

“Hyth’s fucking halo--” The oath had left Cinnamon’s lips before she could think about it, leaping off of her tongue as she looked up from the garment strewn across her lap to locate the burning smell that had filled her small kitchen. She flinched, took a moment to silently apologize to the mother goddess, and then stood to hurry over to take the pot off of the heat - hissing and swearing more mild oaths under her breath as the hot metal scalded her palms. She didn’t need to peer into the interior to know that it was too late for the candy she’d been trying to make - over cooked, the sugar blackened and possibly stuck to the sides of the vessel. Her ears dipped, and she exhaled as she turned to toss it into the sink to run water into.

It was the third attempt of the morning at putting together a simple caramel recipe that Dearling had given her, the fruits of her failures perched and awaiting a good scrubbing. This one had been going so *well*, too, up until she’d sat down to work on putting together the nixie costume she’d been working on. Her own fault, really, but she had thought she’d had plenty of time for the sugar to cook down before it would have burned - now she suddenly understood the amused tilt to Dearling’s lips when he’d asked if she was sure she’d be alright making it on her own. But Razzit to ashes, she was going to make her portion of the Hospitalizer festivities this year more than decorations and patching costumes for the little ones.

She *had* hoped their patron god would take pity on her and give her a boost to compensate for her natural talent in ruining everything she touched that should have been edible but... Cinnamon sighed, poking a spoon into the black mass of burnt caramel at the bottom of the pot, her lips curling into a frown and the sprites hovering around her settling onto her shoulders and hair. Maybe she would have better luck rushing out and *buying* the snacks. She couldn’t exactly ask for help now, after she’d so confidently denied it - and showing up empty handed after insisting that she could bring the caramel dipped fruits to hand out.

But bringing bought treats she hadn’t made herself, even if they weren’t offerings... She inhaled, red eyes closing before she lifted her chin. Absolutely not. She would try again, and if she failed she would buy another pot and keep trying until it worked. Goal in mind, she turned - the tip of her tail flicking and her glowing companions lifting from their perches to circle around her.

She was leaning over the last of her pots, stirring the mixture she’d made carefully, when a sleepy voice from the doorway made her jump.

“It *reeks* of burning in here.”

Her fingers clenched down on the spatula she was stirring with, her body twisting to study the figure rubbing his eyes in the doorway. There was really only one person it could have been, but she’d almost forgotten he was there in the wake of her failures. Dearling, tall and pink and with his nose crinkled, leaned on the door frame - the tip of his stinger brushing against the ground in almost feline displeasure at the scent that had filled the kitchen. Exhaling, her shoulders relaxed before she turned back to what she was doing - her attention returning to making sure that the

forming syrup didn't burn while she was distracted. One of the butterflies perched on the sink fluttered into the air to twirl around her guest, landing delicately on his nose.

"That would be because I may have burned something," she greeted in kind, biting back a soft laugh at the low sound he made in response. True to form, it took only the moments for him to cross the room and bury his nose into the feathers around her neck, his arms carefully moving under the delicate cape to wrap around her middle.

"How much of something?" It didn't sound like he was judging her - Dearling was always too *soft* sounding for that, but she couldn't help but bristle a bit anyways at the implication.

"Enough. I've got it this time, though!" Her insistent tone sounded almost petulant even to her own ears, and she could feel his smile against the side of her neck. It was no secret that between the two of them, despite Dearling's lack of sight, that she was the worse cook. The months of their relationship had been filled with premade meals on his visits over, and the one time she *had* attempted something homemade it had ended with her nearly razing her kitchen to the ground. He had taken over the cooking while he was there since, though he had employed her for the tasks that he could no longer complete.

He shifted, leaning forward to sniff at the pot - one of his hands moving to cover the one holding the spatula. "You're letting the sugar burn," he pointed out instead, guiding her hand toward the small patch where it hadn't been fully mixed. She sighed, letting him guide her through stirring the remainder of the mixture into smoothness. Still, she couldn't help but lean back against him slightly, her gaze softening as he continued to murmur tips. She was rushing it, that she needed to give it time to dissolve before it boiled.

So much for not needing his help, though she supposed that maybe this had been her pity blessing from above.