The Hardest Truth

by Liquid_Sky

Summary

This is a story of revenge, regret, and resentment; but above all, it is a story of failure. As the plans and preparations for the King of Iron Fist Tournament II unfold, Kazuya, Lee, and Jun are forced to face the hardest truth of all...that they are capable of making life-altering mistakes, committing terrible acts and even falling in love. (Rated M for some sexual content in later chapters.)

Notes

This is the prologue to my interpretation of the events that took place leading up to, during and shortly after the second tournament... but with a little twist. I hope you enjoy it.

I've given it an M rating for some sexual content in future chapters, nothing explicit.
A bolt of lightning shattered the black sky illuminating the Japanese countryside. An autumn storm was quickly approaching bringing with it a harsh wind that tore at the remaining leaves on the trees. They seemed to hold to the branches trying to live if only for a moment longer... Though their efforts were futile, as all life must eventually end. Too soon they were overcome and callously scattered onto the cold, rocky ground.

Beyond the bare trees, a gorge could be seen briefly as a second lightning bolt struck, the many jagged rocks at the bottom menacingly reaching toward the sky, unfazed by the roll of thunder that followed.

The flash of light revealed a small figure at the bottom of the gorge, a child whose cry had been masked by the thunder.

A five-year-old boy gasping his last breaths.

At his tender age, he was experiencing what no child should. He was frightened and in pain and had tried to move or scream but all he could do was stare at the sky unaware of the tears streaming down his face. The pain began to fade and though he was only a child he realized that he was dying. At that moment he no longer felt fear, what he felt was anger and searing hate. If only he could climb back up and make his father pay for what he had done.

That was when he saw him.

A figure with dark, leathery wings hovered above him.

**Kazuya Mishima.** He heard a voice inside his head.

*How does it know my name?* The boy wondered as he took in the creature's frightening appearance.

*I know everything about you, Kazuya.* The creature's deep, rasping voice echoed softly in the child's ears.

*You can hear what I think?*

**Of course.**

*Are you an angel?* Kazuya asked though he knew it couldn't be. He hoped that it was because he had always done his best to obey his father and had tried his best to be well behaved. He hoped it was an angel because in his young mind it was what a good boy deserved.

**Angel?** The creature laughed. **That is the last thing I am.**

*You're a devil, aren't you?* The angels he had seen in books and on television didn't have bat-like wings or horns or talons that he was sure could tear him in half.

**Are you frightened?** It grinned revealing sharp fangs and a mouthful of white teeth that made for an unsettling contrast with its dark skin.

The boy hesitated...*Are you here to kill me?* A devil would do that, but in all the stories good
triumphed over evil. He wished he could move his head to look around and see if an angel was on its way to fight the devil, to save him.

It laughed once more. **Kill you? You will die at any moment why would I need to kill you?**

**Why are you here?**

**I am here to help you...To help us.**

_How are you going to help me?_ Kazuya was surprised by the statement. It made no sense for a devil to help anyone, everyone knew that. However, everyone also knew that a father was expected to protect his children, keep them safe, and what his father had done was the opposite. Maybe the world was wrong, maybe angels were evil and devils were good.

**I can heal your wounds and give you back your life in addition to great power. You would like that, would you not?**

_I don't want to die._ He was afraid to die, he had not ever been more afraid of anything in his life. His mother had died and she was never seen or spoken of again, he didn't want that, he didn't want to stop existing, to go from being a boy to being nothing.

**Accept my proposal and I promise you will not. I too am dying, to live in your world I require a body. I need to live inside of you.**

What the creature said made no sense to the boy. **But you're so big, how can you live inside me?**

_Not in physical form. I will occupy your mind, your being._

**Will it hurt?** It was a silly thing to ask, after the pain he'd just experienced there could be nothing worse.

_A little. You cannot expect to receive something while giving nothing._

Kazuya hesitated and wondered if it was telling the truth. Devils lied, it was what they were known for, but again his thoughts went back to his father who was supposed to be his teacher and protector. He thought of the angels who were supposed to help but had not come to his aid...nothing made sense. If everything he knew was a lie, maybe that meant that devils told the truth.

**If you accept you will be able to make your father pay... To make him feel the same pain that you are feeling.**

_All right._ His father did deserve to pay, an angel would not have approved of what the creature was saying, but what it was saying was the right thing.

At his words, the creature disappeared and in its place left a purple light that cast an eerie glow in the dark. It began to surround Kazuya's body, as it did it healed his wounds. He started to feel again. He was soon aware of the raindrops falling on his face, the smell of the wet earth beneath him and the cold that the wind brought with it. He sat up, as he looked down to survey the damage that he had received he noticed a large, jagged scar that began beneath the left side of his collarbone and ended on the right side of his abdomen, it was as wide as his hand at the center and tapered off at each end. Though he had to squint to see in the dimness of the night and the purple glow distorted the color of his skin, he could tell that it was darker than his natural hue. He had no time to react as the purple light gathered then pierced his body making him scream in pain, a few moments later it was gone and the pain had dissipated.
Kazuya stood and cast his eyes toward the heavens, with newfound determination, he began the long and arduous climb to the top.
Kazuya and Lee have vastly different goals for the future of the Zaibatsu.

"Not now, Lee." The young, Japanese woman gently moved her right shoulder away from the silver-haired man's touch.

"That's not what you said last night." He smiled seductively then gently wrapped his arms around her waist.

"Last night we were at home, not in Mr. Mishima's office." As Lee held her tighter she made a half-hearted attempt to move away.

"He's not here now, is he?" He said as he tucked a strand of dark hair behind her ear.

"I need to file these papers, and you know how he gets when—" Lee silenced her with a kiss. He was well aware of the consequences his actions could bring but there was something about her that he found irresistible. She finally draped her arms around his neck leaving her filing forgotten on the desk.

"Lee, I would truly appreciate it if you kept your hands off the help." They immediately pulled away when they heard a voice coming from the doorway.

"Kazuya," Lee began somewhat shakily. "I thought you weren't due in until this afternoon."

At twenty-eight years old Kazuya Mishima looked the part of a ruthless CEO more than most men twice his age. It wasn't his imposing figure, his impeccable designer suits or even the fact that he was the head of the Mishima Zaibatsu, a name synonymous with power. There was almost an aura about him that made men and women, be they janitors or chief executives, want to cower under his gaze. There was something almost unnatural behind his eyes that made them fear him.

Kazuya ignored his younger brother's comment and turned to his secretary, she hastily stepped away from Lee. "Is this what I pay you to do Sakura?" He slowly advanced toward the woman.

"N-no Mr. Mishima." She cast down her eyes as her face turned a deep shade of crimson. "I apologize, sir."

"An apology will do you no good next time."

"There won't be a next time, sir." She bowed slightly then quickly exited the office, her high-heeled shoes clicking loudly on the wooden floor.

Lee glared at his adopted brother. "Her name is Sayuri." He was one of the few people who dared question him and even he knew better than to do it often or at the wrong time.

Lee Chaolan was seen by most as the polar opposite of his brother. Having been adopted by
Heihachi Mishima the brothers shared no physical resemblance, while Kazuya was dark-haired and Japanese, Lee was of Chinese descent and had straight, silver hair. Kazuya got his way by threat of force while Lee relied on his charisma and natural charm. He was the face of the Zaibatsu, in charge of public relations while Kazuya ruled behind the scenes.

Kazuya scoffed as he made his way to the large mahogany desk. "I doubt their names mean anything to you." He set his briefcase down and opened it then pulled out a newspaper.

"She's my girlfriend." Lee countered.

Kazuya smirked as he reclined on his chair setting the newspaper next to the briefcase. "What about that American lawyer that you were out with the night before last? And your dear Anna?"

"That's none of your damn business." Lee felt his body tense at the mention of Anna's name.

"You're right." Kazuya opened a drawer on his desk and put the briefcase away. "I really don't give a damn, as long as you don't do it on my time, or on my desk." He made a face of disgust.

"Have you given any more thought to what we talked about the other day?" Lee felt that it was the time to strike. He had learned to read his brother over the years, there were brief moments that most people didn't know existed when Kazuya was approachable.

"What was it?" He asked dismissively as he opened the newspaper. "I can't remember."

"About investing in robotics research." Lee was quickly becoming irritated but he knew better than to show it and ruin his opportunity. "Expanding beyond that piece of junk that the old man left in the lab to rust."

"No." He shifted his gaze toward the paper.

"No? That's all you're going to say?"

"It was a yes or no question."

"Fine then. Why not?"

"Because it's a stupid idea."

His answer angered Lee but he skillfully masked his feelings, he knew it was what Kazuya wanted. "It's not stupid, it would benefit the Zaibatsu. I've done extensive research, over a year's worth, you know that I have a degree in mechanical engineering; I have educated myself further since. I know what I'm talking about, I'm very serious about this."

Kazuya sighed. "Even if it wasn't a stupid idea, it's expensive and too unpredictable. Why do you think the prototype was abandoned?"

"Of course it is, but there's virtually no competition right now except for the Russians, and all they're focusing on is a combat android."

"There's no competition because it's too expensive, and if we're not going to be focusing on a combat model, what's the point?"

"There's more money to be made if we focus on what people, normal people want." He explained exasperatedly, he immediately inhaled deeply, realizing that he was about to lose his composure. He quickly managed to make his tone even. "We can focus on robots that can do household chores or
Kazuya cut him off. "You're too late, coffee makers and vacuum cleaners have already been invented, I'm not going to risk the Zaibatsu's money to indulge your childhood fantasies. I don't want to talk about this again." Lee knew that the final word had been said. "Did you see this?" Kazuya asked pointing to an article on the second page.

Lee turned the newspaper and read the title, "Mullen Aircraft Services Cuts Ties With Mishima Zaibatsu." He looked at his brother. "I saw it."

"Isn't it your job to keep things like this out of the newspapers?"

Lee sighed. "It's a regurgitated story that an Irish newspaper ran last week, there's nothing I can do about what other countries print." It was his job to make the Zaibatsu look as clean as possible for the Japanese media, most of the time he was able to spin a story but lately Kazuya's antics had been making it more difficult.

"He says that since I became the head of the Zaibatsu it has strayed from the honorable path... Says the illegal weapons dealer, goddamned hypocrite." Kazuya sounded more amused than irritated.

Lee had to agree with that. Desmond Mullen owned a successful aircraft leasing company in Ireland, it was privately owned and not big enough to give any of the top companies any competition, but it was doing well. Too well some thought and they were right as Mullen made most of his money through illegal weapons deals selling to criminal organizations in Ireland and other parts of the world.

"It's not even on the front page," Lee said, "it's a fluff piece, he doesn't specify anything, he's merely announcing that he won't lease to us anymore. We have nothing to worry about. You know newspapers will print pretty much anything if it means they get to mention the Zaibatsu."

"Well," Kazuya looked at his watch, "as of right now Desmond Mullen will cease to be a thorn in my side."

Lee furrowed his brow as he looked at his brother. "What do you mean cease?"

"I mean he'll be dead." His tone was too nonchalant, Lee felt a chill as he saw the look of smug satisfaction on his face.

He looked at Lee. "What time is it in Ireland?"

"Four a.m."

"Perfect," he closed the newspaper, "an hour ago then."

Lee stared at him in disbelief. "You had him killed because of a stupid article?"

"No, I had him killed because he slipped my name to Interpol, they were onto him over his weapons deals, so he started naming clients."

Lee gaped at him for a moment. "...He gives your name to Interpol and then you have him killed? Could you be more conspicuous? You're practically leaving a trail of blood leading straight-"

"They can't prove anything other than that he was legally leasing us a jet, which he was," he said casually. "And I was far from his only buyer, he made a lot of people angry, it could have been anyone."
Lee began to pace the room. "Why are you telling me this? You know I don't like to know about it?"

"Because if for some unfathomable and extremely unlikely reason I ever go down... I'm taking you with me," Kazuya smirked. "If I tell you, you can't deny that you knew."

Lee felt his heartbeat accelerate, he was the one who had chosen Mullen's company precisely because he knew that he sold weapons behind closed doors. Before the King of Iron Fist tournament, Heihachi had planned to train his own private combat task force, to what end, Lee didn't know. Once Heihachi had been defeated and Kazuya had taken over the Zaibatsu, Kazuya had decided that he liked the idea and continued where his father had left off, but there was a stark difference between the two Mishima's methods. Heihachi wasn't above extortion and bribery, perhaps even assassination, but when he engaged in such practices he was discreet and used them as a last resort. Kazuya, on the other hand, threatened force at the first sign of resistance.

Kazuya was right, Lee decided, he knew too much, was involved in too much to feign innocence if the time ever arose. He needed to do something, find some way to take over the Zaibatsu and set it on the law-abiding path or else he would have to distance himself from it. He didn't want to resort to that, it pained him to even think about it. The Zaibatsu had been his by right, it was his destiny. He would only separate himself from it as a last resort, only of his life depended on it.

"Now," Kazuya began to leaf through some papers that he'd taken out of a drawer, "I have that meeting this afternoon, I'll expect my notes and charts to be organized and ready in half an hour."

"Half an hour?" Lee asked outraged. "It'll take me about that long to get the first half done."

Without warning Kazuya threw a stapler across the room, it shattered as it hit the wall breaking a framed photograph of the Tokyo skyline in the process. Had Lee not moved it would have collided with his head, which had obviously been the intended target. "I think I've been tolerant enough for today." Kazuya's voice was low, always a deadly sign. "Perhaps if you hadn't been playing around you would already have it done."

"I know...I-"

Kazuya looked at his watch. "Twenty-nine minutes."

Lee turned toward the door and left the office knowing very well that it was best not to argue.

"You are so late!" Lee heard Sayuri say as he opened the door to his apartment. It had been an extremely difficult and draining day, he closed the door behind him, tossed his keys onto the coffee table and collapsed on the brown leather couch.

"How could he keep you this late," the beautiful young woman said as she made her way toward him, "it's already past nine." She knelt beside him and gave him a quick kiss on the lips.

"The meeting ran late." He said wearily.

"I could have stayed to help you."

"And ruin his fun?" He closed his eyes.

He heard Sayuri sigh as she softly as she knelt beside him. "I'm just disgusted by the way he treats you, you're his brother."

"Adopted brother, never to be mistaken with brother." Lee scoffed. "Not that it would make any
damn difference."

They were both silent for a short moment. She reached for the pack of cigarettes next to the ashtray. "...Can you tell me what the top secret meeting was about?" He knew she had been extremely curious, for more than a week the Zaibatsu employees had been speaking and speculating about a secret meeting. Something that not even Sayuri, Kazuya's secretary knew about.

Lee opened his eyes and sat up, Sayuri extracted a cigarette from the pack and handed it to him along with a lighter. "Well..." He began as he lit it, "...It's out in the open now." He took a long drag from his cigarette, slowly exhaled then ran his fingers through his platinum hair. "Kazuya has decided that there will be a second King of Iron Fist tournament."

"Why? The first tournament was held to decide who would gain control of the Zaibatsu, wasn't it?" Lee understood her confusion, after defeating and killing Heihachi, Kazuya had been declared the winner of the tournament and now ran the company. To most people, the news of a second tournament would make no sense.

"Strange isn't it?" Lee said. "He met with the potential sponsors today; most of them decided to back him."

"Why another tournament?" Sayuri took a seat beside him.

"That's what I wondered, but today, after the meeting he told me why." Lee turned to look at his girlfriend. "Heihachi is alive."

She gave a small gasp and put her hand to her chest. "How?"

Lee shrugged. "The old man must have tough skin or something." He had asked Kazuya the same question and he too had failed to come up with an answer. It had been nearly two years since Kazuya had defeated their father at the end of the first King of Iron Fist tournament. Then, either for good measure or perhaps simply revenge, he had decided to throw him down a ravine. The very same that Heihachi had thrown a five-year old Kazuya into, and he too left him for dead. After the meeting, the two brothers decided that it was best not to dwell on the how of his survival and focus on the fact that he was alive and undoubtedly out for revenge.

Sayuri cast down her eyes. "You're going to enter the tournament aren't you?"

"I already did." He said as he put the cigarette in the ashtray.

She sighed then gave a small nod. "When is it?"

"Two months. I'm going to start training tomorrow, I'll have to be up by four so I can at least get a good two or three hours in before I have to go to work." He stood up. "I'm going to bed."

"Lee..." She took his hand, there was a genuine look of concern on her pretty face. "I..." She looked down and didn't finish what she was going to say.

Lee pulled her up and held her close. "Don't worry, everything will turn out well." He only wished that he could believe it.

"I'm sorry Miss Kazama, but Mr. Mishima does not wish to meet with you." Sayuri tapped her pen on the desk impatiently. "There is nothing I can do. I'm terribly sorry." She quickly hung up the phone. "I swear that woman is going to drive me crazy." She said turning her chair toward Lee's desk.
"Who is she?" Lee asked as he leafed through a folder in front of him.

"She's from some wildlife agency thing. She calls at least once a day asking for a meeting with Mr. Mishima." She stood up and grabbed a stack of papers from her desk.

"Oh."

She rolled her eyes, slightly annoyed at Lee's lack of interest. "Speaking of which I have to have him sign these." She was about to step away from her desk when the phone rang. "Damn phone." She grumbled as she picked up the receiver. "Mr. Mishima's office, Sayuri speaking." She paused for a moment. "Hold please." She pushed a button and Lee's phone rang.

"I don't have time for this." He continued to study his papers.

"You better answer it," Sayuri instructed. "He said it was important."

"Damn it." He reached for the receiver.

She watched Lee pick up the phone then made her way to Kazuya's office, she knocked once then entered. "Excuse me, sir," she walked to the desk and stood near his chair as she set the papers to his right, "Miss Jun Kazama called again, she insists on meeting with you."

"Who?" He asked without looking up from his desk.

"Jun Kazama, from the WWWC."

"What the hell is the WC?"

"WWW, it's a wildlife protection agency."

"Have Lee take care of it." He said dismissively.

"Yes, sir." She inwardly sighed, Lee wasn't going to be happy, but at least she knew the best way to appease him. "Also, these need to be reviewed and signed by tomorrow at the latest."

"What are they?" He moved his attention from the large stack of papers in front of him and looked at her.

"The rules and conditions for the sponsors of the tournament." She explained as she bent down to point to the heading on the top page.

Kazuya looked from her face to the papers on his desk, she noticed his eyes linger briefly on her chest and immediately felt her cheeks flush as she remembered how low-cut her blouse was. He looked up at her again, when their eyes met she felt butterflies in her stomach and quickly looked away. "Fine." He gave her a small stack of documents and continued to talk as if nothing had happened. "I need these copied and sent out to each of the names on this list. I want it done by this afternoon." He handed her the list and she took it along with the rest of the papers.

"Yes, sir. Is there anything else?"

"Not at the moment." Without saying another word she made her way out, as she did she swore she felt his eyes on her and felt herself flush. Sayuri closed the door behind her and hastily made her way back to her desk.

"I have to go," Lee informed her on his way to the door. "I'll be back in about an hour."
"Where are you going?"

"I'll tell you when I come back."

"Wait, Mr. Mishima is..." She spoke too late, he had disappeared through the door, "...going to be mad."
A business opportunity forces Lee to secretly travel out of the country amid preparations for the second tournament and Kazuya is none too pleased. Jun is given a new assignment.

(No Regrets)

Sayuri paced back and forth in front of the television set. It was nearing nine o'clock in the evening and she was still waiting to hear from Lee, he had said that he would be back in one hour, but that had been before lunch. She didn't know whether to feel worried, angry or suspicious. There were times when he was needed at the Zaibatsu after the workday was over, she understood that he had certain duties that could not wait until the next day. However there were some instances when she had a nagging feeling in the back of her mind that refused to leave her, a feeling that he wasn't being faithful. There were nights when he came home later than she expected him and when she asked for an explanation all he had was a bullshit excuse or a bullshit story and she always let it go, every time. She knew there would come a time when one more bullshit excuse would be one too many, but she didn't know when that would be, maybe tonight, she thought, maybe after the day she'd had at work.

He had left her to deal with an angry Kazuya, being around him when he was in a bad mood always left her drained and emotional. There was a heavy feeling in the office on those days, it seemed to envelop her, weigh her down and make her throat tighten. It was almost unnatural. He was intimidating no matter what mood he was in but when he was angry there was something about his eyes that seemed to pierce her soul, made her want to cower and hide. She suddenly remembered the way he had looked at her just before Lee left, when they were alone in his office and she felt her heart quicken; there had been no anger then. She wished she could say that she didn't like it, that it made her uncomfortable but... The sound of the door opening jolted her out of her thoughts, she quickly spun around to see Lee stepping inside.

"Where have you been?" Sayuri demanded.

Lee tossed his keys on the coffee table then walked toward her. "You weren't worried, were you?" He asked wrapping his arms around her waist.

"Of course I was!" Sayuri tried to squirm away, but he held her tightly. He seemed to be in a good mood, she didn't know if she should be relieved or angry. "Where were you?" She asked again.

"I had to take care of some important business that took longer than I expected." He explained.

"Define business." A bullshit excuse, just like she expected.

"I'm going to be gone for a while."

"How long? Where?" Nothing he was saying making her feel better.

"Two weeks. Hong Kong."

His answer surprised her. "Why would you need to go to Hong Kong? What about the tournament?"
She felt her suspicions subside somewhat, there wasn't much time left before the start of the
tournament, he wouldn't leave Japan unless it was important.

Lee sighed, let go of her waist then walked toward the couch. "This tournament..."He paused and
ran his fingers through his hair. "It just seems wrong."

"How do you mean?"

"I want to think that I'll win and that I'll gain control of the Zaibatsu but I want to be prepared." Sayuri took his hand, he looked so concerned that she felt that she needed to reach out to him. So much for being angry with him. "I'm working very hard, and I know that I have become a much better fighter than I was at the last tournament, but still, I have to be open-minded and see that things may not turn out as I expect."

Sayuri was glad to hear him say that, she knew how much winning meant to Lee and had been
worried about how he would react if he lost. Knowing that he saw that as a possibility lifted a
tremendous weight off her shoulders. She suddenly felt guilty for being angry with him, Kazuya put
him through so much, what he needed was her support not her distrust.

"What does this have to do with Hong Kong?" She asked after a short pause.

"I'm starting my own company." He said smiling broadly.

"And you hadn't told me about it?" She knew she must have sounded angry, but in reality she was
hurt. They had shared a home for months, he should have trusted her enough to tell her.

"I was planning to tell you when I was sure that everything had worked out."

Sayuri sighed understanding. She knew that he despised being seen as a failure, so it made sense that he had kept it hidden until he was sure the outcome would be in his favor. "I'm assuming it did work out."

"It worked out." He answered her with a smile.

"I'm glad." She said wrapping her arms around his neck leaving her misgivings forgotten. "What is this super secret company?"

"Some very generous investors see great potential in my robotics research, we're going to start small, but it doesn't matter. They want me to lead, they trust my instincts even though most of them are older than my father. All I have to do is go to Hong Kong for two weeks to personally oversee the hiring of staff and to sign contracts and attend meetings." There was an enthusiasm behind his eyes that she had seldom seen before, she had caught glimpses of it but it always disappeared after meeting with his brother. This was different though, it was almost as if it were radiating from him.

"When are you leaving?"

"My flight leaves at six in the morning, I'm scheduled to meet with them tomorrow evening." She suddenly felt anxious, she didn't want to be alone with Kazuya. "What am I supposed to say tomorrow?"

"Just go in as you always do." Lee instructed. "When Kazuya asks where I am tell him that I never came home and that you don't know. He can't prove otherwise."

"He'll know you're up to something." He couldn't prove it, but she knew it wouldn't make him any
less angry or difficult to be around.

"I'll call him and tell him that I'm taking two weeks off to train for the tournament."

She felt a pang of anger, he was leaving her alone with him for two weeks, who knew what might happen in those two weeks, Lee might come home to find her fired. She almost protested but seeing him so excited, genuinely happy, made her keep her thoughts to herself.

"What about when you come back?" She asked choosing to worry about Lee's fate instead of hers. "He'll at least have you killed."

"It won't matter." He said nonchalantly. "I'll be back just in time for the tournament and I'll either win, or...well, either way it won't matter."

Sayuri sighed. Too many scenarios were running through her head, neither she nor Lee had a good outcome in any of them but she resolved to do what he asked, to do it for him so that he could finally have a foothold on something. He deserved it, he deserved some recognition, an opportunity to show that he could be a leader and a successful entrepreneur, that the Zaibatsu needed him, not the other way around.

"I'll expect a phone call every day." She said sternly.

"Every day." He promised as he kissed her.

She wanted to lose herself in that kiss the way that she always did. She wanted his hands to make her forget about her insecurities the same way that they did every time he touched her, but she was too worried. There was a feeling in her chest that wouldn't leave her, it was almost as if her lungs were being squeezed making her want to inhale to fill them with air. She was going to see Kazuya Mishima in the morning, she was going to look him in the eye and lie to him. She imagined the way he would look at her when she did, those eyes full of anger piercing into her soul...She suddenly remembered the way he had looked at her that morning and the way he had made her heart beat faster. She quickly pulled away from Lee.

"You should pack before it gets late." She said pressing her fingertips to her temple.

He looked taken aback. "I have time."

"I need some rest," she said walking toward the bedroom, "I have a stressful day tomorrow." She left him standing in the living room with a confused look on his face. She felt guilty but decided that she would make it up to him in the morning. She got ready for bed hoping that a good night's sleep would ease her worries.

Six days had passed since Lee had left for Hong Kong. Though Sayuri was more than happy to receive his phone calls telling her that everything was going well, it always scared her to think about what would happen when he returned. Kazuya was becoming more and more irritable each day as his list of duties grew without Lee and to make things worse Jun Kazama called more frequently. Sayuri could take no more, between her usual duties and with the addition of Lee's she had little time to waste. After hanging up the phone she resolutely stood up and made her way to Kazuya's office.

She knocked once then entered the office, the look on his face told her that she had not picked a good time. "...Sir?" She timidly approached him.
"Sato backed out." Kazuya said walking toward his desk. "He doesn't think sponsoring the tournament will be good for his business."

"You lost a sponsor?" Sayuri asked for lack of a better comment.

Kazuya responded with a scowl. "Lee was supposed to convince him, but he's somewhere training for his futile cause. What the hell was he thinking when he left?" He extracted a file from the middle of a large stack of papers on his desk. "I hope he realizes that there will be consequences when he returns."

"That's the second sponsor you've lost since he's left," Sayuri said feeling bold, glad that he was beginning to see how much he needed Lee, "maybe you should remember that when he returns."

Kazuya glared at her. "You need to remember your place, you are not irreplaceable. I can make it so that no one in Tokyo will dare hire you after I have security throw you out of here." He warned.

"Of course, sir, I realize that." She said taking a shaky breath as she tried to think of what had compelled her to say something so stupid. "I-I apologize."

Kazuya roughly pushed the file into her hands. "This is Sato's file, I don't need it in here."

"Yes, sir." She bowed slightly then began to head for the door, but stopped when she was halfway there. "Sir?" She said timidly, remembering why she had approached him in the first place.

"More smart remarks?" Kazuya crossed his arms over his broad chest.

"No." She lowered her head. "That Jun Kazama has not stopped calling here since the day when I first told you about her."

"Who?" The annoyance in his voice made her feel more anxious.

"Jun Kazama, from the wildlife agency." The look of impatience on his face made her speak more quickly wanting to be out of his office as soon as possible. "She calls multiple times a day, it's gotten to the point where it's difficult to get my work done, taking into consideration all the additional work I need to do..."

"Damn it." He shook his head. "This is supposed to be Lee's job, to meet with people like her so that I don't have to." He looked intently at Sayuri. "Where is he, really?"

"I don't know, sir." Her voice was steady, it surprised her, inside she was trembling. "Still in Asia, possibly Japan I suppose, but I couldn't tell you where. As I've told you before, all he said was that he wanted to train free of distractions."

"You share a home, don't you?" He asked continuing to hold her gaze. "He didn't even bother to tell you?"

"No, sir."

"Hmm." A smile formed on his lips. "Perhaps he went to trade you for a newer model, he has always been quite fond of foreign women. I must say that I'm surprised you've lasted this long."

She looked down but didn't say anything, everyone was well aware of Lee's reputation as a womanizer. Kazuya's words brought forth the doubts that she had pushed to the back of her mind since Lee had left for Hong Kong.
"How does my schedule look tomorrow?" Kazuya suddenly asked offhandedly.

"The day is full until two o'clock then you have a meeting with Bennett Industries scheduled for three-thirty." She answered without hesitation determined not to let him see that he had struck a nerve.

"Just schedule a ten minute meeting before that, it's all I need to make sure Jun Kazama never calls here again." He walked back to his desk.

Sayuri didn't doubt his words. "I'll schedule her for two fifty." She turned and quickly exited the office.

Kazuya watched as Sayuri left, unable to look away; it was difficult not to admire her figure. His own thoughts surprised and angered him at the same time, there should be nothing to admire about a disrespectful employee. He shook his head attempting to put her out of his mind but her image refused to disappear. He knew the only reason why he didn't fire her after that remark was that he needed her at the moment. Everything was behind as it was, it would take weeks to train someone else and Lee was not there to train anyone. That was the only reason why she was still working.

Do not attempt to deceive yourself, he heard the voice within him say, 'you know the true reason why she is still here... You want her.'

"I do not." Devil's voice was something that Kazuya had grown to despise over the years, always taunting him, at times pestering him, but it was a small price to pay for the power that he gave him. "I'm a man and I have eyes, if there is something in my field of view I'm going to look at it."

She is very beautiful. It cannot be helped. You have desired her since the first time you saw her, but she is your brother's woman, what a shame.

"I have no time for this." Kazuya sifted through his papers trying to occupy himself with something. Haven't you noticed the sensuous manner in which she walks? Or her revealing clothing?

"Leave me alone, Demon!" Kazuya slammed a fist on his desk.

The creature laughed. You could have her if she were anyone else, anyone at all. I am sure that even you will not stoop so low as to disrespect your brother in such a way.

"Stop calling him my brother and leave me alone."

As you wish.

"The last thing I want is a secretary, especially her." Kazuya glanced at the door then continued to sift through his work.
filing cabinets that they had been promised. She had to crane her neck around a box every time she wanted to talk to a coworker. Two of the walls were plastered with posters of wild animals in their habitats, there were also other posters that showed animals in captivity with a silly quote or saying printed on, she hated those. The wall with the window was left barren and the one parallel to it had policies, flyers and phone numbers stapled or tacked haphazardly onto it. It was a sad sight. She stood up from her uncomfortable chair and stretched her arms and back, she hated office work and she hated the cheap chairs that the staff in her small office was forced to use.

The World Wildlife Welfare and Conservation Agency received generous donations every day, she wished that at least a bit of the proceeds would be spent on the comfort of its employees, God knew the offices at headquarters were well equipped and furnished. She was surprised at her own bitter thoughts, but it was the end of the day, an entire day of sitting at a desk making phone calls and filling out paper work, she was not meant for that type of work. The bureaucracy of defending the welfare of wild animals was maddening, all her supervisors at the WWC headquarters ever did was complicate things. She felt that she accomplished much more when she was able to do things off the book. It felt wrong and right at the same time, though she had never lied, merely omitted some facts. She had been raised to be honest and truthful and so far for the past six months that she had worked for the WWC she had managed to stay that way.

Jun's feeling of victory quickly dissipated as she laid eyes on the open manila folder next to the telephone. The top page read 'Mishima Zaibatsu Report,' the current CEO of the Zaibatsu was Kazuya Mishima. Under his name and title was a litany of offences against wild animals and their habitats that his company had allegedly committed. Allegedly. As a WWC officer it was now Jun's assignment to find evidence against him or the Zaibatsu, perhaps get a confession from him or someone else. It had been initially an assignment meant for Noriko who had the most experience and was old enough to be her mother. Jun had felt a fear grip the woman at the mention of the Zaibatsu, it was palpable to Jun but no one else in the room sensed anything, Noriko was very good at keeping a straight face. She felt the relief from her other two coworkers as Noriko's name was mentioned, the air in the office was suddenly lighter, but at the same time it felt as if all of the fear and tension had concentrated in one area and shifted entirely to Noriko enveloping her like a dark, dense fog. Again, no one else noticed. Then Noriko had looked at Jun and it was as if a ray of hope had pierced through the fog.

"What about Jun?" Noriko had asked with a soft smile. "She's young and pretty and Kazuya Mishima is young and handsome," she had then looked at her supervisor and coworkers for support, "maybe they'll hit it off and it will be easier for her to get information from him." To Jun's dismay they all nodded in agreement.

"Yes, what a great idea," the supervisor visiting from headquarters had said, "you'd be surprised at what men will say just to impress a pretty girl. Also, Jun has shown that she has great skill even though she's new." She added quickly.

"Oh, yes," Noriko said, "I bet she'll have him wrapped around her little finger in no time, she's such a sweet and pretty thing." The other two coworkers were silent but kept nodding a in agreement.

Jun had tried to protest. "I'm not sure I'm comfortable with-"

"We really need to bag this one," her supervisor looked sternly at her, "big game like this can mean a promotion for me...and all of you as well."

Jun was appalled by her use of hunting analogy but she did her best to smile politely even though she had been, and still was, deeply bothered. Were they aware of the implications? No, she had realized, Noriko's relief and the supervisor's excitement at the thought of a promotion surrounded everyone
and everything in the office, it completely overpowered every other thought in their minds. And what exactly did they expect her to do other than question him the same way any WWWC officer would question anyone else. They seemed to think that they were about to send her into a bad spy movie where becoming intimate with the enemy led to anything other than regret. She didn't like it, what she had wanted was to work directly with the animals, do real fieldwork, stand between an elephant and a poacher's gun, save tigers from being caught in traps, be out in the open breathing fresh air. She didn't want to interview a rich man in an expensive suit who was probably wearing shoes made from illegal leather. She told herself that it was a stepping stone, one step closer to doing what she wanted to do. She would pay her dues in that tiny office so that one day soon she could be traveling to India, Madagascar, maybe even Antarctica just so she could see penguins in their natural habitat.

She closed the folder with the Mishima Zaibatsu's information and picked it up along with her purse, she turned off the lights and locked the office. Just a stepping stone, she thought on her way to the bus stop. "That meeting is going to change my life." She stopped as the realization came to her and she suddenly felt a chill run through her and a heavy feeling settled in her chest. She was never wrong about those things, never. At that moment she felt as if someone were looking over her shoulder and saw goose bumps rise on her arms, the presence felt somewhat intrusive, but she decided to ignore it as she felt no malice. Continuing on her way she could not shake the feeling of uneasiness as she thought about her meeting with Kazuya Mishima, perhaps Noriko had been right to pass off the assignment after all.

It was nearly five o'clock, Sayuri was eager to go home and have a hot bath and a glass of wine, to just be away from the Mishima Building. She wanted to hear Lee's voice, she wanted him to erase the doubts that Kazuya had awakened in her mind. She locked Kazuya's office then began to lock the drawers in her desk. She wondered what Lee was doing at the same moment and hoped that he was able to train as much as he needed for the tournament. When she was about to put the appointment book away she heard the door open and looked up to see a woman step inside. She was tall and had shoulder-length blonde hair, she was somewhat attractive, and looked to be in her late twenties, she smiled at Sayuri and walked up to her desk. Sayuri guessed that she was an attorney, judging by the dark pantsuit she was wearing and the way she carried herself, with an air of smug confidence that she didn't particularly like.

"Hello," Sayuri smiled politely, "how may I help you?" She was surprised that no one from the reception desk had called to tell her someone was coming up, but if security had let her into the building in meant that she had business with the Zaibatsu. She hoped the woman spoke Japanese.

"Hello, I'm looking for Lee." The woman's Japanese was fair at best but Sayuri had a keen ear and usually did well deciphering what foreigners were saying when they butchered Japanese.

"He isn't here, but I can help you with anything you need."

"Hmm." She seemed disappointed. "My name is Amanda Mason, I'm an attorney with Bennett Industries, will he be here tomorrow?"

"No." Sayuri said shortly. "The receptionist downstairs didn't tell you?"

"There was no one at the desk."

That bitch took off early again. Sayuri mentally rolled her eyes. "I'm very sorry about that, how may I help you, Miss Mason?"
"Are you sure he won't be here tomorrow?" The woman persisted.

"Yes, I'm certain."

"When will he return?"

"In a week." Sayuri didn't like the lawyer's insistence, it deeply bothered her, gave her a feeling of uneasiness. "Again, Miss Mason, I can help you with anything you need."

She sighed. "I was hoping to move the appointment with Bennett Industries to four o'clock tomorrow."

"Oh." Sayuri opened the appointment book as she forced herself to smile. A foreign lawyer making her way to the Mishima Building through downtown Tokyo so close to rush hour to change the time of a meeting? She wasn't buying it. "I'm sorry, it looks like three-thirty is the only time we have available tomorrow, it's not possible to change it."

The woman shrugged. "It was worth the try."

"Hmm." She forced a smile again.

"May I have a pen and paper, also an envelope?"

"Of course." Sayuri handed her the items and went back to putting her things away for the day. There was a heavy feeling in the pit of her stomach, but maybe she was wrong, she told herself, she prayed that she was wrong.

"Thank you." Amanda Mason said startling her as she set the pen and notepad on Sayuri's desk, without saying anything else she made her way out the door.

Sayuri looked toward Lee's desk and saw that she had put the envelope next to his computer. She briskly walked toward the desk and without hesitation picked up the envelope, she immediately noticed that there was something heavy inside. She opened it and her heart sank when she saw the silver, rectangular object, Lee's lighter. He had lost it weeks earlier, on a night when he told her that he had run into an old friend from college during lunch and that he was going to meet him at a bar to catch up after work. She remembered it had been around the time when the Zaibatsu began to deal with Bennett Industries. She felt her arms grow heavy and her throat tight. There was a note inside, she couldn't stop herself, she pulled it out and attempted to read it. It was in English, Sayuri could speak as well as read some, but the woman's handwriting was god-awful, she was sure even a native English speaker would have trouble deciphering it. She was able to make out the words 'see you' and 'time' but that was it, she had signed with her first name only and had written a phone number.

Everyone was right, she realized as she held the lighter tightly to her chest. The whispers, the rumors, her own suspicions, it had all been right; she should have listened to her instincts. She took Amanda's note and angrily stuffed it into an unlocked drawer, she wanted him to see it, she wanted him to know that she knew. How many women? How many times? She wondered, she sat on his chair feeling defeated, staring at the lighter in her open hand. She didn't want to go home, didn't want to be there when he called, didn't want to hear him trying to come up with another bullshit excuse. That made her sad and angry at the same time because just before that woman had walked through the door she had wanted nothing more than to hear his voice.

It was after six o'clock when Kazuya finally stepped into the elevator of the Mishima Building.
a dead man, he kept repeating that over and over in his head, his absence had left a void that needed to be filled and Kazuya was the one being forced to fill it. There were duties to delegate, meetings to attend and tournament preparations to oversee. Sayuri and other employees were able to handle a significant part of the work, but there were still some responsibilities that no one else was able to fulfill or that no one else could be trusted with. Promoting the tournament through media appearances was one of those things, it was something that Kazuya hated and Lee reveled in. He had just finished giving an interview to a television station, it had been short and to the point, no frills. He had hated it nonetheless, though it had been entertaining to see the news crew scurry about trying not to do anything that would upset him. They had asked if Lee was going to join him, he could see in their faces, hear in their voices that they wished he had been the one who showed up. He had wanted Lee to be the one to do interviews too, to do everything that was his duty and everything that Kazuya hated. He was going to make his life a living hell when he came back.

He is planning something, Devil had not stopped reminding him all day, deceiving you somehow. Why else would he miss an opportunity to show his conceited, pretty face to the world?

It was unlikely, Kazuya thought, but not impossible. He's just training for the tournament, he insisted, he thinks he will be able to defeat me and win ownership of the Zaibatsu.

Believe what you choose, but don't say I didn't warn you. He felt Devil retreat to the back of his mind as he stepped out of the elevator.

He stopped in front of the door labeled, 'Kazuya Mishima, Chief Executive Officer,' and walked inside. The front room of the office was large and well lit, there were comfortable, black leather chairs with their backs against the wall available for anyone who was waiting to be seen. Lee and Sayuri's desks were in the center, one on the right and one on the left with about ten feet separating the two. He liked the way it was decorated, clean and minimal with muted colors and framed black and white photographs of Tokyo. One of the first things he had ordered done after he came to power was to have the office and the entire building redecorated. He had every gaudy artifact and painting that Heihachi loved to fill rooms with removed, he had wanted nothing of his influence to remain in the building. Kazuya stepped into his private office and turned on the lights, he did not expect to see Sayuri sitting on the black, leather couch beside the door.

"What the hell are you doing in my office in the dark?" He asked feeling curious, but mostly irritated because he hated being caught off guard.

"I'm sorry, sir." She said with her voice low and her head down. "It's just that I've had a horrible day and I wanted some time somewhere quiet before I get on the subway. Whenever I look upset men tell me that I should smile and I can't handle that today."

He shook his head at the absurdity of her problem. "They tell you to smile? Do they also have the audacity to open doors for you?"

"A man wouldn't understand." Her voice was barely audible. "I'm sorry," she said standing up, "I'll clean this up and go."

He noticed that she had a glass in her hand. "Were you drinking my scotch?"

"I apologize," she said, though she sounded annoyed rather than apologetic, "I didn't think you would notice."

"What else do you do that you think I won't notice?" He eyed her suspiciously. "How many times have you done this before?"
"None," she looked him in the eye, "and I've never done anything other than work my ass off for you." She immediately looked away. "I'm sorry, it must be the alcohol talking."

It was intriguing to see her behave that way, it seemed that she had been growing a spine during Lee's absence, it was amusing, but if she caught him in a bad mood she would regret it.

"Since you're here," Kazuya began as he watched her pick up the bottle of scotch from the end table, "are there any changes for tomorrow?"

"No."

When she walked to put the bottle back in the cabinet he noticed that she was barefoot, it was strange seeing her that way. She casually walked around him to put her used glass on the tray sitting on top of a dark wooden table with the other glasses that the cleaning crew needed to wash. As she did he suddenly saw her differently, she was no longer just an aesthetically pleasing fixture during the workday, she was a woman. He noticed her form-fitting gray skirt and pink button-up blouse, he noticed how her clothing hugged every curve of her body without being overly tight. She stopped what she was doing undoubtedly feeling his eyes on her and turned to look at him, he saw that she was not wearing lipstick as she usually did during the day. She turned away and tried to busy herself rearranging the used glasses, he walked up behind her and put his hands on her slender waist. She stopped what she was doing, but didn't turn and didn't try to move away.

"...I always hope that I won't have to be alone with you." She said quietly.

"Why?"

"Because you scare me."

"Do I scare you now?" He slid his hands down her form and rested them on her hips.

She slowly turned to face him. "Not in the way you usually do, this is worse." She rested her forehead on his shoulder for a few moments. "Do you ever feel like you're a bad person for doing the things that you do?"

"Not even once." He answered as he began to undo the buttons of her blouse.

She sighed. "I shouldn't do this."

"There's the door," he said continuing to undo the buttons, "I'm not making you do anything you don't want to do. There are no victims in this scenario."

She closed her eyes and lightly shook her head. "...If she would have been just a couple of minutes later..."

"Then what?" He asked, though he didn't know who she was referring to.

"I'd be home right now."

"But you're here." He gently ran his fingertips over her arms and he saw goose bumps rise on her skin.

"I'm here."

He felt her delicate hands on his face as she pulled him down to meet her lips, he could taste the alcohol in her mouth and it made her even more desirable somehow, more human. It made her real.
He knew she would hate herself for it later, but he didn't care, she knew what she was doing, it wasn't his problem. He pulled away to give her one last chance to change her mind, but she didn't move, she merely looked at him expectantly. He pulled her close and kissed her again. Fully aware of the weight of his actions he took what he wanted and felt no regret.
Jun begins her investigation into Kazuya and the Mishima Zaibatsu.

Lee paced the length of his luxurious Hong Kong hotel room and checked his watch for the fifth time in the past ten minutes. It was nearing eleven p.m. which meant that it was almost midnight in Tokyo and he had not yet been able to reach Sayuri. He called at eight p.m. every night and she always answered promptly, he had just tried calling her again for the fourth time and had just left a second message asking her to call him.

He picked up the ashtray from the desk and decided to smoke outside for a few minutes before trying to reach her again. He stepped out onto the balcony and set the ashtray on the glass top outdoor table then lit a cigarette and took a long, satisfying drag. He exhaled slowly and watched the lights of the city that sprawled all around him while taking in the sounds of traffic and sirens that somehow brought him comfort. He had taken a room on the top floor just as he always did, it helped him remember where he had come from and how far he had come, it helped him remember how hard the fall from the top could be.

As a child barely surviving in the streets of Shanghai he had always wondered how the world looked from the top of a skyscraper. In those days he had been confined to the grime-encrusted alleys surrounded by broken and dirty things, he had looked up at the skyscrapers and wondered how anything could be so clean and beautiful, how it could sparkle and gleam so brightly in the sun. He had seen rich men in suits walk into the glass and steel buildings and had envied them because they were free to ride the elevator to the top, they were free to go anywhere and do anything. In those days he had longed to be like those men because as a child, to him they had seemed happy. The irony of life was that at the young age of twenty-seven he had been one of those men for years and happiness continued to elude him. He was well aware that it was the price of being a Mishima, sacrifice principles, sacrifice scruples and sacrifice happiness if it meant attaining power. Being a Mishima meant seeking power above all else. Sometimes he thought that he didn't have the stomach for it, but there were times when he was surprised by the things that he was willing to do and willing to hide to achieve that power.

It suddenly occurred to him that perhaps he had been happier as a child living in the streets, with his dreams of the future giving him hope and spurring him to continue to fight for survival. There was no fight for survival anymore, all that remained was the fight for supremacy against his brother, it was coming. He was biding his time, waiting for the right conditions... He shook his head, making sure his backup plan was airtight in case things didn't go in his favor. Kazuya wouldn't do that, he didn't have backup plans, he set a goal and he achieved it no matter the cost.

He wasn't like Kazuya, there were some lines he wasn't willing to cross. That was good, he told himself, it was a good sign that he still had some form of moral integrity that would enable him to set the Zaibatsu right with the world. Or maybe it was his so-called moral integrity that was preventing him from attaining power. What a goddamned paradox.

"Pathetic." He spoke the word as exhaled and watched the wispy cloud of smoke dissipate in front of
his eyes.

That was what Heihachi would say if he knew what he was thinking, his chosen heir hesitating when he should pounce. He knew that he shouldn't care about living up to Heihachi's expectations anymore, but the thought of being a disappointment to him still made him feel like an insecure child. He sighed and decided to think about his mother instead, he wondered what she would think if she had lived to see the man he was, would she be disappointed as well? He chuckled as he realized that the only thing that would matter to her was that he was sleeping in a warm bed and eating three meals a day. She would undoubtedly have been thankful to Heihachi for taking him in.

The ringing of the telephone interrupted his train of thought and he quickly put out his cigarette in the ashtray and walked into the room making his way to the bedside table.

"Sayuri?" He asked as he picked up the receiver.

"Were you worried?" Her voice sounded strange, it made him uneasy.

"Of course I was, where have you been?"

"I'm not sorry. " She said harshly. "Amanda Mason came to the office, she had your lighter, the one that you said you lost when you went out for a drink with a friend from college. She seemed very eager to see you again."

He felt his heart sink. "...Sayuri, I'm so, so sorry." He didn't know what else to say. He sat on the edge of the empty, king-size bed and closed his eyes waiting for her to say something.

"...Why?" She asked after a very long pause. "Aren't you attracted to me anymore? Do you think I'm boring?"

"No," he answered quickly, "you know I can't even keep my hands off you at work. It's just... I...I don't know."

"If you asked me that question I could give you an exact answer. " She said in a steady tone.

"Sometimes..." He searched his mind for the answer and gave her the closest version of the truth that he could. "I don't want to bring my anger and frustration with work to you... I just needed an outlet." The other part of the truth was that it was just the way he had always been.

"But we're supposed to be there for each other, we're supposed to comfort and confide in each other. We shouldn't be going to other people to get what we need."

"I know."

"What happened? I thought we were better than this, I knew that things weren't perfect but..." She sighed. "I don't know what to do next?"

She sounded sad, not angry, not accusing, just sad. He didn't know what to say to comfort her, he had known that she would find out one day, but he had not expected it to happen while he was away. He had always envisioned that when she did she would be angry. He could handle anger, he had dealt with it on a daily basis since he had been adopted, even before then, but she sounded defeated, disappointed and he didn't know what to do about that.

"...I don't know either."

"Is this it then?" He felt as if the air was being squeezed out of his lungs as he heard her question.
"Do you want me to move out so that you can live your life the way you want?"

"No, please, Sayuri..." He searched for the right words to say, something, anything that would not make things worse. "You're important to me, I need you." Her silence felt like a weight on his chest. "Please let me fix this."

"...Do you really think we can fix this?" She asked after a long pause, her voice cracking.

Her tone gave him some relief. "Yes, I just need some time. I need to finish this and then get through the tournament and then I'll do anything you want." He sighed. "I'm sorry that we can't have this conversation in person, I'm sorry that I betrayed your trust... I'm... I'm just sorry about everything."

"I miss you."

"I miss you too." He said earnestly. "I wish you could see what I'm doing here. I'm not just doing this for me, I'm doing it for us, for our future." He surprised himself as he heard the words leave his mouth but he knew it was true.

"I know. Will you call me tomorrow?"

"I will."

He felt exhausted after their conversation, but he was going through so many emotions at once that he knew he wouldn't be able to fall asleep. He stepped out onto the balcony again and felt the cool, night breeze on his face. He lit another cigarette and sat on the metal chair contemplating the beauty of the lights all around him. Everything he had told Sayuri was true, he did need her and she was important to him, he knew he didn't love her, not yet, but he told himself that he would. She brought him comfort and stability and she made him feel normal even though he belonged to the most dysfunctional family in Japan.

She understood what he went through working for the Zaibatsu and had supported him in everything he did, he couldn't ask for more. He felt at ease with her, he felt wanted, no one else had ever made him feel that way with the exception of Anna, but there had been no security or stability there. Their relationship had been dysfunctional, volatile, exhilarating... scorching hot. He had trusted Anna too, but with different aspects of himself, he wished that he could meld them both into one woman and immediately shook his head at his own selfish thoughts. He ran a hand through his hair and tried to stop thinking about her because it was Sayuri that he needed to think about, he needed to figure out how to regain her trust. He fixed his gaze on a distant skyscraper, it had lights at the top that were a beautiful shade of blue, the same color as Anna's eyes. He sighed and put out his cigarette, he went back into his room and hoped that he'd be able to sleep.

Sayuri had not been able to sleep all night, the guilt of what she had done weighed too heavily on her mind. She had told Lee that she wasn't sorry, but immediately after she had said it she knew that she was. After she left the Mishima Building she had felt as if she had exacted righteous revenge, but as she put more distance between herself and the building she began to realize the horrible consequences that her actions would bring. She had at first tried to blame it on the fact that she could never really hold her alcohol, or that she had been attracted to her boss for some time, but the fact remained that they were both flimsy excuses and laying blame on anything didn't change what had happened.

She had done it because she was angry and she was hurt, she had wanted to hurt Lee the same way that he had hurt her, but she had crossed the line. Not only had she slept with her boss, which in itself
was wrong, but he was her boyfriend's brother, a brother who hated him and wasted no opportunity to humiliate him and make his life a living hell. She felt her eyes well up with tears again, after speaking with Lee she had not been able to stop crying for hours.

He wanted a future with her, he wanted to fix their relationship, but how could that happen now? Everything was ruined, their relationship, her future with the Zaibatsu and Lee's as well. How could he work with Kazuya day in and day out after he found out? He would throw it in his face at every opportunity. She had to stop Kazuya from telling him, she needed to think of something. She gazed at the clock above the door and saw that it was nearly two o'clock, she felt her heart race and her palms begin to sweat, he was due back from the arena at any moment.

She occupied herself by making a phone call about tournament matters to the Mishima Hotel, as she was speaking to the hotel manager she saw Kazuya enter, he gave her a sidelong glance and made his way into his office. She felt her mouth go dry at the thought of having to speak with him, she quickly and politely finished her phone call then stood up and smoothed down her black skirt.

She gave a start when her phone began to ring, the call was from Kazuya.

"Y-yes, sir?" She stammered as she picked up.

"Cancel the meeting with Jun Kazama and hold all my calls for the next half hour unless it's G-Corporation. I need some peace after dealing with those morons at the arena." He hung up before she could respond.

Sayuri sat down on her chair, the conversation would have to wait. It was disconcerting to see him behave the same way that he always did, like nothing had happened between them. It worried her because his indifference made it all the more difficult to decide how to approach him, but she couldn't leave the office without speaking to him, without working something out so that Lee never found out. The ringing of her telephone once again interrupted her thoughts.

"Mr. Mishima's office, Sayuri speaking."

"This is Mr. Yamaguchi, with G-Corporation, put Kazuya on the phone." A deep male voice said.

"Right away, sir."

She remembered Lee talking about G-Corporation before, she couldn't remember exactly what he had said but she knew that he held a deep dislike for their methods of operation and had not wanted the Zaibatsu to associate with them. She immediately decided to listen in on the conversation. Maybe she could find out something that could be useful to him, she had done it before, she frequently listened in on Kazuya's phone calls. She knew she was grasping at straws, but she needed every bit of help to atone for what she had done. She picked up the receiver and pushed the button that enabled her to hear the conversation.

"...Of course Kenji." Sayuri heard Kazuya's voice.

"And you're certain you'll acquire the services of Dr. Bosconovitch? From what I heard he wasn't keen on working with you or us."

"He isn't, but I can be very persuasive," Kazuya stated. "I will have him soon."

"Very well."

"Anything else?"
"Yes, one thing. I'm worried about that brother of yours, Kazuya, you said he wouldn't be there for much longer, but there are rumors..." Sayuri's body tensed as she heard Yamaguchi's comment.

"What rumors?"

"That he may not share your enthusiasm for research. I understand that not everyone has a favorable opinion about the types of endeavors that G-Corporation undertakes. If our companies are to merge I need to be certain that he is either out of the company completely or that he's on the exact same page that we are. Is that something that you can guarantee?"

"Yes. He will be gone before the merge, he won't be a problem for you at all." It took Sayuri a few moments to comprehend what she had heard.

"Well then, I look forward to a new era of research and discovery. There will be no limit to what we can do once we have your support and expand here in Japan."

"I'll meet with you after the tournament."

"Fine. Call me with a time." Yamaguchi finished hanging up.

Sayuri put down the receiver and shakily stood up, she didn't know how, but she found herself entering Kazuya's office without knocking. She had no plan, she was operating on guilt, regret and lack of sleep.

"Please," she stood in front of his desk, "you can't fire him, the Zaibatsu is everything to him."

Kazuya leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms. "You listened in on my conversation?" He chuckled. "After last night, I guess I shouldn't be surprised, is your goal to betray everyone's trust?"

"He does everything, everything that you ask of him." She said ignoring his comment. "You can't run the Zaibatsu without him, you need him."

He stood up and walked around the desk to stand next to her, Sayuri stepped sideways to put more distance between them. "Two things." He said looking her in the eye. "One, I don't need him and two, I'm not going to simply fire him, I'm going to publicly oust him."

"What do you mean?" She felt the urge to look away from him, the feeling was almost the same as when he was angry, the heaviness around her, it was as if the very air was weighing her down. She wanted to inhale deeply to fill her lungs with oxygen but was afraid to breathe in the fear that gripped her.

"He's been stealing from me." He simply stated. "That's larceny, once I start looking into it who knows what it'll turn into, fraud, embezzlement..."

"...No," she felt exhausted, "he wouldn't do that."

Kazuya smirked seeing the look on her face. "You really don't know, do you?"

He could be right, she realized, Lee was starting his own company, which couldn't be cheap, he had said that he had investors, but that didn't mean that he didn't need money out of his own pocket. But it was difficult to believe that Lee would do such a thing, his goal was to take over the Zaibatsu to set it on the law-abiding path, it would make no sense for him to go against his own moral code.

"What kind of a screwed up relationship do the two of you have?" Kazuya asked her. "He doesn't tell you anything, he's out with a different woman every other weekend, and you, well..." He shook
his head. "The two of you deserve each other."

She took a steadying breath even though it hurt her chest to do so. "What do you mean you're going to publicly oust him?" She asked again.

"What does it sound like?" He asked harshly. "Every newspaper and TV station in Japan will hear about what he's done."

"What proof do you have?" Sayuri found herself raising her voice. "He wouldn't do that!"

He grabbed her roughly by her forearm and pulled her to the back of his desk then pointed to a stack of documents. She looked but couldn't make sense of it, it was columns of numbers and codes that meant nothing to her. "This was brought to my attention this morning, Lee is the only one who has access to these accounts, in his absence, two morons from accounting gained access to them, there is money missing that they can't explain."

"Maybe they're the ones who took it," she tried to reason, "maybe they made a mistake." Lee stealing from the Zaibatsu made less sense the more she thought about it.

"No, I had them triple check everything and they wouldn't steal from me, no one who works for me would dare. He got careless," he said looking intently at her, "he must have full faith in whatever he's doing out of the country."

She was sure Lee wouldn't get careless if he was really stealing from the Zaibatsu. He was too smart, he would know how to cover his tracks especially if he was going to be away. Maybe Kazuya was making it all up, maybe it was his sick way of discrediting him.

"Even if what you say is true," Sayuri did her best to keep her composure, "you can't go to the media with it, it will destroy his reputation, he could end up in prison. He deserves better from you after everything you put him through, every-"

"I owe him nothing!" Kazuya cut her off. "He's the one who should be grateful I gave him a place in the Zaibatsu after he lost the first tournament."

"I won't let you do that to him." She turned to leave.

"You will if you don't want him to know what happened last night in this very office." He threatened. "The way you're defending him makes me think that you want to try to salvage this failed experiment you call a relationship."

She stopped and turned to face him once more. "Why do you do this?" She felt the beginning of a pounding headache. "Why can't you just fire him and be done with it instead of ruining him? Why do like to see him suffer?"

"Why do you?" He stood in front of her, the sight of his much larger frame forced her to take a step back. "You're the one who betrayed him with his own brother, I'm just defending my company."

She closed her eyes as she felt her hands begin to shake. "Please don't tell him." She said quietly.

"You don't really think things through, do you?" He looked condescendingly at her. "I'm guessing that you either found out that he's not faithful to you or it happened one too many times and you decided that you wanted revenge."

"Yes." She cast down her eyes.
"Then why don't you want him to know? It can't be revenge if he never knows it happened. What changed your mind?"

"I'm not going to explain myself to you." She said feeling a flicker of courage which was quickly extinguished.

"Then don't. It doesn't matter, I can see right through you, you're nothing but an impulsive coward, you have no conviction. If you had the decency to face the consequences of your actions I might have a modicum of respect for you."

Every word he said stung. "I don't care what you think of me," she felt tears well up in her eyes, "I'm just asking you, to keep this between us...please."

"If I do this for you," he began as he crossed his arms, "what will I get in return."

"I don't know," she said feeling defeated, "what do you want?"

"I don't know yet," he furrowed his brow, "for now I just want you to promise that you won't tell him what you know."

She sighed heavily. "I won't tell him."

He scoffed. "What a shock."

"When are you going to do it?" She asked gently wiping away the tears that had started to roll down her face.

"After the tournament." He said casually as he walked back to his desk. "Disgraced in the arena and disgraced professionally, but at least he'll have you to comfort him." He sat in his chair. "I'm sure you have a lot of work that you need to finish." He said dismissing her. "And stop listening in on my goddamned phone calls."

Sayuri walked out of the office feeling defeated and ashamed, disappointed in herself for not properly defending Lee, for thoroughly betraying him. She had the urge to call him immediately and tell him what Kazuya was planning, that he believed that Lee was stealing from the Zaibatsu, but realized that she couldn't do anything. She felt a painful tightness in her throat and her eyes began to fill with tears again. She gasped when she saw a young woman standing in front of her desk. She had a kind, pretty face and was looking at her with genuine concern in her eyes.

"Are you all right?" She asked lightly furrowing her brow. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to surprise you."

"You must be Miss Kazama." Sayuri tried to smile through her tears and somber thoughts.

"Yes." She looked from Sayuri to Kazuya's door. "You seem upset, is there anything that I can help you with?"

"Oh, no, I'm fine." She lied.

Jun Kazama gave her a comforting smile. "Sometimes just stepping out of the office for a minute helps, it does for me anyway."

Sayuri was taken aback by her kindness, she breathed deeply and forced herself to behave professionally. "Thank you for your concern," she smiled, "I'm sure you know about the King of Iron Fist Tournament." Jun nodded. "We're understaffed in the office and there is what seems to be an infinite amount of preparations to finish. It's a very high-stress environment at the moment, but
everything will be back to normal after it's over." She smiled reassuringly. "Again, thank you for your concern, I will feel better after I get some sleep tonight."

"Of course," Jun said.

"Let me call Mr. Mishima to let him know that you're here."

She knew Kazuya wouldn't be happy and hoped that her oversight wouldn't make things worse. She picked up the receiver and pressed the button that would connect her to Kazuya's phone.

"Miss Kazama is here, sir."

"Is this a joke?" He almost growled.

"No, sir."

"You forgot to cancel, didn't you? Or are you deliberately defying me?"

"Yes, and no, of course not."

She heard him inhale deeply. "Fine, send her in."

She hung up and smiled at Jun. "If you would follow me."

"Thank you," Jun said as she walked behind her, "may I ask your name?"

"Sayuri Yoshida."

"How long have you been working for Mr. Mishima?"

"Nearly a year."

"Do you mind if I ask."

"I'm sorry, Miss Kazama," Sayuri said her as they stopped in front of the door, "Mr. Mishima is ready for you, it's best not to keep him waiting."

"Is he really as bad as they say?" Jun gave her a quizzical look, but she sounded curious, not afraid. Sayuri smiled nervously not knowing what to say, she opened the door and motioned her inside.

"Thank you." Jun smiled again.

"You're welcome, Miss Kazama," Sayuri said then closed the door and returned to her desk hoping that Kazuya wouldn't take his anger out on the kind, young woman.

"God damn that woman and her stupidity," Kazuya muttered under his breath. "She's going to end up being more trouble than she was worth."

Not necessarily, Devil put in, her guilt has proven valuable in your plan against your thieving brother, she will be useful in other situations as well.

I hope you're right because there is only so much incompetence and insubordination I can put up with.
She will be useful, another weapon in our arsenal.

They were interrupted by the opening of the door, he saw Sayuri step aside to let a young woman enter.

She was beautiful, tall and thin with perfect Japanese features and a smile that seemed to brighten the room. She wore black cropped pants and a white sleeveless top.

"Hello," her dark, shoulder-length hair framed her slender face around her white headband as she bowed, "my name is Jun Kazama, I work for the WWWC, thank you for finally meeting with me."

"...I..." For the first time in many years, he found himself at a loss for words but recovered quickly. "What is it that you wanted to meet about?"

"May I have a seat, Mr. Mishima?" Jun asked.

He suddenly didn't want her in that office, the memory of Sayuri still very fresh in his mind, he felt almost ashamed.

"You can call me Kazuya," he said surprising himself, "this is not a good time to be in my office, if you prefer we can have the meeting in the cafeteria downstairs."

"Oh," she seemed taken aback, "of course, Kazuya."

He stood up and walked toward the door. "This way, please."

Please? Devil laughed. Send the woman away, you don't need any distractions.

Doing his best to ignore Devil he made his way out of his office followed closely by Jun. He saw the look of surprise on Sayuri's face when they walked through the office.

"I'll be back in time for the three-thirty meeting."

Jun followed him quietly down the hallway and into the elevator. They encountered few employees, but the ones that found themselves in the hallway with him bowed and gave him a wide breadth. As the elevator doors closed he again found himself at a loss for words.

"Your building is very modern." Jun finally said. "I'm still trying to get used to life in Tokyo, I must admit it's a little overwhelming sometimes."

"You aren't from here?"

"No," she smiled, "I'm from Yakushima originally."

The elevator doors opened and they made their way to the cafeteria.

Aren't you the gentleman? Devil teased as Kazuya held the door open for her.

The cafeteria was nearly empty save for the employees behind the counter and a few people on their breaks. Kazuya walked to an empty table near the back and took a seat as Jun did the same. She took a notepad and pen out of her purse.

"What is it that you wanted to talk about?" He asked glancing at his watch.

"We at the World Wildlife Welfare and Conservation Agency-"
"That's a mouthful," Kazuya said speaking over her.

Jun continued unfazed. "We strive to maintain the safety and fair treatment of animals all around the globe-"

"That seems like a noble, but fruitless and misguided task." Kazuya interrupted again.

"Hmm." Jun smiled as she tapped her pen on the notepad. "The animals we've helped don't think so."

He leaned back in his chair feeling somewhat annoyed. "Miss Kazama-"

"Jun."

"Jun. Why don't we cut through all the formalities and you tell me exactly what you want out of this meeting."

"Very well." She sat up straight. "You paid to have three kangaroos transported from Australia to Japan nine months ago. Why?"

He crossed his arms and smirked. "Australia has too many and Japan doesn't have enough, I'm only looking to spread a little equality."

"I see no humor in this, Mr. Mishima." She said sounding unimpressed. "Would you kindly answer my question."

Kazuya sighed, he was torn between feeling irritated or intrigued by her. "The Kyoto Zoo asked for my help in bringing in kangaroos for their Australian habitat exhibit, I decided to help."

"Yes, they did receive two kangaroos, but what happened to the third?" There was a hint of accusation in her voice that he didn't like.

Of course, she was right to suspect that the Zaibatsu had something to do with the animal's disappearance, it was going through experiments and enhancements in his genetics lab at that very moment. He had hoped it would be ready before the tournament so that he could test his new weapon against real fighters but he had not yet been able to acquire the services of a certain scientist and was now behind schedule.

"Exactly what are you accusing me of, Jun." She was beginning to test his patience, one more insolent question and not even her charm would save her from his wrath.

"Nothing, I didn't come here making accusations, I'm simply looking for answers." She looked into his eyes. "What happened to the third kangaroo, Kazuya?"

"I don't know," he answered despite himself, "I didn't personally transport them here. Perhaps you should ask those who did." He glared at her. "We are done here. I know nothing about a missing kangaroo."

She held his gaze. "Very well," she smiled, "let's move on."

He furrowed his brow. "I said we were done."

"What do you know about lizards?" She questioned.

"What do I-" He shook his head in disbelief. "Miss Kazama, do I look like someone who knows anything about lizards?"
"I make it a point not to judge by appearances." She shrugged. "You own several laboratory facilities, is that correct?"

"Yes."

"May I inquire as to-"

"Not without a warrant." He said straightening up in his chair.

"I understand." She mirrored his pose. "What about the tournament? May I ask about that?"

"To what end?" He didn't know why he was answering her questions, normally he would already have had her escorted out of the building.

"I'd like to know about your sponsors." She said as she quickly scribbled something on her notepad.

"Why?" It was her attitude, he realized she behaved casually around him, as it happened so rarely he found it somewhat captivating.

"I'm concerned about the impact some of them have on the environment."

"You live in Tokyo, don't you think that just by doing that you're impacting the environment yourself?"

"Yes, I'm aware, but-"

"And I'm certain that some of those sponsors make very generous and unsolicited donations to your agency. Isn't that what they call biting the hand that feeds?" Captivating or not he wasn't going to let her get away with that bit of hypocrisy.

She looked somewhat affronted. "When that happens to be the case we immediately cut ties with them. And there's no need to get defensive, I didn't say I was going to do anything against them, all I want is to know who they are and what they do."

"I have to be in my office in ten minutes," he said realizing that their meeting had taken much longer than the allotted time. "I have to leave."

"There's still more I need to ask, can I come by tomorrow?"

"No. I'm going to be at the arena all day." He pushed his chair away from the table suddenly feeling rushed, he didn't like being late, it was a form of weakness and poor planning in his eyes.

"Oh, that works," Jun said cheerfully as she scribbled in her notepad again. "Do I need a special pass to get in?"

"...No..." He stopped as he was about to stand. "I didn't say you could go." He said furrowing his brow.

"I know your time is valuable and mine is too," Jun put her pen and notepad back in her purse, "I won't rest until I get answers to all my questions, so just to make things easier on us both I'll come to see you at the arena tomorrow." She smiled as she stood up. "Thank you for your time." She said as she left.

He watched her as she walked toward the exit knowing that he should be angry, that he should be calling security to let them know that she was banned from the premises but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Her nerve and persistence were certainly admirable. He found himself looking forward to
seeing her at the arena, it was somehow refreshing to interact with someone who didn't seem intimidated by him. She is...different.

She is not, all women are the same, at that moment Kazuya realized that Devil had been quiet through their entire conversation, they scheme and lie to get what they want. She is no different, she wants something from you and you're letting her invite herself into your life.

Answering a few questions to get her off my back is hardly what I would call inviting her into my life.

When you find yourself caught in her web don't say I didn't warn you.

You've been saying that too much lately. Kazuya made his way out of the cafeteria and into the elevator.

Because it is the truth.

Be that as it may, I'm growing tired of your redundancy. Now leave me be, this meeting is important.

As is my warning, redundant or not.

He felt Devil grow quiet as he exited the elevator, his mood felt lighter somehow. He found himself looking forward to seeing the finished fighting arena, to seeing the fighters compete, to having the world witness the greatest sporting event of the century.

It had not been as difficult as most would think for Jun to invite herself to the arena. Having the ability to sense Kazuya's mood had given her an advantage that many would call unfair, she however, called it necessary. After having met him she found herself wondering how anyone was able to work for him without having a nervous breakdown every so often. In hindsight, she was glad that interviewing Kazuya Mishima had been her assignment. No one else in the office would have been able to do it and in the end, it would have been passed down the line from Noriko to Jiro and from Jiro to Megumi, then from Megumi to Jun. Noriko would have spent the entire interview worrying about Kazuya's secretary and fumbling the questions, Jiro would have called in sick because he hated confrontation and Megumi who was only a few years older than Jun would have been crying before the interview started.

Jun had been troubled by what she saw when she first entered the office; Kazuya's secretary in tears. The woman had been absolutely distraught, she had been enveloped in so much regret and fear that it was a wonder she was able to function at all. She was stronger than she seemed, Jun had wanted to tell her but decided against it. She had learned from a young age that most people preferred not to hear that she knew what they were feeling as most of the time it was something they were trying to hide.

Jun stepped out of the bus onto the sidewalk less than a block from the stadium that was being transformed into a fighting arena. It was unmistakable in the distance, a large steel and concrete ring that took up block upon city block of space, nestled among businesses and office buildings. As she walked toward the stadium she tried to make eye contact with the passersby who were weighed down by their worries and emotions. It was something her mother had taught her, she had told her when she was a little girl that sometimes all a person needed was a warm, genuine smile to change the course of their day. She had heard friends and acquaintances from small towns and smaller cities say that people from Tokyo were too cold and too aloof, that they didn't appreciate a 'hello' or a kind gesture. In Jun's experience, however, people were people no matter where they lived and more often than not she found that they smiled in return or thanked her for her help the same as someone from a small town would.
When she arrived at the stadium gate she was stopped by a man in his mid-thirties who at first glance she assumed was a security guard as he was wearing a dark-colored uniform. When she noticed the gun holstered at his hip she looked for the badge that would identify him as a police officer but found none, instead, she saw the Mishima Zaibatsu insignia sewn onto his left shirt pocket.

It seemed that Kazuya Mishima had his own private security. It was to be expected, she realized, he was a very powerful man who no doubt had many enemies. She was suddenly aware of the strange presence that she had felt over the past two days, it was somewhat intrusive, almost as if someone were tapping her on the shoulder. She decided to shrug it off again because she would need her full concentration to get through her second meeting with Kazuya.

"Hello," she smiled at the security officer, "I'm here to see Kazuya Mishima, I'm Jun Kazama."

"Oh." The cloud of boredom that had been surrounding the guard quickly dissipated and was replaced by dread. He signaled to a second, younger man inside a booth behind him that was wearing the same uniform, the man had a clipboard with him. They took her identification card and each double checked it, then the older man stepped into the booth and made a brief phone call. "You'll find him at the center of the stadium, Miss Kazama." He said as he returned her ID.

"Thank you." She smiled noticing that the mood of both men had changed from dread to relief.

Jun had never set foot in a real sports stadium, after walking through the gate she stopped to admire the sight before her. The stadium was a huge oval-shaped bowl said to have the capacity to seat more than one-hundred-thousand spectators. It was ringed by row upon row of seats that went higher and higher up, the glare from the sun forced her to squint her eyes, then look away altogether before she was able to see the top tier.

There were dozens of men and women removing the green, artificial turf and adhering logos and signs to the field wall. There was excitement all around her, people were taking pride in the work that they were doing, it was infectious, surely not even Kazuya Mishima could be in a sullen mood being around all that positivity.

She spotted him in the distance, in the center of the stadium just as the guard had said. He was wearing black trousers and a light-gray shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He was talking to a tall, black man who she assumed was American, he had his hair in the style of a mohawk and was dressed much more casually in jeans and a tank top.

She noticed that the foreigner seemed comfortable around Kazuya, not only that but he was bored, it was unexpected. She stopped and focused on the man, she shook her head slightly as she sensed it, there was a partnership between them, mutual respect and a shared darkness about them. *They're both criminals.* At that moment it was as if her gaze was pulled toward Kazuya, she focused on him and felt the same thing that she had sensed when she first saw him. The darkness surrounding the foreigner was nothing compared to what enveloped Kazuya Mishima. At that exact moment he turned and saw her, she took a steadying breath and smiled as she walked toward him. He looked irritated at the sight of her but she noticed that his mood lightened slightly, sensing this made her heart skip a beat.

She stopped a few feet from him, he was standing next to a large square about thirty feet by thirty feet that was made from what seemed to be slabs of stone.

"Good afternoon, Kazuya." She greeted politely.

"You arrived later than I expected." He said shortly.
"We didn't agree on a time and I had work to do at the office." She looked from Kazuya to his companion just as the man looked from her to Kazuya. *How rude, he's not even introducing us.* She could sense the man's uncertainty. "Hello, I'm Jun Kazama." She said offering her hand.

"Bruce Irvin." The man said as he shook her hand with a very firm grip.

"Do you work with Kazuya?" She asked.

Bruce opened his mouth to speak but Kazuya answered for him. "He works for me." He said. "And you're not going to interrogate him."

"I wasn't planning to," Jun defended, "I'm only trying to make polite conversation."

"There's no need." Kazuya countered.

"I should head back to the building." Bruce said in somewhat accented Japanese and turned to leave without waiting for acknowledgment.

"Is your kangaroo still missing." Kazuya asked indifferently as he eyed the men working on the stone square.

"Still, and I assume you still know nothing about it."

"Still nothing."

He opened a binder and began to look through it.

It was unnerving, Jun didn't know if he was telling the truth or if deceit was such a natural part of him that it didn't allow her to sense anything. His mood and his focus had not changed at all. She would need to try a different approach.

"So this is where men and women are going to beat each other into unconsciousness?" She asked gesturing to the stone square. Kazuya nodded without looking up from his binder. "That's going to hurt."

"It's a good incentive to not get knocked down."

"I can't argue with that," Jun said walking toward it. "May I have a closer look?"

"Just don't stand on it, it's not ready yet."

Jun was about to argue that she had not intended to stand on it but decided against it. She walked to the edge and regarded what was set to be the fighting ground.

The square was composed of rectangular pieces that were a combination of gray, black and rust colored stones, with the removal of the green turf and with the earth exposed it gave the stadium floor a sort of ancient feel. Just like the Romans, Jun thought, except this time it's breadless circuses, she had heard that lately, Kazuya had stopped aiding several charities that his father had generously given to in the past, it was not sitting well with the public.

There were two men wearing surgical booties over their heavy work boots crouched in the center of the square. They were assembling a black and white design in the center that took up about a quarter of the area. She leaned forward to get a closer look, it was a three-pronged shuriken imposed over a shield and surrounded by two in-turned feathers; the Mishima Zaibatsu insignia.

"It's beautiful." Jun complimented the two workers who nodded in acknowledgment.

"Here." She looked over her shoulder and saw Kazuya handing her a sheet of paper. "The sponsors
for the tournament."

"Thank you." She said as she took it and began to read the list.

"As you can see there are no kangaroo kidnappers."

She looked up at him and raised an eyebrow. "Are you mocking me?" She asked calmly.

"That's what you were thinking, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"That my sponsors would be drug dealers and terrorists."

"I admit that I expected more rainforest demolishers and less sporting goods manufacturers." She answered truthfully.

He sighed heavily. "What do you want from me? What do I have to do to get you and your agency off my back?"

He seemed troubled all of the sudden, she could feel the darkness encroaching on him. She suddenly felt a pang of sadness, she could see that he was being slowly overcome by something sinister and she felt the urge to help, to reach out to him.

"You know what?" She said breathing in deeply. "I think I've earned the rest of the day off, honestly I do more work than the three of my coworkers combined anyway."

He gave her a confused look. "You're leaving then?"

"Do you mind if I just stay until your day is finished?"

He looked uncertain. "Doing what?"

She shrugged and smiled. "Whatever needs doing." She looked around and saw two young women who were having trouble pulling a large box toward the field wall. "Helping them for instance."

"If you want to." He said going back to looking in his binder.

"Thank you." She said cheerfully as she walked toward the two girls noticing that the darkness around him had dissipated slightly. She wanted to help him, she truly did, whatever was attached to him was evil and taking over him slowly, eating at his soul. It was wrong, she didn't know if Kazuya had invited it or if it had attached itself to him on its own, but whatever the reason she felt that it was her responsibility to at least try to help him get rid of it. For his own good, and the good of those around him.

As the workday was coming to a close Kazuya watched from the stands as the stadium was one day closer to being completed. The two new, giant screens needed to be installed the next day, after that, only small finishing touches remained; then the tournament would begin. Fighters from all over the globe had already signed up, but he was still waiting to see Heihachi’s name on the roster.

**He will register on time, he is the guest of honor after all.** Devil reminded him.

*I don't want to think about him, I already know that.*

"What are you looking at?" He was surprised to see Jun Kazama standing next to him.
That's it, isn't it? Devil teased. What you really want to think about.

"Everything," He answered as he tried to ignore Devil.

"Did I tell you this is my first time in a real stadium."

"No."

"I always wondered how everything looks from the top row." She said turning toward the steps.

"Small."

"Do you mind if I see for myself?"

**Disgusting**, Devil hissed, **I told you she's trying to invite herself into your life.**

*Shut up.*

"Be my guest." He gestured upward.

"Come with me." She said as she smiled at him.

"Why?" He asked thoroughly surprised.

**Because she's trying to invite herself into your life.**

"Because I'll feel silly if I go by myself." She said clasping her hands behind her back.

"Then don't go." He said shortly.

"Don't you want to see how it looks from up there?" She insisted. "It might give you a better idea of what else needs to be done."

"Hmph." It was a valid point. "I suppose."

Without hesitation, she walked toward the steps.

"So what do you do with your free time?" She asked as she waited for him to catch up.

"I don't have any."

"You must have some, don't tell me all you do is work."

"Don't you?" He asked looking at his watch.

"It's not healthy." She shrugged. "What do you do for fun then?"

"I'm not a child." He said screwing up his face in disgust.

"Neither am I, but I like to have fun."

"Doing what?"

**Stop behaving like a teenager!** Devil demanded. **Stop wasting your time.**

*Leave me alone!*
"I like to go hiking, bird watching, you know," she said as they continued to climb the steps, "all the things you can't do in the city, so I've been reading a lot."

They were silent as the walked the rest of the steps, he was grateful that Devil was quiet too. He seemed hostile toward Jun, it was a feeling more than anything he said, he retreated too easily, it was strange, but he wasn't about to complain. As useful as Devil was sometimes he could be infuriating and bothersome. He watched her out of the corner of his eye as they continued, her demeanor remained friendly and calm, she didn't seem intimidated or rushed, it was different, not at all unpleasant. He wondered if Devil was right, if she was trying to invite herself into his life, to get close to him somehow to get what she wanted, if she was trying to trick him into incriminating himself.

"Here we are."

Jun's voice interrupted his thoughts, he was surprised to see a wall in front of him. He turned toward the stadium and took in the sight before him. The workers were moving about quickly putting away supplies and tools, he could see men fencing off the square in the center.

"They look like ants." He mused.

"They're not, they're people," Jun said thoughtfully with a look of fondness and concentration on her face. "They all have their worries and joys and they all want to finish their work so they can go home. Some genuinely enjoy their job, but most are here because it pays well. The one thing they all have in common is that they want to be part of this tournament, they want to tell their loved ones and their friends that they had a hand in staging this great event." She turned to look at him, the sun's waning rays made her face look soft around the ages, it gave her an ethereal glow. "They are not ants, they're human beings." She finished.

Coming from anyone else it would have sounded trite and contrived, but she said it so earnestly and naturally that it didn't irritate him as something of the sort usually would. As he looked at her he felt his heart race and he knew it was not from having climbed all those steps; his body didn't feel tired, he somehow felt light. He felt the urge to take her hand but willed himself to resist. As he looked down at the arena he felt a twinge of something, pride he thought, he was going to show the world an event that it would never forget. They watched together as the workers filed out of the stadium at the end of their workday. He looked at Jun and saw that she had a serene expression on her beautiful face. As he watched the sun sink below the horizon and the shadows fall over the giant empty bowl beneath them he was glad that he had joined her.
It happened fast, incredibly fast. Jun didn't know if it had taken minutes, seconds or hours but it had happened much more quickly than she ever thought it would. What the *it* was she couldn't even explain, the best way that she could describe it was a sense of excitement that made her heart race and lightened her mood. As far as she knew, and what she had always speculated, was that it should take a considerably longer amount of time, months, years perhaps for whatever it was to develop.

Jun felt strange, it was almost the same feeling that she had when she was a teenager and her friends had dragged her to watch one of those romantic comedies that she detested. One of those stupid movies with a contrived story and unlikely coincidences. The problem was that she couldn't mock the silly plot or the bad acting because this time she was at the center of the story. She was the one sitting in her tiny, cluttered office wondering what Kazuya Mishima was doing at that very moment and it had nothing to do with the file that was tucked away in a drawer.

She hoped that he was not making his secretary cry or calling for some near extinct animal to be smuggled out of its home and into one of his labs because that would be completely disappointing. What scared her was the knowledge that though disappointing, those negative actions would not diminish the amount of time she had him in her thoughts.

