# Episode 1: Preparing for Departure!

Zenith City, the most populated area in all of Silvene with the population of 2 billion people. Everyone who lives there never returned back to the outside due to a current event that took over the entire region. Codenamed the “White Darkness” event, it became too dangerous for normal inhabitants to venture outside. One person, named Marako, established a new alliance order named NEO. Those who join NEO will be able to go outside the city gates. If it allows everyone to enjoy their lives outside again, then NEO members will be able to make that dream into a reality.

Some groups venture out, but most of them never return. It has been going on for years now. At the 7th year of NEO being established, Marako installed an elite branch of NEO, specifically for those who have been in NEO for more than 5 years, or have critically exceptional fighting skills. More and more groups ventured out and didn’t return back. Was it due to the White Darkness? Or to them perishing against the forces? Even as an ordinary person, they know that stepping out of the catacombs will increase your chance of death by tens.

Now, there is a crossroad available for them: Either they join NEO and help those to live normally again, or remain in Zenith City without venturing into the unknown? Regardless, they both choose to experience the unknown with harm and without.

Scene 1: Zenith City: City Gates (Cliffside)

???: *humming*

A cyan colored girl is listening to her favorite music while looking at the white misty skies. The music's so loud that it can be faintly heard a few inches away from her.

???: *sighs* (It feels nice outside! Despite all of this mist, the nice scent of the waves crashing rejuvenates me!)

*incoming call*

???: Agh!? Ouch, ouch, ouch! That's loud!! *removes headphones*

The girl frantically removes her headphones due to the sudden sound and grabs her phone from her pocket. Someone by the name of "Casey" is calling her.

*beep*

???: H-Hello?

*Casey: Hey, are you there yet?*

???: Yeah, I'm just by the cliffside!

*Casey: Oh. Not too far I guess… Well, anyway! You know that the commander has an important mission to assign to us today, right?*

???: Eh!? That's today!?

*Casey: Ugh-*

???: I’m so sorry! I forgot!

*footsteps*

???: Huh?

*faint groaning*

*Casey: Well, my good friend over here says that you have 5 minutes to get over here. So hop to it!*

???: Heh. Don’t worry! I was going to take a shortcut anyway!

*Casey: ….You better not do ANYTHING reckless.*

???: Oh, you’re one to talk!

*Casey: Hey….*

???: Anyways, I’ll see you there, Casey!

*Casey: O-Okay then…*

**beep**

……..

Scene 2: Zenith City: NEO Headquarters (Main Hall)

Casey: Hm….

???: You want me to start the clock?

Casey: Yeah. Let's see if she beats her high score.

???: *sighs* Alright. *pulls up clock app*

*beep*

The timer is now ticking…

…….

## Scene 3: Zenith City: City Gates (Cliffside)

The girl puts her phone away and zips the pocket up.

???: Oh.

A few shadowy figures were standing in the girl's way.

*groaning*

???: Aw man. I guess I have to fight my way through! *activates Quantum Gear*

???: Quantum Gear: Engage!

*burst*

The cyan girl's eyes turn into the same color as her skin and the tip of her hair has some white in it.

???: Hah!!!

*whoosh*

The girl rushes into the figures and slams them down with the gear.

*crash*

*pained growling*

*roars*

???: *grunts* *dodges*

*slam*

???: …… *turns at the figure behind her* *grabs the figure*

*slam* 5x

???: *grunts*

The girl threw the second figure into the tree and immobilized it.

*thud*

???: Alright, you're the last one! Come on!

*groaning*

*whoosh*

???: Whoa!

The last shadowy figure threw a flurry of punches at the girl, but she dodged them all.

???: Aw… So close! *grabs the figure's face and throws them into the air*

*energy surging*

???: Good bye! *jumps towards to the figure* Quantum….. Breaker!!!!

*SLAM*

*whoosh*

*CRASH*

The figure received a fatal blow to the head by the girl's kick.

???: *lands* Too easy… Now then.. What was I about to do…? Oh right! The meeting! *runs off*

*rapid footsteps*

…….

Scene 4: Zenith City: NEO Headquarters (Main Hall)

???: …..

Casey: It's almost 5 minutes…

???: Yeah. I don't think she's gonna make it in time..

Casey: *concerned* Darn it. Where is she?

*faint rapid footsteps*

Casey: Huh?

???: ?

Muffled running footsteps and a “Slow down”! Can be heard behind the doors. Plus a “Sorry”!

Casey: Oh-

*door opens*

???: I’m here!!!

???: *stops the timer*

Casey: Did she make it?

???: ……Down to the wire.

Casey: Yeah! That’s 5 Ven dollars you owe me!

???: Hmph. *pulls out 5 Ven dollars*

???: W-Wait, wait…. *tries not to laugh* You two were betting?

Casey: Yup. Luckily I was the one who had faith in you!

???: And you didn’t? Ouch…

???: I wasn’t confident at that time.

???: Oh…

*footsteps*

NEO Manager: The commander wants you three immediately.

???: Okay!

*footsteps* 3x

Casey: Honestly, I still don’t get how you managed to pull that one off.

???: *nervously laughs* Well, if you've been in NEO for so long, you start to get the hang of fighting those guys.

???: That may be true for you two. In fact, did you run into those Doppelgangers?

???: Me? Yeah, only 3 of them, though.

???: That’s all I need to hear. *pulls up analysis app* I have to collect every data of Doppelgangers that you two have killed to send to the commander. Kinda ironic that I will be sending her this while going to our meeting..

???: I’m sure she would be impressed at the feat!

Casey: I wouldn’t be too confident about that… Lately she’s been focusing on larger quantities of Doppelgangers, not some chump change.

???: Is that so? I wonder why she thinks that?

???: Well, it wouldn’t hurt to ask.

Casey: *stops* Well, we’re here. Let’s get this show on the road. *pushes door*

???: *follows along*

???: *follows along*

……..

## Scene 5: NEO Commander's Surveillance Center

As the trio enters the center, several monitors of data collected from different NEO members can be seen from the commander's side. The commander, Marako, is standing in front of them awaiting the arrival of the trio.

???: …..

Casey: …..

???: …..

Marako: …..?

???: Hello commander!

???: Shh! Keep your voice down!

???: S-Sorry.

Marako: It's fine, Min.

Min: Ok.

Casey: You called us here for a mission assignment?

Marako: Right. I'll get straight to the point: While I was checking surveillance around the districts of Silvene, I detected a strong energy output source down south. There's a strong reading of white mist coming out of it.

Casey: Is that so?

???: You want us to head down there?

Marako: Correct. I feel confident in my choice. I feel that you three are suitable for taking a lethal mission such as this.

Min: I see. Let's just hope it doesn’t backfire somewhat.

Marako: I’m not worrying about it backfiring whatsoever. It’s the form of whether or not you turn into a Doppelganger.

???: ….

Casey: Right. So, where’s the source?

Marako: In District 7. The last district in all of Silvene.

Min: Got it.

???: Oh, wait! I have a question!

Marako: You may ask.

???: This is the first time we’re ever venturing down south, so has any other group received a mission like this before?

Marako: Yes. However their mission is not completed. They are still out there in the districts. Unfortunately, once you go deep into the mist, I cannot keep track of you anymore. Once you reach the 5th district, the cameras cannot detect your movements.

???: Why’s that?

Marako: It’s due to the White Darkness event occurring. This thick white mist is circulating all over Silvene that I have to project all of the movements on that tower.

Marako turns around and points to the skyscraper covered in white mist.

Min: Be a reminder that we can have so many cameras operating in Silvene. Seeing that Marako found the main source of what's causing this event to unfold is the highest priority.

???: I understand now! She's checking to see if there is anything fishy going on….

Marako: Correct. I will know that you all made it here safe and sound while looking at the tower.

Casey: …..I understand. Check the suspicious activity at the Southern Tower…

Marako: There is no time for departure today. You will all leave starting tomorrow morning. I want to give you all the time to say goodbye to your family members and loved ones if you have any.

Min: Sure.

Casey: *nods*

Min: Did you get all that?

???: *spaced out*

Casey: Hello? *snaps fingers*

???: Oh! Sorry! I blanked out at the end.

Marako: *facepalms* Did you at least remember what you are assigned to do…?

???: Yes, I know! Sorry….

Marako: Good. As long as you know. Was there anything else?

Casey: Guys?

Min and the cyan girl looked at each other and shook their heads no.

Casey: Nope.

Marako: Then this meeting is adjourned. Get some rest for your mission tomorrow. You'll need it.

All 3: Yes commander!

*footsteps*

*door opens*

……

Scene 6: Zenith City: NEO Headquarters (Outside)

*door closes*

???: *stretches* Hah~! I'm beat…..

Min: I would think so. You did fight off some enemies on the way here.

Casey: Do you think they're showing up more than usual, though?

???: That would explain the unusual activity surrounding the tower…

Casey: Ugh… I knew I shouldn't have said no… Now this is going to bother me…

Min: *nudges Casey*

Casey: Huh?

Min: …Did you ever get her name before we arrived here?

Casey: Ah.

Min looks at Casey with disappointment.

Casey: Hey, new girl!

???: Huh?

Casey: I know we're about to depart soon, but we haven't really officially introduced yet… Besides, the commander called us here at a short notice.

Min: I'll start. I'm… *clears throat* It's Min.

???: Nice to meet you, Min!

Casey: I'm Casey. Casey Costello. Great to meet ya!

???: Min, don't you have a last name?

Min: ….I do. It's too difficult to pronounce, so I don't really bring it up.

???: I see..

Casey: And… that leaves you! *points to ???*

???: Oh, me?

Casey: Yeah! You… do have a name, right?

???: I believe it was Saya?

Min: Huh?

Saya: Yeah! I remember! My name is Saya Johnson!

Casey: Well, nice to meet you, Saya!

Min: *shakes head* Nice to meet you.

Saya: Hehe!

Casey: Okay! *claps hands* Now that we have introduced ourselves, let's meet up here tomorrow so that we can get ready to leave the city.

Min: Sounds good.

Saya: Okay! See you tomorrow!

Casey: See ya, Min!

Min: Bye.

The three went their separate ways to their homes to meet up with their families.

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## Scene 8: Costello Apartment Residence

*door unlocks*

Casey: I'm home!

Rosaria: Oh, hey Casey. How was today's meeting?

Casey: Pretty quick. Where's the kids?

Rosaria: Zane and Fi? They're asleep.

Casey: Ah. Dang.

Rosaria: Why? What's the matter?

Casey: Well…. I just got assigned with a mission that requires me to step out of Zenith City.

Rosaria: Are you serious…?

Casey: Yup. That's why I'm a bit bummed out because I won't be able to spend time with you guys for a while…

Rosaria: I see.. Don't worry. I'll take good care of your siblings while you're gone.

Casey: Oh.. Thanks Rosa.

Rosaria: To be honest, I don't know what's out there either.. And the thought of it scares me. But, as long as you remain in contact with me, then I don't have to worry about you getting hurt.

Casey: I promise you: I will not make you or my younger siblings worry.

Rosaria: Let's see…. You're gonna be gone for a while, so how about we all hang around at the park later when the kids wake up?

Casey: Oh sure! I'm down!

Rosaria: Sweet. In the meantime, I made lunch for you while you were gone. I thought you may help yourself to that.

Casey looks at the fridge to see that Rosaria made them a gyro sandwich, which is their favorite.

Casey: Oh wow! Thanks Rosaria!

Rosaria: Anytime.

Casey: Ah! I should take this time to catch up on my favorite show…

Rosaria: Oh, your show..?

Casey: Yeah. Didn't I tell you about it?

Rosaria: …. *twiddles her fingers*

Casey: *dumbfounded* You watched it all before me, did you?

Rosaria: Sorry. The moment I saw the first episode I was hooked! Too bad the idol show was ruined because of the invasion.

Casey: Yeah… Well, since you know what happens, you better not tell me!

Rosaria: I won't, trust me. Haha.. Just don't lose it when you get to the end.

Casey: There's no way I'm gonna pop off like that!

Rosaria: Hm.. We'll see…

Casey: *concerned* Now you're doubting me…?

……..

Scene 9: Sakhonnakhon Residence

The moment Min entered his home, he was immediately greeted with his frantic brother and sister, Churai and Kusa.

Min: !?

Churai: Please tell me you didn't get hurt on the way here!

Min: N-No.. I didn't..

Kusa: Are you sure!? Let me see your arm!

Min: Ugh… Guys.. If I was injured, like Grandma said, I would've told you all..

Churai: But still!

???: Alright, you two, let him go. Besides, if he was injured, the first thing he would've said was "Ouch"! Or something.

Min: …..

Churai: O-Oh. Right.. *stops holding Min* Sorry little bro.

Kusa: Yeah. Sorry.

Min: It's fine.. Thanks for the help, Nin.

Nin: It's no problem. Just helping a twin brother in need.

Min: Anyways, I have something to tell you all.

Nin: Oh?

Kusa: What is it?

Min: Now, PLEASE don’t freak out, but I just received a mission from Commander Marako that I have to take. And it requires me to go outside of the city gates.

Churai: W-What!?

Churai did the exact thing that Min told her NOT to do.

Kusa: *concerned* C-Calm down, Churai… Maybe it won’t be so bad..

Min: Can I finish please?

Kusa: Sorry. Please continue.

Min: *exasperated sigh* I will be traveling down to the southern districts, so this will take me at least 2 or more days to complete. I have to make sure I gather everything that I need before setting off.

Churai: *concerned* Oh… Okay then…

Nin: I get it you all are worried about Min, but he’s done this before. It’s just that this is more…. I guess it's difficult?

Min: Most of the missions have me at the sidelines, so I won’t be getting myself injured any time soon.

Churai: Oh… Well, that’s good!

Kusa: Make sure you let our Grandma know.

Min: Yeah, I know.

*footsteps*

Churai: Phew… I almost had a heart attack…

Kusa: YOU almost had a heart attack?

Nin: I believe when I say this: You both collectively had a heart attack almost every day when Min walks in the house. I was included during that one time…

Churai: *nervous* A-Anyways! We should help Min pack up his stuff for tomorrow!

Kusa: I agree! Less work for him when he wakes up!

Nin: …..Or you can just leave the packing to him…?

Churai: But then he will be too tired!

Kusa: We're just supporting along the way!

Nin: *bothered* Oh boy.. You two are a handful…. Look, how about we give him the biggest cheer for tomorrow instead?

Churai: Huh? Why?

Nin: W-Well…

Nin had to come up with an excuse.

Nin: Because like you said earlier about packing with just the two of you would do Min a huge favor, but didn't you ever consider yourselves? You guys will be too tired to wish him good luck for tomorrow!

Kusa: She has a point. Okay, we'll leave his stuff alone. That way we can give him the energy he needs when he's already tired!

Churai: Oh! Good idea, Kusa! Thanks Nin for your help!

Nin: N-No problem…! (That should save Min from the reckless trouble….)

……..

*door knocking*

Min: Hello..? Grandma On?

*pencil scribbling*

Min: Oh, she's busy.

On: Hm? *turns around* Oh, Min! I didn't hear you come in. My apologies…

Min: N-No! It's okay!

On: Have you talked with your siblings yet?

Min: *annoyed* Yeah…

On: *giggles* I know they're a lot, I get it. But aren't you glad to have that energy despite our living conditions in Zenith City?

Min: ……

On: I mean think about it. We've been stuck here in lockdown for the outside world for 5 years now, without knowing what's going on. I believe both Churai and Kusa are keeping the positive energy in this household.

Min: Hm..

A vision of Churai and Kusa being concerned about Min appeared in his mind.

Min: Hmph. *smiles* Well, maybe. I'm not used to it yet, but I will soon.

On: That's good to hear.

Min: Oh! And please don't tell them that I said that…. I would never hear the end of it….

On: *giggles* I give you my word. Now pack up, and get some food in your stomach!

Min: Okay!

On: And a good wash and rest! You have a big day tomorrow!

Min: O-Okay…! (I think all three of them have that energy to be honest…)

……..

Scene 10: Costello Apartment Residence

The next day….

Fi: What?! You mean he's leaving today?!

Rosaria: Yup. That's why I wanted for us to hang out for the last time before they depart.

Zane: Man.. I wished I knew that he was leaving. I would've prepared him something.

Rosaria: Yeah, sorry. I wasn't sure how I was supposed to approach you guys with this. But, I guess I was worrying too much. You two seemed to handle it well!

Fi: I just hope it won't take long! Casey promised us that we're finishing that mecha show together!

Zane: Yeah that's right!

Rosaria: *giggles* Well, I'm sure they will be back by then.

*door opens*

Rosaria: Oh, speaking of..

Casey stepped out of their room in their new NEO uniform. Their uniform is a cyan colored jacket with white stripes on the center and the shoulders, however they rolled up their sleeves for more comfort. The jacket even has NEO's logo on the front. Their bottom wear is a pastel blue with green tech pattern on the back, finishing with the NEO brand sneakers.

Casey: Oh, good morning guys!

Fi: Hello Casey!

Zane: You have to leave so early, huh?

Casey: Yeah… The earliest that we get this done, the better.

Fi: "We"?

Rosaria: Are there anyone else joining you on the journey?

Casey: Yeah! Saya and Min! I totally forgot to mention that part… Haha…

Casey nervously scratches their head in embarrassment.

All 3: Eh….

Fi: Well, tell us more about them?

Casey: Oh, well you know Min. He's more reserved and is a genius at technology and quantum physics. He even taught me something about those Quantum Gears that me and Saya have. *rolls up right sleeve*

Casey's Quantum Gear is in a yellow and white color scheme with the blue gear implanted inside of the rear of the weapon.

Zane: Whoa…! Cool! *grabs Casey's Quantum Gear*

Casey: H-Hey! Be careful with that! I don't want to accidentally hit you with it….

Zane: Oh, my bad! *lets go of Casey's Quantum Gear*

Rosaria: Anyways, what about Saya?

Casey: *picks up traveling bag* Saya's pretty rowdy. Not as rowdy as me, but she somewhat gets herself into fighting some Doppelgangers more often than me.

Rosaria: And her Quantum Gear?

Casey: Oh, she's also white and yellow. Same as mine.

Fi: That's so cool!

Casey: Yeah! We pretty much have the coolest equipment here.

Zane: Man… I wish we're dripped out like you..

Casey: I know. But I much rather have you guys remain at home where it's safe, okay? *winks*

Zane: O-Okay!

Fi: We'll keep the place tidy while you're gone!

Rosaria: They're not. *gets up*

Fi: *annoyed* Hey…

Casey: Hehe…

Rosaria: Anyways, good luck out there, Casey. *hugs Casey*

Casey: Thanks, Rosa. Leave this to me.

Rosaria: *smiles*

Fi: Bye Casey! *waves*

Zane: Kick some butt, Casey!

Casey picks up their phone and looks back at their siblings and Rosaria one last time before closing the door.

……..

## Scene 11: Sakhonnakhon Residence

*door opens*

Min: Hm… (Why is it so quiet..?)

*footsteps*

Min: (Are they asleep? Nah, they can't be. They were just frantic about me yesterday…)

*door opens*

Min: !?

Nin: It's just me.

Min: Oh, hey sis.

Nin: I'm just hanging here because I'm about to warn you about the chaos you will experience.

Min: *unamused* Since when I HAVEN'T experienced that…?

Nin: *laughs* That's true.

Min: Hmph..

Nin: Now, I wish you good luck on your journey! Have fun! *pushes Min to the living room*

Min: What the-!?

……

Scene 12: Sakhonnakhon Residence (Living Room)

*cracker pops* 5x

Churai, Kusa, and Grandma On greeted Min with a large banner saying “Good Luck, Min!!” while they’re popping celebratory crackers.

Min: A-Ah…

On: I may have helped out a bit.

Min: I see..

Kusa: I know you say this a lot, but we can’t help it! You’re gonna be out there helping out NEO and we just have to wish you good luck!

Churai: Yeah! And Nin wanted us to reserve our energy into cheering you on!

Min: *slightly flustered* Oh, guys… You didn’t have to do that… Honest…

Churai: Well, be glad that we did! Otherwise you would’ve walked out there with a tired look on your face!

Min: Hmph.

Nin: Alright guys. *grabs Min’s shoulders* Since he’s recharged from your energy, it’s time for him to set off!

Churai: Wait! Let me give him a good luck hug!

Min: Ah…

Kusa: Just this once, with your permission of course.

Nin: ?

Min: *slightly embarrassed* F-Fine..

Churai: Yay! Group hug~!!

*squeeze* 3x

The whole Sakhonnakhon family gave Min a good luck hug.

On: And dear, don't forget to contact us about how you're doing, okay?

Min: *struggles to speak*

Nin: Oh boy. Okay, let's stop before we choke him to death.

Min: *gasp* I… will….

Churai: Oops…

Kusa: Sorry!

On: Listen, he means well. But he highly appreciates your support everyone.

Min: *gasp* G-Grandma-

On: So make sure to give everyone else you're working with your support as well! *gives Min a thumbs up*

Churai: YEAH!

Kusa: We'll be cheering on your success, so don't worry about us!

Min silently walks to his traveling bag and grabs his portable bike into the door.

Min: *takes a deep breath*

Nin: Min?

Min: *turns around* Thanks everyone. I'll be back safely. *door opens*

Kusa: Have a safe trip!

Churai: Good luck!

On: Take care, honey.

Nin: You got this, Min! Make us proud!! *fist bumps into the air*

……

Scene 13: Zenith City: City Gates

Saya is seen talking with her family on the phone.

Saya's Mother: I just hope that things will go fine for you.

Saya: Don't worry! It will!

Saya's Father: And I'm keeping her in check as well. You know how much of a worrywart that we are…

Saya: Yeah, I know.. I'll talk to you guys later, okay?

Saya's Mother: …Be safe.

*phone clicks*

Saya: Hm…

*footsteps*

Casey: Hey, Saya!

Saya: Oh, Casey!

Min: Did you talk with your parents?

Saya: Yeah, I just got off the call with them.

Casey: Oh? You didn’t visit them?

Saya: Unfortunately, they live in one of the districts..

Casey: Oh. I didn’t know that.

Saya: That’s okay! As long as they’re safe, I can keep going!

*rapid footsteps*

NEO Employee: *panting* Wait! You three!

Min: Huh?

NEO Employee: *panting*

Saya: Is there something wrong?

NEO Employee: So sorry… I forgot to assign you all with an assistant.

Casey: An assistant?

NEO Employee: Yes. She will accompany you all during the journey.. Here.

The employee gave Saya a blue techno box.

NEO Employee: Anyways! Good luck, and Min? Make sure to keep the commander up to date about those FOEs.

Min: Got it.

Saya: Huh? FOEs?

Casey: A weaker kind of Doppelgangers. Instead of them emitting a grayish-white aura like the ones you saw, they emit a grayish-black aura. We cannot tell what they used to look like, though.

Saya: I see..

Min: Anyways, let's activate that cube and see what kind of an assistant we get.

Saya: Okay then…

The moment Saya pressed the "ACTIVATE" button, the surrounding area was covered in a blue hue.

Saya: Wah!!

Casey: Ngh.. My eyes!

Min: *closes eyes*

A woman appeared out of the cube with the same color body. She's even in the similar uniform that the NEO members wear when departing. However, her hair is seen as detached from her base hair, indicating that she's not human.

???: Greetings! I'm your Iridescent Data Assistant! Call me I.D.A!

Casey: (Yeah… The "I" DEFINITELY checks out…)

Saya: Nice to meet you!

I.D.A: Scanning….

Min: Uh..?

I.D.A: Confirmed! It’s a pleasure to meet you, Saya, Casey, and Min!

Casey: Haha.. Nice to meet you, too..

I.D.A: Saya Johnson and Casey Costello, a fighter class! Kill as many FOEs and Doppelgangers as you can! Min Sakhonnakhon, I will be assisting you in collecting the data that the duo have slain!

Saya: Whoa.

Min: See? This is why I don’t allow anyone else to pronounce my last name because of its length…

Saya: Now I know.. Sorry!

I.D.A: If you have any other questions regarding the mission, please let me know!

Casey: We will. Thanks for helping us out, I.D.A.

I.D.A: You’re very welcome! Let us depart!

*footsteps* 4x

Surveillance Camera: 3 people and 1 A.I spotted. State your identity.

Casey: Pull out your ID.

Saya: Okay..

Surveillance Camera: Scanning…

…….

…

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Surveillance Camera: Identified. Saya Johnson, Casey Costello, Min Sakhonnakhon, and I.D.A. You may proceed to the gates.

*gates opening*

Min: *takes the deep breath* *walks out of the gates*

Casey: Ready Saya?

Saya: Uh-huh. Let’s do it.

I.D.A: Mission start!

*footsteps* 3x

…….

Last Scene: Zenith City: City Gates (Outside)

As the group exits Zenith City, Saya looks back at the neon city before the gates completely closes.

I.D.A: Just as a safety precaution, if any of you get injured in battle, I have 5 emergency heal kits all set and ready for you!

Min: Oh, wow. Thanks a lot, I.D.A.

Casey: She only has 5, so we have to be careful as to not get injured too often. One time one of us may need it and she won't have any more.

Saya: Can't she just restock them?

I.D.A.: I'm afraid I can't do that until the mission's completed.

Saya: Dang.

Min: Make sure to tread with caution you two.

Casey: Got it.

Saya: Mm.

Min: The first one is District 1. Let us go.

Casey: Yeah. *charges Gear*

Saya: ….. *charges Gear*

I.D.A.: *happily hums*

The group now officially set off to the Southern Tower to possibly end the White Darkness phenomenon. With Saya and Casey on the offensive while Min and I.D.A on the defensive, a combat balance between NEO members, the group's filling with determination and justice that they will make Silvene safe again.

-End of Episode 1-

# Episode 2: District 1: Suppression and Encounter

After departing from Zenith City, Saya, Casey, Min, and I.D.A were tasked on finding the Southern Tower to discover the cause of White Darkness. However upon arriving at the first district, they soon find themselves not being the only members around.

## Scene 1: Zenith City: City Gates (Outside)

Saya: It's finally starting, huh? Aren't you excited?

Casey: I mean… I can be if the time calls for it, Saya.

Min: Not really.

Saya: Oh? Why's that?

Min: …….It's nothing.

I.D.A: Min, your confidence levels are decreasing!

Min: *upset* That's out of my control… Plus, isn't that a breach of privacy!?

I.D.A: I have to keep everyone in good condition when venturing out…. It's too dangerous if you go out and you're not in a decent condition in taking on FOEs….

Casey: *concerned* As much as I don't want to admit it, it’s right. If there’s ANYTHING bothering you Min, please don’t hesitate to let either me or Saya know. Okay?

Min: …Okay.

Saya: Hm…. Oh! Hey, guys! Come here for a moment! *walks away*

Min: ?

Casey: What’s up?

*footsteps*

……..

## Scene 2: Zenith City: City Gates (Cliffside)

*waves crashing*

Saya: Right here! 2x

Min: A…. cliffside?

Casey: So this is where you’ve been hanging out…

I.D.A: What’s this location?

Saya: See, I come here to unwind and relax a bit if the going gets tough. I tend to listen to my music or the waves crashing below us.

Min: ……

Saya: Here, listen.

Everyone stopped talking to listen to the waves….

Saya: Doesn't it sound wonderful?

Min: …….Oh.

Casey: ?

Min: It… sounds nice I would admit it…

Casey: *smiles* Thanks Saya.

Saya: Anytime!

I.D.A.: Is it a bad time to give a condition update?

Min: No, sorry I.D.A. I know you're just doing your job. I was a bit tense.. I guess…

I.D.A.: Well! I'm glad to hear that you're feeling a lot better than a few minutes ago!

Casey: Does the sea have a special mental power or something?

Saya: Haha! I wished… But, now that I think of it…. Maybe so!

Min: Well, it helped me out at least…

Saya: Hehe! You're welcome, Min!

Saya gave Min a gentle smile, putting Min further at ease.

……..

Scene 3: District 0-1 Subdivision

The waves crashing to the cliffside started to fade into the mist to the point that the sounds were nonexistent.

*footsteps*

Saya: Whoa…. *looks up*

Casey: Yeah. It's nothing but white.. I never thought I would be out here again.

Min: Again?

Saya: Casey's been in NEO longer than we have.

Min: R-Really..?

Casey: Yeah. I wanted to help out the others, so I joined.

Min: Yeah, I get that. But I was thinking about how long you've been in NEO.

Casey: Hmm…. It's been a minute. I guess almost 5 years?

Saya: *surprised* 5 YEARS?!

Some birds flew by at the shock of Saya's voice.

Casey: Yup. And then you guys came along. Honestly, I'm glad that we teamed up.

I.D.A.: You're very lucky, Casey! With Saya's immaculate performance in combat, you two make a good pair!

Min: *raises eyebrow* And what does that say about me then…?

Casey: Oh? *grabs Min by the shoulder* You're our cheerleader! And…. the commander's supervisor~!

Min: ….Supervisor?

I.D.A: He went for an alternate word for "Teacher's Pet"!

Min: …….

Saya: Oh… *tries not to laugh*

Casey: *stuttering* I don't mean that in a BAD way, Min!

Min: *slightly annoyed* Sure… Let's go.

*footsteps*

Casey: ….Oops. Maybe I should've left it at cheerleader…

Saya: There's no helping it! Wait up, Min! *runs up to Min*

Casey: *sighs*

*footsteps*

……

## Scene 4: District 1

Arriving at the 1st district, the vacant homes were abandoned in order for people evacuating to go up north for salvation. It almost looked like a bomb went off in this area….

I.D.A: We have arrived at the 1st district!

Min: *looks around*

Casey: There may be FOEs incoming, so Saya, keep on your toes.

Saya: Gotcha!

Min: Just want to ask, why do you guys charge up your Quantum Gears before setting out? Shouldn't it already be configured and ready at any time when you first got it?

I.D.A.: Ah! There's a catch, Min! Although they have their weapons, it is VERY important that their gears must reserve energy by charging up. If it remains ON for too long, they won't be able to charge it up for a while due to it being in cooldown… Approximately, 27 NEO members ran into this issue….

Min: I see..

Saya: And I don't want to be in that statistic…

Casey: *embarrassed* Ah… Haha…. I was only first starting off. I didn't know there was a function like that…

Min looked at Casey in confusion while Saya looked at them in bewilderment.

Casey: ….What? At least I learned my lesson. Hmph.

Min: *sighs*

Saya: It's okay, Casey!

I.D.A.: I'm always available for any more questions, Min!

Min: Yeah… thanks.

*beep* 5x

Saya: Huh?

I.D.A.: ……..

*footsteps*

Saya: Hey, Min? What's I.D.A. doing?

Min: It's doing a recon of the area. Just to check if we're any danger to FOEs and such.

Saya: You've been saying FOEs a lot… Do they mean anything?

Casey: Ah, right. You haven't been in NEO for that long. FOEs, or False Organic Entities, are anomalies that have fallen to White Darkness according to the commander. I fought a lot of FOEs when I was starting off. Some are small, and some are big. There's even a variant called "Guardian FOEs", but I have yet to beat one….

Saya: I see…. All I have been fighting off were Doppelgangers. None of them were FOEs whatsoever…

Min: That's how I first heard of the category "Doppelgangers". But the info about them it's too vague… All I can hypothesize is that they're another form of anomalies…

*alert signal*

Saya: Oh!

Casey: *grunts*

I.D.A.: CAUTION! CAUTION! FOEs detected! They will arrive in approximately 2 minutes!

Min: I'll leave you two to it. Be careful.

Saya: Leave it to us!

Min: I.D.A.! Over here!

I.D.A.: Coming! *flies away*

*whoosh*

……..

*rapid footsteps*

A hoard of FOEs are approaching Saya and Casey.

Casey: Get ready! Quantum Gear….

Saya: Quantum Gear….

Both: Engage!

*burst*

A surge of light bright energy came out of both of their gears. Fully charged up, they rush into the battlefield.

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *battle cry*

*slam*

Casey slammed their fists into a group of FOEs, crushing them to bits.

*screeches* 7x

Casey: ….. *turns around* *grunts*

Casey raises their gear and punches the ground, emitting a seismic wave to catch the FOEs off guard.

Saya: I got this one! *jumps to avoid the erosion cliff* Quantum….. Crush!!

*whoosh*

*CRASH*

*pained screeches*

Casey: Ah!

Casey sees an incoming FOE completely dodging the attack.

Casey: Saya! *rushes towards Saya*

Saya: Huh?

Casey: *pushes Saya* *grunts* *grabs the FOE*

*whoosh* 5x

Casey spins around and around to throw the FOE into the air.

Casey: There’s more coming.. Take care of those guys while I take this one out! *jumps to the thrown FOE*

Saya: Got it! *turns around*

*rapid footsteps*

*screeches* 10x

Saya: *grins*

*whoosh*

Saya: Hah! *battle cry*

*slam*

*thwack* 2x

*screeches* 2x

Saya: ! *dodges*

……

Casey: ……..*grabs the FOE* Quantum Toss!!!

*whoosh*

Casey looks down to see Saya surrounded by FOEs.

Casey: *breaks sweat* (Here goes….) Quantum…… Fist!!!!!

*charge*

*wind burst*

……..

Saya: *grunts*

*thwack* 3x

Saya: ! *looks up*

A shine of light can be seen, albeit slightly due to the mist in the sky.

Saya: Oh-! *runs off*

Casey: *battle cry*

*BURST*

Casey slammed their fist into the ground, evaporating all of the FOEs in the vicinity.

*pebbles landing* 25x

Casey: *panting*

Saya: Whoa….! That was awesome, Casey!

Casey: Hehehe… Thanks- Uh.. Saya?

Saya is 30 feet away from Casey.

Casey: You good?

Saya: Y-Yeah! I just didn’t expect you to use that move….

Casey: Ah. Oops… Maybe I should’ve warned you about that… Haha…

Saya: Did you get that, Min?

Min: Yeah. You guys killed 45 FOEs.

Saya: Sweet!

Casey: There’s gonna be more than that, so don’t forget it.

Saya: I understand. But, these guys were small fries compared to the Doppelgangers…

Casey: You may think that… But remember..

*stomp* 5x

Casey: !?

Saya: Huh!? What were you about to say!?

Casey: Never mind! It’s here! The Guardian FOE!

I.D.A.: Tread caution you two! I detected one lifeform next to the Guardian FOE!

Min: *uneasy* Ugh…. We should move further back.

I.D.A.: R-Right!

*trees rustling* 3x

*faint footsteps*

The Guardian FOE walks up to Casey and Saya. The person riding on top of it is using it as a ride to block the duo.

Casey: Who’s up there!?

Saya: …..

???: Do I really need to show myself like this? That shouldn’t matter to you, should it?

Saya: Sure it does! We have to get you off of this thing so we can ask you a few questions!

???: …….

The woman chooses not to answer.

*roars*

Casey: *serious* Not gonna answer, huh? This is your final warning.

Saya: Casey…

Casey: Sorry, but if she’s not gonna answer me, then we’re gonna have a problem.

Saya: …..

???: You. With the cyan hair.

Saya: What?

???: Why do you look like you feel bad for me?

Saya: *breaks sweat* Answer Casey’s question first and then I’ll answer it for you!

The woman grew annoyed.

???: ……..

???: The name’s Harako. I came by to give you two a message: “Do not approach at this point”.

Casey: ……?

Saya: *suspicious* Why not?

Harako: Beyond this point is where most NEO members never come back.

Saya: Look, I get that you’re concerned, but we have a mission to do!

Saya’s expression slightly changes to her being mad.

Saya: *upset* What you’re accomplishing is nothing! Plus you have a Guardian Boar FOE with you, so you’re just getting in OUR way.

Casey: Last chance.

Harako: ……. *snaps fingers*

The Boar gave out a loud roar and started charging at the duo.

Both: !!! *dodges*

*slam*

Harako: …Wipe the floor of these ignorant people.

*roars*

*galloping*

Saya: Casey!

Casey: !

The Boar kept charging at Casey, but Casey managed to dodge most of the thrusts.

*roars*

Casey: Ah-?!

*impact*

Casey: *pained grunts*

*slam*

Saya: *panicked* C-Casey!!

*galloping*

Saya: *looks at the FOE* *grunts* *gets up*

Harako: Know your place!

Saya: …….

*slams*

Saya: *grunts* *dodges*

The Boar kept on thrusting and missing Saya as the exchanging attacks between them kept on going.

Saya: *slides down*

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: (Casey… Hope you're okay!)

*roars*

Saya: Quantum Crush!

Harako: ?!

*slam*

*ground rumbling*

Harako: *grunts*

Saya: *rushes towards the Guardian Boar*

Harako: *snaps fingers*

*roars*

The Guardian Boar started to go on a rampage in order to not let Saya get close.

*rumbling*

Saya: (Ugh…! No good..! I can’t get through the damn thing!)

Harako: *snaps fingers*

*roars*

*whoosh*

Saya: ?!

*SLAM*

Saya: AGH!!

*crash*

Saya: *coughing* *grunts*

Harako: Are you ready to yield, ignorant one?

Saya: Ngh…. *holds chest*

Saya felt pain in the chest after being slammed into the tree bark by the Boar. She's even feeling a sense of anger.

Saya: What's your deal…? Do you want these people to not have their normalcy again…?

Harako: Normalcy…?

Saya: Don't make me repeat myself…

Harako: Tch. This "normalcy" you speak of… That's long gone since this outbreak started..

Saya: Wait, outbreak..?

Harako: *snaps fingers*

*roars*

Saya: !!! *rapidly gets up*

Casey: Saya!

Saya: Ah! Casey!

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: I saw what you were doing… One of us has to attack that thing from behind..

Saya: Yeah, I know.. Are you okay?

Casey: I'll be fine. Just a bruise. Come on!

*rapid footsteps*

*roars*

*slam* 4x

Casey: *dodges*

Saya: ! *dodges*

Casey: *grunts* Quantum Rush!

*whoosh*

Casey is moving at a faster pace than Saya and the FOE combined.

Harako: *grunts* Take out the green one!

*galloping*

*whoosh*

Casey: Over here!

*slam*

Harako: Agh! Why you…

*slam*

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya delivered a flurry of punches to the Guardian FOE in order to knock Harako off.

*rumbling*

Harako: *grunts*

Casey: *battle cry*

*thwack* 5x

*crack*

The legs of the Boar cracked into pieces…

Casey: *grunts*

*energy surging*

Saya: Hah!

Saya kicked the FOE back and forth, furthering the damage.

Harako: Ugh… You pest! *activates Quantum Gear*

Saya: !? Wait… You’re..!

Harako: Quantum Crusher!!

*impact*

Saya: *pained expression*

The sudden punch from Harako knocked Saya into the ground in fear.

*CRASH*

Casey: !!!

*energy surging*

Casey looked at Harako and the Boar with an enraged expression on them.

Casey: Quantum…. SMASH!!!!

*whoosh*

*BURST*

*roars*

Harako: !?

The moment Casey landed a punch on the Boar, the impact became small, and then bursted into a large ball of light, killing the FOE and knocking Harako back.

*crash*

Harako: G-Gggh….!

*thud*

Casey: …….

Casey looked around to find Saya, while their eyes were still wide from Harako hurting Saya.

Casey: *frustrated* Saya! Where are you!? Answer me!!!!

*faint coughing*

Casey: S-Saya..?

Saya: …….Right here…

Casey: *worried* Oh my god..! Saya! *rushes up to Saya* Are you okay!?

Saya: *struggling* Yeah… I think…

Casey: Let me see… Can you- !!!

Saya has blood seeping through her jacket.

Casey: *breaks sweat*

Saya: Harako… Is she…

Casey: Yeah, I knocked her ass out. Come on, can you stand?

Saya: Y-Yeah… *grunts in pain*

Casey: MIN!!! I.D.A.!!!! COME QUICK!!!!

*rapid footsteps*

Min: What's the matter- *gasp*

I.D.A.: I'm coming! 2x

I.D.A. approaches Casey and an injured Saya with one of the emergency heal kits.

I.D.A.: Use this!

Casey: *takes the EHK from I.D.A.* Thanks. Saya, raise your jacket for me.

Saya: Sure.. *raises her jacket*

Casey: *presses the HEAL button* *grunts*

Casey applied the EHK onto Saya's abdomen.

*shock*

Saya: AGH!!!

Casey: Sorry… It's gonna hurt a bit. But you're gonna be fine.

Saya: Ugh… Thanks Casey..

Min: What the hell happened!?

I.D.A.: That Guardian FOE….. It did enough damage to warrant an emergency heal kit… We have 4 now.

Casey: This early on, too… Damn it all..

Saya: Well, I guess it's not gonna be easy. Even with my fighting skills, I still have to be wary about those FOEs…

*faint grunting*

Casey: ……

Min: !

Saya: !

I.D.A.: ?

Harako is struggling to get up due to the knockback blast she received from Casey.

Casey: She's up. I'm gonna talk to her. Stay here with them, Saya.

Saya: …….

*footsteps*

Harako: ……

Casey: …….

Harako: I have nothing to say to you.. Other than the fact that you proved me wrong that you're capable of handling such tasks…

Casey: Seriously? After delivering that hard blow to Saya, this is what I get? No thanks. You have some sort of hostile intent and you need to spill it out.

Harako: *tries to get up*

Casey: ! *readies themselves*

Harako: ….You can stop that. *walk passes Casey*

Casey: *slightly mad* Ah- Hey! I'm not done with you yet!

*footsteps*

Saya: Huh?

Harako: You. Saya, was it?

Saya: Yeah…

Harako: You looked so shocked when I knocked you down with my attack. Did my Quantum Gear scare you that much?

Casey: (Wait… Quantum Gear…?)

Saya: It's not that I was scared or anything.. I was caught off guard… If you have a Quantum Gear, shouldn't you be on our side? This doesn't make any sense…

Harako: ……

Casey walks up next to Saya.

Harako: I used to be a NEO member. That's why I have this gear. But thanks to White Darkness, I now have the ability to control FOEs, thus making me a FOE Leader.

Casey: But why? No one should have this power… That makes them-

Harako: An anomaly? Yes. That is the fate of NEO. As soon as they step out of Zenith City, they are now prone to becoming FOEs, Doppelgangers, or FOE Leaders. Honestly, none of them are good outcomes.

Min: But you're alive, right? That should count as something.

Harako: *balls up fist* NO!

The sudden outburst caused Min to flinch.

Harako: *frustrated* It doesn't! I used to be like you lot… I used to fight these bloody monsters… I EVEN had a TEAM…! And now… I'm here… I don't want to be here.. And I DEFINITELY do not want to be viewed as a Doppelganger…

Saya: ……

Casey: …….

Min: ….Sorry.

Harako: !?

Min: I didn't know you used to be part of NEO… But even then… That shouldn't give you a free pass just to attack those who are doing their job AS part of NEO. You may have failed, but at least…. At the VERY least hope that we can stop this phenomenon!

Saya: Min….

Min is shaking after saying his words.. I.D.A., looking at Min with concern, holds his hand in comfort.

Casey: *serious* See? We're just doing our job. As not only members of NEO, but as the elite members. We know what we're getting ourselves into. We're not a couple of dumbasses who nonchalantly joined NEO. While now I understand your intentions, that is NOT gonna stop us.

Saya: Casey…

Harako: …..

Saya: …..

Harako: There's that look of pity again.

Saya: Huh?

Harako: Fine. I won't stand in your way anymore.

I.D.A.: Will you be tagging along?

Harako: I refuse.

I.D.A.: Oh…

Harako: There are many things I can do around here, but helping you lot to cease the phenomenon isn't one of them. I wish I could… But it's not the same..

Harako has a distant look on her face.

Harako: *sighs*

Saya: Harako..?

Harako: No.. You don't call me by my name.. It's… not right.. None of you should call me by my name.

Saya: ……

Harako: Just my warning: This is not over. More and more ruthless FOEs will appear the more you proceed. And you, Saya.

Saya: ?

Harako: If that is your name, take this.

Harako hands a tape named "Log Entry #2" to Saya.

Saya: It is… What are you-

Harako: Good luck on your travels. You'll need it. *runs away*

Harako ran away deeper into the mist, never to be seen again.

…….

Last Scene: District 1-2 Subdivision

The group was walking for a while without saying a word.

*footsteps*

Saya: *down* Now is a good time to sit next to the cliffside…

Min: *nods*

Casey: I still don't get it..

Saya: Huh?

Casey: It's our first time meeting her, but now we get to see her up close, now she's afraid…?

Min: It's probably due to our reason being here. She lost her purpose, and now we're fixing that for the rest of them.

Casey: I get that, but…

Saya: …….

Casey: Why'd she give Saya a tape?

Saya: I don’t know.. But maybe if we find a place to rest our legs, I can view it.

Casey: With what?

I.D.A.: It’s in tape format. I can convert it into a mp4 file if you like!

Casey: *dumbfounded* Wha- Huh?

Saya: That will help me out, thanks!

Min: Hey, we’re getting close to the next district.

Saya: We are?

Casey: It's right from here..

I.D.A.: Shall we proceed?

Saya: Yeah. Can’t get too relaxed, though.

Casey: Hm.

*footsteps*

Saya: (However…)

A sudden memory of Harako appeared in Saya’s head.

*Harako: That is the fate of NEO. As soon as they step out of Zenith City, they are now prone to becoming FOEs, Doppelgangers, or FOE Leaders.*

Saya: (Her words are bothering me… Prone? Prone…. As in vulnerable to become one of them…? Why does that…. Worry me..)

Casey noticed Saya having a frustrated look on her face.

Casey: Saya?

Saya: Huh? Y-Yes?

Casey: You okay?

Saya: Yeah… I'll be fine.

Min: Listen, don't let her get to you.

Saya: Huh?

Min: Harako's words. I know she means well, but it doesn't feel right to hear that from someone you two just fought.

Saya: *bothered* I know.. I just can't help it. Why did she look as she's known me before..

I.D.A.: Hm…. It doesn't show that you two are acquaintances…

Saya: Hm… Maybe I have been thinking about this too much. Sorry.

Casey: It's fine! Now, let's continue.

Min: *nods*

*footsteps*

Saya: (Prone… Prone… It's so strangely familiar, but why…? Why is it only just me…?)

-End of Episode 2-

# Episode 3: District 2: Rescue and Danger Part 1

The group continued their mission to the south after facing off against Harako. Despite heeding her warning, they still pursue on into the 2nd district; even with some concerns on the way.

## Scene 1: District 1-2 Subdivision

*silence*

*footsteps*

Min: (Everyone's quiet now…)

I.D.A.: *whispers* Saya's still in a lot of thoughts about that Harako person…. I know you told her not to worry about her words, but there's something still disrupting her thoughts….

Min: *whispers* I know. Maybe that did shake her up a little. After all, unlike Casey, she hasn't been in NEO for that long…

Casey turned around and looked at Min with concern.

Casey: *sighs* You're still on that?

Min: Sorry, but Saya hasn't said a word since we're getting close to the 2nd district..
Casey: Oh… Right.. *looks at Saya*

Saya is still leading the group with a focused look on her face.

I.D.A.: …Maybe you should have a talk with her!

Casey: ……

Min: It’s worth a shot.

Casey: Okay then.. *walks up to Saya* Hey, Saya? Can we talk?

Saya: Huh? *rapidly turns around*

Casey: *breaks sweat* Don’t worry. It’s just me. Whatcha thinking about?

Saya: Oh! Hm…. Just before… About what Harako said.

Casey: About her being an anomaly?

Saya: That too, but it’s mainly the “fate of NEO” part.

Min: …….

Casey: Oh, that. *scoffs*

Saya: I still don't get it. And… Even if I do, there’s this lingering feeling I get whenever I hear the words “prone” or “fate”. Is this her attempt at foreboding something that even we as elite members aren’t aware about?

Min: Um…

Casey: *brushes Min back to I.D.A.* I got this.

Min: O-Ok..
Casey: To be honest, after thinking about it myself… She may be right on SOME occasions.

Saya: You believe that stuff she said?

Casey: *worried* Well, I thought she was spilling some crap at first, but considering the situation that we're currently in, I think it's possible that some NEO members might be in peril if they don't take this seriously. Sure there are some FOEs to take out, but the larger ones are usually the ones that cause the most casualties….

Saya: *cold* ….People like that aren't meant to be in NEO then.

Casey: !

Min: !

Saya's response took everyone aback. Hearing Saya coming up with a blunt answer may be true as they are facing the reality of it all, but what happened to the spirit of "bringing normalcy back to the people"?

Casey: *concerned* Okay… Saya… That may be… Ugh…

Saya: What is?

Casey: …….

Min: Saya, Are you scared?

Saya: Scared? I'm…. I don't know really. I'm sorry.

Casey doesn't have any words left in him to say to Saya. Defeated, he goes back to Min and I.D.A.

*footsteps*
Casey: (Damn it all… That was uncalled for, Saya… Seriously.) *holds head in frustration*

*faint rustling*

Min: Huh?

Min stopped walking after faintly hearing some rustling in the bushes. The sounds caught his curiosity.

Min: Guys, you go on ahead to District 2. I have to check something out.

Casey: What…?

Min: Sorry! I'll be quick! *runs off*

Saya: ….?

Casey: I.D.A., go with Min in case something dangerous is in there.

I.D.A: Affirmative! *follows Min*

……

Scene 2: District 1-2 Subdivision (Bushes Offroad)

Min pushes through the leaves and tree branches to get closer to the sound.

*branch crack* 3x

Min: (I thought I heard something… But what was it?)

*faint footsteps*
Min: Huh? Who's-

I.D.A.: Hello Min! Casey requested me to follow you!

Min: Oh, okay.

I.D.A.: Was there something that you heard or saw?

Min: Maybe. I can't tell from this damn mist…

I.D.A.: Hmm… Try listening closely!

Min:  …… *closes eyes*

Min relaxes himself in order to focus on the hidden sounds.

*silence*

*soft whimpering*

Min: I hear something.

I.D.A.: Where's the source?

Min: It should be… On the left, I think..

I.D.A.: ……

I.D.A. began to scan the area…

I.D.A.: Min, tread caution… I detected one lifeform here.

Min: *breaks sweat* G-Got it…

*slow footsteps*
*whimpering*

The noise got slightly louder and louder until it was a full audible volume.

Min: …..

I.D.A.: …..

Min slowly takes a peek from the tree he and I.D.A were both residing in, to their surprise, they found a NEO member alone in the pathway.

NEO Member #1: *sobbing* Someone…. Help them, please..

The poor member is clasping their hands in some sort of prayer, hoping that someone will rescue them. Fear is shown all over their face.

I.D.A.: *whispers* That poor boy…

Min: ……

I.D.A.: *whispers* What are you going to do, Min?

Min: *whispers* ….He needs help. I can't leave him here by himself. Besides… I don't even know how long he was in this area alone…

I.D.A.: *nods* *whispers* That's ideal. Try not to scare him off…!

Min: ……

*footsteps*

NEO Member #1: …! W-Who's there!?

The member frantically got up after hearing Min's footsteps. Anxiety was rushing in the member's body, and thoughts were having a difficult time collecting altogether.

NEO Member #1: …… *panting*

Min: H-Hello?

NEO Member #1: !?

Min: ….!

Min finds himself face-to-face to the scared member.

NEO Member #1: Wait… you’re also a NEO member… Please!

The member immediately rushed up to Min in desperation.

NEO Member #1: Help us!

Min: Huh?

NEO Member #1: Up ahead is a NEO Camp that my leader made for all of us to take a break, and after we did that, FOEs started to appear!

Min: *breaks sweat*

NEO Member #1: *worried* We took all of them down, it wasn’t until a Guardian FOE came by and incapacitated most of the team… We don't even have enough EHK left…

Min: My god.. Okay. Listen to me. Me and this android over here can help you.

NEO Member #1: Huh?
I.D.A. gives a friendly wave to the boy.

NEO Member #1: T-Thank you so much…

Min: Follow me. I'll lead you to my team.

*footsteps* 3x

……

## Scene 3: District 2: Entrance

Saya and Casey were one turn away from entering the 2nd district, but didn't want to enter just yet until Min and I.D.A. returned.

Saya: I hope Min's alright..

Casey: Trust me. If I know him well, he makes sure that he doesn't get himself in danger. He's a very curious type, and always makes sure to check his surroundings before executing a task.

Saya: Wow…!

Casey: Yup! Min's a cool, calm, and collected type of guy. Always keeping things in check!

Saya: Hehe… No wonder he's in the analyst class of NEO..

Casey: ……

Saya: *guilty*…Casey? About earlier.. I didn't mean to say it like that.

Casey: It's fine. Though you should think before you speak next time. Sometimes, those words can REALLY hurt someone and you won't even realize it…

Saya: They can…?

Casey: *guilty* Yeah. I did it a couple of times during fights with my girlfriend. We both made up, but we didn't realize that certain words could cut you like a knife…

Saya: Oh.. I didn't know that… I'm very sorry, Casey..

