

S-Files: Next Try

The New Saint Dossiers

Von abgemeldet

Kapitel 9: Dossier 6: Albatross Arythar

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Wednesday, 1987/08/19 -- 2 p.m.

Himiko sighed. "Why is it always me who has to phone the guys?"

"You have the cuter telephone voice," Makoto told her.

"If you say so?" Himiko said doubtfully. She suspected that Makoto just wanted to direct some unwanted work at her. "Moshi moshi! Shizukawa Himiko desu..."

"Yeah, ahm... Hello there. How may I help you?" On the other side of the phone, Arythar McShido, a young man in the twenties with short turquoise hair, was doing several things at the same time; among them putting a pizza in the stove, updating his delivery book and juggling with the receiver.

"Do I speak with Albatross Bronze Saint Arythar McShido?"

"Indeed you do." Arythar walked to the couch to fetch the daily newspaper, forgetting as usual that the phone wire was only of limited length. The receiver fell down. "Oops, sorry!" he called aloud, hoping the woman on the other side heard his exclamation.

"Huh?!" Himiko shook the receiver. "Are you still there?"

A moment of silence, then she could hear "Are you still there?"

"That's what I wanted to know," she said slightly irritated.

"Sure. I'm still here," Arythar answered.

"Fine. But we need you *here*..."

"Indeed? Tell me, do you belong to Jehova's Witnesses?"

"Who's Jehova and why should I be his witness?" Himiko asked puzzled.

"Okay, then nevermind. Anyway, I'm not feeling like being 'there' -- wherever this is. You see, I had a busy day and I prefer to stay *here* unless you can give me a very good reason to change my mind."

"But I have a reason! Athena ordered us to examine you. And 'here' is the Graude Foundation Research Labora--"

"Examine me? Sorry, I won't take any orders by strangers unless they are verified by Athena or any Saints personally known to me."

"But my orders *are* given by Athena herself!" Himiko sulked. "If you don't believe me, then ask *her*!"

"Okay. I will ask her. I have a delivery ordered by her anyway, so I will be here in the evening."

"In the evening? Ask her *now*! My normal working hours end at 6 p.m."

"Well, I can't be at your place before 9 p.m. I have a very tight schedule, and my deliveries definitely take precedence, especially when they are ordered by Athena herself. And now have a nice day." Arythar hung up the phone, noting the phone number displayed so that he could trace the address of this Miss Shizukawa who claimed to belong to the Graude Foundation.

"I don't believe this," Himiko muttered. "He said he'd arrive at 9 p.m.! Now we have to wait all day until he arrives!"

"Obviously. Why don't you review the data you collected of all of the Cloths in the meantime? I'll go into my office and take a look at the medical data..."

"Okay..."

While Himiko dug through her notes, Makoto lay down on the small bunk in her office and decided to sleep a little while. When they had to start the examination that late in the evening, they wouldn't get much sleep in the night. But it was better not to tell Himiko she wanted to sleep, because her colleague would consider this disrespectful to their superiors at the Graude Foundation.

Finally Arythar appeared at the Graude Foundation Research laboratories. He was mildly surprised that Miss Shizukawa had indeed told him the truth, especially when Athena ordered him to show up at the labs for a thorough examination.

He was given directions by a security guard sitting at the desk at the main entrance and soon found the door marked with the names Shizukawa and Terada. As there

didn't seem to be a bell, he knocked at the door.

Makoto, whose back still hurt from the hard bunk, stormed to the door. "If this is Toshiro again asking me to borrow him something, then I won't guarantee for his health," she growled and forcefully opened the door. "*What do you want?*"

"Are you Miss Shizukawa?" Arythar asked slightly intimidated by the tall red-head.

"Do I look like her?"

"How am I supposed to know," Arythar retorted irritated. "Miss Shizukawa called me this noon and Athena confirmed that I was to be examined here. Whatever this means..."

"Oh, I see. Then you are this Albatross Saint?" Makoto waved him in. He was about the same size as she was -- maybe a little taller -- had light skin, unruly, short turquoise hair and dark turquoise eyes.

