodded with a strained smile. "Oh, and Reborn and one of your classmates, the foreign one, are waiting for you in your room. Something about studying?"

"Then I can leave I-Pin with you?"

"Yes, that's fine."

Tsuna nodded and turned to the confused girl. Tsuna pulled her to the side, just out of hearing distance of her mother. "Look, I know that Mom acts a little…odd at times, so could you keep an eye out for something like that happening again?"

"I, yes," I-Pin nodded and turned to stare at the woman who was still clinging to the kitchen counter top like a lifeline.

"Thanks. Mom will get you all set up. I've got a meeting with the tutor from hell and one of my Guardians."

Leaving the assassin with her mother, Tsuna walked up the stairs and opened the door to her room. Hayato was sitting at her desk and looking out the window. Reborn wasn't anywhere to be seen, but that didn't mean he wasn't there. She looked around the room and frowned at the lack of baby sized antagonism and terror.
"Tsunami," Hayato greeted her in a dull tone. His hands were curling into fists at his side as he looked at her and then away.

She blinked at the use of her name rather than her preferred nickname. "Where's Reborn?"

"Right here, Tsuna."

The yakuza boss jumped, spun around so she was facing the voice, and slid into a fighting stance. The baby hitman grinned at her and threw a large book at her face. She plucked it from the air before it could even hit her. Glancing down at the book, she frowned. There was no title. She looked up at her tutor, who simply smiled at her. Opening the book, a frown crossed her face. Those were a list of names and dates and…fuck, the Vongola family tree.

"A history lesson, Reborn?"

"Yes. Now put the book down and take a seat. Gokudera, sit next to her. A good right hand should know this information just as well as the boss."

The Italian teen frowned but did as asked and slid down to sit next to Tsuna. "Is that why the sword-idiot isn't here?"

"Takeshi doesn't really have what it takes to be a right hand." Tsuna explained, pointedly ignoring the name calling. "He's more of a follower or a stalker in the shadows. There's a reason he's my bodyguard rather than one of my higher ranked field commanders. He's also got a training session with his dad right now."

The silveret blinked. "Then…you think I'm right hand material?"

"Well, this is based mostly on what I've observed or other people have told me, but yes." She nodded and pointedly ignored the blush that ran across his face as well as the bright shine that suddenly appeared in his eyes. It was creepy. "You're a genius and you've been raised in the mafia. I'll need someone with that experience who is intelligent to be my right hand."

"Don't forget about loyal, Tsunami," Reborn drawled as he kept one eye on the silveret.

She snorted. "Yeah, I don't doubt the loyalty. He may be just a bit too loyal, if you get what I mean. Well, we have a lesson to start, don't we?"

Hayato blinked, flushed deeper and bowed his head. Tears shone in his eyes, but a question drifted through his mind. How could there be a thing as too loyal? Tsuna was his boss and he, well, he had feelings for her as well, despite how attached she seemed to be to the sword idiot. He would willingly take a bullet for her. He would die for her.

"Well, let us begin with the the previous female boss, Ottavio…" Reborn began to lecture. The two teens leaned over the book and nodded when appropriate. The Ottavio was known for several things: being the head of the family during WWII, being the first female boss, and never marrying despite having two children. Her daughter had married into an allied family while Timoteo, her son, had gone on to become Nono. The hitman watched the two as he continued to talk. Maybe the bomb brat would figure out what he was hinting at. Ottavio, Daniela Vongola, had quite a few lovers and even she wasn't certain who her children's fathers were. The curse of being a female Sky, a thousand men trying to get into your bed.

Reborn had already seen the signs when it came to the boys in his student's sphere of influence. Even a few girls would be willing to fall into Tsuna's bed if she should just ask. He had the feeling the yakuza boss knew exactly what kind of power she held in that regard, but it would be wise to test her
knowledge later.

"I finally found you." A child's voice cried out from outside the house. Three heads lifted as one and turned to face the window. Perched on the branch of a tree was a child no older than five.

"Die, Reborn!" the afro kid in cow print clothing yelled to high heavens and produced a handful of grenades out of his hair. Tsuna paled and began to move but Hayato was already at the window and batting away the explosives. The grenades landed on the ground and exploded with bright pink clouds of smoke rising upward.

"Damn it," Hayato growled and pulled out two sticks of dynamite only to have to jump back from the window as the cow print wearing child barreled in.

"Finally found you, Reborn!" the child announced as he landed on Tsuna's bed and pointed a gun—and who the hell made a child sized Uzi?—at the baby hitman.

Tsuna frowned and stood up. "Reborn, do you know him?"

Reborn glanced at the child and smirked. "No. He's a nobody."

The child stared at the baby hitman with an open mouth before tearing up. "Don't you remember me, Reborn? I'm Lambo Bovino."

"Like I said, a nobody."

The child was silent for a second with tears blooming in his eyes. "Die, Reborn!"

The gun came up. Hayato reacted and threw himself in front of his boss to act as a human shield. Tsuna stepped backwards as the silveret's motion startled her. She hadn't seen him move that fast before. Reborn kicked at the child and sent him flying into the wall with a loud thud. The child, Lambo she mentally corrected herself, began to cry.

"Tol-er-ate," Lambo chanted over and over as he tried to get a hold of himself.

"Reborn." Tsuna said in the hardest tone the hitman had ever heard coming from her. He and Hayato turned to look at her and froze. Reborn had seen that face before on Vongola Nono when someone was stupid enough to directly attack Vongola or a close member of the alliance. His eyes darkened as he took in her stern face and sturdy stance. Now she looked like a boss. Hayato was just breathless in awe of the sheer power his boss was exuding. He shifted ever so slightly to relieve the bit of pressure in his pants. A pleasurable shiver ran down his spine.

What? That look was a turn on. He just wanted to fall to his knees and wait for orders.

"Reborn, please tell me I did not see you just kick a child into the wall."

The hitman frowned. "Tsunami..."

"Because if you did, I would have to retaliate. I do not tolerate child abusers, Reborn."

Reborn felt a tiny trickle of sweat fall down his neck. The Sky Presence his student was leaking made him want to shiver. It filled the air and pressed down on him from all sides. Glancing out the corner of his eye, he could see Gokudera being dragged completely under the influence. His eyes mildly glazed over and tiny red sparks began to appear on his fingertips. Yes, Sawada Tsunami was a strong, pure Sky and he was about to see what she could do in a Sky Rage. Better to retreat than have to fight his own student to the point of serious injury, to her that is.
"Tol-er-ate. Wah! I can't!" Lambo yelled, catching everyone's attention. He reached into his hair and pulled out a new, shiny weapon that made Tsuna's heart stop. Who the Hell had the bright idea to give a kid a bazooka and how was he hiding it in his hair anyway?

No one could move fast enough and the bazooka went off. Waving away pink smoke, Tsuna coughed and tried to make out the damage. She blinked once then twice and stared at the teenager sitting on her bed.

He was obviously not Japanese. Pale skin, one eye closed while the other was open and looking her over, intentionally mussed black hair, a smirk playing on his lips. Tsuna could only stare at the rather handsome boy that had replaced the child.

"Hello, nee-san."

"Eh?" Tsuna would never admit that came out as a mousy squeak, not even under threat of training with Reborn.

"The Bovino Ten-year Bazooka?" Reborn drawled.

"Good to see you, too, Reborn." the teen grinned. "You are correct. I'm Lambo Bovino from ten years in the future. The younger me and I traded places. He's fine. I wasn't doing anything dangerous."

"Wow, I had heard the Bovino were doing some advance science, but never imagined time travel," Hayato whispered.

"Time travel?" Tsuna repeated in a slightly awed look before pausing. "Wait. You called me nee-san?"

"Yeah," the teen smiled at her. "You took me in when I was a brat.

She stared at him for a second before wiping a hand down her face. "I'm a sucker for kids, aren't I?"

"Yep." He stood up and stretched. "I've only got a little bit of time left and there's something I've wanted to do for a while."

Before anyone could react, the teenage Limbo stepped around Hayato and hip checked him out of the way. The silveret hissed as he collided with the wall. The time traveler ignored the cursing that came after and gently cupped Tsuna's face with one hand. Leaning down, he pressed soft lips against her. Her eyes widened even as he stepped away.

"Well, it looks like my five minutes are up, nee-san." He bowed politely. "Please take care of my younger self. I know he can be a bit of a pain."

There was another poof of pink smoke and the teenager was replaced by his younger self, not that Reborn or Hayato noticed. They were both busy staring at the yakuza boss who was blushing a bright red. She looked down at the little boy in cow print and sighed.

"Well, this is... interesting. I'm Sawada Tsunami, kid. Call me Tsuna or nee-san." She knelt down to his height. "Looks like I'm going to be taking care of you from now on. So no trying to kill my tutor, OK?"

Limbo sniffled but stared up at her with large eyes. "But Papa said Lambo-sama had to kill Reborn to be made head of the Bovino family. He said Lambo-sama couldn't come back until Reborn was dead."
Hayato sucked in a sharp breath from where he was leaning against the wall. His eyes went from the cow brat back to his boss. He knew how his boss was going to react to this. He shook his head and felt the tiniest amount of pity for Michaelangelo Bovino because his boss sure as hell wouldn't.

"Boss?" he said in an effort to stop her rage before it began. She looked up at him with burnt orange eyes and he felt himself being pulled toward her in a non-physical way. His Sky was hurting, wanted to hunt someone down and rip them apart. "If you're going to keep the cow brat, shouldn't you go get him set up in a room?"

Tsuna sighed and nodded. "Yeah. I just hope he doesn't mind sharing with I-Pin."

"I-Pin? Fon's apprentice?" Reborn asked with a concerned frown.

"The Triads sent her here for a job without her master's knowledge and Fon's asked me to take her in so she can have the chance to escape them."

The hitman shook his head and smiled ruefully at her. "You've got maternal instincts, don't you?"

"Reborn, there is a reason I nearly went psychotic on you when you kicked Lambo." She smiled viciously. "What do you think?"

"Where do you think you're going?!" Hayato yelled as he grabbed the back of Limbo's shirt and held him up. The five-year-old had been sneaking for the door. The child let out a loud, ear grating laugh before throwing a pink grade in the bomber's face and taking off like a mad person when Hayato slapped it away. Another explosion, complete with pink smoke, rocked Tsuna's bedroom. She blinked and placed her head in her hands. She was never going to get peace and quiet again, was she?

"Nope."

"Stop reading my mind, Reborn."
“Tsunami,” Reborn said as he knocked on the door. The hitman may have been a sadistic demon, but he was at least gentlemanly enough to not walk in on a woman while she was changing. Tsuna was willing to take any break when she got one.

“I’m decent, Reborn.” she called back as she pulled her jacket over her shoulders and adjusted the DC armband.

The baby hitman opened the door and walked in. He looked over his student for a second. Her hair was untidy but a hairbrush rested unused nearby. She likely hadn’t gotten around to that step of her morning ritual yet. Her clothing was unwrinkled and in pristine condition. He hadn’t had to pound that lesson into her. That prefect of hers had done that a long time ago.

“Is something wrong, Reborn?”

“I’ve invited my previous student to meet with you today after school.”

“Previous student? Any more information than that?”

“His name is Dino Cavallone. He is the head of the Cavallone famiglia.”

Tsuna frowned, her lips pursed together in deep thought. “And where do you expect this meeting to take place? It will not be here. I refuse to let Mom be involved any further in organized crime than she already is.”

“I see.” He could understand her reluctance to involve her mother and paint an even bigger target on her back. Right now, the woman’s greatest defense was that she was unknown to anyone in the mafia save Iemitsu and Timoteo. The Akatora all seemed to be protective of the Sawada matriarch as well. “Do you have somewhere you can meet with him, then?”

“I have a few places I take the heads of other families to. Would your former student mind that?”

The hitman frowned and tilted his head to that the brim of his fedora hid his eyes. “What sort of places?”

“Restaurants mainly. If I ask, Tsuyoshi-san will close up and serve us as a private party.”

A smile, wicked and cruel, bloomed on the hitman’s face. “And you’d be on one of your Guardian’s home turf with his father ready to assist if something happens?”

“That may have happened once or twice.” She smirked and stepped around the baby to get out the door. “I’ll run by Takesushi on my way to school and let him know to expect us.” She was down the stairs and had her shoes slipped on in a minute. She opened the front door and had to keep from jumping back as she came face to face with Hayato, who had his hand raised to knock on the door.

“Tsuna-hime, good morning.”

“Morning, Hayato.” He flushed at the use of his first name. “What are you doing here? It’s early.”

“Oh, I wanted to walk with you to school and your mother told me you leave around this time every morning because of your duties to the Discipline Committee.”

Tsuna sighed but gave him a weary smile. “Ok. You can come but I need to stop by Takesushi
before school.” She walked out the door. As she passed by the Italian, she lifted a hand and dragged it across his shoulder. “We might meet up with Takeshi there if he hasn’t already left for school. I don’t think the baseball club meets this morning though. He’s usually done with his run by now, too.”

Hayato looked to be torn between turning bright red at her touch and grumbling about being around the sword idiot as he followed after her. Tsuna’s lips pinched together. She really needed to do something about that. Just, how to do it without breaking the fragile emotional state of the Italian?

She froze and a sly smirk came across her lips for a brief second.

“Hayato, you know quite a bit about the currently political climate of the mafia, right?”

“Um, yes.”

She grinned like the cat that had just ate the canary. “Well, Reborn has invited his former student...”

“Dino Cavallone?”

She blinked and looked at him. “You know him?”

“I’ve done a few jobs for the Cavallone.” He shrugged. “They’ve been a member of the Vongola Alliance since its founding back during the Primo’s time. They had a rough patch before the current head took over, but he’s managed to get them back up in good graces again.”

“Rough patch?”

“Financial difficulties. Rumor has it that a capo or two got into some heavy gambling debt and embezzled a lot of money from the family. That was taken care of by the previous boss, but the damage was done.”

“I see. Well, Reborn invited him into my territory to meet me. I refuse to have him in my home and potentially exposing my mother to the mafia. I’ve kept her out of Akatora business for 6 years. Tsuyoshi-san is always willing to lend a hand or his restaurant on those occasions.”

Hayato frowned. “When is he arriving?”

“Sometime today, according to Reborn. I’m supposed to meet him after school. You and Takeshi will be coming with me.”

“You...you want me to be there during your first meeting with an allied boss?” The sound of awed amazement and the sheer hopefulness in his voice made Tsuna’s heart break just a little. Really, how badly had the mafia screwed up her Guardian?

“You and Takeshi. I figure having my right and left hands there will make the meeting much more interesting.”

“Right and left hands?”

“You’re my right, the one I turn to for stability and advice. My left is the hand I defend with, that holds the blade and is covered in the blood of my enemies. It’s the hand I hide behind my back when I shake hands in peace.”

“Wh-what?” The silveret stared at her in open mouthed shock.

Tsuna smiled and patted his cheek. “You are the one who stands at my right side and whispers
information and advice in my ears when facing opponents across a boardroom table. Takeshi is the bloody knife that plays best in shadows when those boardroom talks fail.”

“You make him sound like an assassin.”

She smiled. It was hollow and didn’t quite reach her eyes. “He’s played that role before. I don’t like having him do it though.”

Hayato didn’t have any time to react to that comment as they had arrived at the sushi shop. Tsuna, having an open invitation and a key to the place, opened the door and led the Italian in. She pulled him through the restaurant and back to the family living area by way of the kitchen. Up the stairs and the two were in what amounted to a dining room and facing the two Yamamotos who had just finished their breakfast by the looks of it.

“Tsun!?” Takeshi chirped and stood up only to stop at the stink eye he was getting from Hayato. Tsuna sighed and slapped the Italian on the back of the head. He winced and looked down at the floor.

“Sawada-chan.” Tsuyoshi inclined his head as he too rose to his feet.

“How many times have I asked you to call me Tsuna?”

“One more than last time.”

Tsuna rolled her eyes and smiled brightly at the retired assassin/bodyguard. “I have a request. I need use of your place tonight. I have a guest coming in from Italy that I think will enjoy trying the best sushi in the world.”

“You flatter me so, Sawada-chan.” he laughed even as his eyes sparked in understanding. “Can I have the name of your guest or is it all hush hush?”

“Dino Cavallone.”

“Ah,” he nodded sagely. “I have heard a few things about him.”

Tsuna smiled. “And you prove once again your information sources are far greater than my own.”

Tsuyoshi shook his head. “It’s just I have a broader interest than you do, Sawada-chan.”

“Again with the surname.”

Takeshi laughed and placed an arm over her shoulders. He ignored the silent fuming coming from Hayato though he was tenser than Tsuna was used to. “He’s never going to stop calling you Sawada-chan, Tsuna.”

“Not unless it changes to Yamamoto.” the father stated as he began cleaning the used dishes from the table.

Tsuna groaned and rubbed the bridge of her nose. “You know I can’t afford to get married, right?”

The retired bodyguard hummed, smiled at her, and dropped the subject. “I’ll make sure the shop is ready for you. Any ideas when this meeting will be?”

“After school. Reborn will direct the Cavallone here as he’s the one who set this up.”

“And you’re just now asking?”
“I just found out myself. On that note, Takeshi, make sure you bring your blade and I’ll stash it in the reception room. I want us to look at least semi-professional.”

Takeshi nodded and went to gather up his weapon from his room. Hayato, taking advantage of his absence, stepped close enough she could feel the heat of his body radiating through her clothing. Tsuyoshi glanced at the boy and suppressed a smirk. Tsuna rolled her eyes heavenwards and asked whatever higher powers were listening to grant her patience.

She had the distinct feeling they were too busy laughing at her to do so.

Tsuna adjusted the sword Takeshi had given her at the school gates for the umpteenth time. Even being safely disguised as a piece of sports equipment, the blade made her nervous to carry it. There just seemed to be something wrong with her carrying over a foot of sharp steel that made her teeth sit on edge. Knives she had no problem with. She had one tucked away as a last resort weapon, but a sword just rubbed her the wrong way.

“Sawada-san.” Kusakabe lifted a hand in greeting as she entered the reception room and put the large bundle on her back over to the side designated for weapons. His eyebrow shot up. While rare, the yakuza boss would sometimes bring weaponry to school. Hibari had been incensed the first time she had done so and had stalked after her to punish her for breaking the rules so spectacularly around him. That’s when he found her and a few of her men ripping apart a group of drug dealers with said weapons she had brought into the school. After the bloody battle, the head prefect and yakuza boss had sat down and ironed out the infamous agreement that let the Akatora get away with crime so long as they did not besmirch the honor of Namimori and Hibari got regular fighting partners.

It was generally considered a win-win all around.

“I’m leaving this here for Yamamoto to use after school.” She stepped away from the weapon and looked over at Hibari’s desk. “Where is he? I’ve got some information for him.”

“He was last seen heading for the second year classrooms. There is a rumor going around about one of the male teachers.”

She snorted and shook her head. “The one about a teacher taking up-the-skirt videos of female students? I really hope he finds the offender. Those sick assholes are the reason I don’t wear the female uniform.”

The older teen blinked. “You’ve wanted to wear the female uniform?”

“Sometimes.” She turned a mischievous smile on him. “Just think how much chaos I could cause wearing a skirt that short.”

He groaned. “Just go and find Kyou-san.”

Tsuna laughed and sauntered out of the reception room. Grinning, she added a bit more sway to her hips and laughed louder at the muted curses she could hear Kusakabe let out in her wake. Really, the other teen was so easy to rile up at times and she was feeling playful. She’d have new prey to play with come the afternoon.

The corridors were quiet. Very few students outside the Committee ever came to school this early, mostly in an effort to avoid Hibari. Those that did were usually members of a club that had morning meetings. Takeshi would come for the baseball team’s early morning practices. A few members of the music club came to practice on the piano in the music room. They had a schedule that they turned into Hibari once a month detailing names and times. Tsuna had a thick folder containing the
schedule going back a year just in case there was a dispute.

Then there was…

“Extreme!”

…Sasagawa Ryohei, Captain of the Boxing Team.

Tsuna sighed and picked up her pace. It wasn’t a run, not even a jog. Such actions were against the rules and would end with a tonfa to the head or ribs. She had no want to fight the crazy prefect when she had an important meeting that afternoon.

A loud thwack echoed through the empty halls. She turned a corner and stopped. Sasagawa was sat on the floor with his back to the wall and a hand nursing a rather large lump on his head. Looming above him like some sort of hungry tiger stood Hibari. His tonfa were out and gripped firmly in his hands. He moved again and hit the downed boxer once more before backing off and walking away.

“Extreme, Hibari! Join the Boxing Club!”

Tsuna shut her eyes and winced at the sound of tonfa hitting flesh again followed by the muffled thump of a body hitting the ground. Opening her eyes, she sighed. Yeah, Hibari had knocked Sasagawa out. Again. She really needed to talk to Kyoko about how to rein in her brother. The boy had to be losing braincells from how often Hibari smacked him around for being an “overly loud, annoying herbivore.”

“Sawada.” Hibari greeted her with the slightest inclination of the head.

“Hibari-senpai, we need to talk.”

His eyebrow twitched upward as he took in the slightly vulpine smirk that crossed her lips at those words. A shiver ran up his spine. He had seen that smile before, when an herbivorous teacher back in Namimori Middle had tried to break her spirit. She had turned the tables on the herbivore and gotten him fired for lying on his resume. It had been one of the many incidents that made him look at her and reevaluate her social standing.

He grunted at her and motioned toward a nearby empty classroom. She nodded, opened the door, and allowed him to enter first. He turned around to stare at her as she shut the door behind them and locked it. She leaned back against it and let her full vulpine smirk flare across her lips.

“Speak.”

“Reborn has sent for his previous student, a mafia boss by the name of Dino Cavallone. I will be meeting with him after school today at Takesushi along with the other two. To facilitate this, I have left Takeshi’s sword in the Reception Room. I will be picking it up and giving it to him off of school grounds later, but I wanted you to be aware of what is going on.”

Hibari frowned. “Will this mafia man cause trouble in Namimori?”

“If he does, I will not stop you or yours from exacting justice. He may be within my territory and seeking audience with my household, but he does not know the rules by which the yakuza live and die by.” Her lips turned down into a frown. Her brows knitted together. “The mafia has traditions that, while similar, are different enough from the ones I am used to to possibly cause problems. I will emphasize at this meeting that he and his are to not cause trouble in Namimori or they will be taken care of.”
“Acceptable,” Hibari stated after a moment of silent contemplation. If this potential rival for the omnivore started to cause problems in Namimori, he would be the one to educate him. The omnivore knew her place in the Namimori pecking order when it came to such things.

“Then, are we agreed that the agreement is being upheld? I mean, I’ve got a lot of planning to do in a short time and need to figure out what strategy I am going to use against this Dino Cavallone, and I don’t need the added pressure of the agreement falling apart because of his actions.”

“Hn.” Tsuna, being rather well acquainted with Hibari-speak, knew that was an agreement and stepped away from the door so the prefect could continue his rounds. She reflexively ducked out of the way of the swing he made as he stepped pass her and let a small smile cross her lips. The prefect snorted and shook his head as he continued on his way. He felt sorry for the one that the omnivore was planning on dealing with. Perhaps he’d catch her on the street and get the fight he wanted. The omnivore still refused to use her fangs on him.

Tsuna snorted at the sight of so many armed men loitering outside Takesushi. Takeshi grinned and let his features sharpen from congenial teen to experienced bodyguard/assassin. The men who noticed shifted uneasily. Even Hayato had turned professional and was walking close to his boss’s side. He flipped a lighter open and closed with a flick of his wrist. Those who recognized the silverette for his title eyed the lighter warily.

Tsuna was having fun. It was rare she got to deal with someone who didn’t know much about her. Reborn wasn’t the type to handhold his students, current or former, and had probably left it for the Cavallone to dig up information on her. That information most likely came from the Bastard and the CEDEF and was woefully wrong and/or out of date. A smile, bright and cheerful and carefully planned to unnerve the most hardened criminal, broke out on her face.

The Cavallone men suddenly started to worry about their boss’s safety.

“I do believe you are blocking our way.” she said to the men guarding the door and ramped up her smile to the point the men were starting to sweat. “We have an appointment with your boss and very much do not want to be late.”

“It would be quite rude.” Takeshi piped up.

Hayato gave a cocky smile. “After all, we are expected.”

Tsuna’s lips twitched. Well, at least they could show a united front when needed. The mafia men under her gaze trembled but maintained their positions. The Cavallone’s men had decent training.

“We are not to allow in anyone but the Vongola Decimo.”

“You’re talking to her.” Tsuna let the barest hint of teeth show in her smile. “I am Sawada Tsunami. Now are you going to let us in or not?”

“Ah, we’re supposed to let in only the Decimo...” the man commented before falling quiet at the looks both her Hands were sending the man.

“If you think I am about to walk into a meeting with the head of another Family, even if they are nominally allied with me, without my Right and Left Hands, you are sadly mistaken.” Tsuna smiled and took a step forward. The man flinched but held his ground. Tsuna’s hand flashed up and grabbed the front of his shirt, pivoted on her heel and threw the man aside. She gave him a little
wave before opening the door and stepping inside. Hayato and Takeshi followed her in while the Cavallone men stared at them in fascination and more than a bit of trepidation. The sound of the door falling shut snapped them out of their reverie and instantly brought back the worry they had for their boss.

Inside Tsuna kept her gaze straight forward. She trusted her Guardians to protect her from other threats. Her job was to come off as the serious, capable crime boss she was. Her lips twitched as her smile turned into a predatory smirk.

Tsuyoshi popped out of the kitchen and smiled at the look on her face. He had seen that look before she had taken apart an enemy group a few years back. It had been then that he had been certain that his boy had made a good decision in following the girl he knew to be a strong Sky. The fact she was able to attract not only his son but the only other, at the time, flame active kid in Namimori, that demonic Hibari child, and the speed at which the Italian teen had fallen under her spell just made that more apparent. The bodyguard cum sushi chef nodded to the group of three and motioned them toward a small, private room off to the side of the restaurant.

“Takeshi, take point. Hayato, rear guard,” Tsuna whispered to them. Both boys nodded and fell into their ordered places. Takeshi looked back at Tsuna as they approached the door. She frowned for a second before she unbuttoned her jacket and adjusted her chest. The bra she was wearing was adequate to present her assets, but they still needed to be set in place. She ignored the blushing of the two boys but did wait for their blushes to vanish before nodding to Takeshi. Her swordsman pushed the door opened and entered. Tsuna, following, scanned the room. Reborn was sitting at the side. That was reassuring. He seemed relaxed and even a bit entertained. Definitely a good thing.

However, it was the blond man sitting at the prepared table. His hair hung down the back of his neck and seemed as if someone had tousled it in an effort to style it. The green jacket with a fur lined collar and jeans wasn’t what she was expecting a mafia boss to wear. Still the fact he was alone, save for Reborn, told her he was either very confident in his abilities or an idiot. With Reborn as his previous teacher, it could even be a combination of both.

“Ah...” the Italian started and fell silent upon seeing her. He swallowed thickly as his eyes roved from her spikey hair down her body with his eyes lingering on her chest before falling down to her legs. He swallowed again. Tsuna took note. It was always nice to know when her opponent was a leg or breast man.

“You must be Dino Cavallone.” Tsuna bowed respectfully. “It is nice to meet you.”

“Ah, yeah, well...” the Don rambled off in confusion. Takeshi suppressed a snicker. He was familiar with what was happening. The Akatora had labeled it TSS- Tsuna Shock Syndrome- and it usually affected those first meeting the Great Tiger. Most expected a strong, manly woman and got petite Tsuna. His boss knew how to take advantage it. He glanced out the corner of his eye at Hayato. He wasn’t going to like Tsuna’s usual way of keeping people off balance, he was sure.

Tsuna straightened and gave an innocent smile. “Well, I think Yamamoto-san has some food ready for us. Takeshi, Hayato, please go and get it. Then you can go wait outside with Don Cavallone’s men.”

Hayato inhaled sharply and sent a sharp glare at the suddenly sweating blond. The bomber was smart enough to keep his mouth closed though. Takeshi reached out and placed a hand on his shoulder in order to guide him out. He let out a long breath and followed after the swordsman.

“Ah, you aren’t worried about being left alone with a mafia Don?” Dino frowned.
She shrugged, making certain she rolled her shoulders in such a way her breasts jutted outward and caught attention. “Not really. Reborn wouldn’t have brought you here if you were a threat.”

“I asked Gokudera to come here.” the hitman commented.

“Like I said, you wouldn’t have brought a threat.”

“He nearly blew you up, Tsunami.”

“And I kept him from being killed, didn’t I Reborn?”

Dino went white as he listened to the conversation between the two. She was arguing with Reborn and he was letting her. A shiver ran down his spine. Well, no getting out of this now, he thought as he stood up. He went around the table with his hand out and that’s when his luck struck and he found himself falling headfirst as he tripped over his own feet.

Tsuna squeaked but made the concentrated effort to not strike out as the Don fell on top of her. Her back collided with the floor. She inhaled sharply and stared into brown eyes. Her lips opened ever so slightly and tongue flicked out to wet her lips. The bright red blush on the Italian Don’s face made her predatory inner self sit up and grin.

Dino stared down at the teen pinned beneath his body. His eyes tracked her pink tongue. Breath stopped in his lungs. His arms shook from where they were keeping him from landing on the teen.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?!” Hayato yelled as he entered the room. Unfortunately for the Cavallone boss, Takeshi had his hands full of sushi. The look on the swordsman’s face also announced that he wanted to take his sword and start dismembering, so maybe that was a Good thing.

“Hayato, stop!” Tsuna ordered. Her voice was hard and filled with every bit of authority she could manage. The bomber froze in his steps even as his nostrils flared wide and pupils dilated.

“Don Cavallone, please get off of me.” she asked. The blond scrambled to get off her. Thankfully he kept his hands from going places that would get him slapped.

“Ah, sorry about that.” he apologized as he scratched the back of his head with a sheepish laugh.

The noise of Takeshi placing the sushi pallet hard on the table caught everyone’s attention. He had such a cold look on his face. Dino shivered at the frosty look the boy was sending him. His eyes tracked back to the silver haired boy who was helping his boss to her feet. He looked over her head and gave the man a glare.

“Boss!” a loud, older male voice called from outside the room. A moment later the door jam was filled with one of the suited Cavallone men. His eyes were wide and he was breathing heavily.

“Donatello, what’s wrong?” And it was like Dino was a whole other person, changing before Tsuna’s eyes. Where there had been a clumsy man became a powerful predator ready to snap and snarl at anyone who threatened his. Really, the Don’s attitude reminded her of her own protective nature.

“Enzo. Water.”

Those two words made the blond go pale and run out the door. The teens looked at each other. Tsuna looked over at the door and took off after them. Hayato and Takeshi followed. The trio froze at the sight that met them outside the sushi shop.
“What the hell?” Tsuna muttered as she stared at a turtle the size of a large vehicle. The Cavallone men lay in piles on the street with blood dripping from wounds on hands, arms and legs. The blood on the turtle’s snout told her exactly what had caused those injuries.

“That’s Enzo.” Reborn popped up and landed on Takeshi’s shoulder for the higher vantage point. “He’s a sponge turtle. He gets bigger the more water he absorbs. If he gets big enough he could devour a house.”

Tsuna gaped and looked at the spiky shelled beast that was roaring like a miniature version of Gamera in the middle of the street. The Cavallone men that had managed to not get bit by the ferocious beast made a sort of circular formation around it in an effort to keep it contained.

“Damn it. Where did he get the water?” Dino muttered as he uncoiled his whip from where he had been hiding it on his person. Tsuna stared at the unconventional weapon and suppressed the thousand sexual jokes she could make about it. There would be time later. For now, she had to focus on keeping the turtle from eating the scenery.

“So if he dries out, what’ll happen?” Takeshi asked. Hayato was hunched over a notebook and taking copious notes while muttering something Tsuna couldn’t quite understand. The terms sounded like scientific jargon and went right over her head.

“He’ll shrink.” Dino answered and lashed out with his whip. The turtle’s attention turned to him and he leapt back to avoid getting bit.

Tsuna watched the suddenly graceful movements of the blond. Her eyes narrowed and lips pursed. The mafia man was powerful and she’d have to tread lightly so as to not underestimate him. Her hands curled into fists and the tiniest flicker of orange flames glowed dimly on her fingertips. Her mind raced as she tried to figure out a way to take care of the monstrous turtle.

“Takeshi, your dad keeps salt around, right?”

“Yes.”

“Go grab a bag. I’ll pay him back later.”

The swordsman nodded and ran back into the sushi shop.

“Drying him out with salt?” Hayato frowned. “That might work. It’d be better to have some heat source, though.”

The turtle roared and the Cavallone men went flying as it thrashed. Dino had managed to get a hold of the turtle’s neck with his whip. It soon became a tug of war between the two and the mafia Don quickly lost ground.

“Got it!” Takeshi announced with a bag of salt draped over his shoulder. Tsuna turned and caught sight of Yamamoto Tsuyoshi standing in the doorway of his shop with a sword in hand. His eyes roved from the turtle to Tsuna. He lifted an eyebrow. She shrugged. Really, she gave up trying to figure out how weird her life was back when she became a yakuza boss at age 10.

“How are we getting the salt on it?” Takeshi asked as he eyed the beast.

Hayato frowned before smiling. “Give that here. I have an idea.”

Tsuna, Takeshi and a few of the still conscious but injured Cavallone men stared at him and the wicked smile on his face. Dual shivers ran down Tsuna’s and Takeshi’s spine.
Dino didn’t know how he was going to stop Enzo before he caused too much damage. The usual tactics he employed couldn’t be used in Japan. He doubted he could get that many hair dryers going simultaneously. His arms strained to hold his partner animal in place. In the back of his mind, he wondered why the police or anyone in authority hadn’t shown up yet. He couldn’t see the uniformed teens with identical hairstyles in the distance speaking into phones.

“Now!” the shout caught him by surprise and his grip slipped. A second later a body collided with him. He and whoever had run into him hit the ground and rolled. Righting himself and bracing himself up, he found himself in a familiar position with the brown haired, brown eyed Tsuna beneath him. A second later an explosion sounded. His head tilted up. Tsuna twisted herself from where he was holding her down to see the results of her Guardian’s specialty.

A shower of salt rained down from the sky. As the salt fell heavily on the beast, it began to shrink. Takeshi, holding onto a bright green hair dryer Tsuna bet was Leon, darted in to finish the turtle off. Dino stared at the sight before getting up. He offered Tsuna a hand up. She smiled at him and took the offered hand. Her fingers slid along his as she let go and a faint redness could be seen on the blond’s cheeks.

“Well, that was fun.” Tsuna said with a grin. “Anyone hungry? There’s sushi waiting for us.”

“Mom, I’m home!” Tsuna announced as she trudged in the front door.

“Welcome home, Tsu-chan!” her mother called back from the dining room. Tsuna popped her head in the room and smiled at the sight of the two children sitting with her mother.

“Tsun-nee!” Lambo screamed and vaulted for her. “Did you bring anything back for Lambo-sama? Grape candy?”

“Broccoli Monster no be loud.” I-Pin complained but remained sitting as Tsuna rocked with the hit.

“No, Lambo, I’m sorry. I’ll take you and I-Pin out later for treats if you behave for the rest of the week though.” Tsuna bribed the child. She had learned over the past week that the Bovino child could be controlled through bribery. It worked quite well if the enthusiastic nodding of his head was any indication.

“You’re home late, Tsu-chan.” Nana commented as she gathered up the dirty dinner dishes. “I know Reborn said you would be late, but I didn’t think it would be this late.”

Tsuna set Lambo down and started helping her mother gather up the dishes. “Reborn wanted me to meet with his previous student. Dino’s a nice guy. A bit clumsy, but nice.”

“That’s nice. I’m glad Tsu-chan is making so many friends.”

“Speaking of friends, where’s Bianchi?”

Nana smiled. “She said she had a job to take care of. Isn’t it nice that she can get her work done even when she’s in Japan?”

Tsuna’s smile turned brittle. So, the Poison Scorpion was out doing a hit. Lovely. At least the woman knew not to say that out loud to her mother. “Yeah. That’s great.”

“Oh, Lambo, it’s bath time.” Nana changed the subject. Tsuna was never more glad.
“Yeah! Lambo-sama will go get ready.”

The boy sprang up to his feet and scrambled for the bathroom. Nana followed soon after, all the while calling out that the bath wasn’t ready yet. Tsuna watched them go and relaxed. It was getting so much more difficult to hide the underworld from her mother. Her stomach turned in knots at the thought of lying to her mother about what she was up to but she felt it was worth it. For the moment at least. She would leave it to the Bastard when he eventually showed his face. He had been lying to the sweet woman for far longer than Tsuna had after all.

“Tsuna?” I-Pin asked. Tsuna looked over at her and frowned at the look on the child assassin’s face. “Mama had another…” The girl waved her hands as she lacked the words in Japanese to explain what had happened. Tsuna understood what she meant.

“What happened?”

“Mama just stare at wall. I-Pin worry. Nothing I-Pin or Broccoli Monster do get her attention.”

“How long?”

“Few minutes. Five?”

Tsuna took in a long breath and ran a hand through her mussed hair. The spikes poked upward and stayed there in a gravity-defying manner. “Thank you, I-Pin.”

“Tsuna good taking I-Pin in. I-Pin happy and want pay back. This small way. I-Pin worry about Mama.

“So do I, I-Pin.” Tsuna’s words weren’t the reassuring ones she wanted to give the girl. The two females shared a grim look before finishing cleaning up the dinner table. All they could do was watch and hope nothing happened to the matriarch of the Sawada clan. Tsuna wasn’t entirely sure if she could survive losing her mother to her own mind. The yakuza boss couldn’t think of a worse kind of death than that.
Tsuna wiped her brow with a hand. Her hair clung to her skin. Her chest heaved but she felt fantastic, like she usually did during a run. A wide grin spread across her face as her feet hit the ground in an even stride. Sunlight beating down on her, a breeze blowing through her hair, this was the closest she had been to content for a long while. Running always made her feel good.

"Sawada!" she heard a loud voice bellow behind her. She stopped and turned to look at her caller.

"Sasagawa-senpai, enjoying your run?"

The white haired teen gave her a wide grin and a thumbs up. "It's Extreme! Yours? I don't usually see your Extreme self out running this late."

She gave the loud teen a strained smile "I needed to destress. My tutor's previous student is in town and is more than a bit clumsy. Spending any amount of time with him is an exercise in patience."

"Sounds Extreme."

"Extremely annoying, maybe."

The white haired teen laughed loudly. He must have thought she was joking, but unfortunately that wasn't true. In Tsuna's opinion, Dino Cavallone was a menace. Unless he had his men within sight, the man tripped over his own two feet and ended up in the oddest situation. She had already had to pull Hayato off the mafia Don three times. Perhaps the most interesting incident involved Dino managing to catch her with his whip and somehow tying them together front-to-front. Hayato had foamed at the mouth before trying to rip the two of them apart.

"Well, would you like to join me on my Extreme run?" the boxer asked with a wide grin.

Tsuna snorted and shook her head. "I've seen you run. It's a bit too much for me. I prefer my more relaxed pace."

The boxer laughed and scratched the back of his head. He knew his extreme workout wasn't for everyone. Most of the members of his boxing club couldn't keep up with him when he went all out. It was kind of depressing. His lips tried to twitch downward into a frown, but he forced the smile to stay on his face. It wouldn't be extreme to worry his sister's friend with his thoughts.

Tsuna let a tiny smile form on her lips. Sasagawa-senpai was thinking heavy thoughts again. Why most people thought the teen was stupid, she didn't know. The boxer had great knowledge of the body and how it worked. He wouldn't have been able to train as he did otherwise. She bet he was going to become a doctor or take a job in the medical field one day if he decided that boxing didn't interest him anymore. She'd lay money on it.
"What…?" the boxer began to stay and fell silent as a young, foreign boy—the pale skin and light colored hair were obvious indicators of that—came barreling down the street toward them.

Tsuna turned and frowned as she took in the boy's appearance. He looked well kept, so likely not a run away. He was rather dirty, but that was mostly superficial. Light colored hair was clean cut and his clothing, while rather rumpled, looked to be of good or better-than-good quality. The large, bright red book in his hands made his running awkward, but the boy seemed used to it with how fast he was covering ground. It was the look of fear and terror on the boy's face that made Tsuna's instincts rear up and screech in alarm. The way the boy's eyes lit up in hope made the yakuza boss freeze in place. She could tell where this was going. Looking out the corner of her eye at the confused boxer, she mentally cursed. She did not want to bring a civilian to a fight. She wouldn't be able to go all out without questions being asked.

The boy's eyes widened as he saw Tsuna and made a beeline for her. The child threw himself into her legs and began speaking in a language she didn't recognize. She had the vague idea it was Italian, but even that didn't sound quite right.

"Sawada?"

Tsuna looked over at the boxer and shook her head before kneeling before the terrified boy. "Japanese, please. I can't understand you otherwise."

The boy looked up at her with wide brown eyes on the verge of crying. Tears started to gather at the edges of his eyes as he sniffled. "Please, please help me. Sawada Tsunami is ranked number one in being unable to refuse a request from a child in need. Also ranked number 5 in most powerful people in Namimori and in the top 100 of the strongest people in the mafia."

Tsuna blinked. The kid knew about the mafia, and what was with this ranking…Her eyes widened as she got a better look at the boy. Anyone who was serious about dealing in the underworld knew about the Ranking Prince. Word was that the title had been passed on a few years back.

"Shit." Tsuna cursed and pushed the boy back behind her. Eyes instantly began to scan the area. If the Ranking Prince was asking for her help, there would be a fight coming up.

"What's going on, Sawada?" Sasagawa-senpai asked in an uncharacteristically serious tone.

"Sasagawa-senpai, I need you to go find a member of the Discipline Committee and tell them Code 5 Red." she said in a voice that brooked no questions.

Ryohei frowned and looked at the trembling child and back at the girl standing protectively in front of him like an extreme mother bear. A shiver ran down his spine at the extremely fierce look on her face. At that moment, Sawada reminded him of his mother that one time a gang of delinquents had tried to gang up on him. They hadn't stood a chance to his mother's extreme protectiveness, and he doubted anyone would be able to hurt the kid with Sawada around him. She was so extreme.

"Sasagawa-senpai, please!" Tsuna hurried. He nodded and ran toward an area he knew the Discipline Committee members tended to watch at that time of the day. He'd gotten in trouble with them enough to know their general schedule.

"Stay close." Tsuna said to the boy and readied for a fight. The boy whimpered. She hoped he wouldn't go running off. It would be much harder to protect him if he ran.

A group of men dressed in black suits came thundering down the road. They stopped upon seeing Tsuna and the child she was standing in front of. One of them, Tsuna assumed he was the leader,
barked out something in a language she didn't recognize. It was harsh and staccato. It definitely wasn't Japanese, Chinese or Korean. She would have recognized Italian and French as well considering how often she heard Reborn use those languages. The assumed leader stepped forward and glared down his nose at the teenager standing protectively in front of their prey.

"Give us the kid, girl."

Tsuna smirked. Her eyes flashed in anticipation. "I think not. The boy obviously does not want to go with you and has, in fact, requested protection from me."

"You really think you can take us all on, girl?" The man snorted and shook his head before yelling something back to his men. They all laughed and grinned lasciviously at her.

Tsuna rolled her eyes and shook her head. They wouldn't be the first nor the last to think her weak due to her sex. "Yes, I can. I've dealt with worse than a handful of rent-a-thugs."

The lead man growled and snarled at the insult before ordering his men forward. They would show the little bitch just who was in charge. It was only once he got within hitting distance that he realized he had been played.

Tsuna moved. Her hand flashed upward and caught one of the attackers hard in the throat. She felt his trachea collapse beneath the hard edge of her hand. Turning to avoid a hit, she lashed out with a kick and managed to hit one of the men's knees. His leg went in two directions and he fell to the floor with a cry of pain echoing from his mouth. The three slower men skidded to a stop before they got within her reach and took a step back. Her eyes bore into them. The brightest of them cursed under his breath as he noticed one detail the others missed.

The girl's eyes had turned from brown into a bright orange he had only seen once: when the Vongola head had killed those who had killed his eldest son.

The thug, sadly, did not have enough time to tell his fellows of his discovery as he was struck from behind. He fell bonelessly to the ground. His two comrades turned to see who had interfered and got a face full of metal tonfa for their troubles. They, too, joined their fellows on the ground in various states of consciousness.

"Hibari-senpai. Where's Sasagawa-senpai?" Tsuna inclined her head. The prefect looked like an avenging angel with his jacket fluttering about him as it was. Her lips twitched as she fought the urge to smirk at the thought. Few people would call Hibari an angel in any way, shape or form. Demon was a far more accurate term for the carnivorous teen.

"He was too loud. Omnivore, explain this."

Tsuna held up one hand and turned around to the Ranking Prince. She knelt down to his level and looked him over more closely. He was dirty, but she could see no obvious injuries. "Are you alright, little one?"

"Y-yes. Thank you. Thank you." the boy sniffled and reached up to cling to her. Tears leaked out of his eyes and left dirty trails down his face.

Tsuna gently ran a hand through his hair. "Let me take care of this, and I'll take you somewhere safe. OK?"

The child just nodded without saying anything. He released the handfuls of clothing he had clung to and held his book close to his chest.
"Omnivore." Hibari shifted his stance into a more relaxed one. He had a good idea why the omnivore had attacked common gangsters.

"They were after the boy." Tsuna explained as she rose and faced him. "He came to me for protection."

"Hn. Mother bear."

Tsuna snorted and smiled brightly at him. "I've been called that before. Can you take care of these guys? I want to get the boy somewhere safe. I doubt these idiots will be the only ones after him."

"He's important?"

Tsuna frowned and looked at the boy before looking back to Hibari. "The Ranking Prince can change the political landscape of the underworld. The ones who control him have an instant way to know the strength of those they are against or how trustworthy an ally is."

Hibari frowned. He knew what the omnivore was implying. There would be others after the child. Though the omnivore would likely never let them get a hold of the cub while she breathed. The worried looks she kept sending the hunched over child definitely told him she had already adopted the boy. His lips twitched. The omnivore got so vicious when children became involved in her world.

He licked his lips and turned his attention on the men who had tried to harm the child. A thrill ran down his spine at the carnage her simple attacks had caused. The man she had hit in the throat was dead, his eye bulging out of his sockets and bloody scratches around his throat where instinct had told him to claw. The one with a dislocated and/or broken leg writhed on the ground in pain.

"Get the cub out of here, omnivore."

"Thank you, Hibari-senpai." Tsuna turned to the child and reached out a hand. "Come on. Let's go somewhere a bit safer, OK?"

Tsuna leaned back in her chair as the Ranking Prince settled onto her overly stuffed couch. The few scrapes and scratches he had accumulated during his flight from his captors had been addressed and the tiny white bandages just made her temper flare. Children were sacred. Period. They should not become involved in the darkness of the underworld whether they were born into it or not. Her jaw clenched but she shook her head and sighed. There was no need to get angry when there was no one around she could let her anger out on. She'd also scared the skittish boy, and she refused to scare him anymore than he already was.

"So, you know my name. What is yours, young prince?"

The boy curled slightly around his book at the acknowledgment of his title. "Fuuta de la Stella."

"Well, Fuuta, you're safe here. I will not allow anyone to hurt you."

"I know." the boy stated firmly. "My rankings said you'd protect me."

Tsuna gave the boy a sad smile. "I do not let children come to harm in my territory. It's one of the few things that I have gone to war with other families over."

"O-oh."
The boy began to uncurl. Tsuna's smile turned brighter. The tightness that had formed in her gut began to unfurl. He was beginning to trust her, or trust her more than he had. It took guts to just run up to a random person you've never met before and beg for protection, especially when you knew that person was involved in organized crime. Fuuta de la Stella was a very brave boy.

"Tsuna-hime!" Hayato shouted as he threw the door open. Fuuta let out a tiny yelp and curled up into a tiny ball around his book. Her stomach felt as if someone had dropped a stone of ice in it. That was a learned action. Her leg tensed and fists curled at her sides. Hayato blinked in surprise at Fuuta's presence.

"Hey, Tsuna." Takeshi said as he entered the office and shut the door behind him. His grin slipped ever so slightly as he saw the child. His eyes instantly tracked over to his boss. His lips pressed into a tight line. She inclined her head ever so slightly and allowed a grim smile to form on her lips for a moment. Takeshi snorted lightly but relaxed.

Hayato bit his lower lip at the silent conversation between the two before turning his attention to the kid.

"I take it Rumiko or Yuusuke called you when I got in?" Tsuna drawled and stood from her seat. She crossed to the front of her desk and sat on the edge. She looked over at Fuuta and smiled. "It's OK, Fuuta. These two are mine. They won't hurt you."

"Yeah, we won't hurt a kid, kid." Takeshi gave the boy one of his blinding smiles as he placed a hand behind his head.

Hayato huffed and crossed his arms but nodded in agreement. "Wouldn't be right to hurt a kid."

"You yell and verbally threaten Lambo enough."

"That's Lambo. He makes himself as annoying as possible and doesn't listen."

"True, but he is getting better."

"Only because you keep tying him up and putting him in a corner when he misbehaves."

Tsuna laughed, though it came out more as a snort. She shook her head and glanced over at Fuuta. He had begun to uncurl and had a small smile on his face. She gave a grateful smile to the silver haired Italian. That was just what was needed to get the jumpy child to relax.

"So, who's the kid?" Hayato pointed a thumb at the kid.

"Fuuta de la Stella."

Hayato inhaled sharply and looked closer at the boy. "The Ranking Prince?"

Tsuna hummed and leaned back against her desk. "He came to me for protection."

"Sawada Tsunami is ranked number one in being unable to refuse a child. Fifth most powerful in Namimori and 23rd strongest in the mafia." the boy repeated his rankings and a shy smile. "I knew she could - would - protect me."

"So, you can see we need to prepare for the coming storm." Tsuna stated and waved a hand at the boy.

Hayato hummed and frowned. His hand came up to cradle his chin in a familiar thinker's pose. His
brows drew together and his nose wrinkled. Tsuna and Takeshi both had to resist the urge to coo over the cute sight.

"Who was holding you?" Hayato asked the boy.

Fuuta gripped the edges of his Ranking Book tightly. "The Cordova Famiglia."

The bomber snorted and shook his head. "The Cordova are weak. Tsuna-hime, we can take care of them without many - if any - problems."

Tsuna quirked an eyebrow. "You know of them, then?"

He nodded. "They're mainly information brokers. Them having the Ranking Prince certainly explains why."

Tsuna hummed and gave Fuuta a sad smile. She inhaled and squared her shoulders. Her boys shifted into a more ready stance themselves. Even Fuuta felt a change in the air.

"Takeshi, go warn Yuusuke. I want our men to be on the lookout. Hayato, go get Rumiko. I know you don't like her, but I need her here now. She keeps tabs on foreigners at the local hotels. She'll know where they're going to be coming from."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime." both of her boys chimed together, giving rough salutes, before hurrying out the door.

Fuuta blinked at the speedy response. "Wow, I didn't think Sawada-san was that...well that."

Tsuna chuckled and picked up her cellphone. "I've been in charge of the Akatora for six years now. I know when and how to turn the whole boss aura off and on."

"Oh." Fuuta frowned and put his book flat in his lap as he looked up at Tsuna with large, wary eyes. He had never had much luck when it came to organized crime and Akatora sounded a lot like a yakuza family. "What's going to happen to me?"

Tsuna's finger hovered over the call button on her phone. She looked over and smiled at him. "I'm going to take you home with me. Mom already loves the other two kids I've taken in. She won't mind me bringing you home, too."

"Then... then you don't...?" the boy mumbled and looked down at the ground even as his fingers curled protectively around the cover of his book.

Tsuna frowned and moved over by the boy. She sat beside him and placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. He flinched and ducked his head downward. Her lips pressed into a tight line as she pulled her hand back.

"No, I won't. You will never need to worry about me asking you to give me rankings in exchange for anything." In a calculated move, she placed her hand on his head and ruffled his hair. "Just worry about being a kid, Fuuta."

Fuuta looked up at her through his bangs. He hesitated for a second. He bit his lip and then nodded to himself. Letting go of his book, he moved fast and hugged her waist. His face pressed into her side as a few tiny tears leaked from his eyes. Tsuna smiled softly and ran her fingers through his hair.

"Thank you, Sawada-san."
"You can call me Tsuna, Fuuta."

"Thank you, Tsuna-nee."

It had been a week since Fuuta had joined the Sawada household. Tsuna, in an effort to maintain peace in the household, was taking all three of her kids out to the park. Bianchi had agreed to stay at home with Nana. The poison specialist hadn't seen one of Nana's attacks, so she didn't understand why Tsuna and I-Pin both insisted she stay close to Nana, but had seen the value in keeping the Sawada matriarch protected with a mafia famiglia after one of the children under her roof. Tsuna only hoped her mother didn't have an attack in front of the assassin. I-Pin she could trust. She was still iffy on Bianchi.

"Nee-san, Lambo-sama wants grape candy!" the cow print wearing child shouted at the top of his lungs. Tsuna inhaled deeply, counted to ten, and stared down at him with a frown on her face. The day she met the Bovino family was the day she was committing mass slaughter.

"You will get your grape candy at the end of the day if you are good." she stated. Lambo continued to whine to the point Tsuna had her hands clenched tightly at her sides. With smooth, quick movements, she pulled her backpack off her shoulder and pulled out a length of rope. He fell silent almost instantly at the sight of the object.

"Already threatening the brat with the rope, Tsuna-hime?" Hayato humphed and crossed his arms over his chest. The bomber did not get along with the Bovino child, and it was only the Bovino child he didn't get along with. I-Pin and Fuuta didn't bother him like the loud mouthed, undisciplined child. He wouldn't strike the boy—he had seen how Tsuna reacted to that—but tying the boy up was acceptable.

"Broccoli monster loud." I-Pin complained as she strolled along Tsuna's left side.

"Ah," Fuuta opened his mouth to speak but closed it. He looked away and clutched his book tightly in his hands. He hadn't let the precious book of rankings out of his sight since. He may trust Tsuna, but years of conditioning kept him from wanting to separate from it. The one time he had tried, he had dropped into a panic attack, much to Tsuna's horror.

The yakuza boss sighed and put the rope back in the backpack. The boy got the idea. "Lambo, just go. Go run off that energy. Play. Have fun."

The Bovino child let out a shrill laugh and took off far faster than he should have been. At least the Bovino had trained the child enough to survive traveling on his own. Tsuna still wasn't feeling merciful toward them, though.

"I-Pin keep eye on Broccoli Monster. No get in trouble." I-Pin stated and wandered off in the direction the cow child had ran off. Tsuna looked in that direction and watched as the boy seemed to bend space-time in order to be in three places simultaneously. She stared blankly before turning away. She would just ignore that.

"Fuuta, go have some fun. It's not right for you to be inside all day."

looking down at his book. Looking over at the other two children playing on the equipment, he felt the pull to go have fun, something that was still new and exciting to him. He'd never gotten the chance to act like a kid before. He bit his lip and nodded to himself.

"Tsuna-nee, will you keep my book safe?"
Tsuna's lips twitched upwards into a smile as she held out her hands to take the precious book. Fuuta placed it into her hands and ran off, but not before sending one last worried look at the book. He hadn't been willingly separated from it in so long, but he could trust Tsuna-nee. He hoped so at least.

"I'm still amazed at your luck." Hayato observed as he watched the kids play. "I know of many famiglie who would give up all their riches just to have possession of the Ranking Prince for one day."

"His name's Fuuta." Tsuna growled and clutched the book tightly. "I refuse to call him by that title. He needs a chance to be a kid, not some pawn to be used by the underworld."

Takeshi sighed and placed a gentle hand on his boss's shoulder. Hayato, seeing how aggressive she had become, didn't puff up as much as he usually did when the swordsman touched her.

"He will so long as you're here for him, Tsuna-hime." Takeshi stated and removed his hand as her tenseness began to vanish.

None of them were expecting the first shot.

It said something about Reborn's training that all three of them were moving before they realized that they had even been shot at. Thankfully the shooter had an aim comparable to an Imperial Storm Trooper and missed everyone by a large degree.

Tsuna's eyes widened and everything began to slow down for her. She had no idea how the legion of black suited thugs had been able to hide from her presence, but the soft cursing of "Mist Flame" coming from Hayato gave her one clue. So whoever it was had at least one Flame Active person. More than likely these people were after Fuuta. The way they had arrayed their people told her that. Most of the thugs stood as a barrier between her and her Guardians and the children, not that they would succeed at keeping them separated. I-Pin had already pulled out her Gyoza buns and had taken out three of the idiots. Lambo's seemingly infinite supply of weapons and afro that bent space-time caught a few of them off guard and gave the boy a chance to take them out. Even Fuuta, who seemed the least physically inclined of the three, had managed to leave one of the attackers rolling on the ground and calling for his mommy.

The boy had taken her lesson on dirty fighting well. Nut shots always hurt.

Tsuna dropped Fuuta's book and put herself into a fighting stance. The men grinned widely at her and pulled out weapons. Thankfully none of the closest ones were armed with guns. She only had to worry about one shooter, at least so far. That was good. Gunshots in Namimori never went unreported for long. Hibari would be on the scene soon. All she had to do was stall for time.

"You have no idea who you're dealing with." she stated with a low growl. The lead man laughed. The grating noise made her teeth ache. She'd shut him up first.

"Look at this bitch." the man practically crowed to his amused companions. "She actually thinks she can take us on."

"Hayato?" Her voice was tense. Thankfully the bomber understood what she wanted.

"Yeah, they're Cordova."

A hunter's grin, the grin of the Great Tiger, spread across her face. "No mercy then."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime." both of her boys chimed as one. The thugs weren't expecting that, nor were they expecting the pain that soon followed.
Takeshi struck out fast as he pulled his blade free from where it had been resting on his back. The metal sang as it cut through limbs and drank the blood of his enemies. His eyes remained calm as he wove a swath of death and destruction around him. No movement was unnecessary. No momentum lost. The Cordova thugs didn't have a chance standing up against the natural hitman that he could become for his boss.

Hayato started off his bit of the fight with some disorienting explosions. With Tsuna so close, he couldn't risk using his more impressive arsenal, but the smaller explosives were effective in causing chaos among the ranks. His fingers trailed up to his neck and released the catch on the garrote he kept hidden among the various necklaces he wore. Yes, he was known for explosives, but that wasn't the only weapon in his arsenal. To specialize so narrowly would wind up with an assassin dead, and Shamal was just a bit too afraid of his family to not teach him some tricks. In the confusion at least five Cordova thugs fell to either his garrote or the poisoned darts he disguised as regular pendants. He was the little brother of the Poison Scorpion after all.

Tsuna moved. The battlefield flowed around her. She struck in quick movements. Bone broke beneath her hits. Joints popped and moved in ways they were not supposed to. Hits applied to the weak points of the head took out men twice as large as she and put them down permanently. These men were after her children. There would be no mercy. Only death awaited them. Her teeth glittered dangerously in the mid-afternoon light at the thought. Her Sky Flame roared within her as she stood on the knife edge of entering Hyper Dying Will Mode without the use of one of Reborn's special bullets.

The training the baby hitman had put her through since the incident at the bridge made her more aware of her own Flame and what she was doing with it. A few sparring sessions with Dino made her realize how much effort it took to pull her Flames out of her body. That still left her weak. However, using the power of her Flame internally, that was a whole different matter. Reborn had been pleasantly surprised by the speed at which she picked up those tricks that allowed her to move faster, to see the enemy's attacks coming and dodge. The laughter from the baby hitman terrified the Cavallone Don.

"Tsuna-hime!" Hayato shouted. A moment later a body slammed into hers. She spun on her heel and stared with wide eyes as the silver haired bomber was stabbed by an idiot with a knife.

Everyone felt the air turn to ice in an instant.

Red blood dripped down from the wound on his arm. His opponent wasn't paying any attention to him, however. All attention turned toward the Sky who was leaking sheer want of violence. The thug who had managed to get lucky scrambled back, but it wasn't fast enough. Hayato had an up close and personal view of just how his boss struck out with enough force to rip out the man's throat. Hayato swallowed tightly at the sight. On one hand the amount of blood in the air and on his boss was unacceptable. On the other, Tsuna had never looked as arousing to him as she did in that moment. Every bit of her presence screamed command and practically forced all there to kneel before her and obey.

The Cordova were screwed.

"Wao." Hibari murmured as he took in the scene of utter carnage. The omnivore had really let loose before. Blood and bodies lay on the ground. Three children huddled close to the sword herbivore who always hung around her. The omnivore herself tended to the explosive herbivore. He looked to have been injured, a stab wound from what he could see, and was getting it wrapped up tightly. The omnivore herself was quiet. A heavy air of rage and aggression as well as the tiniest bit of fear hung over her like a cloud. Every time the explosive herbivore opened his mouth to speak, she'd pin him
with a glare and he'd fall silent and bow his head in submission. Obviously he had done something beyond getting injured to gain the omnivore's ire.

"Get the bodies." he commanded his men. Without a word, they went about cleaning up the carnage. His lips twitched as he walked over to the omnivore. He knew she probably had a good reason for letting her predatory side free, but it still wouldn't hurt to see if she was still in the mood to fight. He might actually get a challenge from her should that be the case.

"Omni-" he started.

"I'm not in the mood, Hibari." she snapped at him without looking from her subordinate's injury. The prefect's eyes widened slightly before narrowing. He reached down to grab her shoulder and demand an explanation.

A second later he found himself flat on his back with the omnivore pinning him to the ground. She snarled and bared her teeth like an enraged beast. The blood in his veins sang at the potential for violence. He shifted ever so slightly to test out her grip and froze as he realized exactly where her knee was poised to strike. His lips pressed together into a thin line, but he backed down and went limp in her grasp. He was not risking getting a knee to that sensitive an area just to fight her. Obviously her predatory instincts had been forced into overdrive. Best to let her cool off a bit before demanding a spar.

"They're the Cordova. They were after one of the children." she ground out as she stood up. The prefect remained flat on the ground. He was dealing with an enraged mother bear. Do not provoke. His eye darted to a nearby corpse and back to her bloody hands. Had she really torn the man's throat out with her bare hands? Yes, best to let her rage die down a bit before demanding what he wanted.

"I'm going to take mine back to the office." She went silent and turned a frosty glare on the Italian herbivore. "I need to have a discussion with some of them."

"Hn." Hibari grunted and cautiously sat up. She stepped back and eyed him warily before going to check on the children. The loud afro brat cried and begged for candy while the Chinese girl bowed respectfully and kept her guard up. The newest addition to her gaggle of children clutched at a worn, red leather bound book with one hand while wiping tears from his face with the other. Though the boy was obviously scared, he did not shake. There was steel there. A smirk ghosted over the prefect's lips. The omnivore kept such interesting company.

"Hibari-senpai." the sword herbivore greeted him as he sheathed his newly cleaned blade.

"Herbivore."

"Get up, Gokudera. We'll get you looked at properly." the swordsman cajoled the wide eyed Italian.

Tsuna took a moment to survey the battlefield. The Cordova would be hurting or possibly all out destroyed due to her actions. They deserved it. One of her own had been injured by them and they were after her children. Still, something settled uneasily in her stomach. There had been a shooter at the beginning of the fight, yet they had not found anyone with a gun. Also, whoever the Mist Flame was had vanished or been killed early on. Her instinct told her it was the former option rather than the latter. A sinking suspicion formed in her gut, but she didn't have any proof. She inclined her head ever so slightly toward the prefect and ushered the children off to the office.

She needed to have a talk with Hayato.

The office was silent for once. Every member of the Akatora could feel the tension in the air and see
the anger on their boss's face. The fact that Hayato was walking behind her with his head bowed and cringing every time he looked at her told everyone who exactly the Great Tiger was angry at this time. Takeshi's pitying and concerned looks were just icing on the cake and confirmed everyone's suspicions.

The children had been left in one of the rooms with one of Rumiko's girls who had younger siblings. The children were shaken but recovering. Violence like what they had seen was, sadly, not new to any of them. Fuuta seemed to be the most distressed of all of them, but Tsuna had a feeling it was because of who had come after him rather than the fact they had been attacked at all. The signs were there that the Cordova hadn't been the kindest hosts for the Ranking Prince. He flinched at loud noises, refused to be far from his book, and made himself small and meek to avoid attention.

"In." Tsuna demanded as she held the door to her office open. Her boys flinched at the cold tone her voice had taken. While Hayato had no experience with Tsuna when she spoke in that tone, Takeshi did. The last time he had heard it, he had nearly jumped off the middle school's roof due to his baseball obsession and an arm injury. She had grabbed him by the back of his shirt and hauled him away from the edge before sliding straight into a lecture about how much of an idiot he was and 'did he want his father to go through the pain of burying him'? The swordsman had took her words to heart and had followed her ever since.

She strode into the center of the room and pointed at the couch. "Hayato, sit. Takeshi, door."

"Yes, Tsunami-sama." Takeshi stated formally and bowed before going to man the door.

Hayato, still not looking up or speaking, sat down where told. He sent a nervous glance at Tsuna and then a side glance to Takeshi, who had taken to staring blankly at the far wall like a statue. So, this was it. This was where she was going to tell him to get lost, that he was worthless, that he didn't deserve to be beside her, that he…

"Hayato! Breathe." Tsuna commanded. Her hand came up to the back of his head and pushed it down between his knees. It was strange. He hadn't noticed his chest tightening or his breath coming in short, rapid puffs or the tears running down his face. His hand shook even as they clutched tightly to his pant legs. He felt Tsuna card her fingers through his hair, but that just made thing worse. She was going to be all gentle and soft and she was going to get rid of him because he was weak and stupid and got injured.

"Hayato? … Hayato?" Her voice sounded muffled to his ears. "Hatato, I said breathe!"

Her voice twisted into her commanding tone. Hayato instantly obeyed as something in his subconscious recognized the tone. His breathing, still shaking and weak, started to smooth out. His eyes remained wide and unseeing. Another set of hands, these larger than Tsuna's and more powerful, ran down his back in an effort to soothe him. The Italian had no idea how much time had passed before he came back to his senses. He blearily lifted his head and looked up at the two who had been trying to calm him.

"Fuck! That was scary." Takeshi said. It was one of the few times the bomber had heard the swordsman curse and just made him feel worse than he already felt.

"Panic attacks usually are when you don't know what to do." Tsuna agreed, her head nodding gravely and stood up from where she had sat down next to the Italian. "Why does this not surprise me?"

Again the tight feeling compressed around his chest and the air rushed from his lungs. Hayato's fingers spasmed as he tried to fend off another attack. A second later, a soothing hand ran through his
hair and down his neck. The bomber froze and looked to the side where Takeshi was watching him with those eyes that missed nothing, the eyes of a hitman watching his prey.

Really, that look shouldn't have been as arousing as it was, but he blamed that on the hotheadedness caused by his panic attack.

"Hayato." Tsuna said softly to catch his attention.

"I'm sorry, Tsuna-hime!" the Italian bowed from his sitting position. "I'm sorry. I promise I'll get stronger, get better. I promise."

Tsuna lifted a hand to stop the rapidly streaming words. She sent a loaded glance to Takeshi. He nodded and backed off slightly. She came to stand in front of the rapidly paling Italian, not that his already pale skin had much color to lose. Then she did something Hayato hadn't expected a crime boss to do: she knelt down in front of him. She lifted one hand and ran it through his hair. A faint blush formed on his face as he felt the gentle motion and saw the sadness in her eyes.

"The mafia really fucked you up, didn't it?" She sighed and continued to run her fingers through his hair. It was a soothing motion and was soon joined by Takeshi running a hand firmly but not painfully down his back. "Hayato, do you know why I'm mad?"

"Because I was weak and got injured." he recounted and tried to avoid her eyes. Those eyes made him hurt. Tsuna shouldn't have that kind of sadness. He vaguely heard the sword-idiot inhale sharply.

"No." She shook her head and leaned back. "That's not true. You are not weak. Highly specialized in your combat area, yes, but not weak. Your over specialization can be changed. Maybe get you some shooting lessons if you favor mid to long distance fighting as much as I think you do. I have plenty of men who can help you develop that skill. No, I don't think you're weak."

"But-but then...?" he stuttered and lifted his gaze to hers.

"You got hurt for my sake." A heavy silence filled the office. Hayato could see flecks of orange start to form in her chocolate brown eyes. The soft feeling of her flame began to thrum through him. He felt like sobbing as that feeling of belonging, the Harmony of his Sky, curled protectively around him. He wobbled for a second before giving into his urges and falling forward. His forehead rested against her shoulder as his entire body relaxed into that feeling of belonging.

"Oh, Hayato." she murmured and rubbed at his back. Looking over the Italian's shoulder, she met Takeshi's gaze. He nodded. Scooting forward, the swordsman joined in the comforting as he wrapped his arms around the Italian. Hayato didn't even twitch.

"I'm not going to abandon you, Hayato. Never!" she stated firmly but gently as she continued to rub his back. His shoulders began to shake and she felt wetness begin to form on her shoulder. She inhaled sharply. He was crying. Her Flame curled protectively around both of her boys.

"Neither of us will." Takeshi said as he leaned his head on Hayato's neck. That's when the bomber realized what the swordsman was doing.

Sitting up as if he had been burned, the Italian pulled himself out of both their grasps and stared at the other boy in shock. A bright flush covered his cheeks and flowed down his neck beneath his clothes. Green eyes went impossibly wide. His mouth opened and shut like a fish. A tiny squeak came from his throat, and that was it for Tsuna. She began to laugh.

"Your face!" she gasped out as she tried to get control of her laughter. Takeshi gave her an annoyed
looked but she continued to chuckle. Taking a few deep breaths, she slowly calmed herself.

"But you - but she - but…!" the Italian choked out. At least he hadn't scrambled further away from Takeshi. There was enough room on the couch for him to do so. It made the swordsman's heart leap into his throat. Maybe he had a chance?

"Did you really not know?" Tsuna asked. "I mean, Takeshi hasn't exactly been quiet about his appreciation of you. There's a reason he likes walking a step or two behind you."

"But-but aren't you two…?" Hayato swung his pointing finger between them in confusion, his eyes wide.

Takeshi grinned that mindless, far too happy grin of his. "We are."

"You're intentionally confusing him." Tsuna reached up and playfully smacked his thigh before turning back to Hayato. "We are together but it's not exactly an exclusive relationship. Remember the lesson Reborn gave on Vongola Ottava?"

"Yeah…" Hayato said with a frown. His eyebrows drew together as he thought about what had been said in that lesson. A moment later his eyes grew wide and mouth dropped open.

"Yeah, female Skies, especially strong female Skies, tend to have harems." She shrugged. "Even before we knew about the Sky thing, we agreed an open relationship fit us rather well. We've both gone out with a few other people, but it never really amounted to anything."

Hayato sat there and just stared at the two before dropping his head into his hands. Takeshi and Tsuna shared a look before Tsuna reached out to touch the bomber's shoulder. His shoulders began to shake.

"Hayato?" Tsuna whispered. The bomber let out a small sob. The sound forced Tsuna and Takeshi into action. Their arms wrapped around Italian. Fingers carded through silver locks. The swordsman and the yakuza boss shared a look over the sobbing teen's head. Tsuna frowned and looked down at the bomber and sighed.

"Why are you crying, Hayato?"

"You-you can't…I'm not," he stuttered out. Sucking in a breath between his clenched teeth, he pushed both of them away and shook his head. "You can't want me."

"And why not?" Tsuna frowned but gave him the space he wanted. Takeshi backed up as reluctantly as she did as well. "You're sweet, caring, tenacious, and attractive as hell. Why wouldn't we want you?"

"No one wants me," he said softly. He kept his head bowed and the line of his shoulders slumped further. The boy really believed those words. It made her heart ache but not nearly as hard as the next words out of his mouth did. "They always push me away. I'm not good enough for them. Never good enough. Just a pianist's bastard son."

Tsuna pressed her lips together and tongue pressed against the roof of her mouth. She heard Takeshi inhale sharply through his nose. Yeah, she knew the mafia had screwed up the bomber, but she hadn't expected it to be that bad. Her hands shook, but she shoved the anger into a corner of her mind to be dealt with later. Hayato needed her in a calm frame of mind, not bubbling over with rage at those she could not reach at the moment.

"We want you, Hayato, if you'll let us have you. We can prove it to you." she said softly and
brushed a hand along his cheek. "You deserve love, Hayato. Let us love you. Please?"

"Yeah, Hayato." Takeshi joined and ran a hand over the top of the Italian's head. Green eyes peered up from underneath silver fringe. "Let us prove how much we care about you. Let us love you."

"I-I," Hayato stuttered before bowing his head, his voice choking into silence. His heart beat hard and fast in his chest. A distinct warmth he barely remembered from his childhood spread through him. No one had really cared since his real mother died. His mouth was dry and his head hurt, a consequence of his panic attacks and crying. The wound on his arm throbbed. Still, he felt better than he had in a long while. He looked out up at his boss. She and the sword-idiot were looking at him with such care and hope in their eyes. His tongue flashed out and wet his lips. They both cared so much, that was obvious, but could-could they really…? He lifted his head and pushed back the dark thoughts running rampant in his head.

"Please, just let us try?" Takeshi begged and Hayato really thought the look did not fit on the normally happy-go-lucky boy's face. It was that look and the one on Tsuna's face that made him break.

"I-I... al-alright." he whispered. Smiles slowly formed on Tsuna and Takeshi's faces. They shared a look between them and gave a barely there nod at one another. Both of them wanted to kiss the Italian but decided that would be too much for him at that point in time.

"You're still having gun lessons." Tsuna stated blandly as she looked back at the silveret but grinned wider. Hayato stared at her, blinked, and let out a rough laugh. The smiles on Tsuna and Takeshi's face grew. They could work with this. Now they just had to make the Italian believe them when they said they cared, that they loved him.

It would be a hard road, but the reward at the end had beautiful eyes and an amazing smile.

Chapter End Notes

So, the relationship marches forward. Hayato's panic attack is akin to me in the middle of one. My brain latches onto one thought and loops around it until I'm shaking and crying. It's hard on me physically, and after a fight where he's been stabbed, I imagine a panic attack would be on Hayato. Hope everyone is still enjoying reading this as much as I am writing it!
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Not Beta'd yet. I kind of wanted to get it out there since people have been asking.

Tsuna moved. Reborn, undeterred, fired at her. Curses ran through her head as she dodged the bullets. Thankfully the baby hitman had agreed to switch out his normally lethal ammo for the less deadly but still painful rubber bullets. She could already feel the bruises forming where she hadn’t been fast enough to get out of the way.

All in all, it was a usual training day.

Takeshi and Hayato watched their boss dodge around the hitman’s bullets from the side of the clearing the Akatora had claimed as a training ground. Hayato twitched every time the hitman’s gun went off and had to visibly restrain himself from running to his boss’s aid. He was helped in this by the arm of the swordsman laying across his shoulders. Hayato would be the first to admit he still wasn’t entirely comfortable with how touchy-feely the swordsman was, but he was getting used to the other teen’s preference for physical contact. He had no idea where the other learned to give a massage, but he really, really wanted to thank them. Those massages felt so good after the hell he was being put through in the name of training.

“Still nothing, Tsunami?” Reborn asked as he pointed his gun at her heaving chest.

Shaking her head, she grit her teeth. “No. I can feel my flames there under the surface. Hell, I can call them to my hand, no problem.” Here she demonstrated and tiny wisps of orange flame formed on the tips of her nails like fox fire. “They still won’t go beyond that to what I felt whenever you shot me with one of those bullets or like on the bridge. It’s like there’s this wall standing in the way.”

Reborn frowned, his brows narrowing, as he lowered his weapon. “That’s enough. I need to contact Nono. This could be an after effect of the sealing or the method you used to break it.”

Tsuna groaned and jumped to the side as Reborn took one final, surprise shot at her. She lifted an eyebrow and grinned. She had been expecting something like that. The baby hitman tutor was devious. She could be, too. Six years of being the head of a criminal organization was good for something.

“Hey, Tsuna, catch!”

Tsuna’s hand flashed up and caught the water bottle Takeshi had thrown to her. Hayato, shifting uncomfortably under the weight of Takeshi’s hold on his shoulder, held out a towel. Tsuna grinned at them both and walked over. As she took the towel with her free hand, she kissed the Italian teen’s cheek. A bright flush crossed his skin. Takeshi, watching the reaction closely, let out an amused snort only to get a feather light kiss on the nose from his boss.

“You three are far too mushy,” Reborn stated. All three teens turned to look at him.

A grin crossed Tsuna’s face. “Would you prefer us to be at each other’s throats? You don’t get to
complain, not with how you were pushing Hayato toward me with that little lesson of yours. You’re a closest matchmaker, aren’t you, Reborn?”

The hitman scoffed but smiled up at his student. She had a point, not that he’d verbally admit it to her. His Sky may have betrayed them, but that didn’t mean it would be the same for them. He sincerely hoped it wouldn’t be the same for them.

“Go get some rest, Tsunami. You’re obviously far more exhausted than I thought if you’re spouting out such crazy theories.”

She nodded slowly with a wide grin on her face. “Right, Reborn. Right.” Yeah, she knew what he was doing. Mentally he cursed at the Vongola Intuition while simultaneously being proud his student could read him that much. Very few had the ability to do so. The last had been…He forcibly turned his thoughts away from that path. No need to bring up those memories.

Tsuna, her instincts telling her the hitman’s thoughts had turned to something she didn’t want to deal with, turned back to her boys and grinned. “I do believe the man has spoken. Let’s go. I’ve got homework to finish.”

“That math homework?” Takeshi asked as he stepped away from his two hearts and picked up his bag. “I really didn’t understand any of it.”

“How could you not understand that? It’s easy,” Hayato complained as he took the soiled towel back from Tsuna and put it in the duffel he had dragged to the training grounds.

“Takeshi’s always had trouble with math. He’s like me and literature. We just don’t get it, but I can bluff my way through literature better than he can through math.” Tsuna shrugged and drank down the last of the water. Crushing the bottle, she went over to her bag and stuffed it in. She’d put it in the recycle bin at home.

The path back to Namimori was quiet and all three teens just talked about the little things. It was, for the first time in months, quiet. Yuusuke hadn’t gotten any new information of the Fuuma-kai nor had the enemy yakuza group dared to step foot back in Tsuna’s territory. Rumors abound in the underworld about her recent ascension to heiress of a powerful foreign family. Those who had the wherewithal to find out the name of the head of the CEDEF put two and two together. Those yakuza families she had either a good or ambivalent relationship with had already sent their congratulations. She had more sake and beer stocked in her office than she had since she formally took over the Akatora.

“-and then you divide the sum of that and you get your answer,” Hayato was trying to explain how to do the equations that made up the dread math homework. Takeshi just grinned and nodded, not that he understood more than every three words that came out of the Italian’s mouth. He was a kinetic learned. He learned by doing, not by listening.

Tsuna smiled as she watched the two interact. Hayato, though still new to their relationship, was getting more comfortable with Takeshi inside his personal space bubble, which due to his European upbringing was far larger than the native Japanese teens’. In addition, a lot of his aggression had bled off. Sure, he still called Takeshi sword-idiot, but the term was becoming a pet name. Just watching the two interact and their subconscious body language made her smile.

“Tsuna-hime?” Hayato said as he caught sight of the soft, affectionate smile on her face. Takeshi looked at her from over the Italian’s shoulder and cocked his head to the side like a curious puppy. “It’s nothing.”
Both boys gave her confused looks, but shrugged. Hayato edged closer to her and bit his lip. His eyes darted down to her free hand swinging away beside her. His fingers twitched. He looked back up at her face and back down at her hand. Tsuna bit back a laugh, turning it into an amused snort, and reached out to interlace their fingers together.

“Ah,” Hayato murmured as his face turned a bright red. He gazed around at the people walking down the street. His fingers curled around hers. She could feel him shaking. Sparing a look at Takeshi, he nodded and took a step back from them both so as to seem to be giving the two a bit of privacy was polite fiction to those watching. The fact that his position allowed him to check out both of their backsides went unremarked on.

He was discrete, thank you very much.

Tsuna gently squeezed the Italian’s hand. He looked down at their linked hands and smiled even as his face turned a deeper red color.

“Omnivore.”

Tsuna froze. Hayato froze. Takeshi tensed and put himself into a guard position. Hibari Kyoya stood on the sidewalk and was staring straight at Tsuna. His eyebrow was twitching slightly and his hand clenched tightly at his tonfa. There was a flash of something dark and feral in his eyes that made Tsuna tense and drop Hayato hand. Her feet moved into a more defensive position.

“Hibari.”

The prefect stalked forward like an angered tiger. His gakuran fluttered behind him like a cape. Every muscle in his body was tense. His very presence screamed conflict. Tsuna had no idea what or who had pissed him off, but she hoped to every higher being it wasn’t one of her people or there would be hell to pay.

Hibari came to a stop just out of striking range. Tsuna stepped forward slightly to put herself between her boys and the enraged beast. Her body stilled as she stared him straight in the eye. His nostril flared and eyes narrowed. Body language shifted fast, almost too fast to read. That was the problem with dealing with Hibari. Most of what he meant had to be inferred from his body language. That left a lot of room for error.

“What do you want, Hibari?”

The prefect stared her down, but she refused to submit. He growled low in his throat and his hands tightened around his weapons. Hayato and Takeshi both dropped their bags and got into a ready stance. If there boss was going to fight, they’d back her up.

“Omnivore, there’s been more pictures.”

Tsuna frowned before her eyes widened in understanding. Yeah. That would piss off the prefect. For the past few months, someone was taking embarrassing pictures of the female students from Namimori and posting them to pervert sites on the internet. Hibari had not been pleased when it had been brought to his attention. The fact that she and the other members of the Discipline Committee had found several cameras hidden in the girls’ locker room just made things worse. No perpetrator had been found, but there were suspects, all of them members of the Namimori faculty.

Taking a deep breath, Tsuna inclined her head ever so slightly. “Any new leads? Have they found cameras in the locker rooms again?”

His lips pulled up into a snarl. “No. They’re different this time. Up the skirt shots of female
Tsuna let out a shaky breath. “I understand this is making you angry, Hiba-”

She ducked around a sudden strike. Her hands flashed up to knock away the followup blow. Twisting her body, she spun outside his reach. Hayato and Takeshi moved to attack the prefect. Her eyes widened.

“Stop, both of you.” The command felt heavy in the air, and Tsuna realized she had tapped into her flames. Her boys stopped and took a step back, though it was obvious neither of them wanted to. Her eyes met the enraged prefect. His eyebrow was quirked upward, and his body language had gone from tense and aggressive to slightly confused. His brows drew together and lips twitched down into a frown.

“Tsunami.”

Tsuna jumped at Reborn’s voice, the same one that had ordered them to stop. She tilted her head in such a way she could keep an eye on Hibari and see the hitman. Takeshi and Hayato moved so they could cover her.

“Baby.” Hibari sounded interested. He, like Tsuna, could feel the incredible presence the hitman oozed. The hitman stared at the prefect. To Tsuna’s despair, a smirk grew across Reborn’s lips. Her stomach dropped. Why did she have a bad feeling about this?

“Fight me.” That might be why. Hibari had turned his entire attention toward the infant sized hitman. The teen practically vibrated in want to fight.

“No.” Reborn turned back to Tsuna. “Weren’t you going home, Tsunami?”

Hibari growled and moved. Tsuna quickly followed. Reborn jumped out of the way of the first hit from the prefect. Tsuna, knowing just how powerful the hitman was and what he could do, grabbed Hibari’s waist and pivoted with all her strength. She could feel her flame react to her urgent need to keep Kyoya from getting himself killed. Strength flared in her body. Muscles became stronger and her mind clearer. Her grip on the prefect’s clothing changed slightly to a better hold. With a loud thud, Tsuna had Hibari’s body pinned to the cement wall that ran along the sidewalk. The prefect struggled, trying to break her grip, but couldn’t break free. Tsuna stepped closer, giving him less room to thrash and potentially injure himself.

“Calm the fuck down,” she hissed in his ear. Sadly her words had the opposite effect. Pulling herself slightly back, she then threw herself forward into his back.

He let out a sharp gasp of breath as he felt her body collide with his and her legs tangle up in his to remove any leverage he may try to get with his superior height. Her grip became painful on his arm and hip. He stilled.

“Tsunami.”

“Not now, Reborn,” Tsuna snapped before turning her attention back to Hibari. She leaned forward so only he could hear her words. “Do you realize how stupid that was? He’s the World’s Greatest Hitman, all capitals. You won’t stand a chance in a fight with him. Do not throw your life away. Even the strongest tiger knows there are other predators that can kill it.”

“Omnivore,” Hibari growled but fell completely limp in her arms. Her grip was too strong and she held the upper hand. With a twist, she could dislocate his shoulder or slam him head first into the concrete wall again. His pride demanded he retaliate, but he knew from prior experience she’d be
expecting it. He’d get even later.

“I’m going to let you go now. Don’t be fucking stupid.” Tsuna let go and backed away.

Hibari turned slowly. He glared at the omnivore and sent a piercing stare in the direction of the baby. His lips pulled up into a snarl, but he backed down. Turning his gaze back on the omnivore, his eyes narrowed into a more vicious glare. That’s when he saw the orange fire on her forehead.

“Well done, Tsunami. You reached Dying Will Mode on your own,” Reborn said.

Tsuna turned to her demonic tutor and stared blankly. The flame flickered on her head for a second before vanishing. “Huh?”

“I think I know how to train you now.” The smile on Reborn’s face did not fill the yakuza boss with confidence. Takeshi and Hayato, both staring at their boss in pride and awe, felt a cold chill run up their spines.

“Hayato, Takeshi, let’s go,” Tsuna commanded both of her boys without looking away from the staring prefect. “Hibari, I’ll talk to Kusakabe about the photos. Good day.”

Tsuna frowned as she looked over the pictures Kusakabe had waiting for her. The technical second-in-command of the Discipline Committee looked harried. His hair wasn’t as well done as usual and his uniform in just enough disarray that she noticed. Dark circles drooped beneath his eyes. The older teen had obviously not gotten any sleep the previous night.

The pictures lay in a wide array on the desk. Each one was a candid, up-the-skirt shot of various girls in Namimori uniforms. Tsuna couldn’t see any faces, but that didn’t make it any better. The backgrounds, what little could be seen, indicated the pictures had been taken in a classroom. The blackboard could be seen in more than a few and if the orientation was correct, the students were standing facing away from the blackboard.

“You noticed it, too,” Kusakabe said as he watched her examination of the pictures.

Tsuna hummed and nodded her head. “A classroom. Looks like our suspicions were correct.”

Kusakabe nodded and rubbed at his eyes. “This is a mess.”

“At least we’ve managed to keep it from the media,” Tsuna said as she looked up at him and winced. “Hibari’s not going to like this.”

Kusakabe frowned and looked over at her. “He was in a foul mood yesterday. He only said ‘omnivore’ when I asked why.”

She groaned and bowed her head. “I kept him from doing something very stupid and potentially life ending.” She squirmed under the look the older teen sent her before sighing. “I pinned him to a wall to keep him from attacking my tutor.”

The pompadoured teen stared at her in shock before wincing. “He’s going to kill you.”

She sighed. “I know, but it was that or let him face someone who is so far above him skill wise he stood no chance. I don’t trust my tutor to not kill him.”

“You tutor?”
She nodded. “Yeah. It’s a long story.”

Before he could ask her to elaborate, the door to the Reception Room burst open with a loud slam. Tsuna moved but wasn’t fast enough to dodge the third tonfa strike. She could hear Kusakabe scramble out of the way of the demon prefect. She just hoped he got to safety as she blocked a follow up strike and ducked out of the way of another.

“Omnivore,” Hibari growled at her. His eyes were dilated, she noted. Every movement belied strength and anger. She gulped and pushed. She could not keep fighting on the defensive if she didn’t want her skull bashed in. She ducked under another strike and took the opening to dash out the still open door. She turned on her heel and blocked the strike aimed for the back of her head.

“Hibari,” she started to speak before falling silent at the prefect’s silent snarl. “Crap.”

Students in the halls scattered as she ran past with the prefect hot on her heels. The few brave souls followed after to watch what they were certain would be carnage. Takeshi, at school early for baseball practice, and Hayato, there to watch Takeshi’s baseball practice, tried to get through the scared herd in order to help their boss/girlfriend.

Tsuna stumbled out the front doors and down the steps. Students fled in every direction. Tsuna running meant the demon was hunting. Hibari continued on her like a wolf on prey. She grit her teeth as she was forced to block another blow and leaned out of the way of another strike. She couldn’t do that too many more times. His strike were getting stronger and she risked breaking her arms.

Hibari felt his blood singing in his veins. The omnivore was fighting him at a higher level than she usually did. She had flashed her fangs at him the previous day, and he would not allow her to withdraw again. He had finally found someone he could get a decent fight from, even if she was a criminal omnivore. He licked his lips as he looked at her standing a few feet away. Her chest heaved from the exertion of fighting him, but her eyes, they made something inside him sit up and take notice. Her eyes had narrowed into an orange tinged glare and something deep inside him leaned toward her in anticipation of something. His skin prickled as the air became charged with unseen energy. He smirked.

Yes, the omnivore was certainly worth his attention.

“Tsuna!” the worried, dual voice of the two herbivores that followed her around cut through the prefect’s thoughts. He barely spared the two a glance. Both males were tense and ready to jump in to aid their precious omnivore, like she would need their help. Still, something inside him coiled and growled at the two males. His eyes narrowed and his grip shifted on his fangs.

“Get out of here!” Tsuna ordered as she noticed the change in Hibari’s attention. She was not going to let him hurt her boys. Never. Anger coursed through her and tiny wisps of flame curled across her fingertips.

“Herbivores, for crowding and interfering with my fight with the omnivore, I will bite you to death.”

Hayato and Takeshi’s eyes widened as they got out of the way of one angered prefect. Tsuna was hot on his heels, reaching out and grabbing the black haired carnivore by the back of his shirt and throwing him to the ground. She ignored the ripping sound of cloth that told her she may have put a bit too much strength into that.

“Why the hell are you doing this, Hibari?”
The prefect turned his attention from the two herbivore males to her. He snorted. “I beat you, I get to fight the baby.”

Tsuna blinked. “Who told you that?”

“The baby.”

Tsuna’s eyebrow twitched. Her lips pressed into a line as she inhaled sharply. Why was she not surprised the hitman was behind the sudden aggression?

“Shouldn’t a challenger face the student before facing the master, Tsunami?” Reborn’s voice came from above and behind. Everyone, even the demon prefect, turned and stared at the hitman. He lounged high above them in one of the trees that dotted the school’s courtyard.

“Reborn,” Tsuna growled. The noise caught the prefect’s attention once more. Fingers tightened around his tonfa. Her head snapped around to stare at him. Her eyes drifted up from him to her watching boys.

“Takeshi, Hayato, go. Tell the nurse to expect someone to show up soon.” She frowned and sighed. “I doubt Reborn’s going to let me get out of this.”

“Correct, Tsunami.”

She closed her eyes as her face turned into a wince. Her eyes flashed open, all signs of orange had vanished. She seemed more resigned than anything. Her shoulders drooped ever so slightly and firmed up her stance.

“But…” Hayato muttered. Takeshi shook his head and placed a hand on the Italian’s shoulder. The bomber looked up at the taller teen. His shoulders collapsing, he nodded and turned to go inside. The swordsman gave one long look to the two.

Hibari tensed as he felt something inside the normally happy-go-lucky boy changed and became far more dangerous. Something changed in the herbivore, made him dangerous. Sure, he knew the other was capable of being a threat, but he normally kept that side of him hidden away. He’d have to think about renaming the herbivore. He might be elevated to dangerous herbivore, like an elephant or rhino. A herbivore capable of killing an unwary carnivore.

“We’ll be waiting, Tsuna-hime,” Takeshi inclined his head ever so slightly before turning his cold gaze on the tense prefect. “If she is injured worse than usual, Hayato, myself and every member of the Akatora in the city will hunt you down and make sure the injuries are returned ten-fold.”

Hibari jerkily nodded. He could fight off the herbivores if they came in the usual small group of no more than 10 to 20, but there was always the possibility of them coming as a group and overwhelming him with numbers. The Triads had tried that before. The omnivore and that man had assisted him then. Best not to borrow danger where it wasn’t needed.

He nodded in agreement.

“Overprotective nut,” Tsuna muttered under her breath as Takeshi smiled brightly. The tense, predatory atmosphere vanished. The swordsman waved and headed aside after the silver haired Italian.

“Still a herbivore,” Hibari muttered to himself. To Tsuna it sounded more like he was trying to reassure himself. Takeshi rarely turned that intense focus and sharp edge on civilians, and despite how he pretty much ran Namimori, Hibari was still considered a civilian.
“Can we get this over with? The bell will be ringing soon.”

“I will bite you to death, omnivore,” he stated and went back to a fighting stance.

“Interesting,” Reborn muttered to himself as he watched the prefect focus. It was plain to see the boy was related to Fon. He had that same laser focus the Arcobaleno martial arts expert had. Still, there were differences. The teenager was obviously not a Storm. He was far too aloof, too independent in thought and deed. Reborn already pegged the boy as a Cloud, and one that was already falling for Tsuna’s Sky Attraction to boot. His student barely needed any help in gathering her Guardians, but that was to be expected with her Flame having been unsealed for as long as it had. To be truthful, he was surprised more of her people hadn’t bonded with her to the Guardian level. Perhaps the age gap or the unsealing method had something to do with it?

As the two teens clashed, the hitman’s attention drifted from them to the students watching from the windows. It looked like most of the student body had gathered to watch the clash of titans in the courtyard. Hayato watched from one of the windows on the second floor. Behind him, partially holding up the twitchy bomber, was Takeshi. The swordsman had one arm wrapped around the silver haired teen’s waist, not that anyone was paying attention to the two, and hadn’t that been a pleasant surprise. Normally in Sky-influenced relationships, the various Guardians remained separate in their affections. Rarely did two Guardians develop a romantic connection with each other. It was quite the sight to see, and the baby sized hitman felt it just went to show how strong and pure his student’s Flame was.

Turning his attention from the two, he looked over the other students. There. Reborn’s lips curled into a smirk. There was the Sasagawa boy who practically radiated Sun Flame. His mouth was open and the teens around him cringing at the volume. He seemed to be in a constant state of low level Dying Will Mode. He’d make a good addition to the Family as both a fighter and a future medic. It was just a matter of getting Tsunami to agree to bringing in someone who was a civilian. The best route for that was through the younger sister. That still left Mist and a suitable Lightning that wasn’t the Bovino brat to find. Namimori was proving to be an excellent place to find hidden talent.

“Gah!” Tsuna gasped as a tonfa just barely missed her stomach as she leaned backwards out of reach. Sometime during the fight, Hibari had managed to get her turned around so her back was to the school. He began to back her up in an effort to take away one of the directions she could use to dodge. Her lips pulled back in a snarl as she tried to think a way out of the situation without permanently injuring the prefect. As annoying as he was, she did not want to cause permanent damage to him. He had been a good ally, if a reluctant one.

Then her back hit the wall. Her eyes widened as a tonfa came straight for her head. She didn’t even think. Her body just reacted. Her hand flashed out. Fingers curled around his wrist. Weight shifted. Eyes widened. A body into the wall.

Tsuna had for the second time in as many days pinned Hibari Kyoya to a wall.

One arm slammed into the area between his shoulder blades. She pressed against him, her chest meeting his back with enough force to daze them both. He let out a gasp and groan as his head smacked into the wall.

“Well, looks like you lost, Hibari,” Reborn stated from his lofty perch. “Well done, Tsunami.”

“Oh, shut up, Reborn,” she snapped. Her lips were so close to his ears, the prefect could feel the her breath with every word she said. The bell rang, and her head tilted upward. Her lips just grazed the outer shell of his ear. His entire body went stiff. Eyes widened as his face heated. He shifted his
weight as his pants became a little too…snug. He let out a low hiss.

“Sorry,” she muttered, which just made the sensations worse for the prefect. “I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

The prefect said nothing. His brain had shut down as thoughts raced. His blood pounded in his ear. It was a familiar sound but for a far different reason than he was used to. His mouth was dry. His tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. Everything that he had thought about the omnivore, felt when she was around, made sudden sense. His arms shook. Legs felt far more unsteady than they had any rights to be.

The bell rang again.

Tsuna stepped away from Hibari and eyed him as he just stood there. “You OK?”

He shook his head and turned to face her. He hoped the redness he knew was there could be passed off for anger nested of embarrassment. He glared at her and stomped off. The bell had rung. He needed to get to class. He wasn’t running away from the omnivore. He wasn’t. He had to keep telling himself that.

Stupid, strong omnivore.

What was with that monkey this morning?” Hana asked Tsuna as they and the other female members of the class were coming inside the locker room after a strenuous gym class. Well, it had been strenuous for those girls who didn’t have a demonic, baby hitman for a tutor.

Tsuna hummed and shook her head. “My tutor gives off this aura that makes Hibari want to fight him. My tutor has refused to fight him unless he can beat me in a fight.”

“You have the worst luck,” Hana stated after a moment of silence. Beside her, Kyoko nodded in agreement “That monkey isn’t going to give you a spare moment.”

Tsuna sighed and nodded. “Yeah, I know…” She trailed off her words as she turned her head. Something had caught her attention, but she wasn’t sure what. There was just a sense of wrongness that suffused through her being. Tilting her head, she turned her attention from her friend to the locker room.

A faint curtain of steam from the showers hung in the air as the sharp fluorescent lights cut through the slowly forming fog. White subway style tile made up the shower area. Concrete seamlessly met the tile where the actual locker area started. Concrete benches topped with brightly painted metal lockers dotted the central area. More lockers lined the walls. Tsuna felt an urge to look up. Slowly tilting her head, she felt her eyes go wide.

“Tsunami?” Kyoko asked in a perturbed tone.

“Tell everyone to keep covered.” The tone she spoke in ensured Hana would obey. As her friends hurried away to warn the other girls that something was wrong, Tsuna walked over to the bank of lockers. Her head tilted up before she jumped up and shimmied her way to the top. There at the top, propped up in a corner, was a wireless camera. The green light on the front told her it was active.
“Son of a bitch,” she snarled. Her head turned to see where the lens was pointed. Her nostrils flared as she saw the showers directly in her line of sight. Grabbing the camera, she pushed back from the lockers and landed in a crouch.

“What’s going on here?” the gym teacher asked as she charged into the room. She frowned as she caught sight of the crouching girl she knew was a subordinate of the demon. It was unlikely to be a fight. Few were willing to go against her with that morning’s display fresh in their heads. As the girl stood up, the teacher realized what the problem was.

“Go get Hibari,” Tsuna ordered the teacher before turning to the watching students. Hana’s hand flew up to her mouth as she realized what was going on. Tsuna met her eyes and nodded. Grimly, Hana nodded and squeezed her way through the crowd and out the door.

“What…?” the teacher started before falling silent at the look the Sawada girl was sending her. A cold chill ran down the woman’s spine. Suddenly the rumors about why the girl was on the Discipline Committee made a lot more sense. “Sawada, please, calm down.”

Tsuna stared blandly at the teacher and shook her head. Grabbing a towel that had fallen on the ground, she wrapped the camera and turned to the gathered girls and frowned. “Everyone get dressed. The Committee will need to speak with everyone. I’ll try my best to ensure its me or Kusakabe.”

The girls, sensing the mood of the most dangerous female in the school, hurried to get dressed. Kyoko, first to be dressed, stepped next to Tsuna and placed a hand on her shoulder. The yakuza boss jumped slightly and turned her attention away from the wrapped camera.

“Are you OK, Tsuna?” Kyoko asked.

Tsuna sighed and glanced back at the bundle in her hands. “I’m frustrated. This is the second time this has happened.”

“At least you noticed it before it could catch too much,” Kyoko said.

Tsuna snorted. “We don’t know that. We don’t know how long this thing has been here.”

“Wouldn’t you have noticed it if it had been here earlier?”

Tsuna frowned and looked up at the place the camera had been hidden. Her lips pursed together. Her eyebrows drew together. A chill went up her spine. Eyes widened. She bound away from Kyoko, who let out a shout of surprise at the quick movement. Tsuna ignored the noise and skidded to a stop at the locker she used. Her head tilted up. A grin, feral and disturbing to all those who saw it, spread across her lips.

“Everyone dressed?” Hana asked as she charged into the room. She looked around, nodded to herself as she noted everyone was dressed in either their gym uniforms or the school uniform, and ran back out. A moment later three members of the Discipline Committee walked in. Kusakabe, as professional as ever, led the way.

“Sawada.” He inclined his head to her. She nodded back and held up the bundle of cloth in her hands. “That’s it?”

“It was still running when I took it down.”

His eyes widened. “Tanaka, see if you can figure out where it was broadcasting to.”
One of the teens nodded and pulled out a laptop. He sat on one of the concrete benches and started typing. He held out his hand for the bundle. Tsuna smiled and handed it over to him before turning her attention back to Kusakabe.

“You’ve got more?” He shook his head. “Wait a moment. Girls, please exit the room and speak with a member of the Committee. They’ll take your information and then you can get to class. If the bell rings, please do not leave if you haven’t spoken with one of us. We will provide passes to those who may be late. Thank you.”

“Well done,” Tsuna muttered just loud enough for him to hear her. He rolled his eyes. “I don’t think that camera was here before our gym class. I’m going to go change back into my uniform in the office.”

He nodded with an amused smile on his lips. Waving for one of the other DC members to come over, he gave a quick order for the security camera footage to be looked at. Tsuna waved to everyone as she walked out to the hallway. She froze, blinked, and shook her head as she saw just how many of the boys were out there. Kusakabe had to have called in everyone who had the luck to have break that period. She waved to them and started down the hall. Following the twists and turns of the hallways, she ended up at the reception room. She stepped in and set her clothing down on one of the file cabinets. Stripping down, she quickly beg not change her clothing. She was halfway done when the door opened.

“Omniv-” Hibari started and stopped. His eyes went wide even as a red flush tinted his cheeks.

“Hibari,” she greeted him as she turned to see who had come in. Her hands hovered over the buttons of her open shirt. Her bra, black and decorated with delicate lace, stood out against the stark whiteness of the shirt and the paleness of her skin. She blinked at his silence and dumbfounded stare before grinning. Her fingers flew over the buttons. Shrugging on her uniform jacket, she turned to face the still stunned prefect.

“Hello, Hibari,” she said and waved a hand in front of his face. He blinked, frowned and growled at her.

“What are you doing, omnivore?”

She shrugged. Hibari’s eyes wandered toward her chest subconsciously. The unbuttoned gakuran didn’t hide her shape nearly as well as it did when it was buttoned and put on right and his fingers were twitching the with urge to walk up to her and button it…

“I needed somewhere to change where I wouldn’t chance running into someone who stupid enough to ask questions about my scars. I normally change in one of the bathroom stalls in the locker room or hide behind a locker. The other girls know not to peek.”

Hibari only nodded and surreptitiously swallowed dryly. Why was the omnivore bother him so much? He shook his head. There were more important matter at hand.

“There was only one herbivore who was seen near the female locker room.”

Tsuna felt a grin, wild and feral and promising pain, cross her lips. “Oh? Are you going to track this herbivore down?”

The prefect snorted. “He kept his tongue even while I disciplined him.”

“Need my skill set, then? I have an idea.” Her leaned back on her heels and crossed her arms under her chest. “We’ll need Gokudera Hayato, though.”
Hibari sneered. “One of your herbivores.”

“One of my herbivores who is related to one of the best poison specialists in the world and apprenticed under the assassin Trident Shamal.”

“…Bring your herbivore, omnivore, and button your uniform properly before I bite you to death.”

“Yes, Hibari. I take it Kusakabe dragged the body to the nurse’s station?” At his nod, she started out the door. “Give me 10 minutes to track down Hayato, and we can get this started. You’re not the only one who wants to know who is profiting from this mess.”

Hibari stepped out of her way. His eyes narrowed as she walked past. The omnivore was different, more confident. She had successfully pinned him twice. He’d have to get even.

He ignored the feeling of his cheeks heating up at the thought.

“What? But, Tsuna-hime,” Hayato stuttered as Tsuna explained why exactly she had him called out of class. The teacher had surprisingly allowed it, but she thought that had more to do with Hibari being on the warpath than anything she had done.

“Hayato, I need someone with your skill set to help with this interrogation,” she exasperatedly explained as she led the Italian down the hallway toward the nurse’s station. “We need to know why this idiot has been filming us girls and selling the pictures online. The tech was a bit too advanced for his pay grade and it’s far more likely he had a backer outside the school.”

“But, I don’t know how I can help,” the bomber stated while looking down at the ground.

Tsuna chuckled. “Then your lessons with Bianchi haven’t bore fruit? And here she was bragging about your intelligence and skills at dinner two days ago.”

“Ah, well, Bianchi is Bianchi,” Hayato mumbled and looked to the side. “I’m no where near her level.”

“But you are good enough and smart enough to have something on hand that may help in this situation?”

“I have a few things I could try,” he finally admitted after a moment of silence. “Why haven’t you asked Bianchi to help?”

Tsuna frowned and shook her head. “Two reasons. I want to keep this in the school. No outsiders, not yet at least. Second, I don’t trust Bianchi.”

“Huh?”

“Bianchi is one of Reborn’s people. Her loyalty is first to him and second to me. I trust her morality and ethics, as well as the order from Reborn, to keep her from harming my mother or the kids, but I am not bringing her into any of my dealings unless there are other options or she has due cause, such as getting vengeance for you being injured or such.”

Hayato stared at his boss before biting his lip and looking away. “Reborn brought me here, too. I tried to kill you.”

Tsuna sighed, stopped and lay an arm across his shoulder. With her other hand, she turned him to
“And now you are mine. Would you betray me, Hayato? Give up my secrets to anyone under pain of death?”

Hayato stared into her orange-flecked brown eyes. He shook his head even as his skin flushed a bright red. He mentally cursed his fair coloring, but didn’t look away.

