

**Every Thorn Has Its Rose(-Colored Soles)**

*(Based on characters from* ***Spy × Family*** *by Tatsuya Endo)*

*Contains: F/F tickling, with a focus on foot tickling. SFW.*

*Word Count: 8,287*

Another day, another assignment. By this point it had become entirely routine for the Thorn Princess to excuse herself from whatever family outing she was partaking in, take out the next mark given to her, and try to return in time for dinner.

At least Loid was able to handle the meal preparations, but she had insisted more than once on doing the cooking herself because it was what housewives were expected to *do*, and as she was posing as one at the insistence of Loid (who had needed a makeshift wife for reasons of his own… not that she knew that), she knew she had to get every detail pitch-perfect to avoid giving herself away.

So it was that Yor Forger found herself shopping for groceries one evening, having left Anya with Loid for some bonding activities of their own. Meanwhile, she had the task of basically foraging for everything requested by the other two along with whatever recipes she wanted to try out herself. She’d been struggling quite a bit to cook properly — after all, it was the role of any housewife to feed her family — but with some help from Yuri, she was making quite a few improvements… at least, some of the time.

That stew in particular could use some extra refinement. It was the same one that she and Yuri enjoyed when they were younger, yes, and it had gone over well with Loid and Anya for sure, but she still felt as though it could be better. Perhaps a few amendments to the shopping list were in order…

“Yor? Is that you?”

She looked up, slightly startled by the familiarity of that voice. A platinum-blonde woman had sidled up to her with a warm smile, one of her eyes obscured by the locks of hair falling over her face. She was dressed in a dark blue jacket with dress pants to match, her dark high heels clicking against the floor tiling as she’d approached.

“Oh! Fiona, I… uh… How nice of you to say hello!” Yor smiled awkwardly, trying to diffuse the slight tension between the two. The blonde had visited the Forgers several times now, and even though Yor always thought Fiona was a very nice woman, Anya was noticeably uncomfortable around her presence, and always clung to Yor and showered her with praise as a mother during every single one of these occasions. No one knew why this was the case. No one but Anya herself.

There was a long and awkward silence between the pair, Yor trying to act casual while choosing a suitable potato. Then Fiona spoke up.

“So… How’s your husband and daughter?”

Yor smiled at her again, feeling a little reluctant to speak at first but eventually swallowing down her hesitation. “They’re doing well, thanks! Loid asked if I could shop for them today, and he’s playing with Anya and Bond at the park right now. I’m pretty much going it solo this afternoon.”

“Hmm.” Fiona tapped her chin. “I’d have thought that Anya would be with you today. Or was that yesterday?”

“We did go to the zoo yesterday, actually! She had a lot of fun! Even managed to feed one of the elephants some of the peanuts I bought her. I wonder if she ever noticed the ‘Do Not Feed The Animals’ sign…”

Fiona shrugged. “Guess you could do with keeping an eye on her a little more,” she said with a chuckle.

The two of them engaged in some cordial small talk as they made their rounds for the next twenty minutes, picking up whatever they had intended to get. Once they made their purchases and headed out of the store, the discussion became what their respective plans were for the evening. Fiona, curiously, seemed to be dodging the question each time Yor asked about it. On the other hand, Yor was struggling to think of an answer herself when the question was directed at her.

“If I had to be honest, I’m not sure how long it will be before Loid and Anya get home,” she said finally. “There’s a lot of places Anya wanted to go. I don’t know how Loid does it, but somehow he’s been able to take her to wherever she wants in the city no matter how far away it is from the apartment. And the park actually is quite far from where I live…”

Fiona nodded. “So, do you think Anya is in good hands, then?”

Yor blushed a little, looking rather flustered. “Wha—?! What are you talking about? I can’t just leave her! I have to show her that I’m the best mother she can have, like she always said I am!”

To her slight confusion, Fiona scowled. “And are you *sure* you are a good parent to her? She’s been acting awfully clingy to you whenever I visit. I’ve heard cases where children are being *held back* by their parents, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not. I know you love her as much as Loid does, but she’s got to find the freedom to make her own choices someday.”

They’d arrived back at the Forgers’ apartment. Taking a moment to unlock the door, Yor slipped inside and put the groceries she’d purchased next to the door, before letting Fiona in and shutting it behind them. Yor looked around to see that the apartment was, aside from the two women, entirely empty.

“They’re still out and about, looks like,” said Fiona, the one bag she’d purchased still dangling from her left hand. Yor never noticed that her right was holding a damp-looking rag, nor that she’d lagged behind to prepare it. “How soon do you think it’d be before they get back?”

