Dame-Tsuna, Right?

by Nobody_Inhere

Summary

Reborn was sent to train Iemitsu's son as the Tenth Boss of Vongola.

He found Tsunayoshi didn't need any training.

Now, all he needed to do was to convince the teenager to accept the mantle.

It should have been easy.

Notes

First Chapter: The Decisive Moment

See the end of the work for more notes
Première Chapitre: Le Moment Decisif

“I’m terribly sorry, but we already have someone else in mind to be a tutor.” Said Sawada Nana sweetly to the baby at her door.

Reborn frowned. While Iemitsu had talked about how much his wife would be delighted to have a personal tutor for their no-good son, Reborn should have known better than expect a smooth transition.

Still, he wasn’t the Number One Hitman In The World for nothing, and had prepared accordingly. “Please, Signora Sawada.” he said, tending her an envelope. “I came as a personal favor for Iemitsu. He told me his son needed a lot of help with school, and that I was his last hope to, and I quote, “make his Tuna-fishie a strong man like his Papa.” He said, cringing internally at that last bit, but it was a calculated maneuver. Hopefully, it would buy him enough time to convince the woman to hire him.

Nana frowned as she read her husband’s letter, but returned to her placid demeanor as soon as she finished. “Well, I guess I can ask Tsu-kun to meet you, at least. It’s not like you can force him to obey, right?” She laughed at her own joke, which made Reborn chuckle himself. The woman turned, beckoning him with one hand. “Here, sit on the counter as I go get him.”

At home this late on a school day? Reborn thought, sadistically gleeful even as he thanked the woman and sat in a stool. Once Sawada-san had left the room, he took out a small electronic and turned it on, fiddling with the dials for a bit. He took a look at the display, before nodding and putting it away in satisfaction. He would have liked to make a thorough sweep of the room, but there was no time, and the device only showed frequencies consistent with standard-use Vongola bugs, so it would have to do for now.

“Tsu-kun will come down shortly.” said the woman, re-entering the kitchen with a mischievous smile on her face. “Would you like something in the meantime? I have tea and cookies.” She offered, puttering around the kitchen.

“Espresso if you have it, madam.” He answered, taking out a small folder and reviewing the meager information he had been able to gather. Once again, Reborn cursed the uncanny ability Iemitsu had to yell to all and sundry he had a cute little Tuna-fish for a son, and simultaneously have absolutely zero relevant facts.

He sighed, scanning the first page.


If it wasn’t for the grid organizing the information, it would hardly cover half a page. Rebor huffed and flicked to the next one, which held a quick overview of the kid’s academic record. Bad grades all around since kindergarten, then a slow and steady rise from the start of elementary, only to drop sharply back down, hovering just above failing. What really worried Reborn were the two long absences: The first one was two months long, just after the kid had entered elementary, having been caused by an accident at school. The second one was last year, almost six months long, with no obvious cause. There had been a note about the kid presenting some kind of test and claiming homeschooling, but it had been denied, so Tsunayoshi had been forced to repeat the
The most worrying thing was, the records didn’t have any more detail than that, and even the best of Vongola’s informants were unable to find anything more substantial, and Iemitsu swore up and down that there were no signs of tampering of the records. But even so, at best, that meant there was someone with a vested interest to keep Tsunayoshi as anonymous as possible.

Someone not from Vongola.

The third and last page was a ‘report’ from Iemitsu himself, along with a photo of Tsunayoshi. What was intelligible under the coffee-cup stains, handwritten notes and sentimental ramblings painted the picture of a wimpy, no-good kid who had accepted his lot in the lowest rung of the food chain, a momma’s boy and pretty much useless.


He eyed the three pages and sighed, putting them back on his folder when he heard footsteps come down the stairs. He quickly put everything incriminating away and took out another folder, this one black and branded with the Vongola coat of arms, and sat down with his best innocent expression.

Sawada-san also heard them, turning back at the door from her place near the coffee machine.”Ah, Tsu-kun. This is Reborn-san, the prospective tutor.” She said with a smile. “Tea?”

“Please, kaa-chan” said a soft voice behind him.

Reborn took a look at his student, and nearly fell off his chair.

Maybe baka-Iemitsu was onto something when he decided to keep his son off the Mafia, he thought dazedly.

Tsunayoshi cocked his head to the side, suspicion morphing to concern in the face of Vongola Primo. The resemblance was uncanny, taking into account how many generations were between the two. Reborn vowed that he was going to have words with the Head of the DEDEF, because seriously, a photo of a chubby-faced, wide-eyed ten years old clinging to the skirts of his mother did NOT, in ANY way, indicate that the same kid was a carbon copy of the founder of the most powerful Famiglia in the world.

“Are you feeling well?” asked the kid, taking a cautious step towards him, one hand raised. His eyes were a deep honey color, sharp as they looked him up and down. “We can do this some other day, if you are feeling ill.”

“I’m fine.” Reborn snapped, making a mental note to get the kid back for the disrespect. He was the best Hitman in the world, he was always fine, and pointedly ignored how the kid could read him so easily.

Tsunayoshi wavered, like he wanted to step nearer, but eventually he lowered his hand, marching to the opposite seat from Reborn, a long ponytail flapping behind him.

He took the seat just as Nana finished, and accepted his teacup with a smile. Reborn nodded his thanks to the woman, who sat besides her son, sipping her own cup.

They sat in silence for a few moments, the three of them seizing each other.

“So, mom said you were a tutor?” said Tsunayoshi, breaking the silence.
Reborn nodded. “I am one of the best tutors in the world, and I have decided to take you in as my student.” He said in a tone that bore no discussion.

The kid frowned, taking another sip of the tea as he studied Reborn over the rim. “How come? There must be a lot of other people interested.” He put the teacup down. “I will be honest: we aren’t rich, Reborn-san, so I doubt we could pay your fees, and I doubt the Sawada family has any connections that could be of use to such a prestigious tutor.” He said, palms up on the table.

“I am here as a favor to your father, so that’s nothing you have to be concerned about.”

“Of course I have to be concerned about it!” Countered Tsunayoshi, annoyance seeping into his tone. “There are logistics to take into account, for example: Is food included in the deal, or do we have to feed you? Are you going to buy your own stuff, or should we? Where would you stay? What other expenses could be incurred? And those are only the ones off the top of my head.” He said plainly.

“Not to mention” continued the kid with a pointed look, not quite interrupting but not letting Reborn a word in edgewise. “That we don’t know who you are, or who asked you to come here.” He ducked his head a little. “If you could give us some insight, that would be much appreciated”

Reborn took one long look at the kid, and made a mental note to incinerate the reports he had been given. Taking a page from the folder, he gave it to Nana. “Those are my credentials. I’m sure a call to any number there would be enough to verify my identity.” The lie came easily to Reborn, even as he felt the Mist flames imbued on the paper waver, before settling around the woman like a cloak. They were an insurance policy, one that he thought wouldn’t need but was glad to have brought with him. Visconti used them whenever he had to infiltrate a non-mafia place, a simple illusion to make the target more suggestible to his words.

Nana’s expression tensed for a moment, before melting into an excited smile. “Tsu-kun! These credentials are amazing!” She exclaimed, prompting Tsunayoshi to give a concerned look to his mother. The woman scooted closer to him, and showed him the paper. “Look closely! See the name there? Do you think that’s the same Dino Cavallone?”

“From Cavalleria Banca” confirmed Reborn, stomping on a superior smirk as Tsunayoshi’s eyes flickered with interest. “I tutored him for some years during his teens.”

“That’s so amazing!” gushed Sawada san. “And this one?”


“That’s right. I taught there for some years, before I started Tutoring privately.”

“And what exactly did you teach there? It says here you lasted less than 5 years.” Said Tsunayoshi.

Sawada-san nodded. “Good question, Tsu-kun. What are your specialties Reborn-san?”

“Mathematics.” He answered immediately, taking out a diploma from the folder. “I have a Ph.D. on theoretical maths. I also have three Masters in History, two on Italy and one on World History, and I also have degrees in Chemistry, Theater, Literature, Physical Education, and Art.” He turned to look at the kid. “I had to leave due to personal issues.”

“This is quite an impressive resume!” Gushed Sawada-san, as she flipped the paper and started reading the second sheet. “Research on Oxford…. Guest Speaker on a Versailles exhibition… Gosh, you are so worldly, Reborn-san!”
“But there isn’t anything on that list even remotely connected with actual Education.” Said Tsunayoshi gently, which made Sawada-san deflate for a bit.

“That’s true…” Sighed Sawada-san, before perking right back up. “But then again, He does have experience, and most of his knowledge would be useful for you, no? And” she said, pointing with a finger. “His specialty IS math, which is your worst subject overall.”

Tsunayoshi huffed. “I would do a lot better if the teacher didn’t hate me.”

If Reborn had blinked, he wouldn’t have caught the utter fury that shadowed Sawada-san for a moment. But just as fast as it had come, it went away, leaving a bone-deep sadness and regret that didn’t fit her at all.

“All the more reason to accept tutoring, Tsu-kun.” she said softly, taking one of the kid’s hands.

So Tsunayoshi was having trouble with a teacher in particular. Either that, or he was an extremely accomplished liar. Before meeting the kid, Reborn would have been more inclined to believe the second theory, since math wasn’t the only thing the kid was failing at. But in the mafia, it wasn’t uncommon to have teacher show favor to one student while sabotaging others, so Reborn would give the kid the benefit of the doubt, at least for the moment.

Tsunayoshi thought about it. “We have to make sure the certifications are real, first.” He said slowly.

The woman and her kid traded a Look, before the kid nodded, making the woman beam. “Let me get the phone~.” She said, trailing off in a note, and with a spring on her step, she went out of the kitchen.

Tsunayoshi watched her leave with a soft smile on his lips, before shaking his head an taking a sip of his tea, apparently oblivious, or deliberately ignoring, the hitman in front of him.

“Mom is pretty excited.” he said after putting his tea down, and taking a cookie from the platter. His words were slow but steady, like he was thinking exactly how to phrase them. “She had been talking about having me do better in school. This is about the best timing you could have hoped for, Tutor-san.” He said, finally looking back at him with a curiously blank look.

“Really?” Asked Reborn with interest.

The kid nodded slowly, still looking at him. “We already had someone else in mind, but he is… busy at the moment. The earliest he said he could come was ten months, and that was being unrealistically optimistic.” He swirled the tea on his cup, before finishing it in one big gulp. “So if you impress her? It’s almost a certainty you’d stay.”

Reborn smirked “It’s a done deal.”

Tsunayoshi cocked his head to the side. “You… are pretty sure about this.” He said, gesturing between himself and the baby.

Reborn straightened, and raised his voice so it was easily heard across the hall. “I am the best opportunity you will ever have, Tsunayoshi-kun. I will make you the leader of the new generation.”

The kid stared at him for a couple of heartbeats, before turning away with a snort. “God, you are full of yourself.” He said as he took the plates on the table, and started washing them.
“Just to be clear,” he said, talking over the rush of water. “I’m giving you a chance because I promised mom to.” He turned off the water and grabbed a nearby rag. “You have six months to convince me to keep you.”

The next second, Tsunayoshi face planted onto the counter, a heavy weight on the back of his head.

“You have severely misunderstood the situation.” Spoke Reborn, his terse voice a contrast with the shoe grinding on the back of Tsuna’s head. “My presence here is not dependent on your whims, child.”

Then he jumped back to his seat, looking through his files just as Sawada-san rejoined them in the kitchen, where she promptly snatched Tsuna up and began twirling around.

“Oh, Tsu-kun! Fate has smiled upon us!” she cried joyously as she spun, ignoring her child’s attempt to get out of her grip. “If Reborn-san is half as good as the school says, he’s perfect to teach you!”

Tsunayoshi wriggled out of her arms and gasped for breath a couple times, before turning to his mother. “Fine. Fine! I’ll take him.” he said, and her smile became incandescent. “But I need to get to school soon, or Kyoya will have my hide.”

Sawada-san sighed. “All right, I’ll start settling him down. Would you please follow me, Reborn-san?”

Reborn smiled up at the woman “Molto Grazie.” He finished the cup of espresso. “But I would like to talk with Tsunayoshi-kun alone.”

“But Kyo-”

“I’ll call Hibari-kun for you.” Said Nana, starting to go out to the phone.

“And we’ll talk in your room” He said, jumping off his chair and starting to march upstairs, not bothering to pay attention to Tsunayoshi’s annoyed mutterings.

They reached the room, and Reborn closed the door, feeling jittery and fighting a bloodthirsty smile as he turned to his student, who’s sitting on the only chair in the room and eyeing him warily. At the very least, the kid had good instincts.

“Well’ he says, blinking innocently up at the brunet. “Now that we are alone, I can speak clearly to you”.

Reborn moved, channeling but a fraction of his power, and his feet connected with a satisfactory “whomp”, sending his useless student to the floor.

“I am Reborn, the Best Hitman in the World.” He says, letting Leon crawl into his hand and transform into his pistol. “My true line of work is assassination.”

He pointed the gun at the kid’s forehead. “And I’m here to make you a Mafia Boss” he finished with a flourish.

Tsunayoshi looked at the barrel of the gun, then at the baby. “Are you joking?” He asked, slowly moving a hand and touching the muzzle of the weapon.

In return, Reborn shots the impudent little brat, and he dodged.
It was clumsy, and graceless, but he dodged, and Reborn doesn’t know if he’s feeling giddy or murderous.

They stared at each other for a moment, before Tsunayoshi sighed and stood up from where he had sprawled. “Guess not”.

And then leaves him alone in the room without so much as a by your leave.

Reborn adjusted his fedora, the hat shadowing his already dark eyes. This kid was A Problem.

Iemitsu was going to pay for this misinformation in blood. There was no way this kid was a civilian, not with how he had dodged his shot, and at such close range too. Hell, he wasn’t even sure the kid was the same kid anymore. Sure, he looked like him, but Reborn had met a lot of skilled infiltrators, and Mist Flames existed. A disguise for the general shape, some internal Flame to take care of the details, and no-one would know.

And his eyes… It had been only a second, but Reborn had seen the honey-like eyes become a bright carnelian, keen and sharp and dangerous.

No way a civilian would have those eyes.

Reborn took off his hat and straightened it, before the creases were able to set in. Leon crawled from his hand, to his shoulder, and licked his cheek, receiving a pat and a smile from the Arcobaleno.

“I’m fine Leon, just a bit ticked off.”

Leon transformed into a hammer, before transforming back into a chameleon and giving Reborn a meaningful look.

“No yet Leon.” said Reborn, fighting off a smirk.

Time to find his troublesome student.

Tsunayoshi forced his hands to unclench before his fingernails dug into his skin. That would make him bleed, which would make his friends worry, and then he would have a babysitting entourage for the rest of the week, which he does not need right now.

Tsuna sighed and ignored the faint presence of Sun Flames in favor of the much more welcome sight of Namimori Middle’s gates.

“Cub, you are supposed to be excused for today.”

“...Aaaaaamnndddd there it is.” Tsuna thought, forcing a smile to his face even as the prefect jumped down from his perch in one of the trees, the white and red armband a striking contrast against the black jacket flapping in the wind. “Hello, Kyoya-san.”

Hibari just looked at him, a scowl on his face and arms crossed, the lethal glint of a tonfa peeking from under the cuffs of the perfectly ironed white shirt. “Students may only be excused in case of sickness or family emergencies.” Recited the prefect, still glaring at the brunet.
“Mom called a home tutor.” Explained Tsunayoshi quickly “But he arrived way earlier than expected, and she didn’t want to risk my chances of getting extra help, apparently the man is in high demand. He taught at the Scuola.” He said, sending a meaningful look at the teenager, whose eyebrows climbed up before a razor-sharp smirk took place on his face.

“I see.” Hibari turned, walking back to the building. “Get to class.” He shot back, making Tsuna chuckle, walking into the school and taking the stairs two at the time, reaching his classroom.

Tsunayoshi took a centering breath, and schooled his expression in a neutral mask, opening the door. Kobayashi-sensei flicked his eyes up to him, frowning and making a gesture for him to come in, before returning to the lecture. Tsuna stepped inside, seeing him marking him in the assistance book, and his fist clenched once again. He’ll ask Kyoya to fix the records later, but for now, he just walked to the back of the classroom.

“Yo, Tsu.” Says Takeshi quietly, turning his attention from his doodling to his friend, smile becoming strained upon seeing him up close. “Did something happen?”

“New tutor” Tsuna huffed out, hunching down on his seat, making his friend lean over him with a concerned look. “Nothing happened, so quit your face. It’s just…” Tsuna could only sigh and hunch even lower, lifting his left hand and extending his pinky, showing a golden ring.

“Oh.” Is the only thing the carefree young man said, eyes going sharp and giving another, slower once-over to his friend.

“Don’t, okay?” Said Tsuna abruptly, giving him a Look Takeshi had come to fear. “The guy was weirdly insistent about this, and I’d rather get whatever information we can from him first.”

“If you say so…” says Yamamoto, closing his eyes and dropping his shoulders, his signature smile becoming much more strained. “But I’m going to your house after this. I want to meet this tutor person myself.”

“I was afraid you’d do that.” Muttered the brunet, resting his face on his arms. Seriously, his friends were way too damn overprotective, and while he was supremely grateful he had them in his life, sometimes he could not help but wish they would calm down on the mother henning.

“Hey, cheer up.” Said Takeshi, giving him a pat on the back. “If worst comes to worst, you can sic my dad and Kyoya’s mom on him.”

“I don’t think so, Keshi.” Said Tsunayoshi, body tensing. “His name’s Reborn.”

The rest of the class would not be able to explain later what exactly had happened, but all of the sudden, the lights seemed dimmer, and the air tasted stale and sharp, like the air before a storm. Those who were paying attention would handwave their misting breath as a trick of the light.

But none of them would be able to forget the icy dread that pooled on their stomach, how their lungs just plain refused to move, choking Kobayashi-sensei as he tried to form words, because there was something there, something dangerous, something that would tear them to shreds if they drew any kind of attention.

And then the moment passed.

Kobayashi-sensei cleared his throat, taking a drink from his thermos and continuing as normal, the students rubbing their head or flexing their hands, trying to shake off the numbness that had crept in.
“I see.” Said Takeshi, voice just as cold as the ice covering the page he had been using. Calmly, he took the page and crumpled it, frost falling and melting before touching the floor, and thrown with perfect accuracy into the trash bin near the door, getting an annoyed look from the teacher. Takeshi answers it with his own winning grin, before dismissing it from his mind as he looked at the brunet. “What does he want?”

“Make me a mafia boss”

Takeshi couldn’t help the outburst of giggles that followed.

Class finished, and both boys were getting their stuff when they were joined by two girls.

“Are you okay, Tsu?” Asked Kyoko, sweet chocolate eyes roaming over him, looking for any kind of injury.

He shook his head, books under an arm. “Yah, I’m cool. Keshi here just got emotional.” He said, giving his friend a narrow-eyed glare, to which Takeshi smiled genially.

“Well the news are not exactly good so…”

“News? What news?” Demanded Hana, crossing her arms and sending the two boys a glare, making them wince.

“Don’t get mad at me, I just found out today.” Tsunayoshi discreetly got behind the taller boy, leaving him to face the brunt of the woman’s ire, all the while giving her one of his best disarming smiles.

Hana just glared harder “Out with it, baka-Tsuna.”

“Mom got me a new tutor. He’s staying at my house.”

“And?” She said, clenching her hands on forearms. It’s never a good sign that Tsuna gets evasive.

“His name’s Reborn.”

Kyoko gasped, turning to Hana who was sporting the same huge eyes as her friends, her nails digging on her skin.

“Shit. Are you okay? What I am saying, of course you are okay, you wouldn’t be here otherwise.” She hunched down and lashed with a hand, dragging him until her lips were right by his ear, all while eyeing the windows and the door like they had personally offended her. “We need to get you out of here” she hissed, “somewhere far and safe. Maybe we can start calling the debts, and we have to do something with your mother, but then Yamamoto-san is going to get involved, and - “

”Hana!” Exclaimed Tsunayoshi, cutting the rambling girl off and putting his hands on her shoulders. “Hana,” He continued, softer now. “It’s ok. I don’t know what his thing is, but he’s not here to harm me. He wants me to become a Mafia Boss.”

Hana blinked twice, her face going tight for a moment before she doubled over in a fit of giggles, her arms wrapping around her middle as she shook, drawing some weird looks from a couple of stragglers, who then finished exiting the classroom, leaving the group alone.
“Ciaossu!”

The four teenagers turned to look at the baby standing on Tsuna’s desk.

“Wha - How did you get there?” exclaimed Hana, snapping straight and scrutinizing the baby standing on the desk.

“It is a se~cret~” He sing-songed, bringing one finger in front of his lips and winking, which made Hana snort and Kyoko squee.

“Oh, you are so cute!” Cooed the smaller girl, coming nearer. “May I carry you?”

Reborn smiled blindingly “No.”

“Awww” Kyoko said, pouting, and dropping her shoulders.

“What about a trade?” He proposed. “You tell me who you are and how you know of me, and I will let you carry me.”

“Of course!” She said, clapping her hands. Behind her, both men sighed and facepalmed, while Hana arched an eyebrow at her friend. “I am Sasagawa Kyoko, pleasure to meet you!” She said, doing a full 90 angle bow. “And these are my friends: Yamamoto Takeshi”

“Yo!”

“ - Kurokawa Hana - “

“Hi”

“- And Sawada Tsunayoshi. But I guess you already met him, since you are his tutor and all”

The baby nodded, but didn’t move. “And you know me how…?”

“Everybody knows about the Greatest Hitman in the World!” She said, a huge smile on her face. “Even though the stories never said anything about a baby. But I guess you’d want that secret, ne?” She finished with a wink.

“I have told you, that’s just a stupid urban legend.” said Hana rolling her eyes. “Though I have to give you props, kid, your disguise is a dead ringer for the description.” She said, giving him a thumbs up. “Could have fooled me and everything”.

“Thank you.” Said the baby, hiding his twitching hand.

“So can I hold you now?” Asked Kyoko, an eager grin on her face as she made grabby motions.

The little hitman shrugged. “If you want”.

He was immediately snatched off the top of the desk and comfortably nestled into the crook of the girl’s arm. Reborn turned to look at her. “That was… Pretty fast” he said, not bothering to keep his interest out of his voice.

“I’m sorry! Did I hurt you?” She asked, her pretty smile changing into a concerned frown as she tucked him more into her arms, making sure to be supporting his neck and putting her other forearm under his knees, “Is this better now?”

“I’m fine.” He said, filling this detail for later. It was hard to catch him by surprise, and civilians
rarely were that fast, so he hadn’t been expecting it.

Tsunayoshi, Reborn decided, had some very interesting friends. The other kid had demonstrated some very potent killer intent, and what appeared to be a natural ability for Rain Flames, and this girl seemed to be shaping up to be a possible Sun. He turned to look at the dark-haired girl, eager to see what she was going to do. “Where are you going now?”

Hana shot Tsunayoshi a look, but he shrugged his shoulders. “We go to the cafe.”

“I can’t go today.” Said Yamamoto suddenly, receiving a puzzled look from Tsunayoshi.

“But I thought you wanted to meet him…?” Asked Tsuna, vaguely gesturing to Reborn.

Takeshi shrugged. ”Well, yes, but I remembered I have to help my old man today. Maybe we can play together tomorrow!” He said with a smile.

“Sure thing.” Answered the baby. “It will be an interesting day”

“Then it will be just Tsuna and Kyoko today. Are you okay with that?” Hanna asked. “It’s not very fun, and they won’t be able to look after you then.”

“Sure! I’d love a cup of coffee.” Said Reborn with his best innocent expression.

“I… Don’t think they’d let us serve you coffee.” said Kyoko, wincing and darting a look at Tsuna. “The cakes, on the other hand, are an absolute delight”

Reborn didn’t answer, merely frowned at it, but decided it wasn’t worth to make a scene over it. “All right.” He said, sighing. “But they better be as good as you say, or Tsuna will pay the consequences.” He threatened, making the girl laugh.

Kyoko smiled. “They are the best there are. Promise.”

Reborn had to admit, as he took another spoonful of a deliciously spongy angel cake, that the cakes were, in fact, a delight.

“See? I know what I’m talking about, I am a total cake connoisseur.” Kyoko boasted over her own cake, a Chocolate Monstrosity consisting of 16 different chocolates. Reborn had taken one look at it and vowed to never go near the thing.

He didn’t comment, instead concentrated on polishing what was left of his own cake as Kyoko waved Tsuna over.

He went, a smile on his lips and a tray on his left hand “Was everything to your liking?” He asked, taking both dishes off the table, and setting down two glasses, one with soda and one with milk. “Will there be anything else?” He smiled, taking out a notepad and pen from his white apron.

“No, that’s fine. Thank you.” Answered the girl with a giggle. “And everything was delicious as always.”

“I am glad. Would you like your check now?”

“Yes please.” Said Kyoko, taking out her wallet, leaving about twice as much for the bill.

Tsuna took it, smile never faltering “Thank you very much. I hope your visit had been satisfactory,
and to see you soon”

“You are welcome!” She beamed, watching as her friend left to leave the tray behind the bar, and made his rounds to the rest of the tables.

“I didn’t know he had a job” said Reborn, putting down his soda and keeping watch over his student.

Kyoko smiled. Contrary to the wide, luminous smiles she had been giving, this was small, and dim, and made her look so sad Reborn almost regretted asking. “It’s... a new development” she said, voice small but firm.

And that only made Reborn more curious, but even he knew when to not push it. And although Kyoko was doing an exemplary effort to keep her composure, her hands were starting to tremble.

So instead, he asked “Do you work with him here too?”

She nodded “Most of us do. Keshi comes when his dad’s restaurant is slow, and Hana-chan and Onii-san have Saturday and Sunday. Most of us have shifts during the week. There are a few others, but they are very intermittent.”

“And you get that much traffic?” He asked, looking around the comparatively tiny shop.

She smiled, “Oh yes! We are one of the best tourist spots…” She trailed off, catching sight of something outside. Reborn turned back to the terrace, where a group of five - no, six students of Namimori middle were making themselves at home, until one of the waiters stopped them. The entire laid-back demeanor stopped, and all of them -three girls and three boys- seemed to have ganged up on the poor server.

There was a clatter and, by the time Reborn looked back, Kyoko had stood up, back disappearing into the backstore. Looking around, people were starting to look up at the teens, most of the patrons glaring or sneering, but a few looked squeamish, alternating between the terrace and the door, like they were planning on running.

Unable hear what was happening from his table, he hopped off his seat and climbed into the vent ducts, navigating them until he found the one vent going outside, just over the table. Leon, ever the loyal pet, transformed into a small camera, connected to a tv, that was easy enough to slide out.

“I told you, Midori-san, you can’t stay here.” Said the server, back straight and arms crossed, staring severely down at the girl in front of him.

“And I told you I don’t care.” Said ‘Midori-san’, huffing “I want cake, and you have the best cakes in town. Therefore, I will eat my cake here” She finished with a sniff.

“You were banned, and you still need to pay for the last display you and your friends destroyed the last time” He answered between clenched teeth. “So please vacate the premises.”

“Or what? You’ll call the police?” Said the boy with a red bandana “Please do so, maybe then you will be able to clean this place of filth.” He said, spitting right at the feet of Tsunayoshi, who had just arrived at the scene, about four more servers behind him.

Tsunayoshi merely narrowed his eyes, looking between the glob of saliva and the boy “As charming as ever, Mochida-san.”

The boy smirked widely, showing his teeth. “Dame-Tsuna! How’s the runt doing?”
“I was doing well before now. What are you doing here? Yawaru-san has not been repaid from the cakes you ruined last time.” He said in an even voice, eyes firmly planted on Mochida.

“Mi-chan wanted cake, so stop acting like a person and go fetch her one of your best.” Said the long-haired girl, who had managed to snatch a chair and was comfortably scrolling through her phone. “And get me a creme brule. Ko-chan, same as always?”

Ko-chan was still standing, hands wringing nervously inside her long sweater sleeves. “N-no, thank you Riku-san” she said, even as she stole a glance at Tsunayoshi, who still had to look away from Mochida.

Rika-san rolled her eyes, adjusting the shades on her head. “Suit yourself.” Then she glared at Tsunayoshi. “Well, what are you waiting for? Shoo.”

Tsunayoshi didn’t move. “We’ll serve you when the damages have been repaid. Until then, you are persona non-grata here, and if you keep being difficult we will be forced to take drastic measures.” he said softly.

“I’ll show you drastic measures!” Said Mochida, swinging a bokken towards him at the same time the other two boys moved to the sides.

Tsunayoshi however was unmoved. The bokken was easily blocked by a broom one of the other servers held up, and the other two boys were blocked in by the rest of the servers.

“I hope I am clearer now” said Tsunayoshi on the silence that ensued, the same bright carnelian from before now boring into Mochida. “If you don’t leave, we will kick you out.”

Mochida barked a laugh, but he took a step back, rising the sword close to his chest. “Fine! This is a shit place anyway.” Then he turned back to Midori. “We’ll get you some cake from somewhere else” He said, snagging her hand and pulling her as he started walking away, ignoring Midori’s whining of “But I want it NOW!”

Rikka-san sighed, locking her phone and standing up, giving Tsunayoshi a look that could curdle milk “You’ll pay for this, Dame-Tsuna. Come on Ko-chan, Tora-kun, Sasuke-kun.”

She stood up, slinging her pack on her left shoulder as Ko-chan swiftly went to her side, the other two boys going after them.

Tsunayoshi followed the girl with his eyes until they reached the end of the street, and disappeared over the corner. Once they were gone, he let out a short breath, turning to face the rest of the servers. “Thanks everyone for your help. Please go back to your stations.” He said, voice even, but loud enough to reverberate through the place.

There was a general murmur of agreement as the servers went back, most of them sending concerned looks at him, one or two brave enough to give him a reassuring squeeze. Tsuna smiled at some of them, reassuring them he was fine, until Kyoko finally arrived with an older man in tow.

“Ah, so you took care of them.” Said the girl.

Tsunayoshi nodded “Yeah. They didn’t try to pull anything today, thank the Gods for small mercies.” Then he turned to the man, who shrank back at the steely gaze. “And what were you doing, Fukuoka-san? I distinctly remember telling you to not leave the front alone while in business hours.” He said, voice silky and cold as ice.
Reborn watched as the man, who had to be at least twice Tsunayoshi’s age, sputtered and blushed. “I didn’t! I went to the back to check if we were stocked on a couple cakes and couldn’t hear…” The man trailed off at the unimpressed look Tsuna sent him, before he turning to Kyoko.

“Found him with the door of the office closed and locked.” She said, shrugging her shoulders at the betrayed look the man gave her.

Tsunayoshi pinched the bridge of his nose, brows furrowing. “This is the second time, Fukuokasan. Please get your stuff from the back office, and turn in your key at the end of the shift. I’ll give you your check today.”

And with that, the kid turned back in, leaving the man with a white face and clenched fists. Kyoko gave the man a hasty bow and returns inside, but by that time Reborn is back on their table, finishing his soda.

“So, what was that about?” He asked casually, Leon crawling inside his suit.

Kyoko shook her head. “Some really nasty people from school. Since Tsuna started working here, they have come at least once a week to cause trouble.” She frowned, biting her lip. “I wish we could do something about them. Something permanent.” She said, her tone of voice suddenly growing darker, shoulders hunching and her hands tensing into claws around her own drink.

Reborn barely suppressed a smirk. He could work with that. “I could help with that.”

She looked up through her bangs, eyes gleaming with interest. “Oh?”

“I need to… assess what my student can do. This would be a good test.”

She smiled, the darkness around her suddenly dissipating. “That would be much appreciated. Tsuna… he sometimes underestimates how he influences us”

“How so?” Asked the baby, tilting his head.

But the girl, instead of talking, shook her head. “It’d be better if you saw it for yourself. That way you can for your own opinion.”

Reborn crossed his arms, mulling over this. “Fine” he said in the end. “But I’ll come after you if I don’t like what I see.”

“Fair enough.” she said, finishing her drink. “Are you going to be fine?” she asked then ”Since Tsuna just fired the manager, he most likely will have to stay and close, usually at seven or so. Do you want me to take you home?”

“No, I like to people watch, and cafes are the best places to do so.”

She smiled, taking out a notebook and a pencil. “All right. I will do some homework, then. If you want anything else, let me know and I’ll order for you.”

Reborn decided not to comment. If he wanted anything, he’ll make Tsunayoshi pay for it. “Sure thing.”

And so, the time passed, Reborn just looking around the restaurant and Kyoko doing her homework, sometimes asking him for help whenever she got stuck on something.
It was 7:43 when the last stragglers left and Tsuna was able to close shop.

Kyoko stretched, yawning, as she changed her weight from one foot to another. “I can’t wait to get home. Today was tiring” she said, trudging along her best friend, Reborn on her right shoulder.

Tsunayoshi eyed her up. “Hm? How so? It was pretty normal. Well… Until he showed up” he amended, gesturing to the baby.

Kyoko frowned, before her eyes lighted up, her mouth dropping on a perfect ‘o’ shape as her eyebrows climbed. “That’s right! I forgot to tell you this morning!” She said “Mochida asked me on a date.”

“What?”

Tsuna turned his body, but unfortunately, his legs seemed to miss the fact they, too, should turn, and he ended up on the floor for the second time that day.

“Owowowowowow…” he muttered, holding his cheek with his left hand, his right hand pushing up.

He scrambled back up again, eventually. “Didn’t he give up? Hell, isn’t he with Midori for that matter?”

“Yes and yes” said Kyoko serenely, not faltering on her step. Reborn would even go as far as to say she actually had an extra-spring to it. “That’s why I couldn’t meet with you after Gym today, I was too busy avoiding him.”

“Avoiding him?” He said darkly.

“The boy has an alarming inability understanding the concept of No.” She said shrugging, looking at her side and noticing the thunderous expression Tsuna was wearing. She took his hand into hers and gave him a smile that had Reborn swearing there were flowers and sparkles around. “Don’t worry Tsu, It’s easy enough to avoid him. And you know I can take care of myself just fine.”

“Even so,” he said in a sigh. “It’s offensive to me you have to be hiding from that… that… Urg. The only thing coming to mind is pig but pigs are actually nice animals.” He said in a frustrated huff.

Kyoko giggled, squeezing his hand a little, but kept quiet.

The rest of the walk was done in silence, just their steady pace on the streets and the cool wind of early April blowing. There weren’t many cars on the streets, people having long gone home or the bar with coworkers, or even staying late on the office. Muted sounds coming from the houses lining the streets, here or there a bark could be heard or the low hum of a tv.

They reached a fork on the road, and stopped.

“Have a nice night, Tsu.” She said, leaning over and kissing him on the cheek, prompting a blush and a smile from Tsuna, and raised eyebrows from Reborn.

“Good night Kyoko. Tell good night to Onii-san for me.”

“Yes sir.” She said, laughing as she turned, a graceful move that made her skirt flare, her long hair
flapping on the breeze .

Tsuna watched her go with a fond smile until she turned a corner, and then he turned around, starting the short walk to his house.

“You really like her.” Said Reborn from the wall to his left.

Tsuna looked at him, confused “Of course I like her. She has been one of my best friends since we were six. I am very lucky to have her” he finished, smiling.

Reborn kicked him on the head, hard enough to make him stumble. “Stop doing that stupid expression, Dame-Tsuna.” He said, back at the wall. ‘Have you told her?”

“Of course I have told her!”he said, frowning in confusion before his mind caught up to what the baby implied ”... Ah! NO! It’s not like that!” Said Tsunayoshi, flailing around. “She’s like my sister! I love her to bits but I can’t see her as anything else.”

Reborn huffed, but said nothing, and privately mourned the missed opportunity to use the Dying Will Bullet. “Then you are more pathetic than I thought.”

Tsunayoshi rolled his eyes, opening the gate to his house. “I’m home!” He called, leaving his shoes at the door, and trudging up to his room. Reborn followed him, jumping into a chair.

The kid looked around, and walked up to the bookcase, rearranging the books there, before going around and picking up the random bits and bobs off the floor. Since the kid had left the room pretty much spotless that morning, Reborn guessed he was just feeling anxious and was trying to delay.

Eventually, once the floor was clean and there was nothing else to distract him, the kid turned to him. “So, a mafia boss” He said, sitting heavily on his bed.

“That’s right. The 9th Boss of the Famiglia is old, and was preparing to retire and leave the family to one of his sons. Unfortunately, the three sons died. The most qualified to Inherit, Enrico, was shot in a feud.” He said, showing him a photo of the corpse of the man. “The second one, Massimo, was left to drown. And the third one, Federico, burnt to death in an arson.” He finished.

Contrary to his expectations, the kid didn't flail or freak out at the photos. Instead, he took them on his hands, examining them, and Reborn was surprised to recognize true grief on his face.

“My condolences.” He murmured, giving one last longing look to Federico’s photo before returning them to him. Reborn accepted them without comment, and in it’s stead took out the family tree he brought.

“So you see, the first Boss of the Vongola” and interestingly, the kid tensed at the name, “retired to Japan, and he is your great-great-great-grandfather. You are part of the bloodline, and a legitimate candidate to be a mafia boss.”

“I see.” He said, taking a look at the tree. “And why me, and not Iemitsu?” He asked, tapping with a finger the name above his.

“There are complications relating to him” Was all Reborn said, before snapping the family tree closed. “Do not worry. I will make you into a fine Mafia Boss.” said the hitman, pulling out a set of pajamas and starting to put them on.

Tsuna huffed “I’m not worried about that.” He said, pulling out his own set of pajamas and walking out of the room “because I will not become Vongola 10th.”
“Oh, you will” Answered the hitman, a sadistic gleam entering his eye as he pointed his gun to Tsunayoshi. “And the first thing on the agenda is for me to evaluate you in your academic disciplines. Hand over your homework.”

Tsuna closed the bathroom door, groaning as his new bruises twanged whenever he moved. Reborn was Spartan, with a capital S, and the last couple hours he had quizzed him on anything and everything, and when Tsunayoshi didn’t meet his criteria…

He winced again, but put the pain out of his mind. Right now he had bigger concerns.

Carefully, he pulled his cellphone from amongst the bundle of clothes.

“You were right about me.” was all he wrote. His thumb hovered for a second over the “send” button.

He was going to lose his oldest friend over this, and it was something he would never forgive his bum of a father.

But he had promised.

He closed his eyes, pressing the button. Tsunayoshi swallowed, trying to keep breathing around the enormous knot that had suddenly appeared on his throat, and forcing his eyes to open up. He left the phone near the sink as he undressed, and let the warm water wash over him for a while.

He heard the phone ping after a while.

With slow movements, he turned off the water, carefully pulling up the feet over the lip of the bath. The phone display had gone dark, and it was clouded from the shower steam. Tsunayoshi genuinely debated leaving it, or even deleting the message without reading it, but that was the cowardly way out. He took another deep breath, ignoring the ringing on his ears and the pressure on his temples, and opened the new message.

“I’m sorry. If there is anything I can do, let me know”.

Tsuna coughed, incapable of stopping the genuine smile and the tears that rolled down along his nose, and then he laughed, a short burst of hysterical giggles, and distantly felt his back hit the wall, but he was too high on relief to care.

“I’ll be fine for the moment. Don’t contact me tho, this guy means business, and I want to keep you as a surprise >:)”

“Wow, pissed you off already?”

“Not yet, but I can tell it’s a matter of time”

“You never did get along with egotistical ppl. I’ll lay low, good luck

... Ti amo.”
Tsuna smiled, warmth filling him.

“J’taime aussi”

He slid down the wall, staring at the messages for a while, before turning his phone off and taking his clothes, stashing his phone back inside the bundle.

By the time he returned to the room, Reborn had made himself at home, stringing a hammock and sleeping soundly, even with his eyes open.

Tsunayoshi put his clothes on the chair, and tucked himself into bed.

He could get through this.
Tsuna woke up with the certainty that he was going to get hurt.

He kept his eyes closed, and managed to play the hitch on his breathing as a particularly deep breath. Slowly letting it go, he concentrated on the Flames around him, immediately finding the muffled Sun that was coming closer.

Tsuna then remembered what happened yesterday.

The e-mail.

Kaa-san talking about a tutor.

Reborn shooting him.

The confrontation at the cafe.

“Ow!!”

“Rise and shine, Dame-Tsuna” said Reborn smugly as he waved Leon-hammer around. “A Mafia boss should be able to know his surroundings, even in sleep.”

Tsuna glared at him, rising and rubbing the bump Reborn had left. “Couldn’t you have woken me up with a glass of cold water, like normal people?” He said once he was seated.

Reborn scoffed. “A glass of water hardly conveys the gravity of sleeping through an attack.” he answered, letting Leon transform back.

Tsuna blinked twice at him, before snorting. He too a look at his alarm clock and boggled at the hour “Seven Forty-five?! I’M GONNA BE LATE!”

Tsuna jumped, his hair a flurry of motion behind him as he ran around, picking parts of his uniform from the chair, the floor and the closet, as well as socks and an underwear before locking himself in the bathroom, bursting out of it five minutes later showered and dressed, picking up his bag and shoving a bunch of books inside, and went down the stairs, taking them two at a time.

“GoodMorningmomssorryIgottagoloveyoubye!” he said without pausing for breathing, taking a sandwich and a bento box his mother was tending him, all with an indulging smile that widened as Tsunayoshi kissed her cheek.

Tsuna crossed the kitchen in two steps, and smoothly slid his feet inside his school shoes. Then, he
threw open the door…

“Ah!”

...To find Kyoko on the other side of it, a fist lifted.

“Oh fu--!”

Tsuna threw himself to the right, his left leg tripping over his right, and the pavement going at a fast pace towards his face. He windmilled, trying to get a grip on anything...

“Tsu-kun!”

…Only for it to stop abruptly.

Tsuna sighed, once he was steady on his feet, and turned with a bright smile. “Thank you, Kyoko! That was close!”

Kyoko smiled sweetly. “It wasn’t a problem. Tsu-kun should really watch his step!” She said, using one hand to cover her smile.

Tsuna smiled, rubbing the back of his head. “I know. I’ll see that it doesn’t happen again.” Then he frowned, before startling a bit. “Hiieee!! Kyoko-chan! Why are you not at Namimori!? We are going to be late!” He said, color draining from his face. Without thinking, he grabbed her hand and started towing her.

“But what about Reborn-chan?” She asked, looking at the house and then around them.

“Don’t worry about him, he’ll catch up. Now run!”

Yamamoto Takeshi tapped his shinai impatiently against his left shoulder. The morning was quiet in this part of town, and it always unnerved him a little. The shopping district was always moving, always noisy, and even after five years, he couldn’t shake the discomfort silence brought to him.

He looked down at his watch. 7:48. He looked down the street once more, hoping that a head of brown would appear, even if it was followed by a black smear.

But no, the street kept being stubbornly empty of Tsuna. Takeshi started running scenarios in his head, remembering the layout of the street, the kind of cars that were common, and the people who went around at this hour of the day. He hadn’t seen anything out of the ordinary the whole time he had been there, but then again, he was just one person.

A rare frown appeared on his face, tapping his shinai once again. With the new tutor here, Hana had wanted as many people on Tsuna as possible, and to be completely honest, Takeshi could not see any problem with that, even if it meant skipping morning practice with his da.

Finally, Tsuna rounded the corner, along with Kyoko. He quickly swapped his frown for a smile, and waved at them. “Morning, Tsuna!”
Tsuna’s eyes were wide and wild as he set them on him, the alarm on them growing by a couple notches, and Takeshi felt his smile strain. Not wasting a second, he fell on step with them, sprinting to school.

“What’s going on, Tsuna? Is this one of Ryo-niisan training regimens?” He asked, playing up the oblivious tone of his voice. Tsuna looked back at him.

“Haven’t you seen the time? If we don’t hurry, we’re gonna be late! And Hibari-san would bite us to death!” He yelled over the sound of their footsteps.

Takeshi grinned. “Hibari-san wouldn’t do that!”

Tsuna turned back, glaring at him, and even though his cheeks were a very cute rose color, Takeshi felt a thin line of ice making it’s way down his spine.

“Just because Hibari-san is slightly more lenient with us now, it doesn’t mean we should be exempt from Nami’s rules!” He yelled back, before turning back and putting some extra speed on his steps, making Kyoko and him do the same or risk being left behind.

Takeshi took a look around, and almost frowned. He could not find the hitman, but he could definitely feel being observed.

The feeling persisted until they arrived at Nami-chuu at 7:58. The three students collapsed inside the building, panting and out of breath after running in 10 minutes a route that is usually at least 15. Tsuna took out a water bottle and took a gulp, handing it to Kyoko and Takeshi in turn.

“Well, that was close” Panted Tsuna out, climbing to his feet. The bell sounded, telling the students they had only five minutes to get to class.

The three of them went to their respective lockers, taking out the shoes and quickly changing into them, before doing a dash to the second floor.

They arrived just in time, before the second bell rang. Tsuna and Takeshi walked staggered to their seat, exchanging concerned looks when the usual jeers didn’t come in their direction, but the answer to that became apparent soon enough.

