

KODOKU PILOT

Written by

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INT. DREAM SPACE

We open on a misty room with no real details to ascertain. A tall, lanky young man walks into frame. DAVID EDEN (17) looks confused by his surroundings as anyone would be.

David looks to see a robed figure nearby.

DAVID

Hello?

The robed figure seemingly floats up to him and presents two decks of cards to David. One has a snake symbol on it, the other has a spider.

ROBED FIGURE

Something that crawls or something
that slithers?

The robed figure's face is obscured by the mist. Its voice is heavily distorted.

DAVID

What?

David stares blankly at the robed figure. He notices the two decks.

ROBED FIGURE

Something that crawls or something
that slithers?

David looks down at the two decks. David looks unsure as he takes the spider deck from the robed figure's spindly, mannequin like hand.

ROBED FIGURE (CONT'D)

You have chosen something that
crawls.

The robed figure suddenly floats away. The fog opens up to an old looking blackjack table with at least four obscured figures sitting at it.

INT. THE TABLE - CONTINUOUS

As David approaches the table we get our first clear view of the occupants. Sitting in the dealer's chair, we see a human sized Bunraku puppet that resembles a demonic geisha. This is THE DEALER. In the occupied player seats, we see a balding white man in his 50s, VICE PRINCIPAL ROLAND(50s). Next to him is an athletic looking teenage male, TROY COLE (18), and next to him is a average looking teenage girl, VANESSA KEITH. (16)

David looks confused, yet recognizes each one of them.

DAVID
Vanessa Keith...

She looks like she's fighting tears.

DAVID (CONT'D)
And Vice Principal Roland.

He smiles and nods at David as he shuffles his deck.

ROLAND
Welcome Mr. Eden.

VANESSA
God dammit, not another one.

Troy looks to Roland.

TROY
Who's he?

ROLAND
That's David Eden. He's a junior
who looks to be taking Ms. Codon's
place at the table. Please take a
seat Mr. Eden.

Roland gestures to the vacant seat. David cautiously sits down. Vanessa glares at Roland. In the center of the table is a jar with decorations of centipedes, spiders, and snakes on it. David looks at the Dealer and it blankly stares back at him.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Do you know how to play Mr. Eden?

DAVID
Uhh...

VANESSA
David... It's David right. You need
to forfeit after the first round.

Roland smiles.

ROLAND
Sheesh Ms. Keith, he doesn't even
know the rules yet and you're
already trying to get rid of him.

VANESSA

This game is evil David. You need to get out of it as soon as you can.

DAVID

I am so confused right now.

ROLAND

So you don't know how to play?

DAVID

Play what?

ROLAND

Kodoku.

David looks around at the other players.

DAVID

Just someone please explain to me what is going on right now.

VANESSA

Ms. Condon died playing this game. You need to forfeit after the first round David. You have to or they will kill you.

Troy smiles as he looks at his cards and Roland sighs.

Vanessa is now in tears yelling.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

This isn't a game David! Ms. Condon is gone because of it.

ROLAND

She forfeited Vanessa. We all saw it with our own eyes.

Vanessa ignores Roland.

VANESSA

David, there will be consequences in the real world if you keep playing past the first round. Don't play past the first round.

DAVID

Ok, why don't I just not play at all?

David gets up to leave, but Roland stops him.

ROLAND

You have to play at least one round. That's the rule. If you want to leave, you can forfeit after your first hand is up.

David looks around at the table. Vanessa gives him a pained look. David nods and sits back down and looks at his deck.

Roland lays out his cards.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Your deck in front of you is all the creatures you have at your disposal. The jar is where they will battle. You can put in as many as you like, but only one can come out alive. The Dealer will hand out curse cards that you can use to defend yourself-

VANESSA

Or attack other players.

Vanessa glares at Roland.

ROLAND

You can cast a curse on another player, yes, but that is something you only want to do when you know you're safe from a counter-attack.

DAVID

Counter-attack?

ROLAND

Those creatures in your deck can come alive and attack other players if you so will it. If you curse another player, they can always send one of their worst after you in response.

TROY

He can learn the rules as we go. I'm done waiting.

Troy puts three snake cards forward. The Dealer's eye light up and the game has now begun. The jar in the center of the table lowers until only the open top is visible. The three cards Troy placed are sucked in by an unseen force.

DAVID
Woah! That's kinda cool.

Vanessa shakes her head at him.

VANESSA
David, please forfeit after the first round. You don't want this game in your life.

Roland leans over to David.

ROLAND
(whisper)
I wouldn't fall for that if I were you. If there is anyone who wants to win this game the most, it's her.

Vanessa puts over a dozen of her cards into the jar. Roland puts in four.

David looks down at his deck and sees several different types of insects, arachnids, and even a rat.

DAVID
Screw it...

David places his entire deck in the jar.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I'm forfeiting anyways right? Why not go big before going home.

ROLAND
Bold strategy Mr. Eden.

VANESSA
You should have just put in one card David. You're defenseless now.

ROLAND
Not quite...

Roland gestures to the Dealer who spits out five curse cards each to every player at the table.

The cards have different colored kanji on their backs and simple illustrations on their fronts.

DAVID
What are these?

ROLAND
Curse cards. We all get five and
they are your best defense against
attack.

David looks over his cards. They are color coded with some
being red and some being purple.

DAVID
What do the colors mean?

ROLAND
We're not sure exactly, but we know
red curses seem to effect one's
body in some way and black, well-

VANESSA
It means death.

Roland nods and goes back to evaluating his curse cards.

