

# Warriors Way

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**Summary:** Minato returns home from a tumultuous time abroad, forged in the fires of combat into something no one in his family could envision. When he stumbles into the Sekirei plan he will begin to challenge Minaka and this so called game in the name of love and honor. Minato/Tsukiumi/Akitzu/Kazehana main wives.

## **\*Chapter 1\*: prologue**

Again i apologize for not noticing that my scene breaks hadn't carried over from word to ff. If anyone knows why this is and ways around it, once again please share.

This fanfiction has several changes in world history: the Holy Roman Empire never tried to retake the eastern portion of the Empire, and as such was never weakened enough to be conquered as easily as it had by the Turks, nor by crusaders. Constantinople was able to hold out and was awarded free city status rather than paying the price to capture what would have been a gutted city. Alternative history is a favorite of mine.

### **Prologue:**

Minato sat next to Yukari at her desk helping his sister with her history homework, a typical Saturday scene as both of them liked to have their Sunday free. They looked up in surprise as they heard their mother's voice coming up from downstairs. "Kids, dinner." The two got up and ran down the stairs eagerly. Their mother was home so seldom that home-cooked meals were a rare treat.

They entered the kitchen and went to their places as their mother turned, holding some mail as she spoke to Minato. "This came from your school. Apparently they're starting some kind of study abroad program to Athens and Istanbul." She waved the paper in front of Minato's face and then made to throw it out, dismissing the idea out of hand.

Minato twitched in irritation. His mother was always doing this. She was always trying to run his life as if he had no will of his own. When he first noticed, it hadn't bothered him but as he was nearly 18 now, it had seriously begun to irritate him.

In a million dimensions, Sahashi Minato had been so beaten down by the iron will of his mother that his irritation would die still borne. In this universe however, something did happen, setting off a chain of choices and events that would in years to come change Minato drastically and the world in general.

He reached out and took the paper from her before she could throw it away. "Actually, that sounds interesting, after all I did take Greek as my foreign language. Maybe studying abroad will be a good idea, broaden my horizons."

Minato gathered his courage to meet his mother's gaze but she had already turned away, not even acknowledging his sudden spinal growth. "Whatever," She took out some paperwork from her office that she needed to do and began to work on it while eating. Her asshole boss never left her a moment's peace.

Yukari looked at her brother, surprised then she grinned and punched him lightly on the shoulder, proud of him for trying to stand up to their mother. Minato shrugged uncomfortably and looked down at the paper, he now clutched in his hands. The heading read *Study Abroad: Constantinople*. He put it on the table next to them and dug into his meal.

### **Chapter one Colliding**

#### **Forward four years**

Hikari and Hibiki were not having a good week. First, their useless Ashikabi got fired from his job, and to put food on their plates they were forced to get jobs at a maid cafe. Sure, the pay and tips were great, but the number of balding oldies and pubescent brats who tried to feel them up made it a nightmare. Well that and the jealous stares of their co-workers. Their week got worse when the un-bonded Sekirei they attacked to try and force out of the project turned out to be number 9 Tsukiumi the water user, who promptly kicked their ass. And she had a temper! Now they were running for their lives as she pursued them angrily throwing spears of water after them.

Hikari grabbed her sister and dragged her into an alley by a busy subway station, practically running into a young man who was standing there talking on his cell phone. In fact, they would have if he hadn't dodged them, showing remarkable reflexes for a normal human.

Tsukiumi on the other hand, nearly collided with him, but pulled up short at his shout of anger. That shout would've instantly caused his death at the hands of the temperamental Sekirei of water if it wasn't so obvious that he was angry with the person on the other end of the phone. She skidded to a halt, as did the two twins, astonished by the force of emotion radiating off the young man.

The young man looked to be of average height and build, with unkempt black hair. His eyes were a unsurprising brown color but they crackled with anger as he spoke into the phone. "No mother, I don't want or need your money

and I don't want to meet with you. How the hell did you even get this number? I thought I made it clear in my letter to you that as you had made it clear you wanted nothing to do with me I wanted nothing to do with you. **Why** would I want anything to do with you, when you seem to only care about me when it's convenient?!"

As his body slumping against the alleys left hand wall Hikari suddenly realized that the boy was as sad as he was angry. Moved by some maternal impulse she didn't really understand she began to move forward. Her sister and Tsukiumi also moved forward, Tsukiumi almost reaching out to touch the young man, as they could dimly hear a woman's voice on the other end (a voice that Hibiki would later swear she knew from somewhere), angry in its turn and not conciliatory at all. "You have to realize that I've had a lot on my plate the last few years, the company I work for has been expanding constantly and I've been in the thick of it. I understand you don't want any handouts, but my lack of communication with you is no reason to shut me out entirely! After all whatever happened can't have been that ba"

Minato's eyes narrowed and he hissed into the phone, "you have no idea, whatsoever, what I've been through." With an angry flick he closed the phone and just as quickly turned to Hibiki who was the nearest of the three women to him. He bowed abruptly. "I apologize for interrupting your movie or video shoot or whatever, but could you please wait for a minute longer, I need to destroy this phone and dump it somewhere. I'll recompense your production group for whatever waste of time my entrance caused."

Hikari and Hibiki were at a loss for words and were about to reply that they weren't part of any movie when Tsukiumi reached out, took the phone in her hand and summoned up a ball of water, crushing it with the water pressure.

The young man had closed his eyes after coming out of his bow and stood there, face upturned to the sky hands twitching as he got control of himself. When he looked down his anger was gone, but his sadness remained and he turned to Tsukiumi, bowed gracefully again and said, "Thank you Ms. I," he looked up at her face and froze, tongue-tied.

Before him stood a woman of peerless beauty. She was dressed in a long black coat open at the front with a very short white under dress stretched to the maximum to cover her amazing chest. A black choker on her neck stood out against its elegant curve, and long black boots with black stockings followed her magnificent legs up to mid thigh. Blond hair flowed down and around her body in waves to the small of her back and to the side of her face framing an attractive face dominated by lively blue eyes on a body whose proportions were almost unbelievably perfect.

As he saw her properly without his anger clouding his senses his whole personality seemed to change. Gone was the controlled, self-contained man he had been and in his place stood a very innocent young man who blushed heavily and began to look away, stuttering nervously.

Tsukiumi waited a few seconds for him to finish, but she was never the most patient of women and after a few seconds, her anger got the better of her. "What's the matter with you, you damn monkey!" She reached out and grasped his shirt, shaking him roughly. Hikari and Hibiki took this opportunity to back away slowly, trying hard not to attract #9's notice.

Minato held up a hand placating and looked back at her still blushing. "I'm sorry, it's just..." he looked away again, blushing even more heavily.

Tsukiumi stopped shaking him as he started, but began again when he looked away." It's just what!?"

Minato moistened his lips and looked back at her, staring into her eyes, still blushing bright red. "It's just you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen." He looked away, embarrassed.

Tsukiumi gasped and let go of his shirt backing away, holding her hand to her chest as a warm flush ran through her at his words, overwhelming every other sensation. For a moment, she could feel her body reacting to something beyond the words spoken, her breathing quickened, her body pulsed, and her heart beat. "It's you", she whispered.

Swiftly her mind, which she had used so long to combat the indoctrination overcame the feeling. Suddenly filled with rage she clenched her fist angrily. How dare this monkey make her body respond like that! She opened the palm of her left hand and began to summon her power her voice rising to a scream, "how dare you! How dare you try to control me! I'll never let you touch me you damn monkey!"

Minato backed away against the alley wall farthest from the blond Valkyrie, his old habit of being terrified of powerful women developed dealing with his mother and the shock of the accusation itself momentarily unmanning him. His voice rose to a squeaky stammer as he waved his hands in front of his face trying desperately to calm the magnificent woman down. He looked around for help but the sisters of lightning had made their escape. "W-wait, what do you

mean? I would never... "

The blonde haired goddess raised her hand, a ball of water forming in her palm and she roared," No excuses!"

Her hand was grabbed from behind as a calm voice said, "Now there's no reason to go around involving innocent bystanders is there Tsukiumi? I'm certain this young man meant no harm." Tsukiumi turned and glared at her rival Homura, Sekirei of fire and self appointed defender of Sekirei. He stood behind her in the alleyways entrance, wearing a long, flowing black cape with a black mask covering the lower part of his face as was normal for the vigilante. She was about to speak when Homura turned to Minato, still gripping her arm and inquired calmly. "I'm certain you'd never dream of doing something like **that** would you?"

He shook his head rapidly, fear of the powerful woman in front of him drowning out his natural curiosity about her powers and what was going on. "I'd never do that to anyone." He breathed deeply getting a hold of himself, facing the woman squarely. He said, "I'm sorry if I offended you in any way, truly I am."

Homura nodded equably, and he and Tsukiumi watched as the young man walked away, still bowing until he was out of sight around the corner of the alley. As soon as he was out of sight the fire user turned to the water manipulator, "What were you thinking getting an innocent bystander involved! MBI would have sent the disciplinary squad after you if you had killed him!"

Tsukiumi shook her head angrily, her blonde tresses wafting over her ample chest for a moment. "My body reacted to him. And you know what that means."

Homura grinned beneath the mask. "Congratulations then, you found your Ashikabi."

Tsukiumi glared at him. "You know my opinion about Ashikabi. I'll kill him before he has the chance to do anything to me!"

Homura shook his head, sadly. "Who's to say he would ever try to 'violate' you as you put it? Besides, you shouldn't be so quick to waste what others cannot have."

Tsukiumi stopped and looked at him. "Why do you want an Ashikabi in the first place? Why would you let anyone own you, control you like an Ashikabi can against your will?" To her mild surprise, the question came out with none of her usual force. Tsukiumi was a woman of incredible emotions, as temperamental as the ocean. And her encounter with the young man had evoked so many conflicting emotions that she couldn't hold on to any one of them for long, leaving her adrift without any anchor.

Homura answered the question as best he could, hoping to convince his temperamental acquaintance of the good points of having an Ashikabi. "Because I don't think that an Ashikabi really would try to control me, not a real Ashikabi anyway. Ashikabi and Sekirei are supposed to love one another and that love makes them both stronger, an equal partnership, with neither partner dominating the other as both are equally important, just like in a normal human marriage."

Tsukiumi looked at him thoughtfully, his words cutting through her emotional confusion. Such a concept had never entered her mind before but the way her body had felt when the young man complemented her was.... *Perhaps... perhaps there is more to this Ashikabi business than I've let myself believe. But that doesn't mean I'll just jump at the opportunity. No, this young man may make my body react, but there has to be more to it, more than just my Sekirei genes reacting.* Tsukiumi nodded decisively, not even noticing Homura looking at her quizzically. *I'll have to do some research on this.*

+++++**Forward one week**+++++

**(why did this break work and none of the others WtF?)**

Minato stretched his arms above his head, heading home to his apartment from his part time construction job. The pay for part time work wasn't much, but it served his needs for the moment. He'd intended, upon his return to Japan, to begin studying to get into college, any college, though his youthful dream had always been to go to Tokyo U. The construction job allowed him to have some spending money for textbooks and the like, while the 'money' he had brought back with him from Constantinople paid for his few ongoing expenses and gave him a bit to invest long term, allowing him to concentrate on his studies. With his grades from before his 'trip' and his intellect, he had every hope of getting on with his life and putting the past behind him.

That had been the plan, but for the past week the goal had lost its luster. He sighed for what seemed the thousandth

time. *Ever since I met that blonde woman, I can't get her out of my head. What had been going on?* That question took on more prominence every time he thought back on the strange encounter. *Women that beautiful surely aren't so common that three of them would be in the same place by chance. The blond was by far the most beautiful, but the other two were better looking than any model I ever saw in those magazines the men used, let alone any woman I've ever seen in real life.* Minato had never thought this much about a woman since hairs starting growing in odd places and his voice changed (of course that might have something to do with his mother's version of 'the talk' which would have destroyed tougher man than he had been). Then there had been the other stuff going on. *There was no crew or equipment around and I saw no sign of special effects or anything that could create that effect, whatever it was, in her hand. Her reaction to my words and her sudden anger was also very strange and somehow... somehow strangely painful.*

He shook his head trying to shake off the thought of piercing blue eyes and long flowing blond locks as he looked around, his senses suddenly telling him something was wrong. After a moment, he realized what was bothering him. *It's only sevenish, there are usually still a lot of people walking around the park.* But the only person Minato could see was a young woman sitting alone on a bench. As he cautiously walked on, he realized with a start that she looked to only have a pair of underwear and a long trench coat on. This sent his senses into overdrive and he moved forward swiftly, eyes searching the shadows for danger as he made his way toward her. He had met and helped rape victims before during his time in Constantinople, and this looked something like that, putting him on unwelcome but familiar ground. *The lack of bystanders is weird though.*

As he moved closer he realized that here was another woman of uncommon beauty. She had unkempt short tan colored hair, and porcelain colored skin. Her body, which Minato was careful not to look at after ascertaining her level of distress, was like the stuff of dreams. *She's as gorgeous as the blond from last week,* he mused. *Maybe Japan really has changed, and beauties like this are more common than I thought.*

He shook off the whimsical thought as he stopped in front of the women. Keeping his distance he bent down slowly to bring his face even with hers. "Miss, are you all right?" It was only when the woman looked up at him that he saw the mark on her forehead, a complicated image centered around a bird shape overlapping a yin-yang symbol with several small moon shapes circling it. *Oooooh shit, something really strange is going on here!* For the moment however, he kept his expression as gentle as he could as he smiled down at her, pushing his questions and concerns to the back of his mind.

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From a nearby tree, Tsukiumi looked down at Minato as he stood in front of the failed Sekirei. She had been watching him for a week, trying to understand why her body had reacted to his complements so strongly, trying to determine if it was merely a physical Sekirei gene-driven reaction or if there was more than physical compatibility at play here.

That question was still unanswered yet in that time she had realized that he was a very unusual young man, and many of those things only made him more interesting to her. He had no friends and few acquaintances off his prep school campus, none of whom he was close to. This by itself was not so strange, but he seemed to be wary of letting others too close, something she could relate to but could not understand in a normal human like him.

He seemed to be constantly watching his surroundings unobtrusively yet keenly. She realized almost immediately that keeping to the rooftops was the only way to stop him from noticing her, and even then he had almost spotted her a few times. He seemed to automatically search for vantage points and high places. It almost reminded her of the way some of the more experienced Sekirei who fought with their fists watched their surroundings when expecting combat, but why would he be watching his surroundings like that all the time?

She'd also realized he was stronger than he looked. A few times during his construction work he had displayed more strength than his lean frame would suggest. Tsukiumi also saw what seemed to be several scars on his forearms, and she had spotted another on his calf when he had ripped his pant leg. She found she was very curious about where he had gotten these scars.

He was also independent. Twice he had refused handouts from coworkers who had heard he was living alone. He had been polite but firm in turning them down. This independence pleased her greatly, and drew her to him even more.

She had decided to introduce herself to him that evening and followed him home with that purpose, determined to get to the bottom of her reaction to him, as well as all the mysteries that surrounded him, but now she watched with consternation as the failed Sekirei, who she recognized by the crest on her forehead, met the man who may be her Ashikabi. The thought occurred to her however that this could be of a final test of his character. *If he's truly worthy of me how he reacts to the broken one will tell me.* Thus deciding she remained in the tree, watching.

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The failed Sekirei Akitzu looked up at the young man standing before her. In the dim light provided by a nearby lamppost, his eyes shone with kindness in a handsome face, and she looked away, confused. The scientists had thought her an object to manipulate and experiment on as they saw fit. The few other Sekirei she had encountered had looked at her with pity and often contempt, not kindness and she didn't know how to deal with it. She spoke in a halting voice, "I, all I desire, is my Ashikabi," she shook her head sorrowfully "Yet I am alone and will always be alone, nothing more than a broken experiment unable to form a bond."

Minato's teeth clenched as he fought to keep his sudden anger off his face. *Whoever messed with this girls' mind has a lot to answer for.* At the same time, the young woman's beauty struck him as much as the blonde's from last week had, but he kept his blush off his face and his voice under control. "Well, I don't know what an Ashikabi is, but would you allow me to help you?" He held out his hand and smiled slightly as Akisu's stomach betrayed her hunger. "Maybe something to eat would help?" He shrugged off his over shirt and handed it to her, politely turning away to allow her some privacy.

Akitzu was astonished. Not only was he willing to help her, he also gave her his shirt. When she had been released she had not even been given anything to wear, so useless was she considered by the scientists who had experimented on her. She set aside the overcoat that she had stolen and pulled the T-shirt over her head before putting the overcoat back on. Now dressed, she reached out and gently touched the man's back. As he turned to her, his welcoming smile made her heart pound and her body hot. *Is this what an Ashikabi would make me feel?*

Minato took the young woman's hand and guided her out of the park to a nearby restaurant. "What's your name?" he asked gently. "Mine's Sahashi Minato."

The fallen Sekirei looked down at their hands, blushing slightly at even this small human touch. Her voice was barely above a whisper as she replied in a single word, "Akitzu."

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Tsukiumi was both pleased and irritated. She had watched from a nearby building through the windows of the restaurant as Akitzu and Minato ate. Minato had not tried anything, just talking to her with a gentle smile on his face. She had no idea what they were discussing but it was obvious that Akitzu was enjoying the conversation, responding a little bit more as the discussion went on. This pleased the water Sekirei.

Yet Tsukiumi felt something, a pain in her heart. *Could this be jealousy? She thought, but why would I be jealous over some monkey? She shook her head at the thought. Still, so far Minato's proven to be a much better man than I thought any damn monkey could be.* From his perspective, he simply helped a woman who desperately needed it and asked nothing in return, bursting her misconceptions about his gender and species as he did. *I need to think on this further...*

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Unbeknownst to the water goddess, she was not the only one watching the pair. A limo pulled up on the other side of the street from the restaurant and a young boy with wavy light brown hair and European features looked out the tinted glass of the window. He turned to his companion, a tall man who had a sword in his lap, leaning back in his seat with his eyes closed. "She's a rare one isn't she, Mutsu" he said excitedly. "I want her. We'll strike in the park after they leave the restaurant." Mutsu nodded his head, but inwardly he was rather irritated. *Master really doesn't have any sense of propriety. The young man obviously feels something towards the flawed one. Getting in the way of true love isn't something we should be doing.* Orders were orders however, and if Mutsu wanted to help his master win the Sekirei plan he would have to do things he didn't want to.

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As they ate, Minato tried to draw Akitzu out, asking if she had anyone she wanted to contact, only to be told she had no family and no one to help her. The worst part was Minato got the impression that was all she had ever known. Minato quickly realized her past was a touchy subject and changed the topic. He kept the conversation light, talking about the weather and then some Tokyo Disney rides he had gone on the first day he came back to Japan. At the time, he had felt that he had deserved a little fun, a chance to reclaim some of his destroyed youth.

Her reactions when he related how he screamed like a girl on some of the roller coasters brightened her face almost to a normal level of expressiveness. She also seemed to enjoy being close to a mother and her baby, who came and sat in the booth behind her halfway through their own meal. He had returned from the bathroom to find her smiling shyly over her seat at the giggling baby boy but she immediately composed herself when she noticed his return,

much to Minato's amusement.

It was at that point that he realized he was very taken with this girl, as much as he was with the blonde from a week ago. He shook his head ruefully. *Even with Akitzu right in front of me that blonde woman is still on my mind. What would Yukari do if she learned that I'm thinking about two women at the same time? Something painful I bet.* The fact was also bothering him, as it was totally unlike him to be this attracted to someone in so short a time, and here it had happened twice in a week. It should have bothered his logical side far more but for some reason he found himself unable to fight the feeling.

After he paid for his meal, he hesitatingly asked Akitzu if she wanted to stay at his place for the night, again something he would never normally do. She agreed immediately and the two of them had begun to walk back through the park towards his apartment.

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Halfway through the park Minato stopped and looked around realizing again that there was no one in the park. He tensed hearing something and motioned Akitzu to stay behind him as he turned to face down another park path. From the shadows, a boy stepped forward; foreign, rich looking and dressed in an effete manner with frills at his cuffs and sleeves. *Okay, when did we travel back in time to the renaissance? Kid looks like he stepped out of one of those horrible Shakespeare plays.*

Next to him stood a tall man and upon sighting him, Minato tensed further all temptation to laugh vanishing. The man's entire manner spoke of a trained warrior and he held a sword, a katana from the look of it like he knew how to use it. On the other side of the man, a young woman appeared, younger and with a bust much smaller than Akitzu's ample proportions wielding a scythe. Minato paid her scant heed however, all his attention focused on the man with the sword.

The boy spoke in an arrogant manner that immediately grated on Minato's nerves. "Now, nii-san, we don't have to do this the hard way you know, we just want to talk to the girl. If you let us maybe you'll walk away from this."

Minato grinned tightly moving slightly to stand next to a convenient trashcan, making certain to keep his himself between Akitzu and their assailants. "I have no idea what's going on but if you think I'm going to follow your orders you're crazy. And I don't think Akitzu wants anything to do with you. Do you?" he kept his eyes on their assailants as he asked the question and felt more than saw Akitzu shake her head quickly.

For her part Akitzu was angry at these people trying to take her away from Minato. Minato was the first person in her life to treat her with kindness and she did not want to be separated from him. He made her feel alive in a way she had never thought possible and she would fight to keep that feeling! Concentrating briefly, she began to gather her power and the night turned cold in response around them.

The boy smirked and at a negligent wave of his hands the other two moved forward in unison. They stopped abruptly as a voice from the left shouted out angrily "two on one isn't fair!"

The woman with the scythe only had time to blink once before a battering ram of water appeared out of nowhere smashing her into and through a tree behind her. Mutsu turned swiftly, his still sheathed blade blocking a similar attack. Immediately assessing the new threat as far more than any human he moved in the direction of the attack, but was interrupted by a trashcan smacking into his legs, tripping him up midstride.

Before he could regain his balance, Minato was on him, palm striking at his opponent's nose, hand twisting the sword out of his hand before he could recover.

*Damnit, let that be a lesson, old boy. Overconfidence can be the bane of the best of us and humans can fight too.* Mutsu shook his head and brought his attention back to the fight. His nose was broken and blood was flowing down his face freely. He was much stronger than any human though, and he reached out and grabbed Minato's hand slamming him to the ground and reaching for his sword. Minato gasped as the breath was hammered out of him by the impact but kicked out as he was slammed to the ground aiming at the man's elbow, but before he connected both combatants were flash frozen, encased in ice that suddenly formed around them. The boy too had been frozen solid.

That threat to Minato dealt with, Akitzu glanced at the blonde woman walking towards her and nodded, recognizing her, "Tsukiumi." The two of them had met once when undergoing combat related tests two years ago. Tsukiumi nodded back and Akitzu waved her hand, vanishing the ice surrounding Minato but not the sword wielder.

Minato shook his head, shaking off the cold snap and his shock at witnessing what could only be called magic for a third time, taking in his surroundings hurriedly. *Questions can wait until we are out of here.* The man he had been

fighting was already breaking the ice surrounding him.

Mutsu glared at Minato through the frozen blood crystallized to his face, jerking his arms out of the ice and trying to reach his sword. Beyond him, the girl who had been smashed through the tree was already getting up, only a few scratches showing from her assisted flight through the tree.

Without waiting another second Minato reached out and grabbed Akitzu's and the blonde woman's hand tugging them both after him as he ran away from the fight, down another of the park's trails. Tsukiumi sputtered indignantly at running away from the fight but Minato looked back at her smiling in a manic sort of way, stopping her protest. "Hello again, I don't think we ever introduced ourselves, my name's Sahashi Minato! We can talk later but a rule of combat is to never fight in a place chosen by your enemies unless you know something they don't and in this case," he nodded past her left shoulder, "they seem to hold all the advantages!"

Tsukiumi glanced back only now realizing that the two Sekirei she and Akitzu fought was only two of four and that the other two were now racing after them in pursuit even as the first two started after them. She ground her teeth audibly at this betrayal of what she felt was the only honorable type of fight: one-on-one combat and she turned forward, nodding. "Tsukiumi, Sekirei number 9. We **will** talk later." Minato nodded.

Grimly the trio ran on out of the empty park into a crowded street. Once they were on a busier street with other people around, they stopped running. Tsukiumi noticed absently that Minato was still holding her hand, though he had let go of Akitzu's as they turned a corner.

Akitzu was quick to rectify the situation, clasping Minato's hand to her breasts, making him gulp involuntarily. Tsukiumi responded by grabbing his arm and pulled herself close just as possessively in a reflex action before regaining control of herself and going back to just holding his hand.

Meanwhile Minato calmed down a bit, now that they were away from the immediate danger, cursing himself for letting his guard down. *I thought life would be easy being back in Japan, but it looks as if I'm destined to live in interesting times.* The two lovely women who were holding onto him looked up into his face, capturing his own eyes with theirs. *Still regardless of what happens it will be worth it, if I can get to know these two.* Again the strangeness of this thought registered, only to be swept away by the realization that it was true. "Would you ladies like to stop by my apartment and tell me what the hell is going on?" After the sudden attack and the strange powers he had seen both women wield he wouldn't have been surprised if he sounded half hysterical, but instead was rather pleased by how calm his voice sounded.

Tsukiumi and Akitzu both nodded and he led the way off through the crowd, still holding his hands.

The trio drew stares from all sides. Women looked on envious of how pretty Tsukiumi was and how strangely Akitzu was dressed while men glared at Minato balefully. They all were wondering what the hell an ordinary looking slob like Minato had done to warrant the attention of two such amazing hotties. The three walked on in silence, each in their own thoughts, which constantly revolved around their companions. Tsukiumi and Akitzu especially were wondering how to handle the others presence. They both decided to simply go with the flow for now, Tsukiumi much more reluctantly than Akitzu. Minato's actions and the emotion he evoked in her raised far too many questions for her to walk away from willingly any more.

They soon came to Minato's apartment small and very cheap apartment that he had rented out upon his arrival in Tokyo. The landlord wasn't the most understanding individual but he was able to pay by the month rather than by the three-month as was normal and he didn't run credit or background checks, which suited Minato, who had none of the first and very little of the latter he wanted known in Japan just fine. But now he found himself embarrassed to show his apartment to such high-class (judging by Tsukiumi's clothing and general air) women, and this showed in a blush as he escorted them into his room. "Sorry about how messy it is" he muttered.

Tsukiumi glanced around and at Minato's face and tried to keep herself from laughing. It was obvious to her that he realized this place was well below what she was used to.

Peeling wallpaper and dirty walls was just the start of it. A few textbooks and note pages were scattered across the floor, as were several articles of clothing. Empty instant food containers were piled up around and in a small trashcan in the far corner. Drinks of several varieties were scattered on a small table in the center of the room, though the sofa next to it was clean. Behind the sofa, she could see an odd box, about four inches by forty leaning against the wall. The only light came from an overhead light set into the ceiling. In other words the room was the quintessential bachelor's hovel, with a side helping of collegiate clutter.

Tsukiumi was not such a connoisseur of messiness to realize this however. All she saw was a pigsty. However, he

had welcomed her in without hesitation and the warmth she felt for him was undeniable now. *He could truly be my Ashikabi, and I, I still do not know how I feel about it.* All her previous convictions about Ashikabi had been destroyed in the past week watching this man, and it left her confused and off balance, a state of being that she disliked intensely.

Akitzu on the other hand did not know enough about the outside world to realize Minato's apartment was anything to be ashamed of. She simply gripped his hand as hard as possible, following him into the apartment.

The moment they entered the apartment, Minato walked over and grabbed a pair of folded jeans from his clean clothes corner and gave them to Akitzu. He turned away as she pulled them on, noting out of the corner of his eye Tsukiumi's look of approval. After sitting Akitzu and Tsukiumi on the sofa, he went to get them some water, giving himself some time to think away from their intoxicating presence.

Looking back, he could again find no explanation for the strange powers he had witnessed and the way their attackers had acted, nor the way he felt drawn to them, though that was at best an incidental observation, lost in the myriad of confusing new experiences he had tonight. *What the fuck is going on here? That kid acted like he was playing a game, but everyone else was deadly serious about it. And the powers Akitzu and Tsukiumi used were like magic. Some kind of ESP maybe, or government experiments? Feels like I walked into some kind of bad sci-fi novel.* He tried to think of a rational explanation and came up blank.

Walking back into the room and handing the ladies their water he sat across from his guests none the wiser for his musings but determined to get some answers. "Umm, I realize that this is a very direct question, but what's going on here? It's not every day that a young man meets two gorgeous women and then has to fight someone else off to keep one from being taken away." He blushed, realizing how corny and stupid that sounded. He really hadn't meant to say it that way. Their presence was really affecting him, and this caused him to wonder about everything that was going on even more.

Both women flushed in pleasure at his compliment but glanced at each other, trying to decide who would speak first. Seeing a chance to learn about the odd scars Minato carried, Tsukiumi took the lead. "I think an exchange of information is in order. We tell you about us, and you tell us why a college boy acts like a trained warrior, agreed?"

Realizing it was only fair Minato nodded his ascent. He was asking them to share information about themselves, and he had to give them some reason to trust him with that knowledge.

Tsukiumi hesitantly related to Minato the origins of the Sekirei on earth, fearing his rejection of them for their origins. Minato did not interrupt her, simply closing his eyes and thoughtfully rubbing at the bridge of his nose. When she finished, Tsukiumi and Akitzu sat waiting anxiously for his reaction.

Minato opened his eyes and looked at his houseguests. Realizing that they were both waiting for his response he smiled gently, which seemed to relieve them. "I'd already realized you weren't normal, so the idea of your being alien doesn't bother me. It beats witches all hollow, which was my first guess." Akitzu smiled and Tsukiumi laughed aloud at his wry humor, relief pouring through them at his response to their odd origins. He went on more grimly, "Besides, after seeing the worst humanity can offer the idea of extraterrestrials doesn't really bother me. But how did your ship crash?"

Tsukiumi shook her head. "We don't know. Only Sekirei number 1 was awake at the time. Single numbers were babies held in cryogenic stasis, and the other 97 were embryos when we were found. Only number 1 would know the reason behind the crash and no one but top M.B.I. Officials know who she is or where."

*She, huh?* Minato filed that and the embryo concept away, already wondering several things about the ship and its crash-landing but there were more pressing concerns now. "Please go on. I can tell there's more to this."

Tsukiumi glared at him, gesturing at his forearms. "I think it's time you told us about yourself. I know you've been working as a construction worker and that you don't get along with your mother, but I for one need to know more about you before telling you more about us."

Minato nodded, running his fingers through his hair. "Right, my turn now huh? Um, how much do you know about recent world events and world history?" When both shrugged, he sighed. *Short version then.* "When I was in my last year in high school I was part of a study abroad program to Constantinople. It's what's called a free city in Turkey. That means it runs itself but pays dues to the country it's in, but the national religion is not the law there." At their blank faces he sighed again. "It would take too long to explain, especially if neither of you ever studied world history. Suffice to say there's always been lot of tension in and around the city, and while I was there as part of a student exchange program it broke down into open fighting between the Greeks and the Muslim populations of the city."

Tsukiumi looked up sharply. "Greeks, I know something about them, weren't they supposed to be some of the best fighters in the world a long time ago? I saw something about them in a museum I visited once."

Minato nodded, eyes not seeing them, mind a thousand miles away. "They were and are damned tough. I was housed in an Islamic household when riots began aimed at the Greek's because everyone thought the Turkish president had been assassinated by Greek separatists. Soon after, when it became apparent that no one was working to get me out of the city, and several of my classmates were either dead or gone I was caught up in the fighting and the only way to survive was to join a side." He looked back at them grimaced. "Eventually I ended up switching sides, when I stumbled upon... well something horrible that I won't discuss with ladies like yourselves." He slowly opened up his shirt on one side, showing them three bullet wounds in his side. "I learned then to always help those who need it." He smiled looking into Akitzu's eyes. She blushed slightly, remembering how he had helped her without knowing who she was or asking anything in return. "After that I fought with the Greeks for two and a half years, until an armistice was reached between the two sides, and the real culprits of the assassination uncovered."

As Minato wound down, Tsukiumi grimaced slightly, leaning back into the sofa. She could tell there was a lot more to Minato's story than he was telling, but it seemed to be very painful for him to relate anything of that time, so she decided not to push.

The trio sat in silence for a few minutes, allowing Minato time to come back to the present. When he did he smiled encouragingly at them. "Now I think it's your turn again."

Akitzu took up the story, telling what she knew of Minaka's finding the ship and using it's tech to build M.B.I. into the superpower it was today, and of the Sekirei Plan and what it entailed. Minato interrupted her several times to ask questions.

"What do you mean when you say adjusting?"

Tsukiumi answered, "Slight genetic modifications done to us over time to allow us to control our powers as well as other changes."

"What other changes?" Minato closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose again, fighting a sinking feeling. He was building himself a very grim picture of this, but he kept his thoughts to himself for now. As he suspected neither knew. When Akitzu got to the actual Sekirei plan, he interrupted again. "Why do all Sekirei have to fight? What if they've met this Ashikabi person of theirs and don't want this grand prize?"

Akitzu shook her head sadly as Tsukiumi answered. "We have to fight because that is a part of who we are. We are warriors and must constantly strive to be the best."

Akitzu shrugged, not agreeing or disagreeing. "Regardless, no Sekirei is supposed to leave the Tokyo city limits. If they try, MBI sends the disciplinary squad after them to bring them back or to kill them. They are three of the strongest and most bloodthirsty Sekirei, and follow any order so long as they are able to fight and kill while doing it. To president Minaka we are all tools to be used as he wills, and he wants us here where he can control us." Tsukiumi scoffed at the idea of leaving, of not fighting, but didn't disagree with anything she said.

Tsukiumi took up the account, telling him about the role of Ashikabi in the Sekirei game. Afterwards she paused before going on. "My adjustor told me that my Ashikabi would enslave me, I never wanted that, I wanted to prove I could be strong enough to never need an Ashikabi. But a friend told me that an Ashikabi was your destined, your love if he was the real one and I have felt..." she paused again "I, w- when you called me beautiful, and the way you look at us, I" She broke off, blushing heavily. Akitzu nodded silently next to her.

Minato opened his eyes and looked at Tsukiumi, blushing as he remembered how he had complemented her when they first met. He was struck by her sudden change in demeanor, finding it intensely attractive. The woman who had been so powerful, so forceful before was looking down at her hands blushing nearly crimson. Minato reached out and gently took her hands. "I meant what I said, you are beautiful" he said. "Any man would be honored to be your boyfriend or just your friend. I'd never try to order you around like you were some kind of object." He glanced over at Akitzu, who had looked on with a blank face as he made this declaration, reaching out a hand to her as well. "I mean it, you both are incredibly beautiful and I don't mean just your bodies."

He turned to Tsukiumi, not knowing where the words were coming from, or the courage to say them but meaning every syllable. "You are fiery, passionate, intelligent, and have a forceful personality, something I really like."

He then turned to Akitzu, "you are kind, gentle, and just as intelligent. I-I,"

He paused and blushed taking his hands away, as his self-control reasserted itself. "You both are extraordinary women and any man would be, I..." he paused. "I- I feel as if I've fallen for both of you. I feel like such a heel saying that but I..." Minato stood up abruptly, his face as red as a tomato at his little speech. "I s-should go. You can stay here the night, I'll find someplace else to stay."

Before he had taken two steps Tsukiumi and Akitzu both reached out, grasping his arms and pulling him back down. Minato glanced back at them and Tsukiumi met his eyes for a moment before looking down shyly. "Strange," she murmured, "the thought of an Ashikabi touching me, owning me, should send me into a rage, but your words make me feel something I've never felt." She looked back up at him almost angrily. "You've turned my whole world on it's head, don't even think about just walking away!"

Akitzu nodded. "I too feel something for you. While I am unable to have a true Ashikabi I would stay with you." The two women looked at each other for a moment before Akitzu looked away dejectedly.

Tsukiumi sighed sadly. She couldn't help Akitzu's situation and was sorry for her, which was in itself something of a shock as before meeting Minato she had always envied Akitzu for not being able to be winged. Yet here she was sorry about it. Yet in that look, Akitzu showed her she would not stop Tsukiumi from grasping her own happiness.

She turned back to Minato studying his face for a moment, thinking of all that had been said, of all that was still to be said. As she stared into his eyes, she made a decision that two weeks ago she would never have had the courage to do: she decided to trust someone enough to give them her heart. "Would you be my Ashikabi?" She asked in a very soft, uncertain voice, completely unlike her normal tone.

Minato gazed to Tsukiumi's blue eyes, and saw fear, trepidation, anxiety and budding love. It was as if she was an open book to him just then, or perhaps he saw her emotions because they mirrored his own. After his own moment of introspection, and fighting that part of his mind that was still certain his emotions were being manipulated somehow he took the plunge and nodded firmly. "What do I have to do?"

Immediately upon hearing his answer Tsukiumi surprised him by leaning abruptly forward and pressing her lips against his.

Minato closed his eyes reflexively and leaned forward, deepening the kiss, loving the feeling of her soft lips on his own. His arms went around her and he poured his own emotions into the kiss, never wanting this feeling to end.

Warmth, exquisite heat, spread like a wave through Tsukiumi's entire body from her lips as she kissed him back, the power filling her from head to toe. *This feeling, this is what love feels like.* Twin wings of light blazed from her back enveloping the room and flowing outward through the walls and into the night, showing the world the power of their newly formed bond as the Sekirei crest appeared on the back of her neck.

Next to her Akitzu, who at first had to fight off her jealousy at what was unfolding found herself enveloped by this light. When she was, Tsukiumi's feelings and emotions were communicated to her. Her memories, desires and fears, in that moment Akitzu saw them all. She watched as a much younger Tsukiumi was made fun of by others because she liked high places. She watched as the few friends she had turned on her as she grew more powerful, as the doctors and soldiers around her began to look at her with lust, disgusting her with their eyes and manners and as her adjustor tried to turn her into a man hater like herself. Akitzu was uncertain what to make of it, and decided to talk to her about it later.

The two broke apart and Tsukiumi leaned her head against the chest of her new husband. "My Ashikabi I, Tsukiumi, Sekirei number 9, warrior of water will love and protect you with my life," she murmured.

Minato was about to ask her what that light had been about when Akitzu touched his shoulder gently. He turned to her, releasing Tsukiumi who leaned back into the sofa cushions, momentarily dazed by the strength of the emotions the ceremony had evoked in her. Akitzu was blushing faintly, but she looked at Minato determinedly. "I cannot be your Sekirei, but I too would perform the ceremony."

Again Minato lost himself in a pair of beautiful eyes, light gray this time, and he nodded helplessly *oh God*, he thought. *I really do love them both. What the hell is wrong with me?* The thought was a small one, easily overwhelmed by the power of his new reached out and gently touched the side of Akitzu's face, bringing her forward to his lips.

Akitzu felt it almost immediately, but it took her a moment to realize what was going on. She had never even thought that it was possible, was never even allowed to consider the idea that it was possible. But as the power of her emotions filled her, as warmth touched places in her soul long left cold, she realized that her new love had healed

what M.B.I.'s scientists had broken.

Tsukiumi looked on in awe as the mark on Akitzu's forehead slowly disappeared and again wings of blazing light reached from wall to wall of the little apartment and beyond. She in her turn was enveloped by the light and gasped, mind suddenly seeing images from Akitzu's past as Akitzu had from hers. She watched aghast as day after day uncaring doctors worked on her, feeding her chemicals, drugging her, breaking her spirit in an attempt to see if they could break the bonding ability, as she was looked at with pity and contempt by her peers, as her one ray of hope, the one scientist who was friendly with her was taken from her. Tears welled up unbidden as she felt Akitzu's bottomless loneliness and despair, disappearing in a blaze of light as she had against all odds found her Ashikabi.

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In a room in the MBI tower, sensor analysts ran around frantically as Minaka looked at a small screen in front of him with growing irritation. One shouted "Aura's confirmed, number nine and number.... Seven now winged!"

Another scientist exclaimed in shock, "That's impossible. Akitzu was specifically broken so that she could never have a bond. That was the entire point of the experiment, to see if we could break that ability!"

Minaka shrugged carelessly. "Apparently the bond is more powerful and much more complex than you thought." He turned back to his own screen and scowled. "More importantly, how am I supposed to make my mysterious and grand entrance? How can someone not have a TV or even a radio to their name in this day and age! And he's not answering his cell phone!" He sighed theatrically. "The irritations I must go through to fulfill my duty as the games master. You" he turned to a random flunky "Get someone over to this address with a TV so I can make my grand entrance and tell him the rules of the game." The security guard nodded and walked off, wondering how much longer he would have to follow the crazy asshole's orders and if the admittedly decent pay check was really worth it.

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Akitzu and Minato's lips finally parted, a trail of saliva connecting them for a moment before Akitzu licked it away, and whispered in a soft, throaty voice full of love, "Sekirei number seven Akitzu of ice gives you her devotion and her love. I will defend and protect my Ashikabi with my life."

Tsukiumi reached out enfolding both her new life-partners in a fierce embrace. She had never thought that she would ever have an Ashikabi let alone share one, but she had seen what Akitzu had gone through, and having seen could not turn her away. *She is truly my sister now.* Akitzu returned the hug, having realized the same thing earlier. Minato for his part was in a daze from the power of the two kisses, his first and second respectively.

After a moment, Tsukiumi stood up abruptly, authoritative manner resurfacing. "Minato we're leaving, this place is not fit for a pig. I'm staying at a hotel and the three of us can spend our wedding night together there." All her previous worries had disappeared, and she suddenly wanted nothing more than to be in Minato's arms. She glanced at Akitzu. *I wonder if we will have to figure out some kind of rotation...*

Akitzu gazed back at her realizing what her new fellow Sekirei was thinking. *I know it doesn't actually have to be part of the Sekirei/Ashikabi bond, but Tsukiumi's misconception will benefit us both here.* In fact, it was safe to say that Akitzu, her emotions and more importantly at the moment libido newly awakened, was looking forward to their wedding night just as much as her companion. Her eyes were almost blazing with desire in her calm face as she looked at Minato.

For his part, Minato spluttered in shock. Not only did he not have enough money to spend on a hotel, certainly not a hotel that was good enough for Tsukiumi, but also the idea of marrying either one of them hadn't really crossed his mind. *What court or priest would marry a human and two aliens (neither of who probably own legal I.D.) after all?* He Looking at his new life-mates, and a rush of realization hit him blasting through his emotional barriers like a tank round through paper. *Shit, I would in a second if I could. I really would marry them both.*

He brought his mind back to the here and now. "I would love to, but I don't have enough money right now for a hotel room and hotels charge by the person so" he stopped as Tsukiumi brought out a gold credit card and waved it in his face. Minato was stunned for a moment, but when he saw the name MBI on the card, he understood. *Of course, money is just another layer of control over the Sekirei. Crap, this is getting worse and worse. But for now...*

Minato looked at Tsukiumi and sighed. "Alright we can use that to pay for one night at a hotel for the three of us but tomorrow we are going to sit down and talk about things like that. I have some points I want to raise before we start thinking about the future. After all" he grinned fiercely at Tsukiumi and Akitzu, "if we can't get out of this game I mean to win it." Tsukiumi smiled back, thrilled that her Ashikabi was as competitive as she was while Akitzu blushed and nodded agreement. Nothing and no one would separate either of them from Minato while she lived.

The three left the apartment quickly, nearly running into the landlord, who had come out to complain about the light show. The fat unpleasant man became even surlier as he saw the two stunning women walking down the stairs his tenant. "Sahashi, you know the rules of the apartment, no women allowed. I expect you gone by tomorrow afternoon."

Tsukiumi growled protectively. Reaching out with one hand she slammed the rude man into the wall for his insolence. "My husband and I would never think of staying in this hovel regardless of your rules!"

Minato smiled faintly. He'd never liked his landlord, a very minor bully who could never understand why Minato wasn't afraid of him and who tried to belittle and taunt his young tenant at every turn. "I'll be out of the apartment by tomorrow. I expect my monthly deposit returned when I arrive at around two. Have a nice night." Without a backward glance, the trio walked away leaving the man sprawled on the ground.

After they were out of sight of the landlord Tsukiumi turned to Akitzu. "The hotel I'm staying at is to the east of here." Akitzu nodded and wrapped her arms around Minato from the right as Tsukiumi did the same from his left. Before he could ask what they were doing, they lifted him into the air. Once they had a firm grip on him the two of them jumped straight up, landing on the apartment's roof, and proceeded to bound from rooftop to rooftop, carrying him with ease.

At first he gripped their waists in terror, but after a few jumps he relaxed and started to enjoy the ride.

Five minutes after they left a black car pulled up and two men got out. A minute later, they reported to Minaka that they had just missed their target. Far away in his lofty tower Minaka scowled irritably. Takami had just returned from the medical wing and he knew how she would react to him having anything to do with her son: violently. *I'll just have to wait until tomorrow to contact him.*

The trio landed on a hotel room balcony set into the side of Tokyo Meridian, one of the most expensive hotels in the city. As soon as they touched ground, Minato turned to Tsukiumi and Akitzu kissing each deeply in turn, not caring that the wings of light appeared again as he did. "That was amazing! Flying like that was one of my oldest childhood dreams, thank you so much!" Both women looked back at him momentarily stunned by his kiss.

After they recovered, all three entered the hotel room, its balcony door left unlocked for just this purpose. Tsukiumi went to put a do not disturb sign on the door while Akitzu went to get a quick shower.

Minato looked at the bed, his elation from the trip evaporating in a sea of worry as he realized what was about to occur. His mind, no longer besotted with their presence fell back on logic and again began questioning the speed with which this was all happening.

Before he could come to any more conclusion than before Tsukiumi returned. He watched as she slowly walked towards the bed, having changed in the anteroom into a towel. Her large gravity defying breasts jutted firmly from her chest with only a hint of jiggle, showing that her nipples had already hardened to points poking through the towel while showing off legs supermodels would kill for. *Oh my god.* As he looked at her, he felt both desire and trepidation of what was going to happen growing, drowning out his other worries as his emotions became more confused. Tsukiumi looked at him watching her and blushed, before running past him and jumping under the covers.

A moment later Akitzu exited the bathroom. Unlike Tsukiumi, she was completely naked. Her porcelain skin shone in the dim light of a single lamp, and her small cherry red nipples stood out in stark relief on her own large, firm breasts. Below, Minato noticed she had only a small triangular tuft of tan hair. He gasped turning away quickly and raising a hand to his nose to stop the sudden flow of blood that her gorgeous body evoked. "Are you both certain that you want to do this? I won't, I, I don't" he stuttered, feeling awkward and overwhelmed as all his doubts and insecurities about this new relationship came back to him.

Akitzu stopped his internal battle by wrapping her arms around his back, pulling his head down, placing his ear against her collarbone. "Can you hear my heart, Minato?" He nodded mutely, blushing yet at the same time calming down. It was beating faster and faster as he listened. "It is beating in excitement for you. We both feel the same way. We both want this." Minato looked over to the bed and Tsukiumi nodded mute agreement, all her earlier arrogance gone, leaving only a shy eagerness in its place. Akitzu released Minato and moved over to join Tsukiumi underneath the beds covers.

Doubts gone to be replaced by apprehension Minato slowly removed his clothing until he stood there with just his boxers on, allowing both his new life-mates to get a look at his body in turn, worried that they would find him waiting. Instead of the revulsion he expected to see in their faces he saw frank appreciation.

In fact both women felt a rush of excitement at the sight of his lean waist and washboard abs, which showed another long scar down one side opposite the three bullet scars on his flank. He wasn't a heavily muscled man, but he had a

rangy power to him, and if there was an ounce of fat anywhere on his toned frame, neither woman could see it, and his scars did nothing to mar his body in their eyes as he had secretly feared.

Tsukiumi kept her gaze firmly on his chest and face, forcefully ignoring his nether regions as he moved toward the bed. Akitzu on the other hand took a good long look and blushed, further aroused by his large and obvious reaction to her and her sister-wife.

One concern gone, another reared its head and Minato stopped halfway to the bed. "Um, wh-what about protection? I mean I er, kids you know, not that down the line that wouldn't be fine but er, I mean if you're supposed to fight and all and I..."

Tsukiumi cut off his amusing and rather endearing babble, understanding the unease behind it and smiling happily at the concern it showed. "Don't worry Minato. All Sekirei were given a drug that makes us infertile for four months before the start of the plan. After that, we can go in and get it renewed or not if we wish. Now, stop stalling and come to bed!" Her earlier commanding tone came back for a brief moment, but was quickly stifled as Minato started moving towards them again.

Once under the covers, Minato turned to look at them. "I, um I'm a virgin, so I..." he trailed off embarrassed. Both women smiled in relief, sharing the thought: *so we will be his first as he is ours.*

Tsukiumi grasped his hand and brought it to her left breast underneath the towel. Minato gulped and moved his fingers slightly, squeezing gently and moving his hand in a circular motion. Tsukiumi moaned in pleasure. Akitzu reached out and gently stroked Minato's face. "This is as new to us as it is to you, Minato-sama. I think we should just do what feels natural."

Tsukiumi nodded, moaning again as Minato brought his other hand up to gently stroke her side, slowly moving it underneath the towel. "I want you to do whatever you want. I'm putting myself in your hands."

Minato nodded, gazing into her eyes. "I love you." He said it simply, and realized he meant it with all his heart, all his doubts gone and his logical brain silent for the moment in the face of overwhelming evidence. He turned to Akitzu, looking into her eyes in turn. "I love you."

Tsukiumi nodded, eyes filled with overflowing emotion. "I love you, Minato."

Akitzu disdained words, leaning forward and capturing Minato's lips with her own. Again, wings of blazing light appeared and Minato moved his hands, removing Tsukiumi's towel as she removed his boxers in turn. Akitzu held the kiss as her tongue dueled with Minato's, electricity filling her at the sudden intrusion.

Reaching past Akitzu's shoulder, Tsukiumi turned off the light.

end chapter 1

## **\*Chapter 2\*: Chapter 2 New lives together**

I do not own Sekirei.

### **Chapter 2 New lives together**

Minato's first thought upon waking up and feeling his life-mate's bare thigh still wet with sweat and other fluids against his own and one cherry red nipple before his now open eyes was *Holy crap, it wasn't a dream*. His second thought was *I'm not a virgin anymore*. He was working his way to a third thought along the lines of how suddenly his life had done a 180 since returning to Japan when he felt a soft hand stroking his cheek. He looked to his right and found Tsukiumi already awake, gazing at him in wonder. "My Ashikabi, my husband Minato."

Minato raised his head from between Akitzu's breasts and kissed Tsukiumi, keeping his eyes open to watch as the wings of light appeared again. In the back of his mind he was still worried about how fast this had all happened, how much his emotions were controlling him, but he decided to ignore that voice in favor of the here and now. After all, it wasn't the outcome that bothered him, just the speed.

Tsukiumi responded eagerly to the kiss, tongues twinning together, feeling Minato's returned energy growing against her leg where it lay across Akitzu's.

Minato broke off the kiss, looking at Akitzu who still slept like the dead. He noticed the clock on the bedstead behind her read 7:21 and blinked in shock. He'd been asleep for only a few hours, but still felt strangely energized given their exertions last night. He put aside this phenomenon for the moment, concentrating on more important things.

He moved his hands, gently playing with his new blond wife's nipples, eliciting a sigh and then a moan from his target as they hardened under his touch. Minato licked his lips staring into Tsukiumi's eyes. "Would you like to have a bath Tsukiumi? It's still early and I think Akitzu needs some more sleep."

Tsukiumi nodded shyly and got out of the bed, reaching for the towel from last night in a vain effort to cover her nakedness, showing off her magnificent rear to Minato's appreciative eyes before she covered up. Minato paused in following her noticing two bloodstains on the sheets among all the other stains. He looked back at Tsukiumi's lithe, painless movements and shrugged. After the amount of activity last night, any human woman would have been sore after losing their virginity, but Tsukiumi didn't seem to be in any pain at all. *Guess it's a Sekirei thing*.

Two hours later they exited the bathroom refreshed and blushing just in time to see Akitzu sit up in bed, the blanket falling off her naked body. Minato again felt mini-Minato stir, and thought *By Buddha what's wrong with me? I should be too tired to move right now, but I still have energy? What's going on here?* Akitzu looked down and saw his reaction. She smiled faintly, stretching her arms over her head to emphasize the effect. She stopped upon hearing his groan of mixed pleasure and amusement at her display and lowered her arms, eyes twinkling devilishly.

He moved over to the bed and leaned in to kiss her on the lips, which she met eagerly. Behind them Tsukiumi watched as her sister-wife's wings appeared flowing over and through her and into the wall beyond.

Outside on the street, a man chanced to look up and gasped, seeing a wing of light appear out of an upper story wall of the Meridian hotel. After staring for a few seconds he turned away wondering what kind of special effects they were using up there and why. The kiss ended and Minato pulled back, nuzzling Akitzu's hair, murmuring, "I love you." He was still concerned about how fast the three had connected with one another, but he could no longer deny how right their being together felt.

Akitzu answered "Love you, Ashikabi-sama." She looked past him to Tsukiumi who had begun to dress for the day. "I get to go first tonight." She said bluntly.

Tsukiumi looked up from putting on her skirt in confusion but after a moment she realized what Akitzu meant and blushed at how forthright her sister wife was. She composed herself swiftly and replied, "Very well, unless you are able to get together during the day." Akitzu nodded her agreement as Minato flushed red, just figuring out what the two were talking about.

He was saved further embarrassment by a loud grumbling as three stomachs sang out in chorus. They all blushed. Tsukiumi glanced at her life mates. "Perhaps some" she glanced at the clock, "brunch?"

They nodded and she went over to the phone to order them some food, flipping through the room service menu and ordering enough to feed seven normal people. Akitzu got out of bed, starting to search for the shirt Minato had given

her the day before, while Minato searched the bed covers for his boxers.

All three looked up from what they were doing as the television turned on by itself. A man dressed in a ridiculous white cape and suit with sweptback spiky white hair appeared on the television screen. "Hello and good morning, Sahashi Minato. Congratulations on being chosen by a Sekirei and welcome to the Sekirei plan! I hope you enjoy your time in this modern day game of the gods!"

Minato looked at him as he sat on the bed facing the TV, keeping his face blank despite his shock at being addressed through a television that had previously been shut off and without any visible sign of networking ability. *How the hell is he doing this?! The tech level, let alone the amount of clout necessary to pull something like this off is...* "And you are?" Tsukiumi and Akitzu both moved to sit next to Minato, taking his hands.

The man dressed in flowing white robes declaimed grandly, "I am the game master, president Minaka of MBI. You are now one of the select few destined to take a place on god's stage and fight for the power of the heavens. Your Sekirei will fight others to claim the prize, which is capable of granting any wish you could ever desire. Win and happiness will be yours and your Sekirei's. Lose or forfeit the game and your Sekirei will be taken from you never to return."

Minato leaned forward, eyes flashing, "Over my dead body." He said it as a flat statement staring into the television, whole body tense and focused like a laser beam. His wives reached over and took his hands in wordless agreement.

Minaka simply laughed gaily, uncaring of their attitudes. "I like that passion. Keep it up. However, there are some rules to this game. First you cannot leave the city, unless you leave your Sekirei behind." Minato gripped his life-mate's hands tightly, silently telling them what he thought of that idea. "Second, you can never tell anyone else about the game! It remains a secret at this stage, and must be kept as such. If you do tell someone, who knows what will happen to them?!" He smiled disarmingly, but Minato's blood ran cold at the implication. "I am certain your Sekirei have already told you everything else you need to know. That's all Sahashi-kun, good luck in your new life!" With that Minaka disappeared.

Minato closed his eyes, trying to get control of himself, anger still coursing through his system at the very thought of his wives being taken from him, shocking in its power. Akitzu leaned into his shoulder supportively while Tsukiumi, ever practical, went back to ordering brunch. 30 minutes later, lunch arrived pushed to the door by a waiter, a middle-aged man who leered at Tsukiumi as she opened the door. "The ladies lunch," he said, trying to rub against her breasts as he passed through the doorway pushing the cart.

Minato noticed this and came out of his stupor with a growl. It was a pure alpha male reaction. Another male was sniffing around his lifemate evoking the most primitive of responses. In a flash Minato was at the door, escorting the man out by wrenching his arm up behind his back and forcefully propelling him out the door. He whispered into the man's ear "The next time I see you looking at my girlfriend or her sister like that I'll make you suitable for a job in a harem, understand?" The man got the hint immediately and scurried off like a rat.

Behind him, Tsukiumi smiled but said sternly, "I can look after myself Minato. I'm not some wallflower you have to protect." She most definitely did not want him getting into that habit as it might get him hurt against Sekirei. Minato just shrugged, blushing.

Tsukiumi took the tops of the plates of food and Minato blinked at how much she had ordered. Akitzu blinked too, but not at the amount, for she was very hungry, but at the variety. Here in front of her were several European breakfast and lunch items, like bacon, pancakes and bagels that she had never tried before, but that had been described to her by her one friend, a female scientist of European descent who had described to Akitzu some of the food she was used to. She looked up at Tsukiumi in surprise and her sister-wife looked away blushing slightly. Her own meal consisted of fruit, rice and egg, and was much more nutritious than Akitzu's.

For his part Minato took a bagel and a helping of fruit and was content.

As the two women surprised Minato with how much food they put away, the three made a point of not discussing anything serious. They simply talked to one another, exchanging stories from their childhoods, their likes and dislikes and everything else that in a normal relationship they would all have already known before sleeping together. The intimacy of this was different from that of sex, but just as important to all three who had, though for different reasons been loners up to this point in their lives.

Minato told them about his family, and his younger sister in particular, and the trouble the two used to get up to on a weekly basis in the forest near their home, and their often absent mother who nevertheless was the dominant figure in their young lives. He touched briefly on his study abroad trip how it began, but did not go into more detail of his

time in the contested city.

Tsukiumi responded by telling about her own life, how she trained constantly, how her adjustor was a man-hater and how her beliefs impacted her own. She touched briefly on having no friends among the very few other Sekirei she met growing up, her desire to be the best and push herself alienating them. She described how she became more and more isolated as her powers grew, and how her adjustor did nothing to combat this.

Akitzu's story was the worst of all, not really having a childhood, just never-ending series of tests and operations as the scientists tried to break her ability to bond. The fact that they hadn't been able to made the ice wielder glow with joy as she gazed on Minato, who returned the look.

Their discussion turned serious as they were finishing lunch. Minato looked at his two life-mates and said, "There are a few things I wanted to talk about involving the Sekirei plan. First let me say the way you're being treated is horrible. The president is treating you all like objects he can play with regardless of your rights feelings or desires."

Akitzu and Tsukiumi looked at each other before the blond shrugged. "While I agree that he treats us like toys, I don't see any way out of it except to win the Sekirei plan."

Minato nodded, but did not look happy. "But we can cut down on the amount of control he has over you. I don't know if you realize but the money you use on that card comes from MBI, and is another line that they'll use to control you like a puppet on a string. They'll know where you are, they will know what you are doing by what you buy and they can figure out where you're living even if you don't use it to pay for accommodations."

Tsukiumi practically growled. She had never thought of that before. Here she was, wanting to prove herself independent from the need for an Ashikabi and MBI and all the time she was using what amount to bribe money live on. Minato continued. "And we just found out that they can track us through the television and I have to assume other electronics as well. Those two strings at least we can do something about and I think we have to. It will become necessary for us to have as little to do with MBI as possible."

Akitzu cocked her head inquiringly, wordlessly interrogative.

Minato looked at them both before shaking his head. "I think this is a case of the outsider seeing more of the game than the person playing. But when we were talking yesterday when the president made his speech, two things stuck out to me. One, there was never any mention of rules about bystanders."

Tsukiumi squirmed uncomfortably, remembering her assault on him when they first met. "We were told not to injure normal humans except in cases of self-defense."

Minato shook his head. "But would the disciplinary squad you mentioned or a more bloodthirsty Sekirei follow that rule?" The two women looked at each other remembering some of the other Sekirei they had met while being adjusted. Both could think of several Sekirei off the top of their heads who would have no problem whatsoever killing normal people. Some would even enjoy it.

Minato went on, "the President also reiterated what you'd already said. If the Sekirei loses her crest, she's taken from her Ashikabi. But what happens to her after that?"

Both women now looked very worried never having even thought of that question before. Seeing how disturbed they were with his line of thought, he reached out, grasping their hands comfortingly. "Don't worry. Hopefully, they'll simply have been taken back into MBI or back to that island you mentioned your ship crashed on. But I know firsthand how badly humans can act sometimes. It's given me a skewed view of what to expect from people with as much power as the president has over all of you."

He decided not to share some of his concerns about Ashikabi and their responses to having as much control over beautiful women as the boy from last night had shown. *That alone is a recipe for disaster. Absolute power corrupts and all that.*

Tsukiumi looked at him before softly asking, "Why would it matter to you Minato? You already said that it will never happen to us or if it does you will already be dead. Even asking such a question puts your life in danger."

Minato shrugged uncomfortably looking down at the table. "Because it's the right thing to do. The way you and the other Sekirei have been treated is **wrong**, and I have to do something."

Akitzu and Tsukiumi were stunned. Not only did Minato love them, he showed more compassion and concern for their entire race than they had ever seen from any human. Akitzu impulsively got up and embraced Minato, Tsukiumi

following suit quickly. Minato hugged both of them to him fiercely.

After the hug ended, Tsukiumi got back to practicalities. "That's all very well and good, but if you think I'm going to live in that horrid little apartment that you lived in think again! And how are we going to pay for an apartment for the three of us if we don't use an MBI card? We could use it to get out yen I suppose they couldn't trace that could they?"

Minato looked at her with affection and growing respect. *Tsukiumi has the makings of a good tactician. That ambush she sprang last night was perfect, and now she's trying to figure out a solution to a problem with only 5 minutes of thought and without real-world knowledge to help her along.*

Tsukiumi blushed a deep red under his gaze. She obviously had said something right, but was not really certain what. "That's one way of doing it yes, though I bet MBI has put some kind of limit on how much cash you can get out. It should be safe to use the card for today, as we won't be ready to split all at once from MBI, we have to break away gradually. Money and tracking first then we neutralize other means of control."

He turned to look at Akitzu. "To start with I would like you to get some more clothing. I don't want any other man to see you in just panties and a T-shirt like last night **ever** again." Akitzu nodded, a flush of pleasure going through her from the possessiveness in Minato's voice. Tsukiumi nodded thoughtfully blushing slightly. Minato had told her how her regular outfit was far too short, and she had felt slightly unclean, thinking of other men looking at her like the scientists had before. She would stop by a tailor to get it changed today. She didn't want anyone but her husband looking at her like that.

He turned back to Tsukiumi. "In fact after we clear out my apartment I'd like you to take Akitzu and go shopping. We can meet up at the park from last night around six o'clock tonight. While you are doing that, I will shop around for an apartment and liquidate some of my... long-term assets." He had explained the nature of these already to the two women, though he had not gone into great detail about them.

Akitzu looked over at the clock and saw that it read one o'clock. "If we're to get back to your apartment before that nasty man from last night decides that you will not be arriving and tosses your stuff out, we should go now dana-sama." Tsukiumi and Minato looked at the clock as well and both got up and walked with Akitzu out to the patio. This time Akitzu alone picked him up from behind pressing her chest hard against his back and eliciting a very deep blush. Tsukiumi jumped next to her and the two of them made their way back to Minato's apartment.

Minato asked them to start clearing out his apartment while he went by himself to talk to the landlord. The unpleasant old man was no more agreeable today than he had been last night but he was also terrified. Being shoved aside like a sack of potatoes by a woman who was at least half your own body weight would do that. He quickly handed Minato his money and almost literally pushed him out of his office before locking the door. That task accomplished, Minato joined his two wives in his apartment.

He found Tsukiumi tying together his textbooks and Akitzu taking out the trash. When he entered Tsukiumi looked up angrily. "This is appalling Minato! You have three pairs of pants, an equal amount of t-shirts, a ratty jacket, ten textbooks and that looks to be it! I will be shopping for you later as well your clothing is unacceptable!" Rant over, she calmed down quickly. "Is there anything else you want us to take? I didn't see anything."

Minato smiled at her outburst scratching the back of his head sheepishly. "You have to remember Tsukiumi until recently I was living by myself and really didn't need much. And as for your question, there's only one other thing I want to take." He walked over and picked up the odd box that Tsukiumi had noticed upon entering the apartment the night before.

Akitzu followed him quizzically and looked over his shoulders as he picked it up, indicating her curiosity with a raised eyebrow. Minato read her expression correctly and motioned Tsukiumi to join them, opening the top of the box to show the two women what was inside.

In the box on a bed of soft linen was an ancient spatha, a roman infantry sword. The blade was a little over three feet in length. It was made of burnished steel, and had an edge that still looked sharp, despite the apparent age of the item. Minato smiled grimly. "A gift from some old friends." He replaced the top and handed the box to Tsukiumi.

She gave him a look, eloquently saying "You will explain later!" and Minato nodded. He really did have to share more of his own past with them, it was just taking him a while to get used to the idea.

They moved next door to a storage space reserved for tenants of the apartment building, placing all of his items inside one of the storage closets. When they found a new place to live, one of them would come back for them.

Job accomplished, Minato kissed both girls on the cheeks and the trio split up. Akitsu, once again dressed in more of Minato's clothing, trailed after Tsukiumi who went in search of a clothing store.

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Minato moved off heading toward the Tokyo International History Museum. As he walked, his mind again assailed him with doubt about his speedy attachment to the two women he had just left, screaming in his mind that it was unnatural and that something was interfering with his emotions. But he was committed now and resolutely pushed such thoughts back down into his subconscious.

It took him over an hour on foot to reach his destination and he spent most of his time worrying about the future, making plans on how best to wage this campaign he had been thrust into. Once he arrived at the museum the curator agreed to see him almost immediately.

The curator, an elderly gentleman with a shock of white hair who was so thin he looked as if he would fit right into a mummy exhibit, waved Minato to a seat in front of his cluttered desk. "Sahashi-san, how are you? What can I do for today?"

Minato smiled, bowing respectfully to him before taking the proffered seat. "I am well professor. Unfortunately something has come up and I have been forced to reconsider our deal for the pieces I placed in your care."

Professor Yuatz frowned. "Have you decided to take them back? We were able to authenticate all three pieces as well as confirm that you're their legal owner. We're already displaying them in our collection."

Minato shook his head quickly. "No, but rather than be paid a stipend each month for the use of them, I wish to sell the three pieces outright to you. My personal life is suddenly more complex, and I require more liquid capital right now than I previously planned for."

The two of them were talking about three artifacts Minato had brought back from his time in Constantinople. They had been 'gifts' to him from the city council which had taken control of the city after the civil war ended. Two were Roman Era Persian ceremonial cavalry swords, the sort rich deghans would have worn, each covered with precious gems and filigree. The last was the head of a destroyed statue featuring Justinian the Magnificent, which was made of, if not a king's, then at least a baron's ransom in the form of silver, gold and the two large sapphires it used for eyes.

Professor Yuatz looked at the young man in front of him, wondering what Minato wasn't telling him, but he shrugged. The artifacts in question were of huge value, and their ownership without question. This second consideration made them rare birds indeed in the world of relics and worth practically any price to his ancient civilizations exhibit. "Very well, Sahashi-san. If you will wait here a moment, I will have my secretary write up both the contract and a notarized bill of sale."

An hour later Minato left the museum with a check from a local bank to the tune of nearly 80,000,000 yen. With his construction job to pay for daily expenses, this would hopefully be enough for the three of them to live on no matter how long the Sekirei plan lasted.

First task accomplished, Minato decided to search for apartments by simply walking around the city, thinking that smaller housing companies or houses being sold directly by their owners were far less likely to have connections to MBI. Besides it would be fun. After all, he had only been in Japan a month, much less Tokyo and hadn't really explored the city.

After about two hour's rambling, he found himself in the outskirts of the city, in a very nice suburban area. The houses were small, two story buildings, but their exteriors were well cared for and each had their own equally small lawn enclosed in wooden fences. A few minutes into the area found him on a street facing a much larger Japanese style house with a sign outside denoting it as Izumo Inn. He smiled looking it over. He could almost feel a sense of peace and serenity radiating from the place.

A dulcet voice spoke from behind him, its tone politely formal and old fashioned. "Excuse me may I help you?"

Minato turned and found himself face to face with a woman, five or six years older than himself with long purple hair dark eyes and a very composed, tranquil demeanor. She was dressed in a traditional attire of a hostess, a purple hakama and white haori with a sash-like belt around her middle, wooden sandals on her feet and a white ribbon holding her hair in place. In one hand she held a bag of fresh groceries.

He smiled and bowed politely, trying with difficulty to match her polite form of speech. "I'm sorry if I disturbed you, I was merely admiring the architecture. I have always liked old-style Japanese houses like this one. It feels like it would

be a good place to live."

"My, it is nice to hear someone complement my inn for a change," she said with a smile. "Would you by any chance be looking for a place to stay?"

Minato shrugged uncomfortably. "I would, but it is not only for me. Unfortunately, I have a live-in girlfriend and her sister is staying with us." He blushed bright red as he went on, "My girlfriend and I tend to be very loud at night I am sorry to say. I am afraid a traditional house like this would not have thick enough walls, and I do not wish to bother other people. Do you know of any houses in the area that are selling? And who do I have the pleasure of addressing? My name is Sahashi Minato."

"You may call me Miya Sahashi-san," she said. "As to your question, there is a house abutting the back of my property that is up for sale, though it will be expensive. I look forward to having you as a neighbor, so long as you keep the salacious aspects of your relationship private, of course." A monster mask of unidentified origin suddenly appeared behind her as she smiled chillingly at him, radiating pure terror.

Minato shivered in sudden fear, and hastened to reply, his analytical mind deserting him in front of the horror the woman had somehow conjured. "I assure you we will be discreet." He blushed as red as a tomato twiddling his fingers together in embarrassment. "It's a new thing for us which is probably why we're so loud."

Miya laughed at his embarrassment, a tinkling sound on the air as the demon head disappeared. She bowed "Then I shall hope to see you around. Good day Sahashi-san." She went past him into the inn, closing the small gate behind her.

Minato looked after her for a while before turning and going to the back of the apartment building. There he found the house with a for-sale sign up outside the door, and a number to call. Within an hour a young man, who said his elderly grandparents had left him the house showed up.

After a brief tour, Minato had seen enough and was ready to buy the house outright there and then. He found the young man almost obsequiously eager to sell for the asked for price. Apparently he had a problem with the area though Minato had seen nothing to disagree with when walking around. But the young man kept glancing fearfully at Izumo house, which to Minato's mind meant he had a problem with the tenants there for some reason. Minato thought Miya agreeable enough despite her terror demon but who knew what her tenants were like. Still that wasn't Minato's problem. He happily handed over the entirety of the money requested for the sale there and then, which came to about a sixth of the money he received from the sale of his mementos.

The young man, Saruyama by name, was almost as ecstatic to have the check as Minato was about the actual house. Minato walked out with the deed to the house, and paid up electricity and water for the rest of the month. Saruyama didn't walk but ran, check in hand in the direction of the train station, still shooting fearful glances back at Izumo house.

Minato gazed after his dust trail for a moment before shrugging. Missions accomplished, Minato left with the keys to his new house to meet up with Akitzu and Tsukiumi.

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Tsukiumi and Akitzu walked down the street until no one was around then jumped up to a nearby rooftop. Tsukiumi led the way toward a mall she had seen before, thinking that it would be simpler to go to one place that had all the stores they would need rather than go from store to store. The two travelled in silence for a time; it wasn't oppressive or uncomfortable, simply reflective, as the two of them found themselves in a situation neither had ever even contemplated.

Tsukiumi as was her wont was the first to break it beginning to speak as they set down in an alley near the mall. "I am... I love him. I know you do too, but this is very awkward."

Akitzu answered her bluntly, which Tsukiumi was quickly coming to realize was her normal way of speaking. "Among our race it is not uncommon for multiple women to love one man." *Or so the scientists that worked on me said from overheard discussions with number 1.*

Tsukiumi nodded, but spoke authoritatively, using her knowledge of the real world to her advantage. "One of us will have to be the public wife however. It's not normal for one man to be with more than one woman in this culture."

"Ahh....You may be the public wife if you wish." When Tsukiumi looked at her, Akitzu elaborated slightly. "I don't care about the trappings so long as I share in the reality."

"Good." The two of them entered a clothing store and Tsukiumi looked around. "What kind of clothing do you like? Remember Minato said that we should buy several outfits each, one for combat, and others for normal wear. What I am wearing will do for my combat outfit once I have it altered, but we only have today to use the MBI card, so we should stock up."

Akitzu shrugged her indifference on the matter, but Tsukiumi glared at her and she relented, giving out more information every time the glare deepened. "I don't know." Glare X2. "I like the colors white, bronze and tan." Glare X3. "Ahh... I would prefer something easy to move in to wear in combat, but something inconspicuous for normal wear."

Tsukiumi nodded and began to search through the store, pulling out skirts, shirts and outfits for Akitzu to try on. After a minute she paused "wait, what size are you?" At Akitzu's blank look, she sighed and motioned her sister-wife over to a changing room. When Akitzu attempted to leave with only her panties on to go back to shopping, Tsukiumi forcibly dragged her back. She had to do so several times as Akitzu kept on forgetting to put her clothes back on coming out of the changing room.

The two of them spent two hours in the store buying dozens of western style outfits each though they had to stop every so often when Akitzu forgot to go to the changing area and instead tried to change right there in the store. However when they were done they had several outfits each and an equal amount of clothing for Minato both for everyday wear and for construction work.

They both walked out in one of their new outfits, thinking correctly they were less likely to attract attention in their new clothing than their original. Tsukiumi's was a long black skirt coming below her knees and a black and white top with a blue dragon pattern down one side. Akitzu had picked a short white skirt and a loose t-shirt with a silver dragon down one side matching her.

The two left that store and moved through the mall looking at the various clothing stores. Akitzu stopped for a moment, looking at a window display of a store that sold kimonos and yukata's. Tsukiumi saw where she was looking, smiled slightly and let Akitzu lead her inside.

The blond woman found this style of clothing rather constricting and more than a little daunting, but Akitzu took to it immediately. She walked out having changed her clothing again. She now wore a pure white yukata with a pattern of tan leaves matching her hair color and paid for again by Tsukiumi's MBI card.

Tsukiumi nodded approvingly. The old style of clothing truly looked good on her, accenting her skin color and high cheekbones. She herself was distracted by another store as they made their way out of the mall. The sign read 'Victoria's Secret'.

Akitzu saw where Tsukiumi and smiled slightly, "Ahh... perhaps something to excite Minato? Though, from last night I don't think it necessary." Tsukiumi blushed bright red, but nodded agreement, and the two made one last stop before leaving to meet Minato.

There was one more conversation the both women knew they had to have before meeting back up with their husband and again Tsukiumi again was the first to give voice to something they had both been thinking. "Akitzu, last night, when I was winged did you, I mean did you see..."

Akitzu nodded before she could voice the question, speaking bluntly. "Yes. I saw some of your memories."

"And I saw some of yours. Is that normal for two Sekirei winged by the same Ashikabi?"

Akitzu shrugged looking down the street. The two of them could have talked about their memories, but having shared them, what could be said this soon? Besides, there was something else much more important to talk about. Suddenly she stopped and looked at Tsukiumi. "Ahh... Did you see some of Minato's memories as well?"

Tsukiumi stopped walking and nodded, biting her lip. "He's not told us everything about his time in this Constantinople place. I don't hold it against him; it's obviously a painful subject for him. But some of the images and feelings were confusing especially those related to fighting." Akitzu nodded relieved that Tsukiumi had seen some of the same images she had seen.

Tsukiumi went on. "I saw images, memories of battle between guns and hand-to-hand weapons. Another was of an alley and something happened there, something involving someone he thought a friend." The image she was talking about obliquely was that of some kind of makeshift prison and the women in it being abused. The horror of this was so strong in Minato that it was one of the strongest memories they had seen. In the memory Minato had been led

there by a friend to partake of it, and instead killed his friend and broke the women out, escaping into the city. It was in leading this escape that he took the bullet wounds in his side, which was another reason why this group of memories had come across so strongly.

Akitzu again nodded, putting her own thoughts of that memory into words. "Hmm... Fear with that image, and intense loathing, but also... grim resolution?"

Tsukiumi nodded, putting those thoughts into words. "He was in tremendous danger yet did not hesitate to do the right thing. He will do what he thinks is right, regardless of the cost to himself. We will need to guard him against that."

Akitzu nodded and the two resumed walking, Akitzu not wishing to mess up her yukata by traversing the city via the rooftops. She again stopped suddenly at an intersection turning to her blonde companion. "He did more than survive."

Tsukiumi answered unequivocally. "He was a leader of warriors, soldiers. There were images of debates, planning sessions and leading them into battle, though most were not as clear as that of the alley. He may well be capable of helping us as he says if we can do our part."

Akitzu nodded. "Hai." The two smiled at one another and linked arms, walking on toward the park where they were to meet their husband.

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Though they showed it in very different fashions, both Akitzu and Tsukiumi were ecstatic about their new house. Tsukiumi was all smiles and enthusiasm as she led the way through the house, while Akitzu had a very small smile on her face, though her eyes were gleaming with enthusiasm.

Tsukiumi was impressed most by the dimensions of the different rooms. First there was the master bedroom with its own bathroom. Second, there was the main room next to the kitchen and third, there were two smaller bed bedrooms. Very few rooms, but each was a comfortable size. She was used to larger and more expensive habitations, but for some reason this place just spoke to her.

Akitzu, being able to cook simple meals, was more enamored of the kitchen than anything else but the master bedroom. Both women after last night were very much in favor of any bedroom in which they could think of Minato in the same sentence.

Infected by the ladies enthusiasm Minato became more enamored of the house as they walked around. It was as if all three of them realized that by buying this new house the three of them truly were beginning their new lives together, leaving their separate, lonely existences behind.

"Minato this place is incredible!" Tsukiumi exclaimed. "I didn't think we would be able to find a place as good as this without resorting to the MBI card." Akitzu nodded agreement, and Tsukiumi went on seriously. "but we will have to get out tomorrow to shop for furniture."

That was in fact the only problem with the house. Outside the kitchen, which had a stove, refrigerator and freezer as well as a dishwasher and sink, and the master bathroom, which was fully furnished, there was no furniture in the house. There were no sheets or futons, lights or sofas, nothing.

Minato nodded agreement, "but for now we should just head out to pick up a few futons for ourselves, and some food for dinner." he turned to Akitzu and asked "What kind of meals can you cook Akitzu?"

Akitzu blushed faintly in embarrassment. She had mentioned being able to cook while they were eating brunch in the hotel room, describing how a female scientist had taught her some simple recipes in an effort to bond with her and alleviate her loneliness. Now that it came to telling her bedmates however she was embarrassed at the lack of variety she could cook. "Ahh... I can cook simple meals, basic soup and rice."

"Don't worry Akitzu I'm sure any meal you cook will be great." Minato smiled encouragingly at her. Akitzu blushed at the praise, unused to any sort of compliment.

Tsukiumi asked, "Did you have any chance to look around and see where we could buy some food around here?"

Minato shook his head regretfully. "No I didn't. But I know who we can ask."

After announcing their presence by ringing the doorbell the three were greeted by Miya at the door. She looked the three over with a bemused expression on her face. "Mah mah. Minato-san, I did not actually think you would be able to buy the house I mentioned so quickly." She turned to Tsukiumi and Akitzu. "Welcome to the neighborhood." She

bowed formally, and they responded in kind.

Minato followed suit, then asked if Miya could direct them to the nearest grocery store. Miya shook her head. "It is rather late for you to go shopping for your meals. If you are planning to move in tonight, I can fix you up with a meal for the night and loan you some futons if you have need." The three life-mates thanked her profusely and followed her inside the inn.

Miya led the way in into the house, down the hall and to the dining area. Minato noticed in passing that the inside of the house was as traditional as the outside, with sliding doors and wood and paper siding. It turned out that the three had arrived in time to partake of the evening meal. Rice was already out on the table and Miya was in the process of putting more food out when they knocked. Akitzu and Minato hurried to help set out food, while Tsukiumi went to shout up the stairs as Miya instructed her to for the inn's boarders.

Tsukiumi came back swiftly followed by a bishonen man of around Minato's age. He had silver hair combed back, and had the face of a model. He smiled equably at Akitzu and Minato, though he had seemed startled and a little leery of Tsukiumi at first. "It's not often we have guests here, welcome to the neighborhood. I'm Kagari." Tsukiumi continued looking at him, making him even more nervous but she shook her head after a moment and moved to sit next to Minato. Kagari inwardly breathed a sigh of relief.

Minato introduced himself, Akitzu and Tsukiumi. The five set down to dinner making small talk with each other. Miya inquired about how long they had known each other, and which of her two female guests was the girlfriend she had heard about.

Minato replied with a prepared story, that he had known Tsukiumi for quite a while, but that they had only recently deepened their relationship, and were actually engaged, though he had not given her a ring yet. The three had discussed this on their walk from the park, and all three had agreed to use this story as their public persona.

Miya complemented Akitzu on her sense of style and Tsukiumi in turn complemented the food and the cleanliness of the house.

The conversation was interrupted as the dining room door opened to reveal a buxom brown haired woman dressed only in a set of sheer white lace underwear that leaned against the doorframe. Like the man before her, she was surprised to see guests at the table. "Guests? How rare."

Tsukiumi was halfway out of her seat eyes blazing with wrath before Akitzu gripped her hand hard and pulled her back down. "Calm down sister. I'm certain this... woman did not mean to flash your fiancé." the look the normally unemotional Akitzu shot the newcomer was pointed to say the least. While she was nowhere near as aggressively possessive as Tsukiumi, she instinctively wanted to protect her place next to her Ashikabi.

Minato for his part had turned around swiftly to avoid staring at the woman. As they calmed down from their initial ire Both Tsukiumi and Akitzu noticed this and smiled inwardly.

The landlady turned to the woman and in a very scary voice ordered her to go back upstairs and get changed, the demons mask appearing behind her and enforcing her edict. Tsukiumi and Akitzu recoiled in terror from the demon mask as she turned to them. "And I do not allow violence in my inn, regardless of the circumstances." Both Akitzu and Tsukiumi agreed quickly, visibly shaking under the demonic glare.

The woman quickly returned dressed in tight jeans and a t-shirt. She sat and dug into her meal hungrily, introducing herself in between bites, "I'm Uzume, room 208." The rest of the meal went quietly as the diners conversed with one another about everyday things.

Miya and Akitzu spent the entire evening talking about recipes. As the self-appointed cook, Akitzu was determined to broaden her repertoire of meals so that Minato would praise her.

Tsukiumi and Uzume struck up a conversation about the latest trends in clothing and decorating, giving the blond a feel for how she wanted to decorate their new house, having assumed control of that project in her usual commanding manner.

This left the two men at the table to strike up a conversation with each other. Kagari smiled slightly. "So what is it you do for a living?"

*Well, I specialize in urban squad based tactics and close quarter combat, and learning that trade in the field has taken up the last four years of my life. Now I'm planning to win or revolt against a competition set up by the world's most*

*powerful company that uses super powered alien women as gladiators. Right, probably shouldn't say that...* "I haven't decided what I'm going to do for a living yet. At the moment, I'm studying to get into Tokyo University but I'm working construction part time to pay for our daily expenses. And yourself?"

*Hmm, I guess they used an MBI card to pay for the house, but I thought Miya had scared all the neighbors into not accepting payment from MBI?* "I'm a professional host." Minato laughed, and Kagari smiled. "Seriously, I work at two bars as a gentleman host. I've been number one on the popularity chart for three months now."

Minato snorted in amusement. "Well, that's alright for those who have the face for it, but I bet you have to beat the oldsters and youngsters off with a stick."

"The oldsters aren't so bad. They at least know what not to touch. The youngsters who get in with a fake ID's on the other hand never have any sense of propriety. Every night there's one of them who gets all grabby shall we say." They both laughed.

Kagari then asked jokingly how a poor college kid had paid for a house in such a nice neighborhood, Minato used another pre-planned lie, saying that he had spent money he got from investments he had liquidated. Miya and Kagari both bought it and the last bit of tension seemed to leave them. The meal continued apace, with everyone talking and getting to know one another.

For the three newcomers the meal was one of the most enjoyable they had had in a long time. Akitzu had never eaten with anyone else except for the female scientist who taught her how to cook. That had stopped after she was fired for fraternizing with Akitzu and other Sekirei. Minato had been stuck in a war zone and had never really been able to sit down and eat an unhurried meal since the conflict began, and since he returned to Japan barely a month ago had found himself unable to relate to the people he met. Tsukiumi had never had any other friends to share meals with, never getting along with other Sekirei once training began, and holding every man she met in contempt due to the scientist's leers and her adjustors views. This inviting, homey atmosphere was entirely new to all three and they enjoyed it immensely.

During the meal, Minato almost absentmindedly paid attention to both Tsukiumi and Akitzu equally and the two of them in turn paid attention to him and each other equally, something that Miya was quick to notice and silently approve of, but which the other residents did not notice.

After the meal was over, Miya, as she said she would, loaned the three a futon each. Thanking her profusely, the three went on their way back to their new house. Once there they walked into the master bedroom and put all three futons down next to one another on the ground.

The women turned to Minato eagerly, who met them just as readily.

As per their agreement, Akitzu was first that night. But that did not mean that Tsukiumi was left out, joining in wholeheartedly until she took her own turn with Minato. By the end of the night, both women were satisfied and pleasantly exhausted, while Minato was literally drained of all his energy.

Throughout the night, wings of light made their appearance blazing out throughout the house and out of the walls. Next door, Miya observed this and smiled gently. In her room Uzume fell asleep to the sporadic flares of light through her window, sighing wistfully. A third person also noticed, but she giggled sadistically imagining just what was going on over there. The rest of the neighborhood thankfully was asleep, and missed the light show entirely.

I decided I wanted to do something different, have Minato et al closeby but not directly a part of Izumo house, and thus not under Miya's rules. I did this for a reason, which will become readily apparent in future chapters. The next chapter will be out tomorrow or Sunday depending on when I get around to beta'ing it (is that a word, hell it is now.)

## **\*Chapter 3\*: Chapter 3 A unlooked for companion**

Disclaimer: me no own. If i did Musubi would be a secondary character at best and the lovely tsundere goddess Tsukiumi would have already forced Minato to man up within a few days of their meeting.

chapter three here. Realize that I have several chapters written for all of my stories and am posting them after I reread them through a final time, thus at some point in the future my posting speed will fall drastically. In this chapter we see more character development and the trio have a new addition to their family. I always felt that if Minato had simply decided to treat his Sekirei in set, familial ways that a lot of their arguments would have disappeared. Also I have plans for the bond long term, and the constant sex is part of that, not just because I think that the characters are sexy as hell and the original Minato must be a eunuch for not at least making a move or two on his Sekirei. I mean come on!

Oh, and i will warn any Takami/Minaka lovers now, I am going to bash them both severely as the story hist it's stride.

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### **Chapter 3 A unlooked for companion**

The next morning, Minato woke to the smell of breakfast wafting up from the kitchen. He went downstairs to find Akitsu, naked as the day she was born, cooking at the stove preparing a simple breakfast from some groceries that Miya had given them the day before. She looked over at him and said, in what he was coming to think of as her normal deadpan voice, "breakfast will be ready soon."

Minato, unable to control his urges (one of his fantasies had just come to life in front of him) interrupted her cooking, pushing her onto the sink, lips locking in a heated kiss. Akitsu moaned in gleeful acceptance as he slid inside her already wet channel and for the next hour the two of them made love right there in the kitchen.

It ended as they came together. Akitsu convulsed, shuddered moaned and nearly screamed as Minato plunged inside her a final time, jerking his hips spasmodically. The two exchanged kisses and cuddled for a few minutes as they recovered their breath.

Minato smiled, kissing Akitsu's nose as he lifted his weight off her gingerly. "You'll need to start wearing clothing in the mornings, unless you want something like this to happen every time," he murmured softly a smile on his lips as he nuzzled her neck.

Akitsu paused in doing the same to him, cocking her head thoughtfully. Minato laughed and stood back, wagging a finger at her. "Don't even think about it." Akitsu smiled and went upstairs to put on more clothing than came down and finished the meal. Tsukiumi was still asleep. *I will have to let her go first tonight* Akitsu thought.

Minato went up to shower, kissing Tsukiumi on the lips in passing. The three had a quiet breakfast, interrupted frequently by kisses and caresses, all three reveling in their closeness as they shared more of their respective pasts with one another, and the two Sekirei began to give Minato a idea of their abilities. Eventually Minato was forced to leave for work however.

Tsukiumi and Akitsu would spend their day shopping for furniture and stocking up on food, using money Minato gave them. He wanted to see if either showed any talent for keeping to a budget. They would also be planting the MBI cards elsewhere in the city. Hopefully someone would find them and use them, thus throwing MBI off their location. Minato's day on the other hand, would be much more eventful.

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Minato cracked his neck explosively, tired from a long days work at the construction yard. He had been able to change his hours from part time to full time, having dropped his test center courses to concentrate on making money and on the Sekirei plan.

They worked on two old houses today taking down one entirely and ripping the guts out of the other. The pay was good, but the workload was really heavy. For some reason whole sections of the city were being rebuilt, either from the ground up or simply demolished entirely. If Minato had known how widespread the phenomenon was he would have worried. As it was he was simply happy for the work.

He was tired, but before going home to his wives he had one thing he wanted to do. He asked one of his co-workers where a local jewelry store could be found, and headed there immediately after work.

When he looked around at the prices of the distinctive pieces of jewelry there he found himself disappointed. He had hoped to buy two rings, but the prices on show would eat into their reserves heavily. He also wanted something really special for both his wives and didn't see anything that was struck him as perfect, and he wanted them both to be perfect. So instead of buying wedding rings, he looked around at the other jewelry, intending to give them to his wives as promise gifts.

Akitsu, who had looked magnificent in a yukata yesterday, was first. For her, he found an ornamental hairpin. For Tsukiumi he found a bracelet that he hoped she would like. Hiding them in his lunch box, Minato set off for home.

Exiting the subway station nearest their home, he began to hear odd noises coming from the rooftops. He kept watch but could not see what was making the noise. A few minutes later a voice shouted "Out of the way please!" from above him.

Minato looked up just in time to be smashed in the face by a falling body ass first. The woman, he was most definitely certain it was a woman, jumped up and before he could move away had grabbed his wrists and started to run off. Looking back Minato saw they were being pursued by the two sisters he had seen when he first met Tsukiumi. The woman dragged him into an alleyway, still apologizing profusely for having slammed into him.

The two hid there from their pursuers, as Minato finally took a look at the woman. She was a brunette of normal height, but her body seemed to scream with compressed power and strength. She also had the biggest bust that Minato had ever seen, *Even Tsukiumi's smaller than her and that's saying something*. She was dressed like a Miko priestess outfit top and short red skirt and thigh high red stockings, and her expression was one of concern and innocence combined.

Minato heard the two sisters returning and reflexively grabbed the girl, pushing her behind him against the wall, hiding her with his body. Their pursuers passed by with only a glance in his direction, missing the girl entirely. Once he was sure they were gone, Minato turned back to the girl. "Are you all right?"

The girl bowed deeply to him. "Thank you so very, very much for helping Mr. I don't know why those two were chasing me." Minato shrugged, not yet having put two and two together when it came to the sisters, who he had not seen use any kind of superpower unless of course you could count dressing like a dominatrix a superpower.

He did become concerned however when the girl's stomach rumbled loudly. *I think I've seen this pattern before*. Yet despite his concerns, his innate decency would not let him simply walk away from a girl who obviously needed help. Minato sighed and asked her if she wanted him to buy her some food. The girl was ecstatic jumped up and grabbed his hand again, dragging him to the nearest restaurant. Along the way she introduced herself as Musubi, Sekirei #88.

This confirmed Minato's fears but he still did not see any problem with merely helping her. She told him of her search for her Ashikabi, her destined one. She had already finished all the food on her plate, and was looking wistfully at Minato's own food which he had not touched, having only bought it out of habit.

He pushed his meal over to her and watched as she gobbled it down greedily, looking forward to Akitsu's home cooked meal rather than fast food shit. *It must be a Sekirei thing. If any normal woman ate that much on a regular basis, she'd blow up like a blimp*. Deciding to politely separate himself from this girl, he bowed his farewell.

The girl followed him out of the restaurant and when Minato turned around to politely tell her to shove off she said "I think I found him. I think you are my Ashikabi." She leaned forward quickly and pressed her lips to his too fast for him to pull away. Immediately wings of light blazed from her back as Minato's eyes went wide in shock.

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Musubi was a step behind Minato as he walked home. Musubi didn't know what she'd done, but it was obvious her new Ashikabi was angry with her. She felt sad, but had no idea what was wrong. After all, he was her destined one and completing the bond as soon as possible was only natural. "Minato-san, are you angry with me?"

Minato stopped and sighed and looked back at her. "Yes I'm angry with you, but you'll see why if you'll just wait a bit, we're almost home."

Ten tense, silent minutes later, Minato opened the door calling out in a resigned tone of voice "Tsukiumi, Akitsu, I'm home." Both women came out to greet him, eager to see him after nearly ten hours apart, but stopped abruptly at the site of Musubi. Tsukiumi of course was the first to speak, pointing a finger at the newcomer angrily "Minato who is this!?"

Minato sighed wearily. "This is Musubi, my new Sekirei. She winged herself on me." he turned to Musubi and introduced his two wives to her as his wives, emphasizing that point. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Tsukiumi growing angrier and even Akitsu was showing signs of temper in a single spasmodically twitching eyebrow. He could feel the air grow cold around him and saw beads of water starting to form in Tsukiumi's hands and hurriedly explained what had happened making no bones about the fact that he had not winged Musubi on purpose.

After his explanation, Akitsu's anger had disappeared entirely, and she merely nodded at the newcomer before turning back into the kitchen to finish dinner. Tsukiumi on the other hand still glared at her. "Well the solution is simple I'll simply beat her and she'll be out of the game and no longer your Sekirei!"

"Musubi will fight you. That way, Minato will also say that I'm a wife!" In Musubi's world, this made perfect sense.

At this point, Minato lost his temper. "No I won't! I like you Musubi but I did **not** want to become your Ashikabi. I already had Tsukiumi and Akitsu not only as my Sekirei but also as my **wives**, which is a far more important distinction. We had talked, discussed things and gotten to know one another at least a little before deciding to become partners. You simply wanted me as your Ashikabi, and you never asked my opinion about it."

Musubi looked down, ashamed. Minato turned to Tsukiumi "And I don't want you fighting each other. Remember what I said about not knowing what happens to Sekirei who lose their crest or get eliminated from the game."

This made Tsukiumi pause for a moment before she shrugged irritably. "Very well but she will be sleeping in another room." Minato nodded in the affirmative and the three of them went into the kitchen to join Akitsu. Musubi soon left to go to bed exhausted from a long day, and more than a little saddened by her unhappy welcome in the house.

After dinner, Tsukiumi looked down at her hands for a moment and then her bust before looking across at Minato. "Minato are you certain you didn't choose her?"

Akitsu voiced their concerns in her usual blunt manner. "Ahh... Her breasts are larger than either of ours. I understand that men are supposed to be 'crazy' for that kind of thing."

Minato was exasperated with the whole situation, but could understand how insecure they were. After all he was the same way when it came to them. He reached across the dinner table to grasp their hands. "Trust me if I'd seen it coming I would've tried to stop it. But I didn't even know that a Sekirei could perform a ceremony with an Ashikabi without his approval." *On the other hand, that means the opposite might also be true, **Not Good**... Think more on that later.*

Both had the grace to look embarrassed at that, having never explained that only a kiss was necessary, not their asking permission or the vows after. The real part of the bond was simply an exchange of DNA, a kiss was simply the easiest way of accomplishing the exchange. "And I **really** don't find her at all appealing. Yes, her body is attractive but that's true for every Sekirei I've seen so far. I told you it was your personalities as much as your beauty that drew me to both of you."

He blushed and looked down at his hands. "I'm afraid to say that intelligence is a major turn on for me. And Musubi just doesn't have it. Moreover, her personality isn't one I really could see myself in a relationship with, way too perky and naive."

He suddenly realized that providence had given him the best response he could have to this new development. He took out his boxed lunch and pulled out the bag from the jewelry store.

Turning back to his wives he began in a very soft, serious voice. "Tsukiumi when you first said to me that I was your husband, as well as your Ashikabi, it surprised me a lot. I knew I had feelings for you but we'd only known each other for a very short time. I know you had followed me for a week Tsukiumi but I had only seen you twice counting the time we performed the ceremony."

"Akitsu, we only met a few hours before. But as I thought about it, I realized that I did want to spend the rest of my life with both of you. To humans however, there are several things you need to do to be married. One of them is to go through a ceremony so that under the law of the nation you're legally joined. I don't think we can do that right now, as neither of you are registered as citizens." Minato took a deep breath before continuing in a steady voice.

"But there is something I can do for you. I wanted to get you both wedding rings, rings that women wear when they are married and for the rest of their lives. But I couldn't find rings perfect enough to do you justice. Instead, I bought you both these."

He gently turned each girl's hand palm up and placed their gift on them. "I love you both. Before I met you, I'd never even thought of the possibility of loving someone as much as I do now, let alone more than one person. But I do. These symbolize my promise to you that we will spend the rest of our lives together and that after this Sekirei plan is over, I will marry you both and dedicate my life to making you happy. I swear it."

Akitsu and Tsukiumi looked down at the jewelry in their hands. Akitsu's hairpin was burnished silver, with a small ruby set in the end, from which tiny bells hung. She turned it over repeatedly in her palm, listening to the tiny bells jingling in silence before closing her hand over it protectively.

Tsukiumi was also at a loss for words. The bracelet Minato bought her was composed of small worked silver disks, with a single pearl inset into the central disk. Without even thinking about it she clasped it around her right wrist, and stared at it hypnotized by the light playing off the pearl.

Suddenly, it seemed as if both women had teleported around the table tackling Minato to the ground and showering his face with kisses. Tsukiumi was first to claim his lips and the wings of light filled the room with their incandescent brilliance. Akitsu was only a second after her. Insecurities and worries were forgotten as the three lost themselves in each other.

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The next morning Minato and Tsukiumi came down from their shower to a late breakfast. Tsukiumi had found that, while the shower was small, it was large enough for two and that washing her husband was a very pleasant activity, especially when he returned the favor. She was determined that this would become part of their daily regimen.

Musubi looked at her fellow Sekirei quizzically. "Are you both okay? I heard you moaning and shouting in pain last night. Were you training? Can I join?" She was bouncing around in her seat eagerly.

Both Minato and Tsukiumi blushed, but Akitsu very calmly replied, "Ahh... We were not in pain we were having sex with Minato. It is a very enjoyable experience. No you cannot join."

"Aw, but Musubi is also Minato-san's Sekirei. Musubi wants to be his wife too."

Minato shook his head, forcibly clearing his face of the blush (and his mind of the memories) that Akitsu's answer had invoked. "Musubi we've been over this. I told you last night that I don't like you that way."

He looked at his two wives. "I realized something. An Ashikabi and his Sekirei not only form a team, but ideally become family. In a family, each person has a set role and a set relationship with everyone else. I like you Musubi, but not in the way a man loves his wife, or in this case wives. Therefore, you should assume the role of a sister to us. That way everyone will know how to interact with everyone else."

Musubi pouted childishly, "but..."

Minato went on briskly, not giving her the time to protest. "Now, I think I have a good idea about Tsukiumi and Akitsu's powers, but what are yours? I was thinking that after lunch the three of us could find some place and I could watch you all train." *I need to see more of what they can do, and since I don't have work today, we can spend the entire day training.*

Musubi brightened immediately. "That would be great! I'm a close combat type; my specialty is closed fist martial arts!"

Minato nodded thoughtfully. "So we have Tsukiumi, close and far range assault, Akitsu, close and middle range defense, and Musubi, close range combat. That's actually a good mix." His Sekirei all looked at him and he smiled. "If we have to fight as a team, I want us all to know each other's strengths and weaknesses." Tsukiumi and Akitsu shared a look. This comment was yet another clue that Minato had not been a simple soldier when he was in Constantinople but an officer of some kind.

Though she was still irritated at Musubi's presence, Tsukiumi nodded thoughtfully. *Minato's idea of treating her like a younger sister will help a lot. That role is no threat to me for his more physical affections. Akitsu and I alone will have that pleasure. I'm still surprised by how much I enjoy that aspect of our relationship. Minato's stamina and ability to please both my sister-wife and myself is.... incredible, and has gotten even better with practice.*

She shook off her recent memory of dripping water, gentles kisses and rubbing bodies, concentrating on the here and now. "I know a place we can go, but the furniture Akitsu and I bought will be dropped off this afternoon. What will happen if no one's here to meet the movers?"

Minato nodded, grateful for the reminder, touching her cheek briefly in thanks. "I'll go next door and ask someone from Izumo House to listen for them. The three of you change to your fighting outfits and meet me out front." The three women nodded in acceptance, and Minato left the table.

Outside he was surprised to see a car pull up and Kagari get out, looking much the worse for wear. He stumbled, and would have fallen to the pavement if Minato hadn't run up and caught him by the shoulders. The car drove off before he could stop them or even look at the license plate. "Hey Kagari, rough night?"

Kagari's head lolled to the side as he mumbled his reply. "Some, someone spiked my drink, can't remember, ugh." Kagari went limp in Minato's arms.

Minato slung an arm around his waist, and half dragged, half carried his new acquaintance to the inn's entranceway. Miya answered his knock quickly, but her greeting died on her lips at the sight of the now comatose Kagari. Minato quickly relayed to her what Kagari had told him, and the two of them moved him up to his room. After that she retrieved a bucket and placed it next to Kagari's bed just in case, then made him as comfortable as possible. "He should be all right, he seems to only have drunk too much. Thank you for helping him."

Minato shrugged, uncomfortable with praise about something so basic to him as a good deed. "That's ok. I couldn't just leave him there after all."

Miya shook her head. "Still I would like to repay you somehow."

"Well, I actually came over to ask you for a favor. My family and I actually have something we have to do today, but we ordered some furniture that may be delivered sometime this afternoon. I was wondering if someone could watch out for the truck and let them in."

Miya agreed readily, and Minato handed over his house key. "Thank you so much." He left and met his Sekirei outside. When he did, he blinked.

Musubi and Tsukiumi were dressed as they had been when he met them, though Tsukiumi's shirt was now much less form fitting and her skirt longer, but Akitsu was dressed in a loose fitting hakami with long sleeves, loose in the arms and chest but held tightly closed at the waist by a black sash before flaring out around her legs, allowing her full mobility, and she had a pair of heavy chains wrapped around her in an oddly bondage like fashion, which made him gulp. Mindful of his thoughts on the matter, she wore underneath this a white t-shirt and exercise shorts (and underwear, Tsukiumi had insisted. They would also need to pick some up for Musubi while they were out). After a moment Minato shrugged. He wasn't really happy about how sexy it made her look, but if she was happy it was fine with him. *After all, all three of their outfits are incredibly sexy.*

Tsukiumi grabbed Minato around the waist and the four of them made their way on the Sekirei express to an abandoned factory in the far north of the city.

Minato popped outside to a nearby electronics store and bought several items: four on sale pagers (4 for the price of one), an odometer and a stopwatch.

Back in the abandoned factory, he found his Sekirei engaging in a three for all. Musubi was trying to touch Akitsu without getting hit by Tsukiumi's water and Tsukiumi was trying to hit Musubi without being frozen in turn by Akitsu.

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Minato watched them going at it for three hours, making some preliminary observations. He noticed that Musubi was severely outclassed, but wasn't showing any sign of tiring or giving up. *She's fast and has good instincts, but little experience, far too much unnecessary movement, only seems to like to charge ahead unthinking and her reaction time seems to be inconsistent. Sometimes it's normal, other times superhuman. Weird. Is it a situational awareness thing?*

Akitsu was the hardest to read. She was indeed primarily a defender as he'd first thought, her power not reaching farther than sixty feet from her. *Within that sixty feet radius though, her powers are deadly.* Besides random ice spears and other ice based weapons she was able to freeze Musubi and Tsukiumi each once enough to slow their movements, and once was able to do it so subtly that Musubi was completely frozen before she could react. She also tended to freeze any of Tsukiumi's water attacks that she noticed in time, though Tsukiumi responded by attacking from multiple angles at once and halting any attack thus frozen before the ice could reach her. *Those spears of ice Akitsu occasionally throws out go farther than that, though they don't seem to do much damage, and move slow enough they can be dodged easily. She's also fast on her feet.*

Tsukiumi had no defense at all, she was purely an attacker with no blocking technique, merely dodging Akitsu's attacks and keeping her distance from Musubi. But her attacks were fast, versatile and powerful. *She's also the most experienced of the three with more attack types and far better situational awareness. She learns from her mistakes and has very few openings the others can capitalize on.* She was also adapting her attacking style to her opponent's weaknesses as he watched. *Her lack of defense is troubling however.*

Happy with his analysis so far, Minato whistled sharply to draw their attention, ending the session. As they came over he kissed each of them on the cheek. "You three are amazing!" The three smiled happily, even the reserved Akitsu blushed slightly, happy about both the praise and affection. "I have several things I want to mention though. Musubi, you have too much wasted motion. You seem to want to use your full weight and power on each hit rather than just enough to get the job done. And you need to work on your dodging ability." He gestured at her torn clothing, making certain to keep his eye on her face. Her clothing had clearly taken more damage than that of his wives, ripped by water strikes and still frozen in other places. "I want you to work on dodging small objects in enclosed spaces and work on your overall speed, I'll think about some training exercises for that later. I don't know how durable you are and I don't want to find out, but speed coupled with skill is better than uncoordinated brute force."

Musubi looked down abashed and Minato reached out and ruffled her hair. "Don't worry little sister, with some training and a little bit of thought you'll become a lot better very quickly." Musubi nodded happily and Minato turned to Tsukiumi.

With Tsukiumi, he allowed himself to take in her ripped and torn clothing and the amount of skin thus revealed. His open appreciation of her body made her preen, practically glowing under his gaze. "Tsukiumi, I have three observations about your style. The first is something I think you are already working on but I need to ask. You seemed to use only one stream of water at first, but later you used several. Is that right?"

Tsukiumi nodded. "I realized after our meeting that I concentrate too much on one attack and that if it's blocked, I recover too slowly. I want to attack from multiple angles at once with equal force."

Minato grinned and kissed her again, this time on the lips, lighting up the entire factory with her wings. "That's great. But I have two other ideas I want to try out." Tsukiumi blushed brightly at the kiss, not comfortable with showing such affection in public yet, watching as he got out the odometer. Next to her Musubi had stiffened slightly jealous of the attention her Ashikabi was paying someone else.

"Can you shoot one of your normal attacks past me?" He pointed the device to the side as Tsukiumi shrugged, doing as he requested. After the stream of water stopped the odometer read 125kph. "Wow. Okay that's impressive, but I want to try something. Can you make the stream smaller?" Again Tsukiumi shrugged, concentrated and fired a water stream, smaller in diameter by half than the previous one. The odometer this time read 450kph. "Much better. Musubi, can you find us a sheet of metal somewhere?"

Musubi nodded and bounded off. Minato turned to Akitsu, whose clothing had not been touched. He still made a point of looking at her body appreciatively though. "Akitsu, I want you to work on the same thing as Tsukiumi. Your power is mainly defensive, but I think you can use it to attack if you can create multiple small icicles and throw them at faster speeds than the large ice spears you were using. They're too easy to dodge, and don't do much damage even if they hit."

Akitsu nodded, but seemed glum about it, and Minato smiled at her reaching out to touch her cheek gently. He was getting better every hour in her company at reading her emotions, despite her lack of expression outside the safety of their bed/home. "You don't like the idea of hurting anyone do you?" Akitsu nodded, leaning into his touch, sighing contentedly. "Alright, in that case, I would like you to try and expand the area in which you can freeze things. That way you can defend more of us at once and won't have to actively attack anyone." He rubbed the back of his head in confusion, "though I have no idea how you will do that."

Akitsu nodded chin hardening in determination. *To protect my Ashikabi and family I will try!* Minato went on, giving her the stopwatch. "I want to see if you can freeze things faster, and what types of things freeze faster. For example," he indicated an empty can lying on the ground nearby. "Can you freeze this?" She nodded, and three seconds later, the can was completely frozen as if it had been soaked in liquid nitrogen. "I also wanted to show you this." He reached out and smacked the can lightly, and it shattered into pieces. "If you face a Sekirei who uses a weapon like that guy from the other night, this technique will be very useful if you learn to do it fast enough." Akitsu nodded again.

Musubi returned with a small piece of junk metal, two feet long and three inches thick. Minato had her wedge it into the wall and asked Tsukiumi to shoot one of her water attacks at it. Like the second one he had clocked it was about palm size in diameter, and expanded its power on the metal shard without damaging it. "Now, try to make the stream even smaller and faster." Tsukiumi broke into a sweat concentrating, and was able to shoot out a stream as small as

two fingers put together, shooting it out at the junk metal. As the stream died, the four of them could see it had punched straight through the metal. The odometer this time read 999kph, the highest it could go, which probably meant the stream had been going a lot faster. Minato hugged Tsukiumi, swinging her around in the air. "I knew you could do it! That's great. You could hit enemies through walls and even armor that way." They whirled to a halt, and Minato put Tsukiumi down, much to her regret.

"There is one thing I want you all to think about: think outside your specialty. Akitsu, you need to find a way to attack long range and defend yourself without relying on freezing your enemies. At some point we may face an enemy you can't freeze." Akitsu nodded thoughtfully. "Musubi, you need to figure out some kind of long range attack as well. If your enemy can keep their distance like Tsukiumi or Akitsu, you won't be able to do anything." Musubi pouted, but nodded agreement. "Tsukiumi, you need to work on your defense. You won't always be able to keep your distance or dodge." Tsukiumi nodded, having already thought of this, and possibly a way to address this concern. Minato looked at his Sekirei and smiled, glad that they were all listening to him. "That's enough for today. Let head home."

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Minato and his Sekirei arrived back home and found dozens of boxes of various sizes outside their house, along with a soft looking black leather sofa and matching chair lying on the street. Miya and Uzume were both just coming out of the inn, looking at the pile of boxes. Minato raised an eyebrow in inquiry before bowing to them. "Good afternoon, ladies. How's Kagari and what happened here? I thought movers are supposed to move your furniture into the house, not leave it out on the street."

Miya looked at the ragged clothing of Musubi and the others. "Ara, ara, What have you all been up to? That is certainly not appropriate clothing for wearing outside. And who is this?" Her demon mask appeared again and terrified all three women and Minato. Seizing her chance Uzume made a run for it before Miya could turn the stare of doom upon her again.

The three ran off into the house to change as Minato hurriedly came up with an explanation of Musubi's sudden presence. "Um, one of Akitsu and Tsukiumi's relatives came to the area and is now staying with us. We put her up in one of the small bedrooms and Tsukiumi and I have toned down things down around her, we really don't want to embarrass or corrupt her at all. Please don't be concerned about their clothing, we were playing soccer and the game got a bit too rowdy as they are all really competitive." This came out in a rush as Minato tried to stave off the demon before his brain could catch up with his terror. *Soccer, great excuse Minato, no way she'll believe that!*

To his surprise Miya nodded equably, and the demon disappeared. "It's nice that they all get along so well. Kagari-san is still feeling very ill, but he was able to eat some soup earlier. As for the movers, they apparently ran off, I don't know why." Minato looked at her. *If they saw the demon head attack for whatever reason, say Uzume answering the door dressed like she was a minute ago, no wonder they ran off! I would've run too.*

Musubi came out of the house, followed swiftly by Tsukiumi who began to order her to carry in the sofa and then the larger boxes. Each box would have taken two or three strong men to lift, but Musubi lifted them easily by herself. Miya smiled at her. "My, you are very strong Musubi-chan."

"Hai. That's because I'm a combat type Sekirei!" Miya laughed, calling her a silly girl and ruffling her hair. Minato smiled to himself as he began to wonder about some things, relieved that Miya had not asked Musubi what she meant by that.

Uzume came back outside dressed in form fitting jeans and t-shirt. She and Minato joined in as Miya went inside to help Akitsu prepare a meal for everyone. Once Musubi had moved the larger boxes into each room as directed by Tsukiumi, Minato opened them and began to put the furniture together. With Uzume's help, the ladies were able to carry everything else into the house in under an hour. Putting the furniture together took about the same time, but it was another hour until Tsukiumi, who had designated herself the interior designer, was satisfied with where everything was.

The house now had several styles present. The main room and kitchen held comfortable, plain furniture, mostly leather and wood with a small closet centering the main room along with two large used leather sofas. The furniture in both of the guest rooms was durable and mostly new age, built around metal and plastics.

The furniture in the master bedroom, centered on a large king sized futon bed, was traditional Japanese, with paper lanterns, a simple divan, and a wooden closet with a dragon pattern carved into the wood.

Minato was delighted that his wives had been able to buy so much furniture with only 4000 yen. Apparently, the furniture for the guest rooms and main room had come from a resale store that was closing its doors. The king size futon bed was the most expensive item, but Minato was not about to begrudge that purchase. Indeed, all three of

them looked at it rather longingly, wanting to try it out as soon as possible. Decoration accomplished, everyone adjourned to the dining room, hungry but happy after a job well done.

After dinner, Minato began to massage Tsukiumi's shoulders. Musubi immediately asked him to do the same while Akitsu merely determined that she would ask Minato to massage her later in private without irritating clothing between her and his touch. Uzume teasingly joined in, but did not get a rise out of Minato or his wives as she had wished, though she could tell he was embarrassed.

Minato tried to stop himself from caressing rather than massaging. He failed. Throughout her massage Tsukiumi was biting her lip to keep from moaning, silently urging their guests to leave as soon as possible. As he moved to Uzume and Musubi, he kept on trying. By the end of their own massages, Musubi fell asleep in her chair and Uzume was seriously questioning her sexual orientation.

Thankfully, she and Miya soon left, wanting to bring Kagari some dinner. Akitsu carried Musubi into the living room and put her on the sofa, covering her with a blanket before literally sprinting up the stairs to join Minato before Tsukiumi could return from escorting their guests to the door. In the end, first or second, both women fell asleep with contented smiles on their faces, Minato sandwiched between them.

end chapter 3

## **\*Chapter 4\*: Chapter 4 First strike and a Newcomer**

I do not own Sekirei, which should be obvious because Uzume was allowed to die. Why Damn you, why! Then again I can't write her for crap anyway... If anyone can think of scenes with Uzume they want me to add I can try though. Double update for this story today because I only recently split these chapters up and tend to still think of them as one large chapter. I won't be updating any of my stories until Wednesday at the earliest though. Real life hits me hard on Mondays and Tuesdays. Twice weekly updates will be the norm from then on.

### **Chapter 4 First strike and a newcomer**

#### **Two days after Musubi's winging**

Minato knew he was dreaming. A part of him could still feel Tsukiumi's thighs against his own and hear Akitsu's breathing against his ear. But the rest of his consciousness faded into the dream.

Minato was in the woods near his home. These woods were a special place, a place where his little sister would come when she was unhappy and in the distance he heard the sounds of someone crying, much like Yukari used to.

After an indeterminate amount of time, he neared the sounds source, the sobbing getting louder as he ran. He rounded a tree to see a tuft of yellow in a tree in front of him.

He looked up into the tree to see a young girl of about eleven, with blonde hair much like Tsukiumi's and green eyes, set in an oval face. She wore a loose skirt of white that had seen better days, dirty and ragged with use. She was crying, sobbing into her hands as she leaned against the tree's trunk, obviously terrified from the height.

Minato smiled up at her. "What's wrong? Can't get down?" he raised his arms up towards her, smiling. "Don't worry, I'll catch you. You don't have to be scared anymore." The girl trembled, but after a few moments of hesitation made the decision and leapt down into his arms. He caught her gently, though the impact of her body sent them both to the ground. The girl clung to him, crying softly for a few minutes, as Minato stroked her hair soothingly. As the sniffling subsided, he asked gently, "what's your name?"

The girl stopped sniffling and looked up at her face red from crying. "Kusano."

"Ku-chan, that's a nice name." the girl smiled happily leaning against his chest. "What are you doing here? How did he get up in that tree?"

Ku-chan sniffled a little more but answered his questions. "Kusano wanted to go out. The doctor took me to the park but I wanted to stay out longer. It's all my fault. I chased a cat but a bad woman came with a stick thing and I ran away. Here I'm safe, but I can't get out. But you came and found me onii-chan."

The dream began to fade, though Minato tried to keep hold of it for a bit longer. The last words he heard were "onii-chan!" shouted over and over.

Minato woke up, hand outstretched as if to grasp the dream girl's hand. He looked to both sides and was thankful to see Tsukiumi and Akitsu still sleeping. He smiled at them, face full of love as he reached out and gently caressed their cheeks. Moving quietly he got out of their thrice christened bed and began to work through some exercises wondering about the dream. *I've never seen a girl like that before, so it couldn't have been a memory. What could it mean? It's pretty clear that she needs help, whatever it means. But what is her connection to me?*

Minato was halfway through his last stomach rep when he noticed that Tsukiumi was awake watching him. Her voice was soft so as to not wake Akitsu, allowing her sister-wife to sleep a little longer before she would have to get up and cook breakfast. Tsukiumi had attempted to help yesterday, and had found she had no aptitude for that particular art. Akitsu on the other hand enjoyed cooking immensely in her own quiet way. "Something troubling you? You look tense."

Minato stopped and looked over at her with one of his shy, apologetic smiles that so warmed her heart. "Sorry did I wake you?"

Tsukiumi shook her head and looked at him with love in her eyes, repeating the question.

After wiping off the sweat from his brow, he walked over and kissed her on the lips, enjoying the visible sight of their love as her crest wings glowed in response. He whispered against her lips pressing their foreheads together, reveling

in the knowledge that their connection, their love became more powerful with each passing day, despite his ongoing worries about the speed with which their connection had formed. "I love you."

Tsukiumi's eyes misted as she responded in kind and the two felt Akitsu's arms encircling them both, adding her own silent vow to theirs. After a timeless moment, Minato explained in a quiet voice about his dream, after which he asked, "Can an Ashikabi dream of his Sekirei? And are there Sekirei that young that will be made to join this so called game?"

Tsukiumi shook her head resignedly. "To Minaka, every Sekirei is part of the plan regardless of age." Akitsu nodded reluctant agreement. Minato growled in rising anger. The very thought of a girl as young as the one he had seen engaging in combat made his fists clench in anger. Tsukiumi went on, her possessive nature getting the better of her. "Would you really want to wing a girl that young? We already have Musubi after all. I don't want to have to share you with yet another Sekirei."

Minato twitched at that. Musubi, in her own naïve way, had kept on asking to be a wife and she refused to take no for an answer. All she knew was that it was fun and Akitsu and Tsukiumi were both doing it. She was woefully ignorant about normal man/woman interaction and kept on pulling him into hugs face first into her chest whenever she could despite his making his disinterest plain. The idea of a girl as young as the girl in his dreams acting like that was beyond disturbing.

Akitsu shook her head, making Minato look at her. "Ahh... Minato's idea of treating his Sekirei as family is a good one. Eventually Musubi will understand and settle down. A girl that young could be another younger sister to us all or a daughter, and thus no danger to our own positions. We could also use the practice." Both her life-mates blushed at the implication of what she was saying but also felt a thrill at the idea. Tsukiumi nodded agreement, while Minato kept blushing. "We'll have to wait and see what happens as we've no clue where this girl could be. The best thing we can do is keep our eyes open today. If anything comes up, we can use the pagers Minato-sama bought us."

Tsukiumi took this idea a step further. "When you go to work Minato either myself or one of the others will follow you and keep an eye on you. Sekirei are destined to find their Ashikabi and something will happen to point you in the right direction of this girl. When it does, we need to be in a position to act on it."

Akitsu nodded agreement, while Minato looked a little uncomfortable, still unhappy with the idea that his wives would be protecting him and not the other way around. But he knew he had to resign himself to it. *The girls'll never let me fight by myself, and I've not even told them I'm going to try to fight alongside them yet...*

Over breakfast, Minato relayed his dream to Musubi who eagerly agreed with his wives about how to handle the situation. She was even more adamant about the fact that if he dreamed about this girl, he was destined to become her Ashikabi. Minato did not like the idea of destiny playing a role in his life but he could not deny that there seemed to be some kind of connection working here. And Musubi's insistence and offer to help actually made him feel better towards her too.

