

# East Coast Academy

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*East Coast Academy is known to be a miniature version of society: there are factions known as the Royals and Commoners, the factions are divided into subranks. The social system has thrived for almost a decade and has yet to be challenged . . . Until Now.*

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<b>Chapter 1 - Author's Note PLEASE READ</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - First Day in ECA</b>	<b>3</b>

# 1 - Author's Note PLEASE READ

Ah so my story *East Coast Academy* has caught your attention hm? Well then, thanks for taking your time to read it! But before you delve into this intriguing tale, you'll need to go through some basic stuff of this prestigious academy

- 1) ECA is a university preparatory school that only the most wealthiest of students could attend (and we're talking beyond millionaire wealth too).
- 2) It promotes the best education that could make even Harvard University jealous and is well-rounded in all programs: Performing Arts, Science, Business, etc.
- 3) however there are excellent opportunities for those unable to afford the tuition of the school to join the high ranks. About an eighth of the 20,000 students at ECA are "Commoners" or those who have an annual pay of below \$110,000
- 4) Now the school has somehow been established with a curious social system: two ranks, Royal and Commoner with three sub-ranks. All of it determined by wealth!

## **Commoner**

Gold: \$100,000\* - \$60,000

Silver: \$50,000 - \$10,000

Bronze: \$10,000 and below

## **Royal**

Gold: \$1,000,000 and beyond

Silver: \$900,000 - \$600,000

Bronze: \$500,000 - \$110,000

\*Annual Payment

Both ranks have distinctive pins they must wear: A kite shield-shaped pin for the Royals, and round-shaped pin for the Commoners. The metal color reflects the sub rank. So if one has a bronze, kite shield pin, then that person is a Bronze Royal.

Well that pretty much sums up the setting of *ECA*! Thanks again for reading it!

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## 2 - First Day in ECA

### Chapter 1 – First Day in ECA

The clock tower's chime rang in my ears as I frantically scanned the numerous buildings laid out before me. I glanced towards the sky to see the Atlantic sun still rising. Unfortunately I had no time to admire its unique beauty, because the full-force of panic was on the brink of exploding within me as I tried to find my chemistry class in the town-sized campus of East Coast Academy. I stumbled up to the large fountain in the center of campus.

It was obviously my first day at the university preparatory school and I even came to the main campus early to try to find my classes. However the map the office provided for me was absurdly messy with details. The thought of this was ridiculous; a school for the insanely wealthy couldn't even provide a decent map around their own campus.

"What is this?" I growled as I sat on the fountain edge. "Is finding a class this hard?"

I brushed part of my blonde-dyed bangs behind my left ear and allowed the rest to cover my right green eye. Meanwhile my shoulder-length brown hair seemed to frizz in the humidity of the East coast. I groaned in dismay.

Then I watched two guys in letterman jackets walk up to me. I examined them for a couple of minutes; they seemed to be trustworthy, hopefully they would be willing to help a lost new kid out.

"Uh excuse me." I walked up to the two. "Could you help me find the chemistry lab?"

As I neared them I realized I made a grave mistake: on the collar of their shirts were gold shield-shaped pins with the school crest. The pins of Gold Royals; oh Lord be with me.

"Aw," one of them mockingly said. "Is the stupid Commoner having a hard time finding class?"

My anger seethed, but I remained silent.

"Too bad, we don't know where it is," His comrade shrugged.

Yes! A golden opportunity! "Is it because you guys always use a GPS to get to class?" I asked with innocence.

In personal opinion, that was probably one of my weakest comebacks, yet the royals were flustered by it! Their faces reddened in embarrassment and eventually they slinked away in disgrace.

I couldn't help but be humored by their embarrassment; perhaps I did have a chance to survive in this school, especially if the royals were as dimwitted as them. I snickered to myself.

Then out of the blue I heard a lazy form of clapping. I peeked over my shoulder to watch a fifteen-year-old step out of the shadows of a nearby hallway.

The fifteen-year-old had brown hair and cold brown eyes that seemed to judge my every move. He wore a red V-neck shirt with black jeans and sneakers. I seemed to pick up a mix of vibes from him: cold but caring, gentle yet tough, and so many more contradictions. I never thought it was possible, but evidently it can happen.

The fifteen year looked me over and gave me a smile.

In a heartbeat, fear shot through my body and I couldn't move! There was a burning hatred behind that smile; *I could feel it!* And that cold gaze he had in his eyes; it was hard to describe but when we made eye contact, I couldn't break away and my body was still paralyzed with fear. Who was this guy?

As though he had read my mind, the guy answered my unspoken question: "I am Lan Nava and I can see that your highness is lost within the massive halls of this campus."

I gulped and managed to speak, "You're right, I'm lost. However I'm not a royal."

"Yes, you claim you are a commoner," he hissed. "But your eyes express the naive mind of a royal. I can see you were forced to assume a rank beneath you. In reality you are one of those stuck-up snobs, just admit it."

I was surprised by Lan's perception. With just one look he could see right through me. However I was insulted that he had inaccurately called me a snob. Nonetheless I hid my offended expression and glanced over to the jackass.

