

Chapter 1: An underground chess match

Chess. Chess is a game that has been played around the world for centuries. There are plenty of chess tournaments hosted where people can compete against one another to become the top player in the world. Naturally, there are also many underground chess leagues. One underground chess league in particular has been gaining infamy due to its use of a frightening piece of technology. This league is known as the Desperado league...

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"Huh? why the hell would we allow a chess club here?" a young man snarled.

"Vice-president, chess is a worldwide sport and our school could-"

"We already have a shogi club, and shogi's superior to chess."

"Says the captain of the shogi team. Are you denying the request for personal reasons?"

"Yes, I don't want your proposed chess club to negatively affect our shogi team. Our school is even called Shogikawa gakuin! We can't have our school's namesake being upstaged by something like chess! Oh, and do you even have enough members?"

"Yes, four in fact."

"Well isn't that a lucky number. Request denied!"

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"What an asshole. A chess club wouldn't leech off his shogi club," a girl with brunette twintails huffed as she stormed down the hallway towards the school's main office.

The girl was a 3rd-year highschooler at Kawaguchi's Shokigakawa gakuin named Mimoko Inoue. She was a girl that had enjoyed playing from a young age, but had only recently decided to become a professional chess player. As a result of that, she was looking to start a chess club at her high school in order to both spread the joy of chess and to properly represent the school in chess tournaments. However, the request had been denied. Mimoko was not going to give up though. If the student council vice-president said no, then perhaps the authority above him could override him.

"No. If you wanna play chess, just do it somewhere else. We aren't going to fund a chess club at my Shogikawa gakuin," the principal huffed.

"Why not? It can just be a club for fun-"

"I don't want chess present in my school at all!"

Mimoko shot the principal a nasty glare before unleashing a verbal tongue lashing upon him. The principal was taken aback, and began yelling back at her. Before things could escalate, some nearby teachers broke up the fight. After exchanging one final glare with the principal, Mimoko stormed out.

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Crows cawed as Mimoko sat dazed on a bench overlooking the river bank and downtown Kawaguchi as the sun began to set. She began muttering to herself about her school life was going to get more problematic now that she got in a fight with the principal.. Her daze didn't last long though as she was approached by a troublesome looking man.

The man dressed like he was from a street gang and had multiple ear piercings, spiky jewelry, a bird tattoo, and a side shave.

"Let's have some fun, just you n' me," the man snickered as he grabbed Mimoko's arm.

"Hmm, why do you look like you're about to kidnap that girl?" a voice asked.

The man turned to notice a boy in a highschool uniform walking towards him.

"Tanabe-kun!?" Mimoko exclaimed.

Okisato Tanabe was one of the students that agreed to join the chess club. He was an average looking man and had no stand-out features.

"Huh? What do you want? A taste of the great Inojin-sama's boot?" the man snarled.

"I just want you to leave my senpai alone. She clearly doesn't want to go with you."

"She never said no, did-"

"NO!" Mimoko glared as she freed her arm.

"HUH!? You think you can just go home!?" Inojin snarled as he whipped out a pocket knife.

"Oi, let's settle this peacefully," Okisato glared.

"Peacefully!? What, you Ghandi or somethin? The real world don't-"

"How about if you beat me in a game of chess, you can do what you want with her?"

Inojin's eyes narrowed as a sinister smile appeared on his face and he agreed to the proposal.

"HOLD ON! Don't I get a say in this!?" Mimoko glared at the two.

"Better idea, how bout you play me, girl. You win, I leave you alone forever, you lose, you become my bitch forever."

"Sorry, but you already agreed to play me. Though if you want to add some extra conditions to us, state them now," Okisato glared.

"Fine. How about loser also ends up taking a dip WITH AN IRON WEIGHT STRAPPED TO THEIR NECK!" Inojin shouted as he pulled a circular device out of his pocket and threw it at the river.

Immediately, a platform appeared floating atop it in place. The platform itself was nothing noteworthy, but the things on it were quite eye-catching. Aside from a giant white pawn statue, overlooking a simple chess board, two giant iron weights with shackles attached to them sat ominously at each end of the platform.

Before Mimoko could say a word, she suddenly found herself restrained to the giant white pawn on the platform. "Wha- MMPH!?"

"Sorry, but chess is a quiet sport, see. Feel free to moan all you want, though" Inojin sneered as Mimoko's mouth was sealed.

Okisato appeared unfazed as he sat down on the white end of the chess board.

"Oi, we didn't draw-"

"Check your card."

Inojin scoffed and summoned a turquoise screen before him. "Black, huh? Well whatever. I'll still win," he snickered as the card vanished and he took his seat.

Immediately, the metal shackles connected to the iron weights attached themselves to the necks of Okisato and Inojin. Mimoko meanwhile was still trying to process everything that was happening as she was forced to watch things unfold.

"So what's your rating then?" Inojin asked Okisato.

"Rating?"

"Don't play dumb with me. You knew I had a WWCF card. Only a member of the World wide chess federation can have one. Though I hate to tell you, but I'm from the Desperado league!"

"Desperado?"

"Yeah, the WWCF doesn't care if you play your matches legally or underground. Of course, only us in the Desperado league have access to this amazing tech."

"Now I get it. That explains why you could summon a chess board out of nowhere."

"You don't look surprised."

"I'm not good at expressing emotions."

"Well whatever. It's time to play. Since this counts as an underground match, there won't be a time limit, though a 10 minute timer will activate if this match goes until daybreak. You also can't leave in the middle of the match, though you're free to take a piss in the river."

"Or offer up a draw?"

"You wish you'd get a draw. Sofia rules are always in play during a DESPER battle. You can't verbally resign either. Though a stalemate or draw by repetition are possible and would result in everything getting nullified, so guess you'd be able to live at least. Now, make your first move. The game starts NOW!"

Okisato nodded and proceeded to move his pawn to e4.

"Standard, huh," Inojin scoffed as he moved his pawn to e5.

As soon as Inojin pressed the button on the timeclock, Okisato moved his pawn to d4.

"What an idiot! CHECK!" Inojin shouted as he moved his bishop to b4.

Okisato effortlessly countered by moving his knight to c3 while Inojin stared at the board for a bit before moving his knight to e7. Okisato then moved his knight to f3 followed by Inojin moving his knight to c6, before Okisato moved his bishop to d3 on his next turn.

"He's being really cautious. Well, he blew his chance big time," Inojin thought as he captured the pawn at d4 with his e-pawn.

Undeterred, Okisato moved his pawn up to e5.

"Wow, guess you really are just an emotionless loser. You should be quaking considering how screwed you are," Inojin laughed as he castled on the king's side.

"Mm," Okisato nodded as he captured the pawn at h7 with his bishop, putting Inojin's king in check.

"What a dumb move. Well one less bishop for you," Inojin sneered as he captured the bishop at h7 with his king.

"This is looking bad! Damn you Tanabe-kun! Why'd you make such a dumb move!? Now I'm gonna be stuck with that creep for the rest of my life!" Mimoko thought as tears began to well up in her eyes.

"Check," Okisato stated as he moved his knight to g5.

Inojin clicked his tongue and moved his king to g6. Okashiro then moved his pawn to h4 eliciting laughter from Inojin. "BA-KA! I'm so close to mating him. I just need a little bit more, though maybe I could end it now," Inojin thought as he captured the knight at c3 with his d-pawn.

To Inojin's surprise, and delight, Okisato moved his queen to g4. "WHAT AN IDIOT! YOU'RE GOING TO DROWN! THANKS FOR THE EASY WIN, CHECK!" he laughed as he captured the pawn at b2 with his c-pawn.

Okisato shrugged and moved his king to e2.

"Mate coming up soon," Inojin maliciously sneered as he captured the rook at a1 with his pawn. "Queen," he declared as the pawn turned into a queen.

"Correct. There's no way out of this. It's mate in 3," Okisato stated.

"Three!?! Nah it's mate in o- mm, two," Inojin shrugged.

"No, it's mate in three, check," Okisato stated as he moved his pawn to h5.

Upon seeing the state of the board, Mimoko let out a muffled sigh as she stared directly at Okisato. "Tanabe-kun, so this is how you play," she thought.

"You struggling? As soon as I get my next turn you're dead," Inojin scoffed as he moved his king to h6.

"You won't get the chance, check," Okisato declared as he moved his knight to e6.

Inojin's eyes shot open as he began to scowl. "He tryin to turn this around by capturin' my queen? Well I can just move my bish- No. That little shit. Well whatever. Even if he captures my queen, I still have another one, and in a much better place too," Inojin thought as he moved his pawn to g5.

Suddenly, Okisato uncharacteristically burst into laughter. "Oh, I was waiting for this moment! You poor fool! Did you think you'd win against ME!?"

"You lost it? Your ass is dead."

"No, you'll be the one drowning in the river tonight. EN PASSANT!"

Inojin's eyes widened with horror as Okisato performed en passant with his pawn at h5, capturing the pawn at g6 thus putting Inojin's king in checkmate.

"Checkmate! You lose!" Okisato maniacally grinned.

"L- Like hell! You can't move a pawn like that!"

"En passant allows you to capture an opponent's pawn adjacent to your own by moving diagonally to the space just behind it. However, it can only be done if the opponent moved their pawn two spaces on the previous turn, and if the pawn is moved to the square directly behind the opponent's pawn that said pawn passed over when it was moved two spaces. Even underground chess matches follow the rules of chess. En passant is allowed and you are in checkmate via my rook. You cannot block, nor escape to g7 because of my knight. You LOSE!"

Inojin went pale and tried to let out a scream as the weight connected to his chain fell off the platform dragging him into the river with it. He desperately tried to pull the shackle off his neck as he sank, but he was unsuccessful and drowned seconds later.

Mimoko was then freed from the pawn and found herself being dragged away by Okisato as the two ran off the platform before it vanished. Once the two were on dry land again, the platform then disappeared as the device used to summon let out a puff of smoke before falling into the river. Inojin's corpse then floated to the surface and began floating away much to Mimoko's shock.

"And that's the end of him," Okisato nodded as his emotionless persona returned.

"Yep, LIKE HELL IT IS! WHAT WAS ALL THAT!?" Mimoko shouted.

"A chess match."

"LIKE HELL IT WAS JUST A CHESS MATCH! IT LOOKED MORE LIKE A DEATH GAME!"

"Well it was. They're pretty common in underground chess matches, though only the Desperado league has developed the technology to create stuff like you just saw. Others gotta set things up the old fashioned way."

"T- Tanabe-kun, w- Who are you?"

"A 2nd-year highschool student that plays chess, that's all... You should probably forget about this and go home. Think of it all as just a wild dream," Okisato said as he walked away leaving Mimoko in a state of shock.

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"Like hell it was just a dream!" Mimoko glared as she watched the news at home. On screen, footage of the police retrieving Inojin's corpse from the river was being broadcasted.

"Wow, that's scary stuff. And you said that guy tried to kidnap ya?" a woman with long crimson hair asked.

"Yeah, but the whole thing was weird. A platform appeared and Tanabe-kun saved me by beating that guy in a game of chess."

"Sounds like a lot. Try and stay safe," a man reading a newspaper nodded.

"You sure you're not just making stuff up?" a young boy asked.

"No, Kotori, I'm not! Well, I guess I'll go to sleep. Good night Okaa-chan, Otou-san, and you too Kotori," Mimoko nodded as she headed for the stairs.

"Oh, did ya get that chess club going?" Mimoko's mother asked.

"No, the requests were shot down, but I'm not giving up. Now that I've decided to play chess professionally, I'm going to do my best to get a chess club going so others can experience the fun of chess."

"Atta girl! Though why'd ya decide to suddenly play chess now? You've been enjoyin' it ever since you were little."

"Back then, I just did it for fun. But ever since you and Otou-san got me that nice chess bag for my birthday a few weeks ago, I decided I wanted to put it to use and start participating in tournaments. Plus, this is my final year of highschool, so I'd like to at least show others the joys of chess before I'm off to college."

"Ya did it because of us?"

"Well, I guess I saw the gift as you both telling me to start playing professional chess."

"Heh, I have no clue how to play chess, but if playin' it makes ya happy, then I want ya to be happy."

"Thanks Okaa-chan."

"I'm calling the bathroom!" Kotori yelled as he raced up the stairs.

"You little ass! Well, I guess I'll wait in my room."

As Mimoko laid down on her bed, she began thinking about the incident. Unable to make sense of it on her own, she instead thought back to something Okisato mentioned, the WWCF, and decided to register with them. Afterall, she was going to have to do so anyway in order to play at official tournaments.

She quickly grabbed her phone and immediately began registering with the WWCF. As

soon as she completed the registration, a notification appeared on her phone.

"Pull out your WWCF card? How do I- WAH!?"

To Mimoko's shock, a translucent turquoise screen, much like the one Inojin had summoned, appeared before her. The screen featured Mimoko's name and picture and listed her rating as unrated.

"So this is a WWCF card. It's more like a menu from a video game."

The WWCF card truly did look like an intricate menu screen. In addition to the rating and profile pic, many side-tabs, each with their own function, were present. The player lookup tab immediately caught Mimoko's eye as she curiously looked up Okisato to find...

"His rating's 2434!? He's nearly grandmaster level!"

Sure enough, Okisato Tanabe was a highly skilled player. Since he was a seasoned player, his match data was also present, allowing Mimoko to look up the match data for the fight with Inojin. To her greater shock, Inojin's rating was 1321.

"That's a pretty respectable rating. Guess you can't judge a book by its cover. Well, I think that's enough for tonight. Tomorrow, I'm going to get some answers from Tanabe-kun," Mimoko thought as she closed her WWCF card.

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The next day, Okisato shot Mimoko a confused stare as she approached him at school. "What's with that look, Inoue-senpai?"

"I just registered with the WWCF. Now I'm an official member. That means I can challenge other members to chess matches and get a proper rating."

"Well congratulations."

"I want to play you. If I win, you tell me everything."

"It doesn't work like that. I was only forced into those conditions because of his devil. Oh."

Okisato had tripped up, but based on Mimoko's lack of surprise, Okisato figured she had pretty much ignored his advice to think of the incident as a dream. Nonetheless, he still attempted to dissuade Mimoko from digging deeper into the incident.

"Underground chess matches can get pretty nasty. I get you're curious, but a rookie-"

"What makes you think I'm bad at chess? How about we review your game at our first meeting of the chess club," Mimoko glared.

"I thought the request was shot down."

"No, we're forming an unofficial chess club. We can play chess at the park instead of in a classroom."

"Sure..."

"Sound more interested! As for your game, I wanted to point out all the errors you made. You nearly lost big time to that thug!"

"Errors?"

"Yes, but we'll discuss everything at the park."

"Seems like I've gotten myself into something," Okisato sighed as Mimoko dragged him away.

The full game:

White: Okisato Tanabe (2434) Black: Inojin Inosuke (1321)

1. e4 e5
2. d4 Bb4+
3. Nc3 Ne7
4. Nf3 Nc6
5. Bd3 exd4
6. e5 O-O
7. Bxh7+ Kxh7
8. Ng5+ Kg6
9. h4 dxc3
10. Qg4 cxb2+
11. Ke2 bxa1=Q
12. h5+ Kh6
13. Ne6+ g5
14. hxg6(ep)#

Chapter 2: The chess club's members

In the park, Okisato scratched his head as he gazed at the chess board. "So you're saying I should have moved a pawn to c3 instead of my knight?"

"Correct, it would have forced him to move his bishop back, then you could have captured his pawn at e5 with no issue, or better yet, moved your bishop to c4," Mimoko stated.

"That would have changed things up."

"Correct, your strategy was reckless. If I was your opponent, I wouldn't have captured the rook and promoted my pawn. Rather, I would have moved my pawn to f5, forcing your queen back, then capture the bishop instead of the rook and promote the pawn to a knight, forcing the rook to capture it. Then you'd be down two pawns, two bishops, and a knight, while I'd only be down two pawns. The rook might seem appetizing, but it's a trap. Capturing it to get a queen would result in white mating black as was shown in your game. Though while the en passant checkmate was flashy, you could have achieved mate in one less move by going knight e6, forcing the king to h7, then capturing g7 with the queen."

"You sure are knowledgeable, I thought you just started chess."

"I've been playing for fun for years. Now was just the time I decided to play professionally."

"Even though there are leagues for elementary schoolers?"

"I told you, back then, I just played for fun. Sure I was asked to consider a chess career at that age, but I didn't want it to consume my life. Now that I'm in my last year of high school, I'm choosing to start a professional chess career."

"Makes sense, I guess," Okisato shrugged as he leaned back on the park bench.

Mimoko decided to take the opportunity to ask Okisato about his lack of grandmaster status. Turns out, he was on the verge of getting one, but just needed to beat a grandmaster,

which he had never been able to do thus far.

"Since you just registered, I assume you're currently unrated," Okisato asked.

Mimoko nodded and pulled out her WWCF card. "I'll need to participate either in a tournament or 5 proper matches before I'm assigned a rating.

"In that case, how bout a practice match with me? Don't worry, a practice match won't affect ratings, plus you can register me as a friend, making it easier to play each other. The cards are even capable of playing online chess, believe it or not. They've also got plenty of other features that put even the latest smartphones to shame. Want me to teach you some things about them?"

"Sure, though, after the chess match. Oh, and you better not hold back."

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"Well, you've certainly got skill, I guess that bastard was smart to tie you up," Okisato nodded as he captured the queen at f8 with his rook.

"And you truly are reckless; checkmate," Mimoko glared as she captured the rook at f8 with her rook. "I'm honestly surprised you have such a high rating with how recklessly you play."

"This was a practice match, so I had no reason to fear trying new things. Besides, even if it counted, I wouldn't really drop in rating much due to you being unrated."

"So you weren't playing at your best?"

"Practice is where you try to perfect new moves and strategies, but I guess they won't work on smart opponents like you."

"You really are an enigma. And why did you suddenly become a maniac when you won yesterday?"

"We all gotta scratch that chuuni itch. Though the less you know about me, the better. I'm just here to play chess after all."

"What about that guy yesterday?"

Okisato let out a heavy sigh and decided to tell her the truth. "He's from an underground chess league known as the Desperado league. I guess they've got a mad scientist among them since they're the only ones that have that tech."

"What do you mean?"

"They can force anyone to play against them with that device. It's known as a DESPER and it can create any stage imaginable as well as make insane punishments possible. It can even drag bystanders in and make them adhere to the punishments as well. Though if their target is higher rated than them, said target can simply refuse to participate and the match won't happen. I guess that means all you gotta do to avoid getting forced into those battles is to get a high rating, though you'd still have the choice to participate if you wanted to I guess."

Mimoko went pale as she struggled to digest the information.

"Don't worry. I'll handle it. Once I get rid of the Desperado league, everyone can play chess without worry," Okisato nodded.

"I guess you have skill. I doubt you got a high rating like that with luck. Though what will I tell the other members?"

"No need to burden them with my problems. Aren't they just doing this for fun?"

"Ugh, I don't know with you. Anyway, they should be here soon. Since there's just two of

them, we'll all play each other for practice to assess skill levels," Mimoko stated.

"What do they look like?"

"Well, there's Shousen-kun and lori-chan. Oh, there they are now."

Okisato gazed over to notice three people approaching. One was a boy with bleached blonde hair, while the other two were girls. One girl had short red hair that obscured her left eye and looked to be the timid type, while the other girl had long multicolored hair and was clearly outgoing and sociable.

"YO! Your girl lori's in da house!" the girl with spiky teeth and long multicolored hair grinned as she approached Mimoko and Okisato.

"This is lori Ishikiridokoro-chan. The guy with the spiky bleached hair is Shousen-kun. I'm not sure who the red-haired girl is, but we'll find out soon. Now introduce yourself to everyone," Mimoko nodded as she nudged Okisato forward.

"Okisato Tanabe, desu."

"Pretty basic greeting, man. I'm Yuusuke Shousen," the boy with the bleached hair stated.

"I'm your girl, lori Ishikiridokoro! Japan's biggest streamer!" lori stated as she struck a cute pose.

"A- A- Eh- Eh- U- Utami En- Enoki," a girl with red hair trembled as she emerged from behind the two.

"Hello Enoki-chan. Are you interested in joining the chess club?" Mimoko asked.

"You bet! I saw her playin' all seductively and knew she had to join! The views will go through the roof when the world sees her dommy side," lori snickered.

"AH! I- I don't want my face seen!" Utami trembled.

"We won't force you, but first things first, do you know how to play the game?"

"I... think?"

"LOL, that's easy! Pawns go up, rooks go up, down, back, and forth, bishops go diagonal, knights take the Ls, queens do whatever, and the lame-o weak ass king can only go one space," lori stated.

Mimoko immediately shot her a disappointed glare as she properly explained the basics of chess. "We'll start with pawns, like lori-chan said, they can only advance forward, however they can capture diagonally and promote if they reach the other side of the board. There is also the en passant move they can perform, but that might be a bit tricky to overwhelm you with now, so we'll move onto the knights. They're unique in the fact that they can jump over pieces and move in an L shape in any direction. Remember, it's two hops in one direction, then one hop to the side. lori-chan perfectly covered the bishops and the rooks to some extent. As for the queen, it is true it has unrestricted movement in any direction, however it cannot move like a knight, nor hop over pieces. Finally the king. While it's true it can only move one space, it can actually move two spaces in a move called castling."

"I- I think I know how to do that," Utami nodded.

"Good. Now another important thing for tournament play is that you take proper notation. It's actually very simple. First, the chess board is divided into 8 ranks and files with the ranks being numbered 1 to 8 and the files being labeled A to H. White always starts on the 1st and 2nd ranks while black is always on the 7th and 8th. As for the files, they go A to H from left to

right. Now for the notation; pawns simply require you to write the name of the space it moves to, for example, e4. To write a capture, just write the letter of the file x the space it's capturing, for example, exd5. As for the other pieces, you simply just place their letter before the space they move to and replace the file letter with the piece's letter when it captures something, for example, Be2, Bxe4. As for checks and castles, the + sign represents a check, and the O-O or O-O-O represent a castle. If a pawn reaches the other side of the board, the notation would be something like, f8=Q. Get all that?"

Utami nodded her head in approval. Even Okisato was impressed with Mimoko's tutoring.

"Seems like she's way smarter than I thought. Perhaps I don't need to worry about her facing off against the Desperados. Though, she'll need a rating," he thought.

"Now that you know the basics, why not play a game against Shousen-kun?" Mimoko suggested.

"He's scary!" Utami trembled as she hid behind Iori.

"Oi! I ain't scary!"

"Don't you get in fights a lot?" Okisato asked.

"Huh!? So what? You wanna get in one?"

"Yes, now sit down and let me school you."

"You tryin' to look cool by sayin' that with a deadpan look on ya?"

"Nah! You play against Tami-chan," Iori grinned as she steered Utami towards the board.

"IORI! I don't wanna play! I'm scared!" Utami trembled as she was sat down.

"Come on Yuu-kun, make your move."

"Tch. Whatever, I'll make this quick, then I'm beating up deadpan's ass," Yuusuke scoffed as he moved his knight to c3. "There now-"

"Oi, shit your ass down, boy. You decided to play a game against me, and I will not be satisfied until I've mated you," Utami glared as her entire demeanor and personality changed.

"Eh?"

"I said sit, it's your move," Utami glared as she moved her pawn to e5.

"When Tami-chan plays chess, she gets all dominatrix and cold," Iori snickered as she filmed the match.

"Ugh, don't tell me this is going to be a chess club of weirdos," Mimoko nervously thought to herself.

Chapter 3: Utami vs Yuusuke

Yuusuke glared nervously as he moved his knight to f3. "Geh, why do I always gotta run into crazy women?"

"It seems you are in need of dire schooling," Utami glared back as she moved her queen to f6.

"Bringin' your queen out? I love huntin' queens!" Yuusuke snickered as he moved his knight to d5.

"You disgust me," Utami glared as she moved her queen to d6.

"Huh? Why are you lookin at me like I'm garbage? I got feelins too ya know," Yuusuke frowned as he moved his pawn to e4.

"I was referring to the ulterior motive in your previous statement," Utami glared as she moved her pawn to c6.

"Huh? What did I say?" Yuusuke asked in confusion as he moved his knight to c3.

"You were referring to 'queen hunting'. Is that code for hitting on girls?" Utami glared as she moved her queen to f6.

"What's wrong with hitting on girls!?" Yuusuke fumed as he moved his bishop to c4.

"Inoue-sama was harassed by a guy trying to hit on her last night," Utami snarled as she shot Yuusuke a glare of pure malice as she moved her bishop to c5.

"I hit on girls the legal way!" Yuusuke shouted as he castled on the king's side.

"With your current demeanor and appearance? I don't buy it," Utami glared as she moved her pawn to d5.

"So you wanna fight with me that badly? Well I don't hold back even if it's a hot babe!" Yuusuke declared as he captured the pawn at d5 with his e-pawn.

"You're a delinquent through and through. I'll make sure you're reprimanded for your actions once I've finished beating you," Utami glared as she captured the pawn at d5 with her c-pawn.

"I haven't done anything!" Yuusuke shouted as he captured the pawn at d5 with his knight.

"You've declared your intent to stalk Inoue-sama. That gets you a death penalty!" Utami snarled as she moved her queen to d6.

Yuusuke shot Utami a nasty glare as he captured the pawn at e5 with his knight. "Then I'll channel my soul and honor into this game and crush you."

"What drama! Looks like the game's about to get good too! Lemme get a poll going to see who chat thinks will win!" Iori chuckled.

"Chess is supposed to be a quiet sport. Ugh, to think I'd be saying that line after what happened to me. Though you are right, things are going to get interesting," Mimoko sighed.

"So Mimo-chan, who do ya think's gonna win? I think Tami-chan's got this."

"True, though she will have to think carefully about this next move. I don't think she realizes just how skilled Shousen-kun is."

Utami began contemplating her next move in her mind. "He's going to put me in check with his bishop. Shit, then he might try and position his queen. I still haven't castled yet. I need to move that knight out so I can. Hmm, if I move my knight to e7, I'd fortify my defenses against his check. Then even if he moves his rook or queen to the e-file, I'll still have enough to block and castle out of danger. Then once my king is safe, I can mate him."

As soon as Utami moved her knight to e7, Yuusuke began to grin. "Check!" he said as he moved his knight to c7.

"What a stupid move, it's just sacrificing a knight. Did he think I'd move my king?" Utami scoffed in her mind as she captured the knight at c7 with her queen.

"Check!" Yuusuke confidently declared as he captured the pawn at f7 with his bishop.

Utami began to grit her teeth in frustration. "You piece of shit. Well, just because you

spoiled my castle doesn't mean you've won. In fact, I can already see a path to victory," she thought as she moved her king to f8.

Yuusuke grinned without saying a word as he moved his queen to f3.

"Trying to set up a mate? Well it won't happen," Utami thought as she captured the knight at e5 with her queen.

"Hmm, now what do I do? If I screw this up, she'll regain the upper hand. I want to go after her rook at a1, but that bishop at c8 will give me trouble- Wait, I can do that," Yuusuke thought as he moved his bishop to e6. "Check!"

Utami clicked her tongue in frustration as she moved her knight to f5 while Yuusuke chuckled and captured the bishop at c8 with his bishop.

"I'm so close to mating him, but now my knight and queen are stuck. Worst of all, I might lose a rook if I'm not careful. That bastard!" Utami thought as she moved her knight to c6.

Yuusuke meanwhile, nonchalantly captured the pawn at b7 with his bishop.

"You really made a mess of things, but now your defeat is imminent," Utami glared as she moved her rook to e8.

Yuusuke shot Utami a confused glare as he captured her knight at c6. However, Utami was not fazed in the slightest as she moved her rook to e7. Yuusuke also showed no signs of being shaken as he moved his pawn to b4.

"That won't work," Utami thought as she moved her bishop to d4.

Yuusuke countered the threat to his rook by moving his pawn to c3. Utami clicked her tongue and moved her bishop to b6. Yuusuke then moved his pawn to d4, followed by Utami moving her queen to f6. Yuusuke smirked and moved his bishop to f4.

"Well now time for some payback," Utami glared as she moved her knight to h4.

Yuusuke squinted for a bit before moving his queen to d5. Utami wasted no time in capturing the bishop at f4 with her queen while Yuusuke moved his f-rook to e1.

"Struggling to the bitter end. Well, I'd rather take that rook out now than worry about it later," Utami thought as she captured the rook at e1 with her rook.

Yuusuke immediately captured her rook at e1 with his remaining rook. It was then that Utami went pale. "Shit! I screwed up!" she thought as she moved her queen to b8.

"Huh? Why's she gettin nervous? All she's gotta do is get the queen down there and its mate," Iori said as Yuusuke moved his queen to d7.

"No, it's mate in two," Okisato stated as Utami moved her knight to f5.

"Check," Yuusuke grinned as he captured the knight at f5 with his queen.

Utami let out a frustrated groan as she moved her king to g8.

"Checkmate! Now what was that you said about me?" Yuusuke snickered as he moved his bishop to d5.

The full game:

White: Yuusuke Shousen Black: Utami Enoki [Informal match]

1. Nc3 e5
2. Nf3 Qf6
3. Nd5 Qd6
4. e4 c6

5. Nc3 Qf6
6. Bc4 Bc5
7. O-O d5
8. exd5 cxd5
9. Nxd5 Qd6
10. Nxe5 Ne7
11. Nc7+ Qxc7
12. Bxf7+ Kf8
13. Qf3 Qxe5
14. Be6+ Nf5
15. Bxc8 Nc6
16. Bxb7 Re8
17. Bxc6 Re7
18. b4 Bd4
19. c3 Bb6
20. d4 Qf6
21. Bf4 Nh4
22. Qd5 Qxf4
23. Rfe1 Rxe1
24. Rxe1 Qb8
25. Qd7 Nf5
26. Qxf5+ Kg8
27. Bd5#

Chapter 4: Fool's mate

"So she blundered," Mimoko sighed.

Seeing Mimoko's disappointment caused Utami to petrify with shock.

"Oi, Tami-chan, you there?" Iori said as she waved her hand in front of the petrified Utami.

"She looks like she turned to stone. Was she that shocked that she lost?" Yuusuke asked.

"No, well maybe she was. Ishikiridokoro-san-"

"Just call me Iori-chan! It's what's on my channel name, which you should totally subscribe to and-"

"So Iori-chan, is it normal for Enoki-san to act like this?" Okisato asked.

"No clue, I just saw her fiddling with a chess board in her drommy state and dragged her over."

Mimoko decided to ease the air by offering to go over the mistakes that occurred in the game. This seemed to be the right play, as Utami immediately returned to normal and agreed to learn from her mistakes.

"I'm glad you're so enthusiastic, Enoki-chan. While it is nice to win, chess is above all else meant to be fun, win, lose, or draw. Now let's first reset the board to the 10th move just

after Shousen-kun captured the pawn at e5 with his knight," Mimoko nodded.

"Hmm? W- Why there?"

"Because that's where you ran into some trouble. Now to be fair, this was a tight spot. However, you were too focused on Shousen-kun putting you in check with his bishop from the b-file. You were also antsy to castle and presumably moved your knight to e7 out of fear that moving it to f6 instead would eventually lead to Shousen-kun preventing you from castling with his queen, while further destroying your defenses in the process. So first question, why didn't you capture the knight at e5 with your queen?"

"Be- ...Because then the scoundrel would seize my queen. His next move would then be to move his rook to e1, trapping my queen. Since I'd be unable to move my queen due to the rook threatening my king, if I did so, I'd have to move another piece instead, but then lose my queen on the next turn," Utami sighed as her confident persona returned.

"Correct. Capturing that knight would have lost you your queen, even though nothing was protecting the knight. That's why it's important to castle as soon as possible so you don't risk putting your king in such a perilous position. It also frees up a rook as well."

"Yes..."

"If I were in your position, I'd have moved my knight to c6."

"Why?"

"Because it would at the least prevent Shousen-kun's plan. Though this isn't an ideal position to be in from the get-go. That's why it's important to play your openings right. A bad opening will result in you having a poor set up which will more often than not lead to mate. Now how about I show you a good opening first, then have you play against Shousen-kun again."

...

"Your defensive maneuvers are relentless. Damn you," Utami glared.

"Ugh, my brain's gonna fry. I thought this was supposed to be a quick learnin' experience," Yuusuke groaned.

"That's why I had you two continue to play. Now I have a better grasp on both of your skill sets. Shousen-kun, your defensive strategies are good. Many would lead to your opponent asking for a draw if they don't decide to go for the win, and even if they do, it would take an expert to properly pull off the moves necessary to beat you," Mimoko stated.

"So you sayin' I'm practically unbeatable?"

"No, just that it would take an expert to best you. With your current playstyle, you'd do well against intermediate-level players, but an expert-level player would have no trouble exploiting all the mistakes you make," Mimoko stated as she moved her knight on the board.

"GEH! Ugh, that's mate in two for me."

"I didn't realize I could do that. My apologies, Inoue-sama," Utami trembled.

"You played very well. Just be sure to have a better opening. That's ultimately what cost you. Never underestimate your opponent. Anyone could be a grand master despite their looks and demeanor," Okisato nodded.

"A good tip indeed, Tanabe-kun. Now how about we see how good Iori-chan is."

"SWEET! Hold my phone and record, yo!"

"Guess I'll play her," Okisato sighed as he sat down.

"Hell yeah! Now watch this!" lori grinned as she moved her pawn to g4.

Okisato nonchalantly moved his pawn to e5, internally scowling as he figured what lori was planning to do.

"Hah! Behold my en passant!" lori declared as she moved her pawn to f4.

"Oi, is she serious," Yuusuke unamusingly glared.

"That is not an en passant, lori-chan," Mimoko groaned as she covered her face with her hand.

"Wow, that's... lame," Utami glared.

"Guess you meant to say f in the chat," Okisato said as he moved his queen to h4, checkmating lori.

"Heh... EHHHHHHHHH!? I GOT TWO-MOVED!?" lori cried.

"lori-chan, was that on purpose?" Mimoko glared.

"Play me and find out. But if you lose, you down this tube of wasabi," lori snickered as she regained her gusto.

...

"AHHH IT'S SO SPICY! AHHHHH!" lori cried as she chugged a tube of wasabi. She had lost in humiliating fashion, though this time she at least appeared to have tried.

"Why are you doing something so stupid?" Mimoko groaned.

"Cuz I lost, so I get the batsu."

"Ugh, I'm the only normal one here. Though if you're going to punish yourself for losing, study up on chess terminology and moves instead of chugging down wasabi."

"Just curious, but do either of you three have ratings?" Okisato asked.

"Ratings, oh yes, thanks for reminding me, Tanabe-kun. In order to compete in tournaments, all of you will need to become WWCF members if you aren't already.

"Oh, I've been playing for years cuz of Okaa. As for my rating... Uh, it's 1478," Yuusuke stated as he looked at his WWCF card.

"I got one of those cards too! My number's 500. They say batting 500 is good so it must be good," lori smiled as she whipped out her WWCF card.

"I- I don't have one," Utami trembled.

"No worries. I myself just registered last night. Want me to help you register, Enoki-chan?" Mimoko smiled.

Utami's face lit up as she shook her head yes.

...

After getting Utami registered, the club was dismissed for the day.

"Hmm, you sure it's a good idea to have Enoki-san here?" Okisato asked as he walked home with Mimoko.

"What do you mean? She's got potential," Mimoko glared.

"But something's been bothering me about her. She knew about last night."

"Huh?"

"She said 'Inoue-sama was harassed by a guy trying to hit on her last night'. That means she saw everything last night. Which is weird because it was just us and that delinquent."

"Wait, are you suggesting-"

"Yeah, she might be with Desperado."

"But we just registered-"

"There's ways around that. Especially for someone from the underworld and/or someone with lots of power, and if she's who I think she is, she at the very least has ties to someone who is related to someone in ties with the league."

"Tanabe-kun... Enoki-chan was genuine."

"So you trust her?"

"I'm honestly less inclined to believe you anyway, but there probably is some concern behind your words."

"Well, I'm only airing my thoughts anyway. Besides, I'm sure she'll tell you everything truthfully if you ask her," Okisato nodded as he briefly glanced over at a nearby bush.

As the two walked away, Utami trembled as she hid in the bush. "Inoue-sama..."

...

After stalking Mimoko for the day, Utami arrived home and headed for the fridge.

"Utami, just where were you today!?" the Shogikawa gakuin student council vice-president glared.

"HEEEEEE! O- ONII-SAMA! I- I was Uh- Uh-"

"Well? You were supposed to practice with us today, however I saw you being carried off by that degenerate streamer. Didn't I tell you not to hang out with her?"

"B- But lori-chan-"

"She is nothing but bad news. I'm surprised she hasn't been expelled yet for all the trash she posts online. Now you'd better come to practice tomorrow, otherwise I shall get father involved."

Utami sank to the floor as her brother stormed away. "I- Inoue-sama, INOUE-SAMA!" she cried as tears poured out of her eyes.

The full game:

White: lori Ishikiridokoro Black: Okisato Tanabe [Informal match]

1. g4 e5

2. f4 Qh4#

Chapter 5: Delusions of grandeur

A man clad in flamboyant attire strutted down the dark street. Feather-themed jewelry and embroidery dominated his look, though the flashy red boots, fedora, and purple tinted shades certainly stood out as well. The most jarring thing about him though were the various gyroscopes spinning atop his hat and shoulders.

Upon hearing the sound of footsteps, the man turned as the gyroscope on his right shoulder sped down his arm, stopping right at his wrist, though continued to spin in place. "Well, you're lucky I'm a skilled man. So what business do you have with me, Mr. Enoki?"

"Mr. Gyro. I'm merely asking for some assistance," the Shogikawa gakuin principal stated as he emerged from the shadows.

"Assistance'? Yes, sure. I imagine you're more interested in this," Gyro glared as he

pulled a DESPER out of his pocket.

"That technology could be used for so much more. Why is it restricted to just chess?"

"Because that's the way it is. Even I don't fully know everything about this tech.

