

## YAKUZA 7 NOTES

### Potential Topics

#### Story

- 2001/2019
- Protagonist change from Kiryu to Ichiban/Inversions & differences

#### - Themes:

The Whereabouts of Light & Darkness / Starting over from Zero / The Grey Zones: Justice and Hypocrisy in Japanese society

Starting over from zero: New beginnings: Fitting for a game about a new protagonist.

#### - Fantasy

In a much earlier video I talked about how every Yakuza game feels like it lifts different amounts from different crime genres. Gangster epics, noir, heroic bloodshed, thrillers.

Yakuza 7 does *Criminal Fantasy* with a very JRPG bent. The ruined hometown, the mystical kingdom. Using the byzantine codes and conditions of the criminal world and using Yokohama almost as a foreign kingdom. Which is funny given it's an hour away from Kamurocho.

### World

- Yokohama Map: Slower, zone by zone navigation. The biggest hub in the series so far
- A fantastical kingdom isolated from the larger (yakuza) world by the *wall of muscle*
- Treasure Hunt (ironic) looking for money/items/plates at vending machines and trash
- Gathering crafting items & crafting / Bugs
- Planting vegetables and flowers around town
- Taxis now need to be discovered
  
- Town Chats / Party conversations as collectibles
- Restaurants / Table talks / Bond boosters / Buffs
- Bigger world with a ton more morsel style content to liven up travel

### Gameplay

- Genre Shift from Brawler to JRPG
- Turn based Combat: Jobs/levelling/status effects/healing/buffing & debuffing
- Yakuza style flourishes: AKA active time elements like QTEs, downed foe attacks, improvised weapons
- Party management
- Bonds/Drink Links
- Personality Stats (Persona personality building)

### Minigames & Distractions

- Can Quest / Eco-Points / Unique Shop
- Seagull Cinema / QTE gameplay / Bond booster
- Ounabara Vocational / Personality booster
- Dragon Kart / Unique Shop
- Sujimon Gathering / Get Extra Items
- Part-Time Hero / Completion List
- Hostesses (now for getting closer to boys than the girls)
- Shogi
- Baseball & Golf
- Darts
- Gambling games sans Roulette and Cho-Han

## **Post-Notes**

### **Turn based combat joke that accidentally turned into a post-note**

- Keep pretending we're about to introduce combat then saying it can wait its turn... Push back until job system or maybe the Mabuchi dungeon where we're stuck with it. "Ichiban is free, but I'm still locked in with this combat." → "I know in the parlance of the kids today locked in means I'm engaged with something and I said I'm locked in with this combat but come on that's not what I meant. This combat makes me feel locked out. At multiple points on my first playthrough my reaction was often. "Man this is cool, I wish I was playing this." and that wasn't me trying to be snippy or clever about the genre shift. It's probably why I don't get on with Turn Based combat, something in my psychology just cannot connect with it the same way real time combat can easily grab my attention and make me feel like an active participant."
- "Please understand to people who enjoy turn based combat, I'm not calling turn based combat inherently lesser as I know that's how this can come across. The issue is with me, not the system. Doesn't help that this system has some issues all its own!"

### **Like a Brawler Mod Joke**

I suppose I should talk about Like a Brawler. It's a mod by Jhrino which converts the game into a brawler. Congratulations Jhrino, you've given Ichiban aphantasia. I'd compare the combat but it'd be comparing invisible apples and oranges. The mod is a ton of fun and incredibly impressive work. I'm mostly bringing it up for people who absolutely cannot handle turn based combat and don't mind harming the wholeness of the experience that there is an option for you here.

I kinda hate knowing that bringing this up is going to summon people who think an opinion like this is a battleground. The mod itself wasn't made out of some spiteful attempt to "fix" the game and it sucks that a guys earnest effort gets strongarmed into ammunition.

### **Super Edge Case Note**

- If you knock out of a ton of enemies but only knock down a few, the KO ticker will take so long enemies can return to their feet.

### **Flee Guys, they go bye bye**

- Want to explore the high levelled zones early. Well just run away! You can retreat your way through dungeons if you're so inclined!

### **Early area enemies weak to blunt**

- The early zone obviously features weak foes, but they're not just weak, they're weak to the standard attack type. Making the early zone even more of a place to find your feet.

### **Collectables aplenty + The Wander of Wondering**

This game is loaded down with collectibles. While the city is wider and they've had to make the content thinner, they've increased the density of things to do in transit. In Kamurocho getting from one end of the city to another is a small prospect. It only really takes combat to give a journey like that meaningful friction.

Ijincho's much larger scale could leave a player tired of transit. So it supplements it in a lot of little ways to add wonder to wandering. Some are pretty stock standard checklister things. Materials and secondary currencies to give mechanical purpose to nooks and crannies. Then there's bespoke enemies and honk honks so you can deal with some crooks and nannies.

The addition of a team brings with it my favourite adds which is Party and Table Talks. Where certain locations and food items flesh out the characters. Since dining no longer adds experience I guess they had to add to the experience. This also builds bond levels but the real reward is in rounding out the characters little by little.

There's the new systems where Taxi points need to be discovered. This has the benefit of making it so the city can't just be skipped to begin with. You have to first travel to a new region on foot and get the lay of the land. It makes finding a taxi both a relief and a reward, and makes using them for fast travel down the line feel less hollow because on some level, I earned that point.

### **Hitting Downed Foes**

- The ability to do extra damage on a downed foe is a clever way to make combat more active and require some degree of quick thinking. You have to quickly decide to forgo a skill move or item and quickly opt to use up a turn for the damage bonus.
- As with many things, the problem is that the combat is so easy that this decision rarely feels like a tide turner.

### **Enemies great vision**

Living in Ijincho the foes vision hasn't been ruined by the constant neon of Kamurocho and so these buggers can actually see you from a mile away!

### **YLAD 40 JOKE**

- I popped Part Time Hero a bit later than expected and so Ichiban had a sudden personality influx... Sorry Adachi Ichi just saw American Psycho and discovered he has a personality.

### **Kiryu, Ichiban, and Stagnation**

*Inspired by the Verge article*

- Kiryu has never really been fighting for change. He fights to maintain the status quo, and before that to return the Yakuza to a former glory that thanks to 0 we know never really existed. He's the Dragon and he fights for what's right, ("Only kids believe in Dragons.") Only issue is it is something that has never sat right with the world.
- Ichiban fights for change. He fights for what is right. True to the Ryuugyo on his back it's better to pursue being the Dragon than to make it there and stagnate. **(post-note/characterisation)**

### **Dubbed the Wrong Way**

The series now features an English dub, a feature brought back in Judgment that's now a common fixture of the series and while I don't use it I'm glad it's here for those who want it. This series is in Japanese to me and feels weird otherwise and I'm quite content with subtitles so that's where I'm sticking.

I do have some complaints with the English dub mind. Much like each of the characters has their own colour profile to set them apart. Each character has very distinct voices. Voices which hint at their personality, past, and place in the world which penetrate language barriers. Nanba's raspiness at once sells his frailty but also his wisdom.

Adachi's gruffness makes him sound older and experienced, but the warmth in his voice speaks to his immaturity. Where a hard life hasn't sapped his love of taking it easy.

Saeko's voice is a lot more practised, she can easily bounce between sassy, seductive, and stern sentence to sentence and it perfectly gets across her mastery of service.

Han is refined, polite, and deadpan. He's professional, unflappable, and keeps everyone at firearms length.

Zhou's flippant, casual cadence contrasts and bouncy energy makes him appear explosive and unhinged, but slowly morphs to show his disconnect from who he was made to be as you learn more.

In the English dub, they all sound like minor variations on a tough guy or gal performance with an often artificial gritty affectation atop each performance which any old fucker out there can do, you don't even need to be on the bourbon for a decade to pull it off.

There's no colour to anyone's voice to really set them apart, the differences, and the dub in my case, is muted. This especially hurts Ichiban. What I love about Nakaya's performance is the level of earnestness and vulnerability he gives Ichiban which is vital in making me believe he's as goodhearted as he needs to be for the story. Making the moments where he's genuinely, furiously angry hit all the harder.

Now, I'm not saying the dub acting is bad, but I do think it's less interesting. I think a more diverse array of voices to give each character distinct textures is where the issue lies, it's more of a casting and direction issue than one that's down to any individual actor. It could be we find this kind of exaggerated difference in tones too absurd to take seriously.

An example of this I find interesting is Samus's muted performance in *Other M*. In Japanese a stoic, robotic performance is accepted as a way of selling certain character traits. This type of performance replicated in English is seen as inherently unnatural, it lacks the cultural signifiers which let us know what this kind of performance is suggesting. Since it lacks meaning to us, it just appears alien, strange, and pointless.

### **Final Scene English Dub Note**

The English dub has a unique interpretation to its final scene. In the Japanese Ichiban begs Masato to understand that he truly does care for him. This is a really powerful beat that the English dub winds up not entirely conforming to, while still landing in a really effective spot. Instead Ichiban begs Masato not to kill himself because he couldn't bare to watch him die. Ichiban asking Masato not to kill himself for his sake is poignant.

It could be the first time anyone has *asked* anything of him. All his life as Masato was spent with people waiting on him hand and foot. Which only solidified his own self-image as being weak and useless, a feeling he deeply resented.

Ichiban begging him to live could be the first time realising that he genuinely meant something to anyone else, that this man never saw him as someone with innate value, not just a burden to be around. Much of the English dub, even in this scene feels like a bit too much, that Ichiban's actor can't drop the edge he puts on top of his voice which I think harms Ichiban's overall character. But here it's dropped exactly where it needs to be. It gives the moment the vulnerability which I think it needs.

### **Verbal Sparring with Kume (A Kumite with Kume)**

Kume is a fantastic character, wonderfully loathsome and annoyingly evocative of real world moral panic busy bodies. His design is simple but effective. An extremely smug, punchable face sat atop some pretty black and white colour theory, literally.

The white blowjob Japan shirt worn over a black long-sleeve stretching out to fingers ready to reach into everyone else's business is an effective shorthand for who he is. A puritanical exterior barely concealing a deeply evil man. An inside as black as coal which burns with a white hot fury. In his crusade to clean up Japan all he's doing is harming people who pose no threat to anyone, but they're considered dirty by "polite-society", this hate has fermented in Kume and so he gets to look like a hero for stamping on people who he would never have ran into had he not decided to stick his nose in their business, a service that's probably catered to around here.

Kume thinks himself straight and true, he hates that the laws only technically allow these grey zones to operate. He'll do whatever he must to bleach them! But there's the problem, he doesn't realise he is not allowed to. (*Ichiban catches Kume*)

Watching Ichiban easily pull his worldview apart is satisfying each and every time it happens but that's where we run into what's so frustrating about Kume. He's a believable impression of these kind of people only up to a certain point, and it's in the way that Ichiban so easily disarms him.

In my experience people like Kume are never so easily shut down by pointing out their hypocrisy because they're either unable to conceive of themselves as hypocrites, utterly uncaring about it because their moral crusade gives them carte blanche to any hypocrisy in pursuit of their goal. Or, if they're actually somewhat canny, the hypocrisy serves a purpose. It's a big red glowing target for opponents to waste time wailing on. Making themselves look like hysterical pedants while never actually getting around to stopping what they want.

What's beautiful is in a way Kume is operating as the latter without realising it. He may not be bleaching Japan all that well but he's doing a great job laundering Ryo Aoki's image. He's a tool, a political tool. His only quality is his devotion to a crusade to attack a people who would never have meant him harm, who he would have never ran into if they didn't represent an opportunity for him to show off how pure he is.

### **The Tragedy of Han and Zhou**

On my first playthrough I skipped the drink links of Han and Zhou, something I made certain to rectify on this playthrough.

The problem is that YLADS format can wind up really working against these lads, why you ask? It's because they arrive at a point in the game where the player may well have exhausted or grown exhausted of side content. Leaving little reason to take the time to get to know them. Not helped by them also being absent from cutscenes even beyond the point at which they join the party. They never quite manage to start feeling truly connected to Ichiban's central arc on main path merits alone, and without the Drink Links these two feel incredibly thin as characters, especially Zhou.

My usual playstyle with these games is to do content piecemeal. Starting and clearing side content in one long burst, usually as soon as it becomes available. I'll be the first to admit this is not the best way to approach this series, it makes a lot of Yakuza games feel incredibly frontloaded. I believe the more intended experience is to follow your nose and bounce from one diversion to another, but that's never quite been how I do things and at times it can seriously bite me.

This time, on a second playthrough, I made sure to leave myself things to do so that I had things to do with these two johnny-come-latelys, and even then I had to blow a lot of money on the cabaret club to get these two done in good time. I had to drink with them in order to drink link with them later. You gotta live a little even if the liver'll be a little less lively down the line.

Having now seen these stories through it's a shame that I missed these are they wound up being my two favourite drink links and they work exceptionally well being the last two in the set. The way they relate to Ichiban and each other provides fantastic parallels and builds on the theme of Nature vs Nurture we see between Ichiban and Masato in their own ways.

Han Joon-gi, real name Yeonsu Kim, was turned into a body double of the real Han by his father. This was done without Kim's consent or the real Han's knowledge or go-ahead. He was then offered up to Han just so that his dad could climb the Jingweon ladder.

The real Han apparently seemed disturbed by this, but accepted the gesture and wound up treating his double quite well. I like this because when I think back on Han I could see this as being borne of pity, ego, or him being a bit more three dimensional behind closed doors.

Han reflects on... Han quite positively. It's an unexpected and weirdly humanising reveal. In an interview Yokoyama said that if the Jingweon were back, Han Joon-Gi would have to be there and having a body double of their leader felt in character for them. It's surprising because reading about it in the abstract sounds barbaric within the context of the game yet pandering from outside of it. Which makes it all the more surprisingly that the result is sympathetic and surprisingly nuanced, working in tandem with the core motifs of the narrative.

The question of why he chooses to remain as Joon-Gi is the central tenet of his drink link, and the answer is about a happier ending for the Jingweon than I'd have thought possible.

Learning that some older hands are tracking him down with violent intent for failing to save the boss. Han draws them out into the open not to eliminate the threat, but to invite them to a new home with the geomijul.

They're all cast offs from the mainland Jingweon, further estranged for their failures in 2006 and 2016. Time is doing a better job destroying the Tojo than they can, the moment for revenge has passed, and they can start life anew. The real Han Joon-Gi had to put up with a legacy that was handed to him. His body double can do more for who's left by finally cleaning own hands of it. He opts to remain as Han Joon-Gi so that he can be a flare for the scattered survivors to come and find a new home. And so the Jingweon's last dark secret can be their guiding light.

Meanwhile Zhou who I just didn't care much for first time around wound up becoming one of my favourite lads. He and Ichiban have a far more bantery rapport. Zhou likes to crack jokes, he likes to mess with people, it's a shtick that could be annoying and shallow, I definitely mistook it for the latter first time around, thinking him a bit of a hollow jokester. What's great is that he actually is, but only on the surface. At first these jokes seem like callous indifference, as Ichiban starts matching him jab for jab and joking back the tension dissipates.

It's a real testament to how dynamic Ichiban's writing is that his voice with each character feels so distinct yet so undeniably Ichiban.

We learn that he was born and bred to be the leader of the Liumang, a role he never actually had any interest in. The tragedy is that he was a guy who was exceptionally talented at whatever he set his mind to, but from minute one his destiny was to be a crime boss. What I love about Zhou is the more I got to know him, the more my perception of his attitude changed. When you first meet him his cavalier attitude about violence and murder makes him seem like a complete monster. As you learn he never wanted to be a Mafia Don and had no choice in the matter his flippancy reveals itself as a way of emotionally distancing himself from the cruelty he was born into.

His drink link ends by tying up a plot point left unresolved by the story. Confronting Mabuchi and begging him to skip town to save his own skin. It's the one time Zhou is openly emotional.

Dropping the lighthearted act to show how genuinely furious he is at Mabuchi, and it's a fury made up of complex emotions. He was betrayed over a position that took his chance at a normal life away from him, that took this best friend away from him. All so he could try to steal something only Zhou could know is so stupid.

I really like these two stories, both for doing a great job adding dimensions to these two late comers. But also for how they tie back into Ichiban and the themes of Light and Dark. All three are characters whose fathers set their course for them. None of the three exactly chose a life of crime, a life of crime chose them and they had to make do.

Now their reasons for staying in that world are gone and they're trying to figure out who and what they're supposed to be for themselves for the first time.

Part of me wishes this stuff was in some way integrated into the main plot, but knows that it's probably for the best being optional content. All of this adds extra dimensions and considerations to the primary theme, but if it was all mandatory we'd wind up in a Yakuza 5 situation where the main plot feels messier because it's unable to ignore a heartfelt tangent.

It's probably best where it is for giving me a little something to stew on without throwing too much into the pot (*devils hell stew*)

## **Amazing Synergy / Gestalt Design**

- Reading the interview where the teams talk about how much their studio overlaps, with everyone at least knowing what everyone else is doing. Combat designers doing dialogue and vice versa. I can't help but feel this developmental synergy is why the game itself has such mental synergy. With every element working in harmony and contributing to some other system.

The Yakuza games open world design is like a rubics cube, it's simple yet complex, it all slots together if you can see the patterns. Each new game rearranges the puzzle.

## **Like Father, Unlike Son**

This duality of light and dark is also found in the ultimate goals of the Arakawa's, their public face being the opposite of their true intentions. Masumi Arakawa is a mob boss who had to act out the role of the traitor in order to bring the Yakuza to a merciful end, to free men who couldn't even see the walls closing in around them.

Those walls belong to Masato, under the guise of Ryo Aoki he talks a big game of bleaching the grey zones and stomping out crime. But his real play is subjugating the Yakuza, bending them to his will. The two inverse each other. They are another example of light and dark, and how in this duality light can blind us to cruelty, while darkness can hide true kindness.

## **Ichiban and Masato: Unnatural Leaders**

- Both Masato and Ichiban hit rock bottom. Masato had an 18 year head start and at a certain point Ichiban thought he'd gone a bit further than rock bottom.

- But both of them underwent a similar journey. Winding up somewhere new and deciding on reinventing themselves.

- While Masato used money and manipulation to buy allies. Ichiban did it with no guile and no guile, just by being a good guy, even if his attempts at heroics were more than a little green.

- Masato used a hatred of the underclass to play on peoples cruelty. While cleverly spinning it into a noble goal, making hatred sterile, clean, and agreeable

- Ichiban stuck up for the dirty and the downtrodden, using empathy and straightforward truth to unite seeming enemies. This did unfortunately play into Masato's hands, giving him the opening he needed to move on Yokohama.

## **Yokohama navigational thoughts**

- Yokohama is great. Each area is distinct, having its own character, distinct road shapes and architectures makes it feel less like more is less, but instead each zone almost feels like a distinct miniature town. Each very well bordered, with distinct checkpoints which make you feel like you're traversing one zone to the next.

- Stores and restaurants are more spread out. In an interview it was said that with the larger map and genre shift they decided to treat restaurants more like inns. In being more sparse the tension of travel is heightened, and a player has to make more choices about how they navigate dangerous zones.

- The larger size allows the story to travel, as the game goes on different chapters put the spotlight on different parts of the city, letting a player steadily come to learn this greater map in time with Ichiban.

- As a general rule it gets more dangerous as you head North. A nice, easily understood escalation. Ichiban's homebase remains in the south, on the poorer end of town. Which bolsters the games storytelling and enforces Ichiban being a hero of the people, it makes the southern districts homely, and as the story more often takes you further North in its later hours, makes you feel like you're treading into enemy territory.

## **Jokes**

- I was gonna joke about how my old self-imposed challenge of not drinking during long battles wasn't gonna work but I actually found that I could go surprisingly long without... Oftentimes the battles wind up as dry as my throat. With enemies going down easier than an invigorating staminan

- The balance is crazy, coming to a head with Han, his head trauma is a head scratcher. A low MP move which for reasons unknown has double base damage which it calculates off of. The series has gone from secret korean to secret korean techniques.

- This video is not to say if you like the dub you're out of the club. If you can't deal with subtitles, ei-go your own way. To me this series is in Japanese and it just feels odd to play it otherwise. I tend to just get attached to series based on first exposure. I try to watch everything in its native tongue but if I catch a dub first and it makes a good impression I get attached to that so there's not much logic to it.

- Before the Director stepped in with an off the books offering, all Hello Work could do was say goodbye and good luck. With no home they had no way of addressing the problem. In this way, Ichiban was saved by yet another grey zone.

- The grey zones are a grey matter for which Kume spares none of his. Easily trounced by Ichiban. His moral superiority is what makes him blind to all his own transgressions. The tragedy in life is that people like Kume are either unaffected or uncaring of their own hypocrisy. If anything the obvious blindspot actually works to their favour by acting as bait.

## **Urban Reign Urban Pain**

- In an interview they said of Yakuza's combat that it has never been about depth but satisfaction. This series has never been Urban Reign but it has always let me bring the Urban pain.

## **Wait to talk about combat joke**

"and... Nope! Combat has to wait its turn."

## **Bond Attack Types**

- *All of the Bond attacks save for Nanbas are the same type, which to be blunt is more than a little dull.*

## **Kume Intro Joke**

- Kume is a puerile puritanical, an ill purposed, putrid and prudish prick who won't stop prodding at prostitutes and unlike most punters won't even pay for the privilege.

## **Collections Running**

- The much sterner Sawashiro says he has Ichiban out running collections, and those collections do indeed be running.

## **Nanba Level up speech bit / How many I know feel behind in life**

- *Sure if we were cavemen we'd be dead by 28 but we're not Cavemen so fuck em! I mean Ichiban is more or less a caveman but he's still kicking, and punching, and batting, and levelling up!*

## **Combat Drag On**

This is like, a Drag, and it just keeps going on and on.

## **Notepad Notes**

### **YLAD 003 NOTE - Reintro to Kamurocho**

We join Ichiban in a Kamurocho between the intro and beginning of Yakuza 1 on New Years Eve. Ichiban doing his rounds and enjoying his life. Bacchus is still standing and the construction of the Millenium Tower looms large, this is a city in transition, inbetween the big stories.

This is where Ichiban further sets himself apart from Kiryu. Known by those in the bustling red light district as not quite like a dragon, just a good lad. He isn't a local legend, he's a local character. While the city may look up to Kiryu it instead looks out for him. He has a rapport with several people outside of the criminal world as he hardly seems to make sense within it.

Like Kiryu he's a criminal with a heart of gold but Ichiban wears his on his sleeve. Imagining and even trying to make good on his self-image as a hero. An image which gets him an endeared derision from the people around him. They condescend and mock and Ichiban barks back, but it's obvious they know he'll never bite, they chide him out of affection for his antics. The city may not care for him but the city people certainly do and underneath his occasional griping it's clear the feeling is mutual.

### **ICHIBAN NOTE**

- His reveal that he knows the construction worker will repay his debt and letting him off is a reveal that while he's stupid, he's not an idiot. Earlier on his underling questions if he understands that he's a Yakuza, not a hero. Ichiban shows that while he is a square hero in a round hellish hole he uses his guile to try and be a Yakuza as heroically as permitted.

- It's an odd testament to the characterisation that Ichiban's intelligence continually surprised even me when he shows time and again that when it comes to reading other people he's Sherlock Holmes. With his stupid mannerisms keeping his perceptiveness beneath notice.

### **YLAD 004 NOTE - Ichibans lack of Confidence around Masato**

Ichiban is a lot less confident back here. In the presence of the Young Master Masato and high class hostesses his loud and brash self is suddenly absent and he's an awkward mess. He keeps looking for ways to be useful because that's the only way he can be himself, by being loud and brash, even though it's clear that Masato hates this.

Unlike the Yakuza 1 intro where after a quick and clean collection job Kiryu spends some quality time in the presence of his loved ones. It's less "Kyodai!" and more "Oh brother!"

Here Ichiban is the lap dog for a master who hates him. He spends his evening at an entirely superficial birthday party where Masato blows a lot of money to claim Yumeno Is his girlfriend. Sitting on the sidelines, not wanted but having to be there to make sure Masato is safe and sound.

- Masato this early on is a rude and bitter young man (master). He's been coddled and cared for by his Yakuza dad and associates his whole life and reads everything as being treated as a powerless child. He reads every attempt to be nice to him as condescension or empty flattery.

The irony is this means that he can easily see Ichiban the same way. Mistaking his earnest care as being sycophantic or self-serving. His worry about Masato injecting himself with untested drugs not as genuine fear for his well being but panic that if something happens to Masato he'll be punished.

Masato's worldview is so twisted by his bitterness he sees his those who care for him as a cage trying to keep him contained. Having been very quickly endeared to Ichiban, it's sad to see him so small, and I think the game walks a fine line where I didn't immediately hate Masato. I felt sympathy for him all the same. This is what will later drive him to power, his hatred for how small he imagines everyone else sees him.

### **YLAD 005 NOTE - This opening is very well paced**

As much as this is a much longer intro than the first Yakuza it is managing a very brisk pace. In 20 minute chunks we learn every facet of Ichi's life and the essentials of the people around him and their relationships. It's much longer but there's a lot more to establish. A whole life to be set up, so it can be knocked down.

- Arakawa's backstory, murdering the Tojo family he worked for who destroyed the love of his life, makes his Omi turn a lot more believable. Why would this man have any love for the Tojo when they took the love of his life.

### **YLAD 012 NOTE - From Rock Bottom**

This game truly does have us start from the bottom. A real zero to hero journey. More nada than Shinada. **(joke/good joke)**

Great escalation from here, the game begins proper with us scrounging for coins beneath vending machines and getting ripped, sorry, getting scrip for collecting cans, and we go from here to head of a fortune 500 company in the side content and a political force and hero of Yokohama in story.

### **YLAD 012 NOTE 2 - Ichiban's Irezumi**

Ichiban's tattoo is introduced in this chapter, another Utabori original. A quote from RGG Online which may not be canonical but I think merits thought. Said by Utabori:

“A long time ago, I tattooed two men at the same time. One with a dragon, and one with a koi. What’s on your back falls between the two ... a koi transforming into a dragon ... a ryuugyo. Will it make it through the Dragon Gate and become a true dragon? ... Or will it be swept away by the current and sink to the depths? That depends on you. Because a tattoo is something that can only be made to shine by the one who bears it.”

Ichiban's tat isn't really interesting as a composite of Kiryu and Nishiki, at least I don't really see Ichiban that way. But it represents growth and transformation. In the early chapters as sort of a UI gag Ichiban's job title frequently and sneakily changes as his uncertain position in the world does. Ichiban is already in the process of transformation as he arrives and settles into his new life in Ijincho and makes something for himself.

It being introduced in this chapter clues us in as to what Ichiban's adventure will be, one of growth and transformation as he changes not only himself but the whole of Yokohama.

The Ryuugyo also symbolises the strength to go against the tide which fits Ichiban’s overall temperament and arc in the game. No matter how much he falls down to rock bottom he’ll struggle back up.

### **YLAD 012 NOTE 3 - Ijincho's fantastical fantasy realism**

After the doomed hometown opening and followup in chapters 1 and 2, our introduction to Ijincho makes for a fantastical location. Ichiban has been dropped in the one place neither the Tojo or Omi will touch (perhaps foreshadowing that his shooting wasn't intended to be fatal and he's been dropped here with a hidden agenda)

Unlike previous cities, redlight districts perfect for crime dramas. Ijincho fulfills this while using the byzantine codes of the criminal underworld to create an almost fantasy kingdom environment. The towns defense rests on the almost mythically named WALL OF MUSCLE, an ever worsening tension threatening war between three kingdoms... er, criminal factions which means no outsider wants to risk upsetting the balance.

This threat of war is what maintains an uneasy peace. Essentially, Yakuza: Like a Dragon is clever in how it uses the language of fantasy stories with the modern day reality of crime fiction to blend the two. It works on both levels.

### **YLAD 014 NOTE - Can Quest**

Not a bad minigame but one which feels oddly slight. Perhaps it needed more maps, it feels hamstrung by being introduced so early and so restricted to one area. Still it's a fun early game diversion and suits the story. Feeling like the beginning of Ichiban's slow ascent. A time when he has to make all the right moves or fall further through the cracks. The economy makes the player agree with Ichiban that this is not enough.

- Obstacles fun, it feels like a game of checking the map when you have a moment and perpetually planning and replanning your route. Making sure you always have boost to defend yourself and trying to snake and evade when you do. A high octane stealth trash collection run. Satisfying when everything falls into your lap.

- I wish enemies weren't total homing missiles and there was more of an even keel chase but that's about my only big frustration.

### **YLAD 015 NOTE - Hello Work is the light and the dark**

On note of the theme, the whereabouts of light and darkness, the face and hypocrisy of society. Hello Work officially cannot offer Ichiban and Nanba proper gainful employment due to their bureaucracy. They need a residence or childhood address. Without that all they can offer Ichiban is a course he couldn't possibly take given his situation.

On the face of it they did their job properly but it's the word of the law and not the spirit. They're meant to help people get work but the unstated rule is they can only help certain people. Some are beneath the aid they're meant to provide. The director of Hello Work does something that's shady on the surface of it, offer an under the table gig, it is a dirty job that can only go to someone outside of polite society, but he's also the only person who does actually give Ichiban and Nanba a job, a connection, a shot at money.

In the theme this is the hypocrisy. Polite society failed people who were genuinely trying. The grey area underworld offered them a real opportunity.

### **YLAD 016 NOTE - A couple jokes and the game lingo observation**

Talking to hobo who says he can half our income tax if he joins our party.

- "Mate the only books getting cooked around here are in a barrel."

When I later return

- "Okay I've got a company now, but I can't have your company, lame." (**Ichiban holdings/joke**)

When Ichiban scares off Bleach Japan.

- "If you can show me someone who looks more heroic holding a bin full of cum... Well I don't want to see it but I'd be impressed."

When Bleach Japan say the place is using the front of a restaurant

- "Some people like to eat out, Kume." (**joke**)

- When Ichiban and Nanba talk about their childhood dreams and starting over, on my first playthrough it was the moment where Nanba stops laughing and urges a receptive Ichiban to go for broke being a Hero at 40 that I was absolutely locked in. It's such a sweet moment and solidifies their friendship and the early games vibe of never giving up no matter how much the world puts you down.

- Up until this point the allusions to games and Dragon Quest all feel a little eye rolling and pandering, it's at this moment they actually click and feel resonant, meaningful.

### **YLAD 019 NOTE - Otohime Land and Elder Care Suite**

- Ichiban disarms the protest group by pointing out their hypocrisy. Getting Kume to get on his moral highground of never acting in a grey manner then pointing out how his protest is in a legal grey area.

- Kume also wears a white Bleach JP shirt over a black undershirt. A facade of purity on top of a pure black heart. A man who uses purity as a means to power. No care for what's right, just what he can control.

- Nonomiya, the seemingly awful head of the Soapland who seems to treat his girls terribly cares more than he lets on by Ichiban's estimation. His cold no nonsense approach is better than someone who appears nice but can't even care to learn about his girls.

- While other buildings have taken on classier titles to skirt judgment from Bleach Japan (arguably more grey), Otohime Land is still publically a soapland. It's a sleazy establishment but it's forthcoming in what it does. Our investigation of Nanoha takes us to an elderly care facility operating under a social care like name. A glitzy and glamorous front taken from a Meiji era bank which operates shadily behind closed doors. The whereabouts of light and darkness theme continues to grow.

### **YLAD 020 NOTE - Tougher Combats**

In previous Yakuza titles the whole city was basically yours to explore the moment the intro was over and you were taken off the rails. It reflected Kiryus familiarity with the city well.

Ichiban being in an unfamiliar place is a lot more limited early on, the city unravels to him as he grows stronger and learns the lay of the land. It also ties into this game being more of an RPG and fantasy story with him braving and coming to understand this mystical domain.

### **YLAD 021 NOTE – Photography**

In the last video I started taking a few more photographs, it's a bit of fun, the party members interact. Actually a feature from Yakuza 6 naturally brought around here which is really fun.

Looking at the photos, they're all watermarked. "What can I say-GA... My wonderful photos have become part of the marketing machine."

### **YLAD 030 SUBSTORY – Self-Referential**

We've hit an odd point in the Yakuza series where it has gotten large and long running enough to become very self-referential. With certain characters and groups who were at one point one off jokes or ideas being turned into series iconography or running gags. The Gondowaras, Pocket Circuit Fighter, and worst of all, the Oba-San. Even though I do find her longevity oddly funny, even though I kinda hate seeing her and have never found her funny.

I'm treading a fine line here because it's something I've praised in the past so it may seem like I'm just filling my nappy complaining about this but here me out. I really like how the older Yakuza's used these recurring characters. Dates daughter, the Florists kid, Emoto, even the former heads of the colour gangs. All had little stories that evolved in substories after their main plot debut a game or two back.

It can get a little Star Wars pandering all these characters need stories but it was nice and low key how every game or two you'd get a check in, a few little jokes, bit of character development, and come 4 when it seemed like the series was trying to move on they'd get a conclusion.

There is something I'm worried about regarding Yakuza becoming a forever series which is that these characters aren't going to be treated the same way. They're not going to be treated as characters to advance with jokes acting in service of said advancement, but jokes first and foremost crowbarred into zany and occasionally surprisingly emotional situations.

Bringing back the Gondowara near 15 years on from their last appearance I just find a little eye rolling. Maybe it's because I was liking the vibe of the substory that got hijacked for this cameo appearance.

I understand the series if zanier now, the older, grittier tone is gone and I still like it, I understand it has to advance with the times and some parts of it I like aren't around anymore or got moved to the relatively more grounded Judgment franchise where they're still working fine as ever. But I do worry about this series becoming a self eating snake of references and forced popularity of what should be one note characters.

I'll admit my hypocrisy however and just admit, when I saw Mack in a recent tweet I did think "Yo it's fucking Mack." and was happy to see him.

### **YLAD 032 NOTE - Already Over-levelled**

An issue I brought up during the last game which is exacerbated here. This isn't my genre so I don't know what common consensus is on this if indeed there is any.

But I have a fear of overleveling for the current story content. It kinda kneecaps the vibe for me and kills the excitement and tension which Ichiban and crew, who are often presented to be scrappy underdogs, just absolutely curbstomp the competition.

I've got a constant push and pull in this game and that's that well, I want to do the side content cause I like the substories and hey, they may give me a fun new gameplay feature I might want to make use of in the main content. But in doing this side stuff I kinda kill all the challenge in said main content and obviously I can't really know, especially on a first go around, where I ideally ought to be.

I want these sequences to have some bite, I want to be engaged with them and feel like I earned my way through and that often winds up hollow. It's an issue that started in Yakuza 6 but in that game I could simply choose not to spend points. If this sounds crazier than Ichiban I'm sorry. He's got his mind goblins and I've got mine.

### **YLAD 034 NOTE - The Seiryu Raid**

The Seiryu base raid is a great sequence. Managing a great mix of comedy and excitement, it's a solid caper.

Like the intro spins the collection run sequence used to set the tone for previous characters. The base raid is a common part of prior Yakuza games. Usually it's a moment of sheer hype, used to highlight when a character is done messing around and ready to take the fight to the clan. It's a straightforward beatdown to establish the pecking order.

Ichiban's first baseraid is not in any way straightforward. He's quickly made a rat in a maze. Him, Nanba, and Adachi improvising and trying to stay one step ahead of the horde. Routes changing as they get thrown and bumble their way to the chairmans office, where it's only a mixture of luck, charisma, and guile that gets them back out alive.

### **YLAD 037 NOTE – TRAVEL TALK**

The Yakuza series is no stranger to fetch quests. There used to be one straw millionaire plot per game and that's really just an extended version of the same idea.

The expanded scope brought about by Ijincho makes these moments better and worse. They can still be skipped by a taxi and if you've put in the ironic legwork to do so so far it could be a reward to see your prep and knowledge of the city pay off.

But in this daft little quest to go find a sushi set to trade for nancy I'd say I felt a good part of the substory was the journey itself. Maybe I've gotten older, more boring, and just appreciate a little trek to the shops for its own sake. But cutting my path through the city, rediscovering a few spots I'd forgotten, getting into a scrape, spotting an alley and a stairwell to investigate. My excursion was an adventure in and of itself.

Ijincho's larger scale has caveats but the city still maintains what I like about prior Yakuza cities, its depth of hidden spots, cuthroughs and such. It already feels like a story with history and life. Which comes through via its oddities and layout.

#### Sidenotes: Personality Gates

I do also appreciate the addition of areas gated off until you hit a stat threshold. It leaves mystery on the table, I like the game to delay gratification and leave me with something to be excited for.

#### Sidenote: Healing Points

Along with this, the enhanced scale and expanded RPG identity bring with this full heal rest points around the map. Useful in the early game to let a player get a free heal. But they could have taken the value out of restaraunts given that EXP is already big on tap for battles.

So the game has had to sweeten the pot with tabletalks and stat booster food combos (returning from Yakuza 6)

### **YLAD 052 NOTE - Long ass boring story dungeon**

After the warehouse scheme goes awry, Ichiban and crew are caught. Dragged at least 3KM underground to a torture dungeon, used to frame the Seiryu for breaking turf laws, and that's the trigger for a war in a trap planted by Mabuchi that we triggered on the Yakuza's behalf.

We escape the torture dungeon, but an even more torturous dungeon lies ahead! An hour long trek through repetitive floors, repetitive flaws, and even more repetitive foes.

I don't like the combat, I get nothing out of this. I just wanted it over with so I could get on with things. I know it's not meant to be interpreted literally but we trekked at least three kilometres by foot underground to get out. I'm surprised we didn't surface in Kamurocho! Also it's thematically weird we're in a Liumang dungeon but Yakuza made up the enemy roster.

- Dungeons are the done thing in JRPGs. A chance to grind some levels, earn some cash, and track down some loot. I hate that I don't enjoy anything about this gameplay but still have the mindset where I have to scour it for stuff. That's the internal contradiction of this gameplay to me. You engage with it to stay level, or do more of it to get ahead and expedite the fresher content. It has never really appealed to me anywhere near as much as more active gameplay.

- I don't think there is no skill to this, it's just testing skills I don't particular enjoy engaging with. Setting up party compositions to cover all bases. Managing resources (health, mana, MP). Exploiting weaknesses while covering or eliminating your own. Taking out and managing priority targets. I prefer more reflexive tests, this isn't my jam but god do I feel in a jam picking my way through dungeons.

### **YLAD 053 NOTE – Urban Reign combat joke**

- In an interview they said of Yakuza's combat that it has never been about depth but satisfaction. This series has never been Urban Reign but it has always let me bring the Urban pain.

### **YLAD 079 NOTE - The Resource Park**

I love Yamakita park on the northern end of the map. It's almost framed as this game's dangerous frontier, being decently high level and the only place you can find bugs in abundance. But I don't call this place Yamakita Park. A more fitting name is the give-up-gardens or pack-it-in Park.

This place also plays host to a bunch of shops where a player can spend their way past a bunch of in-game systems, buying materials to skip the item hunts and ingredients and flowers to bypass the bartender. I'm of two minds about this as the crafting and planting systems are ones I find really boring, but it's funny to have the game so casually let you ignore them. It feels like throwing in the rag, an admittance that these systems are grindy time gates, rather than make the numbers or item requirements more agreeable just let the player pay their way through. At least it's better than microtransactions.

Especially given this is placed right next to where Ichiban Holdings winds up. You will be flush with cash and can flush these systems down the shitter.

- *Should tie the Resource Park to the Business Minigame*

### **YLAD 080 NOTE - PART TIME HERO thoughts**

Advancement of Troublr from the last game and more of a grind than Grindr... I think. PTH is a recontextualisation of the completion screens of prior games. I think it's a cute way to encourage completionism through reframing and grounding the checklist and giving it benefits. With monetary and item rewards as well as the checklists granting personality points.

- As with Troublr it adds a good incentive to explore the city. The fetch quests tell you an item exists and thus the player has the knowledge to look for it.
- Meanwhile the emergencies can guide you to hidden parts of the city and get you exploring. I discovered the toilet casino while delivering paper, and then flushed my money down the toilet.

### **YLAD 096 NOTE - I love Yokohama**

Yokohama is a far larger map. The biggest worry about it being a bigger place is the worry that it'd suffer a loss of character. That it would start feeling like a generic city map. Something that I feel maps in Yakuza 3 and 5 struggle with here and there.

But Yokohama smashes it out of the park and hey it even has a park! A couple nice ones. It's a series of districts and each feels distinct in navigatio and architecture. The use of roads and natural barriers is masterful in giving the place thresholds and crossings. The levelled zones don't totally restrict movement but give it a nice feeling of gradually opening up and letting the story feel like its focus moves from place to place while never losing focus on the place.

The story of Yokohama and how it operates gives a nice unfurling history to the place, which is a distinctive and brilliant distillation of the themes.

The biggest aspect is character and while I think it is a little dulled from Kamurocho (an unfair comparison as the character of that place has had years upon years to ferment) Yokohama sells itself as unique while not losing what's quintessentially Yakuza.

It has had to make navigation fun by spreading objectives thinner with thinner gameplay elements like looking through trash and part-time hero collectathon things but the beauty of these objectives is they keep the city environment meaningful and aid the larger space. I was going to say justify the larger space but they don't, there's multiple aspects doing that and the little stuff they've strewn about to make travel fun is a small part of a larger whole, just as Yokohama is a larger whole by itself.

### **YLAD 096 NOTE - Part Time Hero**

I'm not terribly fond of Part Time Hero but I wouldn't give it a big fat zero. It's an improvement on what Troublr was attempting last game and a very good recontextualisation of the prior games completion screens. Grounding it as a phone app and in-game activity is clever, just like the plot of Yakuza 0 it's a little framing going a long way.

I think its greatest strength however is in how it guides the player by giving them questions. The man who can't stop shitting guides you to every restroom on the map, now this isn't just to take the piss, but in doing this I accidentally stumbled onto several other discoveries, I was led by my nose and no that isn't just because this objective stank. It's a sly way to guide me to areas nothing else might.

Meanwhile the support missions while yes it is mostly 100% fluff (UFO catcher plushes), by telling you to gather a mix of common, rare, and utterly unique items in lets the player know these things exist and prompts curiosity to find them. By telling you the answer it gets you questioning well shit how do I get that.

While the part of me who hates checklisting doesn't enjoy engaging with part-time hero it's a really elegant checklist. Well contextualised and useful for the larger scope of the game, it also doesn't call you every five seconds which is a bonus. Felt like pussyng out of saving a bunch of cats again though I can say that much.

### **YLAD 117 NOTE - Seagull thoughts and Il-Yu Jin Joke**

Il-Yu Jin meeting: Oh I saw that film, that was a medium movie to sit through!

It's cute though that the film referenced in this substory is indeed an old flick you can quick time through in another game mode.

Seagull Cinema, a QTE-fest about putting up with classic films. Ichiban is a bit of a philistine but I've felt it before. You're told about classic films by older people and then they're a struggle to get through. The Italian Job was a real struggle.

It's a pretty simple set up. Face buttons and d-pad to knock down REM-RAMs, the stress supplied by alarm cocks who you should spare. So you've got to identify and respond quickly, but also give it a mental beat so you're not just gunning down cocks.

It's an okay mode, a bit tedious but it does tie into multiple other systems to give extrinsic reward.

- I like to imagine this minigame has offended at least one old film buff.

### **YLAD 129 NOTE - Another Combat Attempt**

Combat disconnect (another attempt at wording this)

When I was in a cool scenario in this game my thoughts first time around were often. "This is sick, I wish I was playing this!" and that wasn't me actively trying to be snippy or dismissive, that's how I feel!

A lot of these videos are me trying to put into words the abstract feeling that gameplay gives me. The irony is the better the game is doing the more elusive that feeling is. Words are only failing me when the game isn't!

That's why I like the brawling in Yakuza so much! I can get wrapped up in it. It's this mix of just enough mechanical depth and crunchy, impactful feeling combat that satisfies my brain. The mechanical depth makes me feel like I do have to apply some skill and thoughtfulness to overcome and the satisfying kinematics connect me to proceedings.

Health and heat bars feel less like strict parameters for how close I am to victory or failure but something which lends proceedings tension.

In a turn based combat, they stop existing that way. It's ironic that in this game where the combat is explicitly being viewed through Ichiban's heightened imagination I feel less like a participant and more like a number cruncher. I'm an a fighter I'm an accountant budgeting resources against the enemy. I'm not a numbers guy but these guys are all numbers to me! And that's the issue, I can't get wrapped up in proceedings. To me turn based is a turn off. Ichiban disassociates and so do I. I feel disconnected from proceedings and while I'm not trying to speak for others, I feel that's why some people just don't gel with turn based. We feel an opaque separation that others don't suffer from.

I'm not gonna be one of those guys who says "this is why turn based is lesser" cause I understand how preference works, but this is mine. This is like, a drag... On the other hand.

### **YLAD 140 NOTE - Masato does not see love**

While Masumi and Sawashiro both enable Masato's ambitions (with some trepidation). They both start refusing him all too late. I read Masato as reading this as them turning against him. Seeing their earlier complicity in his actions as not being born out of loving and supporting him but feeding their own ambitions (as ironically, he is blinded by his own.)

It's when they see that he's too far gone, too cruel and uncaring, they start undercutting and plotting against him. Masumi by helping to engineer the dissipation of the Yakuza. Sawashiro by refusing an order to kill Masumi, and then semi-sabotaging his own assassination of Hoshino. Masato likely sees this as everyone turning against him when really they're trying to save him from himself, to bring him back down to earth.

Masato Arakawa is fuelled by envy and a need to never feel powerless. He felt embarrassed when he was powerless, and now no amount of power will secure him. He craves power and popularity because he felt he could never attain it when he was powerless. So he strongarmed the process. He created false power.

This contrasts Ichiban who never needed to be anything but himself to make people love him. The loyalty that Masato demands is freely given to Ichiban. Ironically, the only person so loyal to Masato is Ichiban himself, whose feeling of brotherhood to Masato was uncynical and honest love.

There's a further tragedy that Masato has won genuinely, somewhat unyielding loyalty which you can see in Kume, but Kume, like so many genuine Bleach Japan members, are utterly loathsome people. So their loyalty is only a means to an end.

Masato has had what he always wanted from the start and could never see it as anything but empty. The only people who ever loved him *for him* came from the place he worked to destroy. When he did genuinely earn loyalty and popularity, the people he won it from he saw as beneath him. He was doomed to never be satisfied.

### **YLAD 142 NOTE - Late Joining Members**

Zhao and Han join really late in the game and it kinda fucks their drink links! And means that you get too use to the core lineup!

Zhaos is really interesting, we get some Snake Flower Triad lore and he has a sort of fascinating backstory with being the boss of the Liurang (and a parallel of sorts with Kiryu).

Meanwhile Han also provides fascinating stuff with his drink link, a genuinely fascinating story and expansion of the prior Han Joon-Gi. But again these guys come very late in the game, not just in story content but if you're doing side content the bulk of running about and doing stuff is exhausted which further harms their presence.

That's an issue that particularly afflicts YLAD and it's more traditional JRPG structure. Prior Yakuza's were more static in their messing about. YLAD's traditional JRPG systems means everything you do tends to push towards conclusion. Battles will make battles easier, minigames will grant and eventually cap out on meaningful progression and resources. Han and Zhao are literally too late in the game to feel like a proper part of the experience.

Their roles in battles are also a bit more niche. The core lineup of Ichiban, Nanba, Adachi, and Saeko are already supporting each other well. (despite being overpowered and having some role overlap), Han and Zhao are great single target physical damagers, which is just a more limited version of what Ichiban brings to the table with him already being an amazing damage dealer.

**YLAD 144 NOTE - I will not go to bat for mirror face, Ichiban is gonna do more than enough of that**

It's funny that in this game about the light and dark, hypocrisy, the hypocrisy and duality of a cruel polite society versus a caring underclass that the guy called Mirror Face reflects literally nothing. He feels like he should be the most on the nose unsubtle element going when he's really just a plot convenience.

**YLAD 148 NOTE - This game has good crime politics**

I remember my first time through the story back when it released I liked the story but I somehow didn't catch that this game has some good crime politics. The tension and explanation of the Ijin three, Bleach Japans tool by the Omi to breach the wall, and especially the dissolution of the Omi and Tojo and the immediate filling of the power vacuum, this game is great stuff and new protagonist Ichiban navigates it so differently than how Kiryu would. His status as a newcomer lets the series really breathe with this stuff again.

I think I was mostly stuck on the dissolution. I was still in my semi-ironic clowning on Daigo phase cause it's fun to clown on him. This moment feels very wobbly, overdramatic and shark jumpy. The return of Watase, the reappearance of the character we were told was done. It's a ridiculous soap opera moment.

Coming back a few years later with the theme in mind, the knowledge it was coming and paying attention to all the little bits and how the dissolution is not only a really interesting advancement for the series going forward but also a reinforcement of the theme, a development on the changing times narrative, and more immediately, a move against Ryo Aoki. I think it's a great moment. That's Yakuza, it's ridiculous but it works. Sometimes it takes a replay and a few years to settle but it clicks.

This is a transitional title, the title itself is in retrospect literally transitional, while having an incredibly layered meaning.

I was distracted by how crazy this game is at first to realise just how many moving parts there are, and they're all working in sync. The surface narrative is a well oiled machine, a tale of brotherhood, growth, and redemption. The subtext, themes, and messages bolster that narrative and are incredibly reinforced by it. Like Ichiban's crew they work in tandem.

**YLAD 150 NOTE - Dragon Kart delay**

The reason the finale of Dragon Kart takes until the actual finale to open up is for the three Kamurocho courses, which is really funny. Aoki is tearing apart the Millenium Tower meanwhile Ichiban is tearing up the streets!

**YLAD 154 NOTE - Joke - This substory did kinda rub me the wrong way and it comes about from these women rubbing Ichiban the right way**

**YLAD 156 NOTE - You can pretty much retreat through dungeons!**

Just want items and other bullshit? You can literally despawn every battle and progress right through to the end!

**YLAD 159 NOTE - Amazing Story**

Great ending, Nakaya's performance kills it. His breakdown at Masato is one of my favourite moments of the entire series. Just a knockout moment. Like in his great moment in the woods with Kiryu back in 0. Nakaya is great at carrying a mix of fury, worry, and love all at the same time. A righteous fury when he's trying to express his anger to those he cares about.

Masato's death is tragic. It only dawns on him when it is far too late that he's had what he always really craved. Love. He mistook power and popularity for people caring for him. He took all the love he received as Masato for pity. For people only carrying out what he wanted out of obligation. As he became genuinely powerful he started seeing all resistance as punishable because he never wanted to be powerless or embarrassed ever again.

When Ichiban yells at him, tells him how much everyone truly cared for him and that there was no "logic" to it it finally breaks through. Only when Ichiban had no obvious gain for telling him this but out of love did it dawn on Masato that it was always true. It's so fucking painful and it's so good.

The ending just brings all of the themes home, and to bring it back to the differences between Kiryu and Ichiban, this is an ending Kiryu could never do. Kiryu was too stoic, too much the perfect Yakuza who could only think of beating what was wrong with Nishiki out of him. Ichiban is more rounded, more human, less of a perfect archetype. Ichiban talked his brother down where Kiryu never saw the option.

### **YLAD NOTE - Another Combat Line (lack of personality)**

Kiryu has said he gets to know others through his fists and when I was playing the games so did I. The fighting styles, the animations, the rhythms, the strategies needed to beat them. The series has always done a wonderful job tying a character's personality to their fighting style both for the player and bosses and this entry is really no different.

But through this format I do feel numbed to that connection in yet another way. It all feels so much more repetitive that the room for a boss to express themselves and heighten their personality via moveset is dulled. I know you'd think it should be the opposite what with move names, elemental effects and animations I need to watch but it just doesn't hook me the same way because I don't feel like I'm actually fighting them, I'm playing with numbers.

"Yakuza Like a Dragon shifts the series to turn based combat and all I can ask is... Y, Lad?!"  
(cheers) hey thanks, I'll be here all week! Waiting for my characters to close the damn gap with the enemy!

### **YLAD NOTE - COMBAT THOUGHTS (unfinished)**

(Talk about combat around chapter 5, when the job system is introduced)

I decided to talk about combat now not because this is where it really brings it home but no, even with this new system this combat just doesn't do the job.

Here's the thing, like Ichiban getting shot and dumped in Yokohama I feel kinda the same way with this combat. I'm a fish outta water, or more aptly a koi out of a brawler. This isn't my genre. I can count the turn based battlers I've bested on two yubitsumed hands. (P3,4,5 (2 unfinished), YLAD and IW, EVO). Yeah, we've talked about virtual tourism in this series before, well when it comes to turn based battlers I'm not even a genre tourist, I'm a day tripper!

But I don't want to just gripe, plenty already have. So I'm gonna approach the combat from 2 angles. Firstly from my greedy perspective as a long time Yakuza fan who feels like something has been lost in the change, and then try and be a bit more impartial. I'm gonna judge it for what it isn't and then do the fairer thing and judge it for what it is.

But to head this off at the pass, no I don't think real time is inherently better than turn based but I know my preferences, even as I've gotten older and developed more patience for slower forms of gameplay real time is where I'll always have a real good time.

So, the greedy perspective is as follows. Yakuza felt one of a kind. This mix of city wandering, JRPG adjacent mechanics, minigames, and crime drama. With a core of meaty street brawling. It's a mix you couldn't get anywhere else! Sure this did survive into the Judgment series but I'll always feel like the core series which, while I like Judgment, I do just care about Yakuza more, had lost something I loved about it.

There were many moments, especially during my first playthrough where. During a cool sequence or amazing boss fight where I'd be watching the fight unfold and thinking "man, I wish I was playing this." Because I just feel disconnected in turn based battlers. Even as a genre outsider where surely I should be putting more thought into trying to get by it instead felt like all these fun scenarios had locked me out of them.

I may not like the change, but I do respect it. The biggest thing I want out of a long running series I'm into is to keep the spark alive, and that's done via surprise. It's so daring to change something this fundamental about the series. Plus I've praised how well the series has done to match characters personality to their gameplay and setting Ichiban apart this hard is commendable.

Now, with this in mind. I hope you can understand if my impartial evaluations won't be as insightful as someone into turn based battlers who has more experience with which to explain this combat. But hey hopefully my outside insight has its own value.

#### **YLAD Note - Core Theme according to Yokoyama**

The games Japanese subtitle translates out to "The Whereabouts of Light and Darkness." and this also translates out to the games core theme.

When asked about kiryu's appearance in an interview Yokoyama revealed the driving theme of the game " When the main themes of the game were decided to be about the dualities of the front and back - the hypocrisy and justice, the superficiality and the truth of Japanese society."

This is the most critical, and overtly political game of the series so far. Many of the games have examined the characters in these terms. Their fronts versus their backs. The mask and the true face. Now taking that to a larger scale.

- There will be a lot to dig into here as I examine the game, but a thought struck me here. Perhaps the most recurring issue people take with this story is Mirror Face. In a series with some insane soap opera twists Mirror Face is the most incongruous entity to sneak his way into the series. This theme is the only way his inclusion makes any degree of sense from a design perspective but even then it's the dumbest.

Over the course of these videos I've defended a few decisions commonly derided by Western fans because I feel the complaints often came about of tediously literal readings. Coming about from a middling level of scrutiny where you think something daft just happened but really you only paid enough attention not to notice you missed something deeper or more subtextual.

But I struggle to offer that to Mirror Face because even from a thematic reading he's just utterly absurd in a main Yakuza plot. He's not even acting as a reflection of the characters he imitates ala the Shadow selves of Persona or something daft yet oddly resonant and melodramatic like that. All he reflects is poor writing and missed opportunities. He's an assassin and his quarry is the plots cohesion, no wonder he's so well regarded a hitman.

#### **YLAD Note - Good character analysis link**

[https://www.reddit.com/r/yakuzagames/comments/1elvkj7/  
an\\_extremely\\_long\\_essay\\_about\\_the\\_core\\_cast\\_of/](https://www.reddit.com/r/yakuzagames/comments/1elvkj7/an_extremely_long_essay_about_the_core_cast_of/)

## **YLAD NOTE - Hard is hard!**

In a shocking twist, when I did my now standard for these videos NG+ playthrough where I just do the story with no distractions to lock the pacing in a little. I figured I'd bump up the difficulty. With Kiryu I'd play on Legendary but hey Ichiban isn't a Legend yet so he only gets hard (plus not really liking this genre I presumed it'd just turn the fights into a slog)

And uh, surprise surprise hard is actually hard! Enemies hit uh, hard. status effects and turn management is actually necessary. A misclick in a street fight and I'm toast! (Die in street fight) (I wanted to run away but hit A twice cause of a finger twitch)

The jump in difficulty is actually meaningful. I was arrogant, so pretty solid proof neither I nor Ichiban are legends quite yet.

