Love Island

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Summary

Zoro hates the love festival, hates the pink decorations and especially hates the Devil Fruit user who can see exactly who he’s been hiding his heart from. Then Sanji eats one too many of her fertility chocolates.

The effects only work between two people who are in love. Zoro offers to help anyway.

Admittedly, Zoro hadn't been paying much attention when Nami was describing the spring island the crew had landed on.

He was more interested in finding the nearest bar. Consequently, he could only stare blankly at all the trappings of merriment and festivity decorating the town. There were poles of flowers lining the paths and arches of heart-shaped arrangements marking every street. People were garbed in pink, red and/or white everywhere he looked. Every store front seemed to have a wealth of couples sitting outside, smiling and canoodling while wearing matching leis with different types of flowers that Zoro didn't bother knowing the meaning of. Vendors were selling carts of chocolate and other sweet things that he couldn't help but turn his nose up at. He was lucky enough to spot a booze stand on one street, but he had nearly chopped the damn thing in two when he downed a pint only to have his mouth assaulted by a sickly-sweet mixture of mint, chocolate, cream and liquor.

Suffice to say, Zoro wasn't exactly in the mood for whatever was happening on this damn island. So, when he eventually noticed that he was not the only Strawhat in the bar he'd settled in, he was less than thrilled that that Strawhat just happened to be Sanji.

Whatever. Maybe he'd get a good fight out of him.

He left his bar stool and approached the table where the cook was sitting. He was with two women who Zoro was certain was only being pestered by the annoying pervert, especially since they were wearing matching leis like all the other couples Zoro had seen in town.

The curly-browed idiot glanced up at him as he approached. The smile that had been on his face instantly dropped.

"What are *you* doing here?"

"It's a bar. What do you think," Zoro replied, punctuating it with a deep swig of his bottle.

Sanji's lip curled in disgust as Zoro wiped away the excess liquid with the back of his hand.

"Ugh, you classless gorilla. Honestly, an island as lovely as this is lost on the likes of you. You haven't a romantic bone in your body."

"Like you do, perv cook?"

Sanji glared at him venomously as the women let out light giggles.

"Boys, boys. There's no need to make such a fuss. This is a time for peace, happiness and love," the red-haired woman chided.

"Exactly. Petty squabbles are meant to be put aside during the Festival of Abundance in honor of the goddess, Ualana, who holds dominion of Love and Fertility," the dark-skinned woman added.

“I don’t believe in gods and certainly not some god of something as silly as love,” Zoro retorted.

The trio gave him a range of affronted looks, though, somehow, Sanji seemed the most offended.

“How dare you insult these ladies’ faith like that, you godless Neanderthal,” Sanji hissed before turning back to the women.

“My dearest Aziza,” he crooned, kissing the dark-skinned woman’s hand.

“My darling Suki,” he continued, kissing the back of the redhead’s next.

“Please, do ignore the green gorilla here. This brute wouldn’t understand the concept of love even if it was kicked into his skull. And trust me, I’ve tried.”

Zoro scoffed in reply. At least he knew what real love was. Love wasn’t the cook’s insipid simping and grandiose posturing.

“I don’t think that’s quite true, Mr. Chef. I am gifted with the Fruit of our goddess. I’ve eaten the Human-Human Fruit, Model: Ualana. I can see within someone’s heart at the depths of love that exists there and what it is connected to,” Aziza explained.

Zoro quirked a brow at the dark-skinned woman as she stared at him intensely.

“There are strong bonds within you, Mr. Swordsman. Love runs deep in your veins, but it expresses itself differently in you than it does in others, doesn’t it?”

Zoro glared back silently but Aziza wasn’t deterred. He watched her red polished nails fold into a fist as she rested her chin atop it. She was studying him like he was something that she could dissect.

“Your love is loyalty to a boy. No, a man made of light and freedom. He is sunshine incarnate with joy erupting from every heartbeat. Your love is dedication to a flag, marking your allegiance. Your love is protection for a crew you see as family. Your love is devotion to a dream and promise formed years ago. Your love is secrecy, secluding the depths of your passion away from the one who you’re too afraid to give your heart to all the while knowing you’ll never love anyone the way you do him.”

Zoro’s fingers clenched around the hilt of Wado as the woman’s words sunk in. The veracity behind them raised his hackles as his eye switched surreptitiously to Sanji, whose brows were scrunched up in disbelief.

“You sure you’re getting all that from the moss here? Far be it from me to doubt a lady’s words, but “secluding the depths of his passion”? That’s not the style of our swordsman.”

“I see what’s there and only that. I don’t question what the goddess chooses to show me. Besides, sometimes even those closest to us don’t truly know what’s in our hearts, especially not when we hide it away from even ourselves. Don’t you agree, Mr. Chef?”

The Devil Fruit user gave Sanji a meaningful look, one that made him shift uncomfortably.

“I’m sure I don’t know what you mean, dearest.”

The dark-skinned woman gave him a serene smile in return.

“I’m sure,” she repeated, her voice sickeningly sweet, bordering on patronizing.

“Z,” Suki spoke warningly.

“No meddling, not today of all days. We’re at the height of the goddess’ festival after all. We should focus on celebrations, especially since you’re bound to be in high demand. Many people will want your favor and to have their union blessed by Ualana.”

“I’ve heard a lot about the customs to celebrate goddess Ualana. I can’t wait to see things in full swing tonight. I hear there’ll be whole streets worth of food stalls. The island makes so many things imbued with floral flavors and edible flowers. It’s hard to keep such things in stock on a ship, but more floral flavors in my repertoire would be appreciated by my lovely Robin and darling Nami. Oh, I hope I can get the recipe for that pink peppercorn, raspberry and rose tart you introduced me to, Suki dear. The pink peppercorn was subtle but paired well with the sweetness of the tart, and the flavor of the raspberry rounded out with the floral touch from the rose made it an exquisite palate cleanser that I know the ladies and our doctor would enjoy,” Sanji rambled, a genuine smile stretching on his face.

This was the real Sanji. Not that the simpering dumbass wasn’t Sanji either. Zoro had learned to take the beautiful with the annoying when it came to the cook, but this was Zoro’s second favorite Sanji, right after the pissed version that was spitting flames of venom and throwing kicks of fury and passion straight at Zoro’s head. This Sanji, who was excited about the things he loved, was a Sanji that let his guard down. He wasn’t afraid of saying too much, or looking cool, or serving others. He was just lost in his own world, rambling about whatever topic caught his fancy and heedless of the fact that others were getting to see him vulnerable. It was moments like these that reminded Zoro of why his heart decided to choose Sanji in the first place.

His skin prickled as he felt a heavy gaze on him. He switched his eye to see that Aziza was staring at him, an enigmatic smile tilting her lips. Her grin widened when Zoro’s eye met hers. This damn woman knew too much.

“Oh. Look at me, babbling on. I’m sure you don’t want to hear this,” Sanji commented, a flush of embarrassment coloring his nose and cheeks.

“It’s quite alright. Passion and love are not always emotions directed at a person. Our goddess is one of all forms of love and I’m gifted to see all forms as well. Your love of cooking is the purest form of love, Mr. Chef. I’m always delighted when I encounter someone with a love such as yourself. It reminds me that such love can exist, uncorrupted. I’m happy to get a glimpse of that love firsthand. And might I be so bold as to say it looks beautiful on you.”

“Ms. Aziza,” Sanji exclaimed, his whole face turning red and hearts popping out of his eyes.

“I’m but a lowly worm when compared to true beauties such as yourself and your ever endearing fiancée.”

“Beauty isn’t a stingy thing. I agree that Suki is the most gorgeous woman in the world and I am lucky she’s chosen to seal our love through a formal bond, but love makes all things beautiful and you wear your love for cooking as freely as the goddess Ualana intended love to be.”

Sanji turned even redder at Aziza’s compliment. Zoro was half-surprised his nose hadn’t started bleeding yet.

“If only you wore the other forms of your love as freely as you did that. Love should never be buried as deeply and under as many shadows as you bury yours.”

Sanji froze at that, a bit of panic flashing in his eyes. Zoro felt a need to step in even though the cook didn’t like to admit needing a save every now and again.

“Figures you’d still be harassing these ladies even though they’re engaged and all, pervert cook. Bet you’re hoping for some damn peep show or something,” Zoro commented, deliberately abrasive and suggestive in the way he knew Sanji hated when it came to women.

As expected, his face immediately turned up in anger.

“How dare you insinuate such things about these lovely ladies?!”

“Wasn’t insinuating anything about them. I was talking about you, dartbrow.”

“Oh, screw you. You don’t even know what the word ‘insinuate’ means.”

“So? At least I don’t go around following a couple of lesbians like a lost puppy dog, hoping for scraps that’ll never come. It’s like Nami and Vivi all over again, except somehow even more pathetic.”

“That’s it! I’m going to kick your ass, you shitty moss!”

Zoro grinned viciously, his hands already on the hilt of his swords.

“Bring it on.”

It felt nice, fighting Sanji through the streets of whatever island this was. It always felt right being the center of his attention even if it was just to fight. Plus, Zoro liked getting to feel his dress shoe colliding with the metal of his sword, the sound ringing out through the air. Kitetsu and Enma singing with the hype of battle, even if it was less bloody than the cursed and demon swords would like. He liked the way Wado sang with happiness as she cruised through the air around the cook, performing a dance she was the most familiar with out of all of his swords. He liked the ease with which they fell into a rhythm, the way they were in tuned with each other’s bodies and minds. It felt like a form of intimacy that couldn’t be replicated with anyone else.

(And, beyond that, Zoro had come to accept that it was the only form of intimacy he'd ever have with Sanji.)

By the time the two finally stopped fighting, Zoro was mildly surprised to see the two women still around, watching them.

Both had identical looks on their faces: impish smiles stretched across their lips with a heavy knowing gaze flickering back and forth between the two.

"Men are so strange," Suki commented.

"Thank you, Mr. Chef and Mr. Swordsman," Aziza said, apropos of nothing.

"You're so very welcome, my dearest Aziza. But what for," Sanji simpered.

"For showing me yet another way to express love. This display of yours was not one I had considered before and given who I embody, it was clearly an oversight on my part."

Sanji tilted his head in confusion while Zoro shot the woman another warning glare which she ignored.

"Anyway, we had just stopped into the bar to take a break from showing Mr. Chef around the island. You should join us, Mr. Swordsman," Suki suggested.

Zoro opened his mouth to deny her, but Sanji cut him off before he could.

"Excellent idea. I needed a pack mule anyway. Might as well put those muscles to use, Mosshead."

Zoro's eye twitched as he huffed in annoyance, but he didn't contradict him either.

Zoro walked behind Sanji through the streets of the island whose name he still didn't know. He was laden with all the things the cook had decided the galley needed as they followed Aziza and Suki through the streets. They weren't heavy items, but they were cumbersome enough that they were annoying. Still, his attention was mainly grabbed by the cook.

