

Ravyn Phoenix

Translations
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Full Metal Panic!

Burning One Man Force



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Full Metal Panic!
Burning One Man Force

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Chapter 03 part A
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Translator's Notes:

Finally! I actually had the translations done around Monday, but my computer was giving me such a hard time that I didn't get it posted till today.

Big thank you to Jeannie and Durendal for helping me with the translating when I got stuck. You guys are the best.

Don't really know what else to say. So, enjoy~

-Ravyn



Part 4

A man called Chief captures Sousuke and Lemon. A deal is made, and Sousuke will participate in a Organization's dangerous Yami competition... ♪

03: Real Bout

“Get out. You’re next.”

The command is followed by the harsh sound of screeching metal. Opening the rusted jail door, the jailer enters the detention cell to drag Sousuke out.

An evening has already passed since they had been arrested.

An unjust arrest by the police based on fabricated evidence. But in a third world country, something like this is a common occurrence.

The detention cell is filthy, and it doesn’t surprise Sousuke in the least. *Sigh, it could be worse*, is the first thing he thinks when he first sees the cell. That is, of course, assuming that this cell is the worst room to spend the night in.

The walls and floor are damp and stained with filth. The cell is teeming with a heavy stench with a noisy buzz of flies zipping around that echoes through the cell. The cell is lit by only one beam of sunlight that is shining in from a grate close to the ceiling and out of reach.

It is said that if someone stays here for 3 days and nights, they’ll suddenly become ill in either body or mind. Actually, all the occupants of the cell are men, and most of them have too skinny shoulders that shake from the cold, and they mutter to themselves deliriously non-stop.

Sousuke is the only one they are summoning. Lemon, who was caught along with Sousuke, is left behind to mingle with the other prisoners. He watches Sousuke leave with a mix of fatigue and anxiety in his eyes.

“Sousuke.”

“Don’t worry,” is all Sousuke says before he steps out of the multi-prisoner cell. Hands cuffed behind his back, Sousuke is escorted to an interrogation room located on the second floor of the police station.

Even though it is called an interrogation room, the only things in the room are a pair of pipe chairs and a naked light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Many dark red stains decorate the bare concrete walls. More than likely blood that splattered during ‘Police questioning’ between the officers and prisoners. It’s not just

blood. In the corners of the room, blending in with the dust and rubbish, there is something that looks like brown pebbles scattered around.

Those – would be teeth.

Were they pulled out with pliers? Or were they knocked loose from being hit too hard? How many ‘guests’ must there have been in order for so many teeth to be collected? Did they leave the room like this, without cleaning it, in hopes to fan the next victim’s fear? He wonders silently.

But rather than being effected by the dreary scene, Sousuke is strangely nostalgic.

It’s true it is strange. Considering this place is supposed to be his own personal graveyard.

Nevertheless. He can’t help what thoughts pass through his mind.

A warm Tokyo apartment. A classroom overflowing with light. A good home cooked meal and the feeling of laughter. Those, of course, are happy memories. But it is a world he no longer belongs to. Especially the way he is right now.

He must become a weapon.

A precise weapon that operates flawlessly.

The interrogation room is nothing special, except for the ruins of pain.

Expressionlessly, Sousuke sits in one of the chairs and fixes his gaze on a spot on the wall. His heart slowly becomes cold, and his feelings become dry.

His eyes stare blankly, and his nerves sharpen.

Sharper. Colder.

In that way he turns back into ‘Kashim’.

It’s a process he has been perfecting little by little, ever since he left Tokyo. It was essential for him to do so. Even if it has been a hindrance while living with Nami and Lemon.

After waiting for roughly an hour, a man finally enters the room.

It’s ‘Chief.’

He walks casually with purposely-slow steps. Is this how the stupid man walks in order for it to be understood who’s in control here? The wide trousers – which have plenty of extra room for his overly large buttocks – and riding boots he is wearing remind Sousuke of a cold-blooded German Nazi officer.

