

Thieves outside the Box Pilot

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A short story

Brčko District, 2020-2021

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Foreign title(s): 怪盗の創造性パイロット版

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*In memory of Kazuhiko Katō
(a.k.a. Monkey Punch)*

The previous year, Kamakura Shio (18) was the talk of the school when she was given the boot from the student council due to inappropriate behaviour. Shio had simultaneously given up on the main position of a prominent phantom thief gang, known as the Phantom Creathieves, and went on the lookout for a new leader. Koikon Izumi (17, soon 18) would be involved in a student council president raffle held by the student council themselves. But, it came with a twist.

In fact, Izumi had won the raffle and became the student council president. However, he passed out from being shot with a dart gun before even giving a speech. He faced Shio, the same student council exile, in a dark room, far from school. She explained that he would become the leader of her band, or else face humiliation by releasing footage engineered by Nishiki Asumi (17), displaying Izumi in a girls' locker room. It would convince anyone and could land him in trouble, despite being fake.

He agreed to join, almost entirely ignoring the footage, and became their leader. Thus, the Phantom Creathieves were back in business. Three days have since passed.

“You have the privilege of picking your first valuable to steal,” Shio said, “just make sure they’re not your favourite groceries or straight-up money.”

He could not think of anything valuable to steal, as he had never stolen anything before. Sometime later, they have been looking at an item worth several hundred-thousand yen, a tear-shaped crystal of pristine green colour, almost emerald-like.

It was the Gem of Sapporo, situated in a museum in Shinjuku, Tokyo. A few glances would prove enough for Izumi to turn around and proclaim:

“This gem is practically begging to be stolen. We’ll grant its wish.”

Tokiwa Kano (18) smirked. “Now you’re thinking like a thief!”

Present day; Izumi and the gang had finished dressing up for the “occasion” and entered the garage. Izumi Hiyori (17) had also just finished smoking a horrible cigarette before they hopped in.

“I’ll drive, Izumi,” Shio said, “but you can be in the front seat.”

“It has enough breathing space, right?”

Shio laughed. “Of course it does! If you can’t breathe, just open the window. I can handle the cold.”

He nodded as he sat down in the front seat of a custom, matte black, Nissan NV200, with a hidden registration plate only shown during the day. It was nine in the evening when the thieves headed to Shinjuku, having already hopped on the expressway. The moon was shining brightly.

“Did you steal this vehicle too?” Izumi asked Shio.

“No, we didn’t. We bought it with our hard-earned money.”

“Hard-earned, you say? But this van was still expensive, right?”

“So what? I told you, stealing cars is just not something we do.”

“...Alright then.”

They left the expressway after traversing it for twenty minutes and arrived at a large museum complex. Having parked their van, they got out, wearing outfits similar to those of the guards, neatly sewed up by Kano. They hid behind some conveniently-placed bushes, just outside the museum.

“Alright, watch me get in.”

Izumi then put on a mask to disguise himself further, then stood in front of the doors which required an ID to enter. A few moments passed when a sturdy figure approached the door. Izumi was shaking a little.

“Oh, my, so much pressure... Who is this...?”

Shio peeked out of the bush. “Is it a guard?”

Hiyori would follow. “A handsome guy?”

“It’s a cute girl! Omigosh!”

“Shh,” Shushing, Izumi swiftly covered Kano’s mouth. “They’ll notice us, regardless of gender.”

The doors opened, behind which, indeed, a woman was standing.

Izumi turned back, unblocking Kano's mouth.

"Can I help you?" The tall woman spoke.

"Oh, it just happens to be my turn to guard today, but—"

"You forgot your ID."

Izumi nodded.

"You novices will all be the same... Hurry up, we don't want any unwanted visitors."

Once the guard turned around, Izumi held the doors open so that the rest of thieves could go in.

They entered the large museum. The ceiling hanged way above, a claustrophobe's heaven. Various chandeliers hanged above, albeit all switched off. The first room they were in had the counter where tickets were purchased, the security desk and a souvenir shop. They quickly hid underneath a desk with a monitor on top of it, and a black computer case below that served as a workstation for the security.

Izumi whispered to his peers. "Asumi, you're good at hijacking things, right?"

"Y-you can leave it to me... I will do my best!"

"Let us know if you need help. We're here for you."

"Thank you... See you on the other side, okay?"

"Good luck!"