However, I do know that it can only be used in regards to chess or chess related disciplines like chess boxing. Thus, you cannot use the DESPERs to build your shogi empire, though if you wish to dabble in chess, then that's a different story."

"Chess will always be inferior to shogi. I only registered with the WWCF because of your insistence."

"I find amusement in both, personally, though Chess is a bit less tiresome. Shogi can become quite a slog at times."

"This spiel about the captured pieces rule again?"

"You know I believe a piece "dies" once it's captured."

"Then just think of using captured pieces as "necromancy"."

"Well, it seems you're the real deal. So care to discuss things over a midnight coffee?"

"I have a job in the morning you know."

"So do I, yet I'm forsaking sleep."

"Well in that case, allow me to inform you of a pest that's been daring to stand up to me..."

...

As Mimoko arrived at school, she began feeling uneasy. The feeling that someone was watching her caused her to dart up towards the principal's office on the top floor of the school. And to her credit, she was right; she was being watched.

"So that's the girl you mentioned. Hmm, just registered... How good is she at chess?" Gyro glared.

"Why would you care about-"

Slash!

The principal let out a yelp as one of Gyro's gyroscopes mowed off some of the little hair he had.

"Now if you don't want a neck shave, how good is that girl at chess?"

"I have no idea!?"

"Very well, then I'll do reconnaissance."

"You can't just-"

SMASH!

The principal began to sweat and trembled as he stared at the gyroscope embedded in the wall mere centimeters away from his face. "A- As you wish..."

...

Mimoko groaned as she walked down the hallway. "Dammit! I got called to the principal's office. This better not be a lecture and subsequent punishment for "threatening" his prized shogi club. Seriously, chess and shogi can coexist with each other just fine."

As she entered, Mimoko was surprised to see the principal accompanied by Gyro.

Gyro properly introduced himself as Gunther Gunnensen, a grandmaster from the WWCF that had come to assess Mimoko's skill firsthand.

"It's an honor to meet you. Do you want to play chess against me?"

"Yes, Miss Inoue. I want to see your skills firsthand. How about you play the principal?"

"ME!? I don't-"

"An amateur facing a grandmaster such as myself would be overkill. My rating is 2559 after all."

"I won't get in trouble if I beat him, right?" Mimoko nervously asked.

"Why would you get in trouble for winning? It's the losers that get punished after all," Gyro snickered as he put his hand in his pocket.

"Then if she loses, she gets expelled!"

"If I win, you formalize the chess club."

"A fine wager. I shall be judge and jury in that case. Now, please take a seat at the chessboard I've set up," Gyro nodded as he gestured towards a chess board on the coffee table.

"When... Fine! I go first!" the principal scoffed as he sat down and opened by moving his pawn to e4.

Mimoko let out a sigh as sat down on the opposite end and her pawn to c5.

"Moving the c-pawn? I heard if you want a good opening you move the pawns on the e and d files," the principal scoffed as he moved his knight to c3.

"There are merits to opening with the c-pawn," Mimoko stated as she moved her knight to c6.

"No, you just messed up at your own game!" the principal sneered as he moved his knight to f3.

Mimoko remained silent and moved her pawn to e5. The principal then giddily moved his bishop to c4 followed by Mimoko moving her bishop to e7.

"Look at how awful your control is. Victory is mine," the principal thought as he castled on the king's side.

Mimoko rolled her eyes as she moved her knight to f6, while the principal moved his pawn to d3. Mimoko then castled, prompting the principal to move his bishop to e3.

"Look at her, she's playing catch-up! The board is mine!" the principal thought as Mimoko moved her pawn to d6. His confidence only grew after moving his rook to b1 and Mimoko moved her bishop to e6. "Look at those bishops, they can barely do anything! Now is the time to move the pawns on the left side in order to free the rook," the principal thought as he moved his pawn to b4.

Mimoko quickly captured the bishop at c4 with her bishop. Though instead of capturing it, the principal opted to capture the pawn at c5 instead with his b-pawn.

"What is that idiot doing? Anyone would have captured the bishop instead," Gyro thought as Mimoko moved her bishop to the safety of a6.

The principal didn't seem the least bit concerned as he captured the pawn at d6 with his c-pawn, nor did Mimoko seem phased as she captured the pawn at d6 with her queen.

"THERE IT IS! She brought her queen out! Now it's the end for her!" the principal thought as he moved his knight to b5.

"What a deluded idiot," Gyro thought as Mimoko promptly captured the knight at b5 with the very bishop the principal had opted not to capture earlier.

"What an idiot! Now I can get my rook out!" the principal exclaimed as he captured the bishop at b5 with his rook.

Mimoko, still unphased, moved her pawn to b6, while the principal, still consumed with delusions of grandeur, moved his pawn to d4.

"Does he think he'll get an advantage by doing that?" Mimoko thought as she captured the pawn at e4 with her knight.

"Here it is! The queen is mine!" the principal thought as he captured the pawn at e5 with his d-pawn. Mimoko promptly captured the queen at d1 with her queen. "So you've chosen to forsake your queen. Well now the advantage is MINE!" the principal shouted as he captured the queen at d1 with his rook.

"No, you just sealed your loss," Mimoko glared as she moved her knight to c3, threatening both the principal's rooks.

"You think you've got me? Think again!" the principal scoffed as he moved his knight to d4. Mimoko promptly captured the knight at d4 with her knight, eliciting giggles from the principal. "See! I'm in control!" he scoffed as he captured the knight at d4 with his rook.

"No, I'm in control," Mimoko glared as she captured the rook at b5 with her knight. To no one's surprise, the principal still seemed consumed by delusion as he moved his rook to d5. "Now he'll lose his other rook," Mimoko thought as she moved her a-rook to d8.

"WHAT A FOOL! I control the game with a rook! Your expulsion is imminent!" the principal cackled as he captured the knight at b5 with his rook.

"No, you're officially recognizing the chess club. Checkmate," Mimoko glared as she moved her rook to d1.

"What a coward! You- eh? NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Reality had finally come back to the principal as he sunk to the floor.

"Splendid. You did well," Gyro applauded.

"YES! I did-"

"Not you, you deluded wretch! Miss Inoue, you performed spectacularly for your first official match as a WWCF member."

"Huh? I thought this was a practice match?"

"I wouldn't call a match with expulsion on the line a mere practice match. Now that your chess club will be formalized, do you happen to have the roster off the top of your head?"

"Of course. Allow me to tell you..."

As Mimoko told Gyro the roster, the principal suddenly found his body moving on its own as he went to his desk. Much to his regret, he was signing the approval form for the chess club even though he had no intention of doing so. He then got the answer for his actions as he noticed the chessboard vanishing. Gyro had secretly activated his DESPER.

After getting the roster for the chess club, Gyro took his leave, though not before informing Mimoko of an upcoming tournament at the Lagoon pathways hotel in Mito, Ibaraki.

"Thanks Mr. Gunnerson. Oh, where'd your chess set go?" Mimoko asked as she gazed at the coffee table.

"Oh, my apologies, but you see the WWCF cards have a secret function that allows them to summon a chess board, though you can't unlock this feature until certain conditions are fulfilled."

As soon as he left the office, Gyro scowled and began thinking to himself. "So Okisato Tanabe, the oni-tiger is here. Then that explains why he fought Inojin last night. That girl didn't seem to realize she was under the effects of my DESPER device, though I wasn't exactly lying when I said the WWCF cards are capable of summoning a chess board. Though what concerns me more was that she was highly skilled at chess. Even I would have trouble facing her. Her clubmates on the other hand are easy marks with the exception of the oni-tiger, though I can easily handle him. As for the others, I'll have Cypress and Zanni kill them. Hopefully a good scare will sway Mimoko Inoue away from chess. The last thing we need is another damn prodigy and threat to the Ultima-master."

As Gyro headed into the courtyard, Okisato gazed out from the window of his classroom. "Huh? Is that Gyro? Hmm... Inoue-senpai should be fine. I doubt she'd lose to him if she could beat me so badly. Though, why was he here?"

The full game:

White: Nagi Enoki (100) Black: Mimoko Inoue (unrated)

1. e4 c5
2. Nc3 Nc6
3. Nf3 e5
4. Bc4 Be7
5. O-O Nf6
6. d3 O-O
7. Be3 d6
8. Rb1 Be6
9. b4 Bxc4
10. bxc5 Ba6
11. cxd6 Qxd6
12. Nb5 Bxb5
13. Rxb5 b6
14. d4 Nxe4
15. dxe5 Qxd1
16. Rxd1 Nc3
17. Nd4 Nxd4
18. Rxd4 Nxb5
19. Rd5 Rad8
20. Rxb5 Rd1#

Chapter 6: Utami's conundrum

As soon as school got out, the chess club met in the park. Mioko happily informed everyone of the club's approved status and the perks that came with it. She also informed everyone of how she bested the principal to get the club approved eliciting a shocked reaction from Utami and giving Okisato the missing piece he lacked in regards to Gyro's visit.

The topic shifted to electing a club president. Mimoko was naturally the favorite, though Iori threw her hat into the ring, and promptly retracted it after learning that being club president involved more administrative duties than she anticipated. Thus, Mimoko became club president and decided to review her game with the principal as her inaugural act.

"And that's how it went. Remember, delusions of grandeur can completely ruin you and lead to mate. Always keep an eye on your opponent's piece placement and think about all the moves they could do. Now, I would also like to inform you all that a tournament will be held this weekend at the Lagoon pathways hotel. If any of you wish to participate, please inform me by tomorrow; that way, I can register everyone as a team the day before," Mimoko stated.

Yuusuke scratched his head. "Isn't that hotel all the way in Mito?"

"Yes, however, since we're now an official club, we can use our new club budget to book rooms at the place so we don't have to take the train back and forth."

The mention of pre-paid amenities immediately got Iori on board. Yuusuke was also on board, but after learning that academic eligibility was a factor, he decided to leave early in order to study for a math test tomorrow.

Before he was excused, Mimoko first had everyone exchange contact info and join the Lime group she created, causing Utami to freak out.

"I- Inoue-sama's phone number!? I- I... can't."

"Why are you so jittery, Enoki-san?" Okisato asked.

"I'm- I'm... I... I..."

"Let's play a quick game of chess."

As the two began playing, Utami's confident persona bubbled to the surface, allowing Okisato to ask her about her troubles. With a deep sigh, Utami revealed that she was the principal's daughter and that he and her older brother, the student council vice president, were pressuring her not to join the chess club and instead stick with the shogi club which she was already a part of.

Mimoko had no qualms with Utami being part of both clubs, however, that did little to solve Utami's conundrum. It turned out that her father wished to build a shogi dynasty, and as such wanted Utami to match her brother's skill in shogi in order to make him look good.

"I actually don't enjoy shogi that much, and believe it or not, neither does my other brother, Kazuya-ni. However, Kazuya-ni has strengths in other areas, unlike me," Utami scowled as her hand trembled.

"He's the student council president, right?" Okisato asked.

Utami responded with a delayed nod, tipping Okisato off that there was more to the story beneath the surface.

"Well just get some dirt on em and then you can do what you want," Iori suggested.

"Iori-chan, that's wrong on so many levels," Mimoko glared.

Okisato then decided to bring up Gyro. "Inoue-senpai, you mentioned how the grandmaster facilitated the match between you and the principal. What would your punishment have been if you lost?"

"Why are you curious? Well, if I had lost I would have been expelled."

"That's it? No stripping, no chugging wasabi, no shaving your head? lame," Iori scoffed.

"Um, I think expulsion is a pretty big deal!"

"I mean if expulsion equaled death than sure, but all those anime and manga that use expulsion as the ultimate punishment just seem kinda lame to me. I mean so what? You get expelled, but you can still go about living your life, heck you could even still hang out with your friends from school."

"Expulsion could be the student equivalent of getting fired from a job," Okisato stated.

"Fired huh? Well getting fired has more impact than getting expelled, but they could just get another job. Now getting fired/expelled AND going to jail, different story. Anyway, I gotta go. I wanna get my stream going early, so make sure you all tune in!" Iori smiled as she skipped away.

"And now there were three," Mimoko sighed.

Just then, Utami's phone began ringing. "Apologies, but it seems the game will have to remain unfinished. Nagi-ni is requesting my return," Utami sighed.

"No worries, I can mate you in two anyway," Okisato nodded.

"Huh? ...! I see I still have much to learn. Well, I shall be off."

"Since you lost, mind answering just a single question?"

"What is it?"

"What's the deal with your split personality?"

"Oi Tanabe-kun! It's rude to just ask something like-"

"I see. You must be wondering how a timid mess like me can suddenly exude confidence. The truth is I can only act like this when playing chess."

"Why's that?"

"I'm unsure myself. Though if I were to surmise, it would be because I am truly invested in it. Unlike shogi, I feel joy and excitement when playing chess. It makes me feel powerful and confident when I can control the board. I especially love the power of the queen. In shogi, the promoted bishop and rook are the closest a piece will get to matching the queen's movements. Each has the same unrestricted movements of their chess counterparts, however the promoted rook can only advance one space diagonally, while the promoted bishop can only advance one space horizontally and vertically, unlike the queen which is unrestricted in how many spaces it can move horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. Even knights are more versatile in chess than shogi."

Okisato stared in silence for a moment before making an offer. "Want to win your freedom?"

"How would I do that?"

"By beating the shogi team in chess."

Everyone stared in silence at Okisato. "Hmm? Did I say something weird?"

"Yes. Why would the shogi team agree to such a proposal? If anything, they'd force us to beat them at shogi to win Enoki-chan's freedom," Mimoko glared.

"Then we meet them halfway. Inoue-senpai, are you familiar with bughouse?"

"Bughouse? Yes, I believe it's a two player variation of chess."

"Correct, and just like in shogi, you can use captured pieces, but only ones captured by your teammate."

"Hmm, they might agree to that. But how can we ensure they stick to their word?" Utami asked.

"By making sure the guy with the gyroscopes is present. Of course, if he is present, there will be a risk that if you lose, you'll be subjected to a cruel fate."

"Why's that? Mr. Gunnerson?"

"Is with the Desperado league."

"Huh!? But when he was here, nothing seemed menacing about him! Plus he didn't have that device that-"

"It can be subtle. The DESPER has the power to even make you move your body and say things against your will. I imagine that's the only reason the principal truly approved of the club."

"Then, the chessboard that appeared was made from the DESPER!? So then he lied about using his WWCF card-"

"Every card does have the function to summon a chess board, but it's only a holographic one, and not a physical one. I can even show you how to-"

"De- Desperado? D- DESPER? W- What is all that?" Utami trembled as her timid persona kicked back in.

"Tanabe-kun, you need to explain to her," Mimoko glared.

Okisato let out a heavy sigh, and proceeded to tell Utami everything, secretly judging her reactions and body language to his explanation.

...

After the chess club was dismissed, Okisato and Mimoko walked home together. "Well, have your doubts about Enoki-chan been cleared?" Mimoko asked.

"Somewhat. Now I've got a far better grasp on her personality and who she is."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm good at reading people. It's how I got good at chess. Though I struggle to get a good read on people smarter than me."

"Are you saying Enoki-chan's smarter than you?"

"No, at least I don't think she is. Though she definitely has potential to become a good chess player. But what about you, do you trust Enoki-san?"

"I do."

"Then are you OK with her stalking you?" Okisato asked as he glanced at a nearby bush."

"Stal- WHAT!?"

"She's hiding there. Oi, come out. I've known you've been there forever."

Utami suddenly bolted out of the bush and ran away at top speed before Mimoko could react.

"Hmm, I saw her face... Now I understand everything. Inoue-senpai, make sure you ask Enoki-san to explain everything to you before you decide to fight the shogi club for her sake. I'm sure you're smart enough to tell when someone's lying," Okisato nodded as he walked away, leaving Mimoko in a state of confusion.

...

In a rough part of town, Gyro lounged in a filthy bathtub in nothing but his fedora and

feather earrings. The gyroscopes still continued to spin atop his hat, perfectly balanced as he leaned back and exhaled the smoke from his cigar.

"Why the hell are you in here too?" he snarled at the handsome man lounging at the other end of the tub.

"Iyah, no need to be so hostile, Gyro-kun. We're both guys."

"I'm not into guys."

"Well neither am I so there's nothing to get antsy about."

Gyro's tubmate was a man who had long brunette hair, slit eyes, and a beautiful face. He was known as Cypress Sycamore, and ran a salon as his main line of business while also secretly being a part of the Desperado league.

"Do hurry up in there, lovebirds. I need to wash all my arms," a large man with a shaved head chuckled as he took his bowler hat off.

The man stood at nearly 7 ft tall and wore a black overcoat along with a brown leather zanni mask. He was known as Dr. Zanni, the owner of a shady tavern as well as an infamous underground chess player with the Desperado league.

"Like hell you can use the tub to wash those! The damn thing's filthy enough as is!" Gyro fumed as he began to get out.

"But I like to keep my arms nice and clean. I do love the sight of pearly white bones," Zanni chuckled as he pulled a skeleton arm out from his overcoat.

"My, that one looks new. Whose was it?" Cypress cooed.

"A salaryman that had just been hired, however he made the choice to venture out to drink at my place to celebrate, and well you know the song and dance."

"Intoxicate them with alcohol, promise them some big money, then bring down the chainsaw on them."

"He even brought friends too," Zanni chuckled as he pulled open his overcoat to expose six more skeletal human arms.

"Any of them have cute faces?"

"There was a young woman amongst them, but I wouldn't call the look I saw upon her face cute. Her makeup had smeared, foam and blood were spilling out. Not very cute if I do say so myself."

"Oi, oi, that sounds like a mega hot girl. You snap a picture?"

"Hmm? I thought you hated women."

"I do, but I love seeing them suffer," Cypress maliciously smirked.

"In that case, I've got a mission for you both," Gyro said as he put on a bathrobe. "Some kids are trying to disrupt Mr. Enoki's shogi dynasty. I figure giving them a scare by offing a few of them will solve the problem."

Zanni and Cypress gazed at the information on their phones. "Heh? I see two girls here. One's unrated and the other I recognize as a dumb streamer," Cypress cooed.

"I doubt you two would be able to best Mimoko Inoue."

Cypress' eyes narrowed as Zanni shot Gyro an odd glance. "What do you mean by that?"

"She played like a grandmaster. While she did best a man prone to blunders such as Mr. Enoki, her style of play reminded me of some of the grandmasters I've faced."

"The ones in normal matches?"

"Yes, I fear that even within the Desperado league, only the Ultima-master or Peter could even the playing field. And even then, since Peter refuses to use a DESPER, none would be able to stop her from challenging the Ultima-master should she get a high rating."

"So that's why you're so flustered. That bitch is actually a major threat. That's why I hate women with cute faces so much, they're crafty bitches that use their cute looks to put you off guard, then stab you in the back when you're guard's down. " Cypress glared.

"Mr. Enoki's daughter is naturally off limits, but feel free to handle the other two. Both of you are well above them in terms of rating and skill. As for me, I will handle the Oni-tiger."

"The Oni-tiger? Uhp, you're right; he's on the roster. Well, men can have a hidden side too."

"I don't care who gets who, just do it by tomorrow morning. I want their deaths to make the afternoon news. And should the opportunity present itself, force Mimoko into a match as a spectator and make it so that if your target loses, she dies alongside them," Gyro glared.

Chapter 7: Confrontation

The next morning, lori happily skipped along as she headed to school. "Free rooms, free hotel, hmm hmm hmm."

"Ishikiridokoro, why do you look so happy?" a voice growled.

lori turned to notice a bespectacled girl clad in the same school uniform as her. "Ugh, what do you want, Mei?"

"Referring to me by first name when I have given you no such permission? You are only worsening your detention period."

"Uh, for what?"

"Severe dress code violation," Mei glared as she pointed down at lori's glittery white sneakers.

"Huh? What's wrong with my kicks? Don't think the school cares what shoes you wear outside of-"

"I was pointing at your mismatched red and pink socks."

"Hate socks? I can always ditch em."

"Socks or stockings ARE required by the dress code for all students. As for the other citations, your jacket is wrinkled and sloppily worn, you didn't tie your bow, your cleavage is exposed, you're wearing too much makeup, and worst of all, your hair."

"But it's natural," lori snickered.

"Lying again. The dye isn't the only problem, it extends past your waist meaning it's too long. Well, luckily there seems to be a salon right here."

"But I'd be late for school," lori whined.

"Like you're properly on time anyway."

"So want me to shave it all off, eyebrows and all and get "Mei's bitch" tattooed on it?"

"Do that and you'll be expelled upon arrival. Seems I'll go in with you and tell the stylist to PROPERLY fix your image," Mei glared as she grabbed lori by the arm.

"Huh!? The hell are you dragging me around for!? Let me go!"

"Our school's image is tainted by you, and I will not allow it to drag down MY future prospects any longer."

Mei Utsunomiya was a 3rd-year student that headed Shokikawa gakuin's disciplinary committee. She was a strict and uptight young woman who believed the school's greater image affected her own due to being head of the disciplinary committee. As such, she vigorously enforced the student dress code and code of conduct both in and out of school. Since lori was a frequent offender of violating both, she was a frequent target of Mei's ire.

"Welcome in, ladies. What might I have the fine pleasure of doing for you today?" Cypress smiled as the two girls entered his salon.

"I would like you to transform her image into that of a mature business woman," Mei nodded.

"So, I take it you want me to give her a pixie and dye her hair and eyebrows black?"

"Yes, that would be suitable. Oh, and hold back on the makeup. Our school dress code has strict regulation regarding makeup for students."

"As you wish."

"WHOA! Why the hell do I have to do this!? And am I gonna be forced to pay!? Is this some kind of scam you two are in on!?" lori cried.

"This is NOT a scam, it is to fix the image of the school-"

"Nah, it's cuz you love me and want me to conform to your fetishes."

Mei shot lori a cold and murderous glare. "Ishikiridokoro, do you want me to have you expelled?"

"For what?"

"Your stream last night would be cause enough."

"Uh, that's a private thing outside of school-"

"But you're a student of our school, and thus anything you do could negatively affect its reputation and image."

"All I did was wear a bikini and lather myself in icky sticky slime."

"You are a degenerate to the core. I SHOULD make you pay for all this yourself, but since you'd start a controversy if I didn't, I shall pay for your image change here and now. Would that be fine?"

"My business accepts payments in advance, but only by card," Cypress nodded.

"Very well, then charge my card. I would prefer to stay and ensure she is dress code compliant, but I have to be at school in the next 10 minutes."

As soon as Mei paid, she departed the salon and headed off to school. lori, meanwhile, sat down in front of one of the sinks as Cypress began washing her hair.

"Haah, dis feels so good," lori blissfully moaned.

"Indeed it does, who would have thought I'd be so lucky today," Cypress snickered as he pressed a rag into lori's face.

lori quickly lost consciousness as Cypress menacingly hovered above her and pulled out his activated DESPER.

...

A sleep deprived Yuusuke slowly strolled down the street as he headed for school. "Ugh,

I just ended up playin' video games. Inoue's gonna kill me when I fail, Okaa will too."

As he rounded the corner, he bumped into a large man, causing Yuusuke to get mad, until the man shut him up by punching a hole in the brick wall.

"As you can see, my size and strength aren't for show. Luckily, I am a sophisticated man unlike you. Should you so choose, we could settle this matter with a simple game of chess. Win, and you walk free. Lose and you pay the price in flesh," Zanni sneered as he turned to face Yuusuke.

"Yeah sorry or whatever, I'm in a bad mood already. I gotta pass my test so I don't piss off anyone," Yuusuke grumbled as he walked away.

"That is where you are mistaken, you don't have a choice, Yuusuke Shousen."

As Yuusuke turned, he noticed Zanni pull out his DESPER and throw it into the abandoned lot. Immediately, a medieval deathtrap room along with a chessboard appeared. Yuusuke attempted to run, only to find himself walking towards the chessboard.

"Oi- ...!? Why am I followin' ya!?"

"Because you don't have a choice. Now as for the punishment, should you lose, I will take one of your arms as payment."

"THE HELL!?"

"Oh rest assured, it shall be well preserved, and you needn't worry, the rest of you will be chainsawed to mincemeat in time for lunch."

"Wh- Who are you?"

"My name is Dr. Arlecchino Zanni. Like you, I dabble in chess. My rating is 1913," Zanni stated as he flashed his WWCF card.

"That high? Shit, mine's only 1478. I'd better be on guard," Yuusuke nervously thought.

Chapter 8: Blitzkrieg

Iori drowsily woke up to find herself gagged and restrained to a chair. "Mmph, MMPH!? NGH MMPH!?"

"Well hello there beautiful, I see you've awoken. It's your move," Cypress sneered.

Iori darted her head around and noticed a large overhead timer with only 4 minutes left on it, and below it, a chess board and time clock.

"MMPH NGH MMPH NGH MMPH!" Iori glared.

"Oh, my "deepest" apologies. I seem to have forgotten that I restrained you and slapped some tape on that mouth of yours. Well, I guess I can free one of your arms, it would look too suspicious if you died without even moving a piece," Cypress sneered as he pressed a button, freeing Iori's left arm.

"PEH! THE HELL'S GOING ON!?" Iori cried as she ripped the tape off her mouth.

"You're in a chess battle to the death with me."

"DEATH BATTLE!? HELL YEAH! So how long we been live for?"

"My, your mood sure changed quickly, but sorry to say, this is reality and you're going to die."

Iori blinked for a moment before staring at the chessboard. Cypress had already taken the

liberty of moving his knight to f3. However, instead of moving, lori did her intro.

"YO! It's your girl lori-chan. I'M TRAPPED IN A DEATH GAME! That means I gotta bust outta here or all my hair gets shaved off. And when I say shaved, I mean PERMA-BALD! No hair, eyebrows, or eyelashes for the rest of eternity! So if I lose, the duct tape goes back on my mouth, I bawl my eyes out and become Miss hairless freakshow, and you get to make fun of me, so gift-sub to the max, cuz my hair and image are on the line!"

Cypress let out a laugh. "My, how delusional, but what can I expect from a dumb woman."

"Whoa! You dissin' me cuz I'm a girl? That's recipe for mondo backlash ya slit-eyed ikemen."

"Quite insulting yourself, though as for your punishment, it's a lot hotter than what you were expecting," Cypress sneered as he pointed up towards a large blowtorch.

The blowtorch then let out a mighty blast, sending sweat down lori's face. "Damn, that shit's really hot. So, loser gets a blowtorch to the face!? I'm down!"

"I'm sure that along with burning your face to the bone, those flames will also incinerate all that dye-damaged hair. Though you truly are an idiot. Well, your rating is only 500 after all."

"Batting 500's good!"

"Not in chess, 500's a pitiful rating, you have the skill of an idiot."

"So what's yours?"

"My rating is 1939."

"YO! That's double mine!"

"So, wish to chat some more? Oh, seem's "lori'sdumbbitchsupersimpchampsslave" just donated 69 yen," Cypress mockingly mused as he pulled out his phone.

"YO! Hook me up to the live feed so I can read chat!"

"Sorry, there is no live feed, or stream, but I will record your death. Your time is just about up."

Cypress sat and waited, but nothing happened. "Hmm? Why isn't- ...!"

Cypress got his answer as he looked down at the chessboard and noticed lori had moved her pawn to d6.

"Your move, Ponytail," lori grinned as Cypress glared and moved his pawn to d4.

"Well, I still have plenty of time left, and you only have three minutes and 44 seconds left before you lose on time," Cypress scoffed.

"Uh, so is this like, a real REAL death game?" lori trembled as she nervously moved her knight to f6.

"Why yes, and you truly are going to die," Cypress smirked as he moved his bishop to f4.

"Wait, I'm going to die, I- Like for real?" lori shuddered as she moved her pawn to g6.

"Yes, you were out when the match started, so now you have a time deficit. Well, not like you're smart enough to win anyway," Cypress scoffed as he moved his pawn to e4. lori instantly captured the pawn at e4 with her knight as Cypress moved his queen to e2 and began to chuckle. "Perhaps you're unaware, but I'm quite skilled at blitz chess, my rating there is lower than my normal rating, but still a respectable 1904."

"THERE'S DIFFERENT RATINGS!?" lori cried as she moved her bishop to f5.

"Yes, one for classical, one for rapid, and one for blitz. However, your main rating that is

shown is actually the overall combined rating of the three, and in most cases, it's the same as your classical rating, so I guess it's fair to say my true rating is indeed 1939. As for this game, we just so happen to be on blitz time so we each get 10 minutes at most," Cypress stated as he moved his knight to c3.

"I NEVER KNEW! And wait! You cheated and chloroed me, so I should get all my time back!" lori glared as she captured the knight at c3 with her knight.

"Life isn't fair, you should know that considering how poor you are. Besides, I activated the DESPER before you lost consciousness, so you conking out is on you." Cypress maliciously grinned as he captured the knight at c3 with his bishop.

lori paused as tears began to streak down her face. "I'm- I've got a channel," she tearfully smiled as she moved her pawn to c6.

"And what else? Your father was arrested and died in prison, your mother overworked herself and just like your younger sister, left you alone to fend for yourself!" Cypress cackled as he castled on the queen's side.

"Y- You know all that?"

"Yes, I do. I hate women so much that I make sure to do my research on them and never underestimate them, that way I can send them to hell without trouble."

"Why?"

"Why? Because women are crafty creatures that manipulate men with their looks and emotions. I despise-"

"NO! Why didn't you just kill me from the start!? You had your chance! So why!?"

"Suicidal, or terrified of the punishment? Well, there are two reasons; first, I enjoy making women suffer, second, killing you via the DESPER will easily send the message to your chess club friends."

"So... I'm gonna be humiliated and murdered, for a statement!? How cruel," lori cried as her makeup began to smear.

...

At the abandoned lot, Yuusuke began to sweat as he arrived at the chess board.

"First, allow me to make some things clear. Once the DESPER is active, verbal agreement to drawing is forbidden," Zanni stated.

"Then how the hell do you draw!?" Yuusuke fumed.

"Either by stalemate or by triggering the repetition rule. As for time, you have a generous 4 hours on your clock. Should it run out, you will lose. As for verbal resignation, that is also forbidden. Though if you so choose to resign, simply twiddle your thumbs and wait for your clock to run out or simply allow me an easy mate. And as for your punishment, it shall take effect as soon as your loss is confirmed," Zanni stated as a chainsaw revved mere inches from Yuusuke's face.

"What the hell!? That's REAL!?"

"Yes, though rest assured, it will not be a factor DURING the game," Zanni chuckled as the chainsaw retracted and returned to the corner of the room.

Zanni opened by moving his pawn to e4, followed by Yuusuke moving his pawn to d5.

"The Scandinavian defense? Very well," Zanni nodded as he captured the pawn at d5

with his pawn.

"Scandinavian defense: Mieses-Kotrč variation," Yuusuke grinned as he captured the pawn at d5 with his queen.

"That will only bring forth my defenses," Zanni chuckled as he moved his knight to c3.

"Nah, you're in for a world of CHECK!" Yuusuke exclaimed as he moved his queen to e5.

Unphased and unamused, Zanni moved his bishop to e2. Yuusuke decided to bring his knight out to f6, followed by Zanni mirroring him by moving his knight to f3. Yuusuke then moved his queen back to e6, giving Zanni the chance to castle on his king's side. Yuusuke scratched his head as he thought before deciding to move his knight to c6. Next, Zanni moved his pawn to b3, followed by Yuusuke moving his pawn to g5.

"GEH! Why'd I do that!?" Yuusuke cried as Zanni captured his pawn at g5 with his knight.

Yuusuke quickly moved his queen to e5, as Zanni moved his bishop to c4. Seeing no other option, Yuusuke dejectedly moved his pawn to e6.

"Now, why don't we play chase, boy, or should I say queen," Zanni taunted as he moved his knight to f3, threatening Yuusuke's queen.

"How bout I pin your queen instead?" Yuusuke glared as he moved his queen to h5.

"My, quite the vulgar man you are. Tell me, do you harass women like that on a daily basis?" Zanni sneered as he moved his pawn to d4.

"I don't harass anyone unless they mess with me, then I kick their ass behind the old school building," Yuusuke declared as he moved his bishop to d6.

"My, you truly are a "smart" one, both on and off the chess board," Zanni sneered as he moved his rook to e1.

"Heh, now's where I can turn things around," Yuusuke thought as he moved his rook to g8.

"What a poor swing. I can dodge it with ease," Zanni scoffed as he moved his pawn to g3.

Yuusuke moved his pawn to e5 without a word as Zanni moved his knight to g5.

"Well guess we'll go queen-less," Yuusuke groaned as he captured the queen at d1 with his queen, and then watched as said queen was captured by Zanni's rook. "Guess e6 is my best bet," Yuusuke sighed as he moved his bishop to e6.

"No, I'm going to make this advantageous for myself," Zanni chuckled as he moved his pawn to d5.

"Guess it's time for some bloodshed," Yuusuke sighed as he captured the pawn at d5 with his bishop, followed by Zanni capturing said bishop with a bishop of his own.

Rather than continue the piece trading, Yuusuke opted to castle on the queen's side.

"And what were you flailing at with that?" Zanni asked as he captured the pawn at f7 with his knight.

"I... have a strategy," Yuusuke trembled as he moved his rook to d7.

"A piss-poor one indeed. I believe you know what comes next, check," Zanni stated as he captured the bishop at d6 with his knight.

Yuusuke put his hand on his face as he captured the knight at d6 with his rook, and let out a groan as Zanni captured his rook at g8 with his bishop. Yuusuke then panicked and

immediately captured the rook at d1 with his rook.

"My, what poor insight. It seems you are going to lose, and when you lose, first I'll take your arm, then I'll turn you into mincemeat. Rest assured, I will ensure you're fully conscious for as long as possible to ensure maximum pain and misery," Zanni maliciously smiled as his hand slowly hovered towards the knight at c3.

Yuusuke began to tremble. "Shit, SHIT! This guy's a psychopath! Why'd I have to start a fuss after bumping into him!? If I had been more alert- Oh, is this what I get for not studying? A gruesome n' painful death? Wow, that's too cruel for a slacker like me," Yuusuke thought as tears began to pour out of his eyes.

Zanni burst out laughing as Yuusuke began to cry. "What a pathetic mound of flesh! You cry at the thought of losing and being subjected to such a gruesome death!? Oh, but you haven't even lost yet!"

"I don't wanna die," Yuusuke whimpered.

"Broken spirit already? Hmm, then why don't I throw you a bone," Zanni snickered as he moved his king to g2.

Yuusuke didn't seem any closer to snapping out of his despair as he captured the bishop at g8 with his knight.

"Still wish to have a wittle rook? Well last chance to move it, next turn I'm taking it," Zanni declared as he moved his bishop to b2.

Yuusuke continued to cry and mumble to himself as he moved his rook to d2.

"Quite the specimen. He doesn't appear to show any signs of recovery. Well, he has no chance of victory," Zanni chuckled as he moved his rook to c1.

Yuusuke moved his knight to f6, followed by Zanni moving his rook to d1. Yuusuke then let out a shriek and panicked as he moved his rook to d6.

"Weren't you going to capture that pawn at c2!? My, how wondrous your collapse is!" Zanni laughed as he moved his bishop to a3.

Yuusuke began to cry harder as he moved his knight to g4.

"I suppose I should indulge more upon how you will be disposed of. You see, my diet is strictly carnivorous as I eat only meat. Well, I guess that's not true since I do style my meat on buns and season it with spices and sauces. Fine wine also doesn't count as meat either, but enough of the tangent, human meat just so happens to be my favorite dish, and as such, you will ultimately be digested by yours truly," Zanni chuckled as he moved his pawn to f3.

"Why? WHY!?" Yuusuke cried.

"Why you ask? Well, simply because I was instructed to eliminate you."

"Huh? F- For slackin'?"

"Slacking'? Well I guess that's what led to your demise, but no; I was ordered to eliminate you because you joined that chess club."

"Huh? What's that got to do with anything?"

"That chess club should not have come to be, thus we are to eliminate you and that girl in order to send a message."

"WAIT WHAT!? WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'THAT GIRL'!? Are you sayin-"

"Yes, you aren't the only one that is being targeted, though considering Cypress is dealing with her, I imagine she'll be receiving an equally painful death. Cypress despises women

greatly, you know, especially cute women like that girl."

Hearing all that caused a fighting flame to be rekindled within Yuusuke. "If I win, will you let them all go and stop targetin' us?"

"Why yes, though only if the match between your friend has not already begun, though for everything else, yes, I can guarantee that."

"Then I'm turnin' things around, check!" Yuusuke declared as he moved his knight to e3.

Chapter 9: Psychopath

Yuusuke confidently took his hand off his knight as Zanni began to chuckle.

"That's all you've got for a punishment? Well, I'll indulge," Zanni sneered as he moved his king to h3.

Almost immediately, Zanni began to go pale upon noticing a potential mate. "No, no, NO! If he goes rook h6 it's mate! I played with my food too much!" he thought as Yuusuke captured the rook at d1 with his knight, completely failing to notice the mate.

"Now I'm turnin' things around," Yuusuke tearfully grinned.

"Oh ...Why was I even worried? You're an idiot," Zanni maliciously chuckled as he captured the rook at d6 with his bishop.

"Nah, cuz now I've got your bishop!" Yuusuke declared as he captured the bishop at d6 with his pawn.

"And I, your knight," Zanni sneered as he captured the knight at d1 with his knight.

...

As lori cried, Cypress gazed at the board. "You almost got me, but I'm not falling for the same trap twice, you moved your queen to a5 while you were sobbing," Cypress sneered as he moved his knight to g5.

"Oh boo! I was hoping it would work," lori tearfully glared as she captured the pawn at c3 with her queen.

"So this is your true face, where'd all the 'YO it's your bitch' go?" Cypress sneered as he moved his queen to c4.

"Shut up! I'm having a bad day!" lori tearfully glared as she captured the queen at c4 with her queen.

