

Content Warning: Weight Gain, Offscreen Inanimate Object Vore, Minor Blood, Stuffing, Emotional Eating

Springtime at the Cragginbarry Institute of Magical, Spiritual, and Ritualistic Peace-Keeping was calm, pleasant, and densely populated. The grand university nestled at the peaks of a mountain was typically cool all year long, though now of all times encouraged students to experience their surroundings. This campus boasted an impressively diverse student body. There were plenty of humans, elves, even gnomes, but there were also goblins and orcs that called campus home. One may find transfer students in various Felinis, Innsmin, even Simisimi here and there. Without a care in the world, students passed by one another and got to experience the once reclusive fauna, beautiful flowers that bloomed out from their little buds, even how green the grass had become after months of spotty snowfalls to moisten it. Though, not everything was cheery like the rose bushes were, evident by commotion within the campus's garden. Through the smooth and dandelion riddled vines that hung up on the ceiling of the green house to the pink trum trum mushrooms in pots that sat in the corners, there was one thing that disrupted the usual peace of these rooms.

"I implore you to reconsider!" Mitsy's hands clenched tight into his robes while he looked the university's Chancellor in the eyes. "He...he has nowhere else to go, nobody to call on! I owe him this! He'll be good, I promise you!"

The man Mitsy begged and pleaded with was covered head to toe in scales, a long, reptilian snout protruded from his face, but soft yellow eyes distracted from those rugged facial features. He had a long tail and claws, though his elegant and vibrant robes distinguished him as a calm, scholarly type. Strangely enough, the man had flowing, wispy white hair that went down to the tip of his tail, with poofy eyebrows and a well groomed beard to boot. To many, he was recognized as a Dracammal, a Rickshaw Theros was the highest level of authority in the Cragginbarry Institute. He had final say on nearly everything, and his say so far was that the chunky, tail wagging Cerberus was to not stay on campus.

"He may be a hellhound, Mitsuru," Rickshaw began, his voice raspy and crackly, "but don't treat him as if he were a pet.."

"S, sorry." Mitsy apologized, his left hand curled up to his chest. "I just, I can't leave him alone. I don't want to separate from him, he's already been moved around from person to person so many times!"

A sigh came from the chancellor, who turned back to water the nibbling poppies behind him. "I understand your affection for him. He seems like a very sweet boy. He is, however, not a student at this academy. If you were to house him for a temporary period while he were to find his own footing, things would be different. You're suggesting, however, to let us house him alongside you and your costs with very little change. Besides, I hate to mention something as shallow as this, but...he's a hellhound named Cerberus. I presume he is just how you describe him, though I fear others may not be so welcoming. The answer is no, it's for his safety."

"But Chancellor Rickshaw!" Mitsy grasped onto the man's sleeve by the thumb and his pointer finger. One could see the half-felinis's eyes water. "H...He saved my life twice! He's escaping a band of guerrilla soldiers, there's nowhere safer BUT here!"

A curious furrow of his brow signified shock. A demon saving a non-demon's life? That kindness was only afforded when a demon was summoned and ordered, or when there was significant use for the person for later. Saving Mitsy twice would show he wasn't powerful enough to be of use, the former could also be crossed out since Mitsy was no demon summoner in the slightest, just an offensive and supportive mage at best. It made Rickshaw consider the options at hand...

A disembodied hand tilted Mitsy's head to make eye contact with the ancient chancellor. "Tell me then, Mitsuru. What is so significant about this Cerberus fellow? What do you know about him?"

"He...he's sweet," Mitsy rubbed at his shoulder while he explained, his voice a little shaky since he started crying, "v-very much so, he's...he's not like other demons in that regard. Cerbi, erk, Cerberus isn't that bright but, he...he pays attention when you speak. He's..."

"I've heard enough." Rickshaw interrupted Mitsy, then put a claw to his shoulder. He led in with a deep breath, one that already crushed Mitsy's heart before he even heard the results...only to be uplifted. "Cerberus is not to attend any classes with you, and not to attend student functions like classes, otherwise... he may live with you and attend any event we hold for the public."

The feeling of rejection was swamped over by waves of relief. Mitsy slammed himself to his knees, hands clasped together, crying not out of desperation, but out of joy! "Tha...thank you Chancellor Rickshaw!" he hollered and cheered, "You're the best! I won't let you down!"

The half-felinis was picked up by his hood by that lacy, disembodied hand, then placed down to his feet once more. "No need to thank me, Mitsuru." His tone was most assuring, "Focus on your studies and do your best. Now, please, clean yourself up, okay?" With a nod, Mitsy made his way out of the vibrant garden to spread the good news. The exhaustion of all those emotions hit him like a bag of bricks the moment he set foot on his own accord. He was ready to see Cerberus again.

Mitsy's dorm room was that of a modest one. There was a sitting room, a bedroom, and a kitchen with an oven in the sitting room. The tired mage clicked open his door with a simple spell, then wearily wandered through the door. All that walking had drained the wick of his candle, he was beyond exhausted by the point. Instinctively, he trudged past the recliner, slipped beyond the coffee table, and flopped down where the excellent couch rested. He would tell Cerbi the good news once he had his beauty sleep, plus, he needed not worry about class tomorrow, it was a weekend! He could show Cerbi around campus, at least, the parts he'd be

allowed to access as a citizen and not a student. He could bring Cerbi to the campus store, to the first floor of the massive library, everywhere if he tried hard enough! Those silly little thoughts rested comfortably into his head, as he sunk further into the couch.

It was then Mitsy remembered something. The couch...wasn't usually this plush. Didn't it have a blanket thrown over it he could've reached for? He was pretty sure that his hands went to grab the blanket, but got air instead. A panic set in, the kind one got from falling in their dream and waking up in their bed. What met Mitsy's eyes was something tan, something round, and something monstrously big. A belly. *Cerbi's* belly.

Panicked, Mitsy rolled off the bed with a screech, hit his head on the coffee table, then collided with the floor below him. His head throbbed with pain, yet he kicked past the table. He had to reassure himself whether or not what he landed on was his imagination.. No, he couldn't have imagined it! Cerbi's blubberous body occupied where the panicked student's couch used to sit. He snoozed away adorably, his neck now just a tire of fat across crests of adipose. His moobs rose up and down with each breath, his stomach stretched out to occupy more space than the vanished seat used to take up. His plump rear poked above his love handles, legs uselessly pressed against his belly in an impossible stretch. A familiar piece of garment impossibly stretched over Cerbi's chest and stomach, a pair of bright blue and white striped pajamas. A little look around to his legs indicated the bottom piece also was worn by the hellhound. How he managed to not only get into the smaller outfit, but stretched it out, Mitsuru had no earthly clue. All that noise that Mitsy made had stirred Cerbi awake from his food coma. He stretched his hamstock arms up and let loose a loud, maw-stretched yawn.

"Is it morning already?" He cutely yawned, then rubbed his eyes before he spotted Mitsy. "Oh! Good morning, Mits!"

After a bit of struggle to get up, and a quick cover of his face so Cerbi didn't get to see the reddened blush all over, Mitsy yelped out a response back. "Cerbi, where's my couch?!"

"Oh, I moved it." Cerbi simply answered. "It was getting in the way of my nap, soooo I put it in your room!"

"Why are you as BIG as my couch..." Was the next question, probably the second most unbelievable one.

Cerbi quickly chirped back to Mitsy. "Oh, I uh, ate everything in the pantries, the drawers, and the ice box you had in the kitchen. Maaaaybe even the icebox, too..." There was a cute grin on his face, like he only just *now* realized that might have been a mistake.

Mitsy's shrunken pupils and shaking hands emphasized his horror. "EVERYTHING?! Cerbi, you do realize some things in there weren't MEANT for human consumption, right?! You ate cheese graters, you ate spatulas, appliances, Cerbi!! You ate EVERYTHING?! How...wh...we gotta get you to a cleric! Your body can't possibly-"

"Hey, hey..." Cerbi chuckled, then put his hands on Mitsy's shoulders. "Relaaaax. I've eaten all kinds of stuff before, and I'm still fine. My tum might hurt for an hour or so, but I'll be good."

"...Really?"

"Really! If I remember right, one time it was either me starving, or eating molten rocks. Like, these rocks were REALLY hot, so..." Cerbi mimed eating rocks, just to get his point across. The panic turned from confusion, then simmered down to relief. If Cerbi could just be a living incinerator, then there wasn't much room to worry.

