Ripples Will Change (And So Will Everything Else)

by GlitterQueenThorn

Summary

One small change can alter anything. Micchy decided to tell Kouta about his brother and that one small change altered everything.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
"There are no secrets that time does not reveal." -Jean Racine

"It's really him," Micchy, Beat Rider for Team Gaim, thought, "It's really nii-san." After the white Armored Rider left to return to the base, Micchy left Helheim to meet up with Kouta.

After the Christmas party, Kouta found it a bit odd that Micchy didn't excuse himself and leave. Normally he was the first one to leave. As he pondered it, he felt someone tap his shoulder. He looked up to see the subject of his musings.

"Hey Micchy, did you need something?" the older boy asked with a smile. Micchy smiled back, but Kouta could see that it was strained.

"Can we talk in private Kouta-san?" the younger boy asked. Kouta nodded and they went outside to talk. Micchy sat at the bottom of the stairs while Kouta stood.

"What did you want to tell me?" the orange rider asked. Micchy took a deep breath.

"I know who the white Armored Rider is," he stated bluntly, "Kureshima Takatora, head of the R&D Department of Yggdrasil." Kouta's eyes widened.

"When did you find out?" he questioned.

"I didn't know for sure until Christmas Games," Micchy admitted, "Before that, I only suspected because he had a Sengoku Driver." Kouta thought over what Micchy said.

"Wait a minute, how did you know he had a Driver?" Kouta asked. Micchy froze for a second before sighing. He smiled bleakly.

"Well, I guess I couldn't hope to keep it secret forever," he said under his breath. He looked up at Kouta.

"Did you guys ever wonder why I never told you my full name?" he asked.

"We just assumed that you preferred your nickname," he replied.

"And I do," Micchy stated, "But my real name is Kureshima Mitsuzane. Kureshima Takatora is my older brother." Kouta just stared for a moment while he processed everything.

"If you're part of such a high class family, then why did you join the Beat Riders?" Kouta asked.

"Do you remember what I told when you told me to stop using the Sengoku Driver?" Micchy replied. Kouta remembered what Micchy had said.

"I don't expect you to understand me. You've always been free to live your own life without answering to anyone. You wouldn't know how lucky that makes you."

"Nii-san has my entire life planned out for me. You said I was going to get dragged into whatever was happening with the belts. Now I know that I would have a part of it no matter what. This way, I get to choose what side I want to be on and joined it on my terms," Micchy explained. Kouta grinned and clapped Micchy on the shoulder.
"Well, it's good to have you on our side," Kouta said with a grin. Micchy grinned back.

Later, the two decided they needed to inform the other Armored Riders of what they'd discovered. They waited in the back room of Drupers. Kaito was the first to show up, followed by Jonouchi and Oren.

"So, Mandarine, Boya, what is the purpose of this meeting?" Oren asked.

"We're going to tell you the real reason we organized the Christmas event," Kouta explained.

"The real reason?" Kaito asked, looking slightly interested.

"You know the monster that was running around a while back?" Kouta asked. The others nodded.

"It was an Inves that had come through a crack into our world," Micchy continued, "Kouta-san and I tracked it to where it came through and found a ton of the plants from the forest. We defeated the Inves before discovering that there were other Inves in the area. The white Armored Rider defeated the other Inves before his subordinates cleared away the evidence. Kouta-san and I wanted to get to the bottom of what was going on, so I thought up a way for Kouta-san to be able to speak with the researchers. Normally the white Armored Rider is protecting them, but by holding the Christmas event, he had to go and remove us from the forest. Kouta-san was able to sneak into their camp and find out some information." Kouta picked up where Micchy had left off.

"I pretended to be a new recruit and entered the base camp. I learned that the forest is called Helheim. The Inves Games were started by Yggdrasil so we wouldn't be suspicious when we were given the Drivers. We were just their guinea pigs." Kouta's fists were clenched. Micchy looked out the window. Oren looked contemplative. Jonouchi looked on disbelievingly. Kaito turned his gaze on Micchy.

"There's something you're not telling us," Kaito stated. Micchy sighed.

"The white Armored Rider-" Micchy was cut off by Oren's sudden exclamations.

"My beautiful melon! What do you know about him? What is his name? Where can I find him?" With each question, Oren leaned further over the table. Micchy leaned back to keep Oren from getting in his face. Kouta pushed Oren back slightly.

"Give the kid some space and actually let him say something," the Orange wielder said.

"The white Armored Rider is Kureshima Takatora," Micchy said, "the head of the R&D Department of Yggdrasil, as well as the head of the Zawame City branch."

"So it's not an underling doing some independent research," Kaito muttered. Micchy shook his head.

"How do you know that it was Kureshima Takatora in the suit?" Jonouchi asked, "Doesn't he have a younger brother? Kureshima Mitsuzane." Micchy played with his grape Lockseed and said nothing.

"You're the younger brother, aren't you?" Kaito said. Micchy just nodded. Kaito's eyes narrowed.

"How can we know you're not a spy?" he asked.

"Nii-san doesn't even know I'm a Beat Rider, much less an Armored Rider. He would rather I work under him at Yggdrasil," Micchy replied.
"The point is that we need to stop the Inves Games and figure out the Helheim Forest," Kouta cut in.

"Why should we work with you?" Jonouchi asked. Micchy leaned forward.

"You and Hase were guinea pigs as much as the rest of us. Yggdrasil couldn't care less about us. You want to keep doing what you're doing and play into their hands? Be my guest. Don't come crying to me when things don't go your way," Micchy said, his voice low. Kouta whistled.

"Remind me not to get on your bad side." Micchy smiled. Jonouchi considered what Micchy had said.

"I'll work with you," Kaito said. Kouta and Micchy looked at Kaito surprised. Jonouchi nodded his agreement.

"I also wish to get to the bottom of this!" Oren declared, "I shall join you as well." Kouta and Micchy nodded.


None of them noticed DJ Sagara watching them.
Training and Yggdrasil

Chapter Summary

Now that the riders know some of what's going on, it's time to train up. But what do they do when Yggdrasil interrupts their training?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Build upon strengths, weaknesses will gradually take care of themselves." -Joyce C. Lock

The next day, the Armored Riders met up at Drupers. They had decided the previous day to start their physical training as soon as possible. Oren had volunteered to lead their physical training, explaining that he'd previously spent some time in the army.

"Come, little soldiers, it is time to begin your physical training!" Oren declared dramatically, "Prepare to face the toughest trials you can imagine!" Kaito looked on stoically. Kouta and Micchy exchanged uneasy glances. Jonouchi looked ready to bolt.

Their first day of training was finally over. Kouta stumbled over to a bench and collapsed on it. Micchy didn't even try to make it to the bench. He collapsed where he'd been standing, trying to get his breathing under control. Jonouchi was even worse off than Micchy. Even Kaito felt like keeling over.

"We shall continue this tomorrow!" Oren declared. Jonouchi groaned in complaint. Kouta attempted to stand without much success. Micchy just remained lying down. Kaito decided to conserve what strength he had left. Kouta finally managed to stand and offered a hand to help Micchy up. Micchy accepted the offered hand and stood with some help from Kouta. They headed to Drupers to get some food in them. They ate their fill and left.

"Hey, Micchy," Kouta started, continuing when he saw Micchy glance at him, "Are you going to go back to your house?" Micchy shrugged.

"I didn't last night. I have no intention of going back to that place," Micchy replied.

"Where did you sleep last night?" Kouta asked, concerned.

"I slept at the garage last night," the younger boy answered. Kouta grinned.

"Well, come on," he said, grabbing Micchy's wrist.

"Where are we going?" the grape rider asked.

"You're staying at my house for now," Kouta answered.

"I don't want to impose!" Micchy protested.
"You won't be imposing," Kouta replied. Micchy allowed the elder boy to drag him to his apartment building. They arrived at Kouta's apartment.

"Nee-chan, I'm back," Kouta called into the apartment. His older sister, Kazuraba Akira, looked in from the kitchen.

"Welcome home, Kouta. I see you've brought a friend," she greeted with a smile, "Welcome." Micchy bowed.

"Thank you for allowing me to stay for a while," he replied. Micchy and Kouta removed their shoes and put on the house slippers before venturing further into the house. Kouta showed Micchy to his room, offering to let Micchy sleep on the bed. Micchy protested that Kouta had already done enough and that he could sleep elsewhere.

The evening passed uneventfully. Akira got to know Micchy. Micchy experienced a normal family dinner. Kouta grinned. The two Beat Riders went to bed early. They knew what was awaiting them the next day.

Once again, they met up at Drupers to start their training. Oren led them to the park and they began their grueling training all over again. At the end of the day, the teens were exhausted, although not quite as much as the previous day. Micchy absentmindedly scratched at an itch. Something had bitten him during training. Kouta and Micchy collapsed next to each other. Jonouchi was sprawled near the playground equipment. Kaito was the only one who was sitting up. Oren surveyed the group. They were coming along quite nicely. The former military man looked up when he heard a lot of footsteps to see a ton of Kurokage Troopers. Kouta stumbled to his feet. Micchy tried to stand, just to fall back down. Jonouchi hid behind the tree. Kaito stood without too much difficulty. Oren held out an arm.

"Let me handle this. You must rest," Oren stated. Kouta gratefully accepted and collapsed near Micchy, who seemed ready to pass out. Kaito huffed, but sat down out of the way. Oren immediately transformed and leapt into the fray. He seemed to take down the Troopers with little effort, but for every Trooper he defeated, two more took his place. He was herded away from the teens by the Troopers. More Troopers took position around the teens. Micchy looked up blearily, trying to focus on the situation at hand. He looked around at the surrounding Kurokage Troopers.

"This is not good," the younger boy concluded. He attempted to stand, only to fall back against Kouta.

"Easy Micchy, Kaito and I can handle this," Kouta assured him. Kouta helped Micchy to a hiding place in the playground equipment before transforming and joining the fight. Micchy had to struggle to keep his eyes open.

"I shouldn't be this tired," Micchy thought "It's only gotten worse since we finished training." He thought back to the bite. "They wouldn't have drugged me, would they? Why me?" More Kurokage Troopers appeared and grabbed Micchy's arms. The teen attempted to jerk his arms out of their grasp, but given that he could barely keep his eyes open, his attempt was doomed to failure.

"Micchy!" Gaim shouted when he saw his friend being manhandled by some Kurokage Troopers. He ran to intervene, but was stopped by the appearance of the white Armored Rider.

"Kureshima Takatora," Gaim growled, "Where are you taking Micchy?!" Takatora, also known as Zangetsu, stared at the orange armored Rider.

"I'm taking Mitsuzane back where he belongs," he stated, "He doesn't belong with filth like you." Gaim remembered when Micchy had plucked up the courage to ask to join the group, watching
Micchy dance, listening to Micchy talk about his older brother.

"Micchy deserves a better older brother than you," Gaim said before charging at Takatora. Baron was fighting some Kurokage Troopers and finished them off before glancing over to see Gaim getting his butt kicked by Zangetsu. The banana rider rushed over to the fight and attempted to land a blow on Zangetsu. The white rider blocked with his shield as he struck Gaim with his sword. Baron summoned two Inves to fight the white rider, but they were quickly disposed of. Baron pulled out a second Lockseed and clicked it open. He removed his Banana Lockseed, replacing it with the Mango Lockseed.

[LOCK ON]

He flicked the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! MANGO ARMS! FIGHT OF HAMMER!]

He charged at the white rider. Gaim stepped back and grabbed a Pine Lock. He grabbed the Orange Lockseed and replaced it with the Pine Lockseed.

[LOCK ON]

He flipped the Cutting Knife.

[SOIYA! PINE ARMS! PULVERIZE DESTROY!]

With a yell, Gaim charged back into the fray. Even with the two rivals using their two physically strongest forms, between Zangetsu's skill and their exhaustion from their training, they were no match for the more experienced rider. Before too long, they were untransformed and sprawled on the ground.

"Take them to Yggdrasil," Zangetsu ordered the Troopers.

Oren returned shortly after Zangetsu's battle with Gaim and Baron was concluded.

"Where are the others?" Oren asked Jonouchi, who'd finally come out of his hiding place.

"They were taken away by the Kurokage Troopers," Jonouchi explained.

"Then we will have to rescue them!" Oren declared.

"How are we going to do that?" Jonouchi demanded.

Oren didn't have an answer.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed it!
Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction

Chapter Summary

Kouta, Micchy, and Kaito have been captured by Yggdrasil. After meeting the maker of
the Sengoku Drivers, they must escape from Yggdrasil.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance—it is the illusion of knowledge." -Daniel J.
Boorstin

Micchy woke up slowly. His eyes fluttered open to see a pure white room with a chair and a small
table. He slowly pushed himself up with little difficulty. He discovered that his Sengoku Driver and
Lockseeds were missing. The last thing he remembered was training in the park and the Kurokage
Troopers attacking.

"They drugged me," he murmured, "But why?"

"To keep you out of the fight," another voice replied. Micchy whirled around to see his brother
standing outside his cell.

"Nii-san! What's going on? Where am I?" Micchy demanded.

"You're going to be staying here for the time being," Takatora replied, "Your friends Kazuraba and
Kumon are here as well. Now you answer me. Where did you get a Sengoku Driver?"

"I got Sid to give me one," Micchy replied. Takatora cursed under his breath. The elder Kureshima
turned and walked away. Micchy banged on the door, calling for someone to let him out.

Meanwhile, Kouta and Kaito had been taken to an open room with a desk and table. A man in a
white jacket and a woman in a business suit were waiting for the two riders.

"Hey! Where's Micchy?" Kouta demanded. The man chuckled.

"Takatora didn't want to expose Mitsuzane to me," he replied jokingly, "Apparently I'm a bad
influence." Kouta glared while Kaito looked on stoically.

"Anyways, I wanted to check on the condition of my Sengoku Drivers," the man continued,
"You've been putting them through quite a bit."

"You made the Sengoku Drivers?" Kaito asked.

"Indeed," the man replied, "Sengoku Ryoma at your service, with my assistant, Minato Yoko." Ryoma
smirked at the riders.

"We're not your guinea pigs," Kouta hissed angrily.
"Oh, but you are," Ryoma replied, "We've gathered the data from your battles and used it to create better drivers." Kouta's fist clenched.

"In fact, I want you to keep fighting using my belts," Ryoma stated, "I've gotten wonderful data from your fights." Kaito slowly slid a deck of cards out of his pocket. Kouta noticed and gave Kaito a slight nod. As Ryoma continued talking, Kaito grabbed one of his cards and flung it at the scientist. Yoko immediately threw a pen, which intercepted the card, before kicking a charging Kaito. Kouta stood to help, but Yoko kicked the back of Kouta's knee, causing him to collapse.

"Don't break them Minato-kun," Ryoma said.

"Yes, Professor Ryoma," Yoko replied. Kurokage Troopers came in and grabbed Kouta and Kaito. Ryoma dismissed them and the Troopers led them away.

Micchy sat on the ground, curled in a ball with his forehead resting on his knees. He heard footsteps coming down the hallway. He got up and looked out the barred window to see Kouta and Kaito shoved into their own cells.

"Kouta-san! Kaito-san!" Micchy called from his cell across the hall.

"Micchy! Are you okay?" Kouta asked.

"As well as I can be," Micchy replied, smiling slightly. Kouta nodded.

"So how are we going to get out of here?" Kaito questioned. Micchy thought about it.

"Unless we get one of the key cards, there isn't much we can do to escape," Micchy said. Kouta and Kaito pondered the situation as well.

"Well, what do we have here?" a voice said jovially. The teens looked up to see DJ Sagara.

"DJ Sagara?" Micchy asked, "You're part of Yggdrasil?"

"Why, yes I am," Sagara replied, "Now I have a question for you. Why do you want the power of the Sengoku Drivers?" Kouta was the first to speak up.

"I have to protect my friends. With the Inves running around, I have to be able to protect them." Micchy looked up from where he was staring at the floor.

"I've finally found a place where I can be myself. I'm going to protect it no matter what," the younger teen answered. Sagara turned to Kaito.

"I just want to prove my strength," the stoic teen replied. Sagara laughed.

"How interesting!" he said, laughing. He unlocked Kouta's cell before handing him a key card. He handed the teen an odd attachment and a light blue Lockseed with a lemon on it. The DJ gave similar devices to Kaito and Micchy, with cherry and peach decorated Lockseeds respectively.

"I like you guys," he said as an explanation. The teens shared a glance and when they looked back, Sagara was gone. Kouta exited the cell and quickly unlocked Kaito and Micchy's cells.

"We need to get out of here as soon as possible," Kouta said.

"We should try to find out more while we're here," Micchy argued, "If I can access a computer, I can have all their files in ten minutes." Kouta and Kaito looked at him in surprise. Micchy waved to the
"My family owns Yggdrasil. My older brother is the head of this branch. When I was younger, I had way too free time on my hands," Micchy explained. The other two teens shrugged and they headed back towards Ryoma's lab. They arrived and no one was there. Micchy headed straight for the computer, producing a flash drive. He stuck the flash drive in the computer and began typing away. Kouta watched over his shoulder while Kaito kept an eye out for other people.

"Alright, I'm in," Micchy said a few minutes later. He downloaded the files onto the flash drive. Being the high-tech company that it was, the Yggdrasil computer only took a few minutes to download everything. Micchy grabbed the flash drive and slipped in his pocket as they headed for the exit. They headed down the stairs toward the crack to escape into Helheim. Surprisingly, they made it into the forest with no trouble. They returned to Zawame City on their Lockvehicles and returned home.

"That was surprisingly easy," Micchy said. Kaito nodded.

"Well, we're away from Yggdrasil," Kouta replied. "We'd better get some rest." Micchy and Kaito agreed.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed the chapter!
Chapter Summary

Having discovered Yggdrasil's secrets, the Beat Rider team decides that something must be done about Yggdrasil's plans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth." -Buddha

Micchy stayed up late that night, looking at the files he'd gotten from Yggdrasil, paling more and more.

"Why are they even considering any of these acceptable ideas?" Micchy whispered, horrified. He kept watching. He came upon their research on the Helheim. One of the videos caused him to drop his tablet and back away.

"No!" he told himself, "That's impossible!" He stared at the tablet as the video played it out. After the video had stopped, it took a few more minutes before Micchy grabbed the tablet and continued. Eventually, the teen fell asleep.

Kouta woke the next morning and checked on the younger teen to find him still asleep.

"He must have been up late going over the information he got from Yggdrasil," Kouta said to himself. He shook the younger boy awake. Micchy started awake and smiled when he saw that it was just Kouta. Then he remembered the video he'd seen the previous night. His smile faded. Kouta noticed.

"What's wrong?" he asked. Micchy looked torn.

"I found out what happened to Yuuya-san," the younger admitted, trailing off at the end.

"Really? What happened?" Kouta asked eagerly. Micchy grabbed his tablet and selected the correct video.

"Should I be showing this to Kouta-san?" he wondered. Then Micchy remembered something Kouta had told him when he'd joined Team Gaim.

"It hurts to let go, but sometimes it hurts more to hold on." Micchy took a deep breath and played the video. The two teens watched as Yuuya appeared on the screen and devoured one of the fruits. They watched as he transformed into the first Inves Kouta had ever defeated. They watched Kouta defeat the Inves. Kouta just stared at the screen, even after the video stopped.

"It's my fault," he whispered, "I killed Yuuya."

"It's not your fault Kouta-san," Micchy replied, "You didn't know and he would've killed you if you
hadn't fought back." Kouta just started crying. Micchy tried to keep his own emotions in check, without much success.

Later that day, after the boys composed themselves, they arrived at Charmant to find Kaito, Oren, and Jonouchi already there.

"Ah, we had heard about your escape from Monsieur Banane," Oren said, "He also said you got some information on Yggdrasil." Micchy nodded. He pulled out his tablet.

"It turns out that Helheim is a sentient invasive forest. It's been coming through cracks into Zawame City for years, even before Yggdrasil came. Anyone who eats a Helheim fruit turns into an Inves. Helheim will overrun our world in ten years. They have a plan called Project Ark to save everyone they can, but they can only save up to one billion people. If the people of Zawame City find out about the invasion, then they'll use the Scalar System to burn the city to the ground." Micchy pulled up the relevant documents on his tablet. The others read over the information.

"They can't do that, can they?" Jonouchi asked, "With the Scalar System, I mean." Micchy shrugged.

"They already have the means to do it," Micchy explained, "The ring that floats around Yggdrasil Tower is the Scalar System." Kouta banged his clenched fist on the table.

"We need to make sure they can't activate the Scalar System," he declared. The others just nodded in agreement.

"Oh, by the way, there is another function to the belts," Micchy recalled, "If you put in a Lockseed without activating it, you gain nutrients without becoming an Inves. That's the original purpose of the belts."

"That's how they plan for humans to survive when Helheim invades," Kaito stated, "Give a billion people these belts and rebuild the human race from there."

"Except that it's just going to be the "chosen ones" who get the belts," Jonouchi scoffed. Micchy nodded sadly.

"What?" Takatora asked angrily, "They escaped!"

"That's not all, sir," one of the technicians added, "It seems that someone accessed the mainframe and downloaded all the information on Helheim."

"Mitsuzane," Takatora seethed.

After a long discussion, the rider decided that they needed to destroy the Scalar System before taking any further action. As they planned the attack, Kouta pulled Micchy aside.

"Micchy, I want you to stay away from Yggdrasil for a while. Your brother is bound to know that you were the one who hacked the files and he has been trying to take you back anyways," Kouta said. Micchy considered before nodding.