There was one single white lily on Tsuna’s desk, the ceramic vase filled to about the middle with water, accompanied by a small amount of offerings: a small bowl of rice with the chopsticks standing upright, an incense plate to the side, a small plate of oranges, strawberries and peaches, green tea, a card, and candles.

Tsunayoshi exhaled through clenched teeth, and picked up the card. As expected, it had condolences from their classmates, and even some teachers, about his recent death.

Takeshi put his shinai down, and grabbed the fruit plate, sniffing it carefully. “These are fresh, Tsuna. Do you want me to throw them away anyway?”

“Do it.” Snapped Tsuna. Takeshi nodded and grabbed both fruit and rice bowls, marching to the garbage can in front of the room, ignoring the giggles of their classmates. Tsunayoshi, meanwhile, blew out the candles and extinguished the incense on the green tea, before passing them to Takeshi to be thrown out.

Tsunayoshi turned back to the flower, hesitating. In the end, he took the lily out of the vase, handing that to Takeshi, before taking a notebook out of his bag and carefully putting the lily inside.
That done, he sat down heavily on his desk, sighing. He looked up, scanning the room, until he found Hanna’s desk. Even from his position three rows behind, Tsuna could see his friend shaking, glaring murder to a particular knot of students near the door, while Kyoko was huddled to her side, muttering soft words to her. She caught his eye and gave him a weak, tremulous smile, that he returned as best as he could.

“Well, looking at this on the bright side, we won’t have to worry too much about attention this week” Said Takeshi, dropping down on his desk. “You think Mochida could be behind this?”

“Almost certainly.” Said Tsunayoshi, roaming the classroom with a lazy eye. “Would not have been too hard to convince, or ‘convince’, someone to do his dirty work for him.” He shrugged. “It’s fine-

The crack coming from his side startled him. Tsuna glanced at Takeshi, who was staring at the broken pencil on his hands.

“Don’t” said Takeshi softly “say it’s fine.”

Tsuna sighed. “All right.”

Takeshi chuckled. “Wonder what your tutor would have to say about this?”

“THOSE BOYS WERE EXTREMELY OUT OF LINE!! They should be extremely punished!!”

Tsuna sighed, catching the bento before it’s contents could spill over the floor. “Careful nii-san. Mama wants me to make sure you are eating your vegetables.” He said, pointedly pushing the half-full bento towards the athlete.

“Apologies!” He said, taking the bento back and digging into it with gusto. “But I still think they should be punish them!”

“I agree with the Ryohei.” Said Hana, taking a shrimp and eating it whole in a bite. “It’s annoying having dodge around all those monkeys and chimps.”

Tsuna huffed and looked up, basking on the clear blue sky and the chilly breeze. The quartet had left the classroom as soon as possible, and while people had tried to get Kyoko, Hana and Takeshi aside, Tsuna had strode impassively ahead. Following the pattern from the morning, no-one acknowledged his presence, but didn’t try to move out of his way either, making for rather awkward spots where Tsuna had body-checked some people to get through. It got easier once Ryohei met with them, most other students hurrying along to not get in the path of the older teenager, but also in fear that such disruption of the peace would summon Hibari.

Now, however, they were sitting on the roof of the building in a tight circle just behind the air conditioning unit on the roof. It was a pretty cozy spot, one of it’s walls being the wall from the building proper, while the other two were big AC units. The last wall was the chain-link fence overlooking Namimori. The secluded space was ideal for having private talks, since not only was it hard to even see, but reaching it involved squeezing between the AC unit and the wall, but once in there was enough space for about a dozen students to sit comfortably.

“No one is going to punish anyone.” He said, popping a piece of broccoli in. “Hana-chan, this is
really good. Would you like to try it?” Tsuna lifted another piece of food with his chopsticks until they were in front of her mouth.

Hanna looked at it, then at him, before wordlessly taking it with her own chopsticks. “Thank you, Tsuna.” she said, looking at him with a raised eyebrow. He smiled nervously, and went back to eating his lunch.

There was a long, tense pause, where the only sounds on the roof were the whisper of the wind and the movement of chopsticks, occasionally punctuated with slurps from their drinks.

“So, what are you going to do about it?” Asked Hana as she wrapped up her bento.

“Eh?” Asked Tsunayoshi, blinking owlishly at her, a piece of tuna dangling from his hand.

She raised an eyebrow. “Well, after the bullshitery he pulled this morning, I assumed you’d like to, you know. MAKE IT FUCKING STOP ALREADY!” she shouted, making the other four jump in surprise.

“W-what do you mean?”

“Tsunayoshi.” She said, with the calmness of a snake about to strike. “We have had to watch as, for about seven years, these punks have tried literally everything to make you a pariah, and succeeding. Because you let them.”

“Oi, It’s not that way and you know it.” Said Tsunayoshi, frowning.

“I know. But still, you don’t have to let them just…Walk all over you. I have told you before and I tell you again: Get. Them. Straight. Or I will.” She finished darkly.

“I have to agree with her.”

The teenagers looked up to find Reborn circling around them with a green glider. The baby descended, and the glider transformed on a parachute, landing in the middle of the circle of teenagers, the parachute changing one last time to a familiar lizard.

“That was so cool!” Exclaimed Kyoko once she got over her surprise.

“Yeah, that looks to be mighty useful” said Hana, giving the chameleon a calculating glance. Leon blinked slowly and stuck his tongue out, before curling around the fedora and settling for a nap. Hana frowned, but Kyoko giggled at the cute picture.

“Of course is useful. Leon is my partner after all.” Said Reborn.

“What an extreme little guy!” Exclaimed Ryohei, bending down to look at Leon more closely.

Reborn turned to face him fully, inspecting the boy as much as he was inspecting Leon. He was bigger than anyone in the group, muscled, with close-cropped white hair and big tea-brown eyes, one of which was bisected by a narrow scar. There was a second one on his forehead, a vertical slash that went into his hair, and a third, from the left corner of his mouth to his chin.

“And you are?” He asked.

The teenager smiled. “My name is Sasagawa Ryohei, the extreme brother of Kyoko! It’s an EXTREME pleasure to meet you!” He said, making some nearby birds take flight at the amount of noise.
“Reborn”

“THE Reborn? THIS IS EXTREEEEMEE!!!” yelled Ryohei, punching the air. “I have always wanted to have an extreme match with you!”

"Maybe later. But back at the topic at hand.” He turned towards Tsuna. “Your friend is right, dame-Tsuna. You need to do something about those people. It is unsightly of a Mafia Boss.”

Tsunayoshi rolled his eyes, slumping. “It’s no use. No one cares about what they do so long it’s just me.” He shrugged. “To be perfectly honest, I don’t care either, as long as they keep it to a minimum.”

“That was not ‘keeping it to a minimum’, Tsuna. That was a thinly-veiled death threat.” Barked Hana.

Tsuna snorted. “Then they are lousy threats. This is, what? The fourth time they have done it this year alone?” he gave a bitter chuckle. “So long they don’t do anything else but talk, I’m golden. Sure, it’d be nice to have some pull with the teachers, but what can you do?” He ended with an insolent shrug.

Tsuna yelped, a bruise blooming on his forehead. He glared at the baby, who was once again standing in the middle of the circled. “What was that for?”

“Cowardice is unsightly on a Mafia Boss too.”

“I am not being cowardly, merely pragmatic.” He said irritated.

Both Reborn and Hana huffed simultaneously, which prompted them to share a look and a small, evil smile. Tsunayoshi had the distinct impression of two predators deciding to gang up on prey.

Further conversation was interrupted by the bell.

“We will continue this discussion later, Dame-Tsuna.” Said Reborn, jumping over the the wall and out of sight.

“I was afraid you were going to say that.” Muttered Tsuna. Then he turned to the rest, who were looking after the hitman with varying expressions of dislike. “Is everybody on board with an impromptu study session today at my house?”

“I am EXTREMELY sorry, but I have promised the coach that I would help him re-do the gym!” Said Ryohei, looking terribly torn.

“That’s fine nii-san. We are all free, it won’t be a problem, right guys?” Asked Kyoko.

“But of course!” Said Takeshi, turning back to them and throwing a vice-like arm over Tsuna’s shoulders, tenderly touching the spot where the hitman had kicked him. “Of course.” He repeated, dropping a gentle kiss on his forehead.

Tsuna smiled, and slid out of their enclosure. His friends followed behind, Ryohei running out and into the building screaming something about “unextreme punishments for being late”, Takeshi taking the lead and Hana staying behind, sandwiching Tsuna between them. Kyoko, however, sidled up to his side and intertwined her arm with his own.

He looked down at her quizzically, but she just smiled angelically at him.
“Have you already told the rest?”


“You should tell them, you know? Haru already suspects, and the others are not going to be happy to learn you left them out on purpose.”

“I will, Kyoko, I will. Just… not yet. I’d like to be free a little more.”

Kyoko hummed, a small smile blooming on her face. “It’s going to be soooo much fun seeing you try to talk your way out of this one. I recommend you start planning the offerings.”

“You are getting so mean, Kyoko-chan. You need to spend less time with Hana.” Tsuna said jokingly, putting his hand around her in a more comfortable position.

“Mean? Me? You wound me so much, Tsu-chan. I would never be mean to you on purpose.”

“KYOKO-CHAN!! WHAT IS DAME-TSUNA DOING TO YOU?!??!”

Tsunayoshi pinched the bridge of his nose, exhaling forcefully, and giving a subtle sign to Takeshi to get him to stand down. He nodded and fell back on the other side of Kyoko.

“Mochida. What do you want?” Tsuna asked, not bothering to keep the annoyance out of his tone. A quick glance to his surroundings showed most students looking at him with a mix of envy, fear, admiration, and in some, disgust.

“I want to get your horrid paws off Kyoko-chan.”

“Tsuna is doing nothing I didn’t consent to first.” Said Kyoko, sending people fluttering with the use of his first name. “If anything, I am the one taking advantage of him.” She pressed closer, smiling up to Tsuna.

Mochida spluttered, his face becoming an ugly shade of red. “Bu-But Kyoko-chan, He is dame-Tsuna! He is not even fit to kiss the ground you walk in!!”

“That is for me to decide, Mochida-san.” She replied coolly, not budging from her spot.

Mochida flinched as if he had been punched, but then he turned his attention to Tsunayoshi. “SAWADA!! Whatever you are planning, leave Kyoko-chan out of it!”

“That is for me to decide, Mochida-san.” She replied coolly, not budging from her spot.

Mochida flinched as if he had been punched, but then he turned his attention to Tsunayoshi. “SAWADA!! Whatever you are planning, leave Kyoko-chan out of it!”

“Shouldn’t I be the one telling you that?” Asked Tsunayoshi in a flat, disinterested voice. “You did ask Kyoko out yesterday, didn’t you? And yet, you were on a date with Midori-san.”

“L-Lies! It’s true we were out yesterday, but it was as friends! That’s it! But then again, it is unlikely you could tell the difference, seeing as you have no friends at all.” He finished with a sneer.

“Hm? Then shall we call Midori-san? See what she thought of your little outing.” He said, taking out his phone and scrolling down. “Ah, there it is.” He turned the phone towards Mochida, who went white. “This is her number, yes?”

“GIVE ME THAT!” Said Mochida lunging at him. Tsunayoshi sidestepped him, throwing the telephone to Kyoko.

“I think that is proof enough.” He said coldly.
“How could you, Mochida-san? Does Hitomi-san know?” Asked Kyoko with a gasp.

“SHUT UP!” He turned to Tsunayoshi, hands balled in fists. “This is all your fucking fault, Dame-Tsuna!! You should not get involved in the business of your betters!”

Tsunayoshi bursted laughing at that. “You? My better?”

“Damn right! I could beat some manners in you, kill that annoying tendency of yours to act like a person, and finally take Kyoko for myself!”

“Excuse me?” Said Kyoko from her place, hands on her hips and a frown on her face. She stomped up to Mochida and put a finger to his face. “And exactly who the hell do you think you are to say something like that?”

“I don’t - I just -Kyoko-chan?!” Spluttered the Mochida, unconsciously taking a step back.

“Tsunayoshi is a hundred times better person than you, Mochida-san.” She said, spitting the honorific. “Therefore, I spend time with him, because I want to, on my own volition. No one is making me do anything. And I am most certainly not an object to take.”

“But Kyoko! That- How can you say those kinds of things about a loser guy like him?”

“First of all, It’s Sasagawa-san. And second of all, I can say that because I actually have bothered to befriend him. And you want to know what? I liked it. I like him.”

Mochida made a strangled sound, looking between Kyoko and Tsunayoshi, eventually settling on him. “I don’t know how, but you have somehow corrupted Kyoko-chan! Someone should teach you a lesson!” Growled Mochida, obviously trying to be intimidating, but Tsunayoshi wasn’t impressed.

“Oh? And who could be this person? You?” He sniggered, before straightening back up. “I dare you to.”

The hallway fell silent at that proclamation. People muttered amongst each other, but neither Mochida nor Tsunayoshi were paying them any attention.

“Y-you - I - What?” Stammered Mochida out, losing all his bravado.

“I dare you to teach me a lesson.” Said Tsunayoshi, slowly and carefully enunciating each word, as if talking with a very small child. “You talk about it so much, I might as well give you the chance.” Tsuna smiled, a carefree smile that was at odds with the seriousness of the situation. He put a hand on his hip, using the other to gesture between them. “Let’s duel like gentlemen, I’ll even let you pick the place and the weapons! What do you say, Mochida-sempai?”

Mochida blinked and gulped, looking around. Everyone was looking at him, waiting for his answer, without a single place to run or hide.

He snapped back to Tsunayoshi, straightening his spine. “Today after class, in the Gym, Kendo. And don’t even think about running, dame-Tsuna!”

“See you then, senpai. May the best man win!” Tsuna said, walking past Mochida’s hanger-ons, gently tugging Kyoko along. The hallway had erupted with murmurs, some people even yelling their encouragements.

“... This works too, I guess.” said Hana once they were away from the crowd. She gently nudged
Tsuna on the ribs. “So much for not caring.”

Tsuna shrugged. “I really don’t care what they say about me. What was unacceptable was how he treated Kyoko.” He winced. “Shit, Kyo-chan, let go, it hurts.”

“Sorry, sorry.” She said, easing on her grip. Tsuna shook his arm, feeling the small indentations Kyoko left. “I just got so mad, you know?”

“I mean, I have always know he was an asshole but holy shit, never expected him to come out and say it like that.” said Hana. Takeshi and Tsuna exchanged an incredulous glance, knowing what that catlike smirk meant, but they decided to close their mouths. Hana could get scary if interrupted in her schadenfreude.

“Yeah, you’d think he would have learned already.” Said Takeshi shrugging. He turned to Tsuna. “What do you think your tutor will do?”

“I don’t want to find out, honestly.” said Tsunayoshi, walking into the classroom. “Anyways, we still good for the study session?”

“Yup!”

“Yeah”

“Of course!”

“All right. See you at the end of the day.” He said, walking inside the classroom and taking his seat. Takeshi sat next to him, blocking him from the rest of the classroom, while the girls sat directly in front of them.

If any of the other students minded, they didn’t do more than look at them slightly longer than usual.

Reborn went back in the house with confidence. Nana was out, saying something about shopping for vegetables and passing through the restaurant, so he was reasonably sure he had enough time to do what he needed.

He took the stairs up and opened the door to Tsunayoshi’s room.

The room looked like a normal 16 years old room, even if it was a bit too organized, in Reborn’s opinion. Kids that age had clothes littering the floor, shoes under the bed, and a myriad of little things on their desk. Dino in particular had been horrible about it, his room resembling a battlefield more often than not. It had taken Reborn a whole year to beat the habit out of him, and even then, sometimes Dino slipped.

The contrast couldn’t have been starker. To the left, the bed that ran parallel to the window was neatly made, the sheets a clear green color, the pillows fluffled at the head. Sitting between them, there was a tiger plushie that had seen better days, with one of its button eyes missing, quite a few stitches standing out from its discolored body.

The nightstand at it’s side was no better: Two books were resting on top of it, perfectly lined with
the edge, under the lamp. There was also an old mp3 player connected to a pair of headphones, carefully coiled around a holder. The top drawer of the nightstand had a lock, the second didn’t.

The opposite wall had a couple of shelves and a desk, which ended just before the closet door. One of the shelves was full of different kinds of books, the other held a variety of items he hadn’t been able to look at in detail before. The desk had everything a 16 year old could need, pens, pencils, a small desk lamp. It also had a new laptop and a printer.

Finally, in one of the corners of the rooms, there was a small entertainment center. A tv sat on top of a small cabinet, two different consoles sitting under it, cables neatly rolled and bundled together, a stack of games to the side.

All in all, a completely normal room for a completely normal 16 year old boy.

Now, to tear it up.

The first thing Reborn did was boot up the computer. It was a slightly older model, so he left it to cycle until he could open it up. Meanwhile, he opened the drawer, but the results disappointed: Nothing but old school books and a couple more school materials. The pencil-holders on the desk were equally bare, holding mundane items.

The computer finally finished cycling, and the hitman was taken to a password screen. He tried different combinations of the kid’s birthday, and then the mother’s. Finally, he used a combination of both and the computer took him to the desktop. Reborn made a mental note to hit his pupil for not securing his computer better, and went to town through the files.

But just as the desk, the results were disappointing. Reborn looked through assignment after assignment, chat log after chat log, but there was nothing to even suggest Tsunayoshi was more than a sixteen year old. The only thing that was even vaguely suspicious was the fact that the internet history was completely blank, but even then, it was circumstantial at best.

Clicking his tongue in frustration, Reborn took out an USB and connected it. Within minutes, he had installed a keylogger and a website tracker, and had that rerouted to the CEDEF, where a group of mooks would be scanning the results 24/7. If the kid was doing anything, he’d know as soon as Tsunayoshi’s finished typing.

Bored with the computer, he moved to the book cases, and once again, was struck at how utterly bare his information had been. There had been nothing there on the kid’s interest on mystery novels, or the fact that he was learning numerous languages. Reborn took out the oldest-looking ones, a series of six volumes to learn french, and was surprised to discover not the neat handwriting of the tests, but the scrawl of a young child. The writing got slightly better as the volumes increased, but it was obvious that Tsunayoshi had learned when he was very young.

The second oldest set was, to his surprise, an 4-volume italian one. He pulled them down, too, and flipping through it realized it had taken the kid a long, long time to learn, as the handwriting slowly got neater, sometimes having drastic changes. Reborn concluded that the kid must have interrupted his studies, and then returned at a later date.

The other courses were a seven-book Russian one, a three book and a dictionary for Chinese, and one very advance volume on English. After paging through them all, Reborn was reluctantly impressed. It spoke of tenacity that the kid had actually learned from those books, and the fact that he had been working on so many was also notable. Even… suspicious. These were, after all, languages of the countries with the strongest Organized Crime presence, with the possible exception of English.
Deciding to grind the kid later (and making a mental note to test his speech skills while at it), Reborn looked at the other books. Most of them were mystery novels, with a particularly large collection of Maurice LeBlanc books in the original French, which was unusual. The Arsène Lupin series was not well known outside France, and was most often overshadowed by the more famous Holmes and Poirot, which were also present in English on the collection, but comparing the new, shiny covers with the older aged ones, it was clear which one the kid favored. There were other works by Agatha Christie, these ones translated to Japanese and almost untouched, a copy of most of Shakespeare plays (comedies included), a complete collection of Jules Verne, one copy of The Three Musketeers that was falling apart, and was that The Art of War in the original Chinese? Reborn pinched his nose, and decided to leave the rest of the books alone. It was obvious that the kid liked to read a very specific type of literature, and he doubted the rest of the books were going to be too much different from the established pattern, so he moved to the second bookcase. The lower two shelves of it were filled to the brim with a collection of manga, mostly shonen, but there was also a bit of seinen and shojo there, as well as a variety of magazines that were bought more for boredom than actual interest, since they ranged from Motorcycles to Magic Tricks to Theater.

The second highest shelf consisted of a first aid kit, a piggy bank, what looked like a jewelry box, and a heavy binder of some kind. He opened the kit first, and was surprised to find it surprisingly well stocked for a civilian, having from something as innocuous as gauze and painkillers to heavy doses of morphine. He took a look inside the piggy bank out of sheer curiosity, but there was nothing of real interest, just some Yen, and the jewelry box contained an impressive collection of earrings. The binder however, yielded the most interesting thing: Music sheets.

Reborn chanced a quick look at the last shelf, and found himself pleasantly surprised. There was a Violin case in there, along with most tools needed to keep the violin in good shape. He took it down, and opened the case, noticing that it was a little used. The violin inside, too, had seen better days, if the lack of lustre was any indication, but Reborn could tell that the instrument was being diligently maintained and cared for. An experimental pass confirmed that it was tuned, too, but there was a slight discord at the end of the note. That, combined with the amount of dust accumulated, made him think the kid hadn’t played much for a couple months or so.

After that, he turned to the closet. He rifled through the kid’s pants and jackets, returning only with a handful of coins and some napkins, and checked inside the shoes just out of habit. The kid had feet too small to hide anything valuable inside them. The drawers inside were far more fruitful, having bills taped to their underside in different denominations, but with a final total of about eight hundred thousand yen; and some American dollars totalling a thousand. However, he’d made sure to have a chat with Tsunayoshi once he came back home, and he better have some good explanations about the amount of feminine clothing.

But what really captured his attention was the wooden chest he found hidden on the absolute back of the lowest drawer. It had been bundled inside an old pillow case, so it was hidden there deliberately. It was square, measuring seven inches a side and about two inches deep, reinforced with polished iron on the corners. On the lid, carved, was some kind of coat of arms. It was a circular celtic circle made to look like an Ivy. In the middle of it, there was a raven in mid-flight, the eyes, beak and feet being made from polished onix. Under the circle, there were seven lilies: one in the center in full bloom and about twice as big as the others, with another three on either side. Under them, in a scroll, there was a motto: “Cor Nobile, Cor Immobile.”

Reborn stopped for a moment to admire the art of it, before carefully picking the lock. He had the sensation that, should anything happen to this chest or its contents, Tsunayoshi would not forgive him easily, and while Reborn couldn’t care less about the brat, that would make his job unnecessarily difficult. Not to mention that it would be simply disgraceful to leave traces so blatant a simple civilian could pick them out.
The lock gave away and Reborn focused his attention back on the chest. He opened the lid, and upon seeing the contents, wondered what the hell these items meant to his student, that put so many precautions for them.

There were four distinct items in total: a pair of white gloves, an extremely old switchblade, a small jewelry box, and a locket. Reborn took the gloves first, being the item that was on top of the rest. They were slightly too big to be his student’s, and the stitching on the leather was frayed, so it was, most likely, a memento. The same thing could be said for the switchblade, once Reborn takes it up and examines it closely. A couple of tools have been lost, and the blade is dull, but the scissors still work, and the kid keeps it oiled enough for it not to rust.

The jewelry box contains what must be the reason for the security: A pair of gold and diamond earrings. The stones are cut into a circle, no bigger than half an inch, and are set on a delicate gold mount that mimics lily flowers. The fact that they are authentic does not faze Reborn as much, as the fact that Tsunayoshi does have something like this in the first place, since he doesn’t seem to be a kid that spends money in this kind of frivolous things. Then again, it’s possible they are a gift, but that makes more questions crop up, because who would give a kid something so precious?

Reborn put the earrings back and too out the locket. It was a heavy thing, made of iron once again, but the chain is silver. The pendant is a simple thing, another celtic knot decorating it and not much else. It opens easily for him, and instead of hair, Reborn finds different colored hairs braided together in a circle. He can make two different reds, a black or dark-brown, a dirty blond, and a golden blond. Whose hairs there are is a mystery he is not going to be bothered with right now, but he makes sure to memorize the shades so he could recognize them.

By the time Reborns put everything on it’s place, made a hell of a deep swipe for bugs (and finding two) and finished checking for secret compartments, there is a beetle waiting for him on the windowsill. Reborn smiles, and offers his hand to it, gently caressing the hard chitin as it tells him what happened once he left.

“Ah, so Dame-Tsuna is not a complete coward.” He said, letting the beetle off. “This will be an interesting day.”

And maybe, if he gets lucky, he will finally be able to shoot his pupil today.

Tsuna walked into the Gym flanked by Takeshi and Ryohei, to be greeted with a cacophony of sound, the benches full to bursting with people. He frowned and looked to the upper right benches, where he found Hana and Kyoko sitting together, away from the general populace. Hana saw him watching and returned a sly smile, blowing him a kiss. Kyoko smiled wryly at her friend’s antics, but brightened a lot and wave enthusiastically at him. He waved back, prompting another wave of comments.

“So you finally came, Dame-Tsuna!” Growled Mochida from the ring, as Tsunayoshi climbed the stairs up to it. “And what the hell are you wearing?” He screeched.

“So I did” he said, mild as milk with an easy grin. “And this is a simple set of armor. Did you think I’d be so rude as to make you wait while I changed?”

Mochida scoffed, but sent a concerned glance at the three lackeys he had with a standby armor.
“Where did you get that? For all I know, that thing could be altered.” He pointed his shinai to him. “I will not tolerate any cheating!”

“We are at an impasse, then. I’d rather use the things I brought myself.” He tilted his head, a grin making a place on his face. “Unless, of course, you’d rather give me your set, and you can fight on the one you were about to give me, since that one is allowed.”

“I- no, that’s fine.” said Mochida, taking a glance to the heavy armor and back to Tsunayoshi, “It’s not like you can beat me anyways!”

Tsuna smiled. “We’ll see about that. So how are we doing this, sempai?”

Mochida smiled. “I assume you are familiar with the basic rules of Kendo?” at Tsunayoshi’s nod, he continued. “We are going to fight, the first person to score three points wins.”

“Sounds fair.” Said Tsunayoshi nodding, slipping on a fighting stance. “Ready when you are.”

Mochida scoffed, but slipped on his own stance. “Let’s do this, Dame-Tsuna. I will put you in your place.”

Tsuna ducked his head, a blood-thirsty smile making home on his face. “I’d love to see you try.”

“The Kendo match between Sawada Tsunayoshi and Mochida Kensuke is about to start! Whoever scores three points will be the winner of the match! Round one, FIGHT!”

And so, the two combatants went at each other. Immediately, Mochida charged at Tsunayoshi and jabbed the shinai at his face, but Tsuna evaded it by taking a step back, and immediately counterattacking with a swipe aimed to Mochida’s abdomen. Mochida moved back and to the side, flowing with his momentum, almost laying a hit on Tsuna, but Tsuna pivoted to the side, using the opening of the stab to make contact with the side of his enemy.

Tsuna drew back and let the bigger teenager gather his bearings, and looked at the referee. When he didn’t rise the flag, Tsuna couldn’t help but roll his eyes at the stupidity, readying himself just in time to parry the rather vicious swing that Mochida took at him.

Up in the stands, Kyoko narrowed her eyes. “You saw that, right?”

Hana nodded, not moving her phone for fear the recording spoiled. “Yeah, not really surprising considering who is taking part, but still... If Tsuna didn’t have such a bad reputation, the students would be outraged. As it is, they must think of this as a very amusing prank.” She ended with venom.

Unfortunately her words were true. Most of the students were pointing and laughing, the ballsiest ones actually cheering Mochida on. Hana made note of those, she would have her hands full after this; and while Tsunayoshi might not care about his reputation inside school, Hana sure as hell did.

Kyoko voice pulled her up from dark fantasies of public humiliations and blackened records for
“Should we tell Hibari-san about this?”

“Nah, don’t worry about it. I’d be surprised if he doesn’t know already what’s happening and is on his way here.” She said, pointing to the other side of the Gym, where one of the member of the Disciplinary Committee was talking on his phone.

Kyoko nodded, returning her attention to the match. “It should be me down there.” She said quietly.

Hana sighed, gripping her phone tighter. “None of us will think less of you for this. And besides, you know damn well why it has to be him.”

“Still, I don’t want him fighting on my behalf. I can -I want to fight.”

Hana sighed. “But this goes further than a simple fight. This could be our chance to put down ‘Dame-Tsuna’ for good. After this, you can do whatever you want to Mochida.

Kyoko smiled. “I’ll hold you to that.”

Tsuna parried another hard swipe to his right side, and used the moment of inattentiveness to get inside Mochida’s guard and try for a hit on the forearms, which Mochida evaded and then countered with another stab.

The shinais locked “What happened to ‘not allowing cheating’ Mochida-sempai? Weren’t you a man of your word?”

Mochida snarled and disengaged his sword, trying to reach the neck with a side swipe, but in doing so he left himself wide open. Tsuna did some fast footwork, evading the shinai before bringing his own down, hard, and in plain view of the crowd, over his forearm. Mochida made a strangled noise on his throat and let go of the sword, but Tsuna didn’t let it end there and stabbed him on the stomach, pushing him back and unbalancing him; and finally bringing the shinai down on his head, making him land on on his ass. Mochida tried to get up, but a sword tip appearing at inches from his face told him that it would be a very bad idea.

The referee gulped, but between the position of his captain and the death glare Dame-Tsuna was giving him, there wasn’t much he could do “Point to Sawada Tsunayoshi.”

Tsuna snorted and brought down the sword. “If that’s the way It’s gonna be, I’m out. I don’t have the time to waste here.” he said, walking off the arena amidst the stunned silence of the student body. His friends were already waiting for him at the edge of the area, Kyoko in front of them with a smile on her face.

“You were excellent, Tsuna” she said, taking the shinai from him.
“I sense a but there”

“...But I don’t think this will be enough. Now his fan club has named you enemy number 1.” She said looking worriedly at a knot of girls on the far side, which included, of course, Midori, Riku, and Ayako.

“Eh, It was expected” Said Tsuna, waving it off with his hand. “Don’t be surprised if in the next days there are stories about me cheating. Speaking of, Hana, did you get all that?”

She hoisted her phone up. “It’s uploading to the school website as we speak. Even after they take it down, I’t going to be pretty obvious if people start trying to rewrite history and say that Mochida won.”

Tsuna started to open his mouth, but didn’t get a chance to answer.

In one fluid movement, Takeshi had gotten behind him, raising his arm to parry the blow intended to the back of Tsuna’s head. There was a sonorous ‘Twack!’ as the wooden sword made contact with his forearm, which Takeshi then twisted to grab the shinai and wrench it from the attacker. Mochida’s bravado died then, faced with a very angry Takeshi Yamamoto, but hope swelled in his chest when he saw Kyoko put a hand on the ex-baseball player arm, making him take a step back.

“Kyoko-chan -” he said, with his most charming smile.

The sound of a slap interrupted anything he was going to say. Mochida touched his cheek, feeling it warm, and turned to look at the girl. Kyoko looked pissed off.

“Why, Mochida-kun, did you try to hit Tsuna? Didn’t you have enough in the ring? Or are you so vile as to attack someone, unarmed, on the back?”

“Kyoko-chan-”

“Shut. Up.”She said, and Mochida’s mouth closed on It’s own volition. “Tsuna beat you fair and square, with your weapons and in your turf, accept it and move on.”

“He cheated!” Cried Mochida, once again ego surpassing brain.

“He didn’t cheat” She hissed, taking a step forward and getting on his face. “And if I find ANY account that says differently, I will go and deal with that personally.”

She turned to address the whole Gym, which had been submersed in silence since the first slap,
trying to not be noticed.

“Listen up! I’m sick of you treating Tsuna like a piece of trash when he is one of the kindest students on this school! Yes, I’m his friend and proud of it, and I prefer to be associated with him than with a bully like Mochida! If anyone has any problem with it, you know where to find me!” She said, ending her proclamation with a look that cowed all students. When no-one said anything, she turned, grabbing Tsuna’s arm. “Come on, I can’t stay here any longer.” she said, all but dragging Tsuna outside. He followed meekly, even if he felt a small smile start crawling on his face, their friends following closely behind.

“That was EXTREEEMEE Kyoko!” Sai Ryohei, hugging Kyoko hard enough to lift her from the floor, making her squeak.

“Nii-san, put me down!” She said, slightly slapping his arms. Ryohei laughed but let her go, and then proceeded to punch the air.

“My imotou is an extremely fierce person! I am EXTREEEEMELY PROUD OF YOU!”

She ducked her head, a blush climbing on her cheeks. “I-It was nothing, really. I was angry already, but when I saw him trying to attack Tsuna… I just snapped, I was so mad!” she said, clenching her fists, her eyes all but spewing flames.

Takeshi and Tsuna giggled, while Hana nodded her head, pleased. “Glad to see my lessons had been put to good use. Go on, Kyoko, let it all out, there’s a good girl.”

“Only thing here is… What are we going to do now with Midori and her clique?” Asked Takeshi, tapping his chin in thought. “We know they had been planning something big for a while now, and you and Hana were able to tell us because you were… “friends” with them. I don’t think this is going to go over well with them.”

“Yeah, and you have been the Idol of Namimori since forever, and exempt from the harassment because of it. I don’t want you to get hurt just for being my friend, and with what you said back on the Gym…” Tsuna said, putting the breastplate down besides the rest of the armor pieces.

She huffed. “Don’t worry Tsu, I’ll be fine.”

“We were planning on ditching them soon anyway.” Said Hana from her seat. “The snake and the spider are at each other’s throat almost daily now, and the only reason they haven’t imploded yet is because Kyoko and I have been running interference for them. Without us, the weasel does not have the spine to stand up to them.” She shrugged. “I give them two weeks before they start
fighting each other. A month tops.”

“That still doesn’t solve the information problem.” Pointed Tsunayoshi, handing Takeshi the kendo equipment.

“I bugged their phones, and I have backdoors to all their social media accounts. Not to mention that quite a few people there still owe us favors, so.” Said Hana, huffing. “Stop worrying about it, I know what I’m doing.”

“I can see that.” came a squeaky voice from the ceiling.

All the teenagers looked up sharply, just as one of the ceiling panels fell down, Reborn descending amongst them with a cheesy, one-piece spy suit. “That was a very intelligent strategy, if crude.” he said, finally reaching the floor as Leon changed back from his rope form, settling on top of Reborn’s head.

“And what would you do, baby?” Asked Hana, some irritation seeping into her tone.

“Hm, depends. Who are they?” He answered, looking up at the girl with big innocent eyes.

She sent him an unimpressed look, but it was Kyoko who answered. “They are bullies.” she said curtly. “They have been bothering us all for a long time, but their favorite target is Tsuna.”

“Why?”

“Beats me.” She said shrugging. “I think they are afraid of him becoming more popular than them.”

“Fat chance of that happening.” Said Tsuna shaking his head.

“It wouldn’t be too hard.” She retorted. “You are nice, polite, and sweet. If the students weren’t scared to death of them, you’d be swimming on admirers. Don’t sell yourself short, Tsuna.”

“Yeah, compared to them, you are a freaking angel, Sawada.” Said Hana, giving him a speculative look. “Now if we could call attention to those traits in contrast to Mochida…”

“Please leave the plotting for later, right now I just want to go home. I am tired and starting to get hungry, and mom might be wondering where I am.” Said Tsuna, stretching. “Ryohei, could you return those please?”

“Extremely! See you tomorrow morning, Tsuna!”

“Thank you.” he said to the back of the athlete, before turning to his friends. “So, is everybody ready?”

“Yeah.” Said Hana, echoed by Kyoko and Takeshi. Tsuna turned to Reborn.
“Can you keep pace with us, or do you need one of us to carry you?”

His answer came in the form of a kick to the knees. “I am the greatest hitman in the world, Dame-Tsuna; I don’t need help keeping up with you.” he said harshly, strutting out of the door.

Tsuna rubbed his knee, glaring at Reborn’s back, before testing it to make sure it could still support his weight. Once he was sure he would not go crashing down, he looked back at his friends, nodded and followed the hitman outside.

“So, Dame-Tsuna, tell me what you plan to do about your enemies.” Reborn asked once the teenagers had caught up with him at the school gate.

“Enemies? That’s quite a heavy word for schoolyard bullies.” Answered Tsuna, raising an eyebrow.

“Doesn’t make it wrong though.” Said Hana. “They definitely hate you enough to be qualified as enemies, and at least Mochida will happily hurt you any way he can, just because.”

“Not to mention that half your social problems are directly or indirectly created by Riku” chimed Kyoko.

“And that part of the reason teachers don’t like you is because Ayako keeps messing with your tests.”

“Wait that was her?” Asked Tsuna, startled enough that he missed a step. He stumbled, but a quick grab from Takeshi prevented him from meeting the pavement.

“Yup. Kyoko and I found about it recently, she was bragging about messing up your last math grade.” She sighed.

“Honestly, how she managed to convince Abe-sensei to let her be class rep will forever be a mystery to me.”

“You aren’t class representative?” Asked Reborn, turning to Kyoko, curious.

She shook her head. “I technically won the election, but since it came so close, Abe-sensei had to act a tiebreaker.”

“How close?”

“...My vote was the difference.” Said Tsuna, voice quiet.

“Do you vote by raising hands or something?”

“It was the quickest way.”

Reborn kicked his student. “Lesson one of being a Mafia Boss: Eliminate any and all chance of failure. You should have used paper, easier to fix”

Tsuna rubbed his shin. “I am not going to bother fixing a simple Class Representative election, I had no reason to!”

“The path of being a Mafia Boss is littered with stepping stones, and Class Representative is but one of them. However, it seems we need to get some troublesome people out of the way first.” Reborn smirked. “This will be your first test, Dame-Tsuna: Become the Class Representative, and take care of the people who would oppose you.”
“Wouldn’t that be two tests?” Asked Tsunayoshi, annoyed.

“One is intrinsically tied to the other, Dame-Tsuna.” Said Reborn. “And by the way, you only have a month.”

“One month?!” Yelled Tsuna “That’s kinda short, don’t you think?”

“A Mafia Boss must be able to adapt to any circumstance, no matter what.”

“And It’s not like you can do anything else.” Piped Hana from behind. “They are going to do something for sure, and I’d rather use this opportunity to put Dame-Tsuna down for real.”

“You just want some revenge” Said Kyoko teasingly, elbowing her friend. “But yes, Tsu-kun, I think it would be better if you cleared the air, so to speak.”

Tsuna huffed. “Keshi, back me up.”

“Sorry Tsuna, the girls are right!” He said with a wide grin. “We have been playing defensively all this time, we should seize the opportunities to make some plays of our own and try to get a home run!”

Tsuna turned slowly to his friend, horror etched on his face. “You are using game metaphors. You-You are serious about this.” He said breathlessly.

“Yup!” He said cheerily.

Tsuna looked between his three friends in rapid succession, looking overwhelmed, before hanging his head. “Ok. Fine, you win.” He lifted his head, and once again, his eyes were the color of sunset, but hard as diamonds. “We are going to war.”

As the teenagers cheered, Reborn turned forward. This would make it easier to assess his student, and if the kid managed to get some hands-on experience on leading, all the better. Besides, a classroom setting is ideal to teach his student about politics, without the threat of harm or worse usually present on the mafia.

Reborn smirked.

This was shaping to be an interesting assignment.

Chapter End Notes

Hi! I am back.

So, I am going to try to update twice a month, or once every two weeks. However, I am also trying to get employed and I have an interview on Tuesday, so with some luck, I will have a source of income with responsibilities, so the schedule may change. I promise I will try my best, tho, please be patient.

Also, I have a tumblr, http://the-blue-eyed-fallen-angel.tumblr.com/

Drop by and say hi!
Third Chapter: The wheel starts spinning

Chapter Summary

Tsuna accepts the consequences of his actions, welcomes a new student, and plotting happens

Troisième chapitre: Les roues commencent à tourner

“What are you doing, Dame-Tsuna?” Asked Reborn, sitting up on his hammock. His internal clock told him it was around 6 AM, and he wasn’t due to wake up Tsunayoshi until 7.

Tsuna finished tying his hair. “Preparing.” He said, tugging on his shirt. Once he was satisfied, he silently opened the door, and tiptoed down the stairs in darkness. Only when he was safely down in the kitchen did he turn on any lights.

Reborn followed him down, where the kid started pulling down ingredients. “Do you want some?” Tsuna asked, leaving the pan to heat while he chopped vegetables.

“Yes. Make it a good one, Dame-Tsuna”

Tsuna snorted. “I don’t like that name too much. I would really appreciate it if you stopped calling me that.”

“But that’s your name.”

“My name,” he said, chopping the vegetables with force. “It’s Sawada Tsunayoshi, not Dame-Tsuna. That’s a cruel nickname I was given more than ten years ago.”

“Convince me.”

Tsuna sighed in frustration, putting the vegetables on the pan. He took a long look at them, looked
at where Reborn was perched on the table, and shook his head. “Whatever.”

He finished both omelettes and put them on the table, wasting no time on eating his. Reborn took a small piece and sniffed it cautiously before eating it. Upon determining it wasn’t poisoned, he dug in with gusto.

“So where are you going?” Asked Reborn between bites.


“Hm. Interesting. You didn’t go running yesterday though.”

“We alternate days. Onii-san is very strict about not getting burned in training.”

Tsuna picked up the plates and left them on the sink, before grabbing a bag and making his way out. The chill air of the pre-dawn daylight gave him gooseflesh, and he couldn’t help but take a deep breath of air, a small smile making way to his face.

The moment was broken thanks to a kick to the head. “Get going, Dame-Tsuna.” He said, perching on the kid’s head. “We wouldn’t want your friends to be bored, do we?”

Tsuna tried to glare at the baby, but realizing it was hopeless, he tried to dislodge him from his head by shaking it as hard as possible. Reborn however, remained unmoved, but internally gave the kid props for trying.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Mush!” He said, clucking his tongue and nudging him with his heels.

Giving it up as a lost cause, he jogged over a couple streets. Soon, the Sasagawa’s house came into view, along with two figures in front of it.

“Good Morning, Tsu!” Said Kyoko, waving. Ryohei broke out of his stretch and waved him too.
“Extreme morning, Tsuna!” Said Ryohei, in what passed as low volume for him.

“Good morning you two! Had a good night?” sked Tsuna, smiling.

“Yes, thank you. Oh! Good morning, Reborn-san.” Kyoko greeted, bowing to him.

“Morning!” Chirped Reborn cutely. Kyoko giggled and Tsuna rolled his eyes. “Are you going on a run?”

“Yes! It’s Extremely important to keep up on your physical training!” Said Ryohei punching the air.

“Are you going to join us today?” Asked Kyoko.

“Sure.”

All in all, it was pretty disappointing for Reborn. While the kids did manage a respectable 8 miles circuit, and while their stamina were to above average levels, there was nothing particularly interesting on their usual circuit, so as soon as they hit the school, Reborn went on his way, acting all mysterious. Tsuna and his friend exchanged concerned glances, but deciding there was nothing they could actually do, they continued with their usual routine.

Until lunch.

“No” Said Tsunayoshi, not even bothering to look up from his book.

The volleyball captain spluttered, looking at Yamamoto first, then back at him. “B-But why not?” He cried in confusion.

“Because I never had anything to do with the volleyball team.” Was his curt response.

The boy hesitated, but bowed. “You are our last hope, Tsuna! I have asked a lot of people but no-
one wants to substitute in such a short notice, and you don’t have anything to do after class!”

“I have work after class.” Said Tsunayoshi, glaring at the boy over the top of his book.

“Well, can’t you be a little late today then?” He bowed again, deeper this time. “This game… It’s our last chance to move up in the rankings. You were amazing fighting yesterday with Mochida. So please, lend us that strength!”

Tsunayoshi finally put his book down and took a long, hard look at the kid. “The volleyball team has been failing all year. Even if I decided to help you, there’s no way you’d be anyway near the top.” He said coldly.

The boy flinched at his words, looked at Tsunayoshi, and fell into a dogeza. “Please! This game is our last chance to save the club! Yes, we have been failing. But! If we win this match, Coach guaranteed us that the club would continue. Everybody would respect us! Even you! Please, you have to!”

Tsunayoshi closed his eyes, taking a deep breath slowly before letting it out. “First of all, It’s Sawada-san to you. Second of all, I don’t care what people here think of me so long as they leave me alone, so the judgemental assholes can save their opinions to themselves. Third, I have been sharing classes with you for six years and you never did so much as say hi to me, so I don’t ‘have’ to do anything for you. Plus, you just tried to lie to me. So, no, I have absolutely no intention of helping you.”

The boy opened his mouth as if to argue, but Takeshi interrupted him. “Well, since that was all you wanted to ask Tsuna, you may leave now.” He said with a smile, tapping his shinai against his shoulder. The volleyball captain flinched, but turned around and walked out of the room just as Kyoko and Hana were coming back inside. Hana turned a suspicious eye to the boy, and he hurried out.

“Did we miss anything important?” She asked, handing Takeshi his drink.

“No, just someone who thought himself entitled to my time. Thanks!” Said Tsunayoshi, letting his book down as he accepted his melon milk from Kyoko.

She smiled “No problem, Tsu.” She said, sitting down on the table before him. She looked out the window, the rain outside falling down hard and fast, and sighed. “Being cooped up is such a bore.
And the day seemed to be so sunny, too!

“I like it, it’s peaceful” Said Tsunayoshi, taking another sip from his drink. “Like a blanket of silence was dropped all over us.”

