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Project Name: ***Boost***

Volume Name (placeholder): ***The Shadow Armor***

Chapter Name (placeholder): ***I am the Dark Runner.***

Pages: ***31***

Nature of the Document: ***Page by Page script***

In One Sentence:

A crew of thieves goes up against a lone technologically advanced assassin in a cyber-punk themed world.

In one Paragraph:

Cyberpunk themed “thief heist”-like scenarios, traps and ambushes. Action aplenty though hardly ever fast paced as our thieves try to outsmart the assassin who is gathering all the parts of an armor so high tech it’s practically a myth, while trying to unravel who the individual is and the mysteries surrounding them, as well as the armor itself.

PAGE 1:

It was an eerie night on some backwater, shady portion of a city. But not empty at all. A figure, Saga's older brother, the current Dark Runner, was being chased.

He slid down a building by use of a pipe. His huge jacket fluttered around him as the wind resisted its attempt to keep up with the body's drop.

He landed with a grunt of pain, which made him pause for an instant to check on a wound he had just suffered. Worried, looking up and back at the force who had caused him hurt and was still giving chase, he dashed away.

PAGE 2:

Charged plasma shots surrounded his steps as he wall-walked for a couple of steps, leaping over to the opposite side.

He landed and, in a continuous motion, frog-leapt to grab a fire escape ladder. In a single pull, he climbed it into a stand.

But as he landed, a shot hit him in the shoulder, staggering him.

Dark Runner: Ugh!

PAGE 3:

The then Dark Runner looked to the side and, without thinking, dove through the window. It crashed ahead of him, allowing him through.

The Dark Runner landed with his hands and head, rolling, but as he brought his torso up to get up and run, a hand intercepted him by clenching against his neck.

Dark Runner: Guhk!

The hand pushed him off his feet and over his back, smashing him against the ground. Dark Runner's head and back crashed hard against the wooden floor of the abandoned house.

For all this time, nothing was visible except for the hand.

PAGE 4:

Our villain finally materialized, de-cloaking, while voicing a statement in a modulated near-robotic voice. He was covered in a cloak and hood such that nothing was visible except for his gauntlet. His voice emanated as if from darkness.

Shin Law: Dark Runner...

Saga's big brother, though, coughed up blood with a smirk.

Dark Runner: I –ugh! I knew you were coming. You're too late, I got rid of my...my shadow part! You-gahk...you failed!

PAGE 5:

Our villain awkwardly stared at our pursued thief, the Dark Runner without his Dark Runners, for a few seconds.

Shin Law: No...

Our villain brings his other hand out of the cloak, placing it in front of the Dark Runner's face.

Shin Law: You have.

His wrist glowed with what would be a charged shot, that we never see discharged.

PAGE 6:

Caption: 5 days later...Dark Runner Enclave, somewhere in Japan.

In another eerie night, a western-like mansion stood beyond a large gate, behind which stood two well renowned thieves. Saga and the Mad Genius looked on at the enclave. Mad Genius had a mask on, one that covered from forehead to chin, but only the front, allowing his bald head to reflect the moon's glow between what few patches of white hair still remained.

Saga: I appreciate the quick warning, old an.

Mad Genius: I'm sorry I can't give you any more information about your brother.

Saga: You can, though, once I get his shadow part, right?

The old man calmly nodded, speaking plainly.

Mad Genius: That's the rule. Those who possess a shadow part, members of the elite, have access to our organization and all information we have...for free. Be aware that possessing the shadow part may...attract unwanted attention.

Saga: I'm a thief, I get nothing but unwanted attention. If I need it to find my brother, then that's all that matters to me. I'll be right back.

PAGE 7:

Mad Genius nodded curiously.

Mad Genius: We'll be watching earnestly, Saga Law.

Saga smirked victoriously, putting sunglasses on. He clicked a little button on them and they extended to a mask, his mask.

Caption:

Saga: World class thief, 16 years old.

And like that, he went in.

PAGE 8:

He walked crouched across the garden, stopping at a few well-trimmed bushes. There, he brought his hand to his mask and tapped a button slightly, to zoom in with his glasses.

SFX: Vvmmnn.

Saga Thought: Hum...cameras. Need to try another way.

Walking around, he moved to a river, roughly located at the right of the mansion, if you were facing its front. It was a river that led to a lake, or a large pond, filling it with water.

Putting his face in the water, Saga saw that the river flowed from a vent-like pipe, like a sewer pipe.

Saga removed the head, and looked at his arms, nodding. He clenched his fists and two blades leaned out of each forearm. One very near his wrist, the other very near his elbow.

PAGE 9:

Saga breathed in, and dived.

Effort-fully, he climbed his way up the pipe, shoving the blades to use them as support.

Away from him was the inside of a basement, there was a tank of water there. It was being filled by another pipe which came from up and was connected to the ground.

After a few a few seconds, Saga burst out of the water, reaching out for air savagely. He clicked the mask so he could breathe, his blades retracting as he motioned to do that.

Coughed, Saga thought:

Saga Thought: Man, it would have been pretty embarrassing for me to die like that...

PAGE 10:

Saga looked around the basement to make sure no cameras were present and then walked out of the tub while clicking his mask back on.

Then he noticed a camera, startled.

Saga immediately relaxed, however.

Saga Thought: No, not an enclave camera, that's one of theirs. I wonder what they're thinking...?

So Saga ignores it, crouching and climbing the stairs that lead out of the basement.

Meanwhile, two individuals stood in a small room, watching him walking away outside of the camera's view. The old man we had seen before was one of them, and next to him was a good looking woman, The Hunter. Both had their masks on. Hers went from ear to ear, covering only the eye on the left side, brow to cheek, but on the right, it went down to her chin. It looks like a full mask that's been split.

She was not as pleased as he seemed to be.

Hunter: He almost died. That would've been embarrassing.

Mad Genius: Good instincts, though. He knows no one lives in the enclaves so everything has to be automatic.

Hunter: It's pure luck. The pool could've been directly connected to a reservoir.

Mad Genius: A tank needs to be filled by something.

Hunter: Whatever you say, old man. Only thing impressive about him so far is his ability to hold his breath.

PAGE 11:

Back inside, Saga was watching a camera on wheels passing him by, smiling.

Then he climbed a flight of stairs, along the railway on the side.

Then he crawled through a vent.

Saga carefully pushed the exit-gate, edging it out and grabbing it before it falls, and then climbed down carefully.

He then walked next to a panel which was right next to a door. He sighed, disappointed, while taking something from his pouch.

Saga Thoughts: Damn, hate when I have to deal with this.

PAGE 12:

Caption: After a long trying hour...

The panel was cut out of the wall, only connected by wires with which Saga was struggling with very little confidence. He had them connected to his own gadget and was holding a very small flashlight in his mouth while he tinkered away, again, doubtfully.