Yor looked a little worried, and a bit suspicious that the other woman was asking more and more about when Loid was returning. “I… I don’t know,” she said finally. “But I’m sure they will. I’ll let them know that you’ve stopped by—”

She reached out, preparing to pat her on the shoulder, when she felt the blonde’s hand grab hold of her wrist. Fiona wouldn’t know it, but the recording device that Yor had planned to plant on her shirt would never go used this evening.

“Spare me the pleasantries. I’d like to take you out for a little bit this evening, if you don’t mind.”

“W-wha?” The brunette was understandably confused. “I wouldn’t mind, but… Are you sure it’s okay? If Loid and Anya come home to see me gone—”

“You can leave a note for them, can you? Just put something on a piece of paper saying I invited you to a weekend ladies’ night and that you’ll be back soon.”

Yor thought about it and smiled, letting Fiona relax her grip enough to slip out of it. “Oh, I suppose I could. And in any case, Loid is definitely capable of taking care of Anya on his own — he’s done that many times before! I’m sure he’ll understand…”

Fiona’s smile turned dark, and in the next instance, her companion looked slightly nervous. “Then it looks like you can afford to be back home a little later than usual tonight,” said the blonde. “Hope you enjoy taking a quick nap.”

“Wait, what are you—***?!***”

Before the dark-haired woman could respond, Fiona had pressed a damp rag to her face. Yor would have reacted instantly and kicked the other woman hard enough to send her flying down the parking lot, but Fiona had the element of surprise on her side. Yor’s struggles quickly subsided as the chloroform sent her entire world fading into darkness…

She wasn’t sure how long it was before she next opened her eyes, but when she came to, blinking sleepily a few times, Yor saw that she was in some kind of large basement or boiler room, light fixtures near the ceiling being its only source of illumination. Various pipes and columns could be seen reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and scaffolding and platforms were everywhere — a factory, maybe?

She was lying on a wooden board with a long fabric cushion secured to it, unable to move her wrists or ankles. The undercover assassin pushed her arms behind her to force herself to sit up, and realized that her arms had been tied behind her back. It was looking down at her feet, however, that made her gasp in shock.

“W-what in the—?!?”

She had been stripped of her footwear, socks and shoes both laid to the side. Four metal rods protruded from the sides of the board near its end, the screw-like threaded free ends in turn passing through the holes on the corners of another, smaller board with a padded underside, secured in place by matching wingnuts. Almost all of her toes had been bent back as far as they could go and forced down by this smaller board, the soles of her slender size nines stretched as taut as they could be.

“So, you’re finally up,” a familiar voice spoke from the darkness some distance away. She looked up, trying to pinpoint the source, only to hear footsteps on the nearby concrete floor. It was then that she realized that she had been placed on a slightly raised platform of concrete in the center of the room, almost like a dais. The light fixtures on the ceiling seemed to be directly illuminating her, their light noticeably stronger than the lamps on the walls.

Oh, no. She instantly guessed what this meant. This was an *interrogation*.

A familiar blonde stepped onto the platform, the dark sunglasses over her eyes doing nothing to conceal her identity. Fiona hadn’t even changed her clothing. It seemed as though her captive had not been unconscious for very long, but the cold smirk on her face told her that it didn’t matter much.

“So… How are you feeling, Yor? Had a good night’s sleep?”

Yor raised an eyebrow, before stifling a yawn. “I don’t think it’s been longer than a half-hour…”

Fiona bristled a little. “You will be *silent*. Or at least, you will *not* talk unless I ask you to. I don’t expect you to remain quiet, after all, but whatever you say can and *will* be used against you. Am I clear, Mrs. Forger?”

Yor raised an eyebrow. “And what do you plan to do with me, anyhow? You know I never did anything to anybody!”

“Oh, but you did. That’s something to talk about later, though. For now, however… How do you feel about a good laugh?”

Yor blinked. “A laugh?”

Fiona nodded. “Of course! Granted, I’m probably going to enjoy tickling you so much more…”

Yor raised an eyebrow. Tickling? As an interrogation method? What kind of childish balderdash was that?! Granted, plenty of playful nights with Yuri when the siblings were younger had taught her that the bottoms of her feet were absolutely sensitive, and she was quite sure that hadn’t changed, but why would anyone consider tickling them a viable questioning technique?

Come to think of it, though… she actually rather missed that feeling. And this was a pitch-perfect opportunity to experience it again. If Fiona really was planning to tickle-torture her, then she might as well play along.