Shopping with Sanji wasn't out of the ordinary. Zoro often found himself being volunteered to do so, but he liked it. He got the excuse of spending time with Sanji beyond fighting and he got to see him in his element. He got to watch the way his blue eyes lit up when a particular flavor he liked hit his tongue. He got to see the way his head tilted when he was contemplating ingredients, exposing the tantalizing skin of his neck. He got to see the way he would use sharp words and sharper wit when he caught someone trying to swindle him. Zoro could agree with Aziza on one thing. Sanji was beautiful, no matter what he was doing.

Zoro watched him pop a small egg-shaped chocolate into his mouth, rolling it around his tongue before humming.

"Apricot crème and champagne?"

“Yes. You have a very sharp palete, Mr. Chef,” Suki complimented.

Zoro rolled his eye as Sanji did his heart-eyed schtick.

“Why, thank you my dear. A compliment from you is like a rainbow on a rainy day.”

“Simp,” Zoro muttered, garnering a sharp glare.

“Our goddess, Ualana, is primarily the goddess of love and fertility but she is also associated with the season of spring, which is why many of the fruits are spring fruits and the dessert stands tend to focus on those confections. Would you like some, Mr. Swordsman,” Aziza asked.

Zoro scrunched his nose up at it.

“Mosshead has the palete of an octogenarian, I’m afraid. He doesn’t like sweet things,” Sanji said.

Zoro took the chocolate anyway and ate it, his mouth twisting unhappily.

“Yeah, but I don’t want to hear you bitch about me wasting food.”

“How lovely of you to put the feelings of Mr. Chef above your own sensibilities. It’s a wonderful trait that makes for an unselfish lover,” Aziza commented.

Zoro rolled his eye at yet another sly comment from the Devil Fruit user while Sanji blushed hard and began to stutter.

“Oh, Aziza. That’s… why I’m… oh my.”

Zoro raised an eyebrow at the embarrassed display before dismissing it. The cook was probably just flustered hearing a lady spout such “vulgarity”.

He watched Sanji snatch up a chocolate rabbit and damn-near stuff the thing in his mouth to avoid talking anymore. Aziza and Suki giggled at the display as the quartet continued walking through the market. Sanji was slowly losing the red hue as he finished off his chocolate. Zoro tried and failed at not watching the other man lick his mouth and then his thumb clean.

A stray thought struck him, wondering what his tongue would feel like on Zoro’s skin before he could chase the thought away. He looked away and found himself looking at Aziza again. The dark-skinned woman had a bright look in her eyes. Zoro was certain he was going to snap at her before the day was through and Sanji was going to pitch a fit over it.

Although Zoro might like that as well. He did like when Sanji turned into a raging inferno of indignation and wrath. All those high-strung emotions were usually aimed at Zoro and he had his full undivided attention.

Aziza giggled as if she could read his mind, and Zoro again shot her a glare. Aziza gave him an impish smile before turning to their companions.

“Suki, why don’t you take Mr. Chef to see the chocolatiers? He can ask them all about their techniques and how they preserve the spring fruits even out of season.”

“That’s a wonderful suggestion, love. What about you two?”

“Mr. Swordsman looks like he’d like to be rid of the burden of these boxes so I shall walk him to the port where his ship is docked. If Mr. Chef’s insults about his sense of direction hold any water, he’ll need the guide.”

“Oh, trust me. I’m probably downplaying it. Make sure he doesn’t leave your sight. If he does, we won’t find him for another two days. And don’t you dare drop so much as a cherry, you brute.”

“Yeah, yeah. Whatever,” Zoro retorted, a lackluster response but his attention was mostly on Aziza and what she wanted from him. He didn’t trust this woman one bit, especially since she had a Devil Fruit whose nature Zoro still didn’t understand thanks to his lack of knowledge on this island’s goddess beyond the fact that she was a love deity of some sort. Did that mean this woman’s power was similar to Boa Hancock or was it something totally different? It was a mythical zoan and Zoro didn’t have great experiences with those thanks to Kaido, although Marco wasn’t so bad.

Still, he didn’t trust her. She knew too much.

Zoro and Aziza were quiet for a while as they walked back to the Sunny, a level of tension between them that Zoro was certain was one-sided given the woman’s relaxed gait and the carefree smiles she gave passersby who seemed to be fumbling over themselves to greet her and bow to her. Some were even asking her for favors. Zoro watched with interest as her hand glowed before she produced several drops of pink heart-shaped chocolates and handed them over with a smile. The couples she handed them to were always grateful and groveling by the end of the interaction.

“You some kind of princess or something? Why’s everyone so uptight about you?”

“I told you, I have our goddess’ Devil Fruit. It means people revere me in a way. They see me as a conduit for her, so they gravitate towards me even if they don’t want my favor. You should know.”

Zoro snorted in reply.

“I’m not attracted to you, lady.”

Aziza laughed in reply.

“Of course not. I wasn’t referring to myself but rather your captain, given his Fruit.”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about, lady. I’m not attracted to Luffy or the Gum Gum Fruit either.”

Aziza gave him an assessing look at that before shrugging.

“That doesn’t surprise me. Your captain and I aren’t your talented Mr. Chef after all.”

“It’s Sanji to you.”

“I’ve yet to hear you call him by his name.”

“He’s my nakama. I can call him what I want.”

“But what you want the most is to call him yours.”

Zoro stopped short at that, cutting his eye to her harshly.

“That shit right there. That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. Stop talking like that in front of the cook.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s none of your business and Curly doesn’t want to hear anything like that.”

“He doesn’t want to hear it or are you just too afraid to know what he’ll say?”

“You want to know fear, lady? Because I can show you,” Zoro threatened, his fingers drifting down to Enma, the blade singing with bloodlust.

“Oh, I know fear. I see love in all its forms, even fearful love. And your cook is full of that, more than anyone I’ve ever met. I don’t think he’s known a day when his love was free and unrestricted by his own terror at its very existence.”

That gave Zoro pause.

“It’s practically my duty to show him that the world won’t end if he lets that fear go, even if just for a night.”

Zoro narrowed his eye at that.

“The fuck does that mean?”

Aziza gave him a mysterious grin in return before continuing to walk ahead.

Zoro resolved to keep an eye on her and the cook for the rest of the day, not trusting her or Sanji’s judgment when it came to women. He still didn’t know what Aziza’s powers were after all.

It was harder to do when Sanji kept gravitating back to her and her fiancée. Maybe that goddess worship thing was more literal than Zoro thought it was. Sanji was being extra complimentary, falling over himself even more than usual to wait on Aziza and Suki hand and foot, even going as far as to offer to leave a recipe for a wedding cake for the ladies after they’d enjoyed one of the confections he made after commandeering the cooking station from a food gondola.

Zoro still sat with his eye furrowed suspiciously at Aziza, wondering if she was doing something to the cook to make his usual simping behavior be dialed up to 11 like this.

“You know, they won’t spontaneously combust no matter how hard you stare,” Nami said by way of greeting, saddling up next to him as they sat near a fountain in the town square. The square was decorated with so much red, pink and white Zoro didn’t think he’d want to see the colors again once they left this island. Beyond that, his nose was itching from the overabundance of flowers, and he hadn’t seen this many stuffed animals since he had to share a living space with Perona.

“I don’t know about that. The cook’s got his fire thing,” Zoro retorted, taking a sip of his beer.

Nami snorted at that and turned to look at the tableau. Sanji was down on one knee reciting some long-winded soliloquy to Aziza and Suki.

“He does seem extra… Sanji. I guess it makes sense. It’s not every day that a self-proclaimed slave of love meets someone who ate a love goddess Devil Fruit.”

“She’s planning to do something to him.”

“Why do you say that?”

“She was saying weird things about the cook. I didn’t like it.”

“You sure you’re not just being paranoid, or jealous?”

“Jealous? What would I be jealous of?”

Nami gave him a look at that.

Zoro was getting tired of all these women looking at him like that.

“I’ve been asking around about this Festival of Abundance and goddess Ualana. She’s the goddess of Love, Fertility and Spring. This island has several festivals in her honor but this one in particular is focused on abundance, not just in food or riches but in fertility as well. Have you noticed people going up to her asking for her favor? Well, she’s apparently able to help couples have children. She creates some kind of gift that promotes fertility in women. So, unless the male anatomy has changed without my knowledge, Sanji should be fine.”

Zoro still wasn’t so sure about that. Nami rolled her eyes as Zoro continued to watch them.

“Or you can keep glaring at them like a creep all night. I suppose that’s an option too. I know green’s your color, but jealousy isn’t your best look, Zoro.”

The swordsman ignored the navigator until she walked away with a huff to join Usopp. He would continue his silent vigil just to be sure Sanji was safe.

Or that was the plan anyway. He wasn’t expecting Luffy to accidentally bring down some ancient shrine for the island’s goddess and wind up nearly being executed for it. Then Aziza

stepped in, reprimanding the villagers about being blind to the presence of yet another deity and spouted some nonsense about a sun god or something. It sounded like she was saying that it was Luffy, which sounded pretty dumb to Zoro. Then, an even bigger feast was thrown and Zoro got swept up in the plentiful drinks and food and merriment, so he lost track of Sanji for a couple of hours, so much so that by the time he was wandering his way through the island in search of him and that conniving woman he'd befriended, it had been well over two hours since he'd last seen the cook.

Zoro felt a small sense of failure at losing his quarry but soothed himself with the knowledge that since these weirdos thought Luffy was a god or whatever, then the crew were all safe.

It was as Zoro was wandering past a motel that he caught sight of Sanji again. The man was standing in an alleyway, leaning against the building. His body was coiled tight, tension showing on every bit of him.

Zoro narrowed his eye at him.

"Oi! What's wrong with you, twirlybrows? And why are all the way out here?"

Sanji jumped at being addressed and quickly looked at Zoro. A series of emotions flashed through his dilated eyes. Zoro quirked an eyebrow. Sanji's blue pupils were nearly covered up by black and his forehead was sweaty.

"You getting sick, Cook?"

"No. I, uh, it's… it's nothing like that."

"What's it like then?"

"What do you care?"

"You look weird and you're alone in an alleyway while the rest of the crew and most of the town is celebrating. It's weird."

"It's not your concern. I'm fine," the blond retorted through grit teeth.

He pushed himself off the wall and made to walk away but he stumbled over his feet and nearly crashed to the ground before Zoro could catch him. The man shivered violently in Zoro's arms, a breathy high-pitched sound leaving his lips as they crashed against one another.

Zoro's eye widened as their bodies made contact. He glanced down even though he couldn't see past where their bodies were plastered together. Either way, he could feel it. Sanji was hard.

That wasn't that strange. The man was a horn dog, Zoro imagined he had the libido of a jackrabbit. Except there were no ladies around, he was sweaty, panting, aroused and clearly disoriented while by himself in an alleyway.

Sanji ripped himself out of Zoro's arms and looked away, his cheeks flushed red.

“This isn’t… I mean I wasn’t… this isn’t because… I…” Sanji stuttered before sighing and slumping in defeat.

“I may have ingested some sort of aphrodisiac at some point.”

“You’re high on some sex plant?”

“Don’t say it like that! And not exactly. I still have all my faculties, my body is just…”

“Horny.”