## **Some Cut Dub Notes**

*Though I can't pretend there are layers of inconsistency to that. I'm a monoglot, but even I'm aware subtitles are an imperfect compromise. No two languages align perfectly in tone, intent, implication, and the emotional baggage of specific words, phrasings, and inflections. All subtitles can do is try to capture the essence of that meaning, and put it in words which still flow and carry character.*

*I do however believe that dubs, through vocal direction and needing to closer match the timings of a scene, wind up adding more distance than reducing it.*

*- The benefit of a dub in my eyes, or well, outside of my eyes, is I don't have to keep an eye on the screen to know what's being said beyond my very rudimentary Japanese. The irony is if I wasn't looking at the screen I'd have no idea which of these three twats were talking.*

*- That said, while I try to stick to original language, if I'm being honest, it tends to be the first impression that grabs me, which becomes my bedrock of the series. Yakuza IS in Japanese to me, it's just uncanny otherwise. But the works of Hideo Kojima are in English to me, because the Metal Gear dubs were my first exposure so long ago as a kid before I figured stories could even be in other languages, sorry Adachi. There are emotional holes in my logic I'm aware of but also feel aren't really that major in the grand scale, I can live with them, adds a bit of texture to life.*

*- How do I feel about the dub though? I'll say, I'm glad it's there for the people who want or need it. If you're only taking it because of subtitles I hope you can accept a bit of mistaking, if you're the kind of genuinely proud lazy I respect you won't even care to defend yourself.*

## **YLAD NOTE - Ichiban and Kiryu differences**

Ichiban was made to be Kiryu's opposite in every way. Design, personality, and even origin.

### **DESIGN**

The design is easy enough. Kiryu's white suit atop a red shirt suggests a stoic and straightforward exterior which covers a passionate and fiery core.

Ichiban's flipped colour scheme screams of a loud, emotional sort with a pure heart underneath. It could also be taken as showing he's more clear and thoughtful on the inside than a surface read will give you. That even in his apparent insanity is a guy who sees the world much more clearly than he'd ever let on.

Kiryu's hair is straight and tidy, a reserved and no non-sense look for a serious man.

Ichiban's styled hair gets across that he's more exuberant and boyish and even a little more looks conscious.

Kiryu has very sharp, rugged features. The face of a thug, a common joke as the series goes on is him being mistaken for a brutish Yakuza because of his mean mug. It backs up that he's meant to be a tough guy.

Ichiban, at least in his early design had very gaunt features. He was more downtrodden and looked more conniving, while he is still capable of greater guile, this was changed to give him a softer look to emphasise his friendliness. Ironically these rounder features hide that he's sharper than he lets on.

- I think it speaks to the effect of character design. Ichiban's earlier design suggests a character who's more of a shady punk than Kiryu was and I think early on this was the idea for him going on concept art. It really goes to show the effect a design can have, when I imagine some of Ichiban's final scenes with this face the tone changes totally. Ichiban's winning smile goes from reassuring to oddly scheming.

### **PERSONALITY**

Kiryu is a heavily repressed, guilt stricken man who tries to carry everyone else's burdens because he believes he's mistaken himself for one. A lifetime of survivor's guilt has made him an easily manipulated loner. He has a lot of love in his heart he keeps a very tight leash on.

Ichiban is very outwardly friendly, far more expressive, and willing to accept help from others. Emotionally healthier and definitely more of a people person. A lot smarter than he'd ever give himself credit and a lot more than he lets on for sure.

Both are heroic and want to believe the best in people.

Kiryu is an almost inhumanly talented fighter. Ichiban is while a tough nut, not especially noteworthy. But we'll cross the combat bridge when we come to it (cross bridge, get bat, talk about combat)

Kiryu spent a majority of his life pursuing his image of an ideal yakuza informed by Shintaro Kazama, and even after moving past it still has a lot of lingering respect for the man and will always see himself as a Yakuza. Ichiban has two father figures, one civilian, one yakuza, and a lot more self-determination from an early age. In fact the moment Ichiban is out of the Yakuza is the moment he begins to thrive. Both Kiryu and Ichiban's self-images create conflict with Yakuza for wildly different reasons, yet both are too good for the Yakuza.

The series has flip-flopped on this here and there. But while Kiryu had come to loathe Kamurocho Ichiban still has love for the place.

Kiryu's tattoo is the Dragon, he was destined to be somebody from the start. No matter how much he tries to fight it, he is the Dragon. No matter how much he tries to determine what the Dragon really means, he is THE dragon.

Ichiban's tattoo is the Ryuugyo, a dragon fish. A koi passing through the gate and becoming a Dragon. But Ichiban has chosen to be represented perpetually by this inbetween state. Kiryu is stubborn and resistant to change, even having to learn the same lesson to open up and depend on people multiple times. Ichiban meanwhile lives a life of constant transformation and changes as he must.

Ichiban will ever only be like a dragon, never the dragon itself, but he's arguably something even greater, a man capable of change.

## ORIGIN

- The whole intro is yet again, a loan collection. Kiryu's origin was direct and professional.

Demonstrating the respect he's owed in short order as he carries out the job with minimal fuss.

Ichiban's is a harebrained scheme to try and get the best outcome for all involved, even bold facedly rejecting opportunities for greater profit and putting his own bonus on the line in the hopes he can make everybody happy. This backfires spectacularly and gets him into trouble, only saved because his boss looks out for him.

While Ichiban is well liked around town, he's more of a local character than a local legend. The city looks up to Kiryu, meanwhile it tries to look out for Ichiban.

We're introduced to Kiryu as The Dragon of Dojima. He was a rising star from a once prominent family. Ichiban is the fall guy for a third-tier subsidiary. Kiryu's sacrifice is a solemn act done out of love. Ichiban is happy to throw his life away for a guy who by this point in the story, appears to hate his guts.

- Kiryu has a complicated relationship with his father figure, Tojo legend Shintaro Kazama, a cold hearted killer and clever manipulator who on some level does earnestly care for his orphans. And on another is ready and willing to use them if needs must. Kasuga has three such figures. Jiro Kasuga, the owner of Shangri-la who took him in. Masumi Arakawa, a less legendary Yakuza, and Dragon Quest. Kiryu at first tried to emulate and then broke away from his own ill informed image of Kazama first to be his own form of Yakuza then to try and figure out the life Kazama would rather he had. Ichiban's life philosophy is a much more self determined blend of the three.

- It's noteworthy as well that Ichiban has far more civilian ties than Kiryu ever had, belonging more to both worlds than Kiryu ever did. This is what makes Ichiban a bad Yakuza. He's too outwardly kind, too uncaring of being seen as a tough guy at all times.

- And well, in terms of length they're also different. This is less a character note and more a sign of genre and times. Yakuza 1 was a big game for the time, by the series current standards it's absolutely quaint.

It's emulating crime genre tropes with the pacing of a novelist steering the ship. Establishing a complex web of character relationships which are bulked out and easily understood by genre convention as concisely as possible.

Now this is a crime JRPG and the pacing cues are more akin to establishing the Heroes doomed hometown.

Trying to make us fall in love with, or at least understand why its destruction would motivate the hero on his journey. Taking these genre tropes and giving them a Yakuza spin.

"Ichiban feels indebted to Arakawa, and so naturally we join him on a collection."

### **YLAD NOTE - Job Thoughts**

I've been trying to vary up jobs but I'm struggling to see much point. Most of the base jobs do what you need. Ichiban's Hero job is an incredibly strong mix of offense, support, and buffs. You can throw Nanba into any magic or elemental based role and he'll do fine meanwhile you can argue that Saeko and Adachi suffer because they have their base jobs and then not long after you get access to what is essentially their base job but better, call that a promotion.

The game isn't demanding or tactical enough to make Job switching anything but an opt in for funsies thing. Even those better base jobs are really just optimising or taking time out of your day to make combat go faster.

Some jobs have bespoke systems or set ups that seem interesting but the games relatively flatness doesn't make these ideas have much payoff. The musicians voltage system lets him get stronger over the course of a battle. The Breaker is focused on attacks with self buffing properties so you can get two things done at once. But nothing is pronounced enough to matter and you can just muddle through. Why pick a class that takes time to be good when all of them are great?

Besides in the time I'd spend grinding up class jobs my base level would rise to the point that all this grinding seems senseless anyway since I'm always powerful enough to get by.

I don't know man, I feel out of my element here (hit elemental resistance). Who am I to judge what's fun or functional in this genre when I can't pretend I'm its target audience. I'm an outside observer on this one.

### **YLAD NOTE - Majima fight joke**

This battle is a life changing moment, and by that I mean it's the first time in the game your life will change to 0. On my first playthrough this marked the one and only time I had a game over.

### **YLAD NOTE - Nice way of putting the theme (the whereabouts of light and dark and hypocrisy)**

- It's an apparent contradiction this series has trafficked (trafficking clip) in for a long time made the core focus. The heroic criminal and the corrupt cop. The sleazebag who oozes kindness versus the composed conniver, who only appears strait-laced to string you up.

### **YLAD NOTE - Romance Substories**

- Romance Substories are technically available quite early in the game but they're a rather stringent mix of requirements. For one you have to shower each girl in their preferred flora to make them faun over you. This requires a ton of gardening or a rather expensive trip to the give up trucks. Then each girl has a maximum personality requirement. Ichiban has to be well rounded if he wants to six time his way through town.

Then each girl also has a side activity requirement. Saeko is the climax for Drink Links. Eri is for topping the business world, Sumire Romance is tied to the Romance Workshop. Miyakoshi is a sapiosexual. Iroha hears about our escapades and wants some action of her own. Ririka makes you put the work in, shuffling between each job at least once, which again takes personality requirements. This game makes you put the effort in if you want to see Ichiban get sexually assaulted several times. You've got to maximise your Persona if you want a joke that's just about cliché enough for said series.

These chicks are closer to completion checks and unlike previous games I don't think there is a capstone to clearing all substories. That's reserved for optional dungeons which I cannot pretend to be interested in. Our reward here at least is Kashiwagi lore... Sort of, I mean I'll take it.

## **YLAD NOTE - Steam art has Ichiban's face half in darkness**

### **YLAD NOTE - Wait to talk about combat joke**

"and... Nope! Combat has to wait its turn."

### **YLAD COMBAT NOTE – Downed Attacks**

It's funny to think that you can get off more chained down attacks than in the brawlers.

### **YLAD COMBAT TOPIC – Imaginative Enemy Roster**

#### **YLAD Character thought – Nanba's Return**

- Perhaps part of why Nanba returned, beyond being simply swayed by Ichiban's word and feeling his friendship was genuine was Ichiban talking about how he thought of Masato as a brother. This battle is personal to him. While Nanba never cared about Ijincho before and was merely here on family business. When Ichiban revealed that his brother is involved. Nanba feels that it's only right that since Ichiban helped him find his brother, he has to in turn help Ichiban resolve his problem.

That's likely only a small part of Nanba's return which I feel is better predicated on good old fashioned redemption and bonds.

#### **Dragon Quest Note**

Decided to play a bit of Dragon Quest so I can see the game that captured Ichiban's imagination. I've not beaten it and as should be obvious by now I'm not a JRPG guy so I can't really offer some super deep thoughts on it but I will say I actually quite enjoyed what I played.

The simplicity is charming and the combat is delightfully moreish. The thing that took me most however was how in lacking certain conveniences and handholds that the genre figured out over time it actually pronounces the "adventure" aspect of the game in a really strong way.

You can't see monster health bars. Your spells don't have their MP or effects readily listed. You can't tell how much of an upgrade equipment is until you buy it, see the numbers, and then see what those mean in combat. This leads to a game where I have to actually feel out monsters, remember roughly how much it takes to slay them and in turn get an idea of how dangerous they are, figured out over multiple encounters. They can surprise you and it meant it was on me to remember what each foe *is capable of*. Putting the responsibility of this on the player, to learn and apply that knowledge rather than supplying it for them makes the world feel more tactile, makes me have to grant it weight.

Meanwhile healing points are spread out and saving is quite restrictive. Each excursion therefore has a journey like quality that later conveniences would really undercut. The greatest danger is not any one monster, it's me overextending, the thought I could be doomed several battles before I even realise it. That gives Dragon Quest a compelling and addictive loop, as with each run my confidence grows and I can hold out just a little bit longer and make it a little bit further in the wilderness. The vague directions the plot offers, leaving it to me to follow deepen this sensation.

I went into the first dungeon expecting an experience bonanza, instead I found directions, something I hadn't even really realised I didn't have yet. I assumed I'd get it in more grandiose fashion.

To bring it back to the present however. I now realise how this game captured Ichiban's very active imagination because it was very quickly doing the same to me. The mix of leaving a lot of responsibility now taken by the game on the player, and the abstract graphics and world led to me

mentally filling in details in a way similar to those aforementioned responsibilities. It's a game you have to meet halfway. The problem with a lot of more advanced RPGs is that lack of trust.

- This could come up during the substory travelling talk, how I kinda wish that YLAD could more often capture this feeling of venturing out. The Quest to the Corner Shop doesn't sound like a thrilling tale, but in this instance, it really was. More than the Nancy quest itself which was already funny, this was the highlight to me, this was the fantasy formula applied to the modern day setting of Yakuza, me using my imagination in a way that made me get more out of the game than it could provide on a raw mechanical level.

### **Call-back characters (part of Referential)**

- I don't totally hate callbacks. A good few games ago I mentioned how part of what I enjoy about Yakuza is how it brought back bit characters. I liked checking in with them and seeing what would be done with them next.

- I don't like the return of the Gondowara family but I do quite like il-yu-jin. And that's because Il-Yu-Jin's substory is an advancement of the character. It feels like a believable part of the world while giving his character and the player something a little bit new to do. Part of the theme of this game is starting over from rock bottom so it's even thematically a perfect thing to do with him, and given the timescale in universe feels like the kind of place an ageing movie star may wind up.

- What I don't like is bringing back a one note joke just to tell it again. I hate to say I'm at the point of tiring a little with Fighter, I'm with the crowd who dislike the Oba-Chan, though I'll cut her some slack for being useful back in the and her 80s. I genuinely wonder if people in Japan really like the Oba-Chan or else no one does and someone at RGG finds it really funny.

- Regardless, the Gondowaras returning, unchanged from 2006, I just find really depressing. It undercuts the ending of the original substory, it's the same joke, and more annoyingly, it interrupts a substory which felt like it was heading in a really interesting direction. Get swerved bitch! You'll find no novelty in here!

- So yeah, I'm not against fan service or returning characters in general. Look this is a series where asset reuse is one of its virtues, but it gets away with it by using old materials in new combinations. But jokes aren't assets, if you think you can just plonk them in again with no new twist or subversion you're just gonna make people start resenting any and all returning elements, even though it's not a blanket issue.

### **Missing Cultural Context**

*Taken out of the early behind the scenes segment about missing cultural queues, probably best left for afterthoughts*

An aside, but these last three points, the onnagata, the untranslated stage name, and the fact this is *not* Kabuki are obviously three major things that passed me by because I lacked the background to get them. Even having done research, I still wasn't brought up in a culture where they'll hold the same meaning. There's always going to be missed context when something is from outside our own cultural sphere. While I can try to bridge the gap with research, at times you don't even know you should be looking things up.

All reviewers are looking at games through their own lens, their own experience. I try to be self aware enough to know what I don't know and consider that being from a very different place, I may not have the expectations and experiences to grasp certain subtleties which do a lot for the story. All critique will be in this way inescapably unfair to some extent, all you can do is try as best you can to meet the game halfway, to not immediately assume your misunderstanding is the games problem.

## YLAD Resource/Interview Notes

### Yakuza's Lead Writer on how Like a Dragon Reinvents the Series

Link: <https://www.theverge.com/22321087/yakuza-like-a-dragon-story-interview-masayoshi-yokoyama>

Date: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Ichiban Kasuga's Origins

- Yokoyama explains that he's been in charge of "character settings" (personalities, speech mannerisms, backbone of their "action principles") for the main characters since the first game.
- Ichiban was originally designed for Ryu Ga Gotoku Online.
- Having just wrapped up Yakuza 6 they were ideating a new protagonist, and it's with Ichiban they decided to take apart the indestructible hero image and create a more relatable "Real-World Hero."
  
- Kiryu's personality is born from the kind of characters who appear in "Ninkyō" movies. Vintage Japanese gangster flicks where qualities like stoicism and self sacrifice are heavily prized. Kiryu is an archetypical hero, one you're meant to idolise.
- Kasuga isn't meant to be "admired" but "relatable." He's someone you'd want to cheer for and fight alongside. As Ichiban was initially being made for RGGO where battles are card based and feature multiple units, with people building decks with their friends to set against enemies. Yokoyama found himself wanting to depict the strength of a leader instead of an individual.
  
- So Ichiban was drawn out of the deck of cards, going from gacha to headlining the next mainline game.

#### Ichiban and Kiryu Similarities

- Yokoyama explains that their origins are more or less exactly the same, the extreme difference in personality is what gives the plotline a totally different feel. Yokoyama points this out by saying that while Kiryu gets out of jail down the line and immediately beelines for Kazama. Ichiban takes the time to go get a haircut. They follow the same path but differ in their portrayal
- *Some general beats are exactly the same as Yakuza 1 only with different people taking the same roles.*
  
- Yokoyama only set out to write the story after fleshing out Ichiban as a human being. At times surprising himself at how different the characters acted within very similar circumstances.

#### Turn Order: What Came First? Ichiban or RPG

- The shift to RPG came first, and Ichiban being made an RPG obsessive came after.
  
- As part of making a "relatable hero", and the party based system worked in the designs favour and would make Ichiban's story interesting. It wouldn't work for Kiryu "Who fights with only his own power." Power corrupts it seems. **(joke/observation)**
  
- The RPG Obsessive nature also cleanly answered questions like how to make ichiban relate to his job class as well as the logic behind how the battles are depicted in game. **(character)**

#### Compartmental Design

- In a question about how personalities are expressed through combat moves. Yokohama instead mentions how there isn't a clear distinction between the writing and game design teams. There's a lot of departmental overlap at each stage which could be a big part of why the games feel so cohesive and whole. **(observation/design)**

### Was Writing for a whole Party Hard?

- Yokoyama's answer is an odd one. Mentioning how having fleshed out side characters in 0 before meant he didn't struggle to flesh out a wide cast. It's odd when the hero has had companions before in a similar manner. The crew in 6, the multiple protags of 4 and 5, even as early as 1, 2, and 3, Kiryu has always been a central figure in a lot of other characters lives. Their lives and motivations driving him as much as anything else. **(writing/observation)**

### Character Questions

- From here it becomes a series of quickfire-ish character questions which each illustrate different points. Yokoyama realised the importance of Arakawa early, the game is meant to "Depict the life of this man."

- When it was decided the Jingweon would turn up, it just felt natural that Joon-Gi had to be there, and his double just felt like something they would do. Hey when you got a popular character sometimes you have to double down. Even if it wasn't the double who bit the bullet. **(joke/bad joke)**

- When the core theme was decided. Yokoyama felt it'd be impossible not to have him turn up... Which feels like quite a shallow answer but whatever.

- As for Goro, the point is made that Majima feels detached from his past. Yokoyama says this past is of little import to Ichiban. "This game is unwaveringly seen from Ichiban Kasuga's perspective, so we got rid of any information or connections that Kasuga has no need of knowing." It's pragmatic I suppose, for new players without disserving the old.

### Dengeki Online's Ryu Ga Gotoku 7 Release Day Article

Link: <https://dojimasdragongirl.wordpress.com/2020/04/13/ryu-ga-gotoku-7-release-day-interview/>  
(Translated by Dojima's Dragon Girl) Date: January 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 (release date)

- Interview with Series Chief Producer Masayoshi Yokoyama. Game Director Ryosuke Horii, and Producer Hiriyoyuki Sakamoto

- Focus of discussions were not about whether to continue the numbered series, but about moving on from Kiryu Kazuma.

- By the time they'd announced Ichiban as part of the Shin Ryu Ga Gotoku project they'd already known him for a long time, but were aware people may be resistant to him. They did however think it'd be a good time to grab old players who drifted from the series, and questioned what kind of character may do that.

- Unlike Judgment (which was in dev at the same time as RGG7 but publically announced and released quickly, knowing Kimura's a strong draw) RGG7 was announced early, it was a slow burn which allowed people to get used to the idea of Ichiban. To become familiar with him in a way before the game came out. **(character/development)**

### Genre Switch

The switch to RPG was decided once they settled on the outline for the story. They had multiple reasons. "a system that gives you a sense of accomplishment through fighting to get over obstacles", "something that everyone can clear eventually", "something with a new and fun approach technically"

But the largest one was because of the nature of the ensemble cast, "you absolutely had to be able to fight as a group."

While I disagree with Yokoyama's assessment it lets me get "more immersed" in the story I won't argue that it's a bad fit for this story, it's honestly perfect. **(observation)**

- personal note: In a way the battles in Yakuza have always been fantastical. This has been a series where we've been able to throw a guy off a roof only for him to be right there when a cutscene played. We've primed ourselves to accept a degree of separation between the gameplay and how

things play out. Ichiban's overactive imagination just codifies what we've been doing all along.

### **(observation/gameplay)**

- Another personal (story) note: The switch absolutely aids what the story is going for and I think it actually aids the game in its underlying optimism, especially after how bleak 6 could feel. 7 is a game with dark subject matter but a hopeful message. This is a game about starting over from rock bottom, IE. Level 0, but it's also about facing the cruelty of society. The two-faced nature of the world and how powerful figures will turn the people below against each other to embolden themselves. The JRPG battle system gives a sense that the more you face society the stronger and more equipped to handle it you'll grow. It's a growth distinct from Yakuza's older systems That's what it means for Ichiban to develop as a hero. **(observation/theme/levelling)**

- The team returned to the marketing ethos they had with the very first RGG. Yokoyama said their pitch back then was it was a game for people who'd lost interest in games and 15 years on it's the same rallying cry. Give people who've fallen out of love with games something novel and good to spark the interest anew.

- This goes hand in hand with a feeling they hit a design wall around the time of Fist of the North Star: Lost Paradise. The only thing Yokoyama felt they could do to expand the gameplay was "making your fingers more and more tired." They wanted something anyone could clear that would still offer a sense of accomplishment and "feeling strong." **(design/gameplay)**

### The Whereabout of the Games Subtitle

- The subtitle "Between Light and Dark" (also translated as "The Whereabouts of Light and Darkness") was decided at the last minute by Nagoshi as he was going in for heart surgery. The title gave them everything they wanted. It felt fantastical and perfectly illustrated the theme. It built on the first chapters subtitle "Light and Dark" and a line in the trailer. "You and I are like light and shadow". It brought out the meaning very well.

### Kiryu and the Straightforward Story

- Kiryu's reveal was a big response. The team felt this was an appeal to old players, that this would make it a "proper" RGG game. The struggle is conveying that to people outside that fan group.

- The interviewer mentions they felt the story was a very straightforward, easy to follow plot. Yokoyama said that the change in protagonist is a huge benefit, allowing it to be a completely new thing. Ichiban's charisma and the fact he wears his heart on his sleeve also helps since he's very direct, open, and honest.

- The writing was a lot more all hands on deck. With scenes written by different people. (Nagoshi in particular loved writing Saeko's dialogue). With everyone on board there was a lot more oversight, people able to push scenes in certain directions and focus on polishing details.

- Unlike Dragon Quest which had villages, they just had Ijincho, but they had to treat it like that. Questioning when areas should open up. As the game progresses the focus changes and that same feeling of adventuring is captured. **(observation)**

### Yokohama Quality

The story and Yokohama were at times in conflict. Sometimes Yokohama's "quality" had to take a hit for the sake of the story and vice versa. They also wanted each area of Yokohama to feel distinctive, like its own village. **(world)**

- *It reminds me a lot of Ryukyu from 3 and a Onomichi. The town has a more diverse, sectioned out design only expanded. With each area having its own distinct personality.* **(observation/world)**

- They go on to discuss how difficult it was to get the story moving. How to get the player involved with the Ijin three, in what order the factions should be met. How the police get involved. All the ingredients of the story were decided early on but the mix took a year to iron out while also hammering in the RPG rules.

### Old Dragons with New Tricks

- They talk about RPG homages and the Sujimon professor, and this gets them talking about design styles. Yokoyama says that the RPG genre has existed for a long time. That's not the same as saying it's old. But that it has lasted so long because it is a great system.

He says even now people play rock paper scissors (jankenpon), and rock paper scissors is a system still used in a lot of games. He says there are those who look down on using an old system like that. But he respects people who can make up to date ways of keeping it fun, and feels that's part of their job.

He goes on to say that even from the first game they were not doing anything new technically, but refreshing old gameplay systems with new additions like Yakuza stories and an adult nightlife setting. This is what they've always done, and RGG7 is no different. But he never expected to make a Sujimon Encyclopaedia. **(design)**

- Personal note: This is a really interesting explanation. Yakuza has always been an amalgamation of many game types. A minigame collection mostly based on pre-existing games and putting spins on those games. I think mentioning that they bolstered old systems through the story and town wandering is a point of how Yakuza has always been about the whole.

- You can play cards in a web browser, you can brawl in any number of games, but only in Yakuza are you playing cards to win enough money for a new weapon. Or brawling to get to the massage parlour. It's not about the experience by itself but about everything it connects to.

### Rise up, not Ryzap / Yokohama's unreality

- They didn't want to sugar-coat their depiction of slumtowns while still being respectful to reality. As such they were far less concerned with real world tie-ins than in previous games. Deciding that what they wanted to do was more important. They had to revise Bleach Japan a good amount however and the intention was never offence. Knowing this was a worldwide release they wanted to be realistic and profound, but they felt the effort would be wasted if people were offended.

### **(story/theme/world)**

- This also meant Yokohama is more fantastical in nature. They took a break from their utterly faithful recreation approach they'd taken up until 6. Yokohama was chosen due to its proximity to Tokyo ("If it was too far from Kamurocho, Kasuga would have been dead by the time he got there.") It was initially going to be Kamata, as it has been Sega's favourite drinking spot for over 20 years, but it lacks landmarks.

- Then Yokoyama remembered living in the Hinodecho area of Yokohama. And settled on Hinodecho, Sakuragicho, and Isezakicho. It still had "small shady restaraunts." at the time. His apartment was near Ichiban Seika so that went in the game too.

- Yokohama is a town of contrast with clear differences between rich and poor ("light and dark"). He mentions the beautiful night view of the harbour symbolising the rich, and then you have the poor who can't go there. Yokohama has many "different faces"

- The difference in light and scale of the buildings also set it apart from Kamurocho, making returning there feel like returning to the big city.

- They spread the restaurants out, treating them like Inns in an RPG. You have to pick your base carefully when levelling.
- They wanted a sense of caution when travelling, that you have to be ready for anything which sadly I'm perhaps a bit too comfortable with the game to feel. You have to be pretty purposefully overstretching to get into the feeling that Ijincho is a big scary city.

### Ichiban and Actors

- They talk about how Nakaya would come and watch motion capture actor Masanori Mimoto's sessions to study them. Take notes. Using this and his theatre experience to match Mimoto and give a strong, believable performance.
- They wanted a strong feeling of bond between the characters without resorting to "cool" or "cliched" lines, they wanted to sell it through more natural means and felt they succeeded.
- Yokoyama notes how the scene of Ichiban inviting Saeko to come drink with Nanba, Adachi and him always made him cry. Must be something to that scene he sees that I'm not equipped to.  
**(observation/writing)**

- Horii notes how Ichiban being so direct rubs off on the people around him. Allowing characters to be more direct, and it makes their conversation feel less scripted. "It feels like natural unfiltered conversation. And I think the more human the characters appear, the closer you feel to them."  
**(writing/character)**

- They talk about fleshing out the characters. How it was a struggle with Kiryu to include him in "fun conversation" with more than just him and someone else. Because he acted alone most times you'd get him to converse with a group would be a story event and thus, more serious. Here fun, rambling conversations can happen more naturally, and more laid back moments are threaded into the story, giving the characters a more human element. **(writing)**

### **Exclusive Interview with Yakuza: Like a Dragon's Masayoshi Yokoyama and Hiroyuki Sakamoto**

Link: <https://news.xbox.com/en-us/2020/11/18/exclusive-interview-with-masayoshi-yokoyama-and-hiroyuki-sakamoto/>

Date: November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

- Once again notes (from Yokoyama) that the change from RPG to action is in part due to the change in heroes. An ensemble story like this is better expressed through the RPG genre.
- In Japan, this change was not received positively ("90% red thumbs!") they said that as they communicated the content of the game, opinion softened, and on release was celebrated. "As a creator that was the most satisfying moment! I managed to prove that my game was good."
- Interesting note, mentioning that the initial reaction to the genre shift was taken very badly in Japan. With 90% red thumbs according to Yokoyama, and he felt the most satisfying moment was seeing everyone turn around come release day.
- An odder note (contradicting what is said in other interviews): Was them never setting out to specifically denounce social problems of real Japan or trying to be provocative. I can believe they weren't trying to be provocateurs, but how do you in one interview say the story is about the hypocrisy of Japanese Society and in another say that actually it was just scenarist writing?  
**(observation/theme)**

## **Chief producer and writer Masayoshi Yokoyama from RGG Studio answered our questions about creating Yakuza stories, Kasuga Ichiban, and the future of the franchise.**

Link: <https://www.gamespot.com/articles/yakuza-like-a-dragon-dev-explains-creating-a-new-hero-and-whats-next/1100-6489092/>

Date: March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

- Yokoyama states he was not intimidated writing a new protagonist or ensemble, having experience from earlier in the series doing such.
- Ichiban was originally developed for Ryu Ga Gotoku Online, this not only gave Japanese fans a year to get familiar with Ichiban Kasuga, but the team for Like a Dragon 7. **(story/character)**
- Ichiban was intended to be the opposite to the “flawless” Kiryu
- “Our mission after Yakuza 6 was not to “Create the next Yakuza title.” but to “create the next protagonist”
- Describes Ichiban as a “Life Sized hero”. Stating Kiryu is the modern version of a traditional Japanese hero. A man in the image of the Samurai who is stoic and acts alone. A character typical of the Ninkyō movies which inspired the original Yakuza.
- Ichiban was meant to be a hero we could relate to. Kiryu we’re meant to look up to from a distance, we’re meant to share in Ichiban’s story. He’s an adult who isn’t mature, and a hero who isn’t larger than life. Yokoyama describes Ichiban himself as the catalyst for change within the series. **(theme/character)**
- *Making his Ryuugyo tattoo all the more appropriate*

## **Yakuza 7 - April Fools 2019 Trailer**

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noioqCv92hM>

Date: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019

- Shows a hyper dynamic and heavily choreographed mock battle. Led to a popular (and still repeated, especially in the comments) rumour that the entire game was overhauled

## **Like A Dragon’s Localisation Team On Adapting Humour, The Name Change, And The Translation Vs Localisation Debate**

Link: <https://www.thegamer.com/like-a-dragon-yakuza-localisation-team-interview-adapting-humour-name-change-translation-vs-localisation-debate/>

Date: March 24, 2024 (this is primarily an IW interview)

- Three reasons for name change: “Reflect the developers renewed commitment to bringing their games to a global audience.”
- We’re rarely playing as an actual member of the Yakuza (anymore), and spinoffs don’t feature the Yakuza at all
- Gamers were mistaking Yakuza for a GTA like, nowadays with Japanese proliferation being more commonplace Like a Dragon as a title is both more accurate and less likely to turn someone away.

## **Toshihiro Nagoshi interview in Weekly Famitsu September 2017 – English translation**

Link: <https://dojimasdragongirl.wordpress.com/2017/09/24/toshihiro-nagoshi-interview-in-weekly-famitsu-september-2017-english-translation/>

Date: September 2017

- Reflects an older version of Ichiban, meant as a Chinpira with a ‘name complex’, “You could say he was beaten by his name.” says Nagoshi.
- He was meant to grow up as the story went it sounds like.
- Ichiban has to be distinct from the well established Kiryu. He can’t tread on his toes and has to stand apart from him. “We wanted to make the new protagonist someone that would make people think, “Kiryu is great, but I like this guy too.””
- The three announced titles are meant to show “new development” each in a different direction

## **Ryosuke Horii Denfaminicogamers “New Generations” interview**

Link: <https://dojimasdragongirl.wordpress.com/2019/02/27/ryosuke-horii-ryu-ga-gotoku-studio-main-planner-and-yakuza-karaoke-inventor-long-interview-part-1/>

Date: August 2018 (translated version unknown)

- The two talk about minigames. Horii says that he feels attention spans are getting shorter, and the console games main competition is in mobile titles which can better cater to that.
  
- So he says console games need three things “Spectacle, challenges, and volume”
- In the past it wasn’t unusual to take one minigame-like idea and extend it to a full game, nowadays outside of indies that doesn’t happen so much.
- He says “There’s definitely a need to have a depth and breadth of many different experiences within one game.”
- “With apps, you can try it for a bit, be “ah, bored now, let’s do this,” and straight away try something else, but with a game you can’t switch off quickly, because it’s made on the assumption that you’ll continue for a certain amount of time, you’ve got a problem, that’s why there has to be a way of switching channels as it were, within the same game.”
  
- *Horii was the director for YLAD, having done a ton of roles within RGG and climbed the ladder to director. Making a name for himself on Karaoke and massively expanding the side content offerings. His feeling that big ticket releases have to compete with the mobile market on their terms is interesting and it’s probably not misguided. A lot of praise is heaped on Yakuza for its breadth of offerings, for its playspots. I like the big stories, but I think the side content works in Yakuza for its interconnectedness, how it bolsters main play, and its broader power of adding depth to the setting and excitement to the exploration.*

## YLAD CHAPTER VIDEO NOTES

### YLAD - CHAPTER 1 - Light & Shadow – Main Menu Notes

#### Pre-Menu

Once again, no install or intro movie. Splash screen with Ichiban's Ryuugyo to announce real Yakuza use a gamepad. This game features the End of the Yakuza, no more gamepads, gonna have to play KBM from here on out. **(joke)**

- Probably not worth mentioning at this point, fresh beginnings, all of these accoutrements are for the past. **(observation)**

00:00 Main menu. Since I've played the game it features Ichiban. Shirtless, stalking towards a distant city with a vortex above. Ichiban walks on burnt ground, bat in hand engulfed in blue flame. **(main menu/image)**

- Before this, the main menu features Ichiban's tattoo revealed in inky splotches, both cool images  
- The start screen track is called Darkness in Light while the menu track is Light in Darkness. It's a cool and immediate way to establish the themes of light and dark/duality. One sounds like a darker reprise of the other. Just like Ichiban will fall to rock bottom and climb back up, just by hitting start it already feels like the beginning of the descent. **(observation/music)**

- The way the menu morphs is clever. We go from just Ichiban's back tattoo, the ryuugyo, a promise of change. To after getting his bat and deciding to be a hero, his actual main menu. Where he creeps towards a distant city on a mission. **(menu/visuals/observation)**

- In this way we go from a promise of change and a smudgy, incomplete image of our character yet to be fully inked, to him changing and settling on his path. **(observation/theme)**

00:40 For supporting RGG studios we're given a gift, a legendary first aid kit!

- Thanks for the support, don't bleed out! **(joke)**

00:45 We get the disclaimer saying all names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are products of the authors imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Yeah yeah I'll see you at the Don Quixote. **(joke)**

- The Don Quixote was outlawed! The pop shop was turned into a cop shop! **(joke)**

00:40 Chapter 1: Light and Shadow

00:45 The game opens on a play. **(story)**

- A Taishu Engeki performance starring Masumi Arakawa. He's an Onnagata (or Oyama), a male actor who plays female roles.

- Taishu Engeki is "Theatre for the Masses." It's light entertainment similar to revues or musical theatre. The stories tend to be simple and not contain political themes or messages. It's funny that this opens one of the most political games in the franchise so far. **(story/observation)**

00:50 Masumi Arakawa, at age 14 is playing the leading role in what looks to be a pretty straightforward revenge tale. Avenging his father by defeating Ginji the The butcher of Edo and his goons. Mortally wounded, Masumi's character reveals they're the real Ginji and falls dead, asking their father if they were watching.

- The theatre erupts in applause, amazed by "Taro Arayoshi" Masumi's stage name. Clearly a rising star. **(story/observation)**

02:50 Playing dead, Masumi's father Toshio smiles at his son, proud of his performance.

03:00 The performers take their bows to great applause.

- Two lei's of money are placed around Masumi's neck by pleased watchers. The camera zooms into a poster featuring Taro Arayoshi front and centre.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Masumi’s Parents**

03:15 After the performance, backstage. **(story)**

- The props are being put away and Masumi Arakawa removes their wig and begins wiping away a thick layer of white makeup. **(character)**

03:35 Masumi is interrupted by their mother, Yoko Arakawa. Unlike the last one, this Yoko is a real Oh no.

03:50 Cutting to the chase, despite Masumi having just gotten off stage, Yoko demands to know if the confetti has been cut yet. With some hesitation Masumi says they haven’t yet. Only to be yelled at. **(story/character)**

- Yoko begins berating Masumi, accusing them of thinking they’re a star for filling a few seats.

Telling them the money they’ve made is pocket change before trying to pocket it for themselves.

- Masumi tries to hold on to their money, but Yoko snatches it away and threatens Masumi with scissors. “... Do you want a scar so deep, makeup won’t even cover it.” **(dialogue/character)**

04:40 Toshio arrives and tells Yoko that’s enough, drawing attention away from Masumi.

- Yoko asks if Toshi thinks he has any business giving her orders and that she keeps the show running. Yoshi has no come back. Yoko drops the scissors and turns (literally and metaphorically) to Tora, the man she is openly having an affair with right in front of her son and husband.

05:45 The two depart, and Toshio tries to cheer up Masumi, saying he’ll cut the confetti, as Masumi brushes away enough makeup to reveal the deep red mark across his cheek. **(story/character)**

- Yoshio offers to go take in the sights of Yokohama before they leave in the morning.

06:20 Toshio and Masumi wander through Yokohama’s Chinatown.

- Toshio asks if Masumi has said goodbye to his friends in Yokohama. Masumi replies that there’s no point making friends since they move every month. Having to deal with school on top of this sounds like bullshit. **(observation/story)**

07:00 The two stop outside Heian Tower, Toshio’s eye is drawn towards a big display of Peking Duck. “The King of Chinese food.”. Masumi frets over the price but Toshio says tonight is a special occasion. **(story)**

07:45 Inside Heian Tower Masumi is already digging into his food before the duck has arrived. Toshio gently tells him he’ll be full before the main course arrives.

- Masumi says he’ll use the restroom before it arrives and exits. A waiter pushes a cart towards their room, and Masumi smiles at the covered dish being wheeled in.

08:25 The bowl is lifted, revealing a pistol. We cut to activity across the restaurant, meals being prepped, dishes laid out, the pistol is fired, and Masumi hears the distant pop from the restroom. **(story)**

08:45 Masumi returns, finding an empty, abandoned cart, and his father slumped in his chair. He approaches the body, only discovering the head wound when he pushes his father back.

09:05 The camera pushes onto the scar on Masumi’s shocked face, before melting 31 years into the future. Masumi now sits in an Yakuza office, he’s now the grizzled Patriarch of the Arakawa family.

- His office is empty, it’s December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000, and all Masumi can think about is what’s for lunch.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Intro to Ichiban!**

09:55 He calls out to Ichi, but only Sawashiro (Captain of the Arakawa family) is present to answer, as he sorts money. He tells the boss he sent Ichiban out on collections. He's far less laid back than the boss.

- Sawashiro states that New Years and Obon aren't holidays in Kamurocho, if the streets don't sleep, neither does the money. **(story/character)**
- Masumi is clearly a little bored by the answer, and slumps in his chair.

10:20 Ten minutes in and our hero arrives, we cut to Ichiban Kasuga chasing Ushio down Nakamichi street. Ichiban yells at him to stop, to which Ushio flippantly replies "What, and let myself get caught by a cumstain like you?"

- This is a far less dignified beginning than we got with Kiryu. **(story/observation/dialogue)**
- Open immediately on opening contrasts and Ichiban differences.

10:40 The game opens on of all things... A chase, even getting a tutorial and following the Judgment model with Ichiban being bizarrely atheltic and agile. This mechanic will not appear again! Even in situations where it would work.

- An opening which seems ill-judged. **(joke)**

11:30 No matter what happens, Ushio seems to give Ichiban the slip, before Ichiban reappears from above, divebombing atop Ushio.

- This immediately tells us a few things. 1. Ichiban is tenacious and more quick thinking than he appears. He may not be the fastest or the strongest, but he has his wits. One of his greatest strengths is that he's unpredictable and easy to underestimate.
- 2. Ichiban does not give up, just when you think you've got him, that's when he'll surprise you.
- And 3. Ichiban knows Kamurocho like the back of his hand. **(character/observation)**

11:45 The situation does not get more respectable, as Ichiban, now atop Ushio gets to the meat of the matter. The uncensored porn (actually tapes of animals mating) that Ushio has been selling to kids under false pretenses. Ichiban is here to get back the money, as it was earned on Arakawa turf. **(politics/story)**

- Ushio tries to usher that aside and slip out from under Ichiban's debt collection, when that fails he socks Ichiban one (with brass knuckles!) and a fight ensues! **(story)**

12:55 Ichiban, annoyed at the sucker punch demands to know if Ushio knows who he is messing with. Ushio retorts that he should be asking that, calling Ichiban a shit-tier thug. **(story/character/world)**

13:10 There is usually a small combat tutorial here, but combat can wait its turn. **(joke/observation)**

- Ichiban batters Ushio

13:35 With Ushio floored Ichiban gets his character card.

- He is just "Of the Arakawa Family, a Tojo Clan Subsidiary." (Compare to Kiryu who was in his intro a "Lieutenant Advisor of the Dojima Family" Ichiban doesn't even have a rank, he's a grunt.) **(story/character)**
- Mitsuo comes running in, worried for Ichiban.

13:55 Ichiban reveals the money and Matsuo is pleased as punch until Ichiban reveals he's going to have him track down and return the money to all the disappointed kids. Mitsuo is incredulous, but Ichiban forces the money, and the mission, into Mitsuo's hands. Those kids have been jerked around enough, and not in the way they wanted! **(joke/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Ichiban's Collections Continue**

14:25 This moment reveals another thing about Ichiban. Which is that he tries to live a life of fairness, a life that's out of step with the the life of a Yakuza, and of its former combat system. **(joke/wordplay)**

14:40 Ichiban has Mitsuo check his injuries. Annoyed that the wound has messed up his fresh haircut. **(comedy/moment)**

15:00 Cutscene mode switches from pre-rendered to in-engine as Mitsuo and Ichiban talk about how Ichiban lets his opponents get hits in and how Ichiban sees the world as sort of like Dragon Quest, with him trying to be the hero.

- Ichiban denies being a msochist, saying he's just doing what a hero would do as he shows off a fighting stance. **(story)**

16:00 Ichiban explains to a confused Matsuo that he pretends he's a hero as he fights, and thinks of everything in Dragon Quest terms. Matsuo asks if the game is all that and Ichiban enthusiastically says it rules.

- Matsuo tiredly asks if Ichiban realises he's a yakuza, not a hero. Pointing out how cutthroat their world is. Which Ichiban sidesteps. **(dialogue/story/character)**

16:50 This gets Ichiban to talking about how he likes his life with the Arakawa, even Matsuo! He says he never wants to find himself at rock bottom again. **(story/character)**

- Matsuo asks if by rock bottom he means when he was cooped up in a soapland playing dragon quest which sounds pretty banging all things considered. **(joke/story)**

- Ichiban enthusiastically says the game made him who he is today. Arakawa filled in the gaps, but through Dragon Quest he was raised on a Hero's Bravery **(story/character)**

- *I'd like to call this hokey, because it kind of is, but I've said before that at times this very series has had me thinking on how I could apply what I'd learned from it to my own life, and Ichiban will go on later in the games to inspire that feeling in ways Kiryu and his stories could not. So I don't get to judge.* **(observation/post-note)**

- And with that Matsuo is swayed, he says he should try Dragon Quest. (after jail I should ask if he's played Dragon Quest yet or have you dragged your feet on that?) **(joke/observation)**

- Ichiban says to get to it after he returns the money to the kids who got scammed. **(story)**

18:00 After Matsuo leaves Ichiban is approached by Old Man Takeo, saying Mama Michiyo is looking for him. Telling him to swing by the bar. No clue what she wants but Ichiban is off to see her, hoping she isn't in trouble.

19:20 Arriving at Michiyo's bar in the Champion District. She and Ichiban's time are wasted. **(joke/wordplay)**

- Michiyo wanted to drink and figured he'd be the only guy available on a holiday. Ichiban yells that he's on collections, Michiyo is unimpressed.

- Ichiban calls her an old lush and she says she's been drinking before Ichiban was even a thought. Which really goes to prove his point. She collapses and we get out first choice!

**(gameplay/mechanic/personality)**

- At times we get choices, these mostly do not have success or failure states, instead each choice adds to a personality type. This opening has an opportunity to boost kindness or passion.

**(personality/gameplay/mechanic)**

20:20 Pick the kind option, and Ichiban says if she keeps going this way her liver will not be beautiful. Through the cloud of drink Michiyo apologises, and thanks Ichiban for caring.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Ichiban and the City

21:00 Takeo returns. Ichiban complains that Michiyo was drunk, Takeo asks what he expected, and says that there's trouble at Shangri-La, which gets Ichiban running, clearly concerned.

21:50 As it turns out, it's just a backed up toilet and a lack of a shitter (Soaplandaise for Plunger) - Ichiban angrily yells about being used as a handman to an unimpressed attendant, saying he cleaned up Ichiban when he used to shit himself. So I guess this is just returning the favour.

**(story/observation)**

- Ichiban tries to argue his way out of doing this but has to throw in the towel, he's off to get a plunger. **(objective)**

- With this we see that while Ichiban is brash and crude, he's also too nice for his own good, all in a day for a hero. **(observation/character)**

23:00 The heroics continue as Ichiban saves a guy from three thugs trying to rob him, and warns the man to be careful in Kamurocho on days like this.

- Matsuo asks how Ichiban reconciles acting the hero while being a Yakuza, he doesn't answer directly because he shows us. Sawashiro does not reward his efforts. No levelling up cause Sawashiro isn't on the level. **(joke/wordplay/observation)**

25:15 At the cigarette shop. Ichiban asks the lady running the stall to run a plunger over to Shangri-La. She protests that Ichiban should just buy them one. He's old enough that he should be sending money home. Thing is, Ichiban is broke.

- This game is the story of how Ichiban went from broke to broken. **(story/observation/joke)**

- The cig store lady tells Ichiban that he should dump the Arakawa and join a clan with some real push. "Even the bottom of the ladder is better than the gutter."

- Ichiban calls her an idiot and says his loyalty is with Arakawa. **(character/story)**

- This makes the old lady laugh and call Ichiban as loyal as a dog. Again showing that despite Ichiban acting gruff and easily slighted, they do trust him to not fly off the handle. They can toy with him and it's clear they have a lot of love for the kid. **(character/observation)**

26:30 Cig Lady brings up Ichiban babysitting Arakawa's kid. Ichiban corrects her, saying the *Young Master* is the same age as him. The lady spits at Ichiban calling him the Young Master. "What is this, a period drama." On a long enough timeline, sorta. **(joke/observation)**

- The old lady clearly isn't fond of Arakawa, or how he's treating his son, or Ichiban.

27:05 Matsuo turns up having just finished doing his returns on what was meant to be his collections. **(joke/observation)**

- Luckily there's another chance to make their quota, as the Arakawa bought a debt from another family having trouble with him. "Nice! Then the Arakawa Family's honor is riding on us!" says Ichi, oh no. **(character/observation)**

- Matsuo tells that Sawashiro said we're free to do whatever they've gotta do. **(character)**

28:35 At Park Number 3 we find our target, a giant construction worker, Hiratsuka. Ichiban knows him from school. Matsuo lays the threats on thick until Hiratsuka stands, towering over him.

- This is when Ichiban steps in, a lot more playfully. Hiratsuka takes a moment to remember "Soapy Ichiban." What a nickname. **(character//story/observation)**

- He laughs, unsurprised Ichiban wound up with the Yakuza. Ichiban bites back that Hiratsuka crawled back after failing to join the JSDF "Life's a bitch, huh?"

- Ichiban says his orders are to get his "wallet". Well he invented that for this little charade. He reaches for Hiratsuka's pocket who naturally recoils.

- Ichi tries to talk this one out, but fails, it's a fight. Ichi tells Matsuo to stay out. Not his turn. **(joke)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Another Failed Collection**

31:50 Ichiban defeats Hiratsuka, saying the wallet goes with him. Hiratsuka begs as Ichiban looks in the full wallet. Matsuo starts berating Hiratsuka for holding out, then Ichiban dumps all his cash on the ground. Announcing that he got the wallet, as stated.

- Matsuo demands to know what Ichiban is doing. Ichiban, acting coy says the wallet was full of junk. The implication is clear. They leave a confused Hiratsuka with his money, just down a wallet.

33:00 Mitsuo asks a proud Ichiban what he's doing, and it's here Ichiban lays out that he knows the guy is good for the money. He just needs time. Saying the guy is working on new years and smoking butts off the ground. He's putting money away to pay the debt off.

- Mitsuo argues that none of this excuses being late on debts, but Ichiban just continues that his mum ran the old candy shop off Showa Street before falling too ill to continue. Hiratsuka is looking out for his mother. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban appears stupid, even plays stupid, but he's sharper than he lets on and knows the score. **(character/story)**

34:40 Matsuo says that none of this is gonna please Sawashiro, they still haven't hit quota. Ichiban, showing his relentless optimism says it'll be fine. That all Sawashiro said was to get the wallet.

**(story/character)**

- Ichiban can only operate so far within the Yakuza. His heroics are at odds with the real day to day life of a Yakuza. Arakawa is the ideal but he mostly just shields Ichiban as best he can.

**(character/observation)**

35:00 Matsuo, knowing it's pointless, says Ichiban knows he didn't meant the wallet thing literally, but a call comes in, Sawashiro yelling that Ichiban is late to pick up the young master.

- Sawashiro berates Ichiban and tells him not to take the Young Master anywhere stupid, or killing Ichi a thousand times would be insufficient.

36:00 Ichiban forces the wallet into Matsuo's hands and runs off, Matsuo is NOT going to the captain like this. **(story)**

36:25 Ichiban runs into the lobby of the fancy apartments where the Young Master resides. His appearance and brashness causing a small stir.

- Without thinking he asks the receptionist if the young master is here, before correcting himself to ask after Masato Arakawa. **(story/character)**

- The elevator opens and out comes Masato Arakawa. In a pinstripe suit, with long slick back hair and a goatee, looking for all the world like a flash Yakuza, only one confined to a wheelchair. On his lap is a leather binder. **(character/observation)**

36:55 Ichiban runs over, apologising profusely for his tardiness. Masato is unimpressed, and focuses instead on the patrons Ichiban's demonstration happen to be disturbing. **(story)**

37:00 Masato Arakawa's title card has no affiliations. No "of the Arakawa family". This could mean one or more things. That Ichiban doesn't see him as part of the "yakuza" family or that his connection is technically severed. Either way this is what will let him operate independently later.

**(story/character)**

37:50 Masato coldly asks if Ichiban forgot how important today was. It takes Ichiban a moment to recall that it's Yumeno's birthday. Masato checks if Ichiban has a gift, he managed to get one.

- Masato then asks if Ichiban told dad (Masumi) about this, which Ichiban hasn't.

- Masato then begins complaining that he's treated like a kid. Ichiban tries to reassure Masumi that he just worries about him. Masato just bluntly tells Ichiban not to act like he knows him.

**(story/character)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – The Club Tears Masato Up**

39:00 The two head to the club on Shichifuku. Masato has a cough, which causes Ichiban some concern. Masato asks to be wheeled into an alleyway. Where he takes the case and pulls from it a needle. An Ephedrine Injector which will restore function to his body. Ichiban is rightfully concerned but doesn't have it in him to stop Masato. He's trapped by loyalty to let the Young Master take a dangerous risk. **(story/character/moment)**

- Good for getting you to walk again, and during hayfever season. **(joke/observation)**

40:40 Ichiban begs to know why Masato would even have this, his self-loathing for his condition not being apparent enough it seems. He says he won't embarrass his girl on her birthday with his weakness. **(story/character)**

- Masato doesn't exactly hide his self-hatred. He views his condition as an embarrassment and resents the world for being stronger than him. This is the route of his myriad insecurities that leads to the creation of Ryo Aoki.

- Ichiban refuses to inject Masato, who calls him a pussy and does it himself.

41:20 Masato slumps forward and Ichiban, terrified approaches him. Before Masato shoots back to life gasping for air. He stabilises and climbs out of his chair. Casually announcing "Let's go." To a stunned Ichiban. Who collects the leather case and gives chase.

42:15 The Staff are waiting to greet Masato as he rolls... Uh, walks into the club, much to their surprise. **(story/character/joke)**

- The big table is reserved for him, as two hostesses take their places besides him. One, trying to make friendly conversation asks if he's all better. All Masato can do is look away, he's not good with people.

- Ichiban tries to distract from the awkward question by asking after Yumeno, who is currently with another customer. Ichiban shoots to his feet, causing the attendant to panic. He says he'll go get Yumeno. Masato takes a moment to consider before allowing it.

- That slight pause could be his discomfort at agreeing with Ichiban, rather than letting him do anything that doesn't come from his mouth first. He wants Yumeno here more than he wants to control Ichiban. **(story/character/observation)**

44:20 Ichiban has to track down Yumeno as she is somewhere in the club. The attendant slyly asks if Masato is cured, and if that means Ichiban will be released from servitude. Which offends Ichiban. The Attendant is really just confused as to why a "civilian" needs a Yakuza escort. **(story/character/world)**

- You may know where Yumeno is. **(wordplay/stupid)**

- Ichiban complains about being the one who has to find her, asking if this is how they treat their best customers. Apparently Masato bought a ton of drinks last week during Christmas, the image gets ever sadder. **(story/character/world)**

45:35 Ichiban finds Yumeno with another customer. He tries to whisk Yumeno away, and she tries to politely warn "Ic-chan" not to continue. It's clear that whatever her feelings on Masato, having a nickname and trying to give Ichiban a warning, she does at least like Ichiban enough not to just let him put his foot in his mouth. **(story/character)**

- The customer (Horinouchi) brushes Ichiban off quite easily. **(and literally/joke)**

- Masato arrives and also tries his own way to get Yumeno from Horinouchi. He succeeds while losing face in the process. Horinouchi rejects his bribes, leading him into having to reveal he's the Senior Commissioner of the Tokyo PD. In this club, Masato can pay to pretend he has power and affection. Horinouchi ruins this space for him by revealing that his power is fake and the affection is bought. No amount of money makes it real. Horinouchi may not be as big a spender. But you don't bid on a persons heart with money alone. **(story/character/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Yumeno Does not Love Masato**

49:15 Masato tries to ask if Horinouchi is even allowed to drink in a place like this. To which he responds there's no law against it. Masato has no way to cleanly win. He lets Masato have Yumeno, but all this does is make Masato look exactly as childish as he is. **(character)**

49:55 With Yumeno now at Masato's table. The girls thank her for the drinks. Ichiban sternly corrects them, saying it was Masato who bought them.

- Masato snidely says it was only the most expensive bottle, they must not get drinks like that often. **(character)**

- Ichiban apologises for earlier, which Masato ignores to instead insult Horinouchi for standing up to him and calling him poor in the process. **(character/story)**

50:25 The girls ask what Masato got Yumeno, she plays it cool saying him being here is enough. The rest play up Masato being her boyfriend. Masato turns to Ichiban, saying he should reveal his gift first. Clearly just wanting to upstage him. **(story)**

51:25 Ichiban's gift is a cheap (expensive for him) wallet, one of the girls jokes that her mother has the same one. Yumeno, ever the professional tries to accept it gracefully. But Masato can't help but crack jokes at Ichiban's expense.

- Masato only then reveals his gift, an expensive watch. It stuns the table. The watch costs as much as an expensive condo. Yumeno is clearly more scared by the gesture than pleased. As Masato says he'll soon get them an actual condo.

53:15 The attendant comes to call Yumeno away. Ichiban angrily yells about reading the room. It's only when putting down Ichiban Masato can affect maturity, telling him not to cause a scene on Yumeno's birthday. (Well "this beautiful lady's birthday" cause the guy can't help but lay it on thick.) **(character)**

53:50 Yumeno leaves, and they go back to drinking. Masato once again putting the other two girls down. It doesn't break their stride.

54:15 Later, in the bathroom Ichiban is taking a dump, when he overhears Horinouchi and Yumeno - Horinouchi wants to leave, offended by being in the same room as Masato. Yumeno is trying to talk him into staying. Yumeno tells him he's the son of a Yakuza, to which Horinouchi jokingly responds to treat him well.