"Alright, Kouta-san," Micchy agreed, "I'll stay at Gaim's garage while you guys take out the Scalar System." Kouta nodded and they rejoined the group. Kouta explained why he thought Micchy shouldn't be apart of the attack, with Kaito and Oren agreeing with him and Jonouchi jokingly asking
if he could baby-sit the teen to make sure he stayed out. Kouta said Team Gaim could look after Micchy while they attack the Scalar System. Kouta quickly pulled out his cell phone.

"Hey, Mai," he started before wincing when Mai started yelling into the phone.

"Where have you and Micchy been? We haven't seen you in two days! It's not odd for you to miss a couple days, but Micchy's never missed practice!" Mai shouted.

"We've been kind of busy," Kouta explained, "I'll explain it all later. Can you keep an eye on Micchy for a while? There's something some friends and I have to do something and I know Micchy will sneak out to help if he can."

"Fine," Mai replied, "I'll come pick him up. Where are you?"

"We're at Charmant," Kouta replied, wincing again when he heard Mai squeal. He hung up and a few minutes later, Mai was at Charmant. She bought a cake before dragging Micchy back to the garage. The others nodded to each other. It was time to put the plan into action.

The three teens tried the light blue Lockseeds, but were unable to figure out how to use them.

"We probably have to use these," Micchy said, holding up the odd attachment that Sagara had given them, "but I'm not sure how they attach to our belts." Having no further leads, they returned to their preparations.

Their first stop was Helheim Forest. Jonouchi picked a Lockseed, which changed into an A-class Lockseed with a new design.

"A pomegranate?" Jonouchi wondered. He put it in his belt and flicked the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! POMEGRANATE ARMS! SHOCKING SHOOTER!]

A pomegranate appeared over Jonouchi and formed his armor, which was similar to his Donguri armor, except with pomegranate designs instead. His weapon was…

"A rocket launcher?" Jonouchi wondered, "Why does pomegranate armor have a rocket launcher?"

Standing some distance away from Yggdrasil, the riders went over the revised plan.

"So I fly up in Suika Armor Gyro Mode and Jonouchi fires at the stations from here," Kouta stated. Oren and Kaito nodded.

"Alright!" Kouta said cheerfully, "Here we go!" He grabbed the Suika Lockseed he had from the Christmas event and clicked it open. Jonouchi did the same with the pomegranate Lockseed.

[LOCK ON]

"Henshin!" they declared, flicking the Cutting Knife down.

[COME ON! SUIKA ARMS! BIG BALL BIG BANG!]

[COME ON! POMEGRANATE ARMS! SHOCKING SHOOTER!]

The giant watermelon descended and Kouta swiftly changed into Gyro Mode. Gridon turned into his
new Pomegranate Arms. Gaim took to the air and made for the far side of Yggdrasil. Gridon took
aim at the near side. Gaim dodged laser beams shooting from the Scalar System. He swerved around
and managed to shoot one of the orbs.

Gridon knelt on the roof of a nearby, reasonably tall building and took aim. Making sure to account
for the movement of the ring, he fired and destroyed another orb.

Gaim dodged more lasers and shot at another orb that was intact. It bullets connected and it shattered.

Gridon took aim and fired at the only remaining orb. It shattered and Gridon breathed a sigh of relief.
He untransformed and Gaim landed before doing the same.

"We better get out of here," Kaito said, "It won't take long for them to start searching for us." They
left and went to the garage.

Micchy looked up when he heard the door to the garage open and saw the other armored riders enter.
"Kouta-san!" he called, "How did it go?" Kouta grinned.

"It went perfectly," the elder teen replied. Micchy gave a sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness," he muttered.

"Alright, now you can explain what's been going on," Mai stated. Kouta blanched. Then he sighed
and started explaining. He told Mai about Micchy's older brother being the white armored rider. He
talked about Helheim and the plans to counter it. He explained what happened to Yuuya. He
explained what the armored riders had been up to the past couple days. Mai could only stare,
stunned, at the riders.

"Why?" she asked, "Why won't they save everyone?"

"They don't think they can," Micchy replied.

Chapter End Notes

The Pomegranate Lockseed was one I made up when I was having problems figuring
out how they were going to destroy the Scalar System. It probably won't be making a
repeat appearance, since it can't be used in close combat. I hope you enjoyed the
chapter! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Chapter Summary

Everyone has to make choices. Whether their good or bad depends on the situation...and on your knowledge of it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"The hard thing is not making a decision. It's thinking about the result of what you have decided." - Unknown

It had been almost a week since the riders destroyed the Scalar System. Micchy bounced between Kouta's house and the garage. The riders often met at Charmant to discuss the situation. Kouta, meanwhile, had decided to go back to the place where he'd found the belt and first entered Helheim.

"A lot has happened since you vanished Yuuya," Kouta said, talking to the wall that held the crack that had started everything. "Micchy's become a Kamen Rider. Did you know that his older brother had his life planned out for him?" Kouta had to shake his head. "I'm working with Micchy, Kaito, Jonouchi, and Oren-san to stop Helheim. I don't want what happened to you to happen to anyone else. I'm sorry, Yuuya." Kouta wiped away the tears that had started to fall. He heard his phone ring and grabbed it.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Kouta-san?"

"Hey, Micchy, what's up?"

"I've been trying to figure out a way to detect cracks so that we can find them and stop any Inves that come through. I've managed to find an odd energy signal near where you are. Can you check it out? You're the closest."

"No problem," Kouta replied cheerfully.

"I'll send you the location." Kouta hung up and received a text from Micchy.

"Micchy knew I would want to talk to Yuuya," Kouta told himself, "He probably wanted to give me something else to focus on." He ran to the warehouse that Micchy had gotten the energy signal from. He arrived and found some Helheim plants. He started looking around for any Inves.

"I thought I would find you here, Kazuraba Kouta," a voice said from behind him. Kouta turned to see Takatora standing behind him.

"How did you know about the crack that was here?" Kouta asked. Takatora smirked.

"Did you think that we would not be able to tell where a crack opened up?" he answered.
"Why don't you stop any of the Inves that come through?" Kouta demanded.

"That is not our concern," Takatora replied. Kouta grabbed his belt and snatched his Orange Lockseed before placing it on the belt. Takatora did the same.

[ORANGE]/[MELON]

[LOCK ON]

Both riders flipped the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! ORANGE ARMS! IN THE SPOTLIGHT! ON STAGE!]/[COME ON! MELON ARMS! ACKNOWLEDGED BY PROVIDENCE!]

The melon and orange descended from Helheim and formed into each rider's armor. Gaim held the Orange Slicer and was halfway crouched while Zangetsu held the Melon Defender and stood straight. After waiting for a short time, Gaim charged at the white armored rider. Zangetsu merely blocked Gaim's strikes with his shield. Gaim drew his second sword and struck with blades, just for Zangetsu to block with the Melon Defender as he drew his own sword. Zangetsu struck Gaim, causing sparks to fly from his armor.

Their dance continued for another few minutes when they were interrupted by Hase Ryouji wandering into the warehouse.

"I need my power!" he cried, seeming half mad, "Give me my power back!" He stumbled toward the Helheim plants.

"Wait!" Gaim shouted, "Don't touch those!" Hase didn't listen and started eating one of the Helheim fruits.

"Hey! Spit that out!" Zangetsu commanded. Hase didn't listen and continued eating the fruit. He dropped the wrapping and suddenly cried out in pain. He was covered in Helheim plants before he turned into a Bixie Inves and ran out of the warehouse.

"No," Gaim muttered, "Not again." Gaim made to go after Hase, only for Zangetsu to stop him.

"Need a hand, Kazuraba?" a voice asked from behind the orange-themed rider. Gaim turned to see Kaito standing there, Lockseed in hand.

"Kureshima Jr. sent me the location," Kaito said by way of explanation. He jerked his head in the direction Hase ran off in.

"Get going," he said, "I'll handle Kureshima Sr." Kaito put on his belt and clicked his Lockseed before spinning it around his finger and placing it in his belt.

[BANANA]

[LOCK ON]

"Henshin," Kaito said, flipping the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! BANANA ARMS! KNIGHT OF SPEAR!]

The banana descended and formed Kaito's primary armor.

"Thanks Kaito!" Gaim called as he ran after Hase. Zangetsu went to intercept the orange rider when Baron got in the way.
"Your fight's with me now," Baron stated.

"Hase!" Kouta shouted, "Where are you? Hase!" Kouta had untransformed and was crouched near a crate, staring at his hands. One hand was green and the other was green with branch like extensions with leaf like fixtures.

"Hase, calm down," Kouta said, kneeling next to the panicking teen, "If you calm down, I can take you to the hospital. Just calm down." Instead of calming down, Hase let out a scream before lashing out at Kouta. Kouta stumbled backwards as Hase once again took the form of the Inves.

Meanwhile, Baron and Zangetsu had continued the fight. Baron's lance was unfortunately useless against Zangetsu's shield. He flipped the Cutting Knife three times.

[BANANA SPARKING!]

Baron stabbed his lance into the ground and several banana-shaped energy manifestations stabbed up at the other rider. Most were blocked by the shield and the few that did connect did little damage. Zangetsu threw his shield, hitting Baron before the shield returned. He struck a few times with his sword, forcing Baron back until the last hit sent the Beat Rider flying. Baron hit a piece of machinery and was forced out of his transformation. He pushed himself up, ready to transform again. However, Zangetsu was already walking away in the direction Kouta had gone. Kaito banged his fist against the machinery. He heard his phone ring. He checked the caller id.

"Hey, Kureshima Jr., perfect timing. Your brother was here and about to fight Kouta when I arrived. Kouta had to run off after someone, not sure who," Kaito reported.

"Thanks Kaito-san. Did anything else happen?"

"No," Kaito replied through gritted teeth. Micchy took his cue and hung up.

Having no choice, Kouta transformed once Hase changed back into the Inves.

"Come on Hase, stop it!" Kouta yelled, "You need to calm down!" Hase let out a scream before running away. Kouta let his transformation vanish. He banged his fist on a crate.

"So they're ready?" Takatora asked, looking at the new Driver handed to him by Ryoma.

"Yep, there's one for you, Sid, Minato-kun, and of course myself," Ryoma replied before handing the Kuresshima an altered version of his Melon Lockseed.

"Here is your complimentary Energy Lockseed," Ryoma added.

Kouta went to Drupers for a snack before resuming the search for Hase, only for Hase to show up at the restaurant. Rat and Rica, who had also come for a snack, screamed and Rat was attacked by the now-transformed Hase.

"Hase! Stop it!" Kouta yelled. He managed to get Hase outside without damaging Druper's before whipping out his Orange Lockseed and attaching it to his belt.

[ORANGE]
"Henshin," Kouta declared, flipping the Cutting Knife.

The orange descended and formed Kouta's armor.

"If you insist on hurting people, I'll have to fight you Hase!" Kouta declared, holding the Orange Slicer at the ready. Hase charged at the orange rider, trying to strike with his claws, but Kouta parried the blow.

The fight continued for several minutes, eventually moving to one of the many fountains in Zawame City. Kouta found himself on the defensive, not because Hase was particularly skilled, but because Kouta couldn't bring himself to truly harm the former rider.

Then the decision was taken out of his hands.

An arrow formed out of red energy was shot at the two combatants, forcing them apart. Kouta looked up to see four riders. One appeared to be a slightly altered version of Zangetsu. Another was a female wearing a pink suit that had shoulder and chest armor and a short skirt. A third had red chest armor with a silver-white body suit and a spiked helmet. The fourth had a blue bodysuit with yellow armor including a shoulder guard on the right shoulder and a yellow cape. Each was carrying a bow with a bladed edge.

"Who are you?" Gaim shouted. Instead of answering, the red armored rider jumped down to fight Hase. Gaim tried to intervene.

"Stop it! That's still Hase!" he yelled. But it was useless. The red armored rider soon destroyed the Beat Rider-turned-Inves before turning to face the now-untransformed Kouta. Letting the transformation fade, the red armored rider revealed himself as Lock Dealer Sid.

"Sid?" Kouta gasped, "You're a part of Yggdrasil too?" Sid merely smirked and walked off. The other riders had already left, trusting Sid to take care of the rogue Inves. Kouta sighed and turned to head back to the garage.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed it!
Meeting Between Brothers

Chapter Summary

Takatora and Micchy meet, and Kaito tags along.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Just be who you want to be, not who others want to see." -Unknown

It had been a couple weeks since Hase had turned into an Inves and been destroyed. Kouta had gotten over it and resolved to not let that happen to anyone else. The Armored Riders had gathered to plan their next move.

Micchy felt his phone vibrate in his pocket. He frowned slightly, unsure of who was texting him during the Armored Rider meeting. He discretely checked his phone. His eyes widened at the message.

Meet me at the park at seven this evening. We need to talk.

Micchy quickly put his phone away. He didn't want the others getting suspicious after all. This was something he needed to handle by himself.

He didn't notice Kaito's suspicious glance.

After the meeting, Micchy checked the time before excusing himself and heading out on an errand. Kouta pulled Kaito aside.

"Kaito, can you keep an eye on Micchy? Something's off and I have things I need to do for Nee-chan," Kouta whispered. Kaito just nodded and left. The banana wielding rider followed the younger Kureshima from a distance, discretely moving out of the younger boy's line of sight when he looked back. Eventually, they entered a park. Micchy headed for the playground area, which had no visitors at that time of night. Waiting there was Kureshima Takatora. Kaito ducked behind a tree and watched as Micchy walked towards his brother.

"Are they working together after all?" Kaito wondered. Micchy came to a stop a few feet away from Takatora, who had his back turned to the younger boy.

"Nii-san," Micchy said. Takatora turned around.

"Ah, Mitsuzane," he said, "I know you hacked our computer system, so you know the truth about Helheim Forest. Why won't you work with us?" Micchy stared at his brother.

"I agree that Helheim Forest is a problem. What I disagree with is your methods to remedy the problem," Micchy replied. Takatora looked slightly confused.

"It wouldn't be right to only save one-seventh of the earth's population," Micchy clarified.
"It's not possible for us to save everyone, Mitsuzane," Takatora stated, his tone harsh, "I didn't think you were that naïve." Micchy looked at the ground.

"I'm not naïve. I just haven't given up yet. Helheim is invading, so why don't we use the drivers to fight back and force it to not invade Earth?" Mitsuzane replied, despite his gaze still being on the ground. Takatora turned back around to face away from Micchy.

"That won't work," Takatora said, "We would only buy another ten years or so." Micchy looked up.

"Then you have ten years to find a better solution than killing off most of the world's population!" Micchy exclaimed, looking up at his brother. Takatora turned back and just stared at his younger brother as if he couldn't believe the other boy's naïveté.

"Those filthy Beat Riders have corrupted you," the elder Kureshima spat. He pulled out his belt, forcing Micchy to do the same. Both attached their belts, although Takatora's was a new model.

"Henshin," the two brothers stated in unison. They both pulled out their Lockseeds and clicked them open.

[BUDOU]/[MELON ENERGY]

They clipped the Lockseeds into place. Micchy flipped the cutting knife.

[COME ON! BUDOU ARMS! DRAGON, FIRE, BANG BANG BANG!]

Takatora pushed in a handle on his driver, opening the Lockseed.

[SODA! MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

The fruits descended to form each individual's armor. Ryugen gripped his gun, knees bent as if ready to dodge at a moment's notice. Zangetsu-Shin stood there for a moment before he began walking towards Ryugen. The younger boy immediately started firing. Zangetsu-Shin deflected most bullets with his blade-edged bow and the few that did connect did very little damage. Ryugen moved to the side to get more space and a better angle, but Zangetsu-Shin took that moment to charge at his younger brother. The younger boy had no chance to move before the elder slashed at him with the bow. Ryugen staggered backwards, barely dodging another slash. Zangetsu-Shin slashed at the younger boy's armor several more times, leaving him lying on the ground. Ryugen pushed himself back up to his feet.

"Why do you keep resisting?" Zangetsu-Shin demanded, landing a particularly savage blow that forced Micchy out of his transformation. The younger boy rolled another couple feet before coming to a stop. Slowly pushing himself up, Micchy looked at his older brother.

"Because you've changed nii-san," Micchy replied, breathing heavily, "And so have I." Takatora grunted in confusion. He de-transformed and moved to grab the younger boy's arm. Kaito left his hiding place and stepped in between the two brothers.

"Kaito-san!" Micchy said in surprise. Kaito glanced back.

"Did you think Kazuraba would ever leave me alone if I didn't keep an eye on you?" the older boy replied.

"This is none of your business," Takatora stated.

"Kazuraba would say he's making it his business," Kaito answered with a smirk, "I, on the other
hand, just don't like Yggdrasil." The two riders pulled out their Lockseeds as Takatora's cell phone rang. He grabbed the phone and answered. After a quick chat, he turned to leave.

"We'll have to finish this another night," Takatora said, looking straight at Micchy. And for once, Micchy stared right back. Kaito grabbed Micchy's shoulder and steered the younger boy to a bench and forced him to sit down. The younger boy looked confused at Kaito's actions.

"So what was that all about?" the older boy questioned. Micchy sighed.

"Nii-san sent me a text during today's meeting to meet with him. I decided to go because I want to try to convince him that he's going about this the wrong way," Micchy replied. Kaito sat down next to Micchy.

"Why did you join the Beat Riders anyways? As a Kureshima, you can have anything you want," Kaito pointed out. Micchy leaned back, looking up at the sky.

"Kaito-san, do know the feeling of being in a cage? Of having no say over your life?" Micchy started. He continued without giving the elder boy a chance to answer.

"My entire life has been planned out for me. Everything. I had no choices in anything that mattered. And when I saw the Beat Riders for the first time, I saw a freedom that I'd thought I could never have. I joined Team Gaim and never regretted it for a moment." Kaito snorted.

"Sounds like something Kazuraba would say," the older boy stated. Micchy chuckled before standing.

"If we don't head back soon, Kouta-san will probably head up a search party for us." Kaito had to admit, that was something the idiot would do. The two teens headed for Gaim's garage.

Micchy sat still as Mai wrapped the scrapes and bruises from his battle with his brother.

"Why did you fight him Micchy?" Kouta asked. Micchy looked up from watching Mai wrap his arm.

"I wanted to convince him that he's going about this all wrong," Micchy replied. Kouta ran his hands through his hair.

"You could've been seriously hurt. He could've taken you back to Yggdrasil," Kouta said quietly. Micchy sighed.

"But I'm not and I'm not going to let him," the younger boy replied. Kaito looked between Team Gaim's two riders.

"Wow Kazuraba, when did you become a mother hen?" the banana wielder asked mockingly. Kouta glared at Kaito. Micchy grinned, no longer tensed as he had been when Kouta had been mother-henning him. After a few minutes of banter, Kaito left. Kouta turned toward Micchy and wrapped the younger boy in a hug. Micchy stiffened for a moment before relaxing and wrapping his arms around Kouta's stomach.

"Thank you, Kouta-san," the younger boy said quietly. Kouta grinned and proceeded to drag Micchy to his apartment.
I hope you liked it! Please comment! Constructive criticism is welcome!
"I don't trust words. I trust actions." -Unknown

Kaito stepped into the lab. He looked at the man seated at the only piece of furniture in the room.

"Sengoku Ryoma," he said. The professor turned to face the Beat Rider.

"Kumon Kaito, how nice of you to accept my invitation," the man replied.

"You said you had a proposal for me," Kaito continued, getting straight to the point.

"Why, yes, I do," Ryoma smirked as Sid and Yoko stepped out from behind the pillars, "But first, a question. What do you think about saving people from Helheim Forest?" Kaito snorted.

"If they aren't strong enough to save themselves, they have no right to exist," Kaito answered bluntly. Ryoma laughed and his associates smiled.

"Then I would like to propose an alliance. We believe the same way you do," Ryoma said, grinning.

"What can you offer me?" Kaito asked. Sid burst out laughing.

"I like this one!" he said, pointing to the Beat Rider. Yoko merely grinned in amusement. Ryoma smirked.

"I can give you a Genesis Driver, like what we have," Ryoma replied, holding up the Driver in question, "It is much more powerful then the Sengoku Drivers."

"Fine," Kaito said, grabbed the proffered Driver.

"Hey, Micchy, do you know where Kaito is?" Kouta asked. Micchy shook his head and replied.

"No, but I thought I heard him say he was going to go train." Kouta snorted.

"That's just like him," Kouta told himself. He clapped Micchy on the shoulder and wandered off. Micchy's hands gripped his tablet tighter. He remembered when Kaito had pulled him aside earlier.

"Sengoku Ryoma invited me to talk and I'm going to go see what he wants. Make sure the others don't find out or follow me."

"I hope Kaito-san's alright," Micchy muttered before returning to his tablet.

Some time later, Kaito returned and they continued planning. They had been brainstorming ways to stop the Helheim Forest from invading Earth, without much success. Kaito stood suddenly.

"I'm done trying to play hero," he said, "If people can't save themselves, then it's no concern of mine." He turned to walk away before Kouta grabbed his shoulder.

"Don't you care about the people that will get caught in the crossfire?" the orange rider asked
incredulously. Kaito shrugged off Kouta's hand before turning to stare at the orange rider.

"I just said that's no concern of mine," Kaito replied. Kouta moved to stand between Kaito and the door. Kaito approached as if to hit the other teen, when Micchy stepped in between them.

"This is no time to be fighting," he told them. Kouta nodded and Kaito snorted. Kouta moved to stand next to Micchy. Kaito headed for the door, shouldering his way past Micchy, almost knocking the boy over in the process. Kouta caught the younger boy before he could fall over, but Kaito was already gone.

