

Mistletoe Troubles in the Crossroads

by zacknapattack

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Twas the night before Christmas, and snow was abound. The Crossroads were bustling, the streets all filled with sound. People played and they sang, and ran round with arms full of boxes. And as they all did so, they had to avoid tripping on foxes.

The source of those foxes, the God Eater herself, was currently getting dressed to celebrate the holidays in her favorite place, the Fox Den beneath her. Saki was dressed with a simple elf hat on top of her usual uniform, to avoid getting in the way of her work. The regulars had already filled the night with festive cheer, faces red from more than just the cold as two figures sat at the bottom of the stairs to the VIP lounge, waiting for the local goddess to descend.

One was a gentleman, dressed in his usual attire, but with his normal hat replaced with a Santa cap, and a sprig of holly in his breast pocket. The other was a woman dressed up very festively, with a very low cut red dress with fluff trim on the top and bottom edges. She also wore some thigh high socks and red heels that elevated her to be the taller of the pair as she looked down at him smugly. His own expression was rather smug as well, both competing with each other silently as they waited.

Above the pair's head was a sprig of mistletoe hanging on high as the two waited patiently. Saki walked over, cleaning a glass as she addressed them. "So, what are you two doing taking up random floor space in my bar?"

"Well, Spiritsmaster, I am currently taking occupancy of this space in anticipation for the arrival of the God Eater upon our mortal presences. There are a few certain subjects I wish to discuss with her, but she only seems to partake in my company if it will amuse her, so I thought this particular festive tradition should prove to be a satisfactory implementation to achieve such a condition."

Forte explained in his usual manner, gesturing to the mistletoe.

"I'm waiting for Chifu to get her foxy ass down here so I can kiss her." Michiko explained more simply, also gesturing at the mistletoe.

Saki looked between the two of them, then looked at the mistletoe, then back at them. "If you two are following the tradition, shouldn't you give each other a kiss first before she gets here?"

"And to whom do you presume me to grant an embarrasser upon? There is none besides me to bestow it upon."

"What are you talking about? I'm the only one under this thing."

"Forget I ask." Saki said, exasperated. She then leaned forward and gave them pecks on the cheek. "I don't do kisses on the lips. That costs extra. You two have fun I guess, whatever that means to the both of you."

Saki went to walk away, when the sound of uneven footsteps began to approach the top of the stairs. Soon, the stumbling Chifu revealed herself in all of her Christmas glory. She wore a short yellow dress under a black corset vest with loose straps on the front, the whole piece appearing as if she was going to spill out of it at any moment. She also wore a pair of thigh high socks, puffy sleeves, and a pair of decorative reindeer antlers on top of her head.

As she got to the top of the stairs, her face flushed with alcohol, she gave a cheery, "Happy New Year everyone!~" She took a step on the first step, before going off balance and stumbling down the stairs at a rapid pace. Forte managed to move forward first, catching her in his arms. As Michiko pouted at his heroic rescue, Chifu wrapped her arms around Forte's neck and smashed her lips against his.

Forte certainly seemed surprised as the sensations from her flooded his senses, the sloppy kiss of a drunk filling his mouth with the taste of eggnog and alcohol as she pressed against him. After a few

moments of the kiss, she eventually pulled away from the writer, whose glasses were now skewed. Chifu then stumbled into Michiko, giving her a similar drunken kiss for just as long.

Once the two travelers had received their kisses, she then turned her drunken attention towards Saki, pushing Michiko away to head towards the oni. "Happy Hanukkah, Saki!~" She tried to kiss Saki on the lips like the other two, but the bartender managed to turn her head away to receive a kiss on the cheek instead, sending Chifu into a giggle fit.

"Alright Chifu, you promised to go see Miss X's concert in front of the Cross Colosseum, so you better get going." Saki carried the drunken goddess towards the door, before nearly shoving her out of the bar. "And be careful of ice!"

"Thanks Saki~" Chifu cheered, running off on steady legs as if her previous drunken state didn't exist. Forte just watched her leave with an exasperated expression at the goddess antics, while Michiko began to protest and chase after the goddess. Her progress was impeded by a crowd of people pushing into the bar led by Armus and Pembroke for holiday drinks with a loud cheer. The assassin gave a roar of anger that was drowned out by the holiday songs as her quarry escaped once more.

But those two weren't the only ones that were having trouble with mistletoes and their intended targets for kissing under it. Across the Crossroads, past the now bustling concert in front of the Colosseum as Miss X did a pop idol rendition of "All I Want for Christmas is You," Senko was looking rather panicky.

After all, she now found herself under a sprig of mistletoe on the streets of the Crossroads in a big puffy coat with fur on the hood, with two pairs of gleaming eyes staring at her. One was Raku, who had been walking with Aanir as both were wearing matching coats, and the other was Inari, who had been walking with Taleus in both of their usual attire besides Santa hats on their heads, both having frozen mid stride/float as they noticed this little scenario. She wished she could just Blink away and make her escape, but their gazes held her in place as they processed what it meant.

