

"HAHA! We're gonna beat you this time, Crow!"

"Yeah, right! Get ready to face <i>Teppoudama no Crow-sama's</i> unbeatable lower body strength! You got a hold, Carly?!"

"Yeah!"

"LET'S GOOOOO!"

"Hrngh, haha, you'll have to do better than that, Rally! Whoa, whoa, stop splashing me! Ahh, dammit stop kicking me! AAAH!"

The racket was abruptly silenced following a splash as both Crow and Carly fell into the water. Rally meanwhile was pumping his arms jubilantly in celebration atop Aki's shoulders.

"...Izayoi has better lower body strength than I would have expected."

"No, it's Rally. He's lighter than a cat."

Yusei turned the page of the manual he was reading. Jack quirked an eyebrow behind his sunglasses. Both were reclined on beach chairs, wearing swim trunks and sunglasses. Jack had also opted for a hat, the dimensions of which somehow did in fact manage to comply with his head. Crow had by that point pulled himself out of the water and was calling over to them.

"OOOOOI!! When are you two gonna stop sitting on your duffs and join us over here?!"

"Crow, don't pester them!" Aki immediately scolded. "They have the tournament to get ready for! Just let them relax until then!"

"Cheh!" Crow didn't let them relax. He came out of the water, back on to the beach and got in front of them, arms crossed.

"....you're in front of the sun, Crow," Jack grunted, pulling his sunglasses down slightly.

"Oh, SORRY! I wouldn't want to get in front of the big important tournament duelists! Team Daedalus, right!? I wouldn't wanna be a BOTHER to Team Daedalus! That's all I am to you guys now, right!?"

"Crow-"

"It's not like I helped you guys defeat the Dark Signers or anything!"

"Crow, come on-" Yusei tried to start.

"It's not like I FLEW INTO A GIANT SUN DRAGON OR ANYTHING!"

"Should we stop him...?" Carly muttered.

"I don't think you can once he gets like this," Rally said with a sigh. Aki just continued to glare a hole in the back of Crow's head, hands on her hips.

"....and that doctor said I busted THREE RIBS! Three!" He shoved three fingers into Jack's face, then into Yusei's, knocking the latter's sunglasses askew. "Not to mention the internal bleeding!" He smacked his hand into his palm for emphasis. "I had to pee in a <i>bedpan!</i>"

"..." Yusei sighed, took his sunglasses off and sat up in his beach chair. "Okay, Crow. What can I do to make this up to you?" He asked.

"Get rid of Jack, make me your partner for the tournament," Crow said immediately.

"<i>What,</i>" Jack said flatly.

"Crow..."

"Make him give me his chair too," Crow added.

"If I get out of this chair now, it's going to be to beat you within an inch of your life," Jack said as he glowered at Crow and from his expression, it looked like he meant it.

"Crow, I'm not getting rid of Jack. He's my partner, we're going to compete together."

"It's a personal growth thing!" Rally shouted from the water. "It's about them burying the hatchet from the last two years and learning how to be friends again! Yusei told me!"

"...thank you, Rally," Yusei said and from his tone and expression, it sounded like that had probably been in confidence. Then, he looked back at Crow. "...I'm sorry, Crow."

"You're both dead to me!" Crow yelled, so loudly and over-the-top, there was basically no way for either of them to take it seriously. He then stormed off down the beach. Everybody watched him go.

"...should we go after him?" Yusei asked.

"I stand by my previous statement," Jack grunted, then grabbed a thermos and a very fancy tea cup. He poured what appeared to be piping hot coffee from the thermos into the cup, which he then began to sip. Yusei stared at him.

"You brought coffee to the beach?"

"Blue-Eyes Mountain's rich, bold taste is appropriate no matter the surroundings, Yusei," Jack said. "Anyway, just let Crow go."

"No...I'd better go-" Yusei started to stand up, but was quickly pushed back down.

"No, I'll handle this, Yusei. You stay here and relax," Aki urged and despite the grimace on his face, Yusei acquiesced. Once she was sure he was staying there, Aki nodded and left after Crow. Yusei sighed and went back to the only reason he'd agreed to stay anyway, the tournament manual in his hand.

"Jack, have you been reading this?" He asked. No response came for a few seconds. Yusei turned his head. "Jack?"

"Huh - what?" Jack half-turned his head away from the water, before turning it back. In Aki and Crow's absence, Rally and Carly had resorted to a splash fight without anything really resembling rules. Even behind his sunglasses, it wasn't hard to tell that Jack's eyes were fixed on the latter in particular.