"You truly are a pathetic piece of shit. Your content is nothing but glorified prostitution," Cypress scoffed as he captured the queen at c4 with his bishop.

"DON'T INSULT MY CONTENT YOU F***** BITCH ASS MOHERF*****!" lori shouted as she moved her pawn to e6.

"Oh? But all you do is flaunt your breasts, scantily clad yourself, try to make yourself more arousing to the dumb sims that hurl money into the burn pit that's your channel. Lest not we forget about your N00DZ Only account," Cypress scoffed as he moved his h-rook to e1.

"I CAN DO WHAT I WANT!" lori shouted as she moved her pawn to h6.

"But you're still in highschool," Cypress sneered as he moved his knight to e4.

"I'm 18 years old!" lori cried as she captured the knight at e4 with her bishop.

"But you're still just a pitiful abandoned poor high school girl, and there's nothing you can do about that," Cypress glared as he captured the bishop at e4 with his rook.

"I have 4 million subscribers!" lori tearfully glared as she moved her pawn to g5.

"Four is an unlucky number in this country, and multiplied by a million, you truly are inching closer to death, guess that means you'll be reunited with mommy, daddy, and little imouto-Mika in hell!" Cypress sneered as he moved his bishop to g3.

"STOP MESSING WITH ME!" lori shouted at the top of her lungs as she moved her pawn to d5.

"Messing with people is my job," Cypress glared as he captured the pawn at d5 with his bishop.

"HOW THE HELL IS THAT A JOB!?" lori cried as she captured the bishop at d5 with her c-pawn.

"It's called scamming. I'm a scammer," Cypress smiled as he moved his rook to e5.

"Sc- Scammer!? Like the ones that trick you into clickin' weird links that give your computer viruses?" lori trembled as she moved her knight to c6.

"Yes, that could be a definition. However, I'm far more sophisticated than that. See, the whole reason I became a barber was so I could easily get close to people. All I have to do is strike up a conversation and dawn the perfect mask to woo my client, and then I have them in my palm. Then I can easily get what I want from them," Cypress nodded as he moved his e-rook to e1.

"Then I gotta beat ya! I can't let anyone else get scammed!" lori tearfully declared as she moved her bishop to d7.

"And what can you do? You only have a minute and 44 seconds left, I still have 3 minutes and 59 seconds left," Cypress glared as he moved his pawn to c3.

"I'll think of something!" lori glared as she moved her pawn to a5.

"A wasted move, your head truly is empty, just like your finances and home," Cypress sighed as he moved his pawn to f4.

"STOP BRINGIN UP MY FAMILY!" lori shouted as she moved her king to d7.

"And you just blundered. I bet you're the entire reason your family abandoned you. What a tragedy, I heard you started streaming to make the lives of your mother and sister better, but now they're gone," Cypress sneered as he captured the pawn at g5 with his f-pawn.

"Yeah, they're dead, all because of me," lori whimpered as she moved her king back to e8.

A cruel smile began to spread on Cypress' lips. "I knew they were dead, probably committed suicide off in the wilderness, but didn't let you in on it," he sneered as he moved his pawn to g6.

"D- Don't remind me of that day, I wish it never happened," lori trembled as she moved her bishop to f6.

"But it did, and just like in this game, there are no take backs," Cypress scoffed as he moved his bishop to d6.

"I can still, still... still," lori trailed off as she somberly moved her king to d7.

"No, you can't do anything. There is no avoiding your painful death," Cypress glared as he moved his bishop to e5.

"I can still win!" lori cried as she captured the bishop at e5 with her bishop.

"No, I've seen enough, you are hopeless," Cypress glared as he captured the bishop at

e5 with his d-pawn.

"I still have HOPE! I'M IORI-CHAN! CUTE STREAMER EXTRAORDINAIRE!" lori tearfully smiled as she captured the pawn at g6 with her f-pawn before flashing a peace sign.

"You have no hope, just delusion," Cypress scoffed as he moved his rook to f1.

"I have the power of friendship! My teammates will give me strength!" lori cried as she moved her a-rook to f8.

Cypress let out a sigh as he captured the rook at f8 with his rook. "You are delusional, Zanni's probably digested your delinquent friend, and Gyro-sama will deal with the oni-tiger. No one even knows you're missing. When your death report hits the news, it'll be reported as you ditching school to ignorantly blast your face with a flamethrower for views. Perhaps I shouldn't even record your death with my phone," Cypress scoffed as lori captured the rook at f8 with her rook.

"Why? Why would you deprive me of even THAT!?" lori cried as she began to slip back into despair.

"Because I hate you, and want to see you suffer. Nothing makes me happier than seeing a woman suffering in the most painful ways imaginable," Cypress smirked as he moved his pawn to c4.

"YOU'RE DISGUSTING!" lori cried as she moved her pawn to d4.

"Coming from a degenerate whore like you? Give me a break."

"Is there really nothing recording any of this?"

Cypress smirked and threw his phone into the wall, shattering it. "Nope, nothing. As for your phone, I confiscated it beforehand. Don't worry, THAT won't be broken, at least not until I type your suicide note. Well, enjoy the last 44 seconds of your life," he smirked as he moved his king to c2.

"So there isn't even anything to record me... GOOD!" lori maliciously smiled as she slammed her rook down on f2.

A chill went down Cypress' spine as he stared at lori. Now that lori had a demented smile on her face, her smeared makeup only made her look more terrifying.

"Wha- how- huh!? Cypress stuttered as he moved his king to d3.

"What? Didn't you say you knew everything about me? So why ya so shocked?" lori sneered as she captured the pawn at a7 with her rook.

"Is this some act!? You won't phase me!" Cypress shouted as he moved his pawn to g4.

"Nah, it's not an act, the reason my family disappeared is cuz I destroyed their bodies," lori mused as she captured the pawn at h7 with her rook.

Cypress trembled as he moved his pawn to g5. "De- Destroyed!? But that means-"

"Yeah, I murdered them," lori smiled as she moved her rook to h3.

Cypress was shaken by the revelation yet maintained his focus as he moved his king to e4. lori seemed to be pleased with that move as she moved her rook to h4.

"No, your farce won't affect me any longer!" Cypress declared as he moved his king to f3.

"What farce? This is my true face. I'm a murderer, and I love it," lori smiled in the most unsettling and terrifying way as she captured the pawn at e5 with her knight.

"YOU WON'T BEAT ME!" Cypress shouted as he moved his king to g3.

"Oh Cytrash Sickomore, I've slowly been severing your tendons this whole game," lori dementedly smiled once more as she captured the pawn at g5 with her h-pawn.

Cypress immediately moved his pawn to c5. "I still have time! I just need to outlast-"

"I can move faster than time," lori chuckled as she moved her king to c6.

Cypress frantically moved his king to f2 as lori gave chase and moved her rook to f4. "Cheeeeeck," she mockingly sang as Cypress moved his king to e2.

As lori moved her pawn to g4, Cypress began to scream inside his head as he moved his king to e1. "HOW COULD SHE DO THIS!? HER RATING IS ONLY 500 AND SHE'S NEVER BEATEN ANYONE HIGHER THAN 700! SHE SHOULDN'T POSSESS THE SKILLS-"

"Thought your motto was 'Hate women, but don't underestimate em'. Guess you failed at that too," lori sneered as she moved her pawn to g3.

"YOU'VE ONLY GOT 10 SECONDS LEFT! I'LL WIN!" Cypress shouted as he moved his king to e2.

"Nah, I'm winning, check," lori disturbingly grinned as she moved her rook to f2.

A delusional smile spread across Cypress' face as he moved his king to e1. "IF IT'S A STALEMATE, EVERYTHING'S NULLIFIED! I'LL TELL EVERYONE YOU'RE A MURDERER AND YOU'LL GO TO JAIL!" he shouted as lori's timer ticked down to the 4th second.

SLAM!

"Nah, you lose so you get a hot facial and hair removal blowtorch. Checkmate!" lori disturbingly smiled as she took her hand off the knight she slammed down on f3, and gave Cypress the middle finger.

Cypress went pale as lori's timer stopped with 4 seconds to spare, signifying both his loss and lori's frightening speed. "No, NO! I- AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" he screamed as the blowtorch mercilessly burned his face and head to the bone.

lori chuckled as she began wiping her smeared makeup off. "Wow, that really turned me on. Reminded me of the days I went around murderin' folks for thrillsies. I think I'm getting addicted to murder... Again," she dementedly smiled.

The full game:

White: Cypress Sycamore (1939) Black: lori Ishikiridokoro (500)

1. Nf3 d6
2. d4 Nf6
3. Bf4 g6
4. e4 Nxe4
5. Qe2 Bf5
6. Nc3 Nxc3
7. bxc3 c6
8. O-O-O Qa5
9. Ng5 Qxc3
10. Qc4 Qxc4
11. Bxc4 e6
12. Rhe1 h6
13. Ne4 Bxe4

14. Rxe4 g5
15. Bg3 d5
16. Bxd5 cxd5
17. Re5 Nc6
18. Ree1 Bg7
19. c3 a5
20. f4 Kd7
21. fxg5 Ke8
22. g6 Bf6
23. Bd6 Kd7
24. Be5 Bxe5
25. dxe5 fxg6
26. Rf1 Raf8
27. Rxf8 Rxf8
28. c4 d4
29. Kc2 Rf2+
30. Kd3 Rxa2
31. g4 Rxh2
32. g5 Rh3+
33. Ke4 Rh4+
34. Kf3 Nxe5+
35. Kg3 hxg5
36. c5 Kc6
37. Kf2 Rf4+
38. Ke2 g4
39. Ke1 g3
40. Ke2 Rf2+
41. Ke1 Nf3#

Chapter 10: Knight race

lori smirked as the blowtorch finally turned off. Cypress was now nothing more than a burnt skeletal corpse.

"That device was rad! I haven't felt this excited since my second to last kill. Best of all, I technically didn't do anything sooo it doesn't count as murder. That means I'm still good," lori thought as she reached for the DESPER device.

Suddenly, a puff of smoke emitted from the DESPER as the chessboard and surrounding furniture began to vanish. lori was immediately released from her restraints while Cypress' corpse fell to the ground and shattered into ash.

lori clicked her tongue as she examined the DESPER. "Guess it's busted. Dammit, this thing could have been amazing, both for killin', and streaming. Ugh, I should kick my ass. I'm not gonna relapse into murderin' for pleasure, not after what I did," she somberly thought as she chucked the broken DESPER at Cypress' remains. "Although, if there's more of these guys, and

I hunt them down, and they challenge me, that's OK," she thought as a demented smile spread across her face.

Iori then noticed her phone laying on one of the counters and grabbed it. "Looks like it wasn't messed with. Welp, time to head to school, though first I gotta do my makeup," she grinned as her streamer persona returned. As soon as she was done, she checked the time on her phone. "MOTHERF*****! I'M GONNA BE DETENTIONED! Guess I'll be doing a surprise infiltration stream," she nervously grinned as she sped out of the salon.

...

At the abandoned lot, the game between Yuusuke and Zanni began to enter its endgame. Yuusuke moved his pawn to b5 followed by Zanni moving his pawn to f4. Next, Yuusuke captured the pawn at f4 with his e-pawn as Zanni captured said pawn with his g-pawn. Yuusuke then turned towards the other end of the board and moved his pawn to a5. Zanni meanwhile maintained his focus on the king's side and moved his pawn one space up to f5.

Sensing the oncoming threat, Yuusuke moved his king to d8. Zanni followed by moving his king to g4, causing Yuusuke to cautiously move his pawn to h6.

"Very well, things are completely in my favor. Oh how I savor the moment despair will reclaim you," Zanni thought as he moved his pawn to f6.

Yuusuke quickly moved his king to e8, forcing Zanni to move his king to f5. Yuusuke then confidently moved his king to f8, eliciting a smirk from Zanni.

"Such confidence, but I have a knight," Zanni thought as he moved his knight to e3.

Yuusuke then moved his pawn to d5, eliciting a laugh from Zanni. "What? Do you have some master plan I don't know about?" he sneered as he captured the pawn at d5 with his knight.

"Yeah, h5," Yuusuke smirked as he moved his pawn to h5.

"Scary, scary! You've frightened my horse," Zanni sneered as he moved his knight to c7.

"Check!" Yuusuke shouted as he moved his knight to d4.

Zanni happily rolled his eyes as he moved his king to g6, though he began to scowl as Yuusuke captured his pawn at c2 with his knight. "No, you're not getting out of this THAT way," he snarled as he captured the pawn at b5 with his knight.

The race was on. Yuusuke moved his knight to b4, followed by Zanni moving his knight to c3. Yuusuke then moved his pawn up to h4, but Zanni decided to threaten his knight by moving his pawn to a3, forcing Yuusuke to move his knight to the safety of d3. Zanni clicked his tongue and moved his pawn to b4, prompting Yuusuke to capture it with his a-pawn, Zanni to capture said pawn with his a-pawn, and Yuusuke to capture that pawn with his knight on his next turn.

"You think I was careless? No, I just want to snuff out all hope of victory for you," Zanni glared as he moved his pawn to h3.

Now the game was a battle of knights. Yuusuke moved his knight to d3, followed by Zanni moving his knight to e2. Next, Yuusuke moved his knight to f2 while Zanni countered by moving his knight to g1. Yuusuke then retreated his knight to e4 allowing Zanni to position his knight at f3. Yuusuke didn't seem phased though and moved his knight to f2.

"And now, you cannot win," Zanni sneered as he captured the pawn at h4 with his knight.

"You can't either, wanna draw now?" Yuusuke asked as he captured the pawn at h3 with his knight.

"Didn't I tell you when we started? The only way to trigger a draw while the DESPER is active is to either stalemate or trigger the repetition rule, and I have no intention of letting you achieve either!" Zanni glared as he moved his knight to f5.

"Too bad, check," Yuusuke snickered as he moved his knight to f4.

Zanni scowled as he stared at the board. "I played with my food too much," he growled as he moved his king to h6 while Yuusuke happily moved his king up to f7. "A draw will result in everything being nullified. I'll also be unable to challenge you again for the day until my DESPER recharges, though remember this, I had the advantage, and should we ever play each other again, I WILL beat you," Zanni glared as he moved his knight to d6.

"I hope I never see you again, creep!" Yuusuke scoffed as he captured the pawn at f6 with his king, stalemating the game.

Immediately, the medieval torture room along with the chessboard vanished.

Zanni clicked his tongue as he pocketed his DESPER. "Well, now everything is null and void so we are back to where we started. The DESPER can only be used once a day, and if I want to kill you, I'd have to do it the old fashioned way which is currently not possible due to lack of resources and the unsuitable location. Seems you have been spared," he glared as he began walking away.

"Ugh, my pants are soiled. Guess I gotta run back home- GEH!? I'm THAT late!? If I return home, Okaa will kill me. Ugh, guess I'll head for the locker rooms and grab my gym outfit," Yuusuke sighed as he began trudging along.

"And why is he still alive?" a voice snarled.

Yuusuke turned to notice Gyro glaring at him.

"Regrettably, it ended in stalemate," Zanni sighed as he attempted to leave.

Gyro glared and immediately hurled a gyroscope into the wall, bringing Zanni to a halt. "Zanni, you played around too much. Just one look at him tells me you blundered an easy win due to greed. Cypress is dead, so I'm not in the mood for excuses."

"Cypress is dead!? How!?"

"I've yet to access the match data, but the burnt corpse I found was definitely his. Before the media and authorities swarm the place, I want to get rid of this boy," Gyro glared as he pulled out his DESPER.

"HUH!? But you said you couldn't use that twice a day!" Yuusuke cried.

"I said I can't use MY DESPER more than once a day, but that doesn't mean someone else with a DESPER can't immediately challenge you," Zanni chuckled.

"But I just got out of a match!"

"Boy, do you know what these feathers I wear are? They're buzzard feathers," Gyro glared.

"BUZZARD FEATHERS!?! But they're red!"

"I dye them in blood. Listen boy, buzzards hover and wait until their prey is either dead or weakened to the point of no return before going in for the meal. And right now, you're easy prey for a grandmaster like me."

"G- Grandmaster!?"

"Yes, my rating is 2559, and I will not go easy on you."

The full game:

White: Dr. Arlecchino Zanni (1913) Black: Yuusuke Shousen (1478)

1. e4 d5
2. exd5 Qxd5
3. Nc3 Qe5+
4. Be2 Nf6
5. Nf3 Qe6
6. O-O Nc6
7. b3 g5
8. Nxc3 Qe5
9. Bc4 e6
10. Nf3 Qh5
11. d4 Bd6
12. Re1 Rg8
13. g3 e5
14. Ng5 Qxd1
15. Rxd1 Be6
16. d5 Bxd5
17. Bxd5 O-O-O
18. Nxf7 Rd7
19. Nxd6+ Rxd6
20. Bxg8 Rxd1+
21. Kg2 Nxc3
22. Bb2 Rd2
23. Rc1 Nf6
24. Rd1 Rd6
25. Ba3 Ng4
26. f3 Ne3+
27. Kh3 Nxd1
28. Bxd6 cxd6
29. Nxd1 b5
30. f4 exf4
31. gxf4 a5
32. f5 Kd8
33. Kg4 h6
34. f6 Ke8
35. Kf5 Kf8
36. Ne3 d5
37. Nxd5 h5
38. Nc7 Nd4+
39. Kg6 Nxc2

- 40. Nxb5 Nb4
- 41. Nc3 h4
- 42. a3 Nd3
- 43. b4 axb4
- 44. axb4 Nxb4
- 45. h3 Nd3
- 46. Ne2 Nf2
- 47. Ng1 Ne4
- 48. Nf3 Nf2
- 49. Nxh4 Nxh3
- 50. Nf5 Nf4+
- 51. Kh6 Kf7
- 52. Nd6+ Kxf6 *

Chapter 11: DESPER

Yuusuke began to tremble as Gyro reached into his pocket.

"Yeah, could you not trigger that just yet?" a voice said.

Everyone turned to see Okisato standing behind them.

"Well, this certainly is a turn of events, so are you the reason Cypress is dead?" Gyro glared.

"Huh? Who's Cypress?"

"Pretty boy, slit eyes, wears a white suit, long brown hair tied in a ponytail, also hates women," Zanni nodded.

"Nope, no clue."

"Then despair as I kill your-"

"Could you not trigger the DESPER? I actually wanted you to use it for something else."

"Sorry Oni-tiger, but things don't always go your way, in fact, I think I'll make you a spect- No, your rating is too high for that, though my rating is far higher than your friend's, meaning I can subject him to spectating and sentence him to death along with you," Gyro snickered.

"But if you do that, your friend the principal won't be able to eliminate Inoue-senpai today."

Gyro paused and slowly took his hand out of his pocket. "Explain."

"Gladly. See, Inoue-senpai wished to get something more out of him, so she's decided to challenge the shogi club to a game of bughouse.

"'Bughouse' you say? ...Hahaha, interesting," Gyro grinned as he turned to Yuusuke.

"Quite the luck you have today, boy. It seems we'll have to deal with you another day. Zanni, you are to play at Inferno's den and not leave until your rating is above 2000."

"As you wish, Gyro-sama," Zanni bowed before departing.

"I'll see you two after school," Gyro sneered as he too departed.

Now alone, Yuusuke turned to Okisato. "What the hell was all that, man?"

"Er, a bad dream," Okisato nonchalantly nodded.

"I ain't dreamin, dumbass, these pants are soiled," Yuusuke glared as he pointed down

at his pants.

"Oh, well shit. Guess I'll have to tell you too," Okisato sighed as the two began walking.

"Who were those guys? The big guy was tryin' to kill me."

"They're from the Desperado league, one of the most infamous underground chess leagues."

"Underground!?! Like mafia and yakuza!?"

"Yeah, though it's not just limited to them. Anyone can partake in an underground chess match whether willingly or unwillingly. As long as you aren't caught breaking any rules, the WWCF will reward you should you emerge victorious."

"Reward!?"

"I'll talk more about that when the whole club's present. As for the Desperado league, they've managed to create some tech that will force you into a chess match."

"Is that what those things they had were?"

"Yes, they're called DESPER. They are capable of both conjuring up something from nothing and forcefully manipulating minds."

"Wait, so was all that a hallucination?"

"No, whatever you saw and felt was real."

"So then the chainsaws really would have-"

"Killed you? Yes. Though if you had won, the big guy would then get sliced and diced."

"Huh? But I said if I won he'd have to stop targetin' us and free any prisoners."

"That's not exactly how the DESPER works. The original holder of the DESPER ultimately controls the punishment so long as they themselves are playing, though if he agreed to your terms, then your punishment for him would have stood."

"He agreed, so I guess that means he wouldn't have died if I beat him, right?"

"Correct. Though if you weren't specific, the programming of the DESPER could interpret the 'stop targeting us' punishment as killing the loser."

"Huh!? Why!?"

"Because he wouldn't be able to target any of us if he was dead; simple as that."

Yuusuke was taken aback by Okisato. "Oi, dude, just who are ya?"

"The less you know about me, the better, but I guess you're already being targeted because of me. Hmm."

"He called you 'Oni-tiger'. Why's that?"

"Because that's what I'm known as to them. See, I'm seeking to rid the world of the DESPERs."

"How are you gonna do that?"

"By beating all that have one. If the holder of a DESPER is subjected to an execution or fate that would prevent them from ever using their DESPER as punishment for losing a match with their own DESPER, the DESPER will destroy itself, becoming completely inoperable and unsalvageable."

"Is that the only way?"

"Yes, as far as I'm aware."

"Couldn't you force em to destroy the device?"

"They would then spend the rest of their life forcefully trying to destroy the device against

their will. If someone were subjected to that, they would likely die either of starvation, or from the things they'd use to try and destroy the DESPER."

"That's messed up."

"Though I guess they could just lock their DESPER in a safe and never use it again."

"Huh?"

"I don't think they're some cursed item that forces its user to constantly use it or be penalized with death, so a DESPER holder could just lock away their DESPER never to use it again. That could even be done normally, but then it wouldn't be binding. Huh, never thought of that. Though most DESPER holders are criminals and bad people in general so it's probably better to kill them."

"Seriously, why are you so bloodthirsty, man? Wouldn't killing someone with that get you booked for murder?"

"No, since the WWCF officially approves the tech for match play."

"THE HELL!? Why would they-"

"Anyone can play chess; warlords, peacemongers, geniuses, idiots, the morally ethical, and the morally corrupt. The WWCF doesn't care how bad or good of a person you are; as long as you don't break the rules of the game, the WWCF could care less if you committed a crime or did something controversial as long as you're good at chess and don't cheat at it."

Yuusuke went pale as he struggled to digest everything. Before he could respond, he noticed that he and Okisato had reached the school. The two quickly noticed lori, nervously hiding by the school gate, occasionally peering through it at the courtyard.

"lori-

"WAAAAH! Oh, it's just you two. Wait! Did Yuu-kun piss himself!? Gyahahaha LOL!" lori laughed as she snapped a photo.

"OI! The hell you makin' fun of me, huh!?" Yuusuke fumed as Okisato held him back.

"Well, wanna collab with me? I'm shootin' a vid right now."

"Huh? 'Collab'!?"

"Yeah, it's a BIG CHALLENGE! Can I sneak into school without getting caught!? Stay tuned to find out!"

Chapter 12: Stealth challenge

Yuusuke glared in annoyance as lori began filming her intro.

"YO! It's your girl lori-chan here! I'M LATE FOR SCHOOL! If I get caught it's detention hell for me! So I'm gonna sneak in so nobody will know I was late. All I gotta do is not get caught and sneak into the classroom without anyone noticing. I've also got some guys here that are also late, say hello to Oki-kun and Shouben-kun!"

"Sh- 'SHOUBEN'!? Want me to kill you, you f***** bitch!?" Yuusuke fumed as Okisato held him back.

"If we can successfully pull this off, we'll win, er... SOMETHING! I don't know what, but it will be something! Now, let's begin!"

lori then secured her phone to a strap on belt before huddling up with Okisato and Yuusuke.

"So what's your plan?" Okisato asked.

"I dunno! I'm just gonna wing it and hope I find a cardboard box," lori grinned.

"I gotta get to the locker rooms, so I'll go on my own," Yuusuke glared.

"Then disperse, I actually wanna chat with lori-chan," Okisato nodded.

"HUH!? You tryin' to make out with her!?"

"Are you into her?"

"Man, now you're just crushing me. My day's been rough enough, I don't wanna get NTR'd," Yuusuke cried as he ran off.

"So whatcha ya wanna ask me? Is it a CONFESSION!?" lori gasped.

"No, but you should probably turn your stream off for this."

"A private question? Sure, we can talk private deets, this is a video anyway, so no worries about live viewers," lori smiled as she stopped recording.

"lori-chan, were you attacked by some guys and challenged to a chess match?"

lori blinked for a few seconds before responding. "Yeah, it was totes rad! That asshole chloroed and kidnapped me and said loser would get a blowtorch to the face!"

"So you won?"

"I kicked his ass!"

"Well that's good. ...So do you have any questions?"

"Huh? About what?"

"Nevermind. As long as you're fine that's good. Now I need to get back to class."

"Huh? Weren't you ditchen with Shouben?"

"No, I came to school, but snuck out when Shousen-san didn't show up."

"You crushin on him?"

"No, I'm not."

"You got a tough poker face, well guess the collab's over. Good luck sneakin in," lori waved as Okisato headed off.

Once she was alone, lori began recording again and immediately began sneaking through the bushes as she made her way through the courtyard. Eventually, she made it to the shoe lockers.

"Stage one: COMPLETE!" she grinned as she grabbed her school shoes.

She then began sneaking through the hallway. "Heh, bet you expect me to just sneak into class and sit down like I was there, well I'm kickin that trend in the ass!" lori stated as she hid in the bathroom. "Now I just gotta wait until the period's over, join everyone as they roam through the halls, and... I'm clear!"

...

A cloud of dejection hung over Yuusuke's head as he trudged toward his class. "Ugh, everyone's gonna ask why I'm in my tracksuit. I'll just say I spilled soda," he mumbled as he entered the classroom.

"And the theorem- Shousen-kun, you've got some gall walking in like it's nothing," the teacher glared.

All eyes immediately turned towards Yuusuke.

"Uh, I just had to change cuz I spilled-"

"You were NOT here when I took attendance."

"I was- HUH!? How the hell'd you get back in!?" Yuusuke gasped as he noticed Okisato sitting at a desk. "

"Shousen-kun, who are you shouting at?"

"Tanabe, dammit! That's right! He saw me spill some soda so I had to change-"

"Tanabe-kun? ...He was here when I took attendance. You're saying he snuck out without me noticing during my lecture?"

"Yeah."

"Tanabe-kun, do you know anything about Shousen-kun's ramblings?" the teacher glared.

"Not a clue," Okisato nodded.

"Shousen-kun, detention."

"Y- Yes, ma'am," Yuusuke sighed as he headed for the detention hall. "Damn traitor," he mumbled under his breath as he slammed the door and the teacher resumed her lecture.

"Guess my generic looks helped me pull off the escape without being caught. But coming here first and being counted for attendance are what truly helped me pull this off. I wonder if lori-chan knows they'll check attendance records again next period," Okisato thought.

...

As the period ended, lori seamlessly joined in with the students walking through the halls. "PERFECT! This challenge was a success, yo! Well, guess that's it. Make sure to like, share, and subscribe if ya haven't already!" she smiled as she struck a cute pose and stopped recording.

In another part of the hallway, Okisato found himself confronted by his teacher and Mei.

"What's wrong, Maida-sensei?"

"You deceived me," the teacher glared.

"Huh?"

"Okisato Tanabe, security footage showed you leaving school grounds and reentering. That is a violation of school rules," Mei glared.

"Ah, I screwed up."

As the bell chimed, lori happily waltzed into class with the other students. However, her bliss was short-lived. "lori Ishikiridokoro, report to the detention hall for violation of school rules this instant!" Mei's voice echoed on the loudspeaker.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOO!" lori wailed as she sank to the floor.

Chapter 13: Skewer

"Serves you right," Yuusuke huffed as he sat in the detention room.

"I didn't know the school had cameras," Okisato stated.

"NO FAIR! I SNUCK IN PERFECTLY!" lori cried.

Mimoko let out an annoyed sigh. "I'm disappointed with you all. As club president, I take responsibility for your actions."

"Is that why you're here too?" Okisato asked.

"I wouldn't come to the detention hall out of free will."

"Quiet! You are all to reflect on your transgressions," Maida glared.

"As per school rules, all of you will be having this offense added to your portfolios, Inoue-san will be included as well due to her failure as club president to keep her club members in check," Mei stated.

"Hold on, isn't it a bit unfair to blame a club president for their club members showing up late to school?" Mimoko asked as she slammed her palms on the desk.

"Yes, you cannot be blamed for a member of your club committing offenses outside your club. However, your club members were all engaging in a club related activity instead of attending school, thus you are equally at fault for their actions," Maida stated.

"HUH!? What do you mean by that!?"

"Your club members were participating in chess matches instead of properly attending school on time," the principal sneered as he entered with Gyro.

"So you ratted us out," Okisato glared at Gyro.

"HOLD ON! That guy tried to kill me! He's a criminal!"

"Cease your slander! Mr. Gunnerson is a good friend of mine as well as an advisor to our esteemed shogi club."

"So you're colluders? Lame-o, when I vlog about this, your-"

"Ishikiridokoro, your phone will be confiscated for the next two weeks," Mei glared.

"The hell!? Then how am I supposed to call anyone!?"

"Perhaps on one of the spare phones you have at your place?"

"I'm dirt poor you bitch!" Iori snarled as her cheery persona faded.

"That's not the only thing, I believe I paid for you to receive an image change, yet here you are, same as normal."

"Uh, the barber kidnapped me and tried to kill me."

"Cease your lies! Though perhaps I'm most disappointed with Tanabe-kun. You tried to act like you were here the whole time when you weren't. Your violation is undoubtedly the greatest offense, therefore you are to remain here for the rest of the day."

"As for the stragglers, Ishikiridokoro, you know the routine. Shousen, you'll be mopping the hallways you walked for any stray drops of your urine that might have leaked, and you Inoue may leave with a warning, though I will wish to converse with you after school on a separate, but club related matter," the principal sneered as he and Gyro headed out.

...

In a secluded part of the hallway, Utami trembled as she was confronted by 3 girls.

"Hey Utami, why ya sniveling around?" the leader of the group sneered.

"I- I- I was just going to class-"

"You bumped into my bag though, ya clutz. I got fragile goods innit. If they were damaged, you're gonna pay for it."

"I- I'm sorry!" Utami trembled as she groveled on the floor.

"Hah! What an annoying pest you are," the group leader laughed as she stomped her shoe down on Utami's head.

"Se- Segawa-san-"

"Segawa-SAMA!" the group leader sneered as she pressed her foot down harder.

"Don't talk down to Shion-sama, bug. Do, and I shall ensure your father finds out," an elegant girl with long blue hair sneered as she kneeled down and titled up Utami's chin with her paper fan.

"Shion-sama, we should like, smush her face in," a girl with spray-tanned skin and bleached hair said as she gazed at her phone.

"Oh? I thought I already squished the bug, though if you feel like it, practice your kicks on the air, Kigyoku," Shion sneered as she walked over Utami.

A malicious grin spread on the gyaru's face as the blue-haired girl held Utami up by her hair. She then ran to the end of the hallway before charging up to Utami and punting her in the face, sending her flying into the wall.

"Perfect kick! Well, that's our school's ace striker for ya," Shion sneered as she recorded with her phone. She then grabbed the bloodied Utami by her hair and held her up. "See, that's all you are, a used can to be kicked into the wind. Unlike your older brothers, you aren't worth shit!" she laughed before knocking Utami out with a knee to the face.

...

"Enoki... Enoki-cha... Enoki-chan!"

"GAH!"

Utami immediately sat up to find herself in the nurse's office. Mimoko was also present sitting beside her bed.

"I- Inoue-sama- Ita!" Utami winced in pain as she felt her face.

"You were pretty banged up, did someone attack you? If so, we need to tell the prin-"

"No, i- If you tell him, he- He'll beat me up too."

Mimoko immediately went pale as she digested Utami's words. "Enoki-chan, if that's true then you need to go to the police."

"Bu- But if I do, he'll hurt you, Inoue-sama."

"Why? If we go together-"

"It won't work, they'll beat us all up!"

Mimoko struggled to find a response. She wasn't the greatest when it came to consoling others on matters outside of chess. It was clear to her though that Utami was terrified about speaking out about her abuse, yet she couldn't do much to help Utami if she didn't have the full context. Suddenly, Mimoko remembered something and used her WWCF card to summon a holographic chess board.

Utami's persona began to change as she nodded her head and began playing with Mimoko.

"Enoki-chan, I know it might be hard for you, but could you tell me what's going on?"

"This is sadly my daily routine. The girl that bullies me is Shion Segawa, the daughter of Shiho Segawa, the prefectural governor."

"She's a bigshot!? Wait, does that mean-"

"Yes, she has some sway over the police. Her family is also quite wealthy like mine. As for Shion, she's currently dating my older brother."

"Wait, so then what's going on with your father? You said he'd hit you."

"If I complain about Shion, yes. He doesn't want to sour a potential relationship with

Governor Segawa, due to the benefits it would bring to him. Shion knows this, and since I'm her favorite punching bag, everyone turns a blind eye to my plight. Though I feel as though my father and brothers truly have no problem with me being a punching bag. I am expendable to them after all."

Mimoko clenched her fists in anger. "Enoki-chan, I'm going to win your freedom."

"Huh? But how?"

"By beating the school's prized shogi team in bughouse."

"Bug-house?"

"It's a two-player variation of chess, but you can use the pieces your teammate has captured."

"So it's kind of like shogi?"

"Correct. I figure going half-way is the best way to get them to agree to the proposal. As for my teammate, I want you to play alongside me."

Utami froze and blushed as a tear streaked down her face.

"Wah!? Why are you crying!?"

"No, it's just, you always give me strength. When I first saw you confronting my father about starting up a chess club, I felt inspired. Finally, someone was standing up to him. I then began playing chess and found my own inner strength, but sadly it can only come out when I play chess. Thus I began following you, hoping to find the key to unlock my strength."

"You were "following" me?"

"Er, I guess it could be considered stalking, but I only did it after school and stopped after 6."

"So then you saw that altercation between me and that thug a few days ago?"

"Yes, I saw everything. Tanabe-san arriving, that strange match, and that thug drowning in the river. Well, the thug deserved it for harassing you."

"You idolize me, don't you."

"Yes, to me, you're my mad queen."

"Mad queen'?"

"Yes, "Mad queen chess" was the term used to describe the chess rule change that led to the queen getting its unrestricted movement."

Mimoko let out a happy sigh. "I really did get a chess club of weirdos, so Enoki-chan, do you want to partner up with me for the bughouse game?"

"On one condition, please call me Utami," Utami blushed.

"Alright, I look forward to partnering with you, Utami-chan," Mimoko smiled.

Tears rolled down Utami's face as she smiled and nodded in approval.

Chapter 14: Bughouse brawl

As soon as school got out, Okisato was allowed to leave the detention hall. The first thing he did was locate Mimoko, who was with Utami. As soon as he saw Utami, he stared Mimoko in the eye.

"Inoue-senpai, are you prepared to risk everything on Enoki-san?"

"Yes, I am resolved to fight for Utami-chan."

"Enoki-san, are you truly all in on this?"

"Y- Yes. I- I won't let Inoue-sama down."

"Good. Now let's gather the others before we face off against the shogi club."

...

Students stared and murmured as all the members of the chess club angrily marched towards the principal's office.

"That fat balding asshole made me mop the whole damn school. That has to count as abuse of power," Yuusuke groaned.

"All the more reason we put him in his place," Mimoko glared.

"Inoue-senpai, be careful. Bughouse can easily throw a top player off their game due to the piece dropping rule. This will also be an all or nothing gambit that will affect not only you and Enoki-san, but all of us as well. Are you two willing to go forth?" Okisato asked.

"Yes, I'm prepared."

Okisato calmly nodded as the group reached their destination. "Then let's enter."

As the five entered, they were greeted by the principal, the student council vice-president, Shion and her two lackeys, and Gyro.

"So you intend to take Utami from me? No, I can't have that, she's a valuable asset to me," the principal snickered.

"ASSET!?! You piece of shit! You don't even view her as human!" Mimoko glared.

"I heard you and Shion have been beatin' her up, that story alone will get your asses mondo backlash," Iori glared.

"Someone should kick all your teeth in so you can never slander me like that again," Shion sneered.

Iori's murderous intent nearly cracked through, however, Okisato eased the tension. "Mr. Principal, you sure seem calm about the prospect of letting your daughter join the chess club to play chess. Is there something you're hiding from us?"

The principal stared in shock for a few seconds before bursting into laughter. "Well, I guess I'm calm because it won't change anything in the end. Your club will eventually be dissolved by the school board due to lack of purpose."

"Lack of purpose!?! But we're going to compete tomorrow in the tournament!" Mimoko argued.

"No, no, no you're not!"

"...Are you saying my club members are ineligible?"

"Sadly no, Shousen barely scraped by on his math test today and Ishikiridokoro somehow managed to turn in a passable report."

"Then what is it?"

"School rules prevent you from competing."

"WHAT!?"

"Yes, school rules state clubs cannot be allowed to compete in sporting events unless they have a supervising instructor, and your club does not have an instructor!"

"So if we get an instructor to supervise, we can compete as a team?"

"Yes, but that isn't going to happen. None of the teachers here play chess, and I'll fire anyone that dares to volunteer to supervise your club."

"In that case, there's no need to hold back. Who are you nominating to play against us?" Okisato glared.

"Two of the shogi club's best members; Mami Manabe, and the president of the shogi club, Nagi Enoki," the principal declared as the blue-haired girl and the student council vice president stepped forward.

