Chapter 345: Signature




...TO FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO AS YOU ARE NOW.
THIS'LL BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU...


YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TRAVEL WITH HIM...?


I MIGHT'VE GONE WITH HIM...
IF I HAD MET HIM WHILE I COULD USE NEN...
HMM... I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
WITH GING?
HMM...
AND WHY'S THAT?
I REALIZED AFTER I SAW HIM... THAT MY GOAL HAD BEEN TO *FIND* HIM.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUT IT... I GUESS IT WASN'T THAT I WANTED TO SEE HIM.
YEAH, YOU ALWAYS TOLD ME.
NOR IS HE WILL-ING!
YEAH, HE'S NOT CUT OUT TO BE A DAD, NOR DOES HE KNOW HOW.
BUT HE'S MORE LIKE AN AWESOME UNCLE I'D ALWAYS HEARD ABOUT, NOT A *DAD*.
IT WAS FUN TALKING TO HIM. I WAS GLAD TO MEET HIM, AND IT MADE ME HAPPY.
HA HA, I KNOW.
JUST THAT GING IS A JERK, AND...
SORRY, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!!
IT WAS A JOKE.
MAYBE I WASN'T CUT OUT TO BE A *SON*.
LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON, I GUESS.


...AND HAD FELT HOW AWESOME AND POWERFUL HE IS, I WOULD'VE WANTED TO GO WITH HIM.
BUT IF I HAD BEEN ABLE TO USE NEN...
IT DIDN'T CROSS MY MIND THAT I SHOULD STAY WITH HIM JUST BECAUSE HE'S MY DAD.
IT'S WEIRD.
...I GET TO BE WITH YOU.
SO AS A RESULT...
AND I WAS NO LONGER ABLE TO FEEL HIS AURA AT ALL...
BUT IT WAS KINDA CHAOTIC WHEN WE MET.
?
WELCOME TO REALITY.
NOW THAT YOU'RE BACK TO NORMAL...
HERE'S THE TEST FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR THE SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT CERTIFICATE WE NEED TO SEND TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE EDUCATION BUREAU, AND FOUR SEMESTERS WORTH OF TEXT-BOOKS.
FIRST, WRITE AN EIGHT- TO TEN-THOUSAND-WORD REPORT ON WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING! WRITE A RESUMÉ AND MAKE THIRTY COPIES.
KNOW WHAT THEY SAID TO ME?
THERE WERE A LOT OF THINGS YOU WERE EXEMPT FROM BECAUSE YOU WERE WORKING AS A HUNTER!! LOOK AT ALL THIS PAPERWORK!
SLAM!!
SLAM!!
KIDS WHO GO TO SCHOOL DEAL WITH 100 TIMES MORE THAN THIS!!
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW!!
SUCH A PAIN!
WHAT? ALL OF THIS?!


WE TALKED WHILE YOU WERE GONE.
SINCE PARISTON CONSIDERS YOU NO. 2...
...WE WON'T OBJECT TO YOU BEING SECOND TO BEYOND.
BUT...
...SOME OF US REFUSE YOUR MONEY...
...WHILE OTHERS ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT IT.

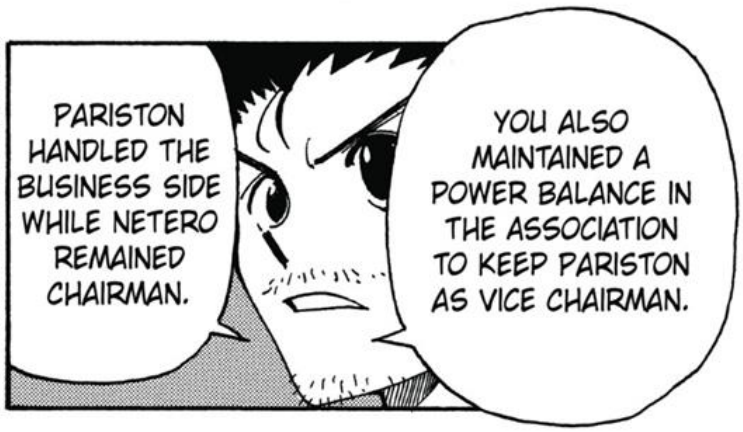

READ THIS WAY
HM.
AND...?
AS YOU GUESSED, WE WERE HIRED BY BEYOND THROUGH PARISTON.
SIMPLY PUT, WE'RE TEMP HUNTERS.
TEMPS, HUH...
...
WE DON'T CARE IF YOU LOOK DOWN ON US.
THE WHOLE LOT OF US WON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST AN ALMIGHTY STARRED HUNTER.
...WE AGREED NOT TO LISTEN TO ANY OF YOUR ORDERS.
TO AVOID CHAOS, UNTIL ALL OF US DECIDE AT LEAST TO ACCEPT THE MONEY...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIE.
YOU'RE ALL EXPERTS, AREN'T YOU?