<i>"Jack!"</i> Yusei snapped, then literally started snapping his fingers in front of his face.

"What. What?!" Jack blinked a couple times, then looked at Yusei. "What is it, Yusei?! I'm trying to relax!"

"Yeah," Yusei said, his tone, in a word, skeptical. "Have you read this manual yet?" Jack reclined in his chair.

"I skimmed it."

"These are the rules we're going to have to follow in the tournament, Jack, you should know them."

"Hrmp!" Jack crossed his arms. "A duel is a duel! And it doesn't matter what way they gussy it up, the three-steps-ahead dueling of Jack Atlas will be victorious!" He declared boisterously. If Crow causing a scene hadn't gotten them some stares, they were definitely getting them now. Jack caught a glance of Yusei's incredulous expression. "...but I will allow you to succinctly explain to me any <i>key sections</i> that may prove pertinent to know in detail."

"...right," Yusei said, that slightly incredulous expression not going away. "Well, the most important thing is we're going to have to use a new version of Speed World."

"What?" Jack asked, tilting his sunglasses up. "A new Speed World?" Yusei nodded and held out the manual. Jack took it and read over the section Yusei pointed out.

"I see..." Apparently, Jack had missed this part in his skimming.

"You understand what this means, right?" Yusei asked.

"Mmn." Jack nodded. He stared out at the beach for a few moments more before abruptly standing up. "RALLY! CARLY!" He bellowed. "We're going back to the room!" He grabbed Yusei's shoulder.

"Do as you wish!" He pulled Yusei up out of his chair with one hand, grabbed his thermos with the other and walked off the beach, leaving Rally and Carly in the water.

"....what d'you wanna do?" Carly asked.

"Hmmmmm. You got one of those, ummm." Rally twirled a finger. "Things that lets reporters get into places free, right?"

"Brrrrrb! Got it right here!" Carly said, holding up her press pass, which she apparently kept in a swim wallet, which was apparently attached to her swimsuit. She let it go and it snapped back, hitting her leg, causing her to flinch. "Aaah! <small>That's the fifth time that's happened....!</small>" She whimpered, rubbing her leg.

"....okay," Rally said, deciding to ignore all of that. "Anyway - let's go see a baseball game!"

"Ooohhh, yeah!" Carly said and clapped. "I heard they sell really good garlic fries there!"

"Alright! LET'S GOOOOO!"

"Jack. How many level 4 tuners do you want me to run?"

"Huh?"

"Your deck's monsters are mostly level 4, right?" Yusei asked, seated at the desk in their hotel room. "I've got Hyper Synchron in my deck. I've got Debris Dragon too, but it can't tune with a level 4 monster. If you want me to use any other level 4 tuners, say so."

"Hrmph! Are you implying I need your help to summon Red Daemon's?" Jack asked, mildly nettled.

"I'm saying if we can help each other, we should. That's all," Yusei explained. "Lots of the duelists here will be building their decks to compliment each other. It's worth at least considering whether we should do the same."

"...hrmn..." Jack leaned back against the headboard of his bed, his cards strewn out next to him. His brow furrowed in thought.

"The competition in this tournament is going to be tough, Jack. Remember the condition Jarvis gave us."

"Another victory, King. 7-0 now. Quite impressive."

Yusei had been called up to Jarvis' suite after his duel. Jarvis offered him a seat. He stayed standing near the door. After seven refusals, he was pretty sure Jarvis did it out of reflex or just to annoy him. He'd also asked him not to call him "King" - he was pretty sure that was just to annoy him. When Yusei didn't acknowledge the compliment, Jarvis just smirked a little.

"How are you enjoying your opponents now? Probably better than a dueling maid, right?" At that, Yusei actually looked, perhaps, a bit offended and crossed his arms.

"Yuko was the most challenging duel I had of any of them," Yusei said. "Did the duel raise money for Satellite?"

"It did. You're getting more sponsors with each consecutive victory. Soon enough, you'll be pulling the same numbers Jack did in his prime," Jarvis said. "As we arranged, I'm funneling most of it into restoration efforts for Satellite and bolstering Security's forces in the area." Yusei's eyes narrowed.

"And Security won't use any of that to harass people in Satellite," he said skeptically.

I've given a direct order to them, through Chief Sagiri not to bother law abiding citizens of Satellite or overly concern themselves with petty issues. They're focusing entirely on pushing into the areas surrounding B.A.D. and arresting the criminals and gangs still trying to hold out there. Once Satellite is clean of serious criminals like that, we can start serious reunification efforts."