Casey: …It's fine. At least you'll be careful next time, yeah?

Casey gave Saya a genuine smile.

Saya: Y-Yeah. I'll be careful.

*footsteps* 3x

I.D.A.: We made it!

Min: I thought you two entered the district already..?

Casey: Yeah, we were thinking that, but I wanted to wait for I.D.A. to come back and do a recon scan of the area like the last district we were at.

Min: I see… Anyways, that noise that I heard? There was someone there.

Saya: Really? Are they okay?

Min is seen holding the NEO member's hand in protection.

Min: He's a little shaken up, and has a good reason for it.

Casey: W-Whoa.. Hey, kid. Can you fill us in?

NEO Member #1: Um….

……..

Casey: I see… Most of the FOEs have been dealt with, but there's still a Guardian FOE out there.

Min: *nods*

Saya: Of course we got to take it down. Where's your leader?

NEO Member #1: …Right this way.

*footsteps* 5x

……

## Scene 4: District 2

As soon as the group arrived at the district, they were greeted with one large NEO Camp that can fit at least 100 members. The grayish-black stains of slain FOEs were left on the ground.

NEO Member #1: Everyone! Listen up! I found a group of people who can help us out!!

*door slides open*
*footsteps* 25x

Some NEO members came out of the camps to meet up with the elite four. The leader was also part of the group that came out of their refuge.

*footsteps*

NEO Group Leader: Sharen! Are you okay?

Sharen: Y-Yeah, I'm fine!

NEO Group Leader: That's good. That's all that matters.

Saya: Hello, sir. Min helped this kid out while he was doing some recon. We just happened to pass on by, too.

NEO Group Leader: I appreciate you all accepting our distress call. Even in this mist using beacons of any kind isn't possible here.. What're your names?

Saya: I'm Saya Johnson.

Casey: Casey Costello.

Min: *nervous*….You already know.

I.D.A.: And I'm their assistant, I.D.A.! Pleased to make your acquaintance!

The leader gives out a friendly chuckle.

NEO Group Leader: Great to meet you all. The name's Dante. I'm the leader of this group of NEO.

Saya: Nice to meet you, Dante!

Casey: So, you said that there was a Guardian FOE around here?

Dante: Yes. As soon as we finished suppressing the FOEs in this area, we attempted to continue on our mission to the 4th district, when we were

stopped by the mentioned Guardian FOE. It took down the majority of my team. And even if we used our emergency heal kits, that wasn't enough. We decided to not continue with our mission out of safety for my team.

Saya: I see… And how many are you guys?

Dante: Including Sharen, that's 26. Other NEO members have their mission to complete as well, but they also couldn't proceed.

Casey: What did the Guardian FOE look like? Did you at least get a glimpse of it?

Dante: For a short moment, because it's well blended with the mist, it's hard to get a full detailed explanation. But, it looked like it had goop or slime on it.

Casey: Got it. So we have a slime type FOE to take care of.

Saya: Wait a minute… You said it had a gooey texture?

Dante: Something like that, yes.

Saya: !!

Min: Something up, Saya?

Saya: I heard of this one before! That's Guardian Fused!

Casey: "Fused"?

Saya: Yeah… It's a mixture of different types of large FOEs combined into one big amalgamation… To be honest, I would've called them "Chaser".

Casey: In any case… We have to take that FOE down!

Min: I.D.A.? Finished scanning?

I.D.A.: Yes! Dante's right! There's only one Guardian FOE in the area! The rest of the FOEs have been recently taken care of!

Dante: I know I'm asking you all too much, but as much as I want to suppress it, we can't do it in our current state.

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: Hey, Casey?

Casey: *worried* Right… You all can't be here while the Guardian FOE is around. One of you can end up being killed.

Min: Are you suggesting..?

Casey: Yeah. All of them need to abort the mission. Dante, get the rest of the NEO members. I'm gonna take them all back to Zenith City.

Sharen: ……

Sharen looked at Casey with comfort in his eyes.

Casey: Hm? Something the matter, kid?

Sharen: N-Nothing! You're just very cool. And caring. I didn't think there was a NEO member who was capable of such kindness..

Casey: *bashful* Hehe.. Just doing my job.
Saya: (Be careful not to walk on air…!)

*footsteps*

The rest of the NEO members came out of their refuges.

Min: C-Casey?

Casey: Oh! Sorry! Hehe… Alright, is everyone here?

Dante: Yeah. All 80 of them.

Casey: Good. And don't worry about FOEs appearing in the 1st district. We already took them down. Saya, Min, I.D.A.? Guard this place while I take these guys back.

Saya: On it.

Casey: ….Be careful, Saya.

*footsteps* 84x

Casey led the rest of the NEO members back to Zenith City.

……

Saya: …….

Min: Oh, Saya? Did you and Casey make up?

Saya: Huh? Oh, yeah. We did. I didn't know better, so I'm trying to learn. It's not a big deal, though..

Min: Oh, okay then. Well, as long as you two aren't giving each other the cold shoulder..

Saya: ….

Min: *slight guilt* What? Is it something I said?

Saya: Promise me you'll tell me that I'm in the wrong.

Min: Uh, sure.. But why the sudden request?

Saya: *upset* I don't want to do that again. It makes me sick.

Min: *worried* S-Sick..? I see..

Saya: Now then! Now that we got that out of the way… I don't have to worry about letting loose now that the NEO members are safe with Casey.

Min: Yeah. As always, we'll contact Casey in case things go south.

Saya: *nods*

*footsteps*

…….

## Scene 5: District 2: Exit Gate

*splat* 3x

Saya: (I can hear it….)

drip* 10x
The sounds of melted goop from the FOE filled the area. It's almost identical to the sounds that make when you step in mud.

*slouch* 2x

Saya: Quantum Gear: Engage!

*charging*

*burst*

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: *battle cry*

*squish* 4x

Saya: Quantum Crush!

*whoosh*

*slam*

*splatter*

Saya slammed one of the arms of the FOE into the ground, turning it into mush.

*roars*

The FOE immediately retaliated by swinging its arms toward Saya.

Saya: !?

*whoosh* 5x
Saya: *dodges* (Right.. I can’t get too close.)

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: *claps hands* Quantum Boom!

*boomburst*

*harsh wind gust*

The wind barely managed to get the slime off of the FOE.

Saya: *breaks sweat* Ugh…

*roars*

*whoosh* 2x

Saya: *dodges*

*slam*

Min: Be careful, Saya!

Saya: Yeah, I know!

*rapid footsteps*

The FOE kept swinging its arms at Saya in order to land a hit on her.

*slam* 5x

Saya: Ugh… *jumps on the arm of the FOE*

*wet rapid footsteps*
*roars*

Saya: !

Saya barely managed to dodge the incoming swing attack from the FOE. Her clothes are all covered in gray slime, which is slightly slowing her down.

Saya: (Gross, gross, gross! I hate this…)

*roars*

Saya: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh*

Saya: *grunts* *jumps off from the FOE's arm*

Saya: Quantum Crush!!

*whoosh*

*slam*

Saya delivered a blunt attack to the FOE, however it was short lived.

*squelch*

Saya: !?

Min: Ah!

I.D.A.: Oh no!

Saya: *struggling* Ugh…! Ah- Now what!?
Min: Saya!

I.D.A.: Don't panic!

Saya: …… (Right, I might be really stuck if I rapidly remove my gear out of this thing's mouth….)

*whoosh* 2x

Saya: Whoa- *yells*

The Guardian FOE thrashed around to get Saya off, but Saya isn't letting it remove her that easily.

Saya: *grunts*

*slight charge*

Saya: *panting* (This is all I can…. do at the moment…)

*roars*

*whoosh*

Saya: !!

*slam*

The Guardian FOE swung its body so rapidly that it threw Saya into the ground.

Saya: UGH!!!

*crash*

*crumble*

Saya: *panting*

*splatter* 5x

Saya: *gets up* *rapidly looks up*

The Guardian FOE is slowly approaching Saya.

Saya: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh*

Saya: (This goop… I have to get it off me so that I can run faster…)

*splat* 25x

Saya: *skids* *grunts*

Saya started to run towards the Guardian FOE once again.

*roars*

*whoosh* 2x

Saya: *dodges*

*whoosh*

Saya: *dodges* *grunts*

Saya releases the remaining energy that her gear has and starts to deliver a flurry of kicks to the FOE.

Saya: Quantum Barrage!!!!

*thwack* 23x

*splat* 15x

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya dropkicks the Guardian's arm. It turned into a gray puddle upon impact with the ground.

Saya: (There. That's one down. But here's another problem…)

Min: !

I.D.A.: What is it, Min?

Min is watching the current status of Saya and the Guardian FOE. The status has Saya in CAUTION.

Min: Not good.. She doesn't have enough time left for her gear…

I.D.A.: Ah… She used up too much energy…

Min: Saya! You need to step back! Your Quantum Gear is on the verge of cooling down!

Saya: *grunts*

Saya closes her eyes in disappointment, but opens them again in realization.

Saya: Yeah.. Coming! *runs away*

*rapid footsteps*
*roars*

I.D.A.: Agh!! The FOE's giving chase to Saya!!

Min: Ugh…

Saya: *slightly hostile* Ugh.. You're being such a pain….

Min: Hurry up, Saya! We have to come back to that thing later-

Saya: No way! After it's chasing me, I can't leave it alone now! I have to do as much as I can with the remaining energy that I have with my gear!

Min: *breaks sweat* *concerned* But Saya..

Saya: *focused* Don't worry, Min. I'll teach that bastard a lesson.

*whoosh*

Min: *grunts*

I.D.A.: Saya, no!

Min: That's it.. I'm calling Casey to get over here! *pulls up contacts*

I.D.A.: ……

…….

Last Scene: Zenith City: City Gates (Outside)

Sharen: Whoa…!

Casey: Here we are. Phew…

NEO Member #24: Are you alright, Casey?

Casey: Yeah, I'm fine. Just hoping that Saya and the rest will be fine, too.

Dante: ……

Casey: Wait here, guys.

*footsteps*

Surveillance Camera: Scanning….

Casey: *breaks sweat*

Surveillance Camera: 84 people detected. More than 5 people were detected. The first person is only required to state their identity.

Casey: …..

Dante: Casey?

Casey: *turns around* I got this. *smiles*

Casey takes out her ID and shows it to the camera.

Surveillance Camera: Scanning….. Confirmed. Casey Costello.

Casey: See? Told you.

*silence*

Dante: What?

Sharen: Um… Casey? The gates aren't moving…

Casey: *slightly confused* Huh?

The gates didn’t open even when Casey showed her ID.

Casey: Hm.. Let me try again..

Casey showed her ID again to the camera.

Surveillance Camera: Scanning… Confirmed. Casey Costello.

Casey: ……..

NEO Member #12: *worried* It’s still not opening…

Casey: (Okay, what the hell…?)

Casey: Fine. Guess I have to do this manually.

Casey walks up to a cyan colored button and presses it.

*buzz*

Casey: Hello, this is Casey Costello from the elite group #2. I have 82 NEO members who are in need of a restock of EHK. Please let us in.

*beep* 3x

Surveillance Camera: One moment please…

*beep* 4x

NEO Member #3: What now?

Casey: Just wait. I’ll get to the bottom of this…

*click*

A surveillance TV appeared next to the camera.

Casey: Hello?

NEO Employee: Casey! Glad to see that you're still alive. What's the matter?

Casey: I have 82 NEO members with me and they all need their emergency heal kits restocked. Can you open the gates for them?

NEO Employee: I'm sorry?

Casey: Please, I would hate to repeat myself. These people can't continue with their missions if they don't have enough energy to heal their wounds!

NEO Employee: I know, I heard you… But..

Casey: But what!?

NEO Employee: I thought you knew this already… NEO members of any kind are NOT allowed back to Zenith City.

The moment the employee said that, most of the NEO members in the group slightly grew anxious. Meanwhile Casey….

Casey: …….?

NEO Employee: I'm very sorry, Casey. I would like to open the gates for you, but I'm not obligated to do so.

Casey: Says… who…?
NEO Member #16: Oh my god… They can't be serious, right!?

NEO Member #17: Are they really going to leave us here to die then!?

NEO Member #18: No, of course not! Don’t be foolish! There has to be a reason!

NEO Employee: It’s by law from the commander herself.

Casey: …….

Casey looks down in frustration and then back at the TV in anger.

Casey: *slams hand into the gate* THAT’S BULLSHIT! I did not hear her saying that at all!

NEO Employee: ….

Casey: So… she thinks it’s okay for all of them to perish at the mercy of the FOEs?! Are you kidding me!?

NEO Employee: Again, I thought you knew this already?

Casey: I did not! How was I supposed to know that!? I wasn’t informed of such a rule!!

NEO Employee: *slightly frustrated* Apparently you didn’t, Casey. Which is surprising to hear. That should’ve been a dead giveaway to you, is it?

Casey: *grunts*

NEO Employee: Again, I’m very sorry. But there’s nothing I can do to help you all. We can only hope that White Darkness isn’t detectable anymore in the future.

*end transmission*

Casey: *frustrated* Ah- Hey! Wait!!

*silence*

Casey: Ah…. *grunts* God damn it!!! *stomps ground*

Sharen: C-Casey…? Where do we go now..?

Casey: *looks at Sharen in disappointment*

Casey brought all of the NEO members here for safety, only for them to be turned away at the hands of White Darkness.

Casey: *shakes head* Oh well. I guess we have to return back to camp.

Half of the members grew into a panic.

Dante: Everyone, settle down! *looks at Casey* I suggest you call your group and tell them we're heading back.

Casey: Yeah.. Sure. *pulls up contact*

Casey noticed that she had missed a call from Min.

Casey: *breaks sweat* *presses button*

*Min: Casey, listen to me, whatever you're doing, stop! Saya successfully suppressed the Guardian FOE, but… She's not taking it so well…!*

Casey's eyes widened.

Casey: *frustrated grunts* SAYA!!!! *engages with her gear*

*whoosh*

Dante: *grunts* Everyone, come on! *engages with his gear*

Sharen: Y-yeah, coming! *engages with his gear*

*whoosh* 4x

Everyone soon followed suit at Casey's panicked rush to reach back to District 2, hoping that nothing grave happened to the group.

-End of Episode 3-

……..

……

……..

…….

…….

# Episode 4: District 2: Rescue and Danger Part 2

After arriving at District 2, the group met up with Sharen and the leader of the stranded NEO group, Dante, who were unable to proceed their mission due to the Guardian FOE “Fused” blocking their way. Casey vows to take the NEO group back to Zenith City, while Saya goes to suppress the FOE. Saya ended up in a caution status; frantic, Casey returned back to District 2 to help Saya out.

## Scene 1: District 2

The FOE is at a faster rate than it was before Saya fought it. After having it lose two arms, it started to become more hostile.

*roars*

I.D.A.: Agh!! The FOE’s giving chase to Saya!!

Min: Ugh…

Saya: *slightly hostile* Ugh.. You’re being such a pain….

Min: Hurry up, Saya! We have to come back to that thing later-

Saya: No way! After it’s chasing me, I can’t leave it alone now! I have to do as much as I can with the remaining energy that I have with my gear!

Min: *breaks sweat* *concerned* But Saya..

Saya: *focused* Don’t worry, Min. I’ll teach that bastard a lesson.

*whoosh*

Min: *grunts*

I.D.A.: Saya, no!

Min: That’s it.. I’m calling Casey to get over here! *pulls up contacts*

I.D.A.: ……

Min scrolled down while looking at Saya’s current status to make sure there weren't any sudden changes.

*beep*

*dial tone*

Min: Are you kidding..?

I.D.A.: “Frequency Error”.... I don’t think you can call Casey if they’re too far away from you in this mist!

Min: Tch…

Min switches the “CALL” button to “Voicemail”.

*beep*

Min: Casey, listen to me, whatever you’re doing, stop! Saya successfully suppressed the Guardian FOE, but… She’s not taking it so well…!
*presses SEND*
*crash*

Both: !?

Saya: *grunts*

*roars*

Saya: …..

Saya kept on dodging the FOE's attacks, while the recoil got some slime substance on Saya. At this point however, becoming slower is the least of her worries.

Saya: Quantum Barrage!!!

*thwack* 10x

Saya: *battle cry*

*smash*

*splat*

*roars*

*whoosh*

Saya: !! *dodges*

The FOE started to flail around and swung its remaining arms at Saya.

Saya: (This is starting to piss me off…..)

*splat* 5x
Saya: *yells*

*smash*

Saya smashed the third arm off of the FOE. It now has one arm left.

Saya: *panting*

I.D.A.: Well?

Min: *breaks sweat* It's still at CAUTION… But it's almost touching the DANGER zone..

I.D.A.: ……

Min: *anxious* Saya!! You NEED to step back, now!! Your Quantum Gear is close to being at the risk of cooling down!

Saya: …..

Min: Listen to me! Just keep on stalling it until Casey gets here!

Saya: *breaks sweat* *dodges*

*slam*

Saya: Ugh… *looks at her Quantum Gear* (I…. don't have a choice…!) Fine! I'll stall!

Saya began to switch to defense and just dodged the FOE's attacks.

*slam* 4x

Min: …..

I.D.A.: ……. (Please…. Saya, hang in there!)

……

## Scene 2: District 2: Entrance

*rapid footsteps* 83x

Dante: *panting*

Casey: *panting* What… the…?

As soon as Casey and the NEO group arrive back in District 2, they all see that Saya is still fighting the Guardian FOE.

Casey: (Wait… I thought she took care of that already!?)

Sharen: Um… Why's the FOE still there?

Casey: *breaks sweat* Don't know. Wait here. *rushes to the Guardian FOE*

*whoosh*

……

## Scene 3: District 2

*burst*

Casey: SAYA!!!

Saya: Huh? C-Casey!

Casey: *jumps towards the FOE* Quantum Smash!!

*crash*

Casey smashed the FOE's head in, making it unable to see anything.

Casey: Ggh….

Saya: Be careful not to get your gear stuck in there.

Casey: Yeah, I know. Come on.

*rapid footsteps* 2x

Casey and Saya both chased down the Guardian FOE before splitting up. Casey's on the side where the last arm is, while Saya is there as a diversion.

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: Quantum Toss!!

*whoosh*

*crash*

Casey: *jumps onto the FOE's arm*

*wet rapid footsteps*

Saya: Over here!! If you can see me that is!
*large footsteps*

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: ! *jumps up to the slime* *battle cry*

*splat* 4x

Casey: *charges gear* *jumps up*

Casey gives themselves a boost from the slime and jumps up very high to the point that they're in bird's eye view of the FOE.

Casey: Quantum Fist!!

*whoosh*

*smash*

*squish*

Casey: !?

Saya: !!!

Min: Casey!!

Saya: Casey, don't panic! Remove your gear slowly-

The moment Saya said that, the arm grew bigger to trap Casey within it.

Casey: G-Ggh…. Ngh..!!

Saya: …….

Casey: (Ugh… I can't… move..!!)

Saya: (I never thought I would use this… At my current time limit…)

*whoosh*

Saya immediately rushes up to the Guardian FOE with incredible speed. Her eyes read with such hostility that it can even stab someone with a glare.

Casey: Huh..? S-Saya!?

Saya: ……

I.D.A.: Ah!

Min: What the hell!?

Min looks at Saya's status and her current state reads from CAUTION to OVERDRIVE.

Min: Wait… What is this..?

I.D.A.: A last resort option! She's using all of her remaining energy onto the Guardian FOE!

Min: !?

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: *notices Saya's Quantum Gear* (The Gear…. It's turning into a cyan color…. )

Saya: I'll get you out of here, Casey!! *grabs Quantum Gear*

Saya's eyes go from cyan to white.

Saya: QUANTUM….. BREAK!!!!!

*electricity* 35x

*shock* 3x

*explosion*

Saya completely destroyed the last arm that kept Casey captive. All of the slimy substances from the Guardian FOE started to fall from the sky, fading away after making contact with the ground for 2 seconds.

*splatter* 100x

…….

*thud*

Casey: *pained grunts*

Min: Casey!!

I.D.A.: Are you okay!?

Casey: …….Yeah. Ouch…

Min: You didn't get severely hurt, did you?

Casey: Don't worry about me. I'm good. It's Saya we should be worried about.

I.D.A.: Let me run a check on her! *runs over to Saya*

*rapid footsteps* 82x

Sharen: *worried* Is Saya okay!?

Min: I have no idea. I just hope that she is.

Dante: That blast was new…. I don’t think I've ever seen it before.

Casey: *confused* Nor have I. Even this is new to me…

*footsteps* 2x

I.D.A.: Saya’s okay!

Min: *turns around*

Saya: …….

Casey: Saya… *gets up*

Saya: *panting*

Saya still has a sense of hostility in her….

Casey: Hey… Thanks for getting me out of here..

Saya: *looks up at Casey*

Casey: !

Saya: *grunts*

*thud*

All: !?
Casey: *worried* S-SAYA!!

Min: Ugh… I knew that attack was bad news..

Dante: …..You all need to rest now. Come into our camp.

*alert beeping*

Sharen: !!

Dante: What the..

I.D.A.: DANGER! DANGER! Special weather approaching this area within 3 minutes!!

Min: Ugh-!

Dante: Now! Go in!

*rapid footsteps* 83x

Casey: *grunts* (Why is this happening…?)

*door slide open*

……..

## Scene 4: District 2: NEO Camp (Entrance)

The rest of the NEO members seeked refuge into the camp. Most of the members continued on to the center of the camp, while Dante, Sharen, Min, Casey, and I.D.A. remained at the base entrance.

All: …….

Min: Hey, real quick.. Dante? Why were you so freaked out about I.D.A's warning?

Dante: It’s this damn mist. The weather outside of Zenith City is hazardous. We can’t be out there during the storm, it’s a death sentence.

Min: Oh.. I see.. So even weather can be affected by the anomaly, too.

Casey:  ….

I.D.A.: I do apologize for the sudden warning. But, we appreciate your hospitality, Dante!

Dante: Not a problem. After all, we owe you all one for the trouble.

I.D.A. gave out a smile.

Casey: *slightly worried* I.D.A.? Can you check Saya’s status?

I.D.A.: Affirmative! One minute please….

*scanning*

Min: Did you experience this acidic rain before?

Dante: I have when it was just the 5 of us. That was before we made it to District 2. I don’t want to think about the people who didn’t make it to their camps during the storm..

Min: *scared* A-Ah… Me neither…

*beep* 2x
I.D.A.: Done! Saya has a slight fever, and her Quantum Gear is in cooldown.

Casey: *grunts*

Min: …..

Casey: Good. At least nothing grave happened to her.

Sharen: Will she be okay…?

Casey: *looks at Sharen* Yeah. Saya's a tough cookie. She'll pull through.

Sharen: Oh, okay..! Well, she needs a place to rest, so follow me!

*footsteps*

Min: *looks at Saya with concern* (This is the second time she pushed herself like this… What's going on..?)

Casey, Min, and I.D.A. followed Sharen to the guest rooms.

……

Last Scene: District 2: NEO Camp (Guest Room #1)

*door slides open*

Sharen: Here you are!

I.D.A.: Wow~~! *spins around* It's like a bunker in here!

Casey: Yeah.. She has a point. It's like you can fit 7 people here.

Sharen: Hehe… Isn't our commander awesome?! She cares about everyone's safety, including us!

Casey: ……

Sharen: Oh, and Dante is checking with the rest of the NEO members at the moment. Do you guys need anything?

Min: No, I think we're good for now, Sharen.

Sharen: Okay then! Then, make yourselves at home! *walks away*

*door slides closed*

Casey: *frustrated sigh*

Casey gently put Saya on the bed.

Min: Casey?

Casey: …?

Min: I thought you took all of the NEO members back to Zenith City? Did something happen?

Casey: ……

Casey explained the reason why they returned back with the remaining NEO members.

Min: ….Are you serious?

Casey: *annoyed* Yeah, that's the strange part.. Not the fact that all of these people are at the mercy of the FOEs, but the fact that I was SUPPOSED to know that already….

Min: ….

Casey: I still think that reason is missing some vital detail…

I.D.A.: You said that you all can't return back to Zenith City? …..There is a reason for that.

Casey: Spill it.

I.D.A.: It's out of the safety of everyone who is living back in Zenith City. The White Darkness phenomenon caused so much trouble for Silvene, that Commander Marako established an evaluation order for all districts. That's why Zenith City is VERY overpopulated… hehe..

Casey: Is that really it?

I.D.A.: *sad* No, there's something else, too. The gates have to remain closed so as to not let any mist get inside of the city…. If the mist manages to seep in, then FOEs will start to spawn inside of the city… Even if it means locking out the NEO members who stepped out of the city for their mission…

All: …….

After hearing that, what did they have to say about it? Marako did have good intentions on keeping everyone safe in Zenith City, but this also unintentionally created an inconvenience to the NEO members who were just doing their job. It's a sacrifice that they have to pay in order to end White Darkness.

Casey: ……..
Min: ……..

I.D.A.: You don't have to force yourself to say anything.

Casey: *down* No, I get it now. If the mist does get in the city, then everyone we know would be in danger..

Min: Casey….

Casey: *sighs* Never mind. I was the stupid one who didn't listen clearly.

Min: *breaks sweat*

Casey: But.. Now that I know that truth, that only just gave me the reason to keep going.

Min: Now?

Casey: Yeah. Maybe Marako didn't want to say this throughout, but more of giving us the hint that this is a mission that not a lot of people will come back from.

Min: ……

Casey: At least, that's what I think.

Min: Hm. Then, I'll.. No, we'll help you two in any way we can.

Casey: *smiles* Thanks, Min. I appreciate it a lot.

Saya: *soft grunt*

All: !

Saya: Ugh… Huh…?
Upon waking up, Saya looked around to see herself in a different atmosphere.

Saya: *slightly weak* W-Where… am I?

Casey: We're in Dante's NEO camp. There's an acid storm going on right now… Maybe… I don't know if it hit yet, but I.D.A. said it was coming, so it may have already hit.

Saya: I see..

Min: How's your fever?

Saya: *feels forehead* Oof.. It's still warm… This sucks…

Casey: You pushed yourself again, and as a result your Quantum Gear is in cooldown for a few hours.

Saya: Huh?! *checks Quantum Gear*

I.D.A.: The statistic has been updated to 28 members now!

Saya: *annoyed* I don't need you to rub it in……

I.D.A: Just doing my job!

Min: Hehe..

Saya: What's so funny?

Min: Oh nothing.. I just remembered that you said you don't want to be listed under that category..

Saya: *mortified expression* Ah-

*shock*

Casey: See, I told you it can happen to those first starting off.

Saya: Wah…

Casey: *sighs* Well, in any case. I'm glad to see you back.

Saya: Yeah, same here.

Casey: Which reminds me, Min?

Min: Huh?

Casey: *serious* Let's address the elephant in the room.

Min: What is…?

Casey: Oh, you know.

Casey gave Min a serious look on their face. It rapidly changed the mood of the room after the small mention of cooldown statistics.

Min: O-Oh…

Casey: While you told me that Saya wasn't like herself, that FOE was still up the moment I got here.

Min: *nervous* It was so you can get here faster. If Saya's Quantum Gear went on cooldown before you arrived, we would've been in danger..

Casey: Oh..

Min: I'm sorry that I had to lie to you, but Saya's Quantum Gear status was not in the green… I couldn't let Saya take care of that Guardian FOE alone any longer.

Saya: …….

Casey: ……Okay.

Min: ?

Casey: *calm* I understand. Though please tell me the actual truth in full detail next time. That was not like you to make frightening assumptions like that.

Min: I won't.

*slip*

Saya: Uh-

*light thud*

The Log tape that Harako gave to Saya fell out of her pocket.

Saya: Oh, right.. The tape!

Min: *picks up the tape* Right, I.D.A. was supposed to convert this into a mp4 file, right?

I.D.A.: Yes sir! I'll take that, thank you~! *takes the tape*

I.D.A. summons two digital cubes one for her internal hard drive to the video cube, and a converter program.

I.D.A.: This should take a moment….
Small pixels can be seen from the program into the tape.

Min: Wow.. I.D.A. can do anything, huh?

Saya: And it's bright, too..!

Casey: Again, that's basically their signature..

Min: Maybe I should've brought my sunglasses..

Saya: Oh, yes! And some sunscreen!

Casey: Ah… I would kill to go back to the beach one day…

Saya: Hehe…

Min: Hopefully we can after this whole thing is over.

Casey: Oh! Saya? Do you need anything? Because Sharen came here earlier and asked us the same thing.

Saya: Well… I would like a cold bottle of water.

Casey: *snaps fingers* Got ya. Be right back! *walks away*

*door slides open*

*doos slide closed*

Min: Right, about that tape.. It's the 2nd one, right?

Saya: Yup. That's what it says. I still have no idea why she gave it to me anyway..

Min: Hm…. As soon as this storm rolls over, I think we have to do some backtracking…

Saya: Eh…?

*door slides open*

Casey: Dude, they have a lifetime stock of water in the center base. *throws one at Min and Saya*

Min: *catches bottle* That's not much of a surprise. They want us to be in our best condition in battle.

Casey: That's funny coming from you, Mr. Pop Inhaler.

Min: Hey….

Saya: *opens bottle* Hehe… Why the nickname? *drinks water bottle*

Min: It's because I mostly drink soda. It's not my fault, though.

Casey: You just can't be drinking them all the time, you know?

Min: Tch.

Casey: *looks at I.D.A.* How's the process coming along though?

I.D.A.: Process is at 78%.

Casey: Oh, I guess it's not that much, huh?

Saya: Hm..

Min: No… Most logs tend to be short anyways.. In fact. *pulls up analyst app*
Saya: You forgot to record one for this district?

Min: I didn't. Plus I was more concerned about you.

Saya: Oh.. Right..

*typing*

Casey: The smaller FOEs have already been taken care of, though.

Min: Yup. But she wants the FOEs that you guys have taken down. In this case, it's just 1.

Saya: …….

*ding* 3x

I.D.A.: Done! Here you go! It's in this cube!

I.D.A. hands the digital cube to Saya.

Saya: Whoa.. Wait, so the log's in there?

I.D.A.: *nods*

Saya: Okay then, well, let's not waste anymore time then.

Saya then presses the play button, causing the video monitor to appear. The picture shows Harako in her designated NEO camp, recording her data to the commander.

*Harako: NEO Log #2.*

*"We already made it to the 4th district, but we all decided to take a break here after suppressing some FOEs and the Guardian FOE Boar.*
*In total, we killed over 127 FOEs. Apparently, that Boar had a youngin with it. It was still a threat, however.*

*My current status is STABLE, and so is the rest of us. Tali may have her cheerful demeanor, but she gets the job done quickly and efficiently. And Ayana…? She's a strange one, but does the job well with no complaints.*

*Which is good considering that this is the first mission you assigned to us as elites. I'll send you another log when we successfully make it to district 5."*

*End of log.*

**click**

Min: Harako's the analyst of that group…?

Saya: Then how was she able to use a Quantum Gear?

Casey: I guess it was a safety precaution?

Saya: *serious* …No. I remember. She's an anomaly. She's able to do things that we humans can't.

Casey: R-Right..

Min: We were just talking about how there may be more tapes like this out in Silvene.

Casey: Hm?

Saya: Yeah. There's a reason why Harako wanted me to take this, so that we can understand what caused the White Darkness phenomenon!

Min: Isn't that a bit of a stretch…?

Saya: It might be, but it wouldn't hurt to assume that's the case.

Casey: *gets up* I'd be willing to take that gamble! And… since all of the FOEs have already been dealt with in the previous district, we can just focus on finding the remaining tapes.

Min: And, what if some FOEs do appear?

Saya: Then we kick their asses as usual! *air boxes*

Min: Ah, right. *chuckles*

Casey: But until then, we'll wait for Saya to get better.

Saya: Huh?

Min: Yeah. Like you said earlier, we have to be in good condition to venture.

Saya: Actually… I.D.A. said something like that?

Min: Doesn't matter. It's the truth, right?

Saya: *chuckles* Yeah… Oh, Casey! Can you bring me another bottle?

Casey: Eh? You're done with that one already?

Saya: I am burning up, you know..

Min: Yeah, but I didn't think literally-!

Casey: *laughs* Okay, okay! I'll get you one!

*footsteps*
Saya: *smiles*

Min: What's up?

Saya: Oh, it's just that I missed this energy. We were so tense back then, but it's great to have to share a laugh or two, you know?

Min: ……..

Saya: ?

Min: Ah, it’s nothing. I was thinking the… same thing honestly..

Min averted his eyes away from Saya.

Saya: *lightens up* Hehe..! You don’t have to get so shy with me, Min!

Min: Hmph..

I.D.A.: Let’s keep our spirits high!

Casey: *walks back* Here, catch! *throws water bottle*

Saya: *catches water bottle*

Min: *jolts* Whoa, that was too fast…

Casey: Oops.. Wasn’t trying to!

Saya: But, no seriously. Thanks for worrying about me.

Saya’s expression hasn’t been this relaxed in a while. Not since she was by the cliffside.

Casey: You’re welcome… Saya.
Min: *nods* Hm.

*footsteps*

Dante: (Hm?)

From the other side of the room, he sees Saya’s group all full of energy and having good talks with each other.

Dante: *smiles* (I think their energy can really liven up the camp, even if it means it will be short lived. Though…)

He looks again, and now feels a sense of solitude.

Dante: (We can use a company like that for them. I just wish them the best once they leave out.)

Dante walks away from the room and returns to center base where the rest of the members are, while feeling the sense of both satisfaction and longing…

-End of Episode 4-

…….

……

## Episode 5: Take it Easy and Recharge!

After successfully suppressing the Guardian FOE of District 2, Saya's Quantum Gear went into cooldown mode, preventing her from fighting. While the team waits for her gear to fully charge, an acidic storm has hit the area, forcing them and the rest of the NEO members to ride the storm out.

Scene 1: District 2: NEO Camp (Center Room)

*chatter*

Most of the NEO members were hanging out in the center part of the camp, while Dante kept everyone in check.

*footsteps*

Sharen: Hey, Dante?

Dante: Hm? What's the matter?

Sharen: Oh.. Just wondering about Saya… Is she alright?

Dante: Well, I just walked by the room not too long ago and she's doing fine. Her Quantum Gear is still on cooldown, though.

Sharen: I see.. Well, I'm glad to see that she's feeling a lot better than yesterday!

Dante: Yeah, me too. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her team after all.
*footsteps* 3x

Casey: Hey guys!

Sharen: Casey! *walks up to Casey*

Casey: Hey kid! You seem to be in high spirits today!

Sharen: Yup! Because I heard from Dante that Saya's doing a lot better!

Min: Yeah, she's getting there. Still need to rest for a bit.

Sharen: I see!

Casey: Hm… *looks around*

Casey looks around and sees that the NEO members are eating canned goods.

Casey: You guys didn't pack up any kitchen tools?

Dante: Nope. None of us did. We don't necessarily have the time to cook food if we're on a mission.

I.D.A.: I don't think there's a time limit to completing a task!

Dante: Maybe.. But I'm impatient! I wanna get things done and out of the way.

Min: That's fair. But rushing things will make you miss some stuff and all that…

Sharen: See? You should take his example!

Dante: *sighs* Not everyone does the same thing, you know…
Sharen: Well, I think that they should!

Casey: Oh! I got an idea!

Min: Huh?

Casey: How about I cook for you guys?

Sharen: What-

Dante: Oh, no… We appreciate the generous offer, but that isn't needed..

Casey: No, please let me! I insist! I can whip you all up something good to last for a good week.

Min: Wait, are you serious..?

Casey: Yup! And, you're…. *grabs Min and I.D.A.* gonna help me!

Min: *surprised* E-Eh!? Why me?

I.D.A.: I'd be happy to assist you!

Min took his hand off of Casey with slight concern.

Min: H-Hold on a minute…

Casey: Huh? What's the matter?

Min: Are you sure you want me to help you make dinner?

Casey: Of course I do! I remember the dish that you made the last time I came over to your house, Min.

Min: *nervous* Well, that's because… I had help from my grandma…
Casey: And? It's still good! Hehe… I can still remember the scent since it was yesterday….

Casey is seen to be lost in the clouds.

Dante: Please, you don't have to cook for us, Casey.

Casey: Oh, no! But I do! It's the least I can do to repay you guys for letting us stay here.

I.D.A.: That does beg the question, Casey… How are we going to cook here?

Casey: I'm glad you asked! Hey Min, grab my bag over there. *points the bag next to the storage room*

Min: ?

*footsteps*

NEO Member #5: Hey… Are they going to make something for us?

NEO Member #8: I guess… But I don't think we need it. After all, we have some canned goods left.

I.D.A.: I'm sorry! I don't mean to eavesdrop on your conversation, but I recently did a scan of the area when we got here and you all have 30 canned goods left!

NEO Member #7: Hey… Have you heard of something called "privacy"?

NEO Member #10: Actually, now that I think about it.. I went to get some food and there's only one box left.

Sharen: R-Really!? I never noticed that we're running out…
Dante: It couldn't be helped. Most of us were trying to replenish our energy back to deal with that Guardian FOE.

NEO Member #5: Ah… right.

Min: *grunts* *pants* Casey… What did you…. pack in… there…?

Casey: *excited* I'm glad you asked! Open it up!

Min: Huh…? *unzips the bag*

As the bag was unzipped, other than Casey's personal essentials, there's another compartment that contains some skillets, a large pot, 40lbs of beef, and a bag of various uncut vegetables.

Min: *slightly tired* ….No wonder it was so freaking heavy. Ugh…

I.D.A.: Wow! You really came prepared, huh?

Casey: *nods* That's why I'm gonna need help in fixing this up for everyone!

Sharen: Oh! I wanna help out, too!

Dante: I mean, might as well, right?

I.D.A.: More assistance is much needed!

Casey: Sweet! Dante and I will cut up the meat, while I.D.A. and Sharen can cut up the vegetables, and Min will season up the cutted meat!

Sharen: Yippie!

Min: *slight concern* Wait, do you know how to use a knife?

Sharen: Of course I do! Ever since I left Zenith City!

Min: ……

Dante: Right… So, Casey? What are we making?

Casey: *grins* My specialty dish: Costello Beef Stew!

Min: Beef stew…? I never heard of it before.

Casey: Really? You haven't?

Min: *slightly laughs* Not much, no..

I.D.A.: I can search up a reference image! One moment please!

*screen turns on*

Sharen: Whoa… Cool!

Dante: See? That's what beef stew looks like.

Min: Wow….

I.D.A.: Should I get the recipe, too?

Min: *spaced out* Uh-huh… Yeah..

Casey: *chuckles* I think Min's pretty into the dish…

Dante: *notices Min drooling* Yeah.. Maybe TOO into it. Yo, Min!

Min: Huh!? Oh, sorry… What were we doing again?

Everyone wasn't surprised in the slightest, but still laughed it off regardless.
Casey: Guess that was the kick of motivation! Now then… shall we get started?

Sharen: Yeah! Let's do it!

I.D.A.: Let me know if you need any assistance!

*footsteps*

Everyone working on the big dinner went to their stations.

…….

Casey grabs the beef from the bag and places it on the cutting table.

*thud* 2x

Dante: Sheesh.. How much does that weigh, Casey?

Casey: Each one is about 10lbs. I only brought in 4 large slabs of meat.

Dante: R-Right…

*cutting* 5x

Dante: Does it matter what type of beef it has to be?

Casey: Hmm… Let me think..

*cutting* 3x

Casey: Not really? Well, I guess a beef roast is well suited for this.

Dante: W-Whoa.. Roast beef!? *chuckles* I don't even want to know how much that costs…

Casey: Yeah… That's what happens when you get paid by an organization! Haha.

*cutting* 4x

……

Casey: Oh, there's something that has been bothering me as of late..

Dante: Hm?

Casey: The acidic storms. Are they common or rare?

Dante: You'll be surprised. They're more common than I thought. They only come on odd numbered days.

Casey: Odd numbered?

Dante: Yup, and this is our 5th day on our mission. So, we all got caught in the storm 3 times now..

Casey: I never thought you dealt with this in the beginning..

Dante: Yeah. Talk about bad luck. You guys happened to depart when we were on our 5th day.

Casey: Hm…

*cutting* 8x

Casey: Almost done…
Dante: It's kinda annoying how we only got a day just to get to our destination, only for the storms to delay it.

Casey: So you said that you dealt with the storms, right? What about those FOEs after the storm?

Dante: …

Dante briefly stopped cutting the meat.

Dante: *slightly scared* I didn't expect the FOEs to get powerful within the next day. Some managed to kill some members.

Casey: ……

Dante: After seeing that, I thought of my brothers and parents who were back home. And what my purpose is in joining NEO.

Casey: ?

Dante: I want to make sure to have them see the outside again. With no anomalies in sight. I may not be an elite member, but I still want to complete something.

*cutting* 8x

While Dante is talking to Casey, I.D.A. and Sharen can be seen cutting up the vegetables on the right side of the base.

Casey: …Yeah. I get that a lot. I'm doing this for my loved ones, too. It's one of the reasons why I stayed in NEO. And if it means putting my life on the line, then so be it.

*cutting* 2x

Dante: You're a determined one, Casey. People could use someone like you.

Casey: *slightly flattered* Hehe… Well, that's what happens if you join NEO from the start!

Dante: Oh, look. Did I do this right?

Casey: Hm?

Casey looks over on Dante's side and sees that the meat is finely cut.

Casey: Yeah…. Yeah! That's very good! The precision on the cutting is so good, too!

Dante: Oh, really? T-Thanks..

Casey: Say, have you taken a culinary class?

Dante: Not since high school. Though classmates of mine praised me for my cutting techniques..

Casey: Well, they were right!

Sharen: Casey! We finished cutting up the vegetables!

Casey: *turns around* Oh, you did? Great job!

I.D.A.: I made sure that he didn't get any scratches!

Dante: Thanks a lot, I.D.A.

Casey: Yo, Min! It's your turn! I'm gonna set up the pot!

*footsteps*
Min: I'm coming..

*gas stove click*

*fire*

Casey: Okay, here is the seasoning that you're gonna put in the beef.

Min: O-Okay then..

Casey: Sprinkle this one… and that one.. And a pinch of salt..

Min: Wait, why the onion powder?

Casey: Oh. It's to make sure that the beef's raw smell isn't too overpowering. My Mama used to tell me that since I have a very sensitive nose…

Min: *slightly chuckles* I didn't know that. That's kinda cute.

Casey: *slightly blushes* Well… What was I supposed to do about that..? Hmph.

Min: Is that it?

Casey: Yeah, that's good, Min! I'll take it from here. In the meantime, why don't you check in with Saya?

Min: Got it. *walks away*

……

## Scene 2: District 2: NEO Camp (Guest Room #1)

*door slides open*

Min: Saya?

Saya: Yeah?

Min: Hey, Casey wanted me to check up on you.

Saya: Oh! I’m doing good! My fever’s gone down, so I get to move around now!

Min: That’s great.

Saya: Hehe…

Min: Casey was… pretty worried about you, though.

Saya: Huh?

Min: *down* I get that you’re a very valorant fighter, but I don’t want you getting too cocky. That’s the last thing they want.

Saya: …..

Min: And besides, seeing Casey all frantic like that…. Scares me.

Saya: R-Really?

Min: Yeah. That’s why they wanted me to keep you in check, because if anything were to happen to you, I don’t think they would be able to forgive me.

Min puts his hands in his pockets in guilt.

Saya: Sorry. I didn’t know that would make Casey feel this way.

Min: Yeah. He’s doing his best to make sure that none of us gets hurt since he’s been in NEO longer than us. And he wants us to make sure of that.

Saya: ……

Min: I should be thanking him. Even though he doesn't ask for anything back, I still want to express my gratitude. I made sure to have his back, and I'm willing to do the same to you.

Saya: Min…

Min: You understand?

Saya: I do. However..

Min: ?

Saya: *serious* I want to protect those I love, too. It isn't just Casey. All of these people that we rescued from the Guardian FOE, they count too!

Min: !

Saya: Hell, I'd be putting my life on the line just for them to see the calming waves, and the warm sensation of the sun again! I'm willing to make any sacrifices whatever the circumstances!

Min: S-Saya….

Saya: I totally get how this feels, and that makes me wanna help even further!

Min: …….

Min was at a loss of words, but it didn't take long for him to reply.

Min: Right. Then I'll, no. I.D.A. and me will help you two accomplish your goal.

Saya: *lightens up* Ah! Thank you, Min! *hugs Min*

Min: !

Saya: *sniffs* Mm… Something smells good~!

Min: Oh, that must be the beef stew Casey's making.

Saya: Beef stew? What's that?

Min: I have no idea. But, I'm kinda excited to see. I wonder if we're going to have rice with that…

*footsteps* 2x

Saya: Rice? What's that?

Min immediately stopped walking.

*door slides open*

Saya: Uh…

…….

## Scene 3: District 2: NEO Camp (Entrance)

Min: ……

Min, without saying anything, left the room out of embarrassment for Saya's lack of knowledge of rice.

Saya: *slightly concerned* W-Wait Min! Is it something that I said?

Min: Yes. How could you not know what rice is?

Saya: Um….

Min: I can’t believe what I just heard. Everyone should know what rice is. They must be living under a rock! It’s so ridiculous how there are people who don't know the most common side dish in the world… That’s blasphemy! Blasphemy I tell you! ใครก็ได้ช่วยผู้หญิงคนนี้ที…..

Saya: A-Ah……

Min: *clears throat* Excuse me, I lost my cool there… Anyways, Saya? What other food have you heard of?

Saya: U-Um… I heard of kiwis, sandwiches, sodas, water, and my personal favorite, burritos!

Min: *salty* How can you hear of sandwiches and NOT rice? They’re from the same food group!

Saya: Ah. That’s a good question-

Min: *covers face* Oh my god… Saya…

Saya: Eh?
Min: Come on. *rolls eyes* What about cereal?

Saya: I like cereal!

Min: Eh- Then what about flour????

Saya: Use it to bake sometimes!

Min: *eye twitches* (AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!!!)

Saya: M-Min..?

Min: *holds bridge of his face* (My siblings won't believe me when I tell them this….)

Casey: Um, guys? What are you…. Um..

Min rapidly turned around at Casey and stomped his way towards him.

Min: *tired* Casey… THIS. *points to Saya* THIS woman hasn't heard of rice….

Saya: I swear I don't!

Casey: …….

Min: You see what I got to deal with?

Casey: Well, she's gonna know today! Because the stew's cooking now!

Min: Oh, thank god.

Saya: Sorry.. I didn't know that you were THAT angry with me.

Casey: Oh, don't worry about Min. His family makes the best rice, so I can see how he was taken aback by your statement-

Min: More than that! I felt betrayed!

Casey: N-Now, now Min…

Min: Ugh….

Saya: *dumbfounded expression*

Scene 4: District 2: NEO Camp (Center Room)

*footsteps* 3x

Dante: It looked like you three had an engaging conversation there.

Min: *slightly salty* I'm not sure if you can even call it that….

Saya: *ashamed* Can we let it go, please…? Guh…

Sharen: Saya!

Saya: Oh, hey Sharen.

Sharen: How are you feeling?

Saya: I'm feeling good! My fever's gone down.

Sharen: Ah! That's wonderful!

Min: Oh. Saya? How's your Quantum Gear?

Saya: My Quantum Gear? *checks right arm* It's…. Currently charging!
Casey: It's charging? That's great! Thank goodness….

Saya: Hm…

Casey: Listen, Saya. I don't want anything to happen to you, you know. I know you're a skilled fighter, but that doesn't give you the pass of being cocky.

Saya: Yeah, I know. Min told me.

Casey: Oh, he did?

Saya: Yup. And I wasn't kidding about the skilled fighter part. Before I joined NEO I had to fend for myself.

Min: H-Huh?

Casey: Are you serious?!

Saya: *exhausted* Yup. I didn't get the chance to experience a normal life because I was too busy running away from those FOEs. And it only got worse when Doppelgangers started to appear…

Min: Wait a moment.. I.D.A.? What happens to the FOEs after the acid storm passes?

I.D.A.: After it passes, FOEs will become much stronger than before.

Casey: Ugh…

Saya: What about Doppelgangers?

I.D.A.: Doppelgangers are the opposite!

Saya: Well, that's good.
Casey: What about those who are in both? The FOE leaders.

Dante: FOE leaders…?

Saya: They're… part of the anomaly. We still don't know much about them.

I.D.A.: Yes, I'm unable to find enough data to determine this…

Min: Great…

Casey: Hey, Dante? You said earlier that you encountered an acidic storm. During those times, did you happen to see anyone in the mist?

Dante: *folds his arms* It was hard to determine that… On the second day, Sharen saw someone of pink hair from afar. We couldn't tell if they were human or not…

Sharen: It was kinda scary how quick they vanished..

Min: That sounds like another anomaly. Humans can't disappear into the mist like that…

Saya: Yeah.. And you said that the storm is hazardous to humans, too.

Dante: Then I guess that woman in pink… May as well be…

Min: It's a stretch, but she's an anomaly. I mean, what else is there to explain that? Anomalies among anomalies. They're like puzzle pieces coming together into one big picture. Maybe….. They have adapted to this bizarre environment.

Saya: !!

*heartbeat*

Saya: Ugh…

Casey: S-Saya!!

Min: Saya!

Dante: H-Hey, are you alright!?

Saya: (Ngh… First "Prone" and now "Adapt"? Why do these words….)

Saya: I'm fine….

Sharen: Are you sure…?

Casey: Did that fever really go down?

Saya: Yes, it did…

Casey: …….

Min: I think you should go back to the room-

Casey: Actually, we'll come with. I.D.A.? Let us know when dinner's ready.

I.D.A.: Okay!

*footsteps* 3x

Sharen: I hope she's okay….

Dante: …….

……..

## Scene 5: District 2: NEO Camp (Guest Room #1)

*door slides closed*

Saya: I have no idea how that happened the second time…

Casey: *concerned* I think your body is still experiencing some fatigue.

Saya: Is that it?

Casey: Yeah. When you nearly collapse like that, it usually means that you don't have a lot of energy in you.

Min: Hopefully that stew will give your energy back.

Saya: *lighthearted* I hope so…!

Casey: *clears throat* Okay, while we're waiting for the food to get ready, let's talk about our next move.

Min: Right.

Saya: Okay.

Casey: *pulls up map* We're still at the 2nd district, and we have to do a bit of backtracking for those tapes. As soon as we pick up the remaining three, we'll head straight to the 3rd district.

Saya: We have to be quick about it as well. That storm could appear the next day, so eventually we will have to seek refuge.

Min: Already have that covered. *summons portable cube* Before we left, the commander supplied each analyst with a portable camp to use to ride the storm out. It was only a coincidence that Dante already had his set up.

Casey: And remember: The moment that we step close into the 5th district, Marako is going to inform us that she can no longer detect us on the map. We will be fending for ourselves from that point forward.

Saya: I believe the FOEs' quantity is going to increase as well..

Min: Well….

Casey: No, she’s right. When Marako said that she gave us this lethal mission to accomplish, that’s what she meant by it. FOEs will increase, so we can’t just rush to the next district and expect things to go smoothly.

Saya: ….There might be Doppelgangers, too. Not really excited to fight them again..

Casey: Just keep on your toes, Saya. There will be Guardian FOEs on the way, too.

Saya: Yeah, I know. I know that they’re going to be there.

Casey: I just don’t want to repeat what recently happened.

Saya: ……

Min: Hm? *wanders around*

Casey: What’s up? *closes map*

Min: I don’t hear any more rain… You think that the storm’s gone?

Casey: I may need to check that with I.D.A., but it doesn’t sound like tiny rocks hitting the surface any more.

Saya: If that’s the case, it’s safe to go out now!

Min: Let’s make sure and see.

*footsteps*

…….

Scene 6: District 2: NEO Camp (Center Room)

*simmering*

I.D.A.: Oh, hello! Is Saya alright?

Saya: Yeah, I'm fine. I haven't eaten in a while, which explains me getting all lightheaded.

Dante: Glad it wasn't too serious.

Casey: How's the food?

I.D.A.: It's almost done! Just currently in the process of marinating.

Casey: Cool, cool. Also, can you also do a scan of the area? I think the storm passed us, but I want confirmation.

I.D.A.: Okay! One moment please….

*scan* 3x
Sharen: So…?

I.D.A.: There are no weather anomalies detected! The next weather anomaly will be in 36 hours!

Dante: No way…

Saya: *jumps* Alright! We're good to go!

Sharen: Good to go?

Casey: Ah.. right. I should've mentioned this, but after we eat we're gonna head on out.

Sharen: O-Oh…

Dante: I guess it was wrong of me to think that you all will be staying here while having a mission to take.

Min: Sorry Dante. While we appreciate you giving us a roof under our heads, this isn't permanent. We have to keep going, and soon another storm will hit, and we won't be able to return back in time since they come by so quickly….