David looks at the illustrations on the red cards. There's
one that shows a body covered in scales. The other shows a
pair of snake eyes. The purple cards are even more abstract
with things like spirals and third eye iconography on them.

DAVID
And the purple?

ROLAND
The jury is still out on that one.
The results seem to vary a bit too
much to really know.

Roland places a red card face down. Troy places a purple and
Vanessa a black.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Well, we know where one of the four
aces went.

Roland looks at Vanessa's black curse card.

VANESSA
I dare you.

ROLAND
Oh, I wouldn't be so foolish Ms.
Keith. Mr. Eden, would you please
place a curse card face down so we
can begin.

DAVID
Face down right?

ROLAND

Unless you trying to curse one of us. Face down means you're using it defensively. Face up means you're on the attack.

David places the red card with the polka dotted man on it face down.

The Dealer's eyes light up and the jar begins to hum with the sounds of bug trilling and snakes hissing. The game of Kodoku has now begun.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I will be placing another curse card in defense mode.

Troy places one of his snake cards face down. Vanessa does the same.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

And that's round one.

VANESSA

You can forfeit now David. Just say it and it'll all be over for you.

The sounds from the jar grow louder.

DAVID

Wait, so that's the game?

ROLAND

It is if you forfeit.

DAVID

I don't get it. How do you win?

ROLAND

Until there is only one player left.

David tries to look into the jar, but all he sees is darkness.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

I wouldn't reach your hand in there if I were you.

VANESSA

David, this is not just some weird dream you're having. It's real.

(MORE)

VANESSA (CONT'D)

This game is real and it can get you killed. Please David, just forfeit. Just do it please.

Vanessa begins to cry.

ROLAND

There's the crocodile tears. She got the last guy to quit doing the same thing.

VANESSA

Fuck you Roland!

ROLAND

That's Vice Principal Roland to you Ms. Keith.

VANESSA

David, he's lying to you. He just wants you to stick around so there's one more player between him and I.

ROLAND

She wants to take me out bad. She thinks I'm her biggest threat.

VANESSA

You're a god damn monster that's why.

TROY

David, you gonna forfeit or what?

Troy breaks his silence and gives David a menacing look.

VANESSA

David, please.

DAVID

No, I won't forfeit.

Roland nods. Troy looks indifferent. Vanessa grows more upset.

VANESSA

David, no you can't-

DAVID

Vanessa, you're in my 5th period Spanish class.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I have never said a word to you in real life and now you're trying to get me to quit playing a card game in a dream I'm having. I just can't possibly take any of this seriously.

David looks over at the jar.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And I really want to know what's gonna come out of that jar.

The humming has stopped.

ROLAND

It seems we have a winner.

Roland looks over at David.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Mr. Eden, if you're not forfeiting then you have to place another card down to show you're still in the game. Then, you can see what comes out of that jar.

David looks down at his curse cards and places the clawed hands card face down.

DAVID

All right, let's do this.

David looks excited while Vanessa looks like her heart has been ripped out. She fights the urge to cry.

The Dealer's eyes light up and the jar rises.

We watch as a rattlesnake comes slithering out.

ROLAND

A rattlesnake? I don't believe I have a rattlesnake in my deck. Ms. Keith is that yours?

The worried look on Vanessa's face seems to answer his question.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

It's not yours is it Mr. Eden?

DAVID

No, I hate snakes.

ROLAND

Then congratulations Mr. Cole on
winning the first Kodoku.

Troy looks up from his deck and surveys the table. His eyes
fall on David and slowly the rattlesnake starts making his
way toward him.

DAVID

Oh no, it's not-

Roland looks preoccupied with his deck and Vanessa refuses to
look up from her lap. Troy keeps his dead eyed stare on
David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Wait guys, is that coming for me?

ROLAND

Hmm, maybe next round I'll put you
in.

The rattlesnake has now crossed the table and reached David's
curse cards. They light up as the rattlesnake slithers past.

DAVID

Are you doing this Troy?

David attempts to get up from the table, but his legs are now
bound to the chair by strange black tendrils.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What the fuck!

The rattlesnake has now slithered its way on to David's body
much to his horror. It's beginning to rattle its tail.

VANESSA

(through tears)

You should have forfeited David.

The rattlesnake strikes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

We see the clock's big hand turn and and the first bell of
the school day ring. A flood of students enter the classroom.

LEWIS

Wait, so what happened next?

DAVID

I don't know. I just woke up suddenly.

LEWIS

I hate when dreams end when they're just getting good. I had this one dream with Dua Lipa-

Lewis sees that Mr. Grant is still listening. He has a hard to read expression on his face as he digests David's dream.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

It was uh really cool. I love her music

GRANT

You have quite the imagination David.

DAVID

Lowkey, I was afraid when I woke I was gonna actually die. The dream was that vivid.

GRANT

Rattlesnake venom symptoms start immediately after your bitten. If you made it to my class without any issues, then I think you'll probably be ok from any snakebites you got in your dreams.

Grant gives David a warm smile as we see the clock on the wall tick closer to class time.

DAVID

Good to know Mr. Grant.

LEWIS

Still that is one really weird dream you had.

DAVID

I'm still not fully sure I wasn't cursed. Ok, I found a weird note with some Japanese on it in my locker like a week ago. Maybe it's connected.

LEWIS
Shit, you might have actually been
cursed!

GRANT
Lewis...

LEWIS
Sorry.

The clock hand moves and The second bell rings. Grant turns his attention to the class.

GRANT
All right everyone. Take your seats
and we'll begin our review of
Chapter 3 shortly.

Grant nods at the boys.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Interesting talk as always boys.

DAVID
You know it Mr. Grant.