Yusei couldn't help but remain suspicious. The words sounded good, but he'd been strung along by Jarvis for 7 duels now with no progress made on his true goal. He was starting to wonder if he was ever going to make good on his predecessor's promise. It was enough to make him want to leave immediately, at least.

"If that's all, I'm going," he said and turned towards the door.

"There's one other thing, actually." Yusei kept walking. There was always 'one more thing', some event Jarvis wanted him to show up to. He'd learned to stop listening - until Jarvis said, "Yusei. I think I found a way to build it." At that, he stopped. He half turned his head.

"Are you being serious with me?" He asked. His expression wasn't just skeptical - there was a trace of anger to it. If Jarvis was holding this over his head to get him to jump for him, Yusei was gonna be angry. That much was obvious.

"I'm always serious," Jarvis said flatly. "Senator Izayoi and I have been trying to push reunification with Satellite, but the senate and moreover, the people of the City aren't willing to buy into it yet. There's too much momentum built into Security's old policies to break them down that easily. Even with the Shooting Star of Satellite dueling in front of them. They're proving more obstinate than I had imagined." He brought up a tablet and touched something. A screen came down and an image appeared on it for both of them to see. The image contained words and a logo.

"...Cross-America Golden Tag Tournament?" Yusei read, blinking.

"The United States Government and Industrial Illusions apparently enjoyed the Fortune Cup so much, they took the idea for it and...expanded on it," Jarvis said wryly. "It's a cross country tournament from San Francisco to Empire City. D-Wheelers from all over the world are going to race each other across America to be crowned champion. It's a much grander scale than the Fortune Cup and the stakes will be much higher."

"What does it have to do with me?" Yusei asked pointedly.

"Think about it, Yusei," Jarvis said. "Winning the Fortune Cup made you the King. But if you entered this tournament, if you fought as a duelist of both Neo Domino and Satellite and gave both cities something to cheer for...something to be united over." He turned to face Yusei. He held one finger up towards him. "You would become more than a duelist. You would become a symbol of hope. For both Satellite and the City. A symbol that went by the name..."

"...Team Daedalus."

"Huuuh?!"

They were at Martha's - himself, Jack, Aki, Rua, Ruka and Crow. He was standing at the head of the table while everybody else was sat down. The very last one was why they'd had to meet somewhere in Satellite and not at, say, Rua and Ruka's hotel or Aki's house - even with the relaxed standards for entering the city, Crow was still totally barred from entry. The way Ushio had put it, he was <i>kinda-sorta</i> lucky that they weren't still trying to arrest him. Crow had laughed and boasted that they were still welcome to try and then he and Ushio had almost started a Riding Duel and - y'know what, neither here nor there.

"He wants me to enter the tournament under the name Team Daedalus," Yusei explained. "If I enter and I compete...he and Aki's father will try and get the Daedalus Bridge approved and see to it that it's built." He sighed.

"Heeeeh...even though nobody in the City knows it, everybody in Satellite knows the legend of the Daedalus Bridge," Crow said. "So if you enter the tournament under that name, everybody in Satellite'll instantly know what your aim is. But then he can even use the name to make the bridge more palatable to the people in the City if you do well in the tournament." A grin came to his face. "Damn...he's coverin' all the angles. This guy's Security through-and-through, Yusei, y'sure you should trust him?"

"I'm really not," Yusei said, eyes half-lidded. "But...if I enter this tournament and do well, it might mean a better future for Satellite. So I don't think I have a choice."

"I don't disagree that Director Jarvis is a..." Aki sighed and searched, desperately for a diplomatic term. "<i>Difficult</i> man to deal with. But the logic checks out. And he's already been speaking with papa extensively about this for some time. I wish they had kept us in the loop about it before now..." she sighed again. "But papa said that he's ready to introduce the legislature for the Daedalus

Bridge if you enter and that he'll sponsor your team." She rubbed her hands together a bit. "He...seems to think that Director Jarvis is being genuine. I'm not saying we should trust him, but...maybe we should believe that he's taking this seriously?"

"Yeah...maybe," Yusei said. He sat down. He slowly shut his eyes - he seemed to be lost in thought.

"So, what'cha gonna do, Yusei?" Crow asked.

"Yeah! Are you gonna go to America or what, Yusei?!"

"..." Yusei let out a sigh. After a moment, he opened his eyes. "I may not trust Jarvis. But I do trust Aki's father. If he's committed to this, then that's enough for me. I'll enter the tournament and represent Satellite and the City." Aki smiled and brought her hands together.