“Burglary, assault, attempted murder.” Chief lists, “Blackmail, false testimony, illegal immigration, illegal gambling conduct, article forgery, interference with a government official in the execution of his duties, and possession of illegal weapons... is there anything else you would like to add?”

“What is that?”

“Your charges, Sagara Sousuke. Estimated to get you at least 48 years of penal imprisonment. That’s almost half a century...”

“How about ‘Assaulting an Executive Officer.’ I can put it into practice right now.”

The Chief’s jaw spasms in annoyance. A large police officer standing nearby steps forward and immediately hits Sousuke across the face. As expected, the officer held nothing back, and the blow is painful. Sousuke’s hit so hard that his whole torso twists sideways from the blow, and his body leans backwards. Just when he’s on the verge of falling off the chair, Sousuke is roughly grabbed by his shirt collar and pulled back into his seat by the same officer that hit him.

“Somehow I don’t think you understand the situation.”

“.....tsk.”

“This is not simply just an interrogation room. It is also the court. It is the place where punishment is executed. I am the public Prosecutor. I am also the Judge. As well as the Executive Officer.”

“Wow, you seem to be extremely under-staffed,” Sousuke mutters the sarcastic remark with difficulty. The inside of his mouth is bloody, and a broken molar is tumbling around his tongue. He considers spitting it out, but, not wanting to give the room another trophy, he swallows it instead.

“What do you want? There must be something you wanted to discuss, or else you wouldn’t have brought me up here just to inform me of a 50 year penal imprisonment sentence.”

“You’ve got good judgment,” Chief laughs, causing the fat of his stomach and chin to jiggle back and forth. “It’s the Arena.”

“.....”

“You’ve been on a winning streak right from your debut match, and it seems your team will be promoted soon, correct? Your skill is building quite the reputation, even among the Match-makers. If you’re promoted to A Class, and you obtain sufficient funding, it’s only a matter of time before you reach the top.”

“That’s the idea.”

“That would be a problem.” Chief casually takes off his regulation cap and wipes his receding hairline. “The Arena holds many flourishing teams. The balance of victories is good, and by managing the position of an Ace Pilot appropriately, the audience can continue to enjoy the game forever. Efficient management. Stable entertainment characteristics. With this, *we* enjoy a large profit. Understand?”

Sousuke understands the emphasis with which Chief said ‘*we*’ perfectly.

The Arena’s Management Committee. Match-makers. Merchants supplying AS parts. Influential people in the town. – It’s all a Bureaucratic Organization within a Crime Syndicate. They all gather around this competition, where a vast amount of money is flowing, to get sweet deals.

“Dao and his team were B class, but they worked well for me, keeping the order. And – Sagara Sousuke – you are about to disturb that order. That is the reason why you have been summoned to this room. I hope we can come to a mutual understanding. After all, don’t you think it’s best to make ‘adjustments’ in order to secure your own future?”

“So that’s how it is.”

‘Adjustments’ – in other words, a fixed match. Or something slightly different but along those same lines.

“Meaning, if I don’t comply, I’ll get 50 years of penal imprisonment?”

“The Frenchman too. It would be good to include your friend, the young girl owner, too. There’s no need to explain to you how those bored prison guards and prisoners would treat a young girl like her, is there? When you’re in this town it’s not a good idea to cross me.”

Even when Lemon and Nami are threatened, Sousuke doesn’t lose his cool. On the contrary, he is seriously considering, with his hands cuffed behind his back, whether or not he can kill the two officers and the Chief.

Yes, he could.

If he kills the three men and removes the handcuffs, he wonders if he can commandeer a weapon and escape.

It wouldn't be that difficult.

Break Lemon out of the detention cell, run to where Nami is, and then leave town?

In all honesty, it would be easy.

But there would be no point. So instead Sousuke answers.

"I guess you're right. If the 'adjustment' is necessary, then I will cooperate. However, I have a request."

"Oh?"

Chief raises an eyebrow in amusement.

"I don't mind making friends and playing nice in the soccer stadium, but I want the opportunity to start getting serious. Somewhere I can display my skills freely, with no holding back, and where there is more money involved. That kind of place."

