

Fire and Flame

It's warm. I don't like it. It's hot. I hate it. Is it happening again? Please no. Not again, not again! Why was I here again? Where was I again? I hate this, I hate this, I hate this, let me leave, let me leave, no, no, no, no, no, no~

-Are you okay, sir?

I look up at that sweet voice, as gentle as a calming breeze, and instantly get mesmerized by the face I see. Long red hair as soft as cotton, shining black eyes as beautiful as a starry night, and a look asuring and cute that I might die.

-Again... Are you okay sir?

-Ah! Y-Yes! O-Of course! I'm fine! I'm fine...

As the woman worries for me once again, I stutter out a quick response, not wanting to see any distress on her face.

-I don't believe you, here.

-Er?

As I look at her confused, she places some warm baked goods in front of me, as well as sitting down slowly across from me. I take a look at what she's wearing, and realize she works at the bakery. Ah, right, I was in a bakery.

-Um... Is it okay for you to sit here? Don't you have to work?

-It's fine, the place is quite empty today, I can afford taking care of such a handsome customer.

She winks at me, making my heart skip a few beats.

-So... What is it that troubles you, sir? I'm going to assume the blush on your face is a different matter entirely though...

As she continues teasing me shamelessly, I try my best to compose myself and speak properly.

-I... It's just that this place feels a bit too hot for me...

-Too hot? Really? I've never heard that complaint before...

-It's a personal thing, don't worry about it..

I look away with guilt all over my face, I can't possibly worry this kind woman so much.

-Hey. Look at me.

I stare up at her and immediately stumble back in surprise, her face suddenly being right next to mine, as she stood up and walked over to me, she then asks...

-Could you come with me for some time?

-I...

I doubt myself for a second, but after being charmed by her gorgeous face and curving smile once again, I say...

-Sure, I'll go with you.

-Great! Just follow me!

Afterwards, she takes me behind the counter, in the kitchen where all the goods are made, which makes me comment...

-This place has such a cozy vibe...

-Oh really? This place is very much hotter than where you were before, you know?

- Ah...  
I let out a quiet gasp at the realization, the kitchen is in fact hotter, I can even see fire over there,  
so why do I feel fine?  
- This doesn't make any sense... That time... It ruined my life... So why do I feel okay right now?  
- Well, I won't pry, but you've been through stuff in the past, right?  
The woman nods, making me stop questioning myself too much and staring at her directly.  
- Yeah... I have...  
- But despite that trauma, you feel way better here than other places, am I right?  
- That's true...  
After confirming what I feel, she looks at me tenderly and takes my hands in hers.  
- Listen... The reason I opened up this bakery was not only for the money, it was most importantly  
to see the smiles on the faces of my customers every day.  
She explains, closing her eyes and reminiscing about her dreams, and when she opens them, she  
looks directly at me with a determined smile.  
- So when I noticed that such a good looking customer was looking distressed, I couldn't help  
but intervene, you know?  
- Ah... I'm sorry -  
- Don't. Don't apologize.  
She places a finger on my mouth to silence me and continues speaking.  
- I know that you've likely been through a lot, but despite that, I can't help but want to  
see you smile.  
She then points to the entire bakery, wanting me to feel welcome.  
- So please, I don't care how long it takes, I want you to get used to here, to feel relaxed and peaceful instead of suffering, I want  
you to fall in love with this place, maybe even more. It would be a win for both of us in the end.  
After that confession, I remain speechless, too stunned to speak, making her add one last comment...  
- Besides... Wouldn't you love spending time with a woman as beautiful as me?  
As she shamelessly flirts with me, a single thought fills my brain  
I want to feel what I'm currently feeling for the rest of my life.  
With that in mind, I obviously respond...  
- Yeah, I would love to.  
- Now that's what I like to hear!  
Years ago, when I was little, my old house burned down, taking my parents along with it. That event  
left me traumatized, anytime I felt even slightly hot, it just reminded me of that horrible time  
in my life, when I was left all alone.  
But now, looking at this gorgeous woman with her hopes and dreams, I feel like I can get part all of that.  
As the fire that once terrified me begins to extinguish, a new flame, beautiful and determined,  
brightens my life anew.