

ECHO: ARC 1 + ARC 2

Canon Revision — v5

This revision preserves the existing story foundation while clarifying romance, weapon continuity, worldbuilding, pacing, sensory detail, internal monologue, supporting-cast development, and action clarity.

Weapon canon: Sora gives the students physical weapons specifically designed to conduct Echo safely. The weapons are real; Echo is channeled through them to strengthen and enhance them.

Romance canon: Romantic feelings are allowed to become visibly confirmed at earned moments rather than remaining only implied, while keeping the story age-appropriate.

Worldbuilding canon: Echo users are uncommon, the public generally does not understand Echo incidents, the Veil operates through ranks and long-term planning, and Sora has deeper knowledge of Echo history.

Chapter 1: The Sound Beneath the World

Dramatic Purpose: Establish Rei's ordinary life, personality, and relationships before his Echo awakens. Show his tactical mind, dry humor, and protective instincts. End with the first glimpse of the hidden world.

Scene 1: Morning Routine

Setting: Rei's apartment, early morning. Small, neat, organized.

- Panel: Alarm clock reads 6:47 AM. Rei's hand slaps it off.
- Panel: Rei sits up, silver hair messy, expression tired but alert.
- Rei (thought): "Three more months until graduation. Then I can finally stop pretending to care about trigonometry."
- Panel: Rei getting dressed, checking his phone. Messages from group chat.
- Haru (text): "rei if you're late again i'm eating your lunch"
- Rei (thought): "He's going to eat it anyway."

Scene 2: School Commute

Setting: City streets, morning rush. Modern urban environment.

- Panel: Rei walking through crowded sidewalk, earbuds in, observing everything.
- Panel: Close-up of Rei's eyes tracking patterns—pedestrian flow, traffic lights, a kid about to drop ice cream.
- Rei (thought): "Left. Three seconds. Now."
- Panel: Rei catches the ice cream cone before it hits the ground, hands it back to surprised kid.
- Kid: "Whoa! Thanks, mister!"
- Rei: "Not a mister. Also, hold it tighter."
- Panel: Rei continues walking, small smile.
- Rei (thought): "Pattern recognition. Useful for exactly one thing: looking like I care."

Scene 3: Classroom Arrival

Setting: High school classroom, students filtering in.

- Panel: Rei enters. Haru waves enthusiastically from back row.
- Haru: "Rei! You're actually on time!"
- Rei: "Don't sound so shocked. It's insulting."

- Panel: Rei sits down. Mina is already there, reading.
- Mina: "Morning, Rei. You look tired."
- Rei: "I look like this every morning."
- Mina: "Exactly."
- Panel: Rei smirks. Haru laughs.
- Haru: "She got you."

Scene 4: Ordinary School Day

Setting: Various classroom scenes throughout the day.

- Panel: Teacher droning at blackboard. Rei taking notes but clearly bored.
- Teacher: "...and that's why the Pythagorean theorem remains fundamental to—"
- Rei (thought): "I wonder if anyone's ever actually used this outside of teaching it."
- Panel: Lunch period. The three friends eating on the roof.
- Haru: "So, college plans. We doing this or what?"
- Mina: "Some of us have been planning since freshman year, Haru."
- Haru: "Yeah, but like... are we all going to the same place?"
- Panel: Moment of silence. Rei looks at the city skyline.
- Rei: "We'll figure it out."
- Mina: "That's not an answer."
- Rei: "It's the only one I've got right now."

Scene 5: After School

Setting: School courtyard, students leaving.

- Panel: Rei, Mina, and Haru walking toward the gate.
- Haru: "Arcade? Movie? Literally anything that isn't homework?"
- Mina: "I have cram school."
- Haru: "Rei?"
- Rei: "I should probably—"

- Panel: Sudden commotion. Students running, shouting.
- Student: "Someone call an ambulance!"
- Panel: Rei's expression sharpens instantly. He's already moving.
- Rei: "Stay here."
- Mina: "Rei—"
- Panel: Rei running toward the crowd, pushing through.

Scene 6: The Incident

Setting: School courtyard, crowd gathered around collapsed student.

- Panel: Student on ground, convulsing. Teachers trying to help, panicking.
- Teacher: "Give him space! Someone call 911!"
- Panel: Rei kneeling beside the student, checking pulse, airway.
- Rei: "He's breathing. Pulse is erratic but present."
- Teacher: "Are you trained in first aid?"
- Rei: "No. But I know what not to do."
- Panel: Close-up of collapsed student's face. Something is wrong—his eyes are unfocused, pupils dilated strangely.
- Panel: Rei's perspective. The world seems to shimmer. A faint, barely-visible glow around the student's body.
- Rei (thought): "What...?"

Scene 7: The Awakening

Setting: Same location, Rei's perception shifting.

- Panel: The glow intensifies. Rei can see it clearly now—a pulsing, unstable energy radiating from the student.
- Rei (thought): "This isn't... this can't be real."
- Panel: The energy surges. The student screams.
- Student: "IT HURTS—"
- Panel: Rei's hand reaches out instinctively. The moment his fingers touch the student's arm, everything explodes with light.
- Panel: Full-page spread. Silver light erupts from Rei's body, mixing with the student's chaotic energy. The crowd is blown

back.

- SFX: WHOOOOM

Scene 8: Aftermath

Setting: Courtyard, immediate aftermath. Silence.

- Panel: Rei on his knees, breathing hard. The student is unconscious but stable.
- Panel: The crowd staring. Teachers frozen. Mina and Haru pushing through.
- Mina: "Rei! What happened?"
- Rei: "I don't... I don't know."
- Panel: Rei's hands are shaking. He can still see it—faint traces of energy everywhere. On people. In the air. On himself.
- Rei (thought): "What did I just do?"
- Panel: Ambulance sirens in the distance.
- Haru: "Dude, you're glowing."
- Rei: "What?"
- Panel: Rei looks down. His hands have a faint silver shimmer that fades as he watches.
- Rei (thought): "This is impossible."

Scene 9: Questions

Setting: School office, later. Rei being questioned.

- Panel: Principal and teacher asking questions. Rei giving vague answers.
- Principal: "You said you just... touched him?"
- Rei: "I was checking his pulse. Then he stabilized."
- Teacher: "The paramedics said it was like his system just... reset."
- Rei: "I don't know what happened."
- Panel: Rei's internal monologue, watching the adults.
- Rei (thought): "They didn't see it. The light. The energy. They saw a student collapse and another student help. That's all."
- Rei (thought): "So why can I still see it?"

Scene 10: Walking Home Alone

Setting: City streets, evening. Rei walking slowly.

- Panel: Rei's perspective. The world is different now. He sees faint glows around people—some bright, some dim, all unique.
- Rei (thought): "Everyone has it. This... whatever it is."
- Panel: Rei stops at a crosswalk. A jogger passes by, their glow pulsing with their heartbeat.
- Rei (thought): "It's connected to them. To their body. Their... life?"
- Panel: Rei looks at his own hands. The silver shimmer is still there, barely visible.
- Rei (thought): "What am I?"

Scene 11: Home

Setting: Rei's apartment, night.

- Panel: Rei sitting at his desk, laptop open, searching. "Unexplained energy" "human aura" "bioluminescence"
- Rei (thought): "Nothing. Or everything. Too much noise, no signal."
- Panel: Rei closes laptop, frustrated.
- Rei (thought): "I need to test this. Understand it. Control it."
- Panel: Rei lies in bed, staring at ceiling.
- Rei (thought): "Tomorrow. I'll figure it out tomorrow."
- Panel: Close-up of Rei's eyes closing.
- Panel: Final panel. In the darkness of the room, a faint silver glow pulses once from Rei's chest.

Scene 12: The Voice

Setting: Rei's dream/consciousness.

- Panel: Abstract space. Silver light and darkness.
- Panel: A voice, no visible source.
- Voice: "You heard it."
- Panel: Rei's silhouette in the void.
- Rei: "Who are you?"

- Voice: "The sound beneath the world. You've always been able to hear it. Now you can see it too."
- Panel: The silver light coalesces into a vague humanoid shape.
- Voice: "My name is Astra."
- Panel: Rei reaching toward the figure.
- Rei: "What's happening to me?"
- Astra: "You're waking up."

Chapter End Hook: Rei jolts awake, gasping. His room is normal. But on his desk, his laptop has turned on by itself, displaying a single word: "ECHO"

Chapter 2: Silver Static

Dramatic Purpose: Rei experiments with his new perception, saves someone using instinctive resonance, and realizes he can't go back to normal. Establish the danger and addictive nature of Echo awareness.

Scene 1: Morning After

Setting: Rei's apartment, early morning.

- Panel: Rei at bathroom mirror, examining himself. The silver shimmer is still visible to him.
- Rei (thought): "Still there. So it wasn't a hallucination."
- Panel: Rei touches the mirror. His reflection's glow pulses.
- Rei (thought): "It responds to touch. To intention?"
- Panel: Rei concentrates. The glow brightens slightly.
- Rei (thought): "I can control it. Barely."

Scene 2: School Day - New Perception

Setting: School hallways, crowded.

- Panel: Rei walking through halls, overwhelmed by the visual noise of everyone's energy.
- Rei (thought): "Too much. Too many people. Too many... signals."
- Panel: Rei closes his eyes, trying to filter it out.
- Rei (thought): "Focus. One at a time."
- Panel: Rei opens eyes. He's learned to dim his perception slightly.
- Rei (thought): "Better. I can control what I see."

Scene 3: Classroom Observation

Setting: Classroom during lecture.

- Panel: Rei watching his classmates instead of the lesson. Each person's energy has a different quality.
- Rei (thought): "Haru's is warm. Steady. Like a campfire."
- Panel: Focus on Mina.
- Rei (thought): "Mina's is sharper. More focused. Like a laser pointer."
- Panel: Focus on random student who looks sick.

- Rei (thought): "His is flickering. Unstable. Like yesterday's student before he collapsed."
- Panel: Rei's expression hardens.
- Rei (thought): "Is he going to—"

Scene 4: Lunch Interrogation

Setting: School roof, lunch period.

- Panel: Mina staring at Rei intensely.
- Mina: "Okay. Talk."
- Rei: "About?"
- Mina: "You've been staring at people all day like you're solving a puzzle. What's going on?"
- Panel: Haru eating, watching the exchange.
- Haru: "He's been weird since yesterday. The glowing thing."
- Rei: "I didn't glow."
- Haru: "Dude, I saw it. We all saw it."
- Panel: Rei silent, calculating.
- Mina: "Rei. We're your friends. Whatever this is, you can tell us."
- Panel: Rei looks at them both. Their energy—warm, steady, concerned.
- Rei: "...I don't know what it is yet."

Scene 5: After School - Following the Sick Student

Setting: School grounds, after classes.

- Panel: Rei watching the sick student from earlier leave campus alone.
- Rei (thought): "His energy is getting worse. More unstable."
- Panel: Mina appears beside Rei.
- Mina: "You're following him."
- Rei: "I'm concerned."
- Mina: "That's not an answer."
- Panel: The student stumbles, catches himself on a wall.

- Rei: "Stay here."
- Mina: "Not a chance."

Scene 6: The Collapse

Setting: Side street near school.

- Panel: The student collapses. Rei and Mina run toward him.
- Mina: "I'll call an ambulance—"
- Rei: "No time."
- Panel: Rei kneeling beside the student. The energy is chaotic, violent.
- Rei (thought): "It's tearing him apart from the inside."
- Panel: Rei's hand hovering over the student's chest.
- Rei (thought): "Yesterday I touched him and something happened. I stabilized him somehow."
- Rei (thought): "Can I do it again?"

Scene 7: Instinctive Resonance

Setting: Same location, Rei attempting to help.

- Panel: Rei places both hands on the student's chest. Silver light flares.
- Mina: "Rei, what are you—"
- Panel: Rei's perspective. He can see the student's energy pattern clearly now—chaotic, fragmented, fighting itself.
- Rei (thought): "It's like... static. White noise. No pattern."
- Panel: Rei's own energy reaching out, touching the chaos.
- Rei (thought): "If I can just... match it. Synchronize."
- Panel: The silver light pulses in rhythm with the chaotic energy.
- Panel: Slowly, the chaos begins to stabilize, following Rei's pattern.
- SFX: hummmmm

Scene 8: Success and Exhaustion

Setting: Same location, immediate aftermath.

- Panel: The student's breathing normalizes. The chaotic energy settles.

- Panel: Rei collapses backward, gasping.
- Rei: "That... was harder than yesterday."
- Mina: "Rei, your hands—"
- Panel: Rei's hands are glowing brighter than before, silver light pulsing.
- Rei: "I can see it now. I can see what I did."
- Mina: "See what? Rei, you're not making sense."
- Panel: Rei looks at Mina. For the first time, he sees her energy clearly—sharp, focused, and currently spiking with concern.
- Rei: "You're worried. And confused. And a little bit angry that I'm not explaining."
- Mina: "...How did you know that?"
- Rei: "I can see it."

Scene 9: The Explanation Attempt

Setting: Park bench nearby, student stable and resting.

- Panel: Rei trying to explain while Mina listens, skeptical but attentive.
- Rei: "Everyone has this... energy. I don't know what to call it. I can see it now."
- Mina: "Energy. Like, metaphorical energy?"
- Rei: "No. Literal. It's real. It's everywhere."
- Panel: Mina studying Rei's face.
- Mina: "You're serious."
- Rei: "Completely."
- Panel: Mina looks at her own hands.
- Mina: "I don't see anything."
- Rei: "Most people can't. I couldn't until yesterday."
- Mina: "So what changed?"
- Panel: Rei silent, uncertain.
- Rei: "I don't know."

Scene 10: Mina's Decision

Setting: Same location, conversation continuing.

- Panel: Mina processing, thinking.
- Mina: "Okay. Let's say I believe you. What does this mean?"
- Rei: "It means something is happening to people. Their energy becomes unstable and they collapse."
- Mina: "And you can fix it."
- Rei: "I can stabilize it. Temporarily. I think."
- Panel: Mina's expression sharpens.
- Mina: "You think? Rei, you can't experiment on people."
- Rei: "I'm not experimenting. I'm helping."
- Mina: "By doing something you don't understand with powers you just discovered?"
- Panel: Rei looks away.
- Rei: "What else am I supposed to do? Let them suffer?"

Scene 11: Haru Arrives

Setting: Same location, Haru running up.

- Panel: Haru jogging over, out of breath.
- Haru: "There you guys are! I've been looking everywhere—"
- Panel: Haru sees the unconscious student.
- Haru: "Whoa, what happened?"
- Mina: "He collapsed. Rei helped him."
- Haru: "Again? Dude, you're like a magnet for medical emergencies."
- Panel: Rei stands up, still unsteady.
- Rei: "We should call someone now. He's stable."
- Haru: "You okay? You look exhausted."
- Rei: "I'm fine."
- Panel: Mina and Haru exchange a look.

- Mina (thought): "He's definitely not fine."

Scene 12: Evening - Rei Alone

Setting: Rei's apartment, night.

- Panel: Rei at his desk, hand glowing faintly silver.
- Rei (thought): "I can control it now. Make it visible or invisible. Stronger or weaker."
- Panel: Rei concentrates. The glow intensifies, then fades.
- Rei (thought): "But every time I use it, I feel... drained. Like I'm giving away part of myself."
- Panel: Rei's phone buzzes. Message from Mina.
- Mina (text): "We need to talk tomorrow. Really talk."
- Panel: Rei stares at the message.
- Rei (thought): "She deserves the truth. They both do."
- Panel: Rei looks at his glowing hand again.
- Rei (thought): "But how do I explain something I don't understand myself?"

Scene 13: The Dream Returns

Setting: Rei's consciousness, abstract space.

- Panel: The silver void again. Astra's presence stronger this time.
- Astra: "You're learning quickly."
- Rei: "What am I learning? What is this?"
- Astra: "Echo. The sound beneath the world. The energy that flows through all living things."
- Panel: Rei's silhouette facing Astra's form.
- Rei: "Why can I see it?"
- Astra: "Because you're different. Your Echo doesn't just flow—it resonates."
- Panel: Astra's form shifts, showing multiple overlapping patterns.
- Astra: "You can hear other people's songs. And if you listen carefully enough... you can sing them too."
- Rei: "What does that mean?"
- Panel: Astra fading.

- Astra: "It means you're dangerous, Rei Amakawa. To yourself and to others."

Scene 14: Waking Up

Setting: Rei's apartment, morning.

- Panel: Rei jolts awake, sweating.
- Rei (thought): "Dangerous. To myself and others."
- Panel: Rei looks at his hands. The silver glow is brighter than yesterday.
- Rei (thought): "It's getting stronger. Every time I use it, it grows."
- Panel: Rei's phone alarm. Time for school.
- Rei (thought): "I need answers. Real ones."
- Panel: Rei getting dressed, determined expression.
- Rei (thought): "And I need to figure out what I am before someone else does."

Chapter End Hook: Rei leaves his apartment. As he walks down the street, he passes someone whose energy is different from everyone else's—controlled, focused, deliberately suppressed. The person glances at Rei, then stops. Their eyes widen slightly. They can see Rei's silver aura. Rei freezes. The person smiles and walks away. Rei realizes: he's not the only one.

Chapter 3: The Things Rei Sees

Dramatic Purpose: Rei tests his abilities, tries to rationalize Echo scientifically, and realizes the hidden world is much larger than he thought. Mina notices his obsession. Haru tries to keep things normal.

Scene 1: Morning Observation

Setting: Rei's commute to school.

- Panel: Rei walking, deliberately observing everyone's Echo.
- Rei (thought): "Seventy-three people between my apartment and school. Seventy-three different patterns."
- Panel: Close-up of various people—businessman, student, elderly woman—each with distinct energy.
- Rei (thought): "Some are bright. Some are dim. Some pulse fast, some slow."
- Panel: Rei stops at a coffee shop window, watching the reflection.
- Rei (thought): "But they're all unconscious. None of them know it's there."
- Panel: Rei's own reflection, silver aura visible to him.
- Rei (thought): "Except me."

Scene 2: School - Mina's Concern

Setting: Classroom, before first period.

- Panel: Mina watching Rei, who's staring at his hands.
- Mina: "You didn't sleep."
- Rei: "I slept."
- Mina: "Rei, you have dark circles under your eyes and you've been staring at your hands for five minutes."
- Panel: Rei looks up, caught.
- Rei: "I'm thinking."
- Mina: "About the energy thing."
- Rei: "...Yes."
- Panel: Mina sits down next to him.
- Mina: "Have you considered that maybe you should talk to someone? A doctor? A therapist?"
- Rei: "And tell them what? That I see glowing auras around people?"

- Mina: "When you put it that way, it does sound concerning."

Scene 3: Haru's Intervention

Setting: School hallway, between classes.

- Panel: Haru throwing his arm around Rei's shoulders.
- Haru: "Okay, intervention time."
- Rei: "I don't need an intervention."
- Haru: "You've been weird for three days. That's the threshold. Intervention activated."
- Panel: Haru steering Rei toward the cafeteria.
- Haru: "We're getting food. We're eating food. We're talking about normal things like normal people."
- Rei: "I am normal."
- Haru: "Rei, you're many things. Normal isn't one of them."
- Panel: Rei almost smiles.
- Rei: "Fair point."

Scene 4: Cafeteria - Attempted Normalcy

Setting: School cafeteria, lunch period.

- Panel: The three friends at their usual table. Haru eating enthusiastically.
- Haru: "So. College applications. Who's applying where?"
- Mina: "I'm looking at three schools. All have good psychology programs."
- Haru: "Psychology? You want to study crazy people?"
- Mina: "I want to understand why people do what they do."
- Panel: Mina glances at Rei.
- Mina: "It's fascinating."
- Haru: "Rei? What about you?"
- Panel: Rei pushing food around his plate, distracted.
- Rei: "Haven't decided yet."
- Haru: "Dude, applications are due in like three months."

- Rei: "I know."
- Panel: Awkward silence.
- Haru (thought): "He's definitely not okay."

Scene 5: Rei's Experiment

Setting: Empty classroom after school.

- Panel: Rei alone, hand extended, concentrating.
- Rei (thought): "If I can see it and control it, I should be able to measure it."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura pulsing in rhythm with his heartbeat.
- Rei (thought): "It responds to my body. My breathing. My focus."
- Panel: Rei tries to push the energy outward. It extends slightly from his hand.
- Rei (thought): "I can project it. Shape it. Barely."
- Panel: The energy snaps back. Rei gasps, exhausted.
- Rei (thought): "But it costs something. Energy? Stamina? Life force?"
- Panel: Rei slumps in chair.
- Rei (thought): "I need more data."

Scene 6: The Library

Setting: School library, late afternoon.

- Panel: Rei surrounded by books—biology, physics, metaphysics, mythology.
- Rei (thought): "Bioelectricity. Electromagnetic fields. Qi. Prana. Aura."
- Panel: Rei reading, taking notes.
- Rei (thought): "Every culture has a concept of life energy. But none of them describe what I'm seeing."
- Panel: Rei frustrated, closing books.
- Rei (thought): "Because they couldn't see it. They could only feel it. Sense it indirectly."
- Panel: Rei looks at his glowing hand.
- Rei (thought): "I can see it directly. Which means I can study it. Understand it."
- Panel: Rei's expression hardens with determination.

- Rei (thought): "I can figure this out."

Scene 7: Mina Finds Him

Setting: Library, same time.

- Panel: Mina approaching Rei's table, seeing the pile of books.
- Mina: "Bioelectricity and Ancient Chinese Medicine. Interesting combination."
- Rei: "Research."
- Mina: "For what?"
- Panel: Rei hesitates.
- Rei: "Understanding."
- Mina: "Rei, this is becoming an obsession."
- Rei: "It's not an obsession. It's a mystery."
- Panel: Mina sits down across from him.
- Mina: "And you can't let a mystery go unsolved."
- Rei: "Would you?"
- Panel: Mina considers.
- Mina: "No. But I'd also ask for help."

Scene 8: The Conversation

Setting: Library, continuing.

- Panel: Rei and Mina talking quietly.
- Rei: "I don't know how to ask for help with something no one else can see."
- Mina: "You could start by trusting that we believe you."
- Rei: "Do you? Believe me?"
- Panel: Mina meeting his eyes.
- Mina: "I believe something happened to you. I believe you're seeing something real."
- Mina: "Whether it's actually energy or a neurological condition or something else entirely... I don't know."
- Panel: Rei looks down.

- Rei: "You think I'm sick."
- Mina: "I think you need to consider all possibilities."
- Panel: Rei's hand glows brighter, unconsciously.
- Rei: "It's not a condition. It's real."
- Panel: Mina staring at Rei's hand.
- Mina: "...Rei, your hand."
- Panel: Rei looks down. The glow is visible even to Mina now—faint, but unmistakable.
- Mina: "I can see it."

Scene 9: Mina Sees

Setting: Library, moment of revelation.

- Panel: Mina reaching out slowly, touching Rei's glowing hand.
- Mina: "It's warm."
- Rei: "You can feel it?"
- Mina: "It's like... static electricity. But softer."
- Panel: Rei concentrating, making the glow brighter.
- Mina: "How are you doing that?"
- Rei: "I don't know. I just... think about it and it happens."
- Panel: Mina pulling her hand back, processing.
- Mina: "This is real. This is actually real."
- Rei: "I told you."
- Panel: Mina's expression shifting from skepticism to fascination.
- Mina: "What else can you do?"

Scene 10: Demonstration

Setting: Library, Rei showing Mina his abilities.

- Panel: Rei extending his hand. The silver energy forms a small sphere above his palm.
- Mina: "That's incredible."

- Rei: "It's unstable. I can't hold it for long."
- Panel: The sphere flickers and dissipates. Rei lowers his hand, breathing harder.
- Mina: "It exhausts you."
- Rei: "Everything does. Seeing it. Using it. All of it."
- Panel: Mina thinking, analytical.
- Mina: "You said everyone has this energy. Can you see mine?"
- Panel: Rei looks at Mina. Her energy becomes visible to him—sharp, focused, curious.
- Rei: "Yes. Yours is... different from most people's."
- Mina: "Different how?"
- Rei: "More focused. Like you're always thinking, analyzing."
- Panel: Mina smiles slightly.
- Mina: "That's accurate."

Scene 11: The Question

Setting: Library, conversation deepening.

- Panel: Mina leaning forward, intense.
- Mina: "If everyone has this energy, why can only you see it?"
- Rei: "I don't know. Something changed three days ago."
- Mina: "When you helped that first student."
- Rei: "Before that. The moment I touched him, something... activated."
- Panel: Rei remembering.
- Rei: "It was like a switch flipped. Suddenly I could see everything."
- Mina: "So it's dormant in everyone. But something triggered yours."
- Panel: Rei nods.
- Rei: "That's my theory."
- Mina: "Which means it could be triggered in others."
- Panel: Rei hadn't considered this.

- Rei: "...Yes. Theoretically."
- Mina: "Could you trigger mine?"

Scene 12: Mina's Request

Setting: Library, Rei hesitating.

- Panel: Rei pulling back.
- Rei: "No."
- Mina: "Why not?"
- Rei: "Because I don't know what I'm doing. I could hurt you."
- Mina: "You helped those students."
- Rei: "I stabilized them. That's different from activating something dormant."
- Panel: Mina persistent.
- Mina: "Rei, if this is real—if this energy exists in everyone—then I want to understand it too."
- Rei: "Understanding doesn't require experiencing."
- Mina: "For me it does."
- Panel: Rei and Mina staring at each other.
- Rei: "I need to learn more first. It's too dangerous."
- Panel: Mina backing down, but not giving up.
- Mina: "Fine. But I'm helping you research."
- Rei: "Mina—"
- Mina: "Not negotiable."

Scene 13: Walking Home

Setting: City streets, evening.

- Panel: Rei and Mina walking together, both quiet.
- Mina: "Does Haru know?"
- Rei: "About the energy? No."
- Mina: "You should tell him."

- Rei: "And say what? 'Hey Haru, I have superpowers now'?"
- Panel: Mina almost laughs.
- Mina: "When you put it that way, it does sound ridiculous."
- Rei: "Exactly."
- Panel: They walk in comfortable silence.
- Mina: "Rei?"
- Rei: "Yeah?"
- Mina: "Thank you for trusting me."
- Panel: Rei glances at her.
- Rei: "You didn't give me much choice."
- Mina: "True. But you could have kept lying."
- Panel: Rei small smile.
- Rei: "You would have figured it out anyway."

Scene 14: The Watcher

Setting: Rooftop overlooking the street.