"Indeed. I'm the Albatross Saint," he confirmed.

"How *could* you dare to come this late?" Himiko said in a darkly accusing tone of voice. "My poor Saint boys will starve because of you!"

"Excuse me, but when my schedule is set I can't simply move around me delivery jobs! Would you like me to return in two weeks? Then I might have another free timeslot..."

"We are busy, *too*, and *we, too* have a tight schedule," Himiko piped. "And now that you are here you will stay here!"

"Okay, okay, alright, Ma'am," Arythar tried to calm her down. "My goodness, haven't you ever heard of the term 'flexibility'? And anyway, when your little boys are Saints you don't need to worry about them starving. Saints can easily endure quite a while without food. They just eat a bit more when they have the opportunity to do so." Arythar looked sweetly right into Himiko's ice-blue eyes.

"But my little boys are still growing! They need their vitamins and minerals and everything!"

"*Your* little boys?" Arythar examined the petite blonde thoroughly, a huge question mark floating above his head.

"Of course. My adopted sons Hyoga and Shun!"

The question marks grew. "Ahm, fine -- but..." He was half amused, half confused. Hyoga and Shun adopted by *her*?

"Can't we begin now?" Makoto asked impatiently. "I'm also hungry and want to go home."

"My goodness! Are you aware that you have regular working hours other people only dream of? Some people have to do 24 hour shifts, seven days the week! Including me, just for your information!"

"With our payment I won't do anything more than absolutely necessary," Makoto stated.

"I wish I had such working conditions," Arythar said wistfully.

"You're a Saint, and Saints are no employees. If I remember correctly, you are supposed to work for honour and stuff like this."

"That's right! And don't forget 'friendship', which is another important value for us," Arythar pointed out.

"Friendship..." Himiko sighed. "If only my Camus-sama could be convinced that there is something like 'love', too..."

"So *you* are the reason Aquarius Camus was so ...distracted the last time I had to deliver some stuff to him?"

"I guess he feels pursued," Makoto grinned.

"I don't pursue him," Himiko protested. "What is wrong in wanting to marry him and have lots of children with him?"

"Whoa. No wonder he's in panic," Arythar laughed. "By the way, as you might have noticed, I run a delivery service which often delivers pretty delicate stuff. I could deliver a love letter of yours to Camus if you like." He decided not to mention his delivery fees right away. A Saint had to find some means to earn some money after all.

"You would do that??" Himiko looked at him in utter delight. "Really? Oh *please!* I'm writing it right away!"

"No, you are *not!*" Makoto said sternly. "You can do that in your free time. Now we have work to do."

"But he would deliver my love letter to my Camus-sama!"

"So what? Right now you are not writing any silly letters. You are going to work."

"One side question -- are we perhaps in *Candid Camera* here?" Arythar looked for the hidden camera.

"*Candid Camera*? Nope. I only watch *Takeshi's Castle* anyway," Himiko told him. "And now I want to examine you so that I can get home and cook for my Baby Saints."

"Your... *Baby Saints*..." Arythar almost doubled over from laughter. Last time he had

seen them, Hyoga and Shun were on the best way to become formidable young men.

"Enough talk now," Makoto said gruffly. "I want to start now! Sometimes I really hate this job..."

"Wanna swap with me and become a Saint instead?"

"I'm not so stupid that I would want to run around in such a silly armour plus a Mask!"

"Agreed, the Cloths of Athena's female Saints are not the riot, but maybe you could ask Poseidon. Thetis' Mermaid Cloth looked pretty neat, and she didn't even have to wear a Mask."

"I'm not so keen on all the training," Makoto admitted. "And anyway, I don't have any Cosmo to begin with."

"Ah well, but if I understood it correctly, this little meeting is not about you becoming a Saint but about me being examined, isn't it?"

"Sure -- so if you please would get out of your Cloth?" Himiko urged. "I need to get back home as soon as possible."

"If you insist I can bring you back home," Arythar volunteered. "I can transport persons as well as my usual courier stuff."