She pictured him in the arena making sure that every detail was to his liking, she chose to believe that it was where he was at that very moment. She closed her eyes and began to spin in her squeaky office chair and was suddenly overcome by a sense of urgency, hoping wasn't enough, she needed to know where he was and what he was doing. Without thinking twice about it, she picked up the phone and dialed the number to the reception desk at the Mishima Zaibatsu, she had called so many times that it was now etched in her memory.

As she waited for the receptionist to connect her to Kazuya's secretary she turned to the wall and fixed her eyes on a poster, it was a picture of a tiger lounging next to a hand-drawn dodo bird with the caption, 'Don't let this be my story.' She hated that poster, there was no sense of urgency on the tiger's face at all.

"*Mr. Mishima's office, Sayuri speaking.*"

"Oh, um, hello." She said sitting up straight in her chair. "This is Jun Kazama, I was just wondering if Ka- If Mr. Mishima is at the arena today."

"*Hello, Miss Kazama...Wait one moment please.*" She heard Sayuri say, she sounded in good spirits, that was a good sign. "*Miss Kazama?*

"Yes?"
"I'm transferring you to his office right now."

"Wait!" She had not expected him to be there and was suddenly feeling thoroughly unprepared. "I just wanted to know if he was at the arena."

"He was walking into the office when he heard me say your name and asked me to transfer you." She explained. "I'm going to do that before he gets impatient."

She heard a soft click and began to feel her heart race. "What do you need?" She heard Kazuya's deep voice.

It was difficult to tell if he sounded angry or if he was merely being impatient. She preferred speaking to people face to face, sensing their moods and emotions always gave her an advantage that she didn't have over the phone, it made her feel insecure.

"I just wanted to know if you were at the arena today." She confessed.

"I was." Came his short reply.

"Oh, um, I just wanted to know how everything is going."

"Why?"

"Because I helped, so I'm part of it now, I need to know."

"I'm too busy to get into that at the moment."

"Can you meet me after work?" She asked quickly as she felt her cheeks flush red.

"Where?" He asked without hesitation.

"Away from the building, there's a little place nearby."

"Give Sayuri the details." She heard a soft click and the conversation was over.

She felt awkward as she spoke with his secretary, all she needed to tell her was that she would meet him in the lobby of the Mishima Building, she wished that he would have let her get one more sentence in. She looked at the clock above Noriko's desk and saw that the lunch hour was nearly over, her three coworkers would be walking in any minute. Four more hours, she told herself, willing the clock to go faster partially because she wanted to see Kazuya and partially because she wanted to leave the office.

Her coworkers, particularly Megumi, had bombarded her with questions in the morning about what Kazuya Mishima was like and if she thought that he was guilty of all the crimes on the list. She had not known what to tell them except that she didn't know because he was being uncooperative, which was half of the truth, the other half was that she had been so focused on what she'd discovered about him that she had decided to halt her investigation for the time being. What she wanted to do first was learn about the dark energy, entity perhaps, that was attached to him. She obviously wanted to learn about him, was interested in him, but before she could proceed with her assignment and before she could sort out her personal feelings for him she needed to know what she was dealing with and how she could help him.

She spent the next four hours looking at the clock and writing backlogged reports about past assignments and dodging even more questions from Megumi; the day seemed interminable. When the clock finally struck five she quickly gathered her belongings.
"You're off already?" Noriko asked surprised, it was rather unusual for Jun to leave before her coworkers.

"Yes, I'm meeting someone," Jun said eager to leave.

"A boy?" Noriko smiled as she asked.

Jun nodded lightly as she eyed her other two coworkers at their desk. She liked Noriko, she was annoying at times, but in a motherly sort of way, something that Jun didn't mind.

"Who?" Noriko asked quietly clasping her hands in front of her chest.

"Kazuya Mishima." Jun's voice was barely above a whisper.

Noriko gaped at her then smiled again. "Go then, girl," she whispered motioning toward the door, "go."

Jun wasted no more time and exited the building. She speed-walked to the metro station and when she found the entrance she quickly descended the stairs and squeezed through the throng of people pushing her way into the subway car. When she reached the appropriate stop she once again pushed herself through her fellow passengers and rushed up the stairs and into the bustling street.

The Mishima Building was a short distance away, she reached it quickly and stopped in front of it, it was not an architectural marvel by any means, but it was one of the tallest office building in the city, all black steel and concrete with rectangular windows that didn't make the building stand out from others. What made it different from all the other office buildings was the Mishima Zaibatsu insignia above the entrance, that was enough.

Jun entered the foyer and as always she was stopped by one of two armed security guards dressed in a uniform that consisted of black trousers and a white long-sleeved shirt. He asked for her purpose and identification then checked his clipboard and let her into the lobby.

Inside it was all marble and polished wood in different shades of taupe and white which should have made the entire area seem boring and barren but it was so expertly decorated that it gave off an understated elegance. The reception desk was empty as it was after office hours so Jun settled herself on one of the brown, leather couches to wait.

Minutes later she felt her heart race as she saw Kazuya emerge from one of the elevators wearing a dark-gray suit. He checked his watch and walked toward her with his brow furrowed and his mouth tight, however, his anger wasn't directed at her. She felt the darkness around him intensify and saw him inhale deeply, she felt a twinge of anger at the thing but outwardly smiled at Kazuya as she stood up and smoothed down her white sweater.

"Hello." She said as he stopped in front of her.

"Were you waiting long?" There was an air of indifference in his tone.

"No, only a few minutes."

"Where are we going?"

"To a little place nearby, I know it's too early for dinner, but maybe we can just have some tea." She felt a tiny sense of triumph as the darkness around him dissipated slightly. "It's a few minutes away, we can walk if you don't mind."
"Lead the way." He said motioning toward the exit.

The guards bowed deeply to him as they exited but Kazuya paid them no mind. She led him two blocks behind the Mishima Building and into the narrower streets. They walked in silence by the little shops, food carts and cafes for a few minutes, Jun was pleased to see that the further they walked the lighter his mood became. They wove through the passersby for a few more minutes until she stopped at a little restaurant in a corner.

"Here we are." She gestured toward the door.

"Why here?" Kazuya asked. "I'm sure there are better places closer to the office buildings."

"I like to support small businesses." His question annoyed her somewhat. "Where I come from every business is a small business, it's sad to come here and see so many of them fail because people prefer the well established, brightly-lit venues."

"Maybe they should invest in better lighting," Kazuya smirked.

Jun gestured to the entrance again, he sighed and walked to the door pulling it open for her then walked in behind her. She had been there only once before, there were only a few tables and no booths, the place was very clean but the decorations were obviously old and most were tacky and cutesy, there were only two other patrons. An older woman wearing a spotless white apron approached them and seated them next to the window. Jun ordered tea for both of them as well as sweet mochi rice cakes when her stomach reminded her that she had skipped lunch. All the while Kazuya looked like he wanted to be somewhere else but his mood seemed lighter than before.

"So how was the workday today?" Jun asked as she folded her arms on the tabletop.

"Same as always."

"I've never seen you at work, so I don't know what always is like."

"Busy."

"With what?"

He sighed. "How can you stand this?"

"What?"

"All this small talk." He seemed genuinely irritated.

She sat up straight in her chair. "That's how conversations between people who don't know each other start, or do you want me to ask hard-hitting questions?" She finished somewhat irritated herself.

"What do you mean?" He folded his arms over his chest. "Is this work-related?"

"No," she answered quickly, "not at all. I really want to learn more about...the arena." She felt her cheeks flush at her own flimsy explanation.

"It's almost done." He said relaxing somewhat, but didn't elaborate and they were enveloped by an uncomfortable silence.

"Tell me a story," Jun said suddenly, hoping to start a real conversation.

"About what?"
"You."

He shook his head. "I don't have any." She quickly sensed an uncertainty in him.

"About your family then."

"No."

"I hear you have a brother," she was beginning to feel nervous and uncertain herself, "I have one too."

"I don't want to think about him." The darkness around him became more prevalent.

_So...Do not ask about his family._ "Fine," Jun shrugged, "you've forced me to tell a story."

"Please."

She inhaled then exhaled slowly. "There are these posters tacked to the wall of my office, they show animals in captivity... I think I hate those posters because I feel trapped like those animals in my tiny office."

Kazuya looked like he was waiting for her to continue. "That's a statement, not a story." He said when she didn't elaborate.

Jun suddenly felt flustered. "I'm kind of nervous, so it's all I could come up with."

"Why are you nervous?"

To her relief, they were interrupted by the server arriving with their order. She set a cup in front of each of them and a white, ceramic teapot at the edge of the table then the mochi between them along with plates and chopsticks. Jun thanked her and the woman bowed, before leaving.

Jun poured tea for both of them and silently took a sip of the steaming liquid, it burned her tongue and throat, but she tried to ignore it and hoped that Kazuya hadn't noticed. She unwrapped her chopsticks and put one of the rice buns on her plate.

"I hope you don't mind," she said looking at him, "I skipped lunch." He nodded, she took as small, delicate bite and tried to savor the sweet taste on her scalded tongue as Kazuya sipped his tea. "This almost tastes like the ones my mother used to make. She always made them on Sundays," Jun said as she felt her heart fill with nostalgia, "she would let me help with grinding the flour on the grain mill. At the time I thought that she was trusting me with the most important job but later I realized that she had me do it because it was the part that she hated the most." She saw that he was looking at her with interest. "What I really wanted to do was mix the sugar and the spices, but she never let me, I've always been terrible at measuring ingredients without instruments."

"Do you resent her for it?"

She was somewhat taken aback by his question. "...No. She worked very hard every day, I can't blame her for passing off a chore that she didn't like." She felt sad for him, that he would think someone would resent a parent over such a petty and insignificant thing. _It must be how he grew up._

He seemed deep in thought as he sipped his tea. She felt the darkness encroaching on him again and knew that she didn't have much time before he decided to leave. A feeling of urgency came over her, it was strong and she knew from experience that it was best to heed the feeling. She felt the need to ask a question, it came to her suddenly, out of nowhere and she knew it was important to her...
"Why are you organizing the tournament?" She asked looking into his eyes.

"I want the best fighters from around the world-"

"Tell me the real version," she interrupted, "not what you're telling the media." There was a clarity surrounding her statement, all other thoughts seemed blurry, his answer mattered, but she didn't know why.

He looked intently at her. "I thought this wasn't work-related."

"It isn't." She said truthfully and calmly.

He regarded her for a moment, she felt the air around them grow heavy, the darkness around him intensified and it began to spread throughout the small establishment. She could feel the mood of the two other patrons begin to darken as well.

"You won't like it." He warned.

"I already know that," Jun said as she felt her chest tighten.

"Then why are you asking?" His voice was so low that she could barely hear it.

She felt the heaviness press down on her and she balled her hands into fists under the table hoping that her demeanor remained unreadable, that her uneasiness didn't show. "Sometimes...if you hear yourself talk about something that you're going to do...that you might regret...just hearing it out loud changes your mind." She said, willing herself to breathe evenly.

Kazuya leaned back in his chair casually. "To rid myself of my father, my brother too, I don't like to leave loose ends." It chilled her to hear him say it so nonchalantly. He chuckled slightly. "I said it out loud and I'm not changing my mind."

"How are you going to do that?" She asked as she felt her heartbeat accelerate, logic told her that she didn't want to know, but her intuition told her that the knowledge was essential.

He didn't answer, he took his wallet out of his back pocket, opened it and extracted a couple of yen notes then left them on the table. He walked toward the exit without looking at her, she could tell that he was battling with the darkness, was trying to maintain control and knew it was best to let him go for the time being. She sat alone for a long while trying to think of a way to help him before heading to the nearest bus stop.

Kazuya exited the restaurant and briskly walked down the narrow streets in the direction of the Mishima Building bumping into pedestrians as he went, though he didn't notice them. Devil was more restless than he had been in months, he thought that he had him under control but Jun's questions had set him off. During their previous encounters he had remained mostly quiet but upon knowing that he was going to meet with her again he had wasted no time in expressing his displeasure.

I told you she was a liar. Devil admonished. She brought you here through deception, with ill intent. She wants you to incriminate yourself.

She said it wasn't work-related.
And you believed her like a little boy believes a stranger with candy.

Kazuya stopped at the edge of the sidewalk realizing that he was on the street of the Mishima Building and turned left toward it.

*It wasn't work-related.* He insisted.

She's instigating, probing, hoping that something she says or asks will cause you to confess a clue or a detail. Otherwise, why would she have asked about your family? Your true purpose for the tournament?

He was beginning to feel confused, Devil's words and his restlessness and agitation were forcing him to feel the same. He knew that if he didn't do something quickly he would lose control, he felt a tingling that morphed into numbness beginning in the back of his head and spreading toward the front. A sign that Devil was gaining the upper hand.

*Who knows what agencies she is working with,* Devil continued, *they made sure to send the most innocent-looking, pretty girl to fool you. I've told you countless times, never trust a woman, and what do you do?*

*I don't trust her,* Kazuya tried to defend, *I just-

*Wanted to see her?* Devil cut him off. *Wanted to see that pretty smile that makes your heart flutter like a teenaged boy's? Pathetic.*

Without noticing he had arrived at the Mishima Building's entrance, seeing him one of the guards quickly opened the locked door. Kazuya stalked toward the elevator. Devil was right, he realized, he shouldn't have agreed to meet with her, he was trusting her too much, why would she want to see him if not to continue her investigation? He was a fool for trusting her, for thinking that she had any interest other than to... He shook his head vigorously as he heard the chime of the elevator and the doors opened, he stepped inside and slumped against the wall.

*Even if she were not a liar how can she relate to anything that you are going through?* Devil continued his scolding. *She had a sheltered, idyllic life with her perfect family, she is looking for a man that will fit in with that perfect family. She will at best try to change you and at worst betray you.*

*Fine, you've made yourself understood.*

*Have I? Oh, please tell me that my figurative ears do not deceive me.* Devil's voice was dripping with sarcasm, it made Kazuya's blood boil.

*Shut up.* He ordered as he held tightly to the handrail, he felt as if the elevator were moving at a snail's pace.

*Have you learned your lesson then?*

"Do not speak to me as if I'm a child!" Kazuya said out loud as he felt his hands begin to shake.

*Then stop behaving the way a stupid child would.*

"Shut up." He felt beads of sweat begin to form on his forehead and suddenly remembered where he was, almost as a reflex he jumped toward the small, dome-shaped camera in the corner of the
elevator and smashed it with his fist leaving tiny shards of glass embedded in his knuckles.

Oh, are you ashamed of me? Devil mocked. Every time this happens you make me feel unwanted, it's as if you didn't want anyone to know about me. Now I understand how poor Sayuri feels...or is she ashamed of you? Perhaps you should tell Miss Perfect about her.

"Stop." He brought his hands to his head and squeezed his temples tightly to relieve some of the numbness and pressure. He knew it wouldn't be long before Devil won.

Do not see that woman again.

"...Fine..." Kazuya conceded. Anything to maintain control.

I'm glad you see things my way. Devil said, then retreated to the back of his mind.

The elevator doors opened and with heavy steps, Kazuya walked down the hallway and into his private office locking the door. He removed his jacket and tie leaving them forgotten on the floor then collapsed on the black, leather couch. It was still early, the room was lit by natural light, though the furniture cast shadows that threatened to envelop the room. Through heavy lids, he looked at the large window behind his desk and watched the fading orange tinge that marked the end of the sunset. As he closed his eyes he thought of the previous evening, in the state between wakefulness and sleep, the part that Devil couldn't control, he wished he was watching the sunset with Jun again.

Jun stepped out of the bus with an ominous feeling in her heart. She had wanted to follow after Kazuya but knew it was best to leave him be. The darkness that she sensed in him was much stronger than what she had felt before. It seemed to be tied to Kazuya's emotions, or perhaps his emotions were tied to it. She could feel its evil, it was like a black hole consuming Kazuya's soul little by little. She walked hurriedly down the sidewalk to her apartment building, an old four-story building in a safe neighborhood about forty-five minutes away from downtown Tokyo. Cheap as far as Tokyo was concerned, but ridiculously expensive compared to her home town.

She unlocked the front door and walked up the stairs to the second floor, the forest-green carpet was worn and the once-white, now turned eggshell-colored hallway needed to be painted, but she appreciated how clean everything was. She unlocked the door marked 204 and stepped inside the small, one-bedroom apartment then removed her shoes. She took a box of matches from the coffee table in the center of the living area and lit some incense that was placed inside a small, green ceramic bowl filled with sand from her favorite secluded beach in Yakushima Island.

She sat cross-legged on the wooden floor and closed her eyes letting the cedar smell of the incense envelop her. She freed her mind of worries and thoughts, let them all wash over her like water over a rock, and soon her mind was blank save for the image of Kazuya. She saw him standing in the white nothing wearing one of his expensive, designer suits, a scowl etched on his handsome face. He was surrounded by a dark aura so dense that the very thought of getting too close made her feel ill, she ventured in nonetheless. She had to use all her strength to penetrate it.

What troubles you, Kazuya?

She reached into his mind with a figurative hand, she touched the outer edges at first, there she found worries about his company that she had no interest in. She reached further in and saw contempt and disdain for someone close to him, a family member, his brother she assumed, she knew that he was the only family Kazuya had. She reached further into him still and she felt it.

Hate.
Black and sticky like tar consuming his thoughts and influencing his actions, it was hate for his father. But there was more, she dreaded going in, she dreaded being anywhere near it but knew that she had no choice. She pushed her thoughts inside him despite the fear and she instantly regretted it, she felt his pain, the searing hate that the entity was incubating inside him. Merely being aware of it made her stomach churn and her head throb.

She pulled herself out of her meditative state and began to shiver despite the warmth in the apartment. "No..." Jun covered her face with her hands. "I can't let it have him, I can't."

"No..." Jun covered her face with her hands. "I can't let it have him, I can't."

Even though she was afraid, at that moment she resolved to help Kazuya, to free him of the evil that was consuming him. There was so much hate in his heart that she felt he didn't even remember, perhaps didn't even know what love was...but she could show him. She could show him the way out of that dark abyss, she could loosen the entity's hold on him and save him. She quickly readied herself for bed even though it was much earlier than her usual bedtime, after what she had seen and experienced she felt exhausted. She fell asleep almost as soon as she laid her head on her pillow.

Jun found herself walking in an endless desert, the sparkling, white sand felt warm and comfortable under her bare feet. She breathed in the warm, dry air and felt a strange sense of peace as she took in the cloudless, sapphire sky and the stunning landscape. Spinning slowly she gazed upon the endless dunes devoid of any tracks or ripples, her footprints were the only marks upon the otherwise undisturbed ground.

Allow me help you. Her voice came suddenly, startling Jun.

Who are you? Her point of view changed and saw herself standing in the white sand wearing her favorite white dress, it was strange, almost as if she were watching a scene from a movie.

Jun, must you ask? She suddenly appeared before her, her brilliance and beauty made her gasp. The woman was tall with Caucasian features, she wore her blonde hair in a loose bun and a blue jewel adorned her forehead. Her white garments seemed to be made of the purest silk and air itself. Her sandal-clad feet hovered gracefully inches above the sand.

Angel... Jun knew, though she had never seen her.

I've been aware of you since the first moment Kazuya Mishima crossed your mind. You are unlike any human I have yet seen, I am quite fortunate that you decided to adhere to your destiny.

You, are the intruding presence I've been sensing? She remembered the feeling on the day she'd finally been given an appointment with Kazuya.

I am, though I find the word intruding somewhat harsh.

Forgive me. Jun said sincerely. Might I serve you somehow? She felt apprehensive asking the question but felt compelled to do it.

Yes, the beautiful being answered quickly, by allowing me to help you rid Kazuya Mishima of his...companion.

Jun wished that she had used a different word, companion gave the situation a lighthearted air that she believed it lacked completely. She was also asking her for permission to help, but what did that entail exactly? It was not that she didn't trust the divine being but there was something about her, or perhaps the situation that made her uneasy.
Without meaning any disrespect, may I ask why you cannot help him yourself? Surely you are more powerful than I am.

Angel raised an eyebrow at this. *Your world is not like mine. I cannot simply occupy whoever I choose or whoever is convenient, neither can Devil.* There was the name, the much more appropriate name.

*Occupy?* The word made her chest tighten. *Then, you need to work through a person?*

Yes, unfortunately. *We both require a host, a human who has what is needed for us to...bond with. It is a game of waiting and patience until we find one.*

*What happens if you don't find someone?*

*If enough time passes we may, in a sense, die, in this realm at least, then there's more waiting in the other world and... Angel chuckled slightly.* If you think bureaucracy is problematic in here... *Not to mention all the destruction that Devil and his host may bring upon your world during the time. In this case, I was beginning to think that might happen, the Mishimas are a dying bloodline.*

*I'm not a Mishima.* It was beginning to sound as if she were saying that she wanted Jun to be her host, she began to feel uncomfortable.

*Not a Mishima, but your power, the degree at which your mind is open, it will allow me to bond with you so that we may help him. I wish I could impress upon you how rare it is to find someone like you.*

*I would like to help Kazuya on my own.* Jun suddenly felt defensive, almost possessive.

*This is not a game, young one, this is not something that you can experiment with, it cannot be taken lightly.*

*I am aware, I assure, you,* Jun said firmly, *but I would like to see what I'm dealing with for myself.*

*If you would allow me-*

*I mean no disrespect,* she interrupted, *but I feel that you are assuming that I will allow you to possess me, from my perspective that is also something that that should not be taken lightly.*

Angel sighed. You want to *think it over even though our union may be his only salvation? You saw what he is doing to Kazuya's soul,* she touched her hand to her chest, *I am charged with saving his soul at all costs, I assure that I have his best interest in mind.*

She pondered the phrase 'at all costs' but decided that she would leave it at that.

*All I want is a little time to think it over.*

*Very well,* she said sounding disappointed, *you have but to call me, I hope you will not ignore me and wait until I find you in your dreams.*

*I will call on you.* Jun promised and saw Angle suddenly disappear.

She opened her eyes and found herself in her bed as the morning light was beginning to sift through
her curtains. Looking at the clock on her bedside table she saw that it was nearly six o'clock, she slowly sat up and moved to the edge of her bed then shivered slightly when her feet touched the cold, wooden floor. She felt strangely calm despite the dream and what she had experienced during her meditation. Communication with spirits was something that she'd been familiar with since she was a child, though this was her first time communicating with a divine being. After speaking with her she was determined to help Kazuya, to do as much by herself as was possible, that meant that she needed to rearrange her entire life. She smiled slightly as she realized that she did not mind, that she would do what she needed to do for him. She stood up and rubbed her arms, the thought of hot water from the shower warming her skin was almost overwhelmingly tempting but there was something she needed to do first.

She walked out of the bedroom and into the living area, she took her purse from the hook on the door and looked for her address book. When she found the number she was looking for she picked up the cordless phone from the end table, sat on the couch and dialed the number of her supervisor at the WWWC headquarters.

She heard the telephone on the other end ring five times before someone picked up.

"Yes?" A drowsy voice answered.

"Miss Tagawa?"

"Yes, who is this?"

"This is Jun Kazama from the temporary office, I'm working the-"

"Mishima Zaibatsu case," Miss Tagawa finished, "yes, Miss Kazama I know who you are. Why are you calling so early in the morning?"

"I apologize for waking you, but this is very important..." Jun inhaled deeply. "I would like to be taken off that case, it has become a conflict of interest."

She heard a sigh, then, a long pause. "...Miss Kazama, I would prefer that you continue to work the case."

Jun furrowed her brow at the unexpected statement. "Policy clearly states that if there is a conflict of interest the officer must be assigned a different case."

"I know what policy is, but I would prefer that you resolve whatever issues you may have so that this ceases to be a conflict of interest."

"It can't simply be resolved."

"Well then maybe we can work around it," Miss Tagawa offered, "what makes it a conflict of interest?"

"It's personal."

"Do you know why you were given this case initially?" She didn't wait for Jun to answer. "Because no one at headquarters had been able to get anywhere with it, assigning it to your office was our last effort to gather evidence before giving up on it and seeing if the police or any other law enforcement agency could do anything with it. You have gotten further with it than anyone else has..."

"But I didn't get anywhere," Jun said frustrated, "all I was able to do was get a meeting with Mr. Mishima and he didn't tell me anything."
“Two meetings,” Miss Tagawa corrected, “you met with him at the arena the next day. Three meetings if you count yesterday after work.”

“I don’t count that one, it was personal,” Jun said shortly, no doubt Megumi had told her about it, she knew that she had overheard her tell Noriko about it and she knew that the younger woman loved to look good in front of her superiors.

“Well, now I see where the conflict lies.” Miss Tagawa cleared her throat. "You are in a position where you can get information out of him, men come and go, but career opportunities can be fleeting. I would strongly recommend that you continue with the case.”

Jun felt suddenly disappointed. "Please clarify your meaning.” Though she knew what she was going to say next.

"This case will bring opportunities for me, higher rank, higher pay...If we bag this trophy I will personally make sure that you are put in an office with a proper window at headquarters, that is, when you are not out doing field work." Miss Tagawa sighed. "But if you refuse...well, there are many eager, young students who would love a place with the WWWC.”

Jun's disappointment quickly turned to anger. "That is severely unethical. You have my resignation, I have nothing to retrieve from my desk, I will expect my last paycheck in the mail.” She hung up without waiting to hear her response.

She stood in the living room thoroughly disillusioned. She had moved to Tokyo specifically to work for the WWWC, to follow her dreams, her destiny, as her mother had once told her. She suddenly realized how cold she was in only her tank top and a pair of shorts. She walked toward the bathroom, the thought of a hot shower beckoning her. She suddenly thought of Kazuya and wondered what he was doing, she smiled realizing that she had nothing to distract her from helping him, perhaps she could do it without Angel's aid after all.

The feeling of a soft, gentle hand on his woke Kazuya from his restless sleep. He immediately thought of Jun, hoped it was her as everything in the room was blurry, but when his eyes adjusted to his surroundings he was unpleasantly surprised to see Sayuri kneeling on the floor next to him. She was gingerly holding his right hand and seemed to be examining it.

“What are you doing in here?” He asked through clenched teeth taking hold of her wrist.

She gasped as she tried to pull her hand free. "Working, I've been here for nearly an hour."

“What were you doing?” He asked tightening his hold on her.

"Checking to see if I needed to call an ambulance.” Her voice was a mix of anger and fear, as she continued to pull her hand away he let go and she lost her balance nearly falling over but caught herself on the edge of the couch. She stood up and quickly stepped away from him.

"Why would you call an ambulance?” Kazuya asked as he sat up straight.

"Bruce called looking for you," Sayuri began as she rubbed her wrist, "he said that security told him you didn't leave the building last night so he wanted me to check your office. I knocked and you didn't answer, I opened the door and called your name and you didn't answer, then I see your jacket on the floor and blood on your hand, I call you yet again and you don't answer, what was I supposed to do?” She asked sounding exasperated. "This isn't in the training manual, and by the way, you should take care of that hand, I think there's glass in it."
She picked up his jacket and tie from the floor and hung them on the coat rack next to the door. She was wearing a form-fitting, short-sleeved, red dress and black high-heeled shoes, as always she looked stylish and beautiful. He hated the sight of her and judging by the way she was looking at him the feeling was mutual.

"What does Bruce want?" He asked standing up.

"I don't know, he wanted me to call him when I found out where you were." She put her hand on the doorknob to leave but turned to look at him. "Should I have the kitchen bring breakfast up for you?"

"Yes, and call Bruce immediately."

"Obviously." She said in a tone that he had never heard from her before. "The usual I assume," he nodded, "coffee or tea."

"Coffee, obviously." He said curtly.

Sayuri opened the door. "Oh, obviously." She casually stepped out and closed the door behind her.

This is interesting. Devil said thoughtfully just as Kazuya was about to go after her to put her in her place. I'm interested to see how this plays out, aren't you?

Admittedly he was. Fine, but there's only so much I'm willing to take from her, I'm almost at my limit.

He walked to his desk and sat in his chair for a few minutes rummaging through drawers to pass the time and hoping the pounding headache that had just started would go away soon. His phone began to ring and he picked it up.

"What?"

"Bruce will be here in twenty minutes and your breakfast will be here shortly," Sayuri said.

"Fine." He had not even finished saying the word and he heard her hang up without asking if he needed anything else, as was expected of her. "That little..." He was in no mood for her games.

Go easy on the girl, Devil said as Kazuya stalked toward the door, she's just beginning to get interesting.

As he opened the door he heard someone talking to Sayuri and stopped to listen.

"That was so fast," he heard Sayuri say in a convincingly cheerful voice, "you and your girls work magic in that kitchen."

"When it comes to making Mr. Mishima happy I think everyone in this building tries." It was the voice of an older woman that he didn't recognize. "Here, these are for you, I just made them myself."

"Thank you," Sayuri gushed, "you didn't have to."

"We really appreciate you downstairs," the older woman said, "you're much better than his last secretary, she was always bossy and in a foul mood, I can't really blame her I guess, but you're always so nice to everyone, we all know it can't be easy to do that when you work in here."

"That's sweet of you to say, Minori, I'd better take this to him now."
"Of course, dear, have a good day." He heard the woman exit.

A few seconds later Sayuri stopped in front of his office door, a look of surprise apparent on her face. He stepped aside to let her push a metal food cart with covered dishes and a glass coffee pot into the office.

"Here it is." She said turning to leave.

He again noticed, and was bothered by the fact that she didn't ask if more was required of her.

"What's her name again?" Kazuya asked. "The kitchen worker."

"She's the cafeteria manager." Sayuri corrected. "Her name is Minori."

"She's right," he began deviously, "you are much better than my last secretary, she didn't offer a full array of services."

He expected to see shame or sadness in her eyes or that she would at least look away but he was surprised to see anger as she firmly held his gaze. It was brief, but unmistakable, then without blinking her demeanor changed and she gave him a pleasant smile.

"Will there be anything else, sir?" She asked in her usual respectful tone as she delicately clasped her hands in front of her stomach.

I told you she was beginning to get interesting.

"How is Lee?" Kazuya asked.

"He says his training is going well."

"Where is he training again?"

"I don't know, sir." She said evenly. "I'll be at my desk if you need anything, Bruce will be here soon." She bowed slightly then exited the office.

What did I ever see in that lying bitch? He asked Devil.

Potential.

Kazuya shook his head and poured himself a cup of coffee. Before he was able to take the first sip there was a knock on the door and Bruce Irvin entered immediately after. The tall, black man was dressed in jeans and a plain, black T-shirt, his casual style and unusual haircut bothered Kazuya somewhat but he couldn't complain about something so petty knowing how difficult it was to find trustworthy and capable employees. Bruce's appearance was an advantage at times as most people who saw an American dressed in jeans would not think that he was the Mishima Zaibatsu's head of security, most people who saw him mistook him for a tourist who didn't speak Japanese and would speak freely amongst themselves while in his proximity.

"You're early," Kazuya said annoyed at the fact that he thought he had at least fifteen more minutes before he arrived. "That's almost as bad as being late."

"No it isn't," Bruce said as he closed the door, "I take pride in the fact that I'm always punctual, I've never been late in my life."

"I don't think your Japanese is as good as you think it is," Kazuya told him, "punctual means on
time, not before time or after time."

Bruce laughed. "It's not even nine a.m. and you're already being a dick. Go home and get some
sleep, you look like shit." He took the second cup from the food cart and poured himself some
coffee.

Kazuya simply shook his head, no one else would dare speak to him that way, not even Lee. But
there was an unexplainable camaraderie he felt toward Bruce that made what he said seem amusing,
though at times irritating, rather than disrespectful.

"Any news?" Kazuya asked as he sipped his coffee, ingesting the hot liquid slightly relieved his
headache.

"The boys arrived in Moscow earlier today." Bruce turned one of the chairs in front of the desk
toward the exit and casually sat down. "By this time tomorrow they'll be putting the doctor on a
plane."

Doctor Geppetto Bosconovitch was the leading scientist in many fields, including genetics. Kazuya
had tried to acquire his services legitimately and the doctor had refused even when Kazuya had
offered more pay than he was sure anyone else had or would. He had refused to work for him based
on what he had said was 'moral grounds'. Kazuya doubted that anyone conducting the types of
experiments and research that Bosconovitch was undertaking was in any place to give lectures about
morals. His refusal had forced Kazuya to take drastic measures and had resulted in his men flying to
Russia to retrieve the doctor. Bruce had tried to convince him that it was too risky but he wouldn't
hear of it, he needed the doctor to oversee the genetic experiments that his scientists were carrying
out and would be essential to the success of the merger with G-Corporation. Once everything was in
place and the tournament was over there would be no limit to what he could do, the kind of power
that he could achieve with never before seen weapons at his disposal. There was also the possibility
that he would be able to unlock Devil's full abilities without losing control and that was worth any
risk.

"Good," Kazuya said as he sat back on the couch.

"I should be there." Bruce tapped his foot lightly on the floor. "I have a feeling they're going to fuck
it up somehow."

"You chose them," Kazuya pointed accusingly at him, "so if they fuck it up somehow guess who will
be held responsible?"

"You are not pinning this on me," Bruce said sitting up straight. "You said that you wanted me here,
so if anything happens it's on you."

Kazuya shook his head in disagreement but knew that his point was valid. "Should be easy enough
even without you there."

"You know," Bruce said leaning back in his chair, "after you chose Ganryu over me for the Ireland
job and now with this Moscow thing, I'm starting to feel like you don't trust me as much as you say
you do."

"Goddammit, Bruce," Kazuya said impatiently, "you sound like an insecure woman."

"Hey now, no need for name calling, I'm just saying I need some action, I'm starting to get bored,
and you can't blame me for being nervous about sending my boys out on their own for the first time." 
Bruce laughed. "I guess this must be how parents feel when they send their kids on their first drive
alone." He was silent for a moment as he drank his coffee then gave Kazuya a serious look. "You should really take care of that hand," he said pointing to it, "I had maintenance repair the camera in the elevator, I gave the man a little something to keep it quiet."

He rolled his eyes. "You know a threat works just as well. Stop squandering my money."

"I don't mind making a threat or carrying one out when I need to, but I want people on my side, people who are willing to take risks for me because they're loyal to me, not because they're afraid of me. They're more likely to turn on you when they fear you, before you know it they throw you under the bus if there's another big, bad wolf who can protect them from you."

"That hasn't been my experience." Kazuya countered.

"Not yet." Bruce shrugged. "You're a smart man, maybe you should consider changing your ways, get more people on your side."

"I let you get away with a lot, Bruce...but that doesn't mean that you can tell me how to run the Zaibatsu," Kazuya said menacingly.

Bruce raised up a hand in surrender. "All right, my apologies, boss." He shook his head, then sighed. "Do you want me to destroy the footage from that camera?"

"Did you see it?" The thought of anyone seeing him in such a vulnerable state made him feel uneasy.

"No." Bruce stood up and set his empty cup back on the food cart. "You know me, what happened in there is none of my business." He crossed his arms and looked soberly at him. "In all seriousness, though, if there's a dead body in the building I need to know so I can properly dispose of it."

Before Kazuya could answer there was a soft knock on the door and Sayuri entered.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, but your first appointment is in an hour and I need to know if it should be rescheduled."

"Yes," Bruce answered. "He's going home, reschedule all of them."

"Sir?" She looked uncertainly at Kazuya.

Kazuya sighed, he knew there was nothing essential scheduled for the day but he didn't feel comfortable going home while his men were in Moscow, Bruce seemed to sense this. "You know you can trust me and Ganryu to give you status reports and handle anything that comes up."

"Fine." He said looking at Sayuri. "Cancel them all."

"Should I reschedule any?" She asked.

"Figure it out," Kazuya grumbled.

"Very well." She gave Bruce a sidelong glance then looked back at Kazuya. "I need to speak with you as soon as you're available."

"Fine." He said feeling suddenly irritated. Sayuri stepped out quietly and closed the door. "No," Kazuya said staring after her, "unfortunately there was no dead body."

"Oh, come on, her?" Bruce chuckled. "Don't kill her, looking at her is the only joy I've been able to find on this god-forsaken floor, you need better-looking staff up here."
"There are dozens of other floors where you can find joy." Kazuya screwed up his face in disgust and shook his head.

"It's not as easy as you might think," Bruce countered, "by the time I got here your brother had picked through the best ones already and I don't want to be where he's already been. I'm lucky he slowed down after getting serious with your secretary, otherwise there would be nothing left for me. It really helps that this place has a high turnover rate, otherwise I'd have to go off site to-"

Kazuya pinched the bridge of his nose. "I really, really don't want to hear about your sexual exploits." He knew Bruce was right, he needed to go home to shower and do some training in the dojo.

Bruce smirked. "You always say that, but-"

"I really don't want to hear about it," Kazuya said harshly. "And yes, erase the footage."

"Consider it done." He said walking toward the door. "When's your stuck-up brother coming back, anyway?" He asked before opening it.

"In a few days." He felt his headache returning. "That's one dead body you may actually find."

"And one I wouldn't mind finding, or getting rid of." He gestured toward the door. "And that would mean she would need some consoling."

"You just said you didn't want to be where he's already been." Kazuya reminded him.

"She would be his widow, or whatever you call a dead guy's girlfriend, not some discarded one-night-stand, it's not the same." He defended. "Anyway, I'll call you any time there's a change." He said before exiting.

Sayuri wasted no time knocking on his door once Bruce left the office. "May I speak with you, sir?" She asked somewhat timidly, he noticed that she was holding a first aid kit.

He looked down at his hand for the first time. There was dried blood on the knuckles and fingers, he could see small cuts and scrapes as well as a few tiny fragments of glass. There was slight pain and some discomfort, but he'd long since learned to ignore such trivial things. He looked suspiciously at Sayuri but nodded, she put the kit on his desk and opened it.

"Why are you doing this?" He asked sure that she had a goal in mind.

"If Lee was here this is what he would have me do, please." She motioned to one of the chairs in front of the desk. "It looks like it just needs to be cleaned, but if you prefer I can have someone from the lab come up to do it."

Kazuya took the seat. "So this is about Lee."

"Can you please put your hand on the desk?" She asked as she extracted a pair of small tweezers from the kit.

"You're not even going to wear gloves?" Kazuya asked her.

"I just washed my hands, but if it bothers you that much I can do that." He shook his head. "You're right, this is about Lee." She said.

"What about him? Are you going to tell me where he is?"
"I don't know where he is." She said as she set the rest of the supplies she would need on the desk. "I want to know what I need to do to keep you from ruining his career and his reputation."

"And to save your relationship, of course, to keep me quiet."

She smiled sadly as she began to carefully pluck glass from his knuckles with the tweezers. "A couple of days ago, yes, but now..." She sighed heavily. "I've been thinking it over since you told me what he did...what you think he did, and I'm certain that he didn't steal from you."

"How are you so certain?"

She shrugged. "I just am." She looked his hand over and seemed satisfied, she took a cotton ball and moistened it with rubbing alcohol then began to clean off the dried blood. "I think you know it too, you know he wouldn't do that."

"He's the only one with access to those accounts, there's no way around that. He stole from me, he committed a crime and he has to pay for it."

"He's not a criminal."

Kazuya chuckled. "How much does he tell you about what really goes on behind closed doors."

She looked affronted. "Not much, I admit, but I know that whatever he does he does it for you, because you ask him." She said as she continued to carefully clean his hand. "And he's loyal to you, he always has been, so the least you could do is not press charges against him, not make it public."

"I told you before that I owe him nothing, but you said you were here to ask what you had to do to keep me from doing that. What are you willing to do?"

When she looked at him there was uncertainty in her eyes. "I don't know."

"Are you willing to commit a murder? Sleep with a client?"

"Maybe...If it means that he keeps his freedom...I-I don't know." She closed her eyes and shook her head slightly. "Is that what you need me to do?"

He was honestly surprised by her answer, he was beginning to see a side of her that he had no idea existed, he wondered if even Lee knew about it. "I don't understand you. One minute you're trying to hurt him, willingly betray him and doom your relationship and the next you're prepared to kill for him."

"Yeah," she chuckled slightly, "I've been a mess since he left, you don't make things easy." She sighed. "We all have our moments of bad judgment, make decisions that we regret and wish we could take back. Don't you?"

"No," He said truthfully. "I always know what I'm getting into and am prepared to live with the consequences."

She rolled her eyes. "Of course you are."

He pulled his hand away suddenly angry. "I've seen this attitude from you all morning, it needs to stop right now."

She cast down her eyes and began to dispose of the used supplies in the waste basket. "I apologize for that, I didn't know what working for you was really like, I've always had Lee to protect me from
your worst. I'm just trying to adjust to a hostile environment, that's why my attitude has been all over the place, but I learn quickly. I won't let my personal feelings for you interfere with my work performance again."

Her answer, though seemingly truthful, did nothing to improve his mood. "Meaning you'll lie your way through the workday, pretend you don't hate me."

"That's what I've done for my previous employers, and hate is a very strong word, I don't hate anyone, including you." She said as she put the remaining supplies in back in the case.

"What is it then?"

"A deep dislike." She said looking into his eyes as she sat in the remaining chair.

Kazuya crossed his arms. "So Lee protects you from me and now you're trying to return the favor?"

She sighed impatiently. "No, this has nothing to do with what he's done for me or even guilt for that matter."

"Then why?" He asked genuinely curious.

"You wouldn't understand." She turned her face away.

What a sweet girl, Kazuya inwardly sighed as he heard Devil's voice, it seems that she truly does care about your brother. How disappointing, I was hoping that she was a heartless bitch.

No, she doesn't, I will prove it.

He thought for a moment. "I'm going to make you an offer, say yes because you'll never hear it again." She turned to look at him with a worried expression on her face. "Resign your position, tell me where you want to work and I'll make sure you are hired, turn your back on all this, leave him to fend for himself and move on with your life."

She shook her head and spoke without hesitation. "I can't do that."

You are wrong.

No, I'm not.

"What's the worst thing you've ever done?" He asked trying a different approach.

She looked uncomfortable as she pressed her fingers to her temple. "You already know, you were there."

"So you go from cheating on your boyfriend to murder?" He asked incredulously. "That's quite the leap, people usually learn to swim before willingly jumping into the deep end. Again, why would you do that for him? I'm sure someone like you can easily find another man to protect you and buy you diamonds."

She shook her head seemingly angry. "Yes, of course, I can, but his money has nothing to do with it. Haven't you ever felt the need to...protect someone? To..." She took notice of his blank expression and scoffed. "I told you, you won't understand."

"Why do you think I'm incapable of understanding?" He asked now angry himself. He wanted Devil to be wrong, he wanted to know that she was just another of Lee's gold-digging girlfriends.
Why do you want that? Don't tell me you're envious of him.

It's not envy.

She looked uncertain as she spoke. "...Because you are the type of person who plots to ruin his own brother's life." Her brow furrowed and she looked condemningly at him. "He's done nothing to you."

Devil sighed. Apparently, women have to choose between being smart or pretty.

Kazuya looked disbelievingly at her as he felt his body tense and his headache worsen. "He's done nothing to me?" His anger surged. "Is that what he tells you?"

She seemed worried as she crossed her arms protectively in front of her but continued to speak. "No, but from what I've been able to piece together...I understand your resentment because your father chose him over you, but you can't blame Lee for that. It was your father's choice, your anger should be directed at him, not Lee, he's a victim just like you." She quickly looked away as she finished.

Devil laughed. Someone should tell her that honesty isn't always best.

"...Get out." He felt the urge to strike her and knew that if she didn't leave immediately it was something that he might do.

She stood up and exited quietly without saying another word closing the door softly behind her.

I'm embarrassed for your brother, Devil said casually, aren't you?

What?

You shouldn't envy him, you should pity him. A woman is fighting his battles behind his back, making him look weak and cowardly.

I don't envy him, I just... He searched his mind for the right words but it was suddenly difficult to think. Things come too easily to him, he doesn't deserve what she's doing for him. And the way she lies for him every day is sickening, does he know what she's really like? Kazuya began to feel a tingling in the back of his skull. I need to go home.

It's what a woman does I suppose, it can't be helped. Lies to him, lies for him and makes him weak.

Kazuya went to his desk and pulled his briefcase out of the drawer. He's done nothing to me? He's just like me? I'll make her regret what she said, she'll learn the true meaning of the word victim. He took his jacket and tie from the coat rack before walking out of the office.

Finally, it's been a while since I've had some real fun. I was beginning to fear that thinking about that other woman was making you soft.

"Sir?" He heard Sayuri say as he stepped out, she was sitting at her desk and had the phone to her ear.

He glared at her. "What?"

He was pleased to see fear in her eyes. "Um...Miss Kazama is on the phone, should I transfer her to your office?"

"No. I don't want to speak with her." His headache intensified as he said those words.
"What should I tell her?"

"I just told you." He said as he made his way to the door.

I knew you would make the right choice. Devil said approvingly. Now let's leave this building, it's been a while since you last let me stretch my wings.

Chapter End Notes

After trying and trying to unsuccessfully figure out what the devil gene is exactly and what Angel's role in the story really is I said, "fuck it," and came up with my own theory. Maybe I'm just dense and don't get it but I changed things so that it made sense to me and to the story that I'm trying to tell. I hope whoever reads it is able to enjoy it.
Kazuya hurriedly walked out of the office slamming the door behind him. He heard his blood pounding in his ears and felt throbbing in his head, it was happening at a different rhythm and was making his surroundings seem blurry.

Perhaps informing security that she is banned from the premises is in order, she does seem to have trouble understanding boundaries. Devil advised.

That won't be necessary, Lee will be back in a few days, I'll have him deal with Jun Kazama and her agency before I get rid of him. His thoughts were suddenly on Lee again and anger once again overtook the bit of calm that he had gained walking from the door to the elevator. Sayuri loves him? He asked Devil. Is that what she was trying to say? He pushed the button for the parking garage and took a steadying breath as the elevator doors closed.

It seems so. Devil said indifferently.

Why? How can she?

Devil sighed. Do not tell me that you have feelings for that woman or I swear...

No. She can drop dead at this very moment for all I care. It was the truth, it wasn't something that he was wishing for, but if it happened the worst outcome would be that he would need to hire a new secretary.

Then what is the problem? Devil seemed to be growing impatient. Why does that anger you? Why do you care?

I just want to know why.

It's really not surprising, he's always been easy to love, easier than you obviously. Everyone loves him, women, employees, service workers...your father did too, didn't he? Otherwise, he would have made you his heir.

But he doesn't deserve it, he doesn't deserve love or sacrifice from anyone, even someone like Sayuri.

Oh, but he does, he needs it. He needs it because love is for the weak, for those who need reassurance and someone to build them up. You don't need that.

I know that. I never said that I did.

The elevator chimed and the doors slid open. When he stepped out he was surprised to see Bruce standing a few feet away watching him with a serious expression on his face.
"I'm glad I caught you." Bruce regarded him carefully.

Kazuya felt the need to breathe fresh air as he stepped into the artificially-lit parking garage in the basement. The fluorescent lights gave the concrete walls and support beams a harsh glow that made the entire space seem surreal. The colors of the parked vehicles seemed eerie and distorted, focusing on them made his headache worsen, he narrowed his eyes squinting slightly to ease the pain.

Kazuya feared the worst and was immediately angry. "Caught me? You look like you were waiting for me, what the hell happened in Moscow?" He shook his head, not only had it been his mistake for making Bruce stay in Tokyo, it also meant that Bruce had been right in wanting to go.

"Nothing," Bruce said eyeing him casually, "no need to worry about that, everything is going as planned."

"Then what?" The relief he felt did little to ease his anger.

Bruce crossed his arms. "Sayuri called me, she said that you don't look like you should be behind the wheel of a vehicle. I see that she's right, you look worse than you did half an hour ago."

"I thank you for your concern," he made sure that the sarcasm in his voice was unmistakable, "but I'm not drunk, it's just a headache."

"I am concerned," Bruce said letting a small smile appear on his lips, "I like my job, I like the perks. If you get yourself killed your brother will be in charge and I'll more than likely be out of the job, or maybe I'll just leave because the thought of having him as my boss makes me want to hang myself."

He turned to the left and gestured for Kazuya to follow him. "I have the driver waiting."

Kazuya sighed heavily and followed him, he hated to admit it but Bruce was right, he was not fit to drive anywhere. He wouldn't put it past Devil to take over when he was on the road, it had happened before and it had resulted in his favorite BMW resting at the bottom of a lake. He had been fortunate that it had happened at night and when no one else was on the road to witness the incident.

"I just came upon some information that you might find interesting, if you don't already know," Bruce spoke as they advanced down the pedestrian walkway. "That cute wildlife officer quit her job this morning."

"What?" Kazuya stopped suddenly. "How do you know?"

"I got eyes and ears everywhere?" Bruce said turning to look at him.

"Why were you investigating her?" There was a sudden feeling that he couldn't explain, it was almost protective, he wanted to be angry with Bruce for prying into her life, his by extension."

"Because she's law enforcement, it's what I do." Bruce shrugged. "I'm doing my job."

"Law enforcement? She's just a wildlife officer. What did she do? Why are you suspicious of her?"

"I'm not," Bruce sighed impatiently, "I check every person that is in any type of law enforcement, they can be parking enforcement or police detectives, it doesn't matter, if they come into this building I have to watch them until they stop being a threat." He shook his head. "You really, really, need to go home and get some sleep."

**Not before you let me frolic in the garden.** Devil said in a sing-song voice.

"Goddammit," Kazuya muttered under his breath as he continued to walk.
"But you know the upside of the whole thing," Bruce said as he walked toward a black Mercedes Benz with tinted windows, "if you want to pursue something with her you can now."

Mark this as the day I was forced to put Bruce Irvin on my shit-list. Devil said angrily.

He eyed Bruce suspiciously, "Why would you say that? What makes you think that I would want to pursue anything with her? And even if I did it's none of your goddamned business." He finished harshly.

"I saw the way you were looking at each other," he explained, "I observe, it's my job, stop being so damn surprised that I'm doing it."

Kazuya stood motionless trying to make sense of the new information, he began to wonder if that was why she had called him, if she had done it for him.

Don't flatter yourself, why would she do that? She doesn't even know you. It's more than likely a ruse to cause you to let your guard down.

"Are you getting in the car or not?" He heard Bruce ask impatiently and noticed that he was holding the door to the back seat open for him. "I'm not your fucking chauffeur," he pointed to the driver waiting inside the car, "which is what you should be doing, you lazy asshole." The man looked frightened and attempted to exit the vehicle. "It's too late now," Bruce rolled his eyes, "just make sure you get him home in one piece."

"Y-yes, sir." The man said nervously as he stuck his head out of the open window to address Bruce. "My apologies, sir."

Kazuya stepped inside the car and reclined on the seat.

Bruce shook his head. "You see what I have to put up with? You have no right to complain about me. I'll call tonight. If there's a development before then I'll call you as soon as I know." He said before closing the door.

Kazuya closed his eyes and sleep took him immediately; he woke when he felt the car stop.

The driver opened the door and Kazuya stepped onto the stone-paved driveway. It was very large and circled an ivy-covered fountain that had been dry since he could remember. He hated the gaudiness of it, the outrageous size, it was completely unnecessary and he had thought about having it torn down more times than he could count but something more important always came up before he could talk to the maintenance staff. The mansion itself was Western-style mixed with traditional Japanese architecture. A white, stone and wood, three level behemoth that was reminiscent of a European government building, though the very traditional brown, pagoda roof, as well as the combination of light and dark colors, made it look somewhat delicate.

As a child, his favorite place to play had been the gardens with their cherry and apricot trees and countless shrubs and flower plants. He had loved running through the many stone paths among the vegetation and watching the fish in the coy ponds. He would spend half his day hiding among the plants and grasses laying down on his belly and throwing tiny pebbles at the water lilies trying to see how many they could carry before they sank. Things had been so simple then, until his innocence had been brutally ripped from him. After that, he had forsaken the beautiful gardens and spent most of his time at the dojo, preparing for the day when he would face off against his father.

He walked to the front door and the housekeeper, a woman in her sixties whose name he couldn't even remember opened it for him and asked if he was hungry. He simply shook his head and made
his way up the dark, wooden staircase to the second level toward his bedroom. The inside of the mansion looked the same as it always had since he was a child. Dark and light wood contrasting beautifully, staircases and doorframes showing evidence of having been created by an expert craftsman. Invaluable paintings and tapestries hung on the walls and ancient vases adorned intricate wooden shelves; together with the expensive hand-made furniture and rugs, it gave the entire space a museum feel.

There was no evidence that a family had ever set foot in that house, none. No evidence that two boys had lived anywhere near its vicinity. Kazuya and Lee had never been allowed to do anything other than walk, without touching anything of course, in any area of the mansion that was not their bedrooms, the kitchen or the library. Outside they had been able to do as they pleased, as long as they stayed away from Heihachi’s precious zen garden; he thought about cementing over it just to spite the old man, but like the fountain, there was always something more important that came up.

He passed a few doors in the second level hallway before reaching his bedroom. It was much more modern than the rest of the mansion, but the bamboo floors and crown molding around the walls gave it a somewhat traditional feel. The four-poster bed and the furniture were more Western-inspired than anything else in the first level of the mansion and the room itself was larger than most Tokyo apartments.

Kazuya undressed as he walked to the bathroom leaving a trail of clothing behind him, it was not something that he would normally do, but he was desperate for a hot shower. He stayed under the steaming water much longer than usual, Devil was finally quiet and his mind was surprisingly blank. Little by little he felt his muscles relax and his headache ebb away. When he was finished he dried himself off and went back into the bedroom. He dressed in a white, sleeveless Gi and made his way out through back exit and down a stone path through the garden and into the dojo, it had been three days since his last training session, entirely too long.

The inside of the dojo was sufficiently lit by the sunlight streaming through the large windows that took up most of the walls. It was all dark bamboo, everything from the support beams to the floors; the walls were devoid of any paintings or tapestries. A punching bag could be seen hanging from the ceiling near one of the corners and a wooden training dummy next to other training equipment that he had seldom used. There had been a mural of a tiger once, but he had charged someone with painting over it on the same day that he moved back into the estate after defeating Heihachi at the first tournament. It brought too many unpleasant memories and he had wanted the dojo to be a place where he could feel a modicum of peace.

Kazuya stood still in the middle of the dojo, he took a few relaxing breaths and began to practice his Mishima-Ryu katas. He was proud of his heritage, proud that the Mishimas had their own style of karate that was not practiced anywhere else in the world. He started slowly, every movement precise and deliberate, perfect; he inhaled and exhaled as he picked up speed.

_Selfish._

"Goddammit," Kazuya said through clenched teeth as Devil broke his concentration.

_You said you would let me stretch my wings._ Devil said reproachfully.

"No," Kazuya said moving briskly toward the punching bag, _"you said that, I never agreed to anything."_

_Are you saying that you want to do this the hard way?_

"Are you threatening me?" He asked as he began to throw a few practice punches at the bag.
"You're always assuming that I'm going to let you do whatever you want." He was suddenly striking the bag with more force than he would normally use for a regular training session, he began to feel agitated.

That is because we usually want the same things. Devil said slowly. Power, respect, control...

He said nothing but continued to hit the bag with unrelenting strikes, switching from punches to kicks then back again. He was feeling his heartbeat accelerate and he knew that it was from more than the physical exertion.

Aww, the creature mocked, are you angry with me? Don't tell me you are still thinking about that woman.

Kazuya suddenly stopped, he angrily wiped the sweat off his brow with the back of his hand and made his way to the wall with the training equipment. "If I am what difference would that make?"

She could be our undoing and will certainly distract you from our goals.

"She will not be, she's no longer employed by that agency, therefore no longer a threat and you never said that about Sayuri."

No, because she is not and will never be a threat.

"You're wrong," Kazuya countered, "She's the one who's a liar."

Hence why she is useful! Her morals are low, she is just a pretty thing that can be used and discarded. He chuckled maliciously. Of course, if that's all you want with the other one...

"No!" He felt his anger rise as his voice echoed through the dojo. It was offensive, the very thought that Devil would suggest he use her like she was nothing...

That isn't what you want? Are you going to stand there and tell me that you don't want her? That the thought has never crossed your mind? Do not lie to me, you know that you can't, it only makes you look pathetic.

He stood looking at the dark wooden floor with his gloves in his hand trying to make sense of his thoughts. He did want her, he couldn't lie to himself and he couldn't lie to Devil, but there was more, it was difficult to explain, to put into words.

"I want...time." He finally said. "Maybe if spend more time with her I'll realize that I want nothing more than a night with her...maybe I'll spend one minute with her and decide that I want nothing to do with her...but I have to know." He finished thoughtfully.

Well... Devil sighed. That is where the problem lies. Do you see what she's doing already? This entire workday has been wasted because of her, you left your responsibilities and came home to talk about your feelings-

"No." Kazuya cut him off. "It was you, you interfered yesterday, muddled my thoughts, gave me no rest and almost made me look like a fool in front of my employees. I was barely able to function and was forced to come home because of you!"
Go ahead, Devil challenged. get angry, it only makes things easier for me. I can practically feel the wind under my wings.

Kazuya began to take slow deep breaths and gradually calmed down. "What we have is a partnership," he reminded Devil, "a give and take relationship. I want more time with her and you want to fly free more often..."

Hmm... Devil began thoughtfully, The fact that you are attempting to negotiate with me worries me, but at the same time, the thought of flying unhindered is painfully enticing. He sighed. Very well, I accept...under my terms of course.

"I really didn't expect that," Kazuya said sarcastically. "What terms?"

That you let me fly every night.

Kazuya sighed. "For an hour."

Two hours.

"I have work I need to do." He protested.

Two. Hours. Devil insisted.

"Fine." He conceded. "What else."

This time with her is by no means permanent.

"I'm not stupid, I know that."

And the instant she interferes with anything, any of our goals or any of our methods, I will personally put a stop to it, you've not yet seen me at my most determined. Devil warned.

"Fine."

Very well, Devil said in a gleeful voice, we start now.

"It's broad daylight."

You owe me. And you know I'm not going to fly to the middle of downtown Tokyo at this hour. Don't be difficult. He finished in a haughty tone.

Kazuya walked out of the dojo and into the garden area knowing that arguing would only prolong the inevitable. He chose a place beneath two beautiful, green maple trees that would obscure the view from the mansion, the last thing he wanted was the staff witnessing his transformation. He stood with his arms at his sides and took several deep breaths until he felt his muscles relax; he closed his eyes and continued to inhale then exhale slowly.

Willingly giving Devil control of his body felt as if he were falling down a dark abyss, as if someone were pulling him away from the light, dragging him to a darkened space that seemed less unpleasant with each visit. He knew what was happening, each time he willingly gave in to Devil he was losing just a little bit more of himself. But it didn't matter, in the end, they would become one regardless, they shared the same body, the same goals... That was why it was crucial for him to merge the Zaibatsu with G-Corporation, maybe through science, he would be able to find a way to become the dominant force, to stop the battle for control but keep all the strength, endurance and power that
Devil provided. Devil had said that it was impossible, that he would win in the end, but of course he
would say that. He would say anything to dissuade him.

He felt his body falling for what seemed to be minutes until he gradually slowed and landed softly on
his feet; he was immediately enveloped by complete darkness. There he would usually train or replay
moments from his past; sometimes he would simply sleep. If he felt inclined he would try to pry into
what Devil was doing, sometimes he was able to see and sometimes he wasn't, it all depended on
what type of mood Devil was in and how determined Kazuya was to look.

It was less pleasant when he took over by force, when Kazuya lost control, which happened when
he became too angry, too physically exhausted or when his body was too damaged. In those
instances, the transformation would begin with a headache that would intensify until he could not
bear the pain anymore, then blurred vision would follow. Devil would then take over and instead of
being slowly dragged into the darkness he would be thrown into it, fragments of unpleasant
memories would flash all around him until he was able to get his anger under control. It was an
extremely difficult task as every image served to anger him further. After it was over he would wake
up exhausted, feeling as if he had not slept for days and his body would feel inexplicably sore.

On this day he chose to continue training. He was suddenly pulled upward; he didn't know how
much time had passed as time seemed to progress differently there, sometimes he was there for what
seemed like minutes to find that hours had passed and vice versa. He felt his body continue upward
until he began to see blurry light and knew that he was in control of himself again. He slowly opened
his eyes and let them adjust to the brightness of the sun, he realized that he was behind the dojo now,
not under the trees as he had been when he transformed. He instinctively looked around to see if he
was alone, realizing that he was, he let his muscles relax and took in the sunshine. His mind felt clear
and it was quiet, but his body felt tired, particularly his shoulders and shoulder blades.

"Damn it." He muttered as he realized that the top of his Gi was nothing but shreds. He made a
mental note to remove his shirt next time. Judging by the position of the sun it was around noon. He
stood up and walked back to the mansion to take a nap in his room.

He woke up at two-thirty in the afternoon feeling rested, after taking a shower he dressed and
ordered his meal to be taken up to his office. He went to the third level and entered the room, it was
nothing fancy, it contained only the essentials, a telephone and a Macintosh computer at his desk as
well as a fax machine and a filing cabinet on the wall opposite to the desk. There was a large
window on one side that enabled him to look at the garden and gave him a spectacular view of
Mount Fuji. He sat in his chair and called Bruce at the Mishima Building to check on the status of the
Moscow mission and was told that everything was going as planned.

Feeling at ease for the first time in days his mind began to wander and he found himself thinking
about Jun. He had wanted to see her or at least speak with her but now that he was thinking about it
more thoroughly he suddenly felt doubt. What would he say to her if he called? Maybe Devil was
right and he was acting like a teenager, calling the pretty girl to ask her out on a date; it was
ridiculous. He didn't even have her home phone number and since she was no longer employed by
the WWWC he had no way to reach her. He slowly shook his head as he realized what a mistake it
had been to make that deal with Devil, to give him control so willingly. He took a few slow, calming
breaths, the last thing he wanted was for Devil to surface.

He decided to focus on tournament matters, he wondered if Heihachi had registered yet, there were
only a few days left before the deadline. He knew that he would enter the tournament, there was no
doubt about it, but every day he looked at the roster expecting to find his father's name and every
time he didn't see it a tiny grain of doubt invaded his thoughts. What if he didn't enter? What if he
had planned something drastic to get rid of him instead? Blowing up the stadium at the height of the
event, for instance. He shook his head at his own thoughts, that wasn't the old man's style he would face him in the arena.

He picked up the phone and dialed Sayuri's number at the Zaibatsu.

"Yes, sir?" She answered promptly, there was a separate line for phone calls from his home office.

"Did you take care of all the appointments?"

"Yes, I rescheduled two and canceled the rest."

"Did any new participants sign up for the tournament?"

There was a slight pause. "...Yes, two."

"Fine, fax me the new list immediately." He wanted to ask if Heihachi was one of them but didn't want to reveal his curiosity to anyone.

"Yes, sir..." Sayuri seemed to hesitate slightly. "...Miss Kazama wanted me to give you a message."

"What is it?" He asked calmly, but for reasons unknown to him his heart began to beat faster.

"She gave me her home phone number, she wanted me to tell you, and I quote, 'he will want to call me'."

"Is that it?" He felt irritated, if that was indeed the entire message she was assuming too much thinking that he would call her simply because she willed it.

"Yes, sir, it is, I'll fax you her number along with the new roster. I'm going home in a few minutes, is there anything else you need before I leave?"

"No." He hung up without waiting for her response.

A few minutes later the familiar high-pitched static from the fax machine filled the office, Kazuya stood up and walked to the counter to retrieve the list. He scanned most of it as he had seen it before: Armor King, King, Ganryu, Bruce, Yoshimitsu, Kunimitsu, Lee, Paul Phoenix, Marshall Law and Wang Jinrei. One of the new names was Baek Doo San, someone he had never heard of, he had to read the last name on the list twice to make sure his eyes were not deceiving him.

Jun Kazama.

"...What the hell?" He wondered out loud.

He stood staring at the list trying to make sense of what he was seeing, he attempted to piece together a scenario that would explain what Jun's name was doing on the roster but was not able to come up with anything logical. He saw the sheet of paper with her phone number and quickly took it to the desk and dialed it.

"Hello?" Jun answered at the second ring.

"What the hell are you thinking entering the tournament?" He asked gruffly.

"Your phone etiquette needs work," Jun said calmly.

"Answer my question." He demanded.
"Is this how you treat every participant? You welcome them with a threatening phone call?" She asked sounding annoyed.

"I am not threatening you in any way."

"Your tone is threatening, I don't appreciate it."

Kazuya breathed in deeply. "Why are you entering the tournament?"

"You said you didn't want to speak to me," Jun began, "I thought that you were going to either avoid me or maybe even ban me from the building and I came to the conclusion that this would probably be the only way that I'd be able to talk to you again."

He closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "You signed up just to talk to me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I..." There was obvious hesitation in her voice. "I don't want to talk over the phone? Can we meet in person? I'm free tonight." She finished somewhat shyly.

"Tonight won't work..." He was suddenly looking forward to the prospect of seeing her again but the Moscow mission came before anything. "How does tomorrow night sound?" By his calculations, Dr. Bosconovitch would be delivered to them Mishima Zaibatsu by six in the afternoon at the latest. That would give him enough time to welcome the doctor and meet Jun by eight in the evening.

"Yes, that will work."

"Where do you want to meet?"

"I think you'd better choose this time."

"There's a proper restaurant across the street from the Zaibatsu, how does eight o'clock sound?"

"Good... Is it fancy?" She asked hesitantly. "I mean, do I have to dress up?"

"You can wear whatever you want, no one will dare say anything."

"Umm...That's..." There was a short pause. "...I'll see you tomorrow then."

"Very well." He said before hanging up.

After speaking with her, hearing how insecure she was about something as inconsequential as what to wear to a restaurant he could not imagine her fighting in the tournament. However she had passed all the tests required to qualify, they were difficult and included several sparring matches against world renowned martial arts masters. He still couldn't understand how she had done it but was determined to find out. If she truly had earned putting her name on the roster... Well, that was one more thing to admire about her.

It was shortly before sunset, as he looked out the large window he could see the colors in the sky changing turning the white snow cap on the mountain to a soft orange; he turned his back on the picture perfect view and made his way to his bedroom. He was somewhat tired and needed to be up much earlier than usual. The mission wasn't set to begin until seven in the morning, one in the morning in Moscow, but he wanted to be available while it was being set up and certainly as it was being executed.
As he readied for bed he thought of Jun and what her possible motives for entering the tournament could be, but again he was not able to come up with anything that made sense. He thought of her as his eyes grew heavy and for a fleeting moment wondered what she would wear to the restaurant. He realized what a preposterous thought that was, Devil was right, she was making him behave like a teenager, he needed to figure things out quickly before she had any more negative effects on him. But at the same time, her insecurity made her endearing somehow... With that thought, he fell asleep.

Kazuya woke up at three-thirty in the morning and after dressing in a pair of white training pants he quickly made his way to the office and called Bruce for a status update. Everything was going according to plan, the men were set to drive to the location, a private airport, and begin setting up in two hours. Feeling confident, albeit anxious to have the doctor in his lab working on various projects, he went into the dojo and began training. He practiced for nearly an hour when he heard a voice over the intercom that was installed throughout the entire mansion and its surrounding structures.

"Sir? Mr. Mishima?" Came the anxious voice of the housekeeper.

"What is it?" He asked stopping immediately and walking to the wall to push the button next to a small speaker that was built into the wall.

"Mr. Irvin just called, he wants you to call him right away, he says it's urgent."

"...Fuck." He muttered under his breath, it was too early, Bruce had no reason to call him unless something was wrong.

He ran to the office and dialed the number to Bruce's office at the Mishima Building. "What happened?" He asked as soon as he heard him pick up.

"We have a big fucking problem," Bruce said in a calm but serious voice. "The doctor is on a plane to Tokyo as we speak."

"What do you mean?"

"Someone must have tipped them off." Bruce began sounding angry now, "he's not on a private plane, he's using a commercial airline, flying coach, making sure he's seen by as many people as possible and set to land at Narita International Airport at ten-fifteen this morning."

"Who's responsible?" Kazuya began to breathe heavily. "It was one of your men, wasn't it?" He accused.

"Priorities!" Bruce said raising his voice. "We have bigger problems at the moment."

Kazuya knew he was right, there was no time to reprimand him for his outburst. "I'll be there as soon as I can. I'll be driving out of here in twenty minutes, you can reach me on the car phone."

He hung up and called the housekeeper to make sure a driver was ready to leave in twenty minutes. He ran to his bedroom and showered quickly then dressed in a pair of black slacks and a purple dress shirt. He was in the car and exiting the driveway fifteen minutes later. Being so early in the day traffic was light and he arrived at the Mishima Building much more quickly than usual. Once in the parking garage he hurried to the elevator and inserted the key in the panel gaining access to the sub-basement where the security office was located.

When he left the elevator he hurried down the hallway. It looked much the same as the higher floors, the same gray carpet and taupe painted walls but the lack of windows gave many a claustrophobic feeling. The doors in the hall lead to clandestine laboratory departments and holding cells instead of
offices and conference rooms. Bruce's workspace, or what he liked to call 'strategy room' was located at the end of the very long hallway. There were a few armed guards wearing short-sleeved, dark uniforms patrolling the halls, they stepped out of the way and bowed deeply whenever they saw him; as always Kazuya ignored them completely.

He entered the strategy room and saw several men standing around Bruce's desk talking and pointing to something. The room was very large in comparison to any other office in the building. There were two desks on opposite sides of the room, one for Bruce and the other for Ganryu. There were two spare desks against one of the walls each holding a Macintosh computer and a printer, other office equipment such as fax and copy machines were seen throughout the room set up in a semi-organized manner. Maps of Tokyo and Japan, as well as various blueprints, hung on the walls.

"Leave," Kazuya said as he entered the room, the men obeyed quickly and soon he and Bruce were the only ones left. He walked up to the desk and looked Bruce in the eye. "Do not ever raise your voice at me again."

Most would have flinched or looked away, but Bruce held his gaze. "Obviously tension was high and we both needed to calm down." He shrugged his shoulders. "It won't happen again, boss."

Kazuya was satisfied and his mind quickly shifted to the matter at hand. "What the hell happened?"

"What I already told you," Bruce sighed, "the boys were setting up when they realized there were no airplanes being readied. They looked into it and found out that there weren't even going to be any flights leaving until six in the morning, that the two a.m. flight had been canceled. They interrogated one of the workers and he told them that the doc was on a plane to Tokyo. They checked it out and sure enough, it was true, he used his real name on the ticket and everything."

"Who tipped them off?" Kazuya felt his anger surge, he knew that he had to get it under control but it was difficult.

"As I said before, boss...priorities." Bruce stood up and put his hands in the pockets of his green sweatshirt. "We know who's helping him... It's Horizon Labs."

Horizon Laboratories was an up-and-coming genetics research company. They marketed themselves as the top private research company in Japan with the highest success rate of treating immune system disorders through the use of corrective gene therapy. They had a good public relations department, he had to give them that, but they were not well established enough to be of any threat to him. Though at the moment they had managed to thwart his plans in a way that not many had before.

"Fine," Kazuya suddenly felt better about the situation, "let them take him, it won't be difficult for us to send a team to their facility and retrieve him from there."

Bruce shook his head. "That would work except Horizon is in bed with the Russians and they're going to be dropping him off at the Russian Embassy."

"What?" He felt a headache coming on.

"But it's not as bad as it could be," Bruce said quickly. "Ganryu just called and he says he's got someone who can help."

Kazuya looked down at the desk and saw what the men had been looking at, blueprints for Narita Airport. Carrying out the mission in Russia, though costly, would have been infinitely simpler. Bosconovitch was well guarded when he was anywhere in the city and certainly in his laboratory, but he was scheduled to fly to Germany to meet with a company that was no doubt trying to acquire
his services. He was set to fly on a private jet out of a small private airport with low security, Kazuya's men had planned to swoop in and grab him overwhelming security through sheer numbers and firepower. But now someone had betrayed him and had left him in this less-than-ideal situation that he could only describe as a clusterfuck.

Shortly after six in the morning, Ganryu appeared at the door, his hefty sumo wrestler form barely fitting through the frame. He looked odd dressed in a suit as opposed to his normal, more casual style.

"Sorry about the bad news, boss," he said as he absently rubbed the scar on his forehead, "but I have someone that I'm sure you'll find useful."

He motioned for them to follow and Kazuya and Bruce walked behind him to one of the holding cells. His gait was surprisingly light for someone his size. They stood on the outside looking through a window into the gray-tiled room. A Japanese woman who looked to be in her early thirties sat on a metal chair behind a rectangular metal table. There was nothing remarkable about her, everything from her looks to her size was average. She was rubbing her arms over her brown cardigan, she looked frightened and had tear streaks on her cheeks.

"Who the hell is that?" Kazuya demanded.

"That's Dr. Hayashi, she's one of the head researchers for Horizon Labs," Ganryu explained, "Bennett Industries has a guy working at Horizon as their spy, he's the one who told us who to grab. She was on her way to work."

Bennett Industries specialized in rare laboratory equipment, he was expecting a delivery from them, the necessary components for the cryosleep machines that Dr. Bosconovitch had invented. The American company had proved to be a valuable ally and had obviously betrayed the doctor's trust in favor of the Mishima Zaibatsu. A wise choice on their behalf, they would be rewarded while Horizon was burned to the ground.

Oh, yes...I do love a fire.

Kazuya balled his hands into fists as he heard Devil's voice. "What does she know?" He asked.

"Hopefully everything, boss," Ganryu said as he opened the door, all three men stepped inside. The woman let out a small yelp when she saw them, they were quite the intimidating trio.

"What's your name?" Kazuya asked her as he heard the door close.

"...Y-yori Hayashi." She stammered.

"What do you know about Dr. Bosconovitch's arrival?" Kazuya questioned.

"N-nothing," Yori said as she began to wring her hands.

"Well, we're off to a bad start, aren't we?" Kazuya pulled the second chair from the front of the table and sat down. "Are you married? Do you have children?" He asked casually almost as if he were attempting to start a friendly conversation.

"N-no, I-I'm single."

"She's married, no kids." He heard Ganryu say behind him. "Her husband's name is Koji, he works for an accounting firm a few blocks from here." Yori let out a shaky sigh as she looked at Ganryu obviously surprised that he had that information.
Kazuya crossed his arms over his chest and leaned back in the chair. "You're lying to me, that is a terrible idea. Do you know what happens to those who try to do that to me?" He asked straightening in his chair, the frightened woman looked away. "I'd have some testimonials about what became of them but no one is available as they're all either buried in a cemetery or scattered somewhere, and I don't mean their ashes." He leaned forward and clasped his hands on the tabletop, Yori gripped the sides of her chair and began to tremble. "You see, they were not smart; but you must have a few science and medical degrees so I'm sure you're familiar with the term self-preservation. I'm no scientist but I've heard that it's inherent to all organisms, even the ones that have no brain, so I'm sure someone like you, who is smarter than all three of us put together, can figure out how to awaken that instinct and save not only yourself but your husband in the process. Otherwise here's what's going to happen, Koji will be keeping you company in this room and I will make you watch as I put my hands around his throat and squeeze until the light fades from his eyes. After that, I will let one of my men put a bullet through your skull and have them deliver both of your corpses to your boss's doorstep." Yori began to sob. "Now, stop crying and let me ask you again, what do you know about Dr. Bosconovitch's arrival?"

That was a beautiful speech.

Shut up and let me think.

Don't be ungrateful, I'm helping you think.

Her sobs gradually subsided. "...Dr. Bosconovitch will arrive at the airport at ten-fifteen." Yori said after a short pause.

"We already know that," Kazuya said impatiently, "who is he with? Who's taking him to the embassy?" She again looked at him startled as if she didn't expect him to know the doctor's destination.

"He has two bodyguards with him..." She stopped and covered her face with her hands and began to sob again. "P-please don't hurt my husband."

"Who the hell is picking him up?" He asked slamming his hand on the table, the action surprised Yori nearly causing her to fall out of her chair.

"I'm sorry!" She said quickly. "Someone from public relations and a security entourage will be picking him up. His flight is number 866 he'll be coming out of gate 58."

Bruce looked deep in thought for a moment then quickly exited the room.

"He only has two bodyguards?" Kazuya asked.

"Yes," Yori answered, "since our team is picking him up we saw no need for additional security."

"Who exactly will be picking him up? I want names." He demanded.

"Reiko Akiyama, she's the head of public relations in Tokyo and the rest, they will be five men, I don't know their names, they've all been hired by the head of security, Hachiro Sasaki." Yori wiped tears with the back of her sleeve.

Bruce opened the door. "I need to tell you both something."

Kazuya and Ganryu exited quickly leaving Dr. Hayashi forgotten.

"I think I know how we can do this," Bruce said, there was a glint of excitement in his eyes, "we do
it right at the airport." He motioned for them to follow him, all three men entered the room and he
guided them to his desk. "Gate 58 is the last gate, it's at the very back of the terminal," he explained
as he pointed to the blueprints on his desk, "a second terminal is under construction as we speak." He
traced the blueprints with his finger guiding their gaze as he spoke. "The construction zone is right
next to the back of the terminal, very close to gate 58, they're constructing rails for a tram that will
connect the two terminals. The gate is almost a straight shot to the escalator leading to the second
level where construction is taking place," he stood straight and looked at Kazuya, "all we have to do
is lure him into the construction zone and we can grab him easily."

"All we have to do?" Kazuya asked annoyed. "How in the hell are we supposed to convince him to
go through a construction zone? That might be a bit suspicious."

Ganryu spoke up. "If he thinks we're the security detail from Horizon he'll probably follow us
anywhere."

"Hmm." Kazuya was thoughtful for a moment, Ganryu didn't look very intelligent and in fact, he
wasn't, but he did have his moments once in a while. "That might work."

"We don't have to get him into the construction zone, we just have to get him as close as possible,"
Bruce began, "as long as we're out of the sight of security and other passengers we can force him
through the barriers, I had my guys check it out, it's just a roped off area with a temporary partition
wall. We can pay some of the construction guys to let us through without problems."

"Hayashi said he only has two bodyguards," Kazuya said, "they'll be unarmed having just left the
airplane, they shouldn't be difficult to put down."

"Two bodyguards?" Bruce laughed. "Fucking amateurs."

At first, it had seemed that a busy airport, with security and police roaming throughout the entire
structure, was the riskiest place to seize the doctor. However, as he discussed it with Bruce, Ganryu
and a few select men it seemed that it could be done using surprisingly little force. The real problem
was preventing Horizon from arriving on time and doing it without raising suspicions that anything
was wrong at the airport, specifically to ensure that the Russian Embassy didn't get involved.

They arranged for a bomb threat to be called into Horizon Labs from a group claiming to be opposed
to gene manipulation. Kazuya wished he could set off a real bomb, but there was no time and even if
there was it would only alert the entire city and may cause the Embassy to be involved and to pick up
the doctor themselves. Perhaps he would do it after the tournament, he thought, make them pay for
thinking they could challenge him and come out the winners. Bruce had also arranged for road
construction crews to be set up on the two most likely routes that the security entourage was set to
take, that would slow them down considerably. All in all, Kazuya felt confident in their plan, he
would have the doctor in his building much earlier than six in the afternoon and would be able to
meet with Jun by eight.

"What about the woman?" Ganryu asked.

"Hayashi?" Kazuya gave him a quizzical look.

"No," the sumo shook his head, "the woman from public relations that will be picking him up, we
don't have a woman."

"Fucking unbelievable." Bruce sat on his chair. "Maybe it's too risky, maybe we can arrange to grab
him on his way to or from the lab once we learn his schedule."
"No," Kazuya said firmly, he needed Bosconovitch as soon as possible, before the tournament started, his plans were behind enough as it was.

He hurriedly walked back to Dr. Hayashi's holding cell, she gasped and her eyes went wide when she saw him enter.

"Is Dr. Bosconovitch expecting the woman from public relations to pick him up from the airport?"

"Y-yes."

"He's expecting her specifically?"

"Yes."

"Does he know her? Has he seen her?"

"No, but he's spoken to her on the phone, she arranged his flight and accommodations."

"How old is she?"

"I don't know, about my age, maybe a bit younger."

**Didn't I tell you she would be useful?** Devil asked lazily.

Kazuya exited the room and walked back to Bruce's office, he hated to admit it, but Devil was right.

"I have someone." He told Bruce as he entered, he looked at the clock above the door, it was nearly seven-thirty in the morning. "Ganryu," he said turning to the large man, "call security at the entrance and have them send Sayuri down here before she goes up to the office, hurry up, she's always early." Ganryu quickly went to do as he was told.

Bruce sat up straight in his chair. "Your secretary? Are you serious?"

Kazuya shrugged. "She owes me."

"This isn't about who owes you," Bruce said sounding exasperated, "this is about finding someone who won't fuck things up."

"Watch your tone," Kazuya warned. "It sounds like you're doubting me, and if you have someone better now is the time to speak."

Bruce sighed. "You're right, my apologies, you obviously know her better than I do."

"All she has to do is smile and get three men to follow her, it will all take less than three minutes. It shouldn't be hard."

"Sometimes things that shouldn't be hard turn out to be damn near impossible to achieve, but...you're the boss," Bruce said sounding unconvinced.

Ten minutes later Sayuri walked through the door escorted by one of the guards. She looked calm and confident but Kazuya noticed that she stole a quick glance at the gun that the guard had holstered at his hip, she tightened her grip on the straps of her purse but her expression remained the same.

"Good morning, sir," she said in a pleasant tone as she gave each Bruce and Ganryu a polite smile, "you wanted to see me?"

"Why the hell are you dressed like you're going to a funeral," Kazuya asked noticing her long-
sleeved, black dress; it was by far the least enticing thing he had ever seen her wear.

"I'm sorry?" She asked looking instantly bewildered.

"The one day I need you to look distracting and you come in here wearing your grandmother's dress." He said harshly.

"Distracting?" There was anger in her eyes, but the way she clutched her purse protectively in front of her said that she was self-conscious.

"Leave us." He said, Bruce, Ganryu and the guard obeyed immediately.

"This is not my grandmother's dress," Sayuri said defensively once the door had closed, "this is from the Gucci fall collection, it's not even available-"

"I don't care if it was woven by the angels themselves." He said cutting her off.

"Why am I down here?" She demanded.

"Because today is the day when you show me what you are truly willing to do to save your boyfriend."

She seemed nervous all of the sudden. "Why do I need to look distracting?"

"You're going to help us kidnap a scientist from an airport." He felt that the direct approach was best. She gaped at him for a moment then her face went pale. "...I can't." She slowly shook her head. "...I can't."

"You said you were willing to commit a murder."

"No," she snapped, "I said that I might and I didn't think-"

"You didn't think I was serious?" He asked raising his voice. "What did you think I would have you do? Pick up my dry-cleaning?"

