



## EPISODE ONE - THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

Ten'ou Haruka opened her mail and frowned. It was a notice from her insurance company.

"The f[BLEEP]k you mean 'claim denied!'" she exclaimed, turning the letter over and over in her hands, squinting at the words as if she was sure that with a bit more focus, she'd see that the message had changed to something that made a bit more sense.

"It means they're not going to pay you anything, Haruka-poppa," Hotaru intoned dryly, walking past her, eyes closed and nodding with an almost smug air of satisfaction.

"This is bullshit!" Haruka exclaimed, crumpling the paper into a ball, tossing it at Hotaru, who calmly shifted herself to the side to avoid it.

"How?" Hotaru asked incredulously. "This is something like the *thirteenth* car you've made a claim on. You've claimed everything from losing cars through 'involuntary demolition derbies' to 'wormholes' to 'Big-ass Kaiju', and this last one was just 'it vanished along with a chunk of the city'. It's no wonder the insurance company has finally had enough and just decided to stop paying out."

"But a chunk of the city *did* go missing!" Haruka protested.

"Not according to the government," Hotaru countered. "And if they won't own up to it, then the insurance company can easily wiggle out of any obligation to pay."

"F[BLEEP]k that," Haruka declared, rolling up her sleeves. "I don't pay them thousands of yen each month for them to just sit on their hands and do nothing." She grabbed Hotaru by the shoulder and turned the slight young woman around to face the front door. "Come on, we're going."

"Going where?" Hotaru asked numbly, already guessing the answer as she felt herself being shoved out the door.

"To that ward that got blown away. We're going to get proof that it's gone and send it to Ginga TV. Once that story breaks the company's gonna have to give me what's coming to me."

"Oh, you're going to get what's coming to you, all right, Haruka-poppa," Hotaru muttered under her breath, already having a bad feeling about this.

### **SOME HOURS LATER**

"For someplace that totally was unaffected by some kind of disaster there sure are a lot of government organizations crawling around," Haruka noted as she and Hotaru looked down at the desolated streets of [REDACTED] ward from their vantage point atop a skyscraper. The streets and sidewalks were covered with chalk outlines of deceased citizens, with the only living beings in the city being government agents in black, agents of the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce, the Kaiju Inspection Team, Alien Zone police, Monarch, and more combing the area.

It took all their skill to avoid being detected, but eventually the duo was able to make it down to ground level, heading for the area where Haruka's car had been.

"How did your car end up here without you?" Hotaru asked as they made their way towards the parking lot where Haruka remembered leaving it.

"Ehh," Haruka muttered, "I have so many cars I leave them everywhere. I was so drunk I think I got an Uber home and forgot to come back to get the car for a few weeks."

Hotaru just looked at her. Despite having lived with Haruka and Michiru for years as their kidnapped adopted daughter, she had never gotten used to quite how wasteful Haruka was with Michiru's money. It really was quite disgusting.

"What?" Haruka asked defiantly at Hotaru's disapproving glare. "I--"

Haruka cut herself off, the words getting stuck in her throat as she saw her car-- or, rather, what remained of it.

It was nothing but a mangled, burnt-out wreck which had been destroyed by a helicopter which had apparently fallen out of the air, crash landing atop it.

As the sun began to set, Haruka began to weep openly at the fate of her third most favorite car. She shoved a hand into the pocket of her mustard-colored blazer, pulling out a can of imported Duff beer and drinking heavily, holding back thick, choking sobs as she gulped down the warm beer.

Hotaru looked on with her typical resigned air of disappointment.

Watching the duo from a few feet away was a strangely tall man dressed in a long beige trench coat, long brown pants and a matching brown fedora which was drawn downwards at a steep angle, casting his face into deep shadow.



The man scrutinized Haruka carefully, sensing her hollowness and infinite despair at the loss of her automobile.