“I know you’re mine. You have been since I saved you from yourself,” she whispered and gently ran her fingers along his skin. “I trust you like I trust Takeshi.”

Hayato fell silent and looked away from her intense gaze. A tiny shiver ran through him. Tsunahime had such a big heart.

“Well, let’s get going. Hibari isn’t going to wait patiently for long,” she chirped as she pulled away from him. “Do you have something we can use for an interrogation?”

Hayato looked up at her and frowned. So quick to change the subject. Still, he did have an idea. His hands went to one of his stashes. That particular stash wasn’t explosives, but smoke bombs. He had been tweaking the formulas for a while and, though loath to admit it, the forced lessons with his sister had given him ideas.

“Maybe. We’d need to evacuate the room for 10 minutes while this,” he held up a single dark red smoke bomb, “clears from the air, but it should work.”

“What’s it do?”

“Cause neural receptors to overload and make pain feel anywhere from 5 to 100 times worse.” He stared at the orb. “I haven’t exactly gotten a chance to test it on a living subject yet.”

Tsuna hummed and smiled. Her teeth flashed in the light and Hayato was glad she was on his side. A thrill ran down his spine as he felt the tiniest bit of sympathy for the man who stood in her way.

“Omnivore,” Hibari greeted Tsuna as soon as she came around the corner to the nurse’s office. His lips twitched as he surpassed the urge to snarl at the silver haired teen walking so close to her.

“Get everyone out of the room and put some wading around the door,” she commanded. The members of the Committee looked from her to the prefect. He inclined his head though his gaze narrowed on her. She just kept smiling like a mischievous fox.

Hayato, keeping his head down, peeked in the office before setting off his bomb and slamming the door shut behind him. The pompadour sporting boys shoved whatever cloth they had been able to find around the door frame and stepped back.

Fifteen minutes later, an interrogation group consisting of Kusakabe, Hibari, Tsuna and Hayato stood in the nurse’s office and stared down at the whimpering wreck that was one of the science teachers Kimura Minoru. The man shook as Hayato’s drug ran its course through his body.

Hibari snorted but nodded to the Italian. “Well done.”

“Your continuing your bonding sessions with your sister if this is what comes out of them,” Tsuna told Hayato before turning her attention back to the prone form. “This can all be over quick if you tell us who you’re working for, Kimura-sensei.”

“F-fuck you,” the man growled. The tone was lessened by the fact he winced and hissed loudly immediately after.
“I see,” Tsuna hummed. She tilted her head to the side. Her eyelids drooped halfway. Hayato, feeling a sudden sense of danger, took a step back.

Kimura screamed. Tsuna drew back her hand from where she had hit him.

“Want to try again?” Her voice dripped with false sweetness.

Kusakabe bit his lip as he tried not to laugh at the shocked look on the scum’s face. So many people underestimated just what the girl was capable of. Even if he hadn’t known she was, well, a crime boss of over half-decade of experience, she was still the only female on the Committee. Hibari mandated a certain criteria for the members of his Committee, including physical fitness and combat ability. Why people just saw a sweet girl, he had no idea. He feared Tsuna’s temper nearly as much as Hibari’s.

“You’re insane,” the man shrieked as he tried to back away from the smiling girl.

“I’ve been called that before,” her smile turned vicious, “usually by the people I burn alive. Now start talking. Who is your backer?”

Hibari forced himself not to react to the omnivore’s predatory showing. His hands shook minutely. Only he or a member of his family would have noticed such tiny movements. His mouth was dry. When the omnivore got into the predatory frame of mind, he was reminded of just why he had agreed to her proposal. A male whimper caught his attention.

Without moving his head, Hibari’s eyes tracked to the Italian standing nearby. A faint red flush covered the foreigner’s face. To make matters worse, the Italian was staring at Tsuna in a way that made the prefect want to growl.

The soon-to-be former teacher whimpered and cried out in pain as Tsuna applied more of her interrogation techniques. They weren’t anything truly damaging just in case they had to turn the man over to the police, but everyone in Namimori knew how vicious Hibari could be and would overlook a few extra bruises.

“I’ll talk. I’ll talk!” The man took several deep breaths as he tried to stop his sobs of pain. Tsuna stepped back and raised an eyebrow as she waited for him to speak. He looked up at her. His skin was pale and tinged a sickening green.

“We’re waiting,” Tsuna chirped.


There was a pause.

“What?” Tsuna’s voice was flat. Her face had gone emotionless. Hayato inhaled sharply and glared at the man on the bed. That was a familiar name.

“You have to understand. I was in debt,” Kimura tried to reason with the scary girl. He quivered at the glared being sent at him from all angles.

“Omnivore,” Hibari broke through the man’s rambling.

“I know. He’s your prey, but I sort of need to send a message.” She frowned and shifted her weight slightly. “Give me what’s left over, and I’ll send a message to the Fuuma-kai. They’re getting a bit out of hand.”
From his hiding place in the ventilation, Reborn smiled. Yes, the Vongola heiress was coming along nicely. He hadn’t even had to interfere too much beyond moving the camera to a more visible spot and making certain the security cameras were rolling. He sipped his espresso and nodded to himself. He’d still have his contacts look into things. These Fuuma-kai didn’t realize just what his student was capable of or what a Vongola could do when they got truly motivated.
Calm Before the Storm

Chapter Notes

Warning: Child abuse, child neglect and spousal abuse referred to in this chapter. You have been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s such a lazy Saturday, Tsuna thought to herself as she read over some financial paperwork at her desk. Lounging nearby, Reborn kept an eye on his student. Every so often the baby hitman would fire a round in her direction. Situational awareness training, he called it. Tsuna called it sadism. The exercise had gotten to the point she could just move her head ever so slightly and avoid the shots. That only made the baby smirk and seem pleased with himself.

Tsuna still had no idea what was going on in her tutor’s head. The man was damn near impossible to read. Only her bloodline blessed intuition made gaining even an inkling into his thought process near impossible rather than the completely impossible everyone else had to deal with. Every so often the man slipped and she was able to get a bit more than usual, but it was rare.

Setting the papers down, she rubbed at her eyes and yawned. Her head tilted to the left and avoided another shot. She glanced out the corner of her eye and sighed. It was going to take forever getting those holes patched. Though—she paused and a smirk appeared on her lips—if she kept them and told anyone who asked just who they were from, well, that would increase her infamy. Avoiding bullets of the World’s Greatest Hitman was social platinum in criminal circles.

“Tsunami, are you done?” Reborn asked from where he was lounging on the couch. There was a glow and Leon returned to his normal chameleon state.

“With paperwork, yes. I still need to see if there’s any new business with Yuusuke and then I have a date with the girls.”

Reborn quirked an eyebrow at her. “Which girls?”

“Rumiko and the girls. We’re going to karaoke.”

Reborn hummed. His eyes narrowed ever so slightly and Tsuna felt a shiver run up her spine. Teeth clenched as she sped up her walk through the hall toward her second in command’s office. She did not want to know what the demon was planning.

“Yuusuke,” Tsuna greeted him as she opened the door.
“Boss.”

“Any new business? I’ve already been through the month’s financial reports.” She tilted her head to the side ever so slightly. “Do you think we can give Kashimoto another offer for his businesses? He has to be bleeding money with the amount of business we’re doing.”

Yuusuke snorted and shook his head. “That man will refuse to give in no matter what we offer. He hates us.”

“I blame the idiots from before and the fact the man is a misogynist.”

“True. Still, that leaves him as our competition.”

“Is there any inclination he’s going solvent? Peeling paint, exhausted girls, poorly kept entryways, anything?”

Yuusuke sighed. “If he is in as dire straits as we think, he isn’t showing it. Personally, I think he’s getting outside help.”

Tsuna paused. Her lips thinned into a tight line. “Fuuma-kai?”

“Possibly. No one’s been able to find any evidence for or against it. It’s just a theory at the moment. They’ve been awfully silent since we gave them back their man. Our allies have noticed they’re laying low. The Ookami-gumi share a border with them and haven’t seen hide nor hair of them for several weeks. It’s worrying.”

Tsuna fell silent and bowed her head. She shook her head. “Be careful, but keep digging. We need to know if they’re using Kashimoto as a spy or to have a foot in our territory to stage attacks. I will not be caught flatfooted again.”

Tsuna leaned backward as Reborn went flying past in a kick. She rolled her eyes and looked over at him. The infant stood there with a cherubic smile on his face, like butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth.

Yuusuke blinked and shook his head. He had gotten used to the crazy. He’d had to. “There’s a loan request I think you’ll want to look at.”

She turned her head slightly to face her second. “You never bring me loan requests. Typically you or Ikeda take care of them.”

“This one you’ll be interested in.” He rummaged through the papers on his desk and pulled one out. “Here, Boss. Ikeda brought it in. He isn’t sure how to deal with it.”
Tsuna frowned and took the papers from his fingers. Her eyebrows drifted upward as she read the name: Mochida Kensuke. Clicking her tongue, she read further. He wanted such a large loan for someone his age. He had little in the way of capital or skills that could be useful. He had no job, but he was willing to swear loyalty to the Akatora as a grunt in exchange for the funds. Her intuition perked up. There was something deeper going on there. Her eyes narrowed. That was a lot of money he wanted for a reason she could figure out at first glance.

“What is going on?” she muttered as she set the papers down. She bit her lip. She peered out from under her bangs at her second. “Have Ikeda bring him in. I want to speak with him before making a decision.”

“Yes, Boss.”

“Tsunami?” Reborn questioned as he looked at her. To his knowledge, she usually tried to keep her civilian and criminal personas separated.

“I have a feeling.”

“Ah.” Vongola intuition strikes again. His lips twitched as he suppressed a satisfied smile. Really, he didn’t have to do much to teach the girl. Iemitsu was in for such a surprise when he finally deigned to turn up. He had kept Nono informed, but purposefully left out a lot of information regarding her ability to lead and run a family. There was always the chance for spies, after all. It would be better for no one in the mafia to have any real idea what she was capable of until she could be confirmed as the heiress and a proper inheritance ceremony performed. No, he wasn’t being petty or spiteful or have any kind of bad feelings toward the Vongola Don for sealing away such a strong, young Sky and not leave her any competent guards or protectors. No, not at all.

“I’ll have Ikeda bring him to one of the offices.” Yuusuke nodded firmly and picked up a phone.

“Any particular preference?”

“The one at Midori.” She turned to walk out the door and paused. “Make sure the girls set it up so he can’t see me when he enters. A screen, maybe? I know Momo has a few for decoration there, and I’ll need you or Ikeda to speak for me.”

“Tsuna-hime?”

“Just... make sure you or Ikeda are there.”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.”

Tsuna gave her subordinate a nod before stalking out the door. Her mind raced with possibilities. Mochida, proud and haughty Mochida, was begging for money.

Something wasn’t adding up. Her tongue pressed against the top on her mouth. Things she had seen just in passing, words said in anger or those odd bruises that disappeared once he had hit high school, started to weave together in her mind and a picture began to form.

She wasn’t happy with the view.

“Tsunami?”
"Why don’t you go see Bianchi and Hayato, Reborn? They should be having one of their sessions. I’m going to be busy with Akatora business for a while."

The hitman frowned but inclined his head. He had heard that tone, that absentminded tone, from Timoteo before. It only appeared when the mafia Don was planning something. It usually led to beautiful chaos. Still, he had yet to hear that tone from his student. She was planning something, that much was obvious. The situation had the possibility to be glorious. It was just a shame he had agreed, promised actually, to stay out of the Akatora’s business matters unless she asked otherwise.

“As you wish, Tsunami. Just remember, I’m watching you. Nono wants an update on your capabilities. He’s been pleased you’ve gathered a Storm and a Rain as well as starting to attract a Cloud with such a high pedigree.”

Tsuna frowned and narrowed her gaze. “You haven’t told him about my people, have you?”

Reborn smirked. “No, I’ll leave that to you. If Nono has fallen so far as to take Iemitsu at face value, then he needs a wake-up call. You being a yakuza boss is a perfect lesson.”

She rolled her eyes skyward but let the tiniest grin cross her lips. He wasn’t wrong, and she acknowledged she owed the hitman for keeping her status a secret. She couldn’t wait for the day she got to confront the bastard who sealed her Flames and her useless mess of a father.

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Tsuna sat primly behind a desk that normally belonged to Rumiko. Her head of prostitution and house/apartment mother stood against one of the walls. She was dressed in her normal fashion, meant to beguile and seduce. Tsuna had dressed in her suit, not that anyone would be able to see with the paper screen dividing the room in half. Yuusuke stood to the side, just out of sight. He’d be her voice for the initial meeting with Mochida. Should the teen’s need be just, Tsuna would grant him a loan and take him into the family if her suspicions were correct.

“Are we ready?” she asked. Rumiko grinned like a loon and adjusted her top as to show more cleavage. Yuusuke nodded and held up his cell phone. That would be the means through which he knew what to say.

“Then let him in,” she ordered and prepared for battle. Her hands folded in front of her as her eyes focused on the door. Rumiko sauntered toward the door and opened it. Soft music drifted in from the front of the Pink Salon. Indistinguishable voices drifted about. Tsuna could hear the girls out front tittering. Rumiko leaned out the door in a way that showed off her assets and beckoned the waiting teen to come in.

Mochida Kensuke stepped into the room. His eyes were firmly latched onto Rumiko’s chest. Tsuna suppressed a snort.

“Hello, Mochida,” Yuusuke said at her prompting. The teen froze and looked up at the screen. Tsuna smirked. Though she couldn’t see the boy’s facial expression, his body language was an open book to her.

“Um, ah, hi?” the dark haired boy managed to choke out. The obvious fear and worry colored his voice.

“You may call me the Great Tiger. I am the leader of the Akatora,” Yuusuke stated as he read the script she was sending him. She could audibly hear the teen swallow from where he was standing.

“Yes, sir,” he choked out and bowed deeply.
Tsuna smirked. Oh, if only he knew. Her fingers flew silently over her keyboard.

“I understand you are trying to gain some capital.”

“Yes, sir.”

Yuusuke hummed. A wide smirk played across his face. It was always so fun when Tsuna-hime did this. He got to play the big, bad yakuza boss and watch as they realize exactly who the boss is during the reveal.

“How? For what reason could you possibly need this much capital?” Here Tsuna lifted the folder holding paperwork on the boy’s request. “You don’t have a gambling problem. You don’t owe anyone money. In fact, my people have found you are doing odd jobs to bring in money. So, why does a teenager need such a hefty sum?”

Mochida turned his head, looking away from Tsuna’s form. “I…” He started but fell silent. Tsuna could read the reluctance to admit his problem in his shoulders and defensive stance.

“The Great Tiger is not in the business of listening to nothing or wasting time. Speak, boy,” Rumiko stated blandly from her position by the door. Her hands played with a knife. Tsuna knew that the woman had a grin on her face that was both disturbing in its blood lust and attractive beyond measure. The yakuza boss could see the tremor of fear and want run through Mochida the moment he looked at her.

Mochida sucked in a fortifying breath. “My father is not a kind man and my mother refuses to stand up against him.”

Tsuna frowned. While she had been expecting something like that, she had hoped to be wrong. Her fingers flew over her keyboard. Meeting Yuusuke’s eyes, she nodded.

“A little adversity never harmed anyone.”

“A little adversity is not nearly beating my little sister to death!”

Rumiko sucked in a sharp breath and went off script. It was useful that the woman knew her boss as well as she did. “How old is your sister, Mochida?”

“12.”

“And what about your brother?,” Yuusuke read off Tsuna’s words. The SiC met her concerned gaze with a raised brow. She shrugged and mouthed ‘school’ to him. He nodded his head. Her position in the Hibari’s Committee gave her access to student records.

“He’s 7. Dad hasn’t touched him yet. He likes to beat Mom and Saya. Mom won’t do anything to stop him. She won’t leave and keeps on saying that he doesn’t mean it.” The teen took in several deep breaths as he continued to rant. “Even the fact he beat Saya to the point she had to be taken to the ER hasn’t changed her view of that asshole. I can’t let her or Kenichi stay in the same house as him. I can defend myself from him. I have since I was 13. They can’t, and I can’t always be there to defend them. That’s why I need the money, to get a place where he can’t find or harm them.”

Tsuna stared at the shadow being cast on the paper screen. Inhaling softly she made a hand motion only Yuusuke could see. He blinked and nodded. She stood from her chair and walked to the screen. Mochida, from his position, could only see the shadow of this all powerful yakuza boss of Namimori grow larger and larger. He quivered slightly and his mouth went dry. He hoped to any being listening to his prayers that he hadn’t angered this powerful man who could be his last and
only chance at getting his poor, sweet siblings away from their deadbeat father.

Tsuna inhaled slowly and released it in a sigh. She stepped around the screen and waited for the reaction. Rumiko grinned, silently opened the door, and slid out of the room. The girls had to be informed there was a new boy in the gang. Idly the prostitute wondered how the Boss was going to tell the Hibari boy about the new status quo without getting her face caved in via tonfa. Well, if anyone could do it without permanent injury, it was the Boss.

“Hello, Mochida.”

The teen stared at the girl he knew to be Hibari’s secretary. A chill crawled down his spine. Had this all been a setup? Before he could open his mouth, an older man stepped into view.

“Boss, if you will?”

“Get going, Yuusuke. I’ll take care of initiation,” she waved Yuusuke off before turning back to Mochida. “Let me properly introduce myself. I am Sawada Tsunami, the Great Tiger of the Akatora-kai.”

“Uh, huh, wha?” Mochida stuttered out as he stared at her.

She smirked and placed a hand on his shoulder. “Yeah, that’s the reaction I was expecting. I’ll explain the history and how I became a yakuza boss later. Right now, we need to get you set up with a place to live and see how we can get your siblings out of the house without anyone calling the cops. I’ll probably end up owing Hibari another spar to keep them away, but it’ll be worth it.” She frowned and tapped her lips in thought. “Though maybe if I told him why I need him to block the cops this time…”

“What the hell?” Mochida suddenly burst out as the shock started to wear off. His mind still raced with thoughts of how this could be possible. Sawada, the most annoying girl in school, was a yakuza boss?! It boggled the mind. How the hell did she get away with it around Hibari? Wait, hadn’t she said she’d be asking for a favor from the demon prefect?

“Earth to Mochida,” Tsuna said as she waved a hand in front of the other teen’s face. He blinked. “Good, you’re back. Come on. I have to introduce you to some of the girls. I’m expecting you, mister kendo champ, to protect them if they’re having trouble out on the streets. Also, you might want to work on your running endurance. The newbies always end up being gophers for the rest of us. Messengers who can run from one end of town to the other without passing out in exhaustion are rare, at least in the beginning.”

That did not put Mochida at ease. In fact, those words just made his stomach twist. Tsuna flung her arm over his shoulder and began leading him out. The kendoist didn’t even bother struggling. Her grip was just that strong, not to mention he knew exactly how strong she could be. She guided him out of the office and into the Pink Salon’s front parlor. His eyes went wide as he saw all the girls standing there in their barely there uniforms. All of them were smiling at him. He glanced out the corner of his eye to look at Sawada’s reaction. She just smirked and shook her head.

Well he could be wrong about all the doom and gloom and Sawada had promised to help him and his siblings.

Tsuna stretched her arms above her head and nodded at her reflection in her bedroom mirror. Getting Mochida and his siblings out of their house hadn’t taken much. All three had little in the ways of personal belongings and the house she had moved them into was fully furnished. Normally the
house would be used by members of visiting yakuza families or girls who had just escaped the slave trade. It wasn’t the largest place she had, but it was in a good neighborhood and had more than adequate security.

Mochida had been so grateful. His siblings had been confused but quickly figured out what was happening. Neither of his parents had been home, so she and her boys didn’t need to deal with that issue at the moment. She already had her legal people looking into getting Mochida emancipated and custody of his siblings. If that didn’t work, well, she wasn’t above slitting a few throats and burying the bodies.

No child should have such fear filled eyes.

She shook her head. Her hair fluttered around her head and into her face. Nose wrinkling, she pushed the strands out of the way and made a mental note to go get her hair cut. It was getting too long again. Looking at her reflection one more time, she nodded again. She was ready for a night of karaoke and watching her subordinates drink more alcohol than it looked like they could hold.

Sauntering out her room and down the stairs, she paused on the bottom step. Reborn and Bianchi were sitting on the couch in the living room and talking in what she assumed was Italian. It sounded like it at least with those quick, rolling syllables and odd vowel sounds. Both of them looked up at her. Bianchi’s eyes went wide as dinner plates as she took in Tsuna’s outfit. The skirt was short enough to be called micro and made of tight, shiny faux-leather. Her top looked to be painted on and was in a deep, rich orange with black tiger stripes. Over all that came the leather jacket. In all, it was kind of obvious who she took fashion tips from. She looked to be halfway between a girl out for a night on the town and a girl on the street looking to make a quick yen.

“Tsunami…” Reborn said before trailing off and massaging the bridge of his nose. “What are you wearing?”

She frowned, looked down at her clothes and back up at them. “Clothes? I usually wear stuff like this on girls’ nights. What’s wrong with it?”

“Where did you get that jacket?” Bianchi rushed out. She focused more on the clothing style rather than what it looked like or that a young mafia Donna-to-be was wearing those kind of clothes. Don Vongola would shit a brick if he saw her dressed up like that.

“Rumiko got it for me. If you want, I’ll ask her where she got it tonight.”

“Tsunami.” Reborn started to say and fell silent as her smirk widened. His lips turned into a frown. She looked far too triumphant.

“Oh, so the big-bad hitman doesn’t want me to go and listen to what my girls have to report on the results of their investigations into the Fuuma-kai and other annoying families?”

Both Bianchi and Reborn’s eyes widened at the implication.

“Why go out like this rather than have that done at your office?”
Tsuna leaned her shoulder against the wall and crossed her arms over her chest. “Not all of my girls are obviously my girls. We make it a mission for everyone to be at one of the karaoke places I own under a different name at least once every two months. The girls who are hiding their connections to me rent out a private booth and have messages passed via the staff. It keeps them safe and able to continue spying for me. It’s a big plus that I own a karaoke parlor rated one of the top in Japan, no?”

“That is devious,” Bianchi said and leaned back. The situation now made sense.

Reborn glared at his student for a minute before relaxing. He could understand dressing up for a part. Everyone would be so focused on Tsuna and her group that her spies would have an easier time getting messages out without being noticed. Still there was one concern. “You are armed?”

Tsuna nodded and started for the door. She could feel both the hitmen’s eyes boring into her back. “Mom and the kids should be back in time for dinner. Tell her I’m out with friends.” She put some extra sway in her hips as she stepped outside and closed the door behind her.

“My brother is a lucky bastard.”

“...Yes, yes he is.”

The night air was cool on Tsuna’s skin as she meandered toward the downtown area. She’d meet the girls at the karaoke salon downtown. Stuffing her hands in her pockets, she sighed and enjoyed the silence. As much as she loved her boys, she needed some quiet just for herself. It let her mind quiet and still. As long as there were people around, she was constantly evaluating them and their actions to figure out their motivations. It could be stressful. She savored the time going from the more residential district to the downtown area.

“Extreme!” the faint shout caught her attention. Her head swiveled as she tried to spot Sasagawa Ryohei. That was his catchphrase and could have been his voice.

“Damn you,” a male voice strangled out. He sounded in pain.

Her attention was instantly drawn toward a rather sheltered alleyway. There was a flash of white, Sasagawa’s hair. She slowed to see what was going on. Her brow rose as she realized just how many people were stuffed in that alley. One person tried to stab the smiling boxer only to be knocked to the ground via punch to the gut. Another punk, this one swirling a chain around in a circle and forcing his fellow attackers to back away only to fall to a nasty right hook.

Tsuna’s lips quirked before she froze. There was something that was setting off her intuition. Lips fell into a tight line as one hand drifted over one of her hidden knives. She started making her way toward the fight. Something was about to go very wrong.

“Extreme!” the boxer cheered again as he dropped another punk.

“Shut up you son of a bitch!” the oldest looking and most creatively dressed of the group of teen shouted as he pulled his hand out of his brightly colored leather jacket. Tsuna’s eyes went wide as she caught the sight of the handgun. Her hand moved. Her knife flashed in the dying sunlight and sliced right over the boy’s hand. He let out a screech of pain and dropped his gun. Sasagawa’s head turned to look at Tsuna. He opened his mouth to say something but fell silent upon seeing the look on her face.

A shiver ran down the boxer’s spine. Sawada looked so terrifying and the way she moved reminded him of a predator. Stepping back he watched as she systematically knocked out what gang members he hadn’t taken down already that had tried to jump him. She stomped on extended fingers and
didn’t hesitate to go for the soft tissue. He winced as another of the punks vomited and fell to the ground clutching his junk.

“You made a very big mistake,” Tsuna growled low in her throat as she stared at the downed punks. Her eyes met the would-be shooter as he cried over his broken hand. She’d had to make sure he couldn’t use his gun again. She did not need legal attention brought on Namimori with all the hitmen present. Tsuna looked over her shoulder and bit back a snort at the wide eyed stare of her schoolmate.

“Sorry for interrupting your fight, Sasagawa, but I just couldn’t let this idiot,” she brought her foot down on the whimpering man’s broken hand, “shoot you.”

The boxer was quiet for a moment. He shook his head and nodded slowly. Best to treat the scary girl like he did his sister when Kyoko’s temper got the best of her. “Ah, sure, Sawada. No problem. Thank you?”

Tsuna smiled brightly at him and he felt his cheeks heat. His eyes wandered from her face to what she was wearing and turned an even brighter shade. He now felt very uncomfortable. He hadn’t thought the boy’s uniform was capable of hiding that much. Swallowing dryly he looked away only to look back at the sound of a dial tone.

“Yuusuke? Tsuna. Contact the police. Some punks tried to assault someone. We’re near Karaoke. Near the- yeah, that’s the place. Make sure they know the punks are injured. Sasagawa got to them before the idiot with the broken hand pulled out a gun.”

Tsuna hummed as she listened to her second mutter a few muffled curses on his end of the phone. Her lips twitched into a smile. Yuusuke knew so many interesting swear words.

“Just find out how the idiot got a gun, OK? I’ll be with the girls as scheduled. Send me a text when you find out anything.”

Ending the call, she stuffed the phone into her jacket pocket and turned around to face Sasagawa. “So, why’d they jump you or did you go looking for a fight again?”

The boxer chuckled and shook his head. “I was walking back home from a late practice, to the extreme, and they surrounded me and pulled me in here. Then they started trying to fight me, to the extreme. They were extremely bad at it.”

Tsuna nodded and smirked. “I can see that. Still, sorry to have butted in. It’s not very honorable to interfere with another’s fight. You can head home if you want. I’ve got someone coming to take care of these idiots. Take my number and call me if you’re attacked like this again. Hibari likes to keep track of places where “herbivores try to seem like carnivores” gather and potential prey.”

He nodded. There was something telling him he should leave. “I’d bettered get home before Kyoko starts worrying about me, to the extreme.”

As his back faded into the distance, Tsuna turned back to the downed punks. Her genial attitude turned cold. Eyes hardened as her lips pressed tightly into a line. Absently she hoped her fight hadn’t messed up her makeup. She had done her best and Rumiko would critique her as soon as she got to the karaoke parlor. She didn’t want to deal with it.

“You lot are in so much trouble.”

“Bitch. You think that we’ll tell the cops anything?” the would-be gunner snarled. He had to be the leader of the group.
A dark chuckle rose from Tsuna’s chest. “Oh you poor idiot. What are you, some juvenile delinquents from out of the area? What the hell are you doing here if you have no idea just who is in charge of this town?”

“And I bet that’s you, bitch? Don’t make me laugh. You’re dressed like a hooker,” the leader growled as he huddled over his injured hand. He sneered and leered at her. “How much you charge for an hour?”

Shaking her head, Tsuna smiled sweetly before kicking the man in the face. She shifted her weight to make sure her heels hadn’t broken under the assault, not that she thought they would. Rumiko had some interesting contacts who had modified her dressy shoes to withstand her fighting ability. Tsuna had no idea how they did it, but their work was good.

“Be more respectful to your betters,” she said blandly and smirked as the punk started cursing. Those of his men still conscious started getting loud but fell silent. Tilting her head to the side, she glanced behind her and grinned. Bless her men. They were always so willing to please.

“Yuusuke send you, boys?”

“Kinda, boss. Yuusuke must’ve told Rumiko ‘cause we just got a text from her to get here and take care of them so you can get going. Said the girls are waitin’. We’ll take it from here.”

“Wait, you’re actually listening to this bitch?”

Her men growled and stalked forward as she took a few steps back. Her lips curled upward from a smirk into a feral smile. She so loved her men.

“That “bitch” is so high above you, you aren’t worthy to be spat on by her.”

“She’s the Great Tiger. You’re nothing more than punks.”

“I see you’ve got this handled. Remember to tell Yuusuke to text me once he knows where they got the gun from,” she said with a wave as her men started teaching the punks why they didn’t insult her in front of them. The groans and grunts of pain and the sound of flesh hitting flesh was music to her ears.

The karaoke machine was on full blast. Natsume was belting out some pop song but was slurring the words so much she couldn’t be understood. The woman had had just a bit too much to drink. Tsuna lounged on one of the couches while Rumiko stood up to get another beer. Tsuna looked down at the pile of papers her spies had managed to get to her. No one had any information about the Fuuma-kai. The situation was making her nervous. There was something wrong. Even if the Fuuma-kai had gone to ground, there should have been rumors or something about their activities.

“Still nothing?” Rumiko asked as she popped the top from the bottle and flopped next to her boss.

“No and it’s bothering me. I just- there’s something we’re not seeing,” Tsuna stated and tapped the topmost paper. “There still should be something even if it’s just a rumor. I feel like I’m missing something.”

“Relax,” the older woman said and took a deep swallow of her beer. “Your little intuition trick will figure it out.”

Tsuna let out an angered, inarticulate noise and flung herself backward. Her hand shot up to her head and mussed her hair. Nothing was making any sense. Hell, why the hell did the Fuuma-kai
even choose to try to take Akatora territory? It wasn’t like the Akatora ran drugs or guns. The territory itself wasn’t that important either. At best it could be used for human trafficking, but very few people would be able to do so without the Hibari clan figuring it out and taking care of them.

Tsuna’s phone began to vibrate. Blinking, the yakuza boss pulled it out and let a smile cross her lips. She put it to her ear.

“Moshi, mosh-”

“Boss, you need to get back here right now,” Yuusuke’s voice was tense and worried. “The Fuuma-kai have-...well, just get over here.”

Tsuna sat up. Ever bit of her intuition screamed there was something wrong. “Yuusuke, what happened?”

Her second was silent for a second. Tsuna glanced upward as the karaoke machine shut off. Her girls had gathered around. Each had serious looks on their faces. Rumiko set her beer on the table and turned to face her boss. The madame looked overly serious.

“Those punks you beat the crap out of, they talked.” Tsuna could imagine the man wetting his lips. “They were hired by the Fuuma-kai to grab the people you spend a lot of time with.”

“What?” Her voice was soft, deadly.

“It gets worse. They weren’t the only group hired to do this.”

“Yuusuke…”

“Your female friends from school, they’ve been taken.”

Her blood ran cold. Fingers tightened on the phone. Her flames roiled within her. “We’ll be there ASAP. Has anyone checked on Hayato and Takeshi?”

“They’re fine and on their way here boss.”

“Good. Yuusuke, tell everyone to prepare for war. I’ve got a call to make, and we’ll be there.”

“Boss?”

Tsuna ended the call and looked up at her girls. The woman nodded. They got the message and headed for the door to gather their discarded things. Tsuna remained sitting and stared at her phone. A second later she hit a single button. Putting the phone to her ear, she listened as it rang once, twice.

“Tsunami.”

“Reborn, get Bianchi and the kids and Mama to the Akatora offices.”

“Tsunami, what’s wrong?”

“War. We’re going to war and I won’t have my mom or the kids as targets. Get them there now, Reborn. I’ll explain once I know they’re safe.”

Reborn was silent for a moment. “Understood, but you are explaining as soon as possible.”

“Fuuma-kai has taken civilian hostages.”
Her girls' attention suddenly snapped to her. Anger and rage flared through their eyes. Tsuna had the feeling their rage was being augmented by her Flames saturating the air. Papers were gathered up and shredded into tiny pieces. Shoes were put on. The girls turned from prostitutes into the fierce warriors Tsuna knew they could be.

“Shit.”

“Get them there, Reborn. I’m not going to leave them unprotected.”

“Hurry, Tsunami.”

The phone call ended. Pulling her phone away from her ear, she stood. No more being nice. It was time to bring out her more ruthless persona and burn those bastards alive. A growl, low and feral, rumbled in her chest as her lips curled into a snarl. The look was mirrored by her girls. An English phrase drifted through her mind.

Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, a cliffhanger. This chapter was getting really big and I just felt it was the best place to leave off. I didn't want you all waiting even longer fora new chapter. Next chapter will be coming quicker as I am really, really into it right now.
The Akatora HQ looked like an ant nest that had been knocked over. There wasn't any physical damage, but the sheer number of people hurrying about was impressive to Reborn, who had only seen bits and pieces of his student's empire. Everyone knew where to go and what was needed. He could see people being outfitted with weaponry in one room while in another they got body armor. It was an efficient system that reminded him of the heyday of the CEDEF before the imbecile took over. Lal was going to love Tsuna.

"Wha-what is going on?" Sawada Nana whispered as she looked around before stepping into the room Reborn had led them all to. Instinct pushed her to get as close to Reborn and Bianchi as possible. She shivered.

"Something I had hoped you'd never see," Tsuna stated. Nana's head snapped to her daughter. The older woman froze at the sight of her child in that kind of clothing. Tsuna grinned sheepishly but made no move to hide herself. She hadn't had a chance to change her clothing from her evening outfit. She'd make time to get into more battle appropriate clothing later, but her people needed her at the helm now.

"Sawada Tsunami, what are you wearing?" Nana burst out.

Tsuna looked down at her clothes and back up at her mother. "Clothes? I was out at karaoke with Rumiko and some of the girls before all this happened. I'll change into something more suitable for the situation in a bit."

Nana stood there with a gaping mouth as she stared at her only child. "You look like a whore."

"Oh, thank you for that, mother," Tsuna drawled even as she hid her wince. "Considering I took fashion advice from a whore to pick this out, it makes sense."

"Tsu-chan," the older woman stuttered out. She had never heard such an acidic tone directed at her from her daughter before.

The yakuza boss sighed and ran a hand through her hair, mussing it further. "I didn't want you to find out about this, not this way at least."

"Tsu-chan, what?"

"Mom, sit down. Please."

"Tsunami, is this really the time?" Reborn asked as he peered up at her from under the brim of his fedora. Leon skittered about at the top. The chameleon obviously felt the tension in the air.
Tsuna glanced down at him and sighed again. "I'll make time for it. I can't leave Mom in the dark now."

"Iemitsu will not be happy. He doesn't want her to know."

"The bastard can kiss my ass."

"Tsunami, language," Nana chastised before realizing just what Reborn had said. "What do you mean my husband doesn't want me to know? Know what?"

Student and teacher exchanged glances. To Reborn's surprise, Tsuna's eyes then tracked over to I-Pin. The child frowned but nodded somberly. His curiosity piqued, the hitman shifted his body language to show he was not going to stop her. He agreed with the fact there was no hiding the secret of organized crime from the kind woman. The fact it would piss off the idiot just made it better.

Tsuna inhaled a long, slow breath. "Mom, you're going to want to sit down for this."

"Tsu-chan?" Nana said as Bianchi and I-Pin guided her to a nearby chair. Lambo, silent since they entered the place she could have sworn was a Love Motel, cuddled up next to her on the couch. I-Pin jumped up and sat at her right. Fuuta, having a good idea what was coming, went over to a free chair as far away from the drama as possible. He may appreciate Nana and care about her, but Tsuna was the member of the family he was closest to. Nana just seemed too air-headed and flighty. She made him uncomfortable when she fawned over him like she did the younger two children.

Tsuna started to pace from one side of the room to the other. "Well, do you remember when I was 9 and that man offered you money for me?"

"Tsu-chan, what are you talking about?"

"Right, you were having one of your spells. I forgot that," Tsuna muttered to herself before coming to a stop.

"Spell?" Reborn asked.

Tsuna ignored the questions and powered on. If she stopped she didn't think she could start again. "Well, you gave me to a man who paid you for me. He took me to a warehouse and I killed him and his boss and his men."

"Tsu-chan!" Nana looked horrified. Whether at her having sold her daughter or her daughter having killed when she was 9, Tsuna couldn't tell.

Tsuna shook her head. "I got out. Remember when that warehouse exploded? I was the one who did that. I thought I had gotten away unscathed. Then Yuusuke found me."

"Yuusuke?" Nana said in a hoarse voice. She was not handling the news well. I-Pin winced as Nana squeezed her little hand tighter. Lambo found himself smooshed up against the woman's side. He was having trouble breathing and his little arms waved about as he tried to find purchase to pull himself out of her grip.

"He was just a low level lieutenant at the time, but he's become my second now. He found me and, well, I've been the head of the Akatora ever since."

"Tsu-chan, who are the Akatora?" Nana's voice was steady and calm and the sound made ice form in Tsuna's veins.
"The Akatora-kai is a yakuza—"

"Yakuza?! Sawada Tsunami, please tell me you are not involved with the yakuza. Please!"

Tsuna bit her lip and looked away. "I can't do that, Mom. I'm sorry. The Akatora are my responsibility. I can't abandon them."

"I-how?" Nana's eyes were wide. She was shaking. Then she went still. Tsuna frowned and shared a look with I-Pin. The Chinese child broke out of Nana's suddenly loose grip to touch the woman's shoulder. Lambo, finally gathering up enough strength to break out of Nana's hold, which had loosened considerably, threw himself off the couch and onto the floor. He landed with a thud and let out a cheer that faded off as he turned around to look at Nana.

"Shit," Tsuna cursed as she stepped forward. Out the corner of her eye, she saw Reborn and Bianchi both tense and go pale. Reborn's eyes were locked on Tsuna.

"Reborn, she's…" Bianchi started to whisper to the hitman but fell silent at a gesture from him.

"I'll contact someone I know to come look at her and confirm it, but we need to focus on the here and now. Tsunami wouldn't have revealed this much to Nana without a reason."

Tsuna ignored the whispered conversation between the two hitmen and placed a hand on her mother's shoulder and gently shook her. Nana's eyes were wide and unfocused, almost glassy in appearance. Something inside Tsuna recoiled at the look. It made her stomach turn. Lambo crawled up onto the couch and poked Nana's arm repeatedly with his finger while begging her to come back. I-Pin was stroking the older woman's hand. Slowly Nana's consciousness returned. She blinked and the vacant stare vanished.

"Tsu-chan?"

"You had another spell."

"You were talking about yakuza and then, nothing."

"So you do remember that part? That I'm a yakuza boss." Tsuna leaned back and let out a sigh. "I never wanted you to find out like this, but the Fuuma-kai aren't going to let me do what I want."

Nana frowned and bit her lip. Her daughter was a yakuza boss. The teen had admitted it, but her Tsu-chan wasn't cruel or anything like how yakuza were supposed to be. It did explain the odd looks her daughter got from the police and the, ah, streetwalkers.

"Tsunami, you said that some civilians had been taken?" Reborn interrupted.

Tsuna took a step back from her mother and turned to her tutor. She nodded. "Hana and Kyoko have both been taken by Fuuma-kai hired punks. They also tried to take Ryohei, but they didn't get that chance. I ran across them being beaten up by Ryohei and intervened when one of them brought out a gun. They're the only reason we had a clue anything was going on."

The baby hitman nodded and frowned. "Hayato and Takeshi?"

"Safe. They're on their way here, actually, and should be here any second. I've made the call for everyone to come in. I've put calls out to allied families to take care of the Fuuma-kai presence in their areas. What information we've gotten from our captives had the head of the Fuuma-kai here in Namimori at a warehouse just on the edge of town. That's also where they've got the girls." Tsuna's frown turned into a bloodthirsty grin that scared her mother and Lambo. "As soon as everyone is
armed, we'll be taking care of him. I'm sending most of my men into neighboring areas to take care of the Fuuma-kai presence there while my closest and myself take care of the leader."

"What do you need with us?" Bianchi asked and sat in one of the available seats.

"Keep an eye on the kids and mom for me. It's unlikely the Fuuma-kai will attack here, but better safe than sorry. Also, feel free to take care of the punks that were attacking Ryohei. Reborn, I'd appreciate it if you could go ahead and get into a sniping position just in case we need the backup, but please don't shoot unless it's necessary." Tsuna inhaled softly and turned so she couldn't see the horrified look on her mother's face. "This is something I need to do. The Fuuma-kai leader dies at either my hand or my men's."

Reborn nodded, his entire countenance serious. This wasn't his student asking for his help, a favor, but a proud yakuza boss. He'd willingly give it. He despised those who caused harm to civilians and the other information his contacts had dug up on the Fuuma-kai hadn't painted a much better picture. Scum like them did not deserve to exist. Still, it was something that Tsunami, as the leader of a yakuza family, needed to do herself or be seen as weak for bringing in outside help. Or to prove it was a matter of pride. The two girls taken were her civilian friends and had been targeted because of that. Her actions were as much revenge as anything else.

The door to the room opened and Takeshi and Hayato stumbled in. The two boys were flushed and breathing heavily. They had ran from their homes to HQ it seemed.

"Tsuna-hi—what the hell?" Hayato gaped at Tsuna's appearance before his skin flushed a bright red. Takeshi colored as well even though he had seen her in such outfits before.

The swordsman licked his lips. "You were out with the girls, weren't you?"

"Yes. Now I'm going to go get changed into something more practical. Go see Yahiko for some body armor. Hayato, you'll need to see Ikeda for a gun. I know you've been getting lessons and I'd rather you have one and your usual arsenal for when we do this."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime." Hayato was out the door. Tsuna took note of the blush on his face and made a mental note to wear her karaoke-outing outfits around the bomber. His reactions were just too cute. Really, the boy needed to learn he was allowed to touch and show affection. Maybe getting his hormones ramped up would help him break through his self imposed limitations in their relationship.

"Are you going to change, Tsuna?" Takeshi asked with a tilted head.

She snorted and nodded. "Now that I know you're both here and Mom and the kids are safe, I'll go get changed into something more appropriate. Now go get some body armor and check in with Yuusuke. He has the updated information on what we can expect."

"Sure, Tsuna." With a lazy wave, the swordsman walked out the door.

"Tsu-chan…" Nana whispered. Tsuna tensed and looked over her shoulder at her mother. "You really...you're going to kill…"

Tsuna winced and turned away so her mother couldn't see her face. Her hands clenched into fists at her side. Her shoulders rose and fell as she took a deep breath. "Yes. There's no choice, and it wouldn't be the first time."

With those words, she walked out the door to get changed. She never looked back. She didn't think she could handle her heart breaking at the horrified look that must have been on her mother's face.
Tsuna pulled her custom body armor over her chest and secured it. She tugged on it a bit to be certain it was secure. She paused and turned to look at the full length mirror on the wall of the room she had chosen to change in. The room was one of the more requested rooms in the hotel HQ used as a front. Tsuna really didn't understand the idea of watching yourself have sex. The entire wall the bed was shoved up against was lined with mirrors. Even the ceiling had mirrors. She really felt sorry for the person who had to clean all of them. A knock on the door brought her out of her thoughts.

"Tsuna-hime?" Hayato's voice called from the other side of the door.

"Come in, Hayato. It's unlocked."

The door opened and both her boys walked in. Takeshi looked sleek in his form fitting body armor. It was less protecting than hers or Hayato's, but the swordsman needed to sacrifice protection for speed and maneuverability. His vest would still protect him from bullets, but there were no stab plates and there was a better than normal chance he'd end up with a broken rib if he was shot. Tsuna always worried when he went into a fight with it on.

Hayato on the other hand had a more tactical set of body armor that one would be more likely to find on a soldier rather than the sleeker version she wore. She knew the bomber had packed away his preferred weapons and creations he'd made himself. While the latter wouldn't see much use in this fight as they didn't have gas masks readily available, the explosives would be very welcome for the breeching she was certain was going to occur. Only an idiot wouldn't barricade the doors if they knew the enemy was after them.

"You two ready?" she asked. The boys shared a look she wouldn't have seen had it not been for the giant mirrors. "Hayato, Takeshi?"

"How are you dealing with this, Tsuna?" Takeshi asked as he came up to her side and wrapped an arm over her shoulders. "I know how hard you've worked to keep Nana out of this."

Tsuna's shoulders shook for a second. That seemed to be Hayato's cue to come up on her other side and wrap an arm around her waist. She blinked and looked over at him in surprise. The Italian was surprisingly shy and didn't usually initiate touch all that often. The faint blush on his face was cute, but the concerned look in his eyes made her breath freeze in her lungs. His jade eyes seemed to glow as he firmly met her own gaze.

"We're here for you, Tsuna-hime," he said. His fingers gently kneaded into her hip.

Takeshi hummed in agreement and placed his chin on her shoulder. Yes he had to lean over a bit to do it, but it was worth it to show her just how much he loved her. "We'll back you if Nana decides to do something stupid like throw you out."

Tsuna's eyes closed as she fought back the tears that wanted to flow. She didn't have time for tears, not when there were enemies in her territory and her civilian friends were in danger. She swallowed thickly. These were her boys, pieces of her heart. She inhaled and held it as she fought back the urge to just break down and cry in their arms. Everything was happening all at once and it was overwhelming. She had revealed the truth to her mother, her mother had had another attack, the Fuuma-kai had taken her friends, and then here were her boys offering their shoulders to her.

"Later," she said as she opened her eyes but didn't step out of their holds. "We need to take care of the Fuuma-kai first. Then...well then I'll deal."

"Boss," Yuusuke said as he appeared in the doorway and froze at the intimate sight in the room. Three sets of eyes looked up at him. "Um, right. The Hibari boy is in the front and demanding to see
"He looks ready to kill."

"Fuck. How did he know?"

"He's got the loud boxer with him. He's being surprisingly quiet and is unnerving some of the newer men."

"Ryohei? He must have gone to Hibari when he found Kyoko missing. The punks that took her probably weren't gentle and left evidence of a struggle. I'll be right there. Have someone show them to an empty room."

"Yes, boss," her second said and hurried off.

"Tsuna-hime," Hayato whispered in her ear. She shook her head and gently pulled herself out of the shared embrace. There was no time for it. She had a yakuza boss to slay, a Hibari to placate, and an older brother to calm.

Hibari was not prone to pacing. It was undignified and not proper carnivore behavior. That said, he had the strongest urge to get up from the seat in the room he and the oddly quiet loud mouthed herbivore had been brought to. He had never had reason to come to the omnivore's true den before even if he knew where it was located. She kept her not-so-legal business to herself and hidden away from where it could besmirch the Namimori name.

The door opened to reveal the omnivore stepping in with the foreign herbivore and the smiling herbivore flanking her. Both were visibly armed. Hibari's eyebrow shot up at the site. This was promising. The omnivore was showing her pack's fangs.

"Hibari," she greeted him with a nod before turning to the quiet herbivore. "Sasagawa, I'm sorry to hear Kyoko was kidnapped. I'll do every—"

"I'm coming with you, Sawada," the white haired boy stated in an uncharacteristically soft tone.

"I...you have no idea what is going on, Sasagawa. It's going to be dangerous."

The boxer snorted and shook his head before meeting her amber gaze with his own gray ones. "Sawada, I have a good idea what's going on. The people at the fights whisper your name in fear. Only yakuza could get a reaction like that from them."

Tsuna winced at his words and the very apparent lack of his trademark phrase. The boxer was obviously angry. His hands were curling and uncurling. Muscles tensed beneath tanned skin.

"It's going to be dangerous," she said with a sigh. Her shoulder slumped. It would be better for the boxer to come with her rather than go on his own like her Intuition told her he would. "If you are sure, I can lend you some armor and maybe a set of brass knuckles. You'll need them. We aren't taking prisoners."

"Omnivore," Hibari's voice broke through the conversation. His eyes had narrowed dangerously on those last words. "Explain."

"The Fuuma-kai have taken Sasagawa Kyoko and Kurokawa Hana because of their connection to me. I am getting them back and ending this. Intel says the Fuuma-kai Lear is in Namimori. We're likely walking right into a trap, but I don't think this idiot is taking me seriously or he would have just hired a sniper to take me out instead of an elaborate plot like this."
"Don't say that, Tsuna-hime," Hayato groaned and rubbed at his head. "Now I'm going to have nightmares about that scenario."

She turned her head to look back at her boys and smirked. "That's what Reborn is around for."
She ignored the grumbling coming from her bomber and turned back to the glaring prefect. "Look, if you want to come, Hibari, you'll obey my instructions."

"Omnivore," the teen growled at her. The other teens sucked air into their chests and took a step back at the hostile sight.

"I'm not backing down on this, Hibari. The Fuuma-kai are ruthless and we are dealing with hostages. A lone wolf, someone getting out of place in the plan, will end with someone dying. Either you agree to follow my lead or I knock you out and leave you tied up here. Your choice."

Hibari growled and took a threatening step forward. His hands went to his tonfa only to stop in place as the air pressed down on him. The omnivore hadn't moved, hadn't shifted, but the room felt so heavy. His mouth went dry. The tiny hairs on the back of his neck raised as his instincts screamed to back down from the dangerous predator. He swallowed dryly and reluctantly, hesitantly, stepped back. His heart thudded hard in his chest.

"Hn." He grunted and backed down.

Tsuna relaxed. Her Flame stopped filling the air. Shoulders dropped into a more relaxed stance as she turned to look at the wide eyed boxer. "That goes for you, too, Sasagawa. You follow my lead. You do as I say, and I will do everything in my power to get your sister home safe and sound."

Ryohei stared at Sawada Tsunami. He had no doubts she would do exactly as she said. Something deep in his gut told him so and he had long ago learned to listen to that voice. It usually led to him not getting hit in a fight.

"Yeah. I understand, Sawada."

"It's Tsuna," she stated blandly and turned to leave the room. "If you're going to fight with me, you can call me that. Takeshi, make sure they get some body armor and make sure Ryohei gets a set of knuckles."

"Sure, Tsuna."

"Hayato, with me. I want you to take a look at the info we've gathered."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime."

It was dark, nearly pitch black with only a handful of security lights attached to the warehouses providing any illumination. No one should have been in the industrial district so late at night. Usually the police would catch those who were up to no good. They had been called off by the Hibari clan. No one questioned it or the warning the youngest Hibari gave of having every available coroner come in and standby.

The bloodbath would be a legend in the Namimori police force for years to come.

Tsuna had placed herself with Hibari and Ryohei. She had the best chance of keeping the two from striking each other. They'd be the main fighters and the ones who would come in from the front. Team two, consisting of Takeshi and Hayato, would sneak in a back way and find the girls. As it was, team one was waiting for team two to signal that the girls had been found.
"Omnivore," Hibari grumbled but fell quiet upon seeing the look on her face. A chill ran down his spine at the cold look.

"We wait. I won't have our entrance threaten the girls."

Ryohei practically vibrated where he was waiting and watching. He had been told to keep his mouth shut. He knew his normal volume would attract attention. That attention could get his sister hurt or killed. His jaw clenched and teeth ground together as he adjusted the knuckles he had been given. Normally he hated using any weapons. His fists could do enough damage, but these bastards had taken his little sister. They deserved every bit of pain he could dish out.

"Calm, Ryohei," Tsuna said and laid a hand on his shoulder.

Whatever she opened her mouth to say next was lost to the explosion.

Tsuna's head snapped around to the warehouse and a feral grin curled over her lips. She made a motion to the two boys and took off running toward the flaming wreckage. Hibari, not one to be outdone, quickly caught up with her and sailed past. He leapt over a bit of flaming debris and slammed his tonfa into the first herbivore he found inside. There was a satisfying crunch of broken bone. His prey hit the ground and rolled to a stop, not that the demon prefect watched. He was already on another herbivore.

Ryohei entered next with a punch actually shattering a large piece of flaming debris. Tsuna eyed the tiny pieces that were left and gave the boxer's back an odd look. Now she knew the boxer was holding back during his fights. Her throat went dry as she watched him punch someone once and snap their neck. Her jaw opened slightly and then closed. Why the hell was everyone she knew a secret, or not-so-secret, badass?

Shaking her head, she stepped into the fray herself. The idiotic Fuuma-kai must have recognized her as they charged her. They made the unfortunate mistake of taking their eyes off the boys. Only two of the seven managed to get close to her. She snorted and ducked under the first sloppy knife thrust, twisted her body around the kick aimed at her ribs, and ended one of them with her favored method of crushing the larynx with a well placed punch. She moved out of the way of the falling body and grabbed the arm that reached out to grab her. Throwing the body attached to the arm over her shoulder, she followed up by removing one of her knives and stabbing the idiot in the throat while he was down.

Standing upright, she kicked at the newly made corpse with a sneer. She looked up at the emptiness of the warehouse and frowned. The fires had burned out as the sprinklers had come on and what little flammable bits there were had been mostly eaten up by the explosion itself. "This was too easy."

"So nice of you to notice," an older male voice called out from the darkness above. The three teens looked up. Tsuna frowned, peered into the shadows, and snorted as she recognized the person standing hidden.

"Mizushima Daichi." Her stance shifted and the bloody knife went back into its sheath. "So you actually came yourself? I thought you were too much of a coward for that."

"You bitch!" one of the men surrounding Mizushima snapped.

Tsuna smirked. The two boys next to her growled. She surpassed the urge to blink and stare at Hibari. That noise was not normal. Ryohei she could understand. The boxer was well known for having a dislike of certain words being used around women. Hibari had no such problem with coarse
"Tsuna, who's he?" Ryohei asked with a low growl in the back of his throat.

The tiny hairs on the back of Tsuna's arms stood on end. There was something in that tone that made her wary of the normally bright and happy boy. "Mizushima Daichi, the leader of the Fuuma-kai. He's the one who would have given the order to take Kyoko and Hana. He's a known Coward, preferring poison and blackmail over proper battle."

"I prefer that I'm just more wiser than you little cretins," the man drawled and stepped properly into the light. He was old, in his 50s or 60s, with short graying hair that was receding fast. His suit was old and not of a quality Tsuna would have thought he'd wear. Her eyebrow twitched upward. That was telling. A picture started forming in her mind.

"Money problems, Mizushima? Is that why you've decided to come after my territory?" She snorted. "How droll. Well, you were stupid enough to do something as taboo as attack civilians."

The man's eyes narrowed into a glare. It did little to make his wrinkles look better. "And yet, you've walked right into my hands. I'd say they did the job. Right into my hands, Great Tiger."

The way he sneered her title made her hackles rise. Her lips pulled back in a silent snarl.

"Ah, ah."

The man smirked down at her as his bodyguards clustered closer to the edge of the catwalk and looked down at her and the boys. "You wouldn't want anything to happen to those girls, would you?"

Tsuna's eyebrow twitched. Her hand flashed out to block Ryohei from moving forward. She looked over at him and shook her head. "You are scum."

"Then you are giving up?" He nodded. "How wise of you. I had thought you'd put up a greater fight."

The Akatora boss snorted and shook her head slightly. Her fingers caressed the pommel of her knives. Mizushima frowned before his eyes widened. He turned and opened his mouth to shout.

Bang!

The sound of a gunshot rang out. Mizushima fell to the ground with blood quickly appearing on his chest. Blood trickled out his mouth and nose before his body fell to the ground like a puppet with the strings cut. The bodyguards started to react, but it was too late.

The sound of a sword being unsheathed. A movement out the corner of the eye and that was it for them. A second later three headless bodies dropped to the ground and Takeshi stood in all his calm, chilling glory among them. Behind the swordsman, Hayato had the gun Tsuna had demanded he learn to use out. His hands were shaking, but she knew he'd get over the jitters running through his system at the moment.

"Wao," Hibari muttered as he stared at Takeshi. The prefect turned from the swordsman and down to Tsuna. She grinned. A shiver ran through Hibari at that look.

"Nicely done," Tsuna congratulated her boys. "The girls safe?"

"Yeah, is my sister safe to the extreme?" Ryohei shouted.

"Ah, yeah," Takeshi nodded as he sheathed his blade. "Rumiko got them away safely and took them to the hospital."
Tsuna frowned. "Hospital? Did they do something to them?"

Hayato shook his head as he holstered his gun. "Nothing more than bruises and chaffing from the rope they had them tied up with."

"So not extreme," Ryohei muttered. Tsuna felt something in her uncoil at the fact the boxer was using his trademark phrase again.

"What are we doing with the bodies? There's a bit too many for how we usually do it," Takeshi said as he frowned down at the headless corpses.

"My family will be taking care of it, herbivore," Hibari grumbled and met Tsuna's eyes in a battle of dominance. She refused to back down and squared her shoulders. He inclined his head slightly but didn't let up the stare.

"Thank your father for me, please," she said and turned to leave. "Ryohei, one of my girls will give you a ride to the hospital. Tell Kyoko and Hana I'll talk to them soon. I need to apologize for this."

"Tsuna-hime, wait up!" Hayato yelled and hurried back down the ladder he and Takeshi had used to get onto the catwalk unnoticed. The swordsman said nothing but followed after his partner. Tsuna chuckled in amusement but made her way through the broken warehouse back to the night air. Her boys hurried and caught up to her side moments later.

"Well done, Tsunami. You two as well," Reborn greeted them as they stepped outside. Tsuna was mildly surprised he hadn't chosen to sneak up on them, but figured he was giving them a break due to what they had just done.

"Thanks, Reborn," Tsuna said and yawned. Now that her adrenaline levels were falling, she was feeling the exhaustion that came with battle. "How about we head back to the office and get some sleep?"

Hayato frowned. "You're not going home?"

The edges of her lips bent into a frown. "I don't think I'm welcome at home at the moment and I'm not sure if it's safe to go back there just yet. Best to wait a day or two to mop up the stragglers and then let Mom and the kids go back home after."

"Tsunami, we need to talk about your mother," Reborn cut into their conversation. The serious tone and the serious body language caught her attention quickly. "I've seen issues like your mother's before. How long has she been having those episodes?"

She frowned. "Since I was 5 or so. I remember it was around the time that Bastard stopped coming home. The psychiatrists all said it had to do with her not coping with him being gone, but that never sounded right to me."

"Reborn, you don't think…" Hayato started to say but fell silent when the hitman looked at him.

"I am calling in Shamal to verify it, but if it is, Iemitsu has much to answer for."

"Reborn?" Tsuna's voice was cold and hard. "What is going on?"

The hitman frowned and shook his head. "Wait until Shamal gets here and can look over your mother. If it is what I think it is, Nono will have to be informed."

"Shamal?" Her eyebrows narrowed as she tried to think of why that name was so familiar. "Wait.
You mean Trident Shamal? That letch?"

Hayato snorted. "He's a fantastic doctor, if you can stand his personality. He was my mentor for a while."

"When will he be here?" Takeshi asked as Tsuna tried to decide whether or not to press her boyfriend for more information.

"Within the week if he knows what's good for him. Tsunami, go get some sleep. You deserve it for this. A very well planned raid and execution, not to mention complete annihilation of your enemy."

Tsuna grinned, the smile shining radiantly in the night. "Why thank you, Reborn."
Aftermath

Chapter Notes

So my Nano idea this year blew up in my face. I decided to write this instead. Enjoy!

Tsuna sipped at her coffee. Mentally she blessed Bianchi and Reborn's addiction to the dark substance and the fact that due to said addiction there was always coffee in the house. Personally, the yakuza boss preferred tea. Tea wouldn't make a dent in the shear exhaustion she was feeling though. Her eyes ached. Her muscles ached. She would swear even her teeth ached. She'd gotten less than 10 hours of sleep in the last four days. She and the Akatora had been far too busy taking care of the stragglers of the Fuuma-kai. As of two hours ago, Tsuna had completely taken over all the old Fuuma-kai properties and businesses. Yuusuke was already buried in paperwork.

It would be good practice for when she had to leave for Italy.

Tsuna sipped at her sweetened drink again. The drink burned hot and bitter across her tongue. Clicking her tongue against the roof of her mouth, she sighed and set the mug on the table. Her eyes drifted to her watch and her lips pursed together. Hayato and Takeshi should be back soon. It couldn't have taken them that long to do what she had asked.

The sound of the door opening caught her attention. She looked up from where she had been studying the dark liquid in her mug and smiled slightly as her boys entered the dining room. They nodded to her and took their places at her sides. Behind them, the Sasagawa siblings and Hana stood in the doorway.

"Come in and have a seat," she invited them and motioned to the chairs in front of her desk. She turned to Hayato. "Please go get the tea from the kitchen. Mom prepared it before she took the kids out to the park."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime," Hayato said and went to get the tea. Tsuna turned back to her guests and frowned at the appearance of the two girls. They had both been pretty roughed up by their captors. Bruises marred their wrists, and presumably their arms, though their long sleeves hid those. Makeup was expertly applied to their faces. Tsuna may have no talent in putting it on, but she could spot when someone was trying to cover a bruise with concealer and foundation. She had beaten more than one of her girls' boyfriends when she discovered what they were trying to hide.

"Tsuna, what is this about? You sent the monkeys to get us and now you're playing hostess," Hana stated blandly. "We all know you aren't yamato nadeshiko material like your mother. So what is going on?"

Tsuna sighed as Hayato appeared from the kitchen and carried the tea service to the table. Sitting it down, he took his place at his boss's right side once more. She glanced over at Takeshi from the corner of her eye and nodded slightly. Her swordsman leaned forward and began to pour tea for everyone present. Hana frowned, her eyes narrowed at the action. Her lips pursed together tightly into a line as her brows furrowed in confusion. Even Kyoko look like a confused puppy. The only one who had any inkling of what was going on outside of Tsuna and her boys was Ryohei. He would never expect a yakuza boss to serve anyone. It wasn't something that happened outside of what he knew about their initiation ceremonies he had learned from old movies.
He sincerely hoped those movies were as accurate as they could be.

Tsuna blew gently on the hot green tea as she lifted it to her mouth. Inhaling the aroma, she kept her gaze locked on her civilian friends as they sipped at their tea. Taking a sip for herself, and seeing her boys do the same in her peripheral vision, she decided the next course of action.

"I am sorry for whatever pains you have suffered from knowing me."

"Eh? Tsuna, what do you mean?" Kyoko asked as she set her tea down and absently rubbed at one of the purple bruises circling her wrist. "You haven't done anything."

"You're right. I haven't done anything, but those injuries—" here she made a vague motion with one hand to encompass all of them— "are my fault."

"Explain, Sawada," Hana growled. Her grip tightened on the delicate cup. Her eyes narrowed darkly as her mind began to put pieces of the puzzle she didn't know she was trying to solve together. Her blood chilled.

Tsuna's lips curled up into a sad smile. "Those punks that took you, they were hired by someone who wanted to use you to get to me." She sipped her tea. "Tell me, did an old man in a bad suit talk to either of you while you were tied up? Did he threaten you? Say anything?"

"He-he said something about making the tiger pay," Kyoko stuttered out with wide eyes. Her hands shook. Hot tea sloshed over the lip of the cup and dripped over her hands. Ryohei, seeing his sister's nerves, placed his tea down and wrapped his hands around hers.

"The Great Tiger?" Tsuna asked as her eyes slid shut. A soft breath came out her nose.

"Yes," Hana's voice was soft but filled with steel. Tsuna opened her eyes and looked toward her. Hana's skin had gone pale and a sort of understanding had formed in her eyes.

Tsuna hummed. She inhaled and exhaled slowly. "The Great Tiger is the leader of the Akatora-kai. That is who he wanted to hurt by taking you."

"You," Hana whispered. "You're this Great Tiger."

Kyoko's eyes were wide and scared. Ryohei shared a somber look with Tsuna over his sister's head as he put her cup on the table and wrapped his arms protectively around his petite sister. She was trembling. It made Tsuna sick to her stomach that someone would hurt the kind girl.

"Yes." Tsuna lowered her cup to the table. Beside her, her boys tensed. They could read her body language, could see how uncomfortable she was talking about this with her civilian friends. Still, it was her fault they had been targeted. She was forcing herself to look relaxed. Her boys just knew her too well. It made her heart flutter a bit that they could communicate nonverbally so well, and she wondered if their Flame Bond had something to do with it.

"But, why?" Kyoko whimpered.

"Because he wants my territory. The Akatora-kai have a rather nice amount of capital. The old man has had issues with me since I took over. Sexist asshole." Tsuna grumbled to herself and sighed. "The Fuuma-kai—that's who took you—wanted to force me to surrender. You don't want to know what they would have done to you had I done so."

Ryohei let out a low growl. Kyoko jumped in her brother's arms and stared up at him. She swallowed hard at the dark look in her brother's eyes. His arms tightened around her in an effort to
reassure himself that she was safe. She turned her attention back to her cooling tea.

"So this was all due to yakuza? Because we're friends with you?" Hana stated in a cold, emotionless tone. Her teeth grit together as Tsuna gave her a bland stare and simply nodded.

"Yes," the yakuza boss said. "I'll understand if you want nothing to do with me now."

"I…" Kyoko started but fell silent. Her head tucked down, her chin resting against her chest as she refused to meet Tsuna's eyes.

"Sawada, thank you," Ryohei said as the girl's silence fell long. Tsuna's eyes shot to his own. "You promised me you would keep my sister safe and get her back from those men, to the extreme. You did. Thank you to the extreme."

"Sasagawa," Tsuna started but fell quiet at his look. He wasn't finished.

"I owe you to the extreme."

"No, you don't." She shook her head. The tiny knot of power in her chest she associated with her Flames began to curl and unfold. It vibrated and sang in a way she was not familiar with. She had a sinking feeling as she stared at the boxer.

"Yes, I do, Tsuna. You risked everything to the extreme for my sister. You kept those fighters from injuring me to the extreme and taking me with you to that warehouse." He let out a deep breath and untangled himself from his stunned sister. She had never heard that tone from him before. It was respectful but there was something else, something deeper.

"Monkey, what did you do?" Hana broke into the conversation. She was confused.

Tsuna picked her tea back up and took another mouthful of the now tepid liquid. "The Fuuma-kai sent a group of punks after Sasagawa. I happened across their attempt at taking him, but they weren't exactly expecting someone as good at fighting as him. Then one of them pulled out a gun. I intervened."

The boxer nodded. "She kept me from being shot to the extreme."

"Thank you, Tsuna," Kyoko whispered. "Thank you for saving my brother."

"Kyoko."

The normally cheery girl had tears in her eyes as she gave Tsuna a smile. "Thank you, Tsuna. None of this was your fault and you protected us as best you could. You saved big brother. You saved us."

Hana looked at her friend and sighed. The happy-go-lucky girl was right. None of this was Tsuna's fault. She had come after them. If she was reading the situation right, she had even taken down a criminal family for harming them. That was…something. She wasn't sure how to deal with that.

"She's right." Hana met Tsuna's eyes which were wise in surprise. "None of this was your fault, Tsuna. I wish we had known about this before, but I'm guessing you couldn't say anything."

Tsuna smiled, the first real smile since the girls had sat down, and shook her head lightly. Her hair swished around her face. "The fewer that know, the less likely I am to deal with the national police."

The group finished off their drinks. Tsuna grimaced at the cold tea, but finished it off anyway. Any caffeine was useful. Her coffee, now very cold, wouldn't be that good and she needed the caffeine to
fight off the yawn that wanted to come out. Kyoko and Hana left the base. They waved to Tsuna. Everything wasn't perfect between them, but her civilian friends knew and they accepted her.

"Tsuna," Ryohei paused in the doorway before he followed after his sister, "I was serious to the extreme about owing you."

"You don't want to do that, Sasagawa. There's no getting out once you're in."

"I know. Still, I owe you, to the extreme, because you protected my sister." He turned and met her gaze. A shiver ran up her spine. She could feel her Flames quiver and reach for something just out of grasp. "Your option isn't nearly as bad as you might think."

With those words, the boxer walked through the door after his sister. Tsuna sat at her desk in shock. An arm dropped over her shoulders. She looked up at Takeshi. A hand reached out and grabbed her hand. Hayato smiled as he lifted the hand to his lips and placed a gentle kiss on her knuckles.

"Not as bad as you thought it would be, eh Tsuna?" Takeshi laughed and he squeezed her shoulder. She leaned into his touch even as she pulled Hayato's hand to her own lips and pressed a kiss to his fingers in gratitude. A blush broke out that became even deeper as Takeshi gave into the temptation and laid a quick kiss to his lips. Tsuna giggled at the Italian went red and flailed like crazy before he eventually calmed and gave both of them a shy smile that made their hearts warm.

"So, when is Trident Shamal supposed to get here?" Tsuna asked Reborn as she finished up the last bit of her paperwork. She was so glad school was on break. She doubted she would have been able to come up with a decent excuse for her absence as well as her boys. She'd likely have had to rely on Hibari for one. He'd have demanded another spar from her.

Reborn looked up from where he was taking care of his weapons. Yes, he usually used Leon, but he did have others. Only a fool didn't and he was no fool.

"Today."

Tsuna stopped in the middle of signing and looked up at him. "What? Wait, who's going to meet him?"

"He'll eventually make himself known, Tsunami."

"Before or after he pisses off Hibari? I kind of need him in one piece to treat Mom."

Reborn let out a sort of snorting noise. "Shamal has been an assassin for longer than you've been a crime boss. Hibari Kyoya is a good fighter, but not on Shamal's level yet. Shamal is tricky. He prefers subterfuge and striking from the shadows than brute forcing anything. He's also a master of diseases."

Tsuna groaned and rubbed at the bridge of her nose. She stood up foam her paperwork and headed for the door. Reborn watched her go and smirked as she shut the door behind her. Hook, line and sinker. He was still able to manipulate his student.

Tsuna hurried down the hall. A few of her men who had recovered from the long fighting waved as she passed. Rumiko, hunched over paperwork of her own concerning the sex shops that had been owned by the Fuuma-kai, looked up and grinned as she passed. Tsuna waved to her and sped up. She was so glad she had managed to get some sleep the night before. The fact that she had Hana and Kyoko's forgiveness and still had their friendship had made going to sleep far easier than it had been in the past few days. At least she didn't have a headache anymore.
"Need anything, Tsuna-hime?" the head prostitute chirped.

Tsuna frowned. "Have any of the girls reported anything odd to you? Reborn said Trident Shamal should be in the city sometime today. I want to find him before Hibari does."

Rumiko blinked and then chuckled. "Nope. Nothing from the Grails but I'm going to expect something now. That man has a reputation."

"Yeah, I know. Hayato's got some stories."

"How is your Italian bombshell, by the way? Is your relationship still going good?"

Tsuna smiled and felt her cheeks flush ever so slightly. "It's good. He's getting a bit less touch shy and letting Takeshi and I kiss him without freaking out too badly. He isn't truly insulting Takeshi anymore and he is initiating touch."

Rumiko smiled at her boss. The girl was obviously happy with how her relationship was going. Good. She deserved some happiness in her life. "I'm happy for you, boss."

"Thank, Rumiko," Tsuna said and turned to leave the room. "Make sure to warn the girls about Trident Shamal. I have a feeling we may need to blacklist him."

She stepped out into the hall and was immediately run over. She and whoever had walked into her fell into a heap of tangled limbs. She squirmed for a second but didn't fight as her intuition didn't flare up. Whoever had fallen on her wasn't dangerous. Her head lifted and she found herself face to face with Mochida Kensuke. The kendo captain and newest recruit was a bright red as he tried to scramble off of her without touching anywhere inappropriate.

"Sorry. Sorry," the boy stuttered out as he scrambled backwards. Tsuna leaned up on her elbows and shook her head at him. Her head turned slightly to the side as she heard something odd and saw Rumiko trying, and failing, to suppress her laughter.

"It's fine, Mochida," Tsuna said as she pulled herself upright. She offered a hand to the other teen and pulled him up. "I wasn't watching where I was going."

"Still, sorry." He ducked his head.

Tsuna hummed before an idea shot through her head. A smirk curled around her lips and quickly vanished. There was no reason to scare the other off before she managed to get him to agree. "Can you help me with something?"

"Yes, ma'am," Mochida snapped to attention. The men who had been teaching him had explained, very carefully, that if the boss asked you to do anything, you did it.

Tsuna's lips twitched and a mischievous light shone in her eyes. It made the boy nervous.

"Come with me. I'm trying to find someone, a guest my tutor invited. Then, I need you to watch the kids." She motioned for him to follow as she headed off down the hall.

"Kids?"

She nodded and looked over her shoulder at him as she continued to walk toward the exit. "Yeah. I've adopted three. There's I-Pin. She's five and a trained assassin. Her master, who I have the utmost
respect for after seeing him lay waste to a group of Triad operatives, asked me to watch over her and keep her out of the Triad's hands until she's old enough to make the decision on whether she wants to be an assassin or not. Then there's Lambo. He's a brat, fair warning. He'll give you the most trouble. Fuuta is quiet and shy and I know he was abused before I took him in but he's good kid all 'round."

Mochida growled. "I hope whoever he was with was taught how wrong their actions were."

"Yes, they were. Very much so." Her voice was vindictive. She turned her head forward and pushed open the external door. "How are you integrating with us, by the way? You've had one of the most hectic initiation periods in recent memory."

"Ah, well, it's different." He looked around furtively. "I wasn't expecting yakuza to be, well, like you guys are."

"Yeah, we're a bit odd even by yakuza standards. I know I get a lot of looks from my fellow family heads. I'm more laid back, but my temper is legendary enough that they don't dare try to capitalize on it."

"Oh," Mochida muttered and fell silent. He didn't know how to talk to this girl. He had thought she was just Hibari's secretary, a scarily efficient one who knew how to fight, but still just a secretary. That she had turned out to be a yakuza boss, and one who was willing to help him, was surprising. She only asked for his loyalty in return.

"How are your siblings?"

"Saya doesn't know how to deal with having her own room, but the girls are helping her with decorating. Kenichi's just happy to be away from Dad."

"Has your father tried anything? Or your mother?"

"I saw Mom at the store a few days ago, but she just ignored me. I haven't seen him around at all. If we're lucky, he's drunk himself to death."

"That's good. Just let me know if either of them give you any trouble." She nodded and smiled at the other teen. "Do you have any questions for me?"

Mochida frowned and bit his lip. He did have one question, but he didn't know if it was a good idea to ask. "No."

"Don't lie, Mochida."

He winced at her tone and the sideways look she gave him. He sighed and looked away. "It's personal, something from before I knew you were yakuza."

"So ask." She looked over at him and frowned. What could he want to know?

Inhaling, he looked ahead so he didn't have to look at her when he asked his question. "Why were you so pissed at me for having multiple girlfriends when you have two boyfriends?"

Tsuna stopped and stared at him. There was a moment of silence before she snorted and broke into laughter. "Oh, Mochida. I was not expecting that, of all things." She regained control of herself and smiled at him. "My issue wasn't that you had multiple girlfriends, it was that they didn't know about each other. They all thought you were with them and only them. Hayato, Takeshi and I, we know about each other and choose to stay together because that's how we feel."
"Huh?"

She smirked and started to walk again. "I started dating Takeshi years ago. We agreed to an open relationship so long as the other was told about any new partner. We hadn't really done it before we met Hayato, but we both agreed we really liked him. We approached him and, well, you can see the result."

Mochida opened his mouth and then shut it as he tried to run that through his head. "So it wasn't about how many but that they didn't know about each other?"

She nodded. "Yes, it was dishonest and unfair to them to think your heart belonged to one of them when it didn't belong to any of them."

Thankfully Mochida didn't have time to respond to her words. Her phone rang. She pulled it out and read a text message. A predatory smirk curled her lips and sent chills down his spine. She put her phone back in her pocket and gave him a wide grin.

"Well, I know where the guy I'm looking for is. Try to keep up."

The yakuza boss ran at a steady pace. She could hear her subordinate running behind her. He was at least keeping pace. All that kendo practice must have paid off for his fitness level. She led him on a merry run through the city toward a commercial area near the school. As she rounded the corner, she came to a complete stop.

"Fuck," she muttered as she caught sight of Hibari Kyoya bearing down on a dark haired foreigner in a white coat. He fit the description of Trident Shamal that Hayato had given her. She turned to Mochida as she heard him run up behind her. "I'm going to do something very stupid. Don't interfere."

With that warning, Tsuna charged into the fray. Her hand reached out and grabbed Hibari's arm. Planting her feet firmly, she pulled him off balance. His eyes went wide for just a moment before turning an acidic glare on her. She smiled and dodged out of the way of a tonfa swipe. Ducking around the hit, she put herself between the prefect and the foreigner.

"Ah, please don't kill the doctor Reborn brought in before he's done his job," she stated blandly. The prefect rose from his crouch. His hands tightened around his tonfa before backing down.

"He was bothering females."

Tsuna sighed and shook her head. She looked over her shoulder at the wide eyed man before turning back to Hibari. "I know. He's a bit of a lech, but he's a very good doctor since Reborn called him here. You can beat him up after he sees Mom."

"Hn." The prefect frowned but nodded. He, like most who had regular contact with the yakuza boss, knew Sawada Nana had issues. If this doctor could do anything to help her, he would hold off his punishment for the time being. Lowering his weapons he turned and stalked off.

"Ah, thank you pretty lad—" Shamal started to thank the girl. His hands reached out to grab her own only to be stopped by a hand shooting out and gripping his throat. There was a warning pressure pressing against his wind pipe. He stilled.

"I'm really beginning to get annoyed with you Gaijin not having any proper manners," Tsuna said as she met his eyes. Her own were hard and staring deep into his own before dropping her hand.

"Come on. Reborn wanted you to look at my mother. The sooner you do that, the quicker Hibari can slake his blood lust."
She stepped back and stared at him. A bead of cold sweat dripped down the side of his face. He swallowed and shivered. He could feel the Sky Flame that pressed on him. Her touch had sent his Flames into retreat. There were few people who had ever managed to get that reaction from him. All of them had been Skies.

"Who are you?"

"Sawada Tsunami."

"Iemitsu's kid?"

"Don't mention that Bastard, but yes. Now, I believe you have a patient, doctor."

"Ah, well, I see," he stuttered out and straightened. He gave her a smile she could only classify as smarmy. It wasn't impressive.

"Right." She pulled out her phone and sent a message off to her boys. "Come on. Mom'll be waiting for us at home. Reborn will too if I know him."

The Sawada household was quiet. Tsuna had sent the children out with Mochida as soon as she had walked Dr. Shamal into the house. Reborn sat at the dining room table with a steaming Hayato and a deceivingly relaxed Takeshi. The boys waved to her as she entered. Reborn simply sipped at his espresso. She could hear her mother in the kitchen.

"Mom, can you come here?" she called as she motioned for the doctor to enter and take a seat.

"Shamal," Hayato greeted him coldly. Tsuna suppressed a smile at the jerk the doctor made at the bomber's tone. She sat in the space her boys had left for her and reached out to curl her hand around his. The doctor's eyes darted right to the clasped hands and a smug smile appeared on his face as he gave Hayato an emotion laden glance.

Takeshi, noticing the look, bit his lip. Tsuna tilted her head ever so slightly as she saw his actions in the corner of her eye. His smile became wider. Nana entering the room made him put his thoughts on the back burner.

"Tsu-chan, who is this?" the older woman asked. Shamal smiled flirtatiously at the woman. She didn't notice.

"This is Doctor Shamal," Reborn introduced the doctor. "When I saw your episode in the office that night, I knew I had to call him here. Please, let him look you over."

Nana jerked up and stared at the infant hitman in surprise before turning a cautious look on the suave man's face. She looked at her daughter, who nodded. She bit her lip and nodded her assent. "OK. What do you need me to do?"

"We can do this in the living room. I'll need some room to move," Shamal suggested as he rose to his feet.

Tsuna stood, her boys quickly following her. She made eye contact with the doctor. "Reborn, you will be watching him. Right? He tries anything sketchy and I get to take out my frustrations on him."

"I promise, Tsunami." Reborn inclined his head. He hopped to the floor and walked toward the living room. "Well, are you coming, Shamal?"
The three wandered out of the room. Nana sent a concerned look to her daughter but held her head high. Tsuna kept a strong, encouraging smile on her face until her mother was out of sight. Then she leaned against Hayato. Her lips turned down into a frown.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi whispered as she placed his hand on her shoulder. She tilted her head to look up at him and looked up at him.

"I had to rescue him from Hibari."

"Ooh," both boys muttered and winced. Hayato's hands reached for her arms and ran his fingers across her bare skin as if he was looking for injuries. Her skin prickled into gooseflesh. She swallowed thickly as heat rushed through her at the touch. She had become so sensitive to the bomber's touch as little as he initiated it. She could see Takeshi's lips pull into a smirk at her reaction.

"So what's Hibari want in exchange?" the swordsman asked.

"Shamal gets to deal with him later. He agreed to back off for Mom's sake."

"What did Shamal teach you, anyway? You've never actually explained it." Takeshi leaned against the bombers back and thread his fingers through the bomber's free hand.

"Tsunami, get in here," Reborn said as he reappeared in the doorway. He looked over all three of them and smirked as he saw their intertwined hands. He'd have to remember to tell Bianchi about that. The woman had asked him to keep her updated on her brother's relationship.

"You're already done?" Tsuna asked as she walked forward and out of the boys' grips. They followed behind her.

"We need you to test something," Reborn's voice turned serious and his fedora tilted over his eyes. A chill ran up the spines of all three teens. Takeshi grabbed Hayato's shoulder and whispered something in Hayato's ear, a warning or maybe a plan if this was bad news.

Her mother was sitting on the sofa. Shamal was standing upright in front of her. The grim look on his face was not encouraging and made Tsuna's stomach drop. He looked up at her as she entered the room and inclined his head slightly in greeting.

"You are capable of controlling your Flames, correct?" Shamal asked. Nana looked at him in confusion. Though her mother had been told about her and her father's connection to organized crime, Tsuna hadn't had the time nor inclination to introduce the concept of Dying Will Flames to her.

Tsuna nodded and came to stand within reach. "Yes."

"And you are a Sky, correct?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then flare your Flames. Start off low and then build it up. You other brats try to stay out of the way."

Hayato humphed and crossed his arms even as he obeyed. He had spent enough time around the hated doctor to know when he was in serious work mode. Whatever was wrong with the Sawada
matriarch had to be bad. The doctor was rarely that serious. At Takeshi's glance, he nodded and the swordsman mimicked him, coming to rest beside him.

Tsuna glanced over at Reborn, who nodded, and closed her eyes. She reached deep for that ball of bubbling energy that was her Sky Flames just as Reborn had taught her when she was trying to activate Hyper Dying Will Mode. Pulling a tiny tendril of the Flame upward, she felt the energy expend from her body. Shamal inhaled sharply at the feeling, causing her to open her eyes to see what was wrong. The doctor was staring at her in slight awe before he covered his reaction. She mentally shrugged. She didn't know what that was about and had the feeling she didn't want to know.

She knew from her boys' descriptions that her power, the feeling of harmony that her Flames exuded when she was calm, would be filling the air around her. Slowly she began to add more and more power to her Flames. Tiny motes of fire sparked on her fingertips. Her eyesight sharpened and her mind ran faster and clearer. Her mother was staring at her and her hand where the Flame was growing in its physical form.

As if a switch had been hit, Nana's eyes went blank and glassy. Shamal began cursing under his breath. Reborn and Hayato both had the same reaction, inhaling sharply. Hayato went so far as to reach out and grab Takeshi's hand tightly, as if what he was seeing was frightening on a level the two Japanese teens didn't get.

"That's enough. Stop. Bring your Flame back in," the doctor commanded even as he knelt in front of the blank eyed woman. He waved his hand in front of her eyes as his other hand pulled out a pen light. Using it, he tested her pupil dilation and hissed when he got none.

"Do you know what's wrong?" Tsuna asked as as she pulled her Flames back under her control.

"Reborn, you were right," Shamal growled out, seemingly ignoring her question. "Damn it all."

"Dr. Shamal?" Nana asked as she came out of her fugue state. She blinked and jerked backward at the closeness of the doctor. She hadn't seen him move.

"When was the last time you saw your husband in person?" the doctor asked as he stood up and stepped away from her.

Nana frowned. "Not since Tsu-chan was four, so about 12 years or so now."

"That would explain it." Shamal nodded to himself before turning to Tsuna. His tongue-as dry as his mouth but he needed to figure out how he was going to tell the scarily powerful Sky just what was wrong— flicked out to wet his lips. He inhaled slowly. "How much do you know about Sky Flames, Vongola?"

Tsuna blinked at being called Vongola but got over the title quickly. "As much as Reborn has taught me. Skies are the rarest of the Flame types and typically great leaders of whatever family they are in. They pull the other Flame types to them because of their component of harmony."

"So the basics," he nodded to himself and sighed. "What is wrong with your mother has to do with your father's Flames. We call it Sky Infection or more commonly called Sky Hypnotism."

Hayato cursed loudly in Italian. His hand squeezed Takeshi's tighter and his lips curled up into a snarl. Tsuna spun around to stare at him. Even Nana stared at his outburst.

"The brat's got the right idea. Sawada Iemitsu is a fucking idiot." Shamal dropped into one of the chairs and rubbed at his eyes. "A Sky Bond forms naturally between a Sky and compatible
Elements. You've reached that with those two. However, a Sky can force a bond to happen as well. This never ends well, especially for the Element forced to bond to the Sky. Generally, the only Skies that do this are the ones who can't attract Elements normally. There's usually something wrong with them, and this suddenly explains why Iemitsu, for all his strength, doesn't have a full set of Elements."

"Doctor Shamal, what are you saying?" Tsuna breathed as she took a seat next to her mother and held the older woman's hands lightly in a show of comfort.

Reborn stepped forward and shook his head slightly. There was a look of pity in his eyes that made Tsuna's hair stand on end. The hitman could hide his emotions very well. The fact he was actually letting her see them...this was not going to be good.

"A bond is meant to happen naturally. A Sky courts their Elements and vice versa. That is how the bond forms. Some Elements reject a Sky's advances due to several factors. The Sky should then back off as they aren't wanted," the hitman explained. "That isn't what Iemitsu did from what we can tell. He instead, knowingly or not, forced a bond that had the effect of forcing whoever was on the other end to obey him and his will. By forcing this bond, he has, in essence, overrode Nana's own thought processes and replaced it with something appealing to him. Your Flame is likely helping your mother override the programming and that is causing her issues."

Nana let out a small choke before a sob forced its way out of her as Tsuna's stomach churned. She knew her mother didn't understand what was being said, but her mother wasn't an idiot. She had to understand that her husband, who she had loved for years, had in essence drugged her and forced her to love him, without her ever knowing. Tsuna's arms wrapped around her mother and pulled her in tight.

The boys stepped away from the wall only to stop at Tsuna's look. She shook her head slightly and motioned with her chin for them to leave. As much as she wanted them to stay and support her, she needed this time with her mother. She needed to come to terms with the reality she was, in essence, a child of rape. Her stomach lurch and she swallowed thickly. When Reborn motioned for Shamal to follow him out of the room, she sent a grateful look to him.

"Tsunami, I'll make certain Iemitsu pays for what he's done," Reborn stated.

Tsunu frowned, glanced down at her mother, and looked up at him with steel in her eyes. Her lips pressed into a tight line. "No, you won't, Reborn. Iemitsu is mine to take care of."

"Tsunami, you have enough to worry about. Trust me to take care of this."

She snorted roughly. "Trust you? No, I don't trust you to do this. It's also not yours to deal with."

"Tsunami..."

"This is a matter of honor," she hissed as she rubbed her mother's back.

"And just how are you going to deal with him? He's in Italy." The hitman's brow twitched. Why was his student so stubborn?

"He'll come here eventually. Then he'll be taken care of. My honor is at stake with this, Reborn," she attempted to explain. Takeshi, who understood what she meant, nodded. Hayato glanced up at him and backed down from where he was going to say something about how difficult it would be to kill the man.

"Tsunami," the hitman repeated her name, this time in a lower register. He was getting annoyed.
"When have you ever tried to understand anything the yakuza hold important, Reborn? Iemitsu is my blood family. That he has done something so dishonorable as this means I need to take care of this myself or I will lose face with the other families." She held her mother tighter as the woman clung to her and shook. "Mom, let's get you to bed. I think you need some rest."

"This isn't over, Tsunami," Reborn said but backed off in deference to the Sawada Matriarch's emotional state.

"Yes, it is," Tsuna snapped as she helped her mother upright. "Takeshi, Hayato, make sure the doctor doesn't cause any problems. Escort him to his lodgings. And Shamal, one word from me and every sex shop and prostitute in this town will black list you. Don't. Tempt. Me."

The doctor swallowed thickly at the sheer murderous intent bearing into him from the young Vongola heiress's eyes. He nodded and made a rapid clip out of there. He knew when to run when a woman was angry. Reborn's eyes narrowed at his student but he walked out. He did not want to upset Nana any more than she already was. He'd speak with his student later.

Tsuna stepped out of the house and closed the door behind her. Her hand shook as she finally let what Doctor Shamal had said sunk in. Yes, she had understood most of what he had been saying at the time, but it just hit her in the gut that she was the child of what could conceivably be called rape. Her stomach churned. She didn't feel like she could keep anything down. She'd grab something somewhere for the kids, but she doubted she'd eat anything for the rest of the day.

She shook her head. She really needed to clear her head if her thoughts were running as wild as they were. Normally she was focused, but this new development had sent her for a spin. First, she needed to get the kids from Mochida and get them fed. Then she could worry about what she was going to do about this new information. Little steps.

Her phone buzzed, breaking her out of her thoughts. She pulled it out of her pocket and smiled. Her boys were checking up on her. She typed out a quick reassurance and promise to see them at the office the next day. She also sent a message to Mochida that she was going to come to the park to pick up the kids. She'd need to figure out how to tell them what was going on, but she doubted any of them would have problems understanding. Two were mafia brats and I-Pin was a smart girl.

She broke into a light jog. The exercise would help with calming her boiling emotions. Her anger and the more nasty edge of her temper hovered close to the surface and was ready to be ignited at the slightest provocation. The repetitive, steady motion of her feet on the pavement brought a stillness to her thoughts that helped calm those turbulent emotions and let her rational mind take hold. As she rounded the corner to get to the park, she had to think fast as a red head stepped right into her line of sight.

"Watch out!" she called as she ducked into a roll to the side. The red headed teen let out a noise Tsuna couldn't classify and stumbled to the side. His eyes went wide as he fought to steady the box in his hands.

"Sorry!" the boy apologized and shifted the weight in his hands.

"No, I wasn't watching where I was going," she replied as she stood from the ground and brushed off her pants. "You OK?"

"Um, yeah. Sorry." He ducked his head.

"I'm sorry too. I should have been careful in case someone was coming around the corner. I'm
Sawada Tsunami, by the way. I don't think I've seen you at Namimori High. Are you new here?

"Ah, no. I go to Sakuramo High in Tokyo. I'm back home for break," the boy said before realizing he hadn't give his name. He bowed as best he could while still gingerly holding his box. "I'm Irie Shoichi."

"I see." She eyed the box. Something was telling her that box was dangerous. Her tongue pressed against the roof of her mouth, but she couldn't deny her curiosity. "What's with the box?"

Irie went pale and looked from the box to her and back. He swallowed and looked at the ground. "It was sent to my house by mistake. I'm trying to return it to its rightful owner."

Tsuna smiled. "Maybe I can help? I'm a member of the Discipline Committee. I know a lot of people in Namimori."

"Ah, well…" the red head was suddenly more nervous. His face twisted in pain as he bent a little at the waist. "Um, I'm looking for a kid dressed in cow pajamas."

"Lambo." Tsuna sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. "What has he done now?"

"You know him?"

"My family's taken him in after what his own did to him."

He perked up at that and thrust the box in her direction. "Take it, please. You can give it to him."

Tsuna took the package from him and gave into her curiosity. She peeled back the lid. Her eyes went wide. Her mouth opened slightly before she shut the lid. She gave the red head a hard stare.

"You will not be telling anyone about this."

He whimpered and doubled over. "I'm not about to say anything since his family found out about him blasting into our house even when we didn't tell anyone."

"Tsuna-nee!" a childish voice called before a weight slammed into her legs. She looked down to meet Lambo's bright eyes as he attempted to climb to her shoulders. He turned to see who she was talking to and flinched. He gave the red headed teen a tense smile before turning a concerned and guilty look at his big sister.

"Lambo, I take it you know Irie-san?"

"Um, no?"

"Was that a question or an answer?" She stared down at him. He stared up at her. The silence went for several seconds before the child broke down into tears.

"I'm sorry, Tsuna-nee! I'm sorry! Don't be angry!"

"Broccoli-head loud again," I-Pin complained as she, Fuuta and Mochida walked sedately down the path. Fuuta walked as far away from the other teen as he could and still remain close to I-Pin.

"Lambo, you're grounded and when we get home, I'll be taking your weapons, again."

"No! Lambo-sama is a good boy!"

"Lambo blasted into a stranger's house, which means he was playing with his bazooka again. Lambo
knows messing with the bazooka means being grounded." Tsuna turned her attention to the stunned Irie Shoichi. She bowed deeply and apologetically to him. "I am so sorry for my ward's actions. If there is anything I can do for your family, please let me know. Any member of the Discipline Committee knows how to get in contact with me or your family can send a message through one of the pink salons in town."

"Tsuna-sama, is something wrong?" Mochida asked and went slightly defensive. He eyed the red headed teen contemplatively.

"Lambo did something wrong and inconvenienced Irie-san's family. Nothing more. Let's head home kids. Mochida, thank you. If you wouldn't mind, could you watch the kids from now on? As much as I trust the others, you actually have experience with young kids from your siblings."

"Ah, sure, Tsuna-sama."

Tsuna reached out and squeezed his upper arm before gathering the children and walking toward home. Lambo continued to cling to her leg and wail like someone had tried to kill him. I-pin was shouting at him and clearly beyond exasperated. Fuuta was silent and staying within arm's reach of Tsuna. Both male teens watched them go.

"What?" Irie asked.

Mochida shrugged. "I have no idea. I just find going with the flow tends to break the brain a lot less than fighting it."
Tsunamile as she shut the front door behind her. Her mother had gotten better since Dr. Shamal had started treating her with some kind of pills. He had tried to explain what they were, but all Tsuna was able to understand was that they were a kind of Flame purgative. It had taken them a few weeks for any real effects to show, but her mother was having far fewer events.

"Sawada!" a familiar voice called. She turned on her heel and blinked in confusion as several members of the Discipline Committee came running up to her. She pulled out her phone and frowned at the lack of messages.

"What's wrong?" she asked as she shifted to a more stable fighting stance.

The two lower ranked DC members stopped and bowed to her. They were breathing hard, their chests heaving. "Kusakabe was being kind, not contacting you with your family issues and all, but he's asked everyone to report in now. There's been someone attacking lower members of the Committee. Hibari is not happy and hunting for the perpetrator."

"Damn," Tsuna cursed, pulled her bag further up her shoulder, and took off at a run toward the school. If Hibari was in as bad of a mood as she thought, she'd need to be there with Kusakabe to help with creating safer patrol routes. She could hear the two lower ranked DC members running behind her. She skidded around a corner and had to dodge out of the way of a gathering group of people. Coming to a halt, she looked at the gates of Namimori High and the gathered Committee members outside. They greeted her with careful nods and nervous looks at the area around them.

"Where is Kusakabe? Or Hibari even?" Tsuna asked the nearest Committee member.

He gulped at the fierce look on her face before answering by pointing down the road. Tsuna nodded and turned to head off only to be stopped by a male's shout of pain and a feminine scream.

"Tsunami, be careful," Reborn said as he popped up next to her. He had a tense look on his face. "There may be more to this than just fighting children."

"Ah," she nodded but headed toward the sound of the disturbance. She blinked as she saw just who had created that noise. A girl ran past her with an embarrassed flush on her face. On the ground, Dr. Shamal groaned and nursed a lump on the back of his head. Hibari stood proud over him with his tonfas clasped in his hands. The prefect looked up at her and nodded in greeting.

"Omnivore."

"Hibari." She greeted him with a small wave before smirking down at the groaning doctor. "He was bothering girls?"

"Hn," the prefect grunted and walked to stand shoulder to shoulder with her. He glanced at the baby and gave him a nod with a gleam in his eye that spoke of his want to fight him. A moment later he let out a small hiss and slapped his hand against his neck. Tsuna frowned and leaned over his shoulder.
to see a small welt had formed there. It looked like a bug bite. At the feeling of her breath on his skin, the prefect started to blush.

Neither noticed Reborn's concerned look or the look he exchanged with the recovering doctor. They pulled just out of earshot to have a small conversation.

"You've heard?" Hibari asked as he strode toward the school gates. Tsuna hummed in agreement and walked beside him.

"Only the basics. How many have been attacked?"

"Seven over the last two days."

"Are they awake? Can they identify their attackers?"

"Hn. Kusakabe's been with them."

She nodded. "I'll speak with him then. Be careful. There's something about this that doesn't seem right. The other families should be staying out of my territory after what we did to the Fuuma-kai, and even then they wouldn't have attacked civilians."

"Tsuna-hime!" Hayato's voice caught her attention. Her head snapped over to him. Eyes widened as she saw the two children with him and Takeshi.

She turned to Hibari. "I need to take care of this."

"Tsuna, Mochida's in the hospital. Kusakabe spoke with him this morning and thinks it's the same people who attacked the Committee members," Takeshi whispered in her ear once she got close. She frowned and nodded. "Mochida called Rumiko and asked for someone to get his siblings. We've put together a schedule."

"Thanks," she whispered before kneeling down to be on the young boy's level and so as to not loom over the 12 year old. "So, someone hurt your brother. I promise we're going to track them down and make them pay."

"Thank you, Sawada," Saya said as she held her brother in close. "Thank you for helping Nii-san."

"You should be getting to school. You go to Nami Middle, right? Which elementary do you go to Kenichi?"

"Saisho."

"OK, Saya, can you take him there?"

"Yes."

"OK. See if the school office will write you a note if you look like you'll be late."

The girl nodded and herded her brother off to go to school. Tsuna smiled at them and rose gracefully to her feet before walking into the school yard.

Takeshi nudged Hayato and motioned toward the watching prefect. The bomber frowned before a light of understanding appeared. The prefect had been watching Tsuna closely while she was talking to the kids. His face was ever so slightly pink and he looked like he was fighting a war with himself. The demon of Namimori shook his head before heading off to stalk the streets.
"He's in denial?" Hayato muttered. Takeshi nodded and smiled brightly. Said smile had a sharp edge to it.

"He needs to get his head on straight before approaching Tsuna," the swordsman muttered back. "I'm not ready to accept him being with her if he gets as jealous as I think he will."

Hayato frowned. Jealousy reared up in his heart as he thought of a brute like Hibari being in a relationship with Tsuna-hime. His jaw clenched only to relax when Takeshi's fingers brushed the back of his hand. The two boys shared a look and nodded. The prefect would have to prove himself to them before they accepted him as a real suitor for Tsuna.

Completely oblivious to the silent conversation going on between her boyfriends, Tsuna was hurrying as fast as she dared toward the Committee room. The door was open and black clad teens moving in and out in a steady stream. Moving around the nervous boys, she entered and inhaled sharply at the pile of papers on the desk. She'd sort them later. Kusakabe, who was on a cell phone talking to someone, took priority. As he turned off the phone, he winced. Looking up, he jerked at the unexpected sight of Tsuna standing right in front of him.

"Sawada."

"You tried to keep me out of this, and I appreciate it, but you need me right now. My family issues are as taken care of as they can be until the Bastard comes back. Now, what do we know?"

"Several low ranking member of the Committee were attacked over the weekend. Several non-Committee members ended up attacked as well."

She nodded. "I know Mochida was attacked. How many others?"

"More than two dozen. Fifteen Committee members and about a dozen civilians"

"Any commonalities between the attacks or injuries?"

He let out a long breath through his nose. "Some. Whoever it is knows how to beat someone up. Several victims were missing teeth. Not everyone had facial injuries consistent with that kind of damage."

Tsuna felt her stomach turn to lead. Her latest lesson with Reborn had to do with the Mafia's version of symbology. Removing teeth from a beaten person was something mafia fighters would do to prove they had done as they asked. The teeth could then be sent to the victim's family as a sort of calling card, letting the famiglia know just who had attacked them.

"I'm surprised you're here."

Tsuna blinked and looked up at him. "Why?"

"Your friend's brother was one of the most recent victims. He was taken in this morning."

"Wait, Sasagawa Ryohei was attacked and beaten?"

"He's at the hospital right now. I was going to talk to him unless you'd prefer to do so."

"Yeah. I will. I'll also check in with Mochida, let him know his siblings are being taken care of."

Kusakabe waved at her as she hurried out the door. The regular students parted around her as she walked through them. The serious look on her face must have scared them. She could see several
girls clinging to each other and crying. Fear hung heavy in the air. She paused at her classroom before walking in and motioning for her boys to follow her.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi asked as they came out into the hall.

"Be careful. I have a bad feeling about all this. Ryohei was attacked this morning. I'm going to talk to him and Mochida. Don't go anywhere alone. Stay together." She sighed and rubbed at her forehead. "This is going to get bad before it gets better."

Hayato frowned, looked around and leaned in to whisper. "Any sign of organized crime?"

"Possibly. The attacks seem to organized, like their trying to target someone."

The mafia hitman let out a hiss before leaning back. Targeted attacks were never good and it would likely lead to her getting involved if just to prove it wasn't something organized crime related. He nodded solemnly and grabbed Takeshi's wrist.

"Be careful, Tsuna-hime."

"I'll be with her, Gokudera," Reborn's voice caused all three to jump. Hayato just managed to stop himself from pulling out a stick of dynamite.

Tsuna gave the baby hitman an unimpressed look. "You're that worried?"

"There's more going on than you know."

She frowned. They all frowned. "I see. Tell me on the way to the hospital. I have a feeling this may take a while."

Tsuna hated the hospital. The smell of the antiseptics and disinfectants burned her nose. Also, being in the hospital meant something had gone wrong, that there were injuries. After checking in with the nurses, she made her way to the patient rooms. She had two choices on who to visit first. Both Ryohei and Mochida could give her a description of their attackers.

She'd see her man first before visiting her friend.

"Well, you look like you got the shit beat out of you," she said as she leaned against the door frame of his room. He groaned and blinked blearily up at her.

"Sawada?"

"Yeah. Heard you got attacked and wanted to check in on you. You're one of mine and I don't take kindly to this kind of thing."

He groaned and leaned his head further back on the pillow. "It was just one person."

"One person did this?" She frowned and stepped into the room. The door closed behind her, giving them some privacy from the many Nami-High students gathered in the halls to check on friends and family. "Tell me what you remember. I'm going to hunt this bastard down and make him regret doing this."

"He wasn't Japanese, not with that blond hair and it wasn't a dye-job either. His eyebrows were exactly the same color and his skin was way too pale to be Japanese."

Tsuna hummed as she took a seat in the chair next to his bed. " Anything else?"
"He drooled a lot and his hand to wipe it off. He was wearing a Kokuyo uniform, too."

"Kokuyo? How certain are you?"

The kendoist frowned and closed his eyes as he thought back to the fight. His tongue lashed out and wet his lips. A second later he blinked in surprise as he felt cold touching his lips. Tsuna smiled down at him and pressed an ice chip more firmly against his lips. He nodded in thanks and took it in. The cold spread over his tongue and trickled down his throat. The scratchy feeling he hadn't even realized he was feeling faded.

"Thank you."

"How did he beat you so bad? I mean," she ran her hand gently over the cast that covered his arm, "I wouldn't have thought they would be able to do this. You're pretty good at defense."

"He just hit too hard." He frowned and winced as a flash of pain ran through him. He relaxed as the IV pump beeped once, a sign more pain medication was being released.

"I'll let you get some rest. I want you to get better as soon as you can. Don't worry about your siblings either. We're taking care of them. I promise." She placed a hand on his head and stood. He blinked, his eyes becoming blurry as the pain medication took hold, and smiled. He knew he had made a good choice when he had gone to the Akatora. Tsuna would take care of his siblings just as well as she took care of her own. His head falling back, he drifted into slumber.

Tsuna walked through the halls. There were so many people wearing the yellow Namimori uniform. It made her skin crawl. Someone was intentionally attacking Nami-High students. Why? Did this have something to do with her or Hibari or just out of control punks wanting a fight?

"Tsunami," Reborn spoke up as he appeared next to her. She looked down at him and frowned. There was something in his tone that made her nervous. Her eyes drifted to Leon and froze as the chameleon's tail fell off to the ground.

"What?" she breathed softly as the hitman picked up the fallen tail. The chameleon glowed for a moment before changing forms. She had seen the same thing many times, but the chameleon had never taken the form of a colander before. Quite baffling.

"So it's that time again," Reborn muttered.

"Reborn?"

"I need to make some more calls. Go see your friend and I'll update you when you're done."

"What's going on, Reborn?"

Leon changed from a colander into an over sized whisk. Reborn adjusted his grip on his animal partner and turned away. "I need to confirm some information, but I have a good idea about what's going on. Do you remember the conversation you had with Nono? He wants to test you using this situation."

"About me taking care of Iemitsu? s he still doubting I'll be able to take care of it?" She snorted and smirked. "I still can't believe you haven't told him about me being yakuza."

"If his information network is that badly degraded, he has other worries," the hitman muttered. "I think he knew something like this was coming. I just need to confirm dates and names. Go see your friend, Tsunami."
"I see," Tsuna muttered and stared as Leon shifted once again into a rather comical green sword. "Is Leon OK?"

"Without his tail, he can't control his shape-shifting. The last time this happened, Dino received his whip and Enzo."

"So he'll be alright?"

Reborn turned to look at his student with a raised eyebrow. He idly shifted Leon in his hands as the chameleon turned into a box. "Why do I have the feeling you like Leon more than your tutor?"

"Because I do."

"He'll be fine, Tsunami. Just go see your friend. I'll meet you in an hour."