Dante: Ah.. right. I'm only wishing you all to take care of yourselves once you all depart.

NEO Member #11: Wait, they're leaving after this?

NEO Member #3: That sucks… I was hoping they would all be permanent guests here.

NEO Member #7: We can't force them to stay, you know.

NEO Member #3: I know, but they all gave us a fun company overtime!
NEO Member #5: Yeah, I guess that's true.

Saya: Aww… You all don't have to worry about us! We'll be fine!

Casey: Yeah, and whenever you think of us, just remember the taste of the beef stew that you're gonna try!

Min: (That's an interesting way of putting it…)

*alarm*

Saya: !?

Casey: *grunts* What now?

Min: *cautious* Some FOEs nearby?

*beep*

I.D.A.: I'm terribly sorry! That was me telling you all that dinner's ready!

Saya: *clenches chest* Ugh… Couldn't you pick a better alarm sound than that…?

Casey: *sighs*

I.D.A.: That is a good suggestion… Yes! I'll do that right away!

Dante: I.D.A.'s pretty good at alerting others, maybe TOO well…

Sharen: That sound was a bit jarring…

Min: Sorry about that. I thought there were some FOEs nearby with that sound, turns out that's just the default…

I.D.A.: I don't like how you are degrading my systems!

Min: Take it as a suggestion then!

Saya: *laughs nervously* How about we all eat and forget that this ever happened…?

Casey: I… agree… *clenches chest*

……..

After some time….

Casey: Phew! I haven't had any of this in a while!

Min: It smells so good…

Saya: So, this is beef stew…

I.D.A.: The aroma is so pleasant! You should definitely eat it, Saya!

Min: Hold on, how can an android-

Before Min could finish, I.D.A. was already eating the beef stew.

Min: Never mind….

Saya: Hm…

Casey: What's the matter?

Saya: Is it spicy?

Casey: Not a lot. It's pretty mild. I know Rosaria LOVES her spicy food, but I made sure to tone it down a notch.
Saya: *relief* Oh! Thank goodness! Time to eat! *picks up spoon*

Min: I remember you cooking up spicy meals, I didn't think you wouldn't do it this time.

Casey: Well, that's mainly because I don't know what everyone feels about the food being spicy. Unlike you and me, some people CAN'T handle it. Even Zane cannot eat it.

Min: Is that so?

Casey: What about yours?

Min: Everyone eats it like it's no problem, with the exception of my grandma of course.

Casey: Phew! Almost the entire family!

I.D.A.: I feel like my CPU temperature is rising…!

Saya: I-I.D.A…?

I.D.A.'s eyes are swirling.

I.D.A.: Must… go… into cooldown….

Dante: Uh- Guys???

Casey: I didn't even make it THAT spicy!

Min: You can't escape from a scene of a crime.

Casey: Min!

Saya: *slightly concerned* I didn't think androids can have their temperature rise just by eating food…

Casey: *guilty* I didn't know, either! Augh… I feel a bit bad now…

I.D.A.: I'll soon recover… Don't worry…!

Sharen: Dante! I want seconds!

Dante: Already? You have quite an appetite.

Sharen: Hehe!

Saya: *looks at the clock* It's morning…

Casey: Well, that’s our cue! Let’s get our things.

Min: Got it.

Saya: Hey! Wait for me!

*rapid footsteps*

Sharen: Oh..

Dante: It’s okay, Sharen. They’re just doing their job after all.

Sharen: *sad* Yeah, I know.. But it’s going to be lonely without them.

Dante: …..I have an idea.

Sharen: Huh?

*footsteps*

Casey: I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Yes?

Casey: Can you put up a timer for the next acidic storm?

I.D.A.: Understood!

*beep* 5x

Dante: Hey, Casey. I wanna say thanks for at least trying to get us back home.

Casey: Ah, it's no problem. Hopefully when all of this is over, you all can return back to your designated homes.

Dante: I hope so, too. Oh! Before I forget….

Dante walks up to I.D.A. and places his fingerprint on I.D.A.'s palm.

*beep* 3x

I.D.A.: Contact registered: Dante Ifrit.

Min: Whoa, that's your last name?

Dante: Um, yeah. I totally forgot that I had a cool surname.

Saya: What do you mean!? No wonder you're famous!

Dante: *bashful* Maybe….

*footsteps*

……..

Last Scene: District 2: NEO Camp (Entrance)

Saya: You're going to leave the ingredients behind?

Casey: Yeah. It's for all of them after all. And plus, I can make us something quick while we're on the road.

Min: That's awfully nice of you, Casey.

Sharen: Hey! Thanks for getting rid of that Guardian FOE earlier.. I forgot to tell you guys that…

Min: Oh, it’s no problem. I’m just glad that you weren’t hurt anywhere when we found you.

Sharen: ……..

Min: ?

Sharen rushed up to Min to give him a good luck hug.

Sharen: Please be safe, okay…?

Min: …..

Casey: Don’t worry, kid. We’re gonna be fine.

Saya: Yeah! Those FOEs will never know what hit them! We’ll take them out before they even scream! Haha!

Min: (What did I say about you being cocky…?)

Many NEO members came to the entrance to wish the team good luck.

NEO Member #10: Good luck!

NEO Member #17: Thanks for everything!

NEO Member #5: Have a safe trip!

NEO Member #3: Be careful!

NEO Member #9: Let Dante know how it went!

Saya: Wow….

Dante: We may not see each other for a while, so if you guys get the time, feel free to call me. I'll always be waiting.

Casey: Thanks a lot, Dante.

Sharen: *whimpers*

Min: I'll be okay, Sharen. Promise.

Sharen: *sniffles* Okay…. Pinky promise.

Min: Pinky promise.

Sharen: *smiles* Okay! I won't be sad anymore! Promise all of you will be safe and sound!

Saya: Yeah! You bet!

Casey: Take care everyone!

Min: Goodbye.

I.D.A.: Farewell!
Sharen: Bye! Good luck! *waves*

Dante: Take care.

*door slides open*

*door slides closed*

Having been fully recharged, the team sets off back on their mission once again.

-End of Episode 5-

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# Episode 6: District 3: Backtrack and Hostility

Having rested at Dante's camp, Saya, Casey, Min, and I.D.A resumed back on their mission to the Southern Tower. But before they could do that, they had to find the other 3 log tapes that Harako talked about.

## Scene 1: District 2

*drip* 5x

The humid rain from the acid storm, although faint, can be heard if listened closely. It probably was dripping from the trees, that is if there are some.

Everyone: ……..

Casey: Okay, time to get back to where we left off.

Min: Just to make sure, I.D.A? How much time do we have until the next storm hits?

I.D.A.: Let me calculate……

Saya: …….

Casey: Something up?

Saya: I can still hear the rain…

Casey: Ah. Don't worry. It's leftover drops from the rain. It's harmless unless you get to the source.

Saya: Hm…

I.D.A.: Calculated! The next storm will hit within 36 hours!

Casey: 36… Got it.

Min: Let's get the remaining tapes and get back on track.

*footsteps*

*slow footsteps*

*groan* 4x

Saya: !

Casey: ……

Min: Doppelgangers…

Casey: Yeah.. But it doesn’t seem like they’re paying any attention to us.

Saya: Even still. We can’t leave them wandering about like this. What if another NEO group encounters them?

Casey: Good point. *cracks neck* Okay…! Let’s clean up!

*whoosh* 2x

The doppelgangers are still moving at a slow pace without paying any mind to Saya and Casey.

Casey: Quantum Fist!!

*burst*

*crash*

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya throws a flurry of punches to the second and third doppelganger. The lack of reaction didn’t phase Saya the slightest as they both received fatal blunts to the head.

Casey: *grabs the doppelganger* *battle cry*

*slam*

*splatter*

Casey destroyed the last doppelganger by slamming it into the ground next to one that he recently suppressed.

Saya: …..?

Casey: Jeez… They weren't even threats at all. Were they just trying to stall for time?

Min: Maybe… Saya, you said that doppelgangers tend to get violent at certain intervals, right?

Saya: Yes, I did. But something seemed off.

I.D.A.: I can explain it! Remember that storm? While FOEs have a positive effect, doppelgangers have the negative effect due to them being half-human!

Min: And Dante did say that the acidic storm is hazardous to humans….

Casey: Well, then there's your answer!

Saya: I guess..

Min: While we're here, let's do a recon of the area and see if there are any tapes around.

Casey: Yeah.

*footsteps*

……

*tree ruffling*

Saya: Anything over there, I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Nope, unfortunately!

Saya: Shoot..

I.D.A.: Don’t give up yet! There’s still some previous districts to check!

Saya: I know.. Let’s check with the others.

I.D.A.: Right! *opens monitor* How’s the search going?

Casey: No luck over here. Just bushes and more bushes..

Min: Yeah, I don’t see anything that resembles a VHS tape of some kind…

Saya: Hmph.

Casey: Let’s meet back at the entrance.

*beep*

Both Saya and I.D.A. looked at each other with concern.

…….

## Scene 2: District 2: Entrance

Min: ….

*footsteps*

Saya: Maybe there are some at the beginning.

Casey: That's what I'm thinking as well. I mean, it's kinda obvious right?

Saya: Hm.

Min: *turns around*

Min looks at the camp with a somber look on his face.

Casey: Don't worry, Min. They will be fine.

Min: *sighs*

Casey: Trust me. They will be completely safe after this is over.
I.D.A.: Don't forget to take deep breaths, Min!

Min:  …. *takes a deep breath*

Saya: I wonder if we're gonna encounter more of those Doppelgängers..

Casey: Honestly, considering the ones we just fought, I wouldn't be too worried about them.

I.D.A.: Ah! That reminds me! Saya, you have experience with Doppelgängers, correct?

Saya: Yeah..? Didn't I just say that?

I.D.A.: You did, and I wanted to confirm!

Min: Huh?

Saya: I.D.A. wants to collect more information about the Doppelgängers since there isn’t any information about them at the moment.

Min: Oh, that’s right. I wasn't even able to get enough information since it was only you who had dealt with them.

I.D.A: That’s right!

Saya: Then sure. I’m gonna help you out. At least it will help figure out why these guys have it out for me.

Casey: Alright then! Let’s get moving!

*rapid footsteps*

## Scene 3: District 1-2 Subdivision

Saya: *grunts*

Several more Doppelgangers appeared before the team.

Saya: Quantum……

Casey: Quantum….

Both: RUSH!!

*electricity*

*burst* 2x

Saya and Casey crashed into the group of doppelgangers, destroying them instantly. Min and I.D.A. ran up to the duo to move on to the next group of FOEs.

*screeches*

Min: W-Whoa-

I.D.A.: Min! *grabs Min's sleeve*

Min: *pants*

I.D.A.: Those FOEs are dangerous to get near! Let's move back!

Min: Y-Yeah…

*rapid footsteps*
Casey: *grunts*

*thwack* 5x

Casey kicked down a few of the FOEs, but they weren't immobilized immediately like the previous FOEs she fought.

Casey: (Shoot, right. They need more of a beating this time…)

*slam* 3x

Saya: *battle cry* *throws one FOE at the group of FOEs*

*roars*

Saya: Casey!!

Casey: … *dodges* *turns around*

Five large FOEs were gathering around Casey.

Casey: *grunts* *shifts gear*

Saya: Huh?

Casey: Afterimage!

*whoosh* 5x

Casey began to move at a faster pace, faster than their Quantum Rush. It is only used as a last resort option.

Casey: *pants*

Saya: These guys are huge…!
Casey: Maybe, but they don't classify as a Guardian.

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: Hah!

Saya punched one of the larger FOEs into the air.

Saya: Quantum Fist!!!

*SLAM*

*rumble*

Casey: *grunts* *jumps up*

……..

The FOE is still in the air thanks to Saya, however it still needs a few beatings just for it to die.

Casey: *battle cry*

*thwack* 2x

*roars*

*slash*

Casey: *grunts in pain* Quantum Toss!

*whoosh* 5x

Casey: *yells*

Casey throws down the FOE into the ground.

Casey: Saya!

……..

Saya: Got it! *jumps to the thrown FOE* *grunts*

Saya kicked the FOE down into the group of FOEs below Saya.

*crash*

Saya: *battle cry*

*thwack* 4x

*slam* 3x

*crack* 6x

Casey: *battle cry*

*slam*

Saya activates her Quantum Rush to deliver a flurry of punches and kicks to the FOEs, while Casey keeps on slamming their fists into the ground to knock them off-balance.

*crumble*

*roar* 3x

Casey: !

Saya: !
*SLAM*

Saya: AGH!!

Casey: *grunts*

*thud* 2x

Saya: Ugh… I thought that was gonna work…

Casey: Don’t underestimate them! *rushes up to the FOEs*

*whoosh* 4x

Casey: *grunts*

*slam*

Casey swung their gear into the FOE's head, killing it.

*splatter*

Casey: Aim for the head!

Saya: Right…

*whoosh*

*roars* 2x

Saya: Quantum Fist!!!

*burst* 2x

Saya: *battle cry*
After throwing a punch at the FOEs, Saya goes to the last one and kicks it so many times that its legs have been cut off.

*thud*

Saya: ……

*splatter*

Saya: *pants*

Casey: *pants* Good… Keep that up in the next district.

Saya: *smiles* Glad to see I'm doing better!

Min: Man… They were yellow this time… *scrolls the map* At least there are no more FOEs in this area. We're free to explore around.

Saya: *stretches* Sweet… Min, come with me!

Min: Ah? O-Okay…

*footsteps*

……

## Scene 4: District 1-2 Subdivision (Off Road)

Saya: …….

Min: I don’t think it’s wise for us to just be searching the tapes on our own without I.D.A..
Saya: Huh? Why?

Min: She could just scan the area, right?

Saya: Hm… With all this mist, I doubt that she can detect anything unless it’s moving.

Min: Hm… Never mind. You might be right about that. I wasn’t sure whether or not she can, but now that I think about it.. Anomalies and active figures are the only ones that I.D.A. can accurately detect for us.

Saya: *pushes tree branch* Yeah, that’s what I think to-! Hey Min!

Min: You found one?

Saya: Y-Yeah! It’s in between the bushes!

Min: Ugh, damn it.. That bush is covered up from the rain.

Saya: ……. Call Casey and I.D.A. over!

Min: Sure. *pulls up monitor*

*beep* 4x

Min: Hey, we found one of the tapes in the bushes. It’s covered in acid water, though.

Casey: Really!? I was about to celebrate until you said that.

I.D.A.: It will be best to use your gears to destroy the bush that way!

Saya: But won’t it damage the tape?

I.D.A.: You don’t have to worry if you don’t charge your gear!
Saya: Okay then…

Min: So like, give it a love tap or something?

Saya: No, I think she’s saying that I should just destroy the bush without going near the tape. That way I get a clear entrance to the tape.

I.D.A.: Correct!

Casey: Just be careful..

Saya: Yeah, I know.

Saya looks down back at the location of the log tape, and swiftly cuts the bush into shreds.

Min: !

Saya: *crotches down* *reaches for the tape*

Saya's movement is slow in order for her to not touch the bush infested with acid. The tape was in clear view for her to grab it now, but still utilizes her stealth to retrieve the tape.

Saya: *grunts*

*clutter* 2x

Saya: *grunts*

*grab*

Saya: I got it!

Min: Good job, Saya.
Casey: Okay, we'll meet at the center then!

*beep*

Min: Phew.. You alright?

Saya: Yeah, I'm good.

Min: What number is it?

*footsteps*

Saya: It's #3.

Min: 3? Hm… We have 2 and 3… It irks me that we're going out of order…

Saya: Haha…. I wouldn't worry too much about that.

……..

## Scene 5: District 1-2 Subdivision

*footsteps*

Casey: That makes 2 now!

I.D.A.: I guess 1 and 4 should be at the beginning!

Saya: Yeah, but still be on your guard. There could be FOEs up ahead.

Min: *concerned* Now why do I feel uneasy after you said that?

Casey: No, she’s right. Best to remain cautious.

Min: *sighs* I will.

Saya: Let’s go~!

*rapid footsteps*

……..

## Scene 6: District 1

*drip* 3x

Saya: …..

Casey: …….

Min: Nothing, huh? I.D.A., scan the area.

I.D.A.: Understood!

*beep*

Saya: It’s weirdly eerie how there’s nothing here other than the dripping noises..

Casey: Could be part of the anomaly and it’s trying to mess with us.

Saya: Could be.

*beep*
I.D.A.: To my surprise, there are no FOEs in this area!

Saya: Are you serious…?

Casey: Good, more time for us to find that tape. Split up!

*footsteps*

……

## Scene 7: District 1 (Off-Road)

Saya: Hey, Casey?

Casey: Hm?

Saya: You said you have been in NEO for 5 years, right?

Casey: Yeah, I did.

Saya: Did… By any chance, did you see any doppelgangers before we met?

Casey: *pushes tree branch* As far as I can remember, nope. All we saw were FOEs and Guardians. No sight of doppelgangers.

Saya: Oh. Guess it was just me then.

Casey: Why, what's the matter?

Saya: I still don't know why I keep on attracting these doppelgangers, or rather the important part of how people say certain words that make my head hurt…
Casey: Ah, right.. That happened before, did it?

Saya: Yeah, back when we first started on the mission while in this district, Harako mentioned that NEO members are prone to become anomalies. And recently with Min saying how FOE leaders manage to adapt into the anomaly with FOEs and the Guardians.

Casey: ……

Saya: I still don't know why my body does that, but it's now giving me more questions to ask. *pushes bush*

*leaves ruffling*

Casey: ….Hopefully we'll find it before our mission is done. Because I would hate to complete it while leaving some questions unanswered.

Saya: Tch. It's such a pain.

Casey: I know.. But it’s only temporary. So keep your chin high, and keep on pushing! The answer will appear soon, so in the meantime we can’t rush it.

Saya stopped moving the bushes after hearing that. Maybe she didn’t realize that she was rushing on about the whole thing with doppelgangers, but then again, no one knows them better than her. It’s best to let it play out itself and determine what will be the answer to Saya’s lingering questions.

Saya: *sighs*  Yeah. Sorry Casey. Maybe I was thinking about this too much.

Casey: Hey, don’t sweat it! But know this, depending what it is, we got your back.

Saya: …..Thanks Casey.
*beep*

Saya: Huh?

Casey: It’s Min. *clicks on monitor* Did you find anything?

Min: Yeah. It was on the tree. I.D.A. had to fly up and get it herself.

Casey: Cool! Hey Saya! They already found one!

Saya: Way to go guys!

Min: We’ll meet you all back at the entrance.

*beep*

Casey: Well? Come on! *runs off*

Saya: *breaks sweat* (I just hope it doesn’t lead to anything worrying that also concerns them.) *follows along*

…….

## Scene 8: District 1 (Entrance)

*footsteps*

Saya: What’s the number?

Min: This is #1.

Saya: So 1, 2, and 3… 4’s missing then..
Min: Let’s head back to the entrance gates.

Saya: Hm…. There’s no need for that.

Min: Huh?

Saya: I was at the entrance before, and last time I checked, there wasn't any tape lying around.

Min: Wouldn’t it hurt to check?

Casey: Yeah, let’s double check and make sure. Besides, we couldn’t even stop ourselves from doing recon, so most likely we missed them.

Saya: Hm.

Min: Okay, unanimous rule. Let’s go.

Saya: What!? I.D.A. didn't even have a say in this!

I.D.A.: I recommend double checking!

Saya: *groans*

Casey: *laughs* Sorry Saya! *walks* It's at the very beginning, so this will be quick.

Saya: Uh-huh.

Saya's expression remains pouty for a short while.

……..

## Scene 9: Zenith City: City Gates (Outside)

*waves crashing*

Everyone didn't say anything the moment they arrived. They were listening to the waves to calm their nerves when they're thinking about arriving at District 3. Saya looked for the tape from the last spot she was at, while Casey looked on the left side of the gates, Min in the middle, and I.D.A. close to the 0-1 subdivision.

I.D.A.: I wasn't able to find anything!

Min: Nothing on this side, either.

Casey: Yeah, nothing here as well.

Saya: Nothing on my side. I told you there's nothing here…

Casey: And you were right.

Min: Ugh… We ended up wasting time…

Saya: Well, let's make up for lost time! Let's hurry back to reach District 3!

All: Right!

*rapid footsteps* 3x

……..

The group ran back to Districts 1 and 2 and are about to reach the next subdivision. The mist got slightly thicker the moment they all arrived at the subdivision.

## Scene 10: District 2-3 Subdivision

All: *panting*

Min: My… chest… hurts…

Saya: At least… We made it…!

Casey: *clears throat* Almost… This is only the subdivision part of the district. We just have to make a left here.

I.D.A.: Tread caution everyone! The mist's getting more dense!

Min: ….

Saya: How much can you see, I.D.A?

I.D.A.: Due to the thick mist, my sight can only go up to 75 miles now!

Saya: That’s not bad..

Casey: That also means that she cannot detect FOEs from far away. They will be so well concealed with the mist that she'll get a late detection for them.

Saya: Oh, that sucks.

Min: Even then, let’s not get surprised when it happens. This damn mist will do its best to throw us off course.

*rapid footsteps*

The groups rushed forward to the next district. Just as Min mentioned, FOEs were detected, and they’re coming in fast.
I.D.A.: DANGER! Hazardous FOEs detected!

Min: G-Ggh…

Casey: Min! I.D.A.! Get behind us, and don’t fall behind!

Min: G-Got it..

Saya: Let’s go, Casey! *charge Gear*

Casey: Yeah! *charges Gear*

*burst* 2x

*whoosh*

*roars* 20x

Saya: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh* 10x

Saya: …..

*impact* 3x

Saya: *grunts*

*thwack* 10x

Casey: *grunts* *battle cry*

*slam* 2x

Casey: *grabs the FOE*
*sizzle*

Casey: !? *yells*

Saya: Casey!

*splatter*

Saya: !?

The FOEs spat out acid towards Saya, slowing her down. The acid fluids that seeped out the moment Casey grabbed one, managed to get on her arm.

Casey: *yells in pain*

Saya: Quantum Fist!

*rumble*

*crumble*

The wall from the ground blocked off all of the FOEs between the group.

Casey: AGH!!! DAMN IT!!

Min: Casey! How bad is it?!

Casey: *pained* That damn acid sprayed onto my skin… I feel it tearing through my clothes!!!!

I.D.A.: It's only a few drops… and yet it can cause that much damage..

Saya: ……

I.D.A.: As long as you don't get hit by more of the acid, we won't have to use another EHK!

Min: That might be a possibility…

Casey: *grunts* No, Min. I'll try my best not to get any more on me.

*crack* 4x

Saya: Casey! Get ready! Min and I.D.A, hide!

Min: Yeah.

I.D.A.: Be careful!

*rapid footsteps*

*crumble* 3x

*roars* 13x

Saya: Quantum Smash!!

*rumble*

*slam*

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

The combined attack managed to crush a few FOEs.

*roars* 16x

Saya: *breaks sweat* Ugh!

Casey: Don’t grab them! It will spray that acid onto you!

Saya: R-Right..!

A few FOEs got up to Saya and attempted to slash her up, Saya managed to dodge a few slashes, but a couple managed to land on her.

Saya: *yells* Damn you!! Quantum….. Pulse!!!

Saya, in frustration, slams her hand to the ground to generate electricity coming off from the ground. Her eyes became white as a result.

Saya: *screams*

Casey: S-Saya!? What the hell are you doing!?

Saya: Getting us out of here!!!

*burst*

*roars* 16x

Casey: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh*

Saya unleashes a variety of attacks to the FOEs with no signs of slowing down. Casey on the other hand, while getting hit, still manages to help Saya out by slamming the FOEs on the head.

*splatter* 14x

Saya: *pants*

The shocking light faded away from Saya.
Casey: *grunts* *slams the FOE down with their gear*

*splatter*

Saya: *sighs*

Casey: S-Saya….?

*blades spinning*

Saya: H-Huh..?

Casey: Shit, what now?

Min: *breaks sweat* There’s someone up ahead….

Saya: Maybe a FOE leader…

*footsteps*

……..

Last Scene: District 3

The group made it to the next district, however thanks to the mist, it's hard to determine what type of area they landed themselves in.
But one thing's for certain; there's the woman in pink that Dante talked about standing in front of them.

*blades whirring*

Saya: …….

Min: *whispers* Casey, that's..
Casey: *whispers* I know.

???: H-How did you manage… to make it pass that…?

Saya: It takes a lot more than that to take us down. That aside, what are you doing here? I don't suppose you're responsible for sending all of those FOEs to us?

???: …You shouldn't be here.. Harako… She…

Casey: Harako?

???: What did you do to her…?

Casey: …..

???: I see. You're here, so that means Harako's dead, huh?

Casey: No, she’s alive. I think, at least that was the last time we saw her-

The pink woman extended her blades in retaliation for Casey's response.

???: *hostile* DON’T GIVE ME THAT! You did something to her…. You don’t even know she’s alive or not after she tried EVERYTHING to keep y'all back to that damn city!

Saya: *groans*

Casey: Saya, let me handle this. Sorry that you think that way, but your friend here blocked our path when we’re just doing our job. And acted irrationally, too.

???: Don’t say that! Irrationally my ass. She managed to get me out of that hellhole of that tower!

Saya: The tower..? You’ve been there before?! Can you tell me what happened there that caused the White Darkness?!

???: I’m not telling you anything! Even if I did, no one is resistant to the mist!

*heartbeat*

Saya: A-AGH-!!

???: ……

Casey: S-Saya..!

Saya: *slightly hostile* We… have a job to do! To dispel this mist! And if you’re also gonna get in our way, then I’ll have to fight you myself through this nonsense!

???: Haha! Do you think I give a damn about your mission!? You did something to Harako and I'm not gonna let you all pass!

Casey: (This is getting nowhere.) Hold on a moment.. You're still part of NEO, right? I can tell because you don't have any gray streaks in your hair.

???: …What are you on about?

Casey: Look, if you can listen for a moment here, you being all alone here is dangerous. I don't care if you're a FOE leader, you at least have an occupation here in NEO, so I can't consider you as an enemy, nor as an ally either. Which makes us even, but I can assure you that Harako's fine. After we fought her, she didn't want to see us again, so she went somewhere to who knows what.

???: …I don't believe you.

Casey: Maybe so. But that's her words. And I'm almost impressed by it, because she has more experience with the mist than any of us here.

???: …….

Casey: What about you? How did you manage to survive all of this? The storms, the FOEs, everything outside of the city?

???: Why do I have to tell you everything…? There's nothing left.

Casey: So that we can try to help you.

???: I don't need ANYONE'S help! I can't trust anyone! That cyan haired bitch! SHE LET MOST OF OUR TEAM PERISH!

Saya: *breaks sweat*

Casey: What…? Are you talking about-

???: Enough of this!

The woman activates her gear again and points it at Saya.

Tali: I, Tali, shall avenge everyone that perished in the tower! Starting with you, you backstabber!!!

*whoosh*

Saya: *grunts*

Saya deflects Tali's blades away from her face, but Tali manages to push Saya down and slashes her chest.

*slash* 5x

Saya: *yells*

Casey: *grunts* *grabs Tali* *yells*

*whoosh*

Tali: !

*footsteps*

Tali: Quantum Razor!!

*whoosh* 2x

Tali swings her blades towards Saya and Casey in anger.

*blades whirring*

Tali: Just quit it! You’re not gonna survive it anyway!

Saya: *dodges*

Casey: *dodges*

Saya: (This is a pain in the ass… Now she’s hostile to the whole tower incident, too…? And why the hell is she accusing me!?)

Casey: *battle cry*

Tali: !?

*thwack* 2x

Tali: *grunts in pain*

Saya: Quantum Smash!

*slam*

*rumble*

Tali: *jumps up*

Casey: *grabs Tali* Quantum Toss!

*whoosh*

Tali: *yells*

Casey: *jumps towards Tali* *grunts*

Casey slams Tali down into the ground towards Saya.

*whoosh*

Tali: !!

Saya: *grunts* *battle cry*

Tali: *battle cry*

*clash*

Saya's gear clashed with Tali's blades, halting the momentum that they both had.

Casey: A-Agh…

Saya: …..

Tali: *yells*

Tali slashes Saya again and again, however Saya isn't flinching at the sudden slashes. Her face doesn't change, but rather it's focusing on her gear.

Tali: Don't you get it!? Can you at least remember what you did!? You did ALL this to my team!!

Saya: *cold* I don't know what you're talking about.

Tali: *frustrated* DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME!!

*slash* 5x

Casey: S-Saya!! *rushes up to Saya*

Saya: *glares* You know what I think? If you don't think for a second that Harako's alive and well, then you have a weaker fortitude than you thought you had, huh?

Tali: A-Ah…

Tali immediately stopped slashing at Saya, leaving an opening for an attack.

*whoosh*

*impact*

Saya uses her Quantum Fist to knock Tali's blades off from her gear and knocking her into the ground.

*slam*

Tali: *yells in pain*

Saya: ……

Casey: *sighs* This could've been avoided if you just explained this whole situation to us.

Tali: ……..

Saya: …..Forget it, Casey. She's not gonna respond to any of our questions now. Let's go. *walks away*

Tali: *grunts*

*burst*

Tali: *battle cry*

Saya: ….?

Casey: *grunts*

Casey holds Tali off to prevent her from hitting Saya, though causing Casey to get stabbed in the abdomen instead.

*stab*

Min: !?

I.D.A.: !!

Casey: ……Ugh…

Tali: !?

*drip* 3x

Casey: *pained* Why… are you.. So fixated on this… grudge? Saya… She didn't do anything… You got… the wrong person…

Tali: That's a lie!! I know that it's her!!

Saya: What did I even do..? Can you knock it off!?

Tali: I will not! Why can't you acknowledge your mistakes!?

*heartbeat*

Saya: *grunts in pain* What… mistakes..? You now have blood on your hands because you're accusing a stranger!!!

Tali: ……

Saya: Because if this is really my fault… Then why the hell didn't Harako attack me when she first saw me..?

Tali: …….She..

The blades stop moving.

*splatter*

*thud*

I.D.A.: Casey!!!

Min: CASEY!

Saya: Look what you did. Had you listened to us, all of this would've been avoided. So selfish.
Tali: ……

Tali puts her head down in defeat.

*shock*

Casey: *gasp* Ngh…! God… that hurts…

Min: I'm sorry, but you were losing a lot of blood…

I.D.A.: We now have 3 more EHK left.

Min: Saya, are you okay?

Saya: ….

Tali: A-Ah…

Saya: What's wrong?

Tali: !

Saya: You were so determined to get revenge and now you're backing down?

Min: Saya, quit trying to provoke her.

Tali: …..Don't give me that. If you STILL DON'T understand, then maybe this would help you. *drops a tape*

Tali: …Just don't cry to me when you remember.

A log tape was dropped from Tali before she ran away.

*rapid footsteps*
Saya: …… *picks up the tape*

Casey: *slightly weak* What's the number?

Saya: ! It's #4!

Casey: No kidding..?

Min: That's great to hear, but Saya..?

Saya: Huh?

Min: *confused* What's with that? Did you and Tali have a connection?

Saya: *panicked* No… I have never met this woman in my life..! Sure I was caught in the middle of the White Darkness phenomenon, but that doesn't mean that all of this was my fault! There's no evidence to determine that!

Min: …..

Casey: Even I find that hard to believe. Why would anyone be responsible for anything if the person they're assuming never met that person before? At that point, they're talking crazy.

Min: Maybe that does seem off..  But it's too late to assume that now. Now I'm curious what really happened to the first elite group.

Saya: That being said, I.D.A.? How much time do we have until the next storm?

I.D.A.: Around 22 hours left!

Min: Can you stand, Casey?

Casey: Yeah, I'm feeling a lot better than before.
Min: *sighs of relief* Thank goodness.. I was so scared that you…

Casey: Listen, it's gonna take more than that to kill me.

I.D.A.: Casey's cockiness levels are rising!

Casey: I didn't need that-

Saya: *laughs* Now we're even!

Casey: *sighs* How exactly?

Saya: Remember how I said I didn't want to be part of the cooldown statistics and ended up being part of it?

Casey: Oh.. that… Wait, they're not the same!

*footsteps*

Saya: Well, I want to count that!

Min: Saya, are you really that desperate to get even with Casey?

Saya: And what if I am!?

Min: That's petty.

Saya: Gah-

……..

Post-Credits Scene: District 4

Saya: I guess all of those FOEs that Tali sent out were from this area too…
I.D.A.: What a careless waste! But, at least that leads one more FOE to suppress!

Saya: One more?

Casey: Another Guardian FOE.

Min: *sighs* After this, we have to take a break…

Saya: I agree. Besides, after collecting all 4 log tapes, we have to set up camp so that I can view these videos.

All: …..

Saya: *slightly frustrated* Sorry, those words Tali said messed with my head, and I'm still trying to wrap my head around it… I know that's just speculation, but…

*faint stomps* 3x

Min: !

I.D.A.: Min! It's coming!

Min: Be careful you two…

*footsteps*

*large stomps* 4x

*roars*

Another Guardian FOE emerges below them. It is slightly bigger than the Boar, while it has its lion-like features.

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: ……

Saya: I have never seen this one before..

Min: That's… Guardian Leo…?

Saya: Leo..? Fine, sure. Ready, Casey?

Casey: …..

Saya: C-Casey..?

Casey, upon seeing the Guardian FOE, gave him a fear stricken expression that never showed on his face, at least not for a while.

Casey: *scared* It’s… here..

The FOE I ran away from…. It’s here…..

-End of Episode 6-

……

# Episode 7: District 4: Clean Up and Traumatized

After receiving all of the tapes and the 4th one from Tali, the group pushed on through District 3 and managed to reach to District 4, however when they got there, Casey felt a sense of anxiety flowing through him.

## Scene 1: District 4

Thanks to the mist getting thicker, it’s starting to become difficult to determine what terrain the group landed themselves in, but that’s now the least of their worries. The nauseating stench of fallen NEO members is all they all can sense.

Min: That’s…. Guardian Leo…

Saya: Leo, huh? I never thought I would see this one again..

Min: You've seen this before?

Saya: Yeah. *charges Quantum Gear* And of course we're not gonna let it stand in our way of our mission, right Casey?

As Saya was about to rush up to the Guardian, Casey didn't move an inch.

Saya: Huh? *turns around*

Casey: …….
Saya: C-Casey? Are you alright…? Hey, can you hear me?

Casey: ….I…

Casey couldn't get his words out to Saya out of fear.

Casey: *shaken up* I met this FOE before… And… I..

Saya: *concerned* H-Hey… I.D.A.? What's Casey's mental status..?

I.D.A.: Checking….

Min: C-Casey… Maybe you should stay back and rest up.You just got healed, so we wouldn't want to mess anything up..

Casey: It's not the wounds opening up that I'm… worried about….

I.D.A.: *worried* Casey's not doing so well…! I recommend you sit this one out! You can't perform well if your mind isn't in a clear state!

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: You better listen to I.D.A. Trust me, I know what this Guardian does, so you don’t need to worry.

Casey: But.. Saya…

Saya: It’s okay! *holds Casey’s hand* Just let me handle this. *rushes up to the Guardian FOE*

*burst*

*wind howls*

Casey: A-Ah.. Saya..
Min: *worried* Casey, come on.

Casey: …..

……..

*rapid footsteps*

The Guardian Leo let out a huge roar to knock Saya back, but Saya already activated her Quantum Rush so she wouldn’t be knocked down by the sudden powerful wind.

Saya: Quantum Boom!

*loud clap*

*harsh wind howl*

*roars*

*thump* 5x

The Guardian FOE started to attack Saya with its claws.

*slash* 6x

Saya: ! *dodges*

*slash* 4x

Saya: Quantum Smash!

*burst*

*crack*
Saya ended up breaking one of the legs of the FOE, making it slow down a little bit.

*pained roars*

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya rushes up to the Guardian Leo to deliver another Quantum Smash, but the Guardian roars again to push Saya away.

*harsh wind howl*

Saya: *grunts*

The Guardian FOE leaps up to Saya and slams her down to the ground.

*impact*

Saya: *shocked expression* G-GAH!!!

*crash*

*crumble*

Saya: Ngh…. *coughs* *looks up*

The Guardian FOE was heading straight down at Saya at a faster pace.

Saya: Ah! *rapidly gets up* *runs away*

*smash*

Saya: *pants*

*growls*
Saya: Quantum Crush! *slams fists into the ground*

*slam* 5x

*roars*

Saya grabbed one of the rocks created from her attack and started to swing it at the Guardian FOE.

*whoosh* 20x

Saya: *grunts*

The Guardian FOE endured the hits, and bit into the rock, breaking it into pieces.

Saya: A-Agh! Damn-

*squeeze*

Saya: !?

The Guardian FOE grabbed Saya and started to squeeze her, making it difficult for her to escape.

Saya: *grunts in pain* N-No..! A-Agh…!

*electricity*

Saya: Ugh..! Quantum… Pulse!

*shock*

*roars*

The Guardian FOE threw Saya down in retaliation of the sudden shock she gave it, releasing Saya and becoming vulnerable to her next attack.

Saya: *winces in pain* (This hurts… It hurts a lot… But I can't let Casey get worse at this rate…!)

Saya began to charge up her attack again. Her hair is starting to emit a white tint now than last time.

Saya: *battle cry*

……

Min: Saya's doing it again….

I.D.A.: ……

Casey: (No… That's exactly… How that went…)

Min: C-Casey…?

Casey: *frantic* I can’t let that happen!! That monster’s gonna kill her! *jumps up*

I.D.A.: *scared* W-Wait, Casey! NO!!

*rapid footsteps*

……

Saya: Quantum…. Breaker…!!!!!

*burst*

Saya shot herself into the Guardian Leo’s torso and began to tear it apart. The sudden momentum that she received managed to deal enough damage to weaken it, but that was only short lived.

Casey: *activates Quantum Gear* Saya!!! DON’T GET TOO CLOSE!!

Saya: *grunts* Huh?!

Saya turned around at Casey with a panicked look on his face, without knowing what was going to happen to her, Saya immediately pushed herself off of the Guardian FOE.

*whoosh*

Both: !?

*slam*

Saya: *screams*

*crash*

The Guardian Leo stomped on Saya with its last leg, and started to crush her back.

Saya: A-Agh… AGH!!!

Casey: *grunts*

With a frantic look on his face, Casey rushed up to the Guardian FOE's leg and began to attack it.

Casey: Quantum Smash!!!!

*thwack* 10x
*crack* 3x

Saya: *screams in pain*

Casey: *flinches*

The painful noises are just how it looks and sounds for Casey. He has been in this situation before. Not as a victim, but as the witness and the receiver.

Casey: GET OFF OF HER, NOW!!!

*thwack* 20x

Casey kept on punching and punching, but its legs aren't moving at all due to Casey's current condition.

I.D.A.: SAYA!!!

Min: *shaken breathing*

Saya: C-CASEY!!!! HELP!! *screams*

*heartbeat*

Casey immediately stops punching the Guardian Leo's leg, knowing that it brought to him any progress, Casey then decides to rush up to the FOE itself to get its attention.

Casey: *frantic* BASTARD!!

*roars*

The Guardian FOE locked eyes on Casey and began to attack him, slightly moving its leg in the process.

Casey: *scared* SAYA!!!

Saya: *weak* N-Ngh… *tries to move*

From the hole that the Guardian FOE made to hold and crush Saya like a balloon, Saya manages to crawl herself out of it.

Saya: *panicked expression* C-Casey!? CASEY!?

Casey is seen mid-air face-to-face with the Guardian FOE. Still shaken up from before, he's starting to learn to fully acknowledge and completely destroy the FOE.

Casey: (I was right… I was foolish to think that this wouldn't be difficult for them… That's why they wanted to make sure I was safe… This beast… is fatal… I can't… let it roam around and kill those NEO members no more.)

Casey's eyes began to glow a greenish color.

Saya: !!

Min: Casey's Quantum Gear is going OVERDRIVE!!

I.D.A.: H-Huh…? It's just like Saya with Guardian Fused!

Min: *worried* Y-Yeah… (But why do I have a bad feeling…)

Saya: *tries to get up* *winces in pain* (A-Agh… My legs…)

Casey: *yells*

*burst* 5x

Casey's Quantum Gear and his eyes are turning into a neon green color. Some green colored electricity sparks are coming out of him.
*roars*

Casey: ……

Casey dodges the sudden slashes from the Guardian FOE. Him baiting it away from Saya manages to get Saya to crawl out of sight.

*slash* 10x

Casey: ….. *dodges*

*shock* 4x

Casey: *battle cry*

With swift speeds, Casey broke off the last remaining leg of the FOE.

*thud*

Casey started to punch the life out of the Guardian FOE, while still managing to avoid the slashes from the desperate FOE.

*impact* 25x

Casey: *pants* *battle cry*

*heartbeat*

Saya: *pained* C-Casey… Ngh…!

Min: S-Saya! Over here…!

Saya: ! *crawls over to Min and I.D.A.*

*impact* 15x
Casey: After hearing everything you did, I can’t expect myself to let you die peacefully. Those members you tore from limb and limb and wandered off like it was nothing… Creatures… all of the FOEs that appeared…

The Guardian FOE couldn’t keep up with Casey anymore.

Casey: *resentment* You sicken me to my core.

*spark* 25x

Casey: *grunts*

*roars*

*slash* 5x

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*smash*

Casey broke off the guardian’s tail and back almost entirely.

*splatter* 2x

Casey: *turns around*

Casey lands on the upper half of the Guardian FOE and begins to tear it apart in a blind rage. His current condition now is the least of his worries. The monochromatic skin was easily torn off as if it was paper.

Saya: *scared* C-Casey… I have never seen them like this..

Min: …..

I.D.A.: …..
*pained roars*

The bone began to move and immediately grabbed Casey by the neck.

Casey: …..!

Casey's expression didn't change at the sudden grab. Instead, he grabbed the backbone of the beast and lifted it up.

Casey: *strained screams*

*alert blare*

Saya: Casey's Quantum Gear is in the DANGER zone!!!

Min: …..I.D.A.

I.D.A.: I'm aware… But this is the consequence of heading to battle in a poor condition.

Saya: But.. if Casey didn't jump in, I would've….

Min: *shakes head* You should’ve been more careful, Saya..

Saya: ……

Casey: *yells*

Casey successfully leaped into the air with the half-dead FOE in his hands.

*whoosh*

Casey: QUANTUM…. CRUSHER….!!!!!!!!!

*CRASH*
The energy coming out of Casey released into the Guardian Leo, cracking its entire body structure; leaving nothing behind at the end of the blast.

……..

*silence*

Min: …..

Saya: What’s Casey’s status now?

Min: Their gear’s at cooldown, at an UNSTABLE condition..

Saya: U-Unstable?

I.D.A.: Yes.. Remember in the tapes where Harako mentioned her team’s current condition? If you go into battle without clearing your mind, your Quantum Gear will start to have negative effects instead of positive effects… While the FOE may have been successfully suppressed..

Everyone looked up at Casey who is nothing but a bloody mess. His eyes are still widened in rage despite fighting back.

Saya: C-Casey…

Min: How's your back?

Saya: Ugh… It hurts like hell, but I don't think it's broken..

I.D.A.: Let me see…

I.D.A. opened her eyes to scan Saya's body to see if they're any broken bones.

I.D.A.: Well, your back suffered a couple of fractures and your right leg has been bruised.

Saya: Oh…

Min: Damn it.. We're going to have to use another EHK for that back.

Saya: Wait! What about Casey? She might need it, too!

Min: …..

I.D.A.: I think it's best we leave Casey alone for now.

Saya: H-Huh? Why!?

Min: Look at them. I don't think they will be able to listen to us after all that!

Saya: B-But..

Min: Look, let's just worry about you first.

Saya: ….Fine. How much time do we have until the next storm?

I.D.A.: 15 hours, though at the arrival of the next district we have to take a break…

Saya: …Yeah. I want all of us to be in good shape after all this..

The group remained silent for 5 minutes. Saya's back has been fully recovered thanks to the Emergency Heal Kit, but now they have 2 left. They all walked together to get to the next district.

……

Last Scene: District 4-5 Subdivision

*beep* 3x

Min: Huh? It's a message from Marako…

Saya: What does it say?

Min: *opens message* It says: "It seems like you all are close to the 5th district. I can determine this because I can no longer detect you on my radar. At this point I can only hope that you all will make it to District 7 unscathed. Best of luck on your travels."

Min: Now that I think about it, when we arrived at District 4, the map's getting hard to determine what terrain we're in…

Saya: Ugh… This damn mist is starting to become a pain..

Min: How's Casey, I.D.A.?

I.D.A. is seen holding Casey's hand in comfort.

I.D.A.: They haven't responded yet…

Min: *sighs* Oh Casey…

Saya: Hey… Min? You were worried about Casey getting to this point. Was there a reason why?

Min felt hesitant on replying back. Only Min knows the reason, but would it be best to tell Saya the truth about Casey?

Min: *scared* I don't think you were there when it happened. This same scenario occurred before. And Casey wasn't the only one there at that time.
Saya: S-She wasn't…?

I.D.A.: …?

I.D.A. felt slight movement from Casey as he heard Min's recent sentence.

*footsteps*

Min: Huh?

Casey: *grieving* Please. Let me tell her everything.

Casey felt a sense of Survivor's Guilt. He never felt this way before, and that's putting everyone not at ease.

Saya: C-Casey, don't force yourself..

Casey: No. You have to know.

Saya: …..

Casey: Because not only it involves me. But I just remembered…

Casey then looked Saya in the eyes with regret.

Casey: You were there. You were there when it happened. But you probably don't remember the full story. This involves the both of us.

-End of Episode 7-

# Episode 8: District 5: Memory and Regret

After suppressing the Guardian Leo in District 4, everyone was left in a state of uneasiness. Casey wasn't acting like himself and that made Saya worry about why he acted irrationally during the fight. However, despite being unwilling to tell Saya what happened, she has to know since they were both involved in some way.

*Scene 0: District 4*

Casey explained the whole story on why they felt out of character towards the Guardian Leo. It involved not only them, but Saya was also part of it in some way.