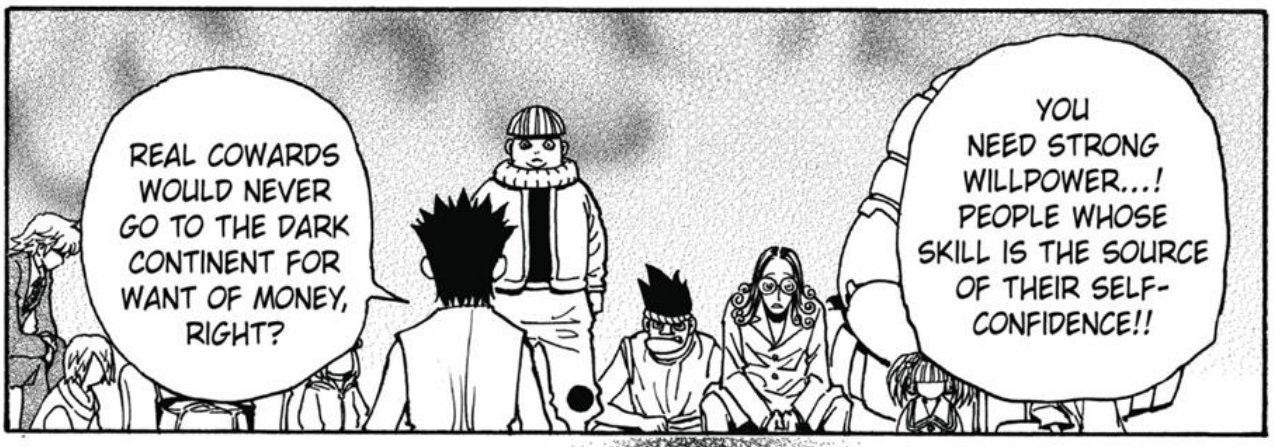

YOU'VE BEEN PLANNING THIS FOR A LONG TIME, WITH BEYOND AS YOUR LEADER.
YOU HAVE THE PARTICULAR SKILLS NECESSARY TO FACE THE UNKNOWN...!
YOU BECAME HUNTERS JUST FOR THIS JOURNEY.


THIS IS ANNOYING...


...


IS THAT WHY I DON'T LIKE HIM?
MEANWHILE, YOU PRETENDED TO BE OPPORTUNISTS WHILE SHARPENING YOUR CLAWS.
WE DO THINK ALIKE.

