

“This seems... highly irregular.”

“Highly irregular'? It's freaking crazy is what it is!”

“Excellent observational skills as always Skull, you're a real genius when it comes to the finer details.”

“Aw give me a break ya stupid cat! Nothing like this has ever happened before! Do *you* know what's going on?”

“Well... no! But I'm not a god, I don't know *everything* about the Metaverse!”

“I know this probably isn't the time or place to say this... but he looks so... cute! Maybe this isn't such a bad thing after all.”

“Now's not the time to be thinking stuff like that! This is, like... a serious issue!”

Ren Amamiya listened to the voices arguing above him, hands in his pockets, silent. It had all started out like any other excursion into the Metaverse. They had heard rumors about a bully around school that imposed his will on others, berating them and making them feel small until they did what he wanted them to do. This twisted desire had manifested in the Metaverse as a Shadow in Mementos, one taking the form of an unintimidating Imp. The mission had seemed laughable, each attack knocking the small creature around like a pinball in a machine... until he managed to land a special attack. Before anyone could stop him, the blast of energy had struck their leader, Joker, right in the chest, knocking him back... and reducing his size to a mere inch in height. The rest of the team had still easily managed to dispatch the Shadow but the damage had been done. Even now, outside the Metaverse, the affliction hadn't fixed itself. Luckily for Ren, his clothes and book bag had all shrunken down with him but it was cold comfort when he was stranded at such a miniscule size. Getting tired of all the chattering going on above him, as though he wasn't present, he raised his voice as loud as he could and shouted, “HEY!”

His sharp voice cut through the chatter, everyone looking down at him at once. The sight was strangely intimidating... but Ren wasn't about to let that stop him. He pulled one hand from his pocket and held it up, sighing slightly before saying, “Look... for now at least, someone just needs to keep an eye on me until we can figure this out. I can't speak for everyone but its been a long day and I'd rather just... not think about any of this for awhile.”

“He has a point.” Morgana said, licking his paw and rubbing his ear. “I'd volunteer but there's a lot of things I can't really do outside of the Metaverse. So... who's it going to be?”

“Obviously it can't be any of the girls.” Yusuke said immediately. “The very idea is too scandalous to even contemplate.”

“Oh... I suppose you're right.” Haru said, sighing. “He's just so cute... but it can't be helped. That just leaves you and Ryuji, then.”

“I would be more than happy to take care of our tiny leader, if he would have me.” Yusuke said, one hand against his chest, eyes closed as he solemnly offered his services.

“Pfft! Dream on, I'm the one who's gonna take care of him, obviously! Right, partner?” Ryuji said, grinning down at his tiny friend.

Ren looked between the two men and weighed his options. Ryuji wasn't always necessarily the brightest or most considerate person in the world... but the idea of being fussed over and potentially forced into posing for Yusuke's artistic whims was too much to bear. Ren turned to Ryuji and smiled. "Yeah, that's right. I'll stick with Ryuji until we can figure this thing out."

"Roger! I'll get right on it!" Futaba piped up, hugging her laptop against her chest. "This is a real challenge for once! Investigating something never before seen in the Metaverse... if I figure out what caused this I'm definitely naming it after myself!"

"We'll leave Ren in your hands then, Ryuji!" Haru said with a smile, hands clasped behind her back.

"Leave it to me! I'll take such good care of this guy he won't want to leave!" Ryuji boasted.

"Wow Ryuji, sure you don't want to just confess while you're at it?" Ann teased, elbowing her friend in the stomach.

"S-Shut up! It ain't like that!" Ryuji sputtered, cheeks burning crimson.

"Alright, alright, leave the two lovebirds alone." Morgana said, smirking at Ryuji... as best as a cat *could* smirk at any rate. "Tomorrow we'll launch a full investigation into Mementos and see if there isn't something we can find to reverse this Shadow's power. Ryuji, you'll stay behind of course to keep looking after Ren. The rest of you... rest up! It's going to be a long day tomorrow."