"That would be fine. I can't let my poor babies starve."

"Your poor babies, huh?" Milo said from the door where he had appeared out of thin air. "And what about *me*?"

"You are too fat," Makoto said mercilessly. "I'll put you on diet, effective now."

"Hey Milo, old chap," Arythar greeted him, slightly surprised to meet the Scorpio Saint here. "How about drinking a beer or two after I'm finished here and while Himiko is feeding her 'Baby Saints'?" In his job as courier, Arythar had already delivered several crates of beer to Scorpio Temple, and hence he had also drunken some bottles with Milo.

"*Baby Saints?*!" Shun asked scandalized. It had taken him too long for Himiko to return, and so he had decided to check on her in the lab.

"Sure, you're a crybaby Saint," Hyoga teased him. Of course he also wanted to see what was keeping his new mama.

"Oh, Shun, Hyoga -- you're here, too?" Arythar greeted them.

"I'm starving," Shun nagged and tugged at Himiko's lab coat.

"My poor little one," Himiko cooed and tousled his hair.

"Didn't you say you'd return shortly after 6 p.m.?" Hyoga asked.

"I'm sorry," Himiko said with hanging head. "My work didn't allow me to return at an earlier time."

"But I'm hungry, too," Hyoga told her.

"I have an idea," Himiko said and fetched her purse. "Why don't you fetch us some sushi and tenpura?"

"But your cooking is soooo much better!"

"And fastfood is unhealthy and much too expensive," Makoto pointed out. "We have to save money, now that you all live in our house."

"I want some food, too!" Milo demanded.

"You are greedy and it shows." Makoto tickled him in the side.

"Greedy? Tell me, Milo, who else is fed by these girls?"

"At Sanctuary they cooked for me, Aiolia, Camus, Shaka and Shura."

"Ahm, and you are the only one who survived?"

"Don't mock them! Their food is *delicious*! -- Makoto, why don't you show Arythar your skills?"

"You just want to eat something, too,"

"So your examination is in fact about who will survive your cooking skills?" Arythar asked.

"Well, you still haven't gotten out of your Cloth," Himiko sighed. She wanted this to be over as fast as possible.

"Okay, okay..." Arythar willed his Cloth away from his body and it returned to its presentational form.

"Another bird," Himiko said warily. "Does it bite, too?"

"Bite? Usually it doesn't. And why 'too'?" On close examination, the Albatross Cloth seemed to scrutinize Himiko attentively.

"The Cygnus Cloth did bite me," Himiko declared in a huff.

"It wasn't my fault," Hyoga said hurriedly.

Arythar shrugged. "Basically, each Cloth has a life of its own. It reacts to outer influences. And if it bit you it surely had a reason to do so."

"It didn't have a reason!" Himiko sulked.

"From your point of view maybe -- but did you ask the Cloth for its opinion?"

"As if these Cloths would talk with us!" Makoto shook her head.

"There's only one person whose Cloth speaks with him," Milo stated. "That's Triangulum Borealis Silver Saint Astreya."

"Indeed? I *have* to examine this!" Himiko exclaimed. "I only hope it doesn't bite, too!"

"Triangulum Borealis? I think that's a bit farther down our list."

"Do I get something to eat now?" Shun nagged. "It's at least three hours past the normal dinner time!"

"Milo, you will go and fetch sushi and tempura for all of us here." Himiko gave him an appropriate amount of money.

"Why me?"

"Because you have nothing else to do."

"I want to stay here and watch!"

"Stop nagging around and do something useful." Makoto pushed him towards the door, and Milo teleported away before reaching it.

"Milo as a delivery boy," Arythar marvelled and shook his head. "A proud Gold Saint being sent to fetch something to eat! Geesh! I never thought I would see something like *this*. -- So what do you want to know now? I don't feel like staying here all night long. And when I look into the faces of Hyoga and Shun, I can tell they wouldn't want that either."

"No, I want to watch the rerun of Dragonball tonight," Hyoga remarked.

"You shouldn't watch so much TV," Makoto frowned.