With those parting words, the hitman strolled out of the ward. Tsuna watched him leave and sighed. That baby annoyed her so. Couldn't he just come out and explain what he was thinking? Her eyebrow twitched but she shook the feeling off. She had a friend to go see.

Ryohei was bandaged, but not nearly as much as Mochida had been. Tsuna stood at his door and just looked the boxer over. He was talking to Kyoko, who was sitting next to him and crying. The peaceful girl shook with suppressed sobs and that only seemed to make the boxer more agitated.

"Up for another visitor?" Tsuna asked in an attempt to break the tense atmosphere. Both Sasagawa siblings looked up at her. Kyoko wiped the tears away from her face and smiled. Ryohei also had a large grin on his face.

"Sawada, it's extreme of you to visit," the boxer said in his usual loud tone. Tsuna shook her head and entered the room. Her eyes went to the medical clipboard on the end of the bed. She could plainly see the word lacerations written across it. Her lips pursed. So, a different attack than the one on Mochida?

"Ah, yeah. Mochida's just down the hall, you know. I had to come check up on him."

"Oh, is he one of your... you know?" the boxer asked with a heavy look.

She nodded. "I'm taking personal interest in this with one of my own attacked. I heard you were attacked this morning."

"Yeah. He was Extremely tricky too. I wanted to beat him up for the team!"

Kyoko frowned. Her tears flowed faster. "Onii-chan shouldn't be fighting. Fighting only gets you in trouble."

"You'll never convince him to not fight," Tsuna told the girl before Ryohei could say anything. Both Sasagawa siblings looked up at her. "He is a fighter. To try to stop him from fighting would be to deny a core piece of who he is. He'd be miserable."

"But I hate it when onii-chan gets hurt."

"It's still his choice to fight." Tsuna frowned and looked at the ground. "Sometimes all you can do is fight and hope you come out on the other side relatively unscathed."

"Speaking from experience, Sawada?"

"You can call my Tsunami or Tsuna, Ryohei. We have fought beside each other."
"I extremely will, Tsuna."

The yakuza boss leaned against the wall and just watched the two siblings interact. That was one thing she had always wanted, a younger sibling to watch over and protect. The kids took up that space now. That reminded her. She needed to have someone pick up Fuuta from his friend's house. It was hard to believe such a shy boy had made so many friends among his new schoolmates, but being the foreign kid had gotten him a lot of popularity. With everything going on at home with her mother's diagnosis, she was glad Fuuta had somewhere to go to get away from the mafia life, if only for a weekend.

"Ryohei, what did the person who attacked you look like?" she asked suddenly. She needed her focus back. Every minute was another chance for another attack.

"Ah, well, he was skinny and wearing the Kokuyo uniform. He had this beanie hat and those yo-yos of his hurt, cut my arms up."

"Yo-yos? Odd weapons, but I can see how you could maybe put an edge on the outside to cut with." She frowned. "Anything else? Did they say anything?"

"Only about me not being the one. Sounded like he was looking to challenge someone to the extreme."

A sinking feeling developed in her gut. Her eyes shut and her head thudded back against the wall. "Would you say this person was Japanese?"

"Maybe, or he might have been a halfa. He had an extreme accent."

"Tsuna, do you know something?"

Tsuna frowned and fought back the urge to snarl. She did not need to frighten her friend with her temper. "Maybe. I have some feelers out, but this is starting to paint a very bad picture."

"Involving your…" Kyoko made a sort of hand wave motion with her hands.

"Possibly." The yakuza boss bit her lower lips as her thoughts raced. "Kyoko, promise me you won't go anywhere alone."

"Ah, OK? I'll tell Hana to do the same."

Tsuna lifted her hand in a wave and headed out the door. She really needed to see Reborn. Her instincts were telling her this had to do with the mafia and her position as Decima. He'd likely have more information than she would. She really, really needed to develop some sources in Italy. Maybe she could get Dino's contact information from her tutor? He'd be better than nothing.

Tsuna frowned as she waited for Reborn to reappear from wherever he had gone. She had pulled a notebook out and started writing down what she knew about the attacks. Multiple attackers. Kokuyo uniforms. Going after Nami-High students. Something in that last fact made her pause. She looked up from where she was sitting in the hospital waiting room. Her eyes widened as she pulled out her phone only to stop at the sound of a familiar voice. Looking back up, she frowned as she caught sight of Kusakabe walking down the hall.

"Kusakabe," she called as she got up and hurried to him. He stopped and turned to look at her. She shoved her list into his hands. "There's something here I'm not seeing. Something's just not right. See what you can make of it."
The second in command of the Committee looked over her list and frowned. He motioned for another Committee member to come take a look. "I think I'm getting what you're saying. Why were these students attacked?"

"The Committee members make sense if whoever is doing this has something against us, but why attack regular students?"

"I'll have someone look over the list of victims to see if there's a commonality," he said with a nod. "Kyo-san seems to have figured out what is going on. No one's seen him for a while."

"That's worrying," she stated and took back her paper. "He shouldn't be going off on his own. I know he's good, but there is always someone who's better."

The pompadoured teen nodded and frowned. "No one has heard from him in several hours."

"I'll see to it my people keep an eye out for him. He's done good by us. We can return the favor."

Kusakabe nodded and headed out of the hospital. He had patrols to organize and data to go over. With any luck, Hibari would take care of the issue before too long. Tsuna watched him go and looked back down at her list. There was something none of them were seeing.

"Tsunami," Reborn's voice coming from above made her jump. She spun around and stared. What? How? She blinked. Nope. The scene didn't change. Reborn was suspended from the ceiling via Leon, who had turned into something she could only compare to a giant slime mold.

"Reborn. You talk to your sources?"

He nodded and hopped to the ground. His hand reached out and grabbed Leon as he shifted into a small ball and fell to the floor. "Yes, and it isn't good."

"Wonderful," Tsuna groaned and leaned against the wall. Something was telling her this was going to be long. "So, what can you tell me?"

"Two months ago, there was a breakout at a prison used to house the worst of the mafia, those who break our laws. They were lead by a teen named Mukuro Rokudo, or Rokudo Mukuro as you would put it. He and two of his followers escaped all attempts at capture and weren't able to be tracked, at least until they showed up at Kokuyo High School."

"He's after me, isn't he?"

"Out of the way!"

Tsuna's head turned. A stretcher bearing another person came flying down the hall. Tsuna gasped, her eyes going wide as she recognized the person on it.

"Kusakabe," she whispered. How could he have been attacked so soon? He had just left the hospital.

Reborn's fedora lowered over his brow. He sprang down the hall far faster than a baby should have been able to. He hopped up on the stretcher and grabbed something off of Kusakabe before jumping down to the ground. He watched as the stretcher was taken back to the treatment rooms and Tsuna came up behind him.

"Reborn?"

"It's what I thought." He turned to face her. Holding out his hand, he revealed the object he had
taken, a gold pocket watch. Hitting the catch to open it, it opened to show the hands pointing at 5:00. He reached into his pocket with his spare hand and pulled out an identical watch. It popped open. The hands pointed at 6:00.

"Reborn?"

"I took this one from Sasagawa's room. It was found on him when he was brought in. I searched earlier, and your man also had one. It was pointing at 7."

Tsuna inhaled sharply. "A countdown?"

"It looks like, especially when you consider this." Reborn put the watch away and pulled out a paper from under his hat. Tsuna took it and frowned. It was heavy paper, like something she'd use if she was sending a message to another yakuza family. There was an elegant scroll work across the top. It wasn't something she was familiar with, it being more European in origin. Definitely mafia related. It was the words below that made her breath catch. Ranking of Fighters in Namimori High School. It was dated two months ago. Hibari was ranked number one. She was number two and her boys took up three and four. The rest of the names on the list were familiar. Her stomach clenched. With the addition of Kusakabe, they were all in the hospital after being beaten by the Kokuyo gang of thugs.

"Fuuta made this," she whispered and looked at her tutor. "Why did he do this? Did you ask him to? I promised he wouldn't be asked to do anything like this, Reborn."

"No one asked him to. Fuuta does this all on his own," the hitman explained. He had to force himself not to lift his arms in a surrender gesture. Really, his student could be quite frightening when her children were threatened. It reminded him of a protective mother bear. Her Flame would rise and push on the air, creating a feeling of despair and despondency in whoever she was facing. It was a useful Sky trick for mentally breaking down enemies that only the best bosses were able to use. Now if only he could get her to do that while training. It took her people being threatened to bring that side of her out. He grit his teeth. While such protectiveness was something Nono wanted in his heir, the fact it took a threat to bring it out was annoying to the hitman.

"On his own?" The feeling of her Flame faded as she leaned back and crossed her arms over her chest. She didn't completely believe him, but she was willing to listen.

Reborn nodded. "He's been ranking things whenever he feels like it now that he feels comfortable in your house. No one's asked him to do anything. He mostly ranks the best places to get fresh vegetables or the best blends to Nana's tea. He only did that ranking after he saw Hibari beating up a few kids. He gave it to me in case I ever needed it."

"And now someone's taken it. This Rokudo Mukuro person most likely." She frowned before her eyes widened. She scrambled for her phone. Hitting one button, she brought it to her ear and bit her lip. Reborn sighed and took the paper from her loose grip. At least she saw who would likely be next.

"Damn it," she muttered as the call went to voicemail. She hit another button and waited. "Takeshi, where's Hayato?"

There was a pause as she listened to the answer.

"Stay with him. Either one of you are going to be the next target. I want you to get somewhere safe."

She ended the call and ran out the hospital door. Reborn watched as she ran. He still had some questions he needed answered and notifying Shamal he may have patients took precedence. She'd be
able to take care of herself for now. He had trained her well.

Tsuna ran. Her heart pounded in her chest. She could feel her lungs burn as she tried to take in more air. Every instinct she had was screaming at her to get to her boys. Takeshi had said they were in a small shopping area close to Hayato's apartment building. It was an area her girls knew well. She stopped in her running, chest heaving as she tried to orient herself.

"Namimori High has certainly gone downhill," Tsuna could hear a girl dressed in Midori High's uniform sneered as she walked by with a friend.

"Can you believe two of them were fighting with a Kokuyo student in the middle of the street?"

"I hope they don't wreck Mira's bakery."

Tsuna's eyes widened. Well, that was useful. She took off at a run once more. Now she had a good idea where her boys were. Unfortunately they seemed to be in the middle of a fight. Running up the street, she slowed to take in the damage. Hayato seemed to be the main fighter, but he was hesitating on using his dynamite, keeping his arsenal to firecrackers only. A few soot marks littered the ground. Takeshi was watching from the side. He wasn't injured or harmed, so why wasn't he helping? She sidled up to her swordsman and gave him a dead stare. He chuckled nervously and rubbed at the back of his neck.

"Explain," she hissed lowly so as to not be heard by the fighting duo.

"The yo-yo kid challenged him to a fight. Called him number 4 and was pleased when he heard his moniker. Got even more pleased when Haya asked if he was after the Jyuudaime."

"We need to end this now."

Hayato, aware that his boss was behind him with the sword idiot, became more aggressive in his fighting. Out went the firecrackers and in came the knives. Though he disliked using them, he had been training in how to use them. It didn't hurt to have a non-explosive option in his arsenal and Rumiko, for all that the woman terrified him, was a very good teacher.

The yo-yo wielding teen ducked under a thrown knife, his weapon snapping out in an attempt to bind only to be cut away. Though he had been emotionless so far, the green clad teen's face twitched in annoyance. His fingers curled and two new yo-yos came out of his sleeves. The boy's entire demeanor changed and he went on the offense. The yo-yos clicked as they reached the height of their arc and a bad feeling grew in Tsuna's stomach.

"Hayato, move!"

Not one to disobey, the bomber jumped to the side and narrowly avoided being sprayed with needles. His eyes widened and nostrils flared as he caught a faint smell he associated with his sister. Poison. His teeth grit together. As he put his knife away and pulled out his favored dynamite. Tsuna's eyes grew wide from where she was standing.

"So, you're the one..." the yo-yo fighter whispered as he caught sight of Tsuna. His lips turned upward into a smirk. He moved to attack her, causing Takeshi to place his hand on his blade. It had just started being removed from the sheath when Hayato intervened.

"Double bomb."

There was a loud explosion. Dirt and dust flew up, obscuring the view for everyone. Tsuna and
Takeshi, both forewarned simply due to familiarity with the bomber, had gotten out of the blast radius fast. The yo-yo fighter hadn't been as lucky, though he had managed to either dodge the main blast or redirect it with his weapons. Hayato snorted as the dust faded and he saw the minor wounds he had managed to land.

"Dynamite, how loud," the boy said.

"Why you…" Hayato growled and dodged out of the way of another spray of needles. He pulled out more of his favored weapon and grinned. The fuses lit in an impressive display of the control he had over his Storm Flame. He smirked. "Double bomb."

The bombs arced overhead. The yo-yo fighter frowned and sliced through the dynamite. His eyes widened as a trio of smaller dynamite dropped down in between the strings of his yo-yos. It was an optical illusion. He didn't have a chance to dodge or curse as the compact explosives detonated.

"How did he survive that?" Tsuna asked as she gaped at the scene. The yo-yo guy was standing, but only barely. He was bleeding from multiple places. He definitely had a head wound. His glasses had shattered.

"Nicely done, Hayato!" Takeshi called and waved.

Tsuna's head shot up. Stretching her neck, she looked off into the distance and frowned. "We need to get out of here. Cops."

"Not yet," the yo-yo fighter gasped out and tried spray where Tsuna was with his quills. Tsuna, already anticipating the action, moved out of the way and rushed forward to retaliate. The boy's eyes widened as a fist slammed into his stomach and she knew she felt a rib shift under her strike. She gave him a bloodthirsty grin and backed off.

"We need to move. Head for home," she ordered her boys. She turned back to the gasping green clad teen. "Whoever you're working for, tell him he's pissed me off. Leave and don't come back."

He stared at her and stumbled off. She looked at her boys and motioned for them to hurry. She could see the cops running toward the source of the explosions. They all took off toward the Sawada house. It was close and she really needed to talk to her boys. She had the feeling this wasn't over. If this Rokudo Mukuro was as dangerous as she thought, she'd have deal with him personally.

Tsuna sighed as she fell back onto her bed. Takeshi and Hayato smiled from where they were sitting on the floor. She pulled herself upright and smiled at them. A wry smirk made its way onto her face as she got up and knelt in front of Hayato.

"You did well out there," she stated and kissed him. He tensed up. She could feel the heat coming up from his face. "I'm proud."

"Tsuna-hime," the Italian whispered. He gulped and lifted a hand to his lips in mild shock. She hadn't kissed him before. His lips tingled where she had touched. He knew his face was a flaming red color. He could feel it.

"He looks so cute when he blushes like that," Takeshi said before using one hand to turn the bomber's face toward him. He leaned forward and pecked him on the lips. Hayato let out a sort of squeaky noise before almost shrinking into a puddle of embarrassment and warmth before his two… lovers? He shook his head. That didn't work simply because they hadn't done anything sexual. Yet, a little voice in the back of his head whispered. That he ignored. Maybe boyfriend and girlfriend?
'Hayato?' Tsuna said as she waved a hand in front of his face before turning to Takeshi. "I think we broke him."

"Ah, Tsuna-hime. Sorry. I'm listening," he squeaked as he straightened back up.

Tsuna leaned back and sat down. Her legs stretched out in front of her, bracketing the bomber between them. "Tell me, Hayato, have you ever heard of Rokudo Mukuro?"

Trying to ignore the fact he was in between his boss's legs, he tried to remember the name. A moment later he shook his head. "It isn't familiar."

She sighed and leaned back. Her arms stretched out behind her to balance her as her head tilted back, revealing the long line of her neck. "I hadn't thought so, but I thought I'd check."

"Tsuna?"

"As of two months ago, Rokudo Mukuro escaped from a mafia prison," here she stopped as Hayato let out a sharp gasp. She sat upright and frowned at the pallor that had overcome Hayato's face. "Hayato?"

"There's only one mafia prison, Tsuna-hime. The Vendicare. It's supposed to be impossible to escape from."

"I see." She hummed low in her throat as Takeshi shuffled himself behind their boyfriend and wrapped him in a hug. The Italian looked like he could use some comfort. "That's worrying."

"Tsuna-nee!" Lambo shouted as he came flying up the stairs and doing a flying tackle into Tsuna's lap. He smiled up at her and clung to her stomach like a limpet. I-Pin came into the room at a more sedate pace. She looked at Lambo and sighed. Shaking her head, she tucked herself next to the yakuza boss.

"I-Pin, what's wrong?"

"Can't find Fuuta."

Tsuna's blood ran cold. Her intuition flared as the bits of information she had started to slot together. How had this Rokudo gotten Fuuta's ranking? Where was Fuuta? Where was her son?

"Tsuna," Takeshi muttered. Tsuna looked at him and frowned. He was sweating. She blinked and realized everyone was shivering and sweating and staring at her in fear. Her Flame was raging. Frost had begun to form under her and spread out. She drew in a deep breath and drew her Flames back inside. The tense, heavy, overpowering atmosphere evaporated.

"Tsunami," Reborn's voice came from the doorway. Everyone looked over at the baby hitman. He came inside, closed the door behind him, and hopped onto the desk before facing his student. "I take it you've found out about Fuuta?"

"Yes. How long have you known?" She stared him down.

"I've suspected since I saw this. I confirmed it an hour ago."

She reached out and held Lambo closer. She needed her kids. "Please tell me you have information."

"I've tracked them down. Rokudo and his people are hiding out in Kokuyo Land."

"Then, we are going to go get Fuuta back and teach this guy a lesson on proper manners."
The door to her bedroom opened with a bang. Bianchi, wearing her goggles so her brother wouldn't have an attack, stood in the doorway with her arms crossed and staring down at the gathered group. Tsuna looked at her and raised a single eyebrow. The poison mistress was being dramatic. This would be good.

"I am coming with you."

"What?" Hayato shouted and jumped to his feet. He glared at his sister while baring his teeth. Bianchi gave him a blank look before looking at Tsuna.

"Why?"

The poison mistress smiled wryly. "Because this is interesting and I want to strangle anyone who would hurt the kid. As often as I've helped your mother watch all three of them, I've become fond of the Ranking Prince."

"His name is Fuuta."

"I know, but you can't forget who he is. It's why he was taken," Bianchi stated as she walked in and closed the door behind her. Hayato backed away, nearly tripping over the combination of Tsuna's leg and Takeshi sitting so close. The swordsman laughed and pulled the bomber into his lap. Tsuna smiled at the sight and curled her legs under her. It was more comfortable.

Bianchi hid a smirk as she watched the interaction between her brother and his loves. That was the other reason she wanted to come. Reborn may have promised to tell her about the interactions of these three, but she wanted to see it for herself. A love story was always so much better when seen in person. Plus she had never seen her brother blush as much as he did around them. It was cute.

"They didn't take Fuuta de la Stella. They took the Ranking Prince."

Reborn nodded solemnly. "It is a good idea. Rokudo came after you in your position as Vongola Decima. I doubt you want to involve your people in this."

Tsuna frowned but nodded. She had tried so hard to keep her mafia and yakuza responsibilities separated. Her tutor was right. She wouldn't be able to call in Rumiko or Yuusuke or any of her people that weren't Flame Bonded, as the hitman had called her connection to her boys. She needed to rely on them for this. Bianchi, whose only connection to her was through her brother and thus an obvious mafia connection, wouldn't alert anyone to the fact she was yakuza.

"I'll agree to this under one condition."

"Yes?" Bianchi smirked triumphantly.

"You don't touch anything edible. I'd rather get through this without getting my stomach pumped."

Hayato, unable to hold it in, laughed at the dumbfounded look on his sister's face. He tucked his head into Takeshi's shoulder and laughed. The swordsman smiled and laughed along with him, his grip on the Italian's hips becoming strong to keep them from falling over. Tsuna smiled at the two of them, but kept her eye on Reborn, who had hopped down from his spot and motioned for I-Pin to come to him. He whispered in the girl's ear and she nodded. Her face tensed into her serious face, grabbed Lambo from where he was laying on Tsuna's lap, and ran out of the room. Tsuna gave her tutor a confused look before shrugging at the smirk he gave her. Her intuition wasn't saying it was dangerous, so she wouldn't worry about it at the moment.

"Tsunami, I won't be able to help much with Leon in the state he's in." The hitman held up a lump of
green that had the chameleon's eyes. His other hand opened and revealed a single Dying Will Bullet. "I also only have one of these."

"Best to save it for an emergency then. I'm getting closer to entering Hyper Dying Will mode on my own and can enter a low level Dying Will Mode without assistance."

"So you say," the hitman said as he put both objects under his fedora. "Well, are you going to wait here?"

A smirk came over Tsuna's lips. "Well, nothing says we can't stop by the office to pick up a few things. I want everyone wearing body armor, and Hayato, we're going to need some of your more interesting experiments."

The look on the bomber's face spelled pain for whoever threaten one of his girlfriend's claimed children. Bianchi looked on in pride at her brother. Though the teen despised her, she had gotten the chance to start making amends and now she was going to get the chance to see him use what she had taught him. She'd have felt sorry for Rokudo Mukuro if he hadn't kidnapped one of the children or sent his men to attack her brother. This fight would be interesting. She could feel it in her bones.
So, back from my vacation. Had a lot of time to write while on the plane/at the airport. Hope everyone enjoys this bit. I'm not entirely certain how good it is. I didn't want to go too far away from canon and the Kokuyo Land arc, minus the fights against Lancia and Mukuro, aren't exactly my favorite of the series. Hope I did these justice, though.

Tsuna, Takeshi, Hayato, Bianchi and Reborn stood outside the ruined remains of Kokuyo Health Land. Time and nature had not been kind to the place. The building stood derelict. The glass windows had been knocked out either by vandals or just the rages of time. Rust had begun to eat away at the unprotected metal. Tsuna reached up and placed her hand on the gate.

"I remember this place. Mom and the Bastard brought me here right before he left permanently." She peered around, looking for a familiar landmark. "It was a lot different back then."

"What happened?"

"The highway overpass got built," Reborn explained. "This road used to be the only way between the Namimori and Kokuyo districts. When the overpass was built, people stopped using this road, and Kokuyo Land just died a slow death."

"I remember the zoo," Tsuna said with a sigh. It was one of the few good memories she had from that time.

Bianchi looked around. "I don't see anything that could be a zoo."

"Really?" Tsuna frowned. "It was this large glass dome thing. It'd be kind of hard to miss. Maybe it's collapsed or something."

"We're standing on it," Reborn stated blandly. "They buried it after this place shut down."

There was a pause.

"We're standing on it?!" all three teenagers shouted just as the sound of glass breaking filled the air. Tsuna and Hayato stumbled back as the ground opened up beneath their feet.

"Takeshi!" Tsuna shouted and crawled carefully over to the hole. Hayato mirrored her movements and they peered down into the darkness.

"I'm OK," the swordsman called up to them. Then the growling started. "OK not so OK."

"Takeshi, hold on. We'll find some way down," she called down to him and turned to her tutor. The baby shrugged. Hayato, nervous at the sounds he was hearing from below, began to look around for anything that could help. The sword idiot had his sword, but there were so many things that could be down there with him.

Takeshi, meanwhile, had stood up and unsheathed his blade. Tsuna and Reborn had insisted he bring along one of the lesser blades the Akatora had in stock as Shigure Kintoki was far too unique a
blade. Should any of these punks figure out just what the blade was, they'd know where to find his father. Despite running away from the yakuza after the death of his wife, his father still had a price on his head that the baby had said bordered on 8 million yen. His muscles tensed and relaxed as he let his inner energy flow. The baby said he was internally manipulating his Rain Flame and that it was a basic ability for a mafioso.

"Hehehe," laughter came from deep in the shadows. Turning slowly just in case whoever was laughing was capable of throwing their voice like that one assassin that had tried to kill Tsuna when they were 14. He still had a scar on his back from where he had been stabbed protecting Tsuna from a death strike. He had gotten lectured after that stunt.

"Kakipi is still unconscious after fighting your Friend and I have no order, but then my prey comes right into my hands," the voice said as there was movement in the shadows. Takeshi's eyes narrowed as he could make out the shape of a person coming closer. Whoever it was had no intention of not being seen, especially as he walked into the light.

"Blond. Kokuyo uniform." Her nose wrinkled as she saw the blond boy wipe his mouth with his sleeve. "Probably drooling excessively. Takeshi, does he have a scar across his face?"

"Yes."

Everyone at the top of the hole looked at her. She frowned. "He's the one who took out Ryohei. Be careful."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime."

"Hime? You actually call her that?" the blond fighter chuckled. "How sickeningly sweet. Che. I'm Joshima Ken. I'll take care of you here."

Takeshi hummed, tilted his head, and smiled. It was his oblivious smile. He'd used it in fights before and never failed to get a reaction from his opponents. It worked this time as the blond teen sneered at him. His hands curled into fists, one hand going to his mouth, and he struck out.

The first thing Takeshi realized was that his opponent was fast, possibly faster than Tsuna had been before beginning training with Reborn. After narrowly dodging out of the way, the swordsman frowned and peered into the shadows where his opponent disappeared into. Second was that the blond teen was crazy. Who rushed a swordsman with a blade in his hand?

"Wait, did you just change?" Takeshi asked as he peered into the shadows.

Ken had changed. His hair was wilder. Lines stretched downward on his cheeks and a tiny picture of a monkey face appeared on his cheek. He crouched on the ground and grinned up at Takeshi. His teeth had changed, become far more dangerous. The teeth looked familiar as well.

"You noticed," Ken snorted as he rose upright. He brought up one hand and stepped into the light. In between his fingers were sets of teeth. None of them looked human. "I can change my fighting abilities like you change out a game cartridge. Pop in a new set, and I've got new skills."

"That is so fucked up," Hayato muttered as he wrote frantically in a small notebook he carried around with him constantly. "Maybe a UMA?"

Tsuna gave the bomber a blank stare before turning her attention back to the fight. There was something about the boy's words that made the hair on her neck rise. There was no natural way to get that kind of ability, or at least she hadn't heard of any. It made her uncomfortable.
Reborn looked over at her. "Tsunami?"

"There's something going on here and it's bothering me."

"Here," Bianchi said as she dropped a roll of rope next to her.

"Not now. Too much of a distraction."

Takeshi ducked out of the way of a wild swing and tried to strike out at the hyper blond, but he was able to jump out of the way with far more agility than his body type said he should have been able to. The swordsman breathed out slowly as he focused on the edge of his blade. Tsuna had tried to explain how she was able to empower his hits before. Now he had to try. He was able to do something similar with Shigure Kintoki, but his familial blade was made to channel Rain Flame. If he was doing it right... A faint line of blue began to shine along it. Success.

"He," Ken laughed and popped in a new set of teeth. "Wolf channel."

The boy's features changed again, his hair spiking up like the fur of a dog. Takeshi and Tsuna blinked in surprise at the sight while Hayato let out a soft noise and started babbling in what Tsuna thought was Italian. Whatever it was, it wasn't something she could understand. Based on the look on Bianchi's face, even if it was Italian it wouldn't have been understandable. Her bomber was babbling science terms again.

"Takeshi, don't kill him," she called down as she noticed the faint blue line on the blade. "We need to interrogate him."

"I'll try, Tsuna!"

Ken growled. He hated being ignored. Drool dripped from his fangs as he dashed at the seemingly distracted swordsman. It was a mistake. A wave of blue collided with him as he got close and his strength just seemed to drain from him in a moment. His eyes struggled to stay open as he fell to the ground. He blearily looked up at the tip of the blade placed right in front of his nose. He groaned and everything went dark.

"Takeshi?" Tsuna called down with concern.

"I'm good. He's down."

It took some maneuvering, but Takeshi was brought up with the unconscious Ken. The Kokuyo fighter was thrown on the ground. Everyone gathered around and looked from the seemingly untouched boy to Takeshi. The swordsman grinned brightly and scratched the back of his neck.

"How?" Tsuna finally asked.

"Well done, Yamamoto," Reborn congratulated the boy. "Your father will be proud you've managed to manifest your Flame without using Shigure Kintoki."

"What?" Tsuna looked over at her tutor and then back at the unconscious body.

"Tsunami, what is the property of Rain Flames?"

"Tranquility," she answered immediately. Her eyes lit up as she made the connection. "Oh."

"That was nice," Bianchi said as she looked the boy over. She rolled him to the side, peeled back his eyelids to check his pupils, and sighed. "He's not going to wake up for a while. We might as well go
"Damn it," the yakuza boss cursed and stood up from where she was kneeling. She looked around. Now where would be the best place to set up a base among the broken buildings? She ran through her memories of the place. The zoo had been one of the main attractions she remembered, but there was one other building that could have been big enough, the theater.

"Sorry, Tsuna-hime," Takeshi apologized with a sheepish look on his face. He hadn't meant to make him fall asleep, just slow him down.

"It's fine, Takeshi," she leaned over and kissed his cheek. "I have an idea of where we should look anyway."

Everyone looked at her. Reborn looked smug. He had figured out where the most likely place Rokudo would be. That his student had realized it so fast made him proud. Her intuition was strong and she was smart enough to use it.

"Where?" Hayato asked as he came up on Takeshi's side. He hesitated for a second before reaching out and brushes his fingers across the back of the sword idiot's hand. Takeshi glanced at him and his smile grew brighter. Unnoticed by any of them, Bianchi had to hide a smile at her brother's actions. She had been so right to come along.

"The theater."

Tsuna sipped at her water bottle. The group had stopped for a rest. They'd need to keep up their strength in case Rokudo sent any more people after them. Her eyes slid over to Reborn and she felt like groaning. How the hell could the hitman just fall asleep like that? Bianchi and her devotion to him remained something that simultaneously creeped her out and made her wonder about the woman's mental health.

"Stop simpering over him, Bianchi," Hayato grumbled. "It's sickening."

"It's love, little brother. You should understand that," she shot back softly as she hovered around the snoring hitman.

Hayato rolled his eyes as he sighed. His sister was insane. He sipped at his water and relaxed against another pile of concrete. Tsuna smirked as she set her water down and sauntered over to her bomber. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him close. He sputtered but fell silent at the mischievous sparkle in her eyes. Takeshi from where he was lounging on the ground, his sword resting beside him, smirked up at his boyfriend. He had a good idea what was coming.

"So, then, you won't mind if I'm a bit...affectionate with my boyfriend, Bianchi?" Tsuna's voice was syrup sweet and brought not happy chills down Hayato's spine. Tsuna shouldn't ever sound like that. It was scary for a reason only the primitive side of his brain could comprehend.

Bianchi, unable to see anything but the Vongola heiress's back, stared with wide eyes as she watched her brother's girlfriend reach out around her brother's hips and do something that made him turn the color of a tomato. Unsure whether to intervene to protect her brother's virtue or just stay out of it, she stayed rooted in place. Takeshi enjoyed the show. He glanced over at the dumb stuck poison assassin. He knew a way to make it even better. He stood up and froze.

Tsuna had turned and shoved Hayato away from her. She landed in a crouch, her eyes darting
around. Takeshi had his blade in his hand a moment later and was on the alert. Hayato, recovering from the unexpected shove, rolled on the ground and came up with two sticks of his dynamite in hand. They were unlit but he could change that in a second. Bianchi blinked and idly wondered at how the three of them moved as a unit as she herself started looking for whatever had set the Vongola off.

"You are perceptive," a female voice came from above. A red haired teen stood on the collapsed roof of one of the many dilapidated buildings. "And the show was just getting interesting."

Tsuna frowned and shifted to a defensive stance. There was something about the girl that made her hair stand on end. As harmless as she seemed, Tsuna could feel the danger she presented. Takeshi and Hayato, seeing her reaction, readied for a fight. The girl brought a clarinet—and Tsuna started to wonder if the mafia had a fascination with weird weaponry—and played a single note. The water bottles, which had been abandoned, exploded in a shower of boiling water.

"How the hell?" Tsuna muttered as she stared at the boiling water splashed on the ground.

"Huh? I thought it would spray further," the redhead tilted her head and grinned. "Well, I'll just have to try again."

"Interesting," Bianchi said with a frown. "That clarinet produces microwaves when you play it."

The redhead humphed. "You figured that out quick, hag. Yes, and those microwaves make water boil and if I can hit you with it, pop goes the person!"

The air became tense. Tsuna turned to look at Bianchi with wide eyes. The woman was practically radiating a dark aura that was nearly visible. Hayato whimpered where he was standing. He had seen his sister this angry only once before. It ended up with her boyfriend at the time dying of massive stomach hemorrhaging. It hadn't been quick and it hadn't been pretty.

"She just fucked up," the bomber muttered as he looked for something to hide behind.

Tsuna grabbed Takeshi's arm and pulled him back. "Bianchi, why don't you take this one?"

"Gladly," the poison mistress snarled as she stepped forward. "I'll finish this before the noise wakes my darling Reborn."

As the two women eyed each other, Tsuna pulled Takeshi over to Hayato and hunkered down behind a piled of twisted rubble and concrete. Tsuna turned to the wide eyed, mildly terrified bomber. "Your sister is insane."

"I know."

"What does an old lady like you think you can do against a young, vivacious woman like me?" The redhead laughed.

Bianchi's hands shook in rage as she ground her teeth together. "You little bitch."

"Ah, ah," the redhead waved a finger and smirked as she brought her clarinet to her lips. She blew a single note and Bianchi jumped back to avoid a barely visible distortion of air.

"So, why are you working for Rokudo? He must be scraping the bottom of the barrel for someone like you."

"You..." the girl growled. "I am MM, the most beautiful assassin in Italy. Mukuro is paying me"
more than enough to deal with you."

"He's paying you too much," Bianchi stated. "Of course no amount of money would make you look beautiful enough to be called the most beautiful assassin in Italy."

MM puffed up like an angered cat, jumped down from the higher ground, and blew another note on her clarinet. Bianchi, realizing she had hit the right button, smirked. Part one of her plan was a success. Squaring her shoulders, the poison mistress reached behind her and pulled out large platters of her special poison cooking.

"Where was she hiding that?" Tsuna muttered.

"You don't want to know," Hayato answered. "Sometimes I think she has access to hammer space, but no proof."

Bianchi smirked as she charged toward the girl and held the platters in front of her. MM reacted just how the poison mistress had hoped and sent out a blast of sound. The platters of poison cooking did as they were supposed to and exploded into clouds of poison gas. MM's eyes widened as she realized what her opponent planned on doing. Removing her clarinet from her mouth, she readied for melee fighting.

"Nice plan," MM sneered as Bianchi got within reach and tried to strike. "Too bad I'm also adept at close combat."

Her clarinet broke down into its nunchuck form. Bianchi inhaled sharply and dropped the platters. Her hand lashed out to block a hit. Her fingers brushed across the reinforced material. Jumping backward to avoid another swing, Bianchi stared at the redheaded assassin and bared her teeth in a vicious snarl.

MM laughed long and loud at the look of defeat on her opponent. "See? Old hags like you have no chance against someone as beautiful as me. Mukuro is going to reward me so much for killing you."

She snapped her wrist and her clarinet reformed into its instrument form. She smirked as Bianchi's eyes widened in fear. Her lips went to the mouthpiece.

"It's over," Hayato stated. Takeshi and Tsuna both looked at him in surprise.

"Don't you have any faith in your sister?" Takeshi asked.

Hayato turned and smirked at him. "No, I mean Bianchi's won."

They looked at him and turned back to the battle. Lo and behold, he was right. The red haired assassin had tensed. Her face turned a sickly white color as she began trembling. The clarinet fell from her fingers. Dark purple smears of something, likely poison, stood stark against her skin. A second later she collapsed to the ground in a heap.

"How?" Tsuna asked.

"Anything she touches can be turned into poison cooking." The bomber sounded smug. "There's a reason she's such a high level hitman."

"Aw, you do love me, little brother," Bianchi turned and crooned at him.

"And Reborn didn't even wake up." Tsuna looked over at the still snoring baby. "That's actually pretty impressive."
"How…?" MM managed to choke out.

"I am a named hitman, girl. Poison Scorpion Bianchi."

The girl convulsed for a moment as the poison worked its way through her body and fell still. Bianchi triumphantly smirked and hurried over to the slumbering hitman. She cooed and swooned over his sleeping form and succeeded in creeping out Tsuna and Takeshi again. Hayato, used to his sister after the many lessons and bonding sessions Tsuna had forced them to go through, just rolled his eyes. He may have started getting along with her better, but the woman drove him insane. She was crazy as a bedbug.

"Is she dead?" Tsuna asked as she approached the prone body. She nudged the body with her toe and frowned. Completely unconscious. She sighed. It would have been nice to have someone to interrogate.

"She shouldn't be. I didn't have enough contact for it to do anything besides knock her out," Bianchi said from where she was hovering over Reborn. The snot bubble coming from the baby's nose popped and his eyes open. "Reborn! Did you have a nice nap?"

Tsuna shook her head and turned away in an attempt to ignore the sight of a grown woman fawning over a baby. Even if her instincts told her Reborn wasn't actually a baby, the sight made her instinct to protect children from predators flare when the Poison Scorpion acted as she did. In an effort not to punch out her ally and elder sister of one of her boyfriends, she tried to ignore the girl's actions.

"Hehehe. Someone managed to take out the gold digger," a reedy thin old man's voice called out. Everyone turned to see who was speaking and frowned at the sight on a man in a trench coat, leaning on a cane, with a bucket hat on his head. Two canaries were perched on his shoulders. There was something catching the light around their necks. Tsuna's instincts flared a warning that nearly knocked her on her rear. Whoever this man was, he was dangerous.

The man let out a chuckle as he saw the surprised looks on the teenagers' faces. The infant hadn't given a reaction, but if that was truly Reborn like the rumors said, he wouldn't have a visible reaction. He looked down at the unconscious body of MM and scoffed. The girl had fallen for such an obvious ruse. Really, he had no idea why Mukuro trusted the greedy narcissist for anything.

"Who are you?" Tsuna asked.

The old man grinned at her. He recognized her as Mukuro's target from Chikusa's description when he came back bloody and passing out. The boy had barely had enough time to get out the basic description before passing out. Birds had immediately sent his precious canaries out to find out who the twins should target. A smirk crawled across his lips at the thought.

"I am Birds, my dear."

"I am no one's dear. I take it you work for Rokudo?" she snapped back. Her teeth flashed in an attempt to intimidate him. He just chuckled.

He tapped his cane on the ground and his two babies flew to a point they could project what their siblings were watching. "Ah, you caught me."

"Bastard," Hayato growled and lifted two sticks of dynamite. He was wary. So far everyone Rokudo had sent after them were experienced and had deadly techniques. The old man seemed to be just that, an old man. It made him nervous.

"I wouldn't do that," Birds stated and snapped his fingers. "You never know what might happen."
Tsuna's blood froze. Her instincts screamed at her that something was wrong, she just couldn't figure out what. Had the area been laced with explosives, Hayato would have noticed. It was kind of hard to ambush an explosive expert with explosives.

The objects around the birds' necks revealed themselves to be projectors. There was a flicker as they projected images of Namimori as seen from above on the largest section of still intact wall there was. The gathered teens plus Bianchi watched in confusion before it became rapidly apparent what was going on. Hana and Kyoko appeared on one side while Sawada Nana appeared on the other.

"No," Tsuna whispered, the sound harsh in her throat.

"The look on your faces, how wonderful!" the old man tilted his head back and let out a psychotic laugh. "I love seeing people's surprised faces."

Takeshi, the most silent of the group, fingered the grip of his blade. It was at his side rather then his back where he favored it, but he did know a few quick draw techniques that could take apart the little man. No one threatened Sawada Nana and lived. The Akatora had agreed on that long ago.

"Ah, ah," the old man smirked at them. "We wouldn't want anything untoward to happen to your friends."

"You sick fuck," Bianchi snapped. She respected Sawada Nana. The woman may have been scatterbrained due to her illness, but she had raised an amazing daughter. The kindly woman didn't deserve to be dragged into mafia business.

"What…?" Tsuna started to ask before falling silent as the projectors showed just what the old man had threatened her friends and mother with. They were like something out of a nightmare. Their eyes, they looked like they didn't have any. She hoped that they were wearing masks but had the distinct feeling they weren't. Their faces were sunk in and wrinkled. They resembled mummies with the lack of visible eyes and thin mouths. Their long limbs and even longer in proportion fingers made her stomach churn. The hairless duo looked like something out of a horror movie.

"Those are the Bloody Twins. If anything happens to me, well," he paused and the two monsters on the screen lifted their hands. Nails lengthened and became sharp.

"What do you want?" Tsuna's voice was flat. She never took her eyes off the images. Hana and Kyoko were talking. Neither had noticed their silent stalker. Her mother was in much the same situation. Just the fact the man, and she used the term loosely, was so close to her mother made her blood boil.

"Kehihi," the man laughed wildly again, tilting his head back with the strange look of euphoria on his face. He calmed and looked at Tsuna. "Well, Vongola, it's up to your men to keep your friends safe."

"What do you want?" Tsuna repeated through clenched teeth. Her hands curled into fists. Arms shook with the effort to not attack the psychotic man. He would die even if she had to rip out his throat with her teeth to do so.

"Punch your boss."

There was silence for a second before both her boys shouted in surprise. Birds tilted his head back and laughed again. The sound was really beginning to grate on Tsuna's nerves.

"Never," Hayato snapped. Takeshi just remained silent though his eyes had narrowed into one of his more terrifying glares that promised death and torture, not necessarily in that order, to whoever it was
aimed at.

"Kehihi. Then your friends die." There had to have been a signal sent, though Tsuna wasn't certain how or what it was. The Bloody Twins stalked forward, disappeared from sight, and something in both projections was rendered into tiny bits. A lamppost behind Kyoko ceased to exist and a bush got a rather vicious pruning.

"Do it." Tsuna looked away from her boys as they stared incredulously at her.

"Tsuna…" Takeshi started to say only to fall silent at her look. Hayato didn't say anything, just shook his head.

"There's no way out of this. Hit me."

"No." Hayato rapidly shook his head. His eyes shone with unwanted tears. He was not going to hit her. He would not be that kind of man.

"Do. It." Her voice was steady, her eyes hard. She truly wanted her boys to hit her. Neither moved to do so. She inhaled sharply.

Bam!

Tsuna moved with the hit. Her hand came up to her cheek. She looked up at Bianchi with wide eyes. The poison mistress's eyes were wide and there was the hint of fear within them. The woman remembered the time Tsuna had nearly killed her. Still, she wasn't going to let her brother do such a thing to his girlfriend.

"Bianchi!" Hayato shouted even as he went to Tsuna's side.

"It's OK," Tsuna said as she placed a hand on his shoulder. Her hand shot out and grabbed Takeshi's shoulder as he took up a guard position in between in boss and Bianchi. "Stand down, Takeshi."

"Tsuna," the swordsman whined, though if it had been anyone other than Tsuna they wouldn't have been able to tell.

"She did just what I asked."

"Kehihi." Birds tilted his head back and laughed. Tsuna turned a nasty look at the man. He smirked. "Such surprise. So perfect."

"Oh, shut up," Hayato snapped and shook a dynamite loaded fist in his direction.

"Ehi, we wouldn't want anything to happen, would we?" Again everyone's attention went to the projections. The Twins had moved. Now they loomed right behind their unaware victims. Tsuna's throat tightened and breathing became difficult as she saw the horrific figure menacing her mother.

"What do you want? I doubt seeing me getting punched in the face was all you were after."

"Astute, Vongola." The man smiled sinisterly. He tapped his cane on the ground. The outer wood shell trembled and fell, revealing a sword. Tsuna frowned. She had a good idea what he was going to ask.

"Vongola, stab yourself with this."

"No!" both of her boys instantly shouted and pulled her back behind them. She blinked and looked up at their backs. She had wanted her boys to get along, but being this in sync was a little ridiculous.
"Then the Twins will take care of your friends." The old man smirked and chuckled darkly.

"You bastard," Hayato growled and took a step forward only to stop at the scene on the wall. The Twins loomed over the women. Their nails aimed directly for the neck. Tsuna stood up and dodged around her men. She couldn't let them be killed because of her. She snatched the blade out of the old man's hand and stepped back. She glared at him and lifted the blade.

"Tsuna, no," Hayato whispered.

She bowed her head and thrust the blade downward.

"No!" Takeshi yelled and tried to reach out for her.

Everyone froze. Their eyes locked with where Tsuna was holding the blade just above her leg. The point was centimeters away from piercing through. Her eyes weren't on the blade, but on the projections. Her eyes widened. Everyone followed her gaze and gaped.

"You shouldn't accost such nubile young women," Shamal stated as one of the Twins lay on the ground several feet away from where he had been. The cause? Shamal's lifted foot. The doctor had kicked the horror in the face. Never had Tsuna been so glad she had learned to read lips. The doctor said something to the girls and they left with odd looks on their faces. Hana looked tense. Kyoko looked thoughtful. Both girls had tense, worried eyes. Shamal smirked down at his fallen prey. The horror stood upright and reached for the doctor only to lock up.

"You really shouldn't vibrate that much," he said with a grin. The skin of the horror began to bubble. Its body twisted and Tsuna was certain that if they had been present, everyone would have heard bones crack. A moment later, a corpse fell to the ground.

Attention turned from that scene to Nana. Two familiar people stood in front of the Sawada matriarch.

"Reborn?"

"Yes, Tsunami."

"Did you tell I-Pin to get Lambo and keep watch over Mom?"

"What do you think, Tsunami?"

"Reborn, thank you. Remind me to have Mom make you tiramisu soon."

I-Pin and Lambo, or at least the 10-years later version of her children, stood protectively in front of Nana. I-Pin was in a more aggressive stance. Her long hair, tied in pigtails, flared around behind her with a mind of their own. Lambo, one eye closed, kept his hands on Nana and gently pulled her aside. I-Pin smirked and moved. She jumped, grabbed the horror's arm with her legs, stretched herself across his shoulders, and grabbed his other arm. A movement and everyone watching had to wince at the sight of arms being dislocated and broke. I-Pin ended it quickly with an open palm strike to the throat. The horror's mouth opened in a silent effort to breathe before falling limp.

"Fon is going to be so proud of her," Tsuna muttered with a smile. Though the martial arts master had wanted to keep his apprentice out of organized crime, she knew that would be impossible. The 10-year later version of the Chinese girl looked healthy and happy, even if she was obviously battle hardened.

"You're going to tell him about this?" Reborn asked with a raised brow. He had contacted his fellow
Arcobaleno soon after I-Pin had fallen under Tsuna's protection. The martial artist had only good things to say about his student and Reborn was oddly proud that the young woman had such contacts. It would serve her well once she officially become Decima.

"As soon as we take care of Rokudo."

"How?" Birds gaped at the defeat of the Bloody Twins. His eyes widened as he turned to the assembled group. He opened his mouth to shout, but it was too late. Takeshi was already on him. His blade sang as it slid through skin. Cut through muscles and tendons and scraped along bone. The man let out a pain filled shriek before falling silent as a stick of dynamite, lit, was thrust into his mouth by a sadistically grinning Hayato. He only had a few seconds to flail and feel his eyes widen before the stick detonated.

"You two are terrifying when you're both pissed," Tsuna said blankly. Both of them turned to look at her and smiled. Both were covered in blood and viscera. It was a discordant sight.

"Such strong Guardians. You are lucky, Tsunami. It looks like there's only one more escaped convict he can throw at us," Reborn said. Tsuna sighed but nodded. She couldn't deny the hitman's words. Her ears pricked as she heard noises, the sound of rustling brush. Her head snapped toward the noise. A young boy with light colored hair peeked out from behind a tree.

"Fuuta? Fuuta, are you OK? Come here. We'll get you somewhere safe," Tsuna stepped forward.

"Stop!" the boy shouted. Tsuna stopped in her steps. "I can't go. I'm sorry, Tsuna-nee."

"Fuuta, it's OK. We're here now. We can get you away," she tried to coax the scared boy out. Her temper flared as her instincts told her someone had harmed the boy she saw as a son.

"I'm not coming back. I'm with Mukuro-san now," he whispered and took off into the woods. Tsuna's eyes narrowed. Her boys, realizing what she was planning, tried to reach out to stop her. She slipped out of their outstretched hands and took off after her son. There was something very off with the boy.

Hayato and Takeshi started to run after her. A loud thunk and the rattle of metal caused them to stop and turned. A man in a Kokuyo uniform stood. In his hand was a chain attached to a large iron ball. The boys and Bianchi instantly went on the defensive. Even Reborn shifted to a more offensive stance. This man was dangerous. They could all feel it.
The woods were lovely, dark and deep, but Tsuna didn't notice as she ran in the direction Fuuta had gone. She had no idea what had gotten into the boy. It was too early for Stockholm Syndrome to set in, or so she hoped. Plus Fuuta had looked scared, but her instincts told her he wasn't afraid of her but for her. Something about the boy just seemed off, even more than his fear and his words.

"Fuuta! Fuuta, come out! I promise I'm not mad," she called, her voice echoing in the silence. She stopped. Silence. There shouldn't've been silence. Birds should have been in the trees. Insects should have been buzzing around. The fact that neither was present made the hairs on her neck stand on end.

"What in the world?" she whispered.

"Ah, are you here to save me?" a boy's voice came from behind her.

She jumped and spun around while dropping into a fighting stance. A male teen with blue hair styled oddly—it reminded her of a pineapple actually—and wearing a Kokuyo uniform. His hair style hid his right eye from view, but his visible one looked calm and glad to see her. She stared at the boy but didn't relax. Something told her not to.

"Who are you?"

"Himura Yahiko. Did you come here to save me? Thank you."

Tsuna took a step back as he walked forward. While his voice was soft and friendly, it still made her wary. Everything about the boy screamed nice, kind, gentle, but there just was something wrong.

"Are you being held hostage here like my son?"

"Son?"
"Yes, a young boy with light hair and a foreign accent. Rokudo took him and has done something to him. He ran when I saw him."

"Ah, the little boy. Yes, I'm a hostage like him. Rokudo is just too strong to go against." The boy smiled. "You must be very strong to try."

Tsuna simply smiled and inclined her head. "I didn't come on my own. My friends are strong as well."

"Oh, how many friends came with you?"

"Two. Another two are one of my friend's sister and my tutor, Reborn." Tsuna's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Is this Reborn strong, good in a fight?"

Tsuna chuckled. Her lips curled into a smirk. "You give yourself away."

"Huh?" the teen was confused but there was a hardness in his eye that hadn't been there.

"You reacted to Reborn's name. Recognized it even. Only those of us involved in the Underworld would know him at all. Based on what I've seen of Rokudo's men, you must be the soft option; getting close to your opponent before putting a knife in their back."

The boy's eye narrowed. His lips turned downward into a frown. The congenial air disappeared. "How astute. Vongola's famous Intuition?"

"We have two options: fight or you let me leave." Tsuna challenged.

His head tilted slightly, his hair swaying out of position. Tsuna held her smirk in place by force of will only at the sight of his right eye. An eye that red was not natural. It made her uncomfortable, made her instincts screech. Her hands curled into protective fists. He raised an eyebrow but stepped aside. The dark chuckle coming from him as she stepped back slowly caused her stomach to churn. She kept going, never turning her back on the unnerving boy. She needed to get back to the others. Safety in numbers.

As his prey vanished into the brush, Mukuro chuckled in amusement. She wasn't really what he had been expecting. Most of the information came second hand from what people had heard the head of the CEDEF say about his "precious, sweet princess." She had the legendary Vongola intuition, that was obvious. She wouldn't have been able to see his reactions or have been as nervous as she had been around him without it. He frowned slightly and shook his head. It didn't matter. She'd fall just like the others.

"So that was Vongola?" Chikusa asked as he stepped out of his hiding spot.

"Yes. Interesting, isn't she?" The blue haired boy smirked. "Did you find the boy?"

"The others are taking him to the base."

"Good." His eyes narrowed. "This Reborn could be a problem, though. Rumors did say she was being taught by one of the Arcobaleno."

"Arcobaleno?"

"The strongest of the strong, all infants and identified by the pacifiers around their necks." He
chuckled. "Getting one of them would be almost as good as getting her. Let's head back. I want to see if the Arcobaleno will become involved personally or if the girl will be able to do anything about Lancia."

"Then, we wait?"

"Yes. Wait and see." The teen with the bi-colored eyes chuckled, the sound echoing in between the trees.

Bianchi, Hayato and Takeshi stood defensively as a man holding a chain attached to a large iron ball with odd grooves cut into it's surface. All three were nervous. It took some serious strength to drag something like that around and it didn't look like this person had dragged it anywhere. The sheer strength necessary to carry that thing was enormous.

"We're going to need to work together to beat this guy." Hayato growled.

"Don't bother," the man said and took off his hat. He had messy black hair and black markings on his face near his chin. Everyone standing before him gasped. He matched the picture from the file Reborn had showed them.

"Rokudo Mukuro," Takeshi stated.

"You don't stand a chance," the man said.

"I'll take point," Takeshi said as he stepped forward. Out of all of them, save the baby, he was the best point man. Hayato and Bianchi both worked best where they could prepare and fight at a distance. The siblings nodded and moved.

Rokudo snorted and lifted the iron ball. The skin around the eye twitched ever so slightly. Drawing his hand back, he threw. Takeshi's eyes widened as he moved to get out of the way, but there was something wrong. He could feel himself being dragged back toward the giant ball. Eyes widening, he tensed, preparing himself for impact. The impact hurt. He could feel bones break and himself be thrown away from the iron sphere. Everything ached. White clouded over his eyes as the pain flared in his mind. His body bounced twice before landing on the ground.

"Takeshi!" Hayato yelled. The swordsman could barely hear him through the pain.

"How?" Bianchi whispered. "He dodged it."

"Now you know," Rokudo said as he pulled the iron sphere back to him, "you don't stand a chance."

"Shit," Hayato growled and pulled out two sticks of his more powerful explosives. Moving fast, the bomber ran around to the side. Rokudo's eyes followed him. Bianchi took the chance to rush out and pull the swordsman to safety.

Reborn looked over him and nodded grimly. "He'll be fine. Give him a second to recover."

"Bastard," Hayato barked as he threw one of the lit sticks at the man.

Pulling his hand up, the iron ball rockets into the air and knocked the stick out of the way. It exploded to the side, kicking up dust and dirt. Hayato smirked, unseen. That had been what he wanted. His hands went to one of the pouches he kept his more interesting concoctions and threw it into the dust. He ducked away just in time as the dust was blown outward. The smoke bomb rolled to Rokudo's feet and went off.
Blue smoke rose into the air and the man began to choke. His eyes watered as he moved out of the smoke. His free hand was over his mouth. Bloodshot eyes shot toward the bomber. Bianchi watched from the side. She was impressed with her brother. She knew he was working on some anti-personnel weapons but hadn't expected him to have anything ready yet.

Rokudo's lips pulled back. He swung outward. The iron ball sailed through the air. Hayato tried to dodge out of the way but felt himself being sucked into the path of the ball. He, like his boyfriend, had only seconds to stare in shock before the sphere hit him hard in the chest and sent him flying backwards.

"Hayato!" Bianchi screamed. The bomber groaned as he hit the ground and bounced. After coming to a stop, he pushed himself up onto his hands and knees.

"No, Haya," Takeshi muttered as he pulled himself upward. He staggered to his feet. His eyes were hard and glinting darkness. His hand went up and gripped his blade.

"Useless," Rokudo growled and turned his attention toward the gathered trio. Once more he threw the iron ball. Takeshi rushed out, braced himself, and used his blade as a bat. His Flame rushed through his body, keeping his body loose and washing away part of his pain. His eyes the arc of the ball and swung. Dust and smoke flared upward and outward. It made it much easier to see what was happening.

"Is that an air current?" Bianchi whispered.

"The grooves of the surface of the ball," Reborn nodded.

The iron ball hovered in midair for just a moment as the momentum of Takeshi's swing fought against the thrust of the ball. The air swirled up along the grooves of the iron ball. The smoke and dust followed the air and swirled around the orb. The faintest phantoms of snakes flared outward and the sphere went from hovering in midair to slamming forward at rapid speed. Takeshi's eyes widened and he jumped out of the way. He could feel the wind trying to send him backward, but he seemed to have jumped just far enough to stay out of the more powerful part of the suction. He stood up only to get knocked back down as the ball came shooting back at him, thrown at a slower speed. It hit his side. His body lifted into the air and went flying. He rolled bonelessly to a stop on the ground.

"No," Hayato whispered. He rose to his feet and hissed as his muscles told him just how bad of an idea that was. He hadn't felt that bad since he accidentally got caught in the edge of one of his explosions a few years ago.

"Try to stand up to this," Bianchi said in an effort to take the attention off her brother. She pulled out another platter of her poison cooking. Rokudo's eyes narrowed at the sight and his hand twitched. The iron ball came to rest at his side. Bianchi threw her cooking at the man. He moved far faster than she had anticipated him being able to. Dodging out of the way, he used his momentum to swing the iron ball on its chain toward her. Her eyes widened as she felt the air pressure change and actually hold her in place. Her eyes widened and met Reborn's from where he was tending to the unconscious Takeshi.

"Aneki," Hayato whispered in muted horror. There wasn't anything he could do. He couldn't move fast enough, couldn't use his dynamite to knock the weapon out of the way. He snarled.

Rokudo closed his eyes as he waited for his weapon to finish its deadly arc. The woman had no chance of surviving the hit, unlike the two boys. He could see the difference in their physiques. Her lithe form wouldn't be able to handle it.
The chain went slack. His eyes opened only to go wide. A new teen, a girl with spiky brown hair and eyes that glowed like fire embers, stood in front of his weapon. Using only her hands, she had stopped it in place.

"Tsunami," Bianchi whispered in awe at the sight. She could feel the power radiating from the girl and saw the tiny wisp of Sky Flame appear on her brow.

"Dying Will Mode," Reborn muttered to himself. "Almost there."

"Bianchi, are you OK?" Tsuna asked without turning around. She had managed to get back to where she had left the others just in time to see the dark haired man try to kill her boyfriend's sister. Something had snapped inside of her. She felt the rush of heat she associated with her Flame rush through her body. Her focus sharpened and narrowed and her body moved without her thinking. It was the familiar state of Dying Will Mode.

"I'm fine," the poison mistress stated.

"Humph. Vongola, so you make you appearance," Rokudo stated and yanked the chain back toward him. Tsuna released her hold on the iron ball before she was yanked along as well.

"Rokudo Mukuro." Though something in the back of her mind wobbled at calling the man in front of her that. He was definitely the person from the file Reborn had shown her, but something just didn't feel right about calling him that. She didn't have much time to contemplate it as she was moving out of the way of another attack. She didn't quite manage to get completely away and was clipped by the iron ball.

Bouncing along the ground, she tried to think of a way to fight this guy. He was strong. He had to be to throw that thing around as easily as he was. Her lips pursed as her mind raced. Instinct began to take over as Dying Will Mode asserted itself more firmly in her mind. She knew from experience that calm, rational thought would soon be leaving her as her Flames and instincts took over. It was one of the major downsides of being able to only enter Dying Will Mode rather than the more advanced Hyper Dying Will Mode.

"Tsuna, look out!" Hayato shouted a second too late. Tsuna felt herself being sucked into the air currents caused by the iron ball and cursed mentally. Her muscles tensed. Flames flared. She felt the impact of the iron ball and groaned as it pressed her down into the ground. Idly in the back of her mind, she noted the man's eyes were once again closed.

"It's over," Rokudo stated only for his eyes to open wide as he felt his weapon being moved. He had only a second to release his grip on the chain before the ball was thrown into the air and the Vongola heiress stood from where he had knocked her down.

"Not quite."

Rokudo hummed. His hands curled into fists. That was the only warning Tsuna had before she was being thrown across the area into a wall. She gasped only for Rokudo to appear next to her and send her flying with another hit.

"The iron ball and chain are hobbies of mine," he explained as he stalked toward Tsuna. His eyes bored into hers and that strange feeling of disconnect between the man and his actions started biting away at the back of her mind. Still in the throes of Dying Will Mode, she couldn't focus on it, but she was aware of it. Flame began to curl up around her fingers unbidden.

"My true strength is my body," he finished as he rushed her again. Her head tilted out of the way of
the first punch. She dodged around the follow up and danced out of his reach. Her muscles burned and ached from overuse. Everything hurt, but her opponent was still standing. She hadn't managed to land a single hit. The tiny motes of Sky Flame on her fingers began to grow.

"You don't stand a chance," he said as he appeared behind her. His eyes closed as he repeatedly struck at the girl. She was forced to bring up her arms to block the savage assault that drove her into the ground with the sheer force of his hits. Opening his eyes, he stood back and waited for the dust to settle.

He didn't expect the punch to the gut.

Tsuna's breath came hard, but she had managed to get one hit in. The man stumbled back from the blow, more surprised than anything. She didn't let up on her chance and pursued.

"It's you that doesn't stand a chance. You won't unless you come at me with everything you have," she stated as she swung and hit his side as he tried to dodge out of the way. "Stop holding back, if you can."

"What?" Bianchi gaped.

Tsuna smirked. "He hasn't been putting himself fully into this fight. Anytime he does what he thinks is a finishing strike, he closes his eyes. He doesn't want to watch what happens. It's weakness."

"Damn you," the man muttered as he tried to fight back. Tsuna, having regained the high ground, ducked under a punch and kicked out at his knee. He stepped back only to realize a second later that was what she wanted as he tripped over a piece of rubble and fell. A second later her fist met his face.

He laid there on the ground, staring up at the sky. Something had shifted when the girl hit him. His mind felt clearer than it had in a long time. His inhaled sharply as it hit him. He couldn't feel the connection between him and the demon child. He lay there, stunned.

Tsuna stood over him and nodded. "It's over. The wisp of Flame on her forehead disappeared as if it had never been.

"Tsuna-hime," Hayato shouted as he rushed to her side and glared down at the prone man. Tsuna's hand shot out and grabbed his shoulder before he could do anything rash.

"So, who are you, exactly?" Tsuna asked much to the surprise of everyone save Reborn. The hitman had figured it out about the same time as Tsuna had.

"Ah, so you figured that out," the man groaned as he tried to sit up. Now that the demon boy wasn't possessing him, every ache and pain from the fight felt magnified. "My name is Lancia."

"What, but he matches the picture of Rokudo Mukuro that was in the file," Hayato stated in shock.

Tsuna shrugged and let go of the bomber's shoulder. "He's a fall guy. I just don't get why you're fighting for Rokudo. You obviously didn't want to hurt us."

"I wasn't willingly," Lancia said. He let out a long breath. "Rokudo Mukuro ruined my life and then took it over."

"There's a story behind that," Reborn said. "I think I've heard your name before. Lancia, the strongest man in Northern Italy, correct?"
"Ah, yes. Surprising that one of the Arcobaleno knows my name. I was once a member of a famiglia in Northern Italy. I had been taken in as a small child and raised by them. It was something the famiglia did to keep numbers up and stay strong. Everyone brought in stayed loyal out of gratitude, at least until he came. Rokudo Mukuro was placed under me, for me to raise. I treated him well, raised him as I would my own." Here Lancia fell quiet as he remember back to those days with his family. It burned deep within what had happened next and he cursed the name Rokudo Mukuro. "It wasn't too long after the boy was placed in my care I started to have blackouts. There would be times, only a few minutes or so at first, where I couldn't remember what I had done. Then…then…"

"Then your famiglia was killed. I remember hearing about the massacre," Reborn said with a nod.

"No. They weren't just killed." Lancia sucked in a deep breath. "I killed them. I woke from one of my blackouts with blood over my hands and everyone dead around me, everyone except for him. That devil child laughed and explained what he had made me do and then demonstrated he could do it again and again."

"That's horrible," Tsuna muttered as she stared down at the man. Her heart ached for him. For him to be the cause of his family's death, it must have broken something inside of him. At least now she had an understanding of why the man's actions had seemed so disjointed to her intuition.

"How did he make you do it?" Hayato asked, his head tilting to the side in confusion. "That would take some pretty heavy hypnotism to do and I'd think you'd have noticed him trying that."

"It wasn't hypnotism. It was——" whatever he was going to say next fell silent as a shower of needles came from the forest and struck the prone man. Tsuna whipped around only to see the backside of the teen Hayato had fought retreating at a run. She took a step after him but stopped.

"Damn it," she cursed and turned back to the man. Hayato and Bianchi, the two who had the most experience with poison in the group, had already begun to tend to the man.

Grabbing one of the needles that had missed, Bianchi sniffed the tip. Her nose wrinkled at the sour smell. "I know this poison."

"He's not dead," Hayato said as he checked Lancia's pulse.

Tsuna nodded. "Bianchi, is there an antidote? Can you make one?"

She shook her head. "It's rare, but if the boy is really a poison user, he'll have the antidote on him in case he nicks himself. This particular poison is difficult to develop an immunity to."

"I'll put him down for good this time," Hayato promised Tsuna as he stood up.

"Right," she nodded and turned to where Takeshi was still laying on the ground. Reborn had gone over to the boy and looked him over. "How is he?"

"He'll survive," the hitman said. "Let's pull him out of the sun and get moving. The faster you can take down the real Rokudo Mukuro, the faster we can get him help."

"Ah." She nodded her head and looked up into the distance. There was only one building nearby that could be used as a good shelter, which the yo-yo boy would have needed after his fight with Hayato. Her lips pursed into a thin line before curling up into a snarl. She was going to find this Rokudo Mukuro and kill him. He would pay for all the suffering he had caused. She'd make certain of it.
Hayato took point as the group entered the theater building. Though the building looked more intact and sturdy than those around it, the place was still a wreck of rubble and decay. The air wasn't stale at least. The sheer amount of broken windows made for decent airflow.

"This place is creepy," Hayato muttered as the rest of their group followed behind him.

"Perfect place to deal with someone who can control others wills," Tsuna said as she looked around the large atrium. Her eyes narrowed on what had at one time been the stairs. They had either crumbled into nothing or been knocked down. She had the feeling the latter was more likely than the former.

"We're being herded," she stated. Bianchi and Hayato both turned to look at her. She shook her head and motioned toward where the stairs should have been. "That is just too clean to be natural. Plus it's something I would do. Control the flow of the battlefield, control the battle. As much as I dislike Rokudo, he does have a tactical mind."

"What do you mean?" Hayato asked, his head tilted to the side like a confused puppy.

"You noticed, Tsunami? I'm impressed," Reborn said as he nodded. Her smiled was grim. "He sent his men to wear us down. He's flushed us out into a place he has knowledge of the terrain and controls it. He has a hostage in Fuuta. He even sent his assassin to silence Lancia before he could tell us anything we could really use against him. We need to find a way up."

Hayato frowned but nodded. He got what she was saying. Everything so far had been them reacting to something that Rokudo had set up. It wasn't in their favor. He went in one direction, peering around corners, while Bianchi and Reborn went in another. As he stepped forward, he stopped as his foot kicked something in the rubble. He knelt down and pulled up a cell phone.

"That's Hibari's," Tsuna said as she reached out and took it from his hand. "I recognize the model and the scratches. He's really hard on his phones."

"So Hibari was here?"

"He likely still is. I have a feeling Rokudo did something to him."

"Can he even be taken out?" Hayato muttered and shivered at the thought of fighting someone able to fight the demon prefect and stop him.

Tsuna snorted. "Anyone can be taken out. We can only hope Rokudo's kept him alive."

"If he thinks he's part of your family, he will," Reborn's voice came from behind the two. Bianchi stood behind Reborn and looked at them both concerned. She knew from stories how strong the prefect was.

Tsuna sighed then snorted. Everyone turned to look at her. "Would you believe Hibari uses the school anthem for his ring tone? It's just something I remembered. I hope he's OK."

Hayato frowned and bit his lips. His girlfriend was worried about another guy who wasn't Takeshi. It was worrying, especially considering just what he and the sword idiot had noticed with the prefect's attention. Jealousy bubbled in his stomach. The prefect didn't deserve her attention.

"A ladder," Tsuna said as the group turned a corner. "It's as good as anything. Everyone be on guard."
As soon as the words left her mouth, everyone heard a noise coming from the shadows. Diving to the side, they just managed to avoid a spray of needles. Hayato rose to his feet, two of his throwing knives appearing in his hands. It was too dangerous to use his preferred weapon in such a derelict building. He had no want of bringing the building down on their heads. His smoke bombs were out for much the same reason. While he may have immunity to his concoctions, the same couldn't be said for Tsuna. His sister and Reborn probably did but his girlfriend hadn't been exposed to those chemicals.

"You," the bomber growled as he caught sight of the beanie wearing, yo-yo using assassin. His lips pulled upward into a snarl. "Tsuna, go. I'll take care of him."

"But—"

"You need to get to Rokudo. Go."

Tsuna inhaled softly and let the breath out slowly. "Be careful. Bianchi, Reborn, let's go."

Hayato tensed as he heard the three climb upward. He didn't dare look away from his opponent. The boy was far too relaxed. His fingers flicked out, his yo-yo weapon bouncing with a movement of the wrist. Everything was still.

Hayato wasn't certain who moved first, but he was forced to jump to the side to avoid being hit by the bladed toys. Two grooves appeared in the ground where he had been standing. The bomber let out a soft snort and lined up his throw. The thin dagger flew through the air only to be smacked away by a flash of red from the assassin's weapon.

"Is that all? How disappointing," Chikusa stated and flicked his wrist. The yo-yo flicked in an upward arc. Hayato wasn't a fool and kept his eyes on the boy. Chikusa struck outward with his second yo-yo. Hayato pushed himself backward. His eyes widened for just a second as the yo-yos speed was far greater than he had expected. The weapon managed to nick his face. The burning sensation coming from it told him the edge of the yo-yo had been poisoned.

"Fuck," Hayato muttered and as he brought his hand to the cut. He pulled a small explosive from one of his hidden pockets. It lit with a small application of Storm Flame. It wasn't powerful, made mostly for the noise aspect than the explosive power. The assassin ducked out of the way. Hayato took the chance to run out of the room. His blood pounded in his veins, circulating the poison faster. His skin began to prickle with sweat. His tongue felt dry. Vision began to blur and double. The world tilted for a second before he felt his legs go out from under him.

"Pathetic. I thought you would actually be a challenge," Chikusa scoffed as he followed after his prey. He blinked and shook his head. He had been spending too much time around Ken if he was thinking like that.

Hayato inhaled dust from the floor and coughed. He hid a smirk as he heard the assassin's footsteps come closer. Moving far faster than he should have been while under the influence of such a strong poison—he would have to think of a way to thank his sister for teaching him how to act even while poisoned—he threw one of his knives behind him. He heard a shout of pain and grinned. Turning over, he smiled viciously at the sight of the beanie boy clutching at his arm where the knife had struck. Blood dripped from under his hand, making his fingers slick and unable to use one of his weapons.

"Rather pathetic, Kakipi," a male voice came from the windows. Two sets of eyes turned to look. The blond animalistic boy, Joshima Ken, sat crouched on the sill. "He's this bad and you can't dodge a knife."
"Ken," Chikusa grumbled. He knew better than to growl at the other. He'd take it as a challenge.

"FUCK, of course you had to wake up," Hayato muttered to himself and hissed as he felt his muscles lock up.

"Let me take a shot, Kakipi," the blond begged as he jumped down from his perch. Chikusa waved his hand. He had an injury to take care of.

Ken grinned, his teeth glinting. He trailed a wild, feral eye on the prone prey. He moved fast and struck hard. Hayato went flying, his back colliding with the ground hard. His momentum carried him further, his body sliding down a short flight of stairs. He let out a groan of pain.

Ken looked down from the top of the stairs and laughed. Chikusa rolled his eyes from where he stood behind the feral boy. The blond began to boast, his words not registering to Hayato in the haze of pain and the fogginess brought on by the poison. One thing that did stand out in his vision due to sheer oddness was the sight of a small, fluffy yellow bird fluttering down and roosting on a small notch in the wall.

"Thought Bird's birds would have flown the coop with the old man dead," Ken said as he tilted his head to the side. He grinned down at the injured, prone bomber. "I saw what you did to him. I got to admit, I like your style. Old man was creepy."

"Ken," Chikusa sighed in obvious annoyance.

"Aw, Kakipi, can't I talk to him before I kill him?"

Hayato's attention turned from the loudly speaking boy to the bird. It's head tilted and turned before it opened its beak. A song, familiar if only because it was played on the school's PA system everyday, filled the air. His eyes widened. His lips pressed together. He focused as best he could. His hand moved ever so slightly to one of his stashes. A stick of explosives dropped into his hand. He chuckled. It was a dry sound.

"Huh? What's so funny?" Ken frowned as he looked down at the downed prey.

Hayato grinned and flicked his hand. The explosive, already lit, flew over his head and landed right in front of the wall behind him. Both of Rokudo's men frowned before the explosive went off. Dust filled the air. Hayato mentally thanked whatever deity was listening that he didn't bring the building down with that last chance attack.

"What the hell? Were you even aiming?" Ken growled. The dust settled.

"Heh. Nice to see you, Hibari," Hayato wheezed out as he caught sight of the prefect sitting on the ground. Steel eyes lifted to look at the downed Italian before lifting upward toward the two assassins. His lips quirked into a smirk.

"What? Seriously. That was your big hurrah?" the blond laughed. "A half-beaten school prefect?"

Hibari growled and stood up. He may have been injured, but he could deal with those two. "Herbivore, I could have escaped."

"Yeah, sure, Hibari," Hayato muttered and relaxed. He smirked as he shut his eyes. The poison burned in his veins. He knew he wouldn't be conscious for much longer.

The prefect looked up at the two assassins and smirked. "I'll take care of these two."
"Why you!" Ken puffed up in anger. Chikusa, much more cautious than his hot headed counterpart, became nervous. There was something in the school prefect's eyes that made him pause. That smirk...

Ken growled and pulled out another set of teeth. Popping them in his mouth, he felt one of the more drastic changes come over his body. His hair lengthened and changed from blond to a tawny brown. Fur crawled down his arms and his fingertips turned into claws. He grinned, showing off long canines. "Lion channel."

The feral boy charged toward the injured duo. Hibari smirked. His foot hooked on his tonfa, flipping them up into his grasp. He moved, one tonfa coming up to block the clawed strike. He pivoted and struck out with the second one. Ken gagged, his breath leaving him in a rush as the steel slammed into his stomach and forced all air from his lungs. He fell to the side. Hibari, taking no chances after his encounter with the demonic eyed teen earlier, hit the feral boy over the head to knock him out. He turned to the other assassin and smirked.

Chikusa had a sinking feeling.

Tsuna's body was tense as they walked through the upper floor of the theater. She knew, intellectually, that she had made the right choice to let Hayato take on the yo-yo wielding assassin on his own, but her heart was heavy with the thought of him being hurt without any backup around to help. Her teeth ground together as she forcibly turned her focus away from the fight she knew had to be taking place below. Hayato would be fine. He'd beaten the assassin before. He could do it again.

The ladder had led up to a long corridor. There had at one time been doors lining it, but those had either been removed once Kokuyo Land had shut down or time had caused them to rot away into nothing. The only door still intact lay at the end of the hall. Tsuna had the distinct feeling that was where she would find the real Rokudo Mukuro. She swallowed and licked her lips. She didn't know why, but she was far more nervous than she had ever been before a fight. Something niggled at the back of her mind, that little voice of her instincts whispering dire warnings.

"Tsunami?" Reborn looked over at her with a raised eyebrow.

"There's something about all this, this set up and everything, that's been bothering me. I just can't put my finger on it."

Bianchi looked over at the yakuza boss and nodded. She understood what was being said. Be cautious, be careful. Take nothing at face value. The Vongola Intuition was truly a legendary thing in the mafia. A person would have to be stupid to ignore such a blatant warning from someone possessing it.

The poison mistress placed her hand on the door and pushed it open. The door let out a loud, screeching creak. The trio stepped inside the room. Everyone was alert.

"Welcome, Vongola X," a voice called from further in the room. Tsuna looked up and frowned at the sight of the blue haired boy sitting on an old, ratty red couch that rested on an elevated platform.

"Rokudo Mukuro, I take it?" Tsuna asked as she stepped forward and suddenly came to a stop. Her eyes widened as she caught sight of the person standing just to the side, halfway hidden by the shadows. "Fuuta!"

The fair haired child stepped forward, but there was something wrong. Tsuna's hackles raised. Her eyes narrowed. Bianchi stepped forward to reach for the boy. Tsuna opened her mouth to shout a
warning, but it was too late. Bianchi gasped. Eyes widened from behind her goggles. A tiny squeak of pain came from her mouth as she fell to the ground, her hands clenching a stab wound to her side. Fuuta looked down blankly with a three pronged blade in his hands. A faint tinge of red colored the center most point.

"What, Fuuta?" Tsuna muttered. The boy turned his blank look on her. Her stomach dropped as she realized what had happened. She didn't have much of a chance to say anything as he struck out at her. She jumped back, landing in a crouch as the boy she saw as a son tried to spear her.

Reborn stepped back. There wasn't anything he could really do. Most of his repertoire leaned toward killing. He knew Tsunami wouldn't allow him to harm the boy, even if the child was a danger. In addition, this was his student's fight. He had promised Vongola Nono he wouldn't interfere unless it looked like she was going to be killed.

"Fuuta," Tsuna gasped as she dodged out of the way of another attempted stabbing. She could hear the blue haired boy laughing from where he was sitting on his raised seat. She snarled. Fuuta flinched. Her eyes widened as she stood up and stared into the young boy's eyes. They were blank, yes, but something shone out from them.

"Oh, Fuuta," she murmured, "none of this is your fault. It's OK."

Fuuta froze. His eyes went wide and the trident-like weapon fell from his loose fingers. "Tsunane..." the boy gasped out before the world tilted and he fell to the ground in a faint.

"Fuuta!" Tsuna rushed over to the boy's side. Not a fool, she kicked the knife away from him just in case Rokudo was able to control him. Her hands brushed over the boy's head. He was burning up, feverish. Fingers pressed to his throat. Pulse was rapid but slowing quickly. Her fingers brushed through the boy's hair in an effort to calm her instincts.

"You had to go and do that," Rokudo said. Tsuna turned, her glare boring into the blue-haired teen. His lips curled upward into a smirk. Really, the girl looked adorable glaring at him like that. She reminded him of one of those yappy, poofy dogs rich women liked to carry around in their purses. "The boy has been awake for two days."

"You fucking bastard," Tsuna growled. Her arms shook as her hands clenched at her sides. Lips pulled back into a snarl.

Rokudo simply laughed at the angry display. "When we got here to Japan, we had no idea where to look for you, Vongola X. There were rumors that the Ranking Prince was associated with you, though. He was too easy to find. He claimed Omerta when I asked, though. Even after I possessed him, he refused to give me any information about you. How loyal."

"That's why you had to use the old rankings to flush Tsunami and her famiglia out," Reborn said as he tilted his fedora over his eyes. The boy had signed his death warrant the moment he admitted to doing anything to Fuuta. Tsunami's protective nature combined with her temper would allow nothing less.

"Ah. And it worked too." Rokudo nodded in agreement as he stood. "I have to admit, I was surprised to find one of the Arcobaleno here. Though, if any of the rumors I found about Vongola X are true, I can see why Vongola Nono would want you to shape her up."

Tsuna was practically vibrating where she knelt beside Fuuta. Her fingers brushed over his cheeks and cleared away the tears that had begun leaking from his eyes. She stood slowly and turned to face Rokudo. Her teeth bared, she growled at the boy. He blinked, drawing back at the sound, before
chuckling. A poofy dog indeed. All bark and fluff but no biting power.

Reborn shook his head at the sight. Rokudo was screwed. The girl was vicious like a mother bear when one of her own was harmed.

"I am going to kill you," Tsuna snarled. Her legs tensed. In Rokudo's hands, a long trident appeared as if by magic. The head of the trident looked very similar to the knife Fuuta had been wielding. Tsuna made a mental note to avoid getting stabbed or even cut. Something about the weapon made her nervous and her intuition told her it was a bad thing.

The two rushed at each other. Rokudo's red eye glowed faintly in the darkness. Reborn frowned as he saw something in the eye change. Tsuna dodged out of the way of the cutting edge of the trident and tried to get in a strike to the boy's side. He moved the shaft of his weapon to intercept. Tsuna growled as she pushed against the metal shaft and landed in a ready position facing the boy.

"What?" she gasped as she saw the dark blue fire that surrounded the bight red eye. "Flames?"

"Oh, so you can see them?" Rokudo asked. That was a surprise, but he would be able to deal with that. "It's an aura of combat skill. I obtained it in the fourth realm Asura."

"Asura? The realms on the path of rebirth?" Tsuna muttered. So, he didn't know about Dying Will Flames? That gave her an advantage. Now, what did the color mean again? It was too dark to be blue, so Rain Flame was out. There was another blue Flame, but she couldn't quite remember what it was.

"I have the experiences of my past lives in all six realms etched into my body. Through those experiences, I have been granted special skills." Rokudo smirked and lifted a hand to cover his eye. "Let me show you. One."

His eye glowed, the pupil changing to the kanji for the number one. He lifted his trident and tapped the non-bladed end on the ground. Tsuna let out a sound of shock as the wooden floor exploded upward in a swell of red light. She felt the floor giving out beneath her. She looked over to the side and saw the unconscious forms of Bianchi and Fuuta falling into the abyss.

"No," she whispered. Her mind blared a warning. There was something wrong.

Indigo. The Flame in Rokudo's eye had been indigo. Construction. Illusions.

Her eyes narrowed as she remembered that lesson Reborn had pounded into her head way back when he had first started as her tutor. Indigo Flame meant Mist Flame, the Flame of Illusionists. She bit the inside of her cheek. Her mind registered the pain. The feeling of falling stopped and the world went back to how it had been before Rokudo had tapped the ground. Standing on steady legs, she smirked at him. He frowned.

"Cute trick," she said blandly. His eyes widened as she rushed at him. He leaned backward, only just managing to avoid the punch to the jaw. He wasn't able to avoid the kick that followed and stumbled back.

He jumped back, wanting more space between him and her. His eyes narrowed. How had she been able to break from his technique? His eyes blinked, the symbol in the right one changing to the kanji for three. "Third path-Animal."

Several objects fell from the ceiling. Tsuna winced at the sight of several snakes, cobras if the hooded heads were anything to go by, uncoiled and hissed at her. Mouths opened, revealing venomous fangs. She twitched ever so slightly. Why did it have to be snakes?
"More illusions?" she asked as she forced her eyes away from the snakes to her opponent.

He smirked. "Ah, no. The Third Path allows me to summon deadly animals."

Her attention snapped back to the serpents. They slithered closer. She took a hesitant step back only to stop at the sound of hissing coming from behind.

"Aren't you going to help your boss, Arcobaleno?" Rokudo asked Reborn.

"Tsunami is not my boss, Rokudo." The baby sized hitman smirked. "She's my student and I have faith in her..."

"Tsuna-hime!" a voice called out from the hall. A moment later several objects were thrown into the air. Tsuna looked up. Her eyes lit up. The explosives hovering in the air exploded, sending the snakes flying. Tsuna herself stood in the center of the explosions. None had come close to touching her.

"Hayato!" she cried.

Rokudo turned to see the door and snorted. The silver haired teen, Smoking Bomb Hayato, leaned against the Hibari boy.

"Hibari, you're safe, too."

"And I have faith in my other students. I haven't only been teaching her," the Arcobaleno said with a smirk. "Don't underestimate them, Rokudo."

"I see. Where is Chikusa?" Rokudo asked.

"Heh. Four eyes and the animal bastard are taking a nap downstairs." Hayato grinned. "Sorry I took so long, Tsuna-hime."

Hibari's eye twitched at the way the herbivore spoke to the omnivore. He looked between the two of them and before shoving the herbivore to the side. "I've repaid my debt."

"Damn it," Hayato gasped as he landed on the ground and glared up at Hibari.

The prefect ignored the look and walked forward. Rokudo smirked and readied his trident. Hibari glowered before rushing forward.

"Hibari," Tsuna muttered as she watched the fight that broke out between the two. The fact that Hibari was being so silent unnerved her. Usually he would be threatening to bite his prey to death, but this silence, it spoke of how enraged the prefect was. Tsuna had seen him like this only once before. A couple of male students had cornered a younger female student and had her half-way undressed when Hibari had found them. The boys had nearly died from the wounds he had inflicted.

"So fast," Hayato muttered from where he was leaning against the wall. The antidote he had found on the four-eyed freak was working, but the aftereffects of the poison, mixed with the injuries the animal freak gave him, made him feel weak.

"Amazing," Tsuna muttered as she watched the two fight. Strike after strike, the weapons blurred together. "I knew Hibari was good, but wow."

"Enough," Rokudo said and pushed the prefect back. His eye changed once again. "One."

The world shifted again. The smell of cherry trees in full bloom filled the air. A canopy of pink
blossoms bloomed overhead. Tsuna frowned and tilted her head. Why was Rokudo showing this?

"You might have been able to win if it hadn't been for your injuries and this." Rokudo smirked as Hibari gasped. Red flared out and stained the clothing on his shoulder. He glared up at the blue haired boy even as he shook. Then, he smirked.

"What?" Rokudo gasped. He didn't have any time to react as Hibari struck out. Tonfa slammed into his stomach, over his arms, before slamming into his back and sending him stumbling. "How?"

"Shamal gave me some medicine for him," Hayato spoke up from where he was leaning against the door frame. He held a prescription bottle up in his fingers. "I think he was scared of what Tsuna would do to him if he left Hibari infected with the Sakura-kura Sickness."

"He infected Hibari with his mosquitoes?" Tsuna asked.

"Yeah."

"Remind me to deal with him later."

"Of course, Tsuna-hime."

Hibari, ignoring the byplay between the two, struck out again. Rokudo didn't have the time to react as the prefect slammed a tonfa against his shoulder, causing him to drop his trident in reaction. A second later he was on the ground on his back, his eyes shut. Hibari sneered down at his prey before falling to his knee.

"Hibari!" Tsuna shouted and rushed to his side. She was hesitating to touch him once she got a good look at the injuries he sported. She didn't know how he was still standing. Lacerations covered his body. He was bleeding from several places. Bruises painted his skin a combination of lurid purple and sickening blue.

"Reborn, we need to get everyone to the hospital. We can tie up Rokudo and deal with him later," she commanded.

"It's OK, Tsunami. Vongola medical is on the way. They'll be here soon."

"It won't matter," Rokudo's voice caused everyone to look up. Tsuna became pale as she saw the white-silver gun in his hand. It was old fashioned looking but every bit as deadly as it's more modern looking counterparts. Where had he been hiding that? "It's over."

Tsuna's eyes were wide. All of their eyes were wide as the blue haired boy lifted the gun and, in a surprising turn, placed the barrel against his head. She reached out instinctively. He grinned at her and pulled the trigger. His body dropped to the floor like a lead weight.

"What the hell?" Hayato's voice broke through the silence that followed.

"Coward," Hibari said. He groaned as his shifting caused his injuries to open further. He sank forward, his body going from kneeling to laying flat on his stomach. His mind clouded over with pain before darkness took over his sight and he went unconscious.

"Reborn, get those medics here fast," Tsuna ordered as she stood up and approached the body. She shook her head. Suicide, how anticlimactic of an ending to this fight.

Bianchi's groan caught their attention. "Is it over?"
"Yeah. He just shot himself," Tsuna said.

"Ah." The poison mistress turned her head and lifted herself up onto her hands. "Hayato, could you give me a hand?"

"Yeah, sure. Whatever," the bomber muttered as he walked over to his sister.

Tsuna could hear her heart beat in her ears. Her head snapped toward Bianchi. There was something — "Hayato, stay back!"

The bomber leaned back just in time to avoid being stabbed by the tri-pronged knife. Bianchi smiled up at him, the blade held firmly in her hands.

"What? Bianchi?" Hayato scrambled backward as he stared at his sister in mounting horror.

"He he. What's wrong? It's just me," the woman smiled at them.

Tsuna's mouth opened in horror. What? A chill went down her back. She looked backward at the body of Rokudo Mukuro and back at Bianchi. Those eyes, this feeling. "Rokudo Mukuro."

"What?" Hayato yelped and pulled himself back from his sister.

"How?" Tsuna muttered as she looked from the fallen form of Rokudo Mukuro to Bianchi and back. "Possession?"

"Like I thought," Reborn muttered to himself as he eyed Bianchi's possessed form. Now that he was looking closer, he could see that her right eye had changed to the same bloody red that Rokudo had. His jaw clenched. This was bad.

"Ah, so perceptive, Vongola. Yes, possession." Bianchi's eyes glinted. Her hands tightened around the hilt of the blade.

"Hayato, move!" Tsuna shouted, but it was too late. The bomber, with his injuries slowing him down, was unable to dodge out of the way. The blade sunk deep into his outer thigh. He let out a loud scream of pain and doubled over as his wounds finally became too much for him. Bianchi, or Rokudo in Bianchi's body, smirked at Tsuna before her eyes fluttered closed and she collapsed next to her brother.

"Hayato," Tsuna whispered. She took a step close to the fallen siblings but stopped as her mind screamed a warning at her. Hayato's hand moved. She took a step back as his hand reached out and grabbed the tri-pronged knife. Hayato's body stood, but Tsuna could tell it wasn't him. The stance was all wrong, too relaxed for the perpetually high strung Italian.

"The knife, that's how you do it," Tsuna muttered as she took another step back. Rokudo in Hayato's body smiled at her. Like Bianchi, his right eye had turned the same blood red that had unnerved her before. "Anyone you cut with it, you can possess."

"Ah," he inclined his head and smiled at her. She felt her stomach roil at that smile on her boyfriend's face. It shouldn't be there. Hayato shouldn't look like that, with that kind of victorious superiority. He walked around her, heading for Hibari's downed form. He knelt beside the injured boy and smirked up at her. With a quick movement, he had cut the prefect's arm with the blade.

"I prefer to call it making a pact," he shrugged and grinned at her.

"The possession bullet," Reborn interrupted the boy's explanation.
Rokudo blinked. "Yes. I'm not surprised you know about it, Arcobaleno."

"Possession bullet? But, wasn't that banned years ago, like over a decade? I know Yuusuke mentioned it once or twice in passing in why we avoid Europe. You're all crazy." Tsuna frowned and looked at the two of them. "None of you mafia crazies I've met have dissuaded me from that opinion by the way."

"It was forbidden." Reborn frowned. "It was a difficult weapon to use. One had to be in tune with the bullet in order to use it."

"And I perfectly match with it," Rokudo stated. Hayato's body tensed for a brief second before falling to the side, eyes closed. Hibari's body began to twitch. He groaned, his head lifting up just slightly as his body shook. "Damn. He fought that hard with his body in this shape. What a monster Hibari Kyoya is."

Tsuna swallowed as Hibari's body went limp. Her attention swiveled between Bianchi and Hayato's bodies. He'd be using one of them. She had to be ready, had to figure out a way to beat him without hurting her boyfriend or his sister. Bianchi had been a help during this romp through Kokuyo Land. She owed the woman that much at least.

She hadn't expected both bodies to get up.

"Oh no," she muttered. Her breathing got faster. Oh, this was bad. So very, very bad.

"So, you can possess more than one person at a time," Reborn stated. He tilted his head. "Interesting."

"Ah. Thank you," Rokudo said through Bianchi's mouth. Footsteps came from the hallway. Tsuna and Reborn turned to see what was happening behind them. Rokudo's two men stood in the doorway. Their bodies looked ragged, injured, but it was the eyes that caught Tsuna's attention. The right eye on both was blood red.

"But it isn't just two I can control."

"Four at once. I never heard of anyone capable of that before," Reborn muttered as he dodged out of the way of Bianchi trying to stab him.

"Ah, but there's more to my ability," Rokudo spoke through Hayato. His eye flashed, the kanji within changing to the number 2. He lifted his hands, bombs between each of the fingers. The fuses lit. "Double bomb."

"Fuck," Tsuna cursed as she jumped out of the way of the explosives. Her head snapped to the side, just missing a punch sent by Rokudo's blond haired assassin. She rolled. A shower of needles appeared where she had been.

"You can use their abilities," she whispered in horror. Hayato began to laugh. Tsuna's eyes narrowed. Blood had begun to seep through Hayato's shirt and stain the fabric a dark red. She swallowed. She needed to end this. Bianchi and Hayato, as injured as they were, wouldn't be able to handle this for much longer.

"My second path allows it, yes." Rokudo grinned down at her from her boyfriend's body. "So, Vongola, what are you going to do? You can't possibly beat all of me?"

"You bastard," she growled and dodged out of the way of a platter of poison cooking. "Do people mean nothing to you?"
"People? They're toys," Bianchi stated with a shrug. Her stab wound weeped a steady flow of blood. Her skin looked pale.

"What are you hoping to gain, Rokudo?" Reborn asked as he danced around the attacks coming from multiple directions. Tsuna's lips pinched tightly together as she ducked out of the way of a punch coming from the feral blond. She pushed him back.

"Isn't it obvious? I want Vongola X."

Tsuna stopped and looked over at Hayato's body. She shivered. She had a good idea what he wanted. "You want to possess me."

"Yes, and once I do, well, I'll use Vongola resources to start a war that will bring the mafia into chaos. Then, I'll possess world leaders. A world war. A little cliche, but it will work to remove the pathetic darkness of this world."

"I see. So that's your plan." Reborn frowned.

"Sick bastard," Tsuna growled.

Hayato chuckled darkly and walked toward her. He pulled out a handful of explosives. Her eyes went wide, her mouth opening to shout, but she couldn't dodge the wide spread of explosives. Bouncing along the ground, she fell into a heap at the base of the raised platform. She hissed as she lifted herself upward. Eyes met her boyfriend's own. She saw nothing of him in there. Only the dark madness that was Rokudo Mukuro.

"Just give in, Vongola X. Make a pact with me and this will all end."

"No."

Hayato's body let out a small huff before he stumbled slightly. His hand went to his side and pulled away coated in red. He swayed slightly on his feet before squaring his shoulders. "How annoying."

"Stop it," Tsuna said, her eyes wide with horror. How could he do this? "Stop it. You'll kill them."

"Ah, I don't feel a thing."

"That's not what I meant!"

His head tilted to the side and a smile crossed his lips. "You're compassionate, aren't you? How about we make a deal, Vongola X? You make a pact with me, and I'll let them go."

Tsuna stared silently at him. She needed to save her people, but she couldn't give in. If he had her body, he'd be able to do whatever he wanted. Her eyes shut tightly. 'I'm sorry Bianchi, Hayato. I can't let him possess me,' she thought, her fists clenching.

"Tsunami," Reborn said, catching her attention. Her eyes shot open. A bright green glow began to form around her, filling the room. Everyone stopped. Lifting her head, she stared. Leon in his small, glittery ball form rose into the air. Long tendrils shot out and latched into the ground and walls.

"What's this?" Rokudo asked as he tilted Chikusa's head.

Reborn smiled. "It's time."

"Reborn?" Tsunami's voice was uncharacteristically quiet.
"Leon's ready. The last time this happened, Dino got his whip and Enzo."

"So, this is your doing, Arcobaleno? No matter," Rokudo said. Bianchi's body tossed the tri-pronged knife to Ken. The feral body leapt upward, slashing out with the blade. Green goop fell to the ground.

"Leon, no," the yakuza boss said softly.

"It's OK, Tsunami," Reborn waved her concern off. "Leon is a shape chameleon. He'll be fine."

The baby sized hitman was right. The green goop was gathering together.

"You should be more concerned with what Leon created."

Looking up, a set of white cloth gloves smacked her in the face. Grumbling, she pulled the fabric away and looked at the gloves. They were white with faint orange stripes around the wrists and the number 27 on the back on the hands. They weren't normal. She could tell. They felt smooth, almost silky under her fingers. She pulled them on. They fit perfectly as if made only for her.

"Gloves? That's it?" Rokudo asked in Hayato's body. He shook his head. "How pathetic. Well, your chance for helping her is gone, Arcobaleno. Now, Vongola X, give up and make a pact with me. I promise to take care of your body."

"Go to hell," she snapped at him a stood on shaky legs. The explosives had taken more out of her than she thought. Her right knee nearly gave out under her weight.

"I've been there and come back," Rokudo shrugged in Hayato's body and pulled out more bombs. Tsuna hissed as the explosives went off. Her body bounced along the ground. She landed in a pain filled heap.

Ken's body walked forward, blade held in hand. "Humph. Well, this is it, Vongola. You're mine now."

No. Tsuna's mind raced even as she gasped for air. That last explosion had taken a lot out of her. She just wanted to close her eyes and give in. This fight, it was so hard. She didn't want to hurt her boyfriend or his sister. She needed to save them. She had to save them. She pushed against the ground with her hands. Her arms shook. Her eyes glared at the smirking forms of those possessed by Rokudo Mukuro. Her Flames boiled within. Her head hurt, throbbed, right in between her eyes. The feeling became more powerful. The pressure building. She had to do something. She pulled at her Flames. They were so faint. She pulled from deeper and deeper.

She couldn't see it, but Reborn was smirking from where he was standing. He could feel the pressure from her Flames. They had changed, become purer. Not long now.

"Just give in, Vongola," Rokudo in Ken's body said as he brought the blade up.

"No." The world exploded.

The world burned a bright orange. Tsuna felt her Flame, stronger than ever, flood her body. Her thoughts stilled. She could feel the texture of the gloves change from a sort of silky cotton to a more leather and metal feeling. Her fingers twitched. Orange fire erupted on the back of her gloves. Her hair shifted under the pressure of the Dying Will Flame she knew had sprouted on her brow. She stood in the haze of dust that had erupted around her as her Flames manifested fully for the first time since she was four. She was calm, supernaturally so.
"What? A battle aura?" Rokudo in Hayato's body muttered to himself. "It doesn't matter."

Chikusa grinned and flicked his yo-yos upward. A rain of needles came down on Tsuna, but she just stood there. Her eyes, a brighter orange than they ever had been before, trailed from the beanie wearing assassin to a piece of blank wall to the side. Her lips quirked upward and she moved. Her fist slammed into the real Chikusa's stomach, knocking the body back and forcing Mukuro to release the possession of his man. The tri-pronged knife went flying from his hands and lodged in the wall. Ken's followed as she grabbed the boy by the face as he tried to attack her and elbowed him in the gut. His body bounced off the wall before coming to a stop next to his fellow.

"What? How? You shouldn't have been able to see through the illusion of Hell without hurting yourself like before," Bianchi muttered.

Tsuna turned and grinned at her. "Vongola Intuition trumps illusions."

"Vongola Intuition?"

Reborn nodded with a smile "Yes. Tsunami has been showing signs of it, but never at this level. At this point, it's on par with the founder, Vongola Primo's, ability to see through deception."

"It doesn't matter," Bianchi said with a smirk. "She still won't strike back so long as I am possessing her friends."

Hayato and Bianchi's bodies approached. Tsuna eyes them, no emotion showing on her face. As Hayato lifted a fist, her eyes narrowed. She could dodge it. If Hayato's body was overextended any more, he would be seriously injured. The same went for Bianchi. Tsuna's body swayed as she took the hits, using her body to absorb the impact and lessen the stress each hit was taking on her friends. She blinked. There. That was how she could end this.

She moved far faster than Rokudo had been prepared for. Bianchi and Hayato looked around. She had disappeared from sight. A moment later a hand slammed into the back of Hayato's neck at just the correct angle to temporarily paralyze him.

"What?" he gasped before Rokudo was forced to let the body go. Bianchi pulled back only to receive the same treatment.

"Get up, Rokudo. I know you're not dead," Tsuna's emotionless voice carried in the silence. She looked over her shoulder where Rokudo's body had been laying.

Reborn smirked, tilting his fedora over his eyes. Yes. This was Vongola Decima in her full power. The remnants of the seal placed on her as a child had been burned away by her will. Nono had forwarded all the information he had on the sealing method he'd used. It was rare for it to be used, so the documentation on it was sparse, especially when applied to children. What had been said made the hitman sympathetic toward his student's childhood. She couldn't have dealt well with a lack of balance and an attention span that bordered on ADHD on a good day. Leon, recovered from his part in all this, circled up on the brim of the fedora and flicked out his tongue.

"How surprising," Rokudo said as he sat up in his original body. "I must admit, Vongola, I was not expecting that. It won't be enough to save you, though."

He rushed at her, his trident coming up to slash at her. Her hand lifted up and grabbed the metal shaft. With a squeeze, the metal warped under her touch and bent.

"What? How?" Rokudo stuttered. "You aura produces heat?"
"It's not an aura," Reborn corrected the blue haired boy. "There is a difference between battle auras and Dying Will Flames. Battle auras are only capable of being seen by certain people. Dying Will Flames are a more compressed, highly expressed form of willpower. There's no comparison, really. Dying Will Flames are stronger than auras."

"Dying Will Flame?" Rokudo muttered before chuckling. The sound started low and became louder. Tsuna blinked and stepped back at the sound. There was something broken about it, not all right. As he brought a hand up to his red eye, she got a sinking feeling in her gut.

"I wasn't expecting to have to use this skill," he said, his shoulders shaking. "I haven't used one of my paths."

"Human. You haven't used the human path," Tsuna said.

He grinned. "Right, the human path. This realm. The most low and disgusting of all the levels of Hell. I dislike using this skill, but it can't be helped."

It was like a switch had been flipped. Darkness erupted around Rokudo. Tsuna inhaled at the oppressive feeling coming from him. Her mind raced. Her intuition told her it was an illusion. She shivered at the feeling of that much negativity radiating onto her skin. He smirked and slammed his trident on the ground. The blackness rushed at her in the form of a demented, raging illusion. She squared her shoulders and let the illusion hit.

She was surprised to be knocked back, her body being cut by the many tiny rocks Rokudo had hidden within the illusion.

Rokudo took the opening her mistake left, and rushed her again. Her eyes widened and Flame covered hands met the shaft of his bent trident. His black aura writhed around him, curling up over the metal and trying to eat away at her orange Flame. Her will strengthened. She pushed back both physically and mentally. A flash of something went through her mind: a young boy surrounded by men in lab coats, pain, and the smell of antiseptic.

Tsuna released her hold and disappeared from sight. Rokudo stumbled forward, looking around. His eyes widened as Tsuna reappeared behind him. He turned but was far too slow. Her fist slammed into his chest. He went flying, his body bouncing twice before landing in a heap. He gasped, tiny puffs of dust curling up in front of his face. He moaned in pain.

"Vongola," he gasped out, his eyes turning up to meet hers. She frowned. "Kill me. I refuse to be taken by the mafia again. Grant me that, Vongola. You know you want to kill me for what I've done."

Tsuna exhaled and shook her head. That image she had seen pressed on her mind. "No. I won't grant you an honorable death. You don't deserve that gift."

She turned away from her fallen foe to speak to Reborn. A second later her eyes widened as she realized what a stupid mistake that was. She spun around, but it was too late. Rokudo had abandoned his trident, sprung from where he had been laying, and grabbed her by the wrists. He pulled, holding her arms behind her back. She could feel his grin as his mouth hovered over her ear.

"Foolish, Vongola," he chuckled darkly in her ear as she struggled to break his grip. "These gloves let you use those Flames from your hands. All I have to do is stop you from using your hands, and you can't attack."

"Damn it," she cursed softly. Her Flames flared. Her eyes turned a brighter orange as her Flame
reached out, tried to fight back. Another scene flashed through her head of blood and dead bodies and phantom pain. What in the world was going on?

"How are you doing that, Vongola?" Rokudo snarled into her ear. "How are you getting in my head?"

"Your head?" She paled. "Memories. Those are your memories. What did they do to you?"

"Be quiet. Be quiet. Like you would understand, Vongola," he practically roared and threw her. Her eyes were wide. "Better watch where you're going!"

Tsuna looked over her shoulder. The tri-pronged knife. He had thrown her toward it and it was coming up fast. Her lips pressed into a tight line. Moving her arms so her palms faced behind her, she turned back to meet his eyes.

"Show him just what those gloves can do," Reborn said with a grin. Rokudo had made a large mistake with that action. Now she could end this. The hitman would have to ask her later about what memories she was talking about. He had a dark feeling about what could have caused that. He hoped he was wrong.

Tsuna smiled. Flames poured from her gloves, slowing her momentum. She could feel the heat raging behind her. She gave Rokudo a quirky grin as she hovered mere centimeters from the tip of the blade. His eyes went wide for just that one second before she rushed at him with a burst of speed. He wasn't able to put up a defense. Her hand slammed into his face, fingers reaching out and grasping his face. Her Flame burned, but not physically. There was no smell of burning flesh, for which she was thankful. That scent took forever to get out. Instead her Flames became softer, burring away at the metaphysical. It was an odd feeling to the girl. She was so used to fighting back physically, but her Flame twisted by instinct into a soft orange that pushed back against the taint she could feel in his body.

Landing, she stood over her fallen foe. He was unconscious. She was certain of it this time. She sighed, the Flame vanishing from her forehead and her gloves changing back to their white, cloth like form. "It's done."

"Well done, Tsunami." Reborn sounded so proud of her. He held up Leon in Iphone form. "Vongola medics have arrived. They even got to Lancia in time to give him the antidote."

"G-g-get away from him-m," came the voice of the fallen assassins. Tsuna and Reborn turned. Ken and Chikusa, both their bodies injured to the point of being broken, crawled toward her.

"You mafia s-sc-scum can't touch him. Not again."

"You three, the mafia screwed you over, didn't they?"

"How?" Chikusa gasped out as tiny drops of blood slipped out his mouth.

Tsuna turned halfway to look down at Rokudo Mukuro. "I saw some of it, his memories. You were experimented on like he was, weren't you?"

"You have no idea what we've been through!"

"You are from a family, aren't you?" Reborn asked. He had a good idea which family they were from. He could think of only one that would be willing to go against mafia law to do such experiments and produce the possession bullet.
"Estraneo," Ken spat out.

Reborn sighed. "Like I thought."

"Reborn?" Tsuna asked. She got a sinking feeling from the look on the hitman's face.

"The Estraneo invented the possession bullet. After it was banned, they went to ground."