"No...I just-"

"You said you would do it if I reconsidered pressing charges against Lee." He reminded her hoping that it would help persuade her.

"I-I know I just..." She began to breathe rapidly, she inhaled then exhaled slowly as she looked at him. "If I agree to this I need a guarantee, I need to know that you won't go public and that you won't press charges against him."

"Fine." He said as he sighed in frustration. "Do we have a deal?"

"...I don't know."

"Think of it this way," his voice was suddenly low and even as he spoke, she was close to agreeing, he could feel it, all she needed was one more little push, "it's an old man's freedom in exchange for a young man's future, that's a fair trade."

Her shoulders fell as she looked down at her red, high-heeled shoes. "...What do I have to do?"

"You just smile and engage a few men in small talk, get them to follow you and your security detail
for literally two minutes. It's just like when you give clients a guided tour of the building."

She nodded absently and was silent for a short while. "...What if I can't do it? What if I make a mistake?" Her voice was barely audible.

She seemed to be wondering out loud rather than asking him, but he answered regardless. "Then you'd better pray that Lee has a really good hiding place away from Japan and that he can find you before I can." She looked up at him, her face expressionless, her breathing was even once more. "By the way, where did you say Lee is again?" It had become a habit by now, asking her when he knew the exact answer that she would give.

"I don't know." She said in a steady tone.

**Didn't I tell you she had potential?** Devil said admiringly.

He nodded in approval. "You're going to do just fine." For the first time, that morning Kazuya was fully confident in his plan.
Chapter Summary

The plan to retrieve Dr. Bosconovitch is set into motion but someone is dead-set on interfering.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sayuri took a deep breath. "What do I have to do? What should I say?" She seemed calm, albeit concerned.

"Your name is Reiko Akiyama," Kazuya told her, "you are the head of public relations for Horizon Labs, you will be at the airport to welcome the doctor."

"What can you tell me about her?"

It was a valid question, but it annoyed him all the same. "All I know is that she's in her late twenties or early thirties."

"But I'm only twenty-four," Sayuri protested, "what if he knows how old she is, what she looks like?"

"He doesn't, but he's spoken to her on the phone so make sure you don't talk with him about anything specific, all you need is two to three minutes of small talk."

"So he knows her voice." She said sounding anxious.

"Everyone sounds different over the phone."

"No, they don't."

"They do."

"Is he Japanese?"

"He's Russian."

"I don't speak Russian."

"He speaks Japanese."

"But what if Miss Akiyama speaks Russian?"

"I doubt that!" He said finally losing his patience, she took a step back startled by his outburst. "Just do everything Bruce tells you and you will be fine."

Go easy on our girl, Devil's voice was soft, almost tender. It was unsettling. Everyone is apprehensive at first.
There was a knock on the door and Bruce stepped inside. He held up a white dress for Kazuya to see. That was something that he appreciated about Bruce, he never needed to be told what to do and always seemed to know what was needed before he was asked.

**How perfect, white like an untouched bride.** Devil cackled.

Kazuya nodded in approval. "That's much more appropriate."

Bruce walked over to Sayuri and handed her the dress. "What is this?" She asked as she tentatively took it.

"What you are going to wear," Kazuya's tone was matter-of-fact.

She looked the dress over. "No." She furrowed her brow as she looked at the tag sewn on the garment. "I'm not wearing this."

"Yes, you are."

"It's too short." She complained.

"Too short? You wear more revealing clothing almost on a daily basis."

"I do not." She countered looking offended. "A dress has to be either short or tight or low cut, not all three at once. If I wear this I'm going to look like a-"

"We both know that's not far from the truth!" His tone was vicious as he spoke over her. Sayuri glared at him.

"I should probably wait outside," Bruce said quickly, "let me know if you need anything."

"That's not necessary, she's done complaining," Kazuya said looking Sayuri in the eye. "Now go put on the goddamned dress."

She stared daggers at him but made her way to the door. "Where?" She asked curtly.

"Ganryu is out in the hall, he can show you to the locker room," Bruce told her, without saying a word she exited the room. "I thought there would be tears," Bruce said turning to Kazuya, "but she just looks pissed at you, maybe I underestimated her."

"We all have," Kazuya said, "but she's an expert actress."

**Our little prodigy.** Devil said adoringly.

"So you really think she can handle this? She won't lose her cool?"

"She never has." He knew that the job was simple and after their conversation, it was obvious that she would do anything for Lee.

Bruce nodded, seeming satisfied with his answer, his demeanor changed immediately, he seemed relieved.

Kazuya's curiosity got the better of him. "Where did you get that dress?"

"From the receptionist in the lobby." He spoke as if it was obvious.

"How did you know she'd have a spare dress?"
Bruce smirked. "She didn't."

Kazuya sighed. "Not that it isn't impressive, but my receptionist better not be naked."

"She's not," Bruce responded with a self-satisfied smile, "but I promise you tonight she will be." He laughed as Kazuya shook his head. "I paid one of the girls in accounting to trade me her skirt and blouse for a lab coat."

"So one of my accountants is wearing nothing but a lab coat?"

"Yeah, but don't worry," Bruce said lowering his voice to a devious whisper, "it's the hot one." He laughed again.

"Are you taking any of this seriously?" Bruce's games were beginning to grate on him.

Bruce looked offended and spoke in a defensive tone. "More than you know, can you blame me for trying to bring some levity into this fucked up situation?"

"Fine." He knew that Bruce could be trusted but his attempts at humor were sometimes vexing.

"I'd better go get ready." He said as he headed for the door.

"Call me for anything I'll be here."

"Sir, yes, sir," Bruce said in a somewhat condescending manner as he exited.

You let him get away with too much.

Devil's words bothered Kazuya, Bruce was one of the only people whose company he could tolerate and even enjoy sometimes. There was also the matter of Jun Kazama, Devil was making him jump through hoops just so that he could spend some time with her. It was getting out of hand, he needed the mission to succeed he needed Doctor Bosconovitch working for him, helping him to figure out how to become the dominant force.

I have told you before and I will tell you again, Devil said sounding bored, science is not going to do anything for you. You can run all the tests and perform all the experiments you want and you will never be able to figure out how to be rid of me, how to manipulate me, or how to control me because it simply cannot be done. I am as old as time and you are nothing but a mortal man, or...you were. Now you are a god and you have me to thank for that, never forget.

He felt Devil retreat to the back of his mind. Part of him knew that Devil was right, but there was another part that dared to hope, to believe that he could have it all; Devil's power and all the control, no more sharing his mind, no more sharing his body...no more sharing his secrets.

Kazuya sat on Bruce's chair and studied the blueprints for the airport once again. For their sake, they'd better not fail.

Sayuri stood in the locker room in front of the full-length mirror looking disapprovingly at her reflection. She hated the dress, it went up to her mid-thigh, was overly tight and the top was so low-cut that she had to arrange her bra so it wouldn't peek over the neckline. It looked like something that had come from the sales rack of a discount store, like something the receptionist in the lobby would wear. She hated white, it really wasn't her color. She looked longingly at the Gucci dress in her hand...
and felt the soft fabric between her fingers.

In her mind, someone named Reiko who was the head of an entire department would wear something classy, not something that would make people mistake for a prostitute. She glanced down at her red, peep-toe pumps, they had looked perfect with the understated black dress, but now they only reinforced the negative image in her mind. Her long, jet-black hair reached the middle of her back. She had tried to arrange it in front of her so it would conceal some of the cleavage that she was showing but it looked ridiculous. Sighing she moved it behind her shoulders again.

She took a deep breath and smiled as she looked in the mirror. "Hello, I'm Reiko Akiyama, welcome to Tokyo." She sighed. "I can't do this." It just didn't seem convincing, maybe Kazuya was right and a distracting dress was necessary.

She walked away and softly opened the door, she automatically stood still upon hearing voices, she quickly recognized them as Bruce and Ganryu.

"What?" She heard Bruce ask in a low voice. "You think I like doing it?"

"That's not what I meant?" Ganryu said sounding apologetic. "It's just that I had to take care of... you know the one in Ireland and I don't feel comfortable with it."

"We both know that wasn't your first time," Bruce said.

"No, but it's the first time I've... you know... taken care of someone with so many connections, what if someone comes after me?"

"Were you careless?" Bruce asked.

"Of course not."

She heard Bruce sigh. "Then you have no reason to worry."

Ganryu's voice was so low that she had to angle her body closer to the doorframe to hear him. "Maybe, but I also want to be able to sleep at night, so if he ends up wanting us to off the doctor you'll have to do it."

Bruce sounded irritated. "Don't be a whiny bitch, you knew what this job was when you signed up."

Sayuri felt a wave of nausea and braced herself on the doorframe closing her eyes as she waited for it to pass. What was she getting herself into? Kidnapping was bad enough, but now murder was a possibility?

"You look ready to go." She gasped and opened her eyes, Bruce was standing next to her, he had changed from his jeans and green sweatshirt to a dark-gray suit.

"I am." She said standing up straight and wishing that the dress was a few inches longer. "You're going as well?" Bruce nodded. "Is Mr. Mishima going?" She asked hoping that the answer was no.

"No, he's the general and we're the lowly troops." He said as he gestured for her to follow him.

She walked with him to the elevator, he pushed the button on the panel for the parking garage. The silence between them was awkward and heavy but at the same time knowing that Kazuya would not be joining them put her slightly at ease. She followed him out of the elevator and immediately saw men wearing black suits climbing into a black Cadillac sedan with tinted windows. In front of it was a black six passenger limousine, Ganryu was standing next to it and a man in a driver's uniform was
holding the door open.

"Miss Akiyama." The man smiled as he motioned her inside.

She attempted to smile but couldn't muster it, instead, she gave a stiff nod when the feeling of nausea returned. She took a deep breath as she steeled her nerves and stepped into the limo feeling uncomfortable in her short, cheap dress. She took the seat on the right, with her back to the driver, Ganryu stepped in directly after her and sat beside her. Bruce followed them in, taking the opposite seat and facing them both. As they exited the parking garage Sayuri was grateful for the silence, but after a few blocks, it became uncomfortable.

She wished that Lee was there, she always felt safe when he was with her. She missed the way he would protectively put his arm around her waist when they were in a strange place. She would lean in against him, lay her head on his shoulder and smell that subtle hint of cologne that he always wore and she and would feel at ease. She reminded herself that she would see him again in a few days but it made her feel worse because she needed him now. She needed him to hold her hand in this dangerous situation, during this crime that she would be committing for him or because of him, she didn't know which. It didn't matter because she couldn't blame him for what she was about to become, she couldn't be angry with him for putting her in that position. She had robbed herself of that right the minute she betrayed him; she could have chosen anyone else in the world to get her revenge, but she had chosen his brother. It was the worst decision she had ever made.

The two men sitting with her were certainly intimidating. Bruce with his calm but intense demeanor and wearing that suit looked much more imposing than when he walked around the Mishima Building wearing jeans and smiling at all the women. As she looked to her left she noticed that Ganryu was sitting closer to her than he had been when they entered the vehicle, before her very eyes he shifted toward her.

"That is close enough." She warned. "Stop inching toward me."

"What the hell, man?" Bruce furrowed his brow narrowed his eyes at him.

"I'm sorry," Ganryu began as he bowed his head, "it's just that I've never been able to get this close to you and your fragrance is so lovely."

Sayuri felt her cheeks flush; she was angry, uncomfortable and embarrassed at the same time. Without giving it a second thought she grabbed onto the side handle and took the seat opposite Ganryu and next to Bruce.

"I hope you don't mind." She said apologetically.

"No," he shook his head, "I completely understand."

"I mean no disrespect," Ganryu said quickly, "I know that you have a boyfriend and my heart belongs to the enchanting Michelle Chang, but I appreciate beauty wherever I see it."

Sayuri shook her head and pressed her fingers to her temple, she felt a headache coming on.

"Here," Bruce said as he reached into the inner pocket of his jacket, "your ID badge."

It was a rectangular piece of laminated, hard plastic hanging from a black cord. On the front was her picture, the same one that was on her current Mishima Zaibatsu ID card, below the name read, Reiko Akiyama. 'Horizon Laboratories' was printed at the bottom imposed over their logo, a stereotypical blue outline of a hill with a yellow sun setting behind it. It reminded her of a retirement home.
"I didn't know there was an entire department dedicated to creating false documents." She said as she slipped the cord over her head.

"What can I say?" Bruce shrugged. "The boss thinks of everything."

She felt her sense of uneasiness returning. "He said you would tell me what to do." She noticed Bruce's jaw tighten as she told him.

"Didn't he tell you anything?" She shook her head. "I know that you can't divulge details," Bruce began as he turned to face her, "but I need to know what kind of work you've done for him before, it'll give me an idea of how detailed I need to be."

She stared at him feeling confused. "...Work?"

"...Holy shit..." Bruce closed his eyes and ran his hand over his mohawk. "Don't tell me this is your first time."

Sayuri looked down at her hands and saw that they started to shake. "...If by work you mean something illegal...this is my first time."

Bruce shook his head. "...It's just that the way he worded things made me think that you had some experience, though I knew it wouldn't be much, but this..."

An uncomfortable silence followed for the next few minutes. It was a crushing, nauseating feeling, for the first time in her life being pretty and looking helpless wasn't going to garner her any sympathy, let alone help. She realized that she was completely on her own, it was a frightening feeling, she wanted to cry but knew that it would only make things worse. The entire plan was hinging on her performance and her ability to gain the doctor's trust, it was more than Lee's freedom and career that was in jeopardy, more than her conscience and peace of mind. The two men sitting in the car with her were dangerous; underneath Bruce's easy-going attitude and Ganryu's goofy expression was a darkness. What would they do to her if the plan failed because she made a mistake? Their freedom and livelihoods were on the line, they would certainly not react favorably if everything fell apart because of her.

She watched her trembling hands and focused on taking slow, deep breaths until they were steady once more. She knew that Bruce must be trying to find a way to remedy the situation but she could no longer stand the silence and decided to ask her own questions hoping to perhaps be of some help.

"When you're on a...job," she began cautiously, hoping that her wording was correct, "what do you find distracting?"

"Nothing," Bruce answered sounding offended, Ganryu nodded in agreement.

"Then why am I here?" She asked suddenly feeling irritated. "How am I supposed distract men who aren't distracted by anything?"

Bruce exhaled impatiently. "Not the bodyguards, the doctor. You're supposed to charm and distract the doctor, you don't even acknowledge them, get him to like you, get him to follow you and they'll follow anywhere he goes."

It was as if an enormous weight had been lifted off her shoulders, the task suddenly seemed doable. *Let the storm rage around you, pretend you're in the eye and that nothing can touch you,* she remembered the saying from her past.

"I can do it." She told Bruce.
"Are you sure?"

"I competed in a lot of beauty pageants."

"This can't be happening." Bruce closed his eyes and shook his head. "He sent us into this job with someone whose only talent smiling and waving at the same time?"

"Will you let me finish please?" Sayuri snapped. "The goal is to win the crown, and the only way to win the crown is to impress the judges, no one else's opinion matters. You just step on that stage and smile, pretend that there is nowhere else you'd rather be, convince the judges that there is nowhere else you'd rather be. No matter how you feel, no matter how much you hate the bitch standing next to you; that's all it is, playing a part, smiling and telling them what they want to hear. I can do that with one old man, I can get him to trust me."

"This isn't a beauty contest," Bruce said sternly, "there's a lot more at stake here than a sparkly crown, there's-"

"I know what the stakes are!" Sayuri raised her voice speaking over him. "My freedom and my life are at risk too!" She suddenly felt an anger overtake her, it was unlike anything she had experienced before. "I am tired of everyone, everyone underestimating me, thinking that I can't do anything myself. I can do this," she said looking Bruce in the eye, "so stop doubting me and start telling me what I need to do."

Bruce held her gaze for a moment then shook his head, she could tell that he was angry and was trying to calm down.

"Did you win anything?" Ganryu asked breaking the silence.

"I won everything." She responded in the most self-assured voice she could muster.

"Like what?" Ganryu asked again.

"I won Miss Japan when I was eighteen, I was going to compete in Miss Universe, but..." She saw that the two men were looking at her listening to what she had to say and she suddenly felt self-conscious. "My grandmother died at the same time that I was being crowned, so I relinquished my title the next day, it just didn't seem right."

"Sorry for your loss," Bruce said seeming sincere, without a trace of anger on his face. "Were you close with your grandmother?"

"No." She said truthfully. "She wanted me to be a lawyer, trying to live vicariously through me, and was ashamed of me for participating in beauty contests. She used to say that if continued to compete instead of pursuing an honorable profession I would peak before I was twenty then fall into despair, whatever that meant. Not only that but she told me that my only viable career option after that would be to marry a yakuza boss who could support my cocaine habit, but only if I was still pretty. If I somehow stopped being pretty I would have to sell my body to afford the drugs I craved and would die of an overdose within the year."

Bruce laughed. "Holy shit."

Sayuri shrugged. "She watched a lot of TV."

They were all quiet for a moment. "Marry a yakuza boss, huh? I've met a couple," Bruce looked Sayuri in the eye, "they're hardcore, but even they are afraid of Kazuya Mishima."
"He already threatened me, you don't have to remind me," she said defiantly, "I'm not stupid, I'm not going to forget." She was frightened to the core as she said those words, but she remembered what Kazuya had said. *Pray that Lee has a really good hiding place away from Japan and that he can find you before I can*. She didn't know what he would do, she didn't want to think about it.

"Well then," Bruce nodded in approval, "keep up that attitude and we might just pull this off."

She had to do it, no matter how guilty she felt, even if it meant selling her soul. *An old man's freedom for a young man's future.* She had no choice.

"Goddamned kids...give them an inch and they take a mile."

Heihachi Mishima stood across the street of the Mishima Zaibatsu Building in downtown Tokyo. It had once been his pride and joy, his citadel, but now it was ruled by the enemy; his own son. He strode across the street fully confident that every vehicle would stop to let him pass, and they did. It was the way he carried himself, with such assertiveness that even strangers stood aside or stopped their vehicles to let him pass.

He straightened the lapels of his taupe suit jacket before approaching the entrance, he braced himself knowing that it was entirely possible that he would not like what he was about to see. It wasn't his choice to be in the building that day, it was something that he had wanted to avoid but was ultimately inevitable if he wanted to register for the tournament. He had called ahead and made sure that neither Kazuya nor Lee would be wandering the lobby during his time in the building, he was being careful to avoid any undignified encounters; he was saving his anger and strength for the arena.

He entered and immediately one of the two posted guards asked for his identification, he had it ready and quickly handed it to him. The guard's eyes went wide as he read the name, he looked from Heihachi to the ID and back again no doubt checking to make certain that he was indeed the correct person. The photo on the card had the same face of a Japanese man in his mid-fifties, the same horseshoe mustache and the same bald head and dark stalks of hair sticking up from behind the ears. Once satisfied the guard scribbled something on a clipboard and bowing slightly handed him the card, Heihachi snatched it from his hand and walked through the tall, glass double doors.

He was immediately angered and displeased by what he saw, the entire lobby had been redecorated, everything from floors to ceiling was different from how he had left it. There was no grandeur, no sense of splendor, it was minimalist, modern bullshit. At heart, Kazuya was just a kid trying to keep up with trends. To make matters worse he noticed that his suit matched the décor, it made him blend in, that in itself made him angry because he was Heihachi Mishima; he didn't blend in, he stood out, his presence alone commanded attention.

He stalked toward the desk where a pretty, young woman who he placed in her early twenties, sat with the telephone receiver to her ear. He stood and watched impatiently while she finished her conversation, upon seeing him she smiled slightly, then turned her attention to an open appointment book and scribbled something down with a pencil.

"I don't know if you can reschedule, I'll have his secretary call you tomorrow, I apologize for that, thank you." As she hung up she lost her grip on her pencil and it rolled toward the edge of the desk, she reached for it giving Heihachi an eyeful of cleavage and a full view of her lacy, white bra. She quickly leafed through the book as she acknowledged him. "How can I help you?" She asked.

"Good morning, young miss." He began in a pleasant tone, "I was looking for the Mishima Building but it seems that I've inadvertently stumbled into a whorehouse."
The girl smiled nervously. "This is the Mishima Building."

"Well if that's the case button up that goddamned blouse, there's a certain image I want associated with the Mishima name and it's not a pair of free-floating tits."

The young woman gaped at him as she touched a hand lightly to her chest. "...You can't speak to me that way."

"I can speak to you any way I please," he said pointing a finger at her, then at himself, "this is my building."

The girl sullenly did the top three buttons of her blouse. "...You're Mr. Mishima's father?"

"No." He answered feeling utterly disrespected. "I am Mr. Mishima."

The girl sighed dejectedly. "What can I do for you?"

"Sir."

"I'm sorry?" She asked giving him a confused look.

"Call me sir."

She sighed again. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"I'm here to register for the tournament." It hurt to say those words, he had to lower himself to registering in the same way that all the other participants did. He felt like a commoner, like a peasant and it made him hate Kazuya all the more.

"Well," the young woman said pulling a stack of papers out of a drawer and attaching them onto a clipboard, "I hope you have a couple of hours to spare for the physical tests."

"I don't." He pulled the invitation out of the inner pocket of his jacket and handed it to her.

"Oh." She removed most of the papers. "Please read these."

He snatched the clipboard out of her hand. "That won't be necessary, hand me a pen." The girl did as she was asked and he quickly signed the bottom of the page, he didn't care what it said, he was going to enter and win the tournament no matter what.

"So Kazuya is unavailable for the day." He said as he handed her the signed document. He had called in advance to make sure that was the case. "Is he in the building?"

"I don't know."

"What about my other worthless son?"

"...Mr. Chaolan?" The girl asked hesitantly.

Heihachi sighed in frustration. "Is there another one I don't know about?"

"...Umm...No?" She began to look uncomfortable, she glanced at the guards in the foyer then back at him.

"Well then?" He asked impatiently.
"...Um...Mr. Chaolan is still away, he'll return on Friday."

"How long has he been gone?"

She looked down at her desk calendar. "A week and a half."

"Unbelievable." He shook his head. "Kazuya is nowhere to be found, Lee's not here... So who's running this place then?"

"I don't know."

If I don't do something these goddamned kids are going to run this place into the ground. Heihachi inhaled deeply to keep his composure.

"What's your name girl?" He asked.

"Asami."

"Well, Asami, I'm going to do my good deed for the day." He said putting his hands on the desk and leaning in toward her, the girl furrowed her brow and tried to shrink back into her chair. "You need to start looking for a job because I'm going to win the tournament and on my first day back I'm going to be coming in with my own receptionist and I'd better find this chair empty and ready for her."

She stared at him with a bewildered expression. "...What's your good deed?" She asked after a short pause.

Heihachi shook his head in disbelief. "Telling you so that you don't find yourself unemployed and physically thrown into the street. Don't look so worried, you won't have trouble finding work, I'm sure any strip club will be happy to have you."

"...You're making me very uncomfortable." She said glancing at the guards again.

"I hope the next time we see each other is at a topless bar." He said before turning toward the exit. "Don't expect me to leave a tip."

He left the building feeling utterly disgusted. The image and reputation that he had built and maintained with his own sweat and blood, was being tarnished by sheer incompetence. From unprofessional personnel to Kazuya's reckless management, his empire was slowly crumbling. It was going to take a hell of a PR campaign to restore the public's favorable opinion of the Mishima Zaibatsu.

Heihachi checked his watch and quickened his pace. He walked less than a block to a bus stop and sat on the wooden bench. A young man wearing dark slacks and a navy-blue windbreaker was standing next to it checking the bus schedule and smoking a cigarette.

"I don't have long," the young, Japanese man said, "it's a hectic day and they'll miss me soon."

"Are they going to retrieve the doctor?" Heihachi asked casually as he surveyed the pedestrians passing by.

"They left about twenty minutes ago."

"Was your friend able to get the weapons into the airport?"

"Yes," the young man responded, "the doctor's bodyguards will receive them as soon as they clear customs." He hesitated. "...But he had to get someone else involved...it's not an easy task, so he says
it will cost you double."

"Money is no object, but you both better hope that he's trustworthy."

"He is."

"Good, good." Heihachi nodded. "Is Kazuya in the building?"

"Yes, he's in Mr. Irvin's office."

"Who did he send?"

The young man dropped his cigarette butt onto the sidewalk and crushed it with his heel. "Four men, not including the drivers, Mr. Irvin, the big sumo guy and his secretary."

"Kazuya's secretary?"

"Yes."

"She's the one who's in a relationship with Lee, isn't she?"

"As far as I know, yes."

"I want her followed, make sure it's someone you trust. I want to know where she goes and who she associates with."

It was very interesting, Kazuya sending his brother's girlfriend on such an important and potentially dangerous assignment while Lee was away. He knew it didn't mean that Lee wasn't aware, but if he wasn't maybe it meant that his two sons were more divided than he thought. At first, he had feared that they would work together against him, but the more he thought about it, he began to remember how deeply rooted their rivalry had been in the past. If that was still the case it would make things infinitely easier for him.

"What's their plan?" Heihachi asked.

"All I know is that someone, or maybe everyone, will try to pass themselves off as the team from the Horizon Labs, they're the ones the doctor will be expecting."

"How are they going to arrive at the airport before Horizon's team? How are they going to get him out without causing a scene?"

"I don't know." He checked his watch. "They're really tight-lipped about this one, I know it's not much info, but it was all I could get. I have to go, they'll miss me soon."

Heihachi stood up as the young man began to walk in the direction of the Mishima Building, turning his back on his informant, he began to walk briskly toward the intersection. He turned left and continued his fast-paced steps for about five minutes until he reached a one-level, four suite building, it was home to a small dojo, a nail salon, and a dry cleaner's shop. Nestled between the dry cleaner's and the salon was an office space with a sign that read 'For Lease' taped to the front window, he pulled the door open and stepped into a small reception area. The carpet was gray and newly cleaned, the walls white and spotless. A black desk occupied by an attractive woman in her early thirties was set up next to the door to a small office.

"Good morning, sir," the woman greeted, "were you able to stop at the Zaibatsu?"

"Yes, Miss Nakano," he said as he removed his suit jacket, "I am now a participant in the King of
"Well then," she stood up and walked to a coffee pot on the table in the corner, "let me get you a drink to celebrate your upcoming victory." She said as she poured him a cup of coffee. "I wish I had champagne to offer you." She set the cup on a saucer handing it to him, he took it in his free hand and she took his jacket.

He admired her figure as she walked to the coat rack to hang the jacket and as she made her way back to her desk. She wore a black skirt with a blue blouse, properly buttoned, as well as black high-heeled shoes. This was the type of employee that clients should see when they first entered the Mishima Building; polite, attentive, attractive and intelligent, not an unprofessional stripper in training.

"I promise you, Miss Nakano, in a few weeks time we'll be closing our workdays with the finest champagne the world has to offer." He said before sipping his coffee.

She sat in her chair and smiled alluringly. "How many times do I need to tell you, Mr. Mishima? Call me Rei, you don't have to be so formal when we're alone."

"It's a good habit to get into." He looked at the clock on the wall and decided to focus on the matters at hand. "I was right," he told her, "he sent a team to the airport."

Rei straightened in her chair. "It's a bold move."

"Reckless." He corrected. "The boy has grown overconfident, he won't last much longer even if I stand aside and do nothing, even if he decided to cancel the tournament." He looked at the clock again. "Is everything in place?"

"Yes," Rei nodded, "the protestors are at the airport and I've called the TV stations letting them know they might become violent."

"Perfect, I'll be in my office, don't disturb me unless it's an emergency."

"Very well, sir."

He entered his small, windowless office and sat in his cheap, office chair behind his cheap, wooden desk. There were no decorations whatsoever, no additional furniture, there was no need; it was temporary. He didn't mind his tiny office in its inconspicuous and common location, he was hiding in plain sight, minutes away from the enemy's fortress and no one suspected.

He pulled an address book out of the top drawer and flipped through the pages as he picked up the telephone's receiver, he found the number he needed and dialed it.

"Russian Airlines, how may I help you?" A woman's voice answered.

"I'm looking to speak with Petra," Heihachi said.

"One moment please."

"This is Petra." A different female voice answered.

"Will flight 866 be arriving on time."

"Oh," she lowered her voice. "yes, it's on schedule, it will arrive at ten-fifteen."

"Five minutes after Doctor Bosconovitch clears customs you are to announce a message over the
"intercom, write it down." He instructed. "You are to say, 'Doctor Bosconovitch, the team from Horizon Laboratories has been delayed, wait inside the terminal,' do you understand?"

"I do, sir," Petra confirmed, "I will do exactly as you say."

"Very well." He said before hanging up.

He breathed a sigh of relief feeling satisfied with himself; everything was in place. He could have easily warned authorities, have the airline give Bosconovitch the message as soon as he landed or even gotten the Russian Embassy involved. There were many things that he could have done to stop the attempt to kidnap the doctor before it happened, but there would be no point; Kazuya would simply deny it and there would be no evidence against him. The doctor would keep his freedom but his freedom wouldn't do Heihachi any good, the purpose was not to do a good deed, it was to put Kazuya in an uncomfortable, maybe even precarious, position. By setting up his intricate trap he was setting Kazuya up not only for failure, but for failure in public, in front of cameras perhaps.

He had paid a farmer who lived a few feet from where the new airport terminal was being constructed a very large sum of money to lie and say that the government had seized his land without his consent. After decades of bitter discord and often violent clashes between farmers and the Transport Ministry over the construction of Narita Airport the public was ready to believe anything. There were also the naive and idealistic college students who were always ready to enact social justice and protest the opening of an envelope if it offended an underdog in some way. He knew that it was too much to hope for but he dared to fantasize about a reporter's camera recording the protest and unintentionally capturing Bosconovitch being kidnapped. He could imagine the look on his son's face when or if it happened and he almost laughed.

Any outcome would eventually end in Heihachi's favor. If Kazuya failed to capture the doctor it would thwart or at least delay whatever plans he had causing him to become more reckless as he attempted to acquire the doctor's services and thus making him more likely to make a mistake that he could not recover from. If he was successful and did capture Bosconovitch, Heihachi would swoop in after winning the tournament giving the doctor his freedom and earning his loyalty and services as gratitude. He couldn't lose.

Kazuya had thoroughly underestimated him, he seemed to believe that Heihachi was powerless outside the walls of the Mishima Building. He had forgotten that throughout his years as CEO of the Mishima Zaibatsu Heihachi had forged friendships and alliances, that he could call in favors from dangerous and powerful people who were fiercely loyal to him. Kazuya thought that by ridding himself of half the personnel when he took over eliminated the threat of someone plotting against him. Yes, it was true that Heihachi's most loyal employees had been fired, but eventually, he had been able to send in his own men. He had some in accounting, in the legal department, the labs and security. It wasn't easy, they were all low-level employees and had little access to important information, he had not been able to infiltrate Kazuya's inner circle yet, but even those low-level employees had proven valuable. It was because of those infiltrators that he had been able to learn of the plot to kidnap Bosconovitch in Moscow; piecing bits of information little by little to complete a picture. Kazuya had never seen it coming.

He stood up and walked to the door.

"Miss Nakano," he called as he opened the door.

"Yes, sir?" She asked swiveling her chair to face him.

"I want you to find the best interior decorators in Tokyo, no...Japan, and have them schedule the remodeling of my building the day after the tournament ends."
"Yes, sir." She said as she quickly wrote it down in her notebook. "Anything else?"

"Yes, start looking for a suitable receptionist for the lobby, the airhead they have there now is unsalvageable."

"Are there any particular requests on skills or education?"

"I completely trust your judgment."

"Very well, consider it done, sir."

"I will be in the dojo until noon," he told her as he made for the front door, "when I come back we'll start looking into what my other idiot son is up to. Goddamned, ungrateful traitor."

"Happy training." She said smiling as she swiveled toward the desk.

Heihachi felt satisfied as he exited his temporary headquarters. It had been a productive morning, no matter what happened at the airport things would end in his favor. Total victory was imminent; he couldn't lead them to the second floor.

Sayuri repeated the instructions in her head over and over, it was a simple task; take the escalator, not the elevator, down from the third floor to the second floor. Ganryu would tell them that he saw something suspicious and wanted them to wait on the second floor as close to the elevators as possible as his men surveyed the area. Lead the doctor as close to the hallway under construction as possible...and that's all. That was her part, it was simple, as soon as they were close to the hallway Ganryu and his men would overwhelm the two bodyguards and her part would be over. That's all, I can do it.

Sayuri was startled by the ringing of the car phone, she had not noticed the black device nestled in an alcove beneath the window next to Bruce.

"Yeah?" He answered as he picked it up. "What is it, boss? What do you mean protesters? The fuck are they protesting? How many?" Bruce asked exasperated. "...Fuck..." He ran his free hand over his mohawk and waited a few moments before speaking. "We'll make it work..." He said as he wearily eyed Sayuri, then hung up.

"The protesters are back at the airport?" She asked instantly knowing what the conversation had been about. "How many did he say?"

"Hundreds, maybe over a thousand, the point is that it's enough for us to worry..." He shook his head. "This is Japan, I thought everyone was happy."

"No one is happy anywhere," Sayuri was surprised by how somber she sounded. "They've been protesting on and off for decades." It was something she had been accustomed to hearing since she was a child, but Bruce was a foreigner, his lack of knowledge on the subject was understandable. "It's farmers who don't want to be forced to sell their lands so that the airport can be built, or expanded in this case."

"Today of all days..." Bruce shook his head.

"More police around, maybe even riot police..." Ganryu said worriedly.

"Cameras too," Sayuri put in, "since it's the first time they've gathered in over a year."
There was a contemplative look on Bruce's face, he was quiet for almost a full minute. "...We'll have to start a riot."

"What?" Sayuri asked straightening in her seat. "You can't do that! People have been injured during those protests, some have even died, we can't just-"

"It's us or them!" Bruce raised his voice making her shrink back in her seat. "I'm not going to get arrested and I'm sure as hell not going to fail the boss." He picked up the car phone and dialed a number then began giving orders.

Sayuri tuned out everything he was saying, her heart was drumming loudly in her chest. There was too much that could go wrong. And even if they were successful they would leave a trail of chaos and violence in their wake, how would she be able to live with herself knowing what she had been a part of?

"Can you keep it together?" Bruce's gruff voice broke through her thoughts, she realized that he was looking intently at her.

"...Me?" She asked uncertainly.

"Yeah." His eyes bore into hers.

Her heart was racing and her stomach churning but she gave the only correct answer. "I can." She knew Bruce was right, failing wasn't an option.

He nodded in approval. "This might actually work in our favor, with all the commotion the attention will be outside."

They were silent for the rest of the drive. After taking the off-ramp toward the airport traffic slowed down considerably, but they had left with plenty of time and had some time to spare. Near the airport entrance, she saw them, hundreds and hundreds of people pacing as they held up picket signs, most were young; they seemed peaceful. Since it was far from the first time something of the sort had happened at Narita Airport, police and airport staff were prepared. A rolled-up, chain-link fence was being set up as a perimeter so that the protesters would not disrupt the flow of traffic or step onto airport property. Men were securing it into the ground with thin metal poles as police officers paced back and forth keeping the protestors in their place, though to Sayuri it didn't seem necessary.

Their vehicles stopped at a checkpoint but they were only asked their purpose for being at the airport and were quickly let through. Beyond the checkpoint, everything seemed business as usual. Cars and shuttle buses dropped off and picked up passengers as pedestrians walked briskly through the crosswalk and cabs waited in the loading area. But she also noticed a couple of police officers patrolling, it made her nervous and she looked down at her hands as she tried to pull her dress down a bit.

"We're going to be short one man," Bruce said, "he'll be setting up the distraction outside." Ganryu nodded in acknowledgment. "I'll be close enough to see what's happening but not be seen."

"You're not coming?" She suddenly felt panic and automatically looked at Ganryu. She would rather have Bruce close, he seemed to know exactly what he was doing, but she didn't fully trust the sumo.

Bruce seemed to read her mind. "I kind of stand out in Japan, so he's the better choice. He looks like an idiot," Ganryu scowled at him but in her mind, he looked comical rather than intimidating, "but if things get tough he won't let you down." He nodded at the large man. "You ready?"

Her eyes went wide as Ganryu pulled a black handgun from behind his back. She was about to make
a comment about handguns being illegal in Japan but stopped herself realizing how stupid and naive she would sound; Bruce had so little faith in her as it was. Ganryu quickly inspected the weapon and with a surprisingly hard expression on his face tucked it back in his waistband under his navy-blue suit jacket. He nodded at Bruce who seemed satisfied, she assumed that he too had a gun.

She felt the car stop and took a steadying breath. *I'm in the eye of the storm.*

"Do I get a gun?" She asked playfully, pleasantly surprised by how natural she sounded, "I've never held one but I'm a very fast learner."

Bruce stared at her for a moment then a small smile formed on his lips. "I'd give you one, but I just don't think you'd be able to hide it under that dress." He said eyeing her up and down.

She felt herself blush as she remembered that she was wearing that cheap, white piece of trash, but tried to continue the conversation as seamlessly as possible. "You're right," she said adjusting the cord of the name badge around her neck, "what was I thinking? I'm the head of public relations, I have all of you to do the work for me."

"Not bad." He said appreciatively. Having his approval helped her feel at ease.

The driver opened the door and Ganryu stepped onto the curb then offered her his hand, as she took it she noticed how strong and steady it was. Once out of the limo she felt the urge to pull down her dress a bit or to look down to make sure that her bra wasn't peeking over the neckline but decided that she needed to radiate confidence the same way that she used to when she was on the stage in front of an audience and instead stood with her shoulders back and left things as they were. She saw the three Zaibatsu men in dark suits stand behind Ganryu, she made her way to the Russian Airlines entrance and trusted that they were all following behind her, again, focusing on appearing confident.

She felt oddly calm as they made their way through the crowded first level. It was an ordinary day in one of the busiest airports in the world. The lines for the ticket counters snaked around each other as travelers stepped off escalators and entered elevators to reach the baggage claim area. They crisscrossed each other with hurried steps eager to meet their loved ones or to reach their gates on time checking clocks, checking watches and paying no mind to what others were doing.

As they arrived at the third level she looked up at the electronic reader board and saw that flight 866 from Moscow had arrived. Feeling her heart race and her stomach tighten she and her entourage turned toward the customs area. As she turned she couldn't help glancing behind her at Ganryu who gave her a slight nod; it was oddly encouraging.

They stood outside of the enclosed customs area and a few minutes later she spotted her target. He was a man approximately in his mid or late sixties, the top of his head was completely bald while the back and around his ears was covered in wispy, white and gray hair that went every which way. He was dressed in gray slacks and a brown tweed jacket. What struck her about him was his kind eyes behind round spectacles; as he met her gaze he smiled at her and she thought she would falter but she made herself think of Lee.

Doctor Bosconovitch was flanked by two men. They were both tall and muscular, both in their late twenties and both wore sports jackets. The man on the right had blond hair and wore a brown jacket and the man on the left had dark hair and wore a beige jacket, she didn't know why but she found it somewhat humorous and it helped her return the doctor's smile in earnest.

Her smile quickly dissipated when she saw a man in an airport uniform approach them and quickly lead them to an unlabeled door next to the customs exit. She looked back at Ganryu for guidance but he stood, staring as the target and his men entered the room and the door closed. He wore a stern
expression that made her stomach turn to knots. Less than a minute later all three men emerged, she noticed that the blond man was adjusting his jacket.

She looked at Ganryu again and she saw him mouth the word go. She quickly did as she was told and approached the doctor.

"Welcome to Tokyo, doctor." She said bowing deeply. "I'm Miss Akiyama."

"Hello, my dear." He said smiling as he bowed to her. "Thank you."

"Was there a problem with your flight?" She asked glancing toward the door.

"Oh, no," his two bodyguards moved closer behind him, "everything was perfect."

"Wonderful." She smiled, though not knowing what had happened behind that door made her nervous. "I hope you don't mind, but these boys insist on following us around." She said gesturing toward Ganryu and the men.

"As long as you don't mind mine." He said as he looked to the dark-haired man.

"The more the merrier." She said cheerfully as she took his arm in hers. "Shall we?" She turned to look at him hoping that he didn't think she was being too forward, to her relief he smiled and began to walk with her. They followed Ganryu and the three Zaibatsu men as his own bodyguards walked a short distance behind the two of them.

"Before anything else I'd like to apologize," Sayuri said somewhat somberly, "the airport protesters have gathered once more and I don't know how quickly we'll be able to leave, or what other problems they will cause."

"Did you have any problems coming in?" He asked concerned.

"Traffic was slow and we had to stop at a checkpoint but they didn't inconvenience us as much as I expected." The walk was excruciatingly slow and long, she wished that she could hurry them along.

"I must say I didn't expect you to be so young, or so lovely," Bosconovitch said turning to look at her.

"You flatter me, doctor."

"I told you about my daughter," she felt her chest tighten at his words, afraid that he would ask a question she couldn't answer, she simply nodded and was relieved to see the escalator to the second level, "she's a bit younger than you, but you're just as beautiful as she is." He said as they descended.

"That sounds like something my father would say."

Her father had always called her his princess, ever since she was a little girl she could do no wrong in his eyes. She had spoken with him less than a week before, if he knew what she was doing at that very moment... She was so ashamed that she wished she had the strength to tell the doctor everything to let Kazuya do whatever he was going to do to her so that this man could be free. But she knew that she didn't have the courage, and she couldn't do that to Lee, not when he was starting his company, when success was finally within arm's reach.

They stepped off the escalator and through all the chatter and all the noise she heard Doctor Bosconovitch's name being called over the intercom, the message was in Russian and she couldn't understand it but still, she froze. She felt the doctor's arm go rigid and saw Ganryu stop in his tracks.
She felt a vice-like grip on her upper arm and suddenly she was being dragged backward, through a horde of passengers, she tried to keep her footing, but she fell only to be roughly pulled up and forced to keep walking. The dark-haired bodyguard was dragging her along as the blond helped the doctor walk quickly through the crowd. She looked behind her to see if Ganryu was following them but neither he nor his crew could be seen. They had passed two gates with exiting passengers and the doctor's bodyguards were moving too quickly.

Her knee painfully collided with someone's piece of luggage and she nearly fell but was quickly and harshly pulled up again. She looked around in a panic, it was disturbing how everyone, every single person was too preoccupied to notice that a woman was being taken against her will. She looked behind and around but didn't see Ganryu in the sea of travelers; she was on her own. She realized that they were leading her away from the elevators and the hallway under construction; they were taking her toward the escalator to the ground level.

"Wait!" She said as she hurried to keep up with the large man. "This is what they want," she said desperately as she finally managed to latch onto his sleeve with her free hand, "you're doing exactly what they want you to do."

The man looked around and briefly stopped. "What do you mean." His Japanese was rough but not too difficult to understand.

"They want you to go to the first level." She lied hoping that there was still some way to salvage the mission.

The blond man gestured to a nearby bathroom and they all followed. The dark-haired man tightened his grip on her arm, she had lost feeling in her fingers and her hand and arm were tingling. Her high-heeled shoes caused her to slip twice on the black and white tile floor before reaching the bathroom, each time he pulled her up roughly, the second time she thought he would wrench her shoulder from its socket. She looked around as best as she could again, but didn't see Ganryu anywhere, everything was happening incredibly fast; it was surreal.

Two men were exiting the bathroom as Sayuri and her Russian escorts entered. The first quickly looked down at his watch as he saw them and the second cast his eyes down and began to walk faster. She realized how vulnerable and alone she was, she was at their mercy. When they entered the bathroom the dark-haired man let go of her arm and putting his hand on her back pushed her further in, she lost her footing and fell forward on her hands and knees. The most mundane of thoughts crossed her mind as she found herself on the floor of an airport bathroom, her hands suddenly felt grimy and she felt the urge to wash them. She tried to stand up but froze when she felt a metal object pushing against the back of her head.

"What did you mean?" She heard the man's rough voice behind her.

She looked toward the bathroom stalls and was distracted by a pair of feet she saw in front of a toilet. "...What?" She tried to steady her breathing but it was impossible, her thoughts were muddled and her heart was beating so hard and so fast that she was sure everyone could hear it. There was pain shooting up and down her arm as her blood began to circulate properly again, she still had no feeling in her hand or fingers.

She heard the doctor say something in Russian and the man moved the gun away from her head and helped her up. She didn't feel steady on her feet but somehow managed to stay upright, she looked at the men, they were both looking at her with hard expressions and were each pointing a gun at her. She almost laughed at the absurdity, as if one gun wasn't enough.

"What do you mean we are doing what they want?" The man asked her again.
"They want you to go through the front door and that's exactly where you're leading us." She said avoiding the doctor's eyes.

She didn't know where the answer had come from, her mind was tapping into its survival instinct and at that moment she asked herself who was more likely to cause her harm. These men who were trying to protect their charge and themselves? Or Kazuya Mishima? The man who had orchestrated a kidnapping and would think nothing of starting a riot. The man who had intentionally put her in danger and was plotting to ruin his brother's life. She hated herself for siding with Kazuya but as she saw it she didn't have another viable option.

"Who is doing this?" Doctor Bosconovitch asked her.

"Kazuya Mishima."

"What is your name, my dear?" The disappointment in his eyes was unmistakable, she had to look away again.

"Asami." She said the first name that she could think of.

"Why the front door? We're more likely to be seen there." The dark-haired man asked.

"The protesters are there," she said rubbing her sore arm to aid her circulation, "Kazuya's men are starting a riot, they plan to grab the doctor and lose the two of you in the confusion."

The three men looked at each other. "We go to the police." The blond suggested.

"You're holding two Japanese citizens hostage in an airport bathroom with illegal handguns." She pointed out.

"Two?" The blond asked, she gestured toward the bathroom stall and she heard a man gasp. "You're the one committing a crime!" He accused.

"He's not!" She said pointing to the bathroom stall again. "And who do you think they'll believe? The two Russian men with guns or the Japanese woman with a clean criminal record?"

"Fine," the dark-haired man countered, "we go straight to the embassy."

"You think they'll want to touch you? Do you know how many Japanese laws you're breaking right now?"

The blond gestured toward Bosconovitch. "The doctor is a world renowned scientist, the embassy will do anything to help him go back to Russia."

"What about you?" She asked the blond. "Will they do the same for you? Are you invaluable to the science world too?" She was grasping at straws, spewing nonsense that was probably making everything worse and she knew it, but she was desperate and didn't know what else to say. "I'll start screaming my head off right now, get the police in here, there's riot police outside too," she threatened, "they will have you in custody before the embassy can get involved and it will be all over the news. How well do you think your country will react to-"

"Or maybe I'll just shoot you and the toilet man right now," The man glowered at her as he stepped forward and pointed the gun at her head. "We find a way out and go to the embassy and no one will ever know who pulled the trigger when they find your bodies."

She closed her eyes and felt her arms grow heavy, she was in over her head but she tried one last
ditch effort. "...You'll never avoid them without me...Please, I'll tell you how to get out."

The doctor gestured for him to put down the gun. "How?"

"We came in through the hallway under construction on this level, maybe you can get out the same way." She prayed that she sounded convincing.

"Why would you come in through there?" The doctor asked.

"To avoid the cameras at the entrance."

"But you say they're expecting us at the doors right now?"

She sighed deeply. "...With all the commotion they're about to cause, no one will be paying attention to what happens at the entrance and the construction workers have started their shift. They would notice someone being taken by force."

"How do we know you're telling the truth?" The doctor asked looking into her eyes.

She let out a short wry laugh. "Because I've failed," she knew that the best lies had a grain of truth to them, "I can't face him after this, I don't know what he'll do to me but if you let me go..." she felt tears begin to form in her eyes as she looked at the doctor, "...I can get on a plane and go to someone who will protect me."

But she wouldn't do that, she knew that she couldn't. She didn't have her passport with her, she didn't have any money on her; it would be impossible for her to get to Lee before Kazuya found her. She felt appalled and ashamed for having once been attracted to that man, if she had known just a little about him, the type of monster that he really was...

Doctor Bosconovitch nodded slowly, he seemed to believe her. "...As soon as we're safe, we'll let you go."

"Thank you." She nodded somberly. "Let's go."

The men tucked their guns in their waistbands. "Don't you move Toilet Man," the dark-haired man warned turning toward the bathroom stalls, "wait fifteen minutes before you leave or I will come back here to shoot you."

The blond motioned for her to lead the way out and the dark-haired man put his arm around her waist. He smelled of sweat and cheap cologne, she tried to put some distance between them but he harshly pulled her closer digging his fingers into her ribs. As they exited her heart began to race again when she saw Bruce in the distance standing next to a coffee shop, he was looking straight at them, his expression hard. She gave him the slightest of nods and she saw him move quickly toward the agreed upon destination. She led the Russians through the crowd bumping into some travelers and swerving to avoid others, the chatter coming from the people all around her was disorienting, she had trouble focusing on her surroundings.

There were fewer and fewer passengers as they neared the elevators on the second level. She spotted the roped off construction area and a long accordion folding door blocking access to the hallway. The closer they got the slower they seemed to move.

"It's that folding door." She said.

She looked around hoping to spot Bruce again but didn't see anyone that she recognized. A group of six people stood waiting for the elevator. Sayuri and her escorts waited a few feet behind them. She
was glad there were so few people, the men looked too stiff and the way the dark-haired man was holding her did not seem convincing at all. She was sure there were security cameras recording them but she didn't dare look up, the last thing she wanted was her face on the security footage.

The chime of the elevator put her on alert once more. Five foreigners with luggage exited and the group in front of them entered leaving the immediate area clear.

"Now." She instructed.

They all moved together toward the roped-off area and the blond man knocked down a short, metal pole holding up a section of yellow 'caution' tape to let them all through. He pulled on the silver handle and slid the door open. He peeked discretely inside then turned to them and nodded, they all walked in behind him and entered the hallway.

To her surprise it was empty. She felt her heart sink, they were supposed to be there; she was on her own again and this time she didn't know what to do. The sounds of the airport were muffled and seemed distant making her feel even more isolated.

The wall to her right was made of glass and was mostly covered by paper attached with blue painter's tape, from what little she could see it was obvious that it would give a view of the runways. There were ladders and scaffolds positioned in front of the wall to her left which was still bare concrete as was the dusty floor beneath them. She could see tools and equipment scattered about, she surmised that the workers had left suddenly, the Russians seemingly coming to the same conclusion readied their weapons in front of them and walked cautiously, their footsteps echoing in the deserted space. Sayuri tried to push away from her companion but he held her even more tightly, she turned her face away in a vain attempt to spare herself from the offensive scent of his cologne, it was beginning to make her feel light-headed.

She heard hurried footsteps behind her and they all turned to see who it was, to her relief it was Ganryu accompanied by two men. She was instantly uneasy again when she saw that all three had handguns pointed at them. They were behaving as if they didn't even see her, it made her heart race and her chest tight, it was difficult to breathe. She felt the dark-haired Russian tighten his grip around her as he raised his weapon toward them. She heard someone else behind them and her captor spun them around quickly. It was Bruce and the remaining Zaibatsu man, they too had their weapons raised.

Doctor Bosconovitch said something in Russian, his tone was calm. The blond man grew expressionless and set the gun at his feet as he raised his hands. Ganryu and the two men cautiously approached him, one of them picked up the weapon on the floor as the other two motioned with their weapons for them to turn toward the other end of the hallway.

"No." The dark-haired Russian bent down to tell Sayuri as he pulled her closer against him. "You promised me a way out and you're going to give it to me." There was so much anger and hate in his voice that it frightened her to her core. He made her walk in step with him backward until their backs were against the glass wall. "Move to the other side." He gestured to Bruce with his head.

"Don't be stupid," Bruce said in an even tone, his eyes locked with the Russian's. "Be like your partner, he knows when to quit."

"No," the man shook his head vigorously, "she promised me a way out and she's going to make good on that promise."

"There are six of us and we all have guns," Bruce tried to reason, "how far do you think you're going to get?"
Bosconovitch said something in Russian but the dark-haired man simply shook his head. "I never should have taken this job. I'll just kill her right now then," he raised the gun to Sayuri's head put it against her temple, "you're going to kill me anyway, I may as well have some company."

She couldn't beg for her life, she couldn't struggle or think about anything; she was frozen. The only thing she was aware of the muzzle of the gun pushing against her head, it erased every other sensation and feeling in her body. She felt defeated when she saw Bruce slowly put his gun on the floor, he motioned for his partner to do the same. He then began to walk to the side of the hallway where the rest of the men were standing, though they all still had their weapons pointed at the Russian.

She had not seen anyone move so fast in her life. Bruce came charging at them without warning, his right knee slammed into the Russian's ribs. Sayuri felt his body shake from the brutal attack as she was knocked to the dirty floor along with him, landing painfully on her hip. She heard the gun clatter on the concrete and she instinctively pushed away from him and tried to crawl to safety. She felt strong hands pull her up, she didn't know who it was but she accepted the help and moved away from the two fighting men.

The Russian was standing back up and tried to land a right hook to Bruce's face but he blocked it with his forearm and brought his right knee up hitting the doctor's bodyguard in the gut and causing him to double over holding his stomach. The Russian was angry and wasn't about to give up. He came at Bruce with a flurry of kicks that the American seemed to have trouble blocking, the last one landed square on his chest causing him to lose his balance and nearly fall. The Russian was slightly taller than Bruce and was also more muscular, Sayuri knew nothing about martial arts or fighting but even she could see the power behind each kick. But again, Bruce was fast. He recovered quickly and waited for the Russian to charge, as he did he bent slightly and executed a spinning uppercut that landed perfectly under his opponent's chin, before the man could fall Bruce followed up with an elbow strike to his chest and the Russian landed unceremoniously on the concrete, but was soon up and ready to charge again.

"Shouldn't someone stop them?" Sayuri was surprised to hear how panicked her voice sounded.

"No," she heard Ganryu's voice beside her, "he's pissed, he needs to blow off some steam or believe me, you don't want to be riding back with him. Don't worry, we have a minute."

She put her attention on the fighting men and saw that the Russian was charging again, but in her eyes, he seemed slower than before. Bruce easily dodged his kick and moved in quickly putting his forearms on his opponent's shoulders and clasping his hands and locking them together behind the man's head. He pulled the Russian down as the larger man struggled trying to get out of his grip and began to bring his knees up to his chest landing one devastating hit after another.

"That's all the time you have," Ganryu said in a commanding voice that she had never heard from him.

Bruce kneed the Russian in the chest one more time before pushing him to the ground. Not missing a beat one of the Zaibatsu men stepped forward and pointed a gun at the fallen man's head.

Bruce was breathing hard, his shoulders and chest moved quickly up and down as sweat ran down his face. He wiped it with the back of his sleeve and took off his jacket, half of his white shirt was no longer tucked into his pants and his tie was crooked. But otherwise he looked well, she chose to ignore the murderous look in his eyes as he looked at the man who was now on his knees with his hands behind his head.

The dark-haired Russian was panting, the sleeve of his jacket was torn and his face was red and
splotchy. Sayuri noticed the blood around his mouth and she felt sick, she felt responsible for what was about to happen to Doctor Bosconovitch and those men. If only she had the courage to defy Kazuya...

"I have to go." She said walking in the direction that she assumed the exit was. She felt desperate to breathe fresh air.

She gasped as she felt a hand on her back and automatically spun expecting to see the dark-haired Russian again, but it was Bruce. She could hear the other men's footsteps behind them, everyone was silent. He walked by her side through the empty, half-finished hallway avoiding tools and going around ladders and equipment and then down a flight of dimly-lit stairs until they reached the exit. Through the open door, she could see the vehicles waiting and she felt anger rather than relief.

Her heartbeat was loud in her ears distorting the sounds around her as she watched the three defeated men being guided into the vehicles. She saw that a second black sedan had joined the Cadillac and the limo. Ganryu followed Doctor Bosconovitch into the limo and his bodyguards were separated one in each of the sedans.

"We have to go." She heard Bruce's voice behind her, it was low and calm.

"You left me." Her voice was dripping with anger as she turned to face him. "You were to supposed to be the goddamned professionals and you left me to do your job for you!" She had never felt angrier in her life. She was angry at everyone from Kazuya to Lee to Bruce and his men but mostly at herself for participating in such an atrocious act.

"I know," Bruce said evenly. "You can yell at me all you want later, but right now we have to go."

She knew he was right, trying to concentrate on her breathing she turned to her left to avoid looking at him and her eyes went wide as she took in the sight before her. She suddenly heard it, it was so loud and so clear that she was shocked she had not heard it before. Metal clashed on wood as the riot police fought to keep the protesters back. They had apparently knocked down the chain-link fence and were throwing bricks and rocks at the blue-uniformed officers. They pushed back with their shields but the protesters were relentless, some of them using their picket signs as weapons.

She felt faint, she bent down and put her hands on her knees for support as she began to inhale and exhale slowly. *I'm in the eye of the storm.* She told herself trying to calm down, but she felt a pull toward the chaos, in her mind, she deserved to be in the middle of the storm, not safely in the eye.

"We need to go," Bruce said gently putting a hand on her arm but she wrenched it away and quickly stood up. "What are you doing?" He asked her as she walked to the front seat of the limo.

"I'm not riding in the back with *any* of you." She said opening the passenger door and sitting beside the surprised driver. "What?" She asked shortly.

"Nothing, miss." The driver said as he glanced out the window undoubtedly asking for Bruce's approval.

The protest was happening about two hundred feet from where they were and it was obvious that no one was paying attention to what was happening there. She could see smoke somewhere among the hundreds of protesters.

"How are we going to get through all that?" She asked the driver.

"We'll take the construction route then take the road that the farmers use to get to the expressway." He explained.
"I hope we get caught." She said bitterly as she saw several men break through the wall of riot police.

"No, you don't, miss." The driver said as he put the limo into gear and began to drive.

The feeling of the gun's muzzle against her temple stayed with her no matter how much she tried to rub it away. She tried to find a comfortable position in her seat but it was impossible, she was exhausted and she had a dull ache in her hip and right, upper arm. She closed her eyes and felt tears stream down her face knowing that the driver was right, that no matter how much she hated herself for what she had done, no matter how ashamed she was, she didn't have the courage to live with the consequences of her actions.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to explore (on a smallish scale) how Kazuya and Heihachi affect everyone around them, how they use people and exploit situations to achieve their goals. Heihachi using the protestors in the off-chance that they might become an obstacle for his son without caring about consequences and Kazuya starting a riot. Yes, I know that technically Bruce gave the order and it was his idea, but he's Kazuya's right-hand man for a reason, his boss would have done the same thing if he had been there. And by the way Narita Airport is infamous for the controversy it's caused and all the peaceful as well as violent protests, so that actually happened. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't learn anything by reading Tekken fanfiction!
Chapter Summary

Jun is unsettled by a dream. Lee is plagued by unpleasant memories of the first tournament.

Chapter Notes

The events of this chapter are meant to overlap the events in the previous chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jun felt the warmth surround her body in the darkness. It was comforting, soothing at first but it quickly became uncomfortable. There was a dry heat that seemed to have consumed any and all humidity around her. Her throat felt dry, her tongue parched and the temperature continued to rise as she felt the air diminish inside her lungs. She breathed in deeply hoping for some relief but to her dismay, she felt hot ash penetrate her mouth and nostrils making her throat sting and her eyes water as she gasped for air.

She woke up with her heart thumping loudly in her chest in a tangle of sheets and drenched in sweat. She untangled herself from her bedding and urgently reached for the glass of water on her bedside table. She let the cool liquid slide down her throat then put the glass to her forehead and felt it cool her slightly. Sunlight was already streaming into her bedroom, she looked at the clock and was surprised to see that it was nearly eight o'clock, she couldn't remember the last time when she had woken up so late. She took slow, deep breaths and sat cross-legged on her bed as she attempted to make sense of what she had just experienced.

It had been more than a nightmare, of that she was certain, but she couldn't be sure if it was a warning, an outcome or merely symbolism. She suddenly saw Kazuya in her mind's eye and she felt fear grip her, but she wasn't afraid of him; she feared for him.

"Why?" She uttered softly.

She didn't have an answer, only a heavy feeling that followed her every step as she showered and readied herself for the day.

She dressed in a pair of jeans and a light-blue blouse and as she brushed her hair in front of the mirror in her tiny bathroom she realized what she needed to do. Letting a sigh escape her lips she set the brush on the counter and walked into her living room then lit the incense on her coffee table. Sitting on the small area rug, she began to meditate.

She soon found herself walking the endless, white sand with the cloudless, blue sky above her.

_I was beginning to worry._

Jun spun around quickly when she heard Angel's voice behind her. She stood with her sandal-clad
feet planted firmly on the sand, her arms crossed lightly under her chest. Jun looked away when she saw that the beautiful, blonde being had a pair of magnificent, white, feathered wings that shone almost silvery in the sunlight. She momentarily felt unworthy to look upon her.

*You didn't have wings the last time I saw you.* Jun said as she timidly turned her gaze toward Angel.

*I did not want to seem more intimidating than I needed to be.*

*I didn't know what else to do,* Jun told her,* I had a dream...or a premonition, I don't know which-*

Yes, Angel interrupted, *I am aware.*

*You look into my dreams?* Jun's apprehension was quickly replaced by a flicker of a feeling somewhere between annoyance and anger.

*Not normally,* Angel's expression turned to one of concern, *but I was drawn to it.*

*It's about Kazuya then.*

*I'm afraid so.*

*What's going to happen to him?* Jun asked feeling dread envelop her.

*I do not know. What you saw and felt could be something that he will cause, it may not necessarily be something that will happen to him. There's a feeling of turmoil today...unrest... But it may just as well be your worry for him manifesting itself as a dream.*

*But if it drew you to me it has to be more than a dream.*

*I can't be certain.*

Pardon my ignorance, but can a being as powerful as yourself not see what will happen in advance?

*No. I cannot simply look into the future and mark a date when an event will take place. I can see possible outcomes and I can discern which of those outcomes is more likely to occur.*

*Sometimes I see the future.*

*Do you ever see it when you want to see it? When you need it?*

*No, I try, but I haven't been able to figure out how.*

*That is because it is something impossible to achieve at will. Looking into the future is the same as trying to sort a jumbled pile of yarn, each piece is a different decision, an impulse that a single person acts upon. One must find the colors that remain constant and see where they join and separate, where they break. Once the correct strands, the possible futures, are found, one is still at the mercy of free will, of vulnerable bodies and minds. It requires patience and time that humans simply do not possess; a lifetime is not long enough to outline all the possibilities.*

It was not what Jun wanted to hear. She had been able to see glimpses of the future since she was a little girl, the visions were sporadic and brief and most of the time she had not known that she was seeing the future until it had come to pass. She had always been certain that she would be able to hone her skills as time went by, but upon hearing Angel's words she felt somewhat discouraged. She hoped that Angel was wrong, that with enough practice and determination she would be able to see
the future at will.

*I thought you would have answers.* Jun said unable to keep the disappointment from her voice.

*I do not have answers, but again I offer a solution. Let me join with you so that we may help Kazuya rid himself of Devil.*

Jun sighed. *You say that the future can't be predicted, so it is possible for me to be able to help him on my own.*

*Possible yes, certain is an entirely different matter. That is why I ask that you allow me to help you.*

*I asked that you give me time, I will see him tonight, give me at least until tomorrow to decide.*

*What makes you think that the outcome of this meeting will be any different than the last?*

Jun sighed in frustration. *Everything is different now; I'm no longer trying to get him arrested, I've entered the tournament to have an excuse to be near him even if he doesn't want to see me and I know which subjects to avoid when we talk.*

*I know that through your young, human eyes it seems simple, but all your efforts may not be enough in the end.*

*But they may be.*

Angel dropped her arms to her sides and her wings folded behind her. *You are stubborn, young one, tenacious. Pray that you are not wrong or we will all pay the price of your arrogance.*

Jun opened her eyes and found herself in her apartment once more.

"Arrogance?" She said out loud as she furrowed her brow.

She stood up and pondered the word as she prepared her breakfast. In the twenty-two years that she had been alive, no one had ever used the word *arrogant* to describe Jun Kazama. If any person had called her arrogant she could have easily dismissed it, but it had come from a divine being and that was what deeply bothered her. She began to question her motives for helping Kazuya, was she just trying to prove something? Was she being overprotective? Possessive? If that was the case it would mean that not only was she arrogant, she was selfish as well. She shook her head at the thought as she began to brew some tea. She wasn't being arrogant, she was being cautious, if there was an easier way to help Kazuya rid himself of Devil, one that didn't involve both of them being possessed, why not do that? She still didn't know what Angel's methods would be and the phrase 'saving his soul at all costs' was still nagging at her.

She opened the refrigerator to look for some vegetables to add to her meal but was disappointed to find none. That had been one of the advantages of living in Yakushima, she could grow her own produce and not have to bother with making time to go to the store to buy sub-par vegetables. She walked out of the kitchen and into the living area and set her bowl of steamed rice on the coffee table along with an omelet and a cup of tea then sat on the floor facing her small television set. She reached for the remote and turned the power on hoping to take her mind off Angel and her dream.

She flipped through the channels and settled for what seemed to be a news program. A young reporter was standing next to a sign that marked the Narita Airport entrance.
"It seems that it all began before sunrise this morning when word reached the Narita International Airport protest organizers that Michio Shimizu was forcibly removed from his home during the night. The Transport Ministry has denied these claims and says that they are investigating the allegations."

The camera zoomed out and focused on the hundreds and hundreds of people marching and pacing while holding picket signs.

Jun didn't hear the rest of the report, she felt inexplicably drawn to the protest. For a fleeting moment, she thought about calling Noriko to ask if she could let her use her car but quickly decided against it. The airport was over an hour away and traffic was bound to be a nightmare. There was also the possibility that she would be stranded there and would be forced to miss her meeting with Kazuya.

She had not been unemployed for more than a day and she already missed working. That was why she had wanted to go join the protest, she decided. It was the thought of being involved in something that could change things for the better, the thought of helping the underdog defeat a powerful entity.

She turned off the TV set and finished her breakfast then washed her dishes and packed some training clothes into a gym bag. There was a dojo close by where she trained during weekends, she would spend a few hours there and try to keep her mind off the dream, Angel and the protest. She felt her heart skip a beat when she remembered that she would see Kazuya at the end of the day.

"No." She muttered to herself.

She was just doing it to help him, she needed to treat it as a business meeting, or what she imagined a business meeting was like. It was all for his sake alone, if anything else happened after he was free of that demon, of that darkness... She sighed heavily. She had resigned her position and was now unemployed, she had entered a fighting tournament that might very well cause her to end up in a hospital or worse, she had rearranged her entire life to help him... She couldn't fool anyone, especially herself.

The ink was dry on all the contracts, hands had been shaken and the building had been leased and occupied. Still, Lee periodically, almost hourly, opened the thick file folder on the table and reread the business plan. He was afraid that it was a dream, that he would wake up at any moment and be back in Japan with nothing.

He ran his hands through his silver hair then moved his neck from side to side. He was underslept, but that was nothing new, he was no stranger to sleepless nights. He was a very light sleeper, it had become survival instinct when he was a child sleeping on park benches and alleyways. He could never let his guard down, not even to sleep. There were still nights now that he was an adult who had no reason to fear for his safety when he would sometimes be awakened by the slightest of noises. On those days he found that having someone sleeping next to him helped him fall back asleep, as long as she didn't snore... He missed Sayuri, she was the perfect sleeping partner. He checked his watch and saw that it was nearly eight in the morning, he had been awake for twenty-eight hours and it would be ten more before his workday was done, then he had to call Sayuri at eight. He made a mental note to buy her something expensive before his return; very expensive. He knew it would not make her forget but there was a possibility that it may help her forgive. But Sayuri had not been the reason why he had spent an entire night awake.

He had been plagued by memories the entire night, memories of the day exactly two years prior. For the entirety of those two years, Lee had told himself over and over that he should have handled things differently. If he had been ruthless like Heihachi wanted him to be he would be leading the Zaibatsu, if he had taken his training more seriously, he would have won the tournament. Or perhaps
if he had been compassionate with his brother the way that his conscience sometimes told him he should be, he would be leading the Zaibatsu along with Kazuya. There had always been animosity and rivalry between them, but before that day their relationship had been one of disdain and jealousy instead of all-out hate.

-Two Years Prior-

Lee Chaolan was the epitome of power and decadence in the New York branch of the Mishima Zaibatsu. A man hated by most of his employees because no one wanted a Chinese twenty-five year old as their boss when they had been in the business longer than he had been alive. It didn't bother him, in fact, he reveled in it. They were the same type of foreign businessmen who used to think he was not worthy of shining their shoes when he was a child; of course, this time he was the foreigner, but now he was looking down on them and as an added perk was sleeping with their daughters.

He was in bed with the daughter of one of his employees at that very moment; he had taken her home after the party even though for the life of him he couldn't remember her name. She worked in the building too, she was either in accounting or human resources...maybe. Things were going to be awkward when they returned to work, but Lee had not been in the right state of mind to worry about such things.

"The phone is ringing."

Lee heard the words and understood each of them individually, but together they made no sense. He felt hands pushing him onto his side and tried to resist but quickly found that he was too tired to care what the woman did.

"Pick up the fucking phone!"

Her voice was loud and obnoxious. He tried to ignore her but she continued to poke and prod his back and he began to hear the ringing of the telephone, he felt the cold air chill him as the sheets slid off his body.

"Pick it up!" She insisted. "I've only had like an hour of sleep."

"Me too!" He yelled as he began reaching for the phone. "Stop hogging all the sheets!" He forcefully pulled the purple, silk sheets over himself leaving her exposed. The air conditioning had been left on all day and night and he had not bothered to turn it off when he got home, now he felt like he was inside a freezer.

"Fine, take them!" She said as she reached for the comforter that had fallen off the bed.

Lee looked at the clock and sighed when he saw that it was only four thirty-eight; he had slept less than an hour. "Hello?" He answered in English.

"Why the hell haven't you signed up for the tournament?" A rough Japanese-speaking voice drilled into his ear.

"Father?" The word came out in English before he could stop himself.

"No, it's your dead mother," came Heihachi's sarcastic and cruel reply. "And speak to me in the proper tongue."

"I apologize, father." He said in Japanese, glad that the woman in his bed wouldn't be able to understand the conversation.
"Are you drunk?"

"No."

If Heihachi had called a couple of hours earlier the answer would have been yes...and also high. It had become something that happened almost every weekend, he had resisted at first but as months went by, the fact that he and Heihachi were an ocean apart began to sink in. He realized that for the first time in his life he was his own man and told himself that a little coke a couple of times a week wasn't going to do any harm. In his mind he deserved it, every day of the week he spent his hours working, then training after work leaving no time for a personal life. As a result, he had slowly become the poster boy for the work hard, party hard lifestyle. The way he saw it as long as he kept everything running smoothly and exceeding Heihachi's expectations he could do as he pleased on the weekend. Still, he wasn't stupid enough to tell him what he was doing.

"You sound drunk." The Mishima patriarch insisted.

"I was sleeping, it's four in the morning..." He sighed, just hearing the old man's voice made him feel like a child and he felt the need to confess to something. "...I did do some drinking, I was celebrating my birthday."

Being Labor Day weekend he had taken the opportunity to throw himself a late birthday party at a lavish hotel that had started early Friday night and had ended at two in the morning on Sunday. He had planned to use the rest of the day as well as Monday to recover before going back to work on Tuesday.

"Your birthday was two months ago."

"Yes, but I've been too busy to celebrate and since it's a holiday weekend-"

"Stop talking in Chinese and let me sleep!" The woman's shrill voice sounded like nails on a chalkboard and he felt himself physically cringe.

"It's Japanese!" Lee hissed at her putting a hand over the receiver. "Just go sleep on the goddamned couch!"

"I should have listened to Veronica, you are such an asshole!" She yelled in frustration sitting up, pulling the comforter off the bed and dragging it behind her as she left. Her long hair looked dark in the dimly-lit room, but he couldn't remember if she was a brunette or a redhead. He wished he had left her at the hotel.

"She sounds classy." Heihachi's voice came over the receiver pulling him out of his thoughts. "So you needed a three-day weekend to celebrate? You're twenty-four years old, you're too old for birthday parties. Leave that for the children."

"I'm twenty-five," Lee corrected, feeling irritated. "And this is the first time in nearly twenty years that I've had any sort of celebration for my birthday."

"Oh, I apologize, son," Heihachi's voice was dripping with sarcasm, "I thought taking you into my home and saving you from misery and death was enough, but now it turns out I was expected to throw parties for you too?"

"Why the fuck did you call me at four in the morning?" Even though he was half asleep, he realized that he was still somewhat drunk; he was usually a master at masking his anger. His mistake put him on alert, he knew that his father wouldn't take kindly to what he'd just said.
"Don't be insolent, boy." Heihachi's voice was low and tight, like a whip ready to crack. "I sent you to America so that you could learn how to properly run my company, not to adopt their culture of disrespect."

"...I apologize, father."

"I already told you why I called, but it seems that you're too damn drunk to answer so I'll ask again," Lee was thankful that there was an ocean separating them. "Why aren't you here now signing up for the tournament? The deadline is tomorrow, I assumed that you had signed up last month when you came to visit."

"...I'm not going to enter the tournament," Lee said hesitantly.

"Yes, you are." Heihachi's voice was calm and steady but there was an anger behind it that he recognized very well. "I already told you what is expected of you."

"The timing is wrong," Lee began to explain, "there is just too much work that needs to be done, I can take a couple of days off and make an appearance but-"

"That sounds like an excuse," Heihachi said speaking over him, "have you let up on your training? I'd better not find out that you've been slacking off because-"

"I haven't!" Lee snapped. "I train every goddamned day, it's not an excuse, I'm just as good as any of the fighters that are going to participate, but I-"

"Watch your tone!" His father warned. "You are my son! The world doesn't expect you to be just as good as the other fighters, you are expected to be the best!"

"I fight my battles in the boardroom and I always win, I don't need to prove myself in some fighting arena."

"You don't get to pick and chose your battles!" Heihachi raised his voice prompting him to pull the receiver away from his ear. "Mishimas fight in the boardroom and the arena, it isn't a choice. Even your good-for-nothing brother signed up already, you are making me look bad and-"

"He what?" Lee couldn't believe what he had just heard, though he should have known it would happen. "When?"

"Two days ago, and don't interrupt me again or-"

"I'll start packing immediately," Lee said dejectedly, speaking over him.

"It's almost six in the evening here, I expect you to walk through the front door no later than noon tomorrow." Heihachi hung up without waiting for a response.

Even though he was exhausted, somewhat intoxicated and now felt the beginning of a pounding headache, Lee stood up and began to pack. He felt stupid, he felt hurt but most of all he felt angry with himself for having trusted Kazuya.

His brother had called him the same week that the King of Iron Fist Tournament had been announced. He had proposed that both he and Lee should stay out of the tournament to show Heihachi that he could no longer control them. Most importantly to make him look the weak patriarch before the eyes of the world as payback for the hell he had put them through while living under his roof. Lee had taken days to think it over until finally deciding to set aside his differences with his brother and had agreed to forgo the tournament. Though admittedly he had been looking
forward to all the media attention that was certain to come with it, what he truly wanted to be known for was being a successful businessman. And he was sure that staying out of his father's tournament would come with its fair share of attention and requests for interviews.

As he packed his bags in his cold bedroom at five in the morning, he realized what a foolish decision it had been. At first, he had thought that Heihachi would do no more than admonish him but now that he thought about it, he could very well disown him or at the very least demote him to do some humiliating office job back in Japan. Heihachi had confided in him and told him that he had officially made him his sole heir; he had almost thrown away his career, his reputation, and the entire Mishima empire all because he was eager to believe that Kazuya was willing to set their past differences aside. He had shown weakness and been made to look the fool all for the slightest of hopes that he might have some semblance of a normal relationship with a member of his fucked up family. He had planned to work something out with his brother, to find a way to put him back in the will, but now... He would show Kazuya the mistake he had made, he would take the Zaibatsu for himself and best him in the arena with the world as his witness.

Lee stepped out of his pricey, Manhattan apartment into the chilly, Sunday morning with his bags packed and his passport ready, leaving the brunette or redhead, he still couldn't remember, asleep on his couch. He took a cab to the airport and was on a plane to Tokyo before seven a.m. Eastern Daylight Time. Fourteen hours later he arrived in Tokyo on Monday, at ten a.m. Japan Standard Time with bloodshot eyes and a severe case of jet lag.

He took a cab to the Mishima Estate, Heihachi had not even bothered to send a car to pick him up. He knew it was his way of telling him that he was not pleased with him. He fell asleep in the cab and woke when the driver stepped on the breaks causing him to bump his head on the window. He paid the man and gave him some extra so he would carry his luggage to the front door. As he stepped onto the familiar circular, stone-paved driveway he was unsteady on his feet, he stopped but felt as if his body were still in motion. After several steadying breaths he finally made his way to the heavy, wooden front door, Keiko the housekeeper opened it and pulled Lee into a hug as the cab driver set the luggage next to them before heading back to his cab.

"This house is not the same without you," the middle-aged Japanese woman told Lee, "if you don't come back soon I'll quit."

"No, you won't," Lee attempted a smile.

"I know," Keiko sighed. "You look like death, I'll make you some fresh miso soup and after you eat it's straight to bed with you."

"All right," Lee said as he began to make his way to the dining room, "you've twisted my arm."

"Lee..." Keiko softly put her hand on his shoulder. "Your father is in there waiting for you...he's angry."

Those words would have shaken him to his core when he was younger, maybe even yesterday, but at the moment he was too tired to care.

"Thank you," he said, truly appreciating her concern.

As soon as he entered the dining area he saw Heihachi, he was wearing a gray suit perfectly tailored to his form, the scowl on his face deepened when he saw him. He stood from his chair and walked up to Lee.

"Welcome home, son."
Lee felt his body stumble back a step as his father's backhand struck him across the face. He bit the inside of his cheek and immediately tasted blood, the pain gradually spread throughout the right side of his face and as he felt his temperature rise his hands instinctively balled into fists. It had been years since Heihachi had struck him and he didn't know how to react, so he stood there, frozen, his eyes fixed on an ancient Japanese vase adorning a dark, wooden table.

"This is to remind you that whether we are in the same room or on different continents you address me with respect," Heihachi spoke in a low menacing voice. "Don't forget that you owe everything you are to me. Had I not taken you in, you would have died in a back alley years ago and no one would have missed you, no one would have even noticed."

His words stung more than his backhand. Lee knew that he was right, without Heihachi, his best outcome would have been spending his life in prison.

"No one would miss him if he died now, except his gold-digging whores...oh, wait, he calls them girlfriends." Lee shifted his gaze toward Kazuya's mocking voice, he was casually leaning against the arched doorframe between the dining room and the first living area. He hoped that he had not witnessed the entire incident but he knew that the chances were slim.

Heihachi ignored Kazuya's remark and went to the unnecessarily large dining table to retrieve a clipboard then handed it to Lee along with a pen.

"Sign this," he ordered.

"What is it?" Lee wanted to rinse his mouth to rid himself of the metallic taste but didn't want to give either his father or brother the satisfaction of seeing his discomfort.

"The contract required to enter the tournament," Heihachi explained. "My assistant had to waste her time filling out the rest of the forms for you, so all you have to do is sign, your highness." Lee did as he was asked. "Now get some sleep, the banquet is tonight at eight, I expect you both there early."

He took the clipboard from Lee and gave him a strange look, almost as if there was something else that he wanted to say, but he glanced at Kazuya and seemed to have thought better of it. Heihachi gave Lee one last look and briskly walked out.

Lee stood motionless until he heard Heihachi's footsteps fade and the front door slam then he picked up the first thing he was able to get a hold of and threw it at Kazuya. He saw Kazuya duck and the ancient vase shatter against the doorframe.

"You lying, piece of shit," he said as he advanced toward his older brother, he attempted to grab Kazuya by the collar of his white T-shirt, but he easily sidestepped and pushed him out of the way.

"Calm down," Kazuya said in a low measured voice. "Don't even try to take me on, the training dummy could knock you on your ass right now."

"Are you all right, Lee?" The housekeeper's concerned voice sounded behind him.

"I'm the one being attacked and you're worried about him?" Kazuya asked incredulously. "Figures, you're everyone's golden boy."

Her presence forced him to calm down somewhat. "Everything is fine, don't worry." She looked from Lee to Kazuya then reluctantly left the room.

"That vase has been in this house longer than you have," Kazuya said. "You know it's going to be the first thing the old man notices when he walks in here."
Lee ignored his remark. "So your plan this entire time was to make me look like an asshole in front of him. To what end?"

"He's always going on and on about how he bought himself the perfect son," Kazuya shrugged, "it's irritating."

"You told me you were not going to enter!" Lee insisted.

"And you believed me?" Kazuya laughed. "If you haven't heard, for the last five years I've been competing in fighting tournaments all around the world and winning every single one. Did you really think I would miss the most publicized tournament in history?" Lee felt his anger surge and attempted to grab Kazuya again, and again he sidestepped. "Look, go have some food, get some sleep and then we'll have a talk, it's long overdue."

"You're the last person I want to have a talk with." He reached into the inner pocket of his jacket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes and his lighter. "You want to wait until we're in the arena to fight? That's fine." He lit up then took a long drag before putting the lighter and pack back in his pocket. "That's best anyway, you know I like an audience."

Kazuya scoffed. "You are quite the attention whore."

Lee shrugged as the took another drag. "I won't deny it." He said as he exhaled.

"You're really trying to get on the old man's bad side aren't you?" Kazuya leaned on the doorframe again. "Breaking priceless pottery, smoking in the house, doing cocaine..."

As he heard Kazuya's words Lee felt his heartbeat accelerate and inhaled when he should have exhaled then immediately began to cough violently, feeling his throat and nostrils sting. When he finally managed to stop he wiped the tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his brown jacket. "How do you know that?" He asked as he cleared his throat.

"Me?" Kazuya asked casually. "Because your moron friend Paul was telling me that he couldn't keep up with you. If you're trying to keep a secret don't tell that idiot."

"What? When did you see him?"

"At our fight in Las Vegas last month," Kazuya sighed. "Did you really not know about it, or are you high all the time?"

Lee shook his head, Paul Phoenix was a good training partner and someone who was fun at lowbrow parties and establishments, but he had known it was a bad idea to take him to that party. It was his fault, Paul had told him that it wasn't his kind of place but Lee had insisted.

"Did you tell father yet?" Lee asked bitterly. "Or are you going to blackmail me somehow?"

Kazuya scoffed. "You always think the worst of me, don't you? He already knows, but I didn't tell him. You think he hasn't paid some of your so-called friends to report everything you do over to him? I listened in last night when Heihachi's assistant brought over the tournament contract... He wants to send you to rehab." Kazuya began to laugh.