"What a jerk," Kouta muttered.

"Yeah," Micchy replied, feeling a piece of paper in his pocket.

"You wanted to talk to me, Kaito-san?" Micchy said, arriving at the playground where he'd fought his brother before Kaito intervened. The banana-wielding rider turned to look at the younger boy.

"I'm going to do some investigation into Sengoku Ryoma and his cohorts," Kaito stated, "I'll forward the information to you when I can. Share it with the others if you must, but don't tell them where you got it." Micchy stared at the older boy for a moment.

"Why are you doing this, Kaito-san? I didn't think like you liked Kouta-san or me," Micchy asked. Kaito looked back with a smirk before replying.

"Who knows?" Micchy shook his head with a smile.

"Good luck, Kaito-san." The brunet boy just smirked before leaving the park.

"It seems that all the pieces are moving around," DJ Sagara said to himself, watching Kaito and Micchy talk from afar. He vanished, reappearing in Helheim. He looked at a golden apple.

"This is getting interesting," he murmured. His eyes widened as he heard a voice coming from the apple.

"I-Impossible!"

Kaito was once again in Sengoku Ryoma's office. The scientist held out a picture, which Kaito snatched from the older man's hand.

"The first thing I want you to do is investigate this picture. I can give you directions to the location," Ryoma stated. Kaito looked at the picture. It showed a blurry dark red figure in some ruins.

"What is this?" Kaito asked.

"We don't know," Ryoma replied, "But I believe it to be an intelligent Inves, which I have dubbed an Overlord."

"Are they strong?" Kaito questioned. Ryoma smirked.

"That's what you need to find out."

Kaito had trekked out to the ruins that Ryoma had shown him, leaving packages as he came.
"I wonder if Junior managed to get Kazuraba to come," he thought.

"Oi! Kaito!" came a shout.

"Right on cue," Kaito thought, smirking. Kouta showed up a few minutes later.

"Hey! Kaito!" the orange wielder called, maneuvering to stand next to Kaito, "What's up with you lately?" Kaito snorted.

"Oi!" They were interrupted by a dark red figure appearing a short ways away in the ruins. The creature spoke in a strange language.

"It can talk?" Kouta gasped. Kaito turned to face the strange Inves.

"That's no ordinary Inves," Kaito stated, "It's an Overlord, an Inves that managed to retain it's intelligence." Kouta gaped at Kaito. The Overlord brandished it's sword at them.

"How do you know that?" Kouta demanded. Kaito merely smirked. Kouta grumbled in frustration as both teens pulled out their Lockseeds.

"Henshin," the two teens declared.

[ORANGE]/[BANANA]

They attached the Lockseeds to their belts.

[LOCK ON]

With a flick of the wrist, they flipped the Cutting Knife.

[CORE ON! ORANGE ARMS! TO THE SPOTLIGHT! ON STAGE!]

[CORE ON! BANANA ARMS! KNIGHT OF SPEAR~!]

The two riders' armor formed and they charged at the creature.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed it. Sorry it took so long! I've just started college and got a new laptop.
"Truth only reveals itself when one gives up all preconceived notions." - Shoseki

"I don't get it," Kouta complained as he and Kaito were getting fixed up.

"It's simple Kouta-san," Micchy replied from where he was bandaging up Kaito, "Kaito-san went undercover when Sengoku Ryoma offered him an alliance to see what they were up to. He told me so that he could relay the information to me. That's how I knew where the ruins were."

"I get that part," Kouta replied, "What I don't get is why Kaito couldn't have told us what was going on."

"You're not a good enough actor," Kaito answered.

"What did you say?" Kouta yelled, jumping to his feet. Mai pushed him back down so she could finish bandaging his wounds.

"Calm down Kouta-san," Micchy replied, "Sengoku Ryoma needed to believe that Kaito-san was leaving the group. I'm good at acting, so he told me what was going on. If too many people were in on it, it wouldn't have looked realistic."

"But his cover got blown anyways!" Kouta declared, throwing his arms upwards in exasperation.

"It would have worked if someone hadn't intervened," Kaito replied, staring at Micchy. The younger boy rolled his eyes.

"Well, excuse me for saving your life," Micchy retorted.

"I didn't need your help!" Kouta sighed.

Three Hours Earlier

"Henshin," the two teens declared.

[ORANGE] /[BANANA]

They attached the Lockseeds to their belts.

[LOCK ON]

With a flick of the wrist, they flipped the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! ORANGE ARMS! TO THE SPOTLIGHT! ON STAGE!]

[COME ON! BANANA ARMS! KNIGHT OF SPEAR~!]

The two riders' armor formed and they charged at the creature.

The battle wasn't going well. The Overlord appeared to be beating them effortlessly. Gaim and Baron had switched to Pine and Mango Arms, but they still could not make a dent in the creature's
armor like skin. Neither of them noticed Micchy and Ryoma coming to keep an eye on the fight.

Micchy's mind was working overtime. The Overlord is incredibly strong and seems to shrug off most attacks. It can also control the Helheim plants.

Ryoma, meanwhile, was considering the possibilities. If I can create an alliance with them, maybe they can help me find the Golden Fruit.

In the fight, Baron and Gaim were barely able to stand when the Overlord suddenly doubled over clutching its head. The fighter and observers looked on in confusion as the Overlord babbled into thin air. The Overlord flashed away to an unknown location. Kouta and Kaito let their transformations fade.

"Alright Kaito, how did you know about that thing? Or this place for that matter!" Kouta demanded. Ryoma decided to reveal his presence.

"That would be me," the scientist replied, "What I'm curious about is how you got here."

"Micchy told me!" Kouta replied. Micchy face palmed in his hiding place.

"Oh, Mitsuzane-kun?" Ryoma wondered, "But how did he find out? It wasn't in the files that he hacked when you escaped from Yggdrasil earlier." Kouta's eyes widened. Ryoma noticed.

"I think I understand what happened now," Ryoma said. He pulled out his belt and a light blue Lockseed.

[LEMON ENERGY]

"Henshin," Ryoma said with a smirk.

Ryoma clicked the Lockseed into place.

[LOCK ON]

He slid the handle-like lever.

[SODA! LEMON ENERGY ARMS! FIGHT! POWER! FIGHT! POWER! FIGHT! FIGHT! F-F-F-F-F-F-FIGHT!]

A large lemon came through the crack and formed the yellow and blue rider from the incident with Hase, known as Duke. Micchy's eyes widened from his hiding spot. Kouta and Kaito quickly reactivated their armor. Duke immediately launched a hail of energy arrows at the Beat Riders. The attack managed to knock them out of their transformation. Kaito rolled towards Micchy's hiding place, while Kouta was sent across the area. Duke approached Kaito.

"I don't take too kindly to traitors, Kaito-kun," Duke said, "You've been giving information to Mitsuzane-kun, haven't you?" Duke pulled back the string on his Sonic Arrow.

"I regret to inform you that our alliance must come to an end," Duke mock-pouted, "So sad." He was about to shoot the arrow when Micchy leapt out of his hiding spot and pushed Kaito out of the way. The attack nicked Micchy's arm, but did no serious damage. Kaito looked at Micchy, surprised. The younger boy pulled Kaito up and dragged him over to where Kouta was getting up.

"Let's go," Kouta said. The other two nodded. They walked away, keeping some of the ruins between themselves and Ryoma.
"My, my," Ryoma said, "Things have gotten interesting."

Present

"I would say you did, considering that would have killed you!" Micchy protested.

"I didn't ask you to save me!" Kaito declared. Micchy just looked at Kaito.

"Why should you have to ask?" Micchy asked quietly. Kaito blinked. Kouta looked over at the sudden lack of volume. Kaito snorted before he ruffled Micchy's hair.

"Hey!" Kouta and Mai laughed while Kaito smirked and Micchy tried to fix his hair. Every time he fixed it, Kouta or Mai would mess it up again. Eventually. The younger boy gave up and started laughing along with them.

DJ Sagara watched the four teens interact.

"Is this what the Golden Fruit meant?" he wondered. He remembered when the Golden Fruit had spoken.

"That's the first time anything like this has happened when I intervene," he said to himself. He vanished from his observation point, the inhabitants of the garage none the wiser to his presence.

"I'll need to find a way to defeat the Overlords," Ryoma said, re-watching the fight between Gaim, Baron, and the Overlord, "I could have the Beat Rider kids try to defeat them, but if they manage it, I'd still have to defeat them." Ryoma leaned back in his seat, pondering the dilemma

Kureshima Takatora stared out the window of his office in Yggdrasil. His fist was clenched.

"Why Mitsuzane? Why do you lower yourself to the level of that street trash? You are a Kureshima! You have a duty to lead!" Takatora shook his head to clear his thoughts.

"Soon, I'll bring you home, Mitsuzane."

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Appearance of the Overlords

Chapter Summary

The Armored Rider go looking for the Overlords and get more than they bargained for.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Conflict avoidance often causes greater conflict." -Bryant H. McGill

"Okay, so we now know about the Overlords thanks to Kaito-san's efforts. They can control the Helheim plants, so if we reason with them, we may be able to get them to call the Helheim plants back from Earth," Micchy said, addressing the other Riders and some of the Beat Riders, "However, this is by no means certain, given that the first one we encountered seems to prefer fighting to discussion. They might not even know our language."

"How do you know there are other Overlords?" Rat asked, "There could just be the one."

"I don't know how many Overlords there are, but if we have to fight, it's better to estimate higher than lower," Micchy replied.

"So we need to try to talk to them," Kouta said.

"But it might not be that easy," Kaito stated, "We should be prepared for a fight." Kouta nodded reluctantly. Kouta, Kaito, Micchy, Oren, and Jonouchi made their way to the ruins where they'd first encountered the Overlord.

"It's better if we stick together," Micchy said. The others nodded or shrugged. They explored the ruins.

"What are you doing here?" a voice asked from behind them. The riders whirled around to see a green lizard-like creature with a halberd. "Who are you?"

"My name is Kazuraba Kouta. This is Kumon Kaito, Kureshima Mitsuzane, Oren Pierre Alfonso, and Jonouchi Hideyasu," Kouta introduced, gesturing to each of the riders, "We just want to talk."

"Oh? What about?" the Overlord asked.

"We know that you can control the Helheim plants, so we're asking you to remove the Helheim plants from Earth," Kouta replied. The Overlord laughed.

"I think not," the Overlord answered. "Why won't you?" Kouta demanded. The Overlord laughed, sending a shiver down the rider's spines. "I grow bored in this place," the Overlord replied, "Earth sounds like it will have far more interesting toys."

"Human lives aren't toys!" Kouta shouted.

"On the contrary, they are nothing more than toys for those who are stronger than them," the
Overlord stated. The riders pulled out their Lockseeds.

"Henshin!" the five riders declared in unison. They attached the Lockseeds.

They flipped the Cutting Knives.

They stood in their ready positions, watching the Overlord. The Overlord laughed. She waved the halberd, causing several Helheim vines to approach the five riders. Ryugen shot at the vines. Gridon whacked them away with his hammer. Gaim and Bravo slashed at the vines with their swords. Baron hacked at them with his spear. However, more kept coming. The Overlord observed their fight with the vines. She then warped near Ryugen. When Ryugen noticed her presence, he scrambled away shooting at her. The bullets' damage was negligible.

"Why is it always me?" the grape-themed rider thought as he continued shooting at the Overlord. The Overlord finally grew bored of letting Ryugen's shots connect and slashed at him with her halberd. Ryugen fell and rolled away.

"Micchy!" Gaim shouted as he rushed to place himself between the Overlord and the youngest rider. He helped Ryugen stand, making sure to keep his sword pointed at the Overlord. The other riders congregated around Gaim and Ryugen. Ryugen grabbed a different Lockseed and removed his Budou Lockseed.

He attached the second Lockseed to his belt.

"You might want to back up," Gaim warned. The other riders took a couple steps back.

Ryugen flipped the Cutting Knife.

Ryugen changed into his secondary armor, arming himself with two large Frisbee-like weapons with bladed edges. They spread out, circling the Overlord. The Overlord laughed again.

"You're such fun toys," she said, "I wouldn't want to break you too soon." With that, the Overlord vanished. The riders undid their transformations. Kaito punched one of the walls. Micchy and Jonouchi heaved a sigh of relief. Kouta's fists were clenched. Oren stared at the space the Overlord had vanished from while he thought.
"I guess the Overlords are our enemies," Kouta said. Micchy nodded.

"It'd be best to regroup in our world," Oren stated. The others nodded. The riders had gathered at Gaim's garage. Thankfully, there were no major injuries that needed to be patched up.

"So, the Overlords won't help us," Micchy thought out loud.

"We'll need to figure out another way to stop the Helheim invasion," Kouta said. Micchy nodded.

"Not to mention, we still need to figure out how to use these," Kaito added, holding up the attachment and light blue Lockseeds.

"Wait a minute, these are Energy Lockseeds," Micchy said, "They're supposed to only work with the Genesis Drivers. I'm guessing that mean that the attachment is the only way we can use them." He looked at his belt. "It obviously wouldn't go over the Cutting Knife and we already tried attaching it to the center space. That means…" Micchy grinned as he fiddled with the Rider Indicator, sliding it off of his belt and replacing it with the attachment given to them by DJ Sagara. He held the belt up triumphantly. Kouta and Kaito quickly copied Micchy's actions. They attached the belts.

[ORANGE]/[BUDOU]/[BANANA]

[LEMON ENERGY]/[PEACH ENERGY]/[CHERRY ENERGY]

They flipped the Cutting Knives, which split both Lockseeds.

[CONE ON! MIX! LEMON RAIMENT!]/[COME ON! MIX! PEACH RAIMENT!]/[COME ON! MIX! CHERRY RAIMENT!]

Each rider retained their helmet shape and Ride Wear, but now they had heavier armor. Kouta's resembled that of a samurai. Micchy's was a lighter version of Kouta's, presumably due to the difference in physical strength. Kaito's armor was about the same as Kouta's. The main difference in the armors was the coloring. Kouta's was yellow with black accents, Micchy's was pink, and Kaito's armor was red. They could practically see Kaito smirking.

"Wicked," Kouta said, looking at his armor. Micchy grinned inside his helmet.

"Next time we come across an Overlord, we'll have to try these things out," Micchy stated, "Or the next time we have to deal with Yggdrasil." Micchy curled one hand into a fist. Kouta nodded, noticing Micchy's sudden tenseness. They released their transformations and replaced the Rider Indicators.

"We'll make your brother see sense," Kouta whispered to Micchy as they left for Kouta's apartment. Micchy no longer protested, since it didn't matter, since Kouta dragged him there anyways. Plus, he was getting quite attached to Kouta's older sister. The two teens were lying down in Kouta's room. Micchy was on the floor while Kouta was on the bed. Kouta was awake, thinking about earlier. He remembered Micchy clenching his fist when thinking about fighting Yggdrasil. He looked over when he heard Micchy talking in his sleep.

"Stop it…Nii-san…Stop," Micchy mumbled as he tossed and turned. Kouta got out of bed and sat next to Micchy. The older boy started smoothing Micchy's hair, which seemed to comfort the younger boy. The boy continued talking in his sleep. "Thank you, Kouta-niisan."

Chapter End Notes
I hope you enjoyed the update! I know it's been a while. Sorry!
The Riders have their first battle against Demushu in their world and alliances are formed.

"If any honor existed in war, it was in fighting to protect others from harm." -Christopher Paolini

The green Overlord knelt before a human-like being that was primarily light blue.

"Ah, Redyue, why are you here?" the light blue Overlord asked. The green Overlord, Redyue, stood.

"The time has come to hasten the human's demise," Redyue stated, "Their planet will be overrun by the forest soon enough." The light blue Overlord merely nodded. Redyue bowed and left.

"Demushu," the green Overlord called. The red Overlord appeared in front of the green one.

"What is it, Redyue?" Demushu asked.

"It is time to lead an attack on the human world," Redyue said. Demushu would've smiled if he could.

Micchy was once again looking over the information he'd gathered on the Overlords. He pursed his lips.

"What's wrong, Micchy?" Kouta asked. Micchy looked up from his papers.

"I've been looking at the information I have on the Overlords," Micchy replied with a sigh, "But I don't have nearly enough." Kouta looked over the information. There were tons of scribbles and notes connecting various pieces of information as well as inferred information.

"It's still a lot more than we had," Kouta answered with a grin, "It'll be fine." He put his hand on Micchy's head. Micchy looked up in surprise before smiling. He nodded.

A crack had opened between Helheim and Earth. Demushu was ready with a small army of Inves. They swarmed through the crack as soon as it opened.

Micchy's tablet suddenly started beeping. He picked it up and paled when he saw the content.

"What's wrong?" Kouta asked urgently.

"A crack opened and that red Overlord is here with an army of Inves," Micchy replied, dropping his
tablet as he dashed for the door.

"What's going on?" Kazuraba Akira asked as Kouta ran to the door.

"Something Micchy and I gotta take care of," Kouta called back, "We'll be back soon Nee-san!"

Kouta followed Micchy out the door, calling Kaito, Oren, and Jonouchi as they headed toward the crack.

The riders arrived at the crack, easily spotting Demushu amongst the Inves.

[ORANGE]/[BANANA]/[BUDOU]/[DONGURI]/[DURIAN]

"Henshin!"

[LOCK ON]

They each flipped the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! ORANGE ARMS! IN THE SPOTLIGHT! ON STAGE!]

[COME ON! BANANA ARMS! KNIGHT OF SPEAR~!]

[COME ON! BUDOU ARMS! DRAGON, FIRE, BANG, BANG, BANG!]

[COME ON! DONGURI ARMS! NEVER GIVE UP!]

[COME ON! DURIAN ARMS! MISTER DANGEROUS!]

Each of their armors formed and Kouta, Kaito, and Micchy grabbed their Energy Lockseeds and placed their Genesis Cores.

[LEMON ENERGY]/[CHERRY ENERGY]/[PEACH ENERGY]

The three riders flipped the Cutting Knives again.

[COME ON! MIX! LEMON RAIMENT!]/[COME ON! MIX! CHERRY RAIMENT!]/[COME ON! MIX! PEACH RAIMENT!]

The riders immediately charged in, trying to defeat as many Inves as they could. The regular Inves didn't stand a chance. Soon, it was just them and Demushu. Demushu snarled and leapt toward them. Kouta caught the attack, letting the other get a couple hits in. Kaito and Micchy’s attacks caused Demushu to stumble. The battle was even for a while before it started to turn in the favor of the riders.

Soon, Demushu was forced to retreat back to Helheim Forest.

“So that’s what happened to my missing items,” Ryoma mused, “But how did they get them?”

The riders released their transformation. Micchy gave a sigh of relief.


“You know what that means!” Micchy and Kouta slumped, while Kaito didn’t react outwardly. Kouta turned to look at Micchy.
“We’d better go find Nee-chan,” he said, “She’s probably worried about us.” Micchy nodded and with a wave, the two riders left. The other riders dispersed.

“Let’s see,” Ryoma mused, flipping through the files of his colleagues that he had on his computer.

“Minato-kun wouldn’t have done it, she’s too loyal,” Ryoma contemplated, “It would be detrimental to Sid for the Beat Riders to get stronger. Takatora doesn’t even want Mitsuzane-kun involved, much less powered up. That leaves…” Ryoma trailed off, staring at the file for DJ Sagara.

“It must be him,” Ryoma muttered, “But why?”

DJ Sagara, meanwhile, was thinking over what he’d heard from the Golden Fruit.

“Why did it speak?” he asked himself, “It’s never spoken before. What’s so different about this world?”

Kouta and Micchy were making their way back to Kouta’s apartment when Kouta noticed how quiet Micchy was.

“Is everything okay, Micchy?” Kouta asked. Micchy started slightly before looking at Kouta.

“Yeah, everything’s fine,” Micchy replied, putting on a smile to reassure Kouta. While he wasn’t convinced, Kouta dropped the subject.

“What news do you have, Demushu?” Redyue asked. Demushu replied in their native tongue, having refused to speak the language of humans.

“So the humans have a new power,” the green Overlord mused. Roshuo was not present.

“They prove to be most interesting toys,” Redyue continued. She smirked, or would’ve if she’d been human. “Most interesting indeed.”

Kouta pulled Micchy into the living room area once they returned to the Kazuraba residence. Micchy looked confused at Kouta’s actions.

“I know something’s bothering you,” Kouta said, “You should get it off your chest.” Micchy chuckled humorlessly.

“I can’t get anything past you, can I Kouta-san?” the younger teen asked rhetorically. Kouta stared at the younger. Micchy avoided looking at Kouta as he spoke.

“This place feels more like home than the house I grew up in,” Micchy started, “That house was so cold. But it wasn’t always like that. When I was little, Nii-san and I were really close. Then he went away for college and to start working at Yggdrasil. He was rarely home and usually kept himself shut up in his room. Even when we were together, he was different. He was more focused on the family business than on family. I was just remembering what it was like before he changed.” Kouta sat next to Micchy and pulled the younger boy into a hug.

“Don’t worry, Micchy,” Kouta said, “We’ll get through to your brother. And now you have an even bigger family.” Micchy smiled and hugged the older teen back.
“Thank you, Kouta-niisan,” he said quietly, unaware that Kouta had heard him and smiled.

“So, you’re Redyue? Charmed,” Ryoma said. Redyue stood in his office, looking at the technology that humans had developed.

“You propose an alliance between your faction and myself?” Redyue questioned, her attention returning to the lounging man. Ryoma grinned.

“Exactly,” he replied, “I can provide you with information on each of the Riders and you can do what you wish to them. Redyue considered the human’s idea.