Grant turns back toward his desk. His expression becomes noticeably more downcast.

He takes his seat at his desk and opens his email. There we see a thread that says "Updates on Laura Condon."

The email says, "We still have no success getting in contact with her family and it seems no one has been at her home in some time. It's been over a week now since she was supposed to return from her trip abroad. I'm once again asking if any of you have any information concerning Ms. Condon's whereabouts to please contact the authorities or reach out to me personally."

The email is from Principal Jada Gifford. Vice Principal Roland is one of the many replies expressing worry over her disappearance.

HARRY (O.S.)
Chandler, cut that out!

Grant looks up to see HARRY COLLINS(40s), hard ass History teacher/basketball coach entering his classroom.

GRANT
Harry?

HARRY
Hey Grant, can I speak to you...
privately.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Grant and Harry are in the now sparsely populated halls.

HARRY
Get to class!

Harry yells at a few students who rush off.

GRANT
What is it you wanted to speak to
me about Harry?

HARRY
You saw the email this morning
right?

GRANT
Yeah, it's getting worrying at this
point.

HARRY
Oh it's far past that now. I mean,
who requests only three days off to
go on a trip abroad suddenly. It's
pretty suspicious if you ask me.

GRANT
I just hope she's safe.

HARRY
She didn't tell you where she was
going did she?

GRANT
No, why do you ask?

HARRY
You and her were getting close
before she up and vanished. Some
people even thought you guys might
have been sleeping with each other.

GRANT
It was nothing like that. She's was
writing a book and she had a lot
biology questions.

HARRY
Biology questions?

GRANT
She wanted to know about different types of animals and how they interacted. She could be very specific with some of her questions.

HARRY
Like how?

GRANT
She wanted to know who would win in a fight between a cobra and a Goliath bird-eating spider.

HARRY
Really?
(a beat)
Who would win?

GRANT
Cobra easily.

HARRY
So, maybe she's running some like exotic animal fighting ring on the side.

GRANT
I doubt it. She's vegan.

HARRY
Did she tell you that?

GRANT
We had dinner together once.

HARRY
Dinner?

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

LAURA CONDON(Late 20s), a pretty and plain woman sits across from Grant as he eats.

GRANT
So about that email you sent me. I don't really like centipedes.
(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

I grew up in Hawaii and they can get pretty big over there - close to a foot in some cases. I've been afraid of them since I was child. That said, as much as I hate to admit it, I think it would win out over the bat. I know flying is a huge advantage, but most centipedes have some pretty mean bites. I can tell you that from first hand experience.

LAURA

I didn't invite you out to talk about my book.

Laura surveys her surroundings. She seems paranoid. Grant however looks a little too happy to hear this dinner isn't all business.

GRANT

Oh... really? Well, I'm almost happy to share a meal with a...friend?

Laura's darting eyes finally fall back on Grant.

LAURA

Can I tell you something that you cannot tell anybody else?

Grant stops himself before he takes another bite.

GRANT

Sure. Of course.

Laura takes a deep breath.

LAURA

I think Roland is stalking me.

GRANT

Neil Roland?

LAURA

Who else would I be talking about.

GRANT

What makes you think he's stalking you?

LAURA

He drives a red Volvo right?

GRANT
Yeah, his parking spot is right
across from mine.

LAURA
That's it right there.

Laura gestures towards the window. Grant turns around and sees a red Volvo parked outside. It drives off as soon as its noticed.

GRANT
Oh my God, should we call the
police? Talk to Jada about it?

LAURA
No!

Grant looks slightly taken aback by her stern response.

GRANT
Ok, but if it gets bad, you'll let
me know right?

Laura doesn't respond. She's still staring at the spot where Roland was parked.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Laura?

Grant goes to touch her hand and she instantly pulls away. The two share a pained look.

GRANT (V.O.)
It was only one time.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Grant looks off in worry.

GRANT
She never asked me out again.

HARRY
Well, either way it's getting to
the point that the cops are
suspecting fowl play.

GRANT
How do you know that?

HARRY
Roland told me.

GRANT

Roland? My God, they don't think she's-

HARRY

Until they find a body, no. That said, I would start sharing every thing you can with the cops. They're going to start suspecting people and you and her were friends at the very least.

GRANT

I don't know what more I could tell them.

HARRY

Every detail helps and makes you look less suspicious.

GRANT

You can't be possibly suggesting I was somehow involved?

HARRY

No, but Sheriff Knot will do that for me.

GRANT

The sheriff is personally investigating now?!?

HARRY

Like I said, it's getting serious.

GRANT

Oh god...

(a beat)

I gotta get back to my class. I'll contact the police during my free period and tell them everything I know.

HARRY

All right, see ya at lunch.

GRANT

Yeah, see ya then.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Grant walks back into the classroom.

GRANT

I apologize for the delay. Let us
begin our discussion of
macromolecules.

Grant begins to write definitions on the whiteboard.

GRANT (CONT'D)

So if you read the section on
lipids, then you'll likely have
some questions regarding—

In the second row, DAVID sits stiffly in his plastic chair
rubbing the side of his neck where he was bit in the dream.

The classroom sounds begin to warp and muffle, drowning into
a low, underwater hum. Beneath the hum, a faint, rhythmic
sound fills the room — the rattle of a snake.

David glances frantically down at the floor around his desk.
Nothing. He looks over at the ceiling tiles. Nothing.

David exhales a shaky breath and leans his head back against
the plastic chair, trying to ground himself. His eyes
instinctively shift to the glass windowpane directly to his
left.

Through the glare of the morning sun, he catches a
reflection.