"...What?" Lee shook his head and began to pace the dining room as he smoked. "Rehab? I don't need rehab, it's just a few lines a couple of times a week!"

"Don't worry," Kazuya said nonchalantly, "not real rehab, his version. His assistant suggested it and the old man said, 'rehab? Yes, I'll send that boy to rehab.' It's all in the emphasis, if he hadn't already
invested so much time and money into you, he'd probably murder you... I'd be worried."

Lee began to check off names in his head, he wanted to figure out who could have betrayed him, but it was too difficult to concentrate. "What is so funny?" He asked when Kazuya began to laugh again.

"That you finally snapped in the most predictable way possible," he chuckled. "Pretty, rich-boy starts doing blow to cope with the pressure of living up to daddy's unrealistic expectations." he pointed at Lee. "You are a walking cliché."

"I didn't snap! I'm just blowing off some steam on the weekends, don't tell me you don't." He countered.

"I do, but I do it like a man, beating other people senseless. You, on the other hand, surround yourself with other little rich boys and you pretend that you have friends, you surround yourself with gold-digging whores and you pretend that they love you, then you all snort your sad feelings away for a moment. That's not blowing off steam, you're turning yourself into a ticking time bomb, one day you're going to explode and it won't be pretty, I just hope I'm there to see it."

Lee began to pace faster as he continued to smoke. 

"...You'd just love to see me fail, but I won't." He was more worried about Heihachi knowing what he had been doing with his weekends than he would ever admit.

Kazuya cocked his head slightly as he looked at Lee. "You do seem a bit edgy, do you need a hit? Or would you rather I drive you to a... real rehabilitation facility?"

"Shut up."

"I wish the world could see you as you really are, a scared, little boy struggling to maintain control."

"I am in complete control!" Lee insisted. "It's what he's always drilled into our heads; control and discipline. Do you really think I would be doing it if I wasn't?"

Kazuya nodded. "Yes, I'm sure it's possible that you are in control, but I think that you do it because it gives you the illusion that you control some aspect of your life. It makes you feel like you're not just Heihachi's little puppet, it makes you feel like you're your own man."

"I am, I'm doing what I want to do, he's not making me do anything."

"Then prove it," Kazuya challenged, "act like a man. When he confronts you about it tell him to go fuck himself, as long as it's not interfering with your work it's none of his business."

Lee suddenly felt how exhausted he was, there had been no time to recover from his party and what little sleep he was able to get on the plane had somehow made him feel worse. He was thirsty and had a headache and he couldn't remember if it was Sunday or Monday; all he wanted to do was sleep. He ran his hand through his hair and closed his eyes.

"No," Kazuya said, "you're not going to do anything. You're just going to stand there and take it like you always do." Lee opened his eyes and stared daggers at his brother, but he continued. "You let him hit you for god's sake, you're twenty-five years old, you should have seen the look on your face, it was like you were fourteen all over again. It would have been comical if it wasn't so pathetic."

"You weren't much different then," Lee reminded him.

"No, I wasn't because I was only fifteen, but if he tried that now, if he laid a hand on me right now I would deal with it like a man... I would kill him." His tone was steady and his face blank, Lee knew
that he was telling the truth and it shook him to his core.

"That's your definition of acting like a man?" Lee asked him hoping that his uneasiness didn't show. "Murder?"

Kazuya shrugged. "Justified murder."

"No, acting like a man is facing any and every challenge head-on and rising above any and every circumstance-"

"What self-help book did you memorize that bullshit from?" Kazuya shook his head. "Whatever, don't listen to me, let him treat you the same way he always has, that's why you're his favorite because you let him treat you like his bitch."

"Fine," Lee shook his head, he was tired and angry and humiliated and he just wanted to put someone in their place; Kazuya was the only one there, "mock me, insult me, I don't care. At least I'm not the one who was kicked off the will."

"What?" Kazuya moved so fast that he didn't even notice when he closed the distance between them, he grabbed him by his jacket catching him off guard and causing him to drop his half-smoked cigarette on the floor. "How do you know this?" His menacing whisper chilled him to the bone.

"He told me," Lee knew he should have kept quiet, he should not have said anything. "The Zaibatsu? The estate? He's leaving everything to you?"

Lee was ashamed at that moment, he should have told him. Kazuya had gone through even more hell than he had with Heihachi as his father, he deserved something for his trouble. He would have told him, if only Kazuya had shown a bit of civility toward him...

"...Everything." He quietly admitted.

He felt fear grip him as he looked into Kazuya's eyes, for the briefest of instants he swore that they flashed red, but he was beyond exhausted and logic told him that it was impossible. Kazuya forcefully shoved him and he had to put his hand on a chair for support to avoid falling.

"I will bury you both," Kazuya threatened before heading out the door.

Lee felt shaken by the hate behind his brother's words, it was almost as if a feeling of fear hung in the air putting weight on his chest and making him break into a cold sweat.

"Shit..." He murmured as he looked down at the floor, his cigarette had fallen on the area rug and had burned a mark on the most noticeable color; he couldn't blame that on Kazuya.

-Present-

Lee never found out what Heihachi's version of rehab would have been, there had not been any time to even raise the issue. He had been too preoccupied with the final preparations for the tournament and then with the realization that Kazuya was on the warpath. After seeing the ferocity with which he was beating his opponents Heihachi had warned Lee to be on guard, to not hold anything back if he had to face him in the arena. His warning made no difference to Lee, it was the same thing that he had said since the first day that he made them spar together as boys, but in hindsight, he should have taken his warning more seriously. He had stepped onto the fighting ground with his head buzzing with excitement from his victories and had not expected the utter brutality of his brother's each and every hit nor the seemingly uncontrollable rage seething inside him. It had not ended well for him,
Heihachi had fared even worse...

Deep inside he knew that no matter what he had done things would be the same or at least close to what they were now, but all those *what ifs* were difficult to get rid of. Kazuya would never have accepted Lee's proposal to lead the Zaibatsu as equals, he wanted it for himself just as much as he did. If Lee had won the tournament, if he were the one leading the Zaibatsu, Kazuya would be the one trying to take it. That was what Lee told himself every time he was plagued by those memories, that their destiny had already been written, no matter who lead the other would try to take the Zaibatsu even if it meant steamrolling his brother.

Lee had tried to rid himself of those thoughts the entire night by exercising in the gym and using the empty yoga room in his hotel to train for the tournament. On the days when the *what ifs* nagged at him he liked to keep himself busy, mentally and physically ideally, but either-or worked for him. He was sitting at the desk double checking bank statements and expense reports as well as résumés for the two candidates interviewing for the final computer programmer position later in the day when he heard a knock on the door. He quickly stood up while adjusting his sky-blue tie, he nearly grabbed the dark-gray suit jacket draped over the back of his chair but decided against it. He opened the door and a man dressed in a hotel uniform pushing a food cart bowed to him. Lee stepped aside to let him pass and was very pleasantly surprised to see a small, Chinese man beaming at him as he stood waiting in the hallway. Lee returned the smile and bowed deeply.

"Master," he said respectfully.

"Good morning, young man." Wang Jinrei bowed in return.

He looked exactly the same as the last time he had seen him two years prior during the first tournament. He had the same pointed, white beard, bald head, wrinkled spotted face and kind eyes. He wore dark blue Xing Yi Quan uniform, he wondered if he ever wore anything else. The older man looked frail, but as far as Lee could remember it was how he had always looked and after seeing his performance in the tournament he had learned that it could not be further from the truth. His opponents had underestimated him and had paid the price.

"Come in, please," Lee motioned him inside, "our breakfast has just arrived." Once Jinrei entered the room Lee tipped the hotel employee before he left then walked over to the breakfast cart. "May I offer you tea?" He asked his guest.

"I was hoping for coffee," Jinrei said as he settled in a chair at the round, wooden table, "I always feel the need for some coffee after a flight."

Lee served two cups of coffee, placed them on saucers and set one in front of the older man then took a sip from the second before sitting in his chair.

"Would you care for some food?"

Jinrei shook his head. "My stomach feels unsettled," he said as he reached into an inner pocket of his shirt and pulled out a small silver flask then poured a generous amount of its contents into his coffee.

He offered him the flask once he was finished, Lee's eyes quickly darted to the clock on the bedside table but he immediately regretted it hoping that he had not seemed rude. "No, thank you," he said politely.

Jinrei chuckled as he sipped his coffee. "You young people think you are so liberal but you're afraid of a little liquid courage before five p.m."
"I have meetings all day today."

"The more reason to indulge." He offered the flask again. "How else do you expect to get through them?"

"No, thank you."

The older man shrugged and put the flask back in his pocket.

"Before we talk about why you came to see me," Lee began as he set his cup on the table, "I would like to know how you knew you'd find me here."

There had been a note waiting for Lee at the front desk the day prior, it read, I will be in the city tomorrow and need to speak with you about an urgent matter. Please make time to meet me at eight a.m. Jinrei had signed his name at the bottom. Lee was worried that Kazuya was investigating, trying to figure out what he was doing out of the country, that maybe he had intimidated Sayuri into telling him everything and would sabotage his plans somehow.

Jinrei sighed as he set his cup in front of him. "One of your investors is a good friend of mine, in fact, I am the one who convinced him to meet with you in the first place."

Lee felt a sudden disappointment, it weighed him down, he felt his shoulders droop and his brow furrow. He had thought that he himself had been responsible for his one and only success, to hear that it had all been due to Wang Jinrei was crushing.

"Now, I know how it sounds," the older man said holding up his hand, Lee realized that his disappointment was plain to see and immediately composed his demeanor, "but all I did was convince him to hear your proposal."

"I don't need charity," Lee somehow managed to keep the bitterness from his voice.

"Charity?" The older man laughed. "Do you think that your investors, being the wealthy and powerful men that they are, found themselves in that position by being charitable? By giving money to any young man who thinks he has a good idea? Do you think there are any riches to be made by granting old friends favors? No, they made their money and built their reputation by being wise, by investing in ideas and men that will make them even richer and more powerful."

Lee felt somewhat relieved. "How did you know I was looking for investors, I was being careful, that's part of the reason why it has been so difficult to find any."

"Coincidence, chance, good fortune, fate..." Jinrei shrugged. "Who knows? My friend mentioned that you had reached out to him, it had been years since we'd seen each other, but there we were at the same restaurant in Beijing, just by chance mind you, and since he knows that I fought in the last tournament just as you did, he mentioned you to me. He was reluctant to meet with you, your family's name does precede you, but I told him that you were different. He trusted me, met with you and whatever resulted from that, well... you did that on your own, young man."

"Thank you, Master..." Lee said as he bowed his head, he was not able to articulate anything else, it was the first time that anyone had put their faith in him. The first time that someone had recognized his talent and character without expecting anything in return.

"And what is this company that you are starting again?" Jinrei sipped his coffee then reached inside his shirt for the flask again then poured the rest of the contents into his cup. "My friend tried explaining it to me, but I just couldn't understand. Something about robots?"
Lee chuckled. "Well, we can't start with robots outright, not in the sense most people think, that is going to be a very long process, years worth of work. We are starting by focusing mainly on research, and to cover the costs and make a profit we will build and repair parts for industrial robots. But the long-term goal is to build a model that is indistinguishable from a human."

"...Building humans." Jinrei shook his head as he smiled. "When I was your age a can opener was the pinnacle of modern technology."

"Now that we have discussed this..." Lee set his cup on the table. "What made you fly from Beijing to see me?"

"I wasn't in Beijing, I was in Tokyo."

"I wish you had called me, I will be back in a couple of days, you didn't have to go through all that trouble to see me."

Jinrei sighed deeply as he set his empty cup down. "It is something that is best discussed away from prying eyes and ears."

"What is it, Master?" Lee asked as he straightened in his chair.

"What do you recall of the time when I lived on the Mishima Estate grounds?"

Lee smiled as he looked into his cup. "It was a relief to have someone who could speak Mandarin and who had enough patience to let me practice my terrible Japanese." He scoffed. "Even though Heihachi can speak perfect Mandarin he never uttered a word of it once we set foot in Japan, unless it was to make sure I knew why I was being punished."

Jinrei slowly shook his head. "He always believed that raising boys required a hard hand, that was where he and my dear friend Jinpachi disagreed the most. He was too hard on Kazuya... He was just a small boy, gentle, and Heihachi would always berate him, expect too much of someone so young... He was too harsh," he sighed. "Jinpachi would always interfere when things were getting out of hand, Kazuya's mother would too."

"What became of Kazuya's mother?" Lee asked, feeling curious and afraid at the same time.

In all his years of living at the Mishima Estate, no one had ever mentioned Kazuya's mother, it was strange, he had dared to ask Kazuya once when they were teenagers and all he received in response was a cold glare. There were no photographs of her anywhere in the house but he had found an old newspaper with Kazuya's birth announcement in the library once. She was beautiful and young, it was clear that Kazuya had gotten his looks from her side of the family.

"A disease took her, she was always ill and after Kazuya was born it only became worse."

"Didn't she have family who could take care of Kazuya? Didn't he have any blood relatives who knew what type of environment he was living in?"

"They tried," Jinrei reached into his shirt and pulled out another small flask, "he had a grandmother and an uncle, but Heihachi frightened them away, they had other loved ones to think about, to keep safe." He poured the contents from the flask into the now-empty coffee cup.

"What about Jinpachi, why didn't he interfere?"

"He was dead by then."
Lee asked the question that made his stomach turn into knots. "...Is it true that Heihachi killed him?"

Jinrei's shoulders visibly fell. "I have no hard evidence but...Jinpachi confided in me, told me that it may happen. You see he had already staged a coup, bribed key Zaibatsu board members with promises of power and wealth if they sided with him...and they did. And you know Heihachi, he always keeps his promises; he made himself quite a few loyal followers. He waited until after I retired, he knew he couldn't take us both on, Jinpachi and I together had too many followers, but Jinpachi alone..." He drank from his cup then looked up at Lee. "Very shortly after, my father became gravely ill so I flew to Beijing to be with him. He died on the very same day I arrived and I stayed to make the funeral arrangements and to make sure that everything was taken care of; I was gone for two weeks. When I returned to Tokyo my friend Jinpachi was dead and Kazuya was...different. Physically he was still a child, but all he did was train in the dojo out of his own free will, he didn't play or laugh anymore. And that scar on his chest..." There were tears in the older man's eyes. "If I had known what was to happen..."

"You can't blame yourself for that, Master," Lee said sincerely, a heavy silence followed and he felt the urge to break it. "I didn't know you were part of the Zaibatsu."

"That was two lifetimes ago, it was different then, nothing like it is now, corrupt, evil..." Jinrei sighed heavily as he looked up at Lee. "But perhaps it can be changed."

"How?"

"With you as its leader."

That was Lee's goal, to win the tournament as well as the Zaibatsu, but he had not expected Wang Jinrei to say what he did and was speechless.

"Have you registered for the tournament?" The older man asked.

"I have..." It was difficult to say what he was about to, to even admit it to himself. "But winning is not a guarantee..." He exhaled and crossed his arms over his chest as he fixed his eyes on the tabletop. "I'm here starting this company partially because it's my passion but also because... I need something to fall back on if I... If things don't go my way."

"That is smart."

He looked the older man in the eye, it was a testament of how much trust he put in him. "...At the last tournament, I was sure that I could beat Kazuya, I was certain. I was blind to the fact that he had been more diligent in his training, that he had spent years fighting opponents in real tournaments, I was... arrogant and made no arrangements, nothing, I had no idea that he was planning to take everything from me."

"...Arrogance..." Jinrei mused. "It is said to be the deadliest of sins and yet most of us find ourselves victim to its charms at one time or another. It is nothing to be ashamed of as long as we learn from our mistakes."

"Heihachi warned me about Kazuya," Lee said as he put both hands around his empty cup. "He saw a change in him when the tournament started, he was merciless... He told me that he thought Kazuya was going to try to kill him and take the Zaibatsu for himself, he told me that if that happened... That I had to get it back using any and all means necessary. But I didn't believe him. Then I woke up alone, in a hospital bed; Heihachi was dead, the New York branch of the Zaibatsu was closed and Kazuya had taken over."
That had been one of the most humbling experiences of his life, even more so than having been beaten into a coma by his own brother. He had been denied entry into the Mishima Building and had been made to set up an appointment in which Kazuya had given him thirty seconds to convince him to give him a position in the Zaibatsu. In the end, Kazuya had agreed to take him back because he needed him, he was losing too many clients and supporters and he knew that Lee was the only one who could bring them back or at least retain the ones he still had.

Lee chuckled slightly. "Any and all means, he meant killing my own brother... I just couldn't do it." He knew that he could never be the Mishima that Heihachi wanted him to be.

"My friend Jinpachi entrusted me with something similar." Jinrei suddenly looked exhausted. "He told me shortly before I left to see my father that he feared his own son would destroy him and that if that happened I should try to eliminate Heihachi for the good of the world as well as to restore honor to the Mishima Zaibatsu...I too could not do it."

"To restore honor?" Lee felt exhausted himself. "But is there honor in killing?"

"If it is justified... If it is for the good and welfare of others."

"It seems we were both assigned a heavy burden." Lee wished he could go to sleep and forget everything, it was weighing him down physically and emotionally.

"Perhaps by working together, we can make the burden a little lighter." Jinrei's words caught Lee's attention. "I too have registered for the tournament, that is the reason why I was in Tokyo, and also the reason why I wanted to meet with you."

"You entered the tournament?" Lee was concerned that Jinrei was too old for such an event but decided not to voice it for fear of being rude, there was also the fact that just two years prior he had performed better than most men in their twenties.

"We both have the same goal, to return the Zaibatsu to its honorable status in the world... If you and I should have to face each other we should fight the same way that we would fight any opponent standing in our way. If you win the right to fight Kazuya, well, that is what we want, but if I should fight him and win, I will immediately sign the Zaibatsu over to you."

"Master, I... It wouldn't be right."

"And what's right about someone my age inheriting all those responsibilities? I retired for a reason. I enjoy my life of tranquility and today you have proved to me that you are no longer the boy that you were two years ago, that you are a man, a leader, I have full faith in you, I believe that you can put the Zaibatsu on the rightful path once more."

"Thank you," Lee bowed his head, again feeling overwhelmed by the amount of trust that Jinrei was placing in him.

"It won't be easy," the older man admitted, "and we may still have Heihachi and Kazuya to contend with, even if one of us wins, they won't let it go without a fight, even if one of us wins it fairly."

*By any and all means necessary.* It seemed to be a phrase common to the Mishimas, even Jinpachi who was the best of them all, but perhaps he had been right, perhaps Wang Jinrei was right. There could be honor in killing, there could be honor in *any and all means,* as long as the cause was justified and the act was selfless. But that was what worried Lee, what if he found that he could kill his father or his brother? What if he did it because he wanted what had been his by right? What if he fooled himself and everyone else into believing that he was being righteous when what he truly
wanted was revenge? What if he sat in that chair on the top floor and discovered that his lust for power was as great as that of any true Mishima? They were all questions for later, he decided, what he needed to do was focus on the task at hand and trust, hope that his intentions were pure.

Chapter End Notes

I have never done a flashback before, but it seemed right, I wanted to show a bit of the Mishima family dynamic before the first tournament so I hope it worked and that it didn't seem too jarring.
The Line

Chapter Summary

Kazuya takes measures to ensure the Sayuri's silence and compliance.

Kazuya stood in the center of the genetics lab in the sub-basement of the Mishima Building. He stood in a relaxed stance with his arms crossed lightly over his chest, he paid no attention to the various screens on the wall above the metal workstations displaying charts and rows of data, nor to the men and women in lab coats tapping fingers on keyboards and writing reports. The vast space was being monitored by video cameras set up in every corner, but Kazuya paid no mind to them either. He was lost in thought. Though the mission at the airport had been a success, someone had tried to interfere, to ruin his plans and expose him to the authorities; it could have resulted in an international incident that would have been impossible to sweep under the rug. He didn't know who that person, or persons, had been, but when he found out there would be hell to pay.

The hissing sound coming from the large, rectangular doorway pulled him out of his thoughts. He fixed his gaze on the heavy, metal door and watched as Dr. Geppetto Bosconovitch stepped through flanked by two of the Zaibatsu's armed guards. The old man wore an unreadable expression; his blue eyes bore into Kazuya's from behind round spectacles. He had to admire the doctor, not many people would dare.

"Leave." Kazuya's voice echoed around the metal-plated walls and immediately the five scientists left their workstations and exited the lab. Kazuya then motioned for the guards to do the same.

"Bold, Mr. Mishima, very bold," Bosconovitch said once they were alone, "much too risky."

Kazuya shrugged. "The methods shouldn't matter as long as the desired results are achieved."

The doctor looked sternly at him. "Where are the two young men who were in my company?"

"They are being taken care of, they will be well fed and given a proper place to rest as-"

"As long as I cooperate," Bosconovitch shook his head, his face screwed up in disgust.

"We could have done this the easy way," Kazuya reminded him, "I gave you ample opportunities."

Bosconovitch walked toward one of the workstations against the wall and looked at the bar graph displayed on the screen. "I have known men like you since I was a boy, you all vary in your methods, in your goals… But the thing that remains constant is that you all think you are entitled to get what you want no matter the cost. Joseph Stalin himself requested my services once."

Kazuya gave a dry chuckle. "What did you do for him?"

"Do you know what I first became famous for?" Kazuya shrugged disinterestedly. "A ballistic missile that I invented when I was twelve years old."

Kazuya scoffed. "Quite the overachiever."

"That was what he wanted me to make for him, and I agreed, but I escaped at the first opportunity
and hid out in Prague until he died."

Kazuya shook his head and looked disdainfully at him. "Have you always been a coward? You always seem to run at the first sign of danger."

"Stalin would have liked you," the doctor gave a light chuckle, "he would have tried to eliminate you, but he would have liked you." He moved to a different workstation and examined the documents on the desktop. "Mr. Stalin, much like yourself, believed himself invincible… But where is he now?"

"He died from an illness. When he was old."

The doctor shrugged. "Or by a masterful assassin's hand…"

His attitude was beginning to grate on Kazuya's nerves. "Are you trying to threaten me? Because you have nothing, I hold all the cards."

"No, Mr. Mishima," Bosconovitch rubbed his temples, "I'm simply reminding you that powerful men rise only so that they can fall, be it from an illness, old age…or a bullet to the heart… It isn't a threat, it is a fact of life, a cycle; it cannot be stopped, certainly not by man. Just as the tide rises, so too it must fall…"

"A man bold enough to blow up the moon could stop the goddamned tide."

Bosconovitch shook his head. "And undoubtedly doom us all in the process."

Kazuya lowered his voice to barely above a whisper, but his tone said it all. "Enough."

The older man sighed. "I was set to fly to Germany to find a way to help my daughter when we were told that your men were in Moscow-"

Kazuya's body tensed. "Who told you?"

"I don't know," the doctor removed his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose, "it was a phone call, he didn't identify himself. I got in contact with Horizon labs, I've partnered with them in the past, they have a brilliant researcher who offered to help me when I told them my dilemma. And now," he gave Kazuya an accusatory look, "now I cannot even help my beloved Alissa."

"You were partnered with Bennett Industries, they were building certain components for you."

The doctor's eyes widened. "How do you know that?"

"They work for me. If I deem your work satisfactory I will have them deliver the parts and components necessary to construct the cold-sleep machine. That is what you need to help your daughter, isn't it?" Kazuya couldn't contain the self-satisfied smirk that began to form on his lips.

Bosconovitch eyed him suspiciously. "How do I know-"

"As a bonus, I will give you a brilliant researcher from Horizon Labs." He walked up to the nearest workstation and picked up the telephone. "Bring Hayashi," he said after dialing a number.

"Is this of her own accord?" Bosconovitch's tone was bitter.

"Of course not."

Less than two minutes later Yori Hayashi from Horizon Laboratories was brought before him by an
armed guard. She had tear streaks marked on her face and her eyes were red and swollen, she pulled on the sleeves of her brown cardigan then began to rub her arms.

"I'm so sorry, Dr. Bosconovitch," she said as fresh tears welled up in her eyes.

"Do not blame yourself, my dear," the doctor said soothingly.

"I have good news, Dr. Hayashi," Kazuya turned to face the frightened woman. "You have been hired as Dr. Bosconovitch's assistant." The woman furrowed her brow and looked at the doctor who cast down his eyes. "The pay is better than Horizon Labs and if you accept you won't have to worry about your husband meeting an early end." Hayashi gasped and lightly covered her mouth with her hand. "Stop that," Kazuya said impatiently, "I said you would not have to worry… unless you plan to betray me."

"N-no," she stammered.

"Get on the phone, call your boss and tell him that you've resigned effective immediately," he turned to the guard that had brought her inside. "Make sure she does it." The man nodded.

"It has been a long day for all of us," Kazuya said as he picked up the phone again, "Dr. Hayashi, make your phone call, go home and I will see you tomorrow at eight o'clock sharp."

He nodded to the guard and the man guided Hayashi out.

Kazuya dialed the number for Ganryu's desk. "Send a Russian translator to the genetics lab, I need the doctor to make a phone call. Then have him escorted to his living quarters, after that you can go home."

"You got it, boss." He hung up after hearing the sumo's confirmation.

"A phone call?" Bosconovitch narrowed his eyes and cocked his head, "why a translator?"

"Because I need him to confirm that you are saying exactly what I want you to say. You will call the Russian Embassy and you will tell them that you have reconsidered your stay with them. Make it sound convincing, we wouldn't want innocent Alissa to pay the price of your betrayal." Bosconovitch closed his eyes and shook his head slowly. "You will be shown to your quarters after, I'm sure you'll find your accommodations more than adequate."

Kazuya walked to the workstation closest to the door and removed a gray file folder then handed it to Bosconovitch.

"What is this?" The older man asked as he opened it.

"It's the project that I want you to start with."

The doctor's eyes widened as he leafed through the file. "A kangaroo? Enhanced mental capacity and...fighting skills?"

"You're a master of genetics," Kazuya said with a shrug. "I want it to be ready to face off against human opponents, it will be participating in the tournament, and therefore is priority one. My scientists have been working on it for months, but it's not quite right."

He looked up at Kazuya with a bewildered expression on his wrinkled face. "Why? Why would you want an animal to compete in a fighting tournament?"
"My vision for the future extends much, much further than the tournament. That will simply be a test for my new weapon."

"Weapon?"

"If, or when, it comes to war, or to defending the Zaibatsu, imagine the advantage I will have with a weapon that no one will expect, that they will be thoroughly unprepared to face."

Bosconovitch shook his head again, apparently at a loss for words. At that moment the doors of the entrance hissed open and in stepped Ganryu with two guards and a middle-aged Japanese man wearing a dark suit.

The sumo pointed at the suit-wearing man, "here's the translator, boss."

"Good," Kazuya looked at his watch, "go home as soon as this is done, I need you at your best tomorrow."

"Sure thing, boss."

Kazuya turned to face Bosconovitch. "I will be by to check on your progress periodically. I have eyes on you at all times," he added as a warning.

"Yes, I'm certain that you do."

Kazuya nodded to Ganryu and left the room, he walked down the hallway and into the elevator determined not to let anything put a damper on his mood. The mission had been successful, Dr. Bosconovitch was in his building working on projects that he had been eager to begin. He had gained a brilliant, though reluctant, new researcher and the preparations for the tournament were nearly at an end. His outlook was brighter than it had been in months.

Sayuri gently dabbed each page of her appointment book with a paper towel. She had spilled hot tea on it and the script was nearly illegible, she was glad that she had most of it memorized. She swiveled in her chair to face the computer that she rarely used. The dark background and the tiny, white, blinking rectangle were hypnotic, she sat staring at it for who knew how long. She sighed and closed her eyes when she felt the muzzle of the gun pressed to her temple, she rubbed the area vigorously with her fingers until the sensation disappeared. She suddenly opened her eyes and straightened in her chair when she heard the office door open, her heart began to race as she imagined the dark-haired, Russian entering. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw Bruce emerge from the doorway, though she wanted to be angry with him she was inexplicably glad to see him.

"So you really are here...working," he said as he sat in the chair in front of her desk, he had changed out of his suit and was wearing the jeans and green sweatshirt again, "I thought you would go home, you should, it was a rough day."

"You obviously have no idea how much work needs to be done before this goddamned tournament begins," she said bitterly. "Do you know who I work for? Do you think he cares that I spent the morning committing a felony for him? No, he still expects all this work to be done."

"You shouldn't say that," Bruce spoke in a low tone, "don't talk about that when you don't know who can hear."

She chuckled remembering what she had heard him and Ganryu talking about near the locker room but decided that it was best to say nothing. "There's no one here," she said instead, "I already told
"You're not stupid, do you think I want to go to prison?"

"How are you doing?" Bruce looked at her intently, she was surprised to see concern in his eyes.

She wanted to answer with an offhanded, 'I'm fine,' or with an angry retort but she found that she wanted to talk to him, she needed to do it.

"I still feel the gun pressed to my head," she gently put her fingertips to her temple; it was more than that, she could still remember the smell of the Russian's cologne and feel his arm around her waist. "And I keep thinking about all these...little, inconsequential things like...that my shoes are ruined and that I was on the floor of an airport bathroom so I need to take an hour-long shower." She exhaled slowly. "I have to make myself think about the important issues like how am I going to explain all the bruises on my body to Lee and what's going to happen with those two men."

"The Russians?"

"Yes."

"That's not something you need to concern yourself with."

"Don't do that, Bruce." She was suddenly angry as she realized that it was something every man in her life, from her father to her boyfriends had said to her, don't concern yourself, I'll take care of it. "I have earned the right to know what's going to happen to them. I can handle it, tell me."

"He was going to kill you, Sayuri, why do you care?"

His question was valid, but she couldn't answer it. "I don't know why I care, I just need to know."

"It's really not."

"I'm the reason why they're in whatever holding cell they're in, so tell me, are they going to be killed?" She stared keenly at him when he shook his head. "I won't say anything, there's nothing I can do, I just... I need to know."

Bruce sighed. "I don't know what's going to happen to them, that's for the boss to decide later on."

"...Are they being...harmed?" The very thought made her feel sick to her stomach and she felt nauseous once again that day.

"We're not savages," Bruce sounded offended, "they're being taken care of for now."

"For now," she said offhandedly. "How do you do it?" She asked after a short moment of silence.

"Do what?" Bruce stretched his arms above his head.

"You always look well rested, so you must be sleeping at night. How do you do it?" She knew her tone and her question sounded accusatory and hostile but she didn't care. "How do you go home and look at yourself in the mirror and not feel like a piece of scum that shouldn't be allowed to breathe the same oxygen as the rest of the population?" His expression was blank and it somehow made her feel guilty for being so disdainful, she cast down her eyes and told him the truth. "I'm asking for my benefit because when I get home I want to be able to sleep... I-"

"There is a line in the sand that we each draw for ourselves," Bruce said in a level and serious tone. "Everyone from Mother Teresa to serial killers have it, it's the line that we are not willing to cross." He folded his arms over the desk and leaned in as if he were telling her a life-saving secret, she
looked into his intense, dark eyes and tried to memorize every word that he was saying. "You have to ask yourself each time, in each situation, where is that line? Where is it for you, not for your family or friends, certainly not for society, but for you. You don't tell anyone, that knowledge is yours. No one ever has to know how far you're willing to go, but you damn well better be sure you know where your line is because if you cross it, you can never step behind it again. It will change you."

She felt as if she were in a daze, speaking to this man that she barely knew about things that she couldn't tell Lee or even her family.

"...Have you ever crossed it?" Her voice was almost a whisper, she didn't know why she asked, it was not something that she wanted to know.

Bruce's booming laugh startled her. "I like you, but I don't know you that well."

"Sorry," she said as she straightened in her chair. "So just don't cross that line then… I wish I'd never taken this job..." She said it more to herself than to him.

"Why did you?"

"My father suggested it."

"Why the hell would he suggest that to you?" Bruce said with a laugh. "Parents are supposed to look out for you, not feed you to the wolves."

"He didn't suggest it to me, I overheard him. I have two degrees in business, I want a career in business administration, but the only experience I have is working at my father's law firm. When my brother made partner at his firm before he was thirty years old, rumors started and the word nepotism was thrown around quite a bit. My brother proved them wrong, he showed everyone that he earned his place; but when I was hired as human resources manager, with my beauty pageant background the rumors started again, it began to affect his business, he lost some clients. Everyone just assumes that I'm…not that smart, so when I overheard him telling one of his employees that working directly under Kazuya Mishima for a year would get her hired anywhere, I applied, I wanted to show him and everyone that I could do it..." She shook her head. "If my father knew what happened today..."

She stopped herself before she said anything that she would regret, anything that would put her father in danger. She knew that her father would call in favors and offer a few of his own to keep her safe and out of prison. He was an intelligent man and she knew that he would never take on the Mishima Zaibatsu, but he was a devoted father who loved his children, he might not take on the Zaibatsu head on, but she wasn't sure that he wouldn't use other methods. She liked Bruce, but he was fiercely loyal to Kazuya, he was one more person who couldn't be trusted.

"What happened there?" Bruce asked gesturing toward the towels and the wet appointment book.

She was thankful for the change of subject. "I spilled my tea on it because I needed something else to go wrong for me today."

"That's why they make cups with lids."

"Smartass," she rolled her eyes. "I'm inputting all the appointments and contacts into the computer, which I should have done months ago."

"I see," he chuckled, "slacking on the job."

"No, it's not that. It was another realization, an insignificant detail, but it said so much about her, it was another blow on the worst day of her life. "...I don't even turn the computer on when Lee isn't
Here, he knows everything about them and I'm... It always seemed too difficult to learn, I took a couple of computer classes in college, but I got through them by flirting with the instructors." She felt her cheeks flush and looked up quickly at Bruce not wanting him to think negatively of her. "I didn't do that for any other classes."

"I'm not judging," Bruce said putting his hands up, "if I looked like you I'd use it to my advantage a lot more often than you do."

She smiled, then continued, "I always rely on Lee to fix every little issue that I have with it because it just seems too difficult to even try by myself. But as I'm entering this information I'm realizing that it's not difficult," she sighed. "I could have done it on my own from the beginning and not have all this extra work..." She shook her head. "I guess what I'm trying to say is that luring two professional thugs and one of the world's most sought-after scientists into a trap by myself while having two guns pointed at me, made me realize that I don't give myself enough credit... That I like things to be easy when I'm fully capable of fending for myself."

She rubbed her temple when she felt the sensation of the gun against her head again. There would be more instances where there might not be anyone able or willing to help her, she felt a knot in her throat as she realized that she couldn't count on anyone. She decided that she needed to find a way to protect herself as and her loved ones, she couldn't lay that burden on Lee and especially not on her father.

"Look," Bruce sighed, "I'm sorry that they separated you from Ganryu, I know that was tough, someone set us up, but I promise we'll find out who and then-"

She scoffed. "And then what? Kill them?" She shook her head, "never mind, don't tell me I don't care."

"Fine, that's best anyway."

"Thank you," she said sincerely as she realized that she had not acknowledged what he had done, "if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be here right now."

He looked taken aback by her statement. "I didn't expect a thank you, I thought you were pissed at me."

"I am angry," Sayuri said in a serious tone, "but not with you," she bowed her head to him. "So, really, thank you."

He shrugged. "Don't mention it, I got to save pretty girl and got to blow off some steam, made me feel like a goddamned hero, it was not a bad day's work."

She smiled shyly as she felt herself blush again, she didn't know why, everyone always told her she was pretty. She reached into a drawer as she remembered the name badge she had used at the airport and handed it to Bruce. "Here, I don't know how to properly dispose of this."

"What happened to the white dress, it looked good on you," he said as he took the badge and put it in the pocket of his sweatshirt.

Sayuri instinctively looked down at her black dress. She was sure Kazuya had ordered her to wear that trashy piece just to remind her that he was in control, in the end, the dress had not distracted anyone, all it had done was make her feel uncomfortable. "It's in the garbage where it belongs, and I didn't look good, I looked like a prostitute."

"No," he laughed, "well, maybe a high-class one."
"High-class prostitute," she chuckled, "there's an oxymoron if I ever heard one."

"What I meant was a really expensive call girl, like the ones that ninety-nine percent of the population can't afford."

"I have to say that is a compliment that I never thought I would hear."

"I have others, I swear they're better."

She suddenly changed the subject when an unresolved problem came to mind. "Do you have any idea how I can explain all the bruises I have to Lee?" She was surprised to hear herself ask him so frankly, but he was the only person that she could talk to. "I was going to tell him that I fell, I can't think of anything else."

"Tell him you were mugged at the metro station," he said it as if it were the most obvious solution. "This is Tokyo, not New York, do you know how uncommon that is here? He'll never believe it."

"All right," he said crossing his arms over his muscular chest. "First of all, have you ever been to New York?" She shook her head. "Then don't make assumptions. Second of all, it's uncommon in Tokyo, not unheard of, and you look like an easy mark, if it were to happen to someone it would be someone like you." Her brow furrowed as she thought it over. "Or...you can just tell him no sex for a month, if he doesn't see the bruises, he can't know," he finished with a sly smile.

She felt herself blush furiously. "Are you seriously talking to me about my sex life?"

"I wouldn't normally," he said with the same smile on his face, "but the thought of that prissy boy not getting any is hilarious to me."

She crossed her arms and looked sternly at him. "This is the first and last time that you are disrespectful to him in front of me."

"Sorry," Bruce said with a look of uncertainty on his face.

She couldn't stop the smile that formed on her lips, there was something about Bruce that made her feel at ease. She immediately realized how dangerous that was and knew that she should not let her guard down around him. Bruce looked as if he was about to say something, but stopped when he heard the door open, they both turned to see Kazuya walking in with an unreadable expression on his face.

"Do you have a minute?" Bruce asked Kazuya as he made his way toward his office.

"Yes," Kazuya said looking at his watch, he entered his office leaving the door open.

Kazuya didn't see the murderous look that Sayuri gave him as he walked through the office. He didn't even notice her, he had too many thoughts running through his mind as well as a feeling of victory that clouded everything and everyone around him. He sat behind his desk and watched Bruce as he closed the door and settled into the chair opposite his.

"Don't worry, boss," Bruce said with a stern look on his face, "I'm going to find the bastard who set us up, I have my men coming back from Moscow tonight, I'll leave Yamada in charge of the investigation while I'm gone. We both know he can be trusted."

"Fine," Kazuya said leaning back in his chair. "But as soon as you're back I want you in charge, I don't care if you're participating in the tournament."
Bruce sighed deeply and straightened in his chair with a look of concern on his face. "I have to be frank," he began, "I respect you and I respect your authority, but what happened today cannot happen again."

"And what is that?" Kazuya asked furrowing his brow.

"First of all, I know that you don't like being told how to run your company," Kazuya too crossed his arms, "but you need to hire a woman, one that can handle herself in a fight, we need one once in a while and I can't be responsible for people who don't know how to defend themselves. Not again, not someone who's on my team."

Kazuya chuckled slightly. "Is your conscience weighing you down?"

"Yeah," Bruce said sternly. "I don't want their blood on my hands."

"Nobody died," Kazuya said casually, which seemed to bother Bruce.

"Look," his voice was low and tight, "I haven't slept in thirty-six hours and I just got my entire team safely through one clusterfuck of a mission, so you're going to listen."

It was Bruce's second outburst in one day, but it was a very rare thing and Kazuya was in a good mood, so he decided to indulge him.

"You sent us on this mission with someone who had zero experience," Bruce said, "we're lucky she didn't fuck anything up, we're lucky that she can think on her feet, but you should have-"

"Has she ever looked you in the eye while lying through her perfect teeth?" Kazuya interrupted as he felt a pang of anger surface. "I knew that she could do it, I was certain that she could. I know her better than you or even Lee for that matter."

"That's the other thing," Bruce said raising his hands in frustration, "she's your brother's girl, what do you think would have happened if he came back to find that she was in prison or dead because of you? Do you think he would take that well?"

"It didn't happen." Kazuya shook his head. "Don't worry about it."

"Goddammit," Bruce ran his hand over his mohawk, "you weren't there to see how close that came to happening." He leaned in on the desk and looked Kazuya in the eye. "That man was going to kill her. I looked into her background after we got back, her family's too; you say that you know her, but do you know who she really is? Because if you do then I don't know what you were thinking today."

"Who is she?"

"She won a national beauty pageant six years ago."

"A beauty queen?"

"Yeah, she gave up her title the next day, but still, it was televised, her face has been seen by the entire country, probably half the world too."

Kazuya tried, but he was unable to control his laughter. "Now I understand why Lee chose her, she's just as narcissistic as he is."

"Are you serious?" Bruce slowly shook his head in apparent disbelief. "I'm not telling you this to
give you a good laugh. If someone like her is arrested, murdered or disappears it captures the attention of the media, national and international, everyone loves to hear about tragic stories involving famous, pretty girls. Add to that, the fact that you are her employer and that she's in a relationship with your brother. That would bring Interpol and every other law enforcement agency to our doorstep faster than you can imagine."

Kazuya sighed in annoyance, he hated to admit it but Bruce had a very valid point. "I'm sure you would make it look like a very convincing accident."

Bruce scoffed. "Let's say that I could, do you really think your brother would just let it go, that he wouldn't be suspicious with it happening precisely while he was gone?" He roughly rubbed his face, almost as if he were trying to stay awake. "Do you even know who her father is?"

"...Who?" Kazuya asked through clenched teeth.

He hated that Bruce was right, he had been so focused on acquiring Bosconovitch on the date that he had planned that he had not stopped to consider everything that could have gone wrong by sending Sayuri on that mission.

"He's a lawyer," Bruce said, "a partner in one of the top three law firms in Osaka and so is his son, her brother. Her mother is one of the administrators at Tokyo Medical University Hospital, her stepfather."-

"Enough." Kazuya cut him off, "I get it, she's got connections, she's goddamned royalty. I don't need to hear any more."

"She's pissed at you," Bruce said in a low voice, "and she's not stupid, so you need to make amends or at the very least keep an eye on her."

"That's it, you're done. This is about as much as I'm willing to take from you." Kazuya said sharply. "Don't ever tell me what to do again."

"Hey," Bruce put his hands up in surrender, "I only speak up when it affects me."

He didn't apologize, Kazuya was glad, he respected the fact that Bruce stood behind his words no matter how he felt about what he had said.

"At what time are you and Ganryu leaving?" Kazuya asked, steering the conversation in a more productive direction.

"Midday tomorrow," Bruce said as he tried to stifle a yawn. "Should arrive in Phoenix ten hours later… which will feel like tomorrow, but it will actually be today… Fuck," he rubbed his face, "that is going to suck. I guess I'm not taking Asami home today, I need some sleep."

"You were the one complaining about being bored," Kazuya reminded him, "now you're complaining about having work to do?"

"I'm not complaining, just making an observation," Bruce sighed. "It's pretty harsh to make Ganryu go on this mission," he said furrowing his brow slightly, "as messed up as it is he really likes that girl, and you're making him kidnap her mom?"

"Are you trying to tell me what to do again?" Kazuya narrowed his eyes and cocked his head slightly. "I need that pendant, I don't care if it ruins his chances for romance."

"Not at all boss. Just a comment."
Sending Bruce with Ganryu to America was the perfect cover to acquire the Native American pendant. They would take a private jet to Phoenix, Arizona where Bruce would meet with the head of Freemont Copper Mining Company to secure a deal with the Zaibatsu for copper components needed for lab equipment. Being his most trusted employee, and also American, Bruce was the best choice to meet with the CEO of the mine. The deal was as good as done, but a face to face meeting was the final step. Meanwhile, Ganryu and his team would kidnap Michelle Chang's mother and take her to the jet and when all was said and done she would be transported back to Japan.

He remembered Michelle Chang from the first tournament. She was very young and much more skilled than anyone had expected her to be. She had entered the tournament to seek revenge against Heihachi for murdering her father, it was mostly whispers and rumors amongst the fighters, of course, the media had caught no wind of her real story. Upon taking control of the Zaibatsu and looking through Heihachi's files as well as questioning those closest to him, Kazuya had found that the rumors were indeed true, Heihachi had ordered the girl's father killed. Such an aggressive and upfront measure was a rare thing for the Mishima patriarch to exhibit and Kazuya had become curious about the reason.

Michelle Chang's father had been killed over an ancient pendant that her family possessed and had refused to give up. Kazuya wasn't sure what it was, but if that pendant was enough to cause Heihachi to so blatantly spill blood on foreign soil it had to have much more than monetary value. It was said that it was the key to great power and he knew that he had to have it.

He had tried to reason with the girl, had offered her money, then resorted to making threats and nothing had worked, she had still refused to give up the pendant. This was his last resort, kidnapping her mother and exchanging her for the trinket; his second international mission in two days. This one promised to go much more smoothly.

"I'd better get going then," Bruce standing up, "we'll call you when we get there and when we're on our way back."

"Don't fail me," Kazuya warned.

"I never do."

Kazuya felt Devil stir as he watched Bruce close the office door. "What?" He asked impatiently.

I hate to admit it, but Bruce is right, Sayuri does need to be watched. Devil sighed sadly. Though it will break my heart if she betrays us.

She won't, I'll put the fear of God into her.

The fear of God is a fine choice, but in my opinion fear of the Devil is much more effective.

Don't get cute with me.

Very well, Devil conceded, let's go have a talk with our girl.

Kazuya stood up and made his way out of his office, he saw Sayuri stiffen when he stood in front of her desk, but her face remained blank, she was typing on the computer, which he realized was something he rarely saw her do. He sat on the chair opposite hers and she turned her body toward him, her expression unchanged.

This bitch will try to betray me at the first opportunity.
Then let's make sure it does not happen.

"I was about to call you," she said listlessly, "the head of the legal department just called for you, he said he wants to meet with you in his office as soon as possible."

"Why?" It was strange to hear such a request.

"He said that it was regarding tournament matters and that the rest was for your ears and eyes alone."

It had to be a serious matter if they had requested Kazuya himself at their office. "I'll go as soon as we're done here."

"I was able to reach Miss Kazama, regarding your...meeting," she gave him a strange look, it was almost admonishing, "as you requested she will wait for you in the lobby of the Park Hyatt Building at six-thirty instead of eight." She shook her head very slightly as she turned away.

"Do you have something to say?" His eyes bore into hers.

Sayuri seemed hesitant but held his gaze. "...She's a good person."

"So?"

Sayuri sighed. "Is there anything else you need, sir?"

"Bruce will be out of the country for the next couple of days, all security matters are to be directed to Yamada." Kazuya chose to ignore her meddlesome comment, he would put her in her place soon enough.

Sayuri scribbled quickly on her desk calendar. "Very well."

"He will be at the Freemont Copper Mining Company in Arizona and will be in periodic contact with us."

"Is he flying by private jet?" She asked as she wrote.

"Why does that matter to you."

She stopped and looked up at Kazuya. "That Irish company, Mullen Aviation, just came to mind. I know that you're leasing a jet from a Japanese company now, but I'll be taking some files down to the archives later and I just wondered if I can take the Mullen file too or if you still need it here."

"He's dead."

"I know, I heard about that, it was all over the news."

"Then why are you asking? I can't deal with a dead man."

"No, sir, I know," she said with a sigh, "but I heard that Mr. Mullen's brother took over the company, so I wondered-"

"Yes," Kazuya said exasperated, "take the damn file to the archives."

She nodded, then took a shaky breath. She looked tired and didn't seem to be wearing makeup, it looked like she had washed her face. "...I can never do something like this for you again."

"Like what?" He asked coolly.
"Committing a crime," she said as she rubbed her temple, "a felony."

"You will do whatever I ask of you," Kazuya said as he leaned back in his chair, "I own you."

She stared at him with her brow furrowed and her mouth tight. "...No..." She slowly shook her head. "You said that if I did this you wouldn't press charges against Lee. I did it, and now we are done."

"I never said that I would have you do this one thing. Your skills are impressive, I may need you again. Think of it this way," he said straightening in his chair, "the longer you're under my service, the longer Lee gets to keep his position at the Zaibatsu, I hate to admit it, but he is useful. I may reconsider getting rid of him, well, as long as he behaves himself."

"No." Sayuri's jaw was tight. "I am no longer under your service, as of this moment, I quit." He didn't believe that she was capable of such a stern expression, but here she was again, showing her true colors. "Don't try to stop me and don't try to threaten me because I will go to the authorities and-"

"What part of I own you don't you understand?" He asked her in the most condescending tone he could muster. "There are so many problems with your flimsy little threat that I don't even know where to begin. First of all," Kazuya said as he leaned slightly forward, "you went through a lot for Lee today, so I doubt that you want him to know what happened between us. Why go through all that trouble just to lose him?" She opened her mouth to protest no doubt, but he quickly continued. "And no, I never said the phrase, I will not tell him." She closed her eyes and crossed her arms protectively in front of her but remained silent. "Second of all, I have told you that I am prepared to live with whatever consequences may arise due to my actions, so let's say I'm arrested," he shook his head and chuckled at the audacity of the thought. "How long do you think it will be until I'm the one running the prison? Days? Hours? You on the other hand..."

"What?" She asked venomously.

"Someone like you isn't built for prison."

"You think that the police will believe that I was the mastermind behind kidnapping a world-famous scientist?" Sayuri chuckled slightly. "My father-"

"Of course not," Kazuya spoke over her, "but being a willing accomplice in kidnapping and murder won't garner you any sympathy, I don't care who your father is."

"Murder?" She asked quietly shrinking back in her seat.

"Those two Russians will cease to be useful eventually, maybe just one, I might need the other to confess, to identify you."

"...If you do that..." She seemed to struggle with her words, she was finally losing her composure. "...If you do that you will go to prison too you think that I-"

"Did you not hear what I just said?" He was beginning to lose his patience, he needed to put her in her place quickly. "I'm prepared for that, and you think I don't have others set up to take the fall for me?"

Sayuri shook her head. "You are even worse than I imagined."

"How much did your watch cost?" He asked ignoring her comment, she said nothing, but protectively folded her hand over the gold timepiece. "That's fine, don't tell me," he continued, "I bet
that it cost more money than most inmates in a women's prison have ever seen. And no, you won't be wearing it, but as soon as they see you they'll know that you're the type of woman who wears expensive jewelry and designer dresses... A privileged, rich girl who squandered the opportunities they never had."

She tightened the hold on her wrist. "If you're trying to scare me-"

"You won a national beauty pageant, didn't you?"

"So what?" She asked as she pressed her fingers to her temple.

"That's something that will make you popular in prison, but not for the same reasons that it does out here," he leaned forward on the desk. "You're thinking that it was just for one day, that nobody will remember a brief television appearance from six years ago... But someone will know because you're a bit of television trivia now, it's the type of minutiae that prisoners remember because they have nothing to do except hold on to the memories that they brought in from the outside. Someone will know that not only are you a privileged, rich girl, but you're also a prissy beauty queen. No one will envy your pretty face then."

Deal the final blow, Devil said lazily, she's already down.

"The inmates will hate you, but don't worry, the guards will love you...frequently. Lee can't help you and your daddy can't help you. If you don't do what I say, if you betray me...All you will do is drag them down with you." Kazuya stood up. "On the other hand if you do what I ask, if you serve me well, you'll have a long career with the Zaibatsu, maybe Lee will too."

Sayuri had a vacant look in her glassy eyes, her fingers were absently rubbing against her temple, but she said nothing. Kazuya took that as a surrender and made his way out of the office and into the elevator.

Devil's voice had a hint of anger. I don't mind if you keep the girl but you had better not be planning on keeping your brother after the tournament. Remember what he did to you two years ago, and that he is actively betraying you by stealing from you.

Of course I remember, he'll be gone by the end of the tournament no matter what happens.

You won't see me cry any figurative tears for him.

As for Sayuri, I doubt I'll be keeping her.

Kazuya entered the elevator and glanced at his watch before pushing the button for the legal department. Feeling satisfied with himself, he leaned on the wall as the doors slid close. In his eyes Lee deserved everything that was about to happen to him, losing any possibility of claiming the Zaibatsu for himself was only the beginning. Sayuri would suffer as well, for trying to protect Lee, for daring to say that Lee had been through as much as Kazuya had; she had doomed herself.

He had been wondering since his encounter with Sayuri, what had it been about her that attracted him? She was beautiful, that was certain, but there was more to it than that, he wasn't like Lee, wanting to sample every beautiful woman that he came across. Kazuya was many things but he was not one to take another man's woman. He knew that even though he had wanted her from the moment he saw her if she had belonged to anyone else he would have put her out of his mind, would never have touched her. It all came back to Lee. He knew that he was trying to make a life with Sayuri, he had sought out every bit of normalcy that he could find from the first moment he set foot on the Mishima Estate. It was obvious he was trying to do the same with Sayuri, he cared about her
in his own way even if he strayed often; he was trying.

When the tournament was over Lee would be too. If he didn't know about Sayuri by then he would tell him himself, he wasn't above kicking him when he was down. He would send him back to his home country with no money, no woman, no hope, and a tarnished reputation. He deserved to live like the piece of Chinese, street-trash that he really was. Lee was no Mishima, he never would be and it was time to pay the pound of flesh for trying, it was time to pay for trying to usurp Kazuya's place as heir to the Mishima Zaibatsu.

**It's moments such as these that make it all worth it,** Devil said sounding impressed. **You make me so proud.**

"I told you not to get cute with me," Kazuya said harshly.

Devil laughed, then retreated to the back of his mind.
Unfamiliar Territory

Chapter Summary

Kazuya spends an evening out with Jun while those against him ponder their next course of action.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sayuri sat in her chair for over an hour waiting for her hands to stop shaking and her heart to stop racing. It had been an entire hour of constructing scenarios and forming conclusions, an hour of creating solutions only to strike down each one. Nothing would work, nothing would help her in her plight.

She glanced at the clock above the door, it was a very simple and elegant design, a large black circle with silver numerals; she wondered how much it cost. She sighed heavily as she slightly shook her head, she was thinking about inconsequential things again, her brain was trying to shut out the recent traumatic events. Seeing that it was past five o'clock she decided to leave for the day.

She looked at the file folders that were stacked on her desk, the obsolete files that should have been taken down to the archives; the one she needed was on top. She opened it and began to look for a phone number, when she found it she wrote it on a notepad, tore the off the sheet and put it in her purse. She closed the file, gathered her things and locked Kazuya's office, then walked down the hallway and into the elevators. Although she was feeling emotionally drained and shaken by Kazuya's threat she tried her best not to show it. She kept repeating to herself that she was in the eye of the storm, but it was such a blatant lie that it quickly began to irritate her rather than calm her.

She stepped off the elevator and into the lobby, on her way out of the building she smiled at the security guards and wished them a good night the same way that she always did. The cool, evening air felt good on her face when she stepped out onto the sidewalk, but she felt strange. She was surrounded by people; they walked around her, behind her, beside her… but she felt as if she were an alien in their world. In her mind she didn't belong in the same vicinity as normal humans; law-abiding men and women who didn't doom other people to be imprisoned or murdered.

Don't cross the line, Bruce had told her. It had been good advice, but she had heard it too late. She was becoming a person that she didn't know, mired in a situation that had absolutely no hope for a positive resolution. Luring Dr. Bosconovitch and his bodyguards into the trap had been her point of no return. She should have confessed, gone with them to the Russian Embassy and called Lee to warn him, to tell him everything; even if it meant that he would hate her. What Kazuya was planning to do to Lee had nothing to do with her; she should have let it be instead of trying to fix things; she had only succeeded in doing more damage. She had single-handedly doomed three men, herself, and possibly her family while Lee's fate remained the same.

Consumed by her dark thoughts she walked past the metro station, when she finally realized, she had left it nearly a block behind. She found herself at a bus stop and decided that it would do; it would be better to take a different route home anyway. It was rush hour and the benches were full, but a man who looked to be in his fifties smiled politely and stood up offering her his spot on the wooden bench. She was exhausted, so she thanked him and sat down to wait for the bus.
She sat gazing at the building across the street from where she was, her eyes unfocused. Her thoughts were once more on the conversation she'd had with Bruce. *You damn well better be sure you know where your line is, because if you cross it, you can never step behind it again. It will change you.* There was no way to change the past, no way to step behind the line; all she could do was continue forward into a place she had never been. Walk further and further away from her morals and good judgment. She had changed. The person that she had been just twenty-four hours earlier would never have been sitting in that bus stop; the person that she had been didn't hate anyone, the person that she had been would have been horrified if she knew what she was about to do.

After leaving the Mishima Building at six thirty-five in the evening, Kazuya's brain was a whirlwind of muddled thoughts. He couldn't believe it; he couldn't fucking believe it. An android had registered itself for the King of Iron Fist Tournament. It had registered itself. It had happened during the commotion of the airport mission, with Kazuya busy and Bruce and Ganryu out it had been a concerted decision between the security guards, the martial arts masters administering the physical tests and the legal department. The abomination had presented a valid identification card and had a legitimate purpose for seeking entrance into the building, and so it was granted admittance and been given the contract to sign, which it did.

After seeing it perform the physical tests everyone from the martial arts masters to Kazuya's overpaid lawyers was worried. The masters were debating whether there was honor in fighting a machine and the lawyers were worried about all the legal gymnastics that would be required to avoid a lawsuit if the machine killed or maimed one of the participants. Every single member of the legal team had been replaced after Kazuya's takeover, so no one knew how Heihachi's team had handled the situation during the first tournament.

Heihachi was an entirely different matter, Kazuya had been told that he had finally signed up but it didn't bring him the satisfaction that he thought it would, all it did was make him angrier. He immediately realized that he needed to focus on the issue at hand, the last thing he wanted was Devil surfacing if he lost his temper.

He had left the lawyers scrambling, making phone calls and looking through archived files to figure out what to do about Jack-2, the newest and least welcome participant. Kazuya went to see Dr. Bosconovitch, seeing as the thing was Russian it was the next logical step. It had a nationality… Kazuya wouldn't confess it to anyone but he found sentient machines utterly disturbing.

He had gotten absolutely no useful information from the doctor, who claimed that he knew nothing of the robot. To make matters worse Kazuya's plans of having the Kangaroo ready to fight in the tournament had to be put on hold so that Bosconovitch could focus on getting the dusty piece of junk called Prototype Jack up and running. He was not about to let the Russians one-up him by having a robot, cyborg, android, or whatever the correct term was for it, enter itself into the tournament; he had to have one too.

Kazuya was on his way to meet with Jun Kazama as those thoughts ran through his head. He didn't even want to see her anymore, he didn't want to sit with her and listen to her flimsy reasons for quitting her job and entering the tournament or to answer her stupid questions when there was a crisis happening in his building. Not only was he on his way to a meeting that he had no interest in attending, he was running late; it was something that he detested. And although he could have decided to stay at the Zaibatsu or to go home to rest after one of the worst days he'd had at work he decided against it. Jun Kazama was a participant in the tournament, which meant that he could not ban her from the building, which meant that being as meddlesome and stubborn as she was she would make his life a living hell until the end of the tournament. He had decided to show up in
person and demand… He didn't even know what.

If Lee was there none of that would be happening. If Lee was there he could be the one repairing the robot and dealing with the legal team while Bosconovitch focused on the genetic experiments. He should have looked into what Lee was doing from the beginning, but now it was too late. Bruce and Ganryu were leaving the country and the men he could trust were on a plane on their way back from Moscow. Too goddamn late.

As Kazuya walked toward the entrance of the Park Hyatt Building he had the urge to pay Sayuri a visit. To break down her door if he had to so that she would get Lee on the phone and he could tell him to get his ass on a plane immediately and stop shirking his responsibilities. He had to will his body to continue walking forward telling himself that he'd get rid of Jun first and deal with Sayuri after.

As he approached the entrance of the building a doorman stepped out of the foyer and held the door open after bowing deeply. An elderly couple looked scandalized as they attempted to exit the building, Kazuya had pushed his way past them and into the building, they had undoubtedly expected him to step aside to let them through. Inside the foyer, another employee in a uniform bowed to him. Beyond he saw the lobby in its gaudy glory, the decor was tasteful in a way, but too much for his taste, too many plants, too many lights and too much gold-plating. Well-dressed men and women walked in and out of the elevators or made their way to the information desk. As his gaze followed an attractive woman in a pantsuit his eyes were drawn to the ridiculous metal sculpture in the middle of the room. And that was where he saw her.

Jun Kazama was walking around the sculpture; she wore a sleeveless, white silk dress that was understated and elegant at the same time. She had a curious expression on her face and a slight smile on her lips. At that moment Kazuya thought she was the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on.

"...God damn it…” He cursed under his breath as he realized that he wanted to be near her, that he wanted to hear all the stupid questions that she was going to ask even if he knew he was going to ignore half of them and scoff at the rest.

Almost as if she sensed him she turned to look at him with a genuine smile adorning her face.

"Hello.” Her white, high-heeled shoes clacked on the marble floor as she made her way to him.

He nodded. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, it's the fortieth floor," Jun gestured toward the elevators.

"Yes, I've been here before,” Kazuya said, then followed her in silence. There had been so much running through his mind just minutes earlier and suddenly all he could think about, all he wanted to think about, was the woman walking in front of him.

*Devil is right, Kazuya thought, she makes me act like a damn teenager. But at that precise moment, he simply didn't care.*
She walked with her eyes cast down, clutching her designer purse tightly in front of her, the clicking of her high-heeled shoes sounded much louder than usual, but no one else seemed to notice. Bruce was right again, she realized, she was the perfect mark for a mugging. She looked down at her red shoes and frowned as she saw the scuff marks that reminded her of her ordeal and she felt the urge to take them off and throw them into the garbage.

She stopped when she spotted the green, public telephones mounted on the white, brick wall. They were next to the stairs that lead up into the street, well away from passengers exiting and entering the subway cars. She moved quickly to them and found the one that would allow her to make an international call. She looked around nervously, her heart pounding loudly in her chest and her mouth and throat feeling dry. There was a man wearing black slacks and a brown suit jacket sitting on the bottom step with his back against the wall. His clothing looked faded and his hair somewhat disheveled; he was eyeing the people waiting for the subway and did not seem to pay any attention to her.

She took the note with the phone number out of her purse as well as the amount of change she would need to make the call; she inserted the coins into the slot and dialed the number then looked around again, no one was using the other telephones. When she began to hear the ringing at the other end of the line she turned to face the subway and put her back against the telephone.

"Mullen Aviation." She was startled to hear a male voice answer in English.

"Um…" Her chest felt tight as she struggled to form the foreign words. "…Someone speak Japanese? My English is not good."

"Not until after two o'clock today," the man answered in a thick Irish accent, "you can call again then."

She was more accustomed to hearing American accents, but she didn't find him too difficult to understand.

"Is this Mr. Braden Mullen?"

"It is."

"I need to talk now, to you." She said resolutely.

"Well, if it's not something too complicated I'm sure we can understand each other, miss," the man said in a pleasant tone.

"…I…" Sayuri hesitated as she quickly surveyed the crowd waiting for the subway. "I know who kill Desmond Mullen."

There was a long pause at the other end of the line. "…Who?" Mullen's voice was hard, she could hear the anger behind it.

"Kazuya Mishima." She said without hesitation.

"Are you certain?"

"Yes."

"Who are you? Why are you telling me this?"

She didn't know what to say, it was much easier to understand the language than to speak it, she was
afraid that she would not be able to explain herself properly. She was also afraid of the consequences that might follow if she identified herself, but in the end, did she have much more to lose? What could this foreigner do to her that Kazuya wasn't already planning to do himself?

"I...I work for him." She finally answered.

"We need to meet." The man's voice was tight.

"No... It is too much danger." Her lungs felt heavy in her chest, it was suddenly difficult to breathe.

"I would risk much more than you, how do I..." She didn't understand the last part of his sentence, it was a combination of the accent and the wording that he used. "Tell me who you are."

"...Secretary." She said hesitantly.

"Kazuya Mishima's secretary?" His tone said that he had not expected her answer.

"Yes."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"He..." She struggled to find a word in her limited English vocabulary that would convey her ordeal. "...He will hurt me, maybe my family."

"I will meet with you." He persisted.

"I cannot."

"I will be in contact with you," Mullen said before hanging up.

Sayuri stood with the receiver in her hand, her heart threatening to push itself out of her chest. She wondered how the Irish man would get in contact with her if he didn't even know her name. As she put the receiver back on the cradle she saw that her hands were shaking. She didn't know what consequences her actions would bring, but she hoped that they would be dire for Kazuya. From what she had been able to put together it seemed that Ganryu was afraid of Mullen's men or his connections, she didn't know which, but it seemed that Braden Mullen was someone who could do some damage. She suddenly wanted to cry, not because what she had done could potentially cause Kazuya his life, but because she realized that she didn't care if it did. She wanted to cry for the person that she used to be, she wanted to cry for the woman who had woken up that morning oblivious to the changes that she would undergo that day.

"Hey, rich girl." She was startled to hear a rough male voice behind her. She turned quickly toward the source and saw that it was the disheveled man sitting on the step. "You got any change you can spare?"

She eyed the man cautiously. He looked to be close to forty years old, of average height and weight. He had not moved from his spot on the bottom step, she noticed that he was clutching a bottle wrapped in a brown paper bag.

"That's an aggressive way to get someone's attention." She smiled slightly, amused at the fact that less than a day ago she would have been too frightened to speak to someone like him. "I can't imagine many people respond or even acknowledge you."

"No," he said as he rubbed his stubbled chin. "Just lost, rich girls."
"What makes you think I'm rich?" She asked as a young couple walked past her and up the stairs into the street.

"Your shoes." The man explained. "Believe it or not I had a job a few months ago, my boss's wife was a rich bitch, she always wore expensive shoes and had a pair just like yours."

"...They're ruined." She said sadly as she looked down at her red footwear.

"Let me cry a tear for the rich girl who had a bad day while a find a bench to sleep on." He said sarcastically.

"I did have a bad day." She suddenly wanted to say everything out loud, she figured he was the perfect confidant, a homeless nobody who didn't know who she was and who she would never see again. She decided that it would be the last time she would speak about her ordeal with anyone. "I did something awful today and then a man tried to kill me... He put a gun to my head." She said as she gingerly put her fingertips to her temple.

"Are you fucking serious?" The man asked as he sat up straight.

She nodded. "He was rough, he pushed me and pulled me around... I fell, twice, maybe three times... That's how my shoes were ruined. I did something horrible just now," she said looking the man straight in the eye, "something that will guarantee my place in Hell... and I don't even regret it."

The man gaped at her for a few seconds. "...Fuck...I thought beautiful, rich girls didn't have problems."

"We're not supposed to," she said sadly.

"You need to talk to like a therapist or something, that shit will mess you up."

She shrugged. "I'm talking to you."

"I'm your source of comfort?" He laughed. "Damn, from now on whenever I have a bad day I'm going to remember you, remind myself that sleeping on a park bench is better than being rich sometimes."

"Why did you lose your job?" She asked him.

He pointed to the bottle. "My true love beckoned and I had no choice but to heed her call."

Sayuri walked up to him and took her wallet out of her purse, she immediately detected the sour smell of alcohol, it was almost as if it were oozing from his pores, invading the air around him and making her feel light-headed. She pulled all the cash out and handed it to him. "Here, go get a hotel room."

A small group of people descended the stairs from the street, she noticed a few giving her looks of admonishment.

"You know I'm just going to drink it all away." The man said as he took her offering.

She put the wallet back in her purse and shook her head. "Here," she said removing her gold watch from her wrist and handing it to him, "take this, it's a few days of sleeping on a warm bed and eating hot meals."

"Damn, that's a nice watch," he said as he examined it. "I'm just going to drink it away too." He
shrugged as he pocketed it.

She sighed and turned toward the subway. She didn't know if what she had done was a good deed or if she had just doomed the man further. She wondered what time it was and instinctively raised her wrist to check her watch then shook her head as she realized that it was gone. She joined the crowd waiting for the subway hoping that she would make it home before eight o'clock.

As she entered the subway car she did not notice the young, Japanese man depart from the crowd and walk toward the public telephones.

He watched as the subway doors closed then turned toward the wall. He noticed a sign that read 'out of order' on one of the telephones, he removed it and adhered it to the only phone programmed to make international calls, the one he had seen the young woman use. He watched the drunk sitting on the bottom step; he waited until a man in a suit walked up the stairs and disappeared into the street to approach him.

"Hey, man," the drunk addressed him once he noticed him, "you got any change you can spare?"

"What did the girl say to you?" The young man questioned.

"What girl?" The drunk asked dismissively.

"The one in the black dress."

"What?"

The young man sighed in annoyance. "The one who gave you the cash."

The drunk laughed as he patted his pocket. "She didn't say anything much, just that she had a bad day, some guy tried to kill her."

"What exactly did she say?"

"I don't know…" He seemed to be trying to remember. "That the guy was rough with her and that she did something terrible just now."

"Did you hear what she talked about on the phone?"

"No, man, I can't hear anything from here… Oh shit!" His eyes suddenly widened as he pointed a shaky finger at the young man. "You're not the guy who wants to kill her are you." He didn't respond. "Fuck… Just don't do it anywhere near here where I might find her, follow her home or something, and make it quick, she seemed like a nice girl."

The young man shook his head in disgust and walked up to the telephones on the wall again, he picked up the receiver of the nearest one and inserted his payment before dialing the number.

The lights were dim inside the upscale restaurant. It was fancy, too fancy for Jun's taste but she did her best to enjoy it nonetheless. She subtly glanced at the well-dressed couples conversing quietly around them and discreetly took notice of the expensive wood that was covering the floors and walls as well as the ritzy, but tasteful decor. She tried her best to look pleased, but not impressed; she didn't know why, she figured it was an insecurity that she had not been aware of before.

She turned her attention away from the interior of the restaurant and gazed out the fortieth floor window. "The city looks so beautiful from here."
She was sure that was a comment everyone who had a table next to the window would say, everyone except for Kazuya Mishima. He did not look the least bit impressed and unlike her, she was sure that he truly wasn't, he was undoubtedly one of the only people who didn't notice or cared how magnificent Tokyo looked from their vantage point.

He finally spoke. "Tell me the truth."

Kazuya's voice was even, there was a hard edge to it, but she knew that he wasn't angry. He had been when he entered the building. She had felt his dark energy immediately but had decided to wait a few seconds before turning to look at him. As he saw her she had felt his mood lighten considerably; that had given her a feeling of victory and had made her heartbeat quicken.

"The truth about what?"

"Why did you enter the tournament? Why did you quit your job?"

Jun took a sip of water from her glass, she set it down then focused on the small, spherical lantern at the center of their table. How to be truthful without sounding like a teenaged girl who has a crush. She hoped that the waitress would arrive with their food quickly so that she could have more time to think of a coherent response. She decided to begin with the easier question first.

"...I quit my job because I asked to be assigned a different case and my supervisor refused."

"Which case was that?"

"Yours," Jun answered even though she was sure he knew.

"Which was?"

Jun was momentarily distracted as she noticed how well the purple shirt fit his muscular frame. Though men were required to wear a jacket inside the restaurant no one had dared mention anything to Kazuya.

Jun inhaled deeply. "To gather evidence to arrest you."

"I thought it was only about a missing kangaroo," he said crossing his arms over his chest, "but you were trying to arrest me?"

"Um...I was only going to ask questions, get a confession maybe. I was really just trying to see if we even had a case."

He cocked his head slightly as his brow furrowed. "So why did you ask to be taken off the case?"

"Because it became a conflict of interest." She felt a warmth spreading from her cheeks to the back of her ears.

"How?"

"You should know." She took another sip of water knowing full well that her blush was unmistakable now. She was also beginning to feel irritated at the way he was making her answer those embarrassing questions.

"I don't."

"Why do you think I'm here?" She avoided his eyes, fixing her gaze out the window again, looking at the countless points of light that tried to push back the night.
"I don't know, why?" Kazuya folded his arms on the table behind an elegant red and black, round platter. He leaned slightly forward, she could sense uncertainty in him and it somehow made her feel more at ease.

She looked into his eyes and felt her heart flutter. "I… want to get to know you…” She said surprised to hear herself say it. "I want to spend more time with you, I…” She stopped as she felt the need to ask her own question. "Wait, why are you here?"

Kazuya leaned back in his chair, a slight smile adorning his face. "Don't turn this around on me."

"That's not fair," she said playfully.

Jun suddenly felt relieved, though somewhat surprised that he didn't seem upset after learning that she had been trying to arrest him.

"Fine," his smile faded again, but his mood remained light. "Answer the other question, why did you enter the tournament?"

She was willing to tell him, planning to tell him, but realized that it was not the right time. It was not a good night to tell him that she was trying to help him rid himself of the demon damaging his soul. She needed to spend more time with him first, she needed to get to know him better, to learn how to best approach the subject.

"Those are my reasons and mine alone. Please respect my answer." She wasn't willing to lie to him, not to anyone if she could help it, but especially not to him. She knew that if he pressed her the night would be ruined, her opportunity to get closer to him perhaps, and that she would have no choice but to accept Angel's aid.

Kazuya sighed. "Fine." She sensed uncertainty again, but his mood didn't darken. She knew that the creature was leaving him be for the moment, it was obvious. "But I want to be clear that this isn't the Olympics, there is no referee and no protective gear, don't blame me if you end up getting hurt, which will undoubtedly happen."

Jun had to use all her willpower to not roll her eyes after being lectured. "I signed the documents, I'm aware of the risks."

"Where did you learn to fight?" He asked her somewhat disinterestedly before taking a sip of water.

"It's more of a self-defense style of martial arts, I wouldn't really call it a fighting style."

"You won't win by blocking." He said with a small shrug.

"It's not blocking, it's-" Jun stopped herself and smiled as she realized how easily he was able to get under her skin. She knew he was doing it intentionally, whether to test her or simply because he liked to annoy her she didn't know. "My father and grandfather taught me," she began again in a calm, pleasant tone, "it is a style unique to our family, it has been passed down from generation to generation, taught to men and women alike. Very few of us have used it to fight, but believe me, just because I don't look for fights it does not mean that you should underestimate me." She looked at him with a confident smile. "I know most will, it will be their mistake and my victory."

She wasn't someone who liked to brag, but at that moment she felt that it was something Kazuya needed to hear. He looked intently at her and she felt her heartbeat accelerate and her cheeks flush again. She wanted to look away, take a sip of water, push a strand of hair behind her ear…anything; but she willed herself to continue to look into those dark eyes. She sensed something different in him, he respected her. There was something else that made her heart flutter yet again, that made her feel
confident and self-conscious, elated and scared. It was his desire for her. She had hoped that he shared the same feelings she did, but now that she knew she wasn't sure how to proceed. It was a situation she had never encountered before.

To Jun's utter relief the server, a pretty girl about Jun's age wearing a black and red kimono, arrived with their food. She watched the young woman as she put the tray on a stand next to their table and began to set the two main courses before each of them, beautiful scallops with mushrooms and steamed rice. She began to arrange the small, ceramic bowls and plates with dipping sauces and sides around their plates. Everything looked colorful and too pretty to eat, but what caught Jun's attention was the vegetable side that the waitress set directly in front of her.

"The spinach is lovely," Jun said looking up at the woman, "who's your supplier?"

The young woman smiled, "We get all of our vegetables and beef from small, family farms." She set a black and red teapot at the edge of the table.

Jun suddenly felt that she could enjoy the food without guilt. "I'm very glad to hear that, I wish more restaurants would follow suit."

Kazuya rolled his eyes and scoffed lightly. "They only do that so they can have an excuse to charge higher prices."

The young server looked nervously at him. "Is there anything else I can assist you with at the moment?"

"No," Kazuya said shortly.

"Please let me know if there is anything you need." She said as she bowed deeply, then left them to their meal.

"They don't buy from small farms so that they can charge more." Jun defended.

"Then why?"

"I admit that the prices are a bit higher," she wished that she had not said anything, she realized that she was hungry and she wanted to start eating, "but what you are paying for is high-quality food, not subpar vegetables like the ones I'm forced to buy." The protests at the airport came to mind. "I wonder if their suppliers are being forced to relocate due to the airport construction."

"Does it matter?" Kazuya asked offhandedly. "They'll just find new suppliers."

"It matters." She was bothered by his indifference, by the fact that he gave no thought to the plight of the men and women who worked so hard to provide for their families, for the ones who toiled to serve the expensive food that he ate every day. "It may not affect you, but it's displacing dozens of families."

He sighed, clearly irritated. "They aren't being displaced, they are being relocated, every single one of them is being paid to move."

Jun huffed in annoyance. "They are being forced, forced to leave their homes. It doesn't matter that they are being paid-"

"That is all that matters." He shook his head. "If they don't leave, the airport can't be upgraded and then other protesters will show up to bitch about how overcrowded and inefficient the airport is."
"No," Jun insisted, "these people have been stripped of what was theirs by birthright, of their legacy." She could not believe that their night was about to be ruined by vegetables, but she suddenly felt that she should continue rather than stop. "Someone, an entity, who holds more power than any of them, than all of them put together, decides that it wants or needs what is theirs and they're forced to relinquish it. Yes, I know that a few welcome the change, that they want out of that life, but most were looking forward to passing it on to their children or to receive it from their parents."

She sensed something in him; anger, then guilt, then...sympathy. He had a blank expression on his face but was looking at her, almost as if expecting her, perhaps daring her to continue. "That land should stay in their name, their ancestor's legacy should continue where they want it to continue, it should not be given to someone who will defile it." They were both silent, staring at their food. His mood was slowly darkening and she felt that she had to say something, anything to salvage the evening. "So...where do you buy your vegetables?"

He suddenly looked at her with his brow furrowed, but she was pleasantly surprised that he was keeping the darkness at bay. "That is the second stupidest question you have ever asked me."

"Second stupidest? What was the stupidest question I've asked?"

The slightest of smiles graced his handsome face. "You asked me what I knew about lizards when we first met."

As soft laugh escaped her. "You never did answer," she said as she delicately covered her mouth with her hand. "So what do you know about lizards."

He shrugged. "They're ugly, slimy creatures."

She laughed again, "Please, please open an encyclopedia once in a while, lizards are not slimy."

"I do open encyclopedias quite often," Kazuya defended, "but not once have I ever done so to learn about something as insignificant as lizards."

She picked up her chopsticks and used them to point at him. "You are trying to rope me into another argument, I'm not falling for it. Now let's eat before this amazing food gets colder than it already is."

"After you," he said as he picked up his own chopsticks, she sensed that his mood was light once more.

Jun felt more hopeful than she had since she decided to help Kazuya. Not only had she been able to help him sympathize with the farmers and protesters but now she was certain her feelings for him were not unrequited. And if he cared about her there was the possibility that he would be willing to let her help him. She could do it without Angel's help she was almost certain, she just needed a little more time.

Heihachi Mishima nursed a glass of brandy as he gazed at the city below him from the balcony of his penthouse apartment. Although he would not admit it to anyone he was more irritated than he thought he would be after knowing that Kazuya's kidnapping plot had been successful. The only thing he was able to do was imagine Kazuya seething in his office when he found out that there were over a thousand protesters threatening to ruin his plans. He pictured him brooding at his desk with his brow furrowed and smashing the occasional object against the wall as Lee paced the length of the office… He was still confident that he would win in the end, that had not changed, however, he had been looking forward to seeing his son fail. To see him publicly humiliated or at the very least
scrambling to sweep the incident under the rug.

That would have been Lee's job, he was in charge of public relations; it would have been amusing to see him trying to come up with excuse after excuse as he smiled for the cameras. But he knew that behind all of Lee's smiles lay an insecurity that the boy himself didn't know existed, the thought made him chuckle slightly; he knew his sons better than they knew themselves and they weren't even aware.

He turned when he heard the sliding, glass door open behind him. His secretary, Rei Nakano stood wearing very short shorts and a tank top, he swept his eyes over her body before looking at her face.

"There's a call for you from the man who was following your son's girlfriend, and I have some news for you when you're done."

He nodded and entered the luxurious apartment, just because he had been believed dead and was currently working from a cheap, rented office space did not mean that he had to live like a peasant. He walked up to a desk that had various papers and documents scattered about it and picked up the receiver of the telephone nestled between stacks of files.

Heihachi put the receiver to his ear. "Yes, Toshi?"

Toshi got straight to the point. "The girl made an international call from a public telephone."

"Why is that something I need to know?"

"Because from what I was able to find out about her this isn't her usual route, it's actually on the opposite side of the city from where she lives. She just got on the subway that will take her back to her usual stop."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, she told a homeless drunk that someone tried to kill her today and that she just did something terrible."

"Give me the number to the public phone and the address where this happened." That was interesting, Heihachi decided and was curious to know who she had called. Could the young woman be doing something that she didn't want Kazuya to know about? "Call me again if you notice anything else." He said after acquiring the phone number and address from his informant, then hung up.

He turned to his secretary who was sitting on a chair with her legs crossed looking patiently at him. "Find the number to my contact at the telephone company and get him on the phone right away, I think he works the night shift, if not call him at home. I need to know what my potential daughter-in-law has been up to."

He handed Rei a notepad where he had written the address and phone number, she took it and nodded then handed him a paper, Heihachi examined it and saw that it had the name of a hotel and a Hong Kong address.

"What is this?" He asked her.

Rei stood up. "It's the hotel in Hong Kong where your son Lee has been staying for the past two weeks." She said sounding quite pleased with herself.

Heihachi took the chair in front of the desk as a smirk formed on his face. "Nicely done, Miss
Nakano, I don't suppose you know what he's doing."

"Not yet," she said as she walked behind him, "but I will tomorrow. I'm going to call the phone company now." She bent down and put her arms around his broad shoulders as she kissed him softly on the back of his neck. "I hope you know I'm charging you overtime for this."

Heihachi chuckled. "I already bought you this apartment, what more do you want?"

"Paid overtime," she smiled as she picked up the receiver and dialed a number.

Heihachi watched her as she made the phone call, amused by her comment. It was not something that he would usually let a woman get away with, but Rei was useful and she knew her place. He wondered if Lee's girlfriend knew her place as well but shook his head as he realized that it was doubtful if she was making secret phone calls in odd parts of the city. Not the type of woman that he would want giving him grandchildren who would one day inherit his empire. Though now it would never happen because Lee was about to pay for his betrayal.

He downed the rest of his brandy as he realized that as much as he would like to blame his current position on Lee, Heihachi himself was responsible for everything that had transpired at the first tournament.

Heihachi had warned Lee that Kazuya had planned to take over the Zaibatsu by killing him and that he was going to use the tournament as a means to achieve his goal. He didn't know if Lee had thought he was serious, but the only fact was that the boy had been too arrogant, he had truly believed that he could beat Kazuya and had thoroughly underestimated him. He would be a hypocrite if he blamed Lee for his arrogance when he was guilty of the same, worse perhaps.