“Very well,” Redyue replied, “At least for the time being, we’re allies.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Chapter Summary

Miccy and Takatora meet once again, but this time Kouta comes to watch. Also, DJ Sagara meets with the other Yggdrasil Riders regarding the Golden Fruit.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Resolve to never quit, never give up, to matter what the situation.” -Jack Nicklaus

During another Rider meeting, Micchy’s phone vibrated, indicating that he had a call. The teen stepped out to take it.

“Mitsuzane,” a voice said before he could say a word. Micchy’s eyes widened.

“Nii-san,” Micchy said, “Why are you calling me?”

“I’m going to finally put an end to your rebellious stage. Meet me at Kajitsu Park at nine tonight.” Then Takatora hung up. Micchy brought the phone away from his ear and tightened his grip on it. He returned to the meeting, waving the call off as concerned school friends. Kaito narrowed his eyes at the younger boy but said nothing.

The day passed quickly. At quarter 'til nine, Micchy snuck out of the Kazuraba apartment and went to Kajitsu Park. It was a park that Micchy and Takatora had frequented as children. Takatora was already there.

“Mitsuzane,” Takatora said, his voice neutral.

“Nii-san,” Micchy replied, his voice equally neutral.

“Why must you be so stubborn?” Takatora asked, “You are a Kureshima. You must act like one.” Micchy looked at the ground.

“I want to be able to choose my own destiny Nii-san,” Micchy replied, looking up at his older brother.

“You would choose those Beat Rider trash over your own family?” Takatora questioned. Micchy squared his shoulders.

“Kouta-san and the others aren’t trash! When we were younger, you never would have called them that!” Micchy replied angrily.

“What?” Takatora asked, thrown by Micchy’s reference to their childhood. Micchy looked at the ground again, his burst of anger now gone.

“You weren’t like this when we were children,” Micchy said. Takatora scoffed.
“I grew up,” Takatora replied scathingly, “You need to do the same.” Micchy’s hands clenched into a fist.

“At least I’m not giving up! At least I’m trying to find a way to save everyone!” Micchy shouted. Takatora frowned. His brother was more corrupted than he thought.

“I guess there’s only one way we can settle this,” Takatora said, pulling out his Genesis Driver. Micchy pulled out his Sengoku Driver, Genesis Core still attached. Takatora looked at the Driver in slight confusion before shrugging it off. They pulled out their Lockseeds, Takatora one and Micchy two.

[BUDOU/PEACH ENERGY]/[MELON ENERGY]

“Henshin!” the two brothers declared in unison.

[COME ON! BUDOU ARMS! DRAGON, FIRE, BANG, BANG, BANG! COME ON! MIX! PEACH RAIMENT! HA-HA!]/[SODA! MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

Their respective armors formed. Takatora looked on in surprise at Micchy’s change.

“Where did you get an Energy Lockseed?” Takatora ground out.

“Why does it matter where I got it?” Micchy asked. With that, the two brothers charged. After exchanging several blows, where Micchy was able to hold his own against his brother.

“Why, Mitsuzane? Why do you turn your back on your responsibilities?” Takatora shouted as they continued to exchange blows.

“I want to follow my own path Nii-san,” Micchy replied, “I will find a way to save everyone!”

“You’re being naïve! We can’t save everyone!” Takatora retorted. Micchy looked at his brother… and closed his Lockseeds. Takatora did the same, staring Micchy.

“You’ve changed Nii-san,” Micchy said quietly, Takatora barely able to hear, “I can barely recognize you anymore.” Micchy turned and left. Takatora’s fists were clenched tightly.

From behind a tree, where he’d stayed to keep an eye in Micchy, Kouta watched Takatora for a long moment, as if to make sure that he didn’t try to strike his brother when his back was turned. Once Micchy was out of sight, Kouta came out from behind the tree he’d been hiding behind and walked up to Takatora.

“What do you want?” the elder Kureshima asked. Kouta studied him for a moment.

“Having to fight you…it’s tearing Micchy apart. It’s hurting him because you’re his brother and he loves you. What’s so bad about the way we’re trying to do things?” Takatora scoffed.

“You way will lead to everyone being wiped out.” Kouta frowned.

“And how do you know that?” he asked.

“You think we haven’t considered every possibility?” Takatora replied, “We’ve had the top scientists in every field working on a way to stop the Helheim Forest. The plan that’s most likely to succeed is Project Ark.” Kouta sighed.

“We have ten years, right? So, use those ten years to find a better solution. Look, I don’t care about your reasons or your plans. I care about the fact that Micchy is hurting because he has to fight you,”
Kouta said. With that he turned and went after Micchy.

“You wanted to meet with me?” DJ Sagara asked, entering Ryoma’s office. Yoko and Sid were also in attendance.

“Yes,” Ryoma said with a smirk, “I’ll get straight to the point.” Ryoma played a clip of the Beat Rider’s fight against the Overlord, specifically when they used the Genesis Cores.

“How did the Beat Riders get their hands on Energy Lockseeds and Genesis Cores?” Ryoma questioned.

“Just trying to even the playing field,” Sagara replied with a wide grin, “It’s not interesting if everything is so one-sided.”

“You’re familiar with the Golden Fruit, aren’t you?” Ryoma questioned.

“You could say that,” Sagara replied, “I’m just in it to see who the Helheim Forest chooses.” The three Riders exchanged glances. When they looked back, Sagara was gone.

It was late when Kouta woke suddenly for no apparent reason. He looked over at Micchy. The younger boy was sound asleep. Kouta got up, careful not to make much noise—Micchy was a light sleeper—and made his way to the living room.

Once there, he came face to face with DJ Sagara.

“What are you doing here?” Kouta asked, his voice hushed to avoid waking Micchy. Sagara wandered in the direction of the kitchen as he spoke.

“How good is your resolve?” the DJ asked, ignoring Kouta’s question. Kouta looked confused.

“I will find a way to save everyone,” Kouta replied, “Count on it.” DJ Sagara started laughing. Kouta glanced over his shoulder to make sure Micchy hadn’t wandered in.

“What’s so funny?” he hissed.

“How interesting,” Sagara said. He picked up an orange from the kitchen and played with it.

“Are you sure? More intelligent minds than yours couldn’t figure out a better way,” Sagara pointed out. Kouta’s hands clenched into fists as he looked away. His gaze landed on the door to his room, where Micchy was sleeping. A small smile crept across his face.

“Maybe if it was just me, you’d have a point,” Kouta replied, “But I’m not alone. Micchy’s the smartest person I know. Kaito’s so strong. Oren-san has all his military training. Jonouchi trains hard. Together, we’ll find a way to stop the Helheim Forest.” Unseen by Kouta, the orange in Sagara’s hands changed into a Lockseed. Sagara smiled mysteriously before tossing Kouta the newly-created Lockseed.

“Eh? What—“ Kouta looked up from the Lockseed to see that Sagara had vanished. Kouta stared at the mysterious Lockseed.

Chapter End Notes
I hope you enjoyed it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Jonouchi's Determination

Chapter Summary

Jonouchi finds out what happened to Hase, and figures out what to do from there. Kaito has a chance to think over the past few months.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person’s determination” -Unknown

“Hey, have any of you seen Hase-chan since the Christmas event?”

Micchy, Kouta, and Kaito looked up from their individual projects. Jonouchi was the one who had spoken.

“I’ve been so distracted by the Rider stuff that I just realized I haven’t seen Hase-chan since then,” he continued. Micchy shook his head and Kaito went back to what he’d been doing. Kouta hesitated for a moment before speaking.

“I saw him a while ago,” Kouta said, “He…ate a Helheim fruit.” Jonouchi paled. They all knew what happened to those who ate the Helheim fruit.

"He turned into an Inves and was defeated by one of the Yggdrasil Riders.”

“So, the Inves you mentioned when you talked about them was Hase-chan?” Jonouchi asked. Kouta gave a slow nod. Jonouchi’s mouth opened and closed a couple times before he left. Kouta grimaced.

Oren was leaving a grocery store, where he got most of his supplies, when he saw Jonouchi sitting forlornly on a bench. The teen appeared to be watching the people walking by but his mind was a million miles away. Oren cocked his head, slightly confused with the normally grounded teen’s behavior. Looking at his groceries, he sighed before walking over the brunet teen.

“What is the matter?”

Jonouchi started when Oren spoke.

“Nothing,” he muttered, not looking at Oren. Oren felt like rolling his eyes. As if he couldn’t tell something was bothering the teen.

“Something’s the matter, otherwise you would not be acting like this,” Oren replied. Jonouchi frowned. Oren sighed again.

“It is better to talk about these things,” he said. Jonouchi hesitated. Then the words came tumbling out.
“It was supposed to be a game,” he said bitterly, “A way for dance groups to determine turf and stuff like that.” Jonouchi thought back to different Inves battles, both defending his stage and trying to gain another stage.

“When they started distributing the belts, it was just another level to conquer. Just another way to fight over turf. Even now, when we’re fighting against Yggdrasil and the Overlords, it still felt like a game. One that we were winning. But Hase-chan…he ate a Helheim fruit. He was just playing the game we’d thought it was. His Driver was broken during the Christmas event and he couldn’t cope with losing his power when he knew that Inves were out there. So, he ended up turning into an Inves and was killed by one of the Yggdrasil Riders. It was just supposed to be a game. And it got Hase-chan killed.” Oren remained silent for a moment, deciding what to say.

“So, what will you do now?” Oren asked. Jonouchi looked at the Frenchman.

“What do you mean?” he muttered.

“Will you run away and make his death meaningless or will you fight to keep it from being in vain? If Yggdrasil wins, most of the world’s population will become Inves, just like Hase. Most of them will probably fall to the Riders, just like Hase. Will you fight to prevent that from happening or run away and wallow in sadness?” Jonouchi’s eyes hardened.

“I’m going to make sure no one dies like Hase-chan,” he declared. Oren nodded. Jonouchi turned to the older man.

”Can you give me extra training, Oren-san? Please?”

”I would be happy too,” Oren replied, “We’d best start now.”

Micchy and Kouta saw Oren and Jonouchi working out.

“Looks like Jonouchi’s okay,” Kouta said, obviously relieved.

“Yeah,” Micchy added, “He seems even more determined now.”

Jonouchi was running on a treadmill. He’d been at it for several minutes already and his energy was starting to flag. However, he stubbornly kept running.

Oren switched him to chin-ups. He could do a couple before it felt impossible, but he stubbornly kept at it.

The pattern continued like that for a while. Jonouchi would start a new exercise, start flagging, and power through. Oren grinned at his pupil.

Kaito had time to think after Kouta and Micchy went to check on Jonouchi. The stoic Beat Rider thought over the past few months. He’d been working with the others, something he would normally never do.

Kaito admitted that he only cared about strength. He knew he was often overly harsh.

But in the past few months, after spending so much time with the other Beat Riders, they were growing on him.

Kazuraba was pretty strong, and he was able to inspire others and be inspired by them. Kaito knew
Kazuraba was doing what he could to help his sister, yet the other teen still made time for his friends and their mission.

Junior had seemed weak at the beginning, but he had some steel beneath his smiles. Then again, he would’ve had to, to have defied his family to join the Beat Riders and then run away from home.

Oren had military experience on his side, and he was willing to train them. Even running his restaurant, he still found the time to train them for hours on end.

Jonouchi used to be a tactician, leaving most of the fighting to Hase or Inves. But he was actually quite strong. Even the absence of Hase hadn’t brought him down until it had been revealed what happened to him.

Even Mai, who usually helped bandage them up after their fights, had her own form of strength. She watched them leave, knowing they could come back hurt, and still let them do it.

Honestly, Kaito knew he was different than before. He had noticed he wasn’t as harsh as he used to be. The only time that he acted as he used to was when he’d been…well…acting.

Truthfully, that was the point when he’d really noticed the changes. Junior had helped him and when Kaito told him he hadn’t asked for help, he’d asked why Kaito should need to. Kaito had sort of frozen after that—not that he would admit it. It had never occurred to him that he shouldn’t need to ask for help from his…friends. Instead of talking more, he’d distracted the younger teen by messing with his hair—something he would never have done before all this Rider stuff.

Yeah, Kaito noticed the changes. But he couldn’t bring himself to stop it.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked the chapter! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Second Thoughts and Betrayal

Chapter Summary

Takatora starts to wonder if his brother is right and Ryoma takes things into his own hands.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"The saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from your enemies." -Unknown

Takatora stood staring out the window at Zawame City. Memories from the past few months flashed through his mind.

"It wouldn't be right to only save one-seventh of the Earth's population."

"I will find a way to save everyone!"

"You've changed Nii-san. I can barely recognize you anymore."

"Having to fight you, it's tearing Micchy apart. It's hurting him because you're his brother and he loves you. What's wrong with doing it our way?"

Takatora started pacing. Why was his younger brother so insistent on remaining with the Beat Riders?

Because you're not the same older brother he remembers a traitorous part of his mind said. He sat at his desk and leaned his forehead against his folded hands.

"What if they're right?"

Ryoma peeked into Takatora's office. He witnessed the other's moment of doubt. He frowned briefly. His normal smile returned and he knocked.

"Come in," Takatora said. Ryoma walked in, holding the latest findings in their research.

"Just came to deliver the new info," he replied. Ryoma set the papers down and looked at Takatora.

"Not having any doubts, are we? Project Ark is the best chance we have to save what we can of humanity," Ryoma assured. Takatora hesitated before nodding. Ryoma noticed the hesitation.

"Come on, Takatora," Ryoma said, "You're not getting soft, are you? This is what we need to do."

"I'm well aware of that, Ryoma," the stern man replied stiffly.

"Are you?" the scientist asked. Takatora sighed.

"Mitsuzane and his friends still haven't given up on saving everyone," Takatora said, "I can't help but
wonder if they might be right." Ryoma raised an eyebrow.

"It's not like you to doubt yourself, Takatora," he stated.

"Mitsuzane never does anything without a reason," Takatora replied, turning back to look out the window, "and his friends have given him a reason to figure out how to stop Helheim." Ryoma frowned, unseen by the elder Kureshima.

"Mitsuzane-kun is being a bit of a nuisance, isn't he?" Ryoma mused, "He's starting to get in the way." Despite how quietly Ryoma had spoken, Takatora whirled around to stare angrily at the scientist.

"What do you mean by that?" Takatora spat.

"Mitsuzane-kun is quite distracting," Ryoma replied, "Because you're so focused on him, you're missing out on your potential! You could rule this world!" Takatora looked disgusted.

"That point isn't to rule the world! It's to save humanity!" he declared.

"But humanity will need a leader once Helheim has invaded," Ryoma answered, "You could be that leader!"

"No," Takatora replied, "That is not my place." Ryoma's face twisted angrily.

"It seems that you've been tainted," Ryoma replied, "You're not the man you used to be."

"You've changed Nii-san. I can barely recognize you anymore."

Takatora shook off the flash of memory. Ryoma turned and left, leaving Takatora uneasy.

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"Hey, Micchy, Nee-chan and I have work, but we need some things for dinner. Can you get them for us?" Kouta asked, holding out the list.

"Of course, Kouta-san," the younger boy replied, grabbing the list. He helped out when he could, as thanks for letting him stay with them. Kouta grinned and left. Micchy headed out to get the groceries.

The first time Kouta had taken Micchy grocery shopping with him had been interesting. It had been Micchy's first time in a grocery store, and he'd reminded Kouta of a kid in a candy shop.

But by now, Micchy was used to grocery shopping and was perfectly capable of doing it on his own. It didn't take too long to find the items on the list, or to go through the checkout. As he was heading back to the apartment, he was forced to stop when a man in a lab coat stepped in his way.

"Wait, aren't you...?" Micchy asked warily.

"Yes, I'm one of your brother's coworker, Mitsuzane-kun," the man replied, "And you're in the way." He pulled out a Genesis Driver and Energy Lockseed. Micchy started to back away, pulling out his Sengoku Driver and Lockseeds. They both attached their belts and activated their Lockseeds.

[BUDOU/PEACH ENERGY]/[LEMON ENERGY]

"Henshin!" Micchy declared.

"Henshin," Ryoma stated.
Duke immediately starts shooting at Ryugen, who dodges the arrows. Ryugen shot back and for a while, they shot back and forth at each other. Eventually, Duke grew tired of them shooting at each other and ran towards Ryugen. Ryugen blocked and tried striking back. Duke easily dodged, landing several blows on Ryugen. The purple and green rider stumbled back. Duke pursued him relentlessly. Ryugen was able to land a few blows.

"You really are a nuisance, aren't you?" Duke asked. Ryugen shot several arrows at him. A few made it through Duke's defenses. Duke came in close, landing more blows. After one particularly savage hit, Micchy was forced out of his transformation. The battered teen pushed himself back up. Duke kicked Micchy in the chest, sending him rolling backwards. Micchy scrambled backwards as Duke came forward again.

"Ryoma!" a masculine voice came from Micchy's right. Takatora ran over, helping Micchy stand.

"What are you doing?" Takatora asked incredulously.


[MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

He attached it to his Driver.

"Henshin."

[SODA! MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

Takatora's upgraded armor formed.

"Get out of here, Mitsuzane," Takatora said to the beat-up boy behind him. Micchy nodded and started walking away as fast as he could. Duke attempted to shoot at the teen's unprotected back, only for Zangetsu-Shin to block the arrows with his bow.

"What possessed you to go after Mitsuzane?" Takatora asked as they started slashing at each other with their bows.

He's holding you back!" Ryoma replied, "If you didn't spend so much time worrying about Mitsuzane-kun, you could be the ultimate being!"

"What do you mean by that?" Takatora demanded. Their fight took them to a ledge, where there were no people.

"Have you ever heard of the Golden Fruit?" Ryoma asked, "Whoever eats it can remake the world as they see fit!"

"They could get rid of Helheim!" Takatora realized.

"They could," Ryoma stated, "I intend to get the Golden Fruit, and I will remake this world. I wish you could have been at the head of it, but you aren't the man I admired anymore. Good bye,
Takatora!" With one last punishing blow, Ryoma forced Takatora out of his transformation and over the edge.

Chapter End Notes

I hop you enjoyed the chapter! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Micchy suddenly sat upright, startling Mai, who had been sitting near the teen.

“Micchy!” she said, “What happened? I found you collapsed outside the garage when I got here!” Micchy thought back to the events a few hours prior.

“Kouta-san asked me to do some grocery shopping for him and I ran into one of Nii-san’s coworkers…” Micchy trailed off, trying to gather his thoughts, “He said I was in the way and we fought. He was really powerful. He knocked me out of my transformation. Then…Nii-san came. He told me to get away and he fought.” Micchy looked down. Mai put a hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t worry Micchy,” she assured him, “Your brother is strong. He’ll be fine.” Micchy just nodded.

“Micchy! Are you okay?” Kouta burst into the garage, calling frantically.

“I’m fine, Kouta-san,” Micchy replied.

“His ribs are bruised and he has several other bruises,” Mai corrected, giving Micchy a stern look, “So no fighting until your fully healed.” Micchy nodded.

Mai was scary when one of them was seriously injured.


“Your brother will be fine,” Kouta assured the teen, “Now, we need to warn the others about Ryoma.” A few calls had Kaito, Oren, and Jonouchi informed of the situation with Sengoku Ryoma. After the calls were done, Kouta checked the time.

“We should be heading back,” Kouta said, “Does Micchy have a clean bill of health to go back to the apartment?” Mai nodded. She looked at Micchy.

“Remember, no fighting,” she told him. Micchy nodded and stood, wincing slightly as his ribs protested when he tried to stretch out the kinks. Mai’s eyes narrowed and the two Riders quickly left before Mai changed her mind.

“Are you sure you’re okay, Micchy?” Kouta asked as they walked back to the apartment.
“I’m fine, Kouta-san,” Micchy replied. Kouta just stared for a few moments. Once upon a time, he would’ve had no idea if Micchy was lying. Now, he knew a few of Micchy’s tells. Micchy sighed.

“I’m worried about Nii-san,” Micchy admitted, “I can fight him on even terms now, but Sengoku Ryoma beat me easily. I’m worried that Nii-san could’ve gotten hurt or worse.” Kouta slung an arm around Micchy’s shoulders.

“I’m sure he’s fine,” Kouta assured the younger boy, “He’s really strong.” Micchy smiled and the two continued back in comfortable silence.

Once they reached the apartment, Akira started fussing over Micchy.

“I’m fine, Akira-san,” Micchy kept telling her. She didn’t listen and kept fussing over him. Between Mai and Akira, Micchy was being smothered more than he’d ever been before. Once they all went to bed, Kouta took the chance to talk to Micchy about it.

“You seemed kind of overwhelmed being smothered by Mai and Nee-san,” Kouta said. Micchy chuckled.

“At home, it was pretty much just me and Nii-san,” Micchy explained, “Eventually, Nii-san grew busier with school and working at Yggdrasil. The staff was mostly to leave us alone unless specifically asked otherwise. I’m not used to being fussed over when I get hurt.”

“Good thing you’re with us then,” Kouta said. Micchy smiled and closed his eyes to sleep, Kouta following close behind.

Kouta and Micchy were heading for the garage. After the attack the previous day, Kouta had decided that Micchy would not be going out alone until Sengoku Ryoma had been dealt with. Especially since Mai had prohibited Micchy from fighting until he was fully healed.

And this turned out to be a good idea.

When Sengoku Ryoma stepped in front of them, Kouta was quick to put himself between his injured friend and the scientist.

“Oh, I’m not here to fight,” Ryoma assured him with a smirk, “Just to deliver some news.”

“Then say what you have to say and leave us alone!” Kouta retorted. Ryoma’s smirk grew wider. He looked at Micchy.