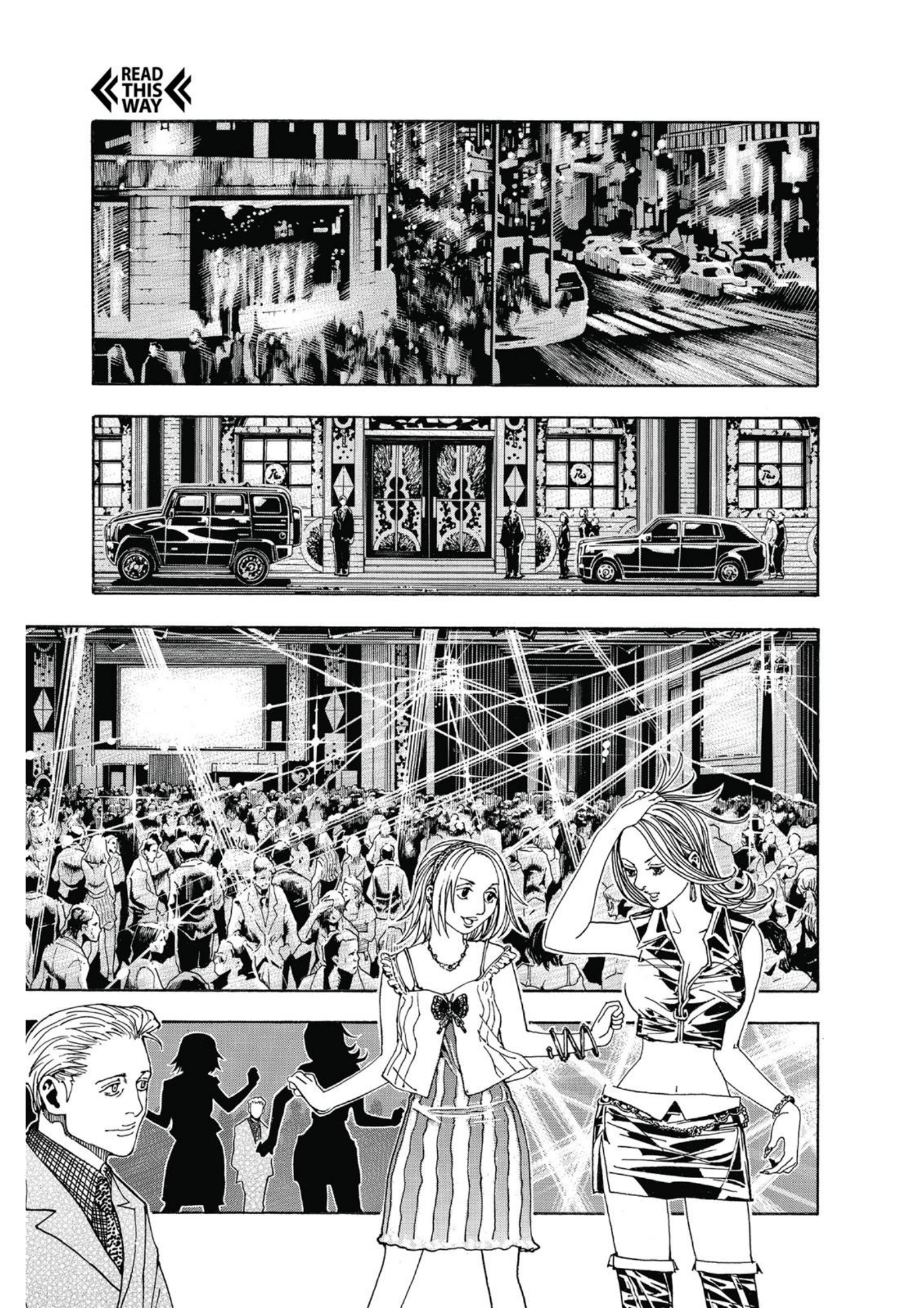

PARISTON HANDLED THE BUSINESS SIDE WHILE NETERO REMAINED CHAIRMAN.
YOU ALSO MAINTAINED A POWER BALANCE IN THE ASSOCIATION TO KEEP PARISTON AS VICE CHAIRMAN.


REAL COWARDS WOULD NEVER GO TO THE DARK CONTINENT FOR WANT OF MONEY, RIGHT?
YOU NEED STRONG WILLPOWER...! PEOPLE WHOSE SKILL IS THE SOURCE OF THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE!!