*……..*

**rapid footsteps**

*Adela: How much farther, Dane?*

*Dane: It's close. *punches another FOE**

*Casey: ……*

*Adela: Good. Casey, stay close to me, okay?*

*Casey: Got it.*
*The family pushed their way through the horde of hostile FOEs in front of them. They left a trail of gray blood from the FOEs they encountered.*

**rapid footsteps**

*Casey: Ah!*

*Adela: There it is.*

*The moment the group reached the end of the 4th district, they were faced with the Guardian Leo. Its fur-like texture is the only thing to classify it as, but its claws are more than enough to cut through you like paper if you're not careful.*

**roars**

*Dane: Adela! Take the right!*

*Adela: Yeah, I know.*

**whoosh* 2x*

*Dane: Quantum Fist!!!*

**impact**

**thwack* 5x*

**stomp* 5x*

**roars**

*The Guardian Leo took a step back and started to charge at Dane.*

**whoosh**
*Dane: Quantum Boom! *claps hands**

**harsh wind howl**

*Casey: Quantum Smash!!*

**crack**

**rumble**

*The sudden erosion created by Casey gave Adela a boost to hit the Guardian FOE head on.*

*Adela: Quantum Rush!!*

*Adela shot herself face first into the Guardian, hitting it head first to knock it off the ground.*

*Adela: Quantum Barrage!!*

*Casey: Quantum Barrage!*

*Both Adela and Casey delivered a variety of punches, kicks, and even headbutts to immobilize the FOE. Meanwhile Dane is charging his gear to attack it in full power.*

*Dane: *grunts**

*Casey: Ah!*

**roars**

*The loud shout of the Guardian Leo sent both Adela and Casey back and knocked the both of them to the ground.*

**thud* 2x*

*Adela: *rapidly gets up* Dane!*

*Dane: Got it! *shifts gear* OVERDRIVE!*

**burst**

*Dane dashes below the FOE's legs and starts to slash them off from its body.*

*Dane: Quantum…. Chopper!!!*

**slash* 30x*

*Adela: *looks around* !*

*Adela noticed that there were some injured NEO members in hiding.*

*Adela: Casey, there's some people over there. Check with them while we hold this one out. *runs off**

*Casey: *nods**

**footsteps**

*Scene 0.3: District 4 (Off-Road)*

**grass footsteps**

*Casey: *grunts* *pushes some tree branches*  Ugh…. Are you all okay?*

*NEO Member #2: No.. Most of us are injured and we don't have enough EHK left.*

*Casey: Ngh..*

*NEO Member #6: I don't suppose you have some on you?*

*Casey: I'm sorry, we only have two left, and I don't think that will be enough for all of you.*

*NEO Member #1: That's fine. *winces in pain**

*Casey: Are you okay!?*

*NEO Member #1: Ah… Just an open wound on my leg. It's not bad compared to the former injuries that my team suffered.*

*Casey: ….Regardless, leaving an open wound like that will infect your leg. Here, I got some bandages for you.*

*Casey pulled out his traveling bag and pulled out a roll of gauze bandages and wrapped around the member's leg.*

*NEO Member #1: Thanks. Are you here alone?*

*Casey: No, I'm with my parents. We're trying to suppress that Guardian FOE because most of the NEO groups were killed by it.*

*NEO Member #4: K-Killed…?*

*NEO Member #6: I can't be surprised. That one isn't like the others…*

*Casey: You all stay here and out of sight. The last thing I want is for the Guardian Leo to prey its eyes on you.*

*NEO Member #2: B-Be careful mister…*

**grass footsteps**

*……..*

## *Scene 0.1: District 4*

**rapid footsteps**

*Casey: *pants**

*The Guardian Leo is slowing down its pace thanks to Dane's charged attack and Adela baiting it to get hit by Dane's traps.*

*Casey: (They're doing fine. Better get over there.)*

**rapid footsteps**

*……...*

*Adela: Ugh! I can't tell if this thing's slowing down or not!*

*Dane: It's fine! It can't move at its normal speed if its legs are damaged like that!*

*Adela: ……*

*Casey: Mom! Dad!*

*Adela: Casey!*

*Casey: *jumps to the front of the FOE* Quantum Smash!!*
*impact* 3x*

*pained roars**

*Casey's momentum caused them to push the Guardian FOE back and bring themselves above the FOE to slam it down.*

*Casey: *battle cry**

*smash**

*whoosh**

*Dane: That's good, Casey!*

*Casey: …. *notices someone running frantically* Huh?*

*Adela: Casey, what's wrong?*

*Casey: *flips themselves forward* I see someone!!*

*As Casey lands on their feet, they immediately run off to the person running away. At that moment, the Guardian FOE slowly gained its balance back.*

**roars**

*Adela: !?*

*Dane: Shit… Quantum Razor!!*

**slash* 5x*

*Adela: Quantum Rush!!!*

**burst**
*Adela landed on the Guardian Leo's back and started to punch her way into the inside of the body, while Dane is slashing below the body to slow it down again.*

*Dane: Drop dead, will you!?*

*Adela: *grunts**

*……..*

## *Scene 0.3: District 4-5 Subdivision*

*???: *pants* (Why are they chasing me?! Get away!!)*

*The cyan haired girl is seen running away from a variant of FOEs with human-like features called Doppelgangers. Casey caught up with her in time just to hold them off.*

*Casey: Hey, get back!*

*???: !?*

*Casey: Quantum Barrage!!!*

*Casey pushed the girl behind them and started to kick their way through the Doppelgangers, but it didn't do much.*

**growls* 4x*

*Casey: H-Huh!?*

*???: Watch out!!*
*The group of Doppelgangers started to launch themselves onto Casey. Each of them started to slash them up in retaliation.*

**slash* 13x*

*Casey: *grunts in pain* A-AGH!!*

*???: *covers head**

*Casey: *battle cry**

*Casey stomped on the ground to send a shockwave signal to their parents. Casey tried to punch the Doppelgangers away from them, but they only managed to get one off.*

**whoosh* 4x*

*Casey: A-Agh…*

*???: Quick! This way!*

*Casey: *grunts**

**rapid footsteps**

*The Doppelgangers are now giving chase to the girl and Casey.*

*……...*

## *Scene 0.5: District 4*

*Dane: C-Casey?!*
*Casey: MOVE BACK! There's more FOEs coming, and for some reason they have the body of a human!*

*Adela: A body of a human…?*

*The Guardian Leo turned around to the parents and started to roar at them to knock their balance off.*

**roars**

*Dane: *grunts**

*Adela: A-Agh… Shit.. We're getting overwhelmed!*

*???: There's too many! We have to leave now!!*

*Casey: Ngh… Why? What's up with those FOEs!?*

*???: They're not like the ones you normally fight!! They're extremely dangerous!*

*Adela: *dodges* …….*

*Dane: Those members you mentioned will be in danger if this keeps up..*

*Casey: Yeah… I'll take them all back to Zenith City!!*

*Adela: W-Wait, Casey!*

*Dane: Leave him be, those people are injured, so they cannot remain in this area any longer. Let's focus on giving Casey enough time to take all of those people to safety.*

*Adela: Got it.. Casey! Hurry! We'll hold this bastard off!*

*Casey: Yeah! Got it! Come on, miss.*

*???: *nods**

*Both the girl and Casey went into the small patch of bushes to meet up with the injured NEO members so that they can all try to evacuate.*

**rapid footsteps**

*Casey: This way!! Mama! Papa! I'll be back!!!*

*Both Adela and Dane looked back at Casey's words, and then back to the Guardian Leo with a determined look on their faces.*

*……*

*Scene 0.7: Zenith City: City Gates (Outside)*

**rapid footsteps**

*Casey: *pants**

*???: *pants**

*Casey: Hey, miss…? How the hell were you outside during all of this?*

*???: I… don't know.. I held them off the best I could, but they quickly overwhelmed me when more of them started to show up.*

*Casey: ….. You all will be fine in the city, so don't worry alright? *smiles**

**footsteps**
*Surveillance Camera: Scanning……*

*???: !?*

*Casey: Don't worry, it's fine.*

*Surveillance Camera: 20 people detected. More than 5 people have been detected. Only the first person may state their identity.*

*Casey: …… *pulls out their ID card**

*Surveillance Camera: Scanning….. Confirmed. Casey Costello. State your reason being here.*

*Casey: I'm here on behalf of my parents, Adela Costello and Dane Costello. I have 18 injured NEO members and one refugee. Please open the gates.*

**silence**

**click**

*The gates are slowly opening up to the members below them.*

*Casey: Come on.*

**footsteps* 20x*

*The moment they all stepped in front of the gates, they were immediately met with NEO employees.*

*Casey: *breaks sweat**

*NEO Employee: Sorry for the sudden inconvenience. The commander wants you all present immediately.*
*???: Immediately…?*

*NEO Member #2: For what..? Did we do something wrong?*

*NEO Employee: Depends on how you look at it. Come along now.*

*Casey: (Immediately…? Does the commander know what happened…?)*

*……..*

*Scene 0.8: NEO Commander's Surveillance Center*

*Everyone arrived at the surveillance center with concerned looks on their faces.*

*Marako: ……*

*Casey: Commander, what's the problem?*

*Marako: Those members you brought along, did they have any injuries that were caused by the anomalies?*

*Casey: Yeah, half of them do. They ran out of EHK after trying to heal the entire team.*

*Marako: ……*

*Casey: My parents kept the Guardian Leo in check when I left with them all. They made sure that the Guardian FOE doesn't lock on them.*

*Marako: You, with the cyan hair.*

*???: Huh?*

*Marako: How did you manage to fend yourself during the White Darkness?*

*???: Me…? I… don't know. The moment I woke up, I was in front of the tower and these-*

*Marako's eyes shifted onto the girl after she mentioned the tower.*

*Marako: The tower!?*

*???: Y-yeah…*

*Marako: The tower is one of the main causes of this white mist… Having to wake up in a dangerous area like that wouldn't be ideal. What else happened when you were over there?*

*???: Um… Those human-like FOEs called Doppelgangers started to appear before me. They appeared in small quantities at first, but then they started to spawn in pairs, and they eventually overwhelmed me, so I ran away. I've been on the run for hours.*

*Marako: I see. You stay here to check up to see if you also have any injuries. The rest of you, return home. You're done for the day.*

**footsteps* 11x*

*Marako: Casey, you stay here.*

*Casey: Huh?*

*???: …..*

*Casey: Hey, take care, alright?*

*???: *nods**

**door slides shut**

*Casey: Is there something you want to tell me?*

*Marako: …Those mentioned Doppelgangers… There are starting to grow more variants in this phenomenon. This is starting to become lethal.*

*Casey: Variants…?*

*Marako: The White Darkness is getting worse in Silvene. And that girl mentioned waking up by the tower, around the same time that the first elite group I sent out entered the tower.*

*Casey: ……*

*Marako: I couldn't tell what happened in the tower, considering I only have access to the outside. She may as well have been the sole survivor of whatever happened there.*

*Casey: Commander, I don't mean to interrupt you, but I have to get back to my parents.*

*Marako: …..*

*Marako turned around at Casey with a stoic look on her face.*

*Marako: “Get back”? What are you implying?*

*Casey: I’m saying that my parents can’t hold on to that Guardian Leo for long, and I have to be there to back them up!*

*Marako: There’s no point in doing that.*

*Casey: What do you mean there’s no point? I can just use my Quantum Rush to get over there! We were only in District 4 for 2 hours, so what’s stopping me from going over there faster?!*

*Marako: *serious* Casey. Your mission is done.*

*Marako immediately cut Casey off with a stern look on her face. She knows that there’s no point in returning to a battle if you leave it.*

*Casey: *confused* W-What…? What do you mean “done”?*

*Marako: Let me ask you this: Do you know what happens to your Quantum Gear when you attack an enemy with a charged attack?*

*Casey: N-No… I don’t.*

*Marako: A gear after the user uses their charged attack will cause the usage timer to go down drastically. Your Father used a charged attack.*

*Casey: …….*

*Marako: Your Mother had to fend the Guardian FOE on her own after that, but it was futile. You should be lucky that you survived.*

*Casey: ……*

*Casey couldn't find the right words to explain what he was hearing from Marako. Knowing that his parents caused a diversion just so they can let their child take all of the injured safety put a pit in their stomach. It was their idea to take all of them back home, so why is he getting this unfortunate news?*

*Casey: ….I see.*

*Marako: And I might as well say this: As of today, you are suspended from getting any new missions.*

*Casey: !?*

*Marako: I have to do more research about the recent flux of FOEs and Doppelgangers appearing in Silvene, so I don't want any NEO members going out doing new missions out of the safety of everyone else in Zenith City.*

*Casey: ……...*

*Casey has a frustrated look on their face. Unable to say anything, they only just nodded.*

*Marako: Do you have any more questions?*

*Casey nodded their head no.*

*Marako: My condolences.*

**footsteps**

*Casey left the room without saying a word.*

*……*

*Scene 0.9: Sakhonnakhon Residence (Patio)*

*Casey explained everything that happened to Min, his close friend. They were out eating one of Min's grandma's special dishes.*

*Min: *sad* C-Casey… I'm so sorry.*

*Casey: …….*

*Min: Maybe the commander is right. I don't think you should be doing any suppression work of the FOEs right now.*

*Casey: And then what? Let all of those FOEs and Doppelgangers roam around freely?*

*Min: I'm just saying that it isn't a good idea right now. You need a mental break from all this.*

*Casey slammed their hands on the table.*

**slam**

*Casey: *furious* My parents gave up their lives just to protect the city! Why do I have to play as the sitting duck after they die!?*

*Min: *jolts**

*Casey: I didn't join NEO because I can follow my parents. I joined NEO because there are people I know and love to protect! And…. I lost two of them… I can't just sit here and do jack shit about it!*

*Min: C-Casey…*

*Casey: …..*

*Min: Do your siblings know?*

*Casey: …… I can't bring myself to tell them now. I just can't…*

*Min: …..*
*Casey: Min…*

*Tears are starting to build up on Casey's eyes.*

*Casey: *breaking down* What do I do…? At this rate, more and more people will die from the FOEs… And I curse myself thinking what if I didn't leave them behind…? My parents fought so hard and even their final moments…. It's just another fleeting conversation in the wind….*

*Min: I wouldn't think of it like that, Casey.*

*Casey: Huh?*

*Min: Everyone fought for their loved ones all the time, and it doesn't make them less different than you. What you did was the best decision you could've made. All of those NEO members will focus on their recovery so that they can return back into fighting against the FOEs. And that girl you saved, I don't know where she is, but I'm hoping she's fine too. So, don't EVER curse yourself for making a decision like that. Because if anything, complex decisions are part of this cycle we're in due to the White Darkness. I wouldn't worry too much about it.*

*Casey: A-Ah…*

*Min: It's not your fault, Casey. And I hate that you think it is when it clearly isn't. *holds Casey's hand**

*Casey: Min… I… *sighs* Those words mean a lot..*

*Min: ……*

*Casey: But I'm not ready to tell them yet. I just can't, so I will just be going alone for now.*

*Min: H-Huh? Aren't you on suspension leave?*
*Casey: From getting any new missions. I'm not letting those FOEs walk around freely. When we do get new missions, I'm making it easy for returning NEO members to do their jobs after I'm done cleaning up.*

*Min: ……*

*Casey: *slightly unstable* I can't… I just can't let them go around and hurt people… They all have to die… Hurting those who others love, everyone wants to live normally again, and I WILL make it happen… If I see one, I will tear them apart. They don't deserve to see the light of day after EVERYTHING.*

*Min: C-Casey… Please calm down..*

*Casey: No, no, no. It's too late for that! I had enough of this. I'm going alone right now to deal with this…*

*Min: !*

*Min got up from his seat to stand in front of Casey.*

*Min: *upset* Don't be making irrational decisions now! You'll be putting yourself in danger! I understand how difficult it is to lose someone you love, but that doesn't give you a pass for doing things you will later regret!*

*Casey: ….*

*Min: I…. I also don't want you to die, too Casey… So please, listen to me. Take a break, and come back later.*

*Casey: ……..*

*Casey bit their lip so hard that it started to slightly bleed out of frustration.*

*Casey: *grunts* Fine. But, give me space in the meantime.*
*Min: ….Okay.*

**footsteps**

*……...*

*After a week of losing his parents, Casey returned to do NEO missions alone as a normal member for 2 years. His siblings, Fi and Zane, were later informed about their parent's death after Casey returned home. Rosaria stayed with the siblings for company since their loss. Min later met up with the commander for the research of FOEs so that he can help out Casey with the missions. The cyan girl followed along getting recruited to NEO not too long after the suspension mission ban was lifted.*

*Even though Casey's no longer working alone as a normal member, he still wasn't able to shake off the guilt he has.*

*……..*

Last Scene: District 5: Abandoned NEO Camp

Casey: …And the rest was history.

Everyone: …….

Everyone successfully made it to the 5th district and found themselves a NEO camp that hasn't been occupied for so long. They're only using it as a brief place to rest up. Casey took the time to explain what was the reason why he was very hostile towards the Guardian Leo and the aforementioned FOEs.

Saya: I…. didn't know they died while trying to let us escape… I wanted to show my gratitude..
Min: ….

Casey: I know, me too. It can't be helped, though. That's the law of this world. I later came to terms with it after trying to send Dante's team back home. It was my fault being naive.

Saya: …….

Casey: That's why I'm worried about others getting hurt because of me. I don't want to be held responsible if they get hurt or die. That's too much of a burden….

Saya: Casey…

Casey: This is not easy to do over the years… I have to do it in order to at least have this lingering hope that we can all return back to normal again. But I can't do that if more and more people I know are in jeopardy…

Saya: Listen up.

Casey: ?

Saya: If it wasn't for you, I don't know where I would be today. You basically saved my life back then when all of the Doppelgangers started to become

extremely hostile. Don’t beat yourself up for that. It sucks, I know. However, you should be at least glad that you came this far! We already made it to the 5th district and we’re so close to reaching the last one. I don’t want you to feel like this when we get to the Southern Tower.

Casey: …..

Min: Saya’s right. You may have remembered what I told you, right? You better take that advice into consideration. We won’t be able to continue if you’re not better.

I.D.A.: Remember to take extra care of yourself, Casey! Grief is a terrible thing to experience, however you can also learn something from it. It’s not a bad thing to think that your actions have an effect on others, but you also have to consider the results of it as well!

Casey: …..I..

A flash of memory appeared in Casey’s mind featuring his whole family.

Casey: *sighs* No, you’re right. This isn’t something I have to keep on glossing over. It’s very unfortunate that this happened, however I don’t think that dealing with this on my own is the solution. Sure, I may need to do some thinking on my own, but it’s a lot better having to hear from other’s perspectives. I want to become better, better to the point that I will be able to stand by the struggles with pride.

Saya: That’s the spirit, Casey!!

Min: *relieved sigh* That’s the right way of thinking, Casey.

I.D.A.: *nods* And your mental status returned back to STABLE!

Casey: It did?

I.D.A.: Yup! And your Quantum Gear is back to charging!

Saya: *sighs* That's great news, but how much time do we have left until the next storm?

I.D.A.: We only have 10 hours remaining! If we want to make it to our destination unscathed, we better leave here and set up camp at the 6th district!

Casey: Ah, that's right…

Min: So we encountered 3 Guardian FOEs, are there any more, Saya?

Saya: Hm… I don't know for sure. I think it's safe to say that there may be more of them…

Min: ….Right.

Casey: Soon all of this will blow over. Whenever you guys are ready, let me know!

*footsteps*

Min: I'm glad Casey is back to normal…

Saya: Yeah, me too. We were so worried about him. Not to mention that our EHK…

Min: Urk… Right… We don't have a lot left..

Saya: The 6th district could be bothersome, so we better step our game up!

Min: You're quite motivated…

I.D.A.: Everyone ready?

Saya: Yeah!

Min: *nods*

I.D.A.: Excellent! Casey! We’re ready when you are!

Casey: *chuckles* Sweet! Let’s back on track!

*door slides open*

The moment the group stepped out, they were greeted with hostile FOEs.

Casey: Saya.

Saya: On it.

*burst* 2x

Saya and Casey both went on ahead to suppress the FOEs, while Min and I.D.A. remained back for supervision. While Saya handles the FOEs normally, after coming out with their story to their friends, Casey found the right light of courage to become a better fighter for the people they swore to protect.

-End of Episode 8-

…….

……

……

# Episode 9: District 6: Update and Suspicion

Casey came to terms and started to acknowledge what happened in the past, which only gave them the perseverance to keep moving forward with the rest of the team going to District 6. Having to realize that District 7 is close, they all wanted to check up with everyone before setting off.

## Scene 1: District 5-6 Subdivision

Saya and Casey are seen fending off the hostile FOEs and Doppelgangers, while Min and I.D.A. remained on the sidelines analyzing the data that is being gathered in the area.

*thwack* 5x

Saya: Hah!

*slam* 3x

Casey: *grunts*

*smash* 7x

*splatter* 20x

Saya: *pants*

Casey: ……
Min: That's all from this section. You guys have been suppressing them pretty quickly lately.

I.D.A.: I say that is a MASSIVE improvement!

Casey: How many was that this time?

Min: Um.. It was… *pulls up data app*

*typing*

Min: 65.

Casey: 65…

Saya: We have been getting more and more FOEs by the time we're getting close to the last district.

Casey: I told you it was gonna get difficult as time goes on by, Min!

Min: I didn't doubt you at all…

I.D.A.: There might be more before we get to the 6th one, too!

Saya: Sure, sure. Let's keep up the pace, Casey!

*alert beeps*

Casey: Huh?

Saya: *grunts*

I.D.A.: Another wave of hostile FOEs are coming within minutes! I'm afraid you guys are not done!

Min: Are you serious..?

Casey: That's not a problem. Come on, Saya! Set up a preemptive attack!

Saya: Got it!

*rapid stomping*

Another wave of hostile looking FOEs are slowly emerging out from the mist.

Saya: *slams hands into the ground* Quantum Pulse!!!

*slam*

*electricity*

Sparks are coming out of Saya's hands, and instead of turning her eyes white, the cracks from the ground are now emitting light from below.

Casey: Alright, keep at it, Saya!

Saya: *grunts*

*roars* 20x

Saya: They’re coming, Casey!!

Casey: …. *rushes to the FOEs*

Casey dashes up to the group of FOEs and raises her fist up in the air.

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*slam*
*rumble*

*shock*

Casey: *battle cry*

*burst*

The energy coming from Saya’s Quantum Pulse and the momentum boost given by Casey’s Quantum Smash immediately disintegrated the FOEs from the rear of the group, leaving the back group to attack with their melee attacks.

*whoosh* 10x

Saya: Watch out! *dodges*

Casey: *dodges*

*slam* 3x

*roars* 5x

Casey: Hah!

Casey smashes one of the FOEs that was about to pounce onto Casey to slow her down, but she manages to punch her way through the stomach of the FOE.

Saya: *runs up to the FOEs*

*rapid footsteps*

*roars*
Three of the FOEs diverts their attention from Casey to Saya. They managed to land a few hits on Saya, but it wasn't enough to slow her down. Saya grabbed one of the FOEs and threw it to the ground.

Saya: Quantum Toss!

*whoosh* 3x

*slam*

Saya: *grunts*

Saya slammed the grabbed FOE over and over again until she threw it to the other two FOEs that were with it.

*smash* 2x

*thud* 3x

Saya: *grunts* *stomps on the ground*

*crumble*

Saya: Casey!

Casey: Got it! *jumps on the cracked ground*

*crack* 3x

*boom*

The stomp from Saya caused the ground to erode below Casey, creating a small cliff from the ground.

Casey: Ugh… There's more of them coming!
Saya: Okay.. Then you take care of the ones in front! I'll take care of the ones in the back!

*whoosh*

Casey: Be careful not to go TOO far!!!

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *jumps off* Quantum Fist!!!

*burst*

*wind howls*

The aftershock from the attack knocked most of the FOEs off balance.

Casey: *grunts*

The FOEs started to jump towards Casey and tried to land a few hits on her. Casey knocked one down with her Quantum Rush, followed by her throwing a few kicks to the FOEs.

*thud* 5x

*slash* 2x

Casey: G-Gah…

I.D.A.: C-Casey!!

Casey: … *spits out blood* *dodges*

Min: He's going to be fine…. Don't worry, I.D.A…

I.D.A.: I know.. And I did say that we shouldn't worry… But…

As Min and I.D.A. looked at Casey dealing with the rapid growth of FOEs with uncertainty, Saya on the other side…..

…….

*thwack* 3x

Saya: Hah!

*slam* 3x

*roars*

Saya: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh*

Saya rapidly dodges the incoming slashes from the FOEs, and manages to dropkick them down and splatter them into bits.

*splatter* 8x

Saya: *grunts*

The next group of FOEs appeared from the sky, almost ambushing Saya.

Saya: !?

*roars*

Saya: Quantum Fist!!

*burst*
*whoosh*

Even if Saya launched one FOE into the air, others still managed to slash Saya in the facial area.

*slash* 3x

Saya: *yells in pain*

*electricity*

Saya: *hostile* Damn you!! Quantum Barrage!!

*burst*

Saya unleashes a shock burst to knock off all of the FOEs that were in close range with her. Saya then glared at the FOEs with an angered look on her face and started to punch most of them into oblivion.

Saya: *frustrated grunts*

*splat* 3x

*splatter* 6x

*silence*

There were no more FOEs appearing in the area, leaving a gray blackish-substance covered Saya in the field.

Saya: *pants*

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: Saya!
Saya: Huh? *shakes off the substance*

Casey: Whoa, are you okay?

Saya: Y-Yeah. I'm fine. These guys thought they had the jump on me…. So I kick the living hell out of them.

Min: Y-Your face…

Saya: Hm?

I.D.A.: You have a facial injury! We should cover that up!

Saya: Huh? *feels face*

Saya has a scar on her face that almost resembles a lightning bolt. It nearly intersected her eye and only managed to reach the middle of her nose.

Saya: Weird… It doesn't hurt or anything..

Casey: Really? A scar that big should sting a little.

Saya: ….Well. It did, but only by impact. After that I don't feel anything.

Casey: Ugh… I envy you. I got a couple of slashes myself, too. And they sting like hell..

Min: I already patched him up, so it's just- Oh..

I.D.A.: Huh! Crisis averted! We didn't need the bandages!

Saya: Wait… You mean to tell me that my wound healed on its own?!

Casey: …..Yeah.

Saya feels her face again, only for her to feel her skin like it hasn't been damaged at all. The scar is now a lighter color than her skin.

Min: Interesting.. Could it also be the mist's strange effects?

Casey: Let's not jump the gun just yet. We still don't know much about this mist's abilities and what its after effects are. Besides that first elite group from earlier….

Saya: Yeah.. We have all 4 tapes, so after we get to District 6, we'll get to view them all.

*loud thump* 5x

Min: !?

Casey: The hell was that!?

Saya: Sounds like another Guardian FOE…

I.D.A.: That sound… It doesn't sound like the others you fought before!

Min: Let me see…

The sounds from the mysterious Guardian FOE started to get louder. The figure itself emerges from the mist once it gets close enough.

I.D.A.: It’s massive!!

Casey: Yeah, but it doesn’t look like that Guardian Leo we fought before. Saya, have you seen this one before?

Saya: Nope. This is the first time I’m seeing this.

Min: Let’s see… *pulls up data app* It has a stone-like texture instead of a fur-like texture. And like you said, Casey, it’s bigger than the Guardian Leo. This is a new type of Guardian…

*silence*

Saya: But, it doesn’t seem to be doing anything..?

Casey: Other than the fact that it is blocking our way..

Saya: …..

I.D.A.: Another type of Guardian… Let’s call it Guardian Golem for now.

Min: Wait, hold on.. Guardian Golem? I think I heard of it once before when I was doing work with the commander… She mentioned how NEO encountered 4 types of Guardian FOEs. This along with Guardian Leo are the rarer ones out there.

Saya: Way to be on your game, Min!

Casey: Do you know anything else about it?

Min: Well, since it has a stone-like texture, its defense is crazy good, so single normal attacks will not have an effect on it.

Casey: Right, so both of our attacks have to hit it otherwise it won't get damaged. You got that, Saya?

Saya: Yeah…

Min: Precision is also the key; both of you HAVE to be well-coordinated. If not, we're going to be here for a while.

Saya: That reminds me… I.D.A.? How much time do we have left until the next storm?

I.D.A.: ….Not a lot of time! You have 2 hours remaining!

Casey: Shoot.. 2 hours…

Saya: Ugh… We better make this most of the remaining time we have, otherwise it will become a bigger pain in the ass to suppress this thing.

I.D.A.: Good luck!

Min: *nods*

*footsteps*

Saya: …..

Saya walked up in front of the Guardian Golem, the FOE itself still isn't moving.

Saya: (How strange…)

*footsteps*

Casey: *charging Gear* I'm on standby in case it tries to pull one under you.

Saya: *nods*

Saya walked a little closer to the Guardian Golem to see if it would react to her movements.

*rumble*

Saya: *abruptly stops walking* !

Casey: *gets into a battle stance*

The Golem is slowly moving towards Saya with its hands raised up.

Saya: *confused* *charging Gear*

Casey: What the hell is it doing…?

*rumble*

*whoosh*

Both: !?

*SMASH*

The Guardian Golem slammed its hands down on the ground at a faster pace than before, unleashing a shockwave from the impact.

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: A-Agh….

Saya: (So that's it… It has charged attacks, too. The moment we get too close, it's gonna repel us back… But then how are we supposed to attack it from afar…?)

Casey: We should focus on getting rid of its arms first! Those can easily crush us if we're not careful!

Saya: R-Right!

*rapid footsteps*
Both: Quantum Rush!!

*whoosh* 2x

Casey dashes on the left side of the Golem while Saya goes in on the right. The Guardian Golem then prepares itself for another attack.

*rumble*

Casey: Quick! Jump on!

Saya: *grunts*

*whoosh* 2x

Casey: Over here!

Saya: ! *grunts*

Saya jumped from the right arm to the left, and gained a slight momentum since the Golem's right arm was the one being raised into the air.

*grab*

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: *climbs up to the left arm*

Casey: *turns around* Quantum Fist!!

Saya: Quantum Fist!

*smash* 6x

Casey: *grunts*
Saya: We need to do more than that!

Casey: Right.

Both: Quantum.. Barrage!!

Both Casey and Saya jumped off the left arm and started to deliver punches and kicks to the hand of the Golem. During this, they were both slowly falling so that their attacks could easily land.

*crack* 20x

Casey: *battle cry*

Saya: *battle cry*

*smash* 6x

*glow*

*whoosh*

Casey: !!

Saya: !?

The Guardian Golem's right arm swung immediately towards the duo.

*impact* 2x

Saya: *pained grunts*

Casey: AGGH!?

*thud* 2x
Min: Saya!! Casey!!

*crumble* 5x

Saya: …….

Casey: …Ugh… *coughs* S-Saya…

*loud stomp* 10x

Casey: ……

The Guardian Golem is slowly walking towards Casey.

Casey: *slams gear into the ground* Afterimage!!

*glow*

*whoosh*

Casey picked up Saya and ran past the Golem within 3 seconds.

Casey: *pants* S-Saya..! Wake up!!

Saya: Ngh….

Casey: Come on.. Can you stand?

Saya: Y-Yeah..

Casey: Good. *sets down Saya*

As they both catch their breaths, they turn around to see that the Guardian FOE stopped moving.

Casey: W-What..?

Saya: Now it’s not moving?

Casey: No.. I get it now..!

While Casey is still talking, the Guardian Golem is walking back to its original spot.

Casey: This Golem only moves if we get too close to it, or the pathway that it's blocking!

Saya: Really?

Casey: Yeah, I mean.. Look!

Saya took another look at the Guardian Golem and was just as surprised as Casey was.

Saya: You’re right… Ugh! Damn it! At this rate, we won’t be able to get to District 6!

Casey: Don’t worry. We dealt enough damage to the left arm, so if we land a few more hits into it, we should be able to break it!

Saya: Yeah, but then we have to worry about it retaliating with its fists too.

Casey: ……

Saya: C-Casey?

Casey: I got an idea! Let's try this again and I'll give you the signal!

*whoosh*

Saya: What signal!?

*whoosh*

Casey and Saya rushed up to the Guardian FOE again, only this time they're both on the opposite side.

*whoosh* 2x

Casey: ….

Saya: …..

They both activated their Quantum Barrage attack on the right arm since the left arm is slowly about to attack the duo.

*crack* 20x

Casey: *grunts*

*crumble* 3x

Saya: Hah! *yells*

*smash* 4x

*whoosh*

Casey: NOW! MOVE!

Saya: !!

Both Casey and Saya jumped off from the right arm, causing the left arm to miss the duo.

*whoosh*

Casey: Aim for the head!

Saya: Got it!

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *charges Gear*

Saya: *charges Gear*

Both of the Golem’s arms were heavily damaged and as a result, are moving at a very slow pace. That doesn’t mean that its power has decreased, however.

Casey: *battle cry*

Saya: *grunts*

*smash* 2x

Casey and Saya kept on punching the Golem’s head before the arms started to attack them again.

*crumble* 4x

Saya: ……

Saya’s eyes are slowly turning into a white color.

Casey: *yells*

Casey’s eyes are slowly turning into a neon green color.

……..

*rumble* 5x

I.D.A.: The exterior armor is breaking!

Min: Yeah… But look over here..

I.D.A.: Huh?

Min showed the current Quantum Gear status of both Saya and Casey. It’s shown for both of them that they’re going to OVERDRIVE mode.

I.D.A.: A-Again..?

Min: Somehow, I feel like I shouldn’t be worried about this. They’re trying everything in the book to take this thing out.

I.D.A.: Even then…

Min: It’s risky, I know. But I have faith in them.

I.D.A.: O-Okay! If you say so!

…….

*electricity* 20x

Saya: *yells*

Casey: *grunts*

*crack* 15x

*whoosh*
Casey: MOVE!

Saya: !

*whoosh*

Casey: A-Ah!? What!?

They both dodged the first arm, but the second arm started to head towards them in the sky, while Saya managed to dodge, Casey wasn't fast enough to move.

*impact*

Casey: *screams*

*CRASH*

Saya: CASEY!!!

Saya was still in the air after dodging the left arm, and in OVERDRIVE mode, Saya launched herself into the right arm that slammed Casey into the ground.

Saya: *screams*

*smash*

Saya: QUANTUM… DOZER!!!!

Saya started to punch through the right arm at her normal speed, and then started to move faster each second. It got to the point where both of her arms are reduced to motion blur due to how fast her fists are hitting the arm.

*crack* 50x

Saya: *battle yell*

…….

Casey: *pants* Ugh… ngh.. A-Ah… (What the hell… It saw through us…?)

Casey got up and looked up at Saya, who was still hitting the Golem's right arm. Her eyes are fully white and her expression is full of rage.

Casey: (S-Saya…)

*whoosh*

…….

Saya: *angered grunts*

*smash* 20x

Casey: SAYA!!!

Saya: !?

Casey: *grunts*

Casey launched himself off the ground at high speeds to meet up with Saya.

Casey: *battle cry*

Casey boosted himself up from the sky and into the arm that Saya was beating it to oblivion on.

*crack* 2x

Casey: Come on!!

*electricity* 30x

Casey: Quantum Barrage!!

Saya: *grunts*

Saya continued her attack from before, while Casey assisted Saya. Eventually, the right arm is starting to crack open.

*rumble*

*loud stomping* 10x

Saya: !?

Casey: *grunts*

In frustration, The Guardian Golem started to throw its left arm into Saya.

*whoosh*

Saya: *grunts*

*burst*

Saya: *breaks sweat* *strained groans*

Saya grabbed the arm before it could even land a hit on her.

Casey: *pants* S-Saya..

*electricity* 35x

Saya: AAAAAAGGGHHHH!!!!

Saya lifted the left arm into the air, launching both the Golem and Casey into the air.

*WHOOSH* 2x

Casey: !?

Saya is seen still grabbing the left arm while it maintains its momentum. Her pained looks are not from the attack from earlier, but from the Gear itself.

Casey: Quantum Rush!!

*whoosh*

Casey: *battle cry*

*smash*

Casey smashed his Gear into the Golem’s head, causing the eyes to lose its glow.

*stumble* 5x

Saya: *battle yell*

Saya threw the fast moving left arm into the right arm, destroying it completely. The blast from the collision sent Saya into the air with Casey. At that moment, her angered eyes met with a determined one.

Saya: ……
Casey: Ready?

Saya: *glares at the Golem* *nods*

Casey: Okay..!! GO!!!

*burst* 2x

Both Saya and Casey launched from the air and into the Golem, who was on the ground motionless.

Both: QUANTUM…..

Saya: BREAKER!!!!

Casey: CRUSHER!!!!

The duo became a bright white and green colored beam of light due to how fast they were going. Their final impact on the motionless Golem caused it to explode into thousands of pieces.

*warp*

*explosion*

……

*electricity* 50x

The leftover static shocks from both of their Gear were the only sounds to be heard in the battlefield. Min and I.D.A. came out of hiding and looked for Saya and Casey.

*footsteps*

Min: Saya?

I.D.A.: Casey!!

*static* 25x

Min: Ugh… *covers nose* It even smells like lingering static shock around here..

I.D.A.: That power… I don’t think I've ever seen that before…

Min: Huh?

I.D.A.: That OVERDRIVE energy… It never got to the breaking point before.. When it does, the user’s power becomes too great. I’m glad that Guardian FOE has been taken care of..

*footsteps* 2x

Saya and Casey, all tired out, slowly emerged themselves from the dust and mist.

Min: Saya! Casey! You’re okay!

Casey: *tired* Y-Yeah… Our Gear’s are under cooldown, though.

Saya: Ugh.. My head’s spinning…

I.D.A.: You two committed quite a gamble! All that energy emitting and those charged attacks… It could’ve been extremely dangerous hadn’t the battle stopped there!

Casey: … I know. Sorry about that.

Min: It’s fine.. In any case, that means we can keep going, right?
I.D.A.: Yes. But listen to this message: This was the first time ANYONE has reached OVERDRIVE at its breaking point. Right there, you both may have achieved a greater advantage, however….

I.D.A. looked down in worry.

I.D.A.: *worried* Make that as your last resort. That overwhelming energy can, and will disintegrate your Gear!

*heartbeat*

Saya: A-Agh…!

*ringing*

Casey: *muffled* S-Saya!? Saya!!

Saya: Ah… Ah….

Min: *muffled* We should hurry up and get to the next district..!

Saya: (My head… It… hurts…!! Prone… Adapt… Resistant…Acknowledge… and now… Disintegrate…? Why… do these words… hurt my head so much…?)

*muffled rocks falling*

The ringing inside of Saya's head started to subside. The moment she got her head together, Casey, Min, and I.D.A. were frantic.

Casey: Falling rocks!? From that damn Golem!

Min: It must be its last resort!

I.D.A.: A-Agh! DANGER! DANGER! Special Weather Anomaly is occurring right now!!!

Saya: H-Huh..? I thought the storm wasn't gonna hit us until an hour and a half?

Min: *starts to run* No! This is different! Get up and run to the next district, Saya!

Saya: *rapidly gets up* *runs off*

*rapid footsteps* 4x

……

## Scene 2: District 5-6 Subdivision

*roars* 3x

Casey: Oh shit!!

Min: Just keep moving! Forget those FOEs!

*crush* 2x

I.D.A.: *yelps*

Saya: The FOEs are getting crushed by the Golem's rocks!

*crash* 5x

Casey: That's good… But it's still bad! They were small at first, but now they're coming in larger quantities and fast!
*whoosh* 6x

*crash* 6x

Min: Agh!

Saya: Hang in there, Min!

Min: I-I'm trying!!

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *grunts*

I.D.A.: We're almost there!!

……

## Scene 3: District 6

While the team is running away from the falling debris, the surrounding area is almost nothing but destroyed infrastructure. Since it's close to District 7, whatever happened in the Southern Tower may have spread far to attack other districts.

*crumble* 5x

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: We're here!

Casey: Min! Release the camp box!

Min: *grunts* *throws the box into the air*
*energy surging*

*shine* 5x

*burst*

The box started to morph into a large camp area similar to Dante's. Only this one has a color scheme of cyan and yellow instead of white and cyan.

*crash* 4x

I.D.A.: Run for it!

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: *pants* H-Huh?

*crash* 6x

Min:  …..

*door slides open*

I.D.A.: Ngh! Quickly!

Saya: *jumps into the door* Casey! Min!

Min: I’m going as fast as I can!

Casey: *grunts*

*whoosh* 8x

*crash* 6x

Casey: Min! Stick with-

*crash*

Min: A-AGH!!

Casey: *abruptly stops running* MIN!!!

Saya: *scared* OH MY GOD!!

I.D.A: *gasp*

Min: *pained* O-Ow… N-Ngh… My arm..

Casey: *rushes towards Min* Don’t worry! I’m coming-

*crash*

Min: K-KGGH- *coughs up blood*

*thud*

The large two boulders landed on Min's left arm and back, breaking it instantly. The sudden rupture of pain caused Min to throw up blood with a pained look on his face.

Min: A-Agh.. H-Help.. me… *attempts to reach his hand towards Casey*

Casey: I.D.A.!! EHK!!

I.D.A.: Coming!

Saya: W-Wait! What about the falling boulders?!
Casey: *grabs boulders* *strained grunts*

I.D.A.: M-Min… Try to take deep breaths…

Min: *struggles to speak*

Casey: *grunts* *yells*

*thud* 2x

Casey: On his back! 2x

I.D.A.: *pulls out EHK* *grunts*

*shock*

Min: *yells*

Casey: *picks up Min* Let's go!!

*rapid footsteps*

*door slides closed*

…….

Scene 4: District 6: NEO Camp (Entrance)

Saya: *pants*

Casey: *pants*

I.D.A.: Is everyone alright?
Saya: *tired* Ugh… Not really..

Casey: Min's back should be healing as we speak.

Saya: Well, that's good. Glad we weren't too late.

Min: ……

I.D.A.: I recommend setting him down on his bed!

Casey: Y-Yeah. Come on, Saya.

Saya: … *gets up*

……..

Scene 5: District 6: NEO Camp (Min's Room)

*footsteps*

Casey gently set Min down on his stomach to let his back heal.

Casey: …..

Saya: *pants*

Casey: S-Saya?

Saya: Huh…?

Casey: You should rest, too. You're sweating like crazy.

Saya: I am…?

*muffled rain patter*

I.D.A.: The rain has hit..

Casey: You sure it's not just the rocks?

I.D.A.: Well, rocks too. It's a mixture..

Casey: Damn it.. So we're forced to wait this out.

I.D.A.: It's not like we have any other options! Besides, once we leave this district, there will be Doppelgangers up ahead!

Casey: Right.. And Doppelgangers will weaken after the rain.

I.D.A.: Correct!

Casey: Then… I guess it's not too bad.

Saya: And our Quantum Gears are on cooldown, too. Going out there to rush on into the final district will be suicide.

Casey: ……

Min: *struggles to wake up*

Casey: M-Min..?

Min: N-Ngh…

Min slowly opens his eyes to see Casey, Saya, and I.D.A. are in the same room.

Min: *tired* Huh…? Where….?

Casey: *worried* M-Min!!! I'm glad you're okay!

Min: Hm..? Oh… Right, my back… How bad is it?

I.D.A.: Was it! Casey put the EHK on you within a nick of time!

Min: …!?

Min attempted to move his spine and noticed that there were no sharp pains.

Min: H-Holy crap.. My back.. It's healed!

Casey: You're welcome…

I.D.A.: *worried* Not to cut this celebration short. But now I must apply to you all with a warning.

Min: A warning?

I.D.A.: *serious* Yes. We used at least 4 Emergency Heal Kits throughout the course of this trip. We have 1 left.

Casey: What?!

I.D.A.: To review: 2 was used on Saya, 1 was used on Casey, and now 1 was used on Min. Because of this, we cannot risk the last one for minor injuries such as dislocated or broken bones.

Min: H-Huh…?

I.D.A.: For now on, the final EHK will ONLY be used when someone's on the verge of death. I understand this is a difficult decision, and for that I deeply apologize. *bows down*

Casey: That also means we have to be extra careful. I don't want to get my body harmed before we get to the tower.

Min: That's fair.

Saya: What about you, Min? Your arm is-

Min: Oh, that? Since I.D.A just said that we can't afford to waste the last EHK, I'm letting my left arm heal on its own. In fact… Hey I.D.A.? There should be some bandages in my bag. Can you go get it?

I.D.A.: Affirmative!

*footsteps*

Saya: Ugh.. I can't believe the acidic storm hit us that soon..

Casey: Yeah.. I thought we only had an hour and a half left? Did time pass that quickly?

I.D.A.: Actually, with the current direction we're heading, it made the time for the next storm much shorter…

Saya: Ugh…

Casey: So the storm’s coming from where the tower is…

I.D.A.: Correct. *pulls out bandages* I got here, Min!

Min: Thanks.

Casey: Ah! Now that I think of it. We did make it this far, so wouldn’t it be fair to check up with our loved ones?

Saya: !
Min: W-Wait, now?! With my arm looking like this!?

Casey: H-Huh? Why not?

Min: *embarrassed* I mean… My siblings are going to freak out if they see me like this… *looks away*

Casey: Well, that shows how worried they are, Min!

Min: (I still find that troublesome…)

Saya: I’ll leave you guys some privacy.

Casey: Huh? You’re not gonna stay here?

Saya: Sorry, no! Besides, I have to call my parents, too! I much prefer quiet places so that I can hear them better.

Casey: A-Ah.. Okay then. Suit yourself.

*door slides open*

Casey: Hey I.D.A.? Can I borrow your monitor?

I.D.A.: Sure!

……..

Scene 6: Costello Apartment Residence

*ding* 5x

Rosaria: Oh! Kids, can you pause that for a moment?
Zane: Aww..! But we're about to get to the best part!

Fi: *pauses T.V*

Rosaria: Well, your brother is calling.

The moment Rosaria said that, both Zane and Fi jumped across the love seat and in front of the computer.

Zane: REALLY!?

Fi: I want to see her!

*connected ding*

Casey: Hey guys..!

Rosaria: Casey! I'm glad to see you're alright!

Fi: Hi Casey!

Zane: How's the mission going?

Casey: Um… Well, it had its ups and downs, but right now we're taking it easy.

Rosaria: Oh? What happened?

Casey: *sighs* I might as well tell what happened from up to this point..

Casey explained everything that has occurred to the raining rocks incident.

Rosaria: Oh god… Is Min alright!?

Casey: Yeah. His back is completely healed, but his left arm needs to be healed on its own.

Fi: That must be terrible…

Zane: I'm just so glad you all didn't get any fatal injuries..

Casey: (Yeah.. Maybe I should leave that part out where I got STABBED.)

Rosaria: ….I hear rain.

Casey: Yeah, we're taking it easy in the camp.

Rosaria: Good. You better be eating, too!

Fi: Yeah! And, and! When you return from your trip, can you make that scrumptious beef stew!?

Casey: *breaks sweat* Hahaha… Yeah, I'll definitely do that!

Zane: Sweet! Can't wait!

Rosaria: You take care of yourself, Casey.

Casey: Y-Yeah. You all take it easy-

*stomach growls*

Casey: U-Um…

Rosaria: …Casey.

Casey: Y-Yeah?

Rosaria: Have you eaten ANYTHING since you got here?
Casey: Just a protein shake! Plus all that running made me hungry!

Fi: Casey is making excuses!

Zane: ….Yeah.

Casey: GUYS!!

Rosaria: EAT. PROPER. FOOD. Okay?

Casey: Okay….

Rosaria: Love you, Casey. Good luck~!

Fi: Bye Casey!

Zane: See ya big bro!

*call end*

……

Scene 7: Sakhonnakhon Residence

*video call ringing*

Nin: Oh? It’s Min..! *presses accept*

*ding*

Nin: *covers webcam*

Min: ….Um.

Nin: *playful* Guess who~?

Min: Ah..? Nin?

Nin: *removes thumb* Hehe.. Yup! How’s the mission going?

Min: Oh, it’s peachy…

Nin: Peachy?

Min: Ah, sorry. I’m taking some painkillers.

Nin: Painkillers? Did something happen?

Min: *looks around* Where’s Kusa and Churai?

Nin: Oh, they’re asleep. Not going to sugarcoat this, but they started to get extremely worried.

Min: Oh… No…

Nin: Yup. I told them you’re going to be fine, but now that I took a look at your arm…

Min: ! *tries to cover left arm*

Nin: Hey, you want me to get Grandma?

Min: Um.. If you can..

Nin: Sure. One sec. *gets up*

*footsteps*

*knocking*
Nin: ยาย! Min's on the phone!

On: Is he?

Nin: Yeah.

*footsteps*

On: Oh, Min.. I'm so glad to see you're well.

Min: Well, kinda.. You see….

……..

Nin: Holy hell..

On: *closes eyes* I'm just glad it didn't turn out to be fatal for you.

Min: I know.. But even then.. I can't afford to get injured like that no more. They need those EHK more than me.

Nin: That's true. Just tread carefully, okay?

On: Even being on the sidelines is dangerous.. I would highly recommend eating something to get your energy back and the energy to rest.

Min: I will do that, Grandma. Thanks for looking out for me…

Nin: It's no problem! Take it easy, น้องชาย.

Min: Thanks. ฉันจะกลับมาเร็ว ๆ นี้.

*call ends*

Last Scene: District 6: NEO Camp (Min's Room)

Min: *sighs*

Casey: …You didn't hear that, did you?

Min: Huh? Heard what?

Casey: No, never mind.

I.D.A.: You both need to eat something!

Casey: Yeah, I know. Let me see what I got..

While Casey's digging through their bag, Min got up and looked for Saya.

*door slides open*

Min: *looks around*

*soft crying*

Min: Huh? *walks back* Hey, Casey?

Casey: What's up?

Min: Maybe you should look for Saya…

Casey: Uh, sure..? *walks away*

*footsteps*

Min: …… Hey I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Hm? What is it that you need?

Min: Did you gather more information about those Doppelgangers?

I.D.A.: Little by little.

Min: That's good enough. I have some inputs I want to add, so can you send me the current data you have?

I.D.A.: Okay!

……

Casey: !

When Casey looked down, he noticed Saya slightly crying.

Casey: S-Saya?

Saya: ! *rapidly gets up* Casey! You scared me!

Casey: S-Sorry.. Min wanted me to check up on you. Is everything alright?

Saya: Y-Yeah… I just got off the call with my parents and I got yelled at.

Casey: O-Oh.

Saya: I told them everything that happened and as expected, they were worried sick.

Casey: …I'm sorry, Saya. That was on me. I was the one who came up with that idea anyway, so I should take the blame.

Saya: No, no! It's okay. I was reckless, too. I lifted a GOLEM into the air for crying out loud.
Casey: *laughs* Yeah.. I have no idea how you did that, though. That was some crazy shit!

Saya: Hehe…

Casey: Anyways, since we're gonna be here for a while, anything you want to eat?

Saya: Um.. Let me get back to you on that.

Casey: Sure thing. *walks away*

*door slides closed*

The moment Casey went back inside of the room, Saya grabbed her phone from her pocket and reconnected her headphones with a serious look on her face. Instead of holding the phone upwards, she's holding it sideways.

Saya: *sighs* (What… am I even doing anymore?)

……..

-End of Episode 9-

……

# Episode 10: District 7: Determination and Siege

Seeing that everyone has caught their loved ones up to speed about their current status of the mission, they all waited for the storm to pass so that they will all travel down to the last district, District 7. Before that, they all were planning to look at the log tapes to determine what happened to the first elite group.

## Scene 1: District 6: NEO Camp (Saya's Room)

*door slides open*

Casey: Oh, hey Min! Was the format successful?

Min: Yeah. I.D.A. said that all I have to do is press this button to play them all.

Saya: Whoa… She managed to compile them all into one big video file?

Min: Yup. It took a long time, though. At least I sent the commander the recent data of the amount of FOEs and Guardian FOEs you guys suppressed.

Casey: Oh, right. I honestly forgot about that.

Min: *sighs*

Saya: How's your arm?

Min: Still broken. It's going to take weeks for it to fully heal, Saya.

Saya: Oh. I see.

Casey: Unlike you who has fast regeneration abilities, we're just not built like that.

Min: …….

Saya: Anyways, let's see what's on those tapes.

Min: Okay. *presses PLAY*

*projector turns on*

……

*Harako: NEO Log #1.*

*"Just our luck. It started to rain once we got to District 2. Over at District 1, there were still some NEO members around, so I told them to return back to the city. But we never saw them again. Either they got the run in with the*

*FOEs, or perished from the rain. No matter, we were warned that the acidic rain will KILL, so maybe that's on them.*

*Currently, both Ayana and Tali are in a STABLE condition, with both of them successfully suppressing a Guardian Fused in the area. Since this storm has hit us, we're waiting it out while eating some canned foods. It may not be much, but it's food nonetheless."*

**footsteps**

*Tali: Hey, Harako! Do you think we can try to push our way into the next few districts to make huge progress?*

*Harako: You sure? We don't know what awaits us when we proceed to the south. We might not make it over there in one piece.*

*Tali: Not if we take precautions first. You have information about those Guardian FOEs, yeah? And we only fought 1 so far.*

*Harako: I still have a hunch that there may be more out there.*

*Tali: Hm…*

*Harako: Tell you what: I'll be sure to gather as much data as possible for each new FOE we encounter. That way it will be easy for us to get past the districts without trouble.*

*Tali: Sounds like a plan~! *stretches* I should get some sleep. You should do the same!*

*Harako: After I'm done with this log first.*

*Tali: Okay! Good night, Harako!*

*Harako: *waves**

**door slides closed**

*Harako: Where was I…. Ah, yes.*

**typing**

*“We used an EHK on Tali today after fighting Guardian Fused. Some parasitic substance got inside of her after using one of her Quantum attacks. We currently have 4 left. Hopefully we won’t use them anymore after this, though that’s me being naive, so disregard that. I’ll be sure to report you more information after we make progress.“*

*End of log.*

**click**

*Harako: NEO Log #2.*

*“We already made it to the 4th district, but we-”*

*click*

Min: We already viewed this one, my bad.

*click*

*Harako: NEO Log #3.*

*“This one wasn’t as good as the other two. We used not one, but two EHK because a new type of Guardian FOE, Golem, appeared when we arrived*

*at District 5. It smashed Ayana's legs and broke Tali's arms. Tali after that… I had never seen her so frightened. I guess now she takes it back after what she said about trying to complete everything as much as we can."*

**door slides open**

*Harako: Oh, Ayana. How's Tali?*

*Ayana: She's still….*
*Harako: Oh, I see. It's best to give her some space and rest. We all went through a lot, so it's only fair that you sleep in tonight.*

*Ayana: Hmph.*

**door slides closed**

*"I know what I said about Ayana getting the job done with no problems, but sometimes I wonder if she's even human. No one had received this mission before, so how come it feels like she knows what she's doing after a certain period of time? Or maybe she got experience before we even met, which could be possible…"*

*"I wasn't trying to be suspicious towards Ayana; I have confidence that she'll make it to the end like the rest of us, but…. Ugh.. I'm sorry. Maybe it's just the mist getting it to me. I'm hoping for a better result soon when we get to District 6."*

*End of Log.*

**click**

*Harako: ……. *sighs**

*“What the hell was she thinking…? Ayana nearly DIED trying to suppress that Guardian Leo on her own… And knowing that she took an EHK without myself knowing… Really pissed me off. Tali keeps on telling me to calm down, but how can I!? We’re down to our last EHK due to one of us being reckless and almost getting herself killed. We had an argument, too. And I said something that caused Ayana to leave immediately.*

*Now it’s just Tali and me, having left our camp out of worry about Ayana, now we don’t have time to head back. Knowing our mission, she probably ran off to the Southern Tower by herself. I don’t know what’s in there, nor does Tali and Ayana. Ayana’s going to doom herself into oblivion with these hostile FOEs that have been lingering around. I’m sorry, Commander. We’re going to put this mission on hold until we find Ayana. Ngh… I just hope she doesn’t…”*

**click**

Saya: *pants*

Min: Saya..?

Saya: A-Ah…

Casey: Hey, do you need a break? Here, I got some cold water for you.

Saya: *takes water* T-Thanks…

Min: I think that gear of hers is giving her negative effects as well, Casey.

Casey: ……

Min: We have one more tape left. Should I play it?

Casey: *looks at Saya*

Saya: *shaking* Y-Yeah.. Go ahead.

Min: Okay. *presses PLAY*

**click**

*Harako: NEO Log #4…*
*“After arriving at the final district, we still didn’t find Ayana. Having to deal with FOEs all by herself, Tali was forced to go OVERDRIVE. It didn’t go so well, either. Her current status is now UNSTABLE, and we’re about to enter the tower. How did things turn out like this? Why did Ayana suddenly decide to go solo? I don’t think I can see her the same way if we do meet up again. Was there something in the tower that caught her attention? Is something or.. No… There’s something calling her.. This White Darkness… Could it have the ability to lure people into the Southern Tower..?*

*Too many questions that need answers, and they won’t be answered given the amount of time we have. Another acidic storm is going to hit, and we don’t have enough time to return back to camp. We’re going to have to bust our way open to the tower. If this turns out to be the last log I ever have to record for you, commander. All I have to say, on behalf of NEO, I’m sorry.”*

**click**

Min: ……

Casey: Shit… They did enter the tower… But then something happened while they were in there..

Min: I think now it’s safe to say that White Darkness caused damage to all of them. We don’t know what, but it’s best to assume that they all became anomalies at the end.

Saya: ……

I.D.A.: How awful… They didn't deserve this fate..

Casey: Hm… But then why did Ayana go on her own? That part still doesn't make any sense to me..

Min: That's a plot hole on its own. That lady… She's so strange.. It's like she knows what's the deal with this mist…

Saya: …That's it!

Min: ?

Casey: Huh? What is?

Saya: You said that Ayana may or may not have the solution to the main causes of the White Darkness phenomenon, right? It's far fetched, yes, but what other options do we have?

I.D.A.: *worried* It is worth a shot… But I'm more worried about what awaits there. If something REALLY did happen to those girls, then that might happen to us!!

Casey: Hey, I.D.A.? It's going to be okay. We watched the tapes, so we know what to expect.

I.D.A.: Yes, but still…

Min: I.D.A.? I never seen you like this before.. Is there something you're not telling us?

I.D.A.: W-Well…

I.D.A. is seen twiddling with her thumbs.

I.D.A.: There's a probability that…. The moment we find Ayana, one of us is not going to return back home…

Casey: …..

Min: ….
Saya: …I'm not surprised. I mean, we are on our last EHK after all. If anything lethal happens, someone is gonna have to take it. And then whatever happens next, we can't do anything about it but to bear it.

Casey: *scratches head* Ugh.. Great, now that you said that… I don't know if I want to continue this if there's a chance one of us MIGHT die.

Min: It's scary to think about, right? But, you all went through worse outcomes before. And this one might be the biggest one we had.

Saya: And besides.. We want answers to this cause of the phenomenon. If we back down now, there's no way for us to live normally again!

*silence*

Casey: Ugh… Never mind about what I said. Sorry, Saya. I just didn't think we got so close to completing this mission that I suddenly felt scared.

Saya: It's fine, Casey! I'm scared, too. But we just have to keep on pushing forward!

Min: *nods*

Saya: But for now… *stretches* I think we should get some sleep for tomorrow. Tomorrow is the final day of our mission, so we better make it count.

Casey: Yeah. Same here.