Coiled tightly around the metal legs of his own chair, a
thick, dusty-brown, scaled body is silently slithering
upward. It slides over the plastic backrest, directly behind
his head.

David freezes. His jaw drops, but no sound comes out.

Suddenly, a heavy, dry weight drapes over his right shoulder.
A triangular head rears up right beside his ear, its black,
dead eyes locked onto his profile. The fork tongue flicks
against David's jawline.

DAVID

Get it off—get it off!

David thrashes forward violently, flipping his desk into the
row ahead. Textbooks and pencils scatter everywhere.

The classroom erupts into startled screams. Students scramble
back in their chairs.

GRANT

David! What is going on?

David falls backward out of his chair, scrambling across the linoleum floor on his hands and knees. He claws frantically at his own neck, tearing at the air.

DAVID

It's on me! Look at it! Someone
help me, it's on my neck!

To Mr. Grant, Lewis, and the rest of the class, the space around David is entirely empty. David is wildly battling nothing, looking completely unhinged, tears streaming down his face.

LEWIS

David, stop! There's nothing there!

David backs into the base of the chalkboard. The invisible weight tightens. The phantom snake rears back and strikes, burying its fangs deep into the side of his throat.

David lets out a strangled, agonizing shriek, his body convulsing as he clutches his neck. He collapses onto his side, gasping for air that won't come.

The invisible presence vanishes.

Mr. Grant rushes over, dropping to his knees beside David.

GRANT

Everyone back up! Give him room!
Lewis, go get the nurse, quickly!

Grant gently tries to pull David's hands away from his throat to check his airway.

GRANT (CONT'D)

David, look at me, breathe. You're
having a panic attack, just—

Grant stops mid-sentence. His eyes widen in sheer, unadulterated disbelief.

Right where David is clutching, there are two distinct, deep puncture wounds actively split open through the skin. Dark, thick blood begins to ooze out, and the surrounding flesh instantly starts to swell and turn a bruised, necrotic purple.

Grant looks at the bloody puncture wounds, then around the classroom floor, his own face draining of color.

GRANT (CONT'D)
 Call 911! Tell them he's been
 bitten-he's been bitten by a snake!

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

David is being rushed into an ambulance. Grant is there with a hand full of staff. A large group of students look on from the windows.

PARAMEDIC 1
 His pulse is dropping fast!

PARAMEDIC 2
 It looks like necrosis is occurring already.

Grant steps forward.

GRANT
 He may have been bitten by snake.

PARAMEDIC 1
 A snake? You sure?

GRANT
 I can't say for certain, but-

PARAMEDIC 3
 We need to go now. He's close to flatlining.

The ambulance pulls away and Grant is left in shock.

ROLAND (O.S.)
 My God Grant, what happened?

Roland steps into frame.

GRANT
 I don't know Neil. He seemed fine when I spoke to him earlier in the class period. Then-

Grant gets a bit overwhelmed.

ROLAND
 Grant, you did all that you could for him.

Roland puts his hand on Grant's shoulder. Grant looks unsure. He is clearly grappling with the strange coincidences that have occurred today.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

You can take the rest of the day off if you have to.

GRANT

Oh God, the last thing I want to do is go home during all this.

ROLAND

At the very least let me take care of your first period. I did used to teach high school AP Bio way back when.

GRANT

Neil, you don't have to do that.

ROLAND

I wasn't asking Grant. You need to take a moment for yourself, ok. I know its been hard for you lately. I know that you and Laura were close. Her disappearance...

(a beat)

on top of this. You've been shouldering a lot Grant, I can tell. If you don't want to go home that's more than ok, but please let yourself have a second or two to breathe.

GRANT

Thank you Neil.

Grant doesn't know how to feel about this kind moment between the two men.

ROLAND

Don't mention it Grant. Somedays can just feel cursed, I would know.

Grant's face shifts at the use of the word cursed.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Did they say what they think is wrong with him?

Roland and Grant share a pregnant pause.

GRANT

They said he might have been bitten
by a snake.

Roland's face shifts to an exaggerated expression of shock.

ROLAND

A snake... really?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Roland is calmly teaching Grant's shell-shocked biology class.

ROLAND

In evolution, size only matters
when it comes to direct and open
competition. The lion chasing the
gazelle for example. In the
smaller, more calculated corners of
nature, it is more beneficial to be
the one that strikes more
carefully. It's not as flashy as
the claws and jaws of Earth's
largest predators, but it
undeniably yields more results. The
animal that strikes with the most
precision has the most powerful
bite-

(a beat)

Or, often is the case, the most
venomous.

Lewis looks on with a terrified expression on his face.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Grant sits in the teacher's lounge with a mug full of coffee
that says, "Bad Case of The Mondays."

SENORA DENISE NAVARRO(60s), the kindly old Spanish teacher,
enters.

DENISE

Grant...

He gets up to collect himself.

GRANT

Denise-

DENISE

Come here.

They two share a hug. Grant starts out unsure of the sudden gesture of human warmth, but quickly accepts it.

GRANT

Thank you Denise.

DENISE

I can't imagine how scary today must have been for you. I was barely keeping it together and I was just watching from the windows.

GRANT

I won't lie to you Denise. I was scared beyond belief.

DENISE

Is David going to be ok? I have him in my 5th period and he's such a sweet boy.

GRANT

I don't know.

DENISE

Oh god.

Denise starts to cry. They share another hug, but this time Grant is the one doing the comforting.

She starts to collect herself as Grant remembers to ask her something.

GRANT

Denise, in your 5th period...

(a beat)

Do you have a student named Vanessa Keith?

DENISE

Hmm Vanessa Keith? Oh yes, Catalina!