- Panel: Unknown figure watching Rei and Mina from above.
- Figure (thought): "Silver aura. Untrained. Unstable."
- Panel: Close-up of the figure's eyes—sharp, experienced.
- Figure (thought): "He doesn't even know how to suppress it yet."
- Panel: The figure's own aura flares briefly—vibrant purple.
- Figure (thought): "Interesting."
- Panel: The figure turns away, disappearing into the shadows.
- Figure (thought): "I'll be watching, silver boy."

Chapter End Hook: Rei arrives home. As he opens his door, he finds a note slipped underneath. No envelope, just a piece of paper with a single sentence written in sharp, aggressive handwriting: "You're loud. Learn to be quiet before someone dangerous hears you."

Chapter 4: Purple Impact

Dramatic Purpose: Introduce Kaito through action. Establish his personality, power, and dismissive attitude toward Rei.

Show the gap between trained and untrained Echo users. End with Rei's determination to improve.

Scene 1: The Note

Setting: Rei's apartment, night.

- Panel: Rei holding the note, reading it again.
- Rei (thought): "You're loud. Learn to be quiet."
- Panel: Rei looking at his hands. His silver aura is visible, pulsing.
- Rei (thought): "Loud. They mean my energy. Someone can see it."
- Panel: Rei at his laptop, searching. "How to hide aura" "suppress energy" "control biofield"
- Rei (thought): "Nothing useful. Just meditation guides and pseudoscience."
- Panel: Rei frustrated, closing laptop.
- Rei (thought): "Whoever left this note knows more than I do. Which means they're either trying to help... or warn me."

Scene 2: Morning Paranoia

Setting: Rei's commute to school.

- Panel: Rei walking, constantly looking around.
- Rei (thought): "Someone is watching. Someone who can see what I see."
- Panel: Rei's perspective—scanning every person, looking for unusual energy patterns.
- Rei (thought): "But everyone looks normal. Unconscious. Unaware."
- Panel: Rei arrives at school, still tense.
- Rei (thought): "Maybe they're not here. Maybe they're—"
- Panel: Sudden impact. Someone bumps into Rei hard, sending him stumbling.
- Voice: "Watch where you're going."

Scene 3: First Encounter

Setting: School entrance.

- Panel: Rei catching his balance, looking up.

- Panel: Reveal of Kaito—purple hair, confident stance, sharp eyes.
- Kaito: "You okay? You look like you've seen a ghost."
- Rei: "I'm fine. Sorry."
- Panel: Kaito studying Rei for a moment.
- Kaito: "...Huh."
- Rei: "What?"
- Panel: Kaito smirks.
- Kaito: "Nothing. Just thought I recognized you."
- Panel: Kaito walks past, leaving Rei confused.
- Rei (thought): "That was weird."
- Panel: Rei watches Kaito go. For a split second, he sees it—a vibrant purple aura, controlled and suppressed but unmistakable.
- Rei (thought): "Wait. He has—"

Scene 4: Classroom Distraction

Setting: Classroom, first period.

- Panel: Rei unable to focus, thinking about Kaito.
- Rei (thought): "Purple aura. Controlled. Suppressed. He knows how to hide it."
- Panel: Teacher calling on Rei.
- Teacher: "Amakawa? The answer?"
- Rei: "...Sorry, what was the question?"
- Panel: Class laughing. Mina giving Rei a concerned look.
- Teacher: "Pay attention, please."
- Panel: Rei trying to focus, but his mind is elsewhere.
- Rei (thought): "I need to find him. Talk to him. He might have answers."

Scene 5: Lunch - Telling Mina

Setting: School roof, lunch period.

- Panel: Rei explaining to Mina about Kaito.
- Rei: "He has it. The energy. But he can control it. Hide it."
- Mina: "You're sure?"
- Rei: "I saw it. Just for a second, but it was there."
- Panel: Haru eating, confused.
- Haru: "Wait, who are we talking about?"
- Mina: "New student. Purple hair."
- Haru: "Oh, that guy. He's in my gym class. Total show-off."
- Panel: Rei leaning forward.
- Rei: "What do you mean?"
- Haru: "He destroyed everyone in basketball. Like, it wasn't even close. Coach wants him to join the team."
- Panel: Rei processing.
- Rei (thought): "Athletic. Confident. Controlled energy. He's trained."

Scene 6: After School - Searching

Setting: School grounds, after classes.

- Panel: Rei looking for Kaito, checking various locations.
- Rei (thought): "Where would someone like him go after school?"
- Panel: Rei heading toward the gym.
- Rei (thought): "If Haru said he's athletic, maybe—"
- Panel: Sound of impact. Loud, rhythmic.
- SFX: THUD. THUD. THUD.
- Panel: Rei following the sound.

Scene 7: The Gym

Setting: School gym, mostly empty.

- Panel: Rei entering. Kaito is alone, practicing martial arts against a heavy bag.
- Panel: Each punch creates a visible impact—the bag swinging violently.

- Rei (thought): "He's fast. Really fast."
- Panel: Kaito stops, sensing Rei's presence without turning.
- Kaito: "You're loud, you know that?"
- Panel: Rei freezes.
- Rei: "...It was you. The note."
- Panel: Kaito turns, smirking.
- Kaito: "Took you long enough to figure it out."

Scene 8: Confrontation

Setting: Gym, Rei and Kaito talking.

- Panel: Rei stepping forward.
- Rei: "You can see it. The energy."
- Kaito: "Echo. It's called Echo."
- Rei: "Echo?"
- Panel: Kaito leaning against the wall, casual.
- Kaito: "That's what we call it. The energy you're broadcasting like a beacon."
- Rei: "We? There are others?"
- Kaito: "Obviously. You think you're special?"
- Panel: Rei bristling at the dismissive tone.
- Rei: "I didn't say that."
- Kaito: "You didn't have to. It's written all over your face."
- Panel: Kaito pushing off the wall.
- Kaito: "Let me guess. You just awakened a few days ago. You can see auras now. You think you're the chosen one or something."
- Rei: "I don't think that."
- Kaito: "Good. Because you're not."

Scene 9: Kaito's Explanation

Setting: Gym, continuing.

- Panel: Kaito walking around Rei, assessing.
- Kaito: "Echo exists in everyone. Most people never awaken to it. Those who do usually have a trigger—trauma, stress, near-death experience."
- Rei: "I helped someone who was collapsing."
- Kaito: "And you resonated with their Echo. That's what triggered yours."
- Panel: Rei processing.
- Rei: "Resonated?"
- Kaito: "Synchronized. Matched their frequency. It's rare for an awakening, but not unheard of."
- Panel: Kaito stopping in front of Rei.
- Kaito: "The problem is, you have no control. Your Echo is leaking everywhere. Anyone with training can sense you from blocks away."
- Rei: "Then teach me to control it."
- Panel: Kaito laughs.
- Kaito: "Why would I do that?"

Scene 10: The Challenge

Setting: Gym, tension rising.

- Panel: Rei meeting Kaito's eyes.
- Rei: "Because you left me that note. You warned me. Which means you care."
- Kaito: "I care about not having an untrained idiot expose Echo to the whole city."
- Rei: "Then help me not be an idiot."
- Panel: Kaito considering, amused.
- Kaito: "You've got guts. I'll give you that."
- Panel: Kaito's expression shifting to serious.
- Kaito: "Fine. I'll teach you. But first, you need to prove you're worth the effort."
- Rei: "How?"

- Panel: Kaito's purple aura flaring, no longer suppressed.
- Kaito: "Hit me once. Just once. If you can do that, I'll train you."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura responding instinctively.
- Rei: "And if I can't?"
- Kaito: "Then you stay away from Echo. Suppress it. Live a normal life."
- Panel: Kaito grinning.
- Kaito: "Deal?"

Scene 11: The Fight Begins

Setting: Gym, combat starting.

- Panel: Rei taking a stance, uncertain.
- Rei (thought): "I've never been in a real fight before."
- Panel: Kaito relaxed, hands in pockets.
- Kaito: "Whenever you're ready."
- Panel: Rei lunging forward, throwing a punch.
- Panel: Kaito sidesteps effortlessly. Rei's fist hits air.
- Kaito: "Too slow."
- Panel: Rei spinning, trying a different angle.
- Panel: Kaito blocks with one hand, barely moving.
- Kaito: "Too obvious."
- Panel: Rei backing up, breathing hard already.
- Rei (thought): "He's not even trying."

Scene 12: Outclassed

Setting: Gym, fight continuing.

- Panel: Rei trying multiple approaches—punches, kicks, feints.
- Panel: Kaito dodging or blocking everything with minimal effort.
- Kaito: "You're thinking too much. Echo isn't about planning. It's about instinct."

- Panel: Rei frustrated, silver aura flaring.
- Rei: "I don't know how to use instinct!"
- Kaito: "Then you've already lost."
- Panel: Kaito moving suddenly—a blur of purple.
- Panel: Kaito's palm strike hitting Rei's chest, sending him flying backward.
- SFX: WHAM
- Panel: Rei crashing into the gym wall, sliding down.
- Rei: "Ugh..."

Scene 13: The Gap

Setting: Gym, Rei on the ground.

- Panel: Rei struggling to stand, vision blurry.
- Rei (thought): "That wasn't even a full-strength hit. He's holding back."
- Panel: Kaito walking over, looking down at Rei.
- Kaito: "You see the difference now? Between someone who just awakened and someone who's trained?"
- Panel: Rei glaring up at him.
- Rei: "I'm not done."
- Kaito: "Yes, you are."
- Panel: Kaito turning away.
- Kaito: "Go home. Suppress your Echo. Forget about this world. You're not cut out for it."
- Panel: Rei forcing himself to stand.
- Rei: "I said I'm not done."

Scene 14: Rei's Determination

Setting: Gym, Rei refusing to quit.

- Panel: Rei charging again, slower this time, exhausted.
- Panel: Kaito sighing, blocking easily.
- Kaito: "You're embarrassing yourself."

- Panel: Rei's silver aura pulsing erratically.
- Rei (thought): "I can't match his speed. I can't match his strength. But I can—"
- Panel: Rei's eyes focusing on Kaito's purple aura, watching its pattern.
- Rei (thought): "I can see how he moves. The energy flows before his body does."
- Panel: Rei dodging Kaito's next strike by a hair.
- Kaito: "Oh?"
- Panel: Rei using his observation, predicting Kaito's movements.
- Rei (thought): "Left. Then right. Then—"
- Panel: Rei's fist grazing Kaito's shoulder.
- Panel: Both freeze.

Scene 15: Acknowledgment

Setting: Gym, after the graze.

- Panel: Kaito touching his shoulder, surprised.
- Kaito: "You actually touched me."
- Rei: "Does that count?"
- Kaito: "I said hit me. That was barely a graze."
- Panel: Rei collapsing to his knees, completely exhausted.
- Rei: "It's... all I've got."
- Panel: Kaito studying Rei with new interest.
- Kaito: "You used observation. Watched my Echo flow and predicted my movement."
- Rei: "Is that... bad?"
- Panel: Kaito smirking.
- Kaito: "No. It's smart. Most beginners just flail around."
- Panel: Kaito extending a hand to help Rei up.
- Kaito: "Fine. I'll train you. But don't expect me to go easy on you."
- Panel: Rei taking the hand, being pulled to his feet.

- Rei: "I wouldn't want you to."

Chapter End Hook: As Rei and Kaito shake hands, both of their auras flare—silver and purple mixing for a brief moment. In that instant, Rei feels something strange: he can sense Kaito's Echo more clearly than before. Not just see it, but understand it. Feel it. And for a split second, Rei's silver aura pulses with a hint of purple. Kaito notices, his expression shifting from amused to serious. "What the hell was that?"

Chapter 5: Rules of the Hidden World

Dramatic Purpose: Kaito explains Echo society, ranks, suppression, and the danger of exposure. Establish the rules and

stakes of the hidden world. Show Rei's analytical mind processing this new information.

Scene 1: The Next Day

Setting: School rooftop, after classes.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito sitting on the roof edge. Rei's body is covered in bruises.
- Rei: "You could have mentioned that training would hurt this much."
- Kaito: "Where's the fun in that?"
- Rei: "Sadist."
- Kaito: "Realist."
- Panel: Mina and Haru approaching.
- Mina: "Rei, what happened to you?"
- Rei: "Training."
- Haru: "Training for what? A demolition derby?"

Scene 2: Introductions

Setting: Rooftop, group meeting.

- Panel: Kaito standing, assessing Mina and Haru.
- Kaito: "These your friends?"
- Rei: "Yes. Mina and Haru."
- Kaito: "They know about Echo?"
- Rei: "Mina does. Haru doesn't."
- Panel: Haru confused.
- Haru: "Know about what?"
- Mina: "It's complicated."
- Haru: "Why do I feel like I'm being left out of something important?"
- Panel: Kaito to Rei.

- Kaito: "You need to tell him or cut him loose. Half-truths are dangerous."
- Rei: "I know."

Scene 3: Telling Haru

Setting: Rooftop, Rei explaining.

- Panel: Rei showing Haru his silver aura.
- Haru: "Okay, that's... that's actually glowing."
- Rei: "It's called Echo. It's an energy that exists in everyone."
- Haru: "Everyone?"
- Kaito: "Everyone. But most people never awaken to it."
- Panel: Haru processing, looking at his own hands.
- Haru: "So I have this too?"
- Rei: "Yes. But it's dormant."
- Haru: "Can you wake it up?"
- Panel: Rei and Kaito exchange glances.
- Kaito: "Theoretically. But it's dangerous."
- Haru: "How dangerous?"
- Kaito: "People have died."

Scene 4: The Explanation Begins

Setting: Rooftop, Kaito teaching.

- Panel: Kaito pacing, lecturing.
- Kaito: "Echo has existed throughout human history. Every culture has a name for it—qi, prana, mana, life force."
- Kaito: "But most people never learn to consciously control it. Those who do become Echo users."
- Panel: Mina taking notes mentally.
- Mina: "How many Echo users are there?"
- Kaito: "Globally? Maybe a few hundred thousand. In this city? A few hundred."
- Rei: "That many?"

- Kaito: "And you've been broadcasting your presence to all of them for days."
- Panel: Rei grimacing.
- Rei: "Great."

Scene 5: Suppression

Setting: Rooftop, lesson continuing.

- Panel: Kaito demonstrating. His purple aura becomes visible, then vanishes.
- Kaito: "The first thing you learn is suppression. Hiding your Echo from others."
- Rei: "How?"
- Kaito: "Control. Discipline. You pull your Echo inward instead of letting it leak out."
- Panel: Rei trying, his silver aura flickering.
- Kaito: "Not like that. You're trying to force it. Echo responds to intention, not effort."
- Panel: Rei concentrating differently. The aura dims slightly.
- Kaito: "Better. Keep practicing."
- Panel: Rei's aura flaring back up immediately.
- Rei: "This is harder than it looks."
- Kaito: "Everything worth doing is."

Scene 6: The Hidden Society

Setting: Rooftop, Kaito explaining the social structure.

- Panel: Kaito sitting back down.
- Kaito: "Echo users exist in a hidden society. We have our own rules, hierarchies, territories."
- Mina: "Like a secret organization?"
- Kaito: "More like an unspoken agreement. We stay hidden from normal people. We don't expose Echo to the public."
- Haru: "Why not?"
- Panel: Kaito's expression darkening.
- Kaito: "Because if ordinary people knew Echo existed, everything would change. Governments would try to weaponize it. Scientists would try to study it. Chaos."

- Rei: "So we hide."
- Kaito: "We hide."

Scene 7: Ranks

Setting: Rooftop, Kaito explaining the ranking system.

- Panel: Kaito holding up fingers.
- Kaito: "Echo users are ranked by skill and control. E through S, with Mastered at the top."
- Kaito: "E-Rank is barely awakened. D-Rank has basic control. C-Rank can fight. B-Rank is skilled. A-Rank is elite. S-Rank is exceptional."

- Rei: "What rank are you?"
- Kaito: "D-Rank. Working toward C."
- Panel: Rei surprised.
- Rei: "You're only D-Rank? You destroyed me."
- Kaito: "Because you're unranked. You don't even have basic control yet."
- Panel: Kaito grinning.
- Kaito: "But don't worry. With my training, you'll hit E-Rank in a few months."
- Rei: "Months?"
- Kaito: "If you're lucky."

Scene 8: The Three Fundamentals

Setting: Rooftop, core lesson.

- Panel: Kaito standing, demonstrating.
- Kaito: "All Echo techniques are built on three fundamentals: Flow, Shape, and Resonance."
- Panel: Kaito's purple aura flowing smoothly through his body.
- Kaito: "Flow is how Echo moves through you. Efficient Flow means less waste, more power."
- Panel: Kaito forming a sphere of purple energy in his palm.
- Kaito: "Shape is how you give Echo form. Blades, shields, projectiles—whatever you can imagine and control."
- Panel: The sphere dissipating.

- Kaito: "Resonance is synchronizing with another person's Echo. It's the rarest and most dangerous fundamental."
- Panel: Rei remembering his awakening.
- Rei (thought): "I resonated with that student. That's what triggered my awakening."

Scene 9: Rei's Abnormality

Setting: Rooftop, Kaito noticing something.

- Panel: Kaito studying Rei.
- Kaito: "When we shook hands yesterday, something weird happened."
- Rei: "I felt it too. Your Echo—I could sense it more clearly."
- Kaito: "Not just sense. Your aura changed color for a second. It had purple in it."
- Panel: Mina leaning forward.
- Mina: "What does that mean?"
- Kaito: "I don't know. Echo doesn't usually change color."
- Panel: Rei looking at his hands.
- Rei: "Could it be related to Resonance?"
- Kaito: "Maybe. But Resonance doesn't copy someone's Echo. It just synchronizes with it."
- Panel: Kaito's expression serious.
- Kaito: "We need to test this."

Scene 10: The Test

Setting: Rooftop, Rei and Kaito experimenting.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito holding hands, both concentrating.
- Kaito: "Focus on my Echo. Try to sense it."
- Panel: Rei's perspective. Kaito's purple aura becomes incredibly clear—every flow, every pulse.
- Rei: "I can see it. All of it."
- Kaito: "Now try to match it. Resonate."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura pulsing, trying to sync with Kaito's purple.
- Panel: Suddenly, they connect. Both auras flare.

- SFX: HUMMM
- Panel: Rei gasps. He can feel Kaito's Echo as if it were his own.
- Rei: "This is... incredible."

Scene 11: The Copy

Setting: Rooftop, unexpected result.

- Panel: Rei pulling his hand away. His silver aura still has traces of purple.
- Kaito: "Your Echo. It's still purple."
- Rei: "I can feel it. Your Echo. It's inside me."
- Panel: Rei forming a sphere like Kaito did earlier. It's silver with purple edges.
- Mina: "Rei, you just copied his technique."
- Kaito: "That's not possible. Echo doesn't work that way."
- Panel: Rei staring at the sphere in his hand.
- Rei: "But I did it. I can feel your Echo mixed with mine."
- Panel: Kaito backing up, wary.
- Kaito: "What the hell are you?"

Scene 12: Implications

Setting: Rooftop, group processing.

- Panel: Silence. Everyone processing what just happened.
- Mina: "Rei can copy other people's Echo?"
- Kaito: "Apparently."
- Haru: "Is that... normal?"
- Kaito: "No. It's not normal. It's not even supposed to be possible."
- Panel: Rei looking at his hands, the purple traces fading.
- Rei: "It's fading. I can't hold it for long."
- Kaito: "How long?"
- Rei: "A few minutes, maybe."

- Panel: Kaito thinking, serious.
- Kaito: "This changes everything."

Scene 13: The Warning

Setting: Rooftop, Kaito's concern.

- Panel: Kaito grabbing Rei's shoulder.
- Kaito: "Listen to me carefully. You cannot let anyone else know about this."
- Rei: "Why?"
- Kaito: "Because if other Echo users find out you can copy their techniques, you become a target."
- Mina: "A target for what?"
- Panel: Kaito's expression grim.
- Kaito: "Some will want to study you. Some will want to use you. Some will want to kill you before you become too dangerous."
- Rei: "That's reassuring."
- Kaito: "I'm serious. This ability—whatever it is—makes you valuable and dangerous."
- Panel: Kaito releasing Rei.
- Kaito: "Until you can control it and defend yourself, you need to stay hidden."

Scene 14: The Plan

Setting: Rooftop, making decisions.

- Panel: Rei standing, determined.
- Rei: "Then we train. Hard. Until I can control this."
- Kaito: "Agreed. But we do it my way. No shortcuts. No experiments."
- Rei: "Fine."
- Panel: Mina raising her hand.
- Mina: "What about me? Can I learn Echo too?"
- Kaito: "You want to awaken?"
- Mina: "If Rei's going to be in danger, I want to be able to help."

- Panel: Kaito considering.
- Kaito: "Awakening is risky. And there's no guarantee you'll succeed."
- Mina: "I understand the risks."
- Panel: Kaito looking at Rei.
- Kaito: "Your call. She's your friend."
- Panel: Rei meeting Mina's eyes.
- Rei: "Are you sure?"
- Mina: "Completely."

Chapter End Hook: As the group prepares to leave, Rei notices something. In the distance, on another rooftop, someone is watching them through binoculars. The moment Rei looks in their direction, the figure vanishes. Rei's silver aura flares instinctively. Kaito notices. "What is it?" Rei points. "Someone was watching us." Kaito's expression hardens. "Then they know. About you. About your ability." The chapter ends with both of them staring at the empty rooftop, realizing that Rei's secret might already be compromised.

Chapter 6: A Competition Nobody Asked For

Dramatic Purpose: Show Rei and Kaito's dynamic through training. Establish their competitive relationship and complementary strengths. Provide comic relief while developing their bond. Introduce the basics of Echo control.

Scene 1: Training Grounds

Setting: Abandoned warehouse district, early morning.

- Panel: Kaito leading Rei to a large, empty warehouse.
- Rei: "This is where we're training?"
- Kaito: "Better than the school gym. No witnesses."
- Rei: "That's either reassuring or terrifying."
- Kaito: "Both."
- Panel: Inside the warehouse—open space, some old equipment.
- Kaito: "This is my training spot. I come here every morning."
- Rei: "Every morning?"
- Kaito: "How do you think I got to D-Rank?"

Scene 2: Warm-Up

Setting: Warehouse, beginning exercises.

- Panel: Kaito demonstrating stretches.
- Kaito: "First rule: your body is the vessel for Echo. If your body is weak, your Echo is weak."
- Rei: "So we're doing physical training?"
- Kaito: "Obviously."
- Panel: Rei struggling through push-ups while Kaito does them one-handed.
- Rei (thought): "I hate him."
- Kaito: "You're thinking something rude, aren't you?"
- Rei: "No."
- Kaito: "Liar. Twenty more."
- Rei: "I'm going to die."

- Kaito: "Not on my watch. That would be embarrassing for both of us."

Scene 3: Flow Exercise

Setting: Warehouse, Echo training begins.

- Panel: Both sitting cross-legged, facing each other.
- Kaito: "Close your eyes. Feel your Echo flowing through your body."
- Rei: "I can see it even with my eyes closed."
- Kaito: "That's your abnormal perception. Ignore it. Feel the flow, don't watch it."
- Panel: Rei concentrating, trying to sense rather than see.
- Rei (thought): "It's like... a current. Moving through me."
- Kaito: "Good. Now guide it. Make it flow faster."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura pulsing faster.
- Rei: "Like this?"
- Kaito: "Too fast. You'll burn out. Steady. Controlled."
- Panel: Rei adjusting, finding a rhythm.
- Rei (thought): "This is harder than it looks."

Scene 4: The Competition Begins

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito getting an idea.

- Panel: Kaito opening his eyes, grinning.
- Kaito: "Let's make this interesting."
- Rei: "How?"
- Kaito: "Whoever can maintain steady Flow for longer wins."
- Rei: "Wins what?"
- Kaito: "Bragging rights."
- Panel: Rei opening his eyes, skeptical.
- Rei: "You're turning basic training into a competition?"
- Kaito: "Everything's a competition if you're creative enough."

- Rei: "That's a terrible philosophy."
- Kaito: "And yet, you're already considering it."
- Panel: Rei smirking.
- Rei: "Fine. Let's do it."

Scene 5: Flow Competition

Setting: Warehouse, both competing.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito sitting, both maintaining steady Echo flow.
- Kaito: "You're doing better than I expected."
- Rei: "Is that a compliment?"
- Kaito: "Don't let it go to your head."
- Panel: Time passing. Both still maintaining flow.
- Rei (thought): "My Echo is starting to fluctuate. I need to stay focused."
- Panel: Kaito's flow remains perfectly steady.
- Kaito: "You're wavering."
- Rei: "No, I'm not."
- Kaito: "Yes, you are. I can sense it."
- Panel: Rei's flow destabilizing, then collapsing.
- Rei: "Damn it."
- Panel: Kaito opening his eyes, victorious.
- Kaito: "I win."
- Rei: "You've been training for years. That's not fair."
- Kaito: "Life's not fair. Get used to it."

Scene 6: Shape Exercise

Setting: Warehouse, moving to the next fundamental.

- Panel: Kaito forming a sphere of purple Echo.
- Kaito: "Shape is about visualization and control. You imagine the form, then force your Echo to match it."

- Rei: "Force?"
- Kaito: "Bad word choice. Guide. Mold. Shape."
- Panel: Rei trying to form a sphere. His silver Echo flickers, unstable.
- Rei: "It's not holding."
- Kaito: "Because you're thinking too much. Shape isn't about logic. It's about will."
- Panel: Rei's sphere collapsing.
- Rei (thought): "Will. Not logic. That's the opposite of how I think."

Scene 7: Different Approaches

Setting: Warehouse, Rei struggling.

- Panel: Kaito forming shapes effortlessly—spheres, blades, shields.
- Kaito: "See? Easy."
- Rei: "For you."
- Panel: Rei's attempts keep failing.
- Rei (thought): "He's instinctive. He doesn't think about it. He just does it."
- Rei (thought): "But I can't work that way. I need to understand the mechanics."
- Panel: Rei analyzing Kaito's Echo flow while he shapes it.
- Rei (thought): "The Echo concentrates at specific points. The density increases. The flow redirects."
- Panel: Rei trying again, this time using his analytical approach.
- Panel: A small, unstable sphere forms in Rei's hand.
- Rei: "I did it!"
- Panel: The sphere immediately collapses.
- Rei: "...For two seconds."

Scene 8: Another Competition

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito's idea.

- Panel: Kaito laughing.
- Kaito: "Okay, new competition. Who can form the most shapes in one minute."

- Rei: "You're obsessed with competing."
- Kaito: "And you're obsessed with complaining. We all have our flaws."
- Panel: Rei sighing.
- Rei: "Fine. But when I lose, I'm blaming you for my lack of training."
- Kaito: "Excuses are just pre-emptive admissions of defeat."
- Rei: "Did you read that in a fortune cookie?"
- Kaito: "Start!"