"Hell yeah, I get to hang with my bro all day *and* we both get out of work! Pretty SWEET deal I have to say." Ryuji said, leaning down and scooping his friend up in one hand.

The gang parted ways after that, each one heading to their home, Morgana deciding to stick with Ann until Ren returned to his normal size. Ryuji lifted his tiny friend up to his face, Ren recoiling slightly at the enormous visage filling his vision. "Sorry but I'm gonna have to keep you in my pocket for a while. You'll be fine in there just... stay put and don't move around too much, okay? If anyone sees you it'll be... ah... awkward to explain why my pants are moving around."

Ren rolled his eyes and said, "Maybe you'd be better off keeping me in your jacket pocket then?"

"Eh, a pocket's a pocket, don't think about it too much." Ryuji shrugged, slipping his friend into his right pants pocket. "Oh, I'd better give Boss a ring too... don't want him worrying about ya."

Ryuji pulled his phone out and dialed the number for Leblanc, Ren sliding down Ryuji's leg until he hit the bottom of the pocket, his legs sliding up from under him, forcing him into a reclined position, as though he was relaxing in a hammock, the movement of Ryuji's leg swaying him back and forth as the towering student casually strode to the subway. "Yo, Boss! It's, uh, Ren's friend, Ryuji! ...Yeah, the loud blond one... glad that you recognized my voice! Hehehehe... uh, anyway, I'm just calling to let you know that Ren is gonna be hanging out at my place for a while. Huh? No! Why would anything be wrong? I just... uh... need help with... uh... a school project? ...Yeah, he needs to be at my place to help! Come oooooon, it's better than constantly loitering around your coffee shop, right? Right! Anyway, I'll make sure he keeps writing in his journal and keep an eye on him so you just kick back and relax, alright? ...Sorry sir... yes sir..."

Ryuji sighed and ended the call, rubbing the back of his head. “Geez... that guy really doesn't know how to take a joke. He should lighten up, maybe take a day off or something.”

Ren snorted, the idea of Sojiro taking a day off practically unthinkable. Ren felt Ryuji's hand press down against the outside of the pocket, lightly patting it a few times before saying, “Just hang tight little bro, we'll be at my place in no time!”

Ren pushed back against the patting but halfheartedly, feeling too tired to resist Ryuji's coddling. It was hard to shake the feeling that everyone saw him as just some kind of strange novelty or mascot now that he was so small but it wasn't like he had much of a choice. Surviving in the world at an inch tall would be practically impossible on his own. He closed his eyes, arms folded across his chest. For now... he just wanted to rest. Sleep proved to be too irresistible for him, the entirety of the subway trip lost in a haze of distant sounds. Ren was fully roused from his half slumber when Ryuji's hand appeared above him, entering the pocket like the hand of a deity, fingers wrapping around his body and lifting him effortlessly out and into the world at large, his fingers unfurling, his gigantic smiling face looming above him. “Wakey, wakey sleepyhead! I could hear your snoring the whole way home! I just hope you're fully rested now to appreciate the splendor that is... my room!”

Ryuji threw his other arm out to his side, indicating the space they were currently occupying. Ren's eyes scanned the somewhat messy room, bed unmade in a corner, magazines and manga strewn across the floor, clothes spilling out of a hamper that was stuffed to the gills... while not being what most people would call impressive, it absolutely screamed “Ryuji”. Ren glanced up at his friend, his expectant grin blazing as fiercely as the sun. Feeling put on the spot, Ren smiled weakly and said, “Yes... it's uh... very... you.”

“Hell yeah it is! One hundred percent pure unfiltered Ryuji!” The blond shouted, flexing his arm and pointing his thumb at himself. “Don't be too jealous now... my home is your home now!”