Then, in a burst of motion and flying snow, both women came charging towards Senko as fast as possible. They started shoving each other as they closed in on the poor girl who just shook in her place.

“Back off dragon face! I saw her first!”

“Doesn’t matter if I get there first!”

“In your dreams!”

“About to be your reality!”

Nearby, Aude and Armel looked over after having their own quick kiss after Gensai had pointed out to them they were under it, the fox girl and ghost shaking their heads at their rambunctious friends charging towards the poor wallflower who quivered like a deer in the headlights.

Eventually, the two girls had reached Senko at the same time, each one planting a kiss on either cheek of the mummy girl, looking smugly at the other at their perceived victory. But before they could open their mouths to brag and eventually argue over who got the kiss first, they noticed that their lips had frozen to the swordswoman’s skin as her freezing touch kicked in. As Senko realized this, she panicked further, causing the freezing touch to spread even faster as Raku and Inari’s cheeks were beginning to cover in ice next. Combined with the already cold and snowy day, both the dragon and the ghost were already set to shivering as they immediately began to hurtle towards hypothermia.

Aude, Armel, and Aanir all immediately launched into a panicked rescue mode, while Taleus just stared at everything in open confusion. Aude quickly came up with an idea after rushing forward and holding her head in panic, running down one street shouting “Find Wendy! Find Wendy!”

The four quickly spread out to begin looking for the mage, who was currently enjoying sledding on the hills to the north with Taketor, Jackie, and Valentine. As the search party spread out from the streets below, on the rooftops above were a pair of figures that were getting up to their own trouble.

Dressed in costumes were Ad and Teekee. Ad was dressed in a reindeer outfit, complete with horns as he was “holding” up Teekee (who in reality, was just walking in a way Ad wouldn’t notice to let Ad think he was carrying him), who was dressed in a simple Santa outfit complete with a thick white beard hanging from his lava-like goop.

“So remind me again of what we’re doing?” Teekee asked, fixing up his costume as he questioned his ward for what might’ve been the third time in the last hour and a half.

“Well, you know how normally people don’t let you climb down their chimney?” Ad asked, looking back at Teekee. “Well, apparently every year on this day, some big guy with a red outfit and a white beard goes around and goes down people’s chimneys to give them presents. So, if we dress up like that guy, then people should let us finally climb down their chimneys and see what’s in them.” He stepped on something weird, looking down at it. “Oh, sorry Piano! Coming though!”

Piano squeaked as Ad jumped past her still in her usual outfit, the girl hiding from people going around trying to kiss her under the mistletoe. Ad finally reached a house with a chimney, “setting down” Teekee as he dusted off his hands. “And there we are! Your reindeer has delivered you to a house! So, let’s go down!”

“I’m not sure this is a good idea, Ad...” Teekee said with some concern. “What if somebody lights a fire in their chimney while you’re climbing down? What will we do then?”

“It’ll be fine.” Ad said dismissively. “People would already have their fires lit if they were going to do it, so we have nothing to worry about. Now, let’s get going!”

With little preamble, Ad suddenly climbed up onto the chimney and stuck himself into the exit hole headfirst, his legs kicking out as he began to scrabble down as Teekee held out his hand in worry. But Ad seemed fine for the moment, already making his way a couple feet down after a bit of effort.

Seeing Ad’s success, Teekee decided that things were fine and wanted to try it out for himself. Looking over at the next house with a chimney, quickly making his way over to it with a few bounding, stretching steps. Reaching it, he took advantage of his goopy body to begin to squeeze

himself down that chimney much faster than Ad's solid body could climb down.

After a few seconds of oozing his way down, Teekee reached the bottom of the chimney and into the fireplace... where Beston looked at him with some confusion and annoyance, his Santa hat flopping to one side as the gunslinger worked his jaw.

The two stared at each other for a few moments, the tortoise man holding a box of matches as he had prepared to light his fireplace to warm himself up. The stack of logs that were carefully arranged were now a scattered mess thanks to Teekee's descent, lying on the carpeted floor around Beston as the gunman clicked his tongue. He then casually set the box down, setting his arm on his knee as he looked down at Teekee. "So boy, care to explain what you're doing here in my fireplace?"

"Well, I'm Santa!" Teekee tried to lamely explain, pointing at his beard. "And I'm here to go down your chimney!"

"Are you now, pardner?" Beston asked, sounding amused at first. "Then I take it you got a load of presents to deliver to a good guy like me, don'tcha?"

"Oh, right... that..." Teekee looked sheepish. "No, I don't really have anything like that."

"Is that so? What a shame." Beston shook his head. "If that's the case, I'm going need you to leave my fireplace... now."

Several guns materialized behind Beston, all of them pointed directly at Teekee's face as the gunslinger drew his physical gun. "I'll give you to the count of ten. After that, I make no promises as to your safety."

