

LIII

Raizo walked along the nearly paved path towards the school. *Ah, Monday mornings. Fucking hate them*, he thought, *or so I'd say if not for what happened two days ago*. Looking to his left, he noticed Hikari cheerfully strolling along. "I can't believe it!" she squealed suddenly. "So, y'know how we'd gotten 25 victories in matches last month?"

"Yeah, what about it?" Satomi inquired.

"Apparently, that translates to a monthly allowance that's subsidized by the government, and it's a *lot* of money," Hikari explained. "Apparently you get your cuts too, so you can check your debit cards or something."

"So that explains why I got so much cash all at once," Satomi muttered. "I received a notification that my card gained 125,000 yen."

"Well ain't that neat?" Raizo chuckled, his voice desperately trying to conceal a hint of frustration.

"How much did you get?" Satomi asked him curiously.

"Let's not discuss that here," Raizo mumbled. *Especially since I didn't get anything*, he thought, *but whatever*.

"Oh, don't worry about that," Hikari laughed. "He got the same amount as you, but I took the liberty of collecting it for him. Besides, Raizo's living expenses are completely covered by *yours truly*."

Damn, and just as I thought her nasty personality was starting to recede, Satomi thought. *What happened to wanting to change?*

"Maybe I can buy my new friends a meal or something," Hikari muttered to herself as she continued walking. *Or maybe I could try using it to help Raizo's love for me multiply even more...after all, even if I'm behind some other people, he said he doesn't hate me so he MUST still love me! All I have to do is show him how much better I am than those other girls and he'll be mine in an instant! However, she thought spitefully, I still have to be nice to everyone, lest they suspect anything and try and improve their game too!* She stroked her chin thoughtfully. *Maybe I'll use that extra 125,000 yen to buy myself a fancy dress! Once he sees his mistress adorned in such beautiful clothing, he'll surely compliment me! And that expression of his love for me is what I'm looking for!*

What's with that stupid grin on her face? Raizo asked himself as he looked at Hikari out of the corner of his eye. *She's probably thinking of something dumb again...I wonder why her personality reverted back to it's crappiest state? Or...did it just not change in the first place?*

Glancing in the other direction, he noticed Satomi staring at him intently. He slowed his pace slightly, allowing her to catch up and lean over to his ear. "Are you gonna be alright? I can give you some cash if you need it, darling," she whispered.

"It's fine," Raizo answered. "I have a little bit of money saved up in a separate account that she doesn't know about," he explained quietly. "It's stuff from random odd jobs I used to do. That said, I don't really buy *anything* nowadays."

Satomi sighed. "Just lemme know if you need anything, alright? I don't want you breaking into your rainy day funds...especially considering your money's not even coming to *you*."

"Yeah...although soon enough I'll have a solution to that," Raizo muttered. "I'll need to talk to the principal though."

"What? You're going to change the account with which you claim your allowance?" Satomi giggled.

"Not quite. If I do that, Hikari will be notified that my account doesn't have any updates, and she'll think I'm not being paid so she'll make a big deal out of it. The administration will be forced to tell her that I changed the account, and all of a sudden *all* my money is compromised," Raizo explained. "However...let's just say I'll have a separate income soon enough, and it'll be a secret. The fund from that job will be sent directly to my other account, and Hikari won't know it exists so it'll work out. Just...please don't go telling her."

"I won't, I swear," Satomi laughed. "Puppets can't get drunk so there's no danger there...and you know I'd always try to support you, *darling*."

Raizo chuckled in response.

"What're you two whispering about?" Hikari's voice interrupted. "I've been calling you for the last few seconds and you've been totally ignoring me!"

"Sorry, young miss," Raizo said, "just discussing what could happen today."

"Ugh, it's a pain, I know," Hikari shrugged. "I hear we start actual combat training on top of classes today," she sighed. "Damn physical education..."

She bought that? Raizo asked himself.

Damn, I still can't believe she's THIS gullible, Satomi thought.

As they entered the classroom, the group noticed Marie and Chinatsu waiting for them, along with vice principal Juri and her owner—the principal—hopelessly restrained by the two puppets in the room. "Raizo, could we have a moment?" the vice principal asked calmly.

"Y-yeah, it's important," the principal agreed, trying to break free.

"Sure," Raizo nodded. Signaling for Satomi and Hikari to go ahead, he went with the two adults and left the room. "We'll only be a bit," Juri called to Chinatsu from the door, "but please excuse the boy if we go a few minutes into class time."

Chinatsu nodded. "Got it," she answered with a light shrug.