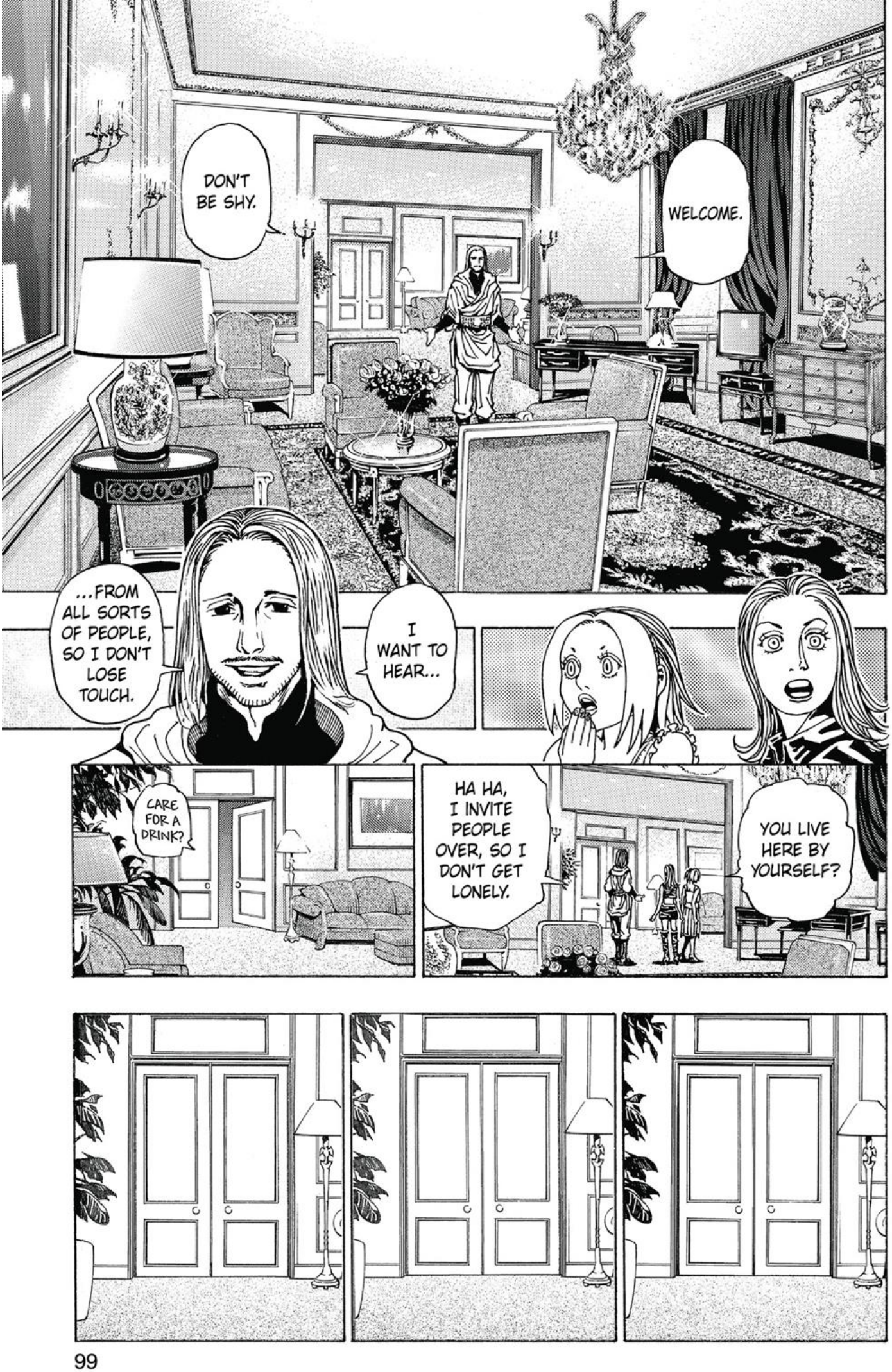

I MIGHT GROW TO HATE SOMEONE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.
ANNOYING...
SO...