"Perfect in that case, Inoue-senpai will play Nagi while Enoki-san plays Manabe. As for the punishment, if we win, Utami Enoki is free from both the shogi club's and your influence, but if we lose, Utami Enoki will never be free and the chess club will be dissolved, never to be formed again. All members of it will also be forbidden from competitive chess for the rest of their highschool careers. As for the game, the ultimate shock of death should be delivered to the one that gets checkmated, while their teammate gets a more tolerable voltage. You hear all that, Gyro?" Okisato glared.

A sinister smile appeared on Gyro's face as he pulled out his DESPER. "It really was worth saving it for this," he snickered as he activated the DESPER.

Immediately, the room transformed into a giant bug zapper light. Iori's eyes widened as she began trembling. "This guy has the tech, there really is more of this stuff," she thought as she maintained her streamer persona.

All the spectators sat down in the bleachers that spawned as Gyro went over the rules. "I'm sure you are all well aware, but this is a two player game. You are free to converse with your teammate, but do be mindful of the time. All players will only have 10 minutes each on their clocks. The only other rule I'll remind you of is that pawns cannot be dropped on the 1st or 8th ranks. Also, if a pawn that has been promoted is captured, it will return to being a pawn, meaning your teammate will not get to use the piece it was promoted to. And with that, white's time starts now!"

Mimoko immediately opened with the king's pawn at e4, followed by Nagi moving his pawn to e5. Mimoko then moved her knight to f3 followed by Nagi moving his pawn to d6.

On the other board, Mami opened by moving her knight to f3, followed by Utami moving her pawn to d5.

"This truly is an intellectually inferior game to shogi," Mami scoffed as she moved her pawn to d4.

"Do not insult chess. Chess requires lots of planning and thinking, just like shogi," Utami glared as she moved her knight to c6.

"OI! Who said you could talk back!?" the principal shouted.

"Do not interfere, spectators interfering will result in a loss, as well as a penalty for the perpetrator," Gyro warned.

"Huh? But you're-"

"The DESPER is not so easy to sway. I suggest you make use of this and shut up," Gyro glared as he tossed the principal a roll of tape.

Back at the board, Nagi began glaring at Utami as Mimoko moved her knight to c3. "Where did this attitude come from? I've never seen it before," he glared as he moved his knight

to f6.

"I become strong and unrestrained when I play chess," Utami stated as Mami moved her pawn to c3.

"Only during chess?"

"Yes, though I hope to expand my confidence outside of chess," Utami nodded as she moved her pawn to f6.

"You are nothing but an expendable pawn. I will not allow you to be promoted," Nagi glared as Mimoko moved her bishop to c4.

"Shouldn't you be more supportive of your little sister?" Mimoko glared as Nagi moved his bishop to g4.

"Why? She's a failure. Her only purpose is to be an expendable pawn," Nagi scoffed as Mami moved her queen to a4.

"That's right, she's doing perfectly well as Shion-sama's sandbag," Mami sneered as Utami moved her bishop to d7.

"I hate it," Utami glared as Mimoko castled.

"But you keep coming back, so you must love it," Mami sneered as Nagi moved his knight to c6.

"I'm making my stand, now," Utami glared as Mami moved her bishop to e3.

"A stand? You think you'd actually be able to better yourself? Shion-sama can easily get you years in prison for a crime of her choosing," Mami sneered as Utami moved her pawn to e5.

"I can't believe despicable demons like you exist," Mimoko glared as she moved her pawn to h3.

"This is called 'society', woman. She has no value, thus she is nothing but garbage, and garbage cannot rise from the trash heap," Nagi glared as he captured the knight at f3 with his bishop.

"Clearly you have a messed up worldview. All the more reason for me, and Utami-chan to beat you both," Mimoko glared as she captured the bishop at f3 with her queen.

Mami then immediately dropped the captured knight at a5, prompting Utami to capture it with her knight. However, Mami then captured the knight at a5 with her queen and handed the knight off to Nagi.

"I heard you are skilled at chess, however, that is only in regular play. Utami is a failure, and as such will be your downfall," Nagi sneered as he dropped the knight Mami captured on g5.

"Utami-chan won't lose, she's strong," Mimoko smiled as she moved her queen to e3.

"No, she will drag you down to hell with her. A fitting fate for someone like you that dares to step out of line," Nagi scoffed as he moved his queen to d7.

"And what did I do to offend you? All I did was stand up for Utami-chan and tell off you and your lousy father when you both resisted my request to form a chess club," Mimoko glared as she moved her bishop to e2.

"And that's why you must be dealt with. You must not be allowed to jam the cogs," Nagi glared as he captured the pawn at h3 with his knight.

"Then call me a rebel, cause I'm fighting back," Mimoko retorted as she captured the knight at h3 with her g-pawn.

"Then you will be bearing the brunt of your punishment when I mate you."

"Mate me? Well, you-"

"Utami will provide all the pieces I need and just like I ordained, she'll be the one that drags you to hell with her," Nagi coldly stated as Mami moved her queen to a6.

A smile began to spread on Mimoko's face. "You're the one underestimating Utami-chan."

"No, you have blind faith in her."

"Blind faith'? Utami-chan, what do you think you should do for your next move?"

"I should place the bishop you captured on b5," Utami confidently stated as she did just that.

Nagi's eyes widened with shock. "MAMI! YOU IDIOT! Salvage that mess immediately!"

"Huh? But I can just- UGAH!? I can't go there, or there. UGH!" Mami fumed as she moved her queen to b7.

"Nagi-ni, Manabe-san, I will never bring Inoue-sama down!" Utami roared as she moved her d-bishop to c6, diminishing any hope of Mami avoiding the capture of her queen.

Mami immediately clicked her tongue in frustration as she captured the rook at a8 with her queen.

"I won't let you gain the upper hand, CHECK!" Nagi shouted as he slammed the captured rook down on g6.

"Your words don't phase me, you're going to lose," Utami glared as Mimoko dropped the captured knight on g3.

"SHIT!" Nagi fumed as he castled on the queen's side.

Mimoko immediately smiled and patted Utami on the shoulder. "Give her a scare, girl."

Utami blushed and happily nodded as she captured the queen at a8 with her bishop.

"This isn't over yet!" Mami roared as she moved her knight to d2.

Mimoko simply smiled as she captured the pawn at a7 with her queen.

Almost immediately, Nagi and Mami began grinning maliciously as they burst into mocking laughter. "What a fool! You just lost your advantage!" Nagi laughed as he captured the queen at a7 with his knight.

"Now I have a queen again. Who would have thought YOU would be the one to ultimately blunder!" Mami laughed as she twiddled the captured queen in her hand.

Mimoko immediately began smiling from ear to ear. "You'll never get the chance to use it," she confidently declared as Utami dropped the captured knight at c2, placing Mami's king in check.

"So you delay my wrath by a turn," Mami scoffed as she moved her king to d2.

"Yes, Mami only needs to protect her pieces while I mate you," Nagi sneered.

"Inoue-sama just said you'll never get the chance to use that queen," Utami glared as she captured the rook at a1 with her knight.

"You are delusional. Mami, place the queen at e6 and put her in check."

"You got it! Utami-chan, you've become dumber from all the times we've kicked your face in. Guess we'll have to smack you around some more to see if you'll start working again!" Mami cackled as she thrust the captured queen towards e6.

"Checkmate!" Mimoko declared as she dropped the captured queen at a8 before Mami

could even put her piece down.

"Do not make comedy, that is an illegal move. You cannot-"

"This isn't shogi. Bughouse rules allow you to drop a piece that will mate."

"You forget I have reserve pieces-"

"All pawns."

"So? I-"

"Can't drop a pawn on the 1st or 8th ranks. You lose."

In an instant, Nagi went pale as he stared at the board. "No, NO! HOW COULD I LOSE!? MAMI! YOU BLEW IT! YOU LOST US THE GAME!"

"HUH!? YOU'RE THE ONE THAT GOT MATED!" Mami shouted as she too went pale.

"I hope you didn't forget the punishment," Gyro snickered as Nagi and Mami found themselves trapped inside glass bug zappers.

"Wh- WHAT IS THIS!?"

"The punishment. As we all agreed, the losers get shocked, with the one who was mated receiving the more lethal voltage."

"LETHAL!? MR. GUNNERSON, WHAT ARE YOU- AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!"

Nearly everyone stared in horror as Nagi let loose a blood curdling scream as he was electrocuted before their eyes. Mami immediately began to soil herself as she frantically began banging on the clear walls imprisoning her.

"Wow, what a turn-on. I wonder how loud that bitch is gonna scream," lori gleefully thought as she recorded the execution with a malicious grin on her face.

Okisato took notice of lori's attitude, but assumed she was likely filming for clout, though noted it probably wouldn't be the best course of action for her to upload the video publicly. Though he had no qualms about Nagi and Mami's punishment. In his mind, they deserved it.

As soon as Nagi finally stopped screaming, the walls around him vanished and he fell to the floor with a thud, before jittering around. After a few seconds, he stopped moving completely. Gyro then rolled him over with his boot and examined him.

"Completely dead. What a travesty, he was such a talented shogi player."

The principal immediately went pale. "D- DEAD!? No, NO! STOP THE JOKE-"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!"

Everyone turned as Mami's electrocution began. Despite her voltage being lower than Nagi's, she visibly seemed to be in more pain.

Eventually, she too stopped screaming and was released from her prison. After she stopped jittering, Gyro examined her too.

"Why I don't believe it, a double kill," he clapped to nearly everyone's horror.

Despite winning, Utami and Mimoko were consumed with fear and shock as the DESPER deactivated and the room returned to normal. The principal immediately ran to Nagi's corpse as Kigyoku and Shion approached Mami's corpse and examined it.

"So she really is dead. What an intriguing development," Shion maliciously thought before immediately heading out with Kigyoku.

The full game:

White: Mimoko Inoue (Unrated) Black: Nagi Enoki (n/a)

White: Mami Manabe (n/a) Black: Utami Enoki (Unrated)

1. e4 e5	1. Nf3 d5
2. Nf3 d6	2. d4 Nc6
3. Nc3 Nf6	3. c3 f6
4. Bc4 Bg4	4. Qa4 Bd7
5. O-O Nc6	5. Be3, e5
6. h3 Bxf3	6. (after move 6) N@a5 Nxa5
7. Qxf3 (after move 5) N@g5	7. Qxa5 b6
8. Qe3 Qd7	8. Qa6 B@b5
9. Be2 Nxh3+	9. Qb7, Bdc6
10. gxh3 (after move 9) R@g6+	10. Qxa8 Bxa8
11. N@g3 O-O-O	11. Nd2 N@c2+
12. Qxa7 Nxa7	12. Kd2, Nxa1
13. Q@a8#	

Move reserve:

Nagi/Mami	Mimoko/Utami
white knight(dropped)	black bishop(dropped)
black knight (dropped)	white knight (dropped)
white pawn	black knight(dropped)
black rook(drop)	white queen (dropped)
white queen	white rook

Chapter 15: Oni Tiger

"Oi, what the hell was that!?" Yuusuke trembled.

"An execution! Yo, this shit would blow-"

"Don't even think about uploading such an atrocity!" Mimoko glared as she hugged a trembling Utami.

"He's dead. She's dead. They're both dead. I- I killed them. It's over," Utami trembled.

"Don't worry, this is legally sanctioned, so no need to worry about murder charges.

Besides, you won your freedom, so run along," Gyro sneered as he pocketed his DESPER and began heading out.

"HOLD UP, GYRO!" the principal shouted.

Gyro sighed and turned to face him. "What is it?"

"YOU DIDN'T SAY HE COULD DIE! NAGI WAS THE KEY TO MY SHOGI EMPIRE, NOW HE'S DEAD! BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE WITH YOUR DESPER!"

"The DESPER can't bring back the dead, though you could play a visage of him using the data from his WWCF games."

"So he can play shogi?"

"Are you concerned about losing him as a son or as a shogi player? If it's the latter, I can easily compensate you with something better."

"Oh, then I got upset for nothing," the principal shrugged as he began heading out.

"Oi, THE F*** IS WRONG WITH YOU!?"

Everyone turned in shock towards Iori.

"Hmm? Ishikiridokoro, were you not just filming-"

"THE F***'S WRONG WITH YOU!? HOW COULD YOU JUST ABANDON YOUR FAMILY LIKE THAT!? YOU CAN'T JUST REPLACE FAMILY AND FRIENDS LIKE THAT, YET YOU'RE JUST GONNA REPLACE HIM WITH SOME ROBOT CLONE!"

"I don't believe I've disclosed the manner in which Mr. Enoki-"

"I DON'T CARE! F*** YOU!" Iori cried as she stormed out.

"She's got some nerve saying that after she gleefully filmed everything," Yuusuke snarled.

"No, I think that was her true heart speaking, besides, those two weren't exactly very redeemable," Okisato stated.

"OI! You're the one that set the conditions in the first place! W- Were you intendin' to kill them from the start!? That's messed up, man!"

"If we let them be, they'd only harass us again in the future, and possibly come back stronger. If anything, I'm annoyed Segawa wasn't one of the participants."

"The hell man!?"

"I saw her grin when she found out her friend died. Her lackey also fell in line when she ordered her to follow her out. Considering her family ties and malicious demeanor, I think she'll become a troublesome foe."

"You really are a piece of shit; I'm outta here," Yuusuke glared as he stormed out.

Now, only Okisato, Mimoko, and Utami remained with the corpses.

"I didn't expect it to end like this. Tanabe-kun, why did you push me to go through with this?" Mimoko trembled.

"You both said you were resolved."

"I didn't know people would die!"

"Guess that part's on me. I really only went through with the idea when I saw how despicable and irredeemable Nagi was. But even if I didn't say anything, Gyro would have still implemented a death penalty for the loser."

"Huh?"

"Both him and the principal clearly want you out of the picture."

"ME!?"

"Yes, because you're both a threat to the principal's ambition, and the Desperado league."

"Wh- What?"

"I didn't get the chance to properly inform you earlier, but the Desperado league is already lashing out against you. They sent members after Shousen-san and Iori-chan this morning."

"They WHAT!?"

"Yeah, had they lost their games, they would have died. Shousen-san clearly had it worse of the two. He was so terrified he wet himself, and had I not showed up with the bughouse proposal, he would have lost to Gyro and been killed."

Mimoko suddenly remembered the altercation that had occurred when Gyro showed up

at the detention hall. She remembered how Yuusuke accused Gyro of trying to kill him and how Iori mentioned that she was kidnapped and nearly killed. Yet she still could not understand why they would be targeted.

"They likely targeted them in hopes that killing them would sway you away from chess. You have the potential to become the best female chess player the world has seen," Okisato stated as he began taking off his shirt.

"THE HELL ARE YOU DOING! DON'T YOU DARE TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE- ...!"

Mimoko froze as she stared at Okisato's backside. Okisato was far more muscular than he appeared, but what truly sent a chill down Mimoko's spine was the oni-tiger tattoo covering Okisato's back.

"Y- You're a yakuza?" Mimoko trembled as Utami hugged her even tighter.

"Yeah. My dad's the boss."

"So is that why you're so familiar with underground chess?" Mimoko trembled.

"Yeah. Like Enoki-san, I was encouraged to learn shogi, but leaned more towards chess. Unlike the principal though, my dad was pretty easy to convince."

"D- Did you beat him in one of those-"

"Nah, though I did rack up a bunch of wins to prove I had skill. Then all I had to do was introduce him to the economics of the chess industry, and now we're the largest chess-playing yakuza gang."

"Are any of you good?"

"There's some talent, but I'm the only one with a rating above 2000."

"Could you explain more about your goal?"

Okisato let out a heavy sigh. "Guess I've got no choice. I don't want the chess club to collapse. Though first let me give you a quick rundown on what I told Shousen-kun about the DESPERs..."

...

At his hideout, Gyro scowled as he reviewed the match data from Cypress' bout with Iori. "Completely outplayed. So we have a powder keg to watch out for."

"Hmm? What do you mean by that?" Zanni asked as he arrived.

"Card, now."

"My rating has risen above 2000 like you asked," Zanni bowed as he flashed his WWCF card.

"2043. Very well, though you will also need to drop your habit of playing with your meals."

"I indulged in that request as well," Zanni smirked as he unbuttoned his overcoat. Three new sets of skeletal human arms now adorned the linings of his overcoat. "I happened to settle things the old fashioned way, but the tub at the pub didn't clean them to my liking, so the tub here will be in use for the time being."

"Hmm, you really killed off some big fish. I'll allow it," Gyro nodded as Zanni put his WWCF card away.

"And how fared the bughouse game?"

"Poor Mr. Enoki's team lost, though I will be able to compensate Mr. Enoki with one of our own. Now, we'll truly have him under our thumb, and best of all, he could care less. I even received a new bid from a far more influential person, and should we hit it off, we could even dispose of Mr. Enoki and not worry about side hustling."

"A bigger money bag? Interesting."

"Best of all, we could even gain a proper chess apostle. While I do humor myself with shogi, I much prefer to focus on chess. After all, I am a grandmaster."

...

Back at the school, Okisato finished explaining everything he knew about the DESPERs.

"I see. So you seek to destroy the DESPERs, but why did you try to facilitate a match with one?" Mimoko asked.

"I was just using it as a tool to make ends meet. That and like I said before, it was unavoidable due to what happened with Shousen-san," Okisato nodded.

"We really did get into something deep, I guess you did make a difficult decision. I'll try and talk things out with Shousen-kun."

"I take it that means I'm not kicked out?"

"Yes, but don't go doing reckless things. I'll still get in trouble as your club president."

"Good, in that case, I'm going to go ensure we can play as a team in the tournament tomorrow night."

"Huh!? But the principal said-"

"I know a teacher that will sign on."

"Just don't do anything reckless."

"Don't worry, I won't drag you down," Okisato nodded as he put his shirt back on and left.

"I- Inoue-sama, are you really going to stick with Tanabe-san?" Utami asked.

"Yes, I'm a target of the Desperado league's ire as well. You might also be targeted too if you stay by me. Do you want to leave?"

"I'll- I'll stay by your side, Inoue-sama," Utami nodded as her confident persona shined through.

"In that case, call me by my first name. We're friends aren't we?"

"I- I- I can call- F- First name!? OOGYAH!" Utami blushed as she fainted, much to Mimoko's shock..

...

Yuusuke groaned as he slumped through the front door of his house. A woman with short spiky bleached hair was angrily staring him down and blocking his path.

"Oi Yuusuke! The hell happened at school!? I heard you were late and pissed all over the place! Want me to put you in diapers from now on!?" the woman snarled.

"Sorry, Okaa."

The woman was Yuusuke's 35-year-old mother Hagei. In her youth, she ran away from home and turned to delinquency. She was stronger than she looked, both in mind and body, and naturally struck fear into Yuusuke.

"You playin' in the tournament tomorrow?" Hagei glared as Yuusuke tried to get past her.

"Uh no, I'm not able-"

"YOU INELIGIBLE YA DUMB SHIT!?"

"N- Sorry, Okaa."

"EXPLAIN!"

"I passed the test, but the principal said we can't compete unless a teacher agrees to supervise us."

"Wait, your principal isn't letting you guys compete!? The hell is he!?" Hagemi fumed as she headed for the door and shoved her feet into her sneakers.

"OKAA! It's almost 7! Besides, the bastard already left!"

"Who do you think I am!? I'll be back when I'm done with him, but don't you dare screw around while I'm gone," Hagemi glared as she grabbed her purse and headed out.

"Ugh, she's just gonna get even more pissed when there's no one there," Yuusuke nervously thought.

Chapter 16: Stalker

As Okisato left the school grounds, a girl with cat ears and a tail watched him from atop the school roof. "Nyan nya? The tiger is leaving, nya? I should follow him, nya. He might go someplace good, nya," she thought before leaping into the air.

...

At a bustling pub in the next town over, Maida sipped up her beer with a straw as her friend snided her. "Mayana, why you sippin' up beer through a straw? You a kid or something?"

"I prefer to drink in moderation. The straw increases my chances of doing so," Maida sighed.

"Huh? You still sober? You a heavy weight? More booze for me, yay!"

"I do not wish to drink anymore, in fact I would prefer to catch the train home."

"Beep beep! Wee Wee! I'm a bird!"

"Shinomiya, you drank too much."

"How!? Ima light weight!"

"My point exactly, a sip of alcohol is too much for you. I guess this means I will accompany-"

Thud!

Maida let out an annoyed sigh as her friend fell asleep at the counter. "I stand corrected, I'll drop you off at the capsule hotel."

As she began dragging her friend away, her eyes narrowed as soon as she stepped outside. Noticing the capsule hotel nearby, she quickly rushed over and deposited her friend. When she turned and stepped outside, she was approached by Okisato.

"And why are you out at this hour? Are you angered with me that your transgression was discovered?" she glared as she cautiously stepped back inside.

"No, I was just hoping to get you to supervise the chess club," Okisato nodded.

"Why would I? First, I have never played chess, nor do I have any affinity for it. Second, I do not need another hindrance in my life. Third, I am already committed to science."

"How about just for the weekend so we can participate in the tournament?"

"No, there are no benefits, only negatives. Now please step aside, lest I report you for

harassment."

"I haven't harassed you, all I've done was ask you a question."

"Don't play dumb, you have been shadowing me since I exited the pub."

"I just wanted to ask you my question."

"Then the answer is no. Now head home, and don't bother me anymore."

Okisato let out a sigh as Maida walked away. "I guess I'll have to get desperate tomorrow- Well, perhaps I'll end up convincing Maida-sensei after all," he thought as he glanced up towards a building.

While it was difficult to see, the silhouette of a cat-like girl quickly leapt into the moonlight before vanishing a second later.

...

As Maida walked through the park on her way back home, she went on guard as she sensed someone following her. "Tanabe-kun, I WILL report you for harassing me so don't-"

"NYAHO!"

Maida glared in confusion as she found herself face to face with a girl with cat ears and a tail. "A cosplayer? Hmm, that uniform's from a school in the next prefecture over. Are you a student?"

"NYO! I'm here to nyab you, nya."

"To- MMPH!?"

Maida's eyes went wide with fear as the girl immobilized and gagged her with her tail.

"Nyow, let's have some fun," the girl snickered as she pulled some zip ties out of her pocket and began restraining Maida's wrists and ankles with them.

"Her tail was able to restrain me! C- Could she be an extraterrestrial!? A mutant!? I NEED to know!" Maida thought as she attempted to speak.

"Sorry, nya, but you need to stay muzzled, nya," the girl sneered as she slapped some duct tape over Maida's mouth and let her fall to the ground with a thud..

Maida moaned and struggled aimlessly as she gazed up in fear at the catgirl. "She used modern means to restrain and gag me. I doubt she's an extraterrestrial, but she's clearly dangerous. Though why am I being kidnapped? ...! Did Tanabe-kun arrange this!?" she thought as the girl pulled a DESPER out of her pocket with her tail.

"Oi, that's my homeroom teacher, could you not kidnap her?" Okisato glared as he arrived.

"Mmmph ngh! Ngh mmph NGH mmph [Tanabe kun! So this IS your doing]!" Maida glared as the cat girl slammed her foot down on her.

"Nyahaha! So the oni-tiger is here to try and prove he's the king of the cats. Well, I'm going to take you down and avenge Inojin, nya!" the catgirl snickered as she activated her DESPER.

Maida's eyes widened as the scenery changed to a giant chess board surrounded by stonehenge-like monuments. Maida tried to make sense of the phenomenon unfolding before her, but her thoughts were interrupted when she suddenly found herself imprisoned inside a large black queen. A gelatinous substance within the queen held her in place as she watched Okisato and the catgirl meet at the center of the board.

"Oi, what's the big idea? Why's Maida-sensei in my queen?" Okisato glared.

"For odds, nya!"

"Odds'?"

"NYES! My rating's only 900, but yours is 2434, nya! So, I'm using odds to even the game, nya. For you, 2 1/2 odds will be in play, nya!"

"Two and a half? What do you mean?"

"Pawn and two moves odds, nya," the girl maliciously grinned. "As for the half, if you lose your queen, the teacher dies regardless of the end result, nya."

Maida's eyes went wide with terror. "D- 'DIE'!? I must be having a nightmare, this can't be real! Yet, it all feels real. W- What is all this!?" she frantically thought.

"And what about for us?" Okisato asked.

"You lose, you die, nya! I also keep custody of the teacher if you lose or draw, assuming she's still alive by that point," the catgirl snickered.

"And if I win, Maida-sensei goes free and you get a punishment."

"Exactly, nya."

"In that case, let's experiment, though I first want to know who exactly you are."

"You've never heard of me!? NYAH! I'm Nyoan Nyakuoji, everyone's favorite femme-fatale feline school girl and the future leader of the Desperado league! Nyahaha! I'll be grandmaster too after I beat you, nya!"

"You're a high schooler?"

"Nyess! I'm a 3rd-year highschooler at Mimineko gakuin. My birthday is February 2nd, I'm 18 years old, and 152 cm tall. I like all things neko and became a nekomimi," Nyoan giggled as her tail moved around in a happy manner.

"Are your ears and tail real?"

"NYESS! As prize for winning a DESPER battle, I got nya nya neko ears and a tail, nya."

"So does that mean you have both human and cat ears?"

"N- Nyess?"

"That's kind of gross."

"NYAH!? HOW DARE YOU, NYA! Wait are you going to-"

"Yes, if you lose, you lose all your hair and fur."

"NYO NYOT MY NEKO EARS AND- Oh, that's fine, nya. WAIT! ALL MY HAIR AND FUR!?"

"Yes, I'm curious to see how you'd look as a hairless cat girl; especially, how weird you'd look with two sets of ears."

"Ny- You're evil, but FINE! I'll make sure to kill your teacher, nya!"

"Then let's begin," Okisato glared.

Chapter 17: Pawn and two moves odds

Okisato's pawn at f7 immediately vanished as Nyoan prepared to make her first move.

"Pawn and two moves odds, that means I play without my f-pawn and you get to open with two moves in a row, yes?" Okisato asked.

"That's right, nya! I get two moves in a row, nya!"

"Is this because my rating is so much higher than yours?"

"That's right, nya! The DESPER allows low rated players like me to challenge and beat higher rated players like you with odds, nya."

"What are the conditions?"

"I don't nyow, nya. Though my master said my rating wouldn't increase as much the more harsh the odds, and that the punishment would be drastically reduced in lethality the more challenged the one playing at a disadvantage is. Luckily, it looks like the DESPER believed this is fair enough to keep the death penalty for you if you lose, nya. Plus I found a way to add an extra odd without reducing the punishments or my rating boost, nya!"

"The hostage scenario?"

"That's right, nya! I just need to imprison someone in a piece, then capture it. In fact, why don't I show you both how it works," Nyoan snickered as a screen appeared.

On the screen, footage of a man trapped inside a pawn getting blown to bits as it was captured was shown. Maida's eyes went wide with horror while Okisato didn't seem phased in the slightest.

"So if I want Maida-sensei to live, I can't let her get captured. What a pain," Okisato sighed.

"Nyahaha! It's impossible even for you, nya! Now, let's begin, nya!"

Nyoan and Okisato then teleported to overhead hovercrafts a few meters above the board. A touch screen containing a layout of the board below was also present, allowing the players a better view of the playing field.

"For my first move, e4, nya!" Nyoan declared as her pawn moved to e4.

"So we control the game from here, and our moves are reflected on the board below, yes?" Okisato asked.

"That's right, nya!" And for my second move, CHECK, NYA!" Nyoan shouted as her queen moved to h5.

"Your bloodlust is obvious, and so is your strategy," Okisato stated as he moved his pawn to g6.

Nyoan merely purred as she moved her queen to h4, unphased by Okisato's provocations in the slightest.

"You really are an annoying one," Okisato glared as he moved his knight to c6.

Nyoan simply laughed as she moved her bishop to c4. "You can't comprehend my genius, nya."

Okisato let out a sigh as he moved his knight to f6 while Nyoan confidently moved her pawn to d4.

"Seems the difference in skill is beginning to show," Okisato thought as he captured the pawn at d4 with his knight.

"YOU FELL FOR IT, NYA!" Nyoan shouted as she moved her pawn to e5.

"Ah, I'm gonna lose a knight. Inoue-senpai's going to scold me for getting in this scenario," Okisato sighed as he moved his knight to h5.

"NYOW your Nyight is gone, nya!" Nyoan snickered as she captured the knight at d4 with her queen.

"No, now your plans are foiled," Okisato stated as he moved his bishop to g7.

Nyoan smirked and moved her queen to d5, followed by Okisato nonchalantly moving his pawn to e6. Nyoan scowled and moved her queen to f3 as Okisato moved his rook to f8 causing her to hiss in frustration and move her queen to g4 on her next turn.

"Now I can get rid of the pawn," Okisato thought as he captured the pawn at e5 with his bishop.

Nyoan responded by moving her knight to f3, while Okisato countered by moving his pawn to d6.

"You're wide open! CHECK, nya!" Nyoan shouted as she moved her bishop to b5.

Okisato effortlessly countered by moving his pawn to c6, causing Nyoan to hiss and move her bishop to d3.

"Now, it's time to get wild," Okisato thought as a sadistic grin spread on his face.

Maida's eyes widened as she suddenly found herself moving at a rapid pace. "What's happening!? Is he moving me!? W- What is he thinking!?" she frantically thought as she came to a stop. Okisato had moved the queen she was imprisoned in to b6, causing a sadistic grin to spread over Nyoan's face.

"Nyahaha, you brought your queen out," Nyoan maliciously laughed as she moved her bishop to e3.

Maida began to moan in terror as Okisato burst into laughter. "Yes, I'm playing with Maida-sensei! Did you really expect me not to put such a valuable piece to use!?" Okisato maliciously grinned as he captured the pawn at b2 with his queen.

Maida shut her eyes as she found herself charging towards the pawn, but didn't feel any impact or recoil as the pawn was captured. As soon as she came to a halt, she opened her eyes. "No impact? Is this truly just a holographic simulation, or did the gelatinous substance holding me in place absorb all the impact," she thought.

A dumbfounded look appeared on Nyoan's face before it was instantly replaced with an unsettling grin. "You fell for my trap again, nya!" she chuckled as she moved her bishop to d4.

"What trap?" Okisato grinned as he captured the bishop at d4 with his bishop.

"THIS trap, nya!" Nyoan exclaimed as she captured the bishop at d4 with her queen.

Maida moaned in terror as she once again found herself in peril.

"Nyahaha, you're trapped, nya. Nyow, your teacher is gonna die when we exchange queens. Then, just like all the others I played, you'll fall into despair and give up, allowing me to win," Nyoan thought as Okisato's face went dark.

"Again, I ask, what trap!?" Okisato maniacally smiled as he moved his queen to c1.

Nyoan's face contorted as she shot Okisato a murderous glare. "Huh? Why the hell are you actin' like tough shit, nya? You're just squirming like an ugly caterpillar that needs to be squashed. Next turn, your teacher's dead, nya" she snarled as she moved her king to e2.

"Guess third time's the charm, WHAT TRAP!?" Okisato sadistically grinned as he moved his knight to f4. "Now, you can only make one move."

Nyoan immediately began to go pale as sweat began to pour down her face. "Nyo, NYO! 'One move'!? The only move is- ...! Nyo... NYO!" she tearfully glared as she captured the knight at f4 with her queen.

"Now, I will win without losing my queen," Okisato sadistically smiled as he captured the queen at f4 with his queen.

"NYA! I'LL KILL YOUR QUEEN!" Nyoan frantically shouted as she moved her pawn to g3.

"No, you're going to experience payback, check," Okisato maliciously smiled as he captured the knight at f3 with his queen.

Color rapidly vanished from Nyoan's face as she quickly moved her king to d2.

Maida then let out a muffled gasp as the queen she was imprisoned in captured the pawn at f2, putting Nyoan in check once more. "That boy, he's using me like a tool, and he's enjoying it," Maida thought as she turned her eyes towards Okisato.

Nyoan meanwhile panicked and moved her king to c3.

"So now YOU'RE going to try and postpone your imminent demise," Okisato snickered as he moved his rook to f3.

"NYAHHAHA! YOU BLEW IT!" Nyoan maniacally laughed as she moved her rook to f1.

Okisato quickly captured the rook at f1 with his queen. "For the fourth time-"

"YOU'RE QUEEN IS DEAD NOW!" Nyoan shouted as she moved her knight to d2.

"...For the fifth time-"

"NYOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" Nyoan screamed as Okisato captured the bishop at d3 with his queen.

"What's wrong? I thought this was a 'trap'."

"I HATE YOU, NYA!" Nyoan cried as she moved her king to b4.

"Perfect, now I win, Checkmate!" Okisato sadistically laughed as he moved his queen to b5, winning the game.

The full game:

White: Nyoan Nyakuoji (900) Black: Okisato Tanabe (2434)

1. e4 ---
2. Qh5+ g6
3. Qh4 Nc6
4. Bc4 Nf6
5. d4 Nxd4
6. e5 Nh5
7. Qxd4 Bg7
8. Qd5 e6
9. Qf3 Rf8
10. Qg4 Bxe5
11. Nf3 d6
12. Bb5+ c6
13. Bd3 Qb6
14. Be3 Qxb2
15. Bd4 Bxd4
16. Qxd4 Qc1+
17. Ke2 Nf4+
18. Qxf4 Qxf4
19. g3 Qxf3+

- 20. Kd2 Qxf2+
- 21. Kc3 Rf3
- 22. Rf1 Qxf1
- 23. Nd2 Qxd3+
- 24. Kb4 Qb5#

Chapter 18: A woman of science

The pieces began to vanish as Maida splashed onto the ground, covered in a gelatinous substance. Okisato approached her as Nyoan found herself restrained by metal tentacles.

"NYAA!? WHAT'S ALL THIS, NYA!?"

Nyoan got her answer as metal tentacles holding a pair of shearing clippers, a sharp razor blade, a bottle of wax, and shaving cream appeared before her.

"I wonder how weird you're gonna look when you're done," Okisato sneered.

"And you're not even going to untie me?" Maida thought as she let out a muffled grunt.

Okisato however remained focused as the metal tentacles began moving and shred all of Nyoan's clothes to bits.

"Heh?"

"KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Nyoan screamed as the tentacles then began shearing all her hair off, including the fur on her cat ears and tail.

"Ah, I guess I didn't specify just to shave the hair on her head," Okisato nodded as his deadpan persona returned while Maida shot him a disgusted glare.

Nyoan meanwhile was busy bawling her eyes out as she was encased in shaving cream and shaved. Once the shaving was done, she was then encased in hot wax.

"Hmm? I never said to wax her, maybe it's necessary to fulfill the "lose all your hair and fur" command I gave it," Okisato nodded.

Nyoan let out a painful scream as all the wax was ripped off her before she was released and fell to the ground with a thud. She slowly got up and shivered as she covered herself up.

"Ny- What did you do to me, nya!?" she stuttered as her face went red with embarrassment.

Nyoan was now devoid of both hair and clothing. Not even her eyebrows and eyelashes had been spared, though what truly stood out about her new look was the fact that both her cat ears and tail were also devoid of fur.

"Wow, those cat ears really were attached to your head... Yeah, now you really look like a mutant," Okisato nodded as he evaluated Nyoan's new look.

"Wh- What do you- NYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME!? I LOOK HIDEOUS!" Nyoan cried as a mirror appeared before her.

The DESPER then deactivated and the scenery returned to normal. Nyoan immediately grabbed the DESPER with her now furless tail and awkwardly scampered off at breakneck speed, while tearfully declaring that Okisato would pay for humiliating her.

"Hmm, it didn't destroy itself. Guess you really can spare the DESPER holders," Okisato noted.

"MMPH!"

Okisato looked down and noticed the still bound and gagged Maida glaring up at him.

"Ah, let me free you, Maida-sensei. Er, do you have anything that can cut zip ties on you?"

Maida glared and motioned towards her jean pocket. Inside, Okisato found a pocket knife which he used to cut the zip ties. Once he was done, he handed the knife back to Maida.

"PEH! Ugh, I'm still covered in gelatinous material," Maida scowled as she ripped the tape off her mouth.

"Well, I've got to get home. See you tomorrow, Maida-sensei," Okisato nodded as he began to leave.

"WAIT! Tanabe-kun, I want answers. Did you plan this entire thing!?"

Okisato turned and faced Maida. "No, though I deduced you might be targeted since I was being tailed when I met up with you at the capsule hotel."

"By that catgirl, I presume?"

"Most likely."

"Then explain the phenomenon that just occurred. Was it a hallucination? A hologram?"

"No, it was all real. That device is known as a DESPER and can create any scenery and material needed to fulfill the conditions of the wager."

"So it's a device used for gambling?"

"Yes, though it's only possible to use it during chess games."

"Why is that?"

"Because that's all the tech's been made for, I guess."

"Yet, you are familiar with it. What is your history with it?"

"Asking lots of questions, well you are a science teacher after all. I learned that an underground chess league known as the Desperado league created it in order to give them the edge in rising to the top of the chess world. Believe it or not, the DESPER is officially approved by the WWCF governing board."

"WWCF'?"

"The World wide chess federation. If you play chess professionally, you become a WWCF member for life," Okisato stated as he pulled out his WWCF card.

"That card, there's something strange about it."

"You've got a keen eye. WWCF cards are like inventory menus from games and can be summoned anywhere at any time as soon as you become a WWCF member."

"So the cards aren't physical?" Maida asked as she attempted to touch the card, only for her hand to phase through it.

"Correct, it's more like a holographic screen, but many like to act like it is, and treat it like it's a real physical card."

"And how does this tech work?"

"No clue."

Maida pondered to herself for a minute before looking Okisato in the eye. "Alright, I'll supervise your chess club."

"Really?"

"Yes. I guess you managed to force my hand afterall. I am intrigued by this technology and as a scientist, I wish to know more about it. However, there are some stipulations. First, as I said earlier, science is my main commitment so I won't prioritize chess over it. Second, I will reprimand you all harshly should you cause trouble like you all did earlier today-"

"That was actually due to Shousen-kun and Iori-chan getting attacked by Desperado league players on their way to school. I only snuck out because I feared they'd be easy marks, and sure enough, I was able to save Shousen-kun from a near certain death by my presence."