Ren grimaced slightly as he heard that, already missing the comfortable routine that his room represented... his desk for when he was studying or making thief tools... the bar on his ceiling he used for training... the couch where he watched movies or played video games... his plant... Ryuji's smile faltered slightly as he saw how pensive Ren looked, but he quickly recovered. “Look, I know this isn't the most... ya know... *good* situation to be in but whatever you're missing I can provide! Want to work out? BAM! My finger is as good as any bar! Want to watch movies? Holy crap! My TV is like the biggest big screen! Want to play video games? ... Okay well that one I can't really help with but you can watch ME play and coach me through any rough spots! I'm gonna make this whole experience so awesome you won't want to leave!”

Ren blinked, staring up at Ryuji... before smiling slightly. He could feel the warmth of Ryuji's presence radiating out from him, making him feel more at ease. His friend was putting in this level of effort, the least he could do was be appreciative. “Thanks, Ryuji.” Ren said softly, his voice carrying despite the low volume. “I really do feel like things won't be as difficult as long as I'm with you.”

Ryuji rubbed the back of his head, looking visibly uncomfortable... but pleased. “Woah dude... no problem! I'd be a pretty shitty partner if I abandoned you when you needed me most, right? So... what do you wanna do first? I bet you're pretty tired after everything that happened today but whatever you wanna do, I'm game!”

Ren thought about it for a moment, pondering his options. After a few minutes he shrugged and said,

"I'm a guest here so I feel like it should be your choice. You're the one who has to take care of me after all."

"Hmmm... my choice, huh? Anything I want?" Ryuji asked nonchalantly.

"Of course! If I didn't mean anything you wanted I wouldn't have said it was your choice." Ren said firmly, crossing his arms and leaning against Ryuji's curled fingers like they were a wall.

"Heh... alright bro, no backing out then!" Ryuji said, walking over to the bed and plopping down on it. "Just give me a sec to get ready, kay?"

Without waiting for a response Ryuji deposited Ren gently on the ground between his sneaker clad feet, the somewhat ratty looking footwear towering on either side of him like fabric mountains. Ren raised an eyebrow, unsure of what, exactly, Ryuji had planned. He wasn't left in the dark for too long as Ryuji pressed the toe of his left foot against the heel of his right, slipping his foot out of the canvas prison that was holding it back, his right foot returning the favor, leaving Ren standing between two socked feet. The shrunken thief couldn't help but notice how tattered the socks looked, several holes visible along the length of the material. He looked up at Ryuji and dryly said, "Really wore your best socks for my arrival, huh?"

"Hey, I didn't know you'd be staying with me this morning when I got dressed." Ryuji countered, leaning forward, resting his arms on his legs, grinning down at his miniscule friend. "Besides, the socks aren't the main attraction... THIS is!"

He reached down and stripped both socks from his feet, sighing in relief as he was finally free after a long, long day. He wiggled his toes, the simple motion drumming relentlessly against the ground, making the floor beneath Ren's own feet quake mildly, everything vibrating around him. "This ain't the kind of thing I'd normally ask but... considering you said it was my choice AND you being an unexpected guest in my house, I think it's only fair you earn your keep a little, ya know?"

"Oh really?" Ren said, smiling. "And what exactly do I need to do to satisfy you in that regard?"

"Not much! Just... give my feet a little rub down is all!" Ryuji said, lifting his right foot and spreading his toes, sweat glistening along the length, making it shine in the light above. The smile left Ren's face as he realized the monumental task in front of him.

"You can't be serious." He said flatly.

"Come oooooon, it's not THAT big of a deal, right?" Ryuji insisted, swiveling his foot so it was hovering over his friend, casting him in its shadow. "Just give me a little rubby rub and then we can do something else, okay?"

Ren gazed up at the towering appendage looming over him, sweat dripping down on and around him like salty rain. He raised his arms to try and block the liquid from hitting him on the head but to no avail. Within seconds his body was drenched in his friend's essence, the undeniable scent of Ryuji suffusing him from head to toe. "Alright, alright! I'll rub your foot."