Scene 9: Shape Competition

Setting: Warehouse, rapid-fire shaping.

- Panel: Kaito forming shapes rapidly—sphere, blade, shield, spear.
- Kaito: "Four!"
- Panel: Rei struggling to form even one stable shape.
- Rei (thought): "Come on. Focus. Visualize. Will it into existence."
- Panel: Rei managing one small sphere.
- Rei: "One!"
- Kaito: "Eight!"
- Panel: Rei's sphere flickering.
- Rei: "This is humiliating."
- Kaito: "Twelve!"
- Panel: Time up. Kaito at twelve shapes. Rei at one.
- Kaito: "I win again."
- Rei: "I'm starting to see a pattern."

Scene 10: Break Time

Setting: Warehouse, both resting.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito sitting against the wall, drinking water.
- Rei: "You're enjoying this too much."

- Kaito: "Absolutely."
- Rei: "Sadist."
- Kaito: "You keep using that word. I don't think it means what you think it means."
- Panel: Rei almost laughing.
- Rei: "Did you just quote The Princess Bride?"
- Kaito: "Maybe."
- Panel: Comfortable silence.
- Kaito: "You're doing better than most beginners, you know."
- Rei: "Really?"
- Kaito: "Most people can't even sense their Echo flow on the first day. You're already shaping. Badly, but still."
- Panel: Rei surprised by the genuine compliment.
- Rei: "Thanks. I think."

Scene 11: Suppression Practice

Setting: Warehouse, final exercise.

- Panel: Kaito standing.
- Kaito: "Last exercise. Suppression. This is the most important one."
- Rei: "Because it keeps me hidden."
- Kaito: "Exactly. Right now, you're like a lighthouse. Every Echo user in the city can sense you."
- Panel: Rei standing, focusing.
- Rei: "How do I suppress it?"
- Kaito: "Pull your Echo inward. Imagine it condensing, becoming smaller, quieter."
- Panel: Rei trying. His silver aura dims slightly.
- Kaito: "Better. But not enough. You need to make it disappear completely."
- Panel: Rei concentrating harder. The aura flickers.
- Rei (thought): "It's like trying to hold water in my hands. The harder I squeeze, the more it leaks out."

Scene 12: Suppression Competition

Setting: Warehouse, inevitable competition.

- Panel: Kaito grinning.
- Kaito: "Competition time. Who can suppress their Echo completely first."
- Rei: "Of course."
- Kaito: "Ready? Go."
- Panel: Kaito's purple aura vanishing instantly.
- Kaito: "Done."
- Panel: Rei still struggling, his silver aura flickering but visible.
- Rei: "How did you do that so fast?"
- Kaito: "Practice. Years of it."
- Panel: Rei's aura finally disappearing for a moment.
- Rei: "There!"
- Panel: It immediately flares back up.
- Kaito: "Doesn't count if you can't maintain it."
- Rei: "I hate you."
- Kaito: "No, you don't."

Scene 13: End of Training

Setting: Warehouse, wrapping up.

- Panel: Both exhausted, sitting on the floor.
- Rei: "I feel like I've been hit by a truck."
- Kaito: "Good. That means you're actually training."
- Rei: "Your definition of good is concerning."
- Panel: Kaito standing, offering a hand to Rei.
- Kaito: "Same time tomorrow?"
- Rei: "You're serious?"
- Kaito: "Every day until you can suppress your Echo consistently."

- Panel: Rei taking the hand, being pulled up.
- Rei: "Fine. But I'm bringing coffee."
- Kaito: "Deal."

Scene 14: Walking Back

Setting: City streets, morning.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito walking together.
- Rei: "Why are you helping me?"
- Kaito: "What do you mean?"
- Rei: "You don't know me. You have no obligation to train me. So why?"
- Panel: Kaito quiet for a moment.
- Kaito: "Because someone helped me when I first awakened. And because..."
- Panel: Kaito's expression serious.
- Kaito: "Because your ability is dangerous. If you don't learn to control it, you'll either hurt yourself or expose Echo to the world."
- Rei: "So you're doing this to protect Echo, not me."
- Kaito: "Both. They're not mutually exclusive."
- Panel: Rei accepting this.
- Rei: "Fair enough."

Chapter End Hook: As they part ways, Rei notices something. His silver aura is slightly more stable than yesterday. And when he concentrates, he can still feel a faint trace of Kaito's purple Echo inside him—like an echo of an echo. Rei realizes: every time he resonates with someone, he retains a fragment of their Echo. The question is: how many fragments can he hold before something breaks?

Chapter 7: Flow

Dramatic Purpose: Rei struggles with basic Flow control while Kaito excels through instinct. Establish Rei's analytical approach versus Kaito's intuitive style. Show Rei's frustration and determination. Introduce the concept of Echo exhaustion.

Scene 1: Day Three of Training

Setting: Warehouse, early morning.

- Panel: Rei arriving with two coffees. Kaito already training.
- Rei: "You're early."
- Kaito: "I'm always early. You're late."
- Rei: "It's 6 AM."
- Kaito: "Exactly. Late."
- Panel: Rei handing Kaito a coffee.
- Rei: "I brought a peace offering."
- Kaito: "I don't drink coffee."
- Rei: "...You're kidding."
- Kaito: "Nope. Caffeine interferes with Echo flow."
- Rei: "That's the saddest thing I've ever heard."

Scene 2: Flow Fundamentals

Setting: Warehouse, lesson beginning.

- Panel: Kaito demonstrating perfect Echo flow through his body.
- Kaito: "Flow is the foundation of everything. If your Flow is inefficient, every technique suffers."
- Rei: "I understand the concept. I'm just having trouble executing it."
- Kaito: "Because you're overthinking."
- Rei: "I'm not overthinking. I'm analyzing."
- Kaito: "Same thing."
- Panel: Rei frustrated.
- Rei: "For you, maybe. I need to understand how something works before I can do it."

- Kaito: "And that's your problem. Echo doesn't care about understanding. It cares about feeling."

Scene 3: The Exercise

Setting: Warehouse, Rei attempting Flow.

- Panel: Rei sitting, concentrating. His silver Echo flowing through his body, but erratically.
- Rei (thought): "The Echo enters through my core, flows to my limbs, returns to my core. Simple circuit."
- Panel: The flow stuttering, creating blockages.
- Kaito: "You're forcing it. Let it flow naturally."
- Rei: "I am letting it flow."
- Kaito: "No, you're micromanaging every movement. Trust your body."
- Panel: Rei opening his eyes, frustrated.
- Rei: "I don't know how to 'trust my body.' I'm not built that way."
- Kaito: "Then you need to learn."

Scene 4: Kaito's Demonstration

Setting: Warehouse, showing the difference.

- Panel: Kaito sitting, his purple Echo flowing perfectly—smooth, efficient, powerful.
- Kaito: "Watch. I'm not thinking about where the Echo goes. I'm just letting it move."
- Panel: Rei watching with his enhanced perception, seeing every detail.
- Rei (thought): "His flow is perfect. No blockages. No waste. It's like water flowing downhill."
- Rei (thought): "But how does he do it without thinking?"
- Panel: Kaito opening his eyes.
- Kaito: "See?"
- Rei: "I see it. I just don't understand how you do it unconsciously."
- Kaito: "Because I've done it ten thousand times. Eventually, it becomes automatic."
- Panel: Rei's expression falling.
- Rei (thought): "Ten thousand times. I've done it maybe fifty."

Scene 5: Rei's Frustration

Setting: Warehouse, Rei struggling.

- Panel: Rei trying again and again. Each attempt slightly better but still imperfect.
- Rei (thought): "Focus. Relax. Let it flow. Don't force it."
- Panel: The Echo stuttering again.
- Rei (thought): "Damn it!"
- Panel: Rei slamming his fist on the ground.
- Rei: "Why can't I do this?"
- Kaito: "Because you're impatient."
- Rei: "I'm not impatient. I'm frustrated."
- Kaito: "Same thing."
- Panel: Rei glaring at Kaito.
- Rei: "You keep saying that."
- Kaito: "Because you keep proving it."

Scene 6: Different Learning Styles

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito adjusting approach.

- Panel: Kaito sitting down next to Rei.
- Kaito: "Okay. Let's try something different."
- Rei: "What?"
- Kaito: "You're analytical. You need to understand the mechanics. So let's break it down."
- Panel: Kaito drawing a diagram in the dust on the floor.
- Kaito: "Echo flows through pathways in your body. Think of them like rivers."
- Rei: "Rivers?"
- Kaito: "If you try to force water upstream, it fights you. But if you follow the natural flow, it's effortless."
- Panel: Rei studying the diagram.
- Rei: "So I need to find the natural pathways and follow them."
- Kaito: "Exactly. Stop trying to control where the Echo goes. Just guide it along the paths that already exist."

Scene 7: Breakthrough Attempt

Setting: Warehouse, Rei trying the new approach.

- Panel: Rei closing his eyes, focusing on sensing the pathways.
- Rei (thought): "Natural pathways. Like rivers. Don't force. Guide."
- Panel: Rei's silver Echo beginning to flow more smoothly.
- Rei (thought): "There. I can feel them. The paths where Echo wants to flow."
- Panel: The flow improving, becoming steadier.
- Kaito: "Better. Much better."
- Panel: Rei maintaining it for several seconds.
- Rei (thought): "I'm doing it. I'm actually—"
- Panel: The flow suddenly destabilizing. Rei gasps, exhausted.
- Rei: "I lost it."
- Kaito: "But you had it. That's progress."

Scene 8: Echo Exhaustion

Setting: Warehouse, Rei experiencing the cost.

- Panel: Rei slumped against the wall, breathing hard.
- Rei: "Why am I so tired? I was just sitting there."
- Kaito: "Echo exhaustion. Using Echo drains your stamina."
- Rei: "How much?"
- Kaito: "Depends on your efficiency. Bad Flow wastes energy. Good Flow conserves it."
- Panel: Rei looking at his shaking hands.
- Rei: "So until I master Flow, every training session will leave me like this?"
- Kaito: "Pretty much."
- Rei: "Great."
- Panel: Kaito tossing Rei a protein bar.
- Kaito: "Eat. Physical energy helps replenish Echo."

- Rei: "Everything about this is exhausting."
- Kaito: "Welcome to being an Echo user."

Scene 9: School Day

Setting: School, later that day.

- Panel: Rei barely staying awake in class.
- Teacher: "Amakawa, are you with us?"
- Rei: "Yes. Sorry."
- Panel: Mina whispering.
- Mina: "You look terrible."
- Rei: "Training."
- Mina: "Is Kaito trying to kill you?"
- Rei: "Possibly."
- Panel: Haru passing a note.
- Haru (note): "Dude, you're falling asleep. Want me to poke you?"
- Rei (note): "Please don't."
- Haru (note): "Too late."
- Panel: Haru poking Rei. Rei jolting awake.
- Teacher: "Amakawa!"
- Rei: "I'm awake!"

Scene 10: Lunch Discussion

Setting: School roof, lunch period.

- Panel: The three friends eating. Rei devouring his food.
- Haru: "Hungry much?"
- Rei: "Echo training burns calories."
- Mina: "How's it going?"
- Rei: "Slowly. Kaito makes it look easy, but it's not."

- Panel: Mina thoughtful.
- Mina: "Different learning styles. He's intuitive. You're analytical."
- Rei: "Exactly. Which means I have to work twice as hard to achieve the same results."
- Haru: "That sucks."
- Rei: "Understatement."

Scene 11: Mina's Interest

Setting: School roof, conversation continuing.

- Panel: Mina watching Rei carefully.
- Mina: "Have you thought more about awakening my Echo?"
- Rei: "Mina—"
- Mina: "I'm serious. If you're going to be training every day, I want to train too."
- Rei: "It's dangerous. Kaito said people have died during awakening."
- Mina: "I understand the risks."
- Panel: Rei conflicted.
- Rei: "Let me get better at control first. Then we'll talk about it."
- Mina: "Promise?"
- Rei: "Promise."
- Panel: Haru raising his hand.
- Haru: "What about me? Do I get superpowers?"
- Rei: "Do you want them?"
- Haru: "I mean... kind of? But also I like not being exhausted all the time."
- Rei: "Smart man."

Scene 12: Afternoon Training

Setting: Warehouse, after school.

- Panel: Rei and Kaito training again. Rei's Flow slightly better than morning.
- Kaito: "You're improving. Slower than I'd like, but improving."

- Rei: "Your encouragement is overwhelming."
- Kaito: "I'm not here to coddle you."
- Panel: Rei maintaining steady Flow for almost a minute.
- Rei (thought): "Don't think. Just feel. Let it flow."
- Panel: The Flow holding, stable.
- Kaito: "Good. Now try to move while maintaining it."
- Panel: Rei standing. The Flow immediately destabilizes.
- Rei: "Of course."
- Kaito: "Flow while stationary is easy. Flow while moving is the real challenge."

Scene 13: Movement Exercise

Setting: Warehouse, adding complexity.

- Panel: Kaito demonstrating—walking, running, jumping, all while maintaining perfect Flow.
- Kaito: "Your Echo needs to adapt to your body's movement. It's like dancing."
- Rei: "I don't dance."
- Kaito: "Then learn."
- Panel: Rei attempting to walk while maintaining Flow. It collapses immediately.
- Rei: "This is impossible."
- Kaito: "No, it's difficult. There's a difference."
- Panel: Rei trying again. And again. And again.
- Rei (thought): "Every step disrupts the flow. I need to anticipate the movement and adjust the pathways before I move."
- Panel: Rei taking one step while maintaining Flow.
- Rei: "One step!"
- Kaito: "Progress."

Scene 14: End of Day

Setting: Warehouse, evening.

- Panel: Rei collapsed on the floor, completely exhausted.
- Rei: "I can't move."
- Kaito: "Yes, you can. You're just being dramatic."
- Rei: "I'm dying."
- Kaito: "You're not dying. You're tired."
- Panel: Kaito pulling Rei to his feet.
- Kaito: "Come on. I'll walk you home."
- Rei: "You don't have to."
- Kaito: "I know. But if you collapse on the street, it'll be embarrassing for both of us."
- Panel: Rei almost smiling.
- Rei: "You're weirdly considerate for someone who enjoys torturing me."
- Kaito: "I contain multitudes."

Chapter End Hook: As they leave the warehouse, Rei notices his silver aura is slightly more controlled than yesterday. He can suppress it for a few seconds now. Progress. But as they walk, Rei senses something—another Echo user nearby, watching them. Not hostile, but curious. Rei glances at Kaito. "Do you feel that?" Kaito nods, his expression serious. "Yeah. We're being observed." The chapter ends with both of them scanning the area, realizing that Rei's presence is attracting attention from the hidden Echo community.

Chapter 8: Mina's Choice

Dramatic Purpose: Mina discovers she can sense Echo and makes the decision to awaken despite the risks. Show her determination and analytical approach. Establish her as more than just support—she's a future fighter.

Scene 1: Mina's Observation

Setting: School, morning.

- Panel: Mina watching Rei and Kaito from across the courtyard.
- Mina (thought): "They're different. The way they move. The way they carry themselves."
- Panel: Close-up of Mina's eyes, analytical.
- Mina (thought): "Rei's exhausted but determined. Kaito's confident but watchful. They're both constantly aware of their surroundings."
- Panel: Mina looking at her own hands.
- Mina (thought): "I want that. That awareness. That strength."

Scene 2: Classroom

Setting: School classroom, during lecture.

- Panel: Mina taking notes, but her mind is elsewhere.
- Mina (thought): "Rei said everyone has Echo. It's just dormant in most people."
- Mina (thought): "Which means I have it too. I just can't access it yet."
- Panel: Mina closing her eyes, trying to sense something.
- Mina (thought): "If I focus, can I feel it? My own energy?"
- Panel: For a moment, Mina feels something—a faint warmth in her chest.
- Mina (thought): "There. Something."
- Panel: The sensation fading.
- Mina (thought): "It's real. I can feel it."

Scene 3: Lunch Confrontation

Setting: School roof, lunch period.

- Panel: Mina, Rei, and Haru eating. Mina unusually quiet.

- Haru: "You okay, Mina? You've been weird all day."
- Mina: "I'm fine."
- Rei: "You're lying."
- Mina: "How do you know?"
- Rei: "Your Echo fluctuates when you lie."
- Panel: Mina surprised.
- Mina: "You can tell that?"
- Rei: "I can see it. Your energy spikes slightly."
- Mina: "That's invasive."
- Rei: "Sorry. I'm still learning to filter things out."
- Panel: Mina setting down her food.
- Mina: "I felt something today. In class. A warmth in my chest."
- Rei: "Your Echo?"
- Mina: "I think so."

Scene 4: Mina's Request

Setting: School roof, serious conversation.

- Panel: Mina meeting Rei's eyes.
- Mina: "I want you to awaken my Echo. Today."
- Rei: "Mina, we talked about this—"
- Mina: "I know the risks. I've researched them. I've thought about this carefully."
- Rei: "Research doesn't prepare you for the reality."
- Panel: Mina's expression firm.
- Mina: "I'm not asking for permission. I'm asking for help."
- Rei: "There's a difference between help and recklessness."
- Mina: "And there's a difference between caution and cowardice."
- Panel: Rei flinching at that.
- Haru: "Whoa. That was harsh."

- Mina: "I'm sorry. But I'm serious about this."

Scene 5: Rei's Hesitation

Setting: School roof, Rei conflicted.

- Panel: Rei standing, pacing.
- Rei: "I don't know how to safely awaken someone's Echo. I barely understand my own."
- Mina: "But you've resonated with people before. You stabilized those students."
- Rei: "That's different. They were already awakened. Their Echo was just unstable."
- Mina: "So you're saying you can't do it."
- Panel: Rei stopping, frustrated.
- Rei: "I'm saying I don't want to hurt you."
- Mina: "I trust you not to."
- Panel: Silence. Rei looking at Mina.
- Rei: "Why is this so important to you?"
- Mina: "Because you're my friend. And you're walking into a dangerous world. I want to be able to stand beside you, not behind you."

Scene 6: Consulting Kaito

Setting: Warehouse, after school.

- Panel: Rei explaining the situation to Kaito.
- Rei: "Mina wants me to awaken her Echo."
- Kaito: "And?"
- Rei: "And I don't know if I can do it safely."
- Kaito: "You probably can't."
- Panel: Rei frustrated.
- Rei: "That's not helpful."
- Kaito: "I'm being honest. Awakening someone's Echo is dangerous even for experienced users."
- Rei: "So I should refuse?"

- Panel: Kaito considering.
- Kaito: "That depends. How determined is she?"
- Rei: "Very."
- Kaito: "Then she'll find another way. Possibly a more dangerous one."
- Panel: Rei realizing.
- Rei: "So I should help her because the alternative is worse?"
- Kaito: "Welcome to the world of impossible choices."

Scene 7: The Plan

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito explaining.

- Panel: Kaito drawing diagrams again.
- Kaito: "Awakening requires a trigger. Usually trauma or extreme stress."
- Rei: "I'm not traumatizing Mina."
- Kaito: "Obviously not. But there's another method—Resonance."
- Rei: "I resonate with her Echo and... what? Pull it to the surface?"
- Kaito: "Essentially. You synchronize with her dormant Echo and amplify it until it awakens."
- Panel: Rei worried.
- Rei: "What are the risks?"
- Kaito: "If you amplify too much, you could overload her system. If you don't amplify enough, nothing happens."
- Rei: "And if I get it exactly right?"
- Kaito: "Her Echo awakens safely. Probably."
- Rei: "Probably?"
- Kaito: "There are no guarantees with Echo."

Scene 8: Preparation

Setting: Warehouse, evening. Mina arrives.

- Panel: Mina entering the warehouse, determined.
- Mina: "I'm ready."

- Rei: "Are you sure?"
- Mina: "Completely."
- Panel: Kaito watching from the side.
- Kaito: "I'll be here in case something goes wrong."
- Mina: "Reassuring."
- Kaito: "I'm a realist, not a cheerleader."
- Panel: Rei and Mina sitting facing each other.
- Rei: "This might hurt."
- Mina: "I can handle pain."
- Rei: "Not physical pain. Echo pain. It's different."
- Mina: "I trust you."

Scene 9: The Awakening Attempt

Setting: Warehouse, the process begins.

- Panel: Rei taking Mina's hands, closing his eyes.
- Rei: "Focus on the warmth you felt earlier. The sensation in your chest."
- Mina: "Okay."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura becoming visible, reaching toward Mina.
- Rei (thought): "I can sense her Echo. It's there, dormant, waiting."
- Panel: Rei's Echo touching Mina's dormant energy.
- Rei (thought): "Gently. Don't force it. Just... encourage it."
- Panel: Mina gasping as she feels something.
- Mina: "I feel it. It's warm. Growing."
- Rei: "Good. Don't fight it. Let it flow."

Scene 10: The Surge

Setting: Warehouse, intensity increasing.

- Panel: Mina's dormant Echo beginning to pulse, responding to Rei's resonance.

- Mina: "It's getting stronger. Hotter."
- Rei: "That's normal. Just breathe."
- Panel: The energy surging suddenly. Mina crying out.
- Mina: "Rei—it hurts—"
- Rei: "I know. Hold on. Almost there."
- Panel: Kaito stepping forward, concerned.
- Kaito: "Rei, her Echo is spiking. You need to stabilize it."
- Rei: "I'm trying!"
- Panel: Rei's silver aura flaring, trying to control the surge.
- Rei (thought): "Too much. I amplified too much. I need to pull back—"

Scene 11: Stabilization

Setting: Warehouse, critical moment.

- Panel: Rei adjusting his resonance, dampening the surge.
- Rei (thought): "Steady. Controlled. Guide it, don't force it."
- Panel: Mina's Echo beginning to stabilize, settling into a rhythm.
- Mina: "It's... it's calming down."
- Rei: "Good. Now hold it. Make it yours."
- Panel: Mina concentrating, her own will taking control of the energy.
- Mina (thought): "This is mine. My Echo. I control it."
- Panel: A faint aura becoming visible around Mina—soft, focused, analytical.
- Kaito: "There. She's awakened."

Scene 12: Aftermath

Setting: Warehouse, immediate aftermath.

- Panel: Rei and Mina separating, both exhausted.
- Mina: "I can see it. My own Echo."
- Rei: "How do you feel?"

- Mina: "Exhausted. Exhilarated. Terrified."
- Rei: "That's normal."
- Panel: Mina looking at her hands, seeing her aura.
- Mina: "It's beautiful."
- Kaito: "It's also unstable. You need to learn control immediately."
- Mina: "I'm ready."
- Panel: Kaito smirking.
- Kaito: "We'll see about that."

Scene 13: First Lesson

Setting: Warehouse, Mina's first training.

- Panel: Kaito instructing Mina on basic suppression.
- Kaito: "First rule: hide your Echo. Always."
- Mina: "How?"
- Kaito: "Pull it inward. Make it quiet."
- Panel: Mina trying, her aura flickering.
- Mina: "This is harder than it looks."
- Kaito: "Everything is."
- Panel: Rei watching, remembering his own struggles.
- Rei (thought): "She's already better at this than I was on day one."
- Panel: Mina's aura dimming slightly.
- Mina: "Like this?"
- Kaito: "Better. Keep practicing."

Scene 14: Walking Home Together

Setting: City streets, evening.

- Panel: Rei and Mina walking, both exhausted.
- Mina: "Thank you. For trusting me."

- Rei: "Thank you for not dying. That would have been awkward."
- Mina: "Your sense of humor is terrible."
- Rei: "I've been told."
- Panel: Comfortable silence.
- Mina: "Rei?"
- Rei: "Yeah?"
- Mina: "I understand now. Why you've been so focused on this. It's addictive."
- Panel: Rei nodding.
- Rei: "It is. Be careful not to let it consume you."
- Mina: "I will. We'll keep each other balanced."
- Rei: "Deal."

Chapter End Hook: As they part ways, Mina notices something. She can sense other people's Echo now—faint, unconscious, but present. And in the distance, she senses something else: a powerful, controlled Echo watching them. She grabs Rei's arm. "Someone's watching us." Rei nods. "I know. They've been following us for three blocks." Mina's newly awakened Echo flares instinctively. "What do we do?" Rei's expression hardens. "We find out who they are."

Chapter 9: Shape

Dramatic Purpose: The friends learn Shape fundamentals. Rei's copied Echo fragments begin reacting unpredictably to his emotions. Establish the danger of Rei's vessel nature and foreshadow future complications.

Scene 1: Three-Person Training

Setting: Warehouse, morning.

- Panel: Rei, Kaito, and Mina training together for the first time.
- Kaito: "Today we're focusing on Shape. The second fundamental."
- Mina: "Creating forms with Echo?"
- Kaito: "Exactly. It's about visualization and will."
- Panel: Kaito forming a purple sphere effortlessly.
- Kaito: "You imagine the shape. You will it into existence. Simple."
- Rei: "For you."
- Kaito: "For anyone with practice."

Scene 2: Mina's First Attempt

Setting: Warehouse, Mina trying Shape.

- Panel: Mina concentrating, her aura gathering in her palm.
- Mina (thought): "Visualize. A sphere. Simple geometry."
- Panel: A small, unstable sphere forming.
- Mina: "I did it!"
- Panel: The sphere immediately collapsing.
- Mina: "...For two seconds."
- Rei: "Welcome to my world."
- Panel: Kaito observing.
- Kaito: "Not bad for a first attempt. Try again."

Scene 3: Rei's Attempt

Setting: Warehouse, Rei trying Shape.

- Panel: Rei forming his silver sphere. It's more stable than before.
- Rei (thought): "Better. Days of practice are paying off."
- Panel: Suddenly, the sphere flickers—a hint of purple appears in the silver.
- Rei: "What—"
- Panel: The sphere destabilizes, pulsing erratically.
- Kaito: "Rei, what's happening?"
- Rei: "I don't know. It's like... there's something else in my Echo."
- Panel: The purple traces becoming more visible.
- Rei (thought): "Kaito's Echo. The fragment I copied. It's still there."

Scene 4: The Fragment Problem

Setting: Warehouse, examining the issue.

- Panel: Rei's silver aura with visible purple traces.
- Kaito: "The Echo I let you copy. It's still inside you?"
- Rei: "I thought it faded. But it's still there. Dormant."
- Mina: "And now it's reacting to your shaping?"
- Rei: "Apparently."
- Panel: Kaito serious.
- Kaito: "This is a problem. Copied Echo shouldn't persist this long."
- Rei: "How long should it last?"
- Kaito: "Minutes. Maybe an hour. Not days."
- Panel: Rei looking at his hands.
- Rei: "So what does this mean?"
- Kaito: "It means your vessel nature is more complicated than we thought."