"....."

"It exists, doesn't it?"

In response, Chief watches Sousuke with careful eyes.

"What are you referring to?"

"I heard a rumor."

"Where did you hear it?"

"Here and there."

Expressionless, Chief says something in his native language, and one of the policemen nods and leaves the interrogation room reluctantly. The other officer – the one who had hit Sousuke – stays. It's more than likely he is aware of what Sousuke is talking about.

When the door closes again, a crooked smile crosses Chief's face.

"Do you know exactly *what* you're talking about?"

"Of course. The Yami Battle is intended to entertain VIP guests. Live ammunition firearms are used. The reward is in a completely different league from the Arena, as well." Sousuke says, repeating exactly what an old friend of one of his war buddies had

told him before, when he was still in Tokyo. In fact, Sousuke had come to this town specifically for the Yami Battle.

“Do you realize that half of the participants die within a few months?”

“Obviously.”

When Sousuke answers so casually, Chief puts back on his regulation cap.

“... There are only two kinds of people who wish to appear in that place,” he mutters. “A weak AS pilot trapped in debt, or a foolish, hot-shot pilot who has too much confidence for his own good. It’s either one or the other. Mind telling me why you’re so interested?”

“First of all, I need the money. I want to buy back a woman. She’s a prostitute.”

“Where?”

“Not here. In Tokyo.”

Of course, the story is nonsense. It’s a common story Sousuke’s heard in the pubs and on TV. As for deciding that the woman is in Tokyo, it is simply to make it difficult for the Chief and the policemen to investigate his story. He’s guessing that the Chief will not be very interested in a story about a woman. And the Chief himself confirms Sousuke’s suspicion.

“And the other reason?”

“I guess you could say it’s similar to you with your work. You like this kind of room, right?” Sousuke says, surveying the interrogation room around him and taking it all in – the traces of blood and teeth alongside scattered fingernails.

Traces of pain. The smell of violence.

“The competition in the Arena is a sport. Even if the irritating odor of jet fuel is there, the smell of blood and gun powder is not.”

“That’s your reason?”

“Isn’t that enough?”

The Chief throws his head back and laughs. His whole body shakes with laughter. His flabby meat jiggles endlessly, and the drawn laughter leaks from his gaping violet lips.

“Looks like you’re somehow the second kind. You definitely aren’t lacking self-confidence in your skill.”

“I would like to hear your answer.”

“Interesting. Very interesting. I guess I can put in a word. However – you have no sponsor. We’ll be keeping the Frenchman and we will release him after the match, as long as you can prove you’re trustworthy. You may leave, Sagara Sousuke,” Chief concluded and left the interrogation room.

He’s hesitant to leave Lemon behind, but for the moment he has no choice. However, before leaving, Sousuke chooses a suitable looking police officer and gives him \$50 with the instructions, ‘Do not harm the Frenchman, and make sure he is treated politely. If you can do that, then afterwards I’ll give you another \$50.’

After leaving the station, Sousuke only walks a few steps before he hears Nami’s voice.

“Sousuke!?”

Nami rushes across the dusty road. She probably already knows about the arrest. Looks like she was waiting – just killing time – at the cheap café across the street from the police station.

“What happened!? Where’s Master Lemon?”

“Still inside. They let me go after I talked to the Chief.”

“The Chief..... that cold-hearted villain?”

It seems like the Chief is well known. Reading the surprise and doubt on Nami’s face, Sousuke nods his head in confirmation.

“Why did he let you go after you talked to him? ... Ugh, something stinks.”

Nami makes a sour face and sniffs the air. Even though it was only one night, he had been among a bunch of unhygienic, filthy prisoners. It was no surprise that he reeked.

“Let’s return to the hotel. I’ll explain the situation there.”

The two of them hail a taxi and head back to Lemon’s hotel room.

After a shower, putting on some clean clothes, and drinking some mineral water, Sousuke feels refreshed. He is more than gratified after going so long without clean clothes or drinkable water.