"And they experimented on us. We're the only ones who survived, and that's because of Mukuro. We won't let you hurt him," Chikusa managed to growl out. Tsuna was caught between the urge to help the two and leave them to suffer for what they had done.

"You have no idea what they did to us. Mukuro, he rescued us," Ken gasped out.

Whatever they were about to say died when the sound of clinking chains filled the air. Tsuna reacted badly as three chains came out of nowhere and latched around her enemies' neck. She lashed out, her foot slamming into one of the chains.

"Tsunami, stop!" Reborn ordered. He had gone pale.

Tsuna looked up and went pale herself as she saw the bandaged forms in top hats and trench coats. She swiftly dropped into a bow. "My apologies, Honored Law Keepers. I'm still a bit in battle frenzy. I did not realize it was you."

"Sawada Tsunami, Great Tiger of the Akatora. It is understandable," one of the lumbering figures said. The voice sent chills down her spine as she remained in that bow.

"May this one make a request of the Honored Law Keepers?" she asked as she peeked up from beneath her bangs. "There is much about this situation that feels wrong to me. These ones came after me in my position as Vongola heiress apparent, but I have seen things in this one's mind that could prove his mind is broken beyond what is considered proper for punishment. Add onto that, one of those under his control was literally so. Possession. I ask the Honored Law Keepers to look deeper into the allegations set forth by the Italian mafia families as there is more here than I believe has been stated."

"We hear your request, Sawada Tsunami," the same speaker continued even as the three injured foes were pulled toward them. The two awake struggled against their bindings, their breathing coming out as wheezy chokes. "It will be brought forward to the others to judge upon."

"That is all this one can ask of the Honored Law Keepers." She rose from her bow and watched as they faded into their portals of darkness. She shivered. "I hate it when they appear. Creepy as hell."

Reborn stared at her. "What did you just do? I've never heard of the Vindice acting in such a way."

She shrugged. "The Honored Law Keepers are known for their neutrality and the want of justice to be served. If there is something mentally wrong with Rokudo to the point his perception of reality has been altered, he may get a more lenient sentence. Not death, but just being imprisoned. I felt sorry for him with the memories I saw."

"But, the Vindice…" he continued before shaking his head. "This is one of the differences between the mafia and the yakuza, isn't it?"

"You're starting to catch on." She smirked. "I think they like us better because we don't cause them as much work as your kind do. They're more willing to listen if one goes through the proper forms. Now, let's go see what's taking the medics so long. I want Hayato and Bianchi looked at
Reborn watched as his student ran from the hall. He frowned and looked over where the Vindice had been. Were the yakuza really that different than the mafia that the Vindice would be willing to listen to such a request from her? He shrugged. It was no longer his concern, but he was going to mention the events to Nono once he saw the man in person. Well, the events and how Tsuna had seen Rokudo's memories. That was telling but could be a boon in the long run, especially if she turned Vongola into something like the Akatora. The Akatora seemed more in line to Primo's ideals than the Vongola at present. He smirked as he followed after her. Such an odd turn of events. At least it was never quiet around his student.
Tsuna practically inhaled the fresh morning air. There was a chill just starting to move in. It made for a brisk run. It had been three weeks since her fight with Rokudo Mukuro and her injuries had healed. It had taken that long to get it through Hayato's head that said injuries weren't his fault. The bomber had pulled away from both Takeshi and her in guilt. When he had avoided Tsuna, Takeshi had gone to him and dragged him out of his funk.

"Sawada!" Ryohei called out as he saw her running. She smiled and waved to him, slowing so he could catch up.

"You look better than the last time I saw you," she said.

He nodded. "I healed extremely fast. The doctors were extremely surprised."

Tsuna nodded, her smile dimming slightly. She had a good idea why the boxer healed so fast. Reborn had been hinting at the boy having active Sun Flame. She had seen the power of those Flames when Vongola's medical division took over treatment of her people. Mochida's arm should have taken a month to heal properly, but he was already out of his cast and training under Takeshi. He hadn't taken his loss that well and her swordsman/bodyguard/boyfriend had agreed to train with the kendo captain.

Mochida had looked bruised but happy every time she saw him.

"I'll be seeing you, then," she started to turn off to continue on her way. A hand on her shoulder stopped her. She turned and had to look up at Ryohei's uncharacteristically serious eyes.

"Sasagawa?"

"We need to talk, Sawada."

"It's Tsunami or Tsuna," she automatically corrected as she turned to face him. Her mind raced as she tried to figure out what the boxer wanted. Several possibilities entered her head, but she had the sinking feeling she knew what he wanted to talk about.

"You protected my sister, again."

"Sasagawa…"

"Ryohei. You can call me Ryohei." He inhaled and bowed deeply to her. "Thank you, Tsunami, for protecting my sister to the extreme."

Tsuna shook her head. "She was only threatened because of her connection to me. I…there is no reason to thank me, Ryohei."
Ryohei rose from his deep bow and shook his head. "No, I owe you a lot to the extreme. Have you thought about what I said last time?"

"No. I am not going to drag you into my craziness." Her voice was hard and quick. He was a civilian. He did not need to be dragged into the underworld. She would not.

"Tsunami, do you really think I haven’t gotten any offers from other families? I do go to the fights and have a bit of an extreme reputation."

She swallowed and shook her head. "No. Ryohei, if you know what's good for you, you'll say no to anyone who offers it to you and run. You're too nice to be involved in organized crime."

"One could say the same about you," he shot back, his arms crossing over his chest.

She snorted and shook her head. "You've seen my public persona, Ryohei. I can be vicious."

"I've seen that. You're an extremely ruthless fighter."

"You've seen me in one fight." She sighed and ran a hand through her sweaty hair. It became more spikey, if that was actually possible. "I can be much worse."

"I am not backing down, to the extreme. You've done an extreme job of protecting my family. I need to return the favor."

"Not like this."

"You're not going to convince him, Tsunami," Reborn's voice made both teens jump.

"Reborn, stop doing that!" Tsuna spat at him with a glare. Her hand rested over her racing heart. Why did the baby hitman have to go giving her a heart attack whenever he showed up?

"Tsunami," the hitman's stern look made her twitch.

She looked away, her eyes aimed at the ground instead of her tutor or the boxer. She sighed softly. "He shouldn't…"

"It's my extreme choice, Tsunami," Ryohei's voice was soft, far quieter than it usually was. She looked up at him and winced at the uncharacteristically serious look on his face. He reached out and placed a large hand on her shoulder. "Do you know what they say about you at the fights? The Great Tiger isn't one to allow her subordinates to come to harm and protects their families to the extreme as well. You've already proven you'd do the same for me already to the extreme."

Tsuna shut her eyes. She drew her thoughts and focused inward where she could feel her Flames bubbling just beneath the surface. Ever since she had unlocked the full force of her Flame during the fight with Mukuro, she had been feeling more. The first time she had felt the bond that existed between her and her boys, she had jumped in shock. She could feel the familiar feeling of a Guardian Bond forming between her and Ryohei. Her lips pressed together and she shook her head. There really was no way out of this, was there? That's what Reborn meant. With a Bond already forming, the chance of convincing him to leave was practically nil.

"Are you certain? There's no going back once you take this step, Ryohei," she said. Her voice was hard. She opened her eyes and stared him down. The boxer stepped back at the fierce look being sent at him. Still, he didn't back down. He couldn't. Any sign of hesitation and she would latch on as a reason for him to not join her side.
"Yes."

She sighed and stepped back. "Alright. Come on. I'll introduce you to the others."

"Tsunami," Reborn said to catch her attention. She looked over at him. "I have something I need to discuss with you."

"The office. If Ryohei is so certain—" the boxer nodded—"I'll get him introduced to Yuusuke and we can talk after."

"So, when did you know Ryohei had formed a guardian Bond with me?" Tsuna asked Reborn as soon as she shut her office door behind her. She crossed the room to her desk and placed her palm flat against the glossy surface. Her paperwork lay in her inbox. There wasn't much. Yuusuke was taking over more of those duties the more it became obvious Reborn was needing more time to teach her about the famiglia she was to inherit.

"After the incident with the Fuuma-kai," Reborn shrugged and hopped up to his favorite chair. "It was obvious."

"To you, maybe." Sauna sighed and ran a hand through her hair before flopping into her office chair. The wheels squeaked as the force pushed the chair back and against the wall. She sat upright and stared her tutor in the eyes. "What was it you wanted to discuss?"

"Have you heard of Mafia Land?"

She blinked and smiled. "I thought everyone involved in organized crime had. I've never been or received an invite to go, but I have heard of it."

"Would you like to go?"

Her intuition, much stronger since the release of her Flames, flared and blared a warning. Chills ran down her back. "For pleasure or business?"

"Training." Reborn smirked. "The current guardian owes me a few favors and your men have been asking for more training opportunities."

"The current guardian?"

"Mafia land has a contract with the Arcobaleno. One of us is in residence at all times to act as a protector."

"And he owes you a favor? And you're willing to use it to get my men training?"

Reborn nodded. "You know my job is to make you the best Mafia boss I can. That includes making certain your Guardians are up to par."

Tsuna bit her lips and leaned back. Her arms crossed over her chest. This could be a good opportunity for them, and they had been training non-stop since medical had told them it was safe. She knew they had all taken their injuries rather badly, though that may have been more the fact they had been injured badly enough they couldn't help her fight off Rokudo. It was even worse for Hayato, who had to live with the knowledge it was his body and skills had been used to hurt his girlfriend/boss.
"Tsunami?"

"It's a good idea if you can get everything set up. Who do you want to take I can guess Hayato and Takeshi, but who else?"

"The rest of your Guardians."

"So Ryohei. Any others?"

"You have two more Guardians, Tsunami."

She blinked and tilted her head, confused. "Huh?"

"Have you been meditating like I told you to?"

She nodded. "Every night."

"And you've felt your bonds with Gokudera and Yamamoto."

"Yeah. I can kind of feel what they're feeling if I focus on them."

Reborn blinked. That was a surprise. He hadn't thought the bond was that deep, not yet at least. It was a good sign. "Have you noticed any others?"

"You mean besides the one with Ryohei? I could only feel it when he was close. It's fainter than Takeshi and Hayato's."

He nodded. That explained it. "It would be. Your bond with your Storm and Rain are truly remarkable. They might be clouding out your connection to your other Guardians unless they are right in front of you."

"Then, you mean I have more Guardians?" She went pale. "Please tell me they aren't civilians. I don't think I can take bringing in another civilian."

"Not technically."

That didn't sound good. Tsuna frowned and thought over just who could... be... oh fuck. "Hibari."

"Your Cloud. He's already fallen into the influence of your Flame."

Tsuna felt her blood chill. She sat up straight with wide eyes. "Not like the bastard. Please tell me that's not..."

"No," Reborn immediately reassured his student. "No. You haven't enforced your will on him. It's not Sky Hypnotism."

Tsuna stopped shaking and swallowed, her throat dry. "Explain how then."

"It's probably been going on for several years. Clouds need to be courted by a Sky. It's why they are usually the last Element to be found by a Sky. You have the unique situation of being in close contact with a strong, classic Cloud ever since you first broke through the seal."

"So, what? I've been subconsciously courting him?"

Reborn nodded. "Basically. Clouds, especially classic Clouds like Hibari, are attracted to physically strong Skies, ones that offer them a safe haven and allow them to wander. Basically your agreement
with him is the height of Sky courtship of a Cloud."

"I…OK. OK." Tsuna took in several deep breaths. "So, Hibari is going to be my Cloud, is my Cloud. Why does this not surprise me? I'll deal with the issue of bringing him in later. Technically he's a civilian, but with his mother being a Triad princess, the line is a bit more blurred than normal. Who else?"

"Mochida Kensuke."

"Mochida?" She frowned. It made a sort of sense. Him being the go to babysitter meant he had spent more time around her than most new recruits would. The boy had also been pushed to get more training. Tsuna hadn't understood why beyond the need to not be in such a situation again, but if he had the Guardian instincts her other Guardians had, the sudden interest in training made sense. But still… "How do you know what kind of Flame he has? If you're saying he's a possible Guardian candidate, then he must not be one of the types I've already bonded with. That leaves Mist and Lightning."

"Experience and there are a few tests that can be performed. Families who specialize in using Dying Will Flames prefer to know a person's Flame type before sticking them in training. Vongola medical performed the tests when they healed him at my request."

She nodded that made sense. "I'll want to talk to him about this, but if he agrees I see no reason to deny it."

"Good. Because the only other candidate for Lightning Guardian is Lambo."

"No. And not just no, but fuck no. I am not going to have a child as a Guardian," she spat. Her hair began to flutter as her Flame reacted to her temper. Eyes bled to a deep, dark orange that just bordered on the edge of Dying Will Mode.

Reborn had to suppress the shiver that wanted to wrack his body at the sight of this young Sky, this pure Sky, being so protective of a child she considered her own. It was those protective instincts that made Vongola Primo so difficult to beat. To see the same instincts in his student made pride swell in his chest. He was careful not to let her see it, though. No reason to stroke her pride.

"No one was suggesting it. I know how you feel about children and fighting," he tried to calm her down. "You'll have to be careful, though. Mochida is an even split Lightning and Storm. It's possible Gokudera will feel threatened by Mochida's inclusion to the Guardian group."

At once Tsuna's temper vanished and she relaxed. The Flame pressure she had been exerting dissipated. "I'll make sure he knows he's still wanted, that no one will be taking his place."

Reborn smirked and chuckled. He had a good idea how she would do that. "Then, you are willing to go through with this? It will be difficult."

She nodded. "Yeah. We're going to need it. I doubt those idiots in Italy are going to be too accepting of a female boss let alone a foreign female boss."

"Tsunami…"

"I deal with sexism a lot as a yakuza boss, Reborn. I doubt it can be worse than what the Fuuma-kai tried or what the Hoshi-gumi have threatened to do with me."

"Hoshi-gumi?"
"Takeshi's mom's family, the one she ran away with Tsuyoshi from."

Reborn winced slightly. "And you have Yamamoto as your bodyguard."

"Yeah." She inclined her head and smirked. "They've been pissed about it. They've tried to entice Takeshi to them with so many offers. The last time Takeshi returned their representative in several pieces. They haven't tried again since."

It was silent for a beat.

"That's rather vicious of him." Reborn frowned. He hadn't thought the swordsman had that kind of psychosis.

"They threatened me before they gave the offer." Tsuna shrugged. "I had been injured by an assassin right before and Takeshi was still pissed about it. He took out his aggression on them."

"Ah." There wasn't anything Reborn could say on that. He had been known to do the same thing if his woman of the week was threatened. Threatening Aria also got the same reaction.

"So, when are you planning this trip?"

"Two weeks," he said. "You're on break then. Do you want to bring any of the Akatora with you?"

Tsuna blinked, surprised he thought to include her people outside her Guardians. She smiled slightly. The man could be taught! "Yuusuke for certain. Possibly Rumiko and Ikeda. They do a lot of the organizational work. It would be nice for them to go and network a bit."

"I'll arrange everything." Reborn hopped up from his seat.

"And I need to have a discussion with Hayato and Takeshi." She sighed and ran a hand through her hair. "Reborn, thank you for this."

"You're my student, Tsunami. It's my job to make you the best boss you can be. Making your Guardians strong is just one way."

"Still, Reborn, thank you."

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Tsunami stretched out on the couch in her office. The coming talk would be better if she didn't give the impression it was a serious thing. Being behind her desk when her boys got there would have sent the wrong signal. Plus the couch was just more comfy and had more room. She and both of her boys could fit on the couch if they didn't mind being close.

"Tsuna-hime?" came Hayato's voice from the door. She looked up and smiled at the sight of her boys. Sitting up, she motioned for them to come in. She stood up, closed and locked the door behind them.

"Tsuna-hime?" Takeshi asked with a frown. His eyebrows drew together. She didn't normally lock the door.

"We need to have a bit of a talk. Reborn gave me an offer this morning I couldn't refuse." She sat on the couch and motioned for them both to sit next to her. Takeshi took a seat to her left and Hayato to her right. She leaned back slightly as she tried to think on how to open this. The boys looked at her and then each other. Takeshi's eyebrow rose. Hayato minutely shook his head. Tsuna bit back the
"I ran into Ryohei when I was out running," she began explaining. "He—"

"He finally asked to join you, didn't he?" Takeshi asked with a smirk.

She blinked and stared at him. Silence reigned for just a moment. "He talked to you, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't warn me."

"You would have avoided him."

"Takeshi," she groaned and placed a hand on her forehead. "What am I going to do with you?"

He grinned at her. "Love me?"

Hayato choked on his laughter and turned away. His boyfriend was such a dork.

"Well," Tsuna started again, "he did talk to me. Reborn convinced me to let him join as my Sun Guardian."

Hayato froze before whipping his head around to stare at her. His mouth opened and shut a few times before he ducked his head. Tsuna reached out and ran her fingers through his hair. He tilted his head to look up at her through the fringe of his hair.

"Turns out he's been bonding with me for a while and my bond with you two just kind of overpowers my ability to feel the other ones unless they are right in front of me." She smiled at the Italian before turning back to her swordsman. "Who do we have that's good at first aid? Suns usually end up in healing and support roles. Ryohei already has quite a bit of knowledge on how the human body works, and I'd like to encourage him to think about going to school to be either a doctor or a physical therapist."

Hayato bit his lip and nodded. "It's good you're gathering all your Guardians."

Tsuna's lips turned into a frown before quickly quirking back up into a smile. "You two are still my right and left hands. Nothing they do will be able to take your place."

The bomber blushed and looked away. She could read him so easily. For a while he had been worried about what would happen when she found her other Guardians. He knew it was a given that the demon prefect would be one, most likely the Cloud. He could deal with that. He had time to get used to the idea.

"According to Reborn, my bonds with you two are so strong, they've been overpowering my sense of the other bonds. I have bonds with every Element but Mist," she stated.

"Hibari is one," Hayato said firmly. "Cloud?"

"Ah, yeah," she said and stared at him. Well, it made sense the mafia native could identify what she had been reassured was a very strong, classic Cloud. "I haven't talked to him about it yet."

Both her boys winced and shared a look. Tsuna frowned and looked between the two. Their eyes went from each other to her. Hayato motioned for Takeshi to go ahead and speak.

"You do know Hibari's been eying you oddly lately?"
"You mean his crush?" She nodded. "Yeah, I noticed."

Both boys' mouth dropped open slightly. Takeshi was the first to recover from that shock and laughed. Hayato shook his head and leaned back against the couch. Of course Tsuna-hime noticed.

"How long and why haven't you said anything?" the bomber asked as he shut his eyes and sighed.

"Since the fight with Rokudo. My intuition has been much stronger since then and the little things I had been noticing finally came together. I haven't said anything because he won't accept me coming onto him, and I hadn't spoken to either of you about it. I won't go into another relationship before I talk to you two."

"Tsuna," Hayato whispered and opened his eyes to look at his girlfriend. This was his girlfriend speaking, not his boss. She smiled at him and gently ran her fingers through his hair. His eyes slid shut and he leaned into the touch.

"Hibari's a jealous guy," Takeshi's voice was hard. "You've seen how he reacts when we're around you?"

She nodded. "I know. If I act on this, I'll have to talk to him about it."

Hayato let out a little groan as she took her hand out of his hair. Eyes blearily opened. "You're going to wait for him to come to you."

She nodded. "I'm going to talk to him about the Guardian thing. He's not exactly a civilian. His mother's a Triad princess and he is Master Fon's nephew. With such strong crime ties, he can't be called a civilian."

"So, that's Sun and Cloud. What about Lightning?" Hayato pushed himself up. "Please tell me Reborn didn't suggest the brat."

"I would never allow a child to fight for me," she hissed and sent a mild glare at him. He knew she wasn't mad at him, rather the sheer idea of forcing a child to fight for her sake. Still the look was slightly terrifying. The protective streak of his Sky was long and dangerous to rouse.

"Huh? Who?"

"Lambo. The Bovino are known for being a Lightning heavy Famiglia. It would be surprising if he wasn't a Lightning, especially with how he can survive those grenades of his," Hayato explained to the swordsman before tilting his head at his girlfriend. "So, who?"

"Mochida."

Both boys blinked. That hadn't been expected.

"Really? Mochida Kensuke? He doesn't seem like a Lightning," Hayato frowned and rubbed at his chin. "He could be an inverted Lightning, but that doesn't feel entirely right either."

"He's also a Storm."

Hayato froze, his body going tense as he turned wide eyes toward her. His breath caught in his throat. Tongue lashed out to wet his lips. Mochida was a Storm. He was going to be a Guardian. He could take…

"You're my Storm, Hayato. I'm not going to let anyone take you from me." She reached out and
placed a hand on his cheek. Her thumb rubbed gently at his skin. "He will be my Lightning, not my Storm. You are my Storm."

Tsuna felt Takeshi move from beside her. He got up and sat on the arm of the couch next to Hayato. His hands rested on the tense bomber's shoulders. Hayato had begun to shake. He repeated her words over and over in his head. She wasn't going to abandon him. He was her Storm. He was her Storm.

Takeshi leaned forward and nuzzled Hayato's hair. His hand trailed down his shoulders to wrap around the lithe chest. Tsuna continued to rub his cheek gently. Slowly he calmed. The soothing feeling of touch from his boyfriend and girlfriend calming him down. His body relaxed against Takeshi's warm hold.

"Feeling better?" Tsuna asked and leaned forward to kiss the edge of his lips.

"Sorry," he ducked his head. Takeshi exhaled slowly, his breath tickling Hayato's skin.

"Don't apologize. I get it," she stated. Instead of leaning away, she curled up against him close. He blushed when he felt her arms go around his middle and her head lay on his shoulder. "You've been bitten so many times, I'm surprised you can trust us as much as you do."

"Tsuna," he whispered and reached out. His arms wrapped around her waist. The three stayed like that for a while, just basking in the comfort that came from being wrapped around each other. Takeshi tilted his head down and kissed the back of Hayato's neck. Gooseflesh rose along the bomber's arms at the feeling. Tsuna smiled and kissed the sensitive area behind his ear. The shiver that ran through him made Takeshi and Tsuna share a look and grinned.

"Are we going too fast, Hayato?" she asked as she leaned her head back down to the bared line of his throat. Takeshi hummed and dropped another light kiss onto the bomber's neck. Hayato let out a tiny squeak that turned a moan as Tsuna's hands kneaded his hips. He didn't answer Tsuna's question but tilted his head to allow her further access. She took the movement for permission and placed an open mouthed kiss onto his neck.

"Tsuna, 'Keshi," the Italian gasped as they continued to play with him, running their fingers over his body and their lips brushing against the skin of his neck. Tsuna lifted her head up from where she was kissing his throat to take advantage of his open mouth. Her tongue brushed along his, pulling a moan from his throat. Takeshi hummed as he watched his girlfriend and boyfriend make out practically on top of his lap. Tsuna pulled back and quirked an eyebrow at the swordsman. He smiled and dove in to take over where she left off.

Tsuna pulled back to watch as Takeshi nibbled at the flushed bomber's lips before sweeping in with his tongue to soothe away the sting. Her tongue flashed out over her lips. Those two looked so good together. A shiver of want ran through her. She pulled her hands away from where they clung to the Italian's hips. He let out a whine around Takeshi's tongue. That whine turned into a gasp and a long moan as she took her fingers and pulled his shirt out of his pants. Fingers dragged across firm, warm flesh.

"You two are going to kill me," Hayato gasped as Takeshi pulled back.

Tsuna chuckled and shook her head before pulling herself up Hayato's body. Takeshi looked at her. One hand coming up, she grabbed the back of Takeshi's head and pulled him into a deep kiss. There was no reason for her to ignore her other boyfriend. She pulled back, tongue giving one last lick to the swordsman's lips, before she lowered herself back into her seat. Hayato was staring at them with a slightly glazed look.
"Haya?" she muttered and snapped in front of his face.

"Do you two know how sexy you look when you do that?" he asked. It seemed his brain-to-mouth filter had been overridden. Tsuna chuckled. Her shoulder shook and she placed her face against the pale teen's chest as she laughed. Moments later, Takeshi joined in. The heavy, lustful atmosphere in the air slowly faded as the three curled up against each other and just laughed.

"I'd say the same about you and Takeshi," she said as soon as she got control of her breathing. She tilted her head up and looked at her still flushed silver haired boyfriend. She perked up a second later as she remembered what else Reborn had done.

"Ah, Reborn's offer. I forgot to tell you," she said as she sat upright. The two boys looked at her. She smiled sheepishly. "We got just a bit distracted."

"Is that what we're calling it?" Takeshi asked with his wide grin.

"So?" Hayato began to ask.

"Reborn called in a favor with the Arcobaleno who watches over Mafia Land. We'll be going in 2 weeks for training."

"Colonello. You've gotten us training under Colonello," Hayato said and sighed. "This is going to be hell."

Tsuna frowned. "But worth it? How do you know which Arcobaleno, anyway?"

"I lived in Mafia Land while training under Shamal. Colonello has been the protector since before then. Training under him is brutal but worth it. You may think you're going to die, but I don't think he'd risk the chance of Vongola coming after him if he killed you."

"Great. I'll tell Dad," Takeshi said as he stood up from his uncomfortable seat on the armrest. He rubbed at his lower back where it had dug in painfully. He didn't regret going to sit there, though. Hayato had needed the reassurance. The kissing was nice, too. "Who else is going to come?"

Tsuna pulled away from Hayato and stretched her arms above her head before answering. "I'm going to tell Mochida later today when he comes to take the kids to the park. Ryohei needs to be told too. Yuusuke, Rumiko and Ikeda will be coming along, but they won't be getting the training. They'll be networking."

"What about Hibari?" the bomber asked as he resettled himself and tucked his shirt back in. His blush returned momentarily as he remembered how it had gotten mussed. Tsuna had to force herself not to lean over and kiss him to make that blush turn a deeper red. She had serious work to focus on. She'd have the chance to spend quality time with her boys later.

"I'll do that today."

"So you can be healed by the time we go?"

Tsuna sighed but nodded. That was the plan. She doubted the prefect would like the idea he was being claimed by her. Her lips quirked into a smirk. Though she may be wrong with how he had been acting around her lately.

"Tsuna-hime," Hayato started but fell silent. He shared a look with Takeshi, who nodded. "If Hibari says anything about wanting to date or having feelings for you, go for it. Just remind him we're with you as well."
Tsuna smiled at them both. She loved her boys. They cared about her so much. Both knew she wanted to have a relationship with Hibari, had for a while if she was being honest with herself. The prefect was a challenge. His looks sure didn't hurt either. She had considered him one of hers for quite a while. Now it was time to make it official.

There were times Tsuna cursed her luck. This was one of them. She stood in the doorway to the Namimori High Reception room. The current bane of her existence, one Hibari Kyoya, sat regally at his desk. Tsuna's eyes twitched rapidly. The prefect wasn't being threatening. He wasn't doing anything. That's what caused the eye twitch. Well, the lack of doing anything and the small stack of paperwork that was building up in the prefect's inbox.

"Hibari," she growled.

The prefect perked up at the sound, a smirk crossing his lips. The omnivore was so easy to rile. Maybe she'd be the first to attack for once. His hands shook slightly at the thought. What he had been told about the fight between her and that damn bastard had made him want to fight her even more. She had wrecked the pineapple-haired boy. This Rokudo Mukuro—Hibari was going to remember that name—fell to that strange power of hers involving the fire that sprouted on her forehead.

"Hibari, why are you not doing your paperwork? Don't you know it breeds if you leave it alone?" she nearly screeched as she pointed at the harmless looking stack of papers.

The prefect smirk grew wider. His steely eyes glinted in the artificial light of the room. Hands lifted to the top of his desk and curled together. He stared her down. The way she twitched was..amusing?

No that wasn't the right word.

Tsuna resisted the urge to reach out and strangle the prefect. It would be just what he wanted. Her nostrils flared as she sucked in a deep breath. She needed to be calm and serene. She walked over to the desk and dropped into one of the chairs there. The quirked eyebrow and the subtle disappointed look made her smile. It was full of teeth.

"Omnivore."

She took his speaking as an invitation. "Hibari, I am sorry you got pulled into my world."

"Hn."

"I don't just mean the fight with Rokudo." She closed her eyes and sighed. "It goes deeper."

"Omnivore, what are you saying?" Hibari sat up, his attention firmly on her. For a second, the yakuza boss felt as if she was a small mouse before a very large, very curious cat.

"You have seen my fire, seen it burst and felt its pull?" she asked cryptically. She waited for him to nod. "Have you seen Master Fon—"

"Don't speak about him," the prefect hissed between clenched teeth. His eyes flashed in anger. Bringing up his uncle never failed to make him angry.

"This concerns him, in a way. Now have you ever seen him glow with red fire? Seen stone crumble at the most gentle touch?"
The prefect grumbled but nodded. He had seen his…uncle do such things. The man was a carnivore, the prefect could admit that at least.

"That fire has a name, Dying Will Flame, and is connected to my paternal ancestor." She paused and inhaled a shaky breath. This wasn't the way to explain. "Normally I would not say anything about organized crime to you. I do not want you to have to pick between your loyalty to the deal and your loyalty to your father, but I cannot do so now. You remember Reborn?"

"The baby."

She nodded. "He came here to train me to use my Flame and to prepare me for taking over the organization my ancestor started in Italy, Sicily in particular."

Hibari frowned. Sicily. If he remembered correctly from the lessons his police commissioner father had given, then… "Mafia. Cosa nostra."

"Yes." She licked her lips and ignored the way the prefects eyes lingered on the movement. Now was not the time. She'd deal with that kettle of fish later. "Dying Will Flames are a big thing in the mafia, especially the family I am set to take over. There are…conditions that the Flame can produce. In the case of red Flame, which is called Storm Flame and which Master Fon possesses, it is disintegration. In my case, I am a Sky Flame. Their attribute is Harmony. The Sky calls Elements to it."

Hibari froze. His muscles tensed. He had an idea where she was going with this. His eyes narrowed and his hands untangled from where they were on the top of the desk. Reaching back, he prepared to pull out his favored weapons.

"Omnivore," he growled low in his throat.

"I've been subconsciously, well the term the mafia use is courting you, Hibari. According to Reborn, we've already formed a Bond." She shut her eyes. "I am so sorry for dragging you into this."

"The other herbivores, you've bonded with them, too." The words were a statement of fact rather than a question.

She looked at him. "Yes. My bond with Takeshi and Hayato is so strong, it blacks out the rudimentary bonds I've been forming with the rest of my Elements."

The room was silent as Hibari mulled the facts over in his head. The fact that the omnivore had done something that made her the most attractive female in the area made sense. The fact it was subconscious made even more. She was not one who would force another to follow her. She looked contrite, maybe even ashamed, she had done this without her knowledge. A piece of him, one that was growing louder and louder the more time he spent around her, clamored for him to reassure her in his own way. Well, he would give in, just this once. The fact he'd have to share her attention with the herbivores was something he could think on later.

Tsuna ducked under the tonfa swing. Her wide eyes met his. There was something there, something in the depths that told her he wasn't angry at her for what she had done. She slid out of the chair and stood to face him in a defensive but ready stance. His eyes shot to her pockets, where those gloves he had been told about had to be. The omnivore was not so much a fool as to throw away her greatest advantage in battle. His throat felt tight. She must have looked fierce during that fight.

"Hibari," she muttered and blocked his hits with her arms. Retaliating with a kick, she managed to get some space between them.
He straightened from his fighting stance and stared at her. She looked so amazing like this, with battle thrumming through her veins and fight flashing in her eyes. That little voice in the back of his head reared up. He wanted to touch her, claim her despite others already having a claim. He knew strong carnivores needed strong mates. He knew she was strong and physically attractive. She cared for her herd, protected the weakest of the weak from scavengers and herbivores trying at being carnivores. His gut burned and his skin flushed whenever he saw her. He had danced around this emotion for long enough. His shoulders relaxed. Time to show her. His fingers shook.

"Omnivore," he stopped his words and sighed. "Omnivore, you know who my mother is and my own attitude. Do you really think I have the mentality to follow my father's way?"

"I still wanted you to have the choice."

"Omni...Tsunami," he whispered and stepped toward her. She didn't relax from her ready stance, though part of that may have been from the prefect calling her by her name rather than the descriptor he had tagged her with. He reached up and ran an hand through her surprisingly soft hair. Her eyes widened and she swallowed loudly.

"Hibari," she muttered.

"You will have to face strong opponents, correct?"

"Yes."

"Then I will fight them, but you will never try to control me, force me to kneel or anything of the sort."

"Hibari," she whispered his name again. The prefect smiled, his eyes lighting and a faint tinge of color coming to his cheeks as his hand slid from her hair to her cheek.

"Omnivore, I do not crowd and won't crowd with your herbivores, but I will stand with you against threats." He ran his thumbs against her skin. She shivered. His touch was so warm. "I won't leave Namimori and I won't herd with others."

"I know. I'd never try to make you." She sighed softly, letting the calming feeling of her Flames reaching out for Hibari's own internalized ones calm her. "May ask you to come to Italy, but I'd never try to force you away from Namimori permanently. A Cloud claims a territory and defends it viciously. Namimori is your territory. You might have to deal with my other Guardians, five others besides you, but I'll try not force you to deal with them for elongated periods of time."

She reached up and placed her hand over his. A tiny quiver went through his frame. She hummed, her Flames humming within at the feeling of being so close to her Cloud in a non-agitated state.

"And this?" he whispered, voice hoarse.

She smiled. "You'd have to share. I'm not abandoning Hayato and Takeshi for anyone. Plus, female Skies are known for having multiple lovers. Daniella di Vongola, the last female Sky boss before me, had so many she was never certain who the father of her children were."

Hibari grumbled but didn't say anything. The omnivore's voice was strong. She wasn't going to back down on this. He felt something inside settle and the feeling of warmth circled him.

"Is this?"

"Me." She nodded and rubbed her fingers across his knuckles. "Reborn is arranging a training trip
for my Guardians, of which you are my Cloud. Would you like to come? It promises to be interesting. It's being led by another baby who is far stronger than he looks."

The prefect slowly retracted his hand. "I'll think about it, omnivore."

"Thank you, Hibari."

The prefect stepped back and smirked down at her. "I still want a fight, omnivore."

"Later? I still need to get Ryohei and Mochida caught up and tell them we're heading to Italy for training."

"The loud herbivore?"

"'My Sun Guardian."

Hibari's brow twitched. So he couldn't escape the loudmouthed one. He growled. Tsuna bit her lip and tried to hold back the chuckles. Well, at least things weren't going to be boring.
Mafia Land

Chapter Notes

AN: Well, here's the new chapter. I don't like it. It feels clunky to me. Still, there are parts of it that are necessary for what I have planned later. Enjoy. I took the Italian translations straight from Google, so if they're wrong, let me know. Hover over the words to see the translation. Varia Arc starts next chapter.

I cannot emphasize this enough. HOVER YOUR MOUSE OVER THE ITALIAN. IT'S TRANSLATED FOR YOU. THANK YOU! I chose to use Italian rather than just italicizing it for a reason. Mainly because I have difficulties reading italic fonts.

Tsuna leaned over the rail of the ship that was taking her and her Guardians to Mafia Land. Her stomach rolled. It was a bad time to discover she got seasick. Reborn had not been pleased. Takeshi had quickly learned to apply his Flames in such a way to calm her stomach. Hayato, the dear he was, had kept her supplied with ginger tea and bundled in blankets whenever she was sitting down inside.

"Still sick?" Reborn asked as he hopped up next to his pale student. He frowned as she moaned and looked at him.

"I have no idea why this is affecting me so bad," she said and winced as her stomach gave a heavy jerk. "I've been on boats before, but I've never had this problem."

Reborn hummed and looked up to where, in the distance, a bank of fog hovered above the warm Mediterranean water. "You could be reacting to the radiation shielding. Some Skies have been affected by it before. I've never heard about it being this bad, though. You'll be better once you get on the other side of the shielding."

"Glad to know it's not just me," she muttered and jerked her head over the railing as she dry heaved. Lifting her head back up and rubbing at her abdomen, she turned to look at her tutor. "Is Colonello going to be waiting for us when we dock?"

"No. You'll have to go through the main office to register first."

A stark flash of warning went through her mind. She winced and leaned over so her forehead rested against the warm metal of the railing. "Why do I have the feeling you've got something planned?"

Reborn just grinned and hopped down. Tsuna resisted the urge to kick him. She didn't want to be hit by a Leon-hammer, and she knew the hitman would dodge the attack. Her stomach turned again, making her fling her head over the rail as she dry heaved. She stood there on the deck, her head bent over the rail for a long time as her stomach continued to protest every movement the ship made. A tingly sensation crawled across her skin. She looked up with bloodshot eyes and blinked. The ferry was surrounded by a white fog. A few seconds later, the fog thinned and lifted.

Mafia Land loomed in the distance. Tsuna could see a large ferris wheel and something that may have been a roller coaster. Tropical trees dotted the landscape. White washed buildings sparkled in the sunlight.
For some reason, Tsuna's blood turned to ice.

Her stomach began to settle. Her throat still felt raw. Shaking her head, she stumbled back to the door leading to the interior of the ship. Her hand bracing against the wall, she walked toward her gathered men. Hayato, the first to see her, rushed to her side and helped her walk to the bench their group had claimed. As she dropped onto the seat, she groaned. Takeshi handed her a bottle of water. She sipped slowly. The cool but not cold water hit her stomach like lead. At least she didn't feel like she was going to throw it up like she had the last three times she had taken a drink.

"Debole come una bambina," one of the mafioso resting nearby sneered at her. Her eyebrow quirked upward. Hayato inhaled sharply and turned a dark, threatening glare on the man. He smirked at the agitated teens.

"Idiota," Tsuna shot back, her Italian coming out with a heavy Japanese accent. Despite Reborn's best effort, her accent was still thick. She was working on it but had other things to worry about than how she sounded. There would be time to get better.

The mafioso drew himself upright into a threatening posture. Her boys instantly curled into a protective arrangement around her. Well, all of them but Hibari, who was resting against the hull and glaring at anyone who came close. He just eyed the mafioso before shaking his head and closing his eyes. Herbivore. Not worth dealing with when the other herbivores looked ready to discipline him instead. He'd let the herd take care of it for once. This was why the baby had dragged them all to this place.

"Dire che ancora una volta," Hayato growled. Tsuna blinked. He hadn't heard her Storm speak Italian very often, but now that she was more familiar with the language thanks to Reborn, she noticed he had a very interesting accent. She'd have to see if she and Takeshi could get him to speak it during their fun times.

The mafioso snorted and took a step forward. Takeshi's hand went to where his blade rested against his side and pushed the blade out just enough that the sharp steel was visible in the light. Ryohei took position slightly in front and to the side of Tsuna. His hands curled and uncurled, and his face turned hard. Tsuna could definitely see the prized cage fighter in the normally loud teen. She smirked as she remembered the message she had gotten from the Watanabe-gumi when he formally joined the Akatora. Watanabe Shouta had not been happy. He'd been trying to recruit the boxer for months only for her to just appear out of nowhere and gain his allegiance. She hadn't replied yet. She wasn't certain if she was going to. The Watanabe-gumi were scum along the same lines as the Fuuma-kai.

Mochida took a ready position next to Hayato. He had his bokken slung over his shoulder and was glaring at the mafioso. Something in his stance just drew the eye, made you want to watch him over the others present. Tsuna almost thought he was going to rush over and brain the mouthy idiot. She was really beginning to see that the boy was a Lightning, or as Reborn had described it, the boy picked a path and wouldn't come off of it come hell or high water. The fact Mochida seemed to have chosen to protect the Boss at all costs as his current path made it much easier to see.

"E 'patetico che non può tenere il suo stomaco. Un gruppo come te non hanno posto quo ," the mafioso smirked and took another step forward.

"Bastardo ," Hayato growled and reached for one of his hidden pockets. Tsuna reacted fast and grabbed his hand.

"We do not need trouble yet," she muttered in his ear and turned her attention on the sneering mafioso. The mafioso's famiglia stood behind him and chuckled. Her eyes narrowed into a dark glare. She let her Flames start seeping into the air. Her Guardians inhaled and looked over at her in
surprise. Hibari opened his eyes and sat upright at the feeling. His lips curled into a smile as his teeth flashed.

"Vorrei pensare che uno non sarebbe così stupido da sfidare un sicario di nome," she stated firmly in accented Italian. She pulled herself up to her full height and let her will slam into his. He stumbled back, eyes wide as he realized just what stood before him. "Lasciare la mia famiglia solo o finirò la tu."

The mafioso stumbled backward as her presence pressed harder and harder against him. The other members of his family quickly moved him out of sight. A higher ranking member of that family walked hesitatingly forward before inclining his head to her. He swallowed dryly as her will pressed on him hard for a second before she withdrew her Flame presence.

"Le mie scuse per le sue parole. Posso avere il tuo nome, cielo signora?"

"Sawada Tsunami." She paused, frowned and shook her head. "Scuse. Tsunami Sawada."

"Sawada?" the man whispered in horror as he realized just who the girl in front of him had to be. His face drained of blood. "Vongola."

"Ah, Vongola Decima."

"Mi dispiace," the man rushed out before retreating and speaking very fast to the other members of his family. Tsuna and her Guardians relaxed as the entire group sent terrified looks over at her. She smiled, her teeth glinting in the light, and gave them a little wave. She thought she saw two of them nearly faint.

"So, I take it we missed something?" Rumiko as she approached the group with a few bottles of water in her hands. Yuusuke and Ikeda walked up behind her and looked between the terrified family and their boss.

Tsuna smirked and looked at them. "Oh, whatever do you mean?"

The intercom clicked on and announced that the ferry was docking at Mafia Land. The family that had been bothering Tsuna and her Guardians rushed for the doors. A dark chuckle caught Tsuna's attention. She turned her head and smiled at the approving look on Reborn's face.

"Well done, Tsunami," the hitman said. "We need to head to the main office first. Stay together and there won't be any problems."

Mafia Land was gorgeous. Tsuna sighed as the Mediterranean sun beat down on her. Her boys had surrounded her in a guard formation with Mochida and Takeshi taking the front, Ryohei right next to her and Hayato and Hibari taking the rear. Hibari didn't look happy about being grouped with the rest of the herbivores, but he had agreed to stay together when Tsuna asked. She had to promise to spar with him later and to use her gloves. The fact that she wasn't able to consistently enter HDW Mode for long periods of time did not discourage her Cloud. It was difficult for her to reach that deep now that all of the power of her Flames was available. Rumiko, Yuusuke and Ikeda followed silently behind the group. They were under strict orders not to call her Great Tiger and to imply that the Akatora had done something to gain Vongola support but not state what.

Reborn, the ringleader of this venture, was perched on Takeshi's shoulder.
"So what can we expect?" Tsuna asked her tutor. Reborn turned to look at her and smiled. A shiver ran down her spine at the sight of that devious twinkle in his eyes. Without saying a word he turned back around to face front. Tsuna resisted the urge to sigh. It would just encourage him.

A building loomed ahead. It wasn't some opulent thing like she would have expected. In truth, it looked more like a bunker or bomb shelter than anything. A sign outside stated it was the administration building. Tsuna's lips pressed into a tight line. Her shoulders tensed. There was the distinct feeling of being watched. Her boys, noticing her agitation, went on alert.

"Omnivore," Hibari muttered from behind. She turned her head to look at him. His eyes darted around the area, stopping briefly on the trees. She fought off a smirk. So he had noticed the cameras, too. Her eyes then sought Hayato. The bomber shrugged, but he kept his hands in the pocket she knew had his more powerful flash bangs hidden in. With them all so close together, he couldn't risk using his more impressive arsenal.

"I know," she muttered and looked back to the front. "Just a while longer, Hibari. I promise. Then you can distance yourself from the herbivores."

"Stupid prefect," Hayato muttered under his breath. Hibari twitched and growled. His hands tightened around his weapons as he resisted the urge to strike out at the back talking herbivore. He had given the omnivore his word he wouldn't strike the others unless it was for training purposes, at least for this trip. In Namimori, his territory, she didn't place restrictions on him.

She knew better.

"Takeshi, take point. Mochida, open the door," Tsuna said as they approached the door. He nodded and opened the door. Takeshi strode in, his hand resting on his blade as he scanned the entry way. A singular desk, probably worth more than what the Akatora made in a month, stood against the back wall. There were doors leading to other areas. All of them were closed. Two of them, the one directly behind the woman sitting at the desk and the door to the right had some kind of security pad next to them. The woman sitting at the desk eyed the group and nodded slightly.

"Welcome to Mafia—oh my goodness, Reborn!" the woman let out a high pitched squeal. Tsuna and Hibari both winced at the noise. The group stared in shock and unreal disbelief as the woman jumped to her feet, charged around the desk, and stopped just short of Takeshi. She stared at the infant perched on his shoulder with stars in her eyes.

"What can I do for you, sir?" she practically squealed.

Tsuna blinked, frowned and dragged her hand down her face. Really? What the hell was wrong with Italian women? Seriously going this crazy and lovesick over an infant?

"I believe everything should be set up for Vongola Decima and her Guardians?"

"Oh, yes, yes," the woman nodded quickly. Tsuna wondered how she didn't get dizzy from it considering how fast she was moving. The group stared in shock and unreal disbelief as the woman jumped to her feet, charged around the desk, and stopped just short of Takeshi. She stared at the infant perched on his shoulder with stars in her eyes.

"What can I do for you, sir?" she practically squealed.

"Sawada Tsunami, Vongola Decima," Tsuna said with an incline of her head. She wasn't going to say anything about her connection to the Akatora. Reborn had been right about that. It was always nice to have an ace or two in your back pocket.
"Ah, yes." The woman looked Tsuna up and down, assessing. Tsuna knew she wasn't the most intimidating of figures. Being just around 160cm (5'2"), she didn't have the height to be intimidating like Takeshi or Hibari did. She wasn't highly muscled. Her body type leaned more toward litheness than anything. She had strength, but it was tempered by her speed and flexibility in ways a more heavily muscled person was not. Ryohei was a good example. The boy could knock someone out with a punch, but she had noticed the boxer relied more on his footwork to get out of the way of a hit than leaning out of the way like she did.

"Yes, Reborn did mention you." The woman stood up straight. Her entire demeanor changed from happy fan girl into an efficient office worker in an instant. "As you haven't been spoken for by another famiglia and there have been no official declarations for Vongola, you will need to prove you have the correct mentality to be here."

Tsuna's eye twitched. Her eyes shot over to her tutor. He was grinning. He knew about this, probably planned for it. Vengeance. One day, vengeance.

"What do I need to do?"

The woman's lips twitched as if she wanted to repress a smile. "This way. Your men can wait through this door." She pointed to the door to the left.

"Wait, she'll be alone?" Takeshi said and his grip tightened on his blade.

"Takeshi, I'll be fine," Tsuna stated and placed a hand on his arm. She felt tense muscles beneath her fingers. Letting out a soft breath, she pushed on the bond she shared with her Rain. This was new. Reborn, who only had stories from other Skies he had worked with to go on, had tried to explain how she could reach out through the bond to her elements and soothe them when they were on edge. He had gone to Nono for help. The grandfatherly man had said it came naturally and was just something a Sky with bonded Elements knew how to do. She was finding he was mostly correct. She still had trouble reaching for her other elements outside of Storm and Rain due to the varying strengths of their bonds, but she could soothe them with her Flame if she concentrated hard enough.

Harmony, peace, rang through the bond. Takeshi nearly instantly relaxed at the touch. His hand lifted from his weapon as he turned to look her in the eye. He held the look for several seconds before backing away. He still wasn't happy with leaving her to face this test, but he had faith she'd be able to get through this. Didn't mean he had to like it, though.

Tsuna stepped back and looked over her boys. "Hayato, you're in charge until I get back. Hibari, please don't get into any fights. I have a feeling we'll be doing enough of that later."

"Omnivore," Hibari growled lowly. She stared him down and pressed against that thin bond they had with her Flames. It wasn't a threat but a reminder of what he promised. His nostrils flared, but he inclined his head ever so slightly. He'd do what she said. He may not like it, but the reward for good behavior was promising.

"Interesting," the woman muttered as she pulled a black leather briefcase out from behind her desk. She watched as the group went through the door. "He looks a lot like the Storm Arcobaleno."

"Don't say that around him unless you want to fight an annoyed Cloud," Tsuna stated blandly as she turned to face her.

"He's a Cloud?" the woman muttered and looked at Tsuna with a newly forming respect. Clouds were notoriously hard to attract and bond with. Shaking her head, she held out the briefcase and opened it so she could see the money that lay within. "The test is rather simple. Take this into the
room there and get whoever is in there to accept it as a bribe. You can't hurt them, but you can do anything else. If you fail, we'll kill you and your people. Good—"

The woman choked as she felt Sky Presence fill the air. Air froze in her lungs. She stared, wide eyed and terrified at the small woman in front of her. How could a single person do this? She had been in the presence of Vongola Nono, thought to be the strongest Sky in the world, before, and he wasn't anywhere near as powerful. She began to shake. The Presence lessened as Tsuna reached out and grabbed the briefcase. It clicked shut.

"Never threaten what's mine," the teen snapped as she stalked to the door. The woman nodded frantically and hurried after her to put the code into the door. The light on the keypad went from red to green. Tsuna inhaled slowly, her shoulders relaxing. Control. She needed to control herself. She could do this. The door opened.

Tsuna walked inside as casually as she could. The room looked more like an interrogation cell than anything. There was a table, two chairs and harsh lighting. Sitting in one of those chairs was a man in a well made suit. He grinned up at Tsuna from his seat and leaned back as she approached.

Tsuna's observational abilities, compounded by her intuition, scrambled to take in all the details she could. The suit was clean and well maintained despite the fact the cut wasn't fashionable for the year. That meant the man either didn't care about fashion or the suit was old. She was leaning toward the latter with the amount of wear she could see on the sleeves. His tie, a rather uninspired black one, told her he had no imagination. He was amused at her, though. She could work with that. It was surprising how many people underestimated her. All but Reborn had regretted it.

"Well now, what's a cute little thing like you doing here?" the man leered at her. Her eyebrow twitched but was quickly suppressed. She smiled. It hinted at the violence she wanted to commit on the ass of a man.

"Oh?" her smile grew. She noted the man become more wary. "I have a feeling you know exactly what I'm doing here. So, are we going to beat around the bush or are you going to take this?"

She dropped the briefcase on the table and opened it. She leaned over it and stared down at the twitching man. He looked like he was repressing the urge to go for a weapon. Her smile turned feral, teeth flashing in a way that reminded the man of a wild dog he had been attacked by when he was a kid. Her eyes caught his attention. They were dark and promised so many bloody things. He had been around mafioso who had violent personalities in the past, but they hadn't been able to let out the same level of blood lust this slip of a girl in front of him was giving. Blood drained from his face.

"Ah, well, um," the man sputtered out. How could she unnerve him so much? His hands shook. He, one of the calmest men serving as security for Mafia Land, shook before a teenager who looked like she wouldn't weigh 50kg (110 lbs) soaking wet.

"Well? Are you taking the money or do I get to be creative? I know I can't leave marks, but there are so, so many things I can do that don't leave a mark. Reborn is a good teacher, after all."

The man's mouth opened, gong to say no as he usually did when new bloods tried this kind of tactic but froze at the girl's words. Reborn's student. What the hell? They had put him in a room with Reborn's student. His mouth went dry. He sputtered a few times, words trying to fall from his mouth only to become jumbled on his tongue. The girl's smile widened victoriously. A feeling of doom settled like a lead weight in his stomach. He knew Colonello would have his skin for giving in so easy, but there was something about this girl that terrified him. His hands reached out and took the briefcase. It clicked shut. His hands shook where they rested on the leather. The girl continued to smile down at him from where she stood.
"I will tell you the same thing I told the one out there." She leaned forward, her fingertips just resting on the surface of the table and her face hovering over his. "Never threaten mine."

The man froze. A mafioso of several years, nearly a decade at that point, froze under the predatory gaze of this tiny girl. The air in his lungs froze. Spots danced in front of his eyes as his heart rate skyrocketed. Then he felt it, the weight that had been pushing down on him without him realizing it. Sky Flame. Borderline enraged Sky Flame. Just like Vongola Nono that one time... It was the last thought in his head before he fell forward in a dead faint, his body not able to resist the stress and shutting down to protect itself.

Tsuna smirked as she rose to stand upright. She waved to the passed out man and headed for the door in the rear of the room. It opened without a problem. Her boys stood in front of a large monitor. Hibari, leaning against the wall as far from the others as he could be but still within viewing distance, smirked at her. Mochida, the one who had been around her the least when she had her predator-alpha-bitch persona going, was a little white and shaking. He swallowed dryly as he looked over at her. Takeshi and Hayato both grinned, but there were identical flushes on their faces. She'd tease them about it later. Ryohei looked like he didn't know to smile or grimace.

"Holy shit," a blond haired baby stated from where he was standing on Ryohei's shoulder. His mouth slowly clicked shut and he turned to look at her.

Tsuna waved at him as she shut the door behind her. "Hi."

The blond baby—who had a blue pacifier around his neck, Tsuna noted— turned to Reborn. "And she needs training, kora? That was like watching a decades old Don rip someone apart with words."

Reborn smirked and crossed his arms. "She doesn't need the training as much as her Guardians do. Tsunami, this is Colonello. Colonello, Sawada Tsunami."

"Still can't believe you're Iemitsu's kid kora," Colonello muttered as he looked over at her.

Tsuna felt her lips curl into a snarl automatically at that man's name. Her Guardians reacted a second later as her annoyance and anger against her sperm donor flared down their bonds. "Do not compare me to that bastard."

The blond frowned and glanced over at his fellow Arcobaleno. A quick hand sign and he let it go. Reborn would tell him later if it was important. "Right, kora. Well, are you ready for your training, ladies?"

"Kill them, and I'll do everything in my power to end you," Tsuna warned him as she walked closer to the group.

Tsuna sighed as she felt the Mediterranean sun beat down on her skin. It was the last day before the group would be heading back to Namimori and Reborn had been gracious enough to let her have the day off as a reward for doing so well in training. Her muscles ached, but it wasn't anything she had experienced before. What was truly different was her sense of her bonds with her Guardians. She didn't know what exercise, between the meditating under a waterfall that nearly left her with hypothermia or the being thrown into a whirlpool to learn to concentrate her Flames, that did it, but all of her Guardian bonds were much clearer to her now.

Even the Mist bond she hadn't noticed.
"How's everything going, Tsunami?" Rumiko asked as she appeared beside her boss. The woman, true to form, was wearing one of the more distracting outfits she had brought. There were advantages of being known as the chief prostitute wrangler of a crime family. "Training went well for the boys?"

"They're passed out in the rooms," she said before grinning. "Well, all of them but Hibari and Ryohei. Those two are out doing their own thing. I know Ryohei said he was going on a run and who knows where Hibari is. He's avoiding people."

"What's new with that? The boy hates being around people. I don't know how you can stand him."

"Practice and experience. I'm nearly as fluent in Hibari as Kusakabe is."

Rumiko snorted and shook her head. The woman smiled softly at her boss. "And your training?"

"Concerned?"

"That our strongest ally could come to harm? Yes." Rumiko hid the grin that wanted to cross her lips. Misinformation. The nearby eavesdroppers had just enough information to make the Akatora stronger. The insular nature of the yakuza was really helping keep Tsuna's role as the Great Tiger under wraps. No yakuza would say anything to outsiders, even those families who hated the Great Tiger.

"Tsuna!" a male voice, Takeshi's, rose above the faint din that was street traffic. Her head turned. Takeshi and Hayato hurried to catch up to the two. The bomber's eyes widened upon seeing Rumiko and her rather revealing clothes, not to mention the swiftly forming mischievous grin on her face. Taking care, he took the widest route he could to get around her and sidled up to Tsuna's side, the one away from the head prostitute.

"Really?" Tsuna muttered as she looked at the bomber.

"She keeps with the touching."

"That's because she enjoys your reactions," Takeshi stated as he threw his arm over Hayato shoulders. He gave the older woman a tense smile. Rumiko, not an idiot despite how she acted sometimes, inclined her head and took a step back. Tsuyoshi's boy was deadly. She did not want his ire focused on her for any reason.

"She'll leave you alone as long as I'm around. Won't she?" Tsuna gave the woman who had taught her so much a look.

"Of course, Vongola," Rumiko chuckled and took another step back. "I'll just go see what the shops around here have to offer. You three go off and do...whatever it is you three do together."

The woman nodded to the three and took off at a fast walk. Yeah, best to give the boss and her boys some breathing room. Also, she made a note to herself to avoid teasing the Italian for a while. The boss and the swordsman were getting tetchy about it.

Tsuna shook her head and smiled at her subordinates actions. Rumiko needed to learn moderation. Shaking her head, the yakuza boss reached up and rubbed her hand on Hayato's head. The Storm Guardian squawked but didn't pull away from the touch.

"You two feeling better? You looked exhausted last night," Tsuna said as she withdrew her head.

"Colonello is a slave driver," Hayato muttered.
"It was fun," Takeshi smiled as he pulled his boyfriend in close.

"You're insane."

Tsuna snorted, her hand flying up to her mouth to keep the laughter in. The boys looked away from each other at the noise. Takeshi chortled. Hayato's lips turned upward into a soft smile. She loved seeing that look. It had become more common in the last month. Takeshi grinned.

Boom!

The ground shook. Tsuna's arms flared out, helping her keep her balance. Takeshi's face shifted from his happy-go-lucky smile to the sharp predator. Hayato fell to one knee intentionally. His eyes scanned the area while his hands drifted to his explosive stash. That noise had sounded like TNT. The noise had come from the shore. The speakers around Mafia Land sprang to life and started giving instruction in Italian. Hayato didn't wait to hear it. He had lived in Mafia Land before. He knew what to do during an attack.

"Come on," he said as he grabbed Tsuna's hand. "We've got to get to the fort. They'll ask for volunteers to fight when everyone gets there."

"Right." Tsuna nodded and took off running beside her Storm. Takeshi took up the rear position. The ground shook again. Prepared for such a thing, none of the three fell.

"Tsunami," Reborn greeted her as she ran through the front door of the fort. His face was grim. Leon perched on his arm, ready to shift into a weapon for his partner to use.

"What's going on?" she asked as he motioned for the three to follow him.

"An attack."

"No, I couldn't tell," she snapped sarcastically.

"It's the Carcassa," Colonello said as he dropped from the sky. Falco, the sniper's animal partner, let out a screech and went to find a perch. He'd be in range if his partner needed him.

"How do you know that?" Takeshi asked as he tilted his head.

"Skull," both Arcobaleno intoned as one. They shared a rare commiserative look at the name.

"Who?" Tsuna started to ask but shook her head. She'd find out later if it was important. "What can we do to help?"

"Extreme!" Ryohei's voice echoed off the walls.

Tsuna winced. "Takeshi, go get the others and bring them here. Hibari's probably already out there fighting whoever is doing this."

"Typical Cloud," Hayato muttered even as he drew closer to his boss's right side. Takeshi nodded to the two and hurried to find Ryohei and Mochida.

"Now, what can we do to help?" Tsuna asked again.

Colonello looked at her and nodded. "Think you can command a ground group, Vongola? I'm going to need all my more senior men organizing the snipers to shoot down those damn bombs."

Another round of explosions rocked the fort. Tsuna braced herself against the wall and glared at the
far wall. Her lips twisted into a snarl. Her eyes bled into a ruddy orange. Her hands went to her jacket pockets. The thin leather gloves dragged over her fingers.

"Yeah, I can do that," she growled. "Hayato, go with them. I think you'll be better off helping the snipers figure out where the next set of bombs are going to be coming from."

Hayato shivered at the sound and flicked his tongue out to wet his suddenly dry lips. He bowed to hid his reaction from her. "Yes, Tsuna-hime."

"Tsuna, got the others!" Takeshi called as he hurried back. His sword, brought by Mochida, hung over his shoulder. "Where do you need us?"

"The eastern beach," Colonello stated and waved for one of his runners to come over. "Get them to the beach. They're helping with any idiots who manage to get to shore."

"Yes, sir!" The man saluted and motioned for the group to follow.

"Be careful," Tsuna said as she passed Hayato.

"Sword idiot, don't let anything happen to her."

"Gotcha."

"Extreme!"

"Why did I agree to this?" Mochida muttered as he ran beside his boss. "What good are we going to be when there's explosives going off everywhere?"

"Can't be worse than that training day when Hayato got to set up the obstacle course," Takeshi grinned viciously.

"It was extreme," Ryohei nodded from his place in the lead.

"I could hear the explosions from the waterfall Reborn was training me at."

Their escort paled and resisted the urge to stare incredulously at the group. Cold sweat dripped down his neck and slithered down his back. These kids, they were terrifying. At least they were on his side for this fight. The tunnel narrowed to an opening. Sunlight streamed in. So did the sound of gunfire and battle.

"Shoot him!"

"He's a demon!"

"Help!"

"Mommy!"

Tsuna snorted. "OK, so we found where Hibari went. Remember to take out any invaders. We can't let them get to the defenseless."

"There are defenseless mafioso?" Mochida snarked even as he readied his bokken. It might not be a slicing implement like Takeshi's preferred swords, but he knew he could split a person's skull open with it. The time Colonello had released those wolves on him proved that.

"Women, children and the elderly." Tsuna shrugged. "Why they don't teach their women to defend
themselves, I still don't understand."

They raced out the opening and stared at the carnage. Hibari had definitely been through. The massive amount of broken bodies, all brought down via blunt force trauma, was as good as a signed calling card. Tsuna could feel him close. Her lips curled into a vicious grin. Nostrils flared wide.

"Extreme!"

"This is going to be fun," Takeshi grinned as he unsheathed his blade. A faint blue aura formed along the blade's edge. Tsuna's eyebrow went up. That was new.

"Extreme punch!" Ryohei shouted, his voice echoing around them. He jabbed his fist into the face of a man who had managed to get up from his Hibari induced injuries.

"Did he just cause a visible shock wave with a punch?" the escort muttered in disbelief.

Tsuna hummed. "He's been able to do that for years. I'll admit the shock wave was a bit stronger than usual, though. We've got this from here. Go back up the others in the fort."

The man stared as the group of four overpowered teens ran toward the sounds of battle. He shook his head and went back into the access tunnel. Pushing a button, the door slid shut and locked behind him.

Tsuna ducked under a punch. Twisting her body, she kicked out and her opponent dropped with his knee going in the opposite direction of his leg. Stomping on his hand and listening to the satisfying crack, she searched for her next target. Ryohei was having fun screaming his head off and dropping multiple opponents with every punch. Takeshi was laughing and surrounded by severed corpses. He was letting his darker side show.

"Just die!" Mochida shouted as he swung out and brained the men who had tried to overpower him. The enemy seemed to have taken his lack of bladed weapon as a sign he was weak. They had done the same to her and Ryohei but quickly realized they were hand-to-hand specialists. Mochida, despite not having a pile of bodies surrounding him, had done quite well for himself. He leaned more toward disabling opponents than killing, but the way he disabled them probably made them wish they were dead. Someone had taught the kendoist to go for the soft tissue before breaking legs. It was hard to fight when your leg bones were shattered.

Hibari hadn't revealed himself. It was worrying, but Tsuna knew he wasn't dead somewhere. He probably found who was causing all of this and was taking out his aggression.

"Slowed down a bit," Takeshi muttered as the last enemy mafioso slid off his blade. The quiet was eerie. The explosions had trailed off some time ago.

"It's too calm," Tsuna stated.

"Hey, anyone need a medic?" a voice called from the cliffs. Tsuna tilted her head up and rolled her eyes at the mafioso gathered there. They seemed rather disturbed by the battlefield. Bunch of weaklings.

"We're fine." She frowned and looked over the water. "Get your asses down here before the next wave arrives."

Boom!

She frowned. A plume of water rose in the distance. Squinting, she could just make out the shape of
"Colonnello," one of the mafioso who had come as backup stated as he walked by her and saw her mildly confused look. "He's taking out the enemy ships before they can get the next wave out. Who's stupid enough to attack Mafia Land?"

"Reborn and Colonnello both said something about Carcassa," she offered up as she relaxed her stance slightly. There was something making her uneasy. This was too easy, too simple. Using tactics like this would never work against such an entrenched position like Mafia Land. Her eyes widened.

"Fuck! Please tell me we have communications with the fort," she snapped at one of the nearby defenders. He nodded hesitantly, quite unnerved by her sudden emotional swing. "Good. Tell them the ships are a diversion. Aim above, in the clouds. That's where the bombs are being thrown from. The trajectories are altered so it looks like they're coming from the ships."

"How the hell do you know that? Why should we believe you?"

Tsuna frowned and stared dead into the grown man's eyes. Her Flames flared slightly, making him sweat at the thought of being under such a strong Sky's attention. "I am Sawada Tsunami. I am Vongola Decima. Do you really want to argue with Vongola Intuition about this?"

"No, ma'am," the mafioso managed to squeak out before pulling out a handset and talking in rapid Italian. A few moments later a single gunshot rang out. Tsuna squinted as the clouds curled around themselves before fading. She blinked. A blimp? Who the hell still used a blimp as a weapon platform?

"Omnivore." Her head turned. Her Cloud stood on a spire of rock, tonfa in hand, as he glared out into the water. His shoulders tensed. Mouth dropped open slightly to take in more air. Nostrils flared. She could see his pupils constrict and dilate. Her head turned to follow his line of sight. The water. Something was in the water.

"Move!" Tsuna shouted to the men closer to the waterline. Her own people turned to look at her and followed her line of sight. Thankfully none of them were close to the water. Their fights had taken them further up the beach onto the steep rocks. Even Takeshi, who would have had an easier time fighting in the water due to the nature of Shigure Soen Ryu, stayed on dry land.

A red tentacle broke the surface and lashed out at one of the unwary mafioso. Lifting the body up, the tentacle flicked and sent the man flying overhead to crash into the jagged rocks. Tsuna shivered. It had to be tentacles. She was a female Japanese high schooler. She knew what those things could do. She had to hope this fight didn't turn into a really bad hentai scene.

"Hahahahaha! You think you can defeat the great Skull-sama!" a voice called out. The tentacle rose up, being joined by more of its kind. Soon the beast the tentacles were attached to rose out of the water like a feature from a bad kaiju film. Tsuna tilted her head to the side and frowned. She didn't think octopi got that big.

The revving of an engine caught her attention. A black and purple blur raced up the sands. Her eyes widened. Instinct blared that whoever this was was dangerous. It didn't matter if it was a tiny person no bigger than Reborn or Colonnello. In fact, the size of the person just made her more wary. This person had to be an Arcobaleno, likely this Skull person.

Pursing her lips together, she nodded. "Takeshi, sushi. Mochida, with him. Ryohei, Hibari, with me."
We're going after the baby."

For a moment, she swore she saw the octopus's eyes widen and turn to the two swordsmen as they rushed it. Takeshi grinned like a mad man as his experienced eye tried to figure out the best places to cut to get the best meat. He glanced over at Mochida and motioned for him to choose a tentacle. His blade sang as he sliced through the closest appendage. The severed tentacle flopped on the ground for a second before stopping. The octopus wiggled and tried to retreat back into the safety of the water.

"Oodako!" the baby riding a motorcycle shouted before he revved his engine. The bike sped toward her swordsmen.

"Ryohei, stop him!" Tsuna shouted as she raced from the water's edge. Hibari jumped down from his perch and followed closely behind her. He grinned. The look made several mafioso want to wet themselves.

Ryohei, heeding his boss's words but knowing there was no way he could catch the motorcycle, looked around. He grinned. Hands reached out. He lowered himself, grabbed hold of a rather large sized boulder, and flung it at the idiot who thought attacking one of Tsuna's people was smart. The biker let out a girly shriek as he skidded out of the way of the flying rock. Tsuna and Hibari caught up to him, getting between him and the boys taking care of the octopus. Tsuna's mind raced as she tried to assess the baby's threat level. There was just…why did she have the feeling the baby was playing with them?

"Hibari, be careful," she muttered softly but took a step back. She'd act as a guard between the two groups. Her Cloud did still need to let off some steam.

"Ha! You think you can beat the great Skull-sama?" the baby boasted as he hopped onto the top of his bike and posed like something out of a sentai show. The yakuza boss had to resist the urge to laugh. Really, he was hamming it up a bit much.

"For disturbing the peace, I will bite you to death."

"Kinky," the baby—who obviously had a death wish—stated blandly. Tsuna bit her lip to the point of bleeding to keep from laughing at the face Hibari pulled. What followed was a lesson in dodging. The baby bounced around like a demented rabbit, staying just outside of Hibari's reach. The prefect snarled as every swung missed by just scant inches. To make it worse, the baby was acting like he was tripping or falling over something at just the right time to dodge the blows. Tsuna turned slightly so she could get a good look at what her swordsmen were up to. The octopus was on the verge of panic as it waved about its tentacles in a frantic manner.

Surprisingly, the wild flailing made it hard for her two boys to get in close. Her eyes took in the two and their fighting styles. Takeshi was being precise as usual. Mochida, now he was interesting. He was taking the hits without seeming to notice the force behind them. His stance was sturdy. Every time he managed to bludgeon a tentacle there was a very obvious, loud thwack that echoed in the air and the tentacle he hit froze up for a second. She could swear she saw a spark of green trace up and down the weapon.

Ka-Boom!

Heads jerked toward where the ships had been waiting in the water and the bumps with the cannon's mounted on their undersides had floated. Only a large spray of water and steam rested on the horizon. Well, water, steam and smoke from the blimps falling in burning wrecks into the sea. Tsuna felt her mouth open and shut several times. She turned and looked up at the walls that protected
"Tsun, was that…?" Takeshi asked as he stared open mouthed and in awe at the carnage at sea.

"I think so, yeah."

"Remind me to compliment Hayato on that later."

"Only if you do the same for me."

"Argh!" Skull cried as the prefect took advantage of his momentary distraction and began beating on him in earnest. If it hadn't been for the fact his own Flames were causing his body to regenerate, he'd have been crippled. In an effort to protect himself, he curled up in a ball and prayed his helmet would stand up to the beating. Hibari really wasn't in the mood to play. "I surrender!"

"Ch. Herbivore," Hibari muttered as he backed off slightly.

"Nicely done, Tsunami," Reborn said as he popped out of one of his hiding holes. She and her boys had done well and put everything they had learned over the course of their training to good use. "Lackey."

"Hi, Reborn," Skull whimpered. Oodako slunk around the group of far too strong for their age fighters and curled protectively around her master. A second later, purple fire curled over her slimy form and she shrunk down to her more normal size.

"I think you and I need to have a talk, lackey." Skull let out a tiny squeak as Reborn jumped over beside him and slung him over his shoulder. The baby hitman turned to look at his student.

"Everything should be fine now. Mafia Land security will take care of the stragglers. Go enjoy your last day before we go home. Colonello and I will be busy reeducating the lackey."

"No, no, Reborn, no please no," Skull shouted as he frantically tried to get out of the other's grasp.

Tsuna smiled beatifically, causing many of the unaffiliated mafioso to stare at her in shock and amazement. "Ah, thank you, Reborn. Have fun."
Tsuna sighed as she took another bite of chocolate cake. Hana and Kyoko had dragged her out on a cake expedition a few days after the group had gotten back from Mafia Land. Both girls demanded stories and complimented her on her tan. Training under the Mediterranean sun had turned her skin from it's pale shade to a rather fetching golden color. She still had nothing on Takeshi's tan though. That boy was dark due to all the time he spent on the baseball field. It made for a nice contrast when he and Hayato were tangled together on her office couch.

"So…?" Hana started to ask but ended with a grin. Kyoko hid her own grin behind a bite of cake.

Tsuna sighed and looked upward in a plea for strength. "I'm not talking about what happened over break."

"Come on. Everyone knows you and Hibari ended up going somewhere," Hana continued to push.

"Not just Hibari. Onii-chan went with her, too," Kyoko stated with sparkling eyes. "They went to Europe."

Hana frowned slightly and turned a critical eye on her yakuza friend. "You aren't trying to seduce that monkey, are you?"

"No." Tsuna's lips curled into a smile. Hana didn't realize what she was revealing to her friend. Using Vongola Intuition on her civilian friend may have not been fair, but life wasn't fair. "You can have Ryohei all to yourself still."

"What!" Hana practically shrieked, her voice rising an octave and catching the attention of everyone in the cafe. She sunk down into her seat as she felt the eyes all turn to look at her. Looking for a quick way to avoid talking, and to avoid the smug look on Tsuna's face, she dug into her slice of cake.

"Wait, Hana and my brother?" Kyoko froze, her fork partly to her mouth. She frowned, brow drawing together, before her face smoothed out. She nodded. "He could do worse. You have my permission."

"I-but-I," Hana stuttered as her face flushed red. "Oh, shut up."

Tsuna smirked as she lifted her cup of coffee. Her nose wrinkled at the taste. Reborn had gotten her hooked on the good stuff in Italy. The stuff in Namimori paled in comparison. "Look, I can't tell you what we all did. You're already on the edge of being involved in organized crime just by being my friends. I don't want to drag you further down."

"We worry you, don't we?" Kyoko asked, her eyes sharp. Hana fell silent and looked away. Yes being Tsuna's friend was dangerous, but the yakuza boss was very protective of them both.

"Yes. I have enemies, and I'm gaining more as the days pass." Tsuna sighed and tangled her fingers together before pressing them to her lips. "I'd feel better if you were willing to take some self defense lessons from my girls."

Hana frowned and leaned forward. "The prostitutes?"

"No one messes with my girls for good reason." Tsuna's grin turned unholy and caused more than a few people trying to listen in to their conversation to back away warily. "They live by the rule that"
there's no such things as a fair fight."

"I don't like fighting," Kyoko muttered as she looked downward.

"I'm not saying you have to use it, but I'd feel better if you'd learn. It could be the difference between escaping or being kidnapped."

"Kidnapped?"

"Hostages are worth more. Plus you're both attractive females that would bring in a pretty nice price to any brothel you were sold to."

There was a moment of silence.

"It terrifies me how you know this," Hana muttered but sighed after a second of thought. "Tell me when and I'll be there. Anything to stay safe."

Kyoko looked at her friend. "Hana?"

"She's right. We're a liability right now and just because you know how to do something doesn't mean you have to use it."

"Better to have the knowledge and not need it than need it and not have it."

"I'd normally ask Rumiko to teach you, but I think Yin would be a better choice. I'll check her work schedule and arrange something."

The door to the cafe opened with a crash. Heads snapped toward the noise. Tsuna was already halfway out of her chair and in a fighting stance. She blinked.

"Takeshi?"

"Tsuna, you need to come with me." Her swordsman's eyes practically glowed with suppressed anger and fear. "Now."

Tsuna ran beside Takeshi as they hurried to the area of town her people said the foreign mafioso were tearing apart. Her stomach tried to climb its way out of her throat. There were only scattered reports, but those reports painted a worrying picture. A foreign teen was running from a man, also a foreigner, with long silver hair and a preference for bladed weaponry. The fact that the silver haired man's voice could be heard from several streets away and the ranting shouts were in Italian gave her a very good idea who he was.

Superbi Squalo, current leader of the Varia Independent Assassination Squad. This was so not good.

"What do you think?" Takeshi asked as they raced along back alleys and side streets. Avoiding the main, popular streets was a must in this situation. They didn't have the time to spare running through the crowds. The city police, led by the Hibari patriarch, may have been content to allow the Akatora do business in the city on the recommendation of his son, but the Varia were a whole different animal. Tsuna had seen reports of what a single Varia assassin could do, and Superbi was the acting leader, miles ahead in skill and the amount of sheer devastation that could be brought to bear. The yakuza boss had no idea why he was considered the acting leader, but there was a story there that her instincts were telling her had something to do with Vongola and Vongola Nono in particular. Reborn had been very brief when he was teaching her about the various branches of the organization. The Varia had been only one of many that lesson.
"Potentially? Something really bad." She leapt over a pile of crates left out behind a corner store. "Reborn's been getting better about warning me about this mafia shit. He knows I do not like it when people from other organizations come uninvited into my territory. What information he had for me on the Varia was just general stuff anyone who has an ear to the ground in the underworld would know."

"So?"

"My intuition is saying there's something going on there. Internal strife between Varia and Vongola, maybe? I don't know enough to get an accurate picture." She frowned, brow knitting together.

"Where's Hayato?"

"He's coming from the other side of town. We should be meeting up with him soon."

"And my mom and the kids?"

"Bianchi and Mochida."

"Good." She took a deep breath as they ran out of the alley and onto a side road. Her ears strained. She could hear a ruckus going on ahead. Hibari would be coming soon. She hoped to get this sorted out before then. "Any sign of Reborn?"

"None." The swordsman scratched his cheek. "Not surprising though. He's probably keeping an eye out. It's his job to keep you alive until you take over."

"Tsuna-hime!" Hayato's voice came from their left. The bomber caught up to her side and nodded. "We've managed to confirm that it's Superbi Squalo. ID on the other person's still going on, but we need to hurry. The police are already getting nervous and Hibari's been seen heading straight for the area."

"Damn it," Tsuna muttered under her breath and frowned. Her hand reached down to her hip where her knives were concealed. She'd stand no chance going against Superbi with them, but maybe if her boys could make an opening? She glanced over at Takeshi, who had dropped into his serious mode and begun radiating an aura that spooked veteran yakuza.

"Be ready. Superbi is likely to start a fight if this is internal strife."

"Probably about Xanxus," Hayato stated.

She turned to look at him. "Xanxus?"

"The head of the Varia and Vongola Nono's youngest son."

Tsuna didn't have any time to react to that tidbit of information, though she did store it away as something she needed to ask Reborn about. She thought she was the only heir. If there was a fourth son, shouldn't he have been next in line instead of the female candidate? Even with her bloodline connection to the Primo, a male heir should have taken precedence just as Enrico, Massimo, and Federico had before her.

The scene that appeared before the trio took importance over such thoughts.

The street was deserted of all but the two combatants. Just like her people had said, there were two foreigners. One a blond teen, male and not much older than herself, looked to be the worse off of the two. The other was Superbi Squalo. In one hand he held a sword and the gouges in the concrete and asphalt told her just how good the blond boy was at dodging. Idly she wondered how Superbi kept
his blade sharp after cutting through something like concrete. She had a hard enough time keeping
the edges on her knives when she stabbed someone. Ribs were killer on her knives.

Her focus quickly shifted from the obvious threat that was the swordsman to the victim, the blond
teen. Her stomach twisted violently as something inside her said she needed to protect the boy. It
wasn't the same feeling she had for her boys, but something more similar to what she felt for the kids
and her mother. Her lips pursed. She'd look into the possibilities once they got out of this situation.
She had a feeling she would not like what it was.

"Voi! Who are you trash?" Squalo shouted as he caught sight of the trio. His eyes narrowed. That
girl, she looked familiar and the pale haired brat was definitely the Smoking Bomb. That would
mean the girl was Sawada's brat and the only obstacle between Xanxus taking over Vongola. A grin,
as vicious and predatory as the animal he was named for, curled over his lips.

"You aren't welcome here, Superbi," Tsuna stated firmly, her Flame slowly infusing the air. A shiver
ran down Superbi's back at the feeling. He hadn't expected her to be able to do that. His lips pursed
into a thin line. Reborn was obviously doing a good job teaching her.

"Sawada-dono!" the blond boy gasped out. Tsuna looked over at him while her boys kept their
attention on the more dangerous Sword Emperor. "Run. He can't…"

"Just die and give me the box," Superbi snarled as he rushed to finish off his prey. He stopped as two
lit sticks of explosives appeared in front of him. He had only a few seconds to pull himself back out
of range. The bombs exploded. A loud, shattering noise filled the air. A flash of light blinded both
Superbi and the blond teen. Hayato rushed forward and dragged the blond teen away. Takeshi, his
blade in his hands and shining in the sunlight, stood in a defensive position in front of them.

"Hayato, bring him here," Tsuna hissed. Her eyes never left the blinking form of the Varia
swordsmen. "Then backup Takeshi. He'll need it."

"Yes, Tsunami-sama," Hayato murmured as he set the injured boy at her feet. He stood up and stood
behind and slightly to the side of Takeshi. Her swordsman smirked, his eyes going sharp as he gazed
upon his prey. Hayato let out a soft breath and reached out to tap a code onto the back of Takeshi's
arm. He nodded in response. Plan made, they moved.

"So, who are you and how do you know who I am?" Tsuna asked the blond teen as she knelt beside
him to get a better look at his injuries. The intricately carved box in his hands took her attention. That
had to be what Superbi was talking about and wanted so badly. Her gaze went from the box to the
wide eyed stare of the teen. An explosion rang out in the background. She glanced up and choked
back a laugh at the sight of her boys double teaming the Sword Emperor. It seemed like he hadn't
been expecting that level of resistance.

"Sawada-dono, I am Basil. I work for thou father," the blond began to explain only to fall silent
when she let out an ominous growl.

"That Bastard sent you," she hissed as her fingers curled into fists at her sides. Her Flames flared
violently within at the mere thought of her sperm donor.

Basil shrunk back in an instinctive movement. He had been in the presence of an enraged Sky
before. His mouth went dry, and he swallowed thickly. A shiver dropped down his spine. He winced
as the movement pulled at his wounds. He may have managed to avoid the worst of Squalo's attacks,
but he was not without injury.

Tsuna took a few deep breaths, regaining control over her temper. Her eyes tracked upward to where
her boys were fighting against the Varia Captain. Hayato remained at a distance, tossing in distracting flash bangs and small explosives every so often as Takeshi danced around the other's sword work. She could see the appreciation and respect starting to grow in the Varia assassin's eyes as Takeshi managed to keep from being harmed. Her Rain wasn't getting in any hits himself, but he wasn't getting hit either. Even with Hayato's help, it was an impressive feat for someone Takeshi's age.

"Why did he send you here?" Tsuna asked without looking down at the blond.

"Don Vongola hath gone missing," Basil started to explain. "Master believes the Varia art trying to take over. Master gave me this to give to thou. Take them. Run. Thou must survive, Sawada-dono."

Tsuna blinked and looked down at him. "Your master told you to bring this box to me? Who is your master?"

"Thou father, Sawada Iemitsu. I do not understand why thou refers to him as a bastard. He is truly a righteous man."

Tsuna's face went blank for a moment. Her tongue pressed against the roof of her mouth a she resisted the urge to snap at the injured boy. "Basil, don't call that Bastard master around me, understand?"

"Yes, Sawada-dono."

"I'm going to guess he's also the one who taught you Japanese?"

"Yes."

Tsuna sighed then froze. The hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. Her eyes widened and her head turned to try to figure out just what was causing that reaction.

"Tsunami," Reborn greeted her as he popped up out of nowhere. He turned and inclined his head toward Basil. "Basil."

"Reborn," Tsuna greeted him as she got her heartbeat under control. That explained the feeling. She really needed to figure out how he did that.

"Sir Reborn," Basil gasped.

Reborn stepped over next to the injured boy and looked at the box. "Is that what Iemitsu sent?"

"Yes," Basil said and held the box out toward the Arcobaleno and the young boss.

Reborn took it from his hands, opened it, and frowned at what he saw within. "Tsunami, hold this."

With Tsuna holding the box, he place his hand on one of the objects contained within. He paused, frowned and nodded to himself. Swiftly closing the box, he grabbed it from Tsuna's hands and looked up at the fight. Squalo stood with an insane grin on his face, his eyes wild with blood lust. Takeshi had fallen back on his defensive stances and sways deflecting every attack he could. Hayato hesitated at the edge of the fight as he tried to get a good line of sight for his explosives. One mistake could lead to Takeshi being injured instead of the Sword Emperor.

Crack!

"What?" Squalo yelled as his arm was yanked backwards. He recovered quickly, his balance coming
back second later. It had been just long enough for the sword wielding kid to move and place the tip of his blade against Squalo's throat. The Varia Captain froze. His eyes narrowed at the boy in front of him. Takeshi smiled at him. The smile never reached his eyes.

"Squalo, what a surprise to see you here?" Dino stated as he flicked his wrist in such a way his whip uncurled from around the Varia assassin's wrist. He grinned at Takeshi and waved. "Yamamoto, Gokudera, Tsuna."

"Dino-nii," Tsuna greeted him while her boys grinned.

"Yamamoto, Gokudera, back off," Reborn barked. Everyone turned to look at him. He stood up, the box held in his hands, and stepped forward. Takeshi and Hayato, not idiots, backed off. Reborn was pleased to note how the two covered each other and that neither turned their backs to the assassin.

"Reborn?" Tsuna whispered as her eyes went between him and the long haired assassin.

"Tsunami, trust me."

She inhaled and released the breath slowly. "Don't make me regret this."

Reborn smirked. A moment later, Squalo fell backward as the box collided with his face. "Take that and go."

"Voi!" Squalo shrieked and stood back up. The Arcobaleno had one hell of an arm. He picked up the box and opened it. A smile broke out on his face. They were all there.

"Squalo, I believe you were asked to leave," Dino stated. His eyes narrowed, his hand flicking in a way to prime his whip for attack.

The Varia swordsman snorted and turned to leave. He paused and looked over at the two brats who had stood against him. Smoking Bomb had been better than he remembered. Good for him to get better for his Sky, which the girl obviously was. His attention was mostly held up by the swordsman, though. His style was familiar, but it didn't seem to be made for the blade he was using. Still, for all that their match had been interrupted, the boy was good. He'd like to fight the kid again someday.

Then his gaze turned to the girl. She stood straight, eyes meeting his. He could see the color slowly turning from brown to orange, much like how his own Sky's would when he was angered. The feeling of Sky Flame pressing down filled the air. It was impressive. Hard to believe Iemitsu had managed to have such a kid.

Squalo nodded and walked away. Dino tensed as the swordsman passed by him, but he just continued on his way.

"Tsuna, are you OK?" Dino asked as soon as Squalo was out of earshot.

She nodded. "I'm fine. Basil here needs some medical attention, but I was never touched. Hayato, Takeshi, you both OK?"

"We're fine," Hayato stated as he walked over. "Where do we go from here?"

"No, the box. Thou can't let him take them," Basil managed to wheeze out.

"It's fine, Basil. They were fakes," Reborn reassured the boy. Basil stared at him in slight horror as the words went through his brain. His thoughts must have been too much. He fainted.

"Are the kids OK? Mom?" Tsuna asked. "Hayato, Takeshi, carry him. I think the office is the best
place to discuss this."

"Right," both her boys said with nods and went about gathering up the injured boy.

"The kids are with Mochida. Bianchi is with your mother."

"Office?" Dino said with a tilted head.

Tsuna gave a trickster's grin. "Let's just say I've been keeping some secrets."

"This is your office?" Dino asked with a frown. He eyed the men and women wandering the halls. "How long…?"

"I've been in charge of the Akatora since I was 10," Tsuna explained as she sat behind her desk. Her hands folded together and resting on the top of the wood. Her eyes turned hard, concerned for what was happening in her territory. She hadn't wanted to let outsiders know about her position yet. There was still so much she had to do to prepare, so much to learn. She sighed. Her eyes slid shut. Well, it had to happen sometime. She had the feeling she never would have felt like it was time up to the point she was properly introduced to mafia society as the Vongola Decima.

"That explains so much," Dino muttered as he dropped into a chair. He shook his head and set a box on the desk. "I was tasked with bringing these to you."

"Rings?" she muttered as she opened the box and stared at the jewelry within. Her intuition told her these were more than just jewelry though.

"The halves of the Vongola rings held by the CEDEF. Your father asked me to bring them to you while Basil provided a distraction."

"That Bastard," Tsuna muttered softly, rage coloring her words. She took a few calming breaths. This wasn't the time to lose her temper. "Basil is his apprentice? He called him Master."

Dino nodded. His lips pressed together as he caught onto her thought process. "I argued against the plan. Basil has been training since he was a child to take over the CEDEF Head position once Iemitsu retires. Using him as a sacrifice would put all those years of training to waste."

Tsuna shut her eyes and inhaled deeply. "We'll look out for him now. That Bastard won't touch him again."

"Bastard?" Dino frowned. That wasn't a normal way to refer to your father, even if you were estranged. The raw hate that tinged her words made his skin crawl. She had to be enhancing her voice with her Flame, a trick most bosses with active Sky Flame learned fairly early.

"It's a long story and not something I'm comfortable talking about with you, no offense. You are a member of the Vongola Alliance, a personal ally and close friend, but you aren't family."

Dino's teeth clicked as his mouth rapidly shut. That was rather telling…and worrisome. He'd have to see if he could get his men to investigate. Something, likely the training Reborn had beaten into his head, told him whatever Iemitsu had done was bad enough to affect the Vongola Alliance.

The door to the office slammed open and a group of people, led by a very annoyed Trident Shamal entered. Dino's eyes trailed to the bandaged Basil who was walking next to a rather happy seeming white-blond boy. Basil looked pale. A large bandage could be seen poking out from under his shirt. The smell of antiseptic hovered over the group. Behind the doctor and the two blond teens came the
more familiar forms of his adopted little sister's Storm and Rain Guardians. Reborn sat on the Rain's shoulder. A third boy joined in the procession, taking up the rear and closing the door quietly behind them.

"You know I hate working on males," Shamal seethed. Tsuna merely raised an eyebrow in return. The assassin-doctor puffed up like an angry cat for a moment before deflating. It was worthless to get angry at the girl. She controlled the sex services in the town. She could get him blacklisted with a word. Worse, the nearby towns were either slowly being taken over by her or the families that did control them would blacklist him for being blacklisted by the Akatora. She had his ass over a barrel and she knew it.

"Basil, how are you feeling? I know Squalo did a number on you," she stated as she stood from her desk and walked to the teen. He swallowed and looked down. Tilting her head, her eyes narrowed. That posture was familiar. Add in his coloring…Tsuna's eyes narrowed. Lifting her eyes from the embarrassed boy to her Guardians, she motioned for them to take a seat anywhere available. Surprisingly, Ryohei sat down next to Basil and rested a hand on the injured boy's shoulder. Tsuna frowned slightly, her head tilting in confusion, before she understood what her Sun Guardian was doing.

While at Mafia Land, Ryohei had one of the heavier training courses from Colonello. On top of the physical conditioning and strategy sessions, he also had to attend lessons on anatomy and Sun Flame healing. Ryohei admitted he wasn't the best at it, but he was only learning. Tsuna drew on her connection to her Sun Guardian and could feel his attention was mostly on the injured boy. More than likely, he was doing some kind of low level healing to help Basil recover quickly.

"So, Dino tells me the Bastard used you, his apprentice, as bait to lure out the Varia so I could get these rings," she stated as she paced back to the desk and the box that lay there so innocently. "Reborn, are these the rings you mentioned?"

Reborn inclined his head. "Yes. Half of them. One half is kept by the active Guardians and boss. The other is kept by the CEDEF. Superbi was likely after the CEDEF Rings because they are less guarded than the ones currently worn by Nono and his Guardians."

"No, that's not it," Dino interrupted with a shake of his head. "Vongola Nono and his Guardians went missing a few days ago. Before that the Varia had begun moving aggressively and secretively."

"Xanxus." Reborn's fedora tilted over his eyes.

"That's the second time I've heard that name today. Who is he? Hayato said he's Nono's youngest son. Shouldn't he be first in the inheritance line, being a male heir and all that?" Tsuna asked as she looked over at her tutor.

"It's not that simple," Reborn began to explain, paused, and sighed. "Xanxus is not actually related to Nono. He was adopted."

"So the lack of blood connection makes him ineligible?" Tsuna frowned and looked back at the box of rings in her hand. "I take it he doesn't like that."

"No, he didn't," Dino sighed, catching everyone's attention. "I went to school with Squalo, got to know Xanxus a bit from that. He never knew he wasn't Vongola blood. When he found out, there was a big fight. Some people called it a coupe. No one but the Vongola upper echelon knows what happened, but the Cavallone found out through our sources. Xanxus disappeared after that. If he's come back now, he's likely planning on taking advantage of the lack of an heir."
"But, there is an heir," Mochida pointed out.

Reborn nodded. "She hasn't been confirmed as the heir yet. In fact, no one outside of those I or Nono have informed should even know about her."

Tsuna's head shot toward him. "So you were the one who told Bianchi!"

"Tsunami…"

"What? I've been wondering about it since I met her." Tsuna frowned and turned to Mochida. "You left the kids with her and Mom?"

"Yes. Some of the guys were there, and I caught Rumiko heading there on my way here."

"Good." Tsuna turned back to Reborn and thrust the box toward him. "I take it the Varia are going to come back for these once they realize what they have are fakes."

Basil's head tilted downward at the reminder, his face taking on a grey pallor.

"We have about a week at best before they come back in force," Reborn stood from his seat on Takeshi's shoulder and jumped down to the desk. Tsuna pulled the box back to her chest. "There's a tradition in Vongola if there's a conflict between two potential heirs. The Ring Battles are overseen by an outside, neutral party, usually the Cervello Family. Each candidate puts their Guardians against each other in battle and whoever has the better Guardians wins."

"I see." She looked at the box and then at her gathered Guardians, and the ever elusive and not social Hibari. A grin worked its way across her face. She held the box out to them and opened it. "Well, what do you all think?"

Her boys each took the ring that called to them. Only the Sky, Mist, and Cloud rings remained inside. Taking the Sky Ring, she slipped it on her right hand. Surprisingly, it fit her finger. She wondered if it was more Flame bullshit that made it fit. It probably was.

"We have a week," she continued as she set the box down. "I have a favor to call in. Reborn, can you see if Colonello is willing to come help us train?"

"Ryohei most likely. He made a good impression on Colonello back at Mafia Land," the hitman nodded. Leon glowed and morphed into a phone for him to make the call.

"Who are you calling in?" Dino asked. Tsuna seemed so much more than she had when he had first met her. She wasn't hiding anymore, he realized. This was the woman who would rule over the mafia. He felt a chill run down his spine. She was going to surprise so many of the old men back in Italy. It would be glorious.

Tsuna turned to him and smiled. "The Arcobaleno Fon owes me a favor or two for taking his apprentice into my home and offering sanctuary. By the way, would you be willing to work with one of my Guardians?"

The blond blinked. "Sure, anything to help."

"Help Vongola, you mean," Hayato muttered. He knew how valuable having the to-be Vongola Donna owing you would be once she took over.

Dino snorted and shook his head. "No, to help my little sister."
Everyone looked at him. Tsuna smiled brightly. The boys, save a very quiet Basil who was still staring at the floor, all swore they could see flowers and butterflies hovering about her.

"Thank you, Dino. I'm almost sorry to ask for your help."

"Huh?"

"Well," she paused thoughtfully, "I need someone to help train Hibari."

Everything was silent.

"Cavallone, you are so fucked," Hayato stated blandly.

"It'll be fine, Basil," Tsuna continued to reassure the blond teen as they walked back to her house. They would be staying the night there before heading out to the forest for the week before the Varia would be back. Reborn, after confirming the CEDEF operative was healthy enough, had wrangled him into training Tsuna for the fight to come. She was a capable fighter, but Basil could help her with accessing Hyper Dying Will Mode.

"If that is what thou say, Sawada-dono," the rather quiet boy said. "Thou mother must be a kindly woman to allow for people to stay with you when needed."

Tsuna frowned. "Call me Tsuna, Basil, and Mom's probably going to think you're my new boyfriend or something."

Basil stumbled. "What?"

"She took to me dating Takeshi and Hayato together pretty well. When Hibari was added to the mix, I think she just kind of shook her head and went on with life. Another guy wouldn't be unexpected."

"What?" Basil repeated as he stared at her.

Reborn chuckled from where he was sitting on Tsuna's head. "Tsunami takes after Vongola Ottava."

"Ah, that-that doth make sense," Basil muttered with a nod. "Master will not be happy with it."

"That Bastard can go fuck himself."

"Sawa-Tsuna-dono."

"The house is just up ahead." Tsuna frowned when she saw no one was watching the outside. The hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. Smoothly but as casually as possible, she slipped her hands into her pockets where her gloves remained hidden. Fingers curled into the thin leather.

"Tsunami."

"Reborn, I can't chance it," she whispered. Her entire demeanor changed from minimal to predator. "Basil, stay here. I don't want you injured so soon after getting healed. Shamal already gripes enough."

Basil nodded and stepped back as they approached the front door. Tsuna inhaled and opened the door. "Mom, I'm home."

"Tsu-chan! Guess who came home," Nana called in a syrupy sweet voice that made Tsuna's flesh crawl and her Flames recoil. The smell of alcohol hit her in the face. Tsuna's head turned as she
stepped in. Every sense was on alert. Her lips pulled back into a silent snarl as her eyes fell on the form laying prone on the couch. Beer bottles littered the floor, and it wasn't even good beer.

A tiny voice in the back of her mind sighed in thanks that he hadn't found her good stash. It would be wasted on him.

"You," she growled softly.

"Your father is back home!" her mother squealed from the kitchen.

Tsuna hands shook. Without thinking, she reached for one of her hidden knives and charged. Iemitsu eyes opened in a flash, danger sense developed from years as CEDEF head blaring a warning. He rolled out of the way of her first strike and rose to his feet. Being clad in only his underwear didn't phase him as he eyed his sudden attacker. His eyes went wide as he caught sight of the hate filled eyes of his daughter boring into him.

"Tuna-fishy?" he said in shock, his stance dropping from combat ready to surprise.

"Stand still and die!"

Tsuna's temper, frayed as it was from the events of the days on top of her hatred of the man in front of her, snapped. Her Flames responded in kind and she slipped straight into the instinct driven Dying Will Mode. The strategic part of her mind shut down as she focused on her one objective: kill the man in front of her.

Later, when asked, Tsuna wouldn't be able to give a proper account of the fight. Reborn, who had watched the entire event, had to fill in the blanks. All she could remember was the feeling of her knife cutting through something, the smell of blood and the sound of shattering glass. She woke up a few minutes later to the sight of red blood splashed on the wall, a broken window, and Iemitsu nowhere in sight. Bianchi and the kids, both turned 10 years older via bazooka, stood in the doorway to the kitchen. Looking beyond them, she could see the forms of her men laying on the floor. Instinct told her they were alive, just knocked out.

"He escaped," Reborn stated in deadpan. "Your mother will be okay. I've called Shamal. He said your Flames will be able to cut through Iemitsu's much easier now that you have more control over them."

"Tsuna-dono, what happened?" Basil asked in shock. He was pale, frightened, and shaking at the feeling in the air, of Tsuna's Flames pressing against everything in an effort to erase Iemitsu's presence.

"Sawada Iemitsu is marked to die," she stated before looking at the blond teen with flat eyes. "He's committed a terrible sin."

Basil hesitated for a second, and bit his lip in thought. "What hath he done?"

Tsuna looked at him, her eyes boring into his to the point he wondered if she had the ability to read his soul. "Sky Hypnotism. Don Vongola has given me leave to take care of the issue before it becomes known to the other families what he's done."

"No," Basil breathed softly.

"Hello," Shamal called from the open doorway as he stepped in.

"Shamal, thank you," Tsuna inclined her head toward him and looked toward the kitchen. "Reborn,
can you get Basil set up with a futon? I want to be there when he looks Mom over."

Reborn smiled slightly and nodded. Keeping the family matriarch happy and healthy was the job of the Don, or Donna in this case. "Of course, Tsunami. Basil, come."

Tsunami watched as the blond boy walked up the stairs in a bit of a stupor. She inhaled softly and frowned. She turned back to the waiting doctor. "Let's get Mom looked at. I also have a favor to ask beyond that."

"Of course, Decima."
The Varia Arrive

Chapter Notes

AN: So, not the longest chapter, but it was like pulling teeth to get it typed out. Half of it was written while I saw taking some codeine cough medicine and the other half while I saw on bed rest for bronchitis. (I had a sinus infection plus a cold that turned into bronchitis during the early part of March. Joy.) The next chapter should be done a lot sooner. At the time of posting, I have only one more scene to write before it gets kicked over to me beta.

Tsuna's chest heaved as she stood in front of Basil, who himself looked exhausted. They had been training hard for the last week. The blond had been a big help. He knew his way around a fight and was skilled in mid range to close combat. The addition of the Dying Will pills just made the training even more worthwhile. She was now able to enter HDWM after taking them and stay in it for over an hour. Really, that length was overkill but Reborn had insisted she stay in it every second that was feasible to let her body get used to the sensation.

"Enough," Reborn announced from his perch above the two fighters. "Tsunami, you need to be ready."

Tsuna frowned as she looked up at him. The tiny wisp of orange flame on her forehead flickered and died. Her eyes went from the deep burnt orange color that marked her usage of Sky Flame back to her normal caramel color. Her muscles, no longer under the great strain they had been in, relaxed into a loose state. She felt exhausted and filthy. Sweat dripped down her back and made her already wet shirt just that much worse and more see through. She could feel the dirt and filth on her skin. Her hands, covered by her leather gloves again, flexed slightly at her sides.

"The Varia are here?"

Reborn nodded solemnly. "According to the CEDEF, yes."

She snorted. "Excuse me if I don't trust anything they say unless I've vetted them first."

"Tsunami-dono," Basil said before falling quiet for a moment. "We aren't all bad."

"But the good do not make up for the bad," she shot back before softening. "Basil I know there are some good agents in the CEDEF, like you and this Lal Mirch lady Reborn vouches for, but if you lot couldn't keep track of me inheriting a yakuza group at the age of 10 or the coup that the Varia led the first time let alone this fiasco, it proves I can't trust CEDEF as a whole."

"And the fact Iemitsu leads it has no bearing in it at all?" Reborn asked as he hopped down from his perch. He tilted his fedora up and gave her a look.

"That's only part of it." She sighed and ran a hand through her sweat dampened hair. "I mean, why hasn't anyone called him out on the fact he has no Guardians despite being a Sky? I could understand if he had one or two. Then no one would say anything beyond he was being picky, but he has none. He's known for having none. Why did this not throw up any red flags?"
"Hindsight," the baby sized hitman stated with a frown. "Possibly him doing something with his Flames to make it seem like nothing important."

"I still cannot believe he did that to your mother," Basil muttered as he shook his head. The blond's Japanese had gotten better in the week he had spent surrounded by native speakers. The few times he did speak using the archaic forms Sawada Iemitsu had taught him, he had been laughed at. Tsuna had compared it to someone speaking Shakespearean English in modern day London. He had been so embarrassed and angry at that man for teaching him in such a way. Thankfully, Tsunami worked with him during their very limited downtime to improve his Japanese. It helped. Some.

"Well, he did," Tsuna snapped, her anger bubbling to the surface.

Basil held up his hands and backed away from her. Her Sky Flames lashed out, making his own Rain Flame tremble at her contained power. It was odd, though. Her Flames, despite being so enraged, did not strike out at him. Instead they curled protectively around him, like a tigress protecting her cubs. The week of training had turned him into one of hers. Had she not already had a Rain Guardian, he would have capitulated in an instant, fallen to his knees in supplication, and bonded with her. He could only hope to find a Sky like hers someday.

Almost as fast as it had appeared, her Flames retracted and calmed. Tsuna's breath steadied. She was getting better at controlling her temper and how her Flames reacted to it. She frowned at the faint ring of frost that had formed around her feet. Reborn had said the ability to produce ice from Sky Flame was something her ancestor had discovered and turned into a powerful technique. Despite not having access to the journals that described the technique, the fact she was able to use her Flames to turn heat into void, as she had put it, impressed the Arcobaleno immensely. After getting a copy of Giotto di Vongola's journals via CEDEF, she was just on the edge of obtaining that important technique. She knew she could do it, it would just take actual combat for her to do so. She had no want to freeze her sparring partner. He could be seriously hurt by the ice.

"How are the others?" Tsuna asked, knocking the Arcobaleno out of his thoughts.

He smirked at her. "Hayato's been put through the ringer by Fon. I still don't understand why you had Fon work with him rather than, say, Mochida."

"Hayato's a good long to mid range fighter, but he'll be up against a knife wielding psychopath. I'd rather he be able to fight back at close range." She frowned and glared at the ground. "There's something nagging me about this. It just doesn't feel right, like we're missing some big piece of the puzzle."

Reborn and Basil looked at each other and then at her. Vongola Intuition was legendary in its effectiveness—and Tsuna seemed to have it stronger than Iemitsu and Nono combined—but it was often difficult to put into words when they knew something was wrong but not obviously so. The hitman tilted the brim of his fedora over his eyes. He needed to speak to Lal again. Maybe she had found out something since this fiasco began.

"Never mind," Tsuna shook her head. "It'll come to me eventually. Right now, I need to call a war meeting. I have an idea for just how to welcome the Varia into my territory."

The grin on her face gave both Italians chills. Reborn couldn't help being proud.

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The stars hung high in the sky, what few that could be seen with all the light pollution thrown off by the city that is. Tsuna stood in the middle of one of the many parks that littered Namimori. It was one of the larger parks with three entrances that were easy to watch, much to her people's relief. Wearing
a charcoal suit tailored for fighting in, she sat on a bench and stared at the sky. She could feel the hostile gazes boring into her back. It took everything she had not to grin or do anything that could give away the game. The Varia were in for a bit of a surprise.

"Tsuna-hime?" Hayato muttered from where he stood behind and just slightly to her right. She turned her head slightly and gave him a small smile. His cheeks turned a fetching pink before he visibly forced himself not to blush. Her eyes sparkled in mirth. Takeshi, watching this from her left, snorted.

"It's a nice night," she finally said, stretching her arms above her head and fingers twining together. To someone just casually watching, it looked normal. To her people, they recognized the go signal for what it was. Everything was still for just a second. Takeshi's eyes glinted, his stance shifting from civilian into experienced yakuza. Tsuna still wasn't sure how he kept people from noticing he was carrying around a sword—Shigure Kintoki this time—but she had the sneaking suspicion her Rain was also a Mist. It made sense.

There was an explosion in the trees. Hayato chuckled darkly, his fingers pulling out of his pocket and the detonator switch to that particular set of explosives dropped to the ground. His lips turned into a smile at the shouting that came from the tree line. A set of seven figures dropped into sight. None of them looked injured, more surprised than anything. The explosions were the second signal for her people. The rest of her Guardians charged out of their hiding spots.