"Hey, I'm training while I watch TV. Then it's not so boring to do push-ups and the like."

"What's 'TV' anyway?" Arythar wanted to know.

"It's *cool*, Ary," Hyoga grinned. It was fun to watch others beating each other up for a change.

"Would you like to go onto the roller coaster again, Hyoga?" Arythar had invited Hyoga to accompany him to the amusement park once in a while in the past, and they both had had a lot of fun.

"Sure!" both Hyoga and Shun exclaimed excited. "When?"

"Let's see... Tomorrow I have to fetch a parcel from Australia in the morning and deliver it to Tokyo by 1 p.m. So we have the whole afternoon."

"Cooooool!"

"Tell me, Hyoga, what exactly is this examination about? I still haven't gotten an answer of Himiko or Makoto..."

"That's easy," Shun replied. "Makoto will prick you and put you through a lot of highly annoying tests."

"That's true," Makoto nodded. "Everything is mostly harmless."

"Indeed?" Arythar looked threateningly at Makoto. "Nasty stuff? *Annoying* stuff?"

"Wow, now he looks really evil," Makoto commented and looked suspiciously at the Albatross Saint.

"When Shun says I'll get pricked and so on, you can't expect me to be overjoyed about it!"

"Sorry, it's all by Athena's command," Makoto told him.

"Just smile and get it over with," Himiko suggested. "And make sure your Cloth doesn't bite me when I examine it."

"Just be nice to it and it won't harm you."

"Now let's get started," Makoto urged.

Himiko asked Hyoga to help her put the Albatross Cloth onto the scales. "10kg! That's light! I could have lifted it myself," she marvelled.

"Indeed it is light," Arythar said proudly. "It's made of a special titanium alloy that combines light weight and strong protection."

"Titanium? Cool! I have to take a sample of it for further analysis."

"Grrrrrrrrrrrr!!" Arythar's gaze turned from normal to very threatening. Himiko squealed in shock and hid behind Hyoga.

"But I need a sample!"

"Not from my Cloth! -- Although, I could provide you with a sample of the same alloy from some remainders of its construction."

"That would be sufficient," Himiko said in relief. "By the way, are the different colours of your Cloth a special kind of paint? It looks as if it's the material itself."

"It is the colour of the material."

"Well, then I need samples of every colour version, too."

"For a complete collection you have to ask Mu. He has samples of everything from the time when he tried to get used to work this material. He said it was weird because he was used to orichalcum and some other materials for the normal Cloths."

"Mu! But he is the Pope now. Does he still repair Cloths?"

"If I remember correctly, he passed this job to his successor Aries Phrixos. But he was the one responsible for my Cloth."

"Oh, I see. I guess we have to ask Phrixos then. He's such a cute little Goldie..."

"Indeed," Arythar nodded. "He had his final exams when I was last in Jamir."

"And now that the matter of the Cloth is cleared, I'd like to start with the physical examination," Makoto said.

Arythar gave her a sceptical look.

"Okay, we'll start with something really harmless," Makoto promised him. "The measurements!"

"That's fine with me. But I warn you -- I watch your every movement, so don't try anything funny!"

While Makoto measured every single part of his body, Arythar whistled to make the time pass by faster. Height... Weight... Torso... Arm length... Armpit to elbow... Elbow to wrist... Elbow to finger tips... Shoulder width... Neck... He sighed tragically. But then, when he needed new clothes, he could just ask Makoto for the correct numbers.

"1.83m and 81kg," Makoto nodded. "That's good. Milo should take an example in you. Now I need a blood sample."

"Why would you want to have a blood sample?"

"To examine it, of course! We need your blood type and want to check if you are healthy."

"Okay, if you absolutely insist..." He held out his arm and closed his eyes. He didn't like to watch doctors working on him with their torture instruments.

Makoto continued to go through all the demanded examinations. The only thing she had to leave out was the ECG, because after the third ruined bike, she wasn't given a replacement.

"We're through with the physicals," she said finally. "Now we only need your curriculum vitae and a demonstration of your attacks."