"Good! Then, my family will gladly sponsor you and Team Daedalus!" Aki said. "Well...papa is much too busy to come to America for so long. But I can come as a correspondent and see to it that everything goes smoothly!" Yusei smiled and nodded back to her.

"AWESOME! We're goin' to America! This is gonna kick <i>so much ass!</i>" Rua said, pumping a fist. Ruka smiled too, but she had a somewhat more...skeptical expression at her twin brother's sentiment. That was, perhaps, aided by the four looks they were now getting that told him he had another thing coming.

"Y'know, Rua, America ain't like that cushy nerf life you're livin' up in your hotel in Tops." Crow said, an arm hanging over his chair, which was leaning back on its two back legs. "It's dangerous. Some parts of it are worse than Satellite!"

"And we'll be traveling across the country on unstable terrain for a lot of the time," Yusei added. "It's a cross country race. It's going to be serious."

"Besides all that, you both have school." Aki punctuated, then, she looked very specifically at Rua. "You can't miss that much class time just to go gallivanting across America with the rest of us."

"We understand," Ruka said, nodding in a way that made it clear all of this was really obvious to her from the get-go. Rua on the other hand looked crestfallen.

"Aw, <i>man...!</i>" Any stamina he might've had to argue was taken away when he had been <i>triple-teamed</i>, so he just gave up, bonking his head on the table instead. Ruka grimaced at him.

<small>"Geez, Rua, stop pouting..."</small>

"So, Yusei!" Crow said, dropping his chair back on to four legs. "It's a two-man tournament, right?"

"Yeah, apparently. It's focused on tag duels," Yusei said.

"Well, who're you gonna have as your partner, eh?!" Crow grinned. "You're not gonna get saddled with some chump that Director picks, are ya?!"

"No." Yusei shook his head. "He said if I enter, I can pick my teammate."

"Alright! So, who're ya gonna pick, eh?" Crow asked. Yusei quirked an eyebrow. Jack just let out an annoyed sigh. "C'mon! It's gotta be either me or Jack, right?!" Crow said and once he'd spelled it out, Yusei blinked in realization.

"...yeah," he said in agreement, nodding. "Definitely. I wouldn't think of doing it with anybody else but you two."

"Heh, well, it can't be both of us, obviously," Crow said. "So who're y'gonna pick?" Yusei looked from Crow to Jack. Crow just had a big grin on his face, Jack looked increasingly irritated. "C'mon, Yusei, who's it gonna be, your best pal, who's stood by you through thick and thin and drove you, <i>miles and miles</i> when you had a piece of shrapnel stickin' out of your gut..." He jabbed a thumb in Jack's direction. "Or the guy who punched you in the stomach a day after you got stabbed?"

"Geez, Crow," Rua muttered, having propped himself up on to his chin. Yusei didn't seem super impressed by the comparison either, but he let it go quickly enough.

"I'd be happy to have either of you as a partner," Yusei said. "If you can figure it out amongst yourselves who wants to -"

Alright, then!” Crow said and dropped his chair on to all four legs, before standing up. “Let’s settle this, then, Jack! Let’s duel! Winner gets to partner up with Yus-” Jack abruptly stood up as well and for a sec, Crow thought he was gonna accept and just grinned challengingly at him.

“A waste of time,” Jack grunted. “I’m not going to jump through hoops just for the privilege of being your partner, Yusei,” he said, suddenly rounding on him. “If you want to duel with me, then don’t insult me with tepid half-measures like this! If you want to duel with me, ask me, man-to-man!” He started to leave, bumping Yusei with his shoulder on the way out. “If you can’t manage that much, then just duel with Crow. I’ll find my own way.”

The door slammed behind him. Everybody just kinda stared for the moment. Crow just let out a snort and lightly slapped his hand on Yusei’s shoulder.

“So. You two are going to duel as a team in the tournament.”

To cut a long story slightly shorter, Yusei had eventually taken Jack up on his offer and asked him, man-to-man, to be his partner. They were both standing in Jarvis’ office at the moment.

“That’s right,” Yusei said. “We’ll duel as Team Daedalus, as you suggested. Aki’s family agreed to sponsor us.”

“Yes. Give him most of the credit, Senator Izayoi came to me with this idea. He was very excited about it,” Jarvis said, plainly pleased with the situation, but affecting at least some effort to not be smug. At least until he said, “But I at least, was the one who came up with the name. I’m a little proud of that.” He placed his hands together. His expression became more serious. “You two realize, this is a very sensitive manner we’re about to undertake. It’s going to require a high level of dedication and some level of <i>subtlety</i> from all of us.”