He watched in bewilderment as Asumi sneaked towards the computer, and crawled inside its monitor. The youngest member of the gang has the most extraordinary skill of them all—being able to traverse digital screens, allowing her to retrieve as many strings of data as she needed. It was something Dynamite¹ wishes they had for their user data extraction. Once Asumi was out of his sight, Izumi turned to the rest.

"Now... let's split up and search for the gem. We'll destroy any evidence if we're unlucky. *I still can't believe how she did it...*"

Shio looked at him with concern. "Aren't you being a little *too* ambitious? The more steps we ought to make, the riskier this mission becomes, I think."

"Let him be, and plus, I love a good challenge! Don't tell me you prefer to play on Easy difficulty!"

¹ Dynamite: Apple Inc. in this universe.

Kano mockingly pointed fingers at Shio.

“Shush, it’s not about me. It’s *his* first time. This should be somewhat simple.”

Shio glanced at Izumi who shook his head.

“Whatever, just be careful.”

“Okay. I’ll let you all know if I have trouble.”

“Likewise. Let’s get this over with.”

Izumi, Hiyori, Shio and Kano scattered all over the museum to look for the gem. In the meantime, Asumi travelled from the PC on the entrance all the way to a PC in the surveillance room, sneaking her way out of the computer screen while another guard was asleep. Asumi pushed the chair outside of the room. After a few swift clicks on the keyboard and mouse, she disabled the surveillance system. She then joined the other thieves in the search for the gem, but not before pushing the man back into the room with a simulation running on all the screens, tricking the guard into thinking everything was well.

Though it had not seemed that way, anyone would raise an eye at the thought of a gang infiltrating a museum for a single gem.

Shio had already checked every crevice of the museum but to no avail. Shio, often serious but elegant, although having excellent night vision, simply could not recognise the Sapporo gem. Everyone else had the same struggle, including Asumi who had come back from the surveillance room. Izumi went his own way to locate the gem.

When he passed through one giant room filled with minerals and another one with semi-precious stones, he noticed, through a large doorway, the Sapporo gem in a box which lay in the middle of an empty room. That is, when he excluded two other guards around it. While aware that breaking into the museum was fairly straightforward, stealing the gem was a different story entirely.

“Dry air... dry air...” Wheezing, Izumi let out a series of coughs.

This attracted the guards as they started walking towards him.

“Why is he so loud?” Shio whispered to the rest. “That’s not very cash money² of him...”

“Don’t be so condescending! He’s a novice, remember? Hold on,

2 Cash money: cool.

Izumin!”

Kano tossed a heavy object into the room next to theirs to revert the guards' focus to the object. They left Izumi alone to inspect thrown object, while Kano crept her way to him.

“Dry... air... dry... dry...”

“Dry air? Whatever do you mean?”

Izumi replied under a heavy breath:

“Rule number one: dry air... is the enemy of... an asthmatic thief!”

The guards suddenly dropped the peculiar subject. Izumi was picked up by Kano and both sneaked out of the museum. Soon they were sitting on the stairs to the entrance. Izumi's coughing calmed down and he was able to think clearly. Hiyori also happened to be outside, having lit another cigarette.

“I come outside for fresh air, but I get to breathe cigarette fumes! What is this?!” Izumi raised both his hands.

Hiyori exhaled a lot of smoke. “I need my fumes, man.”

“But you're not even 20 years old...”

“And you're not the boss of me.”

“But I am.”

“Whatever. What are you doing here anyway? You too, Shika. Aren't you supposed to steal a gem?”

“Well...”

Kano, who has been referred to as Shika, explained what happened to Izumi.

“Meh. Smoking cigarettes is far worse, believe me.”

Kano sighed. “And yet you're smoking anyway...”

Izumi clapped his hands.

“Stop being a leech and come join us, Hiyori.”

“Ugh, alright...”

Before she could even finish smoking, she discarded the cigarette, and Izumi had already taken plenty of fresh air. The two, alongside Kano, walked inside again. Shio opened the door for them because none of them had a key and the doors could only be opened from the inside.

Back there, Shio had laced the drinks with a substance to knock the

gem guards into a slumber. Murdering anyone was out of the question. That was a line the Creathieves would never cross.