"So you came to mess with me?" I asked innocently. "I must say: it's such a crude way to treat a new kid."[br]

"You know I could do worse," Lan answered in a relaxed tone as he took a few steps back. "But I'll be a gentleman, because unlike you're kind, I am courteous."[br]

Well that's an odd way of showing it. "Thank you," I simply said as I picked up my messenger bag and violin case.[br]

Lan rolled his eyes as he led me to the chemistry lab.[br]

"By the way," Lan called. "Be careful of that mouth you've got there. You'll get in trouble with your own kind unless you keep it shut."[br]

I couldn't help but agree, more than once has my mouth brought me into trouble in San Francisco; no doubt the odds were far greater here.[br]

Five minutes later we arrived at the science building. I turned to Lan and gave him a Japanese informal bow as thanks before I stepped into the classroom. Almost immediately I received a harsh greeting from the teacher:[br]

"You're late," he stated flatly.[br]

I gulped nervously as I tried to explain, "I'm still new and I couldn't understand the ma—" [br]

"All of the new students found the lab with no problem. Now take a seat next to Miss Flores." [br]

I meekly nodded and took a seat. I really shouldn't underestimate the teachers' strictness here. They were never going to be flexible with anyone. I sighed in defeat.[br]

"Hey don't worry about him," the girl next to me whispered. "He's always a grouch during the first week of school." [br]

I snickered and looked towards my neighbor. She was a Hispanic with long dark brown hair and chocolate brown eyes. She donned an unzipped gray hoodie, red blouse, black pants and Vans. There

was a heartwarming presence around her that I appreciated and enjoyed. She smiled at me.[br]

“I’m Franci,” she introduced herself.[br]

“You can call me Julia,” I answered with a soft smile.[br]

Suddenly a silver royal sauntered into class and took a seat next to me. My eyes narrowed in anger when the teacher didn’t acknowledge the royal’s tardiness. The moment I realized I couldn’t do anything about it, I examined the royal.[br]

He had spiked blonde hair with dull blue eyes. In addition he wore a royal white T-shirt, an open sweater, saggy jeans and dark blue sneakers. He looked at me with a flirtatious smile.[br]

“Hello beautiful,” he purred. “I’m Zach Peterson, and I’m the man of your dreams.”[br]

Ugh, not only a royal pain but a royal flirt. “And how many times have you used that line?” I asked curtly.[br]

Zach was surprised by my sharp answer and wasn’t sure what to say. Franci giggled.[br]

“Besides,” I said casually. “The man of my dreams isn’t some egotistic little boy.”[br]

I smirked at my classmates snickers as Zach looked away, embarrassed that a lowly commoner like me not only turned him down, but burned him with no effort. However it seemed like with his flirtatious nature, he needed a little humiliation.[br]

After my retort, Zach left me alone for the time being. Satisfied I reached into my bag for manuscript notebook.[br]

I am willing to admit I am a music geek and very proud of it. I have played violin for about ten years and picked up drums about three years ago. Also in my spare time I try to compose original pieces, but so far I’ve only been able to transpose a lot of well-known songs like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, songs from the *Final Fantasy* series, etc. into my own playing ability.[br]

It didn’t take long for me to be warped into my work, enough to the point where I didn’t acknowledged the fact that Zach was looking at my notebook and whispering to his neighbor. I was still focused on my music when I noticed the dirty looks other students were giving me. I was completely confused why they were giving me such unjust looks.[br]

“Music thief,” one student whispered.[br]

“Say wha?” I wondered out loud.[br]

I gathered my bags and stepped into the hall. As I walked by Zach, he tripped me and I fell. I yelped in surprise and made sure my violin was still intact.[br]

“What was that for Zach?” demanded Franci.[br]

“She stole music from Takumi!” he argued. “The lyrics are in Japanese!”[br]

Franci picked up my manuscript and skimmed through the pages. “Hmmm. . .”[br]

“It’s all my original work,” I muttered. “But I’m still learning, so the lyrics might be inaccurate.”[br]

“You’re a damn liar!” Zach shouted. “You stole it from Takumi Akegata!”[br]

Franci glared at Zach, and he was silenced. “No you’re the liar: first of all Julia’s a new kid here and has yet to meet Takumi. Second her music style is pretty different from his; even though they’re both alternative. I can see Julia’s pieces are more influenced by Switchfoot based on her English lyrics, meanwhile Takumi’s are based on Maroon 5.”[br]

As I helped myself up, I was grateful to Franci, if I hadn’t met her, odds were I would have been torn to shreds by this bogus lie Zach made up. At the same time I was impressed by her keen eye for musical details: being able to distinguish the diverse sounds of two bands that are from similar genres.[br]

It didn’t take long for the truth to reach the ears of my classmates; some apologized to me, most refused to do so either because of pride or the fact that Zach’s story may had been more believable than I thought. However it didn’t matter to me because music was my art and though I appreciated the opinions of others, all that mattered was my own satisfaction.[br]

“Hey Julia,” Franci called. “Do you know where your next class is?”[br]

“It’s P.E. at the gym. Do you know where it is?”[br]

“Heh, well,” Franci chuckled. “It’s more like *which* one.”[br]

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Five minutes later, I was sitting on the bleachers in one of the three gyms[br]