"Welcome to Namimori, Xanxus di Vongola, leader of the Varia Independent Assassination Group," Tsuna welcomed as she stood up to stand in the fighting line beside her Guardians. "Now, get out of my territory."

Xanxus stared at the tiny female who dared to order him about. His Flame writhed and flared, his rage and aggression pressing down on her and her baby Guardians. Surprisingly, none of them faltered. The girl managed to gather some interesting Guardians, if what he was feeling was right. Only one seemed to be missing. The missing Cloud madly intrigued him. Perhaps there was trouble there? Could be that the boy in the files they lifted from the CEDEF was just acting like a typical Cloud, though. Something to look into later. He felt his Guardians stir around him. A grin, feral and bloodthirsty, appeared on his face. He made a motion and the lower ranking men he had hidden away charged.

"Nice try," Tsuna said with a bright smile. Her hand lifted and she snapped. Gunfire rang out. Xanxus watched, one eyebrow raising, as the low ranked members of the Varia fell to sniper fire. He looked around, eyes drifting to the buildings that surrounded the park. Very few could be seen from where he was standing, but that meant nothing to a well trained sniper. Interesting. Seems Iemitsu's brat may actually have what it takes to survive the mafia after all. Too bad he needed her gone to take over. She might have made a good mafia wife.

As if she had read his mind, Tsuna's face turned blank. Her mouth turned into a snarl and her Flames, suppressed as to not give hint of what she was planning, burst from her body. Xanxus jerked at the feeling of her Flames clashing against his. She poured her rage, her anger, and her possessiveness into it. Her arms lowered and her fingers twitched. As one, she and her Guardians moved.

"Peasant may actually be worth something…" Belphegor muttered from his place beside Mammon. He eyed the silver haired teen he knew had to be the girl's chosen Storm Guardian. Smoking Bomb was known for being a strong Storm. Bel's genius brain worked fast and hard. The snipers had been a surprise. He hadn't known CEDEF had so many, but the other lower ranked peasants would have them taken care of soon. He was more concerned with the heavy pressure pushing down on him,
snapping at him like a vicious guard dog. He hadn't expected that kind of presence from the girl, at least not from the information they lifted from the CEDEF. She should have been meek, quiet, shy. Either Reborn was a lot better than they thought he was, or the girl had managed to hoodwink the CEDEF informants in town. He had a feeling it was the latter.

Just as the Varia Elite, Xanxus' chosen Guardians, prepared to meet the teenagers charging toward them, a weapon crashed into the ground at their feet. A long trench threw muddy earth into the air and temporarily blinded both sides of the fight. Everyone stopped under the assault and turned to see who had just thrown the…pickax? Tsuna's eyebrow lifted before she saw just who had thrown it. Her blood began to boil, teeth gnashing together as she caught sight of the Bastard standing atop a light post as if nothing was wrong. Her hands clenched into fists. Her heartbeat roared in her ears.

"Scum," Xanxus growled at the leader of the CEDEF. The blond haired idiot smiled down at the gathering. Xanxus felt his hackles rise. There was something about the man that made him uneasy. No one else seemed to be unnerved in his presence, but there was something there that reminded him of the worst of his mother's clients, the kind who made her bleed and broke bones and laughed about it when she screamed. The Varia leader's hands shook, not in fear but anger. He had hated those men, had killed more than one when they had gone too far with his mother or one of the other whores who cared for him.

"You," Tsuna growled, truly growled. It was an inhuman sound that startled the Varia. Her Guardians curled protectively around her, their attention going from the might-be-threat of the Varia to the definitely-a-threat of Sawada Iemitsu.

"Xanxus, back down," Iemitsu commanded from his lofty perch. He eyed his daughter's Guardians as they formed a protective barrier around her. Well, at least they were loyal. He could work with that. Now how to make them stop glaring at him. It wouldn't do if his daughter's Guardians showed signs of not trusting him. The scandals that could come from that alone.

"Sawada," Xanxus hissed but sent a glance over to the girl. The look on her face, he had seen it before, when he looked in a mirror. Very interesting. Funny, too. All that rage in such a fluffy looking girl.

"Hayato," her rage tinted voice slithered out.

The Storm Guardian tensed but did not take his eye off the man who would dare use his Flame to force a woman to bend to his will. His stomach still churned at the very thought. "Yes, Tsuna-sama."

"Please tell me you have the gun Ikeda gave you."

He swallowed and reached behind him to where his hold out weapon rested against the small of his back. Yes, his boss may dislike firearms, but he was not going to be without one now that the Varia were gunning for them all. He handed the handgun to her and eyed the distance. "Aim for the chest. Bigger target, better chance."

Iemitsu ignored the byplay. His dear tuna-fishy wouldn't shoot him. She was a civilian and had no stomach for it. It took time being exposed to the underworld before one started seeing homicide as a viable option for getting rid of annoyances. It was all likely a show for the Varia. Good thinking.

"Xanxus di Vongola, head of the Varia, by the traditions of the Vongola, a challenge has been made for the heirship and the Ring Battles will commence," he intoned gravely. His lips curled into a smirk. "Attempting to steal the rings from the viable candidates chosen by the CEDEF is now forbidden and will end with the Varia candidates' forfeit should it be attempted."
"Damn you—"

Bang!

"Fuck!" Iemitsu cried as he jumped out of the way. Unfortunately for him, he wasn't fast enough. Unfortunately for Tsuna, he was able to move fast enough that instead of getting hit in the chest like she had wanted, he was hit in the shoulder. "What are you doing?!

"Sawada Iemitsu, by the orders of the Ninth Head of Vongola, you have been sentenced to death for your crimes."

"Crimes?" Xanxus, and most of his Guardians, muttered in shocked surprise.

Tsuna took a moment to look over at them. Their confused faces looked so funny. She'd have to remember that. A click from somewhere behind her told her that someone, Reborn more than likely, had gotten a photo. "I'm not comfortable speaking of such things in the open. We can speak in private later, when I can be certain we're not going to be overheard by outsiders."

Xanxus frowned, his brows daring down as he looked at the fluffy girl in front of him. This was not what he was expecting at all. The girl – he had trouble calling her trash in his mind — spoke like an experienced Don. He looked back at the idiot Sawada and felt his lips curl upward into a vicious smirk. Well, at least there seemed to be no love lost between father and daughter.

"After this, and it better be good," Xanxus grumbled but motioned for his men to back off.

Tsuna smirked, the look of a predator having found weakened prey. Iemitsu frowned from where he was on the ground, watching the entire scene. This was not what he was expecting at all. The girl – he had trouble calling her trash in his mind — spoke like an experienced Don. He looked back at the idiot Sawada and felt his lips curl upward into a vicious smirk. Well, at least there seemed to be no love lost between father and daughter.

"Son of a bitch," she cursed between coughs. The gun lowered and she clicked the safety on. Wordlessly she handed it to Hayato. While still affected by the white smoke bombs, he wasn't coughing nearly as bad as the rest of her Guardians or the Varia. He nodded to her and put the gun back in its holster.

"Damn it," Xanxus muttered as he coughed the last of the smoke out of his lungs and looked around. Iemitsu, that coward, had run off.

"Fucking bastard," Tsuna snarled. Her Guardians nodded and grumbled about the man's lack of courage in the face of an enraged woman.

"Voi! What the hell was that about?!" Squalo shouted.

Tsuna winced. The long haired swordsman was so loud. Didn't he have a mute button? "It's a long story, and one you should know if we're being forced to go through with this bullshit."

"Hmm, must be important if Vongola Nono was willing to sign off on an execution order," the Mohawk sporting Guardian of Xanxus said. Tsuna tried to remember which one they were. Lust or Lus or something like that.
"That's an understatement," Hayato snapped, his temper rising and falling in conjunction with her own. Out of all her Guardians, he understood what Sky Hypnotism meant. The others, though quickly coming to terms with what Dying Will Flames were, just didn't have the background that made such a diagnosis so terrifying. The sooner Sawada Iemitsu was dead, the sooner the Storm Guardian could relax.

"Oh?" Lussuria said with a frown. "Interesting."

"Boss, what do we do?" Levi asked, turning his puppy-dog eyes of adoration upon Xanxus.

The Wrathful Sky paused for a second before snorting and turning away. "Leave the trash be for now. We'll take care of them during the battles."

"You—!" Hayato began to growl only to be stopped by Tsuna placing a hand on his shoulder. She shook her head slightly before turning her attention on the Varia Elite.

"I'll bring you a summary of why I'm willing to commit patricide before the first fight." She frowned, lips pursing together tightly. "Xanxus di Vongola, just promise me that if you manage to kill me in the coming battle, you'll still kill that Bastard."

Xanxus looked over at her. His eyes met hers and he found himself holding back the urge to flinch away. That look on her face plus the sheer weight of her Flames in the air was not something trash could do. To tell the truth, the girl had impressed him. That shot had been good. She had clearly been aiming for a fatal hit, but Iemitsu and his limited Intuition had made what should have been a clean kill just an injury. Well, it wasn't like he wasn't going to kill Iemitsu when he took over. He'd lose nothing by giving his word on this.

"I will, trash."

Tsuna leaned back against her bedroom door and sank to the ground. Everything was moving so fast. Now she and hers were going to have to fight professional assassins. The fact the Vongola Nono had gone silent made her intuition sit up and blare loud warnings. She had no doubt the Varia had something to do with that. Adding onto her stress levels, she had no idea where the Bastard had run off to. None of her people could track him down.

"Tsunami," Reborn said from where he was sitting on the window sill. She looked up at him and sighed. "You need to get some rest. The first Ring Battle is tomorrow night."

"Which one?"

"Lightning."

"Mochida. I need to—"

"I've already informed him. He'll be ready."

Tsuna nodded and leaned her head back against the door again. "Where are these fights taking place, anyway?"

"Nami High."

Tsuna froze, her entire body tense as she slowly lifted her head and looked at the baby hitman. Her mouth opened and closed repeatedly as she felt all of the blood drain from her face. "Oh, shit."
Reborn nodded. "Your Cloud's territory."

"Please tell me someone has already informed Hibari. I do not want him coming after me if this damages the school in any way."

"The Cervello are not ones to ask for permission, but they will ensure everything is put back to order. Omerta is a serious thing."

"Hibari's temper is a serious thing. We do want me in fighting condition by the end of this, right?"

"Control your subordinates, Tsunami."

"I thought it was you who taught me Clouds can't be controlled?" She reached for her phone. A moment later it was ringing in her ear. She clicked her tongue as she thought over just what she could say to the temperamental, territorial boy to keep from getting bitten to death.

Click.

"Hibari?"

"..."

"Yes. They're in town now."

"..."

"Intelligence points to that house on Shinzu that's been vacant for years. My people are already watching it."

"..."

"I've been officially challenged. Are you still willing?"

"..."

Her eyes widened and a smile, soft and gentle, crossed her lips. There was even a small blush on her cheeks. "Hibari..."

"...?"

"The challenges are one-on-one fights between our Guardians."

"..."

"Um... well, you see... I didn't choose the location, I swear!"

"...?"

She swallowed, her face rapidly paling. "Yes."

"...?"

"Yes."

"...?"

"The school. Reborn says the ones who made the choice will make sure it's repaired if damaged."
"..."

"You can discuss it with the Cervello. Please don't attack them until after this is over. After that, I don't care."

"..."

"Yes. Thank you Kyoya."

Click.

Tsuna slowly lowered her arm and dropped the phone to the ground. She put her head in her hands and debated screaming. OK, Hibari wasn't angry with her. He at least understood she had no choice in the matter. That was good. It was her fault, kind of, that these fights were happening at all. Very bad. He was going to get to fight a tough opponent. Good. These fights were going to take place on his territory, possibly damaging it. Bad. Fuck it. She didn't want to deal with this on top of everything else.

"Tsunami," Shamal's muffled voice came from the other side of the door. He had been staying at the house since she had driven Iemitsu off. Her mother's treatment had to be adjusted after she was exposed to his Flames again. The doctor did not want to have to deal with the same problem a third time. The man was even cutting down on his flirting with Nana, at least when Tsuna was around. The assassin-doctor made the yakuza boss feel better about leaving her mother with the children.

"Shamal?" she asked as she opened the door.

The man looked her over and winced. "You need sleep."

"I know. What do you want?"

He held up a manila folder. "The medical report you wanted. I removed most of your mother's information save the Sky Infection diagnosis and basic treatment. There's a note about how she got worse after exposure to Iemitsu again."

Tsuna sighed and smiled at him. He twitched and blushed at the sight. "Thank you, Shamal."

"I also got the results from that test you wanted me to run." He pulled out an envelope and looked at her. "How did you know?"

She sighed as she took the envelope and read the papers inside. It was what she was expecting. She hated being right. She stuffed it back in the envelope. "Intuition. Thanks for confirming it. Is Basil around here somewhere or did my people abduct him again?"

"He's downstairs. Would you like me to send him up here?" Shamal turned to go back downstairs.

"Please."

The doctor lifted a hand in a lazy wave of acknowledgment. A few minutes later, she heard another set of footsteps come up the stairs. Basil blinked at seeing her standing in her doorway and just looking at him. He froze and swallowed dryly. She did not look happy. Then again, in the situation she was in, who would? He tried to get his nerves to settle and bowed to her. She rolled her eyes and snorted before waving her into her room.

"Reborn, please leave. I need to talk to Basil privately."
"Tsunami-dono?"

Reborn frowned but nodded. He had a good idea where this was going. "I see. Good luck, Tsunami."

"Thanks." She watched as the hitman strode out of the room before turning her attention on the blond teen. "Basil, please sit. I have something I need to discuss with you."

His mouth felt dry. This seriousness in her made him tense, nervous. He didn't know what he had done, but he wanted to get down on his knees and beg forgiveness for whatever it was. He began to shake ever so slightly.

"Relax, Basil. It's nothing bad, or at least you've done nothing wrong." She sighed and flopped onto her bed, not caring how it looked to the other teen. "This can all be laid at the Bastard's feet."

"Tsunami-dono?"

She held out an envelope for him to take. "Read that, then I'll explain. You should probably sit down."

Now thoroughly worried, he entered the room and closed the door behind him before sitting at the low table she had a small stack of paperwork sitting on. He pulled out the papers folded in the envelope and began to read the first page. There was a chart of some kind. Above the chart was a simple sentence: Sample C is parental origin of Samples A and B with margin of error being .0000056%. He looked up at Tsuna, who had sat up on the edge of the bed and was watching him closely.

"Sample A is me," she started to explain. "Sample B is you."

He paled, his eyes shooting back to the paper as he read the words again. "No."

"Sample C—and I have no idea how Shamal got that—is Sawada Iemitsu."

"No. It can't be. He wouldn't. That's not..." his voice trailed off as he continued to stare at the paper. His eyes stung and he felt wetness slowly descend down his cheeks. His breathing stuttered. His own Flame—and didn't that just explain why he could go into HDWM so easily despite not being a Sky—flickered around him as he fought to control his emotions. Two arms came up and wrapped around him. He blinked, his sight turning from the paper to the girl who was holding him so tightly. Her Flames, his sister's Flames, pressed against his own. He shivered for a moment, tried to fight the instinctual reaction, but broke against that steady, accepting weight. His Flame reached out and tangled with her as he broke down in her arms.

"You didn't know." It was a statement, not a question. He shook his head against her shoulder where he had tucked his tear streaked face. Tears slowly wet her clothing. She rubbed his back. "He will never harm you again, onii-san."
Tsuna eyed the storm clouds overhead. This was not a good sign. Her eyes darted up to the school's roof where a contraption of metal and wires stood in stark relief against every flash of lightning. She had a real bad feeling about this. The rain falling over her and her people, soaking through their clothing and chilling their skin, only made the feeling worse.

"Mochida," she turned to her Lightning Guardian, "please be careful."

"Tsuna-hime?" the boy turned to her with a confused look.

"Something's not right," she explained as she continued to eye the metal contraption on the roof. "Just, be careful. I have a feeling someone is trying to stack the deck against us."

From the darkness and the rain a woman, or at least Tsuna thought the person was a woman, dressed in white with pink hair and a very bad latex mask over her face stepped forward. The woman eyed the group before turning a dismissive sniff in their direction. Tsuna felt her temper rise and forcibly beat it down. The gaijin had no idea with what or who she was dealing with.

"You opponent has been here for three hours waiting," the woman stated with a hint of derision.

"That is his fault. We arrived on time. If whoever my Lightning is fighting is so stupid and rude as to expect us to deviate from the scheduled time due to his battle lust, then he is a fool or an idiot." Tsuna smirked, her teeth flashing for a moment. The pink haired woman drew back subconsciously at the implied threat. "And who are you to say anything?"

"I am Cervello."

"And that means nothing to me. In fact, it means you are one of the idiots who decided to make all of the fights happen within my Cloud's claimed territory." The woman stiffened and turned slightly fearful eyes on her. Clouds were known to be territorial and vicious when their territory was threatened.

"Omnivore," came a growl from the darkness. The Cervello tensed and turned falling into a fighting stance as her eyes went wide. There had been no one there. She was certain of it.

"Hibari," Tsuna greeted him with a nod.

He stepped out of the shadows and into the light. He eyed the pink haired herbivore for a moment before turning his attention back to Tsuna. "I do not like herbivorous trespassers here."

"I know," Tsuna sighed.
"You owe me, omnivore."

"I know."

"Who?" the Cervello started to ask as she stared at the teen who looked far too much like the Storm Arcobaleno to be a coincidence.

"My Cloud, Hibari Kyoya. You've invaded his territory. After this is all said and done, I'm letting him release his annoyance on you." Tsuna smiled. She was certain the woman was going white beneath her mask. She turned to Hibari. "Will you be joining us in watching tonight's fight?"

"Hn."

"Mochida's fighting."

Hibari eyed the herbivore carrying the bokken and turned a rather deadpan expression back at Tsuna. She snorted and grinned.

"I see. Well, good night, Hibari. I'll ensure they fix anything that gets broken tonight. Isn't that right, Cervello?"

The pink haired woman shivered at the amount of malice being sent her way by the teenage Cloud and the Decima candidate. She nodded frantically. Yes, they had planned on fixing anything broken before daylight so as to keep Omerta, but they were going to have to be very thorough if they didn't want a Cloud who seemed to be on the edge of Raging after them if they didn't.

"Yes," she squeaked.

"Why are you holding everyone up, Tsunami?" Reborn asked as he popped up from no where. Tsuna inhaled sharply and, again, reminded herself that she still needed to get revenge for the many times he had scared her with that technique.

"Just making sure the Cervello know how unhappy my Cloud is with what they've done to his territory." The Cervello woman whimpered slightly at the look being shot her way by the Cloud. "We'll be up there in a minute."

Reborn looked between the normally unflappable Cervello who was currently panicking to his student and back. He sighed and nodded, hopping down from his hiding spot. "Just get up there, Tsunami."

"Of course, Reborn." That grin on her face only made Reborn's swiftly forming headache even worse. Tsuna nodded to Hibari, gave the Cervello woman another of her predatory smiles, and led her gaggle of Guardians to the battlefield. Reborn looked at the shivering Cervello again and shook his head. Really, Tsuna was laying it on a bit thick.

Mochida took the lead with Ryohei immediately behind him. The others, with Tsuna being flanked by Hayato and Takeshi, followed. She shook her head and looked around at the transformed roof. A rather strong looking cage of wire and steel stood out in the center. There was just enough room outside of it for the Varia to stand on one side and Tsuna and hers to stand on the other. An awning ran around the outside and kept the observers out of the rain. Inside the cage stood the oldest looking of the Varia, a man with a goatee and spiked hair holding what looked like a closed umbrella as a weapon with more on his back.

"Took you long enough, trash," Xanxus growled from his seat upon his throne. Tsuna's eye twitched. Really, who needed a freaking throne? There was something about that man that just
wasn't right.

"Excuse me for being on time. If you've had to wait, blame that on your own overeagerness," she shot back. Tilting her head slightly, she looked over at Hayato. "Hayato, go give them the papers I promised."

"Yes, Decima." The yakuza boss resisted the urge to twitch at being called that. Yes, he was doing so for a reason. That didn't mean she had to like it. He pulled out a folder filled with medical reports and other papers relating to Sawada Nana's treatment for Sky Infection. He move cautiously toward the group of assassins and stopped at the halfway point. He stared and waited for one of them to step forward and take the papers. Superbi got volunteered, being kicked forward by the annoyed Wrath Sky.

"Voil!" the sword man shout as he rubbed at his ass and mentally bemoaned the fact that his Sky preferred armored combat boots. Stomping over to the far too relaxed Storm Guardian, he snatched the offered papers and grumbled under his breath as he walked back to the waiting Varia. Opening the folder, he began to read. Xanxus, for all his strengths, hated to read paperwork let alone do it. The Varia Boss left that to his second-in-command.

"Hey, I've been waiting," Levi snapped from his position inside the cage. "Scared, brat?"

Mochida stepped forward. His eyes narrowed as he took in his opponent. The man was far more muscled than he was. He'd have to be careful about getting hit. His training, under the Chinese baby during the times he wasn't torturing/training Gokudera, made him able to take some hits, but he doubted he could take that many from the Varia Lightning. He licked his lips in nervousness. Those umbrellas on the assassin's back were making him nervous. The man was a professional assassin. There had to be more to those weapons than they seemed.

"Mochida, kick his ass," Tsuna said as she placed a hand on his shoulder. "I know you can do this, but if it looks like he's going to kill you, throw the ring at him. This fight isn't worth your life."

"He he, maybe you should just give up?" Levi taunted as he caught onto what she was saying. "Seems your boss doesn't have that much faith in you. Nothing like Boss does in me."

"Shut up, trash," Xanxus growled, though he was eying his Rain more than the blustering Lightning. "Shark?"

"This can't be right," the swordsman muttered as he read over the papers again, lifting a few and dropping them to read the first page again.

"No, it's right," Tsuna said. Frowning lips turned into a sad smile. Her shoulders drew up as she looked away, over the school grounds. Deep, dark brown-orange eyes were shadowed, and her hands clenched into fists at her sides.

"Shark?" Xanxus suddenly sat forward. This was interesting. Squalo handed over the folder and pointed to a specific line.

"Oi, are we going to fight or not?" Levi asked as the Cervello made their appearance. One of the women, the one who had met Tsuna and her group below, flinched when Tsuna looked at her. The pink haired woman faltered. Tsuna resisted the urge to smirk. The lack of bruising anywhere on the pink haired woman told the yakuza boss that Hibari hadn't attacked her. Probably just scared her and made her trip or fall over her own feet in an effort to get away. Tsuna's lips twitched as she suppressed a smirk. Couldn't happen to a more deserving target.
"Sawada…" Xanxus's voice was calm, too calm, and colder than ice. Everyone looked over at him. His own Guardians backed away from the aura of rage that he exuded. His scars, faint and not normally that noticeable, darkened and lengthened. The ragged dark splotches slowly spread across his face into great striped as his ruby eyes practically glowed. Orange-red fire danced on his fingers.

"B-Boss?" Levi stuttered as he took a hesitant step back. He, like all of the Wrath Sky's Guardians, could feel the sheer amount of hatred that poured through their bond.

"Is this true?" the biting words cut through the tenseness.

Tsuna looked over at him and nodded solemnly. There was no need to ask what he was talking about.

Xanxus growled, the sound reverberating in the air. He stood from his throne and began to pace slightly. "That promise you wanted? I'll do you one better. If you die, I'll kill him, and I'll make the son of a bitch suffer before I off him."

"Thank you." The yakuza boss smiled and inclined her head. Her attention turned to the Cervello. "Can we get this over with now?"

"Ah, yes," one of the pink haired women managed to get out. She shivered and stepped as far away as she could get from the enraged Wrath Sky. She coughed lightly. "Please have your Lightning Guardian step inside, Sawada."

"Tsunami," she shot back automatically. The Cervello looked at her in confusion. "I am Tsunami, not Sawada. Don't call me that."

"Ah, yes, of course. Your Guardian."

Mochida inhaled deeply and stepped forward. The Cervello pushed against the cage, allowing a panel to swing open. Squaring his shoulders, he stepped through and waited for the panel to swing shut behind him. Levi began to smirk at the sight of the small teen. He turned the parabola in his hand. The boy didn't have a chance at beating him. Boss would be pleased for sure.

Mochida forced his muscles to relax. If there was one thing Fon had emphasized, it was that loose muscles allowed quicker reactions, especially for Lightning Flames. His eyes were drawn from his opponent to the ground where thin wires crisscrossed the ground. He followed the wires to the large, metal poles that stuck up from the roof and got a very bad feeling. His gaze tracked from the poles to the storm overhead. He had a very good idea what those wires were for.

Lightning flashed overhead. Mochida's eyes went wide. His body moved before he was really aware of what he was doing. Less than a second later, the wires on the ground became live, sending sparks flying where his feet had been just a moment previous. His attention snapped to his opponent. The man had jumped to avoid being electrocuted as well.

"So you figured that out," Levi sneered and flicked his wrist so that the point of his still closed parabola pointed at the teen.

"Today's Ring Battle is between Levi A. Than and Kensuke Mochida. Present your rings," the Cervello announced. Both Lightning Guardians pulled their halves of the ring from around their necks. Mochida's lips twitched as he focused on the chain around his opponent's neck. "The winner will be decided when both halves are possessed by one candidate or death, whichever comes first."

"Che. Might as well give up, kid." Levi smirked.
"Go fuck yourself," Mochida snapped back and pulled his bokken out into a defensive position. He had a plan. Now just to time this right.

Levi snarled, his face twisting into a sneer of rage as he struck out with one of his parabolas in the closed position. Mochida smirked. Perfect. He brought up his bokken and waited for the impact. His arms shook as his weapon, reinforced to hell and back by someone the baby hitman knew, took the hit. His senses that had been awakened and forged in Mafia Land by the sadistic sniper infant pinged. Turning with the force of the attack, he used his momentum to get out of range. Feeling for that spark that was flowing under his skin, he shifted it and forced it to change. He may not be the best at using his Flame externally yet, but he was definitely good at using it internally. He wouldn't have survived half the crazy shit thrown at him at Mafia Land if he hadn't. However, he did have two tricks he could pull off externally so long as whatever material he was holding could handle the charge. How fortunate that the baby's gift was made of such material. Tiny sparks of green electricity arced over his fingers and ran up the munei (back edge) of his bokken.

Lightning flashed overhead. Both combatants barely had time to jump before being electrocuted. "He's got that look on his face again," Hayato muttered from where he stood next to Tsuna. All but Tsuna shivered. She eyed them all in confusion and a little surprise. Hayato chuckled lightly. "Mochida really took to using his Flame in really interesting ways once he awakened it. Internally he uses it to become stronger, able to take hits better, and to speed up his reaction times. Externally, well, that's where the Varia asshole is screwed."

"Very extreme. Scary extreme," Ryohei muttered as he crossed his arms over his chest to try to stop the shivering. Who knew someone like Mochida could be that scary?

"There's a story there," Tsuna said as she turned back to the fight and blinked. When had…?

Mochida laughed as the lightning burst forth from the ha (edge) of his weapon and sliced through the umbrella in his opponent's hand. The lightning traced up the broken weapon and shocked the man holding it. Unfortunately, experience with his own Flame kept him from being stunned for too long. The teen was forced to retreat as Levi struck back, pulling another of his parabola's off of his back and striking out far faster than a normal person should have been able to.

"Impressive," Bel muttered as he watched the two go at it while he kept an eye on the Boss and the Shark. Whatever was in that folder was very not good for Vongola as a whole. If the CEDEF idiot had managed something that bad, well, Bel was willing to lend either the Boss or the peasant girl a hand in getting rid of the rabble. It was the noble, princely thing to do. His attention fell back on the fight as the teenager dodged around Levi's attacks with some rather impressive footwork. If the wooden sword hadn't been a clue, the footwork would have the boy pegged as a swordsman. Amazingly, the Shark wasn't paying attention to the fight, or more accurately, to his fellow swordsman. Whatever information was in the folder had to be good.

Mochida's muscles twitched as he used his Flame internally to increase his muscles' reaction times. Leaping backward, he dodged out of the way of one hit only to get zapped by the residual electricity running through the wires. They had already had to deal with four lightning strikes. The wires must not have been able to release all that pent up energy or, he eyed the cage itself, maybe that was what the cage was built for. He had to end this, quick, before it could get fully charged if that was the case. Focusing, he let his Flame crackle across the length of his weapon.

"Do you really think that will work twice?" Levi sneered which quickly turned into a grin as he charged forward.

Mochida mentally cursed but readied himself to take this hit. He was not looking forward to it and knew he'd be under Ryohei's mercies when the fight was over. Hopefully the boxer would be able to
heal his injuries.

The two collided. Mochida stood his ground. He slid back a tiny bit, his heels digging into the floor and the wires snapping as he was pushed back with enough force. Lightning crackled over both weapons as they clashed. Levi's parabola built up a charge, trying to overpower Mochida's ability to deal with electricity, and the older man tried to stab the teen through. The teenager focused in parrying the attacks with the flat of his bokken and channeling his Flame to the kissaki (tip). Eying the distance, he thrust forward. A single bolt of white hot lightning arced out and slammed into the older man. Levi hissed at the feeling of the concentrated lightning even as he leaned away from the wooden sword. He knew there was going to be a burn. If that was all the kid could do, he was going to be toast.

Mochida smirked and danced around the next few thrusts. The old man never noticed. He had to keep from laughing and revealing just what he had done. He'd wait for the next lightning strike.

A flash.

This time on Mochida leapt into the air. He stared, incredulous, as the older man stood still and seemed to absorb the electricity. Flames were so weird. He noticed the lightning seemed to be channeled up the man's body and to the weapons on his back. That was not a good thing.

Landing in a crouch, the teen rolled over the roof to avoid being kicked. His fingers closed around his target. Lips pulled into a victorious grin. He stood.

"Victory goes to Tsunami Sawada's Lightning Guardian," the Cervello announced.

"What?" Levi roared as he came to a stop. His eyes were wide as he stared at the teenager.

Mochida held up his hand. Clasped between his fingers was the other half of the Lightning Ring. Levi's eyes widened as his hands went to his neck. The chain had snapped. When had...that attack. The brat had accurately and precisely used a bolt of Lightning Flame to cut through the chain holding his half of the ring. He had embarrassed Levi in front of his boss. The kid was going to die.

Bang!

"What the fuck?" Tsuna muttered as she saw the older assassin fall to the ground. Her eyes fleet the Varia leader, who had one of his guns out and pointing at his man.

"Whatever, trash," he spat at the girl as he put his weapon away. "Take care of the trash, peacock."

"Don't you love making my life harder," Lussuria complained as he clambered into the lighting cage and dragged a despondent, depressed, injured Levi out of the arena as the crazed Lightning ranted and cursed Mochida. More than a few vows of vengeance spouted out his mouth and made everyone stare blankly at him as he was dragged away, his head hitting every step as the Varia Sun dragged him down the stairwell. Mochida just shook his head and left the cage to stand by his boss and get looked over by Ryohei. His arms and legs hurt from overuse of his Flame. He need a long, hot bath at minimum, or his muscles were going to cramp up something fierce.

"Is he always like that?" Tsuna asked as she looked up at her counterpart.

"Dramatic shit is always like that." He twitched. His Lightning got on his nerves at times with the worship, but then what could you expect from a Lightning raised to be an assassin? At least the brat's Lightning looked to be stable.

Tsuna winced. "I feel your pain. I so feel your pain."
"I doubt it, trash."

"You've never met some of my men." She frowned and shook her head. "I swear they drive me insane with the calling me hime thing."

"Your men?" Bel interrupted. That sounded interesting. Even Mammon looked intrigued. This could be information to sell after all.

Tsuna blinked, looked at her Guardians, and looked back at the Varia. "You mean, you haven't figured it out yet?"

"Trash, start talking," Xanxus growled.

Tsuna smiled. "Have you tried to get a whore yet?"

"What does that—?" Squalo began.

"Excuse me," the Cervello interrupted with a glare at both Skies. "The next fight will be the Storm Battle tomorrow evening."

"I see," Tsuna said as she looked from the pink haired women to Hayato. He seemed to vibrate in place as he glared at the blond wearing a tiara. "Let's go."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime," her Guardians said as one, making her eye twitch.

"Wait, what was that about the whores?" Squalo shouted as they turned to go down the stairs.

Tsuna turned and looked over her shoulder. "If you're looking for companionship, you're going to need to go to Karyu. None of the girls, or guys if you're into that, in town are going to do anything no matter how much you offer or what you threaten them with. Goodnight."

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"Tsu-chan," a soft, kind, familiar voice called out to the sleeping yakuza boss. Tsuna muttered and rolled over, taking her covers with her. Too tired. So tired.

"Tsu-chan, you need to get up," the voice continued and was swiftly followed by a sigh.

"I'll wake her up, Mama," another familiar voice, the sly voice of a certain baby sized hitman, pierced Tsuna's sleepy haze. Her eyes shot open and she leapt from the bed, blankets curling around her legs in a manner that would have made most people trip. She merely staggered and fell into a defensive stance. A moment later she blinked.

Her mother smiled. Reborn could see where Tsunami got the ability. "Well now I know who to go to wake Tsu-chan up. Breakfast is ready. You need to hurry before the kids eat it all."

"Mom," Tsuna whined as she untangled her feet from the knot of blankets. She kicked them back towards her bed as her mother walked out of her room, chuckling at her daughter's reaction.

"Tsunami, we need to talk about some things," Reborn stated as she walked over to her closet and began pulling out clothes. School was out for the week, something she was sure the Cervello had managed. The official excuse was to fix a water main. No one was supposed to be on school grounds, but she had the distinct feeling Hibari would be ignoring that to keep an eye on those who were invading his territory. She felt a tiny bit of pity for the Cervello. Once these stupid Ring Battles were over, they'd get their asses kicked. The hospital had already been warned in advance with the excuse that there was a group that had come to Hibari's attention that he was currently hunting down.
No one would be surprised when the bodies started coming in.

"What things? And please, if you're going to stay in here, turn around."

The hitman shrugged and turned around. He was at least that much of a gentleman, and it wasn't like Tsunami was his type. She lacked the refinement and curves he preferred in his women. "The Storm Battle tonight and what to do about Iemitsu should he show up."

"Did he try to come here when we were at the battle?"

"And came face to face with Fon. Very wise of you to ask him to protect your mother."

Tsuna smiled as she shrugged on her favorite hoodie. The weather was just cool enough for her to wear it and not feel like she was melting. She still felt the chill from the rain the previous evening.

"Fon is an honorable man. I have no doubt that I-Pin insinuated some things and he came up with the conclusion on his own." She shimmied into her favorite pair of pants. She'd normally have gone for jeans, but with the Varia in town and the possibility of them being less than honorable, she decided to go for the more maneuverable option. "He's going to want to watch Hayato's fight, though. I have no doubt that Iemitsu is going to try something again. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Colonello."

"Would he be enough?" She tilted her head as she ran a brush through the mess of spikes that was her hair. "I mean, he's not exactly as imposing as you or Fon. You both have this sort of aura that screams 'I can and will fuck you up.' I'm dressed by the way."

Reborn turned around to face her and lifted an eyebrow at her relaxed attire. He was far more used to seeing her in her school clothes or the suits she wore when conducting Akatora business. The relaxed clothing made her look more vulnerable. It was good camouflage. "He's the best sniper I have ever met--don't tell him I said that-- and he's more than willing to get dirty to protect your family. You impressed him at Mafia Land. He was also trained by Lal Mirch, who has a reputation similar to my own when it comes to training people."

Tsuna hummed and stepped around him to head down the stairs. She could hear the kids, mainly Lambo, laughing and shouting below. She looked over her shoulder at the hitman. "If he's willing, please tell him I say thanks."

Reborn nodded and Leon glowed for a moment before turning into a cell phone. He waved her off. "Go enjoy breakfast with your family, Tsunami."

Tsuna half-smiled and walked down the stairs as her tutor made his phone call to tell Colonello to get to the Sawada household. Entering the dining room, she had to hold back a laugh. Poor Basil. The blond teen, her older by three months half-brother, lay on the floor face down with a rather rambunctious Bovino child jumping up and down on his back. He twitched every time the 5-year-old landed on his spine. Fuuta sat off to the side with his nose in a book and studiously ignored the chaos going on around him. I-Pin sat off to the side with his nose in a book and studiously ignored the chaos going on around him. I-Pin looked to be only half-awake and was mumbling in Chinese under her breath. Tsuna could have sworn those were death threats to "very loud broccoli monster." Lambo must have annoyed her the previous night as well as his actions that morning. Her mother hummed a little tune as she flit around the kitchen.

"Lambo, stop that and sit down," she ordered as she took her seat and started piling food on her plate. "But, Tsu-nee," Lambo whined but did stop jumping on Basil's back. The blond let out a long groan
of relief even as the bratty child sat firmly on his lumbar spine.

"Off, Lambo, or I will ground you. No candy, no TV, no getting to go to the park for a week."

"Yes, Tsu-nee."

"Oh thank you, Tsunami-dono," Basil gasped as Lambo got off his back. He sat upright and rubbed at his back. An application of Rain Flames helped numb the pain, but he'd have to see about getting a Sun to look at him. He could swear he heard his spine crack.

"Just Tsunami or Tsuna," she said as she took a bite of food. "You can call me nee-chan as well."

"Ah, um," he muttered as he sat down at her left and bashfully put some food on his plate. Tsuna eyed the amount, frowned, and put more there. He looked up at her with startled eyes.

"You aren't eating enough."

"Ah, I just...I don't want to be a burden."

"You are not a burden," Nana called from the kitchen. Her head appeared in the doorway as she looked at the blond child she knew was her husband's bastard son. "You are family. You are supposed to help family when they need it."

Basil ducked his head, his pale skin flushing at the words coming from a woman who should by all rights despise his existence. He had seen how mafia wives treated the bastard children of their husbands. Hell, Smoking Bomb was actually on the good end of the spectrum in that he was at least acknowledged as the heir of the Falcone Famiglia, before he ran away at least. His treatment, before he had pulled a runner, had been far better than what many bastard children ended up with. A hand lay on his shoulder. He looked over at Tsunami.

"Tsunami?"

"You may be his son, but you are my brother. Don't forget that."

Basil ducked his head and began to eat just so he didn't have to reply to that. A faint, embarrassed blush crossed his cheeks. Tsunami - no, his sister - had so much kindness in her heart. He shivered at the feeling of her Flames circling him and everyone in the room, wrapping them in her Harmony as a promise to protect them.

"Good morning, Tsunami," Fon greeted as he entered the dining area. Leaning backward, she smiled at him and motioned for him to take a seat next to her. He inhaled softly and winced slightly at the feeling of Tsuna's Sky brushing up against him. Noticing the reaction, she pulled her presence back into herself. He inclined his head every so slightly in thanks.

"I hope you slept well. I heard you'd chased him off," she said as she sipped at her tea. She sent the martial artist a side long glance.

Fon smiled, his eyes lighting in mischief. "He must have a skilled Sun able to heal him. He was moving far too well for someone who was shot just the day before."

"Oregano," Basil stated. Everyone turned to look at him. He kept his head bowed. "Oregano is one of the better Suns in CEDEF."

"Iemitsu's Guardian?" Fon asked as he put food on his plate.
Tsuna snorted. "Iemitsu doesn't have Guardians."

"He's a Sky. No Sky gets to be that age without Guardians unless they are civilians, and sometimes
even then, they attract them," Fon said as he turned to look at Tsuna. Suddenly his former
apprentice's disjointed hints were making a lot more sense, not to mention the loathing of the CEDEF
head she suddenly had in spades.

Tsuna frowned and picked at her food. "Or if the Sky has mental health issues."

"Do you need me to stay and watch you mother?" Fon turned his full attention on her. Her words
were ominous. Mental illness and Sky Flames did not mix well.

"Colonello's already coming," Reborn said as he walked into the room. "Is everything ready for the
battle tonight, Tsunami?"

"Thank you for your offer, Master Fon, but I know you want to see how Hayato does." She turned
Reborn and nodded. "Everyone's ready. Hayato's getting his weapons ready."

"He has a plan?" the Italian infant asked as he grabbed the cup of espresso that Nana set out for him.

"Oh, yes," Tsuna grinned madly, "very much so."

At least it wasn't raining. That was the first thought that ran through Tsuna's head as she led her
Guardians, including an annoyed Hibari, onto the school grounds. The prefect glared at anyone who
came within two feet of him save for Tsuna, and even she dared not get closer than that. He radiated
malice and the air of a pacing predator. The sooner these fights were over, the better in her opinion.
Really, why had the Cervello done something so stupid as to invade a Cloud's territory? Unless that
was intentional and a slight against her. Well, it didn't matter. Hibari would take care of them once
this whole mess was sorted out.

"Shishishi, The peasants have arrived," Belphegor chuckled as he caught site of team approaching.
Hayato grumbled under his breath but stilled as Tsuna looked askance at him. He tucked his hands
into his jacket pockets and tried to look nonchalant as possible. Fon, who had the honor of riding on
Tsuna's shoulder, smirked at him.

"Trash." The word was growled and full of loathing.

"Xanxus." Tsuna smiled widely at him and chirped. The assassins all blinked at the rather
unexpected reaction. Her grin widened.

"Voi! What are you grinning about?" Squalo shouted and waved his sword about. Tsuna merely
chuckled and turned her attention on her Storm. He stared at his opponent, eying him, sizing him up.
He could think of several places the blond could hide his weapons. Reborn and, surprisingly, Shamal
had been a fount of information about the Varia Elite. Hayato had no idea Shamal had been asked to
join by the previous Varia leader, Tyr. The fact that he was able to walk away unscathed made the
bomber reluctantly up his respect for the man.

"Hayato," Tsuna whispered as she looked over the tense assassins. The red eyed glare coming from
their leader made her skin itch. There was something wrong with him. Tsuna wasn't sure what, but it
made her skin crawl and Flames shudder.

"Hm?" the bomber hummed and leaned closer to her. His eyes never left his opponent. This was
going to be a tricky fight.
"Remember what I said." She leaned in so that he would be the only one to hear her. Her hair fell in such a way as to hide her lips from being read. "This fight is not worth your life. Come back to us alive and in one piece."

"Yes, Decima." As much as she hated being called by that title, she knew it was necessary in this circumstance. She could see the red eyed Sky opposite her bristle when her Storm called her such a title. His teeth clicked together audibly as he visibly fought back the urge to attack.

"Good, both groups are here on time," the Cervello representative said as she stepped out of the school building. She paused upon seeing the still annoyed Cloud and swallowed thickly as his eyes instantly tracked to her. She shivered.

"Well?" Tsuna said after the silence lapsed. Both groups looked rather amused at the fact the moody Cloud was able to affect the normally unflappable women with a look.

"Ah, yes," the woman stuttered as she forced her eyes away from the smirking Cloud. "Tonight's fight is between the Storm Guardians. Please present your candidates."

Takeshi lifted a hand and placed it firmly on Hayato's shoulder before gently squeezing. The bomber inclined his head in a nod. Message understood. Don't be stupid. He strode forward.

"The prince is going to have fun taking you apart," Bel stated as he pranced forward. Takeshi and Tsuna twitched at the threat to their own. Xanxus, observing this, raised a brow and smirked. Well, it did seem the girl was taking after Nonna, at least in that way. The old man wouldn't say anything, not considering Nonna was his mother, but Iemitsu had to be having kittens over the fact his daughter looked to have a harem forming around her.

If the man stayed true to his character, he'd probably want to marry her off to someone and produce little heirs as soon as possible. Too bad she it looked like she wasn't having any of his shit. If she survived their fight, he'd ask to watch her take Iemitsu apart. He could just tell it would be entertaining.

"He'll be fine," Fon stated as he pat her head from his perch on her shoulders. "He's been well trained."

"Doesn't stop the worry," she muttered darkly as she glared at the back of the blond Storm's head.

"We will be releasing you on opposite ends of the building. Your goal is to either kill your opponent or take their half of the ring before the time limit is up and the explosives we've planted over the school—"

"You did what?" Hibari snarled as he stepped forward. A dark aura formed around him. For a moment, Tsuna was certain his eyes had turned a brilliant violet shade in the same manner that hers did when she used a lot of her Flames suddenly. Reaching out, she pulled the enraged Cloud back hard enough that he fell on his backside. He snarled up at her. She gave him an unimpressed look. This was not the time.

"Ah, of course we'll fix anything that's destroyed in a timely manner," the Cervello rushed out even as she turned a slightly awe filled look on Tsuna. Such a strong Sky to call to and control such a strong Cloud.

"Omnivore," Hibari growled as he tried to stand up. Tsuna not so subtly stepped on his hand. He glared up at her.

"After. I will not have you ruining this, Hibari." She leaned down, her nose to his. "I will put you
They stayed like that, staring eye to eye as the rest of the fights instructions were quickly told to the combatants. The feeling of Sky Flame filled the air as she pressed on Hibari's enraged, writhing Cloud Flame. He twitched, grumbled, but lowered his eyes in submission, for now. The omnivore had him in a disadvantageous position to strike from. Also, he could understand the need of a pride leader not allowing dissent to be shown around an outside alpha. As much as he wanted to deny it, he was a part of her pride, one that wandered away and was disliked by the herbivores in it, but a member of the pride nonetheless. He'd bow to her will for now and take it out on her later, after these fights were over and he had wet his fangs on the pink haired herbivores.

"The fight has begun," the Cervello announced, causing everyone's attention to snap from the Cloud and Sky arguing to the pink haired woman.

Xanxus turned his focus back on Sawada's brat, though he was starting to think that word did not describe the girl. He could feel the potency of the Cloud's Flame, could feel the hate and anger and rage boiling just beneath the surface for having his territory violated. It said something that the girl was able to keep him from attacking with just a few actions and a look. He did not have a Cloud Guardian. He'd never trusted that rat Ottabio and most of the stronger Clouds in the Varia followed the rat's way of thinking. There were a few baby Clouds, trainees, that looked promising if given a few years to gain experience. Still, it chaffed to know that the girl had a Cloud where he did not. At least he had a Mist and the powerful Arcobaleno Mist at that. He had seen nothing to show the girl had one of those yet.

In the school, Hayato paused. He and his opponent had been separated and taken to opposite ends. He had just a few minutes to lay down his first level of traps. Digging a batch of adhesive from one of his hidden pockets, he eyed the hallway. He knew these halls. He knew the sight lines and the perfect hiding spots. He smiled, teeth flashing under the lights. The Bloody Prince was making a very bad mistake fighting him in a place where he knew the lay of the land.

"For Tsuna-hime," he whispered and went about setting up the first layer of traps. He had to be careful. The information from Reborn said the prince brat would go crazy if he bled. The key to victory, then, was to not let the psychopath bleed.

Belphegor stalked through the halls as he hunted down his prey. He was being careful. His prey was a known explosives expert and had the time to set up some nasty traps. He was being forced to keep an eye out for trip lines and other such traps. He stopped in the middle of a hallway. The hairs on the back of his neck rose. Experience told him something was wrong. Stepping backward, his head turned as he tried to figure out what had set his instincts off. He chuckled, the wispy laughter echoing in the empty halls. A clinking sound, like something rolling, came from the end of the hall. His eyes only had a moment to widen before a canister became visible and exploded with a loud bang.

Hayato ducked into another room as he took advantage of the distraction that was a flash bang. He pulled the last trip wire tight and hooked it to the bomb he had stuck to the wall. Now to draw the assassin into his trap. Licking his lips, he stepped out of the room and ducked under the barrage of knives. A mini stick of dynamite flicked to his fingers, the fuse lighting with a tiny application of Storm Flame before being chucked at the blond psycho. The explosive fell to the ground with the fuse cut by the wires that wrapped around the handles of the various knives his opponent threw.

"Shishishi, peasant should just give me the ring," Bel laughed as he sent another barrage of knives after his prey.

Hayato fought the urge to smirk. Everything was going as planned. Dodging the knives—and he was going to find a way to thank Fon for the dodging lessons when this was all over—he threw a
trio of smoke bombs on the ground. The white smoke filled the hall and gave him just enough cover to run back down the hall to where he had his traps set. The psycho was going to regret going against Tsuna-hime.

"I hate explosive experts," Bel coughed as the smoke faded. His fingers tightened around one of his knives. His jaw clenched as he stepped forward only to stop as a faint sheen caught his attention. His eyes narrowed and a smirk appeared on his lips as he saw the trip wire. Following the wire, he peered around the door and chuckled at the sight of the explosive. After checking to make sure the bomber hadn't left any more surprises, he stepped over the trip wire. Tricky, but not good enough to fool someone of Quality, let alone of royal bearing. He stalked after his prey, a smile on his lips. He was going to have so much fun cutting him into tiny pieces. The blood would be glorious.

Hayato stopped as he came to the end of his booby trapped corridor. He grinned. Well, time to put his hard work to the test. He pulled out one of the throwing knives the girls had given him. He didn't have long to wait as the psycho walked around the corner and stopped. A smirk threatened to break out of Hayato's face as he noticed the enemy look at the corridor and blink before taking a hesitant step back.

Bel frowned as he tried to work out what the bomber's plan was. Sure, he could see the trip wires at various heights. They'd make it a bit hard to use his knives, sure, but that wasn't insurmountable. Still, there was something unnerving about the situation that was making his hands shake slightly. He threw a single knife half-heartedly and watched as the bomber leaned out of the way.

"What? Are you afraid?" Hayato jeered. Just a little more…

Bel flushed at the insinuation. "A Prince is not afraid of a peasant."

Steel streaked toward Hayato. The bomber ducked, moved, and deflected most of the knives, but a one managed to catch him in the shoulder, the blade slicing deep and ruby blood spilling out. He cursed and grabbed at the wound while falling to his knee in slight shock. There was surprisingly little pain though that could be because of the adrenaline in his system. Tsuna was not going to be happy about that injury. Damn it.

"Shishishi," the psycho laughed at the sight of the blood. His nostrils flared as he tried to take in more of the coppery scent. He swayed slightly on his feet. "I am going have fun taking you apart, peasant."

"No, you won't," Hayato growled as his free hand lifted and showed off a detonator. His thumb flicked the trigger and he ducked. His ears rang as the series of flashbangs and his other less than destructive explosive devices went off around them. He could have used his more devastating dynamite, but he did not want that damn Cloud coming after him even if the Cervello were to blame for choosing the battlefield. Also, there was too much of a risk of getting caught in the explosion if he had used them and Tsuna would not be happy if he had. The flashbangs, bad as they were, covered the soft hissing sound from his secret weapon. The smoke from the explosives faded.

Just a little more.

"Shishishi, that was worthless, peasant." The bomber stood up, his head bowed. Bel grinned. His opponent looked so dejected. Maybe he'd start pleading for his life, not that the Prince would listen. He eyed the trip lines and grinned as he noticed almost all of them had fallen slack. There was a clear line from him to his prey. He took a step forward.

He tripped.
Eyes widening, he managed, barely, to catch himself before he hit the ground. His fingers twitched, then twitched again. Soft laughter caught his attention as he tried to get up but his body wasn't cooperating.

"Do you like it?" Hayato asked with a grin as he cautiously approached the psycho as his limbs twitched and gave out underneath him. "It took me forever to make it."

"What have you done to me, peasant?" Bel demanded as panic started to set in. He couldn't control his limbs. His eyes widened as he tried to flare his Flame, to burn away whatever the bomber had used, only for his Flames to slip away out of his control.

"Let me guess, you tried to burn it away?" Hayato stopped right in front of Bel and knelt down. Using his knife, he cut the half of the ring from the psycho's neck, careful not to nick the skin, and pocketed it. "Everyone tends to forget I trained under Shamal and that Bianchi is my sister and we're getting along better thanks to Tsuna-hime. You'd be surprised what they taught me. The problem with your muscles is from a rather specialized neuro-poison that only affects the voluntary nervous system. Took forever to make, but it was worth it. The Flame suppressant came from Bianchi. You'd be surprised how often she has to use it on her hits. Too many people wanting annoying Storms dead, Storms that could burn through her poisons before they manage to succumb and die."

"You..." Bel choked out as the poison started to make speaking hard.

"I didn't give you enough to kill you. The neuro-poison was in those smoke bombs back in the other hall. The Flame suppressant works too fast for me to mix them and not have someone notice something's wrong." Hayato tilted his head as he grabbed the back of the psycho's jacket and started dragging him toward one of the classrooms. "Tsuna-hime really doesn't want us to kill any of you seeing as the Varia are supposed to be allied with Vongola. She'd rather have you not resentful over a death once she takes over."

Shoving one of the windows overlooking the yard where everyone was watching, he threw the blond out the window and made his way to the exit. The Cervello could clean up. He pulled out a needle and gave himself another dose of the antidote for his two poisons just to be on the safe side. He had a feeling the psycho was not going to be happy about his loss and may want a little revenge. His shoulder throbbed as he pressed down on it to slow the bleeding. With luck, turf-top could get him healed up quick enough that he didn't have to sleep on an injured shoulder.

"What the fuck?" Squalo shouted as he saw Bel's body be thrown from a window on the third floor and land with a thump. The Cervello looked the boy over and nodded to ring leader.

"The victor for this fight is Gokudera Hayato."

"Seriously, what?" Squalo continued as Lussuria made his way to the youngest of the group. The healer knelt down and winced at what he found. "Voi, what happened?"

"Poison," Lussuria growled as he tried to work out how that had worked. His Flames recoiled at the greasy feeling that surrounded the teen. "A Flame suppressant, too."

"I'll wear off in a few hours," Hayato said as he walked out the door and past the gathered Varia. Mammon, hovering over the group, eyed the bomber. "Is the poison you used your own make and is it for sale?"

"Yeah, it's my own stuff. No, I'm not selling it," he said without looking back. If he had, he would have seen the pouting face of the Mist Arcobaleno.
"Ryohei," Tsuna's voice snapped as soon as she saw the familiar red stain on Hayato's clothes. Her Sun perked up, his eyes narrowing as he looked Hayato over. Nodding, he held out his hand as the bomber came close. Wincing, the Italian nodded his consent and relaxed as Ryohei's still burgeoning Sun Flame started to heal the worst of the damage.

"Was that your only injury?" Tsuna asked.

"My ears are ringing a bit, but that's normal after being around that many flash bangs."

"Herbivore," Hibari growled from where he was still sitting on the ground. Yamamoto stood behind him, his Rain Flame flaring and forcing the Cloud to calm.

"Flash bangs and gas grenades only. There won't be much damage," Hayato reassured the prefect. "Nothing that can't be fixed in a night. Most of the damage is to the walls and just needs new drywall. A door or two might need replacing as well."

Hibari stared the bomber down for a few second, but inclined his head with a grunt. "You held back."

"Belphegor is known for going insane should he see his own blood," Reborn stated.

"I also didn't want you on my ass. Tsuna-hime wouldn't like us fighting," Hayato retorted as Ryohei finished up what he could. He wasn't the best with his Flame yet, but the wound was mostly healed and his patient wasn't bleeding. The would would scar. Hayato, who had more and worse scars than that from his life on the street, could deal.

"Tomorrow night will be the Rain fight. Please be here promptly at the same time," the Cervello said as she eyed the glaring Cloud.

"Let's go," Tsuna said as she eyed the Varia, who were carrying off their Storm Officer. "I think we all want to know what happened in there. Let's go to the office, shall we?"

"I'm not crowding with you herbivore," Hibari said as he stood up and stalked away, but not before snarling at the Cervello woman, who cringed.

"OK. Everyone else, to the office."

"She has an office?" she could hear the Varia Mist mutter as they hovered after their boss. Tsuna smiled at them as they looked at her before turning away in a huff.

Tsuna leaned back in her chair and grinned. Two fights down, two victories to her. Xanxus had to be steaming about those losses. She could see him thinking that one is just happenstance. After all, the Levi person didn't exactly seem to be the brightest, but Belphegor, a certified genius, losing to a bastard child of some two-bit famiglia. Yeah, that had to sting.

"I'm impressed, Hayato," she said as she pulled herself back upright. A soft smile came across her lips as she looked at her blushing Storm. Takeshi mirrored her look from where he was leaning against the wall.

"Very Extreme use of your talents," Ryohei nodded as he checked over the bomber's shoulder injury again. Fingers pressed into newly healed skin. Hayato winced slightly and let out a hissing breath at the quick shoot of pain that caused. "Mostly healed. It's the best I can do. Any more and I'm Extremely worried I'll cause more damage."
Hayato eyed the smiling boxer and nodded. "Thanks."

"Extreme!"

And the bomber winced at the yelling directly in his ear.

"When did you make that poison?" Mochida asked as he sat straight backed on the couch. Despite being one of Tsuna's Guardians, he was the most twitchy of them. He just couldn't seem to relax when Tsuna was around. "I mean, you had to have tested it out before, right?"

"After the Kokuyo incident," the bomber said, his head bowed as his teeth worried his lower lip. "I didn't want something like that happening again, and I thought a paralytic would be the best way to stop it. Bianchi worked out most of it with me, but it was Shamal over the last week who really helped me get it finished."

"It was a good idea," Tsuna said. "The Varia Storm wasn't expecting it."

Hayato snorted. "Everyone seems to forget that my sister is a poison master and that I was trained by a doctor. I learned a lot just by being around them."

She nodded and hummed, her finger going to her lips in thought. "I'll have to figure out something to thank them, then. Shamal's easy, just get some of the girls to service him. Bianchi's a bit tougher."

"Chocolate. Give her good quality chocolate, and she'll be happy," Reborn said from his perch on Takeshi's shoulders. "That was a good plan, Gokudera. You had a backup?"

"Several. I'm glad I didn't have to use them."

"Fon did a good job with his dodge training." Tsuna looked around. "Where did he go off to anyway?"

"To see I-Pin," Reborn stated. "He can't stay for much longer. The Triads are calling for him."

Tsuna nodded. "A shame. I know how much he cares about I-Pin. At least he got to see this fight. Any word from Colonello about the Bastard trying to get in the house again?"

All of her Guardians scowled at the notion that deadbeat was her sperm-donor. Hayato and Mochida both went so far as to growl. Hayato she could understand, but Mochida's vehement hate of the man once Sky Hypnotism was explained to her was interesting. Turns out her Lightning had a distinct hatred of rapists. Some of the boys had taken him out on a job of dealing with a pervert who had been hounding one of her girls only to find him forcing himself on another woman. Mochida had not been happy and the boys had spoken highly of his ability to beat the shit out of the guy. Multiple broken bones, bruises everywhere and the guy had remained conscious throughout even when Mochida landed a hit with his reinforced bokken on the man's genitals. Yeah, Mochida fit right into the Akatora.

"No, but Lal showed up. Colonello made her leave. He's going to be so upset about that, so be prepared to listen to his complaining."

"They a couple?" Takeshi asked with a smile.

"In Colonello's dreams, yes. Lal won't admit she likes him either." The baby sized hitman shrugged. "It's amusing to watch them."

Mochida yawned suddenly, breaking the flow of the conversation. "Damn these late nights are
killing me."

"You're still extremely recovering from your injuries from yesterday," Ryohei chided him as he went
to look him over. Satisfied with whatever he was able to sense, he nodded. "Just exhaustion. Your
muscles are healing fine."

Tsuna eyed the two and looked over at Takeshi. He met her eyes. She glanced at Hayato and gave
her Rain a little smirk. His eyes sparkled and a faint blush tinted his cheeks just for a moment.
Reborn watched the byplay and rolled his eyes heavenward. Hormonal teenagers.

"Ryohei-nii, will you walk Mochida home? I don't trust that Lightning not to try something." She
frowned and crossed her arms under her chest.

"You think the Varia will try something?" Hayato asked, his head raising slightly.

"The Varia, no. That Lightning, maybe. He seemed a bit not right in the head. I kind of feel sorry for
Xanxus having to deal with him everyday."

Reborn snorted and hopped from Takeshi's shoulder. Yeah, that wasn't the only reason she wanted
them gone. "I'm heading back to the house. Don't be long. Yamamoto has his fight tomorrow against
Superbi."

A grin broke out on Takeshi's face at the thought. He let out a low, chilling chuckle. "I am so
looking forward to it. Half the guys are jealous."

Tsuna inhaled slowly and shut her eyes. She had had to rely on her girls to keep an eye on that
particular member of the Varia. The Sword Emperor fanboy base was strong in her men. She kind of
wondered what he'd think if she set them on him. Should he and Takeshi both survive their fight, she
might just have to do that. The reaction would be priceless and potentially blackmail worthy.

"Extreme! I'll Extremely walk home with you, Mochida. Do you need me to stay the night, to the
Extreme?"

"No. Some of the guys are crashing on our floor just in case." Mochida smiled slightly. "My sister
knows something's up but isn't asking questions. Kenichi just thinks it's cool his big brother has so
many friends over."

As the two left, Tsuna had to hold back a grimace. They had started talking about their siblings.
Ryohei was telling the teddy bear story. If Kyoko found out he told anyone that story, she might just
give up her pacifistic ways and punch him. The girl hated that story. Reborn, sensing potential
blackmail material, followed after them.

Tsuna stood up and closed the door behind them. A twist of the wrist and the lock slid into place.
Any of her people knew that her door being locked meant go away and come back later. She turned
around and leaned back against the door. A warm smile bloomed across her lips.

"Tsuna-hime?" Hayato asked in confusion. He started to stand up only to freeze when she motioned
for him to stay seated. She and Yamamoto shared a look before both turned on him. Blood rushed to
his face at the hungry looks both were giving him. His tongue flicked out to soothe suddenly dry lips.
Two sets of eyes instantly focused on the moving, wet appendage.

"Well, considering you actually went into a fight and were smart about it, I think you deserve a bit of
a reward, Ha-ya-to," she said, drawling out each syllable of his name as she stalked closer to him. He
leaned back in his chair, eyes wide, as she put her hands on the arms of the chair and leaned over
him. He swallowed dryly before her lips met with his. Takeshi moved from his spot against the wall.
Tsuna's head snapped up, and she looked at him. She frowned, her brows drawing together. A moment later she stood upright and sighed.

"Keshi, I know how much you want to help me reward him, but we can't risk it with your fight being tomorrow. Sit. You can watch."

Hayato sputtered as Takeshi pouted but nodded in agreement. She was right. He moved the other free chair so he could get a good view of the two and sat down. Tsuna eyed his hands and the chair for a second before she grinned wickedly. Abandoning Hayato for the moment, she walked over to the swordsman, gently grabbed his wrists, and pulled both his hands up to the chair arms and smiled at him.

"Keep them there. No touching."

"But, Tsuna," he whined.

She placed a finger on his lips, her smile turning into a smirk. "No touching. That's an order, Takeshi."

"What?" Hayato whispered from his seat as he watched the two. His eyes trailed down Tsuna's back. He shifted slightly in his seat. His pants suddenly seemed a bit too tight.

"Tsuna," Takeshi muttered as she backed off, but he kept his hands on the chair arms. His eyes were bright. Black pupils growing wide in reaction to his arousal. He whimpered. This was going to be torture.

"Now, about that reward," she turned back to her Storm. His face had flushed darker during the time she had her back to him. She eyed where the red slowly dipped beneath his shirt collar and wondered just how far down the blush went. "Hayato, can I give you a reward? I want to make you feel so good. May I? Please."

"Tsuna-hime," he whispered hoarsely. Surely she couldn't be asking to do that. No boss would ever do that for their subordinates.

She reached out and trailed a single finger along his cheek and down his neck. He shivered, gooseflesh raising on his arms at the feeling. Everywhere she touched burned so deliciously.

"Please, Hayato? Let me give you this pleasure."

She was hovering over him. He could feel her every breath. Just the tiniest movement would bring their lips together. Jade met honey tinged with orange.

"Tsuna," he muttered again. Fuck. If this was what she wanted to do, then who was he to deny her? He couldn't deny her anything. He tilted his head so slightly. Lips met. Tsuna took that as acceptance and sank down, sitting on his lap. His hands instantly went to her hips to stabilize her as she settled against him. A soft moan came up his throat as she moved her kiss from his mouth to his neck. Lips and tongue brushed over warm flesh. She didn't want to mark him, not without Takeshi there to lay some possessive marks, too. Heat spun wildly through his body. His hands clenched on her thighs. A whimper, coming from neither of them, caught his attention.

Opening eyes he hadn't realized he had closed, Hayato looked over Tsuna's head as she ducked to suck at his Adam's apple to see Takeshi watching them. His look was intense, dark eyes taking everything in and obviously liking what he saw. Hayato could see the swordsman arousal starting to form in his pants and bit back a moan at the thought that he and Tsuna were making the Rain hard. There was something powerful in that knowledge that you were wanted by another, let alone two
people as powerful as Tsuna and Takeshi.

The bomber gasped as one of Tsuna's wandering hands brushed against his groin. His head tilted back, giving her more access to the tender flesh of his throat. He surrendered to her, his body becoming more relaxed the more she touched and savored. The noises he was making, half bitten groans and barely held back moans, just pushed her further. She might not have the supplies on hand for most of the fun activities they could do, but she could do something just as good. Rumiko had taught her a lot. This skill was only one of them.

"Tsu-Tsu," Hayato stuttered and whimpered as she ground her hips against him. Her fingers raked down his front, the thin fabric of his shirt not hindering her barely there nails from scratching his pert nipples. He gasped at the feeling. Hips bucked. She grinned and kissed him again. Unlike before, she opened her mouth and let her tongue out to play against those lips. He gave in quite willingly. His own tongue peeked out and rubbed against hers. A soft moan curled from her chest as she felt his hands squeeze against her backside. Her ears could pick out the sound of Takeshi shifting in his seat and letting out tiny, appreciative sounds at the show. Her lips curled into a grin as she pulled away from her dazed Italian boyfriend. She leaned forward, her chest pressing into his, as her lips came up right next to his ear.

"I am going to make you feel so good, Hayato," she whispered and nipped at the lobe of his ear. Her jerked. She made a mental note. Her bomber had sensitive ears. Her tongue flicked out and licked at the shell. A shiver of raw pleasure ran through him. Her Flames began to react to the pleasurable situation, leaking out in an invisible wave and twirling around her two Guardians. Their Flames reacted in kind, twisting and turning alongside each other and within hers.

"Tsuna," he moaned and bucked against her. Grinning, she backed out of his hold and gently forced his legs apart. His eyes widened as she gracelessly lowered herself to her knees. He could see the want on Takeshi's face much more clearly. The swordsman, noticing his gaze, grinned and licked his lips.

Hayato reeled as she played with his body. Fingers brushing up against him as she unbuttoned and unzipped his pants. His hips lifted of their own accord, allowing her to slid the tight pants down his hips to the floor. She smiled up at him as she noticed the length twitching in his underwear. He flushed darkly. She took a finger and ran it along the clothed, hardening length. He gasped, his body jerking at the touch.

"Tsuna," he whined. She took mercy on him, pulling his underwear down to release his hard cock to the air. Her fingers danced over the hot flesh, making him writhe in the chair. Peeking up through her lashes, she shivered at the pleasured look on his face. His mouth was open, panting. Eyes glazed over. A flush taking over her skin. He looked gorgeous. How had she gotten so lucky to have him?

Her attention turned back to the rigid cock in front of her. Her mind went back to the lessons her girls had taught her. Inhaling deeply, she leaned forward and licked the head. He jerked, a cry coming from his mouth. Takeshi's moan answered it from where he sat watching and wanting. She had to fight down a chuckle. Her swordsman was going to be so annoyed with her when this was over. She have to give him a proper reward when he won as well. She glanced up at the panting face above her. Maybe Hayato would like to help with that?

Pushing the thought to the back of her mind for contemplation later, she leaned forward and ran her tongue along the underside of the length. He gasped. His thigh muscles twitched. Hands went to the arms of the chair and hands squeezed tightly. She pulled back and frowned lightly. Reaching up, she grabbed one of his hands and placed it in her hair. His eyes widened as he looked down at her. She grinned back and took that second of distraction to open her mouth and take him in.
"Fuck!" he cursed. His hand tightened in her hair. The part of his mind still following logic made sure he didn't pull hard enough to hurt, but her mouth felt so good. So hot. So wet. He moaned, his hips sputtering. He wouldn't last long. He couldn't.

Takeshi shivered and hissed as he wiggled in his chair in an effort to get some of the pressure off of his rapidly hardening dick. This not touching thing was torture, but he had been ordered and would be a good boy who obeyed orders. Every little noise Hayato made just made everything simultaneously better and worse. Then Tsuna's head began bobbing up and down and the look on Hayato's face was just...there were no words for how amazing the silver haired teen looked in the throws of passion. Takeshi whimpered as he felt his lower regions throb. Yes, this was torture.

Tsuna moaned around Hayato length. He made such arousing sounds when she did. She felt a wetness begin to form between her legs but ignored the heat gathering there. This was about Hayato and his pleasure. She could take care of her needs later. She bobbed her head lower and sucked as she pulled back up. She couldn't deep throat him—that was something she was going to learn to do—but her hands could take over what her mouth couldn't take. She could feel based on how hard he was and how he was twitching in her mouth that he was close. Just a bit more. Her teeth accidentally scraped across his skin and that was it. That little bit of pain thrust him over the edge and his cum flooded her mouth. He keened. She swallowed as much as she could. She continued to suck for a bit longer, making sure she had gotten everything and enjoying the sounds he made as her tongue ran along his softening length. He sagged in his chair, pleasure glazed eyes staring ahead but not seeing.

Popping off of him, her hand came up and wiped away the tiny bit of cum she hadn't managed to swallow. A devious smirk cross her lips. She stood and turned to the very aroused Takeshi. His breathing was heavy and hard, like he had run a marathon. Sweat trickled down his neck. His hair stuck against his skin. In all, he was the perfect picture of arousal. She smiled widely. He hadn't disobeyed, his hands remaining clenched tightly on the chair arms. She walked over and offered her fingers to him. He looked up at her, but licked at the cum staining them. He shivered at the taste and moaned when she ran her other hand through his hair. He leaned into the touch only for her to step away. She leaned down to his ear.

"Remember, Takeshi, no touching, not until you win tomorrow."

"Fuck, Tsuna, no."

"Yes, Tsuna, yes," she said back as she pat his hair one last time and went to help Hayato recover. She kissed Hayato's cheek and helped him pull his pants back on. He was shaking too much to re-zip and button them. The Italian leaned against her.

"I take it you liked your reward, Hayato?" she smiled at him. He just looked at her and nodded. He wasn't quite sure if he could even talk. His gaze fell on the wincing, hard beyond imagining Takeshi. He had- had they really? This wasn't a dream, right? It felt like a dream. A really good one. Tsuna laughed and helped him to the door. Unlocking it, she peered out into the hall and smiled as she saw Rumiko waiting at the end of the hall.

"Oi, Rumiko, make sure Hayato gets back home OK. I might have blown his brain a little."

"His brain? I have a feeling that's not all you blew," the head prostitute grinned at her but did help the still dazed bomber get out the door. She looked over Tsuna's shoulder and blinked at the sight of Takeshi that hot and bothered still. She looked down at the boss.

"He has to fight tomorrow. Nothing strenuous until then."

Rumiko paused for a second before laughing. Yeah, that would be perfect motivation. She almost
felt sorry for Superbi. The man had no idea what he was in for.
Reborn stared. Rare was it that his student could surprise him in such a way. Bending over a table covered in more recording equipment than a decent recon team used in a year, she had managed. He blinked, shook his head, and blinked again. No, the scene had not changed. His student, with three of her prostitutes he recognized as primarily being cam girls, stood around a table laden with digital cameras of every conceivable size, several video recorders ranging from bulky to lipstick sized, and at least a dozen different types of microphones.

"Tsunami, what are you doing?" he asked with a small sigh.

The yakuza boss looked up at him with a grin. "Trying to figure out how we can make a lot of money on tonight's fight."

"What?" he asked in a deadpan.

"Do you have any idea how big Superbi is among the yakuza? A member of one of the Triads in China managed to get a 5 minute long video of him killing a target. The low res version goes for 16,000 yen. The high res plus audio version goes for about 54,000. The prices for photos depends on quality, size, pose, etc. The ones with him killing or with his sword go for the most. The price range starts at 4,300 and goes up to around 35,000." Her grin became wider. "Right now the information broker Mammon is the main source of for such things, having direct access and everything, but we stand to make a killing of him fighting Takeshi."

The hitman blinked. Yes, he knew there were fans of the Sword Emperor out there but hadn't imagined them being that widespread among the yakuza if the standard prices were that high. "And Yamamoto has agreed to this?"

"Yep," one of the prostitutes chirped from where she was fiddling with a pinhole camera. "So long as he gets copies of everything, he's glad to do it. Hell, the boys are drooling just thinking about it. I know of at least two who are low-key stalking the poor bastard in the hopes they can get a stray hair or something."

"Yeah, can you imagine how much a hair would go for, or, even better, a blood sample?" another girl said as she held up one of the digital cameras.

Tsuna laughed, her eyes dancing with mirth. "Well, it would make the Gathering so much more bearable if I could wave around a handkerchief with dried blood on it and say it's Superbi's. I'd be stampeded and have a bidding war going on in no time."

"Tsunami, what is this Gathering? I could hear the capital," Reborn asked as Leon crawled down to his hand and turned into a familiar mallet shape.

"The once a year meeting of yakuza groups," she rapidly explained as she eyed the green mallet. "It's
for stating alliances, declaring feuds, and announcing heirs. Other things happen, but those are the three main issues discussed at every Gathering. I'll be letting everyone know Yuusuke will be succeeding me when I leave for Italy to take over Vongola."

His eyebrow raised as Leon turned back into his standard chameleon form and scurried back up to the brim of the fedora. "And you aren't worried that doing so will undermine your power?"

The prostitutes snorted as they tried to choke back laughter. Tsuna sighed and gave them a look. Her arms crossed over her chest. They grinned at her and ducked their heads back over their work. So much to do. Just ignore the fool who doesn't know how the world works. Nope, nothing to see here.

"Reborn, I know you do not understand the yakuza, but think of this. I came into power at the age of 10. How do you think I've gotten a territory this big and prosperous, not to mention kept it, since then? Yes, I have good subordinates, but that is part of the issue. My people should not have wanted to follow a child and, yet, look at where we are now. The other families are going to be celebrating the fact that I'm leaving, that or panicking when they realize what me being Vongola means. We know the name even here. No one who is smart annoys such a big organization. Me becoming its head, that's going to make quite a few of the more combative and hidebound families worried."

"Tsunami," Reborn began after a few seconds of dead silence, "every day I see more and more of Vongola Primo in you. The charisma, the strength of your Flames, your work ethic, you are much like him. It will be interesting to see how the mafia reacts to you."

Tsuna's smile became a serious look. She stared down at her tutor, the World's Greatest Hitman. That was a rather nice compliment coming from him. Rarely did the man give those out. A shiver ran down her spine. It wasn't unpleasant and her intuition did not flare. The silence stretched. She could feel her girls studying her as she studied Reborn. Finally she nodded.

"Thank you, Reborn."

The night was reasonably warm though the faint wind blowing through the empty streets cut straight to the bone. Tsuna shivered as she gathered her jacket around her tighter. Though perfect for a formal meeting, the black formal jacket left her in want of her favorite hoodie. At her left side, Takeshi stood ready. Everything about her swordsman screamed competent. His eyes glimmered in a way that reminded her of a lazing beast just waiting for the chance to rip out its prey's throat. A tiny thrill of heat sparked deep inside at the sight.

"Takeshi, please be careful," she whispered and placed a hand on his arm. He looked down at her with those deep brown, predatory eyes and nodded.

"This is going to be an amazing fight," Mochida stated from where he was walking at the front of the group. "I mean, The Sword Emperor vs our Master Swordsman?"

Tsuna hummed. "And with the amount of recording equipment the girls snuck in and placed when those Cervello bitches weren't watching, we'll have enough footage to sell to the other Superbi Fan Boys for a long time."

"Fan boys?" Xanxus muttered as the Varia came into view.

Tsuna smiled and inclined her head toward him and his. "Yes. There are a lot of yakuza who are fans of your Rain. You wouldn't believe the going price for a good, non-grainy, color photo of him."

"38,000," Mammon stated from where they were floating with a nod.
"Ah, you do not mind me cutting into profits, do you, Esper Mammon? I do realize you are the main source for such things, but this is my Rain he is fighting." She was specifically avoiding looking at the gaping Sword Emperor as he started figuring out just what she meant. He was fast flushing a bright red and twitching. Seems like he didn't know about his fellow Guardian making some extra money off of him.

"Hm, you do seem to have got quite the setup going on," Mammon muttered as they looked over the building in front of the groups. "I saw a few working girls moving about in there earlier. Setting up cameras, Great Tiger?"

Tsun's grin turned feral. "So you did figure it out. Yes, my girls set up cameras in there earlier. The Cervello don't seem to have very good security."

"Voi, what the hell is going on?" Squalo finally screeched after being ignored.

Takeshi laughed, his arm reach up to scratch the back of his neck. "Ah well, among the yakuza, you're considered a bit of a, well, ah…"

"You're the equivalent of an idol singer for the yakuza when it comes to an obsessive fan base willing to shell out a lot of money just for a fleeting picture, let alone video. A hair or blood sample and I could at least double profits for this year." Tsuna shrugged as she turned her attention back on the floating Arcobaleno. "I've got more contacts among the yakuza than you do. I'm willing to act as a middle man for any other items you may want to put up for offers for a measly 30 percent if you don't bitch about my people's recordings."

"5."

"20. My contacts will be more willing to buy from me because I am not a gaijin plus I'll be more willing to give similar offers in the future."

Mammon eyed the girl. Tough bargain, but they were likely to make more in the long run if the girl was willing to do this for other items besides the collection of non-incriminating, non-blackmail items they had collected over the years. "Deal."

"Bring a contract in writing to the next fight. I'll sign it then."

"What the hell?" Xanxus muttered as he looked between his Mist, now obviously happy with the conclusion of the agreement, and to the brat. Said brat just smiled. "Who the hell is the Great Tiger?"

"Leader of the Akatora-kai," Takeshi stated as he stepped forward. Tsuna placed a hand on his arm and leaned up to whisper in his ear. His eyes widened and a smirk curled over his lips. His Flames stilled before whirling around him in an invisible whirlpool. Yes, his body knew just how to motivate him.

"You're yakuza?" Xanxus said tonelessly before groaning and rubbing at the bridge of his nose. "Suddenly, you make a lot more sense now. How long?"

Tsun patted Takeshi's arm and pushed him forward. "Six years."

"Fuck," the Varia leader muttered as he ran his hand down his face. "Iemitsu had no idea. CEDEF had no idea. What the fucking hell?"

"Yeah, it's fucking sad when the intelligence arm of the famiglia—" Reborn's head snapped around to look at Tsuna. This was the first time he had ever heard of her refer to Vongola as hers in any manner.— "fails to keep track of one of the potential heirs."
"Attention, the Rain fight is ready to begin. Will both candidates step forward," the Cervello woman said as she stepped out of the shadows. The gathered groups looked at her. Takeshi and Superbi stepped forward. Both had menacing grins on their faces and blood lust swiftly filled the air to a level that made the Cervello woman sweat and shake. Her eyes went from the two combatants to the two groups standing behind them. None in either group seemed bothered by the atmosphere at all. It was chilling to see how they could all so easily throw off the effects of that much radiated blood lust.

"Present your ring halves." The two did so, holding up their pieces of the Rain ring attached to a chain around their necks. The Cervello nodded. "Tonight you will be fighting in there. The floors have been mostly cleared away, leaving only the walkways high above. Water will be pumped into the building and will only stop once one candidate exits. Should the fight go on for long enough and the water level get high enough, a great beast shall be unleashed into the water."

"Wait, what?" Tsuna muttered, her eyebrows rising at the last bit. A great beast and water? A sinking feeling dropped into her stomach. Her hands shook slightly before she curled them into fists. She'd have to have faith that the others would do their part of tonight's plan right.

"Takeshi," Hayato murmured beneath his breath. Ryohei and Mochida both frowned and shared a glance. Reborn's eyes narrowed beneath the brim of his fedora. He had gotten some information about this fight from Tsuna's girls who had been through earlier, but he hadn't expected this. Dino's people had better be ready to move quick.

"Voi, just get on with it," Squalo shouted at the pink haired women. They really unnerved him, which was saying something with the kind of people he lived and worked with. Too uniform and bland and they all reminded him of the pod people from that old movie.

"Follow," the Cervello said in her bland tone as she gave the loud mouthed Rain a glare from behind her mask. The Sawada child's Rain merely grinned, not saying anything. He bothered her in a way she couldn't place her finger on. Just having her back to him made her skin crawl and instincts rear up to say a predator was stalking her back. Where the hell did the girl find these people?

The door shut behind the two swordsmen as they stepped into the building. There was the sound of an airlock activating and then came the sound of rushing water. Takeshi looked around without taking his eyes off his opponent. The walkways were quite large, big enough for four people to stand side by side even if they felt slightly unsteady, made to float just beneath the surface of the rapidly rising water level. Takeshi frowned. This was a battlefield made for a practitioner of Shigure Soen Ryu, especially with how the water quickly covered his feet. His blood sang both for battle and for the reward that had been promised. Tsuna's light, flirting touches had been just a bit much but a definite reminder of what awaited him at tonight's conclusion should he make it out alive and relatively uninjured. His lips twitched into a wide, relaxed grin as he turned to truly face his opponent. Shrugging his shoulder, he removed Shigure Kintoki from its protective covering. The blade in its hidden form to look like a shinai felt almost alive under his fingers.

Swordsman face swordsman. Squalo moved slightly, his blade coming out of it's hidden sheath. He licked his lips as blood lust sang through his veins. Now began the delicate dance that was a proper swordsman's duel.

Facing each other, their blades at the ready, the two fighters seemed frozen in time. Only tiny twitches of muscle gave away the fact that they were alive. Anyone watching and expecting a great battle would have been surprised, but a true swordsman would understand. A real sword fight, one that meant the difference between life and death, was not about crashing steel upon steel or locking blades in some parody of true combat. A true sword fight was more like a dance than anything. Dodging around strikes while trying to get in your own. Parrying and knocking away slashes.
Footwork that put the best dancers to shame. This was a true duel between swordsmen and it all began with this, watching for the first opening and reacting.

A flash of movement and the two were moving, blades slicing through air as their bodies wove their way around the razor edge of the opponent. They stopped, their blades coming back up to the guarding position again as they stared at one another. Dual grins, feral and bloodthirsty, grew on both their faces. Squalo flicked his blade, sections of it coming off and flying at the boy who dodged. A second later an explosion rocked the building and sent water flying.

"He's good," Xanxus muttered from where he was watching the fight on one of the tablets the brat's Guardians had brought out. His men gathered around close, but not too close, to watch much like the brat and her Guardians were doing.

"Takeshi's been considered a master of his style for two years now," Tsuna announced with pride as she watched the two swordsmen clash again. He was really putting his everything into this. He really, really wanted his reward.

"Not good enough," Mammon muttered from where they hovered over Xanxus shoulder. "That's Shigure Soen Ryu."

"Yes," Tsuna turned her attention from the tablet to the Varia. Handing the device off to Hayato, she faced them completely. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"Squalo's already killed a master of that style, dear," Lussuria chuckled, a hand going up to their mouth to smother the sound. "He knows how to beat that style."

Tsuna blinked and snorted. Her lips pulled into a smirk as they all looked up at her. Xanxus simply raised an eyebrow at her reaction. That was not what he expected.

"He's faced a master of Shigure Soen Ryu," she said as she shook her head and crossed her arms over her chest. "That doesn't mean he will be able to beat my Takeshi."

"What do you mean, brat?" Xanxus growled at the implication toward his Rain.

Her smirk turned into a sardonic smile. "Shigure Soen Ryu is a living, constantly evolving sword style. Defeating one master means just that, defeating one master. To know how to defeat the style itself, one would need to track down every practitioner and beat each of them. Your swordsman went in with some preconceived notions that are going to bite him in the ass."

"Tsuna, come here!" Ryohei shouted as he stared down at the tablet with wide eyes.

Takeshi's breath came in pants. His Flames swirled around him as he smiled brightly at the Varia swordsman. The silver haired man chuckled darkly. A moment later he rushed forward. Blades touched. Takeshi's eyes opened wide as he saw pieces of his opponent's blade come straight for him. His stance shifted. Blade came up and he spun, the water beneath his feet flaring up around him as a whirlwind formed around him. The tiny pieces of metal from the Varia captain's sword exploded.

"Shibuke Ame," Squalo said with a slight nod. The kid was good. "I was wondering when you'd start fighting for real."

Takeshi smirked. "Oh, I've just been patient. You should have tried harder to kill me. Now that there's this much water, you don't stand a chance."

"Kid, I've killed a Shigure Soen Ryu master before. I know how to kill you," the Varia swordsman said blandly.
"Water level has reached optimum level. Releasing the beast," a mechanical voice came from speakers overhead. The two swordsmen blinked and looked around at the water that surrounded them on all sides. Squalo frowned. He had wanted this to last longer. The kid was good, really good, and didn't stick solely to the Shigure Soen Ryu forms. He could see the influence of at least two other sword schools in his fighting. It was a shame he'd have to cut him down before he could really make something of himself.

Takeshi smiled, his head tilted as he let the tip of his blade rest in the water. He was going to have to time this just right. His Flames curled down his fingers into his weapon. A second later came the feeling of the water sort of catching on the edge of the blade. Squalo's eyes widened as twin streams of water rose from the floor as he swung upward twice. Using that attack as a distraction, he circled around to his opponent's side. Blades sang as the Varia captain parried the blow.

"Not bad," Squalo said with a grin and struck out, blade meeting blade rapidly. Takeshi winced before his eyes widened. He could feel the foreign Rain Flame seep into him and make his muscle reactions slow. Cursing mentally, he jumped back, out of the way of a followup strike that would have left him cut across the chest. He flooded his body with his own Flame to dampen the effect of the others'. Gritting his teeth, he glared at the long haired nuisance. He was going to end this now, before the loudmouth could do that again.

Blade touching the water, Takeshi forced his face into an expressionless mask. No need to give this away. He moved, feet splashing in the water. He could vaguely make out something moving in the darkness below, but ignored it in favor of focusing on this. His Flames curled over on themselves. Squalo laughed loud and derisive. A wave of water swelled up beneath the two.

Squalo's lips pulled back into a grin. His eyes darted around to catch sight of the kid. There, from above. His arm twitching, he struck. Blade went through illusion. His eyes widened.

"Big mistake," Takeshi muttered as his blade cut through the metal hand of his opponent and sent the grown man flying. He landed with a great splash. Reaching down into the water, Takeshi picked up the half of the Ring his attack had knocked off his opponent. An alarm sounded followed by an announcement of him being the victor.

"What, what the hell?" Squalo shouted as he stood up. Takeshi merely smiled.

Tsuna nodded from where she was watching the finale of the battle. Her lips curled upward into a satisfied smirk. Just as she expected. She was going to make a fortune off of that recording. Plus she got to reward Takeshi as soon as Ryohei gave the go ahead. Both the swordsmen had nicks and shallow cuts from their clashes. Takeshi seemed to be favoring his right side, so there may have been something else wrong as well.

"What the hell?" Hayato muttered as he peered closer at the video feed. His eyes widened. "Fuck, get out of there."

Tsuna's head snapped toward him. "Hayato?"

"Fucking shark. They put a fucking shark in the water and they're both bleeding."

"What?" she snapped and peered back down at the screen. She let the blood rush from her face, leaving her a sickly pale color. He was right. There was a fin poking up out of the water and circling the two swordsmen. Both had definitely noticed. Takeshi continuously shifted so that his blade remained between him and the fish, even going so far as to step in front of Squalo when it was obvious his hand injury left him at a distinct disadvantage.
"Kid, get out of here," Squalo muttered as he eyed the beast in the water. His lips pressed into a tight line. Becoming fish food wasn't how he'd expected to die. The irony of said fish being a shark was not lost on him.

"Damn it, who's bright idea was this? Honorless, filthy, gaijin bastards," Takeshi muttered under his breath. There had to be a way to get him and Superbi out of this. He was not going to let the best swordsman he had ever faced end up dead due to a fucking shark.

He took a deep, calming breath and used his Flames to calm his temper and nerves. There had to be a way.

The shark lunged. Both swordsman managed to get out of the way of the gaping jaws filled with so many sharp teeth. The platform they stood on rocked violently as the beast bumped into it below. The dorsal fin sunk beneath the water.

"If we move fast, we can make it back to the hatch," Takeshi stated as he warily eyed the dark water. There was the faint sound of fists beating on metal coming from that direction. He could feel the roar of his Sky's Flames on the other side tempered by the almost wrong feeling of the Varia Sky's.

"You first, kid," Squalo said and pulled out one of his spare swords in his remaining hand. He could fight just as well with his off hand as his dominate. He just rarely chose to do so. It had saved his ass on multiple occasions. Why everyone thought he only used one hand, he didn't know. There was a reason he was Quality.

The two swordsmen ran for the hatch. The platforms shifted and swayed in the still rising water. The ladder Takeshi had gone down to get to the platform originally couldn't be seen beneath the water.

Feet pounded on the ground. A sort of calm panic raced through the yakuza swordsman. The platform under their feet shifted violently. Both men fell to the ground. Another hit caused it to list.

"Shit," Squalo muttered darkly. He glanced from the water up to the kid and back. As they both stood, the Varia swordsman nodded to himself. Xanxus was going to kill him if he survived this.

A dorsal fin popped up from the deep and made a beeline straight for the platform the two were on. The teen turned to face the beast only to be shoved, hard, by the Varia swordsman. Squalo smirked at the boy before turning his attention to the beast. The Great White breached the water, body slamming into it as it slid over the low platform.

"Squalo!" Takeshi shouted.

Squalo's head popped up above the water. "Kid, go."

Takeshi hesitated. He looked from the man who had been his opponent, who dived back under the water to engage the shark again, and to the hatch. He stood there for several seconds just looking between the water and the hatch. With a defeated sigh, he ran to the hatch. The moment he touched the door, the lock disengaged and it was flung open. Arms grabbed him and yanked him out.

"'Keshi," Tsuna muttered into his chest. Her Flames flared and curled around him. Hayato's Storm Flames flared in response and wove into Tsuna's Sky, reaching for his. He was being dragged away from the hatch and there was noise, shouting, behind him.

"Don't do that again," Hayato muttered in his ear from where he stood behind the swordsman. Tsuna nodded and clung tighter to him.

"Tomorrow is going to be the Sun Battle," the Cervello woman said, her tone bland and unaffected by the emotions running through the air. The Varia and Tsuna's Guardians, as one, glared at the pink
haired woman. Tsuna and Xanxus both growled, a predatory edge coming to their Flames as they glared at the woman.

"Leave," Tsuna hissed. The woman opened her mouth to speak. The sound of a gun safety being disengaged made her go quiet. Xanxus, rage in his eyes and tenser than a coiled spring, pointed one of his guns at her. She gulped and inclined her head before hurrying off.

"Xanxus," Tsuna started as she let her Rain Guardian go, "I am so sorry."

The Varia boss grunted and turned away. The far too silent Varia Elite followed behind him.

"Tsuna," Reborn said only to fall quiet at the look she sent him.

"Ryohei, how is he?" she asked her Sun as he ran his yellow Flame wrested hand along Takeshi's side.

"He's good. His side might be sore tomorrow, but nothing was broken."

"Good. We're heading to the office," Tsuna ordered as she turned away from the building. "Hayato, would you please call Hibari and let him know that I want the Cervello to suffer when he goes after them? This was completely unnecessary."

"Yes, Tsuna-hime."

"Let's go."

"What the hell?" Tsuna asked as she gaped at the injured figure being looked over by the medics of the Cavallone. "Who's idea was this?"

"Reborn's. Thanks for allowing us to use your facilities to hold him. I was planning on just having him under guard, but having him be held in a cell instead of an out of the way building is much better," Dino said as he watched his old friend being care for. Thankfully the swordsman was unconscious. Squalo did have a habit of shrieking when upset. The man's normally loud voice could hit glass shattering levels rather quick.

"You're welcome. I owe you for grabbing him. Takeshi's been in a funk since we left the school. I'll go tell him the good news. What did you do with the shark?"

Dino grinned and rubbed the back of his neck. "Your Rain's father knew someone who was willing to buy the meat. Don't know why. Great White Shark isn't really that good tasting."

Tsuna nodded and turned to leave the makeshift recovery cell. Her people and a selection of Dino's would be on guard duty until the Varia Rain recovered enough for interrogation. She'd have Rumiko handle that. The woman had impressive skills in non-lethal interrogation tactics. Something about this whole situation was making her skin itch something fierce.

The halls weren't nearly as quiet as they had been the previous night. Her people hurried through, most carrying stacks of papers. The Gathering would be happening soon, and, short of her death or serious maiming, she was expected to attend. Yuusuke, Rumiko and Ikeda were taking care of things at the moment while she focused on combating the Varia and getting that stupid technique of her ancestor's down. The Zero Point Breakthrough was giving her headaches. The theoretical side alone made very little sense as the notes were mostly metaphor for the proper feelings the technique should imbue, and to make matters worse, Reborn had not allowed her to truly try the technique out since Basil was the only person around who she could use as a sparring partner. He was too valuable,
especially with the upcoming gutting of the CEDEF she had planned. She knew she could do it considering she had managed to produce frost at will many times, but she did not want to test that in live combat the first time out.

At least she had a meeting with the woman who truly ran the CEDEF coming up the next day. Reborn had promised an introduction to Lal Mirch. She was looking forward to it.

"Tsuna-hime?" Hayato said as he walked out of one of the storage rooms.

"Ah, Hayato, is Takeshi still here? I know Ryohei and Mochida already left for home and who knows where Reborn's gone to."

"Sword idiot was just getting done with a shower. The medics released him. His worse injury were a few shallow cuts, nothing major." The bomber shrugged. "He's still out of it, though. I don't think he's going to be up for much tonight after seeing someone sacrifice themselves for him."

Tsuna snorted and shook her head. "Superbi's alive. We've got him down in one of the holding cells with a team of Cavallone medics."

There was a pause.

"What?"

She nodded and smiled. "Turns out Reborn likes backup plans just in case things go wrong and Dino's people were able to fish Superbi out before he became fish food."

"That's...that's good," the bomber said softly as he fell into line beside her. "Then are you going to, well, um..."

"Make good on my promise? If Takeshi's in the mood, yes." She glanced at him and bit back the urge to grin like an idiot. He had such a serious, thoughtful look on his face. "Hayato?"

"Can, would it be okay if, I just..." he stuttered out, face rapidly becoming redder and redder as he couldn't spit out what he meant. He took a deep breath. "Can I help?"

Tsuna stopped and looked at him. He took another few steps before noticing her halt and turning to look at her. She had not expected that offer. Yes, he had enjoyed the previous evening, but to ask to help with Takeshi's reward, well, she had thought such an offer would be much further down the line. She could see him tense up and his eyes becoming guarded as he looked at her.

"You know you don't have to do that," she said and reached out to tuck his hair behind his ear. The contact made his lips twitch upward. "Not that I'm going to say no, but are you sure you're ready for it? You were rather vehement about not doing acts like that before."

"I'm sure." His eyes slide shut as her fingers trailed through his hair soothingly. "Last night, Takeshi just. I've never been looked at like that before, like I was wanted and then both of you, but especially him, giving me those looks. I had thought that, maybe, he was just going along with this thing with us because he wanted to stay with you, but he looked at me like that and I just...I want to do this."

Tsuna leaned forward and kissed him. "Alright. If that is what you want, and Hayato, both of us want you. Never doubt that."

He looked away. "I know."

She sighed softly and mentally cursed the mafia dogs for what they had put him through. She had so
many plans for when she got her hands on Hayato's father. She wasn't sure which one she'd use. Maybe the one with the peanut butter and the two pounds of galvanized nails. That one would be painful.

"Well, let's go give Takeshi the good news and then his reward," she said and continued toward her office. Pushing the door open, she frowned at the sight of her swordsman and boyfriend. His shoulders were slumped. Hands loosely held Shigure Kintoki. A heavy air of depression surrounded him, and that was just what she was seeing from the back. She knew he was unintentionally doing his kicked puppy look that made everyone feel horrible about upsetting him.

"Damn," Hayato murmured as he looked over Tsuna's shoulder and winced at the sight.

"Oh boy," she muttered under her breath and winced when Takeshi turned emotionless eyes on her. She swallowed and shook her head as she entered the room and closed the door behind her and Hayato.

"Tsuna," Takeshi said blandly as he raised his hand halfway in greeting. It was pathetic.

"Superbi's alive," Tsuna announced. She hid a smirk when the swordsman fell out of his chair, his sword rolling from his grip. The incredulous looks coming from both her boys made her want to giggle. "Reborn asked Dino and his people to be in place in case a rescue was needed. Superbi's in the lower cells getting checked out by Dino's medics. Rumiko will interrogate him once we get the go ahead from them."

Takeshi stared at her from his position on the floor. "He's alive?"

"Yes."

"He didn't die?"

"Yes."

"He's going to live?"

Tsuna sighed and ran her hand down her face in exasperation. "Yes, Takeshi. He'll recover fully. He's alive. He didn't die. You can't see him until he wakes up and is interrogated. Now will you get out of your funk already? I thought your angst and brooding in silence days were over."

"Um, ah," the swordsman muttered as he scrambled back upright. His face turned an embarrassed shade of red as he scratched at the back of his neck. "Sorry, Tsuna."

"It's alright," she said as she sauntered toward him, putting a little bit more sway in her hips than usual. She could feel both of her boys' attention focus on her. "Now, I do believe I promised a reward for winning. You feeling up to it?"

Her hand lifted. Fingers ran along his cheek before burying in his spiked hair. He swallowed thickly and nodded. His eyes were wide, pupils enlarging as she stepped further into his personal space. His tongue lashed out across his lips unconsciously in anticipation. He never noticed the signs she was making with her free hand behind her back.

"Well, Takeshi?" She grinned at him, her lips just far enough away he could feel her breath as she spoke. He quivered, a tiny whimper working its way up his throat.

"Yeah," he choked out hoarsely, his throat having gone dry.
She grinned and pecked his lips with the most brief of kisses she could manage. Her hand lifted and ran down his shoulder and across his chest to rest above his thundering heart. "And just what kind of reward do you want, Takeshi? You were so well behaved last night that I feel you should pick. Or…"

Her grin turned wild as he felt another set of hands come up behind him and a pair of lips kissing the back of his neck. His eyes went wide, head turning only to catch a fleeting glance of silver hair. He inhaled sharply. A fresh wave of hot arousal washed through him and pooled deep in his belly. That was not what he expected. He turned to look back at Tsuna with wide eyes. She merely smiled and nodded slightly. So, this was Hayato's decision.

"Sit, Takeshi," she murmured and she gently pushed him toward the chair he had vacated. "Let us take care of you."

The next few minutes were a blur of sensation to the swordsman. His back hitting the back of the chair. Hands pressing fingers against hot skin. Clothes rustling as they fell to the floor. The sweet taste of two different mouths. Takeshi pulled away from Hayato mouth and gasped as Tsuna wrapped a hand around his arousal. His head tilted backward and a long moan drawn from his throat. Hayato took the opportunity to lay wet, open mouthed kisses along the revealed expanse. The Italian's skin had turned flush not long after they'd gotten started breaking Takeshi down into a quivering mess of want. Tsuna thought he looked cute with the pink tinting his cheeks and running down his neck to hide under the color of his shirt.

"You wanted to help, Haya? Help me get his pants off," she said as she met her Storm's jade eyes. Hesitant, his doubts and upbringing still playing havoc with his emotions, he reached down and began undoing the swordsman's belt. Incidentally those little movements left his hands just barely brushing against a rapidly forming bulge. Takeshi whimpered as the pleasurable feeling.

Tsuna hummed and leaned against the side of the chair as she watched the kneeling Italian work on getting the fabric down those slender, tanned legs. Takeshi's fingers brushed against her arm before he gently dragged her down for a kiss. Tongues played with each other before Takeshi gasped and tilted his head back. His eyes went wide, pupils blowing. Tsuna looked down at Hayato and suppressed a grin. He had managed to get the pants and underwear off and was now taking his time slowly jerking the other off.

"I think he liked that, Haya," she chirped and dropped down to kneel beside her Storm. She grinned at him. "Want to see what other noises we can make him make?"

Hayato flushed deeper and nodded. His hand dragged up the warm flesh of the swordsman, making him gasp and thrust without thinking.

"Here, watch. There's this little trick Rumiko showed me one time," she muttered softly as she reached out. Hayato's hand fell away and was replaced by Tsuna's fingers lightly pressing against the heated skin. Smoothly, she drew her fingers from base to tip, her wrist turning and making the fingers glide over skin in uneven patterns.

"Fuck!" Takeshi barked as his legs quivered. That felt too good. He wasn't going to last long, not with both of them doing these things to him. He'd been left wanting for far too long.

"Here, now you try. Just remember, light pressure and unpredictable movement. Make him anticipate your touch," Tsuna whispered into Hayato's ear as she leaned back to watch. The bomber was a fast learner. Takeshi's shout was more hoarse, wild. She could tell, simply by the tenseness in his thighs and the ragged breathing that he was close. Maybe she shouldn't have teased him so badly the previous night if this was how wound up he got.
Takeshi moaned and panted. Hayato's hands felt so good. His fingers were longer, more fine boned than Tsuna's. That little trick had a completely different sensation when the Italian did it. He wasn't going to last long at all. He could feel the pressure build up. He wanted this to last for longer, but considering he hadn't had a chance to take care of himself for several days, well, he was doing good to last this long.

Hayato stared in slight awe at the way Takeshi twitched and moaned under his touch. He'd have to try that trick out on himself sometime if it was that enjoyable. This power he had over the other, it made his head swim. Admittedly, that could be because all of his blood was rapidly heading south, but still, to know that he was wanted, the sensation soothed over some of the cracks he knew his blood family had left on him.

It seemed like forever to Takeshi, but in truth was just a few minutes, when the pleasure became too much. His head tilted back and a roar came from his throat. Hayato's eyes widened before instinctively closing. Hot cum spurted from the swordsman's member and coated the bomber's face. Tsuna, further back, was unscathed. She licked her lips at the sight. Really, those two looked way too pretty together. Shame Takeshi had cum so quick, but she had been teasing the poor boy. She'd have to make it up to him. Now she just had to help Hayato with his rapidly growing problem.

"Haya, come here," she crooned in his ear. He leaned back, his hand falling from the rapidly softening piece of flesh. Tsuna smiled at him and licked a stripe of cum from his cheek. He squeaked and fell backwards against her. She snorted but continued cleaning him with her tongue, the wet appendage moving across heated skin. One had came around to rest at his still clothed inner thigh. The bomber whimpered and twitched. She could feel wetness spreading beneath her fingers. Leaning back, she looked at the debauched pair. Hayato flushed deeper and turned away.

"Well, it looks like you enjoyed that nearly as much as Takeshi, Haya." She smiled and stood up. "You stay there and recover. I'll help 'Keshi get dressed. We have a long day tomorrow."
Tsuna sat down next to Basil at the breakfast table. I-Pin groggily poked at her food. Lambo wasn’t anywhere to be seen. The hyperactive boy was most likely still in bed. The two children had been up late keeping watch over Nana in case Iemitsu tried to show his face again. It was unlikely, what with the Arcobaleno in town minus the Mist having taken up residence in the house. Shamal also made for a very nice deterrent. The man could be ruthless when a woman was threatened. The fact that he genuinely liked Nana and despised what Iemitsu had done to her just made him more vicious. Tsuna trusted the perverted doctor with her mother, though she still did warn him not to try any funny stuff.

"You need to eat more," Tsuna said as she put more food onto her brother's plate. She eyed him, nodded, and then filled her own plate with food. "With all the training and the running around we're doing, I know that little bit of food isn't enough."

Basil flushed and a tiny smile pulled at his lips. It was...nice to be cared for like this. He could feel Tsuna's Sky Flame curling around him in a protective embrace. Even though she had a Rain Guardian already, he could feel a bond forming between them. He didn't know if she was just that powerful a Sky or if it had to do with them being blood relations, but it made something inside he hadn't even realized was tense relax. He picked up his chopsticks and ate the bit of rolled omelet she had shoved on his plate. He was hungry and Nana was a fantastic cook.

"Tsu-nee?" Fuuta muttered from his place at the table. His ever present book resting at his side.

"Hm? What is it, Fuuta?"

"Who's fighting tonight?" the Ranking Prince frowned, his eyebrows drawing together, "And can some of your people take me to the library?"

She smirked. "Run out of books again?"

Fuuta pouted at her. "It's not my fault I like to read."

"I know." Her smirk turned into a smile as she shook her head. "I'm sure someone can take you to the library. I-Pin, you want to go with him, or stay here with Mom?"

"Stay. I tired," the Chinese girl muttered, her eyelids drooping.

Tsuna winced. "It shouldn't be too long now. The girls have searched most of the city, so the places he could be hiding are getting smaller and smaller. He's not getting out of Namimori alive."

"How do you know he hasn't left?" Basil asked. His head tilted slightly as he looked at her.

"He wants Mom back and he wants me to be his perfect little puppet," she snorted and shook her head. "Thinking back on it, I kind of wonder if he had anything to do with the other heirs' deaths. It
would make sense. Put his clumsy, sealed, dependent, civilian daughter on the throne and use her as a puppet while still keeping his power in the CEDEF."

Basil could feel his blood turn to ice at the thought. What she said made a lot of sense. How had the Capulet Famiglia known where Enrico was going to be? How had an assassin gotten through Massimo's security and abducted him from a Vongola property? How had Frederico vanished for three days before anyone looked for him? Once is happenstance, twice is a coincidence, three times is enemy action. The question was just who was the enemy? The Varia had much the same reason as Iemitsu did for taking out the other heirs. Maybe they just hadn't gotten around to killing Tsuna before everything happened?

"Lal's already got someone looking into that," Reborn's voice came from out of nowhere. Basil was suitably impressed by his sister's seeming lack of reaction. If it hadn't been for how immersed he was in her Flames, he would never have been able to tell just how startled she was.