“Stop being so vulgar!”

“How else should I say it? What happened anyway? Someone spike your drink or something?”

“No, it was an oversight on my part. I should’ve asked Aziza about her chocolates before I ate them—”

“Wait, you had something from Aziza?”

“She made some chocolates for a few of the couples, and I wanted to test them to see how Devil Fruit generated chocolates would compare to handcrafted ones. I went around taste-testing them. I had about five before Suki stopped me. She explained that Aziza’s chocolates were to help promote fertility for the couples she gave them to in order to help them conceive, which is why they’re having this effect on me.”

Zoro narrowed his eye, looking back in the direction of the party.

“It’s not Aziza’s fault. I was foolish for eating it without confirming what it did, especially knowing her Devil Fruit generated it.”

Zoro wasn’t so sure of that, not given the woman’s all but blatant declaration that it was her duty to “free” Sanji from his fear of love.

“Well, what the hell is she doing to fix this?”

“There’s nothing she can do. It has to run its course.”

“And how long is that going to take?”

“A few hours to a day, depending on…”

“Depending on?”

Sanji’s eyes sharpened as he glanced up at him.

“Why are you so curious, Mosshead? Hoping for some ammunition to use against me? I know you want to laugh at me right now, I’m surprised you’re not already. Stupid, simp Sanji fell into another trap laid out by a woman. What a useless idiot.”

Zoro frowned in reply.

“I was asking because I wanted to see if it was better that I take you back to the Sunny or if I should just take you inside this hotel.”

“Why would you of all people be taking me anywhere?”

“You can’t protect yourself in this state. I’m not leaving you alone for someone to take advantage of you.”

Sanji’s cheeks seemed to flush redder.

“I don’t need protection. I’m not weak.”

“Didn’t say you were. But you’re high off love goddess fumes and I don’t know what weird customs this place has, so I’m not leaving you alone to be whisked away by some stranger who thinks you’ve been blessed or whatever.”

“It’s not like I’m giving off pheromones. I’m the only one affected.”

“Still. So, are we going back to the Sunny or are we going inside?”

Sanji hesitated a moment before answering.

“I don’t think I can walk back to the ship.”

“Fine. Let’s go.”

Zoro approached the cook and bent a little, intending to lift the man who was already shivering in place and trembling like he was moments from falling to his knees.

“What are you doing?!”

“Lifting you.”

“Are you out of your mind?!”

Zoro’s face turned up in annoyance.

“You want to get inside or stay out here?”

Sanji huffed but leaned heavily against him with no further protest.

Zoro walked them inside of the motel and briefly paused as he took in the gaudy décor. It looked like something had vomited hearts all over the place and there was even more pink and red, enough to give him a headache.

He approached the receptionist, ignoring Sanji’s small pathetic whine about being seen in his unfit state in front of a lady.

The woman looked at them with an amused glint in her eyes.

“Need a room?”

“What else would we be here for?”

Zoro jumped slightly as teeth dug into his skin.

“Rude,” Sanji admonished.

Zoro was not going to examine the warmth that flooded his gut at that action.

“Save that for the bedroom, fellas. You’re lucky enough to have gotten our last vacancy. We’re far enough from the main square where the festivities are, but this is the Festival of Abundance, so we’ve got plenty of couples who are… celebrating. You’ll be in good company.”

Zoro ignored most of her words to home in on the most important ones.

“There’s only one room?”

“Yeah. One bed of course. It’ll be 2000 berri for the night.”

Zoro hadn’t managed to spend all his allowance on booze as he usually did since he had been shadowing Sanji most of the day and then was pulled into an impromptu feast, so he had enough to pay for the room.

Sanji was worryingly quiet as Zoro climbed up the stairs towards the bedroom.

“What do you need, Cook? Should I leave you here and get Chopper?”

“No,” Sanji replied shortly, squeezing his eyes shut tighter. He was trembling a little in Zoro’s arms, sweat beading on his brow.

“He can’t do anything about it. I’ve just got to…”

“You’ve got to what? Speak, will you?”

“It’s hard to get my thoughts together. My head is pounding and my body feels weird. I don’t think I’ve ever been this horny in my life, so give me a break.”

Sanji was blushing deeply, shifting a little uncomfortably in Zoro’s arms. The swordsman valiantly ignored the prominent bulge in Sanji’s pants and scoffed instead.

“Considering I’ve seen you nearly die of blood loss due to your horniness, I find that hard to believe.”

Sanji bit him again in retaliation, drawing a low grunt from Zoro. Sanji shivered so violently in his arms at that that Zoro nearly dropped him.

“Oi! Don’t do that, dumbass. What if I dropped you on the stairs?”

“I can’t control it. I wasn’t trying to. Goddammit. I just need to be alone. I can’t… ugh. I need a shower.”

Zoro felt a pang of sympathy at the desperation and bewilderment seeping into Sanji’s voice, but he ignored it in favor of making it to the room.

Zoro was not surprised by the color of the room when he walked in. He’d gotten used to various shades of red, pink and white. The furniture was all loopily carved wood and heart-shaped everything, from the mirror to the bed to the stained-glass windows depicting who Zoro could only assume was this island’s love goddess along with cherubic babies holding love arrows. Sanji weakly lifted his head to contemplate the monstrosity. Zoro narrowed his eye at the suspiciously affectionate tilt to his lips upon seeing the room.

“Those boner chocolates must really be getting to your head if you like this fucking place.”

Sanji bit him again. And seriously, what was with this new habit?

“You’re the least romantic piece of sentient moss that ever existed.”

“And you must be part shark or something. Why are you obsessed with biting me all of a sudden?”

Sanji blushed in reply, though that could’ve been the boner chocolates.

“I can’t properly move my legs, that’s all. Trust me, I’m not willingly placing my mouth upon your unwashed flesh without a good reason.”

“If you say so.”

Zoro stepped fully into the room, making his way towards the bathroom. He scrunched his nose up in disgust as he saw that the sink, the tub, the floor mats and the vanity were all heart shaped. There were rows of rose-scented body products and rose petals strewn about the place with low burning candles sitting on the edge of the tub.

“Who the fuck is all this even for?”

“It’s a fertility festival, obviously they anticipated being full of lusty patrons. Just put me down, Mosshead. I need to cool off. A bath might help.”

“Fine, whatever. Do you need help with anything?”

“I… no,” Sanji replied curtly.

Zoro shrugged in surrender and made his way back out to the main room. He sat on the edge of the heart bed and glanced towards the window. He could barely see out of it, but he could still vaguely hear the sounds of merriment from the party.

A party celebrating Aziza’s power and now Sanji had unwittingly become drawn into the influence of said power.

Zoro took a moment to be upset with both himself and Aziza. He had known something was off with her and he let his guard down anyway. He didn't believe that this whole thing was as unintentional as Sanji believed it to be, not with all the sly comments and looks Aziza had been throwing at him the whole day.

But what was she trying to accomplish by doing all this? She claimed that her goal was only about making love as free as it could be, but what she did to the cook had nothing to do with love so much as it did lust. Zoro knew there was a stark difference between the two. He knew what love felt like. He knew it in the way he felt when he was around Sanji. He knew what lust felt like too, he knew what those fleeting encounters felt like, how detached it all could be. Zoro had a long track record of short-lived flings and erstwhile lovers that he never intended to be anything more than that, even before he became a pirate. His life was a constant march of wandering from one thing to the next and a steady lover didn't factor well into that.

Sanji wasn't like that though. Sure, he flirted with everyone and would turn into a gelatinous puddle of goo over any woman no matter what, but the love cook was just that. He fell in love often and took just about any encounter seriously. There was no way he'd fall into some meaningless fling based solely on lust. It wasn't his style. So, what was Aziza playing at?

Zoro's thoughts were interrupted by a series of sounds coming from the bathroom. It took him entirely too long to figure out that it was the cook.

Zoro sat up straighter as he began to decipher the sounds of bitten off moans and short groans, water sloshing and breathless huffs. He did his best to block out the sounds and the images it created in his mind, but he could do little but imagine Sanji's wet skin, his head thrown back in ecstasy, his mouth open on breathless whimpers, his swollen lips glistening while his heart rabbited in his chest and his hand moved against himself, trying to reach completion.

He felt a rush of heat flow down to his gut and groin at the thought as another series of delicious sounds floated from the bathroom.

The swordsman shook his head and closed his eye, focusing on his breathing. He resolved to meditate to try and block it all out until Sanji was ready to come out.

He wasn't sure how long he sat there, still and unmoving, focused only on his breathing and blocking out the world around him. It felt like too long before he became aware of a presence moving around the room before it settled beside him. He cracked his eye open after a while to see Sanji sitting beside him, a miserable look on his face. He was wearing only a pink towel wrapped around his waist while his hair dripped water down his neck and chest. His lips were bitten and slightly bloody and his face was still blushing red.

"You alright," Zoro asked.

"It didn't work."

Zoro raised an inquiring eyebrow at that.

“I tried to… I was… I tried to take care of it myself, but I couldn’t… I wasn’t able to… I couldn’t cum. I’m still as hard as I was before. I didn’t think being horny would be this annoying or painful.”

“Painful?”

“Being hard as a rock and spending 30 unsuccessful minutes trying to jack off with only water as lubricant isn’t exactly a painless process, Moss,” Sanji retorted, his voice dripping with weariness.

“What can I do to help?”

Sanji let out a small sound that wasn’t exactly a laugh.

“You don’t want to ask me that question.”

“I’m your nakama. I want to help you, so what can I do?”

“Don’t say any more things like that. I’m trying very hard to not think about…”

Sanji let out a long breath before nodding resolutely to himself.

“It’ll last a few hours, likely most of the night. I— I can handle that. I’ll just stay here and I can ride it out until it’s over. Besides, even if I could cum, it wouldn’t do much good. The point of Aziza’s favors are to promote fertility for couples who want to have kids, and I can’t get pregnant so it’s not like the effects will stop with enough…”

Sanji sighed heavily before nodding to himself again.

“A few hours. I can get through a few hours. I’ve gotten through worse for longer.”

Zoro sat silent for a moment.

Dare he?

This was playing with fire in the worst way possible, but the cook looked sufficiently pathetic and helpless enough that Zoro felt a twist in his gut and a need to intervene.

“You don’t have to wait if you don’t want to.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I can help you.”

“How would you…?”

Zoro stared blankly in response. Sanji’s face turned up in panic and alarm.

“What? But— no. Zoro, no, you can’t—”

“Why not?”

“You don’t want this.”

“What does any of this have to do with wanting this?”

Sanji’s face did something that made Zoro think that that was the worst thing he could’ve said. The blond jumped to his feet and began pacing back and forth.

“What does this have to do with wanting me, he says.”

“Not what I said.”

“Bloody stupid Mosshead. Doesn’t know jack shit. Smells like a sweaty dumpster and then he offers something like that and then has the nerve to say something so asinine and insensitive and unromantic…”

Zoro silently watched Sanji continue to curse him out as if he wasn’t sitting right in front of him before the man abruptly stopped in front of Zoro.