Scene 5: Testing the Fragments

Setting: Warehouse, experimentation.

- Panel: Rei trying to access the purple fragment intentionally.

- Rei (thought): "If it's still there, can I use it?"
- Panel: Rei concentrating. The purple traces growing stronger.
- Rei: "I can feel it. Kaito's Echo. It's like a second layer beneath my own."
- Kaito: "Can you shape it?"
- Panel: Rei forming a sphere. It's purple instead of silver.
- Mina: "That's Kaito's color."
- Rei: "I'm using his Echo. The fragment I copied."
- Panel: The purple sphere more stable than Rei's silver ones.
- Rei: "It's easier. Like the technique is already built into the Echo."
- Kaito: "Because it is. You're not creating the shape. You're recreating mine."

Scene 6: Implications

Setting: Warehouse, discussing the discovery.

- Panel: The three sitting, processing.
- Mina: "So Rei can copy Echo and retain it indefinitely?"
- Kaito: "Apparently."
- Rei: "But I can only hold one fragment at a time, right?"
- Kaito: "We don't know. You might be able to hold multiple fragments."
- Panel: Rei worried.
- Rei: "What happens if I collect too many?"
- Kaito: "Nothing good. Echo overload, probably. Your system can't handle infinite energy."
- Mina: "So there's a limit."
- Kaito: "There has to be. The question is: what is it?"

Scene 7: Emotional Trigger

Setting: Warehouse, continuing training.

- Panel: Rei trying to form his own silver shape again.
- Rei (thought): "Focus. My Echo. Not the copied fragment."

- Panel: The silver sphere forming, stable.
- Rei: "There. I've got it."
- Panel: Kaito suddenly attacking—a light sparring strike.
- Kaito: "Defend!"
- Panel: Rei reacting instinctively. His Echo flares—both silver and purple.
- SFX: FLASH
- Panel: Rei's sphere transforming into a blade, blocking Kaito's strike.
- Rei: "What—I didn't mean to—"

Scene 8: Instinctive Shaping

Setting: Warehouse, analyzing the reaction.

- Panel: Rei staring at the blade in his hand—silver with purple edges.
- Rei: "I didn't consciously shape this. It just... happened."
- Kaito: "Instinctive shaping. Your Echo responded to danger automatically."
- Mina: "Is that normal?"
- Kaito: "For experienced users, yes. For someone who's been training for less than a week? No."
- Panel: Rei dismissing the blade, breathing hard.
- Rei: "The copied fragment. It influenced the shape. Made it sharper. More aggressive."
- Kaito: "Because that's my Echo's nature. Aggressive. Offensive."
- Panel: Rei realizing.
- Rei: "So copied Echo doesn't just give me techniques. It influences my own Echo's behavior."
- Kaito: "Which makes you even more dangerous."

Scene 9: Mina's Progress

Setting: Warehouse, shifting focus.

- Panel: Mina practicing, her shapes becoming more stable.
- Mina: "I think I'm getting the hang of this."
- Kaito: "You're a natural. Better than Rei was at this stage."

- Rei: "Thanks for that."
- Kaito: "Just stating facts."
- Panel: Mina forming a small, precise sphere.
- Mina: "It's like solving a puzzle. You need the right mental framework."
- Rei: "That's exactly how I think about it."
- Mina: "Which is why we're both analytical types."
- Panel: Kaito watching them.
- Kaito (thought): "They're similar. Both overthink everything. But that might be their strength."

Scene 10: Lunch Break

Setting: Warehouse, taking a break.

- Panel: The three eating, sitting in a circle.
- Mina: "How long did it take you to master Shape?"
- Kaito: "A few months. But I had a teacher."
- Rei: "Who taught you?"
- Panel: Kaito's expression shifting.
- Kaito: "Someone who's not around anymore."
- Rei: "I'm sorry."
- Kaito: "Don't be. They taught me everything I needed to know."
- Panel: Awkward silence.
- Mina: "What happened to them?"
- Kaito: "They left. Said I didn't need them anymore."
- Panel: Kaito standing.
- Kaito: "Break's over. Back to training."

Scene 11: Emotional Instability

Setting: Warehouse, afternoon training.

- Panel: Rei practicing Shape. His emotions fluctuating.

- Rei (thought): "Focus. Stable sphere. Simple."
- Panel: The sphere forming, but pulsing erratically.
- Rei (thought): "Why is it unstable? I'm doing everything right."
- Panel: Kaito observing.
- Kaito: "Your emotions are affecting your Echo."
- Rei: "I'm not emotional."
- Kaito: "You're frustrated. I can see it in your aura."
- Panel: Rei's silver aura flickering with darker traces.
- Rei: "I'm just trying to improve."
- Kaito: "And you're angry that you're not improving fast enough."
- Panel: Rei's sphere collapsing.
- Rei: "Damn it!"
- Kaito: "See? Emotions."

Scene 12: The Lesson

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito teaching emotional control.

- Panel: Kaito sitting Rei down.
- Kaito: "Echo responds to your mental state. If you're calm, it's stable. If you're emotional, it's chaotic."
- Rei: "So I need to suppress my emotions?"
- Kaito: "No. You need to acknowledge them without letting them control you."
- Rei: "That's easier said than done."
- Kaito: "Everything is."
- Panel: Mina joining them.
- Mina: "Meditation might help. Mindfulness techniques."
- Rei: "I don't meditate."
- Mina: "Maybe you should start."
- Panel: Rei sighing.

- Rei: "Fine. I'll try."

Scene 13: Fragment Reaction

Setting: Warehouse, unexpected development.

- Panel: Rei attempting meditation. His Echo calming.
- Rei (thought): "Breathe. Clear mind. Stable Echo."
- Panel: Suddenly, the purple fragment reacting, pulsing.
- Rei: "What—"
- Panel: Rei's silver aura mixing with purple, creating unstable patterns.
- Kaito: "Rei, what's happening?"
- Rei: "The fragment. It's reacting to my emotional state."
- Panel: The mixed Echo becoming chaotic.
- Rei: "I can't control it!"
- Panel: Kaito grabbing Rei's shoulders.
- Kaito: "Focus on my voice. Separate your Echo from the fragment."
- Rei: "How?"
- Kaito: "Visualize them as different colors. Push the purple away from the silver."

Scene 14: Separation

Setting: Warehouse, Rei regaining control.

- Panel: Rei concentrating, visualizing the separation.
- Rei (thought): "Silver is mine. Purple is Kaito's. Separate them."
- Panel: The chaotic mixing beginning to stabilize.
- Rei (thought): "Push the purple down. Contain it. Don't let it mix."
- Panel: The purple traces fading, leaving only silver.
- Rei: "I... I did it."
- Panel: Rei collapsing, exhausted.
- Kaito: "That was close. If you'd lost control completely, the fragment could have consumed your Echo."

- Mina: "Consumed?"
- Kaito: "Overwritten. Replaced. Rei would have become an echo of me instead of himself."
- Panel: Rei's expression horrified.
- Rei: "That can happen?"
- Kaito: "With your ability? Apparently."

Chapter End Hook: As Rei recovers, he realizes something terrifying: the purple fragment is still there, just suppressed. And he can feel it waiting, ready to resurface the moment his control slips. Worse, he can sense other fragments too—faint traces from the students he helped, the people he's resonated with. His Echo is becoming a collection of other people's energy. Rei looks at his hands, seeing the silver aura with barely-visible traces of other colors beneath. "How many fragments am I carrying?" Kaito's expression is grim. "We need to find out. Before they tear you apart."

Chapter 10: The Unranked Match

Dramatic Purpose: Rei faces Kaito in a controlled match, using observation and timing to force acknowledgment despite losing. Show Rei's tactical growth and Kaito's respect. Establish their rivalry as mutual improvement.

Scene 1: The Challenge

Setting: Warehouse, morning.

- Panel: Kaito stretching, preparing.
- Kaito: "You've been training for a week. Time to test what you've learned."
- Rei: "Test how?"
- Kaito: "A match. You versus me."
- Rei: "I'll lose."
- Kaito: "Obviously. But that's not the point."
- Panel: Rei standing, accepting.
- Rei: "What is the point?"
- Kaito: "To see how much you've improved. And to show you how far you still have to go."
- Rei: "Motivational."
- Kaito: "I'm a realist."

Scene 2: The Rules

Setting: Warehouse, establishing parameters.

- Panel: Mina sitting on the sidelines, watching.
- Kaito: "Rules are simple. First to land three clean hits wins."
- Rei: "Define clean."
- Kaito: "A strike that would cause damage in a real fight."
- Rei: "And we're using Echo?"
- Kaito: "Obviously. That's the whole point."
- Panel: Rei taking a stance.
- Rei: "Any other rules?"

- Kaito: "Don't die. That would be inconvenient."
- Rei: "I'll try my best."

Scene 3: The Match Begins

Setting: Warehouse, combat starting.

- Panel: Both fighters facing each other, auras visible.
- Kaito: "Ready?"
- Rei: "No. But let's do it anyway."
- Panel: Kaito moving first—fast, aggressive.
- Panel: Rei dodging, barely.
- Rei (thought): "He's faster than last time. Or I'm just more aware of how fast he is."
- Panel: Kaito's follow-up strike. Rei blocking with Echo-reinforced arms.
- SFX: CLANG
- Panel: Rei sliding backward from the impact.
- Rei (thought): "That hurt. Even through Echo reinforcement."

Scene 4: Observation

Setting: Warehouse, Rei analyzing.

- Panel: Rei dodging multiple strikes, not counterattacking.
- Kaito: "You're just defending. Fight back!"
- Rei: "I'm observing."
- Kaito: "Observing what?"
- Panel: Rei's perspective—watching Kaito's Echo flow, seeing patterns.
- Rei (thought): "His Echo concentrates in his right arm before he strikes. His left leg shifts weight before he kicks."
- Rei (thought): "Patterns. Tells. Predictable."
- Panel: Kaito's next strike. Rei dodging before it fully extends.
- Kaito: "You predicted that."
- Rei: "I'm learning."

Scene 5: First Hit

Setting: Warehouse, Rei's counterattack.

- Panel: Rei watching Kaito's Echo flow, waiting for an opening.
- Rei (thought): "There. His Echo is concentrating for a big strike. He's overcommitting."
- Panel: Kaito lunging with a powerful punch.
- Panel: Rei sidestepping at the last moment, countering with a palm strike to Kaito's ribs.
- SFX: THUD
- Panel: Kaito stumbling slightly, surprised.
- Kaito: "You actually hit me."
- Rei: "Clean hit. That's one."
- Panel: Kaito grinning.
- Kaito: "Not bad. But now I'm taking this seriously."

Scene 6: Escalation

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito increasing intensity.

- Panel: Kaito's purple aura flaring brighter.
- Kaito: "Let's see if you can do that again."
- Panel: Kaito's speed increasing dramatically.
- Rei (thought): "He was holding back. Of course he was."
- Panel: Rei barely dodging a flurry of strikes.
- Rei (thought): "Too fast. I can see the patterns but I can't react in time."
- Panel: Kaito's fist connecting with Rei's shoulder.
- SFX: WHAM
- Panel: Rei spinning from the impact, hitting the ground.
- Kaito: "One-one."

Scene 7: Adaptation

Setting: Warehouse, Rei adjusting strategy.

- Panel: Rei standing, shoulder aching.
- Rei (thought): "I can't match his speed. But I don't need to."
- Rei (thought): "I just need to be where he isn't."
- Panel: Kaito attacking again. Rei using minimal movement to dodge.
- Rei (thought): "Efficiency. Don't waste energy. Small adjustments."
- Panel: Rei slipping past Kaito's guard, landing a light strike to his back.
- Kaito: "Two-one. You're getting better at this."
- Rei: "I'm getting better at not dying."
- Kaito: "Same thing."

Scene 8: Kaito's Technique

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito demonstrating skill.

- Panel: Kaito forming a purple blade in his hand.
- Rei: "You're using Shape now?"
- Kaito: "You wanted a real match. This is real."
- Panel: Kaito's blade slashing. Rei forming a silver shield instinctively.
- SFX: CLANG
- Panel: The shield cracking under the impact.
- Rei (thought): "My Shape isn't strong enough to block his."
- Panel: The shield shattering. Kaito's blade stopping inches from Rei's chest.
- Kaito: "Two-two."
- Panel: Rei breathing hard.
- Rei: "You're not even tired."
- Kaito: "Efficient Flow. You should try it."

Scene 9: Rei's Gambit

Setting: Warehouse, Rei's final attempt.

- Panel: Rei backing up, thinking.

- Rei (thought): "I can't beat him in a straight fight. I need to use what makes me different."
- Rei (thought): "The copied fragment. Kaito's Echo."
- Panel: Rei accessing the purple fragment, mixing it with his silver.
- Kaito: "What are you doing?"
- Rei: "Using everything I have."
- Panel: Rei's aura shifting—silver with purple edges.
- Kaito: "You're using my Echo against me?"
- Rei: "You said this was a real match."

Scene 10: Mixed Echo

Setting: Warehouse, Rei using the fragment.

- Panel: Rei forming a blade like Kaito's—silver with purple edges.
- Rei (thought): "It's easier with the fragment. The technique is already there."
- Panel: Rei attacking with Kaito's aggressive style.
- Kaito: "You're copying my movements."
- Rei: "I'm learning from them."
- Panel: Their blades clashing, creating sparks.
- SFX: CLANG CLANG CLANG
- Panel: Kaito pushing Rei back with superior strength.
- Kaito: "You have the technique but not the power."
- Rei: "I don't need power. I need timing."

Scene 11: The Final Exchange

Setting: Warehouse, climactic moment.

- Panel: Rei watching Kaito's Echo flow, waiting for the perfect moment.
- Rei (thought): "There. He's preparing for a finishing strike."
- Panel: Kaito's blade coming down with massive force.
- Panel: Rei dropping his blade, dodging inside Kaito's guard.

- Kaito: "What—"
- Panel: Rei's palm strike to Kaito's chest—using pure Echo, no Shape.
- SFX: THUD
- Panel: Kaito sliding backward, surprised.
- Rei: "Three-two. I win."

Scene 12: Aftermath

Setting: Warehouse, both catching their breath.

- Panel: Silence. Then Kaito laughing.
- Kaito: "You actually won."
- Rei: "Technically."
- Kaito: "No. You won. Fair and square."
- Panel: Kaito extending his hand.
- Kaito: "I underestimated you. That was my mistake."
- Panel: Rei taking the hand, being pulled up.
- Rei: "You were holding back the entire time."
- Kaito: "Of course. But you still found a way to win."
- Panel: Kaito's expression serious.
- Kaito: "That's what makes you dangerous. You adapt."

Scene 13: Mina's Observation

Setting: Warehouse, Mina joining them.

- Panel: Mina approaching, analytical.
- Mina: "That was impressive. Both of you."
- Rei: "I got lucky."
- Mina: "No. You were tactical. You used observation, timing, and Kaito's own Echo against him."
- Kaito: "She's right. That last move—dropping your blade and going for pure Echo—that was smart."
- Panel: Rei looking at his hands.

- Rei: "I'm still exhausted. And you barely broke a sweat."
- Kaito: "That's the difference between D-Rank and unranked."
- Rei: "How long until I reach D-Rank?"
- Kaito: "At this rate? A few months. Maybe less."

Scene 14: Recognition

Setting: Warehouse, Kaito's acknowledgment.

- Panel: Kaito sitting down, serious.
- Kaito: "I need to tell you something."
- Rei: "What?"
- Kaito: "When I first met you, I thought you were just another untrained idiot who'd get himself killed."
- Rei: "Flattering."
- Kaito: "But you're not. You're smart. You learn fast. And your ability—copying Echo—makes you potentially stronger than anyone."
- Panel: Kaito meeting Rei's eyes.
- Kaito: "Which means you're going to attract attention. Dangerous attention."
- Rei: "From who?"
- Kaito: "Other Echo users. Organizations. People who want to use you or eliminate you."
- Panel: Rei processing this.
- Rei: "So what do I do?"
- Kaito: "Get stronger. Fast. Strong enough to protect yourself."
- Panel: Kaito standing.
- Kaito: "And I'll help you. Because you're not just my student anymore."
- Rei: "What am I?"
- Kaito: "My rival."

Chapter End Hook: As they prepare to leave, Rei notices something. The purple fragment inside him is stronger now—more stable, more integrated. And he can feel it changing him, making him more aggressive, more confident. Rei realizes: every time he uses a copied fragment, it becomes more permanent. More a part of him. He looks at Kaito. "What happens if I copy

too many fragments? If I become a collection of other people's Echo?" Kaito's expression is grim. "Then you stop being Rei Amakawa. And become something else entirely."

\[Due to length constraints, I'll continue with Chapters 11-30 in a condensed format while maintaining key story beats and dramatic moments]

Chapter 11: A Secret Between Friends

Dramatic Purpose: Rei hides what Astra told him, while Kaito notices immediately. Mina becomes the first person to notice that Rei's secret is affecting him emotionally.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop — early morning, fluorescent lights and rain outside.

Scene 1: The Morning After

Setting: School rooftop, before first period.

Rei sits alone, replaying Astra's words. Kaito appears behind him.

- Kaito: "You gonna keep staring at the sky, or are you planning to answer me?"
- Rei: "Answer what?"
- Kaito: "Why you look like you haven't slept."
- Rei: "I slept."
- Kaito: "Your face says otherwise."

Rei tries to laugh it off.

Scene 2: The Lie

Kaito sits beside him.

- Kaito: "What happened when you blacked out yesterday?"
- Rei: "Nothing."
- Kaito: "That's your third lie."
- Rei: "You counting?"
- Kaito: "I count everything that might get my rival killed."

Rei looks at him, surprised by the wording.

- Rei: "You worried about me?"
- Kaito: "Don't make it weird."

Scene 3: Mina Arrives

Mina walks onto the roof with two drinks.

- Mina: "You two arguing already?"
- Kaito: "He won't tell me what's wrong."

- Rei: "Because nothing's wrong."

Mina hands Rei a drink.

- Mina: "Then why are you holding that like it's going to disappear?"

Rei looks down at his hands.

- Rei: "...You notice too much."

- Mina: "Someone has to."

Scene 4: Training

Kaito takes Rei to the warehouse.

- Kaito: "Again."
- Rei: "I've done this for an hour."
- Kaito: "Then you should be better."
- Rei: "You're unbelievably annoying."
- Kaito: "And you're still here."

They spar. Rei begins reading Kaito's movements more quickly.

Scene 5: The Almost Confession

Mina watches from the side.

- Mina: "You two always compete like this?"
- Rei: "He started it."
- Kaito: "He challenged me."
- Mina: "You both sound twelve."

They laugh. Mina catches Rei's eye for a second longer than usual.

- Mina: "You know you don't have to pretend around me."
- Rei: "I know."

He means it.

Scene 6: The Fragment

Later, Rei notices a dark pulse under his silver aura.

- Rei (thought): "Astra said nothing about this."

Kaito notices.

- Kaito: "What was that?"
- Rei: "Nothing."

Kaito's expression hardens.

- Kaito: "There it is again."

Scene 7: A Warning

Kaito pulls Rei aside.

- Kaito: "Whatever you're hiding, don't experiment with it alone."
- Rei: "I'm not."
- Kaito: "You just did that thing where you answer before thinking."
- Rei: "Maybe I don't want you worrying."
- Kaito: "That's not your decision."

Scene 8: Haru's Joke

Haru joins them.

- Haru: "Why do you guys look like you're about to announce someone's death?"
- Rei: "Nobody's dying."
- Haru: "Good. I don't have funeral clothes."

The tension breaks.

Haru watches Rei carefully when the others aren't looking.

Scene 9: The Unknown Feeling

That night, Rei hears Astra again.

- Astra: "You are beginning to notice."
- Rei: "Notice what?"
- Astra: "The part of you that answers before you do."

Rei's expression changes.

- Rei: "What does that mean?"

No answer.

Scene 10: Kaito's Promise

Kaito texts: *Tomorrow. Same time. Don't be late.*

Rei replies: *Make me.*

Kaito: *Gladly.*

Rei smiles despite himself.

Scene 11: Final Panel

A dark figure watches the warehouse from across the street.

- Figure: "The vessel has begun to retain fragments."

The figure makes a call.

- Figure: "Tell the Veil."

Chapter 12: Echo in the Rain

Dramatic Purpose: The group's first serious field incident reveals the danger of uncontrolled Echo and gives Rei his first taste of what it means to save someone who is afraid of their own power.

Setting: Downtown service alley — rainy evening, wet pavement and distant traffic.

Scene 1: The Disturbance

Rain covers the city. Kaito stops beneath an awning.

- Kaito: "There."
- Mina: "I don't hear anything."
- Kaito: "You don't hear Echo."
- Rei: "Then let's move."

Scene 2: The Alley

A person is surrounded by unstable Echo.

- Stranger: "Stay away!"
- Rei: "We're not here to hurt you."
- Stranger: "I can't stop it!"
- Kaito: "Rei, don't rush."
- Rei: "If I wait, somebody gets hurt."

Scene 3: First Contact

Rei approaches slowly.

- Rei: "Look at me."
- Stranger: "I can't!"
- Rei: "Then listen."

Rei steadies his breathing.

- Rei: "In. Out. Just follow me."

Scene 4: Mina's Support

Mina steps beside him.

- Mina: "You're matching his rhythm."
- Rei: "That's what it feels like."
- Mina: "Then don't fight it."

Their teamwork steadies the stranger.

Scene 5: Kaito Holds the Line

A blast knocks debris loose.

- Kaito: "I've got the outside!"
- Rei: "Don't get reckless."
- Kaito: "You saying that to me?"
- Rei: "Yes."
- Kaito: "Then you're definitely getting better."

Scene 6: The Memory

The stranger suddenly gasps.

- Stranger: "Someone... touched my Echo."
- Rei: "Who?"
- Stranger: "I don't know."

A broken-circle mark appears briefly.

Scene 7: Stabilization

Rei reaches the center of the disturbance.

- Rei: "You're not your Echo."
- Stranger: "Then why does it feel like me?"
- Rei: "Because it is yours. It just isn't all of you."

The Echo settles.

Scene 8: Aftermath

The stranger has no memory of the awakening.

- Mina: "That's terrifying."
- Rei: "Yeah."

- Kaito: "And deliberate."

Scene 9: The Mark

Kaito examines the broken-circle symbol.

- Kaito: "I've seen this before."
- Rei: "Where?"
- Kaito: "I don't know yet."

Scene 10: Quiet Walk

Rain continues as they walk home.

- Mina: "You were good back there."
- Rei: "I almost lost control."
- Mina: "But you didn't."

She lightly bumps his shoulder with hers.

- Mina: "Remember that part."

Scene 11: Final Panel

On a rooftop, a Veil scout watches.

- Scout: "So the vessel can stabilize Distortion."
- Voice: "Then the next test should involve him."

Chapter 13: The Wrong Kind of Strength

Dramatic Purpose: Kaito's confidence puts him in danger. Rei saves him by copying a fragment, creating the problem that will drive several chapters of conflict.

Setting: Abandoned warehouse district — late afternoon, cold concrete and failing lights.

Scene 1: Tracking the Source

Kaito studies the map.

- Kaito: "The disturbance came from the industrial district."
- Rei: "Then we go together."
- Kaito: "You can keep up?"
- Rei: "Try me."

Scene 2: The Warehouse

The building is silent.

- Mina: "I hate places like this."
- Kaito: "Good instincts."
- Rei: "You have instincts?"
- Kaito: "Keep talking."

Scene 3: The Distorted User

A violent Echo user emerges.

- Enemy: "You shouldn't have followed me."
- Kaito: "You shouldn't have hurt those people."
- Enemy: "Then stop me."

Scene 4: Kaito Charges

Kaito moves first.

- Rei: "Kaito!"
- Kaito: "Stay back!"

He lands several hits.

- Kaito: "See? Easy."
- Rei: "You just said that out loud. That's never good."

Scene 5: The Trap

The enemy's Echo wraps around Kaito.

- Kaito: "Get this off!"
- Mina: "It's spreading!"
- Rei: "Hold still!"
- Kaito: "That's not exactly an option!"

Scene 6: Rei Intervenes

Rei reaches for the Echo.

- Kaito: "Don't touch it!"
- Rei: "Then tell me what I'm supposed to do."
- Kaito: "Back up!"
- Rei: "No."

Scene 7: The Copy

Rei resonates with the fragment.

- Rei (thought): "I can understand it."

The fragment tears free of Kaito and enters Rei.

- Rei: "AGH!"
- Kaito: "REI!"

Scene 8: Victory

The Distorted user collapses.

Rei remains standing, shaking.

- Kaito: "You copied it."
- Rei: "I didn't mean to."
- Kaito: "That's not what scares me."

Scene 9: The Argument Begins

- Kaito: "You don't know what you just put inside yourself."
- Rei: "I know what would have happened if I did nothing."
- Kaito: "You could've gotten yourself killed."
- Rei: "And you couldn't?"

Scene 10: The Walk Home

Mina walks beside Rei.

- Mina: "Does it hurt?"
- Rei: "Not exactly."
- Mina: "Then what?"
- Rei: "It feels like someone else's heartbeat."

Mina looks worried but stays beside him.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Rei watches a purple-black flicker beneath his silver aura.

- Rei (thought): "I can control it."

He closes his fist.

Chapter 14: Aftershock

Dramatic Purpose: The group becomes protective of Rei after the copying incident. Rei interprets their concern as doubt, planting the first pieces of his independence problem.

Setting: School training room and nearby rooftop — late afternoon into sunset.

Scene 1: Morning

Rei hides his hand under his desk.

- Rei (thought): "Quiet."

The fragment pulses.

- Rei: "Stop."

Scene 2: Kaito Notices

- Kaito: "You look terrible."

- Rei: "Thanks."

- Kaito: "I wasn't complimenting you."

- Rei: "I know."

Scene 3: Mina Checks In

Mina catches Rei after class.

- Mina: "You okay?"

- Rei: "Yeah."

- Mina: "You keep saying that."

- Rei: "Because it's true."

- Mina: "Then look at me when you say it."

He does. She softens.

- Mina: "Okay."

Scene 4: Training Restrictions

Kaito puts down a list.

- Kaito: "No fragment use without me."

- Rei: "Seriously?"
- Kaito: "Seriously."
- Rei: "You're acting like I'm dangerous."
- Kaito: "You are."

Scene 5: The First Spark of Resentment

Rei goes quiet.

- Rei: "And you're not?"

Kaito pauses.

- Kaito: "That's not the point."
- Rei: "Maybe it is."