Saga Thoughts: *C'mon, if those brats can do it...*

Caption: Back in the observation room...

The Hunter entered the back of a van, the Mad Genius did not turn to make sure it was her.

Hunter: Is he still at it?

The old man was squinting his eyes in pain, actually hurt by Saga's technical incompetence.

Mad Genius: Well...he is doing something.

Hunter: Good Lord, it's been, like, an hour.

Mad Genius: He has persistence, indeed.

The Hunter opened up a box of non-descript take out food, to eat.

Hunter: Damn it, do you have the hots for him or something, you old pervert? Stop defending him, especially when you can't. Nobody in the elite would take that long to bypass one stupid security panel.

The Mad Genius shrugged.

Mad Genius: His father did.

Hunter: Ah yes, and what a great example to compare yourself to!

PAGE 13:

A door slid open.

It revealed Saga who looked up, surprised.

Saga then shot up a victorious expression.

Saga: Ha!

He walked out, cautiously.

Then he arrived at a room. At the center of the room, there was a pedestal, with the Dark Runners on it. The boots of the shadow armor.

Saga Thought: There you are...

Saga was leaning against a small counter, overseeing the room, twitching his nose in thought.

The thing was surrounded by cameras and a laser grid. The cameras were surveying the room, four of them in total, looking side to side so they could patrol a squared perimeter.

Saga Thought: Hm...

Saga Thought: Pure stone so I can't use my magnetic grappler... I guess I'll use that.

Saga walked back to the wall, closing his hands. The blades he used to fight the water's current eased out of his fist and elbow, two in each arm.

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Saga Thought: *Better play it safe, dunno if they're sensitive to sound.*

Bending his wrist hard, a coat of liquid dripped from his gauntlets, coating the blades.

Cautiously, Saga shoved one arm's blades into the wall. It went in effortlessly, with a light "tsss". He pulled to make sure it was stuck, and then smiled.

Saga Thought: That's my chemist!

Saga pulled and shoved the other one.

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Caption: Meanwhile, in the observation room.

The mad Genius is squinting again, interested in what he's seeing. Hunter is intrigued, eating yet another take out box. She's pointing with her utensils.

Hunter: Hum, well that's interesting. What's that he's using?

Mad Genius: A special kind of corrosive, looks like... which also seems to function as an adhesive? It allows him to burn a hole in, but then, as it reacts with the very material it dissolves, it becomes adhesive to make climbing possible.

Hunter: Hm, I'm surprised. Is it his doing? I thought he was his father's spawn, only good for running.

The Mad Genius relaxed, sitting back, and the Hunter continued eating.

Mad Genius: And you'd be right. That's Satoshi's doing, for sure.

Hunter: The Guile Chemist? Stupid name, I thought he was with the Shield's crew.

Mad Genius: The Shield could no longer afford him. Not that it matters since he's been retired... much like the rest.

The Hunter looks on, twitching her nose somewhat impressed. Mad Genius continues observing with an analytical mind.

Hunter: Wow, now that is some impressive strength, I'll admit. He might be elite material after all.

Mad Genius: If he obeys the rules and obtains the Shadow Part, he is worthy, no matter what we think of his skill.

The Hunter side-glanced at the Mad Genius, not appreciative of his grand-standing.

Hunter: I know the rules, old man.

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Back inside, Saga reached the ceiling.

He was keeping his body against the ceiling on pure abdominal strength, staying inches above the laser grid.

His neck bulged and his arms twitched as he removed a blade, revealing how it was curved at the end to better work with the ceiling.

Saga placed it ahead.

He sighed, garnering strength, and did it again.

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Saga was now over the boots, on the ceiling, looking down at them and the cameras that surrounded it. There was no laser grid above it.

Carefully, he took off one arm, bringing its blades in. He then held his body vertical, and edged his shoes off his heels so he could still hold on to them by the toes.

Saga sighed.

Saga Thought: Alright...no more caution.

He flung his legs open in a split, throwing his shoes off in different directions.

The shoes sliced off as they pierced the laser grid, and the cameras all looked to find them by the time they land on the ground, in different pieces.

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Saga was falling, his other arm already having retracted the blade. He grabbed onto the edge of the pedestal.

With one pull, he got himself up and directly into sliding his feet into the boots.

The cameras turned and filled him with spotlights. The shoes, meanwhile, oozed and tightened around his feet and leg.

Robotic Dialogue Inside Head: Dark Runners activated, new user assimilated.

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The alarm sounded out, loud and obnoxious, but Saga calmly pressed a button on his mask.

His glasses turned light-filtering on, a whitish yellowish hue.

Saga: Too late, now. Once I reach what I came to steal, you've already lost.

Grinning excitedly, Saga leapt off the pedestal.

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The cameras raised all the up so turrets could slide beneath them. Instead of firing bullets, however, they instead spewed out fire.

Saga, in mid air, span around to avoid the fire and to go through the laser grid untouched.

He landed with a roll, hopped into a flip, then cart-wheeled, all of it through the lasers. The final cartwheel had him passing through the doors, which were closing.

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He ran through a corridor as more turrets popped up, firing bullets that trailed his run as he went from one side to the other.

Saga stepped on the wall.

Mechanize Dialogue Inside Head: Adjusting gravity field.

Saga was thus able to keep running, rising in height until he was almost at the ceiling, at which point he leapt out of it, flipping over the trail of bullets.

He landed neatly on the ground.

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Saga saw a door closing in front of him so he turned. Bullets trailed him as he dashed for a window which had metallic shutters already closing.

The window shattered before his dive through it, barely fitting between the closed shutters.

Saga flipped in the air and then looked down as he fell from three stories high.

Mechanize Dialogue Inside Head: Activating gravity dampeners.

His feet landed with a soft noise, silent. He crouched, comfortable, with an amazed look on his face.

SFX: Vooomm...

Saga: Wow...I didn't even hear that. Didn't even **feel** that. Amazing.

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Caption: Meanwhile, back at the observation room...

The old mad genius pointed at the screens, content as if he had won a bet.

Mad Genius: That, is the Dark Runner.

Hunter: Humpf, bad at infiltrating, expert at fleeing the scene, and always seen. He certainly fits the bill...

Mad Genius: We've been losing a lot of members lately, Hunter. It's good to get a new one, even if he hasn't reached his full potential.

Disgruntled and unconvinced, the woman agreed

Hunter: Yes, I suppose. Go ahead.

The old man opened the back of the van to see Saga, looking back at him proud and cocky, even though a tad tired.

Saga: Well?

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The old man and the woman both stepped out into the street with Saga. The old man cleared his throat with a smile.

Mad Genius: Begin recording.