"Oregano?" the blond asked. Reborn nodded.

Before Tsuna could say anything, a knocking sound interrupted. Sighing, the yakuza boss stood up and went to the front door. Peering through the peephole, she frowned. Kyoko fidgeted where she stood on the front stoop. Tsuna unlocked and opened the door.

"Kyoko, is something wrong?" Tsuna asked as she eyed the nervous girl.

Kyoko twisted the edge of her shirt in her fingers and shook her head. "I just…Onii-chan said his fight is tonight."

"Ah." There wasn't much she could say about that. Of course Kyoko was worried about her brother. It only made sense. "Want to come in and talk about it? I think there's some breakfast left if you're hungry."

"No, just some tea, thank you." the timid teen said as she crossed the threshold and removed her shoes. She entered the dining area and froze. "Um…"

"That's Basil, my brother," Tsuna explained as she went to fix tea. "Basil, this is Sasagawa Kyoko, Ryohei's little sister. She's a civilian whose gotten caught up in matters before as a hostage.

"Oh, um, hello," her brother muttered from where he sat and sent a slightly panicked looked at Tsuna. The yakuza boss shrugged and went to fix the tea. She came back to a very quiet room with an awkward silence that made her skin itch. I-Pin had vanished sometime in the five minutes it took make a pot of tea. Reborn was nowhere to be seen, not that he couldn't be hiding somewhere nearby to spy on this conversation.

Sighing, Tsuna set down two cups of green tea and Basil's preferred coffee. "So, what is it you wanted to ask me about, Kyoko?"

"I just," Kyoko began and paused as she tried to get her words in order. "Why does Onii-chan need to fight?"

Tsuna sighed deeply. This was going to be hard to explain without giving too much away and dragging the girl further into the mafia than she should be. "Right of succession. There is a
challenger who says I am unworthy of my position and Ryohei has sworn to fight for me."

"But, fighting…" the civilian teen muttered while looking down into her cup. "I know you want me and Hana to learn to fight to protect ourselves, and I get fighting is just something you're more relaxed about than I am, but Onii-chan is everything I have. If he was to get hurt…"

"He has a good chance at winning," Tsuna tried to soothe her friend's worries. "He has a good teacher and he's stubborn as an ox. I don't think he's going to give up this fight until he wears his opponent down."

There was silence. Basil shifted in place. He was uncomfortable with this girl. There was just something about the Sun Guardian's sister that made his insides squirm and his mind race. The sly looks Tsuna sent him every so often didn't help matters. If it hadn't been for the training Lal had put him through, he knew his face would be red.

"I just don't want him to fight," Kyoko finally got out.

"You'd have a better chance making the sun stop rising before you could get Ryohei to stop fighting," Tsuna stated as blandly as she could. Kyoko looked up at her in surprise. "Kyoko, before the Fuuma-kai incident, before Ryohei ever pledged loyalty to me, he was fighting in underground fights. He had multiple families trying to recruit him. He's too much of a fighter in spirit to learn to not fight. Keeping him from fighting would be like taking a fish from water and expecting it to breathe air. It would kill him. He'd try and that would hold for a while, but he'd be dragged back in. It's in his nature and can't really be changed."

"I see," Kyoko murmured softly as she stared into her cup. Slowly she looked up at her friend. "Does that make me a bad sister, that I want him to stop fighting?"

"No," Basil said, surprising himself. He blinked as the two girls' attention focused on him. Tsuna motioned for him to go on. She was smirking. That worried him. "No, so long as you mean it with love. You worry he's going to get hurt, and he probably will, but it's his choice and you need to respect that."

"What he said," Tsuna said before looking at the clock. "Look, Kyoko, I'm supposed to be meeting with Reborn and Basil's boss. Can you take Basil to the shops and pick up an orange-chocolate cake? I owe Colonello something for dealing with Iemitsu a few nights ago."

"Colonello?" Kyoko frowned as she tried to remember that name.

"He's the one teaching your brother. Someone may have mentioned he has a fondness for a certain type of sweet."

"Um, I, OK," Kyoko agreed with a slightly bewildered look. She never noticed the looks Basil was shooting his sister, who was smiling as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. She knew she had to get her kicks in somewhere, and if something hit off between the two, even better. Basil was one of the few men she would trust not to pressure her non-confrontational friend. Win-Win.

Tsuna stood in a relaxed, ready stance as she waited for Reborn and Lal Mirch. The park near the downtown area was fairly neutral, or at least as neutral as it got in Namimori. The place had a decent amount of foot traffic, so an ambush would not be a good idea on either party's part. Despite the foot traffic, there was a lot of privacy to be had and plenty of places to sit and have a serious discussion. She absently patted the messenger bag at her side just to reassure herself it was still there. The paperwork contained within was important for getting the CEDEF second-in-command on her side.
"Tsunami," Reborn greeted as he walked toward her with another person of his size walking behind him. The infant sized woman eyed Tsuna critically. Tsuna resisted the urge to smirk. It wouldn't do for the persona she was projecting for this meeting. The scar on the woman's right cheek caught her attention, as did the pacifier around her neck. Something about that object and the scar made the hairs on her neck stand on end. They were wrong in a way she just couldn't describe.

"Reborn," the yakuza boss inclined her head in greeting.

"Tsunami, this is Lal Mirch. Lal, Tsunami," Reborn introduced the two to each other and stepped back. Leon glowed for a moment before turning into a camcorder. This was going to be good.

"So you're Iemitsu's kid," Lal began in her brusque tone only to go silent at the nearly visible flare of Sky Flame that came from the petite teen. The soldier's mouth went dry at the sheer purity of the Flames in that flare.

"He may be my paternal DNA donor, but that man is in no way my father," Tsuna spat, her eyes lighting with red tinted orange. She took a couple of deep breaths to calm the raging tempest that was her temper. It worked, sort of. She at least managed to get her Flames under control and not flaring. "Sorry, but that's one of the triggers to my temper. That man just infuriates me with what he's done."

Here Lal's brow raised. That was worrying. "And what did he do?"

Tsuna reached into her messenger bag and silently handed the toddler sized woman a folder. Lal frowned as she opened the folder. Her eyes first sought out the physician. She blinked upon seeing Trident Shamal's signature. How had she not known the man was in Namimori? She'd need to speak to the men stationed there to...find...out...What the fuck? Her eyes went wide as she read over the diagnosis three times. She felt the blood rush from her face. This was bad. She looked up at the stoic face on the teen.

"This can't be real," she said firmly.

Tsuna shook her head sadly. "No, it's real. He's a dead man walking for it."

Lal was appalled. "How could the men we have stationed here miss that?"

"Current thought among my people is that they didn't," Tsuna sighed. She was beginning to get the feeling she could trust the soldier. "Either that or the Bastard sent the most incompetent here so he could give a show of having Mom and I guarded while not letting his depravity be known."

"I-That-" Lal stood there just reading through the medical charts, the doctor's notes, the observations of Sawa-Tsunami's own Guardians, particularly Gokudera Hayato's notes since the bomber had more experience with Dying Will Flames than the Japanese teens. All of the evidence was damning. Iemitsu, the idiot, had done such a thing to the woman he claimed to love. "How could he do this?"

Tsuna shrugged and leaned back on her heels. "Personally, I think the man is a narcissist who refuses to see reality as it is. I am told that is a dangerous thing in Active Flame Users and may be the reason he has no Guardians of his own. Mental Dissonance or something. Hayato tried to explain it to me, but a lot of the terminology he used was Italian. I'm not too good at that language yet."

"You are getting better, Tsunami," Reborn said from where he was sitting up in a tree, using the height advantage to get better angles for the blackmail footage. It wasn't often Lal became flabbergasted.

"Not good enough for that kind of technical discussion," Tsuna shot back before turning her attention back to Lal. "This does bring up something I've been thinking about, though."
"What?" Lal asked as she closed the folder and looked up at the girl.

"How will the CEDEF survive after he dealt with? Are they more loyal to him than Vongola? Will they rebel and retaliate against me?"

Lal eyed her. Those were good questions. "The best of the CEDEF are mine. I trained them and they are loyal to me. The lower ranks are more in awe of Iemitsu, what with his relation to the Primo. They may follow him out of some sort of misplaced honor or loyalty, at least until the facts about his actions are revealed. Then it's a toss up of who they believe more."

"Then the question becomes, Lal Mirch, are you willing to swear loyalty to me?"

There was a pause.

"You've got chutzpah, kid."

Tsuna smirked. "I've been running a yakuza group since I was 10. If I didn't have initiative, I'd have been killed already."

"What?" Lal stated blankly. Then she looked over at the far too amused Reborn. "What?"

"I'm the head of the Akatora-kai. You might have heard of the Great Tiger? That's me." The teen grinned. Her shoulder shook as she visibly held back laughter at the look on the soldier woman's face. She was starting to get why Reborn was such a troll. It was entertaining.


Tsuna's eyes widened as she pulled out her phone. Glancing at the name, she frowned and held it to her ear. "Basil?"

Lal turned back to face her. That was interesting. She knew Basil had disappeared on some mission Iemitsu had given him, but to be here in Namimori and close to the girl, that had implications. Maybe the idiot was trying to set them up to strengthen ties between the main house and the CEDEF?

"What? Kyoko get somewhere safe. I'll have help incoming," Tsuna snapped and ended the call only to hit another button. "Yuusuke, get the boys downtown. We have some cleaning to do."

As her arm lowered, the phone call ending automatically as her second ended the call from his end to organize things, Reborn jumped down from his perch. "Tsunami?"

The yakuza boss ignored him to focus her attention on the soldier woman. "I need to know now, Lal Mirch. Who do you give your loyalty to? Iemitsu or Vongola?"

Lal did not hesitate. "Vongola."

"Good. Then follow me. There's some house cleaning you're going to need to do." The words made a shiver run down Lal's spine. Such a cold tone in what had been such an amicable teen. This girl reminded the woman of several commanders she had served under. If the choice was between the idiot and her, Lal would choose the girl every time. That kind of bearing was earned through blood, tears, sweat, and sacrifice. The soldier felt her lips curl into a smirk as she ran behind the girl as she ran out of the park and toward the shopping district. Sawada Tsunami was going to make one hell of a Decima. The mafia had no idea what it was in for.

Xanxus watched as the brats filed into the school grounds. His eye twitched. The girl was there, so
was the Sun and the Storm, but all the other Guardians were absent. What's more, the girl looked like
she had been in a fight. Her lips were split though no longer bleeding and purple-blue colored bruises
dotted her knuckles. The Storm constantly looked around, searching for something. He remained
close to his Sky, close enough he could get in the way of any attacker. That was not comforting, not
with the fact the girl controlled the area through her yakuza goons.

"Trash," Xanxus muttered softly enough to only be heard by his own Guardians. Lussuria, a
recovered Belphégor, and Mammon frowned at the girl's appearance as well. The Mosca just
hummed from its place behind the group. Xanxus forced himself not to smirk at the thought of what
the old man was going through in there. The girl obviously had some skill with the famed Vongola
Intuition if she had brought her yakuza group to be as powerful as Mammon's information said they
were. Just having the Mosca out was a risk, but the opportunity to rub in the old man's face about
how the precious female Sky, civilian and untainted by the mafia, was a yakuza.

"Xanxus." Her head inclined ever so slightly. "My apologies for my current state, but there have
been...issues. Let's get this fight over with so I can take care of them, ok?"

Xanxus frowned. That was telling. He eyed the two teens with her. Yes, they were tense, but the
Sun, he looked ready to kill. What the hell had happened?
"The Sun battle shall proceed immediately." The voice of the Cervello caught everyone's attention.
The pink haired woman gave the feeling she was frowning beneath her mask. Where were the
Sawada girl's other Guardians?

"Ryohei," the yakuza boss started to say something before shaking her head with a frown. "Just be
quick. We've got other business to attend to."

Lussuria grumbled at those words as they got into the ring. With a deft flick, their top was off in his
preferred fashion for fighting. They readied themself, watching the white haired Sun enter the ring
and get into a fighting stance. A boxer. How delightful. It had been a while since they had gotten the
chance to decimate one of them. Add in the additions around the ring the boss had noticed
beforehand, and this fight was going to be a cake walk. Really, the boy could barely be considered
anything more than a civilian for all that the rumors Mammon had pulled up had him placed as a
yakuza member, one of the girl's red tigers. Information on the teen was fairly scarce. Most of
Mammon's contacts were hesitant about giving out any information. The informants seemed worried,
if not outright terrified, of getting on the girl's bad side.

"Oh, sweetie, don't you look pretty enough to gobble up," Lussuria squealed in an attempt to
unnerve the boy, who just snorted and shook his head in amusement. "Well, if that's how you're
going to be, honey."

Ryohei's jaw clenched. He wanted this fight over with now. Tsuna needed him for something much
more important than this pissing match between two allied factions. His fists curled tighter before
relaxing. Breathing deeply, the boxer purposefully ignored the taunting words coming from his
opponent. Fighting in the underground matches, he had heard of Lussuria of the Varia. The Muay
Thai expert had a reputation for being a little out there, not to mention their preference when it came
to kinks. Ryohei steadied up his stance as he brought his arms up into a guard.

There was a click. Blinding light shone down from overhead.

Ryohei let out a small grunt and closed his eyes. He shifted his stance again and was thankful that the
floor beneath his feet bounced slightly. That was going to be useful. Less useful was the humming
sound faintly coming from all around him and the smell of hot metal. Memories of a certain cage
fight flickered through his mind as he ducked out of the way of his opponent's first strike and
blocked a second one, pushing the kickboxer back.
Lussuria felt a wild, manic grin form on their face. The boy knew how the game worked. Interesting. They were going to enjoy this. They hadn't had a good fight in ages. They began bouncing on their toes.

The two danced around each other, testing defenses and gauging strength in those glistening blows. Lussuria grinned like a maniac as the teen kept up with them. Rare was it to find someone who could do so. Too bad the boy wasn't just a bit older. He'd be more to the Varia Sun's taste then.

"Well, I believe we've been at this for long enough, sweetie," the assassin crooned. "Now, I'll make this quick. You've earned that."

Tsuna tensed at that chirped threat. Her teeth ground as she watched Ryohei getting knocked around the ring. True, there hadn't been any decisive blows, but Ryohei had been on the defensive nearly the whole time. Her hand curled into a fist at her side as she glanced over at Hayato, who was looking at the screen of his phone. He looked up at her, his lips in a thin line, before showing the message on the screen to her. She growled. This was just fucking perfect.

"Ryohei, end this. We've got better things to do," she commanded as she pulled out her gloves and slipped them over her hands. Hayato took this as sign to put away the phone and pull out him backup gun.

At those words, the pace of the battle changed. No longer did Ryohei stay on the defensive. His stance changed to a wide, grounded stance perfect for using what Master Colonello had taught him. He focused, watched, waited for his opponent to come at him. He had seen the Muay Thai expert favor one leg slightly, and something told him that wasn't due to an injury. Colonello and Reborn had beaten into his head how difficult it was to put down a combat specializing Sun. It had been a surprise to learn that the worst matchups for him would have been against Bianchi, Shamal or Gokudera on a chemistry kick. Blunt force damage, even piercing damage, could be fixed rather rapidly by a well trained Sun. Poisoning or illness, not so much. Still, enough blunt damage and you could take out an unprepared Sun. Unfortunately for Lussuria, the Varia Sun was very unprepared for what Ryohei had in mind.

Lussuria went in for the kill. The kid was good. A quick death had been earned. They shifted their weight and struck out with their armored leg.

Ryohei grinned. He felt his power surge through him and come to a pinprick at his knuckles. Flesh met steel. For a moment both fighters hung in their positions. Then the bomb went off.

"Maximum cannon!" Ryohei shouted, his voice just audible above the sound of forcibly twisted metal screaming through the air. Lussuria flew upward, body arcing gracefully upward to slam into one of the overhead lamps. The tinkling sound of lights shattering and glass falling to the ground ran a counterpoint to the sudden, jarring sound of gunfire nearby. The Varia, caught between surprise at the loss of their expert in hand-to-hand combat and at the sound of gunfire so close by, didn't seem to know which way to react. Xanxus fumed where he stood as he watched the brat's Sun walk over to the prone form of the Varia's Sun Officer and pluck the ring from around their neck. He growled low in his throat as he looked over at the girl and paused. The look on her face wasn't what he was expecting. She was looking away from the fight, facing the schoolyards' entrance. Her Right Hand held his gun in a ready position. The Wrath Sky could tell the safety on that weapon was off and the Storm looked ready to kill whoever came through that fence.

"Boss," Mammon whispered from where they were floating and watching the scene as well.

Whatever else the Mist Arcobaleno was going to say became lost in the screams that came from the other side of the fence. Gunfire erupted. Two people ducked through the gate to take cover behind
the thick, stone walls. Hayato exchanged a glance with Tsuna. She shook her head slightly and motioned toward Ryohei. The boxer looked between the cowering men, who still didn't have the wherewithal to notice they were being watched by a rather large group of people consisting of assassins, pink haired freaks, and yakuza, and back to his boss with a raised eyebrow. Tsuna smiled viciously and nodded. The boxer's face went taut with rage.

"What the hell?" Belphegor muttered lowly as he watched the boxer rush the two cowering men and grab them by the collar. The Varia Storm officer was so flummoxed by what was happening, he dropped his imperious attitude. The enraged Sun dragged the men before his boss and stood ominously behind them. His knuckles cracked.

"So, you are the two who got away," Tsuna hummed and nodded. She shared a look over their quivering men's heads with Ryohei. His lips pulled back into a wordless, soundless snarl that made him look more like a ravenous beast than a man. "Ryohei, feel free to show them my displeasure. I hate traitors."

"Abbi pietà (have mercy)," one of the men managed to get out before the boxer's hands decided on him.

"There is no mercy for scum like you," Tsuna said blankly as she took a step back. She did not want to get caught in the blood spatter.

"Trash, what the hell is going on?" Xanxus finally asked as he watched the Sun who had just one-shotted Lussuria beat down two men he was fairly certain were CEDEF agents.

Tsuna turned to face her opposite. "This is not a matter for the Varia. Akatora business."

"Tsunami!" Basil yelled as he slid through the gate and froze at the sight of Ryohei beating the two CEDEF agents. He blinked and shook his head before walking sedately over to his sister and stowing his weapon, a kind of blade edged boomerang, onto his back. "Well, I see you got them."

"Yes. Where's Mirch?" she asked as she looked her brother over. Aside from a few bruises, he didn't look that injured.

"Right here," Lal said as she bounced out of a tree she had been using as a sniper's blind, as evidenced by the scaled to her size rifle in her hands. She nodded to the Varia leader in greeting. "Xanxus."

The Varia leader stared as he watched the truly effective force behind the CEDEF casually ignore the brutal, and likely to be fatal, beating of two of her men at the hands of the girl's Sun. What the hell was going on?

"I'm fine, Tsunami," Basil muttered sheepishly as she finished looking him over and cataloging his minor injuries.

"I'm not going to have Mama giving me the Look if you come home with anything worse than light bruising," she hissed. "She's taken to the mothering role with you rather well, brother mine."

"Brother?" Xanxus mouthed before his eyes went wide. He began to rub his temples as a headache set in. Wonderful, Iemitsu had a bastard. Just fucking wonderful. At least the trash wasn't a Sky and thus not in the way of succession.

"This is just getting better," Mammon muttered and settled above the Mosca.

"Excuse me," the Cervello woman in charge stepped forward and stopped at the look Lal Mirch and
Tsuna sent her. She licked her lips beneath her mask and swallowed dryly. "The next fight is the mist fight."

"Tomorrow at the same time?" Tsuna asked and waited for the woman to nod. "Good. My people should have these scum removed from my territory by then."

"Now the Prince is curious," Belphegor said in his normal imperious tone, having recovered from his surprise rather well.

Tsuna, Hayato and Basil looked over at him and then at each other. A conversation without words seemed to take place among all of them plus Lal Mirch, who had taken up residence on Basil's shoulder. Tsuna sighed and nodded. Lal smirked triumphantly.

"There's issues with the CEDEF," Tsuna ground out as she turned to face the Varia. She blinked and frowned as she saw the still unconscious, bleeding form of the Varia Sun on the ground. "Are you going to take care of him?"

Xanxus snorted but motioned for his people, who were hiding in the wings, to take the downed Sun Officer. Normally he'd have just left the Sun there as an object lesson, but the girls' words from the previous night burned at him.

"Issues with the CEDEF?" he asked as he pointedly ignored what was going on behind him. Mammon perked up at the thought of information to sell. A tiny notebook and pencil appeared in their hands.

"I do not take kindly to those attacking civilians under my protection or just attacking civilians in my territory generally," Tsuna blandly stated, though her tense muscles showed just how angered she was that anyone would dare try such a thing.

"I see." Well, that was one thing he could agree with her on. Such an action, such a challenge, couldn't go unanswered. The death rattles coming from the two victims and the eerie silence of what had been rather steady gunfire showed just how willing she was to answer such a challenge.

Lal snorted. "The fact that they sided willingly with Iemitsu has nothing to do with it, I bet."

"Oh, maybe a little," she shrugged even as a nasty smirk crossed her face. "I'm more pissed about the fact they tried to abduct and likely rape my Sun's little sister, who is one of the few normal female friends I have. Retaliation was a given."

"Not to mention attacking your brother for defending her," Lal continued as she side-eyed the watching Varia, who were both equally impressed and appalled.

"Fuck," Xanxus muttered as his headache continued to grow in severity. He winced and rubbed hard at the bridge of his nose. Tsuna's eyes narrowed at the movement and her Flames slowly diffused into the air in a non-threatening manner. Against his better judgment, the Wrath Sky relaxed against the feeling of those pure Sky Flames curling around him. The headache began to fade. His eyes, which he hadn't realized he had closed, flashed open and he stared in mild shock and horror at the girl in front of him.

Tsuna nodded to him and turned back to her people, plus Lal. All of them were giving her confused looks. "Let's go. We have more pruning to do, and Ryohei, please shower and give Ikeda your clothes to be cleaned before you go home. I do not want Kyoko complaining to me about bloodstains."
The last 24 hours had been a headache. Tsuna had no clue there were that many members of the CEDEF who had come with Iemitsu. She did not envy Mirch for the task set out in front of her in unifying the CEDEF. Basil, despite being the Bastard's apprentice for several years, was not ready to take over. The yakuza boss had hopes he would be by the time she truly took over as Decima. It'd make everything so much easier on everyone.

Tsuna and her Guardians, all of them save Hibari this time, arrived at the school for the Mist Battle. Only Reborn's assurance that something had been arranged made her come. She had no Mist, though apparently Rumiko was a Mist latent. She wasn't stupid enough to throw her most effective whore/den mother in a fight against the Mist Arcobaleno.

"So, who arranged for a Mist?" Tsuna asked her tutor, taking his place on her shoulder like a demented sort of parrot.

Reborn frowned. "Originally, Iemitsu. I know, but Lal says his idea was good and worth going through with."

She sighed even as she tensed at the mention of his name. "Even idiots can have good ideas every blue moon."

"You give him too much credit," Takeshi chuckled from just behind her on her left side.

"He's a very un-Extreme man," Ryohei said, his voice tinged with a low growl. The Sun had a very good idea why so many male CEDEF agents thought they could get away with what they had tried on Kyoko. Sawada Iemitsu was a menace. He'd be happier when the man and those loyal to him rather than Vongola were dead.

"Tsunami," Basil called out as he and a small group of people with their heads covered entered the schoolyard.

"Basil," she greeted and gently moved Mochida to the side so her brother could walk next to her. Her Lightning grumbled but clapped a hand on her brother's shoulder. Those two had been paired up during the hunt for Iemitsu's CEDEF minions yesterday. With Basil being best at mid to long range fighting and Mochida being a completely melee fighter, they made a good team. Apparently they started discussing food and which country, Japan or Italy, did the best seafood. Ikeda, their team leader, pronounced them siblings separated by a tragedy of birth with the way they argued. That hadn't been a compliment.

"So, who're they?" Mochida asked as he jerked his thumb back to the trio walking beside them. There was a tenseness in the teen as he eyed the three warily. Something about them wasn't right, and it wasn't just the fact he couldn't see their faces beneath encompassing cloaks. One of them seemed far too familiar to him to ignore.

"Ah, they're—" the blond rain began to speak.

"Good, you're here. Hello, Basil," a voice, familiar and causing Tsuna's blood pressure to rise with every word being spoken. "We need to talk about you attacking the CEDEF, Tuna-fishy."

Sawada Iemitsu stood in front of her, dressed in a sharp suit. Tsuna felt her temper rise, her Flames reacting to her rage and becoming tinged red with hate. It was only when she felt the subtle hint of that man's Flames press against her, willing her to bend to his will, to think as he wanted her to, that
she let her Flames free. There wasn't a physical sign she had done anything. This was a purely spiritual attack, one she had asked Dino for help in developing. Her brother-Sky, as he wanted her to call him, had been impressed with her ferocity. It was too bad he was on Nana Watch and was going to miss her first use of it.

As her Flames lashed out at the attacker, she stopped and blinked. A moment later she snarled and took her eyes off the Bastard. Her Guardians eyed her warily as they pulled together into a guarding formation. Even the three newcomers, reading the situation correctly, put themselves into a protective stance. The trident, a familiar weapon that made more than one eyebrow raise in surprise, appeared as if by magic in the slimmest of the covered figure's hands.

"Come out from where you are hiding, you honorless bastard!" Tsuna screamed. Her voice, her tone, surprised everyone save Takeshi. She sounded like a demon or like the stories of Okiku, able to kill with her scream alone. The Rain had heard her like this only once before, when a rival group had tried to burn down one of the salons with the girls still inside. Tsuna had taken great pleasure in turning those men into whimpering little husks before allowing them the mercy of death.

"Tsuna-sama?" Takeshi muttered. His use of the honorific made the three covered figures tense nervous.

"Mist Flames. He's not actually here, but nearby. The Sky Flames aren't coming from in front of us but I can't tell where. The Mist is concealing the origin point somehow," she hissed between clenched teeth.

"Now, now, tuna-fishy. Is that any way to speak to your father?" the simulacrum of Sawada Iemitsu asked with a bright, unrepentant smile on his face even as his eyes flashed in annoyance.

"You have no right to call yourself my father. You do not deserve that title, let alone the Sawada name," she spat even as her Flames, bolstered as they were by Hayato's Storm, ate at the illusion like acid. "Just take your fate like a man, and come out."

"I haven't done anything to deserve this kind of talk from you," the man pressed, his jovial expression rapidly changing to something more sinister. His Sky Flames lashed out against her own, only to be rebuffed by the entirety of her Guardians' Flames, even Mist Flame coming from the visibly armed one mixing in. The rather interesting feeling of Reborn's Sun caught her off guard. There was something wrong with his Flames, she had known that for awhile, but she hadn't expected them to feel that wrong when expressed externally. For such a powerful Sun as he was reported to be, the Flames he was radiating seemed far too weak. A mystery for another time. She had the Bastard to face at the moment.

Tsuna scoffed. Her eyes kept scanning the area trying to figure out where he was hidden. It had to be close by for his Flames to be as strong as they were. The searching came to an end as the illusion winked out. Hayato had a grim smirk on his lips. His eyes had a dull red sheen to them. The completed Vongola Storm Ring on his right hand glowed crimson as he used it as a focus for his Flames.

Tsuna nodded to him. "Well done. Let's get inside before he tries something else. We have an appointment to keep. Takeshi, make sure Yuusuke knows the Bastard was spotted. With luck, one of the others will find him."

With those words, the group headed inside the auditorium. Surprisingly, it didn't look like the Cervello had done much more than put up a large clock on the wall. Even her Intuition told her there wasn't anything else hidden that could harm her or hers. The Varia stood at one side of the building. The robot wasn't around, but the Lightning had reappeared. He glared at Mochida from where he
was acting as a footstool for Xanxus.

"Do you have your men carry that thing everywhere?" Tsuna asked as she eyed the throne. "It's a little ostentatious, don't you think?"

Xanxus snorted even as Levi puffed up like an annoyed rooster. Before the loud and aggravating toady could open his mouth, the Wrath Sky kicked the back on his head, sending his forehead on a collision course with the floor. "Took you long enough. Are you just going to hand over the ring? You don't have a Mist."

Tsuna smirked and waved to the trident bearing figure. "May I introduce to you my Mist."

There was silence. Tsuna blinked and sighed. "You're supposed to remove your covering."

"Oh, um..." a sweet, gentle female voice came from within the mound clothing. Pushing the cloak back so that it fell to the floor in a puddle of fabric. Finally revealed, Tsuna got her first look at the person the CEDEF had found to be her Mist should they get along well enough. She wasn't exactly happy with what she saw.

First, the girl, who couldn't be any older than herself, looked far too skinny. The yakuza boss was certain she could count the girl's ribs had she not been wearing a rather familiar dark green schoolgirl uniform. Add to that the numerous faint scars on the girl's arms made Tsuna's blood boil. Those were cigarette burns. Old cigarette burns that had healed without treatment. The final thing she noticed was the eye patch. All in all, the girl looked to be as harmless as a bunny.

Made sense the girl was a Mist. There was something about her that spooked Tsuna.

"I'm Chrome," the girl mumbled out in her whisper thin voice.

"Humph," Mammon grumbled from where they were hovering next to their boss. "A Mist who needs a weapon. How pathetic. I'll show you what a true Mist is capable of, child."

"Your proof that she is your Mist?" the Cervello woman who had been watching the scene asked. Chrome dug into her shirt and pulled out a half ring on a chain. "I see. Well then, this fight will have a time limit of 15 minutes. If neither side is able to take the other ring half, this fight shall be declared a draw."

Tsuna blinked. "That's rather simple compared to the others."

"They're Mists," the Cervello said in slight exasperation. "They fuck with reality for shits and giggles. They'd turn any fight we set up into a pretzel and spit it out as pumpernickel."

Everyone stared at the Cervello woman who pushed away foam the wall and swayed as she walked to the side.

"How drunk are you?" Mochida finally asked the question everyone wanted to know.

The woman snorted. "No idea, but it's the only way to deal with the higher ranked members of the family. Your Cloud has them running scared and riding our asses."

Xanxus snorted as he visibly held back his laughter. "This is just too good. I didn't even know they got drunk."

"Oh, just start the fight. Go," the woman wave the two Mists to start and slumped against the wall again even as she pulled out a flask and took a long draw from it.
As fights went, the start to this one was slow. Both fighters stepped forward and began weaving illusions together. Tentacles (Mammon) collided with lotus vines (Chrome) and promptly turned into snakes made of fire. Chrome countered with birds made out of water and ice. Mammon merely batted the creatures away and had one of their fire snakes sneak up on the girl, only to pass harmlessly through an illusion.

"Impressive," the Mist Arcobaleno grudgingly let out as they spun about in midair to avoid being skewered before sneering. "I didn't even notice the switch, but a Mist has no need for a weapon. We are one."

At that point the fight became unable to be seen by the spectators as one of the Mists released a cloud of white vapor to hide the battlefield. Sounds, rumbles and growls and other unearthly noises wafted out from within. Every so often a tail or spike or other limb popped out of the obscuring smoke only to vanish back into the miasma.

"Where did you find the trash, brat?" Xanxus asked as the time passed and his Mist, the fucking Mist Arcobaleno, was kept at bay by a scrawny waif of a teenager. It was an impressive feat.

"Believe it or not, the CEDEF found her."

Xanxus eyed her. "And you trust her?"

"Some." Tsuna turned from the Wrath to the other two cloaked figures and frowned. There was just something too familiar. Her eyes went wide as one moved his hand in a way she had only seen one other do before. Her head snapped back to the fog. "There's no way. How?"

"Tsuna?" Takeshi mumbled from beside her.

"I have an idea where this is going."

"Good or bad?" Hayato whispered in her ear.

"Still not sure," she began to say only to be interrupted by a blood chilling laugh coming from the fog. It was male, deep and familiar. Hayato, recognizing the voice, tensed and inhaled sharply. His hand reached for his pockets where he kept his more powerful explosives. Tsuna grabbed his wrist. He stared at her. She shook her head, lips pursing into a grim line.

From his perch on his student's shoulder, Reborn grinned and pulled his fedora down to hide the expression. Chaos time.

"What are you doing?" Mammon asked curiously as the girl's entire demeanor changed. Interesting. Maybe a split personality? It wasn't unheard of for a Mist to break that way. There had been one interesting case a few years ago that had claimed to be possessed by a ghost from the 1800s.

"Kufufufu," the girl laughed. Mist Flame curled around her like a blanket, the fog becoming thicker and her form blurring. Mammon frowned and waved. Tentacles rose from the floor in all directions.

"A bit slow," a now male voice came from directly behind the Arcobaleno. Instinct alone made Mammon rise as quickly as they did and just barely avoided being skewered. Looking down, they frowned at what had been a girl. The hair remained the same, a blue coloring in a style reminiscent of a pineapple, but everything else had changed. To make matters worse, they recognized the boy.

Rokudo Mukuro.

"How?" Mammon muttered only to have to do some quick dodging as spiked vines shot upward and
tried to wrap around them. All the while the boy was laughing, his red eye where the girl had none glowing brightly with each passing second.

"How pathetic," Mukuro hummed as he adjusted his grip on the trident. Chrome, from her seat in the back of their shared mind, giggled. This was so interesting and she was learning so much just by feeling how Mukuro's Flames twisted in ways she hadn't known they could.

'Mist Flame is the most malleable of Flames, Chrome-chan,' the convict lectured as he began to weave another illusion while the Arcobaleno was busy fending off his vines. Just watch. Feel what I am doing.'

Mammon felt the urge to scream as they set another vine on fire. Snarling, they pulled up and began to gather their most potent illusions to the forefront. Beasts and monsters of nightmares, the smell of blood and death, fear and horror to make the heart stop blended into a perfect moment as the world turned red.

Then they crashed into the ground as their sense of up and down became skewed.

"Like I said, pathetic," Mukuro said as he leaned down to whisper in the infant's ear. The chain holding their half of the ring snapped beneath his fingers and the ring rolled into his palm. "You would be wise to keep your mouth shut about me, Arcobaleno. It would be a shame if something was to happen to your Sky. He'd be so easy to kill right now, not expecting me."

Mammon’s blood ran cold as they had the instinctive reaction to their Sky being threatened. What was worse was that the brat was right. For as good an assassin as Xanxus was, he was still recovering from being frozen for the past eight years. There was a reason the Sky fight was last despite it being the most important of the fights. They snarled silently, teeth bared in a vicious attempt at intimidation. It only made them look like an adorable puppy. Mukuro could hear Chrome squealing about the cuteness in their shared headspace. Still, the Arcobaleno nodded reluctantly.

"Good," the convict muttered and relaxed their hold on the body. It was so disorienting going from feeling through Chrome's skin to feeling only water as he floated in the sensory tank the Vindice had dumped him in while muttering something about healing and crazy scientists and how Skies were all crazy. He hadn't been all too certain what it was all about, but the end result was being chained up in a water tank with a gas mask keeping him from drowning. It was boring. At least they hadn’t managed to keep him from astral walking.

Back in the auditorium, the fog screen started to fade. Chrome stood over the downed Arcobaleno with the ring in her hand. Mammon glared up at her and quickly hurried over to Xanxus's side before anyone could say anything. There was a quick, quiet exchange of words and the Wrath Sky went from being enraged to confused to intrigued. He looked at the suddenly nervous girl who quickly made her way over to the waiting Tsuna.

"So, victory to her then," the Cervello said in a slurring tone as the alcohol they had downed finally made itself apparent in speech. "Great. Tomorrow is the Cloud fight. So go. Get lost. Shoo."

Everyone watched as the pink haired woman drunkenly stumbled out the door and into the night. No one said anything for a moment.

"Tsuna-hime, I think you might have gone a bit too far with the threats," Mochida muttered.

The yakuza boss snorted and crossed her arms over her chest. "No such thing. Well, come on. We need to have a bit of a talk. Follow us if you would, Chrome, Chikusa, Ken."
The two still covered figures jerked as she recognized them. One even let out a squawk of surprise. Tsuna merely grinned tightly at them and pointed out the door. Taking the direction, plus the fact that her Guardians were looming in the background just itching for a chance to beat the crap out of them again, they hurried. Chrome, still as nervous as a deer in an open field, scampered behind them. Tsuna turned and nodded to Xanxus.

"Tomorrow then?"

The Wrath Sky said nothing, just stared at her, before snorting and turning away without saying a word.

Tsuna idly contemplated taking this meeting to one of the actual meeting rooms rather than her office. It was getting quite full in there. Chikusa and Ken, both no longer wearing their identity concealing clothing, and the new girl, Chrome, sat in the chairs directly in front of her desk. Her Guardians took seats wherever they could find them save for Takeshi, who had taken his place at her left side. His blade remained a silent threat against anyone who dared to attack her. The three got the obvious message. Each eyed the blade warily.

"So, you got away from the Honored Law Keepers," Tsuna said as she leaned forward in her chair, elbows coming to rest on the top of her desk as she took the classic Gendo Ikari pose in an effort to be intimidating. It seemed to be working despite her size and general fluffiness that made her look so harmless.

"They let us go," Ken burst out as sweat began to form on his brow. The glare coming from the swordsman made his stomach turn into knots. Instinct told the animalistic boy the swordsman had gotten better since the last time they had met. The eyes staring down at him from the girl's side were predator eyes. He had to actively resist the urge to fall to the ground on his back and bare his throat in submission.

Hayato snorted from his position to the side. He would have been at Tsuna's immediate right if it hadn't been for the laptop that had been unceremoniously shoved into his hands the moment he entered the room. He was listening to the conversation but was focused more on the information Lal Mirch and her people had sent along about the investigation into Vongola Nono's disappearance, not that anyone was claiming the man had vanished. The Varia were too good for that.

"As he said, we were released to the care of the CEDEF so long as we swore to aid you," Chikusa explained coldly.

"Except for Rokudo," Tsuna stated with a slight smirk. "He has to possess the girl."

"Ah, um," Chrome muttered, her head bowed as all attention turned to her. She seemed to shrink into herself, shoulders hunching and body curling defensively. "I, um, I volunteered to help Mukuro-sama."

The yakuza boss frowned. Her eyes narrowed as she focused on the indigo haired girl. "That is not my concern at the moment. What you do with your life and your body is up to you. If you want to share a body with a person like Rokudo, then so be it."

Chrome let out a little wordless sound and shrank further back into her chair. This girl in front of her was so terrifying. There was just something, an air she gave off, that terrified the illusionist. It was only Mukuro-sama's soft whispers in the back of her mind telling her not to run that kept her in her seat at all. Her hands shook. Her mouth became dry.
Chrome, allow me to take over. Mukuro's voice whispered in their shared space. He was tired, she could tell by the tone. The fight against the baby he called an Arcobaleno had taken far too much of his already weakened strength. It is me she has issues with. I'll convince her of my...sincerity.

"Rokudo wanting to make an appearance?" Tsuna asked as she eyed the shy girl. She could feel her agitated Flames swirling about her and had the distinct feeling her eyes had turned the orange color many people said she gained when actively using her Flames. At Chrome's nod, Tsuna leaned back in her chair with her arms folded across her chest. "So be it then. I do need to have a word with him."

There was a ripple like a stone being thrown in a calm pond. What had once been an intimidated girl turned into Rokudo Mukuro, who smirked down at Tsuna. The yakuza boss merely tilted her head to look up into his mismatched eyes. Her face stayed blank. Orange tinged eyes bore into blue and red. Rokudo's form shimmered under her gaze, or so she perceived. She could sort of make out the girl's form sort of shadowed within Rokudo's. She blinked and forcibly pulled her Flames back. The perception of a body within a body vanished.

"Tsuna?" Mochida's voice came from the side. His lips were pursed together as he watched her. Fingers tapped away against his bokken. Tiny flashes of green could be seen leaping from his fingers with each strike, the whole ring on his right finger taking on an illuminating glow as each second passed.

"Extreme trick," Ryohei muttered as he casually leaned against the wall next to the door. Again Tsuna was amazed at how deceptive the boxer could be. The normally loud boy had put himself in a defensive position in case the three guests tried to run. He could be at the others throats the moment they made a threatening motion.

"Rokudo," Tsuna bit out as she glared at him.

"Vongola," he greeted back with a wide, not entirely sane grin and an inclined head. Ken and Chikusa relaxed in his presence. Tsuna resisted the urge to smirk at them. They trusted Rokudo so much. Combine that with just how they reacted during the whole Kokuyo Incident when she had managed to knock out the illusionist and Tsuna felt confident she could call Rokudo a good leader.

"Look, why did you agree to this? Hell, who even approached you about this?" Tsuna asked. Her eyes narrowed at the still smiling illusionist.

"Well, dear Vongola, who could pass up an opportunity to serve under--" he began to say.

"Rokudo, cut the innuendo. I was raised by prostitutes. You aren't going to make me blush," she interrupted.

Mukuro paused and frowned. "Raised by prostitutes?"

"Since I was 10. My mother has some mental health issues she's finally getting reliable treatment for that made it difficult for her to raise me properly." The yakuza boss refused to elaborate more. If Rokudo was going to be around as often as she thought he was, he'd pick up on what was going on with her mother soon enough. "Your man has said it was CEDEF. Just...was it Sawada Iemitsu who approached any of you?"

The bitterness, the hatred, that curled round the man's name made Mukuro nervous. That kind of hatred was achingly familiar, along the lines of his own hatred for the mafia. "The Young Lion? He spoke to Chrome, but Chikusa and Ken met with someone else at the Vendicare."
"A man named Turmeric," Chikusa muttered.

Tsun let out a long sigh. "I take it that you kept an eye on Chrome during that meeting?"

"Yes," Mukuro said as he eyed her. That was telling. "Don't trust your father?"

It was at that moment Mukuro realized he had said something very, very stupid.

A flurry of activity met those words. First the Sky's presence that had been steadily leaking into the air froze before bursting into a roiling chaos that was nearly visible. Her eyes, which had been slowly losing their orange tinge, glowed like embers, the orange completely overtaking the brown. Orange Flame burst into existence on her forehead and along her fingertips. The Flames of her Guardians flared in response to the agitation of their Sky. The swordsman standing at her left reached out and placed a glowing blue hand on her shoulder. She tensed for a second before the Rain Flame's tranquility took hold and her anger fell back into something she could corral.

"Never," she growled, "ever call that man my father. He has no right to the title."

Mukuro swallowed and leaned back as far as he could in his chair. He could hear Ken whimpering from where he had fallen to the floor. He rolled over on his back with his throat bared. Chikusa had frozen, his entire body tensing. Breath rattled in his lungs as he stared wide-eyed at the very dangerous Sky in front of him. It was much like what happened when a deer was caught in headlights.

"Noted," Mukuro managed to get out as the press of Sky Flame on him and his slowly dissipated. Coughing slightly, he tried to manipulate the conversation back in his favor. "More proof the mafia destroys everything it touches."

Tsun snorted, as did all of her Guardians save Hayato who had become completely engrossed in the information flying across his screen. "Tell me something I don't know. The mafia are insane and without any honor."

"And you will be taking over the most bloody famiglia of them all."

Tsun laughed, her head tilted back as she leaned back in her chair. Getting a hold of herself, she shook her head. "Yes, but Vongola isn't getting a mafia woman, even if that is what Reborn has been trying to turn me into. I've been yakuza for too long for his lessons to stick. I'm going to turn Vongola into a proper family, one that any yakuza boss would be proud to call their own if it wasn't for the fact that Vongola is Italian. If I have to kill a few bigoted assholes to get my point across, well, no skin off my back."

"Yakuza? How are yakuza any different than mafia?" the illusionist snorted derisively. "A bunch of money loving criminals who would do anything."

"Stop," Tsuna's tone was hard but not angry. "There are major differences between mafia and yakuza, mainly in what each particular culture believes is important to protect. For the mafia, it is wealth and power. More money equals more power and anything that can gain power should be done. Reborn, I know you're up there and I know you know I'm right. Don't interrupt."

Reborn, from his hiding place in the vents, smirked. Well now. Either he was getting predictable or her Intuition was getting sharper. Nothing she was saying was wrong, either, so he'd refrain from speaking. After being in Japan and around a well run yakuza group, he could tell the difference in priorities. The chaos that would come from her turning Vongola from a traditional mafia famiglia to something more in line with her yakuza roots was going to be spectacular. He looked forward to it.
"And yakuza?" Mukuro leaned forward as he asked.

"People and territory." Tsuna shrugged. "When I make a decision there are two things I must think of. How will this affect my people? How will this affect my territory and those within it I have sworn to protect? You can see how that is going to clash with the mafia's power grabbing culture."

"I see." The illusionist leaned back in his seat. Well this was interesting. He glanced over at his subordinates. Chikusa had relaxed, though he still looked rather pale. Ken had stopped whimpering but was laying in a boneless heap on the floor. This could be a very lucrative alliance for them all. "I believe we may be able to come to an arrangement, Vongola."

"It's Tsuna or Tsunami. Well, if you're willing to ally with me, I'll welcome the help. I do have need of a Mist." She shrugged. "Tsuna!" Hayato shouted from his seat on the couch. Everyone's eyes turned to him as he looked up at her. The wide eyes and pale skin combined with the way his Flames were curling and flaring erratically told everyone just how close to panicking he was.

"What's wrong?" she asked as she got up out of her chair. The feeling of one of hers in distress made her stomach churn.

"The Mosca," Hayato stated breathlessly. He took several deep breaths to calm himself. "That robot the Varia have with them. It's a real piece of work. I'm not exactly completely caught up on the technology, but one thing the CEDEF's information says is that it needs a Flame source."

Tsuna frowned. "A person inside it?"

"That's what the original schematics call for." Here the Storm turned the laptop around to show the others. Even Rokudo, not normally interested in this kind of thing, leaned forward to look. "The thing is, the reason more families aren't using this is because the person inside the Mosca end up dying."

Tsuna clicked her tongue. That made little sense. Xanxus, for all the bluster he made, did seem to genuinely care about his people in his own way and didn't seem like the type to throw one away as a sacrifice. Then who was in there? She thought over it for a minute before freezing.

"Shit," she muttered, catching everyone's attention. "Hayato, have Lal's people found Vongola Nono yet?"

"No they…you don't think?" he asked with slowly dawning realization. "Fuck, that makes too much sense. If he's going to use the Mosca as his Cloud, then Hibari will have to put it down hard. That thing was made for heavy combat. If they're using Nono as the power source, he won't be getting out unscathed, possibly even ending up dead. That would fall back on you, and he'd have legitimate reason to call the Allied Families down on you. He'd win even if he lost."

"Right." She frowned and looked at the people gathered in the room. "Mochida, take Rokudo and his people to Yuusuke and get them settled in one of the new housing units. Make sure there's a solo room for Chrome. I doubt she wants to share with two boys despite being willing to share her body. A girl does need privacy sometimes."

"We will be staying at Kokuyo Land," Mukuro said firmly.

Tsuna eyed him before smirking. "No, you won't. Part of the whole yakuza deal, if there is someone allied to me, I am responsible for housing and feeding them. All I ask is that you do some things for me, such as act as my Mist Guardian and maybe help with the rouge CEDEF issue. Otherwise, I don't care so long as you don't cause me any trouble. Got it?"
"I-Why?" the Mist asked, completely confused. That made no sense at all to him.

"It's a hold over from our samurai roots. I am lord of this area, those sworn to me are my people. I am responsible for their health, safety and happiness." The yakuza boss shrugged. "I'm not letting you live in that run down place when I have plenty of safer options. Now, Ryohei, go get Ikeda and get the boys on the street in. I want updates on how the hunt is going and a plan for worst case scenario for tomorrow. Takeshi, Hayato, with me. We have a shark to interrogate."

Mukuro's mouth opened and shut as he tried to think of an argument against this arrangement. The look from the Vongola told him any argument would be futile. His mouth closed with a click. A look made Chikusa and Ken nod. They'd go along with this for now. At least they wouldn't have to worry about a roof over their heads. There was another visual anomaly and Chrome replaced Mukuro.

"I'll also be feeding you three, don't worry about that," Tsuna said as she walked out the door with a smirk on her face. "Just tell Yuusuke your favorite foods and we'll try to work something out."

"How?" Ken choked out as he sat up.

Mochida laughed as he stood from his seat, his bokken resting against his shoulder. "I gave up trying to understand her a while back. Makes everything much, much easier to just go with the flow."

The holding cells, aka the basement, of the building were well lit and clean. Since they were also used as a medical center, it made sense. Very few of Tsuna's own wanted to be there. Being in medical meant you were likely getting chewed out by the Great Tiger or one of her lieutenants. The current situation was an exception. Several of her men, armed to the teeth, sat at predetermined intervals in case their guest managed to escape his cell.

Though, that would be a miracle. Superbi's leg had been broken when he had been brought in. Dino and his people, in their wisdom, hadn't healed that injury. She was thankful. It made it easier to keep him in one place and out of the way.

"Here to talk to him, boss?" Rumiko asked from where she was watching the monitors. "I couldn't get much out of him, only his name. Oh, and the fact he can curse in, like, seven or eight languages. It was kind of impressive. I don't think he repeated himself twice and was cursing at us for seven minutes. We timed it."

Tsuna and Takeshi blinked. Hayato just nodded. He knew the requirements for being considered Varia Quality. The breadth of language that needed to be known lent itself to learning so many swears. He was fluent in four but knew how to curse someone out in an additional three.

"I see," Tsuna said after a moment of silence and shook her head. "I need specific information this time. Is Dino around? I know he still considers Superbi a friend and likely won't like to watch what I have a feeling I'm going to have to do."

"He's in with Superbi with one of his people. You know, the one that follows him around constantly," the older woman said with an amused snort. "Seriously, does he have no coordination at all?"

"Without any of his people around, no. I've seen the consequences of that far too much." Tsuna sighed and smiled slightly at those memories of training with the Cavallone Don.

"Do you want us to take him somewhere else while you have your talk with Superbi?" Hayato asked. If needed, he could come up with something to talk to the blond about, even if it was just how his ass of a father was doing now that Bianchi had left home and become a named assassin. He
wouldn't like having that talk, but he'd do it if necessary for Tsuna.

"No. If he leaves, then so be it, but I want both of you in there with me," Tsuna stated as she walked toward the door. Takeshi and Hayato followed at her heels. She pressed her thumb against the print reader. The light flickered from red to green and she could hear the door lock disengage.

"Voi! What the hell?" Superbi shouted, or maybe spoke as that seemed to be his default volume, from the bed.

"Tsuna, what wrong?" Dino asked as he stood up from his seat next to the swordsman.

"Superbi, we need to have a little talk about what your idiot of a Sky is doing. Dino, feel free to leave at any time, but do not interfere." Tsuna's face turned hard at the order as she stared Dino down. Subconsciously her Flames rose and the faint hint of orange glow flickered in her eyes.

Dino felt his breath catch in his throat. He knew Tsuna was powerful, had strong and pure Sky Flames, but this feeling of pressure mingling with the peculiar feeling of not-exactly-but-sort-of needing to submit to her made his stomach squirm and his own Flames rose in response. To his surprise, the touch of her Flames against his wasn't antagonistic, merely a reminder that he was in her home. It actually reminded him of his meetings with the Giglio Nero Donna. The sort of serene feeling that this person in front of them had everything in hand and there was no need to fight back. It was just... Aria Giglio Nero could barely create that feeling. Her mother had been more adept at the technique, or so Romario swore. Tsuna's calm presence felt like it could encompass the whole building in a blanket of serenity and warmth and still not be weakened. Dino, like all Skies in the mafia, had heard legends about Skies strong enough to suborn other Skies. He wondered with no small amount of fear if Tsuna was one of them. He could see how that feeling of warmth and safety could make someone submit without thinking.

"I understand," Dino said and sat back down. He wasn't going to leave Squalo alone, not with her doing that. Squalo sent him a confused look for a moment before Tsuna turned her attention, a more pointed edge of her attention and Flame Presence, on him. The swordsman's eyes widened fractionally as he tensed and inhaled sharply.

"So, Superbi," she started with a growl, "mind telling me what in the world your Sky is thinking sticking Vongola Nono in that fucking robot?"

Squalo swallowed. So she knew about that then. He hoped Xanxus could keep the plan moving with her knowing. From the look of her swordsman-and how the hell hadn't he realized the kid was the Swallow's kid—and the Storm, they didn't have much of a plan to get around that hurdle. It was a bit too late. The Cloud fight had to be tomorrow. From Dino's ramblings, the Sun fight had been a loss for Lussuria. That had to hurt for the Muay Thai master to be beaten by a teenage boxer of all people. With Mammon being the Mist Arcobaleno, there was little doubt the Mist fight was won if the girl had managed to even find a Mist. Intelligence had said she hadn't had one. Intelligence had also said the Bovino brat was her Lightning, so Intelligence couldn't exactly be trusted completely. The town was just too hard to get spies into, which the girl had to have been the reason for. It was kind of impressive from a logistical point of view. He hoped Xanxus just had to beat the girl into submission and take the ring rather than kill her. It'd be a good idea to have allies among the yakuza, and the girl could be a way to get them.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," he barked and met her eyes unflinchingly.

She smirked and chuckled darkly. "You do know it's pretty difficult to lie to me, right?"

"Damn Vongola Intuition," he cursed under his breath. The two Guardians laughed only to quiet
when she lifted a hand. Squalo tilted his head at that action. They were rather well trained. He turned his attention back to her and her orange-brown eyes. Her Flames brushed up against his own, but not in a painful way. He jerked back. She would not steal him from his Sky. She wouldn’t.

"Look, I'm getting the feeling Xanxus is going to make this look like a betrayal plot, and with the Cervello being pains in the ass," Tsuna paused a Superbi’s facial expression shifted minutely. It only took a moment for her Intuition to catch up and link that reaction to the few clues she had gathered from just watching the creepy women. "He bribed them, didn't he?"

"What?" Dino gaped at her as he looked between his old Friend and his claimed little sister. There was no way that could be right.

Squalo kept eye contact with her. No movements. Nothing to give away that she was right. Damn it. If she knew, then everything could be lost. The Cervello had been awfully easy to convince to go along with the plot. They had taken the available information of the girl in front of him at face value and they were all going to suffer for it.

"If he did, what do you think you can do?" he sneered at her.

"Watch it," Hayato snapped. His lips pulled back into a snarl.

"Control your dog, brat," the silver haired swordsman jeered.

Slap!

His head turned to absorb the impact of the hit. It still stung. Tsuna glared at him balefully.

"You are one to call someone a dog, Superbi. How long did you wait for your master to come back to the house? Do you fetch his slippers when asked?"

"Voi! I ain't Levi, bitch," he snapped at her.

She snorted. "I'm really not seeing much difference. Both of you are fanatical lunatics with a penchant for following a twisted Sky. As for what I'm going to do about the Cervello now that I know your Sky's bribed them, I'm going to lodge a formal complaint with the Honored Law Keepers."

Dino and Superbi blinked and looked at her. Takeshi was grinning. His teeth flashing and making even Superbi nervous. That was not a nice smile, it was one he had last seen on the fish that had tried to bite his leg off. Hayato just chuckled softly. After the whole Kokuyo event and subsequent details on just how Tsuna had defeated Rokudo, he had gotten a crash course in just how the yakuza saw them and why the yakuza were more favored. He’d never really thought about how insane the mafia was compared to, say, the Triads, but he could definitely see where they were coming from. When was the last time the Triads or the yakuza had caused problems bad enough they were heard about in Italy? The Akatora had heard about the Possession Bullet's banning, not to mention half a dozen other incidents that had to be covered up quickly less the governments find out too much about how the real mafia operated.

"Who?" Dino asked as he frowned and tried to figure out just who she was talking about. He knew of no group that went by that name. Only the Vindice came close in description and no one would call them honored.

"You call them Vindice," she shrugged and fought off the urge to laugh at the looks on their faces.

"You'd seriously call the Vindice in on something like that?" Squalo squawked while Dino stared at
her in open mouthed horror.

She shrugged. "Yes. The Cervello are supposed to be neutral, right? And that neutrality is likely by law rather than custom if they are as trusted as they seem. The Honored Law Keepers need to know about such a violation. In fact, Hayato, please go and get Rumiko and get the paperwork started. I want our complaint submitted by morning."

The bomber grinned. "Of course, Tsuna-sama. It'll be done right away. Do you want to mention Rokudo in the request?"

She turned to look at him with a raised eyebrow and snorted. "If you think they do not know he's got a mental connection with that girl, then you are severely underestimating what they are capable of perceiving. It's likely my original request for an inquiry into the allegations coming from Italy have made them more lenient. Let them know Rokudo's sworn his loyalty to me for now and the Mist Arcobaleno has lost to him."

"Bullshit, there's no way Mammon lost," Superbi snapped and winced as his body jerked. His leg throbbed within the cast. He sent a baleful glare at the blond Don. He knew Dino had a Sun secondary or was more capable of splitting his Sky off into Sun Flames and should have been able to heal his leg in a few hours.

No one was really sure how Skies could have More than one type of Flame considering their Harmony Factor. It didn't really matter except that the Cavallone Don was known to be a Sun leaning Sky. Xanxus was a Storm leaning, or a Wrath Sky as they were also called. Based on what he had seen from the girl, the Varia Rain tentatively believed her to be a Cloud leaning, if she had any secondary type at all. It explained the possessiveness or that could have been the value dissonance between mafia and yakuza cultures. He didn't know enough to make a good guess. The Varia didn't really operate in the East. That was more the Triads territory.

"No, the Arcobaleno lost. It kind of surprised everyone, especially since it was Dokuro who went in and came out. We all know it was Rokudo who did the heavy lifting, though." Takeshi grinned and waved Hayato out of the room. He took a step closer to his Sky and rested his hand firmly on the grip of his blade. "I am very much looking forward to sparring with you once you heal up, Superbi Squalo. That was one of the best fights I have had in a long time."

"Wasn't Rokudo Mukuro taken in by the Vindice?" Dino managed to wheeze out. He needed to talk to Reborn. None of this was making any sense.

"Yes, after I beat him for daring to touch my people and challenge my territory," Tsuna said. "I asked for them to look into the exact charges being leveled against him and his mental state at the time. He was tortured by the Estraneo, his own kin, for quite a long time. That had to leave psychological scars."

"But how? Why would the Vindice honor a request like that? They're the Vindice. They are the law," the blond asked, his voice rising in pitch the more he spoke.

"Because I asked in the correct way, in the correct form, and they like the yakuza more than the mafia. Not that I blame them for that. You lot are insane. It's taken several months just to help Hayato be not so insane." She shrugged. "We've still got a ways to go on him, but it is working."

Takeshi laughed as the two Italians stared at them. "Yeah, He's a lot calmer now. I think living with girls is helping."

"The mafia isn't insane!" Superbi finally managed to screech. The two Japanese teens shared a look
and laughed.

"Yes, you are. I mean, who else but the insane would develop a bullet that makes possession possible, develop time travel based weaponry, and the elaborate plots and inheritance rules that seem to pop up everytime I turn around?" Tsuna smiled. "Compared to that, the other organized crime groups are quite sane, even the cartels don't cause nearly as much trouble as the mafia, and everyone hates the cartels."

"Here, here," Takeshi muttered darkly. The cartels had tried to gain a foothold in Japan via supplying drugs and weapons. It hadn't taken long for the yakuza to force them out. It had been before Takeshi and Tsuna's time, but there were those in the Akatora who had been around for it and had stories to tell that would turn stomachs of even the most hardened fighter.

"Well, thanks for confirming some of my theories," Tsuna had the gall to pat the Varia second-in-command on the cheek. "Try to rest and get better now. I don't want Xanxus complaining about our hospitality toward his injured Rain."

"Fuck you."

"That's my boyfriends' job."

With that last dig, she nodded to a still shocked Dino and sauntered out the door.

"Cavallone?"

"Yes."

"Did that really happen?"

"The whole figuring out Xanxus had this whole thing set up since the beginning, Mammon losing to a wanted criminal psychopath, or the Vindice thing?"

"Yes. Fuck…Did you notice what she was doing with her Flame?"

"Yes. I don't think she even noticed she was doing it."

There was a pause.

"I need a drink."

"You and me both."

__________________________

Everyone, save Chrome and her two hangers on who were doing something special for Tsuna, was gathered at the school, waiting outside the gates. Tsuna hovered over her phone as Yuusuke kept her updated on how the hunt for the now considered rogue CEDEF agents was going. Most of them had fled like rats from a sinking ship to places unknown. Only the most idiotic or the most loyal to the bastard had stayed and hunkered down somewhere. "Hibari's here," Mochida said as he caught sight of the prefect.

"Hibari, are you Extremely ready to fight to the Extreme!" Ryohei shouted, making everyone cringe back at the noise. She knew he could be quiet. He just rarely chose to be so. If she had known him less, she would have thought he was doing it on purpose.

"Herbivore, be quiet," the prefect snapped as he walked passed them to stand in front of Tsuna. "Omnivore."
"Hibari," she inclined her head slightly. "I have some information for you before this fight starts. Let's just... step over here. Hayato, Mochida, keep an eye out for the Varia or the Cervello. Takeshi, Ryohei, backup as necessary."

Hibari watched as the herbivores under her command performed their duties. He turned his attention back to her. She was nervous but not unsure. Her shoulders back and head up. She knew what she was doing but the potential outcome was making her nervous. How interesting. The omnivore didn't usually behave like this, so whatever she had uncovered had to be something important.

"Omnivore." He inclined his head slightly.

Tsuna sucked in a long draw of air and turned her phone so he could see the screen. "Some of Lal Mitch's—she's one of the people like your uncle, stuck in an infant body—found out what had happened to the current Vongola head. Seems the Varia abducted him. Not something we hadn't thought of, but what they did with him draws the line."

She flicked her finger across the screen and brought up a picture of the robot he would be fighting. "This is called a Gola Mosca, or just Mosca for short. They are Flame fueled machines. Inside the distended barrel is a person acting as a power supply. Guess who is in this one?"

"Cowards," the prefect growled.

"Yeah, so we need you to aim for breaking the shell here and getting Vongola Nono out as uninjured as you can." She tucked the phone away and shrugged. "We managed to capture one of his people, or I should say Dino did. After talking to him last night, I can confirm Xanxus is going to claim I should be disinherited for having one of my Guardians attack the Ninth. He's bribed the Cervello to go along with it."

"I will bite them all to death," he snapped. His fingers twitched as he resisted the urge to draw his weapons from their holsters.

She waved her hand dismissively and grinned at him. "I've got a plan on dealing with that. You might not get the chance to take your frustrations out on them if it goes through, though."

He paused and gave her a look. On one hand, the omnivore was making plans to punish those who would try to mar her honor. On the other, those same plans could make it so he wouldn't get a chance to show them the error of their ways in challenging him.

"You will owe me a fight then, omnivore," he compromised.

"Agreed." She beamed up at him and kissed his cheek. A flush formed on his cheeks and he coughed awkwardly. She giggled, the high pitched sound making his flush deeper, and patted his cheek.

"Omnivore," he grumbled even as he leaned into the touch. He could feel his Cloud Flames settling down from their agitated state. It felt like coming home as supposed to feel, not the emptiness he got every night he went back to the small apartment his family had gotten him to get him out of the clan's compound once he had realized he was a bigger carnivore than any of them save his rarely there uncle. He closed his eyes and reached up to rest a hand on hers.

"Hibari?" she whispered as the uncharacteristic softness he was radiating at the moment.

He had an urge, one he decided to listen to for once now that he was in a peaceful state. His eyes opened and he leaned forward. Lips met lips. It was a short, sweet kiss that made Tsuna gasp at the emotions she could feel through her bond with him.
"Oh, Kyoya," She murmured as he leaned back. She wanted to hug him, but was uncertain how he would react to that kind of closeness so suddenly. "We can talk about this after the fight, OK? I... you shouldn't feel like that, should never have felt like that."

"Tsuna," Takeshi called as he approached the two and stopped. "Ah, sorry to interrupt, but the Varia are here and you have to see what the Cervello put together for this fight. I think Hibari may have unnerved them a bit more than we thought."

The Cloud and Sky shared a look and followed after the amused Rain. As they rounded the corner of one of the buildings, they could only stop and stare. Sandbags topped with barbed wire made out the general area of where the fighting would take place. Tsuna could see several different caliber guns perched on the tops of nearby buildings. The weapons were either remotely activated or there were gunners she couldn't see waiting for a signal to take a shot. The ground in the middle of the arena had been dug up, the smell of freshly dug earth hung in the air. Her lips pressed into a thin line as she had a good idea why they had done that.

"Seriously, landmines?" she said incredulously as she looked over at the bevy of pink haired women gathered at one end. Instead of the Saul one or two, seven Cervello women stood there as judges. Yeah, if she hadn't known something was up, that would have been a rather large tip off.

"I think you scared them, Tsuna," Dino's voice caught her attention. He was sitting out of the way with his men at his back. The blond grinned at her. "I was not going to miss this fight for the world."

Tsuna grinned back and turned her attention to the Varia's side of the battlefield. The Mosca stood there. Now that she knew what to look for, the wrong feeling of corrupted Sky Flame stuck out like a sore thumb. The Varia's Sun was up, but on crutches. Either Ryohei hadn't injured him as bad as they all had thought or they were a better healer than first believed. Tsuna had the feeling it was the second option. The Lightning stood behind the Wrathful Sky and sneered at them, particularly Mochida. Mochida smirked and purposefully twisted the Lightning Ring around his finger. The Storm and the Mist were quietly arguing about something, or so their body language read to her.

"If the Varia have no objection to you witnessing, neither do I," Tsuna shrugged. He was likely only there because she had mentioned making a complaint to the Honorable Law Keepers. The mafia tended to avoid them if at all possible, and he had to be wanting to see if they would respond to her request.

"Let him," Xanxus called from his place on his throne. "If the trash wants to watch your Cloud die, then so be it."

Hibari growled beside her. She reached out and grabbed his shoulder. A slight shake of her head and a tight squeeze made him back down from going over and ripping out the feather wearing asshole's throat.

"Let's just get this over with, shall we? I think we all have better things to do, and seeing as how my Guardians have beaten all of yours so far, well, you don't exactly have a good chance at winning this. Your Cloud is a machine for crying out loud," Tsuna jeered. The Varia all glared at her. The more volatile members snarling and snapping. "I mean, you should just forfeit already. Haven't I proven I am a better leader than you, Xanxus di Vongola?"

Xanxus leapt from his throne in a flash. His eyes glowed dimly red in the fading sunlight. His scars seemed to lengthen and twisted over his skin. Crimson tinged orange flame curled around his fingers as his hands rested on the guns at his hip. Nostrils flared wide. A growl worked its way up his throat. His own men stepped back out of fear of the aura of violence he radiated.
Tsuna smirked. "And that just proves it more. I make a few comments and you look ready to rip me into shreds like a rabid dog. Really, is it any wonder Vongola Nono looked you over for leading the famiglia?"

Xanxus shook. His Flames raged within. Sweat dripped down his forehead as he forced himself not to strike back against her words. He didn't know what had changed since the previous evening when she had curled those honey soft Flames around him in comfort, but whatever had happened, it made the bitch as vicious as Lussuria on a bad day. Thanks to that thrice damned Intuition she knew exactly where to strike to get the best reaction out of him. He forced himself to sit, to take his hands off his weapons. Still there was the tiniest voice in the back of his mind crying out apologies for whatever he had done to turn those soft Flames hard and jagged against him. Like usual, he ignored that voice. The bitch was going to die. He'd make it so.

"Let's just get this over with," he snarled and motioned for his Mist to send the Mosca out. The robot rumbled as it stomped out to the field. Tsuna's eyes narrowed. They had to know the placement of the mines, then. She turned and nodded to Hibari. Her hand came off his shoulder.

"Be careful. Minefield," she told him simply. He grinned, teeth flashing in warning as a true predator's should, and moved like liquid grace onto the field. She could see the Cervello shivering as they watched him stalk across the battleground.

It was good that Hibari knew his territory and it knew him. Those who had worked with Clouds who had physical territory knew the almost supernatural ability they had of knowing where traps were. The mines the Cervello had put down registered in his subconscious and allowed him to weave around them with ease. The Cervello had an apoplectic fit when they saw the smooth steps deliberately going around the hidden danger.

"W-when five minutes are up, the artillery will open fire if no winner has been declared," one of the women stated as she lifted her arm. She eyed the fighter and the machine for a moment before dropping her arm.

"Oh, he won't need that long," Tsuna purred, her eyes alight with the faintest tinge of Sky Flame. This was it.

Before the machine could lift its hand to open fire, Hibari moved. He was inside the thing's range before the sensors could properly target him. Tonfa appeared as if by magic in his hands. He struck twice. The first to weaken the metal, the second to pierce it. He tugged downward, splitting the thing's belly open. A body, still alive but not in good condition, fell to the ground. Eyes aglow with purple light, he struck out. His own Flames curled through the tonfa, hardening it to a point it could pierce the much more well protected head where the processors laid. The machine sputtered for a few seconds before falling to the ground in a heap.

"You dare attack the Ninth?" Xanxus crowed, glad that his plan had worked. He sent a glance to the Cervello. The eldest stepped forward.

"As Sawada Tsunami's Cloud has attacked Timoteo di Vongola, the Ninth Head of the Vongola, we declare this matter settled and Xanxus di Vongola to be named as the true heir," she declared. Tsuna could practically hear the victorious smirk in her voice.

"Do you really think people will believe this?" Hayato asked blandly. He looked over at Dino and back. "I mean, Cavallone will have something to say about this, and people will listen."

"Oh, Mammon will be taking care of that. He'll just remember seeing your unstable Cloud attacking my poor father and killing him in his rage," Xanxus laughed and pulled out his guns. "The rings,
Tsuna smirked as her Guardians formed up around her in defensive stances. Hibari, standing out in the middle of the field, hauled the man up, grabbed the ring half, and started walking toward her. The Cervello and the Varia looked at her in confusion. She had just lost. Why was she smirking?

"Is that enough proof?" she asked, her head tilted to the side. A feeling of coldness swept through the battleground. Shivers ran down everyone's spine as a creeping feeling of being watched suddenly settled on everyone. There was a burst of power and the familiar black flame of the Vindice became visible.

"Sawada Tsunami, that is more than enough proof," the Vindice said as it walked through the portal. "The Cervello famiglia has lost the right of neutrality. We will be looking into their other activities. We thank you for bringing this to our attention."

"It is an honor to assist you in your duties," she said as bowed respectfully. As she rose, her smirk turned into a full grin. "I'll deal with the Varia myself, if you would be so inclined."

The tall, bandage bound figures looked over at the very startled, very pale assassins even as some of their number tied the Cervello up in their chains and started dragging them through the portal. "The Varia have broken no law. Making a bribe is not against the laws we keep, but taking one is. We look forward to seeing the end result of this fight."

"You…how?" Xanxus said as he gaped at the fact the Vindice had been called. He swallowed and turned a glare on her. "It doesn't matter. Give me the ring, bitch. This game is over."

"Oh, I quite agree," Tsuna's grin turned predatory. "Chrome, drop it."

The Varia's eyes all widened as they realized what that command meant. The air rippled. The indigo haired girl appeared at her boss's side along with Ken and Chikusa. They weren't the only ones. Guns, swords, and various other weapons held at the ready, the united front of the CEDEF loyal to Lal Mirch, the Akatora, and several members of the Cavallone family stood ready. Dino, with a sweet smile all his own, lifted his knife to Squalo's neck from where the still injured and now gagged Rain was sitting in a wheelchair next to him.

"You wanted a battle," Tsuna said, head tilting. "I'm more than happy to give you one."
Sky Battle and More

Chapter Notes

AN: Not beta'd. Ryohei's new thing inspired by The Skirt is Short on Purpose by Starchains over on ff.net.

The Varia had been caught flatfooted. Mammon was reluctantly impressed by the female Mist's ability to hide what seemed to be an entire army and not be noticed. They also had to redo their initial assessment of their ability. Just watching how the girl's Mist Flame spiraled up the trident in her hands told the Mist Arcobaleno that she was using the thing as an amplifier and a fine control manipulator. How interesting. From where they were hovering beside Xanxus, they could see just how outmatched the Varia were in sheer numbers. The lower ranks of the Varia, hiding just out of sight just in case they were needed, likely had more combat experience, but there was also the home field advantage that came from most of the enemy numbers being yakuza.

"Well, Xanxus?" Tsuna smirked as she pulled her gloves down over her hands, tugging the cuffs firmly down her wrists. She could hear the crackling of the Wrath Sky's Flames, could feel the all consuming rage trapped within them. They felt like oil slick against her skin and smelled like burning sugar mixed with motor oil to her nose. Something was definitely wrong with the Varia Head and, from what she understood from her lessons with Reborn and just talking to Hayato and Dino, it was likely and internalized problem for the assassin. Her Flames jerked as she suppressed her urge to mother him. He was hers. He just hadn't acknowledged it yet and her instincts wanted to soothe away the hate and fear she could feel resonating through his Flames.

"I am going to kill you, you bitch," he growled and pointed his gun at her as he felt her Flames reach out for him. His own crimson coated orange fire cringed away briefly from the warmth offered. Her Guardians scattered. Orange Flame flickered to life on her forehead, and she rocketed herself up to the sky. If he wanted her, he'd have to come to her.

Hayato ducked and rolled to the side. Tsuna had been very strict in what he was to do in the event of an all out battle happened. That is, stick close to Takeshi and take care of the Varia's Storm as quick as possible. The Bloody Prince's preference for knives and wires made it far too easy for him to control the battlefield. The bomber glanced to the side and nodded when he caught Takeshi's eye. The two stood up and turned their attention on Belphagor.

"Shishishi," the blond laughed as he drew out a handful of his knives. He allowed a very thin amount of Storm Flames, specifically controlled so they wouldn't disintegrate everything they touched, to form on the edge of the blade. He moved his thumb and the wires attached to the handles of the knives. He was going to have to much fun turning the other Storm into sticky red chunks to repay the embarrassment that was their fight. The Rain he'd leave alive but maimed so Squalo could play with him later.

A wave of blue Flame cut off his thoughts and forced him to fight off the sedative-like tranquility effect. A shinai thrust where he had been a moment before. He stepped back and cursed as he felt something collide with his heel, making him stumble. He turned only to get a face full of some sort of gas. The charge he had tripped over went off, the small explosion taking him by surprise and knocking his feet from under him. He inadvertently took a deep breath and choked. His mouth and
throat felt dry so suddenly and his lungs burned.

The slight delay was his undoing as a hand wreathed in bright blue Flame connected with his head. He only had a moment for his eyes to widen before his entire body was flushed with Rain Flame. He struggled under the feeling of wanting to go to sleep. His Flames, not bound by a Flame suppressant this time, tried to burn out the foreign power. A nick at his neck reminded him he had another opponent to worry about.

"Is it working?" Takeshi gasped as he kept a steady stream of Rain Flames pushing into the blond. He could feel them being eaten by the blond’s Storm Flame faster and faster. He wouldn't be able to keep this up for much longer. It was difficult enough to keep the enraged Storm from injuring himself in his struggles.

"Give it a second," Hayato growled as he put away the needle he had used. "He should be feeling it right about now."

Crash. The three looked over to the side. Belphagor tried to take advantage of the distraction, but whatever the other Storm had used made his vision blurry and nausea and pain to spike in his abdomen. The pain took his attention away from the Rain Flames for just long enough for them to find purchase. Xanxus climbing out of the ruins of what had been a sandbag emplacement was the last thing he saw before darkness took over.

"Let's tie him up and help the others," Hayato said as he pulled a length of rope out from under his jacket. Takeshi took the rope even as he wondered how in the world the other managed to hide such a thing without it being noticed. The Rain shrugged. It probably went the same place the bomber's explosives went.

Xanxus snarled at the bitch hovering in the sky, her hands alight with the orange Flame keeping her above him. His guns barked, two shots heading straight of her. She lazily dodged by dropping, the bullets passing over her head. His Flames curled and stretched and twisted the more his anger grew, the more his vision turned a bloody red as he let his anger fuel his Flame. Teeth ground together, and he took to the sky in his own manner, guns shooting behind him to keep him aloft. It may not have been the healthiest thing to do, but it was the only thing that currently worked. His time in the Zero Point prison had affected his Flame control far too much for the typical methods of focusing to work at the moment. Maybe if he had waited a few months to get back up to par, but the longer the old man and Sawada remained in power, the worse off the famiglia would be.

"Really, Xanxus, must you be so stubborn," her voice whispered in his ear. His eyes widened and he spun, trying to hit her. Too fast. He should have seen her move. Was he really in that bad a shape? She leaned back, grabbed the arm with one flaming hand—it didn't burn. Why didn't it burn? It should burn. Others always burned him with their Flame.- and threw him back to the ground. He bounced and skidded along the loose dirt. His hair finally fell out of the tie he usually kept it back in. The feathers scattered around his head like a demented halo.

Tsuna landed in front of him. Her feet barely made any noise as she touched down. She stared at him, her amber colored eyes looking him over and seeing things normally unseen. Yes, there was something really wrong with the Wrath Sky. All this anger and self-hatred she could see radiating foam him could not be good for his mental and emotional health. Again she wondered what the hell the Ninth was thinking. The self-destructive signs should have been obvious. How the hell had the old man missed them? Then again, she pondered as she tilted her head to watch the assassin leader stand up, the man had missed Iemitsu's issues despite, presumably, spending a lot of time around the man. The old man must be blind or arrogant or both. She shook her head. She'd fix this. The Varia leader was one of hers, a piece of the empire she was set to inherit. She would not allow him to
suffer even if that meant having to hurt him to do so. Her Flames surged with protective, comforting. His Flames drew back at the slightest touch and the offer of peace and belonging that he craved somewhere in the very depths of his soul.

"This would all be over with if you'd just give me the ring half and surrender," she said softly. "This doesn't need to continue. You're beaten, and so are your men even if they don't realize it yet."

"Fuck you," he snapped and tried to shoot her. She moved and appear end behind him. An open palm thrust sent him back several feet as he tried to keep his balance. His muscles complained, loudly. They burned so much he felt like he was on fire. Scar tissue pulled at freshly healed skin. He hadn't fully recovered from being frozen yet. He hadn't expected the bitch to be this good or strong. Fuck, this was the worst case scenario if there ever was one. Just going by what he could feel from his bonds with his Guardians, it didn't look like he could win this. He growled and shook his head. No doubts. He would win this. He had to. He was better than her. He was better than Iemitsu's fucking spawn, more worthy of the Vongola name. Anger at the girl, this nothing, taking what was rightfully his flared through his Flames.

Tsuna's eyes widened minutely and she ducked. A body of a generic Varia mooks went sailing over her head to land in a heap. She glanced at it and half turned to see Ken, Chikusa and Chrome mowing down group after group. Based on the feeling of the Mist Flames and the fact she could faintly see a red eye glowing from where there should have been a patch, she felt fairly certain that Chrome had been replaced by Mukuro but he had forgone transforming her body into his own for reasons she didn't have time to think about. A moment later the yakuza boss was forced to block another volley of shots from the enraged Wrath and took to the skies again.

Mukuro grinned. Due to the amount of people present, people he wasn't sure he could trust not to stab him in the back by running their mouths to others who may be looking for him, he had kept Chrome's form while he took over. She watched from the back of their shared space and felt every pull of her muscles as the trident slash through another of the many low ranking members of the Varia that had crawled out of the woodwork once the fighting had started in earnest. She'd eventually develop the muscle memory needed to wield the weapon, but at the moment he was supplementing them with the phantom feelings of his own. It was invigorating getting to fight these assassins of the mafia, these bloody men and women who prided themselves on their ability to kill. The only thing Tsuna had asked of him, and Ken and Chikusa, was that they not harm the Wrath's Guardians or any of her, Lal Mirch's or the Cavallone's people. Ken ran past him on all fours, Wolf Channel active, and ripped out the throat of one assassin who had raised a gun. Chikusa's needles fell like rain to the side as he downed another group that tried to flank them.

"Kufufufu, such entertainment the little Vongola provides," he said with a wild grin as he bore down on a tight knot of melee specialists. He wove an illusion of invisibility over himself and ducked around to the side. Trident sunk into unprotected flesh. The illusion burst by his command. The assassin tried to scatter but his own weaving of a new illusion, demonic vines with carnivorous mouth that ripped and tore apart flesh, ended that quickly.

"Mukuro-sama," Ken shouted as he dashed pass and slammed into an assassin that had manged to sneak up on the illusionist. Fangs and claws dug into weak points. The man's blood added to the amount the feral teen had coating his clothing. A thick, coppery tang of blood loaded his mouth as he bit down on the jugular and shook his head. His animalistic instincts purred and growled at the taste and smells surrounding him. A wonderful hunt indeed. He'd have to thank the female alpha for this some way. He rarely got the chance to just go all out for fear of harming innocents. There were no innocents among the Varia, only enemies. Her pack, who he was reluctantly starting to consider himself a part of, would come out on top. He, and the animal instincts that had been forced upon him, were sure of it.
"You are going to need a bath again, Ken," Chikusa complained as he stepped away from his comrade. The more intellectual of the duo looked around for a new target and paused as he watched the Varia's Sun being confronted by the Akatora' command trio, as he had heard them referred to as. His head snapped to the side as his peripheral vising caught movement. Yo-yo came up. Needles coated in a substance the Poison Scorpion had provided rained down on the man who had thought to try shooting him. His senses may not have been enhanced to the point Ken's were, but he did have a heightened awareness for his surroundings that made wielding his preferred weapon much easier. A few of the needles hit the ground and lodged themselves an inch deep. Chikusa's lips quirked upward at the pin cushion look the now dead man sported.

Rumiko growled. It was rare she actually had to take to the field anymore. The lower ranking members could usually handle things. Even during the Fuuma-kai incident, she hadn't had to take a combat position. She was starting to remember why she hated combat positions as she flicked her knife free of blood and viscera. Her clothes stuck to her skin due to the amount of blood soaked into them. Thankfully very little of it was hers. She had only been nicked on the arm once by a lucky strike of a dying man.

"Well, now, I wasn't expecting this," Lussuria said as they watched the woman stab another of their subordinates in the groin. A loud crash and the sound of cursing caught their attention. The kickboxer turned to watch as Xanxus hit the ground again, and the girl just hover there above him, not making another move. They shook their head and focused on the knife wielding woman. Not their type, but the woman was an enemy. Cracking their knuckles, they charged. Her head turned. She didn't have enough time to move. They grinned. This would be so-A foot landed squarely in their side, sending them back and reminding them they weren't completely healed from what the boxer had managed to do during their match.

"Thanks, Ikeda," Rumiko said as she turned toward the more dangerous opponent. She looked beyond him and grinned when she saw Yuusuke pulling a cartridge for the modified taser out of the bandolier across his chest and slotting it into the weapon in his hands. She glanced over at Ikeda, who nodded in understanding. Yuusuke smirked and nodded. All three grinned and moved as one. Rumiko reversed her grip on the her knife, ducked under the Sun's kick, and landed a punch to the solar plexus. She felt armor under her fist. So, the Varia's Sun had some measure of intelligence. She looked up through her eyelashes at him and grinned. Ikeda's fist slammed into their shoulder, knocking them off balance and falling over the kneeling woman.

"That served nothing," Lussuria grumbled as they bounced back to their feet. Rumiko kept grinning at him from where she knelt on the ground. Ikeda scoffed and scratched his nose. The Varia Sun frowned.

Thwip. Lussuria fell to the ground, shaking as the taser went off, the leads digging into their exposed skin at the back of the neck. Yuusuke finally let off the trigger and smirked down to the twitching body. Rumiko choked back a laugh and undid her belt. It'd work for makeshift rope. As she tied the Sun's hands, she looked up at her old friend.

"So, what do you think? A good job?" she quirked her head to the side and grinned like a fox up at her brother in all but blood.

Yuusuke snorted and popped a new cartridge into the taser. "I'd say get more of these for everyone to use in the field if I could actually trust everyone not to use them on each other."

"We would never," Ikeda gasped out. His hand lay flat against his chest as if startled by being accused of such. The grin on his face told a much different story.

"And you're the worst of the lot," the second-in-command shot back with a slight grin. A loud
popping sound made all three of team jump. A dust cloud rose nearby as Tsuna’s body slammed into the ground, red-orange fire coursing over her chest as her own bright orange fire fought it back.

She stood up from where she had crashed and wiped a tiny bit of blood from her lips. The Flames dissipated across her chest. Her clothes were charred, her bra showing through the burnt out holes Xanxus had managed to caused. It, too, was singed. Her grin turned smug as she said something no one was close enough to hear. Whatever it had been, Xanxus reacted violently, opening fire with a salvo that would put a sharpshooter to shame. Too bad she wasn’t standing there anymore. The two Skies clashed overhead, red-orange meeting nearly blinding orange as the two collided again.

Tsuna danced around the enraged man. She needed to get him on the ground for several seconds. She needed the stability to start the technique Reborn had foisted on her. The Zero Point Breakthrough required her to be in a level mentality that was difficult to enter when one was flitting across the sky like a hummingbird on crack. Being on the ground for just a minute would help with that while she reoriented and centered herself. Too bad Xanxus wasn’t giving her that chance. He had seemed to loose all sense of sanity when she blatantly called out the fact he wasn’t even Vongola blood. That might have been a mistake. The way his Flames felt, fueled by this rage and self-hate, made her shiver unpleasantly. For someone to have that much rage and self-loathing made her stomach turn and heart break.

"Just die! Die! Die!" Xanxus shouted wildly. Tsuna's eyes widened as she felt the man's Flames slither and shift. The Flame dancing across his fingers began to burn at his skin. She didn't have time to dally now. She refused to let him be consumed by his hatred and the self-loathing she could feel radiating from him the longer this fight went on. Her arms crossed over her chest as she angled herself to take the incoming hit. She tensed and hissed as the Flame backed shot slammed into her arms. She went rocketing toward the ground. A plume of dust kept her from sight. She felt the ground shake as her impact set off nearby land mines. She stood in the cloud and closed her eyes. Opening them, her lips twisted into a bland smile and her hands rose into position. As the dust cleared, Xanxus jerked himself away from where he had been heading straight toward her. He knew that stance. It made his blood run cold as memories of ice and fire that was not fire ran through his mind.

"No," he whispered as he tried to gain altitude from her. He would not be caught in that again. He wouldn't. The old man would have his way. He would not be bound again!

Dino watched the fighting as he and his men protected the medics. Squalo was unusually silent, had fallen silent when he had seen the stance Tsunami had taken. His pale skin turned paler and took on a sickly pallor. Fingers curled to tightly grip at the arms of his wheelchair. Two of Dino's men stood behind him. Both were armed with tranquilizers just in case the Varia Captain wanted to be stupid.

"How is he?" the Cavallone Don asked the medics working on Timoteo di Vongola.

The lead medic looked up, his hands glowing yellow as he used his Sun Flame to get the elderly Don prepared from emergency medical transport to a secure ward of the hospital. It truly amazed the Cavallone medics that the Decima's Cloud had enough clout to order an entire floor of the local hospital closed for their use without anyone asking questions. The girl sure knew how to pick them.

"Almost ready for transport. He was worked over good and is suffering from Flame Depletion," he said as he glanced over at the fighting and shivered. There was a heavy feeling of angered Sky Flames coiling in the air. They weren't Wrath or the Sun-tinged Sky Flames he associated with the blond Don. These Sky Flames burned with a touch of Cloud and were far, far too reaching. He'd had to fight the urge to submit more than once since the fighting truly started. "She's a monster."

"Hm." Dino hummed in agreement as he watched Xanxus duck out of the way of another spray of
chilling energy. Rapidly growing ice crystals formed on the ground beneath where they were fighting. The Varia Leader had taken to the ground after a rather brutal strike by Tsuna had managed to catch him in the back. He discarded the ice coated coat soon after.

"Is she…?" the medic began to ask only to fall silent at the last word.

"Possibly," Dino muttered softly as he felt his Flames fight against the pull coming from her. It would be so easy to bend, to give in and be surrounded by the protective warmth she radiated even while in combat. "Hard to believe. An Ascendant."

"Fucking hell," Squalo muttered to himself. His eyes grew wider and wider as the fighting continued. Bel was down, so was Lussuria. So many of the lower ranks had fallen to the girl's yakuza. How had they missed this? This want the victory they had wanted. How? How had they fallen for this trap? And the girl…The Varia Rain singed back as he felt the emotional backlash from his own Sky bearing down on their bond. Xanxus was fighting so hard, but even Squalo could tell who was going to win this fight. Either by ice or surrender, the girl had won. Xanxus was just too stubborn and too deep in his emotion fueled Flame Rage to give up.

The medic turned away from the fight and back to his patient. He bit his tongue to keep from saying anything, but he had the distinct feeling that Don Vongola was going to regret several things in the near future. Dino hadn't been circumspect about the fact the old Don had sealed the girl's Flame away when she had been a child. Now that it was out, free, and roaring to the world her conviction, the old Don would have to reap what he had sown.

Mochida dodged another lightning strike the crazed Varia Lightning Officer shot at him through those damnable umbrellas. He had already gotten a few minor burns on his arms that would have been much worse had he not been able to harden his skin in time. The completed Lightning Ring rested on his finger and glowed an eerie sort of green, casting everything in that emerald shade even as tiny sparks arced across his fingers and up the length of his bokken. The not-wood-but-similar weapon his boss's tutor had given him had taken a beating no wooden weapon could have. With luck and Tsunami on his side, he might not have to face the demon over the shattered concrete and deep furrows dug into the ground. Really, mimicking that attack from that anime was genius, but really hard on the environment. Twitch his fingers, he motioned for Ryohei to move in like they had planned. The Sun said he had something he had wanted to try after reading a book his sister had recommended.

"Die, die die!" Levi shouted as he tried to stab and electrocute the child who had made him look bad in front of the Boss. He swung, Lightning arcing out and crashing into the ground where the boy had been a moment before. Wood met metal and cloth with a clang. Muscles strained as the crazed Varia Lightning bore down on Mochida. Mochida smiled darkly and placed the tip of his weapon against the ground. His Lightning flared and raced down the spine of the bokken to the ground where, instead of dissipating like true electricity would, hardened the ground into shrapnel as he struck the ground. Dirt, hardened to granite strength, pelted the charging Varia officer. Levi growled and had to shut his eyes against the on slot, not that it hurt him. He was using far too much of his own Flames to harden his skin against such a trick. Still, it made for an effective distraction and makeshift smokescreen for Ryohei to get in close.

Ryohei, despite what many people thought about him due to his loudness, was a smart person. He consistently ranked in the top 10 percentile of his class, with that number raising to the top 5 in the class when it came to biology and anatomy. His time spent at Mafia Land learning under Master Colonello had been interspersed with lessons from the medics on site as well as a few assassins like Reborn who were Sun who specialized in the ways Activation could kill. Activate a heart's rhythm too much and the person died just as if they were having a heart attack. There was this one assassin
woman, the Blut as she was Named by the German organized crime families, that had taught him that. He had taken those lessons and applied them to something slightly different. Tsuna wanted to avoid killing the Varia's leadership as much as possible. The heart trick wouldn't cut it, but the same principles could be applied to this trick. With a quiet, tired grin—chasing down those CEDEF traitors had been exhausting even for him and he hadn't had the chance to recover from the loss of sleep due to nightmares of what could have been with Kyoko—he laid a bare hand against the back of the Varia Lightning's neck, unnoticed due to the hyper-focus on the one who had beaten him before. The man dropped to the ground and screamed an unholy sound as his body spasmed.

"What the hell?" Mochida muttered as he watched the Lightning Officer twitch and fall into unconsciousness. "Ryohei, what did you do?"

"Sun is Activation, right?" the boxer said with a grin that remanded Mochida far more of a wolf than the usually happy dog smile the Sun usually wore.

"Yes," the kendoist squeaked and coughed as he nudged the prone body. Who knew Ryohei could be that scary? The man was still breathing. Good. Tsunami didn't want him dead. She had plans for the Varia.

"Have you read Harry Potter?"

"Yeah. My siblings love it and talk about it often. Begged me to get the movies when they came out." Mochida paused at the rather odd question before his eyes widened and mouth dropped open in shock. He looked between the Lightning Officer's body and his boxing friend. "No way. Did you just create a real life Cruciatus Spell?"

Ryohei's grin widened, just touching on the happy dog smile while remaining the vicious predator. "It's amazing what activating a good portion of the body's pain receptors will do, isn't it?"

Mochida stared but shut his mouth closed. Teeth clicked together painfully. "Ryohei, and I mean this in the nicest way, but you are officially just beneath Tsunami and Hibari in the scares me department."

The kendoist had come to the conclusion everyone who came into contact with Sawada Tsunami was insane and secretly bad ass. He included himself in that group. Being able to cut concrete like butter was kind of an obvious bad ass thing. A loud explosion caught their attention as a small, infant sized body made a crater in the ground. Purple wreathed around the demon prefect's arms and weapons like demented hellfire.

Hibari smirked as he stared down at his prey. His head tilted to the side as he felt the air shift. A tentacle stabbed where his face had been. His lips pulled back to reveal gleaming white teeth. Mammon gasped as they tried to get in more air. This brat was trying his patience.

"You are Fon's kin, aren't you?" the Mist grumbled as they took to the sky. The twist of the boy's face was the only warning before a wave of borderline enraged Cloud Flame slammed into them. They barely manged to avoid being sent back to the ground again as they deported out of the way and began weaving a new illusion.

"The carnivore respects my claim to my territory, little carnivore," Hibari growled as he stalked toward where he could feel, if not see, the infant sized Mist. His Flames had synchronized with his territory. The Mist was in for a surprise.

"The Boss owes me so much for this," Mammon muttered and frowned as they watched the boy make a beeline for them. That shouldn't have been possible. They opened up their senses and gasped
as they felt the atmosphere. Even with all the Flames being expended by both sides—and that girl's Sky Flame made their Flames curl away in fear at what was promised within and the reminder of the last time they had felt that feeling—they could feel the Cloud Flames that had suffused the very ground. Every inch of the school carried the taint of the boy's Flame. Blood drained from the Arcobaleno's face. The boy hadn't been lying about this being territory. There were markings of a very territorial Cloud everywhere. How had they missed it? Rising higher they tried to unnerv themsevles from the security net the Cloud Flame had produced only to be rebuffed and nearly smothered by a very similar Flame.

The boy had a Mist secondary. This was bothersome.

"Cowardly little carnivore," the boy's voice hissed in their ear. Mammon didn't have the chance to turn around before they were sent hurtling to the ground again. The Mist groaned and lay there in the tiny crater.

"Owes me so much money," they muttered as they remained prone as they felt the Cloud approach. "How the hell did we miss that?"

Hibari snorted and smiled. "I have been the guardian of Namimori for nearly as long as the omnivore has been the Tiger and Flame active since before her. This is my territory, little carnivore. Do you yield?"

Mammon peered up at the boy from beneath their oho and sighed. Their limbs fell limp and their Flame, what little they were allowed to use with that damnable pacifier around their neck, curling back to them as the active illusions they had been maintaining dropped. "I know when a battle is futile, brat."

"The annoying carnivore said you were the smartest of the group." Hibari smirked and turned slightly to see what his tiger was doing. "Does your Sky not realize he's lost?"

Mammon snorted. "Xanxus will not surrender."

"Not willingly. The Tiger has her ways."

The Mist froze and looked at him with serious eyes. This could be very bad. "She is Ascendant?"

"She has a strength that shone even through the binding the old, ruthless carnivore placed on her as a cub. I look forward to seeing her revenge upon him and the squawking fool that is her sperm donor."

Tsuna dodged backward as another volley of Flame bullets impact the ground. Her lips twisted into a serene smile as she continued to twist her Flame into the pattern needed for the Zero Point Breakthrough. Like she had thought, it hadn't taken much to actually use the technique. In essence the ice produce was not true ice, though it did share some character indicts such as being cold to the touch and glass clear. Really, the ice was more like a suspension of nature, harmony removed to the point the world crystallized in order to protect itself. She felt sick that it had ever been invented, especially by a member of her family. Her ancestor had much to answer for once she met him in the afterlife. Despite the sickening wrongness that came from twisting her Flames in such a way, it was a good technique for quick, non-lethal takes downs provided she or another Sky could re-harmonize the space before frostbite set in. Those scars, now more prominent on her opponent's skin, told her a story she did not want to contemplate.

"How wronged you have been," she muttered as she forced her annoyance and downright hate toward the Ninth to the back of her mind. She'd have time to rip the old man a new one later. She still owed him for sealing her. Adding the crimes he had committed against this foundling child
was just icing on the cake. Another reason to hate the Italian mafia. Like she needed another. She was going to have to do some serious house cleaning once she became Decima or she'd go insane.

Xanxus's eyes were wide, pupils blown in both anger and terror. The cold of the Zero Point dug into his bones, despite no ice being on him. Perhaps it was memory of the last decade spent buried in his cold, unfeeling prison, but it didn't matter. The girl, this brat, Sawada's whelp, would not bind him down again. Wrath Flames roared around him as his breathing increased in pace. He needed to put her down.

Her eyes shut as his Flames roared against her. She felt him, his hate and fear. Her Flames curled and wove and soothed what they could in their dis-harmonizing state, but that only made the fear worsen. She danced to the side as he tried to physically strike her. His was becoming hysterical. This…she could not do this to him. Her hands fell from the square formation necessary to properly focus for the Zero Point technique. Her Flames curled and bent as they went back to normal. He stumbled, the sudden change catching him off guard.

He didn't expect the warmth to wrap around him before he hit the ground. "You aren't any better than Hayato, are you?" her voice whispered in his ear even as she hefted him up. His knees wobbled. Why was he so weak? He should be fighting back against her, but this being held felt too much like his mother had. There was gentle soothing feeling coming from her, a warmth he hadn't felt since he was child in the slums. "The mafia is cruel to those like you and he, isn't it?"

His eyes widened. He Flames snarled and writhed. Red tinged orange flared from his hands even as he dropped his guns and made to grab the ring at her neck. The moment his fingers grabbed at the metal, a strong shock knocked him on his ass. The ring around his neck began to glow a vibrant orange and burn his skin and clothes.

Tsuna's eyes grew large. Instinct told her to take the ring half from him before it could harm him further. She yanked on the chain, hard and took hold of what should have been hot metal. It felt merely warm to her. Ruby eyes stared at her before the effects of fighting and using so much of his Flames so soon after being released from his prison finally took its toll on his body. With his Flames submitting to the caring warmth coming from this petite girl who should have hated him with all her existence, Xanxus di Vongola collapsed unconscious. Victory was hers.
Tsuna woke to warmth and the feel of silk against her bare skin. Breath breezed across her neck. Slowly she opened her eyes and smiled softly at the cascade of silver hair beside her. Shifting slightly, she turned her head to look behind to the other warm body in the bed. Takeshi's eyes opened. Her slight movements were more than enough for a lightly sleeping assassin, as both her boys were, to wake. She turned back to Hayato when she felt him shift. Green eyes stared back at her. Neither boy looked the least bit tired, despite how they had been as exhausted as she when they crashed in one of the unused rooms in the love hotel that acted as a business front for the Akatora's main office.

"Morning, Tsuna," Takeshi said softly and wrapped an arm around her middle. With a gentle yank, he pulled her up on top of him. Hayato snorted and scooted over to join the cuddle pile. The warmth of their bodies against hers felt so good for her aching muscles. She laid her head down, it coming to rest on Takeshi's chest.

"Feeling better, Tsuna?" Hayato asked as he trailed fingers over her bare thigh.

She muttered nonsense as she went boneless. This felt like bliss. A moment later she blinked and looked beneath the sheets. "When did I get undressed last night?"

"We took care of you when you passed out in bed," Takeshi ran a hand down her arm. Goosebumps rose on her skin.

"I take it you two enjoyed that," she hummed softly, her eyes blearily opening. Hayato flushed and ducked his gaze from hers. He didn't take his hands off her, though. She smiled and reached down to run fingers through his sleep bedraggled hair.

"Ah, Tsuna," Hayato stuttered out. His fingers pressed more firmly into her thigh. A tiny moan came from her throat. That had felt good.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi leaned up slightly and looked at her in concern. She shook her head slightly. No, that had not hurt.

"Sore muscles. Felt good," she murmured out.

"I can only imagine you're sore," the swordsman stated and began massaging her arms. His boss, still reclining on his chest, let out happy, pleasured noises. "You went all out against Xanxus."

"He's down in the infirmary," Hayato spoke up, his face turned a faint scarlet. "The Cavallone's medics are keeping an eye on him. You did something. They weren't saying what last night, but they wanted to be safe rather than sorry in case he woke up in as much of a rage as he was in last night."
The three lay there, basking in each others presence. Hayato met Takeshi's eyes when Tsuna's eyes shut as she relaxed. Her fingers fell out of the silver hair. The swordsman nodded slightly, the motion small so Tsuna wouldn't notice. Hayato ducked under the sheets, his hands shifting from where they had been massaging her outer thighs. Tsuna made a noise and tried to sit up only to be held back by Takeshi.

"'Keshi?"

"Well, you did win your fight," he whispered in her ear. He used his legs to spread her own open. "Hayato and I thought you deserved to be rewarded like you did for us."

Hayato took that as his cue and moved his hands to her inner thigh. He could feel her shiver and hear her moan lightly. He swallowed thickly. Licking his lips he moved his fingers closer and closer to her folds. She whimpered. Arousal flared through him. He touched her wet core. A soft gasp and the sudden shift of her body toward him told him she enjoyed that. Takeshi murmured something Hayato couldn't understand.

"Just relax, Tsuna," Takeshi muttered softly as he continued massaging her arms and shoulders. "Let us take care of you."

Hayato smirked as his fingers brushed over the tiny bundle of nerves that made Tsuna gasp. Bringing his fingers together over the nub, he rubbed slowly. Her thigh muscles clenched and hips raised toward him in an effort to get closer to the pleasurable feelings. Using his other hand, he sought the source of the slickness that was rapidly forming between her legs. He inserted a single finger and pressed down on her clit with his thumb.

"Oh, fuck," Tsuna gasped.

Takeshi grinned and nipped at her ears. His hands moved from her arms over her bare chest. He rolled her breasts. Fingers flicked against her rapidly hardening nipples. Her chest was heaving as she writhed against him. Her head tilted back, eyes shut, and her mouth opened to let out a long, sensuous moan.

Hayato leaned forward, pulling his hands away from where they had been playing with her. She let out a disappointed noise. He inhaled to steady himself. The smell of her wet arousal hit him hard. He exhaled softly, his breath ghosting over her wet core in a hint of what he had planned, and flicked his tongue over her clit. She twitched, her thighs quivering as she forced herself not to clamp down on his head. His tongue dragged down to her opening. Inserting his tongue, he brought his hand back up to play with the clit. She tasted so good to him. Perhaps it had to do with the faint Sky Flame that had begun to seep from her. Hayato didn't care as he continued to bring pleasure to his girlfriend. The noises coming from her and the way she twisted with every movement told him he was doing a good job.

"Ah, Haya, 'Keshi," Tsuna moaned, her hands gripping at the sheets as she resisted the urge to grab Hayato's head and smash his face into her core. Takeshi chuckled as he gently twisted her nipples. That was just enough, the pleasure and slight pain mixing enough to tip her over the edge. A high pitched whine came from her throat as the climax slammed into her senses. Her legs clenched together, trapping Hayato in between her thighs. The feeling seemed to continue on forever and yet not long enough. Her body relaxed almost all at once, her legs falling away from Hayato's head. The Italian popped up from under the sheets, slick running down his chin.

"You two," Tsuna managed to get out as she recovered from the rather surprising reward. The two boys looked at each other and shared a grin. Takeshi pulled the bomber up and kissed him, taking in Tsuna's taste on the other's lips.
"Taste good," Takeshi said as he leaned back.

"We need to get up, don't we?" Tsuna groaned as she leaned back against the swordsman's chest. She could feel just how much he enjoyed watching and feeling her writhing against him.

"Unfortunately," Hayato said as he wiped the slick from his chin.

"We don't have the time for me to reciprocate, do we?" The boys glanced at the clock and winced. Tsuna sighed. "Well, we can have more fun later. I need to speak with Xanxus before seeing how the Ninth is doing. I have questions."

The boys froze at the feeling of her Flames lashing about in tightly controlled anger. They shared a look and nodded. Well, if Tsuna wanted to go against the Ninth for some reason, they'd back her. It wasn't mean they were looking forward to it.

"When will he wake up?" Tsuna asked the Cavallone medic watching over Xanxus's health. Tsuna looked down at the resting body. Her eyes closed as she focused on sensing the Flames of the Varia leader. They felt calmer, more whole than they had during the fight. She didn't know if it was because the scarred man was asleep or if whatever had happened at the end of their fight had something to do with it.

"Soon," the medic reassured her while staying far out of her reach. She eyed him, but mentally shrugged at that fact. He had been one of the ones at the battlefield. He was likely intimidated by her ruthless hand-to-hand. He wouldn't be the first to be so.

"His injuries?" she asked as she stepped closer to the sleeping man. Reaching out, she laid a hand on his bare arm. Her Flames flared slightly. She focused on the feelings of the Wrath Flames boiling beneath his skin. They were still jagged and filled with far more self-loathing than she liked, but they weren't nearly as bad as they had been the previous night. She reached out with her own Flames and calmed what she could. Her head turned as she heard the medic inhale sharply and move away.

"What?" she asked confused. Her hand lifted from Xanxus's arm.

The medic let out a squeaky sound and rapidly shook his head. "It's nothing, Decima."

"That is not a reaction for nothing," she stated blandly and crossed her arms across her chest. The medic backed away, swallowing thickly as he backed toward the door. Tsuna lifted an eyebrow. The man let out a tiny whimper as he felt the swell of Sky Flame coming from her. Neither of the two noticed the faint orange glow coming from the ring on her right hand or the Varia boss's eyes opening to stare at her back before closing again.

"Tsuna?" Dino's voice interrupted the standoff. To the medic's relief, the Cavallone Don opened the door. Taking the chance, he rushed out the door. In his hurry, he knocked his Don to the ground.