ECA had. I casually looked over the groups. I could see the class was split into the factions of royals and commoners: the commoners played a short game of volleyball while nearby royals gathered around to talk and taunt those beneath them.[br]

“Has there ever been a moment when they’ve actually mingled?” I muttered.[br]

“Not a big one if that’s what you mean,” someone answered.[br]

Startled, I looked a row beneath me where a girl with short brown hair and green eyes that were covered by a pair of glasses sat. She wore a zipped up black *Naruto* jacket, navy blue shorts and black DC shoes. I could sense that she was a stand-offish sort of person, but I paid no attention to the vibe as I sat down next to her.[br]

“Well that stinks,” I commented. “Any clue why?”[br]

“It’s because of the royal court,” she answered. “The queen makes sure the status quo is undisturbed.”[br]

I really should have predicted that: in the typical high school there was either one person or a group of friends that ruled the school. It was so annoying, but here at ECA I should expect ten times the average nuisance. And this royal court seemed to fall under the category of oligarchy rulers, so if I were to meet the whole court, it should be very interesting.[br]

My thoughts were disrupted by the shrill sound of the teacher’s whistle and within minutes I was jogging laps around the gym.[br]

I soon came at the lead of the class and slowed my pace a bit. I failed to notice the heavy, fast-paced footsteps that came towards me; the next thing I knew I was pushed aside like a tire swing without a passenger— If only I could return with equal force. However the might of the push was astounding as I was hurled into the concrete wall of the gym. My right side ached profoundly while someone’s cocky laughter rang in my ears.[br]

“Stay out of my way you worthless piece of garbage!”[br]

I groaned in response and tried to sit up when I felt someone took my hand and helped me stand. I looked up in surprise to see the girl from earlier.[br]

“Well you’ve met the royal court’s jack, Joseph Sage,” she said calmly. “By the way, I’m Lauren, but you can call me Sora.”[br]

“Alright Sora,” I grunted as I rotated my aching arm. “I’ve experienced the jackass’s strength first hand, how’s his intellect?”[br]

“Bottom five; it’s the ace, Zach Peterson you’ve got to worry about.[br]

“Experienced his wrath last period; fool tried to flirt with me.”[br]

“It’s just not your day is it?” The whistle blew.[br]

I shook my head in response as we took our positions on the volleyball courts. It was royals versus commoners and I could see that the royals were at an advantage just with Joseph alone. We were practically screwed from the start.[br]

Ten minutes passed and we shifted positions; I became server and Sora became center. I pumped the ball a bit and then served it overhand, straight to Joseph at front. Crap.[br]

I watched in amazement as Joseph leaped into the air and spiked the ball— straight to Sora.[br]

It all seemed to happen in slow motion: the ball hit the floor an inch before her, rebounded and struck her beneath the chin. I watched, stunned as she fell backwards, her face tightened in pain.[br]

“Sora!” I exclaimed and ran to her side.[br]

“I’m fine,” Sora answered calmly. “He’s done worse.”[br]

I helped her up, only to flinch at the sight of an ice cold glare she had for Joseph. But looking past the fierceness, I could see a plan had formulated in her mind. I ran back to my position and readied for the next serve.[br]

The royals served a far too easy underhand towards me. I bumped the ball, another set it up and I watched Sora spike it with an amazing amount of power. The ball landed in similar fashion:[br]

The moment the ball hit the floor, Joseph shielded his face for the impact.[br]

“Not the face!” he howled in fear.[br]

The ball twisted and whizzed by his face by an inch or so. I couldn’t help but laugh aloud at the cowardly behavior of this “super-tough” jock. Soon all the royals and commoners joined in with my laughter.[br]

“Wow, I never realized that Joseph was such a pathetic whimp,” I called out.[br]

“Shut the frack up!” Joseph growled as his eyes narrowed at me.[br]

The bell rang and with a shrug I followed Sora back to the locker room.[br]

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I slipped on my white polo followed by a dark green sweater vest as well as a pair of skinny jeans, and brown sneakers with green trim. Dangling around my neck was an old pair of my father’s dog tags.[br]

Meanwhile Sora still wore her zipped-up *Naruto* jacket but she now had dark jeans with black and green DC shoes. She pushed her glasses up the bridge of her nose.[br]

“Ah I see,” I said. “You and Joseph are enemies in tennis.”[br]

“Yup,” she answered. “He can’t stand the fact that someone’s better than him in a sport.”[br]

“So he does all the sports?”[br]

“Everything but soccer.”[br]

I nodded; I was meeting quite a variety of students: Lan the passive aggressive jerk, Zach the flirtatious possible genius, Joseph the meathead jock and Sora the stand offish tennis player. What’s next? A musician otaku like me?[br]

“Hey Julia.” Sora’s voice brought me back to reality. “Do you have AP Lit next?”[br]

“Yeah why?”[br]



“Do you want to come with me?”[br]

Thank you Lord. “Definitely!”[br]

As Sora and I walked to class, we started to talk about school; who’s cool, who’s not, good teachers and clubs.”[br]

“So have you found any clubs that interest you?” she asked.[br]

“The music club sounds pretty good, how about you?”[br]