"Last question..." Mitsy sighed, then clapped his hands together. "Well, no, there's another, but one more before I...go lay down. *How. Did you. Get my PJs on.* I'm a size small and, er, to put this lightly, I don't think anyone's made fashionable wear in size-Cerbi yet."

"I just shrunk myself to your size." Cerbi answered with a smile. "You said I could use anything with exceptions, never said anything about your PJs! They fit me like a glove when I grew back!"

Some part of that did make sense. Mitsy recalled that the clothes Cerbi had on when he first rescued him grew and shrank with his height and growth powers, so maybe it was just some of that hell magic rubbing off on those threads. With a deep breath, Mitsy nodded, then cradled the back of his head.

"Ge...get some rest." He huffed. "I should go-"

"Your couch's in front of your bed." Cerbi warned, "Why not use me as a bed for a bit? You look pretty tired, plus, you were gonna do that anyway before you fell off!"

There was a deep red veil over the young man's face, and a sharp exhale that resembled a steam train's whistle. "I, er, I, bah, fuh-" Mitsy found the words eventually. "I er, can't, it's, um, you're...not...a bed."

Unoffended by the comment, Cerbi just smacked his gut proudly. "C'mon~" He egged on so innocently, "You were enjoying it earlier! Once you're up, you can wake me up, and I can get back to a normal size. What'dya say?"

An audible gulp left that confused, yet longing host, before he finally took Cerbi up on his offer. He lied face up, and used those comfortable moobs as makeshift pillows for that ached head. It already started to feel better! Cutely, the kitty sighed, and smiled a tad.

"It...went well by the way." Mitsy revealed, "Chancellor Rickshaw said you can stay on campus, so long as you don't pretend to be an active student..."

"Sweet!" Cerbi threw his fists up in the air in victory. "That's amazing! Glad I get to stick around here, this place is pretty dang cool."

The cat chuckled slightly, his hand curled up to his lips. "I...suppose it is. I'm just so glad my biggest worry is done and over with, I couldn't imagine what might happen to you if you were out on your lonesome."

"Well now I don't hafta worry about that, do I?" Chimed Cerbi, "It's just gonna be you, me, and whatever couches I decide to move next."

Mitsy couldn't help but giggle. "Let's not move anymore of my couches unless absolutely necessary, okay? If they break, that comes out of my tuition, and I'd rather not pay more than I have to."

"...How *do* you pay for all this anyway?" Cerbi asked, "I mean, you told me you don't got any folks, so, how'd you grow up?"

Mitsy curled up some. "Well, my family was rich from what I was told. I had a silver spoon in my mouth even without my family being around. Just...no one to talk to."

"So you had all that hair-tans cash?"

"Inheritance, and yes. My mother and father died when I was rather young, when I wasn't cognizant of my surroundings."

"See, you didn't tell me that before! I'm learning something new about you every day!" Cerbi went to pat Mitsy on the head, until the cat recoiled when he touched the bump on his head. "Oof, you okay?"

Without question, he summoned an icicle and rested his sore spot on it. "I'll manage. I may look like I'm fragile, but I'm still rather resilient."

"You sure are! I mean, you were able to walk across a desert by yourself, yeah? That's gotta take some zest."

"I don't think that's the right word for it, but...thank you." There was a bit of silence before Mitsy spoke again. "What about you, Cerberus? What about your family?"

"Don't got one."

Cerbi's answer kind of rattled Mitsy, but it made sense. If he had no home, he had no family to return to. "I see...did you have a family at one point?"

“Everything from when I was a kid’s super hazy.” Cerbi admitted, then scratched his head. “To be honest, everything up to a couple years ago is pretty hazy.”

“Hazy? How so?”

“Like, okay, you know how you walk into a room ready to do something, but then you totally forget what it is you were gonna do? It’s...kind of like that, except throughout most of my life. The earliest memory I have was when I was still a kid, but I only remember when someone said my name. Or did they *give* me a name?”

Mitsy shuffled a bit, then put his hand down to his abdomen. “It sounds as though you have amnesia, Cerbi.”

“It’s not amnesia though. It’s like...memory...lockage. Like they’re there, but I can’t get to them.”

“That’s amnesia, Cerbi. Amnesia, noun, when one loses their memory. It’s a pretty broad definition.”

“Well it’s not like, doctor, amnesia, y’know? Like I can kind of remember things but when I try super hard they’re gone. Plus, wouldn’t I lose memories too? I dunno. I think I don’t have it, is what I mean, I think it has to be something else.”

With a nod, Mitsy dropped the topic. “Well, if you don’t remember who you were, who do you *want* to be?”

“Oh, easy!” Cerbi flexed his fattened arms with a grin. “A hero! Somebody who can swoop in and save the day! I got the strength for it, but never like...the chance for it. Seeing people smile after I lend a hand is more than enough for me.”

Such an infectiously happy dream made Mitsy smile. “Strangely sweet...”

“What about you? I mean, you’re going to this big, fancy magic school, what’cha gonna do with what you learned?”

The boy curled up some, then thought about it. “Be of some sort of use. I’ve always been some sort of recluse. I never talked, I never made friends, I just...was. Outside of that I’m not too sure.”

“Really?” Cerbi tilted his head in confusion. “THAT’S it? I figured since you were smarter you had a lot more you wanted to do.”

That required more thinking, which wasn’t really that fun to do when your head throbbed and pulsed. “Well...” He pulled his sleeve up, and showed Cerbi his scale covered wrist. “While I

stopped the transformation, and even regressed it, it's still showing on my body. I think it would be best if I found out about my heritage."

"You mean you had no family pictures or something?"

That was a good point, something that Mitsy had never questioned as a child. The walls were only adorned in fine art, none of paintings of the lost masters. "I never saw paintings of my parents. Just, of dragons. The only time I saw my parents is-" He lifted his hand up, eyes fixated on it.

He could almost feel it, the same sensation as when he put the power he had accumulated into the gem. It was like he was back there, with that battle torn felinid, that woman with a strong physique. They were right there, even if illusions to him at that moment in time, and then...the feeling disappeared.

"...Maybe I just imagined it."

Cerbi pouted a bit, then leaned his head into his left hand. "Sorry Mits." He grumbled alongside his disappointment. "I'm sure you'll find your mom and dad someday."

The catboy took a deep breath, then leaned his head back slightly to meet Cerbi's eyes. "You're...nice for a demon, you know that?"

"Are demons not normally nice?"

"Demons have this misconception up here, that they're all born evil. Kind of like...dragons."

"Dragons are cool though!" That seemed to excite Cerbi, "I saw a dragon once! It was big, and it had a pointed tail, and, and, it had WINGS, and a big blocky head, and-"

"That's a wyvern, Cerbi." Mitsy corrected with a giggle. "They're different from dragons."

"Right, I knew that." Cerbi crossed his arms and smirked. "I was just testing you, smartie-tartie."

The odd nickname made Mitsy chuckle again. There was just something so endearing about this tank of a goofball that burrowed in his mind. So much about Cerbi seemed wonderful, his smile, his charm, even his naivety at times was comforting. Those feelings have been buried long enough, Mitsy was going to do it. He was going to ask Cerberus to accompany him as his boyfriend. He glanced up to the dog, raised his hand, and... locked up. How was he going to say it in a way that made sense? Cerbi probably never met someone who had a crush on him, he probably never had a crush on anyone in general! Plus, a dog and a cat? Even if they were humanoid, would that really work? Isn't it in their natures to hate one another? What if this was

just a fad in his soul? Had Mitsy liked boys this way before? Well, how could he tell if he never even had a date in general? Mitsy's heart raced a mile a minute now, that creeping sense of dread started to settle in. Those feelings were real, but would they last? SHOULD they last? They were strong enough to, right?

The more his head spun and spun and spun, the more that throbbing pain crept in to cloud any other thought that wasn't outright panic and uncertainty. He winced a bit, which was definitely noticeable by Cerbi. Concerningly so, his pal leaned up to hold the back of his head, now stained some with that red ickor he'd sworn he had seen before.

"Hey, Mits?" He pointed to the cat's wound. "You, uh, got cherry juice on the back of your head."

...Cherry juice? Oh gods, that's blood. The cat hopped off his comfy friend's belly, and landed with a stumble. "Y-Yes, I see." he muttered, "You stay put, I'll go to the infirmary and get it...sorted out."