When he returns to the living room, Nami is sitting cross-legged on the sofa watching TV anxiously. It's more than understandable that she hasn't calmed down.

"... So? What's going on?"

"We won too much. It Seems like it got on our colleagues' nerves. They held Lemon under ransom, threatened you, and suggested a fixed match. I consented."

Sousuke says, sitting down on the sofa.

"A fixed match. So that's what this is about."

"You're not angry?"

"Not really. I heard rumors about this kind of thing before. Besides, anyone that expects good sportsmanship from a gambling town full of swindlers, is an idiot. I'm just glad that's all that happened. But..."

"But?"

"The situation could get ugly. Their real intention behind arresting you and Lemon, and making us work so hard for nothing, is because they're beginning to consider us a threat. If we don't cooperate, they'll just use force and get rid of us. The police Chief, did he give you any terms or conditions?"

"Some, for the time being."

"What were they?"

"I'll be fighting in the Yami Battle."

"Come again?" Nami's leg, which she had been bouncing up and down, suddenly stops. "Yami Battle?"

"Yes."

"You serious?"

"Yes. The profit seems good."

"Wait a second. Do you even know what kind of competition that is? There's been rumors floating around between the people in this trade, but nothing's been confirmed. That it doesn't matter how strong you are, it isn't enough. Don't they use live ammo? Isn't it an actual battle?"

"Seems like it."

"Using my AS?"

"That's the plan, yes."

“You’ve gotta be joking!” Nami yells, shooting to her feet in anger. A reasonable reaction.

“You think it’s as simple as using that AS in the Yami Battle and having a fair fight?! Well it’s not! You realize, I haven’t even touched the F.C. system since I first picked that Savage up!? The armor is worn-out too! The Administration demanding a fixed match, that I can understand, but competing in the Yami Battle!? That’s a whole different story! This is seriously dangerous!”

“You’re right.”

“Then why did you agree!? If you want to die, that’s your own choice. But why do you have to risk my precious AS?”

“That’s...”

Sousuke trails off and continues towel drying his hair.

Should he tell her the truth?

Or, should he just leave it at that?

This is the question he has been hesitant about answering since he left the police station. He would have to give a vague explanation.

However, if he did express his desire to participate in the Yami Battle, no matter how high the reward, Nami and the others probably won’t consent to it. That’s only speculation, but Sousuke’s intuition is usually right about this kind of thing.

“Lemon was taken hostage, so I had no choice but to agree to the terms.”

After telling them that, and resolving the funds issue, it may be possible to persuade them.

Because he’s lived with her up to this point, Sousuke knows Nami is a good person. From his own point of view, he can’t really say whether there is enough trust between them.

But suddenly he remembers.

‘I don’t want to die without knowing anything!’

Tokiwa Kyoko’s words from that time, and the look on her face with her eyes full of tears are never far from his mind. But they hit him hard right then.

Pathetic. Only half a day ago he had felt nothing and was doing so well – had been so close to becoming that deadly weapon. But now every phenomenon, every

circumstance, sways his heart. Can he really achieve his 'Strategic Objective' in such a state?

He doesn't know.

"Is it about abacus calculations?" Nami asks after waiting patiently for a while for an answer.

"....."

"Hey. The thing is, I may never shut up about the financial situation. Even if it's called being stingy, I feel like it can't be helped. But, you know? You and me, are we only business partners? I mean, you can talk to me about it, right?"

"?"

Sousuke doesn't understand what she means, and looks up into Nami's eyes. She leans forward toward the sofa.

"...that isn't the reason."

"I thought that we were at least friends. Was I wrong?" she asks and leans closer. Incidentally, the motion causes her breasts to peak out from the top of her tank top. Startled by the unintentional act, Sousuke suddenly feels conflicted and like a fool.

What is the precise weapon? What is the strategic objective?

Didn't he know the answers only a moment ago? It turns out he is only human, an existence full of contradictions. No matter how hard he tries, that is a fact he cannot escape.

