Caught in Your Web

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by NoxiousNights

Summary

Reader is in love with her butler, Claude Faustus. Unfortunately, this affection is unrequited, and the reader suffers from hanahaki disease.

Notes

This was originally written for a creative writing class I took in high school. I forgot what the prompt was.

A single petal fell onto the ground. *Damn it.* A second petal followed. *Curse me*. Then a third. I nearly choked to death on that one. Then a fourth. It would not cease. Before long, I was coughing out handfuls of rose petals, many of which were stained in blood. *My* blood. Together, they painted the ground scarlet.

“Shit. This can’t be happening now. Why did it...have to be me?” I choked out. I was struggling to breathe. It was painful. I could taste the metallic blood and the bitter rose petals. Each of them on their own tasted terrible enough, but together, they were god awful. I cursed this disease and everything that it had brought upon me. Things would have been so much easier if I just hadn’t developed feelings for *him.*

“Mistress, are you alright?” a low voice asked from beside me. *Speak of the Devil.* I whirled around to face Claude Faustus, the cause of my troubles. He was a devilishly handsome man with golden eyes and jet black hair. His clothes were always the same: a solid black coat over a white dress shirt. He was my butler, the only servant I wanted or needed. What would take one hundred men, he could do entirely on his own to absolute perfection without breaking a sweat. His looks and capabilities were perfect. *Too* perfect, in fact. He was simply *inhuman.*

“You need not worry about me, Claude. It was just a short cough,” I insisted, despite knowing that there was no way he would believe me, not with petals and blood littered on the ground. Not when we both knew that it was blatantly obvious that I was most certainly not alright. He had only asked that question out of human courtesy, after all. I imagined that if he could have it his way, he would ignore the formalities and cut straight to the chase.

“The fragrance of your blood was strong enough for me to detect from across the mansion. Allow me to take a look,” he replied coolly. Wordlessly, I nodded and allowed him to step closer. That was a mistake on my part. As he inspected me from head to toe, senses peeled for even the slightest abnormality, I felt my cheeks heat up from how close we were. Goodness me, had my feelings for this man really grown that powerful? This had not been a problem in the slightest when I had first appointed him as my personal butler. I had known what I was getting myself into when I made my contract with him, so what part of my mind had decided that it desired to have him as a partner? It didn’t make sense to me, and I loathed it. I wished that I simply could have done away with these feelings the same way people did away with weathered clothes. However, I feared that I might have been too far in to do so. My unrequited love for this man would—quite literally—be the death of me.

Claude suddenly gripped my chin in his hand and forced me to look at him, his golden glare burning straight into mine. “My lady, your breathing is so horrendously laboured that it can be heard from the depths of Hell. There is no use in lying to me,” he murmured. If it was even possible, my breathing became even more abnormal. It felt as though a serpent was wrapped around my lungs, squeezing so tightly that I might burst. Why, oh why, had things escalated this far? If I could turn back the clock and stamp away these emotions, I would have. I would have watched my every move and taken great caution to ensure that not an ounce of love could be felt for him. Perhaps then, I would not have been stranded in such a predicament.

Another coughing fit suddenly struck me like a whip, and this time, I was sent collapsing on my knees, hand held over my chest as I hacked up more blood and rose petals. There were even a few entire roses among them. Claude knelt down beside me and produced a handkerchief from his pocket, wiping away the traces of blood and petals that had stuck to my lips. “I see. Hanahaki disease,” he murmured to himself. “How utterly unfortunate.”

“I truly am...a fool,” I wheezed, shaking as I tried to keep any more coughs and roses from surfacing. “To think that I...of all people...would have fallen for...a demon.” I had spoken too much, for a wave of roses came spilling out of my mouth, their petals tainted with more blood than I had ever seen on any of the previous flowers. My chest felt as though a thousand little daggers were jabbing into it, and I doubled over, continuing to spew out bloodied roses.

“A fool you are indeed,” Claude agreed. “Hanahaki is a disease that can only be cured if the feelings of the enamoured are returned, or by surgery. Had you undergone surgery, you might have survived.”

“You know...how risky...surgery is,” I half-snapped, half-rasped. I had only ever known one of my acquaintances to have survived any sort of surgical procedure, and they had almost perished. The procedure had been performed on their leg. I could only imagine what would have happened if a surgeon were to cut into my chest cavity. Even if the surgery itself was successful, there was no telling whether or not I would actually survive the aftermath. I preferred to die in the privacy of my own home, coughing and choking on blood and roses, rather than die splayed out on a surgical table, screaming and writhing in agony with an audience of strangers.

“My lady, you truly are a fool,” he sighed. “I suppose our contract is useless now, given that you are on the brink of death. However…” he trailed off, looking into my eyes with a rather possessive expression. “I will not allow your soul to be taken from me by a shinigami upon your passing. Your soul is mine alone to take and devour.” There was hunger in his eyes as he said this, the kind of hunger that a wolf would have when eying a helpless little lamb.

“Claude...I have a...request.” What I was about to ask of him was probably the most idiotic and desperate thing that I would ever do, as well as the last. I was right at death’s doorstep, though. Didn’t I deserve to have one last thing before I expired?

“Yes, what is it, mistress?” he prompted, awaiting my instructions.

“I want you...to kill me. With your own hands. This is an...order, Claude.” In between coughing fits, I had tried to make my voice as firm and demanding as possible. Even while I was in such a miserable state, I thought to maintain an air of pride and confidence. Such was the way of the aristocrats, and such was the way of dealing with a demon.

Claude gave me the affirmation I needed. “Your wish shall be fulfilled, my lady.” With those words, he hoisted me up to my feet and tilted my chin up so that I might gaze at his austere face one last time. In spite of myself and my current condition, I found myself getting lost in his golden hues. I might have allowed myself to drown in those eyes had it not been for the grim occasion. He traced a finger down the side of my face and down to my neck before murmuring, “You’ll make one hell of a feast.” Then, without a warning, he pressed his lips to mine.

Taken by surprise, I barely had any time to register what had happened before I found myself returning the action. As our mouths molded together, I could feel the sensations of life slipping from me. The tips of my fingers and toes had gone numb, and seconds later, I was weak at the knees. Claude moved a hand up to my back before deepening our kiss.

Truth be told, it was disgusting to have the taste of blood and roses swirling around in my mouth. I could not say the same for Claude. Unlike myself, he seemed to be enjoying this. He had always commented on how exquisite the taste of my blood and soul would be. Even so, I did not dare pull away, and neither did he. I gave myself to him willingly, and not simply because I was hopelessly in love with him, but because we both knew exactly what the reality was behind this action. This was a kiss of death; he was taking my soul and devouring it at this very moment, savoring the flavor for as long as he could.

Eventually, when he had taken every last ounce, he pulled away and gazed into my eyes. My fading senses were barely able to register his last words to me. “My lady, your soul was a pleasure to tear apart, truly a divine meal. Rest now, and for all eternity.” As soon as he had finished uttering the last word, I at last allowed myself to be engulfed by darkness.

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