

# [Forte's Epilogue]

## ChifuxForte Date Night

Original Doc

“You’re in a really good mood today, Mom!”

Miss X was up in the God Eater’s penthouse suite at the top of the Fox’s Den. The goddess was currently in her Chifu “disguise,” sitting in front of a large mirror and working through her hair with a brush as she hummed happily. Miss X could practically feel the invisible tails swaying happily behind her mother.

“You think so?~” the goddess asked, practically wiggling in her cushioned seat as she faced her daughter to beam at her. “Well, I guess that isn’t much of a surprise~ After all, I’m going on a date tonight~”

“You are?!” Miss X jumped up off the counter of the makeup table as she looked at her mom with excitement. “Am I finally getting a dad or another mom?”

Chifu looked asconced at the implication of Miss X’s statement, before better thinking on it and mentally being forced to concede her daughter has a point. “A dad, if I’m lucky~ Forte’s taking me out to dinner~”

Miss X’s excitement waned slightly, looking at her mom with some confusion. “Forte? You don’t mean Piano’s brother, do you?”

“The same one~” Chifu replied, grabbing her rouge and beginning to apply it to her face to add a bit of blush to her cheeks. Soon she had her usual blush on her face, with not nearly the amount of alcohol in her that normally resulted in it.

“But isn’t he the one that’s been going around on dates with a bunch of other people to interview him for his book? I think he spent some time with every mayor of the town, as well as several other women. He even spent an entire night at the Faux High Inn!”

“And?~ There’s nothing wrong with him getting a feel for the local people before going for the biggest prize herself~” Chifu set down her makeup and looked at her top, adjusting the chest to make sure it didn’t slip. She then reconsidered it and brought it lower, so it’d be more likely to have an “accident” during the dinner.

“And he’s been asking everyone weird questions during it, things I don’t think are appropriate to ask! And he always asks for their names afterwards and- “

Chifu reached a hand forward to put a finger “over” her daughter’s mouth. “Shhhh, it’s ok~ I know what I’m doing~ I’ve talked with him before in the bar~ He’s very handsome and I like the way he talks~ And I know what he really wants~”

“You do?” Miss X looked surprised, ignoring the finger over her mouth. “How do you know?”

“Well~” Chifu drew out with a smirk, standing up to get a look at her full body in a mirror. “Forte certainly likes to act cool and in control and totally mysterious - which is hot, by the way~ But when he doesn’t get what he really wants, he gets adorably angry~”

Miss X’s face lit up, smiling as she caught on to Chifu’s plot. “And you got him mad at you?”

“Very mad~ And he seems like the type of guy that doesn’t give up when he doesn’t get what he wants right away~ So if I play my cards right, I should be able to get what I want without giving up all the goods~”

“That’s very sneaky of you mom~ Well, go out there and get me a dad then!”

“Will do~” Chifu made her way over to the elevator door with a sultry sway to her step, the bells in her heels ringing with each step. Bidding her daughter farewell with a wave that was eagerly responded to, the doors closed over the goddess’ form with another ringing of bells to tell that she was descending down to the bar.

Miss X waved for a few seconds even after her mom couldn’t see her anymore before giving a satisfied sigh, happy that she might be getting a dad soon, even if it was Forte. But then she thought about some of her mother’s words near the end and a frown came over her face. “Give up the goods? What did she mean by that?”

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Forte waited outside of the Fox’s Den alone, wearing a rather striking white suit with a red vest instead of his usual darker attire. He decided a decent contrast in colors, while still sharing some color overlap would make for a more striking statement. If it just so happened that those colors matched the God Eater’s true colors, then as far as Forte was concerned, that was just a fortunate coincidence~

As Chifu stepped out of the Den in her usual attire, Forte held out his arm for her to take. “Quite a most pleasant eve to rendezvous indeed~ It is most fortuitous that you would commend such a precious time as this to accompany me on a brief sojourn of your most beloved burgess~”

“I’ve been looking forward to this date all week!~” Chifu cheered, latching on to his arm with clear eagerness as she pressed her body against his side as she got as close as possible. “Are we going to go to the hot springs together~ I’m sure we’ll really get to know each other there~”

"If that will permit you to divulge more of your own sequestered secrets for greater usage in my own crafting of worlds using ink and imagination, then I shall easily acquiesce to such a shift in my meticulous planning of this present eve~" Forte's eye twinkled mischievously as Chifu gave him a pout, pulling his arm against her more.