"They were targeted you say? Why's that?"

"Because the Desperado league wants to get rid of not just me, but Inoue-senpai as well."

"Mimoko Inoue? Why?"

"Because they fear her potential to become the greatest female chess player in the world, possibly even the greatest chess player ever."

"Is she a prodigy?"

"Yes, I'd have trouble beating her even at my best."

"I see, so does that mean I will be targeted again in the future?"

"Considering that catgirl survived, yes. Even if I chose to have the punishment result in her death, her comrades would have accessed the match data and learned about you there since you were also a part of the bet. Though this is honestly the first time I've encountered an odds rule and seen someone get imprisoned in a playing piece. When Inoue-senpai was captured, she was restrained to a white pawn, but said pawn was never in play. Seems there's much more I need to know about the DESPER."

"Is that why you came up with the punishment that you did?"

"Yes. I also really wanted to know if her cat ears were real and how they'd look if she was bald."

"So you used her as a guinea pig. Seems there's a mad scientist within yourself," Maida chuckled.

"I guess. My mom was a scientist after all."

"Did she develop the DESPERs?"

"Sharp one. She was on the development team."

"Now I understand a bit more about you. Though I have one final question, why were you so aggressive with using me while I was captive?"

"It was the most useful strategy. Maida-sensei, how familiar are you with chess?"

"Never played before. I don't even know how all the pieces work, or the proper names for them."

"So you're a complete beginner. Would you like me to give you some quick pointers?"

"Perhaps tomorrow morning. It is quite late."

"Then we'll meet again at school tomorrow, though be careful on your way home. Another Desperado member might be lurking."

"Would they force me to play chess against them?"

"Possibly, they can challenge non-WWCF members. Though you can always study the rules online on your way back."

"I see. Then I bid you goodnight. We'll converse again with the chess club tomorrow after school," Maida nodded as she walked away.

As Maida walked away, she noticed Okisato still continued to tail her, though unlike before, he seemed to be less aggressive and tailed from a greater distance from before. Maida let out a sigh and pulled out her phone. "Seems you are concerned about me. Very well, let's

see how difficult this game is to learn."

Chapter 19: The highest rated female chess player

Nyoan trembled as she sat in a chair. She was now garbed in a bathrobe, but her head was still cold and hairless. Though the greatest inconvenience for her was the beautiful woman with wavy blue hair stroking her hairless cat ears along with her bald head.

"My, you really got a smooth cut, my kawaii little kitten. Your head's now almost as smooth as my skin," the woman cooed.

"If you want a smooth head so badly, shave your own damn head, nya!" Nyoan fumed.

"No, I much prefer not to look like a monk. That and it truly is quite the spectacle to see you with fleshy cat ears in addition to your normal ears."

"My ears again!? NYA! STOP IT WITH MY NEKO EARS, NYA!"

The woman was Nyoan's self-proclaimed master, Kuon Nanya. She was a cat fanatic, though didn't have a single cat in her house. Rather, she considered the two women living with her, Nyoan and Nyogaku, her cats. In her youth, Kuon was hailed as a child prodigy at chess, however, her road to fame hit a roadblock in the form of the woman who would eventually become the highest rated female chess player. While Kuon currently had a respectable rating of 2699 as well as the title of grandmaster, she was always second fiddle to her rival, much to her dismay. This jealousy is what ultimately led to her secretly teaming up with the Desperado league.

...

The next morning, Nyoan happily left for school without a care in the world that she was bald.

"Ara, she was making such a big fuss about her ears and being bald. Yet now she's strutting away with pride, and not even wearing the knit hat I made her. Well, cats are very fickle creatures," Kuon thought as she began doing pilates. Just then, a woman with curly orange hair and cat ears yawned as she came down the stairs. "Ah Nyogaku, you just missed Nyoan. She's now a sphynx breed."

"Oh she's a sphinx? Sweet, she got mummies and sand?" the orange-haired woman grinned.

"No my dumb little neko-chan, a sphynx as in a hairless cat."

"Yay, now she won't shed. Uh, what's a hairless cat again?"

"They'll tell you at the university, now run along or you'll be late for class."

"Nyan, nyan," Nyogaku happily purred as she ran out on all fours, still in her pajamas.

"Oh Nyogaku, you used to be so smart and uptight. I do love seeing you act like a dumb little kitty cat," Kuon sneered as she finished her stretches. "Hmm, the house could use some more cats. With Nyoan and Nyogaku being in school, I'm usually by myself at home. Perhaps I should consider getting an older one that isn't in school or college. I could even get a male cat. Hmm, there are plenty of cute guys that would make great cats. Maybe I'll get two, that way my two cats will have mates. Though they'd have to be strong, I don't want weak kittens. I guess I'll see if there's anyone at work that catches my eye, after all, it's not like they'd beat me," she mused as she gazed at a DESPER sitting on the table while heading towards the door.

Ever since Kuon joined forces with the Desperado league, she began studying the schematics of the DESPER. Through her research, she found it was possible for it to give a person cat ears and a tail as well as allow users with lower ratings than their targets to implement an odds challenge, though the higher rated target could still refuse, thus nullifying the challenge. She was also the one who first discovered it was possible to imprison people in playing pieces during a match. Yet despite all that, Kuon Nanya was not registered with a DESPER, nor did she plan to.

"Hmm, I don't feel like going to work today. Guess I'll sleep for the day. After all, I'm very fickle, like a cat," Kuon smirked as she slid out of her heels, threw off her lab coat, and headed back towards the living room to lay down on the sofa."

...

Yuusuke let out a worried yawn as he walked to school. "Okaa didn't come back. I really hope she isn't where I think she is," he thought. He then noticed a crowd of students gathering at the gates. "Something happen?" he asked.

"Yeah, some psycho lady's squatting at the entrance. She looks pissed and won't leave until the principal shows up," a student stated.

"GEH! I was afraid of this," Yuusuke cried as he made his way to the front.

Sure enough, sitting at the entrance with a menacing aura and bags under her eyes, was his mother, Hagemi. Yuusuke attempted to shrink back into the crowd but was noticed.

"Yuu-su-ke, you said that balding fat shit head would be here. I've been here for 12 hours and he hasn't come, THE HELL WERE YOU PLAYIN AT BOY!?"

"GEEYAHA! I'M SORRY OKAA, I'M SORR- UGH!"

Everyone gasped in horror as Hagemi slugged Yuusuke in the gut and dragged him back with her to the entrance of the school.

"I couldn't even see her movements! We're doomed, some psycho delinquent milf won't let us into school," a student cried.

"So? Why's that a bad thing? Besides, even though she's sleep deprived, she's hot as hell," another student said.

"OI! The hell's with this crowd!?" the principal's voice rang out as he pushed his way through the crowd.

As soon as she noticed him, Hagemi immediately appeared before the principal and grabbed him by the scruff of his neck.

"HEEE! W- What do you want!?" the principal cried.

"A chess club, now what's this about there bein' no supervisin' teacher!?" Hagemi glared.

"S- S- SCHOOL RULES STATE-"

"YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO I AM YOU F***** PIECE OF SHIT!?"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"What's all the commotion?" a voice called out.

The two turned to see Maida approaching them. A thicker layer of makeup than usual was present on her face in order to hide her signs of sleep deprivation. It turns out, she had spent all night studying chess theorems as soon as she learned the game and got home.

"You a teacher? Tell this ass to form a chess club," Hagemi glared.

"YES! Maida-sensei, YOU will supervise the chess club. Now they can function like a proper sports team and compete at tournaments, right?" the principal nervously stuttered.

"I'd love to say no to you, but I already said yes to a member of the chess club, so I'll do it," Maida nodded as she noticed Okisato in the crowd.

"GOOD! Now there's no issue. The chess club is good for tournaments."

"Damn well better be. Well, I'm tired so I'm going to sleep. Don't disturb me," Hagemi said as she let go of the principal and headed for the flower bed. She then laid down in it and began snoring.

"Damn animal, how dare you threaten me," the principal scoffed as he noticed Gyro arriving.

"Mr. Enoki, what is with the crowd-"

"PERFECT! Mr. Gunnerson, please remove that animal from the premises."

"Animal"? What do you- ...!?"

Gyro immediately went pale upon noticing Hagemi. "I can't. She's too strong!"

"Huh? She's sleeping, lob one of your gyroscopes-"

"Then she'd grab one of the bricks and hurl it at us."

"Then beat her in a chess match."

"NO! First, there's too many people here; second, It would be suicide."

"HUH!? But she'd be sleep deprived-"

"She can beat me in her sleep. Do you seriously not know who she is!?"

"Uh why should I care?"

"She's Hagemi Shousen, a WWCF ambassador as well as the highest rated female chess player of all time and 8th highest rated player overall."

"HEEP! S- She's better than you?"

"Her rating is 2808."

"She's that good!? But she acts like a delinquent!"

"Mr. Enoki, ANYONE can be good at chess," Gyro glared as he began to head out.

"Hmm, why is that boy knocked out?" he asked as he took notice of Yuusuke.

"That's her son, Yuusuke."

"THAT BRAT'S HER SON!? DON'T YOU DARE SAY A WORD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH HIM YESTERDAY!" Gyro shouted before speeding away in terror.

The principal went pale for a second before regaining his composure and ordering all the students to get to class.

Chapter 20: Chess experiment

In class, Yuusuke shot Okisato a disgusted look as he entered. "Seems like he's still upset about yesterday. Well, maybe I can bring his mom into the picture to get him on the same page. Though I had no idea she was a grandmaster. Well, considering how spooked Gyro was, I doubt I'll need to worry about him attacking Shousen-kun. However, other more brazen Desperado members will still go after him. Getting ahold of his match data took a while, but he was either lucky or Zanni decided to play with him too much. I'd go for the latter. Speaking of

Zanni, he's probably going to be the number 1 attacker going after Shousen-kun. After all, he knows his playing style far better than the others," Okisato thought.

Maida then entered and called for everyone to quiet down before beginning the lesson. "Now today, we'll be doing something a little different. As soon as the shipments arrive, I shall explain the experiment."

The class immediately burst into murmuring as Maida checked her phone. Just as she smiled, a deliveryman appeared with a cart of boxes. Maida signed for the packages and ordered Okisato to open them.

"She's putting me to work. Wonder what lab- Oh? Well this is a pleasant surprise," Okisato thought as he took a chess board out of the box.

After distributing a board and bag of chess pieces to everyone as ordered by Maida, everyone was required to set up the board before Maida began her lecture.

"Today, you're all going to play chess. Though don't misunderstand, this is first and foremost, a research study. For your first task, I want you all to move a piece as white."

Once everyone had done that, Maida called on some students to document everyone's moves. After that was complete, she stared at the data before going around to everyone's board and moving a piece as black. Those who had made an impossible move, such as placing the king in the center of the board were told to sit out for the remainder of the experiment.

"Well this sure is a roundabout way of learning chess. I bet she studied up last night and decided to concoct this on the spot. Well, she's likely borrowing hints from a tactics book, but this also could help the chess club as well," Okisato thought.

"Huh? She moved the knight to f6? Guess she is an amateur, but I can easily counter that, er does she want me to make another move though?" Yuusuke thought.

"Now, we will repeat this game either for 9 more moves or until one side is checkmated," Maida stated.

"Guess there's my answer, pawn e5," Yuusuke thought as he moved his pawn there.

Faced with a similar setup, Okisato opted to bring his knight out to c3 instead of moving his pawn to e5. By the 10th move, Okisato and Yuusuke were determined to be in the best positions for white for the whole class.

Maida looked at her notes before nodding and announcing the results. "Now, allow me to announce the results. Of the 30 students present, 6 of you failed to make a proper chess move and were thus disqualified."

"But you said to move any piece!" a student protested.

"That was intentional. I wanted to see how many of you would take my words at face value instead of making a proper move. As for the remaining 24, eight of you opened with e4, seven of you opened with d4, six of you opened with Nf3, two of you opened with c5, and one of you opened with a4. Thus, at 33% of the 24 that made legal moves, e4 was the most frequent opening. However, the data gets more intriguing after I moved my knight to f6. As a control, I made this move on every board regardless if it was the right move or not. Though for now, we'll just focus on the 8 that moved to e4. The knight moving to f6 directly threatened that pawn, leading to various responses. Half of you chose to protect the pawn by moving your knight to c3, two of you opted to defend it by moving a pawn to d3, one of you moved the bishop to d3, and one of you moved the pawn up to e5. This was very good research data. Now for your

homework; learn the basic rules of chess. On Monday, I will be having you each play each other from the e4, Nf6 board onwards. And I suppose now is the time to announce that I have assumed supervision of the chess club. If any are interested, meet here after school for chess club, however, do note that the chess club will be departing for a tournament as soon as they adjourn. As such, no new members will be allowed to partake in the tournament today should they join now. I would also suggest you come even if you don't know how to play chess as I'm sure the club president will be able to teach you. That is all."

As the students began flocking to their next class, Yuusuke confronted Okisato. "Did you do something to her?" he glared.

"Well, I met her last night and she agreed-"

"DID YOU THREATEN HER!?"

"No, in fact I saved her life. Though why'd you assume I did something. Didn't the principal- Oh right, you were out cold because of your mother-"

"GEH!"

The mention of his mother sent Yuusuke into a cold sweat. Okisato now had full control over the conversation.

"I'm pretty sure your mother would agree with me on my position considering who she is."

"Alright, you win," Yuusuke dejectedly sighed.

"Well that was easy."

"I'd happily slug you in a fistfight, but I'll never throw a punch at Okaa, she'd hurl me through a wall if I did."

Chapter 21: WWCF cards

After school, the chess club met up in Maida's main classroom alongside the science club. Mimoko and Maida properly introduced themselves to each other before addressing the gathered students. In addition to students from the science and chess club, students from Maida's homeroom as well as some other curious students were present as well.

As soon as Mimoko finished going over the fundamentals of chess, Okisato went to the front of the room to talk about the WWCF cards.

"This is a WWCF card. You receive it as soon as you complete your registration to the World wide chess federation. There are two big perks to it. The first is that it's more like a holographic screen you can summon anytime anywhere. Even if you're in an area with no wi-fi, it will still retain data from when you were last online and will continue to keep track of your progress offline as well. The second, and bigger perk, is that you can receive monetary rewards for winning games."

"WAIT! WE CAN EARN MONEY FROM THAT THING!" Iori shouted.

"Yes. And no, you won't lose money if you lose games, though your rating might go down as a result of a loss, but that's elo ratings 101."

"How exactly is the money dolled out?" a student asked.

"Not sure. Though beating someone with a higher rating and winning tournaments or awards are easy ways to ensure a big pay day."

"Oi, oi, that shit you just said ain't easy," Yuusuke growled.

"As for the banking, the money is tied to your WWFC account. You can use it to buy supplies, various merch, and even exchange the currency for its real world equivalent. My payments are in yen, but it's likely players from around the world earn cash in their home country's currency. Though I think you need to get a proper rating first before you can earn cash. If any of you register right now, you'll be classified as an unrated. In order to get a proper rating, you'll need to play either 5 individual matches against rated players or compete in a single tournament. I'd recommend the latter as that's the easier way, though there have been rare cases where an unrated doesn't get a rating due to being paired with fellow unrateds for the entire tournament. Well that's it. Guess I'll answer questions since I'm the most knowledgeable- actually, why don't I go grab a WWCF official and have her explain-"

"You'll scare everyone away! Just let her sleep!" Yuusuke trembled.

"Ok, any questions?"

"Yes, can you explain the specifications of the tech?" a bespectacled student asked.

"No, I don't know."

"Hmph, well aren't you useless."

"You could just register yourself or examine a friend's."

Before the student could protest, he was interrupted by the excited gasps of some of the other students as they registered and received their WWCF cards. He begrudgingly registered, though continued to give Okisato a disappointed glare.

Once everyone that wanted to register registered, Maida took the stage. "Now, I see about 30% of you registered. Some of you also deliberately chose not to register to serve as a control. Numakawa-kun, have you analyzed anything yet?"

"No Sensei, the UI doesn't appear to use any known language I'm familiar with," the bespectacled student stated.

"So this truly is an enigma. I myself registered, and did some preliminary experiments on it last night. Now, getting back to the topic at hand. Those that have registered will play exhibition matches against Tanabe-kun, Shousen-kun, and Ishikiridokoro-chan as they are the only rated players here. Since only three can play them at a time, the rest of you will join the science team in the move analysis experiment. Those wishing to learn more about chess for the class may congregate around Inoue-chan and Enoki-chan. They will help teach you the basics. As for the rest of you, you will be participating in the move analysis experiment. I've provided notes and instructions for each workstation. As for the three rated players, take this seriously."

"Um, Sensei, someone said we could join a tournament if we joined the club, when is that?" a large male student asked.

"My apologies, but since the tournament begins tonight, I will only be registering the 5 original members of the chess club."

"Actually, there aren't any limits on team size. Plus the larger we are, the better our chances of taking home a team trophy," Okisato nodded.

"There are entry fees though."

"A large club would also lead to us getting more funding, especially if we get results."

Maida let out a sigh. "We can't take everyone that wants to go."

"Then we'll host a mini-tournament to see who joins the 5 of us. You can also play in the

open section too Maida-sensei."

"Are you asking me to compete for a spot too?"

"Not at all, since you technically count as a coach, you can't contribute to the team score. But, you can participate and play in the open section if you want, and would likely receive a proper rating if you did. As for the others, students will either need to soundly beat one of us, win the mini-tournament amongst themselves, or show us that they possess the skills necessary to play at the competitive level. Now, let's begin with the pairings-"

"Hoh? Ya hostin' a mini-tournament?" a voice rang out.

Everyone darted their heads around until they spotted a woman with her face and hair covered in mud by the window. It was Hagemi.

"GYAH! O- OKAA!?" Yuusuke cried.

The room began to grow tense until Hagemi calmed everyone down. "Relax, relax, you're all fine. I was just mad at your lousy principle. Oh, lemme introduce myself, I'm Hagemi Shousen, WWCF ambassador, grandmaster, and the highest rated female chess player in the world; 8th overall."

Everyone stared in disbelief as Hagemi displayed her WWCF card. It was hard to believe a woman like her was a top chess player. The students were then quickly paired up for the mini-tournament with the 5 original members of the club opting to challenge a student of their choice.

"So I get you," Numakawa glared as Okisato sat across from him.

"Maida-sensei claims you're one of the smartest in the science club. Let's test that hypothesis," Okisato nodded.

"Then allow me to demonstrate my intellect," Numakawa declared as he moved his pawn to e4.

"Why'd you do that?" Okisato asked as he moved his pawn to c5.

"E4 is the most statistically chosen opening for white," Numakawa responded as he moved his pawn to d4.

"E4 and d4, ah," Okisato flatly exclaimed as he captured the pawn at d4 with his c-pawn.

"Quite melodramatic. Did sensei not ask you to take this seriously?" Numakawa glared as he captured the pawn at d4 with his queen.

"How familiar are you with chess?" Okisato asked as he moved his knight to c6.

"I'm familiar with what it is," Numakawa glared as he moved his queen to c4.

"Ever play?" Okisato asked as he moved his pawn to e6.

"No, this is my first time. I do play shogi from time-to-time as a brain teaser," Numakawa stated as he moved his knight to c3.

"Wow, you're really pulling from the textbooks then," Okisato jibed as he moved his knight to f6.

"Well, I DID study chess textbooks when I was informed of the nature of the club's activities today," Numakawa scoffed as he moved his knight to f3.

"You think you can beat me with just that?" Okisato glared as he moved his pawn to d5.

"Yes, I believe you are an incompetent buffoon," Numakawa sneered as he captured the pawn at d5 with his e-pawn.

"A buffoon? why?" Okisato asked as he captured the pawn at d5 with his e-pawn.

"Because you fail to understand the very tech tied to your hobby," Numakawa glared as he captured the pawn at d5 with his knight.

"You saw my rating, right?" Okisato asked as he captured the knight at d5 with his queen.

"Yes, you are the 2434th ranked player," Numakawa scoffed as he moved his queen to e2.

"Chess ratings don't work like that. The higher your number, the higher your skill," Okisato glared as he moved his bishop to e6.

"And what makes you think I'm not superior to you?" Numakawa scoffed as he moved his knight to g5.

"Cause you're screwed," Okisato snickered as he castled on his queen's side.

"What was that!? I- No, I remember Inoue mentioned that was castling, but I thought it was done on the other side."

"It can be done on the queen's side too. So feeling screwed?"

"No," Numakawa glared as he moved his pawn to c4.

"How bout now?" Okisato snickered as he moved his bishop to b4.

Numakawa went quiet and pale before biting his lip and moving his bishop to d2.

"Looks like you are kind of smart after all. Mate in 5," Okisato taunted as he captured the bishop at d2 with his bishop.

Numakawa began to tremble in frustration as he moved his king to d1. A spark of desperation lit up in his eyes as Okisato captured his knight at g5 with his queen, however, he soon realized the countermove he thought up was nothing but a desperate struggle and dejectedly moved his pawn to h4. A sadistic grin spread over Okisato's face as he moved his bishop to a5, forcing Numakawa to move his queen to d3 and have it captured by Okisato's rook.

"Damn you," Numakawa meekly glared as he captured the rook at d3 with his bishop.

"Guess you better get some first hand experience, I can deal with textbook players in my sleep! Checkmate!" Okisato laughed as he moved his queen to d2.

"Heh? Not bad, boy," Hagemi cooed.

"Well, failure is the greatest-"

"Not you four-eyes! Boy, are you the strongest one here? If so, then how bout a quick game with me?"

"Actually, Inoue-senpai's probably the strongest," Okisato stated as his normal persona returned.

"Hoh? In that case, let's have a quick, proper match between you two."

The full game:

White: Syouma Numakawa (unrated) Black: Okisato Tanabe (2434)

1. e4 c5
2. d4 cxd4
3. Qxd4 Nc6
4. Qc4 e6
5. Nc3 Nf6

6. Nf3 d5
7. exd5 exd5
8. Nxd5 Qxd5
9. Qe2+ Be6
10. Ng5 O-O-O
11. c4 Bb4+
12. Bd2 Bxd2+
13. Kd1 Qxg5
14. h4 Ba5+
15. Qd3 Rxd3+
16. Bxd3 Qd2#

Chapter 22: A prodigy in the making

Everyone gathered round as Mimoko and Okisato faced off. As soon as Okisato moved his pawn to c4, both him and Mimoko went into full-focus mode as the pieces began flying across the board. Mimoko rapidly moved her pawn to b6 while Okisato moved his knight to c3.

"Bishop b7, e4, e6, e5, d6, they really are into it," Hagemi thought as she watched the match.

Not a word had been spoken by either of the players as they remained focused. As soon as Okisato moved his knight to f3, Mimoko drew first blood by capturing the pawn at e5 with her d-pawn. Okisato promptly captured the offending pawn with his knight, while Mimoko countered by moving her pawn to f6, prompting Okisato to move his knight to g4 on his next turn. Mimoko then moved her bishop to c5, but as soon as Okisato moved his bishop to d3...

"Ah, I screwed up," Okisato sighed as Mimoko captured the bishop at d3 with her queen.

"Heh? He's gonna get beat in fewer moves than he beat four-eyes," Hagemi grinned as Okisato moved his pawn to a3.

"Hmm? You can see that far ahead?" Maida asked as Mimoko moved her king to f7.

"Yeah, mate in 3," Hagemi grinned as Okisato moved his pawn to b4.

Mimoko quickly moved her bishop to d4 followed by Okisato moving his pawn to h4. Mimoko then mercilessly captured the pawn at g2 with her bishop causing Okisato to let out a sigh as he moved his rook to h2.

"Checkmate," Mimoko declared as she moved her queen to f1.

Everyone stared in shock.

"D- Did you let her win?" a nervous student asked.

"No, I really was playing my best, but I messed up. Mistakes are more prone to happen the faster you play," Okisato sighed.

Hagemi, meanwhile, had a massive grin on her face as she stared at Mimoko. "Heh? You really are somethin' special. Tonight at the tournament, you're playing in the open section so we can see how good you really are. That, and we can properly face each other there."

"Huh? You're entering the tournament, Okaa!?" Yuusuke cried.

"Yeah, I know I said I'd sit on the sidelines, but now that there's some worthy

competition. Let me just send out the word that I'm in."

The students all began murmuring until Maida got their attention. "Do not waste time murmuring amongst yourselves. We will dismiss at 5 and the chess club will depart by train to the venue of the tournament by 5:25. If any of you still wish to attempt to join us, continue your mini-tourney now."

...

At her home, Kuon happily mumbled in her sleep as she lounged on her couch. The vibrating of her phone, however, roused her from her slumber as she drowsily examined the message she got.

"Ugh, from Hagemi? If it's another stupid flirt piece- ...!?" Kuon's eyes widened as she read the message before her. "'Found a worthy adversary that could stop me from winning the whole thing' you say? Only I can beat you!" she fumed as she got up and headed for the door.

Elsewhere, Gyro had a similar reaction as he stared at Hagemi's declaration. "No, NO! Did she find out about Mimoko Inoue!? No, I can't let her get a rating or play Hagemi! If she beats her... It's over!"

The full game:

White: Okisato Tanabe (2434) Black: Mimoko Inoue (unrated)

1. c4 b6
2. Nc3 Bb7
3. e4 e6
4. e5 d6
5. Nf3 dxe5
6. Nxe5 f6
7. Ng4 Bc5
8. Bd3 Qxd3
9. a3 Kf7
10. b4 Bd4
11. h4 Bxg2
12. Rh2 Qf1#

Chapter 23: Hagemi's first match

As Okisato arrived at the station, he noticed Hagemi, still clad in her muddy clothes, getting food from a vending machine. "Not gonna change your muddy clothes?" he asked as he approached her.

"Huh? Oh, it's you. I'll shower when I get there."

"Say, do you know a guy with a red hat and a bunch of toy gyroscopes?"

"Gunnerson? What about him?"

"He seemed frightened by you. I was wondering if you knew why."

"Oh, that's a story. Well might as well tell ya- Er, it's 5:15, I'll do the brief rundown version so we aren't late."

"You're taking the same train as us?"

"Might as well, we're headin' to the same place. Anyway, here's my story. So back when I was in highschool, I ran away from home because the lousy bastards were tryin' to get me in a forced marriage. So anyway, I ran away and before I knew it, I was surrounded by a gang..."

...

A young Hagemi glared as she was surrounded by three men. The three were none other than a young Inojin, Cypress, and Gyro.

"She looks quite hot, I wanna make out with her," Inojin snickered.

"The hell!? F*** off ya creeps!" Hagemi yelled as she assumed a combative position.

"Now you two know the rules of the club, we settle things first with a game," Gyro chuckled as he motioned everyone towards a chess board.

"Huh? What's that?"

"A chess board. You see, I'm actually a grandmaster and these two young men have joined my club. They tend to be rough, but we are primarily underground chess players."

"Underground what?"

"Well, you'll understand once we play, sit down now."

"Why should I?"

"We'll reward you with what you seek if you win."

"Like what?"

"Help against your family perhaps? Being a grandmaster does give me some sway, but only if you can win the game."

"Never played this before."

"Then allow me to teach you all the moves."

As Gyro explained the fundamentals of chess, something inside Hagemi clicked. She was unable to describe the feeling at the time, but in retrospect, she claimed it was the moment she realized she had a talent for chess.

"Wow, this shit's easy to understand," Hagemi nodded as Gyro finished his lesson.

"Yes, and now, you will play against me."

"Why?"

"Because my chess lessons aren't free. Don't worry, all you need to do is win. Do that and I shall make your wish come true."

"But loser has to have sex with us," a young Cypress snickered as he wrapped his arm around Inojin.

"Disgusting, but I'll kick your asses and make you all eat shit!" Hagemi glared as she moved her pawn to e4.

"A standard opening," Gyro smiled as he moved his pawn to d6.

Hagemi then moved her pawn to d4, followed by Gyro moving his knight to f6.

Once Hagemi moved her knight to c3, Gyro let out a chuckle. "Standard Pirc defense, just like I taught, well it seems the boys will be having some fresh meat tonight," he thought as he moved his b-knight to d7. However, Gyro's smile soon faded as Hagemi moved her pawn to f4. "Lion's defense: Aniti-Philador variation!? I never taught her to do that. No, it couldn't be," he thought as he moved his pawn to e5.

Gyro's fears were confirmed when Hagemi moved her bishop to e3. "That formation..."

no, I still have control," he thought as he moved his pawn to c6.

Hagemi then moved her queen to f3, while Gyro moved his pawn to b5. Next, Hagemi moved her pawn to a3 while Gyro scowled and moved his bishop to e7.

"This is how castlin' works, right?" Hagemi asked as she castled on the queen's side.

Gyro begrudgingly affirmed her as he moved his queen to c7.

"Oh good, then I'm gettin' the hang of this," Hagemi smiled as she moved her pawn to g4.

"No, now you're going to experience the might of a grandmaster," Gyro glared as he captured the pawn at f4 with his e-pawn.

"Bring it," Hagemi grinned as she captured the pawn at f4 with her bishop.

Gyro then moved his knight to b6 followed by Hagemi moving her pawn to e5.

"You're an oblivious fool," Gyro scoffed as he captured the pawn at g4 with his bishop.

"Really? I just don't see what you're tryin' to do," Hagemi shrugged as she moved her queen to g3.

"You're a fool," Gyro scoffed as he captured the rook at d1 with his bishop.

"Nah, rooks are shit, pawns are easily the best pieces on the board," Hagemi snickered as she captured the pawn at d6 with her e-pawn.

"A desperate struggle, you will not recover from this," Gyro scoffed as he moved his queen to b7.

Hagemi immediately captured the bishop at d1 with her knight as Gyro castled on the king's side. She then captured the bishop at e7 with her d-pawn before Gyro captured that very pawn with his queen. However, Hagemi's smirk didn't vanish as she promptly moved her bishop to d6 causing Gyro to grit his teeth in frustration as he moved his queen to e4.

"Well, guess you're feeling good about yourself," Gyro scoffed.

"Yeah, everything's just clickin' ya know," Hagemi smiled as she moved her bishop to g2.

"Then it should have clicked that you are doomed," Gyro glared as he captured the pawn at d4 with his queen.

"Nah, I see victory," Hagemi grinned as she moved her knight to f3.

"Your greed for my queen will be your undoing," Gyro scoffed as he moved his queen to c4.

"Nah, I saw that coming," Hagemi grinned as she moved her pawn to b3.

"Think I didn't!?" Gyro shouted as he moved his queen to e6.

Hagemi then moved her knight to d4, once again forcing Gyro to move his queen, this time, all the way to c8. She then confidently captured the pawn at c6 with her bishop, prompting an angry snarl from Gyro.

"Happy you finally made back a rook!?" Gyro scoffed as he moved his rook to d8.

"Nah, I told ya before, rooks are shit," Hagemi grinned as she moved her knight to f5.

"Oh no," Gyro mumbled as he was forced to move his pawn to g6.

"Check," Hagemi grinned as she moved her knight to e7.

Gyro let out a frustrated roar as he moved his king to g7 and watched Hagemi capture his queen at c8 with her knight. He then angrily captured the knight at c8 with his a-rook as Hagemi gave him another headache by moving her bishop to e7. Seeing no other option, Gyro captured the bishop at c6 with his rook, while Hagemi happily captured his rook at d8 with her

bishop.

Gyro clicked his tongue in frustration and moved his knight to e4. "Lets give you a taste of queen chasing."

Hagemi confidently moved her queen to e5, prompting Gyro to move his knight back to f6.

"Guess rooks have some use after all," Hagemi shrugged as she moved her rook to f1.

Gyro let out a heavy sigh. "If she doesn't blunder, I lose," he thought as he desperately moved his knight to d7.

Hagemi chose wisely, and moved her queen to d4. Gyro sighed and moved his pawn to h5 while Hagemi immediately captured the knight at f6 with her bishop, prompting Gyro to capture it with his knight on his next turn. Next, Hagemi captured the knight at f6 with her rook forcing Gyro to capture it with his rook. Hagemi then moved her knight to e3, prompting Gyro to move his king to h6.

"Looks like I've met my match, Gyro meekly smiled as Hagemi captured his rook at f6 with her queen.

Gyro then moved his pawn to h4, followed by Hagemi moving her knight to f5. Gyro let out a smile as he moved his king to h7, while Hagemi moved her queen to g7, winning the game.

"Checkmate, now-"

"Congratulations, you've passed flawlessly. The ultima-master will be pleased to have such a prodigious young woman among us," Gyro clapped.

"Ultima what?"

"The Ultima-master, the greatest chess player ever. With you're-"

"Yeah, no thanks, I just want to live in a comfy beach house in Hawaii or somethin."

"We can arrange that, just swear allegiance to the Ultima-"

"Like hell I'm doing that!"

Gyro's smile began to fade as a worried scowl appeared on his face. "Then you must be eliminated," he coldly glared as he launched one of his gyroscopes at Hagemi.

Hagemi effortlessly dodged it and picked up a nearby brick, which she promptly hurled into Gyro's face, downing him instantly. Cypress and Inojin nervously began to take combative stances until a large man appeared.

"That's enough! Break up the fight!"

Despite clearly being up there in age, the man was large and muscular and had long white hair and a beard. He emanated an aura of power and prestige as he approached the group.

"I saw everything. Young woman, you are a chess prodigy. Would you care to consider becoming a professional chess player?"

"I already told bozo, I ain't servin' some ultima whatzit," Hagei glared.

"Then allow me to clear up some misconceptions. My name is Raymond Redfield, and I am the current head of the World wide chess federation, the world's largest chess governing body. Those lads are WWCF members, however, they primarily engage in underground chess matches and worship some cult-like entity. They believe that any prodigy that doesn't submit to their master must be eliminated, however, I believe the opposite, that prodigies should be

celebrated and embraced. Should you agree, I can provide all the resources you need until you can stand on your own feet again."

Hagemi thought for a moment before smiling. "Sure, if you're legit then I'm good. Playin' chess was pretty fun and all."

"I'm glad to hear it. As for you, Gunnerson, the punishment for the loser was to have sex with your two underlings was it not?" Raymond glared as he turned towards Cypress and Inojin.

"Whoa man, we're all guys-"

"I don't care, he lost, he gets the punishment, or would you like me to ensure you three never play chess again?" Raymond glared as he cracked his knuckles.

Cypress and Inojin let out terrified squeals as they fell to the ground in terror.

"Now, was there anything else you would like to request from them as spoils?" Raymond asked as he turned to Hagemi.

"Well, I did tell them to eat shit, so have em do that."

"Would bird shit be fine?"

"Sure, but all three of em need to do it."

...

"And that's how I started my chess career. Ever since then, Gunnerson's always been deathly afraid of me," Hagemi smiled as she finished her story.

"Because of that one incident?" Okisato asked.

"Nah, me becoming an overnight chess prodigy was likely the bigger one. For some reason, that guy just hates it when a new prodigy comes along."

"Why's that?"

"Cause he wants people to join the Desperado league and worship his "Ultima-master" like crazy."

"Do you know who that is?"

"No clue. I'm surprised you don't know, considering you're the only one crazy or not lazy enough to go after the Desperados."

"So you knew?"

"I'm a WWCF ambassador and have lots of clout within the WWCF."

"So then do you know that your son was attacked by Gyro's minion, Zanni."

Hagemi's smile began to vanish. "Huh!? That bastard WHAT!?"

"Guess I'll explain..."

The full game:

White: Hagemi Shousen (n/a) (at the time) Black: Gyro (Gunther Gunnerson) (2501) (at the time)

1. e4 d6
2. d4 Nf6
3. Nc3 Nbd7
4. f4 e5
5. Be3 c6
6. Qf3 b5

7. a3 Be7
8. O-O-O Qc7
9. g4 exf4
10. Bxf4 Nb6
11. e5 Bxg4
12. Qg3 Bxd1
13. exd6 Qb7
14. Nxd1 O-O
15. dxe7 Qxe7
16. Bd6 Qe4
17. Bg2 Qxd4
18. Nf4 Qc4
19. b3 Qe6
20. Nd4 Qc8
21. Bxc6 Rd8
22. Nf5 g6
23. Ne7+ Kg7
24. Nxc8 Raxc8
25. Be7 Rxc6
26. Bxd8 Ne4
27. Qe5+ Nf6
28. Rf1 Nd7
29. Qd4 h5
30. Bxf6+ Nxf6
31. Rxf6 Rxf6
32. Ne3 Kh6
33. Qxf6 h4
34. Nf5+ Kh7
35. Qg7#

Chapter 24: Lagoon pathways hotel

At the Lagoon pathways hotel, Gyro sat in his hotel room as he set up a group chat on his laptop. Twelve other people were present in the chat.

"And care to explain why you've called for an emergency meeting?" a shadowy figure growled.

"You know why I called this meeting, did you not see the headline!?"

"About Hagemi Shousen agreeing to participate in the tournament? Why is that a big deal? We can't stop her, nor are we going to send someone capable of beating her just to put your fears at ease."

"NO! It's worse than that! The REASON she's participating is why we need to mobilize at all costs!"

"The 'reason'?"

"Yes, she said in her post that she is participating because she's quote, 'found a worthy adversary that could stop her from winning the whole thing!' There could only be one person she's referring to, Mimoko Inoue!"

"Mimoko Inoue? Who is she?"

"An unrated-"

"Then cease the pointless drivel. I'm on a different time-zone here and have business to-"

"You don't get it at all, Manny! This girl has the potential to become one of the greatest chess players of all time! We can't allow that!"

"Heh? Why you so scared over a little girl? Anyone can beat a little girl," a shadowy figure sneered as he stroked his long hair.

"Haruki, you want to say that again?" a shadowy figure snarled as she slammed her fists down.

"Hoh? You gettin angry, Svetlana-tan? In that case, turn off the shadow filter so I can see your pretty face. Seein you angry always turns me on."

"Я разобью тебе лицо вдребезги [I'll smash your face to bits]!"

