

プリマドール  
*Prima Doll*

Metal statues which resemble living human girls.  
They understand the mind and have an inner voice.

Book 1:

Anapan and the Auto-Doll

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## Anpan and the Auto-Doll (1)

Everyone has entered this world crying...

Until then, they were surrounded by the warm comfort of their mother's womb. They didn't need to eat, breathe or support themselves. Of course, being born into this harsh reality would bring complaints.

If you think about it, this world is full of unfairness.

There are those families with servants who drown in depravity, there are also those who are poor and work every day, barely scraping by. It's said by foreigners that being born into a wealthy family is like "being born with a silver spoon in your mouth." Comparatively, the situation I was born into was very poor. It is said that my mother went into labor in the dark underdeck of a ship on the way to *The Continent* for servitude. The birth water must have been seawater, meaning it was very salty for a newborn child. I guess I was born with a bitter taste in my mouth. Probably explains why I have a large sweet tooth.

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The wind sent cherry blossoms dancing through the air.

The aura surrounding the Imperial Capital felt like that of a certain carefree beauty. It was sunny, so sunny in fact that I could feel the sweat begin to form as I walked, causing me to subconsciously open my collar.

As I approached the majestic Mokudai Bridge that connected the second and third ward of the Capital, I passed a girl dressed in a new pair of hakama. Surely, she was around the same age as me? She seemed like a freshman entering high school this spring. To study, to learn, to make friends... maybe even find love. How I envy her, honestly.

As for me, while I made it through National School... I was not able to make it into high school. Instead, I was sent off as a live-in servant for a wealthy family because it was too much trouble for me to stay home. Despite that, I was not discomfited. I didn't necessarily hate housework and my seniors love me. I had told an old lady I wanted to start a business one day, and when I did, she told me everything on how to dress, behave, and compose myself as a worker. So, I decided it would be best to stay there and save some money.

However, in the winter my employers went bankrupt and the post-war recessions seemed to have come late, I guess it was only natural. We shot bullets at each other and turned all those Mechina Dolls to scrap

without a care in the world... Now, since the waste has disappeared, I cannot get my life moving again.

Since then, I've made it through doing day jobs for a bit, but lately employment opportunities are becoming scarcer. The last scrap of money I had was running thin, any time I look into my pockets I see a measly 30-rin...\* The only thing I've had today is some hot water and my stomach has been rumbling since.

That's when it happened...

and a handheld sign appeared in front of me.

**[Anpan 30-rin]**

I couldn't believe my eyes. A miracle born from the merging of the Eastern Culture and the West, the ruler of the sweet breads at only 30-rin!? Had this been Murakiya in the second ward this delight would cost no less than 10 yen! This price is unmatched! At this price even I could afford it despite my meager funds. And thus, I ran and stood in front of the girl holding the sign.

"Please!"





“...myu?”

The girl looked at me and tilted her head curiously. Her hair was a pale cherry pink, her eyes were a blue like that of a lapis stone. The gentle lines on her cheeks brought out her youthfulness; her furisode kimono blew in the wind. Straddled to her back was a muted brown backpack, contrasting with the rest of her radiant impression. Protruding out of it was a tiny chimney, steam flowing out of it.

“...uhh... that...”

I froze as I looked at her and she smiled shyly.

“It’s nice to meet you, my name is Haisakura!”

“Ah, how courteous...”

“Have we met before?”

“Huh?”

“You’re staring at me so intensely!”

She giggled in jest.

“No it’s...”

I pondered what to say... this conversation was odd, but I already knew the reason.

“You’re a Doll, huh?”

“Yes, I’m a Mechina Doll!”

I’d never thought I would be seeing an Auto-Doll again, during the war, there were only a few left in the Imperial Capital. It felt so nostalgic... my eyes were burning.

“By the way, sir, is there anything I can help you with...?”

She looked at me with an innocent gaze on her face, clearly oblivious to such sentimentality.

“I can help you with whatever you need!”

I never realized Auto-Dolls were this small... maybe it’s also because I’ve gotten bigger.

“What was it, Haisakura?”

“Yep!”

“I’d like you to sell me some Anpan.”

“Myu!?”

I stopped drowning in sentimentality and got to the heart of the matter.

“You’re a vendor, no? At least that’s what it seems.”

“Ah, yes, I am!”

She glanced at her sign as if it were her first time seeing it.

“Would you like some Anpan, sir?”

“Yes, please.”

I pass over my 30-rin with a clink.

Next to Haisakura, there was a desk with a larger basket, a small safe, and a glass case with samples on display. The display anpan was split down the middle, proudly exposing how stuffed the bread was with jam; the sesame seeds on top were also perfectly balanced.

“Myumyummy!?”



Haisakura yelped out in a strange voice as she peeked into the basket.

“What’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry, sir, but it seems we’ve already sold out~”

“Oh...I see.”

Sure enough, looking at it again, the basket was empty.

“Yes, some people had been waiting in line since this morning, we’d prepared a lot...”

“I’ll take the display then.”

“Eh?”

If there was nothing to sell then it couldn’t be helped, but the last perfectly good one was right there.

“Uh, this is...”

“Are you not supposed to sell this one?”

“Well no, it’s actually not why it’s there--”

“Is it dry or inedible?”

“No… it’s in the glass case because it is soft and fluffy…”

“Did you drop it?”

“No, I put it there so it was safe and I could enjoy it after work...!”

“...like you were going to eat it?”



“Myu!!”

She jumped up and whizzed away like a rabbit.

“Why did you...?”

“How...? Ah--”

She had made an assumption before knowing anything.

“...hah...”

I rubbed my stomach, and it rumbled like it hadn’t been fed in forever.

“If that’s all you have... then I guess I have no choice...”

“No, wait!!”

She grips the hem of my shirt.

“I-It’s my job to sell Anpan and make customers happy...”

She tried to keep her voice chipper, but her tone grew dreary in the second half.

“Ah, please eat...”

She cracked open the small case and offered me the anpan bun, the smell entrancing me and tantalizing my nose.

“I’ll take it with gladness!”

As I picked up the split-in-half bun, it was still faintly warm.

“...uuu”

“Hey.”

“Hah...?”

“We can split if you want.”

“Really!?”

Haisakura veiled her words so little it was like she had already eaten her half.

“Sure, go ahead.”

I handed her one half of the Anpan bun.

“Hahhh~”

I was so moved I could barely contain this emotion...

“Thank you so much!!”

The steam bellowed out of her chimney at her back.

All people were born crying...what expressions were Dolls born with?  
Maybe it was one of those radiant smiles... the ones that still have hope  
for this world.

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