“We understand it just fine!” Jack snapped. “Do <i>you</i> understand how important this is?!” He stepped forward and slammed his hands on Jarvis’ desk. “Up until now, all of us have been patient with you and Security and that other group of yours, despite the cloak-and-dagger tactics you’ve used to cover up Goodwin’s wrongdoing! But if you dangle this in front of us and then think you can take it away later, you’ll have me to answer to! Got it?!” Yusei couldn’t help but gape a little at Jack’s outburst. Jarvis, on the other hand, just stared up at Jack, stonefaced.

“Your objections to my methodology for keeping this city safe are noted, Jack Atlas,” he said, very, very evenly. “I have no intention of using the Daedalus Bridge as the carrot to get you two to jump for me. Despite what else you may think of me, I am as committed to reunifying the City and Satellite as you are. But for this to work, you two have to do more than just participate in this tournament. You have to duel as you did in the Fortune Cup and as you both have as King. You need to raise the entire populace of both the City and Satellite into a frenzy so deep they’ll be able to bond, through all of the animosity they share, over your dueling. Over Team Daedalus.”

“...you’re saying we have to win,” Yusei said flatly.

“No, I’m saying what I said,” Jarvis said. “You have to do well enough to get both the City and Satellite cheering for you. If you win, obviously, that would probably do it. But if you just get far enough to give them time to get used to the idea of rooting for the same thing...that should be enough too.” He let out a sigh. “Mostly what I’m saying is, if you get eliminated on the first day, there won’t be much I can do to help.”

“Hrmph! Then rest assured! I, Jack Atlas, will duel so brightly that the City and Satellite will forget there ever wasn’t a time they were cheering for me together!” Jack declared, his typical boisterousness in full flight now. Yusei couldn’t help but smile, just a little. Jarvis just seemed annoyed.

“...there’ll still be a lot of healing that has to be done after that,” Yusei pointed out. At that, Jarvis’ annoyed expression faded a bit and it was his turn to smile.

“You’d be surprised how much healing a pair of world-best duelists and a couple billion dollars of bridge and highway construction can do,” Jarvis said wryly.

“I remember,” Jack said, annoyed. “We have to duel at our highest level.” He shot a half-glare at Yusei. “Fine. Put some level 4 tuners in your deck.”

Yusei smiled and nodded. He added a couple more cards to his deck. Then, one of the cards from his stock caught his eye. He took it and handed it to Jack. “Here. This may come in handy for you.”

Jack looked down at the card and saw a tiny little fairy glowering back up at him: Trust Guardian. His eye twitched slightly.

“...”

He told himself that it was for Satellite’s sake and took the card. But he didn’t look happy about it.

“Very well,” he said, gritting his teeth slightly as the card went into his deck.

“Those two are Satellite’s hope, now.”

Crow and Aki had both changed back into their street clothes. Aki’s anger had more or less faded as she’d followed Crow back to his D-Wheel, Blackbird. They’d already been talking for a while, but now she could tell they were getting to the real crux of the matter.

“I used to ask Martha to tell me the legend of the Daedalus Bridge every freakin’ night before I went to bed,” he muttered. “And I <i>thought</i> when we beat Goodwin, that might make it come true, finally. But now we’re here and Jack and Yusei are the ones who are carrying on the legend and I’m just...” He kicked his D-Wheel lightly. “I’m a spare freakin’ tire.”

“Crow, you’ve known that for months now, though,” Aki said. “Yusei asked Jack to be his partner months ago - you said you were fine with it! You said you understood why he did it!”

“Yeah, I know I said it!” Crow said, frustratedly running a hand through his hair. “But...” Both hands came down on his D-Wheel and he leaned forward.

“...I thought you said you’d find someone else to be your partner,” she muttered.

“Yeah,” he said. “Yeah. I tried that. I called up everybody I could think of. It didn’t work. Nobody wanted to partner up with me.” He squinted at nothing in particular. “...Ushio told me to go fuck myself.”

“Wh - what?!” Aki’s eyes bugged out. “<i>Ushio</i> said that to you?! Why?!”

“Iliiii mighta...given him some crap, after he said he wouldn’t team up with me ‘cause I’m a criminal. About not telling that Security girl he works with how he feels about her?”

“.....Crow, what’d you say to him.”