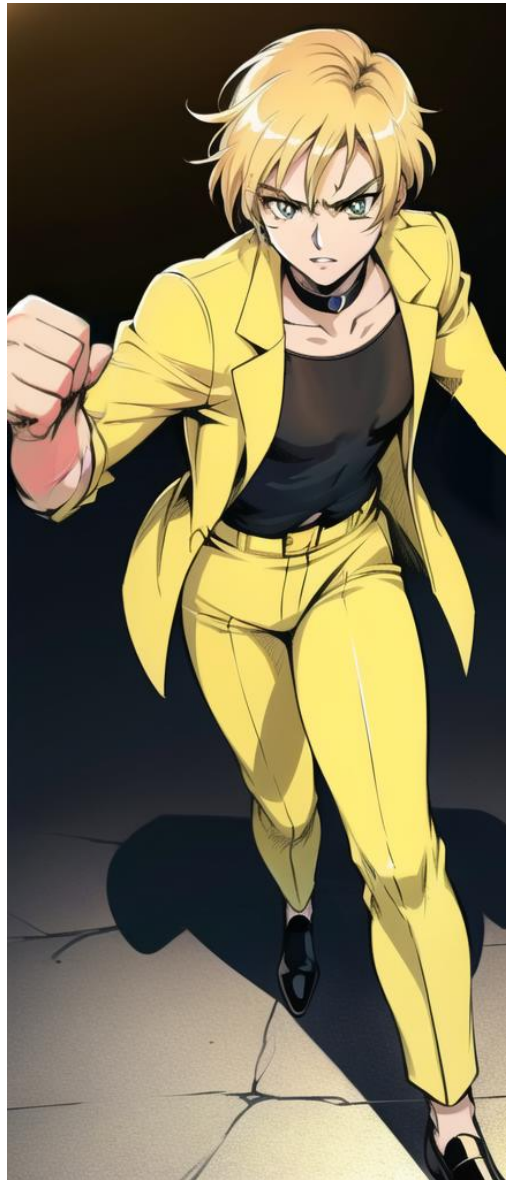
*Yes, he thought. The mighty hero was weak, and ripe for the breaking. All he would need to do now was give her a little push...*

Striding towards her, the man flipped up his hat, revealing a strangely diamond-faceted crystalline face that looked as if it had been hewn from the purest diamond. His whole body pulsed with the overwhelming power of the gigantic Mysterious Illusory Silver Crystal "Ginzuishou" which had once been a Crystal Palace in another universe.

"Ten'ou Haruka," he declared in a booming voice. "I am Krystallo The Omnipotent. I am here to make you a deal--"

Krystallo suddenly found himself on the ground, as Haruka had savagely punched him in the face.

"MOTHERf[BLEEP]kER!" Haruka screamed. "YOU! YOU WRECKED MY CAR TO FORCE ME INTO MAKING SOME KIND OF DEVIL'S DEAL WITH YOU, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!"



"No..." Krystallo spluttered, for once completely innocent. "I sensed your suffering and-" Haruka just continued beating on him with the savage fury of a woman scorned by fate.

Reeling, Krystallo shot a disintegration beam at Haruka, but she took the hit and continued to punish him with increasingly potent blows.

"Wh-what?" Krystallo asked, completely at a loss, trying fire, then lightning, then the 'destruction' power usually reserved for God-level beings.

Nothing worked. Nor would it ever, since Haruka was banned from the afterlife and thus technically immortal.

Eventually, it was all Krystallo the Omnipotent could do to run the f[BLEEP]k away as fast as his legs could carry him.

"THAT'S RIGHT YOU GODDAMNED..." Haruka shook a fist, sobbing. "You god-damned..."

She sank to her knees, crying over the car again, taking another gulp of Duff.

Hotaru, who had been ignoring the entire scene, frowned as she saw something sticking out of the ground a few feet away from the destroyed car and helicopter wreckage. It seemed to be a Katana... and a rather familiar one at that.

Using all her strength, Hotaru pulled it from the ground and immediately recognized the pattern on the blade guard- a rising sun over a mountain. This blade was the *Red Sun*, belonging to Gemini Sunrise. But unlike the *Red Sun* Hotaru knew, this blade was blackened, rotted and rusted, looking to be hundreds of years old.

There was also an unmistakable scent of pure, pervasive *evil* coming from the blade. It was so strong that what little of Mistress 9 remained in Hotaru's body was shivering with delightful glee, almost feeding from the dark power.

*What had happened to this blade? Hotaru wondered. And what had become of Gemini-san?*

A cold shiver ran down Hotaru's spine, and for an instant she sensed a sliver of what had happened here - the great darkness that had emerged from the sky and annihilated everything.

Consumed with dread, Hotaru felt like her skin was crawling. She forced Haruka back to her feet and they decided to go to the HOTEL to try and get some idea about what was going on.