

Mercy had dismissed Gelato and Solara right as the clock struck noon. The two were exhausted from entertaining the baby buns as they'd wanted to recreate the obviously faked stories that Sturge had filled their minds with. The two of them had flipped a coin and Solara lost, having to pretend to be a giant squid attacking a ship much to Gelato's delight. It was hilarious watching the baby buns run up and try to beat the evil squid to save their ship from sinking. Overall, though, it was an enjoyable experience despite the amount of work they'd put in to take care of them all.

When they'd gotten out, Sterling had joined them. As they were walking to the shopping center, they'd been recounting their day and laughing about their experiences together. He was less than enthusiastic and more confused as to what happened to bring them together again. They'd spent so much time bickering and away that it didn't quite make sense to him yet. It was confusing, but he was willing to give it a chance for both of them. "Right...I'm assuming you two had fun today?"

Solara giggled gleefully and held his paw, leaning against him as they walked. "Of course we did! It was a lovely day. I'm so glad I decided to go early today."

"I'm happy for you both, then. So, what am I doing here?"

Gelato and Solara looked at each other with devious grins. Gelato clears their throat and demands, "You're taking us to the shopping center! You're our advisor and bag carrier."

Sterling sighs deeply and shakes his head with a small, amused smile. "I had a feeling this would happen. Solara loves shopping and Gelato's a whole shopaholic."

Gelato opens their mouth to defend themselves, but shrinks back and smiles sheepishly. Hell, what would they say? They knew they loved to shop and did it at least once a week, though typically more. It was just a fun hobby for them and it kept them as up to date as they possibly could be! Solara chuckles and kisses Sterling's cheek, swaying paws with him. "You think it's endearing though, don't you dear?"

"I do because it's a part of you," Sterling nudges her gently. His eyes were sparkling with affection as he looked at his partner. "I love every part of you."

"Ew, gross love talk in front of me!" Gelato fake gags while Solara groans and smacks them with her tail. They chuckle and pat at her back, reassuring her by saying, "I'll allow it only because you're my friends."

"Aww, thank you Gelato. How considerate."

Gelato smiles to themselves, walking beside the two quietly as they discuss what their plans were for the day. It was nice being like this again. They'd reached a level of understanding and now could continue where they'd left off! There was no more being super passive-aggressive or fake

to each other, dreading the next time they'd be face to face! It was refreshing and a weight off their shoulders. All that was left to do was to find Sturge some nice gifts and plan how they'd apologize to him.

As they arrive at the shopping center, Solara excitedly points at a store and grabs onto Gelato's arm, slightly bouncing on her feet enthusiastically. "We should go there first! I'm sure we can find something luxurious for our Sturgey!"

Gelato turns their attention to the store. Their attention peaks and tail sways with interest as they realize it's a jewelry store! Well, it had been some time since they'd taken a look in a jewelry store and gotten anything nice for themselves! Maybe they'd be able to find Sturge something there...maybe. "No reason to not look! Shall we?"

"We shall! My star?" Sterling takes her hand and rolls his eyes affectionately, following her as she eagerly makes her way into the store. Gelato quickly follows suit and is immediately stunned by all the shiny jewelry around the store! There were new hair accessories and head ornaments! Neck, arm, hand, and feet jewelry were stocked up everywhere! Earrings, brooches, belly chains, and body piercings were available too, of course! It was wonderful and Gelato was metaphorically drooling at all the new shiny things!

They zoomed over to the nearest case, bouncing on their feet excitedly as their eyes scanned the jewelry. The necklaces they were looking at were gorgeous! The jewels were polished to perfection and seemed to come in a variety of colors! The new stock must've just come in since they didn't see this last week!

Upon being approached by a sales clerk, Gelato instantly lost themselves in the process of shopping for themselves! Solara had also forgotten why they were there with Sterling standing awkwardly by her side waiting for the opportunity to remind her. Unfortunately, he did not get the opportunity to do this and could only watch on in horror as the two continued to shop for themselves. They were now interacting, gushing over how good they both looked with certain accessories and discussing what would be the most flattering on them. The poor guy couldn't even get a word in! Defeated, he simply sat on a bench, watching as the both of them continued to fawn over all the shiny things the store had to offer...which was honestly everything. He wasn't surprised, though, since they were prone to lose themselves when it came to spending money and shopping.