“Yeah, I’d have thought you of all people would like it, Kyoko.” said Hana slyly. “You do tend to want as much water as possible.”

“It was ONE time and it was SUMMER!” Said Kyoko, dropping her head on the table. “I’m never going to live that down, am I?”

“Nope!” said Hana with a smirk.

“Fucking finally!” someone snarled outside the door, before it opened with such force, it bounced off the wall. Riku marched inside as if it was her god-given right, the usual coterie of girls and boys behind her. “I have been looking for you all lunch Dame-Tsuna!”

“Riku-san, what a pleasure to have you here.” Tsuna said dry as the dessert and mild as milk. “What brings you to this humble clubroom?”

Riku slammed her hand on the table, wincing minutely, her rings making a clattering sound. “What you did yesterday was unacceptable! Go and apologize to Mochida-kun immediately!”

“No.” He said, crossing his arms. “We made the terms of the duel clear, and he lost. Not content with that, he tried to cheat, first by ordering his underling to not count my points, and then he tried to attack me on the back. If he is having trouble, it’s all of his own making.”

She leaned over the table, trying to invade his personal space. “Look, I don’t know nor care what you are trying to do, but it needs to stop. Your place is at the bottom of the ladder with the rest of the losers.” she said, sending a not-so-subtle look to Takeshi, who smiled back at her.

“You wish.” Tsuna said. “I am not trying to ‘do’ anything other than try to get through school. And yet, you insist on trying to make my life as miserable as possible for some reason.”
“You sent my brother to juvvie!”

“You brother was a sociopath that tried to kill Nagi and me. Be grateful he was only sent to juvie.” He said darkly.

“That was an accident!”

“That’s bullshit and we both know it. He was freaking armed and the place was out of the way and isolated, he knew exactly what he was doing.”

Riku snarled wordlessly in anger, turning to Kyoko. “I thought you and I were friends! Why are you still hanging out with this thing!”

“Because he’s right.” She said. “Riku-san, you have been going after him even before what happened to your brother. Stop being a bully and let go.”

Riku looked at both girls with disgust. “Really? So this is how it’s going to be? You are picking him over me, after all these years?”

“If it comes down to that, yes.” Kyoko said stonily, standing up next to Tsunayoshi. “I have no problem with you, Riku-san, and I have valued our friendship over the years, but I refuse to be friends with you if you insist on harassing Tsu-kun so much.”

“He made you repeat a year! If it wasn’t for him, you three would be on High School with me!”

“That was on the administration. If they had done their jobs right, we would have graduated with the rest of the class.”

“Those records were falsified. The principal said so.” Said Riku, a joyful glint on her eyes.

“They were not, and the principal just said so because it was convenient to them.”

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” She turned her attention to Hana, ignoring the whispers that started behind her back. “And you approve?”
“I do.” Said Hana in her best ‘why are you asking stupid questions’ voice.

Riku’s face spasmed. “Ok. you know what? Fine.” She tossed he long black hair over a shoulder, finally finding her poise. “Fine! If you want to spend time with this loser instead of me, fine.” She glared one last time at Tsuna. “I’d recommend you to be careful Dame-Tsuna. Who knows what may happen from now on? Not many people will take well that Kyoko-chan is friends with someone like you. Some people might try to remove the problem.”

Tsuna arched an eyebrow. “You don’t have to worry.” his smile only managed to show teeth. “You know me, Ri-chan. I can take care of my self.”

She stuttered and turned. “Come on! Let’s go!” she said, walking slightly faster than usual. Her coterie parted and let her pass, before following after. One or two sent concerned looks to Tsunayoshi, then turned back to gossip.

“Well.” Said Hana once the voices had disappeared. “That was fast. I was not expecting her to come to you so soon.”

“Or to bring her own peanut gallery. This is going to be all over the school by tomorrow, Tsu-kun.” Said Kyoko, one finger at her lips, a small frown on her face.

Tsuna shrugged. “Eh, that’s fine. If we are going to follow Reborn’s lead on this, then we would deal with her eventually. This way at least, we didn’t start the rumors.”

They finished their lunch and hurried back to class, taking their usual seats at the end of the class. There was a bit of a hub-hub, some rumors, but overall, everything was normal.

The teacher walked in the room, and right behind him, there was another, unknown student.

“Ahem.” The teacher cleared his throat. “Class, this is Gokudera Hayato. He just recently transferred to Japan from Italy.” He turned to the kid, and gave him a pointed look. “Introduce yourself, Gokudera-kun. Be nice.”

Takeshi heard a thunk over the squealing of the girls who were trying to get his attention. Tsuna, at
his side, had started hitting his head on the desk, repeatedly, muttering unflattering things of Reborn in gaelic. Not being able to do much more, he patted his back consolingly.

“Oh, shut up!” rang a voice, and the noise level fell down. Gokudera glared at the room in general. “I am Hayato Gokudera, and I am here specifically for one person. The rest of you bastards are meaningless.”

“GOKUDERA!” The teacher pressed his hand against his face. ”My office, after class.”

Gokudera tisked, making his way to the back of the class. He seemed content to ignore the whispers and the looks that followed him, until Tsuna sat back up. As soon as he did, Gokudera zeroed on him, and walked towards them, his scowl becoming fiercer with each passing second.

Takeshi barely managed to ground the desk before Gokudera’s knee hit it. As it was, the desk still managed to lift a good inch or so of the ground, almost toppling everything on top of it to the floor.

“Maa, Gokudera-kun, you should be more careful.” Said Takeshi, cheerful as can be, even as the temperature around them dropped a good ten degrees. “You could have hurt yourself if the desk had hit any of us.”

“Va’a farti fottere.”

“Preferirei di no. Also, rude.”

Gokudera recoiled, biting through the lollipop stick he had in his mouth. He sent a glare that could have melted tungsten, but moved on to the back of the room, sitting besides a terrified boy, who scuttered away to put as much distance between them as possible.

“Well ain’t he a ray of sunshine.” muttered Tsunayoshi.

“More like a thunderstorm. Kinda cute really, like a kitten clawing at you.” Said Takeshi, looking over his shoulder at the italian. “Makes me wanna provoke him.”

“Takeshi.”
He laughed. “Maa, maaaa. You are no fun, Tsu-chan.”

“You do know this is most likely a test from Reborn, right?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll leave it to you, then. I’m going to tell Haru though.”

Thunk.

“Traitor.” Mumbled Tsuna.

---

Tsuna said his goodbyes to his friends at the gates of the school. He ignored the snickers and the whispers that followed him, and started walking away. However, instead of taking his usual route to his home, he went down the shopping district. He grabbed a couple of meals to go, and some groceries, before rerouting to the nearby park.

“You know, most people would consider it rude to be followed.” He said once he had reached a reasonably secluded spot. He gently put the bags under a tree, and let his backpack down, rolling his shoulders as he turned. “I am willing to overlook your bad manners however, so long as you tell me what you have against me, Gokudera Hayato. Or do you prefer Hayato Gokudera?”

“Che.” He said, flicking to the ground what Tsuna had thought a lollipop, but turned out to be a cigarette. “If a pipsqueak like you becomes Boss, the Famiglia is doomed. That’s why... I will not allow you to become Vongola Tenth!.” He finished, lightening the end of another cigarette.

Tsuna tilted his head. “Oh. That is all?” He shifted his weight, and shrugged, palms out. “Then we don’t have a problem. I have no interest of becoming Tenth.”

If anything, this seemed to anger Gokudera more. “You idiot CIVILIAN!!” He roared. “Don’t you know what an honor is it to be considered a candidate to lead the most powerful mafia of the world? I have killed and bled for the honor of becoming a mere associate, and for some random loser like you to be handed the position... It pisses me off” Gokudera took out sticks of dynamite. “I have been briefed on you, Sawada Tsunayoshi. I found you lacking.”
He ignited the wicks, and lazily threw them towards Tsuna. “Die.”

There was a shot, and the dynamites fell to the floor with their wicks cut.

“You came later than expected, Gokudera.”

“Reborn-san!” Exclaimed Gokudera, looking up at the tree Reborn had perched on. “Please forgive me! I had an… unexpected meeting with some thugs.”


“That’s not important.” Said Gokudera, glaring at the brunet before turning to Reborn. “Reborn-san, were you serious? About me becoming an inheritor candidate if I kill him?” He motioned to Tsuna.

“Yes.”

“Wha-?”

“Then die!”

Tsuna moved back, catching the dynamite sticks and planting them on the damp earth, putting out the wicks. He straightened from his crouch, looking first at Reborn, and then at Gokudera.

“I… I am so sorry, Gokudera.” He said, and Gokudera was amazed to see he meant it. “He lied to you.”

“It matters nothing.” He growled, grabbing more bombs “DIE!”

Tsuna jumped to the side to evade the barrage of bombs, and was soon rattled by the tremors as they started blowing up. Pieces of dirt and mud went flying, rocks pelting both combatants, and leaving deep scars on the once green soil.
“No one can inherit Vongola unless they are part of their lineage! Even if you kill me, they won’t make you Boss. They can’t!” Said Tsuna, dodging the explosives Gokudera sent his way. “Best case, you will survive and maybe Vongola will allow you to join. At worst…” He dove, rolling and coming to a stop in front of Gokudera. “At worst, they will label you traitor and kill you.”

Gokudera roared, lunged at him, but Tsuna hoped back just in time, before maneuvering to the side and rolling through the smoke the bombs produced, and this time ending behind a tree. A peek around made him cringe: The small clearing had been torn up beyond recognition, holes peppering it throughout, like some kind of demented treasure hunt had taken place. Some small trees had gotten caught on the blasts, and although they hadn’t caught fire, they were charred and burnt, while the bigger ones fared better, only with some bark missing. And all around, the bombs that had not blown up due to moisture or other reasons were sitting there, ready for the tiniest spark to ignite the.

“COME BACK OUT YOU COWARD! FIGHT ME PROPERLY DAMMIT!” Shouted Gokudera, looking around for him.

“I refuse to engage in meaningless conflict, sorry.” Said Tsuna, flitting to another tree as his previous hiding place was blown up.

“That is unacceptable.” Tsuna felt a chill on the right side of his body and swung left, narrowly avoiding Reborn’s bullet, before crab walking back to avoid another bomb.

“Come on, isn’t that one of the rules of war or something? Winning without fighting?” Tsuna yelped and took cover behind another tree, bolting upright, and using a branch to swing to another tree as the previous one fell.

“A Mafia Boss who refuses to fight is useless.”

There was another shot that narrowly missed him, nicking his ear. Tsuna felt blood trickling down, and jumped away, hooking his hand on a higher branch and heaving himself up, twisting in midair to dodge a shot and fall on his feet, crouched.

“What is the meaning of this?”

The hiss came from below, and Tsuna was torn between cheering or despairing.
“Who the fuck are you?” Came Gokudera’s growl, as he turned to confront the interloper.

“His name is Hibari Kyoya, head of Namimori’s Disciplinary Committee.” Said Reborn, and there is a predatory glint on his eyes that had Tsunayoshi jumping in between them before he could think better of it.

Hibari zeroed on him as soon as he landed. “You” he said “better have a good explanation for this, Cub.”

Tsuna cringed, giving him a tremulous smile. “Ah ha he… would you believe me if I told you this wasn’t my fault?” Hibari glared. “Guess not…” He sighed.

“For destruction of Namimori’s public property, assaulting members of the Disciplinary Committee, and peace disturbance, I will bite you to death.” Said the prefect, taking his tonfas and moving around Tsuna to face Gokudera.

“Like hell you will!” he said, throwing a handful of dynamite towards both boys, only for them to fall harmlessly at Tsunayoshi’s feet. Before he could really process it, Hibari was swinging at him, a vicious hook to his chest that had him rolling around, stopping at a good ten paces from them.

“Gokudera!” Tsuna yelled in concern, running up to him. He gently propped him up, hands running up and down his side. “Well, at least you don’t seem to have anything broken.” He said with relief. He had definitely heard a crack.

“Move back, Cub.” Hibari said, holding his tonfas up threateningly, gunmetal eyes fixed on the wounded Italian. “I have to punish him still. Endangering members of the Disciplinary Committee is not allowed.”

“Later, Hibari.” Tsuna said, ignoring the prefect. “Do you think you can walk, Gokudera?”

“I don’t need your help.” Spat the Italian, trying to stand up and shake Tsuna off him, but failing in both accounts.

Tsuna sighed. “Thought so. Here, let me.” he shoved his way under Gokudera’s arms, ignoring the
protests of the bomber.

There was on that silence that Tsunayoshi realized three things:

One, Gokudera’s cigarette was missing.

Two, There was a faint hissing noise nearby.

Three, Reborn was nowhere to be seen.

“MOVE!” he screamed at the same time he swung Gokudera over his shoulder and jumped, barely making it out from the first blast, before realizing that with the amount of dynamite around, the only safe way was up.

Tsuna jumped, planting his foot on a tree before jumping off there and hooking an arm over the branch of another, kicking off it and leaping like a cat upwards, higher and higher, until he was a good twenty feet off the ground.

Carefully, he let Gokudera slide off his shoulder. The Italian was pale green, his eyes wide looking down, were the last of his explosives were going off. Aside from some extra mud and dirt, he seemed to be fine.

“Hey, Gokudera? Are you ok?”

The boy turned to him, and Tsuna barely had time to smother an eep when he recognized the look on his face.

“I WAS WRONG! YOU ARE FIT TO BE THE TENTH BOSS!” Said Gokudera, trying to get himself on a dogeza. Tsuna yelped and grabbed him, flailing to try and rectify the overbalance that was shaking the branch they were sitting at.

“Gokudera!?”
“It’s a family tradition for the loser to serve the winner.” Said Reborn from an adjacent tree. “As a member of the Vongola Famiglia, Gokudera is now your subordinate. Good job, Tsuna.”

Tsunayoshi rolled his eyes. “I don’t need any more subordinates.”

“Please Tenth! Don’t throw me away! I will prove myself to you!” Said Gokudera, and Tsuna send him a calculating look.

“I... Fine.” he sighed. He looked down to find Hibari glaring at him from the floor.

“Get back here, Cub.” He said, his demeanor all but screaming ‘pissed off’

“Sorry sorry.” Tsuna let himself fall down, landing in front of the prefect. “Look, Hibari, I know and understand that you are angry, but I really need to deal with Gokudera first. I will fight you later in his stead.”

“And you will be paying for the repairs.”

“Of course.” Tsuna nodded, earnest.

The prefect huffed, and glared one last time at Gokudera, before turning back and marching out of the clearing.

Tsuna watched him go and heaved a sigh, before looking up. “Do you need any help getting down?”

“No no no no! Don’t worry about me, Tenth!” Said Gokudera, letting himself fall; but instead of landing on his feet as he intended, he hit every branch down and face-planted on the mud. From where he was, Tsuna could see his ears redden, before starting to mutter self-deprecating stuff.

“Come on, Gokudera. Up.” Tsuna heaved him up to his feet, before checking where he had left his purchase. While he was a little discouraged to notice some things had broken during the fight, he thanked the to-go lunches had survived their fight.
He turned and gave one to Gokudera. “Here, eat.”

He spluttered. “Wha- I cannot accept such a gift!”

Tsuna rolled his eyes, grabbing the other lunch. “That was an order, Gokudera.”

Gokudera looked lost for a moment, before hesitatingly taking a bite out of the food. Tsuna smiled encouragingly at him, before grabbing the groceries and heaving his backpack up. “Come on, let’s grab the bus back. I’m taking you to my house to get those bruises checked. This is non-negotiable.” He said authoritatively, cutting off any protest Gokudera might have had.

“Mom! I have a new friend with me!” Said Tsuna as soon as he crossed his house.

“Oh? Well come in, let me meet him!” She answered cheerfully from the kitchen.

Tsuna grabbed Gokudera’s arm and dragged him forward. Nana turned from where she was chopping vegetables, and turned to them. One look at the boys had her gasping, covering her mouth with her hands, hurrying towards them.

“Oh my! What happened to you two?” She said, taking a handkerchief and rubbing some of the dirt off Tsuna.

“M-mom!” He shook her off. “I am fine, we just had a rough time getting home.” he motioned Gokudera, who dutifully stepped forward. “Mom, this is Gokudera-kun. We met today after class.”

“It’s an honor to meet you, Tenth’s Mother!” he exclaimed, bowing deeply.

She laughed. “My! Aren’t you a polite one.” She bowed back to him. “It’s a pleasure to meet you. My name is Sawada Nana.” She looked him over and nodded. “Here, come with me. I just finished some laundry, let’s get you a change of clothes and then check you out while Tsuna takes care of his guest.”
“Guest?” Asked Tsuna, but all he got was a wink from his mother. He took up the stairs and stood out of his door, hesitating or a second. Then he made up his mind, grabbing the knob and opening the door with force.

“Ah, Tsunayoshi, so good to see you again. When were you going to tell me you had an arcobaleno living with you?”

Tsuna went white. “Shoichi.” he whispered. “I can explain.”

“I fucking hope so, Tsunayoshi.” said the redhead, closing the laptop he had on his knees. He looked up at him over the rim of his glasses, white glare lending him an intimidating air. “I thought we had broken you out of this bad habit of not telling anything to anyone. Obviously, we failed.”

“Wait please listen.” Tsuna raised his hands. “He has been here two mere days and I was still thinking what the heck I was gonna do not to mention we fought with Mochida and I won so now Riku hates me nothing new there but we think she might actually try something so we’re planning shit and then Gokudera came here so I was dealing with that please don’t get mad at me!”

Shoichi blinked and tilted his head. “Gokudera.” he said neutrally. “As in, Smoking Bomb Hayato.” He frowned, looking at Tsuna up and down, taking on his disheveled appearance, his scratches and his bleeding ear, and covered his face with his hands, groaning helplessly. “You IDIOT!” he threw a pillow at Tsuna, who dodged it. “See, this shit is why I have ulcers! I bet you also dismissed Takeshi and went to fight Gokudera alone, didn’t you?”

“Hey! Reborn told me I was to be Vongola Tenth, and has been testing me constantly. My best option was to do as he wanted.”

“You could have died!”

“Tenth! Are you okay? I hear yelling!”

“You brought him here.” Shoichi said stonily, letting himself fall back into the bed. “Of course you brought him here.” he glared through his fingers. “We need to do something about that tendency of yours to hoard people.”

“Oi, it wasn’t my idea.” He said defensively, scuttling to the side.
“You don’t discourage them either.” he retorted, keeping an ear out on the stomping outside.

“Tenth! Are you - Who the fuck are you?” Growled Gokudera upon catching sight of Shoichi.

The redhead arched an eyebrow and sat up. He looked at the boy on the door, taking in the torn pants but clean shirt, and the bandaged cuts on his face. “I could ask the same to you.” he said crossing his legs.

“I don’t have any reason to answer.” Said Gokudera.


“Gokudera Hayato” He said, still glaring at him from the door. “Is he bothering you Tenth?”

“No-”

“I can bother him whenever I want.” Interrupted Shoichi.

“No you fucking don’t. Show him some respect.”

“I’ll show him all the respect he deserves. I’m no-one’s toady.”

“Actually-”

“Are you insinuating something punk?”

“I’m not insinuating something, but if the shoe fits...”

“Okay cut it out you two!” Exclaimed Tsuna, making the other two flinch. He crossed his arms
over his chest and turned to Shoichi. “Shoichi, stop being an ass.” Then he turned back to Gokudera. “And you, chill.”

“Fine.”

“Of course, Tenth!”

“Good. Now, Gokudera, do me a favor and go help my mom? I need to talk to Shoichi about a couple things.”

Gokudera hesitated, but nodded. “Of course, Tenth!” He threw another suspicious glance at Shoichi, who returned it a thousandfold, but went.

Tsuna sighed and closed the door. “Right. So, this is what has been happening….”

“Only you can get on these messes Tsuna.” Said Shoichi with a soul-weary sigh, taking a sip from his tea.

“Look, if I could, I would have avoided the whole debacle, but literally just by existing I’m an option.” Tsuna took a drink of his own tea. “Honestly, my current plan is to get as much information and training out of this as possible, and then ditch them.”

“You do realize that is going to be damn near impossible, right?”

“Eh.” Tsuna shrugged. “It wouldn’t be the first time I did something called impossible.”

Shoichi hummed. “‘First do what’s necessary, then do what’s possible. Soon enough you will be doing the impossible’” He quoted

Tsuna laughed. “Exactly.” Then got serious. “And besides, if Gokudera is anything to go by, there is a lot of people not happy with the fact that the next Vongola will be a civilian. We need to be prepared. And I...”
Tsuna fell silent. Shoichi, used to his moods by now, let him organize his thoughts.

“I feel that there is more to the story that we don’t know.” Said Tsuna.

Shoichi nodded “I thought so too.” He looked down at his teacup. “When the first heir died, they should have mobilized to protect the rest. And yet, the other two died within a year of each other, and we never saw anything amiss: No cars following us, no people checking on us, on you. And Reborn… Why would they send the strongest hitman to train a civilian? Even with Vongola’s resources, that seems like a waste.”

“So you’ll be looking deeper into this?”

“I will. I will send Hibari-san everything I find. Might have to call in some favors.”

“Do whatever you need.”

“All right. For the moment though, we should focus on your current test” Shoichi said, smiling like a wolf.

Tsuna groaned. “Do we have to?” He whined. “I was happy flying under the radar. Once we do this, there is going to be SO much attention focused on me, ugh.”

Shoichi hummed happily. “Yes, we do have to. I have been dreaming of this for Years!” He cackled. “All those assholes are gonna pay for their abuse, at long last!”

“You are all a bunch of vindictive, scary people.” said Tsuna taking a drink.

“Pot, kettle” shot Shoichi back. “Anyway, shall we call everybody now?”

“We don’t need everyone.... Just. Just the local ones.”

“Makes sense. I am still going to run the voice around though.”
“Can I convince you not to?” Shoichi glared. “Figures.”

“Look Tsuna, I understand you are trying to not worry us, but the fact is, you have one of the most dangerous people of the mafia living under your roof, and probably more coming as we speak. If you really want us to be comfortable with that, you need to let us know things. Where you are. What are you doing. And if you need help. That’s our bond: We keep each other safe. And we can’t do that if you insist on going at it alone.” Shoichi took his hand. “It’s not weakness, I promise. We won’t think any less of you. Just… Let us help.”

Tsuna sighed. “I know… but then I will be putting you guys in danger.”

Shoichi sent him a deadpan stare. “Tsun, we will be in more danger if we can’t help, because we get reckless. You know we can’t afford that.”

Tsuna grimaced. “I know. I don’t like it, but… You are right.”

Shoichi smiled. “Of course I am right, I am always right. That’s why I am your Right Hand.”

Tsuna giggled. “That was a horrible pun.”

He shrugged. “It’s true though. So. Tomorrow, at Hibari’s place?”

Tsuna nodded. “In the school, after class. We just have half a day since it is Saturday, so we can keep working until closing without no-one bothering us if it comes to that.”

“All right. You tell your crew, I’ll tell mine.” Shoichi tapped his lips. “Are you going to bring Gokudera?”

Tsuna shrugged “Probably, if only to throw Reborn off our tail.”

Shoichi huffed. “I’m sometimes really concerned about you. Honestly Tsuna, the man tried to kill you. Normal people don’t follow that up with an offer of friendship.”
“... He thought that being made an associate was ‘an honor’” He said softly. Shoichi groaned, being familiar what that tone of voice and that expression meant. “I think Gokudera-kun has spent a long time alone, trying to find a place to settle.” Tsuna looked at him. “We know the Mafia relies heavily on bloodlines, and I don’t think he’s had a lot of support. The way he fought... He didn’t care where his bombs fell, so long as he could get to me. He could have gotten killed.”

“...Well, at least he will be loyal.” muttered Shoichi, consoling himself.

“I know you don’t like him, but please try to get along with him?”

“I will try, Tsunayoshi. If he starts insulting us I am going to answer though.”

Tsuna nodded. “That’s acceptable.”

The rain of the day before had become a full blown storm by next day. The sky was grey, with a heavy curtain of rain covering everything and making everything look blurry and dark. Thunder could be heard every once in awhile, a distant rumble or a deafening tremor that shook you down to your bones.

Tsuna welcomed the chill with open arms, the clean smell of rain making him smile. “Isn’t this wonderful weather?” He said, leaning against the window, letting his forehead rest against the cool pane of glass.

“If you say so, Tenth.” said Gokudera noncommittally from his spot on the sofa between Ryohei, who was absorbed on some training video, and Yamamoto, who was waiting for his tea to steep.

Takeshi grinned and casually slung an arm over him. “Ma, Maah, don’t worry Gokudera, Tsukun has weird tastes.”

“Get OFF me you sword freak!” Screeched Gokudera, all but shoving the smiling teen off. Takeshi laughed and lifted his arm off, but instead draped himself over Tsuna. “Tsu, I’m bored.” He complained, ignoring the indignant spluttering of the Italian. “Entertain me.”
“You can start on your math homework.” Chimed Hana from the other end of the room, waving a pencil threateningly. “I know your marks are slipping, Yamamoto.”

“But that’s not fun!” He said, hiding behind Tsuna.

“Tough. Get your ass over here.” She pointed to a seat on the low table.

“Go, Takeshi.” Said Tsuna, shaking him off.

Takeshi walked over to where Hana was with the steps of a man going to their execution. Hana smiled and sat him down besides Kyoko, who was busy with her own work, and started quizzing him on what he had done up ‘till now. Tsuna smiled and turned his attention to the window.

“The other herbivores are late.” Muttered Kyoya from his seat on the desk, looking up from the papers he was signin to the clock.

“Give them time. It’s probably because of the rain.” Said Tsuna, looking as a lightening struck on the distance.

The prefect huffed, and joined him on the side of the window. “Where is the baby, Cub?” he whispered, maintaining one suspicious eye on Gokudera, who was reading a book.

“I have no idea.” Said Tsuna honestly. “It makes me a bit twitchy, but there’s not much I can do about that.”

Kyoya huffed. “Your pet scientists could probably devise something.”

“Shoichi and Spanner are busy right now, and even them are nowhere near good enough to fool Reborn for long.” Tsuna said, quirking an eyebrow

Hibari sneered. “The other?”
Tsuna rolled his eyes. “I’m not interrupting him for this. He’s doing something way more important than devising super-powered bugs.”

“We are talking about an Arcobaleno.”

“No, Hibari.” Said Tsuna sharply.

Hibari glared at him, but moved on. “Have you called them yet?”

“Yes, Hibari, ten minutes ago. You were here for that.”

“I dislike waiting.”

Tsuna snorted. “You make people wait for you all the time.”

“That’s asserting dominance.”

“That’s being an asshole.”

“Mother disagrees.”

“Your mother thinks the corpses of your enemies are appropriate birthday gifts.”

“They are here.” Said Hibari sharply, making Tsuna whirl around and peer down the window.

Indeed, two dark silhouettes were running on Nami-chuu’s courtyard towards the building. The rain made it very hard to distinguish much aside the colors, but Tsuna would know that shade of red anywhere.

“They don’t have an umbrella.” Said Tsuna anxiously.
“Probably blown away by the wind.” Hibari answered.

Tsuna looked at him before turning around. “Takeshi, could you, Hana and Kyoko get some towels please?”

“Sure thing!” Said Takeshi springing from his position, Hana following with a much more sedated pace at the same time she frowned at him. Kyoko followed after, making sure their things were properly put on their places.

Just a couple of minutes after they had gone out, Shoichi came traipsing in with a blonde in tow. He was taller than him by a fair margin, with bright blond hair and light blue eyes, a lollipop stick hanging from his mouth.

“Yo! Sorry for the wait, got some hiccups along the way.” He said over the splutters of Shoichi, who was trying in vain to dry his glasses with the same soaked t-shirt he had on.

“What happened to you guys?” Asked Tsuna in concern.

“Yeah, you are EXTREMELY wet!”

“T-tea first, p-please” Said Shoichi between clattering teeth, crossing his arms and hunching. He accepted the napkin Tsuna handed him and cleaned his glasses from water, before proceeding to shed his wet blazer and leave it on the floor, winning him a glare from Hibari. “S-sorry, Hibari-s-s-san.” He apologized.

“Clean it up before leaving, herbivore.” was the only thing Hibari said.

“Spanner. What hiccups?” Asked Tsuna, more forcefully.

“Oh well, you know. We lost our umbrella when we got jumped.” Said the blond offhandedly. 

“You got JUMPED!?! Where? How?” Tsuna flapped his arms around, as if he could catch the
perpetrators.

“W-we don’t know.” Said Shoichi, sitting down on the arm of the couch. “I-It was too d-d-dark. Thank-you” he said, accepting the tea Ryohei gave him.

“It was definitely nearer Namichuu than our school, however. And whoever it was were smart enough to dress on street clothes instead of going at it in uniforms.” Added Spanner, accepting his own cup and taking a sip.

“Yo, Sho-chan! Spanner! Nice to see you guys!” Said Takeshi, coming inside followed by Hana and Kyoko, all of them with their arms full of towels.

Shoichi immediately brightened at their sight. “Hana! Kyoko!”

“Hello, Irie.”

“Sho-kun, hello!”

“What, no love or me?” Asked Spanner, receiving a glare from Hana.

“You are still on thin ice after the last stunt you pulled.” She said, dumping an armload of towels on him.

“Oh, come on Witchy, what’s a couple of electric shocks between friends?”

Hana snarled wordlessly, shoving a towel in his mouth, before turning back to Irie. “Haru?”

“She isn’t here yet?” Asked Shoichi, surprised, before becoming worried. “She was not with us. I called her about twenty minutes ago, she should be here by now”

“Knowing her, she probably stopped by her house to change clothes.” Said Spanner.
“I don’t know, If you guys got jumped…” Said Tsuna.

“You what?” Said Hana sharply. Takeshi, too, frowned at it, and took out his phone.

“It was nothing” Said Spanner with a grin. “Just some punks trying to look tough. We didn’t even get hurt, right Sho?”

“Right.” Shoichi nodded, shaking his hair dry with a towel.

“Haru hasn’t sent anything new.” Said Takeshi, looking up from his phone.

“Give her five minutes, if we don’t know anything by then, we should try calling.” Said Shoichi.

“I’d feel better if we went to her, instead of staying here.” Said Tsuna, looking out worriedly.

“Haru’s strong, Tsuna. Even if she gets in trouble, you can believe she will let us know.” Said Spanner.

“I hope so.” Said Tsuna, turning to look out the window. Lightning struck, making the worry on his eyes all the more apparent.

“Right.” Kyoko clapped. “First of all: Spanner, Gokudera. Gokudera, Spanner, one of our friends.” She said, motioning to each guy as they were named. “Second: Spanner, Sho-chan, off with your clothes.”

“What?!” Spluttered Shoichi, going white.

“Why Kyoko-chan, I thought you’d never ask!” Teased Spanner, getting swatted with a towel by Hana.

“Not like that, you hentai! She means that you should change out of your wet uniform.”
“Are you sure? Because I have started taking dance lessons, and I could give a pretty good show.”

That earned him another swat from Hana.

Gokudera was looking at the exchange with a more horrified expression by the second, before finally turning to Tsunayoshi. “Are they always this…?” He made a weak motion with the hand, where Kyoko was starting to drag Shoichi towards the door, while he tried desperately to hang on the couch.

Tsunah laughed. “Don’t worry Gokudera, you’ll get used to it eventually.”

“Holy *fuck*, Irie, what happened to you?”

Kyoko gasped, dropping to her knees and shoving his shirt up, heedless of what the redhead had to say. “Nii-san! Get the first-aid kit!”

Now with the fabric off the way, everyone present on the room could clearly see the blood dripping from the gash on Shoichi’s side.

“Really Sho? Really?” Spanner asked, stomping behind his friend and forcefully pinning him to the couch, between the cushions.

“It’s barely a scratch! Look, it’s almost healed already!” Shoichi spits out. “Really! It’s not even deep!”

“It can get infected!” Spanner says, and clocks Shoichi on the head for good measure.

“I’m not that incompetent!” Shoichi shots back, and nails Spanner on the ribs with his elbow.

“Herbivores, stay still or I will bite you to death” Hibari snarls, and both boys still on the couch.

“Sho.” Tsuna says, low and slow, and everyone in the room feels dread pool on their stomach, both at the tone and at the close-eyed, teeth-baring smile Tsuna has on his face. “Who hurt you?”
Shoichi gulps and forces the works around the sudden knot on his neck. “I have no idea.” he says.

“Spanner?” Tsuna turns to face the blond, who feels himself stiffen against his will.

“We weren’t kidding when we said it was dark. I legit don’t know.”

“You will forgive me if I don’t put much stock on your words right now.”

“Hey.” Spanner says, and his voice seemed to drop a whole octave. “We did fight, and I did see those punks take a swing at Sho. I was just unaware of exactly how bad it was, and believe me it was not for lack of trying.”

Tsuna takes a long, hard look at them and turns to Ryohei, who has not looked up from the wound. “Nii-san, could you take them to the bathroom and check them up?”

“Extremely!” Says Ryohei. Hana steps up to the side, and grabs Spanner’s arms to guide him to the adjacent bathroom. Once Ryohei is happy with the bandage, he does the same with Shoichi.

Once the bathroom door closed, Tsuna sighed and sat down on the sofa, taking the tea there and gulping it down. Takeshi sighed and took another cup, and proceeded to make another cup for himself.

“And we just had a talk about worrying people.” Spits Tsuna to no-one in particular. “Goddamn hypocrite.”

It takes five minutes before two things happen, almost to the same time:

One, All people in the bathroom get out, and Ryohei gives them all the good news: Aside from Shoichi’s scratch and some bruises Spanner got, both boys are in perfect health.

Two: A girl entered the room.
“Hahi! I hadn’t taken such a good walk in weeks!” She said, stretching one arm over her head, unconcerned with the fact she was dripping all over the floor. She let her arm drop to her side and smiled around the room. “Hi guys!”

She took a second before she registered Gokudera, and then squealed, lunging towards him. “Hahi! You must be Tsuna’s new friend! I’m Miura Haru, but you can call me Haru if you want! I like to make cosplay and clothes, and you are the perfect model for my gothic line! Do you have anything to do tomorrow?” She said, shaking his hand vigorously.

“Ah?” Said Gokudera, caught completely off-guard by the short-haired girl.

Tsuna laughed. “Lay off him, Haru. He just got here yesterday.”

“Hahi! Really? I’m sorry, I didn’t know! Don’t feel obligated or anything! But if you can, please do drop by my house.” She said, before turning to Tsuna. “Tsu-chan! My Tsu-chan! I have missed you!” She said, throwing herself at him and wrapping around, so her legs are at either side of his waist and she’s surrounding his neck with her arms. “I still have those tuxedos from last month and I want to see you in them!”

“WOMAN GET OFF THE TENTH!” Roared Gokudera, trying to lunge at her, but she jumped at the last moment so the boy ended all over Tsunayoshi’s lap instead.

“Hahi! This is so perfect! Your color schemes complement beautifully! And that hair! I can do so many things with that hair!”

“YOU ARE NOT GOING ANYWHERE NEAR MY HAIR!!” Screamed Gokudera, his hair a vibrant red, as he jumped to his feet and put as much distance between himself and Tsunayoshi.

Tsuna, however, merely looked amused. “Haru, seriously now, drop it. We have quite a bit of important things to discuss.”

She nodded, grabbing a nearby towel. “Of course, of course, I have not forgotten that.” She smirked, digging on her skirt pocket. “Now let’s see, I think I have something… Right here!” she said triumphantly, coming out with a plastic bag.

She threw it over to Shoichi, who quirked and eyebrow and opened it, peering inside.
His jaw hit the floor. “Haru, how did you even get this?”

Haru smirked. “Dori-Dori is very airheaded, she “loses” phones whenever a new model comes out. I snatched it when she wasn’t looking.”

Shoichi didn’t answer, engrossed as he was on the phone. Spanner leaned over and grabbed the other one, which was a way older model, and in darker colors.

“And this one?”

“Ah, yeah, that one. Tsuna, did you piss off Riku lately?”

“Oh no, you too?” Said Tsuna, immediately springing to his feet and putting his arms around her.

“Too?” She asked, stepping back. “Did someone else get attacked?”

“I’m fine, Shoichi got knifed.”

“But I’m cool! It was a scratch!” He said quickly.

“How did you know it was her?” Asked Tsuna?

“I checked the phone after taking care of those punks.” She grinned. “They were quite shocked that someone like me could take them on. But anyways, you know what the last messages were?”

“Orders to ambush us?” Guessed Tsuna.

“And a photo of a financial transaction, payed to ‘Daiki Momo’”
“Wait, hang on a second!” Hana exclaimed. “How the hell did the Spider managed to get the Momokyokai-gumi involved?”

Haru shook her head. “I don’t think they were actual Momokyokai, just kobun trying to make a name for themselves.”

“By beating up middle schoolers?” Deadpanned Gokudera.

“By raising a bit more than 50000 yen literally from one day to another.” Said Haru.

“Yeah that would get their attention.” Agreed Shoichi. “I’ll have to take this home to comb through it in more detail.”

“We have until Monday.”

“I know, I’ll clone the chip and bug it. It will be ready.”

“You are a dear.” She blew him a kiss he pretended to catch.

“Well anyways, wasn’t plotting supposed to happen?” She asked, clapping her hands together.

“Right.” Hana said. She stood up and dragged out the two whiteboards they had in the back, and wrote four names on top of them.

“Who do we do first?” She asked Tsunayoshi.

“Mochida.” he said. “Better to get him of of the way early so we can focus on the dangerous ones.”

She nodded, making an asterisk under ‘Mochida Kensuke’ “So what do you all had in mind?”

“As juvenile as it sounds, we could tell his father.” Said Takeshi. “His dojo has not been doing well
lately, and I think that’s partially because of Mochida and the rep he gets.”

Tsuna sighed. “That’d be acceptable, if we can deal with the Yakuza that has been circling him.”
he massaged his nose bridge. “I honestly cannot understand how Mochida can be so self-centered
to not see what he’s doing to his family.”

“That might be harder.” Shoichi said. “They are more interested on the skills his father has to give
than him personally.” He shook his head. “I haven’t really thought about it aside from making
them leave Namimori entirely. Maybe we can arrange for some kind of ‘Inheritance’?”

“Or a job. Mochida-san is a very good instructor, and might be lured away from his failing business
by a good post with wages.” Kyoko piped up.

“First thing firsts, we need to take care of Mochida. With some luck, Mochida-san will agree to
pull him out of Nami. Shoichi, look into the options for Mochida senior.”

“Yes, Tsuna.”

“Next, Nishizawa Ayako.” Hana spat the name like it was shit.

“Burn the witch!” came the cry from all the girls and some of the boys in the room. Gokudera
pressed himself more firmly against the sofa, unconsciously looking for exits as the room was
suffocated with killer intent.

“As much as I’d love to” Tsuna said patiently. “I’d rather not have to justify to Reborn a hit on an
‘innocent civilian’”

“Well, no objections against ruining her options for higher education, right?”

“We are not forging records Spanner, there’s enough material with what she has actually done, and
that cannot be traced to us.”

“You might have forgotten but we tried that already.” Shoichi said.
“Yes, but this time we are going to give the administration a choice between their pupil, and all the shit their pupil has pulled while under their rule going National.” Said Tsuna.

“Blackmail then?” Shoichi rubbed his eyes. “That might work. The Principal here has been requesting transfer over to Yumei for three years now, and if Ayako’s frauds become public, no other school will take him.”

“Yeah, he was already in hot water for the Nezu debacle. I’m pretty sure we can convince people whom Nezu booted to help with the spread.” Spanner said.

“And I am pretty sure I can have Mother file some lawsuits for defamation or something. Even if they don’t go anywhere, they will be a big red flag to any University for the next four years.” Added Hana

“And if we time this right, this is going to hit when Midori and Riku have their fallout, so she will not have any friends around.” Said Kyoko, deep in thought. “That be an appropriate punishment, I think.”

“All right. Next, Saito Midori.”

“Hahi! I have an idea!” Haru said, shaking her hand in the air. “I heard her family was trying to send her to a boarding school!”

“So we should sabotage her?” Asked Hana.

“No! We should help!” Haru typed something on her phone and passed it around. “I did some digging up, and is perfect! It’s located just outside a small town in Inaba. The girls are all closely monitored, no personal computer of phones are allowed except under special circumstances, and absolutely no parties. The schoolwork is terrific, and the failure rate is 10% of each year. Naturally, it is expensive as fuck, but graduating there basically guarantees you a spot on the top universities of the World. All she need to get in are the grades and three letters of recommendation.”

“Hm, I admit that it sounds pretty good.” Tsuna pondered. “And I admit, it sounds the exact opposite of Midori’s life right now. Going from crazy party girl to recluse is going to be quite a shock.”
“Besides, it’s not like she will be able to graduate from there. I give her a year, two maximum.” Haru said offhandedly. “She doesn’t have the discipline.”

“Then we have a plan.”

Hana wrote it on the whiteboard, and tapped the last name on it. “Minamoto Riku” She murmured.

“What I want is for her to join her brother in jail.” Said Kyoko, uncharacteristically serious.

“We don’t have anything concrete yet, but I agree.” nodded Shoichi. “I just hope she escalates, the sooner the better.”

“We will have to deal with the Momokyokai then.” Tsuna sighed. “What a pain…”

“If I may?” Gokudera interrupted. At Tsuna’s nod, he continued. “I could hit their bases, send them a message to leave town.”

Tsuna shook his head. “Thanks, but maybe later. We are trying not to attract too much attention to the town at the moment.” he said in explanation. “Moving now would mean a lot of unnecessary noise, so let’s try to get this done as smoothly as possible.”

“As you say, Tenth.” Said Gokudera, tucking away those little packets of information to investigate them later.

“What exactly does she want?” Mused Hana. “I know she cares about her image, but that’s not it.”

“Power, I think. Her father is a very important politician, and her mother is very wealthy.” Kyoko answered. “Power and respect, and the adoration of the masses. That is why she befriended me all those years ago.”

“All right, so for her we can also do a smear campaign.” Noted Shoichi.
“It will be difficult. Riku has done a number of unsavory things, but she has been far more careful than any of her cronies. Not to mention she has spent all her life cultivating a very specific image is going to be hard to dispel.”

“Urgh, people.” Muttered Hana. “What would we be attacking, exactly?”

“Well, we know for sure she has contacts on with the Momokyokai now. We can start there.” Says Tsuna. “Leave our options open, at least for the moment, and then next week we will see what we have.”

Hana nods. “Shoichi?”

He took a picture of all they had written. “Ready.”

“Alright then, we are done here.” Said tsuna, standing up. “Everyone, you know what you should do. Take tomorrow, and we start on Monday.”

There is a chorus of “Yes, Tsuna”, and they all trickle out of the building. The rain has not abated yet, so they decide to leave in pairs to better use the few umbrellas they have. First are Shoichi and Spanner, then Ryohei and Hana, then Kyoko and Haru.

“I’ll walk you home, Tenth!”

“Ah? But Gokudera, you live nearer to me! It makes more sense for you and I to share.” Said Yamamoto, opening his umbrella.

“I will rather get soaked than to share that abomination with you.” Spits Gokudera, eyeing the light blue with yellow polka dots.

“But Keshi is right, Gokudera. You two are nearer to each other, makes more sense for you two to go together.”

“But Tenth! If our enemies are mobilizing, it makes more sense to have more people with you.”
“It’s okay, Hibari will accompany me.”

“See, Gokudera? Tsuna has already thought about this. Now we should get going or we are going to miss the bus.” Said Yamamoto smiling. “See you tomorrow, Tsu!”

“Bye guys!” Said Tsuna, before opening his own umbrella and turning to Hibari. “Shall we?”

“Lead the way, Cub. I hope your mother made Pepper Steak.”

“I’m sure I can find you something to eat.”

Reborn grit his teeth and cursed the incompetence of Iemitsu Sawada.

At first, he had thought the lack of bodyguards was due to his arrival, and trying not to tip the local criminal or law-enforcing elements by attracting attention to the kid.

Now? Reborn was sure someone had been messing with the bodyguards.

The Namimori safe houses nearer to the Sawada residence had looked well used, with a tepid cup of coffee on the table, the tv on and a jacket left behind and balled, but after spending four hours there, Reborn had to accept the fact whoever was in charge of watch would not be coming.

The irritation turned to alarm once he discovered the rest of Namimori’s houses were in similar state. Nothing seemed too wrong, and the cleaning lady he had found on the office near Tsunayoshi’s school had kindly told him that she sometimes saw people coming and going, but there was absolutely no trace of the bodyguards. Upon shaking down Vongola’s local informants, he had found out the disappeared mafioso had given them specific instructions to not report any difference on Sawada Tsunayoshi. Apparently, the CEDEF had been infiltrated, and the flow of information needed to be carefully controlled, or they risked the security of the only son of the CEDEF head.
In short, any kind of information from Namimori had been tampered with for whoever knows how long, the men who were supposed to be stationed there had disappeared, and a ‘Dame’ student had turned out to not be so Dame after all.

