

## XXIX

Hikari and Raizo watched from a distance, hiding behind a big bush and staring straight at the sakura tree in the middle of the campus. A gentle breeze blew through, causing a few stray petals to flutter in their direction. Satomi, having dragged Elizabeth onto the scene, ran back to her friends. "We're all set," she laughed.

"Why the hell are you helping *her* anyways?" Hikari demanded spitefully.

"Why not?" Satomi asked. "She *is* your sister, right?"

"That's exactly the problem," Hikari muttered to herself.

"Woah, got front row seats, eh? Mind if we join you?" Jiro's voice asked. Raizo casually waved him over. Fuyuko followed behind him. The two crouched down beside their friends. "Nice bush huh? Pretty convenient," Fuyuko giggled.

"Y'know, legend has it that somebody planted this bush here for the very purpose of peeking in on confessions," Jiro said.

"That a fact?" Raizo chuckled. "How...thoughtful of them," he said sarcastically.

"What the heck are you lot doing here?" another voice demanded forcefully. Hikari sighed. "What do you want, Mariko?" she asked, annoyed.

"Hubby...I'm tired..." Kasumi mumbled, collapsing onto her lover's back. Raizo gently ruffled her hair. "Alright, alright," he said, "you can cling onto me then."

"Hey, no fair!" Satomi complained, latching onto Raizo's arm.

Raizo sighed. "Please quiet down, you two," he said. Looking around, he noticed that various students had gathered in hiding places all around the sakura tree. *We're all shit at hiding*, he thought.

Mariko crouched down. "What're you all doing, anyways? This is supposed to be...well...*private*!"

"And yet you're still staying," Hikari laughed. "You're one hell of a hypocrite, commoner."

"Sh-shut up!" Mariko cried.

The whole group turned to her, giving her a quiet shushing.

Elizabeth sighed. Behind her, Koharu leaned against the sakura tree. "Mistress, what do you intend to do?"

"What do you think?" Elizabeth replied. "You know I only have eyes for one man, my dear Koharu, and unless it happens to be that man who comes to see me today, I'm afraid I will have to reject him."

"Ah, 'tis a shame," Koharu mumbled. "I'm afraid that man won't be the one. And yet, he was worried for your safety, mistress."

"Is that so?" Elizabeth murmured to herself, blushing gently.

"Indeed," Koharu nodded. "But in any case, 'tis about time. I think our mysterious gentleman has appeared," she said, gesturing towards the direction

which Elizabeth's back was facing. Elizabeth turned around, her best fake smile plastered on her face. Before her stood a boy with short blonde hair and bright blue eyes like her own. "Why, you look beautiful today, my dear," he said.

"Oh, thank you," Elizabeth replied politely.

"Truly, your eyes are almost as bright as stars and your skin is as smooth as porcelain," he continued. "I am Hideyoshi Kamuko, and I am here to request your love, my princess," he said, bowing deeply.

"Holy crap," Jiro mumbled.

"What's up?" Raizo inquired.

"Remember that guy I was telling you about this morning?" Jiro asked.

"Yeah," Raizo replied.

"That's him."

"Get out, there's no way."

"Oh, there *is*."

"Well then."

"What do you think will happen?" Jiro asked.

"You want my honest opinion?" Raizo smirked.

"Yeah."

"He's gonna get rejected. Flat out."

Elizabeth's smile held firm, but her eyes looked down upon him with distaste. "Hmm...with all due respect, I'm not certain quite yet. Tell me a bit about yourself," she said.

"Well, my family owns a big tech company overseas," Hideyoshi said, "and we own various mansions throughout this country. Perhaps you'd like to visit one? Maybe play a game of golf?"

"I'm afraid I don't know how to play golf, sir," Elizabeth said calmly. "I've always preferred some swordplay over it."

"Then I could try my hand against you," Hideyoshi declared. "I'm a spear user, but I'm sure it can't be that difficult for someone of my status."

