

Title: Secrets in the Rain

Short Novel Story: Sweet Revelry

“What kind of cake are you looking for?”

I was greeted warmly by the kind tone of the old lady from the pastry shop. Everything looked good, it reminded me of how special this day was. I recounted how I prepared for this day. I took an early shift so I could leave midday to get her something sweet from this place she especially took a liking to.

It has been a month since we have started dating. It might not be much, but I want to surprise her and make her smile. Now, I’m not really sure if other couples celebrate ‘monthsaries’ but I am not going to let this moment pass by doing nothing. After all, it was thanks to that rainy day that we met again...it was because of that day that we’re together now.

“I recommend this tart. It’s our bestseller these days.” The old lady smiled, pointing towards a round pastry topped with glazed strawberries. I am a simple guy who only cares about eating sweets without minding the designs that much...but I could tell that this almost looks like a work of art.

“I see...it does look absolutely delicious.” I commented while examining the tart closely. *“This is very popular with female customers.”* The old lady continued. *“We also have this dark chocolate ganache tart, it has a refreshing taste that is not too bitter and not too sweet. It’s very rich so I also recommend it.”* She motions a thumbs up as she brought the chocolate tart to my attention.

“Hmmm...that also looks good.” I murmured. I must have gotten the attention of the kind old clerk because I had been standing and wandering around the shop staring at these cakes with a troubled face. But now, I’ve become more confused. My girlfriend likes fruits so that strawberry tart will definitely be a hit. However, the appeal of this chocolate tart is difficult to dismiss.

Looking back, it was the chocolate she gave me when we were younger that sparked my interest in sweets. And she would always tell me that I could never go wrong with chocolate. I think I got it now.

“I’ll have this chocolate ganache tart, please...and make it two!” I excitedly declared to the old lady. The clerk then bowed slightly and confirmed my order. She asked me to wait for a while so she could prepare the tarts for wrapping. I found myself sitting there while imagining what my girlfriend would say once she sees this. I smiled, lost in thought.

“Are you going to have this with someone?” asked the old lady as she turned around to hand me the box. *“Ah, yes...it’s a bit embarrassing to say but there’s this girl I’ve been dating for a month now. It might be unusual to someone else, but I really want to do something for our ‘monthsary’, no matter how small it might be.”*

I scratched my cheeks trying to hide my bashfulness. I didn’t intend to say it but I ended up telling her everything. I didn’t know I was that nervous. *“Fufufu...how sweet of you, dear. Most of the time, those ‘small things’ mean so much more to people. I’m sure your girlfriend will be happy. Congratulations on your monthsary.”* The old lady assured me.

Ah... I feel so embarrassed. Am I that easy to read? I think all of my feelings are spilling right off of my face. I really appreciate her reassurance.

I lowered my head, thanked the old lady, and bid her farewell. I should have gotten the strawberry tart, but I do wish my girlfriend would like this. Clutching the box, I walked out the shop carrying with me not only the sweets, but also my hopes for this day.

As I was walking towards my house, I thought of the ways she would react to my surprise. She’s a lovely woman, I’m sure she was cherished by others before, but I am hoping that she would smile and appreciate my small but meaningful gesture. This is the first time I’m going to do this for someone so I am unsure of what else to do. Nevertheless, I’ll keep working hard to make her happy.

After passing a few blocks around the corner, I finally arrived at the front door of my house. I could feel my chest suddenly bursting. This is it! I need to hide this before she comes back. I unlocked the door with shaky hands and when I opened it, I immediately caught a whiff of her scent. No, she's not home yet, but my house smells like her.

I had been living alone for a couple of years now but somehow, right after dating her, it feels like we are almost cohabiting. Since I'm always busy with the clinic, she would often come and see me and wait for me here just like a young wife would. I didn't ask for it but she would often do my house chores —cleaning, doing my laundry, ironing my uniforms, and cooking my meals— which I appreciate so much.

The house feels so lonely when she's not here. It's like she has always been a part of this place and without her, it doesn't feel complete anymore. Each corner of the house has traces of her, as if she belongs here from the start. My life has never been better, I have never been happy like this, it's all thanks to her, for coming back to my life again.

My solitary life seems like a distant memory now. But I don't hate this kind of lifestyle. Of course, I'm not saying this because she's helping me in the house. And definitely, I will learn the proper ways of cleaning up too. It would be fun to do the chores together. I'll definitely show her that I can also be a reliable husband...in the future. Hehe...just thinking like this makes me feel shy.

The ticking of the clock suddenly took my attention. Ah, I forgot to ask her what time she'll be coming back...and...is she even coming here today? Oh no...I forgot to do the most important thing! Why am I so bad at this?! I mean, she comes everyday but I should have made sure of it. Ugh...okay let's text her.

Just as when I was about to reach for my phone, it vibrated. It was her.