“This has everything to do with wanting it. I know you don’t want this, you’ve never— that’s how this works. Aziza’s favors… both parties have to be willing.”

“You look willing enough and so am I. I’m here offering, aren’t I?”

“And,” Sanji continued with a glare.

“There has to be a deeper connection than just lust.”

“We’re nakama, we’re family. That’s a deeper connection than lust.”

“*And* you have to want it. And not in a ‘you’re my nakama and you’re chronically horny and I feel kind of bad for you because you look so pathetic’ kind of way, but in a ‘our union is ordained by a love goddess who chooses to bless us with a gift of fertility guaranteed to give us the best sex of our lives and, if our anatomies worked that way, very likely a child’ kind of way. So, yes, you shitty moss. This has everything to do with you wanting me.”

“You keep saying I don’t want you, but you haven’t said anything about what you want. You haven’t said you don’t want this, that you don’t want me.”

Sanji’s eyes widened at that and he began to stumble over his words.

“Well, that’s… I’m… I mean, look at me. I’m hard enough to be attracted to a curvy rock,”

“So, just your normal self?”

“Shut up! You’re lucky I can’t lift my leg to kick you right now. I’d cave your shitty skull in.”

“You look pent up enough for it. Your hand must not have done much to help you.”

Sanji went so red he rivaled the crimson sheets on the bed.

“Sh— shut up. Dumbass. You don’t know anything.”

“I know you’re in pain and I know that if you didn’t want me here to help you, that that pain and chronic horniness wouldn’t stop you from kicking me straight through that door.”

“That doesn’t mean that I… and… and… plus, I’m not in my right mind, so even if I did want you, I couldn’t… it wouldn’t be right to…”

“You already told me you were thinking just fine, so you can’t use that as an excuse. Saying I don’t want it isn’t going to work either. Since when do I do things I don’t want to do, shit cook? And you still haven’t managed to tell me that you don’t want it.”

Zoro stood up and approached the other man. Sanji stared at him, wide-eyed and panicked. He looked like a cornered animal getting ready to strike, but he didn’t pull back or move away when Zoro stepped into his space.

“Can you? Can you say that you don’t want this, that you don’t want me?”

“I… Moss, you’re not being fair.”

“We’re pirates, since when do we care about fairness?”

“But—”

“You’re not listening to me, are you? I want to help. I’m offering. And it’s going to work. You know why?”

Sanji shook his head briefly in reply.

“Because you want me and I want you. I think we’ve wanted each other for a long time now but we were both too stupid to say anything about it.”

“*Zoro*.”

“Tell you what? I’m going to go take a shower, mostly for your benefit, and when I come out you can tell me what you want.”

Zoro hesitated for a moment before going to the pants Sanji had left folded neatly in the bathroom and retrieved his cigarette box and lighter. He walked back to the room while shaking a cigarette out of the box. Sanji eyed his actions with bewilderment as Zoro held it up to his lips.

“Well, Cook? You gonna take it or not?”

Sanji reached up to take it in his fingers, but Zoro pulled it back slightly, his eye locked on Sanji’s lips.

“Moss…” Sanji trailed off warningly. Zoro kept his eye focused on the blond’s mouth, watching the way his throat moved when he swallowed heavily.

Finally, Sanji leaned forward and took the cancer stick between his lips. Zoro lit the lighter and held it up. The flames danced across Sanji’s sweat slick face as he leaned forward to let

the light catch. He angled the smoke towards the ceiling as he blew it out of the corner of his mouth, the scent of nicotine quickly filling the air as Sanji stared at him, eyes hooded with lust.

Zoro pulled back out of Sanji's space, pointedly ignoring the shivering, smoky breath he let out and the way Sanji leaned towards him before catching himself.

He turned to face the bathroom and quickly entered, deciding it was best to leave the rest in Sanji's court. The cook had a thing about control even if he tried to hide it, especially after Whole Cake. Besides, Sanji tended to overthink everything so at least he could get that out of the way without Zoro having to sit through it.

He didn't spend long in the shower, it really was for Sanji's delicate sensibilities that he hopped into the shower at all. He figured it'd increase the chances of the cook actually allowing Zoro to help him.

Because Zoro did want it, even if he was burying the lede about how much he actually did. He was a pro at that, pushing down how much he wished to learn how that sun-kissed skin would feel beneath his fingertips, how Sanji would moan when Zoro gave him pleasure, how Sanji might look when he lost that prissy façade and let himself be completely free.

Zoro stepped out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist. Sanji was sitting on the bed, still looking slightly worse for wear and disheveled by the influence of Aziza's chocolates.

His deep blue eyes immediately snapped up to meet Zoro's singular gaze.

Sanji's eyes had always been deep pools that Zoro could find himself lost in. They were still dilated and more black than blue, blown out with arousal and heavy with desire. They stayed trained unerringly on Zoro as he set his clothes and sword belt down on the love seat and then approached the bed, sitting next to Sanji with about a foot of space between them.

Zoro met his eyes before speaking.

"So? You gonna let me help you now or what?"

Sanji was staring at him with a mixture of disbelief and maybe hope. Zoro wasn't sure. Either way, he needed to hear Sanji say the words. He wasn't going to do anything until he was certain the cook wanted it too. By now, he could guess as much (and that was causing him to rewrite all their interactions over the last two years) but he still needed to hear him say it himself so he could be sure he wasn't just projecting what he'd always wanted onto the other man.

Sanji breathed in abruptly. He shut his eyes for a second, his fingers tightening in the silky sheets.

"This is your last chance to leave, Mosshead, because if you don't… you're going to have to stay and I won't be able to stop myself from doing what I've wanted to for years," Sanji admitted, halfway pleading and shivering as if the thoughts and desires that he'd had were enough to send chills down his spine.

Zoro knew exactly what that felt like.

He leaned forward and kissed him. There on the edge of the heart-shaped bed, surrounded by the trappings of what this island constituted as love but really might just be religious fanaticism for all Zoro knew or cared. What had his attention more was the taste of Sanji against his lips.

He tasted like nicotine, tea, chocolate, apricot, rose and blood, a strange but unique combination that he couldn't help but find delicious as it was a combination that was all Sanji. Zoro ran his tongue over the small wounds from Sanji biting his lip in the bathroom, unsuccessfully trying to cover the sounds of himself jacking off. Sanji moaned into his mouth and the sound was more perfect than anything Zoro had ever imagined it might be.

He pulled back then, staring at Zoro with a combination of fear, desire, panic, longing and desperation.

"I… please… I can't… I don't—"

"*Sanji*," Zoro said firmly.

The word stopped the blond dead in his tracks. He stared at Zoro, wide-eyed and mystified.

"Stop fighting it."

Then it was like a dam breaking and Sanji's lips were back on him as his hands slid up Zoro's chest, resting on his pecs. He internally rolled his eye at that and pulled them down onto the bed, ripping the towel off Sanji's waist, leaving him naked and sprawled lusciously across the sheets. It was everything Zoro had desired but never expected to see:

Sanji, naked with his eyes all enormous and glittering with desire, so clearly aroused and needing Zoro's touch. Zoro didn't care too much about beautiful things but Sanji like this was something else entirely.

Except Zoro wasn't quite sure what was real and what was heightened from Aziza's chocolate. Still, Sanji needed him. Zoro was the one who could help him because Zoro wanted Sanji and Sanji wanted him back. That was what mattered the most right now.

Sanji made a tiny sound, sapphire eyes all huge and pleading. Zoro shook himself out of his thoughts. His useless musings were causing Sanji extra seconds of pain. He focused on pulling off his own towel with ruthless speed, tearing the fabric as he removed it from his body.

Sanji sighed softly when Zoro's body lay on top of his. Their skin touching must feel like sweet relief to him, even though they hadn't done anything yet. Zoro glanced down between them where Sanji was hard, red and dripping precum down his length. Zoro had seen all the guys naked before, but he'd never seen Sanji like this. He reached down and wrapped his fingers around his erect length. Sanji gasped, shuddered and came on the spot, wet heat spilling out over Zoro's exploratory fingertips.

The greenhead looked down at Sanji's pulsing member in surprise.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I—"

Zoro leaned down and pressed a kiss to Sanji's trembling lips, cutting off his apologies. He could tell that just once wasn't going to be enough, not from the way Sanji was still hard in his hand, trembling with each stroke.

"I said I would help and I will. Besides, now we know for sure that the two of us doing this together works."

Sanji bit his lip at that.

"You… you really want me, Mosshead?"

"And you want me, so what's the problem?"

Sanji let out a chuckle that was equal parts mirthless and hopeless.

"More than I have time to say right now."

"I'm sure it's all a bunch of meaningless bullshit you convinced yourself during one of your needless spirals."

Sanji gnashed his teeth at that, looking for all the world like he was about to headbutt Zoro in retaliation.

"What do you want me to do," Zoro asked, stopping Sanji up short.

The blond blinked and Zoro could only guess what lewd images were crossing his mind. It must've been sufficiently arousing because a small drop of blood slid down from his nose, pooling by his lips.

"I can't read your mind, Cook," Zoro started,

"Tell me what you want."

Sanji shook his head in reply.

"Can't. It's too much."

Zoro wiped the blood away from Sanji's face with his thumb. He considered the liquid for a moment before placing the digit in his mouth, sucking it clean.

Sanji's mouth dropped open in response.

"You're a heathen," he insulted breathlessly.

"Yeah, but you want me anyway. I told you I want you. You're not going to scare me off, so just tell me what you want," Zoro pressed, leaning down to pull Sanji's earlobe into his mouth.

The blond shuddered in reply and then words began to leave him like a geyser.

“I—” Sanji’s voice cracked, his whole body trembling.

“I want you in bed with me. I want— I want your hands on me everywhere. I want your skin against mine. Sweat and heat and *shit,*” he gasped as Zoro’s teeth grazed his neck.

“I want you above me, inside me. I want you to pin my wrists down, to hold me there and not let me go, to take what you want from me because I’m… I’m yours. I’ve always been yours and I want you to claim me, inside and out.”

The words tumbled out of him like a confession, years of restraint breaking open. His voice wavered between eloquence and raw desperation, between the cook who could wax poetic and the man who was falling apart at the seams.

“I don’t want to think anymore,” Sanji continued, his sapphire eyes glassy and fixed on Zoro’s.

“I don’t want to be afraid. I just want you. Please. I want— I want to be yours.”

His hands were immediately on Sanji’s skin, taking in as much of the milky expanse as he could. Sanji was pliant beneath him, bending and twisting any way Zoro wanted him to, giving himself over to him without any more shame. Zoro’s fingers slid between those enticingly strong legs, finding Sanji’s hole, clenching and vulnerable already. Sanji lifted his hips impatiently, pushing into Zoro’s hand, wordlessly pleading.

The swordsman glanced up towards the heart-shaped drawer. If this place was worth its salt, there’d be some lube inside. Sanji whined in protest when Zoro had to get off of him to reach the drawer. The desperation seeping into every sound he made was driving Zoro halfway up a wall. He wondered if Sanji was usually this submissive and plaintive even when he wasn’t under the influence of boner chocolate. Zoro thought he might like that a lot more than he thought he would.

