

XLIV

Raizo felt his eyes slowly opening. He briefly mulled over his surroundings, his hands feeling his way around the area as his eyes tried to quickly adjust to the bright light. *Where AM I?* he asked himself.

"Hubby?" Kasumi's voice called out to him. Blinking twice quickly, Raizo felt his eyes relax. His dilated pupils had returned to normal, and he could now properly see everything. *Infirmery, eh?* he thought. *Never thought I'd end up in here myself...neat.* Tilting his head over to the side, he spotted Kasumi sitting down beside him with tears in the corners of her eyes. "Oh, hubby's alright!" she cried, kissing him.

"Yeah, I'm alive," Raizo chuckled. "I told you they couldn't kill me." He raised his arm slowly to place a hand on his lover's cheek, only for his muscles to scream out at him in pain. Dropping his arm, he sighed. "Still," he mumbled, *I think I did quite a number on me.*

"Hubby...I'm happy you're...okay," Kasumi said, kissing him again. Raizo smiled. "Likewise," he murmured. Glancing around, he inspected the white roof of the infirmery, matching the curtains around the bed and the bandages on Kasumi's right arm.

Wait, bandages? The hell? he asked himself.

"Kasumi, tell me something," he ordered. "What...happened to your arm?"

Kasumi almost jumped at the question, covering her bandaged wound instinctively. "D-don't worry," she assured him. "My wound's...almost healed anyways..."

"That doesn't change the fact that you're keeping me in the dark," Raizo sighed. "What happened? Tell me."

"I-it's really nothing," Kasumi said, averting her gaze.

Raizo slowly sat up, ignoring the agonizing pain in his sore muscles. Hugging his girlfriend, he inspected her wound. Indeed, there didn't seem to be any more bleeding, but he immediately recognized the style of the cut and the bloody mark it left on the bandage, the bleeding so intense that it had seeped through dozens of layers of bandages while the wound was still fresh.

Of course the cut was made by an expert.

Of course Raizo could recognize that.

Of course he'd know a cut made in his own signature style.

"Kasumi," he asked, his voice shaking, "did...did I do this?" He knew the answer already, naturally, but he refused to accept it. He needed the confirmation. "Tell me the truth. Did I...do it?"

With a sigh, Kasumi nodded reluctantly. "Hubby...I...I forgive you, okay? I already have, so please..."

In a matter of seconds, Raizo felt his head start to spin. Everything around him made him nauseous. Without realizing when he had began, he found himself gripping Kasumi close, crying into her bosom as she slowly stroked his hair. "I...I'm sorry," he

whispered. "I'm so sorry...I...even thought I promised that I'd *protect* you...even though I—"

Kasumi cut him off with a passionate kiss. The two found themselves inexplicably drawn to each other. As they both wiped away with tears, they found themselves lying together on the infirmary bed. "Hubby...I forgive you," Kasumi whispered again.

Raizo breathed slowly. "Th-thank you," he answered, holding her close. "I swear...I'll do whatever I can to control this...little 'trait' of mine...and when the time comes, I'll use it to protect you properly..."

Marie stood still, stiff as a board, shuddering. *Shoot*, she thought. *Bad timing. I can't go in there right now! Oh, but I need to give them a medical report...darn it!* She shook her head. *Guess I'll wait*, she told herself.

As Raizo closed his eyes, enjoying his lover's warmth, his animal instinct kicked in again. The scent of cinnamon wafted through the air, suppressing the smell of his beloved's strawberry shampoo. His eyes shot open again. "Who's there?" he demanded.

From behind the curtain sounding the infirmary bed, a figure moved. "W-wait, it's me!" Marie called to him. Slowly, she pried the curtains open a little and peeked in. Confirming that nothing was going on inside, she sighed and entered. "Sorry, I thought you two were having a nice little moment, so I decided to wait, but I see you still managed to detect me."

"Yeah," Raizo sighed. "I honestly appreciate how considerate you were being, but...well, *cinnamon* is a pretty strong scent."

"W-wait, you could *smell* it?" Marie cried. "Most people look at me as though I haven't showered in days from how faint it is!"