“Mitsuzane-kun, regarding your brother,” he said, “I’m afraid he’s no longer with us.” Micchy’s jaw dropped and his eyes widened.

“You’re lying!” he shouted, “Nii-san’s not gone!” Kouta’s eyes narrowed at Ryoma. The scientist merely smirked and walked away. Micchy sank to his knees, Kouta going down with him to make sure he didn’t hurt himself. Micchy stared forlornly at the ground.

“Micchy, we don’t know if he’s telling the truth,” Kouta tried, “He could be lying.”

“He wouldn’t lie about something like that,” Micchy replied, “It’d be too easy to find out what really happened. He’s cunning enough to know that I would be able to find my brother if he were alive.” Kouta hugged Micchy and helped the younger boy stand.
"Why don’t we go see Mai and the others,” Kouta suggested. Micchy nodded and they continued toward the garage.

“WHAT! My beautiful melon is no more!” Oren cried over the phone. Kouta winced at the volume. He glanced over at Micchy, who was sitting off in a corner.

“Yeah,” Kouta replied quietly, “We were told by Sengoku Ryoma on our way here. I think it’s best to take it with a grain of salt.

“That is wise,” Oren replied, “I have to go now. Charmant is quite busy.”

“Alright,” Kouta said, “See you later.” Kouta walked back over to Micchy.

“You ready to head back?” he asked. Micchy nodded and followed Kouta as they left.

Kaito was going home, through one of the worse parts of town. Sure, it might be a nicer city, but it still had its bad parts. Kaito continued and took a shortcut through a park.

About halfway through the park, the teen heard someone moaning in what sounded like pain. He hesitated for a moment. Then, muttering about Kouta and Micchy and their moral compass rubbing off on him, Kaito went to investigate the moaning. Upon seeing who was making the noise, Kaito froze.

Well, shit.

Lying there on the ground was Kureshima Takatora, Micchy’s older brother and one of the main enemies of the Beat Riders.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed the chapter! sorry it took so long to get it put up. Constructive criticism is welcome!
A New Armor

Chapter Summary

Micchy and Kaito get new armor, while Kouta finally gets to test his.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“One reason people resist change is because they focus on what they have to give up, instead of what they have to gain.” - Rick Godwin

Kouta spent the next couple days staying close to Micchy. Between his injuries and the news of his brother’s death, Kouta didn’t think it was a good idea for Micchy to be alone.

One afternoon, while Micchy was still healing, an alert came on the younger boy’s laptop. Micchy was quick to check the notification.

“Kouta-san, I’ve picked up a reading for a crack. Can you go check it out?” he asked. Kouta nodded and checked the location on Micchy’s laptop before running off.

Kouta arrived and saw Demushu causing chaos with dozens of Inves. He grabbed the new Lockseed he’d received from DJ Sagara sometime prior.

“Now is as good a time as any,” he muttered and put on his belt. He activated his newest Lockseed.

[KACHIDOKI ARMS!]

He attached the Lockseed to his belt.

“Henshin!” he declared, flipping the Cutting Knife.

[COME ON! KACHIDOKI ARMS! IZA SHUTSUJIN! EI, EI, OH!]

The armor descended and appeared to be an upgraded form of his Orange Arms. Two banners flew from his back. He immediately leapt into the fray, striking down Inves effortlessly.

Micchy stared at the laptop blankly. It was the first chance he’d had to really be alone since Sengoku Ryoma had claimed his brother had died. He looked at his hands, then at his belt.

“Wondering what would have happened if you’d never become a Rider?” jested a masculine voice. Micchy spun in his chair to see DJ Sagara leaning against the wall.

“What are you doing here?” Micchy asked.

“Just checking in on one of my favorite Riders,” Sagara replied. Micchy looked back at his belt. He didn’t notice DJ Sagara starting to fiddle with a small bunch of grapes.
“Even if I hadn’t become a Rider, Nii-san probably still would have been attacked by Sengoku Ryoma eventually,” Micchy stated, “Nii-san wouldn’t let people die if he thought he had another choice.”


“Yes,” he answered. DJ Sagara held the younger boy’s gaze for a few long moments. When Micchy didn’t look away, Sagara started laughing and walked over to where Micchy’s belt rested. He placed the new Lockseed next to the belt. When Micchy looked back after glancing at the Lockseed, Sagara was gone. He picked up the Lockseed.

“Dragon?”

All he could feel was pain. It seemed like all his nerve endings were sending him pain signals. He blinked and waited for the world to come back into focus. Once he could see clearly, Kureshima Takatora tried to sit up. He wrapped one arm around his torso. He could feel the bandages covering his wounds.

“You shouldn’t try to sit up yet.”

Takatora looked up to see Kumon Kaito leaning against the wall, staring at him. Takatora’s mind flashed back to one of the times he’d met with Mitsuzane and Kaito had intervened because he “just doesn’t like Yggdrasil.”

“No one else knows you’re here,” Kaito continued, interrupting Takatora’s thoughts, “As a matter of fact, most of them believe you to be dead.”

“Why did you help me?” Takatora asked.

“Well, I didn’t do it for you,” Kaito replied, “Now, say here and rest.” Kaito left, closing the door behind him. Takatora carefully laid himself back down.

Kouta had finished off the Inves and moved onto Demushu. They clashed blades and Kouta soon learned that he could fight with the banners and that they could set themselves on fire! Soon, Demushu was sent into a retreat. Kouta closed the Lockseed and detached his belt. He tossed it up before catching it and looking at it.

“Yo, Micchy!” Kouta called as he entered the garage, “Everything good here?” Micchy looked up from examining the Lockseed.

“Yeah,” he replied. Kouta came down and saw Micchy’s new Lockseed.

“You have one too?” he asked. Micchy briefly looked confused, until Kouta showed him his.

“Yeah, DJ Sagara was here a little while ago and gave me the Lockseed after we’d talked for a bit,” Micchy explained.

“He did the same thing with me, but that was quite a while ago,” Kouta admitted, “I didn’t even get a chance to test it until just now.”

“I wonder if Kaito-san will get one,” Micchy wondered. Kouta gave his younger friend a confused look.
“DJ Sagara seems interested in the three of us,” Micchy explained, “It wouldn’t surprise me if Kaito-san got one soon.”

Kaito returned to his small apartment. He closed the door and turned to see DJ Sagara lounging in the living room area.

“Cozy little place you have here,” Sagara commented.

“What are you doing here?” Kaito asked. He vaguely noted that DJ Sagara was fidgeting with a banana, of all things.

“Just checking in on one of my favorite Riders,” Sagara replied, “You’ve changed quite a bit in the past few months.”

“So what?” Kaito said, “It’s none of your business.”

“I find it fascinating what the threat of Helheim brings out in people,” Sagara stated.

“Wait,” Kaito asked, “You’ve seen this before?”

“Maybe I have, maybe I haven’t,” Sagara responded, “But this talk isn’t about me. It’s about you. Few have the resolve to do something if it’ll change them.” Kaito rolled his eyes.

“Then they must be weaklings if they’re so scared of changing.” Sagara laughed. Kaito didn’t notice Sagara transforming the banana into a new Lockseed. Sagara left the Lockseed on a table.

“Well, I’d best be off,” Sagara declared, “Things to do.” Kaito blinked and Sagara was gone. It was then that he noticed the new Lockseed. He picked it up and examined it.

“Phoenix?”

Takatora sat up, slightly easier than earlier. There was some food on the box that was acting as a bedside table, along with some pain meds. Takatora ate and took the pain meds. Not for the first time, he wondered why Kumon Kaito, of all people, was helping him. Kumon’s dislike of Yggdrasil, and everyone associated with them, was well known. Then again, Kumon seemed to get along with Mitsuzane well enough. Takatora smiled as he realized why Kumon was helping him.

“Huh, who knew?”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it took so long. Hope you enjoyed it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Chapter Notes

Sorry it took so long to update! I hope you enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Other things may change us, but we start and end with the family.” - Anthony Brandt

It had taken a while, but Takatora had finally healed up. He was still sore from his near-death experience, obviously, but he was healed enough for day-to-day activities.

Meaning Kaito was taking him to see Mitsuzane.

Flashback

“Motivation is supposed to help people recover isn’t it?”

Takatora looked up at Kaito’s stoic face, a confused expression marring his own.

“What?” he asked. Kaito smirked, seemingly amused by his confusion.

“Motivation,” the dancer replied, “Once you’re healed up enough for day-to-day stuff, I’ll take you to see Junior.” Takatora looked confused for a moment, before it dawned on him. Mitsuzane. Once he was well enough, Kaito would take him to see Mitsuzane.

Flashback End

Kaito waited just outside the warehouse he’d hidden the elder Kureshima in.

“Come on,” Kaito said. Takatora followed the Beat Rider in silence. They eventually made their way to a slightly rundown building. Kaito paused outside the building.

“This is Team Gaim’s headquarters,” Kaito explained. He turned to look at Takatora.

“Apparently Junior spent the night here at first when he ran away from home.” Takatora’s eyes widened. Kaito gestured to the door.

“Go on in.” Takatora walked forward, hesitating slightly at the bottom of the stairs, before ascending to enter the building. Kaito smirked.

Takatora entered and looked down the inside stairs to see Mitsuzane sitting on one of the couches, fiddling with his Lockseed. Kazuraba was standing next to him, gesturing wildly about something or other. Mitsuzane grinned, the nervousness leaving his face. As Kazuraba finished his story, Mitsuzane laughed brightly. Takatora had to stare for a moment. When was the last time he’d seen Mitsuzane smile? When was the last time he’d heard him laugh?

“Mitsuzane…”
Takatora had whispered his younger brother’s name, yet he’d immediately turned towards him. Takatora watched as Mitsuzane stared, first in shock, then in happiness. The younger boy ran forward, darting up the stairs to wrap his arms around Takatora. Takatora looked at Mitsuzane. When was the last time he’d given his brother a hug? He wrapped his arms around Mitsuzane, holding the boy tightly.

“Sengoku Ryoma said that he’d killed you…” Mitsuzane stuttered. Takatora could feel a wet spot growing on his shirt, but couldn’t bring himself to care, Kureshima appearances be damned.

“I’m sure he thought he did,” Takatora replied.

Eventually Mitsuzane had been persuaded to let go, so they could all sit down, though he stuck close to his older brother’s side. Takatora made no objection, having spent most of his convalescence worrying about his little brother.

“So, how did you survive?” Kazuraba asked.

“I managed to survive the fall, likely thanks to my armor,” Takatora answered, “Apparently, Kumon found me and brought me to an abandoned warehouse where I could recover.”

“Kaito-san?” Mitsuzane asked, “That’s odd. Kaito-san doesn’t like Yggdrasil, or anyone associated with Yggdrasil.” Takatora shrugged, though he smiled inwardly. Kazuraba glanced between the two brothers before focusing his attention on Takatora.

“What do you stand?” he asked. Takatora focused on Kazuraba.

“I will help you and Mitsuzane save everyone,” he replied. Kazuraba smiled, glancing at Mitsuzane as the younger boy smiled widely.

“Isn’t it great, Micchy?” Kazuraba said. Mitsuzane nodded. Takatora turned to look at Mitsuzane, brow furrowed in confusion.

“Micchy?”

Mitsuzane ducked his head, rubbing the back of his neck as if embarrassed.

“When I first started as a dancer, they asked me to give them a name. I started to say my real name, but I wanted a place where I didn’t have to be Kureshima Mitsuzane. So, I ended up shortening it to Micchy,” Mitsuzane explained. Takatora smiled.

“I think it suits you,” he said. Mitsuzane grinned. Takatora smiled wistfully.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve seen you smile so much,” he said. Mitsuzane’s smile faded to a sad shadow of the bright grin he’d worn earlier.

“After I entered junior high, you started spending more time at Yggdrasil. You were away at work. More than that, you started acting like the rich “noble person” we both disliked,” Mitsuzane replied, “It seemed like the more time you spent at Yggdrasil, the more you became the kind of person neither of us ever wanted to be. You started talking more about duty and “noblesse oblige” than your own dreams. Right before my eyes, you were turning into someone I didn’t recognize as my big brother, who’d always talked about doing what’s right and being kind.” Takatora pulled his brother into a hug, having heard the tears building in his voice. Looking around, Takatora was surprised to see Kazuraba was gone. Mitsuzane pulled back, wiping the tears away.

“I’m glad you’re back,” he said, a small but true smile appearing, even as he finished wiping away
the tears. Takatora smiled back. He did feel different. Freer, as if the weight on his shoulders had lightened. He no longer had to force himself to be cold and uncaring, something which had bled over into his private life. At the beginning, he’d tried to be reserved and professional at work, and his normal self at home. However, as he’d spent more and more time at work, the professionalism and noble persona he’d held bled into his personal life, influencing his behavior towards Mitsuzane and affecting their relationship.

Now that he was on leave from Yggdrasil for the foreseeable future, he could return to himself and mend his bond with Mitsuzane.

Kouta left the two brothers to talk, walking outside to see Kaito leaning against the wall. Kouta smiled. Kaito would never admit it, but he had a soft spot for Micchy.

“Takatora will be siding with us from now on,” Kouta told him, “He and Micchy are talking.” Kaito pushed himself off the wall.

“Why should I care what they’re doing?” he asked.

“So you weren’t waiting out here, just in case?” Kouta questioned, a smirk playing across his face. Kaito turned away.

“I didn’t do it for you or Kureshima Sr.,” Kaito said as he strode away. Kouta’s face softened.

“No, you did it for Micchy.”

Chapter End Notes

Constructive criticism is welcome
Coming of Change

Chapter Summary

Everything is starting to come to a head, and the Riders discover that something might be off with three of the strongest Riders.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as being stuck somewhere you don’t belong.” -Unknown

After the Kureshima brothers’ reunion, the Beat Riders got down to business.

“We’ve found proof of intelligent Inves, called Overlords. They can control the Helheim plants, but they have no interest in helping us. One of them, a red one, seems to be blood-hungry, while another, a green one, views humans as toys for them to play with. Those are the only ones we’ve had any contact with, but there may be more,” Micchy explained.

“How did you find out about them in the first place?” Takatora asked.

“Kaito went undercover with Sengoku Ryoma after Ryoma approached him for an alliance. Ryoma had found images of an unusual Inves and wanted to see if there was anything different about it. He asked me to get Kouta to show up, and they fought an Overlord. Of course, our ruse was discovered almost immediately after the fight,” Micchy explained, “We’ve had a couple more encounters, including when the red Overlord showed up in public with an army of Inves.”

“We’ve been trying to get people to evacuate the city,” Kouta continued, “But most of them don’t want to listen to a bunch of kids.” Takatora took a moment to think.

“I could do a broadcast telling people to leave the city. If I use clips of the battle you had with the Overlord, I’m sure I could convince the civilians to leave the city,” he said. Micchy looked down, biting his lip.

“That sounds like a good idea,” Kouta replied, with the rest of the Beat Riders agreeing.

As the group started to separate, Micchy approached his brother.

“Are you sure about this, Nii-san?” the younger Kureshima asked. Takatora turned to look at Micchy.

“I have the best chance of getting people to evacuate the city,” Takatora said.

“But what if Sengoku Ryoma sees it and tries to kill you again? You’re not fully healed yet!” Micchy protested. Takatora stared for a moment before drawing Micchy into a hug.

“I’ll be fine, Mitsuzane,” Takatora assured him, “If I need help, I’ll call you.” Micchy clung to his
brother for a moment before letting go. The brothers exchanged a smile.

“We should probably work on the speech for the broadcast.”

“Citizens of Zawame City,” Takatora said, staring into the camera that was streaming from his office at Yggdrasil. “It is time to reveal some information that we have kept hidden from you. The Inves are monsters from another dimension called Helheim. For years, they have been coming through cracks into Zawame City. For the most part, we have been successful in keeping them from harming the public. However, it is starting to grow out of control. For your own safety, I urge you to leave the city. If you do not have the funds, Yggdrasil will give you enough money to go elsewhere and get on your feet.” Takatora sighed inwardly. “I do not know how long it will take for us to push back Helheim. It could take months or even years. The attacks are coming more often and with more Inves. So please, evacuate Zawame City.”

“Roshuo.”

The pale humanoid Overlord turned to see Sagara, dressed in more traditional clothing.

“Sagara,” Roshuo said, “Assuming you still go by that name.” Sagara nodded.

“Why do you have humanity’s Golden Fruit?” Sagara asked. Roshuo looked away from Sagara, staring off into the distance.

“Humanity does not deserve the Golden Fruit,” Roshuo replied, “They will only repeat my people’s mistakes.”

“Are you sure it’s not because you want to use it’s power to bring her back?” Sagara questioned. Roshuo turned to look at Sagara.

“So what if it is?”

Sagara smiled.

“Give humans a chance. They might surprise you.”

Roshuo gave Sagara a considering look before summoning a Golden Fruit. The Overlord fashioned a keylike Lockseed and handed it to Sagara.

“Hey, Kaito,” Micchy called. Kaito looked up at Micchy.

“Did you get a weird Lockseed from Sagara?” Micchy asked. Kaito held up the Phoenix Lockseed. Micchy revealed his Dragon Lockseed and Kouta pulled out his Triumph Lockseed.

“What did he ask you guys about?” Kouta asked, “He talked to me about my resolve.”

“Mine was kind of the same, but he asked me what I thought would have happened to Nii-san if I hadn’t become a Rider,” Micchy replied.

“Mine was about how much I was changing,” Kaito answered.

“So, I guess Sagara was testing our resolve,” Micchy said absently, “Kouta’s talk was literally about his resolve, Kaito’s talk was his resolve in the face of immense change, and my talk was about my resolve even if my being a Rider had led to Nii-san’s attack.”
“Well, I’d say we passed if he gave us these cool new Lockseeds,” Kouta said. Micchy nodded. Kaito shrugged and left, the slightest hint of a smile on his face. Kouta and Micchy shared a smile.

Ryoma watched as Takatora implored the citizens of Zawame City to evacuate. A smile sharp enough to cut glass crossed his face.

“So, you managed to survive,” Ryoma mused, “It’s almost a shame that you won’t get to be a part of the new world.”

“Have any of you heard of the Golden Fruit?” Takatora asked. The various Armored Riders shook their heads. Takatora turned to Micchy.

“It wasn’t hidden away in the information you got from Yggdrasil?”

“No, there was nothing about a Golden Fruit,” Micchy replied, “What are you talking about Nii-san?” Takatora sighed.

“It was something Ryoma mentioned before he attacked you. He said that whoever ate the Golden Fruit would be able to control Helheim,” Takatora explained. All the other Rider’s eyes widened.

“So whoever ate the Fruit could banish Helheim from Earth,” Kouta said. The other Riders, sans Kouta, Kaito, and Micchy, froze.

“Exactly,” came a voice from behind them. The three unfrozen Riders turned to see Sagara standing behind them.

“What do you want now, Sagara?” Kouta asked. Sagara held up a silver Lockseed.

“Just to deliver this,” he said, “I’m gifting it to you three. Decide amongst yourselves who will take it’s power.” Sagara placed the silver Lockseed on the table and vanished, the other Riders unfreezing, though confused about how Kouta, Kaito and Micchy had changed positions.

“What happened?” Jonouchi asked.

“Sagara stopped by,” Kouta explained, grabbing the silver Lockseed, “He gave this to Kaito, Micchy and I and told us to decide amongst ourselves who would use it.”

“Sagara made a new Lockseed?” Takatora asked.

“I guess,” Micchy answered, “It wouldn’t be the first time. He created new Lockseeds for the three of us before.” Micchy pulled out his Dragon Lockseed, showing the other Riders. At that moment, Micchy’s tablet went off.

“There’s another attack,” Micchy reported, “It looks like an Overlord.” The Riders immediately headed for the square. Demushu had returned with an army of Inves.

“Guess it’s as good a time as any to test this out!” Micchy said, pulling out his Dragon Lockseed. Kaito smirked, pulling out the Phoenix Lockseed, as Kouta grabbed the Triumph Lockseed and the others pulled out their normal Lockseeds.

[TRIUMPH]/[DRAGON]/[PHOENIX]/[DONGURI]/[DURIAN]/[MELON ENERGY]

“Henshin!” the Riders declared in unison.
[COME ON! TRIUMPHANT ARMS! DEPARTURE TO THE FRONT! EI, EI, OH!]
[COME ON! DRAGON ARMS! FROM THE SKY! EI, EI, OH!]
[COME ON! PHOENIX ARMS! REBORN FROM ASH! EI, EI, OH!]
[COME ON! DONGURI ARMS! NEVER GIVE UP!]
[COME ON! DURIAN ARMS! MISTER DANGEROUS!]
[SODA! MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

Each of their armors formed.

Micchy’s appeared purple, though slimmer than his normal armor, except in the back where it was bulkier. His armor seemed to have a scale pattern in some places. He wielded two guns that were slightly larger than his gun in his Ryugen form.

Kaito had red and yellow armor that almost had a feather pattern in a few places. His armor was slightly bulkier than his Banana armor. He still wielded a lance.

Gaim, Baron, and Ryugen immediately headed for Demushu, while the other Riders dealt with the Inves. The three Riders fighting Demushu were easily beating him, but the others were starting to get overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

“Micchy!” Kouta yelled. Ryugen nodded and spun the circle on the side of one of his guns, shooting upward. A large purple ball of energy shot upwards before coming to a stop and raining purple energy down on the Inves, missing the other Riders. Ryugen continued shooting at the Inves, often destroying them with a couple hits. Gaim and Baron double-teamed Demushu. Gaim spun the circle on his DJ-gun while Baron spun the circle on the handle of his lance. Orange and yellow energy shot out of their respective weapons, striking Demushu, causing him to explode.