The woman nodded and threw a spherical device, the size of a tennis ball, at the middle of them. The device beeped, for a second, and then a red dot started blinking. Mad Genius leaned over his cane intently as he talked to it.

Mad Genius: The Mad Genius, acting representative of the Shadow Circle, lays witness to the prowess and worthy nature of Saga Law, and of the valid way through which he has acquired the Dark Runners from its respective enclave.

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The woman thus spoke, a bit involuntarily. Mad Genius was smiling gladly.

The Hunter: The Hunter, acting recruiter of the Shadow Circle, stands as witness of the deeds accomplished here and now by Saga Law, and the words of authority hereby spoken by the Mad Genius.

The Mad Genius: And so is the Shadow Circle summoned to gather, at the earliest convenience, to officially enter Saga Law into its ranks. He will hence be known...as the Dark Runner, the 26th.
End Recording.

The sphere beeped, shutting off, but Saga didn't wait to speak, though. Impatiently holding his hips, he leaned his head and asked, snotty.

Saga Law: Great, I'm all honored and stuff. Now can I know about my brother?

The Hunter was not pleased.

The Hunter: Is that the only reason to get the boots?

Saga Law: Why? Too unworthy a reason for a thief, is it? Is ego a better reason?

The Mad Genius chuckled while she shivered frustrated and embarrassed.

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The Hunter: I still don't like him.

She said, spiteful and ignoring the fact Saga was standing right there.

The Hunter: I'm leaving. Contact me if you need me again.

And like that, angry, she left. She was still walking away when the old man turned to Saga, serious and grave:

Mad Genius: Very well. As promised, Saga, I will tell you about your brother. Brace yourself, boy, I am about to let you know of tragic tidings.

Saga looked at the Mad Genius and it's obvious that he already knows... that his big brother is dead.

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Caption: 2 days later, at an abandoned warehouse.

Saga walked, without mask or even glasses, going in through the gate, which closed behind him.

He walked in the complete darkness, without hesitation or difficulty.

He walked up some stairs, across some corridors, and everything looked abandoned, dark, empty. Until he was approaching a particular door.

The door opened, letting light out to bask him in. He could then see a silhouette of a small girl.

Closing in, we see it's Miki.

Miki: Seriously, how do you walk around in the dark like that?!

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Saga scoffed a smile, walking past her while patting her in the head. She pouted lightly at the gesture, none too pleased.

Saga Law: It's **my haven**, Miki. My home base. I gotta know it like the back of my hand.

She closed the door behind him, following him.

They walked across a narrow and confined corridor, lit up by lights standing on the corners of the grounds instead of on the top. In the darkness of the ceiling, red dots betrayed the lingering stair of security cameras. A laser grid, set up, shut down as they passed, only to turn on behind them.

They didn't walk in silence, however.

Saga Law: Is the rest of the crew here?

Miki: Well duh, you asked us to wait.

Saga Law: I'm late, though.

A voice interrupted from out of sight.

Satoshi: yeah, we noticed.

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The door in front of Saga was being held open again, this time by an old man sporting long white dreadlocks going over a white coat. Satoshi. Saga walked by him, greeting him with a nod.

Saga: Satoshi.

Satoshi returned it.

Satoshi: Boss.

And then we see the room.

It was messy with cables, which surged into it from virtually every angle, like a city was plugged to that room, circling in the ground, walls and ceiling, until they converged on one of two things, some both. The first was a group of vertical terminals, big and bulking, shoved against the left wall. What was left of the wall had been used to align the crew's lockers. The second was a security panel with several screens, to the right of the door, which showed the feed from all the cameras in the building.

There was a table in the middle, with little tablet screens built >into< it, though they were partially hidden by the remnants of 5 days worth of fast food. The table was surrounded by chairs. The opposite side to the door showed a huge computer terminal outfitted for two people, going by the two chairs there, even though it had many more screens of variable sizes.

The rest of Saga's crew immediately looked back at him. **Vick** was at the terminal, browsing the net, passing the time, and looked back while still drinking a soda, left hand typing on the keyboard. **Ami** was at the table, sitting down, messing with a piece of equipment with some tools, she looked without letting them go. **Dirk** was standing facing the security monitors, and didn't face away, only his eyes turned to Saga. Finally, **Kaori and Katsuo** were taking a nap. Katsuo was lied down over his arms, over his portion of the table, and had opened his eyes at Saga. Kaori was sitting down, arms folded, and she looked at him mean and irritable.

Main Caption: The Law Haven, home base to Saga Law and his crew.

Secondary Captions(no particular order, put them next to each person.:

Vick: Hacker, 17 years old.

Miki: Hacker, 13 years old.

Ami: Engineer, 19 years old.

Dirk: Hired Gun, 41 years old.

Satoshi: The Guile Chemist, 52 years old.

Katsuo: Medic, 27 years old.

Kaori: Thief serving as adjutant. 20 years old.

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Kaori: Well, took you long enough.

Vick opened his arms in welcome, the soda in one of them.

Vick: Boss! Finally, wassup? Why you so late?

At that, Ami sniffed at the air, and suddenly jerked her head down to look at his boots.

Ami: Oh. My. Arethosethe **Dark Runners**?!

Saga answered her as Miki walked by him, Satoshi was already taking his seat.

Saga: Yes, so, that's why I'm late. It was either this or sell our retirement fund, the information was too expensive.

Katsuo reacted by asking the air.

Katsuo: We have a retirement fund?

Saga couldn't answer though, as Ami was skipping all around him, eyes glowing with excitement.

Saga: Ami, calm down.

Ami: But it's the Shadow Armor! The most advance piece of technology on earth!

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Kaori looked pleased.

Kaori: Humpf, so you just walked up to your brother's enclave and stole his Shadow Part?

Saga was taking off his boots as Ami waited, clapping her hands in excitement.

Kaori: That's why I work for ya, boss.

Ami swiped the boots and practically teleported to her side of the table, drawing an electric screwdriver from one of her pockets.

Meanwhile, the rest of them had either sat down or were in the process of sitting down.

Satosi: Well? And the information?

Saga looked grimly as he himself sat down.

Saga: Pretty bad, guys.

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Saga leaned his head on a hand, gloomy.

Saga: First off, it's confirmed, my brother's dead.

Miki: What no! That's awful.

Saga: It's okay, I kinda expected it, I was ready.

He paused, a bit of a blank stare.

Saga: Anyways, he managed to hide away the Dark Runners before his killer got to them, which is more than the others did.

Satoshi: Others?

Saga: Sorry, Satoshi. Lee was killed too.

Satoshi looked really sad. He sighed, heart broken.

Satoshi: He was a good man. Not a good thief...but a really good man.

Dirk: I don't understand. Lee was famous for being a fighter. How is this possible? An assassination? Didn't Lee have his arms with him?