"Hardly," Raizo stretched. "So, what's up?"

"Well, formally, I'm here to give you a quick report on your own status, as well as the status of everyone else," Marie explained. "I've been ordered to give you this report by the administration, specifically by the principal herself. She states that you are 'the reason for the safe extraction of all staff and student lives in this incident,' so you deserve to know."

"I see," Raizo sighed. "Let's hear it then."

"Very well," Marie said. "As you may be able to tell, you're *uninjured*, but your muscles are sore. They'll stay that way for a few days, but you'll be okay. You'll be fine by next Monday, so worst case scenario, three days."

"Three days?" Raizo asked. "Isn't it four?"

"No, it's Thursday," Marie said. "You've been resting for almost 24 hours. Incidentally, you have five visitors, but I've turned down their requests for entry for now. I'm afraid I can't have the fangirls ogling at our little hero, now can I?" she laughed.

"Damn," Raizo chuckled.

"Anyways," Marie continued, "All jokes aside, Kasumi's wound was pretty deep but her regeneration is pretty effective. Despite everything, she's almost completely recovered. As you likely know, your weapon is made from fatalium. Element number 140. The unbreakable element. That renders wounds inflicted by it much more difficult to heal from, so her healing is impressive to say the least."

"So I *did* do it, eh?" Raizo sighed.

"The administration has completely overlooked it," Marie admitted. "They say they know your madness is untreated as of right now, and Kasumi herself said there was no reason to press any responsibilities, so they've let it go entirely after factoring in the *positives* of yesterday's events."

"I understand," Raizo said. "Just for the record though, I *do* intend on learning to control that power."

"And that'll do *everyone* some good," Marie nodded. "There's literally no loser in that scenario. Except the guys you choose to kill, but let's forget about the little details for now, shall we?" she suggested. "Chinatsu is recovering quite well. The nanobots are making quick work of the wounds she received. She'll be back in class tomorrow as well, so be sure to give her a 'welcome back' kiss and whatnot, 'kay?" Marie joked.

"The hell?" Raizo laughed. "I ain't some kinda house husband!"

"Oh, of course not," Marie laughed. "You're the breadwinner for a very *large* family."

Raizo raised an eyebrow. "What's that supposed to mean?" he inquired with a laugh.

"I wonder," Marie replied with a knowing smile. "Well, that's all for now so I'll be heading out. Please rest well. I expect to see you both in class tomorrow." She turned, waved and walked off. "Oh, and I'm letting your visitors in," she added as she slipped out of the room.

"Oh, shit," Raizo mumbled.

Kasumi, who'd virtually fallen asleep during the report, stirred. "What's...happening?" she inquired sleepily, tilting her head quizzically.

"YOU'RE ALIVE!" Satomi's voice cried as she virtually tackled Raizo down onto the bed. "Wanna fuck?" she asked jokingly.

"Stop that!" Mariko ordered, reaching out and dragging her off. Shaking her head to herself, she smiled. "So, how're you feeling?" she asked.

"Is there anything you'd like to eat, my dear?" Elizabeth inquired, poking her head in.

"Hmm...there are too many of us in here. 'Tis a predicament, indeed," Koharu commented.

"MOVE OUT OF THE WAY!" Hikari cried, bursting into the room. "Jeez, why're you all keeping me out?"

I wonder why, Raizo thought with a smirk. Maybe so I don't lose my mind again?

"Oh, good, you're still around," Hikari sighed as she brushed the curtain around the bed aside. "Listen, I order you not to scare me like that ever *again*—oh my God. WHY ARE YOU IN BED WITH HER?" she cried, poking at Kasumi.

"Why not?" Raizo asked.

"Hubby's snuggling...with me," Kasumi said calmly.

B-but...but he's MINE! Hikari thought. *Well, never mind that. In the end, I'll be the only one he loves. After all, it's just that I've temporarily fallen out of favor, right? He still loves me, he just doesn't realize it yet. Yeah, that's it.* She smiled confidently, having reassured herself. *He is...still mine.*