



## S, Vol. 1

*Saki Aida , Chiharu Nara (Illustrator)*

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Detective Masaki Shiiba must work the dangerous streets of Kabukicho, Japan's largest red light district. When an increase in gun crimes forces Shiiba to work undercover, he must forge an alliance with an "S" or spy, who turns out to be an influential man from the Matsukura Group. But when Shiiba gets a call warning him about his S-seeds of doubt are planted. If he can't trust his S, who can he trust?

## **S, Vol. 1 Details**

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Author : Saki Aida , Chiharu Nara (Illustrator)

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## From Reader Review S, Vol. 1 for online ebook

### Rebecca says

I feel as if the author is having some issues balancing the cop drama with the romance, but at least she understands the difference between actual consent and involuntary physical reaction, which is more than I can say for a lot of genre authors.

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### Natalia Clow says

Realmente no me engancho, pero para mi sorpresa es un libro que se acaba rápido así que facilitó la lectura de los volúmenes que seguían.

Personajes cliché, situaciones cliché, poco desarrollo de la relación y de personajes. Nada que sobresalga realmente.

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### Sarina says

This wasn't a bad start to a new series; I liked the detective/investigation aspect to the story as well as the concept of being someone's 'S'. I also liked how, even though they seem to have such opposing personalities, the MCs are still drawn together. I did have a few minor complaints such as the sheer amount of information given about the justice system; I understand why it was seen as necessary but it was a bit of an information dump at times. Also, sex between the MCs was a bit unbelievable for me seeing as how Shiiba had never done it before and there was no lube used. I'm sorry, but ouch. Overall I look forward to continuing the series, especially since the relationship between Shiiba and Kaigo has been established.

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### Elle says

A stand-out in the genre, this is one of the very few that give a much heavier focus to plot than to romance. Really, so much plot. The author did her research into crime, police and gang warfare and it really shows.

Shiiba is an undercover detective working a rather impossible job that has a high turnover rate (from overwork and from cops starting to lose sight of making any difference, not from death, thankfully). This job also happens to rely on these undercover detectives being able to gain a willing information, or spy (the titular "S"), in the criminal underworld they're infiltrating. At the start of the novel Shiiba receives a mysterious warning to be careful with his S.

Being a novel of this sub-genre there's an unusual large percentage of gay characters, or characters otherwise straight who would nevertheless be romantically or sexually attracted to other males or Shiiba in particular. But even most of that is overpowered by the plot (which isn't mostly romantic/sexual shenanigans). There's rival warfare between the Tokyo yakuza gangs. Rival warfare between the Japanese yakuza and the Chinese gangs, the Taiwanese gangs. There's rival 'cold' warfare between the various Tokyo police departments!

More than one character also has a dead family member or romantic interest in their past, dead due to the criminal elements Shiiba is working against or flaws within the Japanese legal system. It's all highly interesting and hints of at least one cover-up or conspiracy. Considering that this is the first of a four-novel series, I'm betting the conspiracy is real -- and possibly there being more than one.

There's not much that gets resolved this novel, apart from Shiiba's S situation. Mostly it's a lot of setting the stage for the full series and revealing the problems with the gangs (national or international) and dropping crumbs for various backstories and possible conspiracies. Don't take that to mean this is a boring novel or that nothing happens, or that it's unsatisfying. I think *S* achieves precisely what it sets out to, which is to entertain, to make you think, and to make you very interested in keeping on reading the series.

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**Rating:** 4 stars

### **Chelsey Middleton says**

I really enjoyed reading this story it had me reading from front to back not being able to put this book down. The things that Shiiba has to deal with must be a big huge drag. At least he seems to have found some outlet in his life through Munechika. Lets just hope the relationship grows. I hope it does but I wont know until I keep reading the series.

Looking forward to it so im gonna jump right into the 2 book right now... :) :p

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### **Sophie says**

This is definitely one of the best examples of the genre. I've learned not to expect too much when it comes to m/m and/or yaoi, but this was really enjoyable and well written. You still have to be okay with the conventions of the genre (like the whole "gay for you" thing), but other than that this really surprised me. Interesting plot and characters that didn't act like cardboard cutouts.

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### **Himi says**

Story: 5.0 – Very intriguing.

Artwork: 3.5 – This was my first encounter, but maybe it will grow on me.

Translation: 5.0

Editing: 4.0 – Good but too many typos!

Re-readablity: 5.0 – OH YES!