Because that was another mystery concerning Tsunayoshi. All his friends, including the girls—maybe especially the girls—had ridiculous potential, not only on the Flame department, but also on becoming guardians. Thing is, like tended to like, and there was no way people like the School Idol, the Ex-Star of the Baseball Team and the Ruling Prefect of Namimori would willingly associate with a Nobody.

They were missing something. What’s more, an unknown number of someones were invested on them missing something.

And Reborn was going to get to the bottom of this.
Chapter Summary

Reborn tests Tsuna's friends, and Gokudera realizes someone cares

“And be sure to tell Riku that Midori will not be paying her trip to California, all right?”

The girl nodded, a determined glint in her eyes. “Sure thing Kyoko-chan!” she then smiled shyly. “It’s so nice of you to look out for her, even after your fallout. Riku… Well, you know how she gets. She didn’t mean anything of what she said in the chat.” She smiled brightly. “I’m sure she’ll apologize soon after all this mess is sorted out.”

“I’m sure she will.” said Kyoko with a smile. “But meanwhile, just tell her what I told you, Suzume-chan. I’d hate for her to get all the way to America before realizing she’d have no money there.”

“Yeah…” Suzume sighed. “Her parents are too strict with her, in my opinion.”

“His father IS a politician, and elections are coming up.” Kyoko shrugged. “I understand not wanting to cause any problems for the time being.”

“Even so, she should be allowed to enjoy her summer, especially after all the work she has been putting on her grades.” Suzume frowned. “Well, I guess I should go tell Riku-chan. See you later, Kyoko-chan!”

“See you!”

There was a pause after the bathroom door closed, and then, one of the cubicles opened.

“And with this, those two should start fighting soon.” Said Hana, touching her phone. Once it
pinged, she smiled. “It’s such a good thing you still have your fans amongst Riku. I would not have been able to do that so smoothly.”

Kyoko laughed. “Oh, no need brag, Hana. We both know you would have found a way.” She said, opening the tap and cleaning her hands.

“True, I would have.” She said. “But it’s most likely I would have to burn her after. This way, we have an extra pawn to play with.”

Kyoko shook her head. “Come on, let’s go back to the classroom. I’m starving, and Tsu-chan brought french toast!”

Hana made a face. “Yuck. How can you keep your figure with the amount of sugar you eat?”. Hana asked, running an envious eye over the slim figure of her friend.

“Nii-san” Kyoko answered, and Hana had to sigh. Although Ryoei had calmed down these last few years, the fact that he had constant access to Kyoko meant she was the designated victim when he wanted to try something new.

They entered the classroom and walked towards his friend, who was currently face down and thumping his forehead against the desk. Takeshi meanwhile, was trying to talk down Gokudera, who was foaming at the mouth and sending glares towards the door.

“Guys?” Asked Kyoko, frowning, as Hana looked around. Aside from a couple of girls gossiping and looking on their direction, everything looked normal. “What happened?”

“Tsu-chan got a confession!” Said Takeshi, who had given up to talking Gokudera down and was in the process of pinning his arms to his sides. Once he was sure the italian was not going to be able to go murder anyone, he continued. “Some girl tried to get him to follow her out somewhere more private.”

“As if the Tenth was such an idiot.” Interected Gokudera, before being forcibly quieted via Takeshi’s hand.

“But Tsuna, of course, said no and that whatever she needed to say in private she could say in front of us. She got nervous, started to stammer, so this here.” He jolted Gokudera. “Growled at her to get going, and she blurted it out.”
“And Tsuna said no and the girl left crying.” Hana said, rolling her eyes.

“I don’t get why though! I have never talked to her, why did she suddenly get all weepy?” Asked Tsuna, voice muffled.

Hana patted his shoulder. “Beats me.”

“Some women are like that, Tsu-chan.” Said Kyoko, shrugging. “Toast?”

Tsuna dug around his backpack, still without looking up, and tossed her a small bento box. Kyoko caught it and eagerly opened, instantly starting to munch on one of the sticks.

“I just wish they would leave me alone, you know?” he continued saying. “All this attention is making me nervous.”

“It’s not that bad…” Started Takeshi, only to be glared at.

“Oogawa tried to be nice to me today.” Said Tsuna, looking at him. “Oogawa! The guy who used to beat me up in second grade! And Haruno told me I looked nice today. I wasn’t even sure she knew I existed!”

Hana and Kyoko started giggling at that. “Ah, Tsuna…. Would this be a bad moment to tell you you have a fan club?”

Tsuna choked and tripped, despite the fact he wasn’t eating or drinking, or walking. He picked himself up from the floor and turned entreating eyes towards them. “Are you playing a prank on me?”

“Nope!” Chirped Kyoko, which sent Tsuna into another spiral of despair. “I know of 10 members.”

“There are about 50 members in total, depending if we are including guys.” Added Hana.

“I don’t want to know.” Said Tsuna firmly, covering his ears. “I can’t hear you,
Takeshi chuckled. “Well, on the bright side, he’s receiving some positive attention. That’ll help. Hopefully”

“If these bastards could not see the amazingness of Tenth before, then they don’t deserve him.” Gokudera said.

“Oh, do not misunderstand Gokudera-kun.” Said Kyoko smiling. ”We absolutely agree with you. The only reason we are being nice is because Reborn-san is here and has a plan. Otherwise we wouldn’t be so nice.”

Gokudera quirked an eyebrow, but remained silent. To be completely honest, he had thought the girls were flocking to the Tenth for protection, but he had soon realized that it was the other way around. And while the Witch had not been a surprise on that regard, the other girl was: Kurokawa had an acrid tongue, the little Sasagawa had poison behind that honey smile. In fact, it was more often than not that Kurokawa held the other girl back, as the Mochida debacle had proved.

He would never admit it out loud, but in a way, it was a great relief.

Despite whatever other people believed, Gokudera had been trained to succeed his father as a Mafia Boss, and so had learned to judge people in quite few facts and brief meetings. While not always successful (and Gokudera hopes Tenth would be able to forgive him someday), it does give him a good, solid base for most of his interactions with people. Tenth would have definitely, without question, risked his life if it meant keeping these girls safe, but Gokudera knew, these girls would do the exact same thing for him.

It was nice knowing he only had to protect one precious person, not a precious person and two mobile, giant targets.

Gokudera was jarred from his thoughts by an unusual silence. All members of the group had fell suspiciously silent, and when he turned, he found a small, mousy girl standing in front of them.

“Sawada” she said, adjusting a pair of huge square glasses, “you and your friends are needed on the training field.”

Tsuna smiled, dropping the surrounding temperature by about ten degrees. “What for, Class Rep?”
She gulped, her eyes flashing from the girls to him to Takeshi, before settling back on Tsunayoshi. “I have no idea.” she said, crossing her arms. “I was just told by the teacher that you were needed.”

Tsuna hummed. “Thanks, I’ll get right to that. Shall I sign the assistance first?”

The girl made a face, but walked back to the teacher’s desk, the group following closely behind. She took a key from her skirt, and opened the lower drawer, taking out a clipboard.

“Here.”

Tsuna signed his name, followed by the rest, and then the girl signed her name on the other column, followed by the date. Tsuna looked over her shoulder and flashed her another smile as she finished. “Thanks. Have a good day, Nishizawa-san.”

The girl huffed, looking away. The group grabbed their things and went out of the door, not quite running but definitely walking at a fast clip, first the girls, then Tsunayoshi, and then the boys.

“Reborn?” Asked Tsuna, as they made their way out of the building.

“Probably.” Shrugged Kyoko. “That field is old, almost never used, and on the other side from most of the classrooms. Perfect place to ambush someone.”

Tsuna sighed, “Figures. Get ready, everyone.”

“SAWADA!”

Tsuna stuttered and turned. Ryohei was coming at them at full speed. More importantly, Hibari was behind him, a glare firmly in place.

“Onii-san!” said Kyoko, waving at him. Ryohei immediately changed course, slamming into Kyoko instead.

“Imotou! Were you extremely summoned, too?”
“We were.” She nodded.

“You better have a good reason for disrupting Namimori’s routine, cub.” Said Hibari, sliding to a stop in front of Tsunayoshi while warily keeping his distance from the siblings.

Tsunayoshi smiled. “Well, look at it this way: You will get to fight someone today.”

Hibari arched an eyebrow, a small, predatory smirk blooming on his face. “Oh?”

“Kyoko thinks we are going towards an ambush, and I agree.”

“Is it the baby?”

Tsunayoshi shrugged. “Probably. Are you still coming?”

Hibari sent him a glare that spelled what he thought of that question, and fell to the back of the group. Tsuna huffed and continued towards the field, his friends following.

There was a weird contraption in the middle of the field, like a competition podium. Reborn was sitting on a lawn chair, sipping a lemonade glass, Leon transformed in an an umbrella next to him.

He lifted his shades, sending Tsuna an unimpressed look, as the kids left their backpacks on the sides. “You are late, Dame-Tsuna.”

“Bullshit.” Tsuna answered immediately. “You know we couldn’t have gotten here earlier.”

“Mouthy brat.” Reborn grumbled. “I should shoot you.”

“You can try.” Answered Tsuna, jumping out of the way to the right.
“I will teach you some respect.” Said Reborn, putting the smoking gun away. “But, not today.”

The group exchanged worried looks, as the platform started to rumble. Hana grabbed a branch that was lying around, Kyoko and Ryohei brought their arms up in a classic Boxer position, and Hibari, Takeshi and Gokudera pulled out their respective weapons. Tsuna closed his eyes, frowning.

With one final roar, the platform unfolded, enveloping the surrounding area on grey smoke. When it cleared, the revealed weapons would be enough to give any decent person nightmares: submachine guns, sniper rifles, bombs of any kind, and crates and crates of ammunition.

“Today, I sponsor the Family Entrance test.” said Reborn, jumping off his seat and grabbing a rifle. “To win: Dodge the bullets, and don’t die.”

He then proceeded to open fire on them.

- - -

Hana swore, fell back, rolled, and sprung back to her feet, throwing her branch to buy precious milliseconds so she could dive behind the bleachers. Even then, the bullets clipped her leg, adding another tear to her already bloody socks.

Takeshi threw her a smile and a handkerchief. “This Reborn guy is really intense!”

“I am going to murder him as soon as I get the chance.” She growled, mopping her forehead, but she was still sweating heavily, it trickled over her nose and stuck her hair to her head.

“Is not that bad, we haven’t had a fight this good in a long time. We should enjoy it while we can.” He said cheerily.

Hana sighed, rubbing her nose. “Right, you are just as much of a battle maniac as Hibari-sempai. Figures you’d like this.”

He nudged her. “Everybody is having fun, so you should too.”

She huffed and rolled her eyes. Trust her crazy-ass friends to have ‘fun’ when they are getting shot
at. She ran back out again, just before a hail of bullets pierced the place she had been crouching behind. She rolled, grabbed a rock and launched it towards the demon baby, before running erratically towards one of the scarce trees that lined the area,

“Hana-chan!” Kyoko fell from one of the upper branches, crouching besides her.

“It’s okay, just a bunch of scratches.” She said as she took stock of her friend.

Hana suddenly grabbed Kyoko’s head, turning ot to the side. “What happened to you?!” She asked, not bothering to keep her outrage out of her voice. Blood was dripping from a cut on her temple, making it’s way all the way down to her chin. A red haze started to descend over Hana’s vision, matching the exact shade of the blood that was slowly leaking down and tainting her face, How dare he How dare he HOWDAREHE HOWDAREHEHURTMI NE.

“Hana! Hana, is okay, I’m okay.” Kyoko said, grabbing one of Hana’s hands and pressing it to her chest. “It’s okay, see? I’m fine.”

Hana calmed down marginally, Kyoko’s heartbeat a steady rhythm that helped her focus, tearing her eyes from the blood and sweeping the rest of Kyoko’s body. Her usually free hair had been messily tied back with her bow, and her knuckles were starting to bleed, her arms were covered with bruises and scratches, but those seemed to be the worst off.

“Stay back.” Hana snapped, turning back towards Reborn, who was taking care of Hibari. The prefect was attacking with unusual fury, but the torn Gakuran flapping behind him gave a good idea what had enraged him so.

Hana heard Kyoko huff, but paid it no mind. If there was something Hana was thankful for, was the fact that her friend was rational, and while Hana was by no means a strong melee opponent, she had more of a chance against Reborn than Kyoko, who only had her martial arts training to fall on, and being unable to use most of her techniques meant Hana was to be a physical barrier between her friend and that stupid wolverine.

Grabbing a good, sturdy branch and fixing in her mind the sight of Kyoko’s bleeding face - oh Goddess that bullet had been so close - Hana grit her teeth and sprinted towards the podium, taking the opening Hibari made and swiping her tree branch at him. Reborn dodged, of course, but it was enough for Hibari to seize the opportunity and push him back, while Hana rolled behind an empty crate. She peeked over the top of it to see the baby had changed from a rifle to a handgun, and now Takeshi was holding his attention.
She quickly looked around, and grabbed another small gun, giving a growl of frustration at the fact that none of this crap looked even remotely familiar.

She heard Shigure Kintoki sing, and stood up. Her bullet went wide, but she was already moving, taking aim, and letting another couple shots fly, before a hail of bullets forced her to duck. She emptied the clip towards the direction of the shots, throwing the pistol when it was empty and running back out of the fray.

“I am going to murder him slowly.” she gritted out once she was safe, digging through one of the back packs and grabbing a water bottle, taking a gulp out of it. She looked back and gogled, because now Tsuna was the one to be fighting the maniac - hand to hand no less - and that just.

She threw the bottle back with a roar, grabbing her branch and diving back in, aiming for Reborn’s back. The wolverine spun and shot her, but she crouched and swept her branch at his feet, making him jump right into Tsuna’s punch. The wolverine managed to avoid that too, grabbing Tsuna’s fist and twisting it behind him, kicking him off the platform. Hana moved left to avoid another bullet and rolled over Takeshi’s back, who was doing a horizontal slash with Shigure Kintoki that almost cut the Wolverine in half, but he had jumped at the last moment. Hana tried to swat him upside the head, but her branch was intercepted by the green chameleon, who had changed into a hook.

Hana let go of the tree branch and doing a back somersault over a long box. A quick look confirmed it consisted of nothing but sawed-off shotguns, and so useless to her. Instead, she upended the crate, scattering the guns around and grabbing two, quickly opening and closing them to make sure they were unloaded. She made a couple of experimental swings, frowning at the weird balance, before concentrating back on the fight.

She waited until the wolverine was busy with Takeshi and jumped back in, swinging both guns in opposite directions, intending to hit either his head or his knees. The wolverine jumped back into the seat of the machine gun, and took aim with it. Hana went left while Takeshi went right, but the machine only made a grinding sound. The wolverine jumped off the seat milliseconds before a bullet hit it, coming from the far right of the field, and a quick count of the sniper rifles revealed there was one missing. Hana looked at Takeshi and smiled, received an equally bloodthirsty grin in response, before both ran towards the wolverine, going shoulder to shoulder, and Reborn took aim.

He shot, but Hana was already moving to the side, letting Hibari come from behind them. He ducked under the shot, rolled, and came up directly in front of the baby, his tonfa already blurring around them. Both Hana and Takeshi converged in a pincer move, attacking whenever they found an opening herding the wolverine back away from the weapons, a few shots stopping Reborn when he tried to move back towards it.
Reborn spun around and blocked a knife, kicking Tsuna away. Tsuna went with it, taking the kick and rolling backwards, sprinting to the side, keeping a close, calculating eye on the fight. Hana huffed and broke out of the fight too, smiling meanly as Reborn tried to take advantage of the opening, before moving to his left as a bullet lodged itself on the ground he would be standing, had he taken the step; and then immediately having to defend as Ryohei showed up, with a shout and a flurry of punches.

“Status!” Barked Tsuna at her.

“We are doing fine, no-one has been too badly hurt, and as long as we keep him off the pile of weapons, we should be ok.”

Tsuna nodded. “Any ideas?”

“Keep doing what we are doing, and pray he gets bored soon.”

Tsuna frowned, but nodded and turned his attention to the fight, springing into action just as Reborn kicked Ryohei in the face, slashing the stolen knife diagonally, and it would have bisected the wolverine if he hadn’t jumped over Ryohei. Hana didn’t hesitate and jabbed one of the shotguns at him, followed by a series of quick swipes as the wolverine evaded them in turn.

Hana panted and looked up at Takeshi, who had also fell behind. He had that little smile that sent shivers up Hana’s back, no matter how many times she had seen it. Takeshi looked back at her and winked, doing a series of rapid one-handed signs.

Hana nodded, and once Tsuna fell back from the fray again, she repeated the same sequence to him. His eyes lit up and flashed a thumbs up, so Hana ran up and relieved Hibari, who hadn’t managed to dodge a the last shot and was bleeding profusely on his left arm. She started by doing a swipe, before stabbing both shotguns towards Reborn, letting herself overreach and falling into a roll, springing back up with a kick upwards against the airborne baby, who somehow blocked her, but before he could do anything to her Ryohei came from the back, a vicious hook missing him by inches, followed by a lightning-fast series of uppercuts and jabs, pushing him even further back.

Hana ran parallel to them, looking closely and stepping in when either Takeshi or Ryohei left themselves too open to retaliation. Off the edge of her vision, she could see Hibari working towards his position, and she couldn’t find Tsuna at all.
Finally, Hibari lunged in. Hana fell into a crouch and caught his left leg at the same time his right planted on her shoulder, springing off it as she stood up and flung his leg over his head, making him spin in middair, block the attack Reborn had aimed at him, and land on the other side of him. In tandem, Hibari and Ryohei launched on a series of complicated moves, flowing around each other to keep Reborn’s attention.

Hana waited until Reborn leapt, and threw one of her shotguns under his feet, making him spin and land on one foot.

That’s when Tsuna bursted in, slashing at him from behind.

Still off guard, Reborn turned, planting his feet firmly on the earth and spinning, bringing his gun up and turning even further back, aiming at Tsuna.

“TENTH! I’LL SAVE YOU!”

Before anything could happen, a stick of dynamite landed smack dab between them. At the same time, Tsuna choked, being suddenly yanked backwards, Gokudera covering him with his own body.

Hana swore, jumping backwards as Takeshi changed course, from Reborn to the dynamite, but unable to get there in time. The blast was small, thankfully, but it was still strong enough to send Takeshi rolling, crashing into Ryohei, who in turn tried to stop himself by grabbing onto Hibari’s gakuran, but he only managed to drag him down with them.

Reborn regained his balance and turned, shooting each guy once, before turning back and aiming at Hana, who tried to avoid it, but cried out and fell, looking at her left ankle where the bullet had hit.

Finally, the hitman turned back, and shot Gokudera, before turning his gun on Tsuna.

“Any last words?”

“I die with no regrets.” Said Tsuna calmly, closing his eyes.
Reborn held position for a while, before turning and shooting Tsuna on the thigh. Tsuna flinched, before touching the place the bullet had hit.

“Blanks?” He asked with an arched eyebrow.

Reborn scoffed. “I am here to train you, and I’m not going to risk killing you.” He frowned. “Although I am going to stop going easy on you, after that last stunt.”

“Haha” Laughed Takeshi, rubbing the shoulder the bullet had hit. “We were just having fun, little one! And we haven’t finished yet, you missed Kyoko.”

Reborn froze, before turning and shooting. There was a yelp and a thud, before Kyoko came out from behind the bleachers, a sniper rifle on her hand as she limped towards them.

“Aw, Rebo-chan, did you have to shoot me?” She asked, rubbing her left leg.

“Yes I did.” He cocked his head to the side. “I am impressed though, I wasn’t expecting you to know how to use any of these weapons.”

Kyoko immediately brightened. “Oh! It’s not so difficult after you had training!” She sighed. “I have been slacking though. Sensei is going to be disappointed in me….”

“Training?” Prompted Reborn.

She nodded enthusiastically. “Yes! I - we used to do a small web series, and my character had a preference for Snipers.” She did a gun pose with her fingers. “Best sharpshootah this side o’ the Atlantic, son!” She said in English, with an exaggerated southern accent.

“Never seen it.”

She shrugged. “Not surprising. I don’t even know if it made it out of Japan at all.”
“The real question is: Did we pass?” Asked Hana, standing slowly as her foot wobbled.

Reborn looked at each of the teenagers in turn. “If I say no, will you leave Tsunayoshi?”

Yamamoto smiled. “Never.”

“Nope!” Said Kyoko bouncing in place, just as Hana and Hibari glared at him, and Ryohei gave an ear piercing ‘EXTREMELY NOT!’.


Tsuna groaned as his friends cheered. “I cannot believe you guys.”

Takeshi threw an arm over him. “Oh, come on, Tsu! You know it’d take a lot more than an exam to get rid of us.”

“Unfortunately.” Mumbled Gokudera, drawing attention from the rest of the gathering. He looked around, feeling uncomfortable with the scrutiny, before snapping out a “What?”

“Nothing, nothing!” Said Takeshi, bouncing up to him. “Just thinking that it takes a lot of balls to say that, being the guy that technically had his boss killed.”

“ TAKESHI! ” barked Tsuna, seeing Gokudera flinch.

Yamamoto shrugged, not dropping his smile. “What? It’s true. If he hadn’t barged in, we would have won.” He turned to Gokudera. “I’d recommend you to learn how to work with us, if you want to stay. We can’t have Tsuna dying because someone felt the need to be heroic, ne?”

“Okay, you’ve made your point, that’s enough” Said Tsuna, taking Gokudera’s hand who was slowly inching towards his pants. “Come one Gokudera, we should get that looked at.” He said, taking his hand and pulling him to his side. A quick look told him that the bomb had scorched him badly: His entire right flank was heavily damaged, portions of his shirt were even missed, and through there Tsuna could see angry red skin, some with abrasions from where Gokudera had taken the hit when he had dragged Tsuna down to the floor.
“Skipping classes, Dame-Tsuna? That’s not good’

Tsuna ignored him, instead looking at his friends. Ryohei and Hibari were a bit burnt, but nothing too horrible. Takeshi was the worst off, being the one nearest to the dynamite when it had gone off: He didn’t seem to have any bad burns, but his hair was singed, and his arms we becoming an alarming shade of red with many, many purple splotches. “Nii-san, take care of Takeshi?”

“Aww, but I wanted to go with you Tsuna!” He said, draping himself over him”

“I’ll be taking care of Gokudera. You go with Nii-san.” He said, shaking him off. He turned to Gokudera and smiled. “Shall we?”

“Whatever you want, Tenth.” He answered demurely, but as soon as Tsuna turned, he smirked back at Takeshi. Takeshi smiled back, tapping his shinai against his shoulder, and very deliberately looking him up and down, like seizing him for a coffin.

“Take care of him, Gokudera.”

Tsuna huffed, speeding up and dragging Gokudera behind him, Reborn on their heels.

It was when they were a couple of streets that Tsuna spoke. “Takeshi’s right, you now?”

Gokudera flinched. “I- I’m sorry, Tenth! I will do better next time, promise!”

Tsuna sighed. “It’s not about that, Gokudera.” he said in an even voice. “We had Reborn right where we wanted him, and we would have won if you had stayed behind.”

Reborn snorted from the wall he was walking on. “You have a pretty high opinion of your group, Dame-Tsuna. An arrogant Boss is a dead Boss.”

“It’s not arrogance if we can back it up.”
“Can you?” Asked Reborn with an arched eyebrow.

Tsuna smiled. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Reborn jumped and kicked his student. “Turn down the cheek, boy.”

Tsuna smiled at him even as he rubbed his forehead, before turning back to Gokudera. “Point is, Gokudera: My friends and I have been training together for years. You are a newcomer, so you will have to learn to work with us.”

“But you were in danger, Tenth!”

“No I wasn’t.” Said Tsuna, with a tone of voice that implied he believed that to be a Natural Law. “Takeshi and I have pulled that same move dozens of times before. And I guarantee you that if there was even the most remote chance of me being excessively injured, and I wasn’t able to protect myself, then Takeshi would have saved me.”

Gokudera titched, spitting out his cigarette.

Tsuna looked at it by the corner of his eye. “Why do you smoke, Gokudera?”

“Eh?”

“Why do you smoke?” At Gokudera’s continued silence, Tsuna elaborated. “I am not going to insult your intelligence by telling you ‘that’s bad for you’, or ‘you shouldn’t do that’. You are far more knowledgeable than I, so if you are smoking… There must be a reason”

Gokudera blinked out of his surprise. “I, uh, I started very young… nine or so?” Tsuna flinched, but nodded. “Well, at that time, smoking helped me concentrate. It is a relaxant, you know? So it helped with stress, and also it gave me energy when I didn’t have enough to eat, so I choose to smoke, because for what I could buy a sandwich for, I could get a pack of cigarettes, which lasted me longer, and since it reduced hunger too, the food that I could afford lasted longer. It’s also very useful to light my bombs, and no-one questions a person for having a lighter if they are also smoking. Does… Does it bother you, Tenth? Because I’ll stop if it does.”
Tsuna growled. “It shouldn’t matter that I don’t like it! You should stop because you want to! Because it’s unhealthy!”

“I’ll stop, then.”

Tsuna opened his mouth, closed it, opened it again, and huffed. “Gokudera, you don’t have to stop just because I want you to.”

He shrugged. “Eh, It’s alright. To be honest, I was planning on quitting, but I hadn’t found a good enough reason to commit. No one… No one really cared enough to call me out on it before, so.” He smiled, a little helplessly.

Tsuna sighed again. “Right. Give me your pack.”

Gokudera dug on his pants for it, and tended it to Tsuna, who grabbed it and threw it in the nearest garbage can.

“We will have to go over your apartment too, and get you some nicotine patches. A doctor’s visit couldn’t hurt, either.” Mused Tsuna, eyeing Gokudera again and lingering on the chest, where he had been sure he had felt ribs.

Gokudera flinched once again. “Ah… I don’t think I can afford those.”

Tsuna cocked his head ”It’s fine, I’ll pay for it.”

Gokudera startled. “Wha- I cannot let you do that, Tenth! You should not waste money that way.”

Tsuna stopped and turned back, frowning. “I’m not wasting money. I am taking care of you.”

Gokudera looked at him wide-eyed, uncomprehending, before he doubled over, impulsively grabbing Tsuna and burying his head on his shoulder, murmuring his thanks and promising eternal devotion. Tsuna was torn between hugging Gokudera back and disentangling himself, but seeing that his shoulder was starting to feel suspiciously wet, he hugged Gokudera.
“There, there.” He said gently. “Come on, we need to get moving. Is your house nearby?”

Gokudera shook his head, standing up, still sobbing softly. “N-no. I actually l-live kind of far away.”

“How far away?” Tsuna asked.

Gokudera told him, and Tsuna immediately rounded back to Reborn.

“WHY THE HELL IS GOKUDERA LIVING TWO HOURS AWAY FROM NAMIMORI?” He exclaimed, every muscle on his body screaming his indignation.

Reborn looked at him, putting aside the popcorn he had been eating. “I don’t know. Probably because it was the only thing he could afford.”

“B-but you called him here!”

“So? He’s just an associate, it’s not my responsibility to set him up.”

Tsuna sucked a breath between clenched teeth. “Right.” He turned, taking Gokudera’s hand once more. “Change of plans, Gokudera. Follow me.”

Gokudera took another bite of the carrot cake as he looked over the ledgers. “Yeah, I can do this, Tenth.” he said confidently.

Tsuna smiled at him widely. “Oh, thank you, thank you!” He said, jumping around in happiness. “You have no idea how hard it was to get a good manager.”

Gokudera smiled. “No, I should be thanking you, Tenth. Suddenly I have a well paying job, and a
better apartment for which I don’t pay rent.” he sniffed again. “This is more than I could have dreamed.”

“Come on, none of that.” Said Tsuna, sitting besides him and patting his back. “Listen, Reborn is being pretty insistent about you being part of my group. And considering everything, you are fitting in well. But I’ll be honest with you, Gokudera: You still have a long way to go. I am not telling you this to be mean, but so you are aware. My friends and I… we have known each other since we were very, very young kids, and to be completely honest, you are a total unknown. It will take time.”

Gokudera took a shuddering breath. “I… I understand.”

Tsuna smiled at him encouragingly. “Come, you need to meet the rest of the staff.”

Gokudera nodded, standing up and following Tsuna out. They went down the small corridor, past the kitchen, and into the main area. At the moment, there were only a couple of tables, so it the three servers were mostly unoccupied.

“Hey everyone, can I get you back here for a sec?” Asked Tsuna. The servers obligingly moved back towards the kitchen.

Tsuna looked around with a smile. “Everyone, this is Gokudera Hayato. He will be the new Manager as for today, and will be moving on the upper floor of the store.”

“Hello” Said Hayato, bowing, and sweeping the gathered servers with a suspicious eye.

“Hello Hayato-san.” Said another silver-haired boy, this one cut closely to his head. “My name is Narukami Yosuke, and I am the Head server as well as Interim Manager.”

“Hi! My name is Dojima Rise. Nice to meet you!” Said an energetic girl with long, blond hair and grey eyes. “I am the main barista.”

“I am Satonaka Yukiko. I hope you have a good time with us.” She said, avoiding eye contact with him with a bow, her long brown braid sliding over her left shoulder. “I serve the tables outside.”
“And I am Tatsumi Naoto, another waiter.” Said the final, much shorter boy. He bounced up to him and shook his hand enthusiastically, his big brown eyes sparkling. “Is it true you come from Italy? I always wanted to go there!” He gushed.

“Nao, leave the poor boy alone!” Said the cook, coming out from the freezer. He conked the black-haired teen on the head before turning to Hayato. “Hello. I am Kubo Tohru, Chef. I have been working on this fine establishment for eight years. If you have any difficulties, you can ask me.”

“Sawada-san, is Gokudera-san going to administer only the cake shop?” Asked Narukami.

“That is correct. I still expect you to handle all the special request from our customers, Narukami.”

The black-eyed boy nodded, looking at Gokudera with a pensive face. “Then I will do my best.” He turned to Gokudera, giving him a small smile. “You must know, the Kintsugi Cafe sells a lot more than cakes. We offer an experience of close, personal contact, where the client feels like the most important person. We help them through their hard times, and celebrate their good times. We are not just selling cakes, we are selling an experience. Got it?”

Gokudera nodded and Narukami continued. “Now, we are not the whole staff. I tend to work here all days, but the rest of us are on a rotation. We’ll introduce you to them when they come to work. Also, as manager, you will be called to work on most of the stations if and when we are short on staff. Can you do it?”

“I can, and in case I can’t, I want to learn.”

Narukami smiled more openly at that. “Excellent. If you have time now, I’d like to start.”

“Yeah, I am free.”

Tsuna beamed. “I’ll leave you to it. I have to go back to school and check up on everyone. Bye guys! And Narukami, be nice, Gokudera was just hurt on an accident.”

There was a chorus as the servers said their goodbyes and returned to their positions. Tsuna, meanwhile, opened his cellphone and shoot a text to Shoichi, asking him to arrange to have Gokudera’s belongings moved to the shop.
“You are too soft, Dame-Tsuna.” Said Reborn, jumping from the roof and landing on his head. “Honestly, giving him a job, and apartment and offering to pay his medical bills? The mafia will eat you alive.”

“It can try.” Said Tsuna. “I will probably give it food poisoning though. And I am not soft” He said, glaring at the hitman. “It just happen that I am a decent bo-oy -“

“Don’t stammer, Dame-Tsuna.”

“-And I take care of my people; I don’t leave them hanging in a different country and living in the dumps.”

Reborn shrugged “Look, Gokudera Hayato is a lone hitman that managed to climb the mafia enough to get into the Vongola Familgia. He is perfectly able to look after himself, or he would be dead by now.”

Tsuna didn’t dignify that with an answer, unless a terribly hostile look qualified as an answer.

Reborn ignored it and continued. “More importantly, where did you and your friends learn to fight light that?”

Tsuna smiled melancholically. “You are not my first tutor, Reborn, and they made sure I learned far more than simple school subjects.”

Reborn hit him. “Answer the damn questions, Dame-Tsuna.”

“Lyon, France.” he answered curtly.

Reborn nodded, before leaping in front of him. “You know, for a civilian, you are acting awfully suspicious. And quite frankly, I am tiring of this game.” He pointed his gun to Tsunayoshi. “I’ll speak clearly: If I determine that you are a threat to Vongola, I will terminate you myself. Are we clear?”
There was a tense moment where Tsunayoshi just stared at Reborn, like he wanted to say something. “Crystal.” Was what he ended up saying.

“HOW COULD YOU MIDORI?!?!?!?”

Tsun could’t help the self satisfied smirk that made it’s way into his face at the screeches that were coming from down the hall. He took another bite of his chocolate as he surveyed the classroom, taking in the stunned and scared faces of his schoolmates.

“Well then, seems Suzume-chan finally got through to Riku.” Commented Hana idly, pilling her books inside her bag.

Kyoko smiled. “I was expecting it to happen tomorrow, but this works, too! She will have the whole day to stew on her inability to go on vacation.” She said, kicking her feet from where she was sitting.

There were more screams from down the hall, but the quartet ignored them, and resumed getting their things off their desks. The last bell of the day had sounded scarcely five minutes ago, and the usual peace of the end-of-the-day chatter had shattered with a high-pitched scream that could be heard all over the floor. Now, students from the B-3 section were petrified like deers in the headlights, waiting for the newest drama to unfold.

Tsun had just finished putting his things away when Riku entered the classroom. She walked determinedly to him, her whole body tense as she pushed people out of her way.

She stood in front of him, her expression of disgust barely disguised between a polite smile. “Sawada-kun”

“Minamoto-kun”

She twitched at his form of address, but proceeded. “May I talk with you for a moment? Alone, if you please.”

He pretended to ponder it for a second. “No, sorry. You can talk here, though”
Her smile stretched, “It’s a private matter.”

“Everything you can say to me, you can say in front of them.” he motioned to his friends, who weren’t even pretending to not pay attention to the conversation.

“Fine. Shall we take this outside?”

His smile widened, and bowed at her with unnecessary flourishes. “Lead the way, madam.”

“Thank you.” She turned, her long black hair swishing behind her as she hefted her book bag, and marched out just as fast as she had come in.

Tsuná didn’t bother to hurry up, instead taking his time to make sure he had not left anything behind, and then sauntering after her, very studiously ignoring Ayako’s desperate attempts to catch his attention.

They made it to the outside of the school without issue to find that she was waiting for them there. She looked at them, all pretense of civility gone, and jerked her head towards the side, near the walls lining the school. Tsuna followed, knowing where she was taking them: It was a pretty cozy spot, with lots of trees that made it hard to make out figures.

She guided them there, before turning, contempt clear on her face. “What the fuck did you say to Midori, Sawada?” She snarled the words out.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know what you are talking about Riku-san. I have not talked to Saito-san in years.” He said.

She marched up to him. “Stop lying! Midori would not leave me high and dry on her own volition. She likes me! She needs me!”

“Riku-san, I think you should be familiar with the concept of ‘lying’ and ‘using people’. And for the record, I still don’t know what you are talking about”
“Summer in California! Midori was going to take me to California and together we would become stars! But then she, for some reason, decided she was not going to pay for my stay.” She walked up to Tsunayoshi. “What. Did. You. Say. To. Her.”

Tsuna shrugged. “You know, Riku-san, maybe Midori-san got tired of you. It happens.” He said, shrugging. “The best I can tell you is to let it go, and find other friends.”

She screeched, shaking with rage. “No! NO! MIDORI LIKES ME! WE WERE GOING TO BE STARS!! WHAT LIES DID YOU TELL HER?!?!"

He looked at her pitifully, backing away. “Riku-san, I had nothing to do with this. You really need to start accepting the fact that sometimes bad things happen to you, and stop looking for a scapegoat to blame.”

“Figures you are running away, you bastard son of a bitch. Just like your father—”

There was a sound of skin hitting skin. Riku stumbled back, shocked, touching her hand to her bloodied mouth and turning up to look at Tsunayoshi, who still had his arm extended.

“Do not insult my father.” he said, voice frosty.

She grinned, showing her teeth tinted with blood. “Why not? Is not like a you will do anything about it. I can say and do whatever I want, and no one will stop me.”

“Is that so?” Asked Tsuna, his face settled on an expression so neutral it could be confused for a frown. “I am very sorry, but it seems you are delusional, Riku-san. But don’t worry.” He said, giving her a big smile. “I will help you understand what your reality is.”

He turned. “Come on, let’s go. I don’t want to see her anymore.” he said, and his friends obediently followed.
Chapter 5: Waves

Chapter Summary

Tsunayoshi receives two bad news

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cinquième Chapitre: Vagues

Mochida Kenjiro had his head down, his fist, bunched up on his hakama.

“I am so sorry, Mochida-san.” Said Yamamoto Tsuyoshi, bowing.

“No.” Said Mochida, shaking his head. “If anything, I have to thank you, Yamamoto-san.” He sighed, his eyes sweeping the pictures. “I would have never thought Kensuke would be this bad, but... I guess this is what I deserve for ignoring the problem.”

“You did nothing to deserve this, Mochida-san.” Said Yamamoto firmly. “You did everything on your power to bring that child up right. Much as we would like, we cannot control our children.”

Mochida smiled sadly. “It still doesn’t absolve me. I should have been stricter with him.” He took a photo where his son was pushing a child off his path. “I thought he was, you know, young and stupid. But...”

Yamamoto sighed. “Yeah.” He said, looking down at the dozens and dozens of photos he had. Some were instantaneous, some printed, all of them showing the youngest Mochida in some kind of crime. There was a sizeable amount of him simply being rude, pictures of him pushing other, smaller children off his path, or cutting in line, but those soon gave way to more serious pictures. Many of them depicted Kensuke on some kind of fight, and more than a few had him obviously stealing. The most recent ones where the most concerning, because on them, Kensuke was clearly involved on some kind of Yakuza turf war.

Mochida let the photo go and grabbed another one, more recent. His son was clearly pictured, an ugly, cruel smile stretching over his face, and Kenjiro felt shame wash over him again when he recognized how his son was wielding that steel pipe. He barely had to glance at the tattoo the other two men sported to know what was going on.

“I didn’t teach him kendo for this.” He said suddenly. “He said he wanted to learn, and I thought it was our thing, something to bond over. And he’s good, Yamamoto-san, talented, and I was expecting him to take over the dojo, but...” He cut himself of, shaking his head.

Tsuyoshi hesitated for a moment, before shuffling to his side and putting his hand on his shoulder. “I’m sorry.” He repeated.

“No, don’t be.” Said the man. “Thank you for telling me. I just... I wish I had known earlier.”
“I had to be sure. I didn’t want to worry you before I knew for sure it was bad.”

“I understand.” Said Kenjiro, moving away from him. Tsuyoshi let him go. “I should have suspected when people stopped coming.” He said. “I thought it had to do with the Yakuza circling around, but...”

Yamamoto nodded. “One thing does not rule out another.”

“No” said Kenjiro, eyeing the other two people on the photographs, both of which sported tattoos, and one of which featured a prominent Peach. “Guess not” he said bitterly.

He turned to Tsuyoshi and bowed. “I got it from here. Once again, thank you.”

Tsuyoshi bowed back. “You are welcome. I will take my leave now, if you don’t mind.”

The other man nodded, carding through the photos already. Tsuyoshi stepped out and nodded to the woman, who have him a tremulous smile, before going towards her husband.

Tsuyoshi stepped into the street with a sigh, moving down the street. The day was bright and pleasant, a slight breeze shaking the branches of the nearby trees, as he walked past the storefronts to the nearby bus stop.

He waited until he was on the bus. There were enough people on the bus to confound anybody who would follow him, and enough noise to make his call unintelligible.

He took out his phone and pressed the speed-dial. It rang twice.

“Hello?”

“Is done, Takeshi.”

“Ah, thanks dad!” Said the cheerful voice of his son. “Sorry you had to get involved in this on your day off.”

Tsuyoshi smiled. “It’s not a problem, I am here to help you out. Besides, I’d rather get involved than find out later you did something dangerous.”

“So you keep telling me!” His son laughed. “Be careful, old man, I might take you to your word and get you working!”

Tsuyoshi smirked. “Is that a threat? If you need me so bad, that just means you need more training. Do I have to call Tsuna’s Shishio and arrange a joint session?”

Takeshi made strangled sound. “Nope! Everything’s fine!” He said, voice higher than normal.

Tsuyoshi laughed. “I figured.” He checked his watch. “Are you going to help at the restaurant or will the girls be alone today?”

Takeshi hummed. “I think I’ll go for the Night shift. We can take the afternoon for ourselves, go out to play in the park. We haven’t done that in a while.” He said wistfully, making Tsuyoshi smile.

“That sounds nice.” Conceded the man. “Alright, see you soon. Be careful.”

“Will do! Bye, love you!” Takeshi said cheerily, and hung up.

Tsuyoshi chuckled and pocketed his phone again. “Me too Takeshi.”
“Dad just finished. He said everything went well.” He said, going back inside the shop.

“Excellent, now come back and finish your homework.” Snapped Hana from her position on the end of the table.

Tsuna put a hand over hers. “Now Hana, I understand you are stressed over the exams, but snapping at Takeshi won’t help. Dial it down.” He said, reclining on his chair.

Seeing it was a Wednesday, Tsuna decided it was the perfect day for Gokudera to have some hands-on experience on the coffee shop. Wednesday tended to be slow days on Kintsugi, and that’s how the Namimori students ended on one of the farthest tables on the back of the cafe. Haru had tagged along to keep helping Takeshi with his homework, and Shoichi and Spanner had come along with her.

Their group had scattered across two nearby tables: Hana, Kyoko and Ryohei were sitting on one side, while Tsuna, Haru and Takeshi took the other. Spanner and Shoichi had claimed a table for themselves, and that one was currently overflowing of blueprints and schematics, which Gokudera was trying to discreetly look at, while still maintaining most of his attention on the few patrons inside.

“I will dial it down when the sword monkey gets off his ass and starts applying what Haru sacrificed her last couple afternoons to teach him.” She growled, but sat back and crossed her arms. Tsuna could only chuckle, letting the Sasagawa siblings bracket the dark-haired girl and try to get her out of her funk.

Haru pouted at her. “Hahi, If I didn’t know better, I’d say you didn’t trust my methods, Na-chan.”

“I trust you with my life. What I don’t trust is that damn Monkey to sit down and get his head on the game.” She said, still giving Takeshi the evil eye when he slid besides Haru.

“Hey! My marks are better than last time”

“And is that supposed to impress me? A dog could bring those marks up.” She sniffed. “I refuse to associate with anyone who can’t clear this low bar.”

Takeshi smiled. “Fine, fine. What do I do?”

Tsuna turned away from them as Hana went back to rail him, and Haru tried to explain what those numbers were supposed to do, and looked at the other table. Shoichi and Spanner were bent over a couple of blueprints while Gokudera tried (and failed) to look uninterested. Tsuna grinned to himself, and schooled his face in a wide eyed, slightly clueless expression. “Manager-san?”

Gokudera snapped upright so fast, Tsuna was slightly impressed he hadn’t broken anything. Shoichi flicked his eyes at him and huffed, returning to the blueprints, but Spanner was much less discreet and made no effort to conceal his giggles.

Gokudera sent the two a deadly glare before turning back to Tsuna with a smile. “How can I serve you today, Tenth?”

Tsuna sighed, dropping the act. “Once again Gokudera, right now I am a simple client. We are
supposed to be practicing.”

Gokudera blushed and nodded frantically, scrabbling through his apron and coming back with a pad and a pen. “What may your order be, sir?” He said, in a forced pleasant voice.

Tsuna shook his head and turned back to the menu, pretending to think it over. “What’s the White Camelia coffee?”

Gokudera blinked and frowned, looking down. Tsuna let him think until he started mumbling under his breath, when he put his best concerned face on. “Manager-san? Are you okay? You are talking to yourself again.”

Gokudera startled, almost dropping the pencil before catching himself. “Yes! Yes, I am fine. The White Camelia is one of our steamed coffees, with java beans mixed with half a cup of foamed milk, almond syrup and… Vanilla extract… and… Caramel? No, that’s not right…”

Tsuna let him go for a while before interrupting “It has maple sugar on it.” Said Tsuna.

Gokudera hit his head. “Maple sugar, of course! How could I be so stupid to forget that?”

“Hey now, don’t be too hard on yourself.” Said Tsuna good-naturedly. “You barely saw the menu a couple hours ago, and you almost have it now. Cut yourself some slack”

Gokudera looked a little insulted, but then softened his face. “Yes, Tenth.”

“And stop calling me Tenth. My name is Tsunayoshi Sawada, use it”

Gokudera went red again. “I can’t explain you how much I cannot do that.” He said, looking down, his shoulder climbing up to his ears.

“Why, because it’s disrespectful?” asked Tsuna teasingly. “Gokudera, I told you before and I am reiterating here: I am not going to become Vongola Tenth. Therefore, calling me tenth is inaccurate. I would appreciate if you used my name.”

Gokudera looked torn for a few seconds before nodding. “All right, Sawada-sama.”

Tsuna frowned and cocked his head, but he was stopped from saying anything by Takeshi. “That would be acceptable.”

“I would rather he call me by my name.” Said Tsuna, looking up at him, puzzled at his friend’s sudden appearance. One look however showed that Hana was bickering with Haru about something.