“Well a friend and I are creating an anime club. We’re having our first meeting this Friday.”[br]

The term “anime” alone captured my attention. “Anime club eh? I’ll join that instead. A big shojo fan y’know?”[br]

“That’s good; hopefully a lot of anime fans will come out of hiding. This school is basically an anti-anime institution.”[br]

I gulped nervously. “That bad huh?”[br]

Sora nodded in response as we stepped into the computer lab. This wasn’t going to work in my favor, I was a bit of an anime fan myself and I doubt I could hide it for very long. And this was going to hurt me badly in the social world of the school, however if there was a significant number of anime fans like myself there was still hope in having friends.[br]

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Two hours later I was wandering around the two-floor cafeteria, cradling my tray of chicken penne, Coke and flan. The noise around me was near unbearable and it was difficult for me to focus. The out of nowhere I collided with Lan and he dropped his tray.[br]

“Oh crap, I’m sorry,” I yelled, mostly out of fear. “I’ll pay you back later.”[br]

Lan stared me down, and I tried to break myself away from him. His gaze seemed to look right through me with an inflexible judgment.[br]

I shivered; how could someone like Lan instill that sort of fear into me? I’ve faced guys twice my size, I’ve boxed against thugs and stared into the faces of fiercest bullies in San Francisco without flinching. Yet this guy . . . *Who the hell was he!?*[br]

I quickly recovered from the scare and looked around for an open table. But the effort was fruitless, I saw no commoners present on a table, they were sitting either on the benches that lined along the walls of the cafeteria or on the ground. I sighed.[br]

“Hey Julia!” Franci’s voice barely reached my ears.[br]

Startled I looked around for her. “Where are you?”[br]

“Check under the staircase,” Sora answered.[br]

I looked beneath one of the staircases and smiled at the sight of Sora, Franci and a new girl sampling a tray of pastries that I could see were homemade.[br]

The new girl had short reddish-brown hair, pale skin and brown eyes. She wore a *Death Note* T-Shirt with denim shorts and sandals. She looked towards me and smiled.[br]

“I’m Kathleena,” she said.[br]

“Julia,” I answered as I knelt down next to Franci. “What’s this?”[br]

“Oh nothing special, I’m just testing some new creations,” Franci answered.[br]

“Planning to be a pastry chef?” I asked.[br]

“Are you kidding?” Sora answered. “She already works at the best on-campus café!”[br]

“Alright but enough about pastries, let’s talk anime,” Kathleena stated.[br]

“Right,” Franci nodded. “So everything is all ready for this Friday?”[br]

Sora and Kathleena nodded.[br]

“Awesome, I can’t wait!” I said with a hint of eagerness.[br]

Kathleena examined curiously. “So Julia, who introduced you to anime?”[br]

“My father, he was an otaku and the fact that he was stationed in Hokkaido when I was born just made me love it even more.”[br]

“Wait you were born in Japan?” Sora asked.[br]

“Hai (yes) he was an Air Force officer stationed in Camp Chitose.”[br]

“Awesome!” Franci smiled. “So where is he now?”[br]

I looked down at my lap and shook my head. “Killed in action.”[br]

I felt Franci touch my shoulder for comfort as I played with my dog tags. The subject of my father was still a touchy one even though he passed away about six years ago. I suppose the story behind it was the reason for its sensitivity.[br]

Suddenly I heard a shout and voices arguing. We peeked through the rails of the stairwell to see the back of a cheerleader and a black-haired guy. I heard audible sighs from Kathleena, Franci and Sora.[br]

“And so it begins,” Sora leaned against a low wall.[br]

“Nani (what)?” I asked curiously.[br]

“The royal court is holding trials for the new kids.” Kathleena rolled her eyes.[br]

“The ‘beloved’ queen holds them and she decides your fate in the social world of ECA,” Franci explained. “It’s totally unjust but the school listens to her anyways. [br]

“When you’re judged, just pray you’re not dubbed a social leper like what happened to Kathleena and I,” Sora sighed. “It hurts, a lot.”[br]

I looked towards the two and gulped nervously; my trial had not even begun and already I knew my fate was sealed: I met two members of the court and set them off one way or another. Yup, this was definitely an F my life moment.[br]

Suddenly my conversation with my new friends was abruptly disrupted when a pair of rough hands grabbed my arms and dragged me to the table of the royal court. I glanced up to see Joseph and Zach was the ones who had kidnapped me for trial. [br]

Honestly I was terrified of this court, but it was necessary for me to shrug it off; there was no way I would give the royal bullies reasons to harass me. Whatever happened happened and if I’m hit hard socially I just had to claw my way up to prove everyone wrong. Plus this person’s opinion really should matter, after all the leader was probably a self-centered, narcissistic prince.[br]

“Who do you think you are?” An obnoxiously shrill voice demanded.[br]

Correction: *princess*. I remained silent as I examined the table before me; it was stationed between the diverged steps of the stairwell where my comrades were hidden. I looked around to realize that I was the center of attention: on the ground students had gathered around the court’s table and in a similar manner those on the second floor were pressed up to the rail, desperate to see what would become of the newest victim.[br]

I then looked towards the court itself:[br]