Heihachi had lost himself in the daily ins and outs of running the Zaibatsu and had grown overconfident. He thought that Kazuya's sudden disinterest in acquiring the Zaibatsu was nothing to worry about, that it meant he wanted to separate himself from the Mishima name. All the while Kazuya had molded himself into a hardened warrior for years, competing in martial arts tournaments against the world's best fighters... He had been biding his time and Heihachi had not even suspected. That was it, the part where he went wrong.

He grew too soft and at the same time fed Lee's arrogance to the point where it became a weakness. But his thoughts circled back to the fact that Lee had betrayed him, that was what infuriated him. He would have expected it from Kazuya, they did have their history, but Lee owed him his life, he owed him everything and still, he had betrayed him. Why? Because the boy adapted to survive, it was what kept him alive on the streets and what had helped him to thrive under his wing. In the end, he should have seen that coming too.

"She called someone in Ireland," Rei's voice pulled him out of his thoughts, "Dublin to be exact."

"Dublin is not what I would call exact," Heihachi said irritably.

"Forgive my poor wording," Rei sighed softly, then bowed her head politely. "He will call me within the hour to let us know."

Heihachi looked into the bottom of his empty glass. "Very good."

A father to traitors, to ingrates who had left him for dead. He would take everything back, everything. Even if it meant taking the lives of his sons.

After finishing their meal Kazuya and Jun continued to talk, about high school of all things. It was a
somewhat one-sided conversation as Jun did most of the talking with Kazuya asking a few questions here and there. It was the first time in a long time, maybe ever, that he had sat after a meal and simply enjoyed being with another person. He learned a little more about Jun, that she had been involved in the school newspaper and in the gymnastics team. He enjoyed hearing her stories, enjoyed hearing and watching her talk.

He didn't know when it had happened exactly, but ask he watched her tell one of her stories, watched because he was too distracted to hear what she was saying, he had noticed that she had perfectly shaped lips. He blamed it on the sake that he'd had to finish by himself because Jun informed him after he had ordered an entire bottle that she didn't drink. He honestly wasn't surprised.

He admired her courage for entering the tournament and her conviction as she had looked him in the eye and had kept her reasons for entering to herself. He was willing to let her get away with that, but it was something that he wasn't willing to simply ignore, he couldn't trust anyone, not even her… Especially her, someone who made him feel and behave so differently was someone who needed to be watched. He hoped that she had entered the tournament to prove something to herself or for some other misguided reason; he would hate to know that she was lying, planning to betray him… What would he do if that was the case?

"It's getting late." Jun's voice interrupted his train of thought. "I should start heading home."

It wasn't very late, it was close to nine o'clock, but he decided to make no comment and stood up from his chair, she picked up a small, white clutch purse from the table and followed suit. Having already paid for the meal they made their way out of the restaurant and into the elevator in silence. He pushed the button for the lobby and moved to the back of the elevator where Jun was standing.

"So…" She looked at him and smiled shyly, a soft blush gracing her cheeks. "...Do you mind if I stop by your building sometime?" She quickly looked away, he thought it was...cute. He realized that it was the first time that word had entered his thoughts in a context that had nothing to do with sarcasm.

"Why?"

She crossed her arms and fixed her gaze on the panel next to the elevator doors. "I don't know...maybe to have some coffee or...I don't know. You can say no, I'm sure you'll be busy with the tournament preparations."

It amused him to see how she blushed so easily, he had the sudden urge to touch her cheek but remained immobile. "Just call my secretary ahead of time to make sure I'm available." He said casually as the elevator chimed and the doors opened.

"I like her," Jun said as she stepped into the lobby, "she's always very helpful and polite."

Kazuya did his best to bite back a remark about Sayuri. "How are you getting home?" He asked instead. "I can have someone drive you."

She cast down her eyes. "I drove here, I borrowed a friend's car, but thank you." She walked toward the exit and he followed after her. "What do you think that is?" She asked stopping next to the metal sculpture in the middle of the lobby.

He stopped and narrowed his eyes as he looked at the…whatever it was. He wondered if Jun was testing him, but she didn't seem the type to do that.

"The molecular structure of...something," he said shaking his head.
Jun gave a short quiet laugh. "Oh, good," she turned to him and smiled, "I was afraid that it was something only the wealthy could appreciate, some sort of test to see if the rest of us fit in."

_Cute_. The word popped into his head for the second time; he blamed that on the sake too. "You are much too insecure."

"I'm not insecure," she defended. "Would you mind walking me to my car?" She crossed her arms lightly over her stomach. "It's a couple of blocks down."

"Lead the way."

He followed her out of the quiet, elegant building and into the bustle of the neon-lit street. Though it was late there was no shortage of pedestrians walking on the sidewalk, crossing the street or standing to the side conversing with each other. But Kazuya didn't see them; he only had eyes for her.

He watched the way her white dress changed color with the red, yellow and green lights around them, how it changed from pink to blue as it was bathed in light from a storefront and then another. He watched as her jet-black hair swayed slightly in the breeze. He noticed the goosebumps on her arms and was immediately made aware of the chill that the night had brought with it and wished he had a jacket to offer her. At the same time, he was glad that he didn't because he didn't want anyone to see him doing such a thing. He wanted to take her hand, but that was something else that he was not willing to let anyone see him do.

Jun turned to look at him. "This way." She smiled as she gestured toward the right, he remembered there was a parking lot a short distance away.

It was darker there, no neon, just street lights shining down from poles high above them. Her dress stood out in contrast with the subtle light. Try as he might he was not able to take his eyes off her. She suddenly stopped and he realized that they were in the parking lot next to an old, white, Nissan sedan. There were a few people exiting or looking for their vehicles, but none were within hearing range.

"Here we are," Jun said as she set her purse on the roof of the car and rubbed her arms. "Thank you for agreeing to the meeting, I'm glad we cleared up-"

Kazuya shook his head and laughed lightly. "Meeting?"

"Umm…" Jun shrugged. "What was this?"

"I have meetings every day of the week," he said feeling amused, "not one has been like this, or ended with me walking anyone to their car."

He couldn't see it in the dim light, but he was sure that she was blushing. "…Um…" She looked away as she smoothed down her bangs, he didn't know why, and then adjusted her white headband with her right hand.

He watched his hand reach for hers, but could not believe that he had done it. Her skin was smooth and delicate and he had a hard time imagining someone like her passing all the physical tests required to enter the tournament; he wished that she hadn't. He felt his heart beat faster as he laced his fingers with hers, _like a damn teenager_, he thought, but he didn't care.

She looked up at him and he met her eyes, those chocolate-brown eyes that made him wish he could stop time and just look at her, hold her. He took a step forward, half expecting her to move away, but she remained still. With his other hand he caressed her silky, black hair, slowly ran his fingers through it and moved closer. He could smell a hint of vanilla in her hair and on her skin and moved
his face nearer to hers until her perfectly shaped lips met his.

It began slowly, with him enjoying the closeness, her scent and the softness of her lips; but he soon found himself pulling her against him and running his left hand down her back. He felt her lips part slightly and her fingers move lightly up his arm and onto his shoulder, he responded by kissing her deeply. He felt her take a step back and he moved with her, pulling her body as closely as possible to his. All too soon she broke the kiss and with the palm or her hand against his chest signaled for him to stop.

"I need to go home," she said as she put her forehead lightly on his shoulder.

"You need to go?" He had to ask, though he knew it was for the best.

She nodded against his shoulder then stepped sideways and let go of his hand. "I should." She took the purse from the top of the car and extracted the keys. "Can I come by tomorrow."

"You can, just, like I said, make sure I'm available."

She unlocked the car and opened the door. "Thank you for dinner and…” She cleared her throat. "...Um...Good night."

He nodded then turned and began to walk. It was too bad that she had cut things short, but again, it was for the best. He found himself looking forward to seeing her again, to hearing her defend futile causes, to touching her again.

You can't have both her and power. Devil's voice surprised him, he had not even felt him stir. I'll never allow it.

I already know that. Kazuya was suddenly infuriated.

Then what were you thinking tonight? What exactly are you trying to do? She's already changing you.

She is not! I just want some time. He hated having to negotiate with Devil, as soon as the tournament was over finding a way to suppress him would be his priority. Give me until the end of the tournament.

And then what? Devil asked angrily.

I'll forget about her.

Fine. Devil huffed, But if it goes beyond that I'll be forced to interfere, and trust me when I say that you do not want me to do that.

As he walked back toward the Mishima Building he could feel her touch lingering on his fingertips and a faint tingling on his lips. Until the end of the tournament, and then I'll forget about her. Even in his head it sounded wrong, he knew that he would never be able to forget her...but he would be forced to push her away.
And finally the longest day in Tekken history is done! I am actually excited, I feel like I can move on with the rest of the story, I honestly thought that it could all be tied up in one chapter, boy how wrong I was.
Enemy of my Enemy

Chapter Summary

An ally from Kazuya's past enters the picture. Lee receives surprising information.

(Enemy of my Enemy)

Heads turned whenever she walked; it couldn’t be helped. It was her revealing outfits and the natural sway of her hips, it was the confidence that the Irish beauty radiated from her core to her stunning exterior. Anna Williams stepped through the doors of the Mishima Building and removed her sunglasses then slowly put them inside her black, leather purse as the security guards watched her with slight impatience.

"I hope you speak English." She said as she rummaged through her purse without bothering to look up at the guards. "Because I didn't bring my English to Japanese dictionary."

"I do," one of the guards responded. "What business do you have here."

"Oh!" She exclaimed as she found what she was looking for. "I have a lifetime pass." She handed the guard her Mishima Zaibatsu ID.

The man took it and sighed as he examined it. "This expired over a year ago, miss." As he handed it back to her, his partner picked up the receiver of the telephone on a small desk behind them.

She scoffed impatiently and pushed the ID into his hand. "I'm on the list," she didn't want to hurt them, but she was going to get into that building one way or another, she was sure that Kazuya would understand. "I'm going to be your new boss within the hour, so don't make a fuss and let me in."

The man looked as if he didn't know whether to be annoyed or cautious, but he turned to the other and said something in Japanese. The other man put down the receiver and pushed some keys on a computer that looked brand new. They whispered to each other in Japanese as they attempted to enter her badge number into a database. Neither of them looked proficient with the machine.

"My apologies, Miss Williams." The guard handed her back the ID and bowed deeply after finding her name on the list, she assumed. "Please," he opened the door for her, "see the receptionist if you need any help."

"Good boy," Anna smiled and winked eliciting a nervous smile and another bow from the man; she was sure she saw him blush.

Nothing had changed since the last time she had set foot in the lobby, except for the receptionist, who was younger and prettier than the last.

"Good morning, darling." Anna set her purse on top of the desk and opened it to put her ID back inside. "Do you speak English?"

"Yes, how may I help you?" She had an accent but seemed to speak the language well.
She looked the girl up and down, it was a habit she had of checking out potential competition. The girl had a nice figure and judging by the tight, hot-pink dress she was wearing, she was well aware.

"I like your dress," Anna said with a genuine smile, nice figure or not the girl was no competition, if she were she would see it in her eyes.

"Thank you." She bowed deeply exposing an almost excessive amount of cleavage.

Insecure. Anna smiled again as she tucked a strand of short, brown hair behind her ear. "Is Kazuya in?"

"Mr. Mishima?"

And not super bright. "The one and only."

"Yes, Mr. Mishima is in today."

Anna picked up her purse. "Great."

"Wait," the girl began sounding somewhat anxious, "you need an appointment, do you have one?"

She laughed lightly. "Sweetie, I don't need an appointment, but call him and tell him Anna Williams is on her way up, and that I want some coffee. The good kind." She ordered as she began to walk toward the elevators.

She felt a sense of accomplishment as she watched the wide-eyed, young woman pick up the phone. It had been her suggestion that Kazuya hire more English speakers and more attractive personnel wherever they were visible to the public. She entered the elevator and as the doors closed she realized that she forgot to ask the receptionist if Lee was still working from the front of Kazuya's office.

It was strange, he could have had any office in the building to himself but had chosen to remain at a desk without walls to shield him from prying eyes or from Kazuya's outbursts. She had asked him why he didn't just take an office on the same floor. Lee's answer had been that he wanted Kazuya to see that he could trust him, that he was loyal to him. But she knew the truth, it wasn't difficult to guess; Lee wanted to be witness to every visitor and client that Kazuya saw and to hear every phone call that his secretary made. She had always wondered if Kazuya knew, or if he cared. He had a tendency to underestimate people, the lengths at which someone could go if they were pushed too far.

Whenever he perceived a threat he dealt with it swiftly and efficiently, but he was of the mindset that few, if any would dare oppose him or go up against him or that anyone would consider him or herself to be his enemy. He thought they simply feared him. He was right, they did fear him and no, they would not call themselves his enemies...not openly.

Lee was his enemy.

There were no more warm feelings between Lee and Kazuya than there were between Anna and her sister Nina, the only difference was the show of civility that the two brothers put on for everyone, including each other. She hoped that Lee would not act against Kazuya, it would put her in a very unenviable position.

When the elevator arrived at the top floor Anna stepped into the hallway and extracted her compact from her purse. She had not seen Lee or Kazuya in over a year, she wanted to make sure that she looked perfect.
"Sir?" Kazuya heard Sayuri's voice when he picked up the telephone. "I just received a phone call from the receptionist in the lobby, apparently there is a Miss Anna Williams asking for you. She's on her way up right now."

"...Send her in." Kazuya said after a slight hesitation.

He was not expecting her, he had not heard from her in more than a year. For a brief moment he entertained the idea of sending her away; after all she had put him in a difficult position with her sudden resignation. But as he remembered what Bruce had said about hiring a woman he thought that perhaps it was not the best time to hold grudges. And if she was only there to pay him a visit it was best to be civil with her, who knew when one of his missions might require the delicate touch of a woman?

Shortly after Sayuri's phone call, there was a soft knock on the door.

"Come in."

Anna opened the door and stepped inside looking stunning in a short, black skirt, red silk blouse, and black high-heeled boots with fishnet stockings. Only Anna could pull off such an outfit and not look like complete trash.

"You know what I missed the most about Japan?" Anna set her purse on the floor next to the black, leather couch before closing the door, she slowly scanned her surroundings and took a seat without waiting for an invitation.

"What?" Kazuya closed the gray folder on top of his desk that he had been looking through.

"Everyone bowing to me, it makes me feel like a princess."

"What brings you here, your highness?"

"I got a phone call from my Sumo Teddybear." She crossed her right leg over her left in a very lady-like manner. "He said you need me."

He straightened in his chair. "Ganryu called you? When?"

"Yesterday."

He was somewhat bothered knowing that Ganryu still kept in contact with Anna. Granted, he didn't care what he did or who he did it with during his personal time, but the fact that he had spoken with her about Zaibatsu business didn't sit well with him.

"And you were in Tokyo? Why?"

"I was in India last week, but then I thought that your tournament might attract a certain blonde, bitter bitch and I thought, why not fly down to Tokyo just in case?"

He should have known, he was actually surprised that he had not anticipated Anna's arrival since the tournament's announcement.

He relaxed his posture and leaned back in his chair. "Nina hasn't registered."

She sighed. "Well, the tournament is still a few days away."

"What did Ganryu say to you."
"He said that I should come down to see you and ask you if you're in need of my services."

It occurred to Kazuya that Bruce must have mentioned something about needing a woman on the team to Ganryu, he couldn't imagine the sumo having the foresight to contact Anna without getting the idea from someone. It was somewhat irritating to imagine them whispering about him, he wondered what else they said amongst themselves.

**You really can't trust anyone.**

Kazuya did his best to ignore Devil and focused on Anna once more.

"You're offering your services again? Why?" He wanted her on his team again, that was certain, but he couldn't let her see it.

She shrugged and spoke in a tone that was matter-of-fact. "Because shooting unsuspecting targets in the back of the head gets boring after a while."

"What about your fiance?" *Fiance... what a joke.* Anna never struck him as the marrying type, he was almost certain that she had only gotten engaged as an excuse for her breakup with Lee. As to whatever really happened between them, he didn't know and more importantly, he didn't want to know.

"That's history," she said dismissively as she examined her red-polished fingernails. "It turns out that the rockstar lifestyle isn't as glamorous as magazines and movies make it out to be."

"So tell me what you want, exactly."

They were interrupted by a knock on the door.

Kazuya sighed in irritation. "Come in."

Sayuri opened the door and pushed a food cart with a stainless steel coffee pot and cups.

"I was told that Miss Williams asked for coffee." She bowed slightly to Anna. "Please let me know if you need anything else." She said before leaving the office.

"That's disappointing," Anna said staring after Sayuri, "I thought for certain that your secretary would speak English."

"She's *my* secretary, not yours." He laughed lightly, unable to help himself.

"What?"

He gestured toward the door. "The old meets the new."

"You're kidding." Anna furrowed her brow. "He's just sleeping with her, right?"

The fact that she had known exactly what he was talking about meant that it had been on her mind, she had been thinking about Lee the entire time. If there was a fault that he saw in Anna it was the soft spot that she had for Lee.

"Yes," Kazuya said somewhat condescendingly, "just sleeping with her, in *their* apartment." He wanted to see her reaction, he wanted to make sure that the reason she was there wasn't Lee.

Anna stood up. "I'm glad he moved on." She walked up to the food cart and poured herself a cup of coffee. "I thought he knew better than to shit where he eats but..." She shrugged as she made her
way back to the couch.

He chuckled slightly, he genuinely liked Anna, she never minced words and always spoke her mind. "I guess he didn't learn his lesson with you, did he?"

"That's not fair, it doesn't count." She sat delicately on the couch keeping her cup perfectly balanced. "I was with Lee before I started working for you."

"Why are you here, Anna?" He had never been keen on smalltalk or pointless conversations and was beginning to grow tired of taking the long way to get to the point.

She gave him a confident smile. "I want my old job back."

"You can't have it." He wanted to know her motives before agreeing to anything, if there was any possibility that she was there for Lee he didn't want her on his team, no matter how much he needed her.

**Yes,** Devil hissed, **go with the feeling.**

She looked taken aback. "Why?"

"Your resignation left me in a very vulnerable position, I was damn lucky that I found a suitable replacement."

Anna raised an eyebrow. "So you need me," she confidently stated.

"No." Kazuya folded his arms over his broad chest. "I needed you and you left me so that you could chase your dream of marrying a rockstar like you were some naive twelve-year-old girl."

Her shoulders visibly fell. "I'm sorry, I regret leaving, what do you want me to say?"

"Regret? I'm disappointed, Anna, I thought you were better than that."

"Yes, you know that human feeling that surfaces when we've made a mistake, haven't you ever felt it?"

"No."

"Never?"

"No."

She scoffed. "Don't sit there looking all superior, it pisses me off. I know for a fact that you regret at least one thing."

"What is that?"

She slowly sipped her coffee then spoke with a smug look on her face. "Not strapping a .45 to your leg and putting a bullet in your father's skull before you threw him off a cliff."

**Always telling it like it is.** Kazuya shook his head. "There is no honor in that."

Her lips tightened as she shook her head. "**Honor,** you Japanese and your fucking honor." She sat up straight. "I can be your .45, just like old times. I can do anything that you want me to do, offing that old man won't bother my conscience whatsoever and trust me when I say that you need me."
"What do you mean?"

She sighed as she slightly furrowed her brow. "There are rumors…"

"From?"

"My clients, their friends, it doesn't matter, they're all around. The point is that you're pissing off a lot of people, burning bridges… Now it turns out that your old man isn't dead, who do you think they'll side with? Even if they weren't friendly before they'll side with him if it means taking you down. And do you honestly think that any of them including your father are going to come at you with honor?" She rolled her eyes as she sipped her drink.

"And you want me to what? Apologize to them? Send them a fruit basket?"

"Apologize is a really ugly word, I'm thinking more... make amends, offer a truce…"  

She was partially right, Bruce was just one man, he could only be stretched so far, Ganryu could be trusted, but he was not smart enough to be trusted with too much. He had disposable men who could take on his enemies, but those disposable men needed leaders. He did need her.

Yes, add another traitorous bitch to your life.

Anna isn't like that, you know that.

"Fine," Kazuya said despite Devil's objection, "I will take you back but only as Bruce's second in command."

"Hmph." She fixed her gaze on the large window behind the desk. "Fine, I'll show you that I'm better than your bitch, by the end of the tournament I'll be your right hand again and he'll be my bitch."

"We'll see." Kazuya picked up the phone and pushed the number to Sayuri's desk. "Call Yamada and tell him to meet Miss Williams in the lobby and give her whatever she needs; she is the acting head of security effective immediately." He hung up after hearing her confirmation.

"Yamada…" Anna mused as she finished her coffee. "He's married, isn't he?"

"I don't care," Kazuya said dismissively. "He'll give you all the access codes you need and will fill you in on what you need to know. Bruce and Ganryu are out of the country for the next couple of days, so I'll expect you to be in charge until they get back."

"Bruce, Bruce, Bruce…" Anna shook her head as she stood up and put her empty cup on the food cart. "He can't be that great." She gracefully bent her knees and picked up her purse. "Admit it, boss… I'm the best you've ever had." She winked seductively and walked slowly toward the door.

Kazuya sighed. "Why do you always have to make everything sound so-
"

"Because of that look on your face," she smiled, "like it bothers you, but you don't really know what to say. It makes you… human." She opened the door and stepped out of the office closing it softly behind her.

You are just full of good ideas lately, aren't you? Devil sounded impatient, irritated. Bringing in another woman who loves your brother… When she finds out that you are planning to ruin him, who do you think she'll side with?
She isn't here for him.

Do you honestly believe that she is here for you?

She's here for the unmatched paycheck.

And for the opportunity to be near your brother.

For the opportunity to face off against her sister, to prove that she's better than her at something. Trust me, she loves her rivalry with Nina more than she ever loved Lee.

But she did love him…

Kazuya felt Devil grow quiet, but the quiet left an unsettling feeling in his body, it made his shoulders tense and he felt a slight tingling in the back of his head. He decided to ignore it and tried to focus on his work.

After a strange day at work Sayuri decided to go for a run shortly after returning to her apartment. It was her morning ritual, every day she would wake up at five-fifteen in the morning and begin her jog at five-thirty. On particularly difficult days, which lately had been nearly every day of the week, she liked to go for a second run before dinner to clear her head. Today had definitely been one of those days. She dressed in her running shorts, shoes and a white sweatshirt and she took the elevator to the ground floor. The apartment was in a five story, white, brick building, it was only a few years old and had a very modern design; it was upscale, expensive and in a very desirable and safe neighborhood. The streets were exceptionally well-lit and it was in close proximity to a park, she always felt safe during day or night.

She was fast, but she paced herself as she ran, she saw a couple in jogging gear up ahead of her and a young woman walking her dog as she passed a coffee shop on the right and a grocery store on the left. There were a few more businesses and apartment buildings to pass before she saw the park and made a right turn toward it.

She didn't know how she had been able to get through an entire day of work at such close proximity to Kazuya. She didn't know how she had been able to talk to him and make sure her work was up to his standards without mentioning what she had done the previous night. He had barely looked at her, had not even asked her about Lee's whereabouts; he completely discounted her, did not see her as any type of threat.

Looking at him made her feel sick, especially after hearing about the aftermath of the protest. Four protesters and one officer had been hospitalized and nearly two dozen men and women had been arrested. There had been damage to public and private property and to top it all off construction on the exterior of the airport had been halted indefinitely. Kazuya had not looked bothered by it, she doubted if he even knew. The protesters were nothing to him; they were only there to be utilized and forgotten about… Just as she had been. Insignificant…

Nothing.

She abruptly stopped and forced herself to think of something else. She focused on her breathing, made sure it was even, she had been running faster than she had intended and realized that she had circled the park already. Settling for a slow jog she decided to circle the park once more before heading home.

She switched her thoughts to the strangest event of the day; the return of Anna Williams. The woman
had strutted into the office with the same confidence of someone walking into their own living room, not only that but she had arrived practically unannounced, Kazuya didn't let anyone get away with that not Bruce or even Lee. And to name her acting head of security on the spot, she couldn't imagine her doing Bruce's job, but knowing Kazuya he would not have done so if she were not as capable as Bruce. Still, she didn't know what to make of it, she had thought about telling Lee the news when she spoke to him after her run but decided against it.

There were rumors already. Minori, the cafeteria manager had warned her during her lunch hour that they would start. She had told her that Lee had dated Anna when Kazuya first took over the Zaibatsu and to brace herself for the onslaught of falsehoods and half-truths that she would be hearing soon. Sayuri didn't know what to think, she wanted to say that it wouldn't bother her but…

"Lovely night for a stroll."

She gave a start as she heard a man's voice behind her and turned to look over her shoulder. The man was of Japanese descent, but his accent said that he had been born, or at least raised outside Japan. She nodded curtly and sped up. She looked to the opposite side of the sidewalk and saw two young men walking as well as an elderly woman leaving one of the apartment buildings. Still, she felt a tightening in the pit of her stomach as she continued to run, she considered turning back but she spotted a woman walking briskly ahead of her. She was obviously a foreigner, she could see a long, blonde ponytail bouncing over her dark, leather jacket. She would slow her jog and keep a short distance behind the woman, then turn back when she reached the intersection. She no longer had a desire to circle the park.

"Not only is it a lovely night for a stroll," she heard the man's voice behind her again, "it's perfect for a chat."

The woman in front of her stopped suddenly and turned toward her. Sayuri didn't know what to make of the man behind her, but knew that this was her chance to turn around and so she did. The man stood in her way with a blank expression on his face, Sayuri gasped when she felt a hand on her arm and instinctively shrugged it away and turned to the person. She did not expect to see the young, foreign woman. The woman's light-colored eyes were cold and authoritative as she took Sayuri by the arm again and guided her in the direction of the park.

"Don't make a fuss, we're all friends here." The man spoke with a smile that did not reach his eyes. The woman was roughly the same height and body shape as Sayuri and her hands looked small and delicate, but her grip was tight. She reminded her of Bosconovitch's bodyguard and she began to feel a slight tingling on her temple. With her heart racing and her throat tight, Sayuri walked into the deserted park with them knowing that she had no choice.

"Let's have a seat." The man gestured toward an empty bench and the woman pulled Sayuri to sit with her as he casually stood next to the bench lighting a cigarette. To passersby it would look like nothing more than a man chatting up two pretty girls.

"Who killed Desmond Mullen?" He asked nonchalantly after taking a long drag from his cigarette. For an instant she wondered if they were working for Kazuya, testing her somehow, but quickly realized that it was impossible.

"...Kazuya Mishima." She hesitated not because she didn't want to say his name but because her mouth and throat had gone dry and she found it difficult to speak.

"Are you certain?" He asked through another false smile.
"Yes."

"Who else?" She was startled to hear the woman ask in English, her voice was soft, almost gentle. The streetlight above them gave the woman's face a subtle glow that accentuated her beauty… There was something familiar about her.

"Um…"

The man took another drag from his cigarette then exhaled. "Who was the triggerman?"

Sayuri assumed that he must have mistaken her hesitation with a lack of understanding of the English language, but in reality she was trying to figure out what to say. She knew that it had been Ganryu, it was what she had surmised after hearing him talking to Bruce outside the locker room...but she couldn't bring herself to name him.

"I don't know," she met the man's eyes, "he has so many men to do his bidding that it would be impossible for someone like me to know."

The man shrugged seemingly accepting her answer. "She says she doesn't know." He told the woman in English.

"I suppose you're here on behalf of…" She hesitated unsure whether or not she should ask, "...of Mr. Mullen?" The man nodded as his eyes narrowed slightly. "How do you know who I am? How did you find me?"

He chuckled lightly. "You work for the most powerful man in Japan, you're his secretary, not his hired assassin, it's public knowledge. As for where to find you, the address was easy, your exercise habits...let's just say you might want to hire a cleaning woman who doesn't like to talk quite so much. She said that you've been running almost every night, which means you're stressed."

"But she only cleans our apartment on Mondays, how did-"

"We're professionals."

Sayuri sighed, not wanting to know any more she decided to cut the conversation short. "Is that all you wanted to know?"

"Tonight, yes." He dropped his cigarette butt onto the grass and didn't bother to crush it, Sayuri fixed her gaze on the tiny orange embers and watched as they were quickly snuffed out by the breeze. "There will be a banquet the night before the tournament, is that correct?"

"...Yes." Sayuri herself had been charged with overseeing the preparations.

"Have blueprints of the Mishima Building as well as Mr. Mishima's tournament schedule ready for us on the morning of the banquet when you go out for your run." He said it as if he were asking for an extra printout of a tournament flyer.

"How am I going to get that?" Sayuri felt nauseous, there was no way to obtain blueprints of the building with arising suspicion.

He shrugged. "You're the one on the inside."

"What if I'm not able to-"

"Miss Yoshida," The man interrupted, "Mr. Mullen truly appreciates this closure that you are about
to bring him. I know him well and I know that he would like the innocents in this, people like you and like me, to come out of this unscathed. And the only way that it will happen is if you give us what we need so that we may enact justice."

Sayuri's heart beat faster and louder than it had while she was running, she was almost certain that the woman sitting next to her could hear it, could feel her fear, and she didn't dare look at her.

_Does that mean she's here to kill Kazuya? _"...Un-unscathed?" She asked for lack of something to say.

"Yes, once this is all over we all go home and move on with our lives, with the exception of Mr. Mishima, of course."

"What about me?"

"What you do with your life is not my concern."

"N-no...I mean…"

He chuckled slightly. "You mean, what will Mr. Mullen do to you?" She cast down her eyes. "He will give you his utmost gratitude for helping bring the man who murdered his brother to justice. This isn't the movies, Miss Yoshida, and we aren't the mob, Mr. Mullen is just trying to right a wrong and make the world a better place in the process. As long as you keep quiet you have nothing to fear."

"Are we done?" The woman's impatient voice beside her took her by surprise.

The man nodded and the young woman stood up. "Please have those items ready on the morning of the banquet. And this goes without saying, but if we see each other, you don't know us and we don't know you."

Sayuri felt a chill run through her as she watched them walk away. _The innocents in this_, the man's words rang in her head. She wondered if he said that to make himself feel better or if he truly believed it, but she didn't know the man, maybe he was only a translator. She on the other hand… She was going to be complicit in a murder, there was no way to put a positive spin on it.

She felt dizzy for a moment and closed her eyes. Lee would be home in less than twenty-four hours, everything would be better then; he always made her feel better no matter the circumstances. But if he knew that she was plotting to have his brother murdered…

_I'll take it to my grave._

No matter what happened between her and Lee, whether they broke up as soon as he returned or spent the rest of their lives together it was something that he could never know.

"This is utterly embarrassing." Heihachi shook his head as he looked at a photo of Sayuri Yoshida with a sparkling crown on her head and a bouquet of roses in her arms. "This little girl has bigger balls than my own son." He flicked the picture onto his cheap, wooden desk where it landed face down.

"Someone like her," Rei Nakano set her notepad on the desk and reached over to pick up the photo, "she was undoubtedly backed into a corner, she used the only weapon she had. It doesn't make her bold or brave, it only means that she's desperate."

He believed it. Desperate was definitely the correct word. Still, the fact remained that a young
woman who was not trained in any fighting art, was trying to find a way to rid herself of Kazuya, for whatever reason, it didn't even matter. It was not something that he knew for a fact, but after connecting all the dots it was the conclusion that he had come up with.

After being on the phone with his contacts in Dublin the entire day, they had informed him that Braden Mullen had received inside information confirming his suspicions; that Kazuya had been responsible for the murder of his older brother Desmond Mullen. The younger Mullen had mobilized his men and sent his best to Tokyo immediately with the task of eliminating Kazuya. If Heihachi had to guess he would wager that they would make their attempt during the tournament, that the assassin would take advantage of the distraction to make his move.

"That is what Lee should be doing," Heihachi slammed his fist on the desk, Rei didn't blink or flinch. "I told him that if Kazuya took over he was to take the Zaibatsu back from him using any and all means, and what does he do? Not only does he betray me by siding with his brother, he sits back and watches as Kazuya runs the Mishima empire into the ground." He threw his arms up in frustration. "Not only that, but he's starting his own company knowing full well that Kazuya's days as CEO are numbered."

"With all due respect," Rei began gently, "you don't know for a fact that Lee knows his brother's days are numbered, if this new company he's starting is only a backup plan-

Heihachi pointed his finger at her. "That, in and of itself is the problem. If he wants to entertain himself with that little robot hobby of his he should be able to use the Zaibatsu's resources to do it. If Kazuya refuses to let him he should make sure that Kazuya is no longer a problem." He sighed wearily. "But no, his girlfriend is taking care of the problem for him, whether he's aware of it or not isn't the issue."

Rei picked up her notepad and pencil, he knew that she was as tired as he was; it was already dark outside and she had been at the office with him since six in the morning. "What is our next course of action then? Do you want me to look into Lee's investors?"

Heihachi waved a hand dismissively. "There's no need."

Rei straightened herself in her seat. "But he's leaving Hong Kong tomorrow. If you want to sabotage his new company this is the perfect time to strike."

"How many new companies conceived and led by twenty-somethings do you think are able to survive the first year?"

"I don't know."

"The answer is not enough for me to worry about." He chuckled. "Mark my words, by this time next year Lee will have filed for bankruptcy. I actually relish the thought of him seeing his dreams crumble slowly, it's the least he deserves. I want the feeling of failure and powerlessness to eat him alive, I want him to watch everything that he worked for, everything that he's worth evaporate in front of him." Rei shifted uncomfortably in her seat and cast down her eyes.

One son dead and the other destitute… Possibly dead as well. Not a good track record, Heihachi knew, but at least he would be leading his empire into a new age of greatness. It would be a monumental task. His first order of business would be to purge every employee that had been loyal to either Kazuya or Lee, while launching an aggressive PR campaign that would restore the honor to the Mishima name. The people would want more than empty words and promises, they'd want action, they would want to see the Zaibatsu involved in charitable work and education programs. Maybe he could build a school. He would have to get the board of directors on his side before his
"Well, then," Rei's voice interrupted his train of thought. "If you're not interested in interfering with your son's plan, what's next step?"

"Call the hotel where Lee is staying, I want them to deliver a message to him, then we'll go home for some well-deserved rest."

On the morning of his last day in Hong Kong Lee stepped out of the shower feeling a combination of euphoria and anxiety. Everything was ready, his company was set to begin production on industrial robot arms. They already had a few contracts with local companies and once they were able to build a reputation the contracts would be coming from international companies as well. Perhaps by then he would be able to merge his company with the Zaibatsu; if he could win the tournament and... If he didn't have his father or brother trying to sabotage him. That was the part that made him anxious, he had not been able to stop thinking about it since his meeting with Wang Jinrei, that even after he won the tournament he would have the two Mishimas to contend with.

Maybe they'll kill each other. He thought as he dressed in a light gray suit and immediately shook his head at the thought, it was awful, no matter what they had done they were his family, the only family he had.

He would have to do something to keep Heihachi and Kazuya at bay, tighten security first of all, hire an elite few who could help guarantee his safety and a goddamn army to guard every piece of property that was under his name. Perhaps he could hire Anna, put the past in the past and rely on her contacts and her skills. It was true that she had been loyal to Kazuya as his head of security, his employee, but Lee knew that if she had to choose only one of them to help he would always come out the winner. The fact that she had ended their relationship didn't matter.

He buttoned his white shirt and walked to the closet as he finished tucking it into his waistband. He removed the gray jacket from its hanger as well as a lavender tie and laid them out on the bed. He glanced at the digital clock on his bedside table and saw that it was ten after five, he had time to eat before leaving for the airport. As he walked over to the desk to use the telephone and order breakfast, something on the floor in front of his door caught his eye.

It was a sealed, blank envelope. Someone had obviously slid it under while he slept, maybe while he was in the shower. After some trepidation he picked it up and opened it, there was a seemingly blank sheet of paper folded inside, but as he pulled it out and unfolded it he saw that it had a sentence written in Japanese script.

Kazuya Mishima will not live to witness the conclusion of the King of Iron Fist Tournament.

There was nothing else written, no heading on the paper, no signature...nothing. Panic ran through him and he rushed to the telephone quickly picking up the receiver, ready to dial Kazuya's number. He watched his finger hover over the first number, seconds passed and he had not moved a muscle. A very strange feeling had wormed itself into his very being, though he couldn't say what it was. After a very short contemplation he set down the receiver, then with slow, heavy steps made his way to his bed and sat on the edge.

He wanted to think logically about the situation, he had no way of knowing if what the note said was true or if it was someone's twisted idea of a joke. It was certainly possible that someone was trying to kill Kazuya, he had no shortage of enemies, his rise to power had been at the expense of many ties and partnerships that had once been vital to the Zaibatsu. If it was true, who would warn him? Why? And why leave a note for Lee and not warn Kazuya himself?
He had no answers, the only thing that was certain was that he possessed the most powerful piece of information he'd ever had.

He suddenly identified what he was feeling; yearning. He saw himself as head of the Zaibatsu, it was something that he had longed for since Heihachi had signed the papers that gave him the same rights as his biological son; it was what Heihachi had groomed him to do. Heihachi had planned for him to lead the Zaibatsu, and he had wanted it too, not because it was his father's desire but because it was his. He wanted to lead, he wanted the world to see that he could be a better leader than both his father and his brother, that he could restore honor to it, stop the illegal activities and begin a new era of excellence. The Zaibatsu was meant to be his and Kazuya had taken it away.

This was his opportunity to take it for himself.

That was the entire point of entering the tournament, for Lee to come out the victor so that he could take ownership of the Zaibatsu. It was what Wang Jinrei wanted and was willing to help him do, Jinpachi Mishima himself would have approved. Heihachi's own father had asked his best friend to kill his son for him so that the Zaibatsu could be steered in a different, more benevolent direction.

If Lee kept quiet, he wouldn't be complicit in a murder, he would be letting nature run its course; karma get its due. He would do the world a favor.

He took his cigarette lighter from the top of the bedside table and picked up the empty ice bucket from the floor. He then put the note back in the envelope and flicked on the lighter, he lit the corner of the envelope and dropped it into the bucket. As he watched it burn he realized that he was more of a Mishima than he would ever admit.
Affirmation

Chapter Summary

Lee returns to the Zaibatsu and comes to terms with his decision.

Jun was barely able to block the incoming punch. Her opponent was only a shadow, but he was larger than life, intimidating, his every blow devastating. The wind pulled at her clothing and tore the fragile leaves from the trees, it brought a chill that settled in her bones and made her tremble. She knew that it would be dark soon and she wanted to go home, desperately longed for the warmth of her room, but the shadow's hits would not let up. His large fist struck her in the chest and she found herself on the rocky ground with her elbows scraped, her chest feeling as if it were on fire and her lungs urgently crying out for air. Suddenly she was angry, furious, overcome by a feeling that was foreign and unmistakable at the same time; a feeling that threatened to burn a hole through her very being.

Hate.

She stood, and with inhuman speed charged at her shadowy opponent. She was no longer small, she was as large as the shadow and just as strong, just as powerful; perhaps more.

"How could you do this to me?" She heard herself yell at the top of her lungs in a voice that was small and shrill, deep and thick at the same time. "I'm your son!"

Jun felt her fist find it's mark and the shadow stumbled backward, she began to punch and kick relentlessly with a fighting style that was not her own. In a matter of seconds, her opponent was down.

Finish it. A raspy voice growled inside her head.

"There's no need," Jun said as she watched the shadow stir feebly on the ground. "He's already down."

Finish it.

"No."

Part of her wanted to do it, wanted to kill him. The feeling was nearly overwhelming, she could almost feel her body moving of its own accord, she imagined herself advancing toward the shadow and had to physically restrain herself.

Finish it. Finish it. Finish it.

"No."

Finish it!

The voice repeated the phrase over and over. It yelled, whispered and screamed inside her head, she felt as if it were clawing and scratching the inside of her skull, soon she was confused, her thoughts muddled, all she wanted was for the voice to stop, to hear nothing but her own thoughts inside her
head.

She saw her opponent struggle to his knees and she charged. She twisted her body and raised her leg, her foot connected with his chest and she saw him fly backward then fall down a cliff that she had not even noticed before.

To her dismay, she quickly realized that she was the one who was falling. Her hands and fingers tried desperately to grasp at something, anything but there was nothing save for the cold wind and the feel of gravity pulling her into an endless, dark abyss.

Jun woke up with her chest heaving and tears in her eyes. She lay motionless in her bed letting the tears roll into her hair and behind her ears. She could still feel the clawing inside her head, could vividly remember how Devil's screams made her skull vibrate and muddled her thoughts. She remained immobile until her tears ran dry and her heart rate slowed, until the only sounds that remained were outside her head.

She didn't need Angel to tell her that the nightmare was about Kazuya, though she wasn't sure if what she had seen was past or future. She didn't know if the one falling had been Kazuya, his father or if it was simply a metaphor… Perhaps it had been her own mind trying to wake her up. As she climbed out of bed she reached for a blue, linen robe that was draped over the back of a chair, she put it on and walked to the kitchen then set to make a pot of tea. After putting the tea on the stove she walked into the small living area, her eyes rested on the shoes next to the door. The white, strappy high heels she had worn to dinner with Kazuya the night before.

She didn't know how to feel about their meeting. *It was a date.* She reminded herself, she shook her head as she remembered that less than twenty-four hours earlier she had planned to treat it as a business meeting. If that was what she had tried to do she had failed miserably and in the end, it didn't even make sense. She had gone knowing that Kazuya was interested in her, why else would he agree to meet with her, why else would his mood improve every time he saw her? The only conclusion was that he had feelings for her.

*It's more than lust.*

That thought exhilarated and troubled her at the same time, it warmed her and filled her with guilt. After he kissed her she couldn't stop smiling, the city lights that she often found overly bright and obnoxious suddenly made everything look vibrant and new. But as she drove home she let guilt gnaw at her excitement and consume it bit by bit. She shouldn't have asked him to walk her to her car, that had been self-serving and unnecessary, they were already on good terms after finishing with dinner. But her goal was to gain his trust, to get closer to him in order to… She sighed in frustration and stood up to check on her tea.

The way she was thinking about it made it seem like she was conspiring against him, all she wanted was to rid him of that thing that was taking over him, that parasite. Thinking about the dream, remembering the voice in her head made her feel ill. She wondered if that was how Kazuya felt when Devil was active, she wondered how any person went about their day with white-hot hate coursing through their being and a monster screaming inside their head.

She needed to get closer to Kazuya, had to gain his trust, it wasn't a matter of right or wrong or of being self-serving. In her heart, she knew that capitalizing on the feelings he had for her was the only way. She knew that she could get through to him if she showed him what love was; if she showed him that *he* could love.

*Love...*
Her heart was suddenly racing faster than it had all morning and as she began to get ready for her day, she couldn't stop smiling.

He had to be a Mishima. Had to be. He was. It was not a matter of choice, it was the only way to acquire the Zaibatsu. What would Kazuya do? What would his brother do if he'd received an anonymous message telling him that Lee was going to be murdered?

Nothing.

And yet… Maybe he could be better, better than a Mishima.

Win the tournament, take ownership of the Zaibatsu and then… Hire bodyguards, a private army to make sure that Kazuya and Heihachi never interfere, never even try to take over.

No, that would never be enough to deter them. It's either let a murder happen now, or plan a murder later. Lee wanted to feel certain about his decision, but it felt wrong. He realized that neither his morals or conscience would come out the winner no matter the outcome of the tournament.

Immediately after setting foot in Japan, he rushed out of the busy airport as quickly as humanly possible and took a taxi to the Mishima Building. When the guards opened the door and bowed to him he automatically nodded in acknowledgment but did not slow his steps until he reached the receptionist's desk.

The pretty, young woman stood up and bowed deeply. "Welcome back, Mr. Chaolan, you were missed."

"Good morning, Asami, is Kazuya in his office?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you," he smiled politely before walking briskly to the elevators.

I am a Mishima. Lee told himself as he rode the elevator to the top floor. Mishimas do whatever is required to achieve power.

But it wasn't just power that he was after, he reminded himself. He had to restore honor to the Zaibatsu, he had to lead it in a different direction, steer it away from corruption and infamy, use its resources to invent technology that would help advance the world, not set it back by aiding warlords and…

The elevator stopped too soon. He stepped out and made his way to Kazuya's office, he slowly pulled the door open and watched for a few seconds as Sayuri spoke on the phone. He smiled at her when she noticed him but her expression was one of apprehension. Her eyes darted from Kazuya's closed door to Lee and she hung up the phone without bothering to finish the conversation. Lee closed the door and walked up to her desk, she stood up and walked around to meet him.

She looked beautiful wearing a long-sleeved, silk lavender dress that hugged every curve of her body while still managing to be appropriate for the office. He reached out to touch her but pulled back his hand when he heard Kazuya's door open.

"Get in here, now." Kazuya's voice was deadly calm, leaving the door open he stepped back inside without waiting for a response.

It would have been easy to keep the information to himself if he knew that he would never see his
brother in person again, but now…

He felt Sayuri's soft hand on his, he looked down at her and saw the worried expression on her face.

"I'm sorry," he softly kissed her forehead, "we'll talk after."

She nodded solemnly. "Go."

When he stepped inside, Kazuya was standing in the middle of the office. He was immediately met with that familiar feeling, the feeling of dread and fear that gripped him whenever Kazuya was angry. The feeling that seemed to physically occupy empty spaces and envelop those unfortunate enough to be on the receiving end of Kazuya's wrath, it made the air stagnant and difficult to take in.

Lee spoke casually, "I see security alerted you of my arrival."

"What were you really doing all this time?"

Lee looked his brother in the eye even though all he wanted to do at that moment was to be away from him and breathe fresh air. "I was training."

Kazuya advanced slowly toward him giving the impression of a lion stalking his prey. "Don't lie to me." His voice was low and measured. "I've had enough of that. What were you doing?"

"I was training."

"You could have just as easily done that here. Sayuri says that you didn't tell her where you were, I find that hard to believe."

"I didn't tell her."

Kazuya was clenching and unclenching his fists, obviously trying to restrain himself, "you disappear for two weeks right when all the preparations for the tournament need your attention, abandon your post when you're needed the most, and you expect me to believe that all you were doing was training?"

"The preparations need my attention?" Lee shook his head. "Don't patronize me."

"How am I being patronizing?"

"We both know that you were not going to let me do anything important, that you were not going to let me do any interviews or take part in any of the decision-making. You would have given me menial tasks that an inept intern could do just to keep me out of the media's eye."

"So rather than complete some unpleasant tasks you disappear? I don't believe you, I've had you doing menial tasks since the day you came groveling back to me, you're planning something, plotting to take the Zaibatsu from me somehow."

"Yes, by winning the tournament." Lee hated to admit it but it was true. When Kazuya didn't need the world to avert its eyes from the Zaibatsu's latest scandal or when there were no clients that needed to be retained he had Lee doing everything from working in the copy room to training low-level employees. It was just to put him in his place, he knew it and he hated Kazuya for it.

Kazuya sneered. "You won't win the tournament, you won't even make it far enough to face me."

"I will," Kazuya's condescending and dismissive tone grated on him, he clenched his jaw to keep from raising his voice, "I will take everything from you the same way that you took everything from
me, what was mine by right." He instantly wished that he had kept quiet, it was not the time to bring that up.

"...Yours by right?" Kazuya shook his head slowly as his scowl deepened, "what rights do traitors have?"

Lee stared indignantly at him for a moment. "...I'm not the traitor, you betrayed me."

"How?"

"You told me that you were going to stay out of the first tournament, you made me think that we could work together against Heihachi, that we could-

"I was testing you, trying to see if I could trust you, trying to see who you were loyal to! Then you both conspired against me and had me kicked off the will!"

"There was no conspiracy! He came to me and told me that you were out, that was all his doing, I was planning to find a way to put you back in!" Lee didn't try to hold back his anger, what Kazuya was saying was preposterous.

"And I'm the one being patronizing? I was going to let you continue to lead the New York branch, but in hindsight, I'm glad things happened the way they did, I'm glad I saw you for the traitor that you are, for how truly weak you are before it was too late. Your betrayal made me realize that there's nothing salvageable in you, it made me realize that you have no honor."

"I have no honor?" Lee usually bit back his tongue when it came to telling Kazuya his truths, but what he said hit a nerve. "Where is the honor in making illegal weapons deals, in committing murder for profit and revenge? You are leading the Zaibatsu in the opposite direction that your grandfather intended, he would be ashamed if he saw what you are doing to what he built, that you are defiling his legacy with-

Before he had time to react he found himself pinned against the door. Kazuya had him by the lapels of his jacket, his face inches away, twisted in what was almost a snarl.

"Don't ever mention him again," Kazuya said through clenched teeth.

The atmosphere was suddenly suffocating, fear seemed to pierce Lee's heart and mind. Why did Kazuya make him feel so afraid? The countless times that Heihachi had threatened or beaten him as a boy and as a teenager never made him feel such dread and anxiety. Lee looked toward the large window behind Kazuya's desk wishing that he could open it to let in fresh air.

Kazuya released his jacket and took a step back, his demeanor suddenly changing; it was unnerving. "Despite everything I'm willing to let bygones be bygones… So give me one good reason why I shouldn't have security kick you out of here and I will let you stay."

Lee's mind began to play memories of the day when he came back to ask for a place at the Zaibatsu after losing the tournament. How Kazuya had made him beg.

This is the last time.

There was a heavy feeling in his heart because he was well aware of what he was doing, sealing his brother's fate, but at the same time, he felt an anger that he had never felt before. He skillfully masked it, it was what the was good at.

"Reason number one… I am your brother, no matter how much you hate to hear it. Reason number
two… Regardless of your interpretation of events, I have always been loyal to you. Reason number three… I'm certain this is the one that matters to you, you need me to attend dinners and shake hands and make thank-you phone calls and if it wasn't for me half of the people we make deals with would be too scared to approach you, need I go on?"

"No, that will suffice for now."

Lee shook his head and turned toward the door.

"Where are you going?"

He wished that he could ignore him and walk out the door but Kazuya's voice was like a tether and he had no choice but to turn and respond.

"I'm sure I have a plethora of menial tasks waiting for me at my desk," he spoke as offhandedly as he was able.

Kazuya chuckled slightly. "You do, but it's nothing your lying… Sayuri can't handle."

Sayuri. Lee suddenly felt guilt in addition to the anger and fear that was threatening to consume him. He had left her alone to deal with Kazuya's tantrums. He would never be able to make it up to her.

"Address her with respect."

"We have a problem," Kazuya began, completely ignoring Lee's demand. "The Russians have entered a robot into the tournament, it's just like the one we have in the basement."

"An android, not a robot."

"Whatever. That means that we need to get that piece of junk working again and into fighting shape."

Lee clenched his fists but his face remained impassive. He had been right about the Zaibatsu needing to invest in robotics, if Kazuya had only listened to him they would have a state of the art fighting android. He wanted to scream it but knew that it wasn't the time and all he wanted to do was leave the room. "It has been out of commission for nearly two years if it turns out that I have to rebuild it from scratch it."

"Stop complaining, you should be glad that the engineering degree you're always bragging about can finally be of some use. And don't worry you'll have Dr. Bosconovitch to hold your hand if things get too difficult."

"Dr. Bosconovitch? He refused to work for you."

Kazuya shrugged. "You know how persuasive I can be. Which is also why I need you to make sure that he doesn't turn the thing against us."

"God damn it...You kidnapped him." Another crime, one step closer to being apprehended by the law, at this point it was only a matter of time.

"He forced my hand," Kazuya said dismissively, "I need you down there now. When you're done, I'll need you to talk to the legal department and see what progress they've made with the new tournament contracts, I don't want some moron trying to sue me."

"Is there anything else I can do for you." If Kazuya noticed the sarcasm in his voice he ignored it. 
"No, not now."

Lee stepped out of the office and pulled the door closed, almost at once it was easier to breathe, easier to think.

"Lee?" He saw Sayuri standing in front of her desk. Her fingers were pushing against her temple, her eyes wide. "I heard noise and yelling, I didn't know what to do...if I called security-"

He took her hand and led her out of the office, they walked quickly and stopped when they reached the first conference room, he made sure that it was empty and stepped inside with Sayuri before locking the door. He put his arms around her and was relieved when she did the same. She laid her head on his shoulder and he took in the scent of her hair, jasmine. She tightened her arms around him holding him in that way that made him feel wanted and needed, secure.

"What happened?" She spoke quietly against the fabric of his jacket.

"He wants me to go deal with some problems in the basement."

"What did you tell him you were doing the past two weeks?"

"Training."

"And he believed you?"

"Probably not, but he left it alone." He held her for a while longer enjoying the closeness, softly kissing her forehead and the top of her head. "I'm sorry." He finally said knowing that the subject needed to be brought up. "I'm sorry I betrayed you and I'm sorry I left you here with him-"

"I don't want to talk about it." Sayuri pulled away from him and gently rubbed her arms. "I just want to move past it."

"We need to address it, I don't want any resentment or lingering feelings of anger or-"

"Please," she took his hand, "if you are willing to promise me that you can move on from this, not forget that it happened just...that we're willing to both do our part so that it never happens again...if you can promise me that, I am willing to let it go."

"I promise." There was a mix of relief and fear, he knew that he wanted to be faithful to her and start a real life with her. He would try...but what if he couldn't? He set those unpleasant thoughts aside and looked at her, truly looked at her, tried to pick out every little detail that made her beautiful and desirable. Everything from her long hair to her lashes to the way that lavender dress fit her perfectly. He reached into the inner pocket of his jacket and pulled out a rectangle-shaped, black velvet box and handed it to Sayuri. "I don't want you to think that I'm giving you this to atone for what I've done," she hesitantly took the box and opened it slowly, "it's something that I wanted to give when I realized that I want you to be part of everything I do, I wanted to give it to you as a way of showing you how important you are to me."

He smiled as he saw her eyes light up when she opened it. Twenty-one diamonds made up an open-circle pendant on a platinum chain, it was expensive as hell, but if it helped her forgive him, then it was worth it.

She smiled as she gently pulled it out of the box. "You know how much I like sparkly things." She set the box on the square conference table and handed the necklace to Lee. "Could you?" He took it and she moved her hair to the side as she turned her back to him, he unfastened the delicate piece of jewelry and put it around her neck. When he refastened it she moved her hair behind her shoulders
again and turned to face him. "What do you think?" She took a step back to give him a better view.

"I think you wore the perfect dress for it."

She put her arms around his neck, "I wore it for you, I know how much you like it."

"The only thing I like more than seeing you in it is being able to take it off." He slowly ran his hands down her waist and her hips.

"Are you going to go home with me or do you have to stay late?"

_The goddamned android._ Lee sighed, "I have to stay late."

"Hmm." Her shoulders visibly fell but then she smiled up at him. "I'll be waiting...and I'll save you the trouble of taking the dress off, I think maybe you'll get home and find that there's nothing for you to take off."

He pulled her against him and kissed her deeply, all of the sudden he didn't care where they were, he didn't care what work needed to be done, all he knew was that he had missed her and that he wanted her. He held her by the waist and helped her onto the conference table then slowly ran his fingertips down her legs and lightly touched her knees, he slid his hands under her dress and kissed her again.

"I missed you," he spoke softly against her lips, his hands slowly gliding up her smooth skin as he left a trail of kisses from her cheek down to her neck. He felt Sayuri's breath tickle his ear and he moved his hands higher up her thighs.

"I love you," she breathed as her lips lightly brushed his skin.

It was as if his blood had turned to ice. His hands were frozen in place and he looked at her before he was able to utter any words. "...I...didn't know that."

She seemed taken aback by his statement, she furrowed her brow slightly and looked toward the door. "...Oh," she pushed lightly on his arms, an obvious sign that she wanted him to stop touching her. "That's because I never told you before...I guess."

"I'm so sorry." He knew there was no way to salvage the situation, no way to spin it in his favor.

Sayuri stood up and began to smooth down her dress. "No, no," she gave him a weak smile, "I should have given you a warning or... I should go back to the office anyway, I don't want him to notice I'm gone."

He took her hand. "I'm sorry."

She sighed, then smiled brightly. "It's all right." She lightly kissed his cheek. "If I'm asleep wake me up when you get home, I want to give you a proper welcome." She smiled one last time and made her way out the door.

_A proper welcome?_ He didn't know if that was comforting or alarming. Feeling the need for a smoke he reached into the pocket of his pants and pulled out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. He lit up and began to smoke even though it was not permitted anywhere in the building, then leaned against the wall.

Why couldn't he tell her that he loved her? He had said it to women who meant nothing to him, so why not Sayuri? Even if it wasn't true yet, he should at least be able to say it, to tell her one little white lie, _a truth placeholder_, because he knew that eventually it would be the truth. He would love
because she was perfect for him, she was beautiful, well-educated and she came from a well-known and respected family. He knew that thinking that made him a hypocrite, he had come from the back alleys of Shanghai, after all, but her background was important to his image and his career. He finished smoking and picked up the jewelry box from the table and dropped it into the empty wastebasket along with the cigarette butt before leaving the room.

Fine leader I will make, not only am I practically plotting my brother's murder, I'm also a hypocrite and a snob.

But maybe that was what it took to lead the Mishima Zaibatsu, Jinpachi Mishima had been a good man with good intentions who didn't have what it took to kill his son and he had paid for it with his life. Thinking about it further, Lee realized that Jinpachi's inaction against the obvious threat that Heihachi was did more than cost him his life, he had allowed a little boy's life to be ruined. If Jinpachi had killed Heihachi when he had the chance Kazuya would have grown up to be a well-adjusted man, perhaps he would have been an exemplary leader for the Mishima Zaibatsu. How many lives had Kazuya's reign negatively affected, ruined or downright ended? If only Jinpachi had had the courage to act…

But then where would I be? That thought was not something that he wanted to dwell on.

He was surprised to find himself in the sub-basement hallway. His thoughts had taken him into and out of the elevator and he had not even noticed. He walked down the corridor leading to the laboratory where he knew he would find Dr. Bosconovitch working on Prototype Jack, the android that he had hoped he would never see again. The guards posted at the entrance bowed deeply to him, Lee nodded in acknowledgment, then input a code into the panel beside the entrance. The thick, metal door slid open and he stepped inside.

He saw a man writing on a notebook and a woman typing on a computer, he remembered seeing them both in the labs before. His eyes drifted to the elderly, labcoat-wearing man with unruly, white hair hunched over a large and sturdy, metal table. On top of the slab, was Prototype Jack lying on its back. Its face resembled that of a man but its body was metal, it was missing its right hand, or drill as Lee remembered from the first tournament. A panel on its chest was open, revealing about a dozen cables that were connected to a monitor that was built into the wall. The elderly gentleman poked at something inside the panel with a screwdriver and the android suddenly raised its right, handless arm, startling both Lee and the gentleman as a beeping sound was emitted by the monitor.

"You've managed to get it working," Lee looked in wonder at the large and intimidating machine on the table. "Well done, doctor, you are Dr. Bosconovitch, I presume."

Bosconovitch turned to Lee and sighed heavily. "And you must be the brother." He scoffed. "I heard that you were the more reasonable one, but I don't suppose you're here to let me go."

"I'm here to assist you and to ensure that your work is satisfactory. Many hands make light work."

"Yes," the doctor detached a cable from the panel and pushed the screwdriver into it again, "I've heard that saying, are you familiar with the one about too many cooks in the kitchen?"

"If I'm being honest, doctor, I'm not only here to make sure that the android is in proper shape to fight in the tournament, I'm also here to prevent you from programming it against us."

"That would be a stupid decision on my part." The doctor detached two more cables. "If I programmed it to attack any of you, how far would Jack get before being shot down or blown up? Could I program him to cause a significant amount of carnage? Certainly, but he would never reach the top floor… And what guarantee do I have that I won't be hit in the crossfire, that I won't die from
a piece of ceiling falling on me? And if I die, what of my young bodyguards who are being held prisoner, what of my daughter? Who would save her then?” The doctor turned his back to Lee and pushed a few buttons on the panel next to the monitor.

What Kazuya was doing was wrong. Illegal element aside, forcing a man to work on projects that he may not morally agree with while holding those he cared about prisoner was dishonorable. And he was using the man's daughter as collateral? He wanted to ask him more, wanted to reassure him that when he won the tournament he would set him free, but he couldn't say anything. He could not let him know that he and Kazuya were not on the same page, it was dangerous.

Bosconovitch sighed. "I did nothing to awaken him, a backup fuel supply had already restored some of the cognitive function by the time I began to work on him, it was only a matter of time before he was fully awake."

Lee was about to comment on the Doctor referring to Prototype Jack as *he* rather than *it* when he heard the telephone ring. The man writing on the notebook went to the telephone mounted on the wall and answered it.

"Mr. Chaolan, it's Mr. Mishima." He held the receiver as far from his face as possible as he handed it to Lee, almost as if it was a contaminated object.

"Thank you," Lee noticed the relief on the man's face as he took the call. "What is it?" He asked warily as he put the receiver to his ear.

"You need to go to the lobby immediately. There's an Interpol agent asking to meet with me, I want to know what he's after before I decide if there's anything that needs to be done about him."

"Is there anything in particular that I should-"

"That's what you're going to find out. Go now."

Kazuya hung up before Lee could ask anything else. He sighed and turned to Bosconovitch. "Pardon me, Doctor, it seems I'm needed upstairs, I'll return as soon as I'm able."

The doctor gave him a false smile. "That's understandable, you are free to wander. And don't worry take your time, please." He turned his back to him and continued to work on the android.

Lee left the laboratory and hurried toward the elevator. He rubbed his face and ran his hands through his hair, *Interpol*, he knew it had to be something about Desmond Mullen's death, Kazuya was much too careless and overconfident. As the day progressed he felt more certain about his decision to keep the information of his imminent death a secret. It was a matter of time before he did something that would doom everyone that had any connection to the Zaibatsu.

Stepping out of the elevator he noticed a young, Chinese man about his own age sitting on one of the brown, leather chairs in the lobby lazily leafing through a magazine. He was surprised by his casual attire and the length of his hair, he was not what came to mind when thinking of an Interpol agent. Certain that he was someone else Lee made his way toward the desk.

"Asami," he smiled and spoke softly as he approached the receptionist, "I was told there is an agent from Interpol here. Is he in one of the conference rooms?"

"No," she gestured toward the man in the chair, "that is Agent Lei Wulong, Miss Yoshida called me and said that you would see him."

"Which is the nearest available conference room?"
"The one next to Mr. Miwa's office."

"Thank you." Lee approached the agent, who stood upon noticing him.

"Agent Wulong," Lee bowed, "I'm Lee Chaolan, from public relations, how may I assist you?"

"Mr. Chaolan," Wulong bowed in return, "public relations, you say?" He smiled slightly, "I was hoping to speak with Mr. Mishima himself, but I guess it was too much to hope for."

"He is a very busy man, especially now with the tournament preparations. I don't suppose you would mind showing me your identification."

"Not at all, though I did present it to your security guards at the door as well as Miss Asami."

Wulong reached into the pocket of his beige pants and pulled out a black, leather wallet, he opened it and showed it to Lee.

He nodded upon verifying that it was an authentic Interpol badge and ID. "If you would follow me, please." Lee bowed slightly, then walked toward a hallway that led out of the lobby area, he could hear Wulong following behind. After entering the conference room, Lee closed the door then gestured toward the chairs around the table. "Have a seat." He unbuttoned his jacket and pulled out a chair for himself after the agent had settled into his.

"We were on the same flight." Wulong smiled as he scanned the room.

"Same flight?"

"This morning, coming in from Hong Kong. I saw you when they called for first class passengers to begin boarding the plane. Do you travel there often?"

There was no hint of accusation in his voice, no sign that the man was doing anything other than making small talk, still, Lee didn't like hearing that he had been seen.

He leaned back in his chair. "Not often." He looked at his watch. "I hate to rush you, but I do have an inordinate amount of work to do, what brings Interpol to the Mishima Zaibatsu?"

"Desmond Mullen."

Lee felt his heart drum in his chest but his face remained blank. "According to the media, the man is dead."

Wulong nodded. "Yes, Mr. Chaolan, quite dead. Our records show that the Mishima Zaibatsu was doing business with him."

"With his aviation company, we were leasing a jet."

"And also that your business with him ended abruptly."

"What exactly are you asking, Agent Wulong?"

"Why did you stop doing business with him?"

He cursed himself remembering that he was the one who had found Mullen for Kazuya. "I discovered that he was overcharging us, I also thought that it would be better for the image of the Zaibatsu if we did as much of our business as possible in Japan, if we brought revenue into our own country."
"Would you say it was an amicable departure?"

"No. I'm sure you've read the newspaper articles where he accused the current leadership of straying from the honorable path. He wasn't happy to lose our business."

"The current leadership? Your brother?" His tone remained pleasant and he asked each question with a genuine smile, it bothered Lee to no end.

"Yes. I have a question too, Agent. Why is Interpol sending someone from Hong Kong to Japan to ask about our business relationship with an Irish company?"

Wulong's smile disappeared. "Around the time of the leadership change in the Mishima Zaibatsu, almost two years ago, we had three similar killings in Hong Kong. All three of those men were business associates of Heihachi Mishima, who was presumed dead at the time..."

He knew exactly who the agent was referring to, he remembered the incident well, those three seemingly legitimate businessmen had connections to the Chinese mafia and had been supplying Heihachi with weapons. They had been loyal to the Mishima patriarch to the end and had refused to sell to Kazuya, as a result they had paid for it with their lives.

Lee spoke dismissively. "At the same time that Kazuya Mishima was taking over operations at the Zaibatsu an earthquake struck the Philippines and a hurricane ravaged Mexico. Here in Japan, it was a bad year for the stock market. I lost quite a bit of money. I'm assuming we're discussing unfortunate events from that year."

Wulong's smile returned. "So you would describe Kazuya Mishima obtaining leadership as an unfortunate event?"

Lee felt the urge for a cigarette but instead willed his expression to remain passive. It was almost time to stop the conversation. "Again, I would like to know exactly what you are asking."

"I'm simply interviewing anyone with a connection to all four victims."

Lee nodded slowly, it was time to end it. "I think it's best if you have your office call our legal department. After the tournament, if you would be so kind, we are all very busy at the moment."

Wulong nodded in return, almost as if he had been expecting it. "Very well, thank you for your time." He rose his index finger as if he'd suddenly remembered something. "One more thing."

"I'm not going to answer any questions."

"I understand that Bruce Irvin works in this building, would it be possible to speak with him."

It was interesting, but not Lee's problem. "Have reception call the security office, they will let you know." He stood up from his chair and Wulong did the same, he opened the door and watched as the agent ambled toward the exit and wished that he could hurry him along.

"Will you be competing in the tournament again?" Wulong asked before stepping through the door.

"Yes."

"Well then, perhaps we are due for another leadership change, good luck."

Lee nodded curtly and closed the door as soon as the man stepped through. He quickly picked up the phone at the center of the table and dialed the direct number to Kazuya's office.
"It's me," he spoke quietly when he heard Kazuya pick up.

"What did he want?"

"He's asking about our former business relationship with aviation companies. I'll be in your office in a few minutes."

"We're talking now. just tell me, we both have work to do."

Lee hated having to discuss it over the phone, it made everything seem trivial. "He's asking about Mullen specifically, he's trying to link his death to some killings that took place in Hong Kong two years ago."

"What did you tell him?" Kazuya seemed unfazed.

"To get a hold of the legal department after the tournament. He also asked about Bruce."

"What did he ask?"

"If he could meet with him, I told him to call his office."

"Fine. I just received a very important delivery. It's in the genetics lab. I want you and Bosconovitch to make sure all the parts are there and functioning."

"That's all you have to say about it?"

"Is there more I need to know?"

"No."

"Then get downstairs and make sure the package arrived intact."

He sighed wearily. "On my way."

"And I expect that robot in proper working order before the first day of the tournament. Speaking of which, don't forget to talk to the legal department and check over the tournament contracts to make sure I'm covered in case one of the robots kills a participant."

"What?" Kazuya had already hung up. "...This can't be happening," he muttered.

He looked at his watch, it wasn't even noon yet, maybe if he was lucky he'd be able to get home before Sayuri was asleep. A pulsing headache beginning at his temples reminded him that he needed some food or at least some coffee. He entertained the thought of stopping at the cafeteria but decided against it and took the elevator to the sub-basement instead.

When he entered the genetics lab he saw two large, wooden crates on the floor. They reminded him of coffins; one for each of the men standing in his way.

The events of the morning had served to affirm his decision. He was confident that he could keep the note a secret, confident that he could stand aside and watch an assassin put a bullet through Kazuya. As for Heihachi, he would find a way to deal with him too.

I am a Mishima.

"Does anyone know what's in there?" He asked no one in particular, there were a few scientists and researchers going about their tasks.
"No," a woman answered, "we were told that only Dr. Bosconovitch can open them."

"Would you have someone bring him in, please."

"Yes, sir." The woman walked to the telephone mounted on the wall.

Lee took off his jacket and draped it over the back of a chair then began to roll up his sleeves. He was startled when a pair of slender arms encircled him from behind. His first thought was that it was Sayuri but he quickly remembered that she had no access to that level.

"Hello, handsome," the familiar voice made his heart drum in his chest and his stomach drop.

He pulled away from the unwelcome embrace and turned around to face sparkling blue eyes and red lipstick.

"Did you miss me?"

_God damn it._ He sighed, only a couple of months earlier her face would have been a welcome sight.

It was past one o'clock when Jun was finally ready to leave her apartment. She had called Kazuya's office in the morning and was told that it was a very busy day and that he would see her tomorrow. It was expected but disappointing at the same time. After that, she had spent her time making phone calls and looking through newspaper ads and now she was ready for some hard training at the dojo. Being unemployed was only acceptable until the end of the tournament, rent needed to be paid and food and clothing needed to be bought whether money was coming in or not. She already had a couple of promising interviews, one for a wildlife researcher position at Kyoto University and the other as an assistant in a wildlife management project in Nikko National Park.

She had been able to contact her former supervisor in Thailand where she had completed her internship working to protect elephants in their natural habitat. All she asked for was a letter of recommendation but she was offered a full-time, paid position as soon as she mentioned that she was no longer working for the WWWC. Jun declined. A month earlier she would have gladly accepted, but after meeting Kazuya she felt tied to Japan, even if a relationship with him didn't end well she needed to stay to help him get rid of that demon. After the nightmare she'd had, after feeling what he felt, bowing out and leaving him to fend for himself wasn't an option. The nightmare had only strengthened her resolve to help him, she was now certain that it was something she _had_ to do.

She picked up her black duffle bag and sighed in frustration when she heard a sharp rapping at her door. When she opened it she was surprised to see a young, Chinese man standing in the hallway, he smiled as he held up a badge and an ID for her to see.

"Good afternoon, I'm Agent Wulong with Hong Kong Interpol." His smile was pleasant and his Japanese was very good.

"How can I help you?"

"I've had a very long day and I was hoping that you could answer a few questions about the Mishima Zaibatsu so that I can go back to my hotel and get some sleep."

She suddenly felt defensive, it was almost an instinct, but she sensed no hostility from him and decided to oblige. There was not much she could tell him anyway. "Of course, come in." She stepped aside to let him pass, then closed the door. "Have a seat." Wulong settled into a worn armchair and Jun sat at the edge of her couch.
"I'll be as brief as possible, it looks like you were ready to go out." He gestured toward the duffle bag. "Off to the gym?"

"Um, yes," he didn't look the part of an Interpol agent with his long hair and casual style, but he was observant, "may I ask something first?"

"Certainly."

"Why do you think that I have information regarding the Mishima Zaibatsu?"

"I was directed here by your former supervisor at the WWWC."

"Why?"

"She said that until a few days ago you were employed by them as a wildlife officer and that you were assigned to find evidence to form a case against Kazuya Mishima or Mishima Zaibatsu."

She suddenly felt uncomfortable and hoped that she wouldn't have to omit any truths or worse, lie. "Why is Interpol working with the WWWC?"

He chuckled slightly. "An officer through and through, I thought I was the one with the questions?" His demeanor remained pleasant, she could sense that he was tired and that his motives were pure. He simply wanted to hear the truth.

"Go ahead then."

"Let me begin by answering your question," he laughed, "yes, I know I just said that I was going to be the one asking the questions." Jun sighed softly and discreetly looked at the clock. "I was sent here from Hong Kong to work on a case involving two countries, my goal is to interrogate Kazuya Mishima regarding the case. I tried earlier today but was told that I needed to arrange it with the legal department. The WWWC is the only agency in Japan that has an open case against the Mishima Zaibatsu so I'm working with them now, they sent me to you."

"I don't have any information other than what was in the written reports that I presented to my supervisor."

"I was told you had several meetings with Mr. Mishima before your resignation."

"Two meetings," Jun corrected beginning to feel somewhat irritated, "not several."

"And you were not able to gather any bit of information on either of those occasions?"

"On the first, I learned that Kazuya Mishima schedules very short meetings and on the second I learned that he's a perfectionist when it comes to organizing the tournament."

"Why did you resign your position? Were you threatened by Mr. Mishima or anyone with connections to the Zaibatsu?"

"No." She sensed that he was genuinely concerned for her, and knowing what she knew about Kazuya she couldn't blame him, still the question annoyed her.

"Then why resign?"

Jun felt her cheeks flush and wondered if he noticed. "I made a very personal decision. That is all the information I have, I'm sorry but I really must get going."
She sensed weariness and disappointment, "I won't keep you then," he chuckled, "...It's funny, if you hadn't resigned you and I would be working together right now, it's too bad I heard you were a great officer." Jun shrugged not knowing what to say. "I've taken enough of your time and goodness knows I need a nap," he said as he stood up, "perhaps we'll see each other again."

"Perhaps." Jun opened the door and Wulong bowed slightly before exiting.

Jun felt her stomach turn into knots and a heaviness settle in her chest as she closed the door. The agent's mood and intentions had not changed, yet she felt a tightening in her throat, something that made her shiver and want to seek refuge under her covers just as she had when she was a little girl afraid of monsters hiding in the dark. She felt Angel's intruding presence behind her shoulder and a chill ran through her as she remembered Devil's voice in her head. What if letting Angel possess her felt the same? What if she muddled her thoughts and bullied her into making decisions and committing acts that were against her beliefs?

"I'll make a decision after I see him tomorrow," if was half apology, half excuse.

She almost swore that she heard Angel's frustrated sigh as the presence retreated.
Chapter Summary

Devil begins to lose patience. Kazuya calls a meeting at the Zaibatsu to address tournament matters.

Chapter Notes

I've decided to change the rating to M, as the story becomes a bit more focused on relationships, there will be some mature content, beginning with this chapter.

Kazuya fell slowly straight down the pitch-black void. He closed his eyes for minutes, relaxing every muscle in his body and letting gravity pull on him until he felt his feet touch the ground. He couldn't see or sense anything, it was complete darkness, complete silence. He was giving Devil his two hours of freedom and he felt tired, his thoughts felt somewhat muddled and he didn't have the energy to train so he decided to sleep. He laid down flat on his back on the hard cold ground and closed his eyes. He tried to clear his mind but saw her in his mind's eye and found the task impossible. He remembered her shy, sweet smile, the subtle scent of vanilla in her hair and the softness of her skin. The thought of her flawless lips on his reminded him of how much he wanted her. He longed for her warmth, for the feel of her bare skin. He wanted to be alone with her, not in a restaurant or in a parking lot, truly alone with her...even if it was only one night.

Look at this.

"Unbelievable," Devil wouldn't let him rest even there. "What?" He opened his eyes and stood.

It was as if a window had opened before him, he was floating over Tokyo, above the Kiyosu Bridge over Sumida River, seeing the city through Devil's eyes. In his mind, the stunning view was nothing but deception. The lights reflecting off the river and giving it the appearance of stained glass concealed the fact that it was nothing more than dirty water, the windows of office and apartment buildings looking like tiny jewels adorning black velvet were nothing more than a cover for humanity's fear of the dark. All deception, nothing but blatant lies.

This is what I'm offering you, Devil spoke in a calm and measured tone. This is what could be yours. New York is equally impressive, as are Paris and London...but it has to start here, in Tokyo. It has to start at the end of the tournament; after you kill your father and rid yourself of your brother...Each end begets a new beginning.

"I already know that."

You know it, yet you seem to forget what you need to do in order for that to happen. You're growing soft, making friends with Bruce and Anna when you should be keeping them on a tight leash.
"They aren't dogs." It was not a statement that would usually bother him, yet this time it irritated him.

Yes, they are. They are not your equals, they are your subjects, just like every other employee and every other pathetic wretch that walks the streets of our city.

"They're loyal and have not failed me yet."

Bruce is attracting attention from international law enforcement and it is only a matter of time before Anna betrays you to protect Lee. It's time to rein them in, remind them who is in charge.

He had to admit it was a somewhat valid point. Anna's return would undoubtedly complicate his team's dynamics, knowing both her and Bruce, he was certain that a pissing contest was about to ensue.

If you let them or anyone else, get too close, if you let them disrespect you or if you let their actions endanger the Zaibatsu, you will lose all this and more.

Anyone else, he meant Jun, Kazuya knew that he meant Jun. But she wasn't a danger, she was… What? A desire?

I'm trying to talk sense into you and you don't even listen because you're thinking about that woman. If you are not careful she will be the end of you, the end of us.

Kazuya was beginning to tire of his lecture, all he wanted was some rest. "You're an ageless demon and yet, you are as dramatic and insecure as a teenage girl."

You call me a demon, but what is she? She is a woman, they thrive on deception. When you least expect it you will find a knife in your back.

Kazuya chuckled, "dramatic and paranoid." He covered his ears and fell to his knees as a deafening roar resounded inside what now seemed to be a confined space, it made his body shake and his very bones vibrate.

Do not make light of my warnings! You have until tomorrow night to end things with her or I will take matters into my own hands.

"No," Kazuya stood up and clenched his fists feeling a surge of anger. "you gave me until the end of the tournament!"

Your insolence has made me change my mind, now let me enjoy the rest of my night. Enjoy yours.

It was a feeling of defeat, a weight on his shoulders that made it difficult to stand. The view of Tokyo was gone and he was again surrounded by darkness. In the distance he saw a flicker of light, it began to grow until it resembled a TV screen, he walked toward it, more out of morbid curiosity than anything, he knew it was a memory, but which one? Once he was close enough to the screen, he recognized it immediately. It was the vantage point that had haunted his dreams and turned them into nightmares almost every night for twenty-three years. The sky was covered by dark and ominous clouds and the harsh wind forced the raindrops to fall at an angle... The view on the screen immediately triggered in this mind the smell of wet earth mixed with rotting leaves and fresh blood. Sometimes the dreams were just a flash, the feeling of pain in his chest or of rain on his skin and lighting in the sky, it would wake him up and he would glance at his clock, remember that he was a
grown man in a comfortable bed, and he would fall back asleep. But there were nights when he relived the entire event from the moment Heihachi threw him down the ravine to the moment he climbed back to the top. Those nights were hell, he would wake up exhausted and then was not able to fall asleep again.

He sighed as he sat cross-legged in front of the screen and watched from the vantage point of a dying little boy. He watched until he saw the purple creature hovering above the fallen child.

A demon, his savior.

Lee walked into his apartment at half past ten exhausted and feeling the immediate need for a shower. It had been one of the most ridiculously busy days he had ever had, and working at the Zaibatsu under Kazuya's management...that was saying something. From finding that damned note first thing in the morning, to the confrontation with Kazuya, the meeting with the Interpol agent and having to repair the android, the momentum had not let up. And to top things off, Anna was working for Kazuya, Anna of all people. He shook his head as he locked the door and stepped out of his shoes, he knew that she was going to complicate things, not because he was interested in her at all, but because she loved getting under everyone's skin, it was her MO. It had been cute once, but now... The bedroom door opened and Sayuri stepped out wearing a black silk robe, a worried expression on her face.

"Are you all right?" He wanted to put his arms around her but was hesitant, the memory of their encounter at the Zaibatsu still fresh in his mind.

"Yes, I..." she touched her fingertips to her right temple and slightly shook her head, "for a moment I thought that maybe someone was trying to break into the apartment," she chuckled slightly, "I know how silly that sounds, I've just been a bit paranoid lately."

"I'm sorry I woke you, I didn't mean to scare you."

"You didn't wake me," she suddenly gave him that beautiful sunny smile that he was used to, "the building manager brought up your luggage, I put it in the bedroom."

"Thank you, you didn't have to."

"It wasn't any trouble, are you coming to bed?"

"I'd like to shower first."

She nodded, "I'm sure you must be exhausted," she smiled again and walked back into the bedroom, he followed after her.

There was something slightly awkward about their conversation but he couldn't say exactly what it was. The bedroom was dark, but the light filtering through the curtains allowed him to navigate the room and to watch as Sayuri took off her robe and got into bed, he wished he didn't have to walk on eggshells around her but in the end knew that he was to blame. He quickly pulled the clean clothes that he needed out his dresser and left the room. After finishing his shower he put on a pair of pajama bottoms and brushed his teeth then went back into the bedroom hoping that Sayuri was asleep. It was simply to avoid confrontation, he knew that she would speak her mind, perhaps tell him that she was angry, ask him what the hell he was thinking telling her that he wanted a future together if he didn't even love her. He would hear what she had to say and let her say it any way she wanted without taking offense or feeling any resentment toward her, but before he could do that, he needed a full night's sleep and a good meal.
He pulled down the blankets and climbed into the bed, the mattress felt heavenly under his tired body, he felt himself sink into it and closed his eyes. For a moment he felt as if he were still flying in the airplane even though it had been eighteen hours earlier. Sayuri's fingertips slowly brushed his shoulder and he let a soft sigh escape his lips. He wished that he had gone straight to the guest bedroom, he could have given her an excuse in the morning about not wanting to wake her, even if they both knew it was bullshit, but maybe it would give him the time he needed to be able to tell her that he loved her, even if he didn't yet.

To his surprise she didn't speak, she moved closer and draped her leg over his and slowly ran her fingers over his chest and stomach. He felt her warm breath on his neck and her lips lightly caressing him. He rolled onto his side to face her, his hand traveling the silky fabric of her nightgown over her waist and the curve of her hip then finally stopping as he found the smooth bare skin of her upper thigh. Maybe there was hope and things would get better rather than worse. She pressed her body against his and kissed him deeply, her tongue pushing slightly against his, it had been months since she kissed him that way, with such need and force, with such urgency, it was almost as if there were something different about her, he had never seen her so aggressive, so confident. He couldn't say that it was a bad change. She pushed him onto his back and straddled him without breaking the kiss. He slid his hands under the fabric of her nightgown over her smooth hips and shapely rear and was pleased to find nothing but bare skin. She slowly pulled away from his lips and her hands began to tug on his waistband. He stretched out his arm reaching toward the lamp on the bedside table but felt her delicate hand around his wrist.

"Please don't," she bent down to kiss his neck.