Takeshi hummed, taking a look at Gokudera. “Maybe later, he needs to win that privilege first.” He smiled brightly. “Wouldn’t you agree, Gokudera-kun?”

Gokudera gave a wordless snarl, but didn’t contradict him. Takeshi beamed. “Great! Glad we are playing by the same rules. You might make it to the main roster and everything.”

“YAMAMOTO GET BACK HERE AND FINISH THIS EQUATION GODDAMIT!!” Said Hana, finally realizing her student had skedadled.

“Coming, coming~” He said, flitting off from his perch on Tsuna’s head. Both Tsuna and Gokudera watched him go and then get promptly bossed around by Hana, while Kyoko and Ryohei consoled a despairing Haru.
Tsuna sighed. “I am really sorry about Takeshi. He can get a bit… Overprotective.”

Gokudera thinned his lips. On the one hand, it was annoying, but on the other hand, if it helped him protect Sawada-sama… ”I understand, Sawada-sama.”

Tsuna sighed and took a look around. There were only a couple other busy tables, and Kou seemed to have it well in hand. Yosuke was off cleaning some tables, and Rise seemed to be on the process of creating another new blend. He turned back to Gokudera with a smile. “Hey, why don’t you take a break and come sit.” He said, pulling a chair to his side. “It’s almost lunch anyway.”

Gokudera nodded, taking off his apron and putting them on the back of the chair while Tsuna flagged Yosuke.

“Is there anything I can get you?” He asked, taking out pen and paper.

“Please get us the day’s bento for him, the usual for the rest of us; and two orders of edemame and fried vegetable spring rolls as appetizer.” Ordered Tsuna.

“Immediately.” Said Yosuke, making some quick notes and disappearing back in the kitchen.

“See Gokudera?” Asked Tsuna, turning back to him. “That’s how you should act whenever you are my server.”

“Uh?”

Tsuna turned to him. “I noticed that while you have no trouble taking other people’s orders, you tend to be overeager whenever you are working with me. Why is that?”

“Because you are the Ten- you are my boss. You are my superior so I have to make sure you get the best treatment possible.”

Tsuna huffed. “Don’t bother, Gokudera.” he said rolling his eyes. “I hate people who demand, or worse, expect preferential treatment; and to be honest I feel extremely uncomfortable when people do try.” He clapped him on the back. “So please, just treat me like anybody else from now on, yeah?”

Gokudera looked conflicted. “But… You are the owner, you deserve special treatment.” He said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“No I don’t.” he said. “And It’s because I am the owner that I don’t demand special treatment. I am trying to set a good example to my employees.” Tsuna crossed his arms. “I don’t want my employees to feel that they are under me, or anything like that, because they are not. They are an important part of the crew, just like me. Therefore, is only fair that I share their work. It would be very hypocritical of me if I said all that, and then turned around to demand special treatment.”

“Oh” said Gokudera. “Thats… Amazing! I hadn’t thought about it at all! You truly are deserving of being the Boss.” he exclaimed, eyes sparkling.

Tsuna winced, looking at how eager Gokudera was. If it was an anime, Tsuna would bet that he’d be able to see dog ears and a very energetic, wagging tail. “Ah, not really? I just don’t want to be treated differently, is all. Not to mention that is the fastest way to breed resentment.” He muttered the last part under his breath.

Gokudera nodded. “Understood! I will do my outmost best to treat you as normally as possible, Tenth!”
“My name is Tsunayoshi…”

“Anyways! Hana, I think It’s best if we leave this for later.” Said Takeshi from his side, once again throwing himself over Tsuna, who sighed.

“And just when we were getting on a good streak” muttered Hana, sitting heavily back on the chair.

“Hahi, more like a rut.” Haru said, splaying on top of her books. “I don’t want to see another function for at least another couple hours.”

“Same” Groaned the Sasagawas at the same time.

“I had forgotten how extremely hard functions were.” whined Ryohei, leaning on his sister, who patted him on the arm. Kyoko started clearing up the table, being helped by Takeshi after a while.

Once the table was finally clear of books and sheets of paper, Tsuna turned to Hana. “All right, spill: What is bothering you?”

Hana glared at him. “Can’t say. Need confirmation.”

That caused a round of groaning for everyone except Gokudera. He frowned back at her. “Woman, if whatever you are withholding is important-”

“It’s not- Well, it is, but. I need to be sure before I send this one” she motioned to Tsunayoshi “Into a stress spiral.”

Tsuna groaned, grabbed his backpack and after digging around, pulled out a small bottle of painkillers. He took two and passed the bottle to Shoichi, who also downed a pair.

“You might as well come out and say it.” He said. “Whether it’s true or not. And if you are this worried, there is a good chance it’s true.”

Hana crossed her arms. “I have been monitoring Midori’s phone.” She said, nodding to Shoichi. “I think the Momokyokai are press ganging people.”

“In Namimori?” Shoichi asked, voice dropping.

“Yes. Concretely, around these places.” She said, taking her phone out and tending it to him. Tsuna took a look and frowned.

“These are not even on the outskirts of the city. These are on the market district and on the downtown. Do they really think they can get away with it?” He asked, looking up at her.

She shrugged “As I said, I am not completely sure, and they might have.” She took her phone back. “From what I understand, they started a couple months ago by blackmailing people, and now they are expanding.”

“Well that stops now.” He declared. “Hana, if and when you get confirmation, I want you and Kyoko to find out who were the first victims, and why. That might give us a lead to the root of this problem.”

“Actually, that is something I wanted to talk to you about.” She intertwined her fingers. “Permission to cleanse Momokyokai?”

Tsuna blinked, straightening up. “What, now?”
“Shoichi and I have been talking.” Tsuna sent a Look at his friend, who looked down guiltily. “And we decided that since the wolverine would have you making waves anyway, we might as well kick those flies off our turf. There will be too much turmoil for everyone to trace it back to you.”

“If I manage to stay out of the limelight.” Grouched Tsunayoshi.

Shoichi rolled his eyes. “You say that like it’s difficult. We have pulled something similar what, three times now?” He patted Tsuna’s back. “Come on, we are more experienced now. This is going to be a piece of cake.”

Tsuna smiled. “Thanks, Shoichi.”

They were further interrupted from conversation by food arriving. The following hour was mostly spend on small talk, picking on each other.

The peace of the meal was shattered by a loud thump. Hana groaned and straightened herself, rubbing the sore spot on her forehead, looking back at the screen of her phone. She looked up at Tsunayoshi. “I hate when I’m right.”

“So you finally noticed the Momokyokai moving around?” was the first thing Reborn asked him, followed by “And who are these kids?”

“Reborn, my best friend Shoichi, Spanner, and Haru. Guys, my tutor. And how do you know I know?” Asked Tsuna as he left his backpack on the desk.

“I have eyes and ears everywhere, Dame-Tsuna.” Said Reborn, keeping an eye on the newcomers. The redhead scowled at him from his bow, but composed his face with a speed that had Reborn impressed, whole the blond kept smiling.

The girl, however, scowled and marched up to him. “Hahi, what a rude baby! Apologize!” She said, putting her hands on her hips and giving what he could see was her best reprobatory look.

“I don’t apologize to people who are beneath me.” He said, proceeding to ignore the girl.

Haru opened her mouth, stunned. “Such a rude baby…”

Tsuna shook his head. “Leave it, Haru. It’s a lost cause.” He let himself fall down on a chair and turned to Reborn. “I wasn’t the one to notice, Hana was.”

“Indeed?” He arched an eyebrow, turning to the girl, who was glaring at Tsunayoshi before turning back to face him. “This is the second time she had to tell you something.”

“Is kinda in the job description.” She said, getting comfortable on the bed besides Kyoko and gently guiding Haru down. Spanner, Takeshi, Ryohei and Gokudera took positions on the floor, while Shoichi took a small white board from the closet and propping it up near the desk.

“So what do we know?” He asked.

“The first few victims were high school students.” Started Hana, scrolling through her phone. “I can confirm of two of them being blackmailed, and it kinda grew from there. The first ones roped
their friends, and those friends rope their friends. There are around 30-40 victims recruited this way."

“And they were blackmailed how?” Asked Tsuna while Shoichi busied himself filling the whiteboard.

She shrugged. “It started with small things, like, petty theft or smoking. They got photos, and then threatened to get those photos circulated. After that they escalated: The boys are now running illegal drugs and being used as muscle, and the girls are being forced on enjo-kosai.”

Tsuna sucked breath through his teeth. “Fucking scum.”

“So what are we doing? Turning them to the police?” Ryohei asked from his perch under Hana.

“No, no.” Tsuna shook his head. “The police might actually make it worse, and despite Minoru-san efforts, I am sure he has not completely purged the department from Yakuza. Best case scenario, they will let the students go with a slap on the wrist. Worst case, they will send them to juvvie while leaving the Yakuza alone.”

“Enabling them to keep recruiting, but this time the Yakuza would be much more careful since they know they are being watched.” Finished Shoichi. He sighed. “Not to mention that after that, the victims might not even come forward anymore in fear of getting punished themselves.”

“So we are going to deal with this ourselves, as always.” Kyoko sighed in exasperation. “Typical.”

“I know, but what can we do?” Tsuna sighed. “Someone has to protect these people, and let’s be real, no-one is going to step up to the plate for Namimori until it’s too late.”

“Said like a true Mafia Boss.” Reborn nodded. “You are not as hopeless as I feared.”

Tsuna rolled his eyes. “Hana, you and Kyoko find out when the first victims got involved. Shoichi and Spanner, you monitor Midori’s communications and try to find out where it’s coming from and what is going on. I” he grimaced “Am going to have a talk with Riku”

“Why, Tenth?” Asked Gokudera, genuinely puzzled.

“Riku is the ringleader of the group. If Midori is into something, she was either taken there by Riku and liked it, or is doing so because Riku told her to.”

“Plus, Midori-chan is really not that intelligent.” Said Haru, crossing her legs and leaning on the wall behind her. “Cunning, sure; and ruthless, but she does not have the capacity to negotiate with the Yakuza, much less plan with them.”

“We should also talk with Mochida, too, since he is also trying to get recruited by those guys.” Said Takeshi.

“Good idea.”

There was a buzzing sound, so everyone fell silent, looking at each other. Kyoko rummaged through her skirt and came back with her phone. She frowned at the number, but accepted the call anyway. “Hello? Yes, this is Sasagawa Kyoko. Asano-san?” She paused, breathing deeply. “Please calm down. Your room?” She nodded. “Are you alright?” She was silent. “Ok, we are going. Stay put, and let Hibari-san do his work.”

She hung up and looked back at Tsuna. “We have another complication.”
“Oh, Gods, thank you so much for coming, Sawada-san” said the boy, bowing politely.

Tsuna smiled. “Not a problem, Asano-kun. Can you tell us anything?”

He shook his head, wringing his hands worriedly on the straps of his backpack. “No, sorry. I just came back from cram school, and found my room like this.” He said, gesturing around.

‘This’ being utter chaos. The floor of the room was completely covered in papers, clothes, and the bed sheets. The drawers from the desk had been turned upside down, the papers had scattered all over the floor and the bed, as well as the dressers’ clothes. Some clothes from the closet had also ended on the floor, some on the bed. Videogame cases had been busted open, one or two games had been broken, as well as some collectible figures. The laptop on the desk had its screen cracked, and a dent on the right side had knocked off most of the numpad keys off, as well as cracking the case, letting some of the motherboard peek out. Books were also open, pages ripped out of them.

“Right.” Tsuna said, sucking a breath. “Do you know if you have pissed someone off, by chance?”

He clutched his backpack, frowning, before shaking his head slowly. “No, I don’t think so. At least not to the point of them breaking and entering.”

“I see. You said something about a stone, right?” Asano nodded. “May I look at it?”

He flinched. “I’m sorry, I gave it to Hibari-san.”

“It’s fine, don’t worry about it. Now, can you tell me who did you piss off?”

Asano hesitated. “Well… After your encounter with Mochida, a lot of guys on the Kendo Club started talking very badly about you. I told them to cut it out and that Mochida was super out of line trying to get you on the back.” He shrugged. “They threatened to ‘teach me a lesson’ but I thought it was just talk.”

Tsunu grimaced. “Yeah, I would have thought the same thing.” He patted his shoulder. “Thanks for standing up for me by the way.”

Asano smiled. “No problem, Sawada-san.” He smiled, blushing. “You are pretty much the only person who stands up to Mochida. It’s the absolute least I could do.”

Tsunu shook his head. “I was just doing what a baseline decent human being should do.”

Hibari choose that moment to walk on the room. “We have found nothing around the perimeter.” He said, walking up to the pair. Asano whimpered and hid behind Tsunayoshi at the sight of the annoyed prefect, but Tsuna merely smiled at him.

“Thank you, Hibari-san. Now, Asano-kun told me his window was broken by a stone?”

The prefect frowned, digging into his pants and gave it to Tsunayoshi. He turned the stone around, looking at the underside, where the words ‘remember the last picnic, Tsu-chan?’ were scratched. “This is a river stone.” he said at the end.

“Because this wasn’t about you Asano-san, no offense.” Tsuna said. “This is still a pretty crappy thing to do to you, but they wanted to send a message to me. Have you reported this to the police?”

He shook his head. “Not yet.”

“Then do so once we go away. Is there anything missing?”

He frowned. “No, I don’t think so, but I haven’t been able to check thoroughly.”

“All right.” Tsuna pulled out a card holder. He took one card from there and gave it to Asano. “Here. I know these guys and they do excellent computer repairs. Tell them I sent you and they will give you a discount.” He looked at the surrounding and sighed. “I am really, really sorry you got caught in the middle of this.”

Asano shrugged. “It is what it is. Thank you.”

Tsuna smiled and walked out along with Hibari.

“This is unacceptable harassment of Namimori citizens, Tiger Cub. Fix it.” He said once they were walking down the sidewalk.

“Will do, Kyoya.” he sighed.

The prefect growled "You have let these fake-carnivores go too far without restraint."

Tsuna sighed again. "Oh no, you too?"

“It's unbecoming of a carnivore to be pushed around by herbivores.”

"Those herbivores have a bigger pack, which can make ganging up on a carnivore easier” pointed Tsunayoshi reasonably. "And those herbivores also have a symbiotic relationship with other, bigger carnivores."

"Then you should take care of the herbivores before the carnivores come to help them"

"But those herbivores then would make the whole herd turn on the carnivore, which then cannot protect them from the other carnivores that are trying to actually prey on them. In that case, it's more reasonable for the carnivore to let himself get beaten by herbivores that don't pose any actual threat to it, so as to preserve the security of the rest of the herd."

"But then those herbivores start getting uppity and thinking they can take on the bigger carnivores, and they CAN'T. What will happen then, Tiger Cub? Do you think those herbivores will fight the carnivores? Or just let the herd be eaten, as long as they can get away unscathed? "

Tsunayoshi looked down.

Kyoya tisked and looked to the side. "See? That's why carnivores should continually remind the herbivores exactly why they are on top of the food chain. Otherwise the herbivores start thinking they can take on other carnivores that are not going to roll over for them, and open the herd to a predator that will happily slaughter them all."

"Point." Gritted Tsuna out.

Hibari smirked. "That said, since the herd will now have a front row seat of the kind of danger they were in, and you are going to sweep up like a hero, the herd will have a hard time trying to undermine your authority again."
"Why are you guys so invested on making me popular?" Asked Tsunayoshi in frustration. "You all know I don't like it. I can fake it but I really don't like it."

"Because, Cub" Said Hibari, as if he was talking to a child “You are literally the only carnivore who will take care of the herd instead of eating them. And even if you don't like it, you have others who will take it off your hands."

Tsuna huffed. "I mean, I guess? But I don't want to pile even more work on Shoichi or Kyoko-chan."

Kyoya rolled his eyes. "They are useful little herbivores to have around, happier when they are working. They will keep the rest of the herd in line. If they weren't useful, I would have purged them out by now." He frowned. "Which reminds me, that silver-haired herbivore."

"Gokudera-kun?"

Kyoya frowned. "Yes, that one. He still has to pay for his damage to Namimori." He said, injecting speed on his pace.

Tsuna sweatdropped. "Hibari-san, I already paid for the damages he caused." he said, trotting to catch up to him. "Isn't that enough?"

"No." Growled the man, taking out his tonfas as he caught sight of the italian. "He still needs to be punished for assaulting members of the committee, attempting homicide on the head of the Disciplinary Committee, and endangering his teammates on the entrance test."

"Now, Hibari-san, let's take this easy" Asked Tsuna with a small amount of alarm. "I don't think this would be a good idea, and besides - Hibari-san? Hibari-san!"

Hibari ignored the panicked cries coming behind him as he ran up to Gokudera. The mafioso seemed to sense him at the last moment, moving away from his position at the bottom of the electric pole. Hibari couldn't help the smirk that crawled onto his face at it, and swung again.

Gokudera yelped, retreating once again until he was a good five paces away from the prefect. "What the fuck?! What do you think you are doing, you battle freak?"

"Gokudera Hayato, you need to be punished." He said, running up to him again, faster that the last time. Gokudera yelped and ducked, rolling and getting to his feet quickly enough to send some low-powered explosives-Strong enough to cause some mild burns, but not strong enough to destroy concrete- towards Hibari, who evaded them easily and tried to cut the distance towards him once again.

"Kyoya! Stop in this instant!" yelled Tsuna, skidding to a halt besides Gokudera. "If it means so much to you, then at least get to somewhere where there won't be as much collateral damage!" He added, looking alarmed at the small holes the explosives had created on the street and the sidewalk.

"Sawada-sama?!" asked Gokudera incredulously. “You agree with this person?”

Tsuna turned to him and bowed briefly. "I apologize, Gokudera, but Kyoya can be quite stubborn. Please bear with it."

"If he cannot stand up to me then he does not deserve to be part of our pride." Stated Kyoya, looking at Tsunayoshi calculatingly. Eventually, however, he backed down and put the tonfas away. "Tomorrow, you will go to the Hibari estate, and face me in combat to atone for your
transgressions. Understood?"

Gokudera wanted to growl something, but Tsunayoshi grabbed his arm. "He'll be there. And I will fight you afterwards."

Hibari nodded. "Excellent. Now, have you found anything significant?"

Gokudera seemed about to argue, but Tsuna added more pressure to his arm. Tsuna shook his head, and Gokudera sighed "No" He said through clenched teeth. "No one seems to remember any suspicious looking boys hanging around, and I checked the bus stop. The last bus to come here came around 10 minutes before we arrived, and the next one is due 15 minutes."

"So they are long gone already." Said Tsuna. "Dammit!" he said, hitting the wall behind him.

"Don't beat yourself, Cub." Said Hibari. "This has nothing to do with you."

"But if I hadn't goaded Riku-"

"She would have done something similarly horrible. These cowardly herbivores don't want a fair fight, and will use any leverage against you." Hibari glared 'Don't let them'

Tsunayoshi took a deep breath. "Yeah. You are right." He shook his head. "Shall we reunite with the others?"

"Is that all?" Asked Tsuna, desperation tinting his voice.

"I am afraid so, Tsunayoshi." Said Shoichi, who wasn't looking any happier. "Whoever did this was very practiced on breaking an entering, they got in and out with no-one being the wiser." He looked down. "I'm sorry."

A big, black haired boy with a pompadour hairstyle patted him on the back. "It's fine, Shoichi-dono. We did all we could, now unfortunately all we can do is wait."

There were various groans around the place. "Kusakabe, devote extra-resources to this particular set of five blocks. I want 24-hour visibility of it."

"Yes, Hibari-san." Said Kusakabe, letting his hand fall from Shoichi's shoulder and turning to Tsunayoshi. "Should we alert the police of our presence?"

"No." He said "I want your guys to be in plain clothes and to be as inconspicuous as possible, but don't alert the police that you are there."

Kusakabe got serious "Are they compromised?"

"Maybe." Tsuna turned to Spanner. "Can you outfit his guys?"

Spanner closed his eyes, chewing on the lollipop stick on his mouth. "I might be able to. How many are there going to be?" he asked Kusakabe.

"Um... around 10? With a rotation on every four hours."
"So between 20 and 30. Might be difficult, but I'll rig something up." Said Spanner, standing up from the chair he was sitting at. "I will take my leave now, since I am going to be working on this. Have your guys stop by our flat in around" he checked his watch "1 hour." He grabbed his satchel and put a hand on Shinichi's shoulder. "C'mon, Sho, It's our time to shine."

Shoichi hesitated, looking around the room. "Please don't do anything stupid or dangerous."

Spanner shoved him out of the door seconds before a book hit the place where Shoichi had been standing in. "Hahi! So rude!" Grouched Haru. "Don't do anything stupid or dangerous" She recited, exaggerating Shoichi's worried face. "As if we WANT to get in trouble!"

"Well... We do have a tendency to run headfirst into things." Said Kyoko hesitately, making Hana snort.

"To be fair to us, half the time those 'things' found us, and we had no choice but to defend ourselves."

"Anyway, if there is nothing else to do, I'd like to go home." Said Takeshi. "Dad is waiting for me, so I need to get going. See ya!"

The rest of his friends echoed their good byes as he went out. There was a second of silence before Haru turned to Tsuna. "So, where are we sleeping tonight?"

"Ah? You are staying"

Haru inflated her cheeks. "Well, of course we are staying!" she jumped off the bed and took two steps, stabbing her finger on his chest. "What, you thought we were going to leave YOU of all people alone when we have Riku gunning for you?"

"I mean, It's not like she would try something directly. Yet."

Haru rolled her eyes. "Things have changed, Tsu-chan. What we know is that she is very selfish, very unempathetic, and very opportunist."

"That still tells me nothing of why you should stay."

"Because we want to?" Kyoko said. "It has also been a long, long time since we have had a sleepover, anyway." She turned her best puppy-dog eyes at him. "Can we?"

"... Yeah, sure." Tsuna sighed. "You are such a clingy person, Kyoko-chan"

Kyoko gave him her best innocent smile. "Well, since it is decided, I will go tell Mama we are staying and check if she needs any help."

"Yah! We need to decide on a movie to watch!"

"Well, what do we have on the queue?" asked Tsunayoshi

"Oceans 12, Hustle Movie 2, Now you see me-."

"Hey, Gokudera-kun is new here." Said Ryohei. "Why don't we let him choose?"

"Me?" Asked Gokudera, looking up from putting his shoes on, surprise written on his face.

"Yup!" Said Ryohei, throwing an arm over his shoulder. "Tsuna has decided you are our friend, so you, as the newest member of our team, shall pick the movie."
"That's a good idea!" Said Kyoko, clapping her hands together. "I'm sure you know a lot of good movies we haven't even heard about!

"Uh... I am not much of a movie person." murmured Gokudera, looking down and scratching his head.

"You must have something you like though."

Gokudera blushed. "Well... There is a kid's movie I am very fond of."

"Really? Which one?"

"Il Bambino che Viaggia"

"Oh, 'The Traveling Child'! I have heard of it!" Said Kyoko. "I have been meaning to watch it but I have never found the time!"

Gokudera smiled. "Is good! Is really good and you should watch it" He froze and turned. "That is, If that is okay with you, Sawada-sama."

Tsuna smiled back. "You too seem super pumped to watch it, so why not? In fact, let me ask my mom to see if she wants to watch it too, seems like something she would like."

"Alright! Gokudera, could you please stay with me so I know I have the right movie?" Asked Kyoko, sitting at the computer and booting up Netcheck.

Tsuna smiled and turned away, leaving his friends to their devices and going downstairs. "Mom! The guys want to stay and do a sleep over, are you okay with that?"

Nana looked at him with confusion. "Of course I am okay with that, Tsu-kun." She said, finishing tying up some bentos.

Tsuna shrugged. "Just checking, just checking. Also, we are going to be watching a movie. Do you want to watch it too? It’s a children’s movie"

"Oh, thank you, but I am going to go out tonight. Xia-chan wants some help with dinner and then we are playing cards." She said, gesturing to the five bentos/

"Oh, Okay. Have fun and tell them hi for me!"

"Will do, see you in a while." She said as she dropped a kiss on his head. “Call you when I get there.”

He smiled. “Thanks, mom.”

He saw her go out and went back up the stairs.

"So, mom is going to be out of the house, we can use the tv downstairs."

"Neat!" Said Kyoko. "Do you want the movie with subtitles or are you fine with just Italian?"

"Just Italian is fine." he said. “I need to practice anyway.”

" Shall I prepare snacks?"

"Yeah, please do Nii-san. Can you hook the computer fine downstairs?."
Tsuna held his head on his hands, expression stony. Before him, the preliminary report card glared at him in red and black.

None of his grades were higher than thirty.

He let his breath go through his teeth. "So this is how you wanna play it, Four-eyes?"

Tsuna stood up abruptly, ignoring the cries of his teacher as he went out of the room. On the edge of his eye, he caught Ayako looking at him panicked, as if she could tell what he was about to do.

Which, to be fair, she probably knew anyway.

Tsuna marched towards the Principal's office, a mask of neutrality on his face. He carefully didn’t make eye-contact with the few students that were out of class as he trekked to the other side of the school, where the office was. He politely smiled to the secretary “Hello, Oikawa-san. May I speak with the principal?”

Oikawa-san, a woman on her thirties with long hair on a ponytail, smiled brightly at him. “Hello, Sawada-kun! Yes, I think he was expecting you. Let me announce you first, please.” She said, pressing some buttons on her phone. “Sensei, Sawada-kun would like to see you.” She nodded and hung up. “Please go in.”

Tsuna smiled at her before turning to the door, his neutral mask back firmly in place.

Tsuna entered, and immediately knew it was going to be a losing battle.

The principal, a rotund man, was sitting behind the cheap desk, "reading' some papers, affecting an air of detachment. In one quick look, Tsuna confirmed there was nothing of importance on those papers, as they only had the permissions for the upcoming festival.

"Ah, Dame-Tsuna." said the principal, barely looking up from the paperwork. "What can I do for you today?"

"Sensei, there has been an error on my report card." Tsuna said, taking his place in front of the desk and daintily putting the report on the desk.

"Hm?” The principal made a mimicry of looking the card up, taking it on his hands. after a couple moment, he turned back to him "I'm sorry, but I see nothing wrong with it."

"My grades" said Tsunayoshi with calculated calm "are not that low, and al can prove it if you want."

"Well, even if they are not, It's not me you should be convincing. The ladder of authority establishes that you should go first to your teacher, then to the coordinator of the area, and then to me." He returned the report to him. "Try to talk to them first."

"With all due respect, Sensei, we both know that is going to do nothing. You know most of the teachers ha- are biased against me. If I do take the time to go through the ladder of authority, then my grades will not be fixed by the time the actual report card is out and the grades are set on the
"system."

The Principal shrugged. "Well, what will you have me do?"

"All I ask is that I can bring all my tests so I can prove that my grades are better and to fix them, or at least for my grades to be delayed until we can get to the bottom of this."

The principal tapped his fingers. "I don't know, Dame-Tsuna. I don't want to give the rest of the students the impression that we are playing favorites."

"And you won't. All you will be doing is your job to protect the students under your care, being a safe authority figure your students can rely on."

The principal stared at him.

Tsuna sighed. "Right." He turned back "Sorry to bother you." He walked back to the door, and grabbed the pommel. But instead of going out immediately, he looked back. "I'm sorry to see you had forgotten my father's words. I'll fix this problem myself shortly"

Tsuna opened the door, ignoring the splutters and cries of 'Sawada-san' coming from behind him, and stepped out on the deserted hallway. He nodded to the lady outside and made his way back to the classroom.

"SAWADA! What do you *think* you were doing, walking out like that?" Asked his teacher, once he walked back in the classroom.

"I am sorry, sensei, I had to go correct a mistake on my card." Tsuna said, crossing his arms in front of himself.

"Like what, too high a grade?" He sneered, getting some chuckles from the students. "go sit back down."

"Yes, sensei." He said softly, walking back to his desk and sitting besides Takeshi.

"That bad?" Takeshi asked.

"Yeah." He sighed. "That bad. My whole scorecard, gone."

Takeshi frowned. "That's weird. They must know you can fight that."

"I think I'm supposed to waste time fighting this. Unfortunately for them," he said, looking at the back of Ayako’s head "I am not going to be fighting fairly."

Chapter End Notes

Hi! I am not dead.

Just wanted to tell you guys, I am very sorry for not being able to update when I said I would. Things have been crazy lately (and I didn't get the jobs I was applying to), so I have not been able to sit down and write for a while.
That said, I also am going to have to shorten the length of the chapters. One factor that delayed both last updates was that I had a target of 10,000 words per chapter. That is not feasible anymore, so I downgraded each chapter to around 5,000 to 7,000 words each. It will help me keep on track and is less daunting.

Thank you for your comprehension, hope you like it!
Chapter 6: Friends, Enemies

Chapter Summary

We get a glimpse of Tsuna's past

Sixième chapitre: Amis Enemies

“I am really sorry, Kazuki-san, but I am not interested.”

The girl sighed, bowing once again. “I-I figured as much.” She said, her voice breaking. “Ha-ve a
good day, Sa-awada-kun. Sorry for bothering you.”

She turned around and trotted away before Tsuna could say anything, her sobs still easily audible.

“I think that’s the last of them, Tsu.” Said Takeshi, looking out of the classroom door.

“Thank Gods!” Said Tsuna, covering his face and rubbing his eyes.

Gokudera patted him on the back, getting a quick smile from Tsuna before he stood up from the
desk he had been cornered in.

“Three on one day. This must be some kind of record.” Tsuna said, picking his bag from where it
was at foot of the desk. “I don’t understand what they are expecting to happen. I am pretty sure I
have not implied that I am free for a relationship. I think?” He asked at the end, eyes darting to
Takeshi.

Takeshi shrugged, tapping his shinai against his shoulder. “You’ll have to ask Kyoko and Hana for
that. Maybe they want to score points early?”

Tsuna’s face darkened “Bit late for that.”

The other two teenagers exchanged looks, and continued to walk down the deserted hallway. Class
had let out for the day a while ago, but Tsuna had stayed behind to keep this friends company
while they cleaned, and then he had been cornered by Kazuki.

“So, are you ready for the fight today, Gokudera-kun?” Asked Tsuna, his voice cheery once again.

Gokudera huffed, his face slowly morphing into a frown. “Definitely. I will give that bastard what
for.”

Takeshi laughed. “Looking forward to seeing that.”

“THIS IS THE CRAZY BASTARDS HOUSE?” Gokudera asked, slack-jawed, as he looked at the
traditional Japanese mansion they were in front off.
It even had a fucking wall surrounding it!

Takeshi laughed. “Yeah, Hibari-sempai’s family is pretty well off.”

Tsuna was having an attack of chuckles, even as he gently pushed Gokudera towards the closed gate. He pressed a button on the intercom and waved to the camera. Seconds later, there was a buzz and the gate swung open.

Gokudera had his head on a swivel, as they made their way from the entrance to the house proper. Better said, as they made their way to the mansion. From what Gokudera could see, the main building had at least three additional wings, all made in the traditional Japanese style. On the left side of the path, he could see a lot of flowers and trees. On his right, while still verdant, the majority of the space was taken up by a zen garden of massive proportions. Gokudera could also see a simple, small brook running across the property, barely big enough to be bridged by a couple of stones.

They reached the house sooner than expected. The door was opened for them by an older, black haired woman wearing a traditional green kimono, who bowed deeply at them “Good afternoon, Sawada-sama.” She said, eyes crinkling as she smiled at them.

“Good Afternoon, Ayame-san!” he chirped back, toeing his shoes off. Takeshi called out a similar greeting, and Gokudera hurriedly imitated them. “Have you seen Hibari-san?”

“Young Master is out still. If you’d like, you may wait for him on the main room or in Young Master’s room.”

“I’ll stick with the main room, thank you.” he said.

The woman bowed again. "As you wish, Tsunayoshi-sama. If you would follow me please."

The woman turned and guided them down a long hallway, before doing a sharp left and opening the sliding doors. Tsuna and Yamamoto entered without batting an eyelid, but Gokudera was once again overcome with awe at his surroundings.

The room was huge, at least 20 feet in length, with the center being dominated by a low Japanese table surrounded by comfortable looking cushions. On the walls different types of weapons hung, from swords to bows to guns, as well as beautiful paints of sumi-e depicting numerous battles. In the far corner of the room was a tasteful arrangement of flowers, mostly lilies.

Tsunayoshi and Takeshi walked forwards and plopped down on the silken cushions. Gokudera slowly crept inside and sat down just to the left side of Tsunayoshi, who had taken his phone out. "Sawada-sama, are you sure whe are on the right place?” He asked worriedly. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust him, but...

Tsuna nodded with a smile. "Yeah, I know, I was baffled the first time I came here too, but turns out that the Hibari family is very old and very well off.” He giggled "But you wouldn't know it by looking at Kyoya."

"Yes, my son is not exactly what you expect when you think refined." Said a sweet female voice from the door.

All three boys startled and turned towards the door, where a woman was standing. Gokudera was struck at how beautiful this woman was, white skin enveloped in a burgundy, elaborate Kimono with silver details, long black hair left free. The only spot of color on her face was her mouth, painted a bright red.
"Xian-san!" Tsuna said, scrambling to his feet and sprinting to the woman, who caught him in a hug with a soft laugh.

"Hello, Tsunayoshi. Long time no see" She said smiling, blinking her dark brown eyes in satisfaction.

"Definitely" Tsuna turned back to Gokudera, as the woman moved on to hug Takeshi. "Gokudera-kun, meet Hibari Xian, Kyoya-san's mother."

"I-it's a pleasure to meet you!" He said, bowing deeply.

The woman smirked and bowed back. "Well aren't you a cute one." She said, her sharp eyes looking at him, through him, and Gokudera suppressed the urge to fidget.

"Why are you here, Xian-san? I thought you were going to be at Tokyo today" Tsuna asked.

The woman frowned, taking out an intricately decorated fan from her sleeve and fanning lazily with it. "I was going to, but the person I was supposed to meet with cancelled me at the last moment. Some people don't have any manners." she sighed in exasperation.

Tsuna nodded in understanding. "Yeah, that must have sucked. Did you at least get a refund on your train ticket?"

"Yes, Ayame-chan did me that favor this morning while I composed a strongly worded letter to that stupid mayor." She took a deep breath, and transformed the frown into a smile. "But enough about me. Why are you here, Tsu-kun?"

"Ah, well, Gokudera had an... Encounter with Kyoya-san."

"Oh did he now?" She asked, her ruby red lips quirking in amusement "Does it have anything to do with the injured committee members?" She asked Gokudera

"Um... Y-yes ma'am." He said, cringing. "I am very sorry."

"I see." Her smile widened. "No need to be sorry. In fact, thank you very much. Maybe now Kyoya will listen to reason and up the training on them."

"I. You're welcome?" He asked, off balance. He had expected her to scold him and demand reparations, not thank him!

She laughed. "But I want to know...Why so much damage? Kyoya was very mad. He never learned to share, so he gets angry when his toys are broken by others."

Gokudera sunk down. "It wasn't my intention, but those people were attracting too much attention at the airport."

She hummed, picking speed with her fan. "I see. I shall have a talk with them about the correct way to handle possibly hostile arrivals." She sighed again. "That boy... He underestimates the necessity to have a public face."

"You can say that again." Takeshi said, while Tsuna nodded in agreement.

Xian frowned, peering at them, before closing her fan with a snap. "Gods! I'm such a bad hostess. Would you like any tea or snacks? In fact, have you eaten yet?"

"Tea would be fine, thank you. I don't want to risk anything heavier." Said Tsuna.
The woman noded. "Tea and some snacks, then. Ayame-chan, could you take care of it."

"Immediately, My Lady." She turned to Hayato. "What would you like?"

"A soda, please." He said.

"Certainly." Then she turned to the other two boys. "And you? The same as always?"

"Yes please" They said.

She nodded and retired.

"Well then, what has been going on in your life, Tsunayoshi?" The woman asked.

Tsuna stiffened, and sent a calculating look at her. "Worse than I would want, but better than I expected" He recited dutifully.

She smiled. "Ah, sharp as always." she said, before her smirk transformed back on a smile "But, really now, how are you?"

Tsuna huffed, and sunk on his cushion. "Eh. Lots of pressure from my friends who want to make me Mr. Popular, but overall, good. A little bored, I can’t hang out with them as often as before, and I can’t spend as much time on my hobbies as I want." He complained. “And people at school seem to think I’m now some kind of Vigilante, here to protect them from all danger.” He finished rolling his eyes.

"Ah, yes, I heard about what happened with Mochida-kun. Really, it could not have happened to a more disgustingly weak herbivore, as my son would say." She brightened. "However, I am glad you are shaking things up. The status quo at your school could do with some… Reorganizing."

Tsuna rubbed the back of his head. "Thanks. It's just...It's a lot of new attention."

"Not to mention that he now has a fanclub!"

"TAKESHI!" Tsuna said, going red.

"Does he now?" The woman nodded "It was time."

Tsuna whined and burrowed on Gokudera's side, making him squeak and blush. "Mean assholes, all of you." He said, his words muffled by the cloth.

Xian and Takeshi exchanged looks, and giggled.

"Come on, Tsunayoshi-kun, It's just some harmless teasing. Besides, It makes me happy to see you are being treated right for once. I was worried about you."

Tsuna came out from his hiding space. "No need, Xian-san. You know I’m a tough nut to crack."

"Still, It's not right. I understand you think you are helping by being a target, but-"

"With all due respect, Xian-san" Tsuna interrupted. "I don't 'think' I'm helping; I know I am. As long as Riku and her cronies are focused on making my life miserable, they are leaving other people alone. The difference is, I can take it without breaking."

She pressed her lips. "I understand what you are saying, but It feels unfair for you to be carrying the responsibility alone. You know we are here to help you."
"I know, and I thank you. But they are my problem, have been my problem since I was eight. I will take care of this myself."

Xian sighed, slumping on her cushion and slowing her fan. "You have really not changed."

Further discussion was stopped by Ayame entering with a tray. She set the soda in front of Gokudera, another soda in front of Takeshi, and some kind of tea in front of Xian and Tsunayoshi. She also left a plate of Onigiri and milk and sugar, before excusing herself out.

There was a moment of silence as the they sipped their drinks, but eventually Xian started up conversation again. "How is the Coffee shop?"

Tsuna sighed. "Well, I had to fire Fukuoka-san."

She frowned. "Again? This is the third manager you fired this month alone." There was a calculating glint taking place on her eyes.

Tsuna shrugged, a lazy half-smile forming."It's ok, turns out Gokudera-kun needed a job, so I gave it to him." Tsuna said nonchalantly.

"And is it working well?" She asked, turning to Gokudera.

He startled, but nodded determinedly. "Yes ma'am. To this date I have re-structured the payment plans, automated the ordering of supplies and created a logarithm that has enabled us to be more effective when using our resources."

She arched an eyebrow "Oh really? I will have to go one day. It has been a long time since I have seen Rise-chan."

Gokudera smiled as confidently as he could "I look forward to serve you."

She quirked a corner of her mouth. "We'll see. And the rest of the businesses?"

"Gokudera-kun is only managing the cafe, I and Narukami-kun work on the rest." Said Tsuna.

Xian nodded. "A wise choice."

"But what about you, Xian-san? How have you been?"

She pursed her lips, frowning once again, her fan picking up speed. "Well, trying to make the Mayor see reason regarding the expenditure for the remodelling of the main roads, and also trying to secure some extra funding for the local parks, but so far I've had no luck." She snapped her fan closed. "That man is too stubborn for his own good."

Tsuna made a face. "Politicians usually are. And the founding is for saving the greenhouse of Uzushio park?"

"That's the one, yes. I cannot understand how he cannot see the good thing it is to have a communal garden. It has been proved that it helped to reduce crime and vagrancy, both here in Namimori and in the surrounding areas, and not only that but since the implementation we have seen a steady rise of interest in agriculture development."

"Maybe try to pitch it as something of a public service?" He suggested tentatively.

"Will try, Tsunayoshi. Nothing else has worked so far so I have nothing to lose."
They chatted idly some more, with periodic interjections by Gokudera and Takeshi, until Kyoya arrived, the big delinquent - Tetsuya? - hot on his heels. He swept the room, looking at his mother first, then at the three boys sitting with her, and a predatory smile spread on his face. "Tiger cub, I thought you had backpedaled on our agreement"

Xian scoffed. "Honestly, Kyo-chan." She stood up as Kyoya walked up to her, returning the hug her son gave her. "You speak as if Tsunayoshi was capable of such a dishonorable act."

Kyoya huffed, turning to Gokudera. "Herbivore, follow me. If I have to drag you, you will be bitten to death twice. Excuse me, mother." He bowed at her, and pivoted on his heels towards the door to the outside.

Gokudera spluttered and stood up haltingly, tripping over his feet and hastily sketching a bow towards Xian, who gave him a smile full of teeth and anticipation.

Tsun couldn't help but roll his eyes at his friends and drained his tea. "I must also go, Xian-san. I don't trust Hibari-san to not go overboard against Gokudera-kun."

She snapped her fan open. "Do not worry, Tsu-kun. We'll chat at a later time."

She watched as both children left her behind, and smiled. "Ayame-chan, could you get me another tea and a cup of coffee?"

"Immediately, My Lady." She said, bowing and leaving Xian.

"Thank you." She said, closing the door and turning. "Please take a seat, Hitman Reborn. It is extremely rude to eavesdrop on other people."

A black blur dropped from the ceiling and onto the table, pointing a green gun at her. "I wasn't expecting to find you here, Crimson Wind." Said Reborn.

She scoffed. "I don't go by that name anymore. Please take yourself off the table, and put that gun away. My husband is coming home soon, and I'd rather avoid a battle if I can help it. Gods know Kyoya will make enough of a mess by himself."

The hitman frowned, but Leon transformed and crawled up to his hat, staring at her. "Since when do you live in Namimori?" He asked, once again cursing Iemitsu for his lack of useful intel.

"My, my, the Greatest Hitman of the World is getting sloppy at his old age." She said, gracefully folding herself in the seat in front of him. "I have been here for about four years."

"And why Namimori? I had pegged you more of a City person"

"Both my husband and my child live here." She pointed drily.

"So you were actually married?" he asked in surprise. When news that the Crimson Wind had become pregnant hit the Underworld, more than one idiot had tried to proclaim being the father. After the first few were gruesomely murdered, the collective conclusion was that she had decided to keep the child of a one-night stand or had used a Breeder, which wasn't all that unusual for Career Hitmen looking for an heir.

And if she had a husband, that explained why she would submit to the Triads.

She scoffed. "What, you thought I went with the Celestial Dragons on my own free will?" She cackled, confirming his thoughts. "Yes, I am married to a wonderfully understanding man, and I
gave birth to a beautiful, strong child; which were then used as leverage to secure my and my Geat-Uncles’s loyalty. Moreover, you know how special Namimori is."

Reborn nodded. "Namimori is Vongola territory. Off-limits"

"Namimori is under the protection of the Vongola Famiglia." She corrected him. "That is a very important distinction. Here, they could be protected from the Underworld, without being part of it, and unless the Triads were willing to weather the wrath of Vongola, they’d be left alone." She closed her fan and put it on the table in front of it, before taking up an Onigiri. "Something few people want, and anyway, they had chained me by then." She took a dainty bite. “But what about you. What brings the Strongest Hitman in the World to this sleepy town?"

"I am here to train the future Vongola Decimo." He answered.

She arched an eyebrow. "Tsunayoshi-kun? Oh, don't give me that look." She sniffed. "I have known Yamamoto-kun's family for a long time, and I keep up with Underworld gossip so I know about the circumstances surrounding the Smoking Bomb. It was obvious who you were after."

"Indeed, my student is Dame-Tsuna."

Reborn moved left, and looked back at the wall behind him. The fan she had been using was firmly embedded on the wall, the metal lining on the inside of the silk gleaming menacingly, the previously blunt tips of the ribs now sharpened into deadly needles.

He turned back to her with a raised eyebrow, utterly impermeable to the killer frown she was sporting. "You will not refer to Tsunayoshi like that in my house." She said coldly, her hands playing with a second fan.

Reborn debated on making a comment, but decided it was too much of a pain. "Fine." He conceded. "You care deeply for him." he added.

"I do" she said, taking the tea from Ayame. Reborn also took his coffee - espresso, black, with a small spoonful of sugar. - "He is a very important person for us, and is the first friend my son made. he doesn't deserve to deal with someone like you"

"Regardless, I am his tutor now for the foreseeable future, so we'll be seeing each other. I would rather prefer for us to be in decent terms while I train him."

She took a long look at him, sipping her tea delicately. "Fine." she said. "I'll tolerate your presence around Tsunayoshi. But be aware that if I ever receive even the smallest whiff of sabotage from you, I will take care of you personally. Capische?"

Reborn barely resisted the impulse to facepalm, and decided instead to focus on his indignation. "I might not have decided to train him, but I will make him the best Don you have ever seen."

"Good. Now, I believe my son and the Smoking Bomb are supposed to be fighting. Care to watch?" She asked, rising to her feet.