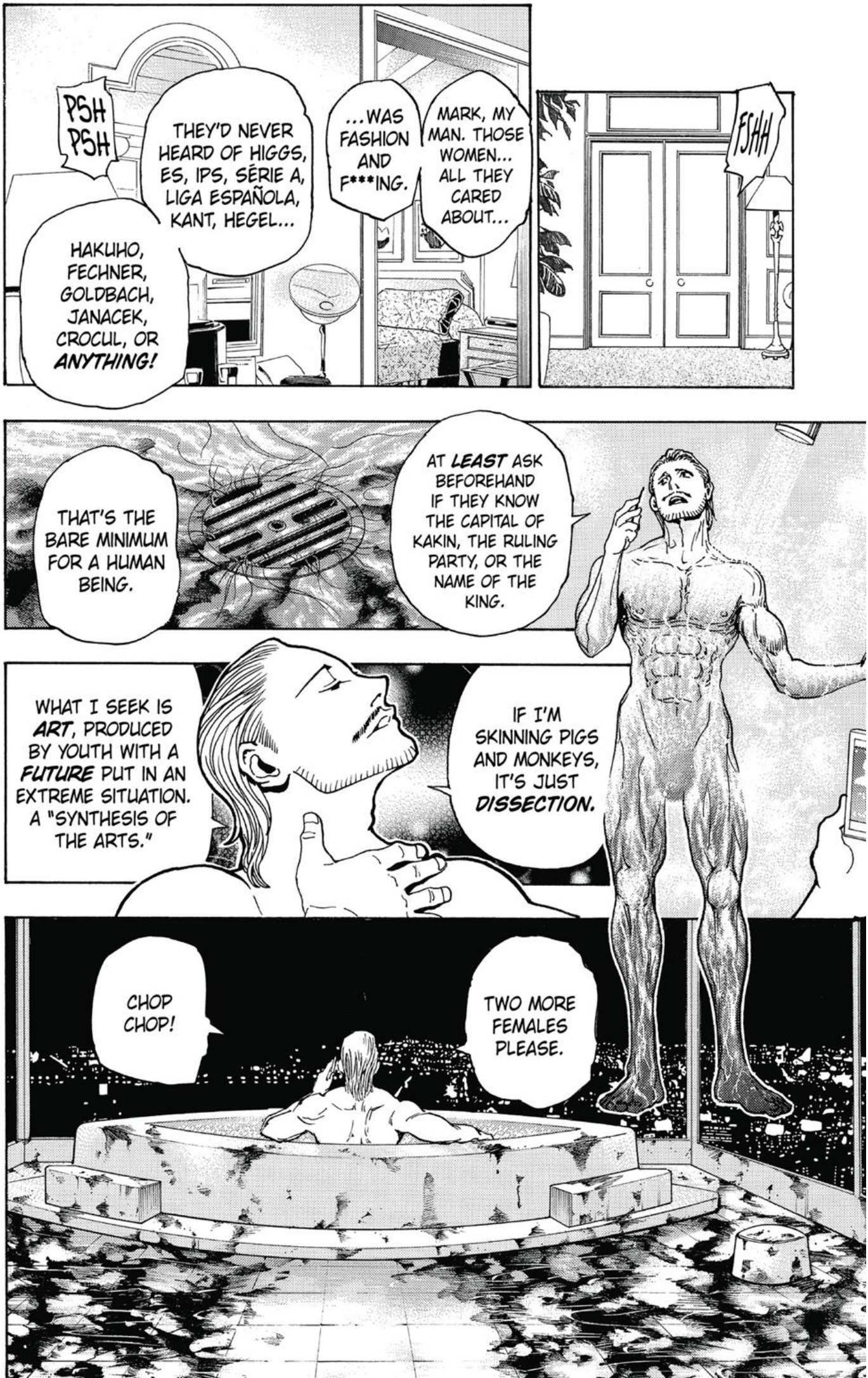

CAN YOU TELL THE OTHERS I'LL PAY THEM UP FRONT, TOO?
SO... THE TEN OF YOU HERE ISN'T "EVERYONE," IS IT?
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS...
...ISN'T AN ORDER.
THIS...
...WHAT I WANT TO DO TO SOMEONE I HATE...
I WANT TO SEE...
SURE.
I'LL LET EVERYONE KNOW.


WILL YOU TELL US YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER?
YOU REFUSED OUT OF REGARD FOR THEM?
IF EVERY-ONE WILL KNOW...
I'LL TAKE THE MONEY.
GIVE IT TO BEYOND. I'M SURE HE'LL GLADLY SPEND IT.
IGNORING MY QUESTION?
OH WELL.
NO PAYING ME BACK.
...IN THE ASSOCIATION. ONLY A FEW WOULD ACTUALLY GO TO THE CONTINENT.
I JUST TOLD YOU, THERE ARE ABOUT 200 OF YOU...
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY OF US THERE ARE?
TWICE THAT...?! THE FORTUNE OF A TOP HUNTER IS INCREDIBLE ...!!
BEYOND PROMISED TO PAY 1.5 BILLION TO THOSE WHO GO, 200 MILLION TO THE ALTERNATES.
IS THERE ANYONE FROM THE ASSOCIATION SIDE? I BET CHEADLE OR MIZAI WOULD PUT A STOP TO THAT...
ABOUT 25, MAX... ANY MORE AND THE TEAM WOULD BE TOO UNWIELDY.
...TO TAKE POWER FROM PARISTON IN NAME ONLY...?
THOUGH THE MONEY WOULD SIMPLY DISAPPEAR IN R&D FOR ANYTHING WE'D BRING BACK.
IT'LL GET YOU STARTED, AT LEAST.
IF THEY'RE IN THE PLAN, "EVERYONE" SHOULD INCLUDE THOSE STAYING ON THIS SIDE.
BUT... IS THERE REALLY A POINT IN PAYING SO MUCH...


READ
THIS
WAY

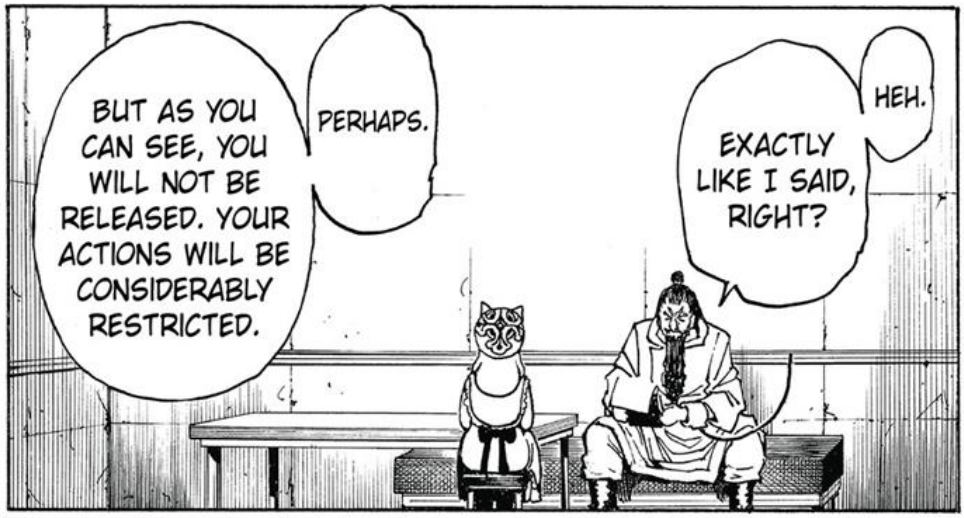

OH, WOW... THIS *ENTIRE* HOTEL?
YEAH.
OWNED BY THE PRINCE.


DON'T BE SHY.
WELCOME.
...FROM ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE, SO I DON'T LOSE TOUCH.
I WANT TO HEAR...
CARE FOR A DRINK?
HA HA, I INVITE PEOPLE OVER, SO I DON'T GET LONELY.
YOU LIVE HERE BY YOURSELF?