Not if Cerbi had a say. His stomach sunk into his body, all that anchoring blubber he had practically disappeared. Now on his feet, Cerbi hoisted Mitsy up as one typically would a cat, one arm over his back, another arm under his rump. "Show me where it is, pal." He smirked, then stomped along. Mitsy's slippers jingled when the bunny ears flopped about, the bells pierced into them were noisy, but cute. "I think you'd only hurt yourself more if you tried walking there..."

"I thought...you said you were sleepy." Mitsy definitely felt a little faded. Nothing scary, but the seriousness of the injury had actually been realized in his body.

"Not when you're leakin' like that." Cerbi proudly continued to carry his friend along, each step caused that similar ding-a-ling.

Doubts began to clear about if Mitsy truly felt something for his new guest in his life. How could he not? He just put himself aside in order to help him again? It comforted the cat, justified his feelings in a way, though the idea of this all being some sort of altruism still lingered on in his mind. He knew he should worry more about getting patched up, but worry would continue to wrack his brain until they'd get to the medical center. Shouldn't be that long of a walk, at least.

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Crowds of people were something one could expect in a store, especially on a weekend where not as many people had places to be. Shoppers from all around campus were busy with their short list, mainly just snacks, provisions, some project supplies if need be. For Mitsy, however, it was more than just the simple supplies. All thanks to a certain somebody who decided to be the end all be all cleaner of his kitchen, it was up to him to restock fully. He looked so silly, like he'd just moved on campus in the middle of the semester... Cerbi followed along,

the proverbial pack mule for him in the shop. The young mage was dressed in rather casual, common clothes. A dark plaid skirt went down past his knees, a loose commoner's shirt with puffy sleeves was tightly held in place by an apron. A part of his head was wrapped in gauze from the injury he'd garnered the day before. His headache conveniently left his mind when he was next to Cerbi. The lovable hellhound, meanwhile, opted to stay in the adorable striped pajamas he nabbed from Mitsy's wardrobe, even if they were pretty ill-fitted around his body after some slightly forgetful size alteration.

"So you're *not* allowed to just pick up and eat anything lying around?" Cerbi asked for confirmation's sake.

With a little sigh, Mitsy nodded. "Yes, Cerberus." He confirmed, "You have to pay for things in stores if you want them up front, you hand your money to the teller."

"Why not trade for something that's close enough to what you want?" Cerbi wondered aloud. "Y'know? How hard's it to get a block of cheese or something? Why not just...hand food out for free?"

"Well, when you accumulate money, you spend it on goods and services." Mitsy stated, "Coins are more like tokens of earning your keep, in a way."

"What's that mean when a lot of people hoard coins then?" Cerbi genuinely continued. "Or, what happens when all that money goes missing? What's the value of it even, like, it just kind of seems like something that-"

"Cerbi," Mitsy gently pressed on his hand. "while I would enjoy this philosophical dilemma, I need to remind you I'm fighting off a mild concussion. My head isn't exactly in the right mindset for all that..." He pointed to the bandages wrapped from the wound on the back of his head to his forehead, right now they were relatively clean. Mitsy had been doing a good job making sure they had been changed every couple of hours just to avoid infection.

"Right, sorry." Cerbi chuckled, then continued onward. "Double sorry for eating all your kitchen stuff by the way. All of it wasn't important, was it...?"

Mitsy just shrugged, then continued on with shopping. "Nothing we can't repurchase, I wouldn't worry your head over it."

They'd gotten quite a bit of supplies up to that point, too. Utensils, graters, tenderizers...the two found a box to put it all in so they could move onto the more important matters, like food! Apples, carrots, lettuce, all were in order for a balanced meal, until Cerbi stopped at the sugary goods. He had spotted a set of freshly made cupcakes, something he'd never had before. Ohhh and they all smelt so sweet! His hand reached over for the set, before another student swiped in and took it. He then watched the last batch exit his life, then and forever, never to be seen again.

Disappointments such as Cerbi's didn't go unnoticed. Mitsy turned to see the boy slouched over, then put two and two together. "Have you ever had a cupcake before, Cerberus?" He questioned the young man.

"I hadn't had much outside of meat and goop." admitted the hellhound, "Well, I guess I can add a whole cutlery set to that list, but I don't think that counts."

It was then Mitsy had decided to make a deviation from his current list, mainly, to add more. Butter, sugar, eggs, vinegar, vanilla, flour... Mitsy picked up as many ingredients as he could, then carefully placed them in another box for Cerbi to hold onto. The flurry of ingredients might have been confusing, especially since most of the processed stuff was completely foreign to him.

"You deserve more than just a cupcake," Mitsy alluded, then turned back with a smile. "How about a full cake?"

A full cake? Cerbi could only imagine a cupcake but bigger at that point, with a silly grin on his face. "You can make it for me?" he wondered, while Mitsy continued to topple the box with ingredients.

"A lonely child had to occupy his time with something." There was a bit of confidence in how he posed, as if he knew what he could get himself into. "Ready to see the byproduct of a lonesome, boring life?"

Shopping after that point was quick and easy, even if the sudden cake ingredients complicated matters. The rush and anticipation to get home was enough to mask his headache even, before the thrill of it wrapped back around to the pressing headache. He'd ignore it the best he could for now, as there was something majorly important. Cerbi's first cake! There the two were, ingredients in bowls on the counter, a whisk and spatulas at the ready, and instructions in a book at the helm. Mitsy rolled his neck, fastened on a bright white apron with a heart at the bottom, then offered Cerbi a whisk.

"Would you like to whisk the cream while I prepare the cake base?" Mitsy asked, eager to have him join in.

Cerbi took the whisk, then looked at a bowl, unsure of what to do next. "Um, I could help, yeah!" He chirped, "But how? I'd never really cooked before."

"Well, don't worry." Mitsy held the novice's hand. "To make a velvet cake, you need all hands on deck..." His heart did beat a bit when he held that big man's hand so tenderly, but he had to push that aside. "Erhem! Right, first thing's first..." Mitsy let go and grabbed a bowl, then started the preparations. "Bowl one needs flour!" He poured in a couple cups of flour with one hand. "Cocoa powder!" A mini bowl of cocoa powder quickly followed, alongside, as he called

out, "Salt and baking soda! Then, you stir!" He grabbed a spoon and spun it around in the bowl, until its contents were evenly mixed. "Then, we set it aside!" That bowl swished over to the side, before Mitsy replaced that whisk with a spoon. "Would you like to try?"

Cerbi looked down at the free bowl, then nodded. "Flower!" He quickly reached for a potted plant Mitsy kept, before the catboy screeched, his tail prickled like pin needles..

"Cerbi, no!!" He quickly grabbed his arm to stop the dog before he made a mistake. "Flour with a 'u', not a 'w-e'!"

"Ooooooh." Cerbi chirped, then looked at both the flower, then the flour. "...How do I know the difference?"

Mitsy confiscated the potted plant, then set it aside before his response. "Flour with a 'u' is a powder, so you could very well call it powder flour."

"Powder flour!" Cerbi corrected himself, then plopped the bowl of flour nearby inside. "Cocoa powder!" Afterward, he poured in a mini bowl of cocoa, "Salt and baking soda!" Plam, poof! The powders went in just fine. "Stir stir stir!" He quickly began to stir with the spoon, which proved that he was much faster than one might think, given his size. "How long am I stirring for?"

"When you think it's all equally blended together!" Mitsy got fired up with Cerbi's gusto on cooking. Soon, the other bowl was set aside, where Mitsy pulled another one close by. "Time for butter!" He let half a stick of room temperature butter plop onto the bowl below, "followed by sugar!" Next, the chef dumped a whole bowl of sugar in, then grabbed a whisk. "Then you BEAT it, like so!" With as much speed his scrawny arms could muster, he began the process on the cream.

He subjected Cerbi to this level of cooking lesson the whole way through, from the cake base, to the frosting, to the cooking process even. It didn't take long before they had two, delectable, red velvet cakes right beside each other. Cerbi's beginning cake wasn't perfect. Cracks all around weren't that uncommon, but Cerbi's cake was a little lopsided in some regards. He was much more of a brute with his preparation, and the frosting spread was a shoddy job. Despite those flaws, it showed promise to a future baker. Meanwhile, Mitsy's was an exemplary red velvet cake, piped around the edges, with crumbs that were broken apart and layered delicately on the side. He even had the decorative spirit, and placed cherries smothered on top. It was, without a doubt, the *reddest* cake he'd ever made for certain. Gleefully, he clapped twice, then swiveled over to Cerbi.

"Well?" He handed Cerbi a knife and fork. "Shall we give it a try?"

Confused, he took both the utensils and stared at them. "I thought you said I'm not allowed to eat these." He mumbled confusedly.