“Oh no no, pleeeease!” she begged, albeit somewhat half-heartedly, flexing her littlest toes which were the only ones not held back by her restraints. “Anything but that, I’ll tell you whatever you want!”

Fiona scowled. “I can tell you’re not as fazed by this as you’re saying. You think you won’t crack from this, right? Well, guess again. It’s time for a petty thief like you to learn what *real* torture looks like!”

Yor felt a thrill of excitement as her captor closed in, but made sure to give her a wordless plea for mercy. It would never come, of course — or at least Fiona thought that way — as the blonde reached forward and started wiggling a nail into each taut arch, giving the assassin’s plantar nerves the first electrifying signals of what she knew would be a long and ticklish torture session…

Slowly, deliberately, Fiona began to drag her nails up and down in little ticklish circles around the exact center of each arch, savoring the moment as Yor began to squirm in place, the corners of her mouth turning upwards just slightly. Her soles were exquisitely well-kept, Fiona observed, without a single blemish in sight, and the way she’d restrained her only accentuated the depth of her tender arches and the smoothness of the skin. The exact centers seemed to elicit a more intense reaction than the rest of her feet, as well. And with the padded board holding her toes firmly in place, she couldn’t curl her toes at all, leaving her utterly defenseless.

Little did Fiona know that Yor had experienced this before. There were multiple times in her younger days when Yuri had dared her into standing barefoot and on tiptoes to reach for something on a high shelf, or to sit on her knees on the floor with her toes pointed forward. Mischief maker that he was, he’d swoop in without a moment’s warning and skitter his fingers all over her arches, taking care to never let her predict when he’d strike. All in all, Yuri was a master tickler, and compared to him, Fiona’s so-called innovation was nothing. Still as enjoyable now as it was back then, though.

Besides, she added in her thoughts, it had been a long week, full of standing and running around, both at work and when keeping up with Anya. Perhaps a little tender care upon her super-sore soles couldn’t hurt…

Boldened by the giggling, Fiona started teasing her verbally while walking a finger up and down each arch. “Kitchy kitchy, Mrs. Forger~” she said with a smirk. “You and I have a whole evening to enjoy together… How do you keep these feet so soft and ticklish? It’s almost criminal~!”

“Mmmehehehheh… Th-thahahank y-yohohou?!” Yor squeaked, trying to hold out as long as she could just to give Fiona at least a small sense of satisfaction.

“So… before we up the ante here, spare yourself the pain and confess your crime. If you comply, I will *try* to be merciful~”

“W-what crihihime?!” Yor replied in disbelief. “I never did anything to anybodeheheheheeeEEE!”

Well, she hadn’t done anything *on her own volition*, that much she could say. She had made absolutely sure to never reveal her hidden identity as the Thorn Princess to anyone, and no one would ever know that the mysterious assassin who’d murdered countless corrupt political figures was none other than this dark-haired housewife now living in 128 Park Avenue.

Now, however, welling up from beneath the haze of tease-induced euphoria, there came a gnawing feeling of worry. Did Fiona manage to find out about her second life? If so, how?! Had her hubby found out as well and told her?!

Fiona glanced up at her and saw the flicker of fear in her eyes. She smirked cruelly, though from her next response, it appeared she got the wrong message.

“Too afraid to talk, huh? Well, in that case, let’s see how much more you can take!”

“NO! NO NO NOOOOHAHAHAH!”

Yor was overwhelmed by ticklish bliss as the blonde now dug all ten of her nails into the skin of her soles, wiggling them up toward the balls of her feet, then back down to the heels, and around to tickle the sides of her feet, even reaching around to scratch at the tops for a little bit. But every time, they zeroed back in on the hollows of her arches, deep and ticklish that they were, resulting in peals of laughter from the luckless(?) brunette before her.

Squeaking, shrieking, and squirming, Yor felt like she was losing her mind — and in a surprisingly good way — as those nails kept on dragging their way along her taut foot bottoms, flicking up and down and all around, over and over. The ticklish torture was nothing short of maddening, but she wouldn’t have it any other way. It reminded her of the happy times she’d shared with Yuri as his sensitive test subject, their affection shared in the form of him playfully tormenting her soles whenever he could. He knew all the best ways to reduce her to a cackling, helpless mess, begging for help and mercy but never wanting it to stop. She’d challenged him to try to find ever more creative ways to mind-break her from the sheer intensity of his various techniques, and he’d taken on that challenge with great satisfaction and relish. Now it seemed as though Fiona was bent on doing the same thing — and paradoxically, Yor couldn’t encourage her to push it further lest she discover the truth. All she could do was watch and laugh.