- Yumeno doesn't take the joke well, she's scared by his reckless spending and alcoholism, and is worried by him talking about getting the two of them a condo together.

- Horinouchi confidently says he'd have Masato arrested at the first hint of threats or violence towards Yumeno. Which raises her spirits. She says she'll go sell what Masato gave her first thing tomorrow, and asks Horinouchi to come with her, saying he's the better man. **(Character/story)**

- "Really though... Who knew there were still idiots out there thinking money can buy anything?" **(dialogue)**

- "Now get back out there and squeeze him dry."

55:50 Ichiban sighs and leaves the toilet, and to his terror notices that Masato was hiding behind the stall. He overheard everything. He tosses Ichiban the binder and a few wads of bills. Telling him to pay the bill and use whatever is left "to wipe your ass."

57:25 Arriving at the Gates, Ichiban gets a call from Matsuo, they'll meet at theatre square before heading to the office.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Reporting to Sawashiro**

58:35 Back at the Arakawa office. Matsuo and Ichiban stand before Sawashiro. Matsuo has his hands in front and looks shaky. Ichiban stands at attention and tries to look impressive.

- Matsuo leads by saying that Ushio won't be trying to pull a fast one again. I doubt any of the kids he conned were able to pull fast ones to his product. **(joke)**
- Sawashiro doesn't care and asks what the pull was. This is when Ichiban jumps in to say he returned the money. Which Sawashiro actually appears to accept. Perhaps buying Ichiban's fairness.

59:00 The topic then moves to the debt they bought. Ichiban presents the wallet. "Just as you requested." Keeping his posture, announcing the retrieval of the wallet alone with a straight face. He announces this proudly. Matsuo shrinks, terrified of what's to follow, only to be surprised when the Captain produces a stack of yen from the wallet **(story/character)**

59:30 Sawashiro simply gets up, rounds the desk, pushes Matsuo aside, and congratulates them on the work. "is that what you thought I'd say?"

- He hits Ichiban and floors Matsuo, pointing out the bill strap holding the money is from the Young Master's bank. He demands to know how Ichiban got the money, where he took the young master. **(story)**
- Ichiban, keeping his promise (in a straightforward and roundabout way) says they went shopping and Masato gave him that money. Sawashiro takes it that Ichiban begged, which Ichi denies, saying he has too much pride. Sawashiro says that pride ain't shit if Ichiban can't earn.

01:00:30 Sawashiro smacks Ichiban, and when Ichiban glares at him. Sawashiro decides to truly put Ichi in his place. Demanding that the board be brought out.

- When Ichiban hesitates to cut his finger off. Sawashiro is about to force his hand. Only to be saved at the last moment by the arrival of Arakawa.

01:01:40 Seeming to sense what was about to go down. Masumi simply asks that Ichiban walk with him. Sawashiro, who was quite enjoying punishing Ichiban is a little let down.

01:02:05 In Arakawa's office. Masumi asks if Ichi can't at least try to get along with Sawashiro. Ichiban protests that the captain simply hates his guts for not being an earner.

- Masumi tries to explain his distaste in terms Ichiban can understand, likening the Arakawa Family to a Dragon Quest party. That it's okay to see things a different way. I think the issue is Sawashiro wanted to see Ichiban's pinky a different way. **(joke/wordplay)**
- Masumi explains. Everyone in the family has a speciality. Some are like Ichiban, charging in. Some hold the rear like Mitsu, and some crack the whip.
- Ichiban gets excited, saying this makes Arakawa like the king. Arakawa says they're all more like sons than subjects to him. He truly is the heart holding it all together.

01:03:40 Masumi asks after Masato. As it turns out, the two are distant, with Masato hardly answering his fathers calls. **(story/character)**

- "I might be king of the family, but at home it's just a title. Haha." Poor guy. **(dialogue/character)**

01:04:20 He then invites Ichiban out for their last meal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

01:04:30 As they walk away from the office, Masumi asks if Ichiban has found a girl, which he hasn't. He says the boss must have been a chick magnet in the day. He takes mock offense, joking that he still is.

- He stops himself and says that as far as women went, there was only ever one for him. Masato's mother Akane.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Masato's Backstory**

01:05:30 24 years ago. When Arakawa was just a grunt in the Hikawa family. He was being groomed to marry the daughter of the family. His heart however was with his pregnant girlfriend Akane.

- He tried to get the boss to lose interest in him but to no avail, and as the due date crept closer a terrified Masumi realised he'd have to make a clean break. The boss obviously took this poorly, Masumi was beaten to within an inch of his life, and that was not an inch he was going to give Akane and their child. So Masumi pulled himself together and fled, trying to get to them before the family did.

01:08:05 Masumi and Akane were to meet at a Cafe Alps, but she never arrived. Eventually a call came through from her. The baby had arrived, and the Hikawa were not far behind. Being near the Shinjuku coin lockers, Masumi tells her to stash the baby in the lockers, and he'll hurry to collect them later. With no time left and the Yakuza closing in. Akane flees. At the same time Masumi is found, and he fights his way through the Hikawa to get to his baby.

### **Post-Note: The Clean Use of Dirty Money**

There's something ironically clean about how dirty money threads Masumi's life. The money that his mother stole from him and Toshio is a big part of what led to his death at the hands of Hoshino working for the Seiryu Clan.

Meeting Arakawa later he gave him a batch of defective fake bills. A symbolic gesture where in return for killing his father. Hoshino gives Arakawa power over his own life.

It's beautiful then that using those bills. Masumi in effect bought Ichiban's life. Giving him one of the defective bills as he sent him behind the wall of muscle. A trinket that will tell Hoshino all he needs to know about Ichiban's presence in Yokohama.

This ties back into the theme of light and dark. This money that Hoshino gave to Arakawa as a show of faith and an allowance to end his life at any moment was instead used to a far more caring end. On another level it's another aspect of how this dirty money produced through underhanded means is also what stabilised the town and did more to reign in crime than a more front facing method could achieve. Because that's a big part of what this game explores. It's about the upsides of the underworld and the downsides of so-called upstanding citizens. Where the only thing they stand up to are people struggling to stay on their own two feet. **(post-note/themes/wordplay)**

01:11:05 Arakawa arrives at the coin lockers. There's no yakuza or Akane. In a panic he begins to listen to the lockers, and when he hears a baby's cry begins to desperately force it open. Punching it until the lock breaks, his hand bloody. (the reason for his one hand glove in the present day)

### **(story/character)**

- With one final punch the locker opens, the baby is not responsive, and Arakawa takes off, sprinting for the hospital. **(story)**

- This intro is full of great scenes but the performance and panic on display is amazing.

01:12:45 Back in the modern day Masumi and Ichiban are stood at the Shinjuku lockers. (why Ichiban knew Masato would come here 18 years later) **(story/observation)**

- Masumi explains the cold temperatures led to Masato's multiple organ failures, which is why he's frail today. Masumi then apologises for asking Ichiban to care for him so often. An apology Ichiban doesn't want. He never saw Akane again.

- The Hikawa tracked Akane down and killed her. Masumi simply states they weren't around long after that. **(story/world)**

- Masumi says this brings him to something he's always wanted to tell Ichiban, even if it's by oath, he considers him a son. This flatters Ichiban greatly, and with this they can move on.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Peking Duck and Ichiban's Backstory**

01:15:00 Once again back at the gate. Arakawa proposes eating, and as he's just been ordained king. They should feast on the king of Chinese Food. Peking duck. A very sweet, succulent gesture.

### **(joke/observation)**

Opening Section Note: Runthrough story quickly, then come back and talk about differences in Ichiban's character and how this differs from the opening of the original Yakuza 1 (and perhaps 0?)

### **(note/structure/observation)**

- Ichiban is ignorant of Peking duck, Masumi's explanation has him pretty sold, so off we head for Heian tower.

Note: Running motif of the game is Ichiban and Masumi always narrowly failing to get Peking duck together. By the end of his life Masumi has never actually had it. **(theme/story)**

01:18:30 Ichiban and Masumi arrive at Heian Tower to find it shut. Ichiban impotently yells at a sign that they have to be open. Only to be calmed by Arakawa telling him the staff are likely home for the holidays. **(character)**

- Ichiban childishly says he was looking forward to the duck, and Masumi promises to take him another time.

- This hypes Ichiban, declaring "Just you wait, Peking Duck!" getting a smile from passers by, Ichiban happily wishes them a happy new year. It's then that Masumi warns Ichiban that he's got to be careful about his image. **(character/story/world)**

01:19:20 "Be careful about laughing outside. The only time a Yakuza laughs with his teeth..."  
"Is with family, or when he's in deep shit."

- This really feels like a moment that'd get reincorporation but then Ichiban isn't going to be a Yakuza for all that long. **(observation/dialogue)**

01:19:50 Having failed to get Peking Duck, they settle for the usual Oden joint, and on the way somehow pass by Shangri-La. The same man is stood outside, and fires another shit joke Ichi's way. I'll plunge your arse if you keep this up. **(joke/story)**

01:20:05 Masumi stops and asks Ichiban if he helps out around home every now and then. Urging him to care for the place. He warns that one day he may not be able to go back, leaning on the dramatic irony for the longtimers as we'd be there when the place gets wrecked. Ichiban has probably seen Shinji cum and go time and again. **(observation/joke)**

- This gets us talking about Ichiban's backstory.

01:20:40 "23 Years ago, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, I came screaming into this sleazy soapland."

Most wait until they're inside. **(joke/bad joke)**

- His mother disappeared after having him. He was found by Jiro Kasuga, the owner of the Soapland. Ichiban never learned the identity of his parents, figuring the dad was one customer or another.

- He was raised by the men and women of the soapland, as well as the people of the city. Who showed him great care and affection. We get a slideshow of all the people we've ran into over the day. **(story/backstory)**

01:22:00 Ichiban bitterly says society considers the people who raised him scum. Arakawa jokingly says that makes him scum too. Which Ichiban takes seriously, trying to recover, he calls him a god. Which only illicit further teasing from Arakawa.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – Ichiban Joins the Arakawa**

01:22:35 Arakawa takes a smoke which Ichiban lights, noticing his gloved hand. It's with this hand he saved yet another child's life.

- After Jiro died Ichiban dropped out of school and became a drifter. Picking fights for money. He eventually ran afoul of the Yakuza, and in a moment of desperation and just happening to see the name. Declared that killing him would bring the Arakawa down on them.

- The thugs, currently in a dispute with the family, decided to use the brat as bait. Arakawa turned up himself, took one look at Ichiban, and without giving the family a moment to think traded his finger for the kid's life. **(backstory)**

01:25:55 In that moment, Ichiban's loyalty was won. He can't even get a thanks out before Arakawa socks him for being so stupid as to mess with the Yakuza. And that he only did this for his face, and his reputation. **(character)**

- I think in this moment, a lot like Kazama trying and failing to keep Kiryu out of the Yakuza. Masumi did mean what he said in a way, but also was trying to stop this idiot kid from getting involved. He could not sell this as a noble action. **(observation/character)**

01:27:05 Ichiban yells he could have just claimed he didn't know him. Needing the gesture to mean something. He demands why he didn't just say that, and Arakawa says "why indeed." Ichiban saw through him.

"Maybe I just felt like impressing an idiot kid who knew my name." **(dialogue/story/character)**

01:27:15 "That was the moment I felt like life's path click into place..."

- If I do have any weird nitpicks (and this goes for Kiryu a bit as well in his Y2 appearances) who these characters are as kids never quite clicks with who they become as adults. Could be Ichiban chilling out but his cynical, rough teenage years feel very out of step with the virtuous, honest to a fault figure we see later. **(observation)**

01:27:30 From that day onwards, Ichiban stood outside the Arakawa offices. Waiting for the day he'd be allowed inside. Withstanding blows from Jo, putting up with rain, cold, and heat.

- One day Masumi arrives alongside Masato. Masumi tells his son to go ahead, and yells at Ichiban to leave, that the Yakuza is not a good life. He'll just make his parents sad.

- It's here Ichiban tells him he has no mom or dad, his foster father died last year. Masumi walks past and sticks a cigarette in his mouth. Ichiban spots it, and is quick on the lighter. His new life began. **(story)**

- During this scene *The Only Way Out* is playing, a song I believe was first used in 0 but I most strongly associate with this game. It just fits Ichiban's melancholy so well. A simple, repetitive acoustic guitar song which better fits Ichiban's more simplistic sadness, and true to its name it's a track which makes you feel almost trapped within its sadness. **(music/observation)**

- It's also fitting in a way that during this "happy" moment in Ichiban's life, after waiting 100 days to be accepted. Plays the saddest track. But for Ichiban, Arakawa was "the only way out." and unlike Kazama. He really did succeed in giving that to his kid. **(observation/story)**

01:30:00 As the two wander through theatre square, Ichiban thankful for the food. The two hear a woman getting harassed and jump to her rescue. She is more terrified than thankful. Arakawa says to let it go. **(story)**

- With that, their night is over. Arakawa heads off, saying he'll see him in the office next year.

- Ichiban is still absolutely smitten with Arakawa, saying he's a badass, before heading off to get a drink.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – New Year / Ichiban Takes the Fall**

Structure Note: Talk early on about how approaching this game is intimidating because with each Yakuza I worried that I'd finally run out of stuff to say. But Kiryu's extensive history always offered me something of a lifeline. This is a new beginning of a sort, and so there's a feeling I have to tackle this game in a new way. But it's still part of a series, and despite our new hero being born in a Soapland, this is far from a clean break and most likely not fully intended as one.

**(joke/wordplay/structure)**

01:33:15 There's a crowd in theatre square, ready to count in the new year

- As 2001 begins, fireworks go off, and Ichiban happily watches from Public Park number 3, a carrier bag full of beer besides him. Despite everything, he's optimistic.

01:34:05 He's awoken the next morning by a cop. He's told to get his ID, but his wallet has been taken. As the exasperated cop tells him to go to the station to file a report, Ichiban gets a call.

- Arakawa needs him in the office, warning him to be inconspicuous.

01:35:20 Lingering Odor is wasted on a small walking segment, this track is amazingly atmospheric. Makes you wonder just what the hell has gone wrong on this short, pretty easy trek to the office. **(music/observation)**

- Outside the Arakawa office the Sakaki accost a confused Ichiban, who fends them off.

01:38:10 Inside, Ichiban finds Arakawa sat alone in a darkened office, hunched over. He asks Ichi to sit.

- On the table is a ashtray full of cigarettes and two bottles of drink. Ichiban reflexively goes to clean the mess but is told to leave it. Arakawa has clearly stressed over what he's about to do.

- Arakawa explains the rivalry the family has with the Sakaki, they have long been suspected of selling inside information to the Omi Alliance. **(world/politics)**

- When confronted, the Sakaki Patriarch feigned ignorance, and since then the families have not gotten along. Worse for us, the Sakaki are a higher tier family. Acting too brazenly would create problems for the main family.

01:40:05 Two hours ago, Arakawa got a call from Sawashiro, he shot a Sakaki man after a confrontation turned violent. It won't be long before the police raid their office, and as Jo was captain. This would be considered a mutinous act, which would see the Arakawa expelled from the Tojo.

- At this point, Ichiban is ready to move heaven and earth to save the family. But Arakawa's head is in his hands, he already knows what he has to ask Ichiban to do. He cannot have Jo arrested. He bows, and asks that Ichiban take the fall.

01:41:40 In a really sad moment Ichiban leans forward with a smile on his face. "What are you even saying, boss?" Ichiban says it should be him bowing, he's honoured to have the opportunity to repay what he owes Arakawa. He stands and bows, saying they can lock him up for 20 years, he'll go through it with pleasure.

- Ichiban's tears fall on the table, is it genuine gratitude, smiling through the pain or some combination of the two? He likely more than anything doesn't want Arakawa to be sad.

**(story/character/observation)**

- So just like Yakuza 1 we got a man going away for family, and as we'll learn much later it did turn out to be his brother. **(story/parallel/observation)**

01:42:25 Outside Ichiban gets a call from Matsuo inviting him to the shrine. Ichiban instead asks him his age, confusing Matsuo with his sudden whistfulness. Ichiban is almost indulging this moment, wanting it all to mean something cause it means the world to him. **(story/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 1 CONT – End Chapter 1**

01:42:45 Matsuo has to remind Ichiban it's his birthday, he's a bit too withdrawn to feel it.

- "Did Sawashiro rope you into something?" Depends on the judge. **(joke/observation)**
- Ichiban hangs up on a confused Matsuo and decides that his last meal will be a beef bowl.

01:45:35 At Matsuya Ichiban has demolished 4 beef bowls and has just enough for one more. He decisively slams his change on the counter and asks for one more. He tries to smile, but it wanes as he recalls Arakawa telling him that he's been banished effective last month to contain the damage. Though he promises he'll pull strings to get Ichiban back. **(story/character/face acting)**

- Arakawa says that being a civilian should also mean they go easier on Ichiban, but he says he'll face as many years as it takes.

01:47:05 The music swells as Ichiban downs his last beef bowl and carefully sets the chopsticks down. He says to the clerk. "Can't go out with regrets, right?" and this guy, buying into it so hard says "No one regrets a beef bowl, I say." and gives Ichiban a big smile.

- Ichiban, despite the sad music, smiles as he realises he's out of smokes, puts on a tough exterior, and heads for the station. The same cop from earlier asks if he's found his wallet. Nope, but change is on the way. **(joke/wordplay)**

01:48:15 Over a black screen, Ichiban Kasuga is sentenced to 15 years.

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 2 – Bloody Reunion**

00:15 Chapter 2: Bloody Reunion

00:25 We rejoin Ichiban in Summer 2002, he's filling chopstick sleeves in prison. **(story)**

00:55 He finishes his box, another prisoner pushes his crate across the table. Trying to coerce Ichiban into doing his work for him.

- Before the guy can even finish talking Ichiban throws his hand up and announces he's done. Refusing to be intimidated.
- The prisoner gestures to his mates as they watch Ichiban go, they're not going to let the disrespect sit.

01:40 Later on in a storage closet the three of them have ganged up on Ichiban and he's letting them beat the shit out of him. **(story/character)**

- Their leader mockingly asks Ichiban if he's ex-tojo. Telling Ichi that even with good behaviour he's got to wait ten years for parole on a murder charge. "I'd say getting along with us is in your long term interest." **(story)**

02:35 Ichiban refuses to respond, so he's asked what family he's from. When he says the Arakawa family the group aren't impressed, calling the Arakawa a two-bit gang. This actually angers Ichiban.

- Mention of Arakawa being "Arakawa the Assassin", but the guy mockingly says he heard he's lost his edge. **(backstory)**
- Ichiban finally loses a handle on his anger, he's ready to kill the guy for insulting Arakawa but is caught in a headlock. He spits on the guy who goes for a wretch. The scene cuts as the blow seemingly connects. **(story/character)**

03:45 We cut to Ichiban, sat cross legged in solitary. A guard comes in with a bread roll and a drink carton. Ichiban wordlessly starts eating the bread.

- The guard asks "You held back for over a year. Why fight now?" Saying the guys Ichiban beat were sent to medical with all their teeth knocked out which is genuinely horrifying to picture. **(character)**

## YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – Lonely Release

### Ichiban's Anger (post-note)

- Ichiban's capacity for rage is something I think needed a bit more attention in the story, it's a genuinely interesting caveat to his character that he is a genuinely good, well meaning person albeit one with a terrifying capacity for violence that he's carried since childhood. You can see in the few times it comes up that before and after these outbursts he is essentially throwing a temper tantrum.
- My problem is it only rears its head in the story often enough to feel out of character rather than a flaw which Kiryu beats out of him. It makes his flare ups feel contrived and Kiryu's role of setting him on the right path totally flat. **(observation/character)**

04:30 Ichiban starts explaining to the oddly patient guard they were shit talking the boss. At first he's calm but as he talks more his anger starts resurfacing.

- The guard says the boss'd be upset. Ichiban agrees, but then the guard adds he'd be upset about Ichiban's sentence getting extended.

05:00 Guitar sting, bread physics, Ichiban's gaze is stuck on the floor.

- The guard advises that Ichiban suck it up for the sake of people who care about him.

05:40 15 years later Ichiban receives a letter from Arakawa which he excitedly tears into.

"Dear Ichiban... I told myself I'd wait until you got out, but I couldn't help but pick up a brush. If they hadn't extended your sentence. We'd be throwing you a party right about now. It's heartbreaking that I can't do that yet, considering how lonely the days are without you.

Even now, sometimes I hear your laugh and turn, but you're never actually there. Only a parent knows how truly empty a home can feel. Without the child, a parent is nothing."

- As the letter goes, the seasons pass. Ichiban cries into the note, crossfading him into raising his head up high on the day of his release. It's a painful little sequence. **(observation)**

- The line about only a parent knowing how empty a home is hits extra hard with the (false) reveal that Masato passed away while Ichiban was serving his sentence. **(observation)**

07:05 In 2019 Ichiban Kasuga gets out of prison.

The letter continues "One day soon, I hope I'll turn around and find you standing there. P.S. The day you get out, let's celebrate with that Peking duck we missed out on."

07:40 Ichiban walks out of jail, takes off his cap, and immediately falls into a bow, profusely apologising to his boss...

... Who is not there **(story)**

08:10 Ichiban raises his head, confused. No one is there, save for an old lady across the road.

- One of the guards puts a comforting hand on Ichiban's shoulder.

08:30 Switch to in-engine as the guard explains that with current anti yakuza laws, the days of bosses rolling up in their cars to collect their boys from prison is over. We had a whole series about the Yakuza's shrinking place in the world you kinda missed it. **(joke/observation)**

09:20 As Ichiban looks at the letter, disappointed the promise within wasn't kept. Ichiban is tauntingly asked. "You really thought the welcome wagon was coming, dumbass?"

- Leaning against the wall is a stocky old geezer in a blue windbreaker, Koichi Adachi.
- Ichiban is confused, and Adachi doesn't relent, saying how it takes real mental gymnastics to expect a guy who didn't visit in 18 years to come pick him up. **(story/character)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – A Grave Possibility**

09:50 Ichiban asks who the hell he is, and Adachi produces a badge. Kanagawa police.

- Ichiban asks if he's a detective, and Adachi reveals that was long ago, now he holds the much less impressive office of DMV paper pusher holding on til retirement. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban jokingly asks if he's here to renew his license.

10:55 Adachi says he has business with Ichiban, and rattles off Ichi's history, he has done his research on our boy.

- Ichiban demands Adachi stay out of his business but he's undeterred, saying his business is with him. Adachi won't stop Ichi, just ignore him. **(character)**

12:50 Ichiban just walks off, first headed to a hairdresser where his punch perm is punched up into the crazy afro we know and love. **(story/character design)**

- Outside, Adachi is laughing his head off and I already love this guy. Man it's so weird to see these two at their meeting where after playing through this and IW they're bros. **(observation/story)**

13:40 Outside, Adachi confronts Ichiban on the haircut. Ichi is not pleased. Chill out mate, keep your hair on. **(joke/bad joke)**

- Ichi demands to know why he's still here. Adachi just repeats that he has business with Ichiban, he's just letting him finish up his own first.

14:20 Cut to a graveyard where Adachi finds Ichiban cleaning the grave of one Chikao Suzumori. The man Ichiban supposedly shot.

- This is where Adachi reveals a little of his hand, he does not believe Ichiban is the real killer. Ichi's story of killing the man out of anger for banishment doesn't line up with him cleaning the victims grave, especially considering it's the first (technically second) thing he did.

- The hair cut was probably a greater penance. **(joke)**

- Adachi wants to know why he took the fall, and why he's still keeping up the lie. But Ichiban sticks to his guns. Trying to stay composed, but he turns and asks Adachi to drop his act. Refusing to believe some old ex-cop is interested in him. **(story)**

16:20 Before Adachi can answer, they spy an odd sight. Arakawa being escorted by a large entourage of Yakuza through the cemetery. Adachi recognises him. **(story)**

- Ichiban takes off to talk to him, but is cut off by two of his detail, who don't believe Ichiban's story of just getting out of jail. They don't let him through, and when one of them pushes Ichiban he loses his cool.

18:10 Ichiban beats the two, when one of them pulls a gun Adachi steps in to diffuse the situation

18:55 Adachi holds Ichiban back as Ichiban watches him approach an Omi headstone. **(story)**

- Ichiban desperately yells for him. For a moment Arakawa stops and looks back before continuing on. Ichiban is despondent. Adachi suggesting that he may have forgotten him after 18 years does very little to calm Ichiban down, who swears he couldn't have forgot him. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban starts childishly rattling off that he must be getting old, eyes and ears going, anything but the idea that Arakawa has forgotten him. **(story/character)**

19:40 Adachi sighs, saying Arakawa definitely looked right at him. Ichiban refuses to accept this.

- Adachi tells him true or not to take the hint. Even if he does remember him he clearly doesn't want to talk.

20:10 Ichiban is still pissed, he takes a moment to think and wonders why Arakawa is even here.

- Ichiban stands by Suzumori's grave in the hopes he'll be noticed.

## YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – The Kamurocho 3K Plan

20:55 Adachi points out the grave Arakawa has stopped at, it's the grave of the former Omi chairman. Ichiban is baffled why he'd visit the grave of a rival clan.

- It's here Adachi drops the bomb. "Well... Probably to do his duty as an Omi Alliance Executive."
- The boss has seemingly deserted the Tojo for the Omi! **(politics/story)**

21:25 Ichiban just laughs, pointing out that the Arakawa are Tojo like it's the most obvious thing in the world. Continuing to laugh in Adachi's face as he questions him even being a detective.

- Adachi is unmoved, now free of humour he matter of factly states the Arakawa family is Tojo no more.
- Ichiban laughs once more, but then the smile falls from his face as it dawns on him. Oh my, he's omi! **(joke/bad joke)**

22:00 Adachi continues "Masumi Arakawa... Is currently acting captain of the Omi Alliance-the second in command."

- Ichiban is no longer laughing, but is incredulous, refusing to believe it for a moment.
- Adachi softens, saying he can understand the skepticism. After all Masumi was a Tojo man for decades even if it was for a third string family. Adachi then apparently stopped talking until the two get in his car.

22:40 The two are now driving down the highway.

- Adachi explains what happened. The new Tokyo governor cracked down on crime via the *Kamurocho 3K Plan* "Keep them hungry, keep them poor, keep the out."
- The police raided ever major Tojo family with surgical precision, but the Arakawa was left alone. It turns out the Arakawa were feeding inside information to the police. Masumi sold the Tojo out. **(story/politics)**
- The Omi then seized the opportunity to send an army into Kamurocho, the cops turned a blind eye, and the city was taken without bloodshed. **(story/politics)**
- Adachi supposes Arakawa bribed and finagled the situation so the cops would look the other way, and the Omi would welcome Arakawa to their ranks. **(politics)**

- Ichiban has gone quiet, Adachi asks if he's alright, and Ichiban explodes back to life. Yelling this is some bullshit. Accusing Adachi of spinning a pretty unbelievable yarn, saying Arakawa was the very image of duty and honour. **(story/character)**

*- Ichiban is incredulous, so was I. When I first played this in 2019 a big part of me couldn't believe it. Not for the same reasons as Ichiban. I more felt a sort of annoyed emptiness like everything up until now had been for nothing. I do like series trying to shake things up and not become stagnant but I just felt like this was a painful thing you couldn't walk back. It's beautiful because while I didn't like it on a metatextual level, I was as a player feeling exactly as Ichiban felt. **(observation)***

*- Now 6 years on I respect the shift itself even though I think the results have been pretty rocky. **(observation/post-note)***

25:40 Adachi points out they saw him visiting an Omi Grave, Ichiban keeps childishly deflecting, now claiming he had it wrong. These are pretty grave accusations!

- Ichiban starts childishly deflecting, saying he had it wrong. That wasn't really Arakawa.
- He then asks where they're driving, this isn't the way to Kamurocho!

25:50 A road sign reveals they're headed for Ijin-cho, they're going to Yokohama. Kamurocho is dangerous for Ichiban and Ichi has to help Adachi with an investigation in Yokohama.

- Ichi keeps yelling. Adachi says not to make this difficult, and Ichiban tosses his badge out the window. As Adachi pulls over to search for it Ichiban starts walking to Tokyo.

## YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – Kamurocho re-re-intro

28:40 Ichiban arrives in Kamurocho, a blink and you'll miss it detail is Ryo Aoki on the FX Vision screen. Ichiban doesn't notice Masato right there.

- Too busy looking at phones to notice the phony. **(bad joke)**
- So we have the classic old guy gets out of jail and is befuddled joke, this time it's over selfie-sticks and vapes. Ding, new technology bit. Hi I'm gotoku sins **(awful joke)**

29:50 Head to the office first, I notice the Don Quixote is gone, replaced with the new police station.

- The pop shop has become a cop shop! **(joke)**

30:50 Arriving at the old Arakawa family office, the janitor has no recollection of it ever being a Yakuza office, way before his time.

- When Ichiban mentions it used to be the Arakawa office, the janitor is more incredulous that they used to work out of such a small place. Ichiban is proud that they're now well known, failing to grasp that he won't like the reason why. **(story/politics)**
- With this avenue a bust, next stop is the old lady at the tobacco stand.

33:15 At the Tobacco stand, the new owner reveals the old lady went back home to the country a long time ago. Before Ichiban can ask about the Arakawa office Ichiban is shoved aside by an Omi grunt.

- An Omi grunt, who Ichiban learns upon confronting him, belongs to the Arakawa family.
- Ichiban gets the grunt to confirm the identity of Arakawa, he repeats what Adachi said. Arakawa is the acting captain of the Omi. **(politics)**
- Ichiban will not stop insisting that the Arakawa family he knows rolls with the Tojo. Putting himself on the radar as the orders are to kill any Tojo men discovered in Kamurocho.

36:35 Ichiban begins interrogating the Omi grunt, but all he gets out of him is that the Arakawa did betray the Tojo before some of his friends arrive. Ichiban is so shocked he skips the chase minigame as he makes his escape, fleeing into the champion district.

37:30 It's here he's approached by Michiyo, now a teetotal health nut. She doesn't know anything about the Yakuza, having lost that clientele when she abandoned drinking.

- The best she can tell Ichiban is to ask Ushio, who has now become a magazine writer fancying himself an organised crime journo. **(story)**
- With the info that he's often slacking off at Children's Park, Ichiban heads off as Michiyo tries to upsell him on Ah-Ha Divine, none of that substory scam for me thanks! **(observation/joke)**

40:30 As Ichiban leaves Michiyo, he notes that he's glad she's doing well, but he feels kind of sad. It's another part of the life he knew that's gone.

43:00 At Children's park, two Yakuza are trying to extort Ushio for money for snapping their picture. Ichiban steps in just before his camera is smashed.

- Ichiban tries to negotiate the other two yakuza away, but they recognise him as the Tojo clan guy and a fight ensues.

45:10 Ichiban beats the two, Ushio snagged some surreptitious snaps and takes off to get his payday. Falling and smashing his camera thanks to Kamulop. Ichiban catches up so he can be caught up. **(story)**

- Kamulop is a mascot the city introduced to rehab its image, I don't think they need it to be any worse but hey what are you going to do. **(joke)**
- You ain't Ono Michio bud, at best you're an Omi Bitchio. **(bad joke/I like it)**

## YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – Ichiban Concedes

46:05 Ichiban asks Ushio what happened to Arakawa, he doesn't believe he'd defect.

- Ushio reveals what (he believes) caused his turn. In 2004 Masato passed away, pushing him to betray the Tojo. Ichiban doesn't fully buy that would push him into being a traitor.
- Ushio just gives a grand (but ultimately empty) speech about how if you lose your reason for living life goes on, and you have to find a new one. So he supposes that Arakawa, yakuza to the core, decided his reason must be "to watch the world burn." **(story/moment)**

*- What I like is knowing what we do about Masumi, the Tojo being the source of a great many pains in his life, him betraying them for the Omi after the death of his son is believable motivation. With absolutely nothing left to lose he finally took vengeance on the clan. Possibly taking inspiration from the Sakaki who had us stiched up all those years ago **(story/observation/character)***

49:20 Ushio then asks what Ichiban will do next, he has no idea himself. Ushio tries to warn him not to go home to Shangri-La, but just hearing the words sends Ichi back to where it all started.

- Ushio shouts after him, warning that the Omi will kill him. All Ichi can do is bitterly invite them to try. **(story/character)**

51:40 Ichiban arrives at the still standing wreckage of Shangri-La

- The Only Way out Plays as Ichiban tries to assure himself that at least he has his memories.
- Adachi arrives, still sort of flippant to the grieving Ichiban. Explaining the place got wrecked when "some moron" drove a truck through it during a Tojo Clan civil war. **(story/history)**
- Ichiban says he guess he didn't even realise how long 18 years is. Adachi says it's hardly the same Kamurocho, mentioning the new police station on Nakamichi.

*- Putting the police station at well, the foot of the pleasure district is a pretty bold declaration that this town no longer belongs to the gangsters. What they failed to realise is that it belongs to the real criminal, a domineering politician. **(observation/story)***

53:20 Adachi assures Ichiban he hasn't lied to him once. The Tojo and the town he knew are gone. Ichiban is finally ready to accept the truth.

- As Ichi agrees, Adachi's fatherly act disappears and he says it's about time, he thought this'd take longer. Ichi is the kind who needs to see something for himself to believe it. **(character/story)**
- Ichiban asks just what Adachi wants, he reiterates, he wants help on his investigation. He knows Arakawa used the police to dismantle the Tojo and open Kamurocho up for the Omi, he knows you need a lot of money for such a task, and figures most of it went to now Police Commissioner Juro Hourinouchi.
- Being a DMV clerk, the commissioner is out of Adachi's reach, but Masumi Arakawa could be his opening, and Ichiban is his avenue to Arakawa, he surely wants to know just as much what changed him, Ichiban can't argue **(story/politics)**

*- Having played through this game and Infinite Wealth. Watching Adachi in his first appearance with Ichiban is jarring. By the time these games are over these two are thick as thieves, thicker than Ichiban after a head injury even!*

- Seeing Adachi be so mercilessly rude to Ichiban... I don't know that I'd say if it feels out of character. Only that Adachi does become a lot more compassionate after he joins the party. His jokes at others expense morph more into dad jokes and him willfully playing a bit of a doddering old clown for his own amusement. A later, well, earlier character (The bartender) does say Adachi is genuinely happy for the first time in awhile, so it could be that breaking through his defences has softened him up. **(character/observation/joke)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – Adachi and Ichiban team up**

55:25 Adachi asks Ichi what he wants right now, and more than anything, it's to see Arakawa. It's all he thought about while he was in prison.

- And Adachi has a plan, there's an Omi officers meeting tonight to cement dominance over Kanto, and Adachi has a way in.

56:40 Over in theatre square, Adachi points out the meeting is in Heian Tower. Ichiban takes this as a sign Arakawa is summoning him. **(story)**

- Adachi tells him the meeting isn't until tonight, and gives Ichiban a cell phone to contact him later.

58:45 Cutting to that night, Ichiban heads back to the meeting point.

01:00:00 On the southwest corner of theatre square. A foppish businessman is on the phone, rattling off empty corporate speak. Annoyed he's being bothered during his nightlife.

- Ichiban asks if he's seen a big burly dude around here. To which Nick Ogata says he only has eyes for women. So far so gaudy, but he'll help Ichiban parse his new cell phone. **(story/character)**

01:01:45 This is interrupted when two Omi grunts arrive, Ichiban steels himself for a fight, but they're here for Nick.

- They tried to shake down one of Nick's bars, he instead sold it outright to them. They blame him for the fact the place is now bleeding money and are trying to extort the guy.

- Ichiban butts in, saying he was due a mobile phone lesson, they realise who they're talking to and another fight ensues.

01:03:40 Fun note, I miss a downed foe with a dropkick **(combat/moment)**

01:04:20 With the two dickheads down for the count (and down on their deal), Ichi asks if he really sold them a bum business. Ogata assures Ichiban the place was a solid earner under his watch. So all he really did was gamble with his employees livelihoods to prove a point to some dumbass Yakuza. **(observation/character)**

- He likens business to women a second time, probably because he owns both, and when the two yakuza refuse to throw more money at the bar, Ogata buys it back at half the price he sold it.

01:06:50 With that out of the way, Ichiban is taught how to use his phone, and the two agree to say in touch. Nick is far from put off by Ichiban's colourful past. Saying he's met far shadier men than the overly blunt and honest Ichiban. So he has his first pen pal. **(story/character)**

- This is all setting up Nick so he can come back in one cutscene and provide the capital for the business minigame.

01:09:00 Adachi arrives, Ichi asks where he's been, he stopped for a beef bowl but it was a struggle, must be getting old. Just wait until you're in the party bud, it'll be a beef bowl bonanza. You'll be 90% appstimmmed **(joke/bad joke)**

01:09:20 Adachi reveals how they're going to get into the meeting, they're going to use the sewers. Sega property or no, there will not be a lightspeed dash down here, but a dungeon dive. **(joke)**

- Ichi asks Adachi if he should be pushing himself at his age, Adachi asks who figured out where Arakawa is, and says they need to watch eachothers backs. **(character/story)**

01:10:25 Koichi Adachi joined the party!

01:10:45 Ichiban asks why he's after the Commissioner. If they're going to trust eachother they have to be open. Adachi throws it back in Ichiban's face by asking again who killed Suzumori, for now, neither wants to answer. So into the sewers they go. Trust will have to wait, as the meeting will not. **(story/observation)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 2 CONT – 6 Feet Under**

01:11:20 Arrival in the sewers, funnily enough this is not the first time the Kamurocho sewer system has functioned as a dungeon, that would be Dead Souls where it was even proc-gen, shifting with each visit. **(observation/gameplay)**

01:20:25 Ichiban and Adachi fight their way through the sewers then up through the building neighbouring Heian tower. They jump the roofs and defeat the yakuza security detail. It's then a police helicopter pulls overhead. Adachi sends Ichiban off ahead, saying he'll buy time. **(story)**

01:22:30 The final obstacle in Arakawa's way is Sawashiro. He asks when Ichiban got out, Ichiban, now with little patience and less reason to listen to the guy says not to pretend to care about that. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban asks if Jo was right behind the boss when he turned traitor. Sawashiro deflects the accusation with a smile, saying Masumi just did what the times called for.

01:23:20 Sawashiro rubs it in, saying even if the Tojo were still around a car wouldn't have been sent for Ichi, he was banished. **(politics/story)**

- Ichi says he's not that hung up on it. Sawashiro mockingly asks if Ichiban is here for some money.  
- Ichiban bites back that he doesn't like that tone coming from the guy whose place he took in prison.

01:24:00 It's then Jo Sawashiro tells Ichiban he doesn't grasp the situation. It's an important night for the boss which Sawashiro wants to keep free of violence. So Ichiban can leave, or die.

- Ichiban declares he will open the door ahead and see the boss. Jo is overjoyed. "Seeing your stupid face again just reminds me of how badly I wanna kill you."  
- Ichiban responds "How funny. I used to think the same thing every time you smacked me."  
- Time to make some dreams come true! Fight begins!

01:25:25 In RPG form I struggle to feel out a personality as much from these fights. That said while Ichiban's style is clumsy and awkward, with him winning fights on sheer stubbornness. Sawashiro is a lot more controlled, he attacks with a lot of explosive energy, with almost rigid stillness inbetween very sharp blows.

- After Ichiban barely dodges some devastating, thick glass shattering blows. Sawashiro pulls a piece of glass. He's a weapon fighter and not particularly put off by the idea of maiming his opponents. Ichiban scraps, Sawashiro slaughters. **(story/boss/combat/characters/observation)**

01:26:20 Ichiban comes out on top and goes for the door. From the floor, Sawashiro calls out, warning him if he opens that door there is no going back.

- Ichiban says he's been waiting 18 years to open this door.

01:27:00 Ichiban bursts into the officers meeting, all eyes turn to him. Arakawa casually mentions he has a guest. "So, you came after all. Figured you might. You're loyal to the end."

- Ichiban begs to know why he betrayed the Tojo and goes to step forward, but stops as Masumi puts his hand out.

01:27:30 Ichiban freezes, the room is deathly still. Another goon asks Masumi if there's anything to worry about. Ichiban smiles as Masumi says Ichiban is nothing to worry about.

- But then Masumi stands, draws a pistol and tells Ichiban. "I'm sorry, Ichi. You have to die for me."

- Cut to black as a shot rings out, end of chapter 2, what a bloody reunion!

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 – The Town at Rock Bottom**

00:10 Loading screens now have a plot recap as well as a bespoke chapter image. The plot recap recounts the chapter prior to where the player is **(menu/loading/story)**

00:20 Chapter 3: The Town at Rock Bottom

00:35 Ichiban awakes to a scary doll face staring down at him, in a panic he tips from his tip, and we learn he's not in hell, but a rubbish heap. **(story/wordplay)**

- He's quite pained, struggling to get up, with a gnarly yellowed wound on his chest. Moving occasionally sends shocks of pain

01:05 Looking around, he's in a homeless camp, someone calls out to him. "Finally awake?"

- Nanba, a homeless man in several layers of clothing, carrying a pole and a bucket with fish in it. **(story)**

- He says with no intonation that suggests he really cares about Ichiban that he's lucky it wasn't Wednesday. "they pick up the compost."

- Immediately we know this guy has been through the ringer. A close to death Yakuza in the trash does not register as all that special to him. **(story/character/observation)**

02:00 Nanba says if he's walking, he's good, go home and take the stitches out yourself.

- He is entirely dispassionate saying all of this. No feelings either way about Ichiban being alive, he just doesn't want trouble from him being here. **(story)**

02:25 Ichiban, more than a little dazed and confused follows Nanba, having questions, but is interrupted when another homeless guy bursts out of his ramshackle dwelling.

- They'd taken bets on Ichiban surviving, this guy lost. Real greedy of us to live.

**(observation/story)**

- The homeless guy nonchalantly approaches the giant, muscled Yakuza, impressed that he'd stitched us up with fishing line. "That's an ex-nurse for ya." Oh I figured he'd be a longshoreman with fishing line skills like that. **(joke/observation/story/character)**

02:55 The old guy starts berating us for not dying, saying he bet big, dying would have been easier. Ichiban finally gets annoyed and the old guy backs down, saying they could call it even and cover his bet. **(story)**

- Nanba finally tells him to cool it, and offers him one of the fish he caught in exchange for a tank of gas. Good barter based economy we got here. **(story)**

03:45 Ichiban asks Nanba where they are. We're in Ijincho, Isezaki Ijincho! Yokohama.

- Ichiban is confused, absolutely flummoxed. No idea why he's here. **(story)**

04:05 Ichiban asks why he's in Yokohama.

- Nanba has no idea, says he found him three days ago, but then says he was brought in and "they" found him in the trash with one foot in the grave. Ichi was in a bad state, and only pulled through cause the bullet very narrowly missed anything vital and exited clean, and cause he's tough as nails.

- Ichiban tries to thank him but Nanba doesn't want it, he only saved Ichi because a dead yakuza is bad news for 'em. Naturally Ichiban doesn't take the heartless answer to heart.

**(observation/character/story)**

05:30 A dead yakuza brings police, who bring media, who asks questions and point cameras. The people here can't have that, they're squatters. People who could be ruined by being found out.

**(world)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – “Treasure Hunting”**

05:55 Nanba tells Ichiban to go on home, and Ichiban reflects on the fact he has nowhere to return to. Telling Nanba he has nowhere to return to, and asking to rest here for awhile longer, he'll even help out.

- Nanba brushes him off, saying this isn't a happy family, they're leeches who survive by taking and taking on another guy is an inconvenience. Get outta here **(world/story)**

06:45 Ichiban sadly accepts it and goes to leave, making it just a few steps before the bullet wound causes him to collapse. So Nanba just has to bite the bullet and let Ichiban stay until he's back to full strength. **(story)**

07:30 Ichiban says under all the talk he's a good guy. Nanba tries to brush it off once more. Which Ichiban once again accepts in a way that suggests he knows it's just talk. **(story/character)**

08:00 Nanba decides to walk the new guy through the rules if he's gonna be staying here.

- He takes the name “Ichiban Kasuga” as fake, a really shitty fake. Has to be told that's his real ass name.

- He then introduces himself as Nanba, deflecting as to whether or not *his* is a fake name.

08:45 He asks if Ichiban has money, Ichiban says he's “broke as a joke”

- More nada than Shinada **(joke)**

- Nice of them to have clearly not gone through his pockets. **(observation)**

- Nanba will show Ichiban how to earn, hopefully he's not another Sawashiro. **(story)**

09:05 Ichiban questions why he has to earn for him.

- Nanba asks if he wants to stay, before catching himself and mentioning it's not up to him, but the chief. **(story/character)**

- “... The elder bum who keeps the peace.” **(world)**

- Basically if you want to find refuge here, you need to earn your place. Liars and troublemakers are out. Makes sense **(story/world)**

- He's the big bum who makes all the rules **(observation/joke)**

10:00 With daylight burning and cold pit in our pockets, Nanba will show us the ropes. **(wordplay/shit)**

- Nanba says he'll show us how it's done, and then he starts scraping around under a vending machine for loose change. It's a funny moment. **(observation)**

- Nanba thinks he found a 500 yen piece, but it's cap **(wordplay/no idea if it's shit)**

- No cap? Oh, it is **(wordplay/pretty sure it's awful/I like it though)**

- Nanba says to also route through trash, warns to not go too far, this town is dangerous, and we're off.

11:45 We're let loose on the “treasure hunt” tutorial. Another JRPG-ism given a... Well not even Yakuza makeover, but this is a pisstakey version of resource gathering. It's also a means of spicing up traversal on this larger map by giving you a lot of little things to do in transit.

**(gameplay/observation)**

- Could cut to my NG+ run where I'm flush with cash. **(joke)**

12:40 Now night, Ichiban returns to find Nanba talking with the chief

- Ichiban offers his cash, the Chief rejects it. Ichi fears he's being rejected, but the gesture proves to the Chief he has good intentions. The cash is his, he must protect it. **(story)**

- Ichi mentions he will repay his debt, the chief asks if he's a Yakuza and Ichiban tells the two his story in a fade to black. **(character/story)**

## YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Can Quest and nice Bread

15:00 Offering his story, the chief asks how Ichiban feels, he can't describe it. Nanba offers him one of his fish hot off the grill. Showing him to cut up the tail and put it in his cup sake.

- Ijincho-style fin sake, fish fin sake (Hirezaki) developed out of post-war Japan as a way to add pleasant flavours to cheap sake. **(history/world)**

- This is done by steeping fish fins in hot sake, the most common variant I see talked about online is pufferfish (fugu) **(history/trivia)**

- Naturally, what started as a drink seemingly for fishermen and the lower classes is now most regularly associated with higher-end establishments. Perhaps there's more to offering of fin sake than just showing how these guys make do with whatever they find? **(observation)**

15:50 The Chief says that after we've healed up. It's Ichiban's choice to stay or go.

- Nanba asks what his plan is, as of tomorrow Ichiban will have to get his own food. Ichi is still a little uncertain, so Nanba says they'll head out at 5:30AM to collect cans.

- Ichiban asks if you need to wake up early for that, and Nanba tells him "Early bums get the crumbs." **(story/character)**

17:10 The next morning we're taken to see Kan-San, and put on our Can Quest.

- This is a mandatory substory, and really feels like the game giving the player a little something to do to break up the story. Flex their fingers and unwind for a moment before progressing.

18:00 → 25:25 Can Quest tutorial and one run.

25:30 Ichiban returns to Nanba cooking up the last of his haul. Ichiban is utterly despondent over how little he earned for so much work.

- Nanba, once again proving he's nicer than he lets on just tells Ichiban that homeless life is harsh, and says he'll buy him food just this once. Ichiban is elated, then Nanba once again tries to run back his gesture by saying Ichiban will never recover if he's malnourished. **(story/character)**

- This is what's great about Ichiban, he refuses to let people shy away from their kindness, whenever it's wrapped up in codes or claims that people are only being good because it benefits them. He refuses to see their kindness as anything but genuine, no matter what they claim otherwise. **(story/character/observation)**

25:40 Ichiban is given a breadroll with fish. Nanba tries to soften the blow, sure Ichi would prefer rice, but Ichiban is elated. Talking about how he grew to love breadrolls in prison, as they made a difference from the awful barley rice they had to eat 6 days a week.

- Nanba tiredly asks why he'd love "plain old bread" only for Ichiban to say it being plain was what was so special about it. "Nothing's plain about prison." **(story/character/backstory)**

- Melancholy yet happy piano playing in the background.

### Post-note: The Only Way Out

While the song originated in Yakuza 0 I most closely associate this sad guitar piece with Yakuza 7. As opposed to the famous sad piano substory track which is so overwhelmingly sappy this evokes such a melancholy and precise type of sadness and is probably one of my favourite pieces of video game music.

I don't know if *The Only Way Out* is its actual title, it's the name you'll find it under and it fits like a glove. Working for so many characters at at least one point in this story.

It's a track that evokes the moment when has to face how trapped they are. That there's either no going back to happier times or distracting themselves from the reality of their situation. When the people, places, or things they use to cope or keep going no longer obscure their vision to the bars around them and they have to face how trapped in with the pain of their situation they are.

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Collection Contentions**

The repetitive strums and long lingering notes also make this track feel gloomy, this isn't short, sharp, intense despair, this is something which is long lasting, a malaise which follows you, which is waiting outside every happy moment for you to step out and find it again, and if you wait too long, it'll invite itself back in. **(post-note/music)**

27:15 Ichiban chows down happily, which actually lightens Nanba up a bit. Seeing someone so genuinely happy and pleased at something which to him was more of a reminder of how poor his situation was warms him to Ichiban a little. **(observation/character)**

27:40 It's then Ichiban overhears some chatter from the homeless. Collectors are coming.  
- One of the homeless just states with resignation that they're early this month.

27:55 Zheng and a crony tell the Homeless to wait by their beds with their cash ready. **(character)**  
- He charges the homeless for the "privilege" of sleeping here, this is his racket. He knows they officially can't be here, and him raising fuss would threaten the camps existence, so they pay the hush money.

- Ichiban asks if this is his land, it is not. Ichiban quickly sees that he too needs this to stay quiet.

**(politics/story)**

- Ichiban tells Nanba to tell Zheng to fuck off, but chiefs orders are to pay up and shut up. Zheng is Yokohama Liumang, a longstanding Chinese Mafia in the area, not the kind to be messed with.

**(story/politics)**

29:00 Ichibna says with an excited smile that he can now repay his debts. Nanba begs him to keep the peace, and seeing as Ichi doesn't have 2000 yen, he's told to hide in a nearby box.

30:20 Zheng comes over and collects from Nanba, belittling him all the way. Nanba contains his anger and hands it over. It's then Zheng notices the box.

- When Nanba says it's some stuff he scrounged, Zheng is quick to decide he wants to look, ignoring any pleas for privacy, calling Nanba trash and forcefully moving him aside to get at his stuff. **(character/story)**

31:10 Ichiban happily greets Zhengs underling, before bursting from the box like a coiled spring, headbutting the triad and landing on his feet. **(story/character)**

- Sick musical sting as Ichiban says Nanba doesn't have to put up with these fools.

31:40 Zheng says if Ichiban is with them, he has to pay rent.

- Ichiban says he's broke, and wouldn't pay if he had money. He is flippant, totally unimpressed with Zheng's game. **(story)**

- Zheng turns his attention to Nanba, taunting that he'll pay for this later. Ichiban demands Nanba be left alone. "That guy saved me life. Hands off him!" **(character)**

- Zheng squares up to Ichiban, trying to act tough, saying Ichiban's bark ain't shit if he can't bite. Some dogs need to be taught the hard way. He's gonna get a pounding for the stretched dog metaphor. **(joke/wordplay)**

32:30 Nanba grabs an umbrella and squares up with Ichiban. At this point he's got no choice but to jump in. "If I'm gonna die, I wanna sock him in the face before I go."

- Zheng fight, and he doesn't even get the boss theme, he gets the street fight music, Yokohama Crack House, a fucking bop. **(music)**

- Ichiban takes contention with these collections **(wordplay/story)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Ijin Three Introduced**

34:40 Zheng yells that Ichiban is gonna die for messing with the Liumang, Ichiban has seen through his scheme. Counting how much he's making and saying it's chump change.

- Zheng just starts screaming louder about siccing the Liumang on him, so Ichi calls his bluff, bring his boys, call the officers. Go report this, and Zheng is shocked.

35:40 Ichiban has cornered him. He can't go report that he got his ass beaten by the homeless while shaking them down for peanuts, and he especially can't report that he was doing this on another gang's territory. The blowback would be disastrous, Zheng has no recourse. He demanded the homeless stay quiet, but he was the one who needed to operate in silence. **(story/politics)**

- Ichiban gets more playful, enjoying having this guy utterly helpless. Taunting his crew to try and anger him further. **(story/character)**

36:30 Zheng screams at Nanba, it's then Nanba refuses to shrink and yells this isn't Liumang turf. Giving Ichiban another nail to hammer into the guys coffin.

- "If you're waltzing across the border to collect, isn't that a turf violation?"

- Ichiban coerces Zheng into not spilling, and all he can do is run with his tail between his legs, trying to make it look like he's in control by saying he's letting them off easy. **(character/story)**

37:50 The chief angrily approaches Ichiban, telling him he was out of line. **(story)**

- Nanba sticks up for us, but the Chief shuts him down with a glare.

- We're warned that if we lay a finger on the Liumang again we'll be out. **(story)**

- Right or wrong, we did threaten the peace, neither of the two can fault the chief. Though Nanba reassures Ichiban that he wasn't really angry at him. Ichiban remains apologetic, realising that he had just gambled far more than his own safety. **(story/politics)**

- Nanba still thinks Ichiban did the right thing, and is sure the others do.

- "I tell ya, you're a real pro at pissing people off." Ichiban is not flattered by the compliment **(character/quote)**

- "Maybe being a pain in the ass is part of your charm."

39:10 Ichiban then asks if the Chinese Mafia is a big deal in Yokohama

39:30 Nanba gives Ichiban the lay of the land with a... Sort of needless diagram

- Nanba sings Akai Kutsu (Red Shoes) as he scrawls a diagram of the gang situation in Yokohama in the dirt. **(trivia)**

- Akai Kutsu is a popular childrens poem, and was written by socialist poet Ujo Noguchi, on account from a family who gave their daughter to an American couple so they could work on a socialist farm. Unbeknownst to the parents, or the writer, the girl had died of tuberculosis in a Tokyo hospital, while they all thought (and the poem imagines) her having become a blue eyed girl in a far off foreign land, with every red shoe and foreigner reminding them of the girl. **(story/trivia)**

40:10 Nanba explains the gang situation.

- The town is divided between the Chinese Yokohama Liumang, the Korean Mafia operating out of the Geomijul (komijul), and the Japanese Seiryu clan. They are collectively called the Ijin-Three.

- Ichiban asks if the Seiryu are an Omi offshoot, they are infact fiercely independent. **(politics)**

- It turns out Ichiban, and all of Yokohama is behind "The Great Wall of Muscle", which not even the Tojo or Omi would dare to breach. The gangs hold the town in a very tense cold war. A powder keg which any spark could blow. Given how dangerous the gangs are and how precarious the place is no one wants to disturb it. It's an uneasy peace which prevents a war. Nanba dread to think what would happen if the balance is upset and war actually erupts. **(politics/story)**

- Ichiban immediately calls the twist, the leaders are only pretending to be on high alert. They just want the image of volatility. What he obvious can't know right now is why, and besides. Nanba immediately shoots that theory down. **(foreshadowing/obervation/story)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Ichiban decides to go to Hello Work**

42:45 Nanba says that everyone knows (they don't) what fuel the groups is a struggle to get stronger, and they're doing it every day. Basically, be careful.

43:20 Despite the warning to be careful Nanba is quite surprised by our luck. Getting shot by our Omi defector boss and then dumped in the one place in Kanto we can't be touched, yeah lets pin that on luck why don't we? **(observation/story/foreshadowing)**

43:55 Ichiban says that bumming around here may not be the wisest move either. So Nanba flippantly tells him to be on his merry way. When Ichiban frustratedly tells him he just might with that attitude. Nanba just wordlessly prods Ichiban's bullet wound, sending a painful reminder through his body. **(story/character)**

- For the here and now, Ichiban is stuck here. But as he grasps his coat pocket he notices something.