"But it's been so long since I've had a proper look at you."

"Please," she continued to kiss his neck and face and her hands continued to pull on his waistband, but being at an awkward angle, she wasn't having much success, "I promise you can look at me all you want tomorrow."

He wasn't about to go against her wishes, he was damn lucky that she was even speaking to him, if she wanted the light off it was all well and good.

He helped her remove his restrictive garment and kicked it off the bed, she aligned herself correctly and he sighed softly as he felt her lower herself onto him. He ran his hands over her thighs and her hips then pulled up the slinky nightgown, she raised her arms and helped him pull it over her head. With the aid of the light filtering through the curtains, he watched her perfect silhouette and wished that she would let him turn on the light. She was so beautiful, that long hair and ivory skin, her smile, her body, everything. She moved steadily up and down for a while, then laid her body on his and kissed him, he responded eagerly and pulled her closer against him then rolled until he was on top. She wrapped her legs around him and began to move with him. She was everything he wanted at that moment, he didn't want to be with anyone else, not even Anna.

He stopped for a moment, cursing himself for thinking of her. *God damn it, why now?*

He felt Sayuri's breath against his skin. "Don't stop," her hips pushed against his to urge him further.

He kissed her and began to move again, making himself think of her and only her, he lost himself in her flowery scent, the sound of her breathing and her soft curves. She moved in perfect harmony with him, just the way he liked, her fingers through his hair, her legs wrapped tightly around him, her lips softly kissing his neck. She sighed deeply as he felt her climax and moved faster as he gripped her hips, it wasn't long before he finished. He kissed her softly and caressed her face, wishing he could tell her that he loved her.
A soft kiss on his forehead accompanied by the subtle scent of Sayuri's perfume pulled him out of his slumber. He ran his hands over his face and rubbed his eyes before opening them slowly as they adjusted to the morning light. He saw her standing by the bed, wearing her robe but looking otherwise ready for the day with her hair and makeup done.

"Good morning," she smiled as she sat on the edge of the bed.

Lee softly stroked her leg over the thin fabric. "Did you skip your run this morning?"

"No," she bent down and gave him a quick peck on the lips then ran her fingers through his hair, "I'm back already, you were sleeping so peacefully that I didn't want to wake you."

"You wore me out last night."

She laughed lightly, "it's probably the terrible day you had yesterday, but I'm glad you're giving me some of the credit."

"You get all the credit, always."

Her expression grew serious and she sat up straight. "I need to tell you about something that happened while you were gone," she averted his eyes as she stood up, she fidgeted with the belt on her robe for a moment before untying it. She then slowly opened the robe and took it off leaving her wearing only her pink undergarments.

Lee sat up when he noticed the bruises on her hip, ribs and arm. "What happened?"

She tucked her hair behind her ear and looked down at the carpet. "It happened at the metro station-"

He got out of bed to get a closer look. "Did you fall?"

"...I..."

His hand gravitated toward the most obvious bruise, the one on her right upper arm. "This isn't from a fall," he gently lifted her elbow, "this is a hand print, what the hell happened? This is why you wanted the lights off last night, isn't it?"

"Yes, and I didn't say that I fell," she walked quickly toward the closet and opened the door, "I was mugged," she spoke with her back turned to him as she pulled clothing off a hanger.

"What? Where?"

"Shinjuku." She quickly stepped into a black skirt.

"At the station? Where exactly? At what time? What were you doing there?"

"I wanted to get some shopping done on my way home from work."

"At rush hour?" She nodded. "How could it happen with all those people there? Didn't you call for help?"

"I couldn't call for help," she was fumbling with the buttons of her blouse and spoke in a bitter tone, "it wouldn't have mattered anyway, the ones who noticed looked the other way."

"Was it one man?" She nodded again. "Did he...hurt you in any way, other than the obvious?"

"No, he just took some cash and my watch."
He sighed and shook his head feeling angry and worried at the same time. "How many times have I
told you that I can teach you self-defense?"

She crossed her arms and leaned against the wall. "I don't know," her jaw was tight as she fixed her
gaze on something behind Lee.

"You should have called me as soon as it happened."

"Why?" She pressed her fingertips to her temple. "So you could spend your evening pacing your
hotel room? That's all you do when you're worried, pace and smoke, pace and smoke."

He shook his head, "fine, did you at least report it to the police?"

"Of course I did."

"What did they say?"

"That they'll look into it, what else are they going to say?"

"They'll look into it? That's all?"

"Will you stop with the damn questions?" She pushed herself off the wall and began looking for
shoes in the closet.

"They have to do something more than look into it-" 

She dropped the pair of shoes that she had picked before turning to face him. "I don't have a
description, I don't have anything useful to tell them, there is nothing else they can do!" She was
obviously agitated, her eyes were brimming with tears. "And I can't believe you're not even asking
me how I'm coping with it instead of telling me what I should have done."

He walked up to her and put his arms around her, realizing that he was being too insensitive. "I'm
sorry, it's just that the thought of anyone laying a hand on you…" He kissed the top of her head.
"Maybe you can stop going out to run for a while…"

She shook her head slowly and looked up at him. "This is one of the safest neighborhoods in the city
and it didn't even happen here."

"What if instead we-"

She gave him an irritated look. "Lee, I'm not going to stop doing anything, what are the odds of it
ever happening again?"

"What were the odds of that happening in the first place?" His tone was harsher than he had
intended, her brow furrowed and she looked away. He inhaled then exhaled slowly. "I'm sorry," he
brushed his fingers over her face and she turned to look at him, "I'm angry at what happened and at
myself for leaving you alone, I'm sorry." He kissed her softly and felt a sense of comfort when she
rested her forehead on his shoulder. He slowly ran his thumbs over her bare arms when an odd
thought struck him. "What are you wearing to the banquet?"

She looked up at him with a bemused expression. "The red dress with the sequins."

"...It's strapless."

She looked at him for a moment as if she didn't know what to make of his statement. "I thought you
liked it."
"I do, it looks beautiful on you but...the banquet is in a couple of days and the bruises won't have faded by then."

She pushed away from the embrace and crossed her arms. "You can't possibly be that superficial," she slowly shook her head, "are you really concerned about how I'm going to look?"

"Of course not, I'm not concerned about how it will look physically, I'm thinking about how it might affect...me."

She chuckled slightly and shook her head again. "You mean how it will make you look," he shrugged, "how is that, exactly."

He sighed. "I think you know."

"Say it," she looked sternly at him, "I want you to hear how ridiculous it sounds."

"...It may look like I'm the one responsible, that I hurt you or at the very least that I failed to protect you, my image is important right now," she began to unbutton her blouse with a blank expression on her face, "if I win the tournament I will need to retain the desirable clients, I am going to need their full, unwavering support." She nodded slowly as the blouse slid off her shoulders and fell to the floor, she turned toward the closet and Lee continued his explanation. "I also have my investors in Hong Kong to think about, there will be plenty of cameras at the banquet, I don't want any of them to reconsider their decision if they have the wrong impression of the type of person I am." She harshly pulled a powder-blue, cashmere sweater from its hanger and quickly put it on. "There's also the matter of obtaining sponsors for the tournament."

"Is this acceptable?" Sayuri opened her arms, the palms of her hands facing outward.

He ran his hands through his hair, he was beginning to feel irritated. "It's fine."

"I didn't think you were the type of person who would tell me what to wear, you sound like-" she stopped abruptly and sighed pursing her lips.

"Look," he took her hand, "we haven't been able to talk since I returned, I made very good progress with the android yesterday and have a little time to spare, so why don't we go out of the building for lunch?"

"I can't, I have to go to the Mishima Hotel to make sure the goddamned banquet will be up to your psychotic brother's standards. Why me you ask? Because you haven't been around to do your job, because I'm the one who had to do half of the things that you weren't there to do, in addition to all the things I normally need to do, with the added bonus of tournament shit." She picked her shoes up from the floor, "I'm going to be late coming home tonight, I was going to pick up my dress from the dry cleaner's after work but I guess I need to go shopping for a new one instead."

"Do you want money?" He realized how that sounded as soon as the words left his mouth, he didn't know why he had said it, it was stupid, he needed some food badly. Sayuri shook her head as she made her way toward the door. "I didn't phrase that correctly."

"I'm going to work."

"It's too early."

"It's Saturday, I shouldn't even have to go, I'll see you when you get there," she walked into the hallway without so much as turning to look at him.
He could see it from her perspective, he didn't like playing the part of controlling boyfriend, in fact, he never had. But image was everything, especially when he was on the cusp of obtaining the Zaibatsu, he couldn't risk losing clients or more importantly his investors; most of whom were family men. He would make it up to Sayuri, take her on a vacation after the tournament or build her a track on the Mishima Estate so that she could go running where he knew she would be safe. The thought of anyone harming her infuriated him, if he didn't have so much to prepare for at the moment he'd look into the incident himself, maybe he would after the tournament if the police had not found anything yet. He heard her close the door as she left the apartment. At least she took it better than Anna would have. He sighed and headed for the shower, cursing himself for thinking about her again.

And that was a different problem, Anna's return did him no good. He had only seen her for a few minutes, during which there had been nothing but small talk, and she was already worming her way into his thoughts during the most inappropriate moments. What truly bothered him was that he had wanted to hire her, had wanted her to be part of his team after winning the tournament, but now... She told him that she had come back so that she could settle a score with her sister, but coming back to work for Kazuya had nothing to do with entering the tournament. She was on his payroll, just another one of his thugs, that meant that she was on Kazuya's side not his, but that also meant that she could be harmed trying to protect Kazuya when whoever the assassin was made his move. If something did happen to her, could he live with knowing that he might have been able to keep her from harm? He decided that he could, she had left him and had sided with Kazuya, her welfare should be the last thing on his mind...

Anna discretely watched Lee and Sayuri as she pretended to leaf through a magazine. The gorgeous brunette was sitting on a comfortable chair in their office wearing a black silk blouse with red polka-dots and a pair of leather pants that frankly, made her ass look fantastic. She was trying to entertain herself while waiting for Kazuya so that the staff meeting could start. There was obvious tension between the young lovers, even if she had not known that they were a couple, she would have been able to figure out. Sayuri was on the same phone conversation that she had been for the past five minutes and Lee was pretending to work on his computer while stealing quick glances at his girlfriend. What did you do this time? She perked up at the sound of the opening door hoping it was the coffee that she had asked for but was disappointed when she saw Bruce walk in wearing jeans and a T-shirt and carrying a disposable coffee cup. She hated the way he dressed, it was completely inappropriate for an office setting. I can't believe Kazuya lets him get away with it. She winked when he turned to look at her and flashed him a cheery smile. "Good morning." He rolled his eyes at her without bothering to return the greeting and walked toward Sayuri's desk, who immediately finished her phone conversation and greeted him with a warm smile. Bruce ignored Lee as well and set the cup in front of Sayuri as he spoke to her in Japanese. Anna mentally rolled her eyes, fucking show off. Sayuri laughed lightly as Bruce pointed to the lid and bowed her head as she accepted the cup. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Lee watch them discretely, he didn't look pleased as Bruce and Sayuri continued their conversation. It was funny as hell.

When she heard the door open again, she was annoyed to see Kazuya and Ganryu step through. No coffee. Now the meeting was going to start and no one would want to interrupt it, she was going to have to wait until after to have her coffee. Everyone except Sayuri followed Kazuya into his office. Anna quickly took a seat on the sofa, crossed her legs, settled comfortably and extended her arm over the back, she watched with a self-satisfied smile as Lee and Bruce gave her irritated looks.

"There's room for three," she smiled enticingly from one man to the other, Bruce scowled and Lee gave her a blank look. Ganryu didn't wait to be asked and sat next to her, she felt her body rise as the
sumo's weight sank the rest of the sofa. "Good morning, you're looking handsome." She had never
seen him in a suit before, it was made of high-quality fabric and was a nice navy color, she wondered
if two suits for an average man could be made from that amount of material.

Ganryu's cheeks blushed pink as he smiled shyly. "Thank you, you smell pretty," his blush quickly
became a deep shade of red. "I...I mean, you look pretty and your pants look nice."

"Thank you, I'm wearing this brand new outfit and no one's said anything," she smiled then turned
her attention to Kazuya as he sat behind his desk. "Good morning, boss," he ignored her as he
rummaged through a drawer.

I guess everyone woke up with a stick up their ass this morning. Their lack of basic courtesy and
manners rubbed her the wrong way and she decided to make the three men who had been nothing
but rude to her, squirm in their seats before the meeting was over. Bruce picked up one of the two
chairs in front of Kazuya's desk and set it a good six feet away from the desk, Lee did the same but
moved it in the opposite direction. When all were seated the four employees were formed in a
semicircle facing Kazuya.

There was a knock on the door and Kazuya grumbled something in Japanese, Sayuri opened the
doors and entered pushing a food cart that held a coffee pot as well as several mugs. She faced Anna
and bowed to her.

"Miss Williams."

"Thank you."

Sayuri nodded then headed for the exit, Anna stared after her wondering where she had bought her
shoes, they were fabulous, black stilettos with small, silver beads adorning the pointed toe and the
heel. Before she could ask her she had left the room. A devious smirk formed on her lips when she
noticed Bruce's discrete gaze lingering on the closed door.

"Maybe it would be a good idea to have your sweet, little secretary stay here to take notes, I'm sure
Bruce would enjoy that very much."

The look Bruce gave her would have made almost anyone regret their words and immediately beg
for mercy but it was exactly the reaction Anna had hoped for. "What the hell is that supposed to
mean?"

That's one down.

"Nothing at all." Anna stood up and walked to the food cart then began to serve herself a cup of
coffee while Lee gave her a stony look, most would think nothing of it but she knew that he was
pissed. She walked slowly back to her seat and sat gracefully down, she looked up at Kazuya when
she felt his eyes on her and saw he was looking at her in a way that could only be described as
something between irritated and homicidal. Though to be fair that was how he looked at most
people. He turned his gaze to Bruce and began to speak in Japanese.

Anna delicately cleared her throat. "English, please," Bruce rolled his eyes, "how would you like it if
I started speaking to all of you in Gaelic all of the sudden? We can try Italian too, but I'm a little
rusty, the last time I spoke it was eighteen months ago when Lee and I rented that charming little villa
in Tuscany. Of course, I didn't get to practice it enough or do much socializing with the locals," she
giggled, "since we didn't really leave our room."

Bruce sighed, "you've got to be kidding me."
She smiled at Lee and she saw him clench his fist but the blank look remained, she admired his ability to maintain a poker face.

_That's two._

Kazuya looked pointedly at her. "Don't expect me to make any more allowances for you."

"You never made them for me," Bruce interjected, "is it because I don't wear slutty leather pants?"

"Hey," if there was one thing Anna hated was a man being disrespectful toward any woman, "don't be such a dick, ever since you-"

"Enough!" Kazuya slammed his fist on the desk and she instantly felt her heart begin to race, she hated that Kazuya could make her feel anxious when no one else could. "You two are wasting my time, it stops now." He didn't wait for apologies or acknowledgment and started the meeting. "The tournament starts in two days is security prepared?"

"Security is ready as we speak," Bruce straightened in his chair, "every single man has been vetted, I got more men as back up here in the building just in case-"

"Have they been vetted as well?"

Bruce nodded. "Every single one, I also have extra eyes around the building just in case, not just men, but cameras that have been set up further down the street. And as for you, either Ganryu or I will be part of your entourage at all times until the end of the tournament, or after if need be."

"Or me," Anna sipped her coffee as she looked at Bruce. _A mohawk, why?_  
Bruce scoffed, "or you, what?"

"You, Ganryu or Anna will accompany me at all times during the tournament," Kazuya stated firmly. Anna smiled and winked at Bruce who shook his head and turned toward the window. "Next," Kazuya turned to Lee, "tell me about the contracts, do any changes need to be made?"

"No," Lee straightened in his chair and looked at Kazuya with the same impassive expression that he'd had all morning, "the lawyers found a loophole since they said you're planning to enter a…" he shook his head slightly, "a kangaroo into the tournament?" He looked to Kazuya probably hoping for him to deny something so ridiculous but he remained silent. "Right..." Lee sighed, "the loophole allows non-human participants to enter but it doesn't specify that the opponents are required to be organic in nature and-"

"I'm covered then," Kazuya sounded even more impatient than usual.

"Yes," Lee looked slightly miffed at having been interrupted, Anna knew how much he liked to hear himself talk.

"What about your progress with the robot?"

"Android," there was an edge of impatience to Lee's voice, Kazuya raised an eyebrow and said nothing, Lee sighed again, "I need to make some very minor adjustments. It insisted on being physically remodeled and I had to reprogram its memory in order to convince it that a full remodel wasn't necessary, Dr. Bosconovitch had the idea to give it a hat and sunglasses and remove the synthetic skin from its face in order to give it the illusion-"

"Is it ready?" Kazuya asked through clenched teeth.
Thank you. Anna breathed a sigh of relief, as much as she hated to see Kazuya shut Lee down at every opportunity, she really wasn't in the mood to listen to him drone on and on about robots, especially on a gorgeous Saturday morning, it was like adding insult to injury.

"It will be ready before the end of the workday," Lee said dejectedly.

"Good," Kazuya leaned back in his chair, "you're dismissed," he spoke casually as he looked at Lee. Lee narrowed his eyes in apparent confusion. "What do you mean?"

"You are dismissed," Kazuya said each word slowly, his tone was unmistakably condescending.

She didn't remember a single instance when Lee had been sent out of a meeting, sometimes meetings were held in the basement without his knowledge, but this was different. The tension in the room was nearly palpable. Anna felt her stomach turn into knots, what Kazuya had done was not necessary Lee could have given him that report in private or over the phone. Lee regained the stony look on his face and quickly stood up, Anna moved her gaze to the coffee pot on the food cart as he left the room.

"Bruce," Kazuya spoke as soon as the door was closed, "has Michelle Chang tried to make contact?"

Bruce shifted in his chair and spoke in a somber tone. "No, but Ganryu left her an invitation for the tournament when he took her mother, so I imagine that she will register soon."

Anna looked at Ganryu out of the corner of her eye, the sumo hung his head. She remembered Michelle from the previous tournament, young, angry and fierce. She remembered Ganryu's feeble attempts at flirting and how the girl had agreed to go on a date with him. It had all seemed strange, Anna couldn't believe that a beautiful, young girl like Michelle would want anything to do with a man who was nearly old enough to be her father and if she was being honest, not attractive. After the tournament, when she started working for Kazuya, Ganryu confided in Anna and told her that Heihachi Mishima had murdered Michelle's father. It was immediately clear to Anna, though unfortunately not to Ganryu, that having been employed by Heihachi, Michelle had used Ganryu to get information, that he'd been nothing more than a pawn in her failed revenge. Anna couldn't blame her, she would have done worse, if someone had wronged her the way that Heihachi Mishima had wronged Michelle Chang, there would have been a trail of bodies left behind her as she took her revenge.

The way Kazuya was behaving was worrisome. He had been ruthless from day one but he seemed different, more difficult to be around. Not only that, but he was alienating his allies and making enemies where there was no need, the way he had treated Lee did not bode well. Now he was kidnapping foreigners, as far as she knew, Michelle's mother had been the second in a matter of days. When the Russians noticed that Dr. Bosconovitch was missing...

Kazuya's voice pulled her out of her thoughts. "As soon as she shows her face let her know that I will let her mother go as soon as she gives up the amulet."

"What if she doesn't?" Anna spoke before she was able to stop herself. Kazuya responded with a piercing gaze that nearly made her shrink back in her seat. She shrugged instead and took a sip of the lukewarm coffee she'd forgotten she was holding.

"Anna, I expect you to keep an eye on Dr. Bosconovitch indefinitely," Kazuya turned to Bruce, "remember to stay out of sight as much as possible."

That piqued Anna's interest. "Why?"
Bruce scowled at her. "None of your goddamned business."

"That's all," Kazuya began to flip through an appointment book, "get back to work."

Ganryu and Bruce stood from their seats, Bruce carried the chair to the front of the desk then left with the sumo without saying a word. Anna remained immobile on the sofa trying to stare a hole into Kazuya's skull. The so-called meeting had been nothing more than a power play, he treated them as if they were all unruly students who needed to be reminded of who was in charge. Lee and Bruce particularly, it was as if he were trying to show them that they could, or perhaps would be replaced. Maybe that was why Bruce opposed her presence so blatantly...well, she was trying to replace him. But Kazuya couldn't possibly be thinking about getting rid of Lee, that would be a stupid move...

Kazuya sighed impatiently and spoke without looking up at her. "What are you still doing here?"

Anna smiled and stood, "I need to speak to you privately," she set her half-empty cup on the food cart. *And I promised myself that I'd make you squirm in your seat before the meeting was over.*

He closed the appointment book and looked up at her. "What is it?"

Anna pulled Lee's chair to the front of the desk and settled in her seat then leaned back casually as she stretched her legs and propped her red stiletto-clad feet on the desk.

"Get your feet off my desk," Kazuya's voice was half whisper, half growl. *Don't poke the bear,* Anna's mother had told her countless times, which to be fair, was sound advice. But how else was she supposed to make it clear to the bear that she was not someone who could be bullied or intimidated? She giggled as she set her feet back on the floor. "What do you find so amusing?"

"That you're so worried about my feet when Lee and I christened this desk a long time ago." Kazuya straightened in his chair and gave her a look of pure hatred.

"That's three.

Her victory was short-lived, she began to feel anxious as Kazuya's piercing gaze bore into her. A heavy feeling settled in her chest and she had no choice but to avert his eyes.

"Leave," he said through clenched teeth.

She sighed. "Obviously you're not in the mood for jokes but I still have a request I need to make."

His brow furrowed and his jaw grew tighter still. "You come in here expecting me to make allowances that I've never made for anyone else, you completely disrespect me and now you want a favor?"

Anna felt the need to leave the room but masked the feeling with a shrug and a smile, she was used to working under pressure. "Technically, I disrespected you two years ago, I would never do that now and I'm not going to ask for a favor, I'm going to propose something that may be good for your tournament."

"What?" He relaxed his body somewhat but eyed her cautiously.

"It has come to my attention that Nina finally registered for the tournament, so this morning I registered as well."

"And?"
"I know that it's all supposed to be 'random' but I was hoping...that you could arrange for Nina to somehow be my first opponent."

She watched Kazuya as he folded his arms over his chest and a smirk formed on his lips. "Maybe I should put you against Lee instead."

Anna felt her heart drum in her chest. "Don't do that," she said quietly before she could stop herself. He chuckled lightly. "Does that mean that you would refuse to fight him? Will you drop out of the tournament if you have to face him?"

She cursed herself for having shown weakness. "I will do what I need to do when or if the time comes," she tried to speak as casually as possible, "but the only reason why I signed up for the tournament is to prove that I'm better than that bitch."

"Let's say I arrange for it, how is that good for the tournament?"

"Don't tell me you didn't look at the numbers from the last tournament, my fight with Nina was the one with the highest television ratings, well, other than yours with your father, though as we all know that one doesn't count since you both decided to make it a private affair. And pissed off the entire world in the process. "If you give us the first fight I guarantee that the audience for opening day will be double than the audience the first tournament had."

"I'll think about it."

"What's there to think about? You know you won't regret it-" she stopped when the phone began to ring and Kazuya picked up.

She realized that she should have refrained from disclosing that bit of information about her and Lee, perhaps she'd gone a bit too far, especially knowing that she needed to ask him for a favor. Lesson learned; mama was right about the bear.

"Come with me, now," Kazuya demanded as he hung up the phone.

"Where?" She stood up from her chair and followed him out of the office.

"The security monitoring room."

Lee was standing at his desk and followed them as they left the office. Kazuya's secretary was speaking on the phone again but Anna noticed the look of pure hate that she gave Kazuya as he passed by her desk. It wasn't at all unexpected, Kazuya was not easy to work for, she figured that he probably put her through all sorts of shit day in and day out. They walked out in silence and entered the elevator, Kazuya put in the code for the sub-basement into the panel after the doors closed. Tension was thick, each man took a corner of the elevator and looked straight ahead, neither speaking a word. It was making Anna feel uncomfortable, she stood between them and casually leaned against the wall. She looked Kazuya up and down, then at Lee and felt somewhat amused by their choice of clothing. Kazuya was dressed in a black suit with a dark, purple tie and Lee was wearing a light-gray suit with a lavender tie.

"I don't know if you two noticed this, or maybe you did it on purpose, but your suits match your hair and you both seem to share a love for purple." Neither man moved a muscle. "Don't worry, it's cute." The silence was deafening, it was making her anxious and she could almost swear that she could feel Kazuya's anger radiating from him, spreading throughout the small space. She had to keep talking to pretend that it didn't bother her. "No compliments for me? That's rude, I thought that these pants would get me a little more positive attention, Ganryu was the only one who gave me a compliment,
he also said that I smell good, which is kinda creepy, but cute in a way." She sighed, "to be completely honest, I'm sort of upset that no one, not even Ganryu stood up for me when Bruce insulted me. I would have done it for you both."

"Stop babbling," Lee whispered.

She shrugged. "You know how I get when I'm bored."

The doors chimed open after the elevator stopped and Anna quickly made her way out, her heels clacking loudly with each step and echoing throughout the hallway. She didn't wait for them to follow and only stopped when she arrived at the security monitoring room. She stood aside to let Kazuya pass, the guards at the door bowed deeply, then one of them quickly opened the door. She walked in behind the two brothers and rolled her eyes upon seeing Bruce standing next to one of the many monitors. His brow was furrowed and his jaw tight, his muscular arms crossed. Every man in the room bowed as they noticed Kazuya, most quickly moved their gaze back to their monitoring station. The monitor that seemed to have Bruce concerned was showing the sidewalk outside the building.

Bruce gestured to Lee and spoke in an accusing tone. "I thought you took care of him."

Lee gave him a contemptuous look. "I did."

Bruce pointed to the screen. "Then why the fuck is he here?"

Anna moved closer to the monitor and studied the images. A long-haired man wearing light-colored pants was walking slowly, scanning his surroundings. She was sure that he was Asian, but she was finding his nationality difficult to pinpoint through the image of the monitor.

"What's happening?" She looked to Kazuya for an answer.

"That's Lei Wulong, an Interpol agent. He came snooping around yesterday, Lee was supposed to take care of him," he looked accusingly at his brother.

"I did," Lee repeated, "there's no law that says he can't walk on the sidewalk."

"How long has he been there?" Kazuya asked.

Bruce looked up at the clock on the wall above the monitors. "Ten minutes."

"Doing what?"

"Walking," Bruce said impatiently, "surveying the building."

Kazuya looked pointedly at him. "Is he here for you?"

Bruce raised his arms in frustration then rested his hands on his head. "Hell if I know."

They watched as the man moved closer to the building entrance and pulled out what seemed to be a map or a flyer from his back pocket.

"He's close enough," Kazuya turned to Anna, "go see what he wants and get rid of him. Maybe you can do your job properly," he gave Bruce a sidelong glance.

Bruce gave Anna an angry look, then left the room.

The man sitting in front of the monitor said something in Japanese and Kazuya turned to look. The
agent was now speaking to a young, Japanese woman in jeans and a dark blouse, she wore a light-colored headband which made for a nice contrast with her dark hair. She watched as Kazuya furrowed his brow and pursed his lips, he moved his right hand to the back of his head and she noticed his fingers pressing against his scalp.

"Find out what he's saying to her," his voice was low and tight.

"Honestly, he's probably just flirting with a cute girl."

Kazuya turned to her and gave her a menacing look, the way his eyes bore into hers made her want to take a step back. "Find out and send her to my office," Kazuya said before storming out of the room.

*Interesting.*

"Have you seen that woman around here before?" Anna asked the guard as she leaned in closer to the monitor.

"She is Jun Kazama," the guard said in accented but clear English, "she was a wildlife officer but Mr. Irvin says she quit working for the agency a few days ago."

She turned to Lee. "Do you know her?"

He shook his head. "I've never heard of her."

Anna put her hand on the guard's shoulder causing him to blush. "Come with me, I'll need a translator, Lee, would you walk us to the lobby?" He shrugged and followed Anna and the guard out the door. She spotted two guards walking in the hallway and motioned to the with her index finger. "I need the two of you now." They followed behind her as she led everyone to the elevator. "What does the agent want?" She turned to Lee as they entered the elevator. The guard from the monitoring room pushed the correct floor on the panel and the elevator began its ascent. Lee walked with her to the back of the elevator and Anna stood next to him, with their arms nearly touching, he looked irritated but leaned in slightly, though not close enough to be able to whisper effectively. Anna sighed, "I'm not gonna bite."

Lee moved in closer and began speaking softly, his lips nearly grazing her hair. "He came asking about a recently deceased owner of an Irish aviation company," he wore the same cologne that he always had, she'd forgotten how much she liked it, "he was also making insinuations about some killings in Hong Kong two years back."

*Fuck.* Out of the corner of her eye she saw the disapproving look Lee was giving her, she knew what he was talking about, she remembered that mission very well, it had been where she proved herself to Kazuya. Exterminating three men with ties to the Chinese mafia, Lee had not wanted her to go, it had been the beginning of the end of their relationship.

"What did you tell him?"

"To schedule a meeting with legal, obviously."

"Anything else?"

"He asked about Bruce."

"What did he ask?"
"If he could see him, I told him to call his office." Lee stepped away from her and leaned casually against the wall until the elevator stopped.

When the doors opened the guards stepped aside to let Anna out, she saw Lee push the button on the panel after the guards stepped out. "You," she motioned to the translator, "with me, the two of you behind us."

The guards quickly did as they were told and followed through the lobby, she noticed the clients and staff exiting and entering the building turning to look at her and put a little extra pep in her step. The guards at the entrance quickly opened the door and she stepped outside onto the busy sidewalk. The agent had his back turned to her, he was speaking to the same young woman who looked somewhat uncomfortable. She was very pretty, although her outfit and the headband were not something that Anna would ever wear, it looked cute on her.

As she approached the woman, Jun Kazama, she reminded herself, locked her eyes with hers. It was strange, all she could compare the feeling to was the way Kazuya's eyes drilled and pierced into her very being when he was in a foul mood. Jun's eyes were different, non-threatening, inviting, but there was something about the way she looked at her as if she were trying to figure her out, that made Anna feel uncomfortable. The agent turned to Anna and her group, undoubtedly noticing the shift in Jun's gaze.

"Hi, Officer," Anna smiled as she stood in front of Lei.

"It's Agent," Lei returned the smile as he bowed his head.

"We can understand each other, fantastic." Anna turned her attention to Jun. "Is he bothering you?"

She heard the translator ask the question and saw Jun shake her head indicating no, then asked something in return.

The guard translated Jun's question. "She wants to know who you are."

"Yes," Lei spoke up, "I would like to know as well."

"Anna Williams, head of security for the Mishima Zaibatsu." Lei furrowed his brow. "Miss Kazama, Mr. Mishima is waiting for you in his office." Jun looked intently at Anna then bowed her head to Lei before heading into the building.

"As I understood it," Lei crossed his arms and leaned casually against the wall, "you held the position more than a year ago then it went to someone else…"

"Well, aren't you informed," Anna pushed a strand of hair behind her ear. "As I understood it, you were told that you needed to make an appointment with our legal department after the tournament. That means you have no business with the Zaibatsu, which means that you have no reason to be here, having a badge and a title does not give you the freedom to trespass."

"I'm not trespassing, Miss Williams, I'm well aware of the laws."

"What are you doing here then? Who are you hoping to spot?"

"No one, I'm here to enter the tournament, it's actually quite a nerve-wracking decision."

"I didn't peg you for a fighter, to be honest, you look like a hippie with a desk job, which if you think about it, that in and of itself is a contradiction, now you tell me you want to enter a fighting tournament...you are a tough one to figure out. Don't worry I don't care enough to try." Smart, by entering a tournament that was open to literally everyone Kazuya would not be able to keep him..."
away, and killing a tournament participant who was also an agent investigating the Zaibatsu was absolutely out of the question. She hoped that Kazuya would not ask her to do that because that was also out of the question...self-preservation all that. "By all means," she gestured toward the building's entrance, "go in and register."

"I must apologize," Lei looked thoughtfully at her, "I should have said this earlier, but I didn't see a way to work it into the conversation... I'm very sorry for your loss." The look on his face was that of genuine sympathy.

His statement caught her completely off guard, it was rare and it made her feel strangely vulnerable, she crossed her arms and furrowed her brow. "For...my father?" There was suddenly a twinge of something that tied her stomach in knots, it was brief but unmistakable.

"No, not your father, your fiance."

"Oh," she was so relieved she almost wanted to laugh, but at the same time, she was angry and disappointed in herself for allowing Nina to make her feel anything other than pure hatred. "How do you now about that?" She hoped her anger didn't show.

"I..." He blushed and ran his hand through his long, black hair, it was kind of cute. "Once in a while, I like to indulge in American magazines."

"Yet another layer to you," Anna shrugged, "there's no need to be sorry, the man died doing what he loved."

Lei nodded solemnly. "Writing music, his songs spoke to many of us."

Anna laughed lightly. "I meant heroin...and I always thought his music was enjoyed by thirteen-year-old girls, not fully grown men." She smirked and cocked her head slightly as she watched him blush again. "You're a big old softie, aren't you?"

Lei shrugged. "I've been told it's an endearing quality." He pulled the same paper he had been looking at earlier out of his back pocket and raised it for Anna to see, it was a tournament flyer. "I'd better go sign up then, I shouldn't take up any more of your time."

"Yes."

"I wish you the best of luck."

She felt her cheeks heat up at his words, she knew it was a jab at her loss against Nina. "Wait, Officer."

"It's Agent."

"I need the two of you to accompany Officer Wulong to Asami's desk," she said as she looked Lei in the eye, the two guards behind her moved to flank the agent, "then walk him to the testing area, to the bathroom, wherever he needs to go." Lei nodded with an amused look on his face then bowed deeply to Anna before turning toward the building entrance with the two guards in tow. "Go tell them to make sure he doesn't talk to anyone about anything regarding Zaibatsu business or employees, even if it seems insignificant."
"Yes, Miss Williams." The remaining guard bowed before hurrying to catch up with Lei and the others.

Lei Wulong was smart, well informed and definitely had an agenda. It wasn't difficult to imagine him getting information from an unassuming employee. He was charming, not in the way that Lee was, this man was down to earth, relatable, and almost seemed too dorky to be astute. That made him very dangerous.

She sighed knowing that she had to interrupt Kazuya from whatever it was he was doing with Jun Kazama. It was not something she would normally do, but the fact that an Interpol agent was entering the tournament was something her boss needed to know.

As she walked toward the entrance she spotted Kazuya's secretary exiting the building. "Hi," Anna waved to her, Sayuri stopped and nodded stiffly, looking apprehensive as she pulled her purse closer to her body. *That is a gorgeous bag.* It was a black Chanel with gold accents, if there was anything Anna loved more than shoes it was purses. "I love your purse," she smiled at the woman as she stopped in front of her.

"...Thank you…" Sayuri said as she took a tiny step back.

"I thought you didn't speak English."

"Only some," she looked down at the floor, Anna couldn't tell if she was shy or if she just didn't want to talk to her.

"Are you going to lunch?"

"...No...um...to the Mishima Hotel, for work."

"Where did you buy your shoes?"

"I-I don't understand," Sayuri gave her a nervous smile then walked around her and quickly made her way down the sidewalk.

"Rude," Anna muttered, she looked at Sayuri who had already put a fair amount of distance between herself and the building one last time before turning toward the entrance. As she turned a man bumped into her, nearly stepping on her shoe. "What the hell? Watch where you're going!"

The wide-eyed, young man spoke quickly in a panicked tone. "Miss Williams, so sorry, Miss Williams!"

He was wearing a jacket over his Zaibatsu uniform, but she quickly recognized him as one of the many guards who patrolled the halls and the perimeter. "It's Toshi, right?" She liked to memorize their names, it made it seem that she cared and served to put the fear of God into them when she caught them making mistakes and called them by their name. "Out to lunch?"

"Yes, Miss Williams…" He looked anxiously at her, it was entertaining and pathetic at the same time.

"Go, no harm done."

"Thank you, Miss Williams, sorry," he blurted awkwardly before rushing off.

On her way to the elevator, she had second thoughts about interrupting her boss. *Kazuya alone in his office with a pretty girl.* The more she thought about it the less appealing the idea of interrupting him...
She would wait until he was free and monitor Agent Wulong from the security room herself. She would not interrupt him unless it was absolutely essential. *God knows that man needs to get laid.*

Kazuya stood in the middle of his office, he clenched and unclenched his hands then moved his neck side to side. The back of his head felt numb, the feeling was slowly spreading from his temples to his forehead, he needed to calm down, needed to tell Sayuri to send Jun away. He walked to his desk and picked up the telephone to call Sayuri before remembering that she was out of the building. He didn't know what to do, it was not a good time to see Jun or anyone for that matter.

**I told you not to trust her,** Devil hissed, **I told you she would betray you.**

"She didn't."

**You saw it with your own eyes, she's conspiring with the man who is trying to have you arrested. I told you not to trust her.**

Jun wouldn't betray him, would she? She had quit her job at the WWWC, what would she have to gain?

**You're wondering what she has to gain?** The demon's laugh reverberated inside his head, **money, a promotion...a lover...all three...**

"No, she wouldn't do that."

**I see, you're going to let her disrespect you the same way that Bruce and Lee and Anna have done, what's one more?**

He needed to send Jun away. He pinched the bridge of his nose and pushed the button that connected him to the reception desk in the lobby.

"*Yes, sir?*" The shaky voice of the receptionist sounded like nails scraping the inside of his skull.

He didn't feel himself slip out of his own reality, didn't feel as Devil took control of his body and calmly sat behind his desk, a predatory grin twisting his demonic features.

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**Chapter End Notes**

Thank you for reading! This chapter seemed long to me but I thought that if I broke it up the beginning and ending scenes with Kazuya would feel disjointed, and I know it was slow, but I'm trying to set up a few things. Let me know what you thought about it, please. Next chapter is all about Jun! What can that mean for KazxJun fans?
Jun and Devil meet for the first time.

Jun stared after Kazuya's secretary as she left the building, Sayuri had worn a smile when she saw her and was polite as usual, but there was something different about her, there was anger, resentment and hate in her heart, she was not the same person that she had met before. And Kazuya's new employee, Anna Williams, she was a ruthless criminal hiding behind a pretty face and wearing a false smile. For the first time since she'd visited the building, Jun felt like a mouse in a den of vipers.

She had never felt more weighed down by an ominous feeling in her life. It made her every step strenuous and her chest tight. She entered the elevator and pushed the button on the panel, she had been excited about her meeting with Kazuya the day before, but now... As the elevator moved closer to the top floor, she began to sense the dark energy and its terrifying strength; she felt it seeping through the walls and saturating the environment. It was obvious that Kazuya was not in control. Realizing that the dark energy was affecting her, she leaned against the wall and took a few steadying breaths before exiting the elevator.

She couldn't go in unprepared.

Her paternal grandmother, as well as many others in the Kazama family before her, had been born with the gift. Psychic, most people called it, but the Kazamas didn't like to call it anything, they were simply more sensitive to energies, moods, feelings, spirits, and entities that most people could not see or even sense. She had assisted her grandmother in removing negative spirits from individuals, she had helped her to detach a demon as well. The demon had been difficult and had left them both exhausted but they'd triumphed in the end. Jun herself had removed a demon from a young man during her internship in Thailand without any assistance, though admittedly it had not been as powerful as the one she had faced with her grandmother. This thing, Devil, was much stronger than either, but Jun was strong as well. Her grandmother had called her the strongest Kazama in generations.

She touched her fingertips lightly to the wall and closed her eyes. She could feel pockets of positive energy, light, as her grandmother had called it, scattered throughout the building coming from Zaibatsu employees and visitors. In her mind's eye, they looked like pinpoints of light pushing against the darkness. She focused on them, imagined the positive energy like liquid silver traveling up the walls and entering her body through her fingertips. She was not taking from anyone, light energy could be shared or spread and it would never deplete, one simply had to know how to channel it. She let the energy fill her, felt it coursing through her, it gave her a feeling of tranquility and helped her to remain focused.

She walked down the hall toward Kazuya's office and entered without hesitation. The last thing she wanted was Sayuri returning or someone else stopping by, she didn't want them to be exposed to that level of dark energy. It was so thick and dense that she could see it enveloping objects, its translucent tendrils reaching into spaces behind bookcases and under furniture. Jun resolutely opened Kazuya's door and entered.

She stood frozen with her hand on the doorknob. It took her a moment to fully take in what she was
seeing; when she realized what it was, she felt her heart drum in her chest and her breath catch in her throat. Devil was sitting behind Kazuya's desk, a demon in an expensive suit with a twisted, malevolent grin that made her skin crawl and her stomach tie up in knots. She took in his appearance as she composed herself. There was a slight sheen to his purple skin, it looked smooth, much too smooth to be a human's. Pointed horns curved and twisted upward above his ears, and a vertically aligned third eye had appeared in the middle of his forehead. His red, glowing eyes sent a chill up her spine, they were soulless embers that made sure any semblance of Kazuya was gone.

"You're one of those," Devil's voice was deep and rasping, it made goosebumps rise on her skin. "I suspected it before, and now being out here, making use of all my senses, I felt you before you came in."

She couldn't show fear or hesitation and attempted to sound unfazed. "You've met others like me?"

He pointed a yellow-nailed finger to himself. "In my lifetime, thousands, in his, two, you're the third."

She let go of the doorknob and entered the room "What did you do to them?"

He threw his head back and laughed, his movements were exaggerated almost as if he were trying to mimic normal human reactions. "Everyone always assumes the worst of me." He shook his head and threw his arms up in the air. "I didn't do anything to them, if anything, one of them hurt me. There was a woman, a secretary in Taiwan last year, she was twice your age and twice as powerful as you are, also twice as smart because as soon as we set foot in her office she left the room and didn't come back." He stood up and walked slowly around the desk. "It's always the young ones who are so arrogant and brazen...stupid..." He stopped in front of the desk, facing Jun, she didn't move though she felt the evil energy radiating from him, attempting to suffocate her.

"Are you trying to intimidate me with those words, with veiled threats?"

Devil chuckled slightly. "There was a boy, a teenager in Berlin maybe ten years ago," he tapped his finger to his chin, "no, eleven, we were there for one of those business meetings where Heihachi felt that showing off his perfect sons would give him an advantage. The boy was working at his father's company during a break from school...I felt him instantly, his misguided intentions to help Kazuya, he tried to befriend him and when he showed no interest he invited Lee to a party knowing that Heihachi would make Kazuya go just to please his client. At the party, he did the same thing you did, fed off the energy of others-"

"We don't feed off or take," Jun defended, "we-"

He put up his index finger and cocked his head. "When Kazuya was sulking in a corner he attacked me, without provocation," Devil crossed his arms and shook his head, "he came up to Kazuya and put his hand on his shoulder, it felt like hot coals, it hurt, but all it did was make both of us angry, it did no real damage, he was much too inexperienced, much too anxious." He laughed lightly. "Kazuya was ready to beat him to a pulp in front of everyone, I was going to let him but Lee interfered...always in the way," The demon smirked, "but in the end, the boy got what he deserved."

There was a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. "You said you didn't do anything to him."

Devil put up his hands in mock defense. "I didn't touch him...but we did go to his home that night, showed him my true face, frightened him and his family and burned down his house. We haven't heard from him since."

"Is that what you plan to do to me? Follow me at night and burn down my home."
Devil shrugged. "Honestly, I hope it doesn't come to that, I don't want to waste my me time by spending it with you, or near you. However, if I am forced to do that, I will have to find a way to enjoy it...So many arts were lost after the Middle Ages, I feel inclined to bring some of them back..."

Jun felt her mouth go dry but her face remained impassive, Devil regarded her carefully. "I so seldom have the opportunity to speak to someone like you, tell me, were many people in your family born with this...hindrance, or are you unique?"

"Hindrance?" Jun scoffed. "We call it a gift."

Devil cackled. "That is one shitty gift. It's that hindrance that brought you here and put you within my grasp... It is not a good place to be, it won't end well for you."

"My gift forced you out and put you face to face with me, I wouldn't mock it." His eyes glowed brighter, brazen and stupid, perhaps Devil was right, but she couldn't afford to show fear or even allow herself to feel it.

"Face to face with what?" Devil advanced toward her, wanting to keep distance between them, Jun walked backward calmly. With superhuman speed, Devil put himself between Jun and the door and continued to slowly move toward her, forcing her to walk backward in the direction of the desk. "I know that I'm face to face with one more gold digging slut?"

"This is what you do every time he's interested in someone or someone is interested in him?" Devil stopped walking and Jun followed suit, she was left standing with the desk to her left and a wall to her right, the window behind her and Devil between her and the door, no way to make a quick escape.

"No, I don't." He shook his head and narrowed his eyes as he looked her in the eye. "He has this idea in his head, that you're different from other women he's associated with, and I see that you are. I see your pure little heart and I see that all you want to do is save the whales and endangered earthworms, or...whatever. I see that all you want is justice for your little animal friends that have suffered at the hands of vile, vile men." He sighed heavily. "And that is where our problem lies, you see, if you were any other woman, I'd let him have his fun then send you on your way, but you're not any other woman, you're you, and to someone like you, he is the perfect target. If you get rid of me you have him and his money," Jun shook her head in disgust, "don't give me that look, wealth is the only thing that can make a difference in the world, you know that. Money in your pocket, or more precisely, putting money in the pockets of the right people, the right governments."

"In other words, you feel threatened by me."

Jun didn't have time to react as Devil grabbed her by the front of her blouse and pushed her hard against the wall-length window. She winced from the pain on the back of her head and her shoulder blades, she tried to push him away but it was like pushing against a tree. "Threatened?" Devil hissed the words into her ear, she felt his hot breath and his unnaturally smooth skin brushing against her cheek, it made her skin crawl. "I have nothing to fear from anyone."

Jun wrapped her hands around his wrist, he was pushing on her chest with his hand, still holding tightly to the fabric of her blouse. She could hear the weakened glass cracking as Devil continued to put pressure on her body. She sensed his intent, he wanted to send her crashing through the window, wanted to put his hand around her throat and end her life then and there, but he was somehow hesitant, maybe unable to do it. She had to fight the urge to kick or hit, to make a desperate escape attempt; instead, she closed her eyes and focused the light energy coursing through her, and began to feel everything around her. She focused on the mass of black and evil energy that was Devil and the tar-like mess inside Kazuya's body. She pictured in her mind's eye the hundreds of pinpoints of light moving together closer and closer at incredible speeds, merging and fusing until they became a pool.
of light, Jun willed it to move through her, it felt like warm liquid as it moved down her arm, into her hand, out through her fingers and into Devil.

She opened her eyes as he released her, there was a look of utter shock on his face, then his mouth quickly twisted into a snarl. Jun gasped when he puffed out his chest and opened his arms, two leathery wings sprung from his back, the eye in the middle of his forehead opened and she had the urge to run and cower behind the desk. Her body did the opposite, she ran at him then executed a kick to his midsection and catching him off-guard covered his third eye with the palm of her hand and let the remaining light energy flow through her hand and into him. Devil made a futile attempt to push her away, she could feel the dark energy dispersing, the heaviness in the air lifting. Devil fell to his knees and the wings disappeared along with the horns.

When she saw that it was Kazuya she dropped to her knees beside him. He looked pale, barely able to open his eyes. When he tried to stand up she quickly moved to help him but he wrenched his arm away from her touch. "I can do it myself."

There was a raspiness and an edge to his voice, but it was clearly human. She waited until he stood then stepped back and watched as he made his way to the couch with heavy and unsteady steps. His shirt and jacket were torn completely asunder at the back, the memory of the wings, the horns and the unnaturally purple skin that had claimed his body mere moments before made her pause before walking toward the couch, but she wanted, needed to see his eyes. The dark energy had dispersed and logically she knew that Devil had been subdued and that he would be dormant or at least weak for a while, but still, she needed to look at his eyes, to make sure that they were the deep, dark-brown that was his own. To make certain that she had triumphed, at least for the time being.

"How are you feeling?" She sat on the couch as far from him as possible, she wanted to be closer but knew that he needed space.

"How do I look?" He snapped, the dark, oppressive energy in the room had been replaced with anxiety and apprehension. Kazuya leaned back on the sofa and closed his eyes, she wished he would look at her.

She waited for him to say something, he looked as if he were sleeping, but a thick, unrelenting tension hung heavily over them. "...I couldn't tell you that I knew," Jun finally spoke feeling an overwhelming need to cut through the silence, "there is no subtle way to say it...and I knew that if-

He spoke without opening his eyes. "How long have you known?"

"Since we met at the arena. I mean, I realized that there was something attached to you but I didn't know how much it could affect you until that day at the little restaurant and I didn't know the extent of his power until now."

Kazuya scoffed. "You still don't know the extent of his power."

She nodded slowly. "I've done this before, the amount of light that I used to repel him would dislodge most spirits or entities."

He slowly opened his eyes but didn't look at her. "Light?"

"It's what we call the positive healing energy."

He closed his eyes again. Jun could feel the anger and confusion clouding his tired mind, he had been drained of too much energy and needed rest. It suddenly occurred to her that during her encounter with Devil Kazuya must have been fighting to regain control.
"Why are you still here?"

The question stung but she kept her voice as casual as she was able. "Do you want me to leave?"

"...No," he opened his eyes and looked straight ahead, "after everything you saw...after..." he shook his head slowly as he looked at the window, a foot-long crack had formed near the middle where Devil had pushed her. "I didn't want to hurt you."

"I know."

He finally turned to look at her, his deep, brown eyes bore into hers and she felt her heart skip a beat. "Anyone else would have left, would never have let it go this far..."

"I want to help you get rid of him."

He chuckled softly as he rested his head on the couch and closed his eyes again. "What makes you think I want to do that?"

It was disappointing to hear him say that, it meant that he had invited Devil in, he wanted him. "Because he takes so much from you; everything from your energy to your soul, to-"

"He gives me power that you cannot even imagine." His tone was firm, resolute.

She shook her head and sighed wearily. "Yes, he gives you power...and you give him control."

He opened his eyes and straightened in his seat. "I need to rest, it's best if you leave," he said harshly.

"Can I help you with anything, your clothing-"

"I have spares."

She nodded then stood up. "I'm still a tournament participant, so I will see you more often than you think. If you need anything you have my number." He remained silent and immobile as she made her way to the door and left the room. She closed the door then stopped at Sayuri's desk to pick up a post-it note and a pen, she wrote, do not disturb and adhered the note to Kazuya's door, then left the office.

She hoped that she wouldn't see Lei Wulong on her way out, or Anna Williams or even Sayuri. To her relief, no one acknowledged her, save for the security guards who bowed as they opened the door.

She had not been aware of it, but as she stood on the sidewalk she realized that it was easier to breathe outside, with brisk and steady steps, she made her way toward the bus stop. Now that her adrenaline was back down, everything that had happened in the building began to sink in, she felt her hands begin to shake and became suddenly aware of the pain on the back of her head and her shoulder blades. Kazuya Mishima was possessed, truly possessed. She had known that he was, had expected an encounter, but seeing the demon face to face, fighting against it had left her more shaken than she thought it would. A thought suddenly occurred to her, Devil had said that he had sensed her power before she entered, if she joined with Angel, how would he react? How would Kazuya react? He didn't seem eager or even willing to set himself free... She wasn't fool enough to think that she had beaten Devil, she knew that it would take time as well as Kazuya's cooperation. She arrived at the bus stop and she sat on the bench for a couple of minutes as she steadied her nerves, but a sudden feeling urged her to continue walking. Following her instincts, she stood up and began to walk away from the Mishima Building, she took a left at the intersection and let her thoughts consume her once more.
It had been her grandmother who suggested she join the WWWC. Jun had other options after her internship was done, all outside of Tokyo, but her grandmother had told her that if she went to Tokyo she might change the world. She asked her how she knew and her grandmother had simply shrugged and said that it had been one of her feelings. Change the world might have seemed ludicrous at the time, but now… A man in Kazuya's position had the power to influence so many, if he was being guided by a demon and continued to gain power, there was no telling how much damage he could cause on a national or global scale.

After walking for a few minutes, Jun found herself in front of a one-level building housing a few businesses, a dojo, a dry cleaner's shop and a nail salon, along with a vacant office space that was for lease. The dojo caught her attention, it reminded her that she needed to train, she wished she'd gone straight home. Her body went rigid when she saw someone exit the seemingly vacant office space. She would recognize that man anywhere, his ridiculous hair and broad shoulders along with a gait that marked him as assertive and confident made him unmistakable. She watched Heihachi Mishima as he entered the small dojo, she had never seen him in person, only on television, the news channels had taken to showing clip after clip of the fights from the first tournament during the past month.

The memory of the nightmare from the night before surfaced as she saw the elder Mishima, that large, shadowy figure that she had fought against in the dream had been Heihachi Mishima, she was sure of it. She remembered how Devil had forced her to finish her opponent when he was already down. The Mishima patriarch had lost the Zaibatsu to Kazuya during the previous tournament, he had been presumed dead by the world, possibly Kazuya too. There was so much strife between two men that Jun was almost certain Heihachi was one of the reasons why Kazuya had allowed himself to become possessed. She wanted to get close, maybe speak with him for a bit, what if the way to help Kazuya was through him?

She walked to the dojo and stood on the sidewalk her eyes fixed on the door to the suite as she pondered how to go about it. She obviously couldn't speak to him about Kazuya directly, and she didn't want to lie unless it was absolutely necessary and even then… She hesitated before walking into the dojo, her hand on the door handle, she shook her head slightly before pulling the door open and stepping inside.

The interior of the dojo was small and unimpressive, it was simple with well-worn, light-colored wooden floors and walls adorned with weapons. What caught her eye was the punching bag in the corner as well as the training dummy, both looked new and of extremely high quality, they almost seemed out of place.

"Hello?" Jun called softly when she saw a balding man in his sixties dusting the weapons on display, she assumed that he must not have had many students, if any.

He wore a sour expression as he addressed her. "I'm closed for a private session."

"I'm very sorry to bother you, I...only wondered if you're looking for someone to teach additional classes."

"You're looking for work?"

"I'm...unemployed."

He shook his head. "Not interested."

"You haven't even seen what the young woman can do." Heihachi Mishima emerged from a door that she assumed led to the office. He had changed out of his suit and into a black gi.
"I beg your pardon, sir, but I'm not interested in-"

Heihachi folded his muscular arms across his chest. "I don't have to remind you that this is my dojo now. If it weren't for me, it would be another vacant room on the lot. I'm interested in seeing what this girl can do, you may benefit from bringing in a new demographic," he smirked as he gazed appreciatively at Jun, "maybe she can teach self-defense to young ladies who are afraid of men with ill intent."

Few things made Jun angry, but merely being in the same room with that man and his condescending attitude was irritating her. She spoke curtly."I would be more than capable."

"What style of martial arts do you practice?"

"It is a style unique to my family but I'm also proficient in traditional karate as well as-"

"What is your family's name?"

"Kazama."

"Never heard of you, I'll assume that you didn't have a proper master then."

"My father is a proper master, as is my brother, as am I."

Heihachi chuckled as he stroked his chin. "Is that so? Well, now I must see a demonstration."

Jun removed her shoes as Heihachi watched on with a condescending smirk on his face. He was highly amused, she knew that he fully expected her to make a fool of herself. She felt his eyes on her as she walked to the center of the room, but any other woman would have, whether she was a sensitive or not, he wasn't being discreet about it. She breathed in deeply and exhaled slowly, it was at that moment that she realized how much of her energy had been spent defending herself from Devil.

Deciding to perform a traditional karate kata, she turned to face Heihachi and the dojo owner, putting her arms at her sides she bowed deeply to them then stood with her back straight as a board. She began slowly, her arms and hands moving gracefully as if she were parting water, she put the two men out of her mind and imagined that she was alone on her favorite secluded beach, with magnificent cedars at her back and the blue water before her. She swiftly changed to a quick succession of punches and palm strikes, eyes ahead, imagining the salty breeze caressing her face and the soft, warm sand under her bare feet. Every turn was sharp and precise, every kick powerful and perfect. She slowed as she neared the end of the routine that had become part of her muscle memory, and found herself in the tiny dojo once more. She stopped and bowed to the two men.

"Hmph," Heihachi frowned, the lines of his mouth seemed to trace the horseshoe mustache, "I have seen worse, but you're not teacher material, still...you're not a completely lost cause. If we work on your form-"

"My form is perfect." It was offensive, her form had been perfect since she was ten years old. She could sense that the amusement he felt had turned to contempt, it wasn't envy or jealousy, he was one of the best martial artists in the world. Her guess was that he didn't' like a woman being proficient in anything. He would be no help whatsoever, and the way he was looking at her was beginning to make her uncomfortable.

"I see your father didn't even manage to teach you not to interrupt, a man who can't keep his children in line can't teach them anything of value, as I said, not a proper master."
Jun smiled slightly to keep herself from saying something that she would later regret, she walked back toward the entrance and put on her shoes. "Thank you for your time." She bowed slightly before turning to leave.

"I do see some potential in you," she turned at the sound of his voice, "I could teach you, I wouldn't mind taking you on as my special project."

"No." She had come face to face with a literal demon and yet she didn't know if she should be more disturbed by him or the man standing before her. She walked out of the dojo and began to search for the nearest bus stop.

She was tired and needed to go home to meditate, to light that cedar-scented incense that reminded her of her home. Her feet were tired of walking on asphalt day in and day out, she needed the sand, the grassy rain-soaked ground of the forest and the moss-covered rocks. She longed to hear the sounds of waterfalls and babbling streams that brought her peace, the chorus of crickets and frogs that lulled her to sleep. She needed to visit Yakushima soon to recharge her spirit and to see her family. If only she could take Kazuya with her… It would be easier there, fighting Devil would be easier in Yakushima. But he would never consent to going, not with the tournament commencing in only a couple of days. She arrived at the bus stop and sat on the bench, at that moment she felt an intruding presence. She knew her time was up, Angel would want her to make a decision.

Jun waited for Angel in the desolate desert. Though she could only see the cloudless, sapphire sky and the endless dunes that surrounded her, she felt as though she were being watched. She rubbed her arms despite the warmth of the breeze and the dry sand beneath her bare feet, she spun quickly when she felt Angel's presence behind her and was met with bright blue eyes that pierced into hers. Angel hovered a few inches above the sand, her arms were crossed delicately in front of her and her majestic, immaculate wings seemed to sparkle in the sunlight and change from silver to white. It felt like a show of power, a visual to remind Jun that she was a human standing before a divine being. The look in her eyes was almost admonishing, it made Jun feel like a little girl.

Jun breathed in deeply before speaking. **You must already know what I'm going to say.**

Angel raised a delicate brow. **After what you witnessed today, you dare reject my assistance?**

**You saw what happened?**

*I can see anyone, anything I desire, but as I said, without the proper human host no one can see me or sense me, I am powerless.* Her tone was somewhat accusatory, Jun felt a twinge of guilt but quickly suppressed it.

*If you witnessed what happened then you know that I was able to subdue the demon.*

Angel scoffed softly. **You surprised him, girl, now that he knows what you can do he will double his efforts.**

*Kazuya fought against him, he didn't let him hurt me. I know that with Kazuya's help and with enough time I can loosen his hold on him and once it's diminished enough, rid him of Devil completely. I've done it before for others, my grandmother used to do it too.*

**Devil is far more powerful than anything you have encountered before… His help and your abilities may not be enough.**

Her statement reminded Jun that Angel wasn't all-knowing, that she wasn't all-powerful. **But they**
may be, you said yourself that nothing is certain.

Angel exhaled and nodded slowly. That is true.

Then it is possible for me to help him detach from that demon without your help.

Possible yes, certain is an entirely different matter. That is why I ask that you allow me to help you.

But if nothing is certain, then even your assistance may not be enough. Angel furrowed her brows slightly but remained silent, clearly irritated. Honestly, I do not feel comfortable being possessed.

Angel's demeanor softened. I understand your apprehension, but I assure you that I only surface when you allow me to do so...unlike Devil.

You would never...take control of me, do something that I'm not aware of?

Angel sighed. Your inquisitiveness is somewhat vexing.

Please answer.

I may interfere when mistakes are not something that I can afford, when a person's foolish or selfish decision risks throwing everything off balance, wasting all my effort.

Would you do that to me?

You are more intelligent than most, more spiritually aware than anyone I have met in many generations...the odds are low.

Jun wasn't satisfied with her answer but decided to set it aside for the time being. Won't Devil sense your presence in me? He said that he felt me, my power before I entered the room, won't he be more combative, more aggressive if he senses you? Won't he be able to sense your power from further away than he did mine?

That is possible.

What would I do then, if I'm not prepared for his full wrath?

That would be when you allow me through.

And you take over my body, my mind.

Yes, but I assure you, I never abuse my power.

Jun closed her eyes as she remembered how it felt to have Devil's voice inside her head, the shouting and the whispering and scratching. She wanted to fully trust Angel but it was difficult. She was a divine being, what if to her one human was no different from another? What if her only goal was to destroy Deviil, where would that leave Kazuya then? And Kazuya himself had not seemed eager to be free, he wanted the power that the creature gave him, he needed to be convinced that he was better off without Devil and that was going to take time. It was entirely possible that being faced with Angel he would help Devil fight against her, and if Angle was defeated there would be no hope for Kazuya or for Jun, she knew that Devil would finish her right then and there.

Jun spoke resolutely. I don't feel comfortable being a host, I do not accept your assistance.
...You may regret it, young one. There was anger and disappointment in her voice, it frightened Jun but did not lessen her resolve. She took note of the word may again, but she did not comment on it. I will be close when you change your mind, you have but to call me.

Jun opened her eyes and breathed in the lingering scent of cedar from the burned-down incense, it made her feel homesick, she wanted to call her mother but felt too tired. She realized that it was an excuse, the reason she had avoided calling her parents in the last few days, was the tournament. If she told them that she was going to participate she would hear nothing but lectures from them both, her mother would worry about her wellbeing and try to guilt her out of it, and her father would remind her that the Kazama style of martial arts was not made for exhibitions...then he would try to guilt her out of it. Her grandmother would have understood, Jun missed her terribly. Thinking about her put her at ease and she went to lay down on her comfortable, well-worn couch to rest her eyes for a few moments. She quickly drifted into a dreamless sleep.

She woke to the sound of knocking on her door and feeling disoriented, not knowing if she'd slept a few minutes or a few hours. She opened her eyes to a dark apartment, so it must have been at least an hour. She got up from the couch and flipped on the light switch when she reached the door, she put her hand on the doorknob and hesitated before opening, even through the closed door she could feel him. He was filled with confusion and apprehension, also a bit of anger, but at least he was alone. She opened the door to let Kazuya inside and immediately wished that she'd had the chance to look in the mirror, it was silly, she was not the type of woman who usually worried about such things.

He looked tired and judging by the wrinkles on his black slacks, he was wearing the same ones from earlier in the day, though he'd changed from his torn clothing into a dark-gray dress shirt. She moved aside to let him through, he stepped inside and scanned his surroundings as Jun closed the door. She didn't speak, wanting him to be the first to say something, but she was quickly frustrated by the heavy silence and Kazuya's rampant staring and scrutinizing of random objects in her apartment.

She gestured toward the couch. "Have a seat."

"He's been gone all day," Kazuya fixed his gaze on her bowl of sand and incense as he spoke, he was trying to appear calm, but she could feel his anxiety. "I sense him...I know he's still with me but it's almost as if he's...sleeping, weak." There was a hint of accusation in his voice and a feeling of resentment mixing itself with the anger and confusion. "How did you do it? And why did you let me in knowing what I'm capable of?" There was the anger again, but it was different, he seemed to be angry with himself.

"What Devil is capable of," Jun corrected. "And I let you in because if he truly wanted to come in, my cheap door wouldn't stop him, and as I proved that I can defend myself against him, even subdue him, I don't see why letting you in is a problem."

Kazuya scoffed and shook his head. "You were able to subdue him because he wasn't expecting you, now that he's aware of what you can do-"

"He sensed me before I entered the room, I didn't surprise him, he was waiting for me...why?"

Kazuya turned to face Jun and locked eyes with her. She felt the urge to look away, his gaze was not intimidating or aggressive but no one had ever looked at her in that way before, it made her heart race and gave her a strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. It was a terrifying feeling, but not at all unpleasant. The look in his eyes changed and he regarded her carefully, "How do you know the Interpol agent?"

"I don't know him, I-"
"Don't lie," he said, pointing his finger at her, it was something that Jun detested. "I saw you on the security monitor."

"I was not going to lie. And are you even legally allowed to monitor beyond your own building's premises?"

"Probably not, I didn't look into it."

"Didn't look into it?" Jun shook her head slowly, "Don't you have dozens of lawyers who keep you up to date on what is illegal and what isn't?"

"Is that all you're concerned about? The illegal activities and deals that the Zaibatsu—that I am involved in? Are you working with that agent?"

"No, I'm not working with anyone, I don't even have a job, you know that."

She noticed the darkness in him begin to emerge, it was subtle, almost hesitant, his doubt seemed to be feeding it. "Then why were you speaking with him so casually, exactly where you thought you'd be out of the range of the building's cameras?"

"Agent Wulong came to see me yesterday, he-"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Jun crossed her arms. "Stop interrupting me," she said pointedly, "he came to ask me what I knew about you and the Zaibatsu because he's working with the WWWC now, he asked me what I learned during the time I was investigating you."

"What did you learn?"

"Nothing, you know that."

He seemed more confused than angry. "It's easy for you to say that, but how can I know that you're not hiding something, that you're not plotting with him?"

"You could just trust me." After everything that she had been through that day it did hurt to think that he might not trust her, but she quickly reminded herself that his doubt and distrust were more than likely the results of a seed planted by Devil.

Kazuya shook his head slowly and headed for the door, the darkness had not increased, but it was there. There was so much doubt in him. If she let him go Devil was sure to resurface quickly.

"Wait," she reached out and took his hand, he stopped short of grabbing the doorknob. She suddenly felt self-conscious and released her grip, she felt his calloused palm as her fingertips traveled down more slowly than she had intended. "Please wait," she said as casually as she could hoping that her blush wasn't noticeable. "The first thing you asked me was how I did it, how I was able to control him."

He turned to her and crossed his arms, his left brow raising slightly. That was the word, control, the key his full attention. She realized that as powerful and intimidating as he was, he didn't have control over his own being, it made her heart ache for him.

"How?" He spoke cautiously, almost hesitantly.

"It begins with intent, confidence, and state of mind."

He exhaled impatiently. "That sounds like the tagline for weight loss seminar."
Jun shrugged. "Mock me if you want to, but you as you saw, it works."

He shook his head. "Fine, what else?"

"I...charge myself up, then I-"

"Charge yourself up? With what?"

"Positive energy."

He laughed lightly. "That sounds absolutely ludicrous."

His attitude was beginning to frustrate her and it was obvious that he was becoming frustrated as well, she was trying to be patient but it was grating on her. If he wasn't willing to cooperate there wouldn't be much that she would be able to do. She sighed softly then continued her explanation. "There is positive energy in nearly every living thing," she gestured to a beautiful, green fern adorning the end table next to the couch, "take my fern for instance-"

"The goddamned plant?" He pinched the bridge of his nose and exhaled impatiently.

Jun looked sternly at him. "Don't insult it."

Kazuya gave her a blank look. "...You're serious," he shook his head then looked toward the door.

"Fine," she put her hands up in surrender, "forget the plant, come sit." She sat on the couch and waited for him to do the same, he complied, though hesitantly. "Do you meditate?" He nodded. "Good, that will make it easier for you to exert control over him." She quickly had his full attention. "You want to be in that first stage when you can sense everything around you and draw from that energy, then use it to push him away."

"Is that something that someone without your ability can do?"

"It's easier for someone like me, but almost anyone can do it with practice. I've instructed many people on how to detach themselves from negative spirits. It doesn't have to be during meditation, it can also be done during that stage when your mind is between sleep and wakefulness, but if you're proficient in meditation it generally gives better results."

"I don't want to detach."

Her heart sank at his words, but she couldn't let him see her disappointment, at least he was willing to listen, willing to control it. "But you want control over him." He looked toward the door, she could tell that he felt vulnerable and was trying to be as casual as possible about everything. "Do you want to try?"

"Now?" She sensed his apprehension, but his face remained impassive.

"Of course," she stood up and lit a half-burned-down candle on the coffee table next to the bowl of sand, she took fresh incense out of a wicker basket and stood it up in the bowl then lit it. She went to the turn the light switch off and felt his eyes on her, it made her nervous. With the room in near darkness, she turned to face him and gestured toward the table. "This should help." It was difficult to see his expression in the dim light, but she could sense his anxiety. "What have you got to lose?"

He sighed and stood up. She sat cross-legged on the floor and looked up at him, he shook his head slightly but lowered himself to the floor and mimicked her pose. She watched his face for a few moments as the candlelight gave his skin a reddish hue and highlighted his cheekbones, his strong
jawline, and his lips. She felt her heart begin to race again and that feeling in the pit of her stomach that was heavy and light at the same time. She looked into his deep, dark eyes and forced herself to think about the matter at hand.

"Close your eyes," she closed hers and hoped that he had done the same, "when you feel that you are ready, try to focus on my energy."

She could see his energy in her mind’s eye, a mass of dark fused with light and lively sparks mired by tar-like negativity. It would take time to sort it all out, to convince him that he was better off without Devil, first things first, teach Kazuya how to control him.

"I can't see you." Kazuya's voice brought her out of her trance and she opened her eyes.

"Clear your mind, just like you do every time you meditate, you will feel me there."

She watched him sitting still as a statue, with his eyes closed and his chest rising and falling slowly, evenly, she had the urge to touch him, he was so close...she could just reach out with her fingertips and brush his cheek or his lips.

"I see you."

She gasped lightly and felt her cheeks flush, she closed her eyes when she realized he had meant her energy. "Good, now draw from my energy, picture it transferring to you, let it fill you." She felt as he drew from her energy, felt Devil retreat further as he did and she was filled with a sense of victory. "That was good, now try pushing him away."

Kazuya opened his eyes. "I pushed him away," it was simply a statement, but Jun could feel the apprehension behind his words, "it was very slight, but I felt it." He was afraid to part ways with Devil.

"You can do this any place, any time, whenever you need to." Though the very idea repulsed her, she thought of it as a shock collar, a way to show the demon who was in control. "Do you want to try again?"

"That's probably enough for now."

"You don't have to draw from the energy, just locate it, the more you do it the easier it will become, there will be times when you have no one around you and the light energy will be more difficult to find. Try again, maybe this time you can find the fern." He sighed, but closed his eyes again, she watched as he furrowed his brow and shook his head. "Here," she reached over and took his hand, it was rough and warm and it made her heart race, "it will be easier if I guide you to it."

He opened his eyes and looked intently at her, his gaze was like the pull of a magnet. Jun let go of his hand and felt her body move forward, she stood on her knees and leaned in toward him, her face even with his until their lips were close enough to touch. She took in the scent of his aftershave, something subtle and masculine that she couldn't place but it suited him perfectly. He didn't move away, she felt his hand on her waist and brushed her lips against his. She had intended to kiss him, more accurately, her body had decided for her, but he remained immobile, his hand on her waist and his lips touching hers ever-so-lightly. She knew that he wanted her as much as she wanted him but he wasn't reciprocating or doing anything and she began to feel insecure.

"...After everything that happened today?" His words tickled her lips and she felt his fingers slightly
press against her waist.

She didn't speak, she simply answered by pressing her lips to his and moving her body against him in a way that she never had before. He responded in kind now, pulling her closer, his fingertips slowly moving up and down her back. His lips were a contrast to the rest of him, they were soft, eager and somehow gentle, his tongue pushed lightly into her mouth and she felt her heart race at alarming speed. Her cheeks felt flushed and the temperature of the room suddenly seemed too hot for a long-sleeved blouse.

Everything seemed surreal, the candlelight dancing on his face, his hands on her body, the very fact that she had kissed him. She felt her hands travel over his chest as he kissed her jaw and her neck, her fingers began to undo the buttons of his shirt and she felt the heat rise in her face. She had never imagined that she would be the one to initiate anything with a man, not even a kiss, let alone what she was doing now. Her fingers and hands were so steady that it genuinely surprised her, she should have been shaking or at the very least fumbling with the buttons, but she was pulling the shirt out of his waistband and helping him to take it off.

The shirt fell on the floor behind him and Jun looked down at his bare chest, she laid eyes on the large scar and felt a pang of dread but quickly chose to push it out of her mind as she felt Kazuya’s hands under her blouse.

He got on his knees and kissed her deeply, with one hand behind her back, he began to lean in pushing her down softly, holding her steady so she wouldn't fall. She was soon on her back on the floor, with him settling himself between her legs. She ran her fingers through his hair as he kissed her and pressed his body against hers, his hands caressing her hips and thighs over the fabric of her jeans, a frustrating barrier between them.

Her shoulder blades and the back of her head were still sore from having been pushed against the window earlier and she quickly realized that the wooden floor was not where she wanted to be. She was already beginning to feel discomfort and slight pain, she wanted to get up and move but it was nearly impossible to pry her lips away from his, to stop touching him. When he began to undo the button on her jeans she spoke up.

"The bedroom would be more comfortable." Her voice sounded strange in her ears, it was low and somewhat uneven.

He didn't say anything as he stood and helped her up, she bent down and blew out the candle then took his hand and guided him through the darkened apartment and into her bedroom. She turned on the light and felt suddenly awkward. Under the candlelight, she had felt bold but now in the brightly-lit space, she was suddenly afraid to make a fool of herself, about what he would think of her, that maybe she was being too forward, that she was too easy. He didn't give her time to dwell on her thoughts he kissed her again and guided her toward the bed and lowered her slowly onto it.

He looked into her eyes as he unbuttoned her blouse, there was a strange combination of calm and anticipation inside her, nothing felt surreal anymore, it was real and it was lovely. She let him undress her as she focused on him, his mood, his feelings. He desired her but there was something else that made her heart grow warm, something that made her believe that she could get through to him, it made her believe that she could help him detach from the demon.

She melted into him, immersed herself in the feel of his body, his lips, his hands gripping her firmly and gently at the same time. She focused on his scent and the sound of his breathing, lost herself in a rhythm that she did not even know existed but that seemed so natural, so effortless. With all sense of space and time gone, she was left in that moment where the difficult battle ahead didn't matter, where his touch and his warmth were all that existed.
The Plight of the Selfless

Chapter Summary

It's early, it's Sunday and everyone has an agenda.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kazuya watched as Devil pushed Jun against the window. He could hear her fast and shallow breathing, the glass cracking behind her, and for the first time since he was a child, he felt fear. There was a feeling of helplessness as he watched her struggle, as he saw images in front of him of what Devil intended to do with her. Devil felt threatened and frightened as he sensed Jun's power, she was someone who could end him...so he had to end her first. Kazuya focused all his energy and saw an image in his head, Devil opening his fist and the fabric of Jun's blouse slipping through his fingers. He tuned everything else out and focused on that image; fist opening, fabric slipping through, fist opening, fabric slipping through...

What are you doing? Devil's growl made the ground vibrate and Kazuya knew that it was working, he had gotten his attention...

The searing pain woke him up. Twice that night he'd had the same dream, he saw the same events from the day prior, but in the dream when Jun unleashed her light energy it hurt Kazuya instead of Devil. He sighed as he looked at the clock, almost four in the morning, he knew it would be impossible to fall back asleep. He turned to watch Jun sleeping quietly beside him.

Kazuya now realized that Devil had always been aware of Jun's sensitivity or psychic ability, whatever it was called. Just like that boy in Germany. This deeply troubled Kazuya, the fact that Devil could hear his thoughts, was in his thoughts, but Kazuya had no access to what Devil was thinking. That had been one of the reasons why he went to see Jun, he needed to show the demon that he could not control him.

Rein them in...beginning with you.

Kazuya's statement went unanswered, he could feel Devil somewhere in the recess of his mind, but he seemed dormant. Now that he was able to push the demon away, to render him inactive, he wondered if he could summon him as well, he assumed that he could, but it was not the time to test it, not with Jun in the same bed or even in the same building. What if he was unable to control Devil and he killed her right then and there? What if Jun was more powerful than either of them thought and she destroyed Devil? She had never said it but he suspected that Devil's demise was her goal. She seemed to value every type of life from ferns to kangaroos, but he doubted that demons were on her list of protected species.

He felt Jun stir then saw her roll onto her side. "You're awake?" She asked as she tried to stifle a yawn. "What time is it?"

"Almost four-thirty." He felt strange, almost awkward, he had never woken up next to someone before, he blamed it on how exhausted he had been after his ordeal with Devil.
"You're going back to sleep, right? I'm an early riser, but this is a bit early even for me."

"No, I need to go home, the tournament starts tomorrow and there's still too much to prepare."

She sat up and turned on the lamp, she held the bed sheet tightly over her chest. That, along with her mussed hair was oddly endearing. "Do you want something to eat before you go?" He furrowed his brow and looked at her not knowing what to say, she chuckled nervously and looked down at the sheets. "I know it's a strange thing to ask this early in the morning, but with everything that happened yesterday I'm sure you didn't have time to eat." She suddenly looked up and met his eyes, her lips curving into a warm smile. "I'm not much of a cook and I'm out of eggs, but I can make you the best pre-packaged miso soup you've ever had."

It was the first time that someone who wasn't getting paid offered to do something for him and he didn't know how to react. It made him feel somewhat uncomfortable. "No, I…"

"It's not an obligation," she smiled at him again, "I won't hold it against you."

Her words and demeanor seemed genuine, it baffled him and again, he didn't know what to say or how to act. In his experience women were pushy and needy, that was why he had never spent an entire night with one, but Jun was different. She wasn't afraid or intimidated by him, even after everything that she had seen, even after Devil had tried to kill her. He saw that moment in his mind when Devil's intent had been to push her through that window and send her plummeting to her death. He was suddenly overcome by something that he had never felt before...guilt.

He shouldn't be with someone like Jun, he should not even be near her, there was too much that could go wrong. If he wasn't able to control Devil there was no telling what could happen to her, if she discovered the types of experiments that his scientists were conducting in his secret laboratories she might turn on him and help Interpol build a case against him. But at the same time, he wanted her, wanted to be near her.

Kazuya Mishima was a selfish man, he had always been and now was not the time to change his ways. He pulled her close and held her tightly, he knew that a countdown had started, each minute he spent with her was one minute closer to the end and he had a feeling that things would end badly. He had a demon inside him, a demon that he needed if he wanted to attain true power, it was impossible for it to end any other way. Feeling confident in his ability to keep Devil at bay and knowing that they didn't have much time, he kissed her eagerly wanting to take advantage of every minute he had with her.

Only a few more days.

After the tournament, he would ban her from his property if he had to, for her own good, not because he didn't want to be near her... And because he wanted power and revenge and he knew that someone like Jun would never stand for it. He didn't hold it against her, she had her principles, her moral code, and she knew how to stand her ground, she was a stubborn woman and he was a stubborn man, it was unfortunate that they had opposite goals and beliefs. He knew what he was doing was selfish and wrong, he knew that he shouldn't lead her on, but when all he saw as he closed his eyes was that clock counting down to zero, he knew that he had to make every second with her count.

Sayuri was unpleasantly surprised to see Lee sitting at the kitchen table. It was five-thirty in the morning and she thought he had left for the gym half an hour ago. He sat with his arms folded on the
top and wearing his workout gear. He didn't seem to notice her, his gaze was fixed on the clock above the kitchen door, though she could tell that he wasn't really seeing it.

"Are you all right?" She moved hesitantly toward the table wanting to make sure nothing was wrong but at the same time dreading the possibility of getting pulled into a conversation. She was on her way to meet Nina Williams and did not want to be late.

He looked at her, then up at the clock. "Will you go to the gym with me?" It was an odd request, it was the first time he had invited her along.

She shook her head. "I hate exercise."

"You go running every day."

"It's not the same."

"You'll be safe there."

She crossed her arms tightly and let a soft sigh escape her lips; she hoped that it wouldn't be the start of another argument. "I'm safe outside too." Lee nodded and stood from his seat. "What's bothering you?" She spoke before she was able to stop herself and instantly regretted it, not because she wasn't concerned, but because she did not want to be late.

Lee ran his hand through his hair as he looked down at the floor. "Kazuya is going to fire me."

Thinking that Lee somehow knew everything she was keeping from him made her heart drum in her chest and her stomach turn into knots. "Why do you think that?" Unsurprisingly she was able to keep her tone even, it had become a habit.

Lee seemed troubled as he looked at her. "He threw me out of the meeting yesterday, he's never done that before."

She shrugged. "He's probably just angry with you."

Lee sighed and shook his head, his brow furrowed. "I don't think so, something feels different."

She stood there knowing that she could tell him everything, that she should tell him everything. Everything from her infidelity, to Kazuya's plan to end Lee's career by publicly accusing him of larceny, to her involvement in a kidnapping and an assassination plot...but she couldn't do it. It wasn't because she was afraid it would end their relationship, it just seemed hard, exhausting, a feat that a mere human could not hope to accomplish. She made the only choice that seemed feasible, she chose to be the girlfriend who knew nothing, she chose to be the woman that she had been before he left for Hong Kong, the woman who would stand by him and support him. Because at this point, lying was easy, omitting was second nature.

She walked up to him and took his hand. "I want you to think about worst case scenario, what would that be?"

He looked down at her hand. "Kazuya fires me, I lose the tournament."

"Then what happens?"

He sighed deeply. "I move to Hong Kong and focus on my company."

I...
It hurt more than it should have. She knew that it probably meant nothing, that he was thinking from a logical, linear standpoint. But after everything she had done, after everything she had been through, she couldn't give up on their relationship, she needed to have something to show for her efforts, for her trouble.

She rested her head on his shoulder. "That's what you've always wanted, isn't it?" He nodded. "And maybe after a year or two, when you're well established and well known, you can expand here in Japan where you can wait for the opportunity to take over the Zaibatsu."

"I have thought about that…" He put his arm around her and his hand on her waist, she felt a chill as she remembered the way the Russian bodyguard had pulled her against him. She breathed in deeply and focused on what Lee was saying. "...Expanding here in Tokyo, maybe Osaka as well…"

"I can help you run it," she suggested, trying to gauge if he saw a future with her.

He was silent for a moment. "...It might look...strange if I hire you as my secretary."

She let go of his hand and took a step back so that she could look at him, his statement bothered her much more than she knew it should have. "Not as your secretary, I will never be anyone's secretary again for as long as I live. I can help you run your company, I know how business works."