Minato left the house as his three Sekirei were playing rock paper scissors to see who would watch him thought, *there are some aspects of this I hope I never get used to. Watching three super-powerful alien women play jan-ken-pon for the 'honor' of following me around all day to is just too strange for words.*

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Seconds after punching out for lunch Minato dropped onto a thick pile of wooden planks, stomach growling in anticipation. Akitsu may still think her cooking left much to be desired, but to him her cooking was as the food of the gods and he looked forward eagerly to every meal. *Perhaps because watching her prepare it either naked or only wearing an apron just for me heightens its flavor. Does that make me a pervert, or merely male? A question best left to others I think, so long as I can continue to reap the benefits.*

Today, however, she had received help from Miya, making the food go from excellent to incredible. Miya had made too much food for breakfast and had offered some leftovers to Akitsu because she had seen how much Musubi ate the day before, even more than Minato's wives.

Miya was an interesting person in many ways, Minato reflected. It was obvious she knew more than she was letting on, her lack of surprise at Musubi's strength the other day had been proof of that, let alone her allowing his horrible excuse for the girl's frayed clothing to slide. He'd lay odds that she knew about the 'plan', but she seemed completely apathetic toward it. She was friendly, and seemed to enjoy his groups company, but he could feel she had yet to truly open up to them.

He looked up as his coworker Seo sat down next to him, eyeing his lunch box enviously. Minato grinned, pointing to

the things he knew Miya had cooked rather than those cooked by **his** Akitsu. Despite his ongoing concern about the speed of their courtship and his overall worthiness to be with them, he treasured the little things they did for him to much to share that. "You can have three bites Seo but that's it."

The man smiled and leaned forward eagerly. "Thanks youngster." he took a bite from a rice ball and his expression changed to thoughtfulness, "This taste..."

Their meal was interrupted as a sudden flurry of steps reached their ears and someone took a flying leap at Seo, kicking the two men into each other and onto the ground, the bento landing face down in the dirt nearby.

Minato looked up in a daze to watch Seo being shaken like a rag doll by a woman dressed in a maid's outfit, a woman who looked very familiar to him, and another woman standing next to her. "How dare you take someone else's lunch after you told us to bring you some?!"

Seo didn't look nervous at all, merely chagrined at being caught. "Ah, Hikari."

"Don't 'Ah' me! Don't you have any shame at all?!" She began to shake him even more roughly.

The other woman reached down and helped Minato stand, apologizing for her sister's exuberance and Seo's greediness. She looked up from bowing as Minato at last shook his head clear and they both shouted aloud, pointing at one another in shock.

"The angry kid!"

"The dominatrix duo!"

Seo looked at the three of them quizzically. "You know each other?" Minato laughed and explained where he had seen the two before, leaving out the fact that Tsukiumi and Musubi were both his Sekirei now.

Seo took one look at him and said "so you're an Ashikabi too huh?" Minato looked at him in shock and Seo laughed. "I have a sixth sense about these things."

He reached a hand around each of the girls pulling them into his body and not incidentally fondling their breasts roughly. "These two are Hikari and Hibiki, my Sekirei." Hikari growled angrily and lightning suddenly flashed out of the sky smashing into Seo. Minato looked down at his smoking form and shook his head, a large sweatdrop appearing on his head. *Seems there are many different types of Sekirei and Ashikabi relationships.* He turned back to his bento and frowned unhappily. "My bento...."

The four of them were interrupted by the supervisor coming over to talk with them. "Works ended for the day guys, you can all leave now."

Seo grinned, happy at getting out of work, but Minato was both suspicious and irritated. The furniture, utilities (two months payment ahead mandatory for those without credit history like Minato and his ladies) and house itself had severely depleted the money he had gotten from selling his antiques, and he really wanted to build up his cash reservoir again. "Why the sudden stop?"

The supervisor shrugged. "Something went wrong with a botanical growth experiment at a nearby park. MBI is bringing in some specialists to deal with it and clearing everyone out in a five block radius as a safety precaution."

At the name MBI both Minato and Seo went on alert.

"Come on, kid." Seo lead the way to the east of the construction area. From the construction entrance, both Ashikabi were able to see the park in question. Even from a block away they could see the park was completely overgrown with massive plant growth, far larger and more numerous than was naturally found in nature. Trees and other plants were literally overgrowing the walls, and the inside was completely obscured by new growth.

As they were looking at the park, Seo received a message on his cell phone. Minato's cell beeped a few seconds later and he looked at it in shock. Only his wives had the number and neither of them would contact him on it except in the direst of circumstances. Looking at it quickly though, he was relieved to see an enigmatic message rather than an emergency one from his wives. That someone else had been able to find his new number in two days and contact him on it so easily was worrisome, but he put aside that worry for a moment. The message read, "The green girl waits in the garden for the one strong enough to claim her."

He looked over at Seo's cell phone, and saw the same message displayed there. "Could this message have

something to do with the girl in my dream?" Minato muttered.

"What's this about a 'girl in your dream'?" Seo asked.

Minato looked at him, and after a moment's hesitation, explained to Seo and the two sisters about his dream. Seo nodded thoughtfully. He put an arm around Minato's shoulders, hiding his surprise at how wiry and solid the younger man was underneath his baggy shirt. "What say we see what this is all about huh?"

Minato nodded agreement, but was cautious in accepting the other man's help. "Why do you want to help Seo?"

"Blunt aren't you?" Seo looked off in the direction of MBI tower, then back to Minato. "You said you had a dream of this girl right? Well, I want to see proof of that bond. I want to force Minaka and his ilk to understand that destiny can't be fucked with."

Minato looked at him a moment, then nodded thankfully. He wasn't a great believer in destiny, but that didn't mean that there wasn't something else at work when it came to Sekirei/Ashikabi bonds.

As they left the construction site, Akitsu jumped down from a nearby building. Her cold gaze fixed on the two sisters, having seen their accidental assault on her Ashikabi (and the bento she worked hard to cook for him). She moved to stand next to Minato, taking his hand protectively and if looks could kill both sisters would have been corpsicles within seconds. Minato stroked her cheek, calming her down before wrapping his arms around her in a possessive hug. Despite this her glare continued to pin the sisters in place.

Seo grinned but before he could say anything Minato took out his cell and sent a prearranged message to Musubi and Tsukiumi, telling them to meet him at his workplace. "Now we wait." Seo shrugged and took out a cigarette, leaning against a nearby wall. The two sisters, uncomfortable under Akitsu's frozen glare retreated next to him, wondering what they were waiting for. Within 5 minutes Tsukiumi and Musubi both arrived jumping down from the rooftops. Seo grinned and said "Wow kid you sure lucked out, they're all hot! You're a lucky man."

Tsukiumi bristled at this monkey's presumption at speaking about her like that but Minato calmed her down by touching her Sekirei crest gently. She reflexively closed her eyes, feeling his love for her flow into her. This was something that the three of them had discovered last night as they tried out new positions. The Sekirei crest acted almost the same as a kiss, transferring emotions between the two. It was also a highly erogenous zone, a fact that Minato had used to his benefit. "I am a lucky man Seo but it's not their bodies I'm in love with, it's their souls."

Hikari and Hibiki's both sighed at this romantic line while Akitsu and Tsukiumi simply hugged Minato to them as Musubi reached out and took his hand. She was tempted to pull him into a hug like normal, but had received a stern talking to about acting appropriately in public by both Miya and Tsukiumi earlier so holding hands would have to be enough for now.

Quickly, Minato outlined the message that he had received and his and Seo feelings about the park down the road and its connection to the odd message and Minato's dream. Musubi and Tsukiumi were for rushing in right now, but Minato convinced them to wait until nighttime. Akitsu never joined the argument, content to follow Minato's lead.

The group waited on a nearby rooftop, watching the activity around the park. They watched as the area was forcefully cleared of all civilians while tanks, APCs, and several squads of infantry formed a defensive cordon around the park entrance.

Minato looked over the troops deployed below with an experienced eye and cursed inwardly at yet another sign of how powerful MBI was. He recognized two American built Abrams main battle tanks and four Japanese Type 96 APC's down there. The first was downright scary in how much influence in America it showed, and he had no idea of the cost, but knew even the APC's were more modern, capable and equally more expensive than any of the forces Turkey had deployed in Constantinople. Though the weapons the troops were carrying were a mixed bag. *NTK-62's and Ak-47's and a few crew served weapons I don't recognize. Still, whatever their small arms weapons, the rest of their gear tells me a lot, not to mention being able to move that many troops in what is supposed to be the capital of Japan without government authority. I'm rapidly beginning to feel like David facing off against a horde of Goliaths.* He decided to see what Seo wanted to do before going on with his own plan, as the man was the more experienced Ashikabi. "So have you got a plan?"

Seo grinned. "We really don't need a plan we just have to go through the front door."

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Hikari and Hibiki's combined lightning struck the ground scattering troops everywhere as Musubi ran forward from a

doorway nearest their position and picked up one of the Abram tanks before it could start its engine, throwing it aside like it weighed no more than the sofa from the day before. Swiftly crouching she dodged a rocket from a bazooka and jumped forward, grabbing the trooper using it and hurling him to land among several more soldiers with an audible thump. She continued to jump around catching single soldiers here and there and throwing them around while dodging streams of bullets grinning wildly. "Musubi is having fun!"

Akitsu shook her head in amusement at the simple pleasure shown by her fellow Sekirei, at the same time encasing several soldiers in ice before they could react. Humans, she had discovered, were much easier to freeze than Sekirei who apparently had much a higher tolerance against heat and cold.

She moved forward, and next froze an APC that had not disembarked its troop yet into a solid piece of ice. Other troopers that found themselves within her sixty feet radius yelled in shock as their weapons suddenly became too cold to touch. They hurriedly dropped their weapons and watched in wonder as the guns shattered like glass upon impact. This single act took most of the regular infantrymen out of the battle, and the number of bullets the Sekirei were dodging dropped dramatically.

Meanwhile Tsukiumi used the technique Minato had trained her in to take care of the other tank. She opened up its top with three well-placed shots of her water cannon as it tried to bring its gun to bear. The entire turret shattered and peeled away like paper under her assault.

The troops inside stuck their heads out, took one look at the water wielding goddess, and ran for it. Next she turned and used a shield of water, a new technique she had thought up the night before, to absorb fire from two of the remaining machine gun emplacements, clearing out each with a single brute force deluge. She dodged to her left, sweeping her hand forward and smashing the APC firing at her with a battering ram of water, knocking it onto its side.

Minato used the distraction his and Seo's Sekirei were creating to run forward, tackling a soldier with a walkie-talkie to the ground. The man tried to fight back but Minato slammed his head down, spun him around and twisted both arms behind his back. By the time he was done taking his prisoner, the rest of the security force was either running in panic unconscious or frozen.

Seo who had stood well away from the action watching as the girls had their fun, strolled up to stand next to him. "Well, kid impressive, aren't they?"

Minato nodded, keeping his face under control as he jerked the trooper he had tackled up to his feet. He had seen his three Sekirei fighting each other in practice, but seeing them fight regular troops was something else entirely. *Two state of the art American main battle tanks, four APC's of recent vintage and 6 infantry squads not only defeated but routed in under five minutes of combat, by Buddha!* Minato looked at one of the APCs which Hikari and Hibiki had blown open. Noticing an MBI logo on it he grinned. He might not have the ability right now to fight MBI in a stand up fight, but at least here he was hurting them a little. *Unless of course this is also part of their game, and these troops were only here to be sacrificed. I really don't want to think that MBI has enough money to eat the cost of that many expensive machines and not care.*

Minato turned to Akitsu and Musubi. "You two please stay here and guard our back. Tsukiumi you come with me." All three of his Sekirei looked at him, bemused by his sudden authoritative manner, but he kept moving eyes shifting from one place to another as he pushed his prisoner in front of him. Tsukiumi and Akitsu exchanged a glance realizing that Minato had changed, taking charge and confirming even more strongly that he had not been a simple soldier in Constantinople. He had been some kind of leader before. But his orders made sense so they both decided to follow them.

Seo grinned, thinking that Musubi and Akitsu were merely obedient, and wondered how he could change Hikari and Hibiki's personalities to be compliant as well. The three of them ran to catch up to Minato, who was still pushing his prisoner ahead of himself. He had questions he wanted answered, and a message he wanted to send.

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Unbeknownst to Minato and the others, a limo had pulled up on another street abutting the atrium. A familiar figure got out, followed by a young woman dressed in a formfitting yellow jumpsuit and wielding a whip. Hayato ordered, "You two, get me the green girl. Don't bother coming back without her." both girls nodded and jumped the fence, moving into the park.

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A few minutes after Minato disappeared into the jungle like depths of the park another figure bounded down from a nearby rooftop. Homura stood for a moment surveying the carnage, and shook his head. "Seo's normal slash and burn job I see." He turned and caught sight of Musubi and Akitsu guarding the park entrance. Akitsu was looking at

him, face blank of emotion, while Musubi was practically bouncing in her eagerness to fight. He attempted to bow theatrically to them, but overbalanced as his head suddenly exploded in pain.

A pillar of ice formed in front of him and arrested his forward momentum. He stared in surprise at it before looking at the two women. Akitsu cocked her head quizzically. "Ahh... are you sick?"

Kagari shook his head gingerly and backed away a little. "I don't suppose there's any way I can talk you into letting me pass?"

Akitsu put a hand out stopping Musubi from moving forward. "Homura?" The man in the black mask nodded bemused at being recognized by someone he hadn't met before in this persona. "Ahh... You call yourself the defender of Sekirei." Homura nodded again, still off balance. "Tsukiumi told me about you. There is no need for your aid here; my Ashikabi will not allow harm to come to the girl within." A small smile graced her impassive features. "Ahh...And you seem to be too ill to fight us."

Homura nodded, gently holding his head in his hands. "I won't argue with you there. But is your Ashikabi the one destined to" he stopped as both girls nodded affirmatively.

Musubi elaborated in her normal outgoing manner. "Minato-san had a dream about her. Don't worry, he'll find her."

Homura nodded, still cursing whoever had drugged his drink two nights ago. He still hadn't recovered from whatever it was. Akitsu was right he was in no shape to fight anyone, let alone someone whose powers appeared to be the exact opposite of his own. He would have to take their word for it. Besides, everything he had thus far seen from Minato told Homura that he could trust him. With a final nod, he bounced away looking forward to a hot compress and some extra strength Excedrin.

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As soon as they entered the Park Minato was gripped by a vision. Kusano stood in front of him, holding out her arms in entreaty. Minato moved forward blindly trying to catch up to her and nearly slammed into a tree, but Tsukiumi grabbed his shoulder and stopped him just in time. "Minato, are you all right?"

"I, I saw the girl again. She's here. I think I know where she is." He reached over and grabbed the prisoner's arm again, wrenching it up behind his back painfully. "What were your orders here?"

The guard grunted in pain but answered readily. "Guard the entrance to the park. Keep out any civilians, wait for the cleanup crew." His eyes shifted to Tsukiumi and the sisters before flicking away, clearly afraid for his life. "Put up as much resistance as possible to any Sekirei assault without significant loss of life."

"Significant loss of life" Minato parroted. "So, you know about the Sekirei, and knew what to expect. Were you told what was going on in here, or what you were 'guarding'?" The soldier shook his head, confused. Minato wanted to spit. "Just blindly obeying orders huh? Well, my friend today you're going to see what you've been 'guarding'. MOVE!" He shoved the man forward.

A few minutes later they came upon a huge tree in the center of the park. Amid its roots was a small cave hollowed out of the earth, from which the faintest echo of weeping could be heard. Minato asked everyone else to wait as he entered the small cave alone. In the cave, Minato found the little girl curled up into a ball sniffing in fear. Minato smiled and sat down near her, calling out softly "Ku-chan?"

The girl looked up and squealed excitedly at seeing him, getting up and half running, half stumbling into his arms. "Onii-chan!" Minato spent a few minutes simply hugging her to him, as she sobbed happily. After a few minutes, the sobbing stopped and Minato stood up still holding the little girl up into his arms. "Do you want to come home with me?" Kusano nodded sleepily, body overcome by its exertions.

Once out of the cave, he glared at the soldier, who stood looking at the blond girl in shock. "A little girl." He said quietly. "A little girl, scared and alone who'll be made to fight in a game devised by your boss against opponents who'll try to kill her. So tell me, is your honor worth that nice paycheck of yours?" His tone was so biting it was like a physical force stabbing into his target.

The soldier opened his mouth to reply but instead blood erupted out of his mouth as a black scythe came out of his shoulder and continued down into his body, nearly slicing it in two. A shrill voice shouted out as the scythe swung back, blood arcing off it as it came towards Minato's head. "Stay away from her! That little girl belongs to be my Master!"

Tsukiumi stepped forward swiftly and used her newest technique, a small shield of water to block the sweeping scythe blade, recognizing the girl who had tried to capture Akitsu when they first met.

The girl jumped back irritably shouting "Get out of my way! I, Sekirei # 98, Yomi, must return to my master with that girl!" another Sekirei, dressed in a black and yellow jumpsuit and with blond hair done into two twin tails with a whip in her hand stepped out of the darkness to join her, staring at the body of the dead soldier in horror.

Minato put Kusano down motioning her to stay behind him while he stood next to Tsukiumi, facing the newcomers. To one side he saw Seo looking down at the dead soldier, but motioning Hikari and Hibiki to stay out of it.

Minato was almost quivering with anger. "And would your master wing her against her will and make her fight? She's only a little girl!"

Yomi shrugged carelessly, spilling more blood from her scythes head. "Whatever her will is now, it'll change when she's winged. My master has commanded me and that is all that matters!" She licked the scythe, closing her eyes momentarily in ecstasy at the taste of blood on her tongue. The girl next to her flinched again but reluctantly took up a fighting stance next to her, cracking her whip, but her eyes kept darting back to the soldier's body.

Minato nodded, face bleak and hard. "Thank you so much for being so clear about it. Tsukiumi, she's yours."

He suddenly threw the gun he was holding at the Sekirei next to Yomi and charged forward distracting her from watching Tsukiumi and the sisters. She recovered from her shock at the dead guard and reflexively snapped her whip first to block the gun then at him but he had expected this and dropped to the ground sticking one arm up allowing the whip to tangle itself up around his arm on the recoil. The whip's energy expended itself on his skin leaving a long painful bruise. Grimly Minato used his forward momentum and rolled on the ground, trapping it between his body and the ground and pulling it off the still off balance girl's hand. Caught off guard by his sudden attack and disarmed the girl jumped backwards.

At the same second Minato moved Yomi charged forward. Tsukiumi met her advance and used her water shield to block her scythe's swing again. Instead of acting like a solid surface and bouncing the scythe blade harmlessly away as it had the bullets and the scythe earlier however, the water gave just a little bit.

Yomi grinned triumphantly and began to swing her scythe even faster, slicing at Tsukiumi from multiple angles. Each time Tsukiumi blocked the attack, but Yomi's scythe sank into the water a little more.

Her triumph turned to anger as she suddenly realized that the water was disintegrating her scythe head, the faster she swung, the faster it disappeared.

Tsukiumi had created her shield out of water revolving in a flat ovoid. The water inside the outer layer of the ovoid was moving at extremely high speeds, so that when something was pushed into it, it hit water moving at speeds in excess of 300 mph.

Within seconds, the scythe was nothing more than a long pole.

As Yomi fell back in shock at losing her weapon, Tsukiumi glared at her. This woman had stated that she would kill her husband without even a thought and proved she was capable of doing so by killing their prisoner. *In that case I will oblige her in kind!* She thought grimly. She raised her hand and slammed Yomi aside with a massive blast of water, smashing her into the other Sekirei as she jumped back from losing her whip. Gathering her power, she summoned up ten small streams of water and with a great shout of "Mizu no Ya Barrage!" sent all of them at the two enemy Sekirei.

Realizing her intention, Minato shouted, "Only hit the girl with the scythe!" Tsukiumi nodded, cancelling half of her attacks before they could reach their target. Yomi blocked two of the remaining with her staff, but the others got through, slamming into and exploding out of her body at tremendous speeds, blood spurting everywhere. She was dead before she hit the ground.

The other girl gasped in shock and tried to leap away, but Minato grabbed her arm, halting her retreat just long enough for Tsukiumi to get behind her. A karate chop to the back of her head put the girl down for good.

As Tsukiumi moved to touch her crest, Minato grabbed her hand, stopping her. "No. Remember what I said about not knowing what happens to Sekirei who lose their mark. And she didn't seem to be as murderous as the other one."

Tsukiumi nodded reluctant agreement, but rounded on him angrily. "Minato that was one of the stupidest things I've ever seen! How dare you risk your life fighting against a Sekirei! What would we've done without you!?" She reached

out and shook him soundly. Stunned by her vehemence Minato wordlessly put his arms around her and Tsukiumi suddenly broke down, clinging to him brokenly. "Never do that again Minato I couldn't bear it!"

Minato realized she was actually crying she was that worried about him. Kusano had rushed forward and was hugging his leg crying as well. It was at that moment that Minato realized how much he truly meant to his Sekirei. His life truly was no longer only his own. Not only did he have to watch out for them, he had to watch out for himself for them as well. *But...* "Tsukiumi, stop for a second and listen." She looked up at him, about to begin berating him again but she paused at the look in his eyes. "Tsukiumi I won't promise to leave you to fight alone. I can't, I won't do that. I love you Akitsu and Musubi too much."

At the look in her eyes he relented. "I promise I won't try to fight a Sekirei unless I absolutely have to. But I will fight their Ashikabi. Okay?" Tsukiumi grimaced but nodded, moving slightly away from him, though retaining control of one of his arms. "Akitsu and I will be speaking to you about this later." She looked down at the whiplash on his other arm as the whip uncoiled itself and dropped to the ground. "**At Length.**" Minato winced, but nodded.

Seo grimaced at the dead Sekirei before coming forward to glare at Minato. "You didn't have to kill her you know, you could simply have erased her creast and removed her from the game. That doesn't make you any better than her." Behind him, Hikari and Hibiki looked at one another, before simultaneously backing away slightly. They personally felt that Tsukiumi had been right to kill Yomi, the joy she showed after killing the soldier had disgusted them. But Seo, besides being a pervert, a leech, a womanizer and a lay-about without any pride, was also a bit of a chauvinist who felt no woman could ever be totally irredeemable.

Tsukiumi, never known for her self-control, lost it entirely and turned stalking toward Seo angrily. "You're right I didn't have to, it was a completely voluntary decision on my part! And don't you dare compare me to that woman. There is a vast difference between killing in self defense and killing in cold blood or for enjoyment like that bitch!"

Minato stepped to her side and gripped her hand, using it to pull her to him and kissed her on the lips. Seo and the others looked on in shock as the wings of light spread, filling the entire park with their radiant light. As he released the kiss, Hikari and Hibiki backed away even further. They could **feel** the power now radiating off Tsukiumi, and knew they had no chance against her, even if they used their own norito.

He turned one arm still around Tsukiumi's waist. "Tsukiumi did the right thing! I would've done the same thing if I could! It's the oldest form of justice; a life for a life. I will fight this so-called game in the way I think is right. That means that the consequences will be in direct proportion to the way other people play it. And I will make Ashikabi pay the same price they ask their Sekirei to pay!"

Seo looked at him, noticing for the first time how hard Minato's eyes could become, as well as the scars that he had on his arms, now out in the open for the first time as the green girl wore his over shirt. *This kid ain't no kid. What the hell is he?* Seo nodded silently and he and his Sekirei left without further discussion. Minato bent down and lifted Kusano onto his back, indicating that Tsukiumi do the same with the unconscious girl. "I've got some questions to ask her when she wakes up. Come on, we don't want to be here when MBI shows up with more troops."

Tsukiumi nodded, lifting the other Sekirei onto her back with ease. She wasn't happy about it as it went against the rules of the game but with Yomi dead, there was no point to staying. In the distance they could already hear the sounds of helicopters.

Outside the park they met up with Musubi and Akitsu. Both looked at the child on Minato's back and smiled, though they were confused by the sight of the other woman being carried by Tsukiumi. Minato smiled "Come on ladies, let's go home. It's been a long day."

Tsukiumi snorted, "That is an understatement."

Akitsu looked at her and then at the whip burns visible up Minato's left arm. She raised an eloquent eyebrow in inquiry and Tsukiumi briefly outlined what had happened as they continued to move away from the park. Musubi was visibly upset at Minato putting himself in danger, but Akitsu's face became even more of a blank mask than normal as she nodded to Tsukiumi. Then her hand flashed up, smacking Minato hard across the face. "We **will** talk later." Minato winced rubbing his cheek but nodded.

Minato and his crew headed home with their new addition. Traveling by Sekirei Express™, it only took them ten minutes.

As they landed on the street in front of their house, Minato decided to stop in at Izumo house to see if Miya had any food to loan them. Akitsu had not prepared anything, being out of the house all day watching Minato, and Musubi had

eaten all the prepared food in the house.

It was only as the door opened that Minato realized he hadn't thought of any excuse for the little girl's presence, or for the unconscious woman on Tsukiumi's back. As this thought entered his mind, Miya opened the door her eyes going wide in surprise at Kusano's presence on Minato's back. "My, who is this? I certainly hope you're not thinking of adding her to your growing harem Sahashi-san, that would be a crime now wouldn't it?" Behind her just a hint of the devil mask began to appear.

Minato looked at the others helplessly wondering how to explain this. Kusano chose that moment to wake up, look around blearily and say "I'm hungry."

Miya smiled kindly, maternal instincts overcoming her desire to tease. "Wait a bit; the food will be ready in a little while." She turned and ran off down the hallway. Gratefully Minato and his Sekirei followed her.

Minato sat down still searching for a way to explain the little girl's presence. "Um, Miya-san, this is"

"The Sekirei Plan yes?" She turned from the stove and gave him an enigmatic smile. "My late husband worked for MBI, and I know quite a bit about the Sekirei plan." She turned to the others and told them that the bath was free if they wanted to go bathe before dinner. The demon mask appeared behind her, letting them know it wasn't a request but an order. They all ran off quickly, leaving Minato alone with Miya and the passed out girl in the jumpsuit.

He sat there silently thinking about the day's events. He had seen firsthand how dangerous Sekirei could be against normal troops. *Millions of dollars in equipment destroyed and half a dozen squads of infantry beaten in less than half an hour. True their training didn't seem to be that good and whoever decided to just park those tanks in a single location in the city with limited lanes of fire was a complete idiot. Still, these troops were from MBI and had been, at least judging by the one Yomi killed, briefed on Sekirei powers, and were still completely unprepared for them. Maybe in a mobile fight against well trained troops it would be different but I don't think so. They were dodging bullets for Buddha's sake!*

*A handful of Sekirei could lay waste to whole armies. Any nation in the world would do anything to get their hands on that power and here's Minaka playing a game with it! I can't believe China and America or any of the other world powers are blind to this so something else is going on here. A bidding war for the use of Sekirei could make sense if you could somehow record the fights and use them as advertisement, but there are way simpler ways to do that, unless a Sekirei's full potential doesn't come out without an Ashikabi, like Akitsu said, and that doesn't even take into account the bond between Sekirei and Ashikabi.* He put those thought aside for now, realizing yet again he needed more information to begin long term planning.

With a mental shrug he turned his thoughts to the fight in the park with the other Sekirei, going over what he had seen in greater detail and wondering how to combat against Sekirei as well as how to counter those same moves. He was also a little surprised that killing Yomi hadn't affected Tsukiumi mentally. She had been very matter-of-fact about it, much like a combat veteran would. He remembered how he had broken down when he first had to kill someone in combat but Tsukiumi hadn't hesitated and showed no signs of being concerned about it. *I wonder if this is part of her Sekirei nature or part of the training that they went through before the 'game' started.*

He came out of his reverie to see Miya looking at him quizzically. "You aren't going to question why I know about the Sekirei Plan?"

Minato shook his head "No, I don't want to make you dredge up any painful memories. I know a thing or two about those myself."

Miya smiled. "That is very kind of you but I am certain you have many questions to ask. First though what do you plan to do with her? You know I do not condone violence in this inn, nor would I allow you to take her away if you meant to harm her." Again the demon head appeared, glaring at him.

Minato shook his head quickly, assuring Miya that he had no such intention. "I just didn't want to have to take her crest away, and I have a message I want her to deliver to her Ashikabi."

Miya smiled and went back to placing food on the table. "So, what are your questions?"

Minato suddenly laughed, gripping his head with both hands. "Gods where to begin? I have so many questions and so few answers. Akitsu and the others don't know anything but the bare bones of what I want, no, **need** to know."

"So start at the beginning."

Minato propped his head on his hands, looking at her. "I have so many that there really is no beginning or end. I suppose the most important at this moment is what kind of hold does Minaka have over the Sekirei to make them obey this game of his, and how is he getting away with moving so openly in the capital of Japan?"

"Three points of control that I know of, there may be others." Miya said calmly. "One: indoctrination. Most Sekirei have been taught, coerced and genetically altered to obey the orders of the scientists and specialists around them. Most do not even question this state of affairs. MBI is their sole source of information, their sole source of interaction with the human world until they are let out for the game and MBI pays for most of their needs even after they leave." She glanced at him at this point having heard from Akitsu that Minato paid for the house and was now paying for all their living expenses from his construction job, having given up on his dream of entering Tokyo University to work full time. *That he would change his plans for them speaks well of him, and that he can support them without MBI's help is also a point in his favor.*

"Second is the Disciplinary Squad. They are three of the most powerful and vicious Sekirei alive. One in particular is more powerful than any fifteen others combined and is a cold blooded killer. Third is Minaka's control of the ship the Sekirei were found in. It is the ultimate trump card, their defender and destroyer. Most of its functions are offline, but it has some weapons capability. If humanity turns against them as a whole, Minaka can use the ship to protect them. If too many get out of line or evade the disciplinary squad, the ship can be used to find them or destroy them." *Or sink Japan, it's not exactly a precision instrument, though I don't know if Minaka realizes that. Best not to mention that...*

"As for operating openly, MBI controls the Japanese government from behind the scenes. They have done so for at least ten years, and the company owns the city of Tokyo entirely. They also own the newspapers and the police and every cable company as well as controlling the cable towers."

Minato buried his head in his hands for a moment. This just kept getting better and better. He couldn't do much about the political chicanery, so turned his attention to the game itself. "So to break his power, I need to break at least one of those points of control," he mused.

Miya's eyebrows arched. "You wish to go against the Sekirei plan? Minaka will not stand for that you know. Your life and that of those close to you will not be worth anything should he find out you are unwilling to play his game."

Minato smiled grimly. "I don't just want to break his little board game, I want to kill him."

"Then we have something in common Minato." Kagari entered the room, still moving gingerly. "I've been wanting to kill him for a long time now."

Minato turned to him, pushing over a cup of tea. "Are you feeling better? I take it you used to work at MBI as well?"

Kagari nodded, gratefully taking up the cup of tea and answered, hedging the truth more than a little bit. "I left around the time Miya's husband died. The way Minaka's using the Sekirei and abusing his power is intolerable to me. And yes I'm feeling better but only a little bit. Whatever was slipped to me is still giving me trouble."

"I don't suppose either of you know what will happen to a Sekirei eliminated from the game?" Minato asked wistfully. Both Miya and Kagari shook their heads. "I really need to know that to form any kind of long term plan." His brow knitted in anger as he thought back to what had happened earlier. "An innocent child and a bloodthirsty psychopath, both Sekirei and both supposed to play this game on an equal footing? The man's insane."

Miya paused in setting the table, "psychopath? What exactly happened tonight?"

Minato related the incident to her from beginning to end including his dream and the fact that Tsukiumi had killed Yomi, and that he agreed with her decision. "Human or Sekirei, lives are not to be used, discarded or spent without thought. If you take a life, you must be ready for your own to be taken in turn."

Miya looked at him thoughtfully. She wanted to be angry at the death of one of her feathers but she had known Yomi as a little girl and even then she had shown sociopathic tendencies, delighting in beating and bullying those Sekirei weaker than herself, much like Karasuba but without the offsetting influence of her friendship with Yomi. There were more than a few such Sekirei but some of them at least had grown out of it. She decided to change the subject slightly "So you are a friend of Seo's?"

Minato shrugged. "More of an acquaintance really, do you know him?"

"More than I would like, he's trash. He never holds down a job very long, is always drifting from one thing to another, forces his Sekirei to work as well and always, **always** comes here to beg food off me because he was a friend of my

husband. Truly trash. **Do not emulate him.**" the demon head began to appear but disappeared as Minato opened his wallet and put several thousand yen on the table in front of him.

He bowed. "Please allow me to redeem my gender. Let me pay for the food he's taken from you for the past month or so. I can also pay you for the food that we eat over here."

Miya looked at him in shock, then smiled and pushed his money back towards him. "Please keep your money. My husband never turned away anyone in need, regardless of who they were. My door is always open."

It was at this point that the others returned. Ku-chan appeared being carried by Akitsu and followed by Uzume, Musubi and Tsukiumi. Kusano was dressed in a Halloween costume of a purple wagtail.

Minato reached out and patted her head. "Are you feeling better Ku-chan? That's a cute costume." The little girl beamed, but her face darkened as Akitsu sat on one side of Minato, putting Kusano down on her other side.

Before she could get up and move, Tsukiumi sat down on Minato's other side, barely beating Musubi for it before leaning in to look at his arm. "Are you certain that doesn't need attention Minato?" She gestured at the whip burn on his arm.

Minato shook his head. Knowing that Miya knew they were his Sekirei, he put his arms around them, sighing contentedly. "Before we eat, I think we should formally introduce Kusano," he patted her again with the arm he had around Akitsu, "our newest family member. First let me ask you. Do you want to join us?" He indicated Musubi and his wives. Kusano nodded excitedly, moving to kiss him, but was halted by Akitsu hugging her firmly. She struggled for a second but stopped as Minato went on. "When Musubi joined us, we decided that we should each have a role in our group and we are going to keep to that rule. Now as young as you are, you can either be our little sister, or our daughter, which do you want to be?"

Kusano pouted further, something inside her telling her that this was not what she wanted, but her Sekirei genes were overruled by her little girl genes. She started to tear up at the thought of having real parents who would love her and be there for her like in the stories the doctor had read to her. "I want to be your daughter, papa! Please!" she looked at him with big soulful eyes.

Miya and the Izumo tenants looked on this little moment with mixed emotions. Kagari was happy that the youngest Sekirei had found such a protective and caring home. Miya simply smiled approvingly at how Minato was handling Kusano, not letting even a hint of impropriety enter their relationship. It warmed her heart, and made her feel something inside her, a mix of an unnamed emotion and sadness for her husband, lost before they could begin their own family. Uzume was teary eyed, her thoughts hidden by a broad smile despite her tears.

Minato looked at his wives, who both nodded slowly, but willingly. *Musubi's opinion hardly needs to be asked, she's grinning so widely...* He nodded and leaned in placing a chaste kiss on Kusano's lips. Her crest appeared on her neck as wings of light blossomed. Minato then solemnly kissed Musubi and then his wives, reaffirming their connection.

Miya's eyes widened and she had to stop herself from jumping for joy as she witnessed Akitsu and Tsukiumi's wings radiating off each other, magnifying the effect. *Oh Minaka, you poor sad fool, you will never understand the powers of the bond you tried to warp, and in the end you will fail. Their bond is growing by the day. All they need is time, and all your manipulations, all your mad schemes will be undone by the power of love. I hope I am there when you realize that the very power you sought to pervert has been your undoing.* Again watching Minato interact with his wives she felt strange but she ignored it once again.

Ku-chan grinned happily, bouncing up and down in her wagtail costume as everyone present congratulated her. Afterwards, they sat back down to dinner, chatting with one another. Much like the first nights dinner at Izumo house, Minato split his attention between his Sekirei as equally as possible. The dinner was fun, friendly and upbeat, despite what had occurred earlier and their still unconscious guest.

After dinner, Miya agreed to watch the girl, provided she be allowed to sit in when Minato asked her some questions. Minato agreed without reservation, raising his status in her eyes still further.

Walking out of the inn with Kusano asleep in his arms he turned to Kagari. "I won't push you about your connection to MBI. I just want you to know that if you want to talk, I'm here with a male ear." He smiled slightly, and Kagari nodded thanks.

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Once back home, Minato put Kusano to bed with Musubi, wishing her a good night. After this, he went to face his wives with not a little trepidation.

Both were still angry and scared about how he had taken on a Sekirei and Tsukiumi demanded he promise not to do so in the future and to leave all the fighting to them, Akitsu nodding fiercely in support of her. They realized he was used to fighting for himself, but knew that no human stood much of a chance against a Sekirei one on one. His stubbornness to not make such a promise irritated both women. "Ladies face it I will fight alongside you any way I can. I may not be able to take on a Sekirei in an even fight, but there are ways to offset that like tonight proved. I am a warrior, and I refuse to send you into danger without facing some myself."

Both women glowered at him, but were forced to concede the point. They did make him promise to not go out of his way to fight, and to keep to fighting other Ashikabi except in personal self-defense. Tsukiumi put it as powerfully as she could. "We are warriors too Minato, and do not need you to fight our battles for us. Moreover, without you we have no reason to fight. I know that sounds strange coming from me, but there's no point in winning without you by our side. You must realize that you are as important to us as we are to you." Minato could not argue in the face of this wave of emotion, and agreed to their demands.

Argument over Akitsu decided to take advantage of her life-mates distraction. She reached out and placed Minato's hands on her breasts, pulling him down to her mouth at the same time. Minato needed no second urging. He opened his mouth instantly, sending his tongue into Akitsu's mouth, touching as much as he could, grinding his lower body against her own. She moaned beneath him, her unemotional exterior melting away now that the three of them were alone and in their marriage bed. Tsukiumi turned off the lights, and the night progressed as such nights should between those in love.

In Izumo house a certain four eyed girl watched her computer screen avidly almost moaning aloud in lust as she thought of a time when she could join in the festivities taking place next door.

Miya too was aware of what was going on, and her serene smile took on a victorious air as the wings of light spread periodically throughout the night, enveloping the whole neighborhood in their radiance.

## \*Chapter 5\*: Chapter 5 Questions and Answers

I do not own Sekirei.

### Chapter 5 Questions and answers

Mitsuha, Sekirei #38, woke up with a splitting headache and looked around. Immediately she knew two things: one, she could still sense her Ashikabi therefore still had her crest and two she was not in MBI tower. The surroundings were much plainer than she had become used to in her master's house and much nicer than anything a Sekirei got in the tower, being in soft earthy hues rather than drab gray and metal.

Before she could take in more than that, a woman's voice made her turn her gaze from the ceiling. "I see you are awake now. How are you feeling, and what is your name?"

Mitsuha immediately leaped up and threw a punch, which was deftly blocked. One moment she was standing throwing a punch at a violet haired woman, the next she was on her back again seeing stars, arm gripped gently but irresistibly. A demon mask appeared behind the woman as she intoned in a voice resembling a death knell, "I do not allow violence in Izumo house."

Mitsuha gulped and her body shook in terror, more frightened than she had ever been in her life. She quickly promised not to make trouble and introduced herself. Miya smiled, released her grip and placed the tray she had balanced on one hand on the ground. On it was a cup of tea and some painkillers.

When Mitsuha learned she had been captured she started to panic, but Miya calmed her down and told her how she would be freed after Minato talked to her. Mitsuha was still tempted to make a run for it when her stomach rumbled hungrily.

Miya looked down at the blushing pigtailed blond and began to giggle. With a smile, she invited her to breakfast with herself and Uzume. During the meal Mitsuha relaxed, as both women went out of their way to encourage her to relax and Miya repeatedly kept telling her that she would allow no violence in her inn regardless of who or why. Despite what had happened earlier, she began to feel safe, hopeful that she would be able to go back to her master.

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Minato again woke up early, but this time he was not alone. Tsukiumi had woken up even earlier, and was playing with his hair, swirling it around her fingers. Akitsu still slept soundly having exhausted herself from keeping more than a dozen large objects frozen for a long period of time and last night's marital activities on top of the martial.

He looked up at her grinning and running his own hands over her skin, caressing and teasing. Tsukiumi let out a low, delighted moan, bringing her face to his. Their tongues dueled for a moment, but Minato pulled away, training kisses down her neck and towards her breasts.

Tsukiumi sighed, she loved it when he did this (and he did it as often as he could), but to her surprise Minato had another target than her breasts in mind this morning. Her eyebrows rose in surprise as Minato only stopped to lick the hard buds on top of her breasts before moving on down her body. "Mi-Minato, what are you," she stopped and gasped, then gasped again, bucking her hips, moving her hands to cover her core. "Wai-wait, that, that's dirty you shouldn't..."

"Tsukiumi," Minato raised his head and looked at her seriously from between her thighs. His hands never stopped kneading her full, heavy breasts, delighting as always in their amazing combination of size and firmness. "Nothing about you is dirty. I've wanted to do this for a while, and I mean to try. Please."

Tsukiumi blushed under his admiring gaze, and slowly removed her hands. Minato took the opportunity and dove back down. Soon Tsukiumi's reluctance gave way to pleasure, her hips bucking, her moans becoming louder.

She looked up in a daze as Akitsu leaned in from her right, stroking her breasts and kissing her ear. Akitsu whispered. "This is a free one for protecting him last night. You may still go first tonight." Akitsu then leaned down and took one of Tsukiumi's bright pink nipples into her mouth, sucking hard.

Tsukiumi could no longer hold back her moans as she nodded convulsively, her voice rising to a scream under her life-mate's attentions. "Minato, Minato, Minato!" Her hips bucked one last time and she collapsed, eyes glazed and body limp.

Akitsu looked at her sister-wife and smiled. It seemed that had been enough for Tsukiumi, leaving Akitsu to take care of their husband's now obvious need. She reached forward eagerly but was interrupted as Kusano's voice was heard outside the door. "Oneechan, Tsukiumi oneechan, are you alright, I heard you shouting for papa! Do you want me to find him?"

Akitsu looked at the door in consternation, and turned almost angrily as Tsukiumi began to shakily laugh behind her. "Be-better luck next time, huh." Akitsu glared, but then broke into a small smile as Tsukiumi went on, reassuring the young girl who had just yesterday become a part of their lives. "It's alright Ku-chan, Minato is in here with me, he was... he was tickling me and wouldn't stop when I told him to." She knew it was a lame excuse, but had to get her own explanation out before Akitsu could. Akitsu's blunt speech would not have been appropriate for a child.

Akitsu shot her a look that told her she knew precisely what Tsukiumi was thinking but she turned back to Minato without saying anything.

Minato stood up and began to get dressed, chanting a mantra under his breath in an effort to force his desire down enough to put on his jeans. "Kusano's at the door, Kusano's at the door, Kusano's at the door."

Akitsu overheard and giggled a trilling, joyful sound that drew grins from both her life-mates. Still giggling even as her face settled into her public impassivity she opened the door slightly, reaching out to tickle the fuming girl outside fulfilling her wish of joining in the fun. The girl squealed excitedly wriggling under the ice Sekirei's hands like an eel.

Minato finished dressing and he and Tsukiumi watched Akitsu tickling their newest addition for a moment. Smiling Minato joined in, tickling them both and moving them out of the doorway, allowing Tsukiumi time to recover and dress.

Akitsu smiled and left the two to go make breakfast while they woke up Musubi. After breakfast, Tsukiumi joined them and the family went over to Izumo Inn to see the prisoner.

They found their prisoner already awake and sitting calmly next to Miya on the porch. As Kusano and Musubi ran around the inn's much larger yard playing tag with Uzume, Minato sat down against a pillar looking at her. "How are you feeling? And what's your name?"

The girl smirked for a second at being asked the same two questions in the same order twice in a day. "Mistuha." The pigtailed blond stared at the young man in front of her warily. "I don't know what you want to ask me. I won't betray my master."

Minato shook his head. "I only have two questions about your master the rest has to do with what you think about MBI and yourself."

Mitsuha looked at him, then Miya, who smiled encouragingly. "Alright, what do you want to know? If I don't like the question I just won't answer." Miya nodded and rubbed her back, which seemed to reassure her.

"Well, my first one is more of a confirmation. Your Ashikabi is a young foreign boy right? Looks a little feminine, like he could dress up as a doll or in a sailor suit?"

Mitsuha blushed red at the image of Hayato dressed in a sailor suit. She had to wipe away some drool quickly before answering. "How-How dare you! My master is not feminine! Hayato-sama is very manly!"

"Hayato. And do you have any problem with how he treats you?"

She looked at him quizzically, but took the question at face value. "No, I don't. He's more than rich enough to pay for the needs and expenses of all his Sekirei. We have enough to eat, a great place to live and we get along with each other, well except for," she stopped and looked at Tsukiumi, sitting next to Minato protectively, "except for Yomi." Tsukiumi looked at her challengingly, and she went on hurriedly. "I don't blame you or anything. She was way out of line, and there is no way our master knew the methods she used sometimes."

Minato drew her back to the point. "So other than Yomi's presence and the lack of, oversight shall we say, you don't have a problem with Hayato?"

"No, though I wish he'd spend more time with me. I'd like it if I had less competition for his time." She sighed in exasperation.

Minato winced inwardly. Obviously that meant Hayato had a lot of Sekirei. *Was that normal in their society, for men to have harems?* "You said that Hayato pays for everything you need, does that mean you don't use your MBI card?"

And what do you think of MBI and Minaka?"

Miya twitched at the direct question, but Mitsuha answered the questions directly. Something told her that Minato meant no harm to her or her master, she couldn't say what it was, but it was there. "None of us have our MBI cards anymore, master made us return them. And he did have ties with MBI, but since the game really began he's begun to cut them. Rumor among us Sekirei is something happened when he winged Mutsu, but I don't know what. As to what I think about MBI, I don't really think anything one way or another. My ties are to my master now, not Minaka and his company."

Minato very carefully did not stand up and shout for joy. *Do I detect a crack in the armor? Yes!* "And has Hayato ever, um," he faltered looking embarrassed but determined "Has he ever made you do something you didn't want to do? I mean...."

Every woman present got it at the same time and Mitsuha only kept a rein on her temper by seeing Miya out of the corner of her eye. She answered the question as succinctly as possible the very idea was so repugnant. "No, Hayato-sama has never tried to abuse or rape me. How dare you even suggest such a thing?!"

Minato looked at her seriously. "It's a very big concern of mine in this game. The level of authority and power an Ashikabi wields over the Sekirei bonded to him is immense. Too many men will abuse that kind of power. I'm sorry if that offends you but I've seen such things in the past."

Mitsuha calmed down at the genuine concern she heard in Minato's voice. *He actually cares about us all, not just his own Sekirei. How strange.* "I understand, but he really has never given me an order I didn't like, well except for working with Yomi, and he's never really shown an interest in me as a woman. Not yet, at least, he's still too young." She smiled a wicked little smile, licking her lips hungrily. "In a few years though...."

Minato ignored that part as Miya summoned her demon mask to punish Mitsuha's perverted thoughts. As Minato leaned back, Tsukiumi leaned in and whispered in his ear "Was that why you were so reluctant to sleep with Akitsu and myself the first time? You thought you'd be taking advantage of us?"

Minato nodded before turning back to Mitsuha. "That's it for my questions. As for my message for him, it's a simple one: you leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone. Stay out of say, the north of the city, north of Findang Street and Market along to the river and the city limit. I will leave him alone and not bother with anything that happens outside that territory."

Mitsuha thought for a moment. She knew that there were at least two other powerful Ashikabi out there that her master had split the city with, but she was not about to share that knowledge. *And master's shown reluctance to push into the north of the city before this anyway, so he's really not losing much if he agrees to Minato's proposal.* "I'll tell him your message, can I leave now?"

Minato nodded, handing her whip over. They watched as she bounded joyfully away. When she was out of sight Minato turned to his family. "Alright, since I don't have work today, let's get some training in I want to see what progress you all have made in thinking up new moves. Go change and then we'll head back to the factory Tsukiumi found." His Sekirei nodded with various levels of enthusiasm.

"If you wish to train, you may do so here. Our lawn is large enough." Miya's suggestion stopped them midstride. She turned to Minato, "provided I can observe your training as well. I wish to see if you truly have the skills to fight next to a Sekirei." She held up a thin plain sheathed katana invitingly.

Minato nodded. "We'll be back in ten."

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Tsukiumi and Akitsu was changing in the master bedroom with a pensive look on her face. "Minato, when you spar with Oya-san, be careful. There's something about her."

She turned to see Minato watching her, appreciative of the view she and Akitsu represented. She exulted in his gaze, preening slightly, never getting enough of his attention. She also had not completely recovered from the sheer sexual charge she had gotten from Minato's treatment of her this morning, and was still ready for more.

Akitsu however had her mind on something more serious. She made that little noise she made when preparing to speak and Minato looked at her waiting patiently. "Ahh... Minato-san, you said that you didn't want to sleep with us at first because you thought you would be taking advantage of us. Is that why you did not want to use the word love during our first discussion?"

Minato sighed, sitting down and taking their hands, holding them to his sinewy chest. "I have spent the last four years trusting my instincts and my common sense. When I met you two I..." He looked down at their hands on his chest. "When I first met you my common sense told me one thing, and my instincts told me another. My instincts told me 'you care for them you love them.' But my common sense told me that it was merely lust, that love can't be created that fast. My instincts won out, but part of me is still saying 'this isn't normal you've only known them for a few weeks'. Most of the time I can override it, but sometimes when I'm alone..."

Akitsu silenced him with a deep kiss, thrusting her tongue aggressively into his mouth to meet his own. Her wings bloomed again before she moved back, allowing Tsukiumi to take her place. Two houses over, a man walking his dog was startled near to death by a glowing wing tip appearing out of the house he was passing, which was nothing to the housewife in the opposite direction who looked down at herself in shock as a wide wing of light passed right through her middle without her feeling anything.

After the kiss was over, with Minato's eyes still glazed by the intensity both had shown, Akitsu smiled. "Never believe that you have taken advantage of us Minato. We're with you because we love you, sleep with you because we love you. If we did not, we would not."

Tsukiumi nodded emphatic agreement in his arms. "We're both single numbers Minato. Our wills are stronger, and the indoctrination to obey far less effective on us than the higher numbers. If we didn't want to sleep with you, or hold you" and she held him tight "or kiss you" and she did "You would never be able to make us do so against our will."

Minato hugged them close for a minute, before the trio reluctantly pulled away from one another to go practice.

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They found Miya already lightly sparring with Musubi as Kusano and Uzume watched from the porch. Minato noted how fast Miya was and how precise her movements were. Musubi was already sporting several lumps on her head from whacks from Miya's sheathed sword. The two broke off as the three life-mates stepped into the garden. Musubi and Tsukiumi began to spar while Akitsu waited for her turn.

Miya brought her sword down by her waist, ready for a quick iiai strike. "You realize I will not go easy on you." Minato took his spatha out of its box, and Miya's eyes widened slightly in surprise. The weapon was obviously ancient and just as clearly a business item. Seeing Minato the so-called college wannabe with it caused several questions to go racing through her mind, joining the ones his entire demeanor had caused, none of which she had an answer to just yet.

Holding it loosely in a close guard position, he replied "Why should you go easy on me when our enemies won't?"

Miya smiled grimly and attacked, keeping her speed down to what a human could handle for now. Minato barely parried her first blow, and was forced to jump back to avoid her second. On the third his back was momentarily to her, but he still blocked it, dodging to one side and sweeping his sword through the space she had just occupied.

She dodged effortlessly and smacked him upside the head with her hilt. "Too slow." Again, Minato swung and again she dodged, only he ducked, avoiding her follow on blow. Reversing his hold on his sword stabbed backward and she blocked it with her blade as Minato turned, bringing the sword around in a arc.

Miya moved so quickly that he could not keep up, slashing her sword at his neck. She had planned to stop short, but Minato somehow guessed her target and ducked down fast enough to dodge, bringing his sword up from below. She recovered too quickly for him to take advantage of however and was able to move away.

Suddenly she swung out again at blinding speeds, again aiming for his neck, changing her aim to his body as the swing began. Minato dodged, jumping back and falling to his knees.

Miya moved to pursue but her sword was wrenched out of her hand. She looked in shock as Minato bounded up, his belt undone and tied around her sword in her last attack. His own spatha thrust forward, stopping an inch from her chest.

Miya looked at him calmly down the edge of his blade, that feeling from last night returning again stronger than before. "I was overconfident, and saw what I wanted to see."

Minato gasped as he nodded, leaning on his knees, as exhausted as he would be after a full-scale battle from pushing his body to keep up with her speed. *By Buddha she is fast, and skilled, and strong, a deadly combination. I'm so out classed here it's not even funny.*

Miya smiled sardonically as she took her sword from his limp hand. "You realize that such a trick will not work on me again?"

Minato gulped in a final lungful of air and nodded, readying his sword once more. *This is so gonna hurt.*

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Mitsuha stood in front her master Hayato. The young boy sat in a large chair, his feet up on a desk far too large for his small frame as he listened to her report, leading off with what happened to Yomi. "Hmm, I can't say I'm sorry Yomi's gone. She was a loose cannon, and way too sadistic for my tastes, especially if she killed an unarmed man like you say she did. But what kept you from coming back so long?"

"The Ashikabi who winged the green girl captured me and wanted to deliver a message to you and ask me some questions. Not about you, but our relationship with MBI and" she blushed, "Some other things."

"Did you see how many Sekirei this Minato had?" Hayato asked eagerly.

Mitsuha nodded rapidly glad to have some information to tell her master. "He had three beside the green girl, Kusano. But..." she gulped and went on. "Two of them were single numbers, Sekirei number nine Tsukiumi, and Sekirei number 7, Akitsu."

Hayato's feet slammed to the ground and he started cursing and flailing about, the chair rotating on its axis from his motions. "Damn it, damn it, damn it, damn it!" He turned and glared accusingly at Mutsu. "You said the discarded number couldn't be winged!"

Mutsu shrugged philosophically, used to his masters temper tantrums. "That's what the scientists tried to do. Evidently they failed."

Hayato grumbled for a few more minutes before turning back to Mitsuha. "Go on."

Mitsuha told him the questions she had been asked, letting out the one about molestation, thinking that Hayato was too young and far too insulated from the real world to understand what she was talking about. She paused. "Um there was someone else there."

Hayato cocked his head. "Another Ashikabi?"

She shook her head. "Not another Ashikabi, a woman, late twenties, lavender hair. She was nice but she'd do this demon mask thing, and.... She really, really scared me! Like no one else I've ever been around!"

Mutsu's laid back demeanor vanished as if it had never been and he leaned forward, pinning Mitsuha in place with a glare. "Long lavender hair down to her waist, sharp, intelligent eyes, an aura of pure terror in the shape of a demon with two small horns?" Mitsuha nodded and Mutsu clutched his sword reflexively. "Miya."

Mitsuha nodded. "That's her name, do you know her? Is she a Sekirei too?"

Mutsu shook off his astonishment looking at the two of them seriously. "A Sekirei, no, her powers were never limited like ours. We are but pale imitations of what she **is**."

Hayato's eyes widened. "Number 1?"

"That was the designation MBI gave her, yes."

Hayato turned back, visibly controlling himself. "What was this message?" Mitsuha relayed the offer of non-aggression from Minato and Hayato nodded rapidly, almost fearfully. "I've no problem agreeing to that. Well, I'm glad to see you back. Go grab some food, and then you can have the rest of the day off. I'll have another job for you tomorrow."

Mitsuha gazed at him longingly, wishing he had any interest in women and silently vowing that she would be the first in line once he did start showing interest. Hayato blinked as she left, derailed from his worries about Miya by the odd look the older girl had given him. "What was that about?"

Mutsu coughed uncomfortably. "You're twelve now right?"

"Yep just turned." Hey, you were at my birthday party Mutsu, how'd you forget that?" The boy pouted at this show of indifference.

"And your parents had tutors for you right? What subjects?"

"History, economics, Chinese, English, math and money marketing. Why?"

Mutsu gave up. "I think I'll have a chat with your tutors, they seem to have left something out of your education." *I'll be damned if I have to give this kid 'the talk'!* "May I be excused?"

"Hmmp. You're no fun. Send in Himeko and Taki, I want to talk to them."

Mutsu nodded and walked out of the office. Outside he found Mitsuha waiting for him. "Um, Mutsu, that Ashikabi also asked me some other questions." She briefly outlined the last subject Minato had touched on, and asked "Could an Ashikabi really pervert the bond that way? Could they really force themselves on their Sekirei?"

*I just bet you'd like Hayato to do that to you, you horny little... I really hope Hayato hits puberty soon and takes some of the tension out of the air around here. Or would that just add more tension? Damn it!* "If the Ashikabi is powerful enough, either in number of Sekirei or in will.... Yes. But you don't have to worry about it. Go get some food and some rest, you've earned it."

Mitsuha nodded, but stayed put. "Mutsu, there was just something about Sahashi that was, I don't know, comforting and protective somehow. I felt safe there, like I feel around Hayato and you. I don't know what that means, but I really hope we stick to this pact."

She walked off, leaving Mutsu brooding in her wake. *Higa to the east, Sanada to the west, and now this Minato somehow allied with the demon of the north. I hope we keep to this agreement too. The alternative would not be pretty.*

---

Minato looked up from the ground, gasping in air as he looked up at his tormentor. "You, you really are a demon in woman's clothing." He wheezed. Besides a small break to calm a hysterical Kusano down (she had seen a ghost in the bathroom) they had been sparring for four hours.

Miya smiled down at him, not a single sign of exertion on her, not even a hair out of place. "Ara, I thought you wanted to become good enough to fight alongside your Sekirei." She gestured to where Tsukiumi and Akitsu had just fought to a stalemate for the fifth time in a row. Neither looked tired yet, and Musubi was standing nearby eagerly waiting her turn.

*Still, she thought, once more filled with an emotion she had not felt for so long she had forgotten what it was, for a human he did extremely well. That first trick he used was deadly. It wouldn't have worked if I was trying to kill him from the start, but still. He will never be as fast or as strong as a Sekirei but he knows this and you can see him planning constantly. The speed his mind works at is almost scary, and his style is very good, for all that it was probably self-taught.* She reached down and pulled him to his feet. "I think we're done today. Go take a bath, you earned it."

Minato nodded, feeling humbled. *I knew I would be outclassed, but she really is at a whole other level.* He glanced over at his Sekirei then quickly back to Miya, *almost superhuman.* He wearily limped into the inn, grateful for the opportunity to use Izumo houses large bath.

He asked Kusano to get him a change of clothing from their house. Uzume went with her. Miya turned back joining the competition and swiftly schooling all three of his Sekirei. Minato shook his head, ignoring their muffled sounds of pain from her sheathed sword.

Unbeknownst to Minato or even Miya, a four-eyed predator had been waiting for a chance to strike. The ghost of Izumo inn saw her chance and decided to act on it.

Minato sighed, as he took off the last of his clothing, grabbing a wash cloth from the basket. He felt more mangled than he had at any point outside of combat. "Jeez, she really worked me over." He proceeded to wash himself, enjoying the feel of the cool water on his bruised body.

He was rinsing his hair of shampoo when he heard the bath door open behind him. "Tsukiumi? Akitsu? I don't think the land-lady will appreciate it if we 'misuse' her bath area, though if you want to just wash my back, I won't complain." He waited. "Hello?"

Turning on the bench Minato came face to bust with a woman he had never seen before. She had orange-brown

colored hair done in two long pigtails down to her knees, a slightly smaller though fuller bust than Akitsu (though less than Tsukiumi's) and brown eyes. She wore a towel wrapped inadequately about her and had a pair of thick glasses set on her forehead. Minato blushed at her nearness and lack of clothing, backing against the wall quickly.

Before he could speak, she was pressing her body against his, murmuring in his ear. "Sahashi Minato, age 23. Been back in Japan only a month, having lived in the contested city of Constantinople for the last four years on what was supposed to be a two-year study abroad program before the insurrection began. Ashikabi to number's 09, 07, 88, 108 and" she paused leaning forward until their foreheads touched, "me, number 02, Matsu." She leaned forward but before she could kiss him, Minato pushed her off and yelled out for help before gasping in pain as his abused muscles reacted to the abrupt movement.

Outside everyone heard Minato's scream for help. Before they could move they saw light emanate from inside the inn. Tsukiumi and Akitsu both stiffened, then moved like lightning.

The two of them and Miya arrived just in time to see Matsu come skidding out of the bathing area on her butt. Minato came out of the bathroom holding up his towel as if it were a final barrier protecting his innocence, looking equal parts angry, in pain, chagrined and embarrassed.

Matsu looked up at them, grinning sheepishly as her Sekirei crest appeared on the back of her neck. "Heh, hey guys, I'm your new teammate, Matsu. No hard feelings right?"

end chapter.

## **\*Chapter 6\*: Chapter 6 Information Dearly bought**

Disclaimer: I do not own Sekirei though renting Uzume from Chiho would be just awesome.

In reference to the above I have been rereading this work and I have to say I am not happy with the number of scenes I have Uzume in, as she is one of my favorite characters but I feel I can't do her personality justice. If anyone can think of scenes to put in with her I will gladly look into writing them.

Author's Post:

This chapter is dedicated to [Exanime Draco](#) and DemonAngel of Ice. Mr. Ice brought up how Minato disliked Yomi and her attitude and what his reaction to Karasuba will be, which I like because the scene (which will appear in chapter 8) is one of my favorites. I won't tell you all, but it will be vastly different from anything I have read about in other fanfiction. Exanime asked me several thoughtful questions about the nature of the Ashikabi/Sekirei bond in my story. The bond and its strength/weakness and what effects said is very important in my story which will become more and more prevalent as the story continues. But I am sorry to say Mitsuha was not reacting to Minato as an Ashikabi, rather he gave off vibes much like Miya, that of a protector and trustworthy individual. I do not yet have plans for any already bonded Sekirei to join Minato's family, but remember that one of Minato's main problems with the Sekirei plan (besides the entire thing really) is not knowing what happens to the Sekirei who have lost their crest and are collected by MBI.

In this chapter we find out a bit more about Minato's past as well as Sekirei in general. Note I take a sci-fi approach to the Sekirei and that becomes apparent in this chapter. There is no mystical/quasi-religious aspect to their arrival on earth. After all any significantly advanced technology can appear like magic to less advanced cultures...

### **Chapter 6**

#### **Information dearly bought**

To no one's surprise, Tsukiumi's reaction was both the most vocal and most violent. She lunged forward, a blade of water materializing around her hand as she screamed, "I'LL KILL YOU!!!"

Almost negligently Miya smacked Tsukiumi's head with her ladle, then her arm, making the water sword disappear an inch away from Matsu's face. The hannya mask made another appearance as she spoke in a chillingly calm voice. "I do not allow violence in Izumo Inn."

Behind Miya, Akitsu stood silently but her expressionless face was an open book to Minato and he could tell that she was as angry as Tsukiumi. Musubi seemed happy to have a new comrade, but Kusano was looking a little scared of the new girl, recognizing her as the ghost that scared her earlier.

Tsukiumi reined in her temper with difficulty. Minato limped his way over to her and gripped her hand reassuringly before turning to glare at the new girl.

Miya turned to him, keeping her eyes firmly fixed on his face, ignoring an invidious little voice telling her to take a look at his body and those strangely compelling scars. "Nor do I allow people to walk around my inn wearing only a towel. You may finish your bath Minato-san. Akitsu, as you have handled this.... incident the best, you will be allowed to join him. He seems to be in quite a lot of pain, and I do not want him to hurt himself further. However" the mask reappeared, "That does not mean you are allowed to do anything improper."

Akitsu surprisingly did not flinch from the stare. Instead, she drew herself up and looked Miya directly in the eye. "Ahh... This is your inn, Miya-san, and none of us would dream of breaking your rules." Of all of them, she had spent the most time in Miyas' company, and had responded by becoming more and more traditional in her views on public propriety and taste in clothing (private time was another matter however, and their home was certainly not public).

Miya nodded back gracefully, acknowledging her point. Minato took this as a cue to collapse against the doorframe of the bathing area. "I am sorry Sahashi-san, I would not have pushed you so hard if I thought you would have to protect yourself from unwanted affections." Minato shook his head and moved back into the bathing area, leaning on Akitsu for support.

Matsu gulped as Miya turned back to her. "As for you, I believe I said what would happen if you caused trouble." Matsu sobbed, crawling forward on her knees, begging forgiveness. Tsukiumi snarled, but leaned against the wall, controlling herself for now.

Musubi came forward and introduced herself, with Kusano still hiding behind her fearfully. After the introductions were over Miya herded the three of them away from the bath, forcing Matsu to go change into normal clothes and return quickly.

As soon as they entered the bathing area, Minato slumped against Akitsu. "I'm sorry" he murmured against her porcelain neck, breathing deeply the scent of her, a mix of lilacs and sweat "I was so sore I couldn't move fast enough to stop her or even run away."

Akitsu sighed extremely irritated by this new development, but she knew it was simply the truth. *We all saw how exhausted he was as he walked inside. If we knew there was danger about, we'd never have let him go in alone.* Shedding her clothing on the way, she slowly moved him back to the bath. The two stayed in the water some time, as Akitsu thoroughly washed and soothed his body.

Outside, Miya forced Matsu to introduce herself and waited as Musubi and Tsukiumi returned to their house to bathe. Kusano went upstairs to play with Uzume. Tsukiumi returned quickly, preventing Matsu from escaping when Miya began to clean the yard and Musubi went up to play with Kusano and Uzume.

Fifteen minutes later Minato and Akitsu finished bathing but Minato was still incandescently angry. Not only had she winged herself on him, she obviously did so knowing about Tsukiumi and Akitsu, unlike Musubi. The way she planned it out showed that she had also known what their reaction would be.

As they left the bathing area, Minato turned to Akitsu. Cupping her face, he leaned forward, giving her a chaste kiss on the lips. "I love you." As her wings of light appeared, they walked down the hallway to the dining room. Minato walked up to Tsukiumi and did the same thing before sitting across from the new girl. Tsukiumi and Akitsu took up position on either side of him, glaring across at Matsu.

Minato spoke gruffly. "You said your name was Matsu." She nodded eagerly, almost drooling at the size and power of the bond wings Tsukiumi and Akitsu displayed, which were still visible and only slowly fading away. "So tell me why I should accept you as my Sekirei rather than having Tsukiumi or Akitsu remove your crest by force." Minato's eyes were hard, and before the startled Matsu could respond or an even more startled Miya interject, he slashed his hand through the air, cutting her off. "Before you answer, realize that the sneaky, underhanded way you winged yourself on me, ambushing me when my other Sekirei were outside practicing and unable to respond quickly and when I myself was too tired to run away or defend myself has already influenced me against you."

Matsu spluttered for a minute before regaining control of herself, deciding to respond with what services she could provide rather than try to emotionally appeal to him. After all he did have a point... "Be-because I can provide something they can't. They're all fighters. I'm an information manipulator. I can get any information on any computer, and provide it to you! I can answer a lot of your questions about the Sekirei plan and the bond!"

"And what kind of place in our family do you want hmm? I see the way you look at my husband." Tsukiumi leaned forward, eyes blazing with barely controlled rage.

Matsu calmly answered her, looking at Minato the entire time. "Of course I want to have a full Sekirei bond with him, like the two of you. That's only fair after all; I do know more about Minato-san than you do."

She was interrupted as Tsukiumi jumped over the table hands outstretched for her throat. Miya's ladle flashed and Tsukiumi was smacked to the side. "I have said before that violence is not allowed in my inn." Miya's own curiosity was roused by Matsu's words however, and she wondered what the perverted spy had found out about Minato.

Minato helped the dazed Tsukiumi back into her seat, glaring across at Matsu. "I apologize for Tsukiumi Miya-san, but she is a passionate woman and what Matsu just said pushed all her buttons. As for your request Matsu, I am afraid that having two wives" he emphasized the word "is more than enough for me. If we decide to let you join us, and you are not making a strong case for it, it will be in the same role as Musubi."

Akitsu spoke up as well, her self-control clearly in evidence and her voice cold and showing none of her usual reticence for speaking in public. "You will also explain that comment about knowing more about Minato than we do. Now, or I will ask Miya-san to allow us to take you off inn grounds." The implication was clear as Tsukiumi, still rubbing her head from Miya's hit, nodded rapidly.

Matsu smiled triumphantly. "I know about his time during the Constantinople insurrection. I know you weren't just a conscript in the Turkish militia. You switched sides and joined the Greek rebels. You became 'the Hoplite!'"

Minato's eyebrows rose in amused surprise as Miya Tsukiumi, Akitsu, and Kagari who had come down and was

watching the proceedings, looked at her blankly.

Matsu rolled her eyes in exasperation. "Arrgh! You guys don't know enough current events or human history. The Constantinople 'rebellion' was started when a popular Greek separatist group was falsely accused of killing the Turkish president. The Turkish citizenry went mad and began to attack them, trying to kill or drive the Greeks out of the city, but the Greeks fought back, even when the army began to help the Islamic citizens, and Minato was in the thick of it from both sides, and led the Greeks for a year." She reached under her skirt and pulled out a wad of paper. "I have proof!"

Matsu began to read aloud from the paper. "'The Asian boy the Turks were using for local propaganda broadcasts has joined us. He brought over from their lines several girls and women we had thought dead. There was much rejoicing, and we have allowed him to join our ranks as a fighter.'"

She picked up another paper. "'When we ran out of ammo, he led us across the streets right into the teeth of their fire, but we somehow made it through. We got in among them and it was pure knife work. Sahashi took a bullet to the arm that was meant for me, but it didn't slow him. We went from house to house, taking back the street with knives and bayonets, Sahashi leading the way the entire day. He deserves the promotion.' Both of those were taken from recordings of rebel air transmissions picked up by a US spy plane during the rebellion."

She picked another one. "This is taken from a Turkish transmission from a division commander back to his high command. 'The Greek Resistance has begun to fight smarter in the past two weeks. We have lost three squads of infantry wiped out, two companies are down to 25% personnel, and the rest of my units are being worn down. If you want us to retake the city, either put the sea blockade back in place and stop them from getting supplies, allow us to bring in tanks, or send in another division of infantry. We are being stretched too thin and hammered too badly.'"

Matsu looked around at everyone, her eyes settling on Minato. She said softly "You were not just a survivor, you were the Hoplite, the Greek leader who fought the Turks so hard, and without resorting to atrocities, that he won their respect and later was able to convince them to stop fighting."

Despite her attempts to overawe them with knowledge Akitsu and Tsukiumi did not look surprised. Though they hadn't realized how important their husband had been they had known that he was far more than a mere press-ganged soldier.

Miya looked at Minato's silent, contemplative form. She had realized Minato was a warrior but this was something else entirely, and that feeling whose name she refused to acknowledge grew within her. "What is a Hoplite?"

Matsu took out a picture and put it on the table where everyone could see it. "Hoplite was the name of a class of ancient Greeks warriors, way before humanity developed gunpowder. The Romans adopted the name for their infantry after they assimilated Greece. And as to why Minato is called 'the Hoplite'..." she took out a small recorder and pushed play.

A male voice spoke, obviously from a recorder of some kind, swiftly followed by a computerized voice translating what was being said into Japanese. "We'll need to pull back to Kaitree market. We can't hold them where we are. This brigade isn't being broken up, they're coming right at us, daring us to hit them, but we can't afford to take the bait."

Another male voice, harsher than the first, as if used to bellowing commands, spoke up next. "Minato are you listening? We have to pull back the left flank. Should we push forward the right to flank this new force? We've got time to set up a few ambushes before they hit our front line, but we need to start now."

Minato's voice was heard, and Akitsu and Tsukiumi leaned forward. "No."

"What?" a third male voice, younger sounding than the previous two.

Minato's voice: "They bring in troops and we fall back. They split their forces and we attack. Over and over again, that cycle has been repeated since this war began. And what has it gotten us? What has it gotten them? We know the truth, that one of their own planned the assassination. That some of their own military leaders were in on it. But do they?"

"And how the hell are we going to tell them huh? You got them to agree to a three week ceasefire to get the civilians some aid, but that's a very different thing from telling them that their whole reason for fighting this war is based off a lie." The first voice again.

"So we tell them in a way they can't ignore, and give them a symbol of what it will mean if they come ahead anyway."

Here we stand, Antrous, here and no further. Like your ancestors, we draw a line in the sand and we **Will Not Yield**, neither to them nor to the lie."

A few minutes of silence, before the third voice spoke softly. "What would you have us do, sir?"

"Pull all our forces back to the corners or Fifteenth and Shafker. Have them dig in, the lines to form two overlapping triangles, using those corners as the points facing the enemy. But they are not to engage unless I personally give the word. Get some of the technicians out in front of that point, rigging speakers and a voice system. Use as much of our material, make it as large as possible in the time available." A pause, as if he was looking around at the still immobile officers, then Minato's voice again, harsh with command. "I am your commander. You have your orders."

A chorus of 'yes sirs' followed and then a few more minutes of silence, before Minato's voice was heard again, sounding weary, but filled with grim determination. "A symbol..." The sound of broken glass, rustling noises, and then nothing.

Matsu looked at everyone. "That recording was made by a British reporter who was allowed to cover the Greek side of the rebellion on condition that he only record audio files and never describe what any other their leaders looked like from a meeting taking place in a history museum the rebels were using as a forward command center. He walked out dressed in armor over a thousand years old and simply walked toward an advancing battalion of infantry armed to the teeth with modern weaponry. He didn't attack, didn't protect himself. Simply stood there, and dared them to come on. The soldiers didn't do it, first because of shock, than superstitious dread, then respect for the Hoplite. He was able to say his message, and eventually, it was believed by enough people on both sides to end the war. Minato was the one who forced them to see the truth." She knew that was a gross oversimplification of what happened, but that moment was the beginning of the process, and in her opinion the most important.

Everyone stared at Minato with varying degrees of surprise and respect. His wives looks were supporting, but not surprised having already put most of this together from their shared memories and he smiled gently at them. Kagari and Miya's expression showed surprised respect though Miya's was tinged with something else... Interest maybe? Minato looked at Matsu before looking back at his wives, who would be the ones most affected by any decision he made. "Enough about me and my past. I'm not willing to make this choice myself regardless of what services you can provide. I don't live in a vacuum. If my wives agree to letting you join us then I will agree to it as well."

Tsukiumi and Akitsu nodded gratefully, and walked into the kitchen to discuss it. Miya looked at him approvingly while the others simply nodded. Miya was thinking that she would have to ask Matsu for a more through explanation of this Hoplite business. *I need to know if Minato has a chance at doing what he said he would attempt. The idea that a single Ashikabi could break Minaka's power over the Sekirei and free them from this mad game seems ludicrous, but if there is more to him than I have already seen... Perhaps it is time my self-imposed exile ended. Perhaps together we can truly end this game.* She ignored the little thrill that went up her spine at the thought of Minato and the word together.

Tsukiumi and Akitsu had moved to a corner and were conversing in quiet tones. "I don't like it. Even if Minato is asking us to make the decision, I don't like it at all." Tsukiumi was very definite in her view.

Akitsu, as had become the norm was the voice of calm reason. "Ahh...but consider what her aid could mean for Minato and us. You know he has questions about the game and bond we can't answer. Matsu may be able to."

Her calm tone didn't fool her life-mate one bit. "So you want her to join us in our marriage bed?" Akitsu visibly stiffened at the suggestion, despite her habitual impassiveness and Tsukiumi nodded grimly. "So we are agreed on that point. We just don't know her well enough to want her on our team at all, let alone enough to.... to share Minato with her." Speaking that aloud was one of the most difficult things Tsukiumi had ever done. Her blood positively boiled at the thought.

Akitsu nodded thoughtfully. "Ahh... She joins our family but not our bed, until we decide her inclusion will not disrupt our marriage." Tsukiumi nodded reluctant agreement.

The two moved back to the table, reclaiming their places on either side of Minato. Tsukiumi spoke for them both. "Alright we agree that she would be a good partner to have. But that is as far as it goes. In terms of her joining us in our marriage bed, both Akitsu and I demand that we make that decision later. If after getting to know you Matsu, we decide that we can share Minato with you, then we will ask him, but not before. And until then, you will answer any question he has that you can, starting now."

Matsu realized she had pushed her luck as far as she could, and quickly agreed to the terms. Minato nodded then stepped in and began to fire questions at her. "What does it mean to be a more powerful Ashikabi? You and Musubi

both winged yourselves on me, but can an Ashikabi wing a Sekirei against her will and does it affect the strength of their bond? How can I keep more Sekirei from reacting to me? I really don't think I can handle more."

Matsu grinned lasciviously. "From what I've heard at night, you could probably handle at least a few more." Akitsu stiffened but thankfully, the insinuation seemed to go right over Tsukiumi's head at first. When she finally got it, Minato was already holding her in place, arms around her in a tight hug.

Matsu blithely went on "Yes a Sekirei can be winged against their will. I haven't seen any research on what it does to the bond, after all, most everything known about the bond was supposition until the Sekirei were released into Tokyo. But most Sekirei have been indoctrinated to be submissive anyway. A forced winging would probably simply amplify the effect. And you probably can't keep un-winged Sekirei from reacting to you at this point. Not only do you have enough Sekirei to be considered one of the four most powerful Ashikabi in the game, but also three of us are single numbers, much more powerful than double digits and above. Ergo, your powers as an Ashikabi will be heightened in turn." She paused at his blank look. *I'll have to use an analogy to describe this.*

"The closest way to describe it would be as a mix between a genetic compatibility and a sound. You are genetically compatible with your Sekirei, but your power as an Ashikabi determines how far the 'call' of that compatibility can be heard and how intrusive or overpowering it is. For instance I could feel the call from your house to here but I wasn't reacting to you until you winged Musubi because I was never in the same room as you. After you did, I could feel the pull even when you weren't in the same house. After you winged Kusano, I could feel it when you were at work and I was here and it was much more overwhelming as well. The more Sekirei you wing, the stronger and further your Ashikabi signal travels, affecting more Sekirei and alerting them to your compatibility with them."

Minato nodded thoughtfully while Tsukiumi was fuming at the idea of having more rivals for his attention and time. Akitsu was more upbeat about the idea, knowing that she and her sister-wife would retain a powerful place in Minato's heart, regardless of what happened. *And, going by how he treats Musubi, he is not the type to be attracted by mere looks. Judging by how leery he is of Matsu he in fact seems to be intimidated by good looking women aside from my sister-wife and myself who act aggressively toward him. So it is doubtful that any others will be joining us in our marriage bed.*

As his wives were thinking about this, Minato asked his next question. "You said I'm one of the most powerful Ashikabi. Tell me about the others."

Matsu nodded, not surprised that he would want that information given his background and the run in with Yomi in the botanical garden. "Hayato of the south you've already heard of. Other than having number five, Mutsu, he has 24 other Sekirei, the most of anyone. He seems to be ruthless in getting what he wants but he follows the rules of the game and makes certain his Sekirei don't hurt bystanders if they can help it, Yomi was a bit of a loose cannon in that respect. He also is often nearby when his Sekirei go into battle and takes good care of them all. His parents are extremely rich but are both overseas, and have been for some time. They're involved in the car and manufactory business, as well as technology research."

"Sanada of the west, I don't know much about. He seems to be a roamer, never staying in one place, but he has at least five Sekirei, maybe as many as seven. I've seen reports that he doesn't want them all to fight though."

Minato nodded thoughtfully. *This man may be someone I can work with in the future. I can't tell if that's the case regarding Hayato just yet, his actions seem to be half little-boy with toys and half decent leader. Was it normal in their society for men to have harems that large? Still, this could be bad. We're not ready yet for a full scale battle, especially against those numbers. Hopefully he's agreed to my proposal. Right now the best we can do is train get stronger and start planning ahead.*

"Then there's Higa of the west. He has at least eighteen Sekirei personally, but has been actively recruiting other Ashikabi to work under him. He can probably call on as many as forty if he wanted to." Uzume, who had just walked followed by Musubi and with Kusano in tow dressed as a mouse, flinched when she heard Higa's name. Akitsu motioned Kusano over, and she and Minato hugged her, complementing her costume as Matsu went on. "He's the heir to a pharmaceutical giant competing with MBI in several fields and is in charge of all their business in Japan. He's known as being very hands off, never endangering himself or coming close to the action."

Minato turned back to Matsu and decided to ask some questions he knew would stump her that had been percolating at the back of his mind since Tsukiumi and Akitsu had first told him about Sekirei. "I'm certain I'll think of more pertinent questions to ask tomorrow but for now here are some questions that are stumpers." Matsu nodded, wondering what he thought were impossible questions. "How many male Sekirei are there?"

"Three out of the one hundred and eight are male." Matsu very carefully did not look in Kagari's direction she said that

and sighed inwardly, thinking that was an easy question. Matsu thought too soon.

Minato grimaced. "Let me get this straight. Tsukiumi told me the ship carried ninety-seven embryo's, nine babies and one adolescent on board right? And of them all, there are only three males?" Matsu nodded and he went on. "So what were they running from?"

Matsu blinked and everyone looked at him with varying degrees of perplexity while Miya's eyes widened in shock though she quickly regained control before anyone else noticed. He elaborated. "While I was studying to get into college I had acquaintances who were history buffs and others who were studying to be geneticists, and we got into this weird discussion a few weeks back about what was needed to start a colony and why it happened so often in ancient times and so rarely afterward."

At their blank looks he shrugged and went on. "To start a colony, you want as wide a genetic base as possible be it human or animal. That means an even number of males and females, or a ratio of three to two for something called 'optimal genetic drift' that I don't understand but has to deal with diseases and stuff. Sekirei and humans are genetically compatible so I have to assume the same needs apply. So it wasn't a colony ship, or there would have been more males."

The others nodded thoughtfully while Miya worked on keeping her face unreadable. "The ship as Tsukiumi and Akitsu described is too large and advanced to be a lifeboat, so it can't have escaped from any larger ship. And any space faring race couldn't easily be wiped out by natural disaster or disease. Also, to put a barely adolescent child in charge with no adult crew seems like a forlorn hope. So what were they running from and for how long? Did they know that humans were here or did they aim for Earth randomly? And if they were running from some other race, is that race likely to track them to Earth?"

Everyone sat in shocked silence at the huge amount of worms that Minato had given voice. Matsu finally replied, in a voice completely unlike her normal brash tones. "I-I don't know the answer to any of those questions. I doubt those questions have even crossed anyone's mind before now. The ships main computer was inaccessible to everyone once it was unearthed, and it has remained offline since. The only systems functioning are the barest life support and weapons systems, so we have no way of knowing what happened."

Minato nodded. "That's what I'm afraid of. Minaka is sooo happy to amuse himself with his toys and play god that he never even thought of the larger picture. I just hope it doesn't bite humanity on the ass." Minato stood up, indicating the end of the discussion. The others, seeing how tired and stiff he was, did not argue with him

After exchanging some pleasantries with Kagari and the others, Minato and his family went home. Miya spent the entire night tossing on her futon, worried by vague dreams and fears that Minato's measured words woke within her.

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The next day, Minato took Kusano and Musubi out. He decided that he had not done enough to get to know his newest Sekirei, having devoted most of his time to making certain Tsukiumi and Akitsu did not get angry at Musubi's presence. The addition of Kusano and Matsu to their little family was bound to add even more tension, especially Matsu. Miya had actually offered to train both of his wives as she had him and as such, the other three were at loose ends for the day which gave him the opportunity to get to know them better without Tsukiumi's endearing but unnecessary jealousy getting in the way.

Both of them needed new clothing. Musubi had been getting by wearing Tsukiumi's clothing as well as the fighting outfit she had been wearing when she and Minato met. But she was rather bustier then Tsukiumi, as well as shorter and far less leggy. Kusano desperately needed new clothing, having only the small shift she had worn when they found her and the animal costumes Uzume dressed her in. Minato felt that one day of wearing that skirt was enough. He refused to see a child of his going around wearing clothing appropriate for a beggar.

Matsu refused to come out of the inn. She explained over breakfast that she was on the run from MBI. She had been part of the first disciplinary squad, but had left when she had realized what the Sekirei plan would entail for all of their almost-sisters.

Miya gave them directions and the three of them made their way to a nearby thrift shop, unwilling to use the MBI card that Musubi had to go to more expensive shops. In fact Minato made her get rid of it as they left the subway in central Tokyo. On the way to the thrift shop he tried to explain why he didn't want her to have it. His explanation was going right over her head so he gave up, simply ordering her to throw it in a trashcan, which she did reluctantly sad she wasn't able to help her Ashikabi more.

As they walked, Minato began to quiz Musubi and Kusano on their knowledge of common sense items, such as

stopping at a red light and needing to pay for stuff. Not surprisingly, neither showed any knowledge necessary to live out in the real world. It was the same as it had been with Tsukiumi and Akitsu, only worse.

Tsukiumi had mentioned her strange adjustor who had introduced her to the world, though she had given her rather a skewed view of it. Akitsu had been friends with a female scientist who had explained many things of the normal world to her and introduced her to cooking. Musubi, though having become friends with several other Sekirei and a few scientists along with her adjustor had not been interested in the world outside and so never asked about it. And Kusano was only nine.

The walk from the subway to the thrift shop took only about half an hour, but Musubi and Kusano's perusal of the clothing available took much longer. Kusano was simply having fun trying on different outfits, while Musubi was trying to find something that would fit and maybe convince Minato to let her be a wife too, though she had no idea where to start. This put Minato in the age-old position of men everywhere; sitting and waiting for their womenfolk to finish shopping. While doing so, he thought of his plans and prepared questions to ask Matsu when they got back.

*In the short term, he wasn't exactly happy with the number of Sekirei that he had now. Kusano is great and as Akitsu pointed out good practice for the future. Musubi on the other hand keeps pushing at every opportunity to join Akitsu and Tsukiumi or prove worthy of replacing one of them, and the tension between her and Tsukiumi is really unpleasant. Even the very controlled, impassive Akitsu had shown signs of extreme irritation with the bubbly girl at times, especially right before bedtime, when the brown haired Sekirei became her most pushy and insistent. Matsu's addition is going to create even more tension.*

*Knowing there was nothing he could do about that particular issue right now Minato forced himself to change mental gears. In the long term though, things are starting to look good. Tsukiumi and Akitsu are both extremely powerful and very adaptable. Musubi is a close combat specialist and is getting better with practice. All three have responded to training so far. Kusano could be a defense specialist much like Akitsu if we face an emergency, though I definitely don't want her fighting if I can help it. Matsu fills the role of intelligence and communications specialist. That's a full team right there. Now if only I could get them to work together...*

His long-term goals were still the same; either end or win the Sekirei game or overthrow the president of MBI somehow. The information Miya and Matsu had provided gave a clue of how to do it. MBI had actually become its own worst enemy. By letting the Sekirei out to form their own ties to Ashikabi, they had created a situation where the Sekirei were no longer looking at MBI or its officials as the main source of loyalty. Minaka and the others had made their bed and Minato was all too willing to make sure they slept in it permanently.

*The problem is making enough of the Ashikabi work together, and not just the bit players, the major ones will have to join up too. Hayato's certainly not going to want to work with me even if he didn't like that scythe-wielding bitch. I don't know enough about this Nishi guy to be able to get in touch with them. Seo only has two Sekirei and he doesn't seem to be very reliable in the long run if what Miya said about him is true. And the way Matsu spoke about the East guy makes me nervous for some reason. Being hands-off is good in business but when it involves women who love you not only fighting but fighting with the expressed goal of staying with you it shows more disregard than I'm happy with.*

Musubi and Kusano walked up to him interrupting his reverie. He looked at what they were now wearing and nodded in approval. Musubi was dressed in jeans and a loose T-shirt which almost offset her overly generous figure. In her bag however held special panties that the clerk assured her would help her get her man, which she assumed meant the same thing as becoming a wife, though the clerk had looked at her very strangely when she mentioned this.

Kusano was dressed like a tomboy in jeans and suspenders over a white T-shirt with a Pokémon of some type on it.

Minato hoped that the rest of the bags they were holding held several pairs more of similar clothing but he wasn't about to ask. His interest in shopping ended the moment the word came up.

As they were walking out of the store, he noticed that Kusano was looking at a stuffed animal in the window longingly. It was shaped like a very large, fat calico cat, and was made of cashmere or some other soft material.

Smiling gently, he walked over, picked it up and, with Kusano watching in shocked happiness, paid for it at the cash register. He came back, ruffled her hair and handed the doll to her. "This is because you've been such a good girl today. You stayed with the group and didn't ask us to buy any toys despite walking past a toy store. Miya also said that you know your letters and numbers and Akitsu said you helped her around the house with chores this morning. I'm very proud of you and I want you to keep it up okay?"

Kusano's face broke into a huge grin and she hugged him hard. With a laugh, he swung her up onto his shoulders and the three of them walked out of the store. Musubi quickly took control of one of his arms, apparently jealous of

Kusano's closeness with him and they walked home this way.

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Once there Musubi and Kusano both peeled off to enter Izumo Inn and to show Uzume and Miya their new clothing. Minato made his way alone to their house, hoping that either Akitsu or Tsukiumi had finished training for a while and would be able to join him for lunch.

As he approached his house, he was surprised to see a young girl looking at it, seemingly bemused by something. She had short-cropped swept back black hair and brown eyes and a thin but not boyish figure and was dressed in a short skirt and blouse. In her hair, she wore a small pin with a flower on it. She held in her hands a piece of paper, which she was looking at in confusion.

The more Minato looked at her, as he was walking towards her, the more she looked familiar. *Actually take away four years of growth in several areas and that could almost be...* "Yukari?" he almost whispered. When she looked up in confusion, he said that a little louder. "Yukari?"

The girl turned to him in surprise. She took in his appearance, his unkempt black hair, brown eyes and lack of fashion sense in growing confusion. After a few moments, her eyes widened in recognition and she whispered "Onii-chan? Minato, is that you?"

One moment they were staring looking at each other, the next they were hugging fit to break each other's ribs. *Four years apart will do that to siblings*, Minato thought, strangely detached. *I'm just glad that Yukari isn't crying*. She was sniffing a little, but he could deal with that. The concept of happy tears was something he just did not understand.

As the two siblings hugged Tsukiumi and Akitsu came out of Izumo Inn, heading towards their house and the shower, sweaty and bruised from their workout with Miya. Seeing the two siblings hugging they both stopped and stared.

Before either could react, Minato noticed them and turned with a grin on his face. "Ladies, I would like to introduce you to my little sister Yukari. Yukari, this is Tsukiumi my fiancée and her sister Akitsu. She and a few other family members of theirs are living with us at the moment." *Thank the gods we came up with that cover story, improvisational lying never ends well with me.*

Both Sekirei inwardly relaxed. They had heard Minato talk about his sister before, so their initial flash of jealousy and anger dissipated as soon as it had appeared. Tsukiumi stepped forward and introduced herself while Yukari stared at her in consternation. She never imagined that her boring brother would ever have a girlfriend, let alone a fiancée as hot as this one. She in fact said as much. "How the hell did my useless brother land a woman like you?"

Minato groaned aloud and Akitsu continued to watch with her usual blank expression, but Tsukiumi smiled. "Despite his complete lack of fashion sense, your brother has many strong points. Not only is he well-off from investments he made during his time in Constantinople, he is also reliable, kind, generous, extremely intelligent and quite, if I may say so handsome."

Akitsu nodded her head in agreement, realizing that because Tsukiumi would have to act like a fiancée during the day she would be going first tonight. Being first really did not mean much, Minato made certain of that, but it was something that both competitive Sekirei enjoyed.

Yukari looked at her blankly for a minute before turning around to her brother. "Investments?"

Minato shook his head, silently telling her he would not explain that to her. He knew that talking about anything concerning his time in Constantinople with his little sister was not going to happen. Yukari was simply too innocent, and like many Japanese too insulated from the outside world, to come to terms with what he had been through in his years in the war zone that was Constantinople. Smiling he invited Yukari inside, and the three of them followed him in. Akitsu immediately set about laying out lunch for the four of them while Tsukiumi and Yukari began to talk about Minato.

Yukari was **extremely** interested in how the two of them had met, and if they were planning a wedding in the future. Tsukiumi answered her questions calmly, referring to the plan the three of them had thought up after their second night in the new house together. Akitsu joined the conversation when they began to talk about traditional and modern clothing in regards to fashion.

Minato left momentarily, going next door and asking Musubi and Kusano to come home and introduce themselves to his sister. He would have invited Matsu as well, but he felt that her strange manner would throw Yukari off.

He could not have been further from the truth. As Yukari caught sight of Musubi the first thing that came out of her mouth was "holy shit monster tits!" she got behind Musubi and immediately started feeling her up, much to Minato's chagrin. *Okay, so my sister's grown up to be a pervert in my absence, just fantastic...* He noticed however that Musubi was not irritated by the attention. *It almost looks as if she's enjoying that...*

Yukari had sort of the same reaction with Kusano hugging the little girl to her and squealing about how cute she was. Needless to say, Kusano loved the attention. She was a very huggy girl and loved physical forms of affection from anyone.

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For the next hour and a half the extended family got to know one another as Minato and Yukari brought each other up to date on each other's lives. Minato was very careful to not mention anything about his time in Constantinople, instead telling her the fabricated story about how Tsukiumi had met from his perspective, and his time studying to enter Tokyo U, as well as how they had found the house and gotten such a great price for it.

Yukari noticed this lapse, but didn't comment on it. She in fact was trying to get her head around all the changes that had appeared in her brother and getting to know the women who surrounded him as subtly as possible.

Minato definitely was not the kind, caring but generally spineless oni-chan she grew up with. Granted they hadn't seen one another for four years, but still. Physically Minato had bulked up a little from what she could see, and his face was far more weather-beaten than had been the case. He also had strange calluses on his hands and a few scars and burns she could see on them and his forearms. Not from around Here, those scars seemed to say. But there was something more, a stillness and quiet confidence that she had never seen in anyone before and was disconcerting to see in her goof of a brother.

As for the women living with her brother Yukari was definitely painting an odd picture of the group.

Yukari had immediately found a friend in Musubi; the friendly girl was all innocence and naiveté and made a fantastic foil for her dirty jokes taking everything at face value. Though there seemed to be some kind of tension between her and Tsukiumi that Yukari couldn't quite put her finger on...

On the other hand there was Akitsu, the equally beautiful 'sister' of Tsukiumi (if that was the case Yukari was a slug, though Minato and the others stuck to that story too well for her to figure out what else she may be) whose dress, manner and expressionless appearance bothered her. Yukari had never liked traditional clothing or mannerisms, but that was in itself not a big issue. It was the way that Akitsu didn't seem to react to anything that disturbed her, that unresponsive face not changing a wit as the hours passed by regardless of the subject matter. Yukari was used to people wearing their emotions on their sleeves. Both Yukari and her mother constantly showed their emotions for all to see, as had Minato before he left and all her friends back home. Akitsu's emotional deadness was so alien to her that it sort of freaked her out.

Kusano was a much more simple and straightforward case. She looked like Tsukiumi enough that Yukari didn't question their being related. The blushing reason for her presence of 'getting some practice' was also believable, though shocking in its assumption. That Kusano kept on calling Minato papa was a little strange, but Yukari just thought it was cute and didn't read more into it.

Then there was Tsukiumi, and her interaction with Minato. Tsukiumi came across as a very aggressive, almost arrogant woman, speaking her thoughts in a forthright manner. The way she reacted to Minato's little gestures of affection seemed to kill all that aggressiveness: after each little touch and compliment Tsukiumi was reduced to blushing and stuttering for a few seconds. It would have been cute if not for the fact that those moments occurred so regularly and that Minato took such delight in making them.

In fact Yukari was starting to become a little jealous. Despite their years of separation she was used to commanding Minato's attention whenever she was around him and having another woman do the same was irritating.

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As Yukari and the others talked for the rest of the afternoon and into the evening, over in Izumo house Matsu was watching the activities on her monitor via a series of hidden cameras in the house Minato had bought that she had installed a few years ago. Initially installed to get evidence of Saruyama peeping and stealing clothing from Izumo house's female tenants, they now served a far different purpose.

She was a little sad about not being able to join the festivities but Miya had told her quite pointedly that she was grounded for her actions towards Minato in the bathhouse. Besides she had something she was researching. In the past month, three Sekirei had been attacked and nearly killed, their bond destroyed but their attacker had not stayed

around to protect them afterwards. Sekirei were supposed to stay around after defeating their opponent until MBI came to retrieve them. No one had stepped forward to take credit for the battles, and the Ashikabi in two cases had also been injured. Matsu was trying to narrow down the origin of the attacks before bringing them to Minato's attention.

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After an early dinner, Musubi and Kusano went back to Izumo house to play in the yard. Akitsu had gone out to buy food for dinner and Tsukiumi went up to take a shower. That left the two siblings alone together. Now that they were alone Yukari tried to steer the conversation to Minato and his time abroad, but he adroitly dodged the subject every time, turning the conversation back to her or fun times when they were younger. As the conversation progressed Minato asked his sister what she was doing in Tokyo and she responded that she was actually trying to get into Tokyo University.

He was surprised by this but knew she was smart enough to get in. She was also confident, something that before his time in Constantinople would've been his major issue. Now of course he had bigger fish to fry.

But it did worry him because if she went to the University she would have to stay in Tokyo. With the knowledge Matsu had told him this morning about the next stage of the Sekirei game he was worried that his sister would be trapped in Tokyo without any way of getting out. *Civilians might be safe now, but how long will that last?* The answer Minato was very much afraid would be as long as the more powerful Ashikabi bothered with it or as long as Minaka was willing to care about it.

Minato looked at Yukari and realized that he had no way of convincing her to leave the city or give up her dream of entering Tokyo University. Not without revealing knowledge to her about the Sekirei game that he was not willing to impart. Even if he was willing to go up against Minaka there were just some aspects of the security portion of his demands that made sense to him.

So with a heavy heart Minato escorted Yukari to the train station. She'd refused his offer of a room saying she didn't want to be a burden to him or his fiancée and that he already had a few too many burdens in any case. Minato had nodded rueful agreement at that. Waiting for the train, the two exchanged phone numbers. Yukari was surprised Minato's cell phone had died mysteriously. And Minato for his part made Yukari promise not to give his pager number to his mother. Yukari was a bit worried about this but decided not to get in between the two. The two parted with a final hug, and Minato made his way back home alone.

That night Tsukiumi and Minato treated Akitsu as recompense for not enjoying his attentions during the day. They made her the center of their lovemaking all night long, only stopping as sleep claimed them one by one.

Four houses down the street a middle aged couple finally decided to call the city council, something had to be done about the odd lights that had begun appearing every night.

**end chapter**

## \*Chapter 7\*: Chapter 7 Escalation

Sekirei is owned by its creator, who is certainly not me, I can't draw boobies nearly as well.

I'm surprised some people forgot that Uzume had been attacking Sekirei under Higa's direction for a while before being found out in the manga. However in my story one of the attacks was from a different source, but that will not come out until much later.

An action chapter and Kazehana is introduced, as well as Minato pissing Minaka off a little.

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g

### Chapter 7 Escalation

+++++++three days later+++++++

Minato sighed as he knocked on Matsu's door. Work had begun again, and for the past three days he had spent his little free time getting to know Matsu, Musubi and Kusano. Because of this he had been forced to spend less time with Tsukiumi and Akitsu, which made him irritable and strengthened that nagging voice at the back of his head that kept telling him he was unworthy of them, that their love was the product of simple lust or something else interfering. Thankfully, the nights were still going as they should (though the fact that several members of the local neighborhood association came by and asked if they had trouble with the bizarre lights appearing at night was rather disturbing, but not enough to make them stop).

However, today was proving a trial because of another source.

Kusano was a delight to be around, huggy but not clingy, innocent and happy. Her days began by having breakfast with her new family, and she spent the mornings usually doing the homework Matsu had devised to teach her about the real world. After that she was free to play with Uzume or any of the others who were free until Minato came home to spend at least an hour with her playing. She had fallen easily into her role as his daughter, and looked to the triumvirate of Miya, Tsukiumi and Akitsu as mother figures, despite somehow knowing instinctively not to actually call any of the young women that.

Today however Kusano had been sad and weepy the entire day. The most anyone, even Minato, could get out of her was that she had dreamed of a male Sekirei who she called Shi-chan and something happening to him. The two apparently had counteracting powers, and been trained together Kusano's entire life. He was a brother figure to the little girl, and she was very worried about him. None of them had been able to bring her spirits up, despite numerous attempts to do so. Minato had finally given up just fifteen minutes ago, leaving to go meet with Matsu in her room.

Matsu's integration into the group was not going nearly as well as Kusano's. It wasn't that she was unattractive, or that on a basic physical level he did not find her desirable. As every other Sekirei he had seen she was beautiful, though her beauty was more lush and softer all around than the warrior body type of Tsukiumi and Akitsu (despite their massive chests...). She had fuller breasts than either, which sagged under their own weight unlike those of his wives. Her face was beautiful, though the gigantic anime style glasses hid her lively brown eyes from view. So yes, if it was just a sexual compatibility issue and he had no prior commitments, Minato would have no problem giving in to her.

*But her personality clashes almost directly with Tsukiumi's, and even Akitsu's to some extent and jeopardizing what I have with them is not something I'm **ever** going to do.* Matsu had a lot of trouble keeping her hands to herself and had quickly shown her perverted nature. Moreover her willingness to go around her agreement with his life-mates to fondle and attempt to make out with him at every opportunity was a major problem for him. Even today would have brought one of the others along, but Matsu had specifically requested he come alone. Minato had learned from previous experience however, and stayed near the door ready to bolt.

Matsu's room was a true otaku den, small, with no furniture but a futon and three computers all working on different projects. It amused him to think about how much of a shut in the outgoing Matsu was.

To his hidden relief Matsu was all business as she turned and waved him toward the computer she was currently working on. "Minato, you told me to share any information with you as soon as I found it. There are four items that I think you should know."

At this pronouncement Minato stiffened and moved swiftly to sit down across from her. He reached out to touch her cheek, turning her head back to look at him. "Matsu, I realize you are a good data collector, but please don't decide on your own what information I need to know or not know. Give me **everything**. We can look at it together and we can both decide what's important and what's not. Any information can give you an edge in battle."

Minato was also anxious to bring in Akitsu on the analysis side. She had proven the night before to have a flair for it. Matsu had tested them all on their knowledge of the city and where the other powerful Ashikabi could be based, and Akitsu had been able to use a few reports to pin down both Higa and Hayato's base of operations (a pharmaceutical complex and a mansion on the southern outskirts of the city respectively), which could be very helpful down the road.

Matsu blushed. It was the first time Minato willingly touched her, and she was thrilled beyond words by it, but kept control, knowing that coming onto him right now would have the opposite effect from what she wanted. "Alright, I'll remember that in the future. But for now can I share what I called you up here to tell you?"

Minato took his hand away and nodded, so she began her prepared briefing. "The first is that there have been six attacks on single Sekirei and Ashikabi pairs in the in random places around the city. Each time, the attacker breaks the Sekirei's bond and then leaves before MBI arrives. Twice the Ashikabi has been badly injured as well. Both of these are against the rules. Sekirei are supposed to wait by their downed opponents to protect them until MBI comes to collect them." She turned around and tapped a few buttons. A moment later, her printer began to work. She handed the paper over. "Here's a map showing where the attacks took place. "

She pointed to an arrow on the map, moving inward from the eastern area of the city into what Minato was starting to think of as his territory. "This was the second thing I wanted to tell you. Higa of the east's going to send a few of his Sekirei on a patrol into the north of the city tomorrow. He's been giving orders to some of his allied Ashikabi via a telephone company I recently hacked. Apparently he's looking for a newly released Sekirei. Nishi, who uses the same company will also apparently be in the area tomorrow and may be looking for him or her. He's made an appointment at a local bike shop and some other stops, which may just be a cover for his presence in the north, which is now known as your territory."

Minato nodded thoughtfully. "Do you think it has something to do with Kusano's 'Shi-chan'?"

Matsu nodded. "It could. I definitely think Higa's search is something we should look into." Minato nodded back and Matsu went on. "The third thing is a report from MBI's American branch. Apparently they were not too happy to lose so much equipment in your assault on the arboretum." Again, the printer whirred away. "I'm trying to find out how much the super powers are involved in funding MBI and what percentage of their funding comes from their legitimate business. So far, I haven't found anything to indicate anything more than a wait and see attitude and some materials relocations, no cash or personnel transfers. There's also been a lot of work going on throughout Tokyo involving installing cameras and recording equipment."

Minato smiled grimly. "It sounds as if the show is about to start." *But why, and who is going to watch, other Ashikabi, other countries, just Minaka? More information damn-it! How many enemies are just waiting to strike the moment Minaka shows weakness? How many enemies will I make when I move against him?* "And the last thing you wanted to share?"

Matsu tapped some more buttons and some deployment orders popped onto the screen, showing orders for dozens of companies of infantry and mobile armor. "These are some of the orders and designations for MBI troops who will be used to close down the city during the second stage and beyond. These began to go out the moment I winged you." She looked only a little apologetic as she brought that up, despite it still being a very sore point between her and his wives.

Matsu had told Minato that there were four stages of the plan during their second question and answer session. The second stage had been meant to start when 90% of the released Sekirei had been winged, but had been moved up to start in the next few days regardless of the percentage still unwinged. MBI would come out and take control of the city openly and declare the game for the world to see. This stage would close the city entirely, forcing Ashikabi to stay and making them begin to fight one another. Cash prizes for the winners of Sekirei fights would be offered in this stage, spurring more competition and the elimination of many of the weaker Ashikabi.

That last, and the moving up of the second stage was a recent addition to the plan Matsu had found out about the day before kissing Minato. Apparently over a dozen single Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs had tried to skip out of town during the first stage when the Sekirei were still being released, despite Minaka's threats. Their whereabouts were unknown now, but Minaka apparently hoped to appeal to Ashikabi greed immediately as well as long term.

That so many Sekirei and Ashikabi would choose not to fight gave Minato hope for the future though he was not so

sanguine about their fates...

The next phase of the game, stage three would take it a step further, pitting those who were still in the game against one another in team battles of set (by Minaka of course) sizes, with each winner receiving an unknown prize. None of the Sekirei, even Matsu had any information about the last stage only that it existed. *I suppose the final stage will be one on one combat between the last Ashikabi's Sekirei against MBI's representatives, if Matsu's supposition is right about the winning prize being command of the spaceship they all arrived in. After all, what else could make 'all your dreams come true'?*

A sudden thought occurred to him and he spoke aloud. "Damn. If the second stage had already begun Yukari may have gotten scared and left the city. But not after taking the test and getting accepted."

Matsu paused and turned to him, unsure how he would react to her suggestion. "Um, I could fix it so that she doesn't get accepted if you want."

"No." Minato said firmly as he got up, offering her his hand and kissing it gently hers in thanks for the thought, making her practically swoon. "We don't have the right to take away her dream like that." Matsu nodded and the two of them went downstairs.

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Dinner had become a communal affair between the Izumo Inn residents and Minato's odd family, with Akitsu and Miya working together on the meals. Tonight Uzume was missing but everyone else was there. They all had fun, be it Miya simply surrounded by friends old and new she had come to care for, a liveliness that had been missing from her life for too long, or Kusano, having fun with Musubi and Uzume, or Minato, training Tsukiumi in tactics. Even the aloof Kagari had fun. He strangely had a passion for card games, and found an apt pupil in Akitsu whose poker face was unbeatable and they spent their meal discussing different games.

After the meal was over, Minato informed everyone of what Matsu had found. Kagari looked surprisingly grim and Musubi and Tsukiumi were both incensed by what they saw as cowardice, running away and leaving a fallen opponent at the mercy of any passerby.

Akitsu immediately spoke up, emboldened by Minato's approval of her analytical skills, her voice cold and logical. "There may be a connection between this nameless attacker and Higa's recruitment. I can think of ways the Ashikabi could be used against the Sekirei, forcing her to obey. An agent that can act in other parts of the city and outside the rules of the game would be very helpful to someone like him." Minato glanced slyly at Matsu, whose mouth had dropped open at Akitsu's leap of logic. *This is why talking over points is so important.*

He motioned Akitsu to continue. "I also agree there is a connection between Higa and Sanada's search for this new Sekirei and Kusano's bad dream." She gestured to where Kusano had fallen asleep in between Akitsu and Miya, exhausted by the emotional turmoil of her day.

Minato nodded. "Tsukiumi, Musubi and I will move in to start patrolling that area of the city tomorrow after work. Akitsu will remain here in support, and Matsu will use her hacking skills to search for the new Sekirei. Ask Kusano tomorrow to give you a description of this Shi-chan, it should help your search."

"And what will we do if we find Higa or Sanada's Sekirei without finding the new one?" asked Tsukiumi.

Minato grinned fiercely and Musubi and Tsukiumi's eyes glittered in anticipation. "I think we should take the opportunity to say hello to our other opponents, don't you?"

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Minato tried for a fourth time but again was unable to find Seo at work. He finally decided to just ask his foreman, and was told that his fellow Ashikabi had quit without any warning during the lull in activity caused by the Kusano incident. *Just like Miya said, he never holds a job long. Pity, I wanted to ask him about my stamina lately...*

He found Tsukiumi and Musubi waiting for him outside the construction yard, turning down or ignoring the workers and passerby who tried to hit on them. As he watched, Tsukiumi smacked aside one of Minato's co-workers who had been persistently trying to get her attention. Minato strode up, put his arms around her and the two spent a moment simply soaking in the others presence before moving off, leaving his disgruntled co-workers behind.

Musubi took her position up on the roofs following them, and the three made their way to the area Matsu's information indicated Sanada and Higa's Sekirei would be searching. Their search went on for an hour as the daylight died, with the lights of the city coming on around them and the crowds becoming heavier as work let out.

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About an hour later they passed through a large crowd and Minato spied two groups of oddly dressed individuals staring each other down from across a busy street. *Bingo, I didn't think we would get lucky this quickly but I'm not about to complain.*

On one side stood a man dressed in late 80's biker style, with unkempt black hair and a major tan. Two of the three women with him, looking little more than teens, were dressed in similar style and equally tanned. The third was a short girl dressed in a kimono that accented her classic Asian features and figure. Minato had to shake his head at the odd juxtaposition that she represented paired with the others.

On the other side stood three women and a man in an expensive business suit, which fit him about as well as it would a gorilla. He had light blond hair and an earring in his left ear, big muscles and an arrogant stance. One of the women stood extremely close to him, holding what looked like a mace under one arm, eyes glinting in a way that reminded Minato of Yomi. The other two women were an equally odd pair. One was dressed in a jumpsuit, had her brown hair in a bowl cut, and a melancholy, withdrawn expression that immediately set alarm bells ringing in Minato's head. The last wore a purple skirt and white blouse, and had long pink hair.

Neither group seemed willing to start a fight with so many bystanders around, which was a good thing as far as Minato was concerned. Before any of them could notice him, he stepped back, taking Tsukiumi with him. He motioned for Musubi to join them as they dropped back a street. "Are you two ready?"

Tsukiumi and Musubi nodded eagerly. He kissed them each on the cheek, not wanting to alert their opponents by igniting their wings this close, before walking back around the corner. The trio moved to intercept the two groups who were heading away from the crowded street. Minato and Tsukiumi followed them at a discreet distance until the two groups had moved away from the crowds, then followed them into a burned out and half-demolished motel complex, with Musubi sneaking in behind them from an upper story window.

As soon as both groups were inside Minato strode forward confidently to place himself in between the two camps, Tsukiumi moving with him. "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. May I ask what you all are doing?"

Thinking that Minato and Tsukiumi were alone the man dressed in a suit snorted and motioned his Sekirei forward. He was under orders to attack anyone who got in his way of finding number 107, an order he would enjoy seeing carried out. Watching his Sekirei fight always gave him a thrill, knowing he controlled someone with so much power.

As soon as the enemy Sekirei moved, Musubi dropped down behind that group and her fist flashed out, barely blocked by the brown-haired girl who stumbled into the Ashikabi and the girl with the mace. At the same time, Tsukiumi sent a spout of water at half speed smashing into the girly girl forcing her back as well. Suddenly realizing the odds, and looking over to the other group, which hadn't moved, the man gestured again, and his Sekirei stayed put, looking at Tsukiumi and Musubi angrily.

The tanned biker smirked at the turnaround and raised his hand in greeting. "Yo, my names Sanada Nishi. Nice ambush."

Minato blinked. "Er, just to be clear, is Nishi your name or is that a nickname? I'm Sahashi Minato."

"It's my real name, thanks for actually asking. Are you the one who winged the green girl, the Ashikabi of the north?"

"Rather pretentious title but yes I'm the Ashikabi of Kusano, the one you call the green girl, though I hope to never actually use her in this dumb ass plan. And you?" He turned to the other man, smirking inwardly at how the other man, who reminded him of some bullies he had known growing up, had gone from confident and arrogant to off balance and under pressure.

The man tried to compose himself but had little success. "I'm Touru Nagari, allied with Higa of the east. I'm here to search for the latest Sekirei to be released and bring her or him back to Higa."

Minato smiled grimly. "Well, Touru, I have a major problem with that. If you were searching for her or him because you felt connected in some way that would be fine. But I refuse to let you search in my territory for a Sekirei you feel nothing for. So you can both leave now or I can force you to leave." While they had been talking, Akitsu was getting closer, alerted by Minato and guided by Matsu. If it came to a fight, Minato was confident that Musubi and Tsukiumi would hold out long enough for aid to arrive.

Nishi shrugged and motioned his Sekirei to move away. "Fine by me dude. I was only in the area to get my bike checked out anyway, and I wanted to see you." He looked at Tsukiumi and Musubi who were still enclosing Touru

and his Sekirei effectively despite being outnumbered 3 to 2. "Now that I see how you roll, I'm done. I'll see you in the third stage." With a jaunty wave Nishi lead his Sekirei out of the yard.

Minato smiled. *That guy likes to hide his brain behind that biker exterior. I may not have an ally in him but at least he isn't an enemy just yet.* He turned back to Touru. "And you?"

Touru suddenly motioned with the hand behind his back, and two of his Sekirei turned and charged at Musubi. The last, the cheerful girl in the skirt, pulled out twin chakra from somewhere and threw them at Tsukiumi. "#101 Oriha here I come!" Touru himself pulled out a handgun, and pointed it at Minato.

Tsukiumi concentrated and a water shield appeared instantly in front of both of them, absorbing the bullets harmlessly, but she was forced to dodge as one of the chakras had enough momentum to force its way through the shield. She hadn't been able to make a shield that large out of supersonic water like in her fight with Yomi.

Minato looked around cursing mentally as Tsukiumi kept her shield up in defense. *It never occurred to me that an Ashikabi would be willing to use guns already.* But he kept his cool, he had dealt with people shooting at him more times than he could count before this. The big secret of guns was that they allowed you to kill at a distance but after their bullets were gone, a gun was little more than a club. And the idiot was already too close to really get the most out of having a gun.

As Tsukiumi's shield began to fade, Minato calmly reached down and wrenched a pipe out of some nearby rumble, throwing it like a spear at Touru, who dodged wildly.

Before the suited man could recover, Minato was on him, knocking the gun away and slamming the man to the ground with a swift two punch combo to the head. Touru again reached into a pocket and pulled out a knife, but before he could use it, Minato grimly stabbed him through the eye with a wooden splinter he grabbed from the floor. The man screamed and thrashed as his life bled out onto the hard ground.

Musubi was hard pressed by the team of the mace-wielding girl and the girl in the jumpsuit. She was pushed steadily backward, until the mace girl suddenly stood stock still before collapsing to the ground like a marionette with its strings cut. At the same time, Tsukiumi dodged another Chakra and sent four waterspouts back at the girl who had introduced herself as Oriha, slashing into her from different angles. She was able to block two, but the others knocked her out of the battle, smashing her between them until she fell unconscious. .

Musubi dodged a leg sweep, and before the brown haired girl could set herself, smashed her on the jaw. Her eyes rolled back and she slumped to the ground, ending the battle.

Minato took note of this out of the corner of his eye as he stared down at Touru's dead body, then over at the girl with the mace. Things had escalated far more than he had thought they would and now... Walking over, he was not surprised to feel no pulse. "Damn it. It would appear we've found out what happens to a Sekirei when her Ashikabi dies." *And maybe why Minaka was unconcerned about the Sekirei's loyalty changing from MBI to their Ashikabi. Push comes to shove kill the weak link. He really is an utter bastard!*

Musubi and Tsukiumi gripped his arms comfortingly, staring down at the girl themselves in shock. Minato quickly called up Matsu and asked if the Sekirei could be revived. She sadly responded that she didn't know.

Not three minutes after the fight ended, Minato and his Sekirei looked up as they heard the noise of rotor blades. Tsukiumi looked at Minato questioningly, but he shook his head at her. Explanations and questions would have to be given, regardless of his low opinion of Minaka. It wasn't like with Yomi, who had killed a soldier in front of them and been executed in turn. He did make certain that his Sekirei were all standing by the two unconscious women though.

To his surprise, the soldiers that poured out of the three helicopters were not interested in the dead man. They retrieved the dead Sekirei's body and moved to take the other two, but stopped as Minato waved them off.

A sergeant stood forward and saluted. "Sir, as per Sekirei Plan rules, we are to collect the defeated Sekirei." He did not even look in the direction of the dead man.

Minato spoke, angered by this callousness but not allowing it to show. "I'll let your troops take them away as soon as you tell me what happens to them afterward."

The sergeant looked nervous, but answered firmly. "I'm sorry sir, but I'm not privy to that information. Standard procedure is to collect them and return to the tower that is all."

*Yet another sign that Minaka prizes not questioning orders over training and intelligence. Damn, the man is really*

*shooting himself in the foot. A well trained unit could at least make a fight of it against a single Sekirei as long as they kept their cool and their distance, but these rent-a-cops, no chance.* Minato spread his hands and his Sekirei stepped forward shielding the bodies of their former enemies. "Not good enough." The two men tried to stare one another down. Behind the sergeant, one of his men tried to lift his weapon to the firing position, but dropped it with a curse as it suddenly became too cold to touch as Akitsu arrived, jumping down from the second story of the complex to stand next to Minato demurely. The gun shattered on the ground as the other soldiers began to look at one another in mounting trepidation.

These men weren't chosen for their courage or experience, but for their little or no morals and unquestioning and unimaginative loyalty to authority, perfect for the unsavory task of retrieving Sekirei but not fighting them. Few people could handle the almost supernatural powers of a Sekirei, and fewer still had the training and none of these rent a troops had the right stuff. Minato smiled pleasantly, knowing precisely what the men in front of him were thinking. "Perhaps you should get in touch with someone who is able to answer my question."

The sergeant, gray faced with trepidation nodded and moved away, using his radio to call it in. During the conversation he kept glancing back at Minato and his party. After a moment, he motioned to another soldier, who went to one of the helicopters and returned with a small video phone.

He held the phone out and Minato looked into the picture not surprised to see Minaka there. "Well, well Sahashi-kun, not in the game a month and already neck deep. How are you enjoying wielding the power of the gods?"

Minato ignored his questions and succinctly explained what happened. Minaka nodded, trying, and to Minato's eyes failing, to hide his pleasure at finding out that his guess had been correct about the effect losing her Ashikabi would have on a Sekirei. "Well, I can't see how Touro's death was your fault if he began it. I'm sorry his Sekirei died, but again, you didn't know. Now if you will just let my men get on with their job, we can put this incident behind us."

Minato's lips twitched to form what only a very foolish person would call a smile. "If you tell me what'll happen to them, then I'll let them go."

Minaka's attitude abruptly changed. "That is none of your business Sahashi-kun. You have no need to know more than they are out of the game."

Minato shrugged, as if the question had been a spur of the moment thing then spoke again, trying to lighten the atmosphere. "In any case, their crests aren't erased, we just knocked them unconscious. I want to send their Ashikabi a message, and they'll do nicely for messengers."

Minaka leaned back, unhappy but bound by the rules he himself had created. "Very well, if their crests are not gone you may do as you wish. Nevertheless, remember this is a game Minato-kun and every game has rules. You are questioning them, and there will be reprisals." With that he cut the call.

Minato turned away face set in a snarl. He didn't know what kind of reprisals the president of MBI would dish out and was not looking forward to finding out. His Sekirei gathered up their defeated counterparts, and they made their way back home.

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As Minato and his family neared their house, they were shocked to see that their front door seemed to be open. Being the least tired of them Akitsu immediately took point. Entering the house cautiously, she was surprised to find Uzume and another woman sprawled out on the floor of the living room. Shrugging she signaled for the others to enter, going to grab another blanket to cover them with.

Minato gasped and held a hand to his nose to stop a nosebleed. Uzume was dressed in nothing but a straining white bra and matching panty, and the other girl just in a purple lace panty. Before he turned around he could clearly see even from this angle that she had a bust even larger than Musubi's with large burgundy colored nipples. "Um, Uzume..."

Tsukiumi screamed in rage as soon as she saw the two women. "Uzume, what the hell do you think you're doing?! Dressed like that in someone else's house, and in front of Minato! Get out of here and put some clothes on!"

The newcomer, roused by the noise shook her head and held up a hand imploringly. "Please, keep it down a little. My head.... too noisy."

Minato went to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water and two Tylenol. He knelt down keeping his eyes averted next to the still groaning woman and held them both out to her. "These should help miss."