"No no," Mitsy chuckled, "but you *are* allowed to eat with them. Like so." He cut into Cerbi's red velvet cake, then plopped the piece onto a plate. Eagerly, he stabbed a forkful into his place and dug in. "Mmf~! Wonderful for your first attempt, even if the appearance could use a little work."

Cerbi put Mitsy's whole cake onto his plate, then cut into it as Mitsy had. He really wasn't gonna let the cat admire his work. "Well, you did most of the work for me." Cerbi chuckled, "You had everything set out, you told me what to do, you gave me everything I needed..."

"But isn't the joy of creation budding within you?" Mitsy pondered, "The wonders of making something your own and..." he finally looked to Cerbi's plate. "Oh, are you going to have it all?"

Cerbi's grin spread from both of his cheeks. "Of course I am! You made it after all, so I know it'll be good!" He grabbed one giant slice of cake, then chowed down. The gush of cherry juices, icing, and cake crumbs made for a treat that had his tail wagging fast. "Mm-mm-MMMMM!! Dish'sh sho goood~!!"

Seeing someone else enjoy his cooking made it all worth it. He leaned in some to watch this big man demolish the cake he'd created, even getting some across his face. Thankfully, Mitsy cared about manners too, and wiped away the slop from the sides of his maw with ease. He'd chow down on Cerbi's cake too, but he wouldn't get further than halfway before the other chef was finished. Proudly, he plopped his gut down on the counter where the other cake once stood. His cat host hopped a little bit, then covered his mouth. He couldn't let Cerbi see that curled up smile and flush across his face.

"So that's cake, huh?" Cerbi chuckled, "I kind of like it! Though uh, that's a lot to remember when it comes to cooking."

"Sometimes there's cake in the commons store," Mitsy revealed, all the while, he drank up the praise that Cerbi had given him so effortlessly.

Cerbi gave a gentle circle around his stomach, then slung it off the other side of the counter. "We should do this again." He chuckled, "I wanna see you when you're most passionate!"

"I..." Mitsy was about to speak up, but he croaked.

Butterflies swelled up in his tummy, those thoughts came to the socially awkward mage like icing did to Cerbi's tongue. He could try to ask again, but that might lead to rejection. What if Cerbi just wanted to be his best friend? There would be a guilt that clung to Mitsy forever if there was any attempt to dismantle that friendship into something more. Was Mitsuru that much of a

jerk? That selfish in his thoughts? No, he shouldn't be. Cerbi was happy the way he was there, there was no way he could take the risk of asking him.

A gulp followed his croak, before he finished off. "-think that we should try more recipes."

"Yeah!" Cerbi chuckled, "Here, when you're done with my cake, how about we clean up?"

"Y...Yes..." Mitsy disappointedly replied, almost absent minded, when Cerbi walked off to Mitsy's bedroom, just to look for something to do for that moment.

Inadequate. Something about admitting his feelings to Cerbi just felt wrong to the mage. Rejection loomed in the back of his mind. There was a weight in the half-felinis's chest, something that tugged at his heart and pulled him down, down, down. He couldn't mess up this friendship. Just having Cerberus here was enough for him. He isn't ready to push himself toward that road. *Why* did he like him so much anyway? Was it selfish to fall for someone who saved your life, or is comfy to the touch, or even had a warm smile? He didn't know Cerbi. He wants to, but he doesn't. For all he knew, Rickshaw's initial judgement could be right. He was a demon. Even if he was, why wouldn't Cerbi do anything now? Thoughts bounced around Mitsy's head profusely, they knocked at his skull walls and didn't let up. The only time he felt serenity was when he took a bite out of Cerbi's lumpy, lopsided cake. It made everything stop for just a moment, but a moment was all the kitty needed. Bite after bite, Mitsy ate away his feelings. To block out the world with a delectable dessert was enough to calm him down for just a moment. He's always been like this, eating just soothed him in ways he didn't expect anyone else to understand. Usually he had the control to space out his meal, though more of the cake continued to disappear down his gullet.

Beneath the shirt and apron his belly puffed, crumbs and icing fell down his windpipe and contributed to the growth. Mitsy's head felt a little lighter at that point, the pressure inside had stopped for the time being. That didn't mean *he* could stop, however. He had to keep his feast afloat. The sluggishness of those utensils truly got to Mitsy, there was something that bellowed up inside of him that had quickly distracted him. Those feelings had to be subdued with more red velvet cake, at a much faster rate. Outside of Cerbi's eyesight, Mitsy greedily dug handfuls out and sloppily shoveled down his maw. That spur-of-the-moment feeling didn't go away though, even as his throw-pillow-size, taut gut replaced the plate the cake rested on. It was then, and only then, when the stress eater realized the error of his ways. His stomach gurgled loudly, it was enough for the boy to stumble back onto his couch. He took sharp inhales and exhales, anything to distract from the pain of a large tum. All that cake...rested heavy on him. Perhaps just one nap wouldn't hurt? Mitsy closed his eyes, then felt slumber wash over.

When Cerberus entered back into the room to find Mitsy asleep, rather than say anything aloud, he simply slipped back into his pal's room. After a moment, he brought out a heavy blanket to fling over the catboy's body. Gently did it flutter down, that comatose cat boy covered by fluffy warmth. Instinctively, his hands gripped to the blanket atop him, an audible purr sounded off. Cerbi figured he'd wait for Mitsy to wake up before he tried any cleaning, so the

hellhound shrunk down to a considerably tiny size, just so he could share couch space with his best bud to rest atop his head.

A day like that turned to days, weeks, then months. Slight inconveniences Mitsy would try to breathe through became an excuse to snack. While spring continued to roll along, Mitsy's clothes grew tighter and tighter. Months of eating nothing but sweets in high quantities, offset by a lack of true exercise, coupled by every minute whisper being a stressor? It really added extra weight in more ways than one. Motivation began to waver when Mitsy had to juggle various reports, multiple conflicting feelings, anxiety over what was to come next. Every chance he had to confess to Cerbi, he wormed himself out of it with his anxious thoughts. One would think that being reabsorbed in his studies would improve his grades, yet restless nights of wondering where to go next, what to write afterward, and how to even approach self care led to some of his other classes being neglected. Mitsy was stuck in a destructive loop of misery. Feeling depressed, eating to feel better, funneled down the stressors of the unknown and inability to succeed...

Closer to the end of his spring semester, Mitsy sat outside in a vain attempt to try and focus on his studies. While people bobbed and weaved around the campus path, Cerbi had gone off to explore the public areas with excitement. By his lonesome, Mitsy tapped his noggin and stared down at his notes. Nothing came to mind, not even an inkling of how to continue his assignment. His final was nearly at his throat at that point... He was able to tune out the sounds of students walking by, though soon enough, a pair of voices were enough to break his concentration.

"Hey, aren't you Mitsuru?"

The half-felinis's concentration, or, what little there was, had been broken. His bright blue pools glanced up to his fellow students in a slight haze. A glance at their poppy red overcoats indicated they were upperclass students, a theory reinforced by their embroidered emblems on their left breasts. His tail slightly flicked behind his plumper rear end, hands pressed into his fuller lap.

"Uh...yes." he meekly nodded.

"Professor Phyne wanted us to check up on you." One of the students remarked with a smile, "Where have you been recently? It seemed like you just vanished..."

"Your name's also popped off the honor roll." Another brought up. "Did something happen? Can we help in any way?"

Mitsy cleared his throat. "N-No I'm just..."

The half-felinis turned his head over to the left, where he found Cerbi interacting with another student. A druid lass helped teach him how to make flower crowns from wildflowers. The two shared great, big smiles, something that tugged at Mitsy a bit. Despite not being a student, Cerbi had intermingled into the student body so easily. He was practically the campus pet, given he'd devour anything handed to him with a trusting smile, he was sociable around everyone, and he just opened up whenever someone poked him. That was something Mitsy couldn't do. His heart felt weak just imagining himself in that situation... was it jealousy? Was it apt to call that feeling jealousy? There was no malice, no hatred, just a longing to be in Cerbi's shoes.

"...Distracted."

"We'll tell Professor Phyne you're okay then." the other upperclassman nodded, then stepped away with their friends.