“EEEEHHEHEHEHEHHEHEEE!” Yor cried out, thrashing about in place as Fiona paid her no heed — never once suspecting that her distress wasn’t really genuine. “YAHAHAHAH AHHHAHAHHAGGGHGH NOOOO! I’LL NEVER TAHAHAHALK! YOU CAN’T MAKE MEEEEHEHEHEHEHEEEEEE!”

Oh, how her heart *ached* to get her captor to play with her hyper-ticklish arches the way she really wanted! How she sought so, *so* badly to get Fiona to tickle her not as an interrogator, but as not but a genuine friend. In another life, she guessed, they really could have been the closest of companions. But alas, it was not to be. Had things been just a little different, she might not have gotten the chance to meet her dear husband.

Perhaps having to hold herself back from blurting out how much she wanted this was the real torture. Fiona just didn’t know it yet.

It was another twenty minutes before Fiona grew tired of the spider-tickles all over her victim’s arches. She decided to change tack, instead seating herself cross-legged in front of Yor and placing her index fingers upon the exact centers of her soles. This already got the dark-haired woman giggling coyly, and the giggles turned into another fit of hysterical guffawing when Fiona began to slooooowlyyyyy drag her nails in an outward spiral from the centers of her soles, and then spiral them back in again.

“NYYYOOOOOOOOHHHHHAHAHHAAHHAHAHAHHHHH!”

“Hmmm, I see… Such an intense reaction. I might make an informant of you yet. Let’s see how long I can keep this up!”

Yor shook her head, seemingly begging for her to stop, but needless to say, she didn’t. She tried tugging at her ankles experimentally to see if she could offer at least a bit of resistance, just to shake things up, but it seemed as though the bottom of the board she was sitting on had been glued to the concrete beneath. Escaping wasn’t an option. Even flexing her toes was worthless, since the board pressing against the pads had been calibrated so they were bent back as far as they could go without hurting the joints, but also ensuring that her arches were so tight that they couldn’t flex by even the smallest amount.

As if to prove this, Fiona broke off from the spiral-tracing tickles by gently, teasingly, lightly sliding the pads of her index fingers up and down the ridge of each arch, causing Yor to throw her head back and shriek at the top of her lungs. She whipped her head from side to side, Fiona getting the impression that she was desperately trying to get herself loose, but all this did was get her to move her fingers even slower, more torturously. All the while, she continued verbally teasing her as well, keeping her victim on edge and reminding her who the dominant figure was (or so she thought, anyway).

“Coochie coooooochie~”

“*YYYAAAAAHAHAHAHHAHAHAH!*”

“You have such nice, deep, *ticklish* arches. The way in which my fingers dip up and down as I slide them across them… Oooh, so, *sooo* soft~”

“*EEEEYYIIIIEEEEHEHEHEHEHHEHEHEHEHEEEE!*”

“I could do this all day, my pretty, prissy plunderer. Giddy giddy giddy~ Coochie coo~!”

“*OHOHOHOHOHOHOHHHH OHHHH NOOOHOHOHOHOHOOO!*”

Fiona smirked and gave each arch a light pinch. “Boop~!”

“***AAAIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHEHEHHEE!!!***”

The double-pinch made Yor shriek like a lunatic. Then another pinch to her arches caused her to repeat the scream, making her worry for the safety of the light fixtures overhead.

Then a word slipped into the teasing registered in her brain through the sea of sensual ecstasy. *Plunderer*? Did she steal anything from Fiona and not even notice it?! Yor’s mind was already thinking back to all manner of possibilities such as accidentally pocketing something precious to Fiona during previous visits, but she was sure that none of them made sense. What could possibly have led to Fiona accusing her of stealing anything?

The tickles alternated between the spiraling from the centers of Yor’s soles and rubbing her arches ticklishly for the next hour. By that point, Yor had been reduced to tears, half-blinded by the wetness in her eyes and the loose hair strands over her face. Catching her breath, she blinked back the moisture and raised her head to look up at Fiona once again.

“So… Still won’t talk, huh?” Fiona asked, grinning viciously.

Gasping, panting, Yor shook her head. “It’s… going… t-to take more than that… t-to get me to squeal…”

The blonde bristled with growing irritation. “Oh, I’m going to make you squeal. Squeal enough for swine to be proud of you!” She motioned her head towards the side, and Yor could see that there was an assortment of bottles, and a couple of other implements like paper towels, napkins, hairbrushes, feathers, and even an electric toothbrush. It dawned on her that the other woman had come prepared for this. Could that explain her earlier visit to the store where she’d come across her?