Denise smiles.

DENISE (CONT'D)

That's her Spanish name. She's such a good student that one.

(MORE)

DENISE (CONT'D)

She's been out sick though since last week I believe. Oh God, I hope she isn't - Oh no.

Denise begins to cry again and Grant hugs her.

GRANT

Oh Denise, I'm sorry. I didn't want to get you more worried than you already are. She could just have that bug that's been going around. I doubt it's anything serious. She's in my study hall and hasn't been showing up for a while, so I thought I'd ask someone else who had her.

DENISE

That's so good of you to be looking out for all your students like that Grant.

GRANT

It's the least I can do.

The two share a warm smile and another hug before Denise heads out. Once she's gone, Grant returns to looking more worried than before.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Grant takes a deep breath as he walks back to his classroom. It looks to be around lunch time now.

HARRY (O.S.)

Hey Grant wait up!

Harry runs in from behind him.

GRANT

Harry?

HARRY

Roland told me what happened. It was a snake!

GRANT

We don't know for certain, but he had bite marks on his neck.

HARRY

Jesus! That for sure means it was a snake?

GRANT

It's just a possibility. I'm no doctor.

HARRY

What a fucking miserable way to start this week is all I can say.

GRANT

You're telling me.

The school bell rings signaling the end of the lunch period.

HARRY

You going to the El Royale after work? I imagine you need it.

GRANT

I don't know yet. I might visit David in the hospital if they allow visitors.

HARRY

Shit, should I do that? I didn't have him in any of my classes, so I don't want to intrude.

GRANT

I think you're fine to tie one off at El Royale. If you're still there after I visit him, I know I'll be joining you.

HARRY

Amen brother.

The two start to head off in separate directions, but Grant stops himself.

GRANT

Hey Harry?

HARRY

Yeah?

GRANT

One of your players is Troy Cole right?

HARRY

Yeah, he's my best point guard.

GRANT

He in school today?

HARRY

No, I don't think so. Why?

GRANT

He's just late on an assignment is all.

HARRY

He's a senior. I thought you only taught juniors?

Grant looks slightly flustered.

GRANT

I didn't know he was a senior.

HARRY

He probably had to repeat the class. He's definitely one of our school's best players, but not one of its best students. I'm sorry about that. I'll talk to him next time at practice.

GRANT

Oh there's no need. I just wanted to make sure he's putting in the work elsewhere.

HARRY

You bet your ass he is. That boy is D1 material.

GRANT

He's got a good coach after all.

HARRY

You're gonna make me cry Grant. I hope to see to you at the El Royale later tonight.

GRANT

I hope so too.

The two men part ways and Grant reaches his classroom. Outside his door waiting for him is Lewis.

LEWIS

Mr. Grant...

GRANT

Oh God Lewis, I can't imagine how today has been for you.

LEWIS

It's real right? That Kotaku game.
It has to be. He has that dream and
then he ends up like that. David
was cursed Mr. Grant! He was
cursed!

GRANT

It's Kodoku Lewis and no he was not
cursed. The dream he had was
certainly a scary one, but
sometimes our brain knows something
is wrong way before our body's do.
Whatever is hurting him might have
started in his sleep and his dreams
were...affected by it.

LEWIS

He wasn't sick at all this morning
Mr. Grant and then suddenly he
falls over screaming about
something being on him-

GRANT

I know it was sudden and scary, but
let's not fall into superstition.
It was a horrible coincidence
Lewis. That is all.

LEWIS

Bullshit, it was more than that Mr.
Grant!

GRANT

Lewis-

LEWIS

I found the note he got. It was
crumpled up in the bottom of his
locker, but it's real.

Lewis holds up the note with kanji on it.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

That's evidence right there Mr.
Grant.

GRANT

That's just a piece of paper with
some Japanese on it Lewis.

LEWIS

Can you read it?

GRANT
No Lewis, I can't read Japanese.

LEWIS
Well, you're more likely to know
someone who does than me.

Grant gives him a look.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Because you're a teacher Mr. Grant,
not because you're Asian.

Lewis tries to hand the paper to Grant.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
If you're so sure this Kodoku stuff
is fake, then I expect you can
figure what this says and prove me
wrong. Until then, I'm living in a
world where a curse almost killed
my best friend. I'd love to leave
it Mr. Grant, so please find
something else to explain this
shit.

Grant hesitates before taking the paper.

GRANT
Fine Lewis, if it helps put you at
ease.

Lewis goes to walk away.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I'm planning on visiting David in
the hospital after school. If you
need a ride I can help you.

LEWIS
Well, David is usually my ride
home, so that would be helpful Mr.
Grant.

GRANT
I'll wait for you in the parking
lot.

The two share a uncertain look before Lewis leaves. Grant
looks at the piece of paper and takes a deep breath.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Grant stands before his class.

GRANT

I think we all could use a day off
from chapter review. Consider
today's class a study hall. If you
have any questions, I'll be
available at my desk.

Students begin to whisper, text, and do literally anything
but school work.

Grant doesn't care. He goes to his desk and begins to do
research.

He translates the note which roughly says, "David, you've
been invited to play Kodoku." He looks stunned by this.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

David Eden's parents BURT (40s) and SADIE (40s) are both
anxiously awaiting a prognosis.

David is lying in the hospital bed asleep. A doctor walks in.

DOCTOR

I have good news. David should make
a full recovery.

SADIE

Oh thank God!

BURT

That's wonderful to hear doctor,
but I want to know how something
like this could have happened to my
son in the first place.