That's why he has such a hard time.

Averting his eyes away from the soft skin before him, he says, "You're right. Then I will tell you."

It was better to confess to this new friend than to lie to her. If they can't reach an understanding between them, then he'll cross that bridge when he comes to it.

"The one who suggested the Yami Battle to the Chief, was me."

"Why!?" Nami demands with wide eyes.

"Because that was my objective from the start. Competing in the Arena was the only means I had to get closer to the Administration's darker side. I heard rumors from my fellow mercenary friends, about the real fighting level of the Yami Battles. It's suspected that 'Amalgam' is involved with it in someway."

“Ama...lgam?”

“It is the name of a certain organization. They are a Terrorist organization and a Military-Industrial Complex with deep connections. They instigated disputes in many places all over the world. Amalgam has masterminded many of the serious terrorist incidents which have occurred over the past several years.”

“Whoa whoa. Wait just a minute...”

“There is a highly top-secret Mercenary Corp who fought against Amalgam. They have the fortune to use equipment that is one generation advanced, they pride themselves on rivaling the special forces of regular armies. It’s a Corp that fights against brutal Terrorist and Criminal organizations. As well as intervening in regional conflict crises and resolving the situation. I’m a survivor of that Mercenary Corp.”

The story is suddenly becoming large-scale and serious, and Nami is becoming more and more confused.

“I- ... I don’t really get it. What do you mean ‘survivor’? What happened to your mercenary corp?”

“Amalgam wiped it out.”

“.....”

“Amalgam’s true nature is unclear. Neither who nor where. Very little is known about the extent of their influence. The few clues that I could gather pointed to Namsak and the Yami Battle. A few times my Military unit overthrew Amalgam’s ASes. From the defeated machines we were able to collect identities, specifying how many of their operation soldiers had once worked as players in Namsak.”

“Oh...”

“You don’t believe it?”

He looks at his companion with his face as straight and hard as possible. Nami, still looking half in doubt, stares at Sousuke and freezes.

“Are you serious?”

“Affirmative.”

“Well, I always kind of knew that no ordinary person could possess your caliber of skill... that aside, aren’t these people you’re going after dangerous?”

“Yes.” Sousuke nods, then says in a completely casual tone, “I want to get closer to Amalgam. Your cooperation is necessary to do that.”

“.....!”

What follows that is a reaction that is only natural.

Nami flies into a rage shouting ‘You got to be shittin’ me!!’, Up-turned the table, scattering the contents across the room, yelling ‘Fight alone without permission?!’ Then after hurling a PET bottle at his head screaming ‘I never want to see your face again!’. She then storms out of the hotel room, slamming the door behind her.

It doesn’t make Nami a bad person.

It’s a totally understandable reaction.

As I thought, it really is impossible.

Sighing deeply, Sousuke begins cleaning up the mess Nami caused. By the looks of things Nami will probably be firing him, and he wonders if he’ll be able to find someone else with a suitable AS in time.

No one reliable comes to mind.

Well, what should I do? He thinks as he cleans up all the rubbish. That’s when the doorbell rings – resounding through the room.

Opening the door, he looks outside to see that the visitor is Nami. Looking very displeased, she stares at Sousuke motionlessly.

“For the time being all I want to know is this,” she says with a slight pout. “Are you in trouble?”

“Yes.”

“Do you need my help?”

“Affirmative.”

Receiving the honest reply, Nami’s tense shoulders relax and she taps Sousuke good-naturedly on the chest with her fist.

“Okay. I guess I’ll let you stick around a while longer.”

“Is that really okay?”

“Master Lemon is in prison. Plus, the reward money is good, right?”

“Yes, definitely.”



“I don’t want you to get your hopes up though, because I don’t know if the crew will go along with it. If they say no, then it’s no.”

“Roger.”

“And don’t tell them anything about Amalgam. It’s harder to be involved in something if you know nothing about it.”

“Thank you.”

It turned out that Nami has quite a bit of charisma at her disposal.