Shio placed the drinks on the floor in the gem room. While waiting for the guards, Shio went to a vending machine to grab some drinks while they wait. In this relaxing and calming atmosphere, Hiyori recorded a mundane dialogue between two gem guards, each with a distinct voice, to use as a distraction. While having a drink, Shio noticed the two guards approaching the gem room. They took one sip of their drinks in a minute before collapsing on the floor. Hiyori and Kano walked to the room while the recording was playing on Hiyori's recorder, as the two pretended to talk. They moved the two guards away from the gem room.

Hiyori smirked. "Say, this mission isn't going so bad, eh?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Ugh, even if we say that, to have to work with someone that can't even break in properly—"

"What's going on over there?!" A guard walked towards Hiyori and Kano with loud steps.

"Wait, how many people are guarding this place?!"

"Shhhh, lemme handle this."

"What's going on?!" The guard asked.

"These two just fell asleep, so we're taking them somewhere else."

It was Hiyori who spoke in a deep voice. The pale and blonde girl, besides being a heavy smoker, has a voice range from feminine over masculine to those that are hard to get the hang of.

"Wait, who are you?"

"I'm the new guy."

"You look rather... tomboyish. And your voice!"

"*I'm the least a tomboy can be.* What, do you have an issue with that?"

"No, not really! Whatever, just take these two away from the gem room! I'll guard it myself!"

Hiyori grabbed one of the guards as Kano did the same, and took them into the reception room where they were seated.

"Ugh, this isn't good. One worry more."

“What time is it, Hiyorin?”

“Doesn’t matter. It’s night time. But if you wanna know so badly...
9:35 PM.”

“That’s not too bad! We’ll still be able to make it in time! Hey, I’ll go check on Izumin!”

“On who?”

“I-zu-mi-n.”

Hiyori sighed. “You’ve known him for exactly 10 days, and you already gave him a nickname. You should at least wait a little longer.”

“And what makes you say that?”

“Common sense. Ah, whatever, go check up on him.”

“Okay!” Kano exclaimed as she left the room.

“*Good grief...*”

Having left the reception room, Kano ran toward the bench on the entrance where Izumi would sit, only to see Shio and Asumi instead.

“Guys, did you see Izumin anywhere?”

“Izumi...n?” Shio said. “Are you gonna call me Shion next? Actually, that’s a horrible idea. Please don’t.”

“Why not?”

“I... don’t wanna talk about it.”

Asumi moved her eyes away from the phone screen. “Um... h-he’s sneaking around the gem...”

“The gem? Oh! I don’t think he knows what’s up!”

At a sharp whisper, Kano left the room to pursue him. Izumi hanged out in the semi-precious stone room, unable to contain his wheezing. Kano wrapped her arms around his waist and pulled him back.

“Wait,” she whispered, “do you have a strategy? No, wait... What’s happening?! Izumin?!”

Every pause caused him to wheeze even more.

“H... help me... I don’t... I can’t...”

“I know something that’ll do the trick! Stay put!”

Kano took out her set of colours and a magical brush—both with magical properties, allowing her to both unleash her creative self, but also assist her outside the field—smothered it in white and a slither of grey,

then flicked her hand and spread the colours onto his tongue. Instead of making it dirty, however, the colours dissolved into a powder, which he would swallow. The wheezing immediately stopped.

“H... hey... What was I about to do again?”

“Make a silly mistake, of course! But aww, your innocence is so cute! Just like you.”

“A mistake? Oh... I’m just... really bad with...”

“Dry air? Aww, my cute, asthmatic thief!”

“Is that supposed to make me blush?”

“Hm, maybe. Now come on, let’s get this gem!”

“Okay! Let’s do it!”

“That’s the spirit! Listen up, I have a plan.”

Kano took Hiyori’s recorder (with her permission) and switched on the recording of the conversation between the two gem guards that were, at that moment, still sleeping soundly. They placed the recorder somewhere far from the gem room, so that they have enough time to snatch the crystal. After they increased the volume high enough, the lonesome gem guard could hear the conversation, so he walked slowly towards it. Meanwhile, Kano used her brush to temporarily disable the lasers that were protecting said gem. The coat of colour could only last for 2 minutes, so Izumi had to quickly, yet carefully open the glass box without breaking it.

Placing it on the floor with care, Izumi claimed the Gem of Sapporo. It only took them a few sleeping supplements, one of Hiyori’s many recorders, a disabled surveillance system, and Kano’s trusty brush.

Of course, happiness only lasts so long. As Izumi was about to return the glass to its place, it started slipping from his hands and he was trying to grasp it. However, the glass slipped further away and made a loud crashing sound.

