

Wise  
by ThePete (thepete.com)  
(c) 2009 1st Draft

Day 1, Chapter 4, 6/11/9

I took a step back from Wise and felt my forehead getting heavy.

"What... just happened?" Miki asked.

Wise turned and walked away.

I glanced around, scanning the area for the man Wise had called "Brothe" but couldn't see anyone in a business suit at all.

"Hey! I'm talking to you!" Miki said, quickly moving after him.

I couldn't hear what Wise was saying at first--it was more than my mind was used to seeing. In hindsight, it reminded me of the first time I was told by a friend that he was gay. It wasn't bad or good--it simply was that he was gay. In the same way, the man who had been there moments before was now no longer.

Literally, it seemed.

I looked back to them and moved forward, not quite being conscious of my thoughts.

I knew Miki was speaking, but I wasn't truly conscious of what she was saying until I found myself sitting at a table at some diner, with her sitting to the left of me and Wise sitting across from me. Every so often a waitress would approach the table from my right and refill my cup of coffee. I didn't usually drink coffee in the middle of the afternoon.

I looked to Miki and tried to decipher the emotions on her face.

Determination...

Confusion...

Concern...

Disbelief...

Maybe a few others. We'd been together for two years and in that time I'd already seen her deal with difficult experiences--losing

patients, nearly losing her spot at the hospital... none of that looked like this.

"I just need to know," Miki began, "...did you kill that man?"

"I am so hungry," Wise said, ignoring her like she ignored me. He picked up the menu lying in front of him and scanned it like a man who'd just come in from the desert.

"Seriously, I think I'm ready for the whole cow." Wise said, aware of the absurdity of his statement.

Miki and I were silent.

I took another sip of my coffee.

The waitress returned.

"Can I have like five hamburgers, please?" Wise asked.

"Is he serious?" the waitress asked.

"Do you even have money for five hamburgers?" Miki asked.

"Oh! Good question--you guys still use money. Hang on." Wise started feeling his overcoat for pockets. As he found each one he searched in side, finding only a pair of gloves. "I don't think I have any--wait!"

He felt around to his back pants pocket and pulled out a black wallet on a chain. He smiled and spoke. "That's what the chain is for! Good thinking!"

He opened it and found some bills. He aimed the mouth of the wallet at me. "How many hamburgers does this buy?"

I shot Miki a nervous look, but she was staring at the table. I took his wallet and thumbed through the bills inside. "You've got about seventeen bucks, here."

"All right, so that means two hamburgers, right?" He sounded so familiar with me.

"Yeah, sure," I sheepishly replied.

"Anything for you two?" the waitress asked.

Miki was silent. I looked at the waitress, shook my head and handed her the menus.

"Wouldja stop being like this, A rr--sorry, you don't like to be called that. Naveed. Hey, you know what happens. You travel in our circles and you sometimes have to make difficult choices."

"Sorry, I don't follow you," I said.

"Navi, you're a diplomat, when you dealt with those hostage-takers in the Kari System, you knew they'd all end up dead when you called off negotiations. This is no different."

"You killed a man in cold... well, I don't know what it was, but you know what I mean."

"Are you listening to me? You have been here before. In my shoes." He smirked suddenly. "Oh, let's bring the food already! I am starving!"

"Killing really makes you hungry, h uh?" Miki's voice was low and monotone.

"No, actually this stomach is empty. Very empty." Wise pat his stomach.

Confusion won out for a moment over the other emotions displayed on her face.

"It's like this kid hasn't eaten in days or something."

"You act like you don't know where that body has been."

"How would I?"

"What?"

"Navi, from you of all people--t he Naveed Aramesh I know wouldn't be reacting like this."

"Well, maybe I'm not the Naveed Aramesh you know !"

Wise sat with his back straight up suddenly, a s though he'd just realized something. Then he looked up as the waitress returned with two plates, each with a hamburger on it.

"OH, thank you, ma'am!" Wise smiled and immediately took hold of one of the burgers. He began to eat it with the ferocity of a starving dog.

"My God, breathe," Miki said, her regular tone of voice returning. Wise smiled at Miki and began to speak through bits of his meal.

"Navi, you know, you're being pretty rude--you have yet to introduce me to your new girlfriend."

I simply couldn't deal with it any more.

"WHAT are you TALKING about?? I 've NEVER seen you before in my life! Who the HELL are you and what the HELL are you talking about?!?" I pounded on the table a couple times for good measure.

Wise squinted at me and after a moment spoke. " You know, you do look kind of younger. "

"THAN WHAT, GOD DAMMIT!?!"

"Take it easy, Nav! Since the last time I saw you! You look younger. What Earth year is this, a nyway?"