The lube in the drawer was full and sitting alongside several condoms of varying sizes. Zoro pulled both out of the drawer and sat on his knees between Sanji’s legs. He got his fingers wet before positioning himself back to Sanji’s entrance.

Sanji gasped and shivered as Zoro pressed a finger inside, his body writhing against the sheets as he pushed his pelvis even closer to Zoro’s hand, sending his finger even deeper. Zoro found himself getting lost in the hot blue depths of Sanji’s gaze, heavy with unadulterated want. Zoro wanted too. Every inch of his body hummed with the sensation.

Sanji’s insides felt like silk and were wetter than Zoro was expecting. An effect of Aziza’s powers perhaps. Zoro wasn’t sure but he was determined to take his time with him, to stretch him and open him up, one finger at a time. He pressed in further, brushing against Sanji’s prostate. He watched greedily as he threw his head back, exposing the tantalizing length of his neck. Zoro leaned down, sucking and biting at the skin as Sanji clenched around his fingers, moaning out an approximation of Zoro’s name as he shivered with pleasure.

Zoro twisted and curled his fingers, pressing harder against Sanji's sweet spot. The blond was writhing beneath him, desperate moans and whines of pleasure escaping his spit slicked lips.

"Shit, fuck. I'm close, Zoro. Please. More," Sanji begged.

Zoro crooked his fingers again before he began drilling them into Sanji, hitting his spot over and over again. He grabbed one of Sanji's legs as they flailed in pleasure, throwing it over his shoulder. Sanji moaned higher at the change in angle before his body stiffened with the onslaught of his orgasm.

Sanji's body barely relaxed as he came down from the high, his free leg kicking restlessly as his hands squeezed into fists over and over at his side.

"More. Please, more," Sanji begged.

"Inside," Zoro asked.

Sanji nodded frantically in reply.

"Please. I need it. I need you. Zoro, please."

He went to grab the condom, bringing it to his mouth to open it but Sanji reached up and snatched it, throwing it across the room.

"I want you to fill me up," the cook confessed.

Zoro found himself as the one shivering then.

"Shit," he cursed, leaning down to press his lips to Sanji's, swallowing all the sounds the cook made as Zoro lined himself up and pressed into his velvet heat. The slide was almost too easy, as if they'd been made for each other, like they were always meant to do this.

"Zoro," Sanji moaned, sending another shiver down his spine.

Sanji's treasured hands ran along Zoro's back and pulled him in closer, wrapping around him as if he feared that Zoro would leave him. As if he could. Sanji's hole was greedily pulling him back in with every thrust, wanting him to stay sheathed inside. Zoro ground his cock inside of Sanji, catching his sweet spot if Sanji's reaction was any indication.

Sanji planted his feet on the bed and tightened his thighs around Zoro's pelvis before he began thrusting and gyrating his hips, spearing himself onto Zoro's cock in a show of how much control he had over his lower body. Zoro grunted as their bodies collided with a wet sound, resonating through the room. He thought Sanji would be embarrassed by this if he was a little less horny but for now, he was singularly focused on meeting Zoro's thrusts.

Zoro reached his climax sooner than he'd meant to, but Sanji was squeezing around him and moving frantically until he came around Zoro's thrusting cock, prompting him to lose control as well. He rode the wave of pleasure alongside Sanji, ecstasy crashing into them as they reached their peak together.

The two stayed still for a few minutes, breathing raggedly as they came down. Eventually, Zoro came back to himself enough to notice that Sanji was still half hard.

The cook blushed prettily at that.

“I— I can deal with it if you aren’t—”

Zoro cut him off with a kiss.

“Told you I wanted you, Cook. Not gonna stop until it’s all out of your system. You said it’d last the night, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, so you really don’t have—”

“A night, huh? Challenge accepted.”

“Dumbass! It’s not a competition.”

“Says you. Bet I can make you cum more times than I will.”

“That’s not a fair bet. I’ve ingested an aphrodisiac, idiot Moss. You haven’t.”

“Sounds like an excuse to me.”

Sanji narrowed his eyes and just like that Zoro had him.

It didn’t take much for him to get hard again too.

It felt right to let all their secret desires free.

Sanji took his time mapping Zoro’s chest with his mouth, tongue circling his nipples until they were peaked and sensitive. The cook’s clever hands stroked him back to hardness as he sucked and licked, teeth grazing just enough to make Zoro’s breath catch. When Sanji straddled his chest, Zoro pressed his pecs together around the cook’s length, watching through a half-lidded eye as Sanji fucked into the tight channel of muscle. The blond’s head fell back, exposing the long line of his throat as he gasped and moaned, his hands braced on Zoro’s shoulders for leverage. The sight of him uninhibited, taking his pleasure, made a dark sense of possessiveness coil tight in Zoro’s gut. When Sanji came with a broken cry, spilling hot across Zoro’s chest and neck, Zoro caught the back of his head and pulled him down into a bruising kiss, tasting the desperation on his tongue.

Later, when they’d caught their breath, Sanji slid down Zoro’s body with clear intent. He settled between Zoro’s thighs, those long fingers wrapping around the base of his cock as he looked up through golden lashes. The sight of Sanji on his knees for him, blue eyes dark with want, sent a jolt of heat straight through Zoro’s core.

“Want to taste you. Want you to use me,” the blond murmured, his breath ghosting over sensitive skin.

The words hit Zoro like a physical blow. This was Sanji. Proud, sharp-tongued Sanji. Yet, he was offering himself up to him, asking to be used. The trust implicit in that offer made something fierce and protective surge in Zoro's chest even as arousal coiled hot and tight in his belly.

"Yeah? You sure about that, cook?" Zoro asked, his voice rougher than he intended.

Sanji's answer was to lean forward and drag his tongue along Zoro's length, base to tip, maintaining eye contact the whole time. Zoro's breath caught, his hand moving instinctively to thread through sweat-damp blond hair.

When Sanji's lips wrapped around him, the wet heat was overwhelming. The cook took him slowly at first, working his way down inch by inch, his throat relaxing to accommodate Zoro's size. Obscene wet sounds filled the room: the slide of lips, the slick movement of tongue, the small hums of pleasure Sanji made that vibrated against Zoro's cock.

"Fuck, Sanji. That's it. Take more," Zoro breathed, his fingers tightening in golden hair.

Sanji's eyes fluttered but stayed locked on Zoro's face as he sank deeper. His hands came up to brace against Zoro's thighs, fingers digging in as he adjusted to the stretch. Zoro could feel the moment Sanji's throat contracted around him, could see the way his eyes watered slightly, but the cook didn't pull back. Instead, he made a soft, needy sound and pressed forward until his nose was buried in the dark hair at Zoro's base.

"Holy shit," Zoro groaned, his hips jerking involuntarily. Sanji's throat was working around him, swallowing reflexively. The sensation was incredible. All tightness and heat and wetness.

"You're taking it so well. Look at you."

Sanji's cheeks flushed darker at the praise and he pulled back slowly, gasping for air when Zoro's cock slipped from his lips. A string of saliva connected them still and Sanji's lips were already swollen and slick. He looked wrecked and beautiful. The sight made Zoro's cock throb with need.

"Again. This time, I'm going to fuck that pretty mouth of yours," Zoro commanded, his voice low and rough.

Sanji's pupils dilated further as he nodded, opening his mouth in clear invitation. The surrender in that gesture, the complete trust in it, made Zoro's chest ache even as his body burned with want.

He guided Sanji back down onto his cock, slower this time, watching the way those pink lips stretched around him. When Sanji was halfway down, Zoro tightened his grip in his hair and began to move, setting a steady rhythm. He started gentle, letting Sanji adjust, but the cook's hands on his thighs squeezed encouragingly, urging him on.

Zoro increased his pace, pulling Sanji down to meet his upward thrusts. Wet sounds grew louder in the room: the slap of flesh, the gurgle of Sanji's throat as he struggled to take

everything Zoro gave him, the desperate little moans that escaped around Zoro's cock. Saliva dripped down Sanji's chin, tears leaked from the corners of his eyes, but he never pulled away, never signaled for Zoro to stop.

"So good for me. Taking everything I give you. You love this, don't you? Love letting me use you," Zoro murmured, his free hand coming up to cup Sanji's jaw, feeling the bulge of his cock in the cook's throat.

Sanji's answering moan vibrated through Zoro's entire body. The cook's eyes were glazed now, lost in the sensation, in the act of surrender. His cock was hard and leaking between his legs untouched. Zoro realized with a surge of satisfaction that Sanji was getting off on being used, giving Zoro this control, on the trust required to let someone fuck his throat.

Zoro's thrusts became more erratic as pleasure built at the base of his spine. He could feel Sanji struggling now, could hear the wet gagging sounds as he pushed deeper, but the cook's hands never pushed him away. Instead, they gripped tighter, holding on, accepting everything.

"Gonna come. Gonna come down your throat. You want that?" Zoro warned, his voice strained.

Sanji's eyes focused on him, bright and trusting despite the tears. He hummed his agreement. The vibration was Zoro's undoing. He thrust deep one last time, holding Sanji's head in place as he came with a guttural groan. His cock pulsed, spilling hot and thick. He felt Sanji's throat working around him, swallowing convulsively, taking everything Zoro gave him. It seemed to go on forever, wave after wave of pleasure crashing through him while Sanji swallowed and swallowed, his throat contracting rhythmically around Zoro's sensitive cock. When it finally subsided, Zoro loosened his grip, letting Sanji pull back slowly. The cook gasped for air, coughing slightly, his lips red and swollen, his chin wet with saliva and come.

"Fuck. You're incredible, you know that?" Zoro breathed, pulling Sanji up into his arms. The cook came willingly, tucking his face against Zoro's neck.

Sanji made a small, pleased sound, as he trembled in Zoro's arms.

The trust Sanji had to have in him to let Zoro use his mouth, to surrender so completely, made Zoro's chest ache with more than just physical satisfaction. That was intimacy on a level he'd never experienced before. Vulnerability and trust wrapped up in raw desire. It was a heavy weight, but a precious one that he quietly swore to himself that he would never betray.

He held Sanji close, one hand stroking through his hair, the other running soothing circles on his back, feeling the rapid beat of the cook's heart against his chest. This, Zoro realized, was what it meant to have Sanji. Not just his body, but his trust, his surrender, his heart.

The second time, when the initial frenzy had passed and he had more self-control, when he could make it last longer, he gave Sanji what he'd wanted from the beginning. He pressed the cook down into the mattress, the red silk sheets bunching beneath them as he positioned

himself between Sanji's legs. The blond was already trembling, skin flushed pink from chest to cheeks, pupils blown so wide his eyes looked almost black.

"Zoro," Sanji breathed.

The sound of his name in that wrecked voice set off a fire in Zoro's chest.

He pushed in slowly this time, watching Sanji's face as he filled him. The cook's mouth fell open on a silent gasp, back arching off the bed as he adjusted to the stretch. Zoro could feel every flutter and clench around him, could see the way Sanji's thighs trembled where they were hooked over his hips.