Reborn drained his coffee and followed her.
Gokudera spit a mouthful of dirt, and rolled to the side, barely making it away from the tonfa that slammed on the place he had been a mere second ago. A knee slammed on his stomach, and he gagged, swinging blindly with his first, but both his arms felt like they weighed a ton each, and he could tell he wasn’t doing any damage to the other.

The pressure on his stomach suddenly disappeared, and he took the opportunity to gasp for breath, spitting a small amount of bile in front of him. It landed on Hibari’s face, making him stutter for a second, but it was time enough for Gokudera to shimmy out from under him and land a solid kick against him.

He hurriedly climbed to his feet, wincing and blinking the tears from his eyes when he put more weight on his right feet. He hurt everywhere, and was fairly sure he looked like hell. His right arm was busted after a nasty tonfa hit to the elbow, and he was sure he had dislocated the thumb and pinky finger. His left was in marginally better shape, only sporting scratches, but he had a slightly worrying slash on his bicep where he had hit a stone at a wrong angle. His left leg was a mess, and his right felt like one massive bruise. His torso was the least injured, but his right side was still burnt and tender from where the bastard had batted one of his dynamites back at him.

In contrast, the bastard looked like he was having the time of his life. His only visible injury was a thin scratch on his forehead, and Gokudera suspected that it was because he had gotten distracted beating the crap out of him when his bombs had gone off rather than any skill of his own. Other than that, and the fact that he was pretty rumpled, there was no sign that they had been battling for the best part of five minutes.

The bastard brandished his tonfas again, and Gokudera barely suppressed a flinch. The bastard smirked, and only the fact that Gokudera had finely-honed instincts from his years on the streets that allowed him to evade the next blow to his head, which would have surely rendered him unconscious. He stumbled back and let some low-powered explosives - more like fireworks, really - fly out of his pockets, igniting them with his flames, and used the blast and the sound to put some distance between them.

He panted and took cover behind one of the rocks, peeking out and doing a pass through their arena. The zen garden they had been fighting on had been drastically damaged, both by his explosives and by the bastard’s tonfas. Rocks that had been the size of a human before were now barely bigger than his fist, while more than one tree had been reduced to splinters, and the hard-packed earth had been dug out.

He saw movement and threw a dynamite stick, detonating it sooner by injecting more Storm flames in it. The bastard rolled, absorbing the momentum and continued running towards him. He jumped over the second blast, making Gokudera growl, and let off another blast as he started running.

He felt a heavy blow on his back, making him crumple on the ground. Gokudera groaned, but no matter how much he wanted it, he could not move.

Two shiny shoes appeared in his field of vision. "You are weak, herbivore."

Gokudera dug his face on the ground, but there was no way to plug his ears against the bastard’s criticism. "You are completely dependent on your bombs to fight. You are useless at close and even middle range. You are slow to attack, and even slower to react." He grabbed him by the back of the shirt, and dragged Gokudera to the side of the garden, where two other servants were waiting for them. Hibari dumped him unceremoniously on the blanket. "From now on, every day you will come here after class and fight me. We need to train your endurance first."
Gokudera whimpered as one of the servants pressed a gauze full of alcohol against his cut, but nodded. Hibari nodded back and turned towards where Tsunayoshi was.

"Wasn't that a little cruel?" He asked, a big sweat drop falling on the side of his face.

Kyoya rolled his eyes. "I was merely nipping him. You need to stop coddling your pride mates, cub. It's better if that one gets his fangs sooner rather than later."

He took a look at Reborn, who was perched besides his mother, before turning to Tsuna with a speculative look on his face. "Come on, cub. You still owe me a fight."

Tsuna squeaked as Kyoya grabbed him by the front of his shirt and pulled. "Ok, ok! I'm coming! jeez, Kyoya, you need to stop or all my shirts are going to get ruined."

Kyoya ignored him, but let go when they reached the makeshift arena. Tsuna adopted a Kung-Fu position that had Reborn quirking an eyebrow, while Kyoya hefted his Tonfas once again. "We will be going for first blood?" Asked Tsuna.

Kyoya nodded, and dove for him.

Tsuna met him head on, ducking under the arm and taking a swing to his chin. Hibari brought the other tonfa to block, and Tsuna used his momentum to aim a heel-kick to the ribs, making Hibari drop his arm and step back, crouch and come at him. Tsuna jumped over him, rolling and springing a kick on Hibari as he tried to hit him while he was on the dirt, but instead took a hit to the stomach. He stumbled back and smiled, going back inside leading with the tonfas, and doing a series of quick jabs that put Tsuna on the defensive. Tsuna traded a hit to the upper right arm for the opportunity to get low and try to sweep the feet of Kyoya, who jumped over him, but was unprepared for the flurry of kicks that went his way.

Instead of covering, however, Kyoya caught one of the kicks. Tsuna yelped as Kyoya pulled, and covered his torso with his arms, falling on the back of his shoulders and rolling off from under Hibari, who nicked his side. Tsuna kicked him, horse-like, on the face.

Kyoya stumbled back, covering his face with one hand, but to Tsunayoshi's disappointment there wasn't any blood there. Instead, Kyoya growled and went back after him, jabs and arcs swinging around Tsuna.

They stood on that impasse for the next couple minutes, trading blows, before Kyoya ratcheted up the intensity, the blows being harder, coming faster, and Tsuna had less time to react between them. Tsuna, for his part, hunkered down and concentrated on blocking and evading him, sometimes trying to sneak a jab whenever he saw an opening.

Tsuna concentrated completely on his opponent, forgetting momentarily on his audience. He waited, and blocked, and waited some more, until he found an opening. He ducked under Hibari's right hook, and feinted back, diving forwards when Hibari followed him. his left hand came up towards his chin, and when that was stopped, Tsuna quickly grabbed it, pulling him even closer and headbutting him on the face while his other side connected with the ribs.

Hibari stumbled back, but still managed to block Tsunayoshi as he came for him, so Tsuna used him as a springboard to jump over him, spinning on air and kicking the back of his head. Hibari turned back and tried to kick him, but Tsuna had already landed on a crouch, and used his leverage to pull Hibari closer-

Tsuna stumbled back, covering his mouth. When he looked down, his hand was covered in blood,
and he realized he could not feel the right side of his face.

"Better, Cub." Hibari said, putting his tonfas away. "You are still a little slow, but you have gotten better at reading your enemy."

Tsuna laughed humorlessly. "Thanks, Hibari-san."

"I have to admit, that was way better than what I expected." Reborn said, coming closer, followed by Takeshi and Xian. "Where did you learn to fight like that?" He said, looking intently at the kid.

Tsuna looked down, avoiding Reborn’s eyes. "I did a favor to someone, and they helped me refine my martial arts."

Reborn arched an eyebrow. He could tell it wasn't the whole story, but he wasn't going to pressure him on that, yet. There would be time for that later. "Pass along my compliments."

"Will do. Kyoya, you are hurt, come on let's get that looked at." He said, grabbing the wrist of the prefect and starting to drag him to the house.

Xian looked at Tsuna, who was starting to drag her son away, and then at Hibari, who was walking without complain. “I will tell Ayame to please set the table, you must be famished."

Tsuna opened his mouth, closed it. "Did my mom help you with dinner?" He settled for, in the end.

Xian pouted. "Oh, Tsuna-kun, do you not trust my culinary capabilities?" She sighed theatrically, opening her fan. "But I will send Ayame for food, if you are more comfortable that way. Pizza ok?"

Tsuna beamed at her, "You are the best, Xian-san"

He entered the house with Kyoya at his heels, her laugh and the voices of Takeshi and Reborn behind him.

He walked confidently through the house, making his way towards the back, and shoving Hibari into one of the unused bathrooms.

"What" he asked, pinning Hibari to the wall. "Was that?" He finished.

Kyoya merely gave him an annoyed look. "Establishment of pecking order, Cub."

Tsuna crowded him. "We could have blown our cover, Hibari. You are not exactly subtle, and I'm not stable yet. That could have gone catastrophically wrong." He hissed

"But it didn't, and now the Arcobaleno respects you."

"He doesn't respect me, he is assessing a possible threat!" Tsuna said, leaving Hibari alone and pacing in front of him. "There is a reason why we are staying on the downlow, and that is because we cannot take the Vongola as we are right now. The only advantage we have is information, and tat they don’t know a whole lot about us. We NEED to keep it like that." Tsuna pointed at the door. "That, Hibari, is inviting undue attention."

Hibari crossed his arms. "Cub, you need to calm down. The Arcobaleno has repeatedly demonstrated he does not think too highly of you." Hibari ignored the muttered ‘No kidding’, "and seeing how he treats you, he thinks he is apex predator in namimori, and you as a weak herbivore. Sooner or later, he would try to establish a new pecking order, and I have no doubt he would push
you to your limit to see where you stand. Tell me, do you really think you’d be able to hold back then?"

Tsuna walked up to the sink, leaning on that. He looked at Hibari through the mirror. “I hate when you make sense.”

Hibari smirked, waves of smugness coming off him. “Someone around here has to help you see the plots of carnivores.”

Tsuna huffed, opening the cabinet and coming out of it with a first aid kit. “Come on, you carnivorous swallow. I told your mom I will take care of you.”

Reborn sipped his espresso, keeping an eye out for his wayward student and the troublesome Cloud. Really, he would prefer to go get them, but he had seen the way the Crimson Wind had been fiddling with her fan, and the way she had crinkled her eyes when she had ‘kindly’ asked him to please follow, had him obeying. For all that it galled him, he really didn’t need an adversary of her caliber making his life harder than it already was.

So he sat at one of the chairs in the modern kitchen, sipping his espresso, overlooking the rest of the people there. Yamamoto was happily babbling about baseball to the Crimson Wind, who was sitting and listening, or pretending to listen, if the way she glanced down to her phone was any indication. Gokudera meanwhile was being looked over by the right-hand of the Cloud (a surprisingly competent individual, and Reborn’s pick for Lightning guardian if he could manage to shift the loyalty from Hibari to Tsunayoshi.)

“We are back!” Chirped Tsunayoshi, coming in. Reborn could see some bandages ob his lips, no doubt from a busted tooth. Hibari also had a small band-aid on his face, and Reborn could see him moving slowly, most likely due to Tsunayoshi’s rather hard hits to his ribs.

“Okaerinasai, Tsuna” said Xian, smiling up to him. “Thank you for taking care of my son.”

Tsuna chuckled, scratching the back of his head. “No probs. I needed to talk to him anyway, so two birds with one stone. Pizza?”

Xian laughed at his eagerness. “Ayame-chan went to pick it up, it will still take half an hour for it to get here.” She said.

He whined, dramatically throwing himself on a chair and looping his hands around Takeshi. “I’ll be dead by then! Takeshi, I name you the executor of my will. I leave all my money to the “Pizza Palazzo”, so make sure no one goes without pizza ever again”

The dramatic way he said this was enough to warrant some genuine laughs around the table, and even Gokudera had a curl of his lips.

Reborn sighed inwardly. While usually he would be happy to stay in the background, the fight had hammered home the fact that he didn’t know his student as well as he should. Even disregarding the horrid Intel Iemitsu had given him, he had been operating under the assumption Tsunayoshi was a charismatic and athletic, but normal civilian boy.

That fight had not been normal by any stretch of the imagination. If asked, Reborn would qualify it
as being low-to-mid Mafia Level. Of course, seeing as both teenagers had not shown any Flame made him want to tilt towards the ‘low’ scale, but at the same time, this was Tsunayoshi. He might well be Flame Active and not shown any due to paranoia.

Not that being paranoid wasn’t a good thing for a Boss-to-Be, but it irked him to have that particular trait turned against him.

So thinking, Reborn put his cup down and turned. “Tsunayoshi, I have a question.”

He waited until the room was focused on him before talking. “What is your relationship with Minamoto Riku?”

The room’s temperature plummeted. Tsunayoshi disentangled himself from his friend, his eyes cold and unblinking fixated on Reborn, even as his lips were quirked on a smile. “Why do you want to know that? She’s an enemy. Is that not enough?” He asked silkily.

Reborn shook his head. “It’s more than that. You and your friends seem keen on making them suffer, and they seem oddly focused on you.”

Tsun a cocked his head to the side. “Well, you did tell me I needed to take care of them.”

“Doesn’t explain why she is so interested on you”

“It’s nothing, Reborn. Really.” he splayed his hands. “It just happens that some people are horrible at introspection. They are horrible people, they know it, and yet won’t do anything about it. So they grab a person who can’t fight back, and make them a scapegoat, and then convince themselves that the victim deserves it.”

Reborn took a look at him.

Then he snapped his hand up, Leon already formed as a gun, and shot Tsunayoshi. The brat dodged, as he had done before, before turning back at him wide-eyed.

“Don’t give me that crap, Sawada Tsunayoshi.” He said, coldly. “I know how a scapegoat situation looks, and you are not it. So cut it and tell me: What are they to you?”

Tsun a looked at him calculatingly. “What are they to me?” He blinked, turning hooded eyes at him. “They are liars. Liars and traitors.”

“Traitors?” Asked Gokudera, breaking the standoffs. “Sawada-sama… Were they...?”

“Friends.” Tsuna nodded, maintaining eye-contact with him. “Yes. Once upon a time, when I was young and stupid, I considered them all friends.”

He sighed, sitting back. Both Takeshi and Tetsuya moved closer, and Hibari was glaring daggers at him. Even the Crimson Wind had lost her usual playful air, and was looking between them with a sad, detached expression, her fanning a slow affair.

“So what happened?” Reborn asked.

Tsuna closed his eyes, before opening again. “I was eight years old” He started. “And I was starting to go back to my old, outgoing friendly self. I had asked my- I asked for a party at the new Kokuyo Land. Since I had aced all my exams, they said ok, and I invited Kyoko-chan, who invited Riku and Midori, who then decided that I was not too bad to hang around with.” He clasped his hands. “It was new, for me, to have so many friends, so I tried to make them happy. And that was
kind of the point with Riku: You HAD to do what she wanted, or she wouldn’t be happy, and then NO ONE would be happy.”

“Another fact about Riku, is that she does not like to share. Like, at all. So when it turned out that I had other friends, she didn’t take it well. She made me choose, and I choose.” He chuckled. “She… disagreed.”

“And that was when she tried to make you a pariah?” Asked Reborn.

Tsuna shook his head. “No.” his eyes turned dark. “That happened when her brother tried to throw me off the roof.”

“What?!” Gokudera jumped up from his seat, standing. “Why?”

Tsuna sent a cold look. “Because I would not bow to her amazingness, and that might give ideas to other people that maybe, just maybe, she wasn’t as amazing and kind as she was pretending to be.” He chuckled mirthlessly. “But justice prevailed after only some poking, and that psycho is now behind bars. Of course, that did nothing but just anger her more, and then she implemented a long-winded plan to make me the most hated person at school.”

“And you let her.”

Tsuna sent Reborn the evil eye. “I never let her do anything. I decided that fighting her every step of the way was a waste of my time, and concentrated on being proof of actually being a decent human being. If other people believed her shit?” he shrugged. “No skin off my nose. I have bigger fish to fry.”

Gokudera was looking at him with wide eyes. “You are stronger than I gave you credit for, Sawada-sama.” He said breathlessly.

Tsunayoshi went red, dropping his eyes to the table. “I never let her do anything. I decided that fighting her every step of the way was a waste of my time, and concentrated on being proof of actually being a decent human being. If other people believed her shit?” he shrugged. “No skin off my nose. I have bigger fish to fry.”

Reborn’s lips thinned. On the one hand, he approved of Tsunayoshi’s outlook, but on the other, a Mafia Boss could not afford the luxury of letting their enemies run around, smearing their reputations without retribution.

“That’s why!” Said Gokudera suddenly. “That’s why all those girls are going after you! And why the kid asked you to go when he got attacked!”

Takeshi smiled. “Yup! Turns out that Tsu-chan is quite popular with the part of the school that actually has functioning eyes and a couple of spare neurons to rub together.”

“But if they like you, then why didn’t they befriend you? Or at least try to run interference between you and her?”

“Because Riku is a bully with a hell of a lot of power. You know her father is a politician, right?” Gokudera nodded, having a sensation of where this was going. “He has quite a lot of influence when deciding where the budget is going to get applied to.”

“So the administration is turning a blind eye in hopes of getting more money?” Asked Gokudera in disgust. Not that it was surprising, but still.

“Not to mention that Nami-chuu isn’t exactly the cream of the nearby schools.” Tetsuya said. “We
have a higher density of delinquents compared with other schools in the area, and most teachers are either recent graduates who are here to gain experience and then move to greener pastures, or older ones who are just waiting for retirement and don’t care as much.” He shook his head.
“Administration in general have a lot to lose if Riku starts bad mouthing them to her father.”

“And after the scandal with her brother, they could not transfer her to one of the other schools easily.” Continued Tsuna. “Not only would it look like an admission of guilt, it would make it look like the councilman didn’t have faith on the school he was supposed to help run. So unfortunately, we are stuck with her until we graduate.”


“Indeed.” said Tsuna. “So you see, if anyone was stupid enough to get between Riku and I, it would be a slaughter, and I really don’t want anyone to get hurt that way. Riku can’t hurt me too much more than she already has. Hana, Kyoko-chan and Takeshi here are mostly untouchable because they are the idols of the school and have a very popular high profile. And nobody is stupid enough to mess with Hibari-san and Tetsuya-kun.” He sighed. “That said, while I am fine with people not getting in between, I have no sympathy for people who willingly joined in with the bullying, or who were deliberately dismissive of me before and are now trying to curry favor.” He finished with a frown.

“I see, so that was the difference between the Volleyball player and Asano?”

“That’s right. Asano-kun was always polite and respectful to me, and when I stood up to Mochida for him he was actually grateful. The volleyball captain made sure I knew how much of a nuisance I was every PE class we had together.” He said rolling his eyes.

Tsuna turned to Reborn. “Are you satisfied with these answers?”

Reborn nodded. “Just so you know, Tsunayoshi, that now you must take them down in a most public, most spectacular way possible. No one messes with a Mafia Boss and goes away scot-free.”

Tsuna snorted. “Oh, don’t worry about that.” He said, a smirk making its way on his lips.

Reborn felt an odd, fluttery sensation on his stomach, and it took him a couple moments to realize what he was feeling.

Anticipation.

Tsuna walked through the school alone.

Well, not exactly alone. He was sure Kyoya was somewhere nearby, and he was reasonably sure Tetsu was tailing him, if the looks of some of the punks were any indication. He sighed. He loved his friends, he did, but this was a bit much. He needed to do this himself, and it would be easier to find his prey if he was alone. Hopefully, Tetsuya would understand if he had to shake him off.

Locating Ayako during recess had been harder than what Tsuna had expected. She usually hung out with Riku’s cronies, or on the library absorbed in a new book. Therefore, when he couldn’t find her in one of the usual places, he had to comb the whole of Namichuu to find her.

Tsuna smiled bitterly as he approached her. This niche under the Eastern building had been one of his favorite spots to hide, when he had been young, and he had brought Ayako here a lot when
they wanted to talk away from the others. “Hello, Class Rep. Feeling nostalgic?” He asked, bending to fit under the stairs.

The fact that he also towered over her was just a bonus.

He smiled at her squeak of surprise, and let himself fall besides her.

“Sawada!” she exclaimed, before lowering her voice. “What are you doing here?” she hissed, her eyes darting around to make sure no-one could see them together.

“Why, looking for you obviously.” He said, unwrapping an energy bar and munching on it indolently. “Want some?” she glared at him and he shrugged. “I have a couple of things to ask of you.”

She wrinkled her nose. “You want me to do you a favor?”

“More like I want to do your job right.” he let the implications sink before he turned fully to her. “Look, I know you have been messing with my grades-”

“Bullshit.”

“-And I also happen to know you have been adjusting your friend’s grades-“

“You can’t prove any of that-”

“-SO I would really appreciate if you could put them back to normal.” He finished, crumpling the wrapper on his hand. “I’t be a huge scandal if it came out that Namimori’s star pupil was changing people’s grades, wouldn’t it?”

She looked at him, face slack. “You can’t be serious.”

“I’m very, very serious.” Tsuna smiled. “You aren’t the only one with special access to the school servers, you know? They are quite easy to break into. Easier even to install a bot to make a copy of the registries every time a certain ID logs in.”

Ayako looked like she was about to cry. “I can’t do that.” she whispered.

“Sure you can” he said. “You have been able to do it the last few years without trouble. I’m sure one more time won’t matter.”

“No!” She said. “If I do that, Riku will know it was me! I’ll be ruined!”

Tsunayoshi rolled his eyes. “You’ll survive it.’

She shook her head desperately. “No! You don’t know how scary she is. She’ll send people after me!” She sobbed.

Tsun squinted at her. “I know exactly how scary Riku is.” He said drily.

Ayako started, seemingly remembering who she was talking to, and ducked her head. “I’m sorry. Of course you know.” She looked back at him. “But then you understand why I can’t.” She sobbed again. “I can’t betray her, Tsuna, or I’ll be ruined! She’ll tell all my secrets: The hacking alone… I won’t get into any University ever!”

Tsuna sighed as she started sobbing again. “You said she’d send people after you?”
Ayako looked at him, her eyes brightening for a second. “Yes! Yes, she will!” she blinked and started sobbing again. “She… She has contacts with people. Very bad people.”

“Gangs?” He asked.

She shook her head. “Worse. Way worse.” She leaned forward. “I think she has contacts on the Yakuza.”

He arched an eyebrow. “Really? Do you know who?”

She shook her head. “No. But, you understand right? Why I can’t do it.”

Tsuna looked at her, and then back down. “I… I’m sorry but… I need you to get those records straightened up. But I know people, too.” He took her hand in his. “If Riku starts harassing you, I’ll help you.”

“You?” she laughed, taking her hand back. “And what do you think you can do? You’re nothing, I am not going to risk my life for you”

He sighed. “Fine. I see you have made your choice.” He stood up and bowed to her. “Good bye.”

He walked away, ignoring her sobs. Once he was a good distance away, he took out his phone.

“Yea?” Came the voice of Hana.

“It’s me. Tell your mom to go ahead with the filling.”

She huffed, and Tsuna could feel the eyeroll. “You went to talk to her, didn’t you? I told you it was going to be useless.”

“I had to try.” He stopped and looked out a window. “I knew she was wasn’t going to change her mind. But I had to give her an easy out, one last chance. Now, I can proceed knowing I did everything on my power to stop it.”

She sighed. “You and your conscience. It should be done by the end of the day.”

He smiled. “You are the best, Hana-chan”

“You only like me for my contacts.” she teased. “Mom expects you to drop by the office sometime next week to make up for this”

“Oh course.”

“Since you are done, get your ass back here. Class is about to start.”

Tsuna chuckled. “Yes Ma’am”

He clicked his phone shut and put it back on his pocket, starting to make his way back up to the top floors.

He felt someone fall in step with him. “That was rude, Tsunayoshi.”

He smiled up at the delinquent. “I’m sorry Tetsu, but I needed to lose you if I wanted to find Ayako on time.”

Kusakabe huffed. “You know Haru does not like you going alone. At the very least you could have
taken Takeshi with you.” He scolded.

Tsuna smiled “I know, but…” He looked down. “I didn’t want to spook her in case she had a change of heart. I fear Takeshi wouldn’t have let her.”

Tetsuya crooked his head before grimacing. “Yeah, I can see that.” He frowned. “But still, you should not have gone alone. We get antsy”

Tsuna sighed, closed his eyes, and counted backwards from ten. “Guys, I love you but a guy needs his space. You are suffocating me.”

Tetsuya kept quiet for a moment before saying gently. “I’m sorry. But we are scared. If it bothers it so much, we should hold a meeting.”

Tsuna groaned. “Reborn is going to know.”

Tetsuya put a hand on his shoulder. “He’s gonna know either way. I think… We are going against the best, Tsunayoshi. There’s only so much we can do before someone slips and shows our collective hand. But if Reborn had something to concentrate instead…”

Tsuna exhaled sharply. “So we give him a decoy?”

“He already found the Vongola safehouses.” Said Tetsuya instead. “It’s not a stretch to think he had already met with the informants. Sooner or later, he is going to start putting it all together. But if we give him something to chew on instead of following that trail.-”

“Then we can decide where those facts point to” finished Tsuna. He shook his head. “But then we’ll need the others.” his shoulders slumped. “I don’t - I don’t want to get them in more danger. Reborn will not react well.”

Tetsuya rubbed his back in a comforting gesture. “It’s for the best. We shall talk more on the meeting, yeah?”

Tsuna sighed. “Yeah. Ok.”
Chapter 7: Fausse Piste

“Shoichi, explain to me why you are digging through my underwear drawer.”

Shoichi jumped, hitting his head on the frame of the dresser.

“Ah, Tsuna!” Said Spanner, poking his head through the window. “You came home earlier than expected.”

Tsuna paused. “Did you skip class to do… Whatever you are doing?” He asked, plopping his bag on top of his bed before letting himself fall face first on his pillow. Tetsuya slipped in the room and nodded to both boys.

“Well, not really.” Said Shoichi, still rubbing his head. “We turned a project early and convinced sensei to give us the time to work on a personal project.”

“And what’s this ‘personal project’ about?” Asked Tsuna, turning his head to the side to be intelligible.

“We are planting bugs on your house!” Said Spanner, entering the room and unstrapping from the harness.

Shoichi huffed and rolled his eyes. “Technically yes, but we are more concerned with putting up some cameras around the perimeter.”
Tsuna groaned and turned to Tetsuya, who had his eyebrows up to his hairline. “See? This is the kind of stuff I was talking about.” He turned to Shoichi. “That will not be necessary.”

“It’s completely necessary.” Retorted Shoichi “We need to make sure you are safe!”

Tsuna looked at Tetsuya, frowning, and pointed accusingly at Shoichi. Tetsuya smiled sheepishly. “Yeah, I see what you mean.” He turned at the other two boys and said. “Are you free this afternoon? We need to host a meeting about security.”

“We are.” Said Shoichi, smiling. “Shall we tell the rest?”

“Our group knows and are heading here as soon as they finish their school duties, and Hana already told Haru.”

“Were you planning on leaving us out?!” Asked Spanner, dramatically clutching at his heart. He put a hand to his forehead. “Oh, Tsuna, I am hurt! How could you be so heartless!”

Tsuna lazily flung one of his pillows at him. “Piss off.”

Spanner caught the pillow and threw it back. “Never.”

“Tsu-kun!” Nana said, knocking on the door as she came in. “What are you doing at home so early? Ah, Tetsu-chan, hello!”

“Hello, Sawada-san” Said Tetsuya. “We are going to have a meeting here today. Hope we aren’t imposing.”

“Ah, I see.” She smiled. “Is everyone coming, or just the Namicrew?”

“Just the Namicrew.”

She hummed. “I’ll start preparing something then. I think I have some miso soup still. Oh, and Tsuna, the people from Tokyo called, it’s about the crew at Gintsugi.”
Tsuna groaned. “Really? Right now?” He facepalmed. “Can’t you take care of that?”

Nana smiled brightly. “Nope, they asked for you specifically.” she said, and trotted down the stairs humming a little ditty.

Tsuna let himself fall on the bed again. “Great.” he said in deadpan.

Shoichi sat besides him, gently carding his hand through his hair. “It’s not so bad.”

Tsuna glared at him.

They spent the time idly chattering, waiting for the rest of the group to get home. The first one to arrive was Takeshi, and so they ended up roped on a baseball video game, two on two. Slowly the others trickled in, first the Sasagawa siblings, then Hana, then Hibari.

Only when Haru closed the door behind her, did the atmosphere change.

“All right, what are we here for?” Asked Haru without any of her usual cheer. She swept the group with a calculating gaze, and finally let it rest on Tsunayoshi. “I assume it has to do with your retinue.”

“Yes.” Tsuna said, staring straight at her. “I want them off me.”

“No” Said Haru immediately, frowning. “Why the hell would you ask me that?”

Tsuna gulped. “I am… overwhelmed. Smothered, is a best word for what I am feeling.” He sighed, slumping. “I just… I can’t do this anymore!” He said, hitting the floor in frustration. The rest jumped. Most of them exchanged alarmed glances, except for Hibari, who frowned, and Haru, who hadn’t even blinked. “I haven’t been able to practice for months, haven’t been able to take a walk without someone getting on my case, haven’t been able to go to the bathroom without someone looking over my shoulder and that just… I can’t anymore.” He took a breath and continued. “Look, I understand with me needing some protection, but I can’t do this all the time.”
“Problem is you don’t need ‘some’ protection, Tsunayoshi, you need all the protection. You are living with a HITMAN that has a vested interest in learning each and every one of your dirty little secrets.” She said. “Besides, you were the one on insisting on our first line of defense to be ‘smoke and mirrors’, which means not doing anything that deviates from their expectations.”

“I know!” he growled, before taking a deep breath. “I know. But. Plans change.” He took a breath. “Tetsuya said he already has found the safehouses. By this time, he has probably talked to Vongola’s informants and knows about the information blackout.”

“So it’s useless?” She asked, the only sign of her distress was the slight upwards inflexion of her voice.

Tsuna smirked and Haru tensed. “Not really. Kyoya has a plan.”

She sighed. “Which means he beat you around until you agreed.”

“Oi.” Kyoya frowned. “I’m perfectly capable of talking the Cub into my plans.”

Haru arched an eyebrow at him, incredulous, but turned back to Tsuna and crossed her arms. “All right. Convince me.”

Tsuna took a breath. “So, the original plan was to keep Reborn ignorant, right?” He waited until they nodded before continuing. “Well, Kyoya proposed we maintain him selectively ignorant. He probably is not going to keep swallowing the story that I am a completely normal middle schooler, not after what Riku pulled.” he raised a finger. “But, if we take the reins, we can let him, ah, ‘discover’ the least incriminating things. It would buy us some time.”

Haru closed her eyes, mulling it. She nodded. “Yeah, all right. That’d work for a while.” she opened her eyes and pinned him. “And after?”

“We can see how he deals and play it from there. If he stops being an asshole, we may be able to actually talk to him. If not…”

“We’ll have to take him out.”
Tsuna nodded.

Haru sighed. “If we do this, there will be no going back.”

“I know, but there is no going back now that Reborn’s here either. We knew we will have to deal with Vongola sometime.”

She nodded. “I understand that.” she said, before lifting her chin stubbornly. “That still doesn’t convince me to call the bodyguards off.”

Tsuna growled. “Look, just…. Can we limit them to the school? And Kyoko-chan and Onii-san can walk me to my house.”

“And if you need to go out for any reason?”

“I can take care of a couple punks myself.” Haru glared at him. Tsuna glared back but amended. “And if I need to go further than a couple blocks I’ll call one of you guys.”

She nodded. “Morning runs are always with one of us, and you are always with us at school.” She bit her lip, thinking hard. “What if you want to go somewhere else after class?”

“Takeshi, Kyoko or Gokudera could go with me.”

“No. You are going nowhere with the Smoking Bomb alone.” Tsuna opened his mouth to argue but Haru cut him out. “I don’t care how loyal he seems, he came here under Reborn’s orders, and is and admitted associate of the Vongola. He’s a liability, and nothing short of him dying for you will make me budge.”


“And you’ll send a mass text. Whoever is closest, drops everything and goes to you.”

“Wha-No!” Tsuna leaned forward. “You can’t do that!”
“We can and we will. It’s too risky to leave you with only one escort, so two will be the minimum.”

“But you-”

“We can handle ourselves, Tsunayoshi.” she patted his hand. “Don’t worry, we aren’t going to stop our lives for you.”

“Well it damn well looks like it.” He grumbled.

Haru rolled her eyes. “Please, have some faith on us.”

He took a deep breath and nodded. “All right.” He opened his eyes. “Now, concerning Reborn. What do we want him to know? Definitely nothing about Kyoto or the cafes, I assume.”

Shoichi scoffed. “That will get us all shot.”

Tsuna nodded. “So, blackmail?”

Shoichi nodded. Hana frowned. “Not all of them, though. Just the street-level stuff.”

“Oh! And the rackets could be revealed, too.” Said Kyoko. Seeing as everyone was confused, she continued. “Would make a neat explanation for all the money and connections we have.”

Tsuna cocked his head, considering. “...Yeah, that’d be good. We should steer clear of the gambling and the hotels, though.”

“So which ones are we giving up?”

Shoichi tapped his phone and closed his eyes for a moment. “Katamachi-shi, Tsunan-machi, and Nakagouma are pretty low level and well-known, and wouldn’t matter a lot if we lost them, but Misato-shi and Saitama are higher-yielding. We should pick one OR the other.”
Tsuna looked down and thought. “Misato-shi and Saitama.” he couldn’t help a smirk. “They’re bigger, he’ll go mad running around trying to figure them out.”

Shoichi nodded and tapped his phone. “Well then. So, last question: are we proceeding as normal?”

“Oh hell yes.” Tsuna exhaled.

Haru huffed. “I’m going to be run ragged” She grumbled under her breath.

Tsuna yelped and jumped back from his locker, letting the contents spill.

Yamamoto leaned over and whistled, his eyebrows hiking up. "My Tsuna, you certainly are popular lately."

Tsuna didn't bother to answer, picking up one of the love notes - an obnoxiously bright pink thing cut in the shape of a heart with white frills.- and opened it, ignoring the murmurs that had sprung up around him.

"My dear Tsuna:

I love you.

It has taken me two months to come to that conclusion, I am so sorry for being such a coward, will you ever forgive me?

I wasn't sure what I was feeling, but after the fight with Mochida, I was able to realize my true feelings for you.

I will be waiting for you under the Mapple tree near the eastern side of school.
Tsuna huffed and crumpled the thing into a ball. "Ugh, what a bunch of bullshit." He said, looking in distaste at the small pile of paper at his feet. He turned to Gokudera. "Mind helping me clean this up?"

"Of course not, Sawada-sama." He said.

Tsuna sighed and dug around his backpack for a plastic bag. He gave it to Gokudera to keep open, as he scooped the cards into it. Soon, there wasn't anything on the floor, and the bag was full to bursting.

"Thank you" Tsuna said.

"So I take you aren't going to be answering anyone?" Asked Kyoko, falling easily in step behind the boys, Hana to her right and sending murderous looks to people she deemed to be staring too long.

"Of course not." Tsuna said, incredulous. "Why would I do that?"

"Let them down?" She asked. "They won’t give up easily, it has barely been a month."

Tsuna froze for a second. "...You mean they will not stop?" He squeaked out

She shrugged, gently pushing him so he continued walking. " Why would they? I think it would be better to make it clear that you are not interested."

"B-b-but I HAVE!" he wailed.

Hana sighed "They’re be waiting around to change your mind." she crossed her arms. “If I remember, the excuse is that you aren’t interested ‘right now’” She stuck out her hands to emphasize the point. “That right now is the part they are banking on.”
As if on cue, somebody called from before them. "Oh, Sawada-kun! Wait up!"

Tsuna had to take a moment to find the girl who called him. "Ah, hello, Suzuhara-san." he said politely.

The girl blushed, but smiled. "H-hi. Um, I have something for you." She said, rooting around the bag on her left hip.

Tsuna shot a befuddled look at Hana, who was smirking, and shrigged.

"Here you go!" She said, bowing and tending a bento. "I-I made this. For you." he blush intensified. "I hope you like it."

Tsuna looked down. "Ah. I see." Then he looked back up at her, making sure to keep eye contact. "I appreciate the thought, but I cannot accept it, Suzuhara-san." She opened her mouth but he talked over her. "And I am really sorry, but my answer has not changed. I am not interested on you, nor do I think I will ever be."

"Oh." She said in a small voice, looking down.

"I am really, really sorr-" Tsuna couldn't finish, as Suzuhara turned and ran down the hallway, her sobs being low but noticeable on the almost-empty way.

Tsuna sighed, and did his best to ignore the glares of a couple of girls that were standing nearby, as well as a murmur of some students that were just walking out of a classroom. "Well, that could have gone better."

“It’s for the best, believe me” Hana said.

Gokudera tisked. "What was she expecting anyway?"

"Beats me" said Tsunayoshi, opening the door to their classroom. "I mean, Suzume-san is nice
enough, but I have never talked to her for more than five minutes. If I ever DO get in a relationship, it has to be with someone that knows, at least, that I don't like daikon all that much”

That got a chuckle from Takeshi and Hana, and a huff from Kyoko, who had gone red. Gokudera looked between them and took out a small notepad, scribbling something.

"Well, what are the plans for today?” Tsuna asked as he took his seat next to the window.

"You need to sign off taxes, I think." Said Kyoko, taking a look at her phone. "And also Shoichi wants to talk to you about some of the other locales."

Tsuna nodded. "Right, thanks for reminding me." He turned to Gokudera. "Do you have anything to do this evening?"

"No, Sawada-sama. I'm at your service."

Tsuna closed his eyes, fighting a blush. "Gokudera, seriously. Stop it with the subservience." He turned back to Takeshi. "Are you coming too?"

"Of course I am!" he said, throwing an arm over Tsuna. "Haru would have my head if I left you alone."

"Oi, Sword-freak, I'll be with the Tenth." Snarled Gokudera

Takeshi smiled. "I know"

Before Gokudera could do anything else than snarl wordlessly at him, the teacher entered the room with a concerned face. Hana and Tsuna exchanged glances, before she went back to her bench.

“Sawada, you are needed at the Principal’s office.” Said the teacher without preamble.

Tsuna smiled, stood up and bowed politely. “Of course, sensei.”
He patted Takeshi’s shoulder and brushed past Gokudera, sending a reassuring smile to Kyoko and Hana on his way out. Hibari, as expected, was waiting out of the room for him with a knife-sharp smile.

Tsuna answered with a similar smile as they made their way to the office.

The first thing that caught his attention was the wailing. As soon as they had opened the doors, Ayako’s cries smashed into them with an intensity that surprised them. Hibari’s glare managed to get her to particularly loud sobs, and even the Principal looked grateful for a second, before remembering why they were there and the look morphed in disdain. Tsuna answered with the exact same look.

“Sawada.” he said coldly. “The school received a Notice of Action this morning.” He passed him a folder. Tsuna opened made a show of looking it over. “Do you have anything to say about this?”

“... It’s truthful.” he said, putting it back on the desk. “I don’t see the problem.”

Ayako wailed. “I-I cannot have an investigation open against me!” she turned to him. “University tests are almost here! And-And I have an interview in a week! For Todai and for Kyodai! An open investigation... It will ruin everything!”

“Not to mention” cut the Principal, fixing him with a squinting glare. “How the reputation of this school would be besmirched by a police investigation against one of our brightest pupils. At the behest of the dead last, no less.” He lifts his head. “Even though the police won’t find anything, It would still look bad to have as precedent. Therefore, I am going to ask you, Sawada, to retract and issue an apology to Ayako-chan.”

Tsuna peeled his lips from his teeth. “I’m afraid that, as a law-abiding citizen, I cannot comply.” He let the Principal splutter for a bit, before continuing. “You see, sensei, I have been asking around and it seems that there is a distressing amount of errors on the system. Teachers input a number but the system another. Some of the times the grades are slightly lowered, sometimes the grades get better. A lot better. Sometimes a girl will miss a straight month of school, and get expelled. Other times, notes and warnings on a student file disappear, like allergies or punishments. Things that greatly affect our lives. As a concerned student, I decided that it would be a good idea for an impartial party to do a check on the system. Just in case.”

“The Notice explicitly stated you leveled a number of accusations towards Ayako-chan.”
“What can I say? I know Ayako-chan has SysAdmin access to the school servers. I also know that people who have been most affected by this have had contact with her. People she likes get better grades, people she doesn’t suddenly are skipping their classes and have tons of detention to do. Sure, some might be a mere coincidence, but really, what are the odds of them all changing at the same time?” He put up three fingers. “We have a motive, and we have the means. We just need the opportunity, and well…”

“You must know that we will fight this.” Said the Principal.

Tsuna laughed. “Oh, I hope you do.” he nodded at Hibari, who tapped his phone.

Immediately after that, both the Principal’s and Ayako’s phone rang. Ayako got her first, and upon seeing what was there, she burst out crying again. The Principal cautiously opened the attachment link, his eyes going wide as his face went pale. “How did you get this?” he croaked.

Tsuna put his hands on his pockets. “I like to be prepared for the worst. The first time she did this shit, I had a friend install an ID tracker and a keylog.” Tsuna bared his teeth at the mouse-like squeak Ayako made. “We have, hmm, about six months of evidence of records being changed just after her id and password were used.”

“That-That’s illegal. Not to mention against school rules!” Said the Principal, looking hopefully at Hibari.

Hibari scoffed. “What the worm is doing is also against school rules, and I only see one person doing anything about this.” He ended with a glare.

The Principal shivered and turned his attention back to the biggest threat in the room. “I can have you arrested for illegal tampering.”

Tsuna shrugged. “You can try. I must tell you though,there are three other people in possession of copies: One of them is an authorized user, and another is a police officer, both of whom have perfectly valid reasons to have installed the surveillance after the allergic reaction Matsuoka had. If you try to change the logs, they will know, and then they will have doubts of this ‘illegal tampering.’ It wouldn’t look good if the school was willing to throw… How many students? Twenty-six?” He looked up at the ceiling, frowned as he made a show of thinking, and nodded. “Yeah, about twenty-six students. How would it look to throw twenty-six students under the bus, all to protect one girl? Not to mention that then, the credibility of the administration here will be
shot, because can we really trust the reports? Maybe you manipulated their grades to make a good teacher look bad, and after Nezu…”

“Fine!” said the Principal. “Fine, fine! You’ve made your point!” He put his phone away. “What do I have to do so this does not get out of here?”

Tsuna smiled. “As of now, nothing, but there are things that you can do to mitigate the impact on the school.” he held up a finger. “First of all, she stops being SysAdmin and Class President.; and she will be barred from having any position of power in the school.”

“Done.” The Principal said over her spluttering.

“Second, you are going to fix the grades of all the students she fucked up, compensate all those students who had accidents due to her tampering, AND you will issue an apology taking personal responsibility about the fuckup to the parents. I don’t care what excuse you come up with, as long as you make clear it was your idea, got it?

“Yes.”

“And finally, you are to rescind your letter of recommendation to the Universities; and when they ask why, you will explain that until recently, you were unaware of her manipulating the records, and you can’t in good conscience, recommend a person like that.”

“What!” Ayako squaked. “You… That’s just plain spiteful!”

“Oh please come off it.” he said, glancing at her. “You and I know those letters are half-truths at best and bald-faced lies at worst. Besides, it will look better for him to cooperate with the authorities.”

The man startled. “So you are not retracting the claims?”

“Oh, I will be doing that after a couple days, just long enough for the story to get some notoriety but not enough for the police to get any damning evidence. Just enough to get a record going”
Ayako burst out crying again at that, but the principal relaxed. “Is that all?”

Tsuna scoffed. “For now. But believe me, if I ever get wind of this happening again; I will not hold back then.” He scowled and glared at the man. “Just to be clear, I’m doing this because it’s an agreement that fits me. You despise me, and the sentiment is mutual. If any complications arise from this, I will not help you unless it benefits me, and if you try to retaliate, I will destroy you and everything this school stands for. Are we clear?”

The man huffed. “Clear.”

“Good.” Tsuna nodded. “Glad we sorted this out.” he bowed. “Now excuse me, but I must return to class. Some of us actually have to put effort on our grades.” He said loud enough to be heard by Ayako, and left.

Haru quickly took off her skirt and stuffed it into her backpack, leaving her only in her green shorts; before taking off her yellow sweater and tying it on her hips so she was only wearing her white Midori shirt. She took the green ribbon off and shoved it on her pockets, before putting on a grey baseball cap and sunglasses. A quick look on the mirror confirmed she looked decently different, and she added the last touch as she walked out of the bathroom, using a couple of hairclips to take her bangs out of her face.

Once out she took a took a quick look around. Midori was a ways away in front of her, so Haru hurried up behind her, just enough to not miss her in the crowds of the shopping district. It was easy, as far as tailing in a crowd was easy, and she only had to change clothes two more times before Midori entered old arcade building.

Haru frowned and went in behind her. She bought a couple thousand yen worth of tokens, and pretended to be absorbed in a fighting game. Midori flitted around the arcade, playing some crane games and some shooting games, before being approached by a bald guy that screamed Yakuza. She turned and said something, the guys said something back, and she sniffed at him, but followed. Haru kept an eye of them as they walked towards the back, and just as they left her field of vision, she followed them. It was harder to follow here, with so many people packed in a too small space, but she managed to catch a glimpse of them as they walked through a door. Making sure no-one was paying attention to her, she followed.

She reached the door they disappeared through, and peeked. It seemed to be a Pachinko den, which was not unsurprising. She quietly opened the door and slid inside, gagging at the smell of smoke and liquor, making a mental note to tell Tsunayoshi about this.
She walked through the perimeter, trying to make herself as small as possible. The sound was deafening, between the loud music blasting from the speakers, the sound of the machines, and the jeers of the people playing. Aside from the pachinko machines, she also spied some slot machines, and a couple of card tables.

Eventually, after a couple of close calls with some drunks and failing to see Midori anywhere, she made her way to the only other door on the room, way into the back by the slot machines. It was shut tight, but her switchblade made quick work of it, and she slid in, letting the door fall shut and muting the sound from the floor. The corridor it opened to was dark and empty, and only had three doors: One was obviously a closet or storage area, and one was a door to the outside.