Dino hissed at the feeling of his backside hitting the hard, laminate floor.

"You ok, Dino?" Tsuna asked as she walked over to him and peered down the hall. The medic couldn't be seen.

"Yeah," he groaned as he got to his feet and rubbed his ass. "What was his problem?"

"No idea. That's what I was trying to figure out." She shrugged. "He got nervous after I touched Xanxus. Are all your people that high strung?"

"After you touched him? Did you do anything with your Flames?" Dino turned uncharacteristically
serious as he looked down at her.

She nodded slowly. "Yes. What does that have to do with it?"

It was as if she had threatened him. His Flames locked down tightly. It felt as if a wall had risen between them. Tsuna took a subconscious step back, her eyes widening.

"Dino?" she whispered in confusion.

Dino turned his eyes from her and stepped into the room. He closed the door behind him and rested his forehead on it. Tsuna reached a hand up to touch his shoulder. He jerked away and spun to face her. She flinched back from the wild eyed, nearly panicked look present on his face. He took in a deep, shaky breath and visibly forced himself to relax.

"Tsuna, we need to talk," he said and licked his lips.

"Dino, what is going on?" she asked with a small growl. None of this sudden wariness made any sense.

"Last night, during the fight with Xanxus, you harmonized with him. I felt it, everyone there felt it," Dino explained. He walked toward Xanxus's bed and stopped. "Tsuna, Skies aren't supposed to harmonize with other Skies."

She blinked in confusion. "Ok?"

"Tsuna, you don't... just don't do it."

"Why?" she asked simply. Really, she didn't get what he was so worked up about. She had offered Xanxus a safe harbor, a home. Heavens knew the scarred man needed it. Don Vongola had much to answer for in how he treated his son.

"Ascendant Skies are feared, Tsuna. If word gets out to the other families, they will be gunning for you," Dino finally exasperatedly got out. "I can keep my people's mouths shut, but you need to release Xanxus from your bond."

Tsuna frowned. "Dino, what the hell is an Ascendant Sky?"

"A Sky harmonized with another Sky," he answered as he ran a hand through his hair. "It's a death sentence."

Tsuna blinked and opened her mouth a few times before sighing. "That makes no sense. Why shouldn't two Skies harmonize? The power of two is more than one."

Dino let out a small snort of derision. "You would think. Harmony between two Skies is toxic to the weaker one. It always end with the lesser Sky trying to kill the stronger."

"Wait, why are you saying there's a lesser one? In a true harmony, no one is lesser than the other. Harmony means unity together at the same level. An *uneven* harmony creates discord." She sighed and looked over at the still form on the bed. "I know Xanxus isn't lesser than me. He just has a different background than me. Both of us together with our backgrounds can be stronger than the individual."

"It doesn't," the Cavallone Don stopped and looked at her. His own Flames still stayed far away from her own, but she could feel them loosen from how tightly he had been holding them. "It doesn't work like that, Tsuna."
A knock on the door kept her from responding.

"Tsunami?" Yamamoto Tsuyoshi's voice came from the other side. Tsuna opened the door and looked at the older man. Dino stared from behind her. She could feel the Italian's grip on his Flames weaken further, but she kept her own under tight control. If her Flames were making him uncomfortable, she'd keep them from him, no matter how uncomfortable the action made her. She enjoyed letting her finally free Flames curl around her and those around her.

"Yamamoto-san," she greeted with small bow. "Why are you here? Is something wrong with Takeshi? I saw him less than an hour ago and he was fine."

The sushi chef shook his head. "No, Takeshi's fine as far as I know. You need to come and see this. Trident Shamal and your kids got you a bit of a present."

"And that involves you, why?" she asked as she tilted her head to the side in confusion.

"They needed help dragging him in."

"Him?"

Tsuyoshi grinned as he saw the light dawning in her eyes as she realized just who had been brought in. Swiftly that light turned to annoyance and malice before her shoulders dropped in resignation.

"I'll be up in a minute. I need to finish this conversation with Don Cavallone before I can take care of that mess." She sighed and tilted her head back. A second later she looked back at the sushi chef. The man had been an assassin. Maybe he knew how to help with understanding why Dino was so upset? The whole reasoning of two Skies harmonizing meant death made no sense to her.

"Tsunami?" Tsuyoshi frowned as he noticed her sharpening gaze on him.

"Yamamoto-san, you've been involved in more than the yakuza and Triads, right?" she questioned as she stepped back into the room and motioned for him to come in.

"Tsuna," Dino started to speak but fell silent as she lifted a hand.

"I think we've hit a cultural divide," she frowned and looked at the concerned and mildly befuddled former assassin. "He's calling me an Ascendant Sky."

Tsuyoshi's eyes widened fractionally and he brought his hand to his face with a moan. It had to be that. The retired assassin rolled his eyes and snorted. "Yes, that is a cultural difference. Look, Don Cavallone, in the East, united Skies do not have the power struggle problems that plague you in the West."

"What?" Dino frowned. "Explain. You make it sound like two or more Skies can co-exist in a bond."

"That's because they can," the older man nodded sagely. "The problem with your thinking they can't is that in the West, Skies are viewed as the top tier of the group bond and there can only be one leader. With more than one Sky in a bond, as you say, it leads to fighting. In the East, we have more a culture of unity within the group that keeps infighting to a minimum."

"So it is a cultural thing," Tsuna muttered as a smile formed over her lips and she could let go of the tiny bit of anxiety that had been building since Dino began his confusing rant over the subject.

"But, Vongola Primo and Secundo…" Dino started to say only to be silence by the chef.
"Are not all Skies. To be honest, you mafia people are considered odd by those of us among the Triads and Yakuza for how you try to stay to such a strict interpretation of Flames that is based off of one Sky and his Elements."

"He was the first," Dino tried to argue.

"The first Italian, maybe, but the Triads have been using Flames for over 1,000 years and the Yakuza since their formation. Martial artists have been training up their spirits to aid in their fighting. That is Flame training as well, even if they rarely make them Usable outside the body," Tsuyoshi continued his miniature lecture. Really, if the mafia thought Giotto di Vongola was the originator of Dying Will Flames, they were very much mistaken. "Perhaps that is why we in the East do not have as many problems as you Westerners do. We are not trying to repeat everything that one man and his friends did. Hell, there's a belief that my Ancestor is the one who originally taught the Vongola Primo how to access his Flames."

"Your ancestor?" Tsuna muttered as she looked away from the gobsmacked Italian. She tilted her head to the side and frowned before realizing who he meant. "Asari Ugetsu."

"Yes," he nodded before turning to the still reeling young man. "The Yakuza and the Triads have centuries of knowledge of Flames built up in our society to the point where they are considered commonplace, even if we don't use them externally nearly as much as your Westerners do. You, on the other hand, have less than 150 years of tradition and training that keeps trying to repeat what one man and his friends did. I am kind of glad that Tsuna will be taking over the Vongola because maybe she will get the worst of your people's practices stopped. The mafia needs someone to kick them in the pants."

"Yeah, no pressure on me," she muttered under her breath before turning to her still in shock big brother figure. "Look, Dino, feel free to stay down here with Xanxus until I figure out what's going on upstairs. I have the feeling I'll be asking you to witness something later, but until then, just think over what Yamamoto-san has explained. Yamamoto-san, thank you for the history lesson. Now, I have a present to look at."

She left the room at a quick clip, her shoes making a staccato sound against the laminate flooring. Tsuyoshi smirked and shook his head ruefully. That girl needed to slow down. Oh well, he'd mention his worries to Takeshi and his boy would help distract her for a bit. He tried very, very hard not to think about what that would entail. He turned back to the two mafia men still in the room. His smirk grew wider as he looked at the body on the bed.

"If you think you fooled her into thinking you're still asleep, I'd think again. The girl is scary intuitive," the sushi chef said. Xanxus's eyes opened in a flash and he tried to sit up only to gasp in pain at the movement. Dino appeared by his side and had a glowing yellow hand on him in a second as he called up his secondary Sun Flames to heal the man's injuries. "I'll leave you two to think about what I said. Just remember, to us, the idea of two or more Skies working together isn't something malevolent. It says something about the mafia that you do."

Tsuna felt a grin forming on her lips as she stared down at the bound, gagged, and unconscious Sawada Iemitsu. Shamal, with a black eye, leaned against the wall. He was grinning just as much and as viciously as she was. Tsuna turned her attention from the prone form to the doctor-assassin. She bowed deeply to the man in thanks.

"How did you get him?" she asked as she rose back up.

The man snorted in amusement. "He tried for Nana just like you thought he would. He wasn't
expecting me to be there. Even though he had three men with him, he couldn't stand up against a few of my mosquitoes and the kids. By the way, I thought you took the bazooka away from the Bovino brat. Hayato's always complaining about him before his lessons and I know he said something about it."

"Lambo had the bazooka again?" Tsuna rubbed the bridge of her nose and sighed. "I have no clue how he keeps getting it back. I'm starting to think the thing teleports back to his hair-space after being separated from him for too long."

"That would explain a lot," the doctor said.

Tsuna paused for a moment before shaking her head. "The fact you don't think it's a strange idea bothers me greatly."

"You'd be surprised what Mist Flames can do." Shamal shrugged and stepped forward to lean over the prone form. "Your people took the other guys somewhere."

"Holding cells," she stated with a shrug. "Look, I need to get some things together for this. I am going to do this right."

Shamal looked at her and to the ring that rested on her right hand. "I take it you don't mean as a Vongola."

"No, as a yakuza." She turned to the door but stopped. "I'm serious, Trident Shamal, name your price and I'll pay it. You've done me a great favor and I owe you for what you've done for my mother."

He frowned for a brief moment before pasting a lecherous grin on his face. "Well, there's always your girls."

"Shamal," Tsuna's voice was hard and unyielding, "please stop with the lecherous act. I know you aren't that oversexed. It's a useful front, but you don't need to keep it up around me. I can tell you hate being an assassin. That's plain as day. Just... think about what you could want as a reward. If it's within my power, I'll grant it. Now, I need to find Rumiko. I think she knows where my mofuku kimono is."

"Mofuku kimono?" the doctor said. That wasn't a phrase he was familiar with. He intentionally ignored the psychoanalysis from the Vongola heiress. Damnable hyper intuition.

Tsuna turned to look at him and smiled ruefully. "Funerary kimono."

Iemitsu came to slowly, groggily. He knew he had been drugged. He tried to flare his Flames in an effort to get whatever sedative had been used out of his system. To his shock and dismay, he found he couldn't. Whoever had captured him had used a suppressant.

"I know you're awake," a familiar, young female voice said. His eyes shot open. There was his daughter. She was sitting in a traditional kneeling position, her Elements arranged behind her. Even the rather violent Cloud sat at her back, though he sat further away from the others. There were other people in the room as well. Yamamoto Tsuyoshi, the retired assassin and father of his Tuna-fish's Rain. Dino Cavallone sat in a chair next to the wheelchair bound Xanxus. The sight of the bastard head of the Varia made Iemitsu's blood boil. The boy should be dead. What did he have to do to kill the freak?

"Pull him up," Tsuna ordered and Iemitsu found himself being lifted by the armpits to sit on the floor
instead of lie on it. His hands were bound behind his back tightly. There was no give in whatever had been used to restrain him. Even his ankles had been bound by some sort of rope.

"Sawada Iemitsu," Tsuna began to speak.

"Tuna-fishy, hasn't this gone on for long enough? Let your father go and I won't punish you," he tried to reason with her. She was his daughter. She would obey.

"Oh shut up," she snapped at him. Her Guardians loomed over her shoulder. Even the timid looking Mist glared at him and clenched her fists in her lap. "You do not have the right to call me anything but Tsunami or the Great Tiger."

"Tuna—"

"It is Tsunami," Yuusuke barked from where he was standing behind the Bastard and slapped the back of his head hard. "Remember your place."

"Thank you, Yuusuke," Tsuna inclined her head to her second as Iemitsu recovered from the shock of the hit. "Now, Iemitsu, you've been found guilty of such crimes that Vongola Nono has washed his hands of you. You've brought dishonor to the Sawada family name, to the CEDEF, to everyone you have touched. I am giving you the chance to regain honor."

"Tsuna, what are you saying?" Iemitsu asked as he stared at the cold face of his daughter. He could feel the crush of her anger and hatred pressing down on him as she let more and more of her Flames seep into the air.

She inhaled slowly and exhaled. "You have been found guilty of causing Sky Infection in my mother, as confirmed by Trident Shamal."

At that pronouncement, Dino and Xanxus both reacted. They sat up straighter. Eyes, one set brown and the other red, focused on the bound man into a glare. Xanxus's hands tightened on the arms of his wheelchair. Yes, he had known what Iemitsu had done. She had told him, provided the information for his perusal before, but just the mention of someone committing such a crime made his blood boil. There was a bit of a difference in reading what the man had done on paper and hearing his crime read aloud in front of the man. Dino's jaw clenched. Well, this suddenly made sense why Tsuna did not want to discuss the issue with him. This was immensely private. It was likely if she didn't want a witness for the Vongola Alliance, he'd never have found out.

Xanxus resisted the urge to snarl. The girl had been very exact about what would happen if he made any noise. He was there to observe only. The feeling of her cold but enraged Flames pressing down on the room made his own purr. That would take some time to get used to. The feeling wasn't anything like the stories of what a subordinate Sky should be, but if what the retired assassin had said was true, that would make sense. If anyone understood culture clashes with the mafia, it was him. The Varia was, perhaps, the most culturally diverse group within the mafia. He'd lost track of how many times fights had to be broken up because of some perceived slight due to cultural differences. Why the hell the exact same hand sign could mean such wildly different things in two cultures, he didn't know, but it was a pain in the ass to deal with. His Guardians mostly kept that shit from coming to his attention. The one time it had, he'd shot both the idiots and been lectured by Lussuria about his aggressive tendencies making keeping the good mooks much more difficult than it should be. Fucking weak trash.

"That's not funny, Tsunami," Iemitsu's voice changed from congenial to cold. His eyes met his daughter's. He forced himself not to swallow nervously. That look on her face was far too much like Vongola Ottavo's legendary "I am not Amused" look.
"No, it is not," she stated firmly and leaned forward so she was only inches away from his face. He felt sweat drip down his back as the pressure of her Flames, and the controlled curiosity and malice of her Guardian's, pressed against his senses. Her brown eyes—she did have brown eyes, didn't she—had turned a brilliant orange. His hands began to shake. There was no mercy there. His mind raced as he tried to figure a way out of this.

"I think you are the lowest filth in existence. I, and mother, will not mourn you," she spat, spittle flying from her mouth to hit him in the face. She leaned back to sitting properly in seiza. "However, I am not completely without mercy. You have a choice, Sawada Iemitsu. Reclaim your honor or die a coward."

She motioned with her hand and a blade was set before him from behind. He looked at it in confusion. His brows drew together before looking up at his daughter. She watched him with eyes like a wary predator. His bound hands jerked.

Tsuna sighed and rubbed the bridge of her nose. "Use the blade to split your belly open and thus atone for your crimes against mother and myself, or I'll just have Yuusuke shoot you. I don't think you have the mentality to go through with it. I really don't care which option you choose. Either way you die and are no longer a problem."

"You need me," Iemitsu snapped as he began to panic. Was his daughter seriously asking him to commit seppuku?

She chuckled. "I need nothing from you. You're not even worth questioning. Lal Mirch and my brother are already taking care of the CEDEF and uncovering what you've tried to hide."

"Great Tiger," Yuusuke whispered softly and motioned toward the bindings, "shall I let him loose?"

"Blade or bullet, Iemitsu," she said as she nodded.

Iemitsu heard a clicking noise behind his head. A revolver, he believed based on the sound. A hand, fine boned and feminine, released his hands from the bindings. Iemitsu's mind raced. He was not getting out of this. He could feel the cold jaws of death closing on him. His suppressed Flames curled and struggled against the suppressant in his system. The edges of his vision turned gray as he focused on the blade in front of him. His teeth gnashed together. He reached out for the blade. When had everything gotten out of hand? How had he missed this? His fingers curled around the hilt of the blade. His eyes rose for a second to meet his daughter's as she sat before him clad in her funeral kimono. He moved.

His head hit the ground a moment later.

"Thank you, Takeshi," she said from where she sat. She hadn't moved even as her sperm donor had leapt for her throat. Takeshi had merely moved and the man's life was over. "Justice is served. Don Cavallone, will you be willing to speak of this to the other members of the Alliance?"

Dino swallowed. Yes, he was used to blood and bodies. Anyone involved in the mafia became inured to such things at a young age, but to see the blase way his little sister had reacted to being attacked made his skin crawl. The oppressive, hostile heat of her Sky Flame dissipated and left behind the warm feeling he was starting to associate with her. "Yes. It would be my pleasure, Vongola Decima."

"Fuck, that was ruthless," Xanxus whispered as he stared at the body of the man who had been a thorn in his side since he had been brought into the famiglia. He looked up at the girl who stayed staring straight ahead. She hadn't moved. The amount of trust she had in her people was telling. He
looked over them. Only the Rain swordsman had moved when Iemitsu had tried his final Hail Mary. Then there was that damnable feeling of warmth and home that wrapped around him and made his Flames purr. It still felt odd. He expected those soft Flames to press against him and force him to submit at any time. He didn't know whether to push the feelings from the Flames away or curl up inside the promise of warmth and safety he had lacked since Grandmother had been alive.

At least he knew she had the spine necessary for being the Head of the Family.

"My thanks, Don Cavallone," Tsuna turned to look at the two men and inclined her head. "Now, I do not mean to be rude, but Xanxus and I need to have a private talk."

"Of course," Dino said as he stood up. Only Reborn's training kept his hands from shaking. He knew there was a faint sheen of sweat on his brow. He made his way out the small room that had been set up for this...staging. Yes, that was the correct term. She had been in control of everything. Even Iemitsu's last attempt to regain control had been something she had foreseen happening. Fuck, the mafia had no idea what it was in for once Vongola Nono stepped down.

"A talk?" Xanxus growled in an attempt to be intimidating.

"Yes," she said as she rose gracefully from seiza. "A talk, but not here. My people have some trash to clean up."
Chapter Notes

AN: Last chapter until December most likely, due to Nanowrimo. If I finish my project early, I may manage to get something out before then but don't count on it. That said, this feels like a good place to stop as it wraps up the Varia Arc. The next bit o the story is my own, original arc dealing with the yakuza. Prepare for that arc to shine a light on Mochida and Ryohei. They need the love. Thank you again to my beta, SailorDyingWill, especially for her help with the Hibari scenes. Emotional!Hibari is hard to write and keep in character.

Xanxus forced himself not to fidget under the girl's gaze. His Flames rose beneath his skin, but they felt calmer, quieter, than they had in a long while. He didn't feel the need to constantly watch his back and felt he could trust the girl to protect him. It felt so odd. He wondered if that was what his own Elements felt through their bond with him.

"So, how are you feeling?" Tsuna asked with a half smile. "We both were going all out last night. My muscles are still not happy with me even after Ryohei looked me over."

The muscles in his arms tensed. His shoulders lifted defensively. Teeth ground together. Eyes narrowed into a glare.

"That wasn't boasting," she sighed and leaned back in her chair. Her hands came up to run along the edge of her kimono. "Look, Xanxus, what the hell happened to make your Flames that volatile?"

"Trash," he growled but fell silent at the look on her face. Despite the obvious differences, the girl looked so much like Nonna had. He'd seen the old woman force her son to back down with barely a glance before. Something aching and raw and hurting inside was soothed at the sight. If he held any beliefs in reincarnation, he'd swear the girl was Nonna reborn despite how similar she looked to the Primo.

Tsuna stared at him, her expression deadpan. "I felt how badly twisted your Flames were. I know enough about Flames to know that the state of the Flames mirrors the health of the soul. Xanxus, you were that close to tearing yourself apart. That doesn't occur easily, especially with the strong bonds you have with your Elements. Now, what happened?"

Xanxus's jaw clenched. His legs tensed as did his biceps. He was not talking about this with her. No. Not going to happen. He inhaled sharply and let the breath out through his teeth.

"Xanxus," she sighed and closed her eyes. "I felt how badly twisted your Flames were. I know enough about Flames to know that the state of the Flames mirrors the health of the soul. Xanxus, you were that close to tearing yourself apart. That doesn't occur easily, especially with the strong bonds you have with your Elements. Now, what happened?"

"It's none of your business," he growled.

"This tells me otherwise," Tsuna shot back near instantly. She lifted her right hand where the Vongola Sky ring rested on her ring finger. It shimmered ominously. "This ring marks me as heir. Thus all parts of Vongola will be mine once the Ninth steps down. The Varia are part of Vongola.
Thus the Varia are mine. I do not, will not, let mine suffer such debilitating issues. Now, talk Xanxus."

It struck him hard how she meant that. He could feel the truth of her words being backed by her Flames. They curled around him, twined with his own. It felt unlike anything he had ever heard of two Skies being in Harmony. It made the words of the retired assassin that much more poignant. With her claiming of him, he doubted he'd have to worry about being bound, buried or back-stabbed. It was odd, incongruent with everything he knew. It left him off kilter enough for his words to escape his mouth without thought.

"He lied to me."

Tsuna's lips turned into a sad frown. What she could feel from him with how meshed her own Flames were with his tugged at her heartstrings. Anger. Betrayal. Self-hate. All swirled through the gruff assassin. His eyes widened as she felt the outpouring of sympathy from her. There wasn't pity, which he was thankful for. He didn't think he'd be able to handle pity.

"Mafia men make shitty fathers, or at least that's my experience," she stated blandly as she leaned forward and rested her arms on the table. Xanxus snorted. "At least you managed your goal."

"And what was yours? Take over? Massimo and Frederico were both around during your coup. What would you have done to them? Killed them?" Her eyebrow raised delicately at the final question. Her eyes bored into Xanxus's. He shifted in his seat and tried to maintain the stare only to look away. Shame and self-hatred flared through him.

He couldn't answer that question. Now, with his head clear and his Flames not trying to break him apart at the seams, he knew his mental space at the time would have let him kill his brothers in his rage. While killing Massimo wouldn't have weighed on him, killing Frederico would have.

A hand placed on his arm brought him out of his thoughts. His head snapped to look at her. He blinked. When had she stood up and how had he missed it? A wave of soothing heat flowed through him starting from where she was touching his arm. It soothed his upset flames.

"Please, just tell me what Vongola Nono did," she requested. Her Flames curled protectively around him. A shiver ran down his spine and his stomach churned. It was a learned reaction. The touch of another Sky had always been something to be wary of lest they turn their Harmony factor on him. He'd get used to the calm, welcoming feeling eventually, especially if what the retired assassin had been saying was correct.

He licked his lips before answering. "I was a street kid. My mother was a prostitute and addicted to drugs. I was lucky she had enough of a mind left by the time I activated my Flames when I was 9 and defending myself from one of her customers. She saw and called someone associated with Vongola." He paused here and took several deep breaths as he tried to calm his rage. Tsuna, feeling his sudden imbalance, lent him what stability she could. To his surprise, he found himself leaning on that feeling of home and stability. He swallowed dryly before continuing.

"I was brought before the old man, and he claimed me as his."

"But you aren't his son," Tsuna whispered softly. "Dino told me. I'm not certain how he got that information, but I want that leak and any other you or Lal's people can find plugged."

"That bastard wasn't ever going to tell me that though. I found out by reading through some personal
"Understandable," she said with a nod. "You'd expected to have a chance at heading the family, especially after Enrico died. To find that there would be no chance as you weren't related to the man who claimed you as his flesh-and-blood son could cause severe shifts in mentality. Reborn's emphasized that a stable mental process is a must for any Flame user."

The two fell into silence. Xanxus felt lighter than he had in a long time. It felt…nice. Fuck, he hadn't felt like that ever. He felt safe, like he didn't need to constantly keep his guard up. Even in the Varia Headquarters, he had to keep his guard up lest some idiot try to take him out. However, with this feeling of safety and security and home running through and around him, he could relax.

"Voi, what the hell, shitty boss?" Squalo squawked as he hobbled into the room. Behind him the gaggle of the Varia Elite tried to look around him to see their Sky. Squalo froze where he was standing in the doorway. His eyes went wide at what he could feel. The two Sky Flames. The girl's Flames flaring and intertwining with Xanxus's. Hell no. He was not going to let that little bitch do that to him.

Tsuna moved, placing the table between her and the angered Guardians. Her Flames flared aggressively. Even dressed in a kimono, she fell into a usable fighting stance as the Rain charged toward the wheelchair bound Wrath Sky. Xanxus's Guardians surrounded him, each becoming angry and concerned with what they felt. Only the Sun looked between the two Skies.

"Huh? I haven't seen that in a long time," Lussuria muttered softly as they checked Xanxus for injuries.

"Lus," Squalo growled, "what the fuck? She's-"

"She's acting like a yakuza should," the Sun interrupted offhandedly.

Tsuna blinked before grinning. Her Flames fell from ready to fight to just being wary of being in the presence of so many aggressive men.

"Trash, leave her alone," Xanxus said as he grabbed the still hyped Rain's flesh arm. "Things are different in Japan than they are in Italy."

"What?!" Squalo squawked as he looked at his Sky. Xanxus did look better, not strained like a subjugated Sky should according to the stories.

"So, with the Muay Thai and the not having a knee-jerk reaction like the rest of them, I take it you're originally from Asia?" Tsuna asked Lussuria as she ignored the furious conversation going on between the Wrath Sky and his agitated, concerned Guardians.

"Born in Thailand."

"Where in Thailand?"

"Have you heard of Roanapur?"

"You have to be kidding me," Squalo's voice caught their attention.

Tsuna snorted and shook her head slightly. "Xanxus, I'll leave you to your own. If you need anything, let my people know. Just so you know, I plan on arguing with Vongola Nono to keep you in Japan. Best to keep you away from the one who caused your original issue, don't you think?"
"Brat…" Xanxus started before looking away. "I don't need protection."

"Doesn't mean I'm not providing it," she shrugged. "I hate men like him. It'll be a pleasure to rip his little worldview where I'll just bow my head and do what he wants to shreds. The man obviously has issues with giving up power."

Xanxus snorted derisively. "That's an understatement."

"I'll let you calm down your people. Want me to send Yamamoto-san to explain some history to them? It might help."

"Brat," Xanxus spoke up but became quiet as she looked at him. He swallowed and inhaled deeply. "Be careful when you talk with the old man. He's shrewd. Watch your back around him."

Tsuna's lips turned upward into a sad smile as she inclined her head toward him. "I will, Xanxus."

Tsuna smiled as she watched the perverted doctor looking over her mother. He had been worried Iemitsu's death could have had some sort of reaction on Nana. Based on the way the man was muttering to himself, something had happened. As the man did not seem worried, Tsuna decided not to be either. She sipped at her cup of tea. She had pulled out one of the higher grade teas she had been given as a gift by one of the business owners the Akatora protected. The man had been grateful when the Akatora stopped a rash of shoplifting in his shopping center. Hibari had not been happy to learn that some of the upper year students were tarnishing the name of the school.

The retribution had been glorious.

"Well?" Tsuna asked as Shamal stepped back from her mother.

"It's fading faster," he stated as he looked over at her. "I've never heard of something like this happening, but Sky Infection is a rare diagnosis."

"So, I'm better?" Nana asked with hope shining in her eyes. Yes, she felt better than she had in years. She could think so much easier, as if a fog she hadn't been aware of had been lifted.

"You'll be cleared of the effects in five months at the most," he said as he put his medical tools away. He paused a second as he stood up and looked at Tsunami. The yakuza boss lifted a brow as she sipped her tea. He breathed out, slowly, and seemed to steel himself. His shoulders squared as he turned to look at her.

"Tsunami, what do you see when you look at me?"

She hesitated for a second, the action of setting her tea down covering it. "You are a man who loves women and the female form in general. You have little to no shame. You care, far too much for an assassin. You are intelligent but rarely apply it, preferring to avoid problems and run from them when they come for you."

"I see," he sighed.

"You are a better doctor than an assassin," she finished her analysis. He froze, eyes going wide as he felt her Flames suffuse into the air and saw her eyes shifted from honey brown to a deep amber. "You desire to leave the life of an assassin behind, but you are too well known for killing. You hate that you are distrusted so much for being a Mist when you know you could help so many people if they just trusted you a bit more. Every death you were unable to prevent marks your soul and gives..."
you nightmares. You see much of yourself in Hayato and wish for him to avoid what you consider to be your fate."

"Tsunami…" Nana whispered as she listened to her daughter speak and watched Shamal's skin take on a sickly pallor.

"You seek a home though you believe yourself unworthy of one."

"Stop." Shamal gripped his medical bag tightly in one hand as he shakily looked down on the serene girl. Damn Vongola Intuition.

She fell silent and inclined her head slightly to the man before picking her tea up again. She paused before taking a sip, her eyes falling on the warm liquid within. "Should you wish, I would offer you safe haven."

"As an-;" His words stuck in his throat when her eyes shot to his.

"As whatever you wish to be. I hate seeing people suffer due to the expectations of others."

"I-I-" he stuttered out as he stared in a sort of wide eyes horrific fascination. The feeling of Sky Flame brushing up against his own riled Mist made his flinch and instinctively pull away from the feeling of warmth. He had, far too often, felt that promised warmth become bone-searing heat when he refused to bow.

"It is an open invitation, Shamal," her voice was soft, as if speaking to a skittish colt. "Just think about it."

The assassin tensed before forcing himself to relax. He nodded and quietly turned to speed out of the house. The door slammed shut behind him as he fled. The sound reverberated through the house. Tsuna was glad the kids were out with Mochida. Lambo would have tried to replicate the noise and only have led to a long series of headaches. I-Pin and Fuuta didn't deserve dealing with the insanity that boy could produce.

"Tsu-chan, wasn't that a bit much?" Nana asked as she stood up and headed for the kitchen. She'd get a head start on dinner. She felt like making something nicer than usual in light of her new diagnosis. The part of her that Iemitsu's memory still clung to wailed out, but she no longer listened to that voice. According to the doctor, she'd always be susceptible to suggestion from now on, but she'd be able to be a productive member of society again. Her head would no longer be in the clouds, and she'd be able to actually think for herself again.

Tsuna finished her tea off with a smile. Her mother was better. She could tell just by how the woman moved. There was more joy and laughter in the house now. Taking care of Iemitsu was one of the best decisions she had ever made. Her people were well taken care of. She had Takeshi and Hayato and Hibari. The latter was the newest addition to her, well, some of her people had taken to calling it "a harem". Neither Takeshi or Hayato objected to the term, so it was likely to stick.

The front door opened. Tsuna instantly sharpened, her eyes focusing on the doorway to the sitting room. Her muscles tensed as her hand reached for the gloves that had found a home in her pockets. A moment later she relaxed. She knew that Flame presence. A second later Hibari appeared in the doorway and crossed to sit in front of her.

"Hibari," she greeted.

"Omnivore," he stated as he stared at her from the opposite side of the table. Her Flames rose around them both in a comforting wave. He relaxed as the warmth curled around him and sank deep into his
bones. He relaxed for the first time in a long time. His eyes closed as he basked in the feeling of her presence. Even if he had to share her with the others, he'd never give her up.

"Have my people been good at putting things to right?" she asked. "Ah, would you like anything to drink? I can have a pot of tea ready in a few minutes."

He grunted and shook his head at the offering. "The school grounds are safe again. Your Streak do good work."

"I'm glad. What is it you need, Hibari?" she asked with a slight smile.

"When are you confronting the old carnivore?" he abruptly asked.

Her eyes slid shut as she breathed out. "His Guardians will be here tomorrow. The Akatora already have plans."

"This includes your inner Dynamic?" he questioned. His voice sounded much closer. Her eyes opened and she blinked. She hadn't heard him move. Instead of being opposite to her, he had taken a place to her right.

"My Guardians by mafia parlance? Yes, they know the plan," she said with a nod. "I was planning on tracking you down later to discuss it."

"I saw the medical herbivore run out of here," he answered her unsaid question.

Tsuna winced. "I may have pushed too hard on him."

"Hn?"

"I offered him a home on his requirements. No one had ever offered him that before." She sighed. "Just one more reason to hate the mafia. The man's been running because he hates being viewed as a life taker rather than a life saver."

Hibari chuckled, the sound dark and sending a thrill through her stomach. "You are much of a mother bear, omnivore."

"I know," she said as she leaned her head back. "It's a bit of a habit."

"A good habit," he muttered as he looked her over. "Omnivore…"

"About our conversation before your fight?" she turned to look at him and smiled wanly. "You don't need to tell me anything."

"Tsunami," he whispered after a few seconds of staring at her in confused silence. He breathed in and exhaled softly. Tsuna, feeling the indecision in his Flames, moved to put a hand on his forearm. His muscles tensed. She didn't back down from the warning as she could feel his Cloud Flames curl and calm under her touch. After several seconds, he leaned into her touch and shut his eyes.

"Kyoya?" she muttered softly against the skin of his throat. He hummed and snuggled closer.

"Tsunami,.... thank you," he muttered into her hair before pulling back. He breathed slowly. He looked to be trying to figure out something.

She reached up and brushed her hand through his hair. "I'm serious. You don't need to tell me anything. If you just need me to do this, I'll be happy to provide."
"I know how the herds see me," he began to explain. Tsuna winced at the raw feeling in his Flames. "My family could not deal with me as a child. We are mostly Storm Flames, with him being the strongest. We have a few other types, but I am the first Cloud in several generations."

"They didn't know how to handle your instincts," she whispered as she continued to run fingers through his hair. He leaned close, his body-weight against her side. "He saw what I was after I disciplined my cousin. I broke his arms after he dared touch a girl without her permission. His actions shamed the family. After that, I was given an apartment closer to the school, my territory."

"And was out of your family compound," she stated and crooned softly. "Oh, Kyoya. I understand the want to protect your own people and your territory."

"You are the first after him," he grumbled. "I have not seen my mother since I broke that herbivore's arm. My father keeps his distance despite relying on me to police the schools and keep crime levels in public low."

The two sat in silence, only the sounds of Nana puttering in the kitchen breaking it. Tsuna kept a hard grip on her Flames and her temper. It was getting easier now that the seal was completely gone, but she felt so enraged at the Hibari clan for essentially abandoning one of their own due to not being able to control him.

"You will always have a place with me; whether nearby or from afar," she finally stated. "Hn." he acknowledged before pulling out of her grip and standing. "The old carnivore?"

Tsuna blinked at the rapid topic change, but understood once she got a good feel on his Flames. He felt not unstable but similar. Maybe off balance would be a better descriptor. She'd let him get his feet beneath him again. He was not one to get emotional, and she had the mildly terrifying thought that her own Flames could inadvertently cause him to become so. Reborn had reassured her several times that Sky Flames weren't capable of that, but with what Iemitsu had done to her mother, the fear had fertile ground to grow in.

"Tomorrow at 2-ish at the park with that high wall over by Ichiyomi's bakery. My people will be keeping civilians away just in case the Ninth's Guardians are more hostile than I expect." She shrugged and stood.

"You expect trouble?"

"I expect the Ninth to be an idiot. The man failed his sons and sealed away part of my soul. He deserves whatever animosity I can draw up against him." She growled low in her throat. "Hayato's related to the Ninth's Storm Guardian, and he had few kind tales about him."

Hibari smirked at her. She looked so fierce when she was angered on behalf of her own. It was a good look on her. Listening to his instincts, he leaned forward and pressed his lips against her cheek. Her words stuttered to a stop.

"Kyoya?"

"I may not like sharing you, but I know if I want anything to do with you, sharing is a must," he stated as he leaned into her space and met her eyes. "That doesn't mean I'm sharing my time with you with them."

A silly grin crossed her lips as she felt a faint blush crawl across her face. She mentally groused
about how simple affection could make her blush while the raunchiest of jokes and actions barely made her blink. "I think we can make that work, Kyoya."

He hummed and started to leave. "I'll be present."

"Just don't attack first," she shot back. He looked over his shoulder at her. "I'd rather he be the aggressor. Mammon will be taping and distributing this little confrontation to the other Dons both as a warning of the Ninth's stupidity and a warning to not mess with me."

"Hn," he grunted an ascent and left. The front door opened and closed soon after.

"Well, he's a nice boy," Nana said. Tsuna jumped and spun around to stare at her mother. When had she come in? What had she seen? "Really, Tsu-chan, did you think you could hide another boyfriend from your mother? At least they are all getting along."

Tsuna paled slightly. "You knew?"

"Takeshi and Hayato were hardly subtle, Tsu-chan," Nana chuckled. "So long as I get at least one grandchild to spoil, I'll be happy. Lambo, I-Pin and Fuuta are nice, but I do want to be a grandmother."

"Yes, mama," Tsuna muttered as she dragged her hand down her face. Well, at least that revelation had went well. Her mind turned to what Hib-Kyoya had told her. She needed to find an appropriate gift to send to his father. Hayato would likely have a good idea how to do what she wanted.

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Tsuna kept her muscles loose. To a normal person, she probably looked relaxed. To a fighter though, she looked ready to spring at any moment. Takeshi, at her back where he belonged, stood in much the same way. Slung over his shoulder rested Shigure Kintoki. Neither of them were taking any chances when it came to Vongola's Ninth Generation. Tsuna knew who had sealed her, who had left her to wander the world only barely functioning. None of her people were happy about this meeting, hence the fact that all of her Guardians were present plus a rather large collection of her tigers resting in plain sight.

She was rather impressed how well Hibari was taking the crowding. He had barely growled at anyone when he took his position sitting on top of the wall and looking down at everyone. The boy was still in a way that reminded her of a leopard waiting to leap down on unsuspecting prey.

"Incoming," Hayato hissed under his breath as he caught sight of the approaching group. The bomber had the best eyesight of the group. Useful for someone who relied on accurately throwing things as a fighting style.

Tsuna hummed in the back of her throat. She could feel the tightening of Hayato's Flames. The Storm rose in response to a perceived threat. A moment later she could understand the aggression. One of the Ninth's Guardians looked very similar to her Hayato. Her jaw clenched as her Intuition told her the two were related closely enough that the man could have protected Hayato from the worst of the mafia. She felt her hackles rise as the man twitched as he saw the glare coming from her Storm and proceeded to look down his nose at him. The sound of Takeshi's swift inhale told her she wasn't the only one to notice that bit. Forget being nice. If the Ninth's own Guardians did not have respect enough for her own to hide their disdain, she'd forgo hiding her own toward them.

"Ah, Tsuna-chan," Nono began only to fall quickly silent as she turned a dark glare on him.

"You do not have permission to use such familiarity with me, Vongola Ninth," she stated coldly as she stepped forward to meet him. His Guardians bristled at the implied insult in her tone. She
suppressed a smirk.

Timoteo looked taken aback for a moment before regaining his footing. He was not blind. He could see the animosity aimed at him, though he did wonder its origin. "I see. My apologies."

"Boss-" Coyote began to speak only to be silenced by the Ninth raising his hand.

"She does have a point, Coyote," he said as he lowered his hand while keeping eye contact with the young woman. "We haven't seen each other in person since she was a child and only spoken over the phone one other time after that."

Takeshi snorted, making the Ninth's Guardians twitch. The boy set off all sorts of alarm bells in their heads. Everything from the way he stood to the way he eyed each of them practically yelled the boy was a hitman, a blooded one if not named.

"Considering the fact you sealed my Flames last time you saw me, I think asking you not to speak to me so familiarly is understandable," Tsuna said in the same icy tone. The Don's jaw jumped as he tried to not react to her accusation. It was true. He hadn't seen her in person since he sealed away her Flames as a child.

"Oh, this is the un-Extreme person who hurt you, Tsuna-hime-sama?" Ryohei asked, specifically using the title she'd normally insist on being used only around other yakuza.

"I didn't--" the old man began.

Tsuna was having none of his denials. "Yes."

"You little..." the Ninth's Storm began only to fall silent when he felt the glare of the Cloud sitting on the wall bear down on him. His words froze in his throat as he felt the full brunt of a full Harmony's rage being aimed directly at him. The Ninth's Guardians reacted to the silent threat. Ganauche taking up a front position to take any damage as was his role as the Lightning while the others readied themselves for an attack.

"Enough," Tsuna's voice rang out, clear as a bell through the tension. "I can fight my own battles and take my own revenge. Reign it in."

For some reason her words did not make the Ninth's Guardians relax.

"You would dare threaten the Ninth," Coyote, the most volatile of the Guardians, snapped, his eyes blazed red as his Flames rose to the surface.

Her own Storm growled under his breath and put his hands in his pockets. Tsuna knew he kept some of his more powerful but non-lethal explosives in those particular pockets. She had emphasized she did not want to kill any of the Ninth's people during this confrontation. That said, Takeshi was carrying Shigure Kintoki and the others definitely had lethal weapons at hand. Hayato, with his rapidly expanding bag of tricks, was the best bet to not kill the Ninth's Guardians. They'd probably wish they were dead if he pulled out the stuff he had worked with Shamal on, though.

"Yes, I would considering the man is either power-mad or a fool," Tsuna paused with a thoughtful look on her face. "I don't know which of those options is worse."

"Now, Tsunami, isn't that a little harsh?" Timoteo tried to play the wise grandfatherly card with both his body language and his tone. He tried to look old, non-threatening, all while his hand gripped the cane in his hands like a lifeline. He wasn't using the thing for balance and was perfectly ambulatory on his own. Tsuna eyed the stick, particularly the top which made it look more scepter-like than
cane-like. She could see a faint sheen wavering over the whole thing, a visual cue that whatever she was seeing was being covered by Mist Flames.

"No, it's not," she said and finally let her smirk show. "You're a failure of a father, allowing all three of your blood children to be killed and a failure of a Don as you allowed Iemitsu to lead you around by the nose. By the way, you need to talk to Lal Mirch. She's been marshaling the CEDEF and rooting out those who were loyal only to Iemitsu and not Vongola as a whole. Basil isn't ready to take over, yet. He'll have Lal's help for quite a while before things settle to the point he can take over."

"Tsunami..." the old Don tried to speak only to fall silent beneath her quelling stare.

"That is not even getting into the parts where you have failed your last son," she said in rebuke. "You allowed Xanxus to believe he was your blood, that he could inherit, and more so, you allowed others within your inner circle to speak harshly of a child born and raised on the streets for not conforming to high society standards."

"You brat," Coyote growled. He took a step toward the girl. A moment later, just as his foot hit the ground, he fell. Arms wrapped around his stomach as the clatter of a tonfa hitting the ground echoed in the air. Tsuna quirked an eyebrow and looked over and up at Hibari. The smirk on his face wouldn't have looked off on a cat's.

"Good aim," she said, impressed, before turning back to the far more wary Ninth Generation. "I do believe your Guardians have gotten too used to being in power. Rein them in, Vongola Nono, before my Guardians decide they and you are a threat to me."

Timoteo looked at her, honestly looked at her with eyes unclouded by obviously falsified reports from Iemitsu. This was not the meek girl he had been informed of. This was a Donna, his mother reincarnate almost. His hands tightened on his scepter. Tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth as his breath turned to ice in his lungs. This was not the meeting he had been expecting. Based on the one phone call informing him of Iemitsu's indiscretion, he had thought her a civilian in the middle of a cold rage. He honestly had not thought the girl, presumably a civilian, capable of taking her father's life so callously. Civilian? Ha! The girl was a yakuza boss. He had been aware for part of the battle between his son and her. Somehow he, and everyone else, kept underestimating her. It would be a fantastic strategy once she was put in place as Decima, but in use against him, it was quite annoying.

"I see," he hummed lightly as he forced his body into a more congenial set. True, she'd likely be able to read through it if her Intuition was as strong as he believed, but at least her Cloud might not throw another weapon.

She shook her head. "No, I don't think you do, but you do think you do."

He blinked and chuckled when he heard Ganauche try to verbally parse her words under his breath. The young Lightning-Sun was a breath of fresh air among his far older set of Guardians. Shaking his head, he met her eyes and subtly nodded. "There is not much time left for us to remain here. We are needed back in Sicily to help calm the rumors that Xanxus's little spat has born."

"The Varia remain here," she ordered. "I cannot trust you to be able to defend against them should you take them back with you. You've already proved to be unprepared for the task."

"You do not have the authority to demand that," Visconti the Cloud objected.

"Authority?" she shot back with a sardonic chuckle. "Am I not the last heir to the Vongola? Xanxus has submitted to my claim. More in point, what makes you think you have any right to speak to me
in such a manner in my own territory?"

Timoteo's eyes widened as he inhaled sharply. That was right. He glanced around and felt the blood rush from his face. He had thought Tsunami had wanted to have the meeting in public to avoid a loud argument. He had paid no attention to the civilians in the area. His stomach dropped to his feet. Those weren't civilians, his Intuition blared at him. He had walked right into a trap.

"Visconti, enough," he verbally tried to pull his Guardian back. The man started and looked back at his panicking Sky. The Cloud's eyes narrowed and he looked around the area, seeing nothing amiss.

"Finally figured it out, old man?" Tsuna tilted her head and smirked.

The old Don fidgeted. "You have made your point, Tsunami."

Her smirk dropped, allowing her true emotions to show. Annoyance and anger bubbled beneath the surface and the air quickly became suffused with annoyed Sky's Flame Presence. "Not well enough if your men are this obstinate. Know this, Timoteo di Vongola, man who sealed off part of my soul and left me to suffer for years under duress, you are not welcomed within my holdings. Leave and do not care to return, for my own may decide my annoyance with them will be worth their defiance to my orders on spilling your blood."

Inclining his head ever so slightly, the Don began to retreat. He motioned for Ganauche to help the still breathless Coyote to his feet. "I do sincerely apologize, Tsunami."

"I will believe that when my Intuition tells me it is true." She snorted and turned to speak to the wider audience. "Let them leave in peace. Should they return, then we can break out the knives."

"Yes, Tsunami-hime-sama," everyone gathered around the park shouted back. The Ninth's Guardians faces twisted as they realized exactly what their Sky had sensed with his Intuition. There was nothing like walking into what could have been an ambush to get a point across. Tsuna hoped the lesson would stick. Based on what she knew of the Ninth Generation, she doubted it.
Gathering

Chapter Notes

So, I'm back. In case anyone was wondering where I went and doesn't check my tumblr, I was let go from my job an just recently got a new one. I didn't have the will to write while I was unemployed and my new job is more difficult than my last. I'm going to try to keep my once a month update schedule. We'll see how it goes.

Xanxus watched as Tsuna clashed with her second. Open palm strikes hit exposed limbs. Hisses of pain left lips. The sound of flesh hitting flesh echoing off the walls of the small room the Akatora used for practicing hand-to-hand. He hated to admit it, but the girl impressed him. She was fair with her fighting style. He knew of several of his own men who could have taken her, but she had beaten him in a fair battle. He needed to spend more time on his hand-to-hand skills, well and thoroughly recover from being frozen. The two yakuza stopped their sparring match at some signal he didn't understand.

"Better," Yuusuke said with a nod. "It looks like you're almost back to your best."

"Just in time, too," she muttered as she grabbed a towel from a pile in the corner and wiped the sweat from her face and neck. "The Gathering is coming up."

The older yakuza hummed and took a swig from his water bottle. "Have you decided on who to take?"

"Takeshi, Ryohei, and Mochida are definite. You and Rumiko and maybe Ikeda." She shrugged and looked up at the ceiling, lost in thought. "I'm going to need to do something to keep Reborn from following us."

"What is this Gathering?" Xanxus asked from where he had been watching the two fight. He needed to talk to the girl about getting someplace set up for the Varia members who would be coming to Japan from Italy.

Tsuna turned and looked at him with a raised eyebrow before smiling. "It's when the heads of the various yakuza families meet to discuss alliances and air grievances. It's in two weeks, so I really need to get prepared now. The Ring Battles made me put it off for a bit, but there is so much that needs to be done."

"All the families, not just the ones you're allied with?" Xanxus tilted his head and frowned. That seemed so odd to him. He couldn't imagine sitting at a table with some of the hostile Dons he knew of. They'd take advantage of such a setting and try to kill their enemies.

"Yes. It's the one week of the year that a ceasefire between all the groups is declared. Violating it gets the Honorable Law Keepers called in." She grinned at his confused face. "You call them the Vindice."

The declaration made his face go rapidly pale and skin clammy. His frostbite scars stood out against the deathly pallor. Tsuna's lips twitched as she suppressed the urge to laugh.
"Now, you're here for something, Xanxus. What did you need?" She switched the conversation topic to his relief. The thought of the Vindice being the driving force behind a ceasefire made sense to his mafia brain. They were terrifying and had a history of coming down hard on those who violated the laws they upheld.

"We need somewhere for the Varia to stay."

She blinked. "Ah, is the house you're using not to your desires?" she frowned. That place was a good one, enough bedrooms for them not to have to share. Distance from neighbors who would say something about a group of gaijin men living there.

"For my Guardians and myself, it is fine, but the Varia does consist of more than us." He rolled his eyes. "Even if I do leave most of them back in Italy, which is my plan, we still need room for those who have to come to report to me in person."

Tsuna and Yuusuke frowned. That did make sense. An assassin group would be light on the paperwork, just in case someone involved in law enforcement got the bright idea to butt their nose in. Verbal reports would be a necessity. The two yakuza shared a look. Yuusuke ran through his memories of which properties were currently empty. With the Fuuma-kai holding being folded into their own from that disastrous night, they did have more options available than usual should the Varia not care about the quality of the lodgings.

"The old apartment complex?" she muttered softly.

"Maybe. That or those rooms above the sex shops in Kokuyo."

"Close enough to be feasible if not the best maintained out of the new properties." She nodded and turned to the waiting Wrath Sky. "There's a couple of options. The best one if you're going to have a lot of people coming through is in Kokuyo. It's a short drive from Namimori, but it has the most room available. There are a few places in Namimori, but they're all above sex shops and rather small."

"How the hell do you remember all of that?" Xanxus asked after a few seconds of silence.

"A good memory and the fact that property rental is one of the big money makers for us. The rest is prostitution, gambling, and high-interest loans. Even the protection racket brings in just a tiny fraction of the total money we earn. Unlike the mafia, we're smart about how we do business." She grinned, teeth flashing.

Xanxus snorted and broke into chilling laughs. "The old men have no idea what they're in for once you take over, brat."

She chuckled darkly. "It's a shame you can't come to the Gathering yourself and see just how cautious some of the other family heads are around me. I may not be known for starting fights, but I damn well will end them and claim the spoils."

"And leave it for me to work out the details of the acquisition," Yuusuke drawled and threw a water bottle at her head. It never hit as she grabbed it out of the air. Rolling her eyes, she stuck her tongue out at him.

Xanxus just stared. Even after a week of being around this slip of a girl who had beaten him so thoroughly, he still couldn't understand her. She was so bright and happy and cheerful, none of the things a mafia Don or Donna should be. Still, that positivity worked in a way he had never seen before. The Akatora functioned far better than any famiglia he had seen. The people were happy and
worked hard to please her. Everyone had a place to stay and food to eat. The prostitutes that looked to her for protection actually got said protection without having to give freebies to the girl's men, or the girl herself if the prostitute happened to be male. Not that she needed any assistance in that manner with the way her Storm and Rain looked at her. If those three hadn't fucked, he'd eat his boots. Still, it bothered him, rankled and rubbed his skin the wrong way that this whole organization seemed so much put together and thriving than Vongola was.

"Tsuna!" a female's wailing voice caught everyone's attention. Tsuna's eyes widened, and she reached out. Gripping Xanxus's shirt, she dragged him out of the doorway just in time for him to avoid being run over by a hyperactive Rumiko. The head prostitute looked at the Italian with a gimlet eye before turning a bright smile on her boss. Tsuna felt a cold sweat break out on her skin. That smile meant nothing good.

"Rumiko, what is it?" she asked hesitatingly.

The woman's smile grew more substantial, more predatory. "You still need to pick out which kimono you will be using for the Gathering. Now, come. The girls and I have them all laid out, so you get to try them on and choose."

The blood rushed from her face. Eyes going wide enough that white could be seen surrounding her irises, she took a step back only to feel Rumiko's hand latch onto her shoulders. The yakuza boss gave a forlorn look begging for help to her second. The man smiled wanly and waved at them both. She opened her mouth to curse at him, but Rumiko pulled her out of the room with a strength her lithe form betrayed.

"What the hell?" she could hear Xanxus ask as she was being dragged down the hall no matter how hard she dug her heels into the ground.

"When Rumiko and the girls want to play dress up, you stay out of the way and hope you aren't the target. Poor boss."

Yeah, poor boss, she grumbled in her mind. Finally giving up on getting out of Rumiko's grip, she started trotting along behind the demented prostitute. The few of her men she passed gave her sympathetic looks but did not try to save her from her fate. That way lied pain and suffering for the interloper, as many had learned in the past. Even Takeshi, had she run into him on this daunting charge to her doom, wouldn't have raised a hand against the head prostitute when she was in this kind of mood.

A door opened, and two women peered out. They grinned at the sight of the boss being dragged along behind Rumiko and moved out of the way. The door shut ominously as Rumiko shoved Tsuna into the room. The yakuza boss winced at the sight of silk draped over nearly every surface. Her furisode, black and heavily embroidered with brightly colored flowers and gold threads, hung on the wall. She'd be wearing that to the opening and closing days as those were the most formal. The other five days would consist on wearing homongi, of which she had quite a few to chose from. They weren't nearly as decorated as her furisode, but the variety of colors was daunting. She bit her lips and looked around warily at her girls. Rumiko's hand landed on her shoulder with a touch of finality.

"Well, boss, let's see which you look good in still, shall we?"

Tsuna whimpered.

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Tsuna leaned back on her couch in her office. Her head hurt, as it usually did after spending extended amounts of time with Rumiko and the girls discussing clothing. Yes, she knew the kimono
she wore to the Gathering was an important status symbol and reflected both her financial means and her current attitude, but trying to pick out which kimono to wear for each day was mentally and spiritually exhausting for the girl who disliked getting dressed up in the first place. There was a reason she preferred the male uniform for school other than the copious amount of perverts that roamed those halls.

Her arm reached up to cover her eyes. Rumiko, as much as she loved the older woman who had taught her so much and made her feel comfortable in her own skin, was a fucking demon when it came to fashion. Her head lifted up, and the arm moved to her forehead as she heard the sound of her door being opened. For a moment, she had the horrible feeling that Rumiko had returned to drag her back to that room of silk and colors and choosing which obi went well with which pattern.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi's voice came as he poked his head into the room. He stopped short at the sight of her face and winced.

"Hey, sword-idiot, move," Hayato said, the epithet even sounding more like a pet name with the amount of affection the bomber put into it. She could see the Italian's hair poking up from behind Takeshi's bulk. Her Rain stepped into the room and moved so the bomber could enter. Hayato froze at the sight of her exhausted body lying languidly on the couch.

"Tsuna-hime, are you alright?" he rushed out as he hurried to her side and laid a hand on her forehead. "No fever."

"I'm fine," she brushed him off and sat up. "I just had to deal with Rumiko."

"The witch?" the Italian muttered as he stepped back.

Takeshi thought for a moment and winced. "Kimono?"

"Yes," Tsuna grumbled and ran a hand down her face before looking up at him. "You need to get your suits out and cleaned by the way."

"I'm going this year?"

"You and Ryohei and Mochida as well as the usual two plus Ikeda."

Hayato looked back and forth between the two as they talked about something he had no clue about. He bit his lip and took a small step back. Doubt ate at him. Times like these, remembering that Takeshi had been here first and the longest, made the Italian self-conscious about his role both as her Guardian and her boyfriend. One arm crossed over his chest as he gripped at his upper arm. The two yakuza stopped the conversation and looked over at him almost as if one.

"Hayato?" Tsuna's concerned tone echoed in his head.

He shook his head. "It's nothing, Tsuna-hime. But, what are you two talking about? Kimono and suits? It sounds like you're preparing for a meeting or something."

"I am."

"I am." She nodded wearily. She pushed herself to sit upright with a faint groan. "The Gathering is coming up, and everyone is getting ready. The Ring Battles cut into our prep time, but we'll make it. I'm so happy we're not hosting it this year. That would be a nightmare and a half."

The bomber tilted his head to the side. "Gathering?"

"The meeting of all the yakuza family heads to talk alliances and grievances. Happens once a year and hosting is on a rotation," Takeshi explained as he draped himself over the other's shoulders.
Hayato stumbled for a second before regaining his balance. He smacked his boyfriend's arm where it hung over his chest. Takeshi snickered in his ear but stepped back half a step, just close enough that Hayato could still feel the Rain's warmth against his back.

"Oh." Hayato didn't know how to respond to that. To his mafia raised thinking, the entire concept sounded ridiculous and dangerous. It would be too easy to kill his Tsuna in such a situation, not that he doubted her prowess. His tongue flicked out and wet his lips.

"It's accorded truce time enforced by the Vindice," she reassured him with a smile. He blinked at her. She grinned impishly. "That was Xanxus's reaction, too."

Hayato nodded and stopped as he replayed what she had said earlier. His lips turned down and brow knitted together. "You're only taking your Japanese Guardians."

"No choice. Gaijin aren't welcome at the Gathering." She gave him a weak smile and stood up to enfold him in a light embrace as she noticed his shoulders slump. "I'm going to have to talk to Reborn about this as well. He can't show up and not expect it to look bad on me."

"Good luck with that," he said with a low chuckle as he felt a soft sort of relief flow through him. She wasn't taking him because of some kind of cultural rule he didn't understand. It wasn't anything he had done. Slowly he felt his shoulders, which had tensed with the negative thoughts running through his mind, relax.

"He'll obey, or I'll turn everyone on him." She pulled back and grinned. "He may be the world's Greatest Hitman, but he's a lone man. I may end up losing a lot of people before I can even scratch him, but I'd need to do something to regain face in front of the other heads if he showed up to the Gathering."

"Not a thing I'd be looking forward to," Takeshi muttered as walked around the embraced pair and flopped bonelessly into one of the more comfy chairs. "So, we got any war plans for this, hime?"

"Not this year." She paused, pulling away from Hayato and turning to look at her swordsman. "Well, unless someone decides to be stupid."

"Great," the swordsman chirped.

"Wait," Hayato drawled as an idea came to his mind. "What do you mean this year?"

"Well," Tsuna paused, placing a finger to her lips as she grinned, "there was a reason the Fuuma-kai were so violent."

"What?" The bomber's flat tone made her choke back a laugh. She looked at Takeshi and saw his eyes dancing with mirth.

"The Fuuma-kai leadership made the mistake of trying to insult Tsuna-hime at the Gathering two years ago, and she managed to turn that insult back on them with Kittie effort. They never forgave her for the loss of face," Takeshi said as his lips spread into a bright, disarming smile.

The air hung silent for a moment as the bomber parsed just what his boyfriend said. "That's familiar ground at least."

The two yakuza finally broke down into laughter. Seconds later, the Italian joined them.

Reborn lifted Leon, eying up his shot, and fired. Tsuna bent backward in a rather impressive display
of flexibility. The rubber bullet ricocheted off of a tree and into the underbrush. Tsuna used her momentum to flip back and land in a loose defensive stance. She clicked her tongue once. The hitman smiled at her. She'd dodged the last 10 shots, a vast improvement over her previous record of five.

"We done, Reborn?" she asked as she rolled her shoulders.

He frowned for a moment before nodding and lowering Leon. The chameleon, in pistol form, glowed and shifted back into his animal form. "You do seem a little eager to finish, Tsunami. Have a date with your two boys?"

"Nothing quite so nice. The Gathering is coming up, and the Akatora is almost ready." She inhaled slowly and released it in a steady stream. "I need to talk to you about that."

"Yes?" he perked up. His animal spies had told him about the busy activity in the Akatora headquarters. He hadn't managed to find much out other than there was a big meeting going on.

"Look, I know you are going to hate me saying this and may be tempted to do the opposite just to spite me, but please do not."

"Tsunami," he growled, urging her to continue.

"You need to not show up nor be present while I am at the Gathering."

His frown grew. "That is unacceptable."

"No." Her voice grew hard. Her Flames began to leak into the air. "You cannot come to the Gathering in any manner."

Reborn's eyebrow shot up. Leon began to shake where he clung to the hitman's arm. "Tsunami…"

"I will not lose face due to a foolish gaijin," she snapped, lips curling back to reveal her teeth. Her eyes flashed orange for a second.

The hitman froze before relaxing into a relaxed stance. He recognized the sight and feel of an angry Sky. "Tsunami, explain."

She breathed in and out in an attempt to reign in her Flames. She could feel them pushing against her control. Her hands curled and uncurled at her sides. Peace. Stability. She breathed out slowly from her mouth.

"You are not Japanese, Reborn. This is a cultural issue." She felt her muscle slowly begin to relax. "The Gathering is for the yakuza only. I am not even bringing Hayato due to him being Italian and, technically, not a member of the Akatora."

Reborn frowned. "What?"

"Hayato serves me as the Decima of the Vongola family. It will be understood by the other yakuza groups that he is acting in a sort of advisory way as I do not have experience with their ways. He is, in no way, shape or form, part of the Akatora." Tsuna shrugged at the still confused aura that surrounded the hitman. "It's a technical thing to do with nationalism that the old men in charge of the larger groups prefer. I could care less about bloodline and nationality. Them? Not so much and I need them to respect me enough not to attack after I hand over the reins to Yuusuke."

Reborn stay silent as he processed the information. He looked at his student, truly looked at her, and
saw how adamant she was about this. He grumbled under his breath but did nod in acquiescence to her request. "I will not be anywhere near where this Gathering is taking place, but I do want to see your security plan and the list of people you are taking with you."

"That," Tsuna grinned at him, the oppressive pressure of her Flames vanishing, "I think I can do."

He gave her a sidelong glance as she wiped her neck and face with a towel. "Something is bothering you about this."

Tsuna froze momentarily before sighing. Her shoulders slumped slightly. Her fingers tapped against the edge of the towel. After a few seconds of thinking, she turned back around to face him. "I have a bad feeling."

"That is not a good thing," the hitman muttered. He knew her Intuition overshadowed the other Vongola Skies he had met. If she had a feeling, there would be trouble… "Then why are you asking your Storm and me and, presumably, Mist to stay away?"

"I'm not asking Chrome to come. She's too new, and I just don't trust her with something this important yet. Kyoya's not coming either. He has a reputation that is partially from his father and mostly from his mother and kind of related to an assassin he killed in a rather brutal way a few years ago. Bringing him in would be the equivalent of taking anthrax to the meeting." She winced at the thought.

"And Gokudera?"

"He's Italian."

"Only half."

"Still half gaijin." She shrugged. "I'm not going to deny the conservative sect isn't racist."

"Tsunami," the hitman muttered and shook his head slightly in bemusement, "you do have a plan for if this meeting of yours goes pear-shaped, I presume."

"The Gathering is a neutral accorded space and enforced by the Honorable Law Keepers." She grinned when Reborn's eyes widened. "While I'm not completely relying on the Vindice, they do take accorded neutrality personally. The last time they had to get involved was back in 1963. There are still people around who remember it and warn everyone not to push their luck."

Reborn hummed as he looked at her before a slight smirk appeared on his lips. "I hear a but."

"But there are quite a few of the younger generation that doesn't believe them." She shrugged sheepishly. "They're the ones the Fuuma-kai had alliances with, too, so I am expecting them to do something and get smacked down hard for it."

The two fell into a reasonably amicable silence as they left the training ground. Reborn hopped up onto her head and momentarily wondered how it was still so soft and gravity-defying despite being drenched with sweat. He pulled his fedora down over his eyes. He'd do as his student asked. She did know more about the social culture surrounding the notoriously insular yakuza than he did. He didn't like it, but at this point, he knew he needed Tsunami to trust him more than she already did. The next few lessons he had planned, or she demanded it.

Tsuna fidgeted in her seat and tugged at the fabric of the furisode. The black silk slid smoothly between her fingers. It felt uncomfortable wearing something that announced to the world she was
unmarried. If she had her way—and she would—it would be the only type of highly formal kimono she'd ever wear. A sound from across the seat from her made her look up. Takeshi grinned at her. She rolled her eyes heavenward.

"It's not funny, Takeshi," she muttered. She turned to look out the limo's window at Tokyo traffic as it passed by. She hated this stupid meeting. All of the pomp and hidden meanings behind every action and word. It made her skin crawl just to think about what would be happening for the next few days. At least after the first day, she no longer had to wear the furisode, instead switching out for a more understated kimono. Personally, she'd prefer to wear a Western suit, but that would cause issues with the more traditional groups who already had enough problems with her being female.

"So, hime," Rumiko leered at her from her seat, practically draped over a dispassionate Yuusuke.

"Rumiko, I love you like a sister, but I do not have the mental processing power for your antics at the moment." Tsuna turned to give the leader of her prostitutes a stare. "Don't. Not now."

"Yes, ma'am," Rumiko said and pulled herself upright into her seat. She gave Yuusuke a sidelong look. "How bad do you think this is going to go? You weren't nearly as stressed last year."

Tsuna sighed and rubbed at the bridge of her nose. "The Fuuma-kai had a lot of interesting information about the other groups they were in alliance with."

"You think they'll try something, then?" Yuusuke asked. He, too, had seen what the Fuuma-kai had on their own allies. The information painted a worrying picture.

Tsuna hummed before turning back to look out the window. "It's a likely thing. Just remember that this is accorded neutral ground. The Honorable Law Keepers will act if that neutrality is broken."

"In other words, don't start anything," Ryohei who had been uncharacteristically quiet since they had left Namimori spoke up. His teeth ground together. The oppressive atmosphere of this whole thing weighed heavily on him. Mochida, sitting beside him, patted the boxer's shoulder. He didn't say anything. The tense atmosphere made him unable to speak.

"I know this isn't your preferred type of work, Ryohei," Tsuna said as she reached out to rest her hand on his, "but I really need you here just in case something goes bad. You're a great fighter and those tricks Lussuria has been teaching you are amazingly helpful."

His head dipped. "Thank you, Tsuna."

The limo came to a smooth stop. Tsuna looked out the window one last time and hid a wince at the sight of the hotel the Yoshi-gum had decided to use this year. She knew it was one of their holdings, but something about the decor of the place seemed wrong to her. Perhaps it had to do with the whole building being decorated in a western style, with marble floors and architectural accents that wouldn't have looked out of place in Europe, but the hotel just made her skin crawl. She nodded to her people and made a motion with her hand. They bowed as one. Takeshi took the lead, as he was the largest of all of them and adequately menacing looking to keep what few gawkers there were away. Rumiko, her light blue kimono contrasting with her own dark one, came next followed by the other boys. Tsuna took a deep breath, squared her shoulders, and slid out behind Yuusuke. Her traditional sandals make a clacking noise on the concrete as she stood upright. Her people closed ranks around her, Takeshi taking a position at her back while Ryohei remained at the front, and they walked calmly into the hotel.

Time to face the wolves.
Gathering Begins

Chapter Notes

New Chapter! It's a bit short, but this felt like the best ending spot. Please don't kill me.
Also, cookies to anyone who figures out what I'm doing before the denouement. If you
know the series you should be getting an idea of what is going on.

The door opened into the entryway. Tsuna kept her head firmly forward. Her people kept to
prearranged distances. She needed to project an aura of strength. She kept her hands demurely in
front of her at her waist and, after a moment of observation, hummed low in her throat. Rumiko’s
fingers twitched slightly, the only sign the woman of the woman’s nervousness. The men’s
shoulders tensed minutely. Ryohei’s hands curled into fists for a moment before relaxing. Takeshi
just continued smiling. Ikeda and Mochida clenched their jaws to the point Tsuna swore she heard
teeth cracking. The air felt heavy and foreboding. A shiver ran down her spine.

“Yuusuke,” she said softly and inclined her head toward the front desk where the hotel workers
stood with a faint sheen of sweat on their brows. Still, they kept their impeccable professionalism.
Yuusuke nodded and approached the desk. A few seconds of talking and room cards were pressed
into his hands. Tsuna’s lips twitched as she fought to keep the smirk from her impassive face. The
hotel workers visibly relaxed once Yuusuke turned his back to the desk.

“Ah, Sawada-san!” a loud, vivacious woman’s voice split the air. The yakuza boss turned and
jerked back at the sight of a rather familiar older woman in the most obnoxious kimono she had ever
seen. The monstrosity to good taste made her eyes burn. Neon pink should never be combined with
periwinkle blue and traffic cone orange.

“Matsushita-san,” Tsuna greeted the older woman through grit teeth, “it is good to see you again. I
take it your husband will not be joining us for the meeting?”

“No, no.” The graying woman sighed theatrically. “Poor dear came down with some horrid
sickness.”

“How awful,” Tsuna stated in deadpan. “Well, we must be going. We do need to get to the main
meeting room before the meeting begins.”

“Oh, don’t be such a bore,” the woman barked out a laugh, a twisty smile crossing her mouth. “This
year is going to be so interesting, don’t you think, dear? I mean, I’ve heard so many rumors.”

Tsuna took a deep breath and sent a cold glare to the old woman. As much as Tsuna enjoyed the
support of the Matsushita-gumi, the family’s matriarch drove her to headaches with her flamboyant
actions. “Just ask, Matsushita-san. I’ll answer what I can while we walk.”

“Perfect,” the woman purred. “You know you can call me Aiko-obasan, dear.”

“Of course, Matsushita-san.”

The old woman pushed her way through the ring of Akatora to take a position next to the diminutive
yakuza boss. Tsuna gave her a side eye look and sighed lightly. Aiko smiled, her eyes twinkling
with amusement. Tsuna looked over to Yuusuke and motioned for him to lead the way. He nodded even as he sent a dark look at the older woman and led the group down one of the many halls. The lack of signage proved no problem for her resourceful second.

“Now that the lookers are gone, how are you really doing, dear? I’ve heard some rumors that have had us concerned for your health,” Aiko asked, her entire body language changing from overbearing grandmother to a more relaxed state.

Tsun looked over at her and shook her head. “I am better than I probably should be considering everything that has happened in the past few months. Daichi-san didn’t want to sit in a meeting room for hours on end?”

“The man can sit for hours going over the books, but put him in a setting where he has to interact with people, and he suddenly becomes recalcitrant.” She chuckled. “I guess that’s why he married me.”

“Was that act necessary?” Rumiko grumbled.

“Yes. The Kagehebi have been loud ever since they got here.” Aiko lifted her fingers to her frowning lips. “They haven’t been happy about what you did to the Fuuma-kai.”

“Not surprising,” Yuusuke rumbled. “They were close allies.”

“And both fools. Everyone has heard about why you scorched the earth, but I expect you’ll have to formally announce why you did it.” The older woman shook her head. “Nothing much more to speak on that until our host brings it up, but be prepared for that Yamazaki brat to do something. He’s too smug.”

“Ah,” Ryohei spoke up, confusion written all over his face.

Takeshi laughed and threw an arm over the tall boxer’s shoulders. “Mutsushita-san—”

“It’s Aiko!”

“Mutsuhito-san is an old ally of ours. The Mutsushita-gumi hold a pretty fair sized territory pretty close to ours and hold the same ideals as Tsuna-hime.” Takeshi grinned brightly. “Their brothels are some of the ones we recommended to the Varia.”

“I thought several of our more recent foreigner clientele looked familiar. So the rumors about the Varia being in your territory are true.” Aiko hummed lightly while eying the young woman.

“Yes.”

“So, are the rumors about the Italian mafia true, too?”

“Maybe.” Tsuna smirked. “Depends on what those rumors are.”

“So the Akatora finally arrive,” a male voice boomed from further down the opulent hall. Tsuna turned her attention from Aiko to the man waiting at a large, ornate door. His suit stood out against the traditional garb of the two older gentlemen standing beside him. Tsuna resisted the urge to roll her eyes.

“I am on time, Yamazaki-san,” she shot at the suited man before giving a congenial smile and bow to the traditionally dressed men. “Fujimoto-san, Abe-san, I am happy to see you in good health.”
Sawada-san,” both of the older men greeted her with a proper bow. Yamazaki sneered and looked about to take a hostile step forward. Takeshi shot the man a dark glare, smile becoming sharp, that made the air feel like ice. Fujimoto and Abe jerked back, their eyes going wide as they felt the temperature shift.

“Please do not force my people to act on your hostility, Yamazaki.”

The youngest of the three male yakuza bosses paled and took a shaky step back before he realized what he was doing. Shaking his head, he glared at her, opened the ornate door, and slipped inside the room. The two older gentlemen and Aiko looked at her and her people in mild wonder.

“That was impressive, Yamamoto-san,” Fujimoto stated. “It reminds me in particular of your father’s abilities.”

“I’ve had more reason to dig into those lessons recently.” His smile lessened.

“I have news for the Gathering,” Tsuna interrupted serenely. She could feel Takeshi’s unease at the attention from the man he should have called uncle. “Am I the last to arrive?”

“No,” Abe shook his head and had a small grin on his face. “We are still waiting for a few more. That said, you are free to take your place at the table, Sawada-san.”

“Right.” She tried to look at her entourage as Aiko slipped by her and into the room through the still open door. “Yuusuke, with me. The rest of you go check our rooms and get everything settled there.”

“Yes, Tsuna-hime.” The group, minus her second, turned and walked off toward the elevators as soon as Yuusuke handed them the room keys. The two remaining Akatora gave each other long looks. Tsuna took a deep, fortifying breath and stepped into the lion’s den.

Tsuna sat serenely at her place at the long, dark wood table. The thing had few flips or furls, making it a supposedly intimidating sign of masculine power. She, in her silks and bright embroidery, didn’t look at all like she belonged among the serious men sitting with her. Yuusuke stood behind her, slightly to her right with his hands resting over each other at his waist. As neutral a position as it was, anyone with half a bit of sense could see the man was ready to strike should any threat come near her, not that she needed his protection. Her serene grace brought to mind the same serene grace of the tiger her group took their name from. Again, only a fool would underestimate her. That, perhaps, explained why Yamazaki sat glaring malevolently her way. The man never did have much in the way of sense.

“It seems everyone has arrived,” Asano Jun, the leader of the Hisuitaka-gumi and organizer of the current Gathering, stated as he took his seat at the head of the table. The room, which had been filled with dull conversation, fell to silence. With a nod from Asano, the large oaken doors shut with a defining click. The air felt electric, and not in the way Mochida could make the air feel when he got angry. Tsuna sucked in a long breath and forced her arms and shoulders to relax. Her hands went to her lap where they began to pick at the silk of her kimono absently.

“I call to order this Gathering of the Heads of the Honorable Organizations of the Underworld Under the Chrysanthemum Throne.” The traditional words said, business commenced.

“We’ve lost five groups since last year,” Asano made his opening remarks as he eyed the table. His gaze lingered on Tsuna’s slightly smug face before moving on. “Three fell to the action of the
police. One fell apart due to internal conflict.”

“And the Akatora destroyed the last,” Yamazaki snapped and rose slightly in his chair. Only the sharp looks from the older generation kept the man in his seat. He leaned back and bared his teeth at her in an attempt to look intimidating.

Lambo on days he hadn’t had a nap looked more intimidating. Tsuna just continued to smile serenely as a touch of sharp steel entered her smile.

“They were fools to attack those under my protection, let alone attack civilians under my protection,” she explained softly. Her lips quirked upward ever so slightly more. “They reaped the rage of the tiger for tugging her tail.”

“Interesting, but completely allowable within the laws of our own,” Asano said with a nod. The man may have issues with a woman as young as she being in charge of a proper yakuza group, but he would not deny her right of retribution by their laws. Her territory and the people within it were hers to protect as she saw fit. He frowned at the negative looks he saw on several of his fellows.

“Moving on, is there any other news of import before we get onto the declarations of heirs?”

“How about how the Akatora are being led by a gaijin bitch?” Yamazaki jeered. Several of the more negative leaning heads leaned forward in anticipation. Tsuna quirked an eyebrow upward as she stared the fool down. He fumed, his face turning a bright red as the silence stretched and she failed to react.

“Sawada-san, your response to this accusation?” Asano interjected, breaking the growing silence.

“My father, though I am loath to use the term after his crimes against his blood and broken oaths to his wife have been brought to light, has some Italian ancestry dating back to around Meiji 3 to Meiji 23,” she began to explain. Her hands came up to rest on the top of the table. She heard Yuusuke shift behind her. A folder of papers about her genealogy came to rest beside her. She pushed the folder toward Asano. The folder glided down the highly polished top of the table to come to a stop in front of the older man. The elder man picked it up and looked at the papers inside. His free hand came up to his salt-and-pepper colored hair before falling back to his side.

“Is this accurate?”

She smiled and nodded. “As far as we have been able to tell. The Hibari clan has lived in the area for a long time and kept detailed records. One of Giotto’s men even married into their family.”

“Asano-san,” Aiko spoke up with a flirtatious smile on her face, “do tell what has you so intrigued.”

“Oh, is it the fact that Giotto di Vongola, the first gaijin to really be able to access the true power of his soul or the fact the same man was believed to be a minor kami because he couldn’t banish the manifestation of his soul from his brow?” Tsuna felt a grin trying to break across her face. Her fingers twisted together in glee at the reactions from the old men who had always been more inclined to incivility toward her.

“A kami?”

“Giotto di Vongola, of that Vongola?”

“What in the world?”

“Only you, Sawada-san.”
The whispers rose. Tsuna smiled kindly at her closest allies: Aiko; the head of the Kagekaminari-kai, Ikuta Souta; and the leader of the Midoriakuma-gumi, Sakurai Haruma. Sakurai chuckled darkly from where he watched the chaos. Even in Japan, they knew the name Vongola simply because of how powerful they were around the world through their front and cover companies.

“So, then, Sawada-san, are the rumors about your inheriting a foreign group true?” Aiko chirped as she clapped her hands together gleefully. The elder woman cast a shrewd eye toward the weaker members of the Gathering. The few who realized what the news meant had gone pale.

“As of a week and some days ago, I am the only legitimate heir to the Vongola famiglia,” she announced as she drew herself up, shoulders rolling back in a show of confidence. “And I take this time before the Gathering to announce my successor, Yamada Yuusuke.”

The Gathering’s opening meeting got underway soon after her announcement, not that many cared to focus on that. Yamazaki spent the entire rest of the meeting glaring at her even as he turned a rather fetching, in her opinion, shade of puce. The meeting had broken up 10 minutes previous, but neither Tsuna nor Yuusuke wanted to stay behind to socialize as most of the other heads did. Something, her Intuition, pushed Tsuna to get back to her people in their rooms as soon as possible. A gaping hole had metaphorically opened in her stomach right after the meeting moved on from her nomination of her heir. She kept her body language as neutral as she could, but she moved Yuusuke out of the room as swiftly as possible without looking like she was running. Thankfully, she wasn’t the only one taking the chance to turn in early. Some of the other more introverted heads had begun to leave.

“Tsuna-hime?” Yuusuke asked as they managed to get to a clear hall.

“Not here,” she bit out. “What’s our room number?”

“623.”

“The stairs.”

“Over there.”

Tsuna grabbed his sleeve and dragged him up the stairs. Her heart pounded in her ears. The stairs flew by beneath her feet. With a mighty shove, she pushed the stairwell door open with a clang. She froze, her pupils going wide as she took in the empty hallway. Something in that hall set her fighting instincts on edge. She heard the faint noise of Yuusuke unsheathing one of his knives and taking up a defensive position. Her hands slipped into her kimono where her gloves remained hidden. With smooth movements, she slipped the leather articles onto her hands.

“What’s our room number?” Yuusuke asked as they managed to get to a clear hall.

“The room,” she demanded. Yuusuke nodded at her back and pushed her toward one of the branching halls. She moved, her eyes constantly roving the carpeted floor and beautifully painted walls for whatever it was that set her off so strongly. Her tongue lashed out to wet her dry lips. A door opened behind her and Yuusuke pulled her physically into a room. The door shut with a click.

“Tsuna’s voice caused her to relax. Her hands shook. She swayed as her mind told her she was safe, finally.

“Tsuna!” Ryohei exclaimed as he came up to support her. He moved Takeshi out of the way and picked her up with ease. He walked her through the suite and placed her gently on the bed. Her people moved around her like ants in a kicked over ant hill. Taking a few deep breaths, she finally
calmed her racing heart.

“Tsuna?” Rumiko said as she sat down next to her and placed a cool, wet cloth on her face.

“I’m fine now,” she wheezed as she tried to sit up only to stop as a wave of dizziness crashed into her. She slumped back onto the bed.

“Right,” Rumiko drawled. “Ryohei, you’re getting first aid training, right? Come check her out.”

“I’m fine,” Tsuna snapped and draped an arm over her eyes. “It’s just my Intuition acting up. We need to be careful, even more than we have been.”

“That’s what that was?” Yuusuke asked as he walked into the bedroom.

“There’s something here, in this hotel, which is setting me off. I started feeling it in the meeting,” she explained before risking sitting up again. Her head didn’t swim again. She breathed out slowly and pressed her hand against her forehead. Her eyes narrowed as she focused on what she had felt.

“So be even more careful than we are?” Takeshi asked as he took his hand off of his blade.

Mochida, also armed from what Tsuna could see, peered over the tall boy’s shoulder. “Is that even possible?”

Tsuna opened her mouth to speak. A scream rent the air. Heads snapped toward the hall. The group shared a look before Takeshi and Mochida charged toward the suite’s door. Tsuna moved to stand only to be stopped by Ryohei and Rumiko pulling her down. Yuusuke drew out his knives and took guard position at the bedroom door. Ikeda, who had stayed in the main room, pulled himself to the side of the door and pulled out his own preferred melee weapons, spiked brass knuckles.

“What is going on?” she grumbled as she shifted in her seat. Ryohei reached out with a faintly glowing hand to rest on her shoulder. She could feel his flames running through her system. Warmth flooded her senses. She could feel their bond, fairly weak compared to her other bonds save for the one with Mochida which was growing stronger. She sighed and leaned into the healing touch.

A steady thump of footsteps made her open her eyes. Mochida sprinted into the room, bowling Yuusuke over. His eyes glinted with green light even as Yuusuke’s knives bounced off his skin. Tsuna idly hoped her Lightning hadn’t dulled the edges. Yuusuke took such pride in his knives. The teen skidded across the floor before coming to a stop. He looked up at the curious faces and winced.

“One of the Mutsushita-gumi, they’re dead.”

“What?” Tsuna gaped as she shoved Ryohei’s arm away from her. “What happened?”

Mochida winced. “No idea, but it was bloody, whatever it was. Mutsushita-san was the one who found him. She’s not happy.”

“Yeah, I’d imagine,” Tsuna sighed and ran a hand through her hair. “Well, now I know what was setting me off.”

“Why,” Rumiko groused as she got up, “does that not make me feel better?”
Hi everyone. I am not entirely pleased with this chapter. My doctor is trying to find a medication for anxiety and depression that works on me. The side effects may have interfered with my writing ability a bit.

Now for an update on my real world life situation. I have a mental breakdown at the end of June. The stress from work became too much and I started to have thoughts about killing myself on top of the breakdown. I quit. At this time I am jobless and my mental health state makes it very difficult to try to apply for jobs. Just thinking about it makes my anxiety ratchet up and puts me on the verge of a panic attack. If you would like to support me further, please check out my tumblr. kaliade.tumblr.com

Tsuna watched as Aiko paced in the meeting room. The usually calm woman snarled at nothing as her arms crossed over her chest. Asano had asked all of the heads to go to the meeting room and for their people to remain in their rooms. Everyone stood about silently, eyes roving between potential enemies. Tsuna sighed and gripped her arms tighter. Her hands hadn't stopped shaking since she saw the scene of the slaughter.

Aiko's chief enforcer—Tsuna never had the chance to learn the man's name—had been ripped in three pieces. Blood painted the walls of the Matsushita-gumi's suite. The iron tang mixed with the other smells of fresh death lingered heavy in the air. Tsuna's far too active mind had noted how fresh the blood had been. A dark thought rang through upon seeing the body. Whatever had been setting off her intuition had done the deed.

"Who could be so stupid as to break accorded peace?" someone muttered audibly.


"Think Asano's contacted them yet?" No one had to say just who 'them' was. The Honorable Law Keepers would take the one who dared break accorded peace.

Just as everyone finally relaxed a bit at the thought, the doors to the meeting room opened and Asano, his skin a sickly sort of pale, walked in. Tsuna let her arms fall to her sides. Something stirred in her gut. The fall of Asano's lips, the haunted look in his eyes, the ever so faint sheen of sweat on his brow. He had likely just come from meeting with the Honorable Law Keepers. She would attest to their intimidating nature, and Asano, strong and wily as the man was, had minimal experience dealing with the intimidating people. Kyoya had gotten her over those reactions reasonably young.

"News?" Tsuna asked as she stepped toward the man. He looked at her and shivered.

"Yes, and I have a message for you from them. Sawada, how do they know your name?" he asked her with the tiniest amount of awe entering his tone.

Tsuna's eyes brow quirked upward. "There was an incident involving a group of criminals who escaped that I managed to bring in for them." The declaration made everyone go quiet and look at her. She shrugged. "It's a long story. I'm more concerned with the murder upstairs than sharing
stories."

"She just gets more terrifying every year," she heard someone—she thought it might be Ikuta Sorta—mutter lowly.

"Yes, well," Asano shifted slightly. "The Honorable Law Keepers say that the peace between all of us is still intact."

It seemed as if everyone in the room had sucked in a harsh breath at that declaration. So, the murderer hadn't been one of them. That meant an outsider was. A shiver ran down Tsuna's spine at the thought. That Asano willingly admitted it, if obliquely, made her nervous. The man never liked to lose face. The situation must be worse than she thought.

"An outsider," Yamazaki spat and sent a glare at Tsuna. "I think we all know whose fault that is."

"Do not blame me for something I have had nothing to do with," she shot back, her head tilting up to stare the man down.

"Bitch," Yamazaki snapped and raised a hand as if to slap her. The two men standing next to him, leaders of neutral families, grabbed him and pulled him back.

"Don't be an idiot," one hissed in his ear. Yamazaki stopped his struggling against them and pushed them away with a huff.

"How did an outsider get around without being seen? That kind of kill, it leaves the murderer as bloody as the room," Aiko asked, catching everyone's attention. "The security cameras would have picked up something."

"Nothing. My people already checked," Asano stated as he went to take a seat. He stared out over the gathered heads. They looked back at him. "My people are doing what we can to track down the person who did this."

Tsuna jerked back a bit as if shocked. Gooseflesh rose along her arms as her stomach twisted. There was something wrong with that statement. She just didn't know what. Her eyes narrowed. Her fingers twitched ever so slightly.

"Please, remain calm. We'll keep the rest of the Gathering on track. Just be cautious," Asano said with a sigh. The rest of the heads eyed each other. Aiko flushed an angry red before her hand curled into tight fists. Her jaw clenched as she shook. Tsuna turned her attention away from the enraged woman and met Yamazaki's fierce glare. She frowned slightly and lifted an eyebrow in response. The childish man puffed up like an insulted cat. He did show a small sign of intelligence when he held his tongue only to send a darker glare at her. She shrugged and turned back to their host.

"Asano-san," she said, catching everyone's attention, "though I do not know much of what happened, I can say that I've felt like I have been watched by something malignant since the middle of the opening meeting."

"Sawada-san?" Asano frowned before his eyes widened. "You mean-?"

She nodded. "The Vongola bloodline is known for its Intuition, and my Intuition has been blaring a warning since the meeting."

That declaration sent a tittering among the heads. The rumors of Vongola intuition were true. Some shifted in place, their minds wondering what she could see when she looked at them. A faint, barely there smile flitted over her lips before she leaned back on her heels.
"Thank you, Sawada-san. We'll take that into consideration," Asano inclined his head to her before addressing the Gathering. "Turn in early tonight and keep your guard up. We'll have our usual meeting tomorrow morning as scheduled. In the meantime, please be careful and don't wander alone."

The group nodded and bowed politely to their host before exiting the meeting room. Tsuna walked next to Aiko, who still vibrated tension and rage. She reached up and placed a hand on the older woman's shoulder. A gentle squeeze made the woman's glinting eyes soften momentarily before walking out of Tsuna's grasp. The Akatora head let out a long sigh as she headed back toward her room.

Tsuna opened the suite's door and walked into a tense situation. Ryohei and Mochida both sat on the couch in the sitting area. Yuusuke and Rumiko stood over by the window, furiously whispering to each other. Takeshi sat on the floor, his back against the wall and eyes firmly focused on the door. Those eyes lit up as he caught sight of her. He moved to get to his feet, grabbing Ikeda's attention where he was sitting in one of the comfy chairs, doing something on his phone.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi said as he stood up and adjusted his blade where is rested on his back. Everyone turned to look at the exhausted girl.

Closing the door behind her, she stalked into the room and flopped into one of the chairs. Her kimono sleeves fluttered about before settling against the pale leather of the chair. She relaxed, her shoulders rolling back and head tilting to give her a good view of the plaster ceiling. The moldings, also plaster, had to be expensive.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi said again. "What did they say?"

She sat upright. Her elbows resting on her knees, she sighed. "Peace has not been broken by any yakuza."

"Outsiders?" Rumiko muttered.

"According to Asano-san who spoke with the Honorable Law Keepers," she agreed and rubbed the bridge of her nose. "I told them about my suspicions about being watched by something malevolent. Asano-san is at least taking my words seriously."

"How the hell would outsiders even get in without being noticed?" Mochida asked as he slumped back against the couch. "I mean, Asano-san seems to have a pretty good security setup. There are cameras everywhere. How did they catch nothing?"

Tsuna shrugged. "Anyone's guess is as good as anything."

"I'm not liking this," Takeshi muttered. Everyone nodded. No one liked this.

"Ikeda, take Ryohei and Mochida and get some food for us all. We should eat here tonight and turn in early," Tsuna picked at her long sleeves and looked over at Rumiko. "Rumiko, help me get out of this, please."

"Shouldn't Takeshi be helping you with that, hime?" The woman had a weak, but teasing grin on her face. Tsuna rolled her eyes and shook her head.

"Well, if he wants to help, then so be it," the yakuza boss shrugged. "I'm not much up for anything besides getting out of this mass of cloth. Yuusuke, make sure the paperwork for tomorrow is ready."

"Yes, hime." her second-in-command nodded with an amused grin on his face.
Rising from her seat, she meandered into the room she had claimed for herself. Takeshi shook his head as she walked past. Rumiko followed after and, as she passed him by, grabbed his shoulder and dragged the unresisting teen into the bedroom behind them. Ryohei and Mochida shared a commiserating look as they got up from their seats to follow after the amused Ikeda.

"So, how did that sort of thing become our new normal?" Mochida asked as he shut the door behind him. "And where are we going?"

"There's a place that does good gyoza," Ikeda said as he walked ahead of the teens. "One of the other guys recommended the place. His cousin runs it. He made arrangements for us to get gyoza and some other things."

"Sounds good," Ryohei said. "They know we're coming?"

"I've already sent a message," Ikeda assured them and held up his phone. "Already sent a message to them. They'll have the Odo ready for us when we get there."

"They don't normally do take away?" Mochida asked.

"Yep. They're willing to do it as a favor."

Ryohei grinned and threw an arm over Mochida's shoulder. The kendoist staggered momentarily under the heavy weight before pushing the arm off. The boxer smiled at his fellow. Mochida shook his head and rolled his eyes. The boxer's exuberance made the kendoist exhausted half the time.

"Heads up," Ikeda hissed, catching the two boys' attention. Two sets of eyes focused on the hall and the person waiting at the end of it. Yamazaki. The two teens winced faintly. Thankfully they were too far from the man for him to see that reaction. Ikeda motioned for them to act relaxed. They were covered under the neutrality accord. All the man could do is bark and threaten.

"Akatora," Yamazaki sneered, his eyes narrowing to practically slits as they walked toward him. There wasn't another way to get to the stairs. They'd have to deal with the loud-mouthed idiot.

"Yamazaki," Ikeda took the lead. He came to a stop, the two teens stopping behind him. Neither went for their weapons. Too much temptation.

"The bitch not keeping you all close. She don't care about you all being the next victims of the killer?" the weasel-like man taunted.

"Such a yapping dog," Ikeda smirked. "Don't you have somewhere else to be, Yamazaki, like the pound? You may be able to find a woman there."

Yamazaki inflated, his chest making the tight white shirt start bursting at the seams. His teeth gnashed as he inhaled heavy through his nose. "You…"

"Shouldn't you be with your own rather than on your own?" Mochida asked as he glanced around the area. Something in the air made the hair on the back of his neck stand on end.

"Shut up, boy," Yamazaki spat, spittle going flying from his mouth. The man practically vibrated out of his skin. He jerked forward a step as if he was going to take a swing but thinking better of it. His lips pulled back to reveal flashing teeth in a parody of a tiger's grin. The three Akatora were not impressed. Their boss looker more ferocious when she was 10 and still looked like a fluffy chick.

"Just go back to your rooms, Yamazaki," Ikeda said in the blandest tone he could manage. His lips quirked up into a smirk as the yakuza boss continued to act like an offended cat. "You know you
can't touch us. Accorded neutrality and all that."

"One day," Yamazaki started forward, his finger pointing directly into Ikeda's face, "one day that bitch is going to regret ever becoming involved in our world. She'll fall and all of you with her. I'm going to enjoy seeing her agonized face as she gets what's coming to her. Maybe even let my boys take a turn."

Ryohei growled, the sound echoing off the walls. Yamazaki looked over at him and aptly went pale. Mochida felt the waves of heat coming from the boxer and grabbed his wrist. The feeling of heat increased but didn't burn. The kendoist had no doubt Ryohei's eyes had turned a glowing yellow. The feel of Sun Flames teetering on the edge of rage filled the air. Ikeda's shoulders tensed as he prepared to grab Ryohei as well. Yamazaki swallowed thickly as he took a step back from the fierce look on the teenager's face. He shivered and turned to walk down another hallway, leaving the doorway to the stairwell free. The heavy feeling in the air receded the further away the man got before he vanished out of sight.

"You are terrifying," Mochida muttered darkly and let Ryohei's wrist go. He surreptitiously looked down at his palm and winced as the red color that rapidly began to fade, an after effect of the Sun Flames gleaming on his skin.

"What the hell are the Arcobaleno teaching you, kid?" Ikeda asked as he spun to face the teens. "I mean, I've only seen the boss do something like that before."

Ryohei shrugged and fingered the collar of his suit. "It's just a trick Reborn showed me."

Ikeda and Mochida both stared at him in silence for several seconds before simultaneously shaking their heads and giving each other a look. Maybe letting Reborn teach Ryohei anything had been a bad idea.

Tsuna relaxed in much more casual clothing. Lounge pants and a soft, slightly oversized shirt felt so much better than that awful kimono. She looked over a folder full of documents as she laid out on the couch with her feet resting on Takeshi's lap. His eyes were closed and his hands were gently massaging her calf muscles. Rumiko decided, after helping Tsuna out of her furisode, to take a bath and had claimed the suite bathroom until the others brought back food. Yuusuke sat in one of the chairs, actually relaxing for once, while he looked over the messages on his phone. There weren't many. Everyone knew he and Tsuna would be busy with the Gathering and wouldn't want to bother either of them. Still, a few reports about simple things like how much the girls pulled in last night and a person with less than stellar credit looking for a loan to start up a business. He'd need to show that one to Tsuna. Something seemed odd about it.

A knock on the door brought them out of their comfort zones. Takeshi's eyes opened and focused on the door. He looked over at Yuusuke before nodding and getting out from under Tsuna's legs. Tsuna nodded to them both but remained laying down. If anyone wanted to talk to her, they could do so with her right where she was. Yuusuke side-eyed the door but went back to looking at his phone. His posture belied his troubled state.

"Yes," Takeshi said as he opened the door and stepped to the side. He jerked back, his skin paling just a shade. His hands shook for a moment before he steeled his spine. "Fujimoto-san."

Tsuna sat upright in a flash. Her sock-clad feet hit the ground with an audible thud. The folder fell to the floor as her hand went to the arm of the couch. Her knuckles turned white as she clenched the leather upholstery tightly. Yuusuke gave up the illusion that he was paying attention to his phone and turned to watch Takeshi. His hand, the one hidden from view from the doorway, fell to where he hid
Takeshi swallowed and stepped backward, allowing the yakuza head to step into the room. Fujimoto, still dressed in his traditional clothing, walked in and closed the door behind him. He looked over the room, his eyes falling on where Tsuna's stare bored into him. He met her gaze and resisted the urge to flinch. The girl—no, she was a young woman now—had an unnerving stare. The faint orange flecks bleeding into the brown of her eyes made a very striking and intimidating look. A sweltering sort of heat filled the room, though neither of the Akatora men seemed bothered. Fujimoto inhaled and pushed out with his own spirit. It made the heat more bearable, which only underscored how dangerous she had become. Perhaps comparing the founder of her line to a minor kami wasn't that far-fetched if his bloodline held such strength this far removed from the source.

"Sawada-san," he greeted her with a small bow.

Her eyes narrowed, the brown more rapidly being replaced by burnt orange. "Fujimoto-san."

The silence stretched as Takeshi walked around the man he should have called kin and took a seat next to his boss. His blade rested against the side of the couch, well within arms reach. Fujimoto glanced at the sword, swallowed, and met Takeshi's dark eyes again. Takeshi met his gaze straight on. His entire body tensed, his legs tightening and readying him to spring forward if threatened.

"Takeshi," Fujimoto began.

"Yamamoto," he shot back. "You don't have permission to call me by my given name, Fujimoto-san."

The older man jerked back at the rebuttal. Silence descended again. Fujimoto coughed and shifted in place. Tsuna's lips curled into a smirk at how discomfited the man was. Served him right for what he had done, and tried to do, to the Yamamoto family. Tsuna took her hands from the couch and curled them together in her lap. She lowered the amount of Sky Flames she was pumping into the air. The faint sheen of sweat on Fujimoto's forehead was unsettling. She didn't want the smell of old man in her rooms.

"What do you want, Fujimoto?" Tsuna asked. "You and I have no alliance, no deals."

"I actually came to speak with Take-" he froze at the chilly look that came from the swordsman "—Yamamoto."

"Then speak," Takeshi bit out. His jaw clenched tightly. Tsuna could practically hear his teeth grinding.

"Ah, this isn't something that needs an audience," the old man said.

"Then I don't want to hear it." Takeshi stood and pointed at the door. "You lost any right to speak to me familiarly the moment you tried to have my father killed."

"He—" Fujimoto started.

"I do believe Takeshi said he wanted you to leave, Fujimoto," Tsuna interrupted. "I agree with him. Leave. You are not welcome here."

Fujimoto's face morphed into an expression not too dissimilar from biting into a lemon. "It's about your mother."

"Who you had killed," Takeshi growled as he took a step forward.
Yuusuke rose from his seat and got between the angered teen and the old yakuza. "That's enough."

"I never wanted her dead. Please, believe that. I loved my daughter," Fujimoto stated. "Please, just think about talking to me privately. Sawada-san, I'll take my leave."

The old man gave one last look at his grandson and walked out of the room. The door shut firmly behind him, making everyone let out a breath of relief. Takeshi fell back onto the couch and leaned over his knees. His lungs burned as he took in air. Tsuna placed a hand on his back. His shoulders began to shake.

"Keshi?" Her voice, soft and soothing, made him relax.

Yuusuke looked over at them as he sat back down. He sighed and shook his head. The Yamamoto family drama never failed to be dramatic, and the Gathering always made it worse. He pinched his nose and went back to his phone. A message to Tsuyoshi would not be out of place. The assassin cum sushi chef would not be happy that Fujimoto wanted to spend any time alone with Takeshi. The bad blood between Tsuyoshi and Fujimoto was both long and deep.

The sound of the door being unlocked made everyone look up. Ikeda led the way, arms laden with sacks. Ryohei and Mochida followed him, also holding bags of food. They took one look at Takeshi on the verge of a panic attack, Tsuna comforting him, and an annoyed Yuusuke and stopped near the door.

"So, what did we miss?"

Mochida placed the last of the bowls, now empty of foodstuffs, back in the sacks the restaurant had given them to use. They’d take the dishes back to the restaurant later in the evening after all the day's meetings were over. The food settled heavily in everyone's stomachs. The gyoza, in particular, had been tasty. He stood up and watched as everyone lounged. Ikeda won the award for the weirdest way to relax with how he was laying on the floor with his legs resting straight up the wall, his toes pointing toward the ceiling. How the man could be comfortable in such a position was beyond Mochida.

"So, anyone want to speculate about tomorrow?" Rumiko asked from where she lounged against Yuusuke's side.

"The same old agreements being hashed out, like usual," Tsuna muttered as she took another drink. Takeshi, still unnerved by the unexpected meeting with Fujimoto, stayed stuck firmly at her side. He had been the last to finish eating and hadn't eaten nearly as much as he usually did.

Mochida shook his head and went to sit against one of the walls. He went to pull his phone out of his pocket and stopped as a buzzing noise itched in his ears. He looked around, trying to find the source. The hairs on his arms stood on end. It made him uncomfortable but still felt familiar. He fidgeted and pulled out his phone. He squinted at the power level and frowned. It shouldn't be that low. He hoped he wasn't subconsciously draining the battery via his Lightning Flames again.

"So reaffirming we don't allow drugs or human trafficking through our territory. We'll look the other way on other kinds of shipments," Ikeda muttered. "Why don't you stop the weapons trafficking, boss?"

"Because I can get the other families to agree to not bring drugs and human trafficking through our territory if I allow them that," Tsuna explained with a shrug. "Of course, if the Hibari happen to discover that there are people bringing weapons into their territory, well, that's something completely
different, isn't it?"

Rumiko hummed. "So that's what that bust was all about last year. I thought it was odd at the time."

"Yep. I'm still not sure which family it was, but they lost quite a bit of money and an entire shipment of guns." Tsuna snickered as she ran her fingers through Takeshi's hair. "Their fault for trying to get something past the Hibari."

"How do you get stuff by them?" Mocha asked. "I mean, I know you and the demon are fairly close, but doesn't his dad run the police?"

"His dad also married a Triad princess," Tsuna chuckled. "He has no moral grounds to stand on. Plus, making a deal with us keeps less wholesome groups out of his hair. He's more than willing to let Kyoya deal fair with us if just to gain some peace and one less enemy going for his throat."

Ryohei, still far more quiet than he usually was, snorted. "Makes sense."

Smiles flit across everyone's faces. Tsuna hummed and continued to pet Takeshi's hair. He murmured nonsensically as he leaned against her side. His hands curled and uncurled as he tucked his head up against her shoulder and lifted his feet properly onto the couch. Warmth seeped from Tsuna into him.

A knock rang out.

"Sawada-san," Asano spoke from the other side of the door. Tsuna blinked and motioned for Yuusuke to answer the door. Rumiko whined as she was forced to get up from her comfy seat.

"Yamada-san," Asano greeted the second in command as he walked into the room, his own second following in his shadow. "Sawada-san, I hate to bother you this late in the evening, but I need to request your eyes."

"Asano-san, what's happened?" her voice grew sharp. Takeshi blinked and sat upright, his feet hitting the floor with a heavy thud. Ikeda uncurled himself from his position. Rumiko, still curled up on the chair, stared at the old man. He met her gaze before looking away and shivering for a moment.

"Yamazaki and his men have been found in much the same state as the Matsushita's man," Asano explained, running a hand through his hair.

"All of them?" Tsuna asked as she rose to her feet. She wasn't the only one. Ryohei and Mochida both sprang to their feet as well. Takeshi reached out and grabbed his blade.

Asano nodded. "All of them. You said, earlier, that you have the famed Vongola Intuition. Can you use that intuition to help me figure out who has done this?"

Tsuna frowned, her brows drawing together. She bit her lip but nodded. She may not have liked Yamazaki, but she did not want the man to die such an ignoble death. Plus, if she did this, Asano would owe her a favor in the future.

"I'll bring someone else with me, but yes, I'll do what I can to help."

"Thank you," Asano exhaled and motioned toward the door. "Shall we?"

"Mochida, with me," Tsuna ordered as she thought over who would be the best to go with her. Yuusuke, Ikeda, and Rumiko all could stand the sight of carnage, but something told her bringing any of them wouldn't be right. "I may need someone to drag me out of there if I get overwhelmed."
"Yes, Tsuna-hime," Mochida muttered and swallowed thickly. He had seen what had been left of the Matsushita's man. This time there would be more corpses, more blood. Still, he followed his boss as she filed out of the room behind Asano.

An eerie sort of silence hung heavy in the air. Mochida knew it was only in his head. The hall was just as loud as when he and the others had left to get food. He swallowed as they came around a corner and fought the urge to gag as the smell of copper and voided body fluids slammed into his nose. He glanced over at Tsuna. Her nose wrinkled in distaste even as her skin paled. Her tongue clicked.

"Boss?" Mochida muttered. She shook her head and sent him a sharp look from the corner of her eye. He winced and went silent. Asano and his man paid no attention to the byplay behind them as they guided the woman who was quickly becoming their only hope at figuring out these murders.

"Here it is," Asano waved them into the open doorway. Tsuna stepped forward and stopped cold at the site. Bodies, or what had once been bodies, lay strewn across the room, broken and dismembered. Blood coated the walls and ceiling. Viscera strung out all over the floor. Tsuna's stomach threatened to come out of her mouth. She had seen bad murder scenes before, but this topped the cake for the sheer amount of horror. It looked like something out of one of those American torture porn films, known as snuff films if she remembered right. She pressed the back of her hand to her mouth.

"Sawada-san, are you…?" Asano began to ask. She shook her head and took in everything she could see of the room. She looked at the door. No sign of forced entry. She looked back at the bloodbath. There was something just nagging at the edge of her mind. Something wasn't right. She looked at the walls again and then the ceiling. Her eyes widened a tiny bit. How had they, whoever had managed to do this, managed to not get hit by the blood? This first kill would have alerted everyone to the killer's presence. More than one. There had to be. She looked down at the floor, knelt close enough that she worried about getting blood on her pants. Her eyes narrowed. Yes, two oddly shaped footprints. Her lips pursed. Boots maybe?