"ENOUGH of the bickering!" Gyro shouted.

Svetlana and Haruki went silent as Gyro began speaking again. "As you all know, the DESPER cannot force someone that is higher rated than its holder into a match. Should someone like that refuse to play, the DESPER will treat the encounter as a draw and deactivate. It is also unable to force someone rated 500 points higher than you into a match as a bargaining chip unless said person agrees to it and. After witnessing Mimoko Inoue's skill first-hand, I can confirm that only the Ultima-master could beat her."

"Only the Ultima-master?" a shadowy figure asked.

"Yes, though perhaps some of the top players like you might be able to stop her. But if she confirms my fears and beats Hagemi at the tournament, she'll become an overnight unstoppable force! She'll get a high rating and we'll be unable to drag her into DESPER matches as a hostage!"

"So it is now or never then for you. Well, you have some luck. I'm currently in Osaka and should be able to just make it in time to the venue to not get a bye point for the 1st round. As such, I'll be logging out of the meeting to register."

"Thank you, Peter. How about the rest of you?"

"I'm in Washington. I'm also swamped with senate duties. In fact, I need to leave now," Manny stated as he logged out.

"I'm not in Japan so I can't make it, though I understand your concerns as does my father. Do you have anything else you wish to discuss?" Svetlana asked.

"You really are cute when you go from angry to soothing. So how bout ya-"

"HARUKI! Don't provoke her! In fact, you SHOULD be able to make it."

"Ah, but I got a date-"

"DATE!?! Like any woman would date you!" Svetlana roared.

"Yes, it is quite unsavory what you do to women," Gyro glared.

"Comin from the guy who took ole Cypress into his team?" Haruki sneered.

"ANYONE can be good at chess, whether they be a kindhearted pacifist, or a scumbag

like you."

"Well, considering we've all killed, wouldn't we all be scumbags?"

"My definition of scumbag differs from yours then. So are you in or out?"

"Well, might as well pop by to check out that Mimoko girl. If she's hot, maybe I'll get rid of her for ya later."

"LATER!?! If she gets a rating-"

"Nah, I'd beat her to a pulp and land her in a coma for the rest of her life. I just pulled up her profile, she'd be an easy mark."

"So you're out then. Well, good day to you then. Seems like me and Peter will have to do everything then, unless one of you would like to assist," Gyro said as he glared at the other shadowy figures left in the chatroom. Not one of them spoke up, prompting an annoyed sigh from Gyro. "Very well, though as for other business I do have two things to discuss. The first is regarding a powerful new business partner and the second is regarding the oni-tiger-"

"ONI-TIGER!?" Svetlana shouted as she slammed her fists down.

"Yes, it seems he took out Inojin and is close with Mimoko Inoue and Hagemi's son, Yuusuke."

"I will depart for Japan immediately! Register me for the tournament, I don't care how many byes I'll have to take!"

"Well you're sure-"

Before Haruki could finish, Gyro booted him from the meeting. Despite that, Gyro surmised Haruki would show up due to Svetlana's presence and turned his attention towards the remaining members in the chat. None of them agreed to come, so Gyro decided to move onto the other topic of discussion.

...

Maida checked her watch as the train arrived. "Hmm, it seems not everyone is present. Well, we shall all board as planned anyway."

"I thought Tanabe-kun was here though," Mimoko glared as she looked around.

"Leave him. We don't-"

"YUUSUKE!" Hagemi roared as she charged up to Yuusuke.

"GEH! OKAA!?! WH- UGH!"

"THAT was for all those blunders you made against that masked freak!" Hagemi glared as she dragged the unconscious Yuusuke with her onto the train.

"Guess we didn't miss it," Okisato nodded as he arrived at the platform.

"You better not have! Now get on," Mimoko glared as she dragged Okisato with her onto the train.

As Okisato got on, he stared at everyone present. In addition to himself and the four other original members of the chess club, Maida, Hagemi, Numakawa, a large male student, and a female student with no stand-out features were all accompanying them. The large male student looked more like an adult male in his mid to late 20s, but he was actually just a 16-year old 1st-year named Rodeo Gorou. He had ventured into the chess club after hearing about a tournament. Though he had won the mini-tourney, his overall skill as a chess player was still

largely unknown.

The girl on the other hand was a 2nd-year named Yuzuha Zenihara. She didn't appear to have any stand out physical or personality traits. The word she best used to describe herself was "generic". She was also a part of Okisato and Yuusuke's homeroom class, and had primarily come to the chess club to learn more about chess for Maida's homework assignment. While she was a complete beginner, Mimoko had wanted to take her for the experience, and since the other new club members were unable to come on such short notice, Yuzuha was allowed to come.

"YO! Welcome to da chess club, juniors. I'm your senpai and cute streamer extraordinaire, lori-chan! So, mind tellin' me what ya joined for?" lori grinned as she waltzed up to Rodeo.

"I joined for the money. My family's poor and could use the money."

"A prize hunter! Well, we could all use some of that moolah. So think ya have what it takes to win?"

"I got muscle from workin' on the farm, and they say brains are muscles so hope that carries over."

"And what's your favorite piece?"

"Rooks I guess, they're the toughest ones, right?"

"There you have it, now moving on to YOU! What's your chess story?" lori asked Yuzuha.

"Hi, I'm Yuzuha Zenihara. I've never played chess before, but I want to learn more things about it."

"A knowledge seeker! And what's your favorite piece?"

"Uh, I don't know, um I guess the horse, because I like horses."

"Well, hello fellow knight lover, and that's it for the exclusive interview with our newest members! Make sure to like and subscribe!"

"What about me!?" Numakawa cried.

"We already know about you, four-eyes!"

"Well you all laugh, but I'm studying on the way. By the time we arrive, I'll have surpassed each and everyone of you!"

"I doubt you'll surpass Inoue-senpai," Okisato glared.

"Over Expectations often lead to disappointment."

"Th- This is going to be my first tournament... W- What if I do poorly?" Utami trembled.

"Don't worry, the most important thing is to have fun. Don't worry about winning or losing, just enjoy the experience," Mimoko smiled.

"Mimoko-sama!"

"Yeah, you kids have fun. Don't worry about the financials or logistics. I'll take care of that," Hagemi smiled.

"I believe the school is obligated to pay for these things," Maida stated.

"Oh, even better. Make that balding lard pay for it all."

The train ride was completely uneventful. When everyone arrived, Yuusuke woke up and groggily staggered off, begging for everyone to keep him away from his mother. Rodeo offered to carry him, but he declined due to pride, though had no issue with Rodeo simply supporting

him as they walked along.

Once all the luggage was unloaded, Okisato took notice of Mimoko's chess bag.

"This is a deluxe chess bag. I got it as a present for my 18th birthday a few weeks ago. I've always loved playing chess, but never really decided to try playing professionally until my parents got me the bag," Mimoko stated.

"So you've never played at a tournament before?" Okisato asked.

"Nope, though I have played online a bunch. I also read up on all the tournament rules and regulations beforehand and came well prepared."

"Not bad, though boards and notes are usually provided, so why bring your own set?"

"For downtime and good luck."

"Well, I won't argue with that."

...

The group stared in awe as they set foot inside the hotel. The hotel's interior was adorned with dim lighting and forest scenery as well as waterways that could be ridden by boat. The overall atmosphere was like a peaceful nighttime lagoon, hence the hotel's namesake, Lagoon pathways.

"YO! It's like they put a real nighttime lagoon in here!" Iori shouted as she pulled out her phone.

"Ishikiridoro-chan, remember that there are strict rules regarding phones, and idle chatter is forbidden during the match," Maida glared.

"Yeah, yeah I know."

"So when do we start playing?" Rodeo asked.

"First we all register, then check-in to our rooms. Once that's done, you're free to mingle until the opening ceremony at 6:50," Maida nodded.

...

As soon as the registration and check-in were complete, Okisato and Mimoko began wandering around the place.

"This sure has an ambient atmosphere, have you played here before, Tanabe-kun?"

"Yeah. This place is one of the most frequent places for chess tournaments along with the Triple cedar hotel in Tochigi. Though this place more frequently hosts late night format tournaments."

"Late night format?"

"Normally, tournaments start on Saturday mornings, but this specific tournament, The Knightlife classic, starts later. It's also only 5 rounds instead of 6."

"So is that how tournaments work at this place?"

"No, just the nightlife classic. Next week, there will be a 5-round blitz and standard 6-round tournament at Triple cedar, and the week after that, a standard 6-round tournament here at Lagoon pathways. Those two places tend to alternate weekends when they host tournaments, so we'll be coming here a lot."

"Do you think any of our club mates will get paired against each other?"

"Not sure, but probably unlikely since there's a team prize for this tournament. Not to mention we registered Gorou-san and Zenihara-san in the junior section and Enoki-san and

lori-chan in the intermediate section so I doubt they'll play each other. The rest of us are in the open section where anyone can play. But even then, we all have different skill levels so I doubt we'll play against each other. At worst, we'll have to play against each other, but even then, the team would still get points.

"Will the Desperados be here?"

"Likely, but since this is an official tournament, they aren't allowed to use their DESPERS, at least that's the hope."

"So they could still use them?"

"It's unlikely, but possible during the final round."

"Why then?"

"Because if there's a high-stakes match, the WWCF wouldn't mind making it more of a spectacle."

"Seriously, what's with the WWCF?"

...

As soon as the clock struck 6:45, the pairings for the first round were posted. Okisato scanned the names before heading into the room. He immediately noticed that both Gyro and Zanni were competing in the open section, and that Nyoan was competing in the rookie section. There were also a plethora of high-rated players competing in the open section, likely due to Hagemi's declaration.

"This looks good. Inoue-senpai's already competing against a 2647 rated grandmaster. If she beats him and continues to get paired up against these types of opponents and beat them, she'll get a high rating. Then the Desperado league won't be able to touch her. Even losing or drawing to some of these folks would still net her a high rating. Though there was one name I saw that will likely give Inoue-senpai some trouble, but he might not play her due to taking a bye this round. Well, guess I'll worry more about myself," Okisato thought as he entered the room.

Chapter 25: The secret puzzle cafe

Once everyone had finished their first game, they convened in a skittles room to discuss what happened. Yuusuke had lost, resulting in lori gloating over the fact that she won her game. Both Utami and Rodeo had also lost, putting a damper on their moods. Yuzuha had managed to get her opponent to agree to a draw, while Numakawa had managed to stalemate his opponent.

"I won my match, how about you, Inoue-senpai?" Okisato asked.

"I won as well. It was a very fun experience," Mimoko smiled. "Now let's all review our games before the next round starts."

As Mimoko began her post-game analysis, Okisato noticed Maida entering the room and asked her how her game went.

"I managed to get a win. I feel that if I'm to supervise this club, I should have respectable prowess in the field. It will also help with the science experiment if I have greater knowledge on the subject I'm researching," Maida stated.

"That's our science teacher for you. Plus, if you get a high rating, those Desperado thugs won't be able to force you into a DESPER match so easily."

"I see, so there is a larger benefit. Is that why you were insistent on taking as many club

members as possible?"

"Yeah, since most of them are unrated, having them participate in a tournament will both give them experience and a rating."

"Seems you're more of a grandmaster than you let on. Speaking of which, when will you be considered a grandmaster?"

"Once I beat one."

"You've never beaten one?"

"Nope. 2400 is about the lowest you'll see a grandmaster be rated, but even then, getting the chance to play them, and beat them won't be so easy. Plus, not everyone with a high rating is given the title of grandmaster. In addition to clearing the 2400 rating threshold, there are other criteria needed to be satisfied before the WWCF awards you the title."

"I see. I wish you the best of luck."

"You too, Maida-sensei."

...

A man with side-slicked black hair clad in formal attire walked into the hotel. He quickly pulled out his pocket watch and clicked his tongue as he saw the time. "Tch! I shouldn't have taken that bye point. There was plenty of time left for me to win. Seems I'll have to get lucky in the pairings."

"Still carrying that pocket watch? Do you not have a smartphone?" a voice asked.

The man turned to see Gyro approaching him. "You know well that I DO have a phone. This watch is also a hybrid antique."

"Yes, Peter. I'm well aware. Now let me brief you on what's gone down..."

...

As the pairings went up for the second round, Okisato once again scoured the names. "Looks like everyone's avoiding the Desperados, but it's possible we'll play them in later rounds. As for tough opponents, it looks like- Uhp, Numakawa's playing Peter. Even though he ended up taking a bye for the 1st round, he can easily sweep all the remaining games. I actually don't know if Inoue-senpai could soundly beat him. Then again, maybe I shouldn't let all the times he schooled me cloud my judgment."

Both Okisato and Mimoko ended up beating their opponents with ease, and ended up being some of the first members of their club to finish for the round.

"So what do we do now?" Mimoko asked as she exited the playing room with Okisato.

"Wait around or head up to our rooms. The 3rd round doesn't start until tomorrow-"

"UGH!"

Mimoko and Okisato turned to see a broken Numakawa curled up against the wall.

"Yep, he trashed him," Okisato nodded.

"Who trashed him?"

"Peter Morphy, one of the top 5 best players in the world."

"Someone like that is here? Though isn't it a little unfair for some like Numakawa-kun to have been paired against him?"

"He likely just had bad luck. The way the pairings work is that if you win a match, you're matched up with someone else that won in your next match. Same thing applies to losses and

draws. However, there are times where there's an odd number of wins and draws due to bye rounds."

"By 'bye' you mean take a game off and only get half a point?"

"Yes, Peter had to take a bye for round one, leading to someone getting a free win."

"So it's possible that I might not face Shousen-chan at all?"

"Yes, but if you two play your best, you'll likely face each other. The opponents you beat so far were all rated over 2600 as well so it's likely you'll be matched against Miss Shousen sooner or later. The other good news is that if we play well, we reduce our chances of playing a Desperado in the final round."

"Speaking of which, do you know how many Desperado's are in the tournament?"

"Aside from the ones that I mentioned, I don't really know much about the others. They do tend to keep their identities secret, though there was one name that stood out, Svetlana Smirnova."

"Who's that?"

"A Russian grandmaster and Desperado league member. She also tried to kill me after I bested her league-mates."

"She nearly bested you in a game?"

"No, I meant she literally tried to kill me with a giant sledgehammer."

Mimoko went pale. "S- SLEDGEHAMMER!?"

"Yeah, it's her weapon of choice. In addition to having a strong mind and rating of 2638, she's also got enhanced physical strength, or maybe she's actually a robot. I can't tell."

"R- Robot!?"

"Well, guess it is common for computers to play chess."

"Y- Yeah, but that woman sounds dangerous."

"Well, the good news is, we likely won't face her due to her taking two bye rounds. People also tend to get paired up based on how many points they have, so the two with the highest amount of points will tend to play each other more often than not."

"That's why you're so confident that I'd play Shousen-chan. She's currently in the number 1 spot."

"Yes, now why don't I give you a tour of this place. There's actually something I want to show you."

...

The two walked around the hotel until Okisato stopped at a bridge overlooking a waterfall. A well-dressed masked man was present, staring intently at the waterfall. "Hmm, guess I have to wait until midnight after all," Okisato muttered.

"What do you mean?"

Mimoko got her answer as the masked man smiled and leapt off the bridge to the water below. To Mimoko's shock, he didn't fall into the water and instead walked on top of it before vanishing behind the waterfall.

"Oh, guess it is open. Come on, Inoue-senpai," Okisato said as he grabbed Mimoko's arm and leapt off the bridge with her.

"Hold on wait- AAAAH!"

The two landed on the water, much to Mimoko's relief, but her nerves were still on edge.

"Don't worry, I got an umbrella," Okisato nodded as he pulled one out and opened it.

Before Mimoko could protest, Okisato dragged her towards the waterfall. When they passed through, they found themselves in a secret room that resembled a cafe.

"Welcome back, Mr. Tanabe. Is your companion a chess player?" the masked man from before asked.

"Yeah, she's going to take over the chess world tomorrow."

"You're telling me SHE'S the reason Grandmaster Shousen and Grandmaster Morphy showed up!? I don't believe it."

"You can check her match results. They should be up in the database."

"What's her name?"

"I'm Mimoko Inoue," Mimoko stated.

The man pulled up a smaller sized WWCF card and stared at it for a moment. "Inoue... So you're unrated but, you've got quite the intriguing record thus far. Your first match as a WWCF member was against Nagi Enoki who had a rating of 100. Then it says you had a bughouse match against a team of non-WWCF members, but the match was a DESPER match, same for the first match. Then you beat Mr. Tanabe in an exhibition match... Hmm, based on your current tournament results, it seems he wasn't going easy on you. It's impressive that you've bested two grandmasters with ratings over 2600, but I'm sorry to say, that you can't play the games here until you get a rating."

"Games?"

"Yes, Himitsudono-san offers challenge puzzles and games to those that find his secret hideout, the secret puzzle cafe," Okisato stated.

"Normally, my hours are midnight to daybreak, but I open early on tournament nights. As for my puzzles, should you solve them, you earn WWCF points that can be redeemed for exclusive prizes. Solve enough, and you'll even earn exclusive memorabilia for your achievements."

"Memorabilia?"

Okisato took out his WWCF card. "Yeah, see this little icon in my profile? That's a badge I got for clearing 10 puzzles here at Lagoon pathways."

"I also offer exclusive trading cards and can even sell and buy chess-related items. Well, you are free to watch Mr. Tanabe, but he will have to pay for any refreshments."

"No worries, besides, we'll both be challenging the Triple cedar SPCM next week."

"SPCM'?" Mimoko stared in confusion.

"It stands for secret puzzle cafe manager. That is my official title. Triple cedar's SPCM is known as Himitsuchan. Now Mr. Tanabe, do you wish to attempt the daily puzzle?" Himitsudono asked as he flashed a tablet displaying a chess puzzle before him.

Okisato nodded, but decided to solve the puzzle in a private pod towards the back of the cafe after noticing Mimoko intimately staring at the puzzle. Before he headed to the pod, he gave Mimoko permission to order any affordable food or beverage to have in the meantime.

"Temptation can be cruel. So Miss Inoue, want anything to eat?" Himitsudono asked as Mimoko sat down at the bar counter.

"Is it ok to just discuss the puzzles, and not get rewards for solving them?" Mimoko

nervously asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I think I solved the one I saw."

"At a mere glance!? Surely you jest. Well, for fun I'll pull up the hardest one from today's daily challenge. Now, what would you- Do!?" Himitsudono's jaw hung open as Mimoko effortlessly solved the puzzle. "Th- That's a grandmaster level puzzle. Though it is possible you've seen this puzzle before somewhere in the world of chess. But still... Miss Inoue, how long will you be able to stay tomorrow night?"

"I believe we leave after the awards ceremony."

"Then delay your departure by 30- No, 10 minutes should be enough."

"Why?"

"Because after the awards ceremony, you will undoubtedly receive a rating, thus you will be able to solve puzzles here and earn prizes."

"In that case, I'll also hold off on ordering something. If this is a club you can only enter after fulfilling certain criteria, then I want to fulfill it before doing anything."

"No worries. You are allowed to be here so long as you are a WWCF member, though we cannot offer services until you have an official rating. Though I imagine Mr. Tanabe dragged you here specifically to peak your interest, as well as mine."

Okisato then finished up and returned to the bar counter. He had gotten 7 out of the 10 right, earning him 70 points. He was unsurprised in the slightest when Himitsudono told him of how Mimoko solved the hardest puzzle.

The two then decided to depart, though there was one lingering question on Mimoko's mind. "Um, how do we get back up?"

"Oh, there's a hidden ramp," Okisato nodded.

"Couldn't we have taken that down?"

"Yeah, but jumping-"

"I WAS TERRIFIED WHEN YOU JUST GRABBED MY ARM AND JUMPED OFF THE BRIDGE WITH ME!"

"Uh, er, sorry I guess?"

Chapter 26: Prelude to battle

The next day, Okisato gazed oddly at Mimoko as she arrived at the meeting point in casual attire. "So that's your casual outfit? Seems kind of... weird. Why the suspenders?"

"Tanabe-kun, I didn't ask you to critique my look," Mimoko glared.

Since school uniforms were optional to wear, Mimoko had opted to wear a more casual outfit consisting of sneakers, a black skirt and suspenders, and a white long sleeve shirt containing the Shogikawa gakuin insignia on the cuffs.

"Casual dress is permitted, though since you are here as a team representing the school, you are still encouraged to at least wear something bearing the school's insignia," Maida stated as she arrived in her usual attire.

"Lol, why you wearin' suspenders, Mimo-chan?" Iori laughed as she arrived.

"Because I think they look cute with my dress," Mimoko pouted.

lori was in full-blown casual attire. She now wore a red bra top, black miniskirt, a navy blue jacket, and her trademark glittery white sneakers and mismatched red and pink socks.

"Ishikiridokoro-chan, I know I said casual wear is permitted, but I would KINDLY ask you at the very least cover up your midriff while you're playing," Maida glared.

"You've been doing real good so far, lori-chan," Mimoko smiled.

"Yeah, I figured I'd win the whole thing, and all the chumps I've played have gotten fodderized, so I'm feelin' good," lori grinned as she took a selfie.

"The opponents will only get harder as you win more."

"I can handle it."

Yuusuke and Utami were the next to arrive. Yuusuke was in casual attire, while Utami had opted to still wear her uniform. Yuusuke was in slightly higher spirits due to winning in the second round and receiving some pointers from Mimoko regarding a certain match. Utami however, was still feeling down due to not yet having won a game.

Rodeo, Yuzuha, and Numakawa were the last to arrive. Numakawa had a bit more color to his face, but was still visibly shaken from his second round loss and continued to mutter all the moves over and over again.

"Still muttering the game?" Okisato asked.

"Pawn- Oh, it's you. One setback will not derail me. Science is all about trial and error after all."

"Well to be fair you did play one of the best players in the world."

"You mentioned the other day that he's one of the top 5 players in the world. Tanabe-kun, have you played him before?" Mimoko asked.

"Yes, many times in fact. He's obsessed with finding good chess rivals. Since the top players aren't always available for play, he'll frequently travel searching for strong opponents. One day he approached me and after trouncing me, he took an interest in me under the assumption that I'd get better and give him more of a challenge in the future."

"Have you ever beaten him?"

"No, heck I don't think that guy's ever lost against someone lower rated than him, and even against the ones rated higher than him, his wins against them are higher than his loses."

"What a monster, I would love to play him."

"He might be the one person here that could truly best you. Well, I guess that's to be expected from a guy named after Paul Morphy."

"Paul Morphy? Ah, the American chess player from the 1800s that was regarded as one of the greatest players of his time?"

"Yes, but he decided to retire from chess after playing for only 2 years. Now that Peter's the second coming of Paul, the WWCF is doing all that they can to make sure he sticks with chess for life."

"I appreciate the history lesson, but I do believe we should be discussing it over breakfast instead of standing around here," Maida nodded.

"Oh right, let's eat before the third round starts."

As the group entered the hotel restaurant, they unknowingly passed by a table occupied by the members of the Desperado league. The Desperados failed to notice them either as they were primarily focused on their own food before them.

"My, you sure are on edge, Gyro-sama," Zanni chuckled as he played with a chicken bone on his plate.

"Time is running out. Mimoko Inoue has already bested two foes, one rated 2647 and one rated 2673. If her exhibition match against Okisato Tanabe is also factored in, which it will be, her rating will likely fall between 2600 and 2700, and that's just assuming she loses her remaining games today, which I fear she won't."

"I thought the armada was here."

"Nyoan is competing, but in the rookie section, though she'd never beat her anyway and with your win and loss, Peter's the only one that might get a shot at her aside from me. However if she wins her 3rd match, Svetlana and Haruki won't even get paired with her even if they win all their games."

"So they've arrived, then?" Peter asked as he closed his book.

"...No, and if they have to take byes for this round too, they'll ensure they never play her."

"Though, there are other members from her club in the tournament. We could target them," Zanni mused as he held up his DESPER.

"Put that thing away. We're at a tournament," Peter glared.

Zanni nodded and quickly put his DESPER back in his pocket.

"Peter, we don't have the same luxuries as you do. I for one will not allow another dangerous prodigy to rise and oppose us. If she beats Hagemi, it's over. We'll never be able to stop her," Gyro glared.

"Yeah, YOU wouldn't be able to stop her, cuz you're too out of line with the time, old man," a young man's voice sneered.

Everyone turned to notice a beautiful young man with long chestnut hair and tan skin. He was clad in a white bathrobe and slippers and surrounded by six large muscular men of various nationalities.

"What a killjoy, I got all dolled up at the SPA, but Svetlana ain't here. Well, guess my skin appreciated the splurge. See ya later," the man sneered as he turned to walk away.

"HARUKI! Take this seriously dammit! If she gets a rating higher than yours, you won't be able to subject her to your brawling match."

"Oi, oi, chess boxing's a recognized sport. The WWCF's even got a specific rating for it, though it does collab with the International boxing federation. Anyway, no Svetlana-tan, so play-"

"TCH!"

Everyone turned to see a young woman with short silver hair clad in a black leather jacket, pants and boots. She carried a large parcel on her back and despite her lean look, possessed abnormal strength and hidden muscle.

"Well hello, sexy. Wanna have some sex for good luck?" Haruki cooed. The woman responded by unleashing a kick at Haruki's face. "Oi, oi, no kicks allowed in standard chess boxing, Svetlana-tan."

"Call me that again and I'll shatter your skull with my hammer," the woman glared.

"And not my nuts?"

"You would regrettably enjoy that."

"You've both got your work cut out for you. Here's everyone you need to be aware of," Gyro glared as he sent everyone a message on their phones.

"Just these 6? Three of the hot girls are unrated while the other one's only 500. I think I'm gonna jizz," Haruki maliciously grinned.

"Well then it will be in you wet dreams, because only two of those women are even competing in the open section," Svetlana glared as she stared with murderous intent at Okisato's picture."

"He's 2-0, and is having a good tournament. You will need to put in the work to even be considered to be paired against him," Gyro glared.

Svetlana nodded and immediately headed off.

"Not even gonna eat? Well, I'll go after that one with the black hair and glasses, she looks like she'd be fun to molest," Haruki sneered as he twiddled his DESPER in his hands.

"I'll finish what I started with the boy then," Zanni chuckled.

"But he's Hagemi's son," Gyro trembled.

"So? I fear her not. In fact, it shall kill two birds with one stone. Perhaps I should try to match his results to best get paired against him."

"Very well, let us see if the pairings are up."

...

Gyro trembled as he stared at the pairings; he was up against Mimoko.

"Ara, if it isn't Gyro-san. Why are you so scared, up against Hagemi-chan?" Kuon sneered as she approached the pairings.

"Kuon, so you were here. I thought I saw your name in the standings, but you never came to any strategy meetings," Gyro glared.

"I didn't feel like it. I had to take care of my cats."

"CATS!? Oh, the ones created by the DESPER. A shame you didn't have Nyoan compete in the intermediate section, then she could have targeted Mr. Enoki's daughter or the girl that did in Cypress."

"I need to build up Nyoan's skill so she doesn't need to rely on odds for DESPY matches.

"DESPY!?"

"Yes, I believe that since I've discovered new ways to use it, I get to rename it."

"What, are you a scientist? Besides Manfred-"

"That mad monkey? Do not pay any heed to his ravings."

"And why should I pay heed to a fickle woman like you?"

"Anyone can be good at chess, yes? Then anyone can be a scientist, even a fickle woman that's a higher-rated grandmaster than you, like myself."

"Then you're clearly a deluded scientist," Gyo scoffed as he headed for the playing room.

"Hmm? It says I'M playing Hagemi, and you are playing an unrated girl. My, are you starting to fear women?" Kuon sneered.

"Did I not tell you before!? Mimoko Inoue is dangerous, if she beats Hagemi-"

"What makes you think Hagemi will beat me?"

"That I am certain will come to pass. I KNOW you can't so much as phase her. She's on

a different level than us."

A scowl formed on Kuon's face as Gyro stormed away. "No, the only queen here is me. I WILL beat her, this time..."

As Kuon sat down at the chessboard, a cheerful Hagemi approached her. "Hey girlfriend, ready to have some fun?"

"Yes, today I will beat you and prove I'm the true queen of chess," Kuon glared.

"You really are cute when ya glare like that."

"And I do hate it ever so much when you flirt with me. You are the last person I would dare to marry."

"Marriage!? Girl, no need to hide your feelings. I'm single and ready to mingle."

"Oh, so you divorced? I hope it made you miserable."

"Oi, tone it down a little. I'm just makin' friendly banter with ya, girl."

"But I don't want to be friendly with you. You are my enemy."

"Alright, tsundere. Now let's have a good game."

"If it wasn't required, I wouldn't shake your hand," Kuon glared.

Elsewhere in the room, Svetlana looked ready to go on a murderous rampage as she sat across from Haruki. However, she refused to shake his hand, resulting in a headache for the arbiters.

At another board, Yuusuke shuddered as he sat next to Zanni. Noticing that it was possible to get matched up against him, Zanni decided to go all in on his strategy to match Yuusuke's performance. He was even willing to resign while ahead should Yuusuke lose his game.

At his board, Okisato sighed as he stared at his opponent.

"Okisato Tanabe, do try to make me put my book down," Peter growled as he read his book.

"I wish I could. You really traumatized Numakawa-san. Poor guy was mumbling the moves in his sleep."

"Sorry, who?"

"Nevermind. Guess I'll just go crazy."

"'Crazy' you say?"

"They say insanity is the best way to counter a genius."

Peter glared as he closed his book and set it down. "Then you best not disappoint me. I don't want to see suicidal chess."

"I'll try."

A few boards away from Hagemi and Kuon, Gyro trembled as he stared across at Mimoko.

"Now we can finally play each other, Mr. Gunnerson. Though I am honestly disappointed that you are such a bad person," Mimoko sighed.

"Listen girl, ANYONE can be good at chess. Never diminish someone's skill as a chess player because of who they are or what they've said or done."

"Even cheaters?"

"They are the one exception, but I assure you, I NEVER cheat, nor does any other Desperado league member."

"That sounds like a pretty big claim. Are you even capable of verifying it?"

"No, then let me rephrase it; to my knowledge, no member of the Desperado league has ever cheated to win a match. Underhanded tactics can be legal and not considered cheating."

"But still morally wrong."

"Like I said before, ANYONE can be good at chess, good or bad."

"Tanabe-kun said the same thing."

"A rare occasion where our views align, now let me put an end to your Cinderella story."

Chapter 27: Peter Morphy

As soon as the round began, Peter and Okisato began moving their pieces at the speed of light. E4, e5, f4, e captures f4, knight f3, d5, d4, d captures e4; the two just wouldn't slow down.

They were going so fast, the nearby arbiter couldn't even keep up. "Was it bishop c4, e captures f3, er- Queen f4, f6, castle on the king- Queen e5, rook e1, g5, rook captures e5, f captures e5- Ugh, I can't keep up."

"Checkmate. I was disappointed. You are still far beneath me, though you at least provided some entertainment unlike the others," Peter glared as he checkmated Okisato.

"Oi, it hasn't even been a minute, how many moves-"

"20 total," Peter nodded as he handed the arbiter his move sheet.

"Oi, I thought this wasn't a blitz tournament," Okisato groaned.

"There are no rules that state you can't play it like it is one."

"How'd you even write everything down so fast?"

"I had a free hand, and free focus due to your sloppy performance."

"So he went queen f7, king d8, queen captures f8, king d7, bishop d5, c6, queen f7, king d6, c4, c captures d5, bishop a3!? ...King c6, queen captures d5, king b6, queen c5, king a6, queen b5 mate... Impressive as always, Morphy-sama," the arbiter nodded as Okisato and Peter headed out.

"Ugh, now I'm going to be bored. Why do I always lose so badly!? I don't get it!" Okisato groaned as he sat down in a skittles room.

"You managed to make me put my book down, but I'd argue that was more due to my overexpectations," Peter stated as he sat next to Okisato.

"What is that book?"

"Take a look for yourself."

Okisato's eyes widened as he stared at the text. "E4, d5... There's nothing but chess moves."

"Correct, since tournaments forbid odds rules, I implement my own by reading that book to divert some of my focus during a match. It contains a record of chess games from the past, however, I prefer to analyze all the other possible moves to see if victory truly was certain in different scenarios. And before you ask, the officials said the book was permitted to be read during matches."

"And you can still focus on the match?"

"Matches that don't require me to think are not worthy of my full concentration."

"You really are a monster. So is that book on sale?"

"It has been coined as "Morphy's bible" by Maestro Himitsu and will apparently be offered as a prize to exchange points for in the secret puzzle cafes.

"Perfect, I'll be heading back there anyway. How many points is it?"

"Mine was a first-print so I have no definitive answer."

"Just curious, but what's your record against the secret maestros?"

"Of the ones I've found, I've bested all of them. However, I have only found 4 of the 7 maestros throughout the world. Even though many frequent chess venues have puzzle cafes hidden within them, those within a given area are all directly managed by one specific maestro. For example, the one here along with the one at triple cedar are both overseen by Maestro Himitsu."

"I don't think I've met the maestro personally, then again it's possible I did without knowing who they were."

"So you still have yet to best the maestro's disciples?"

"Well, more like I don't have enough points to challenge them. It's not easy for me to grind for points since the cafes are only open at midnight."

"Nothing time can't solve."

"Guess you're right. Now that I'm in a chess club, we'll be going to tournaments more frequently. Best of all, the cafes open early on tournament days."

"How far away are you exactly from challenging the maestro?"

"I've beaten Himitsudono, Himitsukun, and Himitsutan, but I don't have enough points to play Himitsusama in Okinawa. Though since I found her secret puzzle cafe, I can challenge her from any secret cafe once I get the points. Same for Himitsuchan whom I lost to, though I'll be able to probably rematch her in person in a week. As for Himitsusan and Himitsuue, I've yet to find their cafes, though I did meet Himitsuue but I believe she's only challengeable after beating the other 6 SPCMs.

"So that is your progress. Seems you are still far from my level. Though you are correct in regards to Himitsuue. "

"Say, can I ask a question, why were you hanging out with those Desperado folks at the restaurant?"

"They seem to consider me a comrade even though I refuse to touch their weapons."

"The DESPERs?"

"Yes, those. I do think the tech could be useful for gaming purposes, but the manner of targeting players and forcing them into submission with it, does not sit well with me."

"So why buddy up with them?"

"To play the Ultima-master."

"Do you know who that is?"

"I do, and have played a series of matches with it."

"And?"

"I've seen better from research laboratories. Though I did have to place my book down. As for the Desperado league, joining it was the only way Gunnerson would so much as permit me to approach the Ultima-master. Joining the league though worked out quite well for me. Aside from the negative association by proxy, I'm not forced to do their bidding, don't have to

wield one of their DESPER weapons, can move as I please, and challenge the Ultima-master as much as I want."

"So you don't have a DESPER laying around somewhere?"

"No, I was offered one, but refused. I have no need of a hindrance like that."

"Hindrance'?"

"Yes, once you register with one, it will not be destroyed unless you're incapable of using it ever again. Besides, if the Ultima-master is beaten by someone not from the Desperado league, it will shut down. After that, nobody knows what might befall the remaining Desperados with active DESPERs."

"So there are some drawbacks to it. Thanks."

"I was merely offering a consolation prize in hopes of improving your mood, and desire to improve your game."

"Guess it worked. Want to have an unofficial match?"

"I will not put my book down this time."

"Fine with me. Though, I think I might have found someone that will at least force you to put your book down."

"Mimoko Inoue, yes? Gunerson won't shut up about her."

"So Desperado's truly targeting her?"

"Yes, this is Gunnerson's last-ditch gambit, or so he believes."

"You don't view her as a threat?"

"I have no loyalty to the Ultima-master, nor has she proved herself before me."

"Fair points. Guess I'll be white this time, that fine?"

"Yes, now begin the game," Peter nodded.

The full game:

White: Peter Morphy (2880) Black: Okisato Tanabe (2434)

1. e4 e5
2. f4 exf4
3. Nf3 d5
4. d4 dxe4
5. Bc4 exf3
6. Qxf3 Qxd4
7. Bc4 exf3
8. Qxf4 f6
9. O-O Qe5
10. Re1 g5
11. Rxe5+ fxe5
12. Qf7+ Kd8
13. Qxf8+ Kd7
14. Bd5 c6
15. Qf7+ Kd6
16. c4 cxd5
17. Ba3+ Kc6

- 18. Qxd5+ Kb6
- 19. Qc5+ Ka6
- 20. Qb5#

Chapter 28: Déjà vu

Back in the playing room, Mimoko opened her game by moving her pawn to e4.

"A standard opening," Gyro thought as he moved his pawn to d6.

Mimoko then moved her pawn to d4, followed by Gyro moving his knight to f6.

As Mimoko moved her knight to c3, Gyro began to scowl. "These moves, no, this is a standard opening," he thought as he moved his b-knight to d7.

Gyro's mood worsened as Mimoko moved her pawn to f4. He was beginning to see remnants of his game against Hagemi, yet still brushed the feeling off as he moved his pawn to e5.

As Mimoko moved her bishop to e3. Gyro began to get a sense of déjà vu and began to accept the reality of the situation. "That formation, she is playing like Hagemi did back then... I still have control," he thought as he moved his pawn to c6.

Mimoko then moved her queen to f3, while Gyro moved his pawn to b5. Next, Mimoko moved her pawn to a3 while Gyro scowled and moved his bishop to e7.

"Castling on the queen's side would be the most efficient move," Mimoko thought as she castled on the queen's side.

"Yes, she's emulating her move for move" Gyro thought as he moved his queen to c7.

Mimoko moved her pawn to g4 followed by Gyro capturing the pawn at f4 with his e-pawn. Next, Mimoko captured the pawn at f4 with her bishop as Gyro moved his knight to b6. She then moved her pawn to e5 as Gyro captured the pawn at g4 with his bishop.

As Mimoko moved her queen to g3, Gyro's eyes widened as he gazed at the board. "No, it's exactly the same as back then! If I capture that rook with my bishop, I'll lose! No, this time WILL be different," he thought as he captured the pawn at e5 with his d-pawn.