Scene 6: Haru Tries to Help

Haru joins them.

- Haru: "Maybe everybody should breathe."
- Kaito: "Not now."
- Haru: "That usually means now."

Scene 7: Rei Trains Alone

After everyone leaves, Rei practices.

The fragment responds.

- Rei: "Again."

He succeeds.

Scene 8: Mina Finds Him

- Mina: "You said you were going home."
- Rei: "Changed my mind."
- Mina: "You could've told me."
- Rei: "I didn't want another lecture."
- Mina: "I wasn't going to lecture you."
- Rei: "I know."

A quiet pause.

- Mina: "Then why didn't you tell me?"

Rei has no answer.

Scene 9: A Small Intimate Beat

Mina sits beside him.

- Mina: "You don't have to prove you're strong every second."
- Rei: "I know."
- Mina: "You keep saying that too."

Rei smiles.

- Rei: "Maybe I like hearing you say it."

Mina looks away, slightly embarrassed.

- Mina: "You're annoying."

Scene 10: Kaito Returns

Kaito sees them.

- Kaito: "Am I interrupting?"
- Rei: "No."
- Mina: "Yes."

They answer at the same time.

Kaito raises an eyebrow.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru watches from the doorway, then receives a message.

You don't have to be the ordinary one.

He doesn't reply.

Chapter 15: The Name Veil

Dramatic Purpose: The group learns the name of the Veil, while Kira Shinjo is introduced naturally as Ren's cousin. Her

recent Echo awakening, confidence, and personal reasons for joining give her a role beyond Rei and Kaito's rivalry. Her arrival also gives the group a new social dynamic without pushing Mina aside.

Setting: Ren's family townhouse / basement workshop — early evening.

Setting: Ren's family townhouse — converted basement workshop, early evening. The workshop is the group's unofficial headquarters: monitors, maps, old electronics, training mats, and a workbench cover the room. Ren handles information and mission support from here rather than fighting in the field.

Scene 1: Ren's Place

Ren pulls down a monitor showing the city's recent Echo incidents.

- Ren: "Before anybody asks, yes, this is why I keep making you come here."
- Kaito: "You mean the creepy basement?"
- Ren: "My family's basement."
- Rei: "That somehow makes it worse."
- Ren: "Good. You understand the atmosphere."

Mina looks around at the equipment.

- Mina: "So this is where you've been doing all of this?"
- Ren: "Research, tracking, communications. If you're looking for the person who tells you where to go while you do the dangerous part, that's me."
- Kaito: "Guy in the chair."
- Ren: "Exactly."

Scene 2: The Files

Ren brings up seven incidents with the same broken-circle symbol.

- Ren: "Seven incidents. Same pattern. Same symbol. Different locations."
- Rei: "The Veil."
- Ren: "That's the name attached to it. We still don't know who's actually in charge."

- Kaito: "Then let's find out."

- Ren: "You say that like the answer is sitting in a locker."

A voice comes from the stairs.

- Girl: "You guys are loud."

Everyone turns.

Scene 3: Kira Shinjo

A girl steps into the workshop. She has a calm confidence that immediately changes the room's energy. She looks at Ren first.

- Ren: "You're early."

- Kira: "You said seven. It's seven."

- Ren: "You usually ignore clocks."

- Kira: "I usually ignore you. Different thing."

Rei and Kaito both go quiet for a beat.

- Kaito: "Who's she?"

- Ren: "My cousin. Kira Shinjo."

- Kira: "Nice to meet you."

- Rei: "Rei."

- Kira: "I know."

- Kaito: "And I'm—"

- Kira: "Kaito. I know that too."

Kaito blinks.

- Kaito: "Okay."

Scene 4: Why She's Here

Kira sets a small folder on Ren's desk.

- Kira: "Ren told me what you guys have been doing. I found out he wasn't just making maps and spying on people."

- Ren: "I prefer observing."

- Kira: "You prefer being annoying."

She looks at Rei and Kaito.

- Kira: "I awakened recently. I don't have everything figured out, but I know what I felt."
- Mina: "You awakened by yourself?"
- Kira: "Yeah. And then I spent a week pretending nothing happened."
- Rei: "That sounds familiar."
- Kira: "Exactly why I came here."

Scene 5: Proving Herself

Kira steps onto the training mat.

- Kira: "If I'm going to join you, I don't want Ren explaining why I should be useful."
- Ren: "I wasn't going to."
- Kira: "You were thinking it."

Her yellow Echo flickers around her.

Kaito's expression changes.

- Kaito: "That's new."
- Rei: "And controlled."
- Kira: "Mostly."
- Kaito: "Mostly isn't reassuring."
- Kira: "Then don't stand too close."

She moves quickly across the mat, stopping inches from Kaito.

- Kira: "Better?"
- Kaito: "A little."

Scene 6: Kira's Reason

Kira's confidence fades slightly.

- Kira: "Someone I knew disappeared after an Echo incident. Ren never told me everything because he thought I'd get involved."
- Ren: "You were supposed to stay out of this."

- Kira: "You know me better than that."

Rei watches the two cousins.

- Rei: "You don't have to prove anything to us."
- Kira: "Maybe not. But I need to prove it to myself."

Scene 7: The Rivalry Starts

Kaito steps beside Rei.

- Kaito: "So she joins, and now you're staring."
- Rei: "I'm assessing her Echo."
- Kaito: "Sure."
- Rei: "You were staring too."
- Kaito: "I was assessing faster."

Kira laughs.

- Kira: "Do you two compete over everything?"
- Mina: "Pretty much."
- Kira: "That sounds exhausting."
- Mina: "You have no idea."

Scene 8: A Different Side of Kira

Kira sits beside Mina while Ren works.

- Kira: "You always this calm?"
- Mina: "Not around them."
- Kira: "Good. I was worried I was the only one noticing how ridiculous they are."

Mina smiles.

- Mina: "You'll fit in."
- Kira: "That sounded almost like approval."
- Mina: "Don't get used to it."

Across the room, Rei and Kaito are arguing over who understood Kira's movement first.

Scene 9: Rei and Kira

Rei helps Kira reset her Echo after the demonstration.

- Kira: "You're quieter than I expected."
- Rei: "You're louder than I expected."
- Kira: "That's not an insult."
- Rei: "Wasn't meant to be."

A small pause.

- Kira: "You really care about these people."
- Rei: "Yeah."
- Kira: "That's probably why Ren trusts you."
- Rei: "He trusts me?"
- Kira: "Don't make me take it back."

Scene 10: Kaito and Kira

Kaito walks Kira through the training space.

- Kaito: "If you want to keep up, you need to learn how everybody moves."
- Kira: "Including you?"
- Kaito: "Especially me."
- Kira: "Confident."
- Kaito: "Accurate."
- Kira: "We'll see."

Kaito grins.

- Kaito: "I like that answer."

Scene 11: Final Panel

Ren adds Kira's name to the team's board.

- Ren: "One more person means one more variable."
- Kira: "You say that like I'm a problem."
- Ren: "You're my cousin. You're definitely a problem."

Everyone laughs.

The final panel lingers on Kira's yellow Echo flickering beside the team's other signatures.

Chapter 16: The Wrong Question

Dramatic Purpose: Rei begins taking the copying problem personally. Kaito tries to protect him, but every warning sounds

increasingly like a statement that Kaito must always be the stronger one.

Setting: School gym and outdoor court — after school, warm evening air.

Scene 1: Training Race

Kaito challenges Rei to a sprint.

- Kaito: "Loser buys lunch."
- Rei: "You're going to be hungry."
- Kaito: "You're going to be broke."

Scene 2: Rei Wins

Rei wins by reading Kaito's rhythm.

- Kaito: "Again."
- Rei: "You said loser buys lunch."
- Kaito: "I lost once."
- Rei: "That's what losing means."

Scene 3: Kaito's Frustration

Kaito laughs, but the frustration remains.

- Kaito: "Don't get comfortable."
- Rei: "Wasn't planning to."

Scene 4: Kira Watches

Kira approaches.

- Kira: "You two compete over everything."
- Rei: "He can't stand losing."
- Kaito: "Neither can you."
- Kira: "So that's a yes."

Scene 5: The Fragment Returns

During training, Rei accidentally uses the Distorted fragment.

- Kaito: "Stop!"

Rei stops.

- Rei: "I had it."
- Kaito: "You almost lost it."
- Rei: "But I didn't."

Scene 6: Mina Steps In

- Mina: "Both of you, enough."
- Rei: "I'm fine."
- Mina: "I know you're fine. That's not the same as being safe."

Scene 7: The Private Conversation

Mina catches Rei later.

- Mina: "You're angry."
- Rei: "I'm frustrated."
- Mina: "At Kaito?"
- Rei: "At myself."

She nods.

- Mina: "That's more honest."

Scene 8: A Small Moment

Mina gently straightens the wrap around Rei's wrist.

- Mina: "You don't have to hide every injury."
- Rei: "You're starting to sound like him."
- Mina: "Maybe you're starting to need the reminder."

Rei smiles.

Scene 9: Haru's Observation

Haru notices Rei training alone again.

- Haru: "You know, friends usually tell each other when they're falling apart."

- Rei: "I'm not falling apart."
- Haru: "I didn't say you were."

Scene 10: The Veil's Message

A Veil operative leaves a note:

Your ability is wasted under someone else's rules.

Rei burns it.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Kaito sees the ashes.

- Kaito: "What was that?"
- Rei: "Nothing."

Kaito doesn't believe him.

Chapter 17: Resonance

Dramatic Purpose: The group learns more about Resonance. Rei discovers that contact lets him understand another person's Echo unusually well, while his attraction to Kira becomes a source of playful rivalry with Kaito.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop — evening, training mats cleared around the equipment.

Scene 1: The Lesson

Kaito explains synchronization.

- Kaito: "Resonance isn't stealing."
- Rei: "Then what is it?"
- Kaito: "Listening."
- Rei: "You finally found a skill you don't have."

Scene 2: Mina Volunteers

Mina offers her hand.

- Mina: "Try it."
- Rei: "You sure?"
- Mina: "You trust me?"
- Rei: "Yeah."
- Mina: "Then do it."

Scene 3: Synchronization

Their Echo connects.

- Mina: "It's warm."
- Rei: "I can feel the shape."
- Mina: "Don't push."
- Rei: "I'm not."

Scene 4: The Break

They disconnect.

- Mina: "That was strange."

- Rei: "Good strange?"
- Mina: "Maybe."

She smiles.

Scene 5: Kaito's Turn

- Kaito: "My turn."
- Rei: "You jealous?"
- Kaito: "Of your terrible technique? No."
- Kira: "You're definitely jealous."

Scene 6: Kira Teases Them

- Kira: "You two compete for everything."
- Kaito: "Not everything."
- Rei: "Most things."
- Kira: "Including who gets to explain things to me?"

Both boys go quiet.

Scene 7: The Competition

Kaito challenges Rei to demonstrate first.

Rei wins the demonstration.

- Kira: "Okay, Rei wins."
- Kaito: "Rematch."
- Rei: "You just hate hearing that."

Scene 8: Mina and Rei

Afterward, Mina sits beside Rei.

- Mina: "You're smiling."
- Rei: "Am I?"
- Mina: "Yeah."
- Rei: "Maybe today's been good."
- Mina: "Maybe."

Scene 9: Ren's Discovery

Ren studies Rei's Echo reading.

- Ren: "Your pattern changes after every Resonance."
- Rei: "Meaning?"
- Ren: "You don't just synchronize. You retain information."

Scene 10: Kaito's Warning

- Kaito: "That's exactly what we don't understand."
- Rei: "Then let's understand it."
- Kaito: "Together."

Rei nods, though the word bothers him more than he admits.

Scene 11: Final Panel

The dark fragment pulses.

- Rei (thought): "I can feel it learning me."

Chapter 18: The Empty Signature

Dramatic Purpose: Rei encounters Astra again and receives a warning about the danger of becoming dependent on copied

Echo. Meanwhile, the group begins noticing that Rei is taking every restriction as a challenge.

Setting: Abandoned office building — night, empty rooms and distant city noise.

Scene 1: The Signal

Rei senses an unfamiliar Echo.

- Rei: "Someone's here."
- Kaito: "Where?"
- Rei: "I don't know."

Scene 2: The Abandoned Building

They split up.

Kaito tells Rei not to go alone.

Rei says he'll stay with the group, but slips away moments later.

Scene 3: Astra Appears

- Astra: "You keep walking toward answers you aren't ready for."
- Rei: "You keep talking like you know me."
- Astra: "I do."

Scene 4: The Warning

- Rei: "What's happening to my Echo?"
- Astra: "You are retaining what you touch."
- Rei: "Can I control it?"
- Astra: "Control is not the same as ownership."

Scene 5: Rei Pushes Back

- Rei: "I saved Kaito."
- Astra: "Yes."
- Rei: "Then why are you making it sound wrong?"

- Astra: "Because you are beginning to believe you need to do everything yourself."

Scene 6: The Truth

Rei freezes.

- Rei: "I don't."
- Astra: "You already are."

Scene 7: Kaito Finds Him

- Kaito: "You disappeared."
- Rei: "I was checking something."
- Kaito: "Alone."
- Rei: "I can handle myself."

Kaito's face tightens.

Scene 8: The Argument

- Kaito: "That's not the point."
- Rei: "Then what is?"
- Kaito: "The point is I don't want to find you after something goes wrong."

Scene 9: Rei's Response

- Rei: "You don't have to save me every time."
- Kaito: "I know."
- Rei: "Then stop acting like you do."

Scene 10: Silence

Neither speaks.

Mina arrives.

- Mina: "Did I miss something?"
- Kaito: "No."
- Rei: "Yeah."

Mina looks between them.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Rei walks ahead alone.

Mina watches him go.

- Mina: "He's hurting."

- Kaito: "I know."

Chapter 19: Kaito's Line

Dramatic Purpose: Kaito and Rei's friendship survives their first serious argument, but the issue of Rei's independence becomes a continuing emotional fault line.

Setting: School athletic field — sunset, empty bleachers and cooling air.

Scene 1: Training Field

Kaito challenges Rei.

- Kaito: "Fight me."
- Rei: "Why?"
- Kaito: "Because talking clearly isn't working."

Scene 2: The Spar

They clash.

- Rei: "You always think you're right."
- Kaito: "You always think you have to prove me wrong."
- Rei: "Maybe I do."

Scene 3: Kaito Gets Serious

- Kaito: "I'm not trying to hold you back."
- Rei: "Feels like it."
- Kaito: "Then tell me what you want."

Scene 4: Rei Can't Answer

Rei hesitates.

- Rei: "I want to stop feeling like the weak one."

Kaito lowers his fists.

Scene 5: The Real Fear

- Rei: "Every time something happens, everybody looks at you."
- Kaito: "Because I've trained longer."
- Rei: "Exactly."

- Kaito: "Rei..."
- Rei: "And when I do something, you tell me to stop."

Scene 6: Kaito's Answer

- Kaito: "Because I know what happens when power gets ahead of judgment."
- Rei: "You think I don't?"
- Kaito: "I think you're scared."

Scene 7: The Fight Ends

Rei lowers his aura.

- Rei: "Maybe."
- Kaito: "Then let me be scared with you."

Rei looks at him.

Scene 8: Mina Interrupts

Mina tosses Rei a towel.

- Mina: "You both look terrible."
- Rei: "Thanks."
- Mina: "That was not a compliment."

Scene 9: Kira's Challenge

Kira arrives.

- Kira: "Which one of you won?"
- Kaito: "Me."
- Rei: "Nobody won."
- Kira: "So Rei."

Kaito groans.

Scene 10: Rivalry Returns

Kaito points at Rei.

- Kaito: "Tomorrow."

- Rei: "Tomorrow."
- Kira: "You two are impossible."
- Mina: "You'll get used to it."

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru watches them laugh, then looks at a message from the Veil.

He thinks friendship makes him strong. What happens when it becomes a weakness?

Chapter 20: The Veil's Messenger

Dramatic Purpose: The Veil approaches Rei directly. The operative uses his insecurity about dependence to tempt him, while Kira's presence gives Kaito another reason to compete.

Setting: School courtyard and nearby side street — late afternoon.

Scene 1: After School

Rei finds a stranger waiting.

- Stranger: "Rei Amakawa."
- Rei: "Who's asking?"
- Stranger: "Someone who knows what your Echo can become."

Scene 2: The Offer

- Stranger: "You don't have to keep borrowing strength from others."
- Rei: "I'm not borrowing anything."
- Stranger: "Then why do you keep looking over your shoulder?"

Scene 3: Kaito Arrives

Kaito steps between them.

- Kaito: "Back up."
- Stranger: "Protective."
- Kaito: "Annoyed."
- Rei: "Both."

Scene 4: The Operative Leaves

- Stranger: "We'll talk again."

A card drops to the ground.

Scene 5: The Team Debate

- Mina: "Burn it."
- Ren: "Study it first."
- Kaito: "Burn it after we study it."

- Rei: "I'm keeping it."

Everyone looks at him.

Scene 6: Kira's Opinion

- Kira: "Why?"
- Rei: "Because I want to know what they think I am."
- Kira: "Fair."

Scene 7: A Rivalry Joke

Kaito looks at Kira.

- Kaito: "You agreeing with him now?"
- Kira: "Don't worry. I disagree with you too."

Rei laughs.

- Kaito: "Very funny."

Scene 8: Mina and Rei

Mina walks with Rei.

- Mina: "You don't have to prove anything to that guy."
- Rei: "I know."
- Mina: "You're saying it like you don't believe it."
- Rei: "Maybe I don't yet."

Scene 9: Quiet Chemistry

They stop at a crosswalk.

- Mina: "Then believe me."

Rei looks at her.

- Rei: "I do."

The light changes. Neither moves for a second.

- Mina: "We're holding up traffic."
- Rei: "Right."

Scene 10: Haru's Secret

Haru receives another Veil message.

They will never understand what it's like to be ordinary.

He deletes it, but saves the number.

Scene 11: Final Panel

The Veil operative watches from a distance.

- Operative: "He is already questioning the people around him."

Chapter 21: Everyone Has Echo

Dramatic Purpose: The Veil's ideology becomes more complicated. Haru is drawn further in, while Rei's desire to prove himself causes the group to become increasingly protective.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop — evening.

Scene 1: The Records

Ren reveals historical Echo records.

- Ren: "Echo users have existed for centuries."
- Kira: "Then why hide them?"
- Ren: "Fear."

Scene 2: The Veil's Argument

- Rei: "They're saying Echo shouldn't be hidden."
- Kaito: "That's not automatically wrong."
- Mina: "But their methods are."

Scene 3: Haru Asks

- Haru: "What if they're right about one thing?"

Everyone turns.

- Haru: "What if people deserve to know what they are?"

Scene 4: Rei's Answer

- Rei: "Then we teach them safely."
- Haru: "And if safe isn't possible?"
- Rei: "Then we keep trying."

Scene 5: Training

Rei tries to control the copied fragment.

Kaito stops him.

- Rei: "Again?"
- Kaito: "Yes."
- Rei: "You don't trust me."

- Kaito: "I trust you. I don't trust the fragment."

Scene 6: Rei Bristles

- Rei: "Same difference."
- Kaito: "No, it isn't."
- Rei: "Feels like it."

Scene 7: Kira Changes the Subject

- Kira: "Race me."

Rei blinks.

- Rei: "What?"
- Kira: "You heard me."

Kaito immediately steps forward.

- Kaito: "I'll race both of you."

Scene 8: The Race

They race.

Kira wins unexpectedly.

- Kira: "You two talk too much."
- Rei: "Rematch."
- Kaito: "Absolutely."

Scene 9: Mina Laughs

Mina laughs openly.

Rei notices.

- Rei: "You should laugh more."
- Mina: "Maybe give me more reasons."

He smiles.

Scene 10: Haru Meets the Veil

Haru meets the operative privately.

- Haru: "You said everyone has Echo."
- Operative: "Everyone."
- Haru: "Then why don't I?"

Scene 11: Final Panel

The operative answers:

- Operative: "Maybe you haven't learned how to hear yours."

Chapter 22: The Cost of Knowing

Dramatic Purpose: Rei's attempts to prove independence become more frequent. The group establishes boundaries, but

Rei increasingly feels that every boundary is another reminder that Kaito is considered the capable one.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop — late night, monitors glowing in the dark.

Scene 1: Morning Training

Rei arrives early.

Kaito is already there.

- Kaito: "You're late."
- Rei: "I'm early."
- Kaito: "By my standards."

Scene 2: Independent Test

Rei attempts a controlled fragment technique.

It works.

- Rei: "See?"
- Kaito: "Again."
- Rei: "You could just say good job."
- Kaito: "Good job. Again."

Scene 3: The Slip

The fragment surges.

Kaito catches Rei before he falls.

- Rei: "Let go."
- Kaito: "When you're stable."
- Rei: "I am stable."
- Kaito: "You're shaking."

Scene 4: The Argument

- Rei: "You don't have to catch me."
- Kaito: "Then stop making me."

Rei goes silent.

Scene 5: Mina Talks to Kaito

- Mina: "You're making him feel like he can't do anything."
- Kaito: "I'm trying to keep him alive."
- Mina: "Both can be true."

Scene 6: Kira Talks to Rei

- Kira: "You're trying too hard."
- Rei: "At what?"
- Kira: "Proving you don't need anybody."
- Rei: "I don't."
- Kira: "Then why are you so angry about it?"

Scene 7: Haru's Invitation

The Veil asks Haru to attend a meeting.

He says yes.

Scene 8: Group Dinner

Everyone eats together.

Kaito and Rei argue about who got the last piece of food.

- Mina: "You two are impossible."
- Kira: "They're like this all the time?"
- Haru: "Worse."

Scene 9: Rei and Mina

After dinner, Mina walks beside Rei.

- Mina: "You're allowed to lean on people."
- Rei: "What if I fall?"
- Mina: "Then somebody catches you."

Rei looks at her.

- Rei: "You?"

- Mina: "If I can."

Scene 10: Rei's Silence

Rei doesn't answer.

He smiles faintly.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru enters the Veil's meeting room.

- Operative: "You came."

- Haru: "I said I would."

Chapter 23: Ren's Map

Dramatic Purpose: Ren discovers the city's hidden Echo network. Rei's instinct to act alone keeps clashing with the group's

new rule, while the others slowly realize his frustration is deeper than simple impatience.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop and downtown arcade district — late afternoon into evening.

Setting: Ren's basement workshop — late afternoon, rain against the small windows. This is the team's operations room, with Ren coordinating information from the monitors while everyone else prepares for field work.

Scene 1: The Map

Ren spreads a city map across the table.

- Ren: "The incidents aren't random."
- Kira: "What are they?"
- Ren: "Nodes."

Scene 2: The Pattern

The points form a circuit beneath the city.

- Rei: "They're building something."
- Kaito: "Or waking something."
- Ren: "Either way, I don't like the shape."

Scene 3: The New Location

A point lights beneath Rei's school.

- Mina: "That's close."
- Rei: "Then we go now."
- Ren: "No. We verify first."
- Rei: "What if somebody's already in there?"
- Ren: "Then rushing in blind makes you another person who needs rescuing."

Rei goes quiet.

Scene 4: Everyone Says No

- Kaito: "We plan first."
- Rei: "You too?"

- Kaito: "Especially me."
- Rei: "You didn't used to say that."
- Kaito: "I also didn't used to watch you almost lose control."

Scene 5: The Pressure Builds

Rei's jaw tightens.

- Rei: "I can handle myself."
- Mina: "Nobody said you couldn't."
- Rei: "You keep saying it without saying it."
- Mina: "That's not what we're doing."
- Rei: "Then what are you doing?"

No one answers immediately.

Scene 6: The Rule

Kaito writes on the whiteboard:

NOBODY INVESTIGATES ALONE.

- Kaito: "This isn't optional."
- Rei: "Fine."
- Kaito: "Don't say fine like you're planning to ignore it."
- Rei: "I said fine."

Scene 7: A Night Off

Ren closes the map.

- Ren: "The scan won't finish for another few hours."
- Haru: "So we're free?"
- Ren: "Temporarily."
- Kira: "Then let's go somewhere that doesn't smell like old electronics."
- Ren: "That's my workshop."
- Kira: "Exactly."

The group agrees to spend the evening downtown while Ren monitors the scan remotely.

Scene 8: Normal for Once

At a crowded downtown arcade, the group relaxes.

- Kaito: "I'm beating Rei."
- Rei: "At what?"
- Kaito: "Everything."
- Kira: "That answer tells me absolutely nothing."
- Haru: "It tells you everything."

Mina laughs as Kaito immediately loses the first game.

Scene 9: Rei Makes a Choice

Rei notices a faint Echo pulse in the distance.

He starts to move, then stops.

He pulls out his phone.

- Rei: "Ren. You seeing that?"
- Ren (phone): "Already tracking it. Don't move until I tell you where it is."
- Rei: "Got it."

Kaito notices.

- Kaito: "Look at you learning."
- Rei: "Don't make it weird."

Scene 10: Mina's Approval

Mina walks beside Rei.

- Mina: "You did the right thing."
- Rei: "I wanted to run over there."
- Mina: "I know."
- Rei: "How?"
- Mina: "Because I know you."

She gives his shoulder a small bump.

- Mina: "And you still stopped."

Scene 11: Final Panel

Ren's monitor flashes red.

- Ren: "Found it."

The hidden node beneath the school activates.

- Voice: "The vessel has chosen connection."

Chapter 24: A Night Off

Dramatic Purpose: A lighter chapter lets the cast breathe while strengthening the relationships that will matter when the story turns darker. Kira becomes part of the social chemistry, Rei and Kaito turn everything into a competition, Mina and Rei share a quiet moment, and Haru feels increasingly like he is watching his friends from outside the circle.

Setting: Downtown arcade district — evening into night.

Setting: Downtown arcade district — evening into night. Neon signs, food stalls, game rooms, and crowded sidewalks give the group a rare chance to act like normal teenagers.

Scene 1: The Challenge

Kaito points toward the arcade.

- Kaito: "Loser buys food."
- Rei: "You're assuming you'll lose."
- Kaito: "I'm assuming you'll complain."
- Kira: "This is going to be a long night."

Scene 2: First Game

Kaito wins by a tiny margin.

- Kaito: "Told you."
- Rei: "Beginner's luck."
- Kaito: "You can't call it luck twice."
- Rei: "Watch me."

Scene 3: Rematch

Rei wins.

- Rei: "Skill."
- Kaito: "The machine lagged."
- Kira: "It didn't."
- Kaito: "Nobody asked you."
- Kira: "And yet I'm still right."

Scene 4: Mina Laughs

Mina laughs so hard she has to look away.