Raizo stood up. "Gonna intervene, I'll be back in a minute," he said, walking off.

"W-wait, where do you think you're going?" Hikari cried. "Get back here!"

Ignoring her, Raizo waved to the group as he started to walk towards the sakura tree.

"Hmm...interesting. Quite the arrogant persona you have there," Elizabeth said. "I'm afraid I'll have to decline your invitations. I prefer slightly more...modest men," she giggled, "and someone who believes they can take up swordplay just like that...they're just foolish." With a wave of her hand, she turned and began to walk away.

"Hold it," Hideyoshi said, his voice turning cold. "Did you just *reject* me? ME?"

"Yeah, it seems like it," Elizabeth said.

"Oh, no. You don't understand. Nobody's rejected me before, and nobody will. Get back here," he said, grabbing Elizabeth's shoulder and forcefully yanking her back.

"Mistress!" Koharu called. As she pulled the relic out from her uniform, she felt the presence of another attacker, Narrowly dodging a slash from a knife, she turned to find a puppet behind her.

"Joan, deal with that puppet over there," Hideyoshi ordered. "Miss Oshiro, come with me unless you want your precious puppet to get hurt."

"Make me," Elizabeth snapped.

"Fine then," Hideyoshi said, reaching forth. With one hand, he forcefully grabbed her left wrist. With the other, he squeezed her right breast. "Not bad," he mumbled.

"H-hey!" Elizabeth cried.

"Mistress, hold on!" Koharu said. Before she could run to her owner's aid, however, Joan got in her way. "Not so fast," she said.

"Curses," Koharu mumbled.

"Let go of me!" Elizabeth shouted.

"Well, make me," Hideyoshi sneered.

"Gladly," a third voice said. As Hideyoshi and Elizabeth turned in the direction of the sound, a fist slammed into the former's stomach. Doubling over in pain, Hideyoshi felt a solid kick being delivered to his chin. Falling over, he opened his eyes only to see a thin, dark grey blade running by his neck. "W-wha—" he mumbled nervously.

"Damn, you're friggin' *pathetic*," the voice said condescendingly. "Either stand up like a man and fight, or piss the hell off," it ordered. Looking up, Hideyoshi was met with a pair of merciless grey eyes and streak black hair. He gulped.

"R-Raizo..." Elizabeth whispered.

"Well? What'll it be, *punk*?" Raizo asked, his jaw curling into a smile. He tilted his sword slightly so that the blade was mere millimeters away from Hideyoshi's neck.

"H-holy crap, y-y-y-you're the *Blood Prince*!" Hideyoshi cried. "You...you *killed* a man and his puppet y-yesterday, didn't you? The hell d-d-do you want with m-me?"

"Oh? A weakling *and* a coward?" Raizo mumbled. "Funny."

"I-I'm no coward!" Hideyoshi cried. "My puppet will beat you, just you watch!"

"There's no need," Raizo said, pointing over at Koharu, who stood over a defeated and disarmed Joan. "Last chance to run."

Hideyoshi gulped. Blinking for a moment, he nodded. "O-okay," he said nervously, slowly getting up and turning around before running off.

"What a friggin' wimp," Raizo mumbled. "You doing okay?" he asked Koharu.

"Y-yes, of course," she replied, averting her eyes and smiling a little.

"And you, Lady Elizabeth?" Raizo inquired.

"O-oh...I'm alright, thanks. I-I mean, like, th-the weather's g-great, thanks f-for ask—I mean...uhh...o-oh my," Elizabeth stammered, blushing to herself. "I-I meant to ask how you were d-doing...w-were you passing by? I d-didn't cause you too much t-trouble, did I?"

"Not at all, milady," Raizo replied. "It was no problem at all. Never mind that, are you sure you're okay?"

"W-wonderful," Elizabeth said, taking a deep breath. "I'm...feeling wonderful, dear," she answered.

Raizo chuckled, patting her head gently with his free hand. "Glad to hear it then," he smiled, sheathing his sword.