The woman chuckled, but then grabbed first her head and then the pills, downing them before reaching out for the water. "Miss, do I really look that old?" She cleared her face of her long, silky black hair and looked at Minato for the first time. She stopped and stared, as a warm, familiar flush began to travel through her entire body at the sight of him.

Minato rubbed the back of his head self consciously, looking away politely as he replied. "No, you don't. But I was raised to be respectful to women, so miss it is until I know who you are."

The gorgeous woman sat up seemingly indifferent of her naked body. "Well, let me introduce myself then, I'm Kazehana." She reached out a hesitant hand, touching Minato's face before he could move away, trying to turn his head to look at her. "You... are you?"

Tsukiumi walked forward and dragged the woman to her feet, swiftly wrapping the blanket she and Uzume had used during the night around her. "Pleased to meet you." she ground out between clenched teeth. *Not awake five minutes and this woman's already flirting with my husband!* "I'm Tsukiumi, and this is my **husband**" she emphasized the word "Sahashi Minato."

Kazehana glanced from Tsukiumi over to Akitsu who had entered carrying a blanket and was now eyeing her warily. She could feel the power radiating off both of them, not just a recently renewed norito but a full bond, the likes of which she had never seen before.

She suppressed a shudder at how powerful Miya had been after being winged and decided to handle things carefully here. *After all, it's still uncertain why my body is responding, I could just be too close to him and his strength as an Ashikabi could be overriding the compatibility.* "Pleased to meet ya, and don't worry I won't poach. I may flirt, but I won't try to steal him or anything. In fact, I might have a few suggestions for you as well dear. Positions, outfits, other ideas to spice your night life up a bit." She giggled.

Tsukiumi spluttered indignantly at the very idea, but Akitsu cocked her head inquisitively. Of the two of them she was the most adventurous. Minato, face red as an apple, made a tactical retreat by running out of the room. He went next door, coming back with a change of clothing for Uzume, who was awake by the time he returned, with explanations following.

It turned out that Kazehana and Uzume were old friends from before they were released, who had met up by chance for the first time in a long while last night and gone out drinking, and kept it up the entire day. Unfortunately, they had both had a little too much to drink and had staggered home roaring drunk. Uzume had the great idea of crashing at their place instead of Izumo house to avoid Miya, who was as hard on drunkenness as she was on lewdness and violence in her Inn.

Kazehana and Uzume were both interested in the prisoners and asked where they came from and Tsukiumi filled them in. Uzume was aghast at the death of the Ashikabi Tatsuo and his Sekirei (though secretly even more so from their presence here in the north).

Kazehana seemed even more shocked. *But that didn't happen with Miya and Takehito! Was she so different from us? Or is this a result of the changes Minaka's made tinkering with our genes?* That thought upset her as she still harbored feelings towards her former crush. The knowledge that he may have changed their bond so much disturbed her faith in him. She allowed none of her inner thoughts to show however.

With Miya's permission, the two prisoners were again held in Izumo Inn where Kazehana and Miya promised to watch over them. This suited Tsukiumi and Akitsu fine: just because Kazehana wasn't showing blatant interest in their husband did not alleviate their suspicions.

That night by unspoken agreement Tsukiumi and Akitsu took the initiative for once, forcing the emotionally exhausted Minato to just lie back and enjoy it, which he did immensely. Tsukiumi discovered that she did not enjoy being the one in charge in this area of their relationship, while Akitsu showed a distinct flare for being on top. None of them was up for more than one round however. Minato was the first to fall asleep, pulling his wives down into a loving embrace and they soon joined him in slumber.

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The next day Tsukiumi slept in, exhausted from having to hold her water shield over a wide area to protect the two of them during the fight with Touru. Minato, despite Akitsu's wordless protest, went to work as usual. He still needed the money after all and the prisoners could wait with everyone there to guard them. She did insist on accompanying him and staying nearby on guard which would force everyone else next door for breakfast.

Tsukiumi awoke and found a note by her pillow. Smiling at the realization that her life-mates let her sleep in, she went downstairs only to find Kazehana there making an early lunch while Uzume was quizzing Musubi and Kusano on the real world knowledge Minato had taught them.

She sat down warily, keeping an eye on Kazehana. She'd never admit it but the older Sekirei made her feel slightly jealous. Her bust size was even larger than Musubi's and her waist and legs were as good as Tsukiumi's.

Though what was really bothering her was a conversation she and Akitsu had after Minato had fallen asleep. They had decided to allow Matsu to join them for one night, as reward for the information and for waiting, but she was not happy about it.

Kazehana noticed her sigh and turned away from the stove to look at her. "What's wrong? Anything Oneechan can help with?" She had decided during the night to play it as cool as possible around Minato. She didn't want to break up anyone's existing relationships or force herself into them until she was certain what she felt. If it came to it she wanted Minato to return her affection willingly. She also wanted to become friends with the other Sekirei.

Tsukiumi looked at her blankly then nodded. *Maybe she will have some insights to share.* "I would like to talk, but it's rather delicate, so if you could keep it a secret I'd appreciate it."

Kazehana's full, cherry red lips widened in a smile and she leaned over the table toward Tsukiumi. "My lips are sealed." She listened as Tsukiumi told her worries wincing inwardly at how much Tsukiumi's concerns mirrored her own from the other side of the equation. Still she put aside her own problems for now to help the younger woman, who despite her bluster Kazehana could tell was unsure of herself and a little insecure. "Well, for one thing you're absolutely right."

Tsukiumi could not hide her surprise, and Kazehana chuckled. "I've known Matsu a long time, and she's exactly as perverted as she seems. Make certain she realizes this is a one-time thing, and that you, Akitsu and Minato have final say on whether she becomes a permanent part of your nighttime activities. Personally I don't see it happening, but you have to let her try or she'll keep pushing, maybe even going behind your backs again if she becomes desperate. You have to make the point again and again that Matsu doesn't have 'full wife' status." She paused looking at Tsukiumi's uncertain expression. "And I think you should reward yourselves and Minato for agreeing to let her in."

Tsukiumi looked up from her rice bowl. "What do you mean?"

Kazehana grinned like a cat that caught a canary. "Well..." The resultant conversation widened Tsukiumi's mind more than she was truly comfortable with, but raised her spirits as well. Kazehana ended the conversation by again telling her to talk to Minato before making any final judgment. "He cares about you both a lot that much is obvious even after a few minutes in his company. If he sees that the two of you are still having trouble with the idea, he won't want to go through with it." Tsukiumi nodded gratefully, and the two went into the next room to play with Kusano.

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While Minato was at work, Tsukiumi and Musubi installed a TV (without cable) and a DVD player in the main living room, purchased from Minato's weekly paycheck. Matsu worked on their pagers, making them closed circuit, able to interact only with one another. Minato's phone would be the only device open to outside signals, but with her modifications even it would be untraceable: the message would be received, but would automatically reroute his location to random places around the city. It wouldn't help against any searcher who knew where he was living, but it would make pinpointing his exact location much harder for those relying on electronic hardware to keep tabs on him.

Kusano went next door to help Miya in the garden while Kazehana watched the prisoners. Uzume had left for work a little after Minato, and Kagari was still asleep, as was normal due to his nighttime profession.

Tsukiumi also talked to Miya about what had happened during the fight. She was shocked to learn what had happened to the Sekirei after her Ashikabi died, as it directly contradicted what had happened to herself and her husband. Miya came to the same conclusion as Kazehana had previously, albeit much more quickly as she felt nothing but hatred for Minaka. *Control again, a final barrier to a Sekirei's independence. Simply threaten the Ashikabi, and the Sekirei will have to fall in line. If they persist, then kill the Ashikabi and the Sekirei dies. Damn you Minaka!*

Both prisoners woke up around lunch time, but the combination of Kazehana and Miya made certain they stayed put. In truth the hanya mask attack was so powerful, fueled by Miya's anger at Minaka, that it was all the poor girls could do to not to piss in fear let alone think of escape.

By the time Minato and Akitsu came home, the prisoners had eaten and bathed. Altogether, they both looked much better than they had after their drubbing by Tsukiumi and Musubi.

Minato spoke first to Miya. He had some specific ideas about talking to these two. "I would like to talk to each of them separately, and if you don't mind Miya-san, I'd like you to observe as a witness." Miya, who had been about to demand that very thing, nodded graciously, pleased that Minato wanted her involved, though she was curious about what he was going to ask. "Certainly, we may use one of the empty rooms on the second floor." Minato thanked her and indicated that he wanted to speak to the uber-girly one first.

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While Minato spoke to Miya, Tsukiumi hugged Akitsu, wordlessly thanking her for watching over their husband. After a moment, she briefly outlined her conversation with Kazehana. Akitsu's eyes began to glow in her impassive face at some of the ideas the wind Sekirei had introduced, and she almost quivered in anticipation. She also agreed to her suggestions towards dealing with Matsu. "I'll handle speaking to her if you want. The hotel room is a good idea."

That had been Kazehana's last serious suggestion: that Matsu and Minato should spend a few hours in a love hotel rather than in their marriage bed and that his wives should join them, so it wouldn't appear as if anything was going on behind their back. "Ahh... If anything happens that we don't approve of, I'll be the one to step in. You're too violent." Tsukiumi nodded unwilling agreement to that caveat and the two went to join Minato and Miya as they escorted the prisoner up to an empty room.

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Miya put out a few futons as makeshift seats, motioning the longhaired Sekirei to one as she took up another. Minato stood well back from the girl, motioning his wives to take the other two futons. "What's your name?"

The girl spoke in a singsong voice, which somehow came out as surly, cutesy and arrogantly aristocratic, an odd linguistic feat. "Sekirei #101, Oriha."

"And is your Ashikabi Izumi Higa or allied with him?"

"Higa-sama is my Ashikabi."

Minato nodded. He had intended to ask her the same questions as he had asked Mitsuha, but her overall demeanor, the pride in her voice and manner made them redundant. "What do you remember of the fight?" Oriha glanced at Tsukiumi, scowling for a moment, but did not answer. Tsukiumi met her glare head on, head thrown back challengingly.

Minato allowed his voice to harden, bringing Oriha's attention back onto him. "The Ashikabi accompanying you on your search into my territory pulled out a gun and tried to kill myself and my wife." He glanced over at Tsukiumi, allowing his love for her to appear on his face before turning back, eyes hardening in anger. "Because of that, both Tatsuo and his Sekirei are now dead." *Make of that what you will.*

Oriha flinched slightly but otherwise kept control. She had known that since waking up a prisoner, remembering the other girl collapsing before her eyes though she hadn't known how her fellow Sekirei had died. Minato went on inexorably. "Until proven otherwise, I will assume that he was carrying a gun because he wanted to, not on orders from Higa, so we can consider this just an unfortunate accident. But I want you to relay this message to Higa: stay out of my territory. Any action in the north will be met with equal force and I will use that force on both Sekirei and Ashikabi. Do you understand?" Oriha nodded jerkily, and Minato signaled he was done with her.

Tsukiumi stood and escorted her out of Izumo inn. On the road outside, she turned to Oriha. "The east is that way" she pointed and Oriha nodded, glaring at her. Tsukiumi grinned down at the shorter woman, blue eyes flashing in challenge. "If you want a rematch, come back anytime." Oriha flinched from her gaze, turned and bounded off. Tsukiumi snorted and re-entered the inn.

Minato had come down and was gazing thoughtfully at their other prisoner, who was talking very quietly with Musubi. She seemed much more resigned to her defeat than Oriha or even Mitsuha, but that wasn't what Minato was thinking as he looked at her. *Shit, this is what I have been worrying about since the beginning. This won't be pretty.*

He looked over to Miya, speaking in a sad, almost lifeless tone. "Could I ask you to sit next to her when we interview her? I'm afraid I already know the answer to my questions, but her reaction to me asking may be bad." Miya looked at him questioningly but nodded acquiescence.

Unlike before, Minato sat on the floor, crossing his legs under him. He also was well back from the girl in the jumpsuit, and rather than sitting with him, he made his wives sit to the side. Miya sat next to their prisoner, hands folded delicately in her lap.

Minato smiled as gently as he could. "What is your name?"

The girl answered in a monotone, keeping her eyes on the ground between them. "#86, Katsuragi."

"And is your Ashikabi Isao Higa?"

Katsuragi twitched slightly but nodded her head. Akitsu noticed the twitch and looked at Minato eyes widening slightly in one of those intuitive leaps she was becoming known for. Minato nodded slightly to her and Akitsu jaw clenched visibly, her equivalent of shouting and screaming. Minato went on, keeping his voice friendly and calm. "And did he wing you against your will?"

Katsuragi twitched again, but nodded convulsively. "But that wasn't all he did was it?" Minato's voice was as compassionate as he could make it, but Katsuragi still started to shake in reaction, as Tsukiumi and Miya suddenly realized where he was going. "Katsuragi, look at me."

She looked up, shocked by the mix of compassion and command she heard in his voice. "You're among friends here. No one here will judge you, or hurt you. Please, tell us what happened."

The brown haired girl's lips quivered as her eye filled with tears as she nodded. Miya reached over and pulled the younger girl into her arms as she broke down completely. Through her sobs, the story came out. She had been captured and taken to Higa almost as soon as she had been released into the city. Two of Higa's Sekirei had restrained her while he winged her against her will. Later that night the same two Sekirei had pinned her down as he asserted his ownership of her over her body.

Katsuragi's sobs grew louder as she relieved that night. Tsukiumi and Akitsu, stirred by a powerful feeling of sisterhood and simple empathy, moved to join Miya in hugging the emotionally ravaged girl.

Minato quietly left, jaw clenched in anger. *I wish I was wrong but I knew it. I knew it the moment I saw her yesterday. How many other Sekirei like her are there? Higa and Minaka are dead men walking. I swear it.*

He looked up from his clenched fists to see Matsu standing there, looking sad but composed, having heard everything through the recorders hidden in every room in the inn. He nodded to her. "What happens to a Sekirei once their crest is erased?"

Matsu removed her glasses to rub her nose. "Theoretically, the crest's simply the visible sign of the bond between the Sekirei and Ashikabi. After it's erased the Sekirei can never form another bond, and she loses most of her power. The stronger the connection, the bond, the worse the physical and mental reaction, but again that's all theory. I can't access anything to do with the already beaten Sekirei, so I don't know for sure."

Minato nodded, and motioned her into the room. "When she's finished letting it out ask her if she wants the crest removed, and one of you remove it please."

Kazehana walked up carrying a bottle of sake on a string her face serious for once. "Let me do it Minato. I think a bit of liquid courage will help the process." Minato nodded and Kazehana and Matsu entered the room together. Tsukiumi and Akitsu soon came out, as did Miya.

She looked at Minato for a few minutes, filled with that indefinable emotion yet again at the compassion and concern this young man showed her feathers, even those not under his care. "You've done a good thing today Minato, yet I have to ask why you have gone out of your way to help an enemy."

Minato shook his head resignedly, leaning his head on Akitsu's shoulder as his arms went around both his wives. Miya noticed the impropriety in her house, but decided to allow it under the circumstances. "She isn't my enemy, she never was. No Sekirei who is in this game against her will is my enemy. My enemies are those who'll take advantage of them like this Higa and the mastermind behind the game, Minaka. A grave injustice has been done to the Sekirei, both in scope and in nature." He looked down at his hands, overwhelmed momentarily by the enormity of the task he had set himself. "I'm only one person, but-

Musubi interrupted him even before his wives could speak up. She and Kusano had come up to tell everyone lunch was ready. "Minato-san, you're not just one person. We're your Sekirei, and we'll stand with you all the way!" Kusano nodded vehement agreement, grabbing Minato's hand and hugging it to her as next to him both his wives offered wordless agreement, nearly crushing him with their dual hug.

Minato looked at them and nodded thanks before turning back to Miya. "I will do everything in my power to break this game, and help as many Sekirei like that poor girl as I can."

Miya looked at him silently for a few minutes before bowing gracefully. "I believe you mean that Minato-san. And I thank you for helping my sisters."

Minato raised an eyebrow in inquiry. "Your sisters?"

Miya rose from her bow, a slight smile on her face. "Yes Minato san. I, Sekirei number 1 Miya Asama, ally myself with you."

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Miya and Minato spent the rest of the day talking and exchanging information. She couldn't answer any of Minato's long term questions about the ship and the circumstances behind it as she was too young at the time to be told much, only that it was one of 8, the others having crashed on earth long before her own. She told him how she had been part of a group of children on a space station who were undergoing various medical tests and that the *Seraphim* (which was how the name translated to Japanese), which was the name of the ship, was supposed to be part of a small fleet of ships to carry away the entire population of the station. What they were running from, and what happened to the rest of their race she did not know. All she knew was that the emergency lights on the station came on, the grownups were running this way and that and her last memory was of a doctor touching her neck with something. She woke up later and found herself in the ships master control chair, alone with no explanation of what was going on and the ship already flying a preprogramed course. After days alone while the ship sailed on, and unable to change its course she decided to put herself into suspended animation until the ship reached its destination. She was like that until Minaka's expedition found her.

Miya told Minato as much as she could about the ship they had arrived in, its weapons and some of its capabilities, and showed him the Jinki that Matsu had stolen when she escaped from MBI. She revealed that these were part of the ships operating system, reacting like an extension of the ships computer and some of its machinery. It was because of his ownership of the main Jin-console that allowed Minaka to operate some of the ships capabilities though not many, as his genetic profile didn't match any on file in the ship's main computer. A Sekirei could operate more, but Minaka never trusted anyone else enough for them to try, and by the time she was fully aware of her surroundings he had already taken control of the babies and fetuses, forcing her to go along with his plans.

Minato had filed all this information away for now, making a mental note to go over it again in more detail with Miya some other time but for now he wanted to ask a question that was far more important to him at the moment. He gripped his wives hands as he looked across at Miya. "I realize that Sekirei react to individuals they can form an emotional and physical relationship with. What I don't understand is why.... Why I fell in love with Tsukiumi and Akitsu and then the others so **quickly**. I mean, they're so, but, I, mean, I've never...." He trailed off embarrassed.

Miya smiled wistfully. *So much like my husband at times*. She shook that comparison out of her head immediately, but it would come back to haunt her again in the days to come. "I remember little about our race Sahashi-san but from what I can remember we were a very emotional people. Unlike humanity, our thoughts, minds and souls are wholly tied to one another. Matsu explained it well, but what she did not know is that the other person must be capable of returning the emotion, and those feelings cause a resonance if you will, building them up far faster than is normal for humans. Your feelings were hastened along their course Minato, **not** altered. Your love for your Sekirei comes from you, not the bond."

Minato looked at her and smiled, a shy, happy grin that transformed his face, taking away the years of hardship and war, changing him to the young man he might have been and she raised a hand to her face chuckling and hiding a sudden blush.

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That night the wings of light appeared almost constantly as Minato showed his love for his wives over and over again, the last part of his subconscious mind finally understanding that his feelings for them were truly all his own.

Kazehana watched for a few hours, gently stroking herself in tune with the flashes (Matsu did the same, though she was anything but gentle). Kazehana's mind was in turmoil, lust, hope and budding love warring with old memories of heartache, neglect and loss. Next to her the newly liberated Katsuragi slept peacefully on, her mind freed from torment by a combination of the welcome she had received, her regained freedom, and a prodigious amount of sake.

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For the next two weeks Kazehana got to know Minato and his Sekirei while everyone did their best to help and watch over Katsuragi, who had woken up the next day free from Higa's domination. She was very emotionally and mentally fragile, but physically she seemed fine so long as Kagari and Minato kept their distance. Everyone made certain that someone was with her at all times. Miya also took her under her wing and began to teach her cooking and

housekeeping.

Matsu's so called reward went well though she proved as selfish and perverted as Tsukiumi had feared, wanting to try out all sorts of paraphernalia which Tsukiumi and Akitsu were quick to remove. On the plus side, she did not have nearly enough stamina, passing out after two orgasms, allowing both Akitsu and Tsukiumi several turns each.

Afterwards Minato and his wives agreed that Matsu wouldn't be a welcome addition to their group on a nightly basis. She was simply too self-centered to fit in their bed, where the three of them had developed a close caring and giving relationship. Matsu, while going out of her way to appreciate Tsukiumi's and Akitsu's bodies outside the bed, was not caring about others pleasure, wanting the action to be centered on herself at all times.

They agreed however to let Matsu have some time with Minato during the days he was home, as the two of them were able to do occasionally. After she woke up, Matsu agreed realizing that this way she could get Minato all to herself each time. She did not realize that she hadn't been able to satisfy Minato, his sexual endurance having changed so much from sleeping with Akitsu and Tsukiumi. More, her selfish attitude to the whole affair was a major turn off for him. And even after sleeping with her he didn't feel the same pull towards her as he did to his wives. To his chagrin however, he was beginning to feel something to their newest acquaintance...

There was just something about Kazehana, who had moved into an empty room in Izumo Inn, that drew his eye and mind. She was experienced, both in dealing with the outside world and in combat, something that Tsukiumi and Akitsu both learned to respect, as her wind based powers were closer to their own than Miya's close combat sword techniques. She was also fun to be around, joking all the time, something they all enjoyed, though Tsukiumi would never admit it. She even had fun when Kazehana tricked her into a drinking contest, something she would never have thought would occur. Akitsu liked her because she was intelligent under her laid back exterior, and was able to teach her how to speed up her freezing technique, as well as being someone who she could talk to about their night time activities.

Minato found her funny, sensible at times, and very worldly, something that none of his own Sekirei were. He often went to her for advice on handling Musubi or Matsu, and found her advice helpful when she was not having fun with him. It amused her how intelligent she was despite her attempts to bury it under her flighty hard drinking party girl exterior.

She also agreed with him on how he was insisting that Musubi was a sister in their family and not a wife and how to handle her continued attempts to jump from one to the other. Miya, who was with Kazehana when he asked her opinion about the matter, also agreed with him. "For humans, entering puberty is a physical and mental change that begins at the same time. For Sekirei it most assuredly is not. We reach physical maturity quickly, and our brains catch up to our bodies later. Musubi's brain has clearly not caught up just yet."

Kazehana put it even more succinctly. "She thinks she knows what she wants, but she has no real idea. She doesn't look at you like a woman does a man she's interested in physically, more like a toy she wants to play with." And with that, another weight was removed from Minato's shoulders. Knowing he was doing the right thing for Musubi rather than simply what was best for him and his wives was a tremendous relief. His wives were equally happy about having new allies to convince Musubi she didn't want to join them. In fact, the combined pressure of the two older women was able to stop her breast-first hugs for a time, and the tension in the house decreased dramatically in response.

Kazehana's sense of humor was also a major draw to him, something that drew the two into joking exchanges routinely about each other and about the others. She lightened the atmosphere of their little community quickly and effortlessly after the revelation of Katsuragi and her treatment at the hands of Higa.

For her part, Kazehana was careful not to come onto him, and simply got to know the odd close-knit family that had sprung up around Minato. Kazehana also went out of her way, as did Miya, to befriend Katsuragi, trying to fully involve the younger girl in the life of their odd community. In an effort to improve Katsuragi's self-esteem, Kazehana began to teach her how to dance both dirty and slow, and roped everyone else except Miya into her lessons.

Tsukiumi, who Kazehana sometimes rubbed the wrong way with her lush body and suggestive clothing, was aghast at first by what the older woman called dirty dancing, but when Kazehana paired her and Minato together for a dance, she was sold immediately. Kazehana herself made certain to never dance with Minato and to almost always look the other way when he was dancing with someone else. She knew if she got that close to his body she would lose all her self control.

As time went on Kazehana was fighting herself more and more to keep her distance from the younger man. Minato was funny, smart, kind and handsome. He was also strong and worldly. On top of these qualities he was driven in a way she had only seen in one other person, though rather than being driven by dreams of self-importance, ego, glory

and power, Minato was driven by the need to protect others and to make his family happy. Less ambitious goals than Minaka's but in Kazehana's eyes far better ones. She was rapidly falling for him, and was realizing more and more that what she had felt for Minaka was a sham best forgotten.

They were all together the night four days after Matsu's reward as the second stage was announced. They watched on a TV in Izumo house as Minaka came on and made his proclamation. Overhead they could hear helicopters moving through the sky. Minato snarled inwardly. *It's only going to get worse from here on out.*

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The next day, a surprising visitor showed up while Minato was at work. It was Tsukiumi's turn to watch him (which was still chosen by a daily jan-ken-pon battle), and Akitsu and Musubi were out grocery shopping. Kazehana had volunteered to watch Kusano, as she wanted to teach her how to use her powers farther away from the target, and she answered the door, still wearing an apron from cooking the two of them lunch. "Hello."

Yukari looked at the super stacked older woman in front of her, shocked beyond belief to find yet another hotty in her brother's house. Next to her a bishonen boy with silver hair dressed in ridiculously short shorts and a t-shirt bowed politely. "Um, hi. My name's Yukari and I'm here to see my brother Minato. Who're you?"

Kazehana smiled. She reached forward and gently lifted the younger girl's chin slightly, who flushed under the familiar contact, but for some reason didn't object. "My you're as pretty as Minato and the others said you were. I'm Kazehana, an old friend of Miya's from next door. I volunteered to watch Kusano while the others were out." Yukari nodded, blushing at the thought that Minato and the others with their awesome figures had described her as pretty.

At the name the young boy's eyes grew wide and he stepped forward, trying to push Kazehana aside. "Ku-chan, Ku-chan's really here?" Kazehana stood firm though, not having heard about Kusano's Shi-chan.

Luckily, Kusano had heard Yukari's voice from the main room, and had already been on her way out to greet her. When she heard the boy's voice, she ran down the hall, ducking under Kazehana's outstretched arm and flying into her brother's arms. "Shi-chan, you're okay!"

Yukari nodded in satisfaction. The moment Shiina had said he was looking for Kusano, she knew immediately that he was talking about the Ku-chan she had met at Minato's. Kazehana let them in and smiled as well, watching the way Yukari's eyes never left Shiina. *Oh my, young love is so wonderful!*

Shiina anxiously questioned Kusano. "Are you alright? Are you happy here? Is your Ashikabi nice?"

Kusano nodded happily, taking out a board game that Uzume had given them. "Yep, Minato-papa's very nice, and so's everyone else. There's always someone around to spend time with, and he bought me new clothes and a kitty!" She held up her stuffed animal, who she had named Suzu, from one of her favorite anime shows.

Shiina smiled, glad that his sister had found a good home. The two happily began to fill one another in on what had happened to them since they were let out, playing the board game at the same time. Finding in one another similar interests Yukari and Kazehana talked about hot spots in the city and where the best drink deals were, as well as where to go for clothing and the latest fashions, though this nearly sparked an argument given their disparate body types and Yukari's (completely justifiable) jealousy of the other woman's figure.

Thankfully before the argument could really get going Akitsu and Musubi returned home and the ice maiden kicked them both out (politely of course) to the kitchen so he could begin to prepare dinner. Uzume returned next from her part time job, and she invited Kazehana and Yukari over to her room. They threw a small dress up party, using Kusano and Shiina as models. Yukari constantly had to run out of the room to allow her blood pressure to return to normal and her lecherous giggles reminded everyone strongly of Matsu. Kusano spent the rest of the day dressed up as a mouse. She ran around the house, squeaking at everyone and having fun with Shiina.

This was the scene Minato and Tsukiumi returned home to. To say that Minato was surprised to find that his sister had found the mysterious Shi-chan was an understatement. *And of course she already winged him, joining this damn plan!*

Before he could begin to give vent to his protective brotherly instincts, Yukari lit into him for not telling her what was really going on. After Mount Yukari subsided, having elicited nothing but a tiny flinch from it's no-longer virgin sacrifice, Minato shrugged, venting his own feelings a little. "I can't say I'm happy to see you taking part in this crazy 'plan', but at least you can stay here with the rest of us. We can put you up in the extra room here, or I'm certain Miya-san would welcome another tenant."

Yukari shook her head, quickly heading off this overprotective largesse. "No way. I just got accepted at Tokyo U, and I already have an apartment set up in a building right next door to the university. No way am I giving that up to move in with my big brother and his 'wives!'"

She tried to make the word come out accusing, but it came out more incredulous than reproof. She had been shocked to find out he had a fiancé as hot as Tsukiumi when she came over the first time. Now she was dumbstruck when she found out that not only was he sleeping with both her and Akitsu, but that they were both deliriously happy, as were all his other Sekirei. *I so do not want to think about why Akitsu and Tsukiumi seem so happy... evil thoughts, evil thoughts!*

Minato frowned at her. "Yukari, you don't know how viscous these fights can get. And there are Ashikabi out there who won't hesitate to have you attacked as well as Shiina."

Yukari remained adamant. "No way. Besides, I asked that president guy, Minaka, and he said that the college campuses were off limits for Sekirei fights. I'll be perfectly safe. And I'll have Shiina to protect me." Shiina looked up from next to Kusano and nodded affirmatively.

Minato's lips twitched. *I always thought I'd get to play the protective big brother who warns guys off his sister, but with Shiina being a Sekirei there's no reason for it.* "Fine, but I think you should stop by on the weekends. That way Shiina and Kusano can see each other." *And I can check up on you.*

Yukari knew the real reason for his suggestion but was willing to go along with it. After all, she had struck up friendships with Musubi and Kazehana, and she wanted to learn more about the temperamental Tsukiumi and the quiet Akitsu now that she knew what they were. And there was that handsome man from next door she wanted to get to know... *After all just because I've got Shiina doesn't mean I can't window shop a little, heh.* "Alright." She agreed and Minato nodded and they went next door, bringing their half of dinner with them. The rest of the night passed pleasantly, doubling as a congratulation party for Yukari's acceptance to Tokyo U and her new partnership with Shiina.

end chapter.

## \*Chapter 8\*: Chapter 8 Assault

I don't own Sekirei. Some of the 'historical' stuff I did make up.

Alright here's where we see if trickery can overcome brute force as well as reactions from various groups about what occurred last chapter. A little short for most of my chapters, but I really did need a chapter break there.

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### Chapter 8: Assault

+++++Four days after the end of the last chapter+++++

Minaka was not a happy man. First, his dinner last night hadn't been prepared to his specifications. He fired his personal chef (for the fifth time this month), but it didn't make him feel any better. Then his ex found out that both her son and daughter were involved in the Sekirei plan and as a result refused to be near him, let alone sleep with him. Again!

Really, these were minor irritants to what was truly bothering him. What was bothering him today was Matsu the runaway # 2 had been winged by Sahashi Minato. That combined with the questions Minato had asked nearly three weeks ago worried him. This was the game of the gods after all and how could these peons be allowed to question the will of the gods? Everything should move according to the divine will that he was merely carrying out.

*What's worse, a beaten and de-winged Sekirei has apparently taken refuge in Izumo house. With # 1 there it's simply too dangerous to order my men to collect her. (Just because Minaka was a monstrous egotist and was possibly insane did not mean he was stupid.)* The fact that the upstart Higa had lodged a formal complaint with MBI over the theft of his property only irritated Minaka further.

Ever since their conversation he had been worrying at the problem of Takami's son in his limited free time. Regrettably most of his time had been taken up with politics and issuing orders to the disciplinary squad, so he hadn't had as much time to devote to this issue as he would have liked.

On the one hand, he, as owner and president of MBI had to make certain that America, Russia and China were, if not happy (they most certainly **were**n't and never would be) at least knew that they had no real choice but to sit back and watch the plan go forward. America in particular was not happy about what they knew of his plans, but they really had no way to fight his plan. Not without admitting to the public their atrocious losses in the Kamakiri island invasion, which itself had been against international law. The government had buried those losses, folding them into the Iraq occupation and the destruction of Somalia and its pirate kings. But their so called democratic government could not be seen to act unilaterally. Not only was MBI's ownership of Tokyo legal (for a given value of legal), but MBI had their fingers so deep in the Japanese government that if they pulled out the entire country would collapse, something that the 'democratic' Americans could not be involved in. Not that appeasing them was ever easy or a short discussion.

His thoughts on Takami's son were also clouded by surprise. *Minato hasn't turned out at all the way I expected. Having grown up with Takami as his parent, I assumed Minato would be a rather weak willed boy, easily dominated by any woman he came into contact with, and not questioning anything he was told by an authority figure.* This obviously was not the case. Not only was Minato asking questions, he had forged an equal partnership with his Sekirei and shown willpower that Minaka hadn't believed he could possess.

(Minaka would have known, or at least known where to look for the answers to his questions, if he had bothered to actually read the files MBI had compiled on Minato. But such drudge work was beneath him, and so Minato remained a mystery. Even Takami had not bothered to look into it, never realizing how much her son could be changed.)

*Something has to be done, something that will scare Minato back into obeying the rules of the game unquestioningly like all the others. It needs to be done now, while the Ashikabi and Sekirei are still in disarray thanks to the start of the third stage. Hurting his Sekirei will not work they're warriors and inured to physical dangers. Perhaps threatening the Ashikabi just once should be allowed. A direct approach might get more of a response than beating around the bush.* He snapped his fingers, and ordered a lackey to go and get the Black Sekirei.

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Minato sat in a fast food restaurant, alone for once and feeling slightly sorry for himself. A few days ago, he'd found

out his Sekirei had never actually been to a doctor outside of MBI. He had immediately set up appointments at a local physician for them and today Akitsu was there. Today was also Tsukiumi and Musubi's day to practice with Miya, and he had forced them to keep up their training rather than watch over him (after a strenuous argument). So he was alone for his lunch, Kusano not being old enough to be let out alone to join him, and Kazehana, who had sometimes joined him and his watcher for lunch was keeping an eye on Yukari and Shiina because she, like Minato's family, felt should have moved into Izumo house. Minato had not 'proposed' the idea, which made it all the better from his perspective. Plausible deniability was a lovely thing.

He sighed. Since the third stage had begun nothing had gone as he thought, the Sekirei game had kept on without a hitch. There had not even been a murmur from the international community or the government about MBI seizing control of Tokyo, or even forcing the Sekirei game out into the open. Not a peep, and their control of all communications going out made informing the world what was going on by himself impossible. Even Matsu with her *norito* couldn't do much there without directly interfacing with the computers, which would be fighting MBI head on in a way that they were not ready for.

Nor would it matter overmuch as the general populace seemed to be more in shock than anything else. Certainly some people had already left; the upper class and rich who could most easily displace themselves. But everyone else, lulled by the continued services or electricity, cable, water etc, seemed uncaring and just kept on with their lives. Minato felt that would continue right until the Sekirei fights became more violent and destructive.

Minato cracked his back explosively. Construction work paid well and was decent exercise, but the sites he'd been working at were getting further and further away from home. Today's site had actually been outside what he had marked as his territory toward the west of the city, adding to the travel time noticeably. A normal workday since work began again after Kusano joined them had him out of the house from nine to seven. And lately his Sekirei had all begun to complain about that, and he was at the point where he had begun to miss spending time with them as much as they did with him. *During the day at least...*

Minato was shocked out of his memories of silken skin, heavenly bodies and quite, heartfelt talks about the future as a woman sat across from him.

Immediately he was on guard. Not only was she good-looking in a hard bodied athlete kind of way but she held herself with a certain arrogance, much like most Sekirei he had seen. *This might not be good*, he thought. *I've been expecting some kind of response from Higa or Minaka, but this blatantly? They must have some way of monitoring our movements, to pick the one day I'm alone. Better remember to have Matsu check on that.*

The woman smiled at him, but he noticed that the smile never reached her eyes, which squinted at him good-naturedly. "So you're Minato. I thought you'd be taller."

When he looked into those eyes, Minato had to force himself to not freeze completely or bolt towards the exit. He had seen eyes like that before in his time in Constantinople, the eyes of someone who, for want of a better word, was a psychopath, a cold blooded murderer who would literally kill you for the sheer joy of watching you bleed. It took all of Minato's willpower not to run right away. *I probably wouldn't get far in any case. A psychopath Sekirei, just like the scythe wielder only worse, she needed an excuse, this one only needs opportunity, oh fuck...* "I'm afraid you have the advantage of me Ms. Who do I have the pleasure of addressing?"

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Elsewhere, Akitsu and Tsukiumi looked up from what they were doing, an alarming tingle going through their bodies. Akitsu turned from entering the doctor's office, running past an astonished nurse to jump to the roofs, moving as fast as she could toward where she could feel Minato's presence.

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Tsukiumi turned from training with Miya and jumped directly to the roof, moving as fast as her legs could carry her. Miya stared after her puzzled, but only for a moment. If a Sekirei was moving that fast, it could only mean her Ashikabi was in danger. Her guts tightened uncomfortably at the thought but she shrugged it off. Musubi, who had gone inside to take a bathroom break, Kusano and Matsu all looked up from where they were, feeling the same danger signal but not being able to figure out where it was coming from.

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Kazehana turned from watching Yukari dress up Shiina in a sailor suit in their apartment off university grounds, her grin vanishing as she felt a warning tingle, faint but from somewhere nearby. She frowned, trying to isolate where the feeling was coming from and what it meant.

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The woman across from Minato smiled good-naturedly at him. "My, aren't you a cool one. For your information, my name is Karasuba, Sekirei #4, captain of the disciplinary squad. Minaka 'requests' that you stop asking questions. You've been a bad boy Minato, and I've been sent here to spank you."

Minato leaned back, still outwardly calm. Inside however his mind was racing as he thought of how to get out of this with all his bones intact and most of his blood still in his own body. "And do **you** know what happens to Sekirei removed from the game?"

Karasuba smiled at him playfully, like a cat in front of a mouse. "I have no idea and even less inclination to care. All I care about is that I'm free to fight and kill. This game exists to pit the strong against each other and cull the weak. Why should I care about my weaker sisters?"

Minato nodded, picked up his drink and drank slowly, mind going into overdrive as he worked out a dangerous but workable plan. "So, not only are you a loyal dog, but a rabid one as well. What a winning combination."

Karasuba's smile vanished momentarily then returned larger than ever. "You really are ballsy aren't you? For that, I'm going to break two more bones than I would have if you took your beating like a good boy."

Minato shrugged carelessly, body tensed as a bowstring. "I've got 52 of them. So, what does it feel like to follow the orders of a madman and a freak? Does he rub your head and scratch you behind the ears like a good little dog?" *Make her mad, make her stupid.*

Karasuba stopped smiling. "Four more and you had better start moving. I have no problem with kicking your ass right here. I'm always amused by how much the human body can **technically** live through."

Minato took the hint and stood up. He knew better than to think crowds would stop someone with eyes like that. In fact being watched may egg her on to bloodier acts, not less. Karasuba followed him, and the two of them walked outside. "You know I didn't think I'd like you from the minute I saw you. And now I'm sure of it. But don't think I'm going to make this easy for you." Minato suddenly sprang to the side, racing down an open alleyway, his goal the nearby construction yard where he had worked that day. *There's got to be something I can use as a weapon there or at least somewhere to ambush her.*

He looked behind him to see Karasuba waving at him and chuckling. Evidently she wanted to give him a running head start. His mind was still ticking over coldly as he flipped her the finger in response. *Cocky, arrogant bitch, come and get me.*

He reached the construction yard and immediately saw a trailer set in the far right corner away from the entrance, as well as a power station for heavy vehicles connected to the city's power grid on the leftmost corner. He remembered its location and ran to the trailer. Kicking the door in Minato ran inside looking around in the dark interior.

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For her part, Karasuba was having fun. Most people when faced with her would start begging on their knees, crap in their pants, or try to bribe her. Few had mouthed off at her and fewer still tried to just run away. It was an obvious choice, but most of the time she had her sword and would simply slice them to pieces before they could take more than a single step.

Today, she had been specifically ordered not to kill this young man. She hadn't even brought her sword this time thinking that she would simply beat the crap out of him with her bare hands (it would be more fun that way, and without her sword the urge to simply kill him was easier to repress). As Karasuba nonchalantly entered the construction yard, she noticed the slamming of the door of the trailer at the far end.

Shaking her head, she walked over and entered the trailer, fully expecting him to be hiding somewhere inside. "Scared little boy, nowhere to run and no more time to mouth off. Don't worry I'll just beat you up a little; break your arms and legs, maybe a few fingers, nothing permanent."

She hadn't expected the sledgehammer coming toward her at knee height. It came out of nowhere before her eyes could adjust to the dark of the trailer and gave her no time to evade. Karasuba almost dodged it anyway, but it nailed her on the side of her kneecap.

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Minato swung the sledgehammer with all his might and was astonished as the head of the sledgehammer exploded upon impact, pieces flying everywhere as the steel shaft dropped from his numbed hands. He felt Karasuba's knee crack but she lunged forward, an outstretched palm slamming into his chest and throwing him across the trailer to

smash into the wall as if he weighed no more than a feather.

Minato could feel his ribs snap from the blow and he gasped in agony, sliding down the wall as the whole trailer rocked from the impact. He laid there for a second stunned by the force of the blow.

Karasuba fell to the floor, clutching her ruined knee for a moment in unused to agony. She glared across at him. "For that, orders be damned. I'm going to cripple you slowly."

Minato rose to his feet coughing blood. Something inside had been punctured by that blow, but he had to ignore it for now. He grabbed up a nail gun from where it had fallen to the floor from a rack on the wall and began to fire at her. Karasuba used one hand to smack away the nails as she used the other to push herself off the floor wincing as her ruined knee took her weight.

The nails pinged off the walls and one of them cut open Minato's forehead. He tried to clear away the blood at the same time moving to his left away from the door where his opponent was.

That moment of hesitation was all his opponent needed. Karasuba was on him in a second, leaping like a tiger and slamming him into the ground, pummeling him with three hard shots to the face, body and thigh. Under each blow he could feel something break or shatter.

Fighting desperately through the pain to stay conscious, he twisted to the side and balled his own fists, bashing them onto her ruined kneecap. Karasuba screamed, throwing him away reflexively, and he skidded along the floor, rolling. Before she could grab him again Minato stumbled to his feet and out of the door clutching the shaft of the sledgehammer.

Karasuba growled as she slowly got to her feet forcing her ruined knee to respond, but the process was slow and painful.

Minato hid behind a pile of pipes, next to a power station, working feverishly to connect a long jumper cable to the metal shaft of the hammer. With desperate adrenaline fueled strength, he ripped the top off the energy station, fingers fumbling in the old dance he had learned from his time in finished just as he heard footsteps coming up behind him and he turned, thrusting his makeshift staff like a spear.

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Karasuba was pissed. It had taken her three minutes to force her body up and out of the trailer and here this over evolved primate had not made a run for it. It wouldn't have saved him, but it would have allowed him to live a little longer. Instead, he had stayed and seemed to want to continue the fight! It was maddening!

Karasuba caught his makeshift spear and held it still, as if his strength meant nothing, eyes promising a painful death. She stumbled forward still holding it and reached out to grab him by the neck with her free hand.

He half turned away and she only then noticed the wires connected to the shaft she held disappeared into the small station he had been fiddling with.

Before she could move, whether to attack or drop the hammer's metal shaft, Minato flipped the switch. The converter turned on, shooting electricity into the wires and through the wires into the shaft and then into her body.

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All around the construction yard lights flickered and blew out as over seven thousand volts shot through the Black Sekirei's body in a matter of seconds. Through it all, Karasuba didn't scream, didn't cry out. She kept glaring into Minato's eyes with all the rage of a maddened tigress even as she collapsed to the ground unconscious.

Minato fell to his knees, losing consciousness from the pain of his wounds even as Kazehana arrived on the scene, Tsukiumi and Akitsu arriving seconds later. The last thing he was able to do was to shout "don't kill her!" the effort this took was enough to finish him and he collapsed face first into Kazehana and Akitsu's arms comatose.

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Tsukiumi glared at Karasuba where she lay, still twitching occasionally from the amount of electricity she had taken. *Why Minato wants her to live is beyond me, but right now his health is far more important than Karasuba's lack of it. But next time I see you, you bitch I'm going to put you down!*

She turned and ran over to help the other two with Minato, not questioning Kazehana's presence for the moment as she and her sister-wife went to move him. Kazehana asked where they were taking him and Tsukiumi responded.

"The clinic we've been going to for our checkups of course!"

Minato had explained to them that he did not want to be indebted to anyone. Unfortunately most of the hospitals and Tokyo had ties to MBI and Minato was adamant that they have nothing to do with anything that could put them in debt to MBI or Higa, who controlled the only hospital in the city that didn't have ties to MBI. Miya had recommended the physician that was currently handling their physicals to them and that was where they were taking their husband.

Kazehana gave Minato a once over before shaking her head. "No way can a private practice handle someone as seriously injured as he is. His jaws broken, several ribs, maybe his thigh bone and I think he's bleeding internally, maybe a ruptured lung. We'll have to take him to a regular hospital." Kazehana had more experience than the other two, and knew that Minato's wounds were severe enough to kill him if he did not get proper treatment right away.

Tsukiumi protested even as she and Akitsu prepared a stretcher for Minato. "But we don't have any money, and every hospital in the city is tied into MBI's information network."

Kazehana shook her head, removing Minato's ID, debit card and wallet from his pocket. "We'll have to use this to pay for it, do either of you know the code?" Akitsu and Tsukiumi nodded, of course the thought of using the family debit card should have occurred to them already, but they were both so rattled by their husband's injuries that they couldn't think straight. Inside, they were both thankful the older woman was here and able to take charge. "We get him treatment now, and then move him as soon as he's stable." She was already thinking up a story to explain his injuries and lack of ID to a hospital, hopefully forestalling both Higa and Minaka realizing he was there before they could remove him.

Tsukiumi and Akitsu heard the concern in her voice and any further objections they had died still born. They picked up the makeshift stretcher and followed Kazehana to the nearest hospital. As they ran all three looked up watching as above them helicopters sped from MBI tower towards the area they had just vacated.

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Karasuba woke up in her room, her Ashikabi sitting next to her. She scowled at Natsuo as he made to lean forward to touch her face. "Don't touch me," she growled. She looked around, "how did I get back here?"

Natsuo did not seem thrown by her callousness, instead answering her questions calmly. She had been found unconscious and been taken back to the MBI tower immediately by the recovery teams. Due to her Sekirei recuperative powers, she would not need any medical aid or anything like that, but she was ordered to take a few days rest. "And president Minaka wants to talk to you."

Karasuba growled. *No way am I going to let that lunatic come down and be pretentious and patronizing at me.* Scowling she shoved her way out of bed. When Natsuo tried to stop her, she slapped him away. This caused a shout of protest from the rooms other occupant, a younger Sekirei with a boyish body and pink hair dressed in a black kimono with pink flower patterns on it. One sleeve was longer than the other, and she had reinforced heavy gloves on her hands. "Hey Karasuba there's no need to be like that! Natsuo-sama was just trying to help you!"

She snarled at both Benitsubasa and Natsuo and they wisely shut up. She stalked to the window and looked out over the city, one thought uppermost in her mind. *He beat me. A human beat me. I was overconfident and he beat **me!** He got me angry and used it against me and he beat **me!***

It didn't matter to her that Minato had probably been so injured he couldn't walk away from the fight, or that he had probably used enough electricity to power an entire city block to electrocute her or that his Ashikabi bond with his Sekirei had obviously somehow given him strength and endurance beyond normal human ability. To her mind, nothing could offset the humiliation of **losing** to a mere human, not to mention his letting her go.

She knew a Sekirei would react to her Ashikabi being in danger or in pain, and at least one of his Sekirei should have arrived soon after the fight ended, if not during. *If he wanted to he could have had me killed right there, but instead he let me live.* This was something that the proud Sekirei could not condone.

*How the hell did he do it!? There's nothing in our records about him having combat experience, but the way he handled himself, the way he moved, the way he outsmarted me all points to him having been in combat before.* She remembered the look in his eyes as he electrocuted her; there was no fear there, only anger and determination.

She looked over at her Ashikabi, if you could call him that. *The man's gay, for crying out loud! How can he be a proper Ashikabi to any of us if he was reluctant to even complete the contract in the first place! Natsuo's simply another way for Minaka to control us.* Haihane and Benitsubasa would not act against MBI as long as Natsuo didn't want them to, yet at the same time, they would only ever be able to use the norito, a Sekirei's most powerful attack

when he allowed it, not storing up the power from a proper bond.

Her own connection to her so-called Ashikabi, whatever Minaka might have hoped for was far less than the others, unclouded by romanticism or foolish dreams and as for the indoctrination... that never worked on any of the single numbers.

Looking at the man before her she silently compared Natsuo to Minato. Natsuo was built like a dancer, a thin skinny body with little to no visible muscle, a handsome face framed by perfectly manicured blond hair. An expensive suit showed off his lean, well cared for frame.

Minato, she remembered, had brown unkempt hair in a face that had looked lively but weathered. His body had looked like a soldier's, thin but extremely powerful and built for endurance and speed. He had radiated an odd mix of laid-back casualness and extreme, alert, intelligence. He had scars too, several of them that she saw on his arms now she came to remember it.

Wetness began to make its presence felt to her. *Oh fuck, I'm getting turned on!* The memory of Minato's savage defiance and his pain filled face was exciting her, making her want to break him, bring him to his knees. She shook it off. *Now's not the time to think about such things. I first have to learn why Minato changed so much from what was in his files and where he learned to fight like that.*

She belatedly remembered a comment in Minato's file about having spent the last four years out of the country in a city called Constantinople. That was about all that had been mentioned in MBI's report about Minato from before he started living in Tokyo. Its intelligence apparatus abroad was pretty weak even now, and concentrated in the so-called superpowers devoted to counter intelligence rather than spread out across the globe. Something had happened to him over there, something that changed him far more than anything MBI had reported to her. *Wasn't there a civil war going on over there for a while?* She didn't know much about it, being more concerned with the defense of Karakirri Island and training at the time.

She smiled suddenly, realizing she had a way to solve her minor mystery and get away from Minaka for a time. *If MBI doesn't have the information that I need, I'll just go to the source.* Karasuba would get to the bottom of the mystery that was Minato, and then she would break him to her will. Her promise to Mu-chan would not save him. *After all, as long as he's alive, our promise is still valid.*

She moved to the doorway, picking up her sword on her way out. Like most Sekirei who used weapons, much of her offensive capabilities were tied into her sword skills. Without one she was far from helpless, but with one she was the next best thing to unstoppable. Only another Sekirei could even slow her down. Minato would not have survived more than a second if she had had her sword on her a fact that, while galling, did not take away from his victory over her in Karasuba's mind.

A look of alarm crossed Natsuo's face and he tentatively reached out a hand to stop her. Benitsubasa stiffened, but Karasuba simply knocked his hand away again, still moving. Her body was mostly healed from its electrocution already, almost back to normal after only a day of rest such was the healing abilities of a combat type Sekirei. Only her knee twanged slightly as she put weight on it and that was immaterial. *It'll have plenty of time to heal on the plane.*

Two hours later she lounged in a sofa aboard MBI's private plane, cleaning her sword as Minaka stared out at her from the TV screen. *Really, the pilot only had himself to blame. If he'd simply followed my orders, he'd still be alive. At least the co-pilot learned his lesson.*

Minaka did not let any of his irritation at her unilateral seizing of MBI property show on his face as he questioned her. "And where are you taking off to? I still need you here enforcing the closing of the city." Several Ashikabi and Sekirei had tried to make a run for it since the start of the third phase, and MBI had lost troops stopping them, to say nothing of recovering those pairs that had fled the city against his orders during the second stage. It pained him how many pairs were unwilling to play the game, but it was their loss. Literally.

Karasuba shrugged carelessly. Minaka thought her a loyal dog as long as she had enough enemies to kill. The truth was she followed his orders as long as she was having fun doing it, which was not precisely the same thing. "Haihane and Benitsubasa should be able to handle it. I think we both need to know who this new Minato is. I can tell you that he is nothing like what we have in his file. It mentions that he lived in Constantinople for a few years, but nothing about what he was doing during that time, so that's where I will be going."

Minaka leaned back, his face clouded in thought. He had reports of what had happened to Karasuba, and any man who could do that to her needed to be studied carefully. The fact that he lived right next door to, and was allied with

#1 Miya, severely limited their abilities to deal directly with the situation. "Very well, but remember that MBI's resources are far weaker abroad than in Japan. You will still have unlimited funds, but our aid on the ground will be restricted. And you should remember that you can't simply kill everyone who irritates you. You'll have to be subtle."

Karasuba shrugged carelessly, "As long as they don't piss me off, I won't destroy the entire city. That's about as good as you're going to get."

Minaka looked at her and nodded. That was indeed the best he could hope for from the Black Sekirei. *Perhaps sending her to chastise Minato was a bad idea? Nah... I never have bad ideas.* "Just try to be subtle please. We really can't afford to have another invasion at this point in time." Karasuba shrugged again and turned the TV off. One way or the other she was going to find out what made Sahashi Minato tick, and then she would know the best way to make that ticking stop.

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Minato awoke in the familiar surroundings of the master bedroom, glad once again to be alive. He opened his eyes and saw several sleeping bodies around him. Two he recognized immediately as his wives, then Matsu, Musubi, Kusano, and Kazehana? *What is she doing here?* Uzume walked in, followed by Miya. They stopped as they noticed his eyes were open. "Awake at last are you?" Miya moved to the bedside and checked his bandages as Uzume and Kagari woke his Sekirei one at a time, warning them to be careful with his body. Uzume simply lifted Kusano off the bed and held her, thinking that the girl would have the hardest time controlling herself.

Tsukiumi and Akitsu were both held back from hugging him by Kazehana, who looked as if she was restraining herself from doing the same. Minato tried to reach out to them, but found he could barely lift his hand off the mattress. He had never felt so weak before. "How" his voice was a weak thready croak, and he had trouble recognizing it as his own "How badly was I hurt?" He knew it wouldn't be good from their faces and his own memory of the fight, but wanted to know the full details.

Miya sighed, her concern deep but hidden. "You have six broken ribs, a shattered shoulder, a ruptured lung, a cracked jaw and a perforated stomach, a chipped spine and a broken femur, as well as numerous other injuries. You nearly died several times when they operated on you. It will be at least a month before you are able to move unaided." Miya made no mention of his astonishing healing speed, putting it down as a side effect of being an Ashikabi. Her husband had healed from a broken pelvic bone remarkably quickly after they bonded as well, though they did have to be careful for a few days after... Without that Minato's injuries should have killed him or permanently crippled him at least, but the way he was healing he would make a full recovery eventually.

Minato was astonished. He knew that the injuries she had just listed should have killed him through blood loss if nothing else and if not that crippled him for life. *What the hell is happening to my body? And a month, those injuries should half crippled me permanently!* He felt himself slipping back into oblivion and he put forth a great effort to speak again. "Love you, all." A visible surge of emotion ran through his Sekirei at these words and as one they moved forward, only to stop as he fell unconscious again. Kusano turned and pressed her head into Uzume's side sobbing uncontrollably and the others looked at him in concern. None of them had any knowledge of medicine, but they all knew how close Minato had come to dying.

His slow recovery was worrying them all. In fact they had been tempted to force him to stay in the hospital to be treated despite his concerns about how that would indebt him to MBI, and his slow recovery (compared to Sekirei) was not helping matters.

Kazehana sighed, stilling her own face back to normal. She looked up and noticed Akitsu looking at her contemplatively. *Uh-oh.*

"You're reacting to him aren't you?" Akitsu asked the question in her usual blunt manner. She had in fact suspected it since Kazehana first moved into Izumo house. Her suspicion had been confirmed when Kazehana had shown up in response to Minato being in trouble.

Tsukiumi looked over at her sister-wife and then to Kazehana in shock. "Is that true?"

Matsu and the others were looking on in fascination. Musubi seemed excited to have another partner. Kusano looked happy to have someone else to mother her. She had found Kazehana a fun person to be around as she could use her wind power to create invisible slides and lift her off the ground to fly around in the air.

Kazehana lips twisted in a wry smile as she lifted a hand to stroke the side of Minato's face. "I've been reacting to him ever since Uzume brought me here. But it wasn't the first time my body reacted to someone."

The others blinked in surprise as she went on, telling them about her reacting to Minaka. None of them had even realized it was possible to react to more than one person. Tsukiumi and Akitsu in particular were astounded by the idea, Tsukiumi never having wanted to react to someone in the first place and Akitsu never even dreaming she could. "But I realized looking back that whatever my body said, that was not love but lust and a little bit of awe. I wanted to figure out what I was really feeling this time before rushing into it."

Akitsu and Tsukiumi shared a look communicating in a way that the others couldn't follow. Tsukiumi at last shrugged her shoulders, moving over to put an arm around Kazehana's shoulders. "And have you come to a decision?" The others looked at her in surprise, thinking Tsukiumi would be last to welcome the idea of another woman joining them.

Tsukiumi however had gotten very close to the older woman, and had found her to be, underneath her flighty, lazy persona, very sharp and intelligent. She was also experienced in combat, something Tsukiumi respected. She enjoyed the others woman's sense of humor, though her dress sense did irritate the water user. She had in fact come to like Kazehana, almost as much as she loved Akitsu. Akitsu felt much the same way about Kazehana, whose quirky sense of humor, worldliness and romanticism appealed to her.

Kazehana smiled gently, putting an arm around the blonde's waist, leaning against her shoulder as they both looked down at Minato. "I've decided that I love him. I love him and I want to be with him."

Tsukiumi turned to Matsu, a slight wry smile on her face. "What would the effect on Minato's body be if we renewed our crests and he received a new Sekirei?" Kazehana stiffened next to her.

Matsu blinked then looked at Miya, who shrugged in response. "I don't know. It might have no effect or it might speed up his healing or even degrade it. What the contract does is exchange DNA and energy between the Sekirei and Ashikabi. An Ashikabi gains some enhancements in terms of speed stamina and strength, but the effect on a healing person is unknown." What Matsu did not say was that Minato's strength and speed were already well beyond what could be called Ashikabi-norm, and she had never seen any data to match it.

Akitsu and Tsukiumi looked at one another again. After a moment Akitsu smiled slightly and Tsukiumi shrugged as her sister wife moved forward to put an arm around Kazehana from the other side. "I don't think Minato will object if we agree to it. Kazehana, would you like to join us?"

Kazehana looked around at everyone, seeing chagrin on Matsu's face at their easy acceptance of her but encouragement and welcome on everyone else's. She blinked back her tears and nodded in response.

Realizing this was a private moment, Miya and Uzume left, though Miya felt oddly reluctant to do so, leaving only Minato's Sekirei and Kazehana. One by one, each of his Sekirei leaned over and kissed him. First was Kusano, followed by Musubi and Matsu.

Kazehana looked at Akitsu and Tsukiumi who both nodded, and she hesitantly leaned forward, pressing her lips to Minato's. A warm flush overtook her as her crest glowed, the symbol of her bond with her Ashikabi radiating out of the room and filling the whole house and beyond with light. "My Ashikabi, I Kazehana of the wind, swear to love and protect you with my life."

Matsu stepped back and turned to watch the readings on a machine they had rented at a exorbitant cost to monitor Minato's life signs and injuries. Her eyes widened behind her coke glasses as the monitors flickered wildly, and many of Minato's injuries began to heal as she watched, bones knitting and sutures healing on the screen far faster than even most Sekirei.

Tsukiumi leaned over in her turn, and again the wings of light appeared, spreading to encompass the entire neighborhood in their vibrant light. Akitsu took her turn as Minato's eyes began to flicker.

He opened his eyes and looked around at them, taking in Kazehana's position between his wives and he smiled. His voice was still a croak, and his eyes were already shutting, this time from exhaustion rather than pain, but all his Sekirei heard his words clearly. "If I live for a thousand years, it will still not be long enough to spend with the ones I love." He dropped back asleep, body overcome from its accelerated healing. Matsu raised a thumb in victory and everybody cheered.

Minaka on top of his tower grinned insanely. His monitors had reported the winging of Kazehana. Now only one remained, and he knew how to liven up the game again.

Miya smiled from her position by the door as the waves of light washed over her, relishing in the knowledge with each wave that Minaka was slowly losing control of his precious game.

In his room, Kagari clutched his chest as his body slowly changed form. A few minutes later she looked up into her mirror, grimacing. *I'm running out of time...*

**end chapter**

What will Karasuba find? How long will it take and how many people will she kill searching for answers?

I know that last section was cheesy, but hey romance sometimes means some cheese. For all the people who like Karasuba, sorry but as you can see I have set her up as one of the main villains. She's the mad physical and unpredictable one while Minaka is the super villain with a plan, like Bond villains, who uses her as his main muscle. Consider her a disloyal and mad Oddjob.

next update on Friday!

## \*Chapter 9\*: Chapter 9 Breakout

I don't own Sekirei. If I did, Minato would actually have a spine like in this story, rather than being such a wimp. Honestly I can see why crossing other male leads into Sekirei is so popular.

Another short chapter, but just as much action as in the last one. A bit of new info about the Sekirei/Ashikabi bond, and how it is effecting Minato and his wives, whose bonds are the strongest. Want to give a shout out to *DemonAngel of Ice*, who once again provided a well thought out review and asked an interesting question about whether or not Kazehana will tell Minato about his sperm donor. The answer is not for a while, she just got accepted into the family, she's not going to rock the boat for now.

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### Chapter 9 Breakout

Four days after Kazehana's winging, Kusano, Musubi and Akitsu were walking home from shopping. Today was the first day that Minato had enough energy to do anything but eat and sleep. He had been up and about at his normal time today, and seemed to be well on the way to a full recovery. He still had bad headaches sometimes and did not have his strength back, but his wounds had all healed from winging Kazehana.

Musubi came up with the idea of throwing a party for his recovery and had gone out to buy party favors. Kusano went with her as it had sounded fun, and Akitsu had gone out to watch the two of them and to buy food. Though she knew that the real party would begin at night, especially with a new wife having joined Tsukiumi and herself, something they were both strangely looking forward to, having come even closer to Kazehana during Minato's convalescence than they had been. *And if his stares and sighs are anything to go by Minato is looking forward to restarting the physical part of their relationship as much as we.* Akitsu felt of shiver run through her at the thought of once more feeling her husband's touch after so long.

More seriously Akitsu, Tsukiumi and their new sister-wife had talked to Minato about the sudden addition of Kazehana to their group as soon as woke up again. All three were delighted that, instead of being angry about not being consulted, he was instead concerned about how Akitsu and Tsukiumi had taken it. Once both had convinced him they were happy with Kazehana joining them (which took some doing, Minato was well aware of Tsukiumi's possessive nature) Minato admitted he had felt an attraction for the older woman since she had shown up, but had never thought of doing anything about it.

Tsukiumi and Akitsu had to hold Kazehana back from jumping him right there, though they were themselves happy at his loyalty, and silently promised one another that they would do something special for him the moment he was healthy enough to survive it. *Which*, Akitsu thought gleefully, though her face still showed nothing of her thoughts, *is tonight!*

Both Akitsu and Tsukiumi had missed their nighttime activities, and were looking forward to starting them again with an almost scary passion (though on the plus side this scariness finally broke through Musubi's naiveté and made her realize she actually didn't want to be a wife).

In fact unknown to all but Miya all three, Minato Tsukiumi and Akitsu, were exhibiting classic signs of withdrawal, much like a druggie in rehab. Miya had not felt something like that when her husband died nor at any time when they were apart. But their relationship had formed gradually over time and had lasted several years before he died. She was a little worried about it, but decided to take a wait and see attitude. After all, it wasn't as if there was anything wrong with wanting to make love to your wife(s). As long as the three could control themselves she would leave things alone.

The shoppers were on their way back walking alongside a narrow canal when they heard the noise of combat. Ahead of them, they heard a loud scream, and a man's voice shouting "Get away from her!"

Akitsu, mindful of Minato's standing order to watch out for trouble in their area of the city, made her way toward the voices, Musubi right behind her, pushing Kusano behind her protectively.

The site they came upon did not surprise Akitsu in the slightest. A young girl with shoulder length dirty-blond hair was slumped against the canal fence. In front of her, arms spread defensively, stood a young man of about college age,

his determined expression belying his quaking legs.

Across from them stood a woman, built much like Akitsu, her body and features obscured by weaves of white cloth, which seemed to be moving back and forth under her control.

Akitsu stared across at her for a moment then determinedly she strode forward exerting her power. Behind her Musubi and Kusano both started to shiver, as did the young couple, but it was in front of Akitsu that her power was being exerted. The cloth weapons of their opponent almost immediately began to freeze solid, shattering in midair as if they had been dipped in liquid nitrogen.

The brown haired woman cursed silently. Akitsu was much stronger now than she was when they had first met, and she doubted that she could have beaten her then. Now as she saw her cloth spear freeze in less than a second and the freezing front came towards her she realized that she had no chance. With a shrug, she turned and fled. She would have to find someone else to ambush to satisfy her...employers.

Akitsu turned back to face the boy and girl she had saved. Musubi was already in front of the girl bowing formally to her. "Excuse me, do you want to fight?" She practically radiated excitement and happy anticipation like a miniature sun.

Behind her, Akitsu shook her head in resignation at her fellow Sekirei's attitude.

The young girl, who was dressed in a skirt and matching shirt combo, looked up at Musubi's towering figure, taking in her large breasts, smooth curves, and cute face. Her bottom lip started to quiver and she shook her head violently, her little self respect she still had after having been beaten so often by other Sekirei dying a violent death. "There's no way I can beat you in any way!" she wailed.

The boy next to her sighed irritably, "Geez Kuno, can't you **try** to stand up for yourself? He turned to Musubi "sorry about that. This is my Sekirei Kuno. Is there any chance you could just let us go? We really don't want to fight. All we want to do is get out of the city and away from this insane game."

Musubi and Akitsu looked at each other before looking at Kusano who was coming up with their bags, using the vines of a potted plant she held in her arms to drag them along, puffing under the weight a little.

Akitsu turned back and looked at the two people she had saved. It was obvious by the way the two looked at each other that they cared for one another, but that the one did not want to fight was a little strange coming from Sekirei.

*Not wanting to hurt someone I can understand, but I've never heard of a Sekirei that didn't like to fight in some fashion. What do they expect to accomplish without fighting? Still, Akitsu thought, perhaps Minato will want to hear about this.* Wordlessly, she indicated that the two should stand up and follow Musubi and herself. Musubi lifted Kusano up onto her shoulders and took all of the bags in her hands and the three walked off.

Akitsu made certain that the two newcomers were following by freezing them a little bit every time they began to lag behind or tried to turn away. After five minutes of walking, Shigi and Kuno had both ended up frozen several times, completely helpless against the ice queen's powers. Finally they relented and began to follow docilely along. Not once during this ordeal did Akitsu's expression change the slightest, allowing no hint of the amusement she was feeling to show on her face.

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Minato cocked his head as Akitsu and Musubi ushered in the newcomers. The young boy looked a little bit like himself, unkempt hair, unkempt appearance, cheap clothes, and around college age, but he was much softer, and had none of Minato's worldly air. The girl beside him looked a little overwhelmed, either by Akitsu's rescue, which she had told him about in her brief fashion, or the amount of beautiful women around her.

Minato could relate to that feeling. He stared at Akitsu, her magnificent form not hidden but accented by her simple kimono, her skin pale but lustrous. His eyes locked on her passing up and down her body as she in turn looked deep into his eyes. She began to flush under his gaze, her face still deadpan but her eyes smoldering, body beginning to tremble with feeling.

Minato tore his eyes away from her but found them caught again, watching Kazehana and Tsukiumi walk in, their swaying hips and swaying... other body parts. Both women noticed his eyes on them and preened visibly, staring back with love in their own eyes. Minato let his eyes travel down their bodies in turn before he shook his head again, trying to control his hormones. *Overwhelmed, yeah that's a good way to put it. Not being up to anything beyond light kissing has been a trial. I never thought I'd be as controlled by my hormones as I am but it's almost become*

*physically painful not being able to touch them or... Is this another aspect of becoming an Ashikabi or something else? I don't like the idea of not being in control of myself but it isn't really hurting anything is it?*

Still, Kuno needn't have worried. While she wasn't nearly as voluptuous or exotic as Minato's Sekirei, she was pretty in an ordinary sort of way. *And the way the young man next to her looks at her, it's clear that he cares for her deeply.*

Kazehana was grinning as she sat down next to her new husband. Minato smiled. One of the things he liked best about his new wife was that she was an unabashed romantic. It was obvious to him that the plight of the young couple tickled her interest.

*Tsukiumi on the other hand looks fit to spit nails.* She was the most combative of his Sekirei, even more so than Musubi and the idea of a Sekirei not wanting to fight as Akitsu had described went against her basic understanding of the world. Frankly, he was a little more of her opinion than Kazehana's, but he had grown up in a very harsh school and knew that most people had a flight-first instinct when faced with overwhelming opposition.

He found his eye locked with Tsukiumi's again, and while the fire in those blue orbs did not ebb, what fueled them did. Minato felt himself falling, drowning in those gorgeous blue eyes...

With an effort he returned his attention to the newcomers as Miya handed them a cup of tea each before taking her place at the head of the table. He cleared his throat, trying to banish his strange lack of control to the back of his mind. "So, Akitsu tells me you don't want to fight, and Musubi says you want to live with your Sekirei despite that? My name's Minato by the way."

The boy introduced himself and explained that the two of them were trying to get out of Tokyo. They felt that if they did, they would be safe. Minato raised an eyebrow skeptically but did not argue. Matsu hadn't been able to find anything yet about the Sekirei that had left Tokyo before the city was closed, as she had been far too busy deleting any mention of him from computer systems worldwide on his orders. Matsu wasn't the only brain type after all, there had been two others, though one had already been 'eliminated' from the game. The other was bonded to a Ashikabi who in turn was connected to Higa of the north, so precautions had to be taken. *It's my nature to expect the worst, especially with the lack of information, but I won't begrudge someone else his dream.* He leaned back and asked his Sekirei what they thought they should do.

Musubi wanted to help them. She would take any chance to keep a 'destined couple' together, no matter the circumstances. Minato still didn't believe in destiny, but the girl's enthusiasm was infectious. Tsukiumi thought it was ridiculous and stupid and ordered the cowering Kuno to toughen up and act like a proper Sekirei. Kazehana wanted to help them. Kusano wanted to help. Matsu thought they should help them, but that it would be very dangerous. Akitsu did not care one way or the other, so long as it did not put Minato in danger, a thought that silenced all his Sekirei for a moment before they all clamored that they would protect him from anything. Well all except Kazehana, she promised to nurse him back to health and said she had just the right outfit for it, a thought that momentarily distracted him.

Miya, as the only one present from the actual Izumo household thought that helping them would be the honorable thing to do.

Minato waited until everyone else voiced their opinions before speaking. "All right, I think we can help you. But it'll take some research, and when we do try to break out, I expect you two to follow our lead and help fight if necessary. I won't risk our lives if you won't risk yours."

The couple looked scared for a minute before the young man straightened his shoulders and nodded affirmatively. Minato nodded in return, "Now please excuse me I need to talk to my Sekirei. We'll meet you outside this inn tomorrow."

Miya told both young people they were welcome to stay in the inn tonight, though she punctuated this announcement with a warning against illicit acts, complete with hannya mask, that sent the two bolting up to their assigned rooms. As soon as the two were out of earshot, Tsukiumi exploded. "Minato, I can't believe you're agreeing to this! Not only is it going to arouse MBI's anger towards us even further, but you're putting our lives on the line for complete strangers!"

Minato nodded. "You're right, yet think for a moment. You're strong Tsukiumi. All of you are. That girl, she doesn't believe in herself. Her Ashikabi doesn't believe in himself. Those two may love each other, but they're not warriors."

"I personally wouldn't want to escape." He reached out, taking Tsukiumi's hands in his own, bringing them up to his lips, kissing them gently. She blushed, but continued to meet his eyes stubbornly even as her body began to respond. "You, me, the others, we're warriors. We can fight for what we want, and what we want is here. Tokyo is where

**everything** is going to happen. Leave and you put your faith in the hands of the winner, whoever that is."

He paused before continuing, locking his eyes with Tsukiumi's, fighting every second not to drown in those blue orbs. "But the real reason I want to help them Tsukiumi is simple. It's the duty of the strong to defend the weak. We have to help them, it's the right thing to do, just as it was the right thing us to help Kusano, for me to help Akitsu" he glanced at them, letting his eyes rake Akitsu's body, leaving her again almost flushed with pleasure and back to Tsukiumi "like it was when you helped Akitsu and me that first night. It's that simple." Miya nodded encouragingly, that still unnamed feeling inside rowing even stronger, and the others all smiled and nodded. Kusano hadn't followed everything that was said, but smiled and nodded along when her name was mentioned.

Tsukiumi broke eye contact, desperate to keep what few shreds of self control she had left. Looking down she instead stared down at her hands, troubled. "I still don't like it. Sekirei are made to fight. What if they escape Tokyo and then are recaptured because they've never fought, haven't grown stronger?"

Minato shrugged, still holding her hands, inwardly smiling at her backwards way of showing concern. "Perhaps that happens, but we'll have helped them as much as we can. But I understand you don't like it, and I feel I should pay you all somehow for putting your lives on the line."

Tsukiumi and the others looked askance at the word pay, but Matsu simply leered, knowing what she would want in payment. Minato went on smoothly. "It's actually been bothering me for a while. Part of normal human relationships is the boy taking the girl out on dates." All around his Sekirei seemed to stiffen, even Kusano jumping up and down in joy, as Tsukiumi and her sister-wives leaned forward eagerly, even hungrily. Miya looked on with a small smile on her face, knowing where he was going with this and ignoring the small flicker of regret inside her. "So if you all agree to help me help Shigi and Kuno I'll take each of you out on dates. I'll spend an entire day with each of you in turn, and we'll do anything you want us to. How's that sound?" He was immediately dog piled by his ecstatic Sekirei, all of them shouting their agreement even Akitsu, though her face still hadn't changed to match.

Miya smile widened for a moment then she proceeded to lay about with her ladle restoring proper decorum in her inn.

That night, after the party celebrating Minato's returning health, Tsukiumi arranged for Musubi and Kusano to stay at Izumo house for a sleepover with Uzume, who had returned during the festivities looking a little sad, but she quickly cheered up. The cover was that way the three friends could continue to hang out after the official party ended. The real reason was she suspected Kazehana of being a vocal lover much like herself. They had experienced a few episodes of the two younger family members interrupting their nighttime games because Tsukiumi became too loud. Akitsu, while in no way silent, did not come close to reaching the water user's volume. She showed her enjoyment in other ways, the main one losing her reserve, showing her emotions and feelings openly and becoming completely uninhibited.

Tsukiumi proved correct in this assumption. But instead of the loud moans and cries of Tsukiumi, Kazehana actually gave voice to words, describing what was occurring in detail and so loudly that the next morning all the neighbors complained about it. The single ones at least...

Miya in particular was annoyed, and rather put out, both by annoyance, lack of sleep and something else she didn't care to examine too closely. She did not particularly want the images conjured up by Kazehana's scream of "**Minato! So Big, so good, harder, please more, harder**" (which was the least objectionable of what Kazehana had screamed last night) in her head, they were so darn hard to kick back out. The next day she demanded that Minato and his wives get some sound insulation for their room, or at least try to keep the noise level down. Minato and his wives, all terrified by a full power demon head attack, agreed to look into it right after helping Kuno and her Ashikabi escape the city.

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Hibiki groaned in frustration. There was no food again! Their Ashikabi had quit **another** job, leaving them barely getting by. *And Hikari's and my waitress jobs don't pay nearly enough to match all of our expenses.*

She could hear them arguing in the other room. Seo apparently wanted to go another round, but her sister wasn't going along with the idea. She shook her head as she noticed a flash of light indicating that someone had just gotten electrocuted. *Fuck, why did we ever decide to become his Sekirei? I know we reacted to him, but he was the only man besides Minaka and Takehito that we had ever seen. Maybe if we had waited -*

Hibiki's musings were interrupted by a knock on the door. Sighing she went to answer it. *It's probably more creditors.* She opened the door, and was surprised to see Minato and Musubi standing there, accompanied by a young couple that she did not recognize.

Minato had gotten Seo's address from the construction yard they had worked at together but was surprised when he and Musubi (who had won the daily jan-ken-pon battle) arrived at the address that the apartment complex was actually decent. *I thought with Seo not holding down a job and his two Sekirei not having their MBI card that they wouldn't be able to afford a place like this. Strange.*

Hibiki ushered the two in and then went to get her Ashikabi. 3 cups of coffee, two electrocutions and ten minutes later Seo leaned back in his sofa looking across at the younger man irritably. "So let me get this straight. You want me to help you help these two escape from Tokyo? And you have no idea how to get out of the city?"

Minato nodded affirmatively. He'd actually been against the idea of asking Seo for help, as he did not really think he was reliable. However, Matsu had not been able to find any information on where MBI had set up its blockade. She had found out the type and amount of the forces deployed but not their disposition. Their radio signals and radar were encrypted and she had been unable to break the cipher since she'd been winged, a clear indication that her winging was known and her abilities identified and planned for by MBI.

Matsu insisted she could break it eventually but Minato was unwilling to give her more time. He knew that the longer the blockade was in place, the more organized the defenders would get and the harder it would be to find a weak point. Therefore they were forced to rely on another source of information.

Miya had surprised them all by pointing them in the direction of Seo. Seo, for all that he was a worthless lazy bum, seemed to know what was going on around the city.

Seo leaned over excitedly. "So how much are you going to pay?"

Shigi looked at him angrily. "How can you expect a college kid who hasn't even gotten into his college yet to have money?"

As the two began to argue Minato sighed and reached into his pocket, taking out the phone Matsu had prepared for him. She had been able to modify the phone so that it could only receive not send as well as being fortified against wire-tapping, and the signal was bounced all around the city, making it even harder for someone to track him.

After a few rings, someone picked up on the other end, and the two talked for a few seconds. At a break in the argument, Minato wordlessly handed the phone across to Seo.

Seo looked at him quizzically as he took the phone, but then nearly dropped it in utter terror as he heard Miya's voice on the other end of the line. After a few moments of stuttered replies, and his promise to help in return for not being cut off from his main (i.e. free) food source, he hung up and glared across at Minato. "You play dirty."

Minato smiled and nodded.

Seo sighed and got out a map of the city and began to point out various places. First he outlined where all the powerful Ashikabi based, not realizing that Matsu had given Minato this information already. Then he outlined how and where MBI's defenses set up.

The blockade relied on three things. One was purely electronic, radar and unmanned probes on constant patrol above the city's outskirts. These Matsu could counter easily enough. The next was several large concentrations of mobile troops, equipped with helicopters and APC's at a few strategically placed centers around the city.

Minato was surprised to recognize two of them as places where he had worked recently as part of construction crews taking down old buildings. *Just great, so my paychecks have been coming indirectly from MBI. I'll have to ask Matsu to find out how close a link that is.*

Troops were also stationed on all the main highways into and out of the city, with tanks in close support.

Minato shook his head at this. He had gone over their assault on the botanical gardens defense and felt he had a good idea of what it would take for normal human troops to take on Sekirei. Sekirei had four advantages over normal troops: speed, striking ability, amazing reflexes and their super powers. To stand against such would take good training to overcome the surprise and fear their powers caused, something that all the MBI troops he had seen so far lacked, as well as the ability to keep your distance and direct enough firepower to a point to overwhelm the Sekirei's speed and reflexes.

Tanks with room to maneuver (something that was impossible anywhere near Tokyo) could possibly make a fight of it if they could direct fire well enough at a single target and were able to keep the range open. Tanks in close support were next to useless against someone who could sprint faster than they could traverse or more and toss them around

like a tennis ball or just outright destroy them. Knockout gas or other deterrents might work though. Still to the average Ashikabi with a single bonded Sekirei, this defense would seem much more credible.

Last and most dangerous, the disciplinary squad was also part of the blockade, roving the outskirts of the city in a random pattern with orders to engage any Sekirei trying to leave the city. Matsu had found this out as well as the fact that lethal force had been used at least twice already on escapers.

However there was one avenue of escape MBI had overlooked: a bridge that had been closed for construction on the north side of the city, half demolished before the construction crews were called elsewhere. Impassable for vehicle traffic, it could still be crossed by foot.

It was near a train station which would allow for rapid deployment of troops from the city center, but that was all. MBI was unwilling to tie down static defenses in the northern area of the city, uncertain how the demon of the north, who Minato now knew was Miya, would react to that. They had instead relied on the fact that not many people knew about the bridge and the roving Disciplinary squad who according to Seo stopped by there frequently.

Seo showed it to them on the map and said that he and his Sekirei would cause a distraction elsewhere in the area, pulling MBI's attention away. Once that was done, Minato and his group would be on their own.

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That night lightning raged in the city as Minato led his Sekirei, minus Kusano and Matsu, to the bridge. Kazehana and Musubi would take on any opposing Sekirei, while Shigi, Kuno, Akitsu, Minato and Tsukiumi would attack any regular troops they encountered. Much to Minato's ongoing amusement, this course of action had been again decided by a jan-ken-pon tournament.

At first, it looked as if Seo's diversionary attack had worked perfectly. Minato and the others did not see any troops anywhere near the abandoned bridge and the subway station they passed was dark and empty.

It was only upon actually starting across that they saw their enemies. Standing there waiting for them in the middle of the span was two Sekirei. Well one stood, the other was slumped over her knees, dejectedly poking at the ground.

Musubi and Kazehana took a moment to size up their opponents. The one standing was short but seemed powerfully built, obviously a hand to hand fighter, with reinforced red gloves on her hands and wearing a black kimono with one sleeve longer than the other and biker shorts underneath it. Her pink hair was tied into a pony tail on the right side of her attractive face, and her red eyes lit with eagerness as she saw the group coming toward her.

The other also looked to be a close quarter combatant, wearing large metallic claws on her hands. She had unkempt gray hair obscuring half her face, the other half showing a depressed expression. She wore an open tattered black kimono over skin tight black pants, but her body was also covered with what looked like cloth bandages wrapped tight around every inch of skin below her neck.

The pink haired girl held up a hand imperiously and started to rattle off an obviously prepared speech. "The rules of the Sekirei plan state that after stage two is declared, no Sekirei or Ashikabi is allowed to leave Tokyo. If you try to leave we, number 105 Benitsubasa and number 104 Haihane of the Disciplinary Squad are allowed to use lethal force to stop you." She licked her lips in anticipation, before turning and kicking her companion in the side. "Get up already, you can worry about your missed TV shows later."

The one called Haihane pouted but complied, claws clicking together eagerly.

Minato looked at them from where he stood next to his Sekirei. "Disciplinary Squad, so your captain is Karasuba?"

Benitsubasa blinked and turned back to them, looking at Minato with her head cocked to one side. Her eyes widened suddenly as she put his appearance together with the description her Ashikabi Natsuo-sama had given her. "You're Sahashi Minato right? I don't know how you're on your feet already, but I wouldn't get too comfortable. Karasuba told us she's going to kill you slowly. That means we can't lay a hand on you, but your Sekirei are still fair game."

Musubi and the others all bristled at this threat to their Ashikabi but Minato merely smiled. "Tell Karasuba 'bark, bark' for me will you?"

Haihane grinned at the cheeky response to which Minato replied with a wink of his own, but Benitsubasa shuddered, knowing how her captain would react to something like that.

Kazehana and Musubi moved forward, introducing themselves as the others backed away. Tsukiumi clenched her

fists at her side in frustration. Normally even having lost the jan-ken-pon battle she should have insisted on fighting. But her new sister-wife had asked that she be allowed to show off in front of her new husband, and Tsukiumi had reluctantly agreed to allow her and Musubi to fight first.

The two disciplinary members moved forward eagerly. Haihane squared off against Kazehana, and Musubi faced Benitsubasa.

Haihane took one look at their opponents and began giggling uncontrollably. "Big Breast Combi" were the only words any of the others could make out.

Benitsubasa kicked her hard in the side. "Shut it will you!? Tits don't matter in a fight!"

Haihane sniggered, almost breaking down again. "They matter when catching a man."

The pink-haired girl gritted her teeth and shouted "Will you be serious! And I'm certain I'll find a way to get Natsuo-sama's attention soon!" Haihane snorted but as her partner raised her fists she sighed and nodded.

Without any warning Haihane dived forward, closing the distance between herself and Kazehana. Yet Despite her surprise, Kazehana had felt her movement in the air and the wind user dodged and danced out of the way of her opponent's claws almost languidly. This went on for a few minutes while next to them Musubi and Benitsubasa clashed.

Musubi had a reach advantage and landed the first blow, hammering her opponent back a few steps despite her cross arm block. Her opponent countered with a high kick then flowing from that spinning through the air to try an elbow jab to the ribs. Musubi turned and took the blow to return one of her own. This led into an exchange where they both took body blows and tried to land a knockout punch quickly but couldn't get through one another's guard.

A spin kick sent Benitsubasa back into the bridge's left guardrail, but she bounced off it using the momentum to torpedo Musubi in the stomach, hurling her across the width of the bridge into the other guardrail, narrowly missing the other fighting duo and possibly cracking a rib. Musubi barely dodged the follow up combo, sending her own fist into her attacker's stomach, doubling Benitsubasa over, but the girl rolled to the side avoiding the following uppercut.

As the fight continued Minato watched with growing concern. Kazehana was handling her opponent easily, the other Sekirei was completely unable to land a blow, and was becoming more and more wild and uncoordinated as the fight went on. But Musubi seemed to be slowly losing her fight. The battle had been going on for twenty minutes, and outside of that first torpedo, neither combat Sekirei had been able to land a real knockout punch. He could barely follow their movements the two were moving so fast, but Minato could see Musubi had several bruises on her, and seemed to be tiring. He castigated himself *I should have kissed them both so they could use their norito attacks!*

At that moment, Kazehana grew bored, and with a single wave of her hand sent Haihane flying through the air over the guard rail to land in the water below. Next to her Musubi was flung back from a kick and Minato took this chance to end the fight. "Alright that's enough."

Benitsubasa paused as Kazehana moved to stand between her and Musubi. "What's the matter, one giant tits can't cut it on her own?" Kazehana again raised a hand and a wall of air stopped Benitsubasa's forward progress. She growled and tried to punch her way through it, but was constantly pushed back. She stopped with a snarl as Minato blocked Musubi from returning to the fight.

"That's enough Musubi, you did your best." Musubi looked rebellious, but Minato put a hand around her waist very gently and drew her away. He could already see she would be sore for a good while, and did not want her to be in more pain than she already was. He looked across at Benitsubasa, who did not seem nearly as battered. In fact, she still looked eager to continue. He scanned his other Sekirei, and Tsukiumi nodded at him eagerly.

After receiving a return nod she stepped forward and Kazehana raised her wind shield. "I, O9 Tsukiumi will be your opponent now."

As the adrenaline left her system Musubi collapsed to her knees exhausted, her leg buckling under her as she finally registered the two broken bones in it. As Akitsu and Minato caught her, she thought *I need to get stronger. I have to be the strongest to keep my promise with Karasuba-chan and protect Minato-sama.*

Akitsu gave her a once over. Benitsubasa had beaten her almost black and blue, but her chest area, and in particular her breasts, seemed to have been pounded worse than the rest of her. Akitsu quirked an eyebrow at this, before turning her attention back to the action.

Haihane had managed to get out of the water and back into the fight, having ditched her gauntlets on the bridge seconds before she was blown over the railing. Despite this she was still having no luck against Kazehana. The wind Sekirei kept her at a distance, sometimes using her air techniques to flip her or throw her the length of the bridge. Even her special ki-charged attacks couldn't connect with the wily veteran.

Tsukiumi could have done the same with her water ability, but had instead opted to meet Benitsubasa hand to hand using a water sword and shield.

Benitsubasa grimaced as she dodged a slash from her opponent's sword, letting it slash harmlessly through her loose sleeves. She was already in a bit of pain from her round with giant tits. She'd gotten in a few solid blows, and one of her arms was almost certainly broken, and a few ribs felt bruised. What was worse, this new big-breasted bitch was much more skilled than her previous adversary. The brown haired one had come in at her eager and confident in her own strength, but this one was smart and ....

Her back struck the railing of the bridge and Benitsuba instinctively braced herself for the next attack. Instead, she blinked in shock as, rather than pressing her advantage, the blond retreated, bringing her water blade up to the guard position.

Tsukiumi's lips twitched as she crooked her finger in a taunt, hiding how hard she was working to keep up with the faster Sekirei at this close a distance. *Make her angry make her stupid, just like Minato taught us.* "Come on whenever you're ready little girl."

Benitsubasa's red irises nearly disappeared as she glared at the blonde in rage. "Making fun of me...." She raised her fist into the air shouting, "Destructive Quake!" and brought it down, smashing into the bridge. The force of the blow sent out a shockwave of power and caused the bridge to literally blow apart in a chasm towards her opponent.

Tsukiumi's eyes widened in surprise and she jumped back over the bridge railing, summoning up a pillar of water to support her at the same time. As the shockwave subsided, she stood on it calmly, looking at her opponent in amusement. *Well, that worked better than I expected.* "Very nice, but did you forget that this is a bridge?"

Benitsubasa blinked at her, and then shrieked in surprise as the concrete underneath her broke and fell away, spilling her into the water below.

Haihane and Kazehana had both moved away from the other two the moment Benitsubasa launched her attack. Haihane giggled manically as she watched her partner fall into the water far below.

She stopped laughing as a voice whispered in her ear. "If you think it's so funny, why don't you join her?"

Before she could move or protest, a gust of wind slammed into her, sending her up and out over the river. With a last despairing cry of "Not again!" she fell out of the sky and splashed down into the river.

The battle over for now, Kuno and Shigi moved forward to gaze stupefied at the shattered end of the bridge. Fully twenty feet of bridge had been destroyed, leaving no way for them to get across. Shigi glared at Minato, who had stopped at the edge of the shattered bridge and was looking down bemused at the water far below. "How the hell are we supposed to get across now?"

Minato looked at the younger man, noticing out of the corner of his eyes a pink head breaking the surface below them. "Well I suppose we can try again later, though of course they'll be expecting us. Or you can make a leap of faith. I suppose the question is, are you willing to risk your lives to be happy?"

Shigi looked him, at Kuno, and then at the helicopters they could already see in the distance coming towards them. He breathed in deeply, nodded once at Minato and grabbed Kuno's hand. Shigi led her back from the edge and then they ran, jumping off the edge at the last minute. They flew forward for a few feet, but began to lose air as their momentum faded.

Kazehana smirked and moved her hands slightly, stirring the air underneath the young couple and pushing them on. Minato turned and gave her a wink, which she returned. Next to them, Tsukiumi glared down at the water below, where Haihane and Benitsubasa were already making their way to the riverbank.

Shigi and Kuno landed on the far side, legs collapsing under them. They both got up and waved frantically at Minato and his Sekirei who all waved back with varying degrees of amusement. As the helicopters neared, the two took off, running away from the city, from the Sekirei game and from MBI.

Minato glanced at the approaching helicopters, noticing they were all coming toward his group, not splitting off to

follow the runners. "Kazehana, Tsukiumi, please warn those helicopters off. I think it's time we get out of here."

Kazehana and Tsukiumi both smirked. Kazehana used her powers to fire high-pressure air blasts at the first two helicopters, which swerved away wildly as their pilots fought for control.

Tsukiumi was even more devastating. She used her water rifle on the last three helicopters, piercing the fuselage of all three helicopters at high speed. They were forced to make emergency landings, turning rapidly away from Minato and his party.

Minato smiled grimly at the sight before kissing all his wives hard on the lips. He pulled back from Akitsu, who had the wounded Musubi on her back and who had not left his side since the operation began, and offered Kazehana and Tsukiumi his arms. "Let's go home."

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When he heard the report from his men, Minaka was livid. Not only had a Sekirei/Ashikabi pair escaped after he had ordered the city completely locked down but Sahashi Minato was the one who had helped them do it. What was worse before any response could have been made, Minato made it back to the area of the Izumo demon, disabling the few helicopters who had been able to respond in time to stop them.

*And again, with 01 there, any assault on his base of operations will be impossible. That'll be true even when Karasuba returns from her fact-finding mission to Constantinople.* Minato was also not relying on his Sekirei's credit cards to take care of them, so that avenue of retaliation was mute. In fact, he seemed to be intent on cutting all ties with MBI as soon as he found them.

Minaka's eyes widened as a thought struck him. *The fourth stage should be beginning soon. Yes, that's perfect. Let the punishment fit the crime.*

He began to cackle maniacally which caused Natsuo, who had brought him the report about the breakout, to back away. *I am working for a psychopath. I wish this was news to me, or that I could do anything about it.* He composed himself as Minaka turned to him and began to issue his orders.

end chapter

next update for this story will be Wednesday

## **\*Chapter 10\*: Chapter 10 Disciplinary Squad**

I do not own Sekirei. I can't draw those tits, I'm sorry.

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### **Chapter 10 Disciplinary Squad**

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It was two days after the breakout and Minato was still waiting for the other shoe to fall. Kazehana, who alone of his Sekirei had kept her MBI card (not wanting to burden the household with her drinking bill), had told him it had been cancelled, but Minato thought that MBI would have to do something else to punish his transgression, and he was not having fun wondering about how they would 'penalize' him for breaking the rules of the game.

On the plus side, he'd already taken Musubi, Matsu and Tsukiumi out on their dates.

Musubi wanted to go on a picnic and to a baseball game. They had fun walking around 'his territory', stopping at various food stalls, where Musubi sampled as much of their food as she could get away with before heading to the game, where Musubi ate an entire tray full of traditional baseball food.

Matsu simply wanted him to spend the day with her in her room, but Miya, and odd look on her face, hadn't allowed it. They had instead been forced to spend the day at a love hotel. Minato hadn't really minded, but Matsu's desire to use diverse items was a bit of a turn off for him. Clothing to help the mood he could understand, but several varieties of dildos and vibrators? He had drawn the line at those, especially when Matsu implied she wanted to use a few on him...

Tsukiumi had simply wanted to spend a night out at a restaurant with him, as well as to have him to herself for the evening. Akitsu and Kazehana had both agreed to this, provided that they would be allowed the same consideration after their dates with him. The fact that Tsukiumi walked around with her head in the clouds and a wide grin on her normally haughty face (her default expression, much like Akitsu's emotionless one) the next day may have had something to do with their decision. Thankfully the sound insulation had been installed under Minato's direction the day after the breakout, so no one had cause to complain about the noise again.

Kusano and Akitsu put their heads together and decided to go to a theme park. Akitsu remembered how much fun it had been to hear Minato talk about his own trip there, and Kusano thought it would be really fun. They had combined their dates because Akitsu had Matsu look up the cost of a day trip to a theme park on the internet and realized it would cost them two days worth of construction work. They had already decided they would go this coming weekend.

Minato turned from contemplating himself in the mirror as Kazehana came in, dressed to the nines in an evening gown, silver bracelets and matching earrings. Minato looked at her in surprise. He was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. "Minato, what the heck are you wearing?"

"I thought we were just going out to drink."

Kazehana smiled, her cherry red lips curving into a sensual smile that set his heart to racing. "There's going out to drink, and then there's going out for drinks."

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An hour later found the two of them entering a dance club, Kazehana almost literally dragging Minato along behind her. He was dressed in a good black dress shirt that Tsukiumi had bought him, as well as black jeans and a belt with an overlarge silver buckle. His hair however, despite Kazehana's protests and his own best effort was its usual birds nest.

Minato looked around morosely. The club and restaurant was organized with several tables and three bars set up around a large dance floor. Minato sighed; he couldn't dance a lick, and loud crowds and the party scene had never been his thing, even before his experiences in Constantinople which sharply increased his dislike of loud noises. The place was packed, the music was blaring and the strobe lights were lighting everything in different colors every other second. *Oh Joy.*

Kazehana gleefully pulled him onto the dance floor and the two began to grind against one another to the music, dirty

dancing the way Kazehana had wanted to do with him when she taught the others. The beautiful woman was ignored the ogling of the men around them and Minato tried his best to ignore the jealous glares sent his own way. He had gotten used to it when out with any of his Sekirei, but he'd never reconciled himself to it.

Tonight the glare of one older man, a hugely muscled and tattooed yakuza type was especially harsh. He tried to come up behind Kazehana, but Minato kept on turning them so that he was always between the older man and Kazehana. For a moment, it looked as if the semi-drunk yak was going to start something but Minato turned and gave him a look that spoke of eloquent death. The punk tried to return his dead stare, but after a few seconds gulped and backed off, quickly leaving the club.

Minato smirked to himself and Kazehana giggled in his ear grinding harder against his crotch. "Oh, Minato, so possessive."

Minato groaned through clenched teeth at the stimulation through his pants, but pushed forward rubbing against her in turn, kissing her neck hard, making certain to leave a hickey there. Leaning his forehead against hers, he stared into her eyes, conveying his feelings to her wordlessly.

Kazehana trembled in his arms, wanting desperately to kiss him right now, but with so many people around her contract wings would cause too much of a stir. She settled for kissing his cheek and holding him as tight as possible, murmuring "I love you, Minato."

The two stayed out on the floor for five dances before Minato wanted a break. The loud noises and the crowd were getting to him. Kazehana wanted to stay and dance some more. She moved over to where a bunch of college girls were dancing together in a large cluster and despite several jealous looks directed at her bust line she joined their group seamlessly.

Minato left the floor in search of a free table or bar stool to rest at. He looked around and noticed one table was empty save for a single girl around his own age. As he moved closer he suddenly twitched in surprise when he recognized her via her hair color. *Okay, the last thing I expected to see was little miss spitfire of the disciplinary squad hanging out in a place like this.*

Minato took a few moments to study the girl in question, noticing the gloomy air that seemed to radiate off her. He looked around, noticing that there was no other table or seat free. Shrugging he made his way over. *This could be interesting.*

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Benitsubasa was dressed in a fashionable one piece dress, expensive jewelry, and her hair was perfect. She should have been having a lot of fun. This was her night out and the place was jumping. That she was not in fact having fun was evident to anyone who looked, as was the aura of rage she let off at the slightest provocation. It served to keep the riffraff away while she sank deeper into her gloom, nursing her twelfth margarita and glaring at the table in front of her.

She looked up, eyes narrowing in anger as someone dared to sit across from her without her permission.

"You mind if I make use of your aura of gloom for a bit of a break?" Benitsubasa's eyes widened in shock as she recognized Minato from the breakout at the bridge. "Musubi wants a rematch by the way."

The pink haired Sekirei glared across at him, stifling her initial impulse which was to reach out and crush his head like a grape. "She's welcome to try anytime. Now leave me alone. Can't you see I don't want to be bothered right now?"

Minato shrugged nonchalantly, though his body was tense as a violin string. "You're not likely to cause trouble in a packed place like this. You're a combat junky not a killer, and I meant it when I said I wanted to use your aura of gloom. You see anywhere else for me to sit?"

Benitsubasa growled but played along, looking around. After a few seconds of perusal she realized she really didn't see anywhere else to sit, not even anywhere to lean against a wall or anything, the place was so packed. She huffed then blinked in surprise as his other words finally registering in her brain. "What the hell do you mean I'm a combat junky not a killer? I would have killed that big titted bitch last night."

Minato leaned back, trying to make himself seem as harmless as possible. "Ah, but that was in a fight. You don't strike me as the kind to enjoy killing and blood simply for the hell of it."

"Hmmp, whatever, just leave me alone." Benitsubasa leaned back sulkily. She didn't want to admit it but the irritating

man across from her was right. She loved a good fight, the bloodier the better, but she wasn't the type to enjoy killing defenseless people. Rough them up a little if they irritated her sure, but not kill. Benitsubasa turned back to her drink morosely, glancing briefly down at her slinky black cocktail dress. *Even if I was in the mood for a fight, I'm not dressed for it. Versace isn't combat wear and this isn't the place for it either.*

She drained her margarita and raised her hand, signaling a nearby waiter to bring her another and he hastened to obey, ignoring several other tables in his haste. MBI owned the building and the club, and the waiter knew better than to keep her waiting.

Minato observed the young pink haired girl across from him closely. The same girl who had beaten Musubi black and blue and, despite her own posturing, made Tsukiumi sweat a little, loving every minute of the fight, now looked as if her dog had died.

He turned to watch his wife enjoying herself on the dance floor, grinning and teaching the college girls some dance moves that made a few of them blush and others grin (Minato later learned those weren't dance moves she was describing with those gestures, but in his defense it was tough to see her hands at all from across the room).

He looked over again, eyes widening in surprise as Benitsubasa grabbed her new margarita and downed it before the waiter could turn away, quickly signaling for another. "Ohhkaay, what's wrong? You don't look like the kind of lady who habitually drinks like a sailor on shore leave."

The pink haired girl glared at him with bloodshot eyes. "Why the hell are you even here?"

Minato indicated Kazehana, who was now in the middle of a conga line, surrounded by giggling college girls and a few well-behaved boyfriends of said. "My Sekirei wanted to come here. I promised them each a date for helping Kuno and Shigi escape, and this is what Kazehana wanted."

Benitsubasa scowled at the memory of her defeat, looking down at the table and then over at the other woman. Her gloom seemed to deepen at the sight. "Che, I suppose all men want women with bigger racks huh?"

Minato's eyebrow shot up in surprise. *Akitsu told me about the odd amount of bruises on Musubi's breasts. It seems the Red Sekirei has a bit of a complex.*

Minato leaned back, subtly taking in her body and how she was dressed carefully considering his answer. He kept his voice mild as he replied. "I don't think so. Shigi loved Kuno, and she wasn't as attractive as you are. My sister's always been quite popular with boys and she doesn't have much to speak of on top either. I think style and how you carry yourself count for more than bust size, and you certainly have style."

Benitsubasa tried not to preen as he went on, keeping his words simple but truthful. "In my own case, I fell in love with my wives, and care for my other Sekirei, because of their personalities. In fact, my wives bodies kinda intimidated me until I got to know them." He coughed self-consciously. "I'm not used to being around gorgeous women, let alone having them take an interest in me. Now, I love them, and it's my pleasure to make them happy."

She slumped deeper into her seat, scowling as the waiter returned with her refill. "That's nice." Her voice was half growl and half sorrowful moan.

Minato leaned over and put his hand over her drink before she could pick it up again. "Okay, seriously what is going on? I really don't want to have to deal with a drunken superwoman. What's bothering you so much?"

Benitsubasa at first looked as if she was going to take offense but leaned back instead, crossing her arms across her chest. "Why do you care?"

"Because I don't see all opposing Sekirei as possessions or my enemies. I see you as women and warriors, and right now, you are a woman with a problem." Minato answered promptly. *And again I really don't want to have to deal with you if you go into a drunken rage...*

Minato's honest response seemed to get under the pink haired girls defenses and she lowered her arms, reaching for her drink as she muttered sullenly, "This was supposed to be my night out with my Ashikabi."

"Did something come up that made him cancel on you?" Minato could only think that it was an emergency, as he'd never make plans with his partners and not keep them if he could help it.

She seemed to glower at him, then over at Kazehana, still dancing happily, ignoring the few males who had entered her sphere of influence. She seemed to shrink back into her seat as she gulped down half of her margarita in one

swig. "It's not the first time."

"Why in the world would a man not want to go out with you?" Minato waved his hand expansively, drawing Benitsubasa's attention to several college age boys and older men who were looking their way.

Benitsubasa glared around and the men swiftly went back to scanning the crowd or staring at their drinks. None of them had the courage to meet her red eyes, and she snorted derisively.

"Honestly, why is your Ashikabi not spending time with you?"

Benitsubasa downed the rest of her drink and muttered a reply. Minato cocked his head and asked her to repeat it. She looked up at him and suddenly let out a wail, "He's gay! God damn-it, he's gay!" She slumped forward onto the table and began to cry into her arms. "I-I've tried; I've tried everything to get him to pay attention, d-different clothing, pu-push-up bras, going **naked**, everything to make him look at me, but n-nothing works! Natsuo-sama just isn't attracted to **any of us!**" She continued to wail as Minato tentatively reached out a hand and rubbed the back of her head comfortingly.

His mind was blank for the moment, unable to come up with a single thing to say. *How the hell can there be a gay Ashikabi? A bisexual one I could see, but gay and with female Sekirei?* It hit him in a flash. *Control. It has to deal with control. A female Sekirei who forms a real connection with her Ashikabi will feel more loyalty to him than to MBI or Minaka's mad plan, and he must not have wanted to bet on his ability to take out the Sekirei by killing the Ashikabi. Even one who has been forced into a contract will follow her Ashikabi's orders. He couldn't assume that their love of combat and indoctrination alone would assure their loyalty. And with a gay Ashikabi there is no way the bond can be deepened, making them too strong to control. By Buddha, that's nasty.*

Kazehana made her way over to her Ashikabi as he was comforting Benitsubasa, recognizing the other Sekirei's pink hair almost immediately, as well as her current distress. She smiled sitting down and leaning against him, breasts pressing against his arm and shoulder. "Flirting with another woman Minato? I'm shocked."

Minato gave her a one armed hug, whispering into her ear and informing her of Benitsubasa's problem. "As soon as she calms down, take her out on the dance floor and dance with her. She needs to be cheered up a bit."

Kazehana was sympathetic, but could not quite bring herself to belief that Minaka would be as manipulative as Minato had indicated, assuming the pairing had been accidental rather than on purpose.

Benitsubasa looked up, noticing the other Sekirei's presence, and began to scowl at her when Kazehana shook off her thoughts, reached across and pulled the pink haired Sekirei to her feet. "Come on pinky, lets, dance."

Minato stayed where he was seated leaned back and watched them go, thinking dark thoughts.

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The younger woman sputtered indignantly as the big-breasted woman pulled her onto the dance floor. Almost immediately they were surrounded by the group of college girls and guys Kazehana had been dancing with. As they began to dance, Kazehana showed her how to move and dance to the heavy metal music.

After a while, Benitsubasa began to have fun, losing some of her inhibitions due to the massive amount of alcohol she had consumed finally hitting her system.

After about ten songs worth of dancing, Kazehana leaned into the younger girl from behind, accidentally rubbing her breasts against her back. She could feel the flat-chested girl stiffen in anger but spoke low into her ear. "You know, Minato wasn't the first person I reacted to."

Benitsubasa growled low, the big breasts pushing into her back irritating her beyond belief, but the words of the older Sekirei grabbed her attention. "What?"

"I reacted to Minaka." Benitsubasa gasped and turned to face her, but Kazehana kept on dancing urging the younger girl to do the same. "Yeah, funny isn't it? But you can react to more than one person. Minaka turned me down, and I'm much happier now than I could ever be with him. So ask yourself, did you react to this Natsuo, or was he forced on you?"

Benitsubasa couldn't think clearly with all the booze she had consumed earlier. At the moment she couldn't remember having had any choice. She had merely been following orders and when she began to react, he had winged her with a short stiff kiss. Since then, he had never touched her willingly in anything but a comradely fashion.

Kazehana danced the two of them to the side of the dance floor, reaching out to grab Minato and pull him in from where he had been standing nursing a beer.

Minato barely had time to put his beer down before Kazehana pulled him onto the floor, pushing him into Benitsubasa. "Show her a good time love, show her what she's missing." Minato shook his head at this but had no choice but to go along with it.

Benitsubasa normally would never have accepted this, but as emotionally frazzled, intellectually confused, and, not least, drunk as she was, all she saw was her new onee-sama wanting her to have fun and loaning out her man for a few dances. *And he is handsome, in a country boy sort of way.* Her besotted mind thought.

The fact that she was betraying her Ashikabi by having fun dancing with another man flashed across her mind, but she suppressed it easily. Natsuo was gay and had shown no interest in her or his other two Sekirei. *I won't really do anything, and just dancing can't hurt can it? Natsuo also turned me down for tonight, so it's his own damn fault.*

Minato danced with both Kazehana and Benitsubasa, taking breaks as needed to clear his head. The two women danced with each other and sometimes other couples. Benitsubasa had the best time outside of a fight to the death she ever had.

The red Sekirei's ego was also boosted throughout the night by the admiring looks she received from the other men there, and from Minato's own attentions to her. Natsuo had never actually complimented her on anything but completing missions. Kazehana's admiration of her dress and style made her feel good as well. The three of them continued to dance on and off together until the club closed hours later.

As the club was closing, Minato and Kazehana walked her to the limo she had called for.

Benitsubasa's buzz had long disappeared, and she looked at the two bemused. She really did have a lot of fun tonight, but she didn't know what to make of their kindness. *They were my enemies a few days ago, and will certainly be our enemies again, so why the hell have they been so nice to me? What do they expect to get out of it?*

Minato had felt something with Benitsubasa, something that told him that the two of them could have been compatible like he was with Musubi if she hadn't already been winged by this Natsuo she had mentioned. He looked at Kazehana who smiled encouragingly. Minato breathed in deeply, and before Benitsubasa could say anything, he reached out and took her hand, shaking it formally. "Tonight's been fun, and that is all it needs to be. Don't think about it too hard; just realize I don't see you as my enemy, regardless of your orders."

Benitsubasa growled, trying and failing to get angry at his nonaggressive tone. "Don't think this makes us even or anything. I haven't forgotten how that blond bitch and giant tits ganged up on me. I'll see you all again, and next time I'll beat them both."

Minato's eyes flashed angrily at this mode of address being directed at Tsukiumi (though not Musubi, 'giant tits' was after all a perfectly accurate way to describe his little sister Sekirei), but Kazehana stepped in smoothly. "As long as it's a fair fight, I think both of them would welcome another fight with you." She leaned down and kissed Benitsubasa on the cheek, and the two of them turned walking down the street heading home. Behind them, they left a very confused young woman, who continued to stare out the window of her limo deep in thought all the way back to the MBI tower.

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That night, Kazehana's date with Minato ended satisfactorily for both of them. The next day, Kazehana walked down the stairway abemused, but satisfied smile on her face. *This is the first time I've ever been tired after sex. Last night was amazing, both the first round and the second! But there's something going on with our link. Those images...*

Minato had of course been kissing her throughout the night, and the constant renewal of their bond did something to it. She received images, memories from Minato, though she did not know if Minato had gotten the same from her. She hoped not, as there were two secrets she wanted to keep from him for a while yet. *Luckily, I have someone I can ask about it.*

Kazehana walked into the kitchen, joining Akitsu in creating boxed lunches for their trip to Tokyo Disney. Yukari had already arrived, and tried not to ogle Kazehana's body through her barely there nightgown. Shiina and Kusano were watching a DVD in the TV room. "Hey Yukari, how are you?"

Yukari answering smile was a little forced. Knowing intellectually that her idiot brother was sleeping with not two, but now three beautiful women was one thing. Looking at Kazehana's thoroughly exhausted, pleased expression and

yes, her slightly bowlegged walk and knowing the reason behind it was another.

Akitsu smiled at Kazehana, knowing that Tsukiumi would be upstairs, taking advantage of their husband's showering to get some time with him. She did not think it would go very far, not with their working under a time limit, something she knew Tsukiumi hated. But of all Minato's Sekirei, Tsukiumi was the one who demanded as much of his time as possible. Akitsu did not mind, and knew that Minato loved giving that attention to her, as he did to all of them.

Kazehana smiled back, but leaned over and whispered into Akitsu's ear. "Tomorrow, I want to talk to you and Tsukiumi. Something happened last night, and I don't know what to make of it."

Akitsu looked at her head cocked quizzically. *It is not something from the date itself, as they told us of their meeting with the red Sekirei last night before retiring to our room, so...* She thought for a moment. "Ahh... something to do with the winging?"

Kazehana nodded.

Akitsu smiled her small public smile. While she had become much more talkative and outgoing since bonding with Minato, her facial expressions hadn't, outside the bedroom at least, become more expressive to match. "Ahh... the same thing happened to me and Tsukiumi. We can go out and have a picnic, just the three of us." Kazehana nodded and the two went back to preparing the lunchboxes.

Akitsu soon left to change into her walking clothes, and Minato came down with Tsukiumi. She would not be accompanying them, though the group going to Tokyo Disney had grown beyond the original three. Shiina and Yukari would be coming with them at Kusano's request, and surprisingly Katsuragi, the Sekirei they had freed from Higa, had evinced an interest in going with them. Miya and Minato agreed that this was a good sign, and so included her as well.

Tsukiumi and Kazehana weren't interested, and were staying behind. They were instead going to practice an idea Minato had come up with: combination attacks. He had thought of it after watching them attack MBI's helicopters during while they broke out Shigi and Kuno.

Musubi also had no interest in going, and was already training with Miya, which would continue for the entire day. Her defeat, which was how she thought of it at the hands of Benitsubasa, weighed heavily on her and she had taken to training again as soon as possible after her wounds had healed, the speed of which had astonished Minato anew, despite his own accelerated healing.

They also concerned him as, if all Sekirei healed at the same rate, Karasuba should have healed long since, but had yet to show herself. That worried him. A mad dog attacking you was one thing; a mad dog doing something where you couldn't see what she was doing was another.

Akitsu soon came down, dressed in casual jeans and the blue dragon t-shirt she had bought with Tsukiumi the day after meeting Minato. Katsuragi joined them outside, dressed in some of Uzume's clothing which Miya had cut down to fit her less developed frame.

Yukari introduced herself, having not met Katsuragi on her previous visits. She had not been told the brown haired girls story, but was quick to notice as they walked to the train station how skittish she was around other men besides her big brother and Shiina.

She also noticed how everyone else, even Kusano, closed ranks around her on the crowded train, not letting any strangers get close.

Katsuragi seemed to settle down away from the claustrophobic confines of the subway, and by the time they reached the entrance to Tokyo Disney, was happily looking forward to the rides they would go on.

As the group got off the bus at the drop off point to the park Minato stopped, looking askance at a familiar figure crouched forlornly on the ground.

Akitsu too recognized Haihane from the fight on the bridge. She looked at Minato and after a moment's silent debate the two walked over to her. "Is it just me, or am I being followed by you Disciplinary Squad members?"

Haihane looked up at them, but seeing that Kazehana (or windy-bags as Haihane thought of her) was not with them, turned away. She went back to staring at two signs that seemed to have recently been added to the bus stops wall. "No. Not one to hold a grudge."

Minato looked at the signs she was staring at so much. One read 'Any Sekirei must be accompanied by their Ashikabi and check any weapons with the security post at the entrance. No fighting will be allowed on Disney grounds. Signed, Mickey Mouse.' The bottom of the poster had a picture of Mickey waving around a stop sign like a mace.

The next was a list of credit cards not valid in the park. At the top of the list was the MBI gold card that had been issued to all the Sekirei.

Minato smiled. *At least some companies aren't going along with MBI. Disney's got few holdings here in Japan, but the company is obviously doing what little it can to inconvenience MBI. Pity this kind of thing hurts the Sekirei and Ashikabi more than the company behind the plan. Still, enforcing a no-fight zone outside of those set by MBI is a decent start. Now if only the international community gets off it's ass and does something too.*

He looked back at Haihane, and then to Akitsu, who smiled her normal small smile and nodded. His own lips quirked in a wry grin as he turned back to the gray haired Sekirei. "I take it you want to enter the park yes?"

Haihane nodded. "Free day, and no anime on. Natsuo-sama can't come, only have the MBI card."

Minato took in her clothing and realized the idea of a disguise, or even hiding her status, had just not occurred to the blue Sekirei. Most Sekirei he had met so far were the same way, almost inhumanly straightforward and without any real guile. Minato thought it was cute. He suddenly thought of a way to turn this to his advantage and help Haihane at the same time. "Listen, I think we can help each other."

Haihane looked up at him, head cocked quizzically. She raised a gauntlet-adorned hand, motioning him to continue. "Can you get out money using your card?"

"Some. Not a lot, only enough for food, about \$200."

Minato nodded, inwardly amused once again at the huge amount all Sekirei seemed to eat. "Two bus stops back there's a shopping complex. You can probably use your card to get cash out of a teller there. Pay for myself and my Sekirei, and I'll pose as your Ashikabi for the day. Okay?"

Haihane thought for a bit, looking at the group that had gathered behind Minato, searching unobtrusively for windy-bags. That accomplished, and not one for deep thoughts and worrying about the future or the past, she turned back and nodded eagerly.

Minato smiled. "Shiina could you take Yukari and Haihane here back to the complex we saw. Yukari, if there's a clothing store there see if you can find Haihane a new set of cloths that won't stand out so much."

Yukari nodded, always happy to play dress up with someone new. *And, she exulted I'm getting out of paying for my and Shiina's park tickets, which'll let me buy souvenirs later.*

Haihane looked at her, at all of them and then down at her own clothing. "What's wrong with what I'm wearing?"

Yukari smiled wickedly. "You stand out a bit too much like that. But don't worry this kind onee-san will teach you." The three left quickly and Minato and the others waited, planning what rides they wanted to go on first.

They were gone less than an hour, and when they came back Haihane was dressed in a long skirt and top, matching the clothing Yukari wore. It looked about as normal on her as a dress would on a lion yet Minato forbore to comment as Haihane seemed to be happy with it.

The group went up to the ticket seller, where Minato signed a waiver agreement with all their names listed on it. This informed the park that he personally would be liable for any damages (MBI cards were useless for that as well). Haihane also handed over her claw gauntlets, laughing hysterically as a security guard buckled under the weight of one of them. Still laughing she received a chit for them, just like a person would from a restaurant for their coats. She would be able to retrieve them when she exited the park.

Tickets paid for and formalities observed, the group entered the park, Kusano dragging Minato and Shiina behind her in her eagerness, and Haihane bounding forward as well, held back by a silently amused Akitsu. Katsuragi timidly brought up the rear with Yukari, but her eyes were coming alive as she looked around and saw the Disney characters stationed around the entrance.

For the rest of the day the odd group enjoyed the park to the full. Katsuragi and Kusano found the children's rides to be the most fun, while Haihane, Shiina and Minato enjoyed the thrill rides the most. Akitsu and Yukari enjoyed both types, and loved the plays going on in the streets, and just the atmosphere of the park as a whole.

Minato was not surprised to spot several plainclothes security guards following them almost from the get-go. This unobtrusive surveillance continued throughout the day, but Minato made certain nothing happened to cause the guards any alarm.

The only hitch in that plan came when they were in a free arcade area. The park had set this up as a place where companies could exhibit their games, getting a lot of free publicity. Haihane and surprisingly Katsuragi got into an extremely bloodthirsty match of Red v. Blue: Reach that almost ended with the two coming to blows when Katsuragi was able to beat Haihane two out of three times. Minato stepped in between them, challenging them both to back-to-back matches and diffusing the situation before the guards became concerned.

In the resulting games, he lost spectacularly in single player to both girls, which made Haihane extremely happy, and even put a smile on Katsuragi's usually gloomy face. In squad combat however, his unit schooled both of theirs handily. He went on to beat all comers in that mode for an hour, only stopping when Kusano dragged him away to join the others on a water ride.

At lunchtime, they set out a picnic lunch on the lawn before the castle, eating the food Akitsu and the others had prepared that morning. Minato let Haihane eat most of his portion. Akitsu had prepared Sekirei sized lunches, and despite his own admittedly large appetite these days, he wasn't up to eating it all.

Haihane spent the meal talking animatedly to Kusano, who she had formed an odd bond with over their shared enjoyment of anime shows. The others discussed the day's rides, choosing which ones they wanted to go on again after the meal.

Minato looked at Haihane, thinking. *I'm surprised by how childish Haihane is in many ways. It's almost as if her intellectual growth had all been towards combat, leaving the rest of her mind back in fourth grade. She's fun, but very weird, even discounting the whole combat junky Disciplinary Squad thing.*

Afterwards, the group went on more rides, going round and round the park until sun down. They left the park happy and exhausted from a long day of fun.

Haihane's face was split by a wide grin as they exited the park, having had more fun than she had ever enjoyed outside of a fight. She now clutched a huge Winnie the Pooh doll to her, and carried a bag containing key chains of all the Disney characters from Toy Story.

Minato had bought them for her, as well as a few souvenirs for his own Sekirei. Katsuragi had a bag containing a Minnie mouse pillow and sheet set, matching Kusano's new souvenir beaker and sticker sheet. Akitsu had gotten a t-shirt featuring the princess from Snow White on it, which had made both Yukari and Minato smile at the appropriateness of it for someone who wielded ice powers.

Yukari had bought Shiina a Donald duck outfit, and was looking forward to having him model it for her later, something that her older brother was trying very hard not to think about.

When they reached the bus stop, Haihane stopped and looked at them, her gaze lingering on Minato. He was fun to be around and a part of her wished that Natsuo took his Ashikabi duties as seriously, or with as much pleasure as Minato did. Minato was also more attractive to her than Natsuo, who was a bit of a prissy pussy in her opinion. In the end though, he was still her Ashikabi. "Today was fun. Doesn't change anything."

Minato smiled at her, feeling the same almost connection to her he had felt to Benitsubasa the night previous. "I had a lot of fun too, especially beating you at Red v. Blue." Haihane scowled, but her heart really wasn't in it. She had smoked him in single player anyway. "But today was simply that, it doesn't have to mean anything more. As long as it's an honest fight, any of my Sekirei will willingly take you on."

Haihane grinned at that, and they shook hands. She rubbed Kusano's head, nodded at the others, and left, bounding off into the distance. Minato turned, and the group boarded the bus that would take them back to the train station.

Yukari and Shiina broke off at the train station, waving good bye, and Minato and the others continued home.

