

[I don't own any of the characters mentioned here, or the songs, or – or much of anything but the inspiration to continue Kyôko and Godai's excellent adventure . . . the first part of which was reported in SangoKagome's story "My Shiny Teeth and Me". In fact, it was that story which inspired me to try to add to the fun. I hope it does.]

When last we left our friends, Rocky and Bullwink – uh, Godai and his beloved superintendent – they were at a karaoke bar, trying to recover from Coach Mitaka's all-too-apt rendition of "My Shiny Teeth and Me". But little do they know what else fate and the author have in store for them. . . .

The "audience" in the karaoke bar was still reacting to Mitaka, his teeth – and the song that had boasted about them both. The coach was alternating between taking more bows and casting meaningful glances at Kyôko, as if to urge her to get up next and sing a matching song.

Kyôko seemed to be pretending that she didn't know him at all. Or – if she couldn't carry that one off after his announcement that he was singing that silly song to her – that she didn't believe he had really done it. It was a brave front. On the inside, though, she was frantically trying to figure out what she could do to get out of this with the least embarrassment for herself, Mitaka, and Godai.

Godai was more actively frantic, pawing through the bar's karaoke catalog. He needed to find just the right song – one he wouldn't embarrass himself singing in front of Kyôko. It had to be a song he knew well enough not to mess up through pure nervousness. But that also meant he couldn't pick anything with lyrics that would say too much in public. "Still, I've got to sing something – or else Mitaka will just get back up there again. And I'll just bet next time it will be a song he can use to try to romance the superintendent right in front of everybody!"

Then – all three suddenly, simultaneously turned with an awkward start. . . as another voice came from the bar's speaker system. A voice that was somehow both suave and deeply disturbing at the same time. For Godai in particular, a horrifyingly familiar voice.

Yotsuya-san. . . .

Yes, there he was at the mike – and Mrs. Ichinose was right next to him. She'd already commandeered a full *isshôbin* of sake, and was getting out her dancing fan.

Godai's hands unclenched from the involuntary pose he'd learned as a child in the snow country to ward off demons, as he and Kyôko looked at each other in shared frustration and panic. "How did they find us?" "I don't know how, they just do! . . ."

And then their brains caught up with their ears, and they heard what Yotsuya was saying:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen – right here on this stage – fresh from her triumphant appearance at the Tokeizaka Invitational Tournament – here she is: the fabulous Akemi . . . and the Ikkookoos!"

"Hit it!"

Suddenly music, oddly similar to the tune Mitaka had been singing, burst forth from the speakers. And just as suddenly, out of the shadows and into a spotlight, stepped . . . the reigning karaoke champion of Ikkoku-kan herself. Godai could have told the men in the bar that he'd seen her wearing less. Still, what she was wearing tonight was enough to attract plenty of attention.

And her contralto voice wasn't bad, either, he noticed. But what was she singing?

When no one will listen

To what you want to say . . .

You're too small, too young –

You haven't begun

To learn the games that they play . . .

Akemi was playing to the crowd beautifully – and it did almost seem as if she had a back-up group with her. Mrs. Ichinose was dancing, of course. Godai thought she pointed at him a few times, laughing uproariously, as if to say a lyric was aimed at him. And Yotsuya-san was playing a creditable air guitar – although it did have some unusual, almost cartoony, noises coming out of it at times.

*Don't sit around, and just wish
For it to be a better day . . .
Speak up, be heard – if you don't say a word,
Everything will stay the same way.*

Now it was Akemi pointing – and moving – his way. The crowd hooted and whistled . . . and Godai blushed. But when he snuck a glance around to see if Kyôko had seen him turn red, she'd turned away herself for some reason.

*If you want to change the way your life's arranged,
Then you have that choice!
To be the star that you know you are,
Be loud, be proud, and rejoice —*

Now Akemi was pointing at a new man almost every line. Still, Godai was sure he was getting more than his share of being the target.

*And find your voice!
Just find your voice!
You know you got that choice –
Now go find your voice!*

Akemi did a full spin out of the pose she'd taken at the start of the last line – and the Ikkookoos joined her in a sudden flurry of movement and a blinding flash of reflected lights. When the stardust had settled, Mitaka found himself with a lap full of "Ikkoku idol".

*You see a girl
That you know you want to meet . . .*

Akemi's arm had been entwining the coach's; now her elbow dug into his ribs.

*Come on, stop messing around –
Get up off your seat!*

Akemi spun up out of Mitaka's lap before even his reflexes decided whether to push her away or stand up too. Now she was facing Godai again. He felt his face warming – and more heat coming at him from behind: a glare from the superintendent, he was sure of it. "I can't help who she's singing to!" he protested. But only in his head, and there it blended with the crazy noises, the music – and the words.

*She might see inside of you
The boy you never knew –
He was in there all the time,
Now just let him through.*

Godai was relieved when Akemi finally turned away from him and went back to picking out various other men in the bar. But he was amazed when the back-up singers started pointing – and singing – right along with her!

*If you want (Want . . .) to change the way (that . . .) your life's arranged (change . . .),
Then you have that choice! (You know – you – have – that choice!)
To be (Be . . .) the star that you know (a . . .) you are,
Be loud (Star), be proud, and rejoice! (Rejoice!)
To find your voice! (Find your voice!)
Just find your voice! (Find your voice!)
You know you got that choice – (Got that choice –)
Now go find your voice! (Find your voice!)*

Huh. Pretty good back-up singing, at that. He leaned close to Kyôko for a moment. “Figures they’d be in harmony with each other.” She agreed: “They certainly aren’t in harmony with anybody else in this world.”