Grabbing a bottle from the collection, Fiona popped it open, swirling its dark brown contents around menacingly. Yor’s vision had cleared up by this point, just enough to notice the label — of all things, it contained chocolate sauce, the kind you’d expect to see being drizzled on ice cream sundaes like the kind Anya enjoyed every once in a while.

There was no ice cream in sight, of course. But she had a good guess as to where the sauce was going.

Fiona took several paper towels from the pile of purchases, before placing them just below Yor’s trapped heels. The bottle was summarily upended over the balls of her feet, one after the other, so the chocolate sauce dribbled onto them, eventually pooling a bit onto the napkins. The majority of it seemed to cling to her skin, however, leaving her soles quite thoroughly drenched in sweet brown goodness.

Huh, Yor thought to herself in realization of what was about to happen. Yuri always went with *strawberry* syrup.

“Before we continue, I want to give you one last chance to confess to your crime,” said Fiona, setting the bottle aside. “Corroborate it and I *might* be merciful. But resist further, and… well…”

Yor blinked in disbelief. “What crime? Again, I never did anything to anybody!”

“Oh, but you’ve committed a crime that affected *me*. Think carefully, Yor! Is there anything you have with you that I consider precious?”

Yor thought about it for a moment, and then shook her head. “Not that I remember—”

“Don’t play dumb with me, you utter *bimbo*! I *know* you have what I want. And for your sake as much as mine, it’d be best to just give him back.”

*Him?!* Yor’s eyes went so wide that they practically risked falling out of their sockets. “Wait… Wait a minute. You’re not talking about—”

“Yes, I am. Stealing Loid from me is a crime worthy of only the most capital of punishments. You know that, don’t you… *Mrs. Forger*?”

Yor glared at her. “You have it all wrong, Fiona. I never *stole* Loid from anyone. *He* chose *me* as his wife. And if you think you can tear us away from one another, you have another thing coming!”

A calculated risk, to be sure. Yor fully expected Fiona to get extremely angry at this retort, and escalate the ticklish torment even further. But first off, the Thorn Princess felt genuinely hurt by the misconception, wondering if this was not so much an interrogation but rather revenge orchestrated by a jealous ex. And second… she’d seen her chance to press the big red metaphorical button in Fiona’s head just to see what would happen, and without a shred of regret, she’d taken it.

When it came to calculated risks, Yor was surprisingly good at the math involved.

The first stroke of Fiona’s tongue made her squeal and buck in her seat, right up the line of her stretched-out left arch. Yor let her laughter flow freely, interspersing it with pleas for mercy to avoid drawing suspicion. The moisture and texture of the tongue upon her arch felt invigorating, sending shockwave after shockwave up her legs with each long, slow lick.

Fiona let her tongue travel up and down her victim’s left sole, making sure to get every last bit of chocolate off of it. She savored the taste almost as much as the way Yor was screaming, begging, and laughing her head off. To the blonde agent, it was as if her prey was suffering the cruelest torment yet.

Once she was done, she gave Yor an expectant look. “Well?”

Yor looked up at her, wheezing every so often. “I’m telling you… Hff… hfff… I didn’t steal anyone, or anything! What made you think I’d do that to you especially?!”

Fiona growled, her fingers clenched into fists. “If Loid chose you over me like you said he did, then there has to be a reason. What kind of devilish spell did you put him under to entrance him with your wiles?”

Yor gaped at her, completely lost for words for several seconds. “What… How… PFFFFFBWAHAHAHAHAHA!!” She couldn’t stop herself collapsing into laughter again, without even needing any fingers or tongue this time. “You’re seriously pegging me as some kind of femme fatale?! I just — I wouldn’t be good at — HHHHHEHEHHEH — I can’t even cook anything without messing up half the kitchen — *PFFFFHAHAHAHHAH!*” She thrashed around as though being tickled again, so reduced to hysterics by the sheer ridiculousness of the idea that she had brainwashed her sweet and innocent hubby like some Greek siren. What kind of jealous maniac made a leap like *that*?!

Besides, she added in her head… if she’d actually entranced him with her feminine wiles as Fiona had claimed, he’d have been dead and buried *months* ago.