"That's it. Take it. Take all of me," Zoro murmured, pressing kisses to Sanji's jaw, his temple, the corner of his mouth.

"*Shit*. Zoro, please," Sanji's voice broke on the plea, his hands scrabbling for purchase on Zoro's shoulders, nails digging in hard enough to leave crescents in his skin.

Zoro set a hard, steady rhythm, angling his hips to hit that spot inside that made Sanji cry out. He brought the cook to the edge again and again, reading every signal of his body: the way his breathing hitched, how his muscles tensed, the desperate little sounds that escaped him.

Sanji was practically sobbing beneath him, arching up restlessly, a litany of broken pleas falling from his lips.

"Please, please, Zoro, I need… I can't…"

"Look at me," Zoro commanded, his voice rough.

Those jewel-bright eyes, pupils all dilated and dark with want, found his immediately. Sanji was completely open to him, vulnerable in a way Zoro had never seen before. He slid one of his hands from Sanji's wrist and lifted it to press against the soft skin of his neck, feeling the frantic pulse drumming against his fingertips. His thumb brushed against a smattering of golden freckles he'd never noticed before. His fingers tested the strength of the delicate bones beneath. Finally, he let his hand rest against Sanji's throat and squeezed, not enough to restrict his airflow completely but enough to assert his claim.

Sanji gasped, his whole body shuddering, then he relaxed into Zoro's hold. His deep blue eyes stayed focused on Zoro's face, open and trusting and accepting, knowing that Zoro wouldn't hurt him, that he'd only give Sanji what he wanted, that he'd make him feel good.

"Yours. I'm yours," Sanji whispered, the words barely audible.

Zoro tightened his grip just slightly and thrust harder, watching the way Sanji's eyes rolled back, the way his mouth fell open on a silent scream.

He wasn't gentle. Sanji didn't want that. He was still careful. He could feel how sensitive Sanji was becoming. By now, every spot that ached and craved and throbbed with pleasure must've been tinged with just as much pain, overstimulation making each touch almost too

much to bear. Still, Sanji wanted Zoro to be forceful, to be overwhelmingly present all around him, to leave reminders on his body that he would wake up to tomorrow.

He released Sanji's throat to brace himself better, then leaned down to set his teeth against the junction of Sanji's neck and shoulder. He bit down hard enough to leave a mark. Sanji keened beneath him, clenching tight around his cock. Zoro soothed the bite with his tongue before moving to leave another mark lower on his collarbone then another on his chest. He mapped Sanji's body with his teeth and lips, leaving a constellation of bruises and bite marks across his shoulders and chest, his neck and wrists. His fingers pressed hard enough into Sanji's hips to leave fingerprint bruises and he knew the force of his thrusts would leave the cook's pelvis aching tomorrow.

Sanji clung to him through it all, shaking and moaning and crying out during Zoro's relentless onslaught. His nails raked down Zoro's back, leaving burning trails in their wake. He pulsed around Zoro periodically when the pleasure crested too high and his orgasm hit him in waves. He pressed his face into the sheets, tears staining the red silk as he begged.

"More, more, please Zoro, more."

Zoro gave it to him, over and over again. He lost count after a while, making their competition moot.

He rolled them over, letting Sanji ride him while he gripped those slim hips and guided his movements. The cook's head fell back, exposing the marks Zoro had left on his throat. The sight made something primal and possessive roar through him. He pulled Sanji down into a kiss, swallowing his moans as he came apart.

Later, he took him from behind, one hand fisted in golden hair as he held Sanji's head back, the other wrapped around Sanji's leaking cock. He could feel the tremors running through the cook's body, could hear the way his voice had gone hoarse from crying out. Sanji's arms gave out and he collapsed forward onto his elbows, ass still raised. Zoro followed him down, covering his back with his chest, surrounding him completely.

"Can't. Zoro, I can't," Sanji gasped, but his body was already tightening, already climbing toward another peak.

"Yes, you can. One more. Give me one more." Zoro murmured against his ear, his voice a low rumble.

When Sanji came this time, it was with a broken sob, his whole body convulsing with the force of it. Zoro held him through it, gentling his thrusts, pressing kisses to his sweat-slick shoulders.

He gave it to him gentle when that was what he needed and hard when he wanted. He used every part of his body to bring him to completion, catching the tears of both pleasure and pain that slipped down Sanji's face periodically. The droplets landed on his fingertips and sat there like diamonds. Each time Sanji shattered, Zoro was there to hold him together, to bring him back down, to coax him toward the next peak.

The room smelled of sex and sweat, the sheets beneath them soaked through. Sanji's skin was flushed and marked, his lips swollen from kisses and biting, his voice wrecked from crying out.

He was the most beautiful thing Zoro had ever seen.

He made Sanji take breaks in between, bringing him water and calling for some snacks from room service.

It was the wee hours of the morning when the Devil Fruit induced desire began to fade to nothing.

He pushed Sanji back against the mattress which was mostly empty now since they'd kicked or flung most of the pillows and blankets away. He moved between his thick-corded tanned thighs, licking and stroking and tasting Sanji. The weight of his full cock on Zoro's tongue was a familiar one by now. Zoro thought his jaw would be hurting if he hadn't trained to fight with a sword in his mouth, but thankfully that made it so he was able to still use his mouth to pleasure Sanji even though he couldn't get hard enough to fuck him anymore. He dipped his head low, the wet patches of hair around Sanji's crotch tickling his nose as he swallowed around the length of him until Sanji arched up against him with a sound that might've been a scream hours earlier.

Zoro could hear the almost noiseless sounds of his sobs as he came again, the cook's body trembling with the intensity of his release. He fell back heavily against the bed, heaving for air, his chest rising and falling rapidly as he tried to catch his breath. Sanji was completely flaccid against his stomach, something Zoro hadn't seen in hours, not since they'd first started this endless cycle of pleasure and exhaustion.

He leaned up towards the cook's face, his movements slow and deliberate despite his own fatigue, pressing his lips to his. The blond mindlessly flinched away from the new sensation at first, his body instinctively recoiling from yet another touch, but his lips returned the kiss that Zoro gave him after a moment. The kiss was soft and gentle, a stark contrast to the intensity of what had just transpired between them. Zoro could taste the salt of tears on Sanji's lips, could feel the way the cook's breath hitched as their mouths moved together.

The swordsman pulled away slowly and ran his lips across Sanji's heated skin, feeling the warmth radiating from his flushed body. He pressed errant kisses into it for a few long minutes, his mouth trailing lazily across Sanji's collarbone and down his chest as he waited to see if Sanji's erection would stir against his leg. When nothing happened, he shifted his approach. He ran his lips up to his ear, breath hot against the sensitive skin there, rubbing his nose gently against Sanji's ear lobe. Earlier in the evening, that simple gesture would've caused him to shiver and gasp, his body responding instantly to the intimate touch. Now, it garnered no reaction whatsoever. Sanji lay still beneath him, his breathing steady but his body unresponsive to the touch that had previously driven him wild.

"Hey Cook, can you hear me?"

There was a pause before Sanji gave a tentative nod.

“You okay?”

Sanji gave another small nod in reply.

“I think… it’s over,” he said in a rough whisper, his voice clearly wrecked.

Zoro was sure his voice was barely any better. Still, it was a relief that he’d finally managed to fulfill the near insatiable desire Aziza’s chocolates on top of Sanji’s altered anatomy had created. Zoro didn’t know who to thank for that. It wasn’t as if he believed in a god or a higher power or a guiding light, certainly not this island’s damn goddess, still he breathed a ’*thank you*’ to the universe.

“M’tired,” Sanji mumbled.

Zoro could relate. There was a bone-deep sort of exhaustion settling over him. A strange mixture of fatigue, pain, fulfillment and rawness ran across his flayed nerve endings, all of which was pushing him towards a long-overdue slumber.

“You can sleep. I’ll still be here. I’ll make sure nothing else happens to you.”

“I know you will,” Sanji muttered before promptly falling asleep.

He didn’t even bother to change positions, remaining crumpled up in a ball in the center of the heart mattress, as if trying to make himself as small and protected as he could.

The night air brushed against Zoro’s skin cooly, feeling colder against his sweaty skin since the two had stopped moving. He reached down and grabbed the closest blanket he could. He hesitated before throwing it over Sanji’s body. He was hesitant to touch Sanji again, wondering if that would still be allowed now that the claws of desire had retracted from the cook’s skin. Sanji wanted him, he knew that much, otherwise he wouldn’t have ever reached completion let alone have cum at all, but this was still Sanji he was talking about. The cook could just as well come up with some excuse to explain all this away and force them to go back to how they were before.

He couldn’t go back to what they were after having a chance to have Sanji this way. Even just a taste had spoiled him for anyone else. He settled the blanket over Sanji’s shoulder and laid down beside him, facing him so he could take in the blond’s features in the moonlight. Sanji’s skin was red and bruised from their passion, his eyelashes clumped together from moisture, dried tear tracks stained his cheeks, crusted blood was beneath his nose, white residue from cum was on his chest and thighs. Zoro thought he was the most beautiful man in the world.

He meant to stay awake, to keep watch over Sanji, to get up and get a washcloth so he could wipe the hygiene obsessed cook clean, but he had no reserves left physically, mentally or emotionally, and so he fell asleep without even knowing it, stretched out on his side and facing Sanji in the wreckage they’d made of the bed.

Zoro didn’t usually wake up early, but something forced his eye open just as the faintest rays of sunlight were peeking through the stained-glass window. He felt as if he had been run over by a sea train and his eye burned with the need to shut again, but he forced them to stay open as he realized that the space beside him was empty.

Sanji was gone.

Zoro stared blankly at the vacant spot.

Sanji had left. Zoro wished he was more surprised by that, but he knew the cook well enough to guess that he had freaked out upon realizing what happened last night and decided to run away before facing Zoro. Not surprised, but perhaps a bit hurt. He would’ve thought Sanji could at least stick around to have a conversation. Zoro sighed and ran a tired hand over his face.

He could only imagine Sanji had gone back to the Sunny. Maybe he was in the galley right now, stress-cooking in order to ignore everything that transpired between them.

Zoro stiffened as another possibility crossed his mind. What if Sanji hadn’t made it to the Sunny? What if he ran into someone that might try and take advantage of the cook in his current state? If Zoro’s body felt as shitty as it did, Sanji’s likely felt even worse. Hell, what if he ran into Aziza? Sanji had claimed that falling underneath the influence of Aziza’s Devil Fruit was an accident but Zoro wasn’t sure about that.

With that thought in mind, he pushed himself up, ignoring all the aches and pains and sore spots that made themselves known as he did. He eased himself out of the bed, ignoring the harsh protest his back gave and started to take a step but encountered an unexpected obstacle.

Sanji was there, sleeping on the floor.

He was laying on top of the large heart shaped rug, wrapped up in a self-contained ball of elegant limbs and fatigue, cocooned inside one of the blankets the two had discarded during their night together. He didn’t have a pillow, just his own hand, blond hair tumbling in all directions and fresher tear-tracks along his visible cheek, water turning his eyelashes dark and pointed. But he was safe and asleep, deeply enough to not have woken up or moved even after nearly being stepped on.