"I'm hungry," Shun said miserably.

"Milo has to return soon," Himiko hoped.

"A demonstration of my attacks?" Arythar lifted one eyebrow in amusement. "Who of you two volunteers to be my target?"

"Don't you dare!" Makoto threatened. "We have a test range for this."

"Isn't it a bit enervating that you have to build a new one after each Saint's demonstration of his attacks?"

"Actually we were lucky that Camus was the first Saint we examined. He froze it so thoroughly that it withstood all of the other attacks so far," Makoto answered.

"Great."

Himiko and Makoto led Arythar to the test range and turned on the cameras. Shun and Hyoga accompanied them. It was boring to stay in the lab alone.

"You may begin," Makoto said and tried not to slip on the ice.

Arythar assumed his attack stance. "High Speed Arrows!" he shouted, and bright bands of light emerged from his fist and crashed into the far wall. The ice wall didn't show any effects, even though the noise was overwhelming.

"Looks cool," Himiko said in awe.

"Too much noise," Makoto complained. "Why do all the Saints have to produce such a noise?!"

"Sorry, I can't help it," Arythar said. "Or have you ever seen a Saint running around with a sound absorption device covering his body?"

"You give me an idea," Makoto grinned. "Himiko, you're the engineer, why don't you invent something like this? Especially Shura needs such a thing -- when he trains with his Excalibur, one might get deaf..."

"Fortunately, my Camus-sama's attacks aren't that's bad," Himiko smiled.

"Do you want to see my other attacks, too?" Arythar asked. When Himiko started to

moon over 'her Camus-sama', she seemed to forget everything else.

"Sure. Go on," Makoto nodded.

"Fine." Arythar closed his eyes in fierce concentration. Some loose ice particles on the ground floated upwards and began to whirl around Arythar, while his Cosmo started to glow, first in a pale white-blue, the glow first weakening, then intensifying to a deep royal blue. The air was filled by a palpable tension when Aryrhar crossed his arms in front of his chest, like the statue of an Egyptian pharao.

In his deep concentration, he thought the trigger sequences of his attack: "Fragmented Partial Discharge!" His Cosmo flared up, and now one could discern two layers, royal blue inside with a shining white halo around. A circle on the ground began to surround the Albatross Saint, sucking up all colours and leaving only shades of grey.

The two scientists looked curiously at the spectaculum of Arythar's pulsating Cosmo energy.

"Fragmented Volume Discharge!" Arythar's thought triggered the next stage, and his Cosmo intensified once more, the air whirling around him with growing ferocity. The greyscale circle on the ground was now 50 metres in diametre, although it didn't fit completely into the test range.

"Loaded Particle Discharge!" Now Arythar's still increasing Cosmo began to show small eruptions like sunflares, and Makoto feared he might lose control over his powers any moment now.

"Loaded Volume Discharge!" This thought finished the start sequence, and the Cosmo of the Albatross Saint exploded with the shouted "*Wings of Albatross!*" attack. Uncountable sickles flew from the hand Arythar now pointed at the far wall and crashed into the ice.

"This is impressive," Himiko said in awe.

"I am still hungry," Shun sulked.

"Okay, okay -- if Milo doesn't appear in about one second, he will be severely punished," Makoto threatened.

"Do you have another attack?" Himiko asked. She wanted to see some more of the pretty light effects.

"No, I'm afraid not. Unless you want to see me reaching the Cubic Volume Discharge. But I'd have to warn you -- the consequences might be truly disastrous. *Very* disastrous."

"And that means?"