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Behind them Haihane jumped back down to the ground near the receiving station, scratching her head sheepishly at having forgotten her weapons...

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For Akitsu and Minato however, the date wasn't over. As soon as it became apparent that more of them would be

coming than just Kusano and Akitsu, he had refused to allow her to count the trip to Tokyo Disney as her date. Instead, he had made plans at a fancy restaurant, and insisted on taking her out for the evening. Akitsu initially refused, not wanting Minato to spend that kind of money on her, and not really comfortable with going out altogether. Tsukiumi and Kazehana had both ganged up on the stay at home Sekirei however and Akitsu reluctantly agreed to the date.

It took Minato half an hour to prepare for the date, but it took Akitsu considerably longer. He was dressed in a good tuxedo, with a vest of dark red that he'd rented for the week, which he had already worn for his date with Tsukiumi.

When Akitsu at last came down, Minato's breath caught in his throat, and everyone present oohed and aahhed, coming forward to praise her choice of clothing.

Tsukiumi had been dazzling when the two of them had gone out, but she had chosen a more westernized dress, in keeping with her more outgoing personality. Kazehana had also been beautiful in her own lush sexual way.

Akitsu had always enjoyed more traditional clothing, and it set her features off amazingly well. For her date she was dressed in a stunning white kimono with a pattern of light bronze leaves around the edges and the hair ornament that Minato had bought her. Its silver color offset her own light tan hair perfectly, and the small red jewel at its base glinted, as her head turned, setting the small bangles to jangle softly. All in all, she epitomized the concept of Tenga Ryurai, elegant Japanese beauty.

Minato said nothing, letting his eyes show his appreciation and sheer pleasure at her appearance. She spent a few minutes gazing back into his eyes before coming forward to link her arm with his. The two said their farewells to the rest of the family and made their way out the door.

Minato groaned, reaching over Akitsu's blissfully slumbering form to grab his pager from the nightstand. Blearily he looked at the message printed there, and he began to curse. The message read "The last free Sekirei waits in the north for the one strong enough to claim it."

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end chapter. The action in the next chapter will make up for the down time in this one.

## **\*Chapter 11\*: Chapter 11 Initial salvo**

If Minato is a wimp, then Sekirei is still not mine

action galore in this chapter, though looking back on it i'm not happy with a few sections of this, they just seem a little rushed. Still i think it's good.

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### **Chapter 11 initial salvo**

"What the hell're you doing?!" Mere seconds after sending out his message, Minaka was knocked from his theatrical pose on a balustrade, nearly falling off the roof of MBI Tower. Behind him stood an angry woman dressed in a lab coat with spiky, close cut hair and a small scar on her face, highlighting her livid expression. Despite his brush with death his voice was playful as he addressed her, "Ah, Takami-chan."

"Don't you dare '-chan' me! What the hell do you think you're doing!?"

Minaka scrambled up onto his feet, laughing madly. "The imperial capital has become too calm of late. As the game master I must correct this. This event will get the players excited again. After all, it'll be the last act before the main event begins."

"You are a fucking mad man you know."

"Ah but you knew that when you slept with me. I am the same now as I ever was." Takami cursed again, but didn't answer. She'd known for months that her attempts to curb Minaka's excesses had failed miserably. The only thing she could do now was lessen the chaos, and pray that the Sekirei plan did not get completely out of control....

"Speaking of sex is there any chance" Takami's fist impacted with his groin and she stomped off, leaving him moaning around his private pain on the rooftop. She had a call to make.

Across the city, Ashikabi received the message from MBI and had various reactions. Most cursed, knowing that they had no chance to wing the last one, while others were sad that the last one would probably not have a choice in his or her true Ashikabi because of the message. The more powerful Ashikabi had various reactions....

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All his associates knew Ise Higa as a young man who calculated his every move very carefully both in the world of business and in his personal life. He had not been given control of his families Japanese assets through nepotism alone (though that did play a major role). He had earned it, and the pharmaceutical business and their other holdings had all done well under his control. He had also swiftly become one of the most powerful Ashikabi in the game, having a total of seventeen Sekirei (even with the defeat and apparent defection of Katsuragi, the ungrateful slut) under his personal control, and a further fourteen (not counting the dead Sekirei and Tatsuo) allied to his cause through various means.

Higa was not out to beat his opponents in the game, that was not his goal. No, Higa was a businessman, not a general, a leader or even a gamesman. He simply saw the game as a means to an end, the end being taking Minaka's place on top of the mountain. What he did there of course would be entirely dependent on his own wishes. Higa was ambitious, and saw no need to limit his aspirations.

This was the personality of the man who read the message sent to all Ashikabi by Minaka. After a brief perusal of the message he looked up at his personal assistant Kakizaki, standing by for orders. "Don't bother relaying this to the others. Starting tonight, take six of the Sekirei and start searching the north for the last one. It will be either #3 Kazehana or #6 Homura."

Kakizaki, Higa's right hand man, nodded. He owned a Sekirei, #22 Kocho, who had some of the same skill set that Matsu gave Minato access to. Because of her, Higa had known for a few months that the host Kagari was in fact the Sekirei of fire. However, he had not moved openly to acquire Kagari, as he had no way to calculate how the demon of the north would react to a direct attack on one of her tenants. He had read reports about her power, and had no desire to rouse a sleeping dragon.

Instead he had attempted subterfuge several weeks back, funding an attempt to drug and kidnap Kagari, but his plan had failed due to his pawns failure to follow orders. He had selected two college girls who he'd fooled around with a few months back to drug Kagari. Instead of returning with him as a captive the two girls, more than a little buzzed

themselves, had instead simply had fun with him, taking pictures and videos of the drugged pretty boy before dumping him off back home.

The two girls in question had since been expelled from Umihara University, their tuition seemingly disappearing into the computer system and their character called into question from public posting of the pictures. Higa did not suffer incompetence or failure lightly.

Kazehana was another Sekirei known to be difficult to wing, despite being the first let out in the second stage. He had in fact attempted to court her several months ago, but the older woman had rejected his advances and eluded his forces, going into hiding so well that no one was able to find her. (Higa was of course in error on that point, but Kocho had not yet passed on to him that she was no longer able to access MBI's network since the start of the third stage, and thus had no way of knowing that Kazehana had been winged)

Kakizaki nodded but felt bold enough to ask, "Are you certain this is a good idea? We haven't had much success in the north since Sahashi Minato appeared. We could lose face among our allies if we suffer further losses."

Higa considered his input for a minute before rejecting it. "Tatsuo's death was his own fault; he should never have upped the ante by pulling out a weapon. However, we will use three of our allies and only two of our own. Send Yui and her Sekirei as well as Akira and his. That way, our allies will share the risk, and our force will be stronger."

Kakizaki nodded. "Do you also wish myself and number 11 involved?"

Higa again thought for a moment before nodding. "Yes, but only for the first few days. I want her to concentrate on weakening Sahashi from now on. Also, station a lookout at the club where Homura works, that way we can strike at the most opportune moment."

Kakizaki nodded, not showing any of his own thoughts about the plan. However, he was becoming concerned that his employer was underestimating Sahashi Minato. He knew better than to voice that thought however. *And really, with the numbers advantage we can bring to bear, Minato is little more than an irritant away from the impenetrable fortress of Izumo House.*

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To the west, Nishi Sanada sipped reflectively on his morning beer. He wasn't the type to force himself on a Sekirei, far from it in fact. However, he was interested in witnessing the event that Minaka had set up. It would give him another chance to scope out the competition before the fourth stage began. He turned to one of his Sekirei, Kuzuri, a girl as tanned as himself. "Hey Kuzuri, when you're done eating, could you get Barei up for me? I think she and I are going to go on a bit of an adventure."

Kuzuri looked up from her breakfast ramen and nodded, slurping up a long noodle. "Hai."

Sanada lost it, launching himself at her. "Aw, you're so cute. All of my little babes are so cute!"

"Master, I'm still eating, at least wait until Ahhn!" Kuzuri soon stopped talking, and it was a long while until Sanada remembered what he had been thinking.

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To the south, Hayato passed his phone over to Mutsu. He let him read the message before asking, "Any chance we can sneak in and grab her?"

Mutsu shook his head quickly. "I honestly don't think we could 'sneak' in, and I know Miya will react violently to any aggressive attempts anywhere near Izumo House. Besides this would be a violation of our agreement with Sahashi." Hayato grunted irritably, but nodded acknowledging the point. Mutsu decided to reinforce the point. "It might not be a 'her' in any case. It might be a 'him'. The defender of Sekirei, the fire user may be the one the message is referring to."

Hayato blanched. Having Mutsu was one thing; he was like a big brother that Hayato could tease and order around, which was really cool. *But I don't want another male Sekirei. So the question is, "Do you think that might happen, that number 1 will take part of any fighting?"*

"No." Mutsu was adamant. "I don't think anyone is foolish enough to force the issue, and she will not step one foot away from Izumo house. So long as nothing threatens it or anyone living there in her presence she will not take action." *Though if she does, the result will be deadly for whoever was idiotic enough to provoke her.* The memory of Miya sinking a whole fleet of warships from over a hundred miles away with a few swings of her sword during the

invasion of Karikiri Island was an image burned indelibly into his mind. Her power was simply on a completely different level than any other Sekirei.

"Good. In that case, maybe we should just sit on the sidelines for this one. You, me and maybe one other should go and see what happens. We won't try to find the last one or start anything we'll simply observe the event from the outside." *That way, I'll be on hand to turn anything that comes up to my advantage but not be instigating anything myself. It will also give me a good idea of Sahashi's abilities as an Ashikabi.* "But I do want everyone's training stepped up. The fourth stage'll start soon after the last one is winged, and I want to be ready to win big."

Mutsu nodded agreement, relieved he was being so sensible about this, as well as thinking past the self-gratification of adding one more Sekirei to his collection and seeing the big picture. *Now if he would only stop trying to dress us all up in cosplay attire whenever he's bored, I'll be happy.*

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Despite his anger, Minato had no intention of waking Akitsu just yet. The two of them had been up most of the night after all. Though even now the sight of her naked body, white skin luminescent in the darkened room, breasts moving gently in time with her breathing and face set in a content smile, made him almost lose his reason.

All his wives had this effect on him, but it was as if the act of sleeping next to them heightened the effect. Waking up next to them continually made Minato realize this was not a dream, but real, that they loved him as much as he did them and that they were really together.

Unfortunately, he had more serious business on his agenda today.

He quietly left, closing the bedrooms door behind him. He made his way downstairs to the kitchen where he found Kazehana making breakfast dressed only in an apron and panties as Tsukiumi, dressed normally, set the table, glowering at the older woman occasionally.

Kazehana adored getting a rise out of him and was by far the most open of his wives in showing her affection for him outside of the safe confines of the bedroom and the master bathroom. Akitsu would willingly do anything anywhere in the house with Minato so long as they knew the 'younger' members of their family could not interrupt. Tsukiumi refused to do more than kiss lightly anywhere but the master bedroom and bathroom but was **extremely** affectionate within those bounds. Kazehana on the other hand was very open with her affections and more than willing to have a quickie anywhere or to cosplay anything to get a rise out of him. They had started the private portion of their date on a roof near the club where they met Benitsubasa, and the times she joined him for lunch almost always developed into quick passionate trysts on the nearest flat rooftop (and once balancing on a girder right above the construction site).

Now, Kazehana giggled as she noticed him standing in the doorway. "Breakfast will be ready shortly Minato, or would you like dessert first?" She twitched her rear at him enticingly, which would normally have the same effect on him as waving a red flag at a bull. Exerting his willpower however Minato shook his head clearing it of the image that sentence had conjured. *Cream and strawberries and chocolate no, bad libido, down libido not now*, bringing his mind back to his present conundrum.

Tsukiumi looked at him shrewdly. Of all his Sekirei, she was the best at reading his emotions through his body language. Perhaps because she understood his warrior spirit more than the others, who all sometimes treated him as if he was some fragile vase that needed to be guarded. "What's wrong, my husband?"

Minato shivered. Just like his wives, he **really** enjoyed it when one of them made possessive comments like that.

He walked over, enfolding her in a hug as he explained the message on his phone. Immediately both Kazehana and Tsukiumi became serious. "What are we going to do?" Tsukiumi asked, arms still around Minato's waist as she stared into his face, worry clear in her eyes.

"Nothing until tonight, we'll start patrolling our territory more aggressively then. I have some things I need to research before we take offensive action."

Tsukiumi was all for offensive action but, "Against which set of enemies are you talking about? Higa and those allied with him, or MBI, or Hayato, or simply against anyone who shows up to force themselves onto this last free Sekirei the message mentions? I thought you said we weren't strong enough to take direct action against Higa or MBI."

"I was thinking of Higa actually. He's the only one who we know that has, without doubt, abused his Sekirei. It stands to reason he'll make a move for this last Sekirei, so I think it's time he feels the pinch more." He gently disengaged from Tsukiumi, moving over to sit down as she did likewise. "Now, put yourself in our enemy's shoes."

Kazehana made a moue of distaste but complied. Minato was constantly pushing his Sekirei to expand their minds, and each had shown a flare in different specialties.

Tsukiumi's specialty was tactical thinking. She had come up with several techniques for herself and for the others, as well as showing the most flare for combination attacks, and had been given several books on tactics and strategy to share with Akitsu.

Akitsu in turn had outpaced everyone else, even Matsu and Minato, in information analysis and long-term strategy, especially in thinking up long term threat analysis of the Disciplinary Squad and the other powerful Ashikabi. Her latest job was to look at logistics, imagining a time when the city would be wholly dominated by the Sekirei game, with everything else shut down, and what their needs in terms of supplies would be to offset that. She and Miya had already begun to hoard supplies for this eventuality.

Kazehana, besides bringing a lot of combat experience into the group, specialized in thinking like their enemies, especially individuals she had personally met like Higa. It wasn't something she liked, but she was able to do it far better than the others. "If I'm Higa, I want to recoup my losses from a few weeks ago, and would also like to make the north, i.e. us, lose some power in return for losing Katsuragi and that scumbag a few weeks back. Higa likes to think he's driven by cold facts and calculation but he's really an egotist. When I turned him down I made him look bad, so he continued to try and find me, getting several of his Sekirei and a few of his men injured in the process. If he really thought in terms of facts and calculation he would have given up chasing me almost immediately. He'll fool himself into thinking that his move will be a calculated one, but it won't be. We stopped him, we cost him an ally and one of his personal Sekirei. That's something his ego won't be able to stand."

Minato ground his teeth remembering Katsuragi's rape at Higa's hands as Kazehana continued. "I also think Hayato will want to do the same. He may have not liked Yomi much, but he's the kind who feels loyal to his Sekirei and treats them well. He won't start anything because of our agreement, but if something does happen he'll try to take advantage of it if he can gain enough to offset breaking our agreement. But if it helps Higa as well he won't do it."

Minato looked at Tsukiumi who nodded. "Matsu found several notes referencing fights between Hayato and Higa's Sekirei, and they both seem to hate one another. Akitsu thinks it's a personal thing, not like Higa's business rivalry with MBI, but we can't tell what it is."

Kazehana went on. "Sanada doesn't seem like the type to forcibly wing someone from Matsu's reports, though he may put himself in a position to watch in case the last one reacts to him."

Minato nodded approvingly. "But would Higa use his own Sekirei and take the risk of weakening himself or use his so called allies to do his dirty work?"

"Allies," Kazehana and Tsukiumi spoke at the same. Kazehana elaborated. "The three of us have actually talked about this. We all came to the conclusion that Higa is more of a user than a leader or even a partner to any of his subordinates and Sekirei. He considers his Sekirei property he owns, pieces in the game. It all ties into his ego. He'll certainly use the ones he can most afford to lose before risking those Sekirei personally bonded to him from now on because they're of lesser value to him personally."

With his construction work and taking his Sekirei on dates Minato had not had time to look at the information Matsu had collected. He was thrilled that the three of them had looked at it, as well as the fact that their information confirmed his initial plan. He showed this now by kissing both Kazehana and Tsukiumi so hard they practically swooned.

After they recovered he said, "In that case, I think we need to limit the so called pieces he can field. I need to go talk to Matsu."

Tsukiumi grimaced, and immediately volunteered to go with him. She hadn't forgotten the way Matsu had winged herself on him behind their back, and was never happy to let Minato alone with her. It was no longer worry for him so much as worry about her influence on him: the last thing Tsukiumi wanted was Minato to become as perverted as Matsu (Kazehana was bad enough, but she at least did not bring *objects* into their relationship, and knew better than to flirt with him too outrageously in front of Musubi or Kusano-though everyone and everywhere else was fair game, something Tsukiumi had become resigned to). She and Matsu simply had incompatible personalities.

Minato realized this, and hugged Tsukiumi to him harder, nuzzling into her neck and wordlessly reaffirming their bond. "Don't worry, this will be purely a business discussion. But what are your plans for the day?"

Kazehana put the finishing touches on three boxed lunches and smiled at her husband. "We three sisters are going to

go on a picnic. We have some things to talk about. Musubi is already practicing with Miya, and Kusano is watching TV over there with Uzume."

"Alright, we'll reconvene here at around six to go over our plans for the night. I have a few errands I wanted to do today anyway." Tsukiumi and Kazehana agreed, so long as he took Musubi along for protection. He acquiesced with poor grace to this command, and kissed each on the cheek before exiting the house.

Outside Minato looked around the silent neighborhood and sighed sadly. It just didn't seem right not to walk out the door and be greeted by one of the neighbors greting him or complaining about the 'mysterious lights'. *Ever since the start of the third stage, more and more people who can are leaving the city.* He'd noticed an even sharper reduction in the city's population the past few days, as Sekirei fights, driven by the cash prizes for victory being given out as part of the revamped stage three, became more and more common. *Even when we went to the park yesterday there wasn't nearly as many people as there should be on a Friday.*

This section of the city had been among the hardest hit. At least two-thirds of the houses surrounding Izumo house were now empty. The only ones who had stayed were those who could not afford to leave and those with the most to lose, college students like Yukari who had no one back home and business owners/workers who had no means of support if they left, or were working directly or indirectly with MBI. *It still scares me to think about how much power Minaka is arrogantly showing off here. This is supposed to be Tokyo, the capital of Japan, a major trade center with China, the U.S. and other countries, and this one company has taken full control of it, its infrastructure and its populace.*

*All the world powers have to be involved in this in some way. So if, and at this point it is still a big if, I take him out what is going to happen next? And why the hell are the other countries going along with this game? I can't believe China, Russia or America is happy with what's going on. America especially, this is something their bleeding heart democrats/commies would hate.* He shook his head banishing that train of thought. *Forget it for now and concentrate on what you can control.* He made his way into Izumo house, greeting Miya and Musubi on his way up to Matsu's room.

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To say Matsu was surprised by how serious Minato was when he came into her room would be an understatement. She was almost scared by how intense he was.

Minato quickly informed her of the message and ordered her to pull up the list of intensive and long term patients of every hospital in the city. It had taken him a few days to think of this, but the clues had been there for a while.

Akitsu had said it a few weeks ago, that Higa may be threatening an Ashikabi to force the Sekirei to obey him, and using her secretly in a way that was against the rules of the 'game'. What better way than to pay for their hospital care if they were already in need of it, especially with his companies connections to various hospitals in the city. MBI only paid for the Sekirei's needs after all, not the Ashikabi. If their cards were used for things that were not connected to their bearers, they were cancelled.

After Minato explained why he was looking for it Matsu spent about fifteen minutes pulling up that information from around the city.

After they had these names and profiles pulled up on Matu's system, the two spent the next three hours going through the list, eliminating names and faces. First, they eliminated anyone over thirty. All the Sekirei were young, and Minato thought it unlikely that any would bond with someone older than that. They also eliminated the patients who had a date of dismissal or decreasing care, as would be case from an accident patient who was slowly recovering. Either would end Higa's control over them. They then narrowed it further by looking at methods of payment and guest lists, eliminating a large portion of the numbers remaining due to ongoing family connections paying for their care.

Of the thirty names remaining throughout the city, 27 were male and three were female. Minato had Matsu print this list out, and took it with him to study more closely. He thanked Matsu and told her she may be needed at some point that night.

He left, rolling his eyes at the lecherous laughter this statement evoked.

Downstairs he ran into Miya and Musubi coming in from training in the yard. Minato told Musubi to change to street cloths as they would be going out. *I may be unhappy with my wives 'suggestion' that I need protection I ain't stupid enough to ignore it!*

He then went in search of Kusano and Uzume. "Uzume-san are you doing anything today?"

Uzume looked up from playing card with Kusano, who also looked up, grinning widely behind a large pile of betting chips. Both Sekirei cocked their head to the side in unison, slightly freaking Minato out. "Not, really, why?"

"I was wondering if you would like to join me for a shopping trip. I need a woman's opinion on something." Seeing Uzume hesitate he wheedled, "I'll buy you lunch." Uzume nodded, before putting her cards down and leaving to go get ready.

Kusano pouted. "Can I come too papa?"

Minato shook his head. "No, I want you to go over the homework Matsu-san assigned to you. Remember? You said last night you would finish it before tonight, so that you and Musubi could stay up late and watch that movie you wanted to see on Sunday." Kusano pouted but nodded obediently, leaving to get her homework and start on it right away. Minato smiled, and kissed the little girl on her cheek in passing, causing her to giggle as she ran off.

Musubi came down, and the three of them left, the two girls chatting happily the entire way to the train station. They followed Minato, exiting the train in central Tokyo, near the biggest shopping district in the city.

This part of the city had felt the population pinch as well, though the shops were still doing a brisk business. Minato and the two women moved through the streets, getting wary glances from all around them. Everyone had learned to be cautious of extremely beautiful women of late.

Minato stopped at a small shop with a small, understated sign above the door. Uzume blinked as she recognized La Oudinaire, one of the most expensive and upscale jewelry stores in the city.

Musubi went next door to a bookstore advertising a manga sale, as Uzume and Minato went inside. Minato immediately walked up to a computer screen set into a display case, and began to punch buttons while Uzume looked around in awe.

The display cases showed various pieces, and even without knowing much about jewelry, she could tell that each was unique. In one display case, dozens of rings adorned with jewels glimmered in the overhead light. In another were row upon row of earrings and in a third jewelry sets glistened, each exhibit set apart in silken cushions of unremitting black.

*I doubt construction work could pay for even a pair of earrings from this place. What are we doing here?* Uzume carefully did not meet the slightly accusing and very suspicious gazes of the two saleswomen or the harder stare of the guard by the door. *Esssh, talk about a stranger in a strange land.*

Minato waved her over to look at the computer screen. He murmured in a low voice. "This store just started doing custom jewelry using laser planning and cutting. Customers can actually design the ring themselves. It costs slightly more than buying a off the shelf ring but it's worth it if you want a unique piece."

What Uzume saw on the screen took her breath away. On the screen were three rings of the same design, but very different details. Each ring was a solitaire, its face centered on a small jewel set into a large circular silver face, which elongated and entwined with a gold band to form the ring. One jewel was a dark blue sapphire, one was a clear diamond, and the third was a deep purple garnet. On the left of the jewel, engraved on each ring face was the kanji symbol for 'soul'.

The symbol on the other side of the jewel was different on each ring. On the jewel with the diamond was the kanji for 'wind'. On the ring with the purple garnet was the symbol for 'ice'. On the last, the ring with the dark blue sapphire was the symbol of 'water'.

Minato stood next to her, and as Uzume looked at the rings he had designed, he looked young and insecure for one of the few times since she had met him. "Do, do you think they'll like them?"

Uzume tore her eyes from the engraving that would go on the inside of the rings, which read 'Unwavering devotion, never-ending love' in kanji. She nodded wordlessly, stunned by the beauty of the words and the images before her.

Minato seemed to sag in relief, and promptly printed out the images and requirements from the computer, taking the printout over to the cashier. The cashier ran it through his system quoted a number, and Minato took out his checkbook.

As they exited the shop, Uzume felt bold enough to ask, "Minato, how exactly are you paying for those?"

Minato shrugged. "Most of my remaining savings and almost all of my earnings from my construction work. I think it's worth it though." Most of the money he had made from selling his some-what legally gotten gains from Constantinople were now gone. A chunk of it had gone to paying his medical bill after his run-in with Karasuba. More than half of the remainder had gone to buying a backup generator and various computers and screens, which he would give to Matsu once they arrived (he had bought them online from outside the city from several small scale computer stores and they would be delivered to the inn) to create a command and communications center. The remainder was now almost entirely gone, spent on his wives rings.

"But won't you have to pay more once they're done? The salesman said it was a two payment system, and I know you said you wouldn't accept cash rewards for winning Sekirei battles."

"Ah, but they don't know I have no more collateral." Uzume laughed aloud. "Maybe I will once the rings are finished, or perhaps something else will come up. I just wanted to get the order in now, before the fourth stage began."

Later, Uzume sat across from Minato at a café. Musubi had taken some money and gone to a fast food restaurant where they served super-size portions, but Minato wasn't hungry, and Uzume hated fast food.

She picked at her sandwich and salad combo, glancing across at Minato, who, now they were away from the jewelry shop, had gone back to emitting rage and sadness in equal parts as he had on and off since this morning. She watched as he flipped through a packet of printouts. She couldn't see the contents but they seemed to be the source of his depression. "Uh, Minato, what's got you in such a bad mood? I thought you would be happy having ordered the rings and all."

Minato wordlessly took out his pager, handing it across to her with the message from MBI still showing. "That is part of what's bothering me. The other part is dealing with Higa."

Uzume's face had clouded as she read the message, and it shut down completely at his last sentence. Ever since Katsuragi had moved in, she had known how vile Higa truly was, but hadn't been able to see a way out of her own predicament, her desperate concern for her Ashikabi warring with her basic decency.

"Right now, I'm trying to figure out who the bastard is controlling and if I can do anything about it. He owns a pharmaceutical company and has dealings with every hospital in the city other than the two owned wholesale by MBI, so Matsu and I thought that would be a good place to start. I think I've narrowed it down to two people out of thirty who have the correct profile, though I'll have Akitsu look the list over later just to make sure. It makes for grim reading."

Uzume made certain her voice was under control as she looped a loose piece of cloth around her hand under the table, hardening it to a point. If push came to shove, she'd kill Minato right now to defend her Ashikabi. She would have to kill not only one of her best friends, but all of them through him in order to protect her secret and her Ashikabi. It made her want to weep, but if push came to shove she could do that after the deed was done. "O-oh, why is it bothering you?" *Oh yes, cry a lot and maybe drink myself into an early grave.*

Minato put the two pieces of paper on the table between them indicating each as he put it down. "This first is tragic and kinda hits close to home for me. He's an ex-member of the JSDF, and apparently is dying from some kind of slow acting chemical agent he was accidentally exposed to in South Korea. A good man, judging by his officers and sergeants reports, he's been in the Tokyo Prefectural for a few months while they try to cure him."

He put another paper on the table, and it took all of Uzume's power to scream at the injustice of the universe as she prepared to kill her best friends. "This is a young woman who developed a major blood related illness, which is an entirely new type. The records of the hospital say there's no cure, and even lists the things they've tried."

Uzume stilled her cloth knife a bare inch from Minato's stomach as his words registered on her suddenly panic-stricken mind. "What do you mean no cure?"

Minato shrugged still staring down at the paper. "It lists all the different types of medicine they've tried, the two surgeries she's undergone, nothing seems to have worked. It's a pity, she seems to be a nice girl; no family left, but she donated their house to a local philanthropist group, and seems to take care of the younger patients on days when she has enough energy to move around. That's in a personal note added by one of her doctors. It breaks my heart to think about how someone like these two would react to knowing his or her Sekirei is being used to hurt others."

Uzume was beyond shock now, unable to even concentrate enough to keep control of her cloth spear. *No cure, no cure, but then why, no cure, but then why I have I been, no cure.* Her mind was so frazzled from what she was hearing, that all her sacrifices might be in vain, that Higa had lied that eventually her Ashikabi would get better, and

used her for nothing and that her Ashikabi would die regardless that she blurted out "But-but wouldn't she thank her Sekirei for doing whatever it took to get her treatment? I mean, as long as she's alive doesn't, isn't that the most important thing, couldn't they come up with a cure somehow?"

Minato looked up at her, finally noticing his companion's strange level of distress. He very carefully did not say *oh shit, it's her. Brown hair and a big bust with long legs, why didn't any of us put together Uzume's appearance with that of the cloth wielder?*

He leaned back slowly, looking up at the sky as he formed his reply, knowing that his life and the lives of those he loved depended on what would happen in the next few minutes. "I suppose from the Sekirei's point of view that may seem the case at first. But there are some things that are worth more than one's own life, principles being one of them. I think if the Ashikabi ever found out that her Sekirei was hurting and threatening others just to keep him or her alive, it would drive a permanent wedge between them. It may even force him or her to reject the Sekirei entirely."

Uzume shook even more, emotional walls crumbling as her inner thoughts and fears were given voice. "But if, if she never finds out, won't she just be happy and not question it?" Even to her it sounded shrill and lame as she said it.

Minato shook his head again. "Something like that can't be hidden forever and the longer it is, the worse it will be. I remember hearing a story once when I was in Constantinople. There was a family of Buddhists, staunch pacifists, living between two contested streets at the very start of the rioting. They moved out, but could not get out of the city, and the father died during the fighting. The mother was badly injured, and taken to a hospital. But she would have been left for dead if not for the young boy. He convinced the aid workers to take of her. He did so by first using his body."

Uzume gasped but Minato went on inexorably. "He became the personal slave to the UN workers who helped her, doing anything they asked, anything. When the workers became tired of him and demanded money he joined a local militia and took part in the fighting, using this as cover to loot some of the local shops and houses. After a few months, his mother was able to leave the hospital and they began to try and leave the city with the other refugees. He tried to hide his deeds as he kept doing them to pay for their travels. But his mother found out what he had been forced to do for her, and disowned him, for going against their religion's beliefs."

Uzume looked at him in shock. "I'm not saying I agree with her decision to do so, but I can see her point of view. If someone you cared for, someone you loved debased himself/herself and went against everything you taught them and believed in for your benefit, how would it make you feel? How could you trust or relate to him or her ever again? How could you look **yourself** in the mirror and know you're the reason for his or her dishonor? There is no way that the trust can be regained, no way the bond can be true again. Not unless you're the one to make it stop and set them back on the right path."

By the end of the story, tears were slowly leaking down Uzume's cheeks, and she had begun to rock back and forth in her chair, all her worst fears and thoughts given voice right in front of her in a way she couldn't deny or ignore. *Chiho will never forgive me, Chiho's a pacifist, she'll be disgusted by what I've done. Chiho will reject me, what have I done, what have I done?*

Minato looked at her, keeping his face as calm and kind as he could. "Is there something you want to say Uzume?"

Uzume looked at him from under her hair, tears cascading from her eyes as she spoke two words. "Help me!"

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That evening the residents of Izumo house (minus Kagari, who was asleep, still pulling double shifts at his club to make up for time lost while sick) and Minato's family, (minus Kusano, who was watching TV after finishing her homework) listened as Uzume explained her situation.

She told them how Higa had controlled her, holding her Ashikabi's continued health over her head. Chiho was a young girl who had been sickly since birth with a rare blood related disease, which required constant care and had gotten worse in the past two years. Her parents had died when she was young, and she had no other relatives willing to foot the ongoing bill for her care. She and Uzume had met when Uzume tried to hide in the hospital grounds from her pursuers, having escaped from MBI after her controller had been fired for being too friendly with her. Something about Chiho drew Uzume to her, and within a few days, they bonded. Uzume moved into Izumo house soon after, and went to see Chiho every day. Her efforts to cheer up Chiho were why she had so many costumes which had led to her first job.

It didn't take Higa long at all to find out their connection and start taking over Chiho's care, and with it, Uzume, who had been trying to pay for her care by doing kids shows using her costume making skills. Thereafter, she became the

Veiled Sekirei, removing bonded Sekirei from the game on orders passed to her by Higa's right hand man, Kakizaki.

As the Veiled Sekirei, she had hunted down several Sekirei and put them out of the game before she tried to hunt down Kuno only to run into Akitsu. She'd tried to fight Kazehana before that only to be completely outclassed. She apologized for attacking Akitsu and Kuno, and for fighting with Kazehana weeks ago, who had recognized her from Izumo house at the time.

As she finished, Minato glared at Kazehana. He was angry that she had kept Uzume's secret from him, but understood why she had. *After all, her loyalty to her friends is one of the things I like most about her. But it does make me wonder if she's keeping any more secrets. I'll have to talk to her about that tomorrow.* Kazehana winced, she knew she had a conversation coming, and that it would be unpleasant in the extreme.

Tsukiumi was all business however having a vested interest in finding out who the last un-winged Sekirei was. She believed it was Homura, who she had mentioned to Minato before but hadn't seen since she joined him. "I realize that this is personally reprehensible to you Minato as it is to us all, but what exactly are we going to do about it? And are we also going to search for and help the last free Sekirei?"

Minato leaned back, looking up at the ceiling thoughtfully as Miya remonstrated with Uzume about how she could have come to her for help at any time rather than undertake such underhanded tasks. *Tsukiumi's right. I want to free Uzume but how do I do that and help this last free Sekirei that's out there? And can we even help Chiho-san?* He voiced this last question, hoping that one of the others had an answer for it.

Matsu shook her head sadly. "Her disease is so far advanced that no treatment currently on the market or being researched would be able to save her. MBI may have something but with our relationship to them being so bad, there's no way they would help us. I wish we could help her, but the best we could do is get her out from under Higa's control."

Akitsu, ever the cool one, spoke up. "Ahh...But if we remove Chiho-san from the hospital, won't it hasten her death? We need to think how to help her before removing her."

Uzume paled at this cavalier reference to her Ashikabi's demise, and Kazehana enfolded her in a comforting hug. Miya however, was silent for a moment, before looking at Minato speculatively. "I believe we may have a way." She turned to Matsu. "Go get the jinki that you stole."

Matsu looked shocked and was going to protest, but Miya's demon appeared and glared at her. She scampered off in fright, and returned moments later with a large crystal, about three hands long and one wide. It seemed to glow with an inner light, which increased as Miya took it from her.

Miya looked into the jewel for a few moments, silently communicating with it. She looked up at the others. "A jinki allows certain features of the ship to be used outside of it. One of those is a low level stasis field. I think I can use this to stop the growth of Chiho-sans disease where it is now. It will not heal her, but it will keep her alive. If we can bring more jinki's together and use them in tandem, then we can produce even better effects, possibly even somehow reversing the disease, though I don't know how."

Minato stared at the jewel in her hand for a few seconds, rubbing the bridge of his nose thoughtfully. *We're back to the problem of how to accomplish both our goals at once. Time is of the essence for one of these goals, and may be for both. I think I'll have to split our forces, which is normally not a good idea, but it can't be helped.* "I think we're going to split into two groups. One group will patrol our territory and either hinder other search groups or help this last Sekirei that's still out there. Uzume, do you think you can continue to act as if you're following Higa's command for the night?"

Uzume nodded. "I guess bro, but what are you going to do?"

Matsu handed her one of the extra pagers Minato had bought all those weeks ago (it seemed like a lifetime but had been little under a month). "Once we free your Ashikabi and have her safely back here, you can turn on the other searchers Higa sends. That way we'll have the advantage of surprise."

He looked at all of his Sekirei in turn. "Musubi, Tsukiumi. You two will be the search team. You both are the most offensive minded" *and least subtle* "of my Sekirei. I think you're the best choice." Musubi and Tsukiumi visibly brightened at his praise.

"Akitsu, you and Kusano will come with me. Kazehana will stay close, but will only come in to transport Chiho-san back here as fast as possible."

Everyone looked at him in shock. They all knew he had said several times that he didn't want to involve Kusano in any fighting. Minato smiled at their confusion. He motioned them to follow him and they moved from Izumo houses back yard into the family room of Minato's house.

Kusano was watching an educational cartoon as they came in. Minato reached out, pulling the young girl into a surprise hug. "And how are you this evening princess?"

Kusano squealed happily wriggling in his arms and kissing his cheek. "Papa! I finished all of the homework Miya and Matsu nee-san assigned to me."

"Good girl. If you do well enough on your homework for a week, I'll take you out to the park for a picnic next weekend." Kusano nodded rapidly as the others smiled at this familial scene, still wondering why he was thinking of having her accompany the breakout team. He put the girl down and nodded to them. "And how have your practices with your power gone? Can you control your power from a greater distance now?"

Kusano grinned. "Hai, though I can't grow plants as fast if I do more than five at a time from more than" she paused, before subtly looking over at Kazehana who silently mouthed the words and she continued "two hundred feet."

"Excellent. How would you like to help us out on a little job tonight?" Kusano responded by hugging him even harder, happy that she was going to be useful to her Ashikabi-papa.

Minato put her down and left her there, telling her he would call her in a few hours time and they would set off. The others joined him in the kitchen and he outlined his plan. "Akitsu goes in and causes a distraction at the front of the hospital. Matsu finds out what room Chiho is in before we leave and Kusano uses her power to create a plant ladder to get the two of us up there, and leaves behind some plants to slow down pursuit if we have to. We go in, convince her to come with us, and leave. "

Akitsu, Musubi, and Kazehana nodded, though the latter was not happy about her limited role in the plan. Tsukiumi however was skeptical of breaking their numbers up, something that tactically speaking was almost never a good idea. "What happens if either group runs into something they can't handle?"

Minato nodded. "My group will have Kazehana in close support, but you and Musubi will be on your own. I'll rely on you Tsukiumi to know when **not** to as much as when **to** fight. You'll also be able to use your norito's if you feel the need." He smiled whimsically. "Though I would like to see them the first time you use them. I wish we could enlist Seo to help, but I don't think we could find him in time to help, and we need to do this as quickly as possible."

Tsukiumi nodded eagerly as did Musubi.

Miya shook her head in disgust at the thought of Seo, knowing that Minato was correct in not trusting him. She could threaten him again, but his work under duress would be sub-par at best. Besides, she already knew who the last un-winged Sekirei was. She kept it a secret however, because she did not want to alienate the person by spreading their secret around. Good friends were hard to find, after all. She looked across at Minato and that as yet unnamed feeling rose up, making her speak up. "If," they all looked the landlady and she went on, "If you need any help, please don't hesitate to call. After all" she went on hurriedly not certain why she was trying to justify herself "Usume-san is one of my tenants, and I'm willing to pitch in and help if needed." Minato nodded thankfully but responded with the hope that her help wasn't needed.

For the next two hours, Matsu researched the hospital, finding out in what room Chiho was in the building. She also accessed an MBI spy satellite and trained it on the building, giving them real time data on its environs. She showed this to Minato and his group, pointing out where two Sekirei were patrolling around the building. More were probably stationed inside somewhere.

Minato and his Sekirei waited until around ten, and then moved out. Uzume had left earlier to meet up with Higa's search party, having received orders over the phone from her handler.

Minato nearly collided with Kagari as the other man was exiting Izumo house, dressed in his 'work clothes'. He grinned at the handsome silver haired club-host, who he hadn't seen for a few days. Whatever had been slipped the other man, it had knocked him on his ass for a week and given him debilitating migraines for even longer. It was only in the past six days that he had been back to normal, and he had been working double shifts to make up for time lost while sick. "Yo Kagari, off to another hard 'day' at work?"

Kagari returned his smile before shifting his gaze to the cell phone in his hand, "soon as I find out why I have over a thousand messages on my cell phone, yes. After all, I have a reputation to keep." He blinked as the other Sekirei

came out after Minato, and his eyebrow rose in surprise as Minato kissed each in turn flooding the neighborhood with light. He watched Musubi and Tsukiumi bounding away over the rooftops before asking "What're you all up to now? Not another breakout I trust?"

Minato pulled his pager out and showed him the message from that morning. "Tsukiumi and Musubi are going to see if we can help this last Sekirei mentioned here, while the rest of us are going to throw a bit of a wrench into Higa's long term plans. Uzume can fill you in on the details tomorrow."

Minato motioned to her and Akitsu picked him up around the waist, Kazehana doing the same to Kusano and Matsu, who could travel by herself, just not as fast as the others. The four of them raced off over the rooftops, leaving behind Kagari, who was now staring at the pager in his hand. *I really **have** run out of time. Damn you Minaka.*

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Minato looked out of the alley a block from the target hospital where he, Kusano, Matsu and Kazehana were hiding, waiting until Akitsu reported that she was in position. A minute after their arrival, Kazehana's pager went off with a faint buzz. Minato motioned to Kusano, and the little girl concentrated, reaching out with her power to a plant underneath the window Matsu had indicated upon their arrival. At the same time Matsu activated her power, mentally taking control of the exterior security cameras and looping the last five minutes to cover their activity.

As the others watched, the plant Kusano was concentrating on began to twitch and blossom odd growths one of which made its way up the side of the building, growing in size as it did. Minutes later Minato and Matsu ran forward stepping onto a leaf the size of a small car. Bracing themselves Minato nodded back at Kusano, who concentrated again, and the plant grew further, lifting them skyward.

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At the front of the building two Sekirei were watching as Akitsu slowly walked toward them. They could feel her power as she approached, but both thought that together they would be able to handle a single opponent.

They thought wrong. One of them, who had a bulky build and a buzz cut, looked down in shock as her walkie-talkie suddenly shattered into pieces as she went to push a button. Even as her eyes widened her weapon became too cold to hold. She dropped it with a curse as her companion did the same with her own weapon before charging toward the unknown Sekirei in front of them.

Akitsu raised an ice shield blocking her enemy's progress momentarily. The longhaired Sekirei smashed through the shield only to find her opponent directly in front of her. Akitsu reached out a hand, touching the longhaired Sekirei's throat, freezing it solid under her grip before the other girl could react.

She gasped, clutching at her throat, trying to get a hold of the ice now slowly choking her.

The bulky Sekirei dashed forward too only to be slammed back by a moving wall of ice. Seconds later her back crashed into the hospital's outer wall. She snarled, breaking some of the ice only to be met with more and more. The weight of the ice slowly crushed her, and despite her desperate efforts the pain caused her to black out after only a few moments.

Akitsu turned to her previous opponent, who was now writhing on the ground, gasping for air, desperately trying to remove the ice from her neck, which was proving impossible as she couldn't get a strong enough grip on it. With a touch, Akitsu removed the ice.

Her opponent looked at her gratefully through her long black hair, disarrayed by her convulsions, though there was something else there, disappointment perhaps?

Akitsu ignored that for a moment, nodded cordially at her before bringing down a large boulder sized piece of ice directly onto the back of her head. The other Sekirei's eyes rolled up into her skull and she fell forward to sprawl on the pavement.

Akitsu turned back, bringing her full power to bear on the hospital entrance. Sweat beaded her brow as the air began to chill around Akitsu in a wide circle, ice forming at her command. Within minutes, the entire front of the building was a frozen wall, including the bulky Sekirei with the buzz cut. Interns and doctors gasped as the temperature inside the building plummeted drastically.

Two other Sekirei coming out to switch places with their fellows gasped in shock as they found their progress blocked. Akitsu's power had penetrated the entrance thirty feet in, filling the hospital entrance and anteroom with a solid glacier of ice. They quickly turned around and ran the other way hoping to exit from the loading doors at the back

of the building.

Mission accomplished, Akitsu turned to her other opponent. She gazed down at the longhaired Sekirei thoughtfully. Katsuragi had informed them that she had not been the only one abused by Higa. *The bulky one fought as hard as she could surprised and weaponless, but this one just charged forward like she had a death wish, and that look she gave me when I released her... If this girl was violated like Katsuragi, she might not fight to win like one winged willingly, but to simply end it one way or another. Can I really leave her here to suffer whatever punishment Higa deals out for failure?* After a moment's thought, Akitsu decided she couldn't. Reaching down she lifted the other Sekirei to her back and jumped away, making toward the rendezvous point that they had set up on their way to the hospital.

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Minato and Matsu were happy to find the target window open. Matsu entered first, startling the young girl in the bed next to the window.

Chiho blinked in surprise from her bed where she had just pulled up her covers to her chin in response to a sudden chill. A young woman with orange-brown hair and large coke-bottle glasses had just jumped into her room from the open window. *Hmm, perhaps an acquaintance of Uzume's? She often comes in from the window.* She blinked again nonplussed as a young man, maybe a little older than herself with unkempt black hair and dark eyes followed the other woman inside.

He bowed politely to her, and she returned the gesture automatically. "Chiho-san?"

Chiho nodded. "Yes, that is my name. Er, may I help you?"

Minato blinked in momentary surprise at her ultra polite tone, but taking in her appearance and the sense of calm she seemed to radiate he realized it was simply part of her personality. He had met other women like that, Miya chief among them, who seemed to carry an air of calm serenity within themselves. "It's actually me that is here to help you. I don't think we have time to explain it all, but suffice to say that Uzume's a friend of ours and we're here to take you away from here."

"I am sorry but that is impossible. I need to stay here for my treatment."

Matsu looked up from reading her chart by the foot of the bed. "Mina-tan, we were right! None of these treatments are to cure her disease, only to hide the symptoms for short amounts of time!"

Minato nodded and explained the situation as briefly as possible while Matsu checked the corridor. He left out what Uzume had been doing to pay for her treatment. That was something Uzume would have to tell Chiho herself.

After hearing the explanation Chiho nodded agreeing to come with them.

Minato moved forward, lifting her off the bed easily. The young woman weighed even less than she first appeared, and his work in construction (plus his still unexplained and mysterious Ashikabi-Sekirei bond given powers) had built on his already extremely strong physique.

Chiho blushed slightly as she leaned against Minato's muscled chest. *My, he certainly is fit...*

Matsu checked the corridor again and saw a blond woman in a business outfit and wearing stylish glasses walking down the corridor towards their room, talking rapidly into a cell phone. "Mina-tan, we should get out of here."

Minato nodded and the two dashed to the window, jumping onto Kusano's plant, which began to shrink down to its original size.

Behind them the door slammed inward and the woman in glasses began to curse at the empty room before her.

Kazehana met them on the ground, where Minato handed Chiho over to her. Chiho's blush intensified to a deep rosy color as she found herself pressed into Kazehana's truly gigantic chest and she had to fight a rush of desire. It had been a long time since she and Uzume had been able to do more than hug after all. Her flush deepened further as the older woman noticed her reaction and began to chuckle wickedly. "Seeing as you're Uzume's Ashikabi, I assume you swing that way. Who knows, Minato may let us all experiment sometime together. But for now, let's get you home."

Chiho's eyes widened at the implication as Kazehana started moving, gathering her power and leaping away from the hospital at impossible speeds before her passenger could say anything.

Halfway there, they met up with Akitsu and saw the burden on her back. With no time for explanations, Minato and the prisoner changed places quickly. Matsu being physically the weakest of his Sekirei took the prisoner, who weighed far less than Minato. Kazehana continued to carry Chiho in her arms while Kusano clung to her back, and Akitsu carried Minato as the group continued moving as fast as possible away from the hospital.

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Tsukiumi sighed in boredom. She and Musubi had been on patrol throughout the north of the city for the past three hours and nothing had happened. Not only had they not run into any search parties from Higa or anyone else, they had also not run into the last free Sekirei.

Tsukiumi had kept it to herself, not wanting to betray a friend, but she was almost certain that the last free Sekirei mentioned in the message sent to Minato was her former rival Homura, Sekirei of fire. He had mentioned that he had an odd condition that made it hard for him to find his destined one, so it made sense he would be one of the last winged.

She had not seen him since Minato had winged her, and was becoming worried about him, though Akitsu had told her Homura had shown up at the park during their mission to free Kusano.

The thought struck her that she never would have made the connection between Homura and the last free Sekirei without Minato's continued efforts to expand all of their horizons beyond the Sekirei plan. His demands that they read and watch the news had added to their knowledge of the human world, far beyond what Minaka and MBI would be comfortable with and helped her personally in learning to connect facts. *We're becoming more than we were before because of our bond as is Minato, just like Homura said we would. Hopefully that means we will be able to help him when the time comes.*

Musubi stirred beside her as they walked along a rooftop, stretching her arms. "Tsukiumi-san, I'm bored."

Tsukiumi growled low in her throat. "So am I Musubi but whining won't do anything." She relented at her partners pouting face. "We'll make one more pass around the district, then head home." Musubi nodded happily and followed her.

The two soon found themselves within a few blocks of the host-club Kagari worked at. Tsukiumi perched on the corner of a toyshop, making note of the location as somewhere to bring Kusano sometime. Needless to say she did not notice that the toys being advertised were not the type for children. Kazehana would later explain that to her as she and Kusano were walking out the door. Her resultant blush would not go away for hours.

Musubi leaned on the balustrade next to her looking around the street below them. Tsukiumi sighed. "Alright Musubi, I don't think we're going to have any luck tonight. Let's head back."

"Arah, and here we just arrived. That's not very hospitable of you." Tsukiumi and Musubi turned swiftly to face the new voice. On an adjoining rooftop stood six Sekirei and three Ashikabi.

Two were young, looking like teenagers and dressed in school uniforms. One had short brown hair in a bowl cut the other had long light blue hair tied into twin pony tails. Behind them stood an older woman in a business suit, which did little to hide her curvaceous body. She had a kindly face, but her eyes were hooded as she looked across at Tsukiumi and Musubi.

Next to this group stood a man and a single Sekirei, who was possibly the tallest woman Tsukiumi had ever seen, standing at maybe seven feet tall. She was rail thin, with an almost boyish appearance, but had long hair tied into a single bun going down her back. She wore a short skirt and a tank top. The man beside her was of more normal height, wearing a punk rocker outfit: ripped jeans, a loose t-shirt with a skull motif, and greased up hair in a mohawk.

A third group stood next to that one, and Tsukiumi saw two familiar faces there. Oriha, the girly Sekirei that Tsukiumi had beaten a few weeks ago stood to one side. Next to her stood the veiled Sekirei, and Tsukiumi had to stop herself from flinching at seeing Uzume still working for Higa. Behind them stood another younger Sekirei, who was dressed in a Chinese evening gown and was holding two folded Chinese fans. Next to her stood a young man, maybe a little older than Minato, dressed in a good business suit. He had swept back brown hair and wore a pair of glasses. Everything about him screamed upper-class businessman.

Oriha, who had been the one to shout the challenge, stepped forward aggressively. "I'm here for some payback you water-using bitch. " The curse sounded odd coming out in her usual cutesy voice, but behind her the other Sekirei tensed for action.

Tsukiumi and Musubi both readied themselves, not retreating despite being outnumbered. Tsukiumi knew that this was precisely the sort of situation that she had warned Minato about and that he would want them to fall back rather than risk fighting against such odds, yet the thought of retreat never crossed her mind. Her Sekirei blood was boiling and she was itching for some action. "Oh yes, and you're so brave, coming after me with all your new friends, bravo."

Without further ado the three Ashikabi backed off and the battle began.

Oriha threw her chakra swiftly, hoping to catch Tsukiumi off balance but the water Sekirei was not caught unawares. She raised a shield of water and thrust it forward, blocking both chakra. The wall of water then became a wave, which sped towards Oriha's group as Musubi launched herself forward at the two Sekirei dressed in school uniforms. "#88 Musubi here I come!"

The two girls split up introducing themselves, one rushing forward "# 100, Kana!" while the other stayed back, "#99, Saki."

Saki brought her hands together and they began to glow purple. A light shot out from the bottom and top of her hands, forming into a bow. She pulled her right hand towards her body from her left and an arrow shaped out of the same purple light grew between her hands. She aimed the light arrow at Musubi and fired, forcing her to dodge away from Kana.

The tall Sekirei joined in against Musubi, pulling out twin ko-dachi from under her long hair behind her neck. She jumped into the air rotating over Musubi in the air and bringing them upward in a twin slash at Musubi's back. "#18 Naru, die for my Ashikabi big tits!"

Her Ashikabi yelled encouragement in the background, screaming about wanting to see some blood.

Musubi rolled into a forward ball, dodging Naru's blades. She kicked out backwards and caught the tall Sekirei in the side with her foot. Kana tried to take advantage but Musubi blocked her punch, catching her arm and pulling the younger girl in close, head-butting her hard.

Tsukiumi had leapt from one roof to another, trying to put some distance between herself and Uzume's attacks while Oriha recalled her Chakra. The girly Sekirei was more cautious now, spinning her chakra and only throwing one at a time to keep Tsukiumi off balance.

The blond Sekirei retreated and waited as Uzume and Oriha jumped after her. As they jumped from one roof to another she summoned water spouts below them, slamming up and into both Oriha and Uzume.

One spout caught Oriha under the chin, throwing her off balance mid-leap, causing her to slam into the edge of the roof. She dropped back into the alley with a squeal of pain and surprise.

Uzume, also caught in midair, was able to dodge enough to receive only a glancing blow from the water spout below her. She raised her veils in a shield, blocking another water cannon shot from straight on. The blast still threw her backwards to land hard on the roof she and her 'allies' had first shown up on.

Tsukiumi followed up on her advantage jumping back to the other roof and summoning up her one of her most powerful attacks. Eight snakes of water formed behind her and with a shout "Yamato no Orochi!" She sent them forward at Uzume and the enemy Sekirei engaged with Musubi, carefully choosing her targets based on something Minato called Threat Level Identification.

Naru slashed at the one targeting her dissipating it. Kana dodged the one sent her way, and both remained closely engaged with Musubi, trading blows with her.

Uzume's veil shield was still up and she adroitly redirected Tsukiumi's attack from her.

Saki swiftly evaded the first one sent her way, but the other two, sent after her as she was the only distance fighter there and therefore most dangerous to Musubi and Tsukiumi, hammered into her from both sides crushing her between them. She gasped in agony and her light bow disappeared as she lost her concentration.

The un-introduced Sekirei flicked her fan open and with a wave of her fan the two water snakes sent at her disappeared. She smiled bowing formally toward Tsukiumi. "#66, Shizuku, the null Sekirei."

Tsukiumi nodded equally formally, pleased someone was following what she thought of as the proper forms, regardless of the melee type of combat going on. "number 9, Tsukiumi." She was forced to jump to the side as Uzume sent a cloth spear at her. The spear came apart and attempted to wrap around the water Sekirei, but she

sliced it to pieces with her water sword. She jumped forward, closing the distance and forcing Uzume backward. As she did Shizuku moved forward joining the fight against the water user.

Saki tried to get up from the rooftop where she had fallen to her knees from the pain of Tsukiumi's attack. Her Ashikabi however placed a gentle hand on the back of head, kneeling down on one knee next to her. "Take your time. I don't want to see you get hurt."

"But..."

"No," the older woman smiled down at Saki, stroking her hair soothingly. "Your health is more important than any mission from Higa could be." Saki closed her eyes and nodded, leaning against her Ashikabi's side, slowly recovering.

The fight had escalated again with Oriha rejoining the action, using her Chakra for quick short-range throws and stabs. The combination of her attacks, Uzume's continued assaults and Shizuku's nullifying her water powers if she tried to control water further than her own reach was taking a major toll on Tsukiumi's abilities.

Her water sword was now her only weapon as she tried to hold off her attackers. *I have to get far enough away from Shizuku, stop her from using her power.*

Musubi gasped in pain as a snap kick from Kana caught her in the stomach. She doubled over, using her momentum to roll forward into Naru, taking the tall Sekirei's legs out from under her. She slammed a fist into the side of Naru's head as she fell forward. Naru groaned in agony and swiftly rolled away, shaking her head to clear it.

Naru's Ashikabi screamed vindictively. "What the hell Naru, get in there and gut those bitches! I want to see some blood!"

Saki at last got to her feet and began to form her weapon again, ready to rejoin the fight.

At the same time Tsukiumi scowled as Oriha's chakra cut a gash into her shoulder. She fell back, acting as if she was suddenly panicking as Naru switched from attacking Musubi to attacking her.

Oriha and Naru pressed forward as Shizuku stayed close on the periphery, out of the action but close enough to cancel out Tsukiumi's powers with her fans.

Suddenly, Uzume turned away from her attack as her pager went off at its place on her waist.

Tsukiumi kept her face under control, revealing none of her sudden excitement at Uzume's retreat.

Uzume trembled as she took out her pager. It showed a simple message, which she and Minato had agreed to 'back home safe, join us soon'. She fell to her knees, worries, guilt, concern and fear battling it out in her head with a sudden, almost violent surge of joy as she realized she was free from Kakizaki and his master's control.

As if summoned by her thoughts, Kakizaki appeared next to her. "What are you doing, Vield One. Get back in the fight." Uzume raised her head, eyes flashing as she slowly got to her feet.

Back in the battle, Oriha smiled vindictively, pushing forward with Naru and forcing Tsukiumi back to the edge of the roof. Behind her Shizuku lowered her fan from canceling another one of Tsukiumi's attacks.

The blond Amazon jumped onto the roof's balustrade, blocking Naru's twin swords as she concentrated, preparing herself. She growled as Oriha pressed in again, slashing her hand, and dissipating one of her swords.

Naru grinned from her other side, where her twin swords were locked with Tsukiumi's other blade and kicked out, catching Tsukiumi just above her knee.

Tsukiumi yelled aloud falling backwards off the roof, but kept her concentration. Oriha and Chizuru both plunged forward for the kill.

Tsukiumi fell two stories before a waterspout caught her. She looked up as Chizuru and Oriha both jumped off the roof after her, their eyes suddenly going wide as they realized what was below them. Tsukiumi smiled grimly, shouting out "Hydra!"

For the last twelve minutes Tsukiumi had been concentrating, slowly building up her attack in the alley, where Shizuku could not see to cancel it. Now dozens of very small, incredibly fast streams of water shot forward at both her

enemies, and unlike the barrage she had used to kill Yomi, this group was able to change direction in midair, coming at her enemies from multiple directions just like her larger scale Yamato no Orochi.

Even in midair both were able to block a few of them, but nowhere near enough to save them. Naru gasped as five of them pierced her body before coming out her back. For a moment she hung suspended in midair, held there by the power of Tsukiumi's attack before the water spouts dissipated, letting her limp body plummet to the ground below.

Oriha was able to save herself by grabbing onto a fire escape, wrenching her arm horribly and sending herself crashing through a window. She cried aloud as one of the Hydra's heads caught her, piercing her calf.

Tsukiumi ignored her defeated opponents, rocketing back up to the rooftop. The scene she found was very different from the one she had left.

Shizuku was unconscious, held in the air next to Kakizaki and the punk rocker, completely wrapped up by Uzume's veils. The mohawk haired man was screaming obscenities and Tsukiumi saw Uzume firmly loop a veil around his mouth stifling it.

Kana was on the ground, slammed to the concrete by Musubi's Kuma-ken punch, and Saki was locked in close quarter combat with Musubi, her energy weapon now almost useless. But Kana was groggily getting back to her feet as Tsukiumi leaped back onto the roof.

She glared at the two school uniform clad Sekirei, feeling the effect of continually using her power taking its toll. *It's time to finish this.* She again summoned her power, and the giant eight headed monster again appeared, shooting forward with another shout of "Yamato no Orochi!"

"Stop!" With a shout, the other Ashikabi jumped forward, interposing her body between her Sekirei and Tsukiumi's attack.

Tsukiumi's eyes widened and she halted her attack. The woman's interposing herself would not have mattered much, but it was the action itself that made her stop. *This is the first time I've seen an Ashikabi besides Minato care enough about her Sekirei to risk her own life for them.*

"Yui! Get out of the way!" Kana and Saki both tried to pull their Ashikabi to safety as Musubi moved to stand next to Tsukiumi.

The woman turned, gathering her Sekirei into a fierce hug, pressing her head into their shoulders. "No. No more. I agreed to Higa's orders because I had no choice, but I refuse to watch you get hurt when the fight is already decided."

Tsukiumi breathed in deeply calming herself as Musubi looked at her hopefully. Minato had put Tsukiumi in charge, and it was her call whether to continue the fight or not. Musubi didn't want to hurt someone who cared so much for her Sekirei.

The blond woman stood tall, eyes flashing imperiously as she glared at the three still conscious enemies. "What's your name?"

Yui turned back to face Tsukiumi and Musubi, her arms still around her Sekirei. "Yui Monotori, school teacher at St. Abigail girl's high school."

Tsukiumi nodded, glancing over at Uzume. Oriha burst through the rooftop door, only to walk right into an uppercut from Musubi. She fell to the concrete senseless. Tsukiumi pointedly ignored the overly frilled Sekirei. "Uzume what do you think?"

The veiled Sekirei removed her veil, showing her flushed face and red eyes, tear tracks visible on her cheeks. Her voice shook slightly as she spoke. "I never met any of these three; they never had anything to do with me." At a thought, her wrappings tightened around Kakizaki and Shizuku, as another loop wrapped itself around Oriha.

"Alright, we'll let you go, on your word of honor that you will not participate in further forays into the territory of our Ashikabi." Tsukiumi made her decision swiftly. Yui nodded and made the promise, realizing there were some things that her so-called benefactor had left out of his briefing on this job. Her Sekirei scowled, but she kept a firm grip on them.

Uzume turned back to Kakizaki. "The only reason I don't kill you or Shizuku right now is I don't want to give you that satisfaction. I'm no longer under your control, you can't hold Chiho-chan's life over my head anymore. I'm free, and

the next time I see you I won't be so nice."

Tsukiumi glared at Kakizaki as well for a moment before switching her glare to the punk rocker, who had never stopped cursing under the cloth covering his mouth. "You, your Sekirei is down below. I honestly don't know if she is alive or dead, nor do I care as you obviously wanted her to try to either kill us rather than simply remove our bonds. Do not come back into the north, or you will be met with the same force again. You have been warned." The man's eyes widened and he started to curse even louder.

Tsukiumi looked into his eyes. She saw no concern for his Sekirei there, only rage at being ordered around and having lost. She shook her head sadly. This man was everything she had long thought all Ashikabi were like, and it pained her to see her fears made reality.

Her gaze shifted back to Kakizaki. "This is the second group from the east we've beaten. Take the hint and stop coming here. You're very lucky that our Ashikabi is not here, for he is not as lenient with other Ashikabi as we are." Kakizaki looked back at her for a moment, before nodding slightly.

Uzume released her captives, and they dropped to the rooftop, though she left the gag in place on the unnamed man, binding his hands together at the same time. Uzume stood for a moment glaring at the spectacled man. Musubi gripped her shoulder comfortingly. "Come on Uzume-san, there's someone waiting for you." Tsukiumi nodded agreement, and the three moved off as the sound of helicopters began to fill the air.

Behind them Kakizaki and Akira looked at each other and the two unconscious Sekirei left on the roof as Yui led her own girls away. Higa was not going to be pleased....

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The trio of exhausted Sekirei landed outside Izumo house, stumbling in their weariness. Uzume looked at her friends in sudden trepidation, wondering if Chiho would even want to see her, if Minato had told her of what Uzume had done to pay for her care. Musubi grinned cheerfully at her, and Tsukiumi wordlessly pushed her forward. Uzume nodded, and opened the inn to the door.

Tsukiumi and Musubi turned and entered their own house. Minato and his other wives had stayed up and greeted them at the door. He took one look at Tsukiumi and wordlessly grabbed her hand, dragging her to the master bedroom and the shower beyond. Stories could wait until tomorrow.

Kazehana and Akitsu gave Musubi a large plate of food and stayed with her as she ate, treating her wounds from a small first aid kit in the kitchen.

Musubi eventually fell asleep at the table. Kazehana and Akitsu carried her upstairs and put her to bed next to an already snoring Kusano. They then joined Tsukiumi and Minato, finding their sister wife bandaged and cuddling next to their husband, eyes already closed in sleep.

Kazehana and Akitsu shrugged. There would be no lovemaking for them tonight. They joined their life-mates in bed, cuddling up next to them, turning out the lights. Minato kissed all his wives on the lips gently, watching in adoration as the symbol of their love burst forth in the darkened room.

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Uzume walked into Izumo house. She found Matsu and Miya awake and having tea in the living room. Neither said anything as she came in. Matsu grinned like a perverted pumpkin and Miya, smiling gently, pointed upwards. Uzume nodded and went up to her room.

Chiho was there, laying down on a futon, the jinki lying next to her on its own pillow, pulsing in time with her heartbeats. In her hands she cradled the head piece of an outfit Uzume had made to cheer her up a few months ago, a bright green cat head. In the corner a monitor, the same one used weeks ago on Minato, read her life signs from a small wristband she wore on her left hand. Chiho smiled radiantly as Uzume stepped into the room. Remonstrations could wait; they were unimportant now that they were back together. "Okairi-nissai, Uzu-chan."

Uzume broke down completely, tears running down her face as she rushed forward, hugging Chiho as if she would never let her go again. Chiho returned the hug as hard as her frail body could. Uzume pulled back just enough to smile at her Ashikabi. She wiped her tears away and grinned. "I'm home."

end chapter

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Higa is the mid-boss of the sotry as you can see. He and Minato will clash several times, and the culmination will be huge.

## \*Chapter 12\*: Chapter 12 Discoveries

Does Minato wing Musubi first and has he remained a virgin to this day? If that is the case, I don't own Sekirei.

I've noticed that a few of my better reviewers, haven't been reviewing lately, hope that doesn't mean I've lost their interest somehow. Oh and I saw that a reviewer mentioned that I had the numbers wrong on some of my Sekirei, and will go back and change that in my chapters sometime this weekend, I just haven't had the time to do that and continue to write. This chapter is dedicated to cjcold2, who is a new reviewer who reviewed three of my stories and seemed to like them. Oh, and if people don't get the joke I put in with the section with Homura, I'm going to cry.

In any event, on with the show.

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### Chapter 12 Discoveries

A black limo moved silently down a nearly empty street, taking with it two pairs of inquisitive eyes that had witnessed the battle between Higa's forces and Minato's Sekirei. Hayato looked across at Mutsu. "What did you think of that fight?" He wanted to know what the experienced Sekirei had thought because personally, he thought the fight had been very interesting. *I've rarely seen a Sekirei fight that violent and raw, it seemed that at least a few on both sides truly hated one another.* The veil Sekirei who had attacked his own Sekirei a time or two turning on her allies had also surprised him. *I wonder what happened there? Not that I'm very likely to find out, but confirming that Higa's been the one using her to break the rules of the game was well worth the trip out here. I'll have to think of some way to... irritate him for that.*

Mutsu thought about his reply carefully. "I was impressed by number 9 and # 88's abilities. Number 9 in particular is far stronger than she was when we first crossed paths. I wasn't impressed by the teamwork shown by Higa's allies. They only worked in their known groups and didn't do a good job helping one another. The northern pair didn't do a great job there either, but their experience and personal skill level offset that. If not for the veiled one turning sides however, I think 88 at least would have lost. The fight was slowly turning against her. On the other hand, number 9 was winning her fight, that attack she prepared in the alley was deadly. It was a gutsy but foolish call for them to fight at all."

Hayato smiled. "But where were Sahashi's other Sekirei, that is the question. I wonder what else has happened tonight?"

Mutsu shrugged. He had no idea, and less inclination to care. Meddling in the north was far too troublesome in his opinion.

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Others had watched the action besides the Ashikabi of the south. Nishi Sanada and his Sekirei Barei dropped from their hiding place. Barei's black cloak, which worked like a chameleon's skin, moved in the wind covering them until they settled onto his bike below. Sanada had been both impressed and a little mystified by the fight. *Come to think of it, where the hell was Sahashi? He didn't strike me as someone to send out his Sekirei alone. That was one hell of a catfight he missed.* The two westerners left swiftly, passing unnoticed through the streets back to their own territory.

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Kagari, or Homura as he was known in his alter ego, spun around dodging a punch from the Red Sekirei as alarms blared in MBI Tower. He had gotten close, so close, but Benitsubasa had returned just as he breached the defenses of the twenty-fifth floor.

Homura raised a wall of fire in the corridor and ducked down the stairs away from his pursuer. He had dreamed for years of taking a shot at Minaka and with the announcement about him Kagari had decided to take a chance. *To come so far and fail... Still as long as I escape I can always try again.*

He gasped suddenly as his power threatened to overwhelm him. He swiftly exited the stairwell, running over and destroying a fire alarm in the ceiling, causing the fire system to activate on this floor as it had on the twenty-fifth and dousing him in cooling water. This allowed Homura to regain control of his powers.

The next instant this cost him, and he cursed as the door to an elevator shaft was smashed in by a grinning Benitsubasa who hurled herself into the corridor.

Homura tried to summon up another wall of flame but Benitsubasa smashed her fist into the floor, roaring "Destructive Quake!"

A shockwave rushed along the floor toward Homura, who swiftly shot out his own attack, "Fire flare!" The attacks met in the middle of the corridor between the two combatants and blew backward filling the hallway with flames and detritus.

Benitsubasa scowled and covered her face from the flames. When she looked up Homura was gone. She cursed and ran back into the elevator shaft. Grabbing the cable, she began rappelling down as fast as her gloves would allow.

She exited the first floor to surprise Homura again, rushing in to catch the mid to long range specialist in close before he could run around a barricade MBI troops had set up in the entrance lobby.

Homura nearly screamed as Benitsubasa's fist struck his upper arm, breaking the bone despite his rolling with the blow. His other hand came up in defense and he sent a sheet of flame straight at Benitsubasa's face.

She shrieked and reeled away, allowing Homura to escape over the barricade and out the shattered entrance door. She shook her head and ran out after him but by the time she got to into the parking lot Homura was gone. Benitsubasa screamed in frustration and kicked the streetlight next to her, snapping it in two and sending it toppling to the ground. She fumed for a few more minutes then regained control of herself before taking out her cell phone. "Natsuo-sama, I'm sorry, but he got away. I hurt him though."

Natsuo was up on the top floor with Minaka having been consulting him on the disposition of the disciplinary squad and Karasuba's lack of progress. Karasuba had shown amazing patience in not killing anyone yet, but had yet to report progress in her self-appointed mission.

Haihane and Benitsubasa had been patrolling around the city's edges as part of the blockade. Haihane had found an Ashikabi and Sekirei pair trying to escape and had not answered the summons back to MBI headquarters to defend against the fire user.

Natsuo's voice was calm as he answered. "That's okay, Benitsubasa. You stopped him, and that's all that matters. Come on back up."

The pink haired girl sighed, slightly pleased and very annoyed by this faint praise. She fiddled with her burned and frazzled hair, thankful that as a Sekirei she was resistant to being burned, so her face was okay after such a close encounter with her enemy's fire attack.

She dropped the frazzled end of her pony tail with a huff. *Hai, I'm okay Natsuo-sama, just a slight burning, I'll probably need a facial and a trip to the stylist. Would it kill you to show some concern, other than simply saying 'good job'? Damn it, I want some more response from my Ashikabi than a pat on the head and a 'good girl', I'm a woman not a dog.* The image of Sahashi Minato appeared in her head as she remembered dancing with him a few nights ago, his body hot and burning as it rubbed against her own but she shook it off quickly. *Natsuo-sama is my Ashikabi. Maybe that new dress with the built in push up bra will finally get him interested in me...*

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Homura staggered as he landed on a rooftop a few blocks away from MBI tower. Thankfully there didn't seem to be any sign of pursuit coming after him. He waited a few more minutes, regaining control of his power and his body, taking a few of the pills Matsu had made for him to help dull the pain. He looked at his left arm and was not surprised to see a huge bruise forming there as he began to lose all feeling in that arm.

Normally of the Sekirei on the Disciplinary Squad only Karasuba would be a match for him, but in the close confines of the building and with the sprinklers, he had been at a major disadvantage. Still, he had managed to escape, and had thankfully not met up with any other Sekirei trying to capture him tonight. *I wonder what happened, I thought I might be fighting my way through half the city after that... what was the word that female American soldier used a few months ago, cockbite? ... yes cockbite sent out the message about me. Still, I'm not about to look a gift horse in the mouth.* Now recovered enough to move, he started to make his way to Izumo House.

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The day after Chiho's rescue Minato woke up to find Akitsu and Kazehana gone from the bed. He looked down lovingly at his tempestuous blond wife, still asleep next to him. It was obvious when they came home that both Tsukiumi and Musubi had been in a tough fight last night. Both had wounds and bruises aplenty, but Tsukiumi had far more than Musubi. He looked at her now lying there still asleep. Her hair was disheveled, she was covered in bandages and bruises and yet to him she was altogether beautiful. Once again he was mesmerized, thankful beyond

words that this magnificent Valkyrie had deigned to be his wife. *I think today I am going to pamper her a bit.* With that goal firmly in mind he quietly got out of bed and headed to the kitchen.

Musubi and the others were already awake and greeted him cheerily. Without prompting, she recounted last night's fight in great detail, waving her arms around and gesticulating so wildly as she reenacted the battle, she nearly broke a glass cabinet and the kitchen table.

After hearing the tale Minato was a little worried about how violent the fight had become, as well as both Tsukiumi and Musubi's desire to fight rather than be sensible and retreat. *Still it was probably the best thing they could have done under the circumstances. With that number of Sekirei, their opponents could have encircled and forced them into a fight regardless. I'll have to talk with Tsukiumi about the fight though, I'm curious to see what she made of it.*

"Well, I think everyone did a great job last night. Akitsu, have you checked in next door about our prisoner?" All his Sekirei beamed at his praise, as Akitsu shook her head. "Alright, I'll go next door and do that, I want to borrow some shampoo and other stuff. I want Tsukiumi and you, Musubi to take it easy today. No training, spend some time with Kusano, maybe watch some TV. Let yourself heal for today." He kissed her on the cheek, and a grinning Musubi nodded happily. She got up, wincing slightly as her injured leg took her weight before going into the TV room in search of Kusano.

After breakfast, Kazehana and Akitsu accompanied him next door to Izumo house.

They found Miya awake and cleaning up after breakfast, and she welcomed them with her usual serene smile, though it was a tad wider than usual as Minato led his family into the inn. Uzume and Chiho were there, as was Katsuragi. Homura was as had become usual absent. Minato smiled as both Uzume and Chiho almost fell over themselves thanking him for the breakout last night.

"I really cannot thank you enough, Sahashi-san. If you had not freed me, Uzume would still be under that megalomaniac's thumb." Chiho was not given to hyperbole, she was deadly serious here. She had not been pleased that morning discussing things and finding precisely what Uzume had been doing to pay for her 'treatment'. Uzume had admitted to her last what she had been forced to do to pay for Chiho's treatment, attacking and severely injuring five Sekirei, taking them out of the game. Chiho had berated her for her actions, but eventually forgave her, as she knew Sekirei morals were not the same as most humans. Still, she had been in the wrong, and Chiho forced her to admit it. Taking the chance of happiness from ten people just for a chance at her own continued existence was not something Chiho wished to be a part of.

On top of that, the two of them had a long talk with Katsuragi during breakfast about her own ordeal at the hands of the Ashikabi of the east. Chiho's enmity for the abusive Higa had grown to almost a physical force after that.

Minato smiled, embarrassed by their praise. "You're welcome, but I was only doing what I thought was the right thing to do, just helping a friend, and it's Minato, please, we're all friends here after all."

"Thanks from me too bro," Uzume said, grinning. "If you were a girl I'd offer to compensate ya if ya know what I mean." She chuckled suddenly, pulling Chiho into a gentle hug. "Maybe when Chiho-baby is better we can both see about rewarding you properly."

Chiho blushed crimson, squeaking "Uzume-san!" but she didn't deny the idea altogether.

Miya reached for her ladle, an undefined emotion welling up as she prepared to remind her most wayward tenant about propriety once again, yet Minato simply laughed. "Sorry Uzume, but three wives is enough for me." Again some emotion she could not name welled up inside Miya, but it disappeared quickly as Minato turned and bowed politely to her. "Is our latest prisoner awake?"

Miya shook her head. "She is not, but I am glad you have come over. I am afraid I will be stepping out for the day."

Minato nodded sympathetically. Every month on the tenth Miya went to visit her husband's grave for the day. She had done so the day before Kusano had joined their family, and Kagari had told them about this ritual of hers. Everyone thought the devotion she showed to his memory was touching.

Miya however felt a little guilty. Normally she would have known the day was coming up and prepared for it, but this month with everything going on it had snuck up on her, leaving her to ask for help in cooking cleaning the house for the day.

Akitsu and Kazehana both nodded affirmatively. "Don't worry we'll be here all day so we can watch the house for

you." Kazehana said.

Miya smiled gratefully. "Thank you." If it had just been Kazehana she would have threatened them about doing perverted things, but Akitsu had a sense of propriety much more in keeping with her own. Chiho-san also seemed to have the same sense of decorum, so long as Uzume didn't try to get fresh with her. Luckily the cloth Sekirei knew her Ashikabi was still sick, far too weak for anything more than light kissing, which Miya was prepared to allow in the privacy of their room. And she knew she could trust Minato to watch over the house. That thought nearly gave her pause. When had Minato and her trust in him become something so central to her life? Miya shook off the errant thought, and after a few minutes gathering her things she left, waving farewell.

Minato sat down at the far side of the table from Katsuragi, knowing she was still uncomfortable being too near any man, even him. "Did you have a chance to look at our new prisoner?"

She shook her head. "No, I just woke up, do you want me to?"

He nodded, and they left the room, leaving Kazehana with Uzume to help carry Chiho back up to bed. Even with the jinki near her, she had no energy and little appetite. The jinki was keeping her alive, not reversing her illness.

It had been Miya who had communicated with the jinki last night, telling it to perform its statis function through some kind of telepathic connection that the others could not follow. They could see the results, the jinki glowing yellow for a few minutes as Miya touched it, but that was all. After that, the jinki had pulsed green and a strange nimbus of energy had reached out to Chiho where she lay next to it on the bed. Miya had not been able to explain what it was doing, she knew barely more than the humans about the ship that had brought her to Earth, but the others were more than happy with the result.

Katsuragi followed Akitsu and Minato to the spare room where the prisoner had been placed. She was still sleeping in a spare futon, her lustrous long black hair flared out on her pillow, snoring peacefully.

Katsuragi knelt down next to her, taking a long look before nodding. "Yes I recognize her. Her name is Chizuru, #92. And from what I remember she actually had it worse than me with Higa." Katsuragi's voice had gone back to its depressed tenor thinking of Higa and what he had done to her, a tone which she had been assuming less and less lately living with Miya and the others.

Minato cocked his head quizzically, motioning her to continue, which she did still speaking in the same tone. "Chizuru told me once that she had actually been reacting to someone already when Higa's patrols found her and brought her in. She went through the same thing that I did, though she was with him far longer. Chizuru was one of the first ones he brought in like **that**."

Minato's eyes hardened and he had to stop himself from cursing aloud in rage. He looked at Akitsu. "Could you and Kazehana watch her for the rest of the day? We don't know if she will try to return to Higa. Without Miya here to calm her down, we have to watch her much closer than with Katsuragi."

Katsuragi nodded, face downcast. "She almost certainly will. We Sekirei, whatever the nature of our winging, are utterly loyal to our Ashikabi. It is part of our nature, not just our conditioning. Then too none of us have anywhere else to go and no one else who will take us in."

"You do now." Minato said firmly. "Any Sekirei who is abused by their Ashikabi will be welcome here if they want to leave him or her."

Katsuragi and Akitsu shared a glance. There were some things that Minato just didn't understand, and the utter devotion Sekirei felt to their Ashikabi was one of them. Of his Sekirei, only Tsukiumi and Kazehana had the strength of will to knowingly ignore an Ashikabi's orders, and the very idea would have seemed outright impossible to the others.

Minato left them there, going into the bathing area to search for the bath salts and other items that he wanted to use to pamper his Valkyrie wife. He found the bath salts, a special shampoo that Uzume used, and a few other things, including scented bath soap and a soft hand sponge. He stood there for a moment looking at the things in his hand wondering if he should grab anything else.

He looked up from his contemplation in surprise as the inner door to the bath opened. A woman he had never seen before stood there, holding a towel to her chest, a large dark bruise showing on her upper left arm and several mild burns visible on her hands. Her eyes widened in shock at seeing him there.

Minato was equally stunned. Despite being around his wives so much, he was not used to being around other half-naked beautiful women. He gasped, falling back against the wall and turning around swiftly. *Wait a minute.* His mind worked in a circle for a moment as the woman tried to grab clothing from the basket. *Silver hair, thin build, handsome face?* He turned and gasped out, "Kagari, is that you?"

The silver haired woman blanched. She had been a he when he entered the bath and changed as she was washing, nearly fainting from the pain. She'd gotten out and tried to hurry to her room, but in her panic had not heard Minato in the anteroom. His presence in the changing area startled her, and she was looking at him like a deer caught in headlights until he turned away. When he guessed her name, it was the final straw and she bolted out the door and to her room, locking it after her.

For his part, Minato was stunned. He'd never suspected Kagari was a woman. *Something is going on here. Could she be the last Sekirei?* Out in the hall, he bumped into Matsu, who had come down to see him. She looked at her Ashikabi in puzzlement. "What's going on?"

Minato shook his head in astonishment. "It was Kagari, he was a she. I...could she be the last Sekirei?"

Matsu looked shifty for a moment, and Minato looked at her sharply. "Do you know something about this?"

Matsu tried to look innocent but failed utterly. Under her Ashikabi's glare she relented, nodding. "Kagari-tan has a genetic condition. I don't know where it came from, but it interferes with his ability to control his powers. He's nearly burned himself to death several times. He came to me a year ago and asked me to create some pills to help him, but all I did was make high powered pain-killers."

"Powers? Burned himself, so fire powers right, like Tsukiumi and Kazehana's powers?" Matsu nodded glumly under his continuing glare. "And they're dangerous to him, and he is the last free Sekirei?" She nodded again. "Did you at least warn him about the message?" She nodded a third time, and his glower toned down a little. "Well you did that much at least. But we will be talking about this further." She nodded miserably.

Inside her room, Kagari had put on her clothes and calmed down a little, but she was still jittery from her encounter in the changing room. *Why the hell does my body react to him, of all people? If it was his sister I could understand, but reacting to another man is...* Regardless of her present shape, Kagari had always thought of herself as a man. It was why he had become a host, to interact with as many women as possible, but not one had made him react even a little bit.

Minato knocked softly on the door. "Kagari-san?"

She stiffened at the sound of Minato's voice. "Go away."

"Kagari-san, I can't imagine what is going through your head right now, but I want you to know I won't try to force anything on you. I won't try to even talk to you if you don't want me to after this. Just don't do anything foolish until you talk to Miya all right? I consider you a friend, and from what Matsu just told me, you're endangering yourself."

Kagari felt a warm flush invade her body at the concern she heard in his voice, but she pushed it away sharply. However, what Minato said made sense. *And given last night it's not likely I'll have a free shot at Minaka for a while, if ever. They'll probably keep at least one of the disciplinary squad members close and inside a building I lose most of my offensive advantage.* She sighed. "All right Minato, you win. I won't do anything until I talk to Miya. Now please leave me alone."

Outside, Minato nodded in satisfaction. "That's all I can ask of you. I'll see you later then." He walked off, still slightly bemused by the whole episode. *I mean, he was such a perfect bishonen, how the hell does he have a woman's body?* He didn't know but knew without doubt he would find Minaka somehow involved in this.

Kagari sighed, collapsing into her futon in exhaustion. "What the hell happens now?"

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Katsuargi sat at the dining room table with Kazehana, Akitsu and the now awake Chizuru, sipping tea and talking quietly.

Chizuru had indeed tried to escape once she woke up, her instinctual reaction to get back to her Ashikabi regardless of her relationship with him. Kazehana had swiftly overwhelmed her, and after Chizuru's initial panic attack subsided, she agreed to remain a prisoner.

Her story was even more tragic than Katsuragi had thought. She had indeed reacted to someone else; a young pre-teen boy of around eight or nine who she had literally run into as he was running away from bullies. Chizuru had scared them off, but had not winged herself on him as she'd doubted what she was feeling given his age.

Higa had captured her later that same day, and had her beaten several times since for no reason she could understand. Though he had, like Katsuragi, only raped her once, her beatings had been very severe. Higa seemed to think of the Sekirei as possessions, and was not attracted to them as women. The initial rape was simply to emphasize his control over them.

Kazehana thought the story was tragically romantic and was gushingly sympathetic, while Akitsu's thoughts were only shown by a slight frown on her expressionless face. Kazehana however had gotten to know her sister-wife, and realized that a frown like that was her equivalent of shouting, screaming and breaking things in anyone else.

She steered the subject away from such a serious topic and the four girls talked about other things for a while. Chizuru seemed very fashion conscious, but her styles leaned toward young tomboy rather than formal or sexy, as befit her rather slender build.

Minato came in from calling in sick to work as they were talking about some scandal in Hollywood, which engrossed all the women save Akitsu, who was the first to notice his presence, standing up and wordlessly moving to his side. She cocked her head inquiringly, feeling his shock and bemused surprise. He shook his head, taking her hand and moving to sit at the table, away from Chizuru and Katsuragi.

Chizuru eyed him warily and he nodded at her. "I take it you've been talking about your treatment at Higa's hands. I won't ask you to repeat it if you don't want to. I want you to know that if you want to you can stay here. Both Miya-san and I have talked about this and agreed to house any Sekirei who want to escape an abusive relationship here."

Katsuragi spoke up putting herself forward for the first time "You can stay with me in my room if you want."

Chizuru looked at him for a moment face blank as she considered for a moment, looking over at Katsuragi, who was alive and well despite her crest being gone. She was very proud that her voice only shook a little as she replied. "Yes, please let me stay here. I want my mark removed, please."

Minato nodded to Akitsu who stepped behind the sitting Chizuru. Kazehana and Katsuragi reached forward at the same time without even thinking about it and took her hands, holding them comfortingly.

Minato looked into her eyes, holding her gaze, his own filled with compassion as Akitsu laid a gentle finger on her Sekirei mark, and intoned her norito. "Let my power freeze the enemies of my Ashikabi."

Chizuru kept staring into Minato's eyes as her mark disappeared. When it was done she collapsed like Katsuragi had to be caught in the waiting arms of Kazehana and Katsuragi. They gently carried her to Katsuragi's room and put her on the futon.

When they came back, Minato kissed Akitsu and Kazehana, whispering his love for them in their ears and promising to treat them both to something tomorrow. "But for now, could one of you please go out and buy another futon? I don't want us to keep using Izumo house's dwindling supplies. Then keep on stocking long term supplies. We can't keep relying on Miya-san and her resources, and I get the feeling we're going to need them soon."

Akitsu nodded and Kazehana smiled. She knew the shops in the area, and would be able to find the best deals. Katsuragi volunteered to go with her, as Minato at last left to go back to his own house, and his awaited pampering of Tsukiumi.

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Minato walked into their bedroom and found Tsukiumi just waking up, trying to move around without aggravating her injuries. Close combat types like Musubi not only had more energy but they healed far faster than elemental or other distance types, so she knew she was in for a rough time.

Tsukiumi had also been more injured than Musubi, who only had several bruises and a broken rib. Tsukiumi in contrast had several slashes from the sword wielding Sekirei and Oriha's chakra along her arms and one on her side. She also had several bruises, the most spectacular being on her thigh right above her knee, a broken wrist, a broken rib, and she had nearly lost an eye to Oriha's chakra.

She had a moment of fear as Minato came in and got a good look at her face with the slash over her eye, but she calmed down almost immediately as he moved to her side, dropping the bathing supplies on the floor by the bed. He

leaned over tracing the already scabbed mark on Tsukiumi's forehead with his lips.

Tsukiumi trembled under his gentle touch showing a vulnerable and needy side she would never show anyone else. She opened her mouth to meet his kiss, tongue already out and searching for his. When their lips met, her bond wings appeared, filling the house and the entire neighborhood beyond with their light. Below in the family room Kusano and Musubi grinned and giggled to one another as they were enveloped by the light, feeling in the love their Ashikabi felt for all of them.

Minato smoothed Tsukiumi's hair away from her face, gently laying his forehead against hers. "You did very well last night. Today is going to be all about you, love. I'm going to pamper you silly." Tsukiumi smiled thinking he was joking but then squealed in surprise as Minato lifted her off the bed and carried her into the bathroom where the pampering began.

First, Minato put her in the shower, having warmed the water to an appropriate temperature, and then he carefully washed every inch of her using the hand sponge and soap, taking particular care of her bruises and cuts, he was so gentle Tsukiumi barely felt anything. He then shampooed and washed her hair, making Tsukiumi's body tingle at his gentle touch. After that he carefully wrapped her ribs and wrist in a medical tape, lovingly kissing the area that was to be covered.

The process was interrupted, or came to its obvious conclusion however one sees it, as they made slow, gentle love, Tsukiumi moaning Minato's name over and over into his neck as he gently sawed in and out of her before erupting deep inside her.

Afterwards he carried her downstairs and tried unsuccessfully to cook her a meal while Kusano, Musubi and Tsukiumi laughed at him in the background. For the rest of the day he spent time with her, talking about the fight and going over what had happened, as well as telling her about the latest issue with Kagari, which shocked Tsukiumi to the core. Mainly however they just talked about odds and ends, dreams and other nonsensical things, reaffirming their connection to one another in the time honored manner of couples everywhere.

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Miya and Kagari came in to dinner that night together. Miya looked her normal serene self, though Kagari looked a little leery. Minato smiled in welcome from his place between Kazehana and Tsukiumi as Akitsu directed Katsuragi and Uzume in placing food on the table. To Kazehana's other side Chiho sat in a special high backed chair that Akitsu had bought for her when she and Kazehana had gone out for supplies, the jinki nestled in her lap.

Miya took her place at the head of the table, and Kagari sat down warily to her side. After grace was said, everyone spent several minutes eating before Minato hesitantly addressed Kagari. "Um, so uh..." He suddenly stopped, unsure where to begin. At last he blurted out. "Exactly how's your condition Minaka's fault and is trying for him last night how you got injured? How close did you get?"

Kagari snorted in laughter at Minato's obviously biased but still correct assumption. "Yes it's Minaka's fault and I got farther last night than I had ever hoped to. I was within five stories of his office on the top floor when the Red Sekirei ambushed me. She turned on the sprinklers and got in close before I could react."

Minato nodded as conversation petered out around the table, everyone present wanting to hear what Kagari was saying. "I can see that. But was she the only one there? I'm a little worried about where Karasuba is and what she's doing."

Kagari could certainly understand that. The Black Sekirei was one of the few he knew without doubt he had no chance beating in a fight. That she had been so badly battered after fighting Minato was a mark in his favor, but realistically once Karasuba had her sword in hand she was practically unstoppable. "She wasn't there, and I didn't see any sign of the Blue Sekirei either. Unfortunately they'll probably add more security now." Kagari paused, and decided to bite the bullet. "But you probably have other things you are more interested in, so why don't we get this over with alright?"

Minato nodded, but Tsukiumi spoke up before he could say anything. "What I want to know is why you didn't tell me who you were! I thought we were friends! All this time I had no idea Homura of fire was the same as Kagari the pretty boy!"

Everyone sweat-dropped as Kagari replied by taking his mask out and putting it on; "Come on Tsukiumi, you're telling me that you never connected me and my alter ego? It's just a half-mask for pities sake!"

Tsukiumi flushed as everyone laughed, but Minato wrapped her in a hug calming her down before she could erupt.

"Well I never looked at your face that closely besides that first night." She said lamely, and flushed anew as everyone laughed, though even she smiled a little as Minato nuzzled her neck for a brief moment before pulling back, ever wary about showing affection to his wives in Izumo house. For one thing, it was against Miya's rules, and for another it would be wrong of him to rub salt in her wounds, doing something with his wives she could no longer do with her husband.

He smiled across at the fire user. "Still Kagari, what do you want to do? I assume you want to stay a guy, but as long as you remain free, Higa at least is going to come after you. And with your attack on MBI, they may come after you too if you remain un-winged."

Kagari nodded, blushing lightly. "Y-yes, I want to stay a man, that's the way I've always thought of myself whatever my present body. I became a host in order to interact with as many women as possible, but none of them made me react. Y-you do, but I don't suppose you ..." Minato shook his head rapidly as his wives looked a little sick at the thought and Kagari sighed. "I don't suppose your sister is coming over any time soon?"

Minato's eyebrows raised in surprise. "She's coming over Sunday so that Kusano and Shiina can watch a movie. Why, do you think you may react to her?" Kagari nodded, still blushing. "And can you keep control of yourself for another day? What do you want to do if you don't react to her?"

Kagari sighed heavily. She had thought long and hard about this throughout the day, and had come to only one conclusion. "I can't go on like this, I need an Ashikabi bond to regulate my power. I had my best shot at taking out Minaka solo last night, and I missed. Hopefully I will react to Yukari, but if not..." Kagari drew in a deep breath, emphasizing yet again to her interlocutors that the fire user was still a she, her very perky and perfectly shaped b-cup breasts bouncing briefly in the too tight confines of her shirt. Minato however, didn't even notice. "Then I think my best bet would be to bond with you. I normally wouldn't even think about bonding with a guy but Matsu's pills aren't working anymore at all, and I don't want to die without seeing Minaka taken down first."

Minato nodded slowly, looking at his wives. Kazehana smiled encouragement, Akitsu shrugged and Tsukiumi frowned before nodding slowly. Musubi and Kusano were both smiling encouragement. Matsu simply nodded. Miya and the other Izumo residents smiled encouragingly. "Alright Kagari, if you can't react with Yukari, then you can join our little family. Realize however that we won't be striking at Minaka any time soon. My aim is to end MBI's hold over the Sekirei and help them, not just kill Minaka. There are way too many mysteries that we need answers to, way to many problems that could crop up, for his removal to make any sense at this time." Kagari nodded reluctantly, and with that the serious discussion ended for the night.

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That night Minato drew Kazehana aside before they entered the master bedroom. He waved at Akitsu and Tsukiumi, who were already in bed, indicating they would join them presently. He led Kazehana back downstairs into the kitchen then, gesturing her into one seat at the table then sat across from her.

Kazehana sat waiting a little miserably, already knowing what this was likely to be about, and not looking forward to it at all. Minato looked at her for a moment and then began to speak, his voice serious and controlled. "I realize that you had good reasons for keeping Uzume's identity a secret, I even agree that it was what a friend should do. **However**, it nearly bit us on the ass. She could have killed me easily when I figured out who her Ashikabi was. I don't doubt she would have felt sorry for it, but she would have done it to protect her Ashikabi. That could have meant you would all have died as well, given what happened to that idiot with the gun and his Sekirei." Kazehana nodded glumly. Uzume had told them all about how close the decision had been between killing Minato and asking him for help. "I'm not happy with Matsu either at the moment and she'll be hearing from me tomorrow, her keeping secrets nearly cost Kagari his life when we could have helped him. But marriages are based off of love, empathy and trust. Because of that, because you are one of my wives, I'm going to ask you right now, are you keeping any other secrets from me?"

Kazehana closed her eyes gathering her courage before looking across at her husband and nodding slowly. When she spoke it was slowly but without hesitation. "I, I've told you about my first reacting to Minaka." Minato nodded, he had heard that story during his forced convalescence after she had joined them, leaving him to wonder where she was going with this. "Well what I didn't tell you was that I didn't stop chasing him because he ordered me to or something like that. I stopped chasing him because I lost him to another woman, MBI's chief medical scientist." Kazehana gulped and went on. "Your mother Takami."

Minato's eyes widened then narrowed. "Tell me." Kazehana did so, speaking about Takami, their not so friendly rivalry for Minaka's attention, how the two had gotten together from her perspective, and his mothers duties at MBI and within the Sekirei plan as far as she knew.

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After she finished, Minato sat there for a moment taking it all in before he nodded. "Well, that does explain a lot of things I've always wondered about my mother's beau, after all I can't exactly call him my father can I? I never even met the man. And it answers a lot of things I've wondered about my mother's work."

He sat silent again as his hands, with no orders from his brain absent mindedly reached across and took one of Kazehana's hands, kneading it gently as he continued to think. Kazehana, thoroughly pleased by the wordless assurance his action was giving her, could see he was angry but he seemed to be getting over it as she watched.

What she failed to realize was that Minato had long suspected something was up with his mother, and he had never been all that close to her in the first place. True she had been the dominant force in his childhood, but their relationship had rarely been warm or caring. And what familial feeling he had for her had died when she didn't try to get him out of Constantinople when violence broke out.

Every Japanese national who lived through the initial rush of riots and violence had been brought home within a few months of the fighting by U.N forces intervening to get foreigners out under pressure brought by the disparate governments and put on the government by concerned parents. With the other two students from his school who had applied to the out of school learning experience and the organizers dead and having made no friends among the others, there had been nobody but his mother who knew he was still there. She hadn't tried to get him out of there, and that was inexcusable to him.

Musings done and deciding to reward Kazehana for her belated honesty, Minato stood up dragging Kazehana to her feet before kissing her hard on the lips. She gasped as their tongues dueled for a few minutes as the wings of light appeared encompassing the entire neighborhood once more. She moaned into his mouth slowly losing control as Minato began to dominate her. He turned her, pushing her against the table. Breaking the kiss, a bit of saliva still linked their lips for a second as he moved his mouth up her jaw line and to her ear. He nipped it, licked around the edge, and whispered huskily. "As far as I'm concerned his giving you up for my mother is just another sign that the man's insane. Everything in the past is done and gone. You're **mine** now, and I will love you till the day I die!"

Kazehana nearly came right there, the mix of possessiveness and love in Minato's voice smashing all her buttons at once. She groaned, reached down and undid his pants before pushing them down to the floor with one hand as she hiked up her skirt with the other.

An hour and several orgasms later, Minato carried the limp but smiling Kazehana up to the master bedroom, where he found his other wives waiting. Akitsu immediately moved to claim his lips as Tsukiumi looked on from the bed, her face showing a mixture of scandalized irritation and amused acceptance at Kazehana's obvious state. Minato gently placed Kazehana on the bed and took Akitsu in his arms, moving her to the other side of the giant bed where he made love to both his remaining wives for the rest of the night until they all dropped off to sleep.

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At first, Karasuba had a lot of fun on her fact finding trip. Granted the MBI personal plane was not allowed to land in the city of Constantinople. The city no longer had an airport, and besides that no MBI flagged plane was allowed in Turkish or Greek airspace, so she was forced to divert to Ciampino near Rome. Well, she had other choices, but she wanted to see how the religious center for the world's largest religious group responded to her, someone who could easily be designated a demon in their eyes. Karasuba just liked to make trouble whenever she could.

From there she waited a few hours until she was cleared to leave. Contrary to what she had expected the religious idiots in Rome actually didn't make much of a fuss about her, they just wanted her gone. This was proof positive that the lockdown of all information coming out of Tokyo had actually worked, the government probably knew about her real abilities, but without the public knowing could claim plausible deniability, thus saving them the expense of trying to capture or kill her. *Pity, ah, well, no excuse for me.*

From Rome she traveled to Civitavecchia the port that served Rome. From there she decided to splurge a bit, just to piss off Minaka, and signed on as a passenger on a cruise ship whose second to last stop would take her to the nearest city to Constantinople in Turkey that was still open to tourism. The two weeks Karasuba spent on the cruise ship allowed her to work off some of her sexual tension that developed whenever she remembered the fight against Minato. Every night she would choose a new boy toy to take to her room and screw until his pelvic bone broke or he collapsed unconscious. It took the edge off at least.

From that city, she took another boat into Constantinople. It was once she arrived in Constantinople that things began to go sour.

Almost immediately Karasuba noticed that the city was different than any other she had seen. First, it was old, as old as some parts of Rome that she had seen in passing. Second, it was obvious from the get-go that the city had seen a

massive amount of combat. Everywhere she looked she could see bullet marks in buildings, sometimes entire buildings destroyed in places, roads gouged out, and even old bloodstains in some of the alleyways she passed on her way from the docks. Repairs were going on everywhere, but it looked to be a very long term project.

Besides the damage that was obvious everywhere she looked, the people themselves gave her a very odd feeling. For one, there were a **lot** of soldiers around. They all gave her a wide berth, which was smart of them, but their very presence told her something as there seemed to be three different groups, all wary of one another. One of them wore the uniform of UN peacekeepers, the other two groups wore uniforms of some sort she didn't recognize, nowhere near as nicely turned out or clean as the UN forces.

Then there were the so-called civilians. Everywhere she looked, she could see civilians armed, sometimes with guns, sometimes with knives but always on the lookout for anything that would threaten them or their families. The ones with towels on their heads watched the curly haired ones and vice versa and both groups watched her and the very few tourists that had dared to come back into the city, as well as the UN forces.

The whole city was tense as if a powder keg had just gone off and everyone was walking quietly to make certain that it didn't go off again. Karasuba was actually tempted to start something just to see what would happen. It would be kind of fun to see an entire city of humans disintegrate into chaos and carnage. Unfortunately, that was not what she was here to do. *And Minaka would probably throw a bitch-fest if I did, the PR would be horrible after all. Pity.*

After spending two days to a feel for the city, Karasuba began to ask questions. Her first attempts doing so however met with little success. No one understood her Japanese, and the few UN workers and the others she could talk to in English (which she could speak, though found it distasteful, after all half the forces that had attacked Karikiri island were American) couldn't tell her anything. She was forced to wait until a translator was sent to her, which took another day. But even with the aid of the little black box translating her questions she got nowhere. Most times she got blank stares, but a few times she could tell that people recognized the picture of Minato she was using, but would back off and disappear into the crowds before she could question them further.

She was even ambushed a few times by toughs who apparently didn't like her going around asking questions. Unfortunately even when she let them live none of them knew anything personal about Minato, just that he had served in the Greek militia during the conflict. It was a good starting point, but she needed to know more. After the third such attack she decided to go right to the top.

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Karasuba walked into the mayor's office, dragging the mayor's bulky and heavily armed security guards after her one in each hand and threw them to the ground in front of the mayor's desk. "Hello" she said brightly, the translator on her jacket pocket translating as she spoke, "you're going to answer my questions now, or I'm going to slice off your arms."

The mayor looked up from his work, one hand moving toward a button that would summon more security, the other moving toward a gun hidden under his desk when the intruder flashed her MBI card. Realizing what it meant he paled visibly, bringing his hands up on top of the desk. He gestured her to a seat in front of his desk. She grinned and set on the desk instead fiddling with the hilt of her sword.

Regardless of her initial impression, the mayor's voice was calm and contained as he asked, "And what would a Sekirei be doing in Constantinople?"

Karasuba pulled out a picture of Minato and pushed it across the desk. "I'm looking for any information you can give me about this individual. His name is Minato, and he is of Japanese descent, and was apparently here on a two-year study abroad program before your troubles began. I want to know what he was doing while he was here."

The mayor picked up the picture and seemed to stare at it lost in thought for several minutes before pushing it back across the desk. He then leaned back and motioned to his two groaning guards to get up off the floor. "I was not directly involved in the conflict, so all I personally know about this fellow is that he was involved on both sides of the conflict and change from the Turkish side to the Greek. For any more information and especially for any accurate information, you would have to ask one of the militiamen who served with him during that time. Several of the old council members served with him, but they have all gone into hiding or simply don't want to be found. I can direct you to two areas of the city where your questions may be answered, so long as you ask the right person." He spouted out orders to one of the guards, who ran off and came back swiftly with a city map. He unfolded it on the mayor's desk and the other soldier came over and started marking areas on the map. "These three streets, especially, are areas where you may be able to find answers to your questions about Minato. If that's all I am a busy man, Ms., have a nice day." And with that he went back to his work.

Karasuba blinked in surprise that the abrupt dismissal but shrugged picked up the map and left. She could always

come back and kill the man later.

The next day she concentrated her search and the areas indicated on the map. Immediately she noticed that even in relation to the rest of the city, these streets were more crowded, and the individuals in them were all of Greek descent. And she noticed that she immediately picked up an unobtrusive tail of armed soldiers, soldiers who seemed a little better trained at remaining out of sight than the ones she had previously seen.

She began to ask questions and at first she had no luck whatsoever, either the people she was questioning did not answer, did not know, or simply walked away. She was beginning to be annoyed.

It was after a young man who she had just questioned scampered off that she heard a low chuckle behind her. Turning around she glared angrily at an old man, leaning up against a barrel and drinking something out of a mug outside what looked like a small bar. "You really don't know what's going on here do you? They don't have to see the weapon you're carrying girl, to know what you are. Your eyes tell what you are and everyone around here has seen too many people just like that to want anything to do with you."

Karasuba's already squinted eyes narrowed further. "Really? What I am? Or what I can do?"

The old man grunted. "To us there is little difference. Still, I'll answer your questions, pull up a chair." Karasuba's eyebrows shot upward in surprise. Then she shrugged pulled up another barrel and sat down across from the old man. She pushed the same picture across that she had shown the mayor and asked the same question.

The man took one look grunted and said, "I see, a very sore point with a lot of people, now that it's all over anyway. Feh, hypocrites all of them."

Karasuba began to smile her evil smile, fingering the blade she carried at her side. "If I don't get some clear-cut answers soon, I am going to become very irritated."

The old man looked her directly in the eyes and surprisingly there was no fear there. "I am sixty-five years old, joint pains, back pain, heart condition, dozens of wounds that all ache every night, I have no family and little money. What precisely could you do to threaten me? The answer is nothing. Sit still child and I will tell you what you want to know."

Karasuba looked at him for the moment, weighing in her mind the brief but intense satisfaction she would get from killing him to the problems it would cause in her search for answers before she reluctantly nodded her head. They began to talk, speaking about Minato and his time in the city giving a basic outline of it as Minato had given to his Sekirei and Matsu.

Karasuba's interest was piqued by the tale of blood and battle. Here was close in combat of the kind that none of the soldiers who'd invaded the island had wanted to try against her and the other Disciplinary Squad. "But why did Minato change sides in the first place?"

The old man nodded. It was as if he was a teacher acknowledging a good question from a pupil. "No one really knows. Only two people I know were close enough to Minato at the time to ask those questions, and they both died in the fighting."

"So he definitely took part in the fighting?"

"For the Persians a bit, for us a lot. We all took part in the fighting. Look at me, I'm old but I still took part in the fighting. It was part of being Greek. Fight for what we own, don't give an inch, and make them pay for everything they take."

The old man leaned back. "Can you imagine it? A young boy, all alone, changing sides and rising through the ranks on sheer ability? He was deadly with a gun even better with a knife or a sword. He won everyone's admiration from the beginning, and then he did the unthinkable. He won an argument with the senior commanders. I remember it well. The world powers didn't want to bother with this conflict. They had bigger fish to fry in Iraq and Iran, and with North Korea testing out a nuclear bomb. But they did want to keep the fighting in one region and demanded that Greece not send in its own troops, fearing that would end in a larger war, and 'knowing' that the Greek resistance had been the ones to start the conflict in the first place. For a short time Turkey had a complete embargo and blockade around the city. We swiftly began to hurt for ammunition, medical supplies and food."

"But there was a nearby army outpost we could strike with what little remaining ammunition we had to get more. However at the same time we were planning that operation we received information that a large band of refugees was going to escape the city. The Persians heard this too and were going to either turn them back or massacre them. All

the commanders were in agreement, the bullets were more important in the long run. Everyone but Minato. For some reason he was able to convince all the other commanders that protecting the refugee, was the right thing to do. We couldn't have done both. We didn't have enough ammunition to defend our portion of the city and launch an attack. But Minato convinced us to defend the column."

"I was there when someone else asked him 'how are we going to fight without ammunition?' Minato raised his knife, a knife just like this one." The old man pulled out a long knife, about 7 inches of serrated steel. "Minato had the balls to ask us 'you're Greek aren't you?' That decided it, we protected the refugees, they got out alive and for the next two weeks we had barely enough ammunition for some of our snipers to use, let alone our regular troops. We fought those weeks with knives, swords taken from atop hearths and museums, makeshift spears and makeshift bombs, lots of bombs."

He chortled darkly. "There's nothing like watching a Turk tank blow up when it rolls over an IED you personally made." He took a pull from his mug, some kind of dark, thick ale that Karasuba hadn't seen before. Putting it back down he went on, "Minato was right in the thick of it. We actually took territory in those two weeks with nothing but spirit and steel."

"A month after those civilians escaped they told their story on the worldwide news and got us the recognition we needed for the UN to break open the blockade and get us some weapons and food. Within a year and a half after that we had control of two thirds of the city and were pushing the damn Turks out. Then, their army got more involved, and we began to be pushed out of the territories we had claimed. That was a bad time, for both sides. We knew the city, were more experienced, and often better armed. The Turks had numbers and tanks."

"Then we captured a soldier who was part of a guard detail on one of their high-ranking officers. After we interrogated him, he sang like a bird about the initial assassination that had sparked the entire conflict. It wasn't us after all who had murdered their Prime minister, it was one of their own who wanted an excuse to push the conflict in the first place. At first we couldn't do anything with it so the violence continued but slowly, people began to gather evidence. Finally we had a name to go with the officer who was involved in the cabal. And with that, a way to possibly end the violence."

Here he briefly described the scene Matsu had tried to paint for her fellow Sekirei when she winged herself on Minato. "Can you imagine the courage that took? He walked out in front of an advancing company of troops, all of them are nervous, waiting for the shoe to drop with itchy trigger fingers. He walked out there armed only with a spatha and encased in old armor, something that would barely slow a modern bullet. And he just stared them down and said his piece, even as the officer who by some trick of fate was in charge of the brigade ordered him shot. He stood, delivered his message again and again until the soldiers again to actually listen. After that, it was all over bar the cleanup."

Karasuba stared off into the distance for a minute contemplating all she had heard before she got up without a word and began to walk away, soft laughter bubbling off her. Here at last was someone who could get her blood going. That wouldn't just bend over backwards or run away screaming but who actually would fight her, and his victory over her was in no way a fluke. *Minaka has no idea who is messing with. Minato is going to blow the Sekirei plan right out of the water, maybe even kill him personally. Now the question is can I get him to jump early and force Minaka's hand, or make him fail in some other way that forces Minaka to use the ship to intervene? Either way, I'm going to laugh as the entire world burns.*

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end chapter. Now Karasuba knows what Minato was doing. The question is, what will she do with the information. The next update will be posted on Sunday, look forward to it.

## **\*Chapter 13\*: Chapter 13 Retaliation**

I don't own Sekirei, if I did at least Higa would have met a dirty end by now, and well, what I have happening to a certain wife beater would have actually happened in the manga.

To the reviews:

*TeninChwang*: I'm sorry if you think my fights scenes are like a 'cheesy action movie'. Now go write your own. In terms of the whole kneecap issue, I did it that way on purpose. Karasuba is NOT HUMAN. No human could have walked away from that it's true, but a close combat Sekirei can take much more punishment, and work through far more pain than any human can. She also took several times more electricity than a normal human could have and was up and about the next day. Any close combat Sekirei has a healing factor almost as good as say Wolverine without the adamantium.

As to Karasuba dying there... what do you think Minaka would have done? Everything Minato had done up to that point was a indirect attack on his power, losing his most powerful guard would have been something he could never have taken lying down. It would have meant an all out war with MBI on one side and Miya and Minato on the other, with Minato already injured and unable to take part, and with Minaka using the ships weapons against them, or something more surgical and far more vile. In the end it would have forced a confrontation far sooner than he wanted to. Never make the mistake of making tactics a priority over strategy.

*Calamity Cordite*: Sorry you feel that way, as again I loved some of your stories. Looking back through the original series though, it's obvious most of Minato's Sekirei were reacting to him, not the other way around. Minato was just being nice to Musubi in the original and in my story, which made her react to him. The only two he reacted to were Tsukiumi (which really gives more credence to that shipping than any other) and Kusano via his dreams. Also, while the bond between husband and wife is the most powerful type of bond, there are other bonds out there. I don't think in the original Mutsu was attracted to Hayato after all, nor was Minato to Kusano. In my story I'm simply making the bond more malleable than in the original. What you get out of it is what you put in, and what you want to. Hence both the amount of WAFF moments, and Minato being firm on the types of bond Musubi and Kusano have with him.

*AbsoluteZero*: You were the only one who commented on my little joke. So sad.

*Zaralann*: thanks for correcting me about the Sekirei numbers. I'll go back and change them up probably next Thursday or so. I need to make certain I change all the other numbers to match, and the Sekirei wiki is a good resource. Though seeing the terminated designation next to Uzume still makes me want to cry.

*DemonAngel of Ice*: As always a good review and nice to hear from you. Thanks for the heads up on the name, as you'll see in this chapter I corrected it. I'll go back sometime this Thursday to change it in my previous chapters. And Minato took the info about his parents calmly because of what you mentioned and because he detests what Minaka and MBI are up to, the very idea his mother is willingly going along with it is more than enough to make him want nothing more to do with her.

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### **Chapter 13 Retaliation**

Two days after Chiho's rescue Minato and Musubi were out getting groceries together. With the number of Sekirei in the neighborhood it just made more sense to send the most physically powerful of them all to get groceries. Musubi could carry alone what two of the others could carry together.

Minato was in an introspective mood as the two walked along together. With the third stage knocking out the weaker players left and right, it would only be a matter of time before the fourth stage began, regardless of Kagari being winged or not. From his own and Akitsu's analysis Minaka was a megalomaniac of the highest form. Even with Kagari protected at Izumo house (he had not reacted to Yukari Sunday but he/she also hadn't made a decision yet), Minaka would probably push forward just to make it seem as if he was still in control of the game.

This was a point of view that Minato was having trouble seeing any truth in. More and more, it looked as if Minaka had simply been riding a tiger rather than being in control of its actions after he released the Sekirei out into the world. Higa's own actions regarding Uzume and her sick Ashikabi, as well as forcing other Ashikabi to follow him, and worse the growing number of civilians and bystanders leaving the city in droves pointed to a person who did not realize what he was going to create when he let loose the Sekirei. Or perhaps he didn't care, which was an even scarier thought. It raised the possibility that he thought this all was worth it in some way, either for the spectacle itself or something...

more.

But that was neither here nor there. With Matsu reporting daily of more and more of the bit players being taken out it would appear to be evolving into a five way battle between Minato, Shinishi, Higa, and Hayato, with MBI forming a fifth party. And unfortunately it looked as if any kind of deal between Minato and the others wasn't going to happen anytime soon. Minato's idea of creating a power block to take on MBI looked to be less and less realistic as the smaller players continued to be taken out or joined up with Higa.

He had initially thought that with the way the two Sekirei from Higa had been treated, that maybe he could persuade others into leaving their Ashikabi if they were treated poorly, but Akitsu and the others had shot that idea down. The indoctrination and connection the Sekirei had to their Ashikabi was so strong and the need to stay with him/her so powerful that no matter how the Sekirei was treated she would never willingly leave him or her unless first beaten and then removed forcibly from their presence, and even then it was something none of his Sekirei had ever thought would happen until they met Katsuragi Musubi in particular had trouble understanding why a Sekirei would want to leave their 'destined' Ashikabi, and it had taken a while to get her to understand why that was the case with their two guests. When she at last did understand, her anger about their treatment had been awe-inspiring, almost as if she had become a different person for a few minutes.

Minato was surprised that Higa hadn't responded yet to the severe losses he had sustained during the battles two nights ago. In fact, the silence from that sector was worrying.

Musubi knocked Minato out of his musings by shaking him roughly. Minato looked up and she indicated the street in front of them. Standing not 25 feet in front of them was a man and a woman barring their path. Minato thought *she's obviously a Sekirei, the big spear on her back sort of, you know is kind of a clue*. The Sekirei in question was of normal height, wearing a skirt and tight fitting top, with blonde hair and normal size breasts. To put it bluntly, other than the spear on her back, she was one of the most normal looking Sekirei Minato had thus far seen. The man next to her was of the same height, with brown hair and wearing black clothing and black glasses.

Musubi placed herself in front of Minato protectively as the man came forward hands up in sign of peace. Minato stepped to the side and stood next to Musubi, hands crossed over his chest, waiting for the other to speak first. Something about the way the guy stood was irritating him for some reason, sparking some memory of bullies from his high school years, the kind that would attack weakness ruthlessly but run away from a challenge.

After a few minutes trying to stare Minato down the man broke eye contact and asked "Are you Minato, Ashikabi of the North? Minato nodded, while wincing inside at the pretentious title, but he had long since realized it was kind of inevitable with the other three powerful Ashikabi having carved up the rest of the city between them. "Good. I represent a group of single Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs interested in escaping from the capital. We want you to join us. Or at least help us escape, like you did the small fry and the crybaby." He smirked at the nickname obviously expecting Minato to join in on the joke. He didn't.

Instead one eyebrow rose in query as the rest of Minato tensed, though Musubi thankfully hadn't gotten the reference. "Small fry?"

"You know; the idiot ronin and the one shot wonder, the girl with the screeching power." Minato cocked his head humming a little, he hadn't known that about Kuno, but the other man took that as encouragement and continued. "But they were smart at least, they ran away when they could. The third stage finally started recently right? And now things are starting to get dangerous even for Ashikabi. The guys from the south, west and east with all their powerful Sekirei are fighting all the time so it's impossible for us with single Sekirei to remain in the game. So a bunch of us got together and we've decided to run away. I mean, we've all tried, but now that there's no chance of our winning we just want to get out of here."

Minato sneered coldly. "You say you've taken on some small fry before, you say you wanted to fight when you thought you had a chance, but now you don't want to? When the stakes of this damn game becomes a little too dangerous for you, you want to run away? And you want me to help you did, fuck no. I'll help those who can't help themselves, but I'm not going to help those who were bullies and have suddenly found that they're not the biggest bully on the block."

The Ashikabi gritted his teeth at Minato's contemptuous tone, and looked to the side at his Sekirei then paled as a shout echoed from a few streets over. "Damn it, your directions are two damn vague, which street is the rogue Ashikabi on again?" Minato jolted, recognizing the voice of the Scarlet Sekirei.

The man and the spear wielding Sekirei both flinched. "Crap, they're onto us, let's get out of here!" The two of them ducked down an alleyway and raced off leaving Minato standing there shaking his head and Musubi with her head

cocked to one side looking confused.

A minute later Benitsubasa jumped down from a roof on the other side of the street and stopped looking at Minato in shock. "Y-you two can't be the two who are leading the attempt to get out of the city are you?"

"Hell no," Minato said bluntly. "They went down that alleyway over there. Have fun, I absolutely hate bullies, and petty bullies at that. How are things going with you and your Ashikabi by the way? Oh, and what's the mad dog up to these days?"

Benitsubasa flinched at his cavalier way of referring to Karasuba. "You do know she's going to kill you, probably slowly, right? Ugh, and as for my Ashikabi and I, it's none of your fucking business, we're not friends, like you said that was a one night truce on neutral ground, nothing more."

Minato shrugged. "Well, if you want to set up a rematch or anything, I'm certain MBI can figure out some way to contact me."

Benitsubasa looked at Musubi who was jumping up and down in excitement at the very idea, and visibly restraining herself from jumping right into it. Just the sight of those tits bouncing up and down made her want to slap the tit monster silly, but she had a job to do first, damn it. "Hmmmph, I'll think about it, right now I got a job to do. Some other time giant tits!" With that Benitsubasa took to the rooftops again, chasing after the fleeing pair.

Later that night Minato's decision to not help other Sekirei to leave the city sparked a bit of a debate during the normal communal dinner. While Tsukiumi, Musubi and Akitsu were all in agreement that he did the right thing, Kazehana and Miya both thought that he should have agreed to help the Sekirei escape. Uzume thought he did the right thing, while Chiho would have agreed to at least talk to the others, in hopes that they were different from their spokesperson. It was surprisingly Matsu who put an end to the discussion, pointing out that MBI had revamped their security protocols and defensive cordon since the escape. Since then not a single Sekirei had been able to escape the city.

Matsu had also broken into MBI's database and looked up some of the Sekirei who had already escaped during the second stage, and twelve out of the fifteen that had escaped had already been recovered, though thankfully Kuno and her Ashikabi was not among them. This rather grim news put a damper on the night and everyone broke up and went their separate ways. Miya in particular was hit hard by this news, and went to bed early, her mind clouded with guilt and worry.

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For the normal citizens of the city, the next four days of the third stage of the Sekirei plan were disastrous. Every day fights broke out between Sekirei and sometimes even between the more powerful Ashikabi. With Matsu's skill in hacking, Minato and the others were able to watch some of these battles. Not only were they destructive in terms of damage to the Sekirei involved, but the city was being torn to pieces. In one fight for example, two of Hayato's Sekirei took on one Sekirei who could do some kind of beam based gravity attack. While the two other Sekirei could dodge, the gravity attack destroyed seven entire buildings large and small before the other Sekirei was taken out. The death toll from this one fight was fifty and counting as the rubble was cleared.

The citizens of Tokyo learned their lessons quickly and soon the mass exodus of individuals leaving the city, including people who had a vested interest in staying was unstoppable. Only a few schools kept their doors open and none of them had more than a hundred students all told. Small and medium businesses, those with no connection to MBI, shut down entirely as their workers and owners left, and most of the MBI run stores lost personnel as well. Food and other comestibles became scarce, but thankfully Miya and Akitsu had begun hoarding weeks before just in case of something like this.

Needless to say, there were those who attempted to take advantage of the chaos and looting and arson began wherever someone thought they could get away with it. To the criminal's dismay however they soon learned this was not a smart plan. In the North, South and West this violence was shut down quickly and brutally by Minato's Sekirei and the other powerful Ashikabi. Minato chipped in too and became known for his brutal nature almost as well as his Sekirei. In the East, it never started. Higa had been proactive in recruiting yakuza to work with him and they shut down any rogue looting before it could begin.