Mimoko promptly captured the pawn at e5 with her d-pawn as Gyro moved his pawn to g5. She then captured the knight at f6 with her e-pawn eliciting a frustrated growl from Gyro.

"I'll exchange queens," Gyro thought as he captured the bishop at f4 with his queen.

Mimoko promptly captured the queen before Gyro captured her queen with his g-pawn.

Mimoko then moved her rook to e1, forcing Gyro to move his bishop to e6. "Damn you," he muttered as Mimoko captured the bishop at e7 with her f-pawn. Gyro's frustrations only grew after he moved his knight to d5, followed by Mimoko moving her bishop to g2. "I'm going to lose a rook. Damn her," he thought as he captured the knight at c3 with his knight.

Mimoko promptly captured the pawn at c6 with her bishop, forcing Gyro to capture the pawn at e7 with his king. Then, just as predicted, Mimoko captured the rook at a8 with her bishop.

Gyro then moved his knight to a2, forcing Mimoko to move her king to b1. He then captured the bishop at a8 with his rook as Mimoko moved her knight to h3.

"Now she's starting to annoy me, well If I can't win, I'll go for stalemate," Gyro thought as he moved his pawn to f3.

Mimoko responded by moving her h-rook to f1, followed by Gyro moving his pawn to b4. She then captured the pawn at f3 with her rook as Gyro gritted his teeth in frustration and moved his rook to g8. Mimoko then moved her knight to f4 as Gyro captured the pawn at a3 with his b-pawn.

Then, Mimoko captured the bishop at e6 with her knight. "FINALLY an exploit!" Gyro thought as he captured the knight at e6 with his f-pawn. His enthusiasm was short-lived as Mimoko captured the knight at a2 with her king. "Damn you... DAMN YOU!" Gyro scowled as he captured the pawn at b2 with his a-pawn.

Mimoko then moved her rook to h3, followed by Gyro moving his pawn to h5. "A wasted move," Mimoko thought as she captured the pawn at h5 with her rook.

"I bet she thinks that was wasted, but now I can do THIS!" Gyro thought as he moved his rook to b8.

Mimoko sighed and moved her rook to a5 as Gyro moved his rook to b7. She then moved her king to b1, prompting Gyro to move his king to f7.

"Does he really think this will end in stalemate?" Mimoko thought as she moved her pawn to h4.

Gyro quickly moved his king to f6 as Mimoko moved her pawn to h5. "Dammit, I can't get any closer to it," Gyro thought as he moved his king to e7.

Mimoko then moved her a-rook to e5, prompting Gyro to move his rook to b6. She then moved her pawn up to h6 as Gyro gave chase by moving his king to f7.

As Mimoko captured the pawn at e6 with her rook, Gyro began to tremble. "No, if I capture the rook, she'll get a queen. I won't lose my rook," he thought as he moved his rook to b8.

Mimoko then moved her rook to a6, as Gyro moved his rook down to b7. "So he blundered in the end, mate is imminent," Mimoko thought as she moved her rook to g1.

Gyro didn't seem phased though as he moved his king to f8.

"Check," Mimoko stated as she moved her rook to f6.

Gyro's face went pale. "No, NO! I- I can't let her win!" he frantically thought as he moved his king to e7.

Mimoko promptly moved her rook to g7, forcing Gyro to capture the rook at f6 with his rook, and watch as Mimoko captured his rook at b7 with her rook. Now, all hope of preventing Mimoko's victory was lost, yet Gyro refused to accept it as he moved his pawn to a5.

Mimoko moved her pawn to h7 as Gyro moved his king to f5. "She can still mess up. She can still mess up," Gyro thought as Mimoko moved her pawn to h8 and promoted it into a queen.

Gyro moved his king to f4 as Mimoko moved her rook to e7. Reality was finally beginning to hit Gyro as he began shaking in fear as he moved his pawn to a4.

"Check," Mimoko stated as she moved her queen to f6.

"She can still mess up... Still mess up," Gyro meekly thought as he moved his king to g4. Mimoko then moved her rook to g7.

"Please mess up," Gyro nervously thought as he moved his king to h5.

"Checkmate," Mimoko stated as she moved her queen to g5.

"She didn't mess up. I've failed..."

The full game:

White: Mimoko Inoue (unrated) Black: Gyro (Gunther Gunnerson) (2559)

1. e4 d6
2. d4 Nf6
3. Nc3 Nbd7
4. f4 e5
5. Be3 c6
6. Qf3 b5
7. a3 Be7
8. O-O-O Qc7
9. g4 exf4
10. Bxf4 Nb6
11. e5 Bxg4
12. Qg3 dxe5
13. dxe5 g5
14. exf6 Qxf4+
15. Qxf4 gxf4
16. Re1 Be6
17. fxe7 Nd5
18. Bg2 Nxc3
19. Bxc6+ Kxe7
20. Bxa8 Na2+
21. Kb1 Rxa8
22. Nh3 f3
23. Rhf1 b4
24. Rxf3 Rg8
25. Nf4 bxa3
26. Nxe6 fxe6
27. Kxa2 axb2
28. Rh3 h5
29. Rxh5 Rb8
30. Ra5 Rb7
31. Kb1 Kf7
32. h4 Kf6
33. h5 Ke7
34. Rae5 Rb6
35. h6 Kf7
36. Rxe6 Rb8
37. Ra6 Rb7
38. Rg1 Kf8
39. Rf6+ Ke7
40. Rg7+ Kxf6

41. Rxb7 a5
42. h7 Kf5
43. h8=Q Kf4
44. Re7 a4
45. Qf6+ Kg4
46. Rg7+ Kh5
47. Qg5#

Chapter 29: Gyro's nightmare

Gyro trembled as he sat in a chair outside the playing room.

"So you finished," Kuon growled as she approached Gyro.

"Did you lose too?"

"Yes... Damn that woman.

Gyro immediately pulled out his phone and gazed at the standings. "Damn it, if only Peter didn't have to take that bye, but it's still possible he plays either Hagemi or Mimoko. I'd prefer he played the latter. Then she would at least lose and-"

"Nah, even if she throws her last two games, she'll still come out higher rated than ya," Haruki sneered as he approached Gyro.

"And you?"

"We drew. Svetlana-tan wouldn't shake my hand and was even willin' to forfeit, but the officials just said to draw."

"Lovely, now you two are useless to stop her nor are you even likely to play any of the other targets. That teacher has been doing quite well for a beginner and the oni-tiger is still ahead of you both by a point despite his loss to Peter."

"Guess I'll leave then. I already got my fill with Svetlana-tan anyway," Haruki waved as he left.

"Well, good riddance. I have no need of you anymore."

...

In another part of the hotel, Mimoko stopped as she was approached by an arbiter accompanied by a muscular old man.

"So you are Mimoko Inoue. A pleasure to meet you, I am Raymond Redfield, the president of the WWCF," the old man stated.

"The WWCF president!?"

"Yes, and I'm most intrigued by you. You've bested three grandmasters thus far and seem to be the one that caught Hagemi's eye. I look forward to your match against her," Raymond grinned as he walked away.

"The WWCF president's taking an interest in me? I guess I should tell the others. Though where could Tanabe-kun be? Wait... is that..."

Mimoko glared as she spotted a moping Okisato floating in a boat below her. "Why are you moping around?" she asked.

"I lost to Peter, again."

"Then let's review the games."

"I don't want to. I don't want to relive the trauma."

Mimoko then leapt over the bridge and landed in the boat next to Okisato. "We're going to review the game, yes?" she threateningly smiled.

"Someone save me," Okisato groaned as Mimoko began rowing the boat back to a dock.

"I guess while we're rowing, I'll inform you that the WWCF president approached me."

Okisato immediately snapped out of his daze and gave Mimoko his full attention.

"Well that did the trick."

"Inoue-senpai, President Redfield is a pretty ambitious guy. If you impress him, you'll likely become the next big celebrity of the chess world."

"I don't mind."

"Even though expectations will pile on you?"

"I'm doing this mainly for fun. If I can make a living off my success at chess, that's just an added bonus."

"I see, then best of luck against Miss Shousen. She's now very likely to be your next opponent considering the president himself is here."

...

As the pairings for the 4th round went up, Gyro shoved through the crowd to get a closer look. "Inoue... Inoue... ...!?" Gyro's face went pale as he saw Mimoko's pairing; she was up against Hagemi.

"My, seems we'll have an intriguing 4th round," a loud voice boomed.

Everyone turned to see Raymond approaching.

"YOU! Did you push for this!?" Gyro shouted.

"Hmm? Scared an even greater prodigy has come along? Well, there's nothing you can do to stop it. A new star is about to be born."

Gyro began shaking. "If she loses to Hagemi, she'll still be a threat, but at least she won't become an overnight prodigy. Yes! Hagemi's one of the top 10 players in the world. She can't beat her legitimately. If Hagemi throws-"

"Then I shall personally referee the match. If she is the real deal, like Hagemi claims, she WILL beat her at her best."

Gyro staggered into the playing room and watched as Hagemi and Mimoko sat down.

"Ah, sir, it seems your opponent had a bye so that means you get a free point," an arbiter smiled.

"Now I can't even stay in here," Gyro fumed as he left the room. He then pulled out his phone and checked the WWCF's website. "So the game is being streamed. No, NO! If she wins, there will be no stopping her. Even if she plays Peter in the final round- No, if she beats Hagemi he'll show INTEREST in her! But if she loses, it will be better than if she wins..."

"Hmm? why are you so pale? Shouldn't you be happy you get a free point?" Kuon asked as she exited the playing room.

"What happened with you?"

"Oh? I'm the one who took a bye for the round, see I just don't like playing in the 4th round. Everytime I do, I lose, so I might as well get a half point instead of nothing. Now, mind telling me why you're so pale?"

"If Mimoko Inoue can surpass Hagemi Shousen, she'll become the next big thing in the chess world. Then, that bastard Redfield will undoubtedly set in motion a gameplan to make her face the Ultima-master!"

"And?"

"If she beats the Ultima-master, I- I- I couldn't bear to live in such a world!"

"Why?"

"Because the Ultima-master was once my adopted father."

"Hoh, the Ultima-master is actually a man?"

"He was once, but then that bastard Redfield subjected him to that experiment! Now, the Ultima-master is all that remains of him."

"And why would beating him be so bad?"

"If the Ultima-master is beaten by someone not part of the Desperado league, it will shut down."

"Hmm? Then just make the girl part of the league."

"She would refuse. Even Peter Morphy is more like a quasi-member since he refused to register with a DESPER and does nothing to protect the Ultima-master other than playing those that have the potential to best it."

"I guess I count as a quasi-member too as do some of the others. So why do you care so much about the Ultima-master?"

"I suppose that would be easier if I told you my backstory. When I was young, I had an odd habit for killing birds and adorning things with their feathers. My parents sent me to a psychiatric ward to be fixed. It was there that I began playing chess, and where I was discovered by the Ultima-master. He was impressed with my chess and adopted me to give me a better life. It was through my time with him that I discovered the joys of chess. He cared not about my odd hobby, in fact he didn't discriminate at all against a good chess player no matter how bad of a person they were. However, that damn Redfield made him participate in that experiment. I'll never forgive him for that, or for taking in Hagemi, or for trying to make Mimoko Inoue the new face of chess."

"So the President is behind this. In that case, why not have a word with Governor Segawa. I'm sure she could solve things."

"Kuon, that woman is merely a politician, not a politician that is good at chess. A person blessed by Caïssa like Mimoko Inoue can only be eliminated at the chess board with the DESPER."

"But that's exactly why she'd be so intrigued. The Caïssa's blessing talented WWCF members can receive is truly a noteworthy phenomenon."

"In that case, the Desperado league already has someone far more powerful that can deal with her on that front, though I wish we had someone better."

"Ah yes, *that* man. Though what will you do if Mimoko Inoue beats Hagemi?"

"If that happens, I'll eliminate her before she gets her rating."

"How?"

"By making her die alongside Okisato Tanabe when I beat him," Gyro glared as he clutched his DESPER.

"I see, since she's unrated, she technically can't be protected from being subjected to

the death game, but once she gets that rating-

"Only someone higher rated than her would be able to subject her to the game. Otherwise, she could simply refuse and the DESPER would deactivate. Even forcing her to be a bargaining chip is only possible if she agrees or the one that activated the DESPER plays and is 500 points higher than her. Otherwise, she'd just be a normal spectator and the DESPER would not affect her, nor would the DESPER allow her to be part of any bets unless she agreed to them. This is my last chance, but maybe, just maybe, Hagemi will beat her, and at worst, she'll just be an elite player we'd have to worry about."

"I can see why you call your league the Desperado league. You're dead-set on salvaging things with a draw," Kuon snarled as she left.

Once alone, Kuon began to grit her teeth as she let out her frustration. "I couldn't beat Hagemi, now some other girl is going to throw me further down the ladder!? Hagemi, don't you dare lose I'M your only rival."

Chapter 30: Hagemi vs Mimoko

Hagemi smiled as she shook hands with Mimoko. "Don't disappoint me, I'm going all out."

"Don't worry, I'll play at my very best," Mimoko smiled.

As soon as the round began, Hagemi opened by moving her pawn to d4 followed by Mimoko moving her pawn to d5. Next, Hagemi moved her pawn to c4, prompting Mimoko to capture it with her d-pawn. Hagemi didn't seem phased as she moved her pawn to e3.

Mimoko then brought out her bishop to e6 as Hagemi moved her knight to f3. Mimoko then moved her pawn to c6 followed by Hagemi moving her pawn to e4.

"Seems like they're preparing their offenses," Raymond thought as Mimoko moved her pawn to b5.

Hagemi then brought her knight out to c3 followed by Mimoko bringing her knight to f6. Next, Hagemi moved her pawn to a3 while Mimoko moved her pawn to g6. On the next turn, Hagemi moved her bishop to e3 while Mimoko moved her bishop to g7.

Okisato won his game and as he was walking out, took a quick glance at Mimoko's game. "So Miss Shousen moved her bishop to e2, and Inoue-senpai followed by moving her pawn to a5. They're probably going to castle next turn. I'd love to stay and watch, but once you finish your game, you gotta leave the room," he thought.

Sure enough, both Hagemi and Mimoko castled on their next turn just as Okisato had predicted. Hagemi then moved her pawn to h3 while Mimoko moved her knight to a6.

"So they're still prepping," Raymond noted as Hagemi moved her knight to e5.

Mimoko promptly moved her queen to c7 while Hagemi moved her pawn to f4.

"Seems the slaughter will begin on the next turn," Raymond chuckled as Mimoko moved her a-rook to d8.

"Looks like it's time for battle," Hagemi thought as she moved her pawn to f5.

Mimoko immediately captured the pawn at f5 with her g-pawn prompting Hagemi to capture said piece with her e-pawn. Mimoko then moved her knight to d5, forcing Hagemi to move her queen to d2.

Undeterred, Mimoko captured the bishop at e3 with her knight as Hagemi immediately captured said knight with her queen. "So that's how you save your bishop," Hagemi thought as Mimoko moved her bishop to c8.

Hagemi then moved her a-rook to e1 followed by Mimoko moving her pawn to c5. She then smirked and promptly captured the pawn at b5 with her knight. Mimoko responded by capturing the pawn at d4 with her c-pawn.

"A queen exchange? Well, I'll be in the better spot afterwards," Hagemi thought as she captured the queen at c7 with her knight. Mimoko followed up by capturing the queen at e3 with her d-pawn. "Now let's see how you handle this," Hagemi thought as she moved her knight to c6.

Mimoko paused for a moment before nodding her head and capturing the knight at c7 with her knight.

"Hoh? Abandoning the rook? Well, guess you are like me... When I was younger," Hagemi smirked as she captured the rook at d8 with her knight.

Mimoko promptly captured the knight at d8 with her rook as Hagemi followed by capturing the pawn at c4 with her bishop. Mimoko then moved her bishop to h6 as Hagemi advanced her pawn to f6. With no other choice, Mimoko promptly captured the pawn at f6 with her e-pawn, as Hagemi captured said pawn with her rook.

"Seems I overestimated the girl. She's clearly at a disadvantage," Raymond thought as Mimoko moved her bishop to e6.

Hagemi then moved her pawn to b3, forcing Mimoko to think for a moment before opting to move her bishop to g5. Hagemi clicked her tongue and thought for a moment before moving her rook to f3. Mimoko then captured the bishop at c4 with her bishop prompting Hagemi to capture it with her b-pawn. Undeterred, Mimoko moved her knight to e6 while Hagemi responded by moving her rook to g3.

"Hmm, I wonder how she'll respond to this," Raymond thought as Mimoko moved her king to f8.

Hagemi thought for a moment before grinning and moving her rook to f3. Mimoko immediately moved her knight to d4, forcing Hagemi to move her f-rook to f1.

Mimoko quickly moved her pawn to e2 as Hagemi let out a chuckle. "Sorry, but that's not gonna work on me," she thought as she moved her rook to b1.

Mimoko didn't even need to think as she nodded and moved her knight to c2, causing Hagemi to frown.

"So she's finally realized her defeat is imminent," Peter thought as a smirk began to form on his face while he watched a livestream of the game.

"Oh seems she's disappointed by this so-called prodigy," Kuon sneered as she watched the broadcast of the game on her phone.

"She'd better be frowning because she's disappointed with Mimoko Inoue," Gyro nervously thought as he kept his eyes glued to the screen of his phone.

Hagemi let out a sigh. "Looks like I'm up against a wall, she thought as she moved her rook to f2.

"Check," Mimoko stated as she moved her rook to d1.

"Well, that's it for me. I doubt she's the kind of player that would botch this," Hagemi

thought as she captured the rook at d1 with her rook.

Mimoko then captured the rook at d1 with her e-pawn, and promoted the pawn to a queen forcing Hagemi to move her king to h2. She continued the attack by moving her queen to e1 prompting Hagemi to move her rook to f3.

A big smile began to form on Raymond's face as Mimoko moved her knight to d4. "Beautiful, Hagemi's judgment was right on the money, the chess world is about to enter a glorious new era," he thought as Hagemi moved her rook to d3.

Mimoko then moved her knight to e2 while Hagemi moved her pawn to h4.

As soon as Mimoko moved her pawn to f5, Hagemi smiled and moved her rook to d8. "Guess this is my last ditch effort... And it failed," she thought as Mimoko captured the rook at d8 with her bishop. "Whelp, mate in two," she happily thought as she moved her pawn to g3.

Mimoko immediately captured the pawn at g3, forcing Hagemi to move her king to h1.

"Checkmate," Mimoko declared as she moved her queen to g1.

Raymond immediately began applauding. "Bravo! You've performed spectacularly, Mimoko Inoue. I wish you the best of luck in the final round," he grinned as he headed out.

Gyro went pale as he stared at the livestream. "S- She beat Hagemi... Then there's no other choice. I don't care about the punishments, I'll do whatever it takes to ensure Mimoko Inoue never threatens us ever again!" he thought as he pulled out his DESPER.

The full game:

White: Hagemi Shousen (2808) Black: Mimoko Inoue (unrated)

1. d4 d5
2. c4 dxc4
3. e3 Be6
4. Nf3 c6
5. e4 b5
6. Nc3 Nf6
7. a3 g6
8. Be3 Bg7
9. Be2 a5
10. O-O O-O
11. h3 Na6
12. Ne5 Qc7
13. f4 Rad8
14. f5 gxf5
15. exf5 Nd5
16. Qd2 Nxe3
17. Qxe3 Bc8
18. Rae1 c5
19. Nxb5 cxd4
20. Nxc7 dxe3
21. Nc6 Nxc7
22. Nxd3 Rxd8

23. Bxc4 Bh6
24. f6 exf6
25. Rxf6 Be6
26. b3 Bg5
27. Rf3 Bxc4
28. bxc4 Ne6
29. Rg3 Kf8
30. Rf3 Nd4
31. Rff1 e2
32. Rb1 Nc2
33. Rf2 Rd1+
34. Rxd1 exd1=Q+
35. Kh2 Qe1
36. Rf3 Nd4
37. Rd3 Ne2
38. h4 f5
39. Rd8+ Bxd8
40. g3 Qxg3+
41. Kh1 Qg1#

Chapter 31: Showdown on the lagoon

Gyro anxiously paced outside the playing room. As soon as an arbiter exited, he approached them. "Is it possible to pair me up against Okisato Tanabe for the final round!?" he frantically asked.

"Well, if that's what you want, I'll allow it," Raymond's voice boomed as he approached the two. "Oh, and feel free to use your DESPER. Make it a grand spectacle. Why, I'll even arrange for you to play on the grand stage in the center of the lagoon."

"I'll hold you to those words," Gyro glared as he stormed away.

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As the time for the final round drew near, Gyro confronted Mimoko. "Mr. Gunnerson, why are you blocking my path?" Mimoko asked.

"Let me just ask you, will you swear allegiance to the Ultima-master? Do so and all your friends will be safe!" Gyro desperately smiled.

"No, I refuse to- MMPH!?"

"Then you will die along with the oni-tiger," Gyro glared as he chloroformed Mimoko. He then proceeded to bound her with zip ties and gag her with a piece of tape before dragging her away as the sound of footsteps echoed behind him.

Gyro ran until he reached the central lagoon within the hotel. There, he turned to face the one that had been chasing after him.

"Let her go," Okisato glared.

"You know the only way that's going to happen, right?" Gyro sneered as he activated his

DESPER.

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In the playing room, Yuusuke shuddered as he sat across from Zanni. "Now, how about we play for real, oh and should you lose, you'll agree to submit to your original punishment, the old fashioned way," Zanni chuckled as he secretly activated his DESPER.

"Then if I win, you destroy that DESPER thing and never hurt people ever again," Yuusuke trembled.

Zanni stared for a few seconds before bursting into laughter. "Such a simpleton," he snickered as he placed a skeletal human arm on the table.

"The hell is THAT!?"

"Oh, once a town councilor. See, I grew up in a hamlet wrought with turmoil. No one could get along and discriminated against each other for the smallest of reasons. Why, some were discriminated against just for having freckles. I, being the humanitarian that I am, sought to fix the problem. The solution I arrived at was simple; if people discriminated against each other because they are different from one another, then I should make them look all the same."

Skeletons suddenly emerged from the now watery floor eliciting a scream from Yuusuke. Yuusuke then looked around and noticed he was no longer in the playing room, but instead on a boat in a dark firefly-lit swamp. Mud-covered chainsaws and skeletal arms adorned the surrounding trees. All the other participants in the tournament found themselves on boats along with the arbiters and Raymond.

"Everyone, remain calm, you are all just spectators. Upon completion of your match, you will be allowed to leave," Raymond stated.

"People better be able to enter too," Peter glared as he read his book.

"Naturally, though I advise all of you to enjoy the scenery while you can, it will also vanish once I best the boy," Zanni chuckled.

"Y- You activated that thing!" Yuusuke cried.

"Indeed I did."

"Is everyone here-"

"Oh no, the DESPER itself prevents me from subjecting everyone else to the same punishment as you should you lose. If I was the highest-rated player here then maybe, but I believe that Professor Skaberghast mentioned it couldn't be used for mass-murder, and by my own experience I can verify his hypothesis."

"The hell!?"

"Oh, Professor Skaberghast is one of the scientists that made the DESPER. If he says that's how the device works, then it must be true."

"Why should I believe you!?"

"See for yourself."

Sure enough, some players that finished were immediately whisked towards a pair of doors. Upon reaching them, they were free to leave. The arbiter that had exited with them, then reentered the room and was taken to the results table by boat.

Zanni immediately began chuckling. "See, there is nothing to worry about, well at least for everyone but you. Now, let me continue my story. See, all humans have a skeleton, so at a

town hall, I proposed everyone skin themselves to the bone, thus eliminating the need for discrimination in the town. Everyone united hand in hand against me. It was splendid, but I knew it wouldn't last. Thus, I killed everyone there and skinned them all myself. However, it was then that I discovered the delicacy that is human meat. I also found it was hard to store all the skeletons, so I decided to just save an arm. That way, I can still make everyone join together hand-in-hand as I watch over the peace conference."

Yuusuke went pale with horror. "You're f***** insane! What's wrong with you!?"

"Nothing, I simply wish for world peace and a good meal. Upon bringing my town to peace, I then became acquainted with the Desperado league. Gyro-sama showed me the power of the DESPER and it was then that inspiration struck me. By becoming an elite chess player, I could use the DESPER to bring about world peace, and be fed for life."

"Yeah, you're never hurting ANYONE again when I win!"

"My, you think you can best me? My rating is now 2043 and I will also not give you any freebies like last time. Afterall, you've properly ripened so your despair will only taste better."

"You creep. I'm not gonna lose! I practiced, I reviewed everything. I'm gonna beat you thanks to Inoue's help!"

Zanni began to scowl. "So she is even focused on nurturing others. Not even Hagemi was like that according to Gyro-sama. I now completely echo his sentiments, Mimoko Inoue must die."

"W- What do you-"

"Gyro-sama should be having his match around this time too. And when he beats the oni-tiger, the oni-tiger along with Mimoko Inoue will die! But first, let's have our rematch."

Yuusuke trembled, but clenched his fist. "Yeah, bring it you bird-masked creep! This time I'm gonna win!"

Chapter 32: Learning from history

Yuusuke trembled as Zanni opened by moving his pawn to e4. "No, I can beat this guy," he thought as he moved his pawn to d5.

"My, this looks familiar," Zanni chuckled as he captured the pawn at d5 with his e-pawn. "Scandinavian defense: Mieses-Kotrc variation, yes?" he chuckled as Yuusuke captured the pawn at d5 with his queen.

"I just like the setup," Yuusuke mumbled as Zanni moved his knight to c3.

"I do too, it's easy to predict and counter," Zanni chuckled as Yuusuke moved his queen to e5. "Next you'll go knight f6, yes?" Zanni sneered as he moved his bishop to e2.

"Yeah, and you'll go knight f3," Yuusuke glared as he moved his knight to f6.

"Well, it is the most efficient way to beat you," Zanni chuckled as he moved his knight to f3.

Yuusuke then moved his queen to e6 as Zanni castled on his king's side. He then took a deep breath before moving his knight to c6.

"My it is just like last time. But I need to be sure," Zanni thought as he moved his pawn to b3. As Yuusuke moved his pawn to g5, Zanni burst into laughter. "Oh Boy, it is just like our last match. Seems you failed to learn the most important lesson of history."

"What's that?"

"That history repeats itself," Zanni maniacally grinned as he captured the pawn at g5 with his knight.

"But isn't that a good thing, then we'll draw," Yuusuke said as he moved his queen to e5.

"My how innocent, but then again, you are a scared fool with a deluded sense of justice," Zanni sneered as he moved his bishop to c4. "And now, he'll go to e6 as-"

Smack!

Zanni stared in disbelief as Yuusuke captured his knight at g5 with his queen. "Well guess history ain't repeating itself then, cause now I'm gonna win," Yuusuke grinned.

"Oh what a fool, a queen for a knight, why- ...!"

Zanni's smile began to fade as he realized there was nothing he could capture Yuusuke's queen with. "Damn him, he baited me. 'I shouldn't have moved my bishop out', is what he probably thinks I'm thinking. What a fool, the queen's capture is only delayed," he maniacally thought as he moved his pawn to d4.

Yuusuke began to tremble and moved his queen to f5. "Hope I didn't screw up," he thought."

"Now, let's scare him," Zanni thought as he moved his pawn to g4.

This prompted Yuusuke to immediately capture the pawn at g4 with his knight.

"Oh? Then how about THIS!?" Zanni sneered as he moved his bishop to d3.

Yuusuke quickly moved his queen to h5 as Zanni glared and moved his pawn to h3.

"I just gotta remember what Inoue taught me," Yuusuke thought as he captured the pawn at h3 with his queen.

"Think I don't see what you're doing!?" Zanni glared as he moved his bishop to f4.

Yuusuke let out a smile as he moved his knight to e3, causing Zanni to burst into laughter. "Oh look at you. The smile of a stupid child that thinks they accomplished something, when all they did was make a mess of things. You were supposed to first move your rook to g8, THEN move the knight. Oh well, there are no take backs, do agonize over my teachings when you're ground into burger meat," he sneered as he captured the knight at e3 with his f-pawn.

Tears began to pour down Yuusuke's face. "Nah, I'm almost there, just gotta pull this off, and you lose," he smiled as he moved his rook to g8.

Zanni stared at the board and scowled. "So you think you've got me, well I can easily sacrifice a diamond if it means I'll survive," he snarled as he moved his queen to g4.

Yuusuke happily captured the queen at g4 with his rook as Zanni moved his king to f2. Rather than continue the pursuit of the king, Yuusuke instead opted to move his pawn to e5.

"Like you'll get my bishop," Zanni scoffed as he captured the pawn at e5 with his d-pawn.

"Now I've got you," Yuusuke tearfully smiled as he captured the bishop at f4 with his rook.

Zanni once again burst into laughter. "You're even more deluded when you're smiling! That's another wasted piece for you!" he sneered as he captured the rook at f4 with his e-pawn.

"Nah, that rook wasn't wasted, it was sacrificed!" Yuusuke proclaimed as he moved his bishop to c5.

"You think I'm in danger, boy?" Zanni scoffed as he moved his king to e1.

"Yeah, mate in 5, check," Yuusuke tearfully grinned as he moved his queen to e3.

"Mate in 5!?! Don't spout such delusions!" Zanni scoffed as he moved his king to d1.

"It ain't delusions, it's a fact, now say hello to my favorite piece on the board, the bishop!" Yuusuke shouted as he moved his bishop to g4.

Now reality finally began to set in as Zanni began to go pale. "No, I won't lose!" he trembled as he moved his bishop to e2.

"How bout a flex, check!" Yuusuke grinned as he wiped away his tears and castled on the queen's side.

Zanni began to sweat buckets. "No, NO! Where can I move!?! I can't lose, if I do, I'll suffer a horrible prolonged death attempting to destroy the DESPER! AH, THAT'S IT! I offer a draw," Zanni nervously smiled as he moved his knight to d5.

"Thought you said the only way to draw was to either trigger a repetition rule or get a stalemate," Yuusuke glared as he captured the knight at d5 with his rook.

Zanni went pale. "Yes, b- But if we agree to draw, then we would just need to move our pieces accordingly. When I move my king to e1, just move your queen to g3, then I move my rook to f2, then you move your queen to g1, I my rook to g2, and we repeat until the repetition rule," Zanni nervously smiled as he moved his king to e1.

"Why would I spare a scumbag like you? You tried to kill me. Now accept your punishment to never hurt anyone ever again and destroy that DESPER thingy, CHECKMATE!" Yuusuke glared as he captured the bishop at e2 with his queen.

Zanni let out a terrified scream as the surroundings returned to normal. His body then began moving on its own as he picked up the DESPER and began punching it while walking out. His hand quickly began to bleed, but he was unable to stop punching the DESPER with all his might.

"No, NO! THIS IS A TORTUROUS EXECUTION! I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU'D BE A HERO!"

"Please don't shout in the playing room, sir!" an arbiter glared.

"Now don't be too harsh on him, he is going to suffer a fate worse than death," Raymond snickered as he approached Zanni. "Now allow my subordinates to fly you to a nice environment where you can attempt to destroy that DESPER."

Zanni screamed, but was unable to resist as he was dragged away by WWCF officials.

"Why was he so scared? Once he destroys that thing, he'll be free from the punishment. Though I guess he probably is mad that he won't be able to use that ever again, or hurt anyone ever again for the rest of his life," Yuusuke thought as he headed out.

"Oi Yuusuke," a voice angrily whispered.

Yuusuke turned and let out a yelp as he saw Hagemi standing right behind him.

"I take it you won. I finished and was taken out of the room. I wanted to ask you, have you seen Inoue-chan? Her opponent's been waiting and time's runnin' out," Hagemi nervously whispered as she gestured over towards Peter.

Peter angrily turned the pages of his book as the move clock for Mimoko slowly ticked down. "Gunnerson, I hope you've made your peace, because if you win against Okisato Tanabe and kill Mimoko Inoue along with him, I'll force you to be my chess sandbag for the rest of your life! Okisato Tanabe, don't you DARE lose!"

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"Ngh? MMPH!?"

Mimoko opened her eyes to find herself bound, gagged, and perilously dangling over an electrified lagoon via a crane hook. She then noticed a tiny platform hovering above the lagoon, and on it were Gyro and Okisato seated at a chessboard.

"Ah, you're awake. Now, let me tell you the stakes. The loser shall be plunged into the electric lagoon and electrocuted to death. Naturally, you will also fall into the river and die upon Okisato Tanabe's defeat!" Gyro cackled

"But if you stalemate, everything's null and void, and you're in a heap of trouble," Okisato glared.

"You think I'll allow you two to live!?"

"Well, in that case, I guess you are irredeemable. I'll make sure you lose," Okisato murderously glared.

The full game:

White: Dr. Arlecchino Zanni (2043) Black: Yuusuke Shousen (1487)

1. e4 d5
2. exd5 Qxd5
3. Nc3 Qe5+
4. Be2 Nf6
5. Nf3 Qe6
6. O-O Nc6
7. b3 g5
8. Nxg5 Qe5
9. Bc4 Qxg5
10. d4 Qf5
11. g4 Nxg4
12. Bd3 Qh5
13. h3 Qxh3
14. Bf4 Ne3
15. fxe3 Rg8+
16. Qg4 Rxg4+
17. Kf2 e5
18. dxe5 Rxf4
19. exf4 Bc5+
20. Ke1 Qe3+
21. Kd1 Bg4+
22. Be2 O-O-O+
23. Nd5 Rxd5+
24. Ke1 Qxe2#

Chapter 33: Desperado

Okisato opened the game by moving his pawn to e4 while Gyro moved his pawn to d6. He followed by moving his pawn to d4 while Gyro opted to move his knight to f6. Okisato then brought his knight out to c3 followed by Gyro moving his pawn to g6.

"I bet he's going to move a bishop to g7," Okisato thought as he moved his knight to f3. Sure enough, Gyro moved his bishop to g7, exactly as he had predicted.

Okisato quickly moved his bishop to c4 followed by Gyro castling on the king's side. Okisato castled next, setting the stage for the oncoming battle.

"Now we begin the advance," Gyro thought as he moved his pawn to c6.

Okisato shrugged and moved his pawn to d5.

"Amateure," Gyro scoffed as he moved his bishop to g4.

"No, it's amateurish to think that would work. Back to d7 you go," Okisato said as he moved his pawn to h3.

Gyro clicked his tongue in frustration as he did just as Okisato said and moved his bishop to d7.

Mimoko meanwhile watched the game from above. "Tanabe-kun, please don't make any unnecessary moves. This guy will destroy you if you do," she thought.

"Now time to get down and dirty," Okisato thought as he moved his pawn to e5.

Gyro immediately captured the pawn at e5 with his d-pawn, followed by Okisato capturing the pawn at e5 with his knight.

"Fool, I've got the advantage," Gyro thought as he captured the pawn at d5 with his knight.

"No, I'll still win the skirmish," Okisato thought as he captured the knight at d5 with his knight.

"Well that's a free knight for me," Gyro snickered as he captured the knight at e5 with his bishop. "And soon, that other knight will be mine.

Okisato paused for a moment before moving his knight to the safety of e3.

Gyro scoffed and quickly moved his pawn to h5, followed by Okisato moving his rook to e1. "I think I'll frighten him a bit," Gyro thought as he moved his bishop to c8.

"Talk about smoke and mirrors. I'm not going to trade queens, nor will I give you the chance to," Okisato glared as he moved his bishop to d3.

"It's called limiting your movements. Do you see these fine gyroscopes constantly spinning atop me? I'm able to do this because I can control their movement to a tee," Gyro stated as he moved his bishop to e6.

"Sure, keep em moving," Okisato shrugged as he moved his knight to c4.

"They do not affect my concentration, rather they strengthen it," Gyro grinned as he moved his bishop to g7.

Okisato nodded and moved his knight to e5, not giving a care about Gyro's explanation.

"Boy, I control the board," Gyro scoffed as he moved his queen to c7 as Okisato quickly moved his bishop to f4. "You think I don't see you eyeing my rook? Well I'm not going to break my formation," Gyro angrily thought as he moved his knight to d7.

"GOT HIM!" Okisato sadistically smiled in his mind as he captured the pawn at g6 with his knight.

"So when cornered, you settle for killing pawns. Well a knight- ...! ...Tch! Damn you,"

Gyro glared as he moved his queen out of the bishop's path to d8.

"Heh? I thought you weren't going to let me have that rook," Okisato sneered as he captured the rook at f8 with his knight.

"Y- You just- ... You weasel, so you have a hidden side too," Gyro glared as he captured the knight at f8 with his knight.

"Guess I'll go chuuni mode for this then. Check, Feather-bastard," Okisato snickered as he moved his bishop to h7.

Gyro glared before suddenly widening his eyes in shock as he gazed at the board. "Damn you. DAMN YOU YOU PIECE OF SHIT!" he roared as he captured the bishop at h7 with his knight.

"Now we shall make a trade good sir, oh wait you're not a good sir, you're an ugly feathered bastard in CHECK!"

Gyro gritted his teeth in frustration as he captured the queen at d8 with his rook while Okisato grinned and moved his a-rook to d1. As soon as Okisato took his hand off the piece, Gyro slammed his rook into the rook at d1, sending the piece flying towards Okisato.

"Whoa, you getting shocked already?" Okisato taunted as he caught the piece and captured the rook at d1 with his rook.

Gyro let out a frustrated roar as he captured the pawn at b2 with his bishop. The tables were quickly turning against him, however, the game was far from over.

"Tanabe-kun, this is where you absolutely CANNOT mess up!" Mimoko thought as she began to tremble.

"Now comes the slog," Okisato thought as he moved his bishop to h6.