“One down, at least one more to go,” Kouta said, as each Rider released their transformations. As soon as they released their transformations, Kouta, Kaito and Micchy all collapsed. Takatora immediately surged forward to catch Micchy, Jonouchi and Oren doing the same for Kouta and Kaito.

“We better get them to the garage,” Jonouchi said.

Chapter End Notes

Here's the new chapter! I hope you enjoy it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Chapter Summary

Sagara appears and explains a few things to the Riders.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Destiny is not a matter on chance. It’s a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.” -Unknown

The Riders got Micchy, Kaito, and Kouta back to the garage. However, when they arrived, Mai was also collapsed on the ground. After putting down Kouta, Jonouchi hurried over to check on Mai. After checking her vitals, he nodded to the other Riders.

“She’s fine,” he said, “just unconscious.” They moved Mai to one of the couches, before putting the three unconscious Riders on some cots they had set up.

“What’s going on here?” Takatora muttered, frustration clear on his face as he watched Micchy.

“Even I’ve found myself asking that particular question on occasion,” a voice replied from behind them. The Riders whirled around to see Sagara in his traditional clothing.

“How can you create Lockseeds?” Oren questioned. Sagara gave each of them a considering look, looking far more serious than any of them had ever seen him before.

“Normally, I wouldn’t bother explaining,” Sagara started, “But nothing about this time has been normal.”

“This time?” Jonouchi asked. Sagara nodded.

“That’s right, this wasn’t the first world Helheim invaded, and I doubt it’ll be the last. Moving onto the explanation, it is difficult to explain my role in everything. I am the overseer and judge, I pick and choose my favorites of the competitors and watch them battle it out. I suppose you could say I’m a manifestation of Helheim, yet at the same time I am separate from it,” Sagara explained, “And what has me most confused is this.” Sagara summoned a glowing golden fruit, which promptly shot across the room, and entered Mai’s body, causing the girl to toss and turn, as if in pain, before settling.

“Ah, so she is the one,” Sagara muttered. The conscious Riders looked at Sagara, their eyes demanding answers. Sagara sighed.

“For each world, Helheim selects a Woman of the Beginning, a proverbial Eve if you will. For this world, Helheim has selected Takatsukasa Mai to be the Woman of the Beginning. She will decide the winner and award him the Golden Fruit. But consuming the Golden Fruit, he will become the Man of the Beginning. Normally, that would be the end of it, but there is something off about this world’s Golden Fruit.”

“What do you mean?” Oren asked.
“This Golden Fruit spoke. I could hear the words as clear as day. No other world’s Golden Fruit has spoken before.”

“What did it say?” Takatora asked, his eyes narrowing. Sagara paused, giving them a considering look once again.

“Warriors of Helheim shall awaken, Only to find their humanity forsaken. The Golden Fruit one will receive With the final battle’s eve. Another world they shall find, To replace what they leave behind.” Sagara looked at the unconscious Riders. “It would seem that they are the warriors the Golden Fruit spoke of.”

“Why did you get Mitsuzane involved in this?” Takatora asked, seething as he saw Sagara look as his unconscious brother.

“Ryugen got himself involved by becoming a Rider. Once he became a Rider, he was a part of this, whether you like it or not.”

“But he wouldn’t be a part of whatever strangeness your talking about if you hadn’t given him that Dragon Lockseed.”

“Do you know how I chose my favorites?” Sagara asked suddenly, verbally knocking Takatora out of his seething anger. The other Riders looked at Sagara.

“I chose those whose resolve was so strong I could almost taste it. I tested them with the Raiments before I gave them the new Lockseeds. The stronger they get, the greater their resolve. Even facing seemingly unbeatable odds, they were resolute in overcoming them. Look at Ryugen, he defied his own family to help his friends and do what he thought was right. More than that, he defied the older brother he had always looked up. Baron’s resolve is obvious. He wants to get stronger, even if he ends up changing large parts of himself. Gaim’s resolve stood despite having killed his best friend who became an Inves, despite fighting a huge corporation and being told that there was no way to save the world from Helheim.” Sagara turned away from the Riders, idly wandering around the garage.

“There’s something fascinating about such strong resolve. All the favorites I’ve ever picked have had such intense resolve. Some used that resolve to seek power, some to defend their loved ones, some to better themselves. Such resolve usually sees one of them winning and becoming the Man of the Beginning for their world.”

“What happens if one of them becomes the Man of the Beginning?” Takatora asked. Sagara shrugged.

“Normally? They could do whatever they wish with Helheim. They could flood the world with Helheim, or banish it to a distant planet. The Man and Woman of the Beginning are akin to gods. However, with this world, I don’t know what will happen if one of those three become the Man of the Beginning. They are bound together by the words spoken by the Golden Fruit. What will happen is anyone’s guess, but I believe one of them will win the Golden Fruit and the others will follow the winner in whatever he does with that power.” Sagara’s gaze wandered between each of the unconscious Riders. “I wonder, if it was always their destiny to be brought to this point. To put themselves, their place in this world on the line for others.” Sagara redirected his gaze to the conscious Riders. “I suppose only time will tell.”

The riders blinked and Sagara was gone.

“So, what do we do? About what Sagara was talking about?” Jonouchi asked.
“The best we can do is keep an eye on them,” Oren replied. Takatora took his place by Micchy again, grabbing his little brother’s hand. The last words of the-prophecy? prediction?-echoed in his head.

“Another world they shall find, To replace what they leave behind.”

Takatora watched Micchy rest, smoothing the younger teen’s hair and moving away from his eyes.

“You don’t know when to give up do you? You were always so stubborn. Except this time, your stubborn streak might take you away from me...forever.” Takatora stood, his eyes steely and determined. Oren and Jonouchi looked up at him.

“If them fighting means that they have to leave everything behind,” he said, “Then they shouldn’t have to fight.” Oren and Jonouchi nodded in agreement, the resolution spreading between all three of them.

Chapter End Notes

Two chapters in one day! This chapter is mostly explaining some plot points that have no relation to the show and how things work in this universe. I hope you enjoy it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Micchy was walking through the Helheim Forest. There were no Inves in sight. Micchy looked around, observing the forest. He walked slowly. Oddly enough, there was no noise. Not his footsteps, no distant sounds of the Inves, not even the slightest breeze stirring the leaves. But there was a part, deep inside him that warned him.

He should not disturb this silence.

Micchy continued walking until he came to a cliff. The cliff put him on edge. It felt as if, in another life, he had made a choice here that had doomed him. Micchy backed away from the cliff.

“So, you can sense it.”

The voice—if he could call it that—reverberated through his skull, more in his own head than outside of it. Micchy nodded.

“In another time and place, you would have made a decision here that you would have regretted for the rest of your life. In another life, you would have sacrificed the best parts of yourself. In another life, despite the best intentions, you would have lost yourself on the path of power.”

Micchy waited.

“You are at a crossroads. Will you turn back or will you pursue that power and lose yourself along the way?”

Micchy could finally speak.

“I will not lose my way. My brother, my friends, will always be there to guide me away from the dark path of that other life.”

“And if your brother and friends are not there?”

Micchy smiled.

“You are me, aren’t you? These are the questions I would ask to myself, to ensure I know the way.”

“You are correct, but you have not answered my question.”

Micchy laughed.
“If you are me, then you know my answer. Even if they are not physically there, they will always be in my heart. I will not follow that dark path.”

“What are you willing to lose to gain that power?”

“My body, my mind, my heart and soul, I would give them up to protect them.”

“You know what I am asking. The price of your strength.”

Micchy smiled softly.

“I know.”

“And you are certain of your resolve?”

“I am.”

Kaito stood in the Helheim Forest. His eyes wandered the trees, waiting for the Inves. The forest was unnaturally silent.

“So suspicious, aren’t you?”

The voice seemed to bypass his senses entirely, flowing directly into his mind.

“Who are you?”

The voice laughed.

“I am you, just as you are me.”

Kaito scowled.

“Impossible. You can’t be me if I’m me, since I’m obviously not you.”

The voice laughed again.

“Ah, something you picked up from Junior? He always did enjoys giving such answers.”

“I won’t ask again. Who are you?”

When the voice spoke again, the mirth was gone.

“Look inside, and you’ll find your answer.

Some part, deep inside of Kaito knew. The voice was him.

“What do you want?”

“The more appropriate question would be ‘what do you want?’ I’m you after all.”

“Stop speaking in circles and give me a straight answer.”

“So, how are your friends?”

Kaito scoffed.
“What friends? If you mean the other Riders, at the most we are allies, united against Helheim.”

The voice’s amusement returned as it replied.

“Is that what you’ve been telling yourself? I always thought I was at least honest with myself.”

The amusement vanished as it continued.

“In another life, you walked alone, forsaking all but the most basic of bonds. You pushed yourself and pushed yourself, and while you did reach an exceptional level of strength, you could not surpass it. In another life, you fought and lost to one who fought for the bonds he had formed. Do you still deny your own bonds?”

Kaito clenched his fist.

“I don’t need bonds. Bonds are for the weak.”

“Oh? What about when Junior saved you from Sengoku Ryoma? If not for the bond you shared with him, you would be dead. What about you nursing Kureshima Takatora back to health? In another life, you would have left him to rot. Do you still deny these bonds?”

“I don’t need bonds! You need to be able to stand on your own two feet!”

“Then why does your heart cry out for them, seek to lean on them?”

Kaito froze for a moment before looking at the ground.

“What would you give to protect those bonds you share?”

“If you’re me, then you know my answer.”

“Do you know what I am asking? The price you will pay for that strength?”

Kaito nodded.

“You are certain of your resolve?”

“I am.”

Kouta wandered through the Helheim Forest. A part of him knew that Micchy and Kaito were here too.

That same part told him not to call out to them.

Kouta looked around as he walked, even as the silence of the forest set his nerves on edge. Soon, Kouta found his way to a set of ruins, not unlike the ones where the Riders had fought Redyue for the first time.

A part of Kouta was on edge, as if something had happened, which had sent ripples through time.

Another part of him felt like it was almost familiar.

“You would not know this place. At least, not in this life.”

The voice reverberated, echoing until Kouta couldn’t be sure if he’d heard it or thought it.
“In another life, Zangetsu attempted to sway you here. However, he ended up being swayed instead. In another life, you turned brother against brother. Zangetsu had convinced Ryugen to follow him, using his brother’s fear of what would happen and his complete trust in his big brother to convince to side with him. Thus, when you convinced Zangetsu to come to your side, you turned the brothers against each other, leaving Ryugen feeling betrayed by the brother who’d convinced him to do what was needed instead of what was right. This led the younger brother down a dark path of isolation and manipulation, of losing himself in the shadows he’d tried to use to protect those he cared about. Will you follow this path before you, even at such a high cost?”

“I know who you’re talking about. They will not turn on each other. Not in this life. And even if they do, I will not let them hurt each other, or themselves.”

The voice seemed to hum.

“What would you give to see your precious ones safe?”

“I would give anything. You know that. After all, you are me.”

The voice was silent for a moment.

“You know what I am asking. The price of strength.”

Deep inside, Kouta knew. He smiled sadly.

“You are certain of your resolve.”

“I am.”

Chapter End Notes

Here's another chapter! I hope you enjoy it! Constructive criticism is welcome!

For Kouta's sequence, the event I describe is when Takatora brings Micchy to see the ruins and you can almost see Micchy falling apart and clinging to his older brother, who he looked up to for most of his life. I'm not saying that Takatora was intentionally manipulating Micchy like that, but he may have done so subconsciously.

Sorry, I put the wrong chapter title up. It's fixed now!
The Chosen Path

Chapter Summary

Some things are explained, and the other Riders see the result of Kouta, Kaito, and Micchy's choice.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I guess destiny is not the path given to us but the path we choose for ourselves.” -Will Ferrell

It was a full day before the unconscious teenagers woke up.

When Kouta, Micchy, Mai, and Kaito finally woke up, they saw the other Riders spread out across the garage. Takatora, from his place by Micchy’s cot, immediately startled awake when Micchy started to get up. He gently pushed Micchy to lay back down.

“Careful,” Takatora said, “You passed out after you defeated the red Overlord.” Micchy smiled.

“We passed the test,” Micchy said, “What did Sagara talk to you about?” The others stared at him.

“What test?” Takatora questioned.

“How did you know Sagara was here? You were unconscious the whole time,” Jonouchi asked. Micchy just smiled mysteriously.

“So, what did he want to talk about?” Kouta repeated. Oren’s gaze panned over the previously unconscious teenagers.

“He mentioned that some things were different this time. That the Golden Fruit had spoken to him,” Oren told them. Mai gripped her shirt over her chest.

“It’s me isn’t it? I can feel the Golden Fruit inside me, waiting for me to choose the victor,” she said. Oren gave her a nod, his expression uncharacteristically serious.

“What did it say?” Kaito asked.

“Warriors of Helheim shall awaken, Only to find their humanity forsaken. The Golden Fruit one will receive With the final battle’s eve. Another world they shall find, To replace what they leave behind,” Jonouchi recited.

“Mitsuzane,” Takatora said, “please don’t fight anymore. If you keep fighting…you’ll have to leave! So, don’t fight anymore. Please Mitsuzane…” Takatora clutched one of Micchy’s hands in his own.

“Nii-san, I have to fight,” Micchy replied gently, “I’ve finally found where I belong. I need to protect it.”

“Then promise me,” Takatora begged, “promise me you won’t use that Dragon armor.”
“Unless we absolutely need it, I won’t use my Dragon Arms,” Micchy promised. The other Riders extracted similar promises from Kouta and Kaito.

“Ah, it seems that Roshuo was hiding humanity’s Golden Fruit,” Redyue said, “It has been released to this world’s Woman of the Beginning.” Ryoma smirked.

“Game on, Beat Riders,” he said, watching clips of the Riders’ most recent battles.

“How about a small test?” Redyue asked. Ryoma turned to look at the green Overlord.

“Oh?” he replied, amusement clear in his tone. Redyue merely turned and strode out of the room.

“I’m sure you’ll find it amusing,” she said as the door closed behind her.

Redyue appeared in the square. She opened several cracks, letting an army of Inves loose on Zawame City.

Micchy tablet went off. He quickly scanned the information.

“There’s a ton of Inves coming in from the square. We’d better get going,” he said. All the Riders headed for the square.

Upon arriving, they found themselves facing a massive army of Inves. They each pulled out their Lockseeds.

[ORANGE]/[BUDOU]/[BANANA]/[DONGURI]/[DURIAN]/[MELON ENERGY]

“Henshin!”

[COME ON! ORANGE ARMS! IN THE SPOTLIGHT! ON STAGE!]
[COME ON! BUDOU ARMS! DRAGON, FIRE, BANG, BANG, BANG!]
[COME ON! BANANA ARMS! KNIGHT OF SPEAR~!]
[COME ON! DONGURI ARMS! NEVER GIVE UP!]
[COME ON! DURIAN ARMS! MISTER DANGEROUS!]
[SODA! MELON ENERGY ARMS!]

The Riders charged into the fray, tearing through the Inves. But no matter how many they defeated more took their place. The battle continued for several more minutes, the Riders being overpowered by sheer numbers. Jonouchi and Oren were knocked out of their transformations, and Takatora was on his last leg.

“Okay, we have a problem,” Gaim said, slashing through several Inves.

“I have to agree with Kouta-san,” Ryugen replied. Ryugen, Baron, and Gaim shared a look. Zangetsu’s stomach sank.

“Sorry Nii-san,” Ryugen said, “But we need to use our new Lockseeds.” Zangetsu could only nod. The three Riders grabbed their unique Lockseeds.
Their new armor formed. Ryugen immediately spun the circle on one of his guns before shooting into the air. A giant ball of purple energy shot up, raining down to destroy several Inves. Gaim and Baron slashed through the Inves, slicing through several with a single strike.

In no time, the cracks closed and the Inves were eradicated. Takatora released his transformation as Jonouchi and Oren pulled themselves to their feet, watching Kouta, Kaito, and Micchy to see if they were going to collapse again. Takatora noticed violet bleeding into Micchy’s irises, yellow in Kaito’s, orange into Kouta’s. Takatora accompanies them back to the garage to get his injuries taken care of before excuseing himself.

“Sagara!” Takatora shouted through the deserted streets, “I need to talk to you! Sagara!”

“It’s rare for anyone to try to call me out,” a voice answered from behind the elder Kureshima. Takatora whirled around. The elder Kureshima grabbed Sagara’s shirt, drawing closer as if doing so would force answers out of the former DJ.

“What is happening to Mitsuzane?” he demanded, trembling so hard that he was almost shaking Sagara.

“I would give you answers if I had them,” Sagara replied, his face disturbingly unreadable, “But I have never seen this happen before. There is no way to know what will happen.” Takatora’s grip tightened.

“It’s okay, Nii-san,” came a voice off to the side. Both men turned to see Micchy, standing there with the mysterious smile he’d had since they had woken up.

“Mitsuzane,” Takatora whispered, rushing over to check on his little brother, “Are you sure you’re alright?” Micchy chuckled.

“I’m fine,” Micchy assured the older Kureshima. He looked at both Sagara and Takatora. “You must let this path run its course.” Sagara’s eyes widened.

“You know what is coming?” he whispered. Micchy shook his head.

“I know the possibilities,” Micchy corrected, “We are at a crossroads. The fate of the world will depend on the victor. If we are not victorious, then Mai-neesan will have no choice but to give the Golden Fruit to our enemy.”

“Enemy…” Takatora echoed. Micchy turned to look fully at his brother.

“The one who gave you that scar,” Micchy stated, tapping Takatora’s chest, where, beneath his shirt, a thin white line marked the brutal attack that had ended their previous friendship.

“Ryoma…” Takatora muttered.

“If Sengoku Ryoma is victorious, the world will be consumed by the forest and it will continue to other worlds,” Micchy said, the calm certainty feeling like a rock sinking into his brother’s stomach,
“If we are victorious, we can take the forest away to a distant world, keep it contained on another world and let the forest finally rest.”

“We? I doubt you mean all us Riders,” Takatora said. Micchy shook his head.

“Mai-nee-san, Kouta-niisan, Kaito-niisan, and myself,” Micchy replied, “Everyone else must stay on Earth to help rebuild.”

“Wait, rest?” Sagara asked. Micchy turned to the former DJ.

“The forest is driven to consume by its nature,” he explained, “but that doesn’t mean it cannot grow tired of destruction.” Takatora looked horrified.

“How do you know all this?” he asked quietly, afraid of what his brother’s answer might be. Micchy looked into his brother’s eyes, revealing the violet that had completely bled into his iris.

“The forest has chosen its new children, should we be victorious. I am its Wisdom, with all its memory and knowledge.”

Takatora’s stomach sank. He hugged his younger brother desperately, as if holding on tightly enough would keep Helheim from stealing him away. Tears ran down his cheeks as Micchy hugged him back.

“No, I can’t lose you,” Takatora sobbed.

“It’ll be okay, Nii-san,” Micchy whispered, “I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

Here’s the new chapter! I hope you enjoy it! Constructive criticism is welcome!
Chapter Summary

Micchy explains the history of the Helheim Forest and we see what happened of Roshuo.

“The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future.” -Theodore Roosevelt

“Where’s Micchy?” Jonouchi asked.

Everyone had their injuries tended to and were scattered throughout Gaim’s garage.

“Ah~, where is my beautiful melon~?” Oren continued.

“Micchy went to find Takatora,” Kouta replied. A moment later, he continued. “Ah, looks like Takatora went to contact Sagara to ask about what’s going on with us.” The other two Riders looked at Kouta.

“How did you know that?” Jonouchi asked, brow furrowed in confusion.

“Micchy just found them,” Kouta answered with a shrug.

“That doesn’t answer my question,” Jonouchi dryly pointed out. Kouta exchanged a glance with Kaito.

“Micchy, Kaito, and I are connected,” Kouta said, “Mai is connected too, but her connection is weaker.” Oren and Jonouchi blinked before looking at each other then looking back at Kouta. The orange-themed Rider chuckled.

“Micchy can explain it better when he and Takatora get back.”

It didn’t take too much longer for Micchy and Takatora to return. Micchy looked at the Riders from the upper landing, blinking before the mysterious smile returned.

“Story time, then?” he asked, descending to take a seat next to Kouta. Takatora, Oren, and Jonouchi perked up to listen. Micchy started to speak.

“Millennia ago, the gods created the Helheim Forest to wipe out worlds so they could start them anew. This continued for thousands of years. However, the gods didn’t know that they had done too good a job creating the Helheim Forest. The forest gained its own sentience by consuming these worlds for the gods. The gods grew to fear it and tried to contain Helheim to one world. But, after thousands of years of consuming worlds for the gods, the forest was too powerful and turned its sight on the ones who created it. It consumed them and their world, gaining immense power in the process. However, the forest still needed some overseers. So, the forest created its own overseers, giving each one a part of itself to take care of. It manifested an overseer for all of its strength and power, one for its immense wisdom and memory, and one who could command it over the others.
For a time, the overseers, the forest’s children, looked after the forest and its creatures. But as time passed, the children grew bored. As the forest’s children, they inherited its desire to consume. So, they sent the forest into more worlds, consuming them until one world’s inhabitants finally struck them down. But by this time, the forest had once again awakened its own desire to consume and continued devouring worlds. The only thing that slowed it down was its need to choose a Man and Woman of the Beginning, making its invasion a contest to find its temporary overseers.”

Micchy’s gaze panned over the Riders and Mai.