Those three parted ways with Mitsy, while they murmured amongst themselves. The peaceful chitters and chirps of the outdoor garden wouldn't return long to the poor cat. Another set of footsteps pulled Mitsy's head away from his sparse notes, only to find someone less desirable to talk to. This woman was slightly shorter than Mitsy, her moon-pale skin contrasted against her grayish black robes. Her hair was silver, her eyes a fierce yellow glow, and all adorned on those robes were hoop designs, along with the sigil from her abdomen down that paraded the sigil of Circe itself. Similar to that of a sword hilt at the top, paired off with a long curve. The heart, an appropriate, common sigil with those associated with the school, rested upon her above average bust. Arabas stood above the reluctant cat, arms crossed. Other students behind her bore similar robes, however their hoods obscured their faces from view. A couple thin women followed behind Arabas, though one portly one stuck close to her.

"My my my." taunted the mage, who kneeled down to get into Mitsy's face. "Moping in the garden, are we? What a pathetic little welp you've become."

Arabas made Mitsy's skin crawl. "Please leave me alone." he simply requested.

A few of the other girls chuckled at Mitsy's remark, before Arabas slipped in once again. "Leave you be? Please, you're my favorite student. It's hard to come across someone so adept at magic like yourself. Perhaps I should be studying you rather than rudimentary spells!"

"I-I said knock it off." Mitsy's eyes darted away again, they fell right to Cerbi, who took notice of Mitsy engaged with these ladies.

"Oh? Staring at the campus mutt?" Their leader giggled. "Perhaps you're the one who rehomed him. He's VERY well trained, but not at all disciplined."

The moment Arabas shifted topics to Cerbi, Mitsy swished his head back to look at her. “You **especially** leave him alone.” he puffed his cheeks with a strange intensity. He suddenly lost his helplessness.

“Charming, now the kitty has his claws!” Arabas scratched at the air and snickered.

“Who’s your friend, Mits?” Cerbi chirped while he stomped on over, his belly swayed and slapped up against his body.

Thoomp! Mitsy shut his notes aggressively and pulled himself off of where he sat. “No one worth talking to.”

“Oh, perhaps you’re mistaken.” Arabas chuckled. “We haven’t properly met, hound. My name is Arabas.”

Briefly, Cerbi tapped his chin to try and assess the woman’s name to memory. He snapped his fingers once something came to mind. “I know you! You’re that girl with the cult!” Such a statement made her and the posse she brought with her recoil. “Everybody talks about you on campus, you’re like, the mega-cult leader! I’ve never met someone who ran one of those before...”

“W-We are NOT a cult!” Arabas griped. “We’re Circe’s DEVOTED children, and...!” she growled, then threw her arms down. “Ladies, we’re leaving.”

The organized group stomped off in frustration at Cerbi’s earlier comments, each one made it abundantly clear in their sassy gait. Mitsy took a deep breath, then stomped in the other direction back to his dorm room. Cerbi followed behind curiously.

“I thought you needed to study?” Cerbi questioned.

Mitsy stormed off, still upset over his previous interaction. “I can study back in my room,” he emphasized, “all that I need to do is some light botany research.”

“Botany’s the thing about plants, right?” continued Cerbi, who pushed himself up to Mitsy’s side. Immediately, the heat of his body was enough to slow Mitsy down and relieve him some. “The garden’s full of them!”

Distractions had pushed the mage’s thoughts away from his assignment once he fully registered that bright, chipper tone of his best friend’s. “You, you have a way with people, you know that? How do you even manage it?”

“Aw, that’s easy.” Cerbi proudly put his hands to his hips. “Getting to know folks is just in the way you talk to them, and the way they talk to you! Even if I don’t hear or...get, anything they say, I can tell what they mean when they say it!”

"You're quite lucky." Mitsy sighed. "I hardly understand what some people mean, sometimes. Unless they're being obvious about it..."

Further down the path the two walked, a study session now turned sour over various things. For once, it wasn't just Arabas's attitude, it seemed to be Mitsy's as well. Though the silver haired lass couldn't help but storm off in an animated fashion, given her gritted teeth and flared nostrils. What broke her out of her trance for just a moment was a hand on her wrist, where she instinctively pulled away.

"I ought to decimate you for-" her insult was cut off when she saw the figure who gripped her.

There stood an individual in a cloak, her hand fine and well cared for despite some bruising around the knuckles. Despite not seeing her face at all, Arabas could feel a cold, intense gaze on her.

"My boss heard about your group." she revealed, "You're the Children of Circe, correct?"

"Y, Yes?" Arabas recoiled somewhat, not used to being recognized so candidly.

"What do you think about a small fee to be brought even closer to your faith...?"

—

The semester's end was the mark of a new cycle on campus. While students exited with training under their belt or temporarily retreated to the comfort of home, others stuck around to enjoy themselves. Parties, friendly gatherings, games and fun of all kinds. Mitsy, meanwhile, simply sat in his dorm and ate himself into stupors. On one particular summer day, Mitsy lounged in the fetal position on the couch, the curtains pulled together so the light wouldn't peak in. On the ground was an emptied bowl of what used to hold ice cream, emptied out by the depressed mage. The table he studied at was stacked with disheveled books and half-finished papers, a candle wick sat in lumpy wax. All seemed so similar, even when the door in front of him opened to reveal Cerbi himself. The hellhound was still happy-go-lucky and giddy, but the state of his bud was certainly a drag. He marched in with groceries, though seemingly a lot more than usual. Baking ingredients, ice cream, milks of all kinds, even fish oddly enough. Such a grand supply was then carefully rested on the counter.

"I'm home!" He chimed out, then started to put things away. "The shops were really wild today, but I think I managed to get everything!"

Mitsy glanced over to Cerbi, then gently smiled. "That's good..." His smile faded a bit after, before he glanced to the floor.

It took a bit more silence for Cerbi to respond. The hellhound slowed down his grocery chore, before he made his way to Mitsy's couch. Down on the other side he sat, then pat his pal on the shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Another window of silence, Mitsy wanted to find what would be the right words to say without risking anything. "I'm fine." It felt better to lie than to tell Cerbi how he really felt.

"You'd been down for a while now." Cerbi shook his head, "If this's what fine looks like, then I think I've been using the word wrong."

With that, Mitsy sighed. "I'm just...down." He mustered at least a little bit of truth. "You know? I've had to take summer classes and it's...weighing on me."

"Are you sure that's not just the cupcakes you made?" Cerbi genuinely wondered, then poked into Mitsy's abdomen. The cat blushed and glanced away. "You've been eating a LOT more lately, and I know you can't eat like me. Your stomach gets all...noisy and red sometimes, like it's gonna pop."

Mitsy shuffled away some. "It's just like that sometimes."

"I wanna see the Mitsy I saw when we first got here." Cerbi gently put his hand on Mitsy's thigh, which most certainly activated something in the cat. "The smiling one. The one who talked to me. The one who wasn't just eating all the dang time and ignoring everything else. C'mon, what's got you so sad?"

Cerbi genuinely cared, Mitsy knew that for certain. How *could* he go about expressing himself in a way that wouldn't hurt his roomy? It all felt so very, very impossible. Those tender feelings still remained, only egged on the longer that warm, warm hand was pressed down on the catboy's chubby thigh.

"It's just..." Mitsy began, "Sometimes, friends *don't* feel comfortable with sharing something, you know? There's something that I really can't share because I..." He gulped a bit. "Cuz it'll just hurt you."

"It hurts me more seeing you like this." Cerbi's ears flopped, tail limp and lifeless. "Whatever you're feeling can't hurt me as much as you're hurt now, could it?"

The only response from Mitsy was a nod, which only affirmed his idea that his feelings could harm more than suppressing them.

Cerbi sighed, then stood back up. "Tell you what." He began an ultimatum. "I want you to talk to someone about this. If you can't talk about it with a friend, then you gotta talk about it with an enemy!"

Logic like that made the cat's head spin. He lethargically shuffled his body up the couch's arm rest. "Cerbi, that's a terrible idea."

"No no no, I mean it. If something like this will hurt your friends, then it's strong enough to be held by your enemies." He rubbed his chin a little, then smirked. "Don't you really hate that tutor of your's? What was her name...Airbuds?"

"Arabas." Mitsy corrected.

"Only saw it written." Cerbi defended himself, "Arabas... why don't you get your tush up off the couch, and march on over to Arabas and tell her what's got you down?"

"Why? She would only make fun of me, or use this as an example of why I should be studying more..."

With a tsk, the hellhound wagged his finger. "If you don't go see her, then noooo red velvet cake for you!"

The problem was that Cerbi, while still no expert, had gotten pretty decent at making red velvet cakes on his own. What made them taste so delectable was the fact they were made by him... with a sigh, the cat got to his feet, then pulled himself up. "...Okay." He answered, then took a few deep breaths. "I'll go see Arabas on the ordeal."