44:20 Cuts scene change to proper cutscene mode, Ichiban inspects his pocket and finds a bloody 10,000 yen bill. Nanba tells him to hide it, but it's too late, the whole camp has noticed Ichiban's seeming good fortune. **(story)**

- They all rush over, one of the more shameless bums trying to claim it. Ichiban is honest, he can't recall having such a bill, and so it's pilfered off of him. **(story)**

- It's as they examine the bill further they notice it's got no back, it's a fake bill, the bums immediately scramble, wanting nothing to do with such a risky object **(politics)**

46:05 As Nanba examines it, he notices that were it not for a missing side it is a very good fake.

- The remaining bums are in a panic, throwing blame about. Nanba defuses the situation, believing Ichiban's innocence, and even proving it by showing it has no bullet hole. Meaning it was placed on him post shooting. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban says he knows nothing about the bill. The bums still want him gone for causing a scene. Nanba asks who really did that, and they could take it to the chief, making them back down.

48:50 Looking at the trouble he's caused and how little he has to show for it. Ichiban decides they should go to Hello Work. **(story/character)**

- He starts trying to hype up the camp to come to Hello Work with him, that they can't just stay and die here. Nanba angrily reminds him where he is and to show some respect. He doesn't know why people come and stay here, it's not always so simple for someone to rejoin society. **(story/theme)**

50:15 Ichiban bites back that circumstances or not, anyone can get a job. Nanba gets genuinely furious as he reminds Ichiban that isn't for him to decide. People came here because they were broken, not by choice, not for Ichiban to drag them back to Hello Work, and with that, their problems. **(story/theme)**

- It's a speech that I am sort of mixed on, I get the intent of it. Ichiban is being overly naive, optimistic, refusing to see the world as in any way complicated. His overly positive "come on get up and go" attitude is the way we'd all want to see the world, that it's something which can be solved with a little effort.

- Nanba meanwhile has been amongst these people for months. He has seen the myriad of complicated reasons and insurmountable pains which cause people to wind up here. Going to Hello Work, trying a little harder, is sadly not always a solution, not always a fix. And while it may not look it, they're working hard here in their own way. This place is not just full of people who've given up on life, it's people who have had to carve out a new one, one which will not be understood, and even less respected, by nobody but those in your well worn shoes.

**(story/theme/observation)**

- Nanba bitterly reminds Ichiban he can't make people act like him.

- Over this entire scene *The Only Way Out* is playing. **(story/music)**

## YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – The Ryuugyo Party Chat

52:00 With Ichiban's lecture done with and the boy genuinely regretful for making a scene. Nanba then says with a smile there does so happen to be one guy with a criminal record lying low.

- "Me" he says with a sudden smile, he's down to try out hello work. **(story)**

- Ichiban is confused, asking if he isn't a former nurse, that's irrelevant now, Nanba has joined the party!

52:40 As we walk out of the Homeless Camp, we get introduced to Party Chats, a form of walk and talk collectible. It uses this mandatory party chat for an important thematic choice, talking about Ichiban's tattoo. The name of the talk is "Weight of the Dragon" **(party chat/backstory)**

- Ichiban's back has some backstory **(bad wordplay/joke)**

- Nanba asked if Ichiban has a dragon on his back. Ichiban says it's a dragonfish (a ryuugyo)

- Ichi confesses he wanted a dragon, but dragon's are the top of the food chain, not something a fresh faced rookie can rock. He says he hopes that one day he'll earn his place, and then his dragonfish will shine even brighter than a dragon. **(story/backstory)**

- "Heh, dreaming big huh?"

- Nanba says then they'd better start with finding a job, and Ichi apologises to his little Dragonfish **(backstory)**

- *It's a cute little bit of extra dialogue, I kinda wish there were more plot governed party chats which could function akin to Codec dialogue. Fleshing out story bits which don't need a dedicated cutscene.*

- *It's a bit of a metatextually humble fourth wall break for Ichiban to say he hopes he'll "one day earn his place and shine brighter than a dragon" The in-universe meaning is obvious, the out-of-universe addressing the player one is moreso. Earn the players love. **(observation)***

- We can also dig into the Ryuugyo and what it represents. The Dragonfish is a carp that has ascended the Dragon Gate and is undergoing transformation into a dragon. It is effectively "Like a Dragon", it symbolises growth and change. Which this chapter shows in abundance both for the series gameplay and Ichiban's situation. New city, new gameplay, new mechanics, a whole heaping of change. Add on Ichiban's job title repeatedly changing as the situation develops (eventually changing into a whole new job). The idea of growth and change is woven into the fabric of the game. **(observation)**

- Ichiban will ever only be like a dragon, never the dragon itself, but he's arguably something even greater, a man capable of change. **(observation)**

- RGG Online also reveals this tattoo to be another Utabori. While this is canonically debateable I want to quote a scene where we see Ichi's tattoo being applied. Said by Utabori:

"A long time ago, I tattooed two men at the same time. One with a dragon, and one with a koi.

What's on your back falls between the two ... a koi transforming into a dragon ... a ryuugyo. Will it make it through the Dragon Gate and become a true dragon? ... Or will it be swept away by the current and sink to the depths? That depends on you. Because a tattoo is something that can only be made to shine by the one who bears it."

- This would suggest Ichiban is framed as something of a composite between Ichiban and Nishiki, it's a reading I've seen which has merit, but it's not one I personally find all that interesting beyond being neat trivia. **(trivia/observation)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – The Harbor Light Gig Where We're in the Dark**

55:50 Arriving at Hello Work, the place is packed, and with their advanced ages (Ichiban 42 and Nanba 41 (he thinks) he does not fancy their odds against the young. Ichiban thinks passion will pull them through.

- Beurocracy cares not for passion however, infact it probably has a form to dispassionately dismantle it. With no addresses all they can do is pass Ichiban along to a far less helpful support centre. **(story/theme/joke/wordplay)**

- Ichiban tries to argue but there is no bending the rules for him. Ichiban has to go. Nanba's luck was no better.

"For us, when God closes a window, he closes a door while he's at it."

- The guy ahead of them in the cue, an angry drunk, asks if the two want to come drink with him, he's quite rudely told they're nothing like him. He's pissed, but he still got up and gave it a go this morning!

59:00 Just as Nanba complains that he should have gone fishing, an older man comes along with a shady job offer, a gig at a bar called Harbor Light by the Sakura River. No details about the job, but 5000 yen cash in hand **(story)**

- As Ichi and Nanba take the gig and head off, the old man is told off for soliciting people for work, only for the receptionist to realise it's the director offering under the table jobs to those who can't make ends meet through proper channels. **(story)**

- *Before the Director stepped in with an off the books offering, all Hello Work could do was say goodbye and good luck. With no home they had no way of addressing the problem. In this way, Ichiban was saved by yet another grey zone. **(joke/wordplay/observation)***

- I just realised this is spelled out by the director mentioning how "not everyone sees laws in black and white." **(observation/dialogue)**

01:03:00 Ichiban and Nanba arrive at Harbor Light.

- The actual Mama at the bar had no idea we'd be coming. We were actually brought here by Hamako, proprietress of a nearby brothel looking out for the local bar district. **(story/character)**

- The Mama says she can't pay for this, Hamako mentions that 5000 is good money for the risk. Ichiban is not too happy to learn there's risk involved. **(story)**

- Hamako explains the gig, along the entire waterfront all the bars are hooked up to a massive tangle of cables, they're siphoning electricity away from the buildings and too the Geomijul, the Korean Mafia is robbing power while the bars have to foot the bill. **(story)**

- Ichiban says to just report them, Nanba points out the police are going nowhere near Geomijul. Ichiban thinks he's joking **(world/story)**

- The oddly informed Nanba points out no one who got close to Geomijul got back out alive regardless of which side of the law they were on. **(politics/story/foreshadowing)**

01:06:30 Ichiban starts trying to propose solutions, all easily shot down by Nanba. With no solution Nanba is very, very insistent they pull out of this. Only to learn Hamako sort of already did. **(joke/wordplay)**

- Ichiban says to just cut the power, Nanba calls him stupid (that'd obviously have repercussions), Hamako concurs, she cut the power yesterday. **(story/character)**

- She says the mama tried to stop her, but Hamako got pissed and just did it "Guess I've hit that age." I like Hamako, she's fun, she gets things done. **(observation/character)**

- They threw a brick through the window warning to turn the power back on. Nanba is exasperated, he wants out. Knowing the Geomijul will definitely exact some form of vengeance on them for the transgression. **(story)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Harbor Light is Saved**

01:09:10 Nanba is arguing with Hamako, finding her an insane, impulsive old woman who just put all of their lives at risk with no regard to the danger. He wants nothing to do with Geomijul.

- Hamako tells him to go then. He turns to leave, apology from the Mama, but Ichiban has no interest in following. He says they can't stand for this. **(story/character)**

01:10:20 Nanba tries to convince Ichiban, but he's unshakeable in this. "If I can help somebody out and get paid to do it, that's my kinda job." **(character/dialogue)**

- He says this with happiness in his voice, Hamako is smiling wide, she likes us.

- And Ichiban is roping Nanba back into this, he gives up, yelling that he's in "Happy now?!" **(story/character/dialogue)**

01:11:30 The bar is open, and the gig begins, with sitting down and drinking on the job.

- Nanba is downing his drink. Ichi tells him to relax "We might not die."

- Nanba is not happy to be risking his life for a measly 5000 yen (£26)

01:12:50 Nanba does question what's going on. The Geomijul have been quiet for a long time. So why hit up a bar now? Ichiban supposes it could be an empty threat and Nanba concurs. Saying that since the people of Ijincho are terrified of them, the threat alone would work. **(politics/story)**

01:13:50 Ichiban and Nanba start getting jumpy. Ichiban can swear he spots someone watching across the river, and the sound of popping sets Nanba off, before it's revealed to be popcorn on the stove. **(story/character)**

01:14:15 But then the disshevelled bum from Hello Work walks in, dragging a sledgehammer behind him. Ichiban tackles the guy before he can do any damage, then skips a chase segment as they catch him at the bridge. **(story/gameplay/joke/observation)**

- He was offered good money by an unknown guy to wreck the bar (for a million yen, he got the better deal, but now he's gotta deal with me) **(joke/observation)**

- He'd have got the better deal, if only he didn't have to deal with me **(joke/wordplay/observation)**

01:16:50 They try to get a name out of the guy, only to be told "You wanna know, ask the bitch yourself."

- Before they can interrogate him further crossbow bolts are loosed across the bridge, and the bum makes a run for it. Ichiban tries to give chase, but heeds Nanba's warning not to run into Geomijul **(story/word)**

- While the two are on the bridge trying to work out what's next, Nanba notices a crossbowman in a geomijul window and the two run for cover. **(story)**

01:18:10 Realising there's no way out, Ichiban makes an all or nothing play. He leaves cover and walks out into the open.

- Spreading his arms wide and calling out Geomijul why he has an audience. He makes an argument that killing them would be a hassle, and the bar is on the verge of closing anyway. So they're not getting power back regardless. He asks they give it up. Nanba wishes Ichiban would give it up!

- Ichiban goes on that stealing electricity is lame and Nanba resigns himself to his fate.

- A final bolt is fired, scraping Ichiban just across the cheek. Ichi doesn't flinch, just asking "We good, then?" And the crossbows are withdrawn. Ichiban wins.

- Ichiban jumps for joy and thanks them for doing business, Nanba is in utter disbelief as Ichi casually starts making his way back to the bar as if that was nothing. **(story/character)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Bleach Japan Arrive**

01:20:10 Ichiban and Nanba return to Harbor Light. Mama and Hamako pleased as punch, a phone call from Matsuo (the attacker) says the matter is settled, they won't be stealing any more electricity. Ichiban is suddenly doubtful, unsure if Matsuo was really Geomijul, Nanba is just elated, beyond surprised they pulled it off. **(story/character)**

01:21:05 Hamako asks how Ichiban pulled it off, Ichi says he just did what he was asked too, nothing special. They're given the money, 5000 yen total.

- Nanba now gripes his life is only worth 13 quid, and Hamako says she has more work lined up tomorrow if they're taking, cleaning out her restaurant, the job is taken.

01:22:30 There's a sweet moment where Hamako, just as she's leaving, realises she never got their names.

- Ichiban swears his name isn't fake. There's a little pause before Hamako says with a smile. "It's a nice name, wear it proudly." I just like that moment. **(story/character/dialogue/observation)**

01:25:10 The next morning Ichiban and Nanba arrive at Hamako's restaurant, she's sat outside having a smoke.

- Hamako gets up and wakes up her staff, they have to leave until the cleaning is done. This is only a restaurant on paper. It is in actuality a brothel. **(story/world)**

01:27:00 Ichiban and Nanba get to work, Nanba obviously a lot more uncomfortable than the soapland raised Ichiban.

- The work is interrupted when they hear a chant outside. "Illegal prostitution has to go! Get out of Ijincho!"

- Outside, a procession of protestors approaches Hamako's establishment. They are Bleach Japan, wearing a dignified BJ shirt with stark black and white colourings. They make their presence very much known.

### **Blowjob Japan Iconography**

- *Their logo design is strong. The white background with their logo in black is great. The white being stronger gives off an impression of their purity, but the fact their logo is in black shows what's at the very dark heart of the operation. A cruel disregard for people. Using this moral outrage not for any good, but to be a pain to others. The square pattern of whites and blacks forming into a more solid block is a visual signifier of their goals, but read right to left demonstrates they're actually just eroding away at good people, in the dark to who they're really serving.*

- *Plus there's the straightforward joke their anti sex work protestors knocking around with gigantic BJ shirts on.*

- *Kume takes the motif further, his white shirt over a black undershirt shows he's a man on a moral crusade but with no good intent. He's in this to belittle, to put others down, to yell at the parts of society he doesn't like, not because he understands or cares about the people in that situation, but to feel better about himself, to feel important. **(story/character/design/observation/post-note)***

01:27:50 Nanba explains who Bleach Japan are.

- An NPO founded roughly a decade and a half back with the slogan "Bleaching the grey zones white." They yell about sex work, which exists in a legal loophole.

- "You know how things fall into the grey area, neither black or white? Like it's technically illegal, but the cops look the other way cause it's traditional?" **(story/politics)**

- Prostitution in Japan exists in a grey zone, the legal definition of prostitution feeling intentionally worded to make only a very narrow window of compensated sex legal while the overall practice is allowed to continue at the laws discretion. A loophole left open by arbitrary wording, which certain people see as obscene, and not a real solution. **(trivia)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – Bleach sent running**

01:28:15 Nanba continues explaining Bleach Japan

- They think grey zones are hotbeds of crime, and want a crackdown
- Nanba says the group has spread all over the country. Which makes sense given their founder is Ryo Aoki, the Governor of Tokyo and head of the Kamurocho 3K plan **(backstory)**
- Ryo Aoki is a very popular figure, played well with the media and got popular with young voters, he left Bleach Japan to be Governor, but still lends them support. **(backstory/politics)**

01:29:35 Outside, the head of the group (Kume), starts yelling that this place is registered as a restaurant. “But we all know the second floor isn’t serving food. All the waitresses even bring is tea.” How’d you know that you damn coomer? **(story/joke/observation)**

- He keeps going, saying that what really happens upstairs is “surely nothing decent.”
- Who is this for? Well, for him and his pack. Everyone who would be here would know what’s going on (as Kume acknowledges) but look the other way to get on with their day. (as Kume doesn’t understand) This is really just a loud ass walking tour with extra steps. **(observation/story)**
- This place has been committing crimes in broad daylight, and the girls are too brainwashed to realise it. He claims.

01:30:30 At this point Hamako steps out, yelling that her girls are hard workers.

- Kume rebuts that hard work doesn’t make it legal. Hamako says kids have no right to be telling others how to live their lives.
- Kume then bites back (not really relevantly) why register yourselves as a restaurant? Because some people like to eat out, Kume. **(joke/wordplay)**

01:31:10 Hamako says it’s about protecting what’s important. Kume just keeps yelling, accusing “protecting what, your debts?”

- Hamako is furious, asking if he’s ever considered why a woman might risk her body. They have to provide for those close to them. This emotional appeal is immediately twisted by Kume to suit his ends. Stirring up outrage that “they raise children with this dirty money.”
- Kume is effective, I want to reach through the screen and wring his neck.

**(observation/character)**

- That’s a recognisable MO, don’t engage in good faith, twist your opponents words, and ignore everything that isn’t useful to the argument you’ve already settled on. **(observation)**

01:31:55 Last night we saw Hamako deal with an enemy she can face. The power stealing Geomijuls could be reasoned with. Kume, a moral crusader with a dim view of this black and white world, cannot be reasoned with, because in his eyes your existence is unreasonable. **(observation)**

01:32:20 He demands to see one child happily raised by a prostitute, and this summons ICHIBAN! “I never minded it!”

- Ichiban, stood in the second floor window with a bucket full of cum. Finally stuns Kume into silence. He warns them he has a lot of trash up here. “It’d be more at home with you!”
- The threat breaks their ranks, and Blowjob Japan beats a hasty retreat. Hamako is impressed, Ichi gives a thumbs up. I love this guy. **(story/character/moment)**
- If you could show me anyone looking more heroic holding a bucket full of cum... I don’t want to see it but I’d be impressed. **(joke/observation)**

01:33:30 Later that night Hamako gives Ichi and Nanba the skinny.

- Bleach have been here for a few years now and have gotten many places shuttered. Hamako is holding out for her workers, they’ve got nowhere else to go. But her fate isn’t in her hands, she’s leasing the land and if the owner wants her gone, that’s it. **(story/backstory/politics)**

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – A Home!**

01:34:10 Kume returns with a more underhanded method. He's grabbed some local toughs and decided to treat them to a meal at Hamako's joint.

- He called Hamako's bluff, as a restaurant, she has to serve.
- Hamako plays along as best she can, offering leftover crackers and cookies, 10k a pop.
- Ichiban steps in, he is not playing along with the mindgame and simply tells them to get lost. Nanba prods one who naturally overacts and takes the opportunity to turn this violent. **(story)**

01:38:20 The thugs ran off, Ichiban doubts Bleach Japan's goals, wondering if they really think they can "bleach" the grey zones.

- Hamako sees through them, they pretend to be noble, but all they want are donations. **(story)**

01:39:10 Nanba and Ichiban are about to head home when Hamako has an idea.

- She offers the two a room, a place to stay. They're floored, but Hamako is quick to add she has her own reasons.
- Over a video of Ichiban and Nanba packing their stuff she explains. If they live in her building they get rights of residence. With live in residents she has some protection against the least holder if they try to drive her out. **(story)**
- Ichiban asks if she's really sure, Hamako says to think of it as a long time job. Ichiban is happy to be her live in security guard, so the deal is struck.
- Nanba and Ichiban are seen off from the Homeless camp.

01:42:00 Ichiban and Nanba arrive in their new home, it's a one room, and is damp in a few disquieting places, but it is home. Diving headfirst onto used futons was maybe not the wisest move, but they're so, so happy just to have a roof over their head. **(funny moment)**

- Ichiban is through the damn roof, he's so chuffed to have this place. Nanba's gripes cannot bring him down right now.

01:42:45 Nanba says he never thought he'd escape the homeless life and sincerely thanks Ichiban.

- Ichiban says he should be thanking him, he'd be dead otherwise. And he grabs each of them a cup sake and asks if he was really a nurse.
- When asked why he gave it up, he said he was selling drugs he smuggled out of hospital, made a pretty penny. This is a lie, but it's a lie to protect someone besides himself **(character/observation)**
- Ichiban bluntly states that was a boneheaded move, Nanba doesn't argue.

01:43:40 Ichiban then asks, with no irony or hesitation, why not just start over as something new?

- Nanba, who unlike Ichiban can get tired. Says if only it were so easy, before turning the question on Ichiban, does he have a goal?

01:43:55 Ichiban actually hesitates, shrinking a little as he tries to answer.

- "The footsteps I've followed my whole life have vanished. I was so focused on them, I never thought of much else" **(dialogue/character)**
- Now Nanba says Ichiban can do whatever he sets his mind to, but Ichiban disagrees, saying he's crossed over 40. Great moment as Nanba calls him on it "Hey, wise guy, you just told me the exact same thing!" **(dialogue/story)**
- Ichiban sheepishly apologises. I love this scene, how this big question starts off as sort of uncomfortable, a big question both of them feel unequipped to answer.

### **YLAD – CHAPTER 3 CONT – A Hero!**

01:44:40 Nanba asks Ichiban what he wanted to be when he was a kid.

- Ichiban at first deflects, unable to hide his embarrassment. Nanba prods, and Ichiban gives up after a moment of hesitation, he wanted to become a hero. **(story/character)**

- Nanba springs back up with some surprise, Ichiban has to explain, a hero, like Dragon Quest. He explains with some embarrassment.

- Nanba laughs at him for wanting to be a hero, and Ichiban asks with a pout what's wrong with that, he was free to choose. Defending himself, saying he's allowed to dream.

- Nanba stops laughing, pulls himself closer to Ichiban and says he's damn well right, he encourages him to go ahead and become a hero, now Ichiban is embarrassed and doubtful. Saying it doesn't pay the bills.

- Nanba puts it that if a hero kills enough slimes, he levels up, levelling up as a lifestyle.

- "Grinding at age 40, huh?"

- Ichiban laughs, he's in, "Let's go do some hero shit!"

- The two toast to a brighter future, the hero of tomorrow.

- It was at this moment I really knew I loved this game, as these two new friends toast in their one bedroom flat, taken out of a brothel so the owner can hold her lease, to the bright future surely ahead of them... **(observation/scene/story)**

01:47:05 We then cut to someone whose own future is looking pretty bleak. Matsuo, the man who assaulted the bar is tied to a chair, begging for his life. It falls on deaf ears, and he is shot through the head with a crossbow. A pretty stark contrast, a reminder of what world we're in.

**(story/tone/observation/juxtaposition)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 4 - The Dragon of Yokohama

00:30 Outside Ichiban's apartment, Adachi finishes his own cup sake, his own little toast, then sneaks past Hamako and her girls as they finish up their work for the night. **(story)**

- He makes his way to Ichiban's room, sneaks up to the sleeping man, and puts him in an arm lock when Ichiban awakes and quickly goes to ward off the intruder, Adachi armbars Ichiban, smiling at himself for getting the drop on the guy. **(story/character)**

01:35 Fade to black, resuming in the morning. Ichiban introduces Adachi. Former detective, now former DMV clerk. His stunt on the roof cost him his job, and the pension he was betting on to see him through old age. **(story/character)**

- He tracked Ichiban down via the smartphone he gave him, he couldn't call ahead as Ichiban hadn't been able to charge it until he got the room. Ichiban struggles with the concept of GPS, tries poorly to play it off. **(story)**

03:45 Ichiban asks if Adachi losing his job is his fault. Adachi says of course it is. I mean okay, I didn't come with you to Yokohama initially, but you get us up to that roof bud. **(observation)**

- Adachi reveals the meeting where Ichiban was shot was being held between Omi Alliance officers who were in deep with the Tokyo PD. Tokyo PD called Adachi's actions disgraceful, so Kanagawa rolled over and gave him the axe. He says if Ichiban is truly sorry, he'll cooperate and help him get the commissioner. **(story/character)**

04:55 Nanba isn't sure what Adachi wants, so he reiterates for him (and the audience)

- Adachi is positive Horinouchi took bribes to allow the Omi to expand into Kamurocho. Nanba asks how Ichiban is meant to help with that, so he re-explains how Masumi Arakawa has ties with Horinouchi. **(politics/story)**

- "Kasuga here used to serve him. At least, till he got shot in the chest, right?" Say that to the guy who needs to help you eh? **(observation)**

- Ichiban says Masumi is still his boss, Adachi tells him to wake up. **(character/story)**

05:30 Nanba asks a question Ichiban hadn't thought of, what *does* Adachi want with the commissioner?

- Revenge, twenty years back an elderly couple was murdered by a burglar. The suspect was a man named Kusumi, who Adachi arrested. When a neighbour provided an alibi Adachi reported it. But HQ weren't happy, and they browbeat the witness until he pulled his testimony. And so an innocent man with a wife and kids was sentenced to 17 years, and wound up hanging himself in jail. **(story)**

- Why did this happen? Because Horinouchi had recently been offered a new position, Kusumi's innocence would have been politically disadvantageous, bogging down Horinouchi's promotion. So an innocent man has to go down. **(politics)**

07:45 Adachi continues that a lot of officers in Kanagawa collude with the Ijin three. A scandal is inevitable given enough time. So politically savvy cops and higher ups do whatever they can to escape Kanagawa. **(politics)**

- Even if it means they themselves do something as awful as knowingly jailing an innocent man. They don't dislike Kanagawa because it's dirty, but because it can stain their own career.

**(observation/politics)**

- This also does a tidy enough job explaining why calling the cops is not something Ichi can do, not that I ever really thought that's a way the story should play out, it'd be kinda boring. **(observation)**

08:10 Adachi attempted to leak the Alibi to the media, but Horinouchi is connected. He caught it before it got out, and Adachi goes from stomping the streets to stamping the sheets. **(wordplay)**

- Adachi admits the smart thing to do would be to let it go, but he knows he can't do that. So he's a dick, used to be one even, but he's got integrity. **(observation/character/wordplay/joke)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – The HERO is off to Hello Work

09:00 The mood drops, luckily Hamako drops in to yell at them that it's past 10 and they gotta go to Hello Work.

- Adachi, freshly unemployed says he'll come with.
- Nanba asks if he doesn't have anything in the bank. Nope, he was betting it all on the pension.
- "Can't believe they let a degenerate like you issue parking tickets." "Shut up! Drinking and women were expensive hobbies!" A life well lived man. **(joke/observation)**
- *Very good joke by the game too*

10:20 Koichi Adachi has joined the party! And Nanba's job changed from Deadbeat to Freelancer!

10:40 After crossing the bridge, the three come across a bat embedded in the ground. The three gather around it in some childish fascination. **(story)**

- Nanba fails to free it, figuring they could pawn it for some scratch. He tells Adachi to have a go, somehow already knowing Adachi is strong. It doesn't shift.
- Ichiban finally has a go, and like King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, it comes free. With electrical bursts and beams of light signalling this bat has found its true owner. **(story?)**
- Ichiban hoists the bat to the sky, sending a beam up in the air.

12:35 Adachi asks just how Ichiban freed it. Ichi jokes only a hero could pull it out.

- Nanba explains Ichi's heroic ambitions to Adachi, who says it isn't exactly a holy sword. Ichiban doesn't care, he's off in his own little world, and Nanba is happy to play along. **(story/character)**
- Adachi asks if these two are done roleplaying so they can get going.

13:15 Then some dad hunters turn up, giving Kasuga an opportunity to smite some evil.

- The battle begins, and the normal foes warp into exaggerated caricatures. Adachi says mr. unemployed has been gaming too much. Ichiban doesn't mind, makes the battle more fun to him! **(character)**
- This is where the sujimon get soft introduced. Enemies are now exaggerated, comedic, representative of the types of weirdoes you'd see on the streets, made evil, twisted, fit for the role of spoof RPG monster. **(observation)**

15:30 After the battle, Ichiban asks if they really didn't see their attackers transform. Adachi says he's delusional, but hey who cares, all heroes are deluded deep down, and it may give Ichiban an edge. That's good enough for Ichi who decides to roll with it. **(character/story/gameplay)**

- Adachi urges them to hurry it up and get to Hello Work then, the party is too poor for herbs. Ichi is hyped, saying it is just like Dragon Quest, they gotta grind some gold first!
- HIS LIFE IS LIKE A VIDEOGAME TRYING HARD TO BEAT THE STAGE

17:40 Outside, the party is attacked by men Adachi arrested... 20 years ago, the Yokohama Pink Panthers. Learning Adachi is no longer a cop, they want some revenge.

- After defeating them, Adachi wonders if being attacked by men he'd long since forgotten arresting is gonna be the norm. Nanba wants nothing to do with him if that's the case, which Adachi brushes off.
- The Pink Panthers warn him they'll be back, they will not. **(story/observation)**

21:10 At Hello Work, it's a lot calmer. Ichiban is called up, and sat behind the desk is the shady guy who gave him a job the other day! **(story)**

- Ichiban is stunned, his shock summons the rest of his party. The Director is quite charmed by Ichi describing them as such, turns out the two are both Dragon Quest fans **(character)**
- The Director warns, this one is on the books, he can only offer them jobs their experience allows. Life is just like an RPG after all. **(story)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Arrival in Otohime Land / Meet Nonomiya

23:20 The director slides a paper across the desk. The job is at a “special” bathhouse.

- Adachi protests that he should surely get something better. Kanbe says that Adachi is old and single, he’s definitely used such services before. Adachi can only protest that it’s not *that* illegal.

**(character)**

- We’re told what we need to do is build up some work history, and warned the owner of the soapland is eccentric. **(story)**

24:35 On the way to our interview at the Soapland, we’re interrupted by the introduction of Sujimon, weirdo freaks the Sujimon professor wants us to help him study, our sujindex is an app in our phone.

27:00 The Ichigang arrives at Otohime Land, a soapland.

- Behind the desk the proprietor Nonomiya rapidly responds to updates from his girls. He’s presented as an uncaring skinflint. With a shrill, rodent like voice, made even more piercing when he puts on an exasperated tone whenever they ask for help.

27:35 He gets a call from Nanoha, she’s asking for time off. He says she’s taking too much, to get checked out, get some meds. Con a doctor if she needs to.

- He then plays on guilt, asking how she’ll pay for her dad’s care with all this time off. “It’s a shame he won’t just die, but I guess he’s really hanging on, huh?”

- When she starts crying, he tells her to knock it off and come back soon.

28:25 Nonomiya leaves the desk and comes over to the waiting room where the lads are sat.

- He asks if they’re here for the job. Nanba and Adachi want out, they turn to Ichiban, who is sat wordlessly observing Nonomiya.

- Nonomiya, feeling insulted, throws it back in their faces by saying Hello Work begged him to take them on. **(story)**

- Nanba and Adachi are in agreement, the only thing they hate is wasting Kanbe’s generosity. They turn to Ichiban and say there are plenty of other jobs to be done. **(story/character)**

29:35 Cuts scene mode change! Ichiban is keeping still. Watching Nonomiya. Nanba is unsure what’s the holdup. Adachi is sure he has the measure of Nonomiya, having spent enough time in sex shops to know his deal.

- Ichiban aggressively stands, Nonomiya is immediately intimidated, saying he’s backed by the Seiryu Clan. Which makes Adachi want to scam even faster.

- Nonomiya hits the wall behind him, Ichiban’s hand slamming beside his head. He stares Nonomiya down one last time... “I’ll take the job... Boss” He says in a gruff tone.

30:30 Nanba and Adachi are baffled, and Ichiban’s tone resumes its usual chipperness as he explains his sixteen years experience in Soaplands to a terrified Nonomiya.

- Ichi says he can even scout. Nonomiya asks about the other two, but before he can answer, Bleach returns yet again.

31:15 Nonomiya has been dealing with them for awhile, saying he’s being targeted as he’s the last joint which is openly a soaphouse. Bleach figures if they can shut this joint down it’ll send a shockwave through the area.

- Adachi asks if the Seiryu has done anything, they made a pointless, token effort. **(story/politics)**

- Not to mention Bleach Japan types are usually read up on Anti-Yakuza law.

**(story/foreshadowing?)**

- He’s been losing employees due to the harassment, but can stay open as long as he has girls.

- Nanba says not to count on it with the way he treats them.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Chase Bleach from Otohime Land

31:55 Nonomiya almost proudly explains how while his girls are Japanese, their situations are often just as precarious as an immigrant. He only hires people who are so close to the edge they can't step back. They will work like their lives depend on it. **(story/character)**

- Nanba calls him scum, this isn't stable work, it's exploitation.

- Nonomiya brushes it off "Lust weighs on the soul just as heavy as hunger, if not more so(...) So long as women are willing to be on the menu, men are going to place orders." **(quote/dialogue)**

- That doesn't make you sound less scummy, if anything it makes it worse. **(observation)**

33:30 Ichiban doesn't care about any of this, he just asks that if he can see Bleach Japan off, will they be hired? Adachi and Nanba still protest, Ichi tells them to shut up, they need work. **(story)**

- Nonomiya is on board.

34:00 Kume is not happy to see Ichiban again. He turns to his crowd and hypes them up, calling people who work here criminals.

- Ichiban asks why they're not being arrested if they're criminals. And Kume says it's because they're evading the law by registering as a bathhouse. "This is what we call a grey zone!"

He launches into a speech.

- Ichiban just asks "what about you?" If Kume is a pure and clean soul. Never committed a crime, baiting the hook by making Kume profess his own moral perfection. **(observation/story)**

35:00 It's funny how Ichiban's first questions don't land. Asking if he's never gone for a leak outside. Yeah that's a crime but like, you would do it if push came to shove. Then he asks if he's ever sped with the same casual tone, maybe it's me but speeding seems a whole lot worse than public urination. **(observation)**

- Adachi doubts he's never not even gone 1KPH over. Kume says it's on them to prove. Now the problem is, he has fallen into their trap. He has to be squeaky clean. Bleach after all.

**(joke/wordplay)**

35:15 Ichiban asks if this many people are allowed to be blocking the road. Kume proudly presents a permit to march on this road. Not only is Kume currently *not on the road* but stood on Soapland property.

- Kume wordlessly runs back, failing to actually confront his hypocrisy. Kasuga continues that he's gone over the people limit for his permit.

- Kume just makes an excuse that the protest picked up more steam, it wouldn't be worth calling for a headcount. **(character)**

36:25 Adachi says Ichi is on the right track, and delivers the killing blow.

- He says this is a march, that is predicated on marching, Kume has stopped to make a speech, this is now obstructing traffic.

- Kume says even if that's *technically* a rule, every protest stops to give speeches!

- Kasuga says that's called a grey zone, fucking destroyed!

- "Gahhh!" says the overacting Kume, blown away by the logical critical hit. Ichiban enjoys the irony, using a grey zone to protest a grey zone. Kume beats a retreat, refusing to take any of what happened to heart.

37:15 Inside, Nonomiya is going over their documents, he recognises Ichiban's address as Hamako's brothel.

- Nonomiya moves on to Nanba, Ichiban is surprised to learn that was his real name. Nanba says all that mattered was Ichiban believing it was. Nonomiya is surprised at Adachi's age, 59. But he'll take the lot.

- Nanba asks if the three of them are not red flags, Nonomiya can't be all that picky.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Nanoha at the cafe

38:35 Nonomiya has a job for us, he produces a picture. It's Nanoha. His top earner five years running, or some other verb anyway. **(joke/awful joke/probably keeping it)**

- Nanba is about to comment on her being on the older side but stops himself. Nonomiya doesn't deny it. Saying if all a girl has is looks and youth, she'll never last. She needs the ability to provide emotional depth.

- Adachi concurs "Men are lonely creatures when you get down to it." **(story/dialogue)**

- Nonomiya says "the depths of a woman's ability to give him that is usually proportional to her own baggage." which is pretty depressing a thought.

39:25 Nonomiya explains Nanoha's baggage.

- Her father can no longer take care of himself, so she quit her job at a big firm. Taking sex work as it allowed her to provide the care he needed.

- Ichiban comments it's brave to skip all the steps between white collar job and prostitution is brave. That bravery, that desperation, is why she's so good at it. She works because her father's life depends on it.

39:45 Recently however, she has started skipping days more and more.

- Between her time off and Bleach Japan, sales are slumping. Nonomiya needs a hand.

- Nanba readies for a fight, misunderstanding what he meant. Funny moment.

40:00 We're to find out what's going on with Nanoha. Ichiban wonders if she has a side piece. Nonomiya says Ichi does know this industry.

- The concept of a side piece is explained. Girls using the soapland to find customers, using the business as a middle man then cutting them out to keep all the profits. **(background/trivia)**

- We're told if she has a side piece, make sure he never comes near Nanoha again. **(story)**

- Adachi asks if this isn't a Seiryu job. Nonomiya says to think of them like car insurance, if you use em, they up your premiums. Ichiban is actually impressed with Nonomiya. "Heh, that's a boss for you. Always a trick or two." **(dialogue/character)**

41:40 We're told the first place to check is nearby Pocket Cafe. **(objective/story)**

42:15 Outside, the group finally talks about Nonomiya.

- Adachi says they've been brought on as cheap detectives. Nanba says he's a scumbag who only cares about his bottom line.

- Ichiban disagrees, saying that while he doesn't like how Nonomiya talks about people, he knows the business and doesn't sugarcoat it. Having seen all kinds of scumbags in Kamurocho, he feels Nonomiya has a lot of love for his girls. Better than someone who doesn't care *why* they're working there. **(story/character)**

- *I can think of reasons why an employer knowing their employees circumstances may not be for altruistic reasons, but we're meant to take Ichiban's experience at his word here.*

**(observation/character/backstory)**

- I do think they maybe went too hard with Nonomiya so this idea would land, but it does make Ichiban's disco elysium empathy check look kind of insane. **(observation/joke)**

44:10 The group arrives at Pocket Cafe. Spotting Nanoha, Adachi advises they wait to get proof rather than confront her. **(story/character)**

- A suited man comes in and sits across from Nanoha, Adachi has Ichiban call his phone, and he plants it behind them.

- They overhear snippets of a conversation. Surprised when it's Nanoha giving cash to the man. Two million, with only three mil left. She has ten days left before something. She wants to meet her father but can't.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Sunlight Castle**

48:15 Ichiban decides they'll have to ask her what just happened. But bumps into some thugs on the way over. When the fight is over, she is long gone. But the suited man is just leaving the cafe. So they'll tail him instead.

51:20 They track him across town to a very ritzy old folks home, Sunlight Castle. Ironic name given the theme. The place is secure, the man had to use a card to get in, and the doors are monitored.

**(story)**

- This answers part of why she was paying him. Buy Ichiban is suspicious why she's paying 2 million in cash to a retirement home, and why she can't see her dad. **(story/foreshadowing)**

53:15 Ichiban decides to get to the heart of it, ringing the intercom and asking for "Nanoha's dad".

- They're obviously not allowed in, with visitations restricted to family. Ichiban changes his tune, saying he's scoping the place out for his dad on Nanoha's recommendation. Entry is still not permitted without a contract. Adachi finds that fishy.

- Nothing to be done for now but return to Otohime land. **(objective)**

55:00 Intro to Poundmates

55:45 Back at Otohime land, they look up Sunlight Castle. The entry fees are high, and their "excellent course" is downright extortionate.

- Nonomiya says this is exactly the kind of thing Nanoha would do for her dad. She does everything for him, and wants him to pass peacefully. Nonomiya is on the verge of tears, this must be that emotional depth he talked about. **(story/joke/observation)**

57:20 Ichiban asks Nonomiya if this was ever about a side piece. No, this was genuine worry for one of his girls. "When they're at work, I can protect my girls. But if trouble finds them outside these walls, I'm powerless."

- Adachi is pleased, says it's hard to see he cares when he's an asshole about it. (character)

- Nonomiya says to stop investigating, but Ichiban isn't done. Saying she looked dishevelled, something is still clearly wrong. **(story)**

- Nanba supposes Nanoha won't be let in to see her dad until she has paid the full amount **(story)**

59:15 Adachi says that with so much of the population being elderly, there are plenty of scum cashing in where they can. A place can look clean and be dirty as fuck in the back. Kinda like how this soapland appears incredibly sketchy but is all soapy rainbows and waterslick shines behind the scenes. **(theme/joke/wordplay)**

- They figure they took some of the money upfront, then withheld access to Nanoha's father until its paid. Causing her health to suffer and payments to slow. Adachi guesses that if she misses a payment they kick dad out and keep what they've taken so far. **(story)**

01:01:20 Nonomiya gets up and prostrates himself before the group. Begging them to save Nanoha's father.

- Nanba responds, realistic but gentle, that if it were so easy they'd all agree to do that in a heartbeat. But the place is secure.

- Ichiban has a plan however. He asks if second jobs are okay, they're gonna get hired at Sunlight Castle. **(story)**

- Nonomiya is in, says he'll call ahead to Kanbe to fill him in on the plan. We're raiding a castle lads! This'll look good on a CV! **(story/observation/fantasy/joke)**

01:03:35 Kanbe cannot, Sunlight Castle is a high end establishment, they don't post jobs through Hello Work. But he does get us contractor gigs we can con our way in with. **(wordplay/story/joke)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Infiltrating Sunlight Castle**

01:05:05 “Hmm, yakuza and retirement homes.” Yeah it’s like oil and the contents of a catheter bag. **(godawful joke)**

- Later on: So yakuza and retirement homes, these guys truly were taking the piss... And their pension. **(joke/good joke/wordplay)**

01:05:35 Cut to sometime later and the gang have infiltrated Sunlight Castle. Nanba as a care assistant, Adachi as a guard, and Ichiban is griping about being a janitor, you didn’t mind it under Hamako, suck it up Kasuga! **(joke/observation)**

- As the group talk they say everything here appears above board. Well staffed, guards on patrol, good equipment.

- But they’ve yet to find Nanoha’s dad, and Adachi doubts he’s on the excellent course. Entry is strictly controlled, interviews are held to let people in, it’s filled with corporate bigwigs. Even if she had the money, Nanoha’s social standing wouldn’t cut it. **(story)**

- Ichiban asks if they’ve even checked out the Excellent Room, it’s out of their reach. Only full time medical and security staff allowed.

01:08:30 Ichiban is called away.

- He’s exhausted by his endless round of toilet cleaning. He asks his handler why they haven’t done the top floor, the Excellent Room is out of the contractors hands.

- He pretends to have forgotten something and rushes off, sneaking up to the Excellent Room.

01:10:20 Upstairs, the entrance to the Excellent Room requires clearance he lacks. He hides as he witnesses an old woman being wheeled in, as she realises where she’s going her face is contorted in terror. **(story)**

- She’s wheeled in, the door closes behind her, and all Ichiban hears is a scream. **(story)**

01:11:35 Back at Otohime Land after their shift.

- Adachi has made it and he’s with Nonomiya, Nanba is still working.

- Just before Ichiban can report what he saw Nanba comes in, near dead on his feet, he doesn’t wanna hear what Ichi has to say, he has to be in early tomorrow cause an old woman died.

- Ichiban springs out of his seat, he knows that old woman must have been killed in the Excellent Area

01:12:40 Nanba questions *why* they’d kill their customers, that surely just means less income.

- Adachi corrects him, if the death goes unreported, the home could collect their pensions and medical payments. He even has a picture of a safe where the residents bankbooks are kept.

**(conspiracy/story)**

- Each time a patient dies, the room frees up while the money keeps coming in. They increase their profits with every dead body.

01:13:25 Looking at Adachi’s picture, Nonomiya recognises two of the people in the picture, those guards are Seiryu Yakuza!

- This is a Yakuza racket! They’re posing as security guards, but they’re really of the Ryuto family **(story)**

- Nanba wonders then if Nanoha’s father is already dead, but based on what they overheard at Pocket Cafe he’s likely still alive, but their deadline for keeping him that way is tomorrow! **(story)**

- Funny thing, each time I’ve played through, doing side content or not, I always thought “that conversation was ten days ago?” Apparently the story having a longer time scale was an intended thing, but this is the one time I’ve felt the passage of time, when it snuck up on me.

**(observation/storytelling)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Survive Bar and the Castle Raid**

01:15:30 The police are unlikely to help (having terms with the Yakuza), and even if Nonomiya had the money to bail them out. The Yakuza would likely go ahead with their scheme anyway. It falls to Ichiban to lead the charge.

- He expects a full house bonus, explains the custom to the group, they're risking their lives for a bonus (£15)

01:16:40 Nanba wants to head back, but Adachi asks if they can make a quick stop at a bar he likes. Figures if tomorrow is gonna be messy they may as well throw one back first. **(story/objective)**

01:17:10 A barker hands us an ad for a nearby sex/weapon shop.

- The sexual theme is kinda bolstered by the fact a very strong, very affordable early game weapon is a gigantic massager. **(observation/theme)**

01:17:25 We arrive at Survive Bar at the northern end of the Bar District **(gameplay/objective)**

- Despite being the nicest joint I've ever seen. The place is dead, Adachi one of the few regulars

- And it's ran by... Fucking Kashiwagi! I'm fucking sorry pal! What does it take to take you out! I guess it took that to take you out of the picture!

- Do you know what you did to Kiryu! He mourned you! For an evening, to this guy! Colder than your damn noodles Wags! **(joke/observation)**

- Iroha notes this is the first time Adachi has brought anyone with him. And embarrasses him when she asks if he actually likes these guys, he has to act macho about it. **(character)**

- Still he puts us on his tab so we're solid.

01:19:30 The Karaoke Bar, Survive, has become the new hangout spot for Kasuga and his party! **(gameplay)**

01:20:00 Nanba is out cold, Adachi says tomorrow is a big day, but being with Kasuga, he thinks it'll work out. Ichiban jokingly asks if he's already drunk. Iroha jumps in to say he's drunk on the rush of a hot friendship. **(character)**

- Ichiban is happy to hear Adachi likes them. Under the gruff, jokey exterior is an actual heart.

01:20:55 Get the introduction to Drink Links with Adachi

- I'll move this to post the Dragonfish Quest chapter to the mid-game gameplay breakdown.

01:25:20 Back at work at Sunlight Castle. Ichiban crashes into one of the medical staff, allowing Adachi to nab his security pass in the process **(story)**

01:26:35 In Tatsuro Mukoda's room a doctor approaches. He calls the Director, clearly in on the racket, and tells him the man has been sedated. **(story)**

- He produces a needle, and dithers to say that most people can only hope to go out in their sleep. **(dialogue/story)**

- Before he can inject Tatsuro, Ichiban bursts in, kicks the needle from his hand, and then the doctor to the floor, before Koing him with a series of ground punches.

- Security floods the Excellent Area, the jig is up, the "guards" have produced tazers, not exactly standard issue retirement home equipment outside of Leeds. **(joke)**

- They don't deny that they're Seiryu, and seeing as they've been figured out, what to do with the intruders is simple.

01:30:15 After defeating the guards, Nanba forcefully interrogates the doctor as he stumbles out. He was gonna give him potassium chloride, a lethal injection. We made it in the nick of time.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – The Seiryu Base Raid**

01:31:10 We're not home free yet. On the monitors Ichiban spots the man they saw talking to Nanoha all that 10 days or minutes ago. **(joke/observation)**

01:31:55 Ichiban walks out to face the man, knowing he's Seiryu, Totsuka of the Ryuto.

- Ichiban questions his Yakuza honour. Totsuka flippantly replies they Seiryu does the dirty work society needs them to.

- Ichiban is not satisfied with that answer. "Killing the elderly is dirty work? Fuck right off!" He demands they let everyone here go or he's telling the world. Totsuka just steps forward "That would involve you walking out of here alive."

01:34:40 With Totsuka defeated, they once again demand the Excellent Course residents are let go. Totsuka says he can't do that. Nanba and Adachi try to reopen the door, but it's not budging. The Excellent Area is in lock down and now won't be accessible until tomorrow. **(story)**

01:35:30 Totsuka says he'll call the cops. Ichiban points out how pathetic a Yakuza running to the police is, he doesn't care, he smiles, thinking he has Ichiban licked.

- Well, Jerk Ichiban's chain and he'll just climb yours. He says he'll tattle to the Seiryu. Terrifying Totsuka. He admits to being scared when Ichiban asks, so Ichiban says he'd better come along.

- Totsuka is confused, Ichiban gets in his face and lets him know. "I'm gonna tell the big, scary chairman everything you did and maybe some things you didn't. You've got the Seiryu Clan's name all over this business! If you're a real yakuza, you gotta accept consequences!" **(story/dialogue)**

01:37:30 We arrive outside Seiryu HQ, it's imposing enough, we're given a chance to go and refresh before we go in.

01:38:10 The inside of Seiryu HQ seems ill-defended, but this is quickly revealed to be a trap. The Ichigang are ambushed. This does nothing to deter Ichiban. Who says it's nothing a little force won't solve. Much to the chagrin of the others. **(gameplay/Seiryu Base Raid)**

01:40:20 Defeating the first wave, Totsuka retreats behind a shutter. A ton of Yakuza appear, and the group flees deeper into the building. Managing to hide and let the main horde pass them by.

- They have to then navigate their way to the Chairman. I love this sequence, a strong contrast to prior base raids in the series. Typically a moment of high action. The protagonists getting sick of the bad guys shit and taking the fight to them, a straightforward, cathartic romp.

- This is instead a farce, as the gang bumbles their way through the building. Solving puzzles, backtracking, and being literally thrown off course and having to improvise a new route. Kiryu pulverising Dojima HQ this is not.

- The music is brilliant too, Seiryu Ran makes us feel like we're truly on the run. An intimidating track which reminds us danger is around every corner. Kiryu has been deep in enemy territory many a time, we're not Kiryu, we're in deep shit. **(observation/gameplay/music/story)**

- I do also like how it builds a little story of its own. As we traverse the Seiryu HQ we run into all the family captains and lieutenants one by one, we learn their movesets, their elemental statuses and so on, and we then face all the minibosses as a little party of their own at the end. It's actually a great little narrative threaded through the gameplay which isn't the most common sight in Yakuza titles. **(storytelling/gameplay/observation)**

- They get through just as much on brute force as they do on unpredictability borne of sheer incompetence. Of course the clan can't predict their next move, they have no idea what it is either!

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – Meet Chairman Hoshino**

01:53:40 Finally closing in on the Chairman's office, we catch up with Totsuka, and have to face the amassed Lieutenants (**boss/combat**)

01:56:25 Defeating them, Totsuka is absolutely flummoxed by how the three of us made it this far. Asking to know who they are, even more perplexed by Ichiban's answer that they're employees of *his soapland*.

- He explains they're here helping a fellow employee save her father from his home. He pre-emptively shuts down Totsuka when he tries to argue again they're just doing what society needs. "You can't twist the Yakuza code to suit yourself! You're just a fuckin' punk!" (**dialogue/story**)

01:58:00 The chairman comes out. Demanding to know what this is. Ichiban says they have a request. The chairman asks how he knows they're not assassins as one of his henchman pats them down, finding the bloodied note! (**story**)

- Hoshino stares at the bill, his eyes widen a little. He recognises it. (**foreshadowing**)

- Ichi says he has no idea where it came from, but it has seem to have bought him Hoshino's attention. (**wordplay/joke**)

01:58:45 Inside the Chairmans office, Totsuka has lost face, and a finger is soon to follow. (**wordplay/joke**)

- Captain Takabe is enjoying this, why wouldn't he, he's lost two *thanks* to Totsuka (**character**)

- Tension high, Totsuka tries to get it over with, demanding the tools be brought out.

01:59:10 Hoshino talks to Ichiban, saying that shunning the Yakuza is natural, but he has risked a lot to protect the city from the Geomijul and Liurang.

- Ichi says he figured the Seiryu keeps the balance. Hoshino says the balance is starting to crumble.

- Hoshino says in all businesses the underlings keep things hidden from the boss, but he never suspected Totsuka. Hoshino knew about the facility, he bought the place 30 years ago and restored it into the business it is today, but he was ignorant of the Excellent Room scheme.

02:01:10 Totsuka says he was going to tell the boss once it was fully up and operational, Ichiban starts shouting that the business is wrong, begging him to let the elderly free.

- Hoshino just calmly asks if he gave Ichiban the wrong idea. He thanked Ichiban for telling him about the business, he did not ask for his opinion. (**character/story**)

02:01:50 Ichiban argues, in classic Yakuza fashion, that what he's doing is murder!

- Hoshino points out that misfortune is an inevitable side effect of profit. Misfortune is kinda what criminals peddle in. (**observation/story**)

02:03:15 Hoshino asks Totsuka to explain the nature of his business. It's euthanasia, euthanasia for the elderly of the continent. (**fuck awful pun/joke**)

- It's done at the request of the patient... or the family. Ichiban is dismayed to hear it, this was NANOHA's request? She was paying for it? (**story**)

- She was not, but hey Ichi believes it.

02:03:30 Totsuka says to let lifes cruelty be a lesson to Ichiban, as he readies the knife to take his own finger. But is interrupted by Hoshino, he tells him to keep the finger, and just as Totsuka thinks he's fine and dandy. Hoshino says he does not approve of the business, and has the captains drag him out. (**story/politics**)

02:04:55 Hoshino says their world cannot be judged by simple right and wrong. It's about reputation. Allowing a civilian to trespass would cause their reputation to suffer. He points the blade at Ichiban, saying he disgraced him and the clan. Ichiban does not flinch.

**YLAD - CHAPTER 4 CONT – A happy ending! A not so happy ending!**

02:05:20 Hoshino has the blade to Ichiban's face. "Starting tomorrow, that knowledge will follow you forever."

- Ichiban smiles, saying he got a chill down his spine, and he feels great. This disarms Hoshino, who asks what he means.

- Ichiban says that after 18 years, he thought all the Yakuza he idolised had faded. He's a Yakuza from the time he remembers. Hoshino happily says Ichiban was one of them after all. They weren't just raided by a civilian. This was Yakuza, through and through. **(story/theme/politics)**

02:06:20 He asks what kind of patriarch Ichiban had, and he recounts his backstory to the man. Getting another glint of recognition from Hoshino. **(foreshadowing)**

- As Ichiban leaves, Hoshino stops to ask who his patriarch was. He definitely knows the name Arakawa. Before he can continue, Ichiban sheepishly says that Arakawa shot him the other day. But in terms of what a man ought to be, that's still Arakawa to him. **(story/foreshadowing)**

02:08:05 Outside, the group are still rattled by Nanoha's part in this. Takabe-San exits the building and tells them to follow him to Sunlight Castle.

02:08:55 The group heads to Sunlight Castle, Nanoha is waiting outside. Takabe breaks the news that the building is shuttering, and her father will have to move.

- Nanoha is in a panic! Saying her dad needs the operation today or else he'll die! She didn't actually want to kill him! Totsuka was trying to extort money out of her for a fake life saving operation. **(story)**

- Takabe quickly spins a story about how the operation is no longer necessary following further examination. Her outstanding claims will be refunded, and she has as much time as she needs to find new accommodations for her father. A cleaner, happier ending than any soapland!

02:14:00 Speaking of, Ichiban also says Nanoha can leave the soapland now that the dad situation is sorted. He'll tell Nonomiya on her behalf and collect any backpay.

02:15:20 The group returns to Otohime land, to find Nonomiya hung from the ceiling

- I still remember the damn achievement name, soap on a roap. **(story)**

- Full house bonuses on the table!

## YLAD – CHAPTER 5 – THE LIUMANG MAN

00:15 Chapter 5 – The Liumang Man

- I derive an odd amount of pleasure from saying *The Liumang Man*. **(observation)**

00:35 The group leaves Nonomiya's funeral, a small affair it seems.

- The people there are less sad about there being no more nonomiya, and more how stupid he is for killing himself (as they believe the hanging was suicide) when he had such a primo location.

**(story/grey zone)**

- Nanba bitter points out how rude it is. Adachi, a smidgen more understanding of their misgivings takes the opportunity to point out how modern regulations make opening new Soaplands pretty much impossible. Nonomiya could have made good money on the deed. **(politics)**

- *Thinking about it, on a long enough timescale Bleach Japan will naturally get their wish. The law is on their side, their actual problem (if they were genuine in their wants and not just making a din for donations) is that the law isn't acting fast enough. The law itself won't kill the grey zones, but it has put it into a position where it will slowly die.* **(observation/politics)**

02:00 The group also believes he took his own life. Ichiban figures there must have been a lot on his mind with Nanoha, he was more sensitive than he let on. **(story)**

02:10 As the group reminisce, they're approached by, Nanoha? (Saeko), she scoffs at them recalling Nonomiya fondly. **(character/story)**

- Who's this psycho? **(joke)**

- Nanba has a stupid smile as he realises that now she's past her fathers death and looking better/different, she's totally sexy. Ichiban calls him a dumbass. **(story/character)**

- *Wonder if that's why she teases and toys with Nanba for much of the early game?* **(observation)**

02:55 Adachi's cop instincts kick in and he gives Nanoha\* the news of how they found the body as tactfully as he can.

- Saeko rebuffs the gesture, saying the guy was garbage with a smile.

- Ichiban has a crack at this, trying to bring her down gently. Now Saeko is tired of the misunderstanding.

- She reaches into her purse and produces... A smoke! Heaven forfend a lady light up!

- The group look at her like she spat on Nonomiya's grave.

- She reveals she is Saeko **(character intro/story)**

04:15 Nanba and Adachi are fucking morons who don't get it. Saeko points out they've never met and the two think it's some riddle of the sphinx. Ichiban puts together that she's Nanoha's twin.

Ding ding! I said he was smarter than he appears. **(story/character/observation)**

- Saeko concurs

04:45 Saeko also worked for Nonomiya in a way. Bartending for a cabaret club Nonomiya also owned. He was actually one of the top guys in the red-light district. **(character/story/conspiracy)**

- *Makes his murder a win for both the power hungry Mabuchi and the grey zone hating Bleach*

05:10 Saeko had no idea Nanoha had been working for Otohime land for years, being somewhat estranged from her family and Nanoha making Nonomiya not tell her.