Saga: We have a gangue, Dirk, to deal with other gangs. We hire guns and arms, like you, to deal with other guns and arms. But nobody can deal with thieves except for thieves. And a thief killed Lee, and stole his shield

Throughout this, Ami and Katsuo are the only ones who don't react; Ami is still looking the boots over intently with the help of loony-looking monocles. Katsuo was still with his eyes closed, drowsy and uninterested.

Kaori, though, raised an issue.

Kaori: Someone's taking shadow parts?

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Miki: You can't have more than one part, can you? Isn't that a rule?

Vick: And you can only take one from an enclave too, isn't that right?

Saga: No. Technically, you can steal it from a thief. You're supposedly better than him, then. More worthy. You can also be given since the thief has that decision power. You can only have one though, yeah. Anyways, the rules don't matter, whoever's behind it is just killing everyone. And I doubt he's worried, seems like he's got almost half of the shadow armor put together already.

Katsuo raised a hand, eyes still closed. He opened them a bit, though, as he spoke

Katsuo: Sorry, I'm not following. Perhaps due to the fact I am fairly new to this... underworld habitat. What is the "shadow armor?"

Ami reacts in complete shocking disbelief.

Ami: Oh dear!

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Saga: Project 56.

Katsuo raised an eyebrow, holding in a patronizing scoff.

Katsuo: What? That conspiracy theory about the invincible suit of armor?

Ami pointed a wrench at him

Ami: It's not a conspiracy theory!

Vick leaned back on his chair with his arm over it, and the other holding a slice of pizza, interjecting:

Vick: I think it was made by aliens.

They all look at Vick, Miki giggling.

Ami: Okay, **that's** a conspiracy theory...

Ami: But the suit's very real!

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Ami: It's a tech-armor more advanced than anything! It was built by a team of researchers in the US but then it was taken by the Chinese, until a European thief, French I think, stole it. With it, he was unstoppable! It has cloaking, hacking, gravity generators, kinetic shields, organic-enhancers, super advanced scanners, you name it. It was only when he died that his identity showed up again on the grid, and the suit was recovered by the English. Then a scientist lost his family on some accident and for some reason he blamed...I dunno, some country, it was a terrorist attack. So he went mental, he took the armor and used it as a weapon. After governments started trying to stop him, he lost all concept of friend or innocents! He would show up out of nowhere, kill and destroy, and then vanish, and nobody could stop him!

Katsuo frowned, doubtful.

Katsuo: ...seriously?

Saga: It's true. He became a force of nature no one could contend with.

Kaori: So instead of trying to beat him, the underworld came together to flush him out and do the only thing that could be done to him...that could hurt him.

Katsuo: What?

Dirk: What else?

Dirk shrugged.

Dirk: Steal.

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Ami: They stole parts of his armor, piece by piece. It's like a computer, ya know? The way you put memory, the cpu, graphic, sound, all those cards, and you put them together around the motherboard.

Katsuo stared in confusion.

Katsuo: ...wha?

Miki: It's like a leggo, you see? Like a puzzle, all the parts come together to make the full suit, but they all work by themselves.

Ami: Right, that's what I said. Anyways, the price of the thief alliance was sharing the value of the armor. But when they found out it could be separated like that, they didn't sell it and shared the money. Instead, they divided the several parts among them.

Saga: This was after they defeated him. They stole parts of the armor until he couldn't contend with a few gangues, and then he died, and every leader took a piece of armor and established an organization that just makes sure nobody has more than one part and basically keeps track of who has what. I can now give the books to anyone but there's a limit to that, there was a guy who just gave his to the police but it was stolen from them and put back into its enclave. It's usually much easier to steal from the enclave than to steal from a thief so it's pretty rare, usually we steal from each other, or we pass them on.

Satoshi nodded.

Satoshi : That's how Lee got his, poor soul.

Saga: That's true. The Shield.

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Katsuo: And what if a thief ignores all that and gets more than one?

Saga: It's happened before, and is happening now. We find out who it is: we find him, and we punish him.

Katsuo: We?

Saga smiled.

Saga: The Shadow Circle. They only really ever join forces to deal with this. The information I got is that this guy's gotten quite a number of parts already. Despite his MO, he is a thief, and he's been walking dead.

Vick: What? Walking Dead?!

Miki: It's a more hardcore version of being "off the grid", Vick. He shows up dead at several places so it's even easier for people to lose track of him. It's very rare for an outsourced informant to trail beyond a dead body.

Vick: Oh, so not a zombie, just dead bodies.

Ami: Yup. Carbon-based meat compounds, probably modified to be unrecognizable.

Vick looks at Ami confused

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Satoshi : Burnt or mangled cadavers, is what she means. He fakes his death whenever someone catches wind of his trail.

Kaori, impatient, finally interrupts.

Kaori: Right, enough with the history lessons. Does anybody know who the guy is?

(
Vick takes the last few seconds to look at Miki inquisitively, to ask

Vick: Carbon-based meat compounds?

She nodded affirmatively.

)

Saga: Well, the Mad Genius seems to think that...and I'd be inclined to agree...that it's my dad.

That was greeted with silence.

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Dirk: Your father was a thief too?

Saga: Yes. A very bad one, though. As in, you know of honor among thieves?

Katsuo coughed a laugh but Satoshi interjected.

Satoshi : Don't laugh, Katsuo, most of them profoundly adhere to it. What about it?

Saga: Well, basically, my dad was of Katsuo's opinion. He sold out his crew and endangered my whole family, which is why my name's so popular.

Kaori: He sold them all out? How's he alive?

Saga: My uncle took pity on him. Got him out and hidden.

Dirk: Your uncle?! Does crime run in your blood, Law?

Vick involuntarily laughed at that.

Vick: HA!

They all looked at Vick who immediately reacted embarrassed. He wiped his lips, and embarrassingly pointed out.

Vick: All...all the Laws are outlaws...get it?

Kaori facepalmed and Miki giggled, actually thinking it was fun. Vick himself pouted, crossing his arms.

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Saga: This was a long time ago, I was still a kid. Shin, that's my uncle, hid my dad and then returned, answering no questions and asking us to forgive my dad. But a year back, big Bro told me Shin had heard my dad had resurfaced. He headed off to try and help him again. Haven't heard from him since.

Kaori: So you think it's your dad?

Saga: Well yeah. Uncle had a Shadow Part, I think my dad killed him, stole it, and now he's trying to get the armor back together so he can be unstoppable.

Ami: What shadow part is that? Who was he?

And then suddenly, they were interrupted by a shady voice coming out of the Vick and Miki's huge computer terminal.

Broadcasted Voice: Saga Law.

They all opened their eyes in shock, even Ami.

Saga replies, gravely.