This would be it. No guard would ever ignore something as simple, yet convincing, as glass breaking. The alarm went off immediately.

“Oh God, what do I do? What do I do?!”

“Hey, don’t worry! It happens to the best of us!”

The two made a run for the doors. Hearing the alarm, the rest of the

Creathieves gathered and immediately left the complex before the guards could lock the museum down. Unfortunately for the thieves, the police already made their way to the museum. Atop a police vehicle stood a short, yet voluptuous policewoman, holding a white-blue megaphone, from which she would yell.

“Ah, Phantom Creathieves! Looks like I’ve caught you again! Surrender now and I may give you less time in prison!”

“Wait, how do *you* of all people know about us?!” Izumi pointed at her.

“That’s Inspector Fujiwara to you. Shocked you’ve never heard of my name before. I’m big when it comes to catching criminals, but I’ll get much bigger once I get you Creathieves!”

“That’s quite a bald claim from someone who allegedly never caught them before.”

“Hey! Those are simple slip-ups from my incompetent policemen!”

“And what are you?”

“I’m Fujiwara Sandra, goddammit! Member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, and INTERPOL on occasion! Do you have dementia or something?!”

“A competent policeman wouldn’t spend their time talking to a felon, you know. Especially since we’re still free. Really says about society nowadays...”

“That ego is bigger than the hat you’re wearing! Uh... Hold up, what was your name again?”

“Izumi. Koikon Izumi. Soon-to-be felon.”

“More like, soon-to-be *prisoner!*”

“Ugh, do we *really* have to deal with the big titty policewoman?”

“We already did, Hiyorin,” Shio replied. “Shika, let’s bail.”

As soon as Kano picked Izumi up, the rest of the Creathieves ran for their van with the police behind their backs. They unlocked and opened each of the doors for them to enter through. Kano put Izumi down on the right side of the car while Shio sat down in the front seat on the left. When she attempted to start the car up, she realised the steering wheel was on the right side instead.

“So much for watching Western cartoons...”

What she did not quite realise, however, was that Izumi managed to start the van. And before she could, they sped away.

“Come on, policemen! I ain’t going back home until I catch these Creathieves! Let’s get them!!”

The sirens went off as all police vehicles started up to give chase to the Phantom Creathieves.

Shio’s voice suddenly echoed throughout the vehicle. “Wait! How are you driving this?! Don’t you have a license?!”

“No... But, if I already stole something, it wouldn’t hurt to drive without a license too, right? Two birds with one stone, they say!”

Izumi smiled while Shio made a violent shake.

“That’s not how mafia works³, Izumi! How are you going to escape the police?! Be realistic!”

“Don’t give him more pressure than he already has! We’re in this together! Come on Izumin, go rock those roads!”

“Oi, don’t just encourage him like that!”

The thieves were already taking a turn to the expressway, leaving Tokyo. The police was still behind them.

“Now that I look at it, the sixth gear looks rather alluring...”

“I know what you’re thinking,” Shio replied. “But have you ever driven in 6th gear before?”

“I’m in fifth gear right now, so...”

“...YOU’RE IN 5TH ALREADY???”

Izumi was driving at least 120 kilometres per hour; the speed limit was 80. He admired the concept of speed just as much as phantom thieves in general. For thieves, speed was near essential. Without it, they would be in jail by now. Speed applies to other people, too. Fast-moving vehicles in general were fun to look at. Sure, achieving high speeds was risky, but was there anything that was not risky in life? Everyone has had at least one risky situation.

With that in mind, Izumi gained enough speed to shift into the final gear. He advised everyone onboard to fasten their seat belts. Shio could

³ The Phantom Creathieves aren’t actually a mafia—“That’s how mafia works” is just a way of saying “that’s how you do it”. In the above case, it’s obviously the opposite.

not believe her eyes.

“I’m watching a newbie drive really fast... Have I inhaled too much of Hiyorin’s fumes?”

While achieving speeds and leaving Tokyo behind, the police desperately tried to keep up. As expected, Fujiwara drove the fastest.

“Damn Creathieves, they’re really fast! But I’ll be faster!!” She kept speeding up.

Approaching the pay toll, Izumi slowed down to take a ticket before speeding off into the distance. Fujiwara and the other policemen did the same.

“How long is this chase gonna last?” Izumi asked. “And how does one evade the police? There is only so much about phantom thieves, and I’ve only watched three shows about them!”