"I'll be heading your home soon. You said you'll be early today, right?" she texted. Ah, what a relief. I'm glad she'll come by today too. The chocolate tart won't go to waste.

“Yes, I’m home now. You don’t have to rush, take your time and please be careful on your way here.” I replied. As soon as I sent the message, I started cleaning up the room, took the dry clothes from the washing machine and folded them immediately. Today, I don’t want her to worry too much about me. I want her to relax and have fun celebrating our monthsary.

Soon after, I heard the sound of the door unlocking. She’s finally here!

“Hello! Sorry to bother you today again!” She smiled warmly. *“You’re never a bother, love. Welcome back.”* I said as I ran up to the entryway to meet her. I noticed she was struggling to carry a shopping bag while she was taking off her shoes. It looks like she was planning to make me dinner. I hurriedly took the bag to help her.

As I came up to her face to face, I whispered ‘welcome home’ once more and kissed her on the lips without waiting for her response.

“Easy tiger, let me close the door first.” She giggled as soon as I released her lips. She then turned around and did what she said. After that, she began taking off her coat and started telling me about her day.

“As soon as I learned that you’re coming home early today, I went to the market this morning to buy ingredients for lunch and dinner before going to work. I put them in the office’s refrigerator to keep them fresh. Thanks to that, I was able to leave early as well!” She said as she turned around to face me. She gave a smug look on her face while giving me a thumbs up which in my opinion, just made her a thousand times more adorable.

She then reverted to her usual smile as we proceeded to get inside the living room. I sighed as I try to control the urge to give her a bear hug seeing her all cute and charming like that. I don’t know why but I just can’t get enough of that smile. I don’t think I could ever get tired of looking at her. She’s just so stinking cute! I’m so glad I’m her boyfriend! *Fufufu...*

I took the shopping bag to the kitchen counter and began taking the contents out of it. I didn’t want her to do it because I am trying to hide my present inside the refrigerator.

I put everything I could find —ketchup, yogurt, miso package, etc.— to the front side to keep the cake box covered. I kept glancing at her nervously. She kept her stuff neatly arranged on the sofa and went my way to wash her hands. She then took her apron and stood right in front of me.

“Oh? Are you going to help me cook today?” She asked, smiling sweetly at me. *“Yes, my lady. I’ll be your escort in the kitchen.”* I said jokingly. She giggled once more and replied, *“Why thank you. Then can you please hand me over the shrimp, lotus root, eggplant and paprika, oh kind sir?”* while giving a curtsy. *“Right away, my lady.”* I bowed and we laughed at our antics.

As I was handing over the ingredients, I was thinking of when I should discreetly put out the tarts. I want it to be a surprise so I can’t let her see it right away. Should I take it out immediately after eating? Or should I ask her to close her eyes or something? Oh boy, I never knew such a thing can be so nerve-wracking. To others, it might be a simple task, but to me, it’s like a special challenge. It’s my sincere wish to do it successfully.

“How was work today? I remember you said there aren’t a lot of customers in the early hours.” She asked as she was rinsing the ingredients. *“Well, there was only me and another person working but yeah, you could say we were kind of ‘free’. How about you?”* I replied. *“Hmmm...in my case it was a little bit busy but since I wanted to leave early, I did my best!”* She smiled as she started cutting the vegetables.

Ah...this kind of conversation is so soothing. For someone who is always alone, these moments are precious to me. Having someone to cook lunch or dinner together with, to have simple conversations about our day-to-day lives is such a blessing. Needless to say, this house has been vivid and full of life whenever she’s here. How am I going to live without her? My life a month ago feels like a total blur.

A few minutes more and I began catching delicious whiffs of the baked shrimp. The scent of charred soy sauce and sesame oil tickled my nose and immediately made me feel hungry. She turned to me while holding a large wooden plate and looked almost like she’s wondering about something.

“Uhm, hey...would you mind if we share this plate? You know, like a boodle feast. The one we saw on a magazine a while ago...” She asked. *“Of course not! It’s a hassle to wash dishes anyway.”* I snickered. I went to get the utensils as she placed our one-plate meal on the dining table. Everything was there; white rice, our vegetable salad and the baked shrimp.

“Finally, you will be in my belly!” I exclaimed to the food in front of me. She giggled and handed me my chopsticks. *“Yes, it looks scrumptious so let’s not make it wait.”* She chuckled. I prepared the soup and gave her one. I also set up the tea she brought today and poured them on the glass cups. *“Itadakimasu!”* We looked at each other and laughed because we said it at the same time. It seems that I’m not the only one eager to dig into this feast.

“Damn...this is good.” I told her with eyes wide open. As soon as I took a mouthful, the fresh taste of the shrimp spread quickly inside my mouth. The combination of sesame oil and the fragrant soy sauce is so flavorful that I couldn’t stop myself from eating. Even though I was already stuffing my face, I could still feel my mouth salivate and want for more. I’m so happy I could eat something so fancy like this. My girlfriend is the best!