Fiona’s rage boiled to new heights. “Oh, you think that’s funny, huh?! Well, that does it! You’ve forced me to take drastic measures. But first things first, I haven’t cleaned up your *right* foot yet…”

Yor didn’t even get the chance to recover from her previous laughing fit before the tongue tickling was back. She didn’t mind continuing to guffaw uncontrollably, letting her captor explore every inch of her right sole with her tongue and clean all the rest of the chocolate sauce off. She was quite sure that the licking of the sides of her feet was done out of spite, though, seeing as they were completely sauce-free.

Once she was done, and once she’d dried her victim’s feet off with another set of paper towels, Fiona picked up a second bottle. This one was much smaller and had a lid like a salt shaker, with a strange orange powder inside it. The fact that Fiona kept her gloves on while handling it was rather concerning. Yor waited in silence, unsure of what the other woman was planning.

As her captive watched, Fiona upended the bottle over her left palm and shook it vigorously, until there was a sizable pile of of the powder sitting on the fabric. With a smile like a shark and a chuckle like a Bondman villain, Fiona moved her hand forward and promptly smacked it against Yor’s taut right sole, before rubbing it gently to get the powder on as much of the foot bottom as possible.

She promptly did the same thing with the other foot, but curiously, she didn’t tickle her afterward. All she did was sit back and wait.

Yor was rightly confused as to what was going on, at least for a few seconds. But then she felt it: a tingling sensation spreading through her soles, one after the other. Then the tingling became more and more intense. Within a matter of minutes, the soles of her restrained feet felt like they were on fire, a horribly maddening sensation making her grit her teeth and give the board restraining her toes a glare that could well have split it in two.

“AaaaAAAAHHH! WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*?!?” Yor snapped at the now-smug Fiona. This was not like anything Yuri had tried with her, and for once, she would swear she was now feeling real, mind-breaking torture.

“Ah, I see you’ve gotten yourself acquainted with the spice rack,” Fiona quipped. “It’s a special brand of mine. Guaranteed to last and itch for days unless removed. I’ve used it for interrogations before — it’s remarkably effective!”

Your ground her teeth again, glaring at her still-smirking warden. “Ooohhhh, you will pay for this! Oh God, it itches so baaaad! Please, please, pleeeeeease scratch my poor feet!”

Fiona thought about it for a moment but then she shrugged and stood up. “I’ll be back soon. I just realized I forgot something from the store. Try to stay sane until I return!”

Yor’s eyes widened. “You’re seriously going to leave me here? Suffering like this!?”

Fiona nodded. “I have ways to make people talk. This one is just one of my favorites. Now, I’ll leave you to your thoughts. I won’t be gone for long, but hopefully you’ll be willing to spill it when I return!”

Yor shrieked at the top of her lungs. “***NO! NOOOO! PLEASE DON’T LEAVE ME HEEEEERE! FIONAAAAAAAA!!***” But it was too late. The blonde had already turned and marched off into the distance, leaving Yor alone to suffer the full effects of the itching powder covering her poor, trapped feet.

In truth, the pleading was not entirely genuine. Yuri had in fact mentioned wanting to try the itching powder technique at least once, but had never gotten around to using it. Yor had been honestly curious as to how it felt, and now here she was, the skin irritation clouding her mind as she screamed and struggled uselessly against her restraints. It was such a strange feeling, and only made her all the more desperate to be tickled again, but she also recognized the intention. Fiona was pulling out all the stops this time around. She too was getting desperate. If Yor could just hold out and keep up her defenseless impression for a little bit longer, she might just get out of this. She just needed to make sure not to divulge anything important. Especially not the Garden—

No! She couldn’t think of that! If Fiona found out for real, it would be the end for herself and everyone else working with her! She had to focus on something else, and she was all but relieved that the powder was driving her to distraction.

*IT ITCHES!!!* Yor’s mind seemed to scream, drowning out the rest of her thoughts almost on purpose. *IT ITCHES!!! IT ITCHES!!! IT ITCHES!!! IT ITCHES!!! IT ITCHES…!!!*

By the time Fiona returned with some fresh cleaning supplies, she found Yor lying listlessly upon the concrete dais. Her eyes crossed, her shoulders twitching every once in a while, she was mumbling incoherently, a faint trickle of drool sliding down from the corner of her mouth.

“Hmmm. Seems like the powder was more effective than I thought…” She smiled to herself, and shook Yor back to consciousness. “Wakey wakey~ So, are you ready to talk?”

Yor sat bolt upright, looking frantically at her. “*YES, PLEASE! I’LL TALK, I’LL TALK! ANYTHING, JUST — JUST PLEASE STOP THE ITCHING! PLEEEEEEASE!!!*” If she’d had her hands untied, she would’ve grabbed her captor’s hands and squeezed them tight in a plea for mercy.