I.D.A.: Just call me if you need anything, Saya!

Saya: Yup, I will. See ya tomorrow.

*door slides open*

Scene 2: District 6: NEO Camp (Hallway)

*door slides closed*

Min: *sighs*

Casey: I’m gonna get some sleep, too. I want to be at my best for tomorrow.

I.D.A.: That will be the most ideal, Casey!

Min: Wait.

Casey: *stops walking* Huh? What’s the matter, Min?

Min: *concerned* Sorry, but can I talk to you in private?

Casey: Uh… Sure?

I.D.A.: I’ll be in the center room! *walks away*

*footsteps*

……..

Scene 3: District 6: NEO Camp (Casey’s Room)

Casey: Is something bothering you?

Min: Well… it wasn't at first, but now it is.. It's about Saya.

Casey: Oh? What about her?

Min: It's… Have you find it nothing more than a coincidence that Saya feels some sort of empathy towards Ayana? The one who assumedly left her team due to the effects of the White Darkness?

Casey: I don't think that's considered bothersome.. I mean, we don't know if she's dead or alive.

Min: No, no. I mean like… About what Harako said about her. How Ayana quickly adapted herself into taking NEO missions. This is the second time that has happened, now with Saya.

Casey: What are you trying to say?

Min: I'm saying….

Min looked up at Casey with a stern look on his face, causing everything to go quiet.

Min: I'm not sure if we can be safe around Saya.

Casey: *confused* W-What..? What are you talking about, Min?

Min: Saya's functioning is slightly different than us, maybe it's not noticeable, but still different. Her small injuries heal very fast, suddenly become ill the moment the acidic storm hits, get aggressive at certain intervals, and even flinch at certain words spoken out loud in front of her. I don't think that's normal human behavior.

Casey: …….

Min: Sorry, you might disagree with me, but I did some personal research with I.D.A. before we looked at the tapes, and I plug some theories together.. Doppelgangers for some reason are after Saya, and not regular FOEs like us. Isn't it strange how one variant of FOEs is targeting only ONE person?
Casey: Min, I don't understand. Are you accusing Saya that she might be a FOE Leader?

Min: Not a FOE Leader since it doesn't look like she can control the FOEs. She might be connected to be a Doppelganger.

Casey: M-Min..

Min: That's just what I think though. I mean, it's too close to a resemblance, right? But I want to make sure that I can see it with my own eyes, and see if I'm right or wrong.

Casey: *slightly upset* That's crazy.. If Saya truly is a Doppelganger, then how come she can possess the power of a Quantum Gear? How can she fight against the FOEs without a second thought? And more importantly, how can she be a Doppelganger if she doesn't have any gray streaks in her hair? Anything that has the latter without the former are anomalies.

Min: …..

Casey attacked Min with logic with their words, even though Min is placing every single hint that can be possible to prove. They're both on different sides, and won't be willing to change their answer.

Casey: How's it possible for a Doppelganger to gain sentience? Think about it for a moment, Min. There's no way that a FOE can suddenly become self-aware!

Min: I'm not saying it's true.. I'm saying it might be a possibility…

Casey: *grunts*

Min: ……

Casey: Fine. If you think that, I'm not gonna stop you. But just know that I see Saya as human like us! This White Darkness phenomenon has us going through a lot of shit, but that doesn't mean that Saya has fallen in the mist! She barely SURVIVED in the mist when I first saw her. If she was a Doppelganger…..

Min: …

Casey: *hoarse* I would've killed her where she stood.

*footsteps*

Min: …… *sighs* (I wouldn't get your hopes up, Casey. Eventually we're gonna know, and none of us are going to like it.)

The night ended with leftover tension in the camp. Casey remains on Saya's side, while Min is keeping his suspicions on Saya being a possible Doppelganger. The team remains to be two-sided, but only one of them will be right.

Eventually, the day finally arrived to set off to District 7.

## Scene 4: District 6

*door slides open*

*footsteps* 4x

I.D.A.: *stretches* It’s great to start this off in the morning~! You all made sure to completely do your hygiene, right?
Saya: Yeah, we did.

Min: *nods*

Casey: I thought I told you all I want to be at my best today?

Min: *pulls up map* ….Anyways. There are Doppelgangers lurking around across the overpass right there.

Saya: Got it! *activates Gear* Ready, Casey?

Casey: *nods* *activates Gear*

*whoosh* 2x

I.D.A.: We’ll be right behind you!

Min: I.D.A.

I.D.A.: Hm?

Min: I also want you to be at a slightly closer distance with the Doppelgangers.

I.D.A.: Oh? Sure! But I can’t get any closer to where Casey and Saya are. I might get in the way!

Min: That’s fine. All I need is more information about those variants anyways.

I.D.A.: Then… grab on to me!

Min: H-Huh..?

I.D.A. grabbed onto Min and started to release her hoverboards from her hair.

*energy surging* 2x

Min: Whoa…

I.D.A.: See? Now, let's go!

Min: Right… *gets on the hoverboard*

*burst* 2x

……

Saya: *grunts*

*thwack* 5x

Casey: *slides down* *battle cry*

*impact*

Saya and Casey were both clearing the path away from the Doppelgangers standing in their way. Like before, the Doppelgangers are hostile when they are being approached.

*growling* 4x

*yells*

Casey: *grunts*

Casey blocks one of the Doppelgangers from slashing their face off.

Saya: Quantum Fist!!

*impact*

*thud*

Saya: Quantum Smash!

*slam*

A cliff emerges from the ground, launching the remaining Doppelgangers into the air.

Casey: Nice one! I'll take it from here! *jumps on the cliff*

*whoosh*

*engine* 2x

Saya: Hm? *turns around*

Min: It's just us. Are there still any Doppelgangers around?

Saya: Yeah, but I just sent them all into the air. Casey right now is dealing with them.

I.D.A.: Oh! Min wanted me to gather more data on them! It seems like the Doppelgangers are catching Min's attention recently!

Saya: Oh?

Min: *sighs* We still don’t know much about them, so I’m also doing you a favor.

Saya: Right.. Thanks Min!
Min: …….

……

*whoosh* 7x

Casey: *grunts*

Casey slammed his body into the falling Doppelgangers into the ground, making some of them hit their heads first, killing them.

*faint thud* 5x

*yell*

Casey: *grabs one of the Doppelgangers* Quantum Toss!!

*whoosh*

*slash*

Casey: !?

*thwack* 3x

Casey: *grunts*

*impact*

Casey dropkicked the last Doppelganger into the ground. Seeing no more Doppelgangers in the air, Casey propelled themselves back to the ground.

…….

*whoosh* 4x

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: Are you alright, Casey?

Casey: Yeah. Just a scratch, but I'll live. *turns around*

Casey looked at the Doppelgangers who were barely clinging on to life. Some of them were twitching after receiving a painful kick from Casey.

Casey: …..

Min: *pulls up analysis app* Hang on. This should take me a second…

*typing*

Saya: I never seen Min like this. Did those tapes give him a shock of inspiration or something?

Casey: Nah. Just the fact that he wants to learn more about these creatures, and where did they really come from.

Saya: They were the product of the White Darkness, I thought?

Min: I can't really make that as the answer, there's not enough information to support it. I have to see for myself to give the accurate information to the commander. That way, other NEO members will be aware of what to expect from them.

*typing*

Casey: …… *sighs*

Saya: Casey?
Casey: Don’t worry, I’m fine. Just don’t frustrate yourself if you accidentally get the wrong info.

Min: *grunts*

I.D.A.: Um…. Why do I sense tense energy from you two…?

Saya: What? Did something happen last night?

Min: *avoidant* Just a disagreement. Nothing special.

Casey: ……

Casey wanted to add on to what Min said, but didn’t want to risk another argument breaking out.

Casey: *slightly annoyed* What he said. I’m still thinking about it, though. Don’t worry, I’ll get over it.

Saya: …….

I.D.A.: There’s still more Doppelgangers up ahead!

Saya: Oh, really? Great…

Casey: Let’s get back on it! *runs off*

*rapid footsteps* 2x

……

## Scene 5: District 6-7 Subdivision

The team arrived at the subdivision only to be met with more hostile Doppelgangers.

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*slam*

*whoosh* 10x

Saya: Shoot! *jumps towards the Doppelgangers* Quantum Pulse!!

*electricity* 4x

*shock*

*pained growls*

*thud* 3x

Saya looked down to see one about to attack Casey.

Saya: !! Quantum Fist!!

*whoosh*

Casey: *grunts* *dodges*

*slash* 10x

Casey: *breaks sweats* Hah! *lowkicks Doppelganger*
*burst*

Saya: *battle cry*

*smash*

Saya crushed the Doppelganger with her Gear, breaking its neck and lower jaw.

Saya: *pants*

Casey: !?

*growl*

Casey: *yells*

Saya: Casey!

Casey: *strained grunts*

One of the Doppelgangers leaped onto Casey, and started to slash its way into Casey's body.

Casey: *slightly frustrated* What the hell is wrong with them!? Didn't…
*grunts* Didn't the storm just pass!?

Saya: *grabs the Doppelganger* *strained grunts*

Casey: *yells* Get… OFF!! *kicks the Doppelganger off*

Casey: *pants*

Saya: *hostile* Casey, get back! Let me tear this one down.

*burst*

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya grabbed the Doppelganger's face in retaliation for trying to slash Casey. Her eyes are full of frustration and anger.

Saya: *yells* *slams the Doppelganger's face into the ground*

*slam* 10x

Casey: *breaks sweat*

Min: Casey!

Casey: *looks up*

More Doppelgangers are running up to Saya with furious looks.

Casey: *charges Gear* Ugh… Such a pain..

*whoosh*

Casey: Quantum Rush!!!

*burst*

*thwack* 15x

Casey: *grunts*

Casey kicked each of the Doppelgangers into the ground, sky, and between the distance of themselves.

Casey: *jumps into the sky*
……

Casey: *grabbed the Doppelganger* *screams*

*whoosh*

Casey: *pants*

……

The fallen Doppelganger thrown by Casey is being sent straight to Saya, who is still slamming the captive Doppelganger into the ground.

*splatter* 15x

Saya: *frustrated grunts*

*whoosh*

Saya: *looks up* grunts*

Saya grabbed the remains of the captive Doppelganger and slammed it into the one that was thrown by Casey. Both of them splattered into gray substances upon impact.

*splatter* 2x

Saya: ……..

*whoosh*

Casey: *grunts* Saya! You alright-

Saya: *glares*

Casey: A-Ah…

Min: ……

I.D.A.: That was close… How's their status doing?

Min: …Both of them are STABLE.

I.D.A.: Ah! Good!

Saya: ….This is..

Casey: ?

Saya: This is the spot where I was being chased..

Casey: ……

Saya: They started to chase me here, all the way to the 4th district…

Casey: S-Saya..

Saya: *sighs* What do they have against me? What did I even do…?

Casey: *looks at Min with disappointment*

Min: …..

Casey: *consoling* Hey, Saya… Whatever it is, it's not your fault. You were just there at the wrong time.

Saya: Ugh..! *deep breaths* I can't waste anymore time.. We have to go. *walks away*

Casey: …… *follows Saya*
I.D.A.: Min, did you get any of the information you need?

Min: Sort of, yeah. (It still doesn't make any sense… How come Casey can't see it by now…?)

*hovering* 2x

…….

## Scene 6: District 7: Southern Tower (Entrance)

The moment they all entered the final district, a tower slowly emerged from the mist, making it into clear view. Looking up, the tower goes above the clouds, so it's best to assume that the tower is as tall as a skyscraper. The trees are the only things that are surrounding the area, with no FOEs or Guardian FOEs in sight.

I.D.A.: *amazed* Wow…!

Casey: We… made it…

Saya: …..

Min: It's taller in person… I may have overestimated its size..

*beep* 3x

Casey: Huh?

Min: It’s the commander!

I.D.A.: Pick it up! 2x

*click*

Marako: *sighs* Well done you all. You made it to the 7th district in one piece.

Min: It wasn’t easy at all. But I have gathered enough information for you when we get back.

Marako: Hm.

Casey: So, now what, commander?

Marako: Your mission is still not done. I may have seen that you all are still alive, but I cannot guarantee the mission’s success.

Saya: “Cannot guarantee”?

Marako: Yes. Remember the first group that were last seen in this area never came back. Proceed to enter the tower in extreme caution.

Saya: Got it.

Casey: We won’t let you down, commander.

Marako: *nods* On behalf of NEO, I want to congratulate you all for making it this far. Your efforts will not go to waste. Even if you all don’t come back, I want you all to acknowledge that you all at least tried to free everyone.

*click*

Casey: …..

Min: ….

I.D.A.: Why did she have to end it on a melancholic note? Doesn't she have confidence in you all…?

Casey: She wouldn’t have sent us on this mission if she didn’t. It’s more of… like she won’t be surprised at the end if one of us dies.

I.D.A.: Oh…

Casey: And you did say that there’s a probability that whatever happens in there, one of us is not gonna make it.

I.D.A. *sad* I did.. But… I don’t want it to be you three… We made so many memories together, even if it was only 4 days… It felt like a long time to me… *sniff*

Saya: I-I.D.A…

I.D.A.: I deeply apologize.. It’s not like me to cry like this…. You all have been a great company, so I felt a deep emotion within me that….

Casey: …….

Saya: I’ll make sure we all return home. So, don’t cry I.D.A.

I.D.A.: I… I won’t, Saya…!

Min: ……

Casey: Now then.. *turns around* How the hell are we gonna get in there? This place is heavily secured.

Min: Leave it to me. It may take a bit since my left arm is healing, but I can bypass the security systems to let you guys in. There should be a vent shaft around the back….

Casey: A vent shaft?

Saya: Let's look for it!

*footsteps*

Min: …..

*typing*

I.D.A.: I want to assist you all until the end, Min. So, let me know if you need anything.

Min: *look at I.D.A.*

Despite I.D.A. already feeling emotional, it's still willing to help out even if she knows that she won't get to see one of them again after the mission.

Min: Sure. Don't be sad, I.D.A. It's going to be fine.

I.D.A.: …..

……..

## Scene 7: District 7: Southern Tower (Backside)

*footsteps*

Saya: Even though we're in front of the building, I still can't see a thing…
Casey: Just look for anything that resembles a metal vent.

Saya: Hm…

Casey: …..

Saya: Hey, Casey?

Casey: Hm?

Saya: I.D.A.'s expression… I've never seen her like this before.. Is she that worried..?

Casey: ….

Saya: Considering she's an android, that's concerning to see..

Casey: I never thought that I.D.A. would be so hung up on the possibility of one of us dying.

Saya: …..

Casey: I guess I wouldn't blame her though.

Saya: …Did I actually make memories with an android..?

Casey: Well… not just you. All of us made a contribution.

Saya: ….

Casey: Oh! I found it!

Saya: You did? Sweet!! Let's get in!

Casey: *grunts*

*bang* 5x

*thud*
Casey: One at a time, Saya.

Saya: Okay..

*metal stomps* 25x

……..

## Scene 8: Southern Tower: Air Shafts

*metal stomps* 30x

Saya: ……

Casey: …….

Saya: Ah. Up there!

Casey: I think that's where the main hall is gonna be.

Saya: Hey, can you give me a boost?

Casey: Sure. *holds Saya's legs*

*whoosh*

Saya: *grunts*

*grab*

Saya: W-Whoa..!

Casey: Don’t worry, I’m right behind you!

Saya: O-Okay..!

*metal stomps* 20x

Casey: Okay, now lift me up!

Saya: *strained grunts*

Saya tries to reach her hand to Casey, but they only touch each other’s fingers.

Casey: Hold on… *grunts*

*burst*

Saya: !?

Casey: *grunts*

*grab*

Saya: That was dangerous! You could’ve blasted a hole in the vents and gave away our position!

Casey: S-Sorry..! Hey, give me a hand!

……..

*metal stomps* 30x

Both: …….

Saya: *sighs* I still can't believe it..

Casey: What is?

Saya: That our mission is almost over.. It may have felt like a short time, but honestly? It was one of the longest missions I've ever been on.

Casey: Same here. You only recently joined NEO and still managed to fit right in. Fought so many FOEs together, suppressed some Guardian FOEs, and met Harako and Tali. Though, the last part could've been better.

Saya: Ah! Don't forget about Dante and the others!

Casey: Right… Them too. I almost forgot about them. I wonder if they're doing okay..

Saya: I'm sure they're fine thanks to that great dinner you made!

Casey: *laughs* That's right. But still..

Saya: Hm?

Casey: Dante looking out for those NEO members, even the ones that aren't on his team… Makes him like the Father of the group, huh?

Saya: Like.. a father?

Casey: Yeah.. Speaking of… Everyone back home in Zenith City.. They're still awaiting our return. Min's family, Zane, Fi, Rosaria… Hell, maybe the commander, although you can't really see it.

Saya: Hm…

Casey: What about your parents, Saya?

Saya: …..

Casey: S-Saya..?

Saya: I..

*beep* 3x

Casey: We'll put that on hold. *presses ANSWER* Min?

Min: Yeah, I just disabled the security systems. Only temporarily, though. You both have 10 minutes before it reactivates itself. We'll meet you inside the tower.

Casey: Got it. Thanks.

*click*

*bang* 10x

Casey: W-Whoa..!

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: At least give me a warning if you're gonna do that!

Saya: Hah!

*loud bang*

Saya kicked the below door open from the vents, causing the door to fall in the middle of the first hall.

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: *grunts*

*stomp* 2x

…….

Scene 9: Southern Tower: 1F

Saya: Whoa..

Both Saya and Casey were surrounded by deactivated generated Doppelgangers.

Saya: Great… There’s some as robots, too?

Casey: Let’s not worry about that. Let’s try to reach the top as fast as we can!

Saya: Wait!

Casey: Huh?

Saya: *runs off*

Casey: S-Saya?

Saya: *charges Gear* Quantum Fist!!

*smash*

The closed door crumbled apart upon impact. Min and I.D.A. were standing outside.

I.D.A.: Ah! Good thinking, Saya!

Min: Hm. I was about to tell you guys about the door.
Casey: Well, we're all together now, so hurry up!

All 3: Right!

*rapid footsteps* 4x

……..

## Scene 10: Southern Tower: 2F

*rapid footsteps*

Min: So you said that these Doppelgangers were A.I generated?

Casey: Yeah… Someone must've got in the tower to set these guys up like guards. But for some reason…

Min: Hm?

Casey: They all have a symbol on their uniforms, similar to ours.

I.D.A.: You're right… They all do!

……

## Scene 11: Southern Tower: 3F

Min: But they're not associated with NEO. I think this one is more of a renegade group.
Casey: Is that so?

Saya: You think they could be connected to the FOE leaders?

Min: If that were the case, they would've showed up next to them.

……..

## Scene 12: Southern Tower: 4F

Saya: Right… So renegade robots…

Casey: They're also built like I.D.A… I wouldn't be surprised if they have the same properties as her.

I.D.A.: But I rarely use my combat drive!

Min: Wait, you have a combat drive?

I.D.A.: I do! You all have never mentioned it until now!

Casey: Even then, that's not something we can use all willy-nilly.

I.D.A.: That is correct!

……

## Scene 13: Southern Tower: 5F

I.D.A.: I’m only programmed to use it as a last resort! Just like the last EHK!

Saya: Hm… To be honest, we may need to ask you to use that drive. We don’t know how many of these guys are in this tower.

Casey: We keep on climbing up the tower, but there seems to be no end to these guys..

Min: H-Hey… are the walls getting thinner..?

……..

## Scene 14: Southern Tower: 6F

Saya: *pants* Yeah…

Casey: *grunts* We have… to keep going…

Min: *pants*

I.D.A.: You all used up all of your stamina!

Casey: *goes against a wall* Ugh… How much time do we have…?

I.D.A: 3 minutes left!

Casey: *tired* A-Agh… Damn it…

Saya: *tired* I think… I can keep going…

Casey: If you're saying this now, you better move it…

Saya: *pants* *runs off*

Min: We better follow her before she gets too far…
I.D.A.: Don't completely tire yourselves out!

*rapid footsteps* 4x

…….

Scene 15: Southern Tower: 7F

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: (They are getting thinner… I guess it's that tall, huh..?)

Casey: ……

Min: *pulls up map* We're getting close… The 12th floor is the top floor in this building.

I.D.A.: Hooray! We're almost done!

As the group was about to reach the 8th floor, the security systems reactivated.

*alert blares* 5x

INTRUDER ALERT. INTRUDER ALERT. ACTIVATING SELF-DEFENSE PROTOCOL. ELIMINATE ALL ANOMALIES.

*metal door whirring*

Casey: !?

Saya: A-Agh!?

*SLAM* 5x
Casey: SAYA!!

Min: Shit, we all got trapped in…

Saya: I don’t see you guys! What happened!?

I.D.A.: The security systems have been activated again! We all got separated!

Saya: *annoyed* Are you serious?

Casey: It’s fine! Don’t worry about us! Worry about getting to the top!

Saya: But there’s A.I Doppelgangers on your end!

Casey: I said don’t worry! *charges Gear* We will be right there, Saya!

*muffled burst*

Saya: …….. *shakes head* *runs off*

Saya and the other 3 were forced to split up. While Saya stuck with the main objective, the rest were stuck between the next floor and the large wave of Doppelgangers.

……..

*coding*

*scan* 5x

Casey: …..

I.D.A.: ….
Min: …..

Casey: Min, stay back. I.D.A? Try your best to protect Min.

I.D.A.: Affirmative.

Casey: *charges Gear* I’m not gonna let you all stop at our objective in stopping the White Darkness! You all better prepare yourselves and whoever the hell operates this building!

A.I: Targeting intruders… Engage in combat mode.

Casey: *battle cry*

*smash*

Casey: *grunts*

*smash* 4x

*gun shots* 35x

Casey: Quantum Rush!!

*whoosh* 10x

Casey narrowly dodged each bullet that was being shot at them at incredible speeds.

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*slam* 3x

*bolts falling* 5x

*beam shots* 15x

Casey: !?

Casey dodged the beams that were being sent at them, however a few managed to hit Casey and left some burn marks on them.

Casey: A-Agh!!

Min: C-Casey!

Casey: *grunts* *dodges* Quantum Break!!

*burst* 3x

Casey: *grunts* *slams fist into the ground*

*rumble*

*shine*

*boom*

The energy that was surging from Casey's Quantum Gear destroyed the first wave of A.I Doppelgangers.

Casey: There…

*rapid metal footsteps*

Min: There’s more coming! In fact, there are a total of 80 of them!

Casey: A-Agh… 80!?

I.D.A.: You want me to assist you, Casey?
Casey: *breaks sweat* No! I need you to stay by Min! I don’t want any of these androids to land a finger on him!

I.D.A.: Okay! Just let me know if you changed your mind!

*beam shots* 25x

*boom* 3x

I.D.A.: !?

Min: *grunts*

Casey: *runs on the walls* Over… here!

*thwack* 3x

Casey: Quantum Barrage!!

*burst*

Casey: *battle cry*

*slam* 10x

Casey: *dodges*

A.I. Doppelganger: Activating shock wave.

*shockwave*

Casey: *screams*

Min: !!!

Casey: *pants*

I.D.A.: C-Casey..! Don’t push yourself!

Casey: *slightly weak* I’m… not… *yells*

*rapid footsteps*

Casey, despite being electrocuted, used the leftover electricity to short circuit the remaining androids.

Casey: Quantum… Pulse!!!

*slam*

*electricity* 45x

*boom* 25x

Casey: *pants*

*metal rapid footsteps*

Casey: Ugh…

Min: (They’re coming in larger groups now… At this rate, Casey’s gonna tire himself out..)

Casey: I don’t have a choice.. *charges Gear*

*energy surging*

Casey: *pained grunts*

I.D.A.: !!
Min: He’s going OVERDRIVE mode again..

Casey: I’m… I’m gonna get us OUT OF HERE!!!!!!

*burst*

Casey’s eyes are now a vivid neon green. Green colored electric sparks are coming out of his Quantum Gear.

Casey: *yells*

A.I Doppelganger: Target is emitting strong volts of energy. Target is going haywire. Must be eliminated.

Casey: Oh… *laughs* You’re ain’t gonna do shit to me. *cracks neck* I’m gonna getcha…

*burst*

Casey rushed within a blink of a second into the A.I Doppelganger, destroying it immediately. At this rate, Casey’s Quantum Gear will run out of energy even quicker.

*smash*

*metal breaking* 35x

Casey: *grins* *laughs* You didn’t expect me to pull THIS one off, did ya!?

*thwack* 23x

Min: *breaks sweat* What are they thinking… Are you trying to get yourself KILLED!?

I.D.A.: I don’t think she can hear you….
Min: …..

*smash* 34x

Casey took down the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th wave of A.I Doppelgangers all by herself. The 6th wave of A.I Doppelgangers are coming, but Casey doesn’t have a lot of time left.

Casey: *pants*

Surrounding Casey are nothing but broken pieces of the A.I Doppelgangers being torn to shreds, mangled, and even disassembled. Casey is experiencing the same surge of energy as Saya when she hits her breaking point.

*metal footsteps*

Casey: *rapidly turns around*

*smash* 10x

Min: *grunts*

*whoosh*

Min: !?

I.D.A.: !

A few A.I Doppelgangers flew past Casey without himself knowing. Due to his energy being too great, Casey was blinded by the things that are occurring behind him, leaving Min and I.D.A. unintentionally vulnerable.

I.D.A.: *grunts*

Min: O-Oh no…! CASEY!!

*blast* 5x

*boom*

Min: …… *opens eyes* H-Huh..?

I.D.A. released her cannons out of hair accessory as a safety protocol. She then activates her hands to become light razor swords emitting with Quantum energy.

I.D.A.: *serious* Activating Combat Drive.

*footsteps*

*burst*

I.D.A.: …….

*slash* 60x

*boom* 45x

Casey: !?

Min: !?

I.D.A. slashed down the remaining A.I Doppelgangers within 5 seconds.

I.D.A.: Are you harmed, Casey?

Casey: …..

Even in this form, I.D.A.'s voice bank has changed.
Casey: N-No… No I'm not.

I.D.A.: Great. Don't be risking your life like that again. Still, I would still require you to keep up with the act in order to break out.

Casey: I know. Don't have to tell me twice.

*energy surging* 2x

Casey: *battle cry*

I.D.A.: …..

*blast* 30x

Min: Keep it up, guys. There's 40 left-

*burst*

Casey: …..

Casey's expression was wide eyed in anger like when he fought against the Guardian Leo, only this time it's more of that fact they're trying to wipe the androids out.

*blast* 20x

I.D.A.: Iridescent Beam!!!

*burst*

A bright light of energy came out of I.D.A.'s hands, blasting all of the A.I Doppelgangers in their place.

*metal footsteps*
Casey: There! This is the last one- A-Ah…

I.D.A.: What's the matter- …..

The last group of A.I Doppelgangers copied both Casey's and Min's family.

I.D.A.: Don't lose focus! This tower is trying to mess with you!

Casey: *pants*

*beam shot* 20x

I.D.A.: Iridescent Shield!

*shine*

*blast*

Min: I.D.A.! Casey's Quantum Gear is at CAUTION! And not only that… Casey's status is switching from STABLE and UNSTABLE!

I.D.A.: Casey! Snap out of it! Our mission will end here if you don't snap back!

Casey: *upset* You're…. Not them…  You can't be like them…

*beam shot* 20x

*gun shot* 23x

I.D.A.: *grunts* Iridescent Blast!

*blast* 5x

Casey: I.D.A… Tell me that's not them…
I.D.A.: It's not! They wouldn't be able to make it over here anyway!

Casey: …….So that's your game.

Casey slowly got back up and charged his Quantum Gear again.

Casey: *angry* Trying to mimic MY loved ones just to try to knock me down…. Well, it's NOT gonna happen twice! You filthy mockery of a damned machine!!!!

*whoosh*

I.D.A.: *grunts*

Casey: GET OUT OF OUR WAY YOU FAKE!!!!!!!!!

*thwack* 2x

Casey: *yells*

*electricity*

Casey: QUANTUM… BREAK!!!!

Casey slammed into the A.I Doppelganger that took the figure of his Mom into the ground, releasing the energy from both of their quantum bodies.

*explosion*

Casey: AGGH!!!

Min: CASEY!!!

*thud*

I.D.A.: Move back! These doors will be going down!

Min: O-Okay… Casey..! *runs up to Casey*

Casey: Ugh….

Min: Quick, deactivate your Gear.

Casey: Hmph… *deactivates Gear* I'm sorry, Min.

Min: It's fine.. Now let's hurry and catch up to Saya.

*slash*

*clang*

I.D.A.: This way!

Casey: *shakes head* *grunts*

*rapid footsteps*

All of the A.I Doppelgangers have been eliminated.

……..

Last Scene: Southern Tower: 12F

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: (I hope everyone made it alright…)

*beep* 3x
Saya: Huh?

*click*

Min: Saya! Are you okay!?

Saya: Yeah.. I'm good. Tired, but good.

Casey: *tired* You didn't run into any A.I Doppelgangers did you?

Saya: No.. Everything was empty when I continued running upstairs.

Casey: Thank god..

I.D.A.: We're not that far from you, so we'll meet up soon!

Saya: Okay then. I already made it to the top. I'll contact you guys again if anything happens.

Casey: That's… Shouldn't you wait since you're up there?

Saya: I can't do that now. We have to finish whatever the hell's going on in this damn tower.

Min: Just don't hurt yourself.

Saya: I won't. See you then.

*click*

Saya: *grunts*

Saya pushed the final door open to the other side. Whatever awaits her, will determine what caused the Dopplegangers to appear, the White Darkness to occur, and if Saya's human or not.

-End of Episode 10-

……

……

……

……..

…….

# Episode 11: Discovery Controversy

The group finally arrived at their final destination, District 7. After getting split up from each other, Casey and I.D.A, had to fend off against the A.I Doppelgangers without Saya. Saya on the other side, rushed to get to the top, determined to find out the truth about the White Darkness phenomenon.

## Scene 1: Southern Tower: 12F

Saya: …….

Saya is seen standing in front of the large door with a nervous look in her eyes.

Saya: (I can't waste any more time now. I have to know…. We have to know… For everyone back home…)

*footsteps*

Saya: *presses on the door* *grunts*

*creak*

As Saya opened the door, she was greeted with a long staircase.

Saya: …. *deep breaths*
*footsteps*

The stairway looked like it took a minute or two to get up to the room due to Saya running all the way to her destination.

Saya: ……?

…….

## Scene 2: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall

Saya reached the top, and the room was darkly lit with some monitors remaining on and idle for quite some time. The stench of dry blood and gray substances from the slain Doppelgangers hit Saya's nose, causing her to cover it up.

Saya: *disgust* Terrible… I can't see a thing, but that smell is awful..!
(People were killed in this room that's for sure by Doppelgangers… But why?)

*footsteps*

Saya: Huh?

Saya finds a video disc in front of the main monitor. It was labeled: "Log #5".

Saya: O-Oh…? Another one of those… And it's already been formatted? (No.. Something's not right. Why would anyone get the same idea as we do?  …..Do they also want to know what happened? If so, how come I didn't see them when we were out finding the missing logs?)
Saya, hesitant, looks around the surrounding area to see if there is anyone else nearby. Other than Casey, Min, and I.D.A who are currently going to be Saya's at, there shouldn't be anyone there.

Saya:  …. (But at the very least, this has got to be the last one. The last one ended up with Harako and Tali about to enter this tower to find Ayana.)

Within a deep breath, Saya inserted the last log disc into the base computer.

*disc loading*

Saya: *breaks sweat*

As the disc finishes loading, the projector screen turns on to show Harako and Tali entering the large doors that Saya went through earlier.

…….

*Scene 2.5: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall*

**footsteps**

*Harako: It's dark.. Tali, stay with me.*

*Tali: *nods**

*The duo kept on walking through the halls with extreme caution as to try not to make any sounds to attract unwanted enemies.*

*Tali: *whispers* Do you see Ayana?*

*Harako: *whispers* No. We would've seen her by now due to her hair, but this room is too dark to see anything..*

*Tali: *whispers* Would using a flash pulse work?*

*Harako: *whispers* That's too risky. What if there are enemies hiding in the darkness?*

*Tali: *grunts**

*Harako: *whispers* Wait. Shh.*

*Tali: …?*

*As they listened carefully, they heard sounds of pained groans within the walls of the room.*

*Harako: *slightly nervous* What… is this?*

*Tali: People are here.. But they sound like they're barely clinging to life. And it smells like fresh blood here..*

*Harako: !*

*Tali: I don't think we should be here, Harako. We should head back.*

*Harako: …Right. The least we can do is report this incident to the commander that NEO members that were abducted here were killed.*

**footsteps**

*The moment they turned around, Ayana was standing by the entrance with fear in her eyes.*

*Ayana: ……*
*Harako: Huh?*

**rapid footsteps**

*Tali: W-Wait! Ayana!!*

*Harako: T-Tali!*

**rapid footsteps**

**groans**

*???: You have to get out of here…*

*???: Run away! It's not safe for people like you to remain here!*

*???: Don't end up like us. We were just unlucky.*

*???: PLEASE! I BEG OF YOU!*

*???: All these people aren't real. They're fakes.*

*???: I just wanted to live… I didn't want this… I'm sorry….*

*???: I can't move… Everything's so stiff…*

*???: I don't see anything.. I hear noises of them wanting to be free… And that's not the most disturbing part of all this..*

*???: I don't wanna die..*

*???: You can't trust anyone… Nobody! Everything's bound to be changed for the worse!*

*???: There's no point.*
*???: Hello? Hello…? Can anyone hear me?*

*???: There's too much darkness in my eyes.. It's muffling every sense and function that my body has.*

*???: Quantum energy cannot be bested here.*

*Harako: *rapid breathing**

*Tali: *scared* W-What is going on…? These people… What EXACTLY happened to them!?*

*Harako: I don't want to find out! MOVE IT!*

**misting**

*Harako: A-Agh! *coughs**

*Tali: *coughs* M-Mist..?! From the outside!?*

*Harako: *covers mouth* Don't let that stop you, Tali! Come on-*

*???: We're just trying to live our lives alone.. Why do we have to be bothered like this…?*

*???: This mist wasn't our intention.. It was to drag people like you away from us!*

*???: I wanna live in peace like you all… It's not fair…*

*???: Don't think of it like that.. This mist can't be trusted by anyone..*

*???: I WANT TO SURVIVE! PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!*

*???: It's sickening.. My body… can't hold for long..*
*???: The disruption of the tower generated this mist… This tower was meant to be inactive… It… Something within it, gained sentience…*

*Harako: …..*

*Tali: ……*

*???: If only we were discovered sooner…*

*???: Then none of this would've resorted to this…*

*???: The Neon Elliptical Order… are now our enemies.*

**burst* 50x*

*Tali: *screams* *charges Quantum Gear* QUANTUM RAZOR!!*

**blades whirring* 6x*

**whoosh**

*The sounds of the unknown ceased the moment the razor claws cut through the mist.*

*Harako: *frantic* N-No… Those people… can't be real…*

*Tali: It's just the mist messing with you, Harako! Don't fall for it!*

*Harako: I….*

*Tali's Quantum energy depleted at a fast rate. She can't get the chance to use another attack in time.*

*Harako: I don't think we should be here anymore, Tali! Your Quantum Gear is losing energy at a rapid rate!*
**glass shatter* 10x*

*Tali: *grunts**

*The glass doors all shattered into pieces, releasing whoever was in those rooms. As Tali looked in fear, she noticed someone else.*

*???: …….*

*Tali: W-What…? A-Ayana..?*

*Ayana: ……*

*Tali: *scared* W-Why!? Why the hell are you with them!?*

*Ayana: …..*

*Tali: A-Answer me damn you!!*

*Ayana: …Those people. I felt bad for them..*

*Tali: H-How!? They killed NEO members in this tower! Why should you feel bad for them!?*

*Ayana: I wanted to see if I could share a room with them. They felt scared. Scared that they all will not be able to see the light of day..*

*Tali: *grunts**

*Harako: *weak* Is… Is that why you left without us knowing?*

*Ayana: *sighs* I figured if I left, you wouldn't follow me here. You would've just returned back to Zenith City.*

*Tali: *frustrated* Now you know that's not gonna be the case here! You're more experienced than us, and having that person to suddenly dip on us it's like…. Like… We're not important to you any more!*

*Ayana: *head tilt**

*Tali: D-Don't give me that! You know what you did, and you're coming back with us whether you like it or not!!*

**bubbling**

*Tali: H-Huh..?*

*Ayana: I don't think so.*

*Tali: !?*

*Tali heard bubbles close by, like something was boiling alive.*

*Harako: *screams* MY ARM!!!*

*Ayana: I'm sorry, Harako. But this isn't my body….*

**drip* 5x*

**sizzle**

*Tali: *grunts* DAMN YOU!! *throws razor claws at Ayana**

**stab* 4x*

*Ayana: *coughs up blood**

**thud**

*Tali: *scared* H-Harako…! Wake up!!*

*Harako: ……*

*Tali: *grunts* *picks up Harako**

*Harako: A-Agh…*

*Harako is seen covered in gray-white sludge, making her unable to move alongside Tali.*

*Tali: *grunts* (Why… Why am I not moving?!)*

*Harako: *looks at her arm* T-Tali…*

*Tali: *frantic* D-Don't talk, Harako! You'll be fine!*

*Harako: *weak* N-No… I can't move… at all..*

*Tali: H-Huh..?*

*Harako: My body's… gone stiff.*

*Tali: *gasp* *drops Harako**

**splash**

*Harako: T-Tali… You must go… Please….*

*Tali: But..*

*Harako: I saw someone else… They're currently running away from the tower… I think they need help..*

*Tali: O-Okay…! I'm… I'm SO SORRY!! *runs away*

**rapid footsteps**

*Harako: ……. (It's a good thing that helping others is her main trait.. Otherwise she wouldn't be able to listen to my request…..)*

*(But that woman… That woman said it wasn't her body…..)*

*(So then… How did she appear from one side to the other…?)*

*On the surveillance cameras, within Harako's damaged view, shows a cyan girl falling in front of the tower, most likely in pain. On the other camera, shows Tali being ambushed by the wandering fallen NEO members, they almost attacked her, until Tali said the words:*

*"That cyan girl tricked you! She didn't want to free you all, she wanted to escape herself! She backstabbed you all in the back trying to lure us in! She's outside as we speak, so if you all leave right now, you'll get a chance for your freedom!"*

*Harako: (Tali….)*

*Harako looked around again only to find "Ayana's" body gone.*

*Harako: H-Huh..? (Where… did she go..?)*

**footsteps**

*“Ayana” walked past Harako’s transforming body and into the Quantum Log Cube. She picked it up and revealed herself with the same features as Saya.*

……

Last Scene: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall

Saya: *distraught* …….So these people… didn’t cause harm from the beginning…? It was a setup just to assassinate me?

???: You finally caught on.

Saya: !?

Saya heard a similar voice from the ones she heard from the tapes her team viewed.

Saya: ….Why did you do this..?

???: Huh?

Saya: Why did you betray your team like that for those Doppelgangers?

???: *sighs* It was a process. Firstly, I wanted to know if those Doppelgangers were really worth saving, and after hearing most of them out, I didn’t leave the tower. I promised them salvation. But then white mist started to emerge due to the Quantum energy and the liquid substances combining within the tower. It spreaded all over the tower, and into all of Silvene, causing all of the FOEs, Guardians, and Doppelgangers to appear all over. The recent surge of FOEs put NEO into high alert, as some members got overwhelmed and were slain. Harako became the victim of the mist. That I know, but not for Tali. She might be dead for all I know.

Saya: She isn't… I encountered her myself.. And she mentioned that you backstabbed them to me. At first I thought she was crazy, but she's right. Instead of your team, you chose the army you've been ordered to suppress.

???: …..

Saya: How long have you been here..?

???: For 2 years I remained up here in this tower, working on a machine to retaliate against the White Darkness. And.. I don't think you remember, Saya. But the person who was running away after being seen was indeed you.

Saya: ….!?

???: It's true. You had fear in your eyes, knowing what would happen to you if you remained longer in the tower. Hearing all of your people in fear, the madness that consumed them to become mindless maniacs whose freedom was stolen from them.

Saya: S-Stop it…

???: The screams of fallen NEO member's voices echoing throughout the metal walls of this skyscraper. The not-so nostalgic smell of blood and gray liquid leaking out from the tubes.

Saya: Please… That's enough…

???: …..

Saya: I already saw everything that led up to this point, so can you stop?

???: Why should I? You're in the wrong, too. Don't you remember what you did to ME!? *pushes Saya*

Saya: A-Ah!

*thud*

???: You're..… NO DIFFERENT than THEM. I couldn't feel my body in control any more… You were so frantic that I was gonna do something to you, but I didn't do anything to harm you all in any way. And you attacked me, caused my body to go limp as my light was STOLEN before my very eyes…. ALL because you were MISUNDERSTOOD.

Saya: ……

???: You see… *removes hood*

Just like Saya saw in the video, this woman has the same looks as Saya, but more worn out due to her fending for herself.

Ayana: YOU are my doppelganger.

Saya: A-Aggh….

*door slams open*

*rapid footsteps*

Min: Saya! We're here!!

Casey: Where are you!?

I.D.A.: Over there! I see- *voice glitches*

Min: !?

Saya: ?!

Casey: W-Whoa! I.D.A.!? Are you good?

I.D.A.: *pained* T-T-That… hurts….

Min: *breaks sweat* Saya, get over here and help I.D.A.!

Ayana: ……

Saya: …..

Ayana: Well? They're calling for you, faker.

Saya: …… *looks down*

Min: Saya!

I.D.A.: M-M-M-Min….

Casey: ….

Min: W-What? What's the matter?

I.D.A.: I…. There's… There's an anomaly in this room, and it's not those FOEs….

Casey: *grunts* Quantum Pulse!!

*burst*

The room received its light from the electric pulse.

Everyone: …….

Casey: W-Wait… Ayana!?

Min: That has to be her… Saya, how did you-

Saya: I didn’t think she’d be here… I thought..

Ayana: That I was dead, correct? You didn’t kill me, Saya. You took what was stolen from me, which I guess it counts as you taking my life, but not for death. I lasted long enough just to lure you, and your team back here in the Southern Tower; the very place where the origins of Doppelgangers came to be.

Min: *cautious* I knew it. I.D.A., who's the anomaly here in this room?

I.D.A.: U-Um… S-Scanning….

*scan*

Ayana: Let me save you the trouble. It’s your friend here.

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: W-What..?

Min: …

Casey: You gotta be kidding.. You’re speaking nonsense!

*alert beep*

I.D.A.: A-Ah….

Casey’s eyes widened when they looked who’s the anomaly.

Casey: *frightened* W-Why… Why didn’t you tell me that in the beginning if you were suspicious of her, Min?

Min: *hesitant*…You wouldn’t believe me.

I.D.A.: *scared* I’m terribly sorry, Casey…

Saya: U-Um.. G-Guys…

Min: *hostile* Don’t bother, Saya. We can’t associate you with NEO anymore now that your cover’s been blown.

Saya: W-What cover…? I didn’t…

Min: Didn’t what!? You’re just like those Doppelgangers that killed those NEO members days ago!

Saya: ……

Casey: …That doesn’t make any sense still. Then why did those doppelgangers chase Saya all the way to District 4?

Ayana: ….Because Tali sent them to. After seeing what happened to the NEO members in the tower, and not knowing that my body was used, she told all of the Doppelgangers that were surrounding her to chase Saya down and kill her dead.

Casey: T-Then…

A flashback of Tali saying: “That cyan haired bitch! SHE LET MOST OF OUR TEAM PERISH!” appeared in their vision.

Casey: ……..

Saya: C-Casey…

*footsteps*

Casey: …… *charges Gear*

Saya: A-Ah…

Casey: *hostile* Get the fuck away from me.

Saya: !

I.D.A.: *averts eyes*

Min: …..

Saya: N-No… Listen to me… Please…

Casey: I won't. You backstabbed us in the back! You were nothing but a spy of these DAMN DOPPELGANGERS! YOU LET THEM STRAIGHT TO US!!

Saya: C-Casey…

Casey started to walk towards Saya with murderous intent.

Casey: YOU WERE THE REASON MY PARENTS DIED! ALL OF YOU… ALL OF THE DOPPELGANGERS WERE RESPONSIBLE OF MY PARENT'S DEATH! THIS WHOLE WHITE DARKNESS PHENOMENON… **WAS STARTED BY YOU!!!!!!!**

Saya: *flinches*

Casey: *defeated* You… You used to be my friend… Someone to watch over for… Laugh with… Fight alongside with… Sleep with…. And Eat together with… I… I trusted you…

Saya: ……

Casey: Not only you betrayed us, but Dante and Sharen, too! Commander Marako as well as YOUR PARENTS! YOU BETRAYED EVERYONE, YOU XENO-SHAPESHIFTING MONSTER!

*high-pitched beep*

Saya: !? *collapses*

*thud*

Ayana: Now… Everything will come into play. Do you get it now? Everything that you did up to this point, Saya. There's no turning back.

Saya: *hyperventilating*

Saya's vision was being disrupted by everything that she had up until this point. From taking Ayana's body as self-defense, to her being chased outside, and from her joining NEO, to meeting with Harako, Dante and Sharen, Tali, and Ayana. Her whole life was all a lie.

Saya: …..

Ayana: Everyone's prone to fall to any FOE types, including you Saya, as a result, in fear of getting found out, you forced yourself to adapt into an environment that you don't belong to, retaliating against those who DID know you without acknowledging them. While the life you took from my own body disintegrated into oblivion. Xeno-Shapeshifter..

*light flashes*

Casey: !?

Min: What the hell!?

I.D.A.: I detected strong quantum energy behind Ayana!

*energy surging*

Saya: …. (What's happening..?)
Ayana: You know, Saya.

Saya: ……

Ayana: You still have a chance to redeem yourself.

Saya: !?

Ayana: This project I've been working on while waiting on your return, will cause the two organic bodies to fuse together into one body. I coded this: Project Collide. It's powered by all of the remaining quantum energy and gray substances that Doppelgangers have. Sure, it generated the White Darkness phenomenon to occur, but it was the only way for me to lure you back to your home.

Casey: Wait… So this white mist spreading all over Silvene…. That was also you!?

Ayana: *nods*

Casey: *scoffs* You could've killed everyone!

Ayana: What, so you wanted me to rot!?

Casey: That's…

Ayana: I didn't want this. I just wanted to help, but Saya chose to fight back instead!

Saya: *angry grunts*

Saya immediately got back up on her feet and attacked Ayana.

*smack*

Saya: *enraged* I DIDN'T WANT THIS, EITHER! WE WERE JUST TRYING TO LIVE OUR NORMAL LIVES UP UNTIL THAT POINT! WE WERE AFRAID OF WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US AFTER SEEING SOMEONE ENTERING THE TOWER! IT'S NOT MY FAULT I ACTED IN SELF-FUCKING-DEFENSE!

Min: …..

Casey: …..

I.D.A.: *covers mouth*

Saya: *turns around* AND WHAT THE HELL!? YOU DIDN'T BOTHERED TO HEAR ME OUT WHEN I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN ***EVERYTHING*** TO YOU, CASEY! MIN, YOU'RE ALSO IN THE WRONG! YOU DIDN'T TELL ME THAT YOU THAT CURIOUS ABOUT ME! I WOULD'VE EXPLAINED IT TO YOU, BUT YOU NEVER ASKED!

Ayana: ……

Saya: SO STOP TRYING TO PIN THIS ON ME WHEN YOUR END RESULT WILL RESULT IN EVERYONE IN SILVENE NEVER GETTING TO SEE THE OUTSIDE WORLD AGAIN!!!

After venting out, Saya was left in a breathless mess, having tears running down her face from not only betraying an unintentional matter, but also the people she was with from the beginning going against her due to a missing woman that they all just met.

Casey: …..

Min: S-Saya..

Saya: *upset* But…! If you STILL don't want to be on my side, go ahead. I don't care anymore. However, Ayana?
Ayana: ?

Saya: I'm sorry that I took your body, however I was scared after seeing what was happening out there, why are you all attacking us and everything.. Those Guardians were there to protect us, alongside with their minions. And yet, you three managed to push through, which terrified all of us.. We wanted to live together… We never wanted any conflict… Just to find another place to survive and strive in. That's why when people asked me: "Ayana! I'm so glad you're safe!" or "Ayana's okay!" Anything that is related to you in any way….

I felt guilty… I didn't have a choice but to try to fit in society. I wore the same clothes, learned the same stuff, even became a daughter… For a family that I never had. Everyone was living happily, and I wanted to feel the same thing that we didn't have. Those people I left were doomed to never strive again, and I wanted to break that cycle. I wanted to feel, I wanted to jump up and down and feel the breeze, I WANTED to feel life!

But even then… Everything fell apart… It wasn't meant to fall apart because I wanted to live… Being in this tower with other Doppelgangers was scary… We didn't know what was going to happen to us up here.. Doomed to fade into obscurity and become nothing. I didn't want my life to end like that… With the quantum energy and our gray substances, we were able to create a body from the camera we see. Unfortunately, for most their bodies were incomplete, except for mines when you came along.

I still feel guilty of replacing your life, but I didn't want to die or be killed.. Even then…

Saya started to cry even harder than she had done before, Min still isn't looking at Saya, but is listening to her, and so is I.D.A. Casey deactivated her Quantum Gear in solidarity. Ayana was impressed by hearing her confession.

Ayana: Well then, Saya. If you think like that, then I have 2 options for you. Despite everything you worked up to this point, will you properly give my body back? Or will you refuse the offer, and continue to live a fake life?

Saya: Despite… everything?

Ayana: Yes. Will you do the right thing, or not?

Everyone: ……..

I.D.A.: Depending on what your answer is Saya, it's going to be okay. Just take a deep breath and find the right pathway for your decision.

Saya: I-I.D.A….

Casey: It's… fine, Saya. Although I'm still wary of you, just don't make a decision you'll regret.

Min: *nods*

Saya: Casey… Min… (They're right. I'm still in the wrong for everything that has happened, but only because I was so afraid of death that I just acted upon impulse. For the sake of my team, for the sake of Zenith City, for the sake of Silvene….)

Saya: *deep breaths* Ayana… I've decided.

-End of Episode 11-

# Final Episode A: Betrayed and Sacrifice

How would you feel after living a life that you took ended up all being a lie and you were not aware of it? All of the memories you made, the experience that you learned, and the bonds you created, all of it was not you. Take note of this, as you come to the harsh realization that you were nothing but a fake just to save your own skin. But even after all that, after being exposed and possibly being exiled, will you still make things right?

## Scene 1: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

*silence*

Nothing but silence fills the air, along with the suffocating tension between everyone. Saya was still left teary eyed, Casey not willing to look at their former partner, Min looking at Saya with a conflicted look, and I.D.A. and Ayana remaining unfazed. As soon as Saya got herself together, she then looked up at Ayana.

Saya: Ayana, listen. I know that it looks like I'm in the wrong, and I have been putting in much thought… Everything from the tower 2 years ago, and then all of the events that have occurred since then running up to this point. I had an epiphany.

Ayana: An epiphany…?

Saya: I wasn't always like this. In fact, I was scared of dying. I didn't want my life to end here in this tower. I was so desperate to try to survive that I

was surprised to see you come to us face to face. At first I thought you were trying to finish the job, but you had a look of sympathy…

Ayana: ….. Harako and Tali couldn't understand. Harako stated that I should just quit the team if I keep risking myself like this. That's why I went alone, so that they don't get in my way and get hurt. But they didn't listen. They followed along anyway.

Saya: Out of worry. They were worried about you-

Ayana: Please. You were just as startled when you heard them calling over and switched my mind and body for your salvation. I don't need your pity.

Saya: …..

Min: Ayana, if you please. Harako and Tali didn't come after us because they didn't care about you, they did, but at a cost. Something happened to the both of them ALL because you stepped out without them knowing. Of course they would be worried. That's human nature.

Ayana: Worrying endlessly is such an exhausting task. Why worry over something so trivial that can be resolved later?

Saya: ….What?

Ayana: What's the point of it anyway? We're nothing but a bunch of hardheaded human beings that don't even know the meaning of careful. We tried to be careful, but we just ended up shooting ourselves in the foot in the end. We all hope of some kind of three-spirited miracle that's all a fluke. We all sealed our fate the moment we all joined NEO.

All: …..

Saya: It….

Ayana: ?

Saya: *serious* It wouldn't hurt to at least try! I may be a doppelganger, but I still want everyone to go back to normal again! I understand what you all are going through, why else I joined NEO…? Because I felt a sense of gratitude from Casey's parents, some vital advice from Min and I.D.A., and everyone back in District 2 who let me experience wonderful hospitality! I want everyone to experience this again…. So that's why…

Saya balls up her Quantum Gear fist and releases some tension of her arm, and looks at Ayana with a sense of resolve in her face.