DOCTOR

As unlikely as it may seem, it was
a rattlesnake bite. The anti-venom
we administered seems to have
stabilized his condition thus
ruling out any other natural causes
for the necrosis.

SADIE

A rattlesnake!

BURT

We have any idea how a goddamn rattlesnake got to my son?

DOCTOR

They're not endemic to this part of the state, so we are still unsure on the how. He doesn't know anyone with one as a pet does he?

SADIE

A pet! Goodness no!

BURT

Even if he did, he sure as hell wouldn't go near them. David hates snakes.

KNOT (O.S.)

Your son doesn't have any enemies does he?

The parents turn to see SHERIFF JACK KNOT (late 50s), a man who looks like the last cop you want to be pulled over by.

BURT

Excuse me?

KNOT

A snake bite as bad as this doesn't just happen on school grounds by accident.

BURT

Are you saying someone did this to my son?

KNOT

All I'm saying is I will rule nothing out in my investigation.

SADIE

David is a nice boy. He has no enemies.

KNOT

I'm sure he's a nice boy Mrs. Eden, but it's my job to leave no stone unturned. Especially when our children's safety is involved.

SADIE

I understand. Thank you Sheriff.

BURT
You catch the son of the bitch who
did this to my boy, you'll always
have my vote Jack.

Knot smiles.

KNOT
You have my word Mr. Eden.

A nurse enters.

NURSE
Excuse me, David's girlfriend is
here to see him.

The parents give each other shocked looks.

BURT
Girlfriend? When did David get a
girlfriend?

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Grant is leaving his classroom when he's ambushed by Roland.

ROLAND
Grant, I have great news!

Grant is startled and drops his things.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Oh God, my bad. I didn't mean to
scare ya.

GRANT
Oh, it's fine Neil.

Roland kneels down to help pick up Grant's things. Roland
notices the piece of paper with Japanese on it. Grant quickly
picks it up and stuffs it into his work folder.

ROLAND
You ok Grant?

GRANT
It's been a long day is all.

ROLAND
That's more than understandable.

Roland helps Grant pick up the last of his things off the
floor.

GRANT
What's the good news?

ROLAND
David will make a full recovery.

GRANT
Oh, thank God. Do they know what-

ROLAND
Snake bite - just like you said.
I'm glad I'm the one who got to
tell you. I know how much you care
for your students. This must be a
big relief for you.

GRANT
It is. Thank you Neil.

ROLAND
You're welcome Grant.

Roland's eyes briefly fall on the note sticking out of the folder. Grant pushes it deeper in.

GRANT
See you tomorrow Neil.

Roland nods.

ROLAND
See you tomorrow.

Grant scurries off and Roland watches him leave with a smile. Once Grant is gone, the smile quickly fades from Roland's face. He dials a number on his cell phone and leaves a message.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
I'm sure you're more than aware by now, but your attack failed. David Eden still lives. If you want the curses to go away, you'll have to finish what you started. I'm willing to help, but only if you return this favor for me at the table tonight. That sound like a deal?

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Grant heads out to the parking lot a bit flustered.

LEWIS (O.S.)
Mr. Grant!

We see Lewis waiting at Grant's car.

GRANT
Let's go.

LEWIS
Did you translate the-

GRANT
We'll talk about it on the way.
Let's go.

Grant unlocks his car and Lewis and him leave in quite the hurry.

INT. GRANT'S CAR - DAY

Grant drives as fast as he legally can. Lewis looks worried in the passenger seat.

LEWIS
So, did you translate the note?

Grant nods.

GRANT
I did. It was an invitation to play
Kodoku.

LEWIS
Holy shit! Really?

GRANT
I'm not saying that your friend was
almost killed by a game he played
in his dream.

LEWIS
Then what are you saying?

GRANT
Something strange is going on here
Lewis. I cannot deny that. But,
until I speak to David again, I
won't say for certain what's really
going on here.

LEWIS
How scientific of you.

GRANT
This isn't a joke Lewis. Your
friend was likely poisoned.

LEWIS
By who?

GRANT
Roland maybe.

LEWIS
What!

GRANT
Before Laura disappeared she said
she was being stalked by him.

LEWIS
Laura?

GRANT
Ms. Condon.

LEWIS
She's missing?!?

GRANT
For over a week now.

LEWIS
Jesus! She got Kodokued.

Grant slams on the breaks.

GRANT
Lewis, she did not get fucking
Kodokued! That is fucking
ridiculous! Like, beyond fucking
ridiculous! I don't know what's
going on here. I can one hundred
percent admit that, but whatever is
happening, it ain't a cursed card
game you play in your fucking
dreams!

Grant returns his eyes to the road and resumes driving.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, that was a bit
emotional.

LEWIS
Oh, it's fine Mr. Grant. Today has
been a bit emotional.

They pull into the hospital parking lot some time later.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - EVENING

As Grant and Lewis exit the car, we see they are being watched by a figure in a pickup truck.

INT. TRUCK - EVENING

His silhouette is obscured, but we can tell his skin is covered in scales that he scratches at. There are several snakes around him slithering about.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - EVENING

Grant and Lewis enter the hospital. Grant approaches the front desk.

GRANT

Excuse me, we're here to visit David Eden. He was admitted this morning.

SADIE (O.S.)

Lewis.

Grant and Lewis turn to see David's mother and father.

SADIE (CONT'D)

It's so nice of you to come visit him. You must have come straight from school.

LEWIS

I did. Mr. Grant here was kind enough to give me a ride.

Sadie's eyes light up.

SADIE

You're the man who saved my son.

GRANT

I don't know about that-

Sadie hugs him.

SADIE

They said if you had not told them
it was a snake bite, they would
have wasted precious time. You
saved my son's life!

