Chapter 23.2:

“I see,” Ito nodded. “Sure, go ahead.”

“You’re not going to ask about my idea?”

“Nah, I trust your plan—ah, uh, I mean your idea.”

That’s… Let’s just get the job done.

I nodded and went to confront the perpetrator. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and headed over to him with my phone camera on.

This was the only plan I could come up with within the short amount of time and limited information I had; I had barely even 5 seconds to come up with it. The time wasn’t the main issue, though; it was the limited information.

I had barely 5% of the needed information; I normally required at least 40%, so this was a gamble I was taking just for my friend.

Hopefully, this works.

A large smile spread across my face as I finally reached the perpetrator.

“Whoa! A real rapist?! Who knew you guys prance around at night in EHS?”

My words instantly brought attention to me. The perpetrator and the victim both locked eyes with me.

“You’ll go viral, dude. I’m sure by sunrise EHS News will definitely love to interview you, though the ladies may kind of hate you, but that’s a small price for fame, right?”

The perpetrator silently glared at me but didn’t stop holding his victim.

I was kind of shocked that he didn't just try to run away, but I couldn't back down now; I had to make him leave. I had to double down. I kept a calm grin before I spoke.
"Not moved, huh? Tell you what, I'm just a rookie journalist, but I can sure as hell perform a good interview."
Of course, I was lying out of my teeth, but I needed a surefire way to convince the perpetrator to back down without resorting to violence.
There was a possibility that the perpetrator was a member of EHS News, but I considered against it.
He didn't look like someone who would work in the newsreader sector, given his average appearance. I happened to watch the news once in a while, and I had memorised who did it, Monday through Sunday.
And he was never among them; moreover, given how careless he was about where he did this, I could assume he wasn't in the management or journalism sector.
Another thing was that EHS News would still be working at this time, yet he was here. Of course, he might have just not been working today.
That being said, it was also possible, or rather it was more probable, to say that he wasn't working with EHS News.
I walked closer to the perp to further sell the lie, but when I came very close, he began to laugh.
Huh? Was I wrong?
"You new or what? You're a transfer student, aren't you? This is the initiation ceremony into the Akatsuki Faction,

so get lost, ‘Rookie Reporter-sama’. Think I don’t know that you’re lying? There are no new reporters that I don’t know—they did tryouts in the first term, and I attended, so even if you aren’t a transfer, I still don’t remember you. It was filled with a bunch of ikemen, so you would have stuck out like a sore thumb. Now leave before stuff gets serious,” the perp glared, but the victim held his hand softly, as if telling him to forget about me.
I shook a bit at the word “faction”.
I knew that something was off from the beginning because the victim never actually screamed for help.
Her mouth wasn’t covered, so she could easily do that; the perp could have threatened her, but I still think she would have screamed, especially when someone actively tried to save her.
At any rate, she looked consumed by fear, but she also made it look like she didn’t want this to end; yes, she didn’t enjoy it, but couldn’t afford to let it end.
“So, she agreed to this?”
“Of course, so I assume that means you’re going to let me be, right?”
He didn’t seem to be lying, but I also couldn’t just let down Ito without trying my best.
“Sorry, but I can’t let you force someone into your third-rate faction, especially someone who’s clearly not enjoying her initiation ceremony.”
The perp got slightly irritated at my words, giving a cold glare. “You know what? I’ve been patient with your

bullshit; I even gave you an out. Seems like the only way to make you leave is to rework your personality."
"Oh~ You seem to forget that there are cameras here as well as mine—"
"And I don't care!" The perp dashed towards me before sending a roundhouse kick straight to my dome—it was a bit slow and frankly showed that he lacked formal martial arts training.
He's probably copying what he saw in a movie.
I moved my head back a bit to dodge his attack; he went a little off balance because he shifted all his weight into the kick.
He was completely open; I could strike him. However, the dim red glow of the camera immediately made me consider otherwise.
That was why I didn't want to resort to violence in the first place… not that my attack would do much damage anyway. After all, I was just a little fast, not strong.
After the perp was settled on the floor, he was about to unleash another kick.
So, what now? More dodging?
I was at a loss as to what to do; I could only hope that after I dodged for a bit, Ito would call a teacher or a staff member—well, except if he thought that this was part of my plan.
Damn, so I am *screwed.*
Or I thought I was, until the victim stopped him by holding his hand and speaking shyly. "Um, Ootake-san, let's do this e-e-elsewhere. I'm ready for y-y-you."

Ootake immediately brightened up at her words and was about to leave, but Ito came running.
He probably already came running before now to try and help me.
“Huh? What’s going on?” He just realised that the fight had just ended. “Hey, wait, stop!”
He understood what occurred (I think) and wanted to try to stop Ootake.
“Please just reconsider doing this. Don’t—”
“Why can’t you guys just—”
Ootake interrupted Ito, and in turn he got interrupted by someone else. No, it wasn’t me. It was the victim.
“Can’t you two just stay out of this?!” She screamed at the top of her lungs. “If you two get involved again, I’ll report to the school that you guys were stalking me. You understand what will happen, right?”
I looked at Ito, and he looked at me; the girl could get us in trouble for bullying or something similar, but even if she didn’t do that, it was still going to be bad for us, for me especially.
If it was leaked, it could be used by Kaneko as leverage to put me in further competitions just like now.
Meaning I had to convince Ito to disengage right now; even if the victim was bluffing, I couldn’t let that small chance put me in a bad position.
“It–”
“Fine then. We’ll stop,” Ito said.
“Huh?” The victim and I were shocked. Ito wasn’t the kind of person to just disengage. I expected him to not

relent; I was sure the victim knew him to be such a person.
“We’ll leave but… Can I at least know why you’re willing to go through with this?”
“I-I have my reasons,” the victim girl replied. “I won’t let myself just be treated like trash just because I dated that asshole! Ootake-san, let’s go before this ruins the mood.”
Ootake silently nodded with a smile and walked away with the “victim girl”. Ito didn’t try to stop them or anything, and I also just silently let it happen.
We watched them walk away till they weren’t in our line of vision—they were heading to the train station.
Perhaps they are heading to the west side.
“Hey Ito,” I said. “Why’d you let them leave?”
“Hmm? Well, your social standing is still bound to be shaky in class, right? I wanted to avoid any close calls.”
It seemed it was his saviour complex, though I never expected such a thing to happen. I thought Ito was the kind of saviour that saved everyone.
The kind that wouldn’t be able to make calls like this when he had to choose between a classmate and someone else.
I expected him to freeze up in such situations, but he showed just how decisive he was.
“Thanks for that.”
“Nah, don’t worry. I honestly still feel a bit bad for doing that, but… I didn’t want to let you down again.”

“Let me down, huh? Lighten up, dude. Why don’t we hit up a cafe?”
“Uh, ok. Which one?”
“Why don’t you pick?”
“Alright then. Follow me.”
I suppose it’s best to ask him about the factions, though a bit of relaxation might help us, especially him, since he feels a little guilty.
Although I’m not exactly sure why. She clearly said that we should leave her alone, so I think we made the right decision.
I mean, didn’t we?