

*Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink!*

*Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank!*

“Ugh...” The crash of multiple piano keys randomly smashed echoed in the empty auditorium, and Yayoi sighed blowing out. Her blonde bangs fluttered before falling back down against her forehead. Everyday for her was a fairytale. Each day taking place in a dream world where anything can be possible and she a different role each time.

Today, right here, right now, she felt like Repunzel. She was locked away in the tower to await the day for her prince to arrive. Of course, the truth was she already had met her prince and the tower was more like an auditorium awaiting his band to arrive in preparation for tonight’s concert.

“That “Little Mouse” will be there.” She made a disgusted face at the mere thought of that innocent bright eyed Yumi, prancing around trying to be a dark princess for the dark prince; *her dark* prince, not Yumi’s.

Now she felt like the wicked witch or something, maybe like the wicked stepsister (like she would call herself an ugly stepsister.). Her plot, that plan; she knew what kind of results it would yield. Yumi deserved it. Playing the shy coquettish woman who came between friends, no less! That kind of person deserved to hurt, deserved to suffer. Toshio-Sama, on the other hand, did not. He was an unfortunate casualty in the plan and so she had to apologize to him. And if she was apologizing to him, she had to apologize to that rodent.

No, that’s not fair. Yumi hadn’t intended to play the heart strings of the two boys.

Now she felt like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. No, that wasn’t a fairytale, was it? Didn’t matter. Yayoi had no reason to be bitter. She won. Despite the attraction Miyabi had for Yumi, she had won out. She was the one who managed to kiss those lips usually painted artfully for the masses. She was the one who got to stroke that slim body in places girls, and perhaps some boys, would kill to caress. Yayoi had won and that was enough for her.

“That’s not entirely true either.” She blew out and returned to her *plinking* and *planking*.

Yes, his lips left burns everywhere they touched. His hands blazed trails of desire on the blank canvas that was her body. He was an artist through and through. Because of that she had to approach him in a way that would speak to his art.

*“Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink!”*

“So why is that not enough?” She blew out once more letting her bangs flutter before settling on her brow.

Miyabi and Yayoi shared a connection, a deep one. They were each other’s first. They were a steady couple. So why did it feel incomplete? Why did the romance they shared feel so... so one sided? If she had bold female friends she could only guess what they would say to her: “You’re obviously putting more into this than he his! Stop doing this to yourself and find a new guy!”

*“Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank! Plank!”* She continued to on the piano. Her eyes were tearing up.

Was she really just a fill in for the mouse that got away? Something *planked* deep inside, almost resonating with the ivories beneath her tiny hands. Why couldn’t she just say aloud what it is she really wants?

“I want lo-”

“Chopsticks, right?” She froze. If her joints creaked as she slowly turned to face the

intruder she wouldn't have been shocked. "M-Miyabi, when did you get here?"

"Just got here. The others will be here soon."

"Oh." She watched him cross the room.

"Move over." He sat beside her on the piano bench at the lower octaves. "My mother... and I used to play this. I think I remember." Yayoi looked at his profile. His dark hair a spiked mess as usual, a frown marred his forehead. "Don't mess it up!"

"Right." Yayoi snapped her attention back to the piano.

*Plink! Plink! Plink!*

'I want love.' She thought looking at Miyabi out of the corner of her eye, her fingers playing the song on their own. 'I want to hear those words leave his lips but...' Her wide eyes slid to look at him. Miyabi's face was stuck in a pensive look, concentrating on the song from his past. '...He'd never say it.' She looked back at the piano as the song came to its close, faster than Yayoi had ever known it to.

"That... brought back memories." He rose and looked around the empty seats of the audience. "We'll start our final rehearsal soon."

"I know." Yayoi nodded standing as well.

"I should help them get ready." He looked at her.

"I know." Her eyes met his.

"Okay." His gaze was now trained on her. Scorching her with the intensity he saved for when they were alone.

"See you... after..." She felt his hands on her waist pulling her closer. Her face burned at the sudden proximity. "Mi-Miya-" His lips crashed on hers in that way she was used to. His smooth, soft lips gliding over hers and her knees weakened. The piano protested as her bottom fell against its keys harshly.

It was always like this. Always jumping to the physical. It was getting old, really fast. No, maybe it was when she discovered where the "Little Mouse" had originated did this getting old. Little Mouse, Little Mouse, Little Mouse... She could just cry. Why couldn't it just be Yayoi?

"Your fifteen are up!" The door slammed open and Akito entered the stage area a pout replaced his usual look of innocence as soon as he laid eyes on her. She smiled at him, a smile he returned before looking away.

"I should go." Yayoi wrenched herself from Miyabi's hold and rushed out. Her eyes were to the floor unable to look the rest of the boys in the eye, from shame, no doubt. But was it shame at letting him make her weak once more or from being caught in his arms.