For a moment, Zoro could only stare, his mind struggling to reconcile what he was seeing with what he’d expected. The cook hadn’t left. He was right there, curled into himself on the heart-shaped rug like something wounded, wrapped in one of the blankets they’d discarded hours ago.

He’d tried to leave, but he couldn’t.

Something in Zoro’s chest cracked open at the realization.

Zoro lowered himself to his knees, moving slowly, carefully, as if approaching something wild and skittish. From this angle, he could see Sanji’s face more clearly. Exhaustion was etched into every line, the shadows beneath his eyes were like bruises. Fresh tear tracks cut

through the flush still lingering on his cheeks, crystalline trails that caught the colored light filtering through the stained-glass windows. His eyelashes were dark and clumped together with moisture. Even in sleep, his breathing hitched occasionally, as if his body was still processing everything they'd shared.

He looked devastated. Beautiful and devastated and so vulnerable it made Zoro's throat tight.

Zoro reached out, his hand hovering over Sanji's shoulder, and felt something shift in his chest. This wasn't about desire anymore, wasn't about the heat that had consumed them through the night. This was quieter, something that settled into his bones like an anchor.

He'd known he wanted Sanji. He'd known it for longer than he'd been willing to admit, even to himself. But this? This moment of finding him curled on the floor, too raw to face what they'd done but unable to actually leave? This was when Zoro understood it was more than want. This was the kind of thing you didn't walk away from.

Carefully, so carefully, Zoro reached up and pulled the thin sheet from the bed. He wrapped it around his waist, more for Sanji's comfort than his own modesty, and then lowered himself fully to the floor. The rug was soft beneath him, but he barely noticed. His attention was entirely on the man in front of him, on the rise and fall of his breathing, on the way his fingers clutched the blanket like a lifeline.

He didn't bother hesitating this time and put his arms around Sanji, pulling him close to his chest. Zoro shifted closer, fitting himself against Sanji's curled form. His arm slid around Sanji's waist, drawing him back against his chest. He felt the cook's body instinctively curl tighter into itself before slowly, incrementally, beginning to relax.

The warmth of Sanji's skin seeped into him, chasing away the morning chill. Zoro could feel the steady thump of his heartbeat against his forearm, could feel the slight tremor that still ran through him even in sleep. He tucked his chin over Sanji's head, burying his nose in the mess of golden hair that smelled like sweat and sex and something uniquely, indefinably Sanji.

This close, he could feel the way Sanji's breathing gradually deepened and evened out, the way the tension slowly bled from his shoulders, the way his fingers loosened their death grip on the blanket. Zoro tightened his hold and pressed his lips to the crown of Sanji's head. Not just a kiss but more like a promise.

I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. You don't have to face this alone.

The floor was hard beneath them. The rug provided minimal cushioning. Zoro knew his back would protest even more when he finally got up. but he didn't care. Sanji had tried to leave and couldn't. He had made it to the floor and collapsed there, too overwhelmed to go further but too afraid to come back to bed. So, Zoro would meet him here in this in-between space. He would rather sleep on the floor with Sanji than alone in the bed.

The cook made a small sound in his sleep, a noise caught between a whimper and a sigh, before he burrowed deeper into Zoro's embrace. His hand found Zoro's arm and held on, soft fingers curling around his wrist with surprising strength. Even unconscious, he was seeking reassurance, seeking proof that this was real, that Zoro was really here.

The swordsman closed his eye and let himself feel the weight of this moment: the warmth of Sanji's body against his, the soft sound of his breathing, the way they fit together even here on the floor, even in the wreckage of the night before. The colored light from the windows painted patterns across them both, turning Sanji's hair into spun gold and warming Zoro's skin. He thought about all the years they'd spent circling each other, all the fights and the insults and the careful distance they'd maintained. He thought about the way Sanji smiled at women and fell over himself for them but still opened himself up to Zoro, wanted *him*. He thought about his own gruff deflections, the way he'd convinced himself that wanting was weakness, that caring was a liability.

What a waste. What a stupid, pointless waste.

His arm tightened around Sanji's waist. He felt the cook's breathing hitch and then settle again, deeper and more peaceful. Zoro's own exhaustion was pulling at him, the aftermath of the night and the emotional weight of this moment combining to drag him back towards sleep. He let it come, let his eye drift closed, let himself sink into the warmth and the quiet and the profound rightness of this.

They would have to talk when they woke up and figure out what this meant, where they went from here. Sanji would probably panic again, would try to deflect or joke or push him away. Zoro would have to be patient, would have to prove that this wasn't just about sex or convenience or the lingering effects of Aziza's chocolate.

But that was later. Right now, in this moment, it was enough to hold him, to be the solid presence at his back, the arms that kept him safe, the proof that he didn't have to face the aftermath alone.

Zoro pressed another not-quite-kiss to Sanji's hair and let himself fall back into sleep, his body curved protectively around the cook's, his heart beating steady and sure against Sanji's spine.

I've got you. I've got you, and I'm not letting go.

The next time he woke up, it was due to the feeling of being watched.

It was later in the morning now, closer to a time Zoro was used to waking up. The room was comfortably warm with multicolored sunlight beaming in through the painted windows. The bed was giving them some cover from the light, but Zoro could see how the colors rippled through the shadows on the walls, the tangle of Sanji's hair and the too-blue eyes which were gazing at Zoro, wide with astonishment.

"Morning," Zoro muttered around a yawn, stretching and taking note of all the sore spots that were going to be a pain when he had to train.

Sanji blinked and looked even more astounded, as if he'd been expecting Zoro to disappear.

"You're here."

“So are you. Do you feel as shitty as I do? I’ve had hangovers that felt better than this.”

“I meant on the floor. You slept on the floor.”

“So did you. Why, exactly? And you didn’t answer my first question.”

“I’m better, I think. My body feels like it went ten rounds with Kaido and I have the worst headache I’ve ever had, which is saying something all things considered, but it’s not… *that*. That’s over.”

“Good.”

“Moss… you—”

“Curls,” Zoro interrupted.

He meant to ask again why they were on the floor, if Sanji was hungry or thirsty, if he wanted to take a shower, anything to waylay what Zoro had a sinking feeling was going to be some form of rejection. However, he instead found himself reaching out to touch Sanji’s cheek, his fingers brushing the faded marks of his tears. Sanji swallowed and blinked hard several times but didn’t move away. Zoro let his fingertips drift gently down to his parted lips. Sanji sucked in a short, sharp breath at the caress.

“Curls,” he said again, partly just to feel the way the word formed in his mouth.

He tilted his head in consideration, remembering how the cook reacted to another name that Zoro said while in the throes with him.

“*Sanji*,” he said carefully, reverently, treating the name as if it was something tender, something that could bruise if Zoro didn’t treat it with the utmost delicacy. Sanji himself would hate to be treated that way, but his name, Zoro could afford to be gentle with that.

The blond’s visible eye widened and his breath audibly hitched in reaction, his cheeks subtly painted red with the warmth of blood rushing to his face while his eyes glittered with some unreadable emotion.

Beautiful. He was beautiful. He was beautiful as the graceful, poised man who could move with the agility of a dancer on the battlefield. He was beautiful as the confident, knowledgeable cook he was, gliding across the galley with familiarity as he cooked the best meals for their crew. He was beautiful as a fire ball of indignation and wrath whenever Zoro sufficiently pissed him off. He was beautiful as the insecure mess of anxiety that had returned from Whole Cake Island, unsure of his place on the crew but still trying his best to provide them with what they needed. He was even beautiful as the kind man who would bend over backwards to serve anyone, but especially the ladies. He was beautiful as the disheveled man, still wearing the evidence of their union all over his body with multicolored sunlight spilling over his skin, his hair, his eyes, his cheekbones in such a way that Zoro was captivated. So he couldn’t really be blamed for the words that came out of his mouth.

“Can I kiss you?”

Zoro didn’t do regret, so he didn’t regret the words he’d said. The ball was firmly in Sanji’s court and whatever he decided, Zoro would have to accept. He held his breath in anticipation of Sanji’s reply. The seconds felt like they were stretching into minutes, but in reality, it was likely only about 10 seconds before Sanji gave him a nod.

It wasn’t their first kiss, of course. They had done plenty of that last night and much more, exploring each other with a desperate hunger that had been building for months, maybe even years. But somehow, in the soft morning light filtering through the window, it still felt like the first. It felt like dawn and sunrise and the beginning of something precious and new, something that could change everything between them.

He could feel Sanji shivering against his lips, trembling like a leaf in the wind, his slender fingers coming up to Zoro’s broad shoulders and holding him close, clinging to him as if he were afraid Zoro might disappear if he let go. This time, Sanji tasted a little like salt from all the tears he’d shed earlier when he’d finally let down all his walls and allowed himself to be vulnerable. Zoro tried to sweep all that sadness away with his tongue, gently and deliberately, replacing the bitter taste of sorrow with something sweeter, something warmer: with tenderness, with devotion, with love.

“Your love is secrecy, secluding the depths of your passion away from the one who you are too afraid to give your heart to, all the while knowing you’ll never love anyone the way you do him,” Aziza had said to him.

Zoro hadn’t wanted to receive her words with anything but ill-intentions before, and he still wasn’t sure about her even now, but he couldn’t deny her words were true. Except, he didn’t want to hide it anymore. He loved Sanji and Sanji at the very least wanted him. Maybe one day he could love him too.

He poured as much of himself into the kiss as he could, pressing his hopes and love and desperate longing into the softness of Sanji’s lips, trying to convey everything he’d been holding back for so long. His calloused fingers tangled in golden hair as he deepened the kiss, pouring years of unspoken feelings into this single moment. Finally, reluctantly, he let the curly-browed man breathe, though he kept him close. When Zoro pulled back slightly to look at Sanji, searching those blue eyes for any sign of reciprocation or rejection, the blond had a completely poleaxed expression on his face. His mouth was slightly parted, his eyes wide and unfocused, his cheeks flushed pink. It was as if Sanji’s usually quick mind had short-circuited entirely, leaving him stunned and speechless for perhaps the first time in his life.

“Zoro…” he trailed off, a million and one thoughts and emotions flickering over his face.

“Why are we on the floor?” Zoro asked.

Sanji blinked at the question before blushing.

“Ah… I… I thought you wouldn’t want… I didn’t think you’d want me there with you when you woke up.”

Zoro furrowed his brows at that.

“Why would you think that?”

“Because I… last night was… I don’t know. I woke up and you were still asleep and you looked…”

Sanji bit his lip, clearly not wanting to speak anymore. Zoro captured his chin between his fingers and held him firmly in place so their eyes were meeting.

“What did I look like, Curly?”

“Tired, worn out, exhausted… content, relaxed… beautiful.”

Sanji was trembling slightly as he said the words, his eyes welling up slightly.

“But I didn’t think that you would want me to… What you did— you didn’t have to do that for me. And what it means is more than just— You don’t know what it really means, you can’t understand it.”