Saya: I'll go along with Project Collide.

All: !!

Ayana: Oh?

Saya: I fully understand your pain, and I still feel bad even now. But at least, at the VERY LEAST….! *takes deep breaths* Give me one last chance to redeem myself.

Min: Saya…

I.D.A.: …..

Saya: *turns around* Casey, Min, I.D.A.? I'm sorry for throwing all of you under the bus so suddenly. And I'm deeply sorry that everything that we did up until this point turned out to be a lie. But at least we're one step closer to stopping the White Darkness. You all don't need to forgive me in any capacity, I know. Just acknowledge that I'm willing to fix my mistakes that got us here at this point.

*footsteps*

Min: Sa- Ugh…. *looks down*

I.D.A.: Saya!

Saya: ?

I.D.A.: We accept any decision that you could've made at that given moment. Just know that this will be the final outcome, so you better walk over there with your head held high! *fist bumps into the air*

Saya: *smiles* Thanks, I.D.A. *continues walking*

Min: And despite all this, you're still taking Saya's side, I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Oh, I'm neutral about this outcome! There are many factors that can play in this argument that will determine a person's viewpoint of Saya's motives. So, it doesn't matter what outcome that Saya chooses, just as long as it completes our main mission!

Min: Ah… Right.

Casey: ……

Casey didn't even look at Saya when she was making her stance on the current situation. He's still conflicted on the end result of Saya not being human like the rest of them. Having to fight alongside an anomaly that was responsible for killing your parents will leave a bad taste. But despite everything, everyone's goal remained the same.

Min: But, there's something that has been bothering me though…

I.D.A.: What is your concern, Min?

Min: That footage right there. *points to the video projector*

The video projector has the Log Tape #5 footage pause on the frame where Ayana was walking towards the fallen doppelgangers.
Min: Saya was the one that saw this tape, right? And it looks like it's already in mp4 format.

Casey: *suspicious* What are you suggesting here…? To prove Saya's innocence?

Min: Not exactly… I.D.A., can you retrieve the tape?

I.D.A.: I can! Please wait! *summons jet boosters*

*jet engine*

Min: Although Saya was the one that saw this entire tape, we haven't. We only saw a glimpse of the frame where Ayana was under the side effect of having her body being switched by Saya. I'm not trying to prove anyone's innocence here.

I.D.A.: I have retrieved the tape!

Min: Good. Can you please play it for us?

I.D.A.: Affirmative!

As soon as I.D.A. presses play, they were all watching the same footage that Saya saw over again. During this….

……..

## Scene 2: Decommissioned Robot

*metal footsteps*

Saya: …..
Ayana: Right this way.

Saya: Okay.

Ayana grabbed Saya's arm for her to enter the front rear of the robot. The robot's colors are dimmed because it is not in use.

Saya: How… How did you manage to find all of the parts for this thing?

Ayana: I had to resort to machinery that was left on the tower, and I had to find a substance to reserve the energy needed for this robot to function.

A slight stench of dark gray mucus can be scented…

Saya: ….. *slight resentment* I see.

Ayana: It's a smell you will have to get used to. I had no other choice. At least their sacrifices are going to be in vain.

That put a pit in Saya's stomach after hearing that. Knowing that the people she was with were turned into an energy source didn't make her feel comfortable.

Saya: …Guess you're very dedicated to this whole entire project, huh?

Ayana: Let me remind you who was the one that resorted to do anything to take what was stolen from me again?

Saya: ……

*clicking* 10x

Ayana: There. It will take some time to charge up. When it is fully charged, place your dominant hand into the slot there. *points to a handprint scanner*
Saya: *dismissive* Yeah, sure.

Says is still willing to make things right in the end, even if it means listening to the person who isn't even less different than the FOEs. But, the cause of Ayana's out of character actions were due to lingering effects on Ayana that Saya inadvertently caused.

……

Scene 3: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall

*click*

Min: *sighs* So that's what happened with the first team. This is nothing but a tragedy on both sides…

Casey: …..

I.D.A.: Hm… But wait a moment! There are some inconsistencies within the footage here! I think we may have to go in depth about this…

Casey: In depth?

Min: Actually I.D.A. has a point; there are some questions that need some answers. We all know what happened with Harako and Tali, Ayana's whereabouts, and how Saya escaped the tower. But we're only scraping the surface here.

Min then rewinds to the point where the footage is paused on Harako's arm being burned off.

Min: First off, Harako's arm was so badly burned that it looks like it's melting off, so she had to find a replacement.

Casey: A replacement…

Min: Look around us. When we all entered the tower and the security systems turned on again, we were surrounded by machinery.

Casey: Yeah. And AI generated versions of Doppelgangers emerged as well. Maybe she must've taken one of the machine parts from the AI.

Min: Possibly.

Casey: Then, what about here?

Casey rewinds to the part of the footage where Ayana was face-to-face with a scared Saya.

Casey: And then look.

The footage showed Ayana standing still and Saya being absent.

Casey: How can Saya can be seen at that one part of the video and then not a second later she's gone? No one can move that fast just to be out of frame that easily!

Min: Right… I.D.A.? Can you slow down the footage?

I.D.A.: Sure! One second please!

The footage has been slowed down to the point that it is playing frame-by-frame.

Min: Okay, pay attention. After what looks like to be Saya getting startled by Harako and Tali coming up the steps behind the door, she then acts in self-defense and takes Ayana's body.

Casey: In self-defense? Sounds like she was trying to save her own ass.
Min: I'm not so sure about that.. The look of someone who has remained trapped up here for who knows how long would not have any ill intentions. Maybe that was her only way out.. I mean just look at Saya. *zooms in*

Upon close up, Saya's body was very thin with the lack of nourishment.

Min: According to her stature, she hasn't been able to get any energy for a long time. If she waited any longer, Saya wouldn't be alive right now. She would've perished alongside with the rest of the Doppelgangers on the tower.

Casey: ….

Min: She didn't have a choice in the end anyway. I mean, it could've gone the other way like how Ayana envisioned, but the thought of being used as a scapegoat must've crossed her mind. Maybe Saya thought that Ayana was pretending to help her just to stall for time…

Casey: ! T-Then…

Min: Saya wasn't at fault here, nor was Ayana. It was the paranoia that set in between them, causing Saya to act like in the footage out of fear of being killed. It's a harsh decision, but like I said before, I don't think there were any other options left.

Casey: But that still doesn't explain how she managed to escape the tower that quickly…

Casey was about to continue, but after the footage resumed at normal speed again, the rapid faint footsteps coming from Saya became clear to Casey on what her escape method was.

Casey: …Afterimage.

Min: Huh?
I.D.A.: ?

Casey: *realization* She used Afterimage! After transferring her body into Ayana, who had a Quantum Gear at the time, manages to use Afterimage to escape the tower!

Min: ….

I.D.A.: That can prove the theory on how Saya manages to escape in such a fashion that cannot be captured in real time…

Casey: And Tali and the rest of the Doppelgangers chased Saya down in a way that Saya was the one that broke their chance at freedom….

Min: Yeah. That sounds more of a likely theory.

Casey: *slightly annoyed* Damn it… I don't know how to feel about this…

Min: Well, that's that part down.

Casey: W-Wait! No! Because how come we saw that Harako has a Quantum Gear? Wasn't she in an analyst class?

Min: Y-Yeah…

I.D.A.: I believe Saya was the one that answered this question already!

Casey: G-Ggh… Right, Harako became an anomaly… But hold on…

Min: ?

Casey: Sorry, but there is one more question I have, about Harako's gear. When me and Saya were fighting her, she had to find a replacement for her arm in order for her to fight. She manually made herself a fighter class after being exposed to the white mist.

Min: R-Right… So what you're saying is….

……

## Scene 4: Decommissioned Robot

From Saya's perspective, Casey was seen brainstorming along with Min and I.D.A.

Saya: (What are they doing now…?)

*energy surging*

Ayana: It's ready.

Saya: Coming.

Saya placed her Quantum Gear into the handprint.

Saya: You sure that this will work?

Ayana: I have run tests on this robot over 23 times. I MADE sure that this process will be successful.

Saya: Okay… Just have to make sure you're not tricking me again.

Ayana: …..

…….

## Scene 5: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall

Casey: And then, where else Harako could’ve gathered the energy output source to activate her impromptu Quantum Gear? In here.

Min: But then, what was the main item for that? You said that it was in the shape of a large cog, right?

Casey: That’s what I thought I said. And when activated, the color changes its hue like a normal Quantum Gear does.

I.D.A.: But in order to receive an energy output for your gear, you have to be redirected to NEO Headquarters….

Min: That’s true. That’s why Casey said that it was man-made. Only an analyst can have a full understanding on how Quantum Gears activate and function in combat, so it's more of a convenient thing for her. A cog instead of an artificial orb…

After some thinking in silence, Min broke the silence with a concerned look on his face.

Casey: Min, what’s wrong?

Min: No way… Harako’s substitute… It wouldn’t be part of that robot that Ayana’s been developing, right!?

Casey: !

I.D.A.: *worried* A missing piece from a quantum energy powered robot is critical! It cannot be operated if there is a missing piece!!

Casey: *looks around*

Everyone turned around with a terrifying realization that Ayana and Saya are on a robot that it is in no near perfect condition to control.

……

## Scene 6: Decommissioned Robot

Ayana: Oh?

Saya: What now..?

Ayana: It seems like your teammates are moving in a frantic manner.

Saya: Wait they are!?

Ayana: *nods*

Saya: …I can’t go back now…. I already made up my mind and everything…

Ayana: Plus I wouldn’t move your hand off if I were you. The energy output is almost at full capacity. Moving it will cause it to shut down, and it’ll gather all the energy again.

Saya: *slight concern* G-Got it.. I’m not gonna move at all then. Just tell me if we’re close to full.

Ayana: We are. 98%.

Saya: ……

Ayana: I'm surprised that even in the end, you're still willing to fix everything. I thought someone like you who fought for freedom in the past would be heavily against the idea.
Saya: …..

Saya chooses not to respond. Saya made it clear twice that her mind is made up. She wanted everyone to know that she isn't willing to change it. After all, that is the final outcome that Saya chose to see through.

*crack*

Ayana: !?

Saya: *gasp*

*alarm*

WARNING. WARNING. MISSING COMPONENT IDENTIFIED. UNABLE TO INITIATE PROJECT COLLIDE.

Saya: W-What!?

Ayana: "Missing component"!?  But how!? I made sure that everything was working!

Saya: *slightly frantic* Maybe not HARD enough!!

Ayana: *grunts* *pulls from tech compartment*

*typing*

Ayana: What side of the robot has a missing piece…?

The computer is searching for the missing piece of the robot, and within 3 seconds, the problem has been found, but can't be resolved.

Ayana: (Oh no…)

Saya: Wait… The core? The missing piece is inside of the core?

Ayana: Not the core. But the side of it… There are cogs inside of the coolant tanks placed in between the core to prevent it from overheating. If one of them is missing a vital piece, then it cannot work.

Saya: S-So, just find another cog then! There are more than enough cogs around here that you can use!
Ayana: *upset* This is a specialized type of cog that is SPECIFICALLY used for coolant tanks only! I cannot find a substitute for it because it would not be compatible!

Saya: A-Ah…

Ayana: *grunts* I have to shut it down myself!

Saya: Wait! Can't I just remove my hand off of this thing!?

Ayana: When the robot's in this mode, doing ANYTHING that involves moving your body parts away from the machine could be fatal! I'm the only one who knows how to work this machine, so you better keep your ass still, Saya!

Saya: … *breaks sweat*

……..

Scene 7: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

Casey: Ugh!! What the hell's their deal!? Why can't they hear us!?

I.D.A.: Perhaps the interior of the robot is sound-proof.. That is the only explanation for the lack of respondence.
Min: Not only that, but I can see red flashes from within the machine!

Casey: Guess they were gonna get the memo anyway…. Move, I'll get them myself!

*alert*

Min: *jolts* I-I.D.A.!? What's the matter!?

I.D.A.: *alarmed* DANGER! DANGER! I'm detecting an immaculate amount of energy forming over where the robot's standing!!

Casey: Agh- Screw it! I'm breaking that tin can down!!

I.D.A.: Halt, Casey!! It's too dangerous to get close when the robot's at this stage!!

Casey: *slightly worried* What are you talking about…?

Min: *terrified* This… This isn't right…

Casey: *upset* Would the both of you quit being vague and just tell me what's happening!?

Min: That robot over there…. I'm checking its status and its energy output somehow managed to exceed its cap limit… It's going past the DANGER zone… And it doesn't stop there…

I.D.A.: Back and forth, it's going from STABLE to UNSTABLE at a very unprecedented rate…

Casey: …….It's exceeding its limits… That will disintegrate the entire robot!!

Min: That's the thing… Harako took a vital piece of the robot. That's the main reason why it cannot stabilize itself…

Casey: Then… AYANA!!! SAYA!!! GET OUT OF THERE!!!

Min: Casey, they can't hear you!

Casey: Then we have to signal them to leave! It's going to turn them into dust if they stay any longer!!

Min: …..

I.D.A.: ……

Casey: WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU ALL DOING ANYTHING!?!?

I.D.A.: Forgive me for this, Casey. Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

Without any hesitation, I.D.A. formed a large shield that is protecting all of them inside.

I.D.A.: I'm detecting a very strong energy knockback forming! If you go out there and get caught in it, radiation poisoning is certain.

Casey: A-Ah…

Min: Poisoning!?

I.D.A.: *nods*

Min: *frantic* Oh god… They're going to….

Helpless and frantic at the sight, all they can do is wait until the robot finishes its emergency protocol.

…….

## Scene 8: Critically Commissioning Robot

DANGER. DANGER. MISSING COMPONENT STILL HASN'T BEEN IDENTIFIED. CANCELLING PROJECT COLLIDE.

Ayana: *frustration* AGH!!! GOD DAMN IT!!

*slam*

Saya: H-Hey! Don't slam your fist onto this thing!!

Ayana: I worked so hard for this project to work…. I can't give up now!! NOT AFTER I GOT SO FAR!!!

Saya: *serious* You have to let it go, Ayana! We can't replace a special gear needed for this thing! I hate to say it, but this mission needs to be aborted!

Ayana: ……

SEARCHING FOR SUBSTITUTES… SEARCHING FOR SUBSTITUTES…

Saya: *slightly scared* O-Or not…?

Ayana: …?

SUBSTITUTE FOUND. QUANTUM GEAR'S ORB. ACTIVATING SEALING PROTOCOL.

*metal clanking* 5x

Saya: !?

Saya's Quantum Gear was sealed within the machine, preventing her from pulling it out.

Saya: *frantic* N-No! Agh…! Damn it! I can't move my arm!!

Saya continued to struggle, which the system responded in retaliation.

RESISTANCE DETECTED. SEALING.

*metal clank*

Saya: AGH!?

Ayana: Don't try to move anymore! Your entire body will get sealed at this point!

Saya: ……

UNABLE TO INITIATE PROJECT COLLIDE. DELETING PROJECT….

Ayana: Stop this right now! Do not delete the project!

DETECTED SUBJECT. SCANNING….

Saya: What's it doing now…?

Ayana: *breaks sweat* …..

ENERGY CORE A FOUND. BEGINNING FUSING SEQUENCE.

*steam*

Energy tubes were coming out the compartments of the machine.

Saya: *horrified* A-Ayana…?
Ayana: I don't know what the hell's happening, okay!? The machine started acting like this on its own!

Saya: Isn't there an emergency shut down button!?

Ayana: Yes, but I can't access it due to all of the tubes blocking the way!

*whoosh* 5x

Saya: *pained grunts*

Each energy tube were being injected into Saya's back.

Saya: A-Agh…. It hurts…

Ayana: There! *runs up to the emergency button*

SUBJECT B DETECTED NEAR SHUT DOWN BUTTON.
UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS. SPEEDING UP PROCESS.

Ayana: Back off!! *grabs one of the machines hands*

*machine whirring*

Ayana: *grunts*

Ayana grabs the other machine hand to prevent it from grabbing Ayana. However this soon turns to be futile.
*metal clanking* 6x

Ayana: What the- *yells in pain*

The hands that Ayana grabbed turned into vacuum tubes, sucking both of her arms in.

Saya: A-Ayana…!

Ayana: *pained grunts*

BOTH SUBJECTS COMPROMISED. BEGINNING FINAL STAGE.

As soon as the machine started its final step, Saya was immediately being lift up close to an energy transfer helmet.

Saya: W-What! No! LET ME GO YOU DAMNED MACHINE!!

Saya is seen kicking and screaming while being restrained like a child having a tantrum, but it wasn't for attention, but out of desperation.

Saya: *angry* I SAID LET ME GO!!!

*electricity* 30x

Saya: *yells*

*bang* 10x

APPLYING TRANSFER DEVICE.

Saya: *grunts*

Saya's head was being restrained by the robot hands that Ayana grabbed earlier, now it's holding her head in place.

Saya: *winces* (Why do I even bother with helping if I'm just gonna be used again…. Maybe I shouldn't have joined NEO…. All I wanted was to live… I'm sorry-)

Saya's thoughts were being interrupted by a strong wave of electricity going inside of her head. Unable to fully think and speak rationally, all is left is a copy screaming.

Ayana: **SAYA!!!**

DEVICE FULLY APPLIED. ACTIVATING ENERGY CYCLE.

Ayana: A-Agh… *pained grunts*

FORMING ENERGY CORE B… STABILIZING.

Ayana: !?

*electricity*

An over surge of quantum energy is flowing through Ayana's body from Saya's body. The sudden high voltage and energy is exceeding the amount that an average human can take. Ayana's body itself is turning into energy.

Ayana: *pained screams*

BOTH ENERGY CORES ARE NOW FORMED. ACTIVATING MACHINE OPERATING SYSTEM.

*machine whirring*

*coding*

All of the statuses listed about the machine have spawned in front of the two cores.

CHARGING CORES TO FULL CAPACITY.

Ayana: Augh…. Agh- STOP IT-
**AAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!**

*crack* 3x

Ayana's brain waves are being interrupted by the machine. Ayana can no longer move at her own will.

Saya: AYANA!!

*electricity*

Saya: WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS!? NO!!!

Behind a wall of no listeners, the girls are both at the mercy of an unresponsive machine. As Ayana became one with the machine, it didn't take long for Saya to become part of it as well.

Saya: *excruciated* SOMEONE HELP US!!!! IT HURTS SO MUCH!!!
**NNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

*electricity* 30x

BOTH CORES STABILIZED. NO INTERFERENCE DETECTED. ALL SYSTEMS STABLE. QUANTUM ENERGY AT GREEN LEVELS.

*crack* 5x

PRODUCING MISSION: ANNIHILATING OBSTACLES.

RECONNING ANOMALIES…

3 DETECTED ANOMALIES.

OPERATING…. X-LEVEL PROTOCOL.
INITIALIZING: PROJECT PARADOX.

With the last statement of the machine, the sound proof barrier broke.

*shatter*

## Scene 9: Southern Tower Surveillance Hall

*blast*

All: *yells*

Min: What the hell!?

Casey: *grunts*

I.D.A.: Is everyone okay?

Min: Y-Yeah…

Casey: *nods*

Min: Thanks, I.D.A.

I.D.A.: Save your gratitude for later! There's a special event occurring!!

Min: Huh?

Casey: …..

As the mist dissipates, the robot that was once decommissioned, is now in full operating mode.

Min: Isn't that the robot that Saya and Ayana went on!? It looks different now!

Casey: Yeah… And look.. *points to the broken center*

At their dismay, both Ayana and Saya are being controlled by the machine.

Casey: That machine prevented them from escaping during all of this.. Saya was about to leave but the machine couldn't let her.

Min: An emergency protocol… *pulls up analyst status*

*typing*

*short circuits*

Min: Agh!

Casey: You okay!?

Min: Y-Yeah… I have never seen anything like this…. This machine… is classified as a Guardian FOE?

I.D.A.: That should be impossible,  but due to the sudden influence of both Ayana and Saya's DNA controlling the machine, it somehow manages to operate just like a Guardian FOE would.

Casey: That machine is an anomaly on its own!

Min: Guardian… Paradox…?
Casey: Paradox?

Min: It doesn't even classify as an organic or natural entity… Due to its nature and artificial intelligence influence, it somehow gained sentience. Thus making it a paradox because of two people of the same copy.

Casey: It cannot gain sentience! What will happen if all of the AI in this building gain that ability, too!?

Min: If that happens, Silvene is doomed!

I.D.A.: It is crucial to acknowledge that all AI that are under the influence of Paradox cannot be dismissed!

Casey: Yeah… I gotta shut it down now!

Min: Okay…. Casey, listen here! Paradox is being energized by a powerful energy output, which is the Core! If you destroy the Core, you should be able to take this machine down!

I.D.A.: Take caution… Paradox is more powerful than Leo and Golem combined! Normal attacks will be deemed useless here.

Casey: I have to use charged attacks then.

I.D.A.: Ah-

Min: Not like you got any choice. You will have to go all out with your Quantum Gear!

Casey: *breaks sweat* ….Even if it means going past OVERDRIVE?

I.D.A.: *worried* If it reaches that point, I'll warn you, but won't tell you to stop.

Min: !?

Casey: I.D.A…

I.D.A.: So, time is of the essence! I'll stand by you as assistance!

Min: Please, both of you… Be careful…

Casey: We will, Min. Ready I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Activating Combat Protocol.

*sheen*

*whoosh*

I.D.A. transformed her left arm into a cannon.

Casey: Quantum Gear: Engage!

*burst*

Casey: I don't know who the hell you are, using the both for your own personal gain. You messed with the wrong Order! *pulls up sleeves*

*dash burst* 2x

With her starting war cry, both Casey and I.D.A. launched themselves off the top balcony of the room and started to rush after Paradox.

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: Quantum Rush!!

*whoosh*
I.D.A.: Be mindful of your energy, Casey! We have to use it wisely!

Casey: I know! I just need more than enough time to blast them all out of there!

Paradox: YOUR ATTEMPTS WILL BE NOTHING BUT FUTILE. ANY RESISTANCES SHALL BE ELIMINATED.

*energy surging*

Paradox loads up 10 cannons out of its arsenal and starts to shoot at Casey and I.D.A.

Casey: !

*blast* 10x

Casey: *dodges*

I.D.A.: Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

*blast* 2x

I.D.A.: Iridescent Blast!!

*blast*

*rumble*

Casey: Nice shot, I.D.A.

I.D.A.: Appreciate the compliment.

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*slam*

Casey leaped into the air and slammed their fists onto the head of Paradox, managing to leave it immobilized for a short second before launching its attacks again.

Paradox: STOP RESISTING. ORGANIC LIFE SHOULD NOT INTERFERE.

*rupture*

Casey: !?

*slam*

Casey: Ugh…. *gets up* Okay…. Get it together… *runs off*

I.D.A. can be seen shooting out of her cannons to slow Paradox down in order for it to not get close to the exit door and Min. Due to her speed, I.D.A. should not have to worry about getting hurt, but has to worry about Casey's safety.

Casey: I.D.A.!

I.D.A.: I'm still stalling it down! Keep attacking it! *dodges*

*blast* 5x

Casey: Quantum Smash!!

*slam* 3x

Casey slammed into the ground to trap the Guardian, but it crashed through the reinforcements.
Casey: *grunts*

Casey dashed up under Paradox to see if it has any weak points exposed, to no avail, there isn't one, however Casey can take the opportunity to smash between its legs.

Casey: *battle cry*

*smash* 10x

Casey: Quantum Barrage!!

*thwack* 15x

Casey: *grunts* *yells*

*electricity*

*crack* 3x

Casey: !

Paradox: CAUTION. DAMAGE TO LOW AREA DETECTED. CHARGING ATTACKS UP TO 50%.

The moment Paradox shouted its warning, the energy cores are now radiating a strong tone of light full of quantum energy.

*electricity* 30x

I.D.A.: Ah! Casey, get out of the way! It is planning something!

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: Yeah, I'm already on it! I took out its legs so it won't be able to move around!

I.D.A.: *summons Iridescent Shield* That's a wise idea. We should be able to land most of the attacks without any complications.

Paradox: LAUNCHING BREAKAWAY ATTACK…. INITIALIZING QUANTUM IMPACT.

*energy surging* 5x

*explosion*

Casey: !?

The blast pushed both Casey and I.D.A. away from Paradox, but due to the shield, the injuries were close to minimal.

Casey: Ugh… Damn it…

I.D.A.: Are you alright, Casey?

Casey: Yeah… But, that attack… It left a crack on your shield.

I.D.A.: I am aware. Unfortunately, that attack I detected is all-round, so eventually depending on how long this combat will take us, we might be forced to brace for the impending attack.

Casey: *grunts* Well, I'm not gonna let it have its way over us! *rushes to Paradox*

Paradox: STILL INTERFERING… ELIMINATE….

*blast* 20x

Casey: !

Casey ran from side to side to avoid any upcoming blasts coming from Paradox, a couple landed next to her, slowing her down by a slight amount.

Casey: *dodges* Quantum Smash!!

*smash* 5x

*crack* 3x

Casey jumped on one erosion to another while also activating his Quantum Rush to accelerate to Paradox.

Paradox: ELIMINATING ALL INTERFERENCES. GENERATING RETALIATION ATTACK.

*energy charging*

Casey: Not a chance! Quantum Barrage!!

*smash* 10x

*crack* 5x

*fuse blow*

Casey: *yells in pain*

*crash*

Core A: CRITICAL DAMAGE DETECTED. ACTIVATED RECOIL PROTOCOL.

Core B: ACTIVATION OF FULL CHARGE ATTACKS… SUCCESSFUL. TARGET ALL.

Casey: *pained* S-Saya… Ayana…

Casey suffered an injury from the same area that Tali stabbed them. Now they're having difficulty getting back into fighting again after hearing the captive core's voices.

Min: (Casey…. Hang in there, please!)

Min is seen checking left and right of both I.D.A. 's status and Casey's. Both of which are under STABLE, but Casey's Quantum Gear status is under the CAUTION level.

*crumble* 7x

I.D.A.: Iridescent Beam!

*laser blast* 5x

Paradox: MORE INTERFERENCE DETECTED.

*rumble* 3x

Paradox: ACTIVATION OF MACHINE GUN PROTOCOL.

I.D.A.: *gasp* Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

Paradox: FIRE.

*gun shots* 100x

Loads of quantum bullets being generated from the cores are launched into I.D.A., knocking her right back into a wall.

*crack* 2x

I.D.A.: *struggling* Not good…!

Casey: I.D.A.! Hang on! *rushes into Paradox*

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *grunts*

Casey launched themselves into the air on the left shoulder of Paradox.

*rapid metal footsteps*

Casey: Quantum Fist!!

*thwack* 10x

Casey smashed the left arm of Paradox, causing it to cease shooting at I.D.A.

Casey: Quantum Toss!!

I.D.A.: !!

Casey grabbed the fractured piece of Paradox and launched into the air.

Casey: *grunts*

Core B: ACTING IN SUCH A WAY. IT IS ALMOST CONSIDERED AMUSING.

Core A: ALL ATTEMPTS DO NOT MATTER AT THE END. THE OUTCOME WILL REMAIN THE SAME.

Casey: (Don't listen to them… It's nothing but the anomalies…)

Core A: ONE WILL BE SACRIFICED FOR A BETTER OUTCOME FOR ALL LIFE. INEVITABLY IS CERTAIN.

I.D.A.: *grunts* Iridescent Shatter!!!

*crack* 2x

*burst*

I.D.A. manually broke her shield to send all of the shards after Paradox. All of them managed to land a direct hit on it.

*electricity* 20x

Paradox: CRITICAL DAMAGE ON LEFT AND RIGHT COMPONENTS. UNABLE TO RELOAD.

I.D.A.: *glitches* Hah… Hah….

I.D.A. was losing power after the breakthrough attack.

I.D.A.: (Casey… Sorry…I hope you can continue alone. I made things easier for us.)

That was when Min looked up and saw I.D.A. not attacking anymore.

Min: *worried* I.D.A.!!!!

Casey: Huh? *looks down*

Casey looks at the same time as well, but was quickly taken off guard when she saw Min rushing towards I.D.A.

Casey: *grunts* (He better hurry up and get out of there!!) *launches off the ceiling wall*

Casey grabbed the launched fragment of Paradox and slashed into the head of the machine.

*SLASH*

Casey: Quantum Crusher!!!!

*SMASH*

*crack* 3x

*electricity* 25x

Core A: FATAL DAMAGE OCCURRED.

Core B: LEFT SIDE FATALLY DAMAGED. ACTIVATING PROTECTIVE PROTOCOL.

Paradox loads its second cannon and starts to charge at I.D.A. and Min.

Casey: (What the hell!? There's another one-) *turns around*

Casey's eyes widen at where Paradox is aiming at. It took no time at all for Casey to rush up in front of the cannon.

*rapid footsteps*

I.D.A.: C-C-Casey..!!

Min: I.D.A., we have to go now!!!

*energy surging*

Core B: MUST ELIMINATE ALL INTERFERENCES…

Casey: SAYA!!!!

*skids*

Casey: *pants* You two okay!?

Min: Yeah, I'm fine. I.D.A. is short circuiting, though… She can't fight.

I.D.A.: I'm sorry. I wanted to buy you more time..

Casey: You did great, don't worry about it!

*energy surging*

Paradox:  3 TARGETS FOUND. AIMING…

Casey: (Shit…) Min! I.D.A.! Hold on to my hands!

Min: Okay! *grabs Casey's hand*

I.D.A.: …. *grabs Casey's hand*

Casey: DON'T LET GO!!

Casey slams his foot on the ground and starts to spin around rapidly.

Min: ..!!!

I.D.A.: Getting… dizzy…
Casey: *grunts* QUANTUM TOSS!!!

Paradox: FIRE.

At the same time, Casey threw both Min and I.D.A. away from the radius blast of Paradox, preventing them from getting hit. However it took Casey a short amount of time to ready himself for impact.

*blast*

Casey: *grunts in pain*

*thud* 2x

Min: Ouch….

I.D.A.: Are you okay, Min!?

Min: My arm slightly stings… But, I'm gonna be okay.

I.D.A.: Sorry about your injured arm…

Min: *winces in pain* Y-Yeah.. But it's better than having a charred body.

I.D.A.: This is no time for amusement comedy!

Min: (Worth a shot..)

*energy radiating*

Casey: *grunts*

Casey is being pushed back slightly from the blast.

Casey: *breaks sweat* *yells*
Casey is now glowing a neon green hue from their eyes, hair, and Gear.

Casey: *grunts* *pants*

Casey, albeit a bit slow, is seen pushing the laser blast into Paradox.

Casey: *screams*

Paradox: DETECTING RESISTANCE… INCREASING BLAST.

*BLAST*

Min: !?

I.D.A.: *gasp*

Casey: *yells in pain*

Min: It’s in the DANGER zone!!!

I.D.A.: *breaks sweat*

Casey: (Please…! Snap out of it!!!! AYANA!!! SAYA!!!!) *screams*

In an intense struggle of his life, Casey continues to push through the harsh radiation of the blast. His Quantum Gear, despite being in the DANGER zone, isn’t backing down on its energy. But it is doing the opposite.

Casey: *war cry*

Core A: ARE YOU TRULY TRYING SO HARD TO CLING TO LIFE? WHY MUST YOU SAVE SOMETHING THAT YOU DESPISE?

Core B: STOP RESISTING. YOU ARE ATTEMPTING AT A FUTILE MANNER THAT YOUR PEERS HAVE DONE.
Casey: !!

Those words hit harder considering Casey knew who it was referring to.

Casey: *struggling* ….Maybe so… Guess I really am a hypocrite. But that doesn't mean that the attempt didn't save ANYONE!!!

*crack* 3x

Casey: It only… forged a new resolve for NEO…. AND MYSELF!!

Casey grabbed the radiated beam from Paradox, ignoring all of the pains that it is causing. With a bright green glow, and the screaming stress of a renowned fighter, absorbed the radiation into her Quantum Gear.

Casey: **QUANTUM….!!!! CONSUMPTION!!!!!!**

*crack* 5x

*explosion*

The combined quantum energy from both Paradox and Casey manifested an unusual, yet much stronger plane of energy.

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: Casey!!!

*warping* 20x

Casey: *struggling*

Paradox: UNIDENTIFIED ENTITY DETECTED. FAILED TO DIVERT AWAY FROM SOURCE. SOURCE IS PULLING WITH IMMACULATE FORCE.

I.D.A.: Both of their quantum energies formed some kind of breakthrough plane… I can't even detect what kind of energy it is!

Min: Yeah… All I'm getting is an error.. But look at Casey!

The monitor shows Casey's status as ???.

I.D.A.: It can't even detect Casey's current status….?

Min: Yeah… I think him taking all of the energy out of Paradox's cannon caused it. But now the recoil is generating some sort of new physical energy that is sucking the both of them in!!

I.D.A.: …..

Around Paradox and Casey, everything is starting to distort in such a matter that cannot be questioned. Even their physical and artificial forms are also starting to distort.

Casey: (What the hell is happening to me!? Why is everything….? Everything….)

*rumble* 10x

The entire tower is starting to shake.

I.D.A.: Min, hold on to me!

Min: *grunts* *grabs I.D.A.*

Min shuts his eyes out of fear of being the next one to get dragged into what unknown plane that has spawned in front of them. All of the sounds of

the machinery being dragged in, the struggling sounds of Casey, and the strong sounds of unknown energy was all they could hear for the past 3 minutes, until everything went silent.
*silence*

Everything that didn't get sucked in, all fell down to normal gravity.

*crumble* 35x

Min: *panting*

I.D.A.: …..

Min: Oh… my… What..?

I.D.A.: Everything's gone… Paradox and Casey…

Min: Huh!?

Min rapidly pulls up the analyst board to check on Casey. To his dismay, nothing is showing up.

Min: *scared* N-No… You don't think that energy took them somewhere even where I can't identify them….?

I.D.A.: I can't say for sure… That energy plane took them to an unknown area, so they have to be still alive. Don't worry, Min.

Min: I know you're telling me not to worry… But…

Some tears are forming on Min's face.

Min: *slightly crying* But even if it's something that even I don't know anything about, how can I not worry about Casey…?

I.D.A.: …..

Min: I’m so sorry, but I’m getting so scared…. We managed to pull through up until this point… This can’t be it…. It just can’t be the end of the line..

I.D.A.: *uncertainty* ….Wait here. *pats Min’s head*

*footsteps*

I.D.A. slowly walks up to the area where Casey and Paradox last stood.

I.D.A.: Hmm….

I.D.A. slowly reaches her hand into the warped area of the form and suddenly reacts in a way that she started glitching.

I.D.A.: *glitches* M-M-M-Min!! T-T-There’s something-g-g there!!

Min: Huh!? *rapidly gets up*

*running footsteps*

I.D.A.: T-T-There!!

Min: ….

Min reached out in the same way as I.D.A.

*electricity* 10x

Min: !?

Min’s eyes are glowing in a pink color, along with his analyst board queuing in on Casey’s whereabouts.

Min: *panicked* What the hell was that…?

I.D.A.: That's the same feeling I felt! Something's within that plane!

Min: …..

Min goes back to check on the status board. All of the information about Casey is now displayed.

Min: *gasp* I.D.A.! I can read Casey's status again!

I.D.A.: That's wonderful news!

Min: It says that Casey's in… "Metaphysical Warp Tunnel"?

I.D.A.: See if you can contact him!

Min: Okay, I'll try.

*typing*

……..

## Scene 10: Metaphysical Warp Tunnel

*silence*

Nothing can be heard from the inside. All of the objects and debris that were sucked in alongside Casey and Paradox can be seen crashing into each other and sending them down to a location that cannot be questioned.

Casey: …….

*echoing*

*Min: Casey!!*

Casey: *grunts*

A faint sound of Min's voice can be heard to fight back the silence.

Casey: *tired* M-Min…?

Min: Casey, wake up!

Casey: *slowly gets up* Huh…? Where…

Casey looked around in a white and pale blue space where everything has a start and end surrounding nowhere.

Min: Can you hear me? We're on the outside of the plane!

Casey: Y-Yeah, I can… How are you doing that?

Min: I managed to touch that warped patch form and I was able to connect with you. Where's Paradox?

Casey: Paradox? *gets up*

Casey looked around to find Paradox.

Casey: Found it! It's way far to the right of the plane!

Min: Okay, good. I don't know what kind of area this place is, but I don't think you should be here for a long period of time.

Casey: Why…?

Min: I generated some energy from the plane and it is comparable to one of a black hole. The gravity is all over the place, there's no sense of time there, and everything is going to unknown areas. Not to mention, your physical body is being affected as well. I'm not sure how long you have been in there considering it took us 5 minutes to get back in contact with you.

Casey: 5 minutes… I was knocked out for more than that!!

Min: That settles it. You have to get out of here. Find Paradox and finish the job. Remember that the Core is its main power source. Shut it down, and this plane is done for!

Casey: Don't need to tell me twice!

Min: Please be careful, Casey. You have to maintain your newly acquired quantum energy, too. You better save it at the most precise time.

Casey: Got it. I'll put an end to this, so that we can all go home.

Min: Yeah.

Casey: *activates Quantum Rush*

*whoosh*

Casey ran from one side to the other while avoiding incoming obstacles that were coming towards her. The silence of the impacts are not helpful in the slightest, but she doesn't let one minor setback become a major inconvenience to her.

Casey: *grunts*

*whoosh*

Casey: W-Woah!

Casey jumped into the air, leaping them with greater heights than they anticipated.

Casey: (Everything is slowing down when I jump like this… Though I can see everything around me, the moment I start to land again, everything is going to accelerate.. I have to prepare myself for that.)

Casey locates the next part of the ground to land on and focuses on the landing spot.

Casey: !

A metal boulder is seen being hurled towards Casey with lighting speed.

Casey: Quantum Fist!

*blast*

Casey: !?

The blast knocked back Casey away from the assigned spot that he was originally going to land on.

Casey: (Not.. good!)

Casey grabbed the next debris that was also dragged in the metaphysical plane, gliding them to the right spot.

*lands*

Casey: …..

Casey is getting close to Paradox.
Casey: It’s getting closer. But it is not budging at all… Hey Min?

Min: Yeah?

Casey: Can you check Paradox’s status?

Min: Sure. Give me a moment.

Casey: *grunts*

*rapid footsteps*

While Min is checking on Paradox, Casey makes the next move on getting closer to Paradox.

Casey: Huh?

When Casey was getting closer to Paradox, suddenly Paradox’s placement was moving towards the bottom side of the plane.

Casey: (And now it's below me…?)

Min: I got it. Paradox is charging its attack.. I think it’s going to do that same attack used on I.D.A. before! You better head over here because it's gonna send you far away!

Casey: …..

*rapid footsteps*

Casey continued the march and jumped down while pushing the debris out of the way. Some even gave Casey the boost needed to rush down there. Suddenly upon close proximity, Casey’s gravity was returned to normal.

*crash*
Casey: *pained* Ugh…. Damn it…

Min: Are you okay!?

Casey: Yeah… I made it. But that's where I ran into another problem.

Min: ?

Casey: The gravity is back to normal on this platform. I cannot jump very high like before.

Min: …..

Casey: At least I'm face to face with Paradox, and it looks like you're right. The Cores are both generating enough energy to take me out. …They're both turning a bright cyan, though.

Min: I got an idea, Casey. Remember when I said you have to deliver the final blow with precise timing?

Casey: !

Min: Right here. You HAVE to charge right here, otherwise it will not work. Right now, you have the same amount of power as Paradox. It's best to launch everything you have at the machine!

Casey: I see what you're putting down.

Min: Please Casey. This is the only chance we all have.

Casey: *charging Quantum Gear* I'll be okay. Thanks for the help, Min.

Min: Glad I could help you.

Casey: Also, when I do land the hit in, you better go to a safe place. I don't know how big the knockback's gonna be.

Min: Got it. Me and I.D.A. will go somewhere safe-

*interference*

<DETECTED LIFEFORM.>

<LIFE FORM MUST BE ANNIHILATED.>

<INITIALIZING QUANTUM MELTDOWN.>

<STARTING COUNTDOWN… 60  SECONDS.>

Casey: *breaks sweat*

*burst*

Casey: I'm not gonna let you have your way, you piece of scrap!!

*rapid footsteps*

<RESISTANCE IS FATAL.>

Casey continues to rush up to Paradox while also being aware of the amount of time they have left. Most of the debris was being dragged into Paradox due to the overwhelming amount of energy being gathered.

Casey: *dodges* *grunts*

Casey started to accelerate towards lightning speed, and thanks to the influence of the metaphysical plane, the speed limit was broken on Casey's terms.

<ONE WILL BE REDUCED TO NOTHING.>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Casey: *yells*

Electricity is starting to form from both Paradox and Casey due to the amount of quantum energy they're generating. Going beyond the limits that the both of them can handle, their bodies were also starting to deteriorate.

<THE PROMISE WILL BE DISINTEGRATED.>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Casey's eyes are fading away leaving nothing but the white glow emitting off of their pupils. Casey is running at the speed of light.

<WHY MUST YOU TRY?>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Casey: *overwhelmed* YOU'RE BEING SUCH A PAIN!!

Flashes of Casey's parents, family, Dante's team, Tali's team, and even their own appeared.

Casey: WHO CARES IF I TRY? I HAVE MANAGED TO FORGE A BETTER MENTAL FORTITUDE FOR MYSELF AND EVERYONE I LOVE!! SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND!!

*electricity*

<ALL LIFE CAN'T BE ANSWERED BY A TRIVIAL THOUGHT.>

<ALL CHOICES WILL BE MEANINGLESS IN THE END.>

<ALL PATHS WILL LEAD TO ONE OUTCOME.>

<NONE SHALL BE AVOIDED.>

<PARADOX ANOMALY PROGRAM. SHUTTING DOWN.>

Casey: *screams*

*whoosh*

Casey jumped from the ledge of the final platform and launched himself at Paradox with such high precision.

Casey: QUANTUM….!!!

*crack* 10x

Casey: **DISCHARGE!!!!**

*crack* 20x

*blast*

The impact landed a direct hit on the inner core.

Casey: ….Light’s out.

*shatter*

*alarm blare*

Core A: DANGER. DANGER. INNER CORE FATALLY DAMAGED.

Core B: UNABLE TO REVERT ANY BACKUP PROTOCOLS. UNABLE TO GENERATE QUANTUM ENERGY. RIGHT CORE SHUTTING DOWN.

Core A: FAILED TO RESTART. FAILED TO RESTART. STABILITY LEVELS DROPPING. LEFT CORE SHUTTING DOWN.

*crack* 50x

Casey: *closes eyes*

Within a brief moment of silence, the radiated energy of both Paradox and Casey destroyed the Metaphysical Plane. Everything was then reduced to nothing, as it never happened.

……..

……

……

……..

Scene 11: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

Min: Ah.

The current status of both Paradox and Casey are shown to be corrupted.

Min: Did they do it..?

I.D.A.: Hm.. I don’t see any updates on my scanner…. Maybe time is warped over there perhaps?

Min: Possibly.. I think Casey mentioned that they were knocked out for more than 5 minutes.. Ever since that last communication we had, that was 10 minutes ago..

I.D.A.: ……

Min: *squints eyes*

Min noticed that the same area that he interacted with before is warping again, but with electric sparks emitting off of it.

Min: H-Hey, I.D.A.! I see something!

I.D.A.: Yes, I am aware! We shouldn’t get too close!

Min: Can you still activate your shield?

I.D.A.: I can! Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

Although I.D.A. can still summon the shield, it is still damaged.

I.D.A.: Sorry, it’s the best I can manage for now..

Min: That’s okay. Honestly, I don’t know what’s going to come out of there, so it wouldn’t hurt to stay cautious.

*rumble*

I.D.A.: !?

Min: A-Agh! The ground’s shaking so violently!

I.D.A.: The magnitude is on an intense level! We have to get under something!

Min: Uh…! *rapidly looks around* I think that computer keyboard is our only way out! Hurry!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

*crumble* 5x

*crack* 4x

*crash* 20x

I.D.A.: Min!

Min: I know! Keep the shield up! I don’t wanna get another broken arm…

Min and I.D.A. kept on running towards the keyboard monitor and managed to arrive there safely.

Min: *pants*

I.D.A.: !!

*energy surging*

*explosion*

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: Brace for impact!!!

Min: *covers head*

The warped area started to get even bigger, and within 10 seconds, everything surrounding the area turned into white.

*BLAST*

*high-pitched ringing*

……

…….

## Scene 12: Southern Tower: Destroyed Surveillance Hall

After the blast, all of the debris that was sucked in the plane, were violently ejected away from the warped area and sent across the room, damaging almost everything in its path. The Guardian Paradox and Casey themselves were also ejected from the space, leaving an injured Casey and a destroyed Paradox.

*crumble* 15x

Min: Agh… I can’t see…

I.D.A.: I still can. Activating night vision mode.

*sheen*

I.D.A.: Are you okay, Min?

I.D.A. reached out to where Min is, who is still covering his head in fear.

Min: I-I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Right here, in front of you!

Min: A-Ah.. *tries to wave his hands to where I.D.A.'s voice is*

Min: Oh! There you are…

I.D.A.: *giggles* I'm glad to see that you're not injured again.

Min: Yeah, same goes for you. But, now we have another problem, we're caved in.

I.D.A.: Not for long! *summons cannon*

*blast*

I.D.A. was still in her combat module and summoned a cannon to blast all of the fallen debris away.

*crumble* 5x

Min: *shocked* Ugh… That could've been bad, you know? Suddenly blasting the blocked boulders away…

I.D.A.: Do not worry, Min! I made sure that our safety remains our 1# priority!

Min: …..

Min and I.D.A. crawled out of their temporary hiding place from the sudden earthquake. The entire area has been reduced to nothing but rocks and broken machinery.

Min: Oh god..

I.D.A.: Let me do a recon.

*scanning*

Min started to walk to the same place where the warped plane was, only to find nothing there.

Min: (It’s gone.)

I.D.A.: There are one critically injured person and two gravely injured people here!

Min: Did you say “gravely”!?

I.D.A.: I’m afraid so. This is a time for the last EHK to be used at once.

Min: Ugh…! Casey!!! Where are you!?

Min is seen running all frantically hoping that Casey is not on the verge of death.

Min: *scared* CASEY!!! ANSWER ME PLEASE!!!

*crumble*

Min: H-Huh…? *turns around*

Multiple rocks were moving off of the buried person below.

Min: !!

*rapid footsteps*

*crack* 2x

Casey: *pained* Ngh…

Min: C-Casey…!

Casey: *coughs* *pants* Hey… Min…

Without hesitation, Min pulls Casey out of the debris with his normal arm.

Min: *grunts*

*crumble* 4x

Min: *pants*

Casey: Phew… That couldn't be worse than what I had to do… Thanks Min-

Min quickly gave Casey a hug.

Min: *tearing up* Don't you EVER do that again…! Please…

Casey: …..

Min: I know what you had to do… But that cockiness of yours nearly killed you today…..

Casey: ….Sorry. I'm just doing my job. I won't ever pull off that stunt again.

Min: I can't promise that for some reason…

Casey: *slightly laughs* Yeah, you got me. But still, I'm glad to see you alright.

Min: *nods*

Casey: *winces* Aagh…

Min: *pulls away from Casey* Oh my god! I'm sorry!

Casey: No, no..! You're fine! Ugh… Guess I have to kiss my gear goodbye, though.

Min: Huh?

Min noticed that Casey's Quantum Gear isn't glowing anymore.

Min: Oh.. So you did go into OVERDRIVE when you were stuck in the Metaphysical Warp Tunnel.

Casey: Hahaha… I didn't have a choice. That thing was going to pull a kamikaze move that was gonna take the both of us out.

Min: …Wait, kamikaze-

Casey: Better yet, where's I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: I'm here!

Casey: Oh!

I.D.A.: I just got done scanning the area. And we have no time to waste either. Two people are on the verge of passing on.

Casey: ….

Min: Did you find them?

I.D.A.: They were not inside of Paradox…

Min: Huh!?

Casey: Hold on guys, I think I found them. Follow me.

*footsteps* 3x

Min and I.D.A. both followed the same direction that Casey was taking, and found both Ayana and Saya bleeding internally.

I.D.A.: *gasp*

Min: N-No… Saya..! Ayana!

Casey: …..

Min: I.D.A.! Check how much time they have left!

I.D.A.: Affirmative…

*coding*

*warning beep*

I.D.A.: Not much.. They both collectively have 6 minutes left before they perish…

Min: Damn it all… We have to choose to save….?

Casey: …..

Min: No, no, no! I don't want that…! They both deserve to live like we all do! ….This isn't fair..

Min collapsed on the floor in grief.

Casey: ….The more we complain, the less time we have left. We better hurry up and decide.

I.D.A.: Casey's right, Min. I'm sorry, but we better make a decision now.

*wheezing*

Casey: !

Min: Huh…?

I.D.A.: ?

A faint wheezing breathing noise can be heard.

Casey: …..

Min: Who is it..? I can’t tell from the darkness.

I.D.A.: It’s Saya.

Both: !?

I.D.A.: Saya, don’t move your body, we’re coming.

*footsteps*

Casey: *crouches down* Saya..

Min: ….

Everyone is surrounding a gravely injured Saya. Her back and head are covered in blood, but her arm where her Quantum Gear was, badly stabbed her arm, like glass cutting through her.

Saya: *weak* ….Everyone?

Min: Yes, we’re here!

Casey: I didn’t have a choice, Saya. That attack that Paradox was doing-

Saya: I know.. I didn't want this either. None of us did.. And yet, I was foolish thinking that if I just went along with Ayana's plan, everything would've turned out okay. I was a fool.

Casey: *grunts*

Min: Don't say that! You're not a fool, Saya! You're different from all those Doppelgangers! You have humanity like us! You were trying to make things right despite everything…

Saya: …..Min.

Min: You have sympathy, empathy, spirit… You have a heart! A soul even! And if you're misunderstood, you are willing to understand anyway!

Saya: M-Min…

Min: *scared* And…! And..! You were so happy being with us! Happy that you're willing to give out a helping hand for everyone back in Zenith City!

Saya: That's all a lie, though. I technically didn't do any of that.

Min: ….?

Saya: I was the one… who took Ayana's original place. I played in her story, not me. I wasn't meant to be here, I'm nothing more… than an anomaly.

Min: But…! Even then..!

Casey grits their teeth in frustration.

Saya: …Give the EHK to Ayana.

Everyone: !!

Casey: This is our choice! Why are you making decisions for us!?

Saya: Haha… I didn't mean to pry into your conversation earlier… But I did make a promise to Ayana that I'm willing to make things right again for her… Even after everything that I've done to hurt you all in some way.

I.D.A.: Are you sure you want me to give the EHK to Ayana…?

Saya: …..

Casey: …..

Min: ……

Saya stayed silent for a short 30 seconds giving in some thought. She didn't agree with the motivation given for Ayana to make Paradox, but the influence of White Darkness affected everyone like the plague, all because of Saya being scared of dying. She didn't want things to escalate to this point, which is why she's willing to change for the better.

Saya: Yeah, I'm sure.

I.D.A.: ……

I.D.A. didn't say anything to retort, as she programmed herself to give the last EHK to someone that is on the verge of death.

*shock*

I.D.A.: There are no more Emergency Heal Kits left. Everyone, let's…. Let's prepare to say our final goodbyes to Saya Johnson.

I.D.A.: couldn't keep her formal composure for long, as she didn't think that her premonition would come true. Tears were starting to form on I.D.A.'s face. Something that an android isn't capable of doing.

I.D.A.: *emotional* I'll start. Saya, thank you for having me to be part of your life and journey. I'm so, so, so grateful that I could be your assistance to the very end. It felt short, but I'm glad to have spent 7 days on the mission with you. You're a valiant fighter, Saya, shining bright like a diamond…

Saya: Haha… Thanks I.D.A.

I.D.A. started to weep.

Saya's eyes turn over to Min and Casey.

Saya: What's wrong guys? You're not gonna say anything?

Min: *crying* I…. I.D.A. said what I wanted to say, so…

Saya: I'm sure there is something in that smart head of yours, Min.

Min closes his eyes trying not to wail in his tears.

Min: I… *sighs* *sniffs* I'm happy that we got to experience this mission together. Even if we did have our ups and downs. You kept all of us company despite us being different. Your personality will be hard to replace I'm sure. I don't think…. there could be anyone else like you..!!!

Min rapidly got up and started to cry.

Saya: That's what I thought, Min. I'm glad. Casey?

Casey: H-Huh?

Saya: I'm waiting, you know.

Casey: Sorry, it's just…

Casey’s eyes weren't focused on Saya at all in order to keep her composure.

Casey: I’m bummed out that this is the last time we’re gonna talk like this. I kinda wished this was under a different circumstance.