“What was that, Godai-kun?” Mitaka had recovered from Akemi’s latest cajoling onslaught, and wasn’t going to be kept out of any conversation with Otonashi-san. But the coach had given Godai a long-hoped-for opening. As casually as he could manage, Godai replied: “Oh – are you still here, Mitaka?” (If the two men hadn’t been focused so intently on each other at that moment, they might have noticed the object of their affection holding in a giggle.)

An instrumental bridge brought some new antics from sideman Yotsuya and choreographer Ichinose, who’d traded in her fan for the tennis racket she used at the club. Now she was wielding it like another guitar. “Where did she learn that grip?” Godai heard Mitaka mutter.

(You have that choice!)
(Be a star . . .) [Where could it be now?]

Now the Ikkookoos were singing counterpoints to each other. And the fabulous Akemi was searching for that voice in every nook and cranny of the bar, throwing in the occasional lyric line and dancing to beat the band . . . if there’d been a band instead of an “empty orchestra”.

Find your voice! (Find your voice!)
Just find your voice! (Find your voice) [Anybody seen it?]
You know you got that choice – (Got that choice –) [Got to find your voice now!]
Now go find your voice! (Find your voice!) [Come on and find your Voice!]
And find your voice! (Find your voice!) [Woo-oo-hoo!]
Just find your voice! (Find your voice!) [Doo-doo-di-dah-da!]
You know you got that choice – (Got that choice –) [Gotta find your voice now!]
*Now go **find your voice!** (**Find your voice!**)*

The echoes of the final chord faded, and the whole “audience” cheered again – loud enough to drown out Mrs. Ichinose’s raucous laughter. (For a moment or two, anyway.) Akemi and the Ikkookoos, basking in the ovation, stood in their final pose – all three of them pointing right at the table where Mitaka, Godai, and Kyôko were sitting.

And of course, that’s where they headed.

Akemi snuggled up as close to Mitaka as she could get – and stay – while also trying to position herself in between the coach and Kyôko. “Whew! Singing is thirsty work! Let me just take a sip here,” she said before draining a good two-thirds of Mitaka’s drink.

Mrs. Ichinose took the seat nearest the bar – and what passed for a dance floor. Her big bottle of sake was proverbially half-full, but all that meant to her was that it was time to order the next round. “What’re you having, superintendent?” “Oh, I’m – I’m fine right now,” Kyôko quickly said, trying to deflect the older woman’s attention. No such luck. “So what’re you gonna sing for us all tonight?” Mrs. Ichinose demanded – then added slyly, “Or are you singing for some of us more than others?”

Meanwhile, the philosophical ball she had let fall was picked up by Yotsuya-san . . . who sat down just to the left of Godai, moving too fast for Godai to dispose of the chair. “Which of the Seven Lucky Gods happened to smile on us and bring us to the same karaoke bar as you and your two companions, I wonder, Godai-kun?”

“My money’d be on the demon of peeping,” Godai grumbled. But Yotsuya was already warming to his next topic. “So you’re preparing to take the microphone yourself momentarily, are you? And what have you selected to favor us with tonight?”

“I haven’t found the right song to sing yet.”

“Well, then, let me help you find something suitable. And in return, you’ll treat me tonight, right? . . .”

Godai and Kyôko’s worried glances met across the crowded table. Now they were in for it – and the worst thing was, they had no way to guess what it would turn out to be tonight! . . .

. . . I'm not sure I do yet, either. Did Godai get any kind of hint from Akemi and the Ikkookoos? Or is he going to need 125 more? Did Kyôko catch the hint? Or was her view blocked by Mitaka – or was she blinded by his teeth?

Will Yotsuya-san try to get Godai to sing a Gilbert O'Sullivan song, only to find out it's not available for karaoke because of copyright issues? Will Mrs. Ichinose try to convince Kyôko she's an old-fashioned girl, so she should sing some old-fashioned "country and Eastern" *enka*? Will any other cast members show up and sing all-too-appropriate songs like Mitaka did?

What do you think your other favorite characters might sing? Would they only sing animation-related songs, or can you think of songs from other sources that are just too perfect for them not to sing?

Will there be any crossover hits sung in this virtual bar? Or do different series' characters party in separate karaoke boxes?

And — **what* *about* *Naomi*?!*

For the answers to these and other questions ("Got a minute?"), tune in to your own vibrations – and keep half an eye on this space in case I pick up some more vibrations of my own.

Reactions welcomed. . . .

jalp-MI

March [5-]6, 2009 . . . still working on draft #1 on my personal translation of the *manga* (but I'm now up to the start of Volume V)

[note after first attempt to post]

Some formatting rejections I can live with easier than others. I **really** wish I could convince the system to line up the lyrics to show how the different parts sung match up in words and rhythm. If it would do that, I'd be happier accepting the loss of paragraph indents in general. And I suppose I should be used to online forms not wanting to let me use two spaces at the end of a sentence and things like that. Oh, well -- I hope the intent of the content comes through anyway. . . .

[note to version 1a]

Well, now I'm trying another way of showing the interlocking lyrics. The exact timing I'll have to leave for you to hear yourselves – but maybe it'll be a bit less confusing "on paper".