

Chapter 10 - Sweet Addiction

Antonio didn't know how to take Tara's reaction. If he were to be completely honest with himself, he had expected something far worse... but still, he had hoped for outright acceptance as well. So although her reaction was entirely legitimate, he couldn't help but feel slightly offended.

Was she not attracted to him the way he was to her?

To him, she was basically the center of his universe - his sun. And his world began and ended with her. Ever since he had met her, the attraction had turned into an infatuation, and then soon became an addiction - a sweet addiction.

Sure, the feelings hadn't come from naught, they had developed over the course of four whole years. But he would have sworn at least their chemistry was undeniable, if nothing else.

As she asked for a month to think things through, to weigh the pros and the cons of dating an older man, and one of her dad's clients, he couldn't help but agree but on two conditions, the first one being that she did not date anyone in that month - well, duh! - and the second one being that she spent the night with him despite it all.

When she agreed to the deal, he couldn't help the smirk that stretched his lips.

"Kimo!" She exclaimed in a mock disgusted tone, before adding, "What are you smirking about?"

"What did you just say?" He asked, brow furrowed.

"What are you smirking about?" She repeated slowly.

"Before that," he told her, his frown deepening.

"Oh," a glimmer of mischief entered her eyes, and a hint of red tinted her cheeks, "that's the contraction for kimochi warui, which means in Japanese disgusting, or something of the sort."

"That would be an abbreviation, not a contraction then, kitten," he told her. A fond smile stretched his lips as he added, "And I think you need help. You obviously watch too many animes."

Her blush deepened at his words, and he then ruffled her hair lovingly.

"I'm too puerile, aren't I?" She asked meekly.

“No, you’re not,” he was quick to say, “It’s endearing really that you love animes. And it makes you innocent in a way.”

“I’m not innocent,” she glared at him, looking like an angry kitten.

“Oh, really?” He taunted, “What did you do lately that could warrant you a punishment?”

She looked to be deep in thought for a moment, and his smile broadened.

Good god, he was whipped!

“Okay,” she conceded after a short while, “you had me there. But I’m not innocent.” He shot her a pointed look as if to say drop-it, and she added exasperatedly, “I’m not innocent.”

“Give me one valid example,” he teased.

“I almost did it with an older man...” before she could finish, he thundered a “Who? Who dared to touch what is mine?”

She rolled her eyes at him and added, “namely you.”

“Oh,” he let out rather sheepishly.

“Yes, oh.”

“Why would that warrant a punishment though? You’re not that religious to want to save your virginity for marriage, or are you?”

“I’m not,” she admitted easily. “I just have yet to find the right person.”

He smiled at her before pinching her cheeks, much like he would a child, making her exclaim rather angrily, “Hey! What are you doing? I’m not seven, you know?”

“Oh, I know, kitten,” his voice dropped down several notes. “I assure you that I am no pedophile.”

“I... I didn’t mean it like that,” she stammered on her first word before shifting her gaze to the floor.

“I know you didn’t, kitten,” he said, “If I don’t tease you, however, who will?”

She stuck out her tongue at him in a rather childish manner and he couldn’t help but chuckle at her.

She was more than his sun, she was the light to his darkness. She was the yin to his yang.

What would he do if she were to refuse him?

Let's think positively, Romeo, he thought.

"Could we go to bed now, Antonio?" She asked sweetly. "Separately if you please."

"Sure," he told her matter-of-factly, "although I feel offended that you would even think I would do anything to you when I promised you that there'll be no funny business from my part."

"Oh, I didn't mean it like that," she said in an embarrassed tone, "I trust you... to some extent."

"What are you implying, kitten?" He iced out, all humor gone from his voice, a frown marring his face. "I am a man of my word. And I live by my word."

"It is me I don't trust," she admitted meekly after a small pause. "I don't trust myself not to seek you out in the middle of the night."

His frown disappeared at that, and an ear-splitting grin replaced it.

So, his feelings were not one-sided.

To say he was pleased it wouldn't cover the half of it.

"Well," he began in a light tone, as he stroke her cheek softly, "considering it is well past midnight now, you would be seeking me out in the early hours of the day I'd say..."

She punched him lightly on the arm, and a scathing glare was sent his way.

"You trying to be funny perhaps?"

"Is it working?" He asked in all fake seriousness.

"Smart ass," She rolled her eyes at him, but he could see that her lips were twitching.

"Oh, cariña," he let out in a mock hurt tone, "I'm wounded that you're only here for my beautiful and - as you put it - smart ass."

Her eyes widened in shock at what he was implying no doubt, and she let out an exasperated "Argh!" before adding, "Antonio De La Cruz," he sobered up at her use of his full name, "Do you want to die of blue balls?"

It was his eyes' turn to widen in shock and horror. He made a gesture as if to sew his lips together, sealing them and then held his hands up in surrender.

“I didn’t think so,” she scoffed at him and he felt the urge to bring her closer and kiss her senseless... but he squished it down, for he was indeed a man of his word. And he’d stand by it for better or for worse