Gyro's only viable move was to move his knight to f6, which he did. Then, Okisato began his attack by moving his rook to d8, putting the king in check. Gyro quickly moved his king to h7, forcing Okisato to move his bishop to the safety of g5. But it wasn't safe for long as Gyro slammed his king down on g6. Okisato countered though by moving his bishop to e3.

Gyro let out a sigh of relief as he began regaining his composure. "Seems he can't mate me with just a rook and a bishop. I've still got both my bishops and a knight; pieces that are versatile enough for me to turn this around. Besides, if we add up the points of the captured pieces, I'm ahead. The advantage is mine!" Gyro maliciously thought as he moved his pawn to b6.

"Seems I got excited too soon. There's still a ton of clean-up to do," Okisato thought as his normal expressionless persona returned while he moved his rook to a8.

"Knights can be one of the most versatile pieces on the board," Gyro snickered as he moved his knight to d5.

"Yeah, knights are a pain," Okisato growled as he moved his bishop to d2.

"You play sloppily, that's why you're losing. Well, perhaps when you're electrocuted to death, you'll see this failure flash before your eyes multiple times, along with Mimoko Inoue's disappointed look. Oh, how agonizing it must be to be a damsel with your life resting in the hands of this idiot" Gyro sneered as he moved his bishop to f5 and glanced up at Mimoko.

Mimoko responded with an angry muffled grunt as Okisato stared in silence for a few seconds before moving his pawn to c4.

"What a waste, I'll snuff out your petty pawns," Gyro snickered as he moved his knight to

c3. "...! NO! I-"

"You took your hand off it, so the move stands," Okisato grinned as his sadistic persona began to bubble to the surface once more as he captured the knight at c3 with his bishop.

"Oh? Did you really think I'd be upset about THAT!?" Gyro maniacally cackled as he captured the bishop at c3 with his bishop. "Now you only have 1 rook while I have two bishops. Mate is imminent."

"Nah, I feel relieved that the knight is gone. I can easily handle two dumb bishops," Okisato calmly stated as he captured the pawn at a7 with his rook.

"So now you're pawn sniping. Futile," Gyro scoffed as he moved his king to f6 while Okisato silently moved his rook to c7. "It won't work, I see what you're doing," Gyro said as he moved his bishop to e4.

"Pawns can be VERY useful," Okisato glared as he moved his pawn to f3.

"Not against two bishops," Gyro scoffed as he moved his bishop to e5.

"Like I said, pawns are very useful, even your own," Okisato stated as he moved his rook to b7.

"Well time for some payback then. Check!" Gyro glared as he moved his bishop to d4. Okisato sighed and moved his king to h1. A confident smile began to form on Gyro's face as he moved his bishop to g6.

"Prideful before the fall," Okisato thought to himself as he moved his rook to c7.

"Intending to advance those pawns? Not happening," Gyro scoffed as he moved his bishop to c5.

"Check," Okisato glared as he captured the pawn at c6 with his rook.

"You really thought you had me? Well if you want something done right, you've gotta do it yourself," Gyro sneered as he moved his king to e5.

Okisato immediately moved his pawn to a4 eliciting a malicious smile from Gyro. "HAH! I told you your pawns would never make it," Gyro laughed as he moved his bishop to d3.

"Really?" Okisato asked as he moved his pawn to a5.

"Yes, go ahead and take the pawn! It will never reach my side of the board!" Gyro sneered as he moved his bishop to d6.

"Guess you like eating your own words. Now I win," Okisato calmly stated as he captured the pawn at b6 with his pawn.

"I think YOU'RE the one eating humble pie. What was that about my pawns being useful again?" Gyro snickered as he moved his king to d4.

Okisato pondered for a bit before opting to move his pawn to c5.

"Tanabe-kun," Mimoko thought as tears began to well up in her eyes.

"I bet he expects me to capture that pawn with my bishop. If I did that, he'd sacrifice his rook and eventually promote his pawn into a queen. I can deal with just a rook, but a queen would be troublesome. So I'll go with a safer move. Seems Mimoko Inoue can see it, my imminent victory, along with her death!" Gyro maliciously thought as he moved his king to d5.

Suddenly, Okisato burst into maniacal laughter. "Oh, you Desperado folks really are stupid. Guess you'll be getting two more big shocks before you die!" he laughed as he captured the bishop at d6 with his pawn.

"Why are you- ...!"

Gyro immediately went pale as he realized he was screwed.

"Heh? What's wrong? Thought you still had one bishop left," Okisato taunted.

The toy gyroscopes that had been spinning on Gyro's shoulders quickly fell to the ground with a thud as Gyro began to tremble.

"No, no, NO! I WON'T LOSE!" Gyro shouted as he captured the pawn at d6 with his e-pawn. "Now, move that damn pawn up! I'll deal with the queen!" Gyro frantically thought as Okisato moved his rook to c7. "NOOOOOO! I CAN'T LOSE! I WON'T LOSE!" Gyro frantically shouted as he moved his bishop to e4.

"Sorry, your bishop isn't worth capturing," Okisato maliciously grinned as he advanced his pawn to b7.

"EAT YOUR DAMN WORDS, TRASH!" Gyro shouted as he captured the pawn at f3 with his bishop.

"Fine, I'll slaughter you," Okisato glared with murderous intent as he captured the bishop at f3 with his g-pawn.

Gyro let out a terrified yelp, but managed to muster the strength to move his pawn to f5.

"Now you're dead; queen," Okisato glared as he moved his pawn to b8 and promoted it to a queen as Gyro clicked his tongue and moved his king to e5. "Sorry, no stalemate for you. Check," Okisato glared as he moved his queen to b2.

"I WON'T LOSE!" Gyro cried as he moved his king to f4.

"You're gonna drag this out. I hate a dragged out game," Okisato glared as he moved his king to g2.

Gyro quickly moved his king to e3, followed by Okisato moving his rook to c3. Without thinking, Gyro then moved his king to d4, followed by Okisato putting him in check again by moving his queen to b4.

As Gyro moved his king to e5, Okisato let out a sigh. "Guess your pawns can be a pain," he grumbled as he moved his queen to b5, putting the king in check once more.

Gyro moved his king to f6, prompting Okisato to move his queen to d5. A look of insanity spread across Gyro's face as he moved his pawn to h4.

"Is he that deluded that he thinks I'll stalemate him?" Okisato thought as he captured the pawn at d6 with his queen, putting Gyro's king in check and forcing him to move it to g5. "Now I gotta be cautious," Okisato thought as he moved his rook to c4.

Of the two possible moves he could make, Gyro opted to move the king to h5.

"Now I've got him," Okisato thought as he moved his queen to f8.

"I won't lose! I'm gonna DRAW!" Gyro cackled as he moved his king to g5.

"No, you're losing and getting mated. Check," Okisato glared as he moved his pawn to f4.

Now reality finally began to sink in as Gyro began to go pale and sweat an ocean. He nearly toppled his king by accident when he moved it to g6. "Was Mimoko Inoue crying back then because she foresaw all this!? No, even if she could, there was no guarantee the oni-tiger would be able to pull it- What am I thinking, she saw the path to victory! Damn her, DAMN HER!"

"Mate in three, check," Okisato glared as he moved his rook to c6 as Gyro trembled and moved his king to h7.

"Check, one move left," Okisato glared as he moved his queen to f7.

"Maybe he'll mess up. Maybe he'll mess up," Gyro uttered as one last grip of delusion consumed him as he moved his king to h8.

Okisato slammed his rook down on c8, before he allowed his sadistic persona to consume him. "CHECKMATE BA-KA!" he maniacally laughed.

The delusional smile plastered on Gyro's face instantly turned into a terrified frown. "No, NO! I CAN'T LOSE! THE ULTIMA-MASTER THE-"

Gyro suddenly felt time slowing down as a trap door opened beneath him, and dumped him towards the electrified water below. "So this is the end. I can only hope my colleagues prevent Mimoko Inoue from playing the Ultima-master, or that the Ultima-master can beat her or at least survive with a stalemate. I guess I should take solace in the fact that I will never have to live in the Mimoko Inoue era of chess," he thought.

With a mighty splash, broken by a loud scream, Gyro fell into the electric lagoon and was electrocuted to death. As his corpse floated away, the DESPER let out a puff of smoke as Okisato leapt off the vanishing platform and onto a walkway. Mimoko suddenly felt herself falling and let out a muffled scream before being caught in Okisato's arms.

"How'd I do, Inoue-senpai?" Okisato asked as he ripped the tape of Mimoko's mouth.

"For now, I'm just happy you won," Mimoko tearfully smiled.

The full game:

White: Okisato Tanabe (2434) Black: Gyro (Gunther Gunnerson) (2559)

1. e4 d6
2. d4 Nf6
3. Nc3 g6
4. Nf3 Bg7
5. Bc4 O-O
6. O-O c6
7. d5 Bg4
8. h3 Bd7
9. e5 dxe5
10. Nxe5 Nxd5
11. Nxd5 Bxe5
12. Ne3 h5
13. Re1 Bc8
14. Bd3 Be6
15. Nc4 Bg7
16. Ne5 Qc7
17. Bf4 Nd7
18. Nxg6 Qd8
19. Nxf8 Nxf8
20. Bh7+ Nxh7
21. Qxd8+ Rxd8
22. Rad1 Rxd1

23. Rxd1 Bxb2
24. Bh6 Nf6
25. Rd8+ Kh7
26. Bg5 Kg6
27. Be3 b6
28. Ra8 Nd5
29. Bd2 Bf5
30. c4 Nc3
31. Bxc3 Bxc3
32. Rxa7 Kf6
33. Rc7 Be4
34. f3,Be5
35. Rb7 Bd4+
36. Kh1 Bg6
37. Rc7 Bc5
38. Rxc6+ Ke5
39. a4 Bd3
40. a5 Bd6
41. axb6 Kd4
42. c5 Kd5
43. cxd6 exd6
44. Rc7 Be4
45. b7 Bxf3
46. gxf3 f5
47. b8=Q Ke5
48. Qb2+ Kf4
49. Kg2 Ke3
50. Rc3+ Kd4
51. Qb4+ Ke5
52. Qb5+ Kf6
53. Qd5 h4
54. Qxd6+ Kg5
55. Rc4 Kh5
56. Qf8 Kg5
57. f4+ Kg6
58. Rc6+ Kh7
59. Qf7+ Kh8
60. Rc8#

Chapter 34: Millisecond chess

"Are you alright, Inoue-senpai?" Okisato asked as he untied Mimoko.

"Well, I guess I am still in shock, but otherwise I'm fine. ...! The match! Has the final round started!?"

"Uh... Oh, we're gonna be late."

"Then let's get a move on! I'm NOT going to forfeit because of this!"

...

In the playing room, Peter scowled as he read his book. "Damn you, Gunnerson. She was beginning to pique my interest with her win over Hagemi Shousen. Now thanks to you, I may never get to play her. You know how much I hate winning by time forfeits."

Just then, Mimoko burst into the room and quickly walked towards Peter. Okisato, meanwhile, slowly walked up to the results table, where Raymond was seated along with some arbiters.

"No need, I know you won," Raymond nodded.

"So you approved the match then. Well, I actually wanted to ask about Inoue-senpai."

"Sorry, rules are rules. We're also on a strict timetable. Blame yourself for not playing fast enough to give her more time."

At the board, Mimoko smiled as she sat down and moved her pawn to e4. "I'm sorry I'm late, I was a bit tied up."

"Then make up for it on the board, and don't lose on time," Peter stated as he closed his book and moved his pawn to e5.

Even though there was only a minute left on Mimoko's clock, it didn't seem to phase her as both her and Peter began moving pieces as fast as humanly possible.

The arbiter watching struggled to keep track of the moves. "Knight f3, knight c6, d4, e captures d4, Bishop c4, knight f6, e5, d5, Bishop b5, knight e4, castle on the king's side, bishop g4, queen captures d4, bishop c5, bishop captures c6, b captures c6, queen d3, castle on the king's- UGH, I can't keep up."

"Then let me assist you," Raymond nodded as he walked over and began doing a rapid play-by-play commentary. "Knight c3, bishop captures f3, queen captures f3, f5, knight captures e4, f captures e4, queen c3, queen e7, bishop e3, bishop b6, a4, bishop captures e3, f captures e3, c5, b3, rook-a d8, rook-a d1, c6, rook f4, rook captures f4, e captures f4, c4, b captures c4, d4, queen h3, e3-"

"I can't even process what the president is saying!"

"Queen g4, rook b8, a5, c5, e6, h5, queen f5, rook e8, queen captures h5, queen captures e6, rook b1, e2, rook e1, g6, queen f3, queen captures c4, f5, rook e3, queen g4, queen captures c2, queen captures g6, king f8, a6, queen e4, queen d6, queen e7, queen h6, queen g7."

"Hmm, if I had more time, I could draw this out, but for now, this is all I can do," Mimoko thought as she moved her queen back to d6.

Peter immediately moved his queen e7. "So this is as far as we can go. Should I draw this out, no there is a 5 second delay on the timer. It will become a war of attrition, but I'm sure she would still trigger a draw either way. I suppose I'll make things easy, assuming she intends to draw," he thought.

Sure enough, Mimoko repeated her moves.

"A draw it is then," Peter thought as the threefold repetition rule triggered. "Splendid, you have great potential. I look forward to our future matches," he smiled as he shook hands with Mimoko.

"That really was intense, if only I had more time, then we could have had a proper match," Mimoko smiled.

"Gunnerson is lucky he's dead, otherwise I would have scorned him myself. Well, until our next match, Mimoko Inoue."

"Impressive, despite the disadvantage, she rallied to pull off a draw by repetition. Not bad, Mimoko Inoue, I look forward to the blitz tournament next week," Raymond thought.

"I didn't even leave and it's over. Impressive as always, Inoue-senpai," Okisato nodded.

"That man seemed like a good opponent, was he the Peter Morphy you mentioned?" Mimoko asked as she walked up to Okisato.

"Yes, and now you've surpassed me. I've never even gotten a draw against him."

"Well, then I'll be sure to teach you so that you can one day win against him."

"That's our Inoue-senpai for you. Hmm, I wonder how high your rating's gonna be. Mine should also go up too."

"Let's first meet with the others and debrief, there's still time before the awards ceremony."

The full game:

White: Mimoko Inoue (unrated) Black: Peter Morphy (2880)

1. e4 e5
2. Nf3 Nc6
3. d4 exd4
4. Bc4 Nf6
5. e5 d5
6. Bb5 Ne4
7. O-O Bg4
8. Qxd4 Bc5
9. Bxc6+ bxc6
10. Qd3 O-O
11. Nc3 Bxf3
12. Qxf3 f5
13. Nxe4 fxe4
14. Qc3 Qe7
15. Be3 Bb6
16. a4 Bxe3
17. fxe3 c5
18. b3 Rad8
19. Rad1 c6
20. Rf4 Rxf4
21. exf4 c4
22. bxc4 d4

23. Qh3 e3
 24. Qg4 Rb8
 25. a5 c5
 26. e6 h5
 27. Qf5 Re8
 28. Qxh5 Qxe6
 29. Rb1 e2
 30. Re1 g6
 31. Qf3 Qxc4
 32. f5 Re3
 33. Qg4 Qxc2
 34. Qxg6+ Kf8
 35. a6 Qe4
 36. Qd6+ Qe7
 37. Qh6+ Qg7
 38. Qd6+ Qe7
 39. Qh6+ Qg7
 40. Qd6+ Qe7 (draw by repetition)

Chapter 35: A new era of chess

After meeting up, all the present chess club members went over how they did. Okisato ended the tournament with 4 wins, resulting in him getting 4 points. Yuusuke managed to break even with 3 wins, netting him 3 points.

As for the junior members, Numakawa managed to win only his final game, leaving him with just 1½ points thanks to his 1st round draw. Yuzuha managed to get 2½ points thanks to winning two games and drawing one. That just left Rodeo who managed to net 2 wins, leaving his final score at 2 points.

As for Maida, she managed to get 2 wins and 2 draws, leaving her with 3 points. It looked like Mimoko was the big winner with her 4½ points, however...

"LOL I went 5-0!" Iori gloated.

"You were in an easier section, though," Yuusuke glared.

"Still did better than you!"

"Well, you'll probably end up having to play in the open section next tournament considering your rating will likely jump to the point where it will be too high for the intermediate section," Okisato noted.

Just then, Utami approached the group with her head hung low. "I'm sorry, Mimoko-sama. I couldn't do anything."

"It's OK, you're supposed to have fun above all else-"

"But I couldn't win 1st place, I'm a disgrace to you."

"Utami-chan, how did your games-"

"Ah, it says she won her last 3 games. That plus her second round draw gives her 3½ points," Okisato stated as he checked the rankings.

"That's amazing!"

"B- But I didn't win 1st, Iori-chan did, so she's the one worthy of being by your side."

"Uh, I'm not jumpin' into any love triangles, I'm just the G.O.A.T. when it comes to chess," Iori gloated.

"Doubtful," nearly everyone said in unison.

"Don't worry, Utami-chan, I'm very proud of how you did. Now let's all go to the awards ceremony," Mimoko smiled.

Utami tearfully nodded in approval.

...

At the awards ceremony, Raymond himself took center stage. "Today is a momentous day in the history of chess. But before that, I suppose we should get the other achievements out of the way. First off, the winner of the rookie section with a perfect score, Nyoan Nyakuoji."

"NYAHAHA! I won, nya!" Nyoan declared as she leaped on stage, now sporting a wool-knit hat.

Kuon proudly took pictures of her, though beneath her smile, she was still upset about Mimoko's rise to fame.

"Next up, the winner of the intermediate section also with a perfect score, Iori Ishikiridokoro."

"YO! Paste this all over social media!" Iori grinned as she struck a cute pose.

"As for the open section, in third place with 4 points, Hagemi Shousen. In second place with 4 points, Peter Morphy. And our winner with 4 and a half points, Mimoko Inoue!"

"Hmm? Nobody got a perfect score?" Yuusuke asked.

"Well, it is to be expected," Okisato nodded.

"But why are the 3rd place and 2nd place not sharing 2nd if they have the same amount of points?" Yuzuha asked.

"Because of tie-breakers. Peter probably edged Miss Shousen out because unlike her, he didn't lose a match."

"As for the top team, the Shogikawa Gakuin chess team wins it all."

"Oh, we won," Okisato nodded as he and the rest of the chess club joined Iori and Mimoko on stage.

"NYA! Why am I the odd one out, nya!?" Nyoan cried.

"Now your attention please. With the conclusion of the tournament and awards ceremony, your new ratings are now available. Please pull out your WWCF cards," Raymond instructed.

"YO I'm 1144 now!" Iori grinned.

"Seems I went up to 1530," Yuusuke nodded.

"I'm 250," Rodeo mumbled.

"350 for me," Yuzuha smiled.

"I- I'm 1001," Utami stuttered.

"Hmm, it says I'm at 1354," Maida stated.

"Impressive, I'm only 900," Numakawa sighed.

"Huh, I went up to 2525, and it says I'm now a grandmaster. I guess beating Gyro, a

grandmaster, fulfilled the final criteria. But I'm really curious what Inoue-senpai's rating will be," he thought as Mimoko's pulled up her WWCF card.

The room let out an audible gasp as they stared at the number.

"And for our new previously unrated champion, her new rating is now 2700! And that's not all, she bested not one, not two, but FOUR grandmasters! Not to mention a draw against one of the strongest grandmasters and top 5 chess players, Peter Morphy. Therefore, Mimoko Inoue will also be granted the title of grandmaster!" Raymond declared.

The room immediately became flooded with gasps and murmurs.

"Damn, even faster than me," Hagemi smiled.

"So this is why Gyro was so frightened. Now I can see. I should have been more proactive," Svetlana thought as she watched from the crowd.

"Heh? So she really was a big deal. Guess now I'm motivated to break her. Wonder which one of her teammates I should use to send a message. Maybe the big lug," Haruki thought as he secretly watched from the crowd.

"So Raymond is making another grand bet. Well, she truly did earn her rating. Though I imagine I'll now have to get in line to challenge her once more," Peter thought.

"And with that, thank you all for coming and look forward to the blitz tournament next week at Triple cedar hotel," Raymond said before leaving the stage.

"My, it seems that club has quite a few intriguing members. So why did you fail so badly in your section?" Kuon glared at Nyogaku.

"I waz sleepy," Nyogaku derpily smiled.

"Well, it does make me happy when you fail in such adorable fashion. Nyoan is progressing well so no matter. Though I will admit, I'm not exactly thrilled about Hagemi being dethroned."

"Why'zz that?"

"Because the one who dethroned her will only push me down even harder than Hagemi did," Kuon glared as she walked away.

...

After packing up all the awards, Okisato brought everyone to the bridge overlooking the secret puzzle cafe.

"Tanabe-kun, this better be quick, the bus to the station will leave in 15 minutes," Maida glared.

"That's plenty of time. So Inoue-senpai ready to-"

"I'm taking the secret ramp. I'm not jumping off with you," Mimoko angrily smiled.

"Yes..."

Chapter 36: Lagoon pathways' Himitsudono

"YO! There's a secret lair in here!? Wait! My phone's not workin! Why!?" Iori cried as she entered the secret puzzle cafe with the others.

"We wouldn't be secret if our location was shared online, therefore we have protective measures in place, though if you want to record and or take photos within the cafe, we do allow you to exchange points for the ability to do just that," Himitsudono bowed before turning to

Mimoko and smiling. "Welcome, Grandmaster Inoue. Now, shall you attempt the daily puzzle?"

"I'm ready," Mimoko smiled.

"Excellent, then you may step into the private pods with Grandmaster Tanabe while I explain things to the newcomers."

"There was a puzzle cafe here the whole time? Okaa never told me," Yuusuke sighed.

"Ah, young Shousen. It seems you've been to a puzzle cafe before. So shall you attempt the daily puzzle?"

Yuusuke nodded as he followed Okisato and Mimoko to the back.

"Now allow me to explain the secret puzzle cafe. The first rule is that you must be a WWCF member in order to enter. Non-members are not permitted under any circumstance. Second, you must have a proper WWCF rating in order to attempt the challenges and earn points. It can be in any of the three time control formats, standard, blitz, or rapid as all those contribute to your overall rating. You all just got proper ratings today, so all of you are good. As for the puzzles, the daily puzzle will be offered here daily. In them, you will be presented with 10 different chess puzzles. Correctly solving one will get you a point, but solving all 10 will net you a bonus 100 points. Of course, that only applies to the beginner level. The points naturally increase at higher difficulties, though the 100 point bonus remains the same across all levels. As for the points you can exchange them for various things, exclusive gear, information, even the right to upload footage of you within the cafe."

"I'm honestly more curious about the mechanism used to form the bridge across the water. Rather than being simple plexiglas, Tanabe-kun mentioned it could retract as well," Maida nodded.

"Ah, the specifications about the lagoon pathway can indeed be exchanged for points. The option will appear on your point exchange menu momentarily."

Maida's WWCF card then appeared and activated a tab titled "Point exchange". In the tab, a list of basic rewards alongside the specifications for the bridge were displayed.

"Quite the hefty sum of points. And can we only exchange points here?" Maida asked.

"Fear not, for you can exchange points on basic rewards and access that tab from whenever. Though some transactions will only be possible if performed in a secret puzzle cafe. Now shall we begin?"

Everyone sat down in some nearby pods and gazed at the tablets in front of them.

"You may skip around as you please, but there is a time limit, and should you fail a puzzle, you won't be able to get a do-over, even if there's time left. You will also get bonus points for how much time you have left. There are various levels of difficulty with higher difficulty puzzles yielding more points. Now, once you select your level of difficulty, you may begin."

As everyone began attempting the puzzles, Himitsudono received a notification that Mimoko had finished. "Well, she certainly is special. Only the top grandmasters were able to get perfect scores on their first day, not to mention they were on the highest difficulty to boot" he smiled as Mimoko emerged.

"Hmm? Oh, everyone seems to be attempting the puzzles. I guess I'll have something to drink then," Mimoko smiled as she sat down at the bar.

"Naturally, some beverages are off-limits to minors and regardless of your age, you will be asked to present valid ID to prove your age should you request such a beverage. WWCF

cards do count though, so no need to worry on that front."

"But what if someone lies about their age?"

"Oh, the WWCF registration is actually quite thorough. Why, there are some countries that even want it to be used as the main form of identification."

"I see. Hmm, my card now has some badges on it."

"Ah yes, the WWCF does have a badge system in place. Though for more information on that, simply tap the badge info button on your card."

"Ugh, finally got a perfect," Okisato groaned as he staggered out.

"Impressive, now you finally have the perfect puzzle badge at max difficulty, Grandmaster Tanabe."

"And enough points to get the app."

Mimoko gave Okisato an odd glance. "'The app'?"

"Yeah, it's an app that will truly let you get daily puzzles from wherever. That way, I'll be able to get enough points to challenge one of the SPCMs."

"You can- HUH!?"

"Haha, one of my favorite things about the secret puzzle cafes is that you learn more secrets by word of mouth," Himitsudono smiled.

"So could I actually challenge you to a chess match?"

"Yes, but it will cost a few points. That and SPCMs can only be challenged if you are present within a secret puzzle cafe. As such, you can only exchange the points to request a match within a secret puzzle cafe."

A new option to the rewards menu suddenly appeared before Mimoko. "'Challenge SPCM Himitsudono', 100 points!?"

"And that is per attempt, though smart folks like you tend to rack up points quickly, speaking of which since you solved all puzzles perfectly on the highest setting and with plenty of time to spare, you now have 1,150 points. Would you like to spend some now?"

"Hmm, I think I will. I challenge you, Himitsudono."

Himitsudono smirked as the points were exchanged and a chessboard emerged from the bar counter. "It shall be my pleasure," he bowed as his WWCF card appeared.

Unlike normal WWCF cards, his was red to denote his status as an SPCM. His name was listed as Himitsudono while his rating was a mere...

"100?"

"Yes, I am regarded as a "first boss" so to speak. As such, there are no extra conditions, meaning you may choose which color to play as, and there is no time limit."

"I choose white then."

"The first move is yours then."

Mimoko nodded and opened by moving her pawn to e4 while Himitsudono mirrored her and moved his pawn to e5. Mimoko then moved her knight to f3 as Himitsudono countered by moving his knight to c6.

"You're playing really solidly," Mimoko smiled as she moved her bishop to b5.

"Perhaps it is due to experience, but alas, my level is still quite low," Himitsudono chuckled as he moved his pawn to a6.

"But you look like you're enjoying yourself," Mimoko smiled as she captured the knight at

c6 with her bishop.

"Perhaps I am," Himitsudono smiled as he captured the bishop at c6 with his d-pawn.

Mimoko then opted to castle on the king's side while Himitsudono moved his pawn to f6. She then moved her pawn to d4, prompting Himitsudono to capture it with his e-pawn. Mimoko then captured said pawn with her knight, however, Himitsudono threatened it by moving his pawn to c5.

Willing to trade queens, Mimoko happily moved her knight to e2 as Himitsudono promptly captured her queen at d1 with his queen. She then captured Himitsudono's queen with her rook as Himitsudono moved his bishop to d7.

Mimoko then moved her bishop to e3 as Himitsudono moved his bishop to d6. She then moved her b-knight to c3 while Himitsudono moved his pawn to a5. Mimoko countered by moving her pawn to a4, however, Himitsudono then captured said pawn with his bishop.

"You see, I am still very much a "first boss", " Himitsudono chuckled as Mimoko captured the bishop at a4 with her knight.

"You were playing really well though," Mimoko smiled as Himitsudono moved his pawn to h5.

"Don't fret. I'm actually quite satisfied with my skill set, in fact I find it preferable to keep it this way," Himitsudono chuckled as Mimoko captured the pawn at c5 with her bishop. "Though, I am capable of beating challengers, check," he nodded as he captured the pawn at h2 with his bishop.

Seeing no danger, Mimoko promptly captured the bishop with her king, eliciting a chuckle from Himitsudono as he moved his pawn to g5. Mimoko quickly moved her a-knight to the safety of c3 as Himitsudono advanced his pawn to b6, threatening the bishop.

Undeterred, Mimoko moved her knight to d5, but instead of capturing the bishop, Himitsudono opted to advance his pawn to f5, giving Mimoko the chance to capture the pawn at c7 with her knight, forcing Himitsudono's king to f7. The rook at a8 was clearly gone, but instead of capturing it, Mimoko made a smarter move and advanced her rook to d7.

"Splendid, Grandmaster Inoue," Himitsudono nodded as he moved his knight to e7.

His defense was short lived as thanks to her bishop, Mimoko was able to capture the knight at e7 with her rook without any repercussions, prompting Himitsudono to move his king to g8. Now, Mimoko decided it was time to capture the rook at a8 with her knight, but once Himitsudono captured her pawn at e4 with his f-pawn, her eyes lit up.

"That is the look of someone who sees mate," Himitsudono chuckled as Mimoko moved her rook to d1.

"I had lots of fun though. How about you?" Mimoko asked as Himitsudono captured the bishop at c5 with his b-pawn.

"Indeed, this was fun," Himitsudono smiled as Mimoko moved her rook to d8, winning the game.

The full game:

White: Mimoko Inoue (2700) Black: SPCM Himitsudono (100)

1. e4 e5

2. Nf3 Nc6
3. Bb5 a6
4. Bxc6 dxc6
5. O-O f6
6. d4 exd4
7. Nxd4 c5
8. Ne2 Qxd1
9. Rxd1 Bd7
10. Be3 Bd6
11. Nbc3 a5
12. a4 Bxa4
13. Nxa4 h5
14. Bxc5 Bxh2+
15. Kxh2 g5
16. Nac3 b6
17. Nd5 f5
18. Nxc7+ Kf7
19. Rd7+ Ne7
20. Rxe7+ Kg8
21. Nxa8 fxe4
22. Rd1 bxc5
23. Rd8#

Chapter 37: The 7 secret chess maestros

Himitsudono began applauding as the chess board lowered back into the counter. "Well done, Grandmaster Inoue. You have bested me and thus gain the following spoils of war. First, you earn a badge for besting me. Second, a bounty of 1000 points and lastly, the right to rematch me for just a single point, though that is only possible within a secret puzzle cafe."

"So I can play you again. That's amazing. I'm glad there's something like that, though if you don't mind me asking, are there other SPCMs to challenge?" Mimoko asked.

"Why yes there are, and they each have their own secret puzzle cafe, though they will not be as easy to beat as me. Though if you want a challenge, seek out the other 6 SPCMs and best them. I assure you that it is worth it even for a player of your skill. And speaking of a skilled player, here comes one now."

Mimoko and Okisato turned to see Peter entering. He immediately sat down and nodded as a tablet appeared before him. Within seconds, he had solved all 10 puzzles at the highest difficulty perfectly.

"Now, would you like to purchase something with your wealth of points, Grandmaster Morphy?" Himitsudono asked.

"Yes, I want a lead on where one of the three Maestros I have left to find is."

"Maestros'?" Mimoko asked.

"Seems we meet again, Mimoko Inoue. Unfortunately, it seems your timetable will prevent us from having another match today, but I will be at the blitz tournament next week."

"I'm looking forward to it."

"My, seems Grandmaster Inoue truly is getting the lion's share of information for free. As for Grandmaster Morphy, the information you requested has been sent to your WWCF card. We thank you for your transaction."

"A word of thumb, Mimoko Inoue. You can purchase an app that lets you play the puzzles anywhere once a day, however, you'll get bonus points for solving the puzzles at a secret puzzle cafe. Hmm, so China is indeed where one of the maestros is. I was hoping for one of the more obscure ones, but I guess I'll know all their locations soon. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must take my leave to track down the maestro and best them before next week's tournament."

As Peter left, Himitsudono chuckled. "Seems the biggest secret is now out in the open. The secret maestros are the seven super grandmasters that can only be challenged by beating all the SPCMs in their domains. As for the maestros themselves, they are truly the best of the best, and have ratings over 3000."

"Wait, but I thought the highest rating achieved was 2899!" Mimoko gasped.

"That's why it's a secret. So, think you can beat ALL the secret maestros?"

A smile began to form on Mimoko's face. "You bet! It sounds like fun."

"Then you should probably save up your points so you can buy the app. Students like us can't come here at midnight every night," Okisato nodded.

"How much is the app?"

"Well, for that, the price varies. Normally, it's 9,999,999 points, but there are ways to get it at a discount. For example, beating a maestro will lower the price considerably. Another way is to solve puzzles at the max difficulty and get a perfect score on them within your first three visits to a puzzle cafe and/or best a SPCM on your first attempt within your first three visits. And you, Grandmaster Inoue, have done just that. Thus, for today only, the app for you will cost only 1000 points."

"DEAL!"

Once the points were exchanged, a new icon appeared on Mimoko's WWCF card.

"Ah yes, I should also mention that the app allows you to see the leaderboard. You may also order items you'd normally only be able to order from within a secret puzzle cafe and even challenge SPCMs you've bested to chess matches, if they are available. As for a final word of thumb, as long as you are within a puzzle cafe, you may challenge any SPCM or maestro that you've met anywhere in the world from any cafe," Himitsudono stated.

"Say, does the app allow you to teleport to any cafe you've visited?" Okisato asked.

"My, I wonder if it does?"

"How many points?"

"A non-discountable 10,000,000,000, though I hear the price can be halved if you best half the maestros like Peter has done. And perhaps, there is a secret way to unlock a more affordable price for it."

"Are there other ways to earn points besides the daily puzzles?" Mimoko asked.

"Why yes indeed. Winning a free-for-all 4-way chess tournament here at a secret cafe, though there is an entrance fee of 40 points, but the winner walks away with 40,000,000 points

and that's just for the standard. The international variant will net you 4 billion points, but only if you win the whole thing, and let me tell you, even someone like Grandmaster Morphy struggles to win those."

"Why's that?"

"Because in 4-way chess, there's four players. You also win by capturing pieces and getting points. Three players could also mutually agree to take out the biggest threat before attacking each other," Okisato stated.

"Wow, I'll have to study up on it."

"Oh, and you can also earn some points based on your performances at normal tournaments and regular 4-way chess tournaments hosted by the WWCF, now that you've found a secret puzzle cafe and completed a daily challenge"

"Wow, I really hit the jackpot. Thanks Himitsudono."

"My pleasure. I look forward to your return, and eventually rematches."

...

"UGH! Those puzzles are hard! I only got 4 right!" Iori fumed as she headed to the bus with the others.

"What difficulty were you on?" Okisato asked.

"Duh, Max difficulty! I'm hardcore!"

As for the others, Utami managed to get 7 right at novice difficulty while Yuzuha got 5 right at beginner difficulty. Rodeo had only gotten 2 right, but largely due to attempting the advanced difficulty ones. Maida meanwhile managed to get an impressive 9 right at the advanced difficulty. Numakawa however...

"The puzzles are far easier than the game, I got all 10 right," Numakawa boasted.

"Bet it was at beginner difficulty though, right?" Okisato jibed.

"Geh, I will gradually increase the difficulty."

Yuusuke meanwhile struggled just to get 6 right at the advanced difficulty, though his mood only soured when he heard Mimoko and Okisato got the secret puzzle cafe app. "Ugh, you got the app? I'm never gonna get that thing. It's not fair."

"Hey, do you have any idea how many years it took to save up for this? Not to mention all the times I was frustrated by spending points to challenge a SPCM," Okisato groaned.

"Have you beaten a maestro, Tanabe-kun?" Mimoko asked.

"Maestro!? Wait, you mean like Himitsudono-"

"No, I still need to find all the cafes and SPCMs first in addition to the ones I've found but still haven't beaten, but now that I have the app, I won't need to worry too much about getting the points to do that. As for you, Shousen-san, did your mother not tell you about the maestros?"

"No, I have no idea what you're talking about, man."

"By the way, what happened to Zanni?"

"Oh I beat him and made it so that he'd destroy the DESPER and never hurt anyone again. Then the WWCF president had his guys drag him away."

"Seems you really decided to make him suffer. Well he deserves it."

"Unlike you, I'm a hero."

"Yeah, sure."

...

The next day, Mimoko woke up early as her mother pounced on her bed. "Ugh, Okaa-chan, stop..."

"Up n' at em, girl! I heard ya got interviews to do on the mornin' news!" Mimoko's mother smiled as she rummaged through Mimoko's closet, looking for a nice outfit.

"So this was what Tanabe-kun warned about. Well, guess I'll accept the challenge," Mimoko shrugged as she got out of bed.

...

At the highschool, news of the chess club's feats swept through the school. Nearly everyone congratulated the senior club members on their achievements. Mimoko however was still swept up with interviews, even as the lunch hour approached.

"Poor Inoue-senpai, she looks like she's using all her strength not to succumb to exhaustion," Okisato said as he watched Mimoko's latest interview.

"Nah, Inoue looks like she's doing fine," Yuusuke snarled.

"You dare not to put honorifics after her name!?" Utami glared.

"GAH! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Don't hurt me!"

"Lol, kick his ass, Utami," Iori snickered as she whipped out her phone.

"Do not make a scene in the cafeteria," Maida glared as she walked by.

"She's right, let's go sit down with the others and wait for Inoue-senpai," Okisato nodded.

The group headed to a table occupied by Rodeo, Yuzuha, Numakawa, and two other students.

"Quite the large group, I feel like I'm standing out even though I'm so generic," Yuzuha laughed.

"We could easily fix your image if you're worried about that. How bout a mohawk?" Iori grinned.

"Um... no."

Just then, Mimoko entered the cafeteria. She was trying her best to hide her fatigue from all the interviews, however she soon became faced with a new problem as she was swarmed by everyone wishing to congratulate her.

"Hey, let her through," Rodeo said as he walked through the crowd and gave Mimoko a lift to the table.

"So the next prodigy of the chess world is before us. This truly is an intriguing experience, never have I met a famous person before they became famous. I should document this experience for science," Numakawa stated as Mimoko sat down.

"Welcome back, so what will we do now, Inoue-senpai?" Okisato asked.

"Well, I guess we should discuss our tournament experience. We can go over the games after school," Mimoko smiled.

[Season 1 End]