- He broke that promise upon learning how dire the Sunlight Castle situation was. Saeko learned about the Ichigang from her, and despite the difficult introduction she just put them through, she did come to say an earnest thank you for how much they helped her family. **(story/character)**

08:10 Another reason she's here, she was on the phone with Nonomiya when he was killed. **(story)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – Saeko Joins the Party, we're hunting Lao Ma!**

08:30 Cut to Saeko, sat at the bar talking to Nonomiya over the phone. Smoking a cig, clearly not happy to be talking to the boss.

- Nonomiya recounts what's going on with Nanoha, that he's got some guys on it. "They're a good bunch."
- His explanation is interrupted when guys bust in, over the phone Saeko hears a bunch of guys yelling "Lao Ma!"

10:15 Fading back in, the group is now at the shuttered Otohime Land.

- Saeko did call the cops, but the moment they learned of the Chinese attackers yelling "Lao Ma" they packed it up on the spot. **(conspiracy)**
- Adachi knows that Lao Ma is the nickname for one of the bosses in the Yokohama Liumang, Mabuchi. It was likely yelled to alert him they'd found Nonomiya. Mabuchi has bought out the organised crime division, likely this is why they dropped the investigation immediately. **(story)**
- Adachi continues, many officers are also shaking in their boots at the Great Wall of Muscle collapsing. So between Mabuchi paying everyone off, and this murder being a turf violation, it's best to look the other way. **(politics/conspiracy/story)**
- One question remains, why kill Nonomiya? No answer there. **(story)**

14:05 Cuts scene mode change: Saeko is deeply frustrated. She clearly didn't actually think much of Nonomiya, she likely saw him the same way we were introduced to the guy. Sleazy, uncouth, inconsiderate, and cheap. To learn how much he cared, to learn just how little he deserved his fate at the very moment it barged in on him leaves her unsure how she's meant to feel. **(story/character)**

- She recounts this very matter of factly, trying to stay emotionally distant. Saying how she left her family and it's only thanks to Nonomiya she found a home, she never thanked him once, she thought herself alone and free. With Nonomiya's death she realised how suffocating she must have been. **(character)**

16:00 Adachi steps forward and says that must have been proof they were close.

16:05 This causes the dam to break, Saeko starts crying. Feeling helpless that his death will just go ignored, but Nonomiya said these three could be trusted, and that's why she came to them. **(story)**

- Ichiban smiles his sympathetic smile and readies up.
- "... You're really doing this again?" asks Nanba "You're finally getting getting to know me, Nurse Nanba." **(dialogue/character)**
- Nanba laughs, he's in. He asks if Adachi is likewise. The old dick folds his arms, saying with a downbeat expression detectives will not go near Mabuchi. He turns and smiles "Which is why my detective instincts are saying, go for it."

17:50 Ichiban lowers himself before the crying Saeko, and says they're with her.

- "From today on, you're not alone anymore." He gives her a warm smile. The tears stop, the group shares a few laughs. "Let's go get him."
- Very sweet scene, Ichiban is so loveable. Saeko Mukoda has joined the party.

19:10 Outside, Saeko is now in her standard black and white garb, interesting colour scheme for a mixed healer/attacker, also contrasts her with the Bleach Japan guys. Her clothes have a mottled design, making it more of an off white. **(colour/character design)**

19:20 The hunt is on, Adachi knows the Liumang are knocking about Restaurant Row, so that's where we're headed! **(objective)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – The Liumang Investigation Begins**

19:55 Introduction to Part-Time Hero, a less troubling version of trouble, and a complete re-contextualisation of the completion menu. **(wordplay/gameplay)**

22:40 Arrival on Restaurant Row, a mini-chinatown far from Chinatown, the gangsters who lost to the Snake Flower years back wound up here, this is now, to some, the true chinatown. **(story/world)**

- Ichiban is surprised by how decrepit Restaurant Row is, expecting a loud and flashy joint like China Town. He is quickly warned by the group to not mention China Town around here.

**(backstory/history)**

- The grudge of the people who were forced out of Chinatown in that long ago turf war still forms the backbone of the Yokohama Liumang, they're people fighting for scraps. **(story/backstory)**

- Being loud, mentioning Chinatown out here, is going to get even the civvies to side eye us, not just the Liumang. The resentment has persisted through generations. **(backstory)**

24:10 Adachi warns we're on Liumang turf, be subtle, do not outright state we're after Mabuchi.

**(story)**

- We have a series of civilians to go talk to. Ichiban thoroughly bungles it, acting stupid in a way uncharacteristic even of him. Even the game is weirdly characterised, with a pretty mellow guy getting labelled as rude. **(observation)**

- It's a very strange comedic whiplash. **(observation/writing)**

26:20 The group reconvenes, with none of them having gotten anyone to talk. Saeko puts it down to loyalty. Rather than Ichiban suddenly having a stroke much more dire than the first.

**(joke/observation)**

26:35 They have raised alarms however, Liumang men are appearing in droves. Nanba tells Saeko to step back, but that's the last thing she wants to do. Cracking a joke at Nanba's expense.

**(character)**

- The group try to talk their way out of the situation, but Ichiban can see they aren't buying it. So he pointedly tells the Liumang what they're after, Saeko is amused by Ichiban's directness. Ichi says it saves them the trouble of asking around. **(character/story)**

28:30 The group are surrounded, Adachi takes this as a sign of Mabuchi's guilt. Saeko is ready to fight, to a degree which scares Nanba.

- This is a little establishing sequence for Saeko, making sure the audience knows she is as rough and ready. Ladylike a dragon! **(character/wordplay/observation)**

30:30 Post fight, Nanba has one of the Liumang in his grasp. He refuses, much like the others, to spill Mabuchi's location.

- It's weird seeing Nanba be the one to knock out a gangster cold with a punch, but he's got that in him. **(observation/character)**

- The group talk about how impressive their loyalty is, Saeko is a lot less interested in appreciating their enemy's machismo, she asks how they're gonna find Mabuchi now.

31:55 Nanba opines that there isn't some scrubby Liumang they can hit up for info. Ichiban can recall one, Zheng! But how to find him they wonder. Well speak of Te devil and he shall appear, wandering into the nearby cabaret club. Nanba says he's still got it, Saeko is quick to point out it's a coincidence.

- They give chase, but this is a members only joint, and you can only become a member via referral. Saeko quickly hatches a plan. She says she'll work here and refer the three. Seeming to bluff having Chinese ancestry and using her bluster to intimidate the waiter into going along with it.

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – A Tete-a-Tete with Te (Zheng)**

36:45 When Ichiban asks if Saeko is cool doing this. Saeko states the guys are risking their lives, she's trying to do her part. Telling them not to worry, she's had years as a hostess.

37:30 With Saeko at her interview the group have some time to kill, and need to find better means of doing so. Adachi lets them know of a factory where we could get some equipment custom made. **(gameplay)**

38:00 Introduction of Romance Workshop.

39:20 Saeko aced the interview and is soon to start serving customers. She'll make sure we get in. **(story)**

40:40 Arrive at Lin Lin Hostess bar. Nanba and Adachi are impressed with the girls, Ichiban is on mission mode. Unamused with Adachi fawning over the girls.

- Ichiban asks after Saeko, she's been sent to the VIP room. Where Liumang men can have their way with girls. Saeko's Japanese nationality got her sent there quick. You do not want to be working the VIP room it turns out. **(story)**

- These girls are much, much less cagey about discussing the Liumang despite (because of?) their close proximity to them and their actions **(story)**

43:15 They say this weird bald guy is the worst, actually dangerous. It's Zheng, so Saeko has fallen into his lap. Ichiban quickly gets to his feet and heads for the VIP room. **(story/pervert)**

- He doesn't make it before Saeko bursts through the door, yelling that Zheng is a pervert. **(story)**

- Saeko says he should go for a grope like a normal guy, Nanba appreciates the unique perspective. **(story)**

- *The game quickly establishes a relationship of Nanba and Saeko cracking jokes at each others expense, each one pointing out the others oddities. I like how this bond works, with each of them thinking themselves the more normal when really they're both weirdos of different stripes. Their eccentricities formed by very different worlds. (character/observation)*

44:40 Zheng, blue balled as he is, is no less ready to spill on the Yokohama Liumang.

**(wordplay/story)**

- Ichi once again threatens to go to his boss, so Zheng calls on some backup and a fight ensues.

**(boss/combat)**

Music Note: When talking combat be sure to mention music, how Ichiban incorporates a lot more electronic compared to Kiryu's more guitar/metal based sound. **(structure/music)**

47:50 With Zheng defeated. It still takes Ichi yelling that he'll tell the manager about Zheng's homeless shakedowns to get him talking.

- Zheng thinks there must be some mistake when he hears about Lao Ma killing Nonomiya.

- Ichi is surprised Zheng doesn't call Mabuchi Lao Ma, he says he doesn't speak a word of Chinese, infact a great deal of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> vary wildly in fluency in their mother tongue, the state of their citizenship too is in flux. With many not having a chance to go to school.

**(story/background/world)**

- Ichiban bluntly states it's kinda like the Yakuza way back when. **(politics)**

- *It's odd we're doing a diversion into a sympathetic topic and it was armpit licker who got us on this trail, I suppose that's the point. This loathsome guy does come from a sympathetic background, and he's one of the luckier ones. (observation/politics)*

- Ichi realises this is why their loyalty is so strong, many have no place but the gang.

**(story/politics)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – Saeko is ONE OF THE LADS**

50:35 Zheng describes Mabuchi, born into poverty and worked hard, studied, went to college, trilingual. He's a smart guy who surrounds himself with smart guys. **(character)**

- Beyond that, Zheng really does know nothing. Mabuchi may be in the same gang. But Zheng is not in the same league as Mabuchi. This was a dead end.

52:25 Ichiban tells Zheng to go, Zheng, defeated, says Ichi is going to rat him out anyway. Ichi says he doesn't get the situation nor him at all. Calling out Zheng for pulling the victim card despite bringing this on himself. **(character)**

53:00 This reaches something in Zheng and he does reveal something, Mabuchi has his hands in many businesses, one of them being the Yokohama Trading Company.

- A business which imports high end utensils and ingredients which are sold to China Town at cutthroat rates. Making the town bend, drop their usual suppliers and go to him. Some restaurants would go under without him now. This is Mabuchi's revenge on the place, Zheng figures. China Town has to eat out of his hand **(world/story/politics/wordplay)**

55:05 So that's the next step in Ichiban's plan, they're going to get jobs at Yokohama Trading Company!

- Zheng warns them most of the workers are young Liumang guys, a bunch of Japanese turning up would be suspicious. Ichiban just says they'll have Kanbe work his magic. Which is a bit of a non-sequiter but okay. **(observation/story)**

56:50 Zheng asks Ichiban if he really won't tell anyone about his shakedowns. Ichiban tells him to leave it, and asks why he let slip the Yokohama Trading Company. Zheng says he felt he owed Ichiban, assuming he's trustworthy. **(story/character)**

- Ichi says they're cool, but lay off harassing the hostesses. Zheng says he'll stick to kissing and groping. Saeko leans in "Ichiban, let's kill him and be done with it." She says coldly, scaring Zheng. **(dialogue/character)**

57:40 Time to head home, but first we must sneak past the Liumang to make our escape, it's trivially easy! **(gameplay/objective/observation)**

- This does however funnel us right to the next story event with a background tension. **(observation)**

59:50 The night is over, and the three boys are thinking of having a drink back at the pad. Saeko is clearly framed as separate, but looking at the three, she says it's a nice thing. Looking at the three she says they're thicker than thieves. Ichiban bluntly says they hardly know each other, and Adachi follows with a laugh that this is just how guys are. **(character/dialogue/party)**

- The friendship music is playing, a bittersweet song. **(music)**

- They're heading off, but Ichiban doesn't move. Nanba says she'll be fine, a mugger wouldn't stand a chance, and Saeko laughs in agreement. The group is laughing but trying to split up because it's the expected thing.

01:01:20 Ichiban turns to follow, but stops, looks back at Saeko shrinking into the night, and strides after her, she doesn't know what he wants. He awkwardly asks if she'd like to drink with them, warning her the place is dirty, she's unsure how to respond.

- Saeko can't help but quietly say Ichiban is a nice guy. **(story/character/dialogue)**

- More than anything else, this has shocked her, a truly pleasant surprise.

- I read in an interview this scene made Yokoyama cry, I was going to say I'm not equipped to see what he sees, but I've put it together. It doesn't make me cry, but it's a sweet moment. Ichiban said when she joined the team she wouldn't be alone anymore, but until this point she was, she still wasn't one of the lads, that changes here. **(observation/dialogue)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – The Yokohama Trading Company**

01:02:15 Outside their place. Hamako recognises it as a brothel.

- Ichi explains they're renting to place and protecting it from Bleach Japan. Saeko had no idea places like this were in Ijincho **(story/character)**

- Hamako approaches, saying they've sweet talked a girl over. Ichiban and Saeko say it's not like that (Ichi a lot more defensively)

- Saeko sweetly explains she's betting big on these guys, her life is a chip in their hands. The inspiring music plays, the guys are moved by the gesture. And Saeko strides into their place.

- The next morning, it's revealed she drunk them under the... Well, they don't even have a table. **(joke/wordplay)**

- As the guys whine about their hangover, Saeko is up and ready to get to Hello Work. Truly, one of the lads. Even Adachi is impressed with her capacity **(character)**

Structure: As they depart for the apartment, I think that's the time to pivot to Drink Links **(structure)**

01:05:30 Kanbe warns us against the Yokohama Trading Company. They're expanding, but very suspicious. This only fires Ichiban up. He explains this is an investigation. **(story)**

01:08:00 While this is being worked out, we're told to talk to Ririka, this is where job switching opens up. We're also the Directors favourite it seems! **(gameplay/RPG/jobs)**

- I change Adachi and Saeko to their 'upgraded' jobs, promotions I suppose **(joke/observation)**

01:11:15 We got the Warehouse jobs, so off to YTC we go! **(objective)**

01:12:10 Arrive at YTC for the first time **(story)**

- The group are inducted, induction is being told if they're slow, it'll come to blows. **(wordplay)**

- The boys are on cargo duty, and Saeko, thanks to being literate, is made to work the office.

01:13:35 Adachi is freakishly strong, easily hefting boxes which take two men. Nanba on the other hand is dying out here. **(character)**

01:14:10 The boys have a chat, Nanba annoyed Saeko got the desk job.

- Ichiban notices no eyes are on them for a moment, and decide to sneak a peak inside the boxes. Shark Fins, shame none of them know how to tell if they're good quality or not. Abalone, fancy stuff.

- Nanba finds a wad of paper, they don't know what to make of that. **(conspiracy/story)**

01:16:00 In the office, the foreman tells Saeko her job. Pay out money for invoices, that's it.

- Saeko is surprised they're doing quite sizeable transactions *in cash*, the foreman folds his arms. That's their selling point, no paperwork.

- The foreman also warns not to try and skim any money, there are eyes everywhere in here. Saeko defends herself, saying she's no thief, they're still having her searched as she goes.

**(story/conspiracy)**

01:18:40 End of the day, the group are all suspicious, Nanba smelly, and wondering why Saeko always picks on him. At least Saeko has worked out their cash flow. So Ichiban is optimistic, we're a step forward!

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – The Second drinking Sesh – Bleach beatdown begins**

01:20:40 Back at Otohime Land, everyone has washed up. Ichiban and Saeko are the first ones out. Ichiban sheepishly backs out at first before Saeko says she doesn't care. "A naked man is nothing I haven't seen before." **(character/dialogue)**

- Saeko is still looking into the days discoveries. Everything seems legit, save for the fact they're selling all of their ingredients at zero profit, they buy and sell at the exact same price. **(conspiracy)**  
- Despite this, they're only becoming more profitable year on year. **(conspiracy)**

01:22:55 Saeko supposes tax evasion, and wants to dig deeper. Ichiban reminds her this is the Yokohama Liurang. Saeko is surprised he's worried, and Ichiban tells her that she shouldn't be, they're buds.

- Saeko has never had anyone she'd call a "bud" before, figuring that kind of thing was only in movies and manga, and even if they were real it's something she'd never have.

"Don't start with that, you got us now!"

- Ichiban goes off about Dragon Quest again. Saeko asks "isn't that a video game." Ichiban sheepishly says yeah but you get the point. Saeko calls him weird and he takes it as a compliment, he won't deny he is weird.

- Saeko is genuinely thankful to be his bud. **(story/character/party)**

- Nanba and Adachi arrive, Adachi is ready to drink. He'll use the full house bonuses left by Nonomiya to buy up.

01:25:05 The next morning the group is pissed, they're awake by who else, but the returning Bleach Japan.

- Kume is taking credit for the shuttering of Otohime Land, right, string him up for murder! **(joke)**

- He's hyping up the crowd, saying the group must not get complacent and must press on. For all of their moral posturing, they don't care about loss of life, so long as it's not on their side.

**(observation)**

01:26:10 Ichiban steps out, and is incredibly diplomatic given the inhuman display Kume has going. Saying they're in mourning and would like him to go.

- Kume doesn't miss a beat in calling Ichiban vermin. Ichiban drops diplomacy quick. Kume tells them to get out of here.

01:26:40 Bleach's pretences do not last, as an oddly jacked member of Bleach steps forward and takes a swing at Ichiban, which he easily catches. Grabbing their wrist, his voice dropping to a low growl as he warns them not to let their protests go beyond shouting. "You lay your hands on us, you pay the price." **(observation)**

01:27:05 A moment a silence, a look exchanged between Ichiban and Kume, the cunt is quick to say that we revealed our true, thuggish nature.

01:27:20 Onlookers from other establishments are getting intimidated, thinking they should shut down before Bleach turns their attention to them.

- With other bleach members yelling, Kume is invigorated, overconfident, he strides towards Ichiban and says without the megaphone that Nonomiya is where he always belonged. **(character)**

- Kume tries to provoke Ichiban into attacking, but is beaten to the punch by Saeko. Ichiban stops her from going for a second, but only because that hit belongs to him. **(story)**

01:29:20 More Bleach guys come out of the woodwork brandishing bats. This was their plan all along. Yet Kume is fuming that he got hit, hypocrit **(story/character/observation)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – Bleach beaten, party is cooking**

01:33:20 With Bleach defeated, Kume screams for someone to call the police. But onlookers are downright gleeful to see the guy get what he had coming. **(story)**

- They begin chanting “Go Away!”, no one here is on Bleach’s side, and all Kume can do is flee, failing to look imposing as he says this isn’t over.

- The group are heroes in the locals eyes. Saeko wants to apologise for getting them into trouble. Ichiban won’t have it, he says now they know their true nature. If the police come for one of em, they better be ready for all of em. **(story/character/party)**

01:35:30 A crowd gathers around Ichiban and Saeko, their morale improved. Realising they have no one to protect them but themselves.

01:36:00 Cut to later, the group are riding high on the compliments. They walk into Eri, and thus I am kidnapped to do the Business Minigame tutorial

01:40:15 I finish the business minigame tutorial.

01:40:15 The group is walking along the highstreet, talking about getting back and resting, getting ready for another day of work. Saeko and Nanba tease, Nanba wondering if she’s crushing on him and this is how she shows it (“Don’t delude yourself.” says Adachi)

- Saeko says she’ll make dinner, and recruits Nanba to carry the bags.

- As the two head off, Ichiban worries if this friendship is for the best, they’re dragging her into danger. Adachi says she knows the danger, and she’s having fun. This sorts out Ichiban’s worries.

**(story/character/party)**

### **Post-Note: Chapter Five Brings the Party Alive**

- *This chapter is about affirming the groups bond. I do wonder if using Saeko, the sole female member to air this out was done to make the fact the group sees eachother as all on the level feel all the more emphasised. By making Ichiban say all the cliché stuff about wondering if a girl can handle it, before having her or someone else in the group quickly dismiss his thinking, the audience is told via Ichiban to treat her in the same way.*

- *Saeko brings all of the roles in the group out in a way. The relationship between each character has believable little distinctions. She rounds out the group. Adachi’s reintroduction has less character than now. This is because in this chapter, we need the group to feel solid as we exit the early game. **(observation/party)***

01:42:30 After another night of hard drinking, the group get back to work at YTC

- Saeko doesn’t have enough money to pay an invoice. She tells the boss, and he says he’ll go get some more from the bank, before taking an elevator upstairs, very suspicious. Returning a short time later with a briefcase full of money **(story)**

01:45:00 That night, Ichiban puts together that they must be making counterfeit bills, the money in the boxes part of the process. Turns out they’re selling at full profit, as they’re paying in play money, and that money is going to China, a long way away from them. **(story/conspiracy)**

- Adachi thinks Mabuchi a criminal mastermind, Ichiban says the trading company itself works as a front for money laundering. **(conspiracy)**

- They need proof if they’re to use this to lure out Mabuchi, so they settle on trying to slip out one of the fake bills. **(conspiracy)**

01:50:15 With this scheme looking like it’s coming to a close. Saeko wants to whip up something to eat. Nanba is too tired to be dragged out again, so Ichiban steps in to step out with her.

**(story/character)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 5 CONT – End of Chapter 5**

01:50:35 Ichiban and Saeko chit chat as the head to the shops.

- Saeko asks if Ichiban's old life as a Yakuza was scary. Ichiban, always understanding, says what's scary and what isn't is different for everyone. It changes over time.
- Only Way Out plays as Saeko reflects the old her would have been lost. But now nothing feels impossible, the scariness has gone.
- Ichiban reminds her to be careful, but she says she'll be fine. His optimism has rubbed off on her, despite his worries. **(story/character)**

01:52:20 The next day at YTC, the group does a hand off to sneak a bill to Ichiban. When a comedy calamity crashes into him, the bill is discovered and the group outed. The warehouse descends on them, one guy even willing to drive a truck into the gang to stop them from getting loose with the evidence. The warehouse is blown up, and the group knocked unconscious. **(story)**

01:59:00 On the Hamakita boardwalk, a silver haired man watches the rising smoke. **(story)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 6 – IGNITION**

00:05 Chapter 6 – Ignition

00:15 Ichiban awakes, and before him stands... Mabuchi!

- Good news lads and ladettes, we've found Mabuchi! (*Dragon Quest level up*) **(Joke)**
- Bad news, he found us.

00:30 Looking around the room, we're chained to the ceiling on a meat rack, with various implements scattered around. **(story)**

00:30 Nanba notes we're finally awake with annoyed resignation **(dialogue/character)**

00:50 Ichiban looks around, his attention is taken by Mabuchi. Ichiban immediately flies into an impotent rage. The gang has already given up, telling him to cool it.

- Ichiban wonders how they're so calm. They've been awake for awhile and already had introductions.

01:30 Mabuchi says it's time to get started. He grabs a knife from the table. When Ichiban keeps demanding to know what's going on Mabuchi grabs his cheek and makes clear he knows who Mabuchi is.

- Adachi says he's Lao Ma, Mabuchi.

02:10 Confronted by Mabuchi Ichiban's anger swells again and he demands to know why he killed Nonomiya. Mabuchi just grabs him by the mouth once again and says he's a busy man. Follow instructions or his friends start dying.

02:40 Mabuchi has one of his subordinates begin filming **(story/conspiracy)**

- He asks if Ichiban is Seiryu, Ichiban denies this, but Mabuchi says with the tat on his back he can't claim to be a civilian. Ichiban doesn't deny it.
- He asks what a Japanese might want with some Yuan. Ichi says he was onto his counterfeit op. He needed the money to make Mabuchi pay for killing Nonomiya. Ichi gets a punch in the gut for that.
- Mabuchi asks if Ichi has told anyone. Ichiban tries to be evasive, but the threat of violence to his friends makes him confess he's told no one.
- One last questions, does Ichiban think he's the one who killed Nonomiya. Ichiban says damn right, playing into Mabuchi's hands.

## YLAD – CHAPTER 6 CONT – IGNITION

05:15 Mabuchi is pleased as punch with that answer.

- Now ignoring Ichiban, Mabuchi launches into a speech about how “To think our rivals would stoop to investigating us. That’s against the rules, isn’t it, Seiryu scum?”
- Nonomiya’s death was a trap, and we’ve set it off.

05:40 Nanba yells that they’re not Seiryu. Adachi says not to bother, we fell into their trap.

**(character/story/conspiracy)**

05:55 Mabuchi steps into frame with Ichiban and says this violates the codes of the Ijin Three, and the Seiryu have declared war on the Liurang. And to think, Kiryu only got to act in substories!

**(joke)**

06:20 As thanks for our excellent performance, Mabuchi reveals he did kill Mabuchi. As Ichiban yells. Mabuchi casually goes on, no longer caring one iota about us.

- To ensure the group see the video they just took as well as the warehouse security footage. He then thanks Ichiban, he was worried no one would water the seeds he planted, but we poured staminan on that shit. Come on Mabuchi don’t you know the mechanics. **(joke/bad)**

07:45 Ichiban keeps yelling as Mabuchi and his goons make their exit. It takes tired old Adachi to explain that there’s no point. For reasons we don’t know. Mabuchi wants to upset the balance of the Great Wall and we’re gonna be the ones who started it. **(story/conspiracy/plot)**

08:35 Nanba interrupts Adachi’s explanation with more pressing matters, trying to get out of here. **(story)**

09:00 Ichiban can look around the room, talk to everyone, but no means of escape presents itself.

11:40 After some time, with the group wondering if they’re just being left to die, in walks the warehouse manager, followed by some of his employees. I suppose the warehouse is more a barehouse, and he’s bare angry about it. **(stupid wordplay/joke)**

12:55 These guys have the pleasure of killing us, and they’re going to take their time. Ichiban is slashed across the chest

13:40 He decides to kill Adachi first, but his stab is cut short by... Han?

- He bluffs that he has new orders from Lao Ma, Theory of Beauty plays as this absolute beauty sets Ichiban loose, telling him this is all he can do. Figure out the rest himself.
- Then he boots the manager before making a run for it.

14:30 Ichiban is back to his happy go lucky self now that he’s free. He grabs the manager, aiding Han’s escape, and the fight begins

15:20 A three on one, with Ichiban reset to his freelancer job given his lack of equipment.

**(story/battle)**

- Even though the hero job is his overactive imagination? Maybe he feels more heroic unarmed in this situation, I am overthinking Ichiban’s underthinking. **(joke)**

16:30 As the group grabs their stuff, they realise they have no signal down here. And figure their saviour must be from the Geomijul, Saeko noticing he had K-Pop looks. **(story/conspiracy)**

17:50 Ichiban is now enjoying this breakout, to Saeko’s frustration, this party always chooses fight!

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 6 CONT – Leaving the Dungeon, the war is starting**

45:00 Fight through the dungeon, filled with homeless and... Yakuza, damn the Ijin Three really is complicated. If these are meant to be Triad Tunnels what are Yakuza doing down here? Didn't need us Mabuchi, I can spot a turf violation right here. **(story/joke)**

- The dungeon ends with the foreman working an excavator, kick his ass and we're home free.

46:00 The party emerges next to the river, opposite to the homeless camp. **(story)**

- Saeko asks what the tunnel was for. Adachi supposes Smuggling (a liumang specialty)

46:40 Ichiban hurriedly calls up the Seiryu to warn them of Mabuchi's plot

- Off to the side, Nanba and Saeko reflect on how crazy it is Ichiban can just phone the Seiryu Chairman, seeing how much of a sign it is that he trusts him.

- Nanba says Ichi is a strange guy, Saeko laughs, it's the first thing they agree on.

47:00 Their convo is interrupted as Ichiban erupts into shouting.

- There was a shooting by the Liumang, two Seiryu guys shot dead in public.

47:20 Cut to the shopping highstreet. Two young Seiryu guys are surrounded by Mabuchi and a gang of his cronies and shredded by gunfire. This was on Seiryu turf. Mabuchi did not wait to kick this into gear.

- The Great Wall is quaking and my muscles are shaking. **(joke/awful)**

48:25 Cut to the Red Light, trucks full of Seiryu men are speeding towards Restaraunt Row, raring for revenge and ready to retaliate **(wordplay/story)**

- The raid is being headed by Takabe, Seiryu Captain. He did not wait on permission from Hoshino **(story/politics)**

48:40 Looking forward with grim determination, Takabe swears swift vengeance for Tetsu and Koji **(story)**

- Adachi says the Liumang boss, Zhao, has a restaurant at Restaurant Row. Right now we're barrelling towards all out war.

- Adachi starts wondering about Mabuchi's motive as the group questions if they're to blame for this. Ichiban beating himself up for playing into Mabuchi's hands. **(story/character/plot)**

50:40 Adachi figures out something kinda obvious, at least to me, why do this frame job? Because he can't just start a war himself. Yeah, he had to mock up a little casus belli, and Nonomiya was the poor bellend who got it. **(story/plot/observation/joke)**

- Saeko asks why he needed them, Adachi explains it could have been anyone, they were not specific to his plan. Nor was Nonomiya in all likelihood. He just needed to kill a guy with Seiryu ties and wait for someone to investigate. **(story/plot)**

- The plan was intentionally roundabout to make it difficult to tie back to him. He only needed enough rope for one guy. **(joke/wordplay)**

53:35 Ichiban, naturally, is pissed to have realised how much he'd wound up giving Mabuchi what he wanted. **(story)**

- The group tries to calm him down, saying anger achieves nothing, this does nothing to sate Ichiban's rage

- Earlier in the convo, Nanba said how he heard once the way to winning a war was to let the enemy make the first move. Ichiban disagrees, his aniki taught him the first move wins, so make it count. Sack up and move. Saeko giggles. Nanba doesn't want to join in on a Yakuza war, but Ichi points out it's that or get the blame for starting one. So reluctant as he is, he's in. **(story/plot/character)**

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 6 CONT – The Restaurant Row Raid**

55:20 Ichi asks if Adachi is in, after a moment of thought he casually states it'd piss him off to let that slick fuck (Mabuchi) have the last laugh

- The group departs for Restaurant Row

58:25 The group arrives in restaurant row to find it has already been ransacked, they're chasing behind the main bulk of the Seiryu forces. So we gotta battle through the backstreets, a really cool little area full of stairs and tight winding passageways which lead to Zhao's establishment way at the back. **(level/observation)**

01:01:50 As we make it deeper into Restaurant Row it becomes clear the Seiryu have advanced deep into enemy territory, but are getting cut off from the back.

01:03:00 Ichiban arrives as Takabe is having a standoff at the foot of Zhao's establishment. Firing a shot to stop a sprinting Ichiban.

- Ichiban desperately explains the situation to Takabe, and that he's playing into Mabuchi's hands.  
- The problem is Takabe knows, he obviously knew Ichiban when he got the photo, the situation has already developed beyond that with the deaths of two young Seiryu. The truth isn't gonna do much to avenge them. **(plot/story/character)**

- Takabe doesn't care it was Mabuchi's plot, he wants to kill all of them for this transgression. For gunning down two recruits young enough to be kids. Takabe is going to demand Zhao's intentions. And make him apologise in the afterlife.

01:06:20 Ichiban stands in the way of the restaurant. Takabe points his gun, Ichiban calmly explains he won't shoot him, he needs a reason to fight, especially if he's going for the kill.

- Ichi says he knows words won't reach him however, ripping his shirt off. This needs to be a fight. Takabe laughs, and tosses his gun. Ichiban played right on his honour, and so he needs to defeat the Seiryu raiding party. **(story/conspiracy)**

01:09:45 On behalf of the Liurang, Ichiban and party defeat Takabe. This does not go as they'd like. **(story/observation)**

- Ichiban tells Takabe to get out of here, but before he can move. Zhao steps out. He casually approaches the group and announces Mabuchi sent him an interesting video.

01:11:10 Finally getting to see a snippet of video, it has clearly been doctored to have Ichiban say he's Seiryu. Ichiban yells he's not, but Zhao is obviously unconvinced.

- He puts a gun to Takabe's head and demands the truth.  
- The group insists this is a Mabuchi plot, which only serves to annoy Zhao, we're accusing his right hand man of acting beneath his nose.  
- Only more frustrating because Zhao won't acknowledge this whole thing stinks.

**(wordplay/observation)**

01:12:20 Ichiban actually manages to break through to him a little when he asks where the hell Mabuchi is given the situation, if he has even heard from him recently.

- Adachi, sensing the opening pushes, perhaps a bit too far. Getting Zhao angry as he accuses Mabuchi of treason.

- Zhao loses a shot at Adachi, he doesn't flinch. Turning deadly cold Zhao points out that Adachi is shit at this. I love shit like this man, I love how yeah, we're really fucking poor interlopers.

**(story/observation)**

- Adachi grumbles, realising he's out of his depth. Zhao loses several shots at the ground.

## **YLAD – CHAPTER 6 CONT – Zhao is worn down by words!**

Structure: Mention how since we're free of the dungeon, it's two more back to back long battles. At least these have actual set dressing and motivation. Mabuchi's torture dungeon was truly torturous  
- Ichiban may have escaped torture, but I didn't. **(joke/wordplay)**

01:13:40 With cold fury, Zhao says he wouldn't mind killing everyone present and kicking this war off right. Taunting that this is a textbook opening to a war, he says with a grin.

- Takabe goads him on, his own anger about the deaths on his side overriding any care about being gunned down.

01:14:00 Ichiban himself is pissed, demanding they see reason and saying we can still stop this from coming to war.

- I have no idea how Ichiban pulls this, but Zhao asks with cruel implication if this is another lecture. Ichiban says it's not, it's a formal complaint, and as the boss of an organisation he has to listen to people sometimes. Zhao finds this amusing, and lets it go ahead.

01:14:50 But first, Zhao asks why Mabuchi would want to start a war in Ijincho. What does he stand to gain. Ichiban can't answer. Which Zhao expected. Going on to ask about Nonomiya. Ichiban's only "proof" is Mabuchi told him about the killing.

- This is not good enough for Zhao, he's done hearing this.

- Ichiban keeps insisting, eventually Zhao just hands it to Ichiban, he'd make a terrible liar.

01:16:30 He takes the gun off Takabe and says he'll need proof, Ichiban and Saeko's words are not good enough.

- Zhao scratches the back of his head, annoyed that now he has to bow to *them*, the Geomijul.

- Limpest chapter cliffhanger in the game as we fade out on "The Geomijul."

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 7 - The Spider's Web**

01:30 Brief recap.

- Everyone concurs, the Geomijul is the best source of info, they'll know if Mabuchi is guilty.

- We're told to come back with proof and don't think of fleeing town.

- Yeah well if we do who are you gonna hear it from? **(joke/wordplay)**

- Zhao does throw in about 50 threats as he tells us to go get this. If Mabuchi is a traitor, that's gonna be a real pain in the ass, if he's innocent, we're all dead. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban doesn't flinch as Zhao tries to stare him down.

- Zhao warns with a smug bow not to get killed by the Geomijul, that won't do us any good.

03:40 Outside restaurant row the group talks. Nanba can't believe they're going from the Liumang right to knocking on the geomijul's door.

- Adachi says it won't be that simple, you can't just walk into Geomijul, ringing the doorbell is gonna stop working at some point. Saeko points out "look who suddenly found some decency."

- Ichiban lays it out straight. They need the Geomijul, so they're going to Geomijul, besides, they're pretty sure the guy who saved them belonged to the group. So maybe they got an in. **(plot/story)**

04:30 The Yokohama Underground Dungeon opens up, in case I want round 2! I do not.

07:20 Outside Geomijul Territory, the group finds Seonhee waiting, it's night, and she's wearing shades. Sunglasses at night, cause she isn't shady enough! **(joke/wordplay)**

- Saeko is immediately pretty judgmental of her looks. Adachi just says the more beautiful, the more quirks with a smile.

- Seonhee shouts that she can hear them.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – GEOMIJUL RAID

08:00 She was expecting them, Ichiban happily declares she isn't dangerous, obviously charmed. Saeko doesn't buy it.

- She also knows what they want, and says to follow her. Adachi says no one beautiful is ever truly evil. We can all tell which head the three men are thinking with. **(joke/observation)**
- Saeko literally says that a moment later fuck

09:25 Ichiban sheepishly brings up the electricity incident. Seonhee flatly asks if that wasn't settled. Ichiban takes that, clearly worried. Seonhee assures him not to be frightened.

- This is a little walk and talk sequence as we're led into Geomijul, there's no one around, and Ichiban is getting more and more worried, much to Seonhee's amusement and Saeko's annoyance.

10:40 Seonhee, hearing the group whispering mockingly says they can turn back. Saeko spits back at her that she knows they can't. Seonhee agrees, and Saeko takes the lead, heading deeper into Geomijul, refusing to back down.

11:40 As we walk up into the main body of Geomijul Saeko is blown away by the scale of the place. The camera pans up revealing the sheer number of cables snaking out of the *Spiderweb* **(world/story)**

- Adachi takes this time to point out the name, spelling it out for the audience.

12:20 As the group looks on in awe, Seonhee tells them what they seek is on the top floor.

- The group, already on edge, jump at a cockroach. Saeko says not to scare her like that. Ichiban has spookier news, Seonhee is gone.
- The group are then ambushed by Geomijul footsoldiers, the fight is on, what we want is at the top. The group decides there's no going back. **(story/dungeon/objective)**

Dungeon thoughts

- It's more enjoyable than a bland sewer!
- The navigation is once again winding, this time it's claustrophobic, hard to move. Fitting for a place called the Spiderweb. However given the genre change it can't leverage this for gameplay beyond making navigation a bit more annoying.
- One moment has a Judgment style investigation prompt to spot an ambush, so, word of advice. If you want to avert an ambush, stand out in the open and slowly scan for it! Your enemies will be forced to meet you head on if you can see them! **(joke/observation)**
- I guess success averts a fight or two?

26:45 The group breaches the heart of the Geomijul. Finding Han waiting, he praises them for making it this far. Apologising for the trouble.

- He introduces himself as Han Joon-Gi
- Ichiban asks why he saved them, only for them to be attacked now. He says the situation is complex. The situation is, we made a complex, you gotta fight through it. **(observation/joke/wordplay)**
- He wanted to test our strength, I feel my patience got more of a workout. **(joke/wordplay)**
- Han says they passed, but he could take them all singlehandedly, a bit headstrong aren't we? **(joke/setup)**

28:55 Han says he has a lot to lay out. Ichiban asks he keep it quick. So he offers him the layperson version. Ichiban takes the insult on the chin. Saeko says for a hot guy he pisses her off. **(story)**

- Bit of a callback, Adachi ponders that both hot men and women have quirks. Saeko says that's why she prefers this lot.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – The Geomijul’s business**

30:20 We’re let into a shadowy room, filled with monitors. This is their business, surveiling every inch of Ijincho.

- Wow, we couldn’t go one game without a new one of you... Well, two new ones of something or other... What a car crash of a sentence. **(story/observation)**
- So we’re introducing a new Kage. Say hello to the Florist of Sayonhee! **(joke/wordplay)**

30:55 Han explains the Geomijul were late comers to the Turf war, they made their way in Yokohama as information brokers. They couldn’t run this joint on their juice alone. So they siphon it from others.

- The info they deal in is how they make their money, and how they defend themselves. Acting as the balance between the two larger factions, making themselves indispensable. **(story/world/plot/backstory)**

32:30 Adachi asks what he means by balance.

- Han explains sort of obliquely, say if the Liumang messed with the Seiryu, they’d investigate thoroughly and reveal the offender and his associates asap.
- “Our actions extinguish sparks before they become fires.”

33:15 Adachi follows on, if someone does try to start a fire, how does Geomijul handle it. Han says they apply painful pressure, using a heavier hand if needed. But it’s all business. **(story)**

33:15 Ichiban asks if they’ve dealt with Mabuchi, he’s pointed to the monitor. **(story/plot)**

- Video evidence of Mabuchi breaking into Otohime land. Unassailable proof.
- Han can’t yet hand it over, he has something else to show us.
- Nanba says this is getting shadier, Ichiban says to give it a rest.

34:30 Cuts scene mode change as the group are led into a room filled with scientists. In the centre is a gigantic green vat, lasers beaming into the goop filling the container.

- It cuts to Nanba, who approaches the large device with a steely gaze, a look of anger and determination. **(story/character/face acting)**
- The group follows.

35:25 Lasers whirr, paper is sent up through the vat, passing through two light barriers. The tension and music rises with it, as out comes a set of high quality fake bills. **(story/conspiracy)**

35:55 The group are baffled, Adachi asks if these are different from Mabuchi’s seonhee enters, saying his can’t compare. This apparatus can replicate real money to a micro-level.

36:30 Ichiban turns on the charm for the returning Seonhee, their jokey flirting annoying Saeko. **(character/story)**

- Han hurriedly demands Saeko watch her tone. Seonhee doesn’t care, she’s got these guys right where she wants them. **(story)**

36:55 Han formally introduces Seung-Hui, leader of the Geomijul. She pulls off her sunglasses, and the group is amazed, damn I didn’t recognise you, person I’ve never seen before heading a shadowy organisation.

- She’s serving Clark Cunt... Wait no I can’t say that. **(joke/awful joke/the worst)**

- Get plenty of reaction shots from Nanba

## YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – Nanba’s Mission

38:20 The paper Mabuchi used is the same base used here. Geomijul had asked them to import it. That paper went through Mabuchi’s warehouse. Zhao knows about this printing operation. Seong-Hui says they can’t keep it secret from him.

- Neither are involved in the Yuan however, Seong-hui figuring one of Mabuchi’s men with a background in forgery chanced upon it in the warehouse and brought the idea forward to the boss. The Yuan operation is entirely of his own devising. **(plot/story)**

40:00 Ichiban asks if she told Zhao, of course he knows, he just pretends not to.

- Likely why the group was able to plant a seed of doubt in Zhao to get them out alive. **(story)**

- Zhao also couldn’t make a move or else he’d have Mabuchi asking questions what the paper was for, Zhao is already guilty of keeping Mabuchi in the dark. **(story/observation)**

- Seong-Hui figures that since the Yen business is going well, Zhao wouldn’t want to tip the scales, so he looks the other way and lets Mabuchi run his own counterfeiting scheme. **(story/conspiracy)**

40:50 The paper is wasted on the yuan, but it keeps Mabuchi satisfied and ignorant. They talk about the process of producing Yen, how much of it is a state secret to ward off forgeries. But decades ago they got details from a contact on the inside.

- Adachi wonders how the police never knew. **(story/character)**

41:30 Seong-Hui approaches Ichiban. Making the point that no one knows about the fake bills.

- She puts a gun to his head, asking why exactly does he have one? **(story/conspiracy)**

- The group worries, Ichiban doesn’t flinch as Seong-Hui reaches in and produces the bill from his pocket.

- Han produces pistols, and says they’ve tracked him since he entered the city, it’s time to explain in detail why he have this.

42:25 The group stands firm, they have no good answer.

- Ichiban knows this, as he forces out the words, he doesn’t know the answer himself. Seong-Hui reassures him she will pull the trigger, Ichiban didn’t doubt that. After a long pause, she says she was making sure. All of their surveillance lines up with Ichiban being as clueless as he claims.

**(character/story)**

- “You didn’t seem to come here with any purpose. Well, not that you’re smart enough to have a purpose.” Big words to say to the guy who repurposed half your boys faces into ground meat.

**(joke/observation)**

- Ichiban laughs nervously, clearly not quite in the headspace for jokes at the moment.

43:45 Seong-Hui’s tone turns angry once again as she raises her pistol at Nanba “But... You’re different, huh?”

- He feigns ignorance, but Seong-hui produces a phone picture of him scanning the Geomijul, pointing out how he’s been watching the building, how he stuck with Ichiban the moment he learned about the bill. Ichiban tries to defend Nanba, but with guns drawn on him and Seong-Hui not letting up, he can’t do much.

45:30 At gunpoint, Nanba reveals why he’s here. He is as he says, a 41 year old former nurse. But he came to Ijincho on a mission, hunting for his younger brother Shoichi Akiba, a journalist who went missing while investigating the Geomijul

- Seong-Hui expresses surprise, saying he’s the journo who “disappeared” Nanba demands she not play dumb, saying he got a message from him just before he went dark. **(story/conspiracy)**

- The Geomijul were onto him. Nanba demands to know where his brother is, Seong-Hui can’t respond.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – Nanba’s non-betrayal**

47:00 The group goes over Nanba’s plot (sort of redundantly)

- Knowing he’d never be able to penetrate the great wall as an outsider. He became a bum at the homeless camp to bide his time and investigate. He had no warm leads, until one warm body dropped in. Ichiban and his fake bill. **(story/conspiracy)**

47:55 Nanba confesses to Ichiban, the moment he saw the bill, he knew he had to follow him.

Finding it funny that Ichiban somehow knew even less than him.

- Ichiban doesn’t much see the comedy in it, he responds bluntly, his face devoid of humour. He goes stern.

- Nanba warmly says he knew Ichiban wasn’t the type to lie about it, then confesses without him knowing about the bills, he was going to leave without a word soon anyway.

- His voice does sound like it wavers as he says this, he apologises to Ichiban, to the group. The group is learily hurt.

49:10 Thinking he’s going to die anyway, Nanba just asks if his brother is alive or dead, asking that Ichiban be left out of it.

- He pulls himself to his feet and asks the rest be spared. Even standing up to Seong-Hui. She is unimpressed, his heroic gesture isn’t quite as shocking as the taser she downs him with.

**(story/character)**

- I like how this scene keeps pivoting, raising and lowering the tension, bringing it to this moment where Nanba tries to make an Ichiban style heroic gesture, the tension rises with him... And then crumples into dust. **(story/observation/scene)**

50:10 Nanba collapses, Seong-Hui says we can be her guests as Nanba is carried off.

- Ichiban stops them, asks where they’r taking his friend.

- Seong-Hui laughs, asking if Ichi heard what he just said. He was only ever using Ichiban for selfish reasons.

- Ichiban hits her with some fucking loyalty.

Seong-Hui: That’s the kind of guy you call a friend?

Ichiban: Maybe you’re right. I shouldn’t just throw that word around at a guy like him.

Saeko: So it’s finally sinking in? *(smirks)*

Ichiban: Don’t get me wrong. I’m saying the word “friend” doesn’t even begin to describe him.

- Saeko and Adachi smile in agreement **(dialogue/excerpt)**

- Ichiban says if Nanba hadn’t taken care of him, he’d be dead. He owes Nanba his life, Nanba accepted Ichiban as his friend. Nanba’s face rises. Ichiban does not begrudge Nanba his reasons, his subterfuge, he says concern for ones family isn’t selfish at all.

- He throws Nanba’s honour and loyalty at Seong-Hui and she is pissed.

51:50 Emotions heighten, and Han’s guns go up with them. Ichiban grabs his wrists and wrestles for control.

- Seong-Hui raises her gun, but Adachi steps in and easily disarms her.

- Ichiban taunts Han, asking “didn’t you say you could stop us all by yourself.”

- Seong-Hui, in a panic, yells at her subordinates to get backup, they’ll have to get back up, we fucking rumbled them! **(joke/observation)**

- Nanba is dumped on the ground as they flee to get reinforcements, and a boss fight with Han begins, naturally, Theory of Beauty plays, though really it’s more query of who is this bitch?

**(wordplay/joke/awful)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – Nanba escapes in an awkward scene

52:20 Joon-Gi Han – Geomijul Advisor

- In contrast to the real Han Joon-Gi, this one is openly underhanded. With heavy use of firearms and poison. He's a crowd controller and a status effect dealer.
- But again, something is kinda lifeless about this fight, it lacks the energy and life of the real guy, it's a pale imitation. Playing Theory of Beauty doesn't reconnect me to... A guy I saw one game ago that I don't share the hype for. **(story/observation)**
- *I do wind up liking this character but this intro just makes me wonder what we're doing here*

58:40 With Han momentarily incapacitated the group beats a retreat from Geomijul

- With Nanba wounded we gotta do this as a three person team (four if I'd gotten Eri)

01:00:30 The exit to Geomijul is cut off but Seong-Hui flanked by a squad of footsoldiers.

- One more round of flirty insults, Ichiban calls her a vicious psycho bitch, Saeko says step aside before they hurt her and the fight is on.

01:03:05 The group is starting to tire from the relentless fighting. Ichiban asks Nanba if he can move and says he'll cover his retreat.

- Nanba tries to protest, asking what about the group. Ichiban just tells him to go, he needs to survive to track down his brother.
- This scene has some fairly awkward presentation, this speech being carried out with in-engine looping animations, set against the geomijul fight track.

01:04:00 Nanba protests for ages, he can't be such a selfish prick (he'll become such after), the group gives him their blessing to flee, Ichiban seeing him off with a smile.

- Nanba runs past Seong-Hui and dives through a window as she angrily yells a command. Then the group teleports past her to block off her pursuit. It's an awkwardly directed little scene. **(story/observation)**

01:04:30 As Seong-Hui is about to have an aneurysm it suddenly becomes a sitcom, with Ichiban pointing at the camera, big cocky smirk saying stress makes you age. With Saeko and Adachi giving their own insults. It's an odd moment.

- This cutscene style just doesn't have the juice for this kinda exchange you know. Everything feels too static, none of the actions have weight, and the high emotions feel constrained by looping animations and fairly rigid face models. **(observation/directing)**

01:06:00 We defeat another wave of Geomijul and Seong-Hui has had time to calm down. She says she underestimated Ichiban, what can I say, it's easy to overlevel in this game. **(joke/observation)**

- Ichi casually asks if they can just call it a day. Seong-Hui says it depends on Han's report.
- The Geomijul is in a panic, Nanba gave them the slip. Seong-Hui explains they will not stop hunting him. Ijincho will crumble in the counterfeiting leaks.
- They will keep hunting him, so Ichiban says it's on, if they want Nanba in their sights, they'll do everything they can to keep him out of them. Ichiban is fired up.
- Seong-hui says to take this seriously, Ichiban reassures her, he is being deadly serious.

**(story/character)**

01:08:35 Seong-Hui is annoyed, and for whatever reason not killing this guy on the spot, probably cause she's worked out his powerlevel. Ichiban asks flatly if they can't just look the other way.

- Seong-Hui says it isn't that simple, and tells him to come to Heian Tower that night, the one who actually holds Nanba's fate in his hands will be there. **(conspiracy)**

01:09:35 Before they can head there, Ichiban has something to check at the homeless camp.

**(objective)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 7 CONT – The Ogikubo Article, the Meeting between the Three**

01:12:00 At the camp the chief asks where Nanba is, Ichiban explains they have to go through his stuff if they have any hope of saving him. **(story)**

- In one of Nanba's boxes they find a laptop. Saeko handles it, despite seeing her work a laptop before, he's baffled this time. I guess he was distracted before. **(story/observation)**

01:13:40 They find an article by Nanba's brother Shoichi Akiba "Mysterious Fake Money Emerges in Ijincho." "The Truth Behind the Rumours."

- The fake money rumours go back 50 years, and have ties to the Chair of the Citizens Liberal Party, Ogikubo, a respected, long established politician.

- *Research: The Citizens' Liberal Party (Minjito) is an anagram (and stand in) for the real life Liberal Democratic Party (Jiminto). And I guess the Daidoji doesn't like them.*

- *In real life the Liberal Democratic Party was formed of a merger of two conservative parties and is one of the two largest political parties in the country.*

- The group expresses some doubt it could go *all the way up* to Ogikubo, he's the oldest member of the CLP, some people say the Prime Minister is just his yes man.

"Sounds like some kind of fixer." Please no lets not do this again. **(story/joke/observation)**

Joke idea: Three "oh we're doing this agains" one for the surveillance, one for Han, one "please god lets not do this again." for the fixer. **(joke/structure)**

01:15:00 Going over the article, if this were true it would link Ogikubo to the not only the Geomijul's operation, but also the Liumang. Adachi says the article has no smoking gun, just unsubstantiated claims. **(story/conspiracy)**

- With what the group do know, they feel there must be some truth to it. Ichiban realises that when he saw the bill on him he got jumpy. Saeko figures that was also the moment Nanba realised his brother was on to something. **(story/character)**

- So they learned about the potential Ogikubo link, but this does not point them to Nanba. All that's left is to go to the meeting. **(story/objective)**

01:19:30 Outside, the group jokes about whether they'd get a meal. Saeko tries to keep them on track, after going off it herself.

- The banter continues inside, joking Adachi has a fear of fancy restaurants.

01:21:30 They find Joon-Gi, saying they're keeping everyone waiting. He's now acting rather graciously. Ichiban is not putting down his guard. Han says they're outside the great wall. Reassurance no harm will come to them.

01:22:00 Han opens the door, leading us to a familiar room, and to three familiar faces. Sat around the table are Zhou, Seong-Hui, and Hoshino!

- Zhou is cheerful, welcoming Ichiban with a casual greeting.

- Hoshino slowly turns to the group, Adachi tells Saeko (and reminds the audience) who he is. The heads of the Ijin Three, all gathered in the same spot! What the hell is going on!

- Ichiban had it right, they're closer than anyone knew! **(observation)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 8 - Bleached Black

00:30 The group stands before the table. Ichiban greets Hoshino, his voice measured for once, a hint of anger. **(story)**

- Hoshino explains they only meet once a year if that, but this is of interest to the great wall.
- Ichiban stops containing his anger, yelling at them for meeting here while there men are fighting and dying in the streets, his captain is captive.
- Hoshino explains there's no retreat, no standing down without good reason. Zhou seconds this.
- Ichiban bitterly asks if they're gonna settle the war over a game of cards. Zhou mockingly finds the idea amusing, further angering Ichiban. Who's told by Hoshino not to rant about what doesn't fit his personal window of morality. **(character)**

02:30 Ichiban asks if this means the standoff is going to continue, saying people will die. Hoshino says that's how it has to be, that's the reality of men all too willing to fight. Sacrifices must be made to maintain the stalemate. **(story)**

- Hoshino puts it thus "A balanced triangle can sustain outside pressure. Just as Japan moved from dictatorship to separation of powers." **(dialogue/politics)**
- Adachi jokes the old man wants to talk postwar climate. He does.

03:20 Hoshino explains that Yokohama's power structure formed in the postwar period. The Seiryu flourished in the black markets, the Liurang were chased from Chinatown and disturbed the Seiryu's peace. Ichiban tries to stop him. Hoshino says they can't discuss the present without understanding the past, presenting his bill back to him. **(story/history)**

- The Seiryu are in on the operation, Ichiban is pissed, demanding to know if they're all in this together. Zhao tells him to calm down, but given the night he's had Ichiban doesn't want to be calm. Saeko agrees. **(story/character)**

05:40 Hoshino states he is not the forged yens final destination, that would be the pockets of Yutaka Ogikubo! He is in on it!

- Returning to the history lesson. Ogikubo was the man who proposed the counterfeiting operation!
- At the time, Ogikubo was small time, and lacked the resources to curb the crime problem. So he instead gave the conflicting factions a common interest, a reason not to tear each other to shreds. The counterfeiting operation, with duties split between the groups. **(story/politics)**
- *this is a great reveal, peace bought with dirty money, it's the lynchpin moment of the games themes when it comes to the crime politics and such an interesting scenario.* **(observation/story)**
- The money went to Ogikubo, who then paid off the cops, putting them squarely in his pocket. He then used the police to crackdown on Ijincho, and force any fighting between the Seiryu and Liurang to stop. He used fake money to create a conflict free zone. **(story)**

10:50 Seong-Hui explains how Ogikubo's scheme helped the Geomijul too. They're a breakaway from a Korean group, who else, the Jingweon Mafia! Each and every time the Jingweon were crushed, more of them would drift to Yokohama. **(backstory/history/politics)**

- And of course Han's a body double of a former leader. Ijincho was the only spot they could live in peace. **(story/backstory/history)**
- Ogikubo stepped in to make sure their arrival didn't turn to bloodshed, making printing and surveillance their duty. **(politics)**
- Ogikubo then used the funds secured from this operation to secure his role as chair of the CLP. **(politics)**

13:00 Adachi cannot get behind it, this is not real peace. Hoshino asks if he believes results don't matter if methods are flawed. Before asking what of the police? It took them cooperating with the Yakuza to rebuild the country after the war. Adachi can't deny it. **(character/dialogue)**

- For all the talk of what's right and wrong, sometimes the best results come from... A grey area. **(story/observation/theme)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 8 CONT – Gotta find Nanba first!**

13:35 Ichiban is indifferent, saying that while they're rambling about Ijincho's past, he's worried about its future. Hey man you're the one jeopardising it! **(joke/story)**

- Ichiban asks what they want with him.

- Zhao and Seong-Hui go over Nanba's investigation, why he has to die. Ichiban asks if he's been brought here to plead.

14:50 Hoshino says under normal circumstances all of their lives would be forfeit, but he has some idea how Ichiban acquired the fake bill.