Shio raised her eyebrow. “Is that how many about them exist?”

“Probably. Phantom thieves are underrated.”

“Well, I’ll tell you one way to escape from the police. Pay attention to your elders!”

Fujiwara approached with her vehicle and was driving alongside their van. She pulled out the megaphone and yelled:

“Go ahead! Pull over! It’s your safest bet, you know!!”

Izumi was given a megaphone of their own, after which he yelled back, “we’ll see about that, Miss Fujiwara!”

While yelling at each other, the van got closer to the police car for Hiyori to open the car’s fuel tank. Kano then used a mini vacuum cleaner to try and drain out as much of the tank as possible. Her fuel indicator went off.

“Huh?! I literally *just* filled it up!”

“Look into buying a better car!” Izumi yelled back. “But anyway, thank you for your gas! Shame our car doesn’t run on your kind! Enjoy your parking spot!”

Izumi then sped off again at 200 kmph. Fujiwara, however, eventually ran out of fuel and her car stopped moving right before a resting area.

“Damn you, Phantom Creathiiiiiiieves!!! I’ll get you next time, mark

my goddamn words!!!”

Unable to drive any further, Fujiwara left her vehicle at the stop lane and took a passenger seat at another police vehicle which made a turn at a junction to return to Tokyo, alongside every other vehicle of the sort.

“Ugh, failed again...”

“It happens, officer,” the driver said, “we all make mistakes.”

“But this was the worst defeat yet! How did those guys even drain all of my fuel?!”

“Some questions are best left unanswered...”

“I guess you’re right... I must say though, man was quite stylish. And arresting him will feel even sweeter. I’ll get you, Koikon Izumi! Just you wait!”

The police was no longer behind them, ending the chase. The thieves left the expressway on the following exit, drove a little bit before stopping somewhere in the woods. After turning off the van, Izumi let out a sigh and closed his eyes.

Shio, however, let out a rather loud laugh.

“That was... the best chase sequence I ever took part in! Where’d you learn to drive anyway?”

“Beats me... But honestly, I’m surprised at my driving skills.”

“I am, too! But you were amazing! Hey, Izumin, you still have the gem, right?”

Izumi reached for his right pocket, pulled out the large, green, tear-shaped Gem of Sapporo and gave it to Shio.

“Wow... Such a pretty gem. I knew it was sparkly before, but when you have a closer look at it, it’s even prettier. It’ll make a fine addition to our collection.”

“Hah... That was scary...”

“But, you succeeded, and that’s important. Hey, Asumi? You okay?”

“Y-yes, don’t worry about me. I’m not too bad when it comes to high-speed chases.”

“Ah, thank goodness,” Izumi said, “I was worried she wouldn’t take it quite well. I feel slightly inconsiderate...”

“Aww, look at you, caring for your peers,” Shio teased.

“Well, like Kano said, we’re in this together... right?”

Kano nodded and gave a thumbs up.

“Hey, do you want to rest with us? I bet you must be quite tired!”

“Are you sure we’re safe here?”

“It’s fine, we’ve done this before,” Shio said.

“I’ll leave you to it, then. I’m falling asleep...”

Izumi left the front seat and went into the back of the van with Hiyori, Kano and Asumi. Having nothing else to do, he lay on the mattress. Shio turned off the lights for them.

“By the way, Kano,” Izumi said.

“Hm? What’s up?”

“...Thank you for treating me back there. If only I had my inhaler for this one...”

“Relax! I’m happy to help whenever. By the by, you can call me Hananon.”

“H-Hananon?”

“There ya go, my cute, asthmatic thief. Now, sleep tight.”

Izumi smiled. “I will.”

Hiyori rolled her eyes. “*Oh, give me a break...*”

Shio was still admiring the gem, not believing that Izumi managed to steal it despite his health working against him.

“I wonder why Mr Shinjuurou wasn’t with Fujiwara this time around...”

That would be the conclusion of Izumi’s first heist. It was a simple one, but a heist nonetheless. This would open the doors for many of their adventures that would take place all over the world. What are they going to steal next? What friends are they going to make? And, most importantly, does Izumi really have all it takes to become their true leader?

Being student council president was yet another problem, but that has never stopped anyone from living a school life at day and a crime life at night.

Those are the Phantom Creathieves, as well as students of Sentama Academy. But just how good of a student council these thieves would make...?

END

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Software used
LibreOffice Writer

Brčko District, 2020-2021

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