Saga: The... Hacker.

PAGE 41:

Voice: I have come for the Dark Runners.

Saga: Viiick...

Vick and Miki leapt into their chairs, throwing their hands all over the keyboards in amazing speed. Theirs eyes trailed the screens of code nervously. Vick looked plenty serious now, Miki worried.

Broadcasted Voice: You will disperse your crew and surrender the Dark Runners to me.

Vick: I dunno how he got in, firewalls?

Miki: All intact.

Broadcasted Voice: Or I will come in there, I will kill you all, and I will take them.

Saga glanced above, serious.

Saga Thought: Well that saves us the trouble of having to come find you.

Miki: Found the hole.

Broadcasted Voice: You have one minute.

Miki: grrrnn! I stomped it, but he found another one to get across the last woord...

Miki complained, a bit sulky. Saga looked at Vick, worried and judgmental.

Saga: Vick?

He was still typing like crazy.

Vick: Look, you didn't **tell** me he had gotten to The Hacker. You might've led with that, ya know? Hey guys, let's meet, by the way, the Hacker's coming to kill us so be ready. I wasn't ready.

PAGE 42:

With arms crossed, Saga watched as the team lost all manner of easy-going demeanor.

Saga: I didn't know. It's the underworld, nobody's sure of who's hit and who's just hiding.

Vick: Well it was because of him that I originally requested to have our whole base wired up, so I can run everything even if I turn off wireless access, which I am doing now...

Miki: I'll execute the signal scrutinizers on the camera feeds.

Vick: Yes, good thinking.

Katsuo: So... is nobody else worried about the fact he's here to kill us all?

They remained silent. Even Ami was no longer moving around.

PAGE 43:

Dirk broke the silence, harsh as he always was.

Dirk: Turn on all the lights, I'll go and kill him.

Saga walked to the boots, to take them out of the table.

Saga: No. You're no match for him, he's got the gadgets.

Dirk stood up and opened his coat, showing a bunch of guns.

Dirk: I have guns.

Saga shook his head lightly, putting on the Dark Runners.

Saga: He's a thief. He could steal each one of those from under your nose if he wanted too, and he wouldn't need his gadgets.

Dirk: You underestimate my training.

Saga reached for him, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Saga: No, you underestimate ours. This doesn't mean I want you to stay here twiddling your thumbs. None of you. Vick, will he be able to interfere with your systems again?

PAGE 44:

Vick turned in his chair, to face Saga. He smiled a cocky smirk and slapped his chest.

Vick: No way! Most he can do is shut off a camera and, and I'm talking theory here, hack us through the cameras or any of our other automatic systems, but no, not if I'm paying attention. He needs to send signals among the ones being sent by those systems to establish a connection. I can't stop him after that but I can stop him before his signals reach us by using a sub-routine which works at the hardware level.

Miki nods excitedly, nudging prideful of her senior.

Miki: It's really awesome! It knows the rate of transmission of each camera, which is fixed! Above or below even a bit, and it neutralizes it.

Saga looked a bit lost, and not hiding it all. He shook it away, and turned to everyone else.

Saga: ...ok, so no, good. Everyone else, this is the plan.

Katsuo, still looking downtrodden, lifted a hand again. He asks the question and Ami answers with an excited yell.

Katsuo: So we **are** going to face this guy? Who's using the...what did you call it?

Ami: The **Shadow Armor!**

Katsuo: Yeah, that, isn't he supposed to be unstoppable?

Saga folded his arms and look on seriously.

Saga: He doesn't **have** the whole thing, so of course we're going to stop him. This is our base.

Saga furrowed his brows, gravely stating:

Saga: Nobody storms our fucking base.

PAGE 45:

The entrance to the warehouse through which Saga had entered was, again, sliding upwards. Our villain's cloak fluttered in the cool wind of the night he was about to leave behind. His mask was now clear as he looked up and intently at a camera, trying to hack it.

Nothing happened so he leaned his head inquisitively, wondering why.

Shin Law: ?

Back at the central room, Vick was flipping him off, pointing at the screen showing him.

Vick: That's right, bitch, the surprise factor is over.

They then observed as the villain's figure shifted and disappeared into nothing. And then the camera disconnected.

Miki: Oh no...

Vick sighed, inconvenienced, pressing a bunch of keys.

Vick: Ok, so he has the Shadow's camouflage...that means...

Miki: Four chimes.

Vick: Right.

PAGE 46:

Meanwhile, in a dark vent, Saga was quickly and silently paced his way across it. The vent had wires and cables running through it.

A general alarm sounded out. It was loud and obnoxious and Saga stopped to count.

SFX: BEEM! BEEM! BEEM!

Saga Thought: One...two...three...

SFX: BEEM!

Saga Thought: Four... c'mon one mo--...damn. Four means The Shadow...so he has perfect optical camouflage. That's just great, how does the Shadow get caught, for pete sakes...

Saga climbed and then descended, leading himself to an exit. Before exiting, though, he shoved a little metallic wire into one of the cables, pulling it out of his pouch, and then exited the vent. He would fall but instead he back-flipped to put the feet pointing at the ceiling

Robotic Dialog: Generating gravity field.

And so Saga got pulled up onto the ceiling, lightly and soundlessly landing.

PAGE 47:

Saga Thought: He doesn't have the Hunter's gauntlets nor the Mad Genius's cane...so no traps and no stealthy long-distance knock-outs. But he's invisible, even to thermal. Okay, so... well, he should be here by now...

Saga connects another end of the metallic wire to his belt, and clicks a button.

Saga Thought: Let's hope Ami's right about him not tracing electromagnetic impulses, even if it's ancient and across cords.

SFX: Click click...click click click click

The room suddenly started filling up with gas, albeit not completely, it didn't reach up to Saga. He pressed a button on his glasses to engage his mas. Then, to a side of a wall, fans start working, blowing the gas to the other side.

Through his blurry night-vision, Saga noticed a bulge blocking the smoke.

From it came a sinister laugh.

Shin Law: Ha ha ha....

PAGE 48:

Saga turned on his thermals with a press of his button, but they couldn't see past the smoke.

Saga Thought: Duh, that's the main point of the gas, of course I can't see him.

Saga Thought: But anyways, if he's unaffected by the gas, that means he's gotten to The Survivor, too. That means he can breathe in anything. He's also got The Shield so it's no use dropping in on him to attack. Right, so... moving on.

Saga then walked out back to the vent, he dove, feet and arms first, completely crouched, not touching any part of it. He landed fine, crouched, and then pressed the button a few more times.

Finally, he took off the metallic cord, from both ends, and retracted it back to his pouch as he walked off.

PAGE 49:

In the gas filled room, the enemy was walking towards the door at the end.