Saya: Same.

Casey: But.. I’ll be damned to refuse to call you my partner. I know what I said, and I still stand by it. But… before that, you didn’t have anyone else to go back to. I helped you get back on your feet, and I made sure that those novice missions were easy for you.

Saya: Hehe.. But those missions were too easy for me anyways.

Casey: I wanted to make it easy for you so that no one can struggle when they all join NEO. You’re different however. You fought through hell and back trying to survive and that.. that alone was very impressive. I have never seen anything like it.

Saya: *nods*

Casey: Basically, what I’m trying to say is…. Thank you Saya. Thanks for fighting alongside us to return Silvene back to normal.

Saya: You’re welcome… And… I would like to say a few things since.. Well… my vision is getting blurry and all.

Casey: *struggling* What is it?

Saya: Even though it was my choice, I still feel bad. I remember everyone back in District 2 that I promised I was gonna come back.. I still remember Sharen's face. He looked so happy…. And I still wonder where Harako and Tali are.. Maybe they can return back to Zenith City when they hear that Ayana's coming home….

Min: ……

I.D.A.: That could be a possibility…

Casey: But, Saya… Didn't you say you're scared of dying?

Saya: Ah… That… I think you misinterpret me there, Casey. By myself, I was scared of dying alone because I'm just gonna be forgotten. But now….

Saya is looking at the team with tears.

Saya: I'm not scared anymore… I can pass on with my memory living on to all of you, and everyone that I've met on this mission. I have developed a clear conscience.

Casey: !

Min: C-Conscience…?

Saya: *nods* I don't feel bad anymore. I felt like I did something right in the end anyway. I can hear the waves.. The waves are taking me somewhere…

I.D.A.: …Where?

Saya: Some…where… ethereal….. That we… can..

All….

Smile together….

Casey: Like the beach..? You… wanna go to the beach for real..?

Saya: …….

Casey: S-Saya…?

Saya: ……

Min: *gasp* Gggh….!!

I.D.A.: …..

Casey: ….Oh.

I.D.A.: ……. *turns around*

Casey: ……. *picks up Saya*

Casey: …! (She's so cold… Just like the ocean waves….)

*low tone alert*

I.D.A.: …..She's enjoying the deep sea now.

A status report showed on I.D.A. that reads: "Saya Johnson is dead."

Casey: Is… she… now…

I.D.A.: I'm sorry. I know what I said, but….

Casey: No, you're just doing your job, I.D.A. There's no one to blame.

Min: *breaking* S-Saya…! SAYA!!!

I.D.A.: Oh, Min….

Casey: (What the hell, Saya… Leaving us like this…)

*drip* 2x

Casey is shown to be crying as well after looking at Saya's peaceful face.

Casey: *crying* That's… a very cocky move of you…

Everyone eventually started to cry at the sacrifice that Saya made. The girl who didn't want to die and wanted to live in a way that she wanted to be happy, carefree, protective, and energetic, made up her mind as she makes sure that Ayana returns home safe. It is troubling, but what can be done?

Ayana: …….

Ayana was struggling to move after the attack. Her former injury damaged her neck area, causing her to bleed from the artery. Thankfully I.D.A. placed the EHK on that area so it can be healed, however her arms were badly scratched up.

Ayana: …..?

I.D.A.: *sniffs* H-Huh?

Ayana: *struggles to get up*

I.D.A.: Everyone, look! *points to Ayana*

Casey: ….

Min: …..

None of them turned around.

I.D.A.: Ayana?

Ayana: W-What…? How am I….? I should be dead… How am I alive..?
I.D.A.: Saya ordered me to put the last EHK on you.

Ayana: ….She did?

I.D.A.: Yes. She basically gave up her life just to save yours.

Ayana: …..

Ayana couldn't reply after that. She did want to have her old body back, but now she can't even get it. But she is still alive regardless.

Ayana: I wished I could've said thanks.

I.D.A.: I know. Hey, can you stand?

Ayana: Y-Yeah.

*footsteps*

Ayana: A-Ah..

Ayana took a glance at Saya's… or rather Ayana's former body and it was badly damaged.

Ayana: (The project's been deleted anyway, so it's not like it would've mattered.)

Ayana: I'm sorry.

Casey: …

Min: ……

Ayana: *sighs*

I.D.A.: Everyone, I know this is sad to go through, but we should all leave this place behind.

Min: *grieving* …Yeah. I don’t wanna be in this hellhole tower anymore.

*footsteps*

I.D.A.: M-Min…

Casey: Come on.

*footsteps* 3x

Everyone collectively left the damaged tower with no light in their eyes.

……..

……

## Scene 13: Southern Tower: Entrance

The moment they all got to the first floor, they noticed something unusual.

Ayana: Huh? The outside…. It’s dark?

Casey: ….! That means…!

*rapid footsteps* 4x

Everything surrounding them was pitch black, however the stars from the sky are slightly illuminating the area.

Min: The mist… It's gone!?

Casey: It finally dissipated. Thank god..

I.D.A.: Mission cleared! Well done, everyone!

Casey: Yeah… But somehow…

Casey's mood rapidly changed.

Casey: *sad* I don't feel happy about that.

*ringing*

Ayana: Hm?

Casey: It's Dante?

Min: Oh boy…

*click*

Dante: H-Hey, Casey! Something weird just happened when I was doing some recon! After the storm passed us, the mist suddenly vanished!

Casey: Oh, really?

Dante: Y-Yeah! That means we can finally go home! I wanted to tell you before we depart so that you don't suddenly get worried.

Casey: That's… cool.

Dante: …..You don’t sound pleased. Look, I get it that you wanted to be the one to take us back, but you saw what happened-

Casey: IT’S NOT THAT!

*silence*

Dante: H-Hey… Are you okay, Casey?

Casey: I’m sorry, Dante. Can we call later? I have to make an urgent call to the commander.

Dante: S-Sure. I’ll leave you to it.

*click*

Casey scrolled down to call the Marako on video.

*ringing* 2x

*click*

*sheen*

Marako: ….

Casey: Commander, our mission is done. We destroyed the main source of the tower which caused the white mist to disappear.

Marako: *grunts*

Casey: …..?

Marako: Let me once again congratulate you all on a job well done on stopping White Darkness. I know this wasn’t easy, and you all went through

near-death events that would have cost this mission a failure. But your resolve shined through in the end. I'm glad that you all returned safely.

Min: So.

Marako: ?

Min: Not gonna rub in the fact that someone died?

Marako: I already expected a casualty during this mission. Why else did I state that this mission was going to be daunting?

Min: *frustration* YOU COULD'VE BEEN MORE SYMPATHETIC!

Marako: That's what you all signed up for when joining NEO. You're putting your life on the line for everyone else back in Zenith City.

Min: …Huh?

Marako: It's harsh, but once you complete your mission, you don't have to continue anymore. The White Darkness event formed because of that tower, and caused all the FOEs and Doppelgangers to spawn. But since the source has been destroyed, there's no need for NEO anymore.

Ayana: So wait, you're abolishing the Order?

Marako: !

Marako turned around to see Ayana back alive.

Ayana: …..

Marako: Sa- No… You're Ayana, aren't you?

Ayana: In the flesh. Please don’t be mistaken, commander. I couldn’t get my body back, so I’m permanently stuck like this.

Marako: …..To return back to your question, yes. The Order will be abolished. However I still want to continue doing research on quantum energy. It is our main power source after all.

Min: ….?

Ayana: I see. Then you all….

Casey: Yeah. We can all finally go home.

Marako: I await your return. I once again thank you for saving Silvene.

Casey: *nods*

*click*

Casey: Tch. She didn’t care at least once about Saya.

I.D.A.: *sad* Oh….

Min: Whatever. I’m just glad to be done.

Ayana: …..

*footsteps*

Everyone remained quiet from the whole trip back. The lack of empathy still bothered Casey, which made their relationship on the rocks. First leaving the NEO members at the mercy of the FOEs, and now doesn’t even react to someone's sudden death. It left a bad taste on Casey.

……

Scene 14: Zenith City: City Gates

*footsteps*

Surveillance Camera: Scanning…

I.D.A.: I can't believe we're here again.

Min: Yeah, it felt like a long time, but it hasn't to be honest.

Ayana: ……

A faint ocean wave can be heard.

Ayana: …..Saya?

Casey: What's wrong?

Ayana: I can hear the waves…

Casey: Oh, that. She did mention she wanted to see them up close one day.

Surveillance Camera: 4 people and 1 A.I. detected. State your identity.

Casey: Come on.

Everyone pulled out their IDs and showed it to the camera.

Surveillance Camera: Confirmed. Casey Costello, Min Sakhonkhonon, Ayana Johnson, and I.D.A., Welcome back to Zenith City.
*gates opening*

I.D.A.: Wow…!

All 3: !

Zenith City returned back to its city pop look like before. The skyscrapers are illuminating, people wandering around in excitement, and the NEO members from Dante's group can be seen.

Sharen: Huh? HEY EVERYONE, LOOK!!!

Casey: (Oh no.)

Sharen: *excited* THEY'RE BACK!!

Dante: Okay, okay, Sharen. I hear you, but let's let them all be. They're very exhausted.

Sharen: Aww… Okay.

Casey slightly chuckled.

Casey: (Knew I can count on you, Dante.)

*footsteps*

After 7 days on the mission, Casey, Min, I.D.A., and Ayana returned home.

……..

Credits Scene 1: NEO Commander's Surveillance Center

Min explained the whole mission ordeal to Marako, while also trying to not cry when explaining how Ayana lived.

Marako: Ah. I see.

Min: Now you see what we had to go through…? It was terrible. I know this is going to be difficult, but…

Marako: I'm not going to repeat what I said earlier. That is your job as part of NEO.

Dante: Surely you could've gone easy on them all?

Marako: If I went easy on them, none of them would be alive right now. That is the reason why I established the elite branch of NEO, so that they will be able to handle such tasks. I have faith in you all, that's why I didn't want to go easy on you.

Casey: …..

Ayana: But with the mission done, you said there's no need for the Neonic Elliptical Order to go on anymore.

Marako: Yes, mainly because there's no need to keep fighting when the war is won. I still want to maintain this facility however. That's why I'm forming an organization starting next year, where our main priority is to conduct research on quantum energy.

Min: !

Marako: I was hoping, Min, after you take your break would you take the offer?

Min: Of course.

Casey: Then… What about the rest of us?

Marako: You can remain in NEO as a facility member, or you can quit. You can assist in the research like those who were in the analyst class.

Casey: …..

Dante: I want to do better at NEO, so I'm gonna remain a member here.

Casey: I'm not.

Dante: What?

Min: C-Casey..?

Casey: I want to spend time with my family. I spent too much time away from them, and I think it is about time I go back. I did most of the work during my time in NEO, so it's time for me to resign.

I.D.A.: O-Oh…

Marako: I understand. NEO will still be open for you if you decide to return back, but until then, I'm required to receive your uniform.

Casey: I know. I'll give it back to you tomorrow morning.

I.D.A.: Casey….

Casey: Oh, hey I.D.A.

I.D.A.: I didn't think you're going to resign… I'm going to miss you..

Casey: Hey, I'll come to visit from time to time! Just as long you come to visit us after work hours!

I.D.A.: R-Really…? Commander! Can I stay with Min!?

Min: *surprised* Eh!?

Marako: Do what you must.

I.D.A.: Hooray!! *hugs Min*

Min: Ah… (Some things don't change huh?)

Dante: I'll be sure to pay you guys a visit someday as well. It would be fun to do casual work for once!

Min: Yeah.. Same here.

Casey: *smiles*

Ayana: *taps Casey's shoulder*

Casey: Oh, right. Hey guys! We're gonna bounce.

Min: Oh, already?

Casey: Yeah, we both got some things to do.

Dante: Oh… Alright then. Stay safe, okay?

Min: See you later, Casey.

I.D.A.: Bye Ayana!!
Ayana: *nods* Later.

Casey: See ya!

*footsteps*

*door closes*

……..

As everyone returned to their homes, Min couldn't get the chance to introduce I.D.A. to Churai and Kusa due to them hugging the life out of Min happy that their young brother came back alive. Nin convinced them all to get off of Min thankfully, and Grandma On welcomed I.D.A. with open arms.

Dante and Sharen returned back living with Dante's brothers, almost making it an emotional reunion after being gone for so long.

NEO has been renamed to Neonic Elliptical Organization, where now they will patrol and conduct research on quantum energy.

As for Casey and Ayana…

……

Final Scene: Zenith City: City Gates (Cliffside)

*waves crashing*

*footsteps*

Casey is seen walking towards the same cliff that Saya always goes to listen to her music. The waves even now still calms Casey down.

Casey: Hey, Saya. Today's such a nice day, isn't it? I mean, the sun's finally out after a week of rain. I hope you didn't get too wet, though.

*waves crashes*

Casey: Oh hey. Something funny happened today. So we were all invited to have lunch over at Min's house, and they served some delicious Bangkok-style noodles. Unfortunately for I.D.A. and Zane, their mouths were on fire… At least Min didn't go on another rant about rice again…

*silence*

Casey: Man.. I wished you were still around with us, you know? Having to taste all this food and I can't share it with you. But everyone's doing alright now. Min, Dante, and I.D.A. remained members of NEO, and I resigned.

*waves crashes*

Casey: I just felt like… I don't know.. I did everything during my time in NEO, and I wanted to spend time with Zane, Fi, and Rosaria. I wanna be there for my siblings now, and my wife. Oh, right. We got married. I totally forgot to tell you that.

*waves flowing*

Casey: Maybe one day I'll return back to NEO, but as of right now. I'm with Ayana trying to get her situated. Harako and Tali are still out there, and with no FOEs standing in our way, finding them should be a breeze!

*silence*

Casey: I hope you're having fun out there, Saya. I'll come back next week to give you another update, okay?

*footsteps*

Ayana: So this is where you've been hiding.

Casey: *jolts* O-Oh… It's just you Ayana..

Ayana: Just me. Are we gonna head out or…?

Casey: Sorry! I'm just catching up with Saya!

Ayana: I see. (Even now, they're still….) *sighs* Okay, let me know when you're done.

Casey: Yeah, sure!

*footsteps*

*waves crashing*

Casey: Sorry, I have to go, but I promise to come back to talk to you again! So don't you worry, Saya.

Casey felt a water drop hitting his face.

Casey: Hehehe.. Miss you too. *turns around* Hold on, Ayana! *runs off*

Casey ran past a memorial statue of Saya before setting off, letting her enjoy the sights of the ocean all she wanted. As for Casey and Ayana, the search for Harako and Tali begins.

-Scarred Quantum Outcome A End-

## Final Episode B: Betrayed and Lost

How would you feel after living a life that you took ended up all being a lie and you were not aware of it? All of the memories you made, the experience that you learned, and the bonds you created, all of it was not you. Take note of this, as you come to the harsh realization that you were nothing but a fake just to save your own skin. But even after all that, after being exposed and possibly being exiled, will you still make things right?

## Scene 1: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

*silence*

Nothing but silence fills the air, along with the suffocating tension between everyone. Saya was still left teary eyed, Casey not willing to look at their former partner, Min looking at Saya with a conflicted look, and I.D.A. and Ayana remaining unfazed. As soon as Saya got herself together, she then looked up at Ayana.

Saya: Ayana, listen. I know that it looks like I'm in the wrong, and I have been putting in much thought… Everything from the tower 2 years ago, and then all of the events that have occurred since then running up to this point. I had an epiphany.

Ayana: An epiphany…?

Saya: I wasn't always like this. In fact, I was scared of dying. I didn't want my life to end here in this tower. I was so desperate to try to survive that I was surprised to see you come to us face to face. At first I thought you were trying to finish the job, but you had a look of sympathy…

Ayana: ….. Harako and Tali couldn't understand. Harako stated that I should just quit the team if I keep risking myself like this. That's why I went alone, so that they don't get in my way and get hurt. But they didn't listen. They followed along anyway.

Saya: Out of worry. They were worried about you-

Ayana: Please. You were just as startled when you heard them calling over and switched my mind and body for your salvation. I don’t need your pity.

Saya: …..

Min: Ayana, if you please. Harako and Tali didn’t come after us because they didn’t care about you, they did, but at a cost. Something happened to the both of them ALL because you stepped out without them knowing. Of course they would be worried. That’s human nature.

Ayana: Worrying endlessly is such an exhausting task. Why worry over something so trivial that can be resolved later?

Saya: ….What?

Ayana: What’s the point of it anyway? We’re nothing but a bunch of hardheaded human beings that don't even know the meaning of careful. We tried to be careful, but we just ended up shooting ourselves in the foot in the end. We all hope of some kind of three-spirited miracle that’s all a fluke. We all sealed our fate the moment we all joined NEO.

All: …..

Saya: It….

Ayana: ?

Saya: *serious* It wouldn’t hurt to at least try! I may be a doppelganger, but I still want everyone to go back to normal again! I understand what you all are going through, why else I joined NEO…? Because I felt a sense of gratitude from Casey’s parents, some vital advice from Min and I.D.A., and

everyone back in District 2 who let me experience wonderful hospitality! I want everyone to experience this again…. So that's why…

Saya balls up her Quantum Gear fist and releases some tension of her arm, and looks at Ayana with a sense of resolve in her face.

Saya: I'm going against Project Collide.

Min: ?

I.D.A.: ….

Casey looked up the moment Saya said her response.

Ayana: …..I'm sorry, I don't think I understand. What do you mean you're going "against it"?

Saya: Look, I'll be honest. I'm scared of dying, and even now. And I still feel bad about what I did, but… Going along with this project… How would you know if it's gonna work?

Ayana: I ran troubleshooting on the machine 23 times without fail. I KNOW it's going to work!

Saya: Even then… There are other ways to go about it! We can just go back to NEO and do that-

Ayana: *chuckles* Are you kidding? After what you took from me, now you're asking for some kind of compromise!? Aren't you going to take responsibility for your actions, Saya?

Saya: …..

Ayana: You only wanted to save yourself, just admit it.

Saya: *upset* I told you it was self-defense! I didn't have a choice! I thought you were setting up a lure just to take me out!

Ayana: I was trying to explain to you that there's nothing to worry about, but went along and took my body anyway!

*slam*

Ayana slammed her hand on the keyboard in frustration.

Saya: …..

Ayana: Look, I'm not getting your pity. You already made your mind up, and I already made up mine. It's fine. I'll just use the DNA substances from other Doppelgangers to make a replacement.

Saya: !

That when it hit Saya; Ayana's energy source for the unknown machine was those Doppelgangers. The same Doppelgangers that Saya was with a couple of years ago.

Saya: *angry* What… did you say…?

*footsteps*

Saya: HEY! I'M TALKING TO YOU!!!

I.D.A.: Saya…

Saya: Ugh!! Why the hell won't she listen to me!? I made the right choice, didn't I!?

I.D.A.: Saya… Whatever choice you made, you're not in the wrong. You just decided what was best for you to follow.

Saya: I know… But…

Saya looked back at Ayana who was starting up the machine alone.

Saya: The motivation that developed within Ayana…. I'm not proud of it. She ended up killing those people.

Casey: (Like that made any difference.)

Min: ….

Min has a curious look on his face looking at the paused footage.

Min: Hey, Saya?

Saya: What?

Min: There's something that has been bothering me about that footage..

Saya: Huh?

Min: It looks like it's already in mp4 format, you don't mind having us to look at it do you?

Casey: *suspicious* What are you suggesting here…? To prove Saya's innocence?

Min: Not exactly… I.D.A., can you retrieve the tape?

I.D.A.: I can! Please wait! *summons jet boosters*

*jet engine*

Min: Although Saya was the one that saw this entire tape, we haven't. We only saw a glimpse of the frame where Ayana was under the side effect of having her body being switched by Saya. I'm not trying to prove anyone's innocence here.

Casey: Sounds like you are…

Min: Well, I'm not! Can you drop it please?

Saya: *frustrated* Ugh…! What's the matter with the both of you!?

Saya shouted towards both Min and Casey in frustration.

Saya: I just said that I'm not asking for my innocence to be proven, nor asked to be forgiven in any capacity!

Min: I'm just curious about the tape is all. Nothing to prove anything. You're the only one that saw it, so we wanted to see for ourselves.

Saya: ……

Min: So, please calm down. All of us are on neither side.

Casey: …Fine. But don't look at me when you're proven wrong.

Min: *sighs*

I.D.A.: I have retrieved the tape!

Min: Good. Can you please play it for us?

I.D.A.: Affirmative!

As soon as I.D.A. presses play, they were all watching the same footage that Saya saw over again. At the same time, Ayana is seen operating on the machine by herself.

Saya: *looks at Ayana* Ugh….

Min: Saya?

Saya: N-Nothing. You said you wanna view the tape, right? I'm not gonna stop you, I'm just… gonna wait until you're done.

I.D.A.: Okay! Now playing….

Casey took a glance at Saya where she had a conflicted look on her face.

Casey: …..

……..

After viewing the footage…..

Min: *sighs* So that's what happened with the first team. This is nothing but a tragedy on both sides…

Casey: ……

I.D.A.: Hm… But wait a moment! There are some inconsistencies within the footage here! I think we may have to go in depth about this…

Casey: In depth?

Min: Actually I.D.A. has a point; there are some questions that need some answers. We all know what happened with Harako and Tali, Ayana's

whereabouts, and how Saya escaped the tower. But we're only scraping the surface here. Hey, Saya? Could you lend us a hand with this?

Saya: *turns around* Uh… Sure.

*footsteps*

Min then rewinds to the point where the footage is paused on Harako's arm being burned off.

Min: First off, Harako's arm was so badly burned that it looks like it's melting off, so she had to find a replacement.

Casey: A replacement…

Min: Look around us. When we all entered the tower and the security systems turned on again, we were surrounded by machinery.

Casey: Yeah. And AI generated versions of Doppelgangers emerged as well. Maybe she must've taken one of the machine parts from the AI.

Min: Possibly.

Saya: Not to mention that the walls that were closed have an identical pattern just like those AI Doppelgangers..

Saya points to the walls of the hall.

Casey: It seems like you're familiar with the patterns as well, Saya.

Saya: Well, I have been trapped in here for a while, Casey. This isn't news to me.

Casey: Then, what about here?

Casey rewinds to the part of the footage where Ayana was face-to-face with a scared Saya.

Casey: And then look.

The footage showed Ayana standing still and Saya being absent.

Casey: How can you be seen at that one part of the video and then not a second later you're gone? No one can move that fast just to be out of frame that easily!

Saya: I…

Casey: …..

Saya: I honestly have no idea how I did it… Everything was just happening so fast that I didn't even know how to react to anything… Time moved so quickly, and before I knew it, I was outside on the ground.

Min: You said that time moved so quickly…?

Saya: Y-Yeah…

Casey: It could've been an adrenaline rush. Anyone in that position could have that effect.

Saya: *annoyed* Oh my god, Casey! Why can't you believe me for one second here!?

Casey: *upset* Well, I did! And LOOK where that brought us!

Min: *annoyed* Will the both of you stop!?

I.D.A.: Yes… This is not the time for a confrontation…. The more we waste time arguing, this mission will not be completed in time..

Min: Right…. That being said, I.D.A.? Can you slow down the footage?

I.D.A.: Sure! One second please!

The footage has been slowed down to the point that it is playing frame-by-frame.

Min: Okay, pay attention. After what looks like to be Saya getting startled by Harako and Tali coming up the steps behind the door, she then acts in self-defense and takes Ayana's body.

Casey: In self-defense? Sounds like she was trying to save her own ass.

Saya nearly responded with retaliation, but continued to let Min speak on her behalf.

Min: I'm not so sure about that.. The look of someone who has remained trapped up here for who knows how long would not have any ill intentions. Maybe that was her only way out.. I mean just look at Saya. *zooms in*

Upon close up, Saya's body was very thin with the lack of nourishment.

Min: According to her stature, she hasn't been able to get any energy for a long time. If she waited any longer, Saya wouldn't be alive right now. She would've perished alongside with the rest of the Doppelgangers on the tower.

Casey: ….

Saya: That's what I was trying to tell to all of you. I didn't have any alternatives left! I thought that Ayana was trying to help me, but at that time… I was so afraid of anything. I thought that Ayana was stalling for time

just to take the rest of us out when I heard Harako and Tali coming up the stairs.

Casey: ! T-Then…

Min: Saya wasn't at fault here, nor was Ayana. It was the paranoia that set in between them, causing Saya to act like in the footage out of fear of being killed. It's a harsh decision, but like Saya said before, I don't think there were any other options left.

Casey: But that still doesn't explain how she managed to escape the tower that quickly…

Casey was about to continue, but after the footage resumed at normal speed again, the rapid faint footsteps coming from Saya became clear to Casey on what her escape method was.

Casey: …Afterimage.

Min: Huh?

I.D.A.: ?

Casey: *realization* She used Afterimage! After transferring her body into Ayana, who had a Quantum Gear at the time, manages to use Afterimage to escape the tower!

Saya: Afterimage…?

Casey: That explains her anxious actions on trying to escape the tower and trying not to get killed…

I.D.A.: Wait, you have used Afterimage before have you Saya?

Saya: I guess this is the second time I've done this if that's the case…

Casey: Wait, second?

Saya: I used it the second time when I was getting chased down by Doppelgangers.

Min: ….

I.D.A.: That can prove the theory on how Saya manages to escape in such a fashion that cannot be captured in real time…

Casey: And Tali and the rest of the Doppelgangers chased Saya down in a way that Saya was the one that broke their chance at freedom….

Min: Yeah. That sounds more of a likely theory. Did we get it right, Saya?

Saya: Hit the nail on the coffin.

Casey: *slightly annoyed* Damn it… I don't know how to feel about this…

Min: Well, that's that part down.

Casey: W-Wait! No! Because how come we saw that Harako has a Quantum Gear? Wasn't she in an analyst class?

Min: Y-Yeah…

I.D.A.: I believe Saya was the one that answered this question already!

Casey: G-Ggh… Right, Harako became an anomaly… But hold on…

Min: ?
Casey: Sorry, but there is one more question I have, about Harako's gear. When me and Saya were fighting her, she had to find a replacement for her

arm in order for her to fight. She manually made herself a fighter class after being exposed to the white mist.

Min: R-Right… So what you're saying is….

Casey: Harako had to at some point gather the required pieces needed to build her own impromptu Quantum Gear, right?

Saya: Possibly. And with all the advanced equipment here, I would not be surprised that she managed to get some here-

That's when it hit Saya; the pieces that Harako used to make her own Quantum Gear was within this same tower that Saya was.

Saya: ….You don't think that Harako built her own Quantum Gear in this tower, do you…?

I.D.A.: Even if you could, you need to have an energy output for quantum energy to circulate through your gear! Without it, the weapon cannot be operable.

Casey: Yeah, and besides you have to be redirected to NEO Headquarters to get it set up anyway. How could she…

Min: Only an analyst can have a full understanding on how Quantum Gears activate and function in combat, so it's more of a convenient thing for her. A cog instead of an artificial orb…

Saya: Wait!

All: ?

Saya: That's it! That artificial orb was the replacement!
Min: Yeah, I think so too.

Casey: The orbs are in this facility as well…

Min: !

After some thinking in silence, Min broke the silence with a concerned look on his face.

Casey: Min, what's wrong?

Min: No way… Harako's substitute… It wouldn't be part of that robot that Ayana's been developing, right!?

Casey: !

Saya: What!? I.D.A.! Do a recon check on the robot!

I.D.A.: Affirmative!

I.D.A. scanned the decommissioned robot from all angles to prove Min's theory, and it turns out to her unfortunate discovery, he was right.

I.D.A.: !

Min: Well?

I.D.A.: A major component of the machine is missing!

While I.D.A. was flying back to the team, Casey replied with a concerned look.

Casey: What piece..?

I.D.A.; From the rear center, there are coolant tanks installed to keep the machine from overheating.

Min: And you said there's a piece missing?

I.D.A.: I'm afraid so. A orb to be more specific.

Saya: Oh no!

I.D.A.: *worried* A missing piece from a quantum energy powered robot is critical! It cannot be operated if there is a missing piece!!

Casey: *looks around*

Everyone turned around with a terrifying realization that Ayana is in a robot that it is in no near perfect condition to control.

I.D.A.: Saya! You have to tell Ayana to get off of that machine!

Saya: Y-Yeah! I'm already on it! *runs off*

*rapid footsteps*

Casey: *conflicted* ….So Saya really wasn't at fault after all..

Min: See, after looking at some evidence, Saya wasn't trying to pull anything below us. And I did say I was remaining neutral about this situation because I needed proof in order to pick a side. Casey, you went on ahead and went against Saya out of context without giving her a chance to explain.

Casey: ….I'm not the only one who's at fault here. You nearly had an alibi about Saya. I never wanted to team up with anomalies who were responsible for my parent's deaths.
Min: Just think for a minute here. People die from the FOEs and Doppelgangers all the time. Just because you know one who turned out to be a Doppelganger, that means that we are against Saya now?

Casey: We were before.

Min: Until we saw the evidence of the tape! Now we know who to believe! So, you can drop the sudden grudge now, okay?

Min looked at Casey with reassurance. At first, they all teamed up for the same reason: Destroying the main power source that was causing the White Darkness. And while they all agree on completing such a task, none of them expected Saya to be a Doppelganger. But there is a main difference that differentiates Saya from all of them.

Casey: Ugh… *sighs* Fine, you win Min.

Min: Good! Glad you're seeing things my way now.

Casey: Okay.. But we still need to get Ayana out of there.

I.D.A.: Do not worry! Saya is doing just that! We just have to be patient and hope for the best results!

……..

## Scene 2: Decommissioned Robot

*footsteps*

Ayana: ?

Ayana quickly stopped setting up the final process for the machine after seeing Saya running up to the machine's arm with a serious look on her face.

Ayana: *sighs* You again?

Saya: *pants* Sorry for being such a nuisance, but you have to get out of this machine!

Ayana: I already told you that my mind's made up. I am not leaving here without getting the results I need.

Saya: Forget about it! This machine cannot be operated under any circumstances!

Ayana: *annoyed* After I explicitly told you that I made sure that this machine is in perfect running condition? Now you're trying too hard to make excuses just for me to drop this project.

Saya: I wasn't the one who discovered this! My A.I. assistant, I.D.A. did! She discovered that one of the parts of the machine is missing!

Ayana: …What?

Saya: Yes! That's the main reason why I came up here!

Ayana: …..

Silence only fills in the air, increasing the tension between the two women even further. Saya thought that her words managed to convince Ayana to cease operations on the unstable machine, but Ayana looked back at Saya with an angered look.

Ayana: *grunts*

Saya: *breaks sweat*

Ayana: …..Doesn't this sound familiar?

Saya: Huh? W-What does?

Ayana: *angered* This was the same tactic that you think I used just to bait you. Misunderstanding my intentions just so you can escape out of here.

Saya: Ugh-

Ayana: Enough, Saya. I'm initializing this machine and this project so that I can get everything that I lost back!

Saya: *frustrated* Project, project, PROJECT! THAT'S ALL YOU'RE FIXATED ON. Forget about it already! You're putting your life at risk at this point!

Ayana: And why do you suddenly care? You left me for dead.

Saya: *flinches*

Ayana: I never wanted this, either. None of us did, but the nature of you being a Doppelgänger changed this for the both of us. This is your final warning, Saya. Turn away, or I'll be forced to take back what's mine.

Saya: …..

Having failed once again to intervene with Ayana's project, Saya turned away from the machine by her request.

Saya: *cold* …Are all humans this hardheaded?

*footsteps*

Ayana: *dismissive* Don't know. Are all Doppelgängers that manipulative?

Saya: !

Hitting it where it hurts the most from both sides, unable to respond to Ayana's retort, Saya ran back to her team.

*rapid footsteps*

……..

## Scene 3: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

*footsteps*

Casey: What the hell? So she just didn't budge?

Saya: Apparently her project is more important than her own life. Ugh!!! *folds arms together* Why is she acting like a hard headed child?! It's like what I'm saying goes from one ear to another!

Min: Saya..

Saya: *cold* And she had the audacity to call me, a person who didn't want to die, a manipulator. I WAS JUST AS SCARED AS SHE WAS! HOW CAN SHE BE SO DAMN STUPID?!

I.D.A.: Saya, please… Take deep breaths. Think of the sea waves!

Saya: …. *deep breaths* I'm sorry. I tried my best, I really did, but Ayana chose to stay back and operate the machine despite our warnings.

I.D.A.: Sometimes people don't heed our warnings and suffer the consequences as a result. You did your best, Saya.

Casey: …Why did she call you a manipulator?

Saya: Because I told her “Are humans here hardheaded?”, and that made her retaliate.

All: …..

Casey: I mean, she’s not wrong… But we know that it’s not you.

Saya: Maybe so. But it’s most definitely targeted to those that I was with on the tower. They had the will to live, too. And now… they became the main power source of a machine that I didn’t know existed.

Min: Saya…

Saya: …..

*footsteps*

Saya walked away from the banister in frustration, but opened her eyes for the possibility of bringing her back for Harako and Tali.

Saya: *gasp* No, no, no! We can’t go back! We came THIS far into completing our mission, and I’m not going back without Ayana!

Casey: ?!

Saya immediately started to run like on a track course, but her endurance was short lived when I.D.A. started to alert everyone.

*alert blare*

I.D.A: DANGER! DANGER! I’m detecting a very strong energy source!

Min: What?! Where?

I.D.A: Over there! *points to the machine*

To everyone's surprise, the machine was in full operating order, just not in the way that Ayana wanted. Faintly, red lights are flashing warning her to not start up the machine.

Min: *worried* Agh! The machine doesn't have all of its parts in!

Casey: *concerned* Was Ayana aware of this?! Surely after having to check everything 23 times she would've noticed that a piece is missing!

Saya: *nonchalantly* I tried to warn her, but she didn't listen.

Casey: Saya, now's not the time! Get her out of there!

I.D.A.: I'm afraid I can't recommend that action!

Casey: And why not?!

I.D.A.: The machine is generating energy so powerful that it's cracking from the outside! By the time Saya gets down there, even using Quantum Rush, it will be too late!

Saya: Can't Casey just use Quantum Toss to put me over there faster then?

I.D.A.: Do forgive me for this. Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

I.D.A. summoned her shield to cover everyone inside.
Min: ?!

Saya: What the hell, I.D.A.?!

I.D.A.: I’m afraid going down there to get Ayana would not be ideal! This machine is overflowing with energy that even surpasses its limits!

Casey: Huh?!

Min: No, she’s right! I’m checking its status right now and it’s going over! Look here! The capacity is going over even of a Quantum Gear’s!

Saya: *breaks sweat*

I.D.A.: The moment the glass breaks, all of you better brace for impact!

*glass crack* 10x

Casey: Got it.

Min: *grunts*

Saya: ….

*energy surging*

*glass crack* 5x

The energy within the machine is too much for it to handle at the current temperature since one of the coolant tanks is inoperable. The machine itself cannot regulate its quantum energy and stability combined. No one knows the current state of Ayana, but one can only speculate that Ayana has become one with the machine.

*burst*
*glass shatter*

All: !!!

*boomburst*

Saya: A-Agh!!!

Casey: *grunts*

*glass fall* 36x

Min: *pants* Is everyone okay?

I.D.A.: No injuries detected! And thankfully so! If Saya was out there, she would've suffered from radiation poisoning.

Saya: *sighs*

Casey: Wait, poisoning?!

*faint energy surging*

Min: I wonder if it is safe to head down there…

Casey: …..!

Casey took a quick glance underneath the balcony and found the machine operating in front of them.

Casey: That's…

As the mist dissipates, the robot that was once decommissioned, is now in full operating mode.

Min: Isn't that the robot that Ayana went on!? It looks different now!

Casey: Yeah… And look.. *points to the broken center*

At their dismay, Ayana is being controlled by the machine.

Casey: That machine prevented her from escaping during all of this.. I think the moment the machine was flashing red, it was already too late.

Min: An emergency protocol… *pulls up analyst status*

*typing*

*short circuits*

Min: Agh!

Casey: You okay!?

Min: Y-Yeah… I have never seen anything like this…. This machine… is classified as a Guardian FOE?

I.D.A.: That should be impossible,  but due to the sudden influence of Ayana's DNA controlling the machine, it somehow manages to operate just like a Guardian FOE would.

Saya: That machine is an anomaly on its own!

Min: Guardian… Paradox…?

Casey: Paradox?

Min: It doesn't even classify as an organic or natural entity… Due to its nature and artificial intelligence influence, it somehow gained sentience. Thus making it a paradox because of interference of one person and the Doppelganger's DNA.

Casey: It cannot gain sentience! What will happen if all of the AI in this building gain that ability, too!?

Min: If that happens, Silvene is doomed!

I.D.A.: It is crucial to acknowledge that all AI that are under the influence of Paradox cannot be dismissed!

Casey: Yeah… We gotta shut it down now!

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: Saya, you said you want to bring Ayana home, right? Now's the time to do it!

Saya: *sighs*

So many conflicted feelings and thoughts are circulating through Saya's mind. She did want to help Ayana and make things right, but going against the project only made things worse. There's no way to compromise, but only to fight her way through the complications.

Saya: Got it. Now it's clear enough that I gotta knock some sense into her.

Casey: There we go! That's the Saya I know!

Min: Okay, listen here! Paradox is being energized by a powerful energy output, which is the Core! If you destroy the Core, you should be able to take this machine down!

I.D.A.: Take caution… Paradox is more powerful than Leo and Golem combined! Normal attacks will be deemed useless here.

Casey: So we have to use charged attacks then.

I.D.A.: Ah-

Min: Not like you got any choice. You both will have to go all out with your Quantum Gear!

Saya: Including surpassing OVERDRIVE?

I.D.A.: *worried* If it reaches that point, I'll warn you, but won't tell you to stop.

Min: !?

Casey: I.D.A…

I.D.A.: So, time is of the essence! I'll stand by you as assistance!

Saya: No, I.D.A.

I.D.A.: Huh?

Saya: I need you to stay with Min and make sure he doesn't get hurt. Me and Casey will handle Paradox.

I.D.A.: Oh! Okay! Min, let's stay back close to the entrance!

Min: Ah, r-right. Please be careful you two..

Casey: Yeah, we will. Ready?

Saya: Yeah.
Casey and Saya looked down at Ayana who is being used as the machine's replacement core.

Saya: I can feel so much energy emitting off of her… This is awful.

Casey: ….Look, the sooner we deal with Paradox, the better chance of her surviving the ordeal. It’s better that we don’t waste any time we have with this!

Saya: Right, right… Sorry.

PRODUCING MISSION: ANNIHILATING OBSTACLES.

RECONNING ANOMALIES…

4 DETECTED ANOMALIES.

OPERATING…. X-LEVEL PROTOCOL.

INITIALIZING: PROJECT PARADOX.

*energy charge*

Saya: Quantum Gear….

Casey: Quantum Gear…

Both: Engage!

*burst* 2x

*rapid footsteps*

Activating their Quantum Gears for the last time, Saya and Casey both ran up to the banister and jumped off to fight against Guardian Paradox.
*whoosh* 2x

Saya: Quantum Fist!!

*smash* 3x

INTERFERENCE DETECTED. ACTIVATING PROTECTION PROTOCOL.

Saya: *grunts*

Paradox started to load up its cannons to aim at Saya and Casey.

Casey: Saya, watch out!

Saya: *nods* *jumps off*

FIRE.

*blast* 20x

Saya and Casey both were running away from the blast shots coming out of Paradox, leaving nothing but debris surrounding the area.

Casey: Quantum Rush!

Saya: Quantum Rush!

*whoosh* 2x

Casey: *battle cry*

*smash* 3x

Casey slid onto the right side of the cannon after Paradox started to recharge, letting her jump on the cannon and started to smash her way through.

Casey: Quantum Barrage!!

*metal clanking* 20x

*smash*

Saya: Quantum Pulse!!

*slam*

*electricity* 35x

Saya’s eyes are now glowing a cyan color while pressing on the ground to generate electricity for her Quantum Gear.

Core: Why must you persist? Wouldn’t it be simple to just castaway from the issue?

Saya: What the…

Core: A castaway… That’s what you are, Saya.

*energy recharging*

Saya: *grunts* Quantum Smash!!

*whoosh*

Saya jumped into the air to aim at the first cannon that has finished recharging.

Saya: *battle cry*

FIRE.

*blast* 15x

Saya glides herself to avoid the sudden blasts from Paradox, but only one of them manages to hit Saya.

*impact*

Saya: *grunts in pain*

*smash*

Casey: Saya!! Quantum Smash!!

*crack* 5x

Casey smashed through the blast that Paradox created in order to get close to Saya.

*whoosh*

Casey: *grabs Saya* Are you okay!?

Saya: I'm fine!

Casey: Okay, good. I'm gonna put you back onto Paradox, ready?

Saya: Yeah!

Casey tightly grabbed Saya's arm and started to swing.

Casey: Quantum Toss!!

*whoosh*

Saya: …..

The direction that Casey sent Saya is towards the head of the machine.

Saya: Quantum Boom!!

*CLAP*

*boomburst*

Saya smashed her hands together with the collected momentum that she gathered from Casey and sent a shockwave towards Paradox.

*blast*

Core: CAUTION. DAMAGE ON THE TOP REAR. INCREASING DAMAGE OUTPUT BY 25%.

Saya: *breaks sweat*

Casey: Not bad, Saya! Let me take care of the bottom side!

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: Got it! Quantum Barrage!!

While Saya was on Paradox, she started to punch on the right side of the machine since Casey already did enough damage to it. This created a perfect diversion for the duo.

Casey: Quantum Barrage!

*smash* 20x

*thwack* 5x

Casey: *grunts*

Paradox: DAMAGE RECEIVING FROM TOP AND BOTTOM REAR. ACTIVATING QUANTUM SHOCKWAVE.

*electricity* 5x

Saya: *grunts* Casey, move!!

Casey: !?

*boomburst*

Paradox released the pent up energy gathered from charging its cannons across the entire battlefield, hitting everyone within it.

Saya: *yells*

Casey: *grunts in pain*

*crash* 2x

I.D.A.: *gasp*

Min: Saya! Casey!!

I.D.A.: Watch out!

*sheen*

*crash* 5x
Min: *pants*

I.D.A.: Check their statuses! Are they in good shape?

Min: Yeah… they’re both in the green.

I.D.A.: Phew…

Min: (An all-round attack… Even A.I. is capable of committing such an act… It's like it's taking everything it knows from past fighters…)

*crumble*

Saya: Ugh….

Casey: *coughing*

Paradox: SEARCHING FOR TARGETS…. 2 TARGETS FOUND.

Min: !

I.D.A.: Oh no!!

Paradox: AIMING…. ACTIVATING MACHINE GUN PROTOCOL.

Min: I.D.A…. Can your shield withstand this attack!?

I.D.A.: I can, but I don't think it's going to last for long…!

Paradox: FIRE.

*gun shots* 100x

Paradox is now shooting at Min and I.D.A., pushing them further back to the entrance door.
*ricochet* 34x

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: …..

Saya: Ugh…. *pants* *gets up*

Casey: ….

Saya: Huh…?

Saya looked up to see Min and I.D.A. are getting shot at by Paradox. They are slowly getting overwhelmed.

Saya: !!!!

*whoosh*

Saya: *angry* GET YOUR HANDS OFF OF THEM!!

*charge* 3x

Casey: *grunts* Saya!

*whoosh*

*rapid footsteps* 2x

Saya: Quantum Break!!

Saya’s eyes are turning into white with a sense of fury in her.

*smash* 4x

Paradox: INTERFERENCE DETECTED. 1 OLD.. 2 OLD TARGETS DETECTED.

Paradox changed their trajectory from Min and I.D.A. to Saya and Casey.

*gun shots* 50x

Saya: *grunts*

Saya dodged the incoming bullets and slid underneath the machine.

Saya: Casey! Stall it for a while!

Casey: Got it! Quantum Break!!

Casey's eyes are turning a neon green. During this, Casey jumped from the side of the balcony to the left side of the machine.

Casey: *battle cry*

*smash* 3x

*crack*

Paradox: WARNING. DAMAGE DETECTED ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE MACHINE. INCREASING DAMAGE OUTPUT BY 50%.

*charging*

A piece of Paradox came flying off of the shoulder blades that Casey punched through.

Casey: *grunts*

*whoosh*
Saya: Quantum Crush!!

*smash* 2x

Saya: *battle cry*

Saya attempted to smash the legs of the machine, making it unable to move around freely.

*crack* 10x

Saya: *grunts*

Saya's punches are increasing speed with their hits. The amount of frustration and vigor within Saya's body is causing her to act in a way that aggravated Doppelgangers within a certain time interval.

Saya: (I can't let you hurt anyone, Ayana!! I'm not gonna let this machine have its way over you!!)

*fuse blow* 3x

*blast*

Saya: AGH!!

*whoosh*

*crash*

The recoil from the blast sent Saya flying towards the wall of the hall.

Casey: SAYA!!

Casey was still in the air when Saya was sent flying from underneath Paradox, she quickly snapped out of it and grabbed one of Paradox's chipped pieces.

Casey: *yells*

*slash* 3x

*electricity*

Paradox: WARNING. SEVERE DAMAGE FROM THE LEFT SIDE OF THE MACHINE. UNABLE TO RELOAD ON LEFT SIDE. FOCUSING ALL ENERGY OUTPUTS ON THE RIGHT SIDE. CHARGING ATTACK…

Casey: *pants*

Core: Resistance is met with futility. Nothing will be gained from this experience. Why must you try at the highest attempt when it will not guarantee the results you want?

Casey: …..

*energy surging*

Paradox: FIRE.

Casey: *dodges*

*blast* 5x

Casey jumped off from Paradox's left side causing it to blast the rest of the left shoulder away.

*alert blare*

Core: WARNING. FATAL ERROR HAS OCCURRED ON THE LEFT COMPARTMENT OF PARADOX. UNABLE TO USE.

Casey: *smirks* (Serves you right.)

*thud*

Casey: Saya!!

*rapid footsteps*

*electricity* 45x

Paradox: LAUNCHING BREAKAWAY ATTACK…. INITIALIZING QUANTUM IMPACT.

I.D.A.: Ah!!

Min: CASEY, LOOK OUT!!

Casey: *turns around*

*energy surging 5x

*explosion*

The blast sent Casey into the wall face first next to Saya, and pushed I.D.A. and Min into the door, but due to the shield, both of their injuries were close to minimal.

Min: *panicked* What the hell was that!? Another AOE attack!?

I.D.A.: *worried* Yes… But this blast attack was more powerful than the shockwave…. I hope Casey and Saya didn't suffer any critical hits from that…
…….

*crumble*

Saya: *pants*

Saya created an eroded grounded shield to block the majority of Paradox's Quantum Impact in order for her and Casey not to get critically injured.

Saya: Casey! Casey!

Casey: Ugh….

Saya: Are you okay….?

Casey: Yeah, I'm fine.. Good quick thinking there, Saya.

Saya: I know. I just saw you flying from that blast wave and I just knew how to react.

Casey: Ngh… *peeks over*

Casey looked to see that Paradox is slowly moving away from Casey and Saya back to its original position.

Paradox: MUST ELIMINATE ALL INFERENCES. SEARCHING FOR TARGETS.

Saya: Well?

Casey: It's looking for us again.. But it is attacking anyone it sees, so we better head back there before it attacks I.D.A. and Min again.

Saya: Right….

Casey looked back at Saya and noticed that her eyes were covered in vitriolic rage.

Casey: S-Saya-

Saya: *cold* That bastard's gotta go.

Casey: ….

*smash*

Saya smashed the shield away and revealed themselves to Paradox.

Paradox: 2 TARGETS DETECTED. ACTIVATING MACHINE GUN PROTOCOL.

Casey: *grunts* Come on!!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

*gun shots* 100x

Saya and Casey continued their pursuit to Paradox's right shoulder while also avoiding any quantum bullets that were being sent over to them.

Core: Are you truly that desperate? Trying to develop a better outcome for all parties… Inevitably it is certain for the ignorant.

Saya: *battle cry*

*whoosh*

Saya launched herself into the air and grabbed one of the fallen pieces of Paradox's right shoulder blade and leaped up into the air again.

Core: This won't bring the fallen back. You are putting everyone here at risk if you continue to persist.

Casey: (Don't listen to them… It's nothing but the anomaly…)

Saya: (It's not true. It's not true… I am doing the right thing…!)

*alert sound*

Min: Both Casey's and Saya’s Quantum Gear are under the CAUTION level…

I.D.A.: ….

Paradox: ELIMINATING ALL TARGETS… AIMING…

Casey: *yells*

*slam*

Casey kicked the lower half of Paradox down, causing it to lose its balance away from Min and I.D.A.

Casey: Quantum Barrage!!!

*thwack* 10x

Casey kept on sending a flurry of kicks into the button half of Paradox.

*smash* 3x

Core: FATAL DAMAGE OCCURRED.

*electricity* 15x

Saya: *grunts* Quantum Breaker!!!!

*energy surging*

*whoosh*

*SMASH*

Saya slashed into the right side of the machine and smashed it through with her foot, destroying its ability to reload under any capacity.

Core: FATAL DAMAGE OCCURRED. BOTTOM REAR AND RIGHT SIDE ARE FATALLY DAMAGED. ACTIVATING PROTECTIVE PROTOCOL.

Saya: *rapidly panting*

Casey: *pants* S-Saya..!

Saya: ….. *jumps down*

I.D.A.: Are you guys okay!?

Saya: ……

Min: !

Min and I.D.A. looked at Saya and noticed that Saya has changed her facial expression in a way that she witnessed both grief and anger at the same time.

Min: S-Saya….

*footsteps*

Casey: I don’t know what made Saya look like this… I guess the words that Paradox is spewing out are getting to her.

Saya: *glances at Paradox*

Core: All organic lifeforms are ignorant beings. Is all life capable of committing a self-destructing mission?

Min: A-Ah…

Every time Paradox or its Core speaks out, it's doing nothing but giving everybody a sense of existential dread and confusion. Saya is still trying to make things right for everyone involved while also trying to own up to her actions. But now a question is being developed in one of them: Is this really the right choice?

Saya: This thing is just going to repeat the same annoying tactic that makes us feel bad, so ignore it.

Min: You say that, but…

Min looks away from Saya in disbelief.

Min: Isn't that what Ayana said herself, too?

Saya: So? I'm still not going to fall for that.

Min: ….

Min can't help but feel worried about Saya after the fight's over. Can she really ignore everything when the mission's over?

Min: …..Can you really?

Saya: !

Min: I don't think it's going to be that simple just to walk away from something that you know it's gonna hurt.

Casey: …!

Min: I mean, Casey went through it. And look what that happened to him.

Saya: …..

Casey: Min, I can do most of the talking here. Yes, what he said is true, but I would like to elaborate more on that. At your current state, you're going to lose yourself in battle. You have to focus on saving Ayana and not letting those words get to you! Without focusing on the main mission at hand, Ayana will not be able to leave with us, or worse, we won't be able to leave at all.

Casey is doing the same thing that Min said towards her back before they all met each other. They've been through that song and dance before, and cannot let Saya go through the same way. If Casey being unstable was bad enough, imagine Saya.

Saya: ….. *sighs* Sorry. Sorry for scaring you all like that. I… I just don't understand this at all… And with you guys getting hurt, I just…

I.D.A.: Your feelings are justified, so don't be too hard on yourself!

Saya: *slight smile*

Paradox: STARTING UP PRIORITY PROTOCOL. BEGIN TO CHARGE. 2 TARGETS FOUND.

*energy surging*

All: ?!

Saya: I.D.A! Grab Min and get to somewhere safe!

I.D.A.: Affirmative! Min, hang on!

Min: Ah, got it.

As soon as Min grabbed onto I.D.A., she began to fly off, only to find an issue.

Min: What the?!

Casey: That coward! It's still aiming at Min and I.D.A.!

Saya: *turns around* ?!

I.D.A.: It's using a priority system! That way it will only focus on the two selected targets no matter what direction they're in!

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: S-Saya, calm down…!

Saya: *frustrated* I'm TRYING my best here, Casey! But this damn machine is pushing all of my buttons!

Min: *steps down of I.D.A.* What the hell do we do now?!

Casey: …..I got an idea! Saya!

Saya: …?

Casey whispered into Saya as to not give the plan away.

Saya: Ah! Of course!
I.D.A.: Did you come up with a solution?

Saya: Yeah, and you have to trust us on this!

Min: Whatever it prevents us from being the targets, sure!

Paradox: CHARGING COMPLETE. AIMING…

Casey: Min, grab on!

Saya: Hold on, I.D.A.! Ready?

Casey: Yeah!

Saya: And, go!

*whoosh* 2x

Both Casey and Saya are using Quantum Toss in order to lead Min and I.D.A. to safety. But the main goal is for them to dodge the blast at the last minute.