"You see, my initial training encompassed only the mental aspect. That is, the foundations of my powers lie in the mental aspect. The ability to use my Cosmo came later, when I was trained in Tibet. Thus I can use either my original mental powers or ignite the Cosmo powers of a Saint. For example, I do not have to access my Cosmo for my power of movement, this is merely done on a mental base. But the two different powers are where my problems lay: My mental powers and my Cosmo don't work together properly. I can increase my Cosmo -- no problem, but in any attack my mental powers are involved. My mental powers take the Cosmo and 'eject' it in a form of energy, which is a physical process. If I would try to do this in one step, it would get immediately out of control, so I have to set up my mental forces in several stages to harmonize the two conflicting powers. Every stage is accompanied by a stronger discharge of energy, and for me it is more difficult to keep it under control and direct the energy. The Cubic Discharge would be the stage after the Loaded Volume Discharge, and I can barely channel *that*. You have noticed the disturbances when I increased my Cosmo, didn't you? They are in fact a sign of the disharmony between my mental powers and the Cosmo energy. When I would try to reach a further stage, then I certainly wouldn't be able to keep the energies in check, and I really don't want to imagine what would happen when they get out of control..."

"This sounds like a real problem." Himiko nodded sagely.

"Well, it's not really a problem -- I consider it a challenge to live with," Arythar smirked.

"Fine. I think we should get indoors now and start with the interview." Himiko shuddered from the cold.

"*More* examinations?" Arythar sighed.

"No real examination, just one or two questions," Himiko assured him. Or three, or four, she added mentally. They went inside again, and Himiko fetched a coffee to get a bit warmer.

"Let's begin," she finally said and turned on the tape recorder. "When were you born and where?"

"I was born on June 6th, 1966, in Scotland."

"Oh! A Gemini!" Himiko scribbled down some additional remarks about certain traits Geminis should have. "So you're 21 now -- just like Milo..."

Arythar nodded.

"How did you become a Saint?"

"Four years ago I had to make a delivery for some Athena who supposedly was in Sanctuary in Greece -- which she wasn't, as I learned later. Instead I was directed to the Pope who -- as I was told -- would take the parcel in Athena's stead. I didn't mind, as long as the parcel got into the right hands. Much to my surprise, he suggested I

should become a Saint..."

"Oh, I see. But are you *really* a Saint? I mean, there is no Albatross constellation -- so how would you get an Albatross Cloth?"

"Okay, I know that there is no Albatross constellation. My Cloth has a completely different origin than the Cloths of the other Saints. My Granddad was a master of materials. He was able to virtually form and carve anything. He made this Cloth for me. And about being a Saint -- the question is: are you only a Saint when you wear a Cloth attuned to the constellation under which you were born, or are you also a Saint when you serve Athena and have mastered your Cosmo?"

"Well, the Steel Saints are Saints, too, even though they don't belong to the traditional Saints," Himiko admitted. "We have worked on improving their Cloths."

"Indeed, I know them. And they fight on Athena's side, too, if I remember correctly. But then, what's in a name? Poseidon's warriors are called Marine Shoguns or Generals, and Polaris Hilda had her God Warriors... Even if they weren't Saints they were faithful to their bosses. And talking of the Steel Saints, they don't even use any Cosmo and still they are called Saints..."

"Okay, so you are another additional Saint," Himiko nodded. "Why did your grandfather make this Cloth for you?"

"Additional Saint? This sounds a little disrespectful," Arythar complained. "Ah well. About my Cloth -- my Grandpa created it as special gift for my eleventh birthday and because I had reached a certain level of my mental forces."

"That's nice of him. Is it possible to meet this grandfather of yours? I'd love to ask him about your Cloth!"

Arythar hesitated a moment. "I'm sorry, he doesn't live anymore." He paused for another while. "He was assassinated."

"That's terrible! -- Assassinated? By whom?"

"By the Council of 13. A conspirational group."

Himiko frowned. "Never heard of them. Would you care to elaborate?"

"I'm afraid it's too complicated to elaborate on this. It would take too long as there are several more entities involved. -- Anyway, don't you think you should finally get some food for Shun and Hyoga?" Arythar changed the topic and to his relief the boys nodded.

"But we aren't finished," Himiko protested.

"Which reminds me of what Milo will be when he returns," Makoto said darkly.

"At least one more thing, Arythar -- what are your current jobs?" Himiko continued.

"I'm having a courier delivery service. When someone wants to send an item that is to reach its destination fast, discrete and safely, then I'm the perfect choice. Tomorrow morning I will have to go to Sydney for another delivery."