“Now, the forest is once again looking for overseers, this time choosing from the world its invading, in hopes that we would not have the desire to destroy that the forest and its first children had.”

“You said earlier that you were its Wisdom,” Takatora said. Micchy nodded.

“Kouta-niisan and Kaito-niisan are the representatives of its strength, and one will eat the Golden Fruit, should we be victorious,” Micchy added.

“What if one of us ate the Golden Fruit?” Takatora asked, “Besides you three.” Micchy smiled at his brother.

“Nii-san, we already belong to the forest. You eating the Fruit would just mean taking you away from this world,” Micchy said, “You will be needed to help rebuild.”

“Earlier, Kouta said that you, him, and Kaito are connected,” Jonouchi said, “What did he mean by that?”

“We share an awareness of each other,” Micchy explained, “Mai-neesan is also part of the connection, but weaker, since she must keep her distance until a victor is decided.”

Everyone was quietly contemplating Micchy’s words when Kouta suddenly remembered something.

“Oh, we never figured out what to do with the Lockseed Sagara just gave us,” he recalled. All the Riders turned to look at the silver Lockseed still sitting on the table.

“I say we give it to Kouta-niisan,” Micchy replied.

“Whatever,” Kaito said, drawing a surprised look from Jonouchi. The acorn-themed Rider gave Kaito a searching look before shrugging.

“Let him have it,” Oren waved. Jonouchi nodded in agreement. Takatora looked torn, before giving a single nod. Kouta grabbed the silver Lockseed, storing with his others.

Everyone wandered off to take care of their own errands.

When Kouta returned, he found Micchy leaning against Kaito’s shoulder, soundly asleep, while Kaito was staring, as if not quite sure how to move the younger boy. Kaito looked up and saw Kouta’s grin. The banana-themed Rider narrowed his eyes at Kouta, trying to mentally command Kouta to help him move Micchy. Kouta grinned wider, pulling out his phone to take a picture. Kaito’s glare sharpened, emanating murderous intent. The others returned, each giving Kaito a look of amusement, to which Kaito responded with increasingly murderous looks.

“I was right to entrust them with the Golden Fruit,” Roshuo said, staring out over the vast Helheim Forest. Sagara nodded from his place next to the humanoid Overlord.
“The humans might be able to put an end to the forest’s rampage,” Roshuo continued.

“If anyone could do it,” Sagara said, “It would be those three.”

**Flashback**

Sagara and Roshuo watched the Riders rush out of the building. None of them had even paused to look at the silver Lockseed sitting innocuously on the table.

“They didn’t fight over it,” Roshuo stated, surprise coloring his voice, “If it had been my people, we would have spent so much time fighting over who would attain such a power that we would have missed the battle.”

“These humans aren’t like your people,” Sagara said, “They don’t seek power for its own sake. Each of them has something they wish to protect.”

“Will they be able to withstand the forest’s power?” Roshuo asked, “I remember how determined we were to stop the forest. Now Demushu is all but feral and Redyue has lost her compassion. I doubt either of them even remember not being Overlords.”

“If they are the victors, then they will allow the forest to rest,” Sagara answered, “And I have every confidence that they will be victorious.”

**End Flashback**

“I hope you’re right, Sagara,” Roshuo said, as he pressed a hand to his wounded chest.

One final shuddering breath, and the Overlord King crumbled to dust.
Plotting Villains

Chapter Summary

Now we see what the villains have been up to.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Nobody is a villain in their own story. We’re all the heroes of our own stories.” -George R.R. Martin

Redyue entered Ryoma’s office.

“The old fool is dead,” she said, “I trust you took care of the other one?”

Ryoma spun around to look at the green Overlord.

“But of course,” Ryoma replied, “Sigurd won’t be bothering us anymore.”

“And the other one?” Redyue questioned, “Is she loyal?”

“Unwaveringly,” Ryoma answered with a smirk, “Minato-kun is loyal to a fault.”

“Even if she is on your side, she may attempt to steal the Golden Fruit,” Redyue commented. Ryoma smirked.

“She wouldn’t expect me to stab her in the back as soon as we win,” he replied. Redyue laughed, Ryoma soon joining in.

Minato Yoko stood outside Ryoma’s office. Her fingers clutched at the reports so tightly her knuckles turned white. She turned and walked away, moving quietly as ever. Making her way down, she dumped the reports in the trash before striding out the door. She quickly dialed a number into her phone and waited for the person on the other end to-hopefully-pick up.

Takatora’s phone rang, interrupting a strategy meeting for the Riders. Takatora frowned, checking the caller id.

“It’s Minato Yoko,” he said.

“See what she wants,” Micchy replied with a shrug. Takatora answered the phone.

“It’s Kureshima.”

“Kureshima-san? It’s Minato. Can we meet somewhere? I don’t care if you want to bring someone, but we need to meet, and soon. Please!” Takatora frowned at the urgency in Minato’s voice.

“How about Kajitsu Park in ten minutes?”
Yoko arrived at Kajitsu Park, looking around anxiously. Takatora and the others arrived soon afterward.

“What do you want?” Takatora asked.

“I want to join your side,” Yoko replied, “Ryoma would kill me as soon as help me.” She shook her head, trembling, “Besides, I didn’t sign up for this. Ryoma is working with the green Overlord who calls herself Redyue. He’s already had Sid killed and I’ll be next.”

“Why would he kill you?” Kaito asked, “You’ve been nothing but loyal.” Yoko looked at the phoenix-themed Rider.

“If he gets the Golden Fruit, he doesn’t want to take the chance that I’ll betray him,” she replied bitterly, “He would stab me in the back before trusting me not to do the same.” Yoko took a shuddering breathe. “Not to mention, he’d working to all but eradicate humanity. I want no part in that.”

“What do you mean, eradicate humanity?” Takatora asked. Yoko’s eyes panned over the group.

“He wants to use the power of Helheim to rule this world,” she replied, “And to dominate others.” She turned to look at Takatora. “He had originally intended for you to rule Helheim but thinks you ‘betrayed’ him by siding with the Beat Riders.”

“What do you think?” Takatora asked, turning to the others. Micchy nodded in agreement, Kaito shrugging, with Oren nodding alongside Micchy.

“You can come help us,” Takatora said, “But if this is a trick…” Yoko frantically shook her head.

“It isn’t!” she said, “Thank you.” She bowed deeply.

It was at that moment that Micchy and Kaito suddenly stiffened. They both broke into a run, heading back to the garage. The other Riders followed, though Yoko was confused.

When they arrived at the garage, they saw Gaim and Gridon fighting off a large swarm of Inves. The other Riders, including Yoko, transformed to join the fight, Kaito and Micchy going straight to Phoenix Arms and Dragon Arms. Takatora stiffened for a brief moment at seeing his brother in the Dragons Arms.

The Inves were quickly taken care of.

“Ryoma showed up and took Mai!” Kouta exclaimed as soon as they released their transformations.

“He must be making a move to claim the Golden Fruit!” Yoko replied.

“The Golden Fruit cannot be claimed unless it is given,” Micchy said, “There are no shortcuts in this competition.” Yoko gave the teenager a wide-eyed stare.

“How do you know that?” she asked.

“It’s a long story,” Takatora interrupted.
“We should be looking for Mai,” Kouta added. Takatora turned to look at Yoko.

“Does Ryoma have any labs I don’t know about?” he asked. Yoko thought for a moment.

“I know of a couple, but he might have others I don’t know about,” she answered.

“That is a risk we will have to take,” Oren replied. Yoko gave them directions to the secret labs she was aware of and they split up to search. Kaito, Micchy, Takatora, and Yoko took one, while Kouta, Jonouchi, and Oren took the other.

“You can’t cheat the forest,” Mai said, seeming remarkably calm for being strapped to an operating table.

“I’m sure I’ll find a way,” Ryoma said, smirking down at the prone teenage girl. Mai frowned.

“You’re trying to bypass the natural order.”

“Well, I’ve never let that stop me before.”

“Do you have any compassion left in your heart?” she asked, driven by a morbid curiosity. The scientist’s face darkened.

“I have exactly as much compassion as I was shown,” he replied, “None.”

“So Takatora didn’t show you compassion, didn’t become your friend?”

Ryoma seethed.

“Takatora betrayed me, siding with those Beat Riders. He could have been a god!”

Mai stared at Ryoma, her face utterly impassive.

“Godhood is not for everyone. The only ones suited to godhood are the ones who become gods to protect when they have no other choice. It is for those whose resolve is strong.”

The girl’s eyes seemed to pierce through the scientist to his soul, and her gaze found him wanting.

“You are not suited for godhood.”

“That won’t matter, once I cut the Golden Fruit from your body,” he replied a smirk stretching across his face.

Mai knew what was coming. The Golden Fruit had been whispering to her what would need to happen.

To truly become the Woman of the Beginning, she would need to die.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it took so long, but I was going to wait so I could post the next chapter with this one, but then I realized I would just be giving you two cliffhangers instead of one, so here it is!
Constructive criticism is welcome!
Mai watched as Ryoma prepped his tools, her limbs chained to the table she was lying on. She was strangely expressionless as her eyes followed the scientist’s movement.

“Nothing to say?” Ryoma asked with a cruel smirk, “You were so full of self-righteousness earlier.”

“What words can be said to one who will not listen?” she replied, moving her gaze to the ceiling. Ryoma had finally finished his preparations.

“Don’t worry,” he said, “I’m merciful enough to give you an anesthetic.” He injected her with an anesthetic, causing her eyes to flutter shut. Ryoma smirked down at the prone girl, holding a scalpel in one hand.

“We’ll start with the abdomen…”

Micchy froze midstride, catching Kouta’s attention. The Beat Riders had split up, Kouta, Micchy and Takatora to one lab, and Oren, Jonouchi, Kaito and Yoko to the other. Kouta looked Micchy in the eyes, clearly seeing the unfocused look as the path rearranged itself in Micchy’s mind.

“Micchy,” Kouta said, shaking the younger boy gently, “Micchy, come on. You need to tell me what’s happening.” Takatora had stopped when he heard Kouta speak. He hurried back from his position ahead of the other riders. Micchy blinked.

“The path is set,” he said. Takatora felt a weight sinking through his stomach as he noticed, for the first time, patches of purple scattered across Micchy’s skin. He looked at Kouta, noticing patches of orange on the older teen’s skin.

“Micchy, what do you mean?” Kouta asked, keeping his eyes locked with Micchy’s.

“The path is set,” he repeated, “The most important decision is yet to come. Can you feel it?” Both boys touched their hands to their hearts.

Kaito paused in the search, reaching up to grasp at his chest, over his heart. Jonouchi looked back when he noticed that Kaito was no longer behind them. He looked back to see Kaito grasping at his chest, though not seeming injured.

“Kaito, what’s wrong?” he asked.

“I think something’s happening to Mai,” he said. He closed his eyes for a moment. He opened them again and Jonouchi suddenly realized that Kaito had patches of red and yellow coloring his skin. He
frowned as he tried to remember when the patches had started developing.

“Micchy said that the path is set. The most important decision is yet to come,” Kaito replied.

Mai watched as Ryoma cut through her body in an attempt to find the Golden Fruit. Her spirit’s connection to her body grew weaker as her connection to the forest and the Golden Fruit grew stronger.

She just needed to wait for Ryoma to finish digging out the Golden Fruit and she could finish the transformation into the Woman of the Beginning. Now, she wasn’t Micchy. She wasn’t aware of the path. One thing she was sure of, was that she had no intention of giving Sengoku Ryoma the Golden Fruit unless she had no other choice.

“It’s starting,” Micchy said abruptly, halting their search once again.

“What’s starting?” Takatora asked. Micchy looked at Takatora and the elder Kureshima was shocked that Micchy’s eyes seemed to pierce directly into his soul.

“Mai-neesan is becoming the Woman of the Beginning,” he said. Takatora’s brow furrowed in confusion.

“Wasn’t she already the Woman of the Beginning?”

Micchy shook his head.

“Mai-neesan would have to die to become the Woman of the Beginning. If she had not died by the time she was to reward the victor, her physical form as you know it would have died to make way for the Woman of the Beginning.”

“So, Ryoma killed her?” Takatora asked, horrified that a man that he had once considered a friend would do such a thing. Kouta shook his head.

“Mai isn’t the Woman of the Beginning yet,” he said, “She’s waiting for something.”

“Sengoku Ryoma wants the Golden Fruit,” Micchy replied, “Mai-neesan is its holder until she awards it to the victor.”

“We should finish searching and rendezvous with the others,” Kouta said. The other two nodded and they resumed searching.

Mai watched.

She had almost finished bleeding out. Soon, she would become the Woman of the Beginning and reclaim the Golden Fruit until a victor was decided.

The thread was getting thinner. Any moment now, it would snap.

Both teams continued searching through their respective secret labs, to no avail. There was no sign of Mai at either lab.

“Mai’s not here,” Kouta said.
“She’s not here either,” Kaito replied

“Can Minato remember any other labs?” Takatora asked. Kouta relayed the question.

“She says that these were the only labs Ryoma told her about,” Kaito answered after a moment’s pause.

“He might have other labs that he didn’t tell anyone about,” Kouta said. Kaito agreed and it was decided that they would return to the garage to plan their next move.

The thread finally snapped.

Mai saw Ryoma pluck the Golden Fruit from her body. Her spirit reached out, grabbing the Golden Fruit. She vanished in a flash of light.

Ryoma cursed under his breath. The Golden Fruit was gone.

“Problems?” came a feminine voice from behind him. Ryoma turned to see Redyue in the doorway. Ryoma smiled.

“Just a minor setback,” he replied. Redyue gave Ryoma an exaggerated thoughtful look.

“Maybe I should find someone else to ally myself with,” the green Overlord said. Ryoma’s smile became a touch feral.

“That would put you on the losing team,” Ryoma replied, “I still fully intend to claim the Golden Fruit, I just can’t take a shortcut.” Redyue seemed to smirk.

“Oh? So sure of your victory?”

Ryoma smirked.

“But of course.”

Micchy looked up from where he had been staring at his hands while the others discussed what to do. Kouta and Kaito looked at the younger Rider.

“It’s done,” Micchy said. Kouta and Kaito nodded. Kouta turned to the other Riders to explain.

“Mai is gone, the Woman of the Beginning is here.”

“They think they can outsmart me,” Ryoma whispered as he entered the Helheim Forest. He put his belt down and grabbed a Helheim fruit. He bit into it, dropping the fruit as his body warped into a monstrous version of his armor. He shifted back into his human form with a smirk.

“I’d like to see them try.”
The other Riders just stared, wide-eyed at the three teens.

“Mai is dead?” Jonouchi said, his face disturbingly blank and his voice almost unnaturally even. Micchy looked down as he tried to think of how to explain it.

“It’s more like a butterfly coming out of a chrysalis,” he said, “Mai-neesan’s physical body was the chrysalis and now she’s a butterfly. It’s still Mai-neesan, but she’s no longer human.”

“Oh,” Jonouchi said faintly. Oren looked over the boy in concern.

“Sengoku Ryoma has eaten a Helheim fruit,” Micchy continued abruptly.

“Doesn’t that just mean he turns into an Inves?” Oren asked. Micchy shook his head.

“He turned into an Overlord Inves,” the younger boy explained. He shared looks with Kouta and Kaito. Takatora’s stomach sank once again. Kouta sighed.

“We’ll need to have at least one of us become an Overlord, to keep Ryoma from using the forest to attack us,” Kouta explained, “According to Micchy, we’ve slowly been turning into Overlords since we started using our unique Lockseeds, but we’re not yet at a point where we can control the forest.”

“Whereas Ryoma can freely control after completing a transformation into an Overlord,” Kaito finished.

“But once you’re all Overlords, won’t you and Ryoma have equal control over the forest?” Yoko asked, speaking up for the first time. Micchy shook his head.

“As the forest’s chosen, our authority would supersede Ryoma’s, unless he wins the Golden Fruit.”

“How do you know all this?” Oren asked.

“The forest wants to rest,” Micchy replied, “If we win, it can rest. If Sengoku Ryoma wins, it continues to devour. It is trying to stack the deck in our favor.” The other Riders exchanged looks. Jonouchi sighed.

“So, which of you will be turning into Overlords?” he asked. Micchy sighed.

“Honestly, it should be all three of us,” he said, “then, if something happens to one of us, we can still keep Ryoma from controlling the forest.”
Silence fell over the group.

Takatora stood outside at the base of the stairs leading into the garage, leaning against the brick wall as he stared up at the stars.

Everything was happening so quickly.

Had it really only been a few days since Sagara had dropped in with one hell of a bombshell? Since Mitsuzane had started becoming an Overlord?

They had been so busy with fighting and explanations that he hadn’t really had time to process everything. Takatora took a deep breath before putting his face in his hands.

He was going to lose his little brother.

If they won, Mitsuzane became something akin to a god and left to watch over the Helheim forest.

If they lost, either Ryoma would kill them or Mitsuzane would still have to follow the forest.

Takatora took a few shuddering breaths as he attempted to keep himself composed. He didn’t notice that he had slowly sunk to sit on the ground.

He did notice when a head laid on his shoulder, arms coming around is torso in a gentle hug. Takatora looked up to see Mitsuzane sitting next to him, leaning his head against Takatora’s shoulder. Takatora reached around to pull his little brother into a hug.

“Sorry, Nii-san,” Mitsuzane said quietly.

“It’s not your fault,” Takatora replied, “You didn’t ask to get chosen by a sentient forest.”

“I know,” the younger Kureshima continued, “But I also know it was a lot to take in.” Mitsuzane gave his older brother a smile, but Takatora knew Mitsuzane well enough to see the slight tremor in his smile.

“What’s wrong?” Takatora asked. Mitsuzane hugged Takatora more tightly.

“It just feels like I could lose myself in it,” Mitsuzane replied, “All the forest’s knowledge, thousands of years, hundreds of cultures, and it’s all in my head.” He looked up at Takatora. “I’m hoping that finishing the transformation into an Overlord will help me not lose myself.” Takatora clutched his brother tighter.

“It’ll take you further away from me,” the elder Kureshima muttered. Mitsuzane smiled, a real smile this time.

“It’ll take you further away from me,” the elder Kureshima muttered. Mitsuzane smiled, a real smile this time.

“I’m sure I’ll be able to come visit you,” he said, “If we win, we become gods. I doubt all of us would need to be watching over the forest all the time. I’m sure I’ll be able to come visit as often as I want. If we lose, I’m pretty sure we’ll have bigger things to worry about.” Takatora smiled at his brother, some of his worries eased by the conversation.

Mitsuzane made a move to stand, pulling his brother up with him.

“We’d best head inside,” he said, “The others have found a Helheim plant.”

The Riders were gathered around, staring at a solitary Helheim plant bearing three fruits. Micchy and
Takatora walked over to the group, joining the huddle.

“I guess the forest is really stacking the deck in our favor,” Jonouchi said. Micchy shrugged.

“I told you the forest is real tired,” the younger teen said, completely straight-faced. Takatora and Oren just looked confused as the other Riders stared flabbergasted at Micchy. Kouta just facepalmed.

“Did you just make a meme about the Helheim forest?” Jonouchi demanded. Micchy just grinned impishly.

“So, for two years, we were in the same dance group and I tried to get you to use memes, but noooo, it wasn’t happening!” Kouta started ranting, to the amusement of everyone else, “But now, it’s the fight to save the world, and you use your first meme! Really?”

Takatora just watched as the other dancers teased Kouta. Oren had joined in with the teasing.

“He did that on purpose, didn’t he?” came a voice from next to him. Takatora looked over to see Yoko standing next to him.

“Yes,” Takatora replied, “Mitsuzane has always been good at reading a room and knowing how to manipulate it.” Out of the corner of his eyes, Takatora saw Yoko smile slightly.

“We needed this,” she said, “We’ve all been so tense, with the fighting and prophecies and betrayals. We needed to just be able to laugh, to just be, outside of fighting.” Her eyes focused on the teenagers.

“I think sometimes we forget how young they are,” she continued, “We’ve been fighting a war, and they’ve been on the front lines since the beginning.” Takatora hummed in agreement.

He couldn’t forget about the Helheim plant sitting innocently in the corner.

Chapter End Notes

Here’s the new chapter. I now have a rough endpoint for the story, which hopefully I can get to soon!

Constructive criticism is welcome!
Beginning of the End

Chapter Summary

The Riders prepare for the final fight.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“A true soldier fights, not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.” -Unknown

Eventually, the teasing and laughter came to an end, with the solemn mood returning, if a little lighter. Setting aside their belts, Kouta, Kaito, and Micchy each plucked a Helheim fruit from the plant. As soon as they had, the vine withered away as if it had never been there.

After a moment’s hesitation, the trio took a bite from the fruit.

Kouta’s change was the simplest. His eyes, which flickered to a bright blue when his emotions ran high, stayed blue, while his hair lightened several shades.

Kaito’s transformation was still mostly humanoid, a more monstrous form of his Phoenix Arms. His eyes were a golden color and almost seemed to glow. The largest difference was the red and gold wings protruding from Kaito’s back. After a few moments to adapt to his new form, Kaito shifted back into his human form, though his eyes remained gold.

Micchy’s change was the most pronounced. In Micchy’s place stood a purple dragon with bright green eyes. Bat-like wings protruded from his back, with small spines running down his back from his head to the end of his whip-like tail. The dragon stretched, shifting into a more humanoid form, the wings disappearing into Micchy’s back. The humanoid figure then shifted back into Micchy, one eye violet and the other a bright green.

It was at that moment that Micchy’s tablet went off again. Micchy checked the location.

