

XVII

"And what brings you to my humble abode at this time of day?" Raizo inquired casually, a hint of sarcasm in his voice. Chuckling as he posed the nervous Satomi his question, he sat down upon the hay beside his lover, putting his arm around her and stroking stray strands of her hair absentmindedly.

Kasumi tilted her head slightly in confusion. She sleepily blinked, one eye moving ever so slightly slower than the other. "Hubby? What's happening?" she asked.

"I'll tell you once I find out," Raizo laughed in response, turning to face Satomi. "So? What's up?"

"Y-y-you're...surprisingly calm about this whole thing," Satomi answered, twiddling her thumbs as she averted her gaze from the spot where, moments ago, she had watched the two sitting before her kiss and make love. "I mean...like...I walked in on you, for God's sake!"

"Yeah," Raizo answered calmly.

"You were *having* sex!" Satomi cried. "I'm talking 'in the fuckin' nude,' y'know?"

"Yeah," Raizo repeated, cracking a wry smile.

"I interrupted your lovemaking session!" Satomi said, visibly agitated.

"Yeah," Raizo repeated again, his smile unwavering.

"It's against school rules and I can report that to the administration," Satomi replied, her voice turned flat and serious to try and change the mood of the conversation.

"Yeah," Raizo said once more, "but you won't. You don't *want* to. Right?"

Satomi sighed. "Yeah, you got me there," she answered, "but still! Like...someone walked in right fuckin' after you were done...well...*fucking*! Doesn't that bother you? Like, at all?"

"No, not particularly," Raizo answered, stretching.

"I don't...really care either," Kasumi said, shrugging sleepily and hiding a yawn.

"What the hell is wrong with you two?" Satomi asked.

"Dunno," Raizo answered with a shrug. Kasumi leaned over to him, pressing her cheek against his torso, and closed her eyes. "Hey, no sleeping," Raizo said. "We've gotta get to class."

Pouting, Kasumi nodded and reluctantly got up.

Her skirt's riding up, Satomi found herself thinking as she stared at Kasumi from behind. Raizo had taken her hand, and the two were walking just ahead of her. Raizo's naturally fast walking pace was easily matched by Kasumi, who marched briskly alone, clearly in a good mood.

Satomi slowly reached forth, giving Kasumi's skirt a slight tug. Immediately, it fell back down and covered her legs. *That's better*, she thought, *but somehow I feel like I may be happier if I just left it be...maybe it's jealousy?* She sighed. *Yeah, that's*

probably it. I never did get to confess to that boy thanks to the accident...but that's behind me now. It's not like I'll find him again...and even if I do...I don't think I'm in love with him anymore. After all, she added to herself, I think the one I love is right before my eyes.

"Hey, Satomi, do you notice something odd?" Raizo suddenly asked.

Satomi looking up, noticed that he and Kasumi had already stopped walking. Freezing on the spot as to avoid colliding with them, she looked around again. The nearby students were all whispering about something, but Satomi remarked that they weren't the subject of the student's discussion. "Huh...what's going on?" she asked.

"I wonder," Raizo answered, clicking his tongue. "We're getting out of here. I don't like the vibe they've got going. C'mon, we should head to the classroom early. Maybe Ms. Saitou knows something about this."

The puppets entered the lecture hall. Checking his watch, Raizo noted to himself that there was still a solid half hour until class started. Chinatsu and Marie already sat at the teacher's desks, reviewing documents. Noticing the puppets, Chinatsu looked up and greeted them. "You three are early today," she mumbled. "What? Here to help with the paperwork?" she joked.

"Err...not *quite*," Satomi answered, "but I don't think we're allowed to do that anyways...hold on, I'm getting sidetracked. The students seemed to be rumoring about something, but this doesn't really seem to be a regular phenomenon here at Dosia, so we were wondering what was up with them."

"Oh, you didn't hear?" Chinatsu asked. "A new student transferred in and will be joining our class today. They say he's a hunk of some sort. I say based off a combination of my own experience and bias, he's probably an arrogant piece of shit, but as an educator I can't really go around saying that," she laughed. "That said, don't tell anyone I called him that."

"Huh...interesting," Raizo mumbled.

"Where is this...new transfer?" Kasumi inquired, rubbing her eyes.

"No idea," Chinatsu answered, annoyed. "He *should* have come to see me by now to discuss his placement in our school's classes, but he's a good 15 minutes late. Friggin' pain in the ass..."

"Language, mistress," Marie reminded her.

"Yeah, yeah," Chinatsu mumbled. "Well, the point is, this Naoki Goda kid is seriously irresponsible—"

"Who?" Satomi cried in shock. *W-wait, seriously? Did I...jinx it earlier or something?* she thought, blushing ever so slightly. *HE's...here? Now? Is this another opportunity to finally confess my feelings? And...do I even feel the same way as I did back then? As we...still the same as before?* She gulped.

Of to the side, Raizo's eyes narrowed as he found himself sighing. *What, does Satomi know him or something?* he asked himself. *She suddenly tensed up...though I*

may wanna be wary of him if our teacher has such a strong opinion about what he may be like, he thought.

Kasumi tugged his sleeve, bringing him back to reality. "Hubby..." she mumbled. "What's...on your mind?"

"Don't worry about it," Raizo answered, his expression softening. "Just thinking about something, that's all," he lied. *I shouldn't influence her regarding this person just yet*, he thought. *At least, not until I have some solid proof that he should be avoided and...if necessary, I suppose I can go "deal with" him...but let's hope it doesn't come down to THAT...*