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Raizo and Kasumi entered the dining room hand in hand.

"G-good morning, you two," Mariko greeted them, her voice trembling slightly. "O-or, well, I suppose good *afternoon* is more accurate, but hey. Ready to eat?"

"Yes, mistress," Kasumi replied with a slight bow. "Hubby, please be seated and...allow me to serve you..."

"Uhh...could you just eat normally instead?" Mariko suggested.

"I...suppose," Kasumi answered reluctantly.

"Well, well! You're looking dapper today, aren't you?" a voice called from the living room. The white-haired girl entered the dining area, striding along casually.

She seems to have long recovered from her injury, from the way she's walking, Raizo thought. *Note to self: cut deeper next time.*

"Aww, why the long face?" the girl asked, walking over to him and poking him gently on the nose. "Say...I should introduce myself, shouldn't I?" She giggled. "The name's Satomi, the Puppet of the Third Eye. I'm a merc—err...well, ex-merc, technically speaking. Oh, and I can see the future."

"Well, ain't *that* convenient?" Raizo mumbled as Mariko brought him a plate filled with bacon, eggs and bread. "So that's how you fight?"

"Uhh...not quite," Satomi answered. "I can only detect incoming attacks so it's completely useless on offense, and only works if I *activate* it, but I can see the majority of attacks about a second in advance...though that isn't to say I'll be fast enough to do anything about it. Your power throws mine off, actually. I can't tell if it's one of your completely intangible clones that's attacking or the real one, so I kinda just have to guess. It's too risky to try and hit 'em all every time, right?" she laughed.

"I see," Raizo said flatly.

"Say...if you don't mind me asking, why do you use a samurai sword?" Satomi inquired. "The tamahagane isn't exactly the *most* versatile sword, y'know?"

"The tamahagane is a sword used by warriors who represent honor and justice," Raizo said. "Personally, I live by two simple laws: leave no debt unpaid, and leave no grudge unsettled. I think it represents that, in a way."

"I don't disagree," Satomi said, "but...seriously? Oh, and another thing: what is that sword *made* out of? The friggin' *handle* ripped a hole through my stomach, for God's sake!"

"It's a fatalium sword," Mariko interrupted. "There's no other way that could have been possible. As far as I know, Raizo doesn't have a power that makes his weapon's handle sharp." Having made her statement, she gave Kasumi a plate of food as well and sat down. A moment later, she suddenly realized her mistake. "O-oh, crap! Err...sorry, Raizo, didn't mean to tell anyone if you didn't want them to know...I'm just not feeling right today, y'know?" she laughed.

"R-right," Raizo replied. "Well, in any case, the cat's outta the bag, so I may as well say it. The sword's made of fatalium and converted from barium. When the

Oshiro family decided to 'purchase' me, they gave me what they called a 'lifetime allowance.' That money's...well, it's gone now. I spent it all in one go and got myself this sword."

"Damn, that's pretty sick," Satomi said, poking the hilt of the sword at Raizo's side.

"Yeah, I needed it though," Raizo answered. "I could tell from the beginning that the young miss had no intention of buying me a new weapon if it ever broke, and even though that 'lifetime allowance' was a hefty sum of money, I don't think it would've lasted very long knowing how often I use my weapon. I'd have to buy something sturdy, for one. Hell, at first, they gave me a goddamn *iron* katana."

"That's a surefire way to get you killed," Mariko said.

"You think?" Raizo asked sarcastically.

Satomi narrowed her eyes. "W-wait...did that woman pull a fast one on me?" she mumbled.

"Let me ask you this," Raizo said. "Were you offered an inexplicably large sum of money for no good reason at all?"

"Y-yeah, in a way," Satomi answered.

"Did you accept it?" Raizo continued.

"Y-y-yeah," Satomi admitted.

"Well done. She got you," Raizo chuckled.

"SHIT!" Satomi cried.

"On the bright side, though," Raizo said, "if you already have a decent weapon you should be fine. On top of that, I'd be willing to bet she offered you way more money than I was given."

"Huh. Really?" Satomi asked.

"Sure, why not?" Raizo replied. "The young miss hates my guts and all, so I wouldn't be surprised if she'd do that just to spite me." Sighing, he took a bite of his meal. "Damn, this is good!" he cried.

"Th-th-thank you," Mariko mumbled nervously, shuffling nervously on the spot.

Satomi sighed to herself. "Damn," she mumbled. "Well, in any case, I suppose we should really get to training together, huh?" she asked. "I mean, we *are* still partners now, aren't we?"

"For better or for worse, yeah," Raizo replied.

"No flirting!" Kasumi complained, poking Raizo on the cheek and pouting.

"Huh. You actually raised your voice," Raizo mumbled. "That's kinda hot."

"R-r-r-really?" Kasumi cried, surprised.

"Why would I lie about that?" Raizo asked.

"Oh? Are you two...a couple?" Satomi inquired. "I thought that 'hubby' thing was a joke or something..."

"D-d-d-don't read that much into it!" Kasumi cried in embarrassment.

"R-right," Satomi mumbled.

Before they could continue their conversation, the group heard a loud knocking at the door. "Hey!" a voice cried. "Are the repairs done? They aren't *that* major, y'know? I don't have all day!"

"Damn that Hikari," Mariko mumbled to herself as she stood up and went to answer the door.