- The other two Ijin members are surprised. If Ichiban wants what Hoshino knows, he has to bring Nanba here. Ichiban is not taking that deal, and asks if they're done here.

- Zhao points out the great wall collapsing means an end to the grey zone. Ichi agrees, sucks for them. Zhao calls Ichiban dense, this safe haven is keeping the Tojo and Omi out too. Ichiban owes his life to the grey zone. Ichiban balks at the idea he owes the city a debt. Zhao reminds him Ichiban is not impartial. **(character/story)**

### **STRUCTURE NOTE**

Combine chapters after combat, this is the section of the game where having had some time to learn about the situation. We're hit with back to back reveals, the great wall is shaking, and each twist feels like another blow as the situation gets more and more chaotic.

- Escaping the dungeon, the game says, hey, why not two more? All this action bridges us into the next arc of the story. These two dungeons also present more enjoyable scenarios than corypasted caverns. Chasing the wave of Seiryu as they crash into the Liumang, only arriving in time to make the situation more convoluted.

- Then raiding Geomijul, learning about their counterfeiting operation, not to mention Nanba's hidden motive.

- This culminates with the Ijin Three meeting. These three have been in cahoots for a long time, the foundation of the great wall was a lie, a brilliant move by an ambitious and inventive politician.

Chapter title: Wall to Wall Reveals?

- Talk about how when I covered Greedfall years back, one of my key disappointments was that all the evil stuff factions did turned out to be the actions of third parties acting in secret within their parent faction. I don't think anyone would spot this connection if I hadn't pointed it out, but I don't feel hypocritical praising it here it all coalesces into this much more interesting reveal. The gangs are all reigned in by a politician. It's such a morally ambiguous scheme. **(story/observation/post-note)**

16:45 It's about to devolve into an argument before Hoshino interrupts, saying Nanba is already being hunted by assassins. Liumang ones, Zhao happily announces.

- Ichiban tells Zhao to call them off, Zhao's not feeling that, one death is a small price to pay for the rest of the city.

- So, Hoshino says they have no choice but to get to Nanba first. Han has an idea where to look and he's willing to share. **(story)**

18:50 Outside the room, out of earshot of Zhao who we can suppose is cool with Ichiban having the lead, and a lead. Han says Nanba's best bet in Ijincho would be going to Bleach Japan.

- Ichi asks what they'll do if they bring Nanba here. Han can't answer, but says if they do nothing the Liumang assassins will get him. So they're off to the Bleach Office! **(objective)**

22:20 The assassin who killed Matsuo the hobo is waiting outside of the Bleach office. This reveal sickens Ichiban, Seong-Hui didn't want the murder to happen, and he left the Geomijul out of a lack of respect. We beat piss out of him. (he took out Matsuo, but this assassin's biggest victim is moral ambiguity) - Perhaps moment to talk about the Greedfall connection? **(observation/structure)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 8 CONT – Ogasawara and Mabuchi

23:45 The group enters the Bleach Japan Office

- Kume, before knowing who walked in, angrily questions if they know what time it is. His mood drops further upon seeing Ichiban.
- Nanba is here, he doesn't seem surprised.

24:20 There are three people in the Bleach office, Kume, Nanba, and some guy in a suit.

- Ichiban warns Nanba about Liumang assassins, Nanba is surprised it's them, not Geomijul.
- The suit introduces himself, Ogasawara, head of Bleach Japan, here to support the Yokohama Branch. He clearly is a Bleach guy, saying the grey zones here are rampant and the police too lax. Buddy the stuff we know would make your head spin, which is probably a service you could get around here. **(joke/story)**

- Oh, he knows, Nanba has confessed the money operation to him. So Ichiban says matter of factly they need to leave, right now. Nanba should go too.
- Adachi is surprised that this was Ichiban's plan. And Nanba is unmoved.

25:45 Ogasawara asks *why* they should be the ones running. So Ichiban grasses on the rest of the operation. It's the whole Ijin Three, this knowledge puts your life in peril.

- Kume says it's a bluff, calling us a smooth talker. Yeah shut it Kume the adults are talking. Ogasawara is smart enough to know we're probably truthful. **(joke/character)**
- Ogasawara can recognise why we're not assassins, Kume is revealed to be out of his depth. Oga explains he chose Kume for his conviction. Kume doesn't get it... Yeah that's why you were chosen, you don't get any. **(story/joke/observation)**

27:05 Ichiban asks if Ogasawara is *really* a civvie, he finds this amusing, saying he knows a bit more than the average commoner. As Saeko wonders who this guy is, he summons his associate, LAO MA!

27:35 Mabuchi appears, saying he'll take care of us

- The Bleach Boys take their leave, Nanba going with them. Ichiban calls to him. But Nanba says he just wants to find his brother, alive or... Otherwise (he hesitates at the possibility) **(character)**

28:15 We're left with Mabuchi and his boys. Ichiban wasn't counting on running into Mabuchi here, but he's glad for it, time to thank him for setting them up, and for Nonomiya!

30:00 Mabuchi Boss, he wields a spear like Guan Yu, the general serving under Liu Bei. Shame he lacks the guys loyalty. His theme *Warmaker* is an absolute fucking bop.

- Not that interesting besides, his main attack is a two hit combo

33:40 The mid boss phase transformation where Mabuchi gains red Heat is dismissed as Ichiban's gamer imagination, a visualisation of Mabuchi's rage. **(observation/gameplay)**

- In his second phase he gets some sweeps, giving him crowd control for this 3 on 1 battle. (4 on 1 with Eri)

38:00 Mabuchi is downed, he's actually happy, enjoying the rush of a hard fight, only happier when Ichiban angrily kicks him, demanding to know if he killed the boss. Mabuchi gleefully confesses to it, but this wasn't just to kick off a fight, he was following orders from Ogasawara!

**(politics/conspiracy)**

- Ogasawara's goal is Ijincho itself, exposing the source of Ogikubo's limitless funds. The group starts throwing questions at him, but Adachi's gets through, why turn on the Ijin three.
- It's because Ogasawara has *real backing*, the great wall is done, the invasion starts tomorrow!

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 8 CONT – Ryo Aoki is not a-okay**

40:15 The ones backing Bleach Japan... Are the Omi Alliance! **(conspiracy)**

- Mabuchi says he'll become the Arakawa of Ijincho, sell the town to the Omi, and earn some real respect! Saying he won't die in this backwater Hovel.

- He gets up and approaches Ichiban, who floors him with one last punch. With fury in his eyes telling him he's nothing like the boss. **(story/character/dialogue)**

41:10 The group decide to check out the room Ogasawara retreated into, but before they enter Nanba and Kume come out. Saying he's already gone.

- Nanba says Bleach will expose the counterfeiting and crush Geomijul, they'll do what they couldn't and find his brother. Nanba is willing to take a sledgehammer to the entire wall for this. **(story/character/observation)**

42:40 The group pleads with Nanba to play it safe, go to ground. Explaining what's going on.

- Nanba pushes them away with clear pain in his voice. He needs their help to find his brother, so damn the group. He's pissed off at how Ichiban won't stop interfering. **(character)**

43:10 Adachi asks if Nanba is really going. Nanba tells them to go ahead and attack from behind if they want. Ichiban says he knows they wouldn't pull that, they're friends after all.

- That really pisses Nanba off, he screams for Ichiban to shut up. **(character/dialogue)**

43:35 The party are upset, but Adachi says they're still in danger, they should hurry and check out that room.

44:05 In the back of the Bleach office, Ichiban is pulled to a certain picture. Featuring the two founders of Bleach Japan, and he recognises one of them!

- Ichiban struggles to believe it, he heard he'd died.

- The man in the picture, shaking hands with Ogasawara is the governor, Rro Aoki, but Ichiban knows him by a different name... Masato Arakawa! The Young Master!

45:35 Fade to black, we join 'Ryo Aoki' in his office.

- He's busy, well liked by his secretary. Confident and self-assured. He gets a call from Ogasawara. Reports that he found Ogikubo's secret weapon, and needs some Omi men to help out. Aoki says he'll send whatever he can spare.

- He looks out of his window, his office high in the Tokyo skyline. He's climbed a long long way up! **(story/conspiracy)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 9 - House of Cards**

00:30 At Survive, Saeko, Ichiban, and Adachi do some research on Ryo Aoki.

- Same age as Masato, 'Ryo Aoki' was conveniently a shut in until 20. At which point he went to Harvard and befriended Ogasawara. This shut in really broke out huh? **(joke/observation)**
- They started Bleach Japan, apparently the young activists bleaching the grey zones stirred the countries heart. And Ryo Aoki rose to fame as a commentator. He fucking rose all right. **(story)**

01:40 Ryo Aoki left Bleach to Ogasawara and went into politics proper. Eeking out a win for Tokyo governor, but then his approval skyrocketed to 80%.

- Ichiban doesn't care about any of this, he just wants a connection to Masato, none seems to exist, and Saeko asks if this can't just be a coincidence. Adachi doesn't want to write it off. Saying some things would make sense if he was. Like the Tojo Clan destruction and 3K plan. **(conspiracy/story)**

02:45 In the 3K plan, all the top officers fled from the city. The police were looking for crimes to pin them with. The 3K plan ushered in so many anti-yakuza laws they'd have no shortage of charges to work with. So the top brass moved their arse **(wordplay/joke)**

- But that shouldn't have been enough, so it's likely they had the inside scoop on the Tojo's moves. If Masumi Arakawa leaked it, colluding with the governor, who turns out to be his own son. It could even explain why Masumi betrayed the Tojo, out of greater loyalty to his own son. Ichiban has to consider it. **(character/story)**

04:50 The question is asked how he did this.

- Adachi says he could have bought a family register, saying for someone with his money and connections, fabricating a person is far from impossible. Ryo Aoki probably was a real guy, Masato just took his place. **(aside/story/world)**
- They ask why, obvious answer, hide his background. He'd never get anywhere in politics with a Yakuza background.
- His "death" was likely leaked by the Arakawa family itself as a means to protect his identity theft, and so Masato Arakawa died, and Ryo Aoki is born anew.

06:40 A picture of Ryo Aoki catches Ichiban's eye, he's risen in the world in more ways than one, he's walking! **(joke/wordplay/story)**

- Adachi figures a US surgery. The other man in the picture walking alongside Aoki is Horinouchi, Adachi's eternal rival.
- Ichiban is feeling mixed up, Kamurocho feels like a big piece of the puzzle.
- Adachi says to leave it there for the night, get some rest, after all, the invasion is tomorrow! So Wags gives us access to the room upstairs, I guess we're his live in security now. **(story/observation/joke)**

11:20 The next morning Ichiban heads out to see how the town is dealing with the threat of invasion, but it seems trouble is coming from within. **(story)**

- Hamako calls, a guy called Totsuka is looking for Ichiban, she hurriedly warns us to stay away and hangs up, about the quickest way possible to summon Ichiban.
- Joke idea: turn up, Hello, Poundmates! **(joke)**

15:10 We find Hamako surrounded by goons, led by Totsuka who is still pretty dinged up. She's unimpressed by their threats, refusing to throw Ichiban under the bus. So Totsuka slugs her, so that's it, he has to die.

- Ichiban steps in to put a stop to this before a sledgehammer is brought down on Hamako. Making a real heroic entrance. **(observation)**
- Hamako jokes she wasn't trying to protect his fool ass, Ichiban knows to play along, they get eachother. He asks if he can take it from here, so lets take Totsuka down once more.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 9 CONT – The Bleach Invasion**

18:05 Ichiban asks if Hoshino forgave Totsuka, nope, this guy is now rolling independent! He knows about the counterfeit money and he's pissed to have been left out in the cold. **(story)**

- Bleach has leaked everything, so trust in the bosses is kinda fucked. The Chairman doesn't care about two dead Seiryu, and he's chumming it up with Zhao... Yeah can't say Ichiban's anger wasn't misplaced, this is how the truth would look to anyone who had to live under the lie! **(observation)**

19:00 Totsuka says these boys are with him, and there are plenty more at HQ ready to tear down Hoshino **(plot/conspiracy)**

- Totsuka wants to kill Ichiban, then take over Ijincho!

- Ichiban kicks his shit in and tells him to go play king on a playground. If he goes near Hamako again he'll bind his ass in bamboo and toss him in the river, successfully intimidating Totsuka.

So what did we learn here: The whole town is going to fucking shit and the invasion hasn't even started... But that'll be any second (phone rings) ah here we go... **(joke)**

22:35 Zhao calls, telling Ichiban a bunch of stuff he doesn't know the guy already figured out. Some casual banter, turns out an Omi backed Bleach Alliance 1000 strong are marching towards Geomijul, it's an invasion with a protest acting as trojan horse. It's awesome.

**(story/conspiracy/plot/observation)**

- Their target is the counterfeiting operation **(story)**

24:25 Zhao wants Ichiban to get down there. Ichiban asks why he can't do it. Well simply put, the Liumang are having a bit of a coup detat right now, with Mabuchi having whipped the boys into a frenzy over the counterfeiting op.

- Zhao says don't make him beg. Ichiban is surprised that he even could, a deal is cut. Ichiban saves Geomijul, and the whole Nanba business is forgotten. Ichi says his end of this deal is harder, but the call is cut off, with Zhao throwing out one last warning that Bleach's orders come down from Ogasawara himself. **(plot/conspiracy)**

27:10 Geomijul has erected a wall, holding back a horde of protesting Bleach, they're pretty rowdy!

- The size of the crowd tells the group, this isn't the usual Bleach turnout, they are god knows how many Omi pumping up their numbers.

27:50 Saeko expresses doubt they can stop this. Kume agrees, appearing behind us. Smugly saying when they're done, the grey zones will be a barren wasteland. Kume is as happy as a pig in shit.

- We ask shouldn't Ogasawara be here, well he's heading the march.

- Getting a bit overzealous, and clearly surrounded not by marchers, but muscle. We're surrounded.

- Ichiban points out to Kume he is clearly being followed by Omi. One of the accused defending himself in a thick Kansai dialect does little to help.

- We tell Kume his boys are of a Kansai Bent, their kansai ben does not beat the allegations.

**(joke/wordplay)**

28:55 Kume says to apologise and he can make them back down. Revealing once again he's little more than a power hungry twerp. Wearing a sanctimonious veil thinner than the lingerie many of the women of the grey zone could tempt you with. **(wordplay/needs works/story)**

- Saeko points out how this is a pretty pathetic display for a guy claiming to be cleaning the world up, the best insult Kume can summon up is calling her a hussy... It's the most telling moment in the game. This man craves power, but he has no claim to it, no qualities that'd actually win him any, so he hitches his wagon with an easy path to power, that lets him look big and important, flex his borrowed muscles. **(observation/theme/character)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 9 CONT – Meet Ishioda, the lieutenants, the secret passage

29:25 Yeah Kume is kinda hopeless in an argument compared to Saeko. She can see right through him. So a fight ensues.

- After the beatdown, Kume tries to call assault, not caring they attacked first, and it was *how many* vs 3? Kume claims he did not know he was being followed by Omi goons, not that this will influence his judgment or how judgmental he is any. **(observation/character)**

- Oh, he had an idea, but was willing to overlook it. How convenient, how *grey*

32:55 With time ticking away, Adachi grabs a protest sign, he has a plan to get in.

33:35 A wrecking ball is driven up to the Geomijul's wall... Uh, I don't think protest permits would cover that. **(joke)**

- A man who couldn't be more obviously Yakuza if he tried hypes the crowd up. Before making his crack in the wall.

- The Ichigang hide behind their plaques as they breach the crowd. They can't spot Ogasawara, and it doesn't take long for the crowd to cotton on to them, with some clear Omi infiltrators picking a fight.

37:50 The fight draws the attention of the wrecking balls operator. Ichiban narrowly saving Saeko from getting atomized by a wild swing which happens fucking smashing into a group of protestors... bleach the grey zones fucking red! **(joke/observation)**

- Adachi recognises the guy manning the ball, it's Reiji Ishioda, an Omi Lieutenant, and on queue, he recognises Ichiban **(story/conspiracy)**

- The two have some banter. Ishioda wondering what Ichiban is doing here, Ichiban says he'll want some handkerchiefs, the story is a real tearjerker. Ishioda will pass, save the hankies for a funeral, we're fighting a wrecking ball!

42:55 The group are unable to stop the machine, and when a swing nearly takes them out, they escape in the confusion. Luckily, that last swing seems to have done the wrecking ball in **(story)**

- Bit of casual nearly died dialogue between Adachi and Saeko, Ishioda regrets killing Saeko for being his type.

45:00 With a moment to spare, Adachi fills Ichiban in on Arakawa's three Lieutenants.

- We just met Ishioda, unpredictable and hard to keep in line, but very good at what he does, whatever it winds up being.

- Then we have Sawashiro.

- Last up is Tendo, former boxer turned Omi, built like a bull. Get a cool silhouette shot of him in Osaka. He is apparently Arakawa's favourite, well take that Sawashiro **(story/faction)**

46:15 A call from Han, he was impressed with the crew fighting a wrecking ball. Ichiban is not happy they're being watched. Han knows they're here to help, Ichi makes sure he knows it's for Nanba, not them.

- Han says they have a precious gift for them, he wants them to know they want their assistance, even if it comes at great cost. So this is a showing of sincerity. **(story)**

- Ichi says he's talking in circles. We're told to head to a restaurant called Eomeoni's Vow. Ichiban asks for clarification, he's told Eomeoni means mother... Cool. **(dialogue)**

47:45 At Eomeoni's Vow, we're taken to the back. Behind the restaurant is the hidden entrance to the Geomijul Residential District. It's a secret they've guarded with their lives, and having seen the group put their lives on the line, they're privileged with this knowledge. **(story/character)**

- This will let us past the crowd and into Geomijul, so we can be before the horde!

- Inside Han awaits, telling us to hurry, the wall just fell! **(story)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 9 CONT – The Torching of Geomijul

50:10 Han tells us Seong-Hui is trying to contact Ogikubo, the man is tense. Saeko finds this cute, until he reminds them one word about this place and he'll kill them all.

51:05 We make it to Seong-Hui, she has a solemn tone. The order has come through, they gotta burn it all down. Seong-Hui says we have two minutes before bleach breaches the inner sanctum, it's our job to hold them back. **(story/objective)**

- Seong-Hui says they didn't know how much pressure the Omi was putting on the great wall, she says this one's on us... I think it's on us but cool, I'll take that. **(story/observation)**

- All ties to Ogikubo must be severed, that was Seong-Hui's call. She asks that Han torches it.

52:05 Han points out that the surveillance system will go down too, as well as their homes. Seong-Hui reassures him she's aware of the consequences.

- Han apologises, and gets right to carrying out her orders.

- Even Ichiban is shocked by this turn. Seong-Hui says while not perfect, she owes their home to Ogikubo, and is only grateful. They're not gonna be sacrificial pawns, but they will repay this debt by covering his tracks. **(story/character)**

53:30 Adachi does not want to cooperate with a crime, but Seong-Hui begs, even bows to the group, much to Han's shock. Saeko tells her not to, saying she doesn't like her, cares less for Ogikubo, but acknowledges someone as proud as her wouldn't bow without reason. Saeko says Seong-Hui is being genuine.

- Ichiban apologises, saying guys can be dense. So we're on the job, the Geomijul members depart to torch the operation, we just gotta hold the crowd back.

56:10 Standing guard, Bleach approaches us, we come face to face with Ogasawara, Ishioda ... And Nanba!

- Ichioda asks why we're alive, not about the wrecking ball, about Arakawa shooting us. Ichiban says it's none of his business, but the guy is asking a good question. Arakawa even had his boys dump us off personally.

- Nanba yells the printer is past us, and they see smoke escaping through the door, they realise they're up against the wall

57:45 Nanba begs us to move, Ichiban says he's made a promise to Seong-Hui, he's not budging.

- With time slipping away, it comes to blows, Ishioda/Nanba boss fight

- You can charm Nanba with Saeko, very amusing **(gameplay)**

01:02:20 Bleach are battered, bodies strewn about the floor of Geomijul, Ishioda is pissed and Nanba is crestfallen, slamming his fist to the ground in utter despair.

- Seeing the fire, the rest of Bleach cut and run. The rest of Geomijul emerge from the burning counterfeiting op, capturing Ogasawara.

01:03:40 Outsider, protestors and Yakuza flee the burning building, the webs of the Geomijul aflame.

01:04:00 Over the flames, a tearful Nanba says none of this will see the light of day. He turns to Ichiban and says he stabbed him in the back.

- Ichiban says he was trying to save him, he's told to shut up.

- Seong-Hui approaches, saying he has good friends, he rejects them as friends, but she says she can clear that up. His brother was closing in on their operation all by himself. He was captured, but they would never waste a talent like his. He's alive, safe and sound, just not allowed to leave their residential district. **(story)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 9 CONT – Nanba Brother Alive! Ogasawara Caught**

01:05:00 Inspiring music plays as the fire rises, Ichi asks why they didn't just say, before catching himself, realising he couldn't. Seong-Hui says the only reason Nanba is getting the truth is because his friends risked so much for him. **(story)**

- Nanba says he won't believe anything until he sees his brother for himself. **(character)**
- Adachi says all the more reason to get out of here (this burning fucking room)
- Ichiban offers his hand to Nanba with a smile, with great hesitation he takes it.

01:07:15 Back at the homeless camp, they've got Ogasawara bound and gagged, the chief isn't happy. Ichiban says they couldn't think of anywhere else to take a guy they kidnapped... Like Survive, or their house, or Ichiban Holdings, then you'd really be holding. **(joke/observation)**

- The chief says we're cannot torture him, Ichiban says please, he's done some naughty things, so torture may be on the table, just be done by morning. **(story)**

01:09:00 Ichiban approaches, saying he has many questions, and morning is not for a long while. Ogasawara gives us a defiant stare, and end chapter.

- Hey where the hell did Ishioda go? I suppose I was told you can't predict him. He's illusive as smoke! Perhaps he even went up in it? **(joke/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 10 - Justice Tempered by Mercy**

00:30 The group talks about Nanba, he's gone off to see his brother.

- Saeko sadly asks if this is where he parts ways with them. Ichiban says he hasn't got much reason to stick around anymore.

01:15 For now, they gotta focus on getting Ogasawara to talk

- So, we got nearly half an hour of exposition to sift through! It's the PLOT 2.0, now with breakpoints! We're given breaks at several stages where we can just leave him and go muck about in the city if we get bored! **(story/pacing/observation)**

01:35 Gag is off, time for Ogasawara to talk! After some encouragement from Han, naturally. A reminder they torched their one home because of him, he has ten fingernails, and Seong-Hui has many more ideas for what to do with him **(character)**

- Ichiban asks what are his Omi connections. Ryo Aoki holds those reigns.
- He's shocked when the group asks if he's always gone by that name. No use denying it. Ichiban knew him when he was Masato Arakawa.

05:00 Ogasawara first met Masato almost 20 years back when they were studying in America. Masato was majoring in Politics and Economics, and rather sharp.

- He was going by Ryo Aoki back then, and had already been treated for his weakness. He was clearly well off, had enough money for such treatments... On a low rung family's dime?

**(observation)**

- Ogasawara approached him, sensing he was wealthy. Ichiban clearly thinks him a bit low for that.
- Ogasawara didn't learn about his criminal connections until they returned to Japan.
- He goes on that he could only wish to have the money and power Masato held, but it didn't even begin to satisfy the man. "He craved something else entirely."

06:50 Frontal Power

- Cut to a shot of Horinouchi rejecting Masato's bribe, as it's explained some people are above being controlled by Yakuza and money. He wanted to bring people to heel through more legitimate "front-facing power" **(story/character)**
- Popularity, Ichiban is silent, Ogasawara taking it as Ichi seeing it as childish. But Ogasawara says popularity is the only way to beat someone in a democracy. Still childish mate, correct, but childish.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – THE PLOT

07:45 Money and criminal connections are back-facing power. Popularity isn't an option. Power cannot be absolute. So he went for governorship of Tokyo. A position that converts popularity into power easier than any other. **(backstory)**

- The position of prime minister is called a figurehead. To become Governor, ten million must will you to power, it's a position of great wealth and greater prestige than PM. According to Ogasawara.

09:10 Ogasawara says he was chosen as a partner in this. Ichiban gives him a shit eating smile, asking if he was more a servant, saying the young master could really crack a whip.

- Ogasawara can't deny it, he's always been second fiddle in this. Bleach was just a blip on his radar, a stepping stone of his ambitions, and Ogasawara has been left behind. **(observation)**

09:30 Break point in the questioning

09:45 Next topic, the formation of Bleach Japan.

- Bleach Japan was Aoki's ideas. Ogasawara thought it naive at first. Early on its ranks needed to be padded with Arakawa members, a lot of money spent getting the message out. At first it seemed a waste but Masato was in for the long haul.

- Oga says Masato has a strong sense of the social climate, and its vague goals of eradicating corruption and "making things fair" resonated. They were not ideas you could easily criticize, and young people ("who had never worked a real day in their lives") liked the praise for trying to reform the world. **(politics/backstory)**

- So they attracted an army of small minded busybodies, who wanted praise without really doing anything. Women were hired to bulk out the numbers and attract men. (Kume was one such recruit thanks to that scheme... Naturally, he couldn't be more pathetic.) **(observation)**

13:30 Bleach Japan expanded, and its anti-grey zone agenda had the benefit of outing corrupt politicians, people weak to a little money and influence. **(backstory/politics)**

- They would often just stumble into reputation ruining information, only giving them more control over these people.

- How big is Bleach? 500 full time employees, and over 100,000 taking part in demonstrations.

- "And you've kidnapped the man at the top of the chain." Ichiban is not intimidated.

14:50 Oga asks Ichiban a question, why he's here. "Aren't you ex-Arakawa?"

- He tries to pull a slick move, say he could put a word in with the governor, have him back in the fold in no time. The Ijin Three are just trouble.

- Ichiban doesn't argue they are trouble. For a moment Oga thinks he has him, but Ichiban tells him not to get it twisted. He doesn't want back in, and he's no ally of the Ijin Three.

- Oga is baffled, Ichi says he didn't come here or get involved with any knowledge of Mabuchi, or Bleach, or this conspiracy. He's just here to chase down the man who killed his boss. Ogasawara has no corruption or greed to exploit, making Ichiban pretty damn untouchable to a guy like him.

**(observation/character)**

- Ichi even sees through this. He's only here cause someone picked a fight, that someone is looking an awful lot like Ogasawara. He flinches at this, caught.

16:20 Adachi puts it bluntly. "Ask a dumb question, get a dumb answer."

16:35 Ichiban takes a smoke break, this is our second interlude in the questioning.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – THE PLOT GOES ON

17:00 After Bleach Japan got off the ground, what came next?

- Aoki pursued media attention, and quickly captured the public's attention. "The bright young mind behind Bleach Japan."
- words matter, but they matter less than how you're perceived saying them. Ryo Aoki played brilliantly for the press.

- In 2010 Ryo Aoki ran for the House of Councillors, appearing to leave Bleach Japan behind. Only known to us he was still riding Oga's behind. **(joke/wordplay)**

- The CLP backed him and he won in a landslide, a feat he topped with the Governorship... Because the Arakawa dug up his opponents' weaknesses. Perfect victory.

- Man we were a really, really fucking good third string family. **(observation)**

- Months later he enacts the 3K plan to massive public acclaim.

- They interrogate how it's considered a success when the Tojo were merely replaced by the Omi, Ogasawara says it was a bloodless, silent takeover. The public only saw the success, the fact nothing really changed hardly mattered! **(observation/story/backstory)**

21:25 Why did the police look the other way toward the Omi invasion? Because it was prudent. The power vacuum of the Tojo led to far more unruly, opportunistic criminals. The Omi helped the police re-establish control (especially given their secret ties to the Governor)

- "Ironic, isn't it? They wiped out the Yakuza, only to find they needed the yakuza."

**(theme/dialogue)**

22:25 Adachi is getting riled. Saying that with the governor acting as middleman between the Tojo and Police, they're no better than the Ijin Three!

- He's pissed, he knows Horinouchi stood to benefit, and demands proof from a confused, panicking Ogasawara. Adachi is pissed that he knows nothing, Oga admits he's just the governor's puppet.

23:50 Next question, why is Aoki after Ijincho? He's not, he's after Ogikubo.

- As Aoki rose to power. Ogikubo didn't budge. Aoki saw something in him, he too had underworld connections. This invasion was a means to secure proof. To give him leverage over his biggest obstacle.

- Mabuchi was their man on the inside, a displeased number 2 who wanted to rock the boat. A promise of Omi sent waves.

- The murder of Nonomiya was Mabuchi's idea, Oga claims he did not sign off on a murder, sure as shit didn't mind it succeeding though! **(observation)**

27:00 Ichiban angrily points out that if he didn't sign off on the murder, someone did, and Ichiban already knows it was Aoki. Oga claims he had a backup plan, but when he went to Masato, he saw nothing wrong with Mabuchi's plot.

- "To get the jump on Ogikubo, he was ready to accept a high risk, high return type of plan."

**(character/politics/plot/dialogue)**

- Ichiban is deeply disappointed in Masato

28:00 Seong-Hui stays on track, saying after this, someone kept chiselling at the wall. Ichiban asks if he's being accused, Seong-Hui says not to take it personally. A scene would have been caused eventually.

28:20 They cause this chaos, and within it find Ogikubo's underworld connections.

- Oga smugly says they were spot on, Ichi won't let him have that, it was a lucky break. It was, Nanba came along and gave them exactly what they needed. Proof which let them mobilise the Omi.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – THE PLOT CONCLUDES / Nanba Returns**

29:30 Ichiban asks Seong-Hui what comes next. **(story)**

- With the operation burnt, Ogikubo has lost the source of his power, Aoki has already won, and his next move determines the fate of Ijincho.
- Ogasawara smugly states this city will share the fate of Kamurocho, with no great wall to protect it the Omi will flood in.
- The great wall was a paper tiger! **(joke)**

30:15 A bum comes rushing in, the Yakuza are coming, a horde of Bleach Japan floods the homeless camp. Dumping a beaten Chief on the ground.

- Oga calls for help, and the Omi Bleach member says to make sure Sawashiro know they're the ones who rescued him.

33:40 The group fend some of them off, but in the confusion they've made off with Oga

- It's so Oga **(joke/bad joke)**
- It's pointed out by Han, hardly handy were you Han? **(joke)**

34:20 The chief asks that next time we kidnap someone, keep them away from here.

- "I wasn't gonna do it again, probably." Ichiban lives an unpredictable life. **(joke/observation)**

35:10 Seong-Hui gets a call from Hoshino. Everyone is blind, no idea when the system will be back up until the damage is surveyed.

- The internal Seiryu rebellion was put down by Takabe.
- One issue, they have been unable to contact Zhao, and without Geomijul tracking, there's no knowing what's happening with him. Ichiban tells Seong-Hui about the coup-detat.

37:30 Ichi says it's time to pay Zhao back, he told Ichiban to save the Geomijul when the Liumang was crumbling, so they better return the favour. Can't afford to lose him with what's coming.

38:00 Adachi and Saeko are thrown that Ichi is planning to go save Zhao, not that they were planning on sitting out. **(characters/party)**

- Saeko says they started in different places, but the truths they're chasing are all coming together!
- Inspiring speech as the crew comes together, Ichiban invites Seong-Hui in. She's feeling it. So lets go save Zhao!

38:50 But first, a word from some bum! Nanba arrives with pathetic plea.

- His brother is alive, but Nanba has a serious, downbeat demeanour. He tells Ichiban straight to let Ijincho go. This isn't his responsibility, there's no reason to care about the Ijin Three, much less risk his life for them.

39:45 He says he's tired of watching Ichiban play mister good guy. "Good guys get played by guys like me."

- Ichiban doesn't feel like he was played, he understands Nanba's want to save his brother.
- Nanba continues, and to get further, he cooperated with Nonomiya's killers.
- This is a great little speech, this isn't about Ichiban, this is about Nanba's self loathing. If he truly didn't care about Ichiban, or any of this, he would have left already. He wouldn't be here acting the bad guy in an effort to save Ichiban's life. **(story/character)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Off to save Zhao

40:35 He breaks down, saying his mind and body have been tainted by this fucking town, and he wants out. He begs Ichiban to think of himself for once. Don't get wrapped up in others shit.

- Ichiban says it's not just him, the whole city is wrapped up in this. And it's not like this isn't personal. He tells Nanba him and Ryo Aoki share a father, for Ichiban this is just as much about brotherhood. **(story/character)**

- *This moment is super important, if nothing else is bringing Nanba back around, it's recompense here, Ichiban helped find his brother, now Nanba can return the favour*

- What's up with you, Nanba? **(joke/bad joke/ I like it)**

41:55 Ichiban spells it out, Nanba never had any idea how far Ichiban would take the good guy act, yet here Nanba is trying to talk him out of it. He's a good guy himself, even if he'd never see it that way.

### Post-note: Ichiban's Forgiveness

There is something sort of bleak about how often the moments people take issue with in Ichiban's stories are his moments of forgiveness. The feeling the people he absolves are far from worthy of redemption. It's kinda tragic one of his core character traits of trying to see the best in people and bring out their better natures is roundly dismissed as poor writing, something someone would never really do.

While exaggerated, especially in Infinite Wealth if we get there. It's one of the most admirable, inspiring traits of his character. To be so compassionate, so able to turn people around.

With Nanba here I think it works. Nanba has done some fucked up stuff out of desperation by this point. But I think people overlook how he begged for Ichiban's life, and how in this scene here. He's playing the part of a bad guy to try and save Ichiban's life. Nothing else has worked on the guy, so he tries to put the spark out. This doesn't work.

Hey if that doesn't make Nanba's redemption or return work for you. You could say he's returning the favour of saving a brother, now relating to Ichiban's own fraternal connection in the conspiracy. **(story/observation/post-note)**

- Also a decent twist for looking back on and examining Nanba's behaviour, all the good acts he does without gain take on extra light.

42:10 Ichiban says he's happy to call Nanba a friend, Nanba once again rejects the label, more out of feeling unworthy of it than anything. **(character)**

- Ichiban continues, more than anything else, they wanna know the truth in a world of lies. They're in the same boat. Nanba doesn't argue, he just leaves.

- Ichiban doesn't lose his smile, saying he thinks they'll meet again soon, if Nanba calls, he'll come running. Nanba tries to leave dispassionately. Nothing will dissuade Ichiban. **(character)**

-Saeko asks if we're gonna stop him. Adachi says he said his piece, he can't really argue with it, but they're going after Zhao.

43:50 Han asks for Seong-Hui to stay behind, guide Geomijul in this moment. She accepts, and in exchange Han is sticking with us, that way we can stay in touch.

- So we're off to save Zhao! **(objective)**

47:10 At Restaraunt Row, the group is surrounded by Liumang defectors led by Zheng, back to his old tricks! His perversions had somehow escaped the Geomijul's notice. "Get on our level" Adachi tells Han.

- Mabuchi is in charge now, and we each have a massive bounty on our heads!

52:30 With the Liumang defeated, we question Zheng. Zhao is being held by Mabuchi in Qing Jin (his restaurant), likely being tortured, and made to give up all his assets. **(story)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Battle Through Restaurant Row

55:00 Time to once again fight through Restaurant Row

01:00:50 At Qing Jin, the staff are ready to serve, their new master! (Awful joke)

01:01:10 The Qing Jin dungeon has some of the best fucking music in the game, pure kung fu funk! It plays for all of a couple floors damnit **(music/observation)**

- This dungeon is a ton of empty space between rooms, not much going on.

01:07:40 The head server boss, after phase one he unleashes a tiger! Our first animal fight! It's still YLAD. Adachi finds it cute, Saeko does not agree. **(boss/combat)**

- It's funny I can double back multiple floors to the infinite heal point. **(observation/gameplay)**

01:17:10 Make it to a sort of grand hall deep in Qing Jin, currently playing host to a large meeting of Omi invaders, with Mabuchi stood beneath them. Good visual language. He will not be Yokohama's Arakawa. Use the spear all you want, you ain't Guan Yu! **(observation/camera language)**

01:17:30 Trying to play it cool, Mabuchi said he won't be satisfied til he kills Ichiban personally. Ichi easily spits back that he put a bounty on him, sure you're not delegating the hard work. **(story)**

01:18:00 Zhao is here... For now, Ishioda asks if Mabuchi needs a hand, but nope, he has to look big, as he looks up to the men he just let in who already stand above him. He'll defeat Ichi and swear up as a full partner (he thinks)

- Mabuchi is a tragic idiot. **(character)**

01:18:45 As Mabuchi talks to his new superiors. Han points out he's flanked by Liumang Assassins, the Triads ace in the hole. The Omi behind them.

- Ichiban tells him to stop, he doesn't want to know how bad the odds are, they run, Zhao dies. That's it. Han says not to bristle.

01:18:55 Ichiban is addressed by a large, unfamiliar figure with a thick kansai dialect.

- He introduces himself as a man having to live with the shame of Arakawa stealing his seat... Oh, oh boy. **(foreshadowing)**

- This is Tendo, clearly thought himself the man for the captancy before Arakawa's big play. **(observation)**

- Tendo is large, has neat, styled hair, a sort of classic boxer look. Old fashioned suit colouring and style. He looks of the old kind. **(observation/character design)**

### Post-Note: Kabuki Colours

- In Kabuki red is heroic, passionate. Blue is villainous, cold. The colour brown represents *ghosts or demons*. Ichi is red, Aoki is blue, and Tendo is brown. **(observation/character design)**

01:20:20 Mabuchi wants to impress, put on a sideshow, and he'll be hard pressed to do so! He is a very easy fight! **(wordplay/boss)**

- Ichiban KOs Mabuchi, announcing the sideshow is over. He turns to the entire fucking crowd of Omi invaders and say they're next. They do not for a second feel threatened.

- Tendo rises, outright rejecting Ichiban's challenge as beneath him.

01:26:10 Yosuke Tendo – Omi Alliance Lieutenant, Ryudo Family Patriarch

- Ichiban tries to stand in Tendo's way. The man admits things are getting interesting, Ichiban ultimately stands aside as Tendo walks through him. We're not on his level, yet.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Music Post-Note / Nanba’s heroic return

### Post-note: Time for Music at Qing Jin

Structure note: Qing Jin is the time for music. Mention how it’s a thoroughly unique battle theme and I adore it. Nostalgic, not just cause of the cool kung fu vibes. Maybe Ichiban’s imagination is taking him to old martial arts movies. It kinda gives me a Yakuza 4 vibe.

- Then pivot into how Ichiban’s sound differs from Kiryu. Kiryu’s sound isn’t averse to techno but is mostly characterised by heavy use of a guitar and accented with other genres to fit the time and place. Ichiban’s music places most of the emphasis on electronic sounds. Fitting his role as a more modern hero and paying homage to his love of games.

It also better fits the needs of turn-based. The music while still giving the fights great energy is a lot less driving than Kiryu’s tracks. While the music does rise and fall, it maintains intensity for longer stretches. It speaks to the danger of a fight, but it’s never telling the player to hurry up and make a decision. This more languid energy keeps the battle tracks from getting tiresome. What can I say man, unlike Nanba the composers for this series just don’t miss (*Nanba Misses*)

Yokohama Crackhouse a bop, Mabuchi’s Warmaker is ten times cooler than he is. I fucking love the war horns blaring. Before we got track names this was called Cold-Blooded, I love the OG track names but does this sound like the track of a coldblooded man to you! This track is fire and so is the blood flowing through Mabuchi’s veins!

01:26:35 Ichiban says they’ll regret letting him live. Tendo says it sounds like a good time.

- Ishioda says Tendo saves his favourite meal for last, “fucking stupid, right?”

- Ichiban tries to hype the group up, but the gang is clearly flagging, even Mr. Body is doubling over. Until he sees... Nanba!

01:27:45 Theme of friendship plays, slo-mo shots of happy faces as our boy steps back into the fight. Sweet musical drop. He’s not done getting wrapped up in our bullshit. He thought he’d be relieved, but all he could do was worry. “So I figured... You better let me help you.”

- The Ichigang is elated, Ichiban can’t help but hug him. Adachi is brought to tears. Infectious joy at times. Ishioda accuses Nanba of another betrayal. Nanba says he’s on Ichi’s team now, for good.

01:29:50 Ishioda boss, now with Nanba on our side... Man, Ishioda gets weaker in his three near consecutive battles, he goes from wrecking ball to human wreck to just plain getting wrecked.

### **(joke/wordplay)**

- The group asks if Nanba has beefed up, well he returns with a new move to make up for the betrayal. Inspired by the fire of Geomijul, he now has a huge fireball move!

### **(joke/wordplay/gameplay/observation)**

- This fight is hilarious, yakuza are, unlike most humans, weak to fire. So Ishioda is very quickly rendered alone and the gang can just go to town on him. Yokohama offers you a warm welcome!

### **(joke/wordplay/observation/gameplay)**

01:33:30 With Ishioda defeated, we get another heartwarming scene welcoming Nanba back to the party. Ichiban has lost count of how many times he’s saved him. He welcomes his help, and asks for a hand, a friend.

- Nanba looks at the group, asking if they’d really still call him a friend. The answer is obvious, without hesitation.

- On the verge of tears he can only try to cover it up by calling the group hopeless.

- “Is it that hard to say you like us?”

- Theme of friendship plays. “We’re your friends, so make it count.”

- Another heartwarming round of smiles, I hope Zhaos okay. **(observation/story)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Nanba’s Bro, Matsuo, Hoshino Knows**

01:35:50 Nanba addresses Han, says his brother was treated well by Geomijul. **(story)**

- Ichiban says Han should apologise but Nanba says not to, he may have met his wife while in captivity.

- Han says while his freedom was restricted, he was treated as an honoured guest. Speaking of captivity, they remember they were here for Zhao.

01:36:15 Zhao turns up, beaten to fuck. Barely standing, he had some help getting here.

- There is something he needs to show Ichiban alone.

- We’re led downstairs, Zhao’s saviour wants only Ichiban to see him. He’s Omi alliance and not very talkative.

01:38:20 Ichiban comes face to face with Matsuo!

- Ichiban is overjoyed, but The Only Way Out is playing. Ichiban has so many questions and Matsuo has no real answers.

- He doesn’t see Arakawa much now, the boss is far above him, but Matsuo stuck with Arakawa through the change. He stepped out of line to save Zhao, he’ll be executed if they learn.

- He has one thing he needs us to know. Arakawa is going to bet all the chips on the table soon. When he does, he’ll need all the help he can get. **(story/conspiracy/plot)**

01:40:00 The group heads outside. Ichiban asks Zhao what happens to the Liumang now.

- Zhao says Ichi goes right for the jugular. He says the wall is full of holes, it won’t ward off an invasion. All that matters to the Liumang is having a home, not who the boss is, a role Zhao never wished for anyway.

- He’s gonna hand it over to a proper leader, Seong-Hui.

- Ichiban is shocked, Zhao’s reasoning makes sense. Yokohama is about to change, the Ijin Three need to restructure, need to have eachothers backs now that they’re up against the wall.

**(wordplay/story)**

01:42:15 Ichiban understands that this also means the Geomijul find a new place to call home.

- Zhao points out not everything needs to be said out loud, don’t go making me look good!

**(joke/character/observation/dialogue)**

- Ichi keeps telling it straight, Zhao’s a good guy. He repeats himself, but then admits the Ijin Three owe him a big debt, even the Seiryu, and remembering the bill, Ichiban thinks he’s gonna collect that debt, that’ll be a first. **(joke/observation)**

01:48:10 Ichiban meets Hoshino at Seiryu HQ **(story)**

- Hoshino knows why Ichi is here, acknowledging he wouldn’t be here were it not for Ichi.

- The Seiryu aren’t unscathed, many members defected to the Omi, and some of those who remained hold a grudge, Hoshino can’t really begrudge them.

01:49:30 Hoshino already knows of Zhao handing the reins of the Liumang to Seong-Hui. Ichi jokingly asks if he’s clairvoyant. Not missing a beat he says he has some idea of the future.

- The Seiryu will succumb to the Omi eventually, the wall is crumbling, Ogikubo’s image is fracturing, and the truth getting out could destroy his party. The people of the grey zones are facing a life or death crisis. **(story)**

01:50:50 Ryo Aoki is in position to push for Party Chair, controlling who the party nominates, he’d have control of the whole country.

- His next move would likely be pushing for dissolution of Parliament.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Aoki defeats PM, Hoshino knows Arakawa

01:51:05 Cut to Aoki doing exactly that! He wants to dissolve parliament, much to the PMs confusion

- Masato is wasting no time securing his spot, saying he could do more for the PM than Ogikubo ever did. If an election were called. Aoki would hand him 2/3rds of the seats
- The PM hesitates, asking if Aoki even has a plan. Aoki says he'll use Bleach to bolster his numbers in weaker areas, he asks the PM if he thinks he has the power to maintain stability without Ogikubo's backing.
- The PM tells Aoki he can't speak to him that way, so Aoki stops playing nice. Telling the PM to appoint him Party Chair and call an election, or else Ogikubo's dealings go public.
- The PM is rattled, trying to find a way out. Saying one can't be both governor and chair, besides, Aoki is too young. With a confident smirk Aoki tells the PM to trot out some old fossil who could beat him. "Assuming you can think of one who can."
- The Prime Minister is silent. Blown the fuck out, three years ahead of schedule! **(joke/wordplay)**

01:53:10 Back to Ichiban & Hoshino

- Hoshino recounts Aoki's scheme, manipulating Mabuchi to topple the wall.
- Ichiban is saddened by Masato's bloodshed, and wonders if Arakawa is really involved.
- Hoshino asks if Ichiban thinks his place in all this is coincidence, Ichi does.

01:54:05 Hoshino however can't help but think it's not chance Ichiban is in Ijincho

- Hoshino asks if he still has the bill, Ichi produces it. Hoshino says just one man could have had that bill. Masumi Arakawa **(backstory)**
- Ichiban is in disbelief, Hoshino continues, believing Masumi shot Ichiban to ensure he wound up here! The fake bill was a letter of introduction to Hoshino. **(backstory/conspiracy)**
- Because of this, Hoshino is left to believe Arakawa's goals do not align with Aoki's ambitions
- Ichiban asks how Hoshino knows Arakawa, Hoshino wants to tell him that tale at a more appropriate place, Heian Tower. It's there their fates became intertwined. Peking duck mentioned, Ichi will be treated to some. **(story)**

01:57:30 The next morning at Survive, Nanba has something he's curious about.

- Hoshino mentioned it wasn't chance Ichiban arrived in Ijincho. Nanba mentions the odd circumstances surrounding Nanba being made to treat him. The chief asked him to do it personally.
- This is unusual for the bums, getting involved with a shot yakuza is risky, if they wanted to save Ichiban, why not take him to a hospital? Nanba suspects there might be more to the Chief's decision. **(story/conspiracy)**

01:59:45 Ichiban and Nanba approach the Chief. **(story)**

- When they ask the chief, he pauses for a moment, and figures it's as good a time as any to tell them.
- The Chief says that there's a responsibility that falls upon his rank. Disposing of dead Yakuza, Yakuza brought here by the Arakawa family, this has been a longstanding deal, going back to the bubble at least. But slowing off dramatically in the Chief's time **(backstory)**
- There is within this, a second duty, should they receive a live one, they're to save them and pretend they died. Ichiban got this treatment. Ichiban wonders if Arakawa was thinking this far ahead. **(character/backstory/conspiracy)**
- Arakawa's words to Ichi go through his head. "I'm sorry, Ichi. You have to die for me. I'm counting on you, Ichi." **(dialogue/story/conspiracy)**
- Ichi tells Nanba about this. Nanba tries to gently tell him not to get his hopes up just yet. He was very close to death on arrival. **(character)**

- Ichiban feels Arakawa's hand was forced, for now, we can't know.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – Arakawa and Hoshino**

02:08:55 Ichiban joins Hoshino at Heian Tower, this time it's just the two of them.

- Ichiban gets to the topic of the bill immediately, the taste of the peking duck depends on what Hoshino says. **(story)**

02:10:10 The Connection between Hoshino and Arakawa **(backstory)**

- Shortly after the war the counterfeiting operation started. It was a secret known only by the Seiryu and Liurang top brass.

- But they needed people to move the money, one such smuggler was travelling actor Toshio Arakawa, a travelling actor.

- He had lost a case containing 100 Million, he was to be killed, but given the nature of why he had to be taken out, it fell to Hoshino, next in line for the clan, to carry out the hit.

- Hoshino killed Masumi Arakawa's father. He only learned the boy would be there to find the body when there was no going back, and later learned the reason he lost the money was due to his wife and her lover having stole it. They fell into the ocean shortly afterwards, luxury cruise accident I imagine **(joke)**

- With their leader dead, the theatre troupe disbanded not long after.

- With nowhere to go, Masumi joined the ranks of the Yakuza. Winding up with the Hikawa, and down and dirty family who mostly took on hits. Masumi was tapped for the job.

- Arakawa took bodies all the way out to Yokohama to be disposed of at the camp, clearly it was an excuse to search for his father's killer. With only a glimpse of Hoshino as the waiter to go off. "That image gave his life a purpose."

02:14:30 Seven years later, Hoshino receives an invitation to this very Heian Tower. It was from Masumi Arakawa, he was not hiding his identity.

- Hoshino came alone, he was prepared to die. "I could think of a lot worst ways (*sic*) to die than giving that kid some justice." **(character/dialogue)**

- Arakawa was sat where Ichi sits now. At the time he was no older than twenty, but the killing had already taken its toll.

02:16:05 Hoshino confessed it all, even the counterfeiting operation. Arakawa heard the story, and got up to leave.

"Didn't you come for revenge?" Hoshino asks. "A shame you took me up on the invitation. I could have shot you in the back that way." Arakawa replied. **(dialogue/character/story)**

- Goes fucking hard, but it's clear, much as Arakawa hates it, a part of him, not all of him. Forgave or at least understood Hoshino. The regret was clear. Another part of Arakawa hated that he could no longer go through with his vengeance and be at peace with himself.

**(story/character/observation)**

02:17:05 In 1984, the 10,000 yen bill changed. When Arakawa formed his family. Hoshino sent him a crate of defective bills. Ichiban asks why. Hoshino struggles, but supposes it was out of debt and gratitude.

- Hoshino took Masumi's father, and his life away. With this gift Hoshino put his own in Masumi's hands. Instead of taking it away, he used it to pay for Ichiban's. It's a beautiful little line that completes the whole arch of the counterfeit money to me. **(story/character/observation)**

- And another way the grey zone saved Ichiban. **(observation)**

02:19:45 Hoshino even wrote on the back of the note "Neither justice nor mercy should tip the scale." Which is not only pretty hardcore, but another little grey area. **(observation/dialogue)**

- "It means those in power must reward and punish where necessary"

## YLAD - CHAPTER 10 CONT – The End

- Hoshino says it also means Arakawa considers Ichiban family. He didn't shoot to kill, he wanted Ichiban to find Hoshino. Ichiban is more than thankful to know all this. His faith in Arakawa coming back strong **(story)**

- Hoshino asks if Ichiban is Arakawa's blood. Ichi says it isn't like that. But Hoshino says Arakawa would be as proud a father as any. The peking duck is served.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 11 - The Odds

00:15 Chapter opens on a news report. Ogikubo has suddenly retired due to illness. Without his chairs backing, the PM has announced parliamentary dissolution. Elections will be called, and Ryo Aoki will be replacing Ogikubo. The young master got his way! **(story)**

01:05 Ogikubo is laid out in a hospital bed. He's visited by Ryo Aoki and Sawashiro.

- Masato gets right to taunting the old man, asking how the *former chair* is doing.

- Ogikubo looks away, the sign said no visitors.

- Aoki says he should care about the rules he broke before the hospitals.

01:45 When Ryo Aoki brings up the counterfeit money. Ogikubo doesn't deny it, he just asks if Aoki knows how many lives that money saved. While other politicians sign laws and build roads. He was saving people who fell through the net.

- He faces Aoki and asks "Are your talents up to the task?"

- Aoki doesn't flinch, his talents are as vast, he just uses them differently. Yeah his net is meant to catch and kill, and he's not letting people slip through! **(observation/character)**

02:30 Ogikubo calls the governor acting as party chair blasphemous. Aoki says much of what's about to come will be blasphemous to old men like him. But within a year it will be the new standard.

- Ogikubo calls him an amateur. Aoki laughs, and reminds Ogikubo of when he won assemblyman ten years back. He asked for the party's endorsement, he and bleach were insulted as "idealistic children." *It's clear that part of Aoki's grudge is a personal slight. His ego was wounded and that would not slide.* **(observation/character)**

03:30 Aoki tells him that he's gonna run a Bleach candidate, endorsed by the CLP. He will win, and everything Ogikubo built will be taken from him by idealistic children. He crouches, he's loving lording it over him. This is the kind of person he could never *defeat* as Masato Arakawa **(story/character/observation)**

04:20 He tells Ogikubo that when Bleach wins, they'll clean the trash from Kanagawa. Ogikubo asks if he'd call people garbage. Thinking on it for a moment, and wanting to hurt him as much as possible. Aoki says they're less than trash to him for relying on the grey zones.

- Ogikubo's heart rate spikes. Having gotten what he wanted, Aoki wishes him a happy retirement. Mockingly inviting him to visit Ijincho when he's done redeveloping it.

05:30 At Survive, Zhao comes to join the gang. Han has... Tried to make himself comfortable, complaining about the lack of room.. This place is palatial the hell are you on about?

**(party/observtion)**

- Ichiban calls out their high standards ("For a couple of pad crashers.") Ichi, mate, you are part of the reason their homes are currently not in order. **(observation/joke)**

- Han says they're not crashing, Nanba gave them permission. "Well, when Joon-gi Han asks if he can spend the night..." Man you'll fuck anything in the turn order won't you? **(joke/observation)**

- They ask how repairs are going. It will be some time before Geomijul is fully back online.

Meanwhile Zhao has relinquished his right to stay at Qing Jin, he is homeless.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 11 CONT – Police won't help, Hamako thinks Bleach will!**

06:40 Adachi, old man grumpily asks why Zhao had to wind up here of all places. Han wisely says information gathers where people do, so lets make use of it.

07:00 Ichiban asked what happened with Bleach Japan, surely the police had to step in. Nope, infact Bleach Japans reputation skyrocketed following Geomijul. They're seen as heroes achieving what the police could not.

- And Ogasawara... Perished in the fire! The group realises the Omi killed him and turned him into a martyr. Zhao says it served as punishment for talking. **(conspiracy)**

- A brilliant move, bringing Nanba to tears over how flawless their enemy is. Bit dramatic. **(observation/character)**

09:20 Han asks what then, go report their abduction of Ogasawara to the police. Adachi says it's a bad idea, they're on Mabuchi's payroll, they'd be arrested on the spot... Where is that guy?

- This also means Bleach won't be done on trespassing, ends justify the means after all!

- The noose is tightening around Yokohama. The Omi's invasion is progressing smoothly. Han advises the group that if they have other living arrangements, make them.

- Ichiban says he can't, he's waiting here on word from Arakawa.

11:05 They asks, didn't Masumi shoot you. Ichiban's explanation "He didn't shoot me to kill me, he shot me to make sure I lived." Leaves the group a little incredulous. Adachi says he'll explain it over a beer. I think you'd need more than one! **(joke/observation)**

11:40 Outside, the game advises that with the collapse in the great wall and rising crime rate, the city's villains grow more powerful!

11:55 Ichiban gets a call from Hamako, do I gotta twat Totsuka again? I'll do it.

- When he's got some time, can he swing by and take out the trash. Totsuka, got it.

**(joke/observation/objective)**

- Is this the time to do substories? Yokohama? Feels *waaaaay* too late.

17:15 At Hamako's, she's had a bit of a clearout. Ichiban thinks she's getting some new stuff in, nope, she's closing up shop. **(story)**

- Ichiban is given a leaflet for the 'Ijincho Revitalization Shelter'. Offering free accomodation and training for women in the nightlife industry. Set up by... Bleach Japan.

- Hamako has been offered a job as Ward Mother. She has turned around on Bleach Japan, no longer helping them now there's some real *action* behind their once empty words. She's even turning around on Ryo Aoki, the groups pessimism behind his intentions only offending her.

- *It's a little daft, but I wanna give it to Hamako. She has been holding out in the hope of giving people a better life. You can fault her for her naivety, but greater contempt belongs with those who would exploit it.* **(observation/theme)**

20:20 Why, that Ryo Aoki is so kind, he's even in Ijincho today to attend Ogasawara's funeral despite everything on his plate. Lady he's gonna eat you alive.

"Don't judge him if you don't know him." Oh you have no idea. **(joke/observation)**

21:05 Time to go talk to Ryo Aoki. Nanba says you can't just approach the man of the year. Saeko says there is nowhere easier to sneak in than a funeral, that's a deep cut.