"Fine, we'll skip the hot springs this time. But next time, you better take me~" Chifu gave a fox-like grin as they began to walk down the streets, the goddess in disguise humming happily. "So, if we're not going to the hot springs, where are we going tonight?~"

Forte gave a smirk, leading her towards the western portion of the Crossroads. "We shall dine at the Vermillion Grill. I have found their cuisines to be rather delectable after partaking in their choicest selections on several occasions. Your influence that allows you to cultivate an entire section of civilization ripe with the talents of the multiverse is peerless~"

Chifu giggled, helping him weave through the streets of her city as she knew it like the back of her hand. She looked up at him, her two-colored eyes meeting his as the golden light in her left eye seemed to glitter with excitement. "So does that mean you like being here?~ Maybe enough to move in permanently?~"

"I've taken such fantastical ideas into consideration." Forte admitted, causing Chifu to cheer with excitement for a moment. But a signal from his hand caused her to quiet as he went on, "After all, this location's more central nature within the fabric of the multiverse makes for a rather convenient starting off point for conducting journeys into various other realms to look for interesting locales to utilize in my tale to be told."

The goddess looked slightly dejected, pulling away from him slightly as she merely held his hand at this point. "Oh... I see."

"Please, pay my practical mindset towards such a marvel of a magical feat not as a diminishing of the wonder of this place. But as one bestowed with the fortuitous fate of endeavoring to consult with the most remarkable of individuals across the multiverse as part of my occupational duties, it's easy to get lost in the mire of such excellence."

"And you consider me one of those excellent people?~ Well, you certainly know how to raise a girl's spirits~" Chifu teased, clinging onto him once more as she was happy again.

"As is the proper thing to do as a man~" Forte shot back, bumping into her. He knew that if he wanted to get her name, he needed to keep her thinking she had a chance of getting him. The more they flirted, the higher his chance of getting her name was. He had already failed twice with his usual methods, so he was going to have to try more aggressive methods to get what he wanted.

The Vermillion Grill soon pulled into sight, set at the edge of the high wall that led down to the coastline below. The two-story building was made of dark brick, with several brasiers arranged outside to light up the exterior with flickering lights, not unlike the neon that flooded the Business District of the Crossroads. There was a large sign of a red phoenix-like bird displayed above the entryway, that in the darkening night light with the flicker flames below, projected a large shadow on the wall above that seemed to “flap” its wings on occasion.

“It’s been so long since I’ve eaten here~ I wonder if Hino Tori still knows how to make my favorite steak just the way I like it~” Chifu mused, looking up at Forte with a glimmer of excitement in her eyes.

“I would scarce find surprise if the man hasn’t made efforts to perfect that particular craft every passing day since last you’ve graced his hallowed halls of work, in hopes of pleasing you with a far greater cuisine upon next you chose to dine on his feasts~” Forte seemed amused himself, looking into the building as if he could see the man.

“I hope so~ It would make this date even more perfect than it already is~”

Forte led her into the building, where a brown-haired woman with similarly colored wings like that of a hawk sprouting from her back gave the two a bow in welcome. She did not speak, but instead gave a gentle cough, holding out her hand expectantly as her other hand went to the red ribbon that circled her throat. Forte produced a small letter from his breast pocket, handing it to the woman as she smiled professionally at the couple. Her eyes flicking through it, she nodded as she accepted the reservation letter.

Grabbing a pair of menus, she took to the air, flying gently above in her light vermillion dress, the ends floating down to her ankles as she waited for the pair to follow her, before she easily wove above the tables to the rear of the building. Exiting out to the ocean facing balcony, the waitress led them to a well decorated table with an amazingly spectacular view of the sea. Setting the menus down at the table, she floated aside for the couple to take their place at the table.

Walking over to one side, Forte drew out the chair and gestured to Chifu, who giggled as she gracefully sat down in front of him. Pushing her seat in for her, Forte took his hat off and hung it on the back of his own chair as he sat down across from her. He then turned to the waitress, giving her a nod.

“If you would be so kind as to procure the Chateau Rouveau De Chante I requested the other eve, I would greatly appreciate it~”

The hawk woman held a hand to her throat, releasing a musical trill in response before flying upwards, heading to an area on the second floor only accessible to the flight that is common among the employees of the Vermillion Grill. Chifu looked up at where the girl had departed, a soft smile on her lips.