GRANT

He's a great kid. It was the least
I could do.

Sadie lets go and David's dad extends his hand to shake
Grant's.

BURT

Thank you for saving my son.

GRANT

Of course Mr. Eden.

SADIE

Burt, you should be hugging this
man, not shaking his hand like any
other dumbass you sell Hondas to.

BURT

I think he was all hugged out from
you.

SADIE

This man saved our son Burt!

GRANT

It's ok, please, I don't need
another hug.

BURT

You hear that Sadie. He doesn't
need another hug.

Sadie looks Grant in the eyes.

SADIE

You deserve one.

The nurse waves to get Grant's attention.

NURSE

Excuse me sir, visiting hours are
unfortunately over for anyone but
family.

Sadie comes barreling into frame.

SADIE

This man saved my son! He is family!

NURSE

All right, if you have their permission then he's in Room 43.

SADIE

Oh, he'll be so excited to see you Lewis.

BURT

Not as excited as he was to see his girlfriend.

LEWIS

Girlfriend?

SADIE

Yeah, her name is Vanessa and she is so sweet.

GRANT

Vanessa?

BURT

Yeah, we thought we'd give them their privacy.

Lewis and Grant give each other looks of realization.

LEWIS

We'll make sure to knock.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Lewis and Grant stand outside Room 43. They hear loud yelling going on inside. Lewis knocks on the door and the shouting stops. Lewis opens the door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lewis enters to see David in a hospital bed by his side is Vanessa. They're awkwardly holding hands.

DAVID

Mr. Grant! Lewis! Oh my God, it's so good to see you guys. This is my girlfriend Vanessa Keith. You remember her from-

David stops himself as he was about to mention the dream.

LEWIS
So Kodoku is real right?

DAVID
Fuck...

Vanessa looks pissed.

VANESSA
You told more people about it!

DAVID
How was I supposed to know it was more than just a dream!

VANESSA
You would be one of those people who tell everyone about their unique, little dreams.

LEWIS
Wait, so are you guys actually dating?

VANESSA
Fuck no! I just needed a good reason for them to let me in past visiting hours.

DAVID
Ouch.

VANESSA
David, you are never allowed to hold anything against me.

DAVID
Vanessa, I said I'm sorry.

VANESSA
Are you?

DAVID
Yes, I almost fucking died! I get it!

David has tears welling in his eyes. So does Vanessa.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I'm scared now too.

GRANT

Ahem!

Vanessa and David look to Grant.

GRANT (CONT'D)

You both seem very convinced of this game of Kodoku being real-

VANESSA

Fuck off Mr. Grant, you're not telling me this is all in my head.

DAVID

Yeah Mr. Grant, not the fuck off part, but the Kodoku is real part. It's real Mr. Grant. Kodoku is real.

GRANT

You have to understand that what you guys think is happening is scientifically impossible.

VANESSA

Well it's happening anyways Mr. Grant.

GRANT

You sure none of you are being drugged?

VANESSA

No, we're not being fucking drugged! I've been going to bed at the same time in my own home with my door locked next to a 100 pound dog that has a biting problem. No one is drugging me and taking me anywhere. It's supernatural Mr. Grant. Plain and simple.

GRANT

There has to be a logical explanation.

LEWIS

Maybe it's the metaverse. Zuckerberg could be sucking them in while they sleep.

VANESSA

How would they do that?

LEWIS

Brain waves and the internet?

(a beat)

I don't know! If that explanation doesn't work for you then we can always go back to the cursed card game you play in your dreams since that seems to be working for ya.

VANESSA

It's the only way of thinking about it that makes any sense.

The group deflate as they realize that no one really knows what's truly going on here.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DUSK

The sun is beginning to set and as it does a swarm of a vicious insects, arachnids, and snakes are approaching the hospital.

GRANT (V.O.)

David? The letter you found in your locker from a week ago. It was an invitation to play Kodoku.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

David nods.

DAVID

Yeah, Vanessa was telling me how Ms. Condon and her also got invitations in Japanese as well.

VANESSA

It's how you get entered into the game. You have seven days to accept or decline. If I knew how, I would have obviously declined.

GRANT

Is it possible for one of you to invite me into the game. I want to see this with my own eyes.

VANESSA

No, no, no, no!

GRANT

Vanessa, I can only figure it out
if I see it from the inside.

VANESSA

Why do you want to understand it?

GRANT

Because Laura was a friend of mine!
I want to know why she's gone and I
refuse to accept a killer card game
as closure!

VANESSA

If you want to join so badly Mr.
Grant then you can always make
yourself an invitation.

GRANT

Will that work?

VANESSA

How the fuck would I know?

LEWIS

So like is there gonna be another
game?

VANESSA

Until one player is left there will
always be another game.

GRANT

And you all can't just forfeit?

VANESSA

Any curses placed on you can't be
truly undone unless you win.

(a beat)

Or, kill the player who cursed you.

GRANT

That a definitive rule?

VANESSA

It would seem so.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DUSK

More dangerous animals enter the hospital. The hooded
silhouette from earlier enters the hospital lobby.

They're wearing a face mask and shades and are able to slip by the front desk unnoticed, as a snake attacks a patient waiting in the lobby. The panicked staff come to the patient's aid, but don't see the snake as it bites a nurse.

NURSE

Oh my God! What bit me! Why am I
bleeding, why am I-

She's bit by another snake as her and others are swarmed by dangerous snakes and bugs they cannot seem to see. Panic takes hold of the lobby as the silhouette heads deeper into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

DAVID

Wait, that means I can still
forfeit right? I don't have any
curses on me other than the snake
bite.