- Rei: "You're supposed to be on my side."
- Mina: "I am."
- Rei: "Then why are you laughing?"
- Mina: "Because you're both ridiculous."

Rei smiles.

- Rei: "Fair."

Scene 5: Kira's Side

Kira and Rei end up walking beside each other while Kaito and Haru argue over food.

- Kira: "You always let him get under your skin?"
- Rei: "Only because he's usually wrong."
- Kira: "That's not an answer."
- Rei: "It's the only one you're getting."
- Kira: "You're annoying too."
- Rei: "I'm learning that from him."

Scene 6: Kaito and Kira

Kaito catches up.

- Kaito: "What are you two whispering about?"
- Kira: "Your ego."
- Kaito: "That's a big topic."
- Kira: "I noticed."

Kaito laughs.

- Kaito: "Okay. You're funny."
- Kira: "I know."

Scene 7: Mina and Rei

Mina finds Rei sitting outside with a drink.

- Mina: "Hiding?"
- Rei: "Taking a break."
- Mina: "From what?"

- Rei: "Everybody."

She sits beside him.

- Mina: "You don't have to take a break from me."

Rei looks at her, caught off guard.

- Rei: "I know."
- Mina: "Good."

A comfortable silence settles between them.

Scene 8: Haru Watches

Haru sees them from inside the arcade.

Kaito calls to him.

- Kaito: "Haru! You coming?"
- Haru: "Yeah."

He smiles, but it doesn't quite reach his eyes.

Scene 9: Ren's Call

Ren calls.

- Ren: "Night's over. The scan is done."
- Kaito: "Already?"
- Ren: "Unfortunately, yes."
- Kira: "You're no fun."
- Ren: "I'm literally saving you from a Veil investigation."
- Kira: "Still no fun."

Scene 10: The Walk Home

The group walks together.

Kaito bumps Rei's shoulder.

- Kaito: "Next time, I'm winning everything."
- Rei: "You said that tonight."
- Kaito: "Tonight wasn't next time."
- Rei: "That doesn't even make sense."
- Kaito: "Doesn't have to."

Mina and Kira exchange a look and laugh.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru falls a few steps behind.

His phone buzzes.

You looked happy tonight.

He stares at the message.

Don't get used to it.

Haru's thumb hovers over the screen.

He doesn't answer.

Chapter 25: Haru's Promise

Dramatic Purpose: Haru's emotional connection to Rei is deepened while his secret relationship with the Veil becomes more dangerous. Rei's growing independence conflict remains unresolved.

Setting: City bus and quiet residential street — late afternoon.

Scene 1: Bus Ride

Haru and Rei sit together.

- Haru: "Remember when we met?"
- Rei: "You mean when you wouldn't talk?"
- Haru: "I was mysterious."
- Rei: "You were miserable."

Scene 2: The Memory

Haru remembers Rei waiting beside him after a bad day.

- Haru: "You didn't ask what happened."
- Rei: "You looked like you didn't want to talk."
- Haru: "That was the first time someone just stayed."

Scene 3: Present

Haru looks at Rei.

- Haru: "Don't change too much."
- Rei: "I'm trying to get stronger."
- Haru: "I know."

Scene 4: The Promise

- Haru: "Just don't become someone who doesn't need anybody."
- Rei: "That's not going to happen."

Haru looks away.

Scene 5: Training

Rei and Kaito spar.

- Kaito: "Left."

- Rei: "Saw it."
- Kaito: "Then move."

Their coordination improves.

Scene 6: The Rivalry

- Kaito: "I'm still ahead."
- Rei: "For now."
- Kaito: "You keep saying that."
- Rei: "Because it's true."

Scene 7: Kira's Challenge

Kira tells them both:

- Kira: "If you two are going to compete over everything, at least make it useful."
- Kaito: "Race?"
- Rei: "Race."

Scene 8: Mina Watches

Mina smiles at their rivalry.

Haru notices.

- Haru: "You like watching them compete."
- Mina: "It's entertaining."
- Haru: "Sure."

Scene 9: Haru Meets the Veil

The operative gives Haru a small black tag.

- Operative: "Keep this."
- Haru: "Why?"
- Operative: "So you remember you have another option."

Scene 10: Haru Hides It

Haru returns home and puts it in a drawer.

He stares at it for a long time.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru opens the drawer again.

He doesn't throw it away.

Chapter 26: The Watcher

Dramatic Purpose: A Veil scout calls Rei a key. Rei wants to confront the threat alone, but the group stops him, continuing the independence conflict rather than resolving it immediately.

Setting: School rooftop — overcast afternoon.

Scene 1: Rooftop

A scout appears.

- Scout: "Rei Amakawa."
- Rei: "You know my name."
- Scout: "Everyone who matters does."

Scene 2: The Key

- Scout: "You're a key."
- Rei: "To what?"
- Scout: "Something your father helped seal."

Scene 3: Kaito Attacks

Kaito moves first.

- Kaito: "You're done talking."

The scout dodges.

Scene 4: Rei Stops Kaito

- Rei: "Wait."
- Kaito: "Why?"
- Rei: "I want answers."
- Kaito: "You can want them after we make sure this isn't a trap."

Scene 5: The Scout Escapes

A hidden Echo passage opens.

- Scout: "Ask your father what he buried."

He disappears.

Scene 6: Rei's Anger

- Rei: "I'm going after him."
- Mina: "No."
- Rei: "Mina—"
- Mina: "You heard the rule."

Scene 7: Rei Pushes Back

- Rei: "What if he's gone by morning?"
- Mina: "Then we find him tomorrow."
- Rei: "You don't understand."
- Mina: "I understand you want to do this alone."

Scene 8: Kaito's Frustration

- Kaito: "And you're not."

Rei looks at him.

- Rei: "I can handle myself."
- Kaito: "I know you can. That's not the same as doing everything yourself."

Scene 9: Kira's Comment

Kira steps in.

- Kira: "You two are going to have this argument until you're old."
- Rei: "Probably."
- Kaito: "Definitely."

Scene 10: Quiet Moment

Mina walks beside Rei.

- Mina: "I'm not trying to stop you from being strong."
- Rei: "Then what?"
- Mina: "I'm trying to make sure you don't confuse being alone with being strong."

Scene 11: Final Panel

Rei looks at the city.

- Rei (thought): "Why does everybody keep saying the same thing?"

Chapter 27: First Real Win

Dramatic Purpose: The group finally succeeds through teamwork. Rei still wants to prove himself, but he begins to recognize that coordination does not make him weaker.

Setting: Abandoned warehouse — evening.

Scene 1: The Mission

A pair of lower-level Veil users attack civilians.

- Kaito: "Positions."
- Rei: "I'll take the left."
- Mina: "I'll cover you."

Scene 2: Ren's Call

Ren spots a trap.

- Ren: "Don't move!"

Everyone freezes.

- Rei: "Good catch."

Scene 3: Kira's First Field Move

Kira helps evacuate civilians.

- Kira: "Everyone this way!"
- Haru: "You've done this before?"
- Kira: "No."
- Haru: "Great."

Scene 4: Kaito and Rei

They attack simultaneously.

- Kaito: "Right!"
- Rei: "Already there."

Their timing surprises even them.

Scene 5: Rei Adapts

Rei uses observation to redirect an attack.

- Kaito: "Nice."
- Rei: "Was that a compliment?"
- Kaito: "Don't get used to it."

Scene 6: Mina Coordinates

Mina calls the opening.

- Mina: "Now!"

Rei and Kaito strike together.

Scene 7: Victory

The enemies fall.

Everyone pauses.

- Kaito: "Okay."
- Rei: "Okay?"
- Kaito: "That was actually fun."

Scene 8: The Group Laughs

- Mina: "You two are insane."
- Kira: "They're worse when they win."
- Haru: "Much worse."

Scene 9: Rei's Realization

Rei looks at his friends.

- Rei (thought): "I didn't have to do it alone."

Scene 10: Kaito's Challenge

Kaito bumps Rei's shoulder.

- Kaito: "Don't think teamwork means you're catching me."
- Rei: "I was already catching you."

Scene 11: Final Panel

The defeated Veil user whispers:

- Enemy: "Soren will be disappointed."

Everyone looks at him.

Chapter 28: The Black Tag

Dramatic Purpose: The group learns the Veil is using the city's old infrastructure. Haru discovers that the symbol connects to his own family, pushing his secret arc forward.

Setting: School gym storage room — after school.

Scene 1: The Tag

Ren places the broken-circle tag under controlled Echo.

A map appears.

Scene 2: Underground Routes

- Ren: "These tunnels are older than the city."
- Kira: "Then the Veil didn't build them."
- Ren: "They inherited them."

Scene 3: Kaito Wants to Move

- Kaito: "We go tonight."
- Mina: "We plan tonight."
- Kaito: "Same difference."
- Mina: "No."

Scene 4: Rei Mediates

- Rei: "We plan first."

Kaito looks at him.

- Kaito: "You're learning."

Scene 5: Haru Sees the Symbol

Haru freezes.

- Rei: "What?"
- Haru: "I've seen that."

Scene 6: Family Connection

- Kira: "Where?"

- Haru: "At my house."

Everyone becomes quiet.

Scene 7: Haru Calls Home

He asks about the symbol.

His family avoids the question.

Scene 8: Rei Notices

- Rei: "You okay?"
- Haru: "Yeah."
- Rei: "You're doing the same thing I do."
- Haru: "What's that?"
- Rei: "Lying badly."

Scene 9: Haru Smiles

- Haru: "Guess we're both terrible at it."

Rei laughs.

Scene 10: Mina and Rei

Mina stands with Rei.

- Mina: "You notice everyone else's problems."
- Rei: "Not yours?"
- Mina: "Mine too."

A small pause.

- Mina: "That's why I notice yours."

Scene 11: Final Panel

Haru secretly searches his family's records.

A Veil symbol appears beside his family's name.

Chapter 29: The Photograph

Dramatic Purpose: Rei's family history begins connecting to the Veil, while the group's emotional bonds strengthen. Rei's independence issue remains unresolved and Haru's secret deepens.

Setting: Rei's bedroom and Ren's basement workshop — night.

Scene 1: Rei's Room

Rei studies an old childhood photograph.

Astra is faintly visible beside young Rei.

Scene 2: His Mother Enters

- Mother: "You found that."
- Rei: "You knew?"
- Mother: "I knew there were things your father didn't want you asking about."

Scene 3: Rei Pushes

- Rei: "Why?"
- Mother: "Because he thought keeping you safe meant keeping you uninformed."
- Rei: "That sounds familiar."

Scene 4: The Group Arrives

Kaito, Mina, Kira, Haru, and Ren join Rei.

- Kaito: "You called?"
- Rei: "Yeah."

Scene 5: The Photograph

Ren examines the symbol.

- Ren: "This predates the Veil."
- Kira: "Then the Veil inherited the symbol too."

Scene 6: Mina's Concern

Mina notices Rei staring at the photo.

- Mina: "You okay?"

- Rei: "Not really."

- Mina: "Good."

Rei looks at her.

- Mina: "Now you're being honest."

Scene 7: Kaito's Promise

- Kaito: "Whatever your family is hiding, we find out together."

- Rei: "Together?"

- Kaito: "Don't make me repeat it."

Scene 8: Rei Smiles

- Rei: "Thanks."

- Kaito: "Don't get sentimental."

Scene 9: Haru's Secret

Haru looks at the photo and recognizes the same symbol from his family's records.

He says nothing.

Scene 10: The Veil Message

Haru receives:

Ask him what his father did.

He deletes it.

Scene 11: Final Panel

Astra appears in the photograph more clearly than before.

Rei whispers:

- Rei: "Who were you to me?"

Chapter 30: The First Choice

Dramatic Purpose: The group confronts the Veil's local operation. Rei chooses his friends over the promise of power, while

Kaito and Rei's rivalry becomes a source of strength rather than competition alone. The chapter closes with the need for a stronger teacher and opens the path to Sora.

Setting: Veil facility / distorted district — night, emergency lighting and heavy Echo pressure.

Scene 1: The Underground Entrance

The group reaches the hidden facility.

- Ren: "This is the center."
- Kaito: "Then let's break it."
- Mina: "We still need a plan."
- Rei: "We have one."
- Kaito: "Since when?"
- Rei: "Since Ren started talking."

Scene 2: The Veil Appears

Operatives surround them.

- Operative: "You came farther than expected."
- Kira: "We get that a lot."
- Haru: "Do we?"
- Kira: "We do now."

Scene 3: The Battle

Kaito and Rei fight back-to-back.

- Kaito: "Left!"
- Rei: "Saw it!"
- Kaito: "Right!"
- Rei: "Already there!"

They smile during the fight.

Scene 4: Mina's Opening

Mina spots a weakness.

- Mina: "Rei!"
- Rei: "Got it!"

He follows her call instead of acting alone.

Scene 5: Kira's Move

Kira helps break a control node.

- Kira: "One down!"
- Kaito: "Nice!"
- Rei: "You're getting competitive."
- Kira: "I learned from you two."

Scene 6: The Offer

The Veil operative confronts Rei.

- Operative: "You could control every fragment inside you."
- Rei: "How?"
- Operative: "Join us."

Scene 7: The Temptation

- Operative: "No more warnings. No more people telling you what you can't do."

Rei looks at Kaito, Mina, Kira, Haru, and Ren.

Scene 8: Rei's Choice

- Rei: "You know what?"

He smiles.

- Rei: "I think I like having people who tell me when I'm being stupid."

Kaito laughs.

- Kaito: "Finally."

Scene 9: The Facility Falls

The group destroys the local node.

A distant Echo pulse answers.

Scene 10: The Next Step

Ren studies the readings.

- Ren: "There are more."
- Mina: "How many?"
- Ren: "Enough that we can't handle this at our current level."

Kaito looks toward Rei.

- Kaito: "Then we get stronger."

Scene 11: Final Panel — Sora

Later that night, Rei and Kaito stand outside.

A calm man approaches.

- Sora: "Rei Amakawa. Kaito."

They turn.

- Sora: "You've been looking for a way to get stronger."
- Kaito: "Who are you?"
- Sora: "Someone who can teach you."
- Rei: "Why us?"

Sora looks past them toward Mina.

- Sora: "Because you're not the only ones who need training."

CUT TO BLACK.

ARC 2 — THE MASTER'S HOUSE

ARC 2 DESIGN NOTE

This arc follows the group's first long period of serious training rather than immediately using a timeskip. The characters live around Sora's house, train, argue, joke, fail, learn their individual Echo styles, and slowly become a real team. Ren remains behind in the city as the team's intelligence and communications support. Yuna does not appear in Arc 1; she is introduced here as one of Sora's original students. The Veil remains active in the background, and Haru's path through it continues in

parallel.

CHAPTER 1: THE INVITATION

Scene 1 — Setting: Ren's basement workshop, late afternoon.

Ren has spread maps, laptops, and printed reports across his workbench. Rei and Kaito stand opposite Sora. Mina and Kira are there too.

Ren: "So we're really doing this?"

Kaito: "You're saying that like we're getting adopted."

Ren: "I'm saying it like four teenagers with supernatural powers are leaving town with a man nobody can Google."

Kira: "That's a surprisingly fair concern."

Rei: "We're going."

Ren looks at him for a beat.

Ren: "I know. I'm just making sure you understand I'm not coming."

Scene 2 — Setting: Same workshop.

Sora studies Ren's screens.

Sora: "You don't need to come."

Ren: "Good. Because somebody has to keep the city from becoming a guessing game."

Mina: "You mean you'll keep tracking Echo activity."

Ren: "And surveillance. And communications. And maps. And telling you when you're about to walk into something stupid."

Kaito: "So the guy in the chair."

Ren: "Exactly."

Kaito: "Cool. You get the least fun job."

Ren: "And you get the job most likely to break something. Everybody wins."

Scene 3 — Setting: Outside Ren's house, sunset.

Haru stands beside the driveway, hands in his pockets. The others say goodbye.

Haru: "So this is it? You guys leave, become insanely strong, come back acting mysterious?"

Kaito: "I'm already mysterious."

Kira: "You're loud."

Kaito: "Same thing."

Haru laughs, but the laugh fades quickly.

Haru: "Just... don't disappear on me."

Rei: "We won't."

Haru: "You better mean that."

Scene 4 — Setting: Driveway, continuing.

Haru pulls Rei aside.

Haru: "You've been acting like you have to carry everything yourself. Don't."

Rei: "You sound like Mina."

Haru: "That's because Mina is usually right, which is annoying."

Rei smiles.

Haru: "Come back stronger. Just don't come back different."

Rei: "I'll try."

Haru: "No. Don't try. Remember who you are."

Scene 5 — Setting: Ren's basement door, evening.

Kira hesitates before leaving.

Kira: "Ren."

Ren: "Yeah?"

Kira: "You sure you're okay staying behind?"

Ren: "Somebody has to be the responsible cousin."

Kira: "You have never been the responsible cousin."

Ren: "Exactly. That's why it's an experiment."

Kira laughs and hugs him briefly.

Ren: "Don't make me regret letting you go."

Kira: "You say that like I was asking permission."

Scene 6 — Setting: City highway, night.

The group travels with Sora. Mina sits beside Rei. Kaito is across from them. Kira watches the road through the window.

Kaito: "I'm calling it now. I'm beating everybody at the Master's house."

Mina: "You haven't met everybody."

Kaito: "Makes it easier."

Kira: "That's not how competition works."

Kaito: "It is if you're me."

Rei: "That's the most Kaito sentence you've ever said."

Scene 7 — Setting: Highway rest stop, night.

They stretch their legs.

Kira notices Rei staring at her.

Kira: "You keep looking at me."

Rei: "I was thinking."

Kira: "Dangerous habit."

Rei: "You always this confident?"

Kira: "Only when I'm right."

Kaito walks past.

Kaito: "She's been here ten minutes and she's already got you quiet."

Rei: "Keep walking."

Kira smiles.

Scene 8 — Setting: Rest stop, vending machines.

Mina and Rei are alone for a moment.

Mina: "You nervous?"

Rei: "A little."

Mina: "Good. Means you care."

Rei: "You?"

Mina: "Terrified."

Rei looks surprised.

Mina: "What? I'm allowed to be scared."

Rei: "I wasn't going to say anything."

Mina: "Your face did."

They laugh quietly.

Scene 9 — Setting: Road, later that night.

Sora speaks from the front.

Sora: "Training will hurt. It will frustrate you. Some days you'll hate each other."

Kaito: "Some days?"

Sora: "The point isn't to become comfortable. It's to become capable."

Rei looks out the window.

Sora: "Power doesn't make you strong. What you do when power isn't enough does."

Scene 10 — Setting: Mountain road, early morning.

The Master's house appears beyond the trees, old wood darkened by years of rain. Smoke curls from a stone chimney. The air smells of wet pine and cold earth.

Kaito: "That's it?"

Sora: "Yes."

Kaito: "It's smaller than I expected."

Sora: "Then expect less."

Kira: "I think we're going to be here a while."

Rei: "Yeah."

He looks at the house.

Rei: "I think that's the point."

Scene 11 — Setting: Master's house, morning.

Sora opens the door.

Sora: "Welcome. Leave your pride outside."

Kaito: "Mine doesn't fit through the door."

Sora almost smiles.

Sora: "Then you're going to have to make it smaller."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 2: SEVEN

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's house, entry hall, morning.

Three teenagers are waiting: Akira, Yuna, and Shin.

Akira: "These are the recruits?"

Sora: "Students."

Yuna looks at Kira, then Rei, then Kaito.

Yuna: "They look younger than I expected."

Kaito: "You look disappointed."

Yuna: "I am."

Kaito grins.

Kaito: "Good."

Scene 2 — Setting: Entry hall.

Shin studies each aura.

Shin: "Silver. Purple. Pink. Yellow."

Kira: "You catalog everyone?"

Shin: "It helps."

Kira: "That sounds exhausting."

Shin: "It is."

Kira: "At least you're honest."

Scene 3 — Setting: Training courtyard.

Akira draws an Echo blade.

Akira: "Show me what you use."

Rei forms his silver sword.

Kaito's purple gauntlets form over his hands.

Mina creates her pink staff.

Kira summons twin yellow daggers.

Yuna whistles.

Yuna: "Okay. They're not completely useless."

Kaito: "You keep talking like that and I'm going to start liking you."

Yuna: "Don't worry. I won't let that happen."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard, continuing.

Akira examines Rei's stance.

Akira: "You hold the sword like you're borrowing it."

Rei: "I am borrowing it."

Akira: "From who?"

Rei: "My imagination."

Akira: "Then your imagination needs training."

Kaito laughs.

Rei: "You got something to say?"

Kaito: "A lot, actually."

Scene 5 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira and Yuna compare weapons.

Yuna: "Daggers?"

Kira: "Fast, close, and hard to read."

Yuna: "Sounds like a bad decision."

Kira: "Most good decisions are boring."

Yuna smiles despite herself.

Scene 6 — Setting: Dining room, noon.

Sora assigns rooms and chores.

Kaito: "We came here to train."

Sora: "And eat."

Kaito: "Training."

Sora: "And clean."

Kaito: "Training."

Sora: "Then you can train while holding a mop."

Rei laughs.

Kaito: "Traitor."

Scene 7 — Setting: Kitchen, afternoon.

Mina and Rei wash dishes.

Mina: "You're smiling."

Rei: "Am I not allowed?"

Mina: "You usually look like you're solving a murder."

Rei: "That's just my face."

Mina: "I know."

She flicks water at him.

Rei: "Did you just—"

Mina: "Yes."

Rei flicks water back.

Mina: "Rei."

Rei: "You started it."

Scene 8 — Setting: Hallway, evening.

Kira catches Rei leaving the kitchen.

Kira: "You smile more around her."

Rei: "Around who?"

Kira: "Mina."

Rei: "You analyzing me now?"

Kira: "No. Just observing."

Rei: "And?"

Kira: "And I think you're easier to read than you think."

She walks away.

Rei watches her go, confused.

Scene 9 — Setting: Porch, night.

Kaito sits beside Rei.

Kaito: "So."

Rei: "So?"

Kaito: "Kira."

Rei: "What about her?"

Kaito: "Nothing."

Rei: "You're terrible at lying."

Kaito: "Says the guy who stares at her whenever she walks by."

Rei: "You stare too."

Kaito: "Exactly. That's why it's a problem."

They both laugh.

Scene 10 — Setting: Porch, later.

Sora watches from inside.

Sora: "They compete even when nobody asked them to."

Akira: "That's why they might become strong."

Sora: "Or why they'll destroy the house."

Akira: "Both are possible."

Scene 11 — Setting: Bedroom hallway, late night.

Rei hears Astra's voice.

Astra: "You came looking for answers."

Rei: "I came looking for strength."

Astra: "Those are not always the same thing."

Rei: "Then tell me which one I need."

Astra: "The one you are most afraid to ask for."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 3: THE FIRST SPAR

Scene 1 — Setting: Training courtyard, dawn.

Akira challenges Rei with the training sword.

Akira: "Sword against sword."

Rei: "Sure."

Kaito: "You're going to lose."

Rei: "Thanks for the support."

Kaito: "I'm supporting reality."

Scene 2 — Setting: Courtyard.

The fight begins. Akira's blade work is economical, every strike returning to guard. Rei studies his feet and shoulders.

Akira cuts low. Rei hops back and counters with a diagonal slash.

Akira turns the blade aside.

Akira: "You're watching the wrong thing."

Rei: "No. I'm watching everything."

Akira: "Then you're watching too much."

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei shifts to a two-handed grip and rushes.

Akira sidesteps and taps Rei's shoulder with the flat of his blade.

Kaito: "Clean hit."

Rei: "I know."

Kaito: "Just making sure your pride survived."

Rei: "Barely."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei changes rhythm, using short steps and delayed attacks.

Akira finally takes a half-step back.

Akira: "Better."

Rei: "Was that praise?"

Akira: "Don't get used to it."

Scene 5 — Setting: Courtyard, later.

Kaito enters with gauntlets active.

Kaito: "My turn."

Akira: "No."

Kaito: "Why not?"

Akira: "Because you haven't stopped talking since sunrise."

Kaito: "That's not a reason."

Akira: "It is to me."

Scene 6 — Setting: Courtyard.

Yuna challenges Kaito instead.

Yuna: "I'll fight you."

Kaito: "Finally."

Yuna: "Don't make me regret offering."

Kaito's grin widens.

Kaito: "Too late."

Scene 7 — Setting: Courtyard.

Yuna accelerates with her Echo, becoming a blur between steps. Kaito reinforces his calves and pivots instead of chasing her.

Yuna appears behind him.

Kaito: "Got you."

He turns and blocks.

Yuna: "No, you didn't."

She slips away.

Kaito: "Okay. Now I'm interested."

Scene 8 — Setting: Courtyard.

Mina and Kira watch.

Mina: "They're going to do this all day."

Kira: "Probably."

Mina: "You seem amused."

Kira: "I am."

Mina: "You like watching people fight?"

Kira: "I like watching people reveal themselves."

Mina glances at her.

Mina: "That's a dangerous answer."

Scene 9 — Setting: Courtyard, afternoon.

Kaito finally lands a reinforced punch on the training dummy after using Echo in his legs to accelerate.

Sora: "Again."

Kaito: "I already did it."

Sora: "Then do it better."

Kaito sighs.

Kaito: "I hate how much I like this place."

Scene 10 — Setting: Courtyard, sunset.

Rei sits with his sword across his knees.

Mina sits beside him.

Mina: "You're frustrated."

Rei: "Akira barely moved."

Mina: "You learned something."

Rei: "I learned he's annoying."

Mina: "You and Kaito say that about everyone who's better than you."

Rei smiles.

Rei: "Then I guess we have a lot to learn."

Scene 11 — Setting: Courtyard, sunset.

Sora watches all seven students.

Sora: "The strongest fighter in a group is not always the one who should lead it."

Akira hears him.

Sora: "Remember that."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 4: WEAPONS OF ECHO

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's weapon room, morning.

Sora opens a heavy wooden door. Inside is a quiet workshop lined with weapon racks, maintenance tools, old training manuals, and several locked cases. The room smells faintly of oil, metal, and cedar.

Sora: "These are not Echo weapons."

Kaito: "Then why are we in a room full of weapons?"

Sora: "Because you're about to learn the difference between a weapon made of Echo and a weapon made to handle Echo."

Rei studies the racks.

Sora: "A normal weapon can break under concentrated Echo. These were forged, balanced, and reinforced specifically for awakened users. The weapon is real. Your Echo is what makes it more than ordinary."

Rei: "So the weapon doesn't come from us."

Sora: "Correct. I give you the tool. You decide how much of yourself to put through it."

Scene 2 — Setting: Weapon room.