The third door, the one on her right, had light coming out from the bottom, as well as some muffled voices. She could make one being Midori’s and another was a man’s.

Haru quickly jammed the door behind her so it would take some time to open, and checked the door in front of her, smiling when it opened without a problem, sunlight streaming through. She left it semi-open as an exit route, and then she put her ear to the bottom of the other door and waited.

“--ation to the Mayor, do you? I mean how incompetent can you be?” Said Midori, making Haru flinch.

“Oi, watch yer mouth, brat.” Said a brasher, deeper voice. “Remind ya yer ‘ere on ma boss good graces.”

Midori huffed. “Please, like you could touch a hair on my head without Riku’s father tearing your head off. You are struggling with a bunch of high schoolers, after all.”

It was the man’s turn to scoff.”I don ‘spect ya ta understand tha strategy, lil’ girly, but we need time and money and people to get a good hit in.”

“Even more? The hell you are doing?” there was a thump and a table clattered. “Just how much do you intend to bleed us? You’ve had five hundred thousands and two months to take care of them and you are asking MORE!!?”

“Pipe down, brat!!” growled the man. “This’ more complicated tha’ sum schoolyard fight, ya
hear? We need ta plan this carefully so the pigs don’ bust our guys.”

“Tch, just do it and I’ll pay bail later.”

“It ain’t ‘bout no bail! If our guys get pinched then we migt get to the slama’! The Clan’s already short-haded since tha damn woman made a push for reform, an’ the Oyabun’s pissed since we lost da chiks an’ da birds.”

“Ew! Spare me the details! Are you or are you not going to trash the damn place this week or not?”

“Depends, are we gonna ‘ave copper or na?”

She groaned, and then there was a rummaging sound. There was a moment of silence before Midori started talking again.

“Here, this should be enough, if your thick head can manage it right and not waste it all in sluts”

He whistled. “Hoooooooly shitto. Yeh, this might be enough to cover all the places.”

“Places? Plural?” she squaked. “What the hell are you talking about? Is only ONE fucking coffee shop!”

He clicked his tongue. “I told ye I didn’ ‘spect ya to understand, but we need a distraction from da pigs. Our guys will hit tha coffeee shop, but two more groups are gon’ go to Nakagouma and hit up a couple o’ popular hotels, draw the cops there with sum fire befo’ the hit, since we can’t rely on someone to keep their end o’ the deal”

Midor sighed. “How many times do I have to tell you? I’ll pay for anything you need.”

“I’s not about the money, brat! Wee need reasurances that the pigs won’t come after us, and so far all our guys are hot”

“Well is not like we have gotten any results yet, have we? You promised this was going to be done
“in a couple days, we are three months deep!”

“And half da Clan is behind bars! We are losin’ footing on this goddamn town and we are the laufin’ stock of the Web!”

“Like that is anything new.”

The was a flat hit and a high-pitched yelp. “Watch yer mouth, brat, my fuse’s runnin short and Imma not be takin any lip”

“I-If you hurt me, I’ll tell Riku.”

The man growled. There was a moment of tense silence, before they started talking again.

“Go. Tell yer boss the problem’s gonna be take’ care of by tomorrow.”

“Ok. And the doctors?”

“Ah, ya, I though’ I was forgetting sumthin. The silence gonna cost a pretty penny, but we found a contact in Korea who can get us tha pills.”

“Urgh, fine, but be quick. I’ve managed to pass it off as weight gain but I’m going to start showing at this rate.”

Haru’s mouth dropped. She didn’t bother to listen to anything else, quickly getting up and running out of the building, taking a second to make sure she closed the door behind her.

She dug out her phone as she walked to the bus stop, the call connecting just as she got on the bus.

“Tsuna, is me.” she hissed ”You need to get people to Nakagouma’s hotels, there’s going to be a fire.”

“When?”
“If I had to guess, tonight.”

“Where are you?”

“Safe”

“Haru.”

“I’m fine!” she said through clenched teeth. “I’m on my way home, and I’m not being followed.” She said, looking over her shoulder. Then she lowered her voice. “And Tsuna, Midori. She’s pregnant.”

“What?” he said sharply. “Since when?”

“I don’t know, I’ll check her phone logs for anything, but long enough she fears to start showing.”

“Couple months, then.” He exhaled sharply. Haru could picture him, wound up with his eyes closed, thinking. “All right. Get home, call me when you get there, and then we’ll see what can we do.”

“Yes sir.”

She hung up.

“Okay guys, change of plans.” Tsuna said calmly, interrupting Hana in the middle of an explanation. “We need to get to Nakagouma now”

“What did Haru say?” Asked Hana, shoving her books into her backpack. Takeshi and the rest followed through.
“Arson in Nakagouma, before tomorrow.” He said, grabbing a jacket.

“Shit.” Hana exchanged worried looks with Takeshi, who had gone stone-faced. Shoichi grabbed his phone and started dialing, and Spanner had barely stopped typing, the only sign that he had heard the news was a deep frown on his face.

“Why the hurry, Dame-Tsuna?”

Tsuna hung his head, Takeshi tensed, and both Kyoko and Hana flinched. Reborn hit the table they were leaving with a thump, looking up at them with calculated interest.

“Well? What’s so important you have to stop a study session to rush to a slum.”

“I’ll fill you in on the way there.” Tsuna said, pinching his nose as he walked out. The rest of his friends soon followed, Hana and Kyoko pulling up cell phones themselves. Reborn squinted, weighing the benefits of shooting at Tsunayoshi and get his answers now or following, and decided that there was no point on antagonizing them any more than necessary.

With a frustrated sigh (Reborn had forgotten how annoying people with spines could be), he followed the kids down.

The seven kids were out in front of the house, all of them on their phones either texting or talking, except for Gokudera, who was apparently the designated lookout if the way he was peering off the street was any indication.

It took barely five minutes to have a couple of cars and a van roll around and stop in front of them.

“Cub” Said Kyoya as he opened the door, letting the kids climb inside it. Tsunayoshi took his place besides him on the front seat, while the girls and Spanner took the back, and Spanner and Gokudera took the middle. The last ones were Shoichi, who sat down besides Tsunayoshi in the front, and Reborn, who jumped and settled in Gokudera’s lap.

Gokudera waited until Tsunayoshi finished rattling some kind of code to the cellphone and timidly turned to him. “Uh, excuse me Sawada-sama, but… Slum?”
Tsuna shrugged his shoulders. “I mean… Sorta? Nakagouma is an old neighborhood, and there are some pretty shady things going on there, but is mostly just old and low-income.”

“It also had the highest crime rate of all Namimori until about four years ago, and it also used to be where the Momokyoakai used to be based on. Word on the street is that it was, and still is, a hotbed for drug dealers and prostitutes.”

“How do you even know all this?” Said Tsuna, annoyed.

Reborn smirked. “I’m the best hitman in the world, Dame-Tsuna.”

Tsuna huffed and turned his attention back to Gokudera. “Point is, the whole neighborhood is old, mostly made of wood, and really cramped. If anything is set on fire there, it will spread. Fast. Everywhere. We have to do our best to stop it even before it starts.”

“And you have some kind of interest in it.”

Tsuna looked at him oddy. “Yes, Reborn. They are citizens of Namimori, of course I am interested in keeping them safe.” He answered as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“Hm, taking care of your vassals.” He smirked. “Like a true Mafia Boss.”

Tsuna arched an eyebrow but ignored the comment. “Anyway, Haru is going to be going to her home and staying put to not draw any attention to her. What we want to accomplish at Nakagouma is to tell everyone, and I mean EVERYONE there, to keep their eyes peeled for suspicious people. Ideally, we would also put in place some volunteer firefighters and some quick water access, but it’s already after two, so I don’t think we’d be able to.” Tsuna said.

Gokudera looked around the street, and had to admit to himself that, for a so-called slum, it wasn’t too bad.

The convoy containing all the Disciplinary Comitee members had driven for a good half-hour, and by the end of the trip, the comforting green of Namimory had slowly but surely bled out, giving
way to more muted greys and browns. The houses, too, gave way to buildings, which became more and more run down the higher they went into the mountain.

Eventually, the car had came to a stop to what Gokudera thought was the Main Street. It certainly seemed so, with the small park, the plaza, and a couple of official looking buildings (which unfortunately were not police or fire stations.)

Still, the surroundings were not exactly appealing. The park had sparse, yellow, straw-like grass patches were it was not outright dry cracked soil, and the few trees there were brown and dry-looking, with poor leaves. Stay bits of trash were being dragged by the breeze, accumulating on the drains near the small road. The buildings matched the environment, most of them with cracked paint falling down their facades, windows and some doors being barred by old iron bars that were rusted over; and those were interspersed with older-looking stores and even some small wooden houses.

People were milling around, ostensibly not paying any attention to them, but Gokudera was trained enough that he could spot more than a few lookouts, kids looking suspiciously at them, who upon catching sight of Tsuna-sama ran away, to inform their superiors, if Gokudera had to guess. There were also a decent number of “bums”, drinking alcohol and talking animatedly, who were a little too interested on their group.

They barely had to wait a few seconds before a woman in a rich purple and blue Kimono came walking down the street, her face painted completely white except for the bloody red of her lips and the dramatic deep blue eyeshadow she wore. Four men were walking beside her, all of them muscular and thug-looking, dressed in blue yukatas even though it was late Autumn.

“Sawada-san. It has been a while since you have visited us.” Said the woman, standing in front of Tsunayoshi and bowing deeply. “Is it good or bad fortune that you are here today?”

Tsunayoshi smiled back. “Bad fortune, I am afraid.”

The woman nodded. “We shall speak in a more secluded place then.”

“There is not time for that, unfortunately. Aimi-san, I need you to mobilize every one of your subordinates. The Momokyokai intend to set two popular Nakagouma hotels on fire.”

The woman went unnaturally still. “Are they, hm?” She snapped open her fan and started fanning
herself. Two of the men that accompanied her turned around and ran back the way they came. “That would explain the outsiders we have been seeing lately.” she sighed sadly. “And here I had hoped for some more business…”

Tsunayoshi shrugged. “Sorry to be the bearer of bad news”

“No need to apologize.” she said sedately. “So, what is the plan?”

They spent the rest of the evening and worked well into the night setting up fire watches, rapid response water deliveries and in general organizing the community to keep safe. This was no small feat, as Nakagouma was a collection of fifteen densely populated blocks on the side of a mountain, forty minutes away from the closest fire station. More importantly, it was in the opposite side of Namimori from where the coffee shop was located.

The help of Mirai-san (who Gokudera suspected was either an underboss of Sawada-sama or a very friendly associate) was an absolute necessity, as she had the most manpower and was a well-respected figure amongst the community. They helped move people to safer areas, and convinced quite a lot of people to volunteer for the fire brigades.

And then, they waited.

And waited

And waited.

But their wait paid off.

It was nearing ten at night when the cars climbed up the mountain side. They were not subtle, either: Black, polished cars that had been modified to have stronger motors, and subsequently, were quite a lot noisier than usual. Gokudera clicked his tongue at such amateur display of ‘wealth’

As instructed, the cars were allowed to pass unimpeded, and as soon as they passed, Gokudera radioed them in and the direction they were going.
“Copy that” Said Sawada-sama from the other end. “Keshi, can you keep an eye on them? They are most likely going to the Karasu”

“Sure thing!” He answered.

“Excellent. Everyone, see you there.”

Gokudera cut the signal and the DC member started driving. After talking it over with the locals, Mirai-san had determined that the two most likely targets were either the Karasu, which was a high-class hotel just in Between of Nakagouma and Namimori proper; or the Bankokuyuza, which was a Love Hotel. Either of them catching fire would summon all available firetrucks, if only to suppress the fire and make sure it didn’t spread to the surrounding area.

They had posted their people on both of those, as well as on the access of the major routes and the only highway.

It was ten minutes before they reached the hotel, and by then, it seemed the team there had it well on hand. The front desk was a disaster, true, and it smelled strongly of gasoline, but nobody seemed to be hurt, and the trouble makers were all tidily tied up and resting face down on the floor, some of them unconscious.

“Gokudera! Hello!” Takeshi said, grinning and waving, standing close to his delegation of DC members. “You guys are late! Sorry, but I couldn’t save any of them for you.”

“Is fine.” He grunted between clenched teeth.

The mission, remember the mission. They had accomplished the mission so it didn’t matter the baseball freak was taunting him.

“Where is Sawada-sama?”

“Tsu-chan is talking with a couple people from the hotel, and making sure the coffee shop is safe. Ah! Here he comes!”
“Gokudera!” Said Tsuna, trotting up to them, Reborn close behind him.

“Sawada-sama! Are you okay?”

He nodded, smiling. “Yeah, by the time I got here Keshi had already taken care of them all.”

“I am a very efficient person!” He agreed cheerily, putting his hands behind his head. He turned to the men on the floor. “What do you want to do with these, Tsuna?”

“We are going to interrogate them.” Said Reborn.

“No can do. Kyoko-chan already called the police, if we don’t turn them in, there are going to be questions.”

Reborn slowly turned to Tsunayoshi. “You call the police?” he said, echoing the disbelief Gokudera felt.

Tsunayoshi shrugged. “Is the right way to go about things. However…” He swept the group. “There, that one. With the vest. Takeshi, can you grab him and confirm if he has a Peach Tattoo?”

Takeshi blinked twice and nodded, bouncing to the man. He turned him off for a bit, and divested him from his shirt and vest. “Ah, here it is!” He said triumphantly.

Tsuna frowned and nodded. “I see.” he turned to Reborn then, “Would it be acceptable for us to take just him?”

Reborn arched an eyebrow. “You think he is valuable?”

Tsuna nodded. “Only certain members of the Momokyokai are allowed to have Peach tattoos. If he has one, he is at least a Captain.”

Reborn nodded. “Very well, then. Give the rest of the trash to the police.”
From then, it was mere formalities. The police arrived, but they didn’t have to give testimony. Just a couple of superficial questions that were mostly done for the sake of clarity, and then they took the rest of the mooks away.

The captain was being safely driven to one of the DC safehouses.

By the time everything was said and done, they were all exhausted. The way back was a blur for him, until they reached the Sawada house. Then, he was changed into some comfortable pajamas, and set to sleep.

Tsunayoshi was the first one to wake up.

He blinked the sleep off his eyes and slowly recovered his arm from Shoichi, who was happily nuzzling his shoulder. Slowly and quietly to not bother him or Takeshi, he sat up and looked around. Gokudera was sleeping at the bottom of his bed, and Spanner was slumped over his desk, his laptop still on and casting a bluish glare on him.

“Morning, Dame-Tsuna.”

“Good morning, Reborn.” Tsuna said softly with a yawn, slowly climbing out of bed. “Where are the girls?”

“Mama set them up on the other bedroom.” Said the baby, following Tsuna out of his room and down the stairs..

“Good Morning, Tsu-kun!” Said Nana from the stove. She turned the heat down and let the eggs sizzle, as she went to hug his son.

“Morning mama.” He said, kissing her on the cheek. “Morning Hibari-san, Tetsu. Please tell me you didn’t stay up all night”
Tetsuya smiled. “We took shifts.” he said, laughing at the groan Tsuna made.

“Come here and eat, Cub.” Snapped the prefect, who was devouring a western-style breakfast heavy on the protein. “And after you are done, I expect you to get presentable for Namichuu.”

“Yes, Kyoya.” Said Tsunayoshi, sitting down and letting Nana put another heavy plate of breakfast in front of him.

Slowly, one by one the children woke up and came down, and soon the house was brimming with conversation and laughter. Nana beamed at all the noise and served them breakfast, while they took turns preparing for the school day.

They left in groups, first Kyoya and Kusakabe, since the prefect had reached his crowd tolerance limit and left the house as soon as he finished his breakfast, then Shoichi and Spanner, to catch the bus to their school.

The last ones to leave were the Namimori students.

“So, Dame-Tsuna.” Started Reborn innocently. “You did well yesterday.”

“Really?” Said Tsunayoshi flatly, looking at the baby with a raised eyebrow.

“I could almost say it was impressive. Truly what a Mafia Boss would do.”

“You have been comparing me to a Mafia Boss for a while.” Pointed Tsunayoshi. “What are you trying to do, Reborn?”

“Me? Nothing!” He said, innocent as you can be. “I’m just pointing out you are acting quite well: Protecting the people on your territory, trying to make their lives safe…”

“I’m going to stop you right there, because I have an inkling of where this is headed.” Tsuna said, interrupting Reborn and consequently dodging a bullet. “No matter how they started, the Mafia is
not into protecting people any more. They may have started that way, but right now they are barely anything more than a bunch of criminals. So don’t try the sympathy route, it doesn’t work.”

Reborn clucked his mouth. “You are annoying, Dame-Tsuna.”

“Thanks!” Said the boy with a smile.

“Anyway, you have barely dealt with one of your targets, and now you are down to only three weeks.” he pointed a gun at him. “Better work faster, Dame-Student”

“Patience, Reborn.” Said Tsuna. “Besides, there is something bigger at work here.”


Tsuna shook his head, but it was Hana who answered. “Not only the Momokyokai, but the fact that they are working with Riku at all. They want something, and something that’s so precious to them that is worth bowing to the whims of a bratty highschooler for.”

Reborn looked at her. “Ah. So you want to find what they are doing first.”

“Yeah.”

The hitman mused this new information. “It’s not a bad plan.” he said at the end. “But remember that you still have to take care of them, AND become class representative.”

Tsuna startled “Shit! I had forgotten about that!”

“Good thing I didn’t. Here, take this.” Kyoko said, digging a sheet of paper from her bag. “I took the liberty to make a small speech for you.”

Tsuna started skimming the paper and raised an eyebrow. “Is our whole strategy to get me elected Representative to bribe the class with a Ryokan visit?” He asked with humor.
“It will work!” Defended Kyoko immediately. ‘The last two visits have been cancelled due to lack of funds, and if we pull this off, nothing anyone offers is going to come close.”

Tsuna laughed. “I think we will need some more than that, but I trust you, Kyo-chan. If nothing else it’s a good place to start”

Kyoko beamed.

Tsuna walked into the open field, made sure there was nobody near, both with his eyes and with his Intuition, and when he was satisfied, he dialed the number.

“Hello?” Came a deep, masculine voice from the other end of the phone.

“Hey, It's me. Sorry I couldn't call earlier, but I have been dealing with some problems.”

“It’s fine.”

“So, what’s about this problem with the crew?” Tsuna asked.

The man at the other end sighed. “It’s not with the crew exactly but… We have had some concerning reports. About people going missing.”

“Missing?” Tsuna gripped the phone harder. “Missing how? When?”

“We didn’t notice at first” the man said “They were mostly homeless, so we thought they had just gotten their stuff and left. But then kids started going missing too.”

“And?” Tsuna snapped impatiently.

“A couple weeks ago, one of our girls got attacked. They didn’t harm her much, but they were
trying to restrain her. She got dosed with chloroform, so she can’t remember a lot.”

“And you didn’t tell me before because?...”

“I thought it was a one-off thing, but I have been keeping an eye out and an ear to the floor since then. Sawada-san, whoever is doing this is very organized and has a lot of resources. More children have gone missing, and nobody can find them. They have been hitting the neighboring towns. And they are moving on your direction.”

Tsuna sucked a breath. “I see. Keep the crew safe, and I’ll take care of this.”

“Yes Boss..”

Chapter End Notes

So! I am officially Not Dead.

Sorry for the long wait, but this year had kicked me on the balls, to the point where losing my job was the last of my problems, and was at the tender mercies of the United States Immigration Department.

Not Fun.

But! most of it has been solved. Mostly. I just need to go to a couple more interviews and everything should be fine.

So I can stop worrying about my livelyhood, and concentrate on the REALLY important things in life: Fanfic!
Les Profondeurs Cachées

Chapter Summary

Tsunayoshi and his friends do things they’d rather not

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 8: Hidden Depths

“We have one more business before class starts.” Said the teacher, looking over the thirty two faces
to pupils. “Since Ayako-chan has stepped down” she continued. “We need to select a new Class
Representative. Is there anyone interested?”

There was a swift murmur before two hands went up.

“Ah, I see. Very well, the runners will be Kazumi-san and Sasagawa-san-”

“Excuse me sensei.” Said Kyoko, interrupting the woman and standing up. “But I am not going to
run for Class rep myself.”

She smiled angelically. “Instead, I’d like to nominate Sawada-Kun for the position.”

The squeak Kazumi san made was audible even over the tumult Kyoko’s announcement caused.

“Silence!” Said the teacher, and it took her a couple more minutes to get the class in order. “Ahem.
What do you have to say about this, Sawada-kun?”

“Well.” Tsuna said, standing up and looking around. “I wasn’t planning on doing anything, to be
honest.” He lied, and smiled. “But since Kyoko-chan has put her faith on me, I guess I can’t let her
down, now.” He turned to the front. “I accept the nomination!”

The room erupted in mutterings once again.

The teacher cleared her throat. “Well, this is quite… Unexpected.” She said. “I guess we will have
to hold an election for it, then.” She sighed. “Would any of you like to say some words?”

The girl flung her hand upwards. “Yes! I would like to make a speech, please!” She said.

The teacher nodded and she bounced her way to the front, and spun on her heels. She had shoulder-
length wavy hair, braided and held back by a blue hairband. Under, she had sharp, bright green
eyes and had a smile on her face.

“Hello!” She started “As some of you may know already, my name is Kazumi Tomoe. I am part of
the light music club, and unfortunately, nothing special regarding my grades. But hey! It’s not like I
ever failed math with a total zero!”

That gained her some laughter and a murderous glare from Hanna.
She smiled and continued. “I know what you are thinking: why would you vote for me? I am nothing special.” She lifted her hands palms up. “I answer you: because by being nothing special, I have had to work very hard for everything I have gotten.” She smiled brightly again. “If there is anything I am proud of, is my work ethic; and I will be happy to put it to work for us, and concretely, to get us that postponed field trip!”

She bowed to some modest applause of the class, and excited mutterings to some of the students.

Tsuna stood up and walked towards the front of the class. He took a moment to survey them, pausing on his friends, who gave him encouraging smiles, and in the case of Hana, a clear look that said "Get it over with."

He smiled, praying that it didn't look as stiff as it felt. Gods, but he hated speaking in public. "I doubt that I need any kind of introduction." he started. "Most of you know me already." He paused and took a breath. "I'm going to be blunt: I am not naive enough to believe any of you will welcome me with open arms, not after so much history between us. But, I do believe I have changed. I would like to use this chance to prove it to you.

"However, I understand that this doesn't give you any reason to vote for me yet, so" he grinned. "I would like to offer you, not just any class trip, but one to the Namimori Shiroishi Ryokan."

The room utterly exploded with screams of joy and excitement, some of the boldest kids even starting a short-lived chant for Tsuna's name.

"Is that all you got!?" Kazumi yelled from the back. "Bribing the class with an expensive trip?"

Tsuna smiled and waited until the noise level went down to where he could be heard over the din without yelling himself. "Some may call it bribery, but from my point of view, we are overdue. We have gone for three years without a trip, so I think something nice to make up for it would be nice."

"And how are you going to pay for it?" She asked haughtily.

"That is actually a good question." Said the teacher. "How are you going to pay for it, Sawada-kun? And you too, Kazumi-san?"

Tsuna put his hand to his chin. "Well, I had some ideas, but I figures that we could go with a classic, for starters. The Cafe I work for have generously offered to donate some of their goods so we can host a bake sale."

"A bake sale?" Said the teacher, while someone barked a laugh on the back.

"Well, it won't be enough, obviously, but I figured it was going to be a good starting point."

The teacher looked pensative for a moment before nodding. "That is acceptable."

"What!?" Exclaimed Kazumi. "But then - What about me?"

Tsunayoshi turned towards her. "You'd be more than welcome to help, or propose your own idea, Kazumi-san."

The girl looked around alarmed, then cleared her throat. "Right. Of course I'd be happy to help. But after this, I'd like to propose my own event before the voting starts."
"Acceptable." Said the teacher. "Now, have you thought of a date?"

Tsuna scratched his head. "This Friday, I should think."

The rest of the day passed at the same turtously slow pace as before, except with more whispered conversation, but with so many things on his mind, Tsuna barely noticed any of it. He was very touched, however, when more than half the class came to congratulate him. They were genuinely happy for him, and Tsuna felt very touched by their confidence in him.

"Sawada-Kun, Kazumi-kun, a word before you go, please."

Both children walked up to the teacher, standing in front of the desk while most of the class flowed around them like a river, eager to leave. Only a select few stayed behind, waiting for their respective friend at the back.

"While I think it commendable that you are taking initiative regarding the position" started the teacher. "I hold the final judgement on selecting the one who will become class President, with all the responsibilities it entails. So, I have decided you are going to work as co-presidents until after the election, and then I will make the final decision."

Both kids nodded mutely.

"Well, since there are no protests, here is your first assignment."

The woman passed them a stack of papers to each of them.

"Since the teachers are still rotating for this class, some paperwork has been misfiled, duplicated, or lost. I have tried to compile anything important from the last 3 years, but realistically, I alone will not be able to shift through all of this."

"So what do we do?" Asked Kazumi, eyeing one of the piles of paper like one might a savage animal.

"I'd appreciate it if you could spend some time after class working on this. Organize the papers, discard duplicates, that sort of thing."

Tsuna nodded, eyeing the other pile thoughtfully. "Should be easy enough. Just a lot of busy work." He turned to the teacher. "Do we have to start today?"

"Goodness, no." She said. "I just wanted to make you aware of this, since a lot of people overlook the day to day responsibilities of the condition. That said, I do expect you to work on this sometime this week, and have it ready by the end of next."

"Can we take it home at least?" Asked Kazumi

"I'm sorry, but no." Said the teacher, genuinely apologetic. "Some of the information might be sensitive. You'd be working on the Teacher's lounge, with me or another teacher."

"And what if we run late?"

"We have no problem staying." Said the woman grinning.
Tsunayoshi remained silent, and none of his friends reacted. Reborn frowned, not used to being ignored.

"Tsunayoshi."

"Yes?" Asked the boy, not stopping on his stride towards the school gate but turned to give him a sweet smile.

"Answer the question."

"I'm sorry, but I didn't hear it. Could you repeat it?" He said, still sweetly.

Reborn ground his teeth. Cheeky brat. "Why are you late?"

"The teacher had to go over some stuff with the candidates."

"So you have opposition, then?" Asked Reborn, and Tsuna nodded. "Good. Glad to know this won't be easy for you. And speaking of easy, when are you going to interrogate your prisoners?" Asked Reborn lightly.

"Sometime this week" Said Tsunayoshi equally as lightly. "I have a bake sale to coordinate."

"Really? I was thinking today might be the perfect time."

"How so?"

"In case you have forgotten, Tsunayoshi, you have people gunning for you." Said Reborn condescendently. "A Mafia boss should be able to prioritize correctly. The bake will be easy for you with all your resources."

"It will still take time to prepare it all."

"Gokudera-kun can take of that." Said Reborn. "He's already proved himself, unlike others." He finished, throwing a glance towards Kyoko.

"So that is what this is about." muttered Tsuna.

Before he could say anything, Kyoko stepped forward. "That's a great idea, Reborn-san!" She said cheerily. "Hana-chan can go help him, too. She's really good at organizing things."

"Kyoko?" Asked Hana, a slight note of uncertainty on her voice.

Kyoko took her hand. "It's okay." Her smile adopted a more mischievous tint "I think Gokudera-kun will need more help than me."

"In that case, Takeshi should go too."

"Eh, what about what Haru said, Tsu?"

Tsuna patted him on the arm "It'll be fine, Kyoko and Kyoya-san make 2"

The prefect chose that moment to jump down from the nearby tree, successfully startling Gokudera.

He turned to Tsunayoshi. "Are we going to the den?"
Tsuna looked at Kyoko, who nodded slightly. "Yeah. I guess we are."

He nodded, and typed something on his phone. "Tetsu will be here soon with a couple cars."

Tsuna swatdropped. "There is no..."

He trailed off at the thunderous expression on Kyoya's face.

"On second thought." He said, shuffling away. "We'll go faster by car. Yes, good idea, Kyoya."

Kyoya smirked.

What tended to be a journey of an hour and 30 minutes by foot and bus ended up being around 30. Tsuna, Kyoko and Kyoya had gotten into a small black SUV that was being driven by Tetsuya himself, with 2 other committee members on the back side, while Gokudera, Takeshi and Hana had taken another, slightly smaller car. Reborn, to Tsunayoshi's dismay, had disappeared while they were talking, which put him on edge.

Finally they arrived at the base. It was an old warehouse, it blended well on the outside, looking slightly dirty and untended.

Kyoya opened the door to a well-lit interior. The main area was spacious and sparsely furnished, being occupied by four folding chairs and a metal table. Two members of the committee were there, playing cards.

"Ah, you are here."

Tsuna stopped, puzzled. "Reborn?" He asked confused, as the baby dropped from the beams of the ceiling.

"I'm so very sorry, Sawada-sama!" Said a third boy, bursting out from one of the side doors. "He barged in and we were unable to stop him!" he explained, bowing.

Tsuna shook his head and waved him off. "No, it's fine. I don't blame you. Reborn can be... a bit difficult to talk with."

"Hurry up and go down, Dame-Tsuna." Reborn said, jumping on top of the DC member head. 'We have a prisoner to interrogate.'

Tsuna nodded, and followed him down the stairs without bothering to comment on how he seemed to know the layout of the house, Kyoko and Kyoya following him closely, as the DC member scrambled forward to open the locked door.

They walked down the stair, Reborn walking besides them on the rail of the stairs.

He took a look at the kids and fell back, into step with Kyoko, who looked at him curiously.

"Are you sure you want to go down?" He asked her.

She nodded and smiled sunnily. "I'll go whenever Tsuna does."

He smirked. "How naive you are."

"Excuse me?" She asked, maintaining the smile.
"I know you think you have nerve, but the world of the Mafia is dark. There is no place for you there."

Her smile gained teeth. "Oh really?"

Reborn shrugged. "We are going to torture a prisoner. I don't think you can handle it." He said bluntly.

She hummed and sped up.

Tsuna sighed.

Reborn nodded to himself. While the girls did have some interesting potential, he wanted first to test their tolerance, and increase it if necessary; and out of the two of them Sasagawa was the one who worried him the most. The Mafia was no stranger to women, but they were more relegated to forming alliances, diplomacy, and discreet assassination; not straight violence; and secrecy luxury Tsunayoshi didn't have as a newcomer.

They walked down a small hallway and then the DC member opened a nondescript door. The room inside it was small, about five feet by five, with only a bare bulb for light. Under it, the captured Yakuza was tied upright, his hands bonded to the chair’s arms with handcuffs, while his chest was bound with an array of knots in rope. They had taken his shirt and pants off, so the man had been shivering in the cold, dark basement for at least 12 hours. The chair he was tied to has secured to the floor with a couple of heavy steel plates.

Tsuna walked up until he was about two feet away, running a critical eye over the man. He had the typical japanese features, with a shaved head that shone under the light. He was well muscles, his chest tattooed with the usual motifs, but it only extended a little under his ribcage and to his shoulders, a peach tattooed on both. Interestingly, he was lacking on scars, aside from a couple of raised pink lines, most likely from knife fights.

“W-what are y-you lo-oking at?” He tried to say, but the clatter of his teeth diluted off any kind of threat.

Tsuna tilted his head to the side, his expression blank but his eyes cold, and didn't bother to answer. He raised a hand and made to put it on top of the man’s head, but as soon as he was in range, the man lunged, snapping his teeth.

Without changing his expression, Tsuna moved his hand away to the side, and then struck the man hard enough to give him whiplash.

Reborn threw a glance to the girl, but she stood there, smiling placidly, and only his years of training let Reborn notice the slight twitch of irritation on her dimples.

“Do you want to take this?.” Tsuna asked, turning back to the girl and gesturing with his hand at the man. “Or would you rather leave me to it?”

Kyoko tilted her head, tapping her lips. She took a look at the man, who was snarling insults between chattering teeth, and then glanced quickly at Reborn (That he caught, of course, but she didn't mind it.) and then smiled. “I’ll do it.”

Tsuna’s answering smile was equally predatory, as he stood aside and let Kyoko go to the left, where she opened a door that had remained overlooked in the darkness, and took out a small trolley filled with all sort of shiny, sharp implements. Reborn arched an eyebrow at the well-stocked selection, while the man in the chair had gone silent and pale.
Kyoko hummed a lilting melody as she drove the cart in front of the man, and after a second of inspecting both her soon to be victim and her tools, she took a long, thin needle that Reborn would have recognized as used in acupuncture, if not for being at least twice as thick.

She glanced down, toying with the needle. “First let me be clear: You are going to die here. If you tell me the truth, you will die quickly and painlessly. If you lie to me, you will die so slowly and painfully.” She flicked the needle and looked at the man in the eye. “If you try to make this more difficult than it needs to be, all your underlings will die slowly and painfully in front of you, before you die.”

There was a flash of silver as the needle embedded itself on the man’s left index finger, just under the nail.

“Are we understood?”

The man screamed, the chair rattling with the strength he was thrashing around with, and Reborn had to give it to the brats, they were good.

Trained.

The Arcobaleno couldn’t make his mind up if this was the best or the worst assignment yet. Definitely the most entertaining, though.

Both teenagers waited patiently for the man to calm down, Tsuna lazing on the back wall, while Kyoko turned her attention to the cart, picking up another needle, twirling it around her fingers.

Once the man quieted down, breathing hard, she spoke.

“Why are you attacking us?”

He spat at her feet.

She sighed sadly and drove the needle into his wrist. The man screamed and tensed his hand, before it spasmed and fell open, limp.

The man gasped for breath, before he seemed to realize something and looked at his hand, which gave a sad twitch before falling limp again.

“I cut the tendons controlling it’s mobility.” Kyoko explained, already reaching for another needle. “You won’t be able to move it, but you’ll still feel it. Now, why are you attacking us?”

The man growled, but his eyes were firmly planted on the silver needle Kyoko was playing with. “Orders.” He grunted in the end.

Kyoko rolled her eyes. “Obviously. Why?” She said, her voice dripping in annoyance.

The man’s eyes twitched, but he recoiled as Kyoko lifted the needle.

“Money!” he blurted out

Kyoko arched an eyebrow and the man bent forward as far as the binding would let him go, facing the floor. “The Oyabun wants us to recover, both our numbers and the territories we have been losing the past years, but between the police and Karasu, we have had difficulties.” He lifted his head. “This woman… she came to us asking for a meeting. Promised us money and new recruits, if we did what she wanted.”
“And you didn’t find anything weird that she wanted to hit some high schoolers?”

He spat. “We didn’t know you were kids, at first. But then you started foiling us, and it got personal.”

Kyoko sighed.

“Osamu Kirishima, why are you lying to me?”

Three needles flew in quick succession, and the man howled, thrashing around so violently the chair he was tied to cracked, the left arm becoming mostly separated from the back as the man tried to get away.

This time, Kyoko didn’t wait for him to calm down.

She took up a clamp meant to hold wood blocks, and affixed it to the right arm. The man twitched and tried to get away, but the handcuffs held strong, and soon his right hand was firmly between the jaws of the machine.

“So, let’s try again.” Kyoko said, taking a pair of pliers from the cart.

“Connections!”

Kyoko arched an eyebrow, and set down the pliers. The man gulped and continued talking. “The woman did offer us money, but what the Oyabun really wanted… It was her connections.”

“To whom?” Kyoko tapped his hand with the closed pliers, making him flinch.

“Councilmen Nagasaki Chika, Kuromiso Eito, and Minamoto Daiki.”

“And what did the Oyabun wants those connections for?”

“I don’t know.”

Kyoko started moving towards the pliers.

“Wait! WAIT PLEASE!! I DON’T KNOW!! I SWEAR I DON’T KNOW!!”

Kyoko ignored the man, grasping the nail of the pointer finger with the pliers, pulling it out in one swift motion.

There was a high-pitched grunt, like a pig, and the man trashed, screaming and crying, begging Kyoko to stop, that he genuinely didn’t know the plans of his boss.

But Kyoko was relentless. Soon, the man had been reduced to sobbing, his five fingernails raw and bleeding.

“I don’t think we are going to get anything else from him, Tsuna.” She said, turning towards him.

Tsuna took one look at the sobbing yakuza member and nodded. “I think you are right, Kyoko-chan.” he walked up to her and took the pliers from her hands. “I’ll take it from here, You get out and take a breather, okay?”

She nodded, giving him a kiss on the cheek. “Don’t take too long, okay?”

He smiled at her, waiting until she had gotten out before turning to the man.
“What are you going to do, Dame-Tsuna?” Asked Reborn with interest.

“I’m going to kill him.” Tsuna said.

Reborn tilted his head. “Just like that?”

Tsuna shrugged. “We can’t get any more information out of him, so there is no point on keeping him alive.”

“You could negotiate with the Momokyokai for his release.”

Tsuna shook his head. “I don’t think he’s worth much. And anyway, returning him in this state will be more of a declaration of war than anything else.”

Reborn shrugged, but nodded in approval. “True.”

He jumped off Tsuna’s shoulder and onto the tray. “Well, go on. Kill him.”

Tsuna sent him an irritated look, but grabbed a camping knife that was resting on the tray. He grabbed the man by the forehead and pushed it as far as it would go, exposing his throat, and flicked his arm.

The man gurgled as the gash in his throat started bleeding profusely, soaking his chest in blood, and it barely took three seconds before the light left his eyes.

Reborn turned at Tsuna, who was cleaning his knife. “You have killed before.” he said, accusingly.

“Yes.” He answered flatly.

“Who was it?”

“A waste of skin.” He said venomously.

Reborn shot a bullet in irritation, not even caring that it was dodged. “Who taught you? Hell, why do you even know how to do this things?”

Tsuna shrugged, putting the knife back in its sheath and down on the table, before starting to clean the place.

“No, you don’t do that anymore.” Reborn said, jumping on top of Tsuna and kicking him on the head towards the table.

Tsuna stumbled but managed to keep his balance, using the roller car to stay upright until Reborn kicked it too, sending him down and sprawling the contents of the car to the floor, before perching on top of his chest and pointing a gun at his face.

“You will answer me right here, until I am satisfied.” Reborn said, returning the glare Tsuna was giving him tenfold. “Who taught you to kill?”

Tsuna’s face twitched. “What do you plan to do if I tell you?”

Reborn hit him with the but of the gun. “Answer me!”

“Not until I know what you are planning on doing.” He said in the same irritatingly calm tone, still looking to the side, his visible cheek rapidly fading to purple.
“You are an annoying little shit, you know that?” Reborn said, only for Tsunayoshi to grin, still not facing him.

“I try.”

Reborn mulled his options. On one hand, he could easily force the kid to give him the answers he wanted, but Tsunayoshi had demonstrated to be stubborn and shrewd. If Reborn forced him, there was a very high chance the kid would resist any and all attempts at education from now on, not to mention his friends and the Crimson Wind.

“You are suspicious.” He lied. “Iemitsu said you were a civilian with no ties to the mafia.”

Tsuna barked out a laugh. “And you believed that bum? The man can barely remember he has a family here in Japan. Hell, the last time he came I was ten.” He spat out. “And most of the time he was drunk off his ass.” Tsunayoshi added.

Reborn prodded him with the mouth of his rifle. I’ll deal with bakamitsu later.” He said, gaining a snort from the kid "After you tell me who taught you to use the knives like that."

Tsuna spent a long time silent."He's dead."

"The man who taught you how to kill?"

"Yes." Tsuna said. "So his name doesn't matter anymore. He's dead."

Reborn humed. "I'll be the judge of that. Second question." He pressed the barrel to Tsuna's windpipe. "WHY did you learn how to kill?"

"Because I wanted to."

Reborn shot him. Tsuna chocked on air as the pellet hit, coughing. He tried to sit up but Reborn applied more pressure to his neck, and he realized that would be a bad idea, so he laid back.

"You don't strike me as the sociopathic type, so let's try this again: Why did you learn to kill?"

Tsuna huffed. "Because I had to." He let his head fall back, making a hollow sound when it hit the floor. "Contrary to the bum's fairy tale beliefs, hiding your family is only actually useful if you keep your damn mouth shut."

Reborn felt ice spread on his stomach. "You have been attacked before? When?"

Tsuna smiled. "When was the first one? Or the latest one?"

"... The first."

Tsuna hummed. "I was... eight, I think? They grabbed us together, me and Kyoya-san. I think he was the original target, but with me, they had a bigger stick to move the world."

"And you learned to kill after that."

"Yes." Tsuna says, even though Reborn hadn't worded it as a question.

"I see." Reborn prodded him with the mouth of his gun. "Tell me the person who taught you to kill."

"NO!" Tsuna yelled, sitting up suddenly and almost knocking Reborn off.
Instead, the hitman jumped off him and shot him, hitting him on the bone just over the left eye.

Tsuna flinched, groaned, and slapped his hand over his eye, unconsciously turning his right side to Reborn. The hitman, for his part, was startled to see genuine tears on Tsunayoshi's eye.

"I'm not going to let you - You are NOT desecrating their graves." Tsuna said with finality, gaining some composure back. He took a shuddering breath and turned, his hand still over his injured eye, but his face was a deep, vivid red, and his only visible eye had the glassy sheen that only people who were either about to cry or had recently cried had.

And then Reborn realized what Tsunayoshi implied.

"I don't go around disturbing the dead, Tsunayoshi." He said harshly.

"Well, you don't have any problem shoving yourself into my life, trying to control me without any input, and you are oddly fixated on my past." He glared. "I wouldn't put a little bit of graverobbing above you, if it would get you what you wanted."

He was entirely correct, but that was besides the point.

"At the very least." Said Reborn quietly, after a moment. "Give me a place."

Tsuna stared at him, searching. "Domaine de Beecher-Lacroix." He said, seemingly satisfied with what he saw. "It's about a day and a half away from Lyon." He sighed wistfully. "It's a very beautiful, peaceful place."

Reborn nodded. "Go check on your subordinates, Dame-Tsuna." he said. "I'll take care of this for you. But just this once."

Tsuna got up and left. He walked up the stairs to the ground floor, and made his way to where the bathroom was. Even from a distance, he could hear the sounds of retching from within, and he closed his eyes, bowing his head.

He knocked on the door.

"It's me."

Kyoya opened the door moments later, his customary frown tingued with worry. "Cub, get in here and help the caring herbivore."

Tsuna managed a tremolous smile and stepped inside.

The pungent smell of bile and half-digested food was wafting from the bowl Kyoko was wrapped around. Tsuna kneeled besides her and put his hands around his shoulders, both to offer moral support and to steady her further, rubbing her back.

"There, there." he murmured, which made her sob and heave again. Nothing came out, of course, but the contractions were still strong enough to shake her.

Finally, she managed to regain some control and slumped against him, groaning. "I hate torture."

She said, her voice croaky.

Tsuna patted her on the back. "I know." He turned and hugged her firmly, tucking her head beneath his chin. "It won't necessary for you to do that- Ow!"

"Stupid man." Said Kyoko, taking back her fist. "It was completely necessary. I'm not going to let
someone separate us because I just happen to have the wrong bits between my legs."

Tsuna huffed. "Even so, are... Are you sure you are..."

"Fine?" She chuckled. "No. Not by a long shot. But I am dealing, that is the important part."

"You shouldn't have to!" He said forcefully. "I can- I could have taken care of it."

"You could have." She agreed. "But that wasn't the point of the exercise, was it?"

"He wanted to see my reaction to it." Tsuna nodded.

"Our reaction." Corrected Kyoko. "He was trying to scare me off on the stairs. I think" she continued. "That more than the torture, he wanted to see how we felt with, um, I guess deliberate, cold blood violence would be appropriate."

"Still, I should have-"

"Shush." She put her hand over his mouth. "I did what I had to. I'm broken, and you are dangerously close to breaking as it is." She sighed.

"I could have taken it." He replied, slightly harsh. "But you..."

"I'll get better with time, and we can't afford you to get any worse." she nodded. "It's better if I take all the stress for now."

Tsuna seemed about to say something when Kyoya hit him over the head,

"Give it up, cub." he said. "Let the caring herbivore feel useful. And you" he said, hitting Kyoko too, although a touch more gently. "Don't put unnecessary strain on yourself. It will be no good if you break any more trying to be useful."

"Yes Kyoya-san." She said, rubbing the point where the prefect hat hit her.

Kyoya noded. "Good. Now go face the carnivore, get him out of your trail, and get some rest."

Kyoko and Tsuna noded, before looking at each other and sharing small smiles.

Tsuna got up first, then offered his hand to Kyoko, who took it gracefully.

The three kids walked out to the main floor. The three members of the comcommittee had been palying cards were plastered to the back wall, eyes wide and terrified looking at Reborn, who was smiling angelically and pointing leon gun at them.

"Ah, finally." He said, casually sidestepping Kyoya as he slammed his tonfa into the ground. The prefect turned and brought the other weapon down, but Reborn jumped over him and kicked it away, getting him on the chin and sending him careening towards his subordinates.