“I’m not following here, Cook. I’m pretty sure I said I wanted you last night, I know exactly what this means.”

Sanji shook his head, guilt filtering into his eyes.

“I didn’t tell the whole truth last night. The chocolates, to make them work the way they were intended, it’s not just that the people have to want each other, they have to… they have to… *love* each other. They have to be *in love* with each other.”

Zoro stared back for a moment before shrugging.

“Okay.”

“Okay? What do you mean—”

“I love you, Sanji.”

Sanji stopped up momentarily at that, a slightly dazed expression on his face.

“You do. I know you do. I know now, because the chocolates worked. And I love you, in case that wasn’t obvious otherwise, again, it wouldn’t have worked. But that’s why I’m on the floor. Because I do love you. I knew I loved you even before this. And this wasn’t how I wanted this to happen. I didn’t give you a choice, I guilted you into… And I was—”

Sanji swallowed thickly and tried to look away but Zoro’s fingers on his chin wouldn’t let him. The cook tried to fight the hold anyway and glared at the swordsman when he wouldn’t relent before he eventually gave up.

“Some part of me wanted that with you, even knowing it wasn’t real or natural. Then, I woke up and you were there and I was still reaching out to you, taking comfort from you. I couldn’t stay, I couldn’t ask for anything from you, but I couldn’t just leave either.”

“So you thought the floor and this stupid rug would be a good idea?”

“Well, I was also tired and sore. I couldn’t get very far. Couldn’t even make it to the bathroom to clean up.”

Zoro smirked a little at that, earning himself a kick to the shin.

“Don’t look so smug about it, bastard.”

“Why not? And I’m pretty sure I won the bet.”

“Bullshit. There’s no way you were keeping count.”

“Didn’t have to. You lasted longer than me.”

Sanji rolled his eyes in return.

“Anyway, you’re a dumbass, Cook.”

Sanji spluttered at that, but Zoro shut him up with a quick kiss.

“You don’t have to apologize for anything. I wanted it. You gave me a chance to leave and I didn’t want to go. You didn’t guilt me into shit. Do you feel like I guilted or pressured you?”

“No! No, I… I wanted it too. I wanted it to be with you.”

“Then I don’t see the issue. I love you and you needed help, so I helped you. Besides, I wasn’t about to let you go out there for just anyone to have you.”

“Oi, I’m not some bloody object, Mosshead. I’m not yours.”

“Aren’t you? Because I want you to be and I want to be yours.”

Sanji spluttered again, blushing bright red.

“You always say the first thing that comes to your head. A little tact would do you some good, you know.”

Zoro shrugged in reply.

“I don’t care about all that. If I mean something, I say it. You want me and I want you. You love me and I love you. It seems pretty simple to me.”

“Moss, you— are you sure? I’m not… easy.”

“Cook, I’ve known you long enough to know that you’re a bitchy prissy asshole who’ll kick someone upside the head before you ask for help and try to give your life up needlessly before thinking to let the crew have your back. I also know you’re one of the kindest people I’ve ever met, even if you try to hide it. I know you care more about our crew than you let on. I know you’d support and defend all our dreams to the very bitter end. I know you have just

as much faith in our captain as I do. I know you have my back. That's enough for me. If I wanted easy, I wouldn't have fallen for you. I want you, including all the complicated bits."

The warmth of that truth spread out around them. Sanji paused, staring at him for a moment before he let out a long breath. He took a moment and then nodded his head resolutely.

"Okay. I— I want you too. I love you too. And we can… we can do this together, even if it's not easy."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Sanji replied, a soft look on his face.

Zoro leaned forward and pulled Sanji into a deep kiss in reply, committing the taste of the cook to memory even though he hoped he'd get to taste him many more times after this.

It was midday by the time Sanji and Zoro were able to drag themselves away from the motel and into the streets of the island, which was apparently called Amora, named for another love goddess this island worshiped as well as the abundance of mulberries. Zoro had looked at him blankly when Sanji mentioned it, which opened up a long-winded rant about the berries from the cook. Zoro was content to listen as the two walked down the street hand in hand.

Zoro felt an overwhelming sense of rightness and calm from being able to do this openly. He could hold Sanji's hand, he could watch him unabashedly, enjoying the moments when Sanji opened up like a flower and let himself be himself without reservation.

"Mulberries were actually considered invasive species back East, but they made for some great desserts and glazes on the Baratie when— what?"

"Huh?"

"You're staring at me."

Zoro shrugged in reply.

"Just enjoying the view s'all. You're real pretty when you get like this, Cook."

Sanji blushed slightly.

"Get like what?"

"Relaxed, not worrying about holding yourself a certain way or thinking about what other people think of you. Don't get to see this side of you often. It's pretty."

Sanji blushed deeper.

"Stupid, shitty romantic Mosshead," he muttered under his breath, but he stepped closer to Zoro, tightening his grip on his arm as they continued walking through the streets.

Zoro could see the evidence of the feast in the debris and plates which were being cleaned up by the locals as well as the carcasses of balloons and fallen petals everywhere. Zoro was almost surprised the destruction was so tame knowing his crew. At least this island didn't have a despot that had ended up angering Luffy enough for him to overthrow their government. Zoro and Sanji would be at his side of course, but Zoro still felt like he needed five more naps before he was at 100% again.

"Ah, there you are," a voice said, cutting through the midday haze.

The two men turned to see Suki and Aziza approaching them.

"Mr. Chef, I was so worried for you last night. You disappeared before I could alert your crew to bring you back to your ship," Suki said by way of greeting.

"Yes, I'm sorry for that. I might've panicked a bit and thought it best to be alone," Sanji replied.

It was more likely Sanji was doing his suffer-in-silence bit.

"I see you're not alone now and that congratulations may be in order," Aziza said, her eyes dancing with a strange light as she stared at their conjoined hands.

"Oh, yes. Well… Mosshead found me and helped me," Sanji replied, his face bright red.

"You owe me 2000 berries, witch. That's how much I had to pay for a room last night on account of your boner chocolates. Could've spent that on booze and fucked the cook on our ship for free."

Aziza let out a light laugh as Sanji made a strangled noise of indignation.

"Don't say such things in front of these ladies!"

"Would you and Mr. Chef have ever gotten to a place where you would consummate your mutual feelings without a push in the right direction?"

"I knew it. You made him eat those chocolates on purpose."

"I make no one do anything. I did, however, note Mr. Chef's curiosity about my favors and chose not to step in. It seems I made the right choice."

Suki knocked her shoulder into Aziza's, a slight look of admonishment on her face.

"No meddling, you promised."

"I didn't meddle. I did the opposite of meddling. I chose to do nothing. They don't seem unhappy about it."

Suki rolled her eyes in reply.

“Please forgive her, Mr. Chef. She told me about how deeply she perceived the love between you and Mr. Swordsman and she couldn’t help herself but want it to be revealed.”

“I could never be angry at such a gorgeous soul as you,” Sanji simped.

Zoro rolled his eye in response.

“I don’t care what the perv cook says, lady. From now on, keep your boner chocolates and your thoughts about our relationship to yourself.”

“Mosshead, don’t be so rude!” Sanji chastised but Aziza chuckled good-naturedly and raised her hands in surrender.

“Fair enough. However, please accept these at least.”

Aziza pulled two of the leis Zoro recognized from seeing couples around town out of her bag.

“Couples wear matching leis during the festival to symbolize their union. I made this last night. The flowers represent enduring love, new beginnings, strength and fidelity. I thought they’d suit you.”

Zoro looked at the lei, a mixture of blue, green, yellow and white flowers he didn’t know the names of.

Zoro and Sanji hadn’t labeled what they were, though they both wanted to try and see if they could work. Zoro didn’t really care what they called each other as long as Sanji was his. He glanced at the blond who was staring at the leis with a contemplative look before looking over at Zoro. The greenhead raised an eyebrow at him inquiringly. Sanji stared searchingly before he reached out and took the leis from Aziza. He slipped one over his head before following up with doing the same to Zoro. Zoro didn’t care much about flowers, but the lei arrangement brought out the color in Sanji’s eyes so much that Zoro found himself staring again.

“What?” Sanji snapped in irritation that was most likely masking trepidation.

It struck Zoro that Sanji might think his reaction was because he put the leis on them. Zoro figured he’d better rectify that.

He reached up and tapped a finger beneath Sanji’s visible eye.

“Pretty,” he said shortly.

Sanji blushed an impressive shade of red. It almost made up for all the color-fatigue this island had given him.

“You’re so embarrassing!” Sanji exclaimed, wriggling around with steam practically coming out of his ears.

He didn’t look like he was sure whether to be angry or endeared. He was likely both.

Zoro decided to go for broke. He grabbed the cook around the waist and pulled him flush to Zoro's chest before planting a deep kiss to his lips. Sanji made a protesting sound against his lips, but his hands grabbed his shoulders and pulled him closer, returning the kiss.

Sanji's face had softened by the time Zoro pulled back.

"Asshole," the blond murmured against his lips.

"You like it," Zoro replied.

Sanji bit his lip in admonishment but didn't deny Zoro's words either. He shoved the swordsman back, dramatically fixing his clothes and smoothing down his hair.

"I apologize that you ladies had to see such a boorish display."

"I hardly need your apologies, Mr. Chef. That feeling in your chest, the feeling of freedom, of being more alive than ever, of all your shadows receding to the corners of your mind? That's all I've wanted you to experience since the moment I first read your heart. It's why I latched onto you upon first meeting you. I'm glad I was able to see what your heart looks like when it is unrestrained. Your swordsman is correct. It is a beautiful sight."

Sanji stared at the woman, wide-eyed and bewildered.

Suki shook her head fondly before taking Aziza's hand.

"Please, enjoy our island for as long as you're here and our festival. Again, I do apologize for any meddling, but my dear fiancée has a one-track mind about these things. Sometimes she forgets that, Devil Fruit or not, she's not actually a goddess."

"But that's what you're here to remind me of."

"As often as I need to," Suki said, her words more of a promise as she pressed her lips to the darker skinned woman's.

Aziza ran her fingers through Suki's red curls lovingly before turning back to the men.

"We will leave you alone now. But if you do find it in yourselves to forgive me, be sure to say goodbye before you leave."

Both Aziza and Suki waved at them before walking off, hand in hand. Zoro watched them go before approaching Sanji, wrapping an arm around his waist from behind.

"You okay?"

Sanji drew in a deep breath and blew it out slowly.

"You know what? Yes. Yes, I am. I am hungry though and you've yet to take me out on a date, Mosshead."

"Huh? Me?"

“Yeah, you. You don’t get to start acting like you actually have a modicum of romance floating around in that empty head of yours and not expect me to cash in on that.”

Sanji raised a challenging brow at him and Zoro found himself smiling a little at the familiar thrill of competition now mixed in with a fondness he got to be open about, a love he got to actively share with Sanji.

He still thought this whole island was a stupid eyesore, but he found himself thanking his lucky stars that he ended up here, looking forward to a future where he had the cook at his side.

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