Min: (Getting… dizzy…)

I.D.A. is shown to have swirling eyes.

Casey: Quantum….!!!

Saya: Quantum!!

Both: Toss!

Paradox: FIRE.

*blast*
Casey: !?

Saya: !!

*whoosh* 2x

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: W-Whoa..!! Min! *grabs Min*

Min: *winces in pain* Ugh… That hurts…

I.D.A.: They managed to throw us out of the way in time thankfully…

Min: Yeah, but despite that… They're both taking that hit for us, and I don't know how powerful that blast is…

I.D.A.: Best we should keep an eye on their Quantum Gear statuses in the meantime!

Min: Yeah, right.. *pulls up status board*

…….

*energy surging*

Casey: *yells*

Saya: *yells*

Both Casey and Saya are seen pushing back the sudden blast that Paradox has created just to aim at Min and I.D.A.

Core: KNOW YOUR PLACE! THIS IS WHERE OUR STORY ENDS; WITHIN THIS ROTTING TOWER!!!
*crack* 3x

Saya: *grunts in pain*

Casey: H-Hang in there, Saya..!!!

*crack* 2x

The ground is cracking underneath the duo, causing them to get pushed back as a result.

Casey: A-Agh…!!!

Saya: Casey!!

Casey: *struggling* I’m fine..!!

*energy radiating*

Saya: Keep pushing!! We’re not gonna lose to this piece of scrap metal!!

*burst*

Saya is now glowing a cyan hue from her eye, hair, and Gear.

Saya: *screams*

*blast*

Saya is now pushing the blast back into Paradox.

Casey: *grunts* *pants*

Casey is also glowing a green hue from the same areas as Saya.

Casey: (Hang on, Saya…!! KEEP GOING..!!)

*burst*

Casey: *screams*

Casey is also pushing the blast back into Paradox along with Saya.

Paradox: DETECTING RESISTANCE….. INCREASING BLAST.

*BLAST*

Min: !?

I.D.A.: *gasp*

Saya: *screams in pain*

Casey: *yells in pain*

Min: *concerned* Both of them are in the DANGER zone!!!

I.D.A.: *breaks sweat*

Saya: (AYANA!!!! SNAP OUT OF IT NOW!!!) *yells*

Casey: A-Agh..!!

Saya: CASEY!

Casey: *grunts*

Saya and Casey are pushing Paradox back together despite the both of them being in an intense struggle of their lives. They both continued to push through the harsh radiation of the blast. Both of their Quantum Gear being in the DANGER zones collectively isn’t backing down on its energy, but rather doing the opposite.

Casey: *war cry*

Saya: *war cry*

Core: WHY MUST YOU TRY TO SAVE SOMEONE YOU DESPISE? BOTH OF YOU ARE NOT ON THE SAME WAVELENGTHS. YOU'RE ONLY ATTEMPTING AT A FUTILE MANNER THAT YOUR PEERS HAVE DONE.

Casey: !!

Saya: !!

Both of those words hit Casey and Saya in their own ways, even harder knowing who it was referring to.

Casey: That may be true…. That's calling me a hypocrite, right? Helping out a Doppelganger while stopping a human being…

Saya: But there is one difference… ONE DIFFERENCE that you managed to overlook, Paradox!! I began to develop my own humanity!!

*crack*

Saya: *struggling* The way to feel, the way to understand, the way to act upon impulse, and the way to act fight for everyone I know who gave me a chance to feel life!!!

Casey: *struggling* You may think that this attempt will be nothing but meaningless to all, but that doesn't mean that WE CAN'T TRY!!

*crack* 2x

Saya: Forging this new resolve not only for NEO…!!

*energy radiating*

Both: BUT FOR OURSELVES!!

Within their war speech, Saya and Casey both grabbed the radiated beams from Paradox, ignoring all of the pains that it is causing. With a bright cyan and green glow, and the screaming stress of the renowned fighters, they absorbed the radiation into their Quantum Gears.

Both: **QUANTUM…!!! CONSUMPTION!!!!!**

*crack* 10x

*explosion*

The combined quantum energy from Saya, Casey, and Paradox manifested an unusual, yet much stronger plane of energy.

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: Saya!! Casey!!

*warping* 20x

Saya: !?

Casey: *grunts*

Paradox: UNIDENTIFIED ENTITY DETECTED. FAILED TO DIVERT COURSE AWAY FROM SOURCE. SOURCE IS PULLING WITH IMMACULATE FORCE.

I.D.A.: All of their quantum energies formed some kind of breakthrough plane… I can’t even detect what kind of energy it is!

Min: Yeah… All I’m getting is an error. But look at Saya and Casey!

The monitor shows both Saya and Casey's statuses as ???.

I.D.A.: It can't even detect both of their current statuses…?

Min: Yeah… I think them taking all of the energy out of Paradox's cannon caused it. But now the recoil is generating some sort of new physical energy that is sucking all of them in!!

I.D.A.: …..

Around Saya, Paradox and Casey, everything is starting to distort in such a matter that cannot be questioned. Even their physical and artificial forms are also starting to distort.

Casey: (What the hell is happening to me!? Why is everything….? Everything….)

Saya: (My hands… My body is distorting….)

*rumble* 10x

The entire tower is starting to shake.

I.D.A.: Min, hold on to me!

Min: *grunts* *grabs I.D.A.*
Min shuts his eyes out of fear of being the next one to get dragged into what unknown plane that has spawned in front of them. All of the sounds of the machinery being dragged in, the struggling sounds of Saya and Casey, and the strong sounds of unknown energy was all they could hear for the past 3 minutes, until everything went silent.

*silence*

Everything that didn't get sucked in, all fell down to normal gravity.

*crumble* 35x

Min: *panting*

I.D.A.: …..

Min: Oh… my… What..?

I.D.A.: Everything's gone… Paradox, Saya, and Casey…

Min: Huh!?

Min rapidly pulls up the analyst board to check on Casey and Saya. To his dismay, nothing is showing up.

Min: *scared* N-No… You don't think that energy took them somewhere even where I can't identify them….?

I.D.A.: I can't say for sure… That energy plane took them to an unknown area, so they have to be still alive. Don't worry, Min.

Min: I know you're telling me not to worry… But…

Some tears are forming on Min's face.

Min: *slightly crying* But even if it's something that even I don't know anything about, how can I not worry about Casey…? And Saya as well… She pushed through everything so far..

I.D.A.: …..

Min: I'm so sorry, but I'm getting so scared…. We managed to pull through up until this point… This can't be it…. It just can't be the end of the line..

I.D.A.: *uncertainty* ….Wait here. *pats Min’s head*

*footsteps*

I.D.A. slowly walks up to the area where Casey and Paradox last stood.

I.D.A.: Hmm….

I.D.A. slowly reaches her hand into the warped area of the form and suddenly reacts in a way that she started glitching.

I.D.A.: *glitches* M-M-M-Min!! T-T-There’s something-g-g there!!

Min: Huh!? *rapidly gets up*

*running footsteps*

I.D.A.: T-T-There!!

Min: ….

Min reached out in the same way as I.D.A.

*electricity* 10x

Min: !?

Min’s eyes are glowing in a pink color, along with his analyst board queuing in on both Saya and Casey’s whereabouts.

Min: *panicked* What the hell was that…?

I.D.A.: That’s the same feeling I felt! Something’s within that plane!

Min: …..

Min goes back to check on the status board. All of the information about Saya and Casey is now displayed.

Min: *gasp* I.D.A.! I can read Casey's and Saya's status again!

I.D.A.: That's wonderful news!

Min: It says that Casey's in… "Metaphysical Warp Tunnel"?

I.D.A.: See if you can contact him!

Min: Okay, I'll try.

*typing*

……..

## Scene 4: Metaphysical Warp Tunnel

*silence*

*Casey: ay…! Aya…!*
Saya: …..

*Casey: Wake up… Saya!!*

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: Saya!

Saya: *grunts* U-Ugh… Huh…?

Casey: Ah, thank god. You were out cold for a while now, and I was starting to get worried..

Saya: *scratches head* Wait, “out cold”? How long was I out?

Casey: After me, I guess you were out for 23 minutes..

Saya: *rapidly gets up* 23 MINUTES!?

The sudden blood rush in Saya’s body forced her to sit down again.

Saya: *uneasy* A-Agh…

Casey: H-Hey! Slow down! Jeez, you JUST got up.

*interference*

Min: Is that Saya?

Casey: Yeah, she’s awake now.

Saya: Huh? Min?

Min: Hey, sorry it took me a bit to get through. I kept getting in and out of the connection due to the strong quantum energy that you all manifested.
Casey: Actually that does beg the question, Min. Where the hell are we?

Min: Well…. According to the map you guys are in, it doesn’t show where you guys are, more specifically, you guys are not showing up in the map at all!

Saya: What!?

Min: It’s like you’re all here, and yet not here at the same time…

Casey: That warped area…

Saya: Huh?

Casey: The warped area that we created, that disrupted the main physical plane somehow!

Saya: *grunts*

Min: Casey's got a point. Everything surrounding you all during that confrontation got sucked in with you.

Saya: *looks around*

All of the debris that followed Casey and Saya are all falling and colliding with each other at various speeds.

Saya: Everything's going very slow, and some are very fast regardless of weight… It's like speed doesn't have a rule here!

Min: That's right. Something within that realm prevents the laws of physics applying here. You three created something to exceed that law to the point that nothing matters anymore.

Casey: *breaks sweat*
Min: Maybe time itself doesn't have a meaning, either. Over here, it took me 5 minutes to connect to you guys again.

Saya: That took you 5 minutes..? That's 20 minutes for us..

Min: *worried* As I thought. You two can't stay there for long. I hate to say it, but the physical properties of that unusual plane can be comparable of a black hole; and what I mean by that is that gravity will function very differently than it is here.

Casey: How pleasant..

Saya: Isn’t that the heaviest though? Does that mean that our gravity is nonexistent?

Min: You said that speed changes by impact, right? I don’t think gravity may be exempt from that. When I said that that plane is comparable to a black hole, I mean that whatever is maintaining this tunnel, due to the amount of energy it is generating, you two will become very heavy when approaching it.

Saya: That means Paradox is still around. Min! How much time do we have?

Min: I don’t know… But it’s best that you two should get this done and over with.

Casey: On it.

Min: ….Please be careful.

*silence*

Saya: So, everything here… It’s just a chaotic space… Like something metaphysical..
Casey: Well, this isn’t what I had in mind by going through this mission, but hey. Anything can happen I suppose.

Saya: *nods*

Casey: Luckily our Quantum Gears are still working fine, so let’s hurry up and get to Paradox and shut down that core! *clenches fist*

Saya: Got it.

*footsteps*

Both of the duo began to walk again, and saw that the debris crashing into each other sent the other part of the fallen debris being sent into the unknown below.

Saya: *breaks sweat*

Casey: Come on.

*whoosh* 2x

Saya: W-Whoa!!

Casey: O-Okay… This is more than I thought!!

Saya: Watch out!!

Casey: !?

*whoosh*

Saya and Casey moved out of the incoming debris.

Saya: *pants* *looks around*
Casey: Don’t worry, I got your back. Just let me know when you found Paradox.

Saya: …..

While Casey was on the lookout for any incoming debris, Saya searched around the metaphysical plane to find Paradox.

Saya: (Come on… Where are you..?)

*whoosh*

Saya: !

Casey grabbed Saya and jumped out of the way.

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: I can’t find it anywhere!

Casey: Then we’re not close enough! Come on! *runs off*

Saya: O-Okay! *follows along*

Casey and Saya both jumped from one platform to the other while also trying to maintain their momentum.

Saya: Is this what being in outer space looks like!?

Casey: I guess you can say that!

Saya: *slightly laughs* It’s… kinda fun! It feels like you’re in a giant gravity bounce house!

Casey: I wouldn’t compare that to a harmless attraction, but alright… Lighthearted comments aside, Saya and Casey landed on the next platform.

*whoosh*

Saya: *grunts*

Casey: *looks around*

Saya: There are more platforms here…

Casey: Let’s keep moving! *cracks knuckles*

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: Ugh! I’m going a bit slower…

Casey: What?

Saya: If we run, we’re just going slower!

Casey: Huh…? Then..

As Casey attempts to walk, they’re suddenly going too fast.

Casey: !?

Saya: *panicked* C-Casey!!

Casey: *yells*

The sudden momentum took Casey off course.

Saya: !!

Saya followed along and grabbed on to the incoming debris that was coming towards Saya.

Saya: *grunts*

Saya slightly slides off of the rock to where she is seen hanging off of it in an attempt to grab Casey.

*whoosh*

Casey: *grunts*

Saya: Casey!! Grab my hand!!

Casey: Huh?

Casey attempts to reach out to grab Saya's hand, but they're spinning too fast to even reach for her.

Casey: I can't stop myself from spinning like this!!

Saya: *grunts* Then I'll just grab your legs!

Casey: Be careful!

*whoosh* 3x

Saya: *grunts*

Saya couldn't get a strong grip on Casey, but after attempting it 3 times, she managed to stop Casey from going out of bounds.

Casey: Phew…

Saya: How's THAT for an amusement ride!?
Casey: Ugh… I almost died, Saya…

Saya: Sorry! Let's get off of here…

Saya focuses on where the next platform is until she found Paradox.

Saya: Here! *jumps off*

Casey: Whoa!!

*whoosh*

*thud*

Saya: *pants*

Casey: You found it?

While Casey is floating over to Saya, Saya turns around with a serious look.

Saya: Yeah. It’s right there!

*faint energy surging*

Casey: It looks like it is generating energy just like Min said.

Saya: *nods* Yo, Min! We found Paradox!

Min, *low connection*: That’s great! Though I can’t stay here for long, since you two are already there… The quantum energy chart for Paradox is going out of control and it is interfering with my connection..

Casey: That’s fine! We’ll take care of that!

Min: Good, I’ll make this quick then! You two will have to use your fully charged Quantum Gears at the precise moment! The moment you two get close to Paradox, that’s when you release that energy!

Saya: Got it!

Min: And another thing! Since Paradox is controlling this plane, gravity will return to normal for you both, so you only have one shot of doing this!

Casey: Yeah, sure. It looks like Paradox is charging for another attack just to take us out.

Min: That's probably that same attack from before!

Saya: Also when we do land the final hit in, you and I.D.A. better go somewhere away from the warped area!

Min: O-Okay..! Be-

*interference*

Saya: Agh! Min!

Casey: It'll be fine, Saya. Let's just focus our attention on Paradox!

Saya: O-Okay!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

As the duo get closer and closer to Paradox, the platforms below them are starting to shift.

<DETECTED 2 LIFEFORMS.>

<LIFEFORMS MUST BE ANNIHILATED.>

<INITIALIZING QUANTUM MELTDOWN.>

<STARTING COUNTDOWN…. 60 SECONDS.>

Saya: As if you're going to take us down with you!

Casey: Let's go, let's go, let's go!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

<RESISTANCE IS FATAL.>

Saya and Casey continued to push on through the debris surrounding them in order to get close to Paradox. As for the floating debris, they are now getting absorbed due to the overwhelming amount of energy that Paradox is emitting off of it.

Saya: *pants*

Casey: *dodges* Hang on, Saya!!

Saya: *grunts*

Casey is starting to accelerate towards lightning speed.

Saya: !?

Casey: *yells*

<ONE WILL BE REDUCED TO NOTHING.>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Saya notices that both Paradox's structure and Casey's body were starting to deteriorate by the excessive amount of quantum energy.

Saya: *breaks sweat*

Memories are flashing back to Saya.

*Saya: What's your deal…? Do you want these people to not have their normalcy again…?*

*Saya: *focused* Don't worry, Min. I'll teach that bastard a lesson.*

*Saya: *serious* I want to protect those I love, too. It isn't just Casey. All of these people that we rescued from the Guardian FOE, they count too!*

*Saya: *slightly hostile* We… have a job to do! To dispel this mist! And if you're also gonna get in our way, then I'll have to fight you myself through this nonsense!*

*Saya: It's okay! *holds Casey's hand* Just let me handle this. *rushes up to the Guardian FOE**

*Saya: If it wasn't for you, I don't know where I would be today. You basically saved my life back then when all of the Doppelgangers started to become extremely hostile. Don't beat yourself up for that. It sucks, I know. However, you should be at least glad that you came this far! We already made it to the 5th district and we're so close to reaching the last one. I don't want you to feel like this when we get to the Southern Tower.*

*Saya: And besides.. We want answers to this cause of the phenomenon. If we back down now, there's no way for us to live normally again!*

*Ayana: Everyone's prone to fall to any FOE types, including you Saya, as a result, in fear of getting found out, you forced yourself to adapt into an environment that you don't belong to, retaliating against those who DID know you without acknowledging them. While the life you took from my own body disintegrated into oblivion. Xeno-Shapeshifter..*

*Ayana: You're..… NO DIFFERENT than THEM.*

Saya: (You're wrong. I can choose to be different if I want to… Because I have a reason to keep on living!!)

*Saya: *enraged* I DIDN'T WANT THIS, EITHER! WE WERE JUST TRYING TO LIVE OUR NORMAL LIVES UP UNTIL THAT POINT! WE WERE AFRAID OF WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US AFTER SEEING SOMEONE ENTERING THE TOWER!*

Saya: (Everything I have experienced, learned, and felt…)

Casey, Min, Dante, Sharen, and I.D.A. appeared within Saya's eyes.

Saya: (Thank you for letting me see it!)

*electricity* 25x

Saya is starting to accelerate at the same speed as Casey, after that build up, they both have 15 seconds left.

<YOU CAN'T SAVE EVERYONE.>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Saya and Casey's eyes are fading away leaving nothing but the white glow emitting off of their pupils. At that point, they are now running at the speed of light.

<WHY MUST YOU TRY?>

<MELTDOWN IMMINENT.>

Saya: *enraged* SHUT UP!!

Everyone that Saya has met throughout her temporary life started to flashed within her.

Saya: SO WHAT IF I TRY!? THAT ISN'T GOING TO STOP ME AT MY- NO! OUR GOAL FOR EVERYONE IN NEO AND ZENITH CITY!! I BEGAN TO BUILD MY OWN RESOLVE, MY OWN FORTITUDE, AND MY OWN WILL TO STAND UP STRAIGHT OF THE CAUSE!!

*electricity* 34x

Casey: *overwhelmed* SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL! WE BOTH HAVE A PURPOSE IN SERVING NEO WITH OUR OWN REASON THAT WILL BENEFIT EVERYONE!!

*electricity*

Both: THAT IS **OUR ORDER!!!**

<ALL LIFE CAN'T BE ANSWERED BY A TRIVIAL THOUGHT.>

<ALL CHOICES WILL BE MEANINGLESS IN THE END.>

<ALL PATHS WILL LEAD TO ONE OUTCOME.>

<NONE SHALL BE AVOIDED.>

<PARADOX ANOMALY PROGRAM SHUTTING DOWN.>

Saya: *screams* CASEY!!
Casey: NOW!!!

*whoosh* 2x

Saya and Casey both jumped at the same time from the ledge of the final platform and launched themselves at Paradox with such high precision.

Saya: QUANTUM!!!

Casey: QUANTUM!!!!

*crack* 20x

Both: **DISCHARGE!!!!!**

*crack* 40x

*blast* 2x

The impact landed a direct hit on the inner core.

Saya: ……Break free.

*shatter*

*alarm blare*

Core: DANGER. DANGER. INNER CORE FATALLY DAMAGED. UNABLE TO REVERT ANY BACKUP PROTOCOLS. UNABLE TO GENERATE QUANTUM ENERGY. RIGHT CORE SHUTTING DOWN. ATTEMPTS AT RESTARTING THE SYSTEM FAILED. FAILED TO RESTART. ATTEMPTING TO BACK UP POWER…. FOUND.

*whoosh*

Three energy tubes started to grab Saya.

Saya: !?

Casey: SAYA!!

Core: STABILITY LEVELS DROPPING. TRANSFERRING REMAINING QUANTUM ENERGY.

Saya: *screams in frustration*

Saya looked at Ayana who had a pained angered look on her face. Saya looked saddened at the sight, but returned back with a last-ditch effort.

*energy charge*

Saya: SNAP OUT OF IT, AYANA!!!!!

*electricity*

Casey: *gasp*

Casey noticed that Saya's Quantum Gear is about to break.

Casey: (Come on, Saya…!)

Saya: This isn't you!! Put that pettiness aside! Don't let Paradox control you like this!! I JUST WANT YOU TO COME HOME WITH ALL OF US!!!!

Saya clapped her hand together with full force.

Saya: QUANTUM….!!!!

Within a second, Saya turned into a shining cyan color.

Saya: SHREDDER!!!!

*warp* 3x

*explosion*

Saya slammed her hands into Ayana's head, pushing Saya away from Paradox.

Core: DANGER. DANGER. MAIN CORE FATALLY DAMAGED. UNABLE TO REGENERATE LOST QUANTUM ENERGY. SHUTTING DOWN.

Casey: SAYA!!!

*crash*

Saya fell onto the ground far away from the impact zone.

*crack* 50x

Casey: !! *closes eyes*

Within a brief moment of silence, the radiated energy of Casey, Paradox, and an enhanced energy of Saya destroyed the Metaphysical Plane. Everything was then reduced to nothing, as it never happened.

……

……..

Scene 5: Southern Tower: Surveillance Hall

Min: Ah.

The current status of Casey, Saya, and Paradox are shown to be corrupted.

Min: Did they do it..?

I.D.A.: Hm.. I don’t see any updates on my scanner…. Maybe time is warped over there perhaps?

Min: Possibly.. I think Saya mentioned that they were knocked out for more than 5 minutes.. Ever since that last communication we had, that was 10 minutes ago..

I.D.A.: ……

Min: *squints eyes*

Min noticed that the same area that he interacted with before is warping again, but with electric sparks emitting off of it.

Min: H-Hey, I.D.A.! I see something!

I.D.A.: Yes, I am aware! We shouldn’t get too close!

Min: Can you still activate your shield?

I.D.A.: I can! Iridescent Shield!

*sheen*

Although I.D.A. can still summon the shield, it is still damaged.

I.D.A.: Sorry, it’s the best I can manage for now..

Min: That’s okay. Honestly, I don’t know what’s going to come out of there, so it wouldn’t hurt to stay cautious.

*rumble*

I.D.A.: !?

Min: A-Agh! The ground’s shaking so violently!

I.D.A.: The magnitude is on an intense level! We have to get under something!

Min: Uh…! *rapidly looks around* I think that computer keyboard is our only way out! Hurry!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

*crumble* 5x

*crack* 4x

*crash* 20x

I.D.A.: Min!

Min: I know! Keep the shield up! I don’t wanna get another broken arm…

Min and I.D.A. kept on running towards the keyboard monitor and managed to arrive there safely.

Min: *pants*

I.D.A.: !!

*energy surging*

*explosion*

Min: *yells*

I.D.A.: Brace for impact!!!

Min: *covers head*

The warped area started to get even bigger, and within 10 seconds, everything surrounding the area turned into white.

*BLAST*

*high-pitched ringing*

……

……..

## Scene 6: Southern Tower: Destroyed Surveillance Hall

After the blast, all of the debris that was sucked in the plane, were violently ejected away from the warped area and sent across the room, damaging almost everything in its path. The Guardian Paradox, Saya and Casey themselves were also ejected from the space, leaving an injured Saya and Casey and a destroyed Paradox.

*crumble* 15x

Min: Agh… I can’t see…

I.D.A.: I still can. Activating night vision mode.

*sheen*

I.D.A.: Are you okay, Min?

I.D.A. reached out to where Min is, who is still covering his head in fear.

Min: I-I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Right here, in front of you!

Min: A-Ah.. *tries to wave his hands to where I.D.A.'s voice is*

Min: Oh! There you are…

I.D.A.: *giggles* I'm glad to see that you're not injured again.

Min: Yeah, same goes for you. But, now we have another problem, we're caved in.

I.D.A.: Not for long! *summons cannon*

*blast*

I.D.A. was still in her combat module and summoned a cannon to blast all of the fallen debris away.

*crumble* 5x

Min: *shocked* Ugh… That could've been bad, you know? Suddenly blasting the blocked boulders away…

I.D.A.: Do not worry, Min! I made sure that our safety remains our 1# priority!

Min: …..

Min and I.D.A. crawled out of their temporary hiding place from the sudden earthquake. The entire area has been reduced to nothing but rocks and broken machinery.

Min: Oh god..

I.D.A.: Let me do a recon.

*scanning*

Min started to walk to the same place where the warped plane was, only to find nothing there.

Min: (It's gone.)

I.D.A.: There are two critically injured people and one gravely injured person here!

Min: Did you just say "gravely"!?

I.D.A.: I'm afraid so. This is a time for the last EHK to be used at once.

Min: Ugh… Saya!! Casey!! Where are you!?

Min is seen running all frantically hoping that the fighters are not at the verge of death.

Min: *scared* CASEY!! SAYA!! ANSWER ME PLEASE!!

*crumble*
Min: H-Huh..? *turns around*

Multiple rocks were moving off of the buried person below.

Min: !!

*rapid footsteps*

*crack* 2x

Casey: *pained* Ngh…

Min: C-Casey…!

Casey: *coughs* *pants* Hey… Min…

Without hesitation, Min pulls Casey out of the debris with his normal arm.

Min: *grunts*

*crumble* 4x

Min: *pants*

Casey: Phew… That couldn't be worse than what I had to do… Thanks Min-

Min quickly gave Casey a hug.

Min: *tearing up* Don't you EVER do that again…! Please…

Casey: …..

Min: I know what you had to do… But that cockiness of yours nearly killed you today…..

Casey: ….Sorry. I'm just doing my job. I won't ever pull off that stunt again.

Min: I can't promise that for some reason…

Casey: *slightly laughs* Yeah, you got me. But still, I'm glad to see you alright.

Min: *nods*

Casey: *winces* Aagh…

Min: *pulls away from Casey* Oh my god! I'm sorry!

Casey: No, no..! You're fine! Ugh… Guess I have to kiss my gear goodbye, though.

Min: Huh?

Min noticed that Casey's Quantum Gear isn't glowing anymore.

Min: Oh.. So you did go into OVERDRIVE when you were stuck in the Metaphysical Warp Tunnel.

Casey: Hahaha… I didn't have a choice. That thing was going to pull a kamikaze move that was gonna take the both of us out.

Min: …Wait, kamikaze-

Casey: Better yet, where's I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: I'm here!

Casey: Oh!

I.D.A.: We have yet to find another person who is injured… And another who is on the verge of passing on.

Casey: …..

Min: Oh god.. We have to find Saya!!

Casey: Y-Yeah..

I.D.A.: I think I saw her up there. *points to the balcony*

The team looked up and noticed a bleeding Saya.

Casey: !!!

*rapid footsteps*

Min: C-Casey!

I.D.A.: Time is of the essence, Min! *grabs Min*

Min: W-Wha-

*jet engine*

Casey: *worried* Saya!

Casey rushed up to an injured Saya. Her right arm has been completely blown off.

Casey: *horrified* NO!!!

Min: *gasp*

I.D.A.: Quickly! Cover her arm!
Casey: *grunts*

Casey frantically takes off their uniform and rips off part of his clothes to make a tourniquet for Saya's arm.

Casey: Min, I need bandages!!

Min: Right here. *pulls out bandages*

Casey rapidly took the bandages and wrapped it around tightly on Saya's arm, causing it to stop bleeding all over the ground.

Casey: *rapid breathing*

Min: …..

I.D.A.: Both of you went over the OVERDRIVE limit and created a massive breakthrough that got you all out of there.

Min: Enough of that! Is Saya going to be okay!?

I.D.A.: My apologies. If we didn't rush up to quickly care for Saya, she would've died from blood loss.

Casey: *sighs* Thank god…

*faint wheezing*

All: !

Saya is slowly coming to me with a blurred vision. She can faintly see Casey holding her.

Casey: S-Saya…

Saya: ……?

Min: Thank goodness! You're awake…

Saya: Huh…? What happened..?

Casey: I don't know.. But the moment we unleashed our charged up energy to Paradox, we got sent back here.

Saya: Really…?

Casey: Yeah… And that move you did…? That almost killed you, you know.

Saya: O-Oh..

Casey wasn't trying to scold Saya, but she ended up trying to hold back her tears.

Casey: *emotional* That was a cocky move, Saya… Damn it..

Saya: I'm sorry.

Saya finally looked up at Casey with some guilt.

Saya: Ugh… I feel numb.

Min: Oh, that… Your arm got blown off when you were at the Metaphysical Warp Tunnel.

That made Saya flinch and wide awake.

Saya: *scared* WHAT!?

Casey: H-Hey, take it easy.. We just patched you up.

Saya: No, never mind that! Where's Ayana!?

I.D.A.: Ayana's probably still in Paradox..

Saya: I'm going to get her!!

I.D.A.: Wait for me!

*rapid footsteps* 2x

Casey: S-Saya!!

Min: Come on, Casey.

Casey: Right.

*rapid footsteps* 2x

Saya and I.D.A. both reached the bottom of the hall and found a destroyed Paradox machine.

Saya: *sighs* Look at this.. None of this should’ve happened if Ayana listened..

I.D.A.: Let’s not dwell on the past, Saya… Proceed with caution.

Saya: ….

Saya walked up to the machine to see that the entire rear area had been blown off.

*short circuiting*

Saya: (That was the same area where I unleashed Quantum Shredder.)

*metal footsteps*

Saya: …Ayana?

*silence*

Saya: (She’s probably unconscious.)

Saya carefully entered the inside of Paradox.

Casey: *gasp* Saya, what are you doing!? Get out of there!

Saya: It’s fine, Casey! This machine isn’t operable!

Casey: But…

Min: It’s fine. I’m not detecting any energy left out of Paradox.

Casey: ….

Saya: Ah!

Saya found Ayana who was still hooked on the machine.

Saya: *breaks sweat* Ayana..?

*silence*

Saya: H-Hey..? Ayana, wake up…

*drip* 10x

Saya: (Right..!) I.D.A.! The EHK!

*silence*
Saya: I.D.A.! I’m going to need you to give me the EHK for Ayana!

I.D.A.: ……

Min: I-I.D.A.?

I.D.A.: Yes?

Casey: Hey, Saya is asking you to give her the Emergency Heal Kit to Ayana. I think she's bleeding out as well.

I.D.A.: Caesy, I already programmed myself to give someone an EHK when they are on the verge of dying.

Min: Okay…? And you just said that there is one gravely injured person here.

I.D.A.: I did say that, yes.

Casey: *confused* So then why aren't you moving!?

Saya: Guys!

All: ?

Saya: What's taking I.D.A. so long? At this rate, Ayana's gonna die!

Min: I don't know! Usually she'll just carry out the task without questioning!

Saya: Huh…? Did the breakthrough damage I.D.A. 's servos, too?

I.D.A.: I can assure you that I am in full health!

Casey: *grunts* I.D.A., pass that EHK.

I.D.A.: I can't give it to you, Casey. I'm not programmed to complete that task now.

Casey: *frustrated* Well then change it back to where it once was!!

Saya: !?

Casey: *winces in pain*

Min: C-Casey!

Casey: Ugh… I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

Saya: (What's the matter with I.D.A.? She isn't moving at all!)

Saya goes to further check Ayana, other than her bleeding from her arms, she notices something else.

Saya: ……

I.D.A.: I believe Saya found the problem.

Min: Something preventing you from entering Paradox?

I.D.A.: No.

Casey: What do you mean, no? That thing was short circuiting, so we thought that getting Ayana out of there would give you a chance to place the EHK on her!

I.D.A. turned around and looked at Casey and Min with a somber look.

I.D.A.: I'm sorry that I cannot obey that task now. There's a reason for that, and regardless of the amount of time we have, I'm afraid it won't matter.

Min: ?

Casey: *upset* Will you quit acting vague and tell us what's wrong!?

I.D.A.: Ayana's vitals are not showing up.

Min: …What?

Casey: Not showing up?

I.D.A.: Yes. Saya’s attack landed a fatal blow on Paradox, but it also fatally damaged the core, which was Ayana.

During I.D.A. 's explanation, Saya was looking at Ayana with a grief-stricken look on her face.

I.D.A.: That attack was so powerful that even I cannot find the right term to classify it now. If that attack managed to create a recoil that was so powerful to even blow Saya’s right arm off, just imagine that damage to Ayana.

Casey: !!!

Min: *shocked* N-No way…

Saya: A-Ah…

Saya couldn’t hold back her tears. Both Casey and Saya were trying to save Ayana, but at the very end, Saya did one of the things that Doppelgangers are capable of doing: taking someone’s body and killing them where they stand.

Saya: **AAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Holding her head with her left hand with the reality that she killed Ayana, Saya is left screaming uncontrollably in a frustrated guilty manner.

Saya: *mortified* NO! NO! NO! THIS ISN’T WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO!!! I WAS TRYING TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT FOR EVERYONE!!! WHY DID I SCREW IT UP AT THE VERY LAST MINUTE!?!??

Min: Saya….

Casey: ……

Saya: I DIDN’T CHANGE ANYTHING! I ENDED UP DOING THE OPPOSITE!! I JUST KILLED AN INNOCENT WOMAN!! I’M NOTHING BUT A BURDEN TO ALL OF YOU!!

I.D.A.: I’m sorry, Saya-

Saya: NO! NONE OF YOU SHOULD CALL ME THAT ANYMORE!! I….

Saya’s heart was pounding like crazy. She ended up killing Ayana when she was trying to save her. This intense amount of guiltiness should kill a person where they stand, but unlike Casey and Min, Saya and I.D.A. cannot die from it because they’re not fully human.

Saya: ….You were right Casey. I’m nothing but a Xeno-Shapeshifting monster. I betrayed everyone in NEO at the last second.

Casey: N-No.. Saya-

Saya: I SAID DON’T CALL ME THAT!!

Casey immediately flinches at Saya’s response.

Saya: Just… all of you. Leave, and never come back.

Casey: *grunts*

Casey walked up to the machine without saying a word.

Saya: ….

*metal clanking*

Casey walked up to Ayana's body and removed the machine parts off of her.

Casey: ….Don't you want to at least make a proper burial before that?

Saya: …….

Casey: Trust me. Leaving her here isn't a good resting place.

Saya: ….After this.

Casey: Good. Let us go.

*footsteps*

Without adding on, everyone left the room in silence.

……

……..

…….

## Scene 7: Southern Tower: Entrance

Min: Huh?

As the team walked to the first floor, the outside was dark.

Min: H-Hey… I don’t see any white areas outside!

Casey: That could mean…!

*rapid footsteps* 4x

As everyone stepped outside at last, everything surrounding them was pitch black, the same tone that you’ll see when the night’s out.

Min: The white mist… It disappeared!

Casey: Yeah.. I guess the main source really was Paradox.

I.D.A.: It would seem so!

Saya: (Paradox was the main source of White Darkness..? Not me..?)

Casey: I was wrong to think that Saya was the reason that she caused the White Darkness event. It was all Paradox emitting its quantum energy and the substances of those fallen Doppelgangers.

Casey turned around and looked at Saya with sadness.

Casey: *sad* I would like to formally apologize for completely doubting you, Saya. I thought you were responsible, but you’re not. You even proven once or twice that you’re not like them. I’m very sorry.

Saya looked at Ayana again.

Saya: No. You were right to think that. I had to fight to prove myself that I’m different. At least I try to understand human emotions.

Min: Saya….

Casey: If any case, we should call the commander about our-

*ring*

Min: Oh, speaking of.

Not in the way they all expected to call, instead of Marako, it was Dante.

Casey: D-Dante?

I.D.A.: Oh, remember? He gave you his contact information!

Min: We haven’t talked to him in a while, so it wouldn’t hurt to pick up.

Casey: …..

*click*

Dante: Hey Casey! Sorry for calling you out of the blue, but when I was doing some recon, suddenly the mist just dissipated!

Casey: Really?

Dante: Y-Yeah! That means that we can finally go home!

Casey: Oh, that’s cool…

Dante: ….You don’t sound very pleased. Look I know you wanted to bring us home yourself, but you originally wanted us to return back to Zenith City, right?

Casey: Yeah… I did.

Dante: Don’t worry, Casey. We will be careful returning back. I don’t know where you guys are, but you better head back as well! I feel like the commander has something to say.

Casey: I bet.

Dante: Stay safe.

*click*

Min: He sounded very happy.

I.D.A.: Of course! I'm willing to say that they're all glad to be returning home to their loved ones! I say that our mission is completed!

Saya: (Somehow I don't feel happy about that.)

Casey: Let's just call the commander.

Casey scrolled down her contact list until she found "Commander Marako" and pressed VIDEO CALL.

*ringing*

Saya: ……

*click*

Marako: …..
Casey: Commander, we're coming to report that we destroyed the main power source from the Southern Tower.

Marako: ……Very good. I noticed that you all left the tower while sustaining critical injuries. The moment you return back to Zenith City, enter the clinic as soon as possible.

Casey: Yes Commander.

Min: Unfortunately, we did have a casualty. Ayana, the woman who went missing from the first elite NEO group was found dead.

Marako: ……

Saya: ….

Marako: I see. I'll have to mark her off then from the active list.

Saya: *grunts* Don't you feel bad for her!?

Marako: …Is that Saya?

Saya: *upset* Sure as hell it's me! Ayana was missing for months and the moment we tell you that she's dead, your only response is to mark her off!?

Marako: Let me remind you all that this mission wasn't going to be easy. You are going to encounter events that may or may not leave someone dead.

Saya: But…! Even THEN…!

Casey: *down* Saya, Marako did the same thing with my parents. Deceased NEO members have their name off of their list since, well, they're not associated with NEO anymore.

Saya: ….

Marako: Members come and go, Saya. Remember that.

Min: ….

Marako: Min, I believe you have something to say.

Min: Y-Yes! Sorry. The full report of our mission will be sent to you momentarily.

Marako: I'm looking forward to it. Until then, you all can enjoy the night sky. The stars are quite a view.

Saya: !

*click*

I.D.A.: You perked up the moment Marako mentions the stars!

Saya: *shy* Y-Yeah.. That's because I have a soft spot for astrology.

Casey: I didn't know that! You and Rosa can go stargazing sometime!

Saya: ….

Min: But the commander is right. We can enjoy the skies, but we also have to head to the clinic for additional care.

Saya: (We could, but I.D.A. programmed herself not to give the last EHK to us..)

Casey: Let's hurry on home, guys.

*footsteps*
Not willing to continue with the conversation, the group stayed quiet.

……

## Scene 8: Zenith City: City Gates

*footsteps*

Min: We’re back home again… After a week..

Casey: Yup. I can’t wait to see my family again.

Saya: …..

*footsteps* 4x

Surveillance Camera: 3 people and 1 A.I spotted. State your identity.

Casey, Min, Saya, and I.D.A. pulled out their IDs and showed it to the camera.

Surveillance Camera: Scanning…

…….

…

..

Surveillance Camera: Identified. Saya Johnson, Casey Costello, Min Sakhonnakhon, and I.D.A., Welcome back to Zenith City.

*gates opening*
I.D.A.: Wow…!

All 3: !

Zenith City returned back to its city pop look like before. The skyscrapers are illuminating, people wandering around in excitement, and the NEO members from Dante’s group can be seen.

Sharen: Huh? HEY EVERYONE, LOOK!!!

Casey: Ah-

Sharen: Casey and the others are back!!

Dante: *looks over*

Dante notices that Casey is carrying Ayana's body.

Dante: That's great to see that they all made it out safely, but let's leave them some privacy, okay?

Sharen: Aw… Okay..

*footsteps*

Min: Thanks for that Dante.

Dante: Hey, it's no problem! I know Sharen is very excited to see you again, but you all….

Looking at the team again, Dante's mood suddenly shifted.

Dante: *worried* Maybe you should get some rest.

Casey: We will. Thanks, Dante.

*footsteps* 4x

I.D.A.: Have a good night!

Everyone departed to the headquarters to get patched up.

……

## Scene 9: NEO Headquarters: Clinic

NEO Nurse: There. You should be set. I'm surprised you were even out there with an amputated arm..

Saya: Ah… Yeah. It's a miracle that I survived.

*footsteps*

NEO Employee: Huh? Hey, aren't you that girl who was running in the halls the other day?

Saya: E-Eh? Yeah, that's me! How did you remember?

NEO Employee: To be honest, you had a lot of energy. And looking at you now, it looked like you just went through hell and back trying to return here alive.

Saya: ….

NEO Employee: But, in any case. The commander wants to see you.

Saya: Oh. Sure.

NEO Nurse: Make sure to come back here tomorrow for physical therapy!

*footsteps*

……

## Credits Scene 1: NEO Commander's Surveillance Center

Min explained the whole ordeal to Commander Marako.

Marako: I see. Well, no matter what the outcome Saya chose, someone will wind up dead. In NEO, we have to overcome anything and forge upon ourselves to become stronger. Such as the main Order of NEO.

Saya: *grunts*

Min: But couldn't you be a bit more sympathetic?

Marako: If I showed any light side of things, NEO wouldn't be able to stand against those FOEs and Doppelgangers for long. The whole Order would have crumbled before the 1st year. That's the reason why I established the elite branch of NEO, so that you will be able to handle such tasks. I have faith in you all, that's why I didn't want to go easy on you.

Casey: …..

Marako: However.

Saya: What now?

Marako: Now that the White Darkness event is over, there's no need for NEO anymore, is there?

Dante: Huh!?

Casey: So, wait, you're abolishing the Order?

Marako: Not as much as abolishing it since we're not going to be fighting anymore. I'm thinking about turning into an organization. Where we will continue to conduct research on quantum energy.

Min: !

Marako: I was hoping, Min, after you take your break would you take the offer?

Min: Of course.

Casey: Then… What about the rest of us?

Marako: You can remain in NEO as a facility member, or you can quit. You can assist in the research like those who were in the analyst class.

Casey: …..

Dante: I want to do better at NEO, so I'm gonna remain a member here.

Min: What about you two?

Casey: Ah… I'm not gonna stay here.

Saya: Same here.

Dante: Wait, seriously?

Casey: Don't get me wrong, I've been in NEO longer than you all and you all think that I should be a role model for you, but… I haven't seen my family all that much since then. I want to take the time off so that I can spend time with them.

Saya: ….Y-Yeah! Me too.

Dante: Ah… Well, it can't be helped then.

I.D.A.: O-Oh..

Marako: I see. Well, NEO will still be open for you two, but until then, I'm required to receive your uniforms.

Casey: Sure thing. I'll give it to you tomorrow morning.

I.D.A.: I didn't think that the both of you would be resigning… I'm going to miss you both.

Casey: I'm sorry, I.D.A. But family comes first before anything, right Saya?

Saya: …..

Casey: Uh, Saya?

Saya: ….These are my only clothes.

Min: ….?

Dante: Wait, you've been wearing NEO's uniforms for that long..?

Saya: Yeah.

Min: I can lend you some of my clothes.

Saya: Oh, you don't have to Min..

Min: Just take it as a way for me to express my gratitude..

Saya: ….

I.D.A.: Does…

Casey: ?

I.D.A.: *sad* Does that mean that we won't see each other again?

Casey: Aw… No! I'll still come by and visit you guys!

I.D.A.: What about you, Saya?

Saya: …….

Casey: Hey, I.D.A.? Tell you what, you can come visit us after work hours!

I.D.A.: *lightens up* R-Really?! Commander! Can I stay with Min!?

Marako: Do what you must.

I.D.A.: Hooray!! *hugs Min*

Min: Ah…

Dante: Easy there, I.D.A… Min had a long day..

I.D.A.: I know! I was there!

Marako: Are there any more questions for you all?

Casey: Not really. What do you think, Saya?

Saya shook her head no.

Casey: No, I think we're good.

Marako: *turns around* On behalf of myself as the commander of the former Neonic Elliptical Order, I want to say congratulations.

Dante: Yeah, you all did an excellent job!

Min: T-Thanks guys.

*text message*

Min: Oh! Nin just texted me that the celebratory feast is done!

Dante: Wait, a feast?

Min: Yeah! And you all are invited!

Dante: O-Oh..! Wow… I didn't think I would be included in this sort of thing..

Casey: Well, I don't wanna waste anymore time here! Come on!

Dante: Hey! Wait up!

*rapid footsteps* 3x

Marako: …..

Min: Hey Commander?

Marako: ?

Min: You're free to come join us if you want. My grandma made sure that she made food for the rest of us.

Marako: ….

Min: …Um.

Marako: …It's been a while since I went to a public gathering.

Min: *chuckles* I'm sure you will enjoy yourself.

I.D.A.: I never tried your family's cooking before! I'm just hoping it's not spicy…!

Min: Uh….

I.D.A. looked at Min with baby-doll eyes.

Min: *dumbfounded* Sorry.

Min, I.D.A., and even Commander Marako left the building for a wonderful dinner that Min's family had created. Dante even invited Sharen and his brothers to meet up with everyone else. After Churai and Kusa hugged Min out of worry, everyone else came after Min to settle down. Nin managed to get Churai and Kusa off thankfully, and Grandma On welcomed I.D.A. with open arms.

The party didn't start to get very lively until Marako made her appearance. Everyone peacefully enjoyed themselves eating Thai cuisines while also trying not to burn their tongues off. Both I.D.A. and Zane got the memo too late and ended up walking away with their mouths on fire. After the exciting gathering, I.D.A. formed an idea to take a commemorative photo.

## Credits Scene 2: Sakhonnakhon Residence

Zane: What? A photo?

I.D.A.: Yes! Having a picture taken after our journey would be a wonderful memento to have!

Fi: Ah, right… After this year, NEO would no longer be an Order team.

Marako: NEO will still be around in the next year, but just for researching and patrolling around Zenith City.

Dante: I don't think that sounds like a bad idea!

Sharen: Yeah! Having to patrol around Zenith City would be so awesome to do!

Churai: But won't you get tired of looking at the same billboard lights every time?

Kusa: I don't think so at this point. We haven't seen them in a long time after all!

Churai: …Maybe so.

Rosaria: Let's all gather around so that we can all fit in the picture!

On: One at a time, please! Places everyone!

*footsteps* 14x

Saya: …..

Casey: What's the matter, Saya?
Saya: I…. Can we talk privately?

Casey: Uh sure…?

*footsteps* 2x

Fi: Huh!? Casey, where are you going?

Casey: Sorry! Me and Saya are gonna talk for a bit!

Rosaria: O-Okay… Be sure not to stay out for too long!

*door slides open*

…….

Credits Scene 3: Sakhonnakhon Residence (Patio)

*door closes*

Casey: What's up, Saya?

Saya: ….Remember back in the tower where we were inside of the ventilation shaft?

Casey: Yeah? What about it?

Saya: You were talking about how much you missed your family and how you want to return to them.

Casey: Yeah?

Saya: You're willing to do anything if it means keeping your family safe, right?

Casey: Yes. I'm willing to do anything. That's why I joined NEO in the first place!

Saya: ….

Casey: I'm sure you will do the same for your family, too.

Saya: Ah…. That's the thing, Casey.

Saya felt guilty once again looking at Casey.

Saya: *sad* I don’t have a family.

Casey: !

Saya: When I was talking to “my parents”, those weren’t mine. They’re both Ayana’s parents. I can’t go back there now that I killed her.

Casey: …

Saya: I don’t know, Casey. I’m the only Doppelganger left in Silvene. I’m not human like the rest of you, so I made up my decision. I’m leaving Zenith City tonight.

Casey: W-What?

Saya: I don’t belong here, Casey. It’s time for me to realize that. While I did help you and Min accomplish the goal, that’s all I’m there for. But in the end, I’m nothing more than an anomaly. I wasn’t meant to have a precious life. I mean, you can take me out and put me to rest right here.

Saya extends her arms out without trying to fight back.
Casey: ….Saya.

Saya: ….

Casey: Don’t be stupid. You DO have a family.

Saya: …Haha. Don’t try to play modesty with me, Casey. I can’t be with you all. Besides, I don’t know if Harako and Tali know about Ayana. I feel like I have to tell them since I’m technically responsible for Ayana’s death. The only thing I wonder is that they’re not going to forgive me. I’m sorry, Casey, but I made up my mind. The moment the picture gets taken, I’m leaving.

Casey: ……

Saya: Do you understand?

Casey: …..Yeah, I guess. But one thing.

Saya: Huh?

Casey: If you're going to leave tonight just to find Harako and Tali, what would you do next?

Saya: …?

Casey: I mean, you want to be in a picture with the rest of us, right? You wanted to feel like you're included somewhat…

Saya: That's because I don't want to be forgotten. I know I said I'm not meant to be here, but the amount of hospitality that I've received… It felt warm. Very warm. That's why when I'm gone, I won't be completely forgotten.

Casey: ……

Saya: I'm not trying to sour the mood, just thought I would tell you this before I forget it myself.

Casey wanted to snap Saya back to her senses about everything, but decided to leave her be.

Casey: …Okay.

Saya: *smiles* Now then, let's take our picture together!

*footsteps*

Saya and Casey, bothered, returned back inside to be in the photo with everyone else.

…….

Final Scene: Zenith City: City Gates

After the party was over, Saya took no time at all to head straight for the city gates. The gates are closed, but since Saya is the only one who kept her ID, she will be able to leave.

Saya: …….

*footsteps*

Surveillance Camera: 1 person detected. State your identity.

Saya: … *pulls out ID*

Surveillance Camera: Scanning….

……

…

Surveillance Camera: Confirmed. Saya Johnson, please proceed to the gates.

*gates opening*

*faint rapid footsteps*

Casey: SAYA!!

Saya: …?

Casey: *pants*

Saya: C-Casey.

Casey: I…. Sorry… I wanted… to see you off…

Saya: O-Oh! I didn’t know.

Casey: Sorry.. I should’ve said that back there as well.. Haha…

Saya: Hehe… *turns around*

Casey: So, when are you going to come back?

Saya: …..

*silence*

Saya: I’m not.

Casey: W-What?

Saya: I already told you, Casey. I don’t belong here. I belong to one of the districts. And after I find Harako and Tali, I’m going to bring them here and I’ll just be on my way.

Casey: ……

Saya: But… before I go. Casey?

Casey: What is it?

Saya: *emotional* You, Min, and I.D.A. all gave me a second chance despite everything…. I know what I did was wrong, and I tried to think up other ways, but in the end…. It still didn't turn out in a way I wanted. But you all…. I felt a sense of comfort when I was with you guys during the beginning of the mission. And since we're parting ways… I can't help but feel sad.

Casey: …..

Saya: Thank you so much.

Casey: Hey, it's no problem.

Saya: *picks up travel bag* Well, this is it. Good bye, Casey. *smiles*

Casey: Y-Yeah.. Bye.

Casey waved back to Saya as she walked towards the gates.

Casey: …… *grunts*

*rapid footsteps*

Saya: Huh?

Without warning, Casey hugged Saya with tears in their eyes.

Casey: *emotional* Please stay safe…. And stay happy, okay?

Saya: …!

Casey: I know you don't feel like one, but…

Casey gave Saya the same comforting smile from when they first met.

Casey: You’re part of our family!

Saya: C-Casey…

Casey: *sniffs* There. Now go find Harako and Tali. I’ll always be waiting for you.

Saya: *smiles* Thank you, Casey.

With their last remarks, Saya walked out of the gates, leaving Casey behind. As Casey looked back at the gates again, he saw Saya’s confident smile again, making him feel at ease again. And for Saya, knowing that she truly has a place in someone’s life despite feeling like not being part of one, found the courage and mental fortitude to keep pushing. And with a final look of the photo….

Saya: Harako… Tali.. I’m bringing you all home.

*footsteps*

Saya might’ve found her new home in a fake, yet redeemable life.

-Scarred Quantum Outcome B End-

# Author Notes

AuRoyalPhoenix: Uh, hi! If you’re reading this aftertalk, then I would like to say thank you for reading Scarred Quantum. This is

another project that I was working on after Celestila Spectrum. (Which is also finished, so go check it out if you haven't already.) But this one is different because this time I wanted to just make it as a stand alone series and not have it be connected to Celestila Spectrum whatsoever. I feel like having a sci-fi action themed series would be fun to do, and plus, who doesn't like a little cyberpunk like world? But I'm glad that I finished Scarred Quantum before the end of the year. And the reason why this took me the shortest time to get it ready than CS is because, well, I discovered that storyboarding is a thing. So, I will be doing that for now just to make my life easier. And for the alternate endings? That's a new one, because I originally had one ending, but I thought about: "Hey, what if I make Scarred Quantum similar to a game where your choices matter in the end?" You know, that stuff that we don't want to do but have to anyway while crying on the inside? That one. Jokingly aside, I'm gonna be taking a break from writing for a while, and I don't know when I'm gonna be back for it, considering school and all, and by the time you're reading this, it will already be the end of the year, so I will be closing off by saying Happy Holidays and have a Happy New Year. Until then.

- Phoenix