The first person I noticed was a cheerleader; a Hispanic with judgmental brown eyes, and shoulder length black-dyed hair who wore a maroon and white cheerleader’s outfit. She tilted her head up high and glared down at me as if I was a piece of dirt. I could see that this one had grown up looking down at everyone who worked hard, and was definitely a superficial, spoiled brat.[br]

To her left was an Irish lass with short red hair and round blue eyes. She donned a light blue sweater vest with a matching plaid miniskirt and brown shoes. Our eyes met and I could see this girl was an unfortunate lackey to the royal court; unlike the others, she was a caring, gentle-hearted girl that reluctantly went with the flow which must have brought her to this precarious position. My eyes squinted to see that she had a golden round-shaped pin; it was the pin of the commoners. So she was a gold commoner with a bunch of royal pains. Poor girl.[br]

To the cheerleader’s right was the most handsome young man I’ve ever seen in my life. He was

Japanese with black hair that was side swept and spiked to the left, and had a chiseled face. His almond-shaped, ice blue eyes were framed by his black semi-thick eyebrows. He wore a simple outfit of a soccer jersey with jeans and athletic sneakers, yet he still looked amazing! I shivered, he was so handsome and way out of my league. I could see he was unlike his friends as well; he provided the presence of a humble young man that was kind-hearted, caring and passionate for what he did. How he ended up with someone like that cheerleader, I'll never know.[br]

"Hey!" the cheerleader's voice dragged me back to the real world. "Are you listening to me?"[br]

"Yes oh bratty one." I answered, sarcasm dripped from every word.[br]

"My name is Alexandria!" she snapped, but regained her composure. "What's with your outfit? You look like some emo prep."[br]

I closed my eyes; I guess my outfit may have accidently given off the message that I was a wannabe emo. I originally intended for a preppy vibe, but evidently that backfired. However if I wanted to survive against her, I had to think fast.[br]

"Well when I was packing back home, I guess I accidently grabbed my old school uniform." I answered. "As for the color, it's a habit of mine to color-coordinate so that's why I have brown and green to compliment my hair and eye color."[br]

"Yeah about your hairstyle," Alexandria added. "What's the deal? Are you trying to pull off an emo look?"[br]

I could see that she was still trying to shake me, and my retort was too good to let go. "No, I've heard that you looked like a Gorgon, but looks like I've got nothing to fear."[br]

I smirked at Alexandria's shell-shocked reaction and looked around. The expressions of all the students varied from delight to downright infuriated. However what really surprised me were the reactions of the Japanese and Irish: silently amused.[br]

Alexandria noticed this and looked at the Japanese, offended. "Takumi why are you so mean to your girlfriend?"[br]

Takumi's expression quickly shifted to dismay. "Lexi come on, I didn't mean it!"[br]

Alexandria sniffled a little bit; he kissed her on the cheek. She then smiled and turned to me once more. My eyes narrowed slightly at her; she was a good actress, I gave her that much.[br]

"Are we done?" I asked and folded my arms behind my head.[br]

"Hey what's with the dog tags?" Joseph shouted. "They look so stupid on you."[br]

He grabbed my dog tags and tried to yank them off, only to have the chain dig into the back of my neck. I cried out in pain and by reflex, I gave Joseph a right hook. The jock staggered back, surprised by my true strength. He was about to retaliate when Alexandria stopped him and looked at me suspiciously.[br]

“Kari, tell us about this low-life commoner,” she ordered.[br]

Kari flinched at the sudden command, and then typed into her laptop. “Her name’s Julia Miller, a gold commoner on a music scholarship. Before she came here she was in the top ten of the honor roll at her previous school and has a 3.8 grade point average.”[br]

Alexandria glared at me and I tilted my head back in with a slight grin. “Well I see my judgment has come to a conclusion. Later.”[br]

As I walked away, Zach called out, “They’ll let anyone into ECA, even music thieves!”[br]

I froze in mid-step and whirled around to glare at him. “I see you’re still playing off of that bogus lie. If Franci’s words weren’t hammered into your thick skull then I’ll say it slowly: I-AM-NOT-A-THIEF.”[br]

“Well then prove it!” Joseph called as he held up my violin case. “Play us a song!”[br]

I frowned slightly and gave a tiny nod; after being called a music thief, I couldn’t refuse since it would only confirm their ridiculous accusation. Also, showing up those royal snobs would be a definite plus.[br]

Joseph handed me my violin and I began to assemble it; the entire time I was deciding on which piece to play. There were a lot of pieces that I had transposed and memorized. It was a tough decision, but I concluded it would be best to play a piece that would give me a chance to play my violin a lot to show that I was a true musician that should not be trifled with. I placed my bow on the strings and began to play the introduction to my version of Kris Allen’s *Live like We’re Dying*. [br]

I looked over at Alexandria and was surprised to see she had a cocky grin; she had something up her sleeve, I wasn’t sure what it was, but she did. I shrugged it off and continued to play. I was really in the zone, doing what I loved and pouring my heart into it. I just wished that I had someone to accompany me, then out of the blue, Takumi walked up to me and began to sing the second verse with a strong alto voice.[br]

[br]