“....” Crow’s head fell. “‘At least I’m not a pussy who can’t tell that Security chick he’s got a hard-on for her’.” Aki quietly slapped a hand over her face.

<small>”Oh, my god,”</small> she muttered. “Well, you know, you really should apologize for that!”

“Why should I apologize?! He was the one who started cussin’ me out over the phone when Rua and Ruka were <i>right there!</i> I heard Rua start laughing in the background! <small>Little weasel told him to keep going.</small>” And if it was possible for Aki to become more exasperated with this story, she did. She decided it’d be better to just. Move on.

“Okay. Well...there’s people around the starting point who are still looking for partners!” Aki said. “The entering period for the tournament hasn’t closed yet, maybe you can stil-”

“With what freakin’ money am I supposed to do that?!” Crow suddenly snapped. “It costs five-frickin’-thousand dollars just to enter, plus supplies, plus putting yourself up at the stupid checkpoints, plus D-Wheel maintenance!” He punched his D-Wheel with each additional expense he listed off and it started to dawn on Aki that Crow’s problem was deeper than him not being on Team Daedalus. “It costs money and I don’t have any because I’m just a frickin’ ex-con with a crappy one-man delivery service!” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled up piece of paper. “All the sponsors have already picked their teams, it’s too late for me to find anybody who’ll pay for all that crap! I can’t enter this stupid tournament, and I can’t...!” His fist tightened and he threw the piece of paper at the ground. Aki blinked and looked down at it. She picked it up before Crow could and he instantly regretted pulling it out.

“Crow, what’s this?” Aki asked as she uncrumpled the paper.

“It’s - it’s nothing, c’mon, Aki, just hand it over,” Crow urged, but she didn’t, instead unraveling it and looking it over. When she did, her eyes widened.

“Crow...this is housing information,” she said. And that was, in fact, what it was. Information about houses and apartments that were being built in Satellite. Dates, sizes, furnishings, pricing, loan information...it was all there. Aki stared forward at Crow while he tried very hard not to do the same. “Crow...were you going to try and buy a house?”

“...I’m sick of my kids living in a junkyard,” he said, running his hand through his hair. “Now Martha watches them most of the time, but. That’s.” He shook his head. “They’re my responsibility! I can’t just dump ‘em off on her forever!” He clenched a fist. “I can barely afford to buy <i>food</i> for them right now with my delivery business...I thought if I entered this tournament...” He clenched a fist and spun around, beating it on his D-Wheel again. “I thought I could show them that they could do anything even if they came from Satellite <i>and</i> get enough money to get them a real home, but...” He ran a hand over the marks on his forehead. “I’m gonna have to go home empty freakin’ handed instead.”

“...Crow...” Aki muttered, a sad frown on her face. Now, it was starting to come together. He hadn’t been angry at Yusei for picking Jack to enter the tournament with, he’d been angry at himself. “...you know if you just aske-”

“Oh my god, Aki,” Crow interrupted, letting out a bitter laugh, his back still to her. “I know you mean well, but, <i>please</i>, if you offer me a handout with your dad’s money right now, I will lose whatever <i>tenuous</i> grip on coherence I still have.” Aki stopped and swallowed the rest of her sentence, suddenly acutely aware that it wouldn’t help at all.

“...Crow, I can’t imagine how you’re feeling right now...” She started to say. “But...I know that, despite everything, Yusei and Jack and I are glad you came here with us.” She let out a sigh. She wasn’t sure where she was going with this - she knew she didn’t want Crow to leave, but, she wasn’t sure how to convince him to stay, or if she should.

“I appreciate that, Aki, but...I don’t think there’s any point in me drawin’ this out any longer.” He grimaced. “Look. After all that, I don’t think I can look Yusei and Jack in the eye for a while. Can y’just. Tell ‘em I’m sorry for makin’ an ass’a myself?” Aki grimaced.

“It’s not like they’re going to hold a single outburst against you, you know...” <i>’Because you and Jack do at least that much every other day,’</i> she added, but kept to herself. But still. She was pretty sure she understood where he was coming from. “...alright. I’ll tell them.”

“Thanks.” He turned back to her and gave her a small grin. “I think I’m just. I’m gonna head back to Satellite and my kids. You guys don’t really need me here.” He put two fingers to his head and gave her a little wave. “I’ll see ya later.” He got on to his D-Wheel and slipped on his helmet. Aki watched him - part of her wanted to object, but she couldn’t bring herself to do it in that moment. Instead, she just watched quietly as Crow drove off.

<small>“...Yusei’s not gonna like that...”</small> She eventually muttered.