PSH PSH
THEY'D NEVER HEARD OF HIGGS, ES, IPS, SÉRIE A, LIGA ESPAÑOLA, KANT, HEGEL...
HAKUHO, FECHNER, GOLDBACH, JANACEK, CROCUL, OR ANYTHING!
...WAS FASHION AND F***ING.
MARK, MY MAN. THOSE WOMEN... ALL THEY CARED ABOUT...
FSHH
THAT'S THE BARE MINIMUM FOR A HUMAN BEING.
AT LEAST ASK BEFOREHAND IF THEY KNOW THE CAPITAL OF KAKIN, THE RULING PARTY, OR THE NAME OF THE KING.
WHAT I SEEK IS ART, PRODUCED BY YOUTH WITH A FUTURE PUT IN AN EXTREME SITUATION. A "SYNTHESIS OF THE ARTS."
IF I'M SKINNING PIGS AND MONKEYS, IT'S JUST DISSECTION.
CHOP CHOP!
TWO MORE FEMALES PLEASE.


WRITE UP A CONTRACT AND GET BEYOND TO SIGN IT.
IF HE VIOLATES EVEN ONE CLAUSE...
...TELL HIM HE'LL SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON.
YES.
I UNDER-STAND.
I DON'T WANT TO IMAGINE THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO... BUT IF YOU LET HIM GET AWAY...
...AND ALLOW A SITUATION TO DEVELOP IN WHICH HE MAKES A DISCOVERY ON THE NEW CONTINENT...
...AND HE DECLARES TO THE WHOLE WORLD THAT HE OWNS THAT DISCOVERY...
I GUARANTEE YOUR FUTURE WON'T BE SO BRIGHT EITHER.
...
YES...! WE ARE...
...WELL AWARE OF THAT...!!