- Time to crash, bang, and potentially wallop a funeral! **(joke/wordplay)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 11 CONT – Chasing Down Aoki

22:50 There's a crowd outside the funeral home. A screen broadcasts the ceremony.

- Ryo Aoki is delivering an entirely self serving speech about how much Ogasawara wanted to see the city be reborn, and how the member of Bleach he doted on most will pick up the dream left to the living. **(story/character)**

- "Having another stride down the path you dedicated your life to creating... Is there any greater joy in this life!? So I, too, will throw my entire support behind him."

- Wow, this is wonderfully disgusting. **(observation/politics)**

- Now it's your Yume, Kume! **(joke/wordplay)**

- "In the election to come... I will see Kume realize his potential as a man!" Dude what soaplands are left to take him to? **(joke)**

- Kume is fired up, he looks forward with determination, the twat. **(observation/story/character)**

- Aoki puts on the crocodile tears as he says he will see his friends vision through. Probably saw him ran through earlier.

25:30 The crowd outside is buying it, vowing to also carry Ogawara's torch, uncaring who they're gonna burn with it. **(joke/wordplay)**

- The group saw him grooming Kume for leadership clear as day, but the crowd are blind to what's really going down. **(story/character)**

26:15 Aoki leaves, his detail keeping him from being utterly mobbed by the press. The Ichigang has no chance of getting a word in. So we gotta cut him off. Saeko knows about a secret parking lot bigwigs use to get here, and hey Adachi drunkenly fell in there once. So we got a likely place to find the guy. **(objective/story)**

32:40 In the underground parking lot, a large, obviously Omi security detail is keeping watch. The group tries to approach when they spot Aoki, but the alert goes up, a word to move the Governor quickly!

- Ichiban tries to mindgame the guards, but this guy is a fair bit less stupid than Kume, not falling for his games of accusations.

- Also yeah Ichiban, while you are correct, you can't just label anyone from Kansai as Omi! **(joke/observation)**

35:00 Adachi baits the guy into drawing a gun, reaching for a cig and approaching for a light.

- Adachi is cool, and with the guy successfully baited, he pulls the safety trick on the guy, disarming him. He may need a pill to do it, but the man is still Solid Snake! **(joke/wordplay)**

37:40 The detail keep the gang at bay long enough for Aoki's escort to drive off. Ichiban tries to give chase but triggers an attack of opportunity for his efforts.

- But the van pulls around, Aoki steps out, and admonishes his guards for attacking. The charm is on and it is offensive. **(joke/wordplay)**

38:50 Aoki offers his hand, and an apology to Ichiban. When Ichi calls him young master he visibly flinches, raising his lip and narrowing his gaze. A cruel smile appears. Ichi takes his hand and is pulled in. With a cold tone he's told to come to Otohime Land alone. **(story/character/face acting)**

- Ichiban pulls his hand away as though pulling it from a gaping maw. Masato doesn't miss a beat, doesn't visibly react to the extreme movement, just apologises for his guards, and climbs back in his van.

- The group asks what was said. Ichiban tells them, and expresses extreme doubts Aoki will come alone. Visibly annoyed at Ichiban for telling them to stay back. Feeling that if he doesn't come alone and Aoki does, he'll be scum. The group backs down, being stubborn is one area where ryuu and ryuugo together. **(joke/bad joke/I like it)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 11 CONT – Ichiban and Aoki Talk**

45:55 Ichiban enters the abandoned Otohime Land, it appears empty, he flicks the light on in the waiting room, and Aoki wordlessly enters from behind, sitting before Ichiban.

- No need to sit down, I already recognised you. **(joke/awful/funny)**
- “You were born in a sty not unlike this, right?” **(dialogue)**
- Okay nevermind dickhead, didn’t need legs to run your mouth **(joke)**

46:15 Ichiban looks down on him, keeping his feelings hidden. Masato smirks, the years have not dulled how much of a fucking edgelord he is. **(joke/observation/face acting)**

46:50 Ichiban tries to greet him, Aoki isn’t gonna waste any more time on this peon than he has to, he knows everything the guy is gonna wanna ask and run him through all of it.

- A lung transplant fixed him up in America.
- He changed his name to escape his ties to the Yakuza, and especially for being born the son of Masumi Arakawa. “Because my condition robbed me of the youth everyone else got to have. I changed my name to rewrite my entire life up to that point.” **(story/character)**

47:35 Thinking of his past makes him sink into the chair, but he springs back out as he says how he’s now the governor and party chair. **(body acting)**

- Ichiban looks down and sighs, Aoki doesn’t get it, asking why he’s not being congratulated. Ichiban bluntly states “I don’t say what I can’t mean.”, there’s real melancholy in his tone. Even Masato doesn’t have a snippy response. **(dialogue)**

48:00 Ichiban asks if he’s even happy as a politician. His answer is quite revealing, he says politics “is a good life(…)” because “You don’t have to use violence to assert control.”

- Yeah that’s how I weigh up how good my life is, how much violence I need to get my way. It’s especially hypocritical as he has up to this point used a ton of violence to assert control, he just fobs it off on the Yakuza. **(observation/character)**
- He does also say he can improve lives within the confines of law and people are grateful towards him for it.

48:25 Ichiban asks if he killed Ogasawara, he casually calls it “risk management.” Ichiban’s hackles are raised. He’s told not to be naive, Ogasawara grassed, he claimed to have said nothing, but Masato said his eyes gave him away. “So I put him down.” **(character)**

- Ichiban, getting angrier, puts it to Masato that he killed Oga *without even knowing?* Masato doesn’t even flinch as he asks “Did he really keep his lips sealed?” Already knowing the answer. **(story)**

- Ichi stumbles, and Aoki gets his smile back. But before he can point out how clever he is Ichiban says he killed his friend. Aoki doesn’t care, at his level you need to know when friends are no longer useful. “Like father, like son.”

- Aoki talks about how Masumi cut Ichiban out, Ichiban rejects that wholly, saying it was to protect the Arakawa family.

50:05 Masato laughs, saying even if Ichi hadn’t turned himself in. Sawashiro wouldn’t have been arrested. Sawashiro was not the one who killed Suzumori. He recounts the events of that night

50:40 Back in 2000, after Masato left the club. He made for his wheelchair, the ephedrine effects wearing off. He collapses in the streets. Too prideful to accept help, he drags himself to his wheelchair. Finding it turned over, with a notice for illegal dumping. He faints.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 11 CONT – Suzumori’s true fate, Aoki’s Deceptions

53:10 He’s kicked away by Suzumori, accused of being a drunk. Learning he’s a Yakuza. Masato immediately starts insulting him. Too angry and egotistical to care. Suzumori leans down to get in his face, Masato spits in it.

- Suzumori accuses him of being legless **(joke/wordplay)**

- He’s dragged out of view to be beaten, and it’s then he draws a gun from his coat pocket.

Suzumori can only laugh at the quivering wreck before him. Calling it a toy gun. He puts it to his head and dares him to shoot. Suzumori does not let up. Yelling at the quaking Masato that he’s a punk who doesn’t get it, until Suzumori becomes the punk who does. As the year rolls over, so does he. **(joke/story)**

- I feel bad for the guy who had to decide the date on his tombstone, I’d have probably given him 2001, easier to chisel I imagine. **(observation)**

- In a panic, Masato calls Sawashiro. All along, Masato had killed Suzumori.

55:55 Back in Otohime Land, Ichiban digests the news.

- “That’s right. Dad sold you to the law to protect his only son.” **(dialogue/foreshadowing)**

- Masato asks knowing all this, knowing he was lied too, does he “still trust the old asshole?” Before subtly relishing in Ichiban’s apparent despair.

57:30 There’s a pause as Ichiban once again recounts Masumi’s last words to him, with some trepidation he says he still trusts Arakawa. Masumi stews on this for a moment, a seeming glance of annoyance Ichi is not so easily shaken.

58:00 Masumi asks why Ichiban is in Ijincho. Kasuga says he doesn’t know. “But I’m “Ichibad” Kasuga, the kinda guy who hits rock bottom and crawls back up.” **(dialogue/character)**

- “I see. Oh well. No matter how many years pass, that dumb face of yours stays the same.” Come on, we got a new do.

- He claims to be more nostalgic than mad. Ichiban is happy, he was sure this was going to be a setup, he says he’s glad Aoki stuck to his word.

58:45 Not even offended, Aoki just says killing Ichiban would be easier than making statements in parliament. He tells Ichiban he has a condition however. Stay away from him and dad. **(story)**

- Ichiban makes a condition in return. Pull out of Ijincho and have Kume stand down. He’s not cut out for politics. Aoki agrees, as does the CLP, Kume is in Aoki’s own words an “ignorant mongrel.” **(politics)**

59:50 Aoki is only fielding him to show his own value, just how much his approval means. They’d have to acknowledge he has the prowess to replace Ogikubo.

- Kume is a tool, as are the revitalization shelters, and they’re quite a useful tool! “They’re the key to rounding up all the illegal immigrants in one fell swoop.” **(story/politics)**

- The music ratchets up in intensity as Ichiban asks weren’t they meant to help. He gets mad as it’s explained those people are getting bussed right to immigration to be deported. “The shelters are revitalizing Ijincho by cleansing it of criminals. It’s hardly a lie.” **(dialogue/story)**

- He says this with a smug, self-satisfied tone, how he is destroying lives while technically not lying about his wording. **(observation/character)**

01:01:30 Cuts scene mode change, Ichiban takes it he won’t be accepting his condition.

Aoki leans forward and says absolutely not. The conversation is terse. Ichiban says negotiations have failed, Aoki corrects him, this was never a negotiation. The only reason Ichi even gets to live is Aoki’s pity. “If you want to risk that, that’s your call to make.” **(dialogue/character)**

- Aoki gets up to leave, after a moment of hesitation Ichiban goes to chase, but his exit is blocked by Sawashiro, flanked by goons. As should be obvious, Aoki’s word is worth dirt.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 11 CONT – Sawashiro leaves it to a jobber

01:02:25 With a small smile, Sawashiro calls Ichiban an idiot for wasting the young masters mercy.

- Ichiban tries to back away, but more goons emerge from behind. Ichiban asks if this many were necessary, he came alone.

- But then, a curtain opens, Nanba waiting behind, he pulls Ichiban away and they retreat into the alley. The gang were not blind enough to trust Aoki.

01:03:35 In the parking lot besides Otohime Land, more Omi goons await. Backup is being called, the only way is *through!*

- Note: Han and Zhao are not present in this scene, they'd have come in handy I imagine, but hey they're here in play! **(observation/gameplay/cutscene)**

01:08:05 We defeat the first batch just in time for Sawashiro and his cronies to surround us. Ichi asks if this isn't a bit much. Just a precaution given what Ichi has pulled through responds Jo.

- Sawashiro ain't even doing this personally, we've been left to a loudmouth with a large knife. Ichi asks if Jo didn't learn anything from the boss, Ichi's single minded devotion to Arakawa always pissed Jo off.

01:10:50 Another Omi Alliance battle. Two stage fight, first against random mooks, then random mooks plus Big Knife Man Matoba

01:19:30 Ichiban grabs Matoba's knife, asking wasn't he gonna cut his head off and ship it to the captain. "I'm sure he'll be surprised to see your head in there then."

- The guy squirms, crawling away, Ichiban brings the blade down beside him and he passes out in terror. The group asks if the Omi are all like him. Ichi says the Omi are huge, they probably have worse.

01:20:40 Hamako comes running. She's in tears, her girls are gone from the shelters, and the workers won't tell her anything. Ichiban tells her the truth, and she breaks down. Feeling responsible for what happened to them. Ichiban and Saeko fail to reassure her.

- Saeko takes her back home.

01:22:35 Saeko returns, the group are despondent. Adachi says Ijincho is falling apart.

- Nanba reminds everyone what Han said, if we have somewhere to go, we should get out of here. It might be time to consider that. The group is silent. Ichiban asks if he's gonna run. Nanba says it's impossible without missing a beat.

- So Ichiban bluntly asks, where? No answer, not from Nanba, Adachi, or Saeko. Not to mention she can't abandon her family. Ichiban says there's his answer.

01:23:50 Theme of friendship kicks on as Ichiban stands, with determination he spells it out, they can't run from this. Nor can the Geomijul or the Liumang. "Which means we fight, right? All the more reason to if it's impossible. Let's make it possible?"

- Nanba asks, tired, but not scared, if they even have a chance. Ichiban says they don't need one. A long time ago Arakawa-san told him "If you have a chance of winning a fight, you're just a bully." A strong condemnation of the games balancing. **(joke/probably not the time for it)**

- "It's only a real fight when you're up against someone so strong you're screwed. Our enemies are the Omi and the CLP. Japan's front and back-facing powers. I say bring it. Let's fight till we're spent." This is a line that would have been a signifier if it was in a more 'proper' cutscene

**(observation/dialogue)**

- Adachi says he couldn't ask for a better fight, he just asks we throw the Tokyo PD in there.

They're fired up. Saeko says we're the worst, but her and Nanba are in. Ichi can skip the pep talk. It'll give him a great speech at his brothers wedding. The course is set.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 12 (failed) - The End of the Yakuza

00:30 Ichiban meets with Seong-Hui, Zhao, and Hoshino at Tianyou. They're here to discuss something, but the food is proving distracting, Hoshino notes with a hint of annoyance, before agreeing that it is delicious.

- Zhao decides to kick things off. They talk about Kume, how he's Ryo Aoki's first phase in painting Ijincho his own colours.

- He isn't alone mind, Bleach has candidates all over the country. Hoshino says Japan's fate is sealed. No one can oppose Aoki. He feels his victory is a done deal. Aoki is overwhelmingly popular and pressing that advantage. Winning Ogikubo's Kingdom will solidify him as heir apparent. **(story/character/politics)**

03:00 Ichiban says he's not gonna take it. And hey, the guy is using Omi, that's as stained as it gets. Seong-Hui points out they're up against an untouchable politician.

- Ichiban goes on, they kept the peace in this town before. They took dirty money to keep the peace. If they don't stand up now they're disgracing the Ijin Three.

- Hoshino and Seong-Hui are annoyed, Zhao meanwhile sides with Ichiban. They were never allowed to take pride in the grey zones, but they could be proud of putting food on the table. He also reminds Seong-Hui she's now responsible for the Liurang and their rep. He earnestly asks her to help out, and she agrees.

05:40 Ichiban begs Hoshino to lend his wisdom, the tired old man caves. He just wanted a cooked meal. No such thing as a free lunch!

- Ichiban says they need to ruin the young masters reputation by beating Kume in the election. Seong-Hui suggests maiming, that won't do, they'll just send another. Ichiban realises, they'll simply win the election themselves!

- Makes sense, but *who* could beat Kume? Or more accurately, Ryo Aoki's reputation? No one comes to mind, not even for the venerable Hoshino. Ogikubo has never before faced serious competition, so no one has the clout.

09:25 They'll think on it, but before then Ichiban needs to foot the 3,000,000 Yen deposit to even field a candidate. **(objective/story)**

- This is the time for the business minigame, could do a bit of a flashback? **(structure)**

- Business/Vocational School/Personality

"Ichiban wonders how the hell he, a former bum from rock bottom could make the cash? Then he remembered. He's boss of the top company in Yokohama! From Rock Bottom to Upper Crust, and all it took to climb between the two was a middling management game! **(joke/wordplay)**

- What's between Rock Bottom and the Upper Crust? A Middling Management game

**(joke/wordplay)**

16:10 Ichiban gets a call from Mitsu, it's about the allies Arakawa will need. He explains...

16:30 And it cuts to that evening, Ichiban breaking the news to the gang that he's needed in Osaka. Arakawa needs help. "He needs *my* help."

- The gang tries to make him see reason, Osaka is dangerous for Ichiban. He's not hearing it, all he cares about is Arakawa needs *his* help. Nanba tells Adachi not to bother.

- They ask about the election, with the money sorted, the ball is in Hoshino's court.

- The group decides they're going with him. Zhao's hyped. Ichi tries to say he's going alone, this is too dangerous, he doesn't want them involved. He's trying to pull a Kiryu. Nanba tells him off.

Ichiban tries to stand firm, and heads out to deliver the money.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 12 (failed) - Arakawa and Ichi head for Osaka**

21:00 At Seiryu HQ Ichiban drops the money off. Ichiban saying him and his friends managed it somehow. This was meant to be a nest egg, and not just because I earned it with child labour and a literal chicken. **(joke/good/I like it)**

- Hoshino has yet to find a candidate. Ichi lets him know he has time, he's needed out of town to help Arakawa. Hoshino has heard rumblings, Watase, current Omi captain, is getting out of jail. This will be Arakawa and Watase's first meeting, a pretty high stakes affair. Hoshino can't say if this is what Ichiban needs help with, he just hopes he doesn't catch another bullet. **(story)**

*Note: Weirdly wound up thinking how fucking weird it felt to know Watase was coming back. The whole battle to shut down the Yakuza had me thinking of... Of all people, the Ham man, how we were preserving the clan for him. Yeah I overlooked all the political shit. I saw this as Daigo flubbing it yet again. Rather than trying to preserve what little dignity the clans had left. How there's a bittersweetness that he was finally free from the chains Kiryu had given him, how Kiryu got to even come back to help sever them and do him a real kindness. **(post-note/observation/I am jumping AHEAD)***

22:55 Cut to Sawashiro speaking with Masato in his office.

- They're discussing Arakawa heading to Osaka. Masato is frustrated with Sawashiro he's only just learning of this. Jo is meant to report all of his fathers movements. He only just learned himself. **(politics)**

- Masato laughs a smug little laugh, he figures dad is up to something. This will be his and Watase's first meeting, and the Omi chairman is terminally ill. It's time for a successor to be named.

- Naturally, Aoki can only envision a plot to kill Watase to secure his spot. Projecting his own methods on his father. Justifying this line of thought given Masumi's efficacy during the 3K plan.

- "Power corrupts absolutely." says the man corrupted before he had any. **(dialogue/story)**

- Aoki smarmily notes it's fine. If dad takes over the Omi, it benefits him too. The only thing concerning Aoki is that dad hasn't told him his plan! If he kills Watase without telling him first, it's treason of the highest order. "The Yakuza only have power when I deem it so!"

- Sawashiro tries to insist Arakawa would never betray him. But Aoki has gone on a presumptuous temper tantrum. Before going on a cold blooded rant about how a man in the public pulpit *must know everything*, family is no exception. **(story/character/dialogue)**

27:25 Aoki demands to know who Sawashiro swears *fealty* to? Sawashiro picks his words. Saying Arakawa entrusted him to Masato. His orders were to put Masato above all else.

- He's to report Arakawa's every move. He says he'll send Tendo to Osaka. Arakawa seems to like him.

28:40 Outside the Grand, Tendo intimidates the shit out of a civilian.

29:30 Inside, Ichiban is sitting on his phone, incredibly on edge waiting for a call from Mitsu. The rest of the group are yucking it up, and them telling him to relax is not helping. **(story/character)**

- Ichiban gets up for a walk. Nanba tells him it's too dangerous to go outside. Ichiban says he can't relax while he waits for Mitsu.

- Nanba points out the big event is tomorrow. Ichiban can't be a pain in the ass when he turned up *early*. Nanba mentions overhearing some people talking, Watase's release is making waves, people are worried there'll be a war between him and Arakawa. **(story/politics)**

32:10 Ichiban gets a text, and is pissed when it's from Ogata. Talking about getting a picture with Kamulop. Ichiban angrily rings him up and says not to contact him for a bit. Nanba admonishes him, and a drunken Adachi wanders over and says if he's gonna be thorny, just go to Omi HQ already! If a war does break out, Arakawa could be in danger. That settles it! We're off! **(objective)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 12 (failed) – Sotenbori Battle Arena, Omi HQ infiltration**

34:00 Before that however, we better be ready. The group mentions a shopping centre. So off we go to Don Quxio-no. **(joke/wordplay)**

35:40 Yappi the robot introduces us to the Sotenbori Battle Arena, a fucking alarm clock telling you to RISE AND GRIND! **(joke/wordplay/gameplay)**

- Well, this is the best battling in the game at least, the bonus objectives do at least add some thought to battling. **(gameplay/observation)**

37:05 Ichiban calls up Mitsu and confirms he's inside Omi HQ. The news Ichiban is outside does not please Mitsu. He tells him to bugger off. The fact Ichiban is fully intending to sneak in only makes him more worried. Ichiban says he's been waiting so long to see Arakawa, he's going in.

- He coerces Mitsu into revealing Masumi's whereabouts inside Omi HQ, then tells the gang he's going it alone. Once again, they're not having it.

- Then Zhao emerges (spooking the others) carrying one of the catering crates, this is how they'll fake their way in. **(objective/story/character)**

42:10 The Omi HQ setpiece is a stealth sequence. If caught you must end the battle very quickly. **(gameplay/dungeon)**

45:55 And done! We arrive at a stairwell leading up to the Dragon Chamber where Arakawa resides, but stood in our way are some inquisitive Omi who quickly rumble Ichiban, a fight ensues!

- The Omi are easily defeated, the gang hides the bodies, but a familiar, shrill laugh catches their attention.

- Down the stairs comes Goro Majima, followed by Saejima Taiga! Majima jokes about sounding the alarm. **(story)**

- I hate to ask... Do you just like dressing that way... I can't believe with these two stood side by side I'm asking that of you Taiga. Or have you broken out for this and just happened to get loaned another green parka? **(joke/observation)**

- Majima ain't ringing the alarm, he's been waiting for a turn! Oh man will you be happy to know...

50:30 Adachi says to get them before they wise up and call for help. Saejima says not to count on them stooping that low. The gang can sense it, these are officers, big shots. Zhao is pretty hype for this. Han is glad he's finally aware how dangerous this is.

- Ichiban has *heard* of Majima at the least, he asks why the hell he's at Omi HQ. Majima just laughs, saying he'll have to beat answers out of him. Queue our title cards. Saejima jokes Majima is old, killing his aura. "You know how many years I've been itching to do this again."

52:40 Majima and Saejima fight, sick ass Receive you mix. This is a life changing fight, and by that I mean it changes your life to 0. **(joke)**

- If ever there's a narratively appropriate difficulty spike here it is, and it goes right up your arse. We finally get to face off against legacy characters and they're that tough. I'd say from this point on the boss fights stop fucking around but this one is the apex, and it's you fighting a guy who loves nothing more than fucking around.

Note: My first game over back during my first playthrough was here, this time I was ready for it. What I wasn't was getting back here on hard and deciding my story playthrough would be humbled here and now. I dropped down.

- Also Majima's shadow clones. We know that's not Ichiban's imagination. He just does that... **(joke/observation)**

- So I game over here, next vid

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 12 PART 2 – Win boss, meet boss, the end of the Yakuza explained**

04:00 → 13:15 Majima + Saejima Fight

- After the fight, Majima is impressed, only breathing a little heavier. The entire Ichiban are exhausted. They're not finding this half as fun. Saejima steps forward, saying it's time to stop holding back, to Saeko's disbelief.

- Ichiban doesn't waver, saying it's time for them to get serious too. They walk forward in unison. Majima's grin grows wider... And time is called, as another familiar voice calls out.

- "You mind holding this fight until tomorrow, Ichi." Ichiban turns, mouth agape, he can't believe he's here. Nanba asks, Adachi confirms, that's Arakawa.

- Ichiban approaches the boss like a kid approaching Santa Clause. Another figure steps out beside Arakawa. He introduces Ichiban to the Tojo Clan's Sixth Chairman. Daigo Dojima.

- Daigo is introduced to Ichiban, Daigo introduces Majima and Saejima. Majima's upset, now the fight has fizzled out before he even got started! **(character)**

- Arakawa reminds him there's a fight waiting for him tomorrow. **(foreshadowing)**

15:50 Ichiban's friends are a lot less thrilled to see Arakawa, standing between him and the old man and glowering at him. Ichiban asks what's up. They say they still want a fight, Adachi saying they won't let him hurt Ichiban. It's a really sweet moment.

- It's both funny, and kinda sad to have Arakawa strain out the words "I don't... I don't plan on shooting Ichi again."

- The entire group forms around Ichiban, asking how he can prove that. He says he'll tell them everything he can, and asks them up to the Dragon chamber. Saejima says he's looking forward to the second half to Ichiban. Ichiban steps through Nanba and Adachi to follow. **(party/story)**

17:20 We enter the Dragon Chamber. The group is invited to sit down.

- Arakawa explains that the Chairman and his two officers have been lying low since the Kamurocho 3K plan was enacted 2 years back. We're the only people who know they're here, right now.

- Arakawa admits to being the one to leak details in the Kamurocho 3K plan. Ichiban looks to Daigo, who remains silent. So Ichi figures there's more to it.

- Daigo maintains his silence, so Ichiban starts shouting, demanding answers. Arakawa gently chides him, Daigo says it's okay, he'll explain. Arakawa never betrayed the clan, he leaked the intel with Daigo's full approval **(twist/conspiracy)**

- At Daigo's request, Arakawa played the part of a traitor, which led to him having to shoot Ichiban. Daigo asks not to blame Arakawa for that. I can see he was borrowing Daigo's marksmanship for that shot. **(joke/observation)**

- *This does go back to Arakawa's theatrical routes. He has the ability to play a role, to play the villain, and be convincing with it* **(observation/backstory)**

19:50 There is yet more, Daigo asks Arakawa permission to tell the rest. **(conspiracy)**

- It started when Masato was elected governor and pressuring the Arakawa to leak intel to crush the Tojo. Arakawa at first said no. Masato repeatedly threatened him with anti-yakuza laws to arrest Masumi as many times as it took for the family to collapse.

- Sawashiro came up with a plan, go along with Masato, prove themselves worth keeping around. Masumi snickers, noting he sometimes goes softer on Masato than himself. **(foreshadowing)**

- Arakawa still didn't budge, he went to Daigo and explained if not him. Someone else will be threatened and eventually crack. Daigo realised then, if anti-yakuza laws are so open to interpretation they can bend Yakuza to their will... Their way of life has lost its meaning.

**(story/theme)**

- *They felt strongarmed by a legal grey zone* **(woah/theme/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 12 PART 2 – The Plan for the End**

22:05 “Eventually, a yakuza sigil will become the brand of a government slave.”

- Kiryu already beat you there. **(observation/joke)**

- Daigo says a good man has already been put away under this charade. A subordinate fighting back against police harassment was used to arrest him, as he was found liable by association. That man was Watase, captain of the Omi. De facto leader of Japan’s largest Yakuza organisation. Daigo had to wait for his release for his plan to work.

23:15 Tomorrow, the two of them are going to disband both the Omi Alliance and the Tojo Clan.

- Watase will declare he’s submitting the paperwork.

- Ichiban is baffled, he says there is no way the yakuza will accept that. Masumi agrees, what happens tomorrow is anything but certain, that’s why he needs allies, people he can trust. Ichiban now understands what his role is. Fade to black.

24:20 We cut to the next day, Ichiban talking to Mitsu outside the Grand. Telling him the events of last night. Mitsu says he could have gotten Ichi in smoother. Ichiban says it’s his fault for keeping him waiting.

- Mitsu recounts what we know. Watase is getting out, the officers have been waiting, all we gotta do is follow the plan. Which Ichiban’s loyalty to Arakawa compels him to do. And the Ijincho crew are joining the party, which is hilarious.

- In this pivotal moment in the history of the Yakuza, its conclusion, there just so happened to be a hobo, a boozehound, and a hostess holding the line. **(observation/joke)**

26:35 At Omi HQ we’re just led in through the front door, all the way up to the assembly hall where many Yakuza await Watase’s return.

Joke: Now, appropriately for a game about bathhouses, if you examine the theme way too closely and way too literally it can get a bit wishy washy. Grey Zones having several different meanings Black and white theme note: Attempting to strictly follow the letter of the law, as Kume failingly does, makes you a homonculous, a confusing, thoroughly artificial approximation of a human devoid of empathy, understanding, or uh, rizz. **(joke/post-note/observation)**

27:10 Across the room Ichiban spots Masumi, the two lock eyes, give eachother a nod. The plan is on.

27:20 Tendo approaches the gang, asking how they got in. Arakawa says to let em through. Tendo is confused by his guest. “He came all the way back from hell to see the captain released from prison.”

- Ijincho isn’t *that bad* boss **(joke/observation/badass dialogue tho)**

- Tendo is impressed, but says if this fool causes any trouble it’ll be on Arakawa to clean it up. I can see despite who won the acting captaincy Tendo still thinks he’s billy big bollocks.

**(observation/story)**

- Tendo knows something fucky is going on and is genuinely excited. Ichiban, getting cocky himself just hints that it’s gonna turn the Omi Alliance on its head. He loses his smile, seeming to worry that he may not be on top of everything. As Ichiban tells him it’s his turn. **(story)**

29:15 Nanba remembers Tendo, former heavyweight boxer, took an offer to fix a match and killed the fixers when they failed to pay. **(backstory/character)**

29:25 Cut to Watase being driven to Omi HQ, letter of dissolution in his hand, he looks across to his bodyguard as he’s driven to the door. An army of goons await him, bowing in unison. Mitsu obscuring our sight of one of the guards. **(camera/framing)**

- *Hey good thing no one is looking up!* **(Observation)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 12 PART 2 – The Dissolution

30:15 As Watase enters the hall to great applause, Daigo's words come back in

- The Omi are currently spread out between Sotenbori and Kamurocho. The document is already in Watase's pocket
- He steps to the microphone and produces it. Reading that 100 years ago the Omi was founded by a handful of Kansai men. They were warlike, they lost many good men, but their grip on the region has won the fear of the locals for years. "And for that we are deeply sorry." **(dialogue)**
- The men don't like that, a wave of unease takes the room. The music swells.

31:15 The presiding Chairman and Captain Watase do hereby declare... The Omi Alliance of Kansai is officially dissolved!

- The men are dismayed, they try to shout down the captain, who continues through the dissent. As they converge on the stage, a line is formed by the Jimas.

31:50 Daigo Dojima emerges onto the stage, the crowds anger and confusion grows, the Ichiban steps in to strengthen the wall.

- Daigo makes the same announcement, the Tojo is disbanding! Watase and Daigo are witnesses to the disbanding of each other's factions
- *You know, I know it's "just-talk" pedantry, but they maybe could have found time in their speeches to give a reason why they're dissolving. You're already cowering to Osaka PD. Maybe say that with Anti-Yakuza laws their way of life is being choked and this is the only way to ensure their men have a shot at freedom. We can still have a fight and a power struggle afterwards, but I think this is the worst way to tell tens of thousands of angry men, whose job is to be passable at violence, that they've lost their jobs. (observation/story)*

32:30 It's mentioned how the decision was approved by the chairman and acting captain Masumi Arakawa.

32:30 The crowd are pissed, we cut back to the meeting last night. Arakawa explains that even if it comes from the top, many will oppose the idea. A war of succession is possible. So they took time to lay out the groundwork.

- The sixth chairman laid out *every detail*, oh this'll be good. **(observation/joke)**
- Daigo clarifies, Watase was involved, so the blame is shared for when this doesn't work. Both share a doubt for the future of the Yakuza.
- They ensured the success of the 3K plan and the Omi takeover of Kamurocho, letting Aoki believe it was his doing while Arakawa played the part of the traitor pissing on the Tojo's grave. This sent half the Omi to Kamurocho, so defenses here are halved.

36:00 Tensions reach a fever pitch in the hall, and men start trying to breach the stage. Saejima and Majima holding them back, Ichiban glazes how cool the two are. Nanba reminds him not to get distracted, we're up against a room full of officers.

- Ichiban is hyped, this is exactly the fight he's always wanted.
- Watase challenges the crowd, if they wanna call themselves Yakuza, try and stop him!

37:00 Tendo steps through the crowd with a big smile on his face, now seeing Arakawa's big picture. He approaches the acting captain, Ichiban gets in the way, squaring up.

- Tendo says this kinda brawl comes once in a lifetime (*omi going underground*)
- He says with rising anger he's gotta pick the side that gives him the most bang for his fists, his voice rising in anger, before he spins and falls in line besides Ichiban. **(twist)**
- Ichiban is so fucking hyped, this is how he steps out of the shadows, fighting alongside the legends of the Yakuza world. This feels addressed to the audience as much as anything else. **(observation/story)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 12 PART 2 – Kiryu Revealed, Ichiban and Arakawa Meet**

40:00 The hall is a free for all, one opportunistic goon with a knife charges past the defenders making a beeline for Watase. I love how even Daigo who is right next to him is such a failson he can only shout.

- But the attacker is fended off by a sudden arrival, a fist flies in from offscreen, the Dragon has landed. Majima and Saejima can only smile, Kiryu is here.

- Dojima asks Watase if he's the one who found him. Watase plays dumb, saying he's just some extra muscle, doesn't even know his name.

41:30 Ichiban says he doesn't know who this guy is, but he sure knows how to steal the show! As we steel ourselves for round 2. The line reforms around Ichiban, who rips his shirt off to emphasise the significance of this fight. Kiryu is impressed.

43:35 The fight is over, the ground is littered with battered Omi officers. Ichiban collapses in exhaustion, as the top brass exits the hall. Kiryu looking back to acknowledge Kasuga.

44:00 *The Only Way Out* plays as Arakawa talks to Ichiban, too tired to move, he apologises for his body not following orders, with sheer childish glee in his voice.

- Arakawa gets on one knee, tells him to rest as long as he wants, he owes his success today all to Ichiban and his backup. Ichi attributes it all to his friends, Arakawa acknowledges he's found some good ones.

- Arakawa says he's glad Ichiban survived it all. Ichiban starts crying, this is probably his happiest moment.

45:30 We cut to a news report of Daigo and Watase headed into the station to officiate the dissolution.

- *hmm Is this the same set from Yakuza 4, are we seeing what before was Ryukyu PD? (observation)*

45:50 At Survive Ichiban is on the phone with Nick Ogata, turns out he was hiding the Jimas. He talks about what a bizarre coincidence it is he just so happened to randomly meet the man who would be their saviour.

- Ichiban is meeting with Arakawa later, he likens it to a date, and Ogata says Ichiban will have to spill later. Little reminder Nick Ogata exists so he doesn't come totally out of nowhere for the finale! **(observation/character/writing)**

47:30 Ichiban and Arakawa are on the Promenade. Masumi is off to see Hoshino, he apologises for having to part ways early. Ichiban awkwardly says it's okay, clearly a little dejected.

- He says it was out of line to invite him out to eat. Arakawa calls him a dumbass, he has no title anymore, he's just an old man now. **(character)**

48:25 Ichiban asks if Sotenbori has quieted down. There is still a lot of confusion between former Yakuza and citizens both.

- Ichi asks if he foresaw this, Arakawa says he doesn't have the luxury of a crystal ball. Ichi goes on it sure seemed like he did "Must be a pretty good actor."

- Arakawa says Masato is probably fuming over this. He was relying on the Omi for support, and now it fell out from under him. **(conspiracy)**

- Arakawa said he hoped he'd grow out of his tantrums, perhaps age isn't a factor. **(character)**

- He can't afford to go easy on him anymore.

50:20 Arakawa tells that Daigo and Watase were considering disbanding before Aoki became governor, what happened likely just accelerated their plans. Arakawa says if he doesn't stop Masato, he'll destroy himself, power is corrupting him, and he doesn't want to see his son break.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 12 PART 2 – Arakawa’s Dreams, pains.

51:10 Arakawa says he should go

- Ichiban watches him leave, before calling out to him “Boss” He asks what Masumi intends to do now that he has no title, no Yakuza.
- Arakawa says they wanted to find a legal way to provide these men who have lost their lives with something new, Arakawa intends to help them. **(save this for end)**
- Sounds like some kind of honest living association... Hey I know a guy who could help with that!  
**(joke)**

51:30 Ichiban smiles, reassured. Arakawa laughs, how else will he kill time. He wonders if this is how businessmen feel when they retire.

52:20 Cuts scene mode change. Ichiban works up to asking if they can go back to being a family.

- Ichiban says being family with him was the happiest time of his life, he felt that way since he was rescued at 16.
- Arakawa can only feel immense guilt at what he’s done to Ichiban. Ichiban’s acceptance of this, his pride in having done all of this for him only cuts deeper. Only bolsters his guilt.
- Arakawa said none of what Ichiban made it through was due to him, it was all Ichiban’s own strength which pulled him through.
- Arakawa breaks down saying *he never helped Ichiban*, Ichiban deserves to hate him for what he’s done. Ichiban says if he feels guilty, then let him serve under him once more. This only hurts worse. Ichiban’s glee can’t lighten his spirits.

54:15 Arakawa looks away, and mentions Shangri-La. The story of Ichiban’s birth traumatised him somehow. He sometimes dreams a dream, 40 years ago, Akane is there, having her baby in Shangri-La. Masato is born there instead.

- Ichiban is embarrassed, Arakawa says it shouldn’t be. Ichiban has a good head on his shoulders. It doesn’t matter where he was born.
- Ichiban’s tone drops, dead serious, as he says he appreciates the thought.

55:45 Arakawa asks if Ichiban wants to meet his parents. He struggles to think of an answer, saying he’d gotten used to not knowing them. Arakawa says Ichi has been through a lot, and he is half to blame. He says it’s just a dream, no use dwelling on it.

- The two share a look, Ichiban slowly smiles. Arakawa says he’ll go the rest of the way, and they’ll see each other tomorrow. Ichiban smiles watching him walk away.

57:00 As Ichiban sleeps, his phone vibrates, a voicemail from Hoshino tells us that Arakawa’s body was found in the ocean. **(story/twist)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 - Coin Locker Baby**

00:30 Ichiban rushes to the promenade, the police try to stop him, but he pulls the cover off Arakawa's body, before falling to the ground in shock.

- Takabe tells Adachi all he knows, Arakawa was shot after his meeting with Hoshino at Heian Tower, his only guess is it was an Omi loyalist, given similar attempts have been made on Watase and Dojima's lives, unsuccessfully.

- Takabe warns Adachi they should be vigilant, given they were on the frontlines of the dissolution. Adachi says he'll tell Ichiban, before looking over to the Hamakita fountain steps where Ichiban sits. Saeko and Nanba with him.

02:10 It cuts to an Officers meeting at Heian Tower, Kamurocho. The officers saying they never saw this whole thing coming. Sawashiro is cowering before the table, being told this is as treasonous as it gets. **(politics/story)**

- They give Sawashiro the business, being former Tojo, they only went along with Arakawa for the family to survive. Getting tired of paying up to the Tojo for land they'd sat on for years.

- One old fuck demands to know who is gonna come through on Arakawa's promises now, they were told they'd be promoted to main family **(politics)**

03:40 Ishioda appears, goons and briefcases in tow. Saying they're not letting the Omi die, all they gotta do is give it a new name. Money is put on the table, and the old fucks tunes change, they can keep it friendly. The score is settled

- They thank the second patriarch of the Arakawa... Ishioda. Sawashiro breaks his silence, as he begins to laugh.

5:15 Cuts scene change. Sawashiro laughs with his head to the ground. The score is settled he asks.

- He looks up and says "you fucking mongrels hardly deserve to be called Yakuza."

- Sawashiro climbs to his feet. The room is angered. He tells them he doesn't need their help to get the Arakawa family back on its feet. He'll unite the Omi that got left here in the East.

05:50 One of the old officers stands up and demands Sawashiro be on his knees for Arakawa's fuckup. Sawashiro grabs him by the face and says he hates Yakuza who are all bark and no balls. Licking the Tojo clans feet, only bowing when Arakawa changed colours. Now trying to pull protocol when he dies.

- Sawashiro shoves the guy to the wall and says Yakuza rule with bloodshed. He says to the room it's time to fall in line behind him and he sticks his thumb in the guys eye. Killing him dead before turning, and with a smile, putting his hands on another old fucks shoulders. Politely saying he hopes his new Tokyo Omi Alliance can count on their support.

- Message sent. Whole room made to understand he knows they're all bitches. **(observation)**

07:20 Sawashiro goes to leave, Ishioda cuts him off, demanding to know what gives him any right.

- Not losing his smile, Sawashiro says surely by now Ishioda gets what he's about. He's not going to sit on his hands when his boss is killed. He doesn't know if it was Ishioda or some other Kansai lowlife, but he'll make them pay. His smile turns to a frown, he says to trust him on this.

- Ishioda calls him an idiot, saying people already suspect he did it on Aoki's orders. He figures Sawashiro is trying to take control at the dawn of a new era just like him. Man that power vacuum is already sucking everyone in huh? **(observation/politics)**

- With his smile returning. Sawashiro simply says he'll give him until he rounds up Tokyo's stragglers. Seems the expected war for succession is on! **(story)**

09:00 Flashback to Arakawa saving teenage Ichiban **(scene/backstory)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Ichiban rejects Revenge, will make Masato see the light**

09:40 We join Ichiban, sat alone at Survive Bar. His phone rings, he ignores it. When Zhao points it out he slowly climbs to his feet and takes the call. Saeko hates seeing him so sad.

- It's Hoshino, checking in on Ichiban. Making sure he's eating, when he says he's not. He asks him to meet at Heian Tower, the last place they met, he'll treat Ichiban to his final meal. Ichiban is about to say he can't go, but Hoshino simply tells him he's coming. He doesn't argue.

- The group softly ask him if he's going. Ichiban says he wants to know what Arakawa's final moments were like.

12:50 Ichiban meets Hoshino at Heian Tower to talk about Arakawa's final moments.

- Hoshino said he was at peace "Like an actor who stepped off the stage."

- He says he had achieved his goals, dissolving the Omi and reuniting with Ichiban. He said he liked the duck. "Would you believe he said he'd never tried it before? He'd had a chance fifty years prior, but I'd killed his father before they could sit down." **(story/dialogue)**

- *He did it, he tied up all loose ends. Does this make it more of a tragedy or less? All that time he could have possibly enjoyed the fruits of his labour, been able to actually connect with Ichiban anew is gone. (observation)*

14:05 Hoshino feels some guilt. He offered to walk Arakawa to his hotel. Arakawa wanted some time alone. Hoshino says he should have insisted. Ichiban says it's not his fault as he falls back into his own despair. He asks if he thinks it was Omi Loyalists, Hoshino has no doubt about it.

14:50 Hoshino tells Ichiban that Omi Loyalists in Kanto are already mobilising to reform. Refusing to go down without a fight **(story/politics)**

- Hoshino asks Ichiban to hazard a guess who might be directing this discord. Ichiban can't believe Ryo Aoki would have ordered his father's death. Hoshino can say he'd have certainly wished for it.

15:45 A waiter walks in, producing a firearm to Ichiban. Hoshino tells Ichiban to seek vengeance. He'll even lend him Seiryu clan men. **(politics/story)**

- Ichiban thinks for a moment and says he doesn't need guns. He cannot imagine Arakawa would want Ichiban to kill the young master. He doesn't want revenge.

- Hoshino asks what Ichiban will do. Ichiban looks up, saying Arakawa was upset about how the Yakuza had become pawns of those in power. That's what the dissolution was about, going back to the roots, using power to help the weak, not take by force. Arakawa saw that through, taking one man's life would never make up for all the time he had to play his part.

- Ichiban also says if he did that, he could never face Arakawa in the afterlife.

- Ichiban says he'll open Masato's eyes, by force if he has to.

17:40 After a moment, Hoshino says Arakawa was truly blessed to have Ichiban, he apologises for stepping out of line. Ichiban assures him he didn't. Then asks how he'll meet Aoki?

- Ichiban laughs, he has that figured out.

19:10 Outside, the gang was waiting for Ichiban, even Zhao and Han.

- He apologises for going and having a fancy meal without them. Adachi asks "so you're sunshine and rainbows again." Ichiban says if he kept moping Arakawa would kick his ass from heaven.

- Anyway, lets go see Kume, Ichiban is gonna make him take us to Masato. **(objective)**

- Han knows where to look, it's announcement day, the start of the election season. Kume will be giving a speech in the district. **(story)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Ichiban rejects Revenge, will make Masato see the light**

22:15 At the end of Isezaki Road, Kume gives a speech from atop a campaign bus to an eager crowd. It's an angry spiel about lawbreakers laughing in glee, getting sick of the lawabiding being the butt of society, swearing to return law and power to the hands of upstanding citizens. He sounds mad as fuck. **(observation/story)**

- Nanba says you can't fault what he's saying. Ichiban says Kume probably believes Bleach's public facing bullshit. Adachi adds, ignorant to their real evils. Willfully ignorant given the Omi members were *pointed out to him*.

23:10 Adachi says from a certain angle, Kume is another of Aoki's victims. Han is more pragmatic, your foes do not deserve mercy. Considering Kume is the reason his home was torched, I can hardly hold this viewpoint against him. **(observation/aside)**

23:30 The gang tries to approach, stopped by a guard, Ichiban recognises him as one of Aoki's detail. Nanba points out he isn't the only one, the place is crawling with Omi, they quickly come out of the woodwork.

- A fight ensues, I make sure it is as loud as possible. Opening fire with Han.

- The crowd should turn around, they're missing a real show. **(joke)**

25:30 The guards are defeated just in time for the bus to leave. Ichiban demands to know where he's headed. The stops are on his webpage, but the guard swears we're not taking another step towards Kume. We look out, there's people watching from the windows and the rooftops **(story)**

- We're told more Omi are coming in, moving on Kume will only get more difficult.

27:10 On a screen above, Aoki is on a TV debate. Running circles around the pundits. **(politics/character)**

- They accuse him of being too young, national politics isn't a students game. Aoki hits back, asking if he's implying local politics are? All he can do is backpeddle.

- The big takeaways are he's already spinning the dissolution to his advantage. Saying it highlights the strength of his 3K plan.

- He is experiencing no visible emotions over his fathers passing.

- They mention how the CLP are fielding many Bleach candidates, and Aoki is asked what his goal is. He wants to rejuvenate the CLP with many young, energetic members.

30:30 Back on the streets, the gang are disgusted by Aoki's antics.

30:50 Hoshino appears, he forgot to give Ichiban something back at Heian.

- They stop at Hamakita park. Where Hoshino returns the money, saying he never found a candidate... Until now! Ichiban should run! Hoshino announces with pure enthusiasm.

- Ichiban is incredulous, he couldn't win this to save his life! He likely won't even make the votes to get his deposit back! But it gets us closer to Kume! If Ichiban is in the running, Kume *has to* interact with him at some point!

- The gang points out Ichiban has a criminal record. Hoshino points out the law protects his right to run since his sentence has been served.

- Ichiban has no time to think, applications have to be made *today*. Ichiban decides he'll do it.

- If Ichiban is running, he's gotta *run*, government office closes at sundown and paperwork has to be done! Make like an old boardgame and GO! **(joke/wordplay)**

36:40 Ichiban is exhausted from the paperwork. Saeko lets him know it isn't over. Tomorrow they're hitting the campaign trail. If they want to get to Kume, this has to look legit.

- As they head for Survive, saying they'll figure this out tomorrow, the camera cuts to Aoki's security listening in.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Ichiban Vs Kume in Debate / Aoki is displeased

39:00 The next morning, the group finds Survive bar covered in messages from Ichiban's detractors, pointing out his criminal record. Ichiban can roll with it.

- He can also roll with the election van Hoshino is gifting to him!

40:00 Kume is at Hamakita park, so we're gonna tackle him head on!

- We arrive to find him already running Ichiban's name through the mud, calling his running a publicity stunt and airing out his criminal history.

- Han says Kume is a step ahead, by making Ichiban a villain instead of a simple fringe candidate he can avoid going near him. **(politics)**

- Ichiban gets it, and decides step one is clearing his name.

41:50 Ichiban pulls up opposite Kume, and immediately grabs the crowd's attention. They all mutter how he's a murderer.

- Ichiban thanks Kume for advertising him, giving him a big step up. Kume tries to smear Ichiban's image, this is not what a candidate looks like.

- Ichi immediately catches Kume in a classic trap. Asking if he doesn't like a convict running.

Making him agree, then pointing out the law protects his right to do so. If he rejects this, he rejects the law. "Right? My law-loving little Kume-chan?"

- Kume is immediately, publically rattled.

43:35 Ichiban pounces, saying the law must be far from perfect then. Strange then how Bleach loves going around making sure we're all following the law. But how do we follow imperfect law, is that not a paradox? Does Kume ask these people to accept that paradox?

- Kume, who has been unable to even reply, yells "Yes" They must accept the paradox.

- Ichiban hits him again, saying that sounds to him like *a grey zone*.

44:10 Ichiban hits him with the most important part of this speech, this is where Ichiban tries to get him to empathise. Saying people want to live according to laws, but people are imperfect, as are laws. Both are paradoxes. Small mistakes can send you down a slippery slope, and that's what brought Ichiban here. Where he was not rescued by laws, but people who live in the gaps between them.

- They're not in the grey zones by choice, but they work hard to be proud members of society. Laws are important, but they know what's more important.

- Kume cannot counter this, he's squirming. He hates it. He simply cannot conceive of a way to argue with basic decency. "People don't exist to serve the law... The law exists to serve the people, doesn't it? Don't you think keeping those in order is important, Kume-San?"

**(theme/story/dialogue)**

45:00 The crowd, filled with people from Ichiban's past, people who Ichiban has actually met, helped and been helped by, go crazy. Cheering his name.

45:50 Ichiban says he has nothing against Kume personally, he's gonna come over and shake his hand. Kume, completely devoid of shame, calls for a retreat, and the van speeds off.

- A news report notes the strange turn of events. The front runner wound up doing a runner. While Ichiban is generating buzz

46:40 In Aoki's office, he mentions how everyone around him is useless. Kume... And You.

- Sawashiro is stood there, his head hanging in shame. Aoki asks the old man for his report. He mentions reorganising under the temporary name of the Tokyo Omi Alliance

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Sawashiro is sent to Ijincho**

47:20 They have sufficient manpower and resources. Before he can announce who he'll be assigning posts too Aoki stops him. "Do you think you're the chairman or something."

- He says the only reason he had power under Arakawa wasn't competency, it was everyone else kissing his ass "Even back then, you followed me around like a lost puppy."

**(foreshadowing/dialogue/character)**

- Sawashiro looks down, genuinely seeming to be hurt by the remark.

- Aoki says he pitied him, but the Tokyo Omi Alliance will be different. If he wants to be chairman, he has a target to take out in 24 hours. **(story)**

- He's handed a photo and told he knows the consequences for failure.

48:30 Today Kume has a speech in front of Jinnai Station, so lets go see the loco-Commotion

**(joke/awful wordplay)**

- This time we're approaching on foot, we're gonna ambush the guy with our presence. **(objective)**

50:05 Once again, the plan to approach Kume is interrupted by his guard. So I make SOME NOISE **(battle/combat/guns)**

- I almost prefer this method of debate, Hattori and me speak the guttural tongue of turn based violence. **(joke/observation)**

51:45 Somehow Kume didn't hear us and Ichiban is able to get in for that hand shake. But Han gets news. **(story)**

- Just as Ichiban is about to get Kume into the van, Han comes over, Hoshino's life is in danger. We gotta get to Seiryu HQ fast.

54:30 Inside Seiryu HQ the ground is littered with bodies. Takabe is wounded, get tells us it was the Omi alliance, ten men, one with a gun and they're headed for the chairman.

- We rush upstairs, only to meet resistance outside the chairmans office. They immediately taunt Ichiban, saying the boys are cleaning up inside, Ichiban wastes no more time, the fight is on. **(story)**

56:15 Ichiban smacks the guy aside and kicks the door down, he's too late.

- Hoshino has been shot dead, and sat on the couch is Sawashiro, smoking a cigarette, waiting here for Ichiban. Gun in hand, he tells him he's too late.

- Ichi, in disbelief, asks if he killed the chairman. Sawashiro looks over. "You've always been too late. Every errand. Every job I sent you on." **(dialogue)**

56:55 Saeko asks why kill Hoshino

- Sawashiro states the Ijin Three's time is over. The old pillar of the Seiryu Clan was the real heart of the Grey Zones. Without Hoshino, it'll crumble unless the Omi intervene. "The young master agrees." No sense hiding the blood is on his hands.

- With anger in his voice, Ichiban asks what the two are so afraid of. They've already won. There's no need to kill Hoshino. Ichiban is enraged by how senseless this killing is.

**(character/observation)**

- Sawashiro smiles, stands, and says "What would you do if I said it's your fault?" before turning the gun on Ichiban. Ichiban just gets more angry, not backing down from the gun pointed at him despite Nanba's urging. **(Character/story)**

- I love how throughout, the party does actually add spice to the melodrama in these ways. A more civvie, human element. Fearful for the world Ichiban is immersed in. **(observation/writing)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Sawashiro sired Masato**

58:00 Sawashiro pulls the trigger, the gun clicks, and he smirks. “Heh, got you.”

- He says winning the district is important to the young master. Ichiban running made him an obstacle. Ichi asks if Aoki is that scared he'll win. Sawashiro laughs at that, fear is nothing to do with it. This is because the young master doesn't tolerate obstacles, no matter how insignificant. Sure thing bud, pretend this isn't a petty personal slight. **(observation/character/story)**

- Ichiban asks why not kill him instead. Sawashiro claims he'd have preferred too, but he has too much attention on him right now.

- When asked “so you killed the chairman instead.” Sawashiro bluntly says yes. Leaving the group in silence, before he continues. The Ijin Three were Ichiban's support.

- Ichiban clenches his fists, asking why the young master sinks lower each time he hits the bottom. “Is he so afraid of losing that he'll make sure he never does.” Hit the nail on the head. “When did he become like that?” You were there blud **(character/story/observation)**

59:30 Sawashiro narrows his eyes at Ichiban, I read this as him hating that Ichiban isn't wrong. He can hate Ichiban, but the guy has the measure of Masato. **(observation)**

- Getting more and more worked up, not realising how much he's seeing right through them. Ichiban screams I'm just garbage to you, why go so far to crush some garbage. His temper overwhelms him and he throws a punch, easily caught by Sawashiro.

- Ichiban asks if Arakawa's death is on Sawashiro too. He just says maybe, doesn't matter anymore, clearly wanting to piss Ichiban off.

- The fight is on. Dynamic intro where Jo just toys with Ichiban before grabbing a blade. We're warned that even if it's us against him. He's far, far more dangerous with a weapon.

**(story/character)**

01:07:30 Sawashiro is defeated, he bursts out laughing. Ichiban asks what he's become. Following orders blindly. He doesn't care if he had a reason for killing Arakawa.

- Sawashiro says Masato's orders are absolute. Protecting him is his life's purpose. Ichiban screams protecting Arakawa was his. Sawashiro knows.

- Sawashiro reveals he didn't kill Arakawa, it was the one order he could not follow. “I abandoned my humanity a long time ago... But that was one order I could not follow. How could I?”

01:09:20 Sawashiro says the first time he saw Masumi Arakawa was before he swore his oath. At the age of 15. **(backstory)**

- The only way out plays as we learn Ichiban and Sawashiro came from much the same place. Picking fights on the streets of Kamurocho to survive. **(story/observation)**

- He had a father, an abusive alcoholic. “The only people there for me... Were other people who didn't have anyone either.”

- He can't even remember the name of his girl... Or else is just claiming that for reasons I can't fully put my finger on. **(observation/backstory)**

01:11:15 The two shackled up together, and tried to ignore it when she got pregnant. Hoping for a miscarriage, but the baby came. Sawashiro said the best thing to do with an inconvenience is sweep it under the rug. The way he'd lived his whole life until now.

- He placed the baby in one of the coin lockers. Later, at Public Park, his girl asks “We're going to hell, aren't we? I know it.” Sawashiro doesn't care, he's already moved on. He wants to get home, but his girl can't live with this choice. Despite Jo's urging, she rushes back to the baby, finally sick of him.

01:12:55 The two arrive just in time to see Arakawa desperately hammering at the locker, freeing their kid, freeing Masato. Jo gets a disgusting smile on his face. The baby is no longer his or her problem. He runs through Jo and his girl off to hospital. **(backstory)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Ichiban’s true Origin**

01:14:15 Ichiban drops Jo to the ground, backing off, unable to comprehend.

- He puts the pieces together. Masato is Sawashiro’s son. Jo goes on, he knows Masumi told Ichiban about that night, how they placed their child in a locker. They could never have imagined there was a second baby in those lockers “Who could?” **(backstory)**

01:15:15 We flash back to Jo, five years after the birth of his son. His girl is thankfully now free of him. He’s back to wandering the streets of Kamurocho alone. **(backstory)**

- One day he saw Arakawa, walking the streets. An underling wheeling around a son. His son. Jo is gobsmacked, seeing his boy.  
- Jo started doing his research. Learning of the Arakawa family, his sons inability to walk, caused by the hypothermia he suffered at birth.  
- We see Masato beating his legs, Masumi tries to calm him, but he demands to know why he alone can’t walk. Masumi can only look away, his guilt not allowing him to properly comfort his boy.  
- Seeing Masato’s pain finally stirred some actual emotion in Jo, they sat with him. He knew the Yakuza was a path his life would wind up on, but this pushed him into swearing up with Arakawa.