She hasn’t failed in cooking yet but I feel like I could eat anything she’d make. Every dish has been really good and I’m always left feeling warm and full. And even if she fails, I’d still eat it because she worked hard to make it for me.

“Gochisousamadeshita! It was wonderful, love.” I thanked her for the great meal I just had. I kissed her blushing cheek as she smiled happily. We continued talking about the recipe and I told her teach me how to do it next time. After relaxing a bit she began to clean up the table like usual.

“Are you full? Or do you think you still have a little room for something?” I asked. *“Hmmm? I’m full but I think I can have something. Why?”* She responded, bewildered.

“Well, before you clean up, I’d like you to sit back and wait here.” I took the plate off her hands and took it to the kitchen sink. Then I went to the refrigerator to get the cake box. I nervously held it behind my back as I walked up to her.

“What is it? Hahaha...you’re making me curious!” She said in an excited and suspicious tone. I smiled and put the box in front of her. *“What is this? Hahaha!”* She asked between giggles. She looks at the package and laughs. *“Aww, you bought this for me? It’s so cute!”* She took her phone to take a snap of it. I then slowly unwrapped the box to reveal the contents inside.

“Happy 1st monthsary, love. Please continue to take care of me.” I whispered as I couldn’t bear to look at her. I was too embarrassed so I immediately covered my face with both my hands. She went silent so it made me more nervous.

Well, at least I was able to say it, I thought to myself. After a hot minute, I stole a glance at her between my fingers and saw her expression. Her hand was on her mouth, her sparkling eyes were wide open and her face was bright red. Ah...I’m so glad I did it...

“Did Iori choose this for me?” “Wow...I’m speechless..” She huffed and held her chest. “Thank you! I’m so happy!” She said as she hugged and kissed me on the cheek. Mission accomplished! I’m also happy because her reaction was priceless. I feel so proud that I was able to make her happy today.

She proceeded to take the tarts out of the box. To my surprise, the tarts put together formed a heart. I see, so if they were placed diagonally beside each other, they’d look like this. What a twist! Right in the middle was a chocolate message plate that seems to straddle the tarts together. On the plate, a huge ‘I LOVE YOU’ was written and it was sprinkled with red candy hearts.

To be perfectly honest, I didn’t ask the old lady to do this, but I’m so happy that she did. My girlfriend seemed to love it as she couldn’t help but take pictures of the tarts. With all smiles, she then turned to me and kissed me once again.

“This is so cute! Soooo cute and it looks delicious! Can’t help but feel bad to eat it, cuz it looks so pretty!” “Thank you so much, Iori! And I love you too!” She exclaimed happily, cheeks flushed and beaming. Wow...I need to go back to that cake shop to give thanks to the kind old lady. I’ll bring my girlfriend too. Her unexpected surprise brought me this much happiness. What a pro.

I hugged her back and patted her hair as she was planting kisses on my neck in between thanking me. I then took her to face me and kissed her lips.

“I love you so much...” I whispered seriously, while looking into her eyes. She smiled and closed her eyes, anticipating what I’m about to do.

I leaned closer to slowly and softly kiss her lips. She responded by parting her mouth slightly while gasping mildly for air. I took her invitation with pleasure. I slid my tongue inside her mouth and gently probed inside. She welcomes me with her own and just like a dance, our tongues twirl and touch each other, without a hint of inhibitions.

It was a passionate kiss. One that feels like there was a total surrender to the warmth and feelings we both have for each other. Each movement unravels more of our connection and unfolds our inner selves. Her small moans in between breaths evoked in me a strong desire of wanting to be one with her.

I kissed her deeper and deeper, entangling her tongue with mine and sucking it, making my intentions known. She sighed and quickly clung to my body while I gently push her to lie down on the floor with my hand behind her back.

“Nnn...mmm...ahh...” She moans as my hand gently slithers inside her shirt, going to her breasts. I stopped midway to look at her face. Her silky white skin looks prettier when she’s tinged in pink like this. Perhaps because I let go of her lips, she opened her eyes and gives me a sloppy, dewy look. I sighed and smiled.

“I’d love to continue this later...is it okay?” I asked while touching her cheeks and tracing it with my index finger. *“Okay...”* She blushed. I hugged her and held her up so she could sit properly again. She held on to me kissing and sniffing my neck. We looked at each other again before I hurried buried my face on her chest.

“We have a lot of time today, so let’s eat this chocolate tart...and proceed to my room next.” I said while rubbing my face on her warm and soft bosom. She caressed my hair and patted my head as I heard a small ‘yes’.

As we ate the chocolate tart, I started thinking of our days ahead. Just like dark chocolate, some days might come across as bitter. But if it’s with her, I know our love will pull us through. Life will always be sweet if we make it that way.

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