

## XI

"What...the *actual fuck* are you wearing?" Yuuto asked, staring at Kaho and Hanae. "Hanae, what's with the friggin' trench coat? And Kaho, those high heels really don't match that outfit."

"Oh shit!" Kaho cried. "I made a fashion flop? Dammit!"

"W-w-w-wait, how'd you know it was me?" Hanae cried in anguish.

"I could see your pink hair from a mile away," Yuuto replied with a sigh. "But anyways, back to what I was saying: why are you here again?"

"I was..." Hanae began.

"She mean we were...err," Kaho tried to correct her.

"Following Sayaka and I all day, amirite?" Yuuto asked with a smirk.

"H-HOW'D YOU KNOW?" the two girls cried in unison.

"We *both* noticed you two. Like, starting from the moment we saw Hanae crouching near that bush we knew something was up. Speaking of which, what was your plan?"

"W-w-w-we just wanted to make sure your da—err...*shopping trip* went well," Kaho laughed.

"Y-yeah! Totally i-innocent here!" Hanae added.

"I have a feeling you're both guilty," Yuuto mumbled. "Y'know what? Come upstairs with me. I don't mind too much myself, but I think you two should go apologize to Sayaka for essentially stalking her all day. She was feeling seriously self-conscious, y'know? C'mon."

"E-e-erm...no, it's fine—" Kaho began.

"We're going," Yuuto cut her off, taking both of them by the wrist and dragging them into the back.

"This son of mine..." Goro mumbled, shaking his head.

"So you finally decided to show yourselves?" Sayaka asked coldly.

"WE'RE SORRY!" Kaho and Hanae cried in unison, bowing deeply.

"Oh? Sorry for what?"

"F-f-for following y—" Hanae said.

"Hmm? 'Following,' you say? I think 'stalking' is more accurate," Sayaka replied.

"We're sorry for stalking you," Kaho said, holding back a giggle, "but do you have to word it that way? I mean, we're girls watching another girl here."

"It is what I friggin' say it is," Sayaka snapped.

"Y-YES MA'AM!" the two girls cried once more in unison.

Yuuto sighed. "Alright, that's enough. You don't have to be so cold to 'em. They wanted to make sure *you* were doing okay, got it?" he asked Sayaka.

"U-uhh...yeah! G-got it. Thanks, you two," she said, "and sorry for losing it just now..."

"Holy shit, he's tamed the beast after all!" Kaho mumbled to herself.

"What beast?" Hanae asked.

"H-huh? You *heard* that? W-well, never mind, either way!"

Yuuto rolled his eyes. "Since you're here, I'll go make you something to eat. One of you can have my bowl of noodles for now. I'll make two more."

Hanae smiled mischievously. *If I wait for that, then I'll be eating the same batch of noodles as my darling!* she thought. "W-well, I could certainly hold out a bit," she said, "so as a symbol of my friendship for today, you can have the other bowl for now." She smiled at Kaho as she finished speaking.

Kaho smiled back. *Nice try, she thought, but if you wait, you'll be sharing food with Ishikawa...in Sayaka's stead. If we both wait, then Sayaka gets to share a meal with her crush! That's so damn romantic!* She shook her head. "I appreciate it, but above all, I think Ishikawa should eat first. After all, we *did* end up following him around all day for no reason, and now he's even decided to treat *us* to a meal. It's only right for us to exercise some restraint."

Yuuto laughed. "C'mon now, you don't have to be so polite with me. After all, you're my guests here." He put on his apron. "I'll be downstairs, so you all try and get along, 'kay?"

"Yes sir!" the three girls all nodded, with Sayaka trying to talk with a mouth full of noodles.

As he walked out of the room, Kaho turned to the other girls. "Alright, so what's the deal here? Are you two rivals or something?"

"Not even close," Hanae laughed. "Did you think anyone else stood a chance? I'm engaged to my darling already!"

"Yeah, yeah. I say that's a load of shit. It was probably just a promise between parents or something," Sayaka commented, taking a sip of the noodle soup. "Holy crap, this is good! Aren't you two hungry? Try it!" She pointed at the free bowl of noodles.

Both Kaho and Hanae heard their own stomachs growl. Both girls bit their lips.

"Kaho, just try it since Hanae offered," Sayaka suggested. Kaho turned to the bowl of soup. She could feel her mouth watering. Hanae smiled to herself as Kaho gave in without much of a fight, immediately starting to eat. "Oh. My. God. This is AMAZING. I mean, like, the chefs back at my mansion can't even cook this well! Do they do takeout here? And if you two start dating can I mooch free meals off of you?"

"Am I just a source of food for you now?" Sayaka giggled. "Well, I'll see if I can get you free food but no promises. More importantly, I also want to know if they do takeout here. But no matter what, if we start dating, you better not bug us about eating all day."

"Key word: *if*," Hanae said slyly.

"That 'if' is gonna become a 'when' soon enough," Sayaka retorted.

"Wanna bet?"

"Oh, I'll friggin' bet, sister!"

Kaho sighed as the two girls continued to argue. *So you ARE rivals after all*, she thought with an exasperated sigh.