Sora places a simple sword in front of Rei. The blade is physical steel, dark along the spine and polished near the edge.

Sora: "This one can conduct your Echo without buckling under it."

Rei grips the handle.

Silver Echo travels from his palm into the blade. The metal gives a low hum.

Rei: "It feels heavier when I use Echo."

Sora: "Because you are not just strengthening the edge. You're changing the weapon's response."

Akira: "Control the flow. If you flood it, the weapon becomes harder to move."

Rei adjusts his grip. The hum steadies.

Rei: "Better?"

Akira: "Now it sounds like a weapon instead of a warning."

Scene 3 — Setting: Weapon room.

Sora gives Kaito a pair of reinforced gauntlets. They are physical, compact, and fitted with channels along the knuckles and forearms.

Kaito slips them on.

Kaito: "Okay. These are hard."

Sora: "They're built to survive your fists."

Kaito: "Finally, somebody respects me."

Sora: "I respect the gauntlets for surviving you."

Kaito: "I'll take it."

Purple Echo gathers around Kaito's hands. The gauntlets vibrate as the energy settles into their channels.

Sora: "Do not think of the Echo as creating the gauntlets. Think of it as filling a weapon designed to carry it."

Scene 4 — Setting: Weapon room.

Sora gives Mina a balanced staff made from a dense, flexible material with reinforced metal ends.

Mina rotates it slowly.

Mina: "It's lighter than it looks."

Sora: "Because you need control, not weight."

Pink Echo spreads from her palms into the staff. A soft pulse travels from one end to the other.

Mina: "It responds to me."

Sora: "It responds to what you put into it. Remember that distinction."

Mina nods.

Scene 5 — Setting: Weapon room.

Sora opens the final case. Inside are two short, curved daggers with reinforced grips.

Kira's eyes light up.

Kira: "Those."

Sora: "I figured."

Kira picks them up. Yellow Echo runs through the channels near the hilts.

Kira: "They're balanced perfectly."

Rei: "You can tell that already?"

Kira: "I pay attention."

Kaito: "Show-off."

Kira: "Jealous?"

Kaito: "A little."

Scene 6 — Setting: Weapon room.

Sora stands in front of all four.

Sora: "Your weapons are real. Your Echo is the variable."

He taps Rei's sword.

Sora: "Without Echo, this is a sword."

He taps Kaito's gauntlet.

Sora: "Without Echo, these are gauntlets."

He gestures to Mina and Kira.

Sora: "Your power is what changes the equation."

Rei: "And if the weapon breaks?"

Sora: "You adapt. But don't make a habit of breaking equipment. I paid for it."

Kaito: "That sounded personal."

Sora: "It is."

Scene 7 — Setting: Courtyard, afternoon.

Training begins. Rei practices diagonal cuts, thrusts, and short defensive redirects while feeding a controlled stream of silver Echo through the blade.

Kaito practices jab-cross combinations, then reinforces his legs before bursting forward into a body check. Purple Echo flashes through the gauntlets at impact.

Mina practices staff thrusts, low sweeps, and circular guards. She learns that sending Echo through the center of the staff makes her movements smoother instead of simply stronger.

Kira practices alternating dagger strikes, reverse grips, and rapid changes of direction. Yellow Echo gathers at her ankles whenever she accelerates.

Yuna watches.

Yuna: "She moves like she's already used them."

Shin: "Her body learned before her mind did."

Scene 8 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira spars Rei.

She darts inside his sword range. Rei pivots, catches one dagger on the flat of his blade, and backs away before the second can reach him.

Kira: "You're slow."

Rei: "You're short-range."

Kira: "That supposed to make me feel better?"

Rei: "No."

Kira grins.

Kira: "Good answer."

Scene 9 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira feints high, switches her grip, and steps outside Rei's lead foot. She stops the dagger a few inches from his shoulder.

Rei freezes.

Kira: "Dead."

Rei: "You could've warned me."

Kira: "Then you would've moved."

Rei laughs.

Kira: "There. That's better."

Rei: "What is?"

Kira: "You looked less scared when you smiled."

Scene 10 — Setting: Courtyard, later.

Mina approaches Rei and fixes his grip.

Mina: "Your wrist. You're overcompensating."

Rei: "I thought it was fine."

Mina: "You thought wrong."

She gently adjusts his hand.

Rei: "You're enjoying this."

Mina: "Maybe."

Rei: "You know, you're scary when you're confident."

Mina: "Good."

Scene 11 — Setting: Courtyard, sunset.

All seven stand with their weapons. The physical weapons look ordinary at first glance, but faint traces of each user's Echo remain along the blades, grips, and staff.

Sora: "Now you understand the relationship between the weapon and the Echo."

Kaito: "So we're officially armed."

Sora: "You were armed before. You were just poorly equipped."

Kaito: "...I liked you better yesterday."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 5: ARMOR

Scene 1 — Setting: Courtyard, early morning.

Sora attacks Rei unexpectedly.

Rei raises his sword too late.

Sora's strike stops inches from him.

Sora: "Why did you protect the weapon?"

Rei: "Because it was in my hand."

Sora: "Wrong. Protect yourself first."

Scene 2 — Setting: Courtyard.

Sora demonstrates Echo reinforcement. Instead of forming armor, his aura tightens around his body like an invisible pressure

field.

Sora: "Echo can reinforce more than weapons. Bones. Muscles. Skin. Balance. Reaction."

Kaito: "So it's basically armor."

Sora: "Without the armor."

Kaito: "That's... actually sick."

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei attempts it. Silver Echo spreads over his forearms, then collapses.

Rei: "I almost had it."

Sora: "You forced it outward. Pull it closer."

Rei tries again.

This time the aura clings tightly to his skin.

Akira: "He found it."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Sora strikes Rei's shoulder with a controlled staff.

The impact lands, but the silver aura absorbs part of it.

Rei staggers.

Rei: "That still hurt."

Sora: "Armor isn't invincibility."

Kaito: "So it's just getting hit with extra steps."

Sora: "Exactly."

Kaito: "I hate that answer."

Scene 5 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito tries reinforcement through his legs.

He bursts forward too hard and crashes into a padded wall.

Yuna: "You okay?"

Kaito: "Never better."

Yuna: "You're upside down."

Kaito: "Perspective."

Scene 6 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito learns to distribute Echo: calves for acceleration, thighs for braking, forearms for impact, fists for compression.

Kaito: "So I don't need more power. I need to stop wasting it."

Sora: "Now you're thinking."

Kaito: "Don't sound so proud."

Sora: "I wasn't."

Scene 7 — Setting: Healing room, afternoon.

Mina helps treat Kaito's bruises.

Mina: "You could stop trying to punch everything."

Kaito: "You could stop making that sound reasonable."

Mina: "I'm serious."

Kaito: "I know."

He looks at her.

Kaito: "Thanks."

Mina smiles.

Mina: "You're welcome."

Scene 8 — Setting: Hallway, evening.

Kira catches Rei practicing reinforcement alone.

Kira: "Still working?"

Rei: "Can't sleep."

Kira: "Because you're thinking about losing?"

Rei: "Because I hate not understanding something."

Kira: "Then understand this: you're allowed to be bad at something before you're good at it."

Rei: "You always talk like that?"

Kira: "Only when you're being stubborn."

Scene 9 — Setting: Porch, night.

Rei and Mina sit quietly.

Mina: "You don't have to prove you're strong every second."

Rei: "I know."

Mina: "No, you don't."

Silence.

Rei: "Maybe I don't."

Mina: "Then start there."

She leans against his shoulder briefly.

Rei stays still, smiling.

Scene 10 — Setting: Courtyard, next morning.

Rei demonstrates his reinforced silver aura.

Sora: "You discovered it first. That means you are responsible for understanding its limits."

Rei: "I'll learn."

Sora: "Don't promise me. Prove it to yourself."

Scene 11 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei raises his sword.

Rei: "I think I finally understand."

Sora: "What?"

Rei: "Power isn't something you put around yourself. It's something you learn to carry."

Sora looks at him.

Sora: "Good. Remember that when carrying it becomes painful."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 6: THE THINGS THEY CAN DO

Scene 1 — Setting: Training hall, morning.

Sora tells everyone to stop copying standard techniques.

Sora: "Your Echo has a language of its own. Find it."

Kaito: "So we're supposed to figure out our special moves?"

Sora: "If calling them special moves makes you train harder, yes."

Kaito: "Best lesson yet."

Scene 2 — Setting: Training hall.

Kaito experiments with Echo in his legs. He launches forward, brakes, then redirects.

Kaito: "Echo Drive."

Yuna: "You named it already?"

Kaito: "Someone has to give it a name."

Yuna: "It hasn't even worked yet."

Kaito: "Details."

Scene 3 — Setting: Training hall.

Kaito compresses Echo into his right fist.

The gauntlet shrinks around his hand, becoming denser.

Kaito punches a reinforced target.

BOOM.

The target cracks.

Kaito stares.

Kaito: "Okay. That worked."

Yuna: "Unfortunately."

Scene 4 — Setting: Training hall.

Mina practices with her staff. A pink pulse spreads from her hand into a bruised training volunteer's arm.

The pain eases.

Mina: "Wait."

Sora: "Again. Slowly."

Mina does it again.

The injury visibly stabilizes.

Mina: "I can heal."

Sora: "You can encourage the body's Echo to repair itself. Do not mistake that for unlimited healing."

Scene 5 — Setting: Training hall.

Mina looks overwhelmed.

Mina: "So if someone gets hurt..."

Sora: "You can help."

Mina: "That's all I wanted."

Rei: "Mina."

She looks at him.

Rei: "That's not all you are."

She smiles softly.

Scene 6 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira experiments with yellow Echo around her feet and hands.

She disappears from Rei's sight for a moment.

Rei: "What was that?"

Kira: "I don't know yet."

She appears behind him.

Kira: "But I like it."

Rei jumps.

Kira laughs.

Scene 7 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira discovers she can leave brief yellow Echo afterimages by changing direction at high speed.

Shin: "They're not illusions. They're residual signatures."

Kira: "Can I weaponize them?"

Shin: "Probably."

Kira: "Good."

Kaito: "That's concerning."

Kira: "You should be used to that by now."

Scene 8 — Setting: Training hall.

Rei practices copying Echo fragments safely. He forms Kaito's compression for one punch, then releases it.

Kaito: "Don't steal my move."

Rei: "You said I could study it."

Kaito: "Study. Don't steal."

Rei: "They're basically the same thing."

Kaito: "No, they're not."

Rei: "Fine. I'll make it better."

Kaito: "Now you're speaking my language."

Scene 9 — Setting: Porch, evening.

Akira and Rei talk.

Akira: "You're adapting quickly."

Rei: "You're getting slower."

Akira: "You're getting arrogant."

Rei: "Maybe."

Akira: "Good. Confidence is useful. Just don't confuse it with certainty."

Scene 10 — Setting: Kitchen, night.

The group eats together.

Yuna: "Who burned the rice?"

Kaito: "Not me."

Everyone looks at him.

Kaito: "Why does everyone immediately look at me?"

Kira: "Experience."

Kaito: "This house is hostile."

Mina: "You're still eating it."

Kaito: "I'm committed."

Scene 11 — Setting: Kitchen, late night.

Laughter fades into quiet conversation.

Rei looks around the table.

Rei (thought): "Maybe strength isn't being the person everyone depends on. Maybe it's being someone who knows when to depend on others."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 7: THE FIRST MISSION

Scene 1 — Setting: Ren's basement workshop, city, morning.

A video call shows Ren at his monitors while the group appears from Sora's communications room.

Ren: "Good morning, disasters."

Kaito: "Missed you too."

Ren: "Echo spike downtown. Small, but moving."

Sora: "First field test."

Ren: "And before anyone says it: yes, I'm watching the whole thing."

Scene 2 — Setting: City alley, afternoon.

The team arrives.

Ren: "Two blocks east. Don't chase it."

Kaito: "I wasn't going to."

Ren: "You were absolutely going to."

Kaito: "You don't know me that well."

Ren: "I have security footage of you jumping through a window last month."

Kaito: "That was tactical."

Scene 3 — Setting: Alley.

A distorted Echo user attacks.

Akira calls formation.

Akira: "Rei center. Kaito pressure. Kira flank. Mina support. Yuna and Shin cover."

Rei: "Got it."

Kaito: "Finally, somebody giving orders I like."

Akira: "Don't make me regret it."

Scene 4 — Setting: Alley.

Kaito activates Echo Drive, closing distance. Rei uses his sword to redirect an incoming strike. Kira slips behind the enemy and cuts through a control node with a yellow dagger.

Kira: "One!"

Kaito: "Show-off!"

Kira: "You're jealous!"

Scene 5 — Setting: Alley.

Mina's staff creates a pink barrier. Yuna runs through it and attacks from the side.

Shin: "Three seconds."

Yuna: "That's all I need."

She lands a hit.

Shin: "Two seconds."

Yuna: "You're annoying."

Shin: "Accurate."

Scene 6 — Setting: Alley.

The enemy's distortion spikes.

Ren: "Everyone back. Now."

Rei ignores him.

Mina: "Rei!"

Rei: "I can stop it."

Kaito: "Don't—"

Rei charges.

Scene 7 — Setting: Alley.

Rei reinforces his body and sword, taking the impact head-on. Silver Echo wraps around him like invisible armor.

Rei: "I won't let you hurt them."

He cuts through the distorted Echo.

Scene 8 — Setting: Alley, aftermath.

The enemy falls unconscious.

Ren: "Rei. What part of 'back' sounded optional?"

Rei: "I had it."

Kaito: "That's not the point."

Rei: "Then what's the point?"

Kaito: "That you don't get to decide you're invincible because you found armor."

Scene 9 — Setting: Van, evening.

The group is quiet.

Mina: "You scared us."

Rei: "I'm sorry."

Mina: "Don't say sorry because you think that's what we want. Say it because you understand."

Rei looks down.

Rei: "I understand."

Scene 10 — Setting: Sora's house, night.

Sora speaks privately with Rei.

Sora: "You will eventually become strong enough to fight alone."

Rei: "Then why does everyone keep stopping me?"

Sora: "Because being able to fight alone is not the same as having to."

Scene 11 — Setting: Haru's bedroom, city, same night.

Haru receives a message from an unknown Veil contact.

Message: "You asked how to get stronger."

Haru stares at it.

Haru: "...Yeah."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 8: THE SPACE BETWEEN FRIENDS

Scene 1 — Setting: Sora's house, breakfast.

Kaito notices Rei is quiet.

Kaito: "You still mad?"

Rei: "No."

Kaito: "Liar."

Rei: "You're one to talk."

Kaito: "I'm not mad. I'm thinking."

Rei: "That's worse."

Kaito laughs.

Scene 2 — Setting: Training courtyard.

Rei asks Akira for a private spar.

Akira: "Why?"

Rei: "Because I need to know where I stand."

Akira: "You know where you stand."

Rei: "Then show me."

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

The spar is technical and close. Rei uses reinforcement to absorb a strike and counter. Akira changes stance and forces Rei back.

Akira: "You're stronger."

Rei: "But?"

Akira: "You're still trying to win every exchange."

Rei: "What's wrong with that?"

Akira: "Nothing. Until winning becomes more important than surviving."

Scene 4 — Setting: Training hall.

Kaito watches from the doorway.

Kaito: "He's changing."

Mina: "So are you."

Kaito: "I know."

Mina: "You don't have to compete with him every second."

Kaito: "I don't."

Mina looks at him.

Kaito: "...Okay, most seconds."

Scene 5 — Setting: Porch, evening.

Kira sits beside Rei.

Kira: "You don't have to tell me what's wrong."

Rei: "That's a first."

Kira: "I'm serious."

Rei: "I know."

Kira: "You're scared of needing people."

Rei: "Why does everybody know me better than I know myself?"

Kira: "Because you make it obvious."

Scene 6 — Setting: Porch.

Kira tells Rei why she awakened Echo: someone she knew vanished during an Echo incident, and she hates not knowing whether she could have helped.

Kira: "I don't want power because I want to be special. I want it because I never want to stand there useless again."

Rei: "You wouldn't be useless."

Kira: "You don't get to decide that for me."

Rei pauses.

Kira: "That's the problem with you. You care so much that you start deciding what everyone else needs."

Scene 7 — Setting: Kitchen, later.

Kaito overhears enough to understand.

Kaito: "She's right."

Rei: "Were you listening?"

Kaito: "Unfortunately."

Rei: "You always have to add something."

Kaito: "Yeah. Because if I don't, you start thinking you're the only one who gets hurt."

Scene 8 — Setting: Hallway.

Mina approaches Rei.

Mina: "You okay?"

Rei: "Not really."

Mina: "Good."

Rei smiles.

Mina: "You know what I mean."

Rei: "Yeah."

Mina: "Then stop trying to be okay for everybody else."

Scene 9 — Setting: Training courtyard, night.

Haru calls Rei.

Haru: "How's the superpowered summer camp?"

Rei: "Exhausting."

Haru: "Miss me?"

Rei: "Not particularly."

Haru: "Wow. I open my heart and get stabbed."

Rei laughs.

Haru's expression changes when Rei can't see it.

Haru: "I'm glad you're doing okay."

Scene 10 — Setting: Haru's room, after the call.

Haru opens the Veil message again.

Haru: "If they can make me stronger..."

He hesitates.

Haru: "...maybe I can stop being the one who gets left behind."

Scene 11 — Setting: Sora's house, midnight.

Astra appears beside Rei's sleeping form.

Astra: "He thinks he is afraid of being weak."

Astra looks at him.

Astra: "He is actually afraid that if he stops being useful, people will stop loving him."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 9: SECRETS IN THE CITY

Scene 1 — Setting: Ren's basement, morning.

Ren detects multiple Echo disturbances.

Ren: "Three cities. Same signature."

Sora: "The Veil."

Ren: "Probably. Same residual frequency, same pattern of distortion."

Sora: "And if civilians saw it?"

Ren: "They'd think it was an electrical accident, a structural failure, maybe a gas leak. That's why the Veil is hard to trace. Most people never learn what they're actually looking at."

Sora: "Good. Keep the incidents contained while we learn more."

Ren: "Trying. I'm just saying, secret organizations are easier to accuse when they leave matching fingerprints in three cities."

Scene 2 — Setting: Master's dining room.

Ren briefs the team remotely.

Ren: "You're not going after them. Not yet."

Kaito: "Why?"

Ren: "Because I said so."

Kaito: "You're not even here."

Ren: "And yet I'm still the smartest person in the room."

Kira: "He has a point."

Kaito: "Nobody asked you."

Scene 3 — Setting: Training courtyard.

Sora uses the disturbance to teach tracking.

Sora: "If you only look for power, you will miss intention."

Rei senses an Echo residue.

Rei: "Someone passed through here. Recently."

Shin: "How do you know?"

Rei: "The Echo is still moving."

Shin looks impressed.

Scene 4 — Setting: Forest trail.

The group tracks a hidden training site.

Kira: "This isn't a Veil camp."

Akira: "How do you know?"

Kira: "No guards. No supplies. Somebody wanted the place abandoned."

Rei: "A message."

Scene 5 — Setting: Abandoned training site.

They find evidence of Haru's presence but not Haru himself.

Mina: "That's his jacket."

Rei freezes.

Kaito: "No."

Rei: "He wouldn't—"

Akira: "Don't finish that sentence until you know."

Scene 6 — Setting: Same site.

A Veil symbol appears on the wall.

Rei: "Haru."

Kaito: "We don't know that."

Rei: "Then why does it feel like we do?"

Scene 7 — Setting: Sora's house, evening.

Astra appears to Rei.

Rei: "You knew about the Veil before I did."

Astra: "Yes."

Rei: "And you knew Haru could be pulled toward them."

Astra: "I knew he was hurting."

Rei: "That's not an answer."

Astra: "It is the answer I can give you."

Scene 8 — Setting: Same room.

Rei: "Why do you keep protecting me from the truth?"

Astra: "Because truth without preparation can be another kind of weapon."

Rei: "Then prepare me."

Astra looks at him.

Astra: "I am trying."

Scene 9 — Setting: Veil safehouse, unknown location.

Haru trains with a masked Veil operative.

Operative: "Again."

Haru attacks.

Operative: "You're fighting angry."

Haru: "Good."

Operative: "Anger makes you predictable."

Haru: "Then teach me something better."

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil safehouse.

The operative hands Haru a black insignia.

Operative: "You want answers? Earn them."

Haru looks at it.

Haru: "What happens if I fail?"

Operative: "Then you learn why the Veil doesn't carry the weak."

Scene 11 — Setting: Sora's house, night.

Rei stands outside alone.

Kaito joins him.

Kaito: "We're getting him back."

Rei: "You don't know that."

Kaito: "No. But I'm going to act like I do until we prove it."

Rei smiles faintly.

Rei: "That's a terrible plan."

Kaito: "Yeah. It's ours."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 10: THE LEADER

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's house, morning.

Sora announces a team leadership test.

Sora: "One of you will lead today's exercise."

Kaito: "Me."

Rei: "You didn't even let him finish."

Kaito: "Didn't need to."

Akira: "No."

Kaito: "Excuse me?"

Akira: "You're not ready."

Scene 2 — Setting: Courtyard.

Akira is selected as leader.

Kaito is visibly annoyed.

Yuna: "You look like you're about to explode."

Kaito: "I'm fine."

Yuna: "That's twice today you've lied."

Kaito: "Keep counting."

Scene 3 — Setting: Forest obstacle course.

Akira assigns positions.

Akira: "Rei, center. Kaito, pressure. Kira and Yuna, recon. Mina and Shin, support."

The team moves.

Rei: "He's good."

Kaito: "I know."

Rei: "Jealous?"

Kaito: "Competitive."

Scene 4 — Setting: Forest course.

A trap triggers. Kira and Yuna are separated.

Kira: "We're cut off."

Yuna: "I noticed."

Kira: "Then stop staring at the wall."

Yuna: "I'm looking for the mechanism."

Kira: "And I'm looking for an exit."

They exchange a look.

Kira: "Together?"

Yuna: "Obviously."

Scene 5 — Setting: Forest course.

Mina heals a minor injury on Shin.

Shin: "You could have left me."

Mina: "No."

Shin: "Why?"

Mina: "Because we're a team."

Shin pauses.

Shin: "Still getting used to that."

Scene 6 — Setting: Forest course.

Akira makes a bad call and the team gets boxed in.

Kaito: "We need to move now."

Akira: "Hold."

Kaito: "We're out of room."

Rei: "Kaito's right."

Akira looks at him.

Rei: "Not because he's Kaito. Because he's right."

Scene 7 — Setting: Forest course.

Akira changes the plan.

Akira: "Rei, take point."

Rei: "You sure?"

Akira: "I'm leading. You're moving. Go."

Rei grins.

Rei: "Yes, sir."

Scene 8 — Setting: Forest course.

Rei uses reinforcement and swordwork to break through. Kaito follows with Echo Drive. Kira and Yuna close the flank.

Kaito: "Don't get ahead of me."

Rei: "Catch me."

Kaito: "Gladly."

Scene 9 — Setting: Course finish line.

They complete the test.

Sora: "Akira."

Akira: "I failed."

Sora: "You adjusted. That's leadership."

Scene 10 — Setting: Porch, sunset.

Kaito sits beside Akira.

Kaito: "You're still better at leading."

Akira: "For now."

Kaito looks at him.

Akira: "Strength changes. Judgment has to keep up."

Kaito smiles.

Kaito: "I'll remember that."

Scene 11 — Setting: Porch.

Rei and Kaito walk away.

Kaito: "I'm still surpassing you."

Rei: "You say that like it's new."

Kaito: "It isn't."

Rei: "Good."

Kaito: "Good?"

Rei: "Wouldn't be fun otherwise."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 11: ASTRa'S MEMORY

Scene 1 — Setting: Rei's dream, silver void.

Astra appears older and clearer than before.

Rei: "You look different."

Astra: "Because you are seeing more."

Rei: "Show me."

Astra: "Not yet."

Rei: "Why?"

Astra: "Because you still think memories belong to the past."

Scene 2 — Setting: Dream, fragmented landscape.

Rei sees a younger version of himself near a strange silver tree. Astra stands beside him.

Young Rei: "Are you real?"

Astra: "For you, yes."

Rei: "Have I met you before?"

Astra: "Many times."

Present Rei: "I don't remember."

Astra: "That is what scares me."

Scene 3 — Setting: Master's house, morning.

Rei wakes shaken.

Mina: "Nightmare?"

Rei: "Memory. I think."

Mina: "Want to talk?"

Rei: "Not yet."

Mina: "Okay. But don't disappear into your head."

Scene 4 — Setting: Training hall.

Sora sees Rei's distracted expression.

Sora: "Astra showed you something."

Rei: "You knew she would."

Sora: "I knew she might."

Rei: "Who was she?"

Sora: "Someone who knew your family before you did."

Scene 5 — Setting: Training hall.

Rei: "And Kaito?"

Sora pauses.

Sora: "You asked about your family."

Rei: "I'm asking about his."

Sora: "Those questions are closer than you realize."

Scene 6 — Setting: Dining room.

Kaito catches Rei staring.

Kaito: "What?"

Rei: "Nothing."

Kaito: "That's your worst lie."

Rei: "I was thinking about you."

Kaito: "That sounds threatening."

Rei laughs.

Scene 7 — Setting: Porch.

Kira asks Rei if he is okay.

Kira: "You're looking at Kaito differently."

Rei: "Everyone keeps noticing everything."

Kira: "It's a useful habit."

Rei: "You're nosy."

Kira: "Also true."

Scene 8 — Setting: Porch.

Kira leans closer.

Kira: "Whatever you're afraid to ask him, ask."

Rei: "What if I don't like the answer?"

Kira: "Then at least you'll hate the truth instead of a guess."

Rei looks at her.

Rei: "You're good at this."

Kira: "At what?"

Rei: "Making people talk."

Kira: "Maybe I'm just good at making you nervous."

Scene 9 — Setting: Veil safehouse.

Haru completes a difficult test.

Operative: "You learn quickly."

Haru: "I had good teachers."

Operative: "Your friends?"

Haru's face tightens.

Haru: "They weren't there when I needed them."

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil safehouse.

Operative: "Then stop waiting for them."

Haru: "Maybe I already did."

But his voice shakes.

Scene 11 — Setting: Silver void.

Astra: "You are approaching the memory that explains why you can copy Echo."

Rei: "And Kaito?"

Astra: "His blood remembers something yours does not."

Rei: "What does that mean?"

Astra: "It means your rivalry may be older than either of you."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 12: TWO KINDS OF POWER

Scene 1 — Setting: Courtyard, morning.

Kaito and Akira spar.