Fiona laughed ruthlessly. “Alright, you get your wish. But promise me you’ll tell me everything once I clean the powder off, alright?”

Yor nodded frantically. She took note of the scrubbing brushes sticking out of the bag, along with a bottle of drinking water, a small pal, and a container of had soap. This was it, she thought. The finale was coming up!

Her attention diverted from Fiona herself for just a few seconds, Yor was caught off guard by all ten glove-clad fingers digging into her soles.

“*YIIIIIEEEEEEHEHHEHEHEHEHHEEHEHEEEE! NOHHOHOHHOHOHHOHOHOOOHOH FAAAHAHAHHAHAHHAHAAAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHHAHAHAIIIIRRRRHHHRR! HAHAHHAHAHHAHAHHAHHAHAHAHHAHHAH!!*” She screamed and squealed and squeezed her eyes shut, sweat dripping down her forehead and making her hair glisten, dual waterfalls of tears streaming and dribbling onto the top of her sweater.

Fiona shook her head in mock sadness. “What can I say? Nothing is.”

“*HHAHHAHHAHAHEHEHEHAHAHHAH! AAAAAHAHHAHAHAHH OH NO NONONO NOT THEEEEEHEHEEEEEHEHHEEEEEEEEEHIIHIIIIIIHIHHHAHAOHOHOHOHHAHHAHH! AAOOOOOAHHOHOOAAHAHHAHAHHAOOHOHOIIIIHIHIINNNGGGHHAHHAHHAH!!*”

A few more minutes passed before Fiona stopped to give her quarry a breather. Yor was disappointed to find that most of the itching powder had not been removed, but as Fiona reached for the bag, she had a feeling that was about to change.

The pail was swifty filled with water and soap, and the brushes promptly dipped into it. Giving her victim only a second to look at the instruments that would bring about her ticklish doom, Fiona promptly moved the forward and placed the tips of all their soft bristles upon the arches of her feet.

“***AAAHHHHHHH!***” Yor cried out, before she started giggling once again.

Fiona gave her only a small smile. Then, just as Yor was getting used to the feeling of the brushes being held still, she started scrubbing the powder off her soles with slow, intermittent strokes.

“***AAAIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHEHEHEHHEEEEHHEHEHHEHEHEHEHEEEE!! OH DEAR GOD, NOOOOOOO!***” Tears were pouring down her face, the intensity of the tickling being so extreme that she was now starting to doubt if even she could handle it. “***AHHAHHAH HAHHAHHH FIONAAAAAHHAHAHAHH! NO NO NONONO STOP IT STOP IT STOHOHOHOOOP IHIHIHIIITTT!***”

Fiona didn’t let up at all, not for a long time. She was utterly merciless as a tickle-washer, her technique seemingly geared towards maximizing the ticklish sensation inflicted upon the helpless victim. She had no rhyme or reason to each stroke of each brush, moving in random directions, at arbitrary times, to different extents. Yor couldn’t guess as to what the next move of each brush was, and the way the bristles danced and scraped along her trapped soles was already maddening enough without that added unpredictability. Both elements together, however, were nothing short of unbearable, and her mind seemed to short-circuit after five minutes of non-stop scrubbing. She couldn’t even speak clearly, and there was no way whatsoever for her to focus on anything for long, except the sensations on her foot bottoms that would drive anyone lesser to insanity within just a matter of seconds.

“***NEEEEEEAAAAAHAAHAHHAHHAHAAHH! M-MAKE IT STOOOOP! I BEHEHEHEG YOUUU! AHAHAHAIIIIEHEEHHEHEHHEHEHH PLEHHEHEEEEHEHEASE MAKE IT STOHOHOHAHAHAAHHAHAHAAAAAHHHHHP!!!***”

“I don’t think I will. Your laugh is just too cute, Mrs. Forger! Coochie coochie~”

She wasn’t sure how long it was before the brushes finally pulled away. But by that point, Yor was a total mess. Her sweater was damp with sweat, her hair frazzled and frayed beyond compare, tears and sweat and a bit of drool having drenched her face from top to bottom. Her feet meanwhile were completely clean of the itching powder, but the soles were red as tomatoes from all that tickling. Fiona had done her job extremely well. Now, however, it was time for the most important question of the evening.

“So… tell me… What was your plan? What were you thinking when you stole Loid from me?”

Your blinked the tears from her eyes as she looked up at her tormentor. She took a deep breath, exhaled, and took a deep breath again.