He looked at the small window behind her and sighed softly. "I know that you have a degree in business, but that doesn't mean-"

She held up two fingers. "Two, degrees in business." He narrowed his eyes and looked as if he were about to shake his head but thought better of it. "You hired me, how can you not know this?"

"I didn't have time to look through every applicant's credentials."

"Fine, but I'm not just an applicant, I'm the person, you personally hired. Most importantly, I'm the person who has been living with you for more than eight months, it's something you should know about me. And how did you decide to hire me without checking my credentials?"

He sighed impatiently. "The hiring manager verified the credentials and gave me the files of the top ten applicants."

She felt her jaw tighten as she spoke. "Was I the most qualified?"

Lee looked at the window behind her again. "She told me that you were one of the top five?"

She felt her temperature rise when she remembered the rumors that had started at the Zaibatsu when she began working. That she had slept with Lee to get the job, that someone like her wouldn't last a week working for Kazuya. "Then why did you hire me?"

He chuckled slightly. "Because I had to choose between looking at a married forty-something all day or looking at you all day. But you were qualified," he added quickly, "if you hadn't been Kazuya would not have put up with you for more than a day."

She wished she had not stopped at the kitchen, another day ruined by another argument, by the truth that their relationship had not been nearly as strong as she had thought. "You should have hired someone with more experience, not someone you wanted to have sex with."

"That's not why I hired you."

"It never crossed your mind, didn't influence your decision in any way?"
"Did I hope it would happen? I'll admit that I did, but-"

"I'm going for my run, I have to stay pretty for you, otherwise, what good am I?" She didn't want to hear any more and glancing up at the clock she realized that she needed to hurry.

She left the kitchen and grabbed her running shoes not bothering to put them on before she stepped into the hallway. She put them on while she waited for the elevator then stepped inside when the doors opened. Once alone in the confined space, she felt angry tears well up in her eyes. She wasn't even supposed to be in Tokyo. If Lee had hired someone else, someone who deserved the position, she would be in Osaka with her father and her friends, but more importantly, with a clear conscience. Without Lee she had no reason to stay in Tokyo, her mother worked nearby but she had not spoken to her in years and the only people she knew were acquaintances from work.

Everything had been easy before he left, even though she suspected infidelity, their conversations had been pleasant and they had honestly enjoyed being around each other. She had thought everything would be better after his return, but so far it was difficult conversation after difficult conversation, argument after argument. She was trying to make things work, trying to make peace, but her resentment was becoming more and more difficult to bury.

The elevator doors chimed open and she entered the lobby, she walked up to the front desk and asked the attendant for the bag she had left in their care the evening before. It contained the blueprints of the Mishima Building. She thanked the attendant and quickly exited the apartment building. She had been apprehensive about asking someone from the security floor at the Zaibatsu for blueprints of the building, but she had quickly found out that being Kazuya's secretary and merely mentioning his name could get her anything she needed at a moment's notice without any questions being asked.

She jogged down her familiar street then turned into the park when it came into view and followed the walking trail. She saw the same Japanese man from the first meeting sitting on a bench smoking a cigarette while Nina Williams stood with her arms crossed. It had been quite a shock to see Nina's photograph along with the rest of the tournament participants, but it made sense, there was no better way to get close to Kazuya. And she was Anna Williams' sister. One sister protecting the target and the other attempting to murder him, it was almost like a Greek tragedy.

"You're two minutes late." A cloud of smoke escaped the Japanese man's lips as he spoke.

Sayuri bowed deeply to them. "I apologize." She wanted to explain that she'd been delayed at home but the look in Nina's eyes told her that if was best to get to the point. She pulled the blueprints out of her bag, she had folded them not wanting Lee to notice blueprints in her purse. She handed them to Nina. "I don't have the schedule, there-"

"You were given specific instructions." The man flicked his cigarette butt onto the grass.

"There isn't a written schedule."

The man relayed Sayuri's statement to Nina in English, then turned back to face her. "Then do a little digging and figure one out. What does Mr. Mishima's day look like today, surely you must know that."

"He'll arrive at the office at eight, meet with his security staff, then leave for the stadium, he's set to arrive at nine. He's overseeing the final preparations but he'll be back before noon because he has a TV interview at the Mishima Building at one p.m."

She watched as he translated for Nina, the blonde moved closer to him and whispered something in
his ear. He nodded then turned to address Sayuri. "Find out everything you can about where he'll be and who he'll be with during the tournament, then bring that information to the banquet tonight. If there is no banquet this evening...if the tournament is canceled, consider this our last meeting and your business with Mr. Mullen done." They both turned their backs on her and made their way out of the park.

Sayuri felt nauseous, short of breath. They were going to do it that very day, it was Kazuya Mishima's last day on Earth. She wondered how they would do it and instantly worried that someone else would be harmed in the process, maybe innocent bystanders or perhaps Bruce. What if Nina's own sister, Anna ended up dead? The thought made her feel dizzy and she thought she might faint. But Nina was a professional, she was young but there was something in her eyes that made her seem years older than she really was, that had to mean that she could eliminate Kazuya without putting anyone else in danger. That thought did nothing to ease the ill feeling or the bad taste in her mouth. She wanted to do something to atone for her sins, something that could ease the guilt, but what?

She took a few minutes to compose herself then turned around and began her jog home determined to do whatever she needed to do to fix her relationship. She had sold her soul, at the very least she should have something to show for it.

Heihachi Mishima had always been good at connecting the dots, at solving puzzles with missing pieces and finding the truth in rumors. Sometimes it was as easy as paying or bribing the right person, on different occasions, it was difficult and maddeningly time consuming, but he always stayed the course and always prevailed because failure was not an option. He had failed once in his life, two years prior, almost to the day. As he climbed back up that ravine with broken bones, humiliated and bruised and bloodied from injuries that would have killed a normal man, he swore to himself that he would never fail again, that he would take back with blood what had been taken from him. What he had taken with blood. But it wasn't the time for blood...not yet. Business came first, building alliances and strengthening friendships came first, setting up distractions was more important.

Heihachi rose from his bed, put on his black robe and walked through his luxurious apartment to the kitchen where his lovely secretary was waiting for him with breakfast on the table. Rei Nakano was already dressed for the day though it was only six in the morning. He eyed her appreciatively, the way the conservative, gray dress hugged her curves and how her beautiful, black hair cascaded behind her shoulders.

"Good morning," she smiled as she bowed her head, "shall we eat here or on the balcony?"

"Here is fine," Heihachi pulled out a chair from the circular table and took his seat. He immediately picked up a bowl full of steaming white rice topped with a fried egg from the center of the table and set it on his placemat.

Rei set a mug in front of him and poured tea from a blue, porcelain teapot then took her chair. "I like this cook," she spoke as she poured herself some tea. "She's very good and she makes something different every day, she's so quiet she's never once woken me up."

"Hmph," Heihachi grumbled as he broke the yolk of his fried egg with his chopsticks then began to mix it with his steamed rice. "I like that she's gone before I wake up. Don't give her too much credit, it's not hard to make steamed rice and fried eggs."

"Don't tell me her soup isn't amazing," Rei said as she added shredded cabbage to her miso soup.
"Why are we talking about food?"

Rei shrugged and smiled. "It's the little things that make me happy sometimes, and I'm excited, I get to wear a pretty dress to the banquet today and tomorrow I'll watch the strongest, most lethal and cunning man on Earth exact his revenge as the world cheers." She gave him an alluring smile. "And afterward I get to take him to bed."

"You'd better not behave like a smitten teenage girl when we're in public."

"Never." She sipped her tea. "What's on the agenda this morning?"

"We need to start looking into the Williams girls."

Rei stirred her soup. "Looking into what, exactly?"

"Why they're here, other than the tournament of course. They both appeared in Tokyo very suddenly."

She shrugged. "As did most fighters."

Heihachi shook his head. "Right after Lee's girlfriend practically signed a death warrant for Kazuya?" He pointed his chopsticks at Rei. "If you had known Richard Williams…"

Richard Williams had done a few jobs for Heihachi over the course of many years, Heihachi didn't know him on a personal level but he knew his methods. There were rumors that he had not only taught his eldest daughter Nina his style martial arts, but that he had also trained her to become an assassin, and that she was quite effective. As for the younger girl, it seemed that she had been taught her mother's fighting style but as far as anyone knew she enjoyed a life of traveling, spending her inheritance and being engaged to international music stars...when she wasn't involved with his sons. Romantically with Lee and as Kazuya's head of security, that alone meant that she was as lethal as her sister. He was almost certain that one of the two women was there to kill Kazuya. Most would bet on Nina, the trained assassin, but he was sure that Anna was an assassin too, and how could one best bring down a target if not by standing right next to it?

Rei stood from the table and took a pen and notebook from the counter then took her seat, set it next to her bowl of rice, and began to write. "Anna recently went through a personal tragedy, she lost her fiance."

"Personal tragedy?" Heihachi scoffed. "She probably killed him." Rei sighed softly as she wrote but didn't say anything. "It could be one of the Williams girls, but it could also be someone else..." He mused.

Rei looked up from her notebook. "Wouldn't we have heard something by now?"

"Not if they're good at their job." They ate quietly for a moment.

As much as Heihachi wanted to finish Kazuya himself, if someone got to him first, it wouldn't be the end of the world. What he wanted was the Zaibatsu. If someone was able to take care of Kazuya before or during the tournament Lee would move quickly to take over, he was on the inside already, and that would become problematic, not impossible to deal with, but a nuisance nonetheless. If Heihachi took over by force it could mean bad press and that was something that he could not afford. If Kazuya was killed before the tournament he needed to be prepared, he needed the board of directors on his side ready vote Lee out and to ensure an easy transition.

That was why he needed his sons distracted, watching each other instead of watching him. He had
paid someone at the hotel in Hong Kong to deliver the note to Lee so that he would either be too preoccupied with his thoughts or tell Kazuya that someone was out to kill him, both options worked in Heihachi's favor as both would have the brothers looking elsewhere. Heihachi was also responsible for framing Lee of stealing company funds. That had not been easy. He was fortunate that his highest level infiltrator was in the accounting department. He was sure that Kazuya knew by now, and again, no matter the outcome, it would keep both him and Lee occupied as Heihachi worked behind the scenes. He had recently found a different distraction. Jun Kazama, a woman who he was sure was close to Kazuya in some way.

"When will they contact you about Jun Kazama?" Heihachi asked Rei.

She looked at her watch. "About half an hour."

Heihachi had known who Jun was as soon as he saw her. He had not known that she had connections to Kazuya but he was familiar with everyone who had signed up for the tournament. He knew that a tournament participant showing up at his base of operations out of pure coincidence was anything but a coincidence. He had immediately looked into who she was and found that she had worked for the WWWC, a treehugger agency that did nothing but get in the way of progress, he made a mental note to give them an extremely generous donation after the tournament. Jun Kazama had then stopped working for the agency, entered the tournament and later been seen with Kazuya on more than a few occasions before finding her way to his dojo. At first, he had thought that Kazuya had sent her to spy on him, but it was unlikely, he was sure that Kazuya wouldn't have sent someone who was such a terrible liar. Still, terrible liar or not, she could prove to be a valuable distraction. All he had done was connect the dots that his low-level infiltrators had been able to provide. He was sure someone like Jun Kazama would not have forsaken her morals from one day to the next, by all accounts, she had been very passionate about her job, most importantly about the welfare of animals.

He stood up from his chair. "I'll be in the shower, you can interrupt me if Mrs. Nakajima has something important to say."

Rei raised her teacup to her lips. "Very well."

In less than one week the tournament would be over and the Zaibatsu would be his once more. He would take what was his by force or submission, by deception or blood.

After Kazuya left Jun sat on the sofa trying to think about breakfast, though she wasn't really hungry. She was disappointed to sense the doubt that plagued him, the guilt that had somehow wormed itself into him. She worried that he thought she was some naive girl who didn't know what she was getting herself into when it was quite the opposite. Jun was an adult woman making her own decisions, she was well aware that there was a very high probability that when everything was said and done she would end up with a broken heart. She didn't want that to happen, but it was something that men and women went through every day, if they could get through it, so could she. And if it resulted in Kazuya being free, of him willingly letting go of that demon, then it was worth it. Her phone began to ring and she looked up at the clock above her kitchen door, it was minutes after six a.m. and she had no idea who could be calling her so early.

She reached for the telephone on the end table and answered. "Yes?"

"Miss Kazama?" It was the voice of an older woman that she didn't recognize.
"Speaking."

"This is Mrs. Nakajima from WWWC Headquarters. I'm sorry to bother you so early and on a Sunday morning but certain information has come to my attention and I was hoping for a few minutes of your time."

"I'm no longer employed by the WWWC and therefore not legally obligated to speak to you or anyone."

"Miss Kazama, please, your supervisor, Miss Tagawa, was too eager to bring the Mishima Zaibatsu down, she has...illusions of grandeur. She should not have let you go so easily, she should have assigned you to a different case."

Jun sighed. "Are you trying to offer me my job back?"

"No, I would like to offer you a job in the field. We have a couple of openings in Kenya at a wild reserve park, a couple in South America at an animal sanctuary and we even have one in Antarctica, those are difficult to come by."

Jun leaned back on the couch and rolled her eyes. "And you want me to do what?"

"Drop out of the tournament of course."

Jun chuckled softly. "Why?"

"It's bad press."

"How?"

"We can't have one of our own participating in a tournament sponsored by a company that performs cruel and illegal experiments on defenseless animals."

Jun felt her face grow hot and her heart begin to race, it had to be the Interpol agent, he must have somehow built his case or at least found some evidence. "That is all speculation as far as I'm aware."

"So far, but with your help, we may be able to find solid evidence."

"What makes you think I would accept your offer when I already told Miss Tagawa that I wanted off the case?"

"You wouldn't have to work on any case."

"I don't understand what you want from me."

"The laboratories at the Mishima Zaibatsu currently hold a kangaroo captive. What we want is to have you back in our employment today, then we will need you to give a short TV interview, today also, stating that you have dropped out of the tournament because you couldn't in good conscience, and as a WWWC employee, participate in a tournament sponsored by a company rumored to smuggle endangered and protected animals with the intent to perform cruel experiments on said animals."

"Rumored." Jun wanted to slam the receiver down but somehow resisted. "You want me to appear on a platform that will reach all corners of the world to malign the Mishima Zaibatsu based on rumors?"

"They aren't rumors, the information came from a credible source, an employee at the Mishima"
"Then that is evidence enough to acquire a warrant, or make an arrest or go on television yourselves with those accusations. A lie from me, especially one told in a TV interview, harms your case and goes completely against my morals."

The woman sighed. "You're right, Miss Kazama, they are nothing but rumors, but we are desperate. The Interpol agent isn't having any luck and-"

"Are you supposed to tell me that?"

"You don't understand how powerful a statement coming from you would be. A former WWWC wildlife officer resigning her position then beginning a relationship with Kazuya Mishima himself and entering the tournament he sponsors only to discover that he is committing illegal activities, then withdrawing from the tournament as well as rejoining the WWWC on the same day to warn the world of his misdeeds would garner an incredible amount of attention. Other agencies, organizations, companies, individuals will potentially come forward and help us finally build our case against the Mishima Zaibatsu."

Jun straightened in her seat. "Who says I started a relationship with him?"

"...Well, your former coworkers speculated that-"

"Mrs. Nakajima, I suggest that from this day forward you and everyone involved with the WWWC begin to familiarize yourselves with investigation, lawful procedures and the gathering of facts rather than spreading rumors and using hearsay and speculation to build cases. Please, do not contact me again." Jun set the receiver down and remained immobile for a few moments.

Rumors, speculation, lies. But what if there was truth to it? What if Kazuya had lied and his scientists were indeed experimenting on animals? It was entirely possible. All in all, her morning was not going well, she wasn't one to dwell on negative feelings or events but it was difficult to remain positive. First, there was Kazuya with all his doubt and guilt, it was bothering her much more than she had thought it would and now the WWWC was attempting to use her to further their own agenda. They didn't care about her job performance or dedication, they didn't need her to work in the field or in the tiny, pathetic office or anywhere. They wanted to exploit her for her ties to Kazuya.

Her thoughts circled back to him. What would she do if she found out that the rumors were true? What if he was, in fact, experimenting on animals? Was that why he felt guilty? Because he was lying to her? And if he was lying to her about something as serious as that, could she ever forgive him? Could she forgive herself for becoming involved with him? She sighed as she leaned back on her couch. Whatever happened, whatever she found out she had to continue to help him, she had to stay until the demon was gone, then Kazuya would be a reasonable man who would find his morals, who could learn to trust and to think of others. It was going to be a long and difficult road and she was willing to stay by his side... But how much was she willing to overlook?

Chapter End Notes

Just a quick thank you to everyone for reading and for the kudos! Next chapter coming soon!
Anna deals with Zaibatsu business then accompanies Kazuya for the final check of the stadium.

"Sunday, bloody Sunday." Anna stretched her arms above head and leaned back against the comfortable, black leather couch wishing that she could take a nap.

"It's a good song," Bruce spoke with his back to her as he stood in front of the wall-length window in Kazuya's office. She was sure that he was as curious as she was as to how the large crack had appeared in the middle of the window. Or maybe he knew, and if that was the case, did it mean that Kazuya trusted him more than he trusted her?

She crossed her legs and discreetly ran her fingertips over her thigh. "I didn't peg you for a U2 fan." The feel of the Colt Mustang holstered under her skirt gave her a sense of comfort.

Bruce turned to look at her. "Have you met someone who isn't?"

She shook her head. "I don't think I'd like to."

It was the first time since she had met Bruce that they'd had anything resembling a pleasant conversation. She didn't know if he was being genuine or if it was a ruse, all she knew was that she couldn't trust him because she was sure that what Bruce wanted the most was to keep his position as head of security, a position that she threatened with her mere presence.

"Ugh," Anna sighed, "does he pull this shit often?"

"What?"

"Make you work on Sunday." She knew it was to be expected once in a while but hoped it wasn't a new requirement.

"Security is a twenty-four-seven job. I'm here when I gotta be, it doesn't matter if it's Wednesday night or Sunday morning."

She mentally rolled her eyes but smiled instead. "All work and no play make Bruce…" She shook her head. "I don't know, it's too goddamn early, but you need to loosen up a little, have some fun."

Bruce gave her the first smile she had seen since she met him. "Who says I don't."

"Yes," she folded her hands neatly on her lap, cocked her head and smiled, "I hear you get around." Bruce shook his head slightly looking somewhat affronted and turned his attention back to the window. She wanted to keep the conversation going, get on his good side, maybe learn more about him, any bit of information could help her gain the upper hand. "I'm gonna give you two points for actually wearing a suit to work." She had to admit that the mohawk was not nearly as obnoxious when he was appropriately dressed for the office, and it also didn't hurt that he knew how to wear a suit.
Bruce chuckled lightly. "We're on a points system?" She shrugged. "Listen," he began as he looked her in the eye, "I need to apologize for what I said to you yesterday."

She straightened in her seat and pulled the hem of her leather skirt slightly down. "Oh, you mean when you called me slutty?"

"I've never said that to any woman before, I know it's no excuse, but I was sleep deprived, I've been stressed out lately, and you took my desk-"

"I thought it was Ganryu's," she defended.

"No, you didn't."

She laughed lightly. "Fine, you're right."

"The point is, I shouldn't have said that to you and it won't happen again, I'm sorry."

"Apology accepted," she smiled sweetly at Bruce. Yeah, definitely a ruse. If he thought he was going to outsmart her, get rid of her, he had another thing coming. "And I'd appreciate having a desk prepared for me." Her own office was what she really wanted, and she was sure Kazuya would let her have it if she asked, but she was taking a leaf out of Lee's book and occupying enemy territory.

Bruce shrugged. "If you want a desk, take it up with maintenance."

It was annoying, most men would have offered to do it for her. "Why are we here anyway?" She asked looking at her watch. "Is this another one of his power plays?"

"I don't know."

Anna stood up and opened the office door, it was seven fifty-three in the morning and neither Kazuya nor his secretary were there. When she arrived she had been instructed by the security guards at the entrance to wait in Kazuya's office per his request and he didn't even have the decency to have someone waiting for them. She saw the door to the front office swing forward and Kazuya entered wearing a dark-gray suit, he had a fantastic tailor. She smiled to herself as she imagined Kazuya looking through swatches of fabric and checking himself out in the trifold mirror. You like to pretend that you're above everyone else, but you're as vain as the rest of us.

"Good morning, Boss," she stepped out of the way to let him through.

"Is Bruce in there?"

Just once, would it kill him to say good morning? "Yes, he's here." Kazuya walked past Anna and without even glancing at Bruce, stood in front of the desk, indicating that whatever business he had with them would not take long. Bruce walked around the desk and stood in front of the couch next to Anna. "Your secretary isn't here yet." She didn't know why she complained, it was petty.

Kazuya picked up his appointment book from his desk and started leafing through it then spoke without looking at Anna. "She's at the hotel finishing the preparations for tonight. If you need to schedule something she'll be back by eleven." He closed the book then looked up at Bruce. "Is everything set for tonight?"

"The hotel is secure, only approved personnel is allowed to work on anything having to do with the banquet and security will be government-building level tight tonight." Bruce sighed. "I still think that you should be in the skybox during the fights."
"Why?" Kazuya crossed his arms and looked intently at Bruce. "You don't think you can secure the stadium properly?"

"It's not that," Anna spoke for Bruce, he gave her a sidelong glance but let her speak, "it's what's expected. Your sponsors will want the honor of your company."

"No," Kazuya said resolutely. "Heihachi sat like a goddamn emperor in his glass box and he lost."

Anna scoffed. "I don't think that's why he lost. It's all about image, it's about-

"I'm a fighter," Kazuya said looking at his watch, "that's my image, I don't want to be seen with all those fat cats more than I have to."

_You might be a fighter, but you're still a fat cat._ "You're the boss," she said instead. Bruce looked at her and shook his head.

Kazuya gestured to Bruce with his head. "Get the entourage ready, we need to be at the stadium by nine."

Bruce nodded. "On it, Boss." Then immediately left the room.

Anna placed a hand on her hip. "Why didn't I know that you're going to the stadium this morning?"

"Don't you read your calendar?"

She crossed her arms. "Why am I here?"

"Because I need to talk to you."

She gasped and clasped her hands in front of her chest. "You're giving me the fight with Nina."

"Not yet."

"What do you mean not yet?"

"You've only been back for a few days and you have disrespected me."

She waved her hand dismissively. "I thought you were over that, I told you it was two years ago."

"When are you scheduled to make your rounds today?"

"After I'm done here."

"Good. I want you to keep an eye on Lee as well, he's putting the finishing touches on the robot."

She gave him a tight-lipped smile as her heart began to race. "I don't know what good I'd do, I don't know anything about androids, except that they aren't robots." She knew that Kazuya knew that as well but he always had to undermine Lee in some way, even subconsciously. She knew that it shouldn't bother her but it did.

"You don't have to know anything about his work, just watch his behavior, what he says. And find out where he was and what he was doing the two weeks he was gone."

"Why?"

He looked intently at her. "You're the one who came in here offering me your services, you don't get
to pick and chose what those are and you certainly don't get to ask questions."

"I didn't say that I wouldn't," Anna looked into his eyes, unflinching, "but I feel like you're testing my loyalty and I don't appreciate that."

"I test everyone's loyalty, always." He walked to the back of his desk and sat in his chair, but not before glancing at the crack in the window. "I'll be back by noon, you can give me your reports then." He sighed and shook his head. "Then I have to do a goddamn TV interview, and then more photo-op bullshit at the banquet tonight."

He could let Lee do that, it was what he liked to do, and Kazuya hated doing it. If the two men managed to set aside their differences and work together she was convinced that they could take over the world and there wouldn't even be a struggle. But who was she to judge when she was in a deadly feud with her own sister?

"I'll see you at noon then." She exited the room without waiting for acknowledgment. She didn't like being the new kid in school, that was not how it was supposed to be. Kazuya clearly preferred Bruce, until she proved herself yet again, but what would that take? Her best bet was to get rid of Bruce...maybe turn his men against him, but how?

She took the elevator to the sub-basement and decided to set that issue aside for the moment. When she stepped out of the elevator she smiled and nodded at the guards who bowed to her as she walked through the doors of the genetics lab. Men and women in white coats gave her quick glances as she passed. The lab area was very large and was divided into several different laboratories, each dedicated to a different area of genetic research. Anna didn't like spending time in there, the experiments taking place in each room ranged from mind-numbingly boring to downright creepy. She had gotten the shock of her life the day she saw two animals having what seemed to be a conversation with each other. A kangaroo that Dr. Bosconovitch had referred to as Roger and a human-sized lizard, dinosaur or whatever it was, named Alex.

Anna had known that Kazuya was experimenting with animals, which she chose not to look too closely into, she did enjoy wearing her fair share of leathers and furs, but a line had to be drawn somewhere. Kazuya wanted Roger and Alex to participate in the tournament, but they were so docile, she didn't know if they would be willing to fight or if they were even capable. And who among the fighters would have the heart to punch a kangaroo in the face? The doctor assured her that they were very capable, but she didn't want to see a demonstration. The confirmation by the assisting scientists and their reports was more than enough to convince her.

She was glad that on this morning Bosconovitch was working on something different. The lights were dim in the area where the sleep pods were kept, Anna walked slowly inside and an ominous feeling that she couldn't explain quickly enveloped her. She hated the way her footsteps echoed inside the metal-covered walls, it made her feel like she was disturbing something. It reminded her of being a little girl inside a church, she could almost feel her father's admonishing gaze.

Anna spotted the doctor at the far end of the room, she slowly walked up to the first pod, goosebumps rose on her skinng when she ran her fingertips over the glass surface. "What do these fancy coffins do?"

"I didn't expect you here so early," Dr. Bosconovitch was bent over one of the cold sleep pods, he spoke in his thick, Russian accent without turning to look at her.

"If you knew when to expect me I wouldn't be doing my job."

The doctor straightened his posture and turned to look at her. "I thought you were just another
miserable, but I heard that you were Mr. Mishima's right hand not more than a year ago."

Anna chose to ignore his question. "Miserable?" She laughed. "I remember a priest saying that word during a sermon once, it's not one you hear often." Rumors and gossip around prisoners were dangerous, she made a mental note to remind the lab personnel to watch what they said.

"I suppose that answers my question." Bosconovitch shook his head. "Is this a common thing Mr. Mishima does? He hires beautiful young women to do his dirty work?"

"He hires the person who can do the job regardless of gender." She hated all the fatherly comments she received from older men. Sometimes they were clients, others they were targets, but they always gave her a disappointed look and told her some variation of how a woman who was so young and so beautiful should do something better with her life.

"Good health is wasted on you." She was taken aback by Bosconovitch's statement and bitter tone, but especially by the look of pure disgust on his wrinkled face. Her surprise must have been obvious because his blue eyes quickly softened and he looked at her with what she swore was pity. "Your parents must have failed you."

Anna felt the heat rise in her face but smiled through her anger. "Just my father, but we have a much better relationship now that he's dead."

"I'm sorry to hear that." He continued to hold her gaze, his bushy, white brows slightly contracted. "Out of pure curiosity, what would he think if he could see you now?"

She shrugged and smiled sweetly. "He'd finally be proud of me."

Bosconovitch nodded. "...That is a tragedy." He took one of many cables hanging from the back of the glass and metal sleep-chamber and connected to a monitor that was built into the wall behind it. "To answer your question," he continued to connect cables to the monitor, Anna had already forgotten which question she had asked, "these aren't coffins...quite the opposite. These cryo pods may hold the secret to near eternal life, to curing diseases that up until this moment seem incurable."

He turned the monitor on then pushed a series of buttons on the side of the pod, it began to emit a low humming sound.

"So you put a person in there, then what happens?"

"He or she will be frozen in time, in a state of cryogenic stasis."

"How does being frozen cure anything? And won't that kill them?"

"Not at all," he began passionately, "they aren't frozen in the same way that a piece of meat is put into an icebox. They will be given a drug to sleep, then they are put in the pod and it is filled with cryogenic fluids, liquid gasses if you will, such as-"

"Hm," Anna delicately pushed a strand of brown hair behind her ear, "that doesn't sound interesting at all, but I'm required to ask you what progress you've made." She didn't appreciate his attitude and had interrupted him out of pure spite. She actually thought it quite interesting, she had read the reports from the other scientist and was fascinated by the notion of going to sleep and waking up years in the future without having aged a day.

The doctor huffed in what was undoubtedly annoyance and narrowed his eyes. "Are my aides not delivering their reports?"

Anna shrugged. "They are, but I'm required to hear it from you."
"Both of the pods have been assembled and are functional, all I need is volunteers to test them."

She laughed lightly. "Good luck with that."

"May I make a request of Mr. Mishima?"

"Tell me what it is and I'll see what I can do."

"When the inevitable happens and you find yourself with a projectile lodged in your cranium, I would like his permission to harvest your organs and put them to better use."

She lightly ran her hand over her thigh and felt the crease of her gun holster under her skirt. "Have a terrible day, Doctor." She turned and began to walk.

"I do, Miss Williams, every day," he said harshly, but she didn't turn to look at him.

She swiftly made her way into the main lab area and stood, arms crossed tightly under her chest, out her peripheral vision she saw the men and women in lab coats stop what they were doing and turn to look at her.

"Someone has been talking to Doctor Bosconovitch about things that have nothing to do with his work in these labs." The only sound was the humming and beeping of various monitors and electronic equipment. "Talk about research only. Nothing related to who does what in this building, or who is in charge of what. Got it? If it happens again, I will personally come in here and start breaking wrists. Ask anyone who's worked here more than a year, I have done it and I will do it again if you push me." She didn't turn to look at them, didn't care if they spoke English or not, she had been met with nothing but disrespect and it was going to stop.

She didn't acknowledge any of the guards as she made her way out of the lab and walked down the hallway toward the engineering department to check on Lee. She knew that it was a waste of time and that she would have nothing to report. If Lee was doing anything against Kazuya she was certain that he would not be doing it at the Zaibatsu in a place where there were cameras monitoring him and anyone could walk in on him at any time.

The metal doors hissed open and she walked in. She hated the lighting in there, it was even harsher than the genetics labs and it made her skin look pasty. Everything from the lamp-lit workstations and pieces of machinery that she couldn't even begin to name, to the beige tile floor with its scuffed and faded spots, to the smell of metal and oil, was just as she remembered it. The entire space was neat and orderly, shelf upon shelf of meticulously labeled tools and components lined the walls. Out of habit, she glanced at the corner-mounted security cameras scanning the lab.

Anna nearly took a step backward when she noticed Prototype Jack in front of Lee. She had seen it fight in the first tournament, but that had been from the stands, up close it was downright terrifying. The android had to be nearly eight feet tall, it looked like a pillar that should be holding up a structure rather than fighting in a tournament. Lee was standing next to a large metal table with his back to the door, he looked at her over his shoulder then turned his attention back to the clipboard in his hand.

"I see Kazuya finally took pity on you and gave you a toy to play with," Anna said acidly as she cautiously eyed the metallic monstrosity.

Lee scoffed. "Yes, there's nothing I would rather be doing right now, nowhere I would rather be. And your snarky comments aren't cute, by the way."

"Your sarcasm isn't either. But I'm glad you found someone who puts up with it."
Lee turned his gaze to the android and spoke in a commanding tone. "Rushing uppercut followed by Cossack kicks and finish with a spin punch." Anna watched as the android turned its back on Lee, bent its knees and advanced forward as it executed two uppercuts that she was certain would be devastating if they struck a human opponent.

The metal monster's raw power made her apprehensive, she felt the urge to keep talking. "I hope she's not still mad at you, I really do like that girl for you, not only does she have killer style but she also looks like someone who puts up with your mommy issues and takes care of you, someone who drives you to the airport even when it's out of her way and makes you soup when you're sick."

Lee wrote something on his clipboard as he watched the android's performance. "Yes, all the things you wouldn't do," he said bitterly.

"Oh," Anna clapped her hands and clasped them over her chest. "She's into threesomes?"

He shook his head and turned to face her. "The airport, I'm talking about the airport."

"We've been broken up for over a year and you still won't let that go? I didn't want to drive you because it was going to make me late for work. You know what a hardass Kazuya is."

"All you had to do was get up earlier."

"I didn't want to."

Lee crossed his arms and furrowed his brow. "Who pissed you off?" The android stood still, it seemed to be waiting for additional commands.

Anna shrugged. "Why do you ask that?"

"Because this is what happens every time someone makes you mad, you take it out on me," he chuckled, "you'd think I'd be free from that but..." He exhaled and shook his head. "I missed you at first, I won't deny it, but each time that happened I reminded myself of moments like these."

Anna sighed feeling a slight pang of guilt. She had hurt him and now she was harassing the one person who wasn't actively antagonizing her. "I'm sorry, it's just, this tournament thing has me on edge..."

"So it's Nina?"

Anna chuckled and shrugged. "You know it's always Nina. I've trained my ass off for the past year, she doesn't know what's waiting for her." Being defeated by her own sister with the world as a witness had been humiliating, what hurt the most was that it had been exactly what everyone had expected.

"I know you'll win."

There was sincerity in his eyes and she suddenly missed being able to talk to him about anything and sharing devastating stories about her childhood that only a person raised by someone like Heihachi Mishima could understand and even top. She felt her heart begin to race as she saw him looking at her and she decided to quickly put a stop to it.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence, I'm sure I will win," she pointed at Prototype Jack, "unless I have to face that thing first."

"Don't worry," Lee said looking down at his clipboard, "it's got its weaknesses if you know where to
strike, and I can almost guarantee that it will randomly be set up against the Russian android anyway."

"You really think Kazuya will do that?"

"Of course, it's the reason he wanted the thing working in the first place."

It suddenly occurred to her that Lee could be her only ally in the Zaibatsu, maybe with his help, she would be able to get her job back. "What do you know about Bruce?"

Lee chuckled as he looked down at his clipboard. "I'm not going to conspire against Bruce with you."

Anna gave him a look of pure innocence. "Who said anything about conspiring? I just asked what you know about him."

He sighed wearily. "I know what you want. You're looking for a way to depose him."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because you want to take his job."

"It's my job."

Lee pointed his pencil at her. "You left it, you have a habit of leaving things and just-" he shook his head.

"And just what?"

He leaned against the metal table. "You can't do it, the men respect him too much, they like him."

Anna crossed her arms tightly. "But they're afraid of me."

"It's not the same. Bruce gains their trust, he knows how to talk to people."

"I know how to talk to people."

"You know how to get under their skin."

"Fine, maybe you're right, that's why I need your help."

"I'm not helping you."

"Why not? Is it out of spite because I broke up with you?"

He scoffed. "No, it's not about you, it's about me. What's in it for me? What do I get out of it other than gaining an enemy I don't want?"

_Selfish bastard._ "What do you want?"

"You know what I want, I'm sure you can guess the reason why I entered the tournament. And you can't give me what I want because just by coming back to work here you've proven who you're loyal to."

She crossed her arms and cocked her head slightly so her face would not be visible to the security camera and spoke softly. "...Are you planning something?"
"Yes, Anna, I'm programming this piece of junk," he threw his pencil at the android, it ricocheted off its chin and landed at Lee's feet, "to win the tournament. Afterward, it will sign the Zaibatsu over to me."

Her eyes bore into his. "Don't say that…" Her voice was barely above a whisper.

Lee laughed lightly and set the clipboard on the table. "You're spying on me for him aren't you?"

She shook her head slightly. "No, I'm not, I'd just hate for Kazuya to think that you're planning something, be careful what you say."

The phone began to ring, Lee looked intently at her for a moment then walked to the wall to pick it up.

She was in a difficult position, she was loyal to Kazuya, there was no question about that, but at the same time, she hated spying on Lee. She hated knowing that Kazuya would use any information she gave him to humiliate Lee, or worse perhaps.

"It's for you," Lee said holding the receiver toward her.

She cautiously walked around Prototype Jack, the sunglasses concealed its eyes but she felt a chill when she thought she saw its face follow her movements. She kept a wary gaze on it as she took the phone from Lee. "This is Anna."

"Hi, Anna," Ganryu's voice sounded jovial over the receiver, "the boss wants you to go to the arena with him, he's on his way to his car now."

"Why? Bruce was going with him."

"Yeah, but we got a call from the arena, that Interpol agent is snooping around."

"On my way." Anna smiled as she set the receiver on the cradle. "Things are looking up after all," she giggled, "Bruce is grounded and I get to go on a field trip."

"Congratulations," Lee said flatly. "In all seriousness, if you want your job back you'll have to go along to get along, earn his trust, wait for an opportunity, then get rid of him." He spoke casually, as if they had not been having a tense conversation moments before, but Anna knew that he had not forgotten, not even close.

"Go along to get along? Do you know me? I don't have time for that."

Lee shrugged. "Suit yourself."

"Have fun with your toy, darling." She called as she made her way to the exit. She smiled to herself, Bruce was out of the picture and she had the entire morning to remind her boss of what a valuable asset she was, maybe working on a Sunday would not be a waste after all.

Kazuya sat in the back of the limo impatiently waiting for Anna. The situation with Bruce was ruining his good mood. The Interpol agent was a problem, he was not only trying to stick his nose into Zaibatsu business, he was also using Bruce's criminal past to get his foot in the door. Once Interpol had him they would undoubtedly try to tie his activities to the Zaibatsu, he knew that Bruce would not talk but… He turned when he heard the sound of the door opening and looked at his
watch while Anna entered the vehicle and took the seat opposite his.

"I'm ready for the exciting arena tour," she said cheerfully as she crossed her legs and smoothed down her skirt.

"This isn't a game," he felt the limo begin to move forward and looked at his watch. *Three minutes behind schedule.*

"I take my job very seriously, but it doesn't mean that I can't enjoy it."

He didn't want to lose Bruce, but if it happened, his head of security would have to take one for the team. Kazuya was sure that Bruce knew he would make it up to him by breaking him out of prison and paying him an ungodly amount of money. Losing him was a possibility even if it was only temporary, so he reasoned that it was best to secure Anna.

"I've decided that letting you and Nina have the first fight will increase the tournament's viewership."

He spoke nonchalantly and looked out the window scanning the buildings and storefronts as they drove by.

Anna gave a childish squeal, he turned to look at her, brow furrowed, and saw that she had her hands clasped in front of her chest. "That is fantastic!" She gave him the most genuine smile he had ever received from her and he was immediately irritated by it. "I thought I was going to have a shitty day, but this is amazing news."

"Remember that you're representing *me* and the Zaibatsu now," he said sternly as he pointed his finger at her, "so you had better win the fight."

She rolled her eyes. "Yes, Dad."

"Are you taking this seriously?"

Her smile suddenly faded and she folded her hands on her lap then looked soberly at him. "Your father suffered defeat and humiliation at the last tournament, do you think he is taking this seriously?"

She cocked her head slightly and he saw something dark behind her eyes, he had never personally seen her on a mission but he'd heard it from others. Even Ganryu had warned him not to cross her.

"It's not the same."

She furrowed her brow. "Why not?" She sighed. "...You don't think that he spends his days training, replaying your fight in his head over and over again, day in and day out? You don't think that he trains and he trains and he trains and curses your name, curses the day you were born? You don't think that at night the nightmare of losing to his kin wakes him from his sleep and he has to train until his body is too exhausted to fight, but most importantly to exhausted to dream?" She turned her gaze to the window.

Kazuya realized that he was clenching his fists, he looked down at his hands and saw that his knuckles were white. "You're prepared to kill her then?" He asked as he attempted to ignore Devil stirring feebly.

She suddenly smiled and she was the same bubbly, beautiful woman that everyone saw. "I've been trying to do it for years. By the way, I'm also hinting that I can kill your old man for you if you want, my offer still stands."

Kazuya crossed his arms. "Are you saying that you don't think I can win?"
"Not at all, I know you can. I mean, look at that body," she smiled as she eyed him appreciatively, it made him feel strange and slightly uncomfortable, "the first thing I noticed when I saw you was that you've been working out a lot." She giggled then leaned back in her seat. "I know you can beat the old bastard, I'm just offering a courtesy since you've been kind enough to indulge me." She opened her purse and pulled out a pen and a copy of Vogue then began leafing through it. "Gucci has the most amazing collection this fall, I'm going to buy myself a few gifts after my victory."

They were silent for the rest of the drive with Kazuya looking out the window and Anna looking through her magazine and occasionally circling and item. When the limo pulled into the VIP parking area of the stadium Anna put her things back in her bag and Kazuya looked at his watch while he waited for the door to be opened. *Five minutes ahead of schedule.* At least the driver wasn't completely incompetent.

The door opened and Anna moved toward the exit. "Ladies first," she winked at Kazuya before letting a man in a dark suit help her out of the limo.

When Kazuya stepped out he was immediately surrounded by four men wearing dark suits. Anna looked completely out of place, small, curvy, flashy, wearing leather and silk, and looking somewhat oblivious, though he knew that she was anything but, the men knew it too. When he first hired her most of the security staff had been opposed to having a nineteen-year-old foreign woman giving them orders, but it only took a few broken bones for them to begin respecting her and following her every order.

"Where's our Interpol friend?" Anna asked no one in particular as she rummaged through her purse.

One of the men looked around nervously then bowed to Kazuya and began speaking in Japanese. "The Interpol agent is still-"

"I'm over here, darling." Anna closed her purse and looked piercingly at the bodyguard. "I'm not only here to protect Mr. Mishima and to make sure that you do your job correctly..." She put her finger to her chin. "Fuchida, is it?" The man nodded. "I'm also here to see that he isn't bothered by anyone, including you." She smiled sweetly. "Okay?"

Fuchida bowed nervously to Kazuya then to Anna. "My apologies, Miss Williams." She nodded and smiled in response but her eyes bore into Fuchida. "The Interpol agent has been here for nearly an hour, he says he's touring the facility, as he is a tournament participant."

Anna turned to Kazuya. "Let's go in," she suggested, then turned to Fuchida, "I don't want Mr. Mishima out in the open for too long."

They walked the very short distance from the limo to the entrance a mere twenty-four hours before the beginning of the second King of Iron Fist Tournament. Stadium staff and security personnel could be seen walking with purpose, stopping only to give Kazuya a short and respectful bow when they encountered him. He and Anna were led to the security monitoring office, it was equipped with nearly as many security monitors as the Zaibatsu itself, though at the moment most of the monitoring stations were empty.

"Where is the agent?" Anna asked as she set her purse on one of the chairs and turned to look at Fuchida.

He repeated the question in Japanese and one of the men occupying a station pointed to his screen. "He's in the locker rooms."

Kazuya watched as Lei Wulong walked slowly inside the men's locker room, he looked relaxed and
seemed to be taking his time inspecting the area. "Have any of the other participants made an appearance?" Most of the men in the room seemed startled to hear Kazuya's voice.

"Oh...um..." Fuchida reached for a clipboard hanging on the wall and showed it to Kazuya. "Baek Doo Son came yesterday morning," he pointed to each name as he spoke, "also Armor King and King, as well as Paul Phoenix and Marshall Law. We've only seen two so far today, Michelle Chang and Mr. Wulong."

Anna gave him a discreet look. "May I see that list?" She extended her hand and Fuchida gave her the clipboard.

Kazuya crossed his arms as he considered the possibilities. Michelle could go to Wulong for help...it would be the word of a teenager against one of the most powerful men in the world and would not normally be a problem but Wulong was already there to investigate him. "Did she and Wulong speak to each other?"

"No, Sir," Fuchida shook his head, "Miss Chang left shortly after he arrived, they didn't cross paths."

Anna handed the clipboard back to Fuchida. "I'll go get rid of that idiot," she beckoned to two guards with her finger, "come with me."

"I'm going to look around," Kazuya told Anna before she left, "make sure he's nowhere near me."

"Done," she said before stepping out of the room.

Shortly after Anna left the event coordinators, a man and a woman who both looked close to forty years old, arrived to give Kazuya and his security detail a tour of the finished stadium. They were both obviously nervous, the man talked too much and the woman not enough. They seemed particularly proud of the skybox that they were sure he was going to occupy during the tournament. When Kazuya said he would be sitting on the sideline they both looked crestfallen but said nothing. He became impatient halfway through the tour and dismissed the pair who were obviously relieved. He walked down the long, wide hallway toward the exit that led to the arena and had his bodyguards wait for him at the door.

He set foot onto the fighting ground, walked onto the middle of the stone square and went down on one knee putting his right fist in the center of the three-pronged shuriken imposed over a shield and surrounded by two in-turned feathers; his family's insignia. *His*. It was his future, it was what Heihachi had tried and failed to deny him, what Lee had tried to steal from him and claim as his own. He pushed his fist against the stone putting pressure on his knuckle bones and when they began to hurt he pushed down harder until the pain began to spread to his hand, to his wrist, and up to his elbow. He felt Devil stirring as he raised his gaze to the stands, the empty seats that in less than twentyfour hours would be filled with a mindless horde demanding blood. He would give it to them. He would give the people what they wanted and then he would take his revenge; then everything would be his and no one would dare dispute it.

**Ours...**

He closed his eyes tightly and focused, lifted his hand and set it on his knee. He concentrated on his breathing and soon felt a presence behind him, he drew from the energy and pushed Devil away, he heard a quiet, angry growl before he felt him retreat. He exhaled slowly then stood up and turned around.

"Don't let me interrupt you," Anna smiled lightly, "I'll go wait with Fuchida and his band of idiots if need some time."
"I'm done."

"May I join you?" He shrugged. Anna stepped onto the fighting ground and went to stand beside Kazuya, then tapped the heel of her boot on the stone. "I'm gonna enjoy slamming her pretty face into the ground."

"What did you find out about the agent?"

Anna scoffed. "He claims to have come just for the tour, and by all accounts he did. There was no suspicious behavior, no odd questions…" She crossed her arms as she looked toward the empty stands. "He very casually mentioned Bruce, he didn't say his name but…" She turned her head slightly, as if to see him out of her peripheral vision. "If Bruce is a problem...you know I can take care of it."

He narrowed his eyes as he looked up at the skybox, it was ridiculous, he would never sit in there. He let Anna's offer sink in and felt a pinprick of something, guilt, anger maybe, he wasn't sure. "Don't even think about it," he spoke without looking at her.

"I would never make a move without explicit orders from you," she said indifferently, "so if, like a piano falls on him or something don't think it was me."

Kazuya shook his head and looked at his watch. "I'm on a schedule, let's go." They stepped off the stone square and began walking toward the door leading to the hallway.

"I told the driver to get the car ready," Anna pulled a pair of sunglasses out of her purse and set them on her head. "So, as I was reading the names of the participants I couldn't help but notice that a Jun Kazama is competing as well."

"Congratulations," he said flatly, "you can read."

"Is it the same Jun Kazama that you saw in your office yesterday?" He didn't say anything hoping that she would drop the subject, Anna nudged him with her elbow. "Are you banging her?"

He stopped in his tracks. "What the hell kind of a question is that?"

Anna bit her lip in a failed attempt to hide her smile. "I don't blame you, she's adorable."

He looked into her crystal-blue eyes, she blinked and suppressed her smile. "Not another word from you. I don't want to hear you so much as breathe while we're in the car." His tone was firm and low but it was enough, Anna was quiet as they walked down the hallway and toward the exit with the rest of the bodyguards.

Now Jun was on his mind. He thought about her gentle voice, her soft hands and her pretty face; he wished she would stay out of the tournament. He didn't want her fighting against Anna, who was an accomplished killer, or Heihachi who would make every fight quick, brutal and devastating. But Jun was stubborn and he was sure that it didn't matter what he said or what he did, she would not drop out of the tournament. Also, he was not about to tell her that he wanted her to drop out because that would imply too many things that he didn't want to think about. He didn't want her seeing what wasn't there. One of the bodyguards opened the door leading to the parking lot and Kazuya and the rest of his entourage stepped through.

"I know that I crossed the line by prying into your personal life," Anna said once they were outside, he just wanted to get in the limo and go back to the Zaibatsu, he could see the driver waiting next to it. He was considering sending Anna to the escalade with the other men and trading for one of the other bodyguards, she was getting on his last nerve. "So I'm sorry about that, your sex life is none of
my business. So let's forget about it and let me tell you about a teensy request I have."

"Are you serious?"

"It's just a tiny one," she said quickly, "I want a song."

He stopped to look at her and his companions did the same. "A song?" He asked in disbelief.

"Tomorrow, as I make my grand entrance."

Kazuya shook his head, Bruce was right, he did make too many allowances for her, it had to stop, he needed to-

It was the sharp pain in his ears that violently shook him out of his thoughts. Immediately his throat and nostrils began to sting, there was the acrid smell of something that was familiar but he couldn't place. He tried to open his eyes but the debris under his eyelids scratched and stung and forced him to shut them tightly. He was on the ground and someone was lying next to him, he was almost positive, though he had been sure that he was standing. Every attempted movement made him feel like his body had been slammed into a concrete wall, his bones and his jaws vibrated and he thought they might shatter. He realized that he could hear nothing but an insistent ringing in his ears, a ringing that began to fade as Devil's low growl become louder and clearer, as the demon prepared to fight for control.
The darkness was all-consuming, absolute. Kazuya had been violently yanked out of his body and now felt gravity pulling him down with increasingly savage force until he was falling at breakneck speed. The air whooshed around him as he flailed his arms trying to grab onto something but found nothing to grasp or even touch. An involuntary groan escaped his lips when his body slammed into solid ground and he felt the air leave his lungs. He lay on his back for a moment trying to catch his breath. He was fully aware of what was happening, Devil had taken control and was in the parking lot.

A window opened above and Kazuya saw the scene in the parking lot through Devil's eyes. The demon seemed to be on the ground, slowly sitting up. It was difficult to see through all the smoke, there was the orange glow of a fire somewhere beyond but he couldn't see much else, it wasn't Devil's focus. He heard deep, garbled voices and the distorted sound of traffic in the distance. Anna rose slowly next to Devil, much too slowly, at first he thought that she was injured but quickly realized that everything was happening in slow motion. Anna moved inch by inch until she was on her knees crouched as low as her body could go, she held a small handgun, she pulled back the hammer and put her finger on the trigger. He saw her arm move forward as her left hand pushed on Kazuya's body, an unspoken signal to duck down.

What a dedicated employee, Devil's raspy voice echoed around Kazuya, putting her life on the line to keep you safe. But if you think about it, if she was good at her job in the first place this never would have happened. If you're wondering what happened, someone just tried to blow you up. You need better help, I should save you the drama of having to fire her.

Kazuya watched through the window as Devil reached forward and lightly rested the heel of his palm on the nape of Anna's neck, his fingers grazing her brown hair. Anna's back tensed but she didn't move.

Devil's voice dripped with malice. I would make it quick, snap her neck right here and now. No one would even suspect you, you could blame it on the explosion.

No!

Kazuya sat up, his heart racing. He shut his eyes tightly and attempted to control Devil just as he had on the day when he tried to harm Jun. He pictured Devil's hand sliding down Anna's body, his fingers grazing her brown hair. Anna's back tensed but she didn't move.
That is not going to work. Devil's voice brought him back to the reality of his black prison. If you
don't want me to hurt her I won't, she's not so bad... But I am in a touchy mood today... I'll
leave it up to you, if you treat our partnership with the respect that it deserves, I won't touch
her.

What do you want?

In a way I understand, you're young, kids like to test limits, to rebel... Just promise me that
you'll be a good boy from now on and I'll let you have this one, but understand that if it
happens again, I will kill your friends.

It was a feeling of utter defeat, of humiliation. He had thought he could best Devil, that he could
control him, but now Devil was the one in control and had made him relive his most painful memory.

What do you want? Kazuya asked again.

I want our plans to stay on track. I want our merger with G-Corporation to be a success so
that we can expand, I want this tournament to be the greatest spectacle the world has ever
seen and most of all, I want you to get the revenge that you so deserve. So really, all I want is
what's best for you.

That is exactly what I was doing.

I is such a selfish word. You're alive because of me and I'm going to get the credit that I
deserve. You will not push me around, as you see, it doesn't work and if you do it again, I will
kill your little mystic bitch slowly right after I kill everyone else. He groaned. All this smoke is
making the air foul, I hate that.

Kazuya felt himself being pulled upward. He knew he was back in control of his body when the
acrid smell settled in his throat and made him feel sick to his stomach. He thought he heard voices
but it was difficult to tell with the ringing in his ears, it made him feel disoriented and vulnerable. A
small hand pushed on his chest, he wanted to see who it was but the brightness of the sun and the
sting of the smoke forced him to shut his eyes tightly.

When strong hands pulled him up by his arm, he opened his eyes slowly and stood upright. A man in
a dark suit urged him into a black sedan. Fuchida, Kazuya somehow remembered the man's name,
he looked over his shoulder and saw Anna following closely looking alert and focused. He surveyed
his surroundings and saw the limo engulfed in smoke and flames before entering the vehicle. He sat
in the back seat followed by Anna, he noticed that she put as much space between them as the seat
allowed.

"Leave now," she spoke in a firm, calm tone. "Our people here can take care of the two that are hurt
and..." She shook her head. The driver nodded and took off immediately. "Are you all right?" She
looked at Kazuya then put the safety back on her gun and slid it into the lace holster that was now
visible on her upper thigh, the slit in her skirt had torn and the stitching was coming undone. He
didn't answer, he simply fixed his eyes on her face. A trickle of blood was barely visible under her
bangs above her right eyebrow, her hair was a bit disheveled but other than that she bore no marks.
He turned his head toward the window, they had left the parking lot and were driving down the
street. Anna sighed at his lack of response. "Give me the phone." She extended her hand toward the
front seat and Fuchida, who as in the passenger's side, reached over his shoulder to give her the car
phone.

Kazuya watched the scene outside his window. Northbound traffic was slowing down while the
southbound lanes were at a standstill, cars began to slowly move to the side of the street as the faint sound of sirens was heard. It became louder and clearer and in mere moments police cars followed by other emergency vehicles moved in the direction of the stadium as quickly as they were able.

The fact that someone had tried to kill him suddenly sank in. It certainly had not been the first time, it had happened when he was only five years old and again when he fought Heihachi at the first tournament. The attempt on his life coupled with Devil thoroughly defeating him put him in a strange mood, he could only call it strange because he didn't know what to feel. Anger certainly, but who should he direct it to? Jun for making him think that he could control Devil? For her role in enraging the demon? Anna and Bruce for failing to secure the stadium? Or himself for putting his trust in others?

He looked at Anna and listened to her phone conversation. She closed her eyes and sighed softly. "Yes, he's fine, I'm sitting right next to him. Traffic's a bitch right now, we're taking the side streets so I don't know how long we'll be. Does stadium security have any more information?" She sighed again. "We can't trust anyone, Bruce. No one leaves the building and only employees come in, security personnel-" Her jaw tightened. "No, Bruce, I'm not telling you how to do your job and I'm not yelling at you, I can barely hear myself think with this goddamned ringing in my ears." Her eyes met Kazuya's and her expression quickly softened before looking away. "I have nothing else to say, we'll be there soon." She pushed a button on the phone and ended the call then handed it back to Fuchida. She leaned back in her seat. "You should really invest in some of those cellular phones."

"They've proven to be unreliable." His voice sounded lower than usual, he felt his temperature rise as he looked at Anna, the near-serene look on her face made him want to push her out of the vehicle. "You seem very calm."

Anna shrugged. "I work well under pressure."

"This happened while we were at the stadium, not before, so don't try to blame it on Bruce."

She crossed her arms lightly under her chest looking somewhat insulted. "I'm not blaming anything on anyone, I didn't even say anything."

"If you had been doing the job that I hired you to do instead of acting like a goddamned teenager going to a party-"

"You're angry and I'm the only one here, I get it. But don't put all the blame on me, there is security staff everywhere and cameras monitoring every damn corner of the stadium so there's plenty of blame to go around. Besides, I was getting rid of that Interpol agent just like you asked." He turned his eyes to the passing buildings. "You do everything I ask and yet, you have failed to make yourself useful since you've been back."

Anna inhaled slowly. "I am doing my job, so I don't know what else you want from me."

He twisted his body in the seat to face her and looked piercingly into her eyes. "Tell me who's responsible for this."

She looked back at him, unflinching. "I can't know that until I look into it."

He was losing his patience, giving in to his anger, if Devil had wanted, he would have been able to easily take control. He spoke through clenched teeth. "Guess, humor me. Who seems the most likely culprit? Heihachi? The Russians? Lee?"

Anna shook her head and moved her gaze toward the front seat. "It wasn't Lee. There are too many
He stared at her until she turned to look at him again. "How do you know it wasn't Lee? Why are you defending him? What did you find out this morning? Did he tell you where he was the past two weeks?"

Anna gave him a look that was between fear and annoyance. "I didn't get a chance to ask him, you summoned me and-"

He scoffed. "So you failed, yet again."

"I need to know where he went, that could tell us if he's responsible for this. Do whatever you have to do to find out."

She sighed. "I will do everything I can but don't expect him to give me a confession, it won't be that easy."

"It should be that easy...for you."

She cocked her head to the side and brushed her fingertips over her gun. "Why?"

"Because you have a past with him, use that. Exploit it if you have to."

She slowly clenched her fist. "How exactly do you mean? You need to be clear."

He sighed impatiently. "I'm sure you know exactly what I mean and I'm sure you know exactly how to get what you need and what you want from a man. Do whatever you have to do."

He noticed a soft blush creep on her cheeks as she spoke softly but firmly. "I am not some hired whore."

"You are whatever I need you to be. I don't care what your methods are, I just want results."

Anna shifted her body and faced forward. Kazuya's eyes bore into the side of her head a moment longer before doing the same. There was complete silence as the car pulled into the parking garage at the Mishima Building. He could almost feel the discomfort of the two men sitting up front, they had obviously heard the entire conversation, but he didn't care that they'd heard him speak to Anna that way. She had no idea how close Devil had been to killing her, she had cheated death twice that morning and she didn't even know it. She was supposed to be the bodyguard and yet, he was the one protecting her, the least she could do was prove herself useful.

As the driver stopped the car in front of the elevator Kazuya saw three armed security guards approach. One of the guards opened the door for Kazuya. Anna didn't wait and opened the door herself then stepped out of the vehicle at the same time as Fuchida.

"We retrieved your purse, Miss Williams." Fuchida handed Anna her bag.

"How thoughtful," Anna said as she reached for it. As Kazuya made his way toward the elevator he heard her lower her voice. "If either of you breathes a word of this conversation, I will kill you both." Fuchida audibly gasped. "Yes," Anna hissed, "I said kill."

Don't make me kill her, Devil's voice echoed in his head. she's starting to grow on me.

Kazuya stepped into the elevator followed by Fuchida, the driver, and the security guards.
"I'll wait for the next one," Anna spoke through a cordial and obviously false smile. It was just as well, he could barely stomach looking at her.

**Good help is so hard to find.**

Kazuya wanted to be alone, for an instant he considered letting Devil take control, letting him take flight so that he could sleep in the dark void where no one would bother him.

Devil laughed lightly. **No, no, you made the mess, you clean it up.** His soft cackle echoed in his head before fading away.

Kazuya looked condescendingly at the men in the elevator. *I'm surrounded by idiots.* The worst part was, that Bruce and Anna had utterly failed him, his most trusted employees. Were they truly worth saving? He was almost sure that it was the anger and exhaustion talking, still, as the elevator made its ascent, he found it impossible to keep the thought from his mind.

Chapter End Notes

I know it's been a while since my last update, what can I say, life and stuff. If you're worried that I'll abandon this story, don't be, I'm writing because I enjoy it and as a personal challenge to myself. But I do have a family and responsibilities and sometimes circumstances that I can't control, so at times it will be a while between updates, but I'll always come back as long as life allows. Next chapter is written, so it will be coming soon. Thanks for reading!
Anna is determined to prove her worth at the Zaibatsu.

Anna breathed a sigh of relief when the elevator doors closed.

It was eerily quiet in the parking garage, it made her painfully aware of the lingering ringing in her ears. In the past, she had been close enough to explosions to feel the unpleasant aftereffects but she had been able to brace herself, had known it was coming, being caught off-guard was significantly worse. There was an unsettling feeling throughout her entire body, she could have sworn that her bones were still vibrating. She was hot, uncomfortable, and she was sure that if anyone had the audacity to bother her, she would kick their teeth in. She rested her back against the wall and took a few steadying breaths.

Someone had tried to kill Kazuya on her watch, the fact that they had survived had been sheer luck, not her doing whatsoever.

She was quickly overcome by an unpleasant, yet familiar feeling, the same that she had experienced almost two years to the day after her loss to Nina during the first tournament. It was the same sense of failure and humiliation threatening to consume her, the same feeling of frustration, of needing an outlet for her wrath and finding none. But finding a way to relive her anger and her frustration would not help her in the long run, what she needed do was redeem herself in Kazuya's eyes.

She was sure that if Bruce had been at the stadium instead of her the outcome would have been the same. But Kazuya was blaming her for the incident, calling her useless and insulting her in a way that had honestly hurt. She needed to redeem herself not only to regain Kazuya's trust but to show Bruce and the rest of the men that she had to be taken seriously. She had to prove herself once more, had to do it again and again, just like any woman in a man's world, she was used to it by now but it didn't mean it was fair. She didn't know how she was going to do it, but she had to start by showing absolutely no weakness.

She chose to take the stairs instead of the elevator. She input the code into the panel beside the entrance then pulled the handle on the heavy, metal door. As she made her descent into the sub-basement she regretted not having taken the elevator. Her every step clacked on the metal stairs and echoed all around her mixing itself with the ringing in her ears. A throbbing headache began to manifest and she was thankful when she reached the door at the bottom.

The hall was so brightly lit that her eyes hurt for a moment before they were able to adjust. Men in their black uniforms walked with purpose from one room to the other, there was an unusual sense of urgency in their body language and their demeanor, the hall could have been empty and she would have felt in the very air.

She never forgot a name or a face so when she turned left toward her office, she tried to look every man in the eye hoping to find a clue or see someone behaving suspiciously. Unfortunately, it was rather difficult since they all bowed when they saw her.

Further down the hallway, she spotted Lee standing next to one of the labs, he had his back against
the wall and his arms crossed tightly over his chest. She could tell by his posture that he really needed a cigarette, and judging by the way he was looking at her, he had been waiting for her. He motioned with his head toward the door and went inside. Not now... Anna sighed and followed him in. She entered the empty lab and closed the door behind her. The room had obviously not been used for some time, all the monitors and electronic equipment were switched off and the chairs had been set upside down on top of desks and counters.

"Are you all right?" Lee fixed his gaze on her forehead and walked toward her. "You're bleeding." He spoke with concern as he reached forward and gently brushed her bangs to the side.

"It's fine." Anna pulled her head slightly away and he took a step back having received the signal. The look on his face changed from concern to frustration. "What happened? No one's told me anything, I've been in engineering with the goddamned android all morning. If it wasn't for Sayuri calling me, wondering if everything is fine here, I would still be in there."

Anna shrugged. "It was a car bomb...I think, the limo exploded and..." She shook her head. "...The driver's dead, two others are hurt, maybe more, we left quickly, I had to get Kazuya out of there." If she had been doing her job properly maybe that man would still be alive...

"You weren't supposed to be there."

Lee's comment and bitter tone took her by surprise, she automatically looked around the room for cameras but saw none. Her voice was quiet as she spoke. "Why do you say that?"

"Because I was there when you got the call and I know you weren't supposed to be there." He shook his head as he fixed his gaze on one of the black screens. "You're putting yourself in danger every second you are near him."

"Again, why do you say that?"

He scoffed. "Why? Because someone just tried to blow you up along with their target, don't tell me you don't think he was the target, and don't tell me that it's going to stop there."

"It sounds like you know something."

"I know that he has a lot of enemies, everyone knows that. And I know that a good fraction of them wouldn't hesitate to kill him if they had the chance."

"Did you have something to do with it?" Anyone could have made the same assumption as Lee, but she had to ask.

"No."

His answer was convincing, the look in his eyes sincere, but there was an inkling in the back of her mind that told her he might know more than he was letting on. Her conversation with Kazuya moved to the forefront of her thoughts. Lee had shown concern for her, maybe Kazuya was right and she would be able to get answers from him by exploiting their past together, as he had put it. She considered it for a moment, but if she obtained information by feigning affection, would it redeem her in Kazuya's eyes? It wasn't that she was above using such tactics but when she did it, it was to further her own agenda, doing it on Kazuya's behest felt wrong.

She sighed softly. "If you have nothing to tell me, I really need to get going."

Lee looked like he was about to say something else but they were interrupted by a knock on the
door. "Come in." The door opened and a man in a uniform poked his head inside, he began to speak quickly in Japanese. Lee answered and the man bowed slightly before closing the door. Lee shook his head. "Kazuya wants me upstairs, I'm sure he expects me to do damage control," he sighed, "I don't know who I hate dealing with more, the media or the police."

"I don't envy your job." Anna managed to smile.

He looked her in the eye. "Be careful." Anna nodded slowly as she watched him turn and walk out the door.

She didn't like the way Lee was acting but she couldn't tell Kazuya because it was worse than having no information. And besides, Lee was more than likely just worried about her wellbeing. She touched her fingertips gingerly to her forehead above her eyebrow and felt a small amount of dry blood. She set her purse on one of the empty tables and pulled out her compact mirror and a pack of moist towelettes.

Looking in the mirror she moved her bangs to the side and saw that there was a small cut just under the hairline. She assumed her sunglasses had broken and cut into her when she hit the ground. _Damn, those were expensive._ She pulled a moist towelette out of the pack and wiped away the dry blood, then a smudge of dirt on her cheekbone. She smoothed down her hair as well as she could. She finished by applying a fresh coat of red lipstick, her armor, she had to look like she was on top of her game. Her boots were scuffed and the slit on her skirt had torn but most men were idiots who wouldn't notice anyway.

She hastily put the items back in her purse, left the lab then made her way down the hall still trying to look at each man in the face. When she arrived at her office, she opened the door and saw Ganryu standing next to the fax machine reading a sheet of paper he was holding. Bruce sat behind his desk with a stern look on his face and the phone receiver cradled between his chin and his shoulder as he wrote on a notepad. He hung up the phone when he saw her and stood up.

"He hasn't called me," Bruce crossed his arms over his chest. "How is he?"

Anna set her purse on Ganryu's desk. "His suit's dirty, his hair is messed up, he's pissed, and he's bitching about everything." She wished that she had a glass of water, or better yet, a very dry martini. "He probably needs some time to decompress, I wouldn't bother him."

Bruce nodded then looked appraisingly at Anna. "How about you, are you all right?"

The fact that he seemed sincere royally pissed her off. "Better than the driver." The look of hurt on Bruce's face made her wish that she had not been so insensitive. "I'm sorry." She looked down at her scuffed boots. "Did he have a family?"

Bruce sighed. "Parents and a sister, I still need to call his father…"

She looked into his eyes. "Well then, let's make sure someone pays." Bruce's jaw tightened but he remained quiet. "There used to be a couple of guys in the police department who we could trust, we can't have law enforcement looking into this, it's gotta be our investigation."

Bruce nodded. "Got it covered, as soon as the police is done gathering the evidence it'll make it's way to us."

Anna sighed impatiently. "How?"

He shrugged. "Guys I trust, new guys. Got it covered."
She hated that Bruce was good at his job, that he was already a step ahead of her, but she kept a
passive demeanor. "Anything out of the ordinary happen while we were gone?"

"Michelle Chang was seen roaming outside the building. That in itself wouldn't be that weird, but I
talked to the guys at the arena and they said that she was there too. She does have a motive but…"

"Let's question her mother then."

He sighed. "What can she possibly know? She's been locked up since before Michelle came to
Japan."

Anna put her hand on her hip and look sternly at Bruce. "I was nearly blown up, I'm having a pretty
shitty morning so just...humor me, Bruce. What harm can it possibly do?"

Bruce shook his head and sighed again then gestured to Ganryu. "Have someone bring Mrs. Chang
to be questioned."

The sumo exhaled softly as his shoulders drooped but he walked to his desk and picked up the
telephone.

Anna turned her attention back to Bruce. "Are all the employees accounted for?"

He took a sheet of paper from his desk. "Almost all, we're working on it." He spoke as he handed it
to her. "These guys haven't started their shifts yet," he ran his finger down the top of the list, "but
they're on their way, we need all hands on deck. We have someone from maintenance who said that
his wife went into labor this morning, and one of the security guards called in and said his kid is
having his appendix removed, both of their stories check out."

Anna pointed to Sayuri's name. "Kazuya's secretary is still out?"

Bruce looked at his watch. "It's close to eleven so she should be on her way back."

"Who drove her?" She asked as she scanned the list.

"I don't know."

She looked up at Bruce. "There are no drivers on this list."

He shrugged. "I guess she went by herself."

"And why would she do that? Kazuya expects everyone who reports directly to him to use a
Zaibatsu car and driver for any business outside the building."

"You're right."

She scoffed as she remembered her encounter with Sayuri the day before. "I don't think it's the first
time she's done that, yesterday I-" Anna clenched her jaw as her finger stopped on a familiar name
on the list. "Son of a bitch…"

Bruce looked down at the list. "What?"

"Where exactly is this Toshi Usui?"

"That's someone we're trying to locate, and someone I'm going to have a talk with as soon as we find
him. He called in this morning saying that he had a family emergency and would come in as soon as
he could. When I verify where he was, all my men and everyone who works in this building will be
accounted for."

Anna shook her head. "No, they won't, there will still be someone left to question."

"Who?"

"I want Kazuya's secretary brought down and interrogated as soon as she sets foot in this building."

Bruce sighed heavily. "Are you serious? Do you have any idea how that's going to look?"

She pushed the list into his hand. "I honestly don't give a fuck. I was made to look like an incompetent idiot this morning, not to mention, I was nearly blown up along-"

"Yeah, you said that already."

"Is there a reason why she shouldn't be questioned like everyone else?"

"It doesn't reflect well on the boss, it makes it look like he's not in control."

"If it turns out she had something to do with this and you did nothing it won't reflect well on you."

Bruce shook his head. "Fine, but I'll do it myself, you don't even speak Japanese anyway."

"And I'll take care of Toshi for you."

Bruce sighed impatiently. "What did I just say? You don't speak Japanese and his English is shit, how is that gonna work out?"

She rolled her eyes. "Translators are a thing, and I don't need to speak the language to get my point across."

"If you're gonna rough up one of my guys I need to know why."

"Because I think he's working with what's her name, or at the very least, he's quite interested in her and we need to know why."

"Are you talking about Sayuri?" She nodded. "Fine, Ganryu call upstairs and have them bring Sayuri down when she gets back, but make sure they're discreet about it."

Anna smiled sweetly at him, even a tiny victory felt good. "I'll be in the monitoring room, I'm not giving that little bastard any time to come up with a story." She watched Bruce shake his head and walk back to his desk, she then turned her attention to Ganryu. "You coming with me, big boy? I'm gonna need a translator." Ganryu gave her a goofy smile and began to make his way toward her.

"I need him here," she heard Bruce protest as she turned toward the door.

She looked over her shoulder at him. "This is important, it's really more for effect than anything, trust me, I know what the hell I'm doing."

"Fine," Bruce conceded, "but call me the second Toshi shows up."

Anna walked out of the office with Ganryu by her side. "How well do you know Toshi?"

"Not well," the sumo responded. "He's only been working here three months or so."

They quickly covered the short distance to the monitoring room, Ganryu opened the door for Anna,
she entered the room and turned to look at him. "Would you say he's good at his job?"

Ganryu shrugged as he closed the door. "I haven't heard anything good or bad."

Anna took a vacant seat in front of a monitor. "*Toshi the Average*, his only superpower is not getting noticed." She shook her head in disapproval. If Bruce was as good at his job as Kazuya seemed to think, he would know every detail of his men's lives. "As soon as someone spots Toshi Usui, I need to know, don't warn anyone or sound any alarms, I will deal with him." She heard Ganryu relay her instructions in Japanese and saw the men sitting at their monitoring stations nod in understanding.

She switched the monitor's view from the corridors, to the entrance, to the sidewalk. She knew it was unnecessary, that the guards sitting in their chairs knew who to look for but she needed a win, she was desperate for a win and was trying to will Toshi Usui into materializing in one of the screens.

She didn't have to wait long, only minutes later she heard one of the guards exclaim something in Japanese.

"He's coming into the building." Ganryu pointed at a monitoring station.

"Don't call anyone." She warned as she stood to look. She watched impatiently as he made his way into the building through the security entrance, once he was in the sub-basement, she made for the door. "Let's go." She called to Ganryu who followed after her.

Her heels clacked on the tile and echoed around her, the men walking the halls gave her and the sumo a wide breadth. She stopped at an intersection and looked up at Ganryu. "He's coming through here?" He nodded. A few seconds later she spotted him, a young man in his mid-twenties wearing a navy blue windbreaker over his dark Zaibatsu uniform. Average height, average looks, average weight. He looked at his watch then stopped abruptly when he noticed Anna and Ganryu blocking the hallway. "Hello, Toshi, out to lunch again?"

The man's eyes widened slightly and he bowed deeply to Anna before trying to turn around and go back the same way he came. Anna walked briskly toward him and grabbed him by the back of his jacket, he tried to pull away from her and quickened his pace. She took hold of his right arm and twisted it behind his back then kicked the back of his knee. He fell forward as he groaned in pain.

"Anna…" Ganryu spoke softly behind her.

"If he had nothing to hide he wouldn't have walked away from me and we'd be having this conversation standing upright. Tell him that." She heard as Ganryu translated, she noticed other Zaibatsu guards stopping to see what was happening. Toshi shook his head vigorously as he spoke in Japanese.

Ganryu spoke quickly. "He says he's got nothing to hide, that his mother had a fall this morning and he stayed with her to make sure she didn't need medical attention."

"Oh." Anna let go of his arm and heard him exhale in relief as he tried to stand. "No, no," she pushed down on his shoulder. "You stay down until I say so." He nodded. "Why don't we call mom and ask her how she's feeling?"

Toshi shook his head. "No, I take her to doctor." He answered in English.

"I was under the impression that your English was shit." She looked at Ganryu, he shrugged and shook his head. "Sounds like you've been holding out on us." She walked around to face the man then went down on one knee. She tried looking into his eyes but he moved his gaze down to her leg, Anna slowly ran her fingertips over the gun holstered to her thigh. It was clearly visible through the...
tear on her skirt. "Are you looking at my gun? I know it doesn't look like much, but it can put a hole in your skull just as well as any other." Toshi let out a shaky breath as he turned to the side. "But let's not go there, we can clear all this up right now, let's call your mom's doctor."

Toshi shook his head. "I cannot. I don't know which one, I only take her to taxi."

Anna sighed as she stood up. "Toshi, you are really starting to piss me off." She turned to Ganryu. "Tell him, just in case he doesn't understand that one." The young man nodded quickly but remained quiet. "Let's try something else, let's forget mom for now. The other day you bumped into me as you were going out to lunch, you left the building immediately after Miss Yoshida and you went in the same direction. This morning, she doesn't come into the building and neither do you." The man's face grew stony as he fixed his eyes on the floor. "Are you meeting somewhere with her?"

"I do not know Miss Yoshida."

"Don't lie. Are you meeting with her?"

"Anna," Ganryu whispered, "maybe it's time to take him into a room now."

"A room? So he can have time to come up with a story?" Anna chuckled. "No. I prefer impromptu interrogations." She heard the men around her gasp as she kicked forward and struck Toshi in the chest. He hit the floor at an awkward angle, when he tried to get up Anna pushed down on his head with her foot then rested the heel of her boot lightly on his forehead and spoke in a calm tone. "Are you meeting with her?"

Toshi was sprawled on the floor, his breathing was rapid but he spoke firmly. "I do not know Miss Yoshida."

Anna pressed her foot harder on his forehead. "Are you following her?"

"I do not know Miss Yoshida."

Anna felt the heat rise in her face, he couldn't leave her looking like an idiot, she needed to get a confession out of him right then and there. The security staff was watching, the guards in the monitoring room were watching, Bruce was probably watching too. That thought made her kick things up a notch, she wasn't about to let Bruce watch her fail. She scraped her stiletto heel across Toshi's forehead and rested it over his eye. He shut it tightly.

"I'm going to ask you again," she put slight pressure on his eye. "Are you following her?"

"I do not know her."

She looked around at the men watching the scene. "What do you think, boys?" She heard Ganryu translate, she had completely forgotten he was there. "When I drive my heel through his eye socket, what sound do you think his eyeball will make? Squelch or pop?"

"I think the sound effects get lost in translation," Ganryu said nervously.

She put more pressure on his eye as she spoke softly, almost soothingly. "I promise you that the visual transcends any...and all...language barriers."

"I follow her!" Toshi let out in a tone that was almost pleading.

Anna smiled. "Now we're getting somewhere. Who gave you the order?"
Anna spoke casually. "My boots are already ruined so I won't mind getting your eyeball gunk all over them. Who told you to follow her?"

He answered in a hoarse whisper. "Heihachi Mishima."

"Son of a bitch." Anna turned to look at Ganryu and saw Bruce standing behind her, his brow furrowed and his arms crossed over his chest.

"No one breathes a word of this," Bruce warned in a low tone. "Not even to the boss upstairs, you're all on camera so if word of this gets out before Miss Williams and I are ready we'll know who to punish." They answered with silence.

Anna looked into each one of their faces as she stepped away from Toshi. "Ganryu, make sure Heihachi's bitch is snug and comfy in a cell." Toshi stood slowly as he rubbed his eye, Ganryu grabbed a handful of the young man's jacket and pulled him down the hallway. The men scattered leaving Bruce and Anna alone in the hallway. They both walked in silence back to the security office.

Bruce took the chair behind his desk, he furrowed his brow as he looked at Anna. "Don't call Kazuya until we know exactly how to proceed."

She closed the door behind her. "It goes without saying." She felt elated and angry and giddy at the same time. She was one step closer to regaining Kazuya's trust, one step closer to dethroning Bruce. She wanted to yell it in his face but decided to remain civil instead, to feign agreeableness and give him a semblance of willing cooperation. "We should follow our plan, have Ganryu talk to Michelle Chang's mother, even though I'm almost certain she won't know anything, we have to cover all our bases."

"It goes without saying," Bruce spoke quietly as he shook his head.

"Yes...then you talk to Kazuya's secretary and after that's done, you and I can question Toshi together while Ganryu gathers our most trusted men to investigate every damn employee in this building. If Heihachi has one man working right under our noses he probably has others."

"When are we gonna tell the boss?"

"After we find out what his secretary knows."

"Why don't you ever say her name?"

"What?" She didn't know why, but the question bothered her. "If you know her name why do I have to say it?"

Bruce shook his head. "Never mind." He sighed. "Look it's not that I don't like what you're proposing, but after I'm done with Sayuri, you and Ganryu are gonna have to take care of the interrogating by yourselves for an hour or two, I need to get all the evidence from the police station and talk to my contact there. From what I know about Kazuya's old man, a bomb just doesn't seem like his style."

She hated that he had his own course of action to follow, she hated to admit that he was right, and she hated that she had not been the one to suggest that Bruce deal with the police. She scoffed. "Well, aren't you the man with a plan. I just wing it half the time and I always get the results I want."
"I bet you do." He ran his hand over his mohawk. "What you did out there in the hallway is not something I would normally-"

"I'm telling you right now," she turned to fully face him as she looked pointedly at him, "if you're going to bitch about my methods-"

"No, I was just going to respectfully say...that it was hot."

She stared at him for a moment before a sly smile began to form on her lips. She had thought that she was having a terrible day but she was wrong, she was having one of the best days of her life. She had cheated death, uncovered a mole in the Zaibatsu which would earn her Kazuya's trust, and now she was being given the opportunity to control Bruce.

"Respectfully?" She asked as she slowly made her way toward his desk.

"Yeah," he shrugged casually but his eyes locked with hers. "Just a compliment."

She liked confidence, sometimes that alone gave a man more sex appeal than good looks or money. And it didn't hurt that Bruce was wearing a suit that day instead of his usual T-shirts. "I do appreciate compliments." She stopped directly in front of him with her knees grazing the fabric of his pants.

He straightened in his seat but continued to look into her eyes. "We should probably call the boss and let him know what happened before he starts bitching."

She laughed lightly. "We both know he's going to bitch regardless but you're right." She turned slowly making sure that her leg brushed up against his knee then made her way to Ganryu's desk and sat in his chair. "I made the discovery," she said as she picked up the phone. "So I get to call him, I'll omit the fact that we're questioning his secretary until after, though, don't worry, I'll deal with him if he gets pissed."

Bruce picked up a notepad and began to write. "Be my guest."

For the first time since she'd arrived at the Mishima Zaibatsu, Anna felt good. She would find a way to learn what she needed from Lee but she wasn't about to follow Kazuya's orders, not this time. She was worth more than that, she had true skills, that was why he had hired her and made her his head of security in the first place. She was willing to do whatever she needed to get Bruce under control or at the very least on her side, but that was different, that was her choice... And she deserved some fun.

Sayuri stepped out of the elevator flanked by two Zaibatsu guards. They did not tell her why she was being taken into the sub-basement, all they had said was that they had orders to bring her down as soon as she arrived. Her blood pounded in her ears and she was sure that if her hands were not holding the straps of her bag, they would be shaking. She walked in silence watching every man and reading the label on every door as she kept in step with the two guards. She tried to commit every detail to memory, tried to find anything that could help her.

She was sure that Kazuya knew what she had done. She was sure that Nina Williams had tried and failed to execute him that morning, that she had been the one responsible for the explosion at the stadium. It was all over the news already but she had found out while she was still out and had called Lee right away. She had prayed that Lee would tell her that Kazuya was dead and at the same time wished that he wasn't, she wished that he was still alive only so that she could say that she wasn't complicit in a murder.

But he wasn't dead, he was alive and he knew. She was sure that he knew.
They walked her down different corridors, past laboratories, offices with closed doors, and ominous-looking rooms. Each step taking her further away from the elevators, further away from escape.

She heard a distinctly female voice down one of the hallways, she sounded upset but Sayuri couldn’t make out what she was saying. They made a left turn and the change of scenery put her on high alert, the lighting hand changed, it was dimmer and the doors along the sides of the corridor were too close together. She saw the woman that she had heard moments before at the far end of the corridor, one of the guards was pulling her by her left upper arm, not harshly, but it was obvious that she was going against her will. She wore a short-sleeved, knee-length green dress, her long, dark hair was tied in a disheveled ponytail. As they closed the distance she noticed the woman's olive skin tone and high cheekbones. It took Sayuri a moment to realize that the woman was speaking in English.

"Please, at least tell me if my Michelle is okay, if she's here." The guard's face remained stoic as he opened one of the doors and led her in. "Please, is she here?" The door closed and Sayuri heard no more.