“It’s nice to see that Aria is still doing well, even if she hasn’t managed to speak yet~”

“Would not such a malady be but a trifle for one the likes of yourself to solve?” Forte asked, tilting his head before letting it rest on his chin as he leaned forward to study her with a snake-like grin.

“It would be no problem at all~ But she doesn’t want me to fix it for her~” Chifu rested her chin on her own steepled hands, rocking her head back and forth with a smile on her face. “The slash she took to her neck only damaged her vocal cords~ With enough practice, she can learn to speak again, and she’d rather do everything herself~ Reminds me of a certain writer I know~”

“And to what end are you insinuating with such phrasing?~” Forte grinned, playing dumb to let her talk longer in order to meet the conditions to attempt to steal her name once more.

“That it was rather kind of you not to try and bully your sister in using her wish to get what you wanted~ It’s much more interesting to watch you try and get everything on your own~”

Aria flew back over, carrying a bottle in one hand using a napkin to shield the heat of her hand from the chilled bottle, two wine glasses in her other hand. Setting the glasses down first, she withdrew her wine key and opened the top of the bottle, the satisfying sound of a cork popping off preceding the smell of wine washing over them. Floating over Chifu’s right side, she poured a glass for the disguised goddess, before repeating the motion for Forte’s glass as well. Nodding to the two of them as they nodded their thanks to her, she returned up to the wine storage to keep the bottle chilled for them.

Forte and Chifu grabbed their glasses, raising them in a toast before the latter took a healthy sip of her glass. Forte merely feigned a sip, watching his date partner with an amused smile. Alcohol should also lower her inhibitions, which should allow him to steer the conversation to his advantage and get her name.

Chifu, of course, wasn’t worried about that. She drank harder stuff than even this wine, and she knew he didn’t have the money to get her drunk enough for that. But she certainly wasn’t going to stop him. Free wine is free wine~

After finishing his “sip” of wine, he set his glass down to address her words from before. “And to what end do you think I am endeavoring towards by remaining in the Crossroads, beyond what I’ve stated plainly?”

“Well, you’ve certainly been talking to some rather interesting people~ It must be kind of nice not having to watch over your sister, now that she is off journeying with Vilivian in her world~” Chifu sets the glass down, glancing at the menu for a moment as if trying to decide what she wanted.

“You’ve certainly accumulated a fine collection of individuals to this stretch of space you’ve carved for yourself~ How could I not take this opportunity afforded by my blood’s wishes in order to fully devote my attention to so many interesting figures and locales to investigate with the acuity it deserves to be put under scrutiny for~” Forte kept his attention on the goddess, who hummed to herself in thought as her legs kicked lightly under the table.

“I suppose that’s true~ Though it’s not like I asked anyone to stay here in particular~ I merely gave them an interesting place to stay and let them come and go as they please~ I think letting

people have that kind of freedom is important for letting the most interesting people thrive~” Chifu grinned, cocking her head as she looked pleased with herself.

“And freedom in abundance you provide~” Forte praised her easily, his silver tongue hidden behind a pleasant smile. “Not a man is here that would wish to be elsewhere~ It must take an impressive force of will to maintain this level of peace without threats of agony~”

“Oh, it’s nothing special like that~ I’m just an innocent little fox~” Chifu teased, sticking her tongue out playfully. “You’re really making a big deal over nothing~ Your ability to travel all over is what’s really impressive~ You could’ve come here all on your own even without my invitation, right?~”

“I suppose you’ve made such a traversal spell rather simple to accomplish~ Merely a few words and a wish towards this region of the multiverse and this wonder of the cosmos presents itself~ The sole reason I did not permit myself an earlier sojourn was due to the necessity to explore various realms from a perspective that requires not journeying forth from the direction of the Crossroads~ All eyes that can see these things watch this place for people of note, so I did not wish to draw the gaze of too many strange and austere individuals~”

“I suppose that’s true~” Chifu leaned forward, reaching forward to stroke Forte’s arm. “I usually keep those kinds of people out because they only try to start trouble~ And not the fun kind, like you cause~”

“Are you calling me a problematic individual?~” The writer merely raised an eyebrow, an amused smirk on his face as he leaned back in his chair, glancing to the side to see if their waiter was approaching.