*"Slam!"* The stage door slammed behind her.

"Miyabi..." Yayoi touched her tingling lips, her face still flushed. She fanned her face and made her way down the hall. 'It's not love.' She smiled softly. 'But... I guess it will do.' She stopped feeling a painful pang somewhere deep inside. "Miyabi..." She looked back at the stage door. That pang came again. 'I love you.' She walked back down the hall to change for the concert.

Three hours later Yayoi was nearly ready. Her blonde hair pinned up in pigtails. She wore a miniature black top hat in the middle of her head, feathers bouncing about as she moved. Her waist was cinched in a white with black lace corset. Her skirt was voluminous, almost tutu worthy. Her make up done much darker than she was used to and now she was sitting, mentally prepping herself for the sexy, long, high-heeled boots. They were very sexy, and perfect for the outfit but-

*Knock! Knock!*

“Eep!” She jumped holding her heart. “Come in...” The door opened and Akito strolled in. “Oh, You look amazing!” She smiled at the young man in shredded leather that clung to him like a second skin. On his left arm, inky black kanji. His makeup was dark and smoky black with trace amounts of purple. His light brown eyes looked right through her and sent a chill up her spine.

“Thanks.” The blonde young man smiled brightly, a contradiction to his dark attire. “You do too.”

“I’m almost ready, just... putting my shoes on.” Akito crossed the room, the smile gone as quickly as it had come and that shiver was back.

“These?” He looked at the boots with the softest of smiles. “Looks dangerous.”

“Y-Yeah...” She smiled. “Miyabi is-”

“Still getting ready.” Akito sighed with an awkward silence following.

“So why are you here?” Yayoi swung her legs a bit.

“I need to talk with you.” Akito knelt and grabbed her boot. This is wrong. Akito, usually so bubbly, was so somber. So serious.

“Ah! I can put them on myself.”

“He doesn’t love you.” Akito said suddenly. “I know it’s not fair to you or him, since he’s not saying this, but Miyabi doesn’t.” The zipper sounded obscenely loud in the silence. The nerve endings in her leg tingled all the way up to her thigh where the leather finally stopped. One boot done, one to go.

“Why would you say that?” Yayoi said watching him slide her foot into the other shoe. Her heart pounded as he continued. He just couldn’t look at her as he worked on zipping the other boot.

“He does like you, but not for the reason you think.” Akito blew out.

“What would you say that?” A lump was growing in her throat; she couldn’t speak louder than a whisper.

“I don’t like watching you pretend for him.” He zipped her boot then rested his forehead on her knee. “I hate watching you look at him, expecting him to say those three words.”

“Stop.” She whispered.

“He won’t say them.” He breathed

“Stop.” She coughed, why did her throat dry up like the Sahara all of a sudden?

“But I will, Yayoi.”

“Akito, Stop!”

“I won’t.” He lifted his head catching her gaze. The world stopped. There was so much feeling, emotion in his eyes. It made that lump in her throat triple. “I’m done stopping.” He leaned forward and kissed her knee. She shuddered visibly. “I want you to see me.”

Her heart stopped. Yayoi just knew she was dead. Her heart stopped. Akito, the happy blonde who sometimes seemed a bit misplaced in Orochi, was kissing her bare thigh demanding her attention. Akito, the band mate and friend to Miyabi, the dark prince of her heart, was looking at her in a way completely wrong for his usual person.

“I want you to see me, Yayoi.” He whispered and kissed higher, just shy of the hem of her skirt. “Because I see you.” He dragged his hand up and down her leather clad leg. “I see you.”

“Akito...”

“I see you.” He placed another tender kiss on her thigh. “I see you and I love you.” He

breathed deep and pushed himself up. His head hung low.

“Akito.” Yayoi whispered watching him turn his back. He looked defeated.

“I love you.” He whispered then it happened. His whole demeanor changed. Standing tall, shoulders back, that happy confident air that was uniquely Akito returned.

“A-Akito?”

“Think about what I said, Yayoi.” He turned around with sunny smile. “Because I meant every word of it.

*Knock! Knock! Knock!*

“Aki...”

“It’s probably Miyabi.” He hugged her to him. She gasped. “When you’re tired of pretending, I’ll be waiting, okay?”

“Okay.” She nodded. Her arms somehow gaining minds of their own as she clutched him, breathing in his scent. This was wrong. He was Miyabi’s friend. So wrong, so impure... and so deliciously welcomed. The way he held her, rubbed her back... she could cry.

This was what she yearned and burned for, this tenderness, and this level of intimacy. This is what she wanted.

“I see you.” He whispered. “So hurry up and see me before this feeling consumes me.”

“Okay.” She nodded again.

*Knock! Knock! Knock!*

*“I see you, and I love you.”* Words that *plinked* in the depths of her heart. Plinked beautifully, happily. *“I love you. I see you... and I love you...”*