"Earth ye--?" I couldn't finish the thought.

"2009," Miki said. I scoffed.

"Right, 2009--I haven't met you yet, h ave I?" Wise said smiling.

I looked at Miki to try and stay calm.

"The computer sent me back earlier and it's got thematical computational algos built-in, so, it knew I knew a later you and dumped me into a body that was close to you--right up the street. Good computer! "

I took a deep breath and exhaled.

"Dumped you into--?"

"Well, it's not really 'dumping' is it? It's more networking, I suppose, what with the tachyon stream connecting this body with my body in the future."

"You're not..." Miki trailed off for a moment. Wise politely waited for her to speak again and when she didn't he explained. "No, not at all. The real me is connected to this brain, this nervous system via a tachyon stream that is modulated with data. That data is being fed into my brain in the future allowing me to live through this man's body, in your here and now."

"Uh-huh," I said.

"Can you prove this at all somehow?" Miki asked. Wise paused between bites for a moment and then bit off more of his burger (he was already on the second one).

"Ah!" he smiled and held up his palm while he continued to eat.

"Funny tattoo," Miki said, staring at the circle with a triangle inside of it that looked to be tattooed onto his right palm.

"It's the conveniencer--my custom conveniencer. I t's, uh, like, I don't know--information, e ntertainment, communication, navigation... it sort of does everything. Conveniencer."

"It's a tattoo on your hand."

Wise seemed to think for a moment. " It is a tattoo--but instead of ink, there are tiny little machines that are manipulated by tiny little machines in my body that are connected to all the known information. If there's a record of something, I know it."

Miki nodded--I could tell she was willing to take his challenge. "All right, what's my blood type? It's on file at the hospital."

"Wait, what's you're name?" Wise asked.

"Miki Seiji."

"Miki... Miki-chan?" his eyebrows went up. S o did mine.

"How... how do you know that?"

He looked awkwardly at me and then at the table. " I'm sorry, I-- shouldn't have said that."

"How did you know his pet name for me? I s this a--this is a joke between the two of you, isn't it?"

"No, honey, it's not! I--"

"He told me--or he will tell me. But it was in confidence, I really should not have said it."

"No, it's OK..." Miki's voice trailed off.

I was really frustrated at that point. I wanted to get up and leave but I couldn't decide what good that would do. Giving up and walking away has never been my style--even if I knew I'd have to sit there and eat a crap sandwich.

Then something occurred to me: "You haven't proven anything, yet. What about that tattoo?"

"Oh, yes!" Wise said, smiling. Putting the last of the burger in his mouth, he ran his finger around the border of the circle several times. His eyes seemed to focus on something in between him and us.

"Seiji, Seiji, Seiji... ah! Seiji--birthdate July 24, 1981, ethnicity Japanese-American, mother Kanae, father, Kenichi, height, weight, bra-size--"

"Excuse ME?"

"Sorry, skip over that--uh, here. Blood type: B positive."

To anyone else, Miki's face looked calm. However, I knew her well. There was vague tension around her eyes--the edges of her lips were ever-so-slightly curled more than they usually were.

This was her "Warrior Face."

It was a face that she used when she was overwhelmed but knew she had to move forward anyway.

It was a face I wish I could mimic.

"All right," Miki finally said. "So... why are you here?"

"Well, I did what I had originally come to do. I know where Fath is, but, since I dispatched his partner, I'm concerned he'll come looking for him. Which is... which is actually good for me."

"Why is that?" Miki asked.

"Well, because it's likely that she will be with him."

"She?" I asked.

"Yeah... the real reason I'm doing this."

"What's that?" Miki asked.

His eyes welled up suddenly. " She's... she's the love of my life."

Suddenly, he was aware of his eyes and held a napkin to them. "Sorry, the tachyon stream is feeding a bit too much to the emotional outputs."

I happened to glance at Miki. Her Warrior Face was gone--it was replaced by her Sympathy Face. It was one I loved to see but seeing her use it while looking at Wise worried me.

"Sorry, I... just need to catch up to her. "

"Win her back?" Miki asked.

"No. To apologize."

Miki took a deep breath. It was obvious he was appealing to her--what was frustrating was that I felt for him, too. What guy hasn't ever wished he could say he was sorry to someone in his past?

"That's... that's so sweet," Miki said.

Something in me needed to break this quaint moment. " All right, Wise, if him coming here will be good for you--well, what did you mean by that?"

"Fath is a really nice man. Very charming. The thing is, I've been to his future. He's responsible for supplying the arms that would be used in a galactic war that would wipe out hundreds of populated planets--including. . ."

I said what neither Miki nor Wise wanted to say: " Earth?"

Wise nodded.