

"Y'know what I heard?" Stella starts, leaning halfway across the bar to draw Hops's attention to her. Not that she needs to. The bar is practically empty.

It's been a slow night. Why this one succubun has decided to drink half the bar herself is beyond Hops, but she doesn't question it. That's not her job.

She listens. That's what bartenders do.

"What did you hear?"

Stella huffs, looking down at her glass. Obviously, nothing good.

"I heard Masaru is shacking up," Stella grumbles, her face pinching. She swirls her drink and Hops raises her brows. "With a *Cherubun* of all people!"

Stella says it like it's the worst thing that could have happened and tosses back the rest of her martini. When she realizes the glass is empty she gives Hops a pleading look. "nother?"

"Who's Masaru?" Hops asks, polite as ever with her customers. Maybe Stella needs to get this off her chest-

"Masaru! The elegant idol!"

-or maybe she's just a chatty drunk. Hops stifles a laugh as she turns to make Stella another martini. "I had no idea."

Stella groans as she drops her head to the counter. "And this just after I found out Neve was *proposing* to some- some *flowershop bunny!*"

She sounds absolutely distraught and Hops just nods, sliding her glass over to her. Stella lifts her head and her nose is red, eyes watery. "How could anyone turn him down?" She asks, as if this is a personal affront. Which, as far as Hops knows, it really could be.

"Some people are a mystery," she says, as if she's been following along with all of this. (She hasn't, but it's a slow night. Sometimes you have to indulge people.)

"Even Aphrodite is settling down," Stella mumbles into her glass, looking forlorn. "And with someone so... messy." She wrinkles her nose. Hops has actually heard about this one.

"I wouldn't be so sure of that. Ares is pretty oblivious," she says as she rinses glasses.

Not that Stella seems to hear her. "Why can't I find love?" She practically wobbles, downing her drink and collapsing against the counter top dramatically.

Oh, *this* is something Hops is more familiar with. Her eyes light up as she leans in, patting Stella's shoulder. "Maybe you're not looking in the right places," she suggests. "Love doesn't always happen the way we expect."

Stella sighs, sitting up. She looks much less dramatic. "I haven't even been on a good *date* lately," she grumbles. The bun looks at her empty glass and holds it out to Hops, who takes that as her cue to refill it.

That earns her a small smile at least. This time, Stella just sips her martini. "Maybe I need new hobbies," she sighs.

Hops raises her brows at her, but... well, she can't leave an opportunity to advertise on the table. (Er- bartop.) "You know, I've been running bartending classes in the mornings lately. Private lessons. Some people quite like mixing cocktails." Or drinking cocktails. Clearly.

For a moment, Stella doesn't seem to put 2 and 2 together. She blinks slowly, looking at the drink in her hand, then at Hops. "Bartending... lessons?"

Hops nods, flashing her a smile. "Mixology, really."

Stella blinks again, and Hops can practically see the cogs turning in her head.

It takes longer than it probably should for Stella to come to the conclusion, "That sounds like fun!"

Oh yeah, she's getting cut off for the night. Hops slides her a business card, though. "Give me a call when you wanna schedule," she says, wondering if the bun will even remember this conversation once she sobers up. Stella is looking more and more happy about it, though, so maybe she will.

The door to the bar opens and a succubun with long pink hair and pretty blue horns comes in. "There you are!" She calls, hurrying over to Stella. "I've been looking everywhere for you!"

Stella brightens immediately. "Reiiii~" she sing songs and throws her arms around the taller woman, snuggling her face into her shoulder. "I got lost," she says, muffled.

Hops can't stifle her laugh this time. "You're making sure she gets home?" She asks, and starts cashing out Stella's tab.

Rei's nods and sighs, but the relief on her face speaks for her. "Yeah, I'm her roommate. I'll take her home," she says with soft fondness in her voice. Stella doesn't seem bothered by their conversation, just snuggles into Rei's chest. It seems she's hit the "sleepy" phase of her drunkenness. Or maybe "cuddly."

It's good she has a responsible friend to take her home.

"Here's her bill," Hops says, sliding the receipt across the counter. Rei picks it up and her eyes widen. She looks down at Stella.

"Babygirl can drink," she sighs, dropping a kiss to Stella's head. The shorter bun looks up at her with a bright grin. Rei rolls her eyes and pulls out her card.

Stella can pay her back later. For now, they need to get home.