"Wait, Beston, we can talk about-"

"Ten. Nine. Eight..."

Teekee immediately began to scramble back up the chimney, though not quickly enough for Beston's tastes as the sounds of gunshots rang out up the chimney after Teekee. Teekee just managed to escape as bullets whizzed into the air. More bullets snaked out of the chimney after the golem as Teekee tried to escape into the snow.

Back in the chimney Ad climbed down, Piano looked down from the entrance as she looked at the boy. Ad was now stuck halfway down, his arms pinned to his side as he tried to wriggle his way out. "Hey, Piano! I'm stuck! Can you get Teekee to get me out of here?"

"Um... well, it looks like Teekee's getting run off by bullets from the other building. I don't think he'll be able to help you..." Piano sounded rather apologetic, glancing at the fleeing golem before looking back to his ward.

"What! Ah man, that sucks!" Ad complained. "How am I going to get out now? Am I going to be stuck here forever?"

"Well, I could go look for the Madame Chief. Her spatial magic should be able to get you out..." Piano suggested, glancing towards the concert at the center of the Crossroads.

"That's a great idea! Hurry up and get her before I-" Ad suddenly began to cough down below, causing Piano to panic slightly. "Ah man, I just swallowed some black powder! What is this stuff?"

"That's soot! Don't eat that, it's bad for you!"

"Well I can't do anything about that! Hurry up and get Chifu!"

Piano quickly took off, opening up her senses to find Chifu as she parkoured above the streets of the Crossroads. But it would take her a while to actually find Chifu, because she hadn't gone towards the concert.

Instead, she had gone towards the outskirts of town, where Muhamora was sat by herself, her mushroom “hat” protecting the rest of her body from the snow as she sat on an overlook of the city with a wistful look on her face as she almost seemed to watch everyone going about their business with a forlorn expression on her face.

“You’re looking pretty down, Muha~” Chifu’s chipper voice came out of seemingly nowhere, as she sat down next to Muhamora. “Maybe I can help you out~”

“Oh, hey Chifu.” Muha said, trying to muster up a happy look for the goddess but only half succeeding as she managed a glum smile. “Just enjoying the Christmas air.”

“From all the way out here?~ Seems pretty lonely to me~” Chifu teased, tilting her head at Muhamora.

“You know I can’t be down there with everyone else because of my... condition.” Muhamora looked down at her hands, as if imagining what they could do to people if they touched anyone in the Crossroads.

“Right, I suppose that is a problem~ You can’t exactly touch anyone with your condition, even with Raku’s gloves to help~ Nor can you kiss under the mistletoe~ Like~ This~” Chifu held up a mistletoe, before kissing Muhamora on the lips.

The mushroom woman immediately went into a panic, worried about Chifu’s health as the drunkard pulled away from the kiss after a bit. “What are you, crazy? Just because you’re a goddess doesn’t mean that isn’t dangerous!”

“You’re right, it would be~” Chifu teased. “If I didn’t grant you a tiny little wish~”

“What?” Muhamora sat back for a second.

“Don’t tell anyone about this~ If people found out I gave out this little wish, everyone will be bugging me about wishes for the rest of my immortal existence and I don’t want that~”

“But what did you do? I don’t feel any different.” Muhamora looked down at her body, looking for any difference.

“Well, I made it that for today only, nobody you kiss under the mistletoe will be affected by your poison~ And with this~” Chifu reached up and attached the sprig onto Muha’s hat. “And with how tall you are, just be sure not to try and kiss Saki and Yama and we’ll be fine~”

“I-I-I” Muhamora seemed lost for words, looking at Chifu with some reverence.

“Well, what are you waiting for?~” Chifu teased, holding her legs close to her body. “Raku should still be near the center of town still~ I’m sure she’d be happy to be your second official kiss of your life~ And then you can make your way around making up for a lifetime of missing out on such a treat, shouldn’t you?~”

Muhamora looked at Chifu for a bit longer, before taking off in a sprint, lifting up her red Christmas dress to better run as she made her way back into the throng of people. As Chifu watched the poison provisioner disappear into the Crossroads, she shifted into her God Eater persona as she watched over her town.

All throughout the town, people were meeting up and exchanging gifts and kisses under the mistletoe as a jolly mood infects the townsfolk. Quan sneaks around tying mistletoe onto the horns of Senko and Piano, causing them to panic. Angelique is dragged towards a set of sleds by Viola and Volley. And Delivery Girl was going around, handing out presents to the various contestants.

As Miss X’s concert comes to a close, a firework show goes off as the last notes of her pop version of “Silent Night” echoed over the whole of the Crossroads. Madame Chief smiled at all the sights and sounds, smoke coming out of her pipe as she felt content at the domain she had dominion over

as it celebrated Christmas in the best ways possible.

“My, what a lovely Christmas we’re having this year~ I hope that the next year will be just as exciting for me and for everyone else~ Have a Merry Christmas, dear travellers, and I hope you’ll all be entertaining wherever you go~”

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