VANESSA

I don't know. That's a grey area. I
thought getting bit meant you were
as good as dead, yet you're still
here David.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAYS - DUSK

The silhouette skulks through the halls. Heart-rate monitors start flatlining left and right as we see snakes, spiders, and centipedes enter patients rooms. The hospital is thrown into disarray as the staff try to save the flurry of coding patients. The silhouette receive a text that says, "4th floor."

GRANT (V.O.)

Because he was given anti-venom. It
seems there are loop holes. The
game can be outsmarted.

The silhouette heads for the stairs followed by several snakes.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

DAVID

So I can forfeit?

GRANT

Maybe.

LEWIS

Wait...

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRCASE - DUSK

The Silhouette climbs the stairs. They reach the fourth floor and as they go to open the door.

LEWIS (V.O.)

What's stopping one player from attacking another in real life?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

Grant looks at Vanessa. She shakes her head.

VANESSA

Trust me, it's bad news for both players.

GRANT

So there is a protection against that?

VANESSA

You could call it that.

The group's attention shifts to the sounds of heart-rate monitors suddenly going flat in the other hospital rooms.

LEWIS

What the hell is going on out there?

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOM WINDOW - DUSK

A rattlesnake slithers up a pipe and into the room through an open window.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

Grant goes to the door to check out the noises. As he does, David's eyes fall on something slithering up his bed.

DAVID

Snake!

Vanessa eyes light up as she notices the rattlesnake slithering up David's hospital bed. Grant and Lewis look confused.

VANESSA

Shit!

The door to the room swings open. We see Troy Cole covered in scales standing in the doorway. He closes the door and leaves a snake to wrap itself around the door handle to keep them locked in.

LEWIS

Oh shit! Help! Help! We need help!

TROY

No one is coming to help. You make this difficult for me, you'll join him.

VANESSA

Troy? What are you doing here?

TROY

Finishing what I started.

GRANT

It's Troy right? Please, don't do anything rash-

TROY

Shut up or I'll kill you too.

LEWIS

You try something they're going to know it was you.

TROY

Can you recognize me right now?

Troy is unrecognizable in his current state. He looks more like a snake with his eyes and all the scales covering his face.

TROY (CONT'D)

Because I can't.

The rattlesnake slithers on to David's lap. He's petrified.

GRANT

David, are you ok?

VANESSA

You guys can't see it, but he has a rattlesnake on him right now.

GRANT

Are you sure?

DAVID

Yes!

Troy notices some of Vanessa's spiders are crawling up him now.

TROY

Vanessa, you really want to do this?

VANESSA

I don't know Troy, do I?

TROY

You talk tough for a girl Vanessa.
I bet you'll give me less shit once
I break your jaw.

Grant steps forward.

GRANT

That's enough. I'm calling the police!

Grant goes for his phone, but a strange sensation in his hand causes him to drop it on the floor. There's a centipede wrapped around Grant's hand, but he doesn't seem to physically see it. He sure does feel it however.

GRANT (CONT'D)

What's going on with my hand!

VANESSA

He put a centipede on it.

GRANT

What!

VANESSA

And he wrapped a boa around Lewis.

We pan over to Lewis with a boa constrictor visibly choking him.

LEWIS

(choking)

Yeah, I can feel it.

TROY
I can just kill them all and you
too.

VANESSA
It would be mutually assured
destruction Troy.

Troy now has countless spiders all over him.

DAVID
T-troy if I can undo the curses
next game I will.

TROY
The only way to undo them is to
finish you off.

GRANT
Wait!

Grant steps forward cautious and mindful of the venomous
insect he cannot see wrapped around his hand.

GRANT (CONT'D)
The curses are defenses against
attack correct? They only activate
in response to aggression?

Troy tilts his head. Vanessa looks confused.

VANESSA
Yes, that is how they work.

GRANT
Great! Then if you stop trying to
kill him, the curses will stop.

Troy starts to laugh.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I'm serious. He survived the first
attack and now you are trying to
come back and finish him off.
You're still the aggressor Troy.
You back off, the curses will too.

TROY
You're talking out your ass.

Grant steps forward and puts himself at Troy's mercy.

GRANT

You pull your invisible monsters
back and I guarantee your condition
will improve. Your boils - holy
shit, those are scales!

Troy grabs Grant by the throat. As he does, his creatures
come back to him, freeing all of the others from the threat
of a bite. After a moment, Grant's hypothesis is proven true
when Troy returns to normal.

TROY

Hmm, lucky guess.

Troy calmly brushes off Vanessa's spiders and leaves the
room. His creatures go with him. The others are left in
shock.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: FALLEN EMPIRES BY SNOW PATROL

Roland is watching the hospital from an elevated roadside
with some binoculars.

ROLAND

Hmm, the boy got cold feet. Plan B
it is.

Roland takes his cell phone out and sends out a chain of
emails that are all invitations to Kodoku. They're going out
to students and faculty alike. We see a lot of the creatures
that were wreaking havoc across the hospital return to him in
his car. It seems it wasn't just Troy causing the misery.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Grant and Lewis's phones ding.

LEWIS

Hey Mr. Grant?

Grant is feeling his hand as he'll still can't get over the
sensation that something was wrapped around it.

GRANT

Yeah Lewis?

LEWIS

I think I just got invited to
Kodoku.

Lewis shows Grant his email. Grant checks his phone and sees that he has one as well.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

This can't be good right?

David and Vanessa share uncertain looks as the choir of flatlining heart rate monitors continues.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

The Centipede returns to Roland. He drives away now that all his creatures have returned to him.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