"Lemme know how it goes, 'kay bud?" His pal pat him on the back while the nervous wreck shuffled outside.

The sun hit him like a ton of bricks, it absolutely sizzled his skin some. Had he seriously been away from its warm embrace for THAT long? Sheepish of other people around him, Mitsy slung his hood up to conceal his face. Sure, people would recognize who he was thanks to the signature blues in his normal attire, though at least he could feel some solace in not having to face them. Down through the outdoors of his dormitory he trailed, past the onlookers with distrust and nervousness. He snaked through, eyes set to the pavement below him. He knew where he was headed, no need to look up at all. Past the main campus building, through a creepy little forest, and in a small clearing sat not a dorm, but a sorority house. Children of Circe Sorority, to be exact, a small faction of women students loyal and devoted to the goddess of magic herself. It was a gothic style home, painted in a slightly faded white. Three floors, it peaked slightly over the giant brush and forest nearby. It loomed so ominously over the desperate catboy, yet no men were allowed in. If it was an emergency, only women medical and security staff could enter. The fact Mitsuru could come by unprovoked was the only exception, mainly of his girly nature. Mitsy knocked gently on the door, then sat down by the stairs. He *hated* being out in the murky forest down the mountainside, it was dark, gloomy, filled with bugs of all kinds. How could this sorority deal with such a location? It was beyond his understanding...

The creak of a door behind him broke the wreck out of his trance, and out came another figure. "If I so much have to-" Those silver strands and golden eyes were all too familiar to Mitsy. Arabas stopped in her tracks when she saw him at her door. "...You."

"I uh..." Mitsy was about to lie, but something in his brain gripped him back onto the right track. "I need your advice, Arabas."

A tsk came from the human. "Great, you need my help? Pathetic, Mitsuru. Here I thought you were the brighter one out of the both of us"

"It isn't about tutoring," Mitsy promised, "it's something more...personal?"

"Don't you have any friends who can help you with a problem like that?"

With a glance down to his side, Mitsy spoke a small, squeaky "No."

Arabas groaned, then crossed her legs. She pulled out a stopwatch from her long, baggy sleeves, then clicked the top of it. "Talk."

On a timer, Mitsy took a breath, then let loose. "So, a few months ago, a guy, er, C-Cerbi, moved into my dorm room, right? He's funny, he's nice, he might be slow and not of high intelligence but that doesn't matter to me. He saved my life twice, he looks out for me, he appreciates being around me and I...I think I'm in love with him and I can't confess it."

The stopwatch clicked, mainly by Arabas's thumb press in shock. At that point, she leaned over to look Mitsy in the eyes. "You love this man."

"Y...yeah."

"Yet in your feeble-hearted attempts to woo him, you're-"

"Could you drop the act just for a moment and...talk to me like a real person? It's just us."

The silver haired girl blinked for a bit. She looked behind her to see if anyone was listening, then closed the door. Down she sat to Mitsy's level, then smirked.

"First of all then," she clasped her hands together. "Good tastes."

"W-Wha-"

"A man with that much layering to him is going to keep you warm, even if you've been stuffing your face like a greedy little pig."

"H, Hey!"

"I can *SMELL* the cake on you still. You must be stuffing your face a lot, aren't you?"

"Th...that's-"

"Look." Arabas put her hand on Mitsy's shoulder. "A sheltered shrewy like you has never been in this situation before, right? Get to the point. Are you stress eating because you want to be comfortable, or do you want to do anything but admit to him how you feel?"

Mitsy took a breath. "What if he doesn't feel the same way? What if the relationship ends up hurting our friendship...?"

"Circe strike me down, it's *this argument*." Arabas pinched the bridge of her nose, then groaned again. "Why do wallflowers ALWAYS default to this argument?" It was then she got up, then rolled her neck. "Alright Mitsuru, I shall do this the easy way then. You have no confidence, a subconscious that's stomping you in your place, and this big hunk of love lumbering over you with his thick, meaty arms, waiting to squeeze you in a hug?"

All those words were like an attack on Mitsy's character, his mind and soul. All of it made him realize the horrifying, shocking truth, that he was, in fact, truly a submissive cat. He tightened his fists, he was powerless to his own anxieties.

"Now you're here," Arabas taunted, "so desperate for help that you come to your worst enemy. All you want to do is admit your feelings, move on and get your life back in order. Am I right?"

"Yes, okay!" Mitsy snapped, then stood up. "I'm a subby little idiot who can't help but gawk at perfection! When I look at Cerbi I see the man I want to cuddle with for the rest of my life! I wanna tell him how thankful I am of him every damn day I'm graced with BREATHING around him! I want him to feel as loved as I am whenever he BESTOWS me with his presence, whenever he makes me feel like a loving spouse just by touching me! I'M. IN. LOVE. AND I CAN'T EXPRESS IT BECAUSE I'M SCARED." The sudden outburst, coupled with emphasis by claps, made the kitty look pretty unhinged. He slunk back down to his seat, then took a breath. "I'm...sorry. I'm just sick to death of feeling like a worthless plep."

Certainly not a side Arabas ever thought she'd see from this wallflower, it left her speechless for a decent chunk of time. After a bit, she cleared her throat, then pulled her hand back into her sleeve. By this point, Mitsy held his face in his hand, then looked the other way. A sly smirk twisted itself onto the girl's face, before she swashed her lips to control that minor outburst.

"Then perhaps we need to take even more drastic measures." Arabas deduced. Mitsy's blue eyes slightly glanced back, he saw what Arabas had yinked out of her sleeve by that

point. In the lady's hand rested a small vial, pink, bubbly liquid sloshed around inside. Already, Mitsy had his reservations, but Arabas's comment afterwards really sealed the deal. "Mitsuru, have you ever heard of a love potion?"

Arabas's words rang through Mitsy's head. The more he thought about it, such a proposition felt untrue to his core beliefs. If he was going to love Cerbi, it would be for who he was. On the other hand, the potion felt like it would be the only way to know for certain that he could share his love with Cerbi. His heart beat fast, that mental struggle between will he won't he pulsed at the catboy's brain. Dare he take the love potion from Arabas? Would it even work? Visible beads of sweat formed along the forehead of the catboy, loud squeaks followed suit.

"What' shall it be then?" The question further egged on Mitsy's fight or flight response.

With his one hand up, the mage's blue eyes intensified on the small vial. That sloshy bright liquid bubbled about, while the sorority girl shook it about gently. Words were like a slushy slop in Mitsy's brain, so many things went on up in that noggin that thinking straight was out of the question. One might even see the veins on his head show, or the air around Mitsy vibrate intensely with him. He looked temptation in the eye, in all its allure and glamor, only to make his decision by the slam of said hand down onto his lap.

"It wouldn't be right!" Mitsy bellowed, "I love Cerbi for who he is, not some cheap imitation! I couldn't do it, I-"

"Slow down." Arabas interrupted, her free hand pinched Mitsy's lips with her pointer and middle finger. "This kind of love potion isn't for *Cerbi*, per say."

Mitsy blinked in surprise, it took a bit for him to even respond properly. "Whuh doob yoo meemb?" Was the only mumble he could muster with his lips the way they were.

"I thought you figured as much?" Arabas questioned, then groaned. By then, she let go of his lips. "A concoction like this isn't for Cerbi to drink. It's a potion that intensifies the love of someone they already feel affection towards."

"So..." Mitsy pointed to himself shakily.

Arabas grinned a little, then nodded slowly. "This brew lasts a whole hour, so if you drink it when you see Cerbi, all those little worries in your head will just melt away. The intense feeling of love and affection will block out all those worries away. That way, you can confess, see how Cerbi feels, and then you'll know if it's meant to be or not."

"What if he says-"

“Ahpt.” Her fingers once again squished Mitsy’s lips. “If it doesn’t work out, the love potion wears off early. The affection will die down a tad in your mind enough for, at that moment, you to realize that you two will just be friends.”

Mitsy gulped, then nodded as Arabas let his lips go. “Alright.” He agreed, then opened the palm of his hand. “...I think I’ll try it.”

With a sly smirk, the sorority girl shook her head. “I’m not giving this to you for *free*.” She mocked, “Nonono, this is hard to make as is.”

With a grumble, Mitsy pulled out a sash meant to be his wallet from within his robes. “F-Fine, how much?”

“Two-thousand silver coins.”

“WHAT?!” Mitsy reeled back up to his feet.