“You help keep things interesting around here~ So you won’t hear me complaining~” Chifu teased, winking at him. “Normally I have to wait for the next Cross Tournament to be entertained, but with you around, I at least have something else to keep my attention for the time being~”

“So I’m being tracked now, am I?” Forte sounded like he was offended, but his smirk only made Chifu laugh more. “Should I take greater care to absolve myself of pursuers in any future endeavors I undertake while circumjacent to your vision?”

“Please don’t~ I like watching what you do~” Chifu gave him a pout, her cheeks puffing out before she took another swig of wine.

“I’ll keep your objections to how I conduct my business in consideration on future ventures~” Forte gave a smirk at her expression, as the waiter finally approached.

The waiter was an olive skinned man with a tuft of black feathers on his chest that worked as a makeshift cravat with his outfit. His black wings fanned out behind him, giving him an elegant look along with his styled black hair and his cool red eyes as he reached the table, looking at the pair of them.

“Good evening, Mr. Forte. Good evening, Ms. Chifu. It is good to see the two of you dining with us once more.”

“It’s good to be back here again, Garu~ It’s been far too long since I came here~ Which is really such a shame~” Chifu giggled, leaning forward to squeeze the waiter’s arm.

Garu gave a professional smile, not letting the goddess in disguise fluster him as he turned to Forte, his wings flapping once to stretch them out as he spoke. “And I see you have joined us for a second evening as well. I hope your dinner with Lady Kanari went as you expected?”

“Your establishment has more than proven its remarkable quality and care in terms of the preparation of cuisines to engorge oneself upon while enjoying the fine company of the Scarlet Hawk~ Her rather exotic taste in appetite was a rather intriguing venture to set upon, delving into culinary expeditions I had yet to tread in my world crossing sojourn. And I’ll be delighted to engage with some of those same foodstuffs once more this eve.”

“Very well sir. What will the two of you be having this evening?” Garu looked between the two attentively, no writing pad in his hand as he turned to Forte as the Devil Blood began to speak.

“For an appetizer, we shall partake in the Olive Tapenade Crostini, along with a pair of salads. Her’s shall possess fresh fruits, while mine will have salmon roe. For our entrees, she shall have a Phoenix Grilled Filet Mignon, topped with mushrooms and your finest sauces. As for myself, I shall indulge in the Vermillion Flambe Steak Diane, with the same adornments as my partner’s.”

“Yes sir.” Garu bowed, lifting up with a few flaps of his wings. “We shall have your meal prepared as quickly as possible.” He then took off towards the window of the kitchen as Chifu giggled.

“Well aren’t you well-researched?~” Chifu teased as she looked towards her dinner partner with a raised eyebrow. “Who gave away all my favorite foods from here?~ Did Kanari tell you too much after getting drunk off of wine?~”

“You wound me with such harsh accusations.” Forte put a hand to his chest, looking offended. “Though I will admit that while colluguing with the leader of the western portion of the Crossroads, she might have mentioned a fair few wine and dining enterprises with the Madame Chief and her usual dining expertise~”

“That traitor~ I’ll have to get back at her tomorrow~Maybe I should take her out for some drinks~ She was always such a lightweight, I’m sure she’ll do something she’ll regret with my encouragement~”

“As one would expect from a trickster goddess such as yourself~” Forte gave a chuckle, reaching into his jacket. “Mind if I partake in a cigar while we wait for our appetizers to arrive?”

“Only if you give my pipe a light~” Chifu pulled her own pipe out, tamping out her previous smoke before adding a new cut of her favorite plant of choice. Forte pulled out his own cigar, using a gold-plated lighter to light his tobacco. He then stood up, walking around the table as Chifu presented her pipe to him as he lit it for her. “Thank you~”

“Your appreciation is but one payment I will accept for such a trifle of an assistance to provide for you~” Forte stayed on his feet for a moment, looking out at the bay as he gave a puff of smoke.

“Only one payment?~ And what other payments are you hoping to get?~” Chifu lifted up her eyebrows, crossing her arms as she leaned back with a flirty smile.

“The kind of benefits that are natural to arise when prolonged time in your company is allowed~” Forte gave her a smirk as he sat down, glancing over at Aria as she returned to fill their drinks and set ashtrays for the both of them. “Hopefully you won’t be remiss to entertain my appetencies by indulging in an interview or two with myself?”