Her companions stopped in front of a door and she followed suit. The man to her right opened it. "No personal items inside." He sounded apologetic as he reached for her purse, Sayuri attempted to nod but found herself handing him the bag instead. He gestured for her to walk inside, she hesitated for a moment before stepping in, she heard the door close softly behind her and felt a chill down her spine. She was in some sort of interrogation room, it was cold and gray, with only two metal chairs and a table as furniture.

She found herself frozen in place imagining Kazuya stepping inside. She saw the image over and over again in her mind's eye, it was like a loop in her brain, but she couldn't see anything beyond that, she couldn't imagine what he would do or what he would say.

She gasped when she heard the door open and instinctively spun around.

"Unbelievable." Bruce shook his head then ran his hand over his mohawk. "This is the opposite of what I asked them to do. If I take you somewhere else it'll just draw more attention so let's just do it here." He motioned to the table. "We should sit."

Her body moved of its own accord and she found herself sitting in one of the chairs. She fist her hands tightly on her lap to keep them from shaking, she glanced toward the door still expecting Kazuya to walk in. Bruce sat in the chair across and looked at her with a serious expression.

"Does Lee know I'm here?" She managed to whisper as she glanced at the entrance once more.

"No."

She didn't know what scared her more, Kazuya knowing that she had helped plot an attempt on his life, or Lee finding out everything that she had done and realizing what a terrible person she was.

"Why am I here?"

"I just need to talk to you so we can get some things straightened out?"

She wished she could read his tone to gauge how much he knew. She ran her clammy hands over the fabric of her skirt. "What things?"

Bruce straightened in his seat. "Where were you this morning? You didn't come to the building."

She stared at him for a brief moment, was that all they had on her? That she had not been in the building? "I was at the Mishima Hotel just like yesterday. It's on the schedule, you can call the hotel,
check the receptionist's calendar, check my calendar...I have been putting the finishing touches on the banquet all morning." It suddenly occurred to her that perhaps they had nothing to tie her to whatever had happened at the stadium, that they were merely questioning employees close to Kazuya. She scoffed. "Is this why he wants me questioned? Because I was out doing exactly what he ordered me to do?"

"Do you mean Kazuya?"

"Yes."

"He doesn't know you're down here."

That scared her, if Kazuya didn't know, then Bruce was the one who wanted to interrogate her. She regretted confiding in him, but she had been so different then, it had only been a few days but seemed like years.

She looked down at the table, noticed the scratches from bracelets, rings and watches, the marks of men and women who had rested their shaking hands on the cold surface. How many of those sitting in that same chair had walked out of the room and out of the building? How many didn't?

"He doesn't know…" She chuckled lightly and looked up at Bruce. "This was your idea then?" His face remained impassive. "You think I crossed that imaginary line?" He stared into her eyes appraisingly for a moment, she had the urge to look away, she felt exposed.

Bruce spoke casually. "The thing is, I really don't know you. I can look at you and talk to you and watch you and talk to everyone who knows you and read up on every bit of information that I have on you and I still won't know what you're thinking. I can try to figure out what you're capable of but in the end, it would be speculation at worst and an educated guess at best and both could be wrong."

He shook his head. "I don't rely on guesses, I rely on facts, and the facts are that until recently, you were a privileged woman who had lived a very sheltered life, someone whose worst offense was flirting to get a good grade. But now...you're a full-fledged criminal...that means that you don't even know where your line is or what you're really capable of."

She felt her fingernails dig into the heels of her palms underneath the table. "...So you brought me here because you think I had something to do with what happened at the stadium?"

"To be honest, that's just an assessment that I made right now, I didn't want you questioned, it was suggested to me, but I wasn't going to go through with it...but a couple of things were brought to my attention and they are definitely something that needs to be looked into."

"What?"

"Why didn't you have someone from the Zaibatsu drive you to the hotel either yesterday or today? You know it's what the boss expects."

She looked down at the table before she answered. A partial truth was probably best, it had worked when she fooled Dr. Bosconovitch and his men. "...I hate being here. Every morning when I come in I feel like I'm being suffocated, the mere thought of spending another day working for him makes me feel nauseated." She inhaled, then exhaled softly. "I took the subway because it meant spending one hour less in this building, one hour less in his presence...I just wanted to be away."

She looked up at Bruce and saw his eyes soften for an instant before piercing into hers once more. "How long have you known Toshi Usui?"

She narrowed her eyes as she thought for a moment, the name didn't sound familiar. "I don't know
He folded his arms over the table and leaned in slightly. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I've never heard that name before."

Bruce sighed softly. "How well do you know Heihachi Mishima?"

"...I..." She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and gave him a quizzical look. "I only know what Lee has told me about him."

"When did you last see Heihachi Mishima?"

She shook her head slightly and looked Bruce in the eye. "I've never met him."

Bruce looked at her for a moment. "Shit, you really don't know them."

"No, I..." She shifted in her seat, did he think she was guilty of something completely different?

"I need you to be honest with me, have you done anything out of the ordinary the past few days? Have you gone anywhere that you wouldn't normally go?"

Images of Nina Williams and the payphones at the metro station flashed in her mind's eye but she decided to go with another half-truth. "...I-I went to the bank yesterday, today too."

He sighed. "Banks are closed on weekends."

"There's the bank in Ginza that all the tourists like to use, do you know where that is?"

He nodded slowly. "...Yeah, I remember it. So tell me, why you were at the bank on the weekend?"

"Why are you asking me?"

He hesitated before answering. "...I have reason to believe that you are being followed?"

"What? By who?"

"Heihachi Mishima. Why were you at the bank two days in a row."

If she was being followed how much did they know? Had anyone seen her with Nina? "...Um..."

"You can tell me or I can find out, trust me, it won't be hard."

She pressed her fingers against her temple and closed her eyes. "Yesterday I went in then changed my mind and left before I did anything and today...I had the bank send an anonymous donation to the hospital where the police officers and protesters from the airport are being treated."

"What? Why the hell would you do that?"

She looked down at the table. "To cover their medical expenses."

Bruce held his head in his hands. "Tell me you're joking."

She found his tone and reaction completely condescending. "No, I'm not. Maybe you can sleep at night knowing that you're responsible for causing people injury and financial hardship or that your actions caused them to lose their jobs but I can't. I can't sleep at night, I feel sick every day, I'm just trying to do some good, I'm just trying to help them in any way I can."
He scoffed. "And screwing as all in the process."

"It's an anonymous donation to a hospital, I didn't walk in there with a bag full of money. They aren't going to trace it."

"Goddamnit." Bruce shook his head. "Where else did you go?"

"I went to a boutique yesterday. Today I went to the hotel, then the bank, then I heard what happened at the stadium and came straight here."

He nodded slowly. "Did you buy anything at the boutique?"

It was not a question that she expected. "...A dress for the banquet."

"Expensive?"

"Of course."

He leaned in as he spoke. "All right, here's what you're going to say. You went to the bank yesterday to withdraw some money to buy the dress. After you got home you realized that you needed new shoes to go with your dress so you went back to the bank today to withdraw more money, that was when you heard about what happened at the stadium and you came here as fast as you could. The part about not taking a driver to the hotel...you'll have to tell the boss the truth, I can't help you with that. And you have to promise me that you are not going to do any more stupid shit, I won't be able to help you next time."

"Why are you helping me now?"

He sighed. "I'm probably going down soon anyway."

"Did I do something-"

"Nothing to do with you, the past just catching up with me. Besides, the boss can get me out if need be."

"But what if he finds out that you lied for me? Won't he refuse to help you then?"

Bruce laughed. "He already thinks you're an exceptional liar, it won't be a stretch for him to believe that you lied to me about what you did at the bank."

No one knew anything. She almost wished that they did, the burden of keeping her secrets was almost becoming too heavy.

"Do you think I'm a good liar?"

He chuckled slightly. "...I think...you're on your way to becoming one, and I hope you leave this place before you learn how to fool me and before you cross your line." He sighed. "And if you have Heihachi Mishima following you, make sure you're not doing anything interesting."

She shivered slightly. "Why would he have me followed?"

"Look at who you're involved with, the only people standing between him and that office on the top floor." He stood up and she did the same. "Come on, I'll walk you to the elevator."

"What really happened at the stadium? I heard it was an explosion, but I don't know anything else."
His shoulders visibly fell. "A car bomb."

"Was anyone hurt?"

"Two bodyguards had to be taken to the hospital, one is hurt pretty badly, the other one should be released later today… The driver died on site."

She felt cold. She felt numb. A man was dead, the wrong man.

She followed Bruce out of the interrogation room, the guard at the door handed her her bag and she automatically reached for it, he said something but she couldn't make out the words.

A man was dead, the wrong man. Kazuya Mishima was alive and an innocent man was dead.

They were somehow standing in front of the elevator but she didn't even remember walking there. Bruce spoke as he input the code on the panel next to the elevator and looked expectantly at her, she nodded as she stepped into it and pushed the button for the top floor.

As the doors closed, she began to tremble. There was blood on her hands, she was responsible for a murder, the wrong murder. There was no going back, no stepping behind the line. There was no line, only a target. She had to give Nina Williams exactly what she needed to finish her job, to make sure that the wrong person was never hurt again. Kazuya Mishima had to die.
Jun is eager to see Kazuya after the attempt on his life.

An ill feeling had been weighing Jun down all day. Someone had made an attempt on Kazuya's life and she had not been able to speak with him. She had tried to reach him all morning but had not even been able to speak with his secretary. Later in the day, when the anxiety and frustration were almost too much to bear, she got ready to go to the Mishima Building but decided against it when saw on the news that the entire block had been put on lockdown. Kazuya must have felt furious after the explosion, maybe even afraid. That made him vulnerable, it gave Devil the perfect opportunity to regain control.

Her hands tightened on the steering wheel as she drove down the lamp-lit street in her borrowed, white sedan. When she finally saw the lights of the Mishima Hotel, she felt her chest tighten and her heart drum in her chest. She pulled into the front of the building and dropped off her car at the valet parking area then walked to the entrance with hurried steps.

The two armed Zaibatsu guards posted outside the glass, double doors asked her for identification before letting her through. After walking into the foyer she was greeted by two more Zaibatsu guards who again, asked her for identification, she presented it again and was directed to the reception desk in the lobby. Additional guards stood between golden columns or walked on the black marble floor warily watching the guests. Tension was thick inside the building, it made her want to turn around and leave but she needed to see him, needed to make sure he was unharmed.

At the reception desk, two women greeted her politely and directed her to the thirtieth floor where the banquet was being held. She entered the elevator and pressed the button.

When the elevator doors opened, Jun quickly stepped into the hallway immediately noticing the stark contrast to the scene in the lobby. Hotel employees, as well as men and women dressed in eveningwear, moved swiftly toward wooden, double doors a the end of the hall. The sounds of soft music and cheerful conversation melding together.

"Jun Kazama!"

Jun turned to the unfamiliar voice and was temporarily blinded by the flash of a camera. Through the
spots floating before her eyes, she saw an attractive woman in her forties looking at her. The woman took her by the arm and guided her away from the elevators as she looked at a clipboard in her hand.

"It's this way," the woman spoke in a firm, authoritative tone as she walked with Jun. "There's no assigned seating so you may sit anywhere you like." A guard opened the door and they stepped inside, the woman gave Jun a little push when she hesitated. "Don't forget to take your gift bag before you leave." She gestured to a table against the wall with various bags before beckoning a server who was holding a tray with champagne glasses, the guide took one and handed it to Jun. "Have a little something to drink, you look like you need it."

"I don't drink." Jun attempted to set the drink back on the tray but the woman put the clipboard in front of her to block it.

"Sake then?"

"I don't drink."

The woman shook her head. "Fine, suit yourself." She took Jun's glass and gestured toward an interview set up that had been partitioned off with heavy black curtains. A young woman with long, blonde hair wearing a very short, black cocktail dress stood up from her chair and unclipped the microphone from her dress.

Jun's guide waved to the interviewer. "She's ready."

"But I-"

She pushed the clipboard into Jun's hands. "Sign this."

"What is it?"

The woman spoke as she walked Jun to the chair in the interview area. "Everyone has to sign it. It just says that during this interview you will not say anything that paints Mr. Kazuya Mishima, the Mishima Zaibatsu, or the tournament in a bad light. Also, that you will not mention the incident at the stadium this morning. Any and all of those violations will immediately disqualify you from the tournament."

Jun shook her head as she signed. "...Ridiculous." She muttered.

The woman took the clipboard and pointed to the chair, then a TV camera. "Sit here, look there." She said before leaving.

Jun smiled politely at the interviewer who was sitting in a chair across from her. "Hello."

"We'll be live." The interviewer said as she looked at a notepad in her hand. "So try not to stutter and be honest, but not too honest."

A man behind the interviewer held up his hand. "We're on in five, four, three, two, one…"

The interviewer smiled brightly as she looked at a camera behind Jun. "We've managed to find none other than newcomer Jun Kazama," she began cheerfully. "I'm sure you're eager to get back to the party, so we'll make this quick. We'll begin with the question I've been asking every fighter... What made you take part in this tournament?"

"...I…" Jun cleared her throat, be honest, but not too honest. "...I have trained since I was a child and…"
"You wanted to see how well that training stacks up against the elite of the elite."

"...Umm..."

"What do you do for a living?"

"...I'm...unemployed at the moment." She felt a blush creep up her cheeks, she was sure her family was watching. They didn't even know that she had quit her job, let alone that she had entered the tournament.

The interviewer looked down at her notepad. "I was told that you work for the WWWC, a wildlife protection agency..." She laughed lightly. "Someone in our studio called you an ecological fighter. What do you think about that?"

"...Ecological..." Jun shook her head, the overly-bright lights were making her hot and uncomfortable. "...I don't work there anymore."

The interviewer nodded. "I see, you wanted to concentrate on preparing for the tournament."

"Yes."

The woman looked expectantly at her then smiled and gave someone a sidelong glance. "What will you do if you win the tournament?"

"...I don't know, it depends on what happens between now and then."

The interviewer nodded and gave her a forced smile. "It seems that Miss Kazama is eager to rejoin the party so we'll let her go, but we'll be back after a short break." She stood up and shook her head then turned to the man standing to her left. "That was not nearly long enough, we need to interview one more. Bring me someone pretty."

The man looked at his clipboard. "She was the last woman."

Someone unlipped the microphone from Jun's dress, she took it as a cue to stand up and leave.

"I see the Korean fighter."

"Does he speak Japanese?"

Jun didn't wait to hear more and stepped away from the cameras. Without the bright lights shining in her eyes, she took notice of the room. Everything from the chandeliers to the over polished, wood floors screamed opulence. The many tables were draped in black and red satin, their centerpieces exotic, expensive-looking flowers that Jun didn't recognize. A large screen behind a podium caught her eye before she saw her own portrait on the wall, a photograph that had been taken on the day that she qualified for the tournament. She looked at the portrait of each fighter and wondered if any of them felt as out of place as she did.

Jun's personal space was suddenly invaded by a young, Japanese woman in a sparkly, silver dress. "We have the perfect dress for you!"

Jun took a small step back. "You must have me confused with someone else."

"No," A man with long, black hair standing next to the woman in the sparkly dress spoke as he bowed politely. "We know who you are, Miss Kazama." His navy-blue, pinstripe suit had a gold sheen that made it stand out among the more demure suits in the room.
Jun sighed softly. "May I help you with something?"

The man spoke with an air of arrogance. "Actually, we want to help you. I am Aki Okamoto and this is my sister Akiko." He looked at Jun expectantly but she had never heard their names before and shrugged uncomfortably sensing his annoyance. "Okamoto." He repeated. It was a fairly common name that meant nothing to her.

"We're clothing designers." Akiko smiled sweetly, though Jun could sense that she was annoyed as well. "The rich and famous wear our designs to all their special events, we'd like you to do the same during the tournament."

Jun looked across the room and sighed. "I'm not interested."

Aki Okamoto spoke condescendingly as she eyed Jun's outfit. "Don't tell me you're going to wear that to the club."

Jun looked down at her white, satin dress, it was the second time she had worn it but she didn't care, especially not now when all she wanted was to see Kazuya. "I don't go to clubs."

"You should start," Akiko Okamoto looked at her almost admonishingly. "You would make good money, we pay very well and I have a couple of sassy little numbers that you could wear during your fights."

"I'm not interested," Jun repeated as she looked around the room hoping to see Kazuya.

Aki shook his head. "Bartolo Alberici got to you first, didn't he?"

Jun sensed Devil's presence before she saw Kazuya.

Her stomach churned and a chill passed through her as she saw him at the far end of the banquet hall; the darkness surrounded him like a thick, impenetrable fog. She had been right to worry, the torrent of emotions that must have followed after surviving a murder attempt had made Kazuya vulnerable and allowed the demon to regain control.

She tried to walk past the brother and sister to make her way toward Kazuya but stopped when a voice spoke over a microphone.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, if you would please take your seats." The message was repeated in English.

"Sit with us." Akiko Okamoto pulled Jun toward the nearest table. Jun sat with the brother and sister and turned her chair to face the podium at the far end of the room. Two servers set plates of appetizers in front of them.

A handsome, Japanese man stood behind the podium waiting for everyone to take their seats. Behind the speaker was the large screen, and on the right, a long rectangular table. She watched as Kazuya took a seat behind the table accompanied by Anna Williams. To most, they must have looked like a couple, both beautiful and exquisitely dressed, Anna in a long, blue strapless gown and Kazuya in a purple suit that would not have worked on anyone else but made him look almost regal. They were no couple. Anna took the utmost care to not even let her elbow brush up against Kazuya, let alone touch him. Her pretty, blue eyes darted around the room, her head turned this way and that as she feigned alluring smiles.

She's looking for threats.
The thought put Jun on high alert, someone had already tried to kill him that day, could danger really be lurking in that very room? She began to feel people's attention on Kazuya as they noticed that he was in attendance. Almost simultaneously thoughts began to darken, hate began to form and spread. Tiny granules and fragments of the attendees' dark energy began to gravitate and attach to Kazuya's dark aura augmenting it, feeding Devil the negative energy that Jun knew he desired.

*How can so many people hate one man?* She shook her head sadly, feeling uncomfortable at her own realization. *How can one man have hurt so many people?*

She noticed that the man behind the podium was already speaking and decided to focus on him for the time being.

"...You should feel honored to be part of the greatest sporting event the world has ever seen..." She tuned him out again, the dark energy was too distracting. She wondered how she should approach Kazuya or if he would let her, would Devil let it happen? Would he take control of Kazuya? "Each fighter's opponent will be chosen using a state of the art computer program, a sophisticated algorithm to ensure that every opponent is random..." What if merely seeing her triggered Devil? "...Jun Kazama..." The sound of her name jolted her out of her thoughts, she looked at the speaker and saw her image on the screen behind him. "From Hong Kong, Lei Wulong," the image of the Interpol agent replaced hers. "From South Korea, Baek Doo San..." Jun decided to approach Kazuya as soon as the opportunity presented itself, Devil surely wouldn't make himself known in a room full of armed guards and world's most skilled fighters.

The speaker continued. "Of course those are the human participants..." Scattered whispers erupted then died down quickly. Jun's stomach felt heavy, her lungs tight, though she didn't know why. "From Russia, the android Jack-2..." Jun had hoped that the androids were left out of the tournament, she remembered seeing them fight in the first one, it seemed wrong to pit them against humans. "Representing the Mishima Zaibatsu, Prototype Jack." People started whispering once more. "The Mishima Zaibatsu has made magnificent advances in science and genetic engineering since the change in leadership. These advances have enabled them to create their own tournament participants, two fighters, unlike anything that has been seen before... Alex, a vicious deinonychus with a killer instinct, and Roger, a master of commando wrestling and obviously not your average marsupial."

Jun felt her hands shake and her blood pound in her ears as she sat unable to tear her gaze away from the image on the screen. Her temperature rose with every excited whisper, every gasp, from the audience, the sounds began to morph into a distorted buzzing until they disappeared altogether and all that was left in the room was the image of the kangaroo. Never in her life had she been lied to so blatantly. That was not supposed to happen to her, she was not supposed to let it happen. She was supposed to see right through everyone. It was her first time experiencing true anger and humiliation and she didn't know how to react, didn't know what to do other than stare at the image and sit until her hands stopped shaking.

"Miss Kazama? Jun?" She shrugged off a hand on her shoulder and saw Akiko Okamoto smile nervously at her. "Have you considered our offer?" Jun stared blankly at her, she couldn't even remember what offer she was referring to.

Aki Okamoto sighed impatiently. "I told you that we should have asked the American girl instead, she looks so exotic." He finished as he stood from his chair.

*Clothing*, Jun remembered as she watched the siblings leave the table. *They wanted me to model overpriced clothing*. Her hands had stopped shaking but her heart was still racing. She looked up at the screen and saw that it had gone black, Kazuya's table was empty and the speaker was gone. She
looked over her shoulder and saw the Okamoto siblings accosting a young, foreign woman. Kazuya was across the room speaking to a group of men in suits, he looked bored and menacing at the same time while Anna Williams stood alert as ever by his side.

Jun didn't want to approach him, didn't even want to look at him. He had unwittingly cut the tether that tied her to him, surely she wasn't the only person in the world willing to stand up to Devil, Angel could find someone else. She took a good look around and took note of the decadence, the wastefulness that surrounded her. Half-empty glasses and bottles on the tables among barely touched plates of food were being removed by the serving staff, everyone was too busy mingling or showing off to notice or even care. Shaking her head, Jun stood up and headed for the door.

"Miss Kazama." Jun sighed and stopped abruptly at the sound of her name. A small, older man dressed in a colorful Xing Yi Quan uniform stood smiling in front of her. "I was coming to join you, will you be returning to your table?"

"No, I'm leaving."

"Already? It would be a shame to let your lovely dinner go to waste."

"This entire event is a waste." Jun looked over her shoulder and saw the server setting more food on the table. "I didn't even order that." The heat rose in her face, it was not like her to share such thoughts, but there was something about the man that put her at ease.

He nodded slowly. "Yes, the Mishimas aren't ones for subtlety. Believe it or not, they were not all like this."

"You know the Mishimas?"

"Knew them...I hardly recognize what they've become." He smiled and shook his head. "Where are my manners, my name is Wang Jinrei." He bowed deeply to Jun.

Jun bowed then smiled as she rose. "Would you still like to join me?" She should be leaving, she knew that she should, but Jinrei's kindly demeanor and more importantly, the fact that he knew the Mishimas compelled her to stay.

Jinrei smiled. "I would be honored." When they took their seats he reached into his shirt and pulled out a small, silver flask. "Would you like to indulge, my dear?" He asked with a twinkle in his eye. "I know they're serving the finest liquors from around the world but I've always preferred my own brew."

Jun smiled. "No, thank you." There was something about him that reminded her of her own grandfather, though he was nothing but a blurry memory.

"I was very surprised to see that a Kazama had joined the tournament, you are one of the Kazamas from Yakushima, correct?"

"...Yes, how did you know?"

He took a swig from his flask. "Many years ago, when I was a young man, and by young, I mean twice your age," he laughed lightly. "I went to Yakushima for some business matters, traveling to and from the island wasn't as easy as it is now. There was a problem with the ferry and I was forced to stay overnight so I decided to enjoy the scenery. I went for a walk, a very long walk, looking like a fool in my business suit, in the humid heat. After walking for hours, I spotted an older man, and by older I mean about as old as I am now, I didn't want to disturb him, so I hid quickly and I watched him. He was practicing a fighting art that I had never seen before. It was beautiful and fluid, like
water birds dancing...I finally stepped out of my hiding place, I had to give him my compliments and ask him if he could teach me. He refused, said that Kazama Style Martial Arts were not meant for display or exhibition or for anyone outside of the Kazama family."

"That must have been my great-grandfather..." She knew that he would not have approved of what she was doing, that no one in her family approved because they all shared the same sentiment regarding the Kazama fighting style. If her grandmother were still alive she would have understood. "...I don't know what he would say if he saw me now."

Jinrei's eyes crinkled into a smile that lit up his entire face. "There's no need for self-admonishment, young lady."

"That's not how my father is going to see it."

He shrugged. "Times change, traditions change, I'm sure you have a good reason for entering this tournament. If it's something that is important to you, it is a good reason."

He was right, what she was doing was important, vital. She couldn't leave. "You say you knew the Mishimas?"

"I helped run the Mishima Zaibatsu along with my friend Jinpachi Mishima. He was a good and honorable man and he would be heartbroken if he saw what has become of his company and his name."

"Do you know the current Mishimas?"

Jinrei smiled as he looked at Jun but there was such a sadness enveloping him that Jun herself felt a knot in her throat. "I knew them before my friend died...when Heihachi was a young man and Kazuya only a little boy, but I've not spoken with them since."

"What was Kazuya like?" It was difficult to imagine that Kazuya had ever been a little boy, he was so rigid, so angry and bitter. How much of that was Devil and how much was the real Kazuya?

"He was gentle and kind, rambunctious at times... Just a typical little boy."

If Kazuya had been a normal child, what had happened to turn him into the man that he had become? What made him invite Devil into his life? There was hope, if she could help him rid himself of Devil there was hope that he could right the wrongs he had committed. There was hope that without Devil he would see the error of his ways.

Jinrei pulled his chair closer to the table. "Shall we eat?"

Jun nodded and smiled. "Yes, we should."

There was hope. She couldn't leave.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I'm still updating this. :) The next few chapters will take place during the banquet, I felt it was important to check in with each POV character before the tournament. I decided to make each character's scene its own chapter, otherwise, it would have been monstrously long. It's all been written, just needs some heavy editing. Thanks for
reading!
Lee dwells on his present situation.

Lee had not expected Kazuya to hire a stranger from a PR agency to speak at the banquet. His days at the Zaibatsu were coming to an end; there was no doubt about it. The only thing worse than knowing was the thought that everyone, including Heihachi, saw it as well. Lee was head of public relations at the Zaibatsu, that was his official title, he should have been the speaker if Kazuya didn't want to do it himself. That had been the first thing that was brought up during his interview.

"You're still head of public relations, is that correct?" The interviewer had asked.

"Yes, I am."

"The program indicates that the speaker will be someone from the Nakajima and Hamasaki Agency. Any particular reason?"

He had smiled and tried to look like it was no surprise. "It was decided that I should forgo some duties to focus my full attention on the tournament."

_Bullshit answer._ It had been woefully transparent, and Lee was sure that everyone saw it. He just hoped that his performance at the tournament could help everyone forget about it; hoped that his demeanor could fool them all. When the speaker finished, Lee clapped on cue wearing his award-winning smile and looked around the room nodding in acknowledgment at the sight of familiar faces; the smile never left his lips, though he wished he could be anywhere else.

He turned his gaze to the balcony exit and had had the nearly overwhelming urge to go out for a smoke. _Not yet._ He had to make a few rounds and shake some hands first, keep up appearances, look like he was enjoying himself.

"They didn't even mention him." Sayuri's demure tone reminded him that he wasn't alone.

He turned to look at her. "Didn't mention who?"

She sipped her champagne then set the glass on the table before answering. "... His name was Katsi Oshiro, the driver who died today." She didn't look at Lee as she spoke and pulled at the long sleeve of her green, silk dress instead. "Twenty-four hours ago he had plans; maybe he had a party of his own to go to...and now he's dead, and no one cares." She picked up her glass drank.

"Did you know him?"

She shrugged. "No, but he was a human being, and he was part of the Zaibatsu."

Lee nodded solemnly as he watched Sayuri reach for the champagne bottle and refill her glass. Her behavior had been strange lately, but it was completely understandable. She had discovered his infidelity, was mugged at the metro station, and he was sure that his inability to tell her that he loved her had not helped. Adding to that pile of misery, was the fact that Sayuri had been interrogated like a common suspect and without his consent. It made him look like he had no authority at the Zaibatsu.
whatsoever.

He took her right hand. "I wish I'd known that you were going to be questioned, I would never have let it happen."

With her left hand, she picked up her glass. "It's not the worst thing that's happened to me." She shook her head slightly before sipping her drink. "I didn't know that you were going to fight...things that aren't human. I don't want you to get hurt."

He chuckled lightly. "They're not the ones that worry me; they're all show."

"The androids are hulking monsters and-"

"Don't worry, I'm the one who got that hunk of metal to work, and I know its weaknesses, the Russian one can't be much different. They'll probably end up facing off against each other anyway."

"You can't know that."

"Kazuya had me reactivate the android as an answer to the Russian android entering the tournament, he'll make sure they fight."

*A new computer program.* That was Lee's area of expertise, he should have been heading the project. Kazuya was taking everything from him, his responsibilities, his reputation... *What else will he take before he fires me?*

Sayuri shifted in her chair. "Do you still think you can win the tournament?"

He gently kissed the back of her hand. "Yes."

She smiled then was quiet for a moment. "...When you're in charge will you make sure Katsi Oshiro's family is taken care of? See to it that they never need anything like money or work?"

"I'll make sure." It wasn't something that he would have considered, but it would be one hell of a PR move. It would paint him in a positive light from the get-go, would let the world see that he was as different from Kazuya as night was from day.

"What about the kangaroo and the...dinosaur?" She shook her head then took a sip from the glass.

"What do you mean?"

"Can you beat them too?"

"I've been training longer than they've been alive, and to be honest I don't think they're very interested in winning the tournament."

Sayuri sighed. "I honestly thought that Miss Kazama would stand up and say something against having animals participating in the tournament. She was a wildlife officer before she met him, but now..."

Lee tried to follow what she was saying. "Met who?"

"...Mr. Mishima..." She fixed her eyes on the tablecloth. "He corrupts everything that he touches... everything." She reached for the champagne bottle again.

Lee took her hand. "Why don't you have some food instead? I'm sure the server will be here with our meals any second."
"I can't eat."

"Why?"

"Because I feel sick knowing that Katsi's family is in mourning while we're having a party." She fixed her gaze across the room then turned to him with a look of concern on her face and moved in closer. "Do you know Michelle Chang?" She asked softly.

He shook his head. "Not personally."

"I thought you knew all the fighters."

Lee spoke carefully and quietly not wanting to give too much away. He couldn't have anyone knowing, not even Sayuri, that Heihachi had arranged to have Michelle's father killed years earlier. "Given the history with our families...I don't think I'm someone she'd like to know. Why do you ask?"

Sayuri looked around before speaking. "...I think Mr. Mishima has her mother."

"There he is!" Lee didn't have time to react to the boisterous voice and found himself slumping forward when a large, heavy hand slapped him on the back. "You don't send me free concert tickets, you don't even call anymore, I thought we were friends." Lee stood from his chair and turned around already knowing who he would see. Paul Phoenix stood tall, wearing leather and denim and looking entirely out of place with his ridiculously high hairstyle. Marshall Law stood next to him, wearing a suit and smiling awkwardly.

Lee extended his hand. "It's been a while, Paul, how are you?"

Paul shook his head as he took Lee's hand in a grip that was tighter than necessary. "Wearing a monkey suit. Always so fuckin' formal, what, don't you want these stuck up, rich folks to know you can really party?"

Marshall sighed softly "We're at a formal function, Paul, not a club."

Lee shook Marshall's hand. "Nice to see you, Marshall. This is my girlfriend, Sayuri Yoshida." He introduced her as he took her hand, she stood up and bowed respectfully to both men. "How are Melissa and Forest, Marshall? Did you bring them?"

Marshall shook his head. "No, Melissa's got work and Forest is in school, we didn't want him to miss an entire week."

"He's in school already? The last time I saw him, he could barely talk."

"Yeah, he's-"

Paul held up one of the gift bags in front of Lee's face. "You know we're getting a free Walkman? And a Rolex, a fuckin' Rolex!"

Lee pushed the bag away from his face then gestured to Sayuri. "Well, you have her to thank for that, she chose each item and organized this entire-"

"She busy later?" Paul smiled as he eyed her appreciatively.

"...She's my girlfriend."

Paul laughed. "No way, you finally settled?"
Marshall groaned and shook his head.

Lee looked at Sayuri. "He means settled down," he clarified in Japanese knowing full well that she spoke and understood more English than she let on. "I think he's drunk."

Paul shook his head. "Unbelievable, you used to be my hero, you never saw a woman twice. What happened to you?"

Marshall elbowed him in the ribs. "Paul…"

Paul groaned. "It all started at the last tournament when you met... What's her name..." He furrowed his brow. "You know, the hot one, Nina's less bitchy sister, her name's on the tip of my tongue... Caroline!"


Paul snapped his fingers. "There you go, Anna! Now she's with Kazuya, that's gotta be awkward."

Lee sighed as he ran a hand through his hair. "She's not with Kazuya."

Sayuri bowed to Marshall and spoke in English. "Enjoy the party." Then turned and gave Lee a smile that he knew was anything but genuine. "I'm sure I'm needed...somewhere."

Lee watched her leave then turned an admonishing gaze on Marshall. "He's drunk already?" Paul was now sitting in one of the chairs rummaging through his bag.

"I'm not his mom," Marshall said defensively. "He wanted to get an early start. You know, get drunk early, go to bed early, sleep it off and get up early ready to fight."

Lee sighed. "Who am I to argue with that logic?"

Paul held up his wrist showing off his new timepiece. "Hey, guess what time it is?" He didn't wait for an answer. "Time for one last drink!" He stood and made his way toward the open bar.

Marshall sighed. "I'd better go make sure he doesn't do something stupid. See you 'round, man."

Lee nodded. "Good luck tomorrow."

He looked around the room and spotted Sayuri speaking to one of the hotel employees. She looked like she had resigned herself to be there and wasn't having fun; she usually enjoyed social functions. He felt guilty knowing that she was not even wearing the dress she had wanted.

He smelled Anna's perfume before he heard her sultry tone. "Déjà vu."

He turned his head to look at her. "Since when do you drink vodka?" Not much of a greeting and he knew it.

She delicately sipped the clear liquid in her glass. "It's water. I don't drink on the job."

He looked to where Sayuri had been standing but she was gone, he slowly scanned the area looking for her. "What do you mean déjà vu?"

"Just seeing you here, on the eve of the tournament watching a woman and trying to figure her out."

"And you here, bothering me." He scoffed. "Yeah, déjà vu."
"Bothering you?" She laughed lightly. "That's rude, and I didn't bother you, I saved you."

It was what she always said. She claimed to have saved him.

At the banquet, the night before the first tournament, Lee had been watching a beautiful blonde in a short, purple dress. The young woman had not seemed interested in anyone or anything; she had not seemed bored or anxious or overly alert. She was unreadable; she was a challenge. He had watched her all night waiting for an opportunity. When she sat at her table, he finally saw it and would have walked over to her if not for the melodic voice he heard behind him.

"She's not interested in you."

He looked over his shoulder and saw Anna, not for the first time; he had seen her the moment she stepped into the room, everyone had. With that face, that body and that slinky silver dress everyone had noticed her.

He turned to face the lovely brunette. "I'm afraid we haven't met," he extended his hand. "Lee Chaolan."

She delicately shook his hand. "Anna Williams."

"A pleasure, Anna, if I may ask, how do you know she's not interested?"

"Because I'm her sister. Don't take it personally, she's just not interested in anyone or anything. She's probably just here for a work thing."

"Work? What does she do?"

She placed her hands on her hips and gave him a look of mock offense. "I'm here saving you from embarrassment and giving you the opportunity to get to know the fun Williams, and you're asking me about my sister?" She shook her head. "I would say that's kinda naughty, which I like, but it's actually just rude, so you'd better rephrase that if you want to keep my company."

He couldn't help it and smiled a genuine smile. Those blue eyes and that wit did him in before he even had a chance. "That is unforgivably rude. Please allow me to make it up to you."

She gestured toward the bar. "The bartender won't serve me. Everyone is perfectly okay with letting men twice my size and twice my age kick my teeth in, but God forbid I should have a little whiskey."

He eyed her cautiously, her face did look quite young. "How old are you?"

She shrugged. "I'm legal in my country." She gave him a knowing smile, and he swore that a light blush had crept onto her cheeks. "Don't get any ideas, I know how that sounded but I'm to that kind of girl, not on the first date anyway."

He chuckled. "It never crossed my mind. So, where are you from?"

"Ireland."

"You sound American."

"So do you, but don't worry, I won't hold it against you." She took his arm and guided him toward the bar. "Now let's go get my drink."

Lee did not have eyes for anyone else until they broke up, and even then, she was always on his mind in one way or another. He looked at Anna as she was now, a hardened killer, soon to be
Kazuya's right hand again. He wondered how long it would take her to dethrone Bruce.

"You didn't save me." He said bitterly. "Being rejected at a party by someone I've never met is not worse than being unceremoniously dumped by someone I trusted."

She sighed. "I'm sorry, Lee but if I had stayed neither one of us would be happy."

He eyed the balcony exit aching for a cigarette. "Right."

Anna looked into his eyes. "Look, I know we're not together anymore, but that doesn't mean that you can't trust me. Our split was amicable...ish."

He looked around for cameras and saw someone snapping photos. He smiled as he looked at Anna. "I can't trust you or anyone, the fact that you interrogated my girlfriend without my consent-"

"Without your consent?" She laughed lightly and shook her head then lowered her voice. "I know you don't even realize it, but that makes you sound like an asshole. And it really pisses me off when you talk to me with that fake smile. I'm just here trying to make friendly conversation."

"Friendly conversation? I feel like you're trying to get me to say something, to confess to something. I have absolutely nothing to confess, certainly not to you. You're just another one Kazuya's thugs."

She gave an impatient sigh. "Thug, really?"

"They're taking our picture, so you should probably smile." Anna looked at the photographer and smiled when she turned her attention to Lee. "You say that I can trust you," he said as he put his hands in his pockets. "Do you want to take a walk with me and tell me the truth about what happened at the stadium? Who's responsible for the attack?"

"They were apprehended, everyone knows who it was."

Lee shook his head. "Earth Ethics? The group against genetic manipulation, you expect me to believe that?"

"It's a fact. It was all over the news."

"And that's all you know."

She sipped her drink. "That's all I know."

"Of course you won't tell me anything else, you've always been loyal to Kazuya."

She shrugged. "It's my job, you know I'm a career girl."

"And you always chose him over me." He saw her shoulders tense, and her grip tighten around her glass, still, he kept talking knowing full well that he should stop. "You know what everyone's thinking?" She shrugged and sipped her water. "That you and Kazuya are together, even Paul sees it."

"Even Paul? Or just Paul?" Her eyes bore into his. "Paul is an idiot, and he's drunk, but you should know better."

He felt his temperature rise, the events of the day had been chipping away at his temper and his patience. "Who will you pick?"

"Who will I pick?"
"When I win the tournament, and the Zaibatsu is mine, will you stand with me? Or will you stay by Kazuya's side and go up against me?"

Anna stared daggers at him. "...Do you really want me to answer that? Because I don't think you'll like my answer."

He nodded. "Thank you for this conversation. Now I know that I can't ever trust you, that I should never have trusted you."

They stood side by side for a few moments; his head was buzzing, he felt her anger, the tension that suddenly enveloped them both. He knew that he had gone too far, that her relationship with Kazuya was nothing beyond a trusted employee, but there was no way in hell that he would apologize. Forgetting about the cameras he walked toward the balcony exit, he really needed that cigarette.
Heihachi sat at his table ignoring the meal that the server set before him.

"Well," Rei straightened in her chair and picked up her chopsticks, "at least the food looks lovely."

"Hmph," he pushed his plate away. It was some sort of dish with prawns, a fish that he was not interested in identifying, and colorful vegetables. Something a student could have thrown together on his first day of culinary school. The banquet the Mishima patriarch had hosted on the eve of the first tournament had been nothing short of lavish and extravagant. He had honored each tournament participant by hiring world-renowned chefs who prepared unique and delectable dishes specific to each individual's country of origin. This evening, however, was one awkward incident after another; the subpar food was only the beginning.

Kazuya had not even bothered to mention the man who had died in his service. In Heihachi's eyes, any man who died performing his duty deserved to be honored, it didn't matter if he was a fighter, a janitor or a driver. *It's like he's deliberately rejecting everything I taught him about honor.* And Lee sitting there like an idiot with nothing to do while some unknown fool stood behind the podium. It was glaringly obvious that he and Kazuya did not see eye to eye, any half-sober fool could deduce that much, but it made Heihachi wonder if Kazuya could be trying to get rid of Lee. If Kazuya had become aware of the funds Lee had supposedly been stealing from the company, then whatever form of trust had existed between the two brothers was undoubtedly gone.

Rei leaned discreetly toward him. "Your son is done speaking to Miss Williams, I think he's headed for the balcony."

Heihachi spotted Lee as he walked away. *He needs a cigarette, no doubt.* He was always weighed down by some vice or another, be it cigarettes, women, or illegal drugs. Heihachi still couldn't get over that one. He stood up, deciding to rattle Lee a bit, to remind him of his betrayal. He stood from the table and walked through the crowd, avoiding sponsors and reporters looking for an interview. He found Lee standing with his elbow propped on the balcony railing, a pack of cigarettes in his left hand.

Heihachi stood next to his adopted son, his arms folded over his broad chest. "I don't blame you for stepping out," he spoke in a casual tone, "this isn't much of a party."

Lee chuckled slightly as he shook his head and put the pack of cigarettes back in his pocket, he then turned to face Heihachi. "In my experience, pleasant company makes for a pleasant event. I saw your companion, maybe next time you should bring a date that is interesting instead of young."

_The ingrate dares to criticize the company I keep?_ "I'm saddened by your disapproval. You'll be pleased to know, however, that I wholeheartedly approve of your recent choices."

Lee sighed and fixed his gaze on the sprawling city lights. "Is that so?"
Heihachi nodded. "First Miss Williams, now Miss Yoshida...certainly a step up from the American sluts you used to surround yourself with." Lee turned to look at him, lips tightened, but he didn't say anything, then turned his gaze toward the city again. "Both fine, young women..." Heihachi continued, "but there's a problem with women of their type, who are educated and well-bred."

Lee turned to face him fully and spoke in an irritated tone. "Well-bred?" He shook his head and pulled the cigarette pack out the pocket in his jacket. "Are you talking about women or dogs?"

Heihachi chuckled and continued to speak as he watched Lee extract a cigarette from the pack and fish a lighter out of his pants' pocket. "I remember telling you many times, 'never bed a woman that you can't control' and what-"

"That is shit advice to give a fifteen-year-old, by the way." Lee shook his head again as he put the cigarette between his lips and lit it. He took a long drag then slowly exhaled. "What's your point? Are you trying to tell me something about Sayuri that you think I don't want to know? I know you've been following her."

"If I wanted to tell you something I'd do it, I wouldn't try to tell you."

"Leave her out of whatever you're planning, she doesn't know anything about the Zaibatsu that would interest you, doesn't know anyone you might find useful-"

"Well, I know that now."

Lee sighed and for a moment looked utterly exhausted. "What the hell do you want? I came out here for some peace."

Heihachi smirked. "I just wanted to inquire about your wellbeing after what happened at the stadium this morning."

"Was that you?" Lee asked indifferently as he continued to smoke.

"No. Was it you?"

"No."

Heihachi crossed his arms, the stench of the smoke was beginning to irritate him. "It should have been you."

Lee looked mildly surprised by his statement and eyed him carefully. "...I should have been the one who got blown up? Or are you saying that I should be trying to kill my brother?"

"Either would be acceptable. I told you during the last tournament that Kazuya would try to kill me and that if that happened, you were to take over the Zaibatsu using any and all means, and what do you do? You betray me, side with my killer and-"

"You were dead," Lee pointed at him, his tone full of anger and accusation. "I woke up, and you were dead, and I had nothing. Kazuya closed the New York branch and found some loophole in the will that left me out of everything except my personal accounts. I have not set foot at the Estate in two years; I had to worm my way back into the Zaibatsu and-"

"All you had were your personal accounts? Forgive me if I don't weep for your misfortune. And who do you owe those personal accounts to? Who?"

"That money is mine I earned it, I-"
"Don't forget that you owe everything to me, boy. Every yen you have, every breath you take, you owe it to me. If I had left you in Shanghai, you would not have lived to be fourteen years old. Look me in the eye and tell me I'm wrong."

Lee sighed softly and turned his back on Heihachi then continued to smoke over the balcony. They were both silent, enveloped by the sounds of the city and the banquet hall. After a moment Lee snuffed his cigarette on the balcony railing and turned to face Heihachi once more. "...If you had come to me two years ago, I would have sided with you, I wish I could say otherwise, but it's the truth... Now things are different; I'm different-

"Hmph, so you have sided with Kazuya."

Lee shook his head. "I'm not siding with anyone. I want the Zaibatsu for myself. I want to restore it to what it once was before you twisted your father's vision and everything that he stood for; before fathers and sons started killing each other."

Heihachi laughed. "Before fathers and sons started killing each other?" It was obvious that Wang Jinrei had gotten to Lee. "And you plan to take over the Zaibatsu how? By asking Kazuya and me to stand aside? By serving us with a restraining order?"

Lee shrugged. "I'll do what I have to do."

Heihachi scoffed. "No, you won't. You're afraid to get your hands dirty. Jinpachi would have liked you; you're a coward just like him."

Lee looked at his watch then walked back into the banquet hall in silence, not sparing his adoptive father even a glance.

Heihachi watched him with a self-satisfied smile and followed after him a few moments later. Inside, he saw Lee talking to a pair of older men in dark suits. He was speaking to them with that smile that fooled almost everyone, but it never deceived him. Heihachi knew that Lee was angry and that he would dwell on that anger and start to plan and over-plan. And hopefully, that would be enough to make him lose his focus.

Looking around the room, he spotted Sayuri Yoshida at the bar talking to Kazuya's head of security. The young woman fixed her gaze on Nina Williams undoubtedly trying to be discreet but in his eyes, failing miserably; not that it mattered he was sure no one else noticed. That look between the two girls affirmed his suspicion; Braden Mullen had sent the older Williams sister to kill Kazuya. It was all so obvious, right under their noses and they were all too self-absorbed to see it.

Jun Kazama was sitting alone at a table a short distance away. He had to keep an eye on her, he didn't know her, and that made her unpredictable. Maybe he would find a way to use her.

He scanned the room again and saw Lee posing for a photograph and wearing that same, unchanging smile covering up the anger and self-doubt. For a moment he felt an inkling of sympathy for him and almost blamed himself for failing to be a better teacher... So much wasted potential. But potential was nothing, counted for nothing if it never led to action.

If Heihachi himself had not acted when it counted, if he had not ripped the Zaibatsu from Jinpachi's grasp, he would only be known for his immense potential. The potential to be a good leader, to elevate the Mishima Zaibatsu to greatness. But he'd had the drive and the courage to do what had been necessary then...and he was willing to do it again, as he had in the past, and again, and again. Potential was nothing only actions mattered. And now that the tournament was about to begin, it was time to leave all the plotting and planning behind, it was time to spring into action and retake his
rightful place as the head of the Mishima Zaibatsu.
Opportunity

Chapter Summary

Sayuri knows that Nina expects information and worries because she has none.

Sayuri ordered sparkling water at the bar. She had been drinking more than she was accustomed to and that, combined with the bright lights and the chatter around her, made her feel light-headed. The bartender handed her the drink and she sipped it slowly as she fixed her eyes on Lee and Anna Williams. The two were talking in the middle of the room as reporters snapped picture after picture. She let a pinprick of jealousy make a brief appearance before pushing it away. There were much more pressing matters at the moment. And Anna was not the Williams who worried her.

She had seen Nina at the start of the banquet but lost track of her. The assassin expected useful information about the tournament, about Kazuya's schedule, but Sayuri had absolutely nothing because the entire day at the Mishima Building had been chaos. That had been Nina's fault as far as she was concerned.

"There's the orchestrator." Sayuri gasped as she heard a deep, male voice. She turned quickly and saw Bruce smiling broadly at her.

"What do you mean by that?" She sipped her water and moved her gaze around the room trying to maintain a calm demeanor.

He shrugged. "You planned this event, and you are here."

"Coordinator," she corrected. "Orchestrator sounds a bit...accusatory."

"My Japanese isn't perfect yet, but you have to admit, for a guy who two years ago, couldn't even order at the McDonald's down the street, it's actually pretty damn good."

She managed a smile. "It actually is quite impressive."

"I know it," he looked around before sitting on one of the barstools. "Great party, by the way, you really seem to have a knack for organizing these things."

She scoffed. "Maybe I should have gone into event planning instead of studying business."

He slowly scanned the room again. "I'm sure you'd be good at it, maybe you should go into it now, after the tournament I mean, get out of this place."

*Plan weddings instead of murders.* "Maybe I should... Why do you care if I get out of this place or not?"

Bruce looked toward the door then looked back at her. "You're like one of my crew now, and you were so squeaky clean before that it's still actually possible for you to get out."

*No turning back, no getting out.*

He shook his head slowly. "I came here to cheer you up, but you look even worse."
"No, you didn't. You keep looking around like you're looking for someone."

He chuckled slightly then looked around again. "I think someone might be looking for me."

"Who?"

He waved his hand dismissively. "It doesn't matter. I'm here now, and you look like you just lost a beauty contest so let's do something about it."

She chuckled slightly. "A beauty contest?"

Bruce laughed then patted the empty barstool next to his. "Come on, let's have a drink."

"I've probably had enough but..." Sayuri set her water on the bar and took the seat. If Bruce had noticed her demeanor, others would as well, it was best to go along with it and try to look like she was at least tolerating the party. She looked for Nina again but didn't see her anywhere.

"Here."

She turned to face the bar. "What's this?" She picked up the glass the bartender had set in front of her and slowly swirled the amber liquid around.

"Tequila." Bruce smiled as he sipped from his identical glass.

She shook her head. "I don't do shots."

"That's not a shot glass, and this isn't Jose Cuervo."

"I don't know what that means."

He laughed. "It means that it's the good stuff, you take your time and enjoy it."

She brought the glass to her lips and sipped slowly, it was much stronger than what she was used to but not unpleasant.

"So how did you get into beauty pageants anyway? Did you have a pushy stage mom or something?"

"No, she was actually the opposite..." She took a couple of small sips before continuing. "...She hated that I entered beauty contests."

"I thought it was your grandmother that hated it."

"They both hated it."

"That's rough."

Sayuri shrugged. "Not really, my father let me have anything I wanted, so I actually grew up pretty spoiled..." She began to feel lightheaded again and decided to slow down, to be careful with what she said. She couldn't trust Bruce no matter how friendly he seemed, if he found out what she was involved in, he wouldn't hesitate to tell Kazuya.

She decided to question him instead. "What about you? I'm always telling you about me and my family, but I don't know anything about you."

He sipped his drink then spoke casually. "What you see is what you get, there's really not much to
"What about your family? Are they in America?"

He furrowed his brow slightly. "No, they're gone."

She looked at him for a moment then back down at her glass. Did they die? She couldn't bring herself to ask him.

He looked around the room and toward the door as he sipped his drink.

She lowered her head. "...I'm sorry." She didn't know what else to say and set the unfinished liquor on the bar.

Bruce shrugged. "It's all right, it was a long time ago."

Her entire adult life, Sayuri had been willfully ignorant, she realized that now. She had been blind to the pain and suffering that plagued the world on a daily basis and that new awareness made her feel ashamed. It was so easy to turn a newspaper over when she read a headline that made her uncomfortable, so easy to lose herself in her so-called problems and pretend that everyone in the world led safe and comfortable lives. She wondered how old Bruce had been when he lost his family. He must have been young. She thought of Lee having to live on the streets when he was a child and hoped that the same had not been the case for Bruce. She thought of Katsi Oshiro's family grieving their lost son...

"I'm usually better at cheering people up." Bruce's voice broke her trance.

She reached for her glass of water. "It's not your fault, this whole day has been..."

Bruce nodded. "Tell me about it." Then spoke with a broad grin on his face. "You're gonna cheer for me tomorrow right?"

She shook her head but couldn't help smiling. "There's already someone I'm supposed to be cheering for."

"You're supposed to be cheering for?"

"I want to cheer for. Are you flirting with me?"

He laughed. "It's my default setting, I can't help it, but at least you're smiling."

A glimpse of long, blonde hair tore her attention from Bruce. Nina was staring directly at her from across the room. Their eyes locked and Sayuri felt her heart thump in her chest. She watched Nina as she walked toward the back of the room in the direction of the women's bathroom. She needed to follow, but her entire body felt like lead knowing that she had nothing to tell, no new information whatsoever.

"...I need to go." She said as she stood. "Thank you for the drink."

He looked around. "Yeah, I should probably find a different place to be anyway. I'm serious, good job putting this whole thing together."

"Thank you."

She left the bar and headed toward the bathroom weaving through guests and hotel staff, smiling and bowing politely while clenching her hands into fists to keep them from shaking.
She opened the bathroom door and stepped inside, the soft light and muted colors were a welcome change as was the blissful silence. She turned the corner toward the sinks and mirrors, even though she was expecting to see Nina, she felt her breath catch in her throat when she saw her standing with her arms crossed tightly and looking expectantly at her. Her apprehension and anxiety suddenly turned to anger; she spoke the first words that she was able to articulate in English.

"You failed." Sayuri heard her own voice echo around her, it was much louder than she had intended. Nina's eyes were pure fire, she didn't move or blink, but her posture and demeanor were suddenly incredibly threatening, forcing Sayuri to take a step back.

Nina spoke in a quiet and even tone. "Give me good information."

"...I…"

The door opened slowly, Sayuri couldn't move. Nina quickly, silently, and casually turned toward one of the sinks, opened her clutch bag and began to apply lipstick in front of the mirror.

The sound of high heels clicking on the tile floor was followed by a playful, sultry voice.

"Hi, Sis." Anna's tone was casual, but her stance said that she was ready for anything. She looked at Sayuri. "Is this woman bothering you?"

Sayuri shook her head. "No."

Nina walked past them without saying a word, without even acknowledging her sister.

Anna looked pointedly at Sayuri once Nina had left the room. "What did she say to you?"

She tried not to blink as she answered and hoped that Anna wouldn't see through the lie. "...She ask if I knowed-if I know you."

Anna gave her one more probing look before walking past her and standing in front of the full-length mirror. She put her hands on her hips and stared admiringly at her own reflection. "I've been feeling deceived today."

"Deceived? What is-"

"It means lied to, do you understand that?" Anna tucked her hair behind her ear. "People lying to me right to my face. But you are not one of those people are you?"

"No, Miss Williams."

Anna turned away from the mirror and looked at her. "Cute dress. A little more conservative than I thought you'd wear, but green works on you. The boss wants to see you, he's in the office. Don't make him wait, I'm sure you know how he gets."

Sayuri bowed deeply and left the bathroom as quickly as she could with her stomach in knots and her hands shaking.

The walk to Kazuya's office seemed too short and too long at the same time. When she arrived, her mind was utterly blank; she could hear her heartbeat in her ears.

Two armed Zaibatsu guards were stationed at the door along with Ganryu. When he saw her, his stern expression changed to a goofy grin. The sumo turned and knocked on the door before opening it slightly. "Miss Yoshida is here." He held the door opened for Sayuri and smiled nervously at her as
she stepped inside.

After the incident at the stadium the security team had insisted on moving Kazuya's office to the same floor as the banquet. Having no room that could be called an office on the thirtieth floor, one of the suites had been stripped, painted, had shelving and new carpet installed as well as new furniture brought in to make it a suitable space for the Mishima Zaibatsu CEO.

Upon entering, she saw Kazuya behind a desk made of dark, polished wood, a half-empty glass of liquor in his hand. The walls were painted a muted, gray and the lights were dim, everything was exactly as he liked it. There was a slight odor of fresh paint that she was sure was giving him a headache, judging by the way he was frowning at his drink.

She bowed deeply before speaking. "You wanted to see me, sir?"

"I will be meeting with Genkei Yamaguchi from G-Corporation Tuesday night-

"This Tuesday? I thought you were going to meet with him after the tournament." She blurted out before she could stop herself. That was too bold.

Kazuya straightened in his chair and crossed his arms. "I forgot, you listened in on that entire conversation...I remember everything before and after too. I remember how you begged me not to tell Lee anything, how you begged me not to fire him... Are you going to beg and plead for his sake again?"

She shook her head before bowing again. "No, sir. I'm here because you asked for me."

He looked pointedly at her. "I know you. You're hiding something."

She looked down at the floor. "No, sir. I'm here to do my job, it's been a long day."

"Have you told Lee anything?"

"No, sir."

He gave her one more scrutinizing look before continuing. "As I was saying before you interrupted, I'm meeting with Mr. Yamaguchi Tuesday at eight p.m. in my office at the Mishima Building. The glass on the window behind my desk is cracked, make sure it's repaired before then."

"Yes, sir. Do you need me there for the meeting."

"No."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"No."

"I will be going home shortly then."

He didn't say anything; she took it as her cue to leave. She bowed slightly to Ganryu and the guards as she exited.

She walked back into the banquet hall and stood at the entrance scanning the room looking for Lee, hoping that he was as tired as she was and wanted to go home. Looking to her right, she saw the table with the gift bags for the tournament participants, some of the bags had not been taken. Sayuri wasn't surprised, she was sure some of the fighters wanted nothing from the Mishimas, save for their blood. She walked over and looked through the tags, Jun Kazama, Michelle Chang, Wang Jinrei,
Heihachi Mishima, Nina Williams.

The idea struck her suddenly, it was like a jolt of electricity, a splash of ice water on her face. She reached for Nina's bag with a shaky hand, thanking the Heavens that she was staying at the Mishima Hotel. She exited the banquet hall and took the elevator to the first floor. When the elevator doors opened, she left quickly, her steps echoing in the oversized lobby. She stopped at the reception desk.

"Miss Yoshida," one of the women behind the desk beamed, "how can we help you?"

"I need a pen and paper."

Once she received the items, she began to write.

Miss Williams,

I hope you find this to your satisfaction and hope that your stay in Tokyo is a memorable one. Enjoy the sights, the parks are especially peaceful at sunrise.

She was sure that Nina's partner could translate it. She folded the note and put it inside the bag, set it on the desk and leaned in to speak to the receptionist. "I need you to deliver this to Miss Nina Williams." She said softly. "You specifically, call her beforehand and tell her that it's from me. Mention me by name. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Yoshida, I'll do it right away."

"Thank you."

She heard the elevator chime and turned to see Lee stepping out. She waited for him at the desk feeling apprehensive, hoping that he was there because he wanted to go home.

He looked tired as he smiled. "They told me you were down here. We can leave if you're ready."

She nodded. "Let's go."

"Good, I can't stand being here a second longer."

They walked side by side as they left the hotel and were silent as the valet retrieved their car. When the car arrived, Lee opened the door for her and helped her inside then closed it and settled into the driver's seat.

He took her hand but didn't say anything, just looked at the dashboard for a few moments before turning to her. "You were the most beautiful woman there." He said as he kissed the back of her hand.

"Thank you." She said dejectedly. She knew they were empty words, that he would have said it to anyone who had been his date.

"I'm sorry."

"For what?"

He sighed. "...I'm sorry that I've been so controlling. I have no place telling you how to dress. It will never happen again."

She lightly squeezed his hand and nodded as she looked out the window, away from his eyes.
"Thank you for saying that."
He kissed her hand again before beginning the drive home.

She looked at him as he concentrated on the road. She watched the lights and shadows dance on his face but quickly closed her eyes. She felt so terribly tired, so horribly guilty. She wished that she could tell him everything; she wished that he didn't feel like he was the only one making mistakes, the only one who had something to atone for. Everything would come to light sooner or later because that was the way life worked. It could be in two hours, two days or twenty years, but it would all come out eventually. But for now, she had him, for now, she had comfortable silence. For now, she had the hope that with her help, Nina's mission would be a success.
Disappointment

Chapter Summary

Kazuya is confronted by Jun.

Every single person who had approached Kazuya had inquired about his well-being, had bowed deeply while praising deities for providing him with protection. Deities who undoubtedly wanted him dead.

It was sickening.

Liars. All of them. The smugness in Devil's voice made Kazuya clench his jaw, but he didn't allow it to break his train of thought.

Kazuya brought the glass of bourbon up to his face and inhaled hoping the scent would mask the lingering smell of paint in the office.

They were liars. He knew everyone was disappointed that the bomb had failed. Everyone from the lowliest Zaibatsu employee to the board of directors was thinking about how much better things would be if he had died. All day he had told himself that he didn't care what they thought, he wanted to feel complete indifference. But as the day wore on, as he had to look at each of their faces, at their false concern, anger began to chip away at indifference until it was all but gone and he was in a barely contained state of rage.

Anger is good. Devil's voice seemed to flit from one side of this head to the other leaving faint echoes in its wake.

"I should have my hands on the entire Earth Ethics group right now. I should be burning their homes to the ground." They had not only tried to kill him, they had also humiliated him in the eyes of Japan and the world. That was worse than attempted murder.

It couldn't have been the tree huggers; it's too perfect.

"I know, but if not them, who?"

Devil laughed. Don't ask me; I'm not the one being paid to figure it out.

The perpetrators were in police custody already. According to Bruce's contact in the police department, someone claiming to be part of Earth Ethics had called the authorities almost immediately after the blast and had given the names of the culprits. The caller had stated that the group did not want to be associated with the violent methods of a few rogue individuals. Bomb-making materials had also been found in a storage unit being used by one of the suspects. A neat, little bow on a perfectly wrapped box. Too easy, too convenient.

He felt Devil grow quiet and attentive at the sound of a light knock on the door.

"What?" He didn't think he could stomach anyone else giving him false smiles and lying to his face.

Ganryu opened the door and stepped in swiftly before closing it. "Miss Jun Kazama wants to see
"Send her in," Kazuya said without even thinking. Ganryu bowed slightly before exiting.

Devil gave a short wry laugh that chilled Kazuya to the bone. **Are you trying to test me? Wondering if I will keep my word? If she tries anything, and I mean anything, I will kill her right here and now.**

*She won't do anything.*

Devil cackled. **On the other hand, killing her would bring me great satisfaction, so it's worth the risk.**

There was a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. Devil was on edge; he was a wild animal ready to strike at the slightest provocation. Kazuya stood up suddenly deciding to have Ganryu send her away, but it was too late, the doorknob turned, and Jun stepped inside.

Jun's tone was sharp as she looked him in the eye. "I tried to get a hold of you all morning. I didn't know if you were hurt..." Her tone softened and she looked at him with concern in her eyes. "...Or worse."

"As you can see, I'm fine." He sat then downed the rest of his bourbon.

Jun shook her head and took a step toward the desk. "You're not fine. I can feel him; he's with you."

Kazuya slowly turned the empty glass in his hand. "And that's where he'll stay."

Jun flinched at his words, her brow creased. "...Is that your decision or his?"

"It's a mutual agreement."

Jun nodded stiffly. "Is he the reason why you do the things you do? Or do you act on your own?"

"Of course my actions are my own."

She shook her head and crossed her arms tightly under her chest. "So then it was your decision to lie to me right to my face."

"About what?"

"It was your decision to abduct and harm an innocent creature then force it to fight for the public's entertainment?"

Kazuya shook his head. "The damned kangaroo again?"

"And a dinosaur? How is that even possible? How many codes of ethics did you break to create him, how many laws?"

"Are you after a confession? An apology? What?"

He sighed and leaned back in his chair. Having her in the room began to make him uncomfortable and he regretted letting her in, hated himself for having wanted to see her.

Jun inhaled deeply then rubbed her arms as she exhaled. "I don't want apologies." She looked down at the floor before looking at him again. "I just...all those decisions to harm, to exploit... It can't all be you."
"It is." Something in her eyes made him want to look away but he held her gaze.

"Maybe now, but you weren't always like this."

He knew what she wanted to hear. That he wasn't the monster that everyone else said he was, that the demon inside him was responsible for all the harm he'd caused; and maybe that was true. But there was no way to discern that now. And he was a Mishima. Heihachi was only a man and he was just as capable of evil as Kazuya.

He shrugged. "What do you want me to say? That I-" He was interrupted by a knock on the door. "Come in."

Ganryu opened the door and poked his head into the room. "Sorry to bother you, boss but I have a message for you." He held up a note.

Kazuya nodded and Ganryu stepped into the room and put the note on the desk before leaving. Kazuya picked it up and opened it immediately; he knew the sumo wouldn't have bothered him unless it was something important.

_Son,_

_Congratulations on hosting the blandest, most boring and lackluster event that has ever been held at the Mishima Hotel. Although, the participants are quite interesting, the lovely Miss Kazama in particular. Ask her if she is still interested in receiving private lessons from me._

_Heihachi Mishima_  

Devil's laugh echoed in Kazuya's head. **This has taken an unexpected turn.**

Kazuya stared at the note in his hand and reread it, then looked at Jun. There was slight apprehension in her eyes, almost as if she knew what was written on it. He stood up and walked toward her. "How long have you been seeing him behind my back?" He was barely able to keep his voice even; he felt his pulse racing as he pushed the piece of paper into Jun's hand.

_She's worried._ Devil taunted.

Jun hesitantly looked at the note, as she read it, her expression changed from confusion to irritation.

"I have nothing to hide," she spoke resolutely as she handed it back to Kazuya. "I'll tell you everything." When he remained motionless, she sighed and crumpled it up. "I haven't been seeing your father behind your back." She walked over to the wastebasket and dropped the note into it. "I saw him once and only for a few minutes, if I had known the type of person that he is, I would not have done it."

"How did you know where to find him?"

She spoke slowly. "Sometimes...I just get these feelings...like I should do something or go somewhere. I just followed my instinct."

"Your _instinct_ led you to one specific man in Tokyo? You just walked and happened upon him?"

"Yes."

Lies.
"That is impossible. Unless you were looking for him unless you had-"

"Impossible?" Jun crossed her arms and gave him a defiant look. "After everything that we've experienced together after I helped you get rid of that demon, you think finding someone through sheer instinct is impossible for me?"

**Got rid of me?** Devil laughed. **Not even close.**

Kazuya pinched the bridge of his nose before speaking. "...Let's say that's true-"

"It is."

"If you did just happen upon him why did he write that? Why did he ask if you're still interested in receiving private lessons?"

Jun blushed and looked down at her shoes as she rubbed her arms. "Because he offered."

"And why in the hell would he do that?"

"I performed a kata for him and he criticized my form...my fighting form."

"Why would you do that?"

"He was in a little dojo, I-I...I wanted to talk to him, see what he was like, I thought that maybe he could be of some help and-" She shook her head. "Wait, how did this turn into a conversation where I have to explain my actions?"

"You thought he could be of help? Help for what?"

"Help for you. To free you of Devil."

The defiance was gone and the look on her face had softened to concern, maybe even pity, but it was obvious that she was sincere. She had gone to Heihachi for help with pure intentions and that made Kazuya angry. She should have known better. He realized that he had put her on a pedestal and had not even known it, but she was just as naive as every other girl her age.

The anger mixed itself with disappointment and he didn't know which was worse.

"...You went to that man for help. The one person who is actually worse than I am."

She sighed. "I know that I shouldn't have, I know that now, but I was, I am desperate to help you. I hate knowing what he's doing to you, what he-"

"Heihachi?"

"No, Devil."

**Naive.**

He gave a short, wry laugh. "You hate what Devil is doing to me and you wanted Heihachi's help."

She looked flustered, her cheeks flushed. "Stop hinting at things, Kazuya, just talk. You keep interrupting me, belittling my efforts, my worries; just say what you have to say."

He took a step back and crossed his arms. "...I would not be here without Devil." The words sounded strange, forced coming from his mouth, but once he began, he couldn't stop the flow of
"If it wasn't for him I would have died twenty-three years ago. He came to my aid when I was dying; when I was bruised and bloodied, my body broken at the bottom of a ravine. He came to me and gave me life, gave me an opportunity for revenge against the man who put me there. My father. The man that you went to for help, the man who threw a five-year-old child down a cliff for committing the crime of existing. Even I haven't done something that low. So do you think he's going to help me in any way? No. What he wants, is to see his hands covered in my blood."

There was a long, heavy silence; it weighed him down. He didn't know if he had said it to hurt her, to humiliate her or if he had said it just to get it out, to make himself feel better somehow. But now he felt worse, everything felt worse. The silence and the tension made him feel apprehensive, vulnerable. His heart was racing, he made a fist with one hand only for the sake of doing something. Was it her presence that made him feel exposed? Was it the ugly truth that he had never dared to speak? Was it the acknowledgment that he needed Devil? That he owed him everything?

Jun stood motionless, her face expressionless and her gaze fixed on the desk. He wished he knew what she was thinking, but at the same time was glad that he didn't. Jun turned her back on Kazuya and quietly opened the door before stepping out and closing it behind her.

I was not expecting that. Devil mused. *Maybe honesty is the best policy, just don't make a habit of it.*

Kazuya stood in the middle of the room staring at the door half-expecting her to come back but the door remained closed and he remained enveloped in silence. Even Devil was suddenly quiet.

Over the years, he had replayed the fall onto the ravine in his head again and again, the moments before and the eternity after, he had seen it almost every night. Devil had shown him the images hundreds if not thousands of times, but he had never spoken of it out loud, had never told anyone what happened that night; had never told a soul that his father tried to murder him when he was a child.

He felt odd. Tired.

He looked at the door again and was half relieved and half disappointed that Jun had not come back.

He walked to the door and opened it, Ganryu stood at attention along with the two armed guards. "Drive me home, now."

Ganryu nodded. "You got it, boss."

He walked with his entourage toward the exit resisting the urge to look over his shoulder. He knew she would not be there and it was just as well.

One problem solved.
Anna looked undeniably magnificent. Her blue, silk gown drew eyes in envy and admiration, and all the attention made her feel like royalty. She was the picture of poise, grace, and confidence despite the zipper that was digging painfully into her back. There had been no time to have a proper tailor examine the dress before the banquet, and when she began to feel uncomfortable, she had worried that the zipper was coming undone. She then took Ganryu aside to ask for his help. The sumo stammered and blushed and apologized profusely when his finger accidentally made contact with her skin. Anna knew that she could have asked any of the female hotel staff for help, but watching Ganryu turn beet-red and sweaty was funny as hell. She knew it was mean-spirited on her part, but she was probably doing him a favor because it was more action than he was going to get that night. As one of Kazuya's most trusted men, and making as much money as he did, Ganryu should have been able to choose a different woman every night if he wanted, but he was too awkward, weird, and sometimes downright creepy. She did feel a slight twinge of guilt for embarrassing him, and truth be told, she was taking her frustrations with other men out on him.

Kazuya had been the first man to offend her by trying to whore her out to Lee in exchange for information. Then, when she made a discovery that no one could have foreseen, the fact that Heihachi's men had infiltrated the Zaibatsu, Kazuya undermined her victory by telling her that he wanted her to focus on finding the men who had made an attempt on his life. When she suggested that Heihachi was the most likely culprit, he wouldn't hear of it and put Bruce in charge of finding and dealing with the spies. The job should have gone to her.

The second man to cross her had been Lee. She didn't know how he could even entertain the idea that she was involved with Kazuya in anything other than a professional manner. She expected it from others, from people who didn't know her and who didn't know Kazuya, but coming from him it was not only infuriating, it was hurtful.

Now, she had her eye on the third man who was trying to ruin her night. The long-haired cop whose idea of formal wear was a darker shade of khaki. Lei Wulong had been trying to get close to Bruce the entire night, so far though, Bruce had proven sufficiently elusive. But now the party was winding down, the responsible fighters were going to their rooms to get an appropriate amount of rest while Paul Phoenix and his ilk had left the hotel to look for a better party. Kazuya was gone, the crowd was thinning, and soon Bruce would have no choice but to leave the banquet hall, Wulong would no doubt follow after him.

"Miss Williams?"

Anna fixed her eyes on a young woman in a hotel uniform. "Do you have my key, dear?"

She extended her hand and offered Anna a small envelope. "Yes."

Anna kept her eyes on Wulong as she took it, he had his back to her and was looking at Bruce, who was standing near the exit. "Do you see that handsome man with the long hair?" The hotel employee nodded. "I need you to tell him that his drink is ready at the bar."

"Now?"

"Yes."

The young woman walked toward Lei, and Anna moved swiftly toward Bruce. She took his arm and pulled him toward the door.
"What are you doing?" He resisted at first but walked with her after glancing at Wulong.

"I just need someone to walk me to the elevator, you're a gentleman, aren't you?" He eyed her warily but followed her lead.

When they stepped into the hallway, she slipped the key into the pocket of his jacket.

"What was that?"

"A key to a room one floor up. Don't get the wrong idea, I'm just saving your ass."

"From what?" He glanced over his shoulder as they neared the elevator.

Anna pushed the button on the panel next to the elevator door. "From that nosy son of a bitch. Don't worry, I'll get rid of him."

Bruce shook his head. "Then I'll owe you. I don't wanna owe you."

The doors opened, and she pushed him in. "Just go."

He stepped into the elevator with apparent reluctance, his arms crossed as the door closed.

Anna turned and walked quickly back to the banquet hall. She shifted her shoulder blades before entering to ease the discomfort of the dress. She opened the door and spotted Lei with his back against the bar lazily sipping a drink.

She sighed as she joined him at the bar. "We gotta stop meeting like this, Detective."

"It's Agent." Lei corrected with a smile. "So they sent you to get rid of me again?"

She shrugged and gave a short, little laugh. "Someone's gotta do it, and somehow I keep drawing the short straw."

Wulong laughed in return. "Imagine my surprise when I arrived at the bar, and there was no drink for me, I had to order my own. But don't worry, no need to apologize, this is so good I have no excuse to be upset." He took a small sip of his drink. "You guys really spare no expense."

Anna eyed the half-empty glass in his hand and shook her head. "A Mai Tai?" She scoffed. "Reminds me of Hawaii. I wish you were there."

"The only thing that's missing is the little umbrella-"

"I'm sure you're headed out, so don't let me keep you."

He took another sip. "I was hoping to stay a little longer, mingle a little more, I didn't have the opportunity to meet all the fighters."

"You'll get it tomorrow, you and I are the only participants left."

"I could have sworn there was one more…"

Anna straightened her posture as she felt the zipper digging into her skin again. "If you're talking about Bruce Irvin, he's left for the night."

"Doesn't like to party?"
"Maybe he's going to a party, maybe you should too, I'm sure a handsome man like you won't have any trouble getting lucky."

Lei blushed and continued to sip his drink. He looked like a dork, but he wasn't Ganryu, she wasn't going to be able to embarrass him out of the room. His nonchalance, coupled with the discomfort she was feeling nearly exhausted her patience.

"You know," Anna crossed her arms and looked him in the eye. "you should feel guilty."

"Why?"

"Because if I hadn't been busy dealing with you at the stadium today, I would have been able to do my job. I would have noticed that something was out of place, I would have put a stop to it, and an innocent man would be alive right now." She clenched her jaw and pursed her lips, angry at herself for the outburst of emotion.

"I was sorry to hear about that."

"So was his family."

Wulong's face took on a solemn expression. "It was a tragedy, but I'm glad there weren't more casualties, and I'm glad that the culprits have been apprehended."

"Yes, we all are."

He sipped his drink. "Very swift action on behalf of the local police force. Very efficient…"

"Of course, the eyes of the world are on Japan and Japan doesn't like to look bad; therefore, they act quickly and-"

"Make hasty and impulsive arrests." He sipped again.

Anna sighed. "Look, if you're going to try to interrogate me…"

"It's not an interrogation, I just want an honest opinion from an insider."

"On what?"

"As a tournament participant, I want to feel safe, as someone affiliated with a law enforcement agency, I want to know that the public is safe."

"They are, we all are."

"You truly believe that Earth Ethics, the environmentalist group concerned with protecting human and animal rights was responsible for the explosion?"

"Yes."

"Miss Williams, I have looked into their organization, into its members, there is no history of violence. They have their causes, their ideals, but they protect those by doing volunteer work, writing petitions, organizing peaceful protests-"

"If you know so much about everything and everyone, including me, then you must know where I grew up. Ever since I was a little girl, I have seen how far people will go to protect and uphold an ideal. I have watched as innocents suffer when a group decides to defend said ideal or prove a point or-"
"Fulfill a murder contract?"

She felt her blood run cold. "...What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Was he there for her? To bring her to justice for some wrong she'd committed in the past.

He shrugged. "Your father did have a...reputation. You said you've seen how far people can go, I just thought."

She clenched her fists to keep her hands from shaking. "We are done. Leave immediately."

"But I'm a participant."

"But you're not a hotel guest, you're staying at Sun Route Hotel, room 233."

"You do your homework."

"I'm very diligent."

"Well then, forgive me for imposing." He bowed. "Good luck tomorrow, Miss Williams."

"Break a leg, Officer. Please."

He gave her a bemused look as he turned toward the exit.

She was seething as she watched him leave. What did he know? Why was he really there? He was supposed to be investigating the death of Desmond Mullen, now he was interested in Bruce and possibly trying to find evidence on something Anna had done. Or was he trying to get her to talk? If so, about what?

She scanned the room. The guests were gone, the only ones left were the staff beginning the cleanup. As she walked toward the exit, the chaos of the day began to weigh her down, her steps felt heavy, and she wanted nothing more than to take off that dress.

Why would he specifically say murder contract? Was it really because Richard Williams had a reputation, as Wulong put it? Her finger hovered above the button to call the elevator as a thought sent her heart racing. Was he implying that there was a contract on Kazuya's life? She cursed as she pushed the button. Surely Wulong would warn him, even if he only suspected and didn't have any substantial evidence. That was his job. Wasn't it?

She took the elevator to the 31st floor then knocked on the door to Bruce's room. "It's me."

Bruce opened the door and gave her a cautious glance. "Is he gone?"

"Of course, are you going to let me in?" He stepped aside with some hesitance. "I guess."

"I really love the rooms in this hotel." She hid her anger and anxiety behind her best simile and opened the mini fridge taking out a bottle of water.

Bruce scoffed. "Yeah, this one has a lovely view of a construction site."

Anna shrugged. "I had to get this on very short notice, they can't all be winners. Do you want a drink?"

He pointed to her bottle of water. "I thought you'd go for something stronger."

She playfully put her hand on her hip. "Oh, I see, because I'm Irish."
Bruce sighed. "Are we really going there?"

"Jesus, learn to take a joke."

"I'm not in the mood for jokes, what did the agent want?"

She took a drink before answering. "He asked where you disappeared to, but that's it." She took another sip of water and watched Bruce as he furrowed his brow. "Are you going to tell me what that's all about?"

He scoffed. "I might one day. What else did he say?"

"He's suggesting that Earth Ethics was not responsible for the bomb, what do you think?"

He shrugged. "It's possible, it was all a little too tidy."

She nodded slowly. "...Some of the things he said made me think that he might suspect or maybe even has a reason to believe that there's a contract on Kazuya's life, and if that's the case…"

"That changes things."

Anna squeezed the bottle in her hand as her heart began to drum in her chest. What if Nina was there for Kazuya? She shifted her shoulders and stood up straighter as the zipper of her dress poked into her back again. She sipped her water and tried to look casual. "If that were the case, do you think it could be one of the participants, his old man maybe?"

Bruce shook his head. "Don't think so, not that I know much about him, but it seems like it's a job he'd want to do himself, face to face."

"Other than Heihachi, Michelle Chang is the only one with a motive."

"That we know of."

"True. Why is Nina here? Ganryu's taking Kazuya home right now, why don't we call him and have him spend the night there, it's not like he was going to spend it with anyone anyway."

Bruce laughed. "That's kinda harsh."

"You know it's true." She shifted her shoulders again. "Could you call him right now, this dress is killing me."

"Yeah."

Bruce undid the button on his suit jacket and and sat on the chair in front of the desk. He took a small, black notebook from his inside pocket before picking up the receiver.

Anna took off her shoes then opened the wardrobe and pulled out a fluffy, white robe, seeing that Bruce was already talking on the phone she made her way to the bathroom.

What if it's Nina?

She closed the door and began to undo the bow on her dress before reaching for the accursed zipper. She had seen Nina talking to Kazuya's secretary in the bathroom, it was unusual, but did it mean anything? She slowly shook her head as she let the dress fall in a heap around her. As much as she hated to admit it, if someone had hired Nina to kill Kazuya, and Anna wasn't aware of it; he'd be dead. There would have been no warnings, no failures, and she certainly wouldn't be trying to get...
information from one of Kazuya's employees where they could be seen so easily.

She smiled as she slipped into the robe. *There's no way in hell, it can't be Nina.* She felt her muscles relax at the thought.

When she went back into the room, Bruce was jotting something down in his notebook. "Done?"

He nodded without looking up at her and continued writing. "The big guy will stay at the Mishima Estate for the night and drive back with him tomorrow morning."

"I feel a little guilty now, it's not how *I'd* want to spend my night."

"Nah, it makes him feel important." He closed the notebook and turned in his chair to look at Anna, he furrowed his brow and crossed his arms when he took in her appearance. "I didn't know this was your room."

She laughed. "It's not, I'm staying in one of the honeymoon suites at the Imperial Hotel."

"Then why…"

"Am I wearing a robe? My dress was hurting me, I have a big, red mark on my back."

Bruce chuckled. "I'll never understand why you ladies put up with all that."

"Well, of course, you wouldn't, all you have to do is put on a suit, and you're good to go. It's not fair."

"Oh, come on, you don't have to go through all that trouble, you'd look good in anything."

Anna smiled when she saw the way he looked at her. It had been a roller coaster of a day and now, she had the perfect opportunity to control Bruce. Or to get him on her side at the very least. She walked toward him and stood directly in front of him, then sat on his lap and wrapped her arms around his neck.

"What are you doing?"

She slowly ran her fingers over his arms and shoulders. "I have all this energy to burn...and you know we both deserve a little fun after the day we've had." She spoke softly as she slid her hands down his chest and his abdomen. "I was almost blown up, remember?" She rested her hands on his belt and ran her thumb over the buckle then looked at him with a devious grin.

"Is this some kind of game?" Bruce gave her a stern look. "Because I don't do games."

She rolled her eyes. "Oh, come on. What did I say about being all work and no play?"

"You didn't say anything." He looked into her eyes for a moment. "...If we do this, it's not going to change our working relationship or the dynamics around here."

She laughed lightly, "Of course not." They they always said that, but it always changed things. If she had not been involved with Lee, who knew how many times he would have tried to sabotage her as Kazuya's right hand. "So...am I going to get a yes?" She felt butterflies in her stomach when his fingers caressed her exposed lower thighs.

"You're different from other women." He sounded amused as he looked at her with a smile that matched her own.
"I'm really not. I'm just not afraid to go after the things I want."

What she wanted was a victory. And it was close, it was finally within her grasp. In a few hours, she would redeem herself in the eyes of the world, would humiliate her sister in the arena the same way Nina had humiliated her in the previous tournament. But for now it was a private victory, one that would remain unnoticed until Bruce found himself out of the Zaibatsu and Anna took her rightful place next to Kazuya as his most trusted employee.

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