Team Crossbow’s maintenance crew did consent to participate in the Yami battle. There were a few people who were opposed to the idea, but after Nami explained about Lemon becoming a hostage, and reassured them that Sousuke had extraordinary skills, eventually, they reluctantly gave the ‘OK’.

The following evening of the next day an errand boy arrived with a message from the Chief. It said:

[On Saturday at 21:00, come to the Church ruins, north of Munamera. Of course, bring the AS, too.]

Munamera is a small farming village along the highway, roughly 20 km north of Namsak.

There’s no way they would hold the battle in Namsak. The live ammunition the AS’s use – 30 mm bullets – can easily reduce anything they hit to rubble. The Yami battlegrounds are somewhere in Namsak’s outskirts, in the mountain areas, where there aren’t very many people.

[Don’t be late. If you are, your friend in the detention cell may face various inconveniences.]

After delivering the Chief’s message the errand boy exits the hangar.

“I feel sorry for Master Lemon. Not only will he develop neuroses in jail, but he’ll also be violated by the gay prisoners.”

Nami grumbles while quickly dismantling the White Savage’s control box.

“I gave the prison guard a tip,” Sousuke says, helping with the maintenance.

“It would be nice if that’s all there is to it. We can remove that switchboard over there. That shouldn’t be a problem.”

Nami picks at a circuit connected to the F.C. system.

“Is it any good?”

“Uh-huh. At any rate, the Flbn-32 probably won’t be of any use. If that’s the case, you had better reduce the burden with the home-made software.”

“Home-made software?”

“I rewrote it. Specifically for the Yami Battle. It took me most of the morning to finish. I’m pretty weak when it comes to stuff like that, and I mean big time~”

Sousuke stops what he’s doing and stares intently at Nami’s smiling face.

“Just this morning? You rewrote the software on your own?”

As far as Sousuke knows, that isn’t a job someone can finish in a few rushed hours. Even a specially trained engineer would need at least a few days – working slowly and carefully – to complete it as much as possible. It’s not a process a 16 or 17 year old girl, who has not undergone any specialist training, can handle.

Actually, in the beginning, when Sousuke was in Afghanistan, most of the amateur or beginner engineering students in the guerrilla groups tampered with the Savage software like this. But the custom-made software was ineffective and they had to suffer with it until they got a hold of the software that was actually professionally made for the AS’s.

“Have you studied it before?”

“No way. I just kept tinkering with it a bit.”

“Even then, it’s not something that can be done so easily. Where on earth did you get technical skills of that caliber–”

“Like–I–said!” Nami waved her hand as if she were shooing something annoying away. “I said I was weak at it, didn’t I? Well, if I touch it a little, I think I can get a general understanding of it. It’s not really that big of a deal, right?”

Impossible.

“When you first got your AS, you learned AS maintenance methods from someone, right?” Sousuke asks the question as casually as possible, waiting for the answer.

“?”

Nami stops her maintenance work and stares at Sousuke with a look full of wonder.

“You didn’t learn it from anyone?” Unease starts to tickle the edge for Sousuke’s mind. “Then, why–”

“But, even if I don’t understand it, I can just fiddle with it a bit and I work it out. Somehow.”

It was hard to think. Even if it is a second-generation type, to understand the AS system, let alone operate the AS, proper training is necessary.

For a teenage girl who doesn’t have any engineering knowledge – who hasn’t been taught by anyone– it shouldn’t be possible.

It can’t be. Her too?

No. Such a coincidence is impossible. The chances of one person being *that* are one in tens of thousands. Actually, the probability of their existence is less than one in a million. The chances of meeting one himself so abruptly and by accident–

“Hey buddy,” Nami says, shaking Sousuke from his thoughts. “Don’t space out on me. Quickly, unfasten that plug over there.”

“Right.”

Sousuke returns to doing maintenance work on the Savage, with a heavy heart. Right now I’m busy.

I’ll worry about it when this mission is completed. If time allows, I’ll look into it with more detail, Sousuke thinks carelessly.

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