It suddenly flung open, though, to show Dirk, wielding an automatic rifle with mortars, and wearing goggles. No mask, he was just holding his breath.

A mortar launched, exploding against the foe. An invisible shield fizzles around him and then another explosion happened on the ground. Dirk then started firing his gun until the room's filled with smoke and debris lifted up by the torrent of bullets.

After short seconds, the gun complained about a lack of bullets. Dirk cocked it and stepped back, closing the door.

PAGE 50:

Shin was walking along another corridor, having escaped. He was shaking his head at their madness when Kaori's voice interrupts him.

Shin Law: Maniacs, the lot of 'em.

Kaori: More like desperate...

The villain looked back and immediately disappeared. Kaori stepped closer from the shadows, not worried at all. She retracted her mask.

Kaori: Calm down... and hear me out. I'm desperate too, Saga's got a plan...but it's stupid, it'll never work on someone like you...

She complimented him with a sweet smile. Silence came as a reply.

Kaori: I don't want to die just so he can keep his stupid boots. I'll walk you away from his trap, you can even kill them, I don't care. I'd rather be with you, if you'll take me.

He materialized behind her, charging a shot aimed at the back of her head all while grabbing her arms behind her back, quick and efficient. She was left in a very vulnerable position, but still she flirted.

Kaori: Well now...I see you're a hands on...kinda guy...I like that.

His creepy modulated mechanical voice sounded out.

Shin Law: Tell me his plan. Then, I'll consider your words.

PAGE 51:

She was really trying to convince this guy not to kill her, and she continued.

Kaori: Please...I know a winner when I see one. He thought of leading you to the secondary hallway, the one he has rigged to electrocute, and then explode. Dirk was just a diversion, he's already moved away to his secondary position...to catch you in case you survive.

Shin Law: So if I go back there...

Kaori: The room isn't even gassed anymore, I promise you. Just go through the main path, all they have to communicate is a portable fiber wire that they shoved into the wires and cables his hackers have around here. They transmit using—

Shin Law: Electric pulses...they're communicating with Morse code?

Kaori: They think it's the only thing you can't use against them.

Shin looked to the side intrigued.

Shin Law: Hum...

He let her go, backed a step and shoved his closed fist in her back, pushing her forward.

Shin Law: Walk in front of me.

Kaori: With pleasure...I'll walk you to an easy win. **And** my survival?

Shin Law: If you have not lied.

Kaori looks ahead, smiling.

Kaori: Well obviously. I just want to live to see tomorrow.

PAGE 52:

Kaori walked ahead of him, opening the door to show the room was indeed clear of gas, even if utterly devastated. Shin “humped” and continued on, following her.

Shin Law: Hmpf.

They approached the door from where Dirk had shot his barrage of fire. They opened the door and nothing was there waiting for them.

She smiled.

Kaori: See?

Shin Law: Keep walking.

They walked into the following room, which was circular and huge, with three doors at each end. There were piles of boxes all over the place, like a real warehouse, though they were all worn and dusty.

The villain was looking around at first but then suddenly, he stopped

Shin Law: Wait.

PAGE 53:

Kaori turned around to face him, slightly impatient.

Kaori: What is it now?

Shin Law: You think I wouldn't see? I have the Eye's part too.

Kaori opened her eyes in shocked realization.

And he shot her, point blank, in the torso.

Satoshi edged a head out from behind a box.

Satoshi: NO!

PAGE 54&55:

From the top of a pile, Satoshi launched a vial at Shin, who leapt back towards the door, cloaking.

But the vial crashed into the ground, igniting in a blue fire that trailed all the way back to the door, turning the whole corridor into a lava-like state (though not exactly >lava<).

Meanwhile, Dirk ran in and grabbed Kaori, dragging her outside of the flame's reach, which ended a few paces from where she was standing. Kaori had almost made it to the mark untouched.

Kaori: Ow! Watch it!

An elliptical shape, man-sized, seemed to show up half-way back to the door, sunk into the ground. It moved a few inches, nudging, but then stopped as the ground solidified.

It was Shin, stuck in the ground as if cement had solidified around him, or more specifically, the shield.

And by then, Katsuo was walking towards Kaori, though with no particular hurry.

The doctor crouched, putting a stethoscope to her wound.

PAGE 56:

Kaori was not pleased at all with what he was doing.

Kaori: AGH, what the fuck do you need a stethoscope for?! I'VE BEEN SHOT!

Katsuo: Yes, though by what?

Kaori: What do you mean, **by what?!**

Saga: Yeah.

Saga fell from above, lightly and without difficulty.

Saga: Is she going to be okay?

Katsuo shrugged, drawing some kind of gadget with a small reading-screen.

Katsuo: If she stops panicking.

Kaori coughed out, his gadget being held over the wound. She gnawed and grinned in pain but nothing seemed to phase Katsuo.

Kaori: Oh, I'm going to **kill** you...

Katsuo: Well, let's make sure you're able enough to try, yes?

PAGE 57:

Saga walked back to the sunken hole on the ground, where Shin was buried. Ami passed by him at a jog.

Saga stopped in front of Shin while Ami kneeled, placing a toolbox on the ground next to her.

Saga: And now you're screwed, huh? Don't feel bad, though, you're not the first she's fooled and you won't be the last.

Silence was the response, though.

Saga: Ami, what're you thinking?

Ami was removing a knee-size antenna from the tool box.

Ami: First the cloaking. Though turning off the shield might kill him right off the bat so maybe that?

Saga: Work on the cloaking. It'll look better if we capture him.

Ami: Aye aye, boss.

Ami placed the knee-size antenna and started fiddling with it all excitedly.

Ami: Hu hu, if I can disable a shadow part...

PAGE 58:

Then suddenly, Shin deigned to speak. From the void within the spherical body keeping the hole intact.

Shin: You really think...it would be this easy?

Saga: What's that, pa? You a sore loser now?

Shin: Pa? You think I'm your father?

Saga looked back at him, visually startled and confused.

Shin: You're a fool. Always **have** been a gullible fool...like for instance, do you really believe I would let myself be half buried without...leaving my arms out?

Saga opened his eyes in shock, right before a charged shot appeared from the void to collide against him, right in the chest. Ami pulled back to run but not in time as the second one hit her too, albeit only in the leg.

Saga: Ach!

Ami: ARGH!

She collapsed, grasping the leg:

Ami: The pain...aaaahhh...

PAGE 59:

Ami's head lied down, passing out.

Then bullets started spraying the void, showing the shield. Dirk side-stepped to avoid a charged shot, then took another to the side of the body.

He staggered, but didn't go down. Instead, he shot out a mortar.

A big explosion roared out, followed by silence as Katsuo and Kaori look on, worried.

Dirk looked on, attentive.

PAGE 60:

Dirk stepped a bit closer, before getting back-handed to the ground, hard.