Final Score: 4.5

+++

Story

*S* is about Shiiba Masaki, a detective in the Counter-Organized-Crime Division of Shinjuku's Metropolitan Police, and his relationship with his organized-crime informant, known to those privileged enough to know simply as "S." A detective's S (a handle which is short for spy) would probably be considered a necessary evil in his line of work; an unsavory character who would most likely never be associated with if it weren't

for his duties, but that's only on the surface. The story moves forward as Aida-sensei slices at our hearts with the double-edged sword that is the relationship between a detective and his S.

### Characters

When employing the age-old premise of “cops and robbers,” it’s easy to apply it un-tweaked: copy and paste one of the many stereotypical profiles to the character of your choice. Because crime dramas have been done to death and back again, it’s really hard not to trip over the clichés hoping to pass as a new spin on an old record. Well, I am pleased to report that Aida-sensei is quite the DJ when it comes to remixing the old standards. Shiiba, the main character, is neither a tsundere, a hetare, nor a born-to-surrender uke; he’s a cautious man with an impulsive streak and closed heart. Although he appears to be detached from his personal life and his work, he’s actually so far into them that he can’t see a way out of either. As a detective, Shiiba is committed to ridding the city of the guns that continue to threaten its welfare. His commitment is an unstable mix of dedication and desperation, with desperation often carrying more weight. Still wallowing in his own victim-hood, he is spurred on by it to accomplish his goal by nearly any means necessary. As a man, he is conflicted about how he relates to others and is often at war with himself over whether or not the stances he has chosen are the stances he should take. While this turmoil is sometimes tempered by his determination to act within the scope of his position and under his own principles which he has sworn to uphold, his desire to come from under the shadow of his aching heart sometimes compels him to make decisions that are to his detriment, both personally and professionally.

The relationships between Shiiba and the other characters and the advancement of those relationships are what propel the story forward. The depth of Shiiba’s connection with his sister’s husband is a little hard to pin down. It isn’t for lack of detail; I just get the feeling that there is much to be revealed about it in the coming volumes. But regardless of that, their interactions do not betray what we know of it. Since Shiiba’s relationship with his S is what the story is about, I don’t want to risk giving anything away, so I’ll just say this: As the story progresses, Shiiba’s understanding or rather, the increasing profundity of his understanding of what an S is to a detective is often the lead-in to some of the spicier moments in the story. It is his actions (and reactions) which are provoked by his willingness to accept or ignore the truth of his situation that makes watching the development of their relationship such a pleasure.

I was convinced from the start. I had an easy time getting to know the characters and as a result, when their various motives were being uncovered, I found it just as easy to reconcile them with their individual natures. While some of them had a rough go of it, I never thought them to be pitiful. And with this only being the 1st of 4 volumes, I am glad that I will get to learn even more about these great characters.

### Delivery

The story progresses very well; I never found myself waiting to get to the good part. The characters, the environments in which they exist, and the circumstances under which they operate, are revealed very naturally. Specifically the breakdown of the Counter-Organized-Crime Division; this could so easily have come off as blocks of unnecessary and uninteresting text or something that would have been better left for the appendices. As a means of avoiding this kind of result when trying to present complex ideas like the delegation of responsibility within a sector or a hierarchical structure, a writer will often rely on some sort of diagram or one of the various forms of afterthoughts that are at their disposal. Doing so isn’t necessarily a bad thing and in some situations it is the preferred thing. However, it is great when this type of information can be integrated into the flow of the story without making readers feel like they have to switch gears when encountering it. Successfully accomplishing this is the mark of an author who fully understands the tone and pace they have set as well as the dynamics of their story as a whole. Fortunately for her readers, Aida-sensei

was able to use a very balanced mix of narration and dialogue to keep us clued-in to the hows and whys of things without boring us into an information coma.

## Art

I believe this is my first encounter with Nara Chiharu-sensei, so I'll hold off on any blanket statements until I've finished volume 4. For the time being, I will say this: There are 12 illustrations; 1 color, 11 b&w; page 97 is my favorite. I think they're all well done, but the lips aren't always good. Sometimes, if it's not a smile or a blank expression, some artists just can't get it right. On the other hand, there are times that a drawing style can start out as not to your liking but grow on you the more you are exposed to it. So, we'll see.

## Dots & Crosses

It could be a mistake on the part of Aida-sensei or it could be a translation error, but either way, there exists a continuity issue regarding Shiiba's age. I double/triple/quadruple checked and it was not a matter of a flashback or a flash forward; it's all in the present and I'm sure it isn't a typo. I suppose I'll have to wait until I get to volume 2 to see what's what.