"Do you also deliver pizza?" Shun asked desperately.

Arythar laughed. "Normally I don't deliver fresh food. But if you can afford it I will certainly not decline such a job."

"I'm back!" Milo popped into existence, carrying two heavy bags with some Greek writing on them.

"You took quite some time," Makoto said reproachfully. "Where did you fetch the food -- from the other side of the world?"

"Not quite," he grinned and unpacked large portions of gyros, tzatziki, biftecki, souvlaki, moussaka and the like.

"Didn't we tell to to bring us sushi?" Makoto frowned. "I don't care for Greek fast food!"

"That's no *fast* food! It took the guys in the take-away quite a while to complete the order."

"I don't mind!" Makoto shook her head. "Why don't you just do what I tell you?"

"It seems you are finished now?" Arythar looked at the scientists. "Give me a snack for the way, then I'd like to return to my base."

"No problem. I think it's enough for all of us here." Milo took a portion of gyros and moussaka and gave it to the Albatross Saint.

"Thanks, old chap! -- Okay, then bye, ladies and guys!" Arythar left the laboratory. It was pretty late by now, and he wanted to get some sleep before tomorrow.

Shun and Hyoga enjoyed the late meal. Greek food was always very nourishing.

"I hate these tons of garlic in the Greek cuisine," Makoto nagged.

"I don't mind," Shun said and shoved the biftecki into his mouth. "I'm starving!"

"Garlic is healthy," Milo lectured and munched on a good portion of tzatziki which traditionally was made of chopped garlic, cucumber, olive oil, plain yogurt plus some herbs and spices.

"It smells badly."

"It prolongs life."

"Only if you don't get near me tomorrow, or I will dispose of you as toxic waste."

"Eat some, too, and you won't mind anymore."

Makoto fried Milo with a deadly glare. "I don't have any intentions to poison me."

"It's your loss, but this leaves more for me," Milo shrugged.

Makoto grumbled while she watched the others eat the food with appetite. Even Himiko munched on a piece of souvlaki.

"I'm so tired," Himiko yawned. "Do you think we could take tomorrow off?"

"Certainly not. We have to survive until the weekend," Makoto replied.

"Too bad," Hyoga said. "Then you can't accompany us to the amusement park with Anythar tomorrow."

"No, I'm sorry." Makoto gave him an apologetic smile. "But I'm sure it will be more fun if you go alone anyway."

"Maybe... Although I'd really love to do some family stuff together with my new mama."

"As long as you leave *me* out of the game I'm content," Makoto said.

"Of course. You see, my dream would be to do some things together with Himiko and Camus-sensei."

"I'm sure he will try to be elsewhere."

"Maybe not if I ask him nicely," Hyoga hoped. "I'll tell him that Himiko will buy him some good wine, then he'll join us for sure."

"He does almost everything for wine, doesn't he?" Makoto laughed.

"Yeah," Hyoga grinned. "Maybe he can even be convinced to marry her, if she promises him to set up a nice wine cellar for him."

"I don't think she has the money to buy the amount of good wines that might convince Camus to stay with her..."

"She will try it, won't you, mom?"

"Sure. I'll do *anything* for my Camus-sama!"

"That's cute." Shun smiled. "I think I'll help her with Camus, too, just for the fun of it."

"Why are you all so keen on setting up Camus and Himiko as couple?" Makoto wondered.

"Because they'd be *perfect* as my mom and dad!"

"Because it's fun to see Camus squirm and struggle to get out of this," Milo grinned.

"Just because," Shun added.

"I *almost* pity Camus. No one is on his side...."

"/am!" Himiko smiled soulfully, pink hearts floating up to the ceiling.

Makoto followed the hearts with her eyes and watched the burst when they touched the ceiling. They were amazing!

"Don't worry, we'll help you, *mom*," Hyoga promised.

"Let's return home," Makoto suggested. "It's far too late by now."

"Indeed." They shut down the devices and switched off the light, before they returned to their house and went to sleep.