He rolled on his hurt shoulder with a grunt, stood up and lifted his arms to fight. The villain was holding on to his gun.

Shin: Pff...soldiers.

The Villain let himself become visible, throwing the gun to the side.

Shin: Not too smart, blowing my prison apart.

Dirk went in and tried to punch, but the villain just dodged. He dodged a couple of times before jabbing, with two open fingers, at Dirk's eyes.

Dirk: ARGH!

Saga looked on in tears as the villain faked an uppercut, only to charge his fist right under Dirk's chin.

PAGE 61:

The fist shot killed Dirk.

Dirk's body limpidly hopped before falling down dead.

Huffing, Kaori stood up, grunting, watching as Shin disappeared again while staring back at her.

Kaori: Go, Katsuo.

Katsuo: But.

Kaori: GO!

Katsuo left running and Kaori coughed up blood, but then strengthened her stance and looked on in challenge.

Saga was also getting up, pushing himself to stand.

PAGE 62:

Kaori: You bastard, I'm going to break every piece of you, starting with the shadow parts!

The reply came from behind her.

Shin: I'd actually take you seriously...

Terrified, Kaori turned around to face the villain.

Shin: If you were even looking in my direction.

She received a punch to the stomach before, in reflex, putting her arm in the way of the forehead, allowing it to take the shot instead of the forehead.

She fell to the ground, and Shin materialized.

Shin: Humpf. Good reflexes, but without treatment, you just saved yourself to suffer.

He then looked at Saga.

PAGE 63:

Shin walked in Saga's direction, and though Saga was standing, it was clearly difficult to do so.

Saga: Who are you? Why are you doing this?

The villain again gave him a quiet and amused laugh.

Shin: Oh Saga Saga Saga...don't you recognize me?

His mask, without anyone touching anything, closed on itself into the shape of very thin square glasses, showing the face of Saga's uncle.

Saga was duly shocked.

Saga: Un...uncle Shin?

Shin: Yes, Saga, it's me.

Saga: Bu...but you...what? But you helped out my dad even after he betrayed--

Shin: His crew, yes, I told the tale, I know what it is. Would you like the truth, now, nephew?

Saga looked on, shocked and dumbfounded.

PAGE 64:

Shin: I framed your father on a heist while making sure his crew died. Would've killed him too, but he escaped me and went walking dead. I didn't go off to help him because he had been found out, Saga, I found him out. So I went to kill him and take his shadow part, and officially start my campaign.

Saga: But...but why?

At that, with due anger in his eyes, Shin yelled out:

Shin: I... AM A **CRI-MI-NAL!**

Shin: We're not supposed to hang around with a crew of best friends forever, having stupid adventures like it's all a stupid game! They serve only to hold us back, anyways, us **real** thieves! The **real** outlaws, whose only motivation is to get **MORE!**

Smiling confident, Shin gestured his superiority.

Shin: More money, more assets, more power! And want to be hard to catch, hard to beat, so of course I want the Shadow Armor, and of course I killed my brother, and my nephew, and their crews, and the Shield and the Eye and the Survivor, I'll kill you all if that means getting the ability to steal what I want from who I want. A true thief wearing the armor? I'll be really and truly invincible! Unstoppable!

PAGE 65:

Saga was still coming to terms with all of it...

Saga: That's...right, you...you never had a crew.

Shin: Of course I didn't. Did I ever miss one? Of course not, because I am the **real deal**, nephew. I am... a true thief. A true thief has no honor, has no true friends, and does not need, require, or in any way depend on such worthless concepts...as **you** are about to witness.

The mask formed up again, and both his wrists charged up. Saga, crying with desperate eyes, saw a family of three. His father and his brother holding Saga on his shoulders, who was holding a gold goblet, his first steal.

Saga blinked and saw a typical day for him and his crew, looking at them from the table with Kaori fixing her nails, Miki and Vick at their computers, the side of them turned to Saga because they were arguing with each other about something, Vick truly offended, Miki giggling amused. Ami was tinkering with goggles strapped to the forehead, Katsuo was sleeping and Satoshi was talking to Dirk.

PAGE 66:

Saga clenched his left fist. And then the right one. The blades flipped out of his arms like a switchblade while Shin aimed his gauntlets at Saga.

Saga: No, uncle, **you** are going to witness something today.

The modulated voice came out.

Shin: Oh? And what is that?

Saga looked at him, fiercely and angry.

Saga: Justice.

He ran off.

Saga: Yaaahh!

PAGE 67:

Shin shoot out two shots but Saga hopped to the side to avoid one and then span unto a crouch under the other one, then leaping as he finished the spin.

Saga opened his chest wide as he swung his arm, but Shin simply cloaked and stepped away.

PAGE 68

tok tok tok, wiiim, came the sounds.

Saga: I can hear you!

Saga span to the side, a shot slicing past his shirt, and sliced with his open arm, only to collide with the shield.

Shin: Justice, or revenge? Either way, you really think you're getting passed the shield?

PAGE 69&70

Saga didn't answer, he just attacked again. Again and again and again, failing and failing and failing, and then he avoided a shot only to be punched in the face, thrown to the ground.

PAGE 71&72

He evaded a shot by having his boots pull him towards a pile of boxes. He landed there, and then put a foot on the ground to stand straight, as the voice sounded out in the background.

Shin: My arms don't make noise, do they?

Saga wiped blood off his nose and charged again. They fought for a bit and Saga got even more battered up.

PAGE 73

Shin: Give up.

Saga: Never.

Shin spoke, seemingly from everywhere as his voice echoed around the room. Saga's looking pretty roughed up.

Shin: You're just like the rest of them, Saga. A failure who needs a crew to get anywhere in this world, just like you needed my brother, and your brother, to get started. I didn't have any help, I've always made it on my own, and that's made me strong.

Saga: There's nothing...weak...about relying on others!

Saga jumped but got immediately kicked by the invisible Shin. He tumbled away but still managed to stand up, arms hanging loose and hurt, eye half open, bleeding and bruised.

Shin walked towards him.

PAGE 74

And so there Shin was, revealing himself right in front of Saga.

Shin: Look at you, you can't move. You won't be able to dodge this next one.

Saga looked on, unrelenting but defeated.

Shin: So tell me, then, nephew. Why have I been coming out the winner? Why have I defeated you so easily? Why, pray tell, am I about to kill you?

The charged gun stared Saga in the face, or rather, Saga stared death in the face.

And then he smirked, cocky.

Saga: Are you?

Shin opened his eyes, confused.

Ami suddenly rose up, pushing herself to raise her torso, yelling out:

Ami: Ami maaagiiic...

PAGE 75

Shin looked down and around and saw he was surrounded by four antennas the size of half his leg. Ami head-but a button on a remote she was holding with her unhurt arm, and the antennas sizzled.