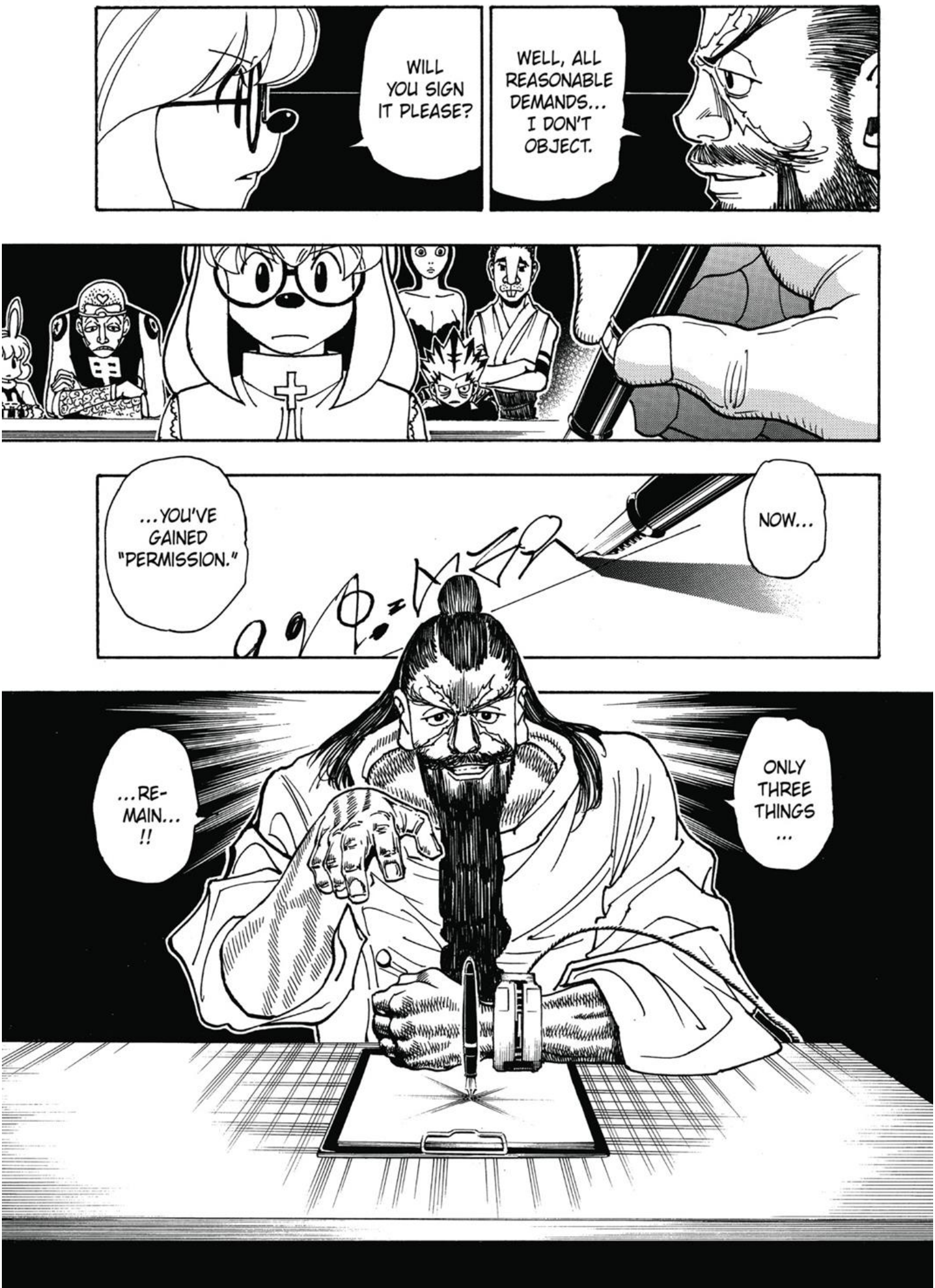

READ THIS.

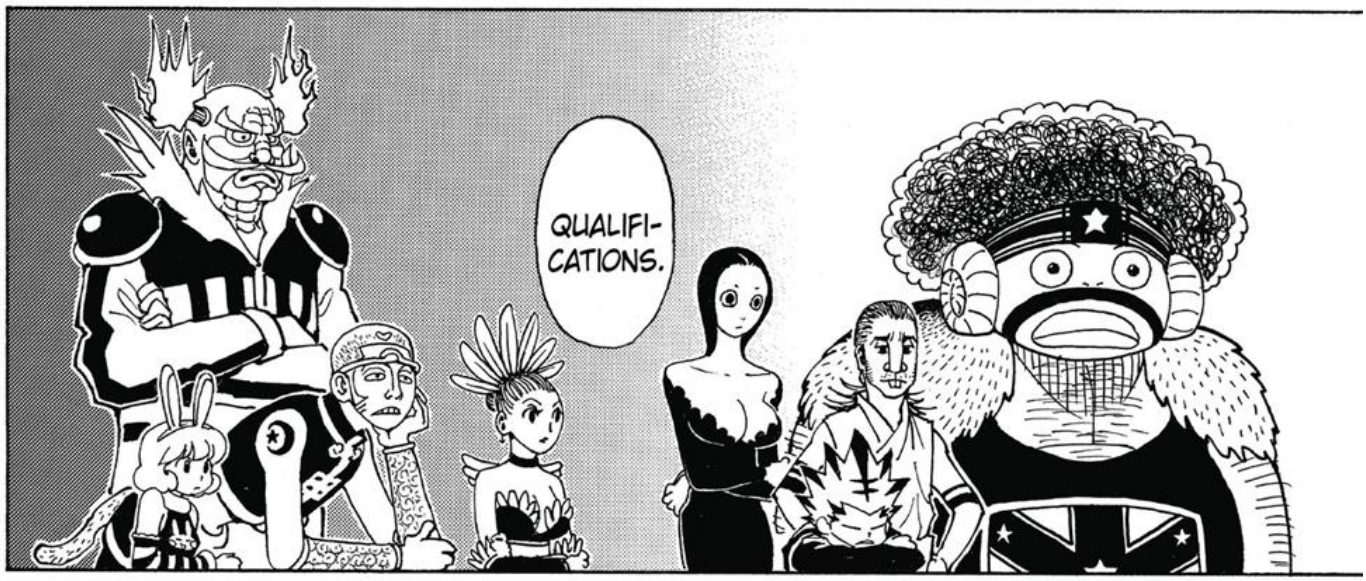

BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, YOU WILL NOT BE RELEASED. YOUR ACTIONS WILL BE CONSIDERABLY RESTRICTED.
PERHAPS.
EXACTLY LIKE I SAID, RIGHT?
HEH.