Chifu gave a slight pout, before her sly smile returned. “Really?~ You get me all to yourself, and all you want to do is talk with me?~ That’s so boring~ Why don’t we be more entertaining?~”

“Oh? And pray tell what you imply by that?” Forte raised an eyebrow as Aria went to Chifu’s right, pouring wine into the proffered glass by the slowly inebriated goddess.

“Well, you want me to share stories about myself, right?~ So why don’t we trade?~ You tell me a story about yourself, then I’ll tell you something about me~”

Another waitress, a blonde woman with long hair that covered her eyes and silvery wings, flew over with their appetizer and salads. The appetizer was toasted bread with a green paste topped with tomatoes, nuts, and goat cheese. Chifu’s salad had a mix of fruit with light olive oil, while Forte’s had a light mix of salmon to accentuate the leaves. Both the appetizer and salads were of smaller portions, to ensure they wouldn’t get full before the main entrees.

As the wait staff flew away to attend to other guests, the couple began to taste their food. Chifu made a noise of appreciation at the Olive Tapenade, another hand under her chin to keep any of the olive paste from falling on her clothes. Forte enjoyed one of the little snacks himself, having tasted them the other night with one of the leaders of the interdimensional town.

“Lady Kinara certainly has a remarkably refined palette that she seeks to encourage those around her to indulge in also.” Forte commented, before following it up with a bite of his salad. “I imagine her talents as a leader are likewise exoitic but effective.”

“She certainly knows her way around the docks~” Chifu said with a wink. “I’m sure you learned all about it the other night~”

Forte gave Chifu a long look as the trickster smiled at him, wiggling her hips as she danced happily at her teasing, seeming to get a reaction out of him. “And pray tell what you mean by that?”

“Well, she led you back to her estate that evening, didn’t she?~ I just want to know what you two did once you went inside~”

“You mean you didn’t attempt to intrude further into my private affairs? I could not fathom an end to your meddling when it comes to matters that entertain so greatly as my occupational objectives.”



"I have my limits~ I'm not going to invade the privacy of one of my trusted leaders just because she's hunting for my new favorite toy as well~"

Forte gave a chuckle, raising his eyebrow. "I was not presently under the impression that anyone had laid claim to ownership over me. By what right do you have over my personhood?"

"Divine right, obviously~" Chifu winked at him, leaning forward so her chest rested on the table past her salad. "I won't hate on Kinara for going for you too~ It just means she has good taste~"

"Are you quite sure of your amiability towards whatever conjured relation I am possessed of with the Scarlet Hawk? Because I can certainly sense some enmity from you over the supposed rendezvous. Might that be envy I detect in your tone?~"

"No, of course not~" Chifu batted her eyelashes at him, even as her invisible tails flicked angrily behind her. "I'm just saying that her feathers were probably really soft, weren't they?~ Though not as soft as my tails are, of course~ I take extra care to keep them nice and fluffy~ Maybe you should come feel them~"

"Your offer is most generous indeed~ But allow me to head off any jealous intentions emanating from you. My time within the Vermillion Palace was merely to indulge in some of the lady's private spirits and to discuss a few more personal aspects she wasn't comfortable sharing in a public venue. I had no carnal relations with Kinara Akai the previous eve."

"Oh?~ Is that so?~ Well, that's your loss I suppose~" Chifu began to wiggle more in her seat, clearly happy as the two finished their salads and the rest of the appetizers.

Two servers came over to take away their plates, creating room on the table for their next plates as the couple went back to smoking. As Forte tapped some ash into the tray, he leaned forward to address Chifu once more.

"Now that I've upheld my portion of this arrangement, I do believe it is time for you to divulge certain information onto me."

"Hmm?~" Chifu raised an eyebrow, not knowing what he meant.

"I informed you as to what I did with Lady Kinara. Therefore, I have the right to inquire into your life prior to your ascension to your current goddess state~"

"Ah~ Fair fair~" Chifu nodded, pouting a bit. "I suppose I did say that~ Though I was hoping to ask a real question from you for that~"

"That was your own fault in being too inquisitive at my personal affairs in the Crossroads~ Now, please begin sharing your own prior experiences if you would~"

"Are you not going to pull out your notebook for this?~" She gestured to his empty hand, causing the author to raise an eyebrow. "You're about to get some juicy details from me~ I would think you'd want to write down every word I say~"

“There will be little need to render your words into ink. My mind can function as a trap for intelligence that is of greater interest of mine. I shall be remiss if I miss even a single syllable attempting to transcribe your narration. I shall suffice with my auditory skills alone~”

“If you say so~ Especially since there isn’t that much to tell~” Chifu took a moment to smoke her pipe, as if to gather her thoughts. “I was just a little fox that spent her days romping around the woods I grew up in and playing tricks on all my fellow animals~ Then one day, a god showed up as he usually did~ So I made fun of him a little and he got all mad at me!~ Can you believe that?~”

“Truly a most unwise move of that entity indeed~” Forte agreed, nodding his head. “You would think such an entity would be wary of such hubris.”