It took quite awhile, but Gelato eventually called him over as Solara began to check them out. Gelato sighed dreamily and hugged at one of their ears, swaying with it happily. "Oh, we're gonna look so good for special events and nights out! You're going to love what Solara bought for you both!"

“Yeah...Did you find anything for your friend?”

“Who?” Upon seeing Sterling’s blank, disappointed face, Gelato remembered what their goal was. Their eyes widened and they bit their lip. They hissed, “Fuck...I totally forgot seeing the new stock!”

Solara laughs, waving a hand dismissively as she hands their bags to Sterling. “Oh, it’s fine! I’m not sure he’d enjoy anything here right now anyways. He doesn’t exactly seem like the sparkly jewelry type.”

“You’re right! Gosh, Sterling, you scared me there for a moment!” Gelato sighs and placed a hand on their chest, calming down from the initial scare.

Sterling shrugs and motions with his tail for them to leave. As they go, he asks, “Since you’re his best friend, what kinds of things does he like, Gelato?”

Gelato puffs their chest out confidently and places their paws on their hips, sneering. “Well, I do know him the best out of everyone here since you two haven’t seen him in awhile and we’ve been besties since forever! This man loves food almost as much as I do!”

“Oh! How about we try that new bakery, then? They must have some delicious treats to try!”

Solara claps their paws together and hops in the direction of the bakery, not even waiting for the other two to respond. Sterling rolls his eyes once again and follows without complaining, knowing his partner wouldn’t have taken no for an answer anyways. Gelato was not going to complain, either! Sturge had mentioned wanting to try it before, so this would be the perfect opportunity to get some things for him to try!

The bakery itself wasn’t busy and smelled absolutely intoxicating. The fresh goods were on display and all looked fantastic. Solara was already there, pointing out the things she wanted to get for dessert while Gelato looked on from behind. Sturge did love food, but also had some sensitivities. Certain foods, textures, and tastes were unpleasant to him, just as everyone but a little more particular. They’d have to think hard about what he’d want if they were to prove that they meant their apology and that they cared!

Macarons would be a good, safe start. There was an assorted box of twenty with ten flavors, something they thought he’d find fun and interactive! Though, it might be a good idea to get two of them just in case. Or would that be too much? Well, it was always better to have too much than too little!

Next, fresh bread was always a safe bet. The loaves in the shape of buns were a little disturbing, but it seemed like something Sturge would enjoy. He’d be able to make so many things with it! Sandwiches, bread crumbs, and more were all obtainable because of how versatile it was! It would be the perfect thing to add to this gift!

Unfortunately, as Gelato was ordering these they turned to look and saw Solara had nearly ordered out the remaining items from the bakery. Their jaw dropped and eyes bulged out of their head as they watched her hand over a copious amount of carats. Sterling was standing by her side and though his expression was blank, his eyes were filled with terror. At least he wouldn't have to carry them home since they were going to be delivered, but Gelato had no clue where they'd put everything or what they'd even do with all of that!

Gelato slid to his side as the baker finished their purchases, whispering, "What is all of that for?" Sterling shook his head, never taking his eyes off of the price rung up on the register. "I have no clue."

"Okay...Good luck, soldier. To you and your wallet." Sterling couldn't even respond apart from the smallest grunt of his life. Gelato stepped back to their register to complete their own purchase. Looks like they were good to go, then! The first part of Sturge's gift was complete. Now, they just needed something else to make a statement to top it off!

The trio exited the bakery and Gelato immediately began to scan their surroundings to find their final destination. Despite there being a plethora of stores, Gelato couldn't think of one that they could find something good from! They puffed their cheeks out in a pout and crossed their arms, tapping a foot while trying to think.

Solara pipes up first. "Should we bring him to a fancy dinner?"