To put it in perspective, two-*hundred* silver coins could buy a lot. A horse and buggy, a heavy sword, at least five rejuvenation potions, sometimes referred to as health potions, even a small establishment if one knew where to look. A love potion was often too taboo to make, but one could find them for a thousand if they knew where to look. Two-*thousand*, on the other hand, could afford permanent accommodations in sheltered wilderness.

“Well?” The con artist slid the potion behind her back, and her free hand stretched toward Mitsy, palmside up. “I believe two-thousand coins is like pocket change to you, Mitsuru Ryuu, of the late Ryuu lineage. Don’t you love your Cerbi-Werbi enough to pay top coin?”

He groaned, then dropped his wallet into Arabas’s hand. “Fine, just...give.”

“Wise choice~”

The sorority girl swapped hands, her potion hand now visible to the catboy, while his wallet would disappear into one of those baggy sleeves. He swiped that vial and looked deeply into its bubbly, throving form. There was a weird sense of reassurance within the hot pink liquid that hadn’t hit Mitsy’s eyes prior. It was as if the bubbles themselves wanted to tell the kitty he made the right choice for certain.

“Now, buzz off, will you?” Arabas stood up, then made her way to the door. “I’m going to be very, very busy tonight, and I don’t need you killing my buzz.”

He knew when he was no longer needed, and made a mad dash away from the sorority house. Carefully, Mitsy cupped the potion in his hand and ran back to his dorm the best his chunkier legs could move him. While Arabas watched Mitsy disappear up the hill and into the woods, she smirked to herself.

“Sucker.” she insulted through a hushed tone. “Now...time to reconsider that offer.”

Arabas twisted the door open, back toward it, then slid right back into her sorority. A lot of work was to be done.

Poor Mitsy had already started panting by the time he turned the corner. The excruciating pain of heat hit him once he made his way out of the dense forests, and back onto campus grounds. Uphill, in robes, in blistering, sun beating thirty-five-degrees-celsius? It was a lot for the poor cat, who hadn't been outside since his depression really kicked in. He slowed down once he neared his dorm, having lazed and dragged himself around for so long had done a lot to his athleticism. Not that he was ever athletic in the FIRST place, but he could run a decent bit before all this added pudge. The steps up to his room were probably the most tired he felt at that point, he had to climb up like some kind of strange crab in order to avoid his chafing. Soon enough, he got to his front door, and took a moment to lean on the wall next to his door to just breathe. Doubts came back into his mind, but those gloomy thoughts already felt a mile away. Lungs replenished, he knocked on his door.

“Comiiing!” Chimed Cerbi's voice, who grew ever closer.

This was it. Mitsy unveiled the potion in his palms and looked down on it with bated breath. Whether or not it would work at that point was irrelevant, he would have to try. The cork to the vial popped ever so easily, then, without even so much as a waft, the eager cat glugged down the concoction. Another bout of puffs, before he planted his feet at the front of the door. This was it. He wouldn't lie when he might say that his heart beat a mile a minute, insane palpitations of ludicrous calibers that made his head swirl. Yet, the boy was ready, the love potion would aid him in his admittance. He was positive of it. The knob on the door swung to the left, then the door itself opened. His roommate stood right there above him, a tower of tubby perfection. It already felt like it worked, doubts and nerves were subdued in the moment where that cat threw himself into dog belly, with a big hug.

A little shocked, Cerbi chuckled a bit. “Hey, you're feeling better already!” He chimed, “Wanna talk?”

“Yeah~” With the side of his head pressed down in fleshy dough, the cat began to idly rub his hands along that tan gut. “About a lot of things, and, about one thing at the same time...”

He let go of his crush so they could discuss inside, cheeks all red with blush. The dog slipped back, and let his host walk in. “Well sure thing! Whatever you wanna talk about, lemme know!”

Down came the slightly plump cat, onto Cerbi's side of the couch, before he took a deep breath. “You know how when we first met, you, uh, saved my life?”

“Saved your life?” Cerbi tapped his chin. “Uh, I didn’t think I was saving your life, but just making sure you don’t get hurt!”

“Well, you know how we got to know each other?” Mitsy egged on. “Remember when we baked velvet cake together?”

“Yeah,” Cerbi chuckled, “then you started getting all sad, but it looks like you’re happy now! Whatever your tutor did, we gotta thank her later on!”

“Forget about Arabas for now.” Time for the sinker. With his hands to his chest, eyes locked into Cerbi’s red voids, he somehow found the words that he had searched for ever since he first felt something. “I was sad before because I didn’t know how to express my feelings. I didn’t know how to tell you what I really felt, my appreciation, my sympathy, my empathy. Most of all though, my affection.” Mitsy gripped onto Cerberus’s warm hand, then held it tight up to his chest. “Cerbi, I know we’ve only known each other for a few months, but the moment I met you, there was this void in my life that filled itself! I kept beating myself up, telling myself that you wouldn’t understand, but...I’m confident you do! Cerbi...will you be my boyfri-”

Mitsy was cut off when Cerbi pulled his hand away. Shocked at first, that flabbergasted fog went away when he saw the big grin on the dog’s face. Cerbi wrapped his chunky arms around the cat, in probably the hardest hug he’d ever given. The mix of raw power behind those arms, and just the absolute cushions that they, along with Cerbi’s moobs and chest were, made quite the mixed feeling within the catboy, alongside the context, or lack thereof. Maybe the potion’s effects were dulled for a bit, because now Mitsy felt a wash of confusion, relief, and worry flow over him. Was he accepted? Was he rejected? What did THIS of all things mean? It took so long for him to realize this, with Cerbi’s outright statement towards his interrupted question.

“I thought you’d never ask!”

“...W-What?” Mitsy wheezed out, maybe that didn’t help the confusion, but the worry definitely deflated down.

Cerbi chuckled, then ruffled his host on the head. “You’d never thought I’d notice?” He teased, “C’mon Mits, I’m stupid, not dumb! You’re nice, you’re caring, you really want me to learn about things, plus you smile a lot when you look at me!~”

“W-W-Wait...” Mitsy huffed, then shuffled a bit to take back in air. “You knew?!”

“I was just waiting for you to say it.” Admitted the hellhound. “I dunno much about love. I just know that it’s when two people want to stay with each other for as long as they can! I dunno how to ever start that, you know? I only know the middle parts.” He let the cat down, then pat his thigh once again. “Sorry if that was the reason why you were so down, but, of course I wanna be with you. You’re *THE* Mitsuru Ryuu, there’s no other guy out there like you!”

Whatever remainder of doubt that lingered in Mitsy was flung out the window by that point. To complete the trade off of hugs, Mitsy swung his little arms around Cerbi's body once more, then nuzzled into him. For the first time in a long time he felt...happy. Like the world could implode on itself and he'd be just fine. Him and his hellhound, two unbreakable bonds. Yeah, there was never a reason to doubt. The gratefulness swamped Mitsy, he could actually feel his eyes well up with tears.

In a crackly, shaky voice, Mitsuru gazed upon Cerberus and uttered "Thank you...~"

The two of them cuddled a bit more on the couch, Cerbi glad to have his friend, no, his *boyfriend* back, while Mitsy was ever so dazzled by love's warm embrace. For the first time in a long time, the hellhound felt just how chilly Mitsy's skin was to the touch. He was a cold, cold boy, paired right up with a warm boy. It made him smile just how they had so many opposites, yet, came together in their strong bond. It was wonderful, truly, wholeheartedly, wonderful. While the sun set through the curtains, Mitsy found himself too exhausted to get up. Not like Cerbi would force him, he let the cat use his belly like a pillow, while he drifted off to sleep. That potion really worked after all, and Mitsy couldn't be anymore happy in that moment.

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An evening slumber was met by a bright, early morning. Another weekend meant Mitsy wouldn't have to worry about going to class, and instead, he could pleasantly spend the time he had with his now boyfriend. Though, with the big lug still asleep, that meant Mitsy had to step up and make breakfast for them. Wouldn't be too hard, since the doggo came back with groceries just yesterday. It was easy for the catboy to make breakfast for himself, but someone who probably weighed ten times more would definitely be harder. Not to worry, for he had magic on his side! While disembodied hands squeezed oranges into glasses, those glasses were gently filled with small bits of ice that materialized from thin air. Other hands pulled out ingredients and prepared pancake batter, while Mitsy himself worked to scramble some eggs. The satisfactory cracks made his spine tingle, and the thought of where this would all go made his smile bright and big. With ease, Mitsy prepared a mighty feast of breakfast, and had it all located close to Cerbi.