“He was never much of a smart god, if I’m honest~ He like showing off, with all his fancy light and cool powers, giving random animals intelligence as he wished~ So I made fun of him for doing it again, and he said that if I thought I could do better, then I should prove myself~ So he puts a series of challenges in front of me, and I beat every one of them~ Then, one thing led to another, and I got the chance to eat him~ And that’s all there is to say about that~”

At that moment, Garu and another waiter came over with their entrees, setting the plates in front of them. Both of their steaks looked somewhat similar, though Forte’s was of a thinner cut and had a small glaze of alcohol and a single red feather on top of his. As Garu set the plate down and backed up, there was a cry from a bird that emanated from the inside of the restaurant.

Forte’s plate set alight in golden flames, cooking the meat as Chifu gave an excited clap at the spectacle. By the time the flames died down, the delicious smell of the food began to waft up as the first server left the table to serve others.

“Enjoy the rest of your meal, sir and madam.” Garu invited, watching as the two cut into their meat to ensure they were satisfied with the quality. Once they both gave an appreciative noise at the taste of the meat, the black feathered man began to float back, departing to prepare the rest of the night.

The two sat in silence for a bit, enjoying their food to the point where conversation was nearly forgotten, both of their smoking implements burning out. The smoke still rising from them was swept away by the sea breeze, causing the pair to look out at the setting sun as orange light danced off the perfect ocean water. The sight made the perfect backdrop for the date, a fact that helped make Chifu’s cheeks flush with color. She grinned happily, sneaking a glance at Forte as he seemed likewise content with the view.

“And now it’s time for you to share more of your own history, Forte~” Chifu teased, pointing her fork at him.

Forte looked back at her, somewhat surprised. “Forsooth? To what end does that serve? My story shall not be one attributed to any one character of any of my novellas I intend to derive from the world of ink and paper. Why then should such a matter be discussed?”

“Because I’m interested in learning more about you~ After all, your sister won my tournament, which makes you by extension interesting yourself~ Plus, it’s fun to listen to you, so hearing you talk more would be nice~”

Forte frowned for a moment, thinking about how long they had been talking. Realizing that he needed a little more from her, and that if he didn’t entertain her more, she might leave without giving him what he needed. Giving a sigh, Forte opened his eyes to the eagerly waiting Chifu.

“Very well. To what matter shall we explore to satiate your need for intelligence on a meager writer such as myself?”

“I just want to know about where you grew up~ You always keep your past a mystery, which makes you so interesting to talk with~ I want to learn all your little secrets, no matter what it takes~”

“Is that all? A mere contrivance of information to impart? Very well.”

Forte made a dramatic motion of cracking his knuckles as he prepared to give his story. Chifu leaned in intently, ready to listen to every word he said with rapturous attention.

“My blood and I hail from the most idyllic setting of Paragon, a bastion of technology and prosperity. A locale that is often blessed by the Ruler of All, the people of the Cubby are oft enhanced with technological marvels that grant those fortunate enough to afford such surgical masteries to graft them on. It is also the sole beneficiary of the direct passage to the Ruler of All’s palace, meaning that only those whose lineages proved themselves worthy to the young conqueror during his campaign of ascension are permitted to remain in his good graces. Such was the nest in which I resided.”

Chifu just nodded along, smiling almost vacantly as she just stared at Forte talking clearly entertained.

“Piano and my own parents passed away due to an unknown disease when we were young, leaving us to our own devices in the metropolis of Vaingloria. While the social support systems of Paragon are second to none, we still had to perform some novel duty in order for the other pseudo-aristocracy of our peers wouldn’t conjure some method to remove us for indolence. So my sister began to study the various martial arts she now understands so thoroughly in order to take a rank among the Gear Guard. I, meanwhile, pursued the more creative arts, honing my skills with ink and paper to take on the role of a writer. I ventured among the more clandestine members of society in order to realize the more villainous elements of my magnum opus. From there, I decided to explore the multiverse, in order to obtain a wide array of personalities to employ when it came time to turn script into novel. And thus have I sojourned to your humble cut of multiversal cloth that is the Crossroads.”