"Taichou!" The three exclaimed, peeling themselves away from the wall and running towards him, but Kyoya rolled to his feet, and sent them a look over his shoulder that stopped them cold.

"Are you injured?" He asked tersely.

They shook their head, eyes instinctively reading his body language, on the lookout for a hit.

Kyoya gave a single nod. "Good." he folded his tonfa and turned, taking a look at them, and they
straightened. "Keep the area under surveillance. If you see any interlopers, send me a message. Don't engage." He said, making eye contact with each of the three.

The three members bowed in unison. "Yes, Taichou!"

Hibari turned. "What now?"

Tsuna shrugged. "Back home, I guess."

++++++++++++++++++++++

It was a quiet ride to Tsuna's house, but it was a companionable quiet, if a little tense. Kyoko was sandwiched between the two boys, pouting, after losing an argument to Tsunayoshi, who was sitting smugly to her left and looking out of the window, while Kyoya dozed to her right. Kusakabe stole glances at her every so often, clearly concerned but unable or unwilling to say something.

The first thing that happened when they reached the Sawada residence was to be assaulted by a brown blur.

"Tsuuuuuunaaaaa!" Wailed Haru. "Why didn't you tell me you were going out today!? I was worried!" she said, shaking him.

The rest of the group could only look, torn between amusement and exasperation as haru did her level best to shake the stupid out of her friend, and Tsuna tried and failed to make her let go.

"Active herbivore." Said Hibari once he felt it had been going long enough. "Stop."

Haru did so and turned to him, pouting. "Hibari sempai. You were with him?" He nodded. "And you didn't tell me?!"

"We were busi, active herbivore." He said, throwing a significant look at the baby.

Haru looked between them with a frown, before her eyebrows flew up. "Oh my Gods. You didn't"

"I think this would be better discussed in a room, don't you think?" Tsuna asked, already going for the door to his house.

The teenagers followed him into the house, up the stairs, and into the room.

"All right. Now." Haru poointed at Reborn. "What did you do?" She asked accusatoringly.

He turned to her, eyes gleaming. "Me? I didn't do anything."

Tsuna snorted. "Just dragged us to deal with the captain we had captured."


He smiled sadly at her. "Not much. Just gave the coup the grace." He gestured to Kyoko. "She did most of the job."

"I insisted." Said Kyoko firmly, seeing how Haru looked ready to burst in a bunch of pins at a moment's notice. "It was for the best."

Haru grounded her teeth hard, running her eyes through the five of them, before settling on Reborn.
"Next time it goes through me."

Reborn Arched an eyebrow. "You are a thousands year too young to be ordering me around, kid."
Props for trying, though. Strong will and an obvious depth of loyalty, That was something he could appreciate.

She sent him a cold, hard look, and Reborn frowned.

The room had started to smell of ozone.

"Haru." Said Kyoko quietly. "Enough. He wasn't interested in Tsuna. He wanted to see me."

It took a long moment for her to stop glaring at him, but she eventually managed. "So, what we talked about..."

"Stays." Tsuna said firmly. "I didn't break any of our rules." he said, sending her a meaningful glance.

She sighed in exasperation. "I guess not."

There was a long silence as everyone tried to gain control over themselves again.

"So, Tsuna." Said Haru suddenly. "Did everything go fine with the mouse."

"Eh? Ah! Yes, all is good. I'm running for Class President, now." He said.

"Good." Haru said. "So I am taking Midori out now, yes?"

"I... Guess. Didn't we talk about having to give it a rest first?" He asked cautiously.

Haru smiled. "I feel like I am doing nothing, so I want to start ASAP. You don't mind, do you?"

Tsuna tilted his head. "Not really, and if it would make you happy..."

She smiled. "Thanks." She rocked on her heels. "Not gonna lie, I have been looking forward to this." She looked up. "I'll hit them hard and fast."

Tsuna nodded. "Yeah, I think that would be for the best." He sighed. "I don't want Riku escalating this any more."

"Afraid of a little kid, Dame-Tsuna?" Reborn said.

Tsuna ignored the barb. "Concerned." He corrected him. "In case you hadn't noticed, Riku has been hitting people with nothing to do with us to try to bait us, and we haven't really responded." He looked up. "If we don't finish this of quickly, she might go for more... extreme measures."

+++++++++++++++++++++++

The halls of Midori Middle School were teeming with students at this hour. Haru walked amongst them, humming a song under her breath.

She skipped along, waving to some girl here and there, ignoring the rude remarks others made about her, and continued on her merry way, down the hall and up three, four, five flights of stairs, before ending on a small space.

She made sure she was alone, and smirked. With a hop and a twist, she slammed her heel on the
door, near the knob, and the door opened with a resounding bang, making the other occupant of the 
roof jump and scream.

Haru laughed. "Ah, sorry about that. Couldn't tell the door was open, you know?" She smiled 
 disarmingly.

Midori glared at her as she flicked her golden hair out of her face. "What did you want to talk 
about?" She said, her voice clipped in distaste.

"Aw come on, not even a hello? I thought you had better manners."

"You aren't worthy of them." She sniffed. "What do you want? I don't have time to waste, unlike 
others."

"Fine then." Haru sighed. "Why the hell are you bankrolling Riku and paying the Momokyokai?"

"Do I really need any other reason than you being... well, you?" Midori asked condescendingly.

"Not really." Haru agreed. "But this is a lot of money, even for you. 50,000 yen is an amount of 
money even your aunt will notice." She pointed.

Midori crossed her arms, eyeing her suspiciously. "Well... I guess it won't matter if I tell you. 
Riku is helping me with a problem, and in exchange she wanted a bit of money." She shrugged. "I 
didn't feel like dealing with her tantrum if I refused to pay."

"Oh? and what is this problem?" Haru grinned. "We might be able to help with this. Hell, we won't 
even bitch about it!"

Midori's face contorted in distaste. "Fuck off." She said. "I don't need anyone like you poking your 
noses in my business! Who knows what you may do."

"Because Riku is completely tristworthy, right." Haru snorted. "Face it, Midori, Riku only likes 
you as long as you can coast her. Once you stop, she will ditch you. Just like she did with Tsuna."

"Fuck. OFF!" Midori said, marching towards the door to the roof.

"Oh, come one, you know it's true." Haru said, stepping aside. "You just had a fallout because you 
wouldn't take her to California, no? Why do you think that is."

"You know nothing!" Midori yelled, looking over her shoulder at her. "You have no idea what 
she's going through, after her father-" She abruptly shut up, her eyes going wide.

"Yes?" Asked Haru, genuinely curious now.

"Forget it." Said Midori, fleeing through the door an down the stairs.

"Hey, wait!" Haru yelled, going after her. Midori was already on the first landing down. "I forgot to 
congratulate you!"

"For what?" Asked Midori, glancing up but continuing down.

"For learning to bake!"

That made her stop. "Bake?" She asked, puzzled and looking up at her.

Haru offered her a sunny smile. "I heard you have a little bun in the oven now."
Midori's jaw fell, her eyes widening in fear and surprise.

Before she could say anything, Haru continued. "Anyways, I'm no expert on this or anything, but I think you should stop spending so much money on Riku. There's better places it could be going, no? Otherwise, your parents might have to get involved." She sighed. "I'd hate to be the one to break news that should rightfully be yours to tell."

Haru jumped off her stairs and landed next to Midori, who had flinched back and was still looking at her like she was a poisonous snake.

Haru smiled. "I'll give you a couple days to think it over. I know you will do the right thing."

Then she skipped down the stairs and towards the exit.

Chapter End Notes

I Have nothing to say for myself, except:

1) Enjoy
2) Sorry
3) This story will never be abandoned
Tsunatoshi receives gifts, threats, and surprise visits

Hi All!

Sorry for not answering comments, I have been super busy, but all my work paid off! Life has now stabilized enough that I can sit and write. So more updates are coming.

Tsuna stared boredly at the ring of boys that were surrounding him. He took a look down the hallway, where thankfully, there were no signs of Takeshi or Gokudera.

"What?" Snapped the leader, a tall, lanky thing with stringy black hair that had taken Mochida's position as both the Kendo team captain and the muscle of Riku's gang, at least while they were at school. "Are we boring you, Dame-Tsuna?" He asked, getting down to his face.

Tsuna arched an eyebrow. "Yes, actually."

The boy jerked back as Tsuna stepped forward, putting himself uncomfortably close. "See, I have been dealing with this kinda thing since I was eight. I used to feel hurt, but after eight years of the same?." He scoffed. "Now all I do is feel bored." He shook a hand dismissively. "Please hurry up and finish, I have other things to do."

The Kendo captain growled grabbed him by his shirt and slammed him against the wall. Tsuna grabbed him by the wrist, hard enough to ground his nails on his skin and making him flinch, bracing his feet against the floor and making himself unmovable.

"Listen, you little bastard." The boy hissed, his eyes narrowed in malice. "You might think you are hot shit because a couple of ants are lapping everything you are crapping, but the second they realize what a sad, sorry bitch you are alone without your lackeys, they will leave you like cockroaches leaving a sinking ship."

Tsuna blinked. "First of all, is rat's leaving the sinking ship, not cockroaches. Second, I don't think I have ever heard so much profanity strung together." He said, sounding genuine. Then, he applied more pressure to the wrist until the boy gritted his teeth and his grip slackened. "Now then, I am no psychologist, but I can recognize when someone's insecurities are acting up. If you are this worried, you should stop harassing your fellow students and concentrate on training, since Mochida-sempai is not here to carry your team any more."

Tsuna let go of his wrist, and the boy brought it up to his face, examining the damage. Small red crescent moons were there, the area around them purpling rapidly.
He huffed and signaled for his three cohorts to move closer, shielding the two of them from the view of anyone coming from the hallway. Tsuna looked at them cautiously, but without fear, which only angered the leader more.

He threw a punch at him, but Tsuna didn't flinch, only moving his head enough to let the punch fly by a mere inch.

"You might want want to work on your accuracy." He said nonchalantly, as he moved in and kneed him on the stomach, not hard enough to hurt him seriously but enough to make him stumble back.

The other three boys yelled and rushed towards him.

"STOP!" said a voice down the hallway.

Tsuna looked over to find a familiar boy there, holding a phone up.

"A-Asano?" asked one of the lackeys, eyes wide and eyebrows up on his face.

"Good afternoon, Kanada-kun, Sato-kun. Please step away from Tsunayoshi, I don't want to have to call a teacher." He said politely.

The leader growled, before turning to Tsunayoshi. "This doesn't end here, worm. C'mon, move!"

"Tought that'd be too much to ask for" Tsuna sighed as he watched the four teenagers retreat, then turned to Asano, who was hurrying towards him. "Nice save." He said, teasingly. "Thank you."

Asano shook his head. "It was the least I could do." Then he frowned. "I'm sorry about them."

"Hm?"

"Kanada-kun and Sato-kun... we are sort-of friends." He said. "They used to nice guys, really, but ever since they started hanging out with the Kendo club, they have morphed into assholes." He finished with a disappointed sigh.

"I'm sorry to hear that." Tsuna said. "It sucks when friendships end like that."

"No kidding." He said, frowning."And it's not just them, is like, everybody who hangs out with Riku is suddenly a major asshole." He let his head fall back, making a hollow thud. "Honestly, I had no idea they were such a pain in the ass. How did you manage to tolerate them for so long? It has only been like a week and I am ready to let rip."

"Friendship helps." Tsuna said. "They will either hold you back from doing something stupid or will join you and help you win."

Asano nodded. "Yeah, true. Shiromi-san and Aoi-chan have been sticking with me lately to keep the creeps away, and Mizuki-san, Akane-san and I are organizing shifts to escort the younger kids of the Videogame club around."

Tsuna laughed. "Well look at you, mister defender of the weak and needy." Tsuna said, nudging at him in the shoulder.

Asano laughed. "If that's impressive, what should we call you? It is kind of your fault that we are all mutining."

"Ah?" Tsuna said, eyes wide. "How so?"
"Well, if you hadn't been standing up to Riku all those years, I doubt anyone would be brave enough to do so now." He brightened. "Really, it's all thanks to you!"

Tsuna stared at him, completely baffled, as red climbed from his neck to his cheeks. He let out an strangled sound of confusion, and turned abruptly to the ground.

Asano stood confused, before shrugging. "Why are you here so late, Sawada-kun?" He asked, looking down the hallway.

"I stood behind to do some Class President work, and my friends offered to get me something to eat." Tsuna sighed. "Just bad luck they caught me alone."

Asano frowned. "Why are you alone?"

Tsuna nodded ticked down his fingers. "Kyoko-chan had to leave early with Nii-san, Gokudera left to check on the Coffee shop, and Yamamoto went out to get me some food from the corner store, and I sent Hana off to get him after a while. Why?" Asked Tsuna suddenly suspicious.

"Oh, I've never seen you walking alone, that's all." He laughed. "It was a bit weird." Then he went quiet, frowning. "How long has it been since Yamamoto left?"

"About 30 minutes, give or take."

"And they haven't called or anything?" Asano said, his frown deepening in worry.

"Hana sent a message, said the store was packed. They should be returning soon." Tsuna said with a confidence he didn't feel. In all honesty, he was getting worried too, but reasoned that if he left to look for them, and they returned to find him missing, they might go a little crazy.

Asano nodded and looked up, wary. Tsuna followed his gaze, and found a girl waiting to interrupt.

"Good afternoon, Sawada-kun." She said, giving him a and Asano a bow.

"Good afternoon." Tsuna said cautiously. "Can I help you?"

She shook her head and lifted a small package, bowing to her waist and offering it to him. "I made some lunch for you. Please, accept it."

Tsuna sighed. "Thank you, but I am not interested in any relationship-"

"That's not what I mean." Said the girl, mantaining a cool demeanor even as her face colored. "You did- You helped me once, when Riku was harassing me." She looked down. "It had been going on for weeks, and I was reaching a breaking point, when you came by and just grabbed her attention and made her leave me alone. And then you went to check on me like it was nothing." She scratched her head. "I wanted to thank you for it, and since now you're working so hard to be Class Rep... I thought you might want a small pick me up."

Tsuna blinked, before a small smile spread on his face. "Oh! Well, um." He scratched his head. "Then, I'll gratefully accept this." He took the box. "Thanks. It means a lot."

The girl nodded and smiled, tilting her head. "My pleasure. Good luck!" She waved her hand as she ran down the halway.

Tsuna and Asano stood in silence for a moment, which was broken by the sound of their growling stomachs. Both boys looked at each other and shared a rueful laugh.
"You haven't eaten either?" Tsuna asked as he unwrapped the bento.

"Ha, nope." Asano said. "I got wrapped up in the club activities."

Tsuna nodded, eyeing the bento. Rice balls, octopus sausage and pickled vegetables, simple, yet very filling.

"Would you like some?" He said, tilting the bento towards him. "Go ahead, I am getting food in a little while anyway."

Asano hesitated. "Thank you." He said at the end, grabbing a piece of octopus and chewing.

He promptly fell to the floor, foaming at the mouth and convulsing.

"Asano!" Tsuna exclaimed, dropping to his knees besides the boy. Tsuna turned him aorund and hit him firmly on the back, making Asano cough-up the half-chewed octopus, and almost immediately the trembling stopped.

"Tsuna!" Came from down the hall. Tsuna snapped up, watching Takeshi barrel down the empty corridor, his bokken in his hand, Hana hot on his heels and hands grasping her umbrella like a vice.

They slid to a stop next to him and crouched "Are you okay? What happened?" Takeshi asked

"I don't know!" Said Tsuna, putting his hands under Asano's shoulders.

Hana gave a high-pitched yelp and Tsuna snapped to her.

She had kneeled next to the bento he had been eating before, only, the rice and vegetable had taken a sickly purple colors, maggots crawling all over it and out.

Tsuna's eyes widened. "Help me get him to the Infirmary!" He barked.

Takeshi dropped his bokken, which Hanna caught, and then both of the boys were hauling the unconscious, yet thankfully still, Asano down to the ground floor.

Hana reached the infirmary first, bursting through the doors "Help!" She yelled, startling the nurse, perfectly playing the part of the terrified girl. "My Friend! He's unconscious!"

Right on cue, Tsuna and Takeshi came in, Asano, his face contorted in pain and an unhealthy green-gray color, barely stirred.

The nurse was at their side in a flash, herding them to one of the empty beds. "What happened?" she asked, taking the boy's pulse and checking his vitals.

"I don't know!" Tsuna said. "We were eating from a bento and he fell convulsing and drooling!"

The nurse swore, crossing the room in two strides, opening the cabinet and taking bottle and a spoon.

"Open his mouth!" she said, and Tsuna obeyed. The Nurse dumped a spoonful of medicine into his mouth and closed it, masagging his throat. Then, she rolled him onto his side and over the bed. Catching on, Hana retrieved a trash bin and put it under his mouth.

In less than five seconds, Asano was vomiting. Hana scrunched her face but kept the bin from moving, as wave after wave of acrid puke came out of him.
"That should be it." Said the nurse, wiping a hand over her forehead. "Thanks." She said, receiving the smelly bin that Hana passed her. "I'm going to check this, see if there is anything I can use. Wait here, okay?" She said, moving towards the small lab on the back.

Once the nurse was gone, the three awake teenagers sagged down on chairs and unoccupied beds.

"God, we can't leave you for five seconds" Complained Hana, pointing an accusatory finger at Tsuna.

"ME!?" He exclaimed, before being shushed by his friends. "You don't even know if I was responsible for this." He grumbled in a lower voice.

Hana rolled here eyes. "Just because you monkeys have a hard time putting two and two together doesn't mean everyone does." she said. "Who would want to target Asano? No-one. But you? You are hot commodity lately."

"But Hana's right." Takeshi said quietly. "We shouldn't have left you alone."

She sighed. "Don't beat yourself up, I was the one with the brilliant idea to go after you."

"It had been fifteen minutes." Tsuna felt the need to point out. "It usually takes less than ten. What happened that took you so long anyway?"

Both groaned. "Car accident." Answered Hana. "No-one was seriously hurt, but it was a five-car pileup and it took the whole goddam street."

Asano took that moment to stir. "Urgh... What... happened to me?" He said, his voice raspy and slow, and even then he still flinched and coughed.

"Easy there." Said Takeshi.

"How are you feeling, Asano-kun?" Asked Tsuna.

"Like my throat is on fire." He said, squinting around. "You brought me to the infirmary."

"Well, duh." Hana said, elbowing the two boys. "It's not like we could leave you up there. Do you remember anything?"

Asano shook his head. "I just... took a bite of the food. What...?"

"The nurse said it was probably allergies." Tsuna said.

Asano squinted at him. "But I don't have any allergies."

"Allergies can develop at any time." Hana said authoritatively. "You might want to be careful from now on."

Asano, sick as he was, still looked doubtful. "I'll... I'll keep that in mind."

Tsuna patted him on the shoulder. "Just rest for now."

Asano nodded, then turned to the Nurse as she came out of the office, frowning.

Tsuna and the other two slipped out of the room as the nurse started asking Asano questions.

"Now what?" Hissed Hana, looking back.
"We go home." Tsuna said. "Someone tried to poison me, and I want to check on my mom and the cafe. I have a bad feeling about this."

"Let's go to the Caffe first." Said Takeshi. "Your mom is with my dad, so they should be fine for now. Gokudera... I'm not so sure about him."

Tsuna bit his lips, but nodded after a long moment.

+++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

"What's going on?!

"Tsuna-sama!" Gokudera said, whirling around, his face roughly the same shade as his hair. Besides him, Haru looked green, and was talking a mile a minute on her cellphone.

"Gokudera, what is this?" Asked Tsuna, gesturing to the scene before them. Ambulances and police cars dotted the street, operatives disseminated amongst civilians, some offering advice, others asking questions, still others investigating the - now closed - cafe. Tsuna could see through the windows one cop talking with the cook, who was looking pale, and even another who was chatting with the staff.

"Ah, Sawada-san?"

Tsuna turned to the policeman, who bowed respectfully. "I'm officer Oomaeda. I understand you are the owner of this establishment?" Tsuna nodded and the man continued. "Would you mind if i asked you some questions?"

"Not at all, officer." Tsuna said, smiling.

No, they hadn't been on the restaurant that day. He had been at school. No, he had no idea how this had happened. Yes, he had all his permissions in order, would you like to see them? Of course, they are in the office. Here they are, officer. Of course you can inspect the Kitchen. I have known Kubo-san for years, he was with the restaurant when it passed to me. Here's his license, and the other accreditations. Here is the paperwork for the servers. Yes, the Barista is over eighteen, here is her identification. Yes, of course you can see the camera feeds.

"Wait." Oomaeda said, pointing at one of the feeds. "That one. Rewind 15 seconds."

Tsuna did as he said, the other four teenagers in the room suddenly observing the screen closely.

The video played again. On it, among the press and shoving of peak hour, a woman with long hair, big sunglasses and a pageboy hat came close to the display. She stood there, looked around and then passed her hands over the sweet's display, before turning around and moving back.

"You think that might have been the culprit?" Asked Hana, looking intently at the woman, probably memorizing what little of her face was available.

"Well." Takeshi pointed at the next client, who ordered a piece of the cake the woman had blocked from view. As soon as a spoonful touched his mouth, he fell down, foaming at the mouth.

Officer Oomaeda squinted. "I'll write a report and send an alert for a woman matching that description."

"Thank you, officer." Tsuna said sincerely.
"Not a problem. Now you be safe, all right?"

There was a chorus of "of course!" ans the kids saw the officer leave the cramped space.

Tsunai reclined against the chair, frowning.

"So" Hana started. "Two food poison cases on the same day."

"Two?" Haru said, her voice dangerously level.

Hana and Takeshi filled her in what had happened at school, and she frowned.

"Well." She said at the end. "That was quite... convenient timing."

"I thought so, too." Tsuna said.

"You don't get to talk." Haru bit. "Not after you sent away your security detail."

"Haru please, be reasonable." Tsuna said in a tired tone. "It had been a long time, and Takeshi wasn't answering. Anything could have happened to him."

"Something almost happened to you."

"Enough!" Hana said, heading off the argument she could see brewing. "We can talk about Sawada's questionable decisions later. Now, though, we need to concentrate on this mysterious poisoner."

"I'll talk to Midori." Said Haru. "She was talking about taking care of us earlier. I'll tell Shoichi to hack on the Momokyokai base, maybe."

"Erm, I might know who she is." Gokudera said.

Three pair of suspicious eyes turned towards him, but he did his best to ignore them, and concentrate on Tsunayoshi's face.

And he talked. "I have a sister..."

+++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

"I can't believe we have a dyed in the wool, real-ass hitman after us." Said Haru for the fifth time that hour, her eyes running over the math problems on the sheet, but even untrained civilians would be able to see she was not at all paying attention to what she was reading. Instead, most of her attention was focused on the two entry points of the room: the window, and the door.

Tsuna sighed as he finished conjugating another verb in English. "We know Haru."

"And!" she continued, ignoring him. "It just so happens that the hitman in question is the sister of the newest member of our troupe, which was called specifically by Reborn, probably with the intention of spying on us! Remind, me why are you letting him stay?"

Tsuna smiled sweetly. "First of all, because I want him around." He ignored the muttered 'mutt collector' from Hana. "And second, Hayato had no idea his sister was coming." there was a pause. "And then there is the fact that she poisoned him so bad he can't see her in the face without having a reaction." He pointed out.

Haru pouted. "Well, he could be lying!" She said.
"Haru-chan, give it a rest" Said Kyoko tiredly. "We can probably take her if we fight together, and I highly doubt Reborn-san will let Tsuna die."

"Still." She said mullishly. "couldn't one of us have gone with him to find her?"

"Aww, worried?" Tsuna drawled.

Haru rolled her eyes. "Not for him. For all we knew, they might be planning an invasion or something!"

Tsuna and Kyoko exchanged looks of exasperation, but decided to let Haru get it out of her system. The next fifteen minutes were spent listening to their friend rant about potential spies, deadly assassins, and hard-headed bosses who didn't know to keep themselves safe.

Tsuna had pouted at that last one.

Haru didn't stop due to lack of breath. What made her stop was Tsuna's phone, ringing with the ringtone he had programmed for Hayato. He ignored her as she glared at the thing like it had offended her personally.

"Oh" he said. "Gokudera-kun is coming back." he lifted his head from the message. "He couldn't find her, apparently, he says he will try again tomorrow."

"Humpf. Bloody useless."

"Have you eaten yet?" Hana asked, frowning. "You have been grumpier than usual."

"No!" she growled. "I have been busy following up on Midori, and then this happened!"

Hana nodded knowingly. "Figures." She stood up "Stay here, I'll go get you something."

"There's leftover ramen on the fridge!" Tsuna called behind her. Hana made a vague gesture to acknowledge she heard, and went down.

"You should go with her, Kyoko. I don't like any of us to go alone anywhere." Said Haru.

"Haru..." Tsuna sighed. "You are starting to be obsessive."

"I know that!" she said, frustration coloring her voice. "I don't care! We can get hurt! We can DIE!" She exploded, sobbed. "I won't let anyone die!"

Kyoko and Tsuna exchanged a look before moving at the same time, cradling the other girl between them in a tight hug as they can between them, and Haru let herself sob away all the stress that had been eating her for the last two weeks.

"Better?" Asked Kyoko, once Haru had calmed down. She nodded, accepting the hanky Tsuna passed her. She delicately dabbed her eyes and blew her nose, and raked her fingers through her hair to make her pageboy cut somewhat presentable.

She nodded. "Much. thank you." Then she frowned. "But don't think this absolve yous of anything!" she said, jabbing a finger on his direction.

Tsuna grinned. "No ma'am."

Haru nodded." Good! Now, let's see what's holding Hana up, because I am starved."
She sprang up in the air, jumped over the table, and landed silently on her toes. Tsuna chuckled and let her show off, following her down.

"Hana! What's taking so looonngg- Hana?"

Tsuna frowned, and exchanged a look with Kyoko, before rushing towards them.

"Urgh..." Hana groaned, from her position on the floor, clutching her stomach. Haru was already on her knees besides her.

"HANA!"

Kyoko shoved Haru to the side, taking her place besides the groaning girl.

"K-Kyoko...." Hana tried to sit up, but a wave of violent retching overcame her. She doubled over and emptied the contents of her stomach all over Kyoko's skirt, who didn't seem to notice, being more interested on trying to steady her friend.

"Hana hold on." She was saying. "Come on, take deep breaths, easy there. Hold on to me."

Hana did so, sluggishly moving her hands from her stomach to Kyokos shoulders, clutching at her like her life depended on it. Kyoko put her own hands under hana's armpits, and pushed herself up slowly. Hana followed, her legs shaking with the effort.

Another pair of hands held her arms. Kyoko looked up at Haru, who gave her a crooked, understanding smile. Kyoko answered in kind, jerking her head towards the table.

Bit by bit they moved the black-haired girl, slowly to avoid another round of vomiting. As it was, Hana was trembling like a leaf in a summer storm, tears streaming from her eyes involuntarily, her body wanting to double in half.

"K-kyoko." Hana said again, her voice going high.

"I'm here." Kyoko said, kneeling in front of her, struggling to keep her tone level, hating herself for not being able to do more than take Hana's hands on hers.

"D-Don't eat an-an-an-any-thing from...from the f-fridge."

Hana spit to the side, thick and pink, like blood had mixed into it. It started to smoke.

"Mon Dieu." Haru whispered, gulping, looking from the blob of spit to Tsunayoshi, who was standing next to the sink with an empty bowl, a broom, and a dishrag wrapped around their face. They made eye contact, and she knew Tsuna was thinking the same thing as her.

She managed to get into the house.

The door opened, startling both of them.

"I'm here!" Gokudera said from the front of the house.

"Welcome, Gokudera." Tsuna said drily.

"I'm sorry Tsuna-sama! I didn't- The fuck!?" He screeched from the door to the kitchen.
Hana flinched.

Gokudera was immediately pinned down by three pairs of eyes, and it was his turn to flinch. "Sorry," he whispered.

He stepped in, taking the scene. Tsuna standing next to the sink on his getup, the fridge wide open, the smell of something dying wafting out of it, and the girls surrounding Hana, who looked grey-green and in pain. "Did she... eat?" He made a vague gesture towards Hana.

"No" Hana rasped from where she was. "I- The fridge...."

Tsuna moved towards it, but Gokudera lunged. "Let me, please." He said. "I have more experience." He added

Tsuna bit his lip and frowned. "I'll stay close." He said.

Gokudera nodded, and turned to face the trap.

Slowly, he slid up to it. The smell alone turned his stomach to concrete, a conditioned response even after all these years, but he was conscious of Tsuna's eyes on him, and forced himself to move forward, tugging the neck of his shirt up to cover his nose and mouth.

Even then, as he went closer, the smell of rotten eggs, sickly sweet meat and something sharp and metallic made his eyes water. One look inside convinced him the appliance was a lost cause, even if they could manage to clean the purple-grey-blue goo that was taking most of the back wall. It had already soaked into the appliance itself, he could see the slight lavender tint. It would not be quick, but food would spoil faster, their effects longer.

Carefully, Gokudera grabbed a broom and used the handle to close the door.

"I'm sorry, Tsuna-sama, but the fridge is lost." He said, bowing.

Tsuna pressed his lips, but nodded. "Do you know anything that could help her?" He asked, gesturing towards Hana.

Gokudera frowned, but nodded slowly, going to the pantry and pulling some powdered milk. Checking that it was still clean of poison, he made up a cup, digging through his pocket for a small, thin tube. He broke it and mixed it's contents.

"Here" He said, thrusting the warm milk towards the girl. "Milk with activated charcoal. It helps to get the edge of it."

Kyoko nodded her thanks, and helped Hana sip it off.

Haru looked at him speculatively. "Why do you have that?" She said, pointing at the tube.

Gokudera shrugged. "I have been poisoned by her before. When I realised who she was, I went home and grabbed a couple."

She looked at him for a long while. "You have experience on this?" Haru murmured.

He shrugged again. "Unfortunately."

She narrowed her eyes at him. Then, she nodded, like deciding something.

"You'll stay overnight."
Gokudera squawked at her back. "What? Listen, woman-

"No, you listen!" She said, taking a step forward and jabbing a finger into his chest. "Family or not, the fact is that there is an assassin guning for us, and Tsuna considers you a friend. Therefore, you are a target." Haru ignored his offended spluttering and continued. "Which means, you are not going home alone, this late. Therefore, you are staying here"

And without another word, she turned and strutted away.

"What the fuck?" Gokudera whispered to himself.

Tsuna chuckled, putting a hand on his shoulder. "It means she thinks you are safe, for now." He walked forward "Come, you will room with me."

"Ah! yes, Tsuna-sama! It'll be an honor!"

Tsuna nodded and started to climb the stairs, grabbing his phone and auto-dialing.

"Hello?"

"Hey mom." He said, smiling.

"Tsu-kun! Takeshi told us about the accident at the Bakery! Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, mom. Are you with Tsuyoshi-san?"

"And with Takeshi-kun too! Let me put this on speaker."

"That's not-"

"Hi, Tsuna!" Said Takeshi

There was a masculine chuckle. "Hello, Tsunayoshi."

"Hello, Yamamoto-san" Tsuna said sighin in resignation.

"So what do you need to tell me, Tsu-kun? Want me to pick up something from the store?"

"No, it's... You should stay at Takezushi tonight."

Tsuna quickly outlined what had happened during the last few minutes. From the monosilabic responses on the other end of the line, even if his mom had wanted to come home, they wouldn't have let her, or at least, not alone.

After extracting a promise from his mom that she would stay put (And Takeshi and his father butting in to reassure him that they'd make her stick to it), he turned back. Gokudera had fallen back to give him some privacy, and was trying to stay out of the way as Kyoko helped Hana up.

Haru brought up the rear, looked at him, and nodded.

+++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Han asked the next day, as she walked besides him to the back of the school.

"No." Tsuna said, rolling his eyes at the question but not breaking his stride.
She sighed. "Then why are you doing this?" Hana asked, not waiting for an answer before continuing. "Riku is not going to back down, you know this. This is a waste of our time."

Tsuna shrugged. "I have to at least give her a chance, you know?"

Hana scoffed. "You and your stupid conscience."

They continued walking, past the doors to the small picnic table area the students were allowed to use when in recess.

Riku was standing there already, two of the bigger boys of the wrestling club flanking her with identical looks of disdain.

Riku was standing in front of them, her aristocratic nose turned up high in the air, her hair perfect as always, her hands deliberately loose at her sides.

"Sawada."

"Minamoto-kun"

There was a moment of silence as they seized each other up. Hana glared at the two boys behind Riku and grinned.

They shuffled but stayed in place.

"Stop it." He said, breaking the silence first.

"Stop what?" She asked sweetly.

"The Yakuza." He said without preamble, taking in the startled looks of the two boys behind her. "I know you are paying them to harass us. Stop it."

"You don't-"

"Spare me the 'you don't have any proof' bullshit. We both know there is enough evidence if I bother to look for it, and besides, only you have so much money to spend and such a deep hatred for me. Call them off."

"Or else?" She laughed. "No, I don't think I am going to do that."

Tsuna sighed. "Look, I am not an unreasonable man. Tell me anything I can do - within reason - To have you stop this... thing you have going. and I'll do it."

She put a finger to her mouth, humming. "I don't suppose dropping dead is on the cards?"

"Answer's the same as 5 years ago" He said flatly.

"Then no."

"I was afraid of that." He sighed. "You do realize I know have to take care of you, right?"

She scoffed. "As if you could." She smirked. "I'm stronger than you. There is no other way for this to end but on my victory." Her smirk turned sadistic. "And I haven't even started."

"I see you are still as full of yourself as always." Tsuna said flatly.
"When you are as fabulous as me, it's hard not to." She shrugged. "I suppose I should pity you, since not even your parents liked you enough to stick around; but I don't have the time to waste on such an inferior being." She turned around. "Let's go."

Tsuna watched her back with a blank face. That last sentence was a bludgeon on an old wound, but the low hiss behind him kept it from hurting too much. He turned and grabbed Hana, who was staring fixatedly at Riku's retreating back, and gave it a gentle tug.

"The fucking bitch!" She spit. "Why didn't you set her on fire? And don't tell me to ignore it."

"It's not worth it." Tsuna said with a shrug.

Hana growled. "Well, at least we confirmed she didn't send the poisoner." Her frown deepended. "But she must be planning something big."

"I haven't even started." Tsuna quoted. "She can say something like that even after trying to set fire to two places and destroy a third."

Hana shook her head. "She's a cruel person, Tsuna. Don't try to understand it."

+++++++++++++++++++"For fuck sake, can't we have a normal day anymore?" Tsuna hissed, frustrated, peeking from the corner.

Two men in black, three piece suits were standing in front of the steps to his house. They weren't trying to be incospicuous, either, standing there in broad dailight, sunglasses on, clear bluetooth devices, and the expensive foreign car - was that a damn Ferrari?!?! - made sure they were noticed by the rest. Mothers gave them fearful looks and wide berths, while younger children stared, pointing and asking questions.

"And they don't seem to be alone." Hana said. Tsuna followed her line of sight and swore,there was movement on the window to his room.

"What do you want us to do, Tsuna-sama?" Asked Gokudera.

Tsuna looked at Kyoko. "Well," She started, her eyes moving around quickly. "There can't be more than 5 or 6 people in the house, being generous, and the two in the front make 8. There also don't seem to be any patrolling the area."

"How do you know there aren't any more?" Asked Gokudera.

"I'm good at noticing things." She answered. "There aren't any more around, believe me. Or if there are, they are not near enough to make a difference."

"So distraction?"

She nodded. "Gokudera-Kun and Onii-san can get their attention easily enough, draw them away from here. Then we can go in and deal with whatever is in there."

"Extre-Mrph!" Ryohei's cry was cut short by Hana, who covered his mouth.

"Quiet, you idiot!" She hissed. Kyoko took a look around the corner and gave a thumbs up. "You were lucky they didn't hear you." She said, retracting her hand.

"I Apologize!" He said, quieter but enthusiastically. Then he turned towards Gokudera with a wide
smile. "Let's go! I want to see how extreme you are!"

Gokudera took a deep breath, and was about to give this man a piece of his mouth, but Tsuna caught his eye and gave him a pleading look.

He huffed. "Fine. But hurry up! I don't like leaving Tsuna-sama."

He smiled. "I don't either, but don't worry! My Imotou and Hana-chan are with him. He's safe!" Then he frowned. "But we should call Haru-chan, just in case." He shuddered. "She will get extremely angry if we don't!"

Hana snapped her phone shut. "Way ahead of you, Kangaroo."

He beamed. "Okay! Here we go!" He knocked his knuckles together. "Let's be EXTREEEEEEEME!"

He yelled, jumped out of the wall they had been using as cover, and ran up towards the men in black, getting on top of them before they could react and sweeping them both off his feet.

Gokudera swore and followed, making a spectacle of lighting up a handful of dynamites, and smirked as he saw the horror on both men faces as they caught sight of them. They weren't dangerous, he would never forgive himself if he accidentally caused damage to Sawada-sama's home, but they were potent enough to hurt.

The Mafioso - and from here he could see they were definitely mafioso - Scrambled to their feet, hands going into their coats, which was signal enough for him to scram.

"Oi! KNUCKLE HEAD! TIME TO GO!" he yelled. An 'extreme' was his answer, and he saw the boxer run pass him, and he followed.

+++++++++++++++++++++++

Tsuna saw the two men run after his friends, and he felt a twinge of worry. He took a deep breath, and centered himself again.

"Come on." He said, and the three of them ran as stealthily as possible into the house.

There was no-one inside. Tsuna let out a breath he didn't even knew he was holding, even if he had known his mom had stayed at Takzushi today too, there was than nagging fear of someone ambushing and kidnaping her.

Cautiously, they made their way up the stairs, Hana in front, Kyoko behind him.

Tsuna looked back, and Kyoko pointed to his door. He gestured to the rest of the doors, but she shook her head, and pointed to the door again, more emphatically.

He frowned. They hadn't bothered to put more men on the other rooms? Why? Either they were overconfident, or they didn't know who they were dealing with.

Hana opened the door.

"Ah, nice to see you joining us, young Vongo-la?"

Tsuna frowned. The voice was young, male, with a distinct italian accent.

He had a sneaking suspicion of what has happening.
Hana huffed and looked back at him. "All clear." She said, in a tone that was all business.

Tsun and Kyoko straightened.

They went in the room.

As Kyoko had signed, there were three men inside the room. Two were dressed like the men outside, in a three piece black suit. The third...

Tsun stopped and stared. Then gave him an obvious once over, and smiled.

Kyoko rolled her eyes while Hana swore under her breath.

"Hello." Tsuna said sweetly with a wide smile. "Mind telling us who you are?"

The young man returned the smile. "My name is Cavallone Dino, tenth boss of the Cavalone famiglia."

Tsun's smile widened.

It was Dino's turn to give him a once over.

"As I thought." He paused dramatically.

Hana rolled her eyes.

"You are no good."

The smile on Tsunayoshi's face dissappeared, and both bodyguards instinctively found their weapons at the foul look the two women were sending their boss.

"You don't have the aura." He continued, seemingly oblivious to the atmosphere. "The way you present is terrible. You don't seem ambitious, either."

Tsun's left eyebrow twitched.

"No sense of anticipation. Your legs are short. The long hair makes you look like a girl. And..." He crossed his arms, bending forward, giving him another, head to toe pass. "You look unlucky, too."

"In short. your disposition to be a boss is zero."

Tsun stared for very different reasons this time.

"Reborn." He said, not taking his eyes off Dino. "Is there any particular reason you brought this clown into my house?"

The cool facade of the man crumpled, leaving him a spluttering mess, as Reborn jumped out from the air conditioning duct he had been hiding.

"Show him some respect, Dame-Tsuna. He is your Senpai"

Tsun frowned, tilting his head and humming "Yeah, you said something about teaching the heir to Cavalleria Banca when we first met." He raised an eyebrow, looking meaningfully back at Dino. "This him?"

"Correct!" Said Dino, seemingly gaining control of himself back and offering a friendly smile.
"Don't let the things I said get you down, Vongola." He said cheerfully, still oblivious to the murderous looks the two girls were sending him. "Before I met Reborn, I wasn't cut to be a boss, either."

"I was finishing Dino's training when Vongola Nono asked me to come here." Reborn added

"Truth be told, I would have liked to keep Reborn with me a little longer." Dino said whistfully.

"Yeah, it's obvious you aren't Boss material quite yet." Tsuna deadpanned.

There was an indignant squack and a gunshot, both of which left Tsuna unfazed.

"Respect your elders, Dame-Tsuna."

"Elders?!!"

"After that speech?" Tsuna scoffed.

Reborn arched an eyebrow, then turned to Dino and shot him.

"Reborn?! What are you doing?!" Dino exclaimed, evading the rubber pellets to the best of his ability.

"Punishing you for failing diplomatic relationships, Pipsqueak Dino." Reborn said, emptying another round of shots on Dino's general direction.

Tsuna was divided between annoyance and amusement, as Reborn shot the guy who had broken into his home around. It felt nice to not be the target of those bullets. But even after everything, he couldn't quite extinguish the tiny spark of pity on his chest.

Once Reborn was convinced Dino had been properly chastised - Or had grown bored with the game, Tsuna couldn't tell. - They settled down again.

"Dino is here to help guide you, for a short time." Reborn said. "He will serve as role model for what a Mafia Boss should be. Feel free to ask him any questions."

Tsuna rolled his eyes. "I have no intention of being Vongola Tenth." He droned.

Dino barked a laugh. "God, I said the same exact thing, the first few times! We're like brothers already."

"We. are. not." Tsuna said most emphatically between gritted teeth.

"Ah, you'll see. Reborn will make a fine Boss out of you yet." Dino continued.

"If you are quite done." Hana said through a grimace trying to pass itself as a smile, startling the man and making Tsuna raise an incredulous eyebrow. "We are hungry, and would appreciate if you left."

Dino blinked, then smiled, all charm and smoothness. "I'm sorry donna." He took her hand and kissed it.

Hana went firetruck red.

"Please let me invite you all to eat to apologize. What would you like, bella?"
"Hands off her." Tsuna hissed like an angry cat, starting to raise out of his seat before being pushed back down by a long-suffering Kyoko. "How old are you, anyway?"

"I'm twenty four, why?" Dino asked.

Tsuna looked at him incredulously. "She's seventeen! She's eight years younger than you! Why are you hitting on her?!"

Dino looked at the red-faced quivering gir besides him. "I was just playing!" He said, letting her go. Hana staggered back, covering her face and sitting heavily on Tsuna's bed. "Nothing wrong with a bit of playful flirtring."

Tsuna's nostrils flared.

"Tsuna." Kyoko said, sending him a cool, knowing look.

He deflated instantly. "Fine, fine, I'll leave it."

"And besides!" Hana exclaimed, jumping to her feet. Her face was still red, but she was frowning with determination. "I have a boyfriend!" She said, imperiously thrusting her left hand forward, where a silver-colored band was seated.

"Uwa!" Dino said, and Reborn arched an eyebrow. He had noticed the ring on the girl, of course, but hadn't attributed it any special meaning after determining it wasn't flame conducting, so he had let it slide from his awareness.

"I'm so sorry, bella! I didn't notice!" Dino said, windmilling and red.

Reborn huffed "Really, Pipsqueak Dino?"

"Anyways" Tsuna interrupted. "Hana is right. Please get out of my house, we want to eat."

"Ah, let me get you food, then!" He scrambled. "Whatever you want! I'll get it delivered. Or drive you."

"Can we get pizza?" Tsuna asked eagerly.

"Tsunayoshi, you have eaten pizza like, three times this week. We aren't eating pizza again." Hana said. "What about Chinese?"

"Oh! Why not get some Vietnamese Pho!" Said Kyoko. "We haven't had that for a while." She turned to the man. "Would you mind picking it up?"

"Of course not!" He said. "Just let me know your orders and I'll bring it to you."

He took their orders and waved them a good bye.

He boarded his Ferrari, Romario at the wheel and another one of his men on the front seat. He nodded and went forward, rolling up the screen between the front and the back.

Once that was done, he turned to his mentor. "That Tsunayoshi guy seems pretty good, all things considered." He smiled. "You might have an easier time with him than you did with me."

Reborn snorted. "We'll see about that." Then he got serious. "But that is not why I asked you to come here, Dino."
Out of seemingly nowhere, the hitman produced a thick manila folder, and dropped it on Dino’s lap.

"These are records of a coffeeshop Tsunayoshi owns." He said. "Track down where the money is going, and where it's coming from. I have the feeling it might just be a front for the real business."

Dino raised his eyebrows and leafed through the folder. "This... will take some time to get through."

Reborn cranked his gun. "Get it done before the end of next week, Pipsqueak."

Dino squaked and scooted back until his back was to the door. "Ok! Ok! Please don't shoot me!"

The hitman snorted. "You still have much to learn, Pipsqueak Dino. Perhaps it'll be a good idea to give you a refresher whole you are here.

End Notes

And so, after 8 years without publishing anything, Fanfiction calls to me again.

Hope you like it!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](link) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!