"Boss," Mochida leaned down to help her up. She looked over her shoulder and stood up. "Mochida?"

"Something…," he paused as he rubbed the back of his neck. The tiny hairs there stood on end. He felt like something was watching him, them. It pinged on the edges of his hearing, or maybe his sight. He just knew something was there.

"Mochida, what is it?" she whispered as she saw his eyes darting about.

"Somethings here, watching."

Asano's second snorted. "Squeamish, boy?"

"Shut it," Tsuna snapped before turning her attention back to her Lightning. "What does it feel like?"

"Like when those trainees back at Mafia Land were going to jump out and ambush us." He shuddered at that memory.

Tsuna's eyes lit up as something connected in her head. Her lips pressed into a flat line. "Not nerves then. Could it be…?"

"Sawada-san?" Asano said.

She turned to face him. "Well, I have an idea. You've got at least two people, one fairly short. I have
‘All that from just looking at this mess?’ Asano’s man sputtered.

‘Bootprints,’ she waved toward the floor. ‘Can’t tell you much else other than that, but I have some suspicions and need to make a phone call or two to some people who may know more.’

‘What people?’ Asano, clearly conflicted on calling on more outsiders, asked.

‘Arcobaleno.’

‘Ah, I see,’ the older man nodded as his aide gaped at her. ‘Your mentor is one of them if I remember the papers Yamazaki handed out about your bloodline today.’

She nodded. ‘Reborn, yes. There’s something about this whole setup that is bothering me, and I think he has the last piece of the puzzle to figure it out.’

‘I’ll leave you to that, but please, call me as soon as you know anything, Sawada-san,’ Asano motioned for his second to hand her a business card. ‘I want to find out who did this before we have another killing spree. Getting this cleaned up will be a hassle as is.’
Day broke. Tsuna groaned and curled deeper into Takeshi's arms to escape the damnable sunlight peeping through the bedroom's window between curtains that hadn't been shut completely the night before. Takeshi murmured and hugged her tightly to his chest, his nose burrowing further into her hair. She felt warm, safe and content.

"Tsuna," Rumiko called as she burst through the bedroom door. Twin moans came from both of the bed-bound teens as they sent acerbic glares toward the woman. She grinned brightly and grabbed the bedsheets off of them.

"Rumiko," Tsuna hissed as she scrambled to grab for the sheets. Takeshi groaned as he got an elbow to his side. He rolled over and threw his arm over his eyes.

"Up," Rumiko demanded. "We had a visitor."

"Who?" Tsuna grumbled as her feet hit the floor.

Rumiko laughed and grabbed Takeshi's ankle. He kicked out at her but finally gave in and got up. He sent a nasty look the older woman's way before he began to strip out of his sleep clothes. Tsuna, also changing out of her bedclothes and into the houmongi kimono Rumiko had picked out the previous evening, watched as he pulled his shirt over his head. She turned to Rumiko. The two females shared a look.

"So, who was our visitor?" the yakuza boss asked as she worked on tying the obi correctly.

Rumiko huffed in amusement and took over for her boss. Hands moved with experience as she correctly tied the piece of cloth. "Fujimoto, again. He's still trying to get some time with Takeshi."

"No," Takeshi bluntly, tonelessly said as he shrugged on his dress shirt and buttoned it.

"If he's this persistent, he's likely not going to take no," Tsuna said as she grabbed a hairbrush and ran it through her spiky tresses. The spikes laid flat for a moment before springing back up to their normal state. Rumiko chuckled at the sight.

"Let him be persistent," Takeshi grumbled.

Tsuna frowned and clicked her tongue. "Did you call your dad last night and tell him about old Fujimoto wanting to talk to you?"

"Yes," he tied his tie, "he hasn't gotten back to me."
"Try calling him again before breakfast," Tsuna said. "I'd rather not have to deal with the man again. He's bad enough in the meetings, what with being such a staunch traditionalist. I don't want to deal with him during my downtime."

Takeshi sighed and turned away from her stare. His jaw clenched tightly and tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth. "Yeah."

"Well, that can wait until after breakfast," Rumiko chirped and glided out the door. "Ryohei, Mochida, and Ikeda went to get food. They should be back before long."

"Takeshi," Tsuna whispered as she watched her boyfriend pull on his jacket. The black stood out against the white of the shirt. She sighed. Her lips pursed before she shook head, her spikes bouncing with the movement. She grabbed her phone and walked out of the bedroom to the sitting room.

Yuusuke sat reading a newspaper in a chair. She waved halfheartedly to him before taking a seat on the couch. She opened her address book and selected a name.

Ring.

"Tsunami," Reborn's voice greeted her.

"Reborn," she replied back. "I need some information."

There was a paused. "What's happened?"

"Several deaths, murders. An enforcer for one group and an entire group in total murdered."

"I thought the Gathering was a Vindice enforced peace get together."

"Outsiders. The Vindice have already said the contract between our groups hasn't been violated, so only an outsider could do this."

"What do you need, Tsunami?"

The conversation continued on for several minutes, Tsuna wringing the information she needed from her tutor. She dialed another number and gave her information to Asano. The Gathering's host thanked her profusely for what she was able to tell him and promised that he owed her a favor. She smiled, a dark light entering her eyes, as put her phone down. A favor from the Asano family would be so very useful in the future.

"Morning," Takeshi greeted as he finally came out of the bedroom and sat next to her. Rumiko, still putting on the final touches of her makeup, peered into the room from the bathroom of the connected suite. A knock on the door kept her from saying anything. A moment later the lock turned, and the three missing members of the group walked in, laden down with food once more.

"You're up," Ikeda grinned at them as he set a bag on the bar. Ryohei, laden down with several cups of hot beverages, began to hand them out. The smells of tea and coffee filled the sitting room as the food soon followed. Mochida slumped against the side of the couch as he nibbled on a breakfast bar. Ryohei nabbed a packaged bread of some kind before sitting at the window, looking down at the people wandering the street below.

"I talked to Reborn," Tsuna announced as she finished off her breakfast. She preferred her mother's cooking, but whatever combini the boys had found had a decent breakfast. She sipped her tea. "I've got a good idea what is going on. Again, no one goes anywhere alone. Mochida, you're with me. Takeshi, be ready to saturate the air with Rain Flames at a moment's notice. I've already told Asano what I've found out."
There was silence as they all finished off their food. Takeshi stared at his hands before sighing. "I talked to Dad."

"And?" Tsuna encouraged.

"He suggested I agree to meet him." Takeshi winced.

"You taking his advice?" Ikeda asked from his seat against the wall.

He sighed and slumped over his knees. Tsuna ran a hand down his back. "I don't want to."

"But you're going to," Mochida finished for him with a nod. "You respect your dad too much not to listen to him."

"Try to see if he'll talk to you before the morning meeting. Then he'll have a time limit," Yuusuke suggested.

"It's extreme you're doing this," Ryohei said as he threw his cup in the trash.

Tsuna snorted as a thought crossed her mind. Everyone turned to look at her, Takeshi going so far as to peer up between his fingers. "I'm just thinking, today, before the morning meeting when everyone is present, is when I'm bringing up the Squalo merchandise I have to sell."

Everyone stared before breaking into laughter, even if Takeshi's sounded forced.

The Akatora retinue made their way down to the large conference hall. Unlike the first day here only the heads and their seconds could attend, the second day was more a sort of socialization day. The only formal meeting would last barely an hour and was more for alliance announcements. The rest of the day was for drinking, talking, and gambling. Tsuna's lips twitched into a smile as she looked over the gathered people in the conference hall.

The Squalo merchandise was going to bring in so much money.

A few heads turned in their direction. A handful of smiles greeted the group. Tsuna nodded respectfully to those that deserved her respect. Rumiko chuckled from beside her, eying up the gathered yakuza and mentally marking the ones she was going to have to speak to later. A few words whispered in the right ears, and the price they could demand their merchandise would rise to the heavens. They were going to be rich.

"Rumiko…" Tsuna began. Her lips twitched.

"I know," the prostitute chirped and clapped her hands together with a broad smile on her face.

"Ah, Sawada-san," Matsushita called out and waved a hand. The woman hadn't recovered her usual exuberance, though she was perkier than most of those in the room.

"Tsuna-hime," Takeshi leaning over to whisper in her ear, his eyes focusing on his grandfather's form, "I'm going to go see what Fujimoto wants."

"Understood," she whispered back. "I'll send Ryohei or Mochida after you if you don't return in an hour."

Her swordsman broke off from their group and walked, head held high, toward the old man. The rest
The old woman sighed and rolled her eyes. "Yes, as much as I hate to admit it."

"Then…" Tsuna motioned for Rumiko. The prostitute placed an envelope in her outstretched hand. "If I remember correctly, his birthday is coming up. Here's a gift from the Akatora to the heir of the Matsushita."

The old woman looked at the young boss and back to the envelope. Her eyebrow quirked upward as she took the envelope and opened it. Her slightly arthritic fingers pulled a photo out. She froze at the sort of choked sound coming from her bodyguard. She turned to look at him, possibly chastise him for making a scene, only to stop at the googly-eyed look on the man’s face. He let out a tiny squeak far too high pitched for a man of his size.

"That's, that's," the man sputtered out, finger-pointing. "That's Superbi Squalo! I've never even seen that picture before. Where did you get it?!"

That caught the attention of everyone within earshot. Heads snapped toward them. Eyes instantly tracked to the picture in Matsushita’s hand. Necks craned to get a glimpse. Tsuna suppressed a faint smile at the covetous looks being sent their way. Time to set the trap.

"Took it when Squalo and my Takeshi fought."

A wave of whispers radiated out at that declaration. Conversations stopped. Everyone turned to look at her. The apparent fans of the Sword Emperor looked shrewdly at her. A few patted their pockets idly. Those who weren't fanboys of the swordsman still knew how good the man was, and how often he left survivors. That is none. For the Akatora swordsman to still be alive, that meant the boy had won. The smarter men shared looks and made mental notes to not get in the boy’s way.

"I have photographs—both black and white and color—and film. Film comes in forms with and without audio," Tsuna announced in just a loud enough voice to be heard by the interested parties. "I'll be opening up sales after the meeting."

"How wonderful of you," Matsushita drawled as she stuffed the photograph in the envelope and handed it to her remaining aide, the one who did not look so starstruck.

Tsuna grinned. "Thank you."

"Where is your talented swordsman, by the way?" Matsushita leaned forward, her hands curling together in front of her as a wicked gleam appeared in her eyes.

"Fujimoto," Tsuna spoke in a deadpan. "The old man has some things he wanted to discuss with Takeshi."

The old woman blinked and shook her head. She clicked her tongue. "And your swordsman willingly went to talk with him? Miracles do happen."
"I know…" Tsuna's voice faded. A chill ran down her spine. Her skin went pale. She stood up and looked around the room. Her hands began to shake. Her people shared a look and began to search for what set off their boss.

From his position on the opposite side of the room, Asano went tense. He motioned for his men to fan out and search the area. His men fanned out. They were armed, something typically not done at the Gathering. Keeping an eye on Sawada was a good idea. He'd have to remember to reward the subordinate that came up with it.

"Tsuna?" Mochida hissed. The hairs on his arms stood on end beneath his clothes. He felt that sort of static buzzing in his head. Nostrils flared, and he swore he could smell ozone. "You feeling this?"

Tsuna's head jerked around. Something was wrong. Mochida was connected to it, sensing whatever it was at a higher degree than she was. Her hands twitched. Eyes tracked over nothing. The hall quickly fell quiet at her odd actions. A moment later, after looking over the crowd, a realization slammed into her.

"Takeshi," she whispered in horror before turning to Mochida. "Find Takeshi. He and Fujimoto are the target. Move!"

Takeshi fought the urge to fidget as he walked beside Fujimoto. He refused to even think of the man as his grandfather. He had lost the right the moment he tried to kill his daughter for falling in love with an assassin. A growl threatened to escape his throat at the thought. His hands curled into fists at his side as he glared out the corner of his eyes.

"You've grown strong, boy," Fujimoto complimented him.

"Dad's work," Takeshi immediately shot back.

Fujimoto shifted and growled. "Yes."

Takeshi smirked, a slight victory. Fujimoto's face twisted as he had to admit that the assassin had done well at something. He pushed a side door leading to a private room open and motioned for his grandson to go inside first. Takeshi looked at him before peering into the room. His senses were in overdrive, trying to find any sign of treachery. After scanning the room from the outside, the swordsman motioned for the old man to go in first. Fujimoto frowned at him before stepping into the room.

"Are you always so paranoid, boy?" he asked as he heard his grandson step inside. "And close the door. This talk isn't for public consumption."

Takeshi rolled his eyes but pushed the door shut. He turned back around to the man he shared blood with and stared. He may have agreed to listen to what the old man wanted, but he did not promise to be civil. The cold shoulder was too subtle for the man who had threatened him in the womb.

"You have your mother's stubbornness," Fujimoto said with a sigh as he sat on one of the chairs in the room. He looked the teen over from head to toe and fought back a wince at the way the boy looked so much like his assassin father. Though, looking closer at the line of the boy's jaw and the shape of his eyes, he could see his daughter's contribution to the boy's genetics. He motioned for the boy to sit.

Takeshi shook his head and remained standing. His muscles itched to move. He refused to give the
man the satisfaction of seeing him so tense.

"Just sit, boy. I'm not going to get a cramp in my neck looking up at you while I talk."

"Right," Takeshi said as he lowered himself slowly in a seat. Anything to get this over with quickly. His legs shook as he managed to get settled in his chair.

"Good, good," the old man muttered and nodded.

"What is this about? You made it seem so important," Takeshi growled.

"Straight to the point like her, too." The old man frowned. "I loved my daughter, boy. Never doubt that. We did not get along, especially after she met your father. I never stopped loving her."

"And yet you tried to kill her and me," the swordsman snapped. His eyes glowed a faint blue as he used his Flames on himself to keep calm. He reminded himself to give Colonello a gift for teaching him the skill, even if he had thought it useless at the time.

"Grandson…"

"My name is Yamamoto Takeshi," he bit out. "Now, what is it you needed to tell me that was so important?"

Fujimoto stared at his grandson for several seconds before sighing. "Isamu is dead. Stomach cancer."

"I see," the Rain said with a tilted head. Isamu, his mother's older brother.

"Isamu's son is not the sharpest knife in the drawer. He prefers his art to properly leading the family. I can't rely on such a flighty person to take over when I pass. The family will be ruined. I am here, asking if you would be willing to become my heir. You know how things in our world work. You have a reputation already built. You have experience." The old man placed his hands together.

"Please, grandson, become my heir so I will not see all of the hard work I have put into the family go to waste."

Takeshi stared for several seconds. His eyebrows rose with every word the old man said. After a few seconds of silence as the old man looked at him with pleading eyes, he broke down in laughter.

"You seriously think I would leave Tsunami?"

"You'd have wealth, power…"

"Both of which I have no need nor want for. The Akatora provides plenty for me, and I swore my life to Tsunami years ago." Takeshi grinned light glinting sinisterly off his teeth. "I made an oath to always stand by Tsunami's side. Nothing short of death will take me from her. I will kill anyone who tries to make me."

"You foolish boy!" Fujimoto roared as he rose from his seat. Takeshi felt the hairs on his neck stand on end. His nerves lit in apprehension. His eyes scanned the room as he tried to figure out why he was getting those feelings. His hands curled into claws as dread flooded his system. The faintest taste of his Sky's Flames began to surge through his bond with his boss.

He barely had the chance to move.

Something shimmered in the air as Takeshi flipped out of his chair and landed in a roll on the floor. He kicked to his feet and gaped at the three long slashes that appeared where he had been. He reached out and grabbed Fujimoto arm, flinging the old man behind him. He was not getting blamed.
for breaking neutrality. Some idiot in Fujimoto's lot would make an accusation, even if Takeshi had
died, too. Pulling from deep within, he flared his Flames outward in hopes that the Tranquility fate
would slow whoever or whatever it was that was attacking.

"Takeshi!" Tsuna's voice screamed from the hall. A wave of Sky Flames slammed into the door
seconds before the door flew open. Mochida, taking point for the group, ran in. His eyes, glowing a
vibrant green, charged. Hands flashed as tiny static bolts leaped off his hair. A sound of pain came
from thin air, which wavered for half a second before shimmering into the form of a tall man, one
with a large chunk of his stomach ripped out. Blood ran down Mochida's arm as he stared in
horrified awe at the blood. He turned a green color that had nothing to do with his Flame type.

Tsuna, not to be idle, charged in behind her Lightning. She looked around the room for several
seconds bore springing at a seemingly empty piece of air. There was a flare of Sky Flames and a
scream as a body, this one much smaller than the other, became engulfed. The air burned with a
searing heat for several seconds before the bright orange Flame faded. The charred corpse of a small
man hit the floor with a dull, dry thud. Tsuna stood up from her crouch and looked over at the
appraising and impressed Fujimoto and the impressed and mildly aroused Takeshi.

"Someone go get Asano-san. I think we just took care of his problem."

The gathered yakuza heads watched as Asano's men dropped two corpses at the front of the room.
One had its stomach region shredded. The other had been burned. Tsuna, standing beside Asano,
kept her head lifted high as she picked bits of the burnt fool out from under her nails. Mochida kept
wiping at his now clean hands with a wet rag from behind her. He swore he could still feel blood on
his skin.

"My thanks to the Akatora for taking care of the outsiders who dared kill our fellows," Asano
announced, though with a bit of a sour tone. He owed Sawada a favor, a large one. He hated owing
anyone favors.

"Your welcome," Tsuna stated and looked down at the most intact corpse. She pushed it with her
foot and frowned. "I've got a good lead on how they did this."

"Then please, tell us," Fujimoto demanded. His face burned a bright red. He had nearly been killed
and only the intervention of that girl had saved him. To top it off, his grandson refused to take his
place as heir.

She looked up at the group of agitated, ruthless yakuza and grinned like a satisfied tiger. "Verde, the
Lightning Arcobaleno."

The room broke out into whispers. Asano looked over at her and quirked an eyebrow. She turned
her grin to him. She flashed her phone in his direction, the screen with Reborn's picture. His eyes
widened a fraction before he nodded faintly. That explained her information source.

"Ah, so you do know of me, Vongola," a young male voice drawled from nowhere.

Mochida froze up. His eyes went wide. Green static sparked off his fingers. Dark brown eyes turned
a brilliant green. His head snapped to the side. He kicked. The air shimmered as something or
someone the size of a toddler jumped away.

"Show yourself," Asano ordered and made a motion for his people to aim at the suddenly empty
area. The yakuza parted and formed a circle around where they thought the infiltrator was.
"Fools," Verde scoffed as he dropped his stealth field. He looked balefully at the two corpses on display. "I must thank you for assisting with the field testing of my stealth suits."

"You son of a bitch," Matsumoto snapped. Her second reached out and placed a hand on her shoulder both to calm her and act as a restraint should the old woman try to take justice into her own hands.

Tsuna hummed in the back of her throat and stepped up beside Asano. Her eyes began to change to a dull orange. Her Flames began to flare outward. Many of her fellow yakuza heads glanced at her and started to do the same. Sky met with the mixture of Mist, Cloud and Rain circled together. Verde's eyebrows drew together as he felt the charge in the air. His hand drifted down to his side under his lab coat.

"I wouldn't," Tsuna warned as her eyes turned from dull to blazing. A shiver ran straight down the back of several yakuza. Enforcers and seconds reached for weapons they had, by accorded rules, left in their rooms. "Draw a weapon here, and you will die. Arcobaleno or no. Reborn assures me it is possible to kill one of you even if you can't kill each other off."

The scientist scoffed but let his hand fall to his side. He glanced around. "Just give me back my suits, girl."

"No."

A shiver ran down Verde's spine at the ice in the girl's voice. "Do not try to fight me, girl."

"You came in here and let these two idiots break accorded peace," Asano roared, his voice booming. "How dare you?"

"Your accorded peace. I have nothing to do with that agreement or with the fact these two decided to test your security," Verde smirked, light glinting off his glasses.

"So you claim you had no idea these two were going to kill off an entire delegation in addition to an enforcer from the Matsushita-gumi?" Asano gaped at the toddler-sized scientist. Tsuna, next to him, growled. Orange flames sparked over her fingers. She felt Takeshi's Rain Flame reach out for her in an attempt to calm her down. She shook her head ever so slightly.

"What they did with my suits are not my concern. I only gave them to the idiots for testing. Return them to me," he demanded. Tsuna twitched. The feeling in the room turned more hostile. The Italian mafia may think they have a monopoly on Flames, but the yakuza, much like the Triads of China, had been creating techniques relating to life energy for centuries. The oppressive atmosphere pressed down on the Arcobaleno. He inhaled sharply. His pacifier took on an ominous shimmer as he tried to pull on his Lightning Flames.

"No," Asano said and motioned for his people to fire. The yakuza leaped out of the firing line. Tsuna watched with a discerning eye as a forcefield of some kind appeared around the scientist. She snorted and lifted a hand engulfed in bright orange fire. The Flames pulsed. Her people grinned, and as the gunfire fell silent, Ryohei pounced. Sun Flames augmenting his strength, he slammed head first into the barrier. It shuddered before falling spectacularly. Verde let out a surprised yelp as he flung a sparking piece on technology at the charging boxer. Glowing yellow eyes met dull, genuinely alarmed green. The toddler sized-scientist almost didn't manage to get out of the charging teen's way.

"What the hell?" Verde hissed as he landed. A strike of Lightning Flames zipped by his ear and impacted the ground. He spun around to see another teenager flicking his fingers toward him. The boy swatted heavily, each spark of lightning making him wince. Apparently not a mastered
technique.

A wall of Rain Flame slammed into the scientist out of nowhere.

Though resistant to the tranquilizing effect, Verde stumbled on his feet. He managed to keep his feet beneath him and whirled out of the way. His eyes went wide as a flaming orange fist met his face. His body arced over the heads of the gleeful crowd and impacted the far wall. Tsuna stood up from her punching stance. She smirked.

Verde groaned and got to his feet. He glared at the Vongola brat. Orange eyes bore into him. He fought the urge to shiver at the malice that dripped from the girl. Green eyes snapped over the room, looking for a way out. The girl was going to kill him. He could feel it. He reached out for a specific device on his belt. He tucked into a ball to avoid the next strike. He felt a wind blow over the back of his neck. He dropped a steel orb on the ground at his feet. It shook for a moment before a steady stream of noxious black fog dreamed out of it.

Tsuna cursed as the smoke burned her eyes. She stepped back. Her intuition blared. She stepped to the side, avoiding two prongs of some type of taser. The leads drifted to the ground. After a second of waiting for the ventilation to clear out the black smoke, everyone stared at the empty space. Tsuna looked around. The scientist was nowhere to be seen. She had a faint idea of how he managed to get out so quickly. Mochida was capable of moving very quickly when he channeled his Lightning Flames into his muscles after all.

"Damn it," she snarled as she reigned in her Flames. "Coward, honorless son of a goat."

"Spread out and search," Asano ordered his people as he snapped out of his stupor. He had not expected the Tiger to react the way she had. Such ferocity in such a small package. His lips twitched as he fought the urge to smirk as her people converged on her. Yes, he may owe the girl a favor or two, but he had the feeling that having a connection to the young woman would pay dividends in the future.
AN: Hey everyone. Sorry this has taken so long but, well, I've talked about my mental health issues before. I have good days and bad days. The bad ones seem to be more frequent and we (my docs, therapist, and myself) have had a lot of difficulty finding a medicine that will help that won't make me sick. No luck on that so far.

To further support me, please check out my tumblr kaliade.tumblr.com
Also, happy winter holiday everyone and a bountiful New Year to you all!

Tsuna smirked at the gathered mafioso. Basil, more familiar with her moos after having lived beside her, flinched. Her brother represented the CEDEF in this meeting. The rest of the group, which consisted of a perturbed Dino Cavallone, a smirking Xanxus di Varia—the man had officially hanged his name, though Tsuna still wasn’t sure how he had done that while in Namimori—, and, the most surprising, Lancia Serbia representing the newly reforming Serpiente famiglia. Lancia had come to Namimori to offer an alliance or at least offer loyalty to the one who freed him from Rokudo Mukuro clutches and argued his freedom with the Vindice. The rumors from that mess had only bolstered the unknown Vongola heir's reputation.

"So what did your crazies do this time?" Dino asked the Varia leader as he took a drag from a bottle of beer.

Xanxus, taking a draw from a bottle of imported whiskey, chuckled. "Squalo found out about his fan base here in Japan and just how rabid they are. He's taken to attacking anyone with a camera."

"That explains why Takeshi's been carrying a camera around, then," Tsuna snorted into her tea. "I swear, I love that boy, but he's a bit of a sword nut."

"Tsunami-san," Basil groaned and shook his head.

"Still, I'm glad he's getting some training out of it. That idiot Fujimoto really set him off."

"Fujimoto?" the confused and entirely out of his depth Lancia frowned.

"Another yakuza leader. He's technically Takeshi's grandfather, but when you try to have your daughter killed for running away with an assassin, well, you lose all connections to their son." Tsuna shrugged. "Fujimoto son and grandson aren't exactly anything to write home about. Hell, the grandson would rather run away, if my information network is right."

"I know how that feels," Dino hissed and shook his head. "He's not getting out, is he?"

"Nope."

"Poor kid."

Tsuna snorted. "Poor kid's raped three of his classmates and gotten out of being charged by grandpa threatening the girls' families. He's scum, just like the rest of the family. Only Reiko-san had any honor among them."
Lancia looked around the gathered powers and shook his head as he tried to figure out what was going on. He shivered as he caught the amused look the Varia leader sent him. The faint flash of white teeth made him squirm.

"Stop intimidating the new guy, Xanxus," Tsuna said as she reeled her hand back from where she had his Xanxus across the back of his head. Dino coughed in a failed effort to hide his laugh. It didn't work. The Wrath Flame user gave the blond the stink eye before huffing and laying off the pressure.

"Needs to toughen up to survive," the temperamental Wrath Sky muttered as he settled back in his chair and rubbed the spot the Vongola Sky had hit. "Still don't know why he's here."

"I owe Vongola Decima everything. She freed me from that monster Rokudo Mukuro and gave me the chance to revive my famiglia," Lancia shot back. He glared hotly at the assassin as he pulled out a small bundle of cloth from his pocket. He placed it on the large table and pushed the bundle toward the yakuza boss cum mafia heiress. "I wanted to do this more formally, but this way will do as well. This is the ring of my former boss, the former leader of the Serpiente. Take this as a symbol of my willingness to place myself and my famiglia under your command."

The air in the room turned solemn. Tsuna placed her cup down and took the cloth bundle in her hands and gently unfolded it. A silver ring in the shape of a snake eating its tail gleamed. The tiny diamond eyes sparkled with an invisible but still acknowledgeable light. She felt the weight of the metal and the weight of the obligation behind it. She looked from it up to the somber mafioso. She nodded. He bowed.

"That's rather…Why with me rather than the current head?" she asked.

Lancia looked around the room, his eyes stopping briefly on Basil. He bit the inside of his lip. "I am not satisfied with the actions of the current head of Vongola."

Everyone in the room sat up. The shared a look, all of them aware of just how badly Timoteo di Vongola had failed his sons and current heir. Tsuna and Xanxus, in particular, shared a long look. Their flames curled against each other, the pure Sky soothing the roiling Wrath. The Italians flinched at the feeling and drew their flames tighter to themselves. Even Basil, who wasn't a Sky, jerked at the sensation of his sister's Sky brushing against his Rain. He shivered and resisted the urge to give in to the promised harmony. She already had a Rain, one he did not want to challenge for his position.

"That is understandable," Tsuna finally admitted. "What was it for you? We all know our reasons of disliking the current head, but I think we all want to hear yours."

Lancia frowned. "He's missing things. The entire situation with the CEDEF-no offense meant to you Basil-is just one, and no one knows what's happened to your predecessor. He's lost three of his sons within five years. He's made questionable decisions regarding his territory that has visibly backfired. I just can't trust my people to his whims. You, on the other hand, have shown you are willing to protect your people from anything. I've heard rumors about just how far you're willing to go."

Tsuna blinked and groaned. "I knew it was bad, but I had hoped it wasn't that bad."

"I'm suddenly glad I don't have to deal with recovering Vongola's reputation," Xanxus snorted and grinned at her. She rolled her eyes and smacked his shoulder. "You knew this was coming, brat."

"Yes, I did," she sighed and leaned back in her chair. She met Lancia's eyes and nodded. "I am more than willing to accept your pledge, Lancia Serbia, head of the Serpiente."
"Decima." The man nodded back with a slight smile on his face.

"Now, onto something less serious," Dino’s happy chirp interrupted the seriousness. Everyone turned to look at him and his goofy grin. "How are you doing with this lot of crazies in your territory, sorella?"

Tsuna blinked. "If you mean the Varia, we’re dealing fairly well. Bel has learned not to try anything against my girls unless he wants me bearing down on him like an angry mother bear, but other than that and the pervert of a Lightning—"

"I regret ever giving him any place of power," Xanxus groaned and took a long drag of his whiskey.

"Yes, he is screwing up your Lightning Division with his jealousy or an inferiority syndrome."

Tsuna nodded sagely. Xanxus glare at her and took another drink. "Other than that, we aren’t having too many issues. Squalo is terrified of me now, though."

"That was hilarious, brat."

She smiled beatifically. "Yes, it was, and even better, we’ve managed to make several million more yen since then. The photos and videos are selling fast. The few strand sofa hair Takeshi’s managed to cut off have gone for even more. Mammon is happy."

"Tsuna-hime!" a female voice shrieked from outside the meeting room. Tsuna jumped to her feet and rushed out the door only to come face to face with her annoyed Cloud. His Flames, agitated and raw, surged around her. The others in the room pulled back. Even Xanxus kept his silence. The Cloud was vicious. He was still impressed the brat had managed to find and coax him into her Sky.

"Kyoya," she greeted him. He reached out and grabbed her shoulder roughly. She grabbed his arm and squeezed in warning. "What is it?"

"That man," he hissed.

"Fon's in town visiting I-Pin, yes."

"Omnivore."

She frowned and looked over his shoulder at the blandly staring group of men. Basil laughed under his breath and took another drink to hide it. She glared at her brother before rolling her eyes. "Well, gentlemen, I believe we need to adjourn here. If you need anything from me, please talk to my people. I have a Cloud to soothe."

The men waved her away as she felt the Cloud's hand wrap around her wrist and yank her out of the room. His flame roared around them. Her flames flared in response. The Sky and Cloy intermingled as the twitching teen pulled her outside and down the street. Tsuna idly wondered where she was being dragged off to.

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Tsuna fingers ran through Kyoya's soft hair as he lay in her lap. Her head tilted back against the tree. Dappled light spread across both of them. Her muscle burned, and the faint bruises her Cloud had caused during their little spar stung. After a spar that ended with them both breathing heavy and sweating profusely, the Cloud had backed her up to one of the trees of the clearing they had used and lay his head in her lap for a nap. His Flames purred contentedly beneath his skin as her own brushed against his and strengthened their bond. Orange flames, these just warm rather than burning, flickered over her fingers as she dragged them through the dark locks.
"Omnivore," the prefect muttered, opening his eyes lazily.

"Are you OK now, Kyoya?"

He hummed. His eyes fell half shut. "Better. Less itchy."

"Having Fon in your territory really does rile you up something awful," she mused and winced at the flare of annoyance at the name. "Sorry."

"Don't talk about him," Kyoya grumbled but let his annoyance subside. "Your meeting. What was it about?"

"With Dino and the others? Just a basic get together to go over rumors and such from Italy." She smiled and pulled out the silver ring. Dark eyes zero in on the object. "The one you might now recognize, or maybe you remember him from Mukuro little episode, is Lancia Serbia. He's pledged his famiglia to me."

"Smart herbivore."

Her head tilted to the left. "Less herbivore than you might think. He is considered the strongest man in Northern Italy and a great fighter beyond that. Maybe more carnivore than you think."

The prefect huffed lightly. "Pack hunting."

"Yes, but it works for those of us who are more social." She shrugged and smiled faintly. "I think you get it more than you let on, Kyoya."

"Omnivore…" the word came out as a warning.

"Just saying, Kyoya. Just saying." She grinned down at him and rubbed her fingers over the top of his ear. He shivered, eyes going wide in surprise. He sat up and turned around to face her. Her grin morphed into a foxy smirk. He glared before leaning in and stealing a kiss.

"You are trouble, Tsunami," he whispered as he put his arms on both sides of her head.

"Maybe," she purred, eyes flashing orange as she called on a hint of her flames. Cloud flames reacted to the invitation to play and curled into the Sky around them. "You'll be there to back me up if I do get in over my head, won't you Ky-o-ya."

He growled low in his throat and moved forward. Lips met lips. Heat passed between the two. The ever stoic prefect's hands went from the bark of the tree to her shoulders. She put her arms around his neck and pulled him closer. He gave in and leaned firmly into her space. One hand dragged down her front, brushed over her breasts before resting at her hip. She pulled back for a Bret of air and smiled at him. His eyes, hazy with desire, blinked.

"Vixen," he breathed before going back for another kiss. A shudder passed down his spine as she dug her nails into his neck. He growled, the vibration passing through his lips to her. He pulled back. "You will be the death of me, Tsuna."

She smiled softly and lifted her hand to his face. She cupped his cheek and rubbed her thumb along the bone. She opened her mouth to speak but stopped as a loud, incessant beeping broke through their haze. Her head turned toward where the phone lay on the ground. The screen lit up with an alarm. She groaned as she remembered she had promised she'd pick up the kids from the playground so Mochida could do something with his siblings. She hissed in annoyance as she gave Kyoya's shoulder a light push. He backed away with a pout, not that he'd admit it.
"Tsunami?"

"I've got to go get the kids."

He frowned but nodded and stood up. He understood the obligation to the younger generation. He did watch over the elementary schools as well as the middle schools in his territory. He offered a hand to her and pulled her up. She grabbed her phone and sent a text off to Mochida so she'd know which playground to go to. A minute later she had an address.

"Omnivore," Kyoya said. She looked at him and blinked at the predatory grin on his face. "You know where they are, correct?"

"Yes."

The grin became wider. Her heart beat faster. "Then, run."

Everything went still. Her eyes went wide, and she took off like a shot. He gave her several seconds of lead before following after. She sprinted out of the training clearing and rushed down a nearby street. Her mind raced as she plotted her path. The playground wasn't that far away, but, she grinned to herself, this chase would be a great way to end their little impromptu date. She bounced off a trashcan and hit the ground in a roll. She heard his footsteps behind her and grinned wildly. Her bond with the Cloud twanged with amusement and joy.

She crumbled up a wall and fell over the other side. Her feet pounded the pavement as she used every trick in her repertoire to stay ahead of the prefect. She laughed, the sound carrying through the neighborhood as she bounced from place to place. Green loomed in front of her. So close. Sweat dripped down her neck. Her lungs burned. She was almost there. She could see Mochida staring at her in a sort of horrified fascination that turned into shock. She frowned for a moment before her intuition kicked in. She had just enough time to brace herself before a body collided with her back, and the two of them continued on to land in the park grass in a roll and tangle of limbs. The prefect grinned viciously as he pinned his prey to the ground. She stared up at him and shook her head.

"Omnivore," he smirked down at her, "good run."

"Kyoya, get off me," she whined and bucked. He stilled and jumped off her. His face turned a faint pink.

"So, that's a thing," Mochida drawled as the kids stared at the two. "I'm leaving the kids to you before you do something else to break my worldview, boss. Have a nice evening."

"Herbivore," the prefect scoffed before wandering off. Tsuna let out a sigh before getting up herself. She managed to get on her feet just long enough to be knocked over by a ballistic Lambo missile. Fuuta laughed from where he sat perched on top of the monkey bars. She shook her head and rubbed the 5-year-old's poofy mess of curls. He grinned up at her and began babbling about what he had done that day as the older child climbed down and came to stand beside them.

"Home?" he asked as Lambo took a deep breath to continue his talking.

"Home. Let's go. Mom's waiting for us with dinner."

Dinner in the Sawada household had become something of a circus, what with Lambo and his loud, wild movement sometimes sending food flung and the frequent appearance of her own Elements, most notably Hayato, to the infrequent appearances of Xanxus. The man did appreciate homemade food and would appear on the nights Nana planned on having red meat dishes. Tsuna still hadn't
figured out how he knew when those nights were, but she suspected Mammon.

"This is very good, Nana," Reborn complimented the matron of the house. The widow smiled and nodded in thanks for the compliment.

"I wanted to try some Italian dishes after I heard you giving Tsuna Italian lessons. I'm glad it is up to your standards," she said.

"It is good, mama," Tsuna said as she ate another mouthful of noodles. The rich sauce felt heavy on her tongue but tasted amazing. She chewed thoughtfully.

"Yum, yum!" Lambo cried as he ate another bite. The 5-year-old had been overjoyed to eat something familiar to him, not that he disliked the Japanese fare Nana usually made. The kid ate everything set in front of him and ate it so fast Tsuna had a feeling the kid knew what it was like to go without food. She almost considered paying Mammon to find out if her suspicion was correct.

"Mind your manners, cow brat," Reborn warned as he lifted a hand toward Leon only to stop as the temperature in the room dropped several degrees. He inhaled slowly and put his hand back down. Glancing out the side of his eyes, he saw the orange fade from his student's eyes. He twitched. The girl had issues with him disciplining the cow brat. Lambo perked up and stuck his tongue out at the hitman.

"Enough of that, Lambo," Tsuna scolded. The boy lowered his head and sniffled. "That was rude."

"Sorry, Tsuna-nee."

"You should apologize to Reborn, not me."

Lambo frowned, his brows nutting together, as he crossed his arms and scowled. Tsuna stopped eating and gave the boy a look. Nana twittered. Her hand came up to her mouth to hide a smile. Her daughter had such a cute "mom face." Really, her daughter was a natural mother figure and, with the few bits and pieces she had managed to put together from talking to those involved in her daughter's life, her Tsu-chan was a fierce protector of children as well. A real mother bear. She was so proud.

"Not gonna," Lambo whined.

"Lambo Bovino—" the boy winced at the use of his full name— "you will apologize, or you will get no dessert."

"But, Tsuna-nee," he continued to whine. Tsuna remained firm and stared silently at the boy. He wriggled in his seat. "Sorry, Reborn."

"Brat," Reborn started. He fell silent at the look her felt Tsuna sending him. He glanced over and sighed. "Apology accepted."

"You really shouldn't antagonize each other," Tsuna stated as she went back to her food and ate more of the salad.

"He's too easy to rile up, Tsunami," Reborn grinned.

"He's five. Of course he's easy to rile up." Tsuna smirked. "I think it says something that someone your age defaults to bothering a child for entertainment."

"Tsunami," Reborn warned. Leon walked down from his perch on the fedora to Reborn's hand.
What, Reborn? It's the truth.

Leon glowed and changed into his gun form. Nana, having become used to such a sight over the past few months, barely blinked at the appearance of a gun in her house. Tsuna refused to react beyond allowing her flame to begin to circulate and fill the air to a higher degree than they had.

"Wah! Reborn, leave my Tsuna-nee alone!" Lambo shrieked. Fuuta, seeing where this was going a second before the Bovino reached into his space-warping hair, dove to the side and curled into a ball. A giant, pink bazooka appeared in the child's hands. Tsuna moved, trying to intercept, but something, some law of the universe that made the 10-year-bazooka unable to be stopped, made her trip over her own feet. The bazooka fire, a cloud of smoke covering Reborn. As the smoke cleared, everyone stared in anticipation for the 10-years-older Arcobaleno to appear.

Nothing. The pink smoke faded and revealed nothing.

"Lambo," Tsuna, after the shock of nothing appearing, spoke up. He broke out into childish sobs at the tone of her voice.

"Tsuna, what just happened?" Nana asked with concern. That was not how she knew weapons behaved.

"I don't know, but we should wait 5 minutes. If something hasn't happened by then, then we'll panic."

Fuuta uncurled from his ball and crawled beside Tsuna to curl into a ball. Tsuna placed a hand on the boy's head. "You OK, Fuuta?"

"I'm OK."

"Maybe you should go to bed? I need Lambo to stay down here, but he's going to be sent up to bed as soon as Reborn gets back."

"Yeah. OK, Tsuna-nee," Fuuta said blankly as he stared at where Reborn had been. He shivered. He knew what that could mean. There would be no one to switch with in the future if you were dead. He looked up at Tsuna and saw his own worries reflected in her eyes. Her flames curled around him protectively. He nodded and went upstairs to his room. He was glad I-Pin had gone out with Fon for dinner. She didn't need to see something like that. Whatever could take out the strongest of the Strongest Seven could likely take out her father figure as well.

Tsuna watched her eldest go upstairs and turned her attention to her mother. A silent conversation went on between the two. Nana gathered up the used dishes and headed for the kitchen. She'd be nominally safe if seething went wrong. Tsuna flesh crawled at the thought of her mother being harmed. Lambo, quiet for once, tried to shrink down on himself. The 10-year-bazooka lay by his side. The pink monstrosity of a weapon looked so innocent. She shivered as her stomach rolled. Her previously delicious dinner threatened to come back up.

"Lambo," Tsuna said in exasperation.

"Sorry, Tsuna-nee."

"No dessert. You know not to use the bazooka."

"Yes, Tsuna-nee."

She kept looking at the clock on the wall. The clock ticked by in silence. Two minutes. Three. Four.
Five. Nothing. No sign of the Arcobaleno returning. She frowned as something tugged at her intuition, a feeling coming both from within and without. She looked around, trying to figure out its source. Her foot tapped on the ground. Her fingers twitched. Something nagged at the edge of her mind.

"Lambo, let me see the bazooka for a moment."

"Yes, Tsuna-nee." He picked up the bazooka. He held the weapon firmly in his hands. The Bovino had, at the minimum, taught the boy proper weapon handling. That's why the moment the bazooka slipped out of his grip and fired made both of them react. Tsuna dove for the child and shoved him out of the way of the falling shell. She had only second to come to terms with what was happening before she was blown away in a cloud of pink smoke.

Her eyes shut tight against the potential irritant. He felt a pull behind her navel and unthinkingly opened her eyes. Stars passed before her vision. Blue and black mixed in a swirl of nothing. Air that wasn't air rushed around her body. Something latched onto her, but not physically. It felt as if someone had stuck a blunt pin or, perhaps, a clip onto her soul to keep her in place. Her jaw went tight. Hair fluttered around her. A bare breath ghosted her neck.

"I'm sorry. Please, forgive me," a female voice, unknown yet familiar, whispered to her before everything became shrouded in darkness.
AN: Hey, everyone. New Chapter. Yay! Reminder that I have a tumblr and to check it out. It's tumblr.com/kaliade. There are links there for how to support me if you enjoy my writing. If you enjoyed this chapter, please leave a comment or kudos. Thank you to everyone who already has done so. You have no idea how happy I am when I read your comments or get a notification that someone bought me a coffee.

Darkness pressed in on Tsuna from all sides. She shifted and felt something around her give and brush against her bare skin. The smoothness felt wrong. A floral smell filled her nose. Her mind raced. Arms came up to feel above her head and hit something solid. Bracing herself, she pushed. The lid of whatever she had ended up in shifted. It creaked and groaned as she pushed it to the side. Light streamed into where ever she had been held. She sat up and stared.

Lilies. She was in a wooden box filled with lilies. Her blood rushed out of her face as the implications slammed into her mind. Her future self, her 26-year-old self was in a coffin filled with lilies. Fresh ones. Her stomach turned. She felt like she was going to vomit. Shaking her head, she pushed the thoughts of her mortality out of her mind and took stock of just where her coffin was. A forested area, not a funeral parlor or cemetery greeted her. Her lips pursed.

"What the hell?" she whispered, her voice rough with suppressed panic. She looked down at the coffin again and frowned. The lilies weren't white like she had been expecting. It took her a moment to recognize the flowers, and she had to suppress a snort of amusement. Tiger lilies. The orange and black spotted petals greeted her cheerily. She shook her head and rubbed at the bridge of her nose. Of course her coffin would be filled with tiger lilies. What had she been expecting? She knew she had to track down whoever had that brilliant idea and beat them senseless.

"Tsuna?" a voice, older than she was used to but still familiar, whispered from the tree line. She turned and met bright jade eyes and long, silver hair. Hayato. Her Hayato only older. She smiled and stood before reality slammed into her again. Her eyes drifted down to the flowers in his hands and she swallowed thickly.

"Tsuna," Hayato breathed and dropped his bouquet of lilies and other mourning flowers. He moved far faster than she was used to. Arms wrapped tightly around her shoulders as strong arms pulled her upward. A nose dug into her fluffy hair. She felt more than hear him sob. His shoulder shook as she delicately wrapped her arms around him.

"Hayato, shh, it's OK. It's OK," she comforted her Storm. He trembled and shook his head. His arms tightened around her, almost painfully.

"Tsuna," he cried. "You...She was right. Her plan worked."

"It's OK, Hayato. Haya, it's OK," she tried to soothe him even as her mind raced over his words. Who's plan? She bit her tongue to keep from asking questions to her obviously emotional Storm.

He pulled back to stare at her. His eyes drank in her figure, her face, everything about her. Tears ran down his cheeks as his fingers dug into her shoulders.
"It worked," he stopped and frowned. "Are you all right? You, well, your future self thought there might be a bit of blow back after what we had to do to make this work."

"I'm fine." She frowned. "Hayato, what is going on?"

"It's a long story and we don't have time." He hissed low, his eyes darting around for enemies unseen before he pulled out a small notebook. "Look, remember that red head the Bovino sent the bazooka's shell to that one time?"

She thought about it for a moment before nodding and taking the offered notebook. "Irie Shoichi."

"Look, he-" a puff of pink smoke cut off what he was saying.

"Tsuna?" Hayato, her Hayato, asked as he blinked in surprise. "What?"

"Lambo, bazooka. It's been more than five minutes for me and Reborn never returned after Lambo got him at dinner. Plus your older self said some things that I really don't understand and gave me this."

"That's concerning," he said with a frown. He looked at his watch. "Two minutes…."

Tsuna winced as she heard his voice drag out as he noticed what she was sitting in. His eyes went wide. Terror and anger began to fill the air between the two of them and lanced down their bond. She shivered at the feeling as cold rushed down her spine. She grabbed his arms and held him in place as he went to jump to his feet. Jade eyes turned a blazing mix of colors as every flame type he had surged and turned his eyes prismatic. She reached up and placed a hand on his cheek as she forced a feeling of calm down their bond.

"Focus, Haya. We can't afford you going off the handle right now plus your older self wasn't that concerned with the coffin, more with me being here and a plan my future self concocted." Her voice became soft, gentle, and, most of all, calming.

He shook as he came down from his rage. His eyes stopped changing colors as he slumped forward. "Sorry, Tsuna."

"It's fine," she whispered before going tense. Her head snapped up. She felt something. Heard something that her intuition was screaming was a threat. She grabbed his shoulders and performed a backward leap. Two bullets impacted where they had been. Her eyes snapped toward the trees. Eyes blazed orange as she reached for her pockets where she kept her gloves. The leather slipped over fingers.

"Show yourself," she commanded, enforcing her words with her Sky. The world shook.

"I forgot how terrifying you were at that age," an adult woman's voice came from the trees. A moment later a woman with long blue-black hair and a tattoo taking up half her dropped out of the trees, a rifle slung over her shoulder. "Decima. Storm Guardian."

"Wait, Lal Mirch?" Tsuna gaped at the woman, the adult sized woman. The last time she had seen the CEDEF leader, she had been infant sized like the rest of the Arcobaleno.

"We need to move. Now," the former military commander ordered. She held out her hand with two lengths of chain dangling from her palm. "They'll have picked up on your appearance. We need to get to cover. Take these and put them on."

"Chains?" Hayato asked as he slipped his on.
Tsuna stared at her length of chain for a second. It felt familiar, the cool feeling of Mist flame curled over her skin. "Are these like Mammon's, able to block Flames from being detected?"

"They'll keep them from tracking your flame signature," Lal explained in a hurry and motioned for them to follow. "We need to leave before they can mobilize here."

The two teen shared a look but followed the woman. They had questions but the tone of the military commander's voice kept them silent. Wherever they were, they weren't safe. Tsuna's intuition told her the woman coil be trusted to keep her safe or to get her to safety. She couldn't differentiate between the two at the moment. Icy cold gripped at her chest again as she got a good look at the ornate coffin as she walked around it. Gooseflesh ran down both her arms at the sight. She could just imagine her future self laying peacefully in it.

"What is going on?" Tsuna hissed as she marched behind the focused woman.

"Too much to tell out here in the open." Lal's hand curled into a fist before she pulled her gun back into her hands in a smooth, practiced movement.

Hayato looked between the two females as he fell in line to guard his Sky's back. The plus side of setting himself up for long range attacks to the front just made everything easier. He swore he could see Lal Mirch give him an apprising nod in acknowledgment.

"Well, what should we be on the lookout for?" Tsuna asked as she kept her head on a swivel. She suppressed her flames as far as she could. After years of being forced behind a seal and having so long a period of time of being free, her flames were reluctant to be buried again, even if whoever this mysterious enemy was had the ability to track her with them. The chains only made it more difficult, or at least as far as she could tell.

"Mosca."

The word made her heart stop. She remembered Hibari's fight with the machine. As swiftly as it had ended, it had emphasized the lack of empathy for a person's own people that seemed endemic to the Italian mafia. Cold shot through her core. How many people had been sacrificed to the machine? She shivered.

"These Mosca are worse than the one you faced. More guns. More power. Better flight systems. Better sensors." Lal growled low in her throat. "Those things have made everything ten times worse for us."

The two teens gaped in horror at the woman. Yes, they remembered how easily Kyoya had taken down the Mosca, but he was a freak of nature and prone to multiplying his strength when annoyed, which he certainly been that night. Tsuna swallowed and shook her head. Hayato looked over at her before turning his attention to the forest. His muscles tensed as his berating deepened as he forced himself into a calm head space. He could panic later, in safety that the CEDEF leader promised.

That is when everything went to hell in a hand basket.

A hushed, unnatural quiet fell over the forest. The trio went tense before diving to the ground as one. Bullets flew through the air. Foliage shredded under the onslaught. The whining of machine serves and thrusters shattered Te tranquility and urged the group to move. Staying low to the ground, they took what little over there was. Lal cursed in Italian as she shot blindly into the forest. Her lips puled back in a fierce snarl. They hit the ground again as another round of machine gun fire made team duck down, faces in the dirt.
"Damn them," Lal hissed as she reached for something hanging from around her neck. She brought a box, barely bigger than a die, up to her face. Her free hand dropped her gun and purple fire bloomed on the silver ring on her finger. Tsuna felt the surge of Cloud flame and flinched away. The flames felt wrong, somehow. Cracked or broken in a way that made her stomach churn.

The flames crackled as Lal slammed the ring into a slot on the box. Cloud flames surged around them. The box unfolded. In a blaze of white-purple light, something slithered. The scattering of a thousand legs as they went through the underbrush reached their ears. Tsuna flinched at the noise. A screech echoed around them as five Mosca appeared from the forest gloom.

"What the hell is that?" Hayato gaped.

That turned out to be a giant, dark purple centipede. Perhaps giant was too small a word. The thing writhed and wriggled through the air, taking up enough space to crush three meant standing side by side. Tsuna jerked and threw up a little in her mouth. Thousands of legs twitched and dug into the bark of trees. Mandibles open and shut with an audible crunch as it grabbed a Mosca. The squeal on distressed metal made the teens wince. The metal bubbled as the creature's venom ate away at the alloys.

"Box animal. Explain later. Let's move." Lal slung her gun over her shoulder and grabbed the ten by the back of their shirts. She dragged the two teen over broken tree root and rock strewn ground until the managed to get their feet under them and run on their own. The giant bug let out a hissing squeal as it crashed into another Mosca an fell to the earth. Lal smirked and recalled the beast back into its box home. Tsuna eyed the tiny object and shivered. Her upper lip pulled back even as the greenish pallor left her skin.

"So many legs. Why does it need that many legs? Nothing needs that many legs."

"Don't like insects, Decima?" Lal teased the teen as she slung her rifle back around to the ready position. "That took care of most of them. We should be able to deal with the remainder, especially with the backup we got incoming."

"Great," Hayato drawled as he drew a gun from where it rested at the small of his back. He clicked the safety off and started actively circulating his Storm flame into the ammunition. Reborn finally, after much cajoling and promises of good coffee and better food, had taught the Storm Guardian how to go about infusing his ammo without disintegrating it.

"Good instincts," Lal compliments as she aimed and fire. The parking mass of wire and metal fell to the ground. The other Mosca, only one remaining of the original five, charged. Sky flame bloomed on Tsu'sn's forehead and flared into blazing existence on her transformed gloves. Hayato aimed and fired. The Storm infused bullet ricocheted off of its surface. He cursed, rapidly and in multiple languages, as he dove to the side. Tsuna rolled out of the way of a mini-missile and slammed her flame covered hand into the machine's head. The metal barely heated. A turret popped out of its shoulder and took aim. Using her flames, she propelled herself upward and ducked around a tree for cover.

"What the hell?" she hissed.

"Flame resistant coating," Lal called back. "Damn, I had hoped they sent the older models."

"Mah, mah, that just wouldn't be our luck, Lal-san," a male voice said. Rain flame surged. A blade, a familiar blade, appeared from nowhere, and cleaved through metal like a knife through butter. The air rippled. Tsuna caught the twang on Mist flames and focused. She could make out an outline of someone. She grinned.
"Takeshi."

"Took your time, didn't you, Yamamoto?"

"I am just in time." The Rain's grin appeared as whatever Mist trick he was using faded and revealed his older, more muscular body. Shigure Kintoki, back in its bamboo form, rested on his shoulder. "Now, we need to get to the base. You're bleeding flames like a beacon. We can talk later."

"Takeshi?" Hayato stared at the older form of his boyfriend. A blush quickly came over his checks as he focused on the lithe muscles in the swordsman's arms. He swallowed thickly as he holstered his gun.

Tsunu climbed out of the tree she had sheltered in and choked back a laugh at her Storm. She could understand the reaction. Takeshi grew up fine. She licked her lips.

"Suppress your hormones," Lal said. Amusement colored her tone. "We don't have much farther to go. Then you can get an explanation about what is going on. I know you, Decima. You probably have so many questions."

"That," Tsuna grunted, "is an understatement."

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Tsunu admitted to herself she was impressed with the base. After Lal had revealed a well camouflaged hatch in the forest, the group descended down and came to a long, narrow hall. She noted the defenses mounted on the ceilings and along the walls. She heard them click as they activated. Lal waved her hand. The guns clicked again. Lights flickered before becoming brighter, revealing the tunnel in more detail. The place looked cut into the bedrock, smooth stone lining the walls and floor. Fluorescent lights flickered in recessed fixtures overhead.

"Welcome to the base," Takeshi said with a grin as he stuck firmly to Tsuna's side. His fingers twitched every so often as he forced himself not to reach out and touch her. Hayato frowned but kept his mouth shut. He remembered just where he had found Tsuna. Sympathy filled his eyes as he glanced over at the Rain.

The group made their way down the hall. Lal took lead and entered her code into a keypad. The indicator light changed from red to green. A hiss of air revealed a door, which opened smoothly to reveal a large, furnished room. The group stepped in and the door sealed shut behind them. The lock beeped twice as it automatically locked behind them.

Tsunu looked around and frowned. Something seemed wrong with the set up. She wasn't certain what it was. The place looked like a nice spot to lounge during downtime. Two long couches and several comfy looking chairs made a circle in the center. Carpet cushioned the feet from the hard floor. The walls, painted gray, were soothing. Her eyes widened as she looked at the far wall more closely.

Names. A list of names trailed down the wall with dates beside them. Birth dates and death dates. Her stomach flipped. She knew those names. She broke away from the group and rushed to the wall. Her fingertips brushed over Rumiko's name. Above her, Yuusuke's rest. Her breath stuttered in her lungs. Her free hand came up to her mouth as she read more and more familiar names.

"No," she whispered harshly. "Please, no."

"They fell in the first wave," Takeshi said somberly as he walked up behind her. He reached out and placed a hand on her shoulder. "They gave us enough time to get out and go to ground."
"The rest of the Akatora?" Her vice quivered. She knew the answer. She didn't want to hear him say it, but she need to him to. She shook.

"Gone."

"God," Hayato hissed as he stepped up beside them. His eyes roved over the list of names, the list of the dead. The wall nerved as a memorial to the fallen and a reminder to those still breathing what they were fighting for. "How? Who?"

"Millefiore." The group turned to the CEDEF leader. "They were killed by the Millefiore famiglia led by Byakuran Gesso."

"You need to focus on the now rather than what's already happened, Tsunami," Reborn's voice came from the corner. Tsuna didn't like the way Takeshi squeezed her shoulder at the sound of the infant sized hitman's voice.

Tsuna turned to face her tutor and paused. Her mouth opened and closed several times as her brain tried to make sense of what he was wearing. "Reborn, why are you wearing BDSM fetish wear?"

Lal snorted before giving up any sign of dignity and broke down into laughter. Tears leaked down the woman's face as her entire body shook in hysterical amusement. Takeshi snorted. Tsuna felt his hand shake where it remained on her shoulder. She reached up and patted his hand.

"It's not BDSM gear, Tsunami," Reborn groused, arms crossing over his chest. "It's a harness to keep me from dying."

The room turned sober rather quickly at that declaration. Tsuna took a seat on one of the couches and pulled her Storm and Rain down beside her. Takeshi took Shigure Kintoki from his back and rested it against his leg, still within reach. Hayato shifted as he tried to get comfortable on her right. She reached out and grabbed his hand in an effort to calm him.

"What is going on?" Tsuna asked. "I woke up in a coffin, of all things, and just, I don't understand."

"Three years ago, the Millefiore devised a machine that would spread a specific kind of radiation. This radiation affected only the Arcobaleno," Lal began to explain. Her hand went to a chain around her neck. "I survived only because I was a failed Arcobaleno and not so vulnerable to the radiation. Instead, I turned back into my adult form while I watched my friends die around me one by one. While this was happening, the Millefiore began consolidating power in Europe. At the height of power, they managed to bring another family under their thumb, the Giglio Nero, and that's when everything really started going to shit."

"The head of the Giglio Nero has a gift for seeing into the future," Reborn's serious tone and face expression made Tsuna's blood chill, far more than the information he had just dropped on her. "You can imagine how that turned the tides for the Gesso."

"Yeah, I can imagine," Tsuna winced and rubbed at her temple. "Let me guess, the Millefiore turned their attention on Vongola."

"Yes," Takeshi hissed, his hands balling into fists. "We had no warning when he struck. The Akatora fell. Nana-san, they left her corpse as a present on your birthday. My dad tried to save her and he…he's gone."

"Shit," Hayato cursed and slammed his fist against the armrest.

Tsuna went cold. Ice suffused through her body as she began to shake. Her lips pulled up into a
snarl. Sky flame raged alongside Storm and a far more subdued that she was used to Rain.

"You woke in a coffin because your future self needed to buy us some time to get everything put together for this plan. You...she went into a meeting with Byakuran Gesso and was hit by a sniper, one of our own with a special bullet that only made you mimic death." Lal smirked. "You really are a devious woman. I never would have considered going as far as your older self did in faking a death up to and including a fake funeral and traditional Vongola rights. That's why you were in a coffin in the middle of nowhere and above ground. Vongola has weird funerary traditions, but the Millefiore fell for it."

Tsuna blinked, her rage calmed by confusion as she heard about this plan of her future self. "And why would you need the me from the past? What could I do then that I couldn't do in the future?"

"I can explain that," Takeshi announced. He lifted his right hand. "Notice anything."

"The ring," Hayato gaped. "What the hell did you do to the Rain Ring? Where is it?"

"Destroyed." Takeshi frowned and rubbed at his right arm. "There was an incident during your ascendance to being the Decima where they were all destroyed by outside forces. We managed to get back at them, but there wasn't anything we could do for the rings. Talbot said he could have done something if the remaining fragments were larger, but all that remained were tiny fragments and dust."

"Well, shit," Tsuna cursed and flopped back. "The rings are that important?"

"Yes," Reborn said, catching everyone's attention. He refused to say more, his face darkening.

"Makes sense," Hayato nodded slowly. "Vongola's known for doing seemingly impossible things. The rings might allow for such things."

Tsuna's lips pressed together as her intuition told her whatever information the two Arcobaleno were hiding was important. It made her skin itch, but she said nothing. There would be time later.

"Tsuna made a plan," Takeshi continued. "Our past selves should be appearing one by one over the next few days if everything goes to plan. Ryohei and Mochida should be back by tomorrow. Hibari's around somewhere. Namimori is still Hibari clan territory even if the Millefiore are active here. Not even Byakuran is willing to go against them just yet. No one's sure why, but it works in our favor."

"I see," Tsuna hummed and frowned. "What do we need to do?"

"Train," Lal said. "Train and let us equip your properly. As you saw with the Mosca, the Millefiore have managed to create some flame resistant coatings for their armor and machines. In return, we've developed weapons capable of rendering those coatings moot. You standard gun with flame infused bullets aren't going to do anything and your Sky flames, Tsunami, aren't at a level where they can easily take care of such things. You tend to start out light before going in fully, and we need to train that out of you."

"Is it true?" a female voice called out from one of the connecting hallways. Heads turned. Tsuna grinned as she recognized the woman in a three piece suit standing there.

"Hana," Tsuna greeted with a wave. "It's good to see you well."

"Huh, so her plan did work? Why am I not surprised?" the woman said with a smirk. "Did you like the flowers in your coffin, Tiger?"
"Those were your idea?" Tsuna glared playfully. "Weren't they a bit garish? Tiger lilies, really?"

"The you from this time liked the idea." She shrugged before addressing Reborn and Lal. "It's getting late. Want me to get them settled in before we torture them with training in the morning?"

"Good idea," Reborn said, his eyes tracking over to the wall of names. "We'll leave them in your capable hands."

"Hana is one of the best organizers we've got," Takeshi grinned at her. He shook his head and stood up. He offered his younger lovers a hand. "You're going to need your rest. Lal is a harsh taskmaster."

"Oh, you flatter me so," the CEDEF commander purred. Hayato and Tsuna both had a bad feeling about this plan. Reborn's sadistic grin only made such a feeling worse.

Tsuna stared at the ceiling of her room. Hana had led her to a rather nicely furnished room with a twin bed shoved up against one wall and a connecting bathroom with a shower. Takeshi and Hayato, who were sharing a room if on separate beds, slept next door and had to share bathing facilities with the rest of the floor. Only two suites, hers and Chrome's, had built in bathrooms even if that did shrink their usable space.

She'd been awake for hours. Her watch read 01:23. Her mind refused to shut up, her thoughts racing. Her heart beat hard in her chest as she tried to assimilate the information she had learned. Being flung into the future was bad enough, being flung into the future where a shadow war was going on and a target was planted firmly on her head made everything a thousand times worse. She groaned and flung an arm over her eyes. She hissed and finally gave in. She sat up and got out of bed. Perhaps she'd be able to work off her nervous energy. She slipped into the slippers she had dug out of the tiny closet earlier.

At least her future self had a sense of humor, what with having lion slippers buried in her closet under several layers of old shirts and threadbare lounge pants.

Fluorescent lighting lit the hallway. She began to walk in no particular direction. She knew she could wake her boys, but they'd need their rest. Hana had hinted at Hayato having a rather long day of training coming himself. The few stories Tsuna had managed to squeeze out of her painted the working relationship between her Rain and Storm as something the mafia were already writing legends about. Now Hayato had to catch up to what his future self was capable of and work to being able to fight beside this older version of their boyfriend. If it wasn't for the fact she knew she'd have a rougher day of training coming up, she'd feel more for his situation.

One door in the hall was open, light spilling out and pulling her attention away from her thoughts. Curious, she walked toward it. The walls were saturated in a bright, cheery yellow that seared the eyes if one stared at them for too long. She blinked several times before looking back in. Yes, the wall were that bright, but at least the furnishings were in dark colors to sort of off-set the color. Hana, in black pajamas, laid in the bed with a book in hand. The older version of her friend set the book down and motioned for her to come in.

"Can't sleep?" she asked.

Tsuna nodded. "My brain won't shut up. Everything here in the future is just...we appeared in a war zone where everyone I swore to protect is either dead or not here."

"The kids are safe, so you can take that off your mind." Hana shrugged. "They're on a general
errand, more of a milk run than anything. Lambo was irritating Reborn and Fuuta and -Pin dragged him out before it could come to blows. They'll be back by tomorrow."

"That's good. I was worried they had ended up like Mom," Tsuna sighed and ran a hand through her hair. "How did she die, Hana? Please tell me it was quick."

Hana looked away and bit her lip. "You really don't want to know that, Tsuna."

"That makes it even worse," she frowned and ran a hand down her face. "Tell me something that can distract me."

"Ryohei fucking you into the bed is a very erotic sight."

Tsuna froze and looked over at her older friend. Her mouth opened and closed several times before she shook her head. "What?"

"Ryohei fucking you into the bed is a very erotic sight."

"That's what I thought you said." She inhaled smoothly and exhaled a long breath. "How the hell did that happen?"

Hana grinned, her teeth glinting in the light. "Well, a certain pair of someones made a point to push the two of us together."

Tsuna gave her an unrepentant grin. "How long did that take?"

"A few months," Hana shrugged. "I'll admit I was stubborn. It was after we became intimate that I discovered a bit of a problem. Ryohei's insatiable, the stupid Sun stamina of his."

Tsuna giggled, her hand going to cover her mouth as she figured out what she was saying. "You needed help wearing him out, didn't you?"

"Yes." Hana shook her head and fell back on the pillows. "When I need a night or two to get some rest, well, you're always willing to help out. It's a lifesaver."

Tsuna continued to giggle, the levity making the serious thoughts that had plagued her calm and fade to the background. Finally calming after several minutes of laughing, she dropped her hand to her heaving chest. She smiled thankfully at her old friend. "Anything else?"

"Your brother refuses to let you match-make for him. It's funny how he keeps dodging the girls and boys you send after him." She sat upright and shrugged. "Beyond that, there's nothing much more entertaining than watching you and your stable of boy-toys circling each other."

Tsuna smirked. "So, my love life is entertainment around here?"

"After everything…" Hana frowned. "After everything, we take our joys where we can find them. The fact that you've managed to find and keep your happiness while the world is falling to pieces…I envy you at times, Tsunami."

Tsuna mirth fizzled. She turned away from Te somber eyes of her friend. She bit her lip and swallowed thickly. "Hana, what happened to Kyoko? I'd have expected to see her here somewhere or you to have said something about her by now."

Hana closed her eyes. "She's in a coma. The attack that took out your mother, it left her in a coma. Her family put her in a hospice in Kyoto. We, Ryohei and I, haven't seen her since they sent her
away."

"Hana, I'm so sorry," she began to apologize.

"It's not your fault, not really," Hana interrupted. "The Gesso bastard, he's not right, normal, sane? I don't know how to put it better, but he treats this war like a game and people as game pieces. He needs to be stopped. Stop him now and in the past before he can become a threat in your time. That'll make up for all this."

"Hana…"

"Now go get some sleep, Tsuna. Lal is a harsh taskmaster. You'll need all the sleep you can get."

Tsuna stood from the bed and stared down at her friend. Hana waved her out and closed the door shut behind her. She leaned against the cool walls of the hallway, her arms crossed over her chest in thought. She shook. The more she heard about Byakuran Gesso, the more she wanted to rip out his heart and crush it in front of his still conscious face. She shook her head and walked back toward her room. Hana was right. She needed her rest. Looking down at her watch, she winced at the time. At least she'd be able to get a few hours in. Hopefully.
Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Here is the newest chapter. I've also started a Discord server for my writing and just general hanging out. It's really barebones at the moment, but please check it out. Link is discord.gg/9SHkUpD

Tsuna blearily sipped at a steaming cup of coffee. The bitter liquid burned her tongue and coated her taste buds. Her eyelids drooped. A mallet tried to impact the back of her head. She moved, tilting her body out of the way. She turned and glared at the far too chipper hitman. She snarled, baring her teeth. He lifted an eyebrow and smirked. The mallet glowed and shifted back into the familiar chameleon shape. The lizard bobbed his head and walked up to his master's arm and climbed onto his fedora.

"Reborn," Tsuna hissed.

"Didn't get a good night's sleep, Tsunami?"

"Fuck you, Reborn. I doubt anyone could have a good night's sleep when they learn everyone they've promised to protect is dead," she snapped and turned away from the infant sized man.

Reborn frowned and tilted his fedora over his eyes. "Tsunami…"

"Reborn, just don't bother me until I'm more awake. I'm not in the mood for your shenanigans." She took another sip of the coffee and winced as the bitterness coated her tongue. "We're starting training this morning, aren't we?"

"Lal's going to take care of your training. She's spoken to me about it, and I agree with her. You're prone to starting off with a low-level Flame until you can see how strong your opponent is. In a war like we're in now, that will end with you dead."

Tsuna frowned as she leaned over her cup and stared at her reflection in the inky blackness. "I'm... in the yakuza we have a different culture around our Flames. You know that. I've tried explaining this in the past, but you don't seem to understand what that truly means. I do not have the same instincts that you do when it comes to using them. You Italians, you use your Flames as a weapon. Us? We see our Flames as extensions of our spirits. That's why I start out low and then go higher. Actualizing your Flames isn't a common tactic and is more a threat or dominance display."

Reborn blinked and, after a second of parsing her words, placed his face in his hand. He grumbled something unflattering in Sicilian before looking up at his student. "That explains so much."
"Thinking about Yamamoto-san and the fact the Flames aren't visible when he or Takeshi use Shigure Soen Ryu? That's the way we've learned to use our Flames, Reborn. Why do you think I prefer using my Flames unseen to control the atmosphere of a room? That's normal for a yakuza, but, from talking with Dino and Hayato, not what you lot in Europe are used to."

"You are going to drive the old men crazy, Tsunami."

She grinned. "Perfect."

"I am going to enjoy the chaos you cause, Tsunami. You just have to survive this." He grinned at her and hopped down from the table.

"Reborn," Lal greeted her compatriot as she set a tray of breakfast down on the table and sat down across from the Vongola heiress. "Decima."

"Tsuna, call me Tsuna," she said. "I haven't been officially confirmed in my time yet."

"Tsuna then." Lal nodded and began to eat her breakfast. "Do you have any questions for me before we begin training?"

Tsuna's lips pressed together. She frowned and stared at the older version of the woman she had come to somewhat respect. She clicked her tongue before nodding. "What, exactly, happened to make everything this bad?"

"The Gesso family started everything. We weren't expecting an agreement between them and the Gigolo Nero to become this." Lal hissed. Her fingers curled tightly around her fork. "Then the Arcobaleno started getting sick. That's when the newly named Millefiore took advantage of our confusion and attacked the Iron Fort."

Lal fell silent. She stared into her breakfast. Her eyes closed, and she inhaled slowly.

"Lal…"

"Skull died giving us time to escape. He took down three squads of Millefiore fighters before— before-" She swallowed. "He took out all of the Millefiore that attacked and injured Byakuran bad enough that he was down for a month despite having an army of Suns workin at healing him."

"Lackey did that?" Reborn frowned from where he perched on the counter and refilled his coffee.

She nodded. "Cloud propagated explosion."
"Holy shit," Tsuna breathed, her eyes going wide as she figured out what she meant. "That's…I'll have to remember to do something nice for Skull when we go back to our time."

"He said after dying as often as he did he no longer feared death." She smiled sadly, a faint glimmer coming over her eyes before being forcibly choked back. "He was the first to die, and he died on his terms taking down as many of his enemies as he could."

The trio fell silent. Lal mechanically ate her breakfast though she looked like the food felt like lead in hare stomach. Reborn kept his head bowed, the rim of his fedora shadowing his face. Tsuna sipped at her now lukewarm coffee. The silence weighed down on them. Tsuna's skin pricked as she felt Hayato and Takeshi approached the cafeteria. She felt the moment they stepped in the room and noticed her state of being.

"Tsuna-hime?" Hayato murmured. Takeshi frowned and shook his head. Taking in Lal's partially slumped shoulders and the look on Reborn's face, he had a good idea what they had been discussing. He gently grabbed the Storm by the shoulder and guided him to the kitchen.

"Takeshi," the Storm hissed at the Rain.

The swordsman shook his head. "There are some things we prefer not remembering. I don't like thinking of the day Namimori was attacked, and we lost the Akatora and Dad. Lal hates talking about the fall of the Iron Fort back in Sicily. Just accept we've seen darkness that makes what you've seen so far look pale by comparison. Just, give them some time to center themselves."

Hayato eyed the old form of his lover and sighed. "PTSD?"

Takeshi merely hummed and nodded.

"Now that everyone has been fed and watered," Lal began with a smirk. Her attitude had recovered from breakfast, and she had dragged the group into one of the training rooms. She smiled, vicious and predatory in her flash of teeth. "Hayato, Tsuna, may I introduce our master weaponsmith, Giannini."

The room fell silent. Lal frowned and tapped her foot. She groaned and rubbed her temples. "Giannini!"

A loud bang clanged beyond the door. The two teens jumped at the crash. Takeshi groaned and sunk his head in his hands. He gave Lal a sour look. The former military woman sighed and stalked over to the door. Yanking it open, she glared at the mess of technology and person that lay in a heap in the hallway.

"Giannini," she groaned and reached down and pull the man up. Cloud Flames flickered around her arms as she amplified her strength as she dragged the man as his contraption upright.
"Sorry, Lal," the man said in heavily accented Japanese. Tsuna's eyes crossed as she tried to parse what he had said. Reborn's reaction, the subtle paling of his face and his stance changing to one that would allow him to jump away from any explosion. That didn't make Tsuna feel good about the situation.

"What was it this time?"

"One of the stabilizers malfunctioned a bit," the balding man in a floating mass over metal armed with a ton of guns attached to it. "It's fixed now."

"Giannini," Lal groaned.

"Hi," the man greeted the teens with a wave. His machine let out a humming noise as it lifted off the ground, and he floated toward the group. "Hi, Yamamoto. How're your boxes working? Anything to report?"

"No, Giannini," Takeshi grumbled and eyed the man warily. He took a hesitant step back as the man hovered closer. Hayato and Tsuna moved far outside the man's reach. Something about his appearance maned the hairs on the back of Tsuna's neck stood on end. She subtly placed herself between the man and Hayato. The Storm frowned but took a step back and put a hand on his hidden gun.

"Take your hand off that gun, little brother," a familiar female voice called from the doorway. Everyone turned to see a woman with a mask covering half of her face standing there. Hayato stared for several seconds before turning an almost sickly color.

"Sister?" he gaped. Tsuna could understand why. Bianchi's face, half of it at least, contained a mass of scar tissue. Her hair on the same side as the scars ceased to exist. The other side of her head, the hair barely brushed her cheek.

"Bianchi?" Tsuna breathed. "What happened to you?"

"Who did this to you?" Hayato roared. His eyes flickered red. His hair began to lift. His fingers lit with multicolored Flames, the red being the brightest and most intense of all. He took a step toward his sister.

"Hayato, calm down," she said. "You're showing your Flames."

"Who did this to you?" he roared. Tsuna reached out and gripped his shoulder. He practically vibrated under her fingers. She pushed with her Flames, the Sky soothing the rough, raging edges of Hayato's combined Flames. Rain Flame quickly joined her own. She looked up at and winced at the glowing blue in Takeshi's eyes. Hayato swayed on his feet and fell back against Tsuna. She wrapped
her arms around him and held him tightly against her chest. She rested her chin on his shoulder, blowing the silver hair out of her face. Hayato shuddered under the combined tranquilizer of concerned Sky and soothing Rain.

"Calm down, Haya," Tsuna said in his ear. He shivered, but his Flames finally settled into something less jagged and raging.

"The you from this time already took care of the one who did this, little brother," Bianchi said as she stepped into the room. Tsuna forcibly held back a wince as her intuition told her that scar, an acid burn really, dipped far beneath her shirt and likely trailed down the entire left side of her body. The long sleeves and gloves she wore made Tsuna's suspicions worse.

"Shamal, what happened to him?" Hayato finally got out as Takeshi stopped feeding his Flames through the bond.

"He's in the medical area right now. I can take you over him later after you get done training with me."

"I'm training with you?" Hayato blinked.

Bianchi smirked and nodded. "I helped you develop your box weapons, Hayato. I know what you can be capable of and how you can train to reach that."

Tsuna released her Storm. He stumbled a few steps before righting himself.

"What are box weapons?" Tsuna asked. The question had been burning in the back of her mind ever since Lal had used that centipede. She shivered as she remembered the multitude of legs. Her stomach flipped.

"My greatest invention!" Giannini announced.

Lal smacked him. "Verde invented them, you fool. You just streamlined the process of making them."

"Explanation, please," Tsuna interrupted the two.

"It was discovered that infusing an object with Flames over a long course of time, it could allow the object to be stored in specially prepared vessels that acted as a sort of space-time pocket. That's what a box weapon is," Giannini tilted his head back and grinned maniacally. He looked to be hovering on the edge of laughing like a madman. "Then we discovered that animals could be treated in much the same way as objects. That's how we have boxes like Lal's Zamza."
Tsuna blinked as she noticed Hayato perk up. "I take it that's the layperson explanation?"

"Yes," Giannini winced. "The future you isn't exactly willing to listen to me ramble on about the more scientific explanations. Gokudera-san prefers reading those reports and summarizing it for you."

She nodded. "That makes sense. So, are you going to give Hayato and I our future-selves' box weapons?"

"After a bit of training," Lal said. "Hayato, go with Bianchi. She's going to get you started on strengthening your secondary and tertiary Flames. Your box weapon requires multiple Flame types. Tsuna, I'm going to take over your training. Giannini's got some simple box weapons for you to practice with. After we're sure your ready, we'll give you access to their box weapons."

Tsuna frowned but nodded. "Makes sense. I assume I use my gloves even in the future."

"Leon does good work, Tsunami," Reborn said smugly. The chameleon puffed up proudly.

Giannini grinned and pushed a button on the control panel on his hover vehicle. It hissed. A blinking light flashed, casting blue light over Giannini's face. A panel pulled back and slid to the side. A shelf slid out, a box decorated with red and gold markings rest in a specially designed slot. The weaponsmith pulled it out and held it out for the Storm guardian to take.

"This is one of the weapons I created for your older self before we developed his current weapon. It's a sort of arm cannon. When it deploys, it'll attach to your right forearm. Feed your Flames into it. It'll automatically turn the Flames into projectiles." His grin turned manic. Hayato hesitated for a few seconds before taking the tiny box. "It's not a box animal like Zamza, but you aren't ready for that creature yet. Damn cat."

"This one is for you," Lal said as she tossed a tiny box at Tsuna. The yakuza box reflexively caught the object and looked it over. Orange swirled around silver. She looked up at the former Arcobaleno in confusion. "It's not a weapon, but there is something in there that your future stored away. I'm still pissed at her about for doing it, but I think you'll be able to get it out fairly soon."

"I'll take Hayato, then," Bianchi said and grabbed her little brother by the back of his collar before dragging him out of the room as he flailed his arms wildly. "I'll return him around lunchtime."

"Why am I suddenly concerned for his well-being?" Tsuna muttered.

"Because you know Bianchi well and your intuition is ridiculous." Takeshi draped an arm over her shoulder in a half hug before heading out of the training room himself. "I have my own work to do. I'll see you at lunch."
"I'd worry more about yourself, Tsunami," Reborn said and sauntered out of the room. "Lal, don't go easy on her."

"Oh, don't worry about that, Reborn." Lal grinned, teeth flashing in the fluorescent lighting. "There's no risk of that happening."

Giannini hurried out of the room, his hovering vehicle making strange noises at the speed at which he moved. Tsuna swallowed thickly as the door slid shut behind him. Lal's smile turned feral. Perfect. Just perfect.

Tsuna flopped onto her back. Her skin ached. Her muscles ached. Even her bones hurt. She felt like one giant bruise. Lal had not been holding back as she had continuously attacked the yakuza boss. Even worse, the woman had brought out her centipede to chase the quietly panicking teen around the training hall. Lal had cracked up at seeing how such a strong, fearless leader like Tsuna avoided the creepy crawler.

"You, woman, are a slave driver," Tsuna gasped out as she shut her eyes and laid her head back on the floor.

"Well, you did start kicking into a harder Flame almost right away, so my methods work," Lal said. "You've passed this part of training. I'm pleased."

"This part?" Tsuna squeaked, her eyes flashing open as her body tensed. She hissed at the sudden flaring of pain at the action. Her teeth grit together. "What do you want me to do now? I can't move."

"Meditation." Lal chuckled at the look the teen sent her. "Your older self suggested it. She was being cagey about the why but insisted you needed to do this."

"Of course I was," Tsuna groaned and laid an arm over her eyes. "Anything else she suggested?"

"Use the ring as the focus. There is something about the ring that aids meditation." Lal shrugged. "Skies don't like talking about training with non-Skies. I've served under three of you and still don't understand how Sky Flames work other than they're the most spiritual of all Flame types due to their harmony aspect."

"Wonderful," Tsuna grumbled and sat up. She idly rubbed her lower back as the muscles there protested. She curled her legs into a comfortable position and crossed her arms over her chest. Her ring glinted on her right ring finger. She looked at it and frowned. Worrying her lip between her teeth, she sighed. "Give me some quiet?"
Lal nodded. "I'll go check in with Yamamoto. He's keeping an eye out for the kids."

Tsuna hummed and settled into a comfortable pose with her hands in her lap. Her eyes slid shut. Her lips pressed into a thin line before relaxing and parting to let out a soft breath. Shoulders settled. She listened to her heartbeat as Lal's footsteps echoed out in the hallway. Her breathing fell even. She reached out to her Flames. Warmth seeped through her body beneath her skin. At least, until the heat met where the Vongola Sky Ring rested on her right hand. Citrine colored eyes opened to look down on the tiny bit of metal. It felt cold against her skin, the metal absorbing her Flame's warmth. She swallowed and focused on the connection. The world outside her focus became fuzzy, unimportant.

"I am sorry, Tsunami," Lal's voice whispered in her ear.

Tsuna's eyes snapped open. She turned as her intuition flared an urgent warning. She couldn't avoid the hit to her chest. He went flying through the air and slammed into the far wall. Her muscles tried to move only to fail. Her eyes met Lal's. The gasmask wearing Arcobaleno rushed her again, this time aiming to grab her neck. Tsuna struggled weakly in the grip.

"I am sorry, Tsunami, but this is necessary," Lal's distorted voice pounded in her ears as darkness began to creep in the corner of her eyes. Her hands came up to push futilely at the older woman's arms. This was not how it was going to end. Her mind struggled as whatever gas the rejected Arcobaleno had used took away more of her strength.

She refused to die here.

Fire consumed her senses.

"What?" Tsuna said as she felt her mind settle. She stood. When had she fallen to the floor? She looked around. Darkness flowed in every direction as far as she could see. Her tongue clicked against the roof of her mouth. Her arms wrapped around her chest. Tongue flicked out to wet lips as she felt someone staring at her back.

"Who's there?"

"Young Vongola," a voice, male and old, wheezed. Tsuna spun around, her eyes searching for whoever had spoken. Her arms came up into a guard position. She pulled on her Flames and hissed as they struggled to flow to her hands. Her lips pulled back into a tight grimace.

"Reveal yourself," she demanded.

"You who must bear the weight of our sins..." another voice, this female, echoed around her. The darkness blazed white, burning at Tsuna's eyes. She blinked, eyes adjusting, and reeled back at the fire that surrounded her. She spun around. Breath froze in her chest before realizing the fire did not
feel hot. Her stance shifted from surprise to something more inquisitive. Peering through the fire, she could make out walls and timbers, both burning. And there, in the center of it all, bodies of varying ages lay. Fire quickly consumed their clothing, not that they were able to react. The bullet holes in their heads told the yakuza boss they were dead. She frowned and stepped back. Her eyes narrowed as she tried to focus her Flames and her intuition to look through what she knew to be an illusion.

"Will you be willing to take on our burden, our sins, young Vongola?" another voice spoke from all around her. The scenery changed. People were mowed down by gunfire all around her. Fighting broke out in stone-lined streets. Women and children ducked and tried to escape the madness.

"This is Vongola," another voice intoned. The scene wavered and revealed another scene of utmost bloodshed. Two men, on their knee in surrender, collapsed as a third surrounded by six other shot them in the head. Tsuna watched impassively. Her eyebrow began to twitch.

"Can you—" another voice started.

"Shut up!" Her eyes blazed in frustrated anger. "You think I do not understand the bloodshed that comes with running an underworld family? Do you think I, who watched impassively as my father was beheaded for crimes against my mother and I, not understand the meaning of sacrificing the morals society as whole impresses upon us as children? My hands are already stained with the blood of those who would harm my people and bring ruin to my territory? A little more will not make much difference. I would burn the world to ash to protect my own.”

The world fell silent. Tsuna stood upright, her intuition flaring as the scene changed back to uninterrupted black. Her heart beat for several seconds. Multicolored light bloomed at her feet. It traced upward and spinning out into a crest she had only recently become familiar with: the Vongola Crest.

"Then so be it, young Vongola," the voices plus more said in unison. Sky Lames blazed in eight pillars lining the crest along the sides. The Flames faded and revealed eight figures holding various weapons. She recognized the familiar form of Timoteo di Vongola. Her fist clenched at her side. As one the group of eight turned to the top of the crest. A final, ninth pillar of Sky Flames, this one far brighter and purer than any of the others, rose toward the sky. It whirled and writhed for several seconds before fading and revealing a blond man who she recognized from her lessons with Reborn. Giotto di Vongola. Sawada Ieyasu. Her ancestor.

Her blood ran cold as the man stepped forward toward her. She straightened subconsciously. Her shoulder fell back and head tilted up to look at him. She met his shining orange eyes head on. He stopped several steps in front of her and just looked her over. Her lips pressed into a tight line.

"Do you believe you can handle this burden, the bloodshed, our sins?" his said in a voice just barely above a whisper. The Flame on his forehead crackled.

"I will do whatever it takes to make Vongola strong since it seems I'm not going to escape this burden. They are mine now, by rights of blood and combat. They are mine to protect, mine to
nurture, and I will do whatever it takes to make them honorable men and women," she promised, never breaking eye contact. "Nothing you or any of them say or do will change my course."

Giotto looked down at her—again she cursed her shortness—before smiling at her. "You may not be what I expected in an heir of my blood so removed from the mafia, but perhaps, you are what the family needs to return to what they once were. At the minimum, you are less bloodthirsty than your predecessors. Go strong in the world and let them try to comprehend your mentality, granddaughter." He paused for a second, his head tilting to the side. "And don't be so mad at the Arcobaleno. You did ask them to arrange this."

Tsuna blinked before groaning and rubbing the bridge of her nose. "Future me is such a fucking troll."

"This wouldn't have worked if you had known what was happening," Giotto reassured her with a smile. "I must admit, you are not what I was expecting. You remind me of Asari and Lord Hiroyuki more than any of your predecessors."

Her nose wrinkled. "I'll take that as a compliment."

"She's more worthy than my lazy son," the only other female of the group said as she broke from the ranks of the men. The Ninth's figure wavered for a second before fading away. "How did he turn out like he did? I taught him better."

"Foolishness of believing himself infalible and being surrounded by yes men." Tsuna snorted. "That'll ruin anyone."

The female figure, Vongola Ottavo Daniela Vongola, smiled. Her eyes, concealed beneath a mask of Sky Flame, crinkled in mirth. She reached out and placed a hand on Tsuna's shoulder before turning to face the First. "She may not be what you wanted or expected of the first of your line to take command since you ran away, but perhaps, she is what the mafia needs in these trying times. If my son is an example of the common mafioso, perhaps a woman like her will be able to force them to bow to her." Her lips turned upward into a smirk. "She does have a Will like your own, Primo."

"Perhaps you are right. We'll just have to see," Primo sighed and rubbed at his head. Blond hair flipped and flopped about before coming to rest in spikes. He turned to Tsuna and smiled sadly. "I still do not wish for this curse of violence and blood on my own kin."

"I'm already drowned in the blood of my enemies," Tsuna shook her head. "I decided my path long ago, ancestor."

"Giotto or Ieyasu. Being called ancestor gives me hives." The man shivered and shook his head. "It's hard to believe someone as young as you has done all that you have. Go now, Sawada Tsunami, and keep your vow to us."
The crest faded away. The eight remaining Vongola bosses bowed ever so slightly to her before they disappeared. Ottavo grinned at her and waved before the darkness crushed in on Tsuna. Her eyes opened. Her hand shot up and grabbed Lal's hand. Sky Flame burned the Arcobaleno's skin. The ex-military commander dropped her and retreated to a much safer distance.

"That was not nice, Lal Mirch," Tsuna hissed. Sky Flame blazed on her forehead brightly enough to cause the shadows to grow deeper. "You are lucky that Primo said this was planned out by myself."

"Holy shit," Lal cursed softly as she stared at the teenager. Her aura pressed down on everything. The Sky Flames in the air made her want to bow her head. Lal shivered and took another step back.

"Now, please," Tsuna began as her intuition blared a warning, "catch me as I soon as I let my Flames go."

"Wait, what?" Lal jerked back. Tsuna's lips turned from stern from into small smile as her Flames rushed back to her body. She wavered on her feet for several seconds before the black swarmed back into her vision. Her legs gave out from under her. She heard Lal curse again before the briefest sensation of arms being wrapped around her before she finally lost consciousness.
Tsuna groaned as she came to. Her body hurt. Muscles ached. Head throbbed. Her eyes slowly opened. She tried to sit up and hissed as her muscles resisted. Fingers curled into the fists.

"Tsunami," Hayato's voice, relieved, came from the side. She glanced over. Her Storm sat up in a chair he must have dragged next to her bed.

"Haya," Tsuna whispered and coughed as her dry throat made her voice crack.

"Here," he placed a straw in front of her. She took several small sips of cool water before he pulled it away. "We were worried after Lal told us you had passed out after completing the Vongola Inheritance Ritual."

"Is that what that was?" She groaned and finally managed to sit up despite her muscles' protests. "I hurt so much right now."

"Would an aspirin help?"

"No. This feels just like the first time I used my Flames and broke through that seal. Nothing helped then." She grumbled a few unfavorable words under her breath. "I'm really beginning to hate my future self. How long have I been out?"

"Two hours, Tsunami," Reborn's voice came from overhead. Tsuna tensed momentarily before tilting her head back and staring at the infant body hanging from the light fixture. She shut her eyes and took in a deliberately slow breath before letting it out as a long sigh.

"Reborn, I take it you knew what Lal was planning?"

"Yes." He nodded and tilted his fedora over his eyes. "All Vongola heads go through the same ceremony at some point. All of them have hinted that the ring becomes more powerful or able to allow them to use their Flames easier."

Tsuna grumbled under her breath before opening her eyes back open and sitting up properly, her body turning so her socked feet could rest on the floor. Hayato moved to help her, but she waved him off gently. "I'm fine now, Hayato. Just sore, like I've been sparring for hours without rest. It'll be over soon."

"Sooner," Reborn announced as he hopped down beside her. "The fact I'm wearing this—" he motioned to the suit and the chains that constricted the yellow pacifier—"means I've got more of my Sun Flames available for working. I may not be the best healer, but I can help wipe away fatigue."

Tsuna looked down at him and frowned. "You're not usually so helpful."

"We're on war footing. You've never seen me like this before. No one alive has."
"You worked with Vongola Ottavo during WWII, didn't you?" Tsuna's lips turned up into a bloodthirsty smile. He matched it. "She was an amazing woman, Reborn."

"She was." He frowned. "How do you know that, Tsunami? There's only so much you can get from the stories I've told and the diaries you've had Gokudera helping you read."

Her smile slithered into a smirk. "She spoke after the acceptance by the other heads and the Primo. She was not impressed with what her son had done."

Reborn chuckled darkly and reached out to touch her arm. "That does not surprise me. Now hold still. I'm out of practice with doing this on someone else."

Hayato stepped back a step, watched, and felt through his connection to his Sky. Faintly he felt the brush of unfamiliar Sun Flame curling along the Sky Flames. He held back a hiss of annoyance and aggression at the foreign feeling. Forcibly pulling back his Flames as they tried to lash out against the intruder, he turned away and focused on a single point on the wall. The Sun Flames coiled back soon after.

"Good control, Gokudera," the Arcobaleno said as he stepped back from the slightly dizzy Sky. She swooned for a few seconds before pulling herself together.

"Thank you, Reborn." Tsuna inclined her head before turning to Hayato. She opened her mouth to speak.

"Tsuna," Takeshi flung the door open and stopped in the doorway. She jumped to her feet as a rush of worry flooded through her body. She swayed for a moment before righting herself completely.

"Good, you're up," Takeshi breathed out before straightening to attention. "We've received a distress signal from Fuuta and the kids. They got separated from Basil, who has called in he's safe for now but can't back up the kids. We think they've been found by the Millefiore when they were returning to the base from their last assignment."

She frowned and shut her eyes for several seconds before opening them. The usually caramel iris blazed a deep, vibrant orange. "Well, then, I'm assuming you're appearance here means we're the only ones who can go out and bring them in from the cold?"

Takeshi's eye glimmered faintly blue as a feral grin crossed his lips. "You know me so well, Tsuna. All our other people are either support staff or not already on critical missions."

"Wait, are you serious?" Hayato's voice rose to a near shriek. "She just woke up."

"I'm not an invalid, Hayato," Tsuna shot back as she stretched her arms above her head. "I'm just a little sore. I can handle this."

Hayato sputtered for a few seconds before his shoulders slumped. He knew that look on Tsuna's face. She would not back down.

Takeshi, watching the entire byplay, coughed in an attempt to hide a laugh. It didn't work. Hayato shot him a look that made his lips curl. Really, his boyfriend's younger self looked like such a puffed-up yappy dog. It had taken a couple of years of good meals and getting actual care before the bomber started to look like something other than a silver-haired waif.

"I figured you would want to come along." The swordsman held up a familiar pair of gloves. "Giovanni wanted to give them an upgrade while you were out. They should be able to handle your Flames better."
Tsuna took the gloves and pulled them over her hands. The lining felt smooth against skin, though of a different material than they had been. Curling her hands into fists, she noted the thin metal plates that would protect her knuckles. Her Flames flickered for a moment. Tiny Sky Flames, far smaller than she had ever managed before, burst into existence at the very tips of her fingers. Pulling her Flames back, she grinned up at her unfairly tall Rain.

"So, where are we going?"

Tsuna tugged on the jacket Reborn had thrown at her as she ran past. She huffed around a mouthful of cloth, more than likely armored material by the weight of the jacket. The sun bore down on them as Takeshi led them out one of the secret entrances. Tsuna muttered darkly as she felt all of the Flames filling the air. Takeshi jumped over a fallen tree before bounding off down a hidden but well-kept trail leading toward the town. Hayato grumbled as he hurried behind them. She made a mental note that they really needed to work on his stamina now that she had managed to get some fat put on him.

"We've got to be careful not to use Flames too much outside the base," Takeshi warned as they ducked around a corner and checked on his watch. "The Millefiore can track us when we use them. Once they get a lock, they'll swarm us."

"That's how they took out the others, isn't it?" Tsuna growled low in her throat as her hands curled into fists. The image of the list of names on the wall made her blood burn.

"Basically."

"Any ideas what we're running into?" Hayato piped up from the rear. His hands roved over the multitudes of pockets his own armored clothing hid. Licking his lips, he tried to forget what had happened to Bianchi. No matter how much he dislikes his sister for what she did to him as a child, no one deserved to have acid—Storm Flame enhanced acid even more so—thrown in their face. He had managed to swing by the lab and grab a few things he had been working with her on just that morning. The weird weapon in a box she had thrown at his head and yelled for him to use his brain and figure it out.

Yeah. He may care about her a small bit, but damn if she didn't annoy him to hell and back.

"Just get the kids fast and get back to safety," Takeshi said as they came out from the bushes and into the open. Tsuna glanced around and recognized the place as being in the warehouse area of Namimori. The area looked downtrodden, much more than it was in her time. Broken glass and construction debris littered the area.

"The kids will have found an area to bunker down in. Fuuta is good with his Cloud Flame and chains. I-Pin can do things with Storm Flames that mirror Fon's old attacks pretty well, if just not nearly as powerful. Lambo's a one-man wall when he wants to not be a brat." Takeshi looked around and frowned as he searched for field signs. His eyes narrowed at the twin slash marks marring one of the warehouse's wall. "Not those two."

"Takeshi?" Tsuna frowned and looked at the marks. Her eyes narrowed. Such distinct marks, made from weapons and—she sniffed the air, her nose wrinkling at the smell—Storm Flame induced destruction. Being around Hayato had inured her to the, but the sickly sweet burnt smell was distinct when one knew what to look for.

"We need to find the kids now." His voice had turned tense. "This way."

"Wait." Tsuna eyes slid shut as she felt familiar Flame signatures filling the air. Her head swiveled
before her eyes opened. "I-Pin is that way and alone. Lambo and Fuuta are together over there." The boys shared a look before looking back at their boss. Takeshi opened his mouth only to fall silent as she glared at him. "You both go after I-Pin. She needs more backup than the boys. I'll go after the boys."

"Tsun..." Takeshi muttered before letting out a ragged sigh. He grabbed the sputtering Storm's arm and dragged him off in the direction he could feel I-Pin's Flames. "Faster we help I-Pin, faster we get back to her."

Tsuna snorted lightly before running off toward the kids. Her boys were far too protective of her. Her hands curled loosely into fists. Her tongue pressed against the top of her mouth as she rushed toward where she could feel the kids. Lambo's usage of Lightning Flames made static dance in the air. Ducking behind a partially crumbled wall, she peered into the warehouse and felt her rage flare. A large man with a blond beard and, most importantly, wielding a scythe jumped away from a stream of Lightning. His physical appearance marked him as Mediterranean descent.

"Brats," he hissed as he leaped into the air and stayed there. A red glow bloomed beneath his feet. Tsuna's nose wrinkled at the acrid smell of Storm Flames that followed the action.

"Fuuta, can you run?"

A harsh inhale answered the question. "Maybe. Damn, I can't believe he got me."

"You're going to die here, kid," the older man jeered as he readied his scythe, the blade glowing a very unhealthy red. Tsuna's eyes narrowed. Muscles bunched. She moved.

Air rushed over her skin. Sky Flames flared brightly. Her mind shifted to a more narrow focus as she slipped into Hyper Dying Will Mode. The hovering man, her target, turned but had no time to react to the orange-hued rocket that slammed into him. The two shot through the air before he slammed into the far wall. Tsuna jumped from his boy, avoiding the blade's swipe. Her feet hit the wall. She bounced off it to land before the two teenagers. The blond teen, Fuuta, had a nasty gash on his thigh. Lambo, far more familiar looking due to past experiences with the bazooka, stood protectively in the front.

"Tsuna-nee?" Fuuta gasped.

"Hey, you two. Heard you needed some backup. Can you move?" Her eyes stayed on the recovering enemy.

He glared at her before turning pale as he recognized her. "How? You're supposed to be dead."

"We'll be slow going. I got tagged," Fuuta said, his breath coming quick and short. His hand pressed against his leg where a dark, wet stain slowly spread through the fabric.

"Lambo, help him get out of here. I'll cover your backs."

"Yes, Tsuna-nee."

"Hey, don't ignore me!" the man shouted before diving for a strike.

Tsuna lifted her hands up. Orange Flame wreathed her hands. The heat blazed against her skin as Sky Flame clashed with Storm. She pushed back hard, her Flames boosting her muscle power. She heard the kids move toward the half-crumpled wall. Curling her hands around the part of the scythe she could reach, she grinned up at the taller man. He leaned back. Inverting her Flames, she shifted them into the pattern needed for the Zero Point Breakthrough. Ice formed on the weapon. The man jerked back, his boots flaring and lifting him into the air.
"You bitch," he spat. His eyes narrowed before going wide at the sight of the ring on her right hand. "That was destroyed."

"In this time, yes." She grinned at him, teeth flashing as she used her Flames to chase into the air after him.

"This time?" he muttered before frowning. "Then, you're the younger version, aren't you? You don't look that different from the older you."

Tsuna frowned and mentally made a grumbled at the fact she wasn't likely to get taller if the man, who seemed familiar enough with her, didn't see any difference between the past and future selves. Her eyes narrowed. Lips twitched. She launched herself into the air. Clawed hand swiped. He danced away, keeping just out of reach even as he tried to use his Storm Flames to break the ice. She smirked as each attempt made the ice grow stronger. She loved surprising people with that Technique but had so few opportunities to do so.

"Feeling a little cold?" she taunted as she pulled herself higher and into a better position to dive.

"You bitch," he snarled even as he tried to break the ice slowly encasing his weapon. The cold bit at his skin.

Tsuna grinned and dove. She spun out into a wide turn. Her leg kicked out as she dove around the flailing of the blond. Hard boot met body armor as she managed to get a solid hit on his side. He tumbled backward, his flame boot sputtering as he briefly lost control of his flames as he tried to suck in air. She flipped upright and glanced over to where the kids had been. Drag marks in the dusty ground showed where they had managed to get out of the warehouse. She turned her attention back to her enemy and smirked as she saw the Zero Point ice continue to devour the Storm Flames he was trying to use to free his weapon.

Crash!

"Tazaru! We have…trouble…” a man with dark pink hair dressed in much the same fashion as her opponent said as he came to a stop in midair. The Storm Flames flaring out of his boots flickered, and he dropped several feet before regaining altitude. "Aren't you suppose to be dead?"

"Surprise," Tsuna drawled in as deadpan of a tone as she could manage. "As the American saying goes, rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

"What the hell are you doing, Tazaru? You were supposed to take care of the girl."

"Monsters," the newcomer gasped.

Tsuna nodded and let her lips pull back to reveal her teeth. "Hayato and Takeshi are rather vicious when they get going, aren't they?"

"You bitch," Tazaru snarled and rushed toward her. Nosaru let out a warning shout that he barely heard. Tsuna flipped vertically, her feet pointing toward the ceiling and dodging the wild swing of storm infused scythe before her hands reached out. Tazaru ducked backward, just out of her reach. She flipped back upright.

"Tsuna!" two familiar voice called. She glanced over at the warehouse entrance and blinked. She spun on her axis to face her two boys. Hayato she expected. Her Takeshi, the Takeshi from her time, she did not.

"What the hell?" Nosaru muttered. Tsuna's head snapped toward him. He paled as he felt a wave of
Sky Flames flushed through the air. The two scythe wielders wobbled in the air before exchanging a look. Tazaru reached into a pocket and pulled a handful of silver pellets. Before anyone could react, he threw them at the ground. Smoke burst and filled the air. Tsuna gagged at the smell, something like a cross between burning sugar and sulfur.

"Tsuna-hime!" her Guardians called and rushed to where she had been. She landed on her feet with her arm over her mouth and nose. She coughed. Her eyes watered. The smoke slowly dissipated. Two pairs of arms with familiar Flame signatures attached reached out and braced her.

"Are you okay, Tsuna-hime?" Takeshi asked as his hands ran over her shoulders.

"Yes." She coughed a few times before standing up straight. "When did you get here?"

"In the middle of the fight with that idiot," Hayato grumbled as he ran his hands down her arms. "I-Pin is safe, by the way. That girl is terrifying as a teenager."

"Like she isn't a terrifying enough child?" she shot back with a grin. "We need to head back to base. We can't count on anonymity anymore."

"Base?" Takeshi tilted his head.

Tsuna turned to Hayato and frowned. "You didn't tell him?"

"Haven't had the time."

"Guys, what…?"

Tsuna sucked in a deep breath. "We are in the future. My future self had a plan that needed the Vongola Rings to be completed, but the rings are destroyed in the future. So, she arranged for us to somehow be brought here via the time bazooka and made it so we got stuck here until we can undo it by defeating and/or killing this insane asshole Byakuran Gesso who killed off the Akatora, my mom, and your dad. Slowly over the next few days, all of my Guardians will be arriving. There are weird, new weapons we're going to learn. Also, the Arcobaleno, sans Lal Mirch, are all dead. Reborn has to wear special BDSM gear in order to not die."

Takeshi stared at her unblinking. He opened his mouth for a moment before shutting it and looking at Hayato.

Hayato nodded. "Yeah, things are weird."

Takeshi inhaled slowly and looked up to the sky before looking back at his girlfriend and smiled. It was more brittle than it had any right being. "So, the plan?"

"Back at the base. Let's move," she ordered and marched for the door. Hayato followed after her. Takeshi stared at their retreating backs for a few seconds before following.

"Tsuna-nee!" a trio of teenager voices called from outside. Three bodies slammed into her. She barely kept on her feet. Laughter bubbled up from her chest.

"Let's go home," Tsuna said with a smile on her face as she wrapped arms around her three kids. They clung to her, Fuuta holding her the tightest. She placed a hand on his head. He looked up at her through his blond fringe. His eyes, tinted purple by his awakened Cloud Flames, were full of tears. He shook slightly and swallowed thickly. Cloud Flames circled and curled through her Sky Flames as he reached out for her warmth.
"Fuuta?"

"Don't do that again, Tsuna-nee," he said, his voice tiny and frail.

"Oh, Fuuta," she whispered and threaded her fingers through his hair. She felt the embers of resentment toward her future self flare. Even if everyone had known she had faked her assassination like Mirch had promised, the whole scenario was obviously traumatizing to the kids. She hated it.

"Tsuna?" Takeshi's voice brought her out of her reverie.

She inhaled and exhaled slowly. Her anger at her future self faded, tucked away in her thoughts for later ruminations. "Yeah, let's get back to base. We have things we need to discuss."

"You are certain it was her?"

"Yes, sir. And she had the ring."

"So did the Storm and the Rain once he poofed away in pink smoke."

"The 10-year bazooka. I see. I'll be there soon. I lost the CEDEF boy but caught the Cloud Guardian's trail. Try to keep an eye out for the others. Byakuran needs the Rings for his plan."

"Yes, sir."

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