The hellhound awoke slightly when Mitsy straddled on his stomach, but didn't say much when his tongue was met by a forkful of bacon. "Morning, sleepyhead..." Mitsy was still a tad bit tired, yet he was able to put that behind to give Cerbi a cute breakfast in 'bed' session.

With a gulp, the oblivious dogman waggled his tail. "You look pretty sleepy too, y'know." He teased, then scratched behind his lover's ear.

The purrs were loud and throaty, probably the only thing deep about Mitsy's voice at all. "St-stoppp~" Chimed the kitty, clearly too into the scritchies to seriously demand them to be over.

“Okay, okay~” With his hand off his lover’s head, the hellhound gently placed it on the couch’s arm rest. “What’s your big plan for today then?”

Another forkful of bacon would enter the big chunkster’s mouth, before Mitsy even thought of responding. “How about you have breakfast?” He suggested, “I’ll be more than happy to feed it to you!”

While that was all fine and good, Cerbi intercepted a muffin, then gently shoved the top end into Mitsy’s mouth. “How about...we share~?” He cooed, “Cuz you got a lotta work to do if you’re gonna catch up with me~”

With a few chews, then a gulp, Mitsy continued along. “Catch up with you? What, you want me to be fatter?”

“Only if you want.” That seemed to be the bargain Cerbi was willing to put down. “You look really cute this chubby! But I get if bein’ big upsets you, so don’t-”

“N-No,” The cat interrupted, “it’s okay, I’d...yeah. I’d be fine with having some more weight on me.” One hand rubbed along the hellhound’s gut, and pressed down into its softness. “How...how big would you like me?”

“As big’s you’re comfortable with. No need to push yourself if you don’t end up liking it, kay-kay?”

“I think I’ll gain passively then, but, I bet you by fall next year my butt will be a blimp~”

“Heheheh~!” Cerbi pecked Mitsy on his nose, which sent the cat into a bright pink flush. “You think one day you’ll get so big I hafta carry you like a princess?”

That comment made Mitsy huff, then shove a muffin into Cerbi’s maw. “Tease me like that again and I’m going to find a way to make you permanently unable to move...”

“I’hhw beeh righdt onn tobba youh!” Cerbi pseudo-threatened, still with muffin bits in his mouth.

That made the catboy giggle a tad. “Jokes on you, living underneath your blubber’s a dream come true...”

Exchanges like those were infrequent after that, the two mainly focused on feeding one another slowly and methodically. Such a giant feast Mitsy had made slowly turned to crumbs to be scrubbed off of plates, glasses to be washed from the inside out, utensils to be washed squeaky clean. The catboy only planned to feed Cerbi, so when he felt his bloated belly press onto his boyfriend’s face, he knew he went overboard for sure. The boy pressed down on his tummy to let some of the pressure travel upward, and out came a tiny, but relieving burp. With a

napkin, the lad was polite enough to wipe his face clean. This was more satisfying than stress eating, actually being able to taste what you created, in the company of your bestest mate...it was invigorating!

"That was a wonderful breakfast~" Mitsy chimed, then slowly slid off of Cerbi. "Hew...now I have to get to cleaning the dorm room." With no clouds of funk over him, he could now focus on the messes he made during his darkest moment...which wasn't much, just a few robes that haven't been washed yet. The kitty was naturally a clean person.

Cerbi's seemingly two brain cells collided in a way for him to have a *thought* once again, that's when he piped up. "Hey, wait though."

"What's wrong?"

"What about that girl that helped you out?" Cerbi brought up. "She said or did something to help you get over your sads, right?"

A good point was raised to be sure, all this wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for Arabas's love potion, right? While she's a pretty unapproachable figure, the catboy *did* have it in him to at least go and thank her if he could.

"I see your point." Mitsy nodded, then held out his hand for Cerbi to grab on. "Shall I lead you to Arabas's residence, then?"

Eagerly, Cerbi grabbed hold of his boyfriend's hand, and made off with him to the sorority house. There were definitely eyes on both boys, whom locked hands the whole way there. Mitsy's stuffed gut bounced and wobbled with each rough step, while it lightly shook otherwise. Every tough trudge was enough to stifle a burp out of him, which was met with either a chuckle or round of encouragement by the hellhound dummy next to him. The rocky road slightly off campus was less of a struggle to march down now that he took his time, especially with his own rock to help lean on in need of support. That spooky forest was not a problem for Mitsy anymore, who felt like he had a smidge of all the confidence in the world. That was, until he came across the sorority house.

That big building had its front doors wide open, footprints had kicked away mess and dust patterns that were once left over. There was nothing, not a peep of noise from further inside, not a sign of life in the foyer...it was like a mass abduction. Mitsy followed up the front steps, completely befuddled. Cerbi just tilted his head confused. "This's the place, right?"

"This...is the place, yes." Mitsy answered skiddishly. "What happened here...? Arabas was here yesterday, she...she helped me out, how...?"

Still a polite young man, he waited outside the girls only sorority, twiddling his thumbs idly. Cerbi, on the other hand, started to rummage around the outside. Old, decayed leaves were

foot-swept aside by the gentle giant, the fresh air ruffled his fluffy hair. The crunch of leaves turned quickly to the crunch of parchment beneath Cerbi's boot. Curious, he hoisted up his foot to glance at what he'd stepped upon, then peeled it away. With a squint, he tried to read along, only to slip by the patient catboy.

"What's this word?" Cerbi pointed to a particularly complicated phrase.

The half-felinis sighed, then pulled the paper over. "It says 'exasperated', Cerbi." Mitsy explained, "Basically it..." He squinted his eyes, then pulled the paper up to his eye level. "Wait a minute...wait, Cerbi! I recognize this handwriting!"

Up he went from his spot, then he began to read aloud. "Dear Pitiful Neerdowell, Your pathetic display yesterday served to benefit my coven! Your increasing desperation had left you exasperated, the perfect prey for my scam?! That vial was just sugar water coupled with smoke and mirrors?! Shall we never meet again, signed - Ara-ba-ba-ba-HUH?!" The note was flung up into the air, while Mitsy pulled his hat down over his head. There was a muffled scream from within, enough to puff it up a tad. "That *WITCH* sc-sc-scammed me?!"

"What? Huh?" Cerbi slid over, clearly seeing Mitsy uncharacteristically upset.

The cat lifted up his hat to show red had crept along his face, not from sheepishness or embarrassment, no. This was rage, evident by his grit teeth and puffy nostrils. "I can't believe she used me, Cerbi!" His screech broke through the treelines. "Arabas!! She just USED me to move her and her sorority out of campus! She tricked me into thinking she was helping me!!"

Without saying much else at first, Cerbi wrapped his arms around Mitsy. The cat pouted and bit down on his tongue, but the warm embrace of his boyfriend slowly, steadily, made him more lax. "It's alright Mits..." He began, then pet his boyfriend on the head like an actual cat. "Sure, she might've took advantage of you and stole your cash, but...it worked, didn't it? In the end it actually worked?"

"That doesn't make what she did right..." Mitsy's tail slid down closer to his ankles. "What she did was wrong, not even it working makes it okay."

"You can get money back though." Cerbi justified, "Well, at least, we can."

"What if she tries to scam someone else though?" Mitsy looked up to the man comforting him. "Or worse, actually hurt them in other ways? Don't you think we need to stop them?"

"We don't even know where they went though..." Cerbi continued to pet and comfort the kitty around his arms. "It's a lost cause, isn't it? Let's just find our own time together, let's try to forget about it, okay? You got me, be happy, Mits..."

With a bigger sigh, Mitsy just stuck himself further into the hug. "I can make back the money, but..." Mitsy pulled out. "Other people can't. They're gonna get hurt."

Cerbi nodded a little. "So that's why we should put out onna those...report things." He explained, poorly. "Y'know, so guards can go hunt her down? People who're smarter at this stuff than we are."

"I guess you're right in that regard..." Relented the mage, who had a light smile. "Okay, we'll put out a report on Arabas. Hopefully we'll get someone who can produce a nearly accurate sketch of her..."

There was still that little part of Mitsy that was angry deep down, getting swindled out of two-thousand silver coins was a blow to your ego, no matter how much you probably had stored away. While Cerbi helped ease most of those feelings off of him, that mage would more than likely hold that grudge in the back of his mind for a long, long while. His little freakout was already pretty eventful, at least, to him. It wouldn't hurt to just go back and relax, now would it...?