*And if your plane fell out of the skies[br]*

*Who would you call with your last goodbye?[br]*

*Should be so care who we let out of our lives[br]*

*So when we long for absolution[br]*

*There’ll be no one on the line[br]*

[br]

*Yeah we gotta start[br]*

*Looking at the hands of the time we’ve been given[br]*

*If this is all we got and we gotta stop thinking[br]*

*If every second counts on a clock that’s ticking[br]*

*We gotta live like we’re dying[br]*

[br]

*We only got 86,400 seconds in a day to[br]*

*Turn it all around or we throw it all away[br]*

*We gotta tell ‘em tat we love ‘em while we got the chance to say[br]*

*We gotta live like we're dying*[br]  
[br]

I carried on for another minute or so and during that time there was an amazing chemistry between us that the audience could sense. So when we finished, the cafeteria erupted into applause. Delighted by my momentary rise of popularity, I gave them a slight bow. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Takumi walking towards me; now that I had a closer view of him, I could see his soccer build beneath his jersey and the way he graced the walkway with a hushed pace was amazing. Plus when he smiled at me, my heart melted. He was just so hot! Why must he be out of my league?[br]

“You’re an amazing violinist,” he complimented.[br]

Eeeeeep! “A-Arigato (Th-Thank you),” I answered in Japanese.[br]

Takumi smiled once more. “Are you going to join orchestra?”[br]

“Hai (yes).” I answered. “Don’t know if I’ll make it.”[br]

“You will. Talent like yours is hard to find.”[br]

If I wasn’t a cherry earlier, I was now. I savored every word in that sentence, to hear that from someone like him was definitely the pickup I needed. And judging by the strength of his voice, it was safe to assume he had some experience in music. [br]

“I’m just wondering, but do you practice vocals?” I asked curiously.[br]

“Two years,” he answered. “But if you think I sing well, you should hear my guitar.”[br]  
I grinned, I could see he was flirting with me and I was trying to flirt back. Unfortunately our clicking moment was brief because Joseph suddenly rushed in and snatched my violin. I gaped in horror as he recklessly examined it.[br]

“What the heck are you doing!?” Takumi demanded.[br]

“There’s no way she could play that piece so well!” Joseph snapped as he bunted me with the bottom of my violin. “You have to have had a recorder somewhere!”[br]

“Wow, you’ve lost it,” I declared with a small tilt of my head. “If you haven’t noticed, I played that piece with no assist—”[br]

All of a sudden a digital recorder fell out of the tight space between the back of my violin and the shoulder rest. My eyes widened in surprise; I was positive *that* wasn’t there.[br]

“No assistance huh?” Joseph picked it up and pressed play. My piece began.[br]

When he stopped the recording, the crowd whispered in shock and I began to panic; I was being framed, dang it! However there was no way I could prove my innocence![br]

“May I see that?” Lan asked as he walked up to us.[br]

“What for Nava?” Alexandria answered with sharpness.[br]

“I just want to check something out.”[br]

Before Alexandria could stop him, Joseph — the dunderhead he was— tossed Lan the recorder. He inspected it for a few minutes and pressed play. The song carried onto the second verse and Takumi’s voice was heard! My eyes widened in surprise and I glared at Takumi to recognize that he was equally shocked.[br]

“How could you do that Lexi?” he demanded in a stern voice. “What has Julia-chan ever done against you?”[br]

“Takumi just back off,” she hissed. “Or else.”[br]

I watched his fists tighten, he radiated a conflicted vibe. But it wasn’t a hard decision really: just choose what was right! He stayed put for a few seconds and then — much to my astonishment — he walked back to the court’s table! I looked at him confused and he simply mouthed, “Sorry.”[br]

“Go back to hell you dog!” Joseph shouted as he threw my violin into the air.[br]

“Oh dear God,” I gasped and began to run.[br]

But that damn asshole grabbed the end of my shirt in an attempt to hold me back, however the effort was futile: I kicked him in the stomach and when his grip loosened, I bolted off. Zach blocked the way and caught my right sleeve. Again it was a pointless action since I was determined to save my beloved violin: I whirled around and hurled a left hook at him. When my fist made contact, he fell like a ton of bricks.[br]

Now the only obstacle left in my path was the low-rise staircase. I did a quick scan of the area before it, and doubled my pace. As I neared the wall, I ran up to the top and grasped the iron rail. I took a quick breath, jumped over it and leaped down the steps.[br]

I ran a few feet ahead of my declining instrument. It was dropping fast and I began to have doubts that I would be able to catch it in time. I quickly shook off the nagging thoughts and leaped into the air.[br]

As though it was rushing towards me for an embrace, my precious violin fell into my arms and I landed with a stumble.[br]

“Damn that bastard,” I whispered to myself.[br]

Franci, Kathleena and Sora ran up to me with carrying my violin case. I smiled weakly to them and held it up by the neck.[br]

“Is it in one piece?” Franci asked worry lined her voice.[br]

“Y-Yeah,” I answered weakly.[br]

A ways off I could hear Joseph’s raucous laughter and my anger began to boil. He had done it now; he had brought upon the musician’s wrath. The last thing anyone who knows me is handling my violin in a frighteningly careless manner and that crosses the line; I hope Joseph and those royal pain-in-the-asses knew what they had gotten themselves into now because when I’m angry, all hell breaks loose.[br]