In manga you can cut to the next scene because even if the dialogue doesn't indicate it and there is no panel that illustrates it, showing a character nursing a bruised cheek is a signal to any reader that his face just met someone's fist. This also works for the sex scenes for which you turn the page on the first "ah" and in the very next panel you are greeted with chirping birds or the morning school bell. It's not always what I want to see, but it's a reasonably acceptable practice. However, this is not so easily accomplished in a novel. When there are no panels to reference and a scene involving movement is being described, the mini-movie that the reader is carefully building in their mind becomes distorted when the author cuts out a step. I thought to myself, "how does that work?" There's one description that produces an image of a physically awkward set up and another one that just seems physically impossible. There's always the possibility that I'm wrong, but I'm pretty good at this, so I doubt it. While these alleged errors don't disrupt the flow, they could be tiny speed bumps to the readers who, like me, translate every line of text into a frame for the mini-movie they're filming in their heads. If it continues to bother me, I'll draw out the scenes and post them.

At 4 1/4 x 6 3/4 x 1/2, the book is the perfect pocket size. There are 7 bi-fold sections that are stacked, glued, and bound in a nice glossy cover that includes the very sexy picture you see above. I only found one typo throughout the entire book, but I found some grammar issues that made me cringe. The only other things that I can really pick with are the alignment, kerning and justification of some of the text. The summary on the back is nicely justified, but the positioning of the block of text favors the right. Because of this, the text nearly hits the edge and leaves an awkward white space on the left. Within the book are a terrible number of weird kerning and justifications. These things do not detract from the story, but since our minds are trained to recognize punctuation as the beginning or end of a thought (complete or otherwise) and to see spacing as a way to separate words and paragraphs and thoughts and moments in a story, abnormal applications do have the potential to trip up the momentum of a passage.

## Summary

Overall, it was a great reading experience. I really enjoyed the story; it was sexy, funny and suspenseful and I am really anxious to move on to volume 2. It felt really good to hold this book in my hand as I slouched at my desk, curled up in my bed or rested for a moment on my foot bench.

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### **Nyie Rombeng says**

what the really mean of "S"? I hope not strange word/titlex)  
need help from crime lord maybe should using price but sometime disappointing when the expectation would not come.  
otherwise, something like threatening, trapping, & slaving of sexual attraction will be happens.  
be careful need a help from someone!

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### **Raine says**

Read this in one sitting. I borrowed an english copy from a friend :3 My second novel next to Ai no Kusabi and Saki Aida delivered! I've read her previous works and her writing was as colourful and detailed as her manga <3 Almost like Deadlock, this is a story involving a Yakuza Detective. It was smexy and an eye-opener. The seme is so obscene though. kkk.

A fun and enjoyable read, but don't expect perfection because you won't enjoy it. Otherwise, it's.. educational and deep in some levels.

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### **Maverynthia says**

So a police detective and a Yakuza get together in this one. :/ The way they make this happen is that the person in the organized crime gets certain kickbacks if they snitch on others. They are called 'S' which means 'Spy'.

And that about where this ends. While I like some of the info dumping at the beginning it just doesn't hold up in the end. Not only that the author creates a woman and kills her just to make him related to someone higher in his chain of command. Oh and she was pregnant too so we can have more man pain.

What a little good about this book is that Shiiba gets into the relationship after Munechika's humiliation which is a terrible trope, but it's better than him being resistant all the way.

Where this book fails is the typical yaoi rape shit that didn't need to be in here.

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### **Kimberly Souza says**

Very fun read. BL.

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### **Blak Rayne says**

S Vol. 1, the first in a series of yaoi novels, written by Saki Aido and illustrated by Chiharu Nara, is a story knee deep in Yakuza, and everything that involves the sordid underbelly of Japan's Shinjuku district's Kabukicho, or red light district; an area where the streets are lined with love hotels and bars, and any sexual fetish can become a reality.

To give you a very brief synopsis, Masaki Shiiba is a detective working undercover in conjunction with a spy or 'S', a man by the name Andou, an informant who is a member of a criminal organization, the Matsukura Group. Andou provides everything Shiiba needs in exchange for special favours. Shiiba is on the hunt for illegal guns coming in from China. While digging for dirt on the Chinese, he runs into a man by the name of Keigo Munechika, another member of the Matsukura Group, but of a much higher rank. Munechika is an intimidating and seemingly cold person, and during their initial encounter, he makes the young detective nervous.

In the beginning of the novel Shiiba receives a mysterious phone call during the night—a man tells him that 'he'd better be careful with Andou'. It's a subtle warning, and subsequently a short time later, Andou is murdered. Shiiba takes the loss hard, as Andou was not only his S, but a friend of many years; he feels responsible, that perhaps he should have done more to prevent the man's untimely death. In addition, the incident seems to drag Shiiba emotionally down, and it pushes him farther into the world of organized crime, something he wishes to destroy. Bound and determined to find Andou's killer, Shiiba accidentally becomes involved with the wrong person, and Munechika, the man he almost loathes comes to his rescue.