Through all of this MBI's troops were a practical nonentity. They were able to maintain check points at the subway and train stations but they didn't have enough troops to form foot patrols or keep peace in the city. With most of the police force either ordered to help MBI troops at these checkpoints or fled, that left only the Ashikabi preserving order. By the end of the two weeks the third stage had been in place, Minato estimated that more than 4/5 of the cities remaining population had given up and left. That was true even in his area, where he and his Sekirei had been very active in keeping the peace. Apparently the mysterious lights had helped scare off quite a lot of people but Minato

couldn't bring himself to be sorry about that...

The end result of this was that in the entire neighborhood around Izumo house only Minato's family remained. During this mass exodus Musubi and the two captured Sekirei had made quite a name for themselves helping people load up all of their property to leave. Minato himself was well regarded as well for his aid, and two of the families around Izumo house had leased their houses to him. One, an ex-police officer put it to him bluntly. "Whatever happens, Tokyo isn't going to go back to what it was before this madness started, not for a long time. I'd rather have the house owned and protected by someone like you than own it myself without being able to protect it and having to trust in whoever controls the city to do it for me." Minato acquiesced to this, and began to think of plans of what he could use the extra houses for. After all, he had heard Miya say a time or two that she had always wanted to enlarge her yard.

He had offered to put Shiina and Yukari up in one of them but as her college was still open she had refused for now. If/when it closed down though she would definitely be joining them. Until then she was able to live her own life, and participate in the game on her terms, something she thought she was hiding from him. Because of Matsu however he knew that she had actually taken out two other Sekirei from the game. Needless to say he was of two minds about this. On the one hand he felt a little bit of pride because she and her Sekirei were so good. On the other was his fears about what happened to the defeated Sekirei after they were taken by MBI.

During this time, Minato stepped up the training of all of his Sekirei. Every day one would be on patrol with Matsu watching on high, navigating her to trouble spots in their territory while the other two would be training and the fourth discretely watching over Yukari. The two captured Sekirei helped with patrolling as often as they could, though neither was up to going out alone. It was obvious that their lack of a bond had severely weakened both of them. While they were still far faster and stronger than the human norm, they were nowhere near as fast as Musubi the other close combat type, or even Minato's other Sekirei. However they did make for good training against Minato himself, something that surprised everyone. Unfortunately this time of relative peace would end soon.

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Izumi Higa leaned back in his plush leather chair sighing deeply as he looked at his assistant standing before him with one of his eyes swollen shut, his glasses shattered and one arm in a sling. The man looked as if he had been put through the ringer, which in a way he had. Just because Uzume hadn't killed him hadn't stopped her from beating him up a little before tying him up. His Sekirei was already on her feet of course but Kakizaki himself would be of limited use for a few weeks until his ribs and other injuries healed. It had taken him four days just to get over the concussion he had to give his report. Report done now, he was relieved when Higa waved him out of the office without a reprimand coming his way.

Nothing in Higa's body language or countenance gave away the boiling rage within. Not only had his search for number 6 been thwarted, but he had lost a valuable pawn in Uzume and her Ashikabi. On the same night one of his strongholds was attacked and one of his own personal Sekirei taken along with the dying Ashikabi whose care he had been using to control Uzume. It would do no good to complain about the theft of his property again, the last complaint had not produced any effect after all. In fact Higa was beginning to wonder how much control of the game the so-called game master Minaka really had. When he was on top things would be run much more efficiently.

Higa leaned back in his chair thinking. *The ungrateful bitch's defection is immaterial in comparison to the loss of Uzume. She was a very valuable tool, able to operate outside the rules and in areas where the rest of my forces could not. She cost my adversaries in the west and south several Sekirei each and would have been the best tool to weaken Sahashi, placed as she was right next to him in the inviolate Izumo house. And according to Kakizaki was her betrayal during the fight last night that allowed Sahashi's Sekirei to win. Before that he seems to have had things well in hand.*

*But at least she won't be around for long, her Ashikabi, what was her name, Chi-Chi, Chisato, something or other, won't live for more than a week without medical care. And in this city, medical care at that level means either me or MBI. MBI won't help anyone associated with Sahashi, he's angered Minaka too much for that to happen, even if he could pay for the treatment without using the MBI card.*

On the injury side of the ledger, the other Sekirei on guard duty at the time of the break in would be back in fighting form by tomorrow at the latest. His other Sekirei that had been active in the search for #5, Oriha, was going to be in the hospital for at least another day even with her accelerated healing powers, but was already clamoring for a chance to once more prove her worth to him.

Truthfully he didn't like any of his Sekirei, their need to prove themselves and constant craving for attention disgusted him no end. Each of them seemed to imagine he had some sort of special relationship with them, but he saw them as he saw everyone else, as mere tools to be used for his own advancement. They were powerful, useful tools, both in

the bounds of the Sekirei plan and outside it, but that was all. In Oriha's case, she had failed him twice and thus moved in his mind from being a useful tool to a liability, and he was starting to think about how to best discard her to his advantage.

But his other tools, his 'allies' Sekirei, had been damaged even more than his own. Two concussions to Yui's Sekirei and the other sustaining near terminal injuries in the fight were a sharp price to pay for no return.

No matter how one looked at it the night had been an unmitigated disaster. *A disaster*, he mused thoughtfully, *that must be redressed in some fashion*. After a few more moments of thought, he reached for the intercom on his desk, calling his secretary. "Get me our contact at Tokyo University, and schedule an appointment with our yakuza contact for this evening if possible."

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Yukari sighed stretching her arms above her head and cracking her neck explosively. Her first semester at Tokyo University was going well, despite the city being disrupted more and more by the Sekirei plan. Life on campus continued regardless, thought with far less people around. The prices for food had skyrocketed with so few people remaining to make it, and the prices for books had dropped with so few buying them. One thing had not changed however; the workload was still a bitch.

*Though the company is good at least*. With that thought she looked over at Shiina who was reheating some takeout from the other night. Today she had allowed him to wear normal clothing, having been too busy with tests and essays lately to have enough energy to cosplay with him. But hopefully this weekend she'd be able to make up for it. Right now, however, she was just looking forward to a nice, relaxing massage, a long bath, and some decent takeout.

Her thoughts were shattered however as the window of her little apartment blew inward, sending flying glass everywhere.

Luckily her desk was against the far wall from the window, and Shiina was in the kitchen protected by the bar that separated it from the rest of the apartment. Because of this Yukari only received a few cuts on her arms and side from flying glass.

Before Yukari could understand what was going on, four Sekirei appeared in the now open window and jumped inside the apartment. One was the Sekirei that Akitsu had disabled the day before at the hospital, the short haired woman was wielding her broadsword as she moved in. Another was a short woman, with spiked out hair going in all directions with small metal points affixed to each spike and wielding long serrated daggers in both of her hands. Another, whose body was built on the same lines as Musubi but with green hair instead of brown, had her hands encased in metal gauntlets.

No words were spoken as three of the four advanced only to be met by Shiina coming forward. The first, the one built like Musubi ran right into his power, clothing disintegrating and body arching in pain as a wave of death force slammed into her. The woman fell away out of the fight, but Shiina was forced to retreat as the other two closed in on him. This left one to attack Yukari, which she did without hesitation.

The last Sekirei had no visible weapon but one appeared as the others charged forward. She had a weapon much like the two Sekirei paired with the teacher Ashikabi from the incident in the north, but in her case it was energy whips that appeared in her hands rather than swords or a bow and arrow.

As her weapons appeared she used one to wrap around Yukari's left arm and pull the college student toward her. Yukari screamed in pain from the energy of the whip burning her arm and screamed again as another whip formed in the woman's other arm and lashed forward wrapping around her right leg and lifting her into the air.

His Ashikabi's cry of pain pulled from where he was fighting the other three, dodging their blows and giving back mini blasts of his death energy. Without thinking about it he jumped to the side, grabbing each energy whip with his hands where they were wrapped around Yukari. Again, a full wave of entropic energy rolled out but instead of shattering or dissipating the energy whip the other Sekirei's energy began fighting Shiina's energy.

The two he had been fighting were about to take advantage of his being locked in combat with their comrade when Kazehana appeared in the destroyed window. Unbeknownst to Yukari, Minato had set up a permanent rotation of guarding Sekirei over his sister after Karasuba's attack on him. He knew she would be irritated by this, but felt it was well worth it to ensure her safety.

Today's attack however had come as a surprise, with the afternoon guard Tsukiumi leaving early, still dealing with her injuries and only working half a normal shift. Kazehana was her replacement but had not yet been in place when the

combat began, having just come off a shift 'guarding' Minato at his current worksite. It was only with her wind-enhanced hearing ability that she had heard the combat at all and been able to join the fight before it became too late.

Of course this had been part of the plan, Kochou having informed Kakizaki and Higa about the guard placed on Yukari, and the attackers had waited for a time when there wasn't a guard nearby to strike. Higa had decided to attack Yukari, going for what he, in his humano-centric view, thought was the more important target, but sent four Sekirei just in case the guard did interfere.

With a single blast of air Kazehana threw all three of the enemy combatants that were on their feet against and then through the far wall. As she did the one locked in combat with Shiina gasped and fell to the ground, her whips dissipating as Shiina's power overcame her. Wasting no time on words and realizing that other enemies may be nearby Kazehana jumped forward and picked Yukari up off the ground, running with her back towards the window. Shiina followed immediately and the two escaped through the open window out onto the balcony and from there onto the roof.

Shaking their heads dazedly the three Sekirei still in the fight pulled themselves together and gave chase, joined shortly thereafter by the first one taken out by Shiina.

The chase lasted the entire length of the Tokyo University campus, with the unburdened enemy Sekirei slowly catching up. Shiina took Yukari from Kazehana as the wind user halted on a rooftop and turned, preparing to hold their pursuers off while Shiina kept going.

The four halted suddenly on a nearby rooftop when they nearly ran into Mutsu, who appeared calmly walking out of the maintenance entrance. The close combat Sekirei all backed off slightly. All four knew him to be Sekirei number 5, and therefore not someone they wanted to mess with, especially with two of them already badly injured and exhausted. The knife wielding one stepped forward and asked "Why are you getting in our way?!"

Mutsu shook his head fingering the hilt of his sword. "One of the earliest rules of this game was that every university in the city was supposed to be a no-go zone. And here I find four Sekirei, possibly more, allied to Higa breaking that rule. What am I supposed to do about this? For now, I think I'll just stop you from chasing after Kazehana and the others. And you can tell your master that my master will have **words** with him."

The four Sekirei were torn. They knew that going back empty-handed would mean that they would be punished severely. But they also knew they had no chance against Mutsu. Mutsu simply stood there waiting their decision outwardly relaxed and calm. After a few seconds hesitation, the four Sekirei retreated.

Mutsu shook his head looking after them as behind him Kazehana and Shiina began moving again, Kazehana not even stopping to say hello to her old friend, too worried about Yukari to care.

Hayato had wanted a chance to tweak Higa because of the latter's use of the veiled Sekirei to break the rules of the game and had several of his allied Ashikabi followed by paid informers. Despite this, it was mostly luck that Mutsu had been in the area, picking up some pizza for Hayato and the other Sekirei (only a Sekirei could carry the amount of pizza they had ordered and he had lost the poker game... damn games of chance) at a restaurant adjacent to the campus when the watcher had spotted him and told him what was going on. *This is not going to end well. We should be concentrating on our own preparations, not picking a fight with one of the other strongest Ashikabi's out there. I can only hope Higa will keep his focus on Sahashi instead of us.*

Without another thought, he turned and jumped away, heading back south to report to his Ashikabi. He would end up being both praised for his swift intervention and yelled at for forgetting the pizza.

Unbeknownst to any of the combatant's one of the college students walking by on the campus below had noted everything that it occurred, and was already on his phone to his friend West.

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At around the same time that Yukari was attacked, Minato and his current guarding Sekirei Akitsu were having their own difficulties. Work had just ended, and the two decided to take their time going home, walking home via the streets rather than taking the Sekirei express™. Minato and Akitsu walked along, arms around one another, basking in one another's presence and the peace of the moment.

Their peaceful time ended abruptly as five college age thugs slinked out of a nearby alley to block their path. Behind them another man came out of a doorway along with a Sekirei. She was clad in what was obviously the adult cosplay version of a sailor suit, showing far too much thigh and too much of her scant cleavage to be anything else. Over one shoulder she carried a truly massive hammer.

Knowing that surprise was the most important thing and looking to maximize it she rushed forward without any warning bringing her hammer around at Akitsu and using her norito immediately. "#84 Yashima! The hammer of my pledge, shatter the enemy of my Ashikabi! Gravity Hammer!"

Akitsu, despite being surprised by the suddenness of the assault, brought her hand up and created a wall of ice which took the brunt of the hammer blow. The two stood locked together there, Akitsu calmly holding her ice shield in place, renewing it second to second under the pressure of her enemy's norito attack, slowly putting more of her power into it.

Behind her the five toughs closed in on Minato, who rather than retreating to stand by his Sekirei as they expected him to stood calmly waiting for them. To the backdrop of ice cracking and the continued grinding of hammer on ice behind them the lead tough said. "Nothing personal kid, but you pissed off a close friend of ours and we're here ta pound ya for him."

Minato calmly changed his stance, bringing his hands up to a guard position. "Just bring it you cretins."

The five immediately attacked throwing punches and trying to grab him. But Minato had played this game in a much harder school, and his attacks weren't meant just to injure or land on his opponent, they were surgical, crippling and precise, and he was far, far stronger than his enemies thought.

Minato ducked under the first haymaker, grabbed a boot as it came up to his face and twisted hard, slamming his other fist into the side of his opponents kneecap. He dropped that foot and rolled away as the man fell to the ground screaming over his now crippled leg. Minato came out of his roll as another of the toughs went to kick him in the side. Again he dodged, his return blow landing straight on the nose and cheekbone of the other man, breaking both and knocking him out.

Minato grunted as a blow landed from behind him into his side. Twisting he captured the next punch to his side with his own arm, twisting even further to deliver an elbow blow to the man's armpit. Feeling something give under the blow he finished up by grabbing the other man's trapped arm with both of his own and hammer throwing him over his back and into a nearby brick wall.

Another punch landed on Minato's face, catching him in the eye even as he automatically rolled with the force of it. The other man moved quickly in an effort to capitalize on his advantage but Minato dodged the next punch and returned a kick to the stomach that drove all the wind out of the man, sending him backward on his knees. A swift follow up kick to the head sent him sprawling backward, unconscious and possibly dead with his neck broken.

As that kick landed the last man was able to follow his fellow's earlier success by again getting behind Minato and landing two punches to his back and side. Minato grunted in pain but turned quickly kicking out and catching the other man on the ankle. One hammer blow to the now off balance man's head and the fight was over.

Truly over, as Akitsu's staying power had outlasted Yashima's norito attack, much to her own well hidden surprise and her opponent's dismay. Before Yashima could recover her form enough to swing her hammer again, Akitsu's power struck, freezing her in a pillar of ice. Her hammer fell out of her frozen hands and she watched helplessly as it, the true target of Akitsu's ice attack, shattered like glass as it hit the pavement.

Akitsu immediately turned to see if Minato was alright, and internally breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of all his attackers on the ground in various states of disrepair. He in turn looked at her with concern having heard her opponent's incantation and fearing the worse. Quickly realizing what had happened he smiled, pulling her in to kiss her on the lips, whispering as the wings of their shared bond bloomed around them, "Magnificent my love. Just magnificent."

Akitsu blushed slightly, her equivalent of blushing bright red, though even the light blush was noticeable on her pale white skin as she looped her arm around his waist. "Ahh... You too husband. Are you alright?"

"A few bruises, a black eye, nothing serious. The question now is what to do with these two." He gestured with his free arm, taking in the frozen Sekirei and her Ashikabi.

He still stood glaring hatefully at them, secure in the knowledge that harming an Ashikabi was against the rules, not thinking how his own actions made a mockery of that rule. "Fucking useless whore!" He scowled at Yashima. "Of all the Sekirei I could have bonded too, I get the weakest little slut of the bunch! Seriously, first that mad bitch beats you, and not a day after you're healed you lose again!"

Minato glared at him. "Akitsu, who are these two?"

Akitsu stopped glaring at the Ashikabi and turned her gaze to Yashima for a moment, trying to recall the Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs she had researched over the past few days with Matsu. "Ahh.... Junichi Tanigawa and #84 Yashima. Has only one Sekirei, recently fired from his job as sales clerk at a music store. Known to be very abusive of his Sekirei in public, up to and including physical beatings."

Minato's eyes narrowed dangerously but Junichi still didn't realize what danger he was in. "Yeah so what, she's my property, I can treat her however I want!"

Minato's fist lashed out catching him in the gut and driving the breath out of his body, doubling him over to meet a knee to the face which put him out like a light. "NO," Minato said coldly. "she isn't and no, you can't."

Yashima yelled out from her frozen prison in protest, but couldn't move as Akitsu summoned a large boulder of ice and slammed it down on her head. Minato nodded at her before turning back to stare down at the knocked out Ashikabi. "Now... what to do with you?" He turned to survey his still groaning and moaning attackers. "Akitsu, could you freeze all of these gentlemen? I need time to think of an appropriate punishment for this cruel bastard."

Akitsu complied swiftly, while Minato looked down contemplatively at Junichi. After a moment, he grinned a particularly evil grin. "I'm going to need a knife, some rope, a large piece of cardboard and a marker, and an overhang." Akitsu obediently went to rifle the thug's pockets, coming back with a knife, and a few feet of rope, which probably had been meant to be used on Minato, while Minato went to a nearby grocery store to get the other supplies.

Twenty minutes later the two continued toward Izumo house and home. Behind them they left Junichi tied up and hanging by his hands from the railing of an overhang which went over a street that was still busy with cars leaving the city. He was naked save for a sign that was tied around his neck and hung down to cover his chest and tiny boy parts. On the cardboard in large letters was written the words 'honk if you hate abusers'. Carved lightly into his chest, hidden from view was the word 'loser', and below that his dick was in a small tourniquet, with a small amount of blood, denoting what else Minato had done with the knife. He had to have Akitsu freeze his head in solid ice for the procedure to keep him knocked out due to lack of air, but in the end it was worth it.

As they walked away the honking of car horns began. It would continue until a few MBI soldiers were called in to remove the vile thing. When they did and the identity of the man was discovered, both Higa and Minaka would be very angry though for different reasons.

Not that this mattered to Akitsu or her husband, who were in good spirits despite Akitsu carrying Yashima, another Sekirei who had been violated by her Ashikabi. Their good mood did not last more than two minutes once they reached home.

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Kazehana had directed Shiina to the small doctor's office that Miya had pointed the family out to for their physicals. The doctor, who had stayed in the city out of a sense of civic duty, was still seeing to her injuries when Minato reached home, and immediately left again after leaving Yashima with Miya with all of his other Sekirei to meet the trio there. When the doctor came out he was startled by the crowd which had gathered to hear his report but got over it quickly.

The prognosis was grim. Yukari had second degree burns on both her left arm and right leg from the energy whip, as well as several gashes on both arms and her left side from the glass of her window that had required stitches. The doctor was able to treat everything, but Yukari would be bed ridden for a little under a month recovering. Shiina on the other hand, was only suffering from exhaustion. The doctor informed them that Yukari could recover just as well anywhere else as in a hospital and asked them to take her someplace else. This wasn't cowardice so much as prudence. He wanted to stay neutral in relation to the Sekirei plan, he was one of the few small practice doctors still in the city and his neutrality was important.

The doctor gave stern instructions on the range of movement Yukari was allowed and not allowed, prescriptions for burn lotions and heavy duty pain relievers and then he let her brother, Shiina and the others take her away on a special wheelchair so heavily dosed with pain killers that she couldn't feel a thing.

Minato and his wives went out to get the medicine while the rest of the family went back to Izumo house with Shiina and Yukari.

As they roof hopped along with Kazehana carrying Minato, Tsukiumi, who was still a little sore from her fight over the 'toy store', lagged behind a little. "Are we just going to sit back and take this Minato? Higa has attacked you and your sister, flagrantly disregarding the Sekirei plan's rules! I for one don't want to sit back and let him dictate what happens

next!"

Minato's voice was cold fury as he replied. "No, we're not going to take this lying down. But we need to wait until a target presents itself. Running off half-cocked will only get us into trouble without bothering Higa. Right now, let's just concentrate on protecting our area and letting Yukari heal while Matsu, Akitsu and myself go over our information on Higa and see what kind of weaknesses we can find. Only then will we strike back."

Tsukiumi looked rebellious for a moment, but nodded eventually. Minato noticed this and motioned the others to go ahead, while he and Tsukiumi waited where they were for them to return with the medicine. Minato put his arms around his temperamental wife's shoulders. "Tsukiumi, I know that you want to be doing something to get back at Higa for this, so do I. But hurting Higa won't magically make Yukari heal any faster, and if we go after him now, I'm willing to lay odds he'd be ready for us, and I don't want to see any of us get hurt in a pointless fight."

Tsukiumi buried her face in his shoulder for a moment before stepping back. "I know that, it doesn't make me any less angry though. But there is something else that's bothering me." Minato motioned for her to continue and she went on slowly still thinking it through herself. "Except for the breakout with Kuno and her Ashikabi, everything we have done has been reactive in nature. Even when we rescued Chiho it was mostly because she was Uzume's Ashikabi. We haven't really hurt Higa himself that much, and we haven't done anything really to hurt MBI in any way. I don't like being on the defensive so much, it puts the initiative in their hands and that worries me. Today's attacks could have been much worse, even crippling if Higa had decided to devote more resources to them. We can't let him keep choosing the time and place of our battles."

Minato looked at her, admiration shining in his eyes. He nodded. "That's true, and it's mostly been my fault we haven't been more active against Higa. I've wanted to, but I also wanted to stay under MBI's radar for a time and let you all train as much as possible. But you're right, we need to take the initiative away from him, that's the only way we have a chance against his numerical superiority."

Tsukiumi nodded, looking at her husband reflectively. He cocked his head and asked "What?"

"You once said you could tell immediately that Katsuragi had been abused yes?" Minato nodded grimly. "Do you think you would be able to spot that during a fight?"

Minato nodded. "With Katsuragi to give me some description of the others she knows who were treated the same, yes."

"Then promise me something Minato." Tsukiumi's voice came out hard as steel. "Promise me that those Sekirei who are with that bastard of their own free will, the ones who helped him do that to their sisters and attacked Yukari, we show no mercy."

Minato looked at her silently for a moment before reaching out and gently tracing her cheek with a gentle hand. "I love you, you know, my fierce Valkyrie. Every day I spend with you and the others makes me realize that more and more. And your sense of justice is just one of the many things I love about you." His touch stayed gentle even as his voice hardened to match her own. "Yes my lady, I promise that there will be no mercy for those who willingly stand with the rapist Higa."

Tsukiumi nodded enfolding Minato in a hug. The two stood there silently holding one another until Kazehana and Akitsu returned with the medicine for Yukari.

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Back at Izumo house, it was a very angry group that met that night. Yukari was now staying precisely where her brother wanted her to, in the same house he had offered to her two days earlier, but not in the manner he wanted her to arrive. Minato and the others were all in agreement that this attack on Yukari had been in direct retaliation for their freeing Uzume from Higa's control, as well as the losses his group had sustained when trying to track down Kagari. Even Miya, who for years had been content with staying on the sideline of the war was angry beyond all reason at the flagrant abuse of power by Higa.

Luckily the removal of Yashima's norito went without a hitch when she woke up. The knowledge that her weapon was destroyed and that she would never have to fight again as well as being away from her Ashikabi left her crying tears of relief. This time it was Musubi who erased her crest, her face more serious than anyone had ever seen it.

Akitsu and Minato spent the evening going over targets and information in an attempt to find a way to retaliate against Higa for this attack. Unfortunately, their plans kept on running into a wall named Kochou, the only other brain type Sekirei still in the game, who was doing all she could to confuse things and defend her Ashikabi's holdings. They

were only able to identify a few more of his allies, and unfortunately most of them lived too far for a quick strike to take them out. The only one that wasn't was problematic for another reason, but may still turn out to be viable.

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Yukari woke up to pain, a lot of pain and with an unfamiliar ceiling above her. It took her a moment to remember what happened and she tried to sit up only to fall back as a strong hand on her stomach pressed her back down. "Stay put Yukari, you're not going anywhere for a bit."

She squinted her eyes blearily at the blue and brown blob that was sitting next to her bed. "Oni-chan?"

"Yep, how you feeling kid?"

"Ughh, horrible. How bad was I hurt?"

Minato gently lifted her head up enough to put a small pill in her mouth then let her sip from a glass of water, then helped her sit up slowly. "Second degree burns on your arm and leg, some cuts that needed stitching, that'll be the tightness and itchy feeling you've got from your left side. On the other hand" he went on smirking down at her "I don't have to convince you to move in with us here in the north anymore."

"Ughhhh." Yukari groaned, looking around the room. It was bare with only the bed, a folding chair and a small side table next to the bed. The walls had very nice wallpaper, and the room was clean, just empty. Near the door she saw Kazehana placing a blanket over a snoozing Shiina who was sitting in another folding chair. "Where are we?"

"You remember me trying to talk you into moving in up here a few days ago? This is one of the houses that's empty now. And before you ask, no, we're not sending anyone back to get your stuff, it's too dangerous."

Yukari frowned. "I thought that Minaka said universities and schools were no-go zones for fighting, what the heck happened?"

"Yeah, well Minaka **said** a lot of things, turns out most of the games rules are merely guidelines really. As for you being targeted I don't know, it was probably because of your connection with me, the only thing I can't understand is how Higa knew to send some of his Sekirei after you rather than some of his gang-banging buddies. I mean it's not like...." He stared down at Yukari who had turned her face away staring out the window guiltily. "Yukari... is there something you want to say to me?"

"Uhm, well, er, you know I have Shiina right, so we um, sometimes went out and fought other single Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs, I mean isn't that what we were supposed to do, and um I mean, we won a bit of money too..." She wilted under Minato's glare.

Kazehana moved over and put a restraining hand on Minato's shoulder. Reaching up to take it in his own he slowly counted to ten before speaking between clenched teeth, deeply regretting his decision to respect his little sisters privacy by not having Matsu keep tabs on her. "This is not a game Yukari, regardless of what you think or whatever MBI is trying to force everyone to think. People have died, there have been literally trillions of yen in damages! Did you think the city was emptying because people were visiting their relatives or something?!"

"W-well I knew about the damage being done. If I didn't have Shiina I'd probably leave too, if I didn't have classes anyway. B-but what do you mean people have died, theres been nothign about that in the news?"

"Over one hundred-seventy-five civilians and ten MBI troopers have died from getting caught up in Sekirei fights or been specifically targeted by an Ashikabi since the start of the third stage. One Ashikabi and Sekirei pair were 'removed from the game' because they were targeting civilians as well as other pairs, mainly ex-bosses and girlfriends." Minato said bluntly. That removal had been done by Haihane, and when Matsu found out and told him Minato had been tempted to send her an anime set or something as thanks for actually doing her job. He hadn't because he figured MBI would probably not let anything from him near her, but he had bought a set as a gift for the next time he saw the claw wielding Sekirei.

"Thanks to MBI controlling the news networks, the papers and the vast majority of utilities and cable networks, that news hasn't spread yet, but rumors and gossip can't be stopped. Matsu was able to find the numbers because of her hacking skills, and we've been trying to get it out there on the net but MBI is really clamping down hard on information. And second, you don't have any classes any more. Tokyo U has closed down citing the attack on you and the 'ongoing disturbance of the Sekirei plan'. MBI tried to bribe them to stay open but the attack on you was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Yukari paled at the first part of what her brother said, but then groaned aloud at the second but Minato went on inexorably, lifting the sheet so Yukari could see where she was bandaged. "And because you didn't listen to me about how serious this game is once these bandages come off, you're going to have nearly as many scars as me. Congratulations." Yukari looked down at her arm and side in dismay and Minato sighed, anger dissipating.

He reached out and pulled her into a gentle hug, and Yukari sniffled against his shoulder for a few minutes. Searching for something to cheer her up Minato smiled. "Don't think you're going to get away without work little sister, in fact I think I have a project I want you to work on."

Yukari looked up at him quizzically. "A project, what do you mean?"

"You said you were going to be a landscape designer right?" Yukari nodded, and Minato grinned. After explaining what he wanted, Yukari started to smile, then grin happily while behind Minato, Kazehana looked at him in shock and growing approval.

---

Minato left his sister there, going over to Izumo house and up to Kagari's room. He knocked, but receiving no reply he opened the door and went inside the host's room. What was inside was slightly surprising. First there were a few fantasy novels in a small bookcase on one wall, and on the opposite wall was a large map of Tokyo, with the borders between the four sections denoted in different colors. On the double sized bed Kagari was sleeping the covers thrown to the side and his shirt undone. Luckily his body had gone back to normal, and thus his state of undress was amusing rather than embarrassing.

A small lamp on a bedstead drew his eye for a moment. It was one of those lava lamp things, and he shook his head, he'd never have thought Kagari would like something like that. Underneath it was a picture, and Minato, unable to stop himself, moved over to look at it. The picture was of Kagari, dressed in his suit that he wore to work, and a female American soldier with her arms locked around his neck in a headlock. She had short hair of course, and she looked tough, but still pretty. On the picture was written 'Buenas dias man-whore! Next time you get to be the bitch! Love, Allison'.

Minato smirked, shaking his head. Reaching down he shook Kagari awake.

Kagari awoke with a gasp, looking around wildly. Minato backed away just in case. "Yo, you said you wanted to see if you reacted to Yukari, she's awake now, do you want to try now?"

Kagari nodded, pushing up out of bed and absently buttoning his shirt. "Yes, thanks for waking me. Let me just grab some coffee and I'll head over with you."

Minato nodded and waited until they were in the kitchen with Miya, who smiled in welcome, to ask "So, who's Allison, and why do you have her picture?" Kagari's blushing stuttering response brought twin evil smiles to Minato and a suddenly intrigued Miya.

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An hour of solid teasing and twenty minutes of travel after leaving Kagari with his sister found Minato looking through the gate of Saint Abigail Girls school located right on the rather tenuous border between his territory and Higa's. He was here for a specific reason, and one he hoped would not actually end in violence, though he had Kazehana and Tsukiumi standing by. He had left Akitsu in charge back home, and Uzume was helping Musubi, Chizuru and Katsuragi to patrol their territory.

His eyes narrowed as he saw the school let out. About fifteen minutes later he saw a woman that matched the description Tsukiumi gave him of Yui Monotori and her Sekirei, Saki and Kana come out of the school together. As they cleared the press of bodies near the entrance he walked over to them. "Monotori-sensei, ladies, may I have a moment of your time?"

Kana and Saki turned from their own discussion and took up positions on either side of their Ashikabi as she replied, head cocked to one side. "Hai, may I ask who you are?"

Minato bowed deeply. "Minato Sahashi, so-called Ashikabi of the North." As all three women stiffened in response he went on calmly "As you can see My Sekirei are not with me, though they are close." He grimaced, "They seem to think I can't defend myself, but I'm here just to talk."

Yui cocked her head to one side, waving away Kana and Saki's attempt to get between them. "If you wish to talk Sahashi-san, I am willing to listen, though what we could have to say to each other eludes me."

Minato walked back over to the tree he had been leaning against, which had a bench underneath it. The building behind it must have been the sight of a Sekirei fight at one point, because there was very little of the building left standing. With only MBI's own construction crews still working inside the city it would be a long time if ever before it was fixed. He bowed Yui onto the bench and then leaned against the tree, carefully not noting how Kana and Saki were still watching him like a hawk. "Let me ask you a question, are you allied with Higa by choice, and if not, if there was an alternative would you take it?"

Yui blinked at the straightforward manner of the questions but then smiled, pushing her glasses back up her nose. "You are direct aren't you? Suffice it to say I would rather my girls and I not have to participate in this madness at all. But I refuse to let them be taken from me either. Higa offers us his protection in return for going on some missions of his. I can't say I like it, but it was either that or his Sekirei would have simply removed my girls from the game. As I don't know what happens to Sekirei when they are taken, I decided to make a deal with the devil as it were. What would you offer us?"

"There is no 'as it were'. As for what I offer, how about an alliance with someone who isn't a blackmailer, multiple rapist or sociopath." Minato said grimly. Yui flinched at the cold tone and Saki and Kana both twitched, paling considerably. "That's how he exerts his control of his Sekirei you know. When there were still un-winged Sekirei, he'd have a few of his enforcers beat them up, drag them in and he would wing them against their will, then rape them. Your two girls are lucky they met you first."

Yui swallowed thickly, looking around wildly as if they would be overheard. Minato smirked coldly. "Don't worry, I already took out the two watchers he had assigned to you, they're unconscious over in alley way back there." Neither were Sekirei thankfully.

Yui looked where he indicated, and nodded to Saki, who lept forward to check it out. She came back, nodding her head affirmatively, and Yui turned to stare at Minato. "You have proof of that accusation I trust?"

"I have two un-winged Sekirei who requested we remove their crests for them after we beat them. You're welcome to interview them, in fact I would like you to even if you decide not to join us, none of my Sekirei are psychologists and I'd like to know if they really are recovering as they should."

Yui looked at him searchingly for a moment but could detect no falsehood. And his Sekirei had let the three of them go when she had shown she cared about her girls, plus while it was known the Ashikabi of the North was ruthless, he hadn't taken any offensive action, only defending his own territory. "If my girls and I do come with you, we can walk away at any point yes?"

"Yes, provided we leave now, before anyone realizes that you may even be thinking about this."

Yui paused for a moment then nodded. "Lead the way."

Instead of immediately taking the trio to his own home, he took them to Izumo house, where he introduced Miya, making no mention of her status as number 1, as she still didn't want that bruited about overmuch.

Yui was slightly intimidated by the beautiful, poised and controlled landlady, but got over it quickly. Kana and Saki didn't seem to notice anything odd about her. "Ara, who are these three you bring to my inn Minato-san?" Miya asked, looking at the three interestedly.

Minato smiled at her. "Hopefully they're some new allies for us Miya-san. This is Yui, a school teacher, and her Sekirei, Kana and Saki. They wanted to meet with Katsuragi and Chizuru before making any decision though."

Miya nodded gracefully. "I believe they are both outside with Yashima-chan." Yashima had woken up that morning suffering from a panic attack and had instinctively tried to leave to search for her Ashikabi despite not feeling their connection any longer. Miya had stopped her of course, and since then the girl had been subdued. She hadn't quite gotten used to being free just yet, but Miya was confident she would be in time. "Please follow me."

Outside they found the three freed Sekirei playing ball with Uzume and Kusano. To the side Chiho sat watching them happily. Minato grinned widely at the sight for a moment, then moved over to pick up his daughter and give Musubi a hug. More than his wives, focused as they were on the 'plan' and protecting him, Kusano and Uzume had really reached out to the mistreated Sekirei. Since her inclusion Chiho had done the same thing, and it warmed Minato's heart to see it. "Hey princess, how are you this afternoon?"

Kusano squealed happily as she suddenly found herself on her father's shoulder. "Daddy!" She hugged him around the head, looking into his eyes with the dreaded puppy dog eye attack "Come play with us!"

Minato shook his head regretfully. "Sorry princess, daddy has a few more things he needs to do before he can play today. I'll be out soon though, promise." Kusano pouted, but decided that would be the best she could get. She had tried a temper tantrum once before, but Minato hadn't caved, even when she tried to bite him. He'd simply held her in such a way that she couldn't bring her molars to bear and stated firmly that good girls don't bite people. He then took away her dessert privileges for the evening, which had sufficiently impressed upon the young girl that tantrums were counter productive.

Yui looked at her Sekirei for a moment, both of whom were looking at the ball game still going on longingly. In Yui's opinion all Sekirei had a bit of ADHD to them, sitting down or standing still to most of them was almost torture, thus school for her girls was a hardship, only mitigated by seeing her (and hadn't that been hard to get used to, being bonded to two young girls who made you the center of their universe) practically the entire day. "Go on girls, I only really need to speak to Minato and on these other ladies for a few moments." They gleefully dashed off, and soon a rousing game of free fall volleyball was in session.

Katsuragi came over at Minato's wave and the three of them and Miya went inside to talk. That talk would confirm everything that Minato said. If anything he had understated how vile a man Higa was, treating his Sekirei as he did. After her story was finished Yui allowed her to go back to the game, which was getting a little rowdier as time went on, evidently Musubi and Tsukiumi had returned from their patrol and joined the game. Miya followed, her ladle already out in order to enforce her rules of no fighting in Izumo house. Yui watched the landlady go for a moment before turning to Minato. "The landlady, is she..."

"Not my story to tell." Minato shook his head firmly. "If she wants you to know she will tell you herself, until then I suggest you respect her privacy."

Yui nodded. "So, what would you have my girls and I do if we ally with you?"

"Protect Izumo house and the surrounding neighborhood." Minato answered bluntly. "Help my Sekirei patrol our area, we usually use teams of two for that, so your Sekirei will always be together. They can join my Sekirei in their training, if they want to. And cut all ties with MBI. At best Minaka is an enabler of abusers, never putting rules in place to control how Sekirei could be treated and not enforcing the few rules this 'plan' has. At worst, he's a fucking narcissistic pimp, selling the Sekirei off for some kind of pay off down the line. I haven't figured out yet if he gets more out of this game then just watching all the action from on high to feed his god complex, but I fear there is more to it than that."

Yui thought about it. "And we won't be attacking other Sekirei, we will just be defending?"

Minato nodded. "Yes, any offensive action, and I won't lie to you, you're joining my group is an attack on Higa just as much as it is simply getting you away from his influence, will be done by my own Sekirei and me."

Yui looked out the window for a moment, her lips quirked as she heard the sound of Miya forcefully toning down the game, the 'tonk' of her physical reprimands carrying to them here. "Alright, I think we will be joining you Minato-san. It's certainly better than our current deal with Higa at any rate." She smiled, shaking her head. "The school was going to close in a few days anyway. Too many students and teachers have fled the city for it to make any sense to keep it open." Minato nodded happily and the two shook hands to seal the deal.

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When he heard of Yui's defection Higa raged around his office for a few moments, scaring the two men who he had following the school teacher and her Sekirei, as well as Kocho, who hadn't spotted this with her ability to hack into MBI's security satellites and cameras. It was many moments before he calmed himself enough to think, and when he did his thoughts were cold again.

*This ongoing conflict between me and the North is much like the Cold War between America and Russia, he reflected. Both of us can't attack the other directly. He lacks the numbers and resources to attack me with me defense in depth, and I can't attack him, with his ultimate defense in the form of number 01, like Russia could not attack America because of their nuclear deterrent and vice versa. Our troops have clashed, but the main fighting has been done by proxies on my part, and while I haven't cost him anything yet, we've come close. The question then becomes how to continue this war? Proxies are still the way to go of course, but perhaps I should prepare for a more direct confrontation, especially since the fourth stage is set to start soon. I have a vast numerical superiority; perhaps I should halt my other operations and concentrate solely on the North. . A few attacks on the few civilians still in the area, who he has apparently decided to defend would bring his forces out and away from Izumo house. Spread his forces out and take them out in detail. It would cost him in terms of his own forces, as it was apparent by how well the lower digits of Minato had performed so far against his own that maybe only his two strongest could take them on one on one.*

His thoughts were interrupted however as his secretary came in, gulping nervously as he spotted his boss. Higa cocked an eyebrow, wondering if he would soon need a new secretary. "I thought I told you I wasn't to be disturbed."

The secretary gulped but answered. "Sir, there's, someone on the phone for you. He says he's Minaka of MBI."

Higa's other eyebrow rose to join it's fellow. "Very well, patch him through." He walked over to his desk and sat down. A few seconds later he was looking at the face of the man he hated the most in the whole world, the man who stood at the top, and whose company stood in the way of his. "Well, isn't this an unexpected event. I never thought you and I would speak face to face." That was a lie, he expected to speak to Minaka at some point, hopefully after he had killed off the rest of the competition and had his boot on the man's throat.

Minaka looked back at him through his glasses, his usual mad scientist coat white against a black backdrop as he stared at Higa as if he could read all the younger mans thoughts like a book. He smiled his mad, manic smile, but his voice was unusually serious when he spoke. "There is a saying, 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', and I think we have a mutual enemy, one who refuses to stick to his role in this game of the gods. I have a proposition that will force him back on the right path with your help."

Higa parsed through the nonsense language quickly enough and smiled very slightly. It appeared as if Minato had irritated Minaka more than he had previously thought. Kocho would be busy figuring out why that was as soon as this call was over. "I'm listening." Ten minutes later he hung up the phone, and gave Kocho and Kakizaki their orders. Both walked off with a vague feeling of unease but shook it off. Alone in his office once more Izumi Higa stared out of his window out across the city. *The fourth stage huh? Well, I can wait that long easily. Enjoy your momentary gains Sahashi, soon they will end, for good.*

That night Higa made two mistakes. One was when asking Kocho to make up a dossier on Minato, he neglected to tell her to search as far back as she could. If he had, she might have found enough clues despite Matsu's clean up to piece together how dangerous Minato was. The second was to assume his and Minaka's plans would go off without a hitch. The first rule of warfare however was no plan survives contact with the enemy. He would learn this lesson soon enough, as would Minaka.

End chapter

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Things are really starting to heat up huh? As always read and review.

## \*Chapter 14\*: Chapter 14 Preparation

For those of you who are most knowledgeable about the original Sekirei manga, realize that I will be changing things around a lot vis a vis the numbers and abilities. I may also take a Sekirei and give her a new master or two as this continues. That way I can change things more than before, though I will also be creating a lot of new Sekirei, as I have done so up to this point.

Warning, this chapter begins with lemony contact, but it does have a point, and will be more important as the story goes on.

I was able to finish this in two days because everything but the dialogue had already been written. I hope to continue to put out a chapter of this story every Sunday/Monday from now on regardless of my loss of my Dragon Naturally Speaking.

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### Chapter 14 Preparations

Minato looked up into Akitsu's flushed excited face as she rode him, leaning upward occasionally to lovingly kiss the side of her neck as his hands kneaded her rear and chest.

Each of his wives had one or two acts that lit their fires more than any other. As has been previously mentioned Kazehana had a bit of an exhibitionist streak and a love of dressing up. She loved surprising him with spontaneous, heated quickies and also loved getting Minato off with her mouth and tits. She truly had a bit of an oral fixation, cumming as hard when he finished in her mouth ('better tasting than sake' in her words...) as when he was inside of her.

For Tsukiumi, it was slow, sensual full body massages given or received and strangely enough the doggy position if they were in any hurry at all. She loved the feel of Minato behind her playing with her breasts as he pounded in and out of her. Her breasts and especially her nipples were her major erogenous zone. She also **loved** looking into Minato's eyes as they made love, so any position that let her do that she was game for.

For Akitsu, she loved to be on top, in control of the tempo as she lost all her inhibition, all her self-control and just went crazy. It was something that Minato never got tired of, watching his normally staid and very self-controlled wife lose it entirely and become a wildcat.

She also loved morning attacks, either making love in the kitchen before anyone else was up and being 'surprised' by Minato or attacking Minato before he could get out of bed. He however, loved turning the tables on her taking control of their lovemaking, either speeding up or slowing down as he wanted until she begged him with her eyes to finish inside her.

This morning was no different and he slowed down the tempo, staring into her eyes, capturing them with his own as he gently kneaded her breasts, tweaking her cherry red nipples and biting down on one still staring up into her eyes. Akitsu thought that they were working under a timetable, but Minato knew better because he didn't have anything planned that morning and Kusano and Musubi could go next door for breakfast. So he took his time gently driving Akitsu insane as she tried to control the tempo with her hips rising up and down over his.

Behind them Kazehana and Tsukiumi woke up to their sister wives groans and moans and looked on in amusement as she became of puddle of bliss.

Fifty minutes into their session, Minato could start to feel himself losing control. He sped up the pace slanting up into Akitsu as she screamed and began to slam down into him at the same time neither one of them breaking off their stare even as they kissed their eyes wide open as the wings of light bloomed again filling the house, the neighborhood and two adjoining neighborhoods with light. As Akitsu began to cum Minato finished at the same time, almost screaming one another's name. As they did, something inside Minato burst, some kind of final wall in his mind, froze then shattered, letting in a cold wind that somehow warmed him. He didn't register the sensation at the time, far too busy with the physical feelings assailing him, yet it would become immediately apparent that something within the bond had changed.

Minato slumped back onto the bed, so spent for the moment he couldn't even speak but he thought, *I love you Akitsu.*

She responded. *I love you too, Minato.*

Minato's eyes widened. *I didn't say anything.*

Akitsu's own eyes widened turn stare at him. Tsukiumi and Kazehana both blinked wondering what was going on. *We can hear eachother's thoughts?*

*This has to be something to do with the bond. This is... so utterly amazing I can't even...*

Behind him his two other wives were now looking at them askance. That looked faded as Minato turned to them, love and an almost exuberant, childish joy in his face as he reached for them.

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After a few hours of exclamations and examinations, it was determined that all four of them could hear one another in their heads, but not every thought. You actually had to be thinking at the person to get them to receive the thought. When they informed Matsu and Miya of this over lunch, both of them were astonished having never heard of such a phenomenon. Miya thought back to her few memories as a child and wondered if that was why bonded pairs among her people rarely seemed to speak aloud to one another, but understood each other implicitly. For a moment that ugly feeling she refused to name welled up again, but she pushed it back down, forcing herself to smile happily at the quartet.

All three of Minato's wives were ecstatic over this. Now they could literally feel the love of Minato every time they thought of him, regardless of where he was or where they were. Minato loved that aspect as well. Though his brain liked the fact he could communicate with his wives over at distance and that no one could spy on their communications.

When his wives went over to Izumo house they were greeted by several varied reactions to the light show they had inadvertently given the entire neighborhood. Yui, who was living in one of the inn's rooms for now, seemed amused, her lips twitching while her Sekirei were simply bemused, never having imagined that making love to their Ashikabi would result in such an ongoing light show. Uzume was grinning and giving Minato two thumbs up, Chiho was blushing hotly and looking at him out of the corner of her eyes and way every few minutes. It wasn't the first time she had seen the wings of his wives of course, but to see all three of them in succession brought home to her what they were doing to create those wings. Homura was looking as amused as Yui, possibly for much the same reason.

Musubi and Kusano greeted him with hugs and kisses of their own, which he returned but made certain to keep short in front of Miya. While neither really understood why his wives wings appeared so often, both of them loved the experience of bathing in their fellow Sekirei's wings. The wings conveyed not only the feelings of the Sekirei, but Minato's own feelings for all his Sekirei. All of them knew he loved them whenever they were touched by one another's wings, bringing them closer together. Matsu enjoyed the feeling too, but also wished she could be a wife to Minato and have access to him full time like they did. Yet she knew her own interest in toys and such like were against her there. Perhaps in the future she could join them, but not now.

Shiina was a blushing mess at the end of the recently enlarged table, while Yukari was oscillating between looking interested and mortified. Miya was.... Miya had looked amused at first, her hand delicately raised to cover her smile, but now she was staring at the four of them with keen eyes. "Ara Minato-san, it appears as if something has happened this morning other than the obvious. Ufufufu."

Minato smiled and nodded his head toward her. "You might say that. It appears as if there is more to the Sekirei bond than we expected." He explained as succinctly as he could, wondering if his other Sekirei would become jealous. Thankfully they didn't. Matsu was too busy looking shocked, Musubi just seemed happy and Kusano didn't understand what they were talking about.

Miya smiled behind her hand even wider, though it was tinged more than a little with sorrow. If Takehito had made her react to him as well as fall in love with him, maybe they could have formed a true bond like that, and maybe he would still be alive. Yet it was not to be, and these days she was far too busy to think about 'might have been'. She wondered thought if the bond between couples could do that, did that explain why in her few memoires being among her people that none of the married couples seemed to talk aloud to one another, but always seemed to know everything about one another? She shunted that aside for now.

Lunch, as every communal meal had become, was a lively affair, though with the addition of Yui and her Sekirei and Shiina and Yukari it was even more so. Still soon enough the meal ended, and Musubi, Shiina, and Kusano went outside along Chizuru and Katsuragi along with Kana, who was the more childish of Yui's Sekirei, to play for a few hours before getting down to training. Yukari went with them to watch, not really wanting to be a part of any serious discussion for a while. She was still coming to terms with her injuries and the fact that the Sekirei plan could turn deadly rather than be a game like she thought, so she was prepared to let long term planning in the hands of Minato

and the others. Besides which she had some planning of her own to do, and she wanted to see the backyard of Izumo house.

Miya placed a plate with tea on it in the center of the now smaller table. As soon as everyone who wanted some had a cup, Minato began. "Alright, today we are going to start two long term projects along with continuing to gear up for the next stage. First though Yui-san, do you or Saki have anything you want to say?"

Yui nodded. "I'll be taking over teaching Kusano for now, that will allow Matsu slightly more time, as well as seeing where all your Sekirei place in terms of academics. I'll start that later today and will have hourly tutoring session to bring them up to high school graduate level if needed."

Minato looked at her quizzically. "Um, not that I mind, but isn't there more important..." He trailed off as the school-teachers face hardened noticeably and Saki began shaking her head wildly behind Yui, making an x with her hands. Apparently this was something really to her. "Okay, never mind, anything else?"

Saki raised a hand. "I'm good at espionage and spying." So saying she closed her eyes for a few seconds, and then her features began to change, somehow shifting, becoming bland and unremarkable, someone who could blend into the crowd easily. Her skin color soon changed as well, going from tanned to bland. When she spoke even her voice was different, completely forgettable in tone and timbre. "This way I can sneak around anywhere and not be noticed much. I can even change my age given time." She stopped, concentrating again, and slowly changed back to normal. "Yui hasn't let me use it too often though, and we made certain to never tell Higa about it." They wouldn't be telling Minato now if they hadn't discussed things last night between the three of them. They decided that for some reason Minato was trustworthy, he honestly cared about all Sekirei, even those he was fighting against. He was also their best chance of living through this mad plan with their lives and bond intact.

Minato smirked a truly evil smirk, that hadn't been in the file Matsu had found about her. "Good" he drawled. "That's excellent. Would MBI know you have that skill?"

Saki thought for a minute. "They know I can change my face and coloration, not my age, I never showed that to anyone except for Yui." She and Yui both blushed. She had in fact tried to get around Yui's problem with her Sekirei's age by making her body look older, but still Yui had refused to do more than kiss until both her girls were out of high school.

"Hmmm... Alright we won't use that right away, I want to keep that as a trump card for future operations." He pulled out a folder and spread it's contents across the table. "First can either of you tell me anything about Higa's Sekirei?"

Yui and Saki both leaned forward leafing through the pictures. Yui took out two pictures in particular. "These are Toyotama and Ichiya, the pair of them are Higa's main enforcers. They're attack dogs, they like to hurt people, the more the better. I have seen them in action, and they are brutal. They're the main reasons I never tired to fight against being allied with Higa, I knew Saki and Kana had no chance against them." Minato nodded, Uzume had said much the same thing, and it had come up in Akitsu's analysis of Matsu's information as well. If he ever went up against Higa in a straight up fight they would be his first targets.

Miya winced as she looked at the pictures. She remembered these two, much like Yomi, they had been among those who looked to Karasuba as a role model, but really the darkness had already been there, Karasuba merely helped bring it out.

Saki cut in holding up one picture. "This Sekirei isn't one of Higa's, but her Ashikabi is allied with him. I've never met him, but he must be completely under Higa's thumb as Izumi-aho uses her like one of his own. Hell I only know that because of an offhand comment she made when we were doing a mission together.

She touched another picture, which showed the image of a Sekirei with straight black hair, a Yankee sort of dress and the darkest skin Minato had seen on a Sekirei up to now, a light chocolate color that was quite fetching on her. "This girl is named Yahan #57, she was forcibly winged by Higa. I know because that was the first mission I was used on. A test of loyalty so to speak." The words came out with as much venom as she could muster, which was a surprising amount when discussing Izumi Higa. "She's a mix of short range and mid range. She can do something with shadows, I don't know what, and she's pretty strong and really fast. If you ever fight her watch out for her kicks though, they pack more of a punch than you might think for some reason."

Minato nodded thoughtfully. While he had known about the girl's combat abilities thanks to Akitsu and Matsu's research, he hadn't known she had been forcefully winged. Given the others skills in her file that opened up a whole realm of possibilities he could address later if they could convince her to join them at some point. He turned to Yui as Saki continued to look at the pictures. "How many other Ashikabi are allied with Higa, and do you know how many are

allied with him by choice?"

"Most of them have allied with him by choice I'm afraid. I actually only know one other Ashikabi that has done so because he had no choice. His name is Oboro, he's a rather older gentlemen, who was a soldier at one point I believe. He isn't happy about this game or working with Higa, but I understand it was an at gunpoint decision, possibly literally."

Minato nodded then turned to Matsu who shrugged. "I'll see what I can find about him, as well as trying to find about the unknown Sekirei of the yellow-eyed girl."

"Good. I'll leave you two and Akitsu here to continue going over this stuff. If you can find us a target, a place rather than a person for preference that we could attack and really hurt Higa, that would be great. Think strategic necessities. Kazehana, I'm going to give you a list, some stuff I've already ordered and paid for through various... means. Go to the address there and you should find it all there. Take Musubi with you for the heavier stuff."

Matsu's curiosity got the best of her and she looked over the wind user's shoulder as she read. She nodded at some of the purchases, but her eyes widened at the esoteric ones. "Um... Minato-tan what are you planning with some of this stuff?"

Minato smiled grimly. "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies Matsu."

Miya looked over the list and smiled grimly in approval as she saw the items that bothered Matsu. "I see you are preparing for a bit of an offensive Minato-san."

"Not so much an offense as a trap Miya-san. The name of the game is tactical defense, strategic offense. We'll need to wait a few more days for the rest of the civilians to leave who can and will, but after that, well, we can take action against one enemy or the other. For now though, we merely prepare our supplies, and let me tell you finding some of that stuff took some doing without warning MBI, and ready ourselves for the coming storm."

He turned to Yui. "Do you mind if I borrow Kana of Saki for a bit later this afternoon? I want to do a little fact finding mission later, and I'd like to have a representative of another Ashikabi when I do. Tsukiumi, don't get too involved in training, you'll be going with me."

Yui nodded. "I have no problem with that Minato-san, though you will of course have to tell me more before you leave."

Minato nodded agreeably. "On that note ladies, I will take my leave. Miya-san, may I talk to you for a moment?"

Miya quirked an eyebrow in surprise but nodded acquiescence and followed Minato out the door, though she took the lead from there, moving down the hallway. The two didn't speak until they were in Miya's room. Miya smiled behind her hand at Minato. "Ara, I hope this isn't part of some plan to seduce an old widow like myself Minato-san."

Minato's lips twitched. "You're hardly old Miya-san, in fact I would call you very desirable, but I already have three wives who demand my attention, and I hardly think I could handle another." Miya blushed behind her raised hand, hiding her reactions to his words with the ease of old practice as he continued. "No I'm afraid this is about something far more serious."

Miya's blush faded at those words and she nodded to indicate she was listening. "Besides buying and hiding away the supplies Kazehana and Musubi are going to pick up, I have been thinking of worst case long term scenarios, and I've come up with a few I don't know if I can combat. What I'd like is for you to disprove the worst of them."

Miya nodded. "Very well Minato-san, ask away." She surreptitiously looked around, making certain that Matsu hadn't tried to bug her room again. She hadn't which was a very good thing for number 02. Miya hadn't needed to chastise anyone for some time, not seriously anyway, and she was worried she might be getting rusty.

"Could MBI have placed any dead man's switches in the Sekirei?" Minato asked bluntly.

Miya's entire body stilled for a moment. It wasn't rigid, no it was **still**, like a forest just before an earthquake or a mountain just before it turned into a volcano, when all the critters ran for the hills or burrowed down and prepared for the worst. After a moment she spoke her words normal, but something in the depths of her tone called to Minato's primitive monkey brain of certain death. "What exactly are we talking about here?"

Minato gulped, but answered gamely. "M-miniature bombs implanted into their bodies, some kind of tracking and neutralization device, I know they have some way of tracking the Sekirei, I need to know if that's all they have inside

them. It would fit Minaka's MO to have a final solution he could use to target those who refuse to play his so called game of the gods, and possibly punish the losers in the next stage. It would be something he could only use once or twice though, before everyone learned of it and it wouldn't affect the Ashikabi. Those last two would be why he hasn't used it against me and mine yet. Well, that and he has no idea how you would react."

"I do not know if such a thing is possible, but the jinki should be able to tell us if there is anything foreign in our bodies. But if this is true," and that whatever it was that touched the terror center of Minato's brain was suddenly multiplied, "if this is true, I will kill Minaka this very day. I will wipe him and MBI out of existence, damn the long term consequences."

"I wouldn't even try to stop you. Hell I'd join you. But that's the worst case scenario for that aspect."

Miya nodded, then sighed heavily, as if the weight of the world had come to rest on her shoulders. "It wasn't supposed to be like this you know, all I wanted was to protect the youngsters from those who would harm them. That was the entire reason I allowed Higa to continue to have access to the ship while I was there. And when we turned back the invasion in part because of his behind the scenes maneuvering, I thought my trust had been justified. But then I found out about the adjustments being made to the fetuses, and the mental conditioning as well. Takehito was in charge of the initial adjustments and I trusted him, so thought they were justified. But then he was killed, and Minaka set this mad plan in motion for who knows what reason, the feathers are being torn from their loved ones, some of them find themselves bound to people not of their choosing, and it's just all a big mess and I don't know what to do..."

She looked so sorrowful and guilty that Minato couldn't resist the urge to reach out and pull her into a hug. He made certain his arms stayed around her shoulders though. Miya first stiffened at his touch then sighed and simply took comfort in it. She blushed lightly as she heard his heartbeat where her head rested against his chest, but it was his words that brought her real comfort. "None of this is your fault Miya, you couldn't have known what Minaka was planning, and you Sekirei really did need him and his company as a go between for your dealings with humanity. As bad as this game is, if the Chinese or hell even the Americans had found you all first, you would never have woken up in the first place, they would have simply taken you, the babies and the fetuses to a lab somewhere and you would never have seen the light of day again.

"And as to what is going on now, there is no one to blame but Minaka and those who willingly serve him, those who see your people, your younger sisters as things to be toyed with, not as people in your own right. The only mistake you made was in being too trusting, and frankly I think that is a product of your race. All of you Sekirei can't seem to dissemble well, hell even Matsu and Kazehana can't outright lie easily, and don't get me started on Uzume or you. Even when you were 'a simple landlady' it was obvious you were something more."

"Mou, Minato-san, it's not nice to point out another's shortcomings to them in such a manner." Miya almost pouted, but controlled herself quickly. She thought she was doing quite well playing a simple landlady, well one who was trained as a swordswoman at least, and had worked at MBI and that could keep up with Musubi... Okay so maybe her disguise hadn't been very good at that, but it was still rude to point that out.

"I'm not saying that's a bad thing, I'm just saying that you Sekirei have no concept of misdirection, or lying or distrust in those who have power over you. I think that actually makes you better people in the main, certainly in personal interactions it does."

Miya finally pulled herself out of his embrace backing away slightly to look into his face. "But not in war."

"No," he said sadly, "not in war or fighting, in warfare you need to be able to think in angles and misdirection. When the enemy thinks your striking here go there," and he gestured with his hands, "When he thinks he has you figured out start to act differently. That's part of why I haven't yet taken action against Higa, I wanted to lull him and Minaka into thinking that I wouldn't take offensive action, that I was content to remain on the defensive."

Miya nodded thoughtfully. "I can see your point, but I find myself unable to think like that, such trickery doesn't come easily to me."

Minato shrugged. "That's why I'm here."

Miya giggled. "Indeed, maybe we should keep you around Minato-san, you seem to be very useful, and not just for the light shows you give us all." Again there was a spike of some emotion in her, but she easily suppressed it as Minato blushed heavily, causing her to laugh. "UFUFUFU, a little late to be embarrassed Minato-san, and it isn't as if it's a bad thing. Besides, what you do in the comfort of your own home is your own business. SO long as it doesn't corrupt the youngsters, like Kusano and Musubi." Here she let loose with her hanya mask, nearly scaring Minato into

immediate flight. "Am I clear?"

Minato nodded rapidly and she giggled again, letting the hanya mask slip away. Minato sighed heavily. "Ugh, that wasn't fair Miya-san."

"Ara, I have no idea what you're talking about Minato-san." Miya smiled serenely.

Minato almost glared at her but stopped himself just in time then he sighed, sad to bring the topic of their original conversation back up. "So should we go and see if the jinki can tell us what we want to know?"

Miya sighed and nodded. "Very well, let us go see Chiho-chan."

Minato nodded and led the way out of her room, but stopped when he nearly collided with Matsu who had apparently been trying to listen in through the door. Behind her Akitsu stood well away from the door patiently waiting. Minato sighed, and stepped lightly around Matsu, reaching out for Akitsu's hand. "I'll just let you handle this Miya-san, I'll get Chiho and Uzume and meet you in their room."

"Ara, thank you Minato-san, it appears as if I need to have a talk with miss peeper here." Matsu made to back off but Miya had already begun to bring out her hanya, freezing her in place.

Akitsu and Minato beat a hasty retreat then went outside to get Chiho and Uzume and Yi, not wanting to hide anything from her. Once they found them, Minato helped Uzume get Chiho back up to their room, while Akitsu joined Tsukiumi for some training.

Leaving behind a quivering puddle of ooze that had formerly been Matsu, Miya joined them quickly. Minato explained what they were going to ask the jinki to do. Both girls were appalled at the idea of Uzume having something like a kill switch inside her, and Chiho nodded immediately. Yui merely narrowed her eyes.

Miya gently took the jinki from where it lay in a specially constructed (by Minato, who was pretty good with tools of all sorts) holder by her side. Chiho leaned back against the back of the bed, feeling a little weaker than she had a moment before, but thankfully that was all. While she couldn't live without the jinki's stasis field, it wasn't like she would die immediately without it.

At Miya's direction Uzume turned her back, flipping up her hair, and Miya gently pressed the tip (only she could tell one end from the other) of the jinki against her crest. Closing her eyes Miya concentrated on what she was feeling, trying to guide the jinki, which was really not meant for this, it could be used for it, but it was much like using an army APC to go and get your groceries, it could do it, but it was over kill in both the power and the ability. Thankfully, the jinki's ability to connect to the ship and use its sensors through its body, much like the stasis field keeping Chiho alive, was up to what they wanted. After a moment she sighed in relief and pulled back, handing the jinki gently over to Chiho. "There appears to be something along her spinal column, but it is reading as nonthreatening. At least that is what the jinki is telling me. We can't take it as a given that it will stay that way, but it does appear to be only a tracking device."

Minato breathed a deep sigh of relief then turned to Yui. "Unfortunately that means Saki will be of limited utility unless we can find a way to remove the device, which I have no idea how to do. Unless you know a really good surgeon?" Yui shook her head, angry inside at something like that being in one of her girls, but thankful it wasn't worse. She excused herself then, going out to inform her two Sekirei of this discovery.

Minato then turned to Chiho. "Chiho, do you mind if I take Uzume somewhere in a few hours?"

Before the demure girl could respond Uzume spoke up grinning wickedly. "Wow bro, are you looking to add more women to your harem, where are you going to 'take' me? "

Chiho stuttered out 'U-Uzume-chan' while Minato blushed brightly at her tone. Miya giggled, and deciding once again that Minato was far too serious for her own good, joined in the teasing. "Oh my, he asked to join me in my room earlier, and before I knew it he had his arms around me. I'm afraid none of us are safe from his wanton lusts."

Minato and Chiho both blushed even harder as Uzume grinned at him. "Damn, that was pretty daring of you, though I'm sorry to say that if you want to 'take' me you'll have to 'take' Chiho at the same time, I'm not going to leave my Ashikabi out of something like that, after all sharing is caring."

Minato's blush was now so profound it looked like someone was choking him, unused to this kind of teasing. He could hear his wives in his head asking him why he was feeling so embarrassed, Akitsu concerned, Kazehana interested and Tsukiumi defensive. Trying to reassure them he opened the link almost automatically as he gathered himself and

responded to the teasing. "Is today tease Minato day or something, look I have three wives, and I am not looking to add anyone to anything!" At that point he kind of lost it and he pointed at a surprised Miya "You're gorgeous as all get out, and any guy would be lucky to be with you!" He pointed over at a furiously blushing Chiho, "You're cute as hell and any guy would be lucky to be with you!" He then turned to Uzume who was by this point staring at him in surprise, "You are hot and funny as hell, any guy who was with you would have a lot of fun whatever you were doing! But I am not interested in adding any more girls to my family, three wives are more than enough for me!" He looked at all three of the now wide-eyed girls. "Now that we've got that out of the way, I'm going to take what remains of my dignity and leave." With that he turned and left, hearing the laughter of Kazehana and the quiet giggles from Akitsu in his head, while the grumbling of Tsukiumi went from in his mind to in the physical world as she stumped toward him.

Miya quickly recovered herself and looked over at Uzume who had broken out into laughter again. "I trust word of this will not be shared with any other others?" She hoped that Matsu hadn't returned to her room yet, she would have to delete this section from her spy cams. Her hand twitched out into a corner by the bed, picking up a small doll from a pile of others and taking a hold on its head, blocking the image. "We seem to have discomfited Minato-san far more than we intended."

"Speak for yourself!" Uzume caroled, "That was hilarious. Who knew bro had it in him under that serious exterior!"

"Uzume-san!" Miya said sharply, bringing out her hanya mask, which finally got Uzume to realize she was serious. Miya sighed thankfully as the cloth Sekirei began to nod rapidly with her 'suggestion', as Miya's own heart began to beat slower. Embarrassment, yes that was all she felt from Minato's compliment, just embarrassment.

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Mianto spent a few minutes calming down Tsukiumi, who had been very disturbed by the emotions she had felt through their link, as well as the words he had spoke which came through the link when he opened it fully. While Tsukiumi was much more open about her emotions, much calmer in most situations, she was still a little covetous of his affections, and did not want any more women added. Having Matsu on the side was more than enough. Because of the link however Tsukiumi was much easier to calm down. She could literally feel the love he had for her through it, and the result of linking minds and saying the words that way was most amusing. After about fifteen minutes of this concentrated attention, Tsukiumi had more than forgiven him, in fact she was tempted to drag him off back to their bedroom for the rest of the afternoon, but thankfully Minato was able to put that off until the evening. As fantastic an idea as that sounded, he really did have other things to do today.

He went over to his sister, who was still outside, watching with a look of frustration as Shiina and the others played in the back yard. A closed sketch book, and pencil was placed by her side. "How are you doing Yukari?"

"Nii-chan," she said looking up at him then away, "feeling like a bit of an idiot actually. I thought it wasn't, you know, serious, I thought no one would really get hurt despite all the panic and everything, but now..." she gestured at her side and Minato nodded. Yukari had taken her burns in stride as much as she could, but the fact she would now have scars from where the flying glass had cut here was preying on her mind. Thankfully the medicine was keeping the pain at bay. She looked at him for a moment head cocked to the side. "Have you heard from mom lately?"

Minato didn't let his body stiffen or show any other response to this and he shook his head. "I warned her not to contact me again when she called me a few days after I arrived in Tokyo. I don't want her in my life if she's only going to show any interest when it's easy for her." He looked at her crestfallen expression and misinterpreted it. "I'm not going to stop you if you contact her though."

Yukari shook her head, deciding not to butt in between the two of them yet again. "I called her a couple hours after you all moved me into my new house and told her what was up. She hasn't called me back yet other than to leave a message and say she was glad I was okay, nothing else."

Minato decided to give the obviously worried girl a bone. "She might not be allowed to contact any of the contestants in this stupid plan you know, she does work for MBI after all." Yukari nodded glumly, though didn't seem to see the significance that statement carried in Minato's opinion of his mother. He changed the subject, pointing at her sketch pad. "How are you doing on that project I asked you about?"

Yukari brightened a little. "Oh I've got some ideas already, I should be able to have a few finalized by the end of the week. Using the Sekirei to build it is an interesting idea by the way, I think they'll all have a lot of fun with it."

Minato nodded, then saw Homura over to the side beckoning to him. "Listen is it okay if I take Shiina with me somewhere this afternoon, I know he won't want to leave you alone, but I'd like him along."

Yukari nodded. "Sure, that's no problem, don't tell him I said this, but his hovering is kind of getting on my nerves."

Minato nodded and with a final pat on the head left his little sister to go talk to Homura.

They entered the dining room and seeing on one was there Homura blurted, "It's not working. I've been around your sister for hours today and I'm not feeling anything. Worse, I nearly had another attack last night, if it wasn't for Matsu and Miya I might have burned myself to death. I don't know what else to do but let you wing me! I can't die yet, not before I see Minaka fry!"

Minato frowned. "See the problem with that is I've never seen you as anything but a guy, a little, okay a lot bishonen, but still a guy. I have no interest in that area, sorry, not even a little. Why didn't you react to that Allison chick you have a picture of by your bed, or any of the women at the club you work at?"

"Look I told you, Allison was just using me for short term kicks and to get the taste of this asshole named Church out of her head, the way she described him he sounded like a real obsessive freak. She wasn't ever serious about it, and even if she was I wouldn't have wanted someone like her as my Ashikabi, she was way too rough around the edges and butch for my tastes, I mean why would I want a woman who could literally break me in half? I just keep her picture because, because..." He blushed and whispered, "Because she was the first woman I slept with, all right, most of my customers never get that far. And I have no idea why I'm reacting to you rather than all those women I met at the club when you have no interest in me in that way, but I am, maybe you're too strong an Ashikabi or something, but I don't think I'll last another week without an Ashikabi connection to help regulate my power!"

"Have you tried Yui?" Minato riposted, "She might be open to your advances."

"Yui is a lesbian," Homura said flatly. "If I was reacting to her, my body would be permanently female by this point."

Minato sighed. "Alright, I give up, I'll wing you, but I got to warn you, I'm not really comfortable with kissing you. See if Matsu can find some way for you to be winged without the whole icky body touching stuff, 'cause let me tell you, that's disgusting to me. No offense, I have nothing against gay people or anything, I just find it disgusting to imagine, let alone contemplate in real life."

Homura chuckled weakly. "You're not the only one, I was going to suggest asking Matsu if you didn't. But the question will be can she stay on topic long enough to solve the problem rather than off in her own fantasy world?"

Minato shivered violently, not prepared to imagine what the most perverse of his Sekirei would think about something like this. "Tell her I'll erase all her porn from her hard drives if she doesn't take it seriously. Oh and you get to tell Tsukiumi and the others about this." And with that he slipped out of the room before a suddenly very worried Homura could form a rebuttal.

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Around four in the afternoon the party set off from Izumo house, with Minato avoiding looking at a grinning Uzume, and with an irritated Tsukiumi standing between them. In the group was Minato, Uzume, Tsukiumi, Kana, (Saki was too depressed to want to do anything after learning about the tracker that negated her stealth ability) and Shiina. They were actually setting off later than Minato had wanted as the argument once he informed everyone where he wanted to go had been loud and long. After a while however, everyone agreed that in the long term his idea was sound, they just didn't want him to put himself into danger, which set off another round of arguments about who got to go and why. Eventually he was able to argue everyone down and the group set off, their destination: the west of the city controlled by Nishi Sanada.

As they walked along Uzume asked "Are you sure of this bro? I mean he might not be a bastard like Higa, but he is one of the bigger players in the game, and that makes him your enemy."

"No, it doesn't, by the rules of the game it does maybe, but we've seen that those rules aren't worth the paper they're printed on. And with all of you along to tell your stories I think we can get him to agree to a non aggression pact like we've got with Mikogami, maybe more."

Shiina however was concerned about a more personal problem. "Are you certain that you need my along? I don't like leaving Yukari alone niisan."

"I'm certain Shiina, I want to have representatives of each of my allies along to make certain Sanada realizes how readily I work with other Ashikabi."

"Still..." The younger boy muttered, looking back over his shoulder the way they had come.

Minato smiled at his concern over his sister, though a part of him wanted to grab the boy and threaten him about

being near his sister. Uzume however looked at him a little angrily. "You're not the only Sekirei away from their Ashikabi right now gaki, I want to be with my Chiho-baby just as much as you want to be with Yukari. Don't be a baby about it and just get it done. I've been away from Chiho-baby way too much since we got together to want to listen to you whine about a few measly hours."

Shiina glared at her and Minato adroitly stepped between them. "Enough, we're all allies here okay. Uzume that was a little harsh, Shiina doesn't know about your problems with Higa. Shiina, Uzume's right, we're only going to be away for a few hours. I know you're still feeling guilty about not being able to protect her, but Yukari's a big girl, she'll be alright until you get back. And under the circumstances you did a great job protecting her against a surprise attack by not one but several enemy Sekirei."

Shiina blushed at the praise and subsided, though inside he knew that he and Yukari had both been saved by Kazehana being there. He resolved to join the others in their training, he had to get stronger to protect his Ashikabi.

Tsukiumi and Kana looked over at the others then ignored them, going back to their own discussion about the advantages of mid range to short range.

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Back in her bed in her new house Yukari sighed. Something about her conversation with her brother was bothering her, something about the way he was so still when they were talking about their mother. She shook her head, resolved to question him or maybe one of his Sekirei about it later.

"Are you okay Yukari-nee?"

She looked up and smiled at Kusano who had come with her with Katsuragi and Chizuru to keep her company. They had also brought along deck of cards and several board games to play with, but both of their poker faces were so bad playing anything but go-fish was way too easy. "I'm okay Musubi-chan, just thinking about something, my mother Takami hasn't contacted me lately and I've been a little worried about her."

Kusano gasped and then smiled happily at her, giving her right arm a hug. "I know who Takami-neesan is, she was my adjustor! She was nice!"

Yukari froze inside a little. Her mother didn't just work for MBI, but with the Sekirei, and with this plan? She looked over at the two quiet girls and remembered what she had been told about what happened to them, and wondered how the hell her mother could be involved in something that lead to something like that. "O-oh, well, that's nice, now whose turn is it to pick the game?" With that the three girls began to play jan-ken-pon to see who would choose the next game, and Yukari began to wonder what the hell her mother was doing, and how much Minato knew about it, and what he was planning to do about it.

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Minato and his group finally arrived in the area controlled by Sanada, and almost immediately they could tell they were being watched. Kana in particular was spooked as she couldn't figure out who was watching them, she couldn't see them but she could feel them. "I don't know where the hell they are but we're being watched somehow."

Tsukiumi nodded, looking around. "Are you sure you still want to do this Minato? It feel like we're surrounded." Unlike the younger Sekirei however she was feeling excited, she hadn't had a good fight since fighting Higa's forces. Uzume and Shiina were both looking around, but much more calmly than the others.

Minato nodded. "Positive, lets just keep going."

Another ten minutes of travel, they arrived at their destination a dirty, almost run down bar frequented by bikers and other rowdies. Going in Minato was unsurprised to see that it was practically empty. Even the civilians involved in the seamier side of the city were leaving the city as fast as they could.

Minaka had finally woken up to what was happening and tried incentives and even thinly veiled threats to their property if they left, but none of the citizens had wanted to stay. Another fight had begun near one of the main roads out of the cities between Higa's forces and Mikogami's and it had quickly escalated to include parts of the road, which had been heavily congested of course with traffic heading out of the city. The death toll was still rising this morning as the MBI emergency crews continued to clear the area, but it was already at fifty plus. None of the Sekirei were reported as 'deactivated' in the information Matsu had been able to find in their computer system.

The group sat down, and Minato went to the barman and ordered a round of drinks, mostly soft drinks but a Yebisu for him. They sat down at one of the tables and waited, seemingly at their ease.

Another fifteen minutes passed before Nishi Sanada came in through the door, followed by five of his Sekirei. Minato was struck by the fact that four of the five had the same body type: young and athletic. The other looked relatively normal for a Sekirei, other than the fact she wasn't dressed like one, she was dressed like a school teacher, almost exactly like Yui dressed, and Minato wondered what her abilities were.

Nishi walked up grinning at Minato and his group. "I didn't think even you would have the balls to come here like this, what's the big bad Oni of the North doing in my territory?"

Minato raised a hand to indicate to the barman to bring over another drink even as looked at Nishi quizzically, "Oni of the north, since when is that my name?"

Nishi sat down, waving at his Sekirei to see at a nearby table. "Since you did that to Juniichi, the bastard deserved it but god did that put the fear of death into everyone. Gotta say, I wouldn't have done it like that, but damn was it effective."

Minato smirked, "That was the point."

Nishi nodded. "So what's brought you to my neck of the woods? Especially with the Sekirei of at least three other Ashikabi? I recognize the veiled Sekirei, I assume she was being coerced somehow by that asshole Higa? And then there's this one" he pointed Kana who waved awkwardly at one of his Sekirei who responded the same way "Who we've also seen working with Higa, and this one" he nodded at Shiina, who seemed to shrink a little under his gaze, "Who I think is the death Sekirei of the devil Ashikabi? What the hell have you been doin'?"

"Making allies, which is why I'm here, and let me say it's nice to see you without your dumb biker persona?" Minato answered calmly.

Nishi laughed, "Not that it ever fooled you huh met me once and saw right through me! Fools Mikogami, Higa and the head bastard pretty well, that and moving around a lot in my territory. So, what would the point of this alliance be, and why the hell should I bother?"

"You get out information, and the short term objective would be to irritate and cripple Higa, then put ourselves in a position to take on Minaka, once we figure out what will happen once he's gone."

Both men knew what they were talking about, after all, Tokyo was part of Japan no matter if MBI had bought it, and in fact was supposed to be the capital, but the Japanese government hadn't done anything yet to address what was going on in the city. This was despite the city emptying of civilians, all of whom would undoubtedly complain to the first politician they could nail down enough to do so. MBI though, was so an integral part the Japanese economy. If they wanted they could destroy the entire economy, and maybe cause a recession worldwide. That didn't even consider their personal army dug in around the city or the Sekirei themselves. Who knew how Higa or Mikogami would react to an invasion, certainly the Disciplinary squad would fight back, and in the city or close range Sekirei were deadly.

"How would you cripple Higa exactly?"

"Higa's power comes from the number of Ashikabi allied with him, I'm going to continue to whittle away at that, his own Sekirei, that can wait until the next stage, and his money and control of his company. With the current warzone like reality in the city, money isn't going to be worth much soon. Higa has seized control of the power station that services his section of the city, presumably to remove himself from MBI's control of the utilities. I want to make that decision bite him in the ass, I'm going to blow that power station the fuck up, and plunge practically his entire territory into darkness. Without utilities, most of his employees who have stayed will be forced to leave or move into his hospital, which is the only building in his territory that has its own generator. And he'll have to prioritize who can stay there, his own employees or his yakuza allies. Either way he will have to deal with unrest and problems at home. Then, I'm going to take out a few of his allies, those that are allied with him by choice. Within two weeks, Higa will be crippled, paranoid and leading a fractured force."

Nishi's eyes widened at this list and he leaned back nursing his beer in silence for a few minutes before responding. He had been given generalities for the most part true, but the plan was sound, and there was something about Minato, something solid and competent, which told Nishi a lot. "Okay, what do you need me to do?"

The discussion lasted another fifty minutes as the two sat there nursing their beers and discussing Minato's long term plans. It ended with the two shaking hands and Minato going back to his territory, mission accomplished.

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As this was going on, Kazehana and Musubi had returned from gathering the supplies. Most of them were easy enough to understand, and taking a bit of initiative the two of them and Matsu began to convert one of the inn's rooms into a command center. While Matsu programmed the computers to connect to various video feeds which came from over a dozen heavy video cameras. Saki, Yui, Homura and Yashima went out to place them in various areas, along with several motion sensors, though where Minato had bought them from none of the others knew. Miya meanwhile went over their supplies, and prepared dinner. By the time Minato came back the command center was set up and Matsu was nearly finished her programming. Ten of the twelve computers were set up. The eleventh was set up to use MBI's own satellites to track Sekirei movement, and the 12 was kept free for Matsu's personal use.

Minato was proud of their work and handed out hugs and kisses to all of his Sekirei, lingering on Kusano, who he lifted to his shoulder and refused to let down the rest of the evening except for dinner. They played lots of games and had a good time that night, only interrupted by Matsu, lewd giggles as she looked at Homura and Minato, which was swiftly followed by Miya rapping her on the head from where she was sitting next to Akitsu.

After the meal Homura and Matsu came up to Minato before he could leave, Kusano asleep in his arms. Homura gestured at Matsu. "Matsu suggested something that may solve my, our er, the problem. She recommends that you drink from a glass, and I'll do the same. That way maybe we can, you know..."

Here Matsu giggled and butted in "You'll swap spit, ehehheh.... Then we'll see if you're really as straight as you think Minato-tan..."

Miya came up and smacked her again sighing, before dragging her back to work in the control room. Homura whispered "She's been like since I asked her for advice. I fried her several times when I brought up the problem, and I swear Miya has had to change out her ladle twice since you left."

Minato rubbed his eyes irritated. "Right, I suppose we should have expected that. Do you want to try this now?"

Homura nodded, and took up the glass of water Minato had been drinking from during dinner. He hesitated then

Surprisingly this worked. Minato watched amused and amazed in equal amounts as the wings of light blazed from Kagari's back.

Not ten minutes later Matsu's voice rang out loudly from the command room, calling Minato and the rest of his Sekirei back from where they had been about to leave the inn for home. Minato-tan, Everyone you've got to come and see this!"

Everyone piled in to see what she was shouting about and watched in shocked surprise as president Minaka's crazy visage appeared on the screen. "The malevolent third stage begins! Now who will win and advance to the next stage! You chosen few, you who remain will now battle upon this stage in teams the size of which I the game master will choose. From here on out it is only the strong vs. the strong, and let might choose who will gain control of the power of the gods!"

Minato groaned aloud, knowing what to expect next.

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End chapter If you all could look at the part where Minato is being teased and tell me if I need to add anything to it, that would be good, and suggestions as well of course.

## **\*Chapter 15\*: Chapter 15 Fourth Stage: Direct Conflict**

I don't own Sekirei, if I did Minato would have a spine and Akitsu would be one of the main characters.

In this chapter you will note, much like the previous chapter, that I have mixed and matched some Ashikabi/Sekirei pairs, which allows me to do different things with them. It has also come to my attention that I've gotten the stages wrong, inserted a new one somewhere that wasn't in the original anime/manga. It really doesn't matter at this point, but I will go back when I have finished this story to correct it. Right now I just don't want to waste time on it when I could be advancing one of my stories instead.

Now for some quick responses to a few reviews:

Illusive Man: thank you! You're only the second person to comment on my RvB inserts, I was getting a little depressed. Seriously, if any of you haven't seen Red vs. Blue, go and watch it, its free online and it's amazing.

Zarlaan: dude, don't leave me hanging like that, if you have a problem with Saki's powers tell me, don't just drift off after a few words!

Zenaano: You say you want me to hurry up and put Miya with Minato, yet at the same time you complain about how little detail I put in another scene? Strange, and completely missing the point. Miya is a widow who loved her husband very much and doesn't yet want to see that she is ready to move on with her life, of course it's going to take a long time for her to see it, and even longer to act on it. As for the scene with Nishi, I am going to slowly flesh out his character as the story continues, and that begins in a little flashback to that conversation in this chapter. And in terms of analyzing Nishi, what makes you think Minato couldn't do that very easily? Good leaders can do that you know.

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### **Chapter 14 Fourth stage: Direct Conflict**

As Minato had expected his cell phone rang almost immediately after the start of the fourth stage of the Sekirei plan. When he resignedly opened it, Minaka's arrogant and over-the-top voice sounded in his ear. "Well, Minato Sahashi are you ready to take on the other powerful players in this game of the gods? Today is your day, my friend, the battle will occur at an abandoned factory on the following coordinates." The phone made a beeping noise indicating an incoming text, and Minato tilted the screen so Matsu could see it. "It will be a five-way battle in which every Ashikabi will bring only two Sekirei. The Ashikabi will also be pitted against one another in this round Minato, something you should approve of! The prize will be beyond your imagination. Good luck!" And with that, president of MBI's hung up the phone.

Minato looked over at Matsu who was studying the map of the city intent with a wave of her fingers she was able to ring up a real-time video of the site, an ironworks factory that had been among the first businesses to shut down due to lack of workers. "It's pretty large" she said, "about four blocks in area, and two stories tall. Visibility will be low, but most of the combat should occur in the few open places like the main floor and the garage section at the back. There are lots of overhangs, lots of pipes and places to hide in throughout the factory, I'll try to get a map of the interior for you."

Minato nodded. He looked over his Sekirei for a moment, all of whom looked a little apprehensive, knowing that he could only choose two of them to go. Tsukiumi and Musubi, as the the most combative of his family looked the most worried. "The rules say two Sekirei, but we've seen how easily those rules are ignored so I want everyone else to follow us to the site and be on hand nearby just in case." all their faces brightened at that. "Matsu will stay here and communicate via the earbuds we picked up with everyone on site. Kazehana and Akitsu will be with me as the 'legal' fighters. Musubi and Tsukiumi will be hiding close by, and" here he looked over to Chiho and Uzume, "Uzume was well, if that's alright. If they are willing to break the rules they may have only planed for my girls, so she may give us a good x-factor. That'll leave Saki and Kana to patrol our area just in case." He looked over to Yui who nodded, happy that Minato hadn't even considered bringing along Kusano.

Chiho looked at Uzume nodding approval and the cloth user grinned. "Hell yeah, bro, I am so there if ya need me."

Matsu turned back to the map and began to play with her computer again. After a moment she was able to bring up a street side view of several buildings near the factory. One of them had already been damaged in a recent Sekirei fight which Matsu pointed out to Tsukiumi and Musubi. "You two can hide here. It's near the western most corner of the factory, so if Minato-tan runs into any trouble, they can retreat in that direction and I can direct you straight to him."

Tsukiumi looked at her husband worriedly. "Do you think just making us go first in this stage as Minaka's way of getting back at us for what we've been doing? Or is there going to be something more? I would think that there would be if it is."

Minato smiled at her taking her hand in his. "I think he wants us to walk right into a trap. I don't know what it's going to be, but the only thing more devastating than a well-prepared trap is to have one turned against you."

Tsukiumi nodded approvingly and hugged Minato around the stomach in a tight viselike grip. She looked wordlessly at her sister wives. *Take care of him for us.* Their assurance ran across the link the other way instantaneously.

Miya stepped forward, her own worry for all of her friends evident on her face. "Don't worry, we'll be keeping a close eye on you all from back here. Good luck!"

Minato shrugged philosophically. "In battle preparation and planning matter more than luck and I think in those two areas whoever is against us is going to find that they are on the short end of the stick." All his Sekirei gave a mighty cheer at that and left to get ready. Minato looked over at Homura, who was looking a little irritated at being left out. "Homura, I'm going to work under the assumption that only MBI knows you've been winged." He glanced over at Matsu, who gave him a thumbs up, indicating she had been able to stop that information getting to Kocho. "In that case, I want you to take a message to Nishi, tell him to expect us at around three in the morning tonight for that little plan we thought up. Once that's done, come back here and grab a few of the items Kazehana and Musubi brought back and take them with you back west, I'll meet you at the border between the north and the western section of the city after we're done with this contest. I'm almost certain Minaka is going to use Higa and his forces to punish us, so he'll be weakened, and I want to keep the blows coming."

Homura nodded, but his handsome face was creased in a frown. "Are you sure we can trust Sanada? I didn't run into him one way or the other when I was protecting unwinged Sekirei, but still, he is one of your main rivals in this game."

Minato shook his head, amused. "I don't have rival in this game Homura, I have enemies, and so far the only ones of those that matter are Higa and Minaka. Nishi may play his cards close to his chest, but judging from that conversation we had, he and I have far more in common in terms of how we see Sekirei and this mad plan."

#### **Flashback:**

*Nishi leaned back slightly, looking over at Minato with lazy but intelligent eyes. "You know, I get the impression that this is all, sort of like just another day at the office to you. Word is that you just got back into the country a few weeks at best before you winged your first Sekirei, I gotta wonder what the hell you've been doing to take this so much in stride."*

*Minato smiled pleasantly and adroitly dodged the question, answering back with his own. "Call it the legacy of a misspent youth. What concerns me is how easily everyone else has been taking to this 'plan', treating living beings like toys in a game."*

*Nishi growled angrily, and behind him his Sekirei stirred at the implication. "Hey, don't take that tone with me dude, I've never treated any of my babies like anything less than the women they are. Well," he added conscientiously, "except for dressing them up as anime characters sometimes." Two of the Sekirei blushed at the reminder, but he went on easily "and if any Ashikabi in my area treats his Sekirei as less than that, my babies and I punish them. Not as much as you did to that scumbag Junichi, but we've had ta chastise a few. Iv'e tried to keep my babies from removing any of their sisters from the game though."*

*"So have I," Minato said blandly, "Except in cases where the Sekirei is a danger to others," and he went on to describe how he and his Sekirei had gone out of their way to help those sisters that were in abusive relationships. When Nishi and the others heard about how Higa had treated his Sekirei, all of them growled low, and some of them sent dark looks at Kana, who flinched under their eyes, but looked back stubbornly.*

*Nishi nodded slowly. "I can see why you've got a mad on for Higa then, and I'll join ya in hammering him. But that still leaves Mikogami, who is the strongest player in the game going by the numbers he can call on, and Minaka himself."*

*"Yes, but Mikogami is a child, and he can still learn from his mistakes, besides from what we have found out he treats all his Sekirei very well. If he didn't collect them by force like they were trading cards I wouldn't have a problem with him, but that is something he can learn not to do in the future. By the way, have you stopped using your MBI card?"*

*Nishi snorted. "I never even started dude, never needed it to help me look after my babies, I've got so many friends in this town that I never needed to look far for anything they needed, from food to clothing. Well I did have friends, most*

of them have left the city. Can't say I blame them either, hell I helped most of them do it."

"It all comes back to control," Minato leaned forward intently, and one his hands reached out to grasp Tsukiumi's in an unconscious gesture of affection. She blushed as the other Sekirei grinned at her, but squeezed his hand as Minato went on. "Minaka seems to think that this is some kind of game and controls all the rules but he doesn't, and I'm going to prove to him that he doesn't. First we hammer Higa then we take on Minaka in the court of public opinion. He's somehow stopping any information from the city getting out, but there has to be a way to get around it. We also need to gather as many Ashikabi as we can together, if enough of us get together, he can't force us to keep playing by his rules."

Nishi stared into the distance thoughtfully. "That's a little vague man, and we still haven't figured out why the government, hell why the world super powers are just letting this go on. I've got no idea about that one. It can't be just his economic clout. He needs a bigger stick than that."

"Control of the ship the Sekirei arrived in gives him one such stick," Minato said, remembering Miya's telling him about the ship and its capabilities. "And I think he thinks the Sekirei/Ashikabi would all help him in throwing out any attack, plus his own private army of course. I'm still not certain how much of that 'age of the gods' bullshit Minaka really believes and how much is an act. But consider this, we don't know what happens when a Sekirei is taken back into MBI after being deactivated, but we do know that Sekirei can survive having their crest, their connection to their Ashikabi broken, at least if it wasn't a full bond. Or perhaps the phrase willing bond would be better."

Nishi shuddered. He had no idea how many Sekirei had been eliminated in this game but it was at least in the high thirties, maybe higher. "That's an ugly thought Minato."

"Oh, here's another one," Minato said smiling thinly, "Why are the Sekirei here at all? One ship, with one adolescent, nine babies and ninety-sevens embryo's with only three males? You say you're an anime fan, what does that sound like to you, a colony mission or something else?"

Nishi paused then looked up at the ceiling and through that to the sky beyond. "Y'know I've always loved sci-fi anime, stuff that had to do with space and all, always wondered what was out there. Now I'm afraid of the answer, thanks dickhead, really." Minato grinned at him and Nishi looked down at him, all business again, "Alright, so lets get down to specifics. What exactly do you want me to do to hurt that bastard Izumi?"

### **End Flashback**

Minato smirked now. "Trust me, Nishi will do his bit, he wants to hammer Higa as hard as he can for what the bastards done to his Sekirei." Homura nodded still reluctant agreement, then left to get on his fighting outfit. While he wasn't using his alternate identity anymore, the black jacket would blend into the night better than anything else he owned. Once more he was thankful that for whatever reason he was still male, and wondered why that was. He didn't feel any attraction to Minato, and it was obvious the reverse was also true. *No use worrying about it, I'll just count my blessings that he didn't force me to change. I wonder what this will mean though if I ever find a woman I'm attracted to on more than a physical level? Well, whatever, at the moment he's got a plan to win this game and take out Minaka, and that's good enough for me.* Not five minutes later he was moving swiftly over the city toward the western section of the city.

Minato left the command center and went over to his house. He dressed in jeans, a tight t-shirt and leather coat, and was carrying a wrapped object under his arm. Once he was ready he met up with his family downstairs and they went back over to Izumo house to meet up with Uzume. Miya frowned slightly at the sight of the wrapped object under Minato's arm, she knew what it contained and she didn't like what its presence told her of what Minato expected to happen, but she kept her own council, ignoring the fluttering in her heart.

Minato kissed Matsu on the lips goodbye then lifted his daughter into his arms and kissed Kusano's cheek noisily, causing the girl to giggle aloud, breaking the pall of worry that had descended on her. She didn't follow everything that was going on, but she knew her papa and onee-chan's were heading into trouble and she wasn't going with them. A part of her wanted to, but she knew that her papa wouldn't let that happen, not until she was grown up. Minato put her down and Saki and Kana came over to take her outside to play, the better to take her mind off what was going to happen.

Minato turned to the others. "Well we're off."

Miya nodded, hiding her worry behind her pleasant smile. "Be safe, all of you." Chiho followed this admonition with her own, staring at Uzume in worry, which caused the cloth wielder to tear up and hug her gently (taking the opportunity to feel her up) before stepping back. Yui merely nodded pleasantly, thinking this would be a good way to

see if she had decided to back the right horse in this game in more ways than ethically. Yukari and Shiina also added their own farewells, and Yukari in particular looked worried, but she was also wondering what that package under Minato and his chosen team turned and walked off without another word. Miya and the three captured Sekirei along with Shiina and Yui and her girls watched them go until they were out of sight. Yukari and Matsu however both turned quickly back to the command center to get the best seats to watch what was going to happen.

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Minaka chortled as he looked over the observation room in the top floor of MBI tower, where he and his workers could access every camera they had installed throughout the city. The feed of each fight in the fourth stage would be sent out to the Ashikabi in the city, and to several foreign powers, or the secret services of said powers in America's case. Minaka always thought that was amusing, that the Americans wanted the power he was promising them, but couldn't openly declare it because their own bleeding heart public would rip them to pieces. The fact the most powerful nation in the world was so constrained amused him no end. That would not be a problem his government would have once he declared himself. Rally though the nations of the world were so stupid, to think he would willingly sell the power of the Sekirei as he had told them they really had no vision, no dream for the future.

What made this first fight of the much anticipated fourth stage even better though was the fact that Minato Sahashi was going to learn at last what happened when you broke the rules of the game. With a swirl of his white jacket he left the room, gleefully looking forward to making his grand entrance.

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Minato, Kazehana and Akitsu arrived at the abandoned factory 15 min. to spare before the allotted time. Tsukiumi and Musubi had broken off earlier to hide in the abandoned building on the eastern facing side of the factory.

They walked in looking around them cautiously hoping to have time to explore only to find that two of their opponents had already arrived. Across from them, one Ashikabi stood with two Sekirei at his side. The Ashikabi looked to be a college student, dressed in a blue hoody he had pulled over his head, but his eyes were cold and hard over a supercilious sneer as he looked at Minato and his Sekirei. The Sekirei to his left had brown hair in a buzz cut, was of normal height, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt I'm was one of the more normal Sekirei that Minato had seen. She held no weapon unlike her neighbor, who had two serrated daggers attached to her belt, and spiky hair going in every direction with metal points on the ends.

Minato's eyes narrowed dangerously, as did Kazehana's and she spoke to him through their mental link. *Minato, that's one of the Sekirei that attacked your sister.*

Minato's answer was cold as ice in her mind as he replied. *I know, it seems Minaka has allowed Higa to stack the deck against us. He keeps his own hands clean, and lets Higa take his revenge on us at the same time, not unexpected, but we'll need to stay sharp.* He stared hard at the two Sekirei, both of whom were looking eager to begin, analyzing their body language and their faces before he shook his head. *Take those two down permanently if you can, they look like the kind to enjoy what happened to my sister, and I don't think they were winged by force.* Kazehana and Akitsu both sent acknowledging mental nods, looking around them at the factory. The factory was an old ironworks factory that had most of its roof removed at some point, but the interior was still intact, and besides the open area they were standing in, which must have been the entrance to the main floor, it was filled with pipes and hanging walkways, much like Matsu had said. What she hadn't mentioned were the cameras they could see literally everywhere, though of course they had expected something like that.

While his Sekirei were concentrating on the battlefield, Minato focused his attention to the other Ashikabi, and was frankly both surprised and worried. The Sekirei appeared to be older than most of the other Sekirei Minato had seen except for Kazehana and Miya, and her body was built along the same generous lines as the wind user. Her clothing however was very conservative and more resembled that which Miya and Yui routinely wore: long skirt and a very plain blouse, something that a housewife or teacher would wear, not a warrior. Her hair was a dark red color, and was done in a simple style down to her neck.

Beside her stood her Ashikabi and this was what worried Minato the most. The Ashikabi was a young boy even younger than Hayato. Minato would guess his age as either ten or eleven at the most. He was dressed in a school uniform, but Minato didn't recognize what school it was from. He had brown wavy hair and a kindly face, but was looking very determined as he stared back at Minato.

To the boy's other side stood his other Sekirei, but this time he recognized the Sekirei from his discussion with Saki and the others, the one whose name they hadn't been able to find out, but who Saki had said was allied with Higa, not one of his Sekirei. This Sekirei looks to be around sixteen or seventeen, with an impressive bust for one so short and young looking on display via a dark blue leotard, short silver hair save for where it stuck up to form dog like ears

and long bangs on either side of her face, yellow eyes and a heavy collar completed the image, but unlike the older Sekirei who didn't seem to have a weapon, this younger Sekirei had two medium sized whips attached to her belt. Both girls stood so close and seemed so protective of their little Ashikabi that Minato couldn't help but smile internally, sending to all three of his wives, *those two seem to have a true bond, we'll want to take them down as gently as possible.*

Kazehana looked directly at the trio and giggled aloud drawing their attention and causing the older looking Sekirei to flush as if she could tell what the wind user was thinking. *That's why I love you Minato, so romantic! Of course we can't break up a destined trio.* Akitsu merely sent back the mental equivalent of a nod, not caring either way. Outside Tsukiumi relayed Minato's orders to the others just in case, and then had to literally sit on Musubi with Uzume to get her to stay put rather than charge out and hug Minato for all she was worth.

Minato finished his examination of the Sekirei and Ashikabi and moved to take his place in a corner with both of his wives beside him, opening up his mental link to Tsukiumi. *Tsukiumi, get in contact with Matsu, find out if she's able to hack into MBI's cameras to watch the match, and see if she's been able to get us a map of this place.*

Tsukiumi answered in the affirmative, and minutes later replied, *Husband, she was able to do both. If need be I can give you directions around the interior of the building. She is also trying to find any information about that older looking Sekirei, but doesn't have anything yet, Sekirei profiles are apparently kept under much tighter security.*

Minato thanked her, and then listened as Tsukiumi described the floor plan of the factory, looking around with shrewd eyes before whispering out the beginnings of a plan to Kazehana and Akitsu, not wanting to give away the fact he could communicate with his wives telepathically. They both nodded, but remained stationary, holding his hands tightly. About ten minutes after their arrival, the next Ashikabi and Sekirei arrived and this time all three of the northerners recognized them, though that recognition gave them no pleasure.

Benitsubasa was dressed in the same black kimono that she had been wearing at the battle of the bridge. Haihane looked much the same as well, save for wearing far more bandages this time under her clothing. Behind them came a man that could only be there Ashikabi Matsuo. As both disciplinary squad members moved, reluctantly Minato strangely thought, to a balcony in the upper left corner of the factory, Minato studied Matsuo as he moved to stand by the door.

Minato was not impressed. Matsuo wore a stylish suit and looked like he cared for himself, but his soft features and laid-back and lazy attitude seems to imply that he didn't know the first thing about combat. *If the Ashikabi are supposed to fight one another like Minaka said in his introductory speech, this is going to be a cakewalk for me at least.*

For their part Benitsubasa and Haihane were happy to be there and looked forward eagerly to fighting Minato's Sekirei, but did not look forward to going along with the plan that Minaka had devised. According to their orders they were supposed to let Higa, and his associates either take out Minato's Sekirei completely or at least tire them out before moving in to finish them off. Both thought this was rather cowardly and really did not want to do it to somebody who had proved to be, if not their friend at least friendly to them personally. Then too, both Sekirei were wondering how well the unknown Akitsu would stand up in a fight against them, though Haihane wanted to try her luck again against Kazehana. Benitsubasa was a little irritated that neither thunder-tits nor blondy were here.

Kazehana smirked when she saw Haihane glaring at her. "Hello claws-chan, back for more of the same? Guys don't like vindictive girls you know."

Haihane snarled and made to leap forward, but restrained herself at a cough from Matsuo, instead replying verbally, "There's no river to dump me in this time windy-bags, we can have a proper fight here!" The other Sekirei and Ashikabi trios moved back slightly, but continued to watch the action avidly.

"Windy-bags, is that envy I hear?" Kazehana snarked back. "Though no, that would be your friend over there, wouldn't it? How are you doing Beni-hime, any luck on that little project of yours?"

"NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS YOU OLD HAG!," Benitsubasa screeched, flushing as Matsuo turned to look at her, all of her earlier reluctance to fight Kazehana instead of monster tits or the water bitch gone as Haihane chortled next to her.

Before the verbal abuse could escalate further, Minato spoke up, "By the way Haihane, I bought you a present a week or so ago, but I didn't think MBI would let it through if I sent it to you. If you tell them to let it through I'll send it in the morning."

Matsuo cocked his head, but before he could say anything Haihane asked hopefully "Present, what kind?"

"An anime set for King of Bandits Jing, I thought you might like the series, and it was the least I could do to show my gratitude of your killing that asshole that was using his Sekirei to kill off his ex-girlfriends a few weeks ago."

Haihane's face lit up in appreciation, she had seen a few episodes of Jing and she loved the action in it especially the crow that turned into a weapon and fired those energy blasts. Matsuo however answered for her. "My, trying to influence my Sekirei, Minato-san? I'm sorry to say that we couldn't possibly accept a gift from a fellow competitor in the Sekirei plan, even if it is merely a sign of thanks for our work." Haihane pouted, poking at the ground with one of her claws, and Benitsubasa rolled her eyes, both at her reaction and at Matsuo.

"I never said it was in appreciation of your work," Minato said bluntly, looking with contempt at the other man, "just Haihane's. I might not like Minaka or the disciplinary squad or anything about this farce, but it was nice to see that she was willing to keep the peace as much as she could." Unseen by either Ashikabi Haihane blushed a little at Minato's praise.

Matsuo frowned slightly at Minato's use of the word 'farce' and the look of contempt in the other man's eyes. "I'm sorry, have I done something to offend you Minato-san, you seem to have a lot of anger towards me for someone who I haven't seen in person before. Or is your anger at me about my lifestyle choices, shall we say?"

Minato shook his head pityingly. "Your life choices are your own, what I have a problem with is why you winged Benitsubasa and Haihane when you didn't feel anything toward them, that's not fair to them, and it makes me angry seeing anyone treated that way, though you are just following your glorious president's lead in that area. Frankly the way MBI has treated the Sekirei is beneath contempt, and I'm going to enjoy showing Minaka the error of his ways." The young boy, who had been watching all this avidly, nodded agreement, having long since realized that treating people, even alien girls, like things was wrong and evil. His two Sekirei gripped his hands momentarily, and he looked up at them smiling. The college age Ashikabi though, didn't show any reaction and his Sekirei sneered at the sentimentality. Haihane and Benitsubasa though both looked away, sad at Minato's words and for just a moment resentful of their bond with Matsuo, before their bond with him and their indoctrination kicked back in.

Matsuo frowned in thought, wondering how to reply but before he could, Higa and his Sekirei finally arrived.

The pharmaceutical heir had wanted to send his aid in his place but he was still down with his injuries and his Sekirei refused to participate without him. Normally he would discipline such intransigence very thoroughly, but the null Sekirei's and Kochou's abilities were such that they were almost irreplaceable and thus given much more leeway than his other allies. So Higa was forced to participate himself and had brought two of his own Sekirei that the others recognized.

One of them was the girly girl Oriha, who Tsukiumi had tangled with twice previously. The other was the unnamed close combat Sekirei that Akitsu had frozen against the wall of the hospital on the day they broke out Chiho. Both looked at Minato and his Sekirei angrily, eager to even the score even though Oriha was disappointed to not see Tsukiumi standing there. Minato looked them over, and saw none of the signs he knew to look for and smiled grimly.

Suddenly the sound of a helicopter whirring above echoed around the metal of the factory. Looking up everyone saw a helicopter fly above them, dragging a long rope ladder below it. On the ladder a familiar figure hung one-handed and Minato groaned aloud.

Minaka cackled madly as he held up a huge iridescent jewel in his other hand and Minato and his wives breath caught in their throats as they recognized the jinki for what it was. "Who will win the game of the gods, who will be the king of the battlefield? To the winner goes the spoils and in this case the spoils are this! Who knows what this example of alien technology can do for you, you Ashikabi questing for glory. Another is hidden somewhere in the factory. Defeat your opponents, find the jewel, and this round is yours! At the sound of the gong the combat will commence!" With that the helicopter flew off disappearing into the distance.

Minato's mind moved quickly. *Tsukiumi change of plans, radio Matsu and tell her to look for any odd readings in the factory. Once you find something Uzume is to move in immediately to take it while you and Musubi remain as backup. We'll try to hold off the others until you figure out where it is. If the disciplinary squad wasn't here I think we could win this outright, but with them here I want to know where the Jinki is so if we make a break for it we can take it with us.* Tsukiumi barely was able to reply before the sound of a gong echoed from the speakers built into every corner and combat began.

Right off the bat Minato was proven correct in his assumption that everyone would be against his team in this contest. To the right the young boy's Sekirei moved in, the teenage Sekirei moving up almost as fast as Musubi would towards

them jumping here and there, her whips already in her hands and moving. From the left and center came the other four with Higa standing in the background with the other three Ashikabi.

As their enemies came forward Kazehana started stage one of Minato's plan: get some distance and cause some confusion. She swiftly brought both hands forward hitting the ground with a gust of wind and blowing huge clouds of dust into the air while Akitsu started to freeze the air and throw her ice spears into the fog. The ice spears were meant to hinder more than hurt, allowing the two long to mid range fighters to move back.

Minato moved to the side and jumped up grabbing one of the low-lying pipes with one hand and flipping himself up onto a walkway above. Running along it he then jumped down getting closer to Higa and the other Ashikabi before they could react, still carrying his wrapped package in his off hand.

Behind him, the Sekirei broke through the fog quickly only to find Akitsu and Kazehana having taken up station up in the pipes. The young looking Sekirei charged forward announcing her name with a shout "Kaie #62!" Kazehana was surprised by her speed, but Akitsu calmly raised an ice wall to block her advance. The girl slammed into it face-first and skidded down moaning to the ground below, stunned for the moment but not out of the action.

Higa's Sekirei tried to circle behind them jumping up to another walkway but Kazehana caught them mid jump and blew them back to the ground with a gust of wind. They landed well, but Oriha had lost one of her Chakra.

The dagger wielding Sekirei came on jumping up in front of Akitsu, but she waved her hand, having trained hard to do this quickly and suddenly her weapons froze and then shattered. The Sekirei fell back in shock and Akitsu and Kazehana followed up their advantage jumping down to meet the other Sekirei that had accompanied the knife wielder. A ferocious tornado of wind and ice shards slammed into her carrying her across the factory and crushing her against the far wall. When the pressure let up the Sekirei fell to the ground, bleeding from several serious wounds and her body broken in various places.

Higa's Sekirei had come back and closed the distance before the two could retreat and they and the older looking Sekirei, who introduced herself as #14 Kazami and seemed to be a pure fist type, kept the fight close against Kazehana and Akitsu, keeping the one dodging and the other freezing walls to protect themselves as they fell back into a cul-de-sac away from where Minato and the other Ashikabi were standing, followed quickly by Kaie. The disciplinary Squad followed behind watching the action avidly, waiting reluctantly for the best time to join in.

As this was going on, Minato closed the distance swiftly between him and the other Ashikabi. With a quick tap on the back of the head he passed the young boy and slammed a forearm straight into the college boys head before he could prepare himself, sending him stumbling backwards. Grabbing the back of the man's head he brought his head down and his knee up. With a crunch, the man was knocked unconscious before he could even get a chance to defend himself. His remaining Sekirei, who by now was out of sight with the others following Minato's wives deeper into the factory, didn't even notice.

His first target down, Minato advanced slowly on Higa, face set in a grim smile. "Greetings from Katsuragi and Chizuru. I'm going to enjoy this." Behind him, the young boy who he had left alone sighed in relief and began to back away even further, hiding behind some wood near the entrance.

Higa smirked and whistled loudly. Five men who all looked like yakuza muscle and armed with various weapons immediately entered the factory. "Funny, I think I'm going to enjoy it too. You and your Sekirei have cost me too much already. It's time to try a hostile takeover. You have a choice now, either join me or die." For a moment Higa looked further into the factory frowning momentarily, as if he had expected someone to appear from there as well but then he leaned back against the wall his entire manner one of calm deliberation.

All of them looked far more competent and experienced than the group Junichi had with him, and to anyone else they would have seemed very dangerous, to anyone who had not been through what Minato had anyway. Minato on the other hand shook his head, smiling thinly. "You have no idea who you're dealing with here do you?"

As he started circling the five men who were trying to envelop him from all sides Tsukiumi got in touch with him via their mental link. *Minato, Matsu found out where the jinki is being stored in the factory. It's in the direct center of the factory hidden in the main chimney stack. Uzume can't get to it without exposing herself and Musubi and I just intercepted two of Higa's Sekirei who were trying to enter the factory from the back, we think more of them might have entered from one of the other sides. We'll try to finish them quickly and meet up with you.* Tsukiumi's worry for Minato and her sister wives came through clearly a bright beam of emotion against the backdrop of her words.

Minato in turn sent her a wordless wave of love and reassurance. *Don't worry Tsukiumi. As long as you can keep too many more Sekirei from joining the fight, I think we can handle this, tell Uzume to go for it if you don't need her help*

*dealing with Higa's reinforcements.* He reached through the link and connected to his other two wives *Kazehana, if you feel the need you can use your norito, Akitsu if you can, keep yours in reserve.* Minato had no idea what their norito attacks looked like, all of his Sekirei having deemed them too dangerous to practice, but he was confident they would be enough. *I love all of you, and I know you'll do your best.*

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Elsewhere the other Ashikabi were watching the match with varying levels of interest. One of them, Mikogami was incensed. "They aren't playing by the rules!" He exclaimed, turning to look over his shoulder at Mutsu. "Why the hell are all of them ganging up on one team, this was supposed to be a five way free for all right?"

Mustu shrugged. "It seems as if Minaka chose teams that were already allied with one another for some reason. It can't be a coincidence, but I wonder what Minato has done to earn the games master's ire?"

Mikogami scowled. "It shouldn't matter, even the games master has to follow the rules, otherwise what's the point?" He bit his nails thoughtfully, still avidly watching the TV screen. "If the president can play favorites like that, we may need to rethink our strategy going forward." After that he fell silent and Mutsu nodded approvingly. While Mikogami was a picture perfect brat in many ways, he did follow the rules of the plan, and he cared for his Sekirei, in a sort of hands off fashion. Seeing something like this was bound to change his opinion of MBI for the worse.

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Elsewhere Nishi too watched, worried for his new ally, but then he smirked. Whatever the case, he had already decided to back Minato, this would just show him how good or bad a bet that was.

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Outside the factory Tsukiumi lowered her hand from where she had just sent a battering ram of water to cut off the two enemy Sekirei from entering the factory. "You cowards, we thought you would break the rules of the match, we won't let either of you interfere!" Musubi nodded seriously, getting into a stance next to her while Uzume began to shake with repressed anger at who the other two Sekirei were.

Toyotama and Ichiya, Higa's two prized enforcers, jumped away from the fast moving stream of water, and turned to look at Tsukiumi and the others. Ichiya was a tall woman whose battle outfit consisted of a purple and yellow leotard with portions cut away held together by a small metal ring right on her stomach. She smirked as she landed easily, one eyebrow rising to her hairline, which was cut about an inch long, almost like a buzz cut. "Well, well, if it isn't the little cloth bitch? I wondered if I'd see you again after you ran off. Who'd you have to blow to get these idiots to help /someone like you?"

Toyotama was clad in a tight top that exposed her midriff and shorts, and her colors were white and purple. Her long black hair moved from side to side as she shook her head, leaning on her staff. "That's all weaklings like you are good for of course. If you were stronger you could have wound up with an Ashikabi worth the name unlike that weak little girl, what was her name now?"

Ichiya scoffed. "Who the hell cares what a weakling's name is?"

Uzume's anger got the better of her then and she made to dash forward, her cloth weapons moving around her with deadly purpose, but a surprisingly serious Musubi put an arm to stop her. The normally upbeat fist type Sekirei glared across at their two opponents. "How dare you! How dare you belittle the bonds of love that exist between a Sekirei and her destined one! If you cannot understand the power of that bond than I'll beat it into you!"

Tsukiumi nodded, her own face set in a sneer of contempt. "You two are no better than dogs, barking and following the commands of you master with no thought for others, how dare you belittle Uzume-san and what she had to go through under orders from that filth you call Ashikabi. I won't stand for it!" Uzume, touched by their support made to speak but the water user jerked her head toward the factory. "You have your own mission Uzume, we'll handle these two."

Uzume looked torn for a moment, but the thought of obtaining another jinki and maybe using it in combination with the one they already had to heal Chiho somehow was way more important than her own revenge against two of her main tormentors. "Kick their ass for me girls!" With that the cloth wielder turned and jumped over the factories wall, her costume billowing behind her.

Toyotama brought her staff up into a ready position. "You think you two can handle us? You must be dreaming. Besides, you think we're the only team that was trying to get in?"

Tsukiumi shrugged. "No, but I'm certain my sisters can handle the rest of you filth, all that matters to me is making

certain you're not going anywhere."

Musubi took that as her cue to start and she shot forward, faster by far than she had been when Higa's forces last saw her, though not enough to surprise her enemies. Ichiya jumped upward, coming down with an axe kick which Musubi blocked, the ground cratering beneath her at the impact. Ichiya jumped backward then swung her staff only to bring it back to guard against a massive blast of water from Tsukiumi. With that the battle was joined.

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Minato stepped back slightly before unfolding his spatha from its wrappings. It fell into his main hand and before any of the toughs could even register the fact he had a real weapon he charged forward bringing it up in a vicious arc, slicing the knife wielding hand of the bruiser closest to him cleanly off before coming back in an economical movement and stabbing him in the gut. One boot lifted and he kicked the dead body off his blade. He then turned and faced his other attackers, raising his blade to a guard position.

The other four yakuza paused, shocked at how easily Minato had taken out one of their companions. They all looked from their own weapons, stiletos, tantos and switchblades to his bloodstained sword in sudden trepidation. Higa had also brought out a weapon, an elongating police shock stick and now he waved it in the air, his cool control gone completely, snarling. "What the hell are you waiting for he's still only one man, rush him!"

Still the four hesitated and Minato sighed. "Amateurs, the lot of you, when you have a numerical advantage in a situation like this, you don't sit back and dither, you charge in close and overwhelm me all at once. Don't let me dictate the pace you idiots. Come on, I haven't got all night." The four thugs, spurred on by the contempt in his voice finally rushed forward, while behind them Higa took the opportunity to move deeper into the factory to start looking for the prize.

As soon as the toughs were within five paces Minato ran forward, faster than anyone there had ever seen anyone move before. A straight power kick to one stomach sent one of the men flying back with a ruptured diaphragm, and he was in among them. Before the others could react Minato's spatha came up and over slashing into the shoulder of another thug, chopping straight through his arm. One of the thugs on his other side, a little quicker to react than the others, tried to stab him in the back but Minato, with that special awareness that can only be built in life or death situations, dodged to the left just slightly, bringing his arm up to pin the other man's arm against his side. Turning within the man's reach he brought his sword up, stabbing straight through the man's guts before the thug could back away. He pulled it out swiftly to face the last remaining thug, letting his last opponent to fall to the ground trying to hold his guts inside his body to join his fellows, who were rolling around in agony. Minato ignored them turning to face the last yakuza, but there was no need.

The one remaining bruiser took one look at the carnage that Minato had caused in little under a minute turned and ran out of the factory.

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All of that action had been caught on video and Mikogami stared, awestruck. "So-so cool..." he breathed, while behind him Mutsu raised an eyebrow in surprised respect.

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Nishi first gawked, then laughed, and turned to his Sekirei. "Alright babies, if his Sekirei can do as well as he can this fight is in the bag! Kujika, Kuruse, Barei, get ready, we're going to have work to do later tonight!"

The three Sekirei all nodded, chorusing "Haiiii!" Before they all turned back to watch the action.

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The residents of Izumo house had various reactions as well. When the thugs had appeared Yukari, who knew nothing about Minato's fighting ability or his past had been scared for her oni-chan, but when the fighting actually began she could only gape in shock. Shiina, Chiho, Yui and her Sekirei were in a similar state, as were the three freed Sekirei, none of whom had even suspected the kind, gentle Minato they knew could be capable of something like what they were seeing.

Matsu had of course been worried despite knowing her Ashikabi's prowess, but the reality of the fight shook her a little, but she quickly got over it. Kusano hadn't been shocked at all merely cheering her papa on.

Miya too hadn't been surprised, merely smiling a little grimly as Minato took out his spatha, feeling a little proud of his skills, then she frowned a little. "Ara, that one man should not have been able to get so close to him, and that first lunge was awfully clumsy. It seems I will have to step up our training a bit." The others turned and looked at her in surprise, but Yukari didn't look away from the screen, her lips pressed tight together. *It looks as if me and oni-chan*

*are going to be having more to discuss when he gets back than I thought.*

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Minaka stared then slammed his fists down on the arms of his Presidents chair, a chair designed for maximum use and comfort set into the middle of his communication center, roaring "What was that! Where in the hell did Minato learn to fight like that?!" Behind him someone began to laugh and he turned angrily to stare at Karasuba, who had returned from her trip not even an hour ago. "Can you shed some light on this?"

Karasuba smirked, wanting to prolong this as long as she could, "Yes, but I'll do it tomorrow, I'm suffering from jet lag, and it can wait until the morning." She ignored his angry splutters and turned to one of the technicians sitting nearby, a man whose nametag read Simmons. "You."

The technician blanched a little at being singled out, but not for the normal reasons someone was when Karasuba. "Um, I really don't like it when girls pay direct attention to me."

Karasuba blinked for just a second. *I must be losing my touch.* She rested her sword lightly on the back of the man's neck. "Then I'm sure you won't want any more yes?" The man nodded fearfully and she went on. "Pump the feed from the factories cameras to the TV in my room, and send me a recording of that fight from the beginning. Don't make me come back here for it, you wouldn't like it if I do."

He nodded fearfully and turned to do her bidding, while Minaka stared at her retreating back, fuming at the disrespect for a moment before he turned back around to watch the action. Unfortunately he was interrupted as an alarm on another computer went off to the side of the main screen. He groaned aloud, "What is it now!?" When he heard the response he groaned, but began to issue orders crisply.

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As this was going on, two more of Higa's Sekirei had joined in attacking Akitzu and Kazehana. One of them appeared to be a teenager dressed in a far better fitting and less erotic version of the miko outfit Musubi wore. She immediately drew Kazehana's attention with her closed, almost fatalistic expression, reminding the wind user far too much of how Katsuragi used to look. Two large blades jutted out of her loose sleeves, and she actually paused to announce her name and number before joining the fight, speaking in a monotone voice, "#40, Shi." before rocketing forward with no thought to her own defense.

The second girl was dressed in something like an adult version of a kunoichi cosplay outfit, with open sides that were held closed around her waist by a large obi. She had a lordly look of disdain and contempt on her thin face and she ignored her fellow Sekirei entirely rushing forward immediately to join the fight.