In anguish, I rushed to the court’s table and to no surprise everyone but Kari and Takumi were celebrating like there was no tomorrow. My fists tightened in fury as I debated whether or not I should try to fight against them. I took a deep breath and walked away from them.[br]

“Bunch of slimeballs,” I muttered.[br]

The student processed the idea that I was some pathetic coward, unable to stand my ground. They began to laugh at my humiliation while I walked away, holding back the tears of total embarrassment. The royal court won, and I would not let that happen again.[br]

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My last period was orchestra and I was eager to release the musician within me once more. As I left my Algebra II class, I caught sight of Kathleena and quickly ran after her.[br]

“Oh hey Julia,” Kathleena smiled. “What’s up?”[br]

“Not much, I survived the horrendous period of Algebra,” I answered. “You’re heading to orchestra right?”[br]

“Yeah, you’re heading there too?”[br]

I nodded in response and followed Kathleena to that massive auditorium. I looked around with wide eyes and when I stepped through the doors into the lobby itself, I was taken aback.[br]

The massive hall was comparable to the stages of a Broadway musical; it appeared that this place could house almost a thousand people. The stage itself was built to amplify the sound of the performers so it could even reach the nose-bleed section. I grinned in delight; this was perhaps the best stage I would ever perform on.[br]

“Hey Julia, are you coming?” Kathleena called.[br]

“Yeah!” I answered as I jogged after her.[br]

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“What do you mean I don’t have to audition?” I asked the director in surprise at the beginning of the period. “That is one of the requirements to join orchestra wasn’t it?”[br]



“Yes but someone sent a video of you performing in the cafeteria,” he answered. “When I saw it, I just had to have you join orchestra.”[br]

I smiled broadly. “But, but who sent it?”[br]

“Miss Kari McKennon, she is in my piano lab and not only is she is the best student I ever had, she is also one of my most honest students. I can trust her with anything, and if she recognizes your talent then I will too.”[br]

I smiled again. So I was right! Kari wasn't a bad kid after all, and if what the director here says is true then I have to befriend this girl as soon as possible. Hopefully she would be willing to be friends with someone like me.[br]

Soon enough rehearsal commenced and I listened intently to the instruments that played around me: the relaxing tones of the clarinets, the soft-playing melody of the flutes, the confident blasts of the trumpets, the rich notes of the saxophones, cellos and low brass, while the strings of the violins and violas played with light hearts. I smiled to myself and was momentarily enlightened, until the drums just seemed to crash in and threw everyone off beat.[br]

“Drummers!” the director shouted. “What are you doing?!”[br]

I glanced over my shoulder to see they were caught in a trap, I knew they were trying to improvise and that alone was a dangerous feat. I stood up and walked towards them; hopefully I would be able to assist them a bit. Back in San Francisco I had the nickname of Rhythm because according to the school orchestra I could play almost any drum part given to me, no matter how difficult the rhythm; hence my nickname.[br]

“May I take a look?” I asked curiously.[br]

“Back off,” the section leader growled. I glanced at his pin; a bronze royal. “You're just a violinist, what do you know about drums?”[br]

“For one thing, just because I'm a violinist, it doesn't mean I don't know rhythm. Just let me take a quick look!”[br]

A commoner drummer handed me the sheet music and I examined it intently, tapping my foot along to the four-count beat. It was a tricky one to understand, but I eventually comprehended it.[br]

“Okay, you guys did the snare roll a little too early,” I explained. “And you missed the crash cymbal in the beginning not to mention the rims along the fourth measure. This is supposed to be a soft rock song, just keep that in mind and the rhythm should come along more easily.”[br]

I smiled to them and the section nodded, they completely understood and evidently appreciated my assistance. I took my seat and out of the corner of my eye, Kathleena was looking at me very surprised. I simply smiled and shrugged.[br]

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After class I ran to my dorm, relieved that day was finally over. But in the back of my mind I was trying to predict what the royal court would do to me now that they had made it official that I was a public enemy of ECA. I sighed in frustration as I jumped down a small flight of stairs and made my way towards the far northern part of the campus.[br]

Reflecting the unjust prejudice of commoners, their dorm was known as Driftwood as if depicting the worthlessness royals assumed the commoners had. Like our fates had already been sealed and we would never graduate: the builder made sure that Driftwood was planted almost two miles away from the main campus, nestled in the middle of nowhere along the Atlantic beach.[br]

As I walked on the concrete path of the shores, I could see an island just a ways off the coastline, and on top of it a tremendous castle with windows that reflected the setting sun and presented a majestic glow.[br]

“Oh wow,” I whispered in awe.[br]

“Nice huh?” Sora came up from behind me. “That’s Babylon, the gold royals’ dorm. I’ve heard it’s super nice.”[br]

“I bet. It looks amazing from here.”[br]

“Too bad it houses a lot of snobs.”[br]

I nodded in agreement as I ran after Sora. When we came through the wooded archway of Driftwood I was surprised at the sight of three, two-story buildings surrounding a small plaza with a café, a low platform, and a small market. In the center of it all was a medium-sized fountain where the ledge had enough room for people to sit on. Beyond the buildings I could see a makeshift building as well as a couple of tables.[br]