“Swarms of Inves coming through the cracks,” Micchy reported, “They’re all over the city. Ryoma is waiting in the Central Plaza, Redyue is by the docks, and swarms of Inves are wandering the city.” Kouta and Kaito looked at Micchy, then each other.

“We need to come up with a plan,” Kouta said, “I can fight Ryoma, Kaito can fight Redyue-” Micchy interjected, cutting off Kouta.

“Redyue is mine.”

Micchy and Kouta stared at each other for a long moment.

“Alright,” Kouta agreed, “Micchy will Redyue, I can fight Ryoma.” Kouta looked at Kaito.

“Feel like taking out hordes of Inves?” Kaito smirked and nodded.
“I’m with you,” Takatora said, nodding at Kouta, “Ryoma and I have unfinished business.” Kouta nodded. The other Riders exchanged looks.

“We’ll help with the Inves hordes,” Jonouchi said, “As strong as Kaito is, he can’t be in several places at once.” Kaito just nodded.

Kouta looked over all the Riders.

“Ryoma is making his final push. If we want to protect our city, our world, we can’t fall here,” he said, eyes sweeping over the Riders. They all nodded and started preparing.

Kouta stared for a moment at his phone, blown up with text messages and missed calls from his sister. Had it really been less than a week since the evacuation? Kouta checked through the text messages, asking where he was, why he hadn’t evacuated with the others. Kouta slowly dialed his sister’s number, bringing the phone to his ear. It only rang once before Akira picked it up.

“Kouta? Kouta, where are you? I’ve been looking for you everywhere-”

“Nee-chan,” Kouta said gently, cutting into Akira’s hysterical speech.

“Kouta?”

“I can’t chat for long,” Kouta said, “My friends and I are getting ready for our final fight. I’ve been in the city this whole time. I’m sorry I didn’t get back to you earlier, but it’s been a hectic few days.” Kouta’s voice broke as it finally sank in that this would almost certainly be his last conversation with his sister.

“Kouta, what’s wrong?” Akira asked frantically.

“After this fight,” Kouta said, his voice rough as he tried to keep his sorrow from his sister, “Micchy, Kaito and I will be going away. I don’t know when we’ll get a chance to come back. I wish I had time to explain everything, but I don’t. I’m sorry, Nee-chan.” Kouta’s heart broke as he heard his sister crying at the other end.

“Nee-chan, it’s okay,” Kouta reassured her, “I knew what I was getting into. Maybe not at the beginning, but I knew before it was too late. I chose this, Nee-chan.” Kouta could hear Akira’s sobs fade somewhat as his sister composed herself.

“You were always so selfless,” she said, “Just don’t forget to take care of yourself, okay? And I don’t care if I have to wait years, you come visit me.”

“I will,” Kouta promised. He slowly pulled the phone away from his ear, not wanting to give up the comforting sound of his sister’s voice. He hung up, setting the phone on the table. He looked at his silver Lockseed, eyes hardening in determination.

Takatora hugged Micchy tightly, as if his hug could keep Micchy from leaving.

“When this is over,” Takatora said, his voice rough, “Promise me that you’ll come visit.” Micchy smiled.

“I will,” he replied, “as often as I can.” Micchy looked up at Takatora.

“Helheim isn’t the only threat out there,” he said, “Promise me that you’ll protect Zawame City when
we can’t.”

“Even if you can, I’ll be right beside you,” Takatora promised. Micchy smiled before he and Takatora separated.

“It’ll be okay, Nii-san,” he said, “You won’t have to be alone.” Micchy’s eyes panned over the other Riders. “You have other friends now.” Takatora smiled.

Jonouchi stared at his phone. No messages or missed calls from his parents, though there were several from his dance team. He dialed his mother’s number quickly, as though he would lose his nerve if he slowed. The phone rang several times before going to voice mail.

“Hey,” Jonouchi said, “I’m still in Zawame City if you were wondering. My friends and I have been fighting off the monsters, and we’re about to go into the final fight. I just wanted you to know, in case…” Jonouchi trailed off, hanging up and putting his head in his hands. Someone placed a hand on his shoulder. Jonouchi looked up to see Oren standing behind him, his face solemn.

“After this, if you wish, you can stay with me,” he offered. Jonouchi drew in a ragged breath as he struggled to keep himself from breaking down.

“Thank you,” he said. Oren just nodding, remaining there as a comforting presence for the boy.

Yoko approached Kaito, who was leaning against the wall outside the garage.

“No loved ones to contact?” she asked leaning against the wall next to him. Kaito shrugged.

“I already sent some text messages to my dance team,” Kaito said, “to say good bye.” A comfortable silence fell between the two Riders.

The Riders regrouped and gave each other solemn looks.

“Don’t forget,” Kouta said, “to come out of this alive.”

Each of the Riders shared resolute nods before leaving to go their separate ways.

Chapter End Notes

Here you go! The next chapter: Micchy versus Redyue!

As for Micchy being a dragon...I just really wanted him to be a dragon.

Constructive criticism is welcome!
Micchy and Redyue battle it out, Wisdom vs. Wisdom.

“Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.” -Sun Tzu
“I’m sure he thinks he does.”

Redyue blocked a slash from Micchy’s scythe, using the blade to hold Micchy’s weapon in place.

“You would be fun to break,” Redyue commented, “I think I’ll keep you as a pet.”

“Maybe I’ll be the one to break you,” Micchy said evenly, his normally well-hidden ruthlessness making itself known in the face of Redyue’s blatant psychopathy. Redyue laughed once more.

“You think you can best me in a game of cunning?” Redyue asked, laughter clear in her voice, “I have played these games for centuries. How can a mere boy like you hold a candle to me?” Micchy chose not to respond, focusing on his attacks.

“Nothing to say?” Redyue taunted. Unseen by the Overlord, Micchy rolled his eyes.

“I’d certainly manage a lot better than you think I can,” Micchy replied.

“Oh?” Redyue asked, “Even when I have your dear brother.” Redyue shimmered, taking the form of Takatora.

Kaito strode through the streets of Zawame City. He grinned as he came upon a group of Inves trying to destroy Drupers.

[PHOENIX]

“Henshin,” he declared, catching the attention of the Inves.

[COME ON! PHOENIX ARMS! REBORN FROM ASH! EI, EI, OH!]

Kaito’s armor formed. The Rider immediately slashed at the Inves with his bladed lance.

Micchy slashed through the image of Takatora, striking Redyue across the chest.

“You would strike your own dear brother?” Redyue asked. Micchy gave Redyue an unimpressed look.

“If you’re going to bluff, don’t try it on someone who knows you’re lying,” Micchy said, “I know where my brother is, and it’s not here.”

“That’s why you showed up alone,” Redyue hissed, “You knew about my illusion abilities.” Micchy smiled underneath his helmet but didn’t speak. Redyue stood, clutching at her chest. She lunged toward Micchy, lashing out with her halberd. Micchy used one hand to pull out one of his guns, shooting Redyue in the chest.

“I can see now that Sengoku Ryoma’s information is out of date,” Redyue said, breathing heavily. Underneath his helmet, Micchy let out a shark-like grin.

“Out of date?” He lashed out with his scythe, striking Redyue once again. “His information was never complete.” Micchy unleashed a barrage of strikes, spinning to hit the green Overlord several times. “The thing about Sengoku Ryoma is that he focuses almost exclusively on provable data. He doesn’t know what people are thinking, unless they consistently act the same way. Even a few incidents of “uncharacteristic” behavior throw off his data, making him throw out his entire data set.” Micchy pulled out his gun, aiming at Redyue. The green Overlord was kneeling on the ground, clutching at her chest.
“However, if you can make your behavior consistent, if you can play to his expectations, he, and anyone using his data, thinks they have you pegged.” Micchy shot at the Overlord, landing several blows. He spun the disk on the gun, purple energy building up in front of the barrel.

“And if there is one thing I have mastered, it’s playing to people’s expectations.”

Micchy shot Redyue, the hit connecting solidly. Lightning started crackling across Redyue’s body. The green Overlord stumbled to her feet before staggering over to where Micchy stood. Micchy crouched next to the previous Wisdom.

“I don’t like how you threatened my brother and friends,” he said quietly, “That was your biggest mistake when fighting me.”

Redyue started laughing.

“Oh, history will repeat itself, little dragon,” she promised, “You will turn into me. You’ll see.”

Micchy released his armor, letting Redyue see the near feral smile on his face.

“No, I won’t,” Micchy replied. Redyue attempted to hit the now unarmored Micchy with her halberd, only for Micchy to grab the handle and push it to the ground.

“You would kill someone for some perceived insult to yourself,” Micchy continued, as if she hadn’t just tried to decapitate him, “I’m killing you because you tried to hurt my family and friends. You use your cunning and ruthlessness to amuse yourself. I use mine to remove threats.” Micchy stood, walking away even as Redyue’s insane laughter echoed in his ears. More lightning crackled over her body, causing it to explode. Micchy exited the docks. He paused for a moment, looking up at the sky.

“It’s done.”

Kaito smirked. Junior had come a long way.

Kouta grinned as he and Takatora faced Ryoma.

“Redyue is gone. You have no more allies,” he said, “It’s our stage now.”

Chapter End Notes

Here's the new chapter! Sorry it took so long!

Constructive criticism is welcome.
The Final Battle

Chapter Summary

Takatora and Kouta face Ryoma to determine everything.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Where there is unity, there is always victory.” -Unknown

Kouta grinned as he and Takatora faced Ryoma.

“Redyue is gone. You have no more allies,” he said, “It’s our stage now.”

Ryoma smirked.

“If anything, you’ve done me a favor,” he said, “Now I don’t have to get rid of her once I claim the Golden Fruit.”

“Look around you,” Kouta said, holding out his arms, “No allies to help you. No access to the forest or the Inves. Last chance. Give up this quest of yours.” Ryoma held up his Lemon Energy Lockseed.

“I think not.”

[LEMON ENERGY]

“Henshin,” he said.

[SODA! LEMON ENERGY ARMS! FIGHT, POWER! FIGHT, POWER! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FI-FI-FI-FI-FIGHT!]

Ryoma’s armor formed, revealing one of the New Generation Riders Kouta had seen when Hase had turned into an Inves. Kouta sighed, pulling out the silver Lockseed.

[LOCK OPEN! EXTREME ARMS! GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, GREAT, SHOGUN!]

Kouta’s newest armor formed, silver with colorful fruit designs on the chest. It had a long red cape that fell to his ankles. It wasn’t as bulky as his previous armors.

“If you won’t give up on your goal,” he said, “Then I will have to stop you.” Kouta pulled out his saber as Ryoma pulled out his bladed bow. They charged each other exchanging several blows.

“You may have been chosen by Helheim,” Ryoma shouted, “but I will be the victor!” They paused in their fight.

“Yoko-san told us what you were planning,” Kouta said, “How you planned to use the forest to become a tyrant. I refuse to let you!”

They exchanged several more blows.
Hidden on top of one of the shorter buildings around the plaza, Takatora was already transformed. He gripped his bladed bow tightly, his knuckles white underneath his armor. He remembered what Kouta had told him.

*Flashback*

*Kouta paused halfway to the plaza. He turned to Takatora.*

“They’ll go in alone,” he said. *Takatora was about to protest when Kouta continued. “I’m hoping you can use your Sonic Bow to snipe him from a distance. I have a bad feeling about you engaging in close combat with him, and Micchy’s shares my thoughts.”*

*Takatora could only nod.*

*End Flashback*

He watched the fight, waiting for the perfect moment to attack Ryoma.

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Kouta and Ryoma exchanged blows. Kouta pushed the scientist back, summoning the gun from his Triumph arms. He shot at Ryoma, forcing him further back.

Takatora saw his chance and stood from where he had been crouching to hide from Ryoma’s view. He aimed carefully with his bow and shot several energy arrows at Ryoma.

Ryoma was caught off guard by the volley of energy arrows. He looked up, spotting Takatora on the roof of one of the shorter buildings.

“So you did show up,” he muttered. He stood, stumbling slightly. He tapped a button on his own Driver.

Takatora’s Genesis Driver started sparking before seeming to just shut down. Takatora’s armor dissolved, leaving him vulnerable to a volley of energy arrows shot by Ryoma. He dodged to the side just in time, with a couple arrows only nicking him.

He pulled out his Sengoku Driver.

Kouta quickly shot at Ryoma, distracting him from Takatora for a moment.

“Do your friendships truly mean nothing to you?” Kouta asked, “You betrayed Takatora, you planned to betray Yoko-san. They both considered you friends.” Underneath his helmet, Ryoma sneered.

“You think you can lecture me?” he seethed, “You couldn’t possibly understand where I came from. You, who was raised by loving family, couldn’t possibly understand!”

Kouta was unimpressed.

“Takatora wasn’t raised in a loving environment, save for Micchy. He was the one taking care of Micchy, when he hadn’t had anyone to show him! If anyone understood, it would’ve been Takatora! But you still turned your back on him!”
“Is that my cue for a grand entrance?”

Both Kouta and Ryoma turned to see Takatora walking toward them, Sengoku Driver in hand. He put it on, pulling out his old Melon Lockseed.

[MELON]

“Henshin,” he said.

[COME ON! MELON ARMS! ACKNOWLEDGED BY PROVIDENCE!]

Takatora was once more clad in his previous armor, wielding a large shield. Ryoma laughed.

“You couldn’t defeat me using your Genesis Driver,” he said, “What makes you think you can beat me with your Sengoku Driver.”

“A lot has changed Ryoma,” Takatora replied evenly, looking straight at Ryoma. To the scientist, it felt like Takatora was looking through him. Takatora continued speaking. “You could have used your brilliance to revolutionize the world. Instead, you chose to try to conquer it. I expected better from you.”

Ryoma seethed. He lashed out at Takatora, attempting to strike him with his bladed bow. Takatora easily blocked the attack with his shield, pushing Ryoma back slightly to land a devastating blow. Ryoma backed up a short distance and attempted to shoot Takatora. Takatora blocked those with his shield as well. Kouta watched from the sidelines, more than willing to let Takatora get closure for what had happened between him and Ryoma.

Takatora dealt Ryoma more devastating blows. Not long after, he turned to Kouta.

“Ready to finish this?”

Kouta could only nod, stepping forward to help Takatora deal the final blows.

Kouta pulled out his saber, slashing at Ryoma.

He summoned the lance from Kaito’s Banana Arms, once more slashing at Ryoma.

Micchy’s gun from Budou Arms, shooting Ryoma multiple times.

Jonouchi’s hammer from Donguri arms, hitting Ryoma several times.

Hase’s spear from Matsubokkuri Arms, slashing again at Ryoma.

Oren’s dual swords from Durian Arms, slashing savagely at the scientist.

Takatora’s shield from Melon Arms, copying Takatora’s early actions.

Yoko’s bladed bow from Peach Energy Arms, shooting Ryoma with an energy arrow at point-blank range.

His gun from Triumph Arms, pointed directly at the face of Ryoma’s helmet.

“You hurt a lot of people,” Kouta said quietly, “I’ll make sure you never hurt anyone again.” He spun the disc, silver energy gathering in front of the gun.

“Goodbye.”
Kouta pressed the trigger as Takatora threw his energy-empowered shield. Both attack struck true, causing electricity to crackle across Ryoma’s armor. He collapsed forward, briefly shifting to his Inves form before exploding.

Soon, the other Riders arrived at the plaza to see the outcome of the fight. They were distracted by a glowing figure arriving.

The Woman of the Beginning-Mai-had appeared before them.

Chapter End Notes

Second to last chapter is here! I hope you enjoy it!

Constructive criticism is welcome!
Epilogue: Goodbye and Hello

Chapter Summary

Everything has come to an end and all that's left is to rebuild.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“There is no real ending. It’s just the place where you stop the story.” -Frank Herbert

Takatora smiled softly as he headed for Charmant. Oren had offered to host the anniversary dinner and was planning to close the shop early to get ready. It was a nice day, so Takatora had decided to walk after leaving work.

It also gave him time to think.

It had been one year. One year since they’d won against Ryoma. One year since Kouta, Kaito, Mai, and Mitsuzane had left with the Helheim forest.

One year since they’d said goodbye.

Flashback

*The Woman of the Beginning-Mai-had appeared before them.*

She looked at each of them.

“Kouta has defeated Sengoku Ryoma in combat,” she announced, “Would any of you challenge him for the Golden Fruit?”

“I’ll not fight him for the Fruit,” Jonouchi said.

“I’ll not fight him either,” Oren echoed.

“I am not the one meant to have it,” Mitsuzane said, his serene smile back in place.

“He can have it,” Kaito answered. They all turned to look at Takatora. The elder Kureshima hesitated before he remembered what Mitsuzane had told him.

“You will be needed to help rebuild.”

“I cede to Kouta,” Takatora said with a sigh. Mai nodded, producing the Golden Fruit. Kouta took a bite. His hair lightened further to a blonde, his eyes becoming a more vivid blue. His clothing changed to a silver armor with a white cloak. Mitsuzane and Kaito let their armor dissolve, the other Riders following suit. Mitsuzane hugged Takatora tightly.

“I’ll visit as soon as I can,” he whispered. Takatora could only hold Mitsuzane tighter before they were forced to separate. He could see that the others had said their goodbyes. Mitsuzane and Kaito shifted into their Overlord forms.
“Take care of yourselves and Zawame,” Kouta said, “We’ll visit when we can.” With that, Kouta held up a hand, opening a huge crack in the sky. Takatora could see Inves and Helheim plants being sucked in. Once there were no more Helheim plants and Inves being sucked in, Kouta, Mai, Mitsuzane and Kaito flew up through the crack, which closed behind them.

End Flashback

The remaining Riders had spent most of that time rebuilding their lives and helping Zawame City rebuild. Most of had needed to go to counselling for varying reasons.

Jonouchi had started working for Oren. He’d even taken Oren up on his offer of letting Jonouchi stay with him. Takatora remembered when Jonouchi’s parents had arrived while they’d been helping the dancer pack up to move in with Oren.

Flashback

Takatora had been taking one of the boxes out to the van they had borrowed to move Jonouchi’s things when he heard raised voices just inside the house. He’d entered to see Jonouchi arguing with two unfamiliar adults. He could see the resemblance and could only assume that they must be Jonouchi’s parents.

“Why are you moving out?” the woman asked, tears gathering in her eyes, “You didn’t even say anything, just started packing. We wouldn’t have even known if we hadn’t come back today!”

“Exactly!” Jonouchi retorted, throwing his hands in the air, “You never noticed anything I did! You didn’t notice that I was a dancer or notice when I became a Rider! You didn’t even notice that I hadn’t evacuated from the city! I called you before the final battle and it went to voicemail! Oren-san is more my parent than you are, and I met him six months ago! So yeah, I’m moving out! I don’t want to live with two people who don’t even care enough to check if their only child had evacuated from a war zone!”

Jonouchi turned and stormed away, leaving his stunned parents behind. Takatora saw Oren clap Jonouchi on the back with a smile, causing the young man to smile in return.

End Flashback

Yoko now worked as his personal assistant, which she was exceptionally good at. She was settling into the group, stepping away from the fringes that she had occupied during the fight.

Takatora had to fight the rising anger as he remembered his parents’ reaction of Mitsuzane leaving.

Flashback

“That was dangerous, Takatora,” his mother said, “You could have been killed.”

“And with Mitsuzane’s reckless decision to become an Overlord and leave Earth, there wouldn’t have been anyone to take your place. Takatora’s blood boiled at his father’s implication that Mitsuzane’s only use was as Takatora’s replacement.

“Mitsuzane did what he needed to do,” Takatora replied stiffly, “As for me, it was a mess of my own making, so I needed to help clean it up.”

“Mitsuzane was there on behalf of the Kureshima family,” his father said, waving a hand dismissively, “You needn’t have gone yourself.”
Takatora had to stop himself from losing his temper at his father’s words and his mother’s lack of objection. He stood.

“Thank you for your concern,” he said coldly, “But I’ll thank you to leave now. Perhaps it would be best if you didn’t return to Zawame City. I don’t trust to care about this city or its inhabitants if you can’t even bring yourself to care about your youngest son.” Takatora turned and strode out of the room.

End Flashback

That had been the last he’d heard from his parents.

Takatora’s mood brightened as he arrived at Charmant. He entered. Everyone else had arrived before him, even Yoko, as it had been her day off.

Oren and Jonouchi had outdone themselves with the food, with a large table in the center filled to the brim with food. A smaller table was off to the side with four place setting. Someone had put four candles in the center, one white, one purple, one orange, and one yellow. Takatora smiled softly as he was greeted by the other three Riders.

They got their food and sat down.

“Ready to light the candles?” Oren asked. They nodded, each lighting a candle. Takatora lit Mitsuzane’s, Yoko lit Kaito’s, Oren lit Kouta’s, and Jonouchi lit Mai’s. They each raised their wineglass.

“To the ones we lost,” they murmured.

“Can I have a sip? I’ve never drank before.”

The seated Riders whirled around to see Kouta, Mai, Kaito and Micchy standing in Charmant. Takatora was the first out of his seat, pulling Micchy into a tight hug.

“I missed you too, Niisan,” Micchy said. They separated, and Takatora noticed the wide smiles on the other Riders’ faces.

“Well, are we going to eat?” Kouta asked, “This food looks good.”

Chapter End Notes

Here it is: the last chapter!

This is actually my first time completing a multichapter fic. The only reason I could finish it was because of all the reviewers who told me they wanted me to keep going. Thank you for your support and I hope you like the ending.

End Notes
I wanted to write a story where Micchy was honest with Kouta, and here we are! I hope you enjoy the story.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!