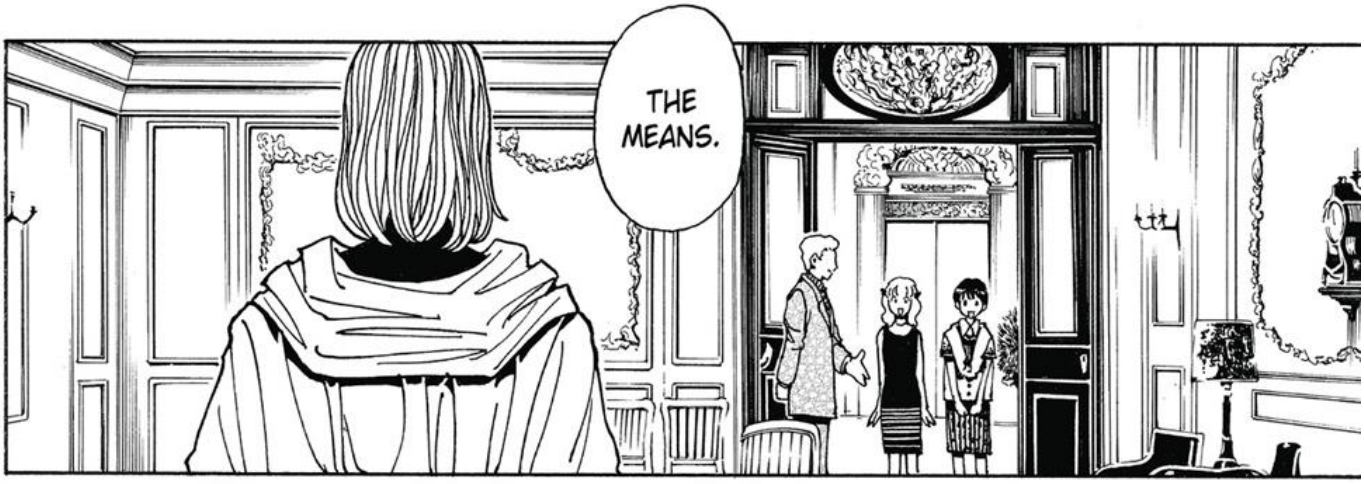



ANY COMMUNICATION WITH ANYONE WILL BE MANAGED AND MONITORED.
YOUR WHEREABOUTS WILL BE MONITORED VIA AN ANKLET WITH A TRACKING DEVICE.
CHAPER-ONES WILL ACCOMPANY YOU ON OUTINGS.
YOU'LL STAY IN A ROOM UNDER 24-HOUR WATCH.

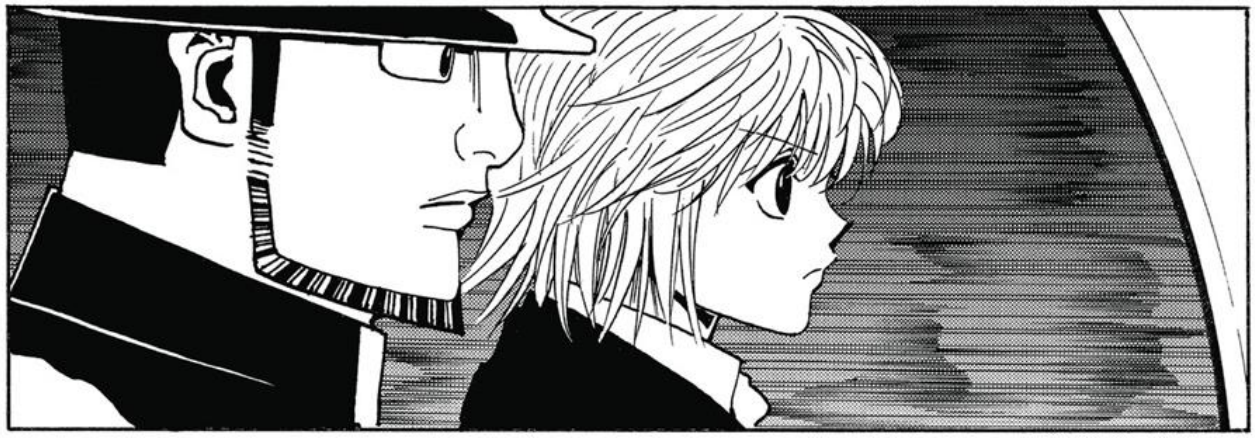

I SEE...
ANYTHING FOUND THROUGH MY ACTIONS WILL BELONG TO THE V6, AND ANY DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION IN ANY MEDIUM IS FORBIDDEN.
DO NOT RESIST THE ASSOCIATION DURING THE JOURNEY.


WILL YOU SIGN IT PLEASE?
WELL, ALL REASONABLE DEMANDS... I DON'T OBJECT.
...YOU'VE GAINED "PERMISSION."
NOW...
...RE-MAIN...!!
ONLY THREE THINGS ...


QUALIFI-
CATIONS.


THE
MEANS.


A
CONTRACT.




...YOU GET THE EYES BACK?
AFTER...
...WITH THE PRINCE?
WHAT WILL YOU DO...
WHAT IF HE RESISTS?
I'LL YIELD TO MOST DEMANDS.
I JUST WANT MY BRETHREN BACK.
IT WILL BE THE SAME WITH THE PRINCE.
BUT THEY CHANGED THEIR MINDS WITHOUT DYING.
THERE WERE TWO PEOPLE WHO TOLD ME THEY WOULD RATHER DIE THAN HAND THEM OVER.
I SURE HOPE SO.
...


OKAY, 100 MORE PROBLEM SETS!
SIGH.