Kazehana thought, *Can you somehow separate Kaie, Shi and Kisami from the others Akitzu?* She winced as a thrown kunai from the unnamed new girl nicked her shoulder, and the two continued to fall back, making certain they couldn't be surrounded. *This is getting a little dicey. And those two MBI dogs haven't joined in yet.*

Akitzu replied in the negative. *No, they are all too close to the others for me to do that, we need to figure out some way to separate them one at a time.*

Evidently Higa believed in stacking the deck as much as possible in his favor, because just as she thought this, two more Sekirei arrived and joined the fight. One of them was a grimfaced flat-chested young woman wielding a halberd, her eyes locked with Akitzu as if she had a personal grudge against her. The second was dressed much like Shi in a conservative miko's outfit, and she too wielded twin blades though they were of a different design, but that was where the similarities ended. Unlike Shi and her pain filled eyes, this one had a look on her Kazehana had seen only on Karasuba before, a look of pure bloodlust, and she came on with a roar.

Kazehana nearly groaned aloud, the odds were really stacked against them now, it wasn't un-winnable just yet, but it was getting close.

Thankfully they were about to get a bit of a reprieve. Both of the Disciplinary squad members flinched slightly as their cell phones went off. Benitsubasa opened hers, and looked at the message, then scowled. "It looks like we have been called away damn it! You get a reprieve you two, but we'll kick your asses next time! Let's go Haihane." Inwardly she was relieved, despite the taunting earlier she hadn't wanted to fight Kazehana, she wasn't the among Minato's flock she had problems with, and the odds hadn't made it a fair fight anyway. Haihane, scowled, as she had been looking forward to fighting 'windy-bags' but nodded, and the two of them jumped away.

Kisami suddenly gave them an opening, leaping into the air to climb onto a catwalk and attempt to get behind them. Kazehana sent a blast of wind at her, catching the other Sekirei as she was coming down, spinning her up and

around to crash into one of the pipes headfirst. There she slumped, dazed from the impact.

At that moment Uzume appeared on the scene the jinki tucked rather erotically between her breasts and bound there by another layer of clothing. She wrapped the downed Sekirei in her special steel-lined cloth to the pipe she had smashed into. "Hey you two, help has arrived!"

The attacking Sekirei paused to stare up at her and Kazehana flashed Uzume a thumbs up. "Great job Uzume, and nice place to keep the jinki!" Uzume laughed.

Kaie growled, turning and using her whip to catch an overhanging pipe swinging up and towards Uzume, who ran off in another direction. This time Kazehana was forced to let her go, as she was hard pressed by Shi and the other dual blade wielder. She ducked away, but felt one of their blades rip through her dress along the back, but it didn't penetrate her skin and slammed a strong wind down into their legs, sending both of them sprawling and letting her rejoin Akitsu as the two continued to fall back. Kaie, instead of stopping to help her fellow Sekirei, ran after Uzume.

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Minato cleaned his sword off on one of the bodies of his attackers, his eyes flicking between the young boy and Matsuo, who had backed away as soon as the yakuza entered the factory. Now he looked at Minato a little appalled at the violence he had just witnessed. Minato pinned the young boy with a stare. "You, don't move." The boy nodded rapidly, and Minato turned his attention fully to Matsuo. "Now, you and I are going to have a little talk," and he stalked forward purposefully.

He stopped however when Matsuo's phone rang. The other young man answered it swiftly, and after a moment said "Of course, we'll move out immediately, sir." He turned back to Minato and smiled pleasantly, having regained his equilibrium while talking to his superior. "It appears we will have to have that talk some other time Minato-san," he said, while Haihane and Benitsubasa jumped out of the maze of pipes to land next to him. When they did they both gawked at the dead bodies littering the floor. Haihane saw the sword in Minato's hand, and grinned, giving him a discrete thumbs up, while Benitsubasa merely stared. "But I'm afraid duty calls. Apparently a number of Ashikabi have taken this opportunity to try and leave the city, and that is against the rules of the game."

Minato glared at him, but stopped himself from attacking as he stared at the two Sekirei. "It appears to me that the rules are only enforced when Minaka says they are, but I won't try to stop you. I couldn't anyway." He turned to Haihane and Benitsubasa, his expression softening noticeably. "See if you can talk them into letting me send you that DVD set Haihane, and I'll get it to you as soon as I can. And Benitsubasa, remember what I said, if you ever want a real one on one rematch call us up and either Tsukiumi or Musubi would be fine with it."

Both Sekirei nodded, one eagerly the other almost robotically, still unable to take her eyes off the carnage all around them until Haihane pulled her away.

When the trio was out of sight Minato sighed, then turned to the young boy. "Come on kid, I'm not about to just leave you here, but I want to hunt that bastard Higa down." The boy nodded and fell into step behind Minato. "What's your name anyway?"

"Er, my names Kohta. Um, ano, what are you going to do with me?"

"Nothing kid, just stay out of the way. I don't have a grudge against you or your Sekirei, it's Higa's head I want to stick on a pike." The boy blanched, realizing that the young man before him was fully capable of doing just that, but having no choice followed him anyway.

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Outside the battle had become vicious very quickly. Realizing that the single number had a major advantage over them at long or medium range Toyotama and Ichiya kept in close, trying to pin Tsukiumi down. But the water user was as experienced as they were, and rather than be at a disadvantage used her water blade to counter their close combat skills, and it was all Toyotama could do to counter her.

Musubi too was in her element, and she and Ichiya exchanged punches and kicks that would have shattered any human's bones, but neither of them were able to get in a decisive blow until Musubi tripped on a piece of debris from one of her earlier misses.

That split second was all Ichiya needed and her foot whipped out in round house kick to impact the side of Musubi's head, sending the other fist type flying to crash into a wall on the other side of the street. As the rest of the wall collapsed on the big breasted Sekirei Ichiya turned and joined in attacking Tsukiumi, laughing aloud. "How's that bitch, you're all alone now!"

Tsukiumi however remained calm, forming a sphere of water in one hand that, while it lacked enough mass or speed to do real damage still pushed Toyotama back as she turned to point her water blade at Ichiya, sending a much more powerful jet of water at her, slamming her backward to land across the street. "I don't care what you say, or how many of you there are, I'm never alone! I can feel the love and trust my Ashikabi, my husband feels for me no matter how far apart we are! My Ashikabi believes in me, and that gives me all the power I will ever need to defeat the likes of you!"

"It's Love!" A new voice shouted, sounding almost like Musubi, yet not at the same time, deeper, more mature and powerful somehow. "All a Sekirei really needs is love!" Musubi burst out of the rubble, her clothing in tatters, not that she noticed, assuming a stance immediately. "I can feel the love of our Ashikabi, and with that we are unbeatable!" She sprang forward one fist upraised, almost glowing with power. "Fist of Fate!"

Ichiya brought up her arms to block the blow, but it mattered not at all and she was sent flying with a cry of pain as her arms snapped like twigs under the power of Musubi's punch to slam back to earth nearly a full block away.

Toyotama gaped and leaped away from Tsukiumi, landing next to her downed comrade, glaring hatefully at their opponents.

Musubi ignored them, turning to Tsukiumi who was watching her with wide eyes. When she did, the water user somehow knew that this wasn't Musubi, but someone else entirely, somehow using her body. The woman looking out from that familiar face was more mature, more powerful, and far wiser than Musubi.

She held her hand up to her heart, smiling happily at Tsukiumi. "Hello and well met sister! I am Yume, the Sekirei of fate, and I share my soul and power with Musubi, though it is only in times of great pain or distress when I can make myself known. I can feel the bond you share with your Ashikabi number 09, Tsukiumi, a bond such as I have never even heard of before! I can also feel his love for his other feathers, and I praise him for so rightly choosing how to cherish them in turn. Please watch out for my Musubi for me, she is very dear to me, and goodbye." With that the mature look vanished from Musubi's face, and she fell forward unconscious.

Tsukiumi swiftly caught her, then gently set her younger sister down on the ground, wondering what the hell that had been. She decided to ignore it for now, and rose eyes, dark with determination. "let's finish this!" She strode forward, but before she paused as the wind rose around them in response to something occurring elsewhere.

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Kazehana and Akitsu had at last reached their destination, a long hallway with no other exit to it, that forced their opponents to come after them along a narrow front, negating their numbers a little. Akitsu now exerted her power to the utmost, freezing and cover the floor of the hallway in a sheet of ice. It took a bit out of her, but she was able to do it, and when she finished, none of their attackers were able to find solid footing.

The closest two enemy Sekirei, Shi and the other dual blade wilder were still close enough to them to strike, but Kazehana blasted the unnamed one away, Akitsu, with reflexes she hadn't yet shown, grasped Shi's arms, exerting her freezing power directly on her. Shi's weapons shattered and before she could do anything Akitsu formed large ice slab over her head, then let it fall slamming into her and knocking her out.

Shi fell forward into Akitsu's arms and she nodded to Kazehana then moved behind the wind Sekirei with her burden as number 03 prepared her Norito. Raising her two fingers to her lips Kazehana kissed them and brought them forward saying in a loud voice "let the tornado of my love tear apart the enemies of my Ashikabi! Fury of Fujin!"

A condensed and massively powerful cyclone slammed out from her into the metal walls on both sides and before approaching Sekirei, her aim purposefully off to the side of most of them, but more than close enough as it turned out.

Matsu, Minaka and all the other watchers citywide looked on in awe as a massive tornado ripped, shredded and destroyed everything down to tiny, tiny pieces of debris in a 70 km long and twenty feet wide strip suddenly torn out of the center of Tokyo. The Sekirei who had been the target of this attack, those who weren't hit directly by it were picked up by the winds at the edge of this attack, whirled around and slammed into one another, the walls and the ground, blessedly losing consciousness within seconds of being hit with the attack. The unnamed dual blade wielder and the girl in the kunoichi outfit had been hit directly, and didn't even have time to scream as they were shredded to pieces, leaving nothing left larger than a toenail.

As the attack died out Kazehana looked at the damage it had done appalled. "I-I didn't mean for it to be that powerful. I only put in enough power for it to be a medium-sized one!"

Akitsu however simply shrugged and moved forward to check their enemies. All four remaining were down for the

count with injuries ranging from mild to severe. One of them the close combat Sekirei she had run into at the hospital was dead with a broken neck and several other injuries, including a sliver of metal straight through one eye and into her brain. Two others were badly injured, one would likely bleed to death, her leg amputated from the knee down, her norito already gone. But the other, the second one that had been standing by the college student with the hoody, might live if someone gave her medical attention quickly enough. Her injuries were severe, but she hadn't lost any limbs, her major arteries were fine, and so was her crest for now. Oriha on the other hand was already gone, she had taken too much damage to sustain her link to her Ashikabi, and thus was out of the game.

Akitsu looked a question at Kazehana, who shrugged uncomfortably. "I know what you're thinking, we should finish them all off, but that feels too much like murder to me. I wouldn't have shed a tear if they had died in the blast, but killing them now... no." Akitsu nodded, not agreeing or disagreeing, but willing to follow her sister-wife in this. With that they both turned

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Uzume had been having a lot of trouble with Kaie, who was very skilled with her whips, and used them expertly to counter her own cloth based attacks. When Kazehana's attack rumbled out of the factory though, Kaie and Uzume paused their fighting as the entire factory shook around them, the wind flowing around and through the factory even from the other end from Kazehana's attack nearly enough to rip them off their feet. Before Kaie could recover and resume her assault Uzume used her cloth spears to grab two iron pipes and slam them into her head from opposite sides, making a sound like something out of a cartoon. "Kabong!"

Kaie slumped to the ground dazed, and before she could move Uzume had her wrapped up tight in her cloth cocoon. "Well, this has been fun, but I think we're done with the sideshow here. Want to see what Kazehana did?" She manipulated her cloth to make Kaie nod her head, and grinned at the fuming girl. "I knew you did. And we can pick up yer sister too, then go see how bro got along without any of us there to back him up." With that she turned and made her way back to the center of the factory.

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Higa was nearer the center of the norito attack than Uzume and her opponent, but was partially shielded from the wind by being in a enclosed office. He stopped his search for the prize as the building shook, and when it subsided exited the office only to stop and stare in shock and fear of the damage Kazehana's attack had done to the factory and the city beyond, visible now as the opposite wall of the corridor had been ripped away by the cyclone. Thinking quickly, he realized that he had lost this fight, and that taking the prize now would avail him nothing at all if he could even find it in the first place.

He started to move toward the outer edge of the factory, barely avoiding Minato who was running deeper into the factory in search of him, having taken refuge behind a large pipe with the young boy when the attack began. He wound up back at the entrance to the factory, finding the carnage Minato had left behind and the comatose form of his associate tool, Reji Koya, who hadn't yet recovered from being knocked out by Minato at the start of the match. Higa shrugged and left him there, knowing that without his Sekirei, who had almost certainly been obliterated by whatever that attack had been. Outside he was thankful beyond belief that his limo was still in once piece, though his dirver had fled, thankfully not with the keys and a minute later Higa was in it and escaping.

As he drove he came upon his two main enforcers, one on the ground and the other staring beyond him to where Kazehana's attack had struck along with one of Minato's Sekirei. He scowled, but screeched to a halt by the fight. "Get in,!" he shouted.

Ichiya who had been stunned by the destruction the wind users norito caused, looked at him then back to Tsukiumi, who was now glaring at her, hands already raised in preparation of an attack. She swiftly reached down, grabbing her partner and jumped forward, barely dodging a battering ram of water that whooshed by behind her. She through Ichiya inside and then hopped into the limo herself and Izumi slammed on the accelerator. The limo shot forward, barley avoiding a Mizu-no ya barrage that would have perforated it. Tsukiumi scowled, then sent a thought to her husband. *Minato, that scum Higa got away, along with the two Sekirei Musubi and I were fighting. I'm sorry, I didn't react in time.* Next to her Musubi stirred, groggily getting to her feet and looking around, wondering what had happened. The last thing she remembered was getting kicked into a building.

Minato replied swiftly. *That's alright Tsukiumi, it would have been nice to take him out here, but not necessary either. In fact it works out best this way. You and Muusbi did a fine job, you all did, I am proud of each and every one of you.*

That thought and the love that accompanied it brought a smile to the water users face as she relayed it to Musubi, who grinned happily, but then the blonde Amazon frowned. *When we get someplace safe Minato, I have something we have to talk about. I don't think its anything dangerous or serious, but it is very odd.*

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Back with Minato and Akitsu, who was carrying Shi over her shoulder, and Kazehana all met back at the entrance to the factory. *That's fine Tsukiumi, we'll talk tomorrow if that's alright, the nights work isn't quite done yet.* Looking over at where Kazehana's attack had sliced into the factory and the city beyond he shook his head. "Remind me not to get you angry at me Kaze-chan." To take any sting out of his words he kissed Kazehana on the lips as he sent all his wives a wordless wave of love through their link and her wings of light bloomed. So big were her bond wings by now that as they spread they nearly caught up with the fleeing limo. He then did the same to Akitsu, who had been standing silently by, and her wings too, flared out, joining her slowly dissipating sister wife's. Higa looked behind him, nearly blinded by their mingled light and shivered in even greater fear, gunning the accelerator again to speed them on their way.

Uzume arrived then, carrying the jinki between her breasts as she had been and dragging Kisami and Kaie along the ground, much to the teenage girls ire from her muffled shouts. "Hey bro, talk about a complete victory huh? I wish I could have seen that bastards face when he saw your norito sis." Kazehana and the others all chuckled.

The young boy Kohta came forward apprehensively. "I'm, please, mister, please don't knock my Sekirei out of the game, they're like the family I never had. Please!" The youngster almost looked like he was about to break down and cry, the combination of Minato's own brutal dispatch of the thugs that had accompanied Higa and Kazehana's display of power had terrified him, but he still cared enough about his Sekirei to come forward and plead for them.

Minato shook his head, smiling gently at him now that the battle was over. "I don't knock Sekirei out of the game because I'm afraid of what would happen to them once they're taken back by MBI, I either kill them or capture them depending on their own actions. However I think you and your Sekirei are going to join us, at least for a bit and maybe longer. It's only fair after all, you did try and help to ambush us when it should've been a free-for-all." The young boy nodded miserably, and did not protest this at all.

Tsukiumi, and Musubi came in then from the damaged section of the factory to meet Minato and the others. Both of them were ecstatic to see Minato uninjured and ran for hugging him tightly. Tsukiumi had kissed him hard on the lips and Musubi tried to follow only to be fended off by Akitsu. She settled for simply giving him a crushing hug and was surprised when Minato gave her a kiss on the lips, causing her bond wings to appear and she grinned happily, hugging him even harder.

When Minato at last got his breath back from the bear hug he directed his Sekirei to pick up the two Sekirei that belong to the young boy and Kohta himself. Tsukiumi picked Minato up and they all jumped away from the building as from the MBI tower. As they left several helicopters began to make their way towards the battlefield.

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## End chapter

Well hell, that was a lot of combat huh? As you can see I wanted to try and get the first battle of the fourth stage and what comes next done in one chapter, but couldn't get it done without short changing a few of the scenes. As it is I think I still didn't give Yukari's scene enough depth, but whatever. You'll note I change Kazehana's norito, I wanted it to be more warlike and powerful sounding than the original, because it is. The Kohta character is based off a rather amusingly naughty anime/manga called Kanokon, and Kisami is based off the alien teacher in Onegai Sensei, who my ex-girlfriend loved beyond almost any other anime. No accounting for taste I suppose.

Next chapter Minato goes on the offensive, and Minaka and Higa both learn how flimsy an edifice a city really is.

## **\*Chapter 16\*: Chapter 16 Fourth Stage: Covert conflict**

I don't own Sekirei. Wah.

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### **Chapter 15 Third Stage: Covert conflict**

Minato didn't even go home after the battle was over, instead he and his Sekirei paused only a mile or so into his territory. Akitsu stared at him worriedly as he began to divest himself of anything that had even a hint of electronics in it, not wanting to take the chance that he could be tracked by any of it. Tsukiumi and Kazehana also looked worried, but it was the water user who spoke up even as kept supporting Musubi, who was showing all the signs of a concussion. "Are you certain you don't want any of us to come with you, husband?"

Minato actually shuddered a little at the love and devotion Tsukiumi sent through their link as she spoke aloud, but he still nodded, taking a moment from preparing himself to take her hand and kiss it gently. "I'm certain, all of you are tired and sore, more we know that every Sekirei can be tracked now, and, well what I'm doing tonight isn't going to be anything I want traced back to us right away, hopefully ever."

Uzume shook her head, still carrying Kaei on her back, tied there like a rug with as much of her cloth as she could use it. "Yeah I get what you're saying bro, but what about Homura?"

"Homura won't be coming with me, he's just dropping off the stuff I'll need," Minato replied as he strapped his spatha to his back with a makeshift sheaf made of some of Uzume's cloth, made nearly black from having soaked it in a puddle of blood in the factory. "I'll be alright for this on my own."

Tsukiumi now was a little desperate, "Why must you go off now, surely you can take the time to come back home with us."

Kazehana answered for him, gripping the younger Sekirei's shoulder. As one of the original disciplinary squad members, she knew all about covert ops. Hell she had run one or two herself, not that she had been anywhere as good at them as Karasuba she just wasn't very sneaky, though her powers could be, let alone able to kill as easily and without hesitation as Crow-chan could. Miya too knew in broad terms what Minato was going to be doing, though she had no idea what his targets were going to be. "Things like this aren't what we're good for Blondie-chan. Best to let the man do his work huh?"

*Besides we have our connection, Minato sent, that way you'll know where I am and if anything happens to me.*

*But if we aren't there or even nearby we might not get to you in time!* Tsukiumi replied in the same manner. *Please husband, I know we need to keep knocking Higa off balance, but surely we can wait, find some way we could go with you.*

Minato sighed, but before he could answer Akitsu spoke up, where she had been holding Kohta like a sack of rice under one arm, the boy staying strangely quiet. "Ahh... wait." The others all looked at her, and she paused for a moment before going on. "Scrapped number." When the others all looked at her she elaborated. "I was a scrapped number, never supposed to be let out for the plan, what if I don't have a tracker, what if they track me by my power rather than my body. If so I can be backup just in case."

Minato nodded, while his other wives were ecstatic. "Alright, if you can get to where I'll be meeting Homura by the time I get there, that would be great. If not, then not. Now I really have to go." He kissed all of his wives thoroughly, then walked over and ran down the buildings emergency staircase to the streets and out into the night. Almost as rapidly Akitsu handed Kohta to Uzume and shot off as fast as she could from rooftop to rooftop. Uzume glared, but picked up the kid, whose head banged against the jinki as she and the others took off after her.

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Miya and the others left in Izumo house had not been idle while the fighting had gone on. First, Miya used the jinki to scan each of the Sekirei remaining in Izumo house, finding to her chagrin that nearly all of them had a working tracker device lodged in their necks. The only one who didn't was Homura, and she ordered him to wait at the rendezvous point and help Minato with whatever he wanted to do later. Saki, Kana and Shiina were all sent out to patrol the Northern territory to make certain no one tried anything while Minato was away, turning back two Ashikabi/Sekirei pairs who tried to enter it. Miya also made certain that Matsu kept her eyes on the ball, and had already downloaded as much information as they could glean about their incoming guests and prisoners that she could.

Both Katsuragi and Chizuru confirmed that Shi, the depressed girl in the miko outfit, had been among those forcibly winged by Izumi Higa. She hadn't had it nearly as bad as Chizuru, who had taken a lot of beatings at Higa's hands, but she had been forced to work with Toyotama and Ichiya more than either of them, which in itself was abuse enough.

It was Kohta the boy Ashikabi that garnered the most reaction. Chizuru had actually screamed aloud when she saw his image during the start of the first match. It turned out that he was the young boy she had been reacting to before she was captured by Higa's Sekirei. To see that he had attracted other feathers who had not hesitated in bonding with him struck her to the core. She spent most of the rest of the fight crying silently at lost opportunities, though she cheered up when Kohta and his Sekirei were captured in relatively good shape.

Akitzu arrived and was promptly scanned, though alas she did have a tracker in her. Oddly enough her tracker was placed in her thigh rather than neck, which was odd, but not something she wanted to dwell on. She was mollified however by the news that Homura's tracker wasn't working.

After that Matsu went back to her main job for the night, blanking out all electronic tracking of Nishi Sanada's Sekirei for the night. She was only bale to do this using her norito, and the fact that MBI had more than enough on its plate at the moment. Trying to track down the escaping Sekirei and keep an eye on Minato and his ladies was taking up most of their tracking centers runtime.

When the rest of the fighting force returned they found Izumo House waiting for their arrival. Miya nodded pleasantly to all of them, including a special nod for the young boy, but when she spoke it was with an odd mix of her normal welcoming tone and that of a hard bitten commander. Okaieri, mina-san. Kazehana you may place young Shi in the first room on the right, she will be staying with me tonight. Then please place yourself and your fellow wives in the command centre, I will be with you presently. I assume you will all want to be scanned for trackers? Assumptions like that can often be wrong after all." This did not come out as a question, and they all nodded.

Tsukiumi and Akitzu were surprised at how in control and forthright Miya was being, they knew she was number 01, but had never really expected her to act like this. Both of them though felt it suited her somehow. Kazehana merely raised an eyebrow in surprise, seeing a bit of her old commander coming out of the housewife shell she had assumed. They all moved off, leaving Kisami, who Tsukiumi had been carrying along with supporting Musubi. Yui took possession of Musubi, ushering her into Uzume's room and immediately putting her in bed despite her feeble protests. Kusano was already there, having been allowed to stay up to watch the fight but no further.

Miya turned to Uzume and her charges. "Let them go please Uzume, you know the rule here."

Uzume hesitated, then placed Kohta on the floor and undid the bonds holding Kaie. Kai however didn't know the rules and immediately turned to attack her. Miya's ladle whipped, out smacking her hard on the forehead, causing the dog-like Sekirei to fall on her bum. She looked up rubbing her head in confusion to see Miya looming over her, a smile that was somehow terrifying on her face. "As you are new here, I will let that slide, but know this: I do not allow violence in Izumo house."

Miya turned to bow politely to the young boy who returned the bow with one far deeper, as was proper from one so young to an adult. "As long as you remain in these walls no harm will come to you, from inside or without, you have my word."

Kohta breathed a sigh of relief at that and nodded. "Thank you miss."

Miya smiled. "Ma, such a polite boy, now, I believe we have someone who would like to speak to you." She ushered him into a room next to the command center where Chizuru was waiting, nervously. That nervousness disappeared when Kohta ran to her hugging her around the waist with a cry of "Nee-chan!" Behind him Kaie entered the room, scowling at the affection he showed this other girl, but given Miya's edict and the bump on her head she decided to let it go for now. Miya smiled and after gently laying Kisami down on a futon in the room left them to it going back to the command center.

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An hour after he split off from his friends Minato reached the meeting point with Homura, having moved across the city without a single soul having seen him. This was easier now with the city almost empty of civilians, but he could have done the same thing if there were more people, it was a necessary skill for insurgents. He was surprised however to find Homura waiting for him smirking slightly. At the same time, a wave of frustration from all three of his wives hit him, but only Kazehana was able to put their frustration into words, though her voice also held a hint of humor. *Akitsu does have a tracker in her, it's not in her neck though, it's in her thigh. Tsukiumi and I have both been scanned and we have them too. However, Miya says she scanned Homura doesn't so it looks as if you have a*

*bodyguard anyway.*

Minato looked at Homura as he arrived, one eyebrow raised. "You don't have a tracker in you?"

Homura grinned, shaking his head. "Damn, and there goes my surprise. It's going to take me a while to get used to you and your wives being able to communicate with no one the wiser. And yes in answer to your question, the trackers don't seem to be as heat resistant as they might have wished. I have one in me, but the jinki was able to tell me that it was dead." He shuddered a little. "And may I say what a treat it is to know I have something electronic inside me that those bastards put there. Disturbing doesn't begin to cover it."

"It could be far worse, I was worried you all had kill switches in you." Minato said glibly before sending, *alright, I'll take Homura with me. I'm going to have to concentrate, so I won't be sending as often as I want, but please follow me as you can, it makes me feel as if I have guardian angels on my shoulders.* His wives replied with 'I love you's and a wave of love and affection that nearly made him blush, but he shook it off and got down to business. "You have the supplies I wanted you to bring?" Homura nodded. "Good, alright, I'm fine with you coming with me but I want you to know, what I say goes. This isn't going to be straight up fights like what you Sekirei are used to, it will be dirty and nasty, and so far beyond the rules of this damn plan it's not even funny. If you have a problem with that you are a liability to this operation, not a positive." Homura nodded again, and Minato nodded in return then went over to the pile of supplies that Homura had brought.

Minato spent the next thirty minutes mixing chemicals, which alone were things you would find in your home or any restaurant, but when mixed together became a highly volatile substance, and the basis for incendiary IED's. He made three of these and then two more explosive types. The components of these had been more dangerous to get, TNT was not exactly a household substance after all, but his connections with other construction workers had proven up to the task. This and the four blocks of semtex in another bag were what Miya and Matsu had noticed on his list, but the purchases had been made through several cutouts before being delivered anonymously to that warehouse. *Minaka made a major mistake, he thought grimly, just because people can't fight him and the Sekirei/Ashikabi, doesn't mean they're helpless. And I'm going to show them that you should never discount the little man.*

After another ten minutes he sat back, nodding with satisfaction then checked the next bag. This bag and the next two held fertilizer and he smiled. *More fuel for the boom, excellent.* Their next bag however held a small electronic device that one his other friends from the construction business, a drifter who had swiftly left the city as soon as Minaka openly declared the Sekirei plan, made to Minato's specifications. *Propaganda is just another weapon, not one I can use just yet, but soon, unfortunately it's not one that I can blame on anyone else.* Reluctantly he put the device back into the bag, and pushed the bag underneath a air vent. "Alright, we're ready to go. Grab the heavier bags and let's go. We won't have to go far before Nishi and his Sekirei meet us."

"Will they be going all the way with us?" Homura asked grunting as he put the large backpack that half the fertilizer on his back and picking up the other two heaviest duffel bags. And I just put these down too.

"No, they have their own mission tonight. Higa is going to die the death of a thousand needles, well not really" Minato smirked as he stood up under his own burden and began to walk off. "More like the death of the Black knight really, 'tis only a flesh wound', he'll soon realize he's lost his limbs." Homura nodded grimly and the two men walked off side by side.

Minato was proven correct as within three blocks they were met by a two Sekirei patrol, one of whom Minato had met before, a teenage girl with a good sized bust, cheerful expression and tan skin named Kuzuri. The other was yet another Sekirei wearing a miko outfit, though in her case it was far more refined and normal looking than it was on Musubi or even Shi, the Sekirei Kazehana had been carrying when he left them. The tan girl spoke, her bubbly voice matching her face to a T. "Minato-san, hi-hi! Nishi-sama asked us to meet ya, oh this is Kaho-channie, she and her Ashikabi work with us and she said she wanted ta meet with ya."

Kaho was far more sedate in her greeting nodding politely, though her eyes strayed from Minato to Homura. "Indeed I did Minato-san, I wanted to meet the Ashikabi of my best friend Musubi-chan, yet I did not expect to be able to thank Homura-san for his help at the same time."

The two Sekirei grabbed some of the bags lighting their loads and the four of them ran on. "So you're a friend of Musubi? She's never mentioned you?"

Kaho smiled. "That's not surprising, Musubi-chan is rather scatter brained. We met when we were captured by, well we never learned who they were, and Yume-sama and Karasuba-sama saved us." Minato, who hadn't heard yet about the odd experience Tsukiumi had a few hours ago, simply nodded, filing away that information for later. Kaho sighed sadly. "And then when I was let out to find my Ashikabi, I needed the aid of someone else again. Arigato-

gosamazu, Homura-san."

The fire user actually blushed, and for the first time realized he did actually have a type of girl he was interested in, calm, formal and demure seemed to push his buttons. *Now if I can only find a girl like that for myself.* He twitched for a moment then laughed inside, happy to realize that despite having a man as an Ashikabi, he was still straight. *Whew! But then, if it isn't attraction, what the hell is the bond? And how much has it been perverted by Minaka and his scientists? Still, for now I'll follow Minato with his family idea, I always did think having a brother would be cool.*

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It took them another twenty minutes to reach where Nishi waited for them with two of his Sekirei and another young man. With the way Kaho's face lit up when she saw him he was obviously her Ashikabi. *Lucky bastard,* Homura thought, though there was no real heat in it. Kaho walked up to the unknown man and took his hand while Nishi came forward, grinning. "Damn boyo, you and your Sekirei put on one hell of a show!" He gripped Minato's hand hard, thumping him on the shoulder. "And I ain't even gonna ask where the hell the sword came from or where you learned to fight like that."

Minato smirked a little, slapping the other man's arm in turn. "Let's just say that learning overseas can include stuff learned outside the classroom and involves a lot more than you think. Are you ready to go?"

Nishi nodded. "Yep, this is my Sekirei Kuzuri, who you've met, and Kujika and Barei. They're gonna be my hit team, we've already found the yakuza's main base in Higa's area. Its normally protected by a single Sekirei on rotation, but the one assigned there tonight was pulled out as soon as Higa got back to his territory, you put the fear of god in him man, he's pulled all of his Sekirei and peons to that hospital he owns."

Minato nodded, surprised anew by the spy network Nishi had developed by simply having friends around the city who told him stuff. Higa's reaction however didn't surprise him. Kazehana and he had Izumi Higa nailed to a T. Higa wasn't a leader or had any real understanding of combat and warfare, and wasn't nearly at home with violence as he thought he was. He had been too close to the action he felt personally threatened and was panicking. Now was the time to hit him again, before he had a nights rest to recover. "Excellent, you have a map?"

Nishi nodded and brought out a city map. Minato looked at it, smirking as he saw his targets. *Matsu is really a godsend, despite her perversions, I'll have to reward her for all this at some point soon.* He began to point out places on the map. "Okay, this is the grocery distribution point for this entire sector of the city. And this is the only bridge in his area weighted to take trucks. This here is the main generator for the area, but over here, is the only converter that is bringing in electricity from outside the city. And here is one of only three water treatment facilities in the city, and the one that distributes all the water flowing into his section of the city."

"We take those four places out, he becomes completely dependent on food and energy coming from Mikogami's section of the city. And I bet once the kid realizes it, he'll finish the job and cut off that too." What he didn't say, but what Nishi knew, was that there were generators at several schools and other public buildings in the area, but Higa probably wouldn't think of that. He wasn't the kind of person to think in terms of salvage. But even if he did he would go for the biggest and best, it fit his ego, and Minato was going to leave a few surprises for him. "Where's your primary target?"

Nishi pointed at a large and ritzy hotel, whose workers had left after its parking area had been the sight of a Sekirei battle. "The yaks are holed up here. A lot of them, about two hundred toughs, two mid level bosses, and one high level, all in the hotel, about fifteen on walkabout security."

Minato looked at him, one eyebrow raised but Nishi cut him off sharply before he could ask the question on his face. "And no, I got no problem taking them the hell out permanently. I don't know if you were able to follow everything that happened after people began to leave but I know you shut down any crap in your territory. Well Higa allowed the yaks to do anything they wanted as long as they shut down any other groups and gave him a cut. These bastards took advantage of anyone they could, hell I know they killed at least one family that couldn't pay, I'm just thankful they seemed to shy away from rape. Guess they didn't know how any Sekirei would respond to something like that. So yeah, give me the IED, and let me do my part."

Minato looked deep into the other mans eyes and slowly nodded. Nishi wouldn't regret what he was about to do, he would probably have nightmares about it afterward, but he would do it. "Alright." He gestured at the large backpack Homura was still carrying. "That's the fertilizer, (or as a chemist would put it, calcium ammonium nitrate). The explosive is already in the bag. Set the timer and get the hell away from it, it's as simple as pie, push the timer button then the minute timer. Max is fifteen minutes, minimum is five, it cannot be turned off after you set it. Best place for it would be somewhere on the first floor near or in the elevator shaft to spread the fire and take out the supports."

Nishi nodded then waved Barei forward. This Sekirei looked a little older than most of his Sekirei and a huge billowing cloak with a hood that hid her face. As she stepped forward the cloak billowed around, and Minato's eyebrows rose at the chameleon effect that was visible for a moment. "Alright, what's my other target?"

"Next, hit the grocery distribution point. If you think you can get away with it steal as much as you want, but blow the entire place up." He explained one of his incendiary devices next, then told Nishi about the properties of flour mixed with gas, which caused Nishi to gape for a moment, then laugh in delight. "I'll take out the generator, the converter, and the bridge, and plant some surprises elsewhere. Whoever finishes his initial targets first can hit the water purifier center. After that, Homura and I will meet you back here."

Oosumi, who had remained quiet up until this point, spoke up now, his worry about what they were planning plain, but he was still game enough to ask, "Is there anything we can do to help?"

Minato held up a hand, sending to Kazehana, how as the most experienced of his wives was in charge when he wasn't there. Well, she was in charge as far as he knew, Miya was the one really calling the shots back there, something he would learn and approve of the next day. *Kazehana, can you ask Matsu if she can extend her tracking blackout to include Kaho, she's #87, and her Ashikabi is allied with Nishi and wants to help out.*

Kazehana replied almost immediately. *Hai, she can, MBI is busy as hell right now trying to hunt down the Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs that were able to get out of the city during our match. The Disciplinary Squad hunted down a few before they could get away, but the rest have scattered all over the place. That and making certain we don't move, they've parked a spy plane right over us as well as a few helicopters. Miya's getting a little irritated, but we've been able to convince her to wait before doing anything rash.*

*Excellent job ladies!* Minato sent to all his wives then spoke aloud to Oosumi. "Alright you can join us MBI is too busy tracking down the group of Sekirei that made a break for it out of the city to notice Matsu blanked their computers ability to find you and Nishi's Sekirei. You think you could hit the water purifier plant and the converter?"

Oosumi nodded. "Yeah we can do that." Minato directed Kaho to pick up another bomb, then walked her through where to look for the water plants personal generator. "Take it out, and the incoming water pipe, put and it becomes useless."

Kaho nodded seriously then smiled. "I would never have expected someone as serious as you to be Musubi-chan's Ashikabi, I thought for certain that like would attract like."

Minato shrugged. "I have to say that while I wasn't happy when we first got together, having her as a younger sister has been fun, she and Kusano really light up the atmosphere. That and she's a darn good fighter too." Kaho nodded, well satisfied by his answer, though a little saddened that her sister hadn't found the love of her life in her Ashikabi. "If that's all, let's go, we're burning nighttime."

Nishi smirked again, seeing more and more proof that Minato was anything but normal. He had planned out this whole operation as if he had done it dozens of times before, that and the way he fought... *I wonder what overseas conflict he got caught up in? Might have ta figure that out later.* He and his Sekirei all grabbed what they needed, and the group split up, moving like so many shadows in the night.

---

Nishi and his team were the first to arrive at their primary target. The quartet alighted on a nearby roof, making certain that the yakuza hadn't been smart enough to place snipers up high in the hotel to cover the approaches. They hadn't not used to thinking in terms of real threats, merely having about ten men walking around the building in a show of force. A show of force that was utterly useless. "Alright Barei get your cute little rear in position by the door. If you see a chance to get inside do it, otherwise wait until Kusuri and Kujiki and I start our attack. We'll give you five minutes to get into range."

Barei blushed hotly under her hood, her Ashikabi was so vulgar sometimes, but she nodded anyway. She concentrated for a moment, sending her power into her cloak, and disappeared slowly from sight. Nishi spent those five minutes fondling his Sekirei's rears and looking over the edge of the building trying to figure out if the yakuza had a set pattern to their patrols. They didn't, hell half of them were just loafing around, including two right below his position. The rest were just wandering around looking tough, though why the hell they were still doing it at this time of night and with practically no one still around was a mystery. There weren't many people in the city at all anymore and no-one in Higa's section of the city would be willing to tangle with the yaks. Inform on their location to someone who could, that was another story.

Once the five minutes was up He nodded to his two remaining girls, both of whom were now a panting blushing mess.

"Alright you two start the party as soon as I hit that two asshole right below us." The both pouted at him leaving them once he got them all worked up but nodded and split off, heading to different points around the hotel. Nishi made his way softly down to the street and then snuck up to be hidden in an alleyway near his targets. He paused there, listening into their conversation as he waited for his Sekirei to start the ball.

The first thug, thin, lean sort wearing a pink shirt turned to his friend with laugh lines around his face said, "Hey."

The other thug, a large fat slob answered, "Yeah?"

"You ever wonder why we're here?"

"That is one of the biggest metaphysical questions ever asked. I have to say I have been kept up a night or two thinking about it, whether or not there's a plan or..."

"Dude, no. I mean why the hell are we standing out here in the dead of night?"

"Oh. Uh, we're stuck out here because it's our job to stand out here and look tough."

"Yeah but why are we doing it now. I mean we know there aren't many people out there, and none of them are gonna mess with us, so why aren't we inside where it's nice and air-conditioned."

"Whats up with that anyway, I signed on to bang some alien chicks, not intimidate normal people."

"Like any of them would look at you for more than target practice Grif."

"Oh shut up, your shirt's pink."

"I keep telling you fatty, it's not pink, its lightish red."

"Hey I'm not fat I'm just big boned, and they've already got a word for that, guess what, it's pink."

"Well I think we'll need a second opinion."

At that moment a loud crack was heard and one of the yakuza patrolling near the front of the hotel flew overhead, smacked by a full power punch from one of Nishi's Sekirei. They weren't always so good at judging their own strength when they were hot and bothered. The two men he had been observing turned and Nishi charged out of the alleyway, taking them both to the ground with a flying tackle. As he jumped up quickly, he brought up his chosen weapon, a lead pipe about as long as his arm. "Oh by the way, I think your shirt's pink too."

He smashed the fat ones lights out second, allowing him to say "Hah, see!" before the blow landed sending him into lala land.

Elsewhere Nishi's ladies had already cleared out the rest of the outer guard. Both of them were fist type Sekirei, and no normal human was anything like a match for them in power, speed or reaction time, and the yakuza learned why they always had at least one Sekirei nearby. It wasn't to be a messenger as some had thought, but to guard them from other Sekirei. This assault made an opening for Barei to enter the building unseen.

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Of all Nishi's Sekirei, Barei was the quietest and most unassuming. She could be in a room full of other people and no one would notice her there. Even if she was in a crowded train people would bump into her and then look around and wonder what they just bumped into rather than actually notice her. Add this to her Sekirei skill, and you had a girl who could be the most dangerous infiltrator in the world.

She swiftly made it through the lobby where there were a few yaks were lounging around seemingly drunk or asleep and entered the staircase, moving down swiftly. Once there she opened the gas heater, letting gas out into the building to add to the explosive power. She then went back up and placed the explosive device and the three bags of fertilizer into the elevator shaft on top of the elevator, locking the elevator on the basement floor by the simple expedient of breaking one of its doors and leaving it sticking out of the elevator. She set the timer for five minutes, and then ran swiftly up the stairs and out of the building.

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Nishi watched amused as nothing happened after they had taken out the outer guards. It seemed as if no one inside had seen or heard thing. A moment later Barei shimmered into existence next to him, her hood pushed back slightly to allow her lower face to be seen, her lips, painted with an odd blue lipstick curved into a smile. "Mission

accomplished" she said in a soft voice.

Nishi smirked, leaning in to kiss her on the cheek. "Great job Bai-chan. Now let's all move back a block, I want to see this, but I don't want to be in the blast zone to do it." His Sekirei all nodded, and Kuzuri picked him up and the three jumped away.

A minute later the bomb blew up with a tremendous "BOOOM!" with the fertilizer and gas to fuel the explosion it burst out at ground level, taking out most of the walls and caving in the entire floor while the fire and explosions wave front shot up through the elevator shaft to spread fire and flaming debris on every level. Within seconds the whole building was a huge death trap filled with fire, falling walls and ceilings. With a rumble the last support gave way, and the whole hotel crashed inwards. Not a single yakuza got out alive.

Nishi paled, he could picture all too well how the yakuza trapped and burned, blown up or buried alive in there had to feel. His face firmed a moment later though, remembering what his friends had said about the yakuza in the area and what they had been up to. With that thought and remembering the men who had made it possible he nodded grimly. "Alright ladies, great job, now let's get out of here and move on to the next one."

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Minato's first target was the bridge, and he and Homura (who was carrying him) arrived there about twenty minutes after Nishi had first arrived at his. In contrast to the hotel however was the fact that nobody was around the bridge at this time of night. There wasn't any traffic going out of the city this late, and the cordon was far enough away from the other side that their work wouldn't be visible. Minato motioned Homura to wait and took off his backpack, bringing out several closed baggies with blocks of TNT in them, and one with a small block of semtex, a small amount of the stuff which had been the hardest to get a hold of without anyone tracing it back to him. He took off his shirt and carefully tied them up into it, slinging the whole thing over his shoulder. He looked up at Homura who was looking at him wide eyes. "What?"

Homura shook his head. "Hadn't seen those scars of yours before." Minato smirked and made to open his mouth and Homura scowled. "And if you say they're a legacy of a misspent youth or time abroad or anything like that I will drown you."

Minato cocked his head to one side. "Drown, not burn?"

Homura smirked. "Two words, plausible deniability."

The two men laughed but then Minato became serious. "Which of those main support sets can you hit from here with a fireball, say one about the size of your hand? I'm running out of timers, and I want to use at least two on the IEDs for the generator. And how accurate are you?"

Homura looked at the bridge gauging distances. "I can throw a fireball that small almost across the whole bridge, accurately... I would hit something as small as that block of explosives on say the third support out."

The third support was one of two that were directly in the middle of the river and Minato nodded in satisfaction. "Excellent, I'll swing out there and place the explosives, then use something to mark the block of semtex for you and swim back. Once I reach shore toss your fastball, and then we get out of here." Homura nodded and watched with worry as Minato walked into the water, then swam off. The water wasn't really deep for the first feet, but after a few minutes he had to swim to keep moving forward, which was slowed by his need to drag his bag behind him, but not a lot since Minato was in extremely good shape. So after five minutes he pulled himself up onto the targeted support pillar. The pillar was ten feet by ten feet, concrete and metal he assumed, but given the amount of explosive he was going to use to destroy it, that wouldn't matter. Minato took a moment as he swam in place, looking up at it then he used a handhold on the steel ladder built into it to pull himself up, and tie his full shirt to the ladder. He then took out one of the bags, which did not contain one of the explosives but duct tape. He then pulled it out, making certain it was still dry, then first looked back, making certain he could see Homura from where he was, then he pulled out the bag containing the semtex bars, and then taped one to the concrete right where he was, then put half of his TNT around it. Then he swam over to its twin and did the same there. Once he was done he took out two glow in the dark emergency sticks and stuck them into the two semtex bricks as targets. That done he swam swiftly back to shore.

He wrung out his shirt returning Homura's glare with a raised eyebrow. "What is it now?"

Homura glared. "Those are your targets, seriously?"

Minato turned back and saw the glow sticks, not clearly but obviously. "Yes, so? What, do you have weak eyes or something?"

Homura sighed. "Never-mind." He summoned a hand sized fireball and shot it off at the target. It turned out that he had slightly exaggerated his marksmanship with his powers. The initial fireball missed wide. However this did not matter as it impact on one of the TNT blocks instead, which promptly exploded, an explosion that spread to its fellows quickly. The explosion blew the entire pillar to pieces and Homura nodded with satisfaction. He turned to the next target and missed again, only this time it was close enough to hit the semtex block. The second explosion shattered the second pillar, and Homura nodded again then turned to look at Minato. "Well?"

"What the heck, you still hit the damn things. Let's get out of here." Homura nodded and the two ran off into a nearby alley. Homura made to grab Minato and jump up to the rooftops but Minato held up a hand. "What?"

Keep to the streets for now, Sekirei always seem to take to the rooftops, and that's the most obvious place to look for any of you. Let's keep to the alleyways until we're a mile away from here. "Now can you make some fire for a second." Homura did, wondering why then his eyebrow twitched as Minato held up his shirt over the fire. His other hand snaked up and smacked Minato in the back of the head. "Owww, what the hell man?"

"I am not a portable fucking dryer asshole. Now let's move." Minato smirked a little but nodded, then put on his still damp shirts and led the way further into the dark of the alleyway away from the bridge, which collapsed into the river behind them. Already helicopters from the cordon around Tokyo were winging their way toward the bridge.

Before long they were at the converter station. It was surprisingly small, but was nearby the river. The power lines led off from then into the ground and from there under the river and to the other side. Here Minato left Homura outside and snuck inside. He placed a timed IED on the main line coming into the converter, then set it for an hour. That would give him and Homura enough time to get away and move on to the next target.

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When his group reached the food distribution warehouse he found several guards making their way around the place. All of them however were Higa's men, and so he felt no pity for any of them when he let his babies have at them. Once that was done he and his babies moved inside the building. He turned to Kuzuri and Kujika. He had left Barei outside to stand guard. Alright babies, move around and find any sacks of flour, or oil and dump them out as far as possible. We want as much flour in the air as possible okay."

"Hai-Hai" they both chorused and raced off after he kissed them both on the lips. While the wings they made weren't nearly as large as those of Minato's wives, they were still large enough to illuminate the entire warehouse.

The two set off immediately and even before the wings had dissipated specks of flour appeared in their gleam. Nishi went around grabbing fish oil and some other things to pile up around the incendiary IED that Minato had given him in the center of the warehouse. Within twenty minutes the two dark skinned Sekirei came back, Kuzuri spoke up first. "Nishi-sama, we're done! We found tons of flour and spread it everywhere, can you see?"

Indeed Nishi could see the particles of dust in the air by the lights set into the ceiling. It was actually making him nervous. "Okay babies, lets get out of here." They nodded and the trio ran off after he set the timer for fifteen minutes. What they had created was called a flour bomb, and it was why flour was always condensed and packaged so carefully. After those fifteen minutes the small incendiary went off, in itself with only enough power to light a large fire. However once that interacted with the flour in the air....

Nishis and his girls gaped as a massive explosion ripped the entire warehouse into pieces. They were five blocks away, and they felt the blast wave. The whole building seemingly disappeared, the walls blowing outward the roof disappearing, everything inside was just gone! "HOLY SHIT!" Nishi shouted, as flaming debris began to fall around them. Kujiki grabbed him and the thee Sekirei jumped away as Nishi kept looking at the explosion behind them. Nishi shook his head. "I think we're done for the night babies, let's get back to the meeting point." All three of his Sekirei nodded, shaken by the explosions they had wrought for the second time that night.

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Kaho and Oosumi did not move nearly as fast as Minato and Homura, but eventually made their way to the water purifier. And like the food distribution center it was guarded by Higa's men. He had secured all of these places to break ties with MBI after they bought the city, but it was biting him in the ass tonight. And the guards here were just as lackadaisical as the yakuza outside of the hotel.

One of them was walking next to the other as they walked slowly around the water purifier station. "Man, all I'm saying is that we should be at least hanging out with the alien chicks. I mean higa's got so many of them he can afford to let us hit up a few right?"

"And I'm saying they've got some kind of mystical connection to him, they won't look at you let alone be interested in

you Tucker."

"Dude that's bullshit! No lady could help but be interested in me. I am the love doctor dude, PHD loveologist. All I need is a chance with any of those alien babes and Bow Chika Wow Wow, you know what I'm saying."

"No, no I don't and I don't think you do either."

"Hehehe. Here's one, pretty appropriate for this place. Did anyone call for a plumber, I'm here to lay some pipe. Bow Chika Wow Wow!"

"Oh god."

"So I hear you got sisters, Bow Chika, or twins, Wow Wow!"

At this point Kaho couldn't take it anymore and she jumped out of their hiding place, bringing her naginata around and slicing the head of the noisy one off like a shuttlecock. She brought her other hand up to slam with crushing force into the other's head. Oosumi shook his head coming out of the alleyway. "I think we just did something that was for the good for all mankind. I just hope neither of them had opportunity to breed." Kaho nodded, calming down and the two went about the job. Twenty minutes later at around three in the morning another explosion ripped through the night.

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Now by this time MBI realized something was going on. The cordon around that section of the city had sent out multiple helicopters but had only found the explosions not who was causing them. Minaka was too busy with the Disciplinary squad trying to bring back the Ahsikabi/Sekirei that had escaped the city to worry about it though. One of them had even gotten on a ship and was escaping to international waters! And Higa had taken over all the utilities in his section of the city anyway, so whatever was happening was his problem, no one else's. Besides, dealing with fires and stuff was what the fire brigades were for. Of course most of the city's fire brigades had left with the majority of the civilian population, leaving only those who reported directly to MBI, but none of them were stationed in Higa's territory.

He sent a few more helicopters, taking them from observing Izumo house, but that was all he was willing to do at the moment. Once the wayward Sekirei were captured or terminated there would be plenty of time to figure out why things were exploding in Izumi's territory. Yet another oversight that would come back to cost him.

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Minato's luck faded when he and Homura arrived at the electric generator, for it was guarded by an Ashikabi/Sekirei pair that hadn't heeded Izumi's recall order, and the two were waiting for them.

Yahan was a dark-skinned Sekirei with jet black hair who wore a bikini top beneath strangely enough an old fashioned shawl. She had a sarong of black leather tied with a large belt around her waist and boots that came up to her thighs. As soon as Homura and Minato landed inside the fenced off area around the generator, she rocketed down from one of the towers, her kick flashing into Homura's face. "Ugh!" Homura grunted as he was sent flying back.

However when she followed up Homura had recovered, his nose bloody but his hands filling with fire and he threw some at her, causing her to back off quickly. The two circled one another, with Homura being on the lookout for any yakuza or other Sekirei that might be there too.

As soon as Homura had let him go Minato had whipped out his spatha, then dodged as someone actually fired at him. "huh, and it's been what, months since someone shot at me." A bullet ricocheted off the concrete next to his head as he rolled into cover behind one of the metal towers. "And tonight had been going so well!" Another bullet spanged off the metal he was now hiding behind and he shouted to the fire user. "Homura, where the hell is the shooter!"

Homura ducked under another kick but ran straight into another one as Yahan flipped in the air to bring her other foot up to impact his chin. Homura spat out blood and tried again to roast the dark skinned Sekirei, but she dodged nimbly to the side. "I'm kind of busy here!" A bullet sped through the air towards his head but he reflexively slashed out with a fire brand melting it and redirecting its molten remains to the side. Another whip of fire beat back Yahan's charge, scorching her sarong and nearly pinning her in place. With another blow he melted the electrical tower right above her head, causing it to bend over and trap her where she was standing for a moment.

With the shooters attention diverted for a moment Minato took a chance and ran for the entrance to the shack by the gate where the bullets were coming from. However he ignored the door, kicking it in then diving through the window next to it. Once he hit ground inside he brought his spatha up slicing at the gun held by an older man with close

cropped grey hair. The man promptly let go of his rifle and slipped one hand down to his thigh bringing out a large knife.

The two began to circle on another while Minato took a moment to look at the older man. His eyes were hard brown, hair was deep gray and his body looked like someone had carved it out of wood. The way he moved he was obviously trained as a soldier from his stance and speed.

The old man's eyes had flicked over him as well, finally landing on the sword. "That's an interesting pig sticker you've got there boy. You know how to use it?" He feinted then lunged, but Minato ignored the feint and parried the blow with his spatha, then turned it in word, nearly gutting the man but he pulled back before he could do more than get a scrap along his side.

Minato smirked regaining his previous position. "About as well as I can old man, war's a hard teacher, you learn or you die." *Well that and Miya training me.*

"Heh, so I see." The two men glared at one another. "Names Oboro punk, recently of the UN forces and a tour in Darfur."

"Minato, recently of the Greek/Turkish conflict in Constantinople." Oboro's eyes widened in surprise, but the two were still in a standoff until Minato had Oboro's back facing the kicked in door. He suddenly charged and though the old man was strong he was no match for Minato and his spatha's range. He barely blocked a lunge then another but his knife was knocked spinning out of his grip and he found himself flying backwards out of the shed from a kick to the sternum. He tried to roll when he landed but when he looked up the point of the Minato's spatha was against his throat. "Surrender."

Oboro looked up at him without any fear in his eyes. "No. I know what will happen to Yahan if I do."

Across from them Yahan looked up from having just escaped her prison and saw Oboro on the ground. "Dad!"

Minato's eyes widened at the exclamation then he smirked. "Huh, and here I thought your relationship was a sugar daddy sort of thing. And do you know what might happen to her if you die?"

"Don't be disgusting, she's old enough to be my bloody daughter, that's how I treat her and how she sees me thankfully. And no I don't." Oboro's gaze never wavered while Homura raised another wall of flame to cut off the now frantic Yahan from reaching the two Ashikabi.

"If the bond is deep enough, she dies. If not, well I have no idea what MBI is doing with the bodies of the 'deactivated' as they call it. Now, surrender, come with us peacefully and find out there're better allies to have than a multiple rapist and narcissist."

Oboro flinched at the first accusation. He had thought he'd seen a few of Higa's Sekirei that had the look of rape victims, but.... "Alright, let me up, and Yahan and I will come with you."

Minato stared down into the older man's eyes and after a moment nodded "Alright." He pulled his spatha away and waved at Homura. "Let her through Homura, we're allies for now."

Homura looked at him in shock but Yahan didn't bother looking at him merely rushing forward to check on the old man. "You ok dad?"

Oboro grunted as he felt his ribs. "A few scrapes and a bruised rib or two, nothing serious, you?"

Yahan put an arm around his waist shaking her head. "A bit burnt along the edges but that's it. Are we allies or prisoners?"

Allies." Minato said firmly. "Head out into the north of the city. One of my Sekirei will meet you as you cross the border between Higa's and my territory. He sent out a thought to his wives, *Everyone, I just made a new ally or at least we'll have a chance to convince them, I'm sending Yahan and her Ashikabi to you, have someone meet them up when they cross our border and escort them to Izumo House.* Tsukiumi replied that she would be heading out she was going stir crazy not helping him. Minato sent her a wave of reassurance and the thought, *we're almost done here, we'll be heading back to Nishi's territory and from there on home soon.*

Oboro nodded. "Alright, I'm not saying we'll join you, but at least we can sit down and here your proposal." Minato nodded affably and Yahan picked up the older man and jumped away.

Minato turned from watching the two disappear out of sight to smirk at Homura, who was wiping at the blood on his face from his broken nose. "Alright Homura, lets blow puppy up and get the fuck out of here."

"Oh thank god, I'm going to fucking sleep for a week after this." Homura was in pain, tired, and irritated as hell. Yahan had been pressing him hard, and this night was going on too long. *I thought I left my late nights*

The two spent several minutes placing their remaining IEDs throughout the generator factory. As they jumped away it exploded brilliantly. Higa now had no water, no yakuza, no food coming in, had lost another ally, no power and none coming in that didn't cross Mikogami's territory. He was now beaten, lamed and reduced, and Minato felt it was time to call it a night.

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Despite making far better time now that they were no longer burdened by their explosive burdens, it did not surprise either man that they were the last to arrive back at the meeting point. Nishi was still there looking subdued but satisfied while Oosumi was leaning back against the wall of the bar, Kaho behind him and both of them with their eyes closed. Nishi looked up as Minato and Homura landed nearby. "Hey you two, how'd it go on your end. We both hit our targets pretty easily."

Homura scowled, fingering his broken nose. It would take him at least a nights rest to heal it, after all he wasn't a fist type. Musubi would have been able to heal from this in under an hour, but element types healed far slower than that. Minato answered for them both. "We ran into a spot of bother at our last target. On the other hand we convinced another 'ally' of Higa's to stop working with him, for a little while anyway." Minato filled the Ashikabi of the West in on what had happened and the other man nodded. "And with that my friend, I think we can all call it a night. I hear my bed calling for me, so unless you have something you want to say, Homura and I are out of here."

Nishi shook his head. "Nah, I'll see you in few days maybe, we should take it easy for a few days, see how Minaka and Higa react before planning our next move. But next time I'll come to you okay?"

Minato nodded agreeably though he had a strong suspicion he knew how Higa, once he recovered from his fear, would be reacting. He also planned to be ready for him. "Sure, search for Izumo House, it's my main base of operations, there's always someone there anyway. See ya man, stay safe huh?" And with that Homura grabbed Minato and jumped up and away. Nishi simply nodded, tired too and going back inside with his Sekirei. Oosumi and Kaho both followed, intent on grabbing one of the rooms above the bar for themselves after a hard nights work.

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It was nearly five in the morning by the time Homura touched down outside Izumo house. Before either man could move however Miya and Minato's wives came out to meet them. All the other Sekirei had been put to bed, as had the prisoners and the child Ashikabi. Miya smiled, she and the others had many things to tell Minato. But for now looking at the bedraggled appearance of the two men she decided not to burden them with what had happened. 'Ara, welcome back you two. I think a brief shower and then straight to bed with both of you yes? We can talk about what happened tonight in the morning. Our guests are already resting, and we can meet with them all tomorrow as well.'" Both men nodded wearily and Minato was lead away to his house by his wives. They pulled off his cloths despite his protests and showered him and put him to bed, none of them up for any playtime. In Izumo house Miya did much the same to Homura, except for the bathing part. Despite this lack they both fell into bed at around the same time, and that was all she wrote for either of them for a while.

End chapter

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Heh, that was a lot of fun to write, both the violence and the running gags. A good running gag is simply awesome to have in a story. I also hope I showed you how Homura and Minato's 'relationship' will be working in my story. They bonded through causing explosions and sneaking around, what could be better. Don't make comments about my explosions please, or how I pictured the targets, nitpicking is not in anyone's best interest, though if anyone has been in Tokyo and can tell me about another target to hit I'll put it in the next chapter. Next chapter we have various reactions to the nights events as well as some interesting discussions and the strategic ramifications of the nights work.

## **\*Chapter 17\*: Chapter 17 Confrontation and Discussions**

I don't own Sekirei.

I usually am not able to do this, given how I want to spend most of my free time writing up new things for my various stories but I hit a bit of a writer's block on them today, so went back and revised this chapter. Thanks go out to MWRANDOM for pointing out that this chapter had far too many errors, I hope I corrected most if not all of them.

A poll will be placed on my profile for which story I should start after this one is finished, so stop in and take a look at it and my profile for my proposed stories. As before if you pm me and try to convince me of your choice it will count as ten to the total of said choice.

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### **Chapter 16 confrontations and Discussions**

High up in his ivory tower Minaka was no longer angry, he was enraged and confused. Not only had his plan failed miserably in punishing Minato for his transgressions against the game, but Minato had absconded with the jinki, once more leaving his enemies broken behind him. That coupled with the power that Kazehana had shown with her norito attack worried him immensely. But even that could have been born. After all, getting stronger and winning battles was what the Sekirei game was all about. He didn't want the Sekirei to be weak, far from it. But instead of being content with his victory, Minato had yet again taken Sekirei belonging to his enemies away with him, as well as an Ashikabi this time, thumbing his nose at the rules of the game. When an Ashikabi won a battle his Sekirei were supposed to destroy the bond of the enemy Sekirei. Not kill him outright, a dead Sekirei was no use to Minaka's plan. Nor were they supposed to merely knock them out and then make them prisoners!

Then of course there was the chaos that had gripped Higa's territory later that night. Minaka had no idea who had been behind it, after all none of Minato's Sekirei had left Izumo house, and the helicopters he'd stationed nearby hadn't seen any movement to and from during that time. Nor had any of the tracking sensors seen any movement from him or the other powerful Sekirei. Homura, the Sekirei of fire that Minaka's estranged wife had been using on the sly to protect un-winged Sekirei until they found their Ashikabi (as if Minaka didn't know what she was up to) couldn't have gotten to all the places that were attacked in the time allowed. And only Matsu could block the tracking sensors at all, and the only other brain type in the game was Kocho, who was aligned with Higa, and they were watching all the monitors for just such a maneuver. Accrodign to his computer and surveillance experts Matsu hadn't done anything except keep an eye on them the entire night, thus none of the other Sekirei with Minato could have been involved. Still Minaka could not shake the feeling that Minato was somehow behind it, and desperately wanted to think of a way to punish him.

Yet whoever was behind it didn't really matter at this point, the end result was Higa had no water, power or food now, and would have to rely on the other sections of the city to provide them. Something Minaka knew would not happen. Already reports had come in early that morning that the southernmost energy lines had been cut, and the roads heading into the west blocked by rubble. The North hadn't done so yet, but it was still barely nine in the morning.

All in all Minato needed to be smacked down, however any overt assault was impossible since he lived next to Miya. Any direct confrontation with number one would be doomed to failure from the start. This left him with other avenues to try to punish the north, yet they were not nearly as satisfying or quick. Yet upon mature consideration Minaka realized that he still had most of the cards in his own deck. In the long run this kind of surly rebellion against his rules couldn't work. It simply irritated Minaka, but didn't directly affect his power base or his long term plans. As long as Minaka controlled the information getting out of the city (and he did his people had even been able to stop pictures and video of the explosions the night before from getting out, despite the American and Chinese spies best efforts) as well as kept his reasons for collecting deactivated Sekirei a secret he controlled the game and where it was heading. Moreover, and this brought a smile to his face, everything that occurred last night could be made to turn to his advantage. He left his office then, intent on turning this around.

First, he needed to take control of public opinion. Minaka did this by making a speech against those who broke out, citing the violence they caused in the surrounding suburbs while fighting his troops, and placing the over two hundred civilian and fifty military deaths that had occurred squarely at their feet, and subtly at the feet of the foreign power who had almost absconded with a Sekirei/Ashikabi pair.

That had been a little too close for comfort. With Haihane and Benitsubasa already helping capture/deactivate the pairs that had run further inland, he'd had to wake up Karasuba and send her after them, and she had caught up with them as they were meeting an unmarked submarine. The submarine spotted her and had dived immediately, leaving

behind the pair behind just as she jumped down onto their boat from the helicopter she had taken out after them. Whoever the submarine belonged to obviously had heard of Karasuba. She had taken her ire out on everyone on the boat, and Minaka was forced to write off the Sekirei she was supposed to return with. After all, she was very dead, living people have more limbs, and a head, and blood actually in their bodies rather than simply generally spread around.

The helicopter pilot however had enough foresight to take a picture of the submarine as they closed, and its distinctive shape had pointed to who was behind the defection. He was so incensed he activated two of his sleeper agents in Russia, Wyoming and South Dakota (named for states of Russia's traditional enemy in an attempt to put another layer of protection between him and their actions) with orders to find and delete with extreme prejudice anyone who had any involvement in that operation. He had no doubt they would do just that. Despite Dakota's rashness and Wyoming's regrettable fixation with knock-knock jokes, they were two of the best saboteurs and assassins in the business.

From start to finish Minaka's public announcement made him sound as if he was simply someone who tried to control the violence and mitigate it rather than start it as he had. Then, though we didn't come out right and said he ordered it, he declared that the attacks that occurred in Izumi Higa's territory last night had been a direct retaliation for his breaking the rules of the game by bringing in more Sekirei to the second match, which would hopefully appease Mikogami, though it probably wouldn't work on Nishi. That man was proving far more intelligent than Minaka had originally thought.

Underneath the table however, he sent out feelers to Izumi offering power, food and water. In a way he was actually happy too as this assault had firmly welded the Higa's continued prosperity to his own. Thus he came out smelling cleaner than a rose from the third stage's first match abroad and with at least a few of the Ashikabi, and he also collected the Sekirei that had been deactivated during the match, giving him three more. So while his control of the game and Minato it in particular was slipping, abroad his power and control remained unchanged. Gripe all they wanted, none of the offering powers wanted to pay the cost in lives or power that taking him on would cost, even if they were victorious. Then too, most of them still believed he would be selling the secrets of the Sekirei to them, the fools. And Jpaans couldn't move against him because of how much of their GDP was dependent on MBI, as well as the danger his own private army represented.

Thinking about it after his last announcement, Minaka was tempted honestly to use the MBI card secret, but felt it wouldn't work as none of the Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs that had allied with Minato still had them. Worse there was no way to return them on the sly with Miya in the area. In point of fact the only time MBI troops ever came within a mile of Izumo house was last night when the helicopters were around observing Minato and his Sekirei. Minaka was still flailing in the dark thinking of ways to respond to Minato specifically, and he hoped to get enough information from Karasuba to figure out some way to control him. He had a meeting with her that afternoon, along with Takami, who had seen the videos from last night's battle and was not happy.

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Minato and his group were also having a few meetings that day. While Matsu and Akitsu kept watch on MBI's reaction to their assaults on Higa's holdings, Miya and Minato talked to the father and daughter duo Minato had 'convinced' to talk with them. After Yahan and Oboro were introduced to Yashima, Katsuragi and Chizuru they both agreed to join. Oboro knew that one-to-one Sekirei Ashikabi pairs were not strong enough to last any longer in this game, and he had no desire to work any further with the rapist, nor would he take orders from the brat or the drifter. Still he did bring some information to the table. "Do any of you or your other allies still have your MBI card?"

Minato shook his head. "No, we got rid of them all as we didn't want to have any connection to MBI that they could use as a string control us."

The father nodded "good, well I went a little bit further and I think I found something out about it you need to know. I dumped mine in water and it shorted out."

Minato froze for a second. "Shorted out? As in actually frying, like there was something electrical in there?"

Oboro nodded while behind him Yahan nodded as well. "After that we took it apart. We're both electrical mechanics you see, me because it's my profession and her because...." he paused and looked at back at his Sekirei who was leaning against the wall behind the table they were sitting at.

"And me because that's my power," she said simply. "I can tell if things are broken, take them apart and put them together better, I just know what to do with mechanical parts, it's fun." She said happily, smirking little.

Minato nodded, whistling inside. *And Higa had these two out on a regular patrol? Good god, they're nearly as great a*

*pair to have on your side as a brain type Sekirei.* "Were you able to find out anything?"

Oboro nodded. "From what Yahan could tell after it shorted out, it was supposed to send out some kind of electronic field that would block some kind of signal. Not certain what signal it's supposed to block though."

Minato cocked his head, thinking for a moment, but Miya had stilled, making Minato's ape brain want to run and hide, and from their faces Oboro and Yahan both of them felt the same. "Could it be used to block the bond between a Sekirei and an Ashikabi?"

All her listeners stiffened in alarm. Oboro thought for a moment then shook his head. "I don't know. We've never figured out what kind of frequency or wavelength or anything like that the bond signal is on, but I can't say for certain that this weird field could block it."

Minato nodded grimly. "That was what I was afraid of, a kill switch. I guess this way they wanted it to appear as if it was an important item, rather than something inside the Sekirei, much less invasive that way, and you could use it as a penalty later in the game for not winning. After all, most of the Ashikabi have to use their card to take care of their Sekirei, it would only be 'fair' if the card could also take them away." he said bitterly. "Well, your first job is going to figure out some way to block that signal. Before that tell Matsu to put the word out on the internet and over the phone to every Ashikabi she can reach to get rid of their card, but after that you don't have any other job but this one understand?"

Oboro nodded looking over at Miya, controlling his initial reaction and not running away before waving Yahan out of the room. "I'll get right on that." he said calmly, "and I'll let Yahan get with that information specialist of yours to figure out what they can get from it too."

With that he closed the door and Minato turned to Miya whose eyes were blazing with anger, her entire body tensed like the world's most dangerous spring. "I'm going to kill him," she said calmly. "I am going to hunt him down and rip out his heart! How dare he," she growled angrily, her control slipping, "how dare he interfere with the bonds between Ashikabi and Sekirei!"

Minato placed a comforting arm around her shoulders shaking her a little. "We still don't know what will happen after he dies Miya-san, other than that I would cheerfully help you gut him like a pig. Just hold in your anger for a little while, eventually he'll have to move against us, that way he'll be seen as the aggressor, as the one who broke the rules and decided to make this a personal thing, then we can move against him and MBI. Either that or we wait until we have more than half of the jinki. Once we do then we can move against him without fearing his use of the ship you all came in. Without that in a stand up fight in the city we could possibly win right now."

Miya drew strength from his friendly gesture for a moment, then pulled back chuckling quietly. "Ara, Thank you for the support Minato-san, but you really shouldn't be flirting with an old widow like me. Do try at least to contain your lascivious desires." She laughed a little and Minato shook his head, but she went on more seriously. "Speaking of gutting things, your sister was quite put out by the little display you put on last night in the fight in the factory. And that's without knowing what all else you got up to last night."

Minato winced. "I was afraid of that. It's just, she's so sheltered, I mean, she actually thought this was a game at first! I really don't want to let her see the ugly side of things, which is primarily what happened to me, worse I don't want to her about our mother, or our sperm donor."

He watched her face for a moment and Miya shrugged, not looking away from his gaze. "I realize that you don't want to bring out any skeletons from the closet Minato, but you really do need to talk to her today. And I knew about your full parentage already, and it does not matter to me. A person is defined by their choices, not who they are related to."

Minato sighed thankfully. That had been something he had been frightened of since Kazehana had told him. He didn't exactly relish sharing that bombshell with Homura either. His other two wives had reacted with anger at first until he told them he had never known the man. That had appeased both of them, especially when he told them the same thing later via their mental link, through which, they had discovered, it was impossible to lie. "Thank you for that Miya," he said softly, looking at her with admiration, and she blushed a little.

She shook it off quickly however, and said. "Be that as it may, I will not be around to help you talk to your sister nor to look after the young Sekirei who Kazehana brought back. She still hasn't woken up but I need to go out today."

Minato cocked his head and then realized what that it was the monthly anniversary of her husband's death. He nodded somberly, bowing his head toward her. "I understand Miya, and don't worry we'll all watch the house for you. Go safely and be back soon."

Miya smiled at the old-fashioned way of saying goodbye, and bowed gracefully. "I will return this evening." Minato nodded and watched as the landlady moved out the door elegant as always.

He spent the next 45 minutes playing with Kusano, Kana and Uzume on one side and he and Kotha and Kaie on the other side tossing a ball back and forth in the yard where he could watch the entrance. Kohta had immediately agreed to work with them willingly after talking to Chizuru. He even gave Oboro his MBI card to look at. The girl in question was sitting on the porch with Kisami watching the game, and hadn't been further than a single room from the young boy since he had arrived.

During this time Shi, the captured Sekirei woke up, but rather than bolt immediately she simply laid there as if she had no will of her own. Yui, who was watching her with Katsuragi and Saki, took one look and ordered her Sekirei to remove the crest from her the back of her neck.

After she watched Saki do it, she went outside to speak to Minato and said sharply, "That girl hasn't just been raped once, she has all the signs of someone was been abused over time, not just once."

Minato clenched his teeth to keep the curses inside and shook his head, his eyes and face grim. "There will be a reckoning." All his Sekirei save Kusano, who didn't know what they were talking about, nodded resolutely.

After that Minato gathered all the other Sekirei and Ashikabi together and told them that they were going to be working on a little project outside. With that he left them to go get Yukari, who would be the foreman for this job.

The only two that were sent elsewhere were Yahan and Katsuragi and Yashima, who were sent to the nearest school to steal it's generator and return with it. Before this, they didn't have anyone who had the necessary skill to install a personal generator for their little and growing community, but with the addition of Yahan and Oboro they did. This way they addressed another strategic weakness, much like they had by hoarding supplies like they had been for so long.

Minato then went over to talk to his sister, who was being guarded by her Sekirei. Shiina let him in, nodding respectfully. *At least his opinion of me hasn't changed after last night's battle.*

When he entered the living room of their house he found Yukari staring out of the room, deliberately ignoring his entrance. "Hey imouto, Miya just left so now would be a perfect time to start although project."

Yukari nodded, but didn't look away from the window. "Is that all you have to say?"

Minato sat down opposite her and sighed softly. "What do you want me to say Yukari? You know I was in Constantinople, you know that there was a rebellion a civil war going on there?" Yukari nodded. "Well is it too far-fetched to believe that I would be caught up in it? I was the only foreign national that was!" He growled this out rather angrily, and he paused a moment to control himself. *Evidently I'm not as over being abandoned by our mother as I thought.*

"It's not that!" she exclaimed, shouting back at him just as angrily. "I figured that out on my own, thank you. What I want to know is why you try to hide from! We're supposed to be family!"

Minato shrugged. "How exactly was I supposed to bring it up? Oh by the way Yukari I spent the last few years in an urban environment fighting as a revolutionary against a corrupt government? It wasn't fun, it wasn't pleasant, and I didn't think you are ready to hear about it. Unfortunately in this day and age Japanese people are very sheltered. If you want to question me about it, go right ahead, but after that we need to start on Miya's appreciation gift."

Yukari nodded, but didn't move still staring at him. "I guess I don't really have any burning questions about your time there, I can see what you learned by how you act. But what do you know about our mom being a part of the Sekirei plan?" She asked, shifting topics suddenly.

Minato sighed, he'd hoped to divert her attention to his own pass rather than that topic, but that had obviously failed. "Heard about that too, well I know she was an adjustor for the Sekirei, altering their bodies somehow, modifying them so that they could, well supposedly so they could breed with us humans, but I have my doubts about that."

Yukari leaned back banging her head against the wall behind her, but she had gotten used to that idea since Kusano had told her about it, so she got over it quickly. "I don't like the idea of mom being involved in this in any way, especially after what I've learned about those girls that you're not bonded with that live here, Katsuragi and the others."

Minato shrugged uncomfortably again and Yukari went back to staring at him, asking "And our father?" It was a stab in the dark, but she had never heard anything about whomever their mom and married, and figured that might a

reason at least why she was involved with this whole mad plan in the first place.

Minato sighed again, cursing Kazehana for telling him, and wishing she was here to foist this off on. Unfortunately he wished for it just a little too hard and it went out along their bond and her response was rather tart. *She's your sister Minato this is your responsibility not ours. And you should've already been having this discussion the moment she woke up after the attack on her.*

Minato grimaced internally; indeed all of his wives had been saying much the same, but he had been a bit of a coward, not wanting to have this conversation as long as he could put it off. The fact that had failed miserably came as no surprise to any of them and he could feel their smugness through the link. *Yak it up you three, you're right I was wrong, but don't think I won't get you all back for rubbing it in.* he felt their amusement but shook it off and went back to speaking to his sister.

"Kazehana the wind Sekirei, the oldest of my wives, she told me who our father is," he said slowly, reluctantly. "He's the chairman of MBI, Minaka. The bastard who put this whole plan in motion, who's the main cause for everything that has happened since, is the person who impregnated our mother."

Yukari gaped at him then screamed "The chairman is our dad!"

Minato growled angrily. "Not our father!" Yukari blinked at him startled by his vehemence. "A father is someone who is involved in your life, Yukari, a father is someone who is there for your mother and you, who you can look up to! He is not our father, he's just the asshole got up our bitch of a mother pregnant!"

Yukari's arm swung up in an attempt to hit him but he blocked it easily and she stumbled back. "You might not think that just yet. Yukari, but that's what she is. She was the chief adjustor for crying out loud! That means she's got pull, she could try to fight this plan, could have tried to make certain there were actual rules rather than the stupid guidelines that are only followed when Minaka decides they should be! She has a lot to answer for," he said his voice becoming soft, calmer now, yet also sad "and eventually I will make certain they both pay for it."

Yukari looked at him in horror. "You-you're not thinking of actually, you know, killing her are you? She's our mom onii-chan!"

Minato sighed heavily. "I don't want to kill her Yukari. Imprison her and put her away for life for crimes against humanity yes, not kill her. Don't worry about that." He did not say anything about letting Minaka live though.

Yukari thankfully didn't notice, as she stood up determined to forget about this for now. "All right I'll think about this stuff later, right now let's get to the project for Miya-sama." Minato nodded and the two siblings walked out the front door with Shiina following.

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Outside they joined the other Sekirei/Ashikabi groups, with Minato leaning down quickly to pick up his daughter who had run up to him excitedly. As he kissed her cheek he saw his wives had done as he had asked, getting all the supplies for this little construction project and putting them in the backyard of the house.

This little present for Miya had come about by a chance remark from Homura to Kazehana, who had been watching Tsukiumi and Musubi sparring in the backyard. The fire user had commented that more room would be nice, which would allow Kusano and the others to play in the backyard at the same time as other people were practicing. Kazehana had replied that Miya's husband had plans to enlarge the backyard if any of the houses that abutted the inn's property became vacant but none had before he died. Minato heard this and thought it would be an excellent gift for Miya for putting up with him and all the trouble that they had brought into her life.

This thought had solidified when he realized that it was only her presence that kept MBI from moving against him directly when he broke the rules, like when he helped Kuno escape Tokyo and when he helped the abused Sekirei of other Ashikabi escape rather than defeat them and leave their deactivated bodies for MBI to collect. Yukari, who wanted to be a landscape designer, had put the plan together and Minato's wives had gone around collecting the supplies.

Now he turned to his other Sekirei and said, "All right girls, first things first let's take those fences down all around, and then come back here so Yukari can show us what she wants done next.

Yukari spoke up quickly "As you're all doing that, can i borrow Musubi? She's the strongest one here." This statement made Musubi puff up proudly, thrusting out her chest even more than normal, which caused a thin trail of drool to form around Yukari's mouth, but she shook it off. "And I want to start digging the pond immediately. Show me the liner

and pipes you got for it first though."

Musubi proudly displayed the pipes and liner that she and Katsuragi had brought, and Yukari nodded. She looked around measuring distances and looking at the plan she had in her hands. "All right follow me Musubi-chan," she said moving over to a specific spot near the southern corner by the little patio. It was about 15 feet away from the house, and she began to use paint to mark a circle on the ground the innermost edge of which was where Musubi was standing. "Shiina, bring that waste barrel over here and you two can get started digging this place out. Kill everything inside this circle first and then dig down around ten feet. After you're done that I'll show you what I want you to do next."

Musubi nodded eagerly, while Tsukiumi suddenly remembered what she wanted to talk to Minato about. She made her way over to him where he had begun to take apart the fence along where it abutted their house. "Minato," she said seriously. "I think we need to have a little talk about what happened last night with Musubi."

Minato looked at her and nodded. "Help me with this, and you can tell me all about it while were working."

Tsukiumi did so, describing the odd possession Musubi had gone through after receiving her concussion last night. She was feeling a little irritated by how quickly pure fist type Sekirei could recover from such things. A concussion would have had her in bed for at least a full day.

The first-hand account of the fight made Minato break off his work and pull his lovely Amazon wife into a hug, kissing her lovingly on the lips. As they parted he muttered "If I had known that you two were facing off against Higa's chief enforcers I would have been more worried, but you two did as magnificently as I knew you would." he said holding her in his arms and looking at her with admiration, causing her blush from being kissed in public to deepen further. He looked over at Musubi, quirking his lips thoughtfully for a moment before shrugging. "I wouldn't worry about it too much right now. I'll bring it up with Miya at some point, but it doesn't sound as if this 'Sekirei of destiny' had anything but good intentions toward her."

Tsukiumi still flushed from the kiss nodded. "I didn't think so, she was dangerous either" She confessed. "But it worried me a little. It was so strange to see, it was as if I was looking at what Musubi could be with five or ten more years of experience. The difference in their maturity level was just so startling."

Minato nodded, indeed. "If you'll excuse me, I think I'll go and give her a little kiss too, she definitely deserves it if she went through that, above and beyond my kissing her last night for participating." Tsukiumi, despite never liking to share his affections with anyone but her fellow wives, nodded assent. Musubi had once again been the one that was most injured from a fighting and little things like kisses were what made Sekirei love to fight for their Ashikabi.

Minato went over to Musubi, who along with Kusano was still giggling and laughing at the sensation of being covered by Tsukiumi's bond wings (his other Sekirei reacted far stronger to it in their own ways...) and kissed her gently on the lips. As her own wings blossomed Musubi looked at him in surprise and he said "that was for last night he you did well Musubi I'm very proud of both you and Tsukiumi standing up against those bullies of Higa's." Musubi nodded happily, even though she couldn't remember much of the fight. Tsukiumi had told her though that she had knocked one of their opponents out of the fight, and made the other one want to run away. That was good, it meant she was getting stronger, and though even she realized that her vow with Karasuba wasn't important any longer, she still wanted to be strong enough to face number 04 in battle.

After that everyone got to work quickly. The landscaping project continued apace, and with the power and strength of all the Sekirei working together under Yukari's demanding instructions it was finished by the time Miya got back that evening. The yard had been expanded, connecting all three of the houses that were currently being used by Minato and his allies. Stone pathways leading from the back doors of two of the houses and the side door of the other led to the back patio, and a small pond had been placed nearby. They had even been able to find fish for it, several koi who were already swimming happily around the water that Tsukiumi had put into it. Three trees that all been planted along the edge of the new property, and the whole thing looked fantastic. Yet for all this change from the front, you would have to look very closely to see any difference from the outside.

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Karasuba sighed, leaning back in her chair and finishing the last of the ale she had brought from her excursion into foreign parts. She'd developed a taste for it, and wasn't looking forward to going back to the local crap they called sake. Then too, the anticipation of dropping this bombshell on her two interlocutors was adding to her enjoyment of the drink greatly.

Across from her Takami growled at her antics, while Minaka laughed, always amused by how easy it was to get a rise out of her. Takami had been appalled by what her son had done during the fight the night before, the sheer

murderous efficiency he showed scared her more than anything she had seen coming from her gentle wallflower son. "Damn it Karasuba, start talking, what the hell can you tell us about my son?"

Karasuba smirked as she replied "Quite a bit actually. You see, your son wasn't just in Constantinople, he was part of the fighting there." She went on to talk about what she had found out from talking to the old man, and the odd little tidbits of information she had been able to glean from other sources, most of the time at sword point.

Takami was torn between pride at her son's strength and rising horror at what he had been forced to do. *I should never have allowed him to go on that damn trip, or at least tried to use MBI's resources to get him back home! And now look what he's done since he entered this mad plan! I have to talk to him, get him to go along with things, who knows what Minaka will do if he keeps defying him.*

Minaka's thought were along the same lines, but dealt with the here and now rather than should haves. *So we have a young man who refuses to back down to pressure, who is used to war and violence, no wonder sending Karasuba to threaten him never worked! Still, a young man who is that opinionated, that eager to help other people does have a weakness that can be exploited. The trick will be doing so without completely tipping my hand or coming into conflict with O1. I need to think about this, but perhaps some moral persuasion will at the very least buy me some time.*

Karasuba watched their faces, her thoughts hidden behind her usual slitted eyes. *If they both knew how easily I can read them they'd probably freak out* she thought almost cheerfully. In reality she no longer cared about either MBI's reaction to her news or Minaka's personal one. Her plans for the next few days were set in stone already. No way would Higa take what happened lying down, he'd confront Minato, and when he did she could take advantage of it to move against him on her own. Once she'd plucked all his feathers from him, save Musubi, then she'd break him to her will, and show that ditz and Yume that love wasn't worth anything in the face of power. She could feel herself growing wet at the very thought of his broken yet still useful body, but she kept any hint of her thoughts from her face, merely chuckling aloud at the consternation her words had brought Takami a hypocrite in the truest sense of the word that she despised.

Minaka laughed gaily, standing up and swirling his long white lab coat/cloak around him. "Well that was quite informative O4, but alas the game of the gods waits for no man. It must continue and I as games master have my duties to attend to. I trust Takami-san, that you can convince this wayward player to start obeying the rules?"

Takami scowled. Minaka was giving her what she wanted, but the way he did it irritated the hell out of her. "Our son Minaka, not just mine, or have you forgotten?"

"A mere happenstance of genetics and timing Takami-san, nothing more, you know how I feel about such things, a man of my vision has no need of such." Takami flinched, yes she knew exactly what he thought of such things, and the fact she fell for him anyway was horrifying, but it had happened, and now she had to deal with it.

Karasuba's giggling drew her attention as Minaka swept out of the room, heading toward the control room to oversee the second match of the third stage. "What the fucks so funny bitch?" Takami knew Karasuba wouldn't attack her, as chief adjutor she had power over even her, and the other woman's attitude never failed to grate on her.

"Oh, just wondering what you're son is going think of you. A very opinionated and 'honorable' man is Minato, heheh, wonder what you'll say to each other?" She laughed and Takami growled again before stomping away, leaving Karasuba to finish her ale in peace, smiling widely at the thought of the blood and anarchy to come.

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When Miya came home that night she had no clue what was going on as she stepped into the Inn's property though she could feel the happiness and bubbling excitement in the air. When she stepped inside the fence's gate however she gasped and looked around in astonishment at the changes that had been wrought. She looked around, taking in all the changes and then walked into the backyard to stare at the changes that had been wrought there as well. She smiled happily, more broadly than she had in several years. This showed what Minato felt about their little community more than any words could have: they were all in this together and she looked over at the others her smile widening even more. "Thank you so much!" she exclaimed, "It looks lovely!"

They all clapped happily at her reaction, and the Sekirei began to high-five one another jubilantly. Miya sidled up to Minato and asked "I take this was one of your ideas?"

Minato nodded, "guilty as charged. I wanted to do something for you to show my appreciation. After all, it's only because of you that we're able to operate so freely. And I know that you've often despaired of all the trouble we bring into your life."

"That was true before I knew what depravity Minaka had sunk to Minato. You didn't have to do this, but thank you anyway."

Minato bowed grandly, "Anything for a lady!" he declaimed proudly.

Miya brought up one hand to her mouth to hide her smile as well as her blush. *I can't deny it any more*, she thought in a strange mixture of sadness and joy, *I am deeply attracted to him*. Indeed, that was one of the reasons she had spent the entire day rather than a few hours at her husband's grave, wondering what he would want her to do. *He would want me to be happy, to move on with my life and make a difference. And Minato is becoming more and more a central figure to that happiness*. To go forward however she would have to take the plunge and talk to his wives, and she wasn't certain she was ready for that just yet. She smiled wickedly behind her hand as an idea occurred to her, then she adopted a thoughtful expression. "Ara, does this mean that the other houses should also be considered Izumo house property?"

Minato blinked. "Um well that was kind of the pognbh"

Kazehana's mouth covered his before he could say anymore. She had seen the glint in Miya's eyes, and knew what she was getting at. "Not at all Miya-nee, just consider the yard communal property. No reason to go around enforcing rules in other people's houses is there?"

Miya pouted at being foiled and Tsukiumi and Minato both blanched, understanding what Kazehana was talking about. "Oh well, still I don't think I have to warn you about keeping such activities in your own bedroom yes?" She pointedly looked at Kazehana who chuckled sheepishly, backing away a little. She had in fact thought that a midnight romp on the new grounds would be a lot of fun, but there was no way in hell she was going to tempt fate now.

Minato smirked a little. "If you're looking for indecent acts to punish Miya-san, I suggest you look up what might be going on in Matsu's room."

"Ara, that's always a good place to look for such Minato-san, but is there a reason it springs to mind now?" Miya cocked her head innocently, but inside she was looking to smack someone a bit. It was really the only outlet she allowed herself these days, and it was always fun to see their reactions when she enforced her rules on someone. The fact that if all went well she would soon have another 'outlet' didn't occur to her just then, but it would when she went to bed that night, and her dreams, fueled by the sight of bond wings appearing throughout the night next door, were better than she had enjoyed in a long time.

Minato scratched his head sheepishly. "Well, it appears as if Yahan is a bit of a kindred spirit to Matsu in many ways. The two of them were giggling in a disturbing manner over something this morning before Yahan and a few others were sent off on an errand." The generator had been brought back and a place prepared for it, but Yahan would need more daylight than they had left to install it. "Since she got back neither of them have left Matsu's room."

Miya froze, the image of two Matsus swimming before her eyes before she shook it off vigorously. "If you'll excuse me mina-san, I believe I have something I need to see to."

Kazehana laughed a little. "We'll call you for dinner Miya-nee, Akitsu, Yui and Kisami are handling it tonight. Take your time."

"Thank you Kazehana-san, I'll do that I think." Miya turned smiling at Minato who winked at her, nearly causing her to giggle aloud before she walked into her home. Needless to say, the cries of the two perverted Sekirei rang out for a while after that. Oboro, stuck in a room he had converted to a workshop with the help of a few of the girls, looked up, smirked and went back to his work. He had warned her after all, and some aspects of his daughter's personality were areas he would never touch with a ten foot pole.

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The familial gathering for dinner was boisterous, loud and happy. Well, except for the corner occupied by Matsu and Yahan who hadn't recovered from their long chastisement from Miya.

Even the news that the next match of the third stage had happened couldn't dampen the joyful atmosphere, as it hadn't included anyone they knew personally. More, the losing pair, it had been one Ashikabi/Sekirei pair against the other, was among the more vile players still in the game and not allied with Higa. #13 Amebane and his Ashikabi were known to brutalize their opponents and anyone else to get what they wanted. Their defeat at the hands of #73 Namiji and her Ashikabi (and obvious boyfriend given the affection shown, which had sent the hopeless romantic Kazehana into a swoon) was comeuppance as far as Minato and his group were concerned. More, Namiji and her Ashikabi operated out of the western area of the city, and Nishi might be in contact with the pair, which might in turn

give them access to another jinki to help Chiho and keep them out of Minaka's hands. Minato had to wonder why the hell he was being so free with them, but he didn't have enough information to go on so he ignored that question for now.

It was to this convivial scene that Shi woke up to after having her crest removed. This warm and happy scene more than anything, well save for no longer feeling her bond to that scumbag Higa, helped her break out of her shell, and once she was seated beside Kusano and Chizuru she tucked into the food with a will. She wasn't quite ready to share her story, but no one there was asking her to, and whatever the case may be, whether or not she was a prisoner or anything, this atmosphere was much more welcoming than anything she had seen with Higa.

Miya nodded cordially to her "Don't worry my dear, you are safe here. Consider this a safe house for anyone who wishes to leave the game that that madman has put in place." She nodded at the other injured Sekirei that Minato had rescued from Higa and Shi looked at them, having not actually noticed them before and her eyes widened in recognition of a few of Higa's other Sekirei who she knew had been abused like her. Then her face blossomed into a little shy smile. "C-can I stay here, please?"

Miya nodded graciously "As I said, we do not turn away anyone here, save those who bring violence with them. And on that note," she said a little more grimly. "Violence is prohibited in Izumo house. Do you understand?"

Shi nodded rapidly and Miya smiled happily. "Good. Now tuck in."

Elsewhere the evening did not pass nearly as merrily, something that would have made the day of everyone around that table.

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Higa was afraid, deeply, bone-chillingly afraid. It wasn't just what Minato had done to the yakuza toughs he had brought along, nor was it the power that one of his Sekirei had shown with that horrifying display that ended the battle. Those were terrifying in and of themselves, but even together he could've ignored his fear, made plans around the new information. No, what drove his fright was the memory of the bond wings he witnessed as they fled.

Whenever Izumi kissed one of his Sekirei, mostly to fuel their norito, the bond wings were small, barely filling his office, though in the case of his two enforcers they were a little larger than that, able to spread two or three rooms beyond his office in length.

The bond wings of whoever that was that Minato had kissed at the end had followed them for at least eight blocks! And while most of the time he didn't feel anything when bathed in the light of a Sekirei's bond wings, these wings had filled him with terror. Some inexplicable otherness about them had settled into his very being and he spent most of that day trying to get over it after sleeping very poorly the night before. He wasn't even up to dealing with the new crisis that had befallen his territory, now bereft of all strategic resources.

His assistant Kakizaki watched him for a time and then moved away with his Sekirei close behind him. While Higa still controlled a large amount of Sekirei of his own and an almost equal amount through other Ashikabi of like tendency, it appeared as if the personal threat he had faced would affect his thinking from now on, regardless of whether or not he recovered from his panic attack at the moment or not.

*I think it's time for me and mine to make some plans of our own.* That didn't even consider the fact that his brain type Sekirei Kocho was now at a profound disadvantage and almost useless. While the hospital was still up and powered by its own generator and had its own internal network they were cut off from the world at large. Unlike Matsu Kocho could not access the internet or computer systems from abroad via her powers, her powers allowed her to bypass any security device once she was online, not actually connect to the target system.

To continue using her powers they would have to enter one of the other powerful Ashikabi territories, and that would probably mean they would be attacked almost immediately. Worse, it was obvious that the information she had been gathering was either false or incomplete. Certainly she had not found anything about Minato that had hinted at the fact that he could fight so well on his own, and that concerned Kakizaki greatly. While the null Sekirei would still be useful from now on it would appear as if the brain type would be useless, and Higa did not have any need for useless tools. *Yes, it is definitely time and past time to think about a back door for ourselves.*

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That night Minato and Miya sat out on the patio looking out over the new backyard, sipping tea peacefully. His wives had joined Homura and Uzume in a free-for-all game of risk, which he had pointed them toward as a way to broaden their minds and long term planning, and they had taken to it with enthusiasm. Chiho was with them watching the action and smiling happily. While the second jinki wasn't able to reverse the damage done to her, with two the initial

virus and physical ailment had been removed. She still wouldn't be able to walk or move about without aid, but it was much better than she had been. She also had slightly more energy, hence why she was still awake at ten at night.

Yui was inside with some of the Sekirei holding night classes for them. Hers was a strange personality, Minato reflected, totally devoted to teaching and extremely unhappy with ignorance. He was inordinately happy that his wives had been able to test out of her classes. The others on the other hand, were not so lucky. Musubi in particular was probably going to have a very hard time of it. Yet Minato could not find it in him to complain. Kohta, Kaei and Kusano were all in another room together listening to Kisami, Kohta's oldest looking Sekirei, read a story to them. She had volunteered for it, and Kusano had agreed, wanting to hear a new voice read to her.

Miya sighed looking over at Minato. "I cannot thank you enough for this Minato-san," she said softly, gazing out over the lawn. "For this and more importantly for what you have done for my sisters. You have done far more than any other Ashikabi, far more than any other human has ever done for them." She snorted a little bitterly into her cup, "Far more than I have truth be told."

Minato shook his head. "You were a stranger in a strange land Miya-san, there was little you could have done alone. As powerful as you are you could not have faced the world united against you. Could you have been more careful in whom you trusted, yes. But given the choice between them or the government that sent in troops by the thousands, I'm afraid I would've probably chosen the same exact way."

"Thank you for that Minato-san" she said, but then shook herself. "What are your plans going forward?"

"That's actually why I'm out here to talk to you. He said softly. As good as my wives are, they're not quite as critical about my own actions as I would like. I have a few plans going forward, but one of them I find particularly dirty and I feel the need for a second opinion."

Miya nodded thoughtfully. "I understand from what little I have seen that war is often dirty Minato-san" she said calmly. "Why don't you fill me on the other plans and then tell me about this dirty one of yours."

"We've pretty much crippled Higa as long term player in this damn plan of Minaka's. He needs food, power and water. Yes he's got enough to last for a little while, but eventually he will have to go on the offensive to get more. He could hit the South which is still the most powerful group in the game, going by numbers anyway, us, or MBI. And since we've been the ones that have done him the most damage he's going to come looking for us."

"Why not West?" she asked critically.

"Nishi doesn't have any more food supplies than Higa. There are even fewer people in his territory than there were in the East, and all of them are leaving shortly according to Nishi. Then too that area doesn't have a power generator of its own and is in danger of being cut off from both power and water if the South ever decides to do so."

Miya nodded thoughtfully. "So you assume he will come here."

"I assume he'll have to. He won't want to face you" he said, winking at her and she giggled a little and nodded "if he's heard half the things that you could do. However, he could take a position in our territory somewhere and dare us to come to him, or he could march straight to the generator that is at our new northernmost corner and take it for his own. It would do okay for a base of operations, especially seeing as there is a road right there leading out of the city that could supply them with food."

"I see, so you will be perfect pairing your defenses there."

"Half there half somewhere else." He said noncommittally. "There's always the chance he might surprise me after all, but he certainly hasn't done that yet. Meanwhile I want to prepare to go after MBI now."

"How so?" She leaned back a little accidentally letting a hint of her calf show as she resettled herself.

Power, water and public opinion are where Minaka is most vulnerable." He answered calmly, trying hard not to look at the glimpse of her leg Miya had accidentally shown him. "As soon as we figure out what Minaka is doing in response to our attacks on Higa other than that rather brilliant, I have to admit, speech this morning, we can move against his own water and electricity supplies. For now though I'm going to spread the word on the Internet and through Nishi about the MBI card. I don't want any Sekirei/Ashikabi pairs taken out like that. After that is done I'll have two of the other Sekirei take over the command center for Matsu, so she can work full-time on figuring out what the hell is going on with the Sekirei taken in from MBI that had been deactivated, as well as a blueprint of MBI Tower. Once I have that information, we may or may not take direct action, that will depend on what the situation is."

Miya looked at him thoughtfully for a moment seeing the grim set of his jaw and she reached out gently touching his jaw lightly. "You have an idea," she said softly, "one that concerns you quite a lot. But concerns shared are often problems solved. Tell me this idea of yours, and I will tell you if it is possible if I can."

Minato closed his eyes, then nodded. "I'm afraid that there might be a way to reprogram the Sekirei" he said gently, yet unhesitatingly, taking her hand in his own and squeezing it in thanks. "If a Sekirei is deactivated, their crest gone could they be forced to imprint on something else?"

Miya frowned and was silent for a few minutes thinking deeply "I... I do not know." She said slowly and very sadly for having to admit to that. "Something like that would obviously have been unthinkable among my own people. Well, from what little I can remember of them at any rate. The bond was sacred, and the idea of perverting it like that is just wrong. Yet I cannot rule out the possibility. But even if that was the case they would be much like my feathers you've saved from Higa. Barely at half strength and no match for a still bonded Sekirei."

"That wasn't what I asked, I asked if the bond itself could be replaced somehow, once the old bond is broken a new one set into its place. The Sekirei would thus keep all of her powers; she would simply lose her loyalty to her previous Ashikabi. It's the only idea that makes any sense."

Miya shook her head. "I don't know and thought disturbs me greatly. I will commune with one of the jinki and see if it can tell us anything in the morning. But do not let such a glorious day as we have had end on a low note Minato" she said, pulling him up by the hand he still had a hold of. "Go play, have fun with your Sekirei," she said in a joking tone of voice. "Time enough for serious discussions again tomorrow." Minato nodded obediently, but Miya did not release their shared grip until they were in the house and parted ways.

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Takami had eagerly latched onto the need to talk to Minato, hoping that maybe she could patch things up with her son and at the same time see her daughter and make certain that they stayed safe and got taken off Minaka's shit list. With Karasuba back, the disciplinary squad was back to full strength, which meant that if Minato stayed on Minaka's shit list his movement would be sharply regulated and he could even be attacked again. Boy had she been pissed when she heard about that... More, she needed to get him under control. Regardless of his past experiences, there was no way Minato was ready for what Minaka could do to him.

Now that it came to it, however she was more than a little leery. She had seen the video of his fight with the thugs Higa had brought to the match, and even though Higa broke the rules in doing so, the bloody and overwhelming way Minato dealt with them terrified her, and the news Karasuba had brought didn't give her any comfort, only understanding. The question the fucking crow had asked, how he would react to her, kept playing in her mind even as her limo entered the northern section of the city.

As she left her car parked on the curb she was met immediately by Musubi and Kana who were on patrol for the day. After exchanging pleasantries with the bubbly Sekirei she was directed into Izumo house. She paused after entering the yard, taking in the changes she could see with a raised eyebrow of surprise, then moved on.

When the door opened in response to her knock she was met with the very last person she wanted to meet, Kazehana. "To what do we owe the pleasure?" The sarcasm in the wind user's voice was palpable as she directed Takami into the house.

Takami didn't bother to answer as she was directed into the dining area. There she found Minato already sitting with Kusano beside him looking over what looked to be some kind of homework for the little girl, which had a smiley face sticker at the top of the sheet. Next to Kusano on the other side was a very young Ashikabi that she didn't know who also had some kind of homework in his hand and another Sekirei who had strange hair made to look like dog ears, a collar and a bust size that at her age Takami would have hated her for with a passion. Across from them sat a woman wearing typical school teacher outfit and a slight smile, Uzume and another Ashikabi, this one a female and presumably Uzume's.

Minato looked up as Takami entered the room and a part of her, the deep motherly part that she had buried so hard in her effort to devote herself to her work at MBI and fighting Minaka's excesses in the Sekirei plan died a little as she watched her little boy's face harden from the bright proud smile it had been into a cool blank mask. "Hello mother. I suppose I don't even have to ask but I will anyway, are you here for professional or personal reasons?"

Minato had had a frustrating morning and had just been getting over it when she appeared. The jinki hadn't understood the questions Miya put to it leaving them none the wiser to what Minaka was doing with the deactivated Sekirei. Worse, what little Matsu could find about reactions to the 'Sekirei Plan' abroad hadn't changed. All of the super powers were taking a wait and see approach, and no information was getting out. It looked more and more like

Minato would have to strike at public opinion, and the weapon he was going to use to do that was one he didn't really want to use.

Takami bristled with anger at his tone of voice but clamped down hard on it as she replied, "A little of both actually. I haven't seen you in years and I wanted to see how you were getting on. I realize you didn't want to communicate with me after you returned to Japan but in these trying times I think that family needs to stay in contact, don't you?"

Minato nodded sardonically, rubbing Kusano's head absentmindedly as he sent out a mental call to his wives, however they were already responding thanks to Kazehana. Tsukiumi was out on patrol along their border with Nishi passing on a message to him and would take a while to get back. Akitsu however appeared almost immediately from where she had been sitting in the command center. "Family is certainly important, but you've proven that you're no family of mine. But let's leave that for now. What did you really come here for?"

Takami looked at the others in the room. "Can we talk alone?"

Minato looked at the others and nodded. Kusano pouted, but stood up willingly along with the young boy, who she dragged outside to play, the other rather top heavy but short Sekirei Takami didn't recognize off hand followed them out smiling widely. Uzume picked her Ashikabi up and carried her out of the room. As they passed her Takami was shocked to see that the young girl had not one, but two jinki in a pouch around her stomach.

Takami ignored that mystery for now in favor of studying her son in greater detail. She noticed the light tan, the calluses on his hands and the scars on his forearms, all evidence of the hard time he had in Constantinople. She looked on askance as Akitsu and Miya walked in, the ice user taking her place beside Minato opposite Kazehana while Miya sat at the head of the table. "I really wanted to speak with you alone. Or has Kazehana been telling you stories about me?"

Minato smiled a small wintry smile. "While she may not have been as forthcoming with information as I would've liked initially, Kazehana has always been honest and up front with me, unlike some others I could mention. Would you like to tell me why the fact that the president of MBI is my father never came up in our conversations when we were younger? I notice you also don't seem too concerned about your daughter, who, incidentally, is in one of the houses next door, still recovering from an attack perpetrated on what is supposedly neutral territory by another Ashikabi. The same Ashikabi who your lover tried to hand me and my wives to gift wrapped."

Takami twitched angrily but fought it down again. "I'll go see her as soon as I'm done talking to you. But you're in far more danger than she is. You're willfully going against the rules of the Sekirei Plan, and Minaka isn't going to stand for it for much longer. I've been asked to tell to warn you to go along with the rules from now on, and to release the three Sekirei of Higa's that you defeated to MBI. If you do, no harm done, but if you don't then Minaka is going to take action against you."

"And what action would he take against me? I know he can't attack me while I'm so close to Izumo house." Miya smiled thinly looking at Takami challengingly as Minato waved toward her, but the other woman refused to meet her eyes.

"I don't use an MBI card to pay for my Sekirei, and since the second stage began, I don't even have a job. The guy wants to keep stacking the deck like he did in first match? Bring it on." He grinned savagely and Kazehana and Akitsu nodded agreement. "But enough about that mother dear. I'm interested in something. I wonder, how does it feel to be a pimp? You help raise these women, you do tests on these women while befriending some of them, and then you send them out without any rules or any kind of guidelines on how they should be treated when they're out in the world. Honestly, what did you think would happen?"

Takami shrugged carelessly, wanting to get back to the main reason she was here before being bogged down in trivialities. "I realized that some Ashikabi may have treated their Sekirei poorly, but most of those Ashikabi have already lost the game. It was all I could do sometimes to curb Minaka from forcing some kind of giant free for all from the get go, I couldn't do anything else." Almost immediately she realized that she had been mistaken, this wasn't a triviality to her son or his allies.

"Wrong answer!" Minato snarled, fists slamming down on the table between them. "Higa for one at least has raped several of his Sekirei after forcibly winging them. And going by what Matsu and Yui-sensei have told me I wouldn't put it past most of the others he is still allied with to do the same thing. And that doesn't even take into account how many lives have been lost, disrupted or displaced by the Sekirei plan in Tokyo. So rather than being part of a scientific experiment or a pharmaceutical company as you always alleged, you have in fact been party to rape, murder, wholesale destruction and the ruination of literally millions of lives."

Minato went on inexorably, hard eyes locked on Takami's rapidly paling face. "You mother, bear a lot of the responsibility for this. You say you couldn't do anything, you say you tried to change things, but you didn't do enough. You didn't say **no**. So no mother, I'm not playing this game, I'm going to break the damn board! So you go back and tell Minaka anything you want to, it won't change how I respond, and it won't change how I fight. And I will not hand over the injured Sekirei to MBI. Not until I know what will happen. If you can't tell me that then we're done here."

Takami rallied at this point shouting back at him. "Don't act so self-righteous with me! I know you ordered Yomi's death, and your Sekirei killed more in the fight yesterday, let alone what you did in Constantinople. You're no better than I am!" Takami realized she was sounding too defensive and tried to think of some way to regain control of the conversation, but in the end she couldn't, the young man before her bore no resemblance to the boy she once knew, and any hold on him she had was long gone.

"Killing in self-defense or in the defense of others is no murder." Minato answered calmly. "Tsukiumi put down a rabid dog, and I defended my **wife** and myself from a man with a gun. And as for my time in Turkey, I was a soldier, doing what I had to do, doing what I knew was right, something I will continue to do till the day I die. I will make every Ashikabi who plays this game as if the lives of his Sekirei don't matter, as if they're pieces to be moved around hither and yon, pay in the same coin they are demanding their Sekirei play with. And that goes double for the man who put the pieces on the board in the first place"

Takami shook her head trying one last time to reason with her son. "You don't know how powerful Minaka is. Do you want to be holed up in this house for the rest of your life? That's what it's going to be if you don't back off."

Minato sighed sadly, leaning back as Takami once again tried to 'reason' with him, rather than admit she was in the wrong or at the very least explain her actions. "Get out. You've chosen your side mother, and you will reap the whirlwind the same as the man who fucked you. And I will see you both pay the price for what you have done." Takami took one look at his grim face and the equally set faces on the others before turning at a sound in the doorway. Several other Sekirei stood there, including two she recognized as having been winged by Higa, looking down at her just as coldly as the others. Takami paled again, took one last look around, stood up and walked out as fast as her dignity could allow.

Minato sighed leaning back heavily but Miya decided not to give him time to brood. "Ma, I think you spoke well Minato," she had decided to drop the honorific last night "but such foul language is forbidden in Izumo house." She summoned her hanya and chased Minato out of the house, getting his mind off his mother.

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The day passed quickly after that, with everyone trying to keep Minato's mind off his confrontation with his mother. When she heard about it Yukari was angry she hadn't been there, but also a little sad that her mother hadn't tried to see her regardless of Minato's anger. Other than that, nothing happened until a few hours after the third match of the third stage ended. This match had pitted Nishi against Seo surprisingly, as well as Mikogami. The boy himself wasn't there though, as he had been called away to deal with some business, and his Sekirei lost, though they were not deactivated. One of Nishi's Sekirei, a young girl only a little older than Kusano named Shijime who had been brought along for just this purpose, had sneaked around and found the jinki thus ending the match.

About two hours after the match ended Minato had just sat down to a match of shogi with Homura when the doorbell rang. He got up to answer it but was beaten to the front door by Miya. She opened it and Minato was surprised to see Nishi, two of his Sekirei and who he recognized as Najimi and her Ashikabi. Miya smiled politely. "Good evening, may I help you?"

Nishi took one look at her and clutched at his heart. "So hot!" he then got down on his knees in front of her declaiming loudly "Please marry me! You're the ultimate housewife fantasy I've been looking for!"

Miya's eyes widened slightly in surprise then narrowed angrily and she summoned her hanya mask and her ladle. "Propositioning women who you've only just met in such a vulgar and thoughtless manner is forbidden in Izumo house!" She lashed out and her ladle cracked on the top of his head sending him reeling backwards. Behind him the others had all recoiled in shock and were now petrified with terror. She would have done more but a small sound from behind her drew her attention.

Minato had gripped the doorway to the living room with one hand, and had actually warped the wood around his grip a little as he glared at Nishi. As she watched he seemed to come out of it and look away. Miya swiftly turned back before Minato could the pleased little smile on her face at this reaction. One other had seen it however and Kazehana, who had been standing at the top of the stairs, made a mental note to talk with her old captain at some point in the near future, as well as her husband.

Minato shook off the odd moment of anger and stepped forward, hauling Nishi to his feet, glancing at the others with him quizzically. "Yo man, what's going on? I though you said you didn't want to meet for a while in person."

Nishi rubbed his head, all thoughts of Miya having been promptly banged out of his brain. He motioned one of his girls forward and she hesitantly stood next to him, unwrapping a bundle she carried. Within was the jinki he had just won that very day. "I didn't but well... the jinki can send images, and judging by the images my girls get when they hold it, it seems like it wants to talk to you Minato."

End chapter

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We are moving into the end game now, I estimate another three chapter, maybe three and an epilogue. Hope everyone liked the chapter, and as always read and review.

## **\*Chapter 18\*: Chapter 18 Strategic Offense, Tactical**

I don't on Sekirei, if I did Tsukiumi and Akitsu would be the main female leads.

thanks to cj-cold, who spotted a naming mixup in this chapter

In this chapter we see some more character interactions, some plans laid out and a whole mess of violence.

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### **Chapter 17 Strategic Offense, Tactical Defense**

Minato stared blankly at Nishi for a moment. "Uh, Nishi..." he said slowly "they can't actually talk to you, you know. I mean they're just computerized crystal interfaces." He looked at Miya who nodded, they had certainly never talked to her, not with words anyway, images were another story.

Nishi groaned and rolled his eyes. "I know that idiot, but when either of us held these things, both of us saw visions of, well, you. Not close ones, as if the thing was being held by someone else, but they definitely want to talk to you, hell even my Sekirei saw the same thing. So I figured I'd take the opportunity to come over and talk to you, though meeting this lovely lady was a great bonus." He said waggling his eyebrows at Miya but she started to bring out her hanya, which caused him to flinch away.

Propriety restored, Miya frowned thoughtfully. "It could be that the the ship's limited artificial intelligence has a message for you Minato, though what that message could be I don't know. Nor why it would single you out, or could even realize that you were important in some fashion."

Minato looked at her in concern, "Could it have somehow read your mind while you were communing with it Miya?"

Miya's frowned deepened at that. "It could have" she said slowly. "If so that is a rather disturbing thought."

Minato shrugged, "well there's only one way to find out, lets head inside and we'll put them all together and see what happens."

Nishi nodded and came in along with his friend Takano and his Sekirei 373 Namiji. Namiji, a medium sized Sekirei with brown hair tied in a long tail down her back was dressed in a very tight form fitting gymnasts outfit, while Takano, a college age blonde kid was dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt over a t-shirt. Namiji was gripping his hand tightly, both of them looking a little scared of Miya, something that showed they had working brains in Minato's opinion, that mask was damn scary. Nishi's Sekirei also seemed a little freaked out by Miya, having been caught in the backlash of the terrifying hanya mask. Takano swiftly handed the jinki over to Minato and walked out the back door into the yard with his Sekirei to play with the others (and get away from the frightening house lady).

Minato took a moment to look outside the window and smiled see that Kusano and Kohta were playing with Kaie and Chizuru, kicking a bean bag around between them, while Kana, Saki, Musubi and Yahan were sparring a little ways off. It seemed as if Musubi was holding her own against all three of the others, and his smile turned proud as he thought about her progress since they had met. Namiji surprisingly joined the kids while Takano joined Kisami and Homura, who were playing a spirited game of Chinese checkers of all things. They agreeably started over letting him join.

Tsukiumi, Akitsu and Kazehana all followed Minato up the stairs and into the cloth users room. Luckily she had heard them, so Miya didn't find her and her Ashikabi having an intense make out session. Her Ashikabi still had a faint blush to her cheeks but that was easily excused away, and disappeared as they told her about what they wanted to do with the jinkis.

They carefully placed the jinkis all in her lap touching one another as Miya directed, and Minato laid a hand on one of them but Uzume, despite the mysterious nature of what they were about, couldn't help but crack a joke before the others could follow suit. "Damn it, now I'm jealous of a piece of crystal, being in Chiho-baby's lap and getting felt up by Minato."

Miya and Tsukiumi both glared at her for different reasons (partially) and she flinched away but Kazehana and Minato chuckled and waved the joke away. He motioned to his wives and they came forward to touch the jinki as well, and then Miya followed suit. She then began to direct them on how to push their thoughts into the jinkis.

This time it was not nearly as difficult as the other times Miya had tried to commune with the jinki and this was

probably because there were so many of them here and at this point, and the jinkis almost reached out to touch their minds and turn.

The five suddenly found themselves floating in a sea of nothingness, surrounded by gray nothingness. A voice from out of the nothingness intoned. "warrior, welcome." And then with a flash images from Miya's memory about how Minato had explained his actions in Constantinople, as well as what actions he had taken in the Sekirei plan thus far, his analysis of Minaka, his long term concerns and others things, the newest of which as her watching him on the computer screen take apart the Yakuza Higa had brought to the first match of the present stage.

Minato looked over at Miya who flushed a little, annoyed and irritated that the jinki had evidently been able to read her mind while she had been communing with them. Luckily the thing wasn't sharing her feelings or thoughts only the memory of what she had been seeing.

The voice ignored her rising irritation and went on addressing Minato. "It is to you that we bring this message you who understand war and who plans."

The gray nothingness receded, and an image formed. The image was of the planet, a monstrous gas giant. Going around the gas giant was a moon, and the image zoomed in on it. Minato couldn't help but think that it looked like the forest moon of Endor with different trees and a ton of strange looking crystals. "This was our home world, we called it the Sekeren, and the gas giant Gracios. We developed technology," and suddenly the image changed to show vast cities of gleaming metal and pure crystal, beautifully laid out with trees and forests all around and inside it. "But never forgot our connection to nature."

"Sekirei never had wars is you humans do, but we did have contests and battles between one person and another person." The image changed, showing something that would have fit right in with Rome's gladiatorial days, a massive arena and two Sekirei, both male which was surprising, fighting with odd powers and weapons in the center while a huge crowd watched from the tiered seats surrounding it.

"The city states combined into a nation, and we spread to create floating cities in the gas giant. Our population never increased as much as humanity's has, especially given the size of our home world, more we had a desire to keep our numbers down to not damage the ecosystem."

"We had just found a faster than light mode of transportation, and the future looked bright for our race. Then they came, the aliens, they called themselves the Gbaba." Another image formed of an alien creature that looked strangely like a cross between a bat and a bipedal cat. It had the ears and face of a bat though its teeth were pure meat eater, fur like a cat and large powerful looking hands with fingers that looked like they had five joints in each.

The Image changed again to show a vast fleet of ugly boxy looking ships coming into a star system. One ship was sent out to meet them and was immediately destroyed. The image changed again showing the same fleet taking up position over the gas giant and opposing them was another fleet, this time of beautiful crystal ships shaped like a diamond with an elongated point, just beautiful really. They were also three times as large as their enemy's ships.

"We fought them, as we had fought amongst ourselves." The video began showing one ship after another of the defending Sekirei charging out to meet their enemies one-on-one. "But the enemy did not fight that way, and simply destroyed each ship as it came, losing dozens, hundreds of their own ships, but they had thousands more."

Minato at this point lost his temper. "Are you fucking kidding me?!" His anger actually made his wives and Miya take a step back. He began to pace raising his hands in the air, gesticulating wildly. "The fucking Homeric tradition of champions fighting one another in warfare?! God, it's like watching the samurai attack the Mongolian horde. You ran out there one at a time and got your asses shot full of arrows! How the hell did your race get to the stars without getting rid of that stupid fucking tradition?!" Even Tsukiumi agreed with that. She was all for one on one fights, she felt they were the best way to see who was stronger, but this was just ridiculous.

The voice answered coolly. "Understand, we did not have wars as you humans have. We went through a peaceful period of consolidation, and any martial dispute was settled by champions. The very idea of working as a group against a common enemy simply beyond the understanding of my creators."

Minato growled aloud, but nodded his head in acquiescence and the video continued. "Soon it became apparent that we were not winning this war, that we did not have the numbers anymore to fight back effectively, and that our enemies were using tactics and strategies we had never even thought of. One-on-one none of them could match us, but they came in their hundreds. It was determined that we would send our children, our unborn children and youngsters away, hoping to find some hospitable place and starting new."

The scene changed again, showing several rock ship's, that was the only way to describe them, they were much less pretty than the others, but just as large, lifting off from what Minato could still only think of as the forest moon of Endor. Another one left a space station in orbit around the moon. Both launches were happening as the enemy was pressing in destroying the cities as they came. They didn't seem interested in conquest, only annihilation, and they stayed in their ships and in orbit, too far away for the Sekirei to use their powers.

"This ship was the only one who did not have an adult crewmember. The enemy came forward too swiftly destroying the space station as the children were hustled aboard, and as long as a single child was there no adult would leave. Children were sacred to us and none of my creators would leave them, so the crew died with those who could not get on board in time."

"Why do I not know this?" Miya asked, looking around rather wildly, her normal self-possession fraying badly under these revelations. She had never imagined that her people had been almost wiped out by another race like this. She had always thought it was a plague or some kind of natural disaster. And she had never seen anything like this when she was interacting with the ship's computer before she stepped down from the captain's seat or as the leader of the Disciplinary Squad.

"Fear," the computer replied simply. "My designers knew their people well, and knew that they might eventually be able to rise to the stars again. But if they knew about their past they would possibly make the same mistakes, and possibly might even go searching for their enemies."

Miya blushed a little. She knew precisely that her people, her feathers her younger sisters and her would probably have done the exact same thing. Even when she was a leader of the disciplinary squad none of the members actually worked together, they simply were part of a team, but that did not imply that they worked toward the same objective at the same time. Each of them had different areas of focus. Even seeing humans work together in many different ways including warfare didn't really change the idea that it was somehow wrong. More, she had always thought it a sign of their inherent weakness in comparison to the Sekirei. Indeed, until she had met Minato, she had not met many Sekirei who were comfortable with that idea. The thunder sisters were an exception of course, and she had heard stories about 04 and 08, but discounted them knowing Karasuba as she did, that bitch would never work with anyone.

"All right" said Minato, having gotten over his anger at the stupidity of his ladies ancestors, "why are you telling me this now?"

He was very afraid he knew the answer, that it somehow knew when the aliens, the Gbaba would appear in the solar system, but thankfully he was wrong. "Defense" his computer said simply. "Your people are different, genetically the almost the same as the Sekirei, but very different emotionally, mentally and in terms of how you age. Your history is different, all those wars you have had have no equivalent in the Sekirei culture. I have analyzed the world governments and how humans have historically reacted to those different than them and we estimate that, given how Minaka is taking this plan of his forward, there is only a 20% likelihood that the Sekirei as a race or as individuals will exist in ten years."