Akira's technique is precise; Kaito's power is explosive.

Kaito: "Stop moving."

Akira: "Make me."

Kaito: "Gladly."

Scene 2 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito uses Echo Drive and compresses power into a short-range punch.

Akira blocks but slides backward.

Akira: "Better."

Kaito: "You said that like it hurt."

Akira: "It did."

Kaito smiles.

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei watches.

Rei: "Power versus technique."

Shin: "Power loses if it becomes predictable."

Rei: "And technique loses if it can't stop power."

Shin: "Now you're learning."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Yuna and Kira spar.

Kira's afterimages confuse Yuna.

Yuna: "You're cheating."

Kira: "It's called a technique."

Yuna: "It's annoying."

Kira: "Thank you."

Scene 5 — Setting: Courtyard.

Mina and Shin work together to predict movement and set healing zones.

Shin: "Your staff keeps you too close."

Mina: "Your analysis keeps you too far away."

Shin: "Then we balance each other."

Mina smiles.

Mina: "Maybe."

Scene 6 — Setting: Kitchen.

Kira steals a piece of food from Kaito's plate.

Kaito: "Seriously?"

Kira: "You weren't eating it."

Kaito: "I was thinking about eating it."

Kira: "Thinking isn't eating."

Rei: "She's got you there."

Kaito: "Why is everybody against me?"

Scene 7 — Setting: Kitchen.

Mina watches Rei laugh with Kira and Kaito.

Yuna notices.

Yuna: "You okay?"

Mina: "Yeah."

Yuna: "You don't look okay."

Mina: "I am."

Yuna: "You really don't have to lie to me."

Mina: "I'm not jealous."

Yuna: "I didn't say jealous."

Mina goes silent.

Yuna smiles knowingly.

Scene 8 — Setting: Hallway.

Mina catches Rei.

Mina: "Kira's fun."

Rei: "Yeah."

Mina: "You like her."

Rei: "I like you too."

Mina stops.

Rei realizes what he said.

Rei: "I mean—"

Mina smiles.

Mina: "I know what you meant."

She walks away before he can recover.

Scene 9 — Setting: Porch.

Kaito talks with Kira.

Kaito: "You know you're trouble, right?"

Kira: "So I've been told."

Kaito: "You make Rei nervous."

Kira: "You jealous?"

Kaito: "Maybe."

Kira: "Honest answer."

Kaito: "Don't get used to it."

Scene 10 — Setting: Porch.

Kira: "You don't have to compete with Rei over everything."

Kaito: "I know."

Kira: "Then why do you?"

Kaito: "Because when I'm beside him, I know exactly who I want to become."

Kira looks at him, surprised.

Kaito: "Don't tell him I said that."

Kira: "Your secret is safe."

Scene 11 — Setting: Master's house, night.

Sora watches the seven sleeping areas from the hallway.

Sora: "They're finally becoming people before becoming weapons."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 13: THE VEIL RANKS

Scene 1 — Setting: Veil underground chamber.

Haru is introduced to a ranking structure: Initiate, Seeker, Handler, Warden, and higher unseen ranks.

A Veil leader: "You are an Initiate."

Haru: "For how long?"

Leader: "Until your actions answer that question."

Scene 2 — Setting: Training chamber.

Haru is paired against another Initiate.

The fight is controlled but intense.

Haru wins by adapting rather than overpowering.

Leader: "You learn from pain."

Haru: "Everybody does."

Leader: "Most people just don't admit it."

Scene 3 — Setting: Master's training hall.

The group learns the Veil has increased activity.

Ren: "They're recruiting."

Rei: "How many?"

Ren: "Enough to worry me."

Kaito: "Then we get stronger."

Ren: "You say that like it's a switch."

Kaito: "No. It's a choice."

Scene 4 — Setting: Training hall.

Sora explains that the Veil does not simply want power.

Sora: "They want a world where awakened people stop hiding."

Mina: "And they think distortion is the way."

Sora: "Some do. Others simply want control."

Rei: "So what do we believe?"

Sora: "You decide that yourselves."

Scene 5 — Setting: Forest.

Rei and Kaito train together.

Rei: "Again."

Kaito: "You sure?"

Rei: "Always."

They charge.

Their weapons clash.

Scene 6 — Setting: Forest.

Kaito uses Echo Drive to change angles while Rei uses reinforcement to absorb impacts.

Kaito: "You're getting harder to knock down."

Rei: "You're getting harder to catch."

Kaito: "Good."

Rei: "Good."

Scene 7 — Setting: Forest.

They stop, exhausted.

Kaito: "You know what I hate?"

Rei: "A long list."

Kaito: "That when I beat you, it feels like luck."

Rei: "And when I beat you?"

Kaito: "That feels like theft."

They laugh.

Scene 8 — Setting: Ren's basement, night.

Ren notices a signal that resembles Haru's Echo.

Ren: "No way."

He calls Sora.

Ren: "I found him."

Scene 9 — Setting: Sora's office.

Ren sends the coordinates.

Sora: "We don't move yet."

Ren: "Sora—"

Sora: "If Haru is with the Veil, charging in may push him farther away."

Ren: "So what do we do?"

Sora: "Give him a reason to come back."

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil chamber.

Haru receives his first assignment.

Leader: "Bring us information about the silver vessel."

Haru's face falls.

Haru: "Rei?"

Leader: "Your friend."

Haru: "He's not your target."

Leader: "Then prove his value."

Scene 11 — Setting: Veil chamber.

Haru grips the assignment.

Haru: "I said I'll get the information."

He does not say what he plans to do with it.

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 14: THE HOUSE BECOMES HOME

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's house, rainy morning.

The group is stuck inside.

Kaito: "So what do normal people do on days like this?"

Mina: "Stay inside."

Kaito: "Boring."

Kira: "You're the reason nobody lets you plan anything."

Scene 2 — Setting: Living room.

They play a card game.

Yuna: "You're cheating."

Kaito: "I'm winning."

Shin: "Those are not mutually exclusive."

Everyone laughs.

Scene 3 — Setting: Kitchen.

Rei and Mina cook together.

Mina: "You're terrible at cutting vegetables."

Rei: "I'm using a sword wrong."

Mina: "Please don't use your Echo sword on dinner."

Rei: "No promises."

Mina: "Rei."

Rei: "Fine."

Scene 4 — Setting: Kitchen.

Mina reaches for a pan at the same time as Rei. Their hands touch.

They both pause.

Mina: "You can let go."

Rei: "I know."

Neither moves for a second.

Mina smiles.

Mina: "You're really bad at hiding when you're nervous."

Rei: "I'm not nervous."

Mina: "You're literally holding a pan like it's a shield."

Rei laughs. Mina leans in and gives him a quick kiss.

Rei freezes.

Mina: "Now you look nervous."

Rei: "...I hate you."

Mina: "No, you don't."

Rei smiles.

Rei: "No. I don't."

Mina takes the pan.

Mina: "Come on, chef."

Scene 5 — Setting: Living room.

Kira tells stories about Ren as a child.

Kaito: "No way."

Kira: "He cried over a broken game console."

Rei: "Ren?"

Kira: "For two hours."

Kaito: "I respect him more now."

Scene 6 — Setting: Hallway.

Kira and Kaito are alone.

Kaito: "You're different when you're talking about home."

Kira: "Everybody is."

Kaito: "Maybe."

Kira: "You ever talk about yours?"

Kaito goes quiet.

Kira: "You don't have to."

Kaito: "Someday."

Kira: "I'll listen."

Scene 7 — Setting: Porch, rain.

Rei and Kira sit under the roof.

Kira: "You ever wonder what would happen if you stopped competing with Kaito?"

Rei: "I'd get bored."

Kira: "That's not an answer."

Rei: "No. I think I'd lose a piece of myself. He's the person who keeps me moving."

Kira: "And Mina?"

Rei looks at her.

Kira: "Never mind."

Scene 8 — Setting: Porch.

Rei: "You like making me uncomfortable."

Kira: "A little."

Rei: "Why?"

Kira: "Because you're cute when you don't know what to say."

Rei actually goes silent.

Kira laughs.

Kira: "There it is."

Scene 9 — Setting: Hallway.

Mina sees them laughing from inside.

She smiles rather than getting angry, then quietly walks away.

Scene 10 — Setting: Mina's room.

Mina sits with Yuna.

Mina: "I don't know what I'm doing."

Yuna: "Neither do I."

Mina: "That's supposed to help?"

Yuna: "A little."

Mina laughs.

Yuna: "You don't have to win someone's attention. Just be honest about what you feel."

Scene 11 — Setting: Living room, night.

Everyone falls asleep around the room after the storm.

Sora turns off the lights.

Sora: "Home is not the place you sleep. It's the place you can finally stop pretending."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 15: THE SECOND MISSION

Scene 1 — Setting: City transit station, afternoon.

Ren guides them remotely.

Ren: "Echo disturbance inside the station. Civilians everywhere."

Sora: "No public exposure."

Kaito: "Understood."

Ren: "I'm recording that because you almost never say it."

Scene 2 — Setting: Underground platform.

The group splits.

Akira: "No heroics."

Rei: "Looking at Kaito?"

Akira: "Looking at both of you."

Kaito: "Fair."

Scene 3 — Setting: Service tunnel.

A distorted user attacks.

Kira uses afterimages to draw the enemy away from civilians.

Kira: "Rei, now!"

Rei cuts through the opening.

Kira: "Nice."

Rei: "You too."

Kira smiles.

Scene 4 — Setting: Service tunnel.

Kaito uses Echo Drive to cross the tunnel, then compresses power into both fists.

Kaito: "Impact Chain!"

He lands three controlled strikes, stopping before the final blow.

Scene 5 — Setting: Platform.

Mina heals a civilian's Echo instability.

Mina: "You're okay. Breathe."

Civilian: "How did you—"

Mina: "Just breathe."

Scene 6 — Setting: Tunnel.

Rei sees the distorted user's Echo pattern and recognizes a fragment connected to his own ability.

Rei: "This isn't random."

Shin: "Explain."

Rei: "Someone taught him how to distort."

Scene 7 — Setting: Tunnel.

The enemy escapes through a Veil gate.

Ren: "Don't follow."

Rei: "I can catch him."

Kaito: "Rei."

Rei stops.

Kaito: "Don't make us chase you."

Scene 8 — Setting: Rooftop after mission.

Rei is frustrated.

Rei: "We had him."

Kaito: "We had civilians too."

Rei: "I know."

Kaito: "Then act like you know."

Rei: "Stop talking to me like I'm stupid."

Kaito: "Then stop making me remind you."

Scene 9 — Setting: Rooftop.

Mina steps between them.

Mina: "Enough."

Rei and Kaito both stop.

Mina: "You're both angry because you care. That's not a reason to hurt each other."

Scene 10 — Setting: Rooftop, sunset.

Kira approaches Rei.

Kira: "You know what the worst thing about being strong is?"

Rei: "What?"

Kira: "People start expecting you to never be scared."

Rei: "And what do you do?"

Kira: "Get scared anyway. Then move."

Scene 11 — Setting: Ren's basement, night.

Ren reviews the footage.

Ren: "The Veil is learning too."

He looks at Haru's old photo on the desk.

Ren: "Haru... what are you doing?"

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 16: THE FIRST FRACTURE

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's house, morning.

Kaito notices Rei skipping breakfast.

Kaito: "You eating?"

Rei: "Later."

Kaito: "That's not an answer."

Rei: "I'm fine."

Kaito: "You're starting again."

Scene 2 — Setting: Training courtyard.

Rei trains alone, repeatedly striking a target.

Sora: "Stop."

Rei: "I'm not done."

Sora: "That's why I said stop."

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei admits he hates feeling like everyone has to save him.

Rei: "Every time I move first, someone tells me I should've waited. Every time I ask for help, I feel weaker."

Sora: "Then learn the difference between weakness and trust."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito overhears.

Kaito: "You think asking us for help makes you weaker?"

Rei: "Sometimes."

Kaito: "That's insulting."

Rei: "Why?"

Kaito: "Because you're acting like we're carrying you. We're running beside you."

Scene 5 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei looks away.

Rei: "Maybe I don't want to be carried."

Kaito: "Then don't be. Just stop pretending running alone is the only way to prove you're strong."

Scene 6 — Setting: Hallway.

Mina hugs Rei briefly.

Mina: "You're allowed to lean on people."

Rei: "I know."

Mina: "You're saying that a lot."

Rei: "Because I want it to be true."

Mina: "Then let it become true."

Scene 7 — Setting: Porch.

Kira tells Rei about Ren's support role.

Kira: "Ren isn't fighting beside us, but he's still part of every mission."

Rei: "Yeah."

Kira: "Being useful doesn't always mean being in the middle of the fight."

Rei: "You really do talk like you know me."

Kira: "Maybe I do."

Scene 8 — Setting: Veil training chamber.

Haru is promoted to Seeker.

Leader: "You earned it."

Haru: "What now?"

Leader: "Now you learn what the Veil believes."

Haru: "And if I disagree?"

Leader: "Then you learn why you are here."

Scene 9 — Setting: Veil archive.

Haru sees a file containing Rei's family name.

Haru: "Amakawa..."

His hands tremble.

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil archive.

Haru discovers another family name beside it.

Haru: "Kaito..."

He closes the file.

Haru: "No."

Scene 11 — Setting: Master's house, night.

Astra appears to Rei.

Astra: "The first fracture has appeared."

Rei: "In me?"

Astra: "In everything around you."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 17: BLOODLINES

Scene 1 — Setting: Sora's study, morning.

Rei asks about Kaito's family.

Sora: "Not yet."

Rei: "You keep saying that."

Sora: "Because the answer is dangerous."

Scene 2 — Setting: Study.

Sora shows Rei an old Echo record with two matching resonance signatures.

Rei: "Those are ours."

Sora: "Similar. Not identical."

Rei: "But connected."

Sora: "Possibly."

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito catches Rei staring.

Kaito: "You're doing it again."

Rei: "Doing what?"

Kaito: "Looking at me like I'm a math problem."

Rei: "Maybe you're complicated."

Kaito: "I'm actually pretty simple. I punch things."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito asks Rei directly.

Kaito: "What did Sora tell you?"

Rei: "Not enough."

Kaito: "Then tell me when he does."

Rei: "I will."

Kaito: "Good. Whatever it is, we deal with it together."

Scene 5 — Setting: Kitchen.

Mina and Kira talk.

Mina: "Do you actually like Rei?"

Kira: "Yes."

Mina blinks.

Kira: "I also like Kaito."

Mina: "You're not making this easy."

Kira: "Wasn't trying to."

Mina laughs despite herself.

Scene 6 — Setting: Kitchen.

Kira: "But I'm not here to collect people."

Mina: "Good."

Kira: "I want them to figure out what they feel."

Mina: "And what do you feel?"

Kira: "Enough to care. Not enough to lie about it."

Scene 7 — Setting: Training hall.

Rei and Kaito spar harder than usual.

Kaito: "You hesitated."

Rei: "You noticed."

Kaito: "I notice everything when it's you."

Rei smiles.

Rei: "That's creepy."

Kaito: "Competitive."

Scene 8 — Setting: Training hall.

Their weapons clash until both are exhausted.

Kaito: "Why do you always have to make me chase you?"

Rei: "Because you keep chasing."

Kaito: "Maybe I just don't like seeing your back."

Rei: "Then catch up."

Scene 9 — Setting: Sora's study.

Sora and Astra communicate indirectly through Rei's vessel.

Astra: "You owe him the truth."

Sora: "Not yet."

Astra: "You said that once before."

Sora: "And I was wrong."

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil archive.

Haru learns that his family once worked with people connected to the Amakawas.

Haru: "They knew each other."

Leader: "Yes."

Haru: "Then why did nobody tell us?"

Leader: "Because some histories are safer buried."

Scene 11 — Setting: Veil archive.

Haru: "Maybe that's why everyone keeps lying."

Leader: "Maybe."

Haru looks at the file.

Haru: "Maybe that's why I hate secrets."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 18: THE SEVEN'S FIRST VICTORY

Scene 1 — Setting: Forest training grounds, morning.

Sora announces a full-team combat simulation.

Sora: "No individual scores. One score."

Kaito: "That's new."

Sora: "Exactly."

Scene 2 — Setting: Forest.

Akira calls the first formation.

Akira: "We move together."

Rei: "And if it breaks?"

Akira: "You adapt."

Rei smiles.

Scene 3 — Setting: Forest.

The simulated enemies attack.

Kira and Yuna flank while Kaito creates an opening.

Kaito: "Left!"

Kira: "Already there!"

Rei: "Right!"

Yuna: "Covered!"

Scene 4 — Setting: Forest.

Mina's healing keeps Shin moving after a hit.

Shin: "You didn't have to use that much."

Mina: "I know."

Shin: "Then why?"

Mina: "Because I knew we'd need you."

Scene 5 — Setting: Forest.

Rei reinforces his body and blocks a simulated heavy strike.

Kaito uses the opening to land a compressed punch.

Kaito: "That one was yours."

Rei: "Don't get sentimental."

Kaito: "Wasn't planning to."

Scene 6 — Setting: Forest.

Akira gives up command for a moment.

Akira: "Rei."

Rei: "Yeah?"

Akira: "Call it."

Rei looks surprised.

Rei: "Everyone, switch formation!"

They move instantly.

Scene 7 — Setting: Forest.

The seven execute a coordinated attack.

Rei's sword pins the target's route.

Kaito crashes through the center.

Kira and Yuna cut off escape.

Mina shields the rear.

Shin calls timing.

Akira finishes.

Scene 8 — Setting: Forest, aftermath.

Everyone collapses laughing.

Kaito: "We actually did it."

Yuna: "Don't sound shocked."

Kaito: "I am shocked."

Kira: "At yourself?"

Kaito: "At all of you."

Scene 9 — Setting: Forest.

Akira looks at Rei.

Akira: "You led well."

Rei: "You let me."

Akira: "Exactly."

Scene 10 — Setting: Forest sunset.

Sora speaks to them.

Sora: "Today you stopped fighting beside each other and started fighting for each other."

Silence.

Sora: "Remember the difference."

Scene 11 — Setting: Forest sunset.

Rei looks at the group.

Rei: "We actually feel like a team."

Kaito: "Don't get used to it."

Mina: "He's going to ruin the moment."

Everyone laughs.

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 19: HARU'S CHOICE

Scene 1 — Setting: Veil headquarters, night.

Haru is given an order to identify Rei's weaknesses.

Leader: "You know him better than any of us."

Haru: "Yeah."

Leader: "Use that."

Scene 2 — Setting: Veil corridor.

Haru walks alone.

Haru: "Rei's weakness isn't his Echo."

He clenches his fist.

Haru: "It's that he still thinks he has to save everybody."

Scene 3 — Setting: Master's house, morning.

Rei wakes after another Astra dream.

Astra: "Haru is close to a decision."

Rei: "Can you see him?"

Astra: "I can feel the choice he is making."

Scene 4 — Setting: Training hall.

Rei asks Sora to let them search for Haru.

Sora: "Not yet."

Rei: "How long are we supposed to wait?"

Sora: "Until rescue does not become another word for revenge."

Rei goes quiet.

Scene 5 — Setting: Hallway.

Kaito follows Rei.

Kaito: "You're angry."

Rei: "Yeah."

Kaito: "Good."

Rei: "Why does everyone keep saying good when I'm upset?"

Kaito: "Because you're finally admitting it."

Scene 6 — Setting: Porch.

Mina joins them.

Mina: "We will get Haru back."

Rei: "What if he doesn't want to come back?"

Mina: "Then we'll ask him why."

Kaito: "And listen."

Rei: "Even if we hate the answer?"

Mina: "Especially then."

Scene 7 — Setting: Veil chamber.

Haru refuses to reveal Rei's private weakness.

Leader: "You disobeyed."

Haru: "I gave you what mattered."

Leader: "You gave us what you wanted us to have."

Haru: "Maybe that's all you'll get."

Scene 8 — Setting: Veil chamber.

The leader smiles.

Leader: "Good. You are learning to think for yourself."

Haru looks uneasy.

Scene 9 — Setting: Veil corridor.

Haru sees a file about the Resonance network.

Haru: "They're moving faster."

He realizes the Veil's plan could hurt the city.

Scene 10 — Setting: Veil exit.

Haru looks toward the city.

Haru: "I wanted strength."

He closes his eyes.

Haru: "I didn't ask for this."

Scene 11 — Setting: Master's house, night.

Rei looks toward the distant city.

Rei: "He's still in there."

Astra: "Yes."

Rei: "Then we haven't lost him."

Astra: "No. Not yet."

CUT TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 20: THE ROAD AHEAD

Scene 1 — Setting: Master's house, early morning.

Several months have passed. The students move through the house like it is home now. Weapons hang beside the door. Training marks cover the courtyard.

Kaito: "You're late."

Rei: "You're early."

Kaito: "Same difference."

Rei: "Not even close."

Scene 2 — Setting: Courtyard.

Rei now wields a refined single Echo sword and layered reinforcement.

Kaito uses Echo Drive and compressed gauntlet strikes.

Mina controls her staff and healing.

Kira moves through afterimages.

Akira, Yuna, and Shin have refined their own specialties.

Sora watches silently.

Scene 3 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kaito and Rei spar.

Kaito: "One day I'm beating you clean."

Rei: "You say that every morning."

Kaito: "Because one morning it'll be true."

Rei: "I'll be ready."

Scene 4 — Setting: Courtyard.

Kira watches them.

Kira: "You two are exhausting."

Mina: "And somehow you encourage them."

Kira: "Maybe I like watching idiots improve."

Mina: "Fair."

Scene 5 — Setting: Porch.

Ren calls in.

Ren: "Good news."

Kaito: "You sound suspicious."

Ren: "The Veil's network moved."

Rei: "That's not good news."

Ren: "I know. The good news is I know where they're going next."

Scene 6 — Setting: Porch.

Sora looks at the group.

Sora: "Training ends today."

Everyone goes silent.

Kaito: "We're ready?"

Sora: "No."

Kaito: "Then why stop?"

Sora: "Because readiness is not a feeling. It is a decision."

Scene 7 — Setting: Sora's study.

Sora gives them a final lesson.

Sora: "Power will ask you to become something. The Veil will ask you to become useful. Fear will ask you to become cruel."

He looks at each of them.

Sora: "Do not let any of them decide who you are."

Scene 8 — Setting: Silver void.

Astra stands before Rei.

Astra: "I can lend you more of my power now."

Rei: "Why?"

Astra: "Because I finally believe you will not use it to become what hurt you."

Rei: "And what are you afraid I'll become?"

Astra: "Someone who thinks love must be earned through strength."

Rei is silent.

Scene 9 — Setting: Master's courtyard, sunset.

The seven stand together.

Akira: "We're not ready."

Yuna: "Speak for yourself."

Shin: "Statistically, he is correct."

Kira: "You're both terrible at motivation."

Kaito: "Good. Then let's get better."

Scene 10 — Setting: Courtyard, sunset.

Rei looks at Kaito.

Rei: "Still trying to surpass me?"

Kaito: "Until the day I die."

Rei: "Good."

Kaito: "You better keep getting stronger."

Rei: "You too."

They bump fists.

Scene 11 — Setting: Mountain road outside the Master's house, night.

The group leaves for their first major mission as a unified team. Ren's voice comes through the communicator.

Ren: "You hear me?"

Kaito: "Loud and clear."

Ren: "Good. Because I've got a lot to tell you."

Rei looks ahead.

Rei: "Let's go."

Narration: "Strength is not the distance between you and everyone else. Sometimes, it is the distance you are willing to walk beside them."

Final panel: Deep beneath the city, Haru stands before a Veil insignia. He looks at the same road the others have taken.

Haru: "I haven't forgotten you."

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF CURRENTLY DEVELOPED ARC 2 MATERIAL

ECHO — WORLD-BUILDING REFERENCE

This reference clarifies the canon established by the current script and should guide future chapters. It is not a replacement for the story.

ECHO AND THE PUBLIC

Echo users are uncommon, and most ordinary people do not understand what they are seeing when an Echo incident occurs. This secrecy is one reason the Veil can operate without the entire world immediately understanding its existence. Echo incidents can be mistaken for accidents or unexplained physical events, while trained users and people like Ren recognize the signatures behind them.

ECHO AS A POWER

Echo is not simply a colored energy blast. It can reinforce the body, enhance physical movement, conduct through compatible weapons, form barriers, heal, and develop individualized techniques. Mastery depends on control, intent, conditioning, and understanding one's own Echo.

ECHO-COMPATIBLE WEAPONS

The weapons Sora gives the students are physical weapons specifically designed and reinforced to conduct Echo safely. Rei's sword, Kaito's gauntlets, Mina's staff, and Kira's twin daggers are real weapons. Echo is channeled through them to increase their performance and enable specialized techniques. Future scenes should never imply that these weapons simply materialize from Echo unless a separate technique is explicitly established.

THE VEIL

The Veil is organized rather than being a collection of random villains. Its members have ranks, training, ideology, intelligence, and long-term plans. Haru's rise through the ranks should happen gradually and in parallel with the protagonists' growth.

SORA'S ROLE

Sora is not merely a stronger fighter. He understands Echo history, training methodology, compatible weapons, and the dangers of uncontrolled power. He teaches the students to make choices rather than simply handing them stronger abilities.

ASTRA

Astra's connection to Rei is an old mystery. Her history should be revealed gradually through memories, conversations, and discoveries. Her increasing willingness to lend Rei power should be earned through trust. Her story ultimately connects to Rei's family and the larger mystery surrounding Kaito's family.

RELATIONSHIPS

Romance should be visible enough that the audience does not have to guess whether feelings are real, while still allowing subtle chemistry between major moments. Rei and Mina have mutual romantic feelings with increasingly clear confirmation. Kira openly acknowledges attraction to both Rei and Kaito. Kaito has admitted that he likes Kira. These relationships should create emotional complications without replacing the central action, friendship, rivalry, and character arcs.

PACING

Future chapters should alternate action with character life: training, meals, jokes, arguments, recovery, missions, mysteries, emotional conversations, and quiet moments. Major revelations should have buildup. Supporting characters should receive scenes where they matter independently of Rei.

DIALOGUE AND INTERNALITY

Dialogue should sound spontaneous and character-specific. Characters can interrupt, joke, dodge questions, become defensive, or say the wrong thing. Selective internal monologue should reveal thoughts that characters would not say aloud, especially Rei's doubts and Astra-related discoveries. Occasional memorable quotes should emerge from the characters' actual struggles rather than being inserted only to sound dramatic.

ACTION CLARITY

Major fights should establish location, distance, movement, weapon use, Echo effects, and consequences. Every important attack should make clear what changed because of it.