01:17:00 As Jo is about to be sworn in, Arakawa asks him if he’s sure. Telling him there is no turning back once the oath is sworn. Jo is sure. He tells Ichiban if there was anyone he would have sworn to. It would be Masumi Arakawa.

- Jo reflects on how even back then he had a rep as Arakawa the Assassin. Ichiban bitterly asks it wasn’t his rep that won Jo over, it was the proximity to his son. Jo is silent. Ichiban asks if Masato knows. Jo says this is the first time he has ever told anyone. It’s a secret he thought he’d take to the grave.

01:18:25 Ichiban, now a bit softer asks why tell him.

- It’s because Jo has a question. “Don’t you feel there’s a critical piece of info missing from that locker story?”

- If the baby Arakawa took was Jo’s... Where was Arakawa’s real son? Jo says that Arakawa’s love was a woman named Akane, before he knew here. She worked at a soapland... Shangri-La.

- She needed a place to actually give birth on that night. Jo figures it would have been Shangri-La... Who was born in Shangri-La?

- Ichiban slowly puts the pieces together, not out of stupidity, more the sheer difficulty in comprehending what he’s been asked to understand.

01:20:10 Ichiban clearly gets it, but Jo goes on. After the boss took Masumi, he saw another baby.

- Back to that night by the lockers. Jo and his girl are stood. Unable to leave the lockers. Even in his relief, Jo can’t help but question *why* this random Yakuza saved his baby.

- A few minutes later his answer arrived, workers from the soapland, the only other people who could know about this plot, arrived to pry open every locker they could.

- In the very next locker, besides the one Masumi had cracked open, was Ichiban. Jiro takes him back home, saying Akane may return for him. It’s then Jo realized Arakawa took the wrong baby.

01:22:45 Sawashiro says after leaving Ichiban, Akane ran until the Hikawa caught her. She must have told someone about the plan in case it had failed, who could she tell but the workers of Shangri-La?

- He spells it out. Ichiban is Masumi Arakawa’s son. Ichiban, on the verge of tears, backs away, saying it’s stupid. Not wanting to believe it. Sawashiro says only a DNA test would prove it, Ichiban is free to walk away, not believe him.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 13 CONT – Sawashiro ratted on himself**

01:24:20 He walks past Ichiban, currently stunned into submission, and goes to leave. Only for Zhao and Han to stand in his path. They're not letting him go for killing Hoshino.

- Jo doesn't fight. "Do what you will to me. I have no future anyway."

- The group are confused. Sawashiro says he refused the order to kill Arakawa, he knows how wreckless an order to kill Hoshino is, this is him being discarded. "(...) He only saw me as a disposable, third-rate hitman."

01:25:25 Ichiban asks with a degree of sadness who killed Arakawa. Sawashiro doesn't know. He thinks it'd be Ishioda. Ichiban's anger begins to flare again.

- Adachi tells Jo he can't let him walk away from this. "I'd love to do it with my own hands, but... Your atonement's gotta be clean."

- Jo can only reflect on atonement has never crossed his mind, but he doesn't fight, he allows himself to be collected by the police. The group looks on as he's carted away. Han puts a call in to Geomijul. Hesitating to give Ichiban the news.

- He discovered who gave the anonymous tip about Hoshino's peril, it was Sawashiro himself. Han figures Sawashiro probably hoped Ichiban would stop him in time. Ichiban gasps. Han goes on that he probably could not say this outright without betraying Masumi, so he left it up to Ichiban, and fate.

- Saeko reflects on how they failed to stop him, and Ichiban shakes his head. Saying Sawashiro always made impossible demands of him. The two share a look as the policeman drives off. Ichiban is deeply pained, conflicted. **(story/character)**

Observation: As I said way earlier, every reveal about Sawashiro pivots on the last. He tells his own story, of how deeply selfish he has always been. And he tells it bluntly. He knows how deeply unwell as a person he was, and how he's only scarcely better now. He resigns himself to his cruelty, hiding any good intention he has under a layer of malevolence which he takes some glee in.

**(observation/character)**

- His backstory, as told to Ichiban. It has so many elements which could be sympathetic, but he never asks for sympathy for his deeply cruel actions. Even as seeing Masato stirs something in him. He doesn't ask for understanding, he seems uncaring if anyone gets him. Even as he seemed to hope Ichiban would stop him. He also easily allowed him to fail. **(observation/character/Sawashiro)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 14 - Passing the Torch**

00:25 Ichiban is back to the bar, sat smoking alone at Survive. Nanba steps out to check on him. He looks up to the ceiling.

- Joes words echo is in his head. Arakawa took the wrong baby. The words Arakawa said that night on the promenade about his dream with Akane. Ichiban takes a drag.
- Ichiban wonders if Arakawa knew all along, somewhere deep down. **(character/story/backstory)**

01:40 He stubs out his cigarette, getting more shaky until he punches the bar. His desperation for answers growing as Aoki's smug face fills his mind. **(story)**

- Ichiban climbs to his feet and goes to storm off. Nanba says everyone is worried about this.
- Ichiban cuts him off, saying he's gonna settle this. He's gonna make Kume take him to Masato.
- Nanba agrees, clearly worried by Ichiban's attitude. Ichi takes off for the Bleach office, not even waiting on Nanba to follow.

02:55 Outside there's a standoff, the rest of the gang standing off against surrounding Omi.

- Zhao and Han say they were waiting. These Omi guys don't want to talk.
- Ichiban dryly asks if they're just stood there. Saeko confirms, but the issue is more just keep showing up.
- Adachi says they've got a bone to pick with us. Ichiban says the feeling is mutual. He yells they're heading out and not to get in the way. When they don't move, Ichiban takes the invitation. He's happy to bash this out. **(story/character)**

06:30 Nanba asks if dealing with the Omi is their lives now. Ichiban is too upset to care. Saying he's fine not having to think about it.

07:30 Ichiban and Saeko arrive at the Bleach office. Finding it oddly quiet. The door is left open, and it's empty inside.

- And that's because outside is anything but, this place has been left as a trap for Ichiban, and now the Omi are congregating.
- Ichiban steps out to meet them. Immediately asking where's Kume? When they only taunt, he has no time for it, right into another fight.

09:10 Ichiban climbs on top of one of the downed Omi. He asks why they're being attacking. It's revenge for Sawashiro. Next he demands Kume's location. When the man doesn't talk Ichiban starts beating him.

- His anger for Arakawa, Hoshino, Sawashiro, and all that he's learned is surfacing. He says he's far from done. He confesses that Kume has ran for Kamurocho, after Ichiban's confrontation he ran to Aoki beginning for more security.
- Ichiban says forget Kume then, take him to Aoki. This guy knows he can't do that, Ichiban probably knows he can't. Ichiban doesn't care, he has a lot of frustration to work out. **(character/observation)**

11:15 "You killed Arakawa-san... You killed Chairman Hoshino..."

- Cuts scene change as Ichiban just starts beating the life out of this guy. He begs, saying he told him everything. This is no longer about answers, this is answering for what they've done to Yokohama. What they've taken from Ichiban. Ichiban's friends yell at him, only to be told to shut it. Ichiban says him and Masato need to have words.
- The gangster beneath him is fearing for his life as Ichiban raises his fist once more, only for it to be caught by... KIRYU! **(story)**

12:20 Ichiban recognises him, asking why he's in Ijincho. Good question Ichi, shame you have no idea just how good a question it is! **(joke/observation)**

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 14 CONT - Kiryu Appears, Aoki denies killing**

12:25 Kiryu nonchalantly states he was passing through. "My ass." Nanba says to himself.

- Ichiban demands to know who he is, how he knew Arakawa. Kiryu says his past is irrelevant. He can't live in the open, and this gives him access to things most people don't know.

**(story/conspiracy)**

- Kiryu knows Aoki's next move, it's going to be in Kamurocho. He was going to tell Ichiban... Until just now.

- Ichiban scrambles to his feet and demands to know. Kiryu just sadly states after what he just saw of him, he can't say he feels like it. **(character/story)**

13:30 Ichiban gets pissed this guy is getting preachy. Kiryu just looks at the guy on the ground, saying if you have to be held back from a guy who can't even fight anymore, doesn't it give Kiryu the right?

- Ichiban just keeps screaming to be told while the group looks on silently. Kiryu says in his state he wouldn't get it, and calmly tells him to come to Geomijul tonight. Han says Seong-Hui is getting the system back online.

14:05 Kiryu and Han share a look. Kiryu snickers "You're just like him..."

- Han doesn't follow. Kiryu just says he knew a man who looked like him years back. "But, I saw him die with my own eyes."

- Han tries to deflect it, but Kiryu has learned he had a body double. Han continues with riddles, not wanting to answer directly until Kiryu demands it.

- "To become a man's shadow, your body and mind must be as one with his, and you commit to that for life. Some day, a shadow will be born from me... And make the same commitment."

- Han Joon-Gi is eternal, this would be impressive if Kiryu seemed any less so. **(joke/observation)**

15:40 Ichiban pries, asking if these two know each other, after a silence it's Han who says they just share an acquaintance.

- Ichiban asks what's this about going to Geomijul, Kiryu just says not to show if he doesn't want to. But if he cares about what he has to say, come tonight.

16:10 In Aoki's office, Masato and Hourinouchi talk.

- Masato denies any involvement in Hoshino's death. Horinouchi asks what if the public doubts him. Masato is confident it'll die on the vine as mere rumour.

- Horinouchi clears up, there's no evidence? No chance Sawashiro will turn rat, no chance of a leak? "That's what I should operate on?"

- Aoki says not to be skeptical, he has to much respect for the office of police commissioner to cause him stress.

- This doesn't alleviate Horinouchi's worries. The situation gets more fluid with each brief, he's only becoming more paranoid. He starts prying into the Omi's dissolution, and now Sawashiro's unpredictability. Aoki, being unable to actually answer just tells him to stay away, be at ease.

**(politics)**

17:50 Horinouchi follows that the remnants of the Omi left in Kamurocho are just a band of unruly thugs. What's going to reign them in? Masato just says to leave it to him.

- Horinouchi tries to argue, but is told by Aoki that for now he needs to keep his distance from law enforcement. Situation is delicate, he asks (orders) Horinouchi not to barge in here again without his permission. **(story/character)**

- Horinouchi considers for a moment before scoffing. "So decrees the man who jumped into national politics without even a heads up to us."

- Masato folds his arms "Oh, you wanted to be consulted on that." Sorry Horry, you're not a player in the game, you're a piece on the board. **(joke/observation/character)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 14 CONT – Horinouchi, Ishioda, and Kiryu fight begins

18:45 Horinouchi is smugly told that even if he were informed it would have changed nothing. No one has the power to stop Masato.

- Horinouchi doesn't back down. He says his advice could have been useful, like not seeking power you're not qualified to wield. "Not that it would have mattered, right?" Horry says, leaving in a hurry to get the last word in.

19:30 Masato turns and looks out the window, the camera pans around him, revealing Ishioda.

- Ishioda says that bastard Horinouchi ought learn to respect his governor. He asks if he should make him an example. Masato says not to ruin his fun, to Ishioda's confusion.

- Masato clarifies. "He's going to live the rest of his life at my beck and call." This is revenge for embarrassing him at the club, I should remind you. **(observation/joke/character)**

- Ishioda gets it, he was probably also embarrassed like that way back when. **(joke)**

20:05 Ishioda says Kume is up from Ijincho crying for help, wants security.

- Aoki says he'll handle it, tells Ishioda to focus on his task, and asks how it's going.

- Ishioda says prep is done, but from here on out he won't be able to be reached until it's over.

- Aoki sits down, looks at Ishioda and says he may have what it takes to be next chairman of the Omi, clearly buttering him up, giving him motivation. **(character)**

- Aoki says he'll mention it at the next officers meeting. Ishioda buys the bullshit.

21:00 We rejoin Ichiban, it's night, time to head to Geomijul

22:35 At Geomijul, Kiryu stands before the stairs leading up to the Surveillance room. He welcomes Ichiban.

- Ichi says it's unfair he knows about him, but he doesn't know anything about Kiryu. Kiryu is confused, taking Ichiban as someone who doesn't get hung up on small stuff.

- Ichiban yells, insisting this isn't small. Kiryu poses a question then, would he rather know about him, or what Ryo Aoki is up to?

- Ichiban says he came here to learn the one thing that matters. Kiryu is glad he gets it, but he has one condition.

23:30 Kiryu wants to test if Ichiban and his friends are worthy of his information

23:45 Cuts scene change, Kiryu rips his shirt off, revealing his dragon. Receive You flares up.

- "Unfortunately, I'm, the type who gets to know someone through my fists." I can relate **(joke/dialogue)**

- Ichiban is impatient, angry, lost, confused. He looks around as he asks to skip this part. Kiryu isn't budging, asking why he should.

- Ichiban says he's lost so much lately, he's at his limit. He fears that if they fight, he might kill Kiryu. Kiryu finds that cute, he scoffs, "All the better, then."

- Enraged, Ichiban rips his own shirt off. Revealing not only his dragonfish, but the big part of him that's still an angry, bitter, thug. Ichiban simply reminds him of his objective. The treasure Ichiban is after is up ahead. "And I'm the one guarding it."

ENG DUB Note: "I'm the dragon guarding it" is a pretty sick take on that line, I like it a lot.

**(observation/dub)**

- Music swells as the fight begins. Kiryu's introduction is so fucking good. He lets Ichiban punch him in the fucking forehead and no sells it with a Komaki parry. Drops his classic "If you wanna die, step up!" and the fight is on.

- Unique fucking mechanic: Kiryu *will not* attack women, so you gotta pick your party composition carefully! Unique mechanic: takes 20 minutes and doesn't suck! **(gameplay/observation)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 14 CONT – Kiryu Reveals MIRROR FACE

25:35 → 43:20 Kiryu battle

- Ends with Han blowing Kiryu away with pistols.

43:45 The gang are wiped, Ichiban is on the floor gasping for air. Kiryu looks completely unaffected. He compliments Ichiban. “Not half bad.”

- Ichiban is insulted, he forces himself to his feet as Kiryu approaches and readies a punch. His fist glows with energy, chased by a dragon. Ichiban is blown away by the punch. His imagination takes over, he’s dressed as a mighty knight, Kiryu takes the form of a literal dragon.

- Ichi hypes himself up, before turning and seeing his gang sprawled out on the ground. In that moment, he remembers what he’s been fighting for all along, not for anger or revenge, but for the people he cares about.

45:10 he turns, curses the dragon, deflects its fiery breath before going on the offensive and salying the beast. He lands, smiles, and hoists his sword to the heaven.

- Cut to him, unconscious, head in Saeko’s lap as he chants a victory theme. Saeko slaps him awake and he rises with a start, asking where the dragon is, to the groups confusion.

- He’s right there! Kiryu approaches and helps him up, saying he has calmed down. Ichiban repeats with a bit of confusion, before saying he’s all good. **(story/character)**

46:35 By pushing him to that point. Kiryu beat the rage out of Ichiban, reminded him what’s important. **(observation)**

- Ichiban asks if he really had to fight them for that. Kiryu says Ichiban was blind with rage, he couldn’t see past it. If he wants to beat his enemies he has to think, put himself in their shoes. Think about what they’d fear most, and do it. **(story/character)**

- Luckily Kiryu never had to do that, cause what his enemies feared most was him. **(joke/observation)**

48:05 Ichiban is taken to the Monitor Room where Seong-Hui awaits.

- Kiryu put in a request to look into what’s happening to Ijincho before it hits. Find the people closest to Ryo Aoki, knowing there’d be something fishy there.

- They’re hunting for an assassin entering Ijincho. Here to silence Sawashiro. Seong-Hui asks if Kiryu’s info comes from the fixers men. Kiryu takes it she looked into him. She knows, he interrupts before she can say his name. **(story/it’s a long fucking story)**

50:15 An image of a back alley is thrown up, some Omi grunts escorting a man in a mask. Zhao recognises him as Mirror Face. A famous assassin who can make anything look like an accident or suicide, and assume the appearance of anyone!

- So after making Ichiban face himself, we gotta look into a mirror... Face **(joke)**

- Also this chapter falls apart, this is a way of quickly getting Ishioda outta the plot and giving us Mirror Face for one final twist. **(observation)**

52:35 Ichiban demands to know if silencing Sawashiro is his next move. He says he has to tell him Jo is his dad. Seong-Hui and Kiryu know that won’t change things. He’s beyond sentimentality.

- Kiryu tells Ichiban to think it through. “After everything you’ve seen and heard would you drop it if I said I wasn’t sure? Personally, I don’t think you’re that kinda guy.” **(dialogue/story/character)**

- Ichiban accepts this and asks for a hand, Kiryu says this is as far as he can take it. Explaining he had to disappear for what he treasures in life.

54:55 Kiryu asks what Ichi fought when they felt. Ichi isn’t sure how to answer, but says he’s the real deal. This conversation isn’t between these two, it’s to the fans. Ichi is not the real deal yet, this fight was not about winning or losing. It was trust. Trust him, and his friends. This will lead to him becoming “The real deal.” **(observation/story/theme)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 14 CONT – Ishioda, Mirror Face, and Arakawa's Killer

55:45 Zhao says Seong-Hui knows more than she's letting on about Kiryu as he departs.

- She says he's as he says, a dead man walking. We didn't see anything, no need to tell anyone.

**(story)**

- Ichiban readily accepts that to Zhao's surprise. Before discussion can continue. A feed picks up Ishioda being dropped off at Mirror Face's building. This confirms it to the group, this is gonna be a hit on Sawashiro. Ichiban won't allow it. "I'm gonna stop him for real!" **(objective/dialogue)**

- He tells Seong-Hui to keep watch, it's time for Ijincho to counterattack! He declares to the group.

01:01:15 Outside the building Ichiban gets a call from Seong-Hui, confirming Mirror Face and Ishioda have not moved. Ichi hypes the group up, saying they got the home advantage.

01:01:50 They're then immediately ambushed by Ishioda grunts, surrounded on all sides.

01:07:05 The group fight through the abandoned building. Ishioda is surprised Ichiban caught him. "The Geomijul's spider web can still catch flies." Explains Han.

- Ichiban asks if Ishioda killed Arakawa. He grumbles a negative. Saying he got killed by the Yakuza code. "Our world ain't so soft that traitors can walk away without paying the price."

- Ichiban calls that a bullshit excuse, as Adachi is grabbed from behind by... Adachi?

01:08:00 The two Adachi's struggle, the group itself struggles to comprehend, Mirror Face can even mirror someone's strength! That's... Fucking crazy.

- Ishioda is impressed with fuckin' Decoy Octopus here. Ichiban solves the issue by asking them a question about traffic code and punching the fucker who gets it correct. Mirror Face quickly understands his mistake. "He's a stain on public service." **(dialogue/game joke)**

01:10:10 Ishioda and Mirror Face fight

- I wish Mirror Face mirrored your actual Adachi, level, equipped job and weapon... I've already written my notes on Mirror Face. This fight is not terribly interesting, but can be hard if underlevelled. **(gameplay)**

- *I guess all fights can be hard if done underleveled*

01:20:00 Ishioda is defeated. Ichiban says if you let him be Sawashiro would never talk. If he finds out about this attempt on his life, he might just spill to the cops.

- "Either way, you failed the young master. Can't wait to see how he takes it." Yeah this kind of loyalty by fear really has a shelf life. **(observation/dialogue)**

- Ichiban is obviously seeing clearer now.

01:20:40 Ishioda climbs to his feet, where Ichiban kicks him sprawling over a table. He starts his interrogation.

- Aoki did order him to kill Arakawa. "But... Someone got in the way."

01:21:55 Flashing back to that night. Ishioda acts as spotter for a sniper, with Arakawa in his sights.

- Suddenly, Tendo appears, talking to Arakawa. The boxer seems to praise Arakawa for his ploy, while the old man thanks him for his help.

- Tendo acts humble, saying he got swept up in a once in a lifetime fight. Arakawa asks Tendo what next. Tendo says he'll go to Kamurocho and tell Aoki what went down, assuring Arakawa (quite suspiciously) that he'll be fine. **(observation/foreshadowing/story)**

01:23:50 The two discuss what to do, Ishioda wants to make this a two for one hit, taking out both traitors. As they decide Arakawa is the first to go. Tendo steps in the way and points out to the two of them.

- Before they can even question it, they're ambushed, Tendo's own men have them held up.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 14 CONT – KABOOM

01:24:30 The group are dragged out of view. Tendo taunting that Ishioda always jumped the gun.

- Arakawa tries to speak gently to Ishioda, telling him the age of Yakuza is over. Tendo is a lot more blunt about the Sotenbori Omi getting crushed. Tendo then says some people find their big chance at a time like that.

- He produces a gun “Shouldn’t a guy like me take his chance to make it to the top? It’d be funny, right?” Fucking wildcard here. **(character/observation)**

- He draws on Arakawa, plugging him with a sweet smile and without a second thought. **(character)**

01:26:00 Back in the present, the group are shocked. Adachi demands to know where Tendo his, but before Ishioda can answer, Tendo calls it in. There’s a bomb in the building. Go for it.

- The building explodes, chapter end, but hey we got Kiryu as a poundmate!

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 - To the Pinnacle

00:35 Our final chapter opens on a Bleach election van drifting through Ijincho, telling people to vote for Kume as Bleach Japan zealots walk the streets. Kume waves from the window as the van extolls Aoki’s faith in him.

- The camera drifts to an Ichiban campaign poster.

- As the election speech goes on, talking of Kume’s support from Bleach, the camera pans over the grey zones to be destroyed by his party, then the derelict wreck where Tendo’s bomb went off. The destruction he’s already acting as distraction for. **(observation/camera/story)**

02:25 In Kamurocho, Ryo Aoki’s underling makes a speech, a crowd packed into Tenkaichi street as he talks about how just two years prior no one imagined this city could ever be purified, but now the Tojo have been eradicated, it’s a city that stands for what’s just. “Party Chair Aoki is changing the CLP, and Bleach Japan is the magic wand!”

- In the van, Aoki’s assistant goes through his schedule, something catches her off guard, he asks what’s wrong. She asks if she should refer to him as chair instead of governor.

- He actually apologises for the confusion and says to stick to Governor, it’s an oddly human moment. She’s genuinely flustered around him. **(observation/character)**

04:05 Far from the crowd, someone covered in tattered rags approaches, they produce a megaphone from a paper bag.

04:20 Back in the van. Aoki and his assistant go over the event. Loads of cameras, it will be live.

- Aoki says this feels like a dream. He’s worked his whole life for this influence. He says he had to escape the political viper’s nest, and did some wrong to get here. To his assistant’s disbelief. He says it was only breaking the rules in the smallest ways. As images of his victims flash past.

05:10 Aoki claims he did it because unlike most who only claim to do right in pretty speeches, he wanted to follow through on what he said.

- His assistant, fired up, says Aoki was in the right. She says everyone has broken the rules once or twice before. “If you’re committed to making your ideals a reality, there will always be sacrifices. History always proves that.” Aoki is taken aback by her words, she immediately apologises, saying she spoke out of line. But then Aoki thanks her. That was the vindication he needed, so he heads up to make his speech. She tells him to tell the country his righteous ideas. **(character)**

*I find this beat really interesting. Aoki’s soft confession reveals he has some capacity for guilt, this is the first time he has even expressed the idea he could be wrong, even if slathered in justification. But at that moment a true believer in him vindicates him. Shows love for the cruel person he is, she believes in his righteousness. And that gives him all he needs to keep going. This is the power over people he seems to have always craved, she unconditionally loves him, doesn’t stand up to him, even enables his worst traits. **(observation/character)***

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – The Bait is Set**

06:50 Aoki is gleefully introduced, he's not only the governor of Tokyo, but Ogikubo-sensei's successor as CLP Party Chair! He's been all over the nation, but today he's here in Kamurocho!  
- The crowd goes wild!

07:35 As Aoki is about to begin his speech, a figure in the crowd raises his own megaphone! All eyes turn to ICHIBAN! With a plaster! Aoki's face is in shock, the crowd parts as Ichiban introduces himself, he survived that explosion in Ijincho, he couldn't miss the chance to offer his hand to Aoki!

- Adachi and Nanba run in, giving Ichiban an boost as he leaps atop the van!

08:30 Atop the van, Ichi plays the crowd a little, asking if he can be seen in the back, probably talking to the snipers with that one. "I swear I'm not a ghost, take all the pictures and video you want!" He's playing it up, making sure there's a lot of proof that he's right here. Too difficult to easily put down. **(joke/wordplay/observation/story)**

09:25 He says he wants to shake Aoki's hand and has to borrow him for a minute, he turns to Aoki, staring at him with an expression of annoyance.

- Ichiban approaches with a warm smile, reaching out his hand. Aoki's underling tries to scream at Ichi but Aoki throughs a hand up.

09:55 Aoki slowly takes his hand, where Ichiban pulls him in. "You ordered Captain Sawashiro to kill Arakawa-San. Don't bother denying it. The captain told me himself."

- Ichiban claims the order is on record in the Arakawa Office up in the millenium tower. Aoki says he's bluffing, Ichiban tells him if he believes so, no skin off his back.

11:00 Ichiban steps away, leaving Aoki with a parting shot. Saying he sees why Arakawa and Sawashiro were worried about him right up until the end. "Too bad you let it all go to your head, man. You don't understand reality now."

- Ichiban angrily tells him he can't get away with everything.

- Ichiban jumps down, as he departs Aoki hastily works to recover, saying elections are unpredictable, saying Ichiban has made a rather bold declaration of war. That's one way of putting it. **(story/character/dialogue/double speak)**

11:50 Ichiban gets a call from Nick, Ichi asks how he looked on TV. Nick says Ichiban is trending, but people are not exactly supportive. Ichi knows he looks the villain next to the young master.

12:10 In an alley off of Tenkaichi the gang awaits. Nick says there's a hideout at a bar called Earth Angel That's our stop off point. **(objective)**

- The group mentions how shady Nick is. Turns out he sheltered us after the explosion.

14:00 The gang arrives at Earth Angel, the mama is still there. Good on her.

- Nick asks if Ichi did all this to shake Aoki's hand. Ichi says there's more to the plan. It's explained that while the record of the hit is bullshit. Aoki's paranoia will not let him ignore it. The building will be turned inside out, and when nothing is found, Tendo himself will be sent. They'll catch him there. **(story/plot/character)**

- Ichiban says that bastard killed Arakawa, Saeko is more hung up on the guy trying to blow them up. "We would've been screwed if Adachi-san hadn't noticed something was off."

- Flash back of Adachi pointing out the bomb and the gang running away. **(story/flashback/okay)**

- Zhao is impressed with the plan to catch Tendo

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Tendo’s last order, approaching the tower**

18:00 In Aoki’s office, Tendo is given the order to search the Arakawa Office. He’s annoyed, he asks if this is not just cleaning up Aoki’s mistakes

- Aoki doesn’t argue, he just asks if he needs to give all his orders in minute detail. Tendo flippantly apologises, saying he’s not on the same wavelength like Aoki and Sawashiro were. Aoki grunts, catching the insult. **(character)**

18:45 Tendo takes the job, but says this time he’s gonna make sure Ichiban stays dead. “Any objections?”

- Aoki stays silent. Tendo jokingly notes “Not gonna make the same mistake and give orders that could be taped, huh?”

- Aoki turns around and gives Tendo a warning. Anything happens to him and Tendo’s Omi loses all its power. Meanwhile Aoki can replace Tendo “As many times as I need to.”

- *While Ichiban made irreplaceable friends and allies. Masato kept throwing people away, eventually you do run out of dependable people. **(observation/character contrasts)***

19:40 After a pause, Tendo chuckles, finding this amusing. Saying he’ll prove the Tokyo Omi’s worth. Aoki is unimpressed, saying just focus on protecting him. It’s in his best interest. **(character)**

- Tendo says he’ll make sure that one day, Aoki can’t live without his “services” A clear threat. He will not be made replaceable. **(story/character)**

21:15 Outside Earth Angel the gang wonders how to stay safe. Luckily Adachi has a detective friend offering them a safe place at a bar called New Serena! Sounds swanky and wanky lets go! **(joke/observation)**

23:25 We enter New Serena, getting a cameo from Makoto Date. He says Ichiban has “eyes just like he did back in the day.” Date is used to this kind of thing happening. So don’t sweat it. **(story/character/cameo)**

25:00 Saeko says the polls are open, the group wonders if Ichiban has managed a vote. Adachi joking at least someone has to give him a joke vote.

- Nanba and Adachi give us the classic warning to wrap up loose ends cause there’s no going back once we enter the tower, and that’s it. **(gameplay/observation)**

27:05 Outside the tower, Ichiban hypes himself up for the fight ahead.

27:10 We cut to the results of the election. Kanagawa District 2 was won by Sota Kume! **(politics/story)**

27:50 Back outside the tower, the gang looks up. Ichiban gets a call from Nick. Tendo entered the tower two hours ago, he has to be up there. Ichiban thanks him, but Nick is worried.

“This is the demon lord’s castle, Ichiban. **(story/character/dialogue)**

- He do be in brown. **(observation/kabuki)**

- Nick says he’ll be rooting for us, Ichiban gives his thanks.

28:45 Cuts scene mode change, Ichiban puts his phone down and looks to his friends. They give him smiles and nods, he returns the look. Then stares up to the tower, his imagination turns it into a building piercing the heavens, crackles of lightning turning it into a demonic spire. He hypes his allies up and enters, finding the place flooded with Omi.

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Climbing the Tower, Facing Tendo

29:40 → 49:25 Millenium Tower Raid (**gameplay/dungeon**)

- Awesome music, this music feels driving, like we're far more dangerous. We caused this. Shows Ichiban's growth.

- Unlike Kiryu who was always reactive. This finale demonstrates Ichiban's power, he can be proactive. Past tower raids failed, Kiryu became predictable and the world used it against him. Ichiban flips the script, engineering the same trap for the villain.

- This follows much of the same path as the tower in Yakuza 6, but much like Ichiban diverted from Kiryu's path so does this level. I love how it also ends a room after where Kiryu fought Someya last game. Ichiban may not make it all the way to the roof, but in metaphorical terms, at this moment he has surpassed Kiryu in his own way. This is what he can do which Kiryu could not, a plot and plan that uniquely belongs to him and saves the day. (**story/observation/post-note**)

49:30 Sick ass shot of Nanba and Adachi opening the doors to the Arakawa office for Ichiban. He walks through. Lightning strikes as we see Tendo sat on the desk, he takes a big gulp of brandy.

- Ichiban calls out, find what he was looking for? Tendo says even if the kill order existed it wouldn't prove shit.

- Ichiban bites back "Yet he can't even stand the thought that it might. So he sends you out here, poor bastard."

50:20 Tendo's eyes narrow, unsure quite what Ichiban meant. Ichiban's smile clues him in. He realises he's right where Ichiban wants him. The data never existed. (**story/character/face acting**)

50:40 Ichiban once again spells out, Sawashiro would never have betrayed the young master, but no one left on his side understands loyalty.

- Tendo understands this was bait to lure him out. Ichiban says back in Sotenbori they all thought he was on their side. Tendo snaps back at Arakawa "the guy playin' everyone doesn't stop ta think if he's getting played." He does say Arakawa gave him the chance of a lifetime, the opportunity he never had as a boxer. Riling up Ichiban, saying he watched Arakawa struggle to survive his gunshot, the last thing he saw was Tendo's sweet, beaming smile. I love Tendo as a villain, he's so wonderfully loathesome.

52:30 Ichiban tells him to shut his fucking mouth. He rips his shirt off as lightning strikes. Calling Tendo a piece of shit.

- Tendo taunts, if he's shit what does that make Ichiban "soapland-born and dumpster-raised?" One last reminder of just how high Ichiban has had to climb. How people think they're superior to him because of the circumstances of their birth, shit they had no control over. "Well, ya've got my respect for havin' the balls to make it this far. Unfortunately, I'm gonna string ya up by 'em."

(**dialogue/observation/theme/story**)

52:55 Tendo rips his shirt off, revealing an azure dragon, opposite facing to Kiryu's. The Azure dragon. Combining opposing elements of fire and water, possessing what appear to be fins, symbolising him as a carp who ascended the waterfall.

- Ichiban fell to one dragon earlier in the story, this one he has to slay.

- The RGGTattoos blog also points out an interesting parallel to the Yakuza 5 end boss where Kiryu (a dragon fighting for family) put down Aizawa (a carp fighting for power), here the respective characters and drives are reversed. (**observation/theme/post-note**)

<https://rggtattoos.tumblr.com/post/696789742774321152/tattoo-analysis-tendo-yosuke>

53:15 Tendo squares up, saying in the end he'll be the one standing on top, our heroes journey ends here!

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Defeat Tendo, Aoki spooked into heading to tower

53:20 Tendo dynamic intro. Ichiban runs full pelt, a drop kick doesn't move him. Two solid bodyblows do nothing. Ichiban looks up, and with a single haymaker Ichiban is sent flying back across the room. The stakes are fucking set.

- The party talks. Nanba in disbelief he's fighting *the* Tendo. Adachi mentions Nanba bringing him up earlier. As a boxer he had it all, "Power *and* Fame"... I figured one would naturally follow the other there.

- Ichiban is too pissed to be intimidated. "I don't give a single fuck about his boxing record! I just wanna knock his ass out." (**dialogue/bad ass**)

54:20 So we come to the mechanical final boss of Yakuza: Like a Dragon and it's honestly *not that impressive* on a gameplay level.

- Well, if you know how to use Peerless resolve it's just kinda meh and if you haven't been paying attention it's a literal roll of the dice, forget about being a boxer, it's boxcars! (**joke/wordplay**)

- He hits hard, he has combo strings making blocking... Well not much more troublesome despite some timing mixups, but they just haven't figured out a great way to escalate mechanically.

- Now narratively it's another story. He's a suitably daunting opponent, and the game does a great job making you want to kick his ass. Or well, in my case, watch Ichiban kick his ass as I feel minimal involvement. The music, Triplet After Triplet makes it sound like we're overcoming a goddamn mountain it's so imposing. The strings drowning out Ichiban's signature techno beats sells the idea that Tendo dwarfs the party. (**music/observation**)

01:13:50 Tendo falls to his knees. Ichiban growls he doesn't get to die yet. Ichiban has to pay back to the boss. Tendo pulls himself to his feet and it fades to white as the two charge in for one last blow.

01:14:20 Cut back to the results. The speaker says this house election has been a historic victory. The PM gives a great deal of weight to this victory to Ryo Aoki. Saying his achievements belong in the same breath as Ogikubo's retirement.

- Nick is in the crowd, on his phone

01:15:20 Aoki begins his speech, talking of change for the CLP. Saying he'll shine a light on the grey zones and oust corruption, these are the principles he founded Bleach on twenty years ago...

01:15:55 People are shifting uncomfortably in their seats, pointing out something behind Aoki. He turns seeing in big bold writing on the screen behind him. "Breaking: Warrant issued for CLP Party Chair Ryo Aoki under suspicion of incitement to murder."

- He looks up in disbelief, stunned. The press charge the stage. He's clearly rattled, saying it has to be a mistake and trying to restore order. Nick breathes a sigh of relief, before asking if Ryo Aoki is his real name, and putting on a dramatic performance. Asking if he's actually Masato Arakawa, if the crime boss Masumi Arakawa who was killed the other day was his father.

- Masato Arakawa is hurriedly escorted off stage, he fixes his tie and departs.

01:17:15 In a car speeding down the highway. Masato is on the phone with Horinouchi, he's in a great panic. Saying he can't reach Tendo or the Arakawa office. He demands to know why there's a warrant for his arrest. Horinouchi can't confirm anything, he can't find the report.

- Horinouchi advises him not to do anything rash, avoid the tower. It's an order Aoki cannot follow, and he threatens that Horinouchi will be joining him in hell if this cannot be cleaned up.

- Aoki's driver says he also couldn't reach Tendo. He's sending men to the tower. Aoki says to narrow down a few to act as his guards. (**character**)

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Aoki Implicates Himself, Ichiban berates him

01:18:55 Seeing the bodies of defeated Omi grunts. Aoki can't believe Ichiban was capable of this.

01:19:10 Masato arrives in the Arakawa office. He finds the Ichiban sprawled out on the floor, Tendo casually sat on the desk.

- After a moment of confusion. Arakawa demands to know why the fuck he wasn't picking up the phone.

- Tendo just says he was busy, his eyes are framed out, clearly this is suspect. 'Tendo' confirms it was a bluff.

01:19:50 Masato looks down on the defeated Ichiban, relief washes over him. "So it was just a trick... Yes... That's all it was."

- Tendo asks if we're done here. Aoki is not. He confidently declares Ichiban must still have allies out there. He can't allow things to ever get this out of hand ever again.

01:20:35 Tendo asks what's the plan. **(plot)**

- Aoki bluntly states "root them out... and kill them." **(dialogue)**

- Aoki continues, making examples out of his enemies. Destroy the bodies

- He kneels besides Ichiban, saying he wants them so dead nothing can ever come crawling out of the gutters again.

01:20:55 Lightning flashes, Ichiban opens his eyes. And Aoki stumbles backwards in shock.

- Ichiban climbs to his feet, big smile, asking how good his performance was. Adachi says he should be on the stage.

- Masato is in shock, why are they alive!

- Ichiban says to Masato "We aren't done. Not yet."

01:21:35 Tendo starts laughing, to Aoki's confusion, he's mirror face! As the real, unconscious Tendo is dragged out from behind the desk. A betrayal from Mirror Face for being treated as disposable! **(theme/character)**

01:22:25 From behind a corner Han and Saeko emerge, they recorded Aoki's speech

- Saeko says this'll be quite a scoop! Han says the video turned out great. "Should I go ahead and post it online?"

- Aoki rushes towards Han demanding he don't. Ichiban stops him with a shout. Telling him it's over, it's time to admit defeat.

01:22:55 In the same breath Aoki calls Ichiban a dumbass, and asks if he planned this.

- Ichiban explains the recording was a bluff to get him to send Tendo. From there it was a safe bet Aoki would follow. "You can read me like an open book, but I learned a lot about you at the same time."

- The insinuation Ichiban can read him pisses Aoki off.

- Ichiban is talking softly. "Young Master. This was the only way I could come up with to stop you. Somewhere along the way... You lost sight of how to even stop yourself!"

- *I'm gonna be real Ichi, my read on Masato was the last time he knew how to stop himself was when he had breaks, and he's long since broken free of that life.*

**(joke/wordplay/character/observation)**

01:23:45 Ichiban spells it out. Masato became governor to get back at those who embarrassed him. What did he even get out of that? He has no one left who actually cares about him.

- Ichi starts getting worked up. Saying all he can do is kill anyone who stands in his way, is this the life he wants "Are you really that stupid!?" he screams at him. **(character/dialogue)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – VS. MASATO ARAKAWA

01:24:25 Aoki, clearly hurt, forces a smile, telling Ichiban not to act like he knows him. **(face acting/character)**

- He fixes his glasses. Ichiban says it's true though. Aoki says true or not doesn't matter, this is the only way forward. No one can stop him.
- Ichiban swears he'll stop him, as he and his party ready up. Aoki sends his goons for them.

01:25:15 Ryo Aoki boss fight!

- He carries gun, he has men, he has minor boss music, we're fighting the *fake* version of Masato Arakawa, this is not a fight of ideals, this is just a boss battle.

01:32:50 When Aoki is beaten he beats a retreat, hey he hit a wall! That's a failed escape! 0/10 game! **(joke/gameplay)**

01:33:10 The group are sprawled out on the floor, too tired to stand. Ichiban tries to rally them, but Nanba says to forget about them, he has to chase after Aoki! They all say he can trust them left alone. Ichiban feels their passion. "You're all the best friends I've ever had! Thanks, guys."

- Quick stop by the minibar and it's time to go kick the shit out of my bro.

Joke idea: Stop by the place that used to sell icecream. Kamurocho has changed a lot, can't even get a nice soft scoop before putting my bro's plans on ice. **(joke/structure)**

01:35:05 Ichiban approaches Masato from behind as *Ism* begins to play.

- Aoki turns and says the stupidest, most arrogant shit ever. "You think you can defeat me, unarmed, in a fight?" (Actually I realise he still has his gun)
- He looses a shot at Ichiban, narrowly missing his head. Aoki tosses the gun and Ichiban is pleased. Perhaps that's another sign he doesn't quite want to kill Ichiban.

01:35:40 *Ism* kicks into gear as we get his character card. Reading Masato Arakawa, no fancy title, no hiding his true identity. This encapsulates what is so strong about its fight, like last game disrespected the final boss with its title card. This isn't a boss fight, this is an interactive cutscene and it's a really good one.

- This fight is truly beautiful, this to me pays off the turn based RPG shit. Using its structure to tell an amazing story and perfectly sell all the emotions it needs to.

- Ichiban is reverted to his freelancer job. Much like Aoki has morphed into Arakawa. Ichiban's imagination isn't in this fight, he's not the hero. He's a man having a fight he never wanted to have against a brother who has lost his way.

- Unlike last fight where the strings dominated the techno as Tendo overshadowed Ichiban. Here the strings are a lament for a fight that didn't need to happen, they intermingle with the techno creating a truly melancholy track.

- Masato will cheat counter, he'll throw a tantrum when he misses an attack, it even ends with a QTE, making this feel more real, more grounded than every fight prior! We do actually get some of our own hits in, feeling more one with Ichiban as he has to correct his brother!

- Also, parallel to Yakuza one. One the scumbag politician who uses goons to his advantage and the brother we're fighting to save are the same person... We even get some evidence out of them!  
**(joke/callback/observation)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Aoki Exposed

01:39:25 The fight ends with Ichiban sending Aoki through a glass barrier, he falls to the floor below, after a moment, Ichiban jumps down after him.

01:39:50 Masato, unable to comprehend having lost asks how Ichiban pulled this off. “You’re just scum!”

- He musters his energy and comes at Ichiban with one last easily dodged punch, before being put down with a blow to the gut from Ichi. He pulls him back to his feet before sending him sprawling with one last heymaker. Ichiban calmly, definitely states “It’s over, young master.”

01:40:25 Masato refuses to give it up, he pleads that he can still lead Japan down the right path. He claims he’s serious. The power transformed him. **(character/story)**

- Ichiban just asks he can do what, what’s his point. He goes on, he can clean up Japan..

- A look of anger crosses Ichiban’s face, as Masato claims that people want justice. Ichiban tells him all he accomplished was doing what he pleased while others cleaned up after him. He threw away anyone who crossed his path and told himself it’s the right thing to do.

- Everything he claims as righteous is just an excuse to kill more people

- Ichi tells him if he’d let Masato have his way he’d have killed Sawashiro, a man who only ever served him. Ichiban’s anger raises.

01:42:00 Masato claims there are only two kinds of people in this world. Those who use, and those who get used. The irreplaceable and the easily replaced. Masato is the former, and they were the latter.

- Ichi asks if it’s okay to use someone and throw them away. Masato smugly asks “did that finally sink in?” Ichiban screams in his face, actually scaring Masato back.

01:42:50 Ichiban makes a speech, a great speech, and one I think is purposefully, a little wrong.

“You and I, we’re like light and shadow born on the same day. You’re the light, of course. You always had everything I never could! You started off with everything! Everything you could want... So how the hell... How’d you end up like this!?”

- Ichiban can only see in Masato all he wanted. A family who loved him, who he would do anything for and who in turn would look out for him. Masato could only focus on what he lacked, what he saw in everyone else, even to a degree, Ichiban. Power, dignity, the ability to assert oneself in the world. Masato saw his family as a restraint. They didn’t care for him, they contained him, and when he broke out of that shell, he was gonna come back with a hammer and smash it for ever thinking it could hold him, only if it only ever was holding him dear. **(observation/wordplay/character)**

- Aoki is finally silenced, no jab has landed, no argument has stumped Ichi

01:43:20 Police flood the room. Adachi hurriedly warn Ichiban these are likely guys on the Commissioners payroll.

- Ichiban kneels down before Masato and gently tells him starting over is his only choice.

- Ichiban lowers himself further, down to Masato’s level and tells him, encouragingly to start over at rock bottom, he knows he can rise again. Ichiban excitedly promises he’ll be by his side. Saying the boss wanted that, it’s what he asked him to do when he joined the family.

01:44:40 Ichiban stands up and approaches the police, telling them the bomb in Ijincho was planted by Tendo, the order came from Ryo Aoki.

- Ichi points out it doesn’t end there. When it was discovered they were alive, he was not done.

- Han holds up the phone, saying to watch.

- Aoki’s words fill the room, while all eyes are on the phone, Aoki grabs a shard of glass and stuffs it in his pocket.

- Han says the video is already spreading like wildfire online.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Aoki's End**

01:46:20 The lead cop says they'll have to consult with the commissioner, turning to Aoki, he says it doesn't look good.

- A cop is sent to grab him, where Aoki puts the shard to his throat and takes him hostage, grabbing his gun.

- Ichiban begs him to stop but can't get through, Masato drags him out the room, condemning Ichiban and Arakawa once more. Hating how the Yakuza pretend to be family, duty and bonds brainwashing them.

- Masato is screaming at them. Ichiban holds the cops back and begs Masato to let him go, to save his life. "Because I don't want to see any more family die!"

- Masato smiles, spits on his words, but Ichiban keeps trying. Steadily breaking down. No longer angry, just upset he couldn't stop Masato from losing control, and thanks to that, he'll never see Arakawa again, but Masato can still come back. He begs him. **(character)**

01:48:35 Aoki is smiling as he venomously says everything about Ichiban is just like his fucking dad. He can see the resemblance.

- Aoki enjoys inflicting this pain, having this power, being able to hurt Ichiban with his words.

- Aoki drags the cop to the lift, once in there he knocks his hostage out, and it's then he dawns on him just how fucked he is, as he screams fuck repeatedly. **(character/story)**

01:49:40 On Tenkaichi Street, where just yesterday Aoki made his crowd pleasing speech. Now Masato's video plays, broadcasting his true nature to the nation.

- Masato walks away, beaten and bloodied, a husk, he anonymously makes his way through the crowd, as they watch his empire crumble. **(character)**

01:50:15 Masato staggers back to where it all began, finding himself by the coin lockers.

- He looks at the locker where he was left many years ago. Drawn to it, staring at it.

- Ichiban approaches, knowing this is where he'd come. The two look at each other.

- Ichiban calmly states "I tried to tell you. I know exactly what kind of person you are."

**(dialogue/character)**

- Masato sneers at Ichiban, before it turns into a faint laugh.

- Ichi continues, he thought Arakawa may want to hit the reset button, start over from rock bottom, that's why he'd find him here. "I just had a feeling" **(character)**

01:51:10 Masato angrily repeats "Don't think you know me!" as he draws on Ichiban. Who stands firm. Ichi assures him he brought no one with him. He doesn't need the gun. He reaches out a hand and asks he hand it over.

- As Ichiban takes a step forward Masato looses a shot at his feet. Sending bystanders running.

Ichiban doesn't flinch, he just lowers his hand as Masato's fury mounts for a moment, before it, and his gun arm, falls.

01:52:10 Masato turns back to the locker and places his hand on it, steadily it falls, balls into a fist and he leans against it. "This is where I began."

- He asks if Ichiban remembers Yumeno. Saying 18 years ago she changed their lives forever. She was the hostess who abandoned him.

- Coldly, matter of factly. Masato says she married Horinouchi. Before Masato was elected, he was invited to a party to celebrate Horinouchi's promotion to commissioner. As Aoki, Yumeno complimented him. It's as he says it he begins to break, breaking out in agonised laughter as he smacks his gun against the locker. Hurt how he sees the compliment as two faced. Ironic given he had become Ryo Aoki! For that to hurt, Masato had to still be in there. **(observation/character)**

- He's trying to goad Ichiban into finding this funny, but Ichi can only look hurt. He doesn't find Masato's pain half as funny as he does. **(character)**

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Masato’s End

01:54:00 Masato collapses on the locker, a lifetime of pain and helplessness creeping back in now he has nothing to contain it. He has no more power to abuse.

- Ichiban approaches, Masato reflects on how fragile the power he changed his name and body for... Then he realises, there’s just one thing left over which he holds power. He puts the gun to his head. “All that, and still nobody could appreciate who I really was.” **(story/character)**

01:54:35 Masato continues, tearing himself down. Talking about hating his weak, ugly self. Struggling to change it, and still no one cares!

- Ichiban tells him this wasn’t true, the captain and Arakawa only ever cared about him.  
- *My favourite scene pretty much starts here. I’ve already long written about why this works so well for me. It’s powerfully acted and beautifully ties up these two characters* **(observation)**

01:55:00 Ichiban says he knew he was Masato Arakawa the moment he saw a picture of Ryo Aoki, because he cared! He’s practically pleading with Masato to understand.

- Masato once again snickers, he finds it laughable “Back to this bullshit about family love?”  
- And this comment causes Ichiban to snap. Calling out how he’s acted, Nakaya is so fucking good at lacing his anger with so much love. So much bitter frustration. All the pain this guy has caused him and Ichiban still wants to save him.

- The first comment which seems to penetrate Masato’s defences is when Ichiban tells him there was no “logic” to their love. All his life he thought all the good anyone done for him was out of obligation. To be told it was unconditional finally breaks through to him. He could never see it as genuine until Ichiban, with nothing to gain by doing so, begs for his life. **(observation/character)**

01:56:20 Ichiban says he sees him as his brother, and tears in his eyes, just begs Masato to understand him. Masato finally chokes up, he finally puts the gun down, pointing it to the ground.

- He opens the locker, his locker, and places the gun inside.

01:57:20 He calls his assistant, apologising for worrying her. He says he’s going to turn himself in, he’s about to ask her to take care of something, before deciding to let go, telling her to do as she wants. He finally let go of power over someone, trusting them to act. **(character/observation)**

- He has difficulty expressing it, but pushes through

01:58:00 He looks to Ichiban with a smile, a genuine smile, one not borne of arrogance or mockery. A small step in the right direction, and the last he’ll ever make. Ichiban returns the smile, barely containing his tears. Before Kume steps in.

- “How could you do this, Aoki-san? I trusted you...! I thought the path you walked was bleached in pure white...”

- Camera turns back to Ichiban. He looks on, stunned. Aoki laughs, and says it’s not too late. “True good... Will triumph.”

- Kume steps away, pulling the blade from Aoki’s side. Masato collapses, Ichiban screams, scooping him up and screaming for help. Drowned out by the music.

- Masato grabs Ichiban’s hand and says his last words. Ichiban’s face fills with determination as he scoops him up and runs, the same run his father made all those years ago. **(story)**

02:00:05 Credits, Ichiban-Ka plays

## YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – Post-Credits

02:05:35 Some time later we're back in Kamurocho, we have a shot of the lockers, people walk past, the conflict is over.

- Shot of the new police station, the camera creeps up to the roof where Horinouchi waits.

02:06:10 Adachi walks up behind him. Horinouchi doesn't remember the guy and doesn't want a reminder. Adachi is told to get to the point. He had evidence of crimes committed by the Tokyo Omi Alliance.

02:07:00 Adachi approaches, he mentions the audio implicating Aoki's murder of Arakawa. Horinouchi officiously says that was a mere bluff to lure Tendo.

- Adachi notes the guy is well informed, as behind him the elevator opens and several officers alight for the roof. Adachi casually asks if these are subordinates. Horinouchi says to him, every officer in Tokyo is a subordinate.

- Adachi tiredly says that's fair, as he produces a USB.

02:08:05 While the recording was a bluff. What Adachi holds is anything but, a list of all the people the Arakawa family bought out, and wouldn't you know it. Horinouchi made the list!

- As Adachi explains the paper trail, Horinouchi starts to squirm, much to Adachi's delight. He outlines *exactly* why Horinouchi is going down.

02:09:50 Horinouchi looks past Adachi and starts ordering his subordinates to arrest this man. They're unmoved.

- Adachi lets him know it's too late, the evidence is already with the Inspector General, and another is with a media pal. Good old Date I'd bet!

- Horinouchi calls this a bluff, after all, there's no profit in this! Adachi can only say this isn't a bluff. He tightens his fist, relishing this. "It's a declaration of victory!"

02:10:25 The officers pass Adachi and subdue Horinouchi. Adachi continues his speech, savouring this decades long revenge coming to fruition. Adachi says he's sure Horinouchi had his reasons, probably even felt he was justified as falling in line with Aoki kept the peace.

- Horinouchi's face contorts in anger, as Adachi twists the knife. By pointing out he couldn't help but skim a little off the top for himself. Adachi is rubbing it all in, saying it's in the data. "Ambition is one thing, but damn!"

- Adachi asks if he did it to save his own skin. "Just like the old days, eh, Horinouchi." (**dialogue**)

02:11:50 Horinouchi scrunches his face. "You bastard." Adachi can only delight in it. "You know... I've been waiting a long time for you to make that face." (**dialogue**)

02:12:05 As Horinouchi is dragged away he tries to argue his way free to no avail.

- Adachi calls out one last time. He's about to rub Masato Arakawa in his face, one final insult...

But Adachi stops, and realises it'd be an insult not just to Horinouchi, but to Ichiban, to Masato, to all they had been through, and he lets it go. His justice won't be tainted by such a needlessly cruel remark. (**observation/character**)

02:12:50 Now with the roof to himself, Adachi enjoys a quiet smoke as he looks up to the sky.

## **YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – The Funeral**

02:13:05 We're now in Ijincho, back at the Homeless Camp where Ichiban's new life began

- The bridge leading to Hamako, where he finally found a new home.
- The camera creeps into Ichiban's apartment where he prays at a shrine dedicated to Masato and Masumi.

02:13:40 Nanba says Sawashiro got his sentence, he's looking at life in prison. Ichiban says he was just reporting that to the boss.

- Nanba reflects on how Masato died without even knowing Sawashiro was his real father, and how Masumi died believing Masato was his son. Ichiban looks at pictures of the two.
- We see Sawashiro in jail, sat alone, a blank expression on his face. His hair having returned to the unkempt state he had in his youth. No longer holding any ties. **(story/character)**

02:14:30 Nanba proposes a DNA test to confirm Ichiban's parentage. Ichiban thinks on it and decides against. "Nah, man. I've got my two dads(...) The owner of Shangri-La, Jiro Kasuga, and Masumi Arakawa."

- Blood doesn't matter to Ichiban, nothing would change that they were both fathers to him.

**(story/character)**

- Nanba smiles, he can't argue with that.

02:15:30 Saeko bursts in, they have to hurry off to the funeral

02:16:00 The service is attended by Daigo, Mitsu, Watase, Majima, Saejima, Ichiban, Saeko, and Nanba

02:16:20 Ichiban sits next to Daigo, offering him a bow.

- Ichiban has heard he's setting up a new security firm. Watase confirms, saying all the Yakuza lost what they knew. Watase had been prepping it from the start. Arakawa was meant to help.

02:17:10 Saejima asks what Ichi will do. Majima asks why not lend a hand in Osaka.

- Nanba and Saeko look on, a little uneasy.
- Ichiban awkwardly laughs, says he never expected rational advice from the mad dog. He appreciates the invitation, but his place is in Ijincho, he has priceless friends here. Saeko and Nanba are glad. As Ichi continues he hasn't even began to pay the people back yet. He's finishing the work the boss left behind here.
- Nanba rests a hand on Saeko's shoulder, the two are relieved Ichiban is staying.

02:18:40 Ichiban steps forward and presents a flower to the Arakawas. Offering a prayer to "dad" and "Young Master"

02:19:15 Saeko rushes outside, catching up with Ichiban and Nanba. They're joined by the rest of the gang, as well as Hamako, the Chief, and Seong-Hui, the spread of people Ichiban has met and helped and who helped him in turn. Ichi asks what has them out and about. Zhao says they were worried about Ichi. About Tojo remnants scooping him up.

- Hamako asks if Ichi is skipping town. Ichi hands off to Saeko "I'm too sober to say that all shit twice."

- Ichiban walks off alone, stopping at the bridge. The sound of his friends and allies reminiscing on his words, laughing about how sappy it was fills the background. It's a really sweet scene. They all talk about how well they know him. Adachi hopes he counts as a priceless friend, as does Hamako.

- Ichi looks out to the water as Masato's last words echo through his head. "Keep living, Ichi. Starting over from rock bottom huh? I'll take those odds."

**YLAD - CHAPTER 15 CONT – FIN**

- Ichi looks from the water to the sky. “Once you’re at rock bottom, the only way is up. But the bottom doesn’t have to be all dark and gloomy. If you can stand and look up, you’ll see the light of hope up there. You were right about that part... Young Master.”

- Ichiban smiles wide. FIN.