"Explain that," Minato barked sharply, with his wives and Miya nodding agreement.

"While we cannot act unilaterally, our objective of serving the Sekirei race I have deduced that several foreign countries are becoming more and more leery and irritated by Minaka and his plan. Agreements were apparently made, though the details are unknown to me, that have not been fulfilled, and there are more and more people simply pushing to wipe the Sekirei out. Videos from several different fights, the most bloody and dangerous for the surrounding civilian population has leaked. Public opinion is slowly turning against not only MBI, but the Sekirei as a race. Worse, is the reaction abroad to Minaka's latest public announcement. He comes out as a misguided naïve man, while the Sekirei seem to be bloodthirsty monsters who have found similar souls among humanity to bond with. The Sekirei need to be taught how to live among humans and how to work together as a group against a greater threat."

Minato nodded, sighing softly. *I was afraid of something like that. As a race humanity just isn't ready to acknowledge the fact that there are other races out there that may be our equals or superiors out there among the stars. It would take very little impetus to form hate groups targeting the Sekirei, and the idea of simply wiping out the Sekirei by a nuclear weapon or something would probably be very appealing to many governments in the world. I'd guess the only reason they're hesitant is the fallout among the other world countries and the people at large to nuking a city here in Japan of all places. The fallout among the Japanese people would be terrible, and any other way to address this issue would be preferable, especially if it would leave the spaceship intact and a few Sekirei they could 'study'.*

Akitsu touched Minato's hand gently, bringing him out of his thoughts. She looked at him, and seeing what she wanted, he nodded and she asked. "Ahh... Is there any information you can give us, any kind of access you can give

us to MBI?" Minato shook his head sending a burst of affection at his icy lady, grateful she had kept her eye on the ball.

The computer answered bluntly "Not in the short term. We are only able to talk like this because you possess four of the seven remai jinki. A jinki's computational power is cubed when combined. Two is four times as powerful as one, and four sixteen times. We can block an access if given the order by a Sekirei, but cannot lift off or override local control of our environs. We can aid O2 Matsu in keeping an eye on other nations somewhat by easing her access, but that is all we can do on a strategic level. However I can analyze what is going wrong with the Ashikabi of #10 Uzume who you have been using the jinki to keep her alive. We have already diagnosed the issue, and if you had access to a chemistry lab or the ships nanites we could heal her."

Minato smiled at that, hugging Akitsu, or at least the astral image of Akitsu with one arm. That was actually very helpful in the long term. Miya however was frowning, trying to remember something, something about that number of jinki was jangling around in her head, but she couldn't quite bring it to the forefront.

Kazehana spoke up next, "Can you tell us anything about the crests? Once they are gone can they be renewed or redone somehow?" Minato had shared his concerns about the deactivated Sekirei MBI had gathered, and she felt most strongly about the issue.

"Yes" the computer answered promptly. "Depending on the type and strength of the bond a Sekirei can survive having the bond destroyed as you well know, though we estimate only Kusano would be able to survive if the bond is destroyed, simply given her age." Minato gulped but his wives took that in stride, simply sending him wordless waves of love to calm him down. Miya somehow realized what was happening and simply smiled at him. "Once a bond is gone a new one can be installed in its place, though it is a very difficult process and was almost never done among adult Sekirei who have reached full maturity in mind as well as body, which as you know is different than in humans, who age physically and mentally at the nominal same rate. The only bond the Sekirei replaced continually were the bond between children and parent. As only one bond could exist at a time a new bond could take its place easily enough, though the parents would watch out for such and would stop it if the children were not adult enough to handle it."

"Was there a time frame for that kind of thing?" Tsukiumi asked, wondering how long it would take to put those Sekirei MBI gathered back into action. There were at least forty Sekirei by Matsu's count thus taken, and maybe as many as sixty.

"Negative. Once a Sekirei has been deactivated as MBI puts it, the bond can be added again at any point, and that was before Minaka figured ways to somehow pervert the bond. That information is kept on a separate server that only he and his most trusted can access physically, and is never connected to any others."

"Perverted? That's an interesting world word for a computer to use." Minato asked, head cocked to one side.

"It is used with feeling" the AI said. "Somehow or other Minaka has been able to use the bond to manipulate the Sekirei, making them more pliable and has found a way to block the signal between a bonded pair as well."

"So I have several problems now confirmed, a new ally of dubious worth in the short term, and in the long term a whole planet full of trouble." Minato sighed.

"Yes, but forewarned is forearmed. That is a saying among your people."

Minato groaned and said "yes it is, but I'll need to think about how to solve some of these issues later. Right now Higa and then Minaka and MBI are my priorities."

With that he ended the interview and left the connection, and after a moment his wives followed him. Miya stayed for a little longer, and the voice said. "This is not your fault O1 Miya, you were never supposed to be a captain in any case, there should've been adults to handle things like this, and it is only because of you and your strength that your people were not taken and experimented on by foreign governments. They have a chance, where before they had none."

"And what are the odds of Minato pulling this off?" Miya asked, shaking her head sadly. Regardless of what anyone else said she knew she should have done more.

He seems to be extremely capable, and could be the only salvation of your race, we estimate a 96% chance of his surviving the present conflict against the Ashikabi Izumi Higa, and a 42% chance of his overthrowing MBI and Minaka. If that occurs in the next two months then the odds of the Sekirei race surviving and allying with humanity

ranges from 32-89% with too many variables to be truly calculated at this juncture." One of those variables was Miya joining Minato fully, but it would not bring that up, afraid of causing the opposite of the reaction it wanted. The AI was almost certain that Minato would be able to wing Miya, unlike the heroic Takehito Asama, who had no Sekirei DNA in him. Minato had at least a little, and it seemed to have been activated and strengthened with each successive true bond.

Miya sighed, nodded and left the connection.

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The somber mood lasted for a few hours as Minato and the others related what they had learned about the Sekirei's past to the other Ashikabi and the Sekirei who were interested in it. Eventually, however, Nishi prodded his Sekirei to up and they left for the night.

That night his wives decided to take Minato's mind off his troubles rather forcefully, and their bond wings lift up the night throughout that evening.

The next morning Miya was quietly irritable as she welcomed them back into the Izumo house, her dreams had been rather forcefully overridden by the desires and love of her developing feelings towards Minato every time one of the bond wings of his wives intersected her position in bed. It had been euphoric and extremely welcome for a time, but after a little while it become simply annoying unaccompanied with the physical as it were. Still, it was proof that the bond between them was growing.

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She was not the only one who could see that however and the next morning however Kazehana pulled her aside to talk to her, Akitsu and Tsukiumi. "Alright Miya," Kazehana said seriously, dropping the honorific she often used for her old captain and senior. "What's going on between you and Minato?"

Akitsu merely stared at her but Tsukiumi gaped, then frowned, then paused considering. Miya pouted. "Mou, Kazehana, you could have waited until I came to you about this." She sighed, looking around at the three of them. "I, I have been reacting to Minato for a few weeks, at least it feels like that. I, I have come to care for him deeply, as deeply as I cared for my husband Takehito. I wanted to wait until I was certain of my feelings before talking to you, and I haven't been certain for that long. but I, I would like to join the three of you."

Kazehana nodded then looked at the others. They communicated silently via their link and then both Akitsu and Kazehana turned to Tsukiumi. They both were fine with the idea, more than fine really as they had come to love Miya in a way themselves, and if any of them deserved to be happy it was her. Tsukiumi was torn between her admiration and yes love for Miya, both in her housewife persona and as 01 captain of the Defense squad, and her possessiveness when it came to Minato. In the end though it was no contest.

Tsukiumi sighed, then reached out and pulled the surprised Miya into a hug. "I suppose one more sister won't make that much a difference. Welcome to the family sister." Miya sighed, gently hugging the younger Sekirei back. Tsukiumi pulled away and Kazehana and Akitsu both came forward to hug Miya in turn. "But," the blond water user said, "Wait until we've dealt with Higa before bringing this up with Minato, he needs to have his mind in the game for that." Miya pouted cutely, causing Kazehana to giggle but eventually agreed.

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Minato spent the mornings with Kusano and the other more playful Sekirei, hitting a ball back and forth, drawing, playing cards and generally having fun and spending time with them while his wives went out and finished up some reconstruction elsewhere. Musubi and Kusano were both happy with this state of affairs, as were the others as Kohta and Yukari joined in. After a rather boisterous lunch however Nishi came back along with both of his allies, Takano and Oosumi.

Musubi gasped as she caught sight of Kaho. "Kaho-nee!" She rushed forward, dragging her into a boisterous hug, which Kaho gently returned. The two of them spend the rest of the day talking excitedly to one another about their Ashikabi, and simply sparring from time to time, Musubi never moving further than a arms length from her friend.

Kaho on the other hand was a little surprised that her friend hadn't matured to match her incredible body yet. The last time they had both been rather childish, but she had grown up to match her body, where Musubi evidently hadn't. Still she was a lot of fun and Kaho greatly enjoyed their time together.

The interested parties, as Minato thought of it, those who could think of the future piled into the command center for the debriefing and to hear the plans going forward. Despite what it said about their thought processes he was glad that so many of the Sekirei had opted to stay outside and play. He was also thankful Nishi had taken his advice and

brought only one Sekirei, as the other two had. Matsu could only do so much to cover their movements after all, and she had been forced to do more lately than she was comfortable with hiding for long from MBI's techs, up to and including erasing the signal of Nishi and his allies Sekirei being in Izumo house yesterday.. *She is really earning some reward time lately.*

First Minato brief them all on the information the jinki had passed on, as well as what he had done so far to combat Higa, who all the Ashikabi there had reasons to hate.

At this point he turned the meeting over to Kazehana who stood up confidently moving to the front of the room. "Hi mina-san!" she said happily "I'm Kazehana, Sekirei number three, and I'm the one that knows Minaka best of us all here. It took me a while to realize it, but he and Higa are pretty much the same people, it's just one of them is much more intelligent and a little crazy."

"They're both narcissists"she said calmly, simply. "They think the world revolves around them, and they have every right to take whatever they can grab. The only problem is that both of them have the tools now but they might be able to do it. Our short-term objective is Higa, and we're not certain why he hasn't acted against us yet, but we know he will. I personally met the man, and he's not a warrior. He doesn't take setbacks well and he doesn't seem to think in anything but in terms of loss and gain. Higa likes to think he's only ruled by logic but he isn't. He's lost a lot and will want to recoup of that loss, he's going to look to come back and hammer us at the same time. Well us in the North anyway."

Here she went on to detail some of Higa's allies, as well as all the information they had about his remaining Sekirei and their fighting styles and the ones they knew had been abused according to Chizuru, Shi and Katsuragi. Originally Minato had wanted Akitsu to do this portion, as she was the best analyst among them, and had been the one to put most of it all together and interview the trio. However Akitsu had flatly refused to speak in public like that. Doing it in front of the his wives and him was one thing, even speaking in front of the rest of Izumo house was okay, not something she would do willingly but she could do it, but not in front of these virtual strangers and their allies now. She simply did not feel comfortable speaking in that environment. Instead she sat next to Minato coaching the most outgoing of his three wives in doing it instead.

Kazehana spoke for about thirty minutes about Higa and his Sekirei and allies before winding down then Tsukiumi spoke up. She stood glaring almost challengingly around the others. Tsukiumi was his most combative wife, and that was on full display here. "As my sister said, we assume that he'll strike for this power station here in the north." She spread a map of the city out on the floor and everyone craned their necks to look. "It will make an excellent base for him to start recouping some of his power, or barring that he can make a swift getaway through this road here. The bridge might be a little bit of a chokepoint, but if he has lost all his Sekirei in battle he will make for this point and cut his losses."

Kazehana nodded from where she had sat down, snuggling into Minato's side, until a glare from Miya made her straighten up. "He's a personal coward," she said scornfully. The only time he's ever been even near the action was a few nights ago in the first match and he wouldn't have even been there if he had been able to get out of it. The moment he loses his Sekirei, he'll cut his losses and run."

"But were not going to let him run," Minato said grimly. "That man has a lot to answer for. I'll settle for capturing him, and putting him on some kind of trial, but if we can't do that, if it's a choice between letting him rabbit or kill him, he dies. I want that understood right now. This isn't just about shutting down his Sekirei or knocking him out of the Sekirei plan, Higa has raped more than half the Sekirei he's bonded, and has done so forcefully and ordered the murder of several people, and it's time he answers for that." Several of the Sekirei and Ashikabi blanched at that, but most of them simply nodded grimly. Miya also nodded.

The two most powerful Ashikabi in the room looked at one another. "What do you want me to be doing while you're taking his Sekirei on?" Nishi asked. "I could ask some of my girls to help you out I guess."

Minato shook his head. "I'm going to ask you to play messenger to the south. We haven't done anything to Mikogami yet, and I want to see what his stance on everything that's been happening has been. Just talk to the kid and arrange a meeting between the three of us. Don't tell him about any of the long-term things we've heard about, and especially don't mention the fact that we might be attacking Minaka."

At a mental nudge from her husband Kazehana spoke up again. "We've done an analysis on Hayato Mikogami too. None of us actually met him, except for Akitsu shortly after she was released." Akitsu stared at her husband/Ashikabi and her blonde sister, love in her eyes at how the two had helped her, which both responded to in kind. Kazehana smiled, feeling a bit of the fallout but went on. "We think he's simply a kid, sort of enamored about being able to boss adults around. He treats his Sekirei well if a little hands off, and follows the rules of the game to the letter. There

seems to be something going on between him and MBI that has to do with his winging 05, but we don't know what it is. All we know is that he's tried to distance himself from MBI outside of the game. We think he might react favorably to the information we've got, but we want to meet him in person and gauge his reaction."

Nishi nodded somberly, a little irritated that he wouldn't be in on the action against Higa, but he would be doing his part anyway. And meeting Mikogami might not be the soft option if the kid or his Sekirei were feeling argumentative.

Minato took up the thread of the conversation again. "We'll be using the terrain and several little traps against Higa, but everything we do will bring as much of MBI's attention on that one position as possible. We want every MBI watcher to be watching the action, as we think we've figured out a way to deactivate the Sekirei trackers. Well I say we," he laughed, "but it was basically Oboro and Yahan, and we'll be taking advantage of that at the same time, so that any small discrepancies are missed."

At this point the extremely tanned Sekirei stood up smirking a little evilly as she pushed some buttons on a computer. "The screen behind her lit up and showed a diagram of a Sekirei body, then turned and showed where on the neck the tracker most of the Sekirei had was placed. "This is a tracker that MBI has placed and in every single Sekirei. It's to help to track them down, and it means that no matter where we go MBI can find us. It's how they always knew when someone was trying to leave, and it's doubtful that anyone who did leave is..." She trailed off and everyone understood what she was saying. Minato sighed remembering the Kuno and her Ashikabi. His wives also were remembering that, and Kazehana in particular was angry at the idea of the two being dead or separated. "However, we have figured out a way to deactivate it."

"The device is susceptible to vibration damage, certain electrical signals that can knock it out, and heat. Unfortunately, given the position of the tracking device, which is right below where the Sekirei crest appears, our options of how to get rid of it are limited, but we figured out a way to do it. Here." She reached into her bag and pulled out what looked at first glance like a large vibrator. When she turned on, it turned out to be a vibrator.

As everyone blanched or gasped or twitched in reaction she stuck a small scoop like device, which looked as if it could rest securely on the back of the Sekirei's neck and said, "this device is made to send powerful vibrations into the neck of the Sekirei to disable the device. However, we need to be careful of two things. One, the vibrations may become too strong, and damage the muscles and bones of the Sekirei, and two, finding it in the first place. I've created a small scanner device to find the trackers, and then we can shut them down. Another problem will arise however because the moment a signal is lost, MBI will know what we're about. The signal is in such a place where it will be assumed that the Sekirei was deactivated and then they'll send out their retrieval teams. But if they don't find that to be the case, or if it happens in someplace like Izumo house where violence is prohibited" Here she smirked a little looking over at Miya a moment "and where they can't go, they'll wonder what's going on. So will need to set up something else to show the same signal and turn it on at the exact moment the device dies. That'll be some tricky timing, but I think we can work it if we do it when their sensor specialists are busy elsewhere."

Minato took up the thread again. "With that we can let loose Saki and use her talents as an infiltrator along with your cloaked Sekirei Barei" Nishi nodded indicating Minato had gotten the name right and he went on "together. They should be able to get into the communications tower, and install this on one of the main lines" he nodded at the device he had his friend make a few months ago. "With that we should be able to send out our own messages to counter the messages of Minaka, and start turning public opinion worldwide against him rather than the Sekirei."

Nishi nodded, looking across at him shrewdly. "What kind of message are you going to send out?"

"That has yet to be determined." Miya replied for them both, as that had been one of the many things Minato wanted to talk to her about.

The blonde Ashikabi Tokano spoke up for the back of the room. "And what about long-term? If we remove Minaka, who or what is going to take his place?"

Minato said firmly "We'll deal with that after we take out Higa and see how Minaka root reacts to it. Keep getting the word about the MBI card out, I don't want anyone who is allied or anyone who isn't allied with us to be taken out that way." Everyone nodded grimly at this, as the idea of the MBI card blocking the bond between the Sekirei and Ashikabi and thereby deactivating the Sekirei frightened all of them, especially Tokano and Oosumi who had been using the damn things. "And if it comes to an open conflict between us, well, I think we would have a good chance of winning that too, so long as he doesn't have some kind of final solution like most mad villains."

"In terms of removing Minaka, I think we should be all right for the short term. I doubt any of the foreign governments are prepared to move instantly, which could allow us to solidify our base here in Tokyo. In any fight in the city any Sekirei would be deadly against any normal opponent. The cityscape and the rubble infested roads would play to the

strengths of the Sekirei, and hopefully turn the tide against any defender. More if we can show the Sekirei in a positive light the governments of the world won't be able to move against us as openly. America certainly won't, controlled as much as it is by public opinion, and China and Russia couldn't send forth enough of their power outside their own borders to overcome us."

"In the long term, however once we have control of all of the crystals and the ship, we remove them from temptation. We put them up in Earth orbit and get them the hell away from anyone who would want to use them against us or anyone else." *Maybe remove them entirely.* He thought to himself, *even up in orbit they'd be a prize that any government would kill for.* If that meant leaving and trying to build a new colony someplace else they could do that. The Sekirei were much more genetically diverse, and with the numbers they could call on even now they might be able to make a viable colony of it someplace else.

Here Matsu spoke up, pushing her coke-bottle glasses up her nose as she looked at them all seriously. "We were actually sent some information via a piggyback single last night. Somebody used their cell phone to send us some information from a computer. Nothing we didn't already know really, just a lot of confirmations about the information Matsu-tan and Akistu-tan were able to build up that Kazehana-tan shared. The sender was probably the other brain type Kocho, and her Ashikabi Kakziaki."

Kazehana nodded. "I've met him too he's a calculating unfeeling so-and-so. Put plainly, he's a rat and he's leaving a sinking ship."

"So, should we send him something, try to make a deal?" Yui asked. "I can't say I like the man, but his Sekirei would add a decent force to our own. Kocho is the only other brain type in the game, I bet she and Mastu" Yui did not use honorifics for many people, certainly not for perverts like Matsu "would do wonderful things together and Shizuku, the null Sekirei is extremely powerful."

Uzume stiffened at that idea, and Chiho, who had been sitting quietly next to her at the back of the room took one of her hands squeezing it gently. Kakizaki and his Sekirei Kocho were the ones who found out about their situation, and had been the main go between Higa and Uzume. Kocho was one thing, she was really standoffish and Uzume didn't have much to do with her but Shizuku had never missed the opportunity to rub her fate into her nose, much like Toyotama and Ichiya. She was about to stand up and speak out, but a glance from Tsukiumi stopped her. She knew husband after all.

There was some muttering among the others in attendance but that ended with the swiftness of a knife as Minato leaned forward, his voice sharp. "NO." Everyone looked at him and he continued, feeling the approval from his wives and seeing the look of approval on Miya's face. "Understand me, anyone who was involved in the rape or kidnapping of Sekirei, of the abuse of power of the hospital Higa owns, of allowing the yakuza to prey on the people in his territory, will face justice one way or the other. There will be no deals of any kind or anything done under the table, clear?" Everyone else nodded agreement, some reluctantly, such as Yui who wanted to keep the killing to a minimum, but no one objected and the meeting swiftly broke up.

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Later that night found Miya and Minato once more sharing cups of tea on the outer porch. Minato had just put Kusano to bed with Musubi, Saki and Kana, passing Kisami doing the same to Kohta. Kaie, her ahoge (her weird ear like hair things actually had a name, though Minato had never heard of it before, Matsu had and told him) twitching as she laid out on a futon before his door. His wives had gone next door to their house with Yukari, talking about something that had Shiina running out of the house his face bright red. They had already heard about the idea he wanted to share, and had agreed with him, but knew he wanted to have someone else's opinion.

Miya waited as the sounds of movement faded staring out at the bright stars above them. As the last sounds faded from inside the inn she took a sip of tea and smiled gently at Minato. "You mentioned concern over how to take control of the propaganda side of things, that you were worried about how best to go about it." She raised a hand to gently touch Minato's as he poured himself some more tea from the kettle. "Need I say it again, a concern shared is often a problem solved."

Minato took a sip of tea to calm his nerves then began. "Controlling public opinion abroad and in Japan is the key, and Minaka knows it, that's why he's painted himself as someone merely trying to control the violence, that the Sekirei are naturally violent. The way to fight that is twofold. One way is to interview people who left the city after Minaka came out and declared it closed off. I've done that, I have dozens interviews from people who got out when they could. I have other interviews with people who have lost everything because of Minaka. And there are interviews from people who have lost their jobs because of MBI running them out of business, pictures of the schools that have closed down, photos of the fleeing civilians and the massive traffic congestion it caused, images of the troopers

forcefully turning the Sekirei and Ashikabi back who don't want to fight, his need to offer money to the winners to force more competition...."

"But that... might not be enough to paint the Sekirei as victims rather than part of the problem. To do that..." he swigged some tea, wishing it was something quite a bit stronger as the subject matter was so foul. "To do that I would need to interview some of the Sekirei we've saved, the trauma they've gone through is so bad... it would show them as victims, as women who have been cruelly used despite their powers."

Miya paused, cup halfway to her lips as that thought struck her. Using the trauma that Katsuragi and the others had gone through to score a propaganda coup was... wrong, vile in a way. That Minato had thought it up was disturbing, though the fact he was so uncomfortable with it eased her worries. "I, I see where that could help make my younger siblings look more human, but I can also see why you are having problems with it." She sighed looking at his face for a moment. "Do you have an idea of how much it would help?"

"A lot." Minato said miserably. "We need the Sekirei to look as vulnerable and needy and victimized as possible, both in Japan and abroad. We need the world powers to agree to back off and not attack us after Minaka is gone, and pull any aid they're giving him as well. I don't think we can get the Japanese government to attack, they've probably got enough on their plate handling the millions of refugees that pulled out of Tokyo, but we may get them to place an embargo on MBI. More, it may effect the morale of MBI's personal army to see what they've been protecting."

"And you can't simply ask them, all of the girls would agree to it because it would let them do something against their abusers before realizing how it put their misery on display." Miya murmured.

Minato nodded still miserable. "I know, all of them want to strike back at Higa and at MBI for allowing it to happen."

Miya thought for a minute then smiled, a little evilly. "What if we take Higa alive and put him on trial, then ask Katsuragi and the others to be witnesses. Yui-san has been telling me that something along those lines would be good for all of them, for closures sake."

Minato brightened up. "that... that would work. But wouldn't that be just as bad, just not as invasive?"

"We'll do it." A voice announced from behind them and they both turned to the sliding door leading into the inn to see Chizuru standing there. "Me and Katsuragi will at least. We've been wanting some way to strike back at that bastard that's true, but this can also serve to tell any Sekirei out there that's been abused that there is someplace to go where they can get away from it and be safe. I doubt it will work that way, the Sekirei bond to their Ashikabi is too strong, but a real trial and a execution at the end will also put the Ashikabi on notice."

Minato nodded thoughtfully. *It would also paint my faction in a good light, as trying to uphold justice and the rights of the individual.* He thought than hated himself for thinking so analytically about something like this. "Are you sure you want to do this, no one will force any of you to do anything you don't want to."

Chizuru nodded firmly. "I want that bastard to hurt for keeping me from my real Ashikabi, and if I have to... to air my own pain to do it then so fucking be it. He thinks he's so much better, so much stronger and more important let's see how he likes being treated like the common fucking rapist he is."

Miya rose gracefully, and Minato found himself staring at her hakama clad rear for a moment in a highly inappropriate manner before looking away as she hugged Chizuru. "You are stronger than that bastard could ever be, his strength is nothing, built on money and ego, your strength is built on surviving everything he did to you and still being a vibrant, powerful woman. I am proud of you little feather, and come what may I will stand beside you."

Minato rose as well, placing a gentle hand on Chizuru's shoulder. "Me too, and all of my flock as well." Chizuru nodded, and after gathering her emotions again walked back into the house.

Miya and Minato stood there for a moment looking at one another. "That was a great idea Miya-san."

"Ara," Miya replied, smiling. "Thank you for the compliment Minato, but I believe we know each other well enough to do without honorifics. Please just call me Miya, no -san, alright?"

Minato blushed but nodded. "Alright Miya." Miya smiled and his blush deepened, unseen in the dark. He coughed, "Well I'll see you tomorrow."

Miya nodded and he walked off into the night. Miya remained sipping her tea and gazing into the night as the wings of light began to appear one after another, all together in no discerning pattern, spreading their radiance throughout the night.

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It took two days for Izumi Higa to get out of the funk his fear had pushed him into, and when he learned about what had happened to his territory he flew into a rage the likes not even Kakizaki had ever seen from the man. Power gone, food no longer coming in, yakuza pawns dead in a rather horrific fire, and water, gone! And on top of that another of his pawns had flown the coup. How the hell had his people here and in MBI not seen and warned him!

Izumi Higa had long ago blackmailed and threatened several of the sensor technicians to cover his movements and that of his tools against the other Ashikabi and even against MBI's human forces at times. Of course it never occurred to him that he had never explicitly told them to look for enemy movements against him.... Higa and Minaka shared another personality quirk other than their narcissism, they forgot the little man. Minaka didn't care about all the people who ran for their lives from the Sekirei fights, and never even noticed a few of them passing on purchases through a drop-off to Minato. And Higa didn't realize that if you blackmail or threaten someone's family, you create resentment in them and sometimes the people will find ways to strike back.

Regardless his strategic position was now untenable. The hospital that was his main base of operations still had power, but it hadn't managed to keep a surplus of water on hand for a while, and never had much in the way of food, well not food **he** would willingly eat. They had enough supplies to last a week, more if he decided to send away all the hospital workers that he'd bribed to stay on and just keep his Ashikabi 'allies' and the Sekirei accompanying them. Still, in the long run he would have to take the offensive.

He still had eleven Sekirei of his own after the debacle in the battle against Sahashi and his single digit Sekirei, and his allies had seven. *Damnit I wish I had known the difference in power between a single digit and the others, I would have made a more concerted effort to bring 03 to heel, especially since she was probably the one that did all that damage with her norito.* The fact that he had made such an effort and been unable to do so was something that completely failed to register on his ego driven brain. This left him short of the total that Mikogami could call on. *But it might be enough for me to move on the power plant in the north. And if Sahashi moves against me he'll leave the fortress of Izumo house, and in that kind of battle numbers will tell. And even if I lose, the road out of the city is right there, and I'll no longer be an Ashikabi, so MBI's troops won't have a reason to keep me in the city. Thus the question is to wait or to strike now.* "Are Ichiya and the others that were injured back on their feet?"

"Ichiya is back on her feet, but she was the only one injured that night that wasn't completely deactivated." Kakizaki answered.

Izumi scowled, he'd hoped that maybe one or two of his pawns had survived that mess, but evidently not. "Get everyone ready. We move on the power station in the northern corner of the city within the hour."

Kakizaki paled. He hadn't received any reply about the information he sent Sahashi, and so had no way what his reaction would be if he and his Sekirei fell into his clutches. "Are you sure that's wise, our track record against the Northern Ashikabi and his Sekirei hasn't been the best. Perhaps we should move against Mikogami, if we're fast enough we could take out enough of his Sekirei before he can consolidate his forces."

Higa paused. The idea had merit thought it didn't appeal to either his need for revenge on the group that had terrified him so. Still never let it be said I won't take advice. He took out his cell phone which was able to reach the communications towers from here, unlike the wi-fi, and called one of his contacts at MBI. A brief discussion followed and Izumi nodded his head, satisfied that his plans were the right ones. "Mikogami has already pulled his Sekirei back to his mansion, all 24 of them." That thought was bitter as he had only been able to cost the brat two of the alien bitches, and he had only lost one to the North before, rumor had it, making some kind of nonaggression pact with Sahashi. "So we'll go with my original plan."

"Then should we not wait, maybe he'll resume sending them out on patrols in a few days, we have enough food and water to last that long." Kakizaki said, hiding his increasing desperation easily. He **really** did not want to face Minato or his Sekirei until he knew the Northern slayer, as he was being called now, would agree to make a deal with him.

Higa stared at him. "Are you questioning me?" Kakizaki shook his head, still looking as calm and collected as he could. "Then get going, we leave in an hour. Prepare one of the limos, you, me and our other Ashikabi 'allies' will be traveling in it while the Sekirei range ahead of us." Kakizaki sighed and nodded. If push came to shove he would leave Kocho and Shizuku to their own devices if it meant he could get away and out of this stupid plan himself, but that didn't mean he was going to like it. But it looked as if he needed to prepare himself for that eventuality.

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Unfortunately for the western narcissist and his followers, Minato was indeed prepared for them. One of the first things he had done after wining Matsu was make sure that no one could get a real-time map of the Northern Territory.

Then when people began to move out, he started to in a word remodel the area, the more people who left the more he remodeled. Now there were very few roads leading in and all of them were surrounded by destroyed buildings, large mounds of rubble that completely blocked the sight of anyone travelling on them. He had also sent out a few of the Sekirei who were not going to be taking part in the fight out to place IED's on a few of them channeling anyone who entered his territory into separate sections where they could be ambushed.

The minute Matsu, who had, with Minato's approval taken to using her norito every few hours, (which she greatly enjoyed having an opportunity kiss Minato that much), saw that Higa was leading his Sekirei into the northern area Minato and his Sekirei (save Kusano of course, much to the little girls irritation) headed out and got into position. All of them were ready with their noritos charged by a recent kiss but the start the ball off would be Kazehana and Tsukiumi.

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Simmons the technician loved his job. He had a ton of work to do, all of it with computers and not needing any interaction with other people, especially girls, at all! What was better, he got paid for overtime, which was way better than his last job. He always paid attention to any signal that appeared on his computer afraid there might be a test later (and this time he had the right kind of pencil so he'd be alright as long as it wasn't timed) so he was the first to see the movement from the over a dozen signals streaming from the west toward the north. He didn't even notice the frantic motions of the sensor analyst next to him, and raised a hand to get the attention of the senior tech on duty. "Er, sir we might have something going on here."

The senior tech came over and looked at the screen. "What in the world is going on? Is there a match in that sector we haven't been told about?"

Simmons shrugged. "I don't know sir, no one tells us anything."

Takami was not in a good mood. She had basically spent the entire night after her 'talk' with her son getting as drunk as woman-fully possible this side of absinthe. The harsh words and even harsher glares had gotten to her, making her question her actions for the past, well twenty years or so. She had also contemplated taking her holdout pistol and going and finding Minaka and putting him out of everyone misery, but even she didn't know all the secrets of the Sekirei Plan or his long term plans. She was here more to get away from that temptation than anything else, however she stomped over to look at the screen Minaka's trained monkeys were so interested in.

She stared for all of two seconds before she began to bark orders. "Get as many helicopters into the air as we can spare, get them all into the air and over the north as soon as we can! Power up the video cameras in the area, get me as many eyes on the action as we can get!"

Simmons paused, his fear of women warring with his desire to please authority for a moment before the latter won out. "Oooh a take charge leader! Yes sir, ma'am!" Takami ignored the irritating little eunuch to stare at the big screen as the cameras in that section of the city came on.

When the news reached Karasuba she smiled manically. This was the opportunity she had been waiting for.

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One of Higa's allies lost a Sekirei to an IED in the foolish bitch stepped on it at the front of the column. After that everyone spread out and to the rubble and the skyline that remained, but Higa and the other Sekirei, stuck in his armored limo had very limited choices. Thus, the rest of them were forced to go along the one main road that was left to enter the north from the west. It seems to be leading towards the power plant, which made sense to Higa, as that would also allow food to be coming in from across the bridge nearby.

Unfortunately he had no knowledge of warfare, let alone urban warfare, and kept all his Sekirei with him around the limo in the main street. In other words, they sitting ducks.

Izumi looked at the other three people in the limo with him, Kakizaki and his two remaining allies. Neither of them was the sort he would normally consort with, but they had Sekirei, and were of like-minded in how the aliens should be treated. In their cases however, they seem to have lucked out and found Sekirei much like his own two enforcers, who liked to cause pain to other people, and didn't care a damn about fair play. The one who had just lost a Sekirei didn't even blink at the loss, simply waving his other one to continue moving forward and then firmly raising the window.

Outside the limo however, the attitude was very different. A few of the Sekirei were worried, a few eager, and a lot of them were scared. They had never faced something like this, they were used to thinking humans were frankly a little weak, smart and tricky but only really dangerous in large numbers and with guns. But the idea of fighting someone

this way, with ambush and unmanned bombs, they had never even considered something like this. The only thing they all agreed on was that they were looking forward to finding something to hit.

Things got worse for them as they hit the halfway mark towards their goal. Two voices rang out as one from a pile of rubble they could barely see the top of on the side of the convoy.

"Water Celebration!"

"Air Cannon!"

The two attacks merged together, the wind speeding the water along its way and spreading it out to hit the entire column. While not very powerful, it still smashed a few of them off their feet into one another and the surrounding rubble. One of them even slammed into a limo and Higa cursed as it rocked under him. At the top of a nearby rise made by rubble stood Tsukiumi and Kazehana hands outstretched as they through their attack in the face of the invaders.

Ichiya, the fist type whose arms Musubi had broken in the first match saw the blonde that had been with the big titted bitch and growled, and then waved a few of the others to follow her as they rushed toward the two ambushers.

Tsukiumi paused for a moment fighting her instincts to stay and fight even against the odds she could see arrayed against her, but then remembered Minato's plan and felt his concern and worry for her through the link. That was enough to get her moving, and she and Kazehana jumped away. Four of Higa's Sekirei followed, Ichiya leading the way and three others following.

Kazehana split off as soon as they were out of sight, moving out of sight, singing out happily after she ducked into a large tunnel that had once been a store, but whose front was now piled with rubble. "Good luck blonde-chan!"

Tsukiumi nodded, but didn't speak, simply sending her fellow wife a wave of reassurance over the link, as she raced ahead still in plain sight from the top of the ridge they had just vacated.

Her pursuers crested the ridge the ridge of rubble and saw her still jumping away in plain sight and chased after her immediately. Tsukiumi shook her head looking back as she realized that Minato was right. *Our people really are kind of silly when it came to things like this. We just don't seem to understand the concept of subterfuge or ambush, not unless its explained to us. And these girls are about to get a hands on lesson of how deadly they can be.*

Within minutes, the four Sekirei chasing her were out of sight of the main column, and Tsukiumi led them on into a maze of alleyways destroyed buildings and rubble that the group had been very carefully building over the last few weeks. The job they did on the lawn had actually been simple in comparison.

Soon she reached the area she wanted to be in and turned at bay. As the four Sekirei ran towards her, she summoned her water sword and waited for them to close. Ichiya sneered at her as the others fanned out to cut off any sudden escape. "You should have kept running bitch, I'm going to pay you back for what that other bitch did to my arm!"

Just as battle was about to begin between the five of them, Musubi, Shiina and Kaie hopped out of cover all around them. Before the others even had time to blink Musubi hammered Ichiya with her Noriko infused fist. "Kuma-ken!"

Ichiya barely dodged in time, and the aura around Musubi's fist still caught the side of her head, slamming her backwards. But despite her sadistic and bullying nature, she was a fighter, and responded to the surprise attack swiftly, bringing up her leg in a kick that sent Musubi back a little.

Her allies were not so quick to react however. Two of them, a tall thin girl with short blonde hair in a black leather top that exposed her midriff and equally tight bloomers and one who was far shorter with broad shoulders and wielding a huge battleaxe with a permanent sneer on her face found themselves wrapped in Kaie's whips before they could set themselves. Shiina jumped forward before they could get lose and used his power on both of them. "Entropy of my pledge, wither away the enemies of my Ashikabi!" So powerful was the death force that struck them both that they literally began to disintegrate, first their crests and clothing, then the rest of them.

Shiina stood staring down at the mounds of dust that had once been Sekirei and wondered if he should be feeling remorse, but all he felt was satisfaction at a job well done. This had been the real reason Akitsu had compiled the amount of notes on their enemies that she had, to know which served Higa willingly and which not, and unfortunately most of his Sekirei were more like Ichiya and Toyotama than Shi and the others they had saved. These two in fact liked to prey on humans more than anyone who could give them a real fight, so in a way had been worse than the two

enforcers.

By this time Tsukiumi had already dealt with her own opponent, the short haired blonde girl wearing a short sleeve Chinese dress with puffed up sleeves, who had only put up a token resistance really. Looking at her Tsukiumi wasn't certain if she had been among the ones abused by her Ashikabi, whoever that Ashikabi was, but the fight had certainly gone out of her long before this match.

Ichiya looked back and forth between her four opponents and snarled but didn't even think of retreating. She wasn't like that, she always knew that eventually she'd meet someone stronger and half to pay the piper, and she wasn't going to pretend otherwise. She launched herself forward, but Kaie grabbed one of her legs with her whips, stopping her just enough for Musubi's next punch to crash into her face with all the power of her norito behind it.

Musubi shouted her norito to the world, ecstatic that she finally had a reason to use it. "Fist of my contract! Break the enemies of my Ashikabi! Light Hammer!" Her fist, covered in a sheen of purple light slammed into Ichiya's face crushing her jaw, temple and a bit of her skull before sending her body flying away lifeless.

Musubi looked down at her opponent sadly. "That wasn't fun," she whined, "battles should be one-on-one, not all this skulking about but direct and fair!"

Tsukiumi smiled putting an arm around her in a comradely fashion. "I agree with you, Musubi-chan, this isn't my kind of fighting either, but with the numbers coming against us we need to even the odds a little." Musubi pouted but Tsukiumi went on seriously, shaking her a little. "It's Minato's plan, and he's our Ashikabi. That's all there is to it right?"

Musubi sighed and nodded and the four ambushers went off, Musubi, Shiina and Tsukiumi moving obliquely through their territory to a position ahead of the invading column, and the dog-like Kaie to bring their prisoner back to Izumo house. Miya was there of course, and thus they would be either safe or secure regardless of what else happened.

*Minato, everyone, first ambush went off without a hitch, four enemies down, one secure and being taken back to Izumo house now. One of the dead was Ichiya, and the other two were also Higa's. the prisoner wasn't one of us his, but she had much the same look as Katsuragi had.*

A wave of approval hit her from all three of her bondmates and Minato answered with words as well. *Excellent job beloved, now meet up with Homura at his position, and keep Musubi with you for close combat.* Tsukiumi blushed hotly as she always did when her husband addressed her like that, but answered affirmatively and led the way towards where Homura was waiting.

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ten to fifteen minutes before the trap was sprung Kazehana had already moved off and she joined up with Kana, the energy bow wielding Sekirei. Yui had allowed her to take part in this operation, something for which the battle hungry young Sekirei was extremely happy for.

They crouched behind a rubble pile on top of a seven story building, and she grinned at the younger Sekirei as she hunched down beside her out of sight of the column of enemies waking and driving about four blocks away. "Can you take at the Ashikabi in the limo from here?"

Kana looked into the distance down at the limo and its surrounding guards, and shook her head. "If that thing is armored like the pervo Matsu says it is, I'd need to be closer to get through the armor plating, heck even the windows at this range, though if you want me to take out one of its wheels I can do that."

Kazehana thought for a minute then sent off that idea to the others. Minato however was waiting ten blocks away near the power station and didn't have a good enough visual of it, so he delegated the call to Tsukiumi, who had joined up with Homura only two blocks ahead of the approaching column. She looked from her position on the roof to where Kazehana and Kana were in the distance then back down to the column. She then looked into the distance, bringing up a map in her mind of the area, then shook her head. *No*, she said firmly. *Let him continue to think he can still escape by using the road ahead of him if he has to after we take out all his Sekirei. As soon as he gets into range of seeing the bridge, then take out the wheels. There are way too many alleyways around here for us to cover them all, and I don't think any of us want to give him even the slightest chance of slipping away.*

Kazehana relayed this to Kana who nodded and turned her sights on to one of the leading Sekirei, a girl with short black hair a thin undeveloped body and a shirt that looked like some kind of cosplay of a host uniform, complete with tie, but no sleeves and an exposed midriff. She gathered her energy, formed her bow and then stood up pulled and fired in one fluid motion.

The bolt of energy slammed into the approaching Sekirei throwing her backwards, but not doing much damage, only startling her and singeing her shirt. That Sekirei and another one, this one wearing a extremely tight Chinese dress and with hair done up in Chinese bun style charged towards her position.

One of the Ashikabi in the limo stuck his head out and tried to yell at them to come back. They didn't hear him though and soon were nearly on the position the shot had come from, coming under fire from Kana the whole way, though they didn't know she was deliberately missing to let them come close and away from the column, which had kept going behind them. She left her position and ran for it as soon as they were close enough to see her, leading them even farther away.

About five minutes later Shiina jumped out of hiding, disintegrating the ground the two enemy Sekirei. Before they could get their feet Kazehana was behind them, slamming them both to the ground with a missive gust of wind. She immediately used an air cutter on the Chinese looking Sekirei, recognizing her from Akitsu's notes as one who had helped guard the yakuza when they had been preying on the civilians in Higa's territory. She died with barely a gurgle, sliced neatly in half by the winds of the cutter going more than seven hundred mph.

The other however she also recognized, more from Chizuru and surprisingly Shi's description. Oshino was another Sekirei that Shi had apparently been travelling with before they were both captured by Higa's Sekirei, and he had winged and raped them both on the same day. Oshino wasn't to his liking physically however, and he tended to ignore her unlike Shi, who was one of his favorite targets, indeed, one of the few he raped multiple times, but she became a punching bag for Toyotama and ichiya instead.

Thus Kazehana was almost gentle as she brought a hand down, chopping at the girl's neck. She collapsed to the ground and Kazehana motioned Kana forward. Take this one back to Izumo house." She sighed sadly, "I think the old place is going to be filled to capacity by the time we're done." Kana nodded and gently lifted the downed Sekirei to her shoulder in a fireman's carry before jumping away.

*Minato, two more down, they're getting more cautious about splitting off from the main group, but one I put down and the other I sent back to Miya with Kana. Kazehana sent.*

Minato responded affirmatively then told her to meet up with him, and she and Shiina jumped away.

---

By this time Higa and the others were getting very, very worried, and Higa was even beginning to doubt the wisdom of this course of action. None of the Sekirei that had left the column had returned, taking a little over a third of their combined strength. Minato and his Sekirei did not play the game like anyone else, they were fighting, if Higa but knew it, like a trained combat squad. He didn't of course, what Izumi Higa knew about warfare outside of the meeting room could fit a thimble.

Worse they had been making very poor time with the rubble and potholes in the road, and now two hours after entering they were only barely within sight of the power station now. Who knew what else would happen next. They got their answer when Tsukiumi and Homura started the next attack.

"Water Celebration!"

"Flame Cannon!"

This attack didn't do any damage but was meant to create a massive fog bank, and it did so, filling the entire street and blinding everyone in it to anything more than a foot or two in front of him or her. When this attack hit Musubi and Uzume rushed forward from one side and Homura and Kazehana attacked from the other side.

Uzume went straight for the position where she had last seen Toyotama. Musubi had put down the other wild dog, but Uzume wanted a piece of one of her main tormentors, and she was going to get it now. Her cloth spear came out of the fog and Toyotama barely dived out of the way in time.

Uzume charged forward, but now Toyotama was ready for her and her spear was up and stabbing.

Uzume dodged it, grabbing at the haft with her cloth then grabbed the hand holding it. Toyotama kicked out and Uzume grunted, but she had been training with Musubi and the others, so was used to taking some punishment, and formed a blade around one of her hands. Toyotama kicked her again, but Uzume ignored it, plunging her cloth dagger into the other woman's side. Blood spurted out and she pulled it back out with a squelching noise that was buried under the sounds of the other fights going on.

Toyotama ignored the wound, letting go of her spear to try and punch Uzume.

Uzume dodged it easily now that she wasn't trying to hold her enemy in positions. "This is for always treating me like crap and threatening Chiho all those times you bitch! Teni no Mai!" The veils around her whipped up and around, their edges like so many razors and she danced around her opponent cutting, cutting away at her from every angle. Soon she cut a few major arteries and she stopped when she saw the darker arterial blood pouring out in a dozen places.

Toyotama still stood but Uzume simply walked away. Toyotama tried to shout after her. "Hey get back here and finish me, you, you..." Yet her wounds and blood loss was too much for even a Sekirei to deal with and she slumped to the ground, still staring angrily after the woman she had always thought was so weak, yet who had defeated her so easily, her eye still full of hate and rage as they glazed over in death.

Elsewhere Musubi was facing another fist type who was built for speed over power, and who kept on shouting to herself about how she was going to carve the 'big titted bitch' up.

For about five minutes she dodged around Musubi slashing at her with an odd gauntlet weapon that instead of covering the whole hand covered only two fingers, but which came to a point like a dagger. Musubi tried to land a punch several times, but her opponent kept backing away, slashing and disappearing into the fog, which was actually hindering her at this point, though thankfully none of the other enemy Sekirei could tell friend from foe, making it so they didn't know where to help or who.

Musubi could feel herself weakening under the repeated injuries her enemy was inflicting, but suddenly saw her chance when the other tried to close to the kill, getting just a little too close. Like lightning she reacted, grabbing her before she could dodge away Another kuma-ken punch and she went down, dead or simply out of the game she didn't know and at the moment couldn't care less. Shiina appeared beside her and forced her to retreat saying she was too injured to continue the fight, something she reluctantly agreed with.

Homura found himself surrounded by four opponents, all of whom he recognized. Two of them were Higa's and he and they had clashed several times when he was protecting unwinged Sekirei. They weren't quite as bad as Ichiya and Toyotama, but were bad enough that he would have no qualms killing them. Another was Kujou, one of the Sekirei he had tried to save, and she looked as if she would rather be anywhere but here. According to Shi, Kujou was another one of Higa's girls who he had raped multiple times before going tired of her. She had a decent sized chest under what looked like a waiters uniform, and a skirt that spread out wide around her hips, and a large belt around her waist.

The fourth however was different entirely. Dressed like someone going to a cocktail party in a nice dress with frills that came down to her knees, she was actually a knife wielder who, along with her Ashikabi, had killed several normal people in disfiguring ways. Now she looked at Homura and sighed sadly. "Such a pretty face for a boy, that really is unfair you know. I really will have to do something about that."

Homura smirked evilly, letting his fire dance around his fingertips. "You know I was just about to say the same about yours." He jumped upward, cleaving down and sending a scythe of fire at her then summoned a wall of flame as soon as he touched down that separated Kujou from the other three. It looked the three of them in with him in close, and one of the two that had bonded with Higa smirked. "You idiot, you're a midrange fighter, now you should've kept your disugh"

She was interrupted by Homura's fist hammering into her chest at near supersonic speeds. He had used the flames under his feet to power himself forward getting in under her guard. His fist too was coated in fire, and his opponent shrieked at the burning sensation. A kick sent her partner tumbling to the ground.

The knife wielder leaped forward, stabbing. Homura turned, grabbing the blades of her knives as she pulled her arms back. Even as they cut into his palms he poured more power into his flames, making them hotter and hotter. The knife wielder tried to pull away, but she was much weaker in terms of physical strength than Yahan or Musubi and she found Homura holding her blades still. Soon the blades began to turn white hot, and after a moment the hilts did too. The knife wielding sadist screamed as the pain of holding the blade got to her and she let go.

Homura throw the now badly melted blades at the other two who were starting to get up, then clapped his hands together and brought them forward. "Flame guillotine!" A massive blade of flame shot out from his hands, slamming into the knife wilder who shrieked and died under the intense flame of the maneuver.

Homura grunted as one of the others got in a hit on his side, then grunted again as the other followed suit to his back. Without warning he exploded in flame, catching both of them and sending them to the ground with severe everywhere

on their bodies. With a thought the wall of flame dissipated and he saw Kujou unconscious on the ground. *The flames or the smoke must have gotten to her*, he thought. With a grimace he felt his ribs and knew he was done fighting for a while. He reached down and carefully picked up the comatose Sekirei, then faded away into the fog.

Tsukiumi was having a harder time of it elsewhere. She wasn't facing multiple opponents like Homura, but the one she was facing was named #75 Niwa, and she was among the Sekirei they knew had been abused by their Ashikabi, though in her case she wasn't bonded with Higa but one his allies. The girl, dressed in a sleeveless shirt and short skirt of a deep burgundy color was putting up a heck of a fight, keeping in close and keeping Tsukiumi from concentrating for long enough to use most of her attacks.

Tsukiumi tried to reason with her. "You don't have to keep fighting for that bastard of a monkey, if you come with us he'll never hurt you again!"

Niwa tried to land another punch of the elusive single digit. "How can you say that, you know the bond is sacred! We have to obey my Ashikabi, I won't throw that away to be alone again. I refuse!"

Tsukiumi kept her talking as she maneuvered her toward an open window in a burnt out building on the side of the road where the ambush had originally taken place. "But you don't enjoy it do you? The orders he gives you, how he looks at you, none of it is what you expected is it?"

Niwa was now in tears but she kept coming. "Who cares? So what if he doesn't carry about my pleasure only his own, so what if he prefers his other Sekirei, that knife wielding bitch. I don't care, don't you understand there's no other choice left for me!"

Tsukiumi sighed and with a wave summoned a prepared water celebration from inside the building she had just passed, which hammered Niwa away. Before she could regain her footing Tsukiumi sent two more battering rams of water at her, slamming her down to the ground and out. "There is always another choice, and right now, we are offering a new one to you, or will once you wake up." She reached down and lifted the younger girl onto her back, then looked up as the fog finally dissipated, letting the sun to shine down again on this little piece of Tokyo. "And maybe the future will be a brighter place for you after you do."

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As the fog cleared Minato listened to his wives checking in, with Akitsu standing next to him. Higa and his allies now saw how badly their forces had been hammered. They had only five Sekirei left between them and Higa was dismayed to see that Toyotama was not among them. They looked forward and saw Minato standing out in the open in the center of the street, sword in one hand and the other holding Akitsu's. The Sekirei and the Ashikabi all looked at them, and Minato said calmly. "Now Akitsu."

Akitsu stared calmly at the five remaining enemy Sekirei carefully looking at their faces as her sister wives and family members grabbed their prisoners, lifting them off the ground. She nodded, having seen that none of the remaining Sekirei were among those they knew or thought had been abused. Therefore, they were fair game. "Ice of my pledge!" she shouted in a clear, cold voice, louder than she had ever said anything before, echoing in the suddenly quite streets. "Freeze and shatter the enemies of my Ashikabi! Ice Age!"

The cold spread faster than thought from her, and within a 50 mile radius the ground and anything connected to it was suddenly covered in ice, frozen solid. The terrain now looked as if it had been taken from Vokstok Station in Antarctica. Two of the enemies, those that hadn't been able to get off the ground in time had also been frozen in place as if they had been dipped in liquid nitrogen. The limo too had frozen, trapping Higa and the others inside.

The Sekirei that had dodged this attack by jumping into the air breathed a sigh of relief. But then an ice spire shot out from the ground slicing straight through the leg of one of them, and as she felt forward another ice spire jumped out of the ground impaling her through the chest, killing her instantly.

The last survivor, Shizuku the null Sekirei gasped appalled, having only been saved by using her own norito and creating a null field around her body that cancelled out the norito of her enemy in that area, but she couldn't push it out further, and her sister Sekirei Kocho had been among those frozen. Suddenly she had to dodge two spikes of ice that appeared from beyond her nullification field, only to run into another, which took her right through the stomach from behind. Both Sekirei began to freeze solid the instant they were skewered and soon they joined their fellows.

Higa and the others were able to break out of the frozen solid limo, but stopped when they saw the last of their Sekirei frozen and skewered, they as one tried to make a run for it on foot, but found Minato standing in their way. One of them tried to take a swing at him, and Minato brought up his sword slicing into the man's head, sending him to the ground minus half a head. A kick to the next one sent him flying back into the side of the limo. Homura, who had

turned over Kujou to Shiina grabbed the man, then smacked his head into the limo until he stopped moving, well save for a bit of twitching. And then, then only Kakizaki and Higa stood there.

Higa looked at him coldly trying to keep his control, knowing that Sahashi's Sekirei were even now surrounding them, ignoring the freezing blood and boyd of his former pawn at his feet. "All right," he said coldly. "What do you want?"

Minato cocked his head. "What do mean what do I want?"

"How much," Higa said boldly now, seeing Minato hesitate. "How much to let us go? You have all my Sekirei, killed or captured, we're done with this game, let us exit the city and you'll be victorious, and I can reward you richly for it."

Minato stared at him. "You really don't understand me at all, do you? This is never been about money or about status or anything like that. This is about justice and honor, something you don't have and fail to understand. Minato moved forward and before either man, despite their limited martial arts training, could prepare for. He dropped his sword and slammed his fists into their chest and with his Ashikabi given strength threw them back to land hard against the still frozen limo. "I'm going to see you face justice you raping murdering, narcissistic son of a bitch." He said growling and he kicked the former pretty in the head, knocking him unconscious.

Kakizaki tried to stand up but Minato put his sword to us throat. "You just sit there. I won't knock you out like I did him, but you're not going anywhere either."

The aide pushed up his glasses as he stared up at Minato anger overcoming his fear. "And what do you think you're going to do," he sneered, "you have no legal authority over us, you're not part of the government or MBI, you're just another contestant in this game!"

Minato answered coldly as Akitsu lifted Higa up, holding him under one arm. "I believe the sword at your throat gives me all the power I need, just like you had yours at everyone else's, like Uzume and Yui and her girls, like Yahan and the old man. Just like Minaka has his along the throats of every Sekirei. You people made the rules of this mad game, might makes right, just like Minaka said once. Don't complain to me if someone else uses might better than you, and can actually enforce a sense of justice here." The aide still glared at him and Minato shook his head. "You know what, on second thought I don't think I need you awake." He brought it the hilt of his sword down on the man's head, knocking him out to join his boss.

Uzume landed next to him and gleefully rapped the man up in cloth. "That was awesome bro I swear if I didn't think Tsukiumi would kill me I would so rock your world right now!"

Minato smiled then looked around and saw that his Sekirei were finishing cleaning up and Akitsu was again standing beside him, her burden under one arm not hindering her in any way. "Good job love," he said, sending the same message over their link to his other ladies.

Akitsu blushed feeling the love he had for them all through their link and took one of his hands in hers. "Hai," she whispered, leaning against his shoulder. With a mental snap of the fingers her power receded, and the ice around them shattered, including that which had been Higa's Sekirei. The invasion was over.

End chapter

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Now I could add another thousand plus words here, but that would leave a much worse cliffhanger, so I decided to end this here. Hope everyone liked the battle, it was a beast to write because I wanted to show it as tough overall, but each successive fight was simple taken alone. It also allowed Minato to showcase another one of his wives norito which will get out to the rest of the world and give them, shall we say, pause. Before anyone asks why he didn't ask any questions about the bond or anything else from the AI, he has his mind firmly on the issues he needs to solve now, rather than in a few years. More about Miya and why the AI called Takehito heroic in the next chapter where we'll also see what was going on with Minato's allies and my favorite character from my running gag will make an appearance (hint).

## **\*Chapter 19\*: Chapter 19 Unforeseen complications**

I don't own Sekirei, nor could you convince me to admit to creating such a wimpy character as the original Minato, nor do I own certain other characters that might appear...

Some reviews I'd like to mention:

Anon – thanks for noticing where I got the aliens name from, it's always nice to see other people pick up on my little jokes.

Cj-cold: thank you, your reviews are always well thought out and interesting, just thanks!

Spartan1082: this will be discussed in the epilogue, continue reading and find out.

Now on with the shoe, dirtbags!

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### **Chapter 18 Unforeseen complications**

The moment the assault team and Minato left Matsu started to use the devices Yahan had created to remove the tracker from Saki. Nishi had another set of the device, both the vibrator-cum-sonic disabler and the fake signal creator. Minato was thus proven correct, Yahan was worth her weight in any precious material you cared to name.

Saki moaned a little at the sensation of the vibrator on her neck, but after a moment Matsu pulled back, turning the second device on as fast as she could and Miya moved forward, gently touching the jinki to Saki's neck. A moment later she nodded. "It's gone, now do you know what to do?"

Saki nodded, answering by rote. "Meet up with Barei at that old appliance store along his border with us, then go with her to the communication center/tower. Sneak in, try not to draw any attention but if we do Barei needs to be able to get out without being detected, she's the one that will be placing the device on the main communication computer Minato-taisho gave me, and then get back out." Saki had decided to call both Miya and Minato by that title, thinking it appropriate given how they sometimes acted.

Normally Miya would try to get her to stop, pulling out her simple 'oya-san' card, but now she didn't bother. She simply nodded, her face stern and unyielding, looking far more the Disciplinary Squad captain than the simple widow she had been for the last few years. "Good, now get going." Saki took one look at her serious face then went like the hounds of hell were after her. Miya then turned back to the command center, where again Matsu had hacked into MBI's video system, to watch the battle that was about to occur.

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Saki and Barei met up easily on the rooftop of the appliance store twelve blocks away from their target along the 'border' (it wasn't actually a border anymore after all, with Minato and Nish allied so closely) between the north and the west. Saki landed next to the silent Barei who was simply standing there staring into the distance toward their target, not moving or speaking. Saki stood there for several minutes looking around before she actually saw that the other infiltrator was already there waiting for her. "Um, ok didn't see you there, any problems on your end?"

Barei smirked a little, her lips, painted blue today rather than violet, the only thing visible from the inside of her hood. Save for her button nose. "No, and don't worry most people don't notice me even when they are looking for me like you. Here." Her pale hand appeared from inside the long sleeves of her cloak. "This woman is the chief supervisor of the com center, can you take her form?"

Saki nodded, looking at the picture. It was only a face shot though, not enough of the rest of her to let her fully transform. "Yeah that's a great idea and all, but I might need to take the form of someone else, a picture isn't the best."

Barei nodded, leading the way off. "That's fine, we may be able to ambush her somehow, or sneak in and take her out in the building."

Saki nodded, glancing at the other Sekirei with a little bit of jealousy. Despite the fact that she was far more, well, girly than Kana, the two of them shared a youthful, thin tomboyish appearance. Barei, despite her ability to blend into the background had a great body, not top heavy by any means, but a good sized chest and very womanly hips. Not for the first time she had to fight back a bit of sadness. *Is that why Yui won't touch us, because she doesn't find us*

*attractive? I know she said it's because we're so young, but...*

Luckily they arrived at their target by that point, a large fenced off compound, dominated by a huge com tower situated next to a large building. From where they were hiding on a nearby roof they could see several sandbag made foxholes with about five MBI rent-a-soldiers in each spread around the perimeter and two heavy pillbox-like buildings set to either side of the single entrance to the compound. Well, the single normal entrance, the fence wasn't nearly large enough to keep Sekirei out. There was also a single jeep parked next to the building along with a large supply truck. Saki frowned, not seeing a place to ambush anyone without someone seeing it and raising the alarm. "How are we going to do this?"

Barei pointed and Saki turned back to see a porta-potty set up near the fence. This building had been among many left without running water by the water shortage caused by Minato's attack on the plant in Higa's territory and Mikogami cutting the other sections of the city off from his water purification plant. Thus without working water, the building didn't have any indoor plumbing. Saki groaned. "Oh you have got to be kidding me."

Barei didn't reply simply looping around the compound to the nearest position from the porta-potty. Saki groaned again but followed her. They waited about an hour and then, wonder of wonders, the woman they were after came out and moved swiftly toward the porta-potty. Saki waited a few more seconds until she saw all of the soldiers were looking out rather than at the potty then leapt up, landing lightly on the top of it and then swiftly wrenched the door open and was in before any of the soldiers could turn and see her. Not a minute later she came back out wearing her targets face and the other woman's clothes over her own.

Barei, now with her cloak active landed behind her. "Come on, I'll follow right behind you."

Saki growled, whispering to her out of the side of her mouth. "You know I hate you so much right now. That thing was disgusting ugh, I feel dirty just having been in there let alone using it!"

Barei smirked unseen, "We must all make sacrifices."

"Fine then, you get to do the sacrificing next time." Saki did as she was told though, making her way toward the main building Barei following after her.

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The man known to his men only by his rank of Sarge stared from his command pillbox back toward the woman in charge of the com center as she reentered the building. One of his men looked at him. "Something wrong Sarge?"

"Somethin' weird's going on I can feel it in my bones." The man had a thick Southern American accent, giving his Japanese a very odd accent, almost as bad as a Kansai accent.

"Oh come on Sarge this is an easy gig, no way are any of the Sekirei or Ashikabi going to attack us here, we're not important enough. Want a donut?" Another trooper, this one fat and slovenly held up a box of the aforementioned sweets, only to gulp as he was suddenly staring down the business end of a shotgun, a Kel-Tec KSG 12 gauge shotgun.

The other soldier didn't even look away from polishing the heavy crew served gun set in the center of the pillbox. "Sarge, I keep telling you, you can't shoot him just because he's a waste of skin."

"Frakerigbhtg" the mustachioed man muttered. "You sure? Could be my shotgun just went off accidentally."

"No, sorry, Joanes still has his uses, mostly as a meat shield admittedly."

"Okay, one I hate you guys, two my names Jones, it's a really common name, and three screw you!"

Sarge turned back watching the officer enter the main com building. "Something's wrong here, something.... Blue. Washington, you're in charge here, I'm gonna go see what's up."

Washington nodded and the two soldiers watched the man move off. After a few moments Jones asked. "So, do you know what's up with Sarge and the color blue?"

Joanes, some things are just better left unknown."

"God-damnit my name is..."

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It took the espionage duo several minutes to traverse the interior of the building, passing over a dozen workers, all of whom had the MBI logo on their clothing. MBI had taken over the city's utilities well before closing the city off, so that made sense, but it made Saki feel better if they had to fight their way out of the compound.

The building, despite being large in area, only had two floors and on the second floor near the back they found the main control center for the city's communication grid. Barei looked around the room, keeping the workers focus on her stolen body by loudly asking them all for a status report and then loudly yelling at them when they didn't jump to obey.

Barei sneaked around and down, opening a panel underneath the main computer, then placing the small device inside, right over the override command switch, which could, if so ordered take over the airwaves or block the airwaves if so ordered. She quietly closed up the panel and then moved back around the worker, slightly tugging on Kana's sleeves. A few minutes later she finished shouting and turned and left, Barei following quickly after.

Back on the first floor they nearly ran into the mustachioed sergeant who was coming towards them. Saki nodded and moved aside for the man, but instead of moving forward the man swiftly pulled out a shotgun, pointing it at Saki's stolen form. "Hah, I got you, you dirty spy! That lady Rumiko always greets me by name, Sarge! Now reach for the sky!"

Saki slowly raised her hands, about to shout at the man and bluff it out but Barei went around her chopping at the gun and smashing a fist into the man, the fist visible outside her cloak mere seconds before her fist was to hit his stomach. Yet even so he moved his shotgun to take the blow, thus only being smacked back against the wall. He kept his shotgun up, firing it at Saki.

Saki dodged wildly but was still nicked by the buckshot along her side, and she winced a little. She ran forward, her leg moving forward for a kick. Around them doors opened and shouts began, but no one else came forward to help the shotgun wielder.

Sarge dodged wildly, kicking out and nearly taking Saki down to the ground with a blow to her lower leg. Barei rushed forward again but another shotgun blast barely missed Saki as she rolled away wildly, and some of the buckshot hit Barei, and when the pain hit she lost the concentration needed to keep up her chameleon cloak.

Saki however kicked out, finally landing a clean hit and sending the man through a wall. She grabbed Barei who was leaning against the wall moaning in pain. While they both fell under the general heading of a fist type, the type most known for their durability and physical prowess, it was more of a secondary classification compared to their espionage abilities, and for Barei it was even worse. She wasn't nearly as tough as Saki or the more normal fist types. Still, the blast which would have killed a normal man had only stunned and injured her.

Saki had the presence of mind to keep her stolen body, and with a sudden thought decided to maybe throw off anyone who was listening. "Come on Barei, we've got to go we'll have to try again some other time!" Barei looked at her blearily then shook a little and nodded, and the two moved away swiftly.

Behind them Sarge got up, seemingly none the worse for wear except for a split lip, his eyes brim with rage. "Blue, she had blue lipstick, those damn dirty Blues!" He pulled out his walkie-talkie and shouted into it. "Washington, we've got blue doings go on, some dirty spies got in, turn the gun ta aim inward and get Joanes to bring the warthog around, I'm goin' after 'em!" With that he ran off after the two Sekirei, shotgun in hand.

More shotgun blasts began to sound behind Saki and Barei, peppering the wall as they made the turn down the final hall toward the entrance. Kana and Barei looked at one another a little wildly then sped up as Sarge came around the same corner. They barely made it through the doorway when it was blasted by six shotgun blasts in quick succession. The two women hit the ground outside, then looked up to see one of the crew served weapons being turned inward, and they jumped up running wildly towards the nearest fence and jumping away as even more bullets began to fly.

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The mustachioed Sarge ran out of the room, his shotgun moving from side to side, then swoled as he didn't see either of the spies. "Joanes! Where's my Warthog?!"

The fat slob Jones drove up swiftly with the jeep. "Here it is sir, mind telling me what the fuck's going on?"

"Blue bastards, infiltrated us, luckily I caught 'em before they could succeed in their nefarious schemes those dirty backstabbers. Now get this jeep a movin'!"

Jones did so blinking a little in surprise. "Um sir, wouldn't they have to have been on our side in the first place?"

"Those dirty frontstabbers! Now enough questions meat sack, get this jeep into high gear!" He reached down and slapped a tape into the old fashioned tape deck, and soon music began to blare through the speakers, some kind of odd digitized southern banjo music that Jones had never heard before.

"Uh sir, could I ask if we could play some other music I mean this is just" suddenly there was a cli-click and Jones saw Sarge pointing his shotgun at him. "Never mind."

"You sure? I like to hear the opinions of my soldiers."

"No, I'm good."

They soon caught up to the fleeing spies forcing them to dodge to the side to avoid the jeeps charge. Sarge leaned out and blasted his shotgun at one of them, catching the spy in the side and nearly pasting her. "Now that's what I call ridin' shotgun! Haha, blammo!"

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Saki groaned as she sat up, bleeding from several small wounds in her side, then ducked again as another shotgun blast nearly nailed her full on. "God damn it, you won, just let us go you fucking asshole!"

"Hah! Never, the only good blue is a dead blue!"

"What the fuck is a blue!" Saki yelled back, and then dodged again, running off with Barei and jumping to the rooftops. Below them the jeep followed after, Sarge having switched weapons, blasting away at them with a rifle he'd had stowed in the jeep.

This went on for a few minutes, with both Sekirei dodging and wincing as the blasts came close. Saki gasped out, "Do you know where any roadblocks or anything like that are?"

Barei nodded, gasping for air, her cloak in tatters, including her hood and bleeding from several places due to buckshot. "Yes, go straight for another block then turn right and go two and then left, there should be one there."

Saki nodded and the two grimly raced on while below them the mad human zoomed after her.

About fifteen minutes later they reached the roadblock, a massive pile of rubble from the two buildings on either side.

Barei and Saki jumped down on the other side of the roadblock grinning at one another in relief. Their relief was short lived though as the roar of the jeeps engine came and they turned and gaped as the jeep, a true off road beast, came up and over the roadblock straight sat them. "Ha, you can't escape you dirty spies, you just got..."

He was interrupted by a thrown naginata slamming into and through the jeep's engine block. The engine exploded, but Sarge and Jones were already jumping out so the explosion merely lifted them up and sent them tumbling away. Sarge slammed into a still intact window of a nearby shop, while Jones slammed face first into a wall and slid down, his neck broken.

Kaho, who was patrolling this section of Nishi's territory on her Ashikabi's orders, jumped down to join her fellow Sekirei looking in amused shock at how badly battered and bloody the two were. "What in the world was that about? Did you succeed in planting that device thing?"

Saki merely groaned holding her side while Barei shook her head, pulling absent mindedly at the remnants of her hood. "I honestly don't know, but I have to say I respect humans more now. Not only did that man survive a punch from me and a kick from Saki, but he was extremely skilled and determined. Crazy, but tough." Kaho cocked her head quizzically, and Barei shook her head. "Later, right now we both need medical attention and some rest."

Saki nodded. "Agreed, and if I never see another shotgun or a man with a mustache it will be too damn soon!" Barei nodded fervent agreement and Kaho shrugged, looking mournfully over at where her naginata now lay mangled beyond saving thanks to the explosion. She shrugged and moved to help the two injured Sekirei.

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in the shop, surrounded by shattered glass Sarge groaned and tried to get up, but fell back weakly. "Owwwww damn it, they messed up my own liner." He painfully reached for his walkie-talkie, but didn't find it and he groaned, leaning back again.

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At the same time Barei and Saki were having their adventure and the massive battle was occurring in the North Nishi

was moving into the South. He brought only two of his Sekirei, Kujika and Kuzuri his two tanned beauties with him in the hopes of not sparking a fight with Mikogami.

As he moved further into the southern territory he was surprised at how normal it all looked. There wasn't much damage to the buildings he was seeing and there were actually some people moving around. Not a lot, but way more than in the other areas of the city. That was surprising but Nishi guessed that with twenty plus Sekirei he had been able to hammer any lawlessness under, not to mention coming down hard on any Ashikabi/Sekirei group that tried to make trouble above and beyond the plan itself.

The efficacy of the South's patrols was swiftly proven as Nishi and his two Sekirei soon found themselves facing five Sekirei bonded with Hayato. They arranged themselves all around the interlopers, two on the rooftops on either side, two in back and one in front. The one in front would have been recognized by Tsukiumi or Minato, the pigtailed blonde Mitsuha, who they had questioned and let leave to convey their offer of nonaggression to her Ashikabi. "You're either very brave or very stupid to enter my master's territory like this deadbeat-kun."

Nishi smirked. "A little of both I guess, but more determined than anything. I believe the phrase I should use right now is 'take me to your leader?'" Mitsuha blinked in shock, then looked at the others, sighed and pulled out a cell phone.

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Nishi looked around the mansion he found himself in admiringly. "Nice place you got here."

"Hmmp, unlike you deadbeat-kun our master has money, he can look after us easily!" the blond Sekirei answered back snarkily.

Nishi shrugged at the barb but he had to take a second to calm his two ladies down before they could continue. Upstairs in a large office they found Hayato sitting behind a desk that looked too large for him, his feet up on the top of it and looking completely at his ease. Mutsu, number 05, stood behind him to the right, eyes closed and leaning against the wall. On the other side was a woman with, in Nishi's opinion a banging body that was wasted on someone so young. She wore a white dress that looked pretty high class except for how much cleavage it revealed and the fact it didn't cover her belly button and had blue-gray hair that cascaded down past her rear.

If Nishi was nervous it wasn't apparent to any of the others, and in fact he actually wasn't, even if things didn't go well Hayato was more likely to let him and his babies go than attack them, so why worry? "Hey kid, you look pretty comfy there."

Hayato smirked at the older man then waved him into a chair in front of the desk. "Mitsuha said you wanted to talk to me, so talk."

Nishi nodded. "Yep, I come bearing a message from, well I guess you could call us the Ashikabi Alliance. Me, a few of the less powerful Ashikabi and Sahashi Minato, he's our leader I guess."

Mikogami started then bounced around his seat excitedly, losing his arrogance and acting just like the kid he was for a moment. "You, you're working with Minato, the guy with the sword!? Oh my god that was so cool when he took on the yakuza that bastard Izumi brought into the match. SO did you have a hand in the attacks on his territory? That was just awesome!"

Nishi laughed. "Yeah it was, and as for the attacks on Higa that night, it was both of us. Minato and I met up and decided to pound on the asshole a bit. In fact, the reason I'm here right now is we think MBI will be too busy looking at Higa's invasion of the north to notice me here."

"Higa's invading? But, in this stage all the fighting has to happen in the matches!" Hayato scowled, his lips thrust forward petulantly. "He's still not playing by the rules, even with the beat down he received? What an idiot!"

Nishi shrugged. "Honestly I expect that Minato is smashing Izumi and his forces to dust right about now. Izumi can't outfight or outthink Minato, and I doubt numbers will make up for quality. No, what I'm here to talk about is why we went after Higa so much and why eventually we're going to move on MBI." He began to detail what they had found out about what Higa had been doing, not only his ignoring the so-called rules of the Sekirei plan, but also how he abused the Sekirei he winged forcefully. At this point he ran into a problem.

"What's rape?" Hayato asked, his face scrunched up in question. In his sheltered upbringing he'd never heard the term, and he hadn't run into it in any of his books either. Nishi gaped at him and Taki, the elegant looking woman on his left turned to Mutsu, who scowled at her. They played a single game of rock paper scissors and Mutsu lost and he growled a little as she smiled happily. 05 leaned forward and began to whisper into his master's ear. After a moment it

sank in and Hayato's face clouded with fury. "If I had known that before I would have joined in hammering Higa so fast it would make his head spin, for the little time we allowed him to keep it!"

Nishi shrugged. "Higa won't be an issue any longer after today, and he was never more than a symptom not the problem itself. That is MBI, and we think this whole mad plan has a secret side to it." He then explained what they had found out about the MBI card and the tracking devices, as well as the information Minato had found out about the nature of the bond, and how it could be forcibly replaced if the initial one was lost, and their fears about what MBI was doing with the Sekirei it collected.

Hayato stayed silent listening to this, but Mustu and Taki kept on glancing at each other, looking more and more worried and appalled. The idea of perverting the bond like that was just wrong to Taki. Mutsu on the other hand knew what kind of man Minaka was and the idea of him having that ability and an army of enthralled Sekirei to call on was horrifying.

As Nishi wound done Hayato sighed but shook his head. "I understand why you're here now, and I sympathize I really do, but I can't help you if you move against MBI. I gave my word that I wouldn't and I don't think you should move against him either. You see, the MBI cards aren't the only way Minaka can strike at the Ashikabi and Sekirei."

"What do you mean?" Nishi asked, suddenly worried.

"My parents own companies that are major names in shipping, the automotive industry and other stuff, and we have had a lot of dealings with MBI since they came on the scene. So when they used us to move some stuff for them back when they were building MBI Tower, no one flagged it. Until that is someone realized what all they were transporting. They must have used our company to move this stuff because the government and UN were watching them so closely, though we didn't know that at the time. See, the things they had us bring in, well, they were the parts of a nuke, big enough to take out the entire city, maybe more."

Nishi gaped at him but Hayato went on. "That was actually how I winged Mutsu here, I was the one who added it all up and so I wanted to confront Minaka personally." Hayato giggled a little. "I tripped going up the stairs and he was coming out of the hall behind me, so I fell on top of him and we touched lips." Mutsu shuddered in memory and Hayato giggled again. "Minaka was really pissed, though he didn't show it, merely laughing on an on about fate being unpredictable, it was that bitch Takami that railed at me. Mutsu was supposed to be second in command of the Disciplinary squad so my winging him greatly weakened MBI's power in the Sekirei Plan. But I'm too powerful to be removed or coerced, if I had disappeared at that point they could never have covered it up and would have had a lot of problems they could have handled at the time. So they had to let me join the game, and I thought it sounded really cool, so I agreed not to move against MBI or tell the authorities about my suspicions about the nuke."

Nishi frowned, wondering how the hell they were going to deal with this, and if they could at all. *I think Barei and Saki are going to have their work cut out for them when we move against MBI...* "But if we do take out Minaka and take control of the ship and MBI, will you join with us to try and protect the Sekirei from persecution?"

Hayato frowned thinking hard. Mutsu took this opportunity to ask a question that had been bothering him since Nishi mentioned an Ashikabi Alliance. "Excuse me, but is Minato still allied with the demon of the North?"

"You mean Miya? Yeah, big time, she's like his right hand woman of something, takes part in all the planning sessions and decisions as far as I can tell. And she's really scary, let me tell you." Nishi sighed, sad his attempts to flirt with the beautiful widow had been rejected so often and so strongly. *Ah well, at least I still have my babies.*

Mutsu almost gaped in shock, the idea of the aloof and standoffish Miya trusting anyone other than her ex-husband that much was beyond surprising, but that little tidbit made Hayato's mind up for him. "If you're working with 01, then I'll definitely agree to work with you if you beat Minaka, I'll even tell my parents and get all their business interests behind us if you can do it." Nishi nodded and, their business concluded, allowed a few of Hayato's Sekirei to escort him and his babies back to his territory.

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Everyone, even Minato had to take one of the captured Sekirei or Ashikabi, as they trekked back to Izumo house. Uzume was dragging Kakizaki behind her whistling and giggling every time his head banged against a rock or bump. Everyone was exhausted, sore and a little battered around the edges, but in terms of actual serious wounds, the most serious was Uzume having a few cracked ribs along with Homura and Musubi's multiple slash marks, but all three had already been sent back to Izumo before Akitsu had used her norito. In total they had captured nine more Sekirei, and left the bodies of the rest behind them, not just deactivated, they were permanently dead. It was a total and complete victory, which should have warned Minato that something was bound to go wrong.

Something did. They were nearly within sight of Izumo house when Matsu's frantic voice came over the intercom in Minato's ear. "Minato-tan look out there's....."

Before Matsu could finish her warning Minato saw what she was talking about, as at that moment the three members of the Disciplinary Squad had just jumped down from a nearby roof to land in front of Minato and his Sekirei.

Minato groaned aloud, he'd figured MBI would take this chance to send the disciplinary squad after him, but he thought that they would be too scared of Miya to be so brazen near Izumo house. He had thought they would show up during the fight, or directly after, and had let his guard down. Now he was paying for that optimism.

Karasuba stepped forward, her eyes blazing with eagerness, as well as a little something else that Minato really did not want to admit to recognizing. Even thinking it was a little disturbing. "You've been a bad boy again Minato!" she exclaimed, laughing. "Or should I call you the hoplite?"

Minato showed no sign of the worry and growing concern he felt, moving to stand in front of his Sekirei despite their verbal and mental protests. *If those three attack our only real chance of victory as tired and exhausted as we all are is to protect Tsukiumi as she summons her norito to take them out and hope they couldn't dodge whatever her attack is.* Like his other wives she had never used her norito before, the four of them judging it too powerful to use unless necessary. "I see someone's done some research," he said calmly, "but you're not wearing your collar! What will your master say?"

Benitsubasa twitched at his obvious attempt to antagonize Karasuba, while Haihane giggled a little in the background. To be honest neither of them wanted to do this, taking on already weakened opponents wasn't really something they'd signed up for. They wouldn't have a problem fighting Minato's Sekirei in a match when all of them were at full strength, but this seemed sort of cheap to both of them.

Karasuba however didn't care and besides she figured the numbers alone would give her a bit of a fight. "You have one choice Minato" she said, even knowing there was no way Minato would cave to Minaka's demands, she needed to say the words for forms sake if nothing else. "Turn over the captured Sekirei you have and start following the rules of this game, or we're authorized to eliminate you and all your Sekirei." She looked around idly, but didn't see Musubi, which pleased her. Musubi had been forced to retreat during the match due to her injuries, and was already back at Izumo house with Homura and Uzume. Despite Karasuba's desire to break Minato and kill his other Sekirei she didn't want to end Musubi that quickly. She was the last remnant of her old rival Yume after all.

Minato shrugged reaching behind his head and pulling out his sword. He knew he had no chance at all against the sword wielding number 4 under these circumstances, but he would be damned if he went down without a fight. "I think we both know my answer to that question."

Karasuba grinned and was about to charge forward when a massive pressure built up in the air around them. It built up slowly yet inexorably, pushing down on her and everyone else there, pressing down on them as if ten elephants had suddenly sat on each of them. Then came a feeling of killing intent, so strong it drove both of the other disciplinary squad members to their knees, their faces white and gasping. Even Minato and his Sekirei, who were not the target of it fell backwards in the face of the fear it evoked. Minato alone was still standing, as the force seemed to not affect him as much as the others.

Karasuba merely grinned manically, pushing against the wave of force with her own madness infused willpower. *This is far better than I had ever hoped for!* She turned and saw striding down the streets, her movements still graceful yet somehow more warlike despite her clothing, like a massive cat on the hunt and with a naked blade in her hand number 1 Miya. The sword was huge, nearly five feet long, but thin, with lines much like that of a katana, with an overlarge hilt to counterbalance the weight of the blade.

Karasuba cocked her head, pointing her own sword at the other woman's, "I thought you got rid of that?"

Miya shook her head, the pressure of her presence still increasing as she closed. "Ara, putting it in storage is not the same as getting rid of it. Now, I believe I mentioned at one point what would happen to you or anyone else from MBI if you dared harm any under my protection. Are you prepared for the consequences of your action?"

Karasuba laughed, "But we're not in the Izumo house now, the treaty between you and Minaka only covers the inn! And you know what he holds over your head. You really wants to test his patience, you may have two of the jinki, but he still controls the ship. And with that he can deactivate your entire our entire race, do you want to push them like that? Only those Sekirei bonded can take part in the game!" Despite this she was hoping Miya would ignore the warnings, clashing blades with 01 was her greatest dream and who cared if she died doing it, what a way to go that would be! Of course she didn't know Minato and his group had four of the seven jinki now, but even that might not be

enough to cancel the deactivation order from the ship.

By this point Miya had walked around Karasuba placing herself next to Minato. Once there Miya sighed dispelling some of the pressure that had built up. "So I can only take part in a battle if I am winged?"

Karasuba nodded happily, "you got it!" she exclaimed. "Now either use that sword of yours and lose your precious neutrality or stand aside and let me do my job!"

Miya brought up a hand, touching her lips gently in thought while an almost overwhelming excitement rose up within her. "No, she said softly. "I don't think I'm going to do that. Minato?" she asked turning towards him.

Minato nodded "Yes Miya?" Then without warning Miya closed the distance putting the two of them and dragged him into a kiss.

Almost as soon as Miya grabbed his face, Minato knew what she was going to do and looked rather wildly over at his wives. Tsukimi was looking a little surprised, but accepting, Kazehana was looking ecstatic and grinning wildly, and Akizu was simply nodding her head, which from her was the same as a verbal encouragement.

*They must have known that this was going to happen, was I that obvious?* His growing attraction toward Miya had been his dirty little secret for a while, and had only heightened after learning how she had taken command of the command centered during the first match and how well she had backed him up in all their little discussions with other Ashikabi. Competence was always one of his turn-ons, and the rest of Miya was wholly desirable as well. The idea that she was attracted to him hadn't occurred to him, not seriously anyway, up until this moment.

Yet his wives were now using their bond to send him waves of love and acceptance, so when Miya closed the distance between them, she was not met with shocked stupefaction but a surprising amount of eagerness. As their lips opened and their tongues began to dual one another, massive wings appeared behind Miya. While not nearly as large as one of his wives, which these days covered fifteen blocks or so they were already larger than say Kusano or Musubi, probably because of her personal power on top of their connection. They were so vast they spread in four blocks in every direction.

Kazehana, Benitsubasa, and Haihane looked on in shock, not one of them thinking that number 1 could ever be winged.

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That was pretty much the reaction of MBI and everyone watching the various instruments in the control center. Takami in particular was feeling dumbstruck, after all Miya had been married and she hadn't been winged then. This coupled with her shock at the battle before this made her practically insensate. She hadn't quite believed how much her baby boy had changed, even with the knowledge Karasuba had come back with or the verbal destruction he had rained down on her. But the prior planning that had gone into completely annihilating Izumi Higa and his group was shocking and more than a little disturbing.

While the video cameras hadn't caught all of the action, they had caught enough to see the tactics that Minato used to slowly pare away Higa's numbers, and how completely overwhelmed Higa had been by this. More, they had also recorded 07 Akitzu's norito, and the sheer scope and power of it was beyond any of their expectations. Well, except for Minaka, he spent the entire time cackling at the power of these 'shackled gods'. He kept on laughing until it became clear that not only had most of the fallen Sekirei been killed not deactivated but that the others were all being captured and taken off by Minato. That threw him into another mad rambling about 'poor fools who go against the will of the gods in this plan or ascension and must be punished for such transgressions'.

For her part, When Takami saw that was reminded about what Minato had told her about how many of Higa's Sekirei were abused, and wondered if these were more of the same.

Luckily (or unluckily depending on whose side you were on) Minaka had assumed that this might have happened, and agreed to let Karasuba and her minions cut them off from the safe house at Izumo. With Minato's Sekirei exhausted and battered he was confident that Karasuba and the others would prevail.

Yet now the instruments were telling them an unknown Sekirei was being winged! And when they finally were able to localize the signal and the helicopter they had following Minato at a distance was finally able to send in their video feed they saw Miya, number 01 Miya, being winged! This was above and beyond anything he had ever assumed could be possible.

For once Minaka lost his manic appearance, and his eyes were hard and staring. This offset all of his calculations and

plans. There was no telling what could happen now, not with such a force to contend with. It was the reason he had Takehito killed, though the bastard had somehow cost him one of the jinki in the end. (Minaka still didn't know how Takehito had destroyed it something that still rankled) Because he knew Miya's power was such that it had broken through every attempt to modify it, and that she alone was a match for practically anything he could throw at her.

He turned to Natsuo, his voice sharp and commanding, none of his usual grandiose pomposity evident in his tone. "Order Karasuba and the others to retreat immediately! We'll need to consolidate our forces, the plan is postponed for now, cancel all the upcoming fights, peel off at least half our regular forces stationed around the city to reform on us here at the tower."

His thoughts however were already racing ahead, wondering if he could possibly rally the other Ashikabi to fight Minato, and if nothing else weaken him so that the Disciplinary Squad as his representatives could come in and clean up after. *The odds of me convincing the Mikogami brat are actually quite good, that young fool loves the game, and will follow the rules to the letter. I might be able to bring Nishi in as well, the dumb drifter has always been pretty good at following the rules and my orders, so long as the prize is worth the work.* This went to show that Matsu's hiding the coming and going of Nishi was working very well. More he overestimated the allure of the game and the rules there an when dealing with Hayato.

Nor did he understand or would hear about what happened at the calm center for a while. And when he did Minaka would assume that given the shouted words of the Sekirei that had attempted to break in they had been captured before they could do whatever they were there to do. This would come back to haunt him later. Like many megalomaniacs it would be the little things that would doom Minaka.

Takami too was thinking of what she should be doing. She looked over at the madman she had once fallen in love with, thought of the plan he had put in place, and wondered if maybe, just maybe she could redeem herself somehow, and sighed. No, she reflected for better or for worse she was stuck doing what she had been doing, it was far too late for her to turn back now. *And*, a little voice inside her said *you still love the mad bastard*. Takami made no reply to this inner voice, merely continuing to watch everything going on around her in a kind of fog.

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Karasuba stared down at her phone, then laughed and tossed it to the side uncaring. Haihane on the other hand said, "But... the recall..." While Benitsubasa nodded rapidly. Neither of them wanted to tangle with number 1, the captain of the first generation Disciplinary Squad, and they grabbed onto this as an excuse to not do what they hadn't wanted to do in the first place.

Karasuba however was rapidly descending into her mad battle lust, and she would hear none of it. "This!" she exclaimed. "This is what I live for! Let's see how much of your skills you've lost Miya!" She charged forward, sword already slashing out faster than most of the Sekirei there could even see.

Miya however could see it and was waiting for it. Whatever training Karasuba had put herself through to try and close the gap between their skills was, simply put, not enough. She raced forward, meeting Karasuba with the clang of steel on steel, before stopping easily in place a half pace later. Karasuba kept going for a few seconds then stared down at her sword as it bisected in the middle, the topmost portion falling to the ground the blade sliced clean through. She felt something warm trickle down her neck, and raised a hand to touch her throat gently. A miniscule cut, much like someone could get from a shaving accident, was right over her jugular.

Miya turned to her glaring angrily and waving her sword slightly at the other two, who backed away rapidly. "You have never understood Karasuba, what you all try to be is what I am! You and all of my younger sisters were modified, changed, weakened. **I was not!** And you, who cannot love, who only lusts for battle will never have the bond necessary to break those chains, and thus will never be able to equal me! Leave," she said scornfully, "leave and take your minions with you, or die here."

Benitsubasa grabbed Karasuba who was staring down at her blade and then up and Miya her eyes aflame with the desire to continue but without her weapon Karasuba knew she had no chance against 01. She turned angrily and jumped away, Benitsubasa following quickly.

Haihane was only stopped from following them when Minato called out "Wait Haihane!" Haihane turned and Minato said, "Wait here I'll go run and get that DVD set for you."

Haihane looked at him in surprise, wondering why in the world he had thought of that after the tension that had just passed, but nodded eagerly all the same. Minato ran off as the others watched amused. He soon came back, and tossed the box of DVDs to her. She caught it with difficulty, juggling it with their claws. "Thanks," she said looking at it happily.

Minato nodded "No problem."

Haihane looked at him wondering once again what life would've been like if she had still been free to be winged by Minato. She didn't really know whether or not she was physically attracted to him, but he had treated her with more kindness and more attention than her Ashikabi ever had.

She sighed a little and Miya seemed to understand what was going on in her head. Despite her dislike of those who would seek battle for battle's sake, she decided to give the younger claw using Sekirei some comfort. "The bond is only as important as you make it," she murmured softly walking past Haihane to join the others. "If you and your Ashikabi do not put enough into it, then it matters not at all."

Haihane looked at her blankly for a moment her mind a whirl. Then she turned and bounded off. She had a lot to think about and of course a new DVD set to watch. After all some things were more important than others.

With that distraction gone, Miya stood beside Minato who waved the others forward so that she and he could talk as they walked back to Izumo house. While the others raced ahead with their various prisoners, the two of them continued slowly, looking at one another and then away, wondering which of them was going to speak first. Eventually Minato spoke up, looking over at her a slight blush on his face. "I thought that my attraction to you was one-sided, a dirty little secret I had to keep hidden. So why....?"

Miya blushed a little in turn. "I believe it started for me when you began your quest to save my younger sisters from Higa and those like him. You have done so much for my people Minato, despite the danger to yourself and those you bonded with. How could I not come to respect you for that? And then seeing the care and love you share with your Sekirei, your respect and friendship with me, how could I not come to return it? More I came to realize that I had been in stasis for so long. I wanted to start moving again, and when I realized that I knew I wanted you beside me into the future. I still love my husband, may he rest peacefully in heaven, but I love you as well now. Will you accept that?"

Minato turned to her, halting her progress towards Izumo house. He stared at her for a moment then leaned in gently to kiss her on the lips and said "yes." Her wings once more appeared, growing a little brighter, flaring a little stronger and she pulled away, smiling, as he continued seriously. "But I still want to talk to my wives before I commit to you joining them. I have to make sure that they're all right with this."

This didn't bother Miya in fact it made her smile widen in appreciation. "And yet again you show how much you care, how you treat us like people not like pawns. Is it any wonder I came to love you Minato?"

Minato blushed, then shook his head. To him his kindness and attention was merely what any husband or Ashikabi should feel towards their Sekirei family/wives, but he knew that in this game that had proven to be rarer than he could have hoped.

With that they completed their journey. The prisoners were all placed in one room in the inn itself while the Sekirei were placed in one of the empty houses. Kaie, Homura and Uzume would watch the Ashikabi along with Shiina and Yukari. Kana, Kisami and Yahan would be watching the Ashikabi.

Saki would not take part in guarding the prisoners. She was resting in the main dining room, laid out on the ground as Yui tended to her injuries.

Minato looked at her as he was passing through and blinked in shock. "You guys were just supposed to infiltrate the com center, there shouldn't have been a Sekirei guard there! What the heck happened to you?"

"Don't ask" Saki growled out. "We ran into a bit of an issue. You humans have some bat shit crazy people you know that?"

Minato looked at her realizing there was a story there but he decided to let it lie for now as it was obviously still a sore subject. He shrugged said "good work, thanks" and left to find his wives. They and Miya had all congregated in Miya's room, and following the bond he shared with them he found them there easily.

When he entered the room Tsukiumi was the first to come up to him, clasping him to her in a fierce embrace and kissing him lovingly on the lips. Minato eagerly returned this while asking through the link, *Are you positive you're all right with this?*

Tsukiumi pulled back and looked at him her eyes dark, but face accepting as she replied out loud, sending her feelings at the same time. "Yes Minato, I am. If it was anyone else I would not be, and this had better be all that is holy be the last one to join us, but Miya is..is Miya." She stammered a little at the end. "There's really no other way to

say it. I respect her, she's powerful, majestic very womanly and... and I have come to care for her as much as my other sister-wives." She said it almost defiantly, and Minato looked at her for a moment before dragging her into a very gentle hug and kissing her lovingly on the cheeks. Of all his wives he knew Tsukiumi was the most possessive of him and for her to say something like that meant it was true and Minato vowed to do something nice for his wives to show his appreciation of them all. *When this is over I'm going to pamper them all silly that is a promise.*

He looked over at the others and saw Akitzu her normally emotionless face gone now that they were alone and she smiled happily at him. Kazehana was giggling looking between him and Miya, and seemed on the verge of saying something raunchy and wrong, but Miya glared at her until she subsided a little still giggling. No need to ask either of their opinion but Minato still did so over the link. Kazehana answered with an emphatic "yes I want my Miya-nee to join us," while Akitzu disdained words, and simply sent him a flood of acceptance and love through their link that nearly took his breath away.

With that done Akitzu turned to Miya and gently brought the older woman into a hug and kissed her on the lips. Miya returned it, but then pulled away, shaking her head. "I know I shouldn't ask, but do you think my first night with..."

Kazehana however was already dragging Akitzu and Tsukiumi out the door. "We'll bring all the others over to the other houses to leave you two love birds alone," she said gaily. "Don't be too loud though, you might still disturb us."

Me as chuckled a little and answered back, surprisingly tartly. "Oh, like you've disturbed my rest so many nights with your wing based light shows?" Kazehana actually blushed a little but still giggled and waved at them as they walked out the door.

Minato turned from watching them leave to look back at Miya and found her already undressing slowly. As her magnificent body came into view, she teased him a little moving slower and raising a languid hand to wave at him to come forward. Minato felt himself respond almost immediately, and gulped, torn between trepidation and desire. "Oh boy."

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End chapter

And there you have it the next chapter of Warriors Way. Further shakeups, further combat and insanity done by the master of the shotgun. And before you ask, yes that last little bit with him was a cliffhanger. Sorry for the waffiness at the end, but this is Sekirei and it needs a certain amount of citrus and love. Quick question for everyone, should I give Takami a chance to redeem herself? Regardless, I estimate at least three more chapters, two actual chapters and an epilogue. Hope you all enjoyed this chapter, and as always read, review and I'll see you next week.

## **\*Chapter 20\*: Chapter 20 Loose Ends**

I do not own Sekirei, if I did Minaka would be seen as the root of all the problems that he really is rather than a simple madman with too much power. Well that, and Minato would have grown a spine and stood up to him at some point.

Some reviews I would like to mention:

*DemonAngel of Ice*: Good to hear from you again and as always an excellent and thoughtful review! I know that type of character is endemic in manga/anime I just can't understand why, you can have as much fun with strong yet shy characters as wimpy ones who ignore their own hormones entirely after all. Thanks also for telling me about Dragons Rioting, I've read the first two sections and it looks interesting. And in regards to Minaka, if you ignore the little things for too long, they will come back to kill you, it's as simple as that.

*Undeen*: you and other reviews inspired a certain portion of this chapter, and I hope you like how it turns out.

*Partsu*: I know what you mean, the original Minato is almost as bad as Musubi being the main female lead in my opinion. Now if it was Yume that would be different, but I hate wimps and ditzy characters quite a lot.

*AbsoluteZero*: funny you should mention that....

*Crimsonninja117*: Okay I'm going to rant at you here, because regardless of how you intended it, saying 'hurry the fuck and update' pisses me off! Especially since I have made a point of updating this and indeed all my stories as I can! I haven't once missed a week since I began to post this story, and you and others saying 'hurry up' will not change the speed of said, in fact it makes me not want to share my work with you. If you are going to review my work please say something more than 'hurry up I want to be entertained more by your without putting in any work of my own'.

Okay now that I have gotten that rant out of my system I have to say this chapter will be far more serious than any of the others previously have been. While there will be a bit of violence, there won't be any real fights and for this I apologize but it is a necessary evil. Oh, I also realized I made a mistake with the name in the chapter with Higa's assault on the north. The name of #75 is Niwa, not Miwa. This has been corrected going forward and in the chapter in question.

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## **Chapter 19 Loose Ends**

Even having a night to work at it, Minaka found his position as game master severely hampered going forward. Mikogami and Sanada had not responded at all to his overtures/demands. The brat Hayato responded by sending a message telling him that he was busy keeping all of the utilities that still were in the city, all of which were in the south save , up and running and protecting the civilians that were still living in his area of the city, which at this point was the only area of the city that still had any civilians that weren't in some way employed by MBI. This was obviously a very thin excuse to take a wait-and-see attitude to the conflict brewing between Minato and Minaka.

He shook his head at the thought of Minato, torn between anger and amusement that his genes were obviously so superior having produced the young man. The professional and above all ruthless manner in which Minato had slaughtered Higa's forces had been astonishing and amusing to watch, after all the more powerful the Sekirei the better for his long term plans. The humor however had already faded and then disappeared altogether when Miya was winged. Minaka was not a man who admitted fear easily, but he could admit to himself that he was terrified of 01. More it was only a matter of time until Minato made good on his threats and came after Minaka as games master. And if Minato brought the 01 with him, and even if Minaka threw all his resources into the fight victory was nowhere near assured.

And when that conflict did occur it was becoming clear that MBI would stand alone. The ungrateful Ashikabi had responded not at all to his demands and overtures, to his offered rewards for attacking and bringing down the corrupter of the gods plan. The southern brat wasn't the only one, Sanada hadn't even responded. In fact he seems to have disappeared completely from his normal hiding spaces, and the two Ashikabi that were allied with him had vanished as well. This meant a significant force of Sekirei were nowhere to be found.

What was worse was that the sensor net devoted to tracking the Sekirei showed that all those Sekirei should have been where they were supposed to be in the West, but they weren't. He wondered how they had managed to block the tracking device as well as copy them, and what they were up to now. Despite his halving the forces surrounding

the city there hadn't been any reports of mass escapes, so they were all still in the city

This left Minaka with few choices of how to respond, and all of them had issues. The normal human forces he had at his command would be no match for Miya, and it was doubtful whether or not they would be a match for any of Minato's other Sekirei. The power of the norito that Akitzu had used was fantastic, but as it was still being wielded by his enemy and that enemy had shown himself to be both ruthless and capable which was not a good thing. Idly Minaka wondered if he should use the override deactivation signal, which could be sent by the communications tower built into the top of MBI Tower.

However, it wasn't something he could direct or aim, and he would take out his own disciplinary squad as well as his enemies. Unfortunately while this would be all right in the long run, after all he had never planned for any of the Sekirei to retain their free will, in the short run it would be very bad. Not only would it take out his most effective military force, it would send clear signs to the rest of the world that he could have controlled everything that had been occurring from the very beginning. This would disprove the propaganda he had been using previously.

This would be a bad thing, as America and a few of the other democracies in the world were already making noises about annexing Tokyo, and there was even talk in the news about sending in troops to restore order and subdue MBI and the Sekirei. He was certain that his lobbyists could block it in America of course. Silly people, allowing what amounted to obvious bribes in their very election system. But India and the UK had proven surprisingly resilient against the pressure he had brought to bear behind the scenes. If America could be convinced that someone else would supply the land forces they certainly had the ability to sealift those forces into Tokyo with minimal cost or threat to their own forces. And if that happened it was even more imperative that he keep Karasuba's loyalty, as she was the only Sekirei he had at the moment that could take on ships from a distance. It wasn't her normal mode of course she much preferred to see the blood fly, but she could do it. Not nearly as far away or as easily as Miya, but it was doable, and he had no other weapons he could use that were large enough to do that job. A bluff was possible to hide that fact of course, after all he had been bluffing about other things for several years now.

No, it was very much better for his long-term plans if they could keep everything under wraps, which meant keeping control of all communications going out of Tokyo and hammering this little rebellion into the ground. And thanks to Sarge the attempt to break into the communication tower near Sanada's territory had failed, which allowed him to retain that control. In point of fact the Sgt.'s injuries were such that he was almost ready to return to duty. Several bruised ribs, a broken wrist, and numerous cuts and bruises, but nothing that could keep him down as he had insisted when he was brought in. The fact that a human and been able to fight off not one but two Sekirei, even if they were weak infiltration types, had surprised Minaka and he had awarded Sarge by putting him in charge of organizing the defense of the first five levels of the tower.

So Minaka decided to remain on the defensive. And if Minato moved against him, he will be seen as the aggressor and anything MBI did to put Minato down would be seen as a good thing, as he would be the one breaking the peace and attacking Minaka, who was simply trying to control the violent Sekirei and their Ashikabi. He looked over at a special phone set into his desk. He had it installed simply because the moment he used it would be such a dramatic moment that it demanded its own phone. Then he looked away again. It was not quite time yet. He wasn't that desperate just yet, after all even if Miya was winged it was unlikely that she would take offensive action after so long. Not when she knew that he had both the ship and could send out a signal to kill her entire race. Yet if she did, he would have no choice but to make a certain phone call.

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Minato hurt. He hurt in ways he would never have thought possible. His pelvic bone felt as if it had been ground to fine powder, his back had scratches on it, his stomach muscles felt as if he had tried to do 6000 sit-ups in one go, and his dick felt as if someone had put it into a meat grinder. Yet despite all this, he woke up with a smile as he had done it, he had worn out Miya! From the noises she was making as she moved around the room, humming cheerfully, it hadn't lasted very long, but she had fallen asleep before he did last night. He silently thanked the fact that he had already had three wives, as being with them as often as he was had given him the endurance necessary to keep up with Miya. Hopefully from now on she wouldn't be as...insatiable going forward, as Minato didn't think he could take any more sessions like last night. *Oh, but what a way to go. I have to remember to get her a ring at some points, I know the ones I designed for my other wives were never finished, but maybe someday...*

He turned away deliberately so he couldn't watch Miya get dressed, as he thought that if his dick got hard again it would probably fall off, and he knew it would, Miya was just as gorgeous as his other wives, and such a reaction was inevitable. Instead he concentrated on what he knew about Minaka, and the megalomaniac's reaction or probable reaction to what had happened yesterday.

Depending on how Nishi did with his meeting with Mikogami, Minaka could find himself alone, friendless and

surrounded by enemies. Even for a normal man that would make for a combination that would create a certain level of desperation. *With a man like Minaka I just don't know how he'll jump having been denied so often, even if he still retains a lot power. Will he attack and try to immediately regain control again by trying to smack me and mine down, or will he take a wait-and-see attitude, playing to popular opinion abroad to make it seem as if I'm the aggressor when I go after him?* After a moment's thought, Minato figured that it would be a second option. Minaka had always taken the wait-and-see attitude, as he firmly believed that he held all the cards. He still held several high denomination ones, but the momentum had most certainly shifted to Minato.

*If that was the case I'm going to take this time to clean up some loose ends, and prepare for the fight to come. As well as do the trials* he thought grimly. If he had his way this would be the last day that Izumi Higa would be polluting the earth with his presence. *More it will go a long way to turning popular opinion against Minaka and MBI.*

Miya came over now that she was fully dressed and leaned down to kiss him tenderly. Despite her own exertions the night before she felt stronger more powerful than she ever had, and she reveled in her bond with her new husband, certain it was only a matter of time until that bond was as deep between them as his was with her new sister wives. Her bond wings spread out, now almost the size of his wives as they had been before the mental connection occurred, and they could hear giggles and laughter out on the lawn and in the inn itself. She pulled away slowly, dreamily and Minato smirked a little. "So what does this do to your 'no lewd acts in Izumo house' rule?"

Miya smiled looking down at him as she moved away to let him sit up. He did so, wincing in pain. "I believe that we could bend that rule a little. No lewd acts outside of the bedroom, and only at night." She frowned a little as she noticed the welts and bruises on Minato's back, as well as one spectacular hicky on his neck. Not that she was completely unmarked, but most of her marks had already faded. Miya laid a cool hand on his bare back sighing. "I'm sorry Minato I didn't realize how rough I was being last night."

Minato grabbed her hand kissing and gently. "I didn't complain at the time and I'm not complaining now. I wouldn't mind if our next time is a little more gentle rather than well, ferocious really, it was fun, but it wasn't something I want to do again like that."

Miya laughed quietly and said softly, "I don't think that will be an issue, but it had been several years for me you know." It hurt to acknowledge in some ways, but Minato had proven a better lover than Takehito had been, simply with his endurance. They treated her much the same, and they were very much the same in other ways, not to put it too bluntly, but Minato had far more endurance, something that her husband had lacked. She'd been astonished that he was able to keep up with her, and even more astonished when she became tired out before he did. She looked forward to the next time she could test that endurance, but for now more serious matters beckoned.

The two exited the room together and went into the dining area to find that Chiho had taken over making everyone breakfast, and was directing the others in doing so, acting for all the world like a queen in her little kingdom, thrown and all. Everyone there looked up at the two new lovers, their reactions were varied. Yui merely nodded, wondering internally what this would do to the group dynamic, while Yahan and Matsu both were giggling and giving her knowing, lecherous looks. Miya immediately set them straight with a small hanya mask attack of course then smiled at Chiho and let her to it, going over to check on the Sekirei that had been captured the day before while Minato checked on the Ashikabi. It was well she had for as Kisami bowed her into the house Niwa, the Sekirei that Tsukiumi had subdued, came awake.

Like the others she made an instinctive move to get up and find her Ashikabi, but she was met with Miya's gentle hand, pushing her down with inescapable force. "Sshh, young one, rest easy, you are safe."

Niwa looked up at her blearily, but didn't recognize her. "W-who are you?"

Miya smiled. "I am Miya Asama, Sekirei 01, and you are with friends here."

Niwa looked at her a little warily. "And my Ashikabi, where is he?"

"He will be facing justice soon for how he treated you and your other sister." Miya nodded over to Yosuga. "We can also remove your crest if you so wish." It had to be her choice after all, even if they had a lot of evidence of the Ashikabi's wrongdoings as they did in this case.

Niwa started to thrash. "No, no I can't, you can't the bond, it's all I have, I'll be alone again!"

"Not while I draw breath," Miya said firmly. "I said you are safe here, and I meant it. You will find friends here, people who accept you and respect you as you are and will not judge you for what you've gone through or done. We are all family here young one."

Niwa looked at her, her eyes starting to tear up. "I-I won't be punished, I, I won't be alone?"

Miya shook her head, and as the younger girl began to cry, loudly and heartrendingly, she gathered the girl into a hug, gently rocking her back and forth as Kisami looked on, her own eyes a little wet. This went on for several minutes but when it ended Niwa was able to ask for her crest to be removed, which Miya obliged even as she kept hugging the younger girl, saying a prayer for the first time ever. "By the blade of my soul, let this foul connection be severed." A second later the crest on the back of Niwa's neck disappeared and she collapsed boneless against Miya's chest. Miya kept on holding her, gently rocking her from side to side as around them the other 'captured' Sekirei began to awaken.

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Minato found that the Ashikabi had woken up, but after some very blatant threats, admonishments and bribes their guards had knocked them back out. Yukari had taken a certain amount of pleasure in doing this, and the heel sized mark on Higa's privates showed what her contribution had been. After a moment spent wincing Minato nodded solemnly and told her to keep the others out, and that she would be called to bring them over to Izumo house when the trials were ready to start.

Next he went over to talk to Saki. Saki explained what had happened on her mission of infiltration and Minato listened, almost unable to keep a smile off his face as he listened to how badly things on when this shotgun wielding soldier had gotten involved. Minato was sort of looking forward to meeting him, though hopefully not with a shotgun in his hand. Minato himself was good with a shotgun, there was nothing like a good shotgun for clearing urban hard points (i.e. houses and the interior of buildings), but they weren't exactly a weapon you could walk away from if you were hit. It was only thanks to Saki's Sekirei endurance that she and Barei had walked away.

"Still," he said thoughtfully, "you guys did good. We'll be using that little device later today hopefully. After that things are going to happen quickly."

Saki nodded in reply still sore and irritated by the drubbing that she had taken. She tried to convince herself that it would've gone differently if she had been there to fight rather than get in and get out in secret and if Sarge hadn't taken them by surprise. Yet she knew that in that kind of environment other soldiers would've obviously come to help Sarge, and if they all could fight as well as he had the battle would've gone against her pretty quickly, and even if they hadn't she might've still lost. Saki looked speculatively at Minato, wondering if he and Sarge were more the norm for humanity than she had thought.

Minato had already turned his attention to Kusano, who had just run in, excitedly reaching for a hug. Minato swept up his daughter into a fierce embrace then put her on one shoulder and turns to Uzume who stood beside Chiho. "Do you have all the jinki down here? If so, ask the AI if we could create a solution for your Ashikabi's disease. With Higa taken out, his hospital is fair game."

Chiho tried not to look to hopeful but Uzume a nodded rapidly. With a thought she threw her consciousness into the jinki, and after a moment she came out of the trance breaking out into a wide grin. "It says yes, it'll even give me a list of the things we'll need!"

Minato nodded happily and Chiho let out a breath of relief, true, complete relief at the knowledge that her disease could be cured.

With that done Minato ordered Yahan and Matsu to start removing and creating decoys of the trackers on all of his Sekirei and the other girls. At this point Miya came in, having released all the captured Sekirei from their bonds. She was followed by Tsukiumi and his other wives. All of them swiftly made their way towards him and he kissed them each in turn on the lips. Their wings merged as they interacted, soon joined by Miya's and all his other girls to create a massive Kaleidoscope of vibrant color that spread throughout his territory. Unbeknownst to Minato (though it would have made his day if he had known) this display was even visible from the top MBI tower and Minaka scowled angrily as he saw it from his office's windows.

After a brief discussion of what all they wanted to have happen today Tsukiumi was leading a group out to Higa's former base of operations. This group consisted of her, Matsu (leaving Izumo house for the first time ever without heading immediately to a love hotel), Musubi, and Uzume along Yashima, who knew the layout of the hospital having been there several times but did not have any bad memories associated with it as her Ashikabi had only been allied with Higa, not actually living there with his own forces. On top of this Matsu had found a diagram of the building, and she had the list of machines and medicines that they needed to create a solution to Chiho's disease.

While this was going on Miya had finally realized what had been bothering her about the jinkis and after a moment explaining it, she and Minato both decided to communicate with the AI to solve the mystery. Kazehana joined them

while Akitzu went over to watch the captured Sekirei with Kaei and relive Kisami and Kana so they could get some rest and food.

As soon as they were in the formless gray fog that was the mental connection between them and the jinki, Miya asked bluntly. "While I was probably not meant to be the captain of the ship that brought us here, I was it's captain in truth for a time, I know there were eight jinki not seven. What happened to the eighth? Did Minaka do something to it?"

"Negative," said the computer's voice sounding almost sorrowful, but at the same time very respectful. "Crystal number 05 was deliberately destroyed by the head researcher Takehito."

Miya gaped for a moment her face going white. "What," she exclaimed, her customary control is almost gone at this point, "Why, deliberate, why..."

Minato put a hand on her shoulder bringing her into a firm hug, and Kazehana placed a friendly hand on her shoulder to calm her down as the computer replied. "Watch," it said, and like the last time a video began to play. Unlike the last one this didn't come from the ship's own computer, and didn't match the quality of most of those images. It was black and white, and going by the time stamp and the angle evidently downloaded from a video security. It showed what looked like a very high-tech laboratory with the lights off. It was empty at first but that ended abruptly when the lights of the laboratory came on and someone Minato did not recognize but, from the gasps they made Miya and Kazehana did, came through the door.

Minato noticed that the man, who must be Takehito was bleeding from a shoulder wound. It looked like a gunshot to Minato, and he had blood caking his hair. He ran into the laboratory towards the main center console, on top of which a straight strange scanner sort of thing lay, and on top of that was one of the jinki. The man looked around, making certain he was alone. When he was certain of that he reached underneath the table, to pull out a huge cannon of some kind, the size of a bazooka but if it was one it wasn't a type Minato had ever seen before. He noticed it had wires leading from the back of it to before he could even voice the question the computer answered him, saying calmly "laser, reverse-engineered from the ship and miniaturized. The head researcher truly was a genius, on par or even greater than Minaka. Before this he had spent several hours deleting any and all information on the computer system about this project, and even now MBI and Minaka have yet to recreate it."

The scientists turned to look at the camera. His voice was heard via a pickup in the room somewhere and it was calm despite his injuries as he stared into the camera's lens. "I know why you're doing this Minaka, I know why you're having me killed. I know everything now. But I know also that you need all eight of the crystals to control the Sekirei's ship, and I'm not going to let you do it. One way or the other, I'm not going to let you do it."

The door to the laboratory banged open and a true behemoth of a man came through. He was easily pushing 9 feet tall, was monstrously broad in the shoulders with a bald head and eyes hidden behind a visor. He was also wearing a form of body armor that Minato had never seen or heard of before. It looked almost like a more advanced version of the common Navy Seal rig, but with what looked like incredibly heavy armor of some kind, with several large loops of ammunition stowed away as well as what were obviously some kind of needles or syringes. Minato calculated the weight of the thing going by its looks alone and realized that the man must be even stronger than he looked to be able to move around while wearing it. In one hand he held a large serrated knife and in the other a rifle.

He stalked forward slowly knowing his prey had nowhere to run and Minato felt Miya twitch and her hands clenched at her sides. Miya had been told that Takehito had died in an accident. Oh she had her suspicions of course, yet to see those suspicions become stark reality was a major blow, and without Kazehana and Minato there to hold her she would have lost all control and gone immediately to the tower to kill Minaka and anyone who got in her way.

The scientist shook his head. "The Meta, one of many of Minaka's little personal projects, now his pet killer. You may have been human once" he said thoughtfully, looking at the giant as he kicked aside a desk to get at him, "but I don't think you are anymore, and you certainly aren't a Sekirei. That doesn't really matter now. I know I'm going to die, but I have something to tell you and Minaka both and I know he's listening now." As the Meta abandoned his attempts to come closer and started to raise his rifle he said coldly, "You can always take one with you" and turned the laser on, it's target the jinki next to him.

Before the Meta could fire the laser fired a continuous beam of energy slamming into the jinki. Two shots rang out impacting his body, but somehow the scientist kept to his feet, and the laser kept pouring fire into the crystal. As the Meta charged forward desperately to push him away the crystal began to pulse and then it exploded and everything went white.

The computer said softly, "That explosion utterly eradicated one of MBI's main research laboratories on Kamikura

island, and if it had occurred above ground it would've decimated the whole island. The entire facility was simply gone and the crater it created was fifteen km. wide."

"Your husband actually forced Minaka to go with the Sekirei plan as it was his second option. With all eight of the jinki he would have had full access to the ship and, once he could break all my security codes, which I have today he was very close to doing, could have gotten access to all of my records and everything that entails. Without it he cannot fully control me or the ship, and he has since been bluffing about being able to use it's weapons. Your husband Miya was a hero of the highest order."

Miya stood there, a proud look on her face, smiling happily at the news but with tear streaks raining down her face. While Kazehana took over the job of comforting her Minato asked "what was the Meta?"

"The Meta was an experiment to see if it was possible to re-create the Sekirei core, the internal energy source that creates and sustains a Sekirei's power and bond in a human being. The experiment failed, as the human mind and body was not meant to sustain such power. Perhaps if it had been used on an Ashikabi that was already as strong and as reinforced as you or the other major Ashikabi it would've worked, but even that would be a long shot. According to the research this unit was able to find hacking into MBI's system the Meta's mind broke, and he was never able to produce the same power that a Sekirei could."

"And you're positive that Minaka can't use anything from the ship?"

The computer seemed to hesitate for a moment, then answered "affirmative. He has attempted numerous times to override my security codes, but without all eight of the crystals under his command he has been unable to do so."

Minato sighed in relief. That was one worry gone. Little did he know however that Nishi would soon arrive, and his news would introduce a new problem.

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Later that day Miya had once again taken over watching the captured Sekirei. More had woken up but like Miwa they were calmed and cowed by her presence, as well as her hanya mask attack. However despite this, and displayed her assurances that nothing would happen to them. None of the others asked for their bond to be removed at this point.

Yui took a look at them and after a few minutes talking to them was able to say that they all seemed to be suffering from mild cases of Stockholm syndrome, identifying with their Ashikabi despite how they were treated. This concerned everyone, but Miya was certain that she could handle them come what may. And possibly seeing that their Ashikabi would get justice would break that final tether and let them move on.

While this was going on Minato was busy meeting with Nishi. The two of them grabbed a six pack the man had brought along and started moving from house to house in the area, looking around. Nishi had decided to pull all of his Sekirei and Ashikabi allies out of his territory and move into the houses near Minato and company. With the last of civilians in his area gone he was able to leave with a clear conscience. This also put all their forces in one place, so they couldn't be taken out in detail. While Minato was confident that working together his wives could match Karasuba, Nishi well knew that none of his Sekirei was up to matching that particular bitch.

He also brought a lot of supplies in the form of foodstuffs and water, which was always a concern. It went without saying that Minaka had already cut off all the utilities to Izumo house and the north in general (this had happened directly after Takami's visit). They hadn't felt the crunch yet because of Akitzu, Matsu and Miya being so concerned with stockpiling supplies, but it would have been a matter of time before they did. *Of course*, Minato thought sardonically *as things are going it wouldn't have been an issue*. He fully expected that this Sekirei Plan and Minaka would be dealt with within the week. What would happen after that he wasn't going to speculate, so maybe it would eventually have become an issue... "So how'd your meeting with little boy rich go?"

Nishi sipped his beer before replying. "All right I suppose though I didn't exactly follow our initial plan." This was actually a test he was setting up for Minato. If Minato was a control freak who is going to freak out about how Nishi didn't follow the plan Nishi could still back away, well a little anyway.

But Minato had long ago learned to trust the opinions of others, and so he simply nodded. "You were the man on the spot so I'll go with what you decided to do. And that was exactly what?"

Nishi grinned a little in relief, taking another swig of beer. "The kid's a lot brighter than we expected. Hell even I thought he was a bit of a dumbass, a little boy with new toys. But that little boy has a brain, and he's got more control about his parent's business than we expected too." He went on to describe the meeting he had with Hayato, as well as the number of Sekirei he had seen patrolling the southern section of the city. The fact itself he'd been able to keep

his territory relatively unharmed. It was still populated a little which was a nice surprise, but the news about the nuke that MBI had built was a BAD THING.

Minato groaned. They would have to take out that nuke before they could really come to grips with MBI and its forces, but how to do it was a question. He looked down at the bottle in his hand and with intent lifted it to his lips and drained it all in one go. After he was done he turned to Nishi and shook his head. "We should've brought more beer."

Nishi grinned. "Or something stronger anyway."

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When they returned from their walk/discussion/drinking session Nishi and Minato found that another Ashikabi had shown up out of nowhere. Seo had gone to ground with the thunder twins that no one had been able to find him but presumably MBI. He had moved around so much none of the other Ashikabi, not even Matsu had known where he would be from day to day. None of the trio looked any worse the wear for this though. Seo looked up from talking with Matsu to stare at Nishi and Minato as they came in, and his jaw dropped as he looked at Minato. "Wh-what the hell! You, you can't have, you winged Miya!"

Nishi looked at Minato in surprise, the other man not having mentioned that just yet, while Minato raised an eyebrow at the perception Seo showed. "How exactly can you tell that?"

Seo looked away, his face hardening a little. "Takehito did some... tweaks on me a few years before he died. It makes me able to see the bonds between Ashikabi and their feathers, and I can cancel out most Sekirei's powers by grabbing onto them."

Minato nodded. "So that's why you can survive grabbing your Sekirei like you do when they don't like it. And here I thought you were just a durable pervert."