My over all feelings for this novel were mixed. It wasn't until chapter five that the story really took off for me. And, as I've stated previous, when any book is translated from Japanese to English, a lot can literally be lost in the process, including the author's true voice. S Vol. 1 has a good plot and strong characters, but sadly it lacks in description, and decent editing. The POV's are jumpy, dialogue confusing, and the chapters ended at what I felt were the more inopportune moments. On the other hand, the sex scenes were nicely written, the relationship between the uke and his semi believable, and the information about the Japanese police and Asian mob well researched.

Will I read S Vol. 2 and S Vol. 3? Yes, most definitely! The reason I say this is because I did enjoy the plot and characters, and I'm curious; I'd like to see how Shiiba's relationship with his semi develops. As far as a rating goes, I give Saki Aido 3.5 stars for the story and 4 flames for the sex. If you decide to give this novel a try, I will warn you the sex isn't over the top explicit, but it isn't tame either, and there is a rape scene.

Happy Yaoi Hunting!

Blak Rayne

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### **Amethystically says**

Not entirely believable and this series might lean towards a little too angsty for my liking but the ride was still fun, and the Munechika x Shiiba chemistry was great.

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### **Untamed says**

I enjoyed the story more after getting past all the back story about how undercover police work with their informants, or "S". I recall beginning to read the novel the first time, then stopped. But after my "to read" pile continued to grow, I decided to give it a second try, and was pleasantly surprised. The dynamics between the undercover officer and his "S" is handled differently from one officer to the next, and Detective Masaki Shiiba took his job seriously, doing whatever it takes to keep his informant safe. That is until he came upon his current possibility in a Yakuza named Keigo Munechika. But could he handle sleeping with a man in

order to get information on organized crime? I'm glad I hung in there and read this first book, as I am now enjoying the second. If you love crime fighting novels, mixed with intense sexual content, then Saki Aida's "S" will be to your liking.

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### **J'aime says**

I read a lot of M/M fiction, both erotic romance and other genres that feature such relationships. I also read a ton of yaoi manga, but this is only the second "yaoi novel" that I have read (the other was Ai No Kusabi The Space Between Volume 1: Stranger (Yaoi Novel)). I enjoyed this story very much, and consequently ordered a few more yaoi novels to try.

Unlike yaoi manga, there is room for much more story and relationship development in a prose novel. For those wondering, the main differences (that I can see) between yaoi novels and M/M fiction is the inclusion of illustrations and the relationship dynamic, specifically the carry-over of the uke/seme roles. In M/M fiction, most gay men like to "switch" between top and bottom in the sexual relationship. In yaoi, one man is the bottom (uke) and one the top (seme). That is certainly the case here. Shiiba is a detective in Tokyo Metropolitan Police investigating arms smuggling/crimes. He works with an informant known as an S, or spy. Shiiba loses his S and has to cultivate a new one. Munechika would make a great S, only Shiiba doesn't like him! But that aversion covers up a secret attraction.

For the first in a series, this was very well done. The plot has a lot of detail, and the ongoing backdrop of a police investigation provides a good atmosphere for a tense romance. Shiiba is a well developed character with enough back story to make him believable. Readers can easily identify and sympathize with his vulnerabilities. Munechika is kept deliberately mysterious to help build suspense around his actions concerning Shiiba, and it works beautifully. The only problem I found was that the author was a little too detailed about the workings of the police and government bodies associated with crime investigation. I found the bureau relationships and conflicting names confusing at times. I really could've used a hierarchy diagram! Fortunately, a reader can skim these parts since they aren't critical to understanding Shiiba's job, or his purpose. The story has a lot of action, and twists. Also, unlike Ai No Kusabi's first volume, this includes some graphic sexual situations, though they don't occur until more than halfway through the book. I can't wait for VII, but it's nice to not be left hanging waiting for the relationship to begin. Another bonus is the illustrations sprinkled throughout the novel, some of which are quite steamy. They give the reader a little something more than you find in a traditional novel.

My only real issue with this, and all yaoi novels, is the price. S looks like it will be at least 4 volumes, possibly 5. All of these together would equal about one mass market paperback, given their page counts. So, the price is pretty steep considering a mass market is less than \$10, and 4 volumes of a yaoi novel comes to nearly \$36. However, I realize that the market for yaoi novels isn't large and the cost of translating these from Japanese can be high. In the end, I think the story is worth the cost especially if you can get the books with Amazon's four for three promotion. Overall, I highly recommend S.

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