Chifu gave him a wide, knowing grin as he finished his little tale, clapping a little as she did. “You certainly are a wonderful storyteller, Forte~ Maybe I should have you read me bedtime stories to help me go to sleep at night~ You have such a wonderful voice to listen to~”

"Your words are most kind, Madame Chief~" Forte gave a slight bow, taking another "sip" of wine as Chifu finished her own glass across from him.

"Indeed~ You weave such thrilling stories as well~ If I didn't already know that you were lying about all of that, I might have believed every word you said~"

"I beg your pardon?" Forte looked confused, keeping a calm smirk on his face. "By what measures are you utilizing to render such accusations of falsehood against me?"

"Oh, I heard your sister talking to Vilivian about where she actually grew up~ Dissonance, was it?~" Chifu had a glimmer of mischief in her eyes as she called him out, though Forte didn't look too upset at that.

"Is that so? I suppose my sister saw no need to hide our origins from such a tremendous opponent. It's not as if the Matriarch would ever utilize that information for nefarious purposes..."

"And you think I would?~" Chifu batted her eyelashes at him, trying to look innocent despite the wide smirk across her face that indicated that she was up to some sort of trick.

"I would not be faulted for suspecting some sort of trickery from the God Eater~" Forte glanced over as the waiters came by to grab their plates as they finished their meals. "I would be much afeared that you might further ensnare members of those Piano and I colloque with into this flight of fancy you organize."

"I wouldn't think of doing that~" Chifu protested, puffing out her cheeks once more. "I would just like to see the place you grew up in~"

"If you were more open as to your intentions, mayhaps I would entertain such a notion. As it were, I do believe it is my own chance to venture for more intelligence from you~"

"Fine fine~ What do you want from me this time?~" Chifu looked at him with some intent, having also been measuring how much time they had been talking. She almost knew what question was coming next. As smart as Forte was, when he was going after his main objective, he was predictable to the trickster goddess.

Sure enough, the expected words left his lips after he addressed the waiter to indicate he would be the one covering the check. "I'll simply request what I have once before: I wish to learn of your title of personage. Your true one this time, if you would~"

Forte's expression, while at a first glance still confident and friendly with his smirk, took on a harder edge as he watched her closely. Chifu seemed to give his request deep thought, putting a finger on her chin as she looked up to the darkening sky.

"Hmmm~ WeeeeIIIIIIII, I suppose I have kept you hanging long enough on that one~ Ok, I think I can do that~"

“Most excellent~” Forte took hold of the check that Garu handed him, looking at the cost before pulling out the right number of coins to cover the charge. With his other hand, he surreptitiously drew his pen, setting it against the back of the check as he looked back to his date partner with a most wicked grin. “So, to what name should I put you down as?~”

“My name... my real name... is Vix Volpe~”

Forte’s pen moved with a fast movement, his ability to steal names attempting to activate and finally achieve his goal that he had in mind since arriving in the Crossroads.

So when he didn’t feel the magic pull her name from the ether, his anger quickly rose up as he glared at her. She simply looked at him with polite confusion, though the small smirk growing on her face showed she could see him getting upset.

“You have delivered yet another falsehood upon me. Do you truly enjoy playing me the fool in such a manner?”

“Well, I have a reputation to maintain after all~ I can’t let people think that I’m too easy~ But chin up~” She reached across the table and pushed his chin up, her mismatched eyes meeting his. “Maybe your strategy was flawed from the start~ After all, this wine wasn’t enough to get me drunk~ There’s no way I’d slip up like this~”

“That is a fair assessment.” Forte admitted, putting away his pen. “Then I take it a return to your favorite haunt shall suffice for a start to this change in strategem?”

“If you mean the Fox’s Den, then you would be right~” Chifu stood up quickly, almost pulling Forte back up on his feet as he grabbed hold of his hat. Giving a wave to Garu and Aria as they bowed in farewell to them, Chifu latched herself to Forte’s arm as he began to lead her back to all the alcohol that was waiting for her back home.

And if she kept playing her cards right, maybe she can make sure Forte takes a few drinks himself. She was excited to see what new sides of him she could draw out before their date was over.

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