Seo laughed. "Oh don't worry I'm that too, I'm just a pervert with an edge." Hibiki groaned while Hikari scowled at his admitting to something so shameful. She was tempted to fry him, but Miya had just walked into the room, and her opinions on violence in Izumo house were well known. Now if they could get Seo out to the road outside Izumo that would be a different story.

Miya took her place next to Minato graceful as ever, though there was a glow about her, a sparkle to her eyes that hadn't been there since Takehito had passed away. Seo saw it, frowned a little and then shrugged philosophically. He had never thought she'd get over Takehito but she seemed happy and he knew his old friend would have wanted that more than anything else. He looked back at Minato with keen eyes. "You've been busy since I last saw you. Minaka put out a call to all the other Ashikabi, telling them how you'd broken the rules and asking them to work together with the disciplinary squad to take you down."

Minato smirked a little and Nishi actually laughed aloud. "So long as the ones responding don't include Mikogami, I'm not exactly worried." In point of fact there were only about ten Sekirei unaffiliated with them, Hayato or MBI still in the game. Over a dozen had died trying to break out during the first match of the fourth stage and many more had died in the war between the East and the North, and even more had been deactivated during the third stage before and after the city was closed.

Seo chuckled too, but his eyes were hard as he stared at Minato. "Yeah, but they all want me to talk to you, we sort of have been keeping in contact since the fourth stage began. They don't want to fight anymore, but they don't want any part of your rebellion either. They want to know if you win, what's going to happen to them? Are you just going to replace Minaka with yourself? What's really going to happen?"

Minato nodded, that question was reasonable but first... "Did they all get the message Nishi here send out about the MBI cards?" Seo nodded grimly. "Well in that case I really don't care if they sit on the sidelines for now." He looked at Nishi, Miya, Akitzu and Kazehana, all of whom shrugged or nodded. Kazehana completely understood bonded pairs wanting to be left alone with one another and thought it was extremely romantic. Akitzu didn't care one way or another, she couldn't really care less about complete strangers, she hoarded all her caring for those she knew, especially their family, but in that focus she cared far more than she ever showed, and Minato knew it. Miya, judging from her face, wanted as many of her younger sisters out of the fighting as possible. He even reached through their bond to ask Tsukiumi's opinion. Yet his most tempestuous and combative wife had learned that many of her sisters just weren't fighters. She didn't like it but she knew it was the truth, and she was okay with them not joining the battle against MBI.

He turned back to their guest. "In the long run as long as we band together and can take control of the ship and MBI facilities, we hopefully will be left alone by the rest of the world." He rolled his eyes indicating his thoughts on the odds

of that. "I have no intention of continuing this mad plan of Minaka's if that's what you're asking. What I want to do, my only goal long term, is to keep the Sekirei safe from anyone who would experiment, manipulate or kill the Sekirei. Whatever I do will work towards that goal."

Seo nodded, and finished the food he had taken from the kitchen and stood up. "Well, I'll relay that to the others, but for now we're just going to keep watching and keep our heads down." Minato nodded and Oosumi walked Seo out (none of the Sekirei wanted to come near the pervert).

Nishi waited until the older man was gone before mentioning lightly. "I notice you didn't mention the nuke, or what the Sekirei were running from when they crashed on Earth?"

"Would you have?" Minato looked over at Miya. "I don't know Seo well enough to say what he'd do with information like that, and I really don't want to add anymore variables to this situation at this point."

Miya frowned thoughtfully. "The one thing about Seo other than his laziness, lack of ambition and perversion that you can count on is that he hates Minaka. Not nearly as much as I do of course, but still." For an instant there was a pressure in the air, taking everyone's breath away but then it was gone as soon as it appeared. "But as to what he would do with that information, I really can't say one way or the other."

Nishi nodded decisively. "Right, we don't need any more crap right now. And if it comes to a fight between MBI and us, we've already got the numbers and power to take them without anyone else." The others nodded and the discussion turned to other things for a time as they ate lunch

By the time they finished Tsukiumi had returned with Uzume and the others with the ingredients and devices they would need to create a cure for Chiho. Takano immediately took charge of that, it turned out that he was budding chemist, and was up to the task of creating the new medicine. It would take time, but it would happen eventually. Miya walked Namiji through connecting with the jinki and they moved the material and the two of them into the same house Yukari and Shiina were living in.

Chiho smiled brightly, beaming at them all. "I can't thank you enough for this all of you, thank you so much!" Uzume was even more effusive, going around and hugging Sekirei and Ashikabi alike in the joy of her Ashikabi being cured. Reactions were varied, but the arguments and shouting this elicited from possessive Sekirei took Minato's mind off the problems that were looming in the near future.

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Karasuba was contemplating the future as she waited for her new sword to be prepared to her specifications. The metallurgy lab's supervisor was working his people as hard as he could, knowing that the faster they finished the faster the sadistic O4 would leave their lab.

Karasuba didn't notice their sweaty faces or their terrified looks in her direction too busy fuming with anger at how easily Miya had swept her aside, as if all her skills didn't matter. And as for that crap she spouted about not knowing love... well it was true but it didn't matter, love was utterly worthless in her opinion, hence her ongoing rivalry with Yume and her successor Msuubi. No, she needed an edge she needed something that would let her face Miya and Musubi. What that was she didn't know just yet, but she would find it, and when she did they would both die by her blade and she would take their precious Ashikabi, the source of their love and break him too. And then the world would burn.

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Karasuba wasn't been the only one who was thinking about the future among the Disciplinary Squad. Benitsubasa was doing the same thing pacing up and down angrily in their shared living room while Haihane watched the animation DVD set that Minato had given her. Again their Ashikabi hadn't even patted them on the head or done anything to acknowledge how close they had come to death against O1. In point of fact, they hadn't even seen him since getting back. Minaka had apparently sent Natsuo to Kamikara Island for some reason, taking a message on one of MBI's hyper secret superfast stealth helicopters. This rankled Benitsubasa even more after seeing the care and concern Minato showed all of his Sekirei, and even the way he treated her and Haihane. The memory of that night of dancing was one of her favorites.

"I mean," she exclaimed, "we're supposed to be a team or something right! Not just a band of peons that goes where he wills or where Minaka wills! He's supposed to be our Ashikabi not some errand boy who just passes on orders! Would it kill him to spend some time with us!"

Haihane glanced up briefly as the ending credits began on the second episode of *Jing*. *Heh human greed coming alive how cool was that?* "Jealous?" she asked.

A month ago Benitsubasa would've blown up in her face at the very idea. Yet now she had had that month and more to get used to the fact that her Ashikabi didn't feel anything but a little bit of friendliness towards her of the kind that you would give a dog or an apt underling. Worse she had attempted to ambush him in his room last night after coming back from their aborted attack on Minato and his flock, and seen things in his room. She had known that her Ashikabi was gay, but seeing pictures of his past lover, as well as dozens of pictures of Minaka spread out on a wall like some kind of obsessive stalker was more than enough to break the final piece of her desire for him. Well, that and give her nightmares.

She hadn't shared that discovery with Haihane, and probably wouldn't ever. Now she simply shook her head "no," she sighed sadly "just really, really pissed off and worried. You know Karasuba is going to do something crazy, and we're probably going to be caught up in it. Maybe...." she looked over at Haihane from the corner of her eyes. "Maybe we should look for our own way out of here."

Haihane looked up again pausing the DVD before the next episode could really get started. Unlike her friend, she had never really had much of an emotional connection to her Ashikabi, oh she had reacted to him and it would've been nice if that connection had grown, but it hadn't and she didn't really care one way or the other about him. For some reason unknown to her the indoctrination, both physical and mental hadn't really taken hold, and without any affection or effort to secure the bond it had withered away. Maybe it was because in several ways she was as undeveloped mentally as Kusano or Musubi, while other areas of her brain were fully developed. That odd dichotomy might have worked against the indoctrination. So rather than react like a normal Sekirei would and start shouting at her friend at the very idea of leaving their Ashikabi, Haihane simply cocked her head and asked, "how? Where to?"

Benitsubasa sighed again. "I don't know, I think, I think we need to get out of here. I know it's sort of like a rat leaving a sinking ship here." Haihane giggled a little as the image of a pink haired rat appeared in her mind trying to scale down the tower with a little pack on its back. Benitsubasa ignored the noise with the habit of long practice as she went on, "but I think we do need to get out of here. I'm not exactly afraid of the fights to come of course." They both grinned fiercely at one another. If there was one thing that all three of the Disciplinary Squad members shared it was a love of lighting combat. If it was just the fighting or even fighting to the death neither of them would blink, but fighting 01 on top of all the silly, stupid, dishonorable and contemptible orders they had been given lately, and all the evidence they had seen that Minaka and his plan really didn't have the anything to offer them, that was beyond the pale. "But if I'm going to die I want to do it on my terms." Haihane grinned raised one hand in agreement and then turned back to keep watching her DVD. Perils plans and desires aside, anime was more important. *Gimme a Keer Royale, heh, I want one.*

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Takami sighed as she prepared for a short afternoon nap, which was all she could allow herself. Another all-nighter filled with butting heads with Minaka, butting heads with the other scientists, trying desperately to mitigate the chaos, trying desperately to head off the coming showdown she could see looming between her son and his father. Though of course neither saw that connection, it was purely genetic to both of them, unimportant in comparison to the moral stance of one or the mad dreams of the other. She knew come what may one of them was going to die, and she couldn't think of anything to do to stave it off.

Takami blinked as something beeped cheerily over by her dresser. She got up as the beeping continued to find her cell phone, which she had just plugged in to charge after several days at least of it not having power. This wasn't wasn't unusual, she had a lot on her mind damnit, and way more demands on her time than anyone normal could deal with. The beeping indicated incoming messages, and she smiled at who they all were from, her daughter Yukari.

'Hey mom, just wanted to check in, I love you.'

'Hey mom, must have missed you, don't worry about nii-chan, he'll come around. What did you think of the yard I designed? Love you.'

'Hey mom, no matter what happens, no matter what you've done, you're still my mom, and I love you.'

Takami stared at all the messages her daughter sent her for a moment then made a decision. Come what may, she was going to make her little girl proud of her, she was going to do the right thing for her and her son, and that meant moving past her self-destructive pull towards Minaka and siding with Minato. With that she powered up her personal computer and started to search the system for something, anything she could use as leverage.

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Minato and the others spent an hour after lunch rearranging the dining area, which was the largest room in the inn and any of the houses around. In the center of the room there were three hard wooden chairs for the three captured Ashikabi. Against the wall directly facing them were three piles of comfy pillows, set up like a military tribunal. The

centermost, much to everyone's surprise, went to Miya. As the most powerful (a hasty correction from the oldest made by Minato) member of her race she naturally had to be involved in any kind of court that impacted her younger sisters. The other two places were taken by Minato and Nishi as the most powerful Ashikabi.

Minato wanted to make certain to avoid any sign of partiality or rigging of the court, and so Yui would act as the defendant's lawyer, while Oosumi would act as the prosecutor. Like any court, witnesses would be called in to speak one at a time and the two acting lawyers would each have turns to question them. The judges could answer and ask questions too of course, and a full video camera and microphone system was set up in the doorway to the kitchen behind a hastily made screen, which would hopefully hide them from the view of the captured Ashikabi.

Matsu stood up from setting it up with Yahan looking over worriedly at Minato. The video was connected via long wires to her computers in the command center, and from there would be sent on to the communication tower and from there out to TVs across the nation and maybe even the world, as well as directly to the internet. "Mina-tan are you sure about sending this out live? There's no way Minaka and MBI won't know how we're sending it out pretty quickly. The moment they do it'll take them no time at all to find with the signal splicer."

Minato nodded firmly. "We need to send this out live to make it clear none of it is made up, we'll have more than enough people saying that anyway. Besides even if Minaka and the assholes he has working from him in the tower figure it out, it will still be the people on the spot who have to find and remove our little device. And despite the fact Saki attacked her I doubt any woman will want to stop this trial once it gets going." Well anyone but someone like Karasuba, but that type was rather rare, and he was willing to hope for some luck.

Matsu nodded, not agreeing or disagreeing. Not ten minutes later the prisoners were brought in, their hands tied behind them. Izumi Higa and the others had been allowed to bathe before this, with Homura and Oboro watching them like hawks; there would be no way for them to evoke a sense of sympathy in the audience. Higa was forced to sit in the center seat, with his former aide next to him on his right and the third Ashikabi, Busu Chinpō.

When they were in place Miya swiftly looked over at Yahan who nodded. Miya looked at the 'men' before her with disgust in her eyes, but she didn't let any of it touch her face or voice, indeed she appeared the epitome of an impartial judge. "You are here to answer charges of rape, murder, willful destruction of property and slavery. You will be allowed to speak in your defense, but only when told you may. You have also been given a lawyer who will cross examine the witnesses and the accusers, who are, in this case one and the same. They are, naturally Sekirei, who have been freed of their bonds to you and can now speak freely. Do you understand what I have explained?"

Kakizaki recognized her as the Demon of the North and realizing what she was stayed silent. Busu simply scowled, wondering how the hell Yosuga or Niwa were already freed from his bond with them. Higa however had regained some of his poise and arrogance when they were in the baths. "I do not recognize the power of this court over me!" He sneered. "If you wish to try me you must turn me over to an actual court."

Miya nearly unleashed her hanya mask attack, but Nishi spoke up before she could. "Oh, and where the hell are we supposed to find a judge or a policemen or anything like that in Tokyo now? They ran off like the rest of the population of the city. No, you'll be tried by a jury of your peers, and that means us."

Higa scowled but Minato spoke up in the interest of moving things on. "Could the first witness please come in?"

Chizuru came in from the hallway, face tense but her head held up proudly and she marched without hesitation to the center of the court facing the tribunal. Once she was there Oosumi began to ask her some questions, giving her the opportunity to give a brief background of her life, how she had been experimented on to supposedly 'correct' her genes, before going into how she had been captured by Higa's enforcers and then raped. She had been calm up until that point, but she began to lose it when she talked about how Toyotama held her down as Higa raped her.

She turned to stare with anger and hate in her eyes at Higa who looked back without any expression on his face but cool disdain. That look seemed to spur her on, and when Oosumi asked more questions she began to talk about the other Sekirei she knew had been abused as well as how often she was beaten and ignored by Higa, treated much like a useless slave would have been. How he had ordered her and the others to attack other Ashikabi and Sekirei regardless of where they were found, resulting in untold damage to the city and to its civilian population.

When it was her turn to cross examine, Yui asked "And at no point before being kissed did you react to the defendant in question?"

"No" Chizuru said firmly, despite the tears flowing down her face. "I was reacting to a young boy I met, but much to my sorrow I didn't bond with him then, because he was so young. Now I have met him again, as if it was really fated, and maybe someday I will recover enough to bond again."

"And did either of the other defendants take part in any of the beatings or worse you went through?" Chizuru looked at them both and shook her head. She barely knew Busu, but had dealt with that sadistic bitch of his who liked to use knives and wear cocktail dresses, but not him personally. She did know he had used her to kill a few civilians though, but Yui rejected this as hearsay, and Miya and the others agreed. And as for Kakizaki, he had never taken part of anything physical. Yui nodded. "No further questions." Chizuru nodded weakly and left the room to find Kohta and his Sekirei waiting for her, and she swiftly found herself the center of a group hug.

The next girl was Katsuragi, whose story was much the same, though she hadn't even had time to explore the city before being captured and forcibly winged by Izumi. Next came Shi, who refused to even look at Higa, keeping her eyes locked on the three judges. Her story was even more damning, as it included over a dozen instances of Higa raping her rather than one, and her beatings were almost as bad afterward as Chizuru's was simply because she didn't enjoy it. When Oosumi asked what Higa had her doing, Shi described how once she had been ordered on threat of even more beatings to attack and kill a group of civilians, former policemen who remained in the city when the rest of their fellows pulled out with the majority of the civilians, simply because they had fought off the yakuza for a few days.

Again however when cross-examined by Yui she didn't say anything about Kakizaki, only saying he had been the one to hunt her down with the null Sekirei, and she had never interacted with Busu or any of his Sekirei. She had heard the rumors about Busu and his Sekirei, but that was all. Shi too was in tears by the time she was finished. When she left the room Yahan and Musubi were waiting for her and quickly pulled her into a hug. While Musubi didn't follow everything she knew Katsuragi had never known the love of her real Ashikabi and that was enough.

Next to come in was Niwa, who paused in the doorway, trembling a little until she caught Miya's eyes on her. A firm nod and a smile gave her the courage to move further into the makeshift courtroom to stand where the others had. Her questioning went much the same at first, that she had been experimented on and indoctrinated as far back as she could remember, that she had never known anything but obeying the orders of MBI and following the orders of her Ashikabi. But from there her answers differed. Unlike the others, Busu had never assaulted her sexually.

She was routinely beaten however for not enjoying the missions she was sent on. At this point her answers became even more damning than similar questions for the others. For, while Izumi had his Sekirei guarding his yakuza allies from other Sekirei, they didn't routinely take part in the actual looting or killing. Busu ordered his Sekirei to take part in both, and routinely ordered them to attack and murder specific targets, mostly people who made fun of Busu's looks, and kids who had gotten into college when he hadn't. When Niwa and Yosuga wouldn't willingly participate he would beat them, and because they were his Sekirei neither fought back. Thus the knife wielding bitch was his favorite until Homura killed her.

Yet again, Niwa didn't mention anything about Kakizaki taking part in anything that happened to her, so he was feeling a little more hopeful about things while Higa was still glaring at Miya and the others while Busu seemed to have sweated off at least ten pounds since the trial began.

However Kakizaki's good fortune needed when Uzume came in next. Her vindictive look at him and his boss wiped out any hope he might have been feeling. When questioned, Uzume spoke not of personal beatings but of incredible corruption in a hospital, something that would shock and dismay the audience worldwide. She spoke of her Ashikabi's health being used to force her to do things she would never do otherwise. Oosumi questioned at this point why MBI didn't stop her, after all, MBI had to know because of the tracker imbedded in every Sekirei, and had never hunted her down or realized what was going on. Yui protested that the question wasn't relevant, but it had still been asked.

Overall the trial had painted each of the Ashikabi it was directed against in a very bad light, and Minaka and MBI either as utterly incompetent and unfeeling or as a master manipulator who did not care for anyone who died while his plans went forward, or how many lives he ruined.

The three judges deliberated quietly than, with Minato scowling a little Miya made their verdicts known. "Izumi Higa we find you guilty of all charges made against you. Do you have anything to say in your defense?"

Izumi Higa stared coldly at the single most powerful being on the face of Earth and sneered, his well hidden hatred for the Sekirei coming out at last. "You have no right to judge me, you pathetic alien **FREAK**. You and all your sisters aren't human your things, tools to be used or discarded at the pleasure of your masters. You, judge me, you wouldn't even be alive now, none of you would be if Minaka hadn't found you and awakened you! And as for you two, pathetic drifters with nothing to your names, not money, not status, nothing! And now you side with these alien whores against your own race! I do not recognize your power to judge me!"

It was only Minato's hand on her arm that stopped Miya from obliterating Izumi Higa then and there, and when he spoke his voice was as fiery as Higa's had been. "Your vitriol is impressive, but not persuasive. You look at them and

see tools, things that can be used. I look at them and I see women of a race that is so much like humanity it is startling, and thus they have rights. I see women, representatives of a race whose mission of peaceful coexistence has been completely usurped by you, Minaka and all those like you. I see young girls who have been lied to, manipulated, and experimented on since birth by people who have no morals, no empathy and no right to do so! I see women who, when they were let out into the false freedom that is the Sekirei Plan, were captured and forced into slavery as foul and scarring as any humanity has done to itself!"

His voice changed from passionate to cold with purpose, like a death knell given voice. "You Izumi Higa are only a symptom of the problem, but you are one we can solve here and now. Izumi Higa, you are sentenced to death, the sentence to be carried out the moment this trial is ended. Make peace with whatever god or religion you believe in now, because these are your last minutes among the living."

That got through Higa's arrogance and he looked at the hard, cold gaze Minato was leveling at him and shivered, shrinking down like a popped balloon, realizing he could no longer game the system, bargain or talk his way out of this.

Nishi took up the thread then, his normally jovial face hard and condemning. "Kakizaki, as we haven't heard any evidence of murder or rape in your case, you will be held prisoner here in the North until you can be remanded into the custody of the governments or its representatives." Kakizaki breathed a sigh of relief at this. He knew he would probably face criminal charges, maybe even copious amounts of jail time, but he would still be alive, which was more than could be said for his former employer, or as he was about to learn, his ally. Nishi went on remorselessly, "Busu Chinpo, you have been found guilty of all charges. You will be taken from this place and executed within the hour. And may your next life reflect the bad karma you have built up in this one."

Busu made to stand but a feeling of freezing ice filled him from his toes up. The others turned and saw Tsukiumi, Kazehana and Akitzu, who had all been standing at the back of the room, out of sight as the trial went on.

As three of his wives moved off with the prisoners in tow Minato turned to look at the camera. "You all have heard two different points of view of the extraterrestrial ladies known as Sekirei. I taped this trial to counteract the blatant propaganda being fed to you by Minaka and MBI. Now you have seen what he wants you to, and you will next see interviews of the citizens forced to flee Tokyo, and you have seen what the Sekirei themselves have to say today and how they are treated. My question to all of you who are watching this is what do you see them as, and what will you, your government and your military do now?"

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Reactions among MBI personnel to the broadcasted trial were varied. For one, Minaka was only told about the broadcast about 15 to 20 minutes into the trial, by which time Haihane and Benitsubasa had both seen it. Haihane had switched off the DVD player to go and exercise with her friend but before she could do the same to the TV had seen Minato and the others on the screen. So the two of them kept watching for a bit.

Neither of them were very introspective, nor do they have much empathy for other Ashikabi or Sekirei, but knowing that this had been happening right under their noses, that they were supposed to be, at least on paper, enforcing the rules of the game rather than merely keeping the Sekirei penned up in Tokyo as they had been was a blow to them and the final straw in their belief that MBI had anything but fell intentions toward them or anyone else. They both turned and looked at one another and silently nodded. Without a word, they got up, Haihane grabbing her claws and Benitsubasa led the way out of their suite and down the stairs trying to exit the building before anyone could find and stop them.

Unbeknownst to the duo they were helped along during their escape by an unlikely source. Takami too had been appalled by what she was seeing on the video, and resolved to confront Minaka with what she had learned in her foray into the MBI secure system. However before that she had seen Haihane and Benitsubasa leave their suite down the hallway from her own, and had realized what they might be up to. So she disabled all the security cameras, forcing them to play a little loop of the last 15 seconds each to keep the sensor specialist firm realizing that two thirds of the disciplinary squad had just absconded from the building.

Thankfully Karasuba was still involved in the metallurgy department trying to create the perfect sword that would be able to stand up to Miya and her blade. While it would take them some time to move away from the tower through the now several mile wide defensive cordon around it, they would eventually get away and succeed in their attempts to meet up with Minato and his crew.

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Minato was not only enraged by the message being sent by this video that Minato had created he was furious that when he ordered it to be taken down and the splicer that allowed Minato to send it out found the manager of the

communication tower prevaricated and slowed the process down as much as she could, only finding the device after the entire video had ended. Yet he hid it behind his normal mask of arrogant crazyness. "Oh my, it seems as if we have a unbeliever in our midst, willing to work against this game of the gods. Why that just won't do, send someone to liquidate that particular asset would you? I will be in my office, I must decide how best to deal with the disorder this will cause in our work towards creating a new age of gods." The security chief nodded and Minaka swept out of the control center, his white cape billowing dramatically.

Five minutes later he sat down at his desk scowling. Not only would the damn video make certain that none of the Sekirei or Ashikabi would be willing to work with him, the effect of it abroad and in Japan was going to be monstrous. This kind of human rights disaster was precisely the kind of thing that would force the democratic governments of the world to act regardless of anything his bought and paid for senators and other representatives could do. If they tried to fight against taking action against MBI they would probably be crucified, thus being politicians they would leave him in the lurch and get on the bandwagon like everyone else. He estimated that within the weak MBI as a corporation would cease to exist as its assets around the world were seized and its personnel detained. The governments of the world might not act unilaterally in a military fashion against his holdings here in Tokyo or on the island, but even that might occur. Certainly the groups that had attacked the island would know who Miya was, and if she was on the other side they could assume he could not call on her power to defend his holdings. He could bluff it out, but right now he needed a visible hammer, and that unfortunately meant one thing.

As he was contemplating on this the door to his office banged open and Takami stormed in. Minaka looked up at her, one eyebrow raised beyond his glasses. "Takami-chan, how are you! I'm sorry I'm rather busy at the moment, ushering a new era into the world is busy work, so..."

Takami cut him off abruptly, her manner sharp and her eyes hard on his face. "What the hell is this project hidden under Omicron level security and why the hells don't I have clearance for it?"

"I didn't want to bother you or burden you any further." He exclaimed happily though inside he was snarling in anger that she had found out about it at all. "After all not everything that happens with the Sekirei falls under your purview.

Takami bends down to place her fists on his table, leaning across to stare at him. "And what is it supposed to do? What the hell does this have to do with all the deactivated Sekirei we brought in? And why the hell did you allow Higa to get away with all that crap!"

"I am a mere game master my dear," he said modestly, leaning back in his chair. "What the players do with the pieces is up to them. And I'm afraid I'm going to say that you don't need to know what the project is about. As I said it isn't under your purview. No, what I am more concerned about is how your son has become such an obstacle to our plans."

"Pieces, pieces in a game that's all anyone is to you isn't it! So all that high falutin' talk about using the plan to allow the Sekirei to meet their destined Ashikabi, all that talk about searching for the destined one to command the ship and achieve 'godhood' in your words, all that was so much claptrap, and Minato is your son as well if you can bother to remember! And what will the rest of the world think of MBI now, huh? What do you think is going to happen when they realize you're the source of all the problems in Tokyo?"

"Oh I was perfectly truthful Takami-chan this is the game of the Gods. However, I never said or meant for anyone else to ascend. That would just be silly. And I told you before. Takami-chan, his parentage is merely inconsequential, a man such as I has no need of a son. And as for the rest of the world they won't dare to try and attack us here. I will let them know through backdoor channels of certain... fail safes that would make any assault suicidal at best."

Takami stared at him appalled, and then reached into her pocket and pulled out a handgun. She pointed it at him with trembling hands and said, "Yeah well I think the game is over, I'm not going to let this mad plan hurt anymore people, and I'm appalled at the part I played in it. But I'll be damned if I let you hurt my children!"

"How unfortunate." Minaka said shaking his head.

A shot rang out, but it wasn't Minaka who fell to the floor. Takami looked down to see bright red blood flowing down her chest from a gunshot straight through her and she stared up at Minato's uncaring face as she collapsed to her knees. Another shot rang out and Takami fell dead to the floor.

"How unfortunate," Minaka said again sadly looking down at her. "Oh well. Thank you for that Deuce, now get someone in here to take away the body and clean up the blood. It's absolutely ruined the carpet."

As the giant man came out of his secret security panel set into the wall Minaka turned back to his desk and reached

for the special phone set into it. He picked it up and said into it. "Doctor, I realize that circumstances are not what we could wish, but I'm afraid real life has derailed our plans a little. Activate Project Golem."

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End chapter.

And there we have it, the third to last chapter of this story. As he can see by the build up the next chapter will feature the final conflict between MBI and Minato. I'm certain a lot of people already have an idea of what Project Golem will be, but it will make for a fantastic final battle. I hope everyone likes how Takami tried to redeem herself, as well as the unfortunate end she came to. Her children won't know about her death for a while, but when they do, you'll see their reactions. I also originally had intended to kill off at least one of the absconding duo of Benitsubasa and Haihane, but I figured that the rest of the chapter was so serious that adding more seriousness to it was just not necessary. Oh and concerning Miya's prayer, I actually never typed out any prayers for removing the crest before, so forgive me for how bad it was. Her norito will be something special let me tell you. I also wanted to put in more interaction with the flock in this chapter, but there are so many things that needed to happen, that sort of got pushed to the wayside.

As always read and review and see you next week, same bat-time, same bat-channel (heh, lets see how many of you are old enough to get **that** joke)

## \*Chapter 21\*: Chapter 21 End Game

I do not own the bouncing battling beauties of Sekirei, though given how much I've changed him I might own 70% of this version of Minato.

Some reviews I would like to mention:

LordXeentheGreat: um, dude, I like how much you like my story but little two word reviews for each chapter in turn is a bit much and at the same time too little. Just review the whole story or last chapter please. This way was a little disturbing in its exuberance.

Jboy: pedant.

SpecialRelativity: You changed your name, anything behind this change? Sadly I have to report even the Meta could not survive the blast of a jinki exploding when he's barley five feet away from it. I wonder what you will think of his legacy and how I... deal with Karasuba in this chapter. Oh and Sarge makes a pain of himself in this chapter, quite a big one actually.

DemonAngel of Ice: Heh, yeah but it was a very near run thing, another round might have killed him. Thank you for commenting on the trial by the way, that was easily the toughest scene to write in this entire story. I wanted to give it enough detail to make it seem realistic but I didn't want it to overpower everything else in the chapter. I hope you like how I pictured Izumi Higa and his end in this chapter. And I was wrong, no one did see exactly what Project Golem was. Oh well.

Pravus Prime: welcome to the story, glad you like it. I have no plans to explicitly add more Sekirei to Minato's flock, though there might be some understanding later on. The bond isn't supposed to be replaced naturally that quickly after all, that would just cheapen it.

UraharaIsGod: Welcome, thank you for your reviews, though I have never seen Urahara as THE god, more like a Loki or Hermes sort.

Interesting little fact, I use Dragon Naturally speaking to do most of my writing, but I can't use it to write Minaka's dialogue, at all. I just can't speak like him, the words just don't come out right, yet I can write them out, weird huh? Anyway some readers will notice how he thinks of the Sekirei in the sections with him in it, that is deliberate.

No one mentioned my made up name for the asshole Ashikabi, so sad, I urge you to go back and look it up.

Oh and there is a joke here about Minato not remembering Natsuo and the name he called him instead, I hope someone realizes what it is.

The name of the chapter should be self-explanatory so let the violence begin and never end!

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### Chapter 20 End Game

As the mess in his office was cleaned up Minaka turned his attention to other matters. He spent a few minutes giving out orders to his troops still maintaining the interdiction zone around the city for a time before he was again interrupted by a report that two of the three Disciplinary squad members had just left the building despite no orders to do so. He sighed. "It seems as if the rot of free thought has spread further than I expected, it is such a pity that so many people have decided to ignore the will of the gods." *Or one soon to be god anyway.* "Have the troops try to stop them leaving, if they cannot then send out the deactivation signal to their cards. We can't have any more loose cannons, now can we?"

His chief security officer nodded curtly and turned to follow his orders as Minaka pushed up his glasses, continuing to talk to his chief sensor specialist. "While that is going on, see if you can find another way to track the Sekirei, we can't let them go without some kind of guidance can we?" That man nodded as well and Minaka turned back to his desk. It would take a few hours to activate all of the golems but once they were all up and awake he would have a small but incredibly dangerous army at his disposal. He wished once more that he had been able to gather up some of Minato's Sekirei as they had all proven to be far more powerful than estimated, but perhaps he would after this. *Enjoy your life for these last few hours Minato-kun, because your little rebellion is finally going to end.*

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About an hour after the trial ended, though some of the interviews and videos were still being sent out, Minato took Bosu and Izumi to a nearby park. This extra time had allowed the captured Sekirei to get over their shock at the trial and agree to have their crests removed, thus saving them from the fate that would have awaited them if their Ashikabi died when they were still bonded to him.

While all of his wives were willing to do the deed themselves, he could feel that none of them were actually sanguine about it. Miya was too angry from Higa's comments during the trial to act dispassionately during this execution which was what it needed, it was an execution, not a murder and he wanted that understood. Akitzu would do it for him in a second, but it was because she would that he could not ask it of her, he knew it would bother her later. Kazehana and Tsukiumi were not mentally prepared to kill someone in cold blood or watch it being done. So it was Homura and surprisingly Shiina who came with him.

They entered the small park and moved into the center, where both prisoners were made to stand upright against a tree. Minato pulled out a handgun, clicking the safety off then reached into one of his other pockets bringing out a few white pills. "You have a choice, the bullet or the pill."

Higa stared at him, feeling fear for... well for the first time in his entire life really. He knew he wasn't going to live past the next few minutes, and he at last began to prepare to meet his end. Yet if he was going to die he was going to die on his feet, not pleading with the man who had singlehandedly wrecked his dreams and power. "And the pills are what exactly?"

"Cyanide, my wife Tsukiumi took them from your own hospital, poetic no?" Higa grimaced, but didn't argue the point.

B usu began to shiver against his own tree but Homura slammed him back against it hard, a small viscous part of him enjoying the man's fear (though the smell of his natural reaction was a bit much). The stories Niwa had shared had struck him hard, as she was one of the Sekirei he had helped escape from Hayato's searchers. The idea that he had helped her remain free only to have this man enslave her instead angered him. The man began to beg and plead but the three men, even Shiina were unmoved.

Minato stared down at him, face blank but eyes filled with contempt. "And did the civilians you had murdered beg and plead? You showed them no mercy, and you won't find any for you here." Busu kept sniveling and pleading but Minato shook his head, raised the handgun and 'Blam!' a single bullet blew the sniveling man's brains out before he could even register what was happening. Shiina flinched from the blood and noise, but Homura simply grimaced a little, thankful none of the detritus had gotten onto him.

Higa looked down at the man who had once been one of his more ruthless and thus useful tools and then away, gathering what remained of his courage and consigning his soul to any god who could find it. "I, I think I'll take the, the cyanide pill." Minato shrugged and handed one over, along with a bottle of water from the still staring Shiina. Higa stared down at the small white pill that would take his life, then up at Minato's hard, unyielding face. Then he gulped down the pill and turned to stare up at the sky, remembering the dreams of power and dominance that had brought him to this and wondering if maybe he had lived his life simpler what would have happened. As he began to convulse and foam at the mouth Minato continued to watch, feeling a little respectful of how the man met his end, until he stilled then he moved forward and checked Higa's pulse. After a moment he pulled away satisfied. The Ashikabi of the East was dead.

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After burying the two bodies the trio was subdued as they made their way back to Izumo house. About five blocks away from home they were met by an unexpected interruption. "Minato!"

Minato looked up at the shout to see Benitsubasa and Haihane standing on a nearby roof. Both of them looked tired and a bit roughed up but Minato couldn't tell if they were seriously injured or not. Homura and Shiina both stepped in front of him protectively but to Minato it didn't seem as if the duo were there to fight, after all it looked as if they had already been in one. "Hey you two. Here for yourself or by your Ashikabi's orders... what was his name, Natsuke or something?"

Haihane and Benitsubasa leapt down to the road nearby and it became even more evident they had been through a bit of a ringer even if they weren't that injured. Their clothing was scuffed they both had holes in their clothing and were covered in soot. Benitsubasa spoke up for both of them. "For ourselves, we left MBI. We, well we don't want to work Minaka any more, not after we saw the things that we could have stopped if he hadn't ordered us to simply patrol the perimeter of the city."

Haihane giggled. "That and she found Natsuo had pictures of the president all around his wall like a stalker."

Her friend growled, she should never have told Haihane about that! They had even been caught by MBI's troops and forced to fight their way out because the stupid bitch had collapsed laughing when she told her about it. The pink haired fist type still nodded though. "That too."

Minato and Homura looked at one another sharing a shiver at the very idea, but a sudden thought occurred to Minato and he looked back at the two newcomers quickly. "Wait, did you hear the news about the MBI card?"

Both of them shook their heads. Benitsubasa reached into her purse, which she had hidden in the front of her kimono. "What about the card? I know there aren't any shops open anymore, but still it might be useful at some point in the future."

"Throw it away, now!" Minato barked, and both Sekirei stiffened and obeyed without thinking, the cards leaving their hands quickly.

It was well they did because about a second later, as the cards were still in the air barely five feet from them some kind of visible field of energy sparked into life around them, forming a sphere as the cards sailed on. Benitsubasa, who was just a little slower than her friend gaped at the energy inches from her outstretched hands, her eyes wide. "Wh-what the fuck was that!"

"That was a field that would forcefully cut off your connection to your Ashikabi, forcing your 'deactivation'." Minato said calmly. Really they had no idea what kind of difference it made, getting your crest deleted by a fellow Sekirei of by this field the cards made. Perhaps it was because it was a conscious decision, which weakened the bond just enough to make the deactivation a short term thing rather than the alternative. Whatever the case it wasn't something he wanted to chance. "Now come on, I think we need to get back to Izumo house. Something tells me something's going to happen soon, and I want all of us together to deal with it." The others nodded, both of the girls still looking a little shaken. Minato paused for a moment to pick up one of the field died around it. With a grunt he snapped the card in half, causing a small electrical discharge. Pocketing it he followed the four Sekirei down the street.

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Minaka shrugged unconcerned as one of the sensor section flunkies, Simon or something told him about not registering the deactivation signals from either Haihane or Benitsubasa. "It matters not at all, the path to godhood marches on, and they will be consumed by the tide to come as will all enemies to god's plan." Minaka turned to Karasuba, who was looking down at her blade introspectively. Minaka took a moment to analyze his most lethal yet most unpredictable tool for a moment, wondering about her mood, then tossed her a special MBI card.

Karasuba caught it automatically and looked at him, one eyebrow raised over her perpetually squinting eyes. "It's a special card Kara-kun." He ignored the twitching of her eyebrows at the cutesy name and went on, "It will emit a special field on command if you hit that red tab on the upper left corner that will cut off a Sekirei from her Ashikabi, thus eliminating her from the game."

And not incidentally knocking her or him out for a time or even killing someone if the bond was strong enough. Karasuba knew this and she looked at the card with renewed interest. Of course Minaka would prefer that Minato's Sekirei were in condition enough to be gathered in, but he was willing to overlook that. "I wish to send you out ahead of my little golems to seek out 01. And if you find yourself unable to beat her fairly, well, all that really matters is who is standing at the end of the battle yes?"

Karasuba looked from the card up to him, her eyes widening slightly, letting her mad eyes be seen as she began to laugh. "Sure, I'll be your little stalking horse, it'll be worth it to see Miya-chan's body at my feet. But remember I have to fight Musubi-chan too. She and I have a little promise I want to see to the end, make certain your little toys steer clear of her."

Project Golem was developed to find a way to subsume or override an existing Sekirei bond with a new one without losing any of the Sekirei powers as was normally the case when a Sekirei survived having her crest removed. They hadn't been able to find a way to do that, but they had learned how to emplace a new bond once the first one was lost. That was the whole reason behind the Sekirei Plan, Minaka had to find a way to do three things, one, find compatible Ashikabi for all the Sekirei, and two put in a system which would force the Sekirei to fight one another, thereby becoming stronger and three, allow them to take one another out, allowing him to collect the deactivated Sekirei. His use of the jinki was meant to help the Sekirei grow stronger, not strong enough to challenge him, but even if that aspect had failed, the other three had worked well enough, and he had over fifty Sekirei brought in, rebooted and made into soulless soldiers, loyal only to him, with all their strength and powers still in place. Only the ones with the strongest bonds had even been able to fight the process, and the more injured they were the easier it had been to replace the existing bond.

Over course some of the Sekirei they brought in had been too damaged to repair, but their cores, the odd part solid part energy state **thing** that gave the Sekirei their powers had survived. And Minaka was not one to let a resource lie unused if he could turn it to his own purposes, hence why Takehito had become the man he most hated with all his soul. Without all eight of the jinki MBI couldn't override the security programs on the ship, and when the one had been destroyed the ship had activated its internal defense systems to prevent further damage. He well knew the AI was devoted to blocking him, but there were ways around that, such as having the loyalty of at least 4/5 of the surviving 'crew' and he still controlled three of the remaining jinki and the ship itself, staving off anyone else trying to control it.

So, several men had the Sekirei cores implanted in them in a modified version of the experiment that gave him the Meta, though far less durable and powerful as the Meta had been gifted with two cores rather than one. Deuce was but one of these men, and all of them were as loyal as Sekirei but were also utterly insane, rabid dogs (much like Karasuba) that obeyed only him and lived to protect him (unlike Karasuba). This of course suited Minaka just fine. With them to see to his personal defense and the oddly durable and effective man named... well Minaka didn't know his name but Sarge in charge of the defense of the lower levels, including the nuke placed on the fifth floor in a department hidden under the name of secondary generator, he knew he was untouchable.

"I'll send the regular troops and the golems out after you. It's time we end this little rebellion once and for all." *There can be only one god Minato-san, and I will ascend and conquer, regardless of anything you do. Once you are gone, the game will have served its purpose, and I will move against that brat in the south and the neutral holdovers. then the ship will have to obey the orders of one of my Golems. And with its technology Earth will be mine, and the stars themselves will follow!*

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Tsukiumi and the others were waiting for them, and they all stare at the two Disciplinary squad members following Minato, Homura and Shiina. Kazehana smirked, taking in their disheveled appearance. "Aw, it looks as if someone was in a fight, what's the matter tiny top, did one of these bad boys hurt you?"

Haihane chortled at the dig as Benitsubasa snarled at Kazehana then calmed down. "I see your brain is in reverse proportion to those monstrous tits of yours. If you actually thought a minute you'd know we wouldn't ever be following along so calmly if we had just been beaten. Or is that too difficult for you to understand wind-for-brains?"

Kazehana smirked even wider, understanding they were no threat at the moment decided to twit the pink haired girl, going back to tried and true methods. She hefted her massive breasts then allowed them to bounce for a moment as she leaned forward. "Is that jealousy I hear?"

Benitsubasa seethed but before she could find a nonlethal reply Yukari broke in angrily. "God damnit Kazehana, I've had it up to here with you and your tit-ocracy! Just because you have unnaturally large tits isn't any reason to try to make those of us who are **normal** feel bad! Besides, I bet some sweaty virgin scientist decided to tweak your genes or something to give you those things in the first place!" Benitsubasa grinned and nodded along with her ally while Minato and Haihane laughed together at the growing argument.

Moving forward gracefully between the three arguers Miya looked at her new husband. "Is it done?"

Minato nodded gravely. Chizuru, who had been standing next to Akitsu silent and anxious, began to cry tears of relief and joy in response and shot away to tell her sisters that their tormentor was gone and would never return. Minato related what had happened, as well as how Haihane and Benitsubasa had run into them on the way back. He turned back to the two newcomers. "By the way, how much trouble did you have getting away from MBI tower?"

Haihane turned to look at him from watching the breast based argument which had restarted as soon as Miya was out of the way. "Some, not much. Just really irritating. Tank shells suck." She pouted, lifting one of her metal claws, which looked a little bent and battered.

Minato understood from this that she had been forced to use it to block or redirect a shell round and he shook his head, amused anew by the abilities of the Sekirei. Part of him wanted to question the gray haired Sekirei about their numbers and disposition, but he knew it would be pointless. Besides, another question was much more important. "What about Karasuba, where was she when you were escaping?" It was always good to know where a rabid animal was after all.

Miya's eyes glinted. She had let Karasuba go because she wanted the other woman to know and have time to think about how badly she was outclassed, but that had been a onetime deal, and if the crow Sekirei ever crossed her path again, she would die.

Haihane shrugged, her eyes straying back over to the argument about breasts that had started to escalate again.

"Don't know. Didn't run into trouble until after we left the tower." With that she turned away fully to watch the fun.

The argument was now touching on such important things such as firmness and sensitivity, causing Shiina to blush heavily and Homura to roll his eyes before walking away. Nishi and Oosumi had both come out as well, and they shared a grin and continued to watch. Most of the other Sekirei were in the backyard in small groups doing various things, including watching Kohta, Kusano and Shijime, one of Nishi's Sekirei that was the same age as those two play a rather cutthroat game of go fish with Kisami and Yui. But this looked much more amusing to both of them.

Minato shook his head and he began to lead the way into the house, Miya, Tsukiumi and Akitsu by his side. Miya stopped for a moment to warn the arguing trio about how she didn't allow violence in Izumo inn then followed her husband inside, sharing a look with her fellow wives. Minato was thinking about something, something that worried him, and she wondered what it could be.

They would never find out however as Matsu's scream for attention brought them all running into the command room. "Minato-tan, everyone, we've got trouble!"

Everyone tried to push into the command center, clogging the doorway and it took Miya's hanya mask attack to clear the way. Once that was done, Minato and his wives, as well as Nishi and the other Ashikabi came in, then stopped and stared while a few of the others, including a curious Benitsubasa came in after them. Matsu had hacked into MBI's sensor division and had put up the information it showed on the screens around them. What they showed now was MBI's troops boiling out of their prepared positions straight at them. What had caused Matsu's scream however was the forty marks designating Sekirei that were boiling out after them.

Minato's eyes narrowed as he analyzed the information. The troops were being spread out in a wide front rather than concentrated, and ten tanks were being spread out as well, showing that Minaka's rent-a-soldiers were just as incompetent as he was. Ten tanks moving through a city as fast as they could with the ability to cover one another at intervals was dangerous, a tank on its own in a city was merely a target, regardless of the troops kept close to provide protection. But really in a city as built up as Tokyo tanks would never be a weapon of choice. There seemed to be about four companies, so somewhere around 1,000 troopers were also spread out in a wide arc rather than combined into a single attacking spear. *It would appear as if someone needs to learn about the truth of the phrase 'power to a point', still the regular troops are almost beside the point compared to the forty Sekirei with them. Forty!* "It would appear as if our fears about the Sekirei bond being replaceable have been proven true." He turned and yelled out the door. "Someone get me the jinki, I've got a few questions to ask that damn AI!" Homura nodded and ran off quickly.

Miya however was searching for one mark set apart, and she found it well in front and to the side of the rest of the attacking force. Her hand clenched around her blade, and her eyes glittered with fury. "That one there would be Karasuba, there is no way that she would be willing to work with humans."

Musubi looked over at the mark Miya was indicating from her place in the doorway and frowned. She had long realized that their promise had been overtaken by more important things but it was still important to her, and if there was any chance to save Karasuba-sama... Before she could speak though, Homura returned carrying Chiho and one of the jinki, followed closely by Uzume and the chemist and his Sekirei, who stopped at the door.

Minato wordlessly gestured for the jinki and entered the odd mental connection to talk to the AI. As soon as he was in the connection he barked out "Defense on Kamikura Island, what are they and can one of my ladies take control of the ship if they take the jinki with them and get to the ship? What can you tell me about these Sekirei that have suddenly showed up?"

The AI answered quickly, realizing the urgency of the situation thanks to its limited ability to hack MBI's systems. "The defense of Kamikura Island consists of two companies of MBI soldiers and 14 'Golems'. The last word was nearly spat out like an epithet, the normally unemotional AI's voice showing stark hate. "That is what MBI calls these Sekirei. They consist of every Sekirei MBI has collected, including the ones that attempted to escape the city, their personalities and former bonds wiped away yet leaving their power and skills, replaced with soulless devotion to Minaka. This was hidden from me up to this point, but someone else left the code for it labeled such on their open server. There... there is no way to save them, their minds and souls are just... gone."

Minato paused frowning. He had thought it was fools dream, but... "Does that include the Sekirei #95, Kuno?"

"Searching.... Sekirei found. Subject was taken via card deactivation. Ashikabi killed as per usual in this operation." The AI said flatly, and Minato shook his head sadly at the loss of such an innocent pair. The AI went on inexorably answering his other questions. "Negative, only an active member of the crew can take control of me without all of the remaining jinki."

Minato groaned aloud. "And let me guess, that means Miya right?"

"Affirmative, while she was not supposed to be a member of the crew, since there were no adults on the ship she was labeled acting captain for purposes of programming and commands. I cannot override it without creating a blanket override, which would open me up to be taken over by MBI's troops."

"And the nuke? Can you somehow hack into MBI Tower's systems and somehow find out where it is?"

"Searching.... Affirmative, again someone has left the backdoors to their system open, allowing me more access than ever before. The Nuclear device is stored on the fifth story of the tower under the label 'secondary generator'. It can be activated by a signal from the Director's office on the top floor. I would conjecture, given the personality of Minaka Hiroto, that there is also what is called a 'deadman's switch', that would activate it if Minaka dies."

Minato frowned, taking several minutes to think of what to do, knowing that time in this strange connection moved slower than the outside world. After a moment he nodded decisively. "Alright, do whatever you can to prepare for liftoff without warning anyone. If you can do it, prepare to cut the islands communication net. Be on watch and you'll see when." As the computer answered in the affirmative he exited the mental connection.

He turned to the others, eyes sharp and clear with purpose. "Alright here's what we're going to do. Matsu get a map up on the screen." Matsu did so swiftly, knowing this was a time to be serious, especially since the forces, slow moving though they were, had already entered the northern section of the city. "Alright, Homura, I want you to create a firewall here." He pointed at a section of the map, moving his figure across it. "Right in front of that section of this attack. The moment that happens, Nishi I want all of your Sekirei to attack on a diagonal from this direction." Again he pointed the way he wanted that attack to go, the opposite side of the map where the lone Sekirei signal was. "The regular troops are a bit ahead of the Sekirei who are spread out for now, so get them to chase you back that way."

Nishi nodded grimly. He knew his limited skill at fighting wouldn't serve any purpose here, and so his babes would be fighting alone. But if they had to fight for their freedom, lives and love, better to do it now with the friends and allies that had proven themselves already.

Minato looked up at Tsukiumi. "Tsukiumi, you're in charge of the rest of our forces. When to use a norito is up to you. The jinki says these Sekirei have been completely memory wiped, they can't be saved so..." Tsukiumi flinched as did all the others save Akitsu, who stared back at Minato, her eyes slightly narrowed as she realized that if Tsukiumi was in charge of this battle, Minato would be doing something else.

Miya spoke up at that point. "I presume I will be facing Karasuba and then joining the rest and taking over?"

Musubi made to speak up, but Minato shook his head, answering before she could open her mouth. "Afraid not. This is the end game, and we need to take out every part of MBI's power before some other government moves in and takes over, which I bet some of them are already poised to do. That means assaulting Kamikura island and taking over the ship, and the only one that can take command of the ship as it stands is you."

Miya's eyes widened angrily, and she moved swiftly to touch the jinki. As she pushed her mind into the connection Musubi took the opportunity to speak up, her voice and face almost unnaturally serious. "Minato-san, I want to be the one to face Karasuba-sama. She and I made a promise to each other to see which was stronger, hate or love. I believe that love is far stronger, but I have to prove it to her as well."

Minato leaned back thoughtfully. *Tsukiumi, do you think that this Yume that's inside her will help her if she needs to? Miya did say Yume had given her, well her life in a way for Musubi after all.* That had been one of the few serious conversations they had the night previous during one of their breaks from their lovemaking.

Tsukiumi answered in the affirmative. *I believe so husband, yes. She cares greatly for Musubi, and this promise might have been started by Yume in the first place. I think this is something she has to do beloved, let her go please?*

Minato sighed. "Alright Musubi, you can head out and intercept her now if you want, but try to lead her away from the rest of the battle, the farther away the better." Musubi nodded eagerly and Minato leaned in kissing her gently on the lips. "Come back to us okay little sister?" Musubi actually blushed a little as she nodded happily and ran out of the room.

Before she could leave the house however Kaho spoke up after spending the time since Musubi spoke up talking to her boyfriend/Ashikabi Oosumi. "I too made that promise Musubi-chan. I will go with you." Musubi stopped hugged her tightly and then ran off, followed swiftly by her friend, who stopped to get a kiss from her own Ashikabi before racing after her.

Miya scowled as she came out of the jinki connection. "Mou, this is so aggravating. Very well then I will go and do this little errand. I trust you all will still be here when I return?" The words were light but her eyes were serious and everyone could tell she was extremely put out by this. Everyone nodded, and once more Minato leaned in for a kiss. There was nothing gentle about this one though, it was purely primal, and Miya's wings spread swiftly, almost as large as his other wives. After learning where a few MBI helicopters were grounded on the outskirts of the city, she too moved off swiftly.

Minato turned to the others, confirming Akitsu's fears. "Me, Saki, Barei if you'll let her go with me Nishi, same with Yahan Oboro, Haihane and Benitsubasa will hide behind Homura's firewall. Once Matsu has reported that the majority of MBI's forces has swerved off to chase Nishi and his forces we'll make our way forward as quickly and unseen as possible. Our objective will be to take out the nuke, and capture of kill Minaka." Haihane and Benitsubasa had been leaning against the wall outside, able to listen but not taking part, and they both grinned at one another. Hopefully a few of these sick non-Sekirei would be there to make a fight of it. Barei and Saki however both shivered. Somehow they just knew this was not going to be easy.

Kohta spoke up then. "Um, I'd like my Sekirei to take part in this as well if that's okay. I don't think they need to be here to protect me and the other Ashikabi." Kaei nodded eagerly. Kusano, who was sitting next to the boy (and was it just Minato's imagination or were the two kids spending a lot of time around one another?) looked around worriedly, not understanding much of what was going on, but knowing they were going to be attacked somehow soon. Yukari nodded resolutely, motioning to Shiina who also nodded. Yukari thought the plan was okay, but she had her own idea of what she would be really be doing. Minato was her nii-chan not her commanding officer after all.

Katsuragi spoke up, which from her was rather unusual. "We want to help too. If we leave a few of us here to defend Matsu and the Ashikabi, some of us can head out with Nishi's Sekirei. We won't be much help against these Sekirei, but we can be a major help against the human troops." Shi nodded resolutely. They had to pay Minato and the others back somehow and this was the way to do it.

Minato sighed but nodded. "Okay, but Kisami and Shiina stay here along with three of you alright?" Shi and Katsuragi nodded. "In that case, I think that's as much of a plan as we can make. Good luck, and let's get this done." The others all nodded grimly and the group broke up swiftly running out to prepare themselves or talk to the Sekirei that hadn't heard Matsu's shout. They were followed swiftly by three sets of bond wings, spreading and flowing together in the air.

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With Minato and his group behind him in a dilapidated building Homura waited until he could see the approaching soldiers coming down the road toward him before beginning his attack. Due to the tank's presence the troops had to stick to the main roads entering the northern section of the city, which had caused Minato a moment of reflection as he could have tried to defeat each group in detail, but they were too close together, and the Sekirei in the attack were too maneuverable for that to happen. Better to divert the whole attack into a single, unwieldy group moving in a different direction and whittle away at them. While the main attack looped around to take Minaka from the rear.

To create a large enough firewall however Minato and Homura had to kiss. Neither of them had been very happy about it, but it allowed Homura to use his norito later and allowed him to control more of his power than he normally would have been able to handle, having been experimented on far too much in an attempt to change his gender. It also made the temperature of his flame far, far higher. It looked far more like plasma or something, far hotter than his normal fire. Indeed the flame wall streaking from his position in both directions nearly spread five blocks, cutting through buildings both concrete and metal and one unfortunate tank that had gotten ahead of the rest of the attack as well as a few infantry men alongside.

The response from the MBI troopers was immediate. A lot of them fell back in disarray, but the tanks moved up firing on his position through the wall of flame forcing Homura to retreat. The Sekirei too moved forward quickly going around it and Homura winced as he recognized a few of them from his time as the defender of Un-winged Sekirei. Yet as they closed he could see their eyes, and they were blank, almost like clear glass that had nothing behind them. He shivered, realizing that this was what Minaka wanted for his entire race, to become soulless automatons obeying only Minaka.

Homura ran off in the direction towards Nishi's Sekirei, bringing out his walkie-talkie and talking to Matsu, Minato, Tsukimi and Nishi. "They're coming after me!" he reported, "The Sekirei seem to be a lot more aggressive than the mobile troops too, though I don't know if we'll be able to separate them that easily, not until the Sekirei are ahead of the regular troops anyway."

Tsukiumi replied from where she was with the rest of them, being busy directing them to different places and take up

positions around the area. Kazehana would be the one in the first attack, looping back around when the 'Golem' Sekirei followed her. Nishi's group would then hit the MBI troopers behind that first assault, before retreating in turn in a different direction. They would also have Kana providing long range support. While any Sekirei could take out a tank if they could get close enough, that wasn't actually the point of this. Tsukiumi wanted the tanks taken out to sow chaos, confusion and fear among the regular MBI troops. She figured that the more that ran the less they would have to kill. She well knew that the troops were only really dangerous to the unchained Sekirei, as well as the Ashikabi. If they could simply run most of them off that would do them fine, and they could concentrate on these soulless Sekirei.

"That's fine." She said calmly, not exactly an emotion she was feeling at the moment. No her real emotion was a all pervading eagerness. She remembered the smirking, lusty looks that MBI troops and scientists had given her and her sisters as they grew up, and was glad for this opportunity to pay them back if they were dumb enough to keep coming. "Join up with Kazehana, she's in position over that odd adult toy store to the northeast from your starting position.

Homura snickered at that, remembering how the blond had been utterly appalled at finding out about that 'toy store' and what it contained (they had also found out that Matsu was a preferred customer) and replied "Roger."

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The soulless Sekirei were more maneuverable and much more aggressive than the human troops so it was no surprise to Kazehana and the others that they contacted them first. Indeed they arrived at the ambush point only a thirty seconds after Homura arrived, having not slowed their pursuit at all. Kazehana motioned the man over to her and said crisply, "Combination attack immediately when they get within range. Then we retreat that down that road." She pointed, "And we meet up with Kaie down that way." Homura nodded equally serious. In this part of the attack there were five Sekirei near the front, and all of them were barreling down on the two of them with some seven or so about a block behind them. Homura and Kazehana could see them, but none of those seven would be within range to do anything to stop their initial attack. Kazehana counted down calmly as she stared at the oncoming Sekirei. As they came closer she saw what Homura had seen; that there were no minds, no souls, behind those eyes, only instincts and orders. The last of her doubt disappeared to be replaced by rage as she saw the blank eyes of those who had been her fellow feathers. "Three, two, one now! Wind blast!"

"Fire torrent!" Homura shouted at the same time.

The two attacks emerged, the wind powering the flame, working with it, moving with it to engulf all five of the incoming Sekirei. The 'Golem' Sekirei didn't even scream as they died, simply trying to move forward despite their bodies burning and failing under them. It was without a doubt one of the most horrifying things he had ever seen, and he knew we would have nightmares about it for weeks.

Kazehana however had seen worse, not much worse, but still. Shaking off her own horror quickly she grabbed the unresponsive fire user and ran off with him speaking into her walkie-talkie. "Five down." She reported crisply, all her normal flightiness and sense of humor gone in the heat of battle.

Behind her, the seven Sekirei that had been further back spread out to go around the fire trying to corner the two runner, moving well ahead of the MBI troops behind them.

About five minutes after the seven Sekirei were out of sight the tank in the lead coming around the wall of fire suddenly detonated as a blade of green light ten feet long in the shape of an arrow impacted it and slice through like a hot knife through butter. This was Kana's norito, the Gandiva Bow, and unlike most other norito attacks, it wasn't just a one shot. Instead her norito powered up her normal powers exponentially. The amount of time that extra power was available varied, but it would hopefully be enough to let her snipe the enemy tanks to oblivion.

The tank exploded, taking out its surviving crew and over a dozen of the infantrymen around it. The rest exclaimed in shock and started to scatter into cover, but Tsukiumi ordered two of Nishi's girls, Kuzuri and Kujika, in along with the un-winged Sekirei Shi and Katsuragi and they created havoc for a few minutes in close range before retreating as four more of the MBI-brainwashed Sekirei came up.

This new group of Sekirei chased after them, breaking up the enemy Sekirei further. As this was reported back to her at position about 3 miles back from this action Tsukiumi nodded grimly. MBI might have overwhelming force, but they weren't using it as they should, they weren't flexible and seemed to only react in certain ways, and no single enemy Sekirei could come close to matching even Nishi's girls, let alone a single-digit like her and her fellow wives.

She looked at the map on the portable computer pad that she had taken from Matsu, placing in her mind where all the troops were heading and the best places to set up ambushes. This was something that she and Minato had done on occasion, his desire to make his wives grow their minds, expand their horizons showing clearly, and Tsukiumi felt up

to the challenge *I will not fail my husband, I will not fail my sisters and I will not fail myself.* "Uzume," she said softly into her walkie-talkie, "Kujika and Kuzuri are going to pass your position soon, when they pass attack the Sekirei following them from behind, that'll be the signal for the two of them to turn around and attack as well. Eliminate all four if you can but once you see MBI troops coming too close retreat directly north." Uzume replied with an affirmative, and the battle continued.

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Musubi had found Karasuba easily enough, and she and Kaho stared across at her as she calmly waited for them, sitting on the edge of a roof. The black Sekirei shook her head. "And here I thought Miya would be the first one to find me, such a pity. Ah well, I suppose it doesn't matter. With everything else going on it really doesn't make much sense anymore for us to wait until we're the last two standing to fight. So are you ready to admit that hate is stronger than love Musubi?"

Musubi sighed a little, filled with the love of her Ashikabi and her fellow feathers. "No Karasuba-sama," she said, her voice clear and calm. "Hate will never win as long as there are those who love with all their hearts. And I'm going to prove this to you with my fists!" Beside her Kaho nodded grimly.

Karasuba laughed, bring her new sword out its sheath and into a guard position. "All right, girls" she said playfully. "I can spend some time destroying your delusions I suppose. I'd like a little warm-up before the main event anyway."

The three stood staring at one another for a moment and then without warning, charged forward. Kaho, using a spare naginata Oosumi had insisted they buy months ago just in case jumped into the air bringing it down as fast as she could. Karasuba brought her blade up to block and smacked her away, bringing her blade down quickly enough to block a blow from Musubi. Her usually narrowed eyes widened in surprise at the strength of the blow as it made her arm shake a little. Then she ducked away as Kaho swung her naginata in again, responding by slicing Musubi's side a little before backing away to dodge another punch only to take a kick that exploded into her midriff, sending her backward at the same time Kaho's back swing cut her cheek slightly as she twisted away.

Karasuba jumped away, wiping the blood away from her cheek. She licked the bit of blood from her finger and smirked, her eyes now fully open. "Well this might be more fun than I thought!" With that she jumped forward her blade swinging as she laughed.

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Covering the length of the city had been easy, as had destroying what little defenses were around the helicopters. What surprised Miya was the ease with which she had convinced one of the helicopter pilots to pilot her out to the island. As she sat down, pulling her hakama around her in a demure ladylike fashion despite the blood dripping off of her sword she looked at him quizzically. "Might I ask why you are helping me?"

The man shrugged. "I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not proud of, but I've never been one to push that all aside, I know what I've done is wrong, and following Minaka's orders is one of them. Yet you're trying to hit back at him, and if the choices are getting knocked out by you or helping you, I'll choose helping you. Besides, my family used to live in Tokyo, and they lost practically everything when they were forced to relocate when our house and the surrounding area was demolished to make way for a Sekirei fight area."

Miya nodded, smiling a little. *It seems that what Minato said was correct, the little people might not be strong enough to strike back directly yet they always do find a way to irritate those in power, and you ignore them at your peril.* "Very well, I am unaware of any kind of air laws or designated speed limits, but I would urge you to get me there as fast as you can."

"Then you better buckle up lady, because when this baby goes, it goes fast!" And with that one of MBI's secret radar invisible helicopters took off.

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Minato and his group waited about 30 minutes hiding until Matsu reported that most of the troops had diverted to follow Homura and the continued assaults that had taken out the first few groups to respond. The flame wall had done its job, cutting off a major portion of the routes into the North, making them go around on both edges. And because they had been attacked from one side, they had diverted all their strength to that side rather than continuing to try and sweep through the territory. Minato was uncertain why they were reacting like this, going from a conquering force to a hunter killer force, it seemed almost idiotic to him to allow the enemy to dictate the pace of battle but he wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

As soon as the coast was clear his group made their way forward with Benitsubasa and Haihane in the lead making their way swiftly towards MBI tower. They crossed the empty city silently, only running into a few straggling groups of

troopers, and one lone Sekirei who seemed to have been caught a little by the flame wall, as one of her legs was badly burned. Yet despite the shambling slow walk this forced her to use, she was still moving and when she saw them tried to attack them.

Haihane took her out easily, and Minato shook his head sadly as the unknown Sekirei, a muscle type who was rather tall and extremely muscular died. If the jinki had told him that there was any way to save the mind-wiped Sekirei he would've done it in a heartbeat, but their minds were simply gone as well as everything that made them Sekirei but their powers. Even if they killed Minaka and some of them were still alive they would be vegetables. That was no way to live, better to die like this, especially considering what militaries and government agencies around the world might do if they got their hands on a Sekirei body. He made a note of the position so he could send Homura or someone else to come back and deal with the body and they moved on.

Their first real obstacle came as they neared the tower as it was still ringed by defensive positions. The defensive positions were nearly empty, but they still had a few troops in them, and this forced them to stop for a minute as the further could into the Tower before any alarms were sounded the better. After a moment's contemplation, Minato sent Benitsubasa and Haihane forward wearing a few handcuffs each with the Saki and Barei following behind them. Saki had changed her form to be as masculine as she could, hiding everything else under a MBI officer's uniform, taken from the corpse of one Minato had shot in the back as he turned to flee their advance. This way they were able to get close without any of the soldiers in the dugouts calling out a warning. Minato shook his head at their stupidity falling for one of the oldest tricks in the book, the fake handcuff but at the moment he was thankful for it. As soon as the foursome closed, they exploded into action and within a minute all of the MBI troops outside the entrance to the tower were down and out of commission.

Once they entered however they ran into far sterner resistance Someone inside had seen evidently what had happened outside because as soon as they appeared, they came under fire forcing them back out the doors. Minato grabbed some grenades from a dead soldier and flipped them all through the doorway clearing it and creating enough smoke and chaos for the two Sekirei to get in close and finish off the defenders. Minato took the lead moving further into and up the building, but every few doorways or so they would run into more resistance, slowing them up. Minato cursed colorfully, knowing that Minaka knew they were already in the building and wondering what the madman would do.

In point of fact Minaka did not know they were in the building because the sensor specialists whose job it should have been to tell him were all too watching the fight that was escalating in the northern Territory through the videos cameras scattered around the fighting. Given a choice between watching regular troops fight each other or mostly scantily clad Sekirei attack one another and regular troops, well the answer was obvious to all of them. Besides, it wasn't like they were in any danger right?

That, and the fact that one of them, the one who had been designated 'speaker to the crazy man' for the day had gotten shanghaied by a face from his past.

### **\\Flashback/**

Sensor specialist Simmons sighed as he finished putting the trash from his lunch in all the correct trashcans. The food in the cafeteria wasn't really good, frankly it reminded him these days of those damn MRE's from when he was in the army. *Heh, yep all I'd need is someone shouting at me in the background to make this just like the army.*

"Simmons, is that you!"

*Yep just like that. Wow I didn't know my imagination was that good, I could swear I heard Sarge's voice just then.*

"Hey Simmons, I'm talking to you! What the heck are you doing here?"

*Hey wait a minute.* The bespectacled man turned at last and gaped at the taller, broader man with the mustache who had been addressing him. "S-Sarge, wha-what are you doing here?!"

"Heh, same as you working for MBI. They were the only ones who agreed with me about the blue menace, so I decided to work with them. Well that and they didn't do a good background check but that's beside the point. Good timing, I need someone to handle this new computer controlled gun, and here you are! Now come on, let's get you dialed in or whatever the phrase is." Sarge grabbed Simmons' arm at the elbow and began to walk him away.

"Besides I need someone to talk to, the damn meatheads they assigned me can't talk for some reason, what kind a' names are Deuce and Trece anyway?"

"Wait, Sarge I really, can't, hey!" But the thinner man was no match for Sarge's strength. So it was that without the

'speaker to Mr. Crazy', no one wanted to leave the action happening on their screens to tell him about anything, so they simply set him inner office text messages. Minaka's crazy act had done its job, masking his true thoughts and personality, but it had come with its own downside. Then two, they had all seen the 'experimentals' and knew their capabilities.

### \\End Flashback/

However Minato had no way of knowing this and he grimly pressed forward with the rest of his group.

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Kazehana ducked, blasting the ground with a blast of wind to knock one of her attackers back then using the backlash of the attack to fly in the air for a moment sending two more wind cutters at another attacker, this one looking vaguely familiar with spiky hair with little bells on the ends and a tall body. Regardless the woman was only able to block one of them. The other cut her body in half, sending the top half sliding off in a welter of gore.

Homura jumped over a kick, sending a thin but powerful blast of fire into the soulless Sekirei's mouth, burning out her head. He grimaced as he looked around while Kazehana took out the last of the seven that had come after them despite her desperate dodging, the massive pike she wielded slowing her down too much to dodge. The blond haired Sekirei still tired to charge forward even with her weapon sliced in half, but Kazehana simply responded but sending her crashing away by another blast of wind.

The two of them had turned at bay at the designated point, which Tsukiumi had chosen because it was pretty far back, making it unlikely another group of soldiers or Sekirei could sneak up on them as they were dealing with the group they had just killed, and it had several little explosive surprises scattered around, having been along one of the routes Higa could have taken to assault the North. When two of their seven pursuers tripped said surprises and went down, injured and dead, they had turned and attacked with Kaie coming out of cover to join them, and they had simply overwhelmed all of them, despite at least two of them being nearly as skilled as Musubi.

Homura looked down at the bodies of those two sadly, a large woman tanned almost as much as Yahan that had long hair down to her hips before Homura had burned it and her head with it. She had the strange power of using her hair as an offensive weapon, moving it around like blades, hands or whatever she wanted. Homura remembered helping her face down the idiot S&M twins months back before finding her Ashikabi, a young fisherman down by the docks who was the first in his family to go to college. She hadn't been one to like fighting, and had probably been deactivated when they tried to run. He didn't recognize the other one who had fought so well and so skillfully, and wondered what it said about him that he was thankful for that small mercy.

Kazehana finished clearing off her hands and wiping the blood from her face shaking her head a little before steeling herself and checking back in with Tsukiumi. The fight was still going on, and they would have to get back into it.

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Tsukiumi cursed luridly as more soulless Sekirei made their way forward, announcing their presence by pushing Uzume to retreat from her ambush with Kuzuri and Kujika. She had already ordered the un-winged Sekirei to fall back. They had done their job excellently, killing or scaring into retreat at least half of the MBI troops attacking them, but they had nearly been caught by MBI's own Sekirei in turn. Shi was badly battered, and Niwa had nearly lost an eye and an arm. She had ordered both to retreat back to Izumo house.

When Kazehana, Homura and Kaie reported they had taken out the seven Sekirei that had been chasing them, she swiftly ordered them into the fight, using Matsu's ever updating map on her pad to direct them where to go.

That was over an hour ago. They had rejoined the fight, pulling the attacking Sekirei this way and that but the enemies simply had overwhelming numbers, and refused to be broken down further than ten. While Kana and the un-winged Sekirei were still able to keep MBI's troops hopping, constantly attacking and fading into the smoke and chaos of the urban environment the Sekirei were forcing her sisters back. Luckily the soulless Sekirei's aggression had broken them off from the regular troops, and so none of them were around to help the regular troops from the attacks form their rears. Seeing the last tank mark disappear from her map she smiled grimly, and ordered Kana to fall back to guard Izumo house. She knew once the other girls norito induced power up faded, she would be out of it for a while.

Shiina, Kisami and Kusano would protect her, Shi and Niwa there. Indeed Matsu had reported that Kusano had used her power to grow every piece of foliage within two blocks of the little community, making the entire area as tough to get through for anyone else as the forest she had created in the park. If she could have extended it further Tsukiumi would have been tempted to pull back into it, but as it was it would be a fantastic fall back spot, but she hoped it wasn't necessary.

She knew if the fight went on much longer they would start taking losses, and unlike the soulless Sekirei, she didn't want to lose any of her own sisters or Nishi's Sekirei. She had already ordered one of them, a short blonde haired girl with a very girly style of clothing named Kuruse to retreat along with one Namiji. They had been caught by a force of ten 'Golem' Sekirei, and both of them had been bloody and battered, only saved by Akitsu coming to their aid and killing several of them allowing them to escape.

Tsukiumi grimly put down the computer pad and her walkie-talkie down, knowing it was time for her to move forward to join the action. Her final order to her sister-wives went out over their telepathic communication, telling them to retreat further and bring all the attacking soulless Sekirei to a single point, a large intersection that had been completely demolished to make room for an arena for the Sekirei Plan.

Not even five minutes later she met up with four of Nishi's Sekirei and provided them with some long-range firepower against the eight enemy Sekirei they were facing. "Water celebration!" She shouted and a massive battering ram of water caught one of the Sekirei attackers in the side of the head smashing her side to land boneless against a wall on the other side of the street. Another shout of "Hydra!" sent hundreds of tiny but incredibly fast jets of water forward forcing the attacking Sekirei could Dodge around to avoid them.

One of them however responded by shrieking loudly creating a field of sonic power around her which impacted and dissipated the jets of water aimed at her.

She jumped forward carrying her scream with her and now launching in a wave of nearly visible sound from her mouth. Tsukiumi stopped and stared appalled. Minato told her and her sister-wives about MBI collecting any Sekirei that had escapes, but to actually see the Sekirei they had helped escape from the city stand before her, her eyes dead, no mind, no soul, no will behind them and knowing that her Ashikabi was dead as well was another thing entirely.

She fell back in shock and was nearly clipped by one of her enemy's sonic screams, two other fist types came forward and she barely blocked their punches and kicks. She summoned a water sword to guard against them, while concentrating on another larger scale attack behind her. One of their punches glanced off the side of her head and she reeled back shaking it but stabbing forward at the same time with her other hand to impale the other Sekirei before she could take advantage of Tsukiumi's weakness. As her water sword dissipated she sent her Yamato no Orochi attack forward, forcing all of the MBI's soulless Sekirei back except for the sound user, who was easily dispatched by Nishi's Sekirei.

Tsukiumi to the moment to stare down at her dead face and sightless unseeing eyes and shook her head sadly. Then she grimly gathered herself and moved away with the other four pressing their momentary advantage, hoping that Minato was doing better, but knowing she couldn't spare the time right now to check in.

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Minato was not all right. He had nearly lost his head to a machine gun blast from up ahead, and he and his group had fallen back into cover. Whoever was in charge of the defense of the building had shut down the power so they couldn't use the elevators and had a heavily fortified every level of the staircase going up. Worse, there were troops on every level and they had tried to move straight up the staircase without clearing out the second and third floors only be to be taken from behind in a pincer movement. He had left Haihane and Benitsubasa behind to clear up the levels below them, while Yahan the two infiltrators and Minato forged on. They were able to make it up to the fifth floor, but it was the most heavily fleet fortified of the mall and they had barely gotten out of the staircase before they came under even more fire. One man was hiding in a doorway with a shotgun blasting away but not hitting anything at this range. But Someone had also set up a crew served machine gun operating from a computer at the far end of the hall, and it was only by luck that all three of them had survived long enough to dive into a nearby doorway. Yahan led the way, killing the two guards in there as the others tumbled in behind her to the sound of machine gun fire slamming into the walls behind them.

Minato looked around the small office they found themselves hiding out in before waving at the inner wall as he reloaded his rifle (describe rifle). Smash through here and keep going, I'll keep their attention on me here and pin them in place while you circle around them." Yahan nodded, but Saki and Barei were muttering together unheeding.

"He can't still be alive!" Saki moaned, leaning in close to Barei, who was using purple lipstick today. "I mean he's only human right, we saw him get thrown away when that jeep of his exploded!"

Barei shuddered. "But what if he's not human? I mean he could be some demon or something, fire would be his friend, just like that dam shotgun of his!"

"Hey!" Minato shouted, bringing both moaning girls back into the normal world. "Get it together. We've got a job to do

girls, let's get it done." Barei and Saki nodded and moved over to stand by Yahan as she started to break through the wall, grimacing a little as they moved.

They had all taken bumps, bruises, cuts and a few bullets through this assault, and it was only because of their Sekirei durability that all of them were still on their feet. Well, that and the fact that Haihane and Benitsubasa had done the majority of the fighting up to this point.

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As Minato poked his rifle out and fired blindly down the corridor, below them Haihane and Benitsubasa had in fact just finished clearing out the fourth floor when they heard noises coming up from below in the staircase. They peered over the edge and saw Yukari and Shiina making their way up the stairs.

"Aren't you supposed to be back at the inn?" asked Benitsubasa, not that she was unhappy to see her ally against the tit-ocracy.

Yukari grimaced. She and Shiina had followed Minato and his infiltration group at a distance since they left Izumo house, and she had to stop several times to throw up when they came upon the bodies left behind. She was still game though and she replied hotly "I'm worried about my mom, you haven't seen her or anything have you?"

Both of the ex-disciplinary squad members shook their heads. "Your mom was the head adjustor right, she'd be up on the fifteenth floor at least maybe up on the thirtieth. Go back down, find the generator room in the basement and get the power back on, then you can get up there far easier and we can too." Benitsubasa ordered, then turned away, following Haihane up the stairs. Yukari grimaced but nodded and she and Shiina turned around making their way back down the stairs.

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Kazehana and Homura had just taken out two more Sekirei, but eight more were coming on towards them, more spread out than before and Homura was limping, having taken a sword thrust through his thigh. Luckily it had missed the femoral artery so he wasn't going to bleed out but his mobility was severely hampered. It looked bad for them until Akitsu, Uzume and Kaie appeared behind their enemies. Akitsu wasted no time at all, slaying two of them with large ice spears stabbing up from the ground. The other two Sekirei combined for another three Sekirei between them then Kaie rushed over and grabbed Homura around the waist helping him retreat. Kazehana nodded grimly and shouted after him "get back home, you're no use to us here with that lame leg of yours."

Homura grimaced. It was a pity, but his count was pretty good, and he had the distinct pleasure of killing another Sekirei twice, one of Higa's bitches that had taken pleasure in hunting down and bringing in other Sekirei for her master. Hoping that pleasant memory would keep the nightmares about the others he had killed this day at bay he moved off, leaning heavily on Uzume, who herself was looking much the worse for wear, her clothing in tatters, burned and ripped, leaving her without her primary weapon. Kaie followed after them to guard them missing one of her whips and with her hair missing one of her ahoge, but other than that still in fighting shape.

With their injured friends taken care of Akitsu and Kazehana backed away slowly, taking an awful toll on their enemies but still being pushed back as more 'Golem' Sekirei came up, the survivors of Uzume, Kuzuri and Kujika's attack. It was at that point that Tsukiumi's orders to retreat towards that particular intersection showed up. The two embattled element users looked at one another than bought time to disengage through use of a combination attack that pushed their enemies away and froze the ground beneath them, letting them jump away, though still in sight when the frontrunners recovered and joined the rest of the mindlessly following Sekirei chasing after them.

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It'd taken over two hours at the top speed the helicopter could reach without appearing on radar, but Miya had at last arrived on the island. She scowled a little as they came in for a landing, the pilot having convinced the rather minimal air control in place they were there to drop off some supplies. The island was nearly lifeless, dominated at one side by a MBI military installation, where they were touching down, and the gantries and research station that had been built up piecemeal around the ship sunk into the ground. There had been more installations once, but she could see the massive crater her Takehito had created in his final act of bravery. The rocky landscape all around them seemed to suck at her enthusiasm, trying to trap her in those memories but she shook them off. *God I hate this place. Far too many unpleasant memories. I've got a job to do, heaven help anyone who gets in my way. I won't fail my race or my husband, not again.*

With that thought centermost in her mind the moment they landed she began her attack, slicing apart tanks and men stationed around the helicopter landing area with equal ease. She would normally not have been so blood thirsty, using violence only as a means to an end, but that was before these men had aided and abetted Minaka in his mad

schemes. As such their lives were forfeit.

She paused as nine of the soulless Sekirei, who had been sent here just in case by Minaka came forward to attack her. She shook her head sadly, raised her blade and 3 seconds later the fight was over. While a single digit Sekirei could come close to matching her if they had a full bond like her fellow sister wives did, these will-less, mindless things... they may have retained their power and skill yet that power and skill was nothing in comparison to her own. She was simply on another level in terms of speed, strength, skill and everything else you could name.

She kept moving towards the ship, killing anyone that came near her with fell intent. After a few minutes though most of the troopers wouldn't come near her: watching a beautiful woman dressed demurely in a hakama slice their friends, the Golems and the tanks to pieces with a blood drenched sword without even a mark or spatter of blood on her was terrifying (and of course a few of them knew what she was, and wanted no part of trying to fight her).

About ten minutes later she was close enough to feel the jinkis in the pouch on her back react to the presence of the ship, and she paused sending her mind briefly into the connection to order the ship to prepare for liftoff, but was told something unpleasant at the same time. As she did so she could hear even louder sirens and shouts of alarm from the base around the ship, but she ignored them for the moment, turning towards where the ship had told her something was coming. She raced away, up the side of a cliff overlooking the ocean to peer out over the waves. For a moment she had a feeling of déjà vu, this sight once again bringing up dark memories of her time as captain of the Defense Squad and the invasion of the island that she and they had dealt with.

For over the crest of the ocean was an approaching fleet, complete with landing craft. From here she couldn't make out any discernible marks or flags but that really didn't matter. They hadn't taken any aggressive actions yet but their course was clear, and she wondered briefly what she should do to... discourage them. After a moment she decided and brought her sword up in a flash, sending a monstrous wave of force out to impact on the ocean directly before the forward most ship in the formation. From here she could see the monstrous wave this made wash over the ship and practically sink it, but it did cause them all to start to turn away, which was what she wanted. With that done, she turned and raced towards the ship.

Dozens of troopers and hundreds of scientists had tried to stop the ship from preparing to take off, but had failed miserably. More, the ship's own security system had come online at Miya's orders, and they were finding themselves increasingly locked out of the system. Some were even killed when they tried to get down to the engine room to shut it down there.

Most of them had retreated out of the ship, and when the scientists turned and saw her they began to scramble away, leaving all their work behind in their mad scramble to get away from the goddess of death they knew as O1 Miya. Only a few of them had the courage to face her as she raced towards the ship's open hatch. Natsuo was with them, as well as two more of the 'Golem' Sekirei. Natsuo ordered them forward while he fumbled in his pocket for something, wishing with all his heart he had been told to bring along one of his Sekirei or that he had thought of doing so on his own. He was bitterly regretting ignoring them now and only hoped he would get out of this with all his bits still intact.

The two mindless Sekirei didn't even slow her down she simply cut them down without thinking about it and moved on, only to stop as something silver flashed towards her. It looked like an MBI card, and Miya swept her blade forward and sliced out catching it midair between them with a blast of wind. The thing shorted and fizzled out before dying and she looked at the man before her who was still trying to control himself and appear calm. "Yes," she asked the very normalness of her tone, completely unwinded and not even a little tired or angry freaking out everyone nearby, "was that supposed to do something?"

With one hand she simply brushed the man aside and entered the open hatch, which slid shut soundlessly behind her. About five minutes later the entire island shook and most of the scaffolding and buildings around the ship collapsed in on themselves. One of the falling pieces of metal slammed into Natsuo who hadn't moved from where she had brushed him aside, paralyzed by fear at his brush with death, killing him instantly. With a roar of power the ship burst loose from the Earth to hover about 50 feet above it.

To the men in the fleet now circling the island twenty miles offshore the ship looked nothing so much as a giant quartz crystal. Though you couldn't quite see inside of it, it looked as if you should, if that made any sense. It didn't to their superiors when they reported this later, and many of them were sternly reprimanded for flights of fancy, but the fact of the matter was it looked as if it was a giant spire of crystal, with bits sticking out at various intervals and quite a few of them at the back.

There was no visible sign of propulsion, no engine or rocket or anything else, yet it hovered in the air, another impossibility with modern technology, without moving or doing anything for a moment then flicked away, moving more like a dragonfly than anything made by man could in atmosphere, in water or space, barely seen in motion and only

really seen when it stopped. One moment it was hovering over the island, the next it was hovering over the fleet, and hundreds of sailors scattered to their various duties as the captains began to shout firing solutions to one another and elevate their guns in a poor attempt to be able to hit the ship above them.

Fighters started to scramble as well, but thankfully before anyone to do anything rash. A voice came from the ship, almost impossibly loud over the ships few exterior speakers. "I am Miya, Sekirei 01 and now wife of my Ashikabi Minato. Leave us alone, and we will leave you alone. Yet if you come to us with war and violence we will show you no mercy." And with that stern injunction ringing in their ears the ship above disappeared again flicking off to another target. This time the target was Tokyo, and Miya hoped with all her heart and soul that her fellow wives, friends and above all Minato were still all right when she got there.

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Minato grimaced as he heard more gunfire coming from the hole Yahan had made in the wall. Evidently the person in charge of the opposition knew how strong Sekirei were and what they could do and had fortified another room facing the walls just in case. "Great, so I guess its time to do something really stupid." He looked around and grabbed up the metal lined door Yahan had kicked in to get them into the office in the first place. Hefting it like an overlarge shield in one hand he charged out without warning into the hallway.

Almost immediately he came under fire from the shotgun wielder and the machine gun, but with his free hand he threw one of his purloined grenades up and over to land in the makeshift foxhole built around the machine gun. From ahead of him he heard someone shout "Son of a Bitch!" as it went off, but Minato didn't bother noticing more as he kicked the door forward as hard as he could, slamming it into the shotgun wielder, who ducked into a ball, grunting as Minato leapt after the door landing and rolling down the corridor.

Sarge grunted as he felt his ribs then turned to fire at the damn invaders back but Minato had already charged past Simmons position, covering him from fire from his rear. Sarge grunted angrily and followed him, taking a moment to check on Simmons, who had ducked away enough not to be killed but was still thrown sharply into the wall, knocking him out. He turned as noises from the stairwell drew his attention and scowled as he saw the two dirty traitors that ran off had come back and now were racing towards him. Sarge grimaced then fell back, still firing at them causing them to duck and slow down. They both paused for a moment, nearly collapsing as a wave of lethargy hit them, but then they were up and moving, not even noticing that their crests were gone.

Minato immediately came across two huge men who were simply standing side by side in the corridor, disdaining any kind of cover. Minato paled a little seeing how much like the Meta that had been sent after Takehito they were, both in size and armor.

They brought up huge machine guns, the kind that were normally on a vehicle and immediately began to belt out fire at Minato, who ducked wildly into a doorway, now hiding in what looked like, he looked around, yep a bathroom, women's by the color and lack of foul smell. "Peachy" he muttered as the machine guns began to fire again.

Luckily for him Yahan, Saki and Barei had broken through the hard point holding them up and they burst through the wall on the other side of the hallway, drawing his attackers attention. He looked around the doorway to see Yahan kick one down the corridor and jump after him as two more appeared from the room across from her allies behind her. The three of them began to pummel Barei and Saki into the ground despite their speed and strength and Minato scowled but charged forward.

He tackled one of them to the ground, bringing out his spatha and stabbing down trying to find some weak point in the giant's carapace armor. He found a bit on the side that was weaker and stabbed in. The man below him convulsed and began to gurgle as he died but Minato rolled away just in time to dodge a stab from another one of the giant's wielding a serrated knife. He crouched, blocking one blow then pushing to his feet as the giant pulled back for another stab, kicking Minato to his knees. He barely got his sword in position to catch another stab on his sword's edge. He punched out, catching the other man in the nuts and the man groaned, collapsing to forward and Minato stabbed him through the neck. *All that armor on and no cup? Idiots.*

He barely got to his feet when he had to block a slash from the last giant, who had just kicked Barei to the ground senseless to join Saki. He had been about to finish her and Saki off when Minato killed his fellow, and Saki had destroyed his gun so the only weapon left to him was his knife.

Minato blocked that first slash then gasped in shock as the blade of his spatha, the sword that had seen him through so much cracked at last. The giant man grinned and swung his knife in again and pushing Minato back against the wall of the hallway. The giant pressed forward and the spatha shattered at last, letting his blade in to stab Minato in the shoulder.

Minato however gritted his teeth and ignored his injury. Even as the man twisted his knife and raised another hand to grab Minato's throat he reached out catching the tip of his spatha in his fingers and bringing it around to stab into the giant's throat.

The giant fell back grabbing at his throat and staring but Minato brought his other hand up with the remnants of his blade to stab into the man's side.

As the giant fell to the floor Minato grimaced, moving his arm at the shoulder and Yahan came back, her legs covered in blood, some of it her own, and her face a mass of bruises, one arm already in a makeshift sling. "You, you alright taisho?" she asked wearily, her words barely discernible through her bruises. "Th-there were four more of them down there. I to-took 'em out but" She shrugged, eloquently bringing attention to her battered state.

Minato nodded grimly. "Hopefully there won't be any more of those... those abominations." He moved over to Saki and Barei, breathing a sigh of relief when he found their pulses. Both of them looked a little better than Yahan, but they were down and out for now.

Shotgun blasts rang out from behind them and they both turned wearily to the noise.

Sarge was backing up frantically, trying to conserve his shotgun shells, a mode of operation he was never good at as Haihane and Benitsubasa made their way towards him. Both of them stopped and stared at something over his shoulder and he turned and gaped, seeing all eight of the creepy silent giants down, dead or dying. Before he could gape at anything else however the man standing there covered his own blood and thiers charged forward. Sarge tried to bring his shotgun up, but the man slapped it aside driving his knee up into Sarge's chest. Sarge gasped in air but reached out gripping the mans good shoulder and bringing him in for a head butt. Their legs got tangled and they went down.

Minato groaned as he glared up at the man even as Benitsubasa and Haihane raced forward to lift the man off him. "God damnit, you do know you're guarding a fucking nuke that can be triggered by the madman upstairs right?"

Sarge grunted, stopping his mad search for his hip knife to stare down at the younger man beneath him. "Excuse me, the wasawha?"

"The nuke, Minaka's last trump card, at least we hope it is." Minato ground out, even as one hand reached for a tiny holdout knife he carried in his belt.

Sarge looked over his shoulder, seeing the two Sekirei nearly on him and thought about his position. Reluctantly he put his hands behind his head, causing Haihane, who was about to stab him in his back with her claw blades to stop, looking down at him quizzically. "Prove it."

Ten minutes later they opened the door to the 'secondary generator' room and inside they found the nuclear device. Yahan pushed forward, examining the device critically. "I can shut this down easily." She affirmed through her bruises, reaching into a backpack she had kept safe throughout this mad fight, bringing out her tools and getting to work immediately grimacing as she could only use one hand.

Simmons looked at the device in shock. "I-I can't believe the director would set something like this up! Why, why..."

Sarge grunted angrily, smacking him on the shoulder. "Since when have the higher ups cared about what happens to grunts like us. Huh, bet they all like the color blue too."

Minato looked at him wondering what was up with the color but he shrugged turning away in surprise as the ding of an elevator reached them. He and Benitsubasa moved out to the hallway and stared as Yukari came out, hanging off of Shiina like she had no strength left in her. As soon as she saw Minato she rushed forward slamming into his chest, not even noticing him biting down on his lip to keep from yelling aloud at the pain in his shoulder as Yukari sobbed. "Nii, nii-chan, mama, she, mom, she, she's!"

Slowly the story came out that the two of them had followed Minato worried about Takami. At Benitsubasa's suggestion they had gone down into the basement and turned on the breaker to the elevator, but while they were down there they had come across a makeshift morgue. Takami's body had been thrown in and left on the floor just inside the door. She had been shot from behind by a large rifle.

As Minato comforted Yukari, Barei and Saki groaned into wakefulness, then made their way slowly toward where the sound of sobbing was coming from. They stopped and stared for a moment then came forward to offer what condolences they could. About ten minutes later Yukari was composed enough for Minato to move away, leaving her

with Yahan and the others while he took Haihane and Shiina with him to take the elevator up to find Minaka. Sarge and Benitsubasa were sent to take out the communication center, something they would accomplish by destroying every piece of equipment inside it. Minato walked off, his eye hard as he racked another round into his rifle leaning back and closing his eyes.

*As much as I disliked the choices she made, especially those in regards to the Sekirei and tome personally, Takami didn't deserve to die like that, shot in the back. Just one more mark in your ledger Minaka, and guess what, it's time to pay your dues.*

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Karasuba scowled angrily as her two opponents pressed her hard, something they had been doing since the fight began. *How they hell have these two gotten so good and so fast! There's just no way the bond could've caused this, no way.* She refused to believe it, but the truth was they had been fighting for over two hours now, and only now were the two of them making mistakes and getting a little sloppy.

A moment later however she saw her chance, and as Musubi powered forward with her kuma-ken she dodged inside wincing a little as the edge of that aura caught her, but her other hand, brought her sword slashing forward. Musubi desperately tried to raise a hand to block it, and then screamed in agony as her arm was completely cut off right below the elbow and went spiraling away to land several yards behind her.

Another slash of the blade barely caught Kaho coming in, causing her to block desperately with her now mangled naginata only to be tossed aside into another building.

Karasuba smirked, wiping away the blood from her mouth and ringing out her sore arm from pushing that much power through it. "Well, it looks as if hate is stronger Musubi, are you finally ready to admit it or am I going to end you here and now." A part of her, a long deeply buried and ignored part, railed at that yet the rest of her ignored it easily. This was after all only the prelude to the main fight with Miya.

Musubi fell to her knees gripping the stump of her arm, but her eyes were still hard and focused as she stared up at Karasuba in defiance. At this moment, bleeding out as they, were the spirits of Musubi and Yume were one, and it was with one voice they spoke. "There truly is no loving your soul is there Karasuba, in that case I will defeat your evil with all of my power and love!" Musubi/Yume got to her feet, bringing all of her power into her one remaining fist and starting to enchant her norito.

Karasuba laughed gaily. "Really in that case I'll go all out now!"

"These are the fists of my pledge, crush the catastrophe threatening my Ashikabi, Kuma no Te!" A huge beam of yellow light lanced out from Musubi's palm aiming at Karasuba.

Karasuba gather her own inner energy's into her sword, causing it to glow black with red lightning covering it. As the beam of yellow light came toward her, Karasuba sliced forward sending her own slash of utter darkness forward. The beam of light impacted her attack and she cut straight through it with difficulty, but she suddenly faltered, her attack winking out for a second before resuming. Karasuba shook her head as the momentary weakness left her then poured more of her power into her attack for another few seconds then both of their attacks winked out as one.

Musubi fell back with a long, deep gash going from her right shoulder to left hip and Karasuba stood there looking down at her smirking.

"You see," she said slowly, coughing a little, "hate is stronger than love." She coughed again and brought out a hand to her mouth to cover her mouth. She looked at her hand quizzically as she said bright red flecks of blood on it and then raised a hand to her chest. She felt her ribs and on side rather than feeling muscles or bones she felt only mushy innards. She looks down and she had a hole straight through her side. She gasped a little, "No, no, that can't be..."

A voice from behind her spoke up then edged with grief and rage. "But it can you bitch!" Kaho had pushed herself out of the dent she had made in the ground to see the two exchange their final attacks, and now dashed forward her eyes brimming with tears and her own norito powering her spear as she brought it around in an ark. Karasuba glared up at her, her eye already going dim even as her head was sliced cleanly off her neck to shoot away down the street.

With that done Kaho dropped her spear and ran over to Musubi kneeling beside her and trying desperately to staunch the blood. "You did it Musubi" she said loudly trying desperately to keep her friend awake. "You did it! You proved love was stronger so don't die on me, please!" Musubi smiled at her a wide happy smile and then her head fell back as her eyes closed. Fifteen minutes later Kaho was still desperately trying to patch her up when a huge shadow

loomed overhead.

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Tsukiumi, Akitsu and Kazehana had met up at the designated point having sent all of their other allies either back to Izumo or on another mission. Nishi's feathers had regrouped and moved around the attacking Sekirei to completely annihilate the troops behind them. Luckily Tsukiumi had read the soulless Sekirei well and none of them had peeled off to help defend the regular troops. All eighteen remaining MBI indoctrinated Sekirei had joined up and were now coming at the three single digits in a single mass, running along streets and jumping from rooftops in front of them.

Tsukiumi looked at her sister-wives and motioned them to get behind her. "It's time we end this." she said grimly.

"What are you going to do?" Kazehana said not arguing in the slightest. She had Akitsu had been attacked before they had met up, and both of them were practically exhausted and also in a certain amount of pain. Tsukiumi looked slightly worse than the two of them, having been in the front lines and holding there against ten of the attacking Sekirei as she ordered Nishi's girls to retreat.

"I'm going to end it." Tsukiumi said grimly and began to gather her power, as much of it as she could handle running into her. She brought up two fingers to her lips kissing them softly and then brought her hand forward. "By the depth of my bond with my Ashikabi!" She shouted her voice stern unyielding and powerful, so powerful that it even stopped the Sekirei facing them in their tracks for a moment. "Let the boundless wave of my devotion crash and drag down the enemies of my Ashikabi! **Infinite Tsunami!**"

From her in a wide 45° angle shot out water, unending water in a torrent faster and more powerful than anything natural or unnatural that had ever been seen on Earth. Minute after minute it the attack went on catching all of the enemy Sekirei, and everything beyond them. Ten minutes elapsed as the attack went on and on, until it finally finished and Tsukiumi nearly collapsed to the ground, only being caught by Kazehana at the last moment. As the water subsided, disappearing down drains and into rivers and filling little areas of rubbish the three stared at the carnage it created.

It was as if someone had sliced out a portion of the city as easily as one could take a piece out of a pie. From where they were, they could see straight on down to what had previously been the docks situated over in Nishi's territory and there was nothing in the way of that view. Buildings made of concrete steel and everything else were simply gone everything was flat and everything that had been in the way of the attack had been completely disintegrated, demolished by the power of her pledge. Later all three of them would be astonished by the power of it but right now they were just too tired to care.

They wearily looked up into the sky as large shadow fell over them and then smiled happily at seeing the ship. Miya's voice came from above them, impossibly loud. "Thank you for making a landing zone Tsukiumi-chan but I really don't think it's necessary. I think this thing can hover as long as I want it to." The three of them looked at one another and then began to laugh a little as little beams of light came down impacting them and somehow teleporting them onto the ship.

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Minaka had been in his office the entire time, watching first with pleasure, then disbelief and growing shock as the battle went on in the north of the city, costing him the majority of his Golems. A video clip of the sheer power of Tsukiumi's full powered norito was utterly beyond belief. Fully a fifth of the city was just not there anymore, smashed, crushed, disintegrated into nothing and with it all of his remaining Sekirei. He shook his head sadly. He had greatly underestimated the power the bond could give the Sekirei, as well as the difference in power between a single digit and the double digits at his command.

He was about to order his personal helicopter readied to take him to Kamikura island when looked out of his window, stopping and gaping in surprise at seeing the ship hovering there. *Wh-what the hell is going on!* He looked down at his internal messaging service and noticed all the messages he hadn't seen before, and he read through them with growing fury and shock. *Well they know damn well I never look at that thing, why didn't they send someone to tell me?!*

He turned away to stare again almost lifelessly the rock ship that the Sekirei had first arrived in hovered over the cityscape in the distance. It was so large it loomed even from here, and with that sight he knew it was over. All that he could do now was take them all down with him. *If I cannot become a God no one will.*

Suddenly, the double doors to his office burst open and Minato strode in, followed by Shiina and Haihane, all three of them looking battered and bloody, though Haihane still looked game enough, her eye nearly glowing with battle lust. They had run into four more of the giants the moment they got off the elevator, but against Haihane and Shiina they

had been overmatched, though Minato had also gotten in his own shots since Shiina was leery of using her entropy based powers near his allies.

Minato strode forward, empty rifle in one hand, and his broken spatha in the other. He was covered in bloody, his face covered in cuts, several of which were deep enough to become scars later and bleeding in several places, most of all his shoulder. "At this point," he said coldly. "I should really call upon you to surrender, but I couldn't trust your word nor do I really want you alive."

Minaka spread his hands almost gleefully. "Hubris comes before a fall my son!" he said gaily knowing that he was going to die, but also knowing that he had one final failsafe that would let him take Minato and all of his enemies down with him. "Why just look what it cost me, and will now cost you!" With a flourish he reached over to hammer a button on his desk before any of the others could stop him. When nothing happened he frowned, then bashed the button again.

"If you're thinking of that nuke you have downstairs don't" Minato answered, a wintry smile on his face. "We disconnected it and took it apart. And one of my allies has destroyed your communication center so even if you had something else up your sleeve it's not going to work."

Minaka glared at him his joy at the idea of taking everyone else down with him fading as he saw the seriousness on Minato's face as he came forward.

"And I am no son of yours." Minato continued walking around the desk and before Minaka could try to move away he was held in one unbreakable grip. Even as Minato winced as the move made his shoulder scream in pain he lifted and Minaka's legs lifted off the floor and he was slammed back hard against the wall-sized window that made up the back of his office.

Yet even as helpless as he was he wanted to strike back. He opened his mouth to shout out how he had Minato's mother killed when he suddenly gasped and he looked down and saw Minato had already stabbed him with the remains of the spatha deep into his guts. "No" Minato said coldly "no final diatribe, no final speech no nothing, just die, die and know you were nothing but a minor footnote in history, soon to be utterly forgotten." He backed up and then gave Minaka a single hard kick that sent him crashing through the glass to fall to his death low with a blade Minato it stabbed him with still in him.

Minato sighed and waved his hand a little. "It's done Yukari," he said and he turned and looked at the doorway as Yukari came through it still being supported by Barei and Saki. The Sekirei plan was over, MBI was finished, and Minato was just damn tired of it all. He put one arm around his sister and stared out over the view of the city at the distance spaceship now cruising above the city slowly.

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End chapter

Whoa. That was a bitch to write and think of how to cut up into different sections. I realize the Golems sort of sound like the berserkers I used in Chaos vs Destiny and for that I apologize, but I didn't realize that until I wrote this chapter, and really I think it worked rather well, though if I ever go back I might make them less mindless, but then would the good guys be as sanguine about killing them, or would that whole combat become little more than a holding action while Minato tries to kill Minaka to shut them all down? I also think my description of the process to create them could be better, but on the whole I'm well pleased how it turned out. Before anyone asks, distance and the weakness of the bond in question was why none of the DS trio were effected by Natsuo's death for more than a moment. If he had been in the city it would have effected them much more, but he was nowhere near. As always tell me what you all think, and look forward to the epilogue next week!

## \*Chapter 22\*: Epilogue Towards the Future

I don't own Sekirei.

The time has come to speak of many things, and to end this story. The time has come.

Some reviews I would like to mention:

*The Robdog*: thank you for noticing that little joke, it always does me good to have someone notice and comment on my jokes.

*Partsu*: Sorry, a kick out the window and broken sword to the stomach is all you get.

*Urahara'sgod*: Yes, Homura reverted to his male form as Minato didn't feel any attraction to him or even see him as a girl at all. The power of the bond made it so despite the experiments done on him.

*Drazil*: Given what a free translator was able to tell me, thanks. I respect the hell out of anyone who can read another language, as I have no ear for language at all... I can barely understand a very little bit of Japanese even after years of being an anime fan.

*SpecialRelativity*: There was a part in the Stars wars book where one of the x-wing pilots, who had been sent as a part of a diplomat group said something like "Yessss, damage. No talking just killing." It was completely out of character for him and a sign of frustration but it was a sentiment that my version of Minato would totally understand. The moment any villain tried to make a grand speech or gloat Minato would have a knife in him.

Now on with the curtain call.

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### Epilogue: Towards the Future

Minato let himself have 15 minutes to himself, before getting on with his work, after all just because Minaka was dead didn't mean everything was solved, there was a lot of things he needed to do. First, he sent Benitsubasa and Haihane through the tower to clear off any more resistance, something the bloodthirsty duo was looking forward to. They were also to gather any of the scientists, who would be held and tried for crimes against humanity, and hopefully executed over the next few days if Minato had any say about it, though Miya had already proven she would overrule his desire to make one permanent size (specifically a 9 mm bullet) fit all. He would've liked to send Yukari with them, just in case the scientists had something that could disable or kill a Sekirei, but she was still distraught over their mother's death. Minato himself was a little disturbed by her death, but given their estrangement that was about all.

After that he immediately got into telepathic contact with his wives and was astonished and incredibly proud of how well they had all done. Not only had Miya forced her way onto the ship and taken control of it with very little in the way of problems, but Tsukiumi had led a magnificent defense of the north, winning the battle moments before Miya showed up with the spaceship, resulting in over forty enemy Sekirei deaths. All of his Sekirei were injured, and Tsukiumi in particular was exhausted, but no one had died. Homura and almost all of Nishi's Sekirei were battered and wouldn't be in fighting form for a few days despite their healing abilities, but they were all still alive and without them Minato's Sekirei would have been overwhelmed, maybe even if they had all used their noritos. According to Akitzu, who had taken charge of getting their wounded onto the spaceship, Musubi was easily the most badly hurt. She had lost one of her arms and had been fading in and out of a coma before Kaho could get her to the ship's medical wing. She was stable now however, as the fully automated medical wing was simply incredible. *It makes sense in a way*, Minato thought as he sent a wordless wave of affection love and pride to all of his wives as well as saying the words out loud to Miya on the phone, *after all, it was their pharmaceutical business and their medical devices that put MBI on the map worldwide*.

Next he went over and found the phone number for Hayato's cell phone and called him up. A rather perky yet strangely mature sounding female answered. "Mikogami Tokyo residence may I help you?"

"Get Hayato on the phone right now." Minato replied coldly. "This is Minato, Minaka is dead, the nuke is taken care of and it's time for him to get off the fence." Such was the commanding presence in Minato's voice said his Sekirei on the other and didn't even argue, merely handing the phone over to her Ashikabi.

The young boy was rather chirpy as he answered, having enjoyed immensely watching the battle in the North, as well as seeing the spaceship soaring over the cityscape. That was just too cool. Mutsu however, didn't think it was so

cool, and had taken to staring at it from the rooftop above the mansion, in some kind of odd mix between fear and longing. "Hey Minato, man that was fantastic! You say the nuke is taken out, that's great too! And that ship, it's just so big and shiny!"

"Hayato" Minato said calmly "shut up. The fighting is over, Minaka's dead, and it's time for you to join up and do your part. I want at least three groups of five Sekirei to start patrolling the city. Find and turn away or kill any spy or any of MBI's troops that are still trying to make trouble. If they surrender let them, we'll figure out a place to herd them to later. I'm going to call on the troops surrounding the city to surrender, and if they don't I'm going to send the ship after them. The term for them and for anyone watching will be shock and awe I think." *Then too, my own ladies are too exhausted to do the job. Well except for Miya, but she's the only one who can command the ship at present.* "After that I'm going to get in contact with the UN. I'm going to have to make a point to the rest of the world governments they really don't want to pistol soft. Not only do we have the spaceship, but I still have three wives that haven't used their norito just yet today and you've got twenty-five Sekirei all of whom are ready and willing to fight. But that discussion, well argument probably is going to take a while so you and your Sekirei will have to handle internal security."

*And that promptly puts me in my place, if I thought of betraying him.* Hayato thought sardonically. He had seen a video of the final moments of the battle in the northern section of the city that showed Tsukiumi's use of her norito, and the sheer destructive power of the single digits special attack had shocked him. He thought that Mutsu's might be close to that in power, but wasn't certain as their bond was more accidental and brotherly based rather than based on mutual attraction and love. Maybe eventually his other Sekirei could have something of the sort, but even that was doubtful. (Hayato's hormones hadn't kicked in just yet, although he had found himself staring a little at his Sekirei from time to time and feeling... something in the past few days) Still he hadn't really had any intention of trying to double cross the demons of the North, so he simply replied. "You got it."

"Also, send another group of five around to collect Sekirei bodies. I know it's really uncomfortable to think about, but we can't let even a single Sekirei body fall into anyone else's hands and you have to know that the vultures are already circling." Minato grimaced distastefully at this necessity, but he really didn't trust his fellow man at all, and knew exactly what most government agencies would do with a Sekirei, dead or alive.

Hayato actually knew this better than Minato did. His section of the city was the only section that still had all of its utilities intact as well as home to five bridges leading out of the city. This made it the entrance of choice for spies that were able to get through the cordon around the city, which after all was meant to keep the Sekirei in rather than keep other people out. His Sekirei had been intercepting spies since the game began from quite a few countries and even one Special Forces team from Russia. The Spetsnaz team had actually put up a bit of a fight, but against Sekirei who could dodge bullets or even take them and keep on coming and with no time to prepare traps they had lost easily. And the idea of what any kind of government would do with a body of an extraterrestrial like the Sekirei was something that sent a shiver up Hayato's spine. "I'll get to it. Minato," he said calmly "I'll put Mutsu in charge of that aspect, as he's the most mature of my Sekirei, he'll be able to handle it the best I think. Are you going to lift the communication blackout? The sooner you do the sooner I can get in touch with my parents and they can put their money and influence behind us. I know they own a few senators in America outright, and they have connections in a lot of the news agencies as well as in the shipping business."

"I'll lift it as soon as I send out my initial message to the world governments. Talk to you soon."

With that he had hung up the phone. Next he called the troops around the city but they weren't answering. Shaking his head he got in touch with Kazehana to tell Miya to take the ship out to disperse them. with that done he turned his attention to what he had to say to the UN. *Have to get just the right mix of belligerent anger at their allowing all this to occur, and show a willingness to compromise without actually surrendering anything and making certain they know I have the moral high ground, hmm....*

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The next two weeks were incredibly hectic as Minato took control of MBI's resources in the city and unilaterally turned over all their other resources around the world to the governments of the countries where they were situated, though only after letting Mutsu loose in their system to delete anything about the Sekirei or anything that could hurt them. This kept the governments a little happier with things than they had been, but his demand that they back off, keep their distance and stop trying to send spies after the Sekirei had not been taken well.

Even after the spaceship had used a few of its tertiary weapons to utterly demoralize the MBI troops around the city Russia had tried to send two of their submarines in to spy out what was going on. But a few shots from the spaceship across their bows that nearly sunk both of them turned them back. Well, that and the name and pictures of two assassins MBI had sent into Russia, though they had yet to take any aggressive action. With the information Minato

supplied the two spies had been quickly captured, and sang like canaries. China however had tried to send three nuclear weapons against them, figuring, if Minato supposed, that if they couldn't control the power of the Sekirei no one would. The ship intercepted all three and detonated them harmlessly in midair.

This unilateral reaction from China had massive repercussions for their internal and external popularity. Nuclear weapons had been for years one of the bogeymen of the world, the other ones of course being chemical and biological weapons. China's willingness to use nuclear weapons on a foreign target had created panic worldwide, and even internal unrest, sparking riots and demonstrations in cities throughout China that the ruling committee had been forced to use the army to suppress. The UN Security Council had almost voted China off it, and sanctions against their import/export businesses had hammered China's economy. They had not been completely cut off, as that would damage the world economies far more than anything they could've gained, but the riots in China itself had caused a lot of issues.

It went without saying that Miya and Minato had told them that whatever else happened, China would not be getting any technology taken from the ship unless a change of government occurred. *Miya has really been a godsend throughout these two weeks* Minato thought as he leaned back in his captain's chair. *Not only can she speak as the elder statesman of her people, but she is also the captain of the ship and the most single most powerful being on the planet.* That probably took a lot of getting used to for various presidents he thought sardonically, but it was true. Miya alone had been the cause of more than two thirds of the losses sustained by the invasion force back when they tried to take over Kamikura Island. More, that whole operation had come out recently, and a lot of questions were being asked in various governments across the world. Unfortunately it had happened so many years ago that the government parties that had actually been involved were out of power, but still the repercussions were continuing in America and Britain in particular. No one liked to know they had been lied to when told how their loved ones had died, and there was a vast difference between dying in a clear act of aggression and dying defending innocents against pirates.

While Miya was dealing with these issues and being the public spokeswoman of the Sekirei, Hayato and Sarge was handling internal city security.

Sarge had also proven to be very helpful, knowing how regular troops thought and weeding MBI's mercenaries, who had mostly turned bandit out with ruthless efficiency. *And all it took was marking a few of their known locations blue on the city map.* Minato had found out why Sarge and a few of the other troopers among MBI's men were so bizarre. Nice, very effective, but bizarre and slightly manic. It turned out they were all Americans who had taken part in some kind of VR experiment to train better soldiers through connecting their brains directly to a VR system and training them in live action scenarios that way. Unfortunately, it had been too real, and they were just driven a little around the bend, with very odd reactions to certain stimuli, which in Sarge's case was the color blue. This didn't matter to Minato, they were loyal and extremely effective troops and decent guys to have a beer with if you knew what to not say. More Sarge seemed to have struck up a friendship with Benitsubasa somehow. Haihane continued to hang around with Kusano and the other youngsters, though she also hung out with the known perverts Matsu and Yahan, an odd dichotomy.

Outside of meeting with the UN Minato spent his time with Musubi down in the medical wing, and with Matsu preparing a video to show the world as well as getting to know his new allies better. Musubi was weak even now two weeks later, and it remained to be seen whether or not she would ever regain her former fighting strength. Yet the loss of her arm didn't seem to bother her overall mood. The knowledge that she had won her battle against Karasuba, proving once and for all that love was stronger than hate (if only to herself and her dead opponent) seemed to raise her spirit despite her enforced bed rest. On the other hand Chiho had been completely cured, and she spent much of her time with Musubi as both of them went through rehab along with Uzume.

The video he and Matsu created to broadcast worldwide was made up first of the video the AI of the ship had shared with Minato and his wives, showing what the Sekirei had been fleeing from. Then it segued into video taken from the security cameras showing the 'adjustment' process of the Sekirei as they were growing up. It also showed several of the other experiments that had been done on Sekirei bodies recovered during and before the plan, as well as the dissection of the two Sekirei whose cores had been sacrificed to create the original Meta. The video then compared this to what had happened to the Jews during the Holocaust and the experiments that had been run on them in the concentration camps, as well as, unit 731, the Japanese equivalent. At the end it simply ran two questions: 'they came in peace, and we did this to them. What does that say about us as a race? And what will we do now?'

That had been sent out a few days ago, and initial reactions had been contemplative silence and then a lot of humanities groups had gotten behind and pushed. There were still a few hate groups devoted to the Sekirei, but the idea that they were simply refugees and that they had been treated so badly by MBI and Minaka in particular seemed to have struck a chord with people across the globe. Now he was sitting here waiting for any kind of official response

from the UN, and hoped he wouldn't have to wait long.

He had enjoyed getting to know Hayato though. The boy was bright despite his childishness, and had latched onto Minato as another big brother figure. More, his parents and their connections worldwide had proved incredibly useful, and would be even more so in the future. Kohta and he had gotten along famously, which told Minato that despite his privileged upbringing the boy hadn't really made any close friends growing up. He, Kohta, Kusano and Shijime, Nishi's Sekirei daughter were now inseparable. Yukari had built a huge play area for them, and the three of them and Haihane and a few others could always be found there playing video games or other things.

Yukari was still sad about how her mom had died, yet proud at the same time. They had found a security camera recording that showed the confrontation between Takami and Minaka so she knew her mom had died trying to do the right thing. She was sad though that Minato had already killed her murderer. Deuce was one of the giants he had run into in their assault on the tower. She had busied herself with renovating and redesigning areas of the ship for a hydroponics garden and maybe an area where they could eventually transplant Izumo house and a few of the surrounding houses. They held such fantastic memories it didn't feel right to just leave them behind.

The other Ashikabi were a mixed bag, and Minato hadn't spent much time with them other than his original discussion with them all. After holding a massive funeral at sea (or space in this case) for the Sekirei whose bodies they had recovered, he had talked with all of the Sekirei and Ashikabi in a large group about what needed to happen from now on. For one thing he had basically ordered all the Sekirei and Ashikabi to not have any contact with any other government, and to assume that they themselves were part of a new sovereign nation. This hadn't gone over too well with the independents led by Seo who simply wanted to be left alone to live their lives as normal people (well most of them, Seo would never be normal). Yet when they had seen the video of what had been done to the Sekirei before and after the plan went into motion that idea went out the window. It was one thing trying to have a safe and happy life as normal people, it was entirely another to know that certain agencies would willingly kidnap and torture your significant other to gain the secrets of her body.

Now every Sekirei and Ashikabi was aboard the ship, including all of the un-winged. Miya had talked about them with the AI, and had learned that her people had a special ceremony to either pass on or to help create a new bond, however, it would take over a year for almost all of their tama to heal enough to allow a second bond to occur naturally. How Minaka had been able to force a new bond so quickly on the 'Golems' no one knew and no one wanted to know. Minato had the AI go through MBI's systems and delete everything about Project Golem, everything about the bond and everything that any other nation could use against them a bare hour after Minka's body hit the concrete below his window.

He looked over as the door to the bridge opened admitting Miya, who glided in with her usual grace, still wearing her normal hakama. He smiled in welcome and Miya smiled back, practically glowing. It turned out that that first night they shared had a long term impact. She had found out three days ago that she was pregnant, and her incredibly happy smile had not gone away since. More, the knowledge that she was carrying their child had broken the final barrier and allowed Miya to join his other wives in being able to communicate telepathically with him. Of course his other wives had turned around and demanded that he get them pregnant as well, which Minato of course didn't have a problem with, even if keeping up with all four tended to make him unable to move anything from the waist down the next day.

Unfortunately it would be another few weeks before the contraceptive medicine that MBI had given all the Sekirei wore out, and the AI thought that getting rid of it more quickly would cause more trouble than it was worth. Well that and the medical wings was already working full tilt at undoing the damage the 'adjustments' had done to all the Sekirei, as well as somehow (Minato didn't understand the explanation) reinforcing Minato and the other Ashikabi. Instead Takano, Ashikabi/boyfriend to #73 Namiji, had looked at the injections composition and had been utterly appalled. The strange chemical soup that went into the anti-pregnancy medicine was beyond bizarre. He estimated that on a normal human woman, it would have made her barren permanently. Strangely enough, this was one of the things that had already escaped onto the market, and it was already being used elsewhere in the world as anti-pregnancy pills. Minato really didn't understand that at all, though the areas where it had been found gave him a bit of an idea that it wasn't actually any of the locals who introduced it... And in the end he just didn't care enough to comment. It could not be linked back to him or the Sekirei but MBI, so he didn't care.

Miya glided across to him and sat down in the chair next to him, one of four they had placed there. She slid her hand under his, squeezing gently as her eyes glanced at the main communication screen. "Still waiting on a response?"

"Yes" Minato sighed. "It's been a few days, but I hope to get a response soon." Miya nodded bringing his hand up to her mouth and gently kissing his knuckles.

So now he was merely waiting for a response from the UN and specific countries around the world to a little proposal he had sent them a few hours after Matsu's video went out. Hopefully, they would be able to get on board to the idea

of building up a space navy to defend against the Gbaba. The AI estimated that it was only about fifteen years before the Gbaba arrived in the solar system. By that time they would have to have a fleet of at least, they estimated 15 to 20 ships of the same capability as the ship the Sekirei had come in at the very least. After all, the aliens didn't come to invade, they came to annihilate and that neatly took away all the abilities of the Sekirei and negated all of the militaries of the world. They had fifteen years to get ready to fight a battle in space, one whose severity they could guess at but not really anticipate. Therefore Minato had agreed to give out pieces of the technology of the Sekirei in return for agreements to build a united navy in space to defend against this threat. He hoped thus to appeal to their greed and self-interest as well as survival instincts and humanity and hopefully, just hopefully his daughter or son would be able to live his or her life without the threat of genocide hanging overhead.

The door swished open again, and Tsukiumi and the others came through joining Miya and Minato. Tsukiumi disdained the remaining seat next to him climbing into his lap and kissing him tenderly. The bond wings appeared yet again spreading from the bridge to nearly encompass the entire spaceship and beyond out into space. Akitsu and Kazehana both took their turns and Miya did as well, all four of their wings joining and singing with symmetry out into space. Minato smiled happily at them all, looking from their faces down to the rings on each of their hands. Eventually, with businesses returning to Tokyo the three rings he had ordered for his original trio of wives had arrived, and he had been able to order another one for Miya. Where the others were represented by the kanji for the element she controlled, Miya was represented by the kanji for 'shield' instead, as that was what she had been for her race, and it had the kanji for 'soul' opposite just like the others, with the same inscription inside it and her jewel was a green emerald. All their rings glittered in their lights set into the ceiling of the bridge.

The quartet leaned back talking quietly among themselves waiting, just waiting and hoping that the rest of humanity would agree to work with them and move into the future together. *Regardless*, Minato mused as more and more of his Sekirei and friends came onto the bridge. He shared his smirk with Nishi and a high five with the young Hayato, *this group will face it together. And, come what may we will be ready. I swear it.*

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End chapter and story

And there you have it ladies and gentlemen, my second finished story. I realize that there are a few loose ends still in this story, but I wished to leave some of it up to your imagination/interpretation. Someone, a guest, asked if I would consider continuing the story after this point, and I have to say that that is impossible for me. Not only have I reached the end of the Sekirei universe, I've gone quite a bit beyond it and I am frankly tired of this universe. It was time to end and this point was where I had always expected to do so. I hope that everyone enjoyed the story and I urge everyone who has yet to try to write their own story in this universe to do so. Especially if you like harems, as in this universe it's kind of built into the very framework...

As always read and review, and check out my still ongoing stories!