

## Skirentines

“The usual, then?”

A clearly haggard Asmodeus drops onto his barstool, “Yeah, Flair, I'd think it's a bit fucking obvious that I haven't come here for a cup of tea.” Flair being well used to this type of behaviour by now gets started on making the drink. This wouldn't be Flair if he didn't prod, though. There's no chance that he can let this sit quietly and *not* try to pry into whatever is bothering the slumped over cccat in front of him.

“So, boy troubles or ‘waste disposal’ troubles, then?” inquires the nautipod as he finishes up preparing the drink. “Listen, Flair. I'm really, *really* not in the mood for this shit today.” “Fine! Fine. If you're so sure that you absolutely cannot FATHOM telling your dear old trusted bartender of your woes, then here-” Flair slides the drink across the bar to Asmodeus, “drink your troubles away instead of bothering me with your quite frankly *miserable* demeanour.” He gives the now squinting Asmodeus a few seconds to mull over the decision, before letting out an exasperated sigh and a shrug so big that his arms slap down to his sides. Rolling his eyes, he turns to walk away and continue on with the terrible fate of getting on with his regular bar work.

“Wait.” Asmodeus, sounding almost reluctant to say anything at all, decides to just complain to the barman as usual. “Today is just. It's pissing me off.” Clearly taken aback, Flair questions him “And what exactly is it about the day of celebrating friendship and love that bothers the oh-so beloved Asmodeus?” Asmodeus rolls his eye and takes a long, long sip of his drink before replying “It's not exactly all sunshine and rainbows being a social butterfly, you know. Yeah, you get a lot of acquaintances, you get a lot of admirers, and god knows I *love* admirers,, but real connections are rare.” He sighs and sinks down into his stool, placing his forehead on the bar to sulk. “It's not like I don't have any real connections, I do, they're just.. Not the kind of thing you usually see people celebrating on a day like today.”

Setting down his glass, as well as his usual attitude, Flair turns his full attention to Asmodeus and inquires about the few connections he knows of “What about Mikhail?” Asmodeus sighs “It's.. Complicated between me and him. I'm never entirely sure what the situation is, it's kind of dependent on his whims. He's a bit apathetic about, well, everything? And at times it's freeing to not have any expectations, but it can feel.. I don't know, isolating? Like I'm being shut out.”

Not feeling like daring to set foot in that particular rabbit hole right now, Flair moves on to the more obvious option.

“And Uriel?”

“I- we're not together?”

“You're not??”

“No?”

An uncomfortably long silence falls between them as the bewildered nautipod stares at Asmodeus.

“Are you sure??”

“YES???”

Flair squints at Asmodeus, he squints *hard*, until the very confused cccat elaborates “we’ve never *been* a thing, like, ever.”

“And.. Does *he* know that?”

Visibly irked by that comment, Asmodeus scoffs “I don’t really appreciate the barman passing judgement on my friendships as though he somehow knows more about it than I do.”

Flair, a little shocked by the sudden tone shift, decides near immediately to drop the subject. The Mikhail situation is one thing, but this? Uriel looks on the verge of biting the hands off of anyone who dares touch Asmodeus in his presence on a near constant basis! If the topic is this sensitive, despite how completely and utterly obvious it is that it desperately needs to be talked about, Flair wants absolutely no part in it.

“WELL. You’re clearly not looking for relationship advice, but I doubt you’re looking to just mope at the bar alone all night. This is NOT the usual Azzy vibe, I see you here often enough to know that much.” Easily bouncing back to his usual more personable zesty self, Flair produces a small shimmering object. “This” he says “is a sand heart!” He grabs Asmodeus’ hand and presses the sand heart into his palm before clasping the cccat’s fingers over it, gently patting the top of his hand. “Your *secret admirer* left it with me to give it to you~”

“My what now?”

“You heard me!”

“Flair I’m not in the mood for your jokes right now I-”

“Me? Joke about something like THIS? Wow, Azzy, you really do think that poorly of me don’t you?”

“Well then Flair, who is this mysterious secret admirer then?”

“It wouldn’t be so secret if I just told you all willy nilly now, would it? I will tell you this though: they *are* here in this bar tonight, and I hear they *love* a good game of cat and mouse.”

“Alright alright, I’ll bite. Can I at least get a hint, then?”

“Hhhmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm no.” Flair’s usual teasing does not go over well, and the frustration growing on Asmodeus’ face tells him as much quite swiftly. “Well okay alright FINE you can have one teensy weensy hint!” Flair’s eyes scan the crowd, and Asmodeus’ gaze follows. “The incredibly attractive super mysterious secret admirer that you’re searching for is a crook!” Upon hearing this, a smirk finds its way onto Asmodeus’ face “That doesn’t narrow it down much, but it’s better than nothing I guess. At least I know where to start.”

“Now then!” exclaims Flair, slapping both of his hands down onto Asmodeus’ shoulders

“Doesn’t galavanting around your favourite club hunting for the tonight’s ~partner in crime~ sound a whole lot more exciting than moaning to the barman about your situationships?”

Patting the cccat’s cheek and fixing up his tie for him, Flair sends him on his way, sand heart in hand and looking for.. Well, something better to fill his time with than moping around alone, that’s for sure

After some time, another person sits alone at the bar. This one looking absolutely completely and utterly dejected. Flair discreetly reaches under the bar to his tin of sand hearts, and, glass in hand, asks the same old question.

“So, the usual then?”