Shin: N—

He tried to jump but a field caught him, blinking his shield for a second.

Shin Thought: *Shield's gone, but it was only for a second, if I turn it back o—*

Saga: Yaaah!

Saga was already flying towards him, right elbow at the lead.

PAGE 76

Saga stepped and curved the blade so it went around Shin even if at neck height. Shin's mask turned, trying to observe.

Shin thought: What angle is that? He'll never be able to pierce me like that.

But Kaori also showed up, her arm and hand diving way out-stretched, pushing into the blade so it went in the back of Shin' neck.

Shin thought: ACK!

Kaori nudged the blade, before staggering back.

Kaori: Oh gee...this is so...humiliating.

PAGE 77

Kaori fell down, limp, passing out. The shield blinked and sizzled, trying to form on top of the blade, but unable too.

Saga winked at Shin's mask, and waved his other arm very quickly to join his blade.

As he did so, he staggered because of a charged shot. Shin had placed one of his gauntlets against Saga's belly.

But Saga clenched and held on to Shin.

The weapon charged again, but instead of shooting, it gave out a beep.

Shin looked down at it, in shock. (well kinda, he has the mask so...)

PAGE 78

Shin: What?!

Saga: Ha ha...

Saga, despite the fact he was in pain, or because of it, decided to gloat.

Saga: The blade... Kaori shoved it right into your hacking implant. We know where it is...

Shin: So what?

Shin's mask opened up. His glasses fell down, revealing a shocked gaze that evidenced he was losing control of the armor.

Saga: It's connected to your occipital lobe for a reason, uncle, it enables you to hack into anything, at a distance... but you need eye contact.

Shin again realized something bad, and looked to the side.

He saw there was a fiber wire hastily wrapped around the blade that was a bit shoved into his neck. He followed that thread and trailed it into a wire that went up into the ceiling.

Shin: You had...

PAGE 79

Saga smiled victoriously, a bloody grin.

Saga: I set it up before I came down, just in case. There's a lot of it, so I could walk around as much as I liked. It was the plan all along but you broke free before we got your shield down, ha ha...so we had to improvise.

Shin: Doesn't matter, I can out-hack them.

Saga: ha ha...

Back in the hacking room, Vick and Miki were going crazy.

Vick: Ok, he's on to us! He doesn't have eye contact but it's still his neural processing. I've never hacked a person's nervous system before!

Miki: I'm still stumped the connection went through!

Vick: All the Shadow Parts connect directly into the nervous system, and function as translators between any kind of electric signal, digital or analogical, and synapses! And that's what we're sending.

Miki: Still, it's slower than usual.

Vick's looking super excited, Miki as well.

Vick: Of course it is! And now the real battle begins! Lay into him, full brute force, attack everything! I'll take down his systems one by one meanwhile, all sneaky like.

Miki: Like a thief?

Vick: Yeah! Ha ha, like a thief!

PAGE 80

Back to our main stage, Saga was wearing a frown of hurt, still locked and connected with his uncle.

Saga: And even if you could beat them, it's not like I'm...COUGH! Going to let you concentrate!

Shin: Wha—

Saga head-butted Shin.

They both fell to the ground, pushing the blade a bit more in. Shin frowned and opened his eyes in pain.

Shin: Argh!

Saga pulled his back, looking at his uncle with a murderous gaze.

PAGE 81

Saga: YOU DO NOT!

He head-butted

Saga: COME TO MY FUCKING BASE!

He head-butted, Shin's bleeding into Saga's forehead, bruising up badly.

Saga: And attack!

He head-butted.

Saga: MY FUCKING!

He head-butted!

Saga: CREW!

He head-butted!!

PAGE 82

Saga's eyes closed and his head lightly touched his uncles', and he lost consciousness like that, leaning over his defeated foe.

In the dark, he could hear Vick's voice in the global communicator. And even though he had his eyes closed, somehow, Saga could see himself, and his uncle, locked in the darkness.

Vick: Katsuo! They're all knocked out and dying, get back in there!

PAGE 83

Caption: Four days later, in a non-disclosed location...

Saga was standing in the darkness. Patched up, bandaged around the face and belly (if visible) with an arm in a cast and strapped to the chest.

Then slowly, spotlights showed up all around him, making a circle around him.

Some of spotlights were then occupied by shades. Only some...

One of the Shadows: Welcome to the Shadow Circle. We have convened to discuss your actions and your inclusion into the circle.

Saga looked towards the speaker.

Saga: Yeah, like I've said, I'm all honored and stuff.

Saga: What've you done with my uncle?

PAGE 84

Another of the Shadows: Delivered to the authorities. He is in a prison we control, to make sure he does not escape.

Saga: Hum hum...you didn't kill him?

First of the Shadows: Should we have killed your uncle?

Saga: No...I suppose not. But I would have, if I wasn't unconscious. Is that a problem?

Another of the Shadows: No. You may yet procure his death now that you are a member of the circle. I doubt anyone will oppose that.

Saga: No further trials, then?

One of the Shadows: No. You returned all the different shadow parts, which have been moved to each respective enclave to wait for the next successors. And you proved yourself by stealing the dark runners.

Saga nodded.

Saga: Most of my crew was hurt or otherwise debilitated. My hired gun died. Most importantly, everyone knows where my base is, now. As acting member of the Shadow Circle, I move to give myself, the Dark Runner, enough funding to build and outfit a new base of operations, as special recompense for having dealt with a problem that concerned the entire underworld.

Saga sniffed and then added.

Saga: By myself.

Silence surrounded him.

PAGE 85

One of the Shadows: The assets of the members which were forcibly retired are available. It will hurt no one if we give them to the Dark Runner.

Chorus: Agreed.

Another of the Shadows: For bringing justice to your fellow thieves, at considerable cost, we will transfer to you the earnings of The Shield, The Hacker, The Survivor, The Shadow and of The Eye.

Saga: What about the gauntlets?

One of the Shadows: I, The Hunter, hold them. What about them?

Saga: No, not yours, my uncles'. They shot out weird plasma bullets. If my medic didn't have experience with it, we would've all died. Hearing him tell it, even a shot to the arm will do, even if it takes time.

Another of the Shadows: Those gauntlets were stolen from a military research facility. They do not belong to the Shadow Armor nor are they recognized as a Shadow Part. They have been ransomed back to the respective government.

Saga: My point is it was my sell to make. Pretty underhanded to take it from me when you did.

Another of the Shadows: Good Lord, you're already getting all the funds from the others, you want that as well? Greedy much, Dark Runner?

PAGE 86

Saga smiled, looking around.

Saga: What can I say?

He looked ahead, gladly.

Saga: I'm a thief, through and through.

THE END