“Okay,” I muttered. “Didn’t see that coming.”[br]

I glanced down at my key, “A201.” I frowned just a little bit and saw old wooden signs hanging from the rail a letter from A to C on them. I looked around again and then walked toward the A building.[br]

I carefully walked around the building then up the stairs where I saw A201 at the far end of the narrow walkway. I took a deep breath, walked towards it and used the key to get in.[br]

Instantly I was greeted by the sight of a tiny living room filled with dresses of various patterns; in another room I could hear the monotonous hum of a sewing machine. My eyebrows rose in surprise as I dropped my bags and examined the few sketchbook papers strewn in with the fabrics. Each one had an amazing design of girls in eloquent costumes.[br]

“How the hell did you get in!?” Lan’s voice called from another room, then the humming stopped and footsteps came towards me. “You should know—”[br]

When he stepped into the room, I stifled a laugh: he wore a pin cushion on his left wrist, had measuring

tape around his neck and a few needles in his mouth.[br]

“I’m sorry,” I said, trying to contain my laughter. “I didn’t realize—”[br]

“Come here,” he said as he grabbed me by the hair and threw me out the door and over the rail.[br]

“Kya!” I yelled in surprise as some shrubs cushioned my. “My bag!”[br]

“Here!” He hurled my bag (with all my textbooks) over the rail as well.[br]

“Ooof!” I grunted in pain as the bag landed right on my stomach.[br]

I groaned, shoved my bag off my belly and slowly stood up. Never again would I underestimate Lan’s strength; my poor stomach hurt like crazy, or was that from the textbooks? I shook my head and looked towards the second floor.[br]

“Lan! Come on!” I argued. “I was assigned to this dorm!”[br]

“No!” Lan answered through an open window. “There are no co-ed dorms!”[br]

I growled softly; damn that bastard. I backtracked to the plaza and took a seat in front of the café. Crap, now what would I do? The housing office will be closed by the time I got there and I had no place to go! I buried my face in my hands and screamed into them.[br]

“Julia?” Kathleena asked, looking at me oddly. “Are you okay?”[br]

“Eh, I think there was a screw-up with housing,” I muttered. “Lan kicked me out of his dorm.”[br]

“I’m sorry. Do you want to stay with me and Sora?”[br]

I smiled and nodded in appreciation.[br]

Later that night at Sora and Kathleena’s dorm room I was gathering the empty instant ramen cups for them as they began to read some of their manga. For the past two hours we talked about anime and school while we did our homework. I was very impressed by their extensive manga collection and cosplay costumes; these two were definitely the hard-core otakus and I was a bit more at ease now after all that brouhaha over housing.[br]

“Hey I’ll be back,” I called as I slipped into my gym shorts, tank top and tied half-pound weights around my ankles while I slipped on two pound weighted gloves. “I’m going for a jog.”[br]

Sora and Kathleena stared at the weights and nodded. I laughed slightly at their reactions, stepped out of the bungalow and jogged on into the night.[br]

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As I jogged through the small neighborhood, I heard the most beautiful guitar since I came to the east. Engrossed by its sweet melody I slowed to a walk in the full moon and made my way towards the plaza.

There he was sitting on the steps of his porch, strumming an acoustic guitar to a song my father would play for me, "Full Moon Sway." My mind flashed back to my childhood memories of my father and before I even realized it, I began to sing along,[br]

[br]

*Full moon sways [br]*

*Gently in the night of one fine day [br]*

*On my way [br]*

*Looking for a moment with my dear [br]*

[br]

*Full moon waves [br]*

*Slowly on the surface of the lake [br]*

*You are there [br]*

*Smiling in my arms for all those years [br]*

[br]

*What a fool! [br]*

*I don't know about tomorrow [br]*

*What it's like to be [br]*

*Ah~ [br]*

[br]

*I was sure [br]*

*'Couldn't let myself to go [br]*

*Even though I feel [br]*

*The end [br]*

[br]

*Oh my fair[br]*

*Floating like a bird that's in her wings [br]*

*You are there [br]*

*Smiling in my arms for all those years [br]*

[br]

*What a fool! [br]*

*I don't know about tomorrow [br]*

*What it's like to be [br]*

*Ah~ [br]*

[br]

*I was sure [br]*

*'Couldn't let myself to go [br]*

*Even though I feel [br]*

*The end[br]*

[br]

I noticed Lan was a bit surprised by my sudden entry, but he continued to play. As we continued to play together, all my frustration towards him seemed to melt away and for five minutes we actually connected.[br]

When the song ended, an awkward silence soon followed.[br]

“You’re not bad,” he said nonchalantly.[br]

“Th—“[br]

“But I could have done better.”[br]

Once again my anger rose; that little asshole! My fists tightened, and then I remembered I was wearing my weighted gloves. With a smirk and one swift motion, I slipped it off my hand and chucked it right at him . . .[br]

Only to get him below the belt.[br]

**A/N: Okay I had originally intended to update here and on dA too, but Fanart's more of a hassle to upload and edit than dA! So it's official! I have moved to devianart! You can get to my gallery from my author's note chapter.**