"For real?! Holy crap dude, not gonna lie, I thought you'd put up waaaaaay more of a fight!" Ryuji gushed, lowering his foot until he felt it press against his leader's body, pushing further until Ren was

flat on his back, Ryuji's foot easily covering his tiny body. "Alright bro, go for it!"

Ren pushed back against the foot as best he could but it was useless. His hands merely sank into the soft flesh of Ryuji's sole, the skin dimpling but his efforts wasted beyond that. He took a deep breath to prepare himself, the scent of Ryuji flooding his nostrils, making him pause for a moment. There was something almost intoxicating about the smell, something comforting and familiar, that made him want to relax and completely give himself over to the much larger man... but Ren shook his head and resisted that siren call. Now was not the time to be getting sentimental and soft. Steeling himself, he pushed back against the foot, rubbing as hard as he could, his fingers digging into the sensitive flesh, making Ryuji shiver and bite his lower lip. "Woah... kinda feels like you've done this before, partner. A guy could get used to this kind of thing ya know?"

Ren couldn't help but feel a small sense of pride at Ryuji's praise, but his mind was focused on the task at hand. He rubbed and prodded and kneaded Ryuji's soft foot, reaching any bit of it that he could, showing it the attention a generous host deserved. Ryuji relished the feeling, closing his eyes and leaning back, his foot idly rubbing up and down the carpet, grinding Ren deeper into his foot without realizing, his friend swiftly getting compressed into the foot to the point that he was well and truly stuck, his body surrounded now by that soft but unyielding flesh. Ren could feel the full weight of Ryuji's foot crushing down on him from above, the abrasive carpet scraping at his back, his feeble movements arrested by the simple motion of Ryuji's foot. The giant blond was so lost in the feeling that it took him a moment to realize exactly what he was doing, fighting against his instinct to lift his foot up from the carpet, his heart leaping into his throat as Ren was nowhere to be found... until he turned his foot over and looked at the bottom of it, a black clad bug buried deep within his foot flesh. He let out a snort of laughter before managing to say, "S-Sorry dude... kind of got, uh... lost in the moment. You understand, right?"

Ren peeled his face off of Ryuji's foot, the tangy flavor of his sweat gracing his lips as he glared up at his friend and said, "I understand that this little show of fealty is over now... right?"

"O-Oh yeah! Totally! I'm one hundred percent satisfied!" Ryuji quickly agreed, gently peeling his friend off the bottom of his foot. "So... wanna watch a movie, then?"

Ren grabbed the hem of his jacket, holding it out from his body and said, "First... I need to change out of these clothes."

"Do you... have a change of clothes?" Ryuji asked tentatively.

"... I have my gym clothes in my bag." Ren said. "Which is... better than nothing."

"You get changed, then, and I'll set up the movie." Ryuji said, giving his tiny friend a thumbs up.

Both men accomplished their task in silence, Ryuji taking the opportunity to change into his own pajamas before relaxing on his bed, remote in hand, Ren still waiting on the floor. Ryuji leaned over the edge of his bed and said, "So... you wanna hang out down there or up here with me?"

Ren hesitated for a moment before asking, "Actually... I think it might be nice to stay down here... if you wouldn't mind putting your foot down with me."

"Woah... for real? You liked my foot that much, huh?" Ryuji asked with a grin, rubbing his finger

under his nose.

“Don't... just put your foot down already!” Ren ordered, redness tinging his pale cheeks.

“Aye aye, captain! Anything for you.” Ryuji chuckled, shifting his position so he was leaning his back against the wall, his feet flat on the ground.

Ren walked over to his friend's right foot and squeezed himself between the big and second toe, his arms relaxing on either side of his body, the warmth and scent of Ryuji surrounding him. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath... and let it out in a long, slow sigh. “Alright... let's watch the movie.”

Ryuji picked up the remote and pressed play, the opening scene of an action movie lighting up the screen. Ryuji gave his little leader a slight squeeze between his toes, his voice low as he said, “Ya know... I'm actually kind of happy this happened.”

Ren smiled, squeezing the digits on either side of him back. “You know... me too.”

The End