"No, we shouldn't get more food related gifts. It's not the only thing he likes!"

"Maybe kitchenware?"

"Solara, he already has the kitchenware he needs! He's so picky about his knives that he brings them to my place when he cooks...Also, it's food related."

"Oh, right. Hm...This is hard!"

Gelato agrees and nods, groaning, "Why is this so difficult? It needs to be the perfect thing so he gets it!"

Sterling clears his throat to catch their attention. "I think he'll understand even if you don't get him another gift."

Both Solara and Gelato gasp immediately. Horrified, Gelato exclaims, "But it's rude if we don't!"

"I agree! For being nuisances, we owe him something nice in return!"

Sterling sighs and rolls his eyes, readjusting the bags he was holding. "Fine. Does he need clothes or anything?"

"No, Sturge wears pretty much the same thing all the time unless it's for a special occasion."

Gelato sighs dramatically and sits on the ground. "Maybe I do suck as a friend! All this over my stupid but very beautiful habit. I've ruined things!"

Sterling stares down at them stoically before an idea flashes in his mind. "Speaking of that, I actually have a suggestion..."

It was the next day. The clock had just struck twelve and the three of them were standing in front of Sturge's door. Sterling offered an encouraging nod to Gelato before they took a deep breath and knocked on his door. There was some shuffling from inside before the door opened. Sturge looked at them, eyes wide, before offering his usual friendly smile. "Well, look who's here! We have the gang together, huh?"

"H-Hey, Sturge. Yeah, some things have happened since yesterday..."

"Well, no need to stand here! Come inside and catch me up on what I've missed." Sturge steps aside and holds the door open for all of them. He shuts it as they take their seats, still attempting to hide the gifts they'd gotten. He made his way over and sat down next to them, leaning forward eagerly. "So, what's going on?"

Gelato gulped and sat the bakery gifts onto his table, fidgeting nervously. "Well, we made up. Sorry for saying those things and treating you like that yesterday. It was stupid."

Sturge chuckles quietly and leans back. "It's water under the bridge. I knew you didn't mean it, but it did sting a bit in the moment. I'm just glad we're all together again!"

Sterling nods in agreement, sipping on the coffee he'd gotten on the way there. "It's nice. I do miss our outings."

"I'm surprised with how interesting things would get before!" Solara exclaims.

"Well, I haven't let you live down the bar incident, have I?" Solara lightly slaps Sterling's leg as the rest of them laugh.

Gelato smiles fondly and gestures to the gifts to get back on topic. "I got these just in case you'd still be upset, also."

Sturge leans over to open the boxes of macarons and licks his lips. "They look delicious! How about we share them to celebrate our reunion?"

"Well," Gelato gestures for Solara to grab the final gift hidden behind the couch, "how about you try this on first? We wanted to make sure it was the perfect fit for you."

Solara hands off the gift to Sturge who eagerly slid the cover off of it to reveal a small, sparkly blue habit! He gasped and theatrically leapt to his feet, holding it up against his body. "For me? After all of that?"

Solara laughed confidently and crossed her arms. "Nothing but the best for our Sturgey! I offered one to Sterling too, but he wasn't interested. It'll be special for the three of us!"

Sturge sets the habit down before wrapping his arms around the two of them. “You two can be so sweet, you know that? Let me try it on for you really quick. I wanna try those macarons!” He quickly shuffled off to his bathroom to change. It was only a minute before the door opened and he walked out, posing for them. The shade of blue complimented his fur and it fit him just right! Solara clapped while Gelato gushed, “It’s perfect for you!”

“You know it! I looked great in yours so I’d look great here!” He made his way back to his seat and plopped down, rubbing his paws together eagerly. “So, macarons? I’ll be careful to not get anything on the new habit!”

Solara scooted closer to the box of sweets, pulling Sterling along with her. “You better not! It’s special between us...and we spent a pretty penny on the rush order.”

“You’re wealthy, Solara,” Sterling gently reminded her.

Gelato shrugged and shook their head with amusement. “Yeah, but who cares about that right now? Let’s celebrate and eat up!”