“…I don’t remember.”

In that moment, the entire basement went completely silent. For a few long seconds, the only sounds were the light fixtures running and flickering.

“*What*,” was Fiona’s only reply.

“I’m telling you, I genuinely don’t remember,” said Yor. “It was a while ago, and it happened so fast that I didn’t have any time to process it. Whatever I said, however I felt, it’s been buried under many things since. All the happy memories I’ve had with my dear husband and daughter… they’re what I recall now. And I won’t change that for anything.”

Fiona’s mouth worked for a moment.

“Plus, all that tickling and itching left me unable to focus on anything at all,” Yor added in an embarrassed tone. “It’s not like those sorts of torturous feelings exactly encourage concentration…”

Fiona’s eyelid twitched once, twice, three times. She struggled to think of a retort, but none came to her at that point. Yor merely smiled in an apologetic way, but said nothing, either.

With a final growl of frustration, Fiona threw the brushes down. Glaring at Yor, she started turning the wingnuts holding down the toe-restraint board to loosen it up, eventually allowing Yor to slide her feet free.

“You win this time, Mrs. Forger,” she snarled, grabbing the brunette’s stockings and stilettos before callously tossing them at her. “I’m going to put a blindfold on you now, and then I’ll be taking you home — that way, you’ll never be able to track me. But know this: you’ve made a powerful enemy. I’ll be coming back for another round when you least expect it. And mark my words, you *will* talk once I’m done with you. We’ll make a rat out of you yet, and I’m going to get my beloved Loid back from you if it’s the last thing I do!”

Having caught her breath, Yor raised an eyebrow as she rubbed her still-tingling soles together. “I still don’t understand… Why do you think *I* stole Loid from—”

Fiona’s angry retort cut her off. “*Silence!* It doesn’t matter what I think, all I care about is that you did. But I have places to be, and as much as I want to continue this discussion, it will have to wait for some other day. Now, put this blindfold on, and take it off only after I say so. Understood?” She tossed a piece of cloth at her former captive with a scowl, motioning for her to comply.

Yor nodded meekly, feeling somewhat disappointed that Fiona would give up so soon. She’d gotten surprisingly close to breaking her with the combination of the itching powder and brushes, but from the Thorn Princess’ standpoint, that wasn’t such a bad thing. She’d hoped Fiona would push the challenge of seeing what could finally break her, but then again, she couldn’t exactly force her to continue. Not without giving away the game she herself was playing.

Ah, well, she thought to herself as she tied the blindfold around her face. It was fun while it lasted, at least.

*~ Later that evening ~*

“AHHHHHHH! I FORGOT THE MILK!!!”

Yor had just taken her blindfold off at Fiona’s signal, and found herself standing at the door to her apartment. Fiona flinched a bit at the outburst, but said nothing; she’d been the one who’d knocked on it.

“Oh no no no, this won’t do! I have to go back to the store, I can’t disappoint Loid like this — if I get just *one* thing wrong, I’ll be a terrible wife and I—”

The door opened, and a familiar blond man peeked through the gap. “Is something wrong?”

Yor looked utterly flustered, and Fiona tried to stay aloof. Loid had gotten the note from earlier, but he wasn’t sure as to why the other woman — his own partner from W.I.S.E., not that Yor knew or suspected it — would invite his wife out for an evening together all of a sudden. He wisely decided not to inquire any further, though.

“It’s alright… The store is probably closed now, anyway.” Yor rubbed the back of her head, smiling in embarrassment. “I’ll probably just get the milk tomorrow.”

Loid nodded. “Good to see you again, Fiona.”

“I guess I should take my leave now,” the light-haired woman replied, a little too coldly for comfort. “Thank you for the evening, Yor — I quite enjoyed it.” She strangely didn’t sound like it.

Yor nodded. “I’m glad for that! I’ll let you know when I have some free time next, and we can try going out on another shopping trip!”

Fiona discreetly elbowed her, but said nothing. Yor got the message, though, and slipped into the house without another word. Fiona was gone before Loid could get even one word in.

“I made you dinner while you were away,” Loid said as he followed his wife into the kitchen. “The recipe you wanted to try was a good call, but I felt it could use some work. I hope you don’t mind that I made a few adjustments.”

“Huh? Oh! Oh, not at all. Thank you!”

There was a pause, before Loid spoke again. “So… How was your evening, Yor? Did you have a good time?”

Yor thought back to what had happened this evening, never once noticing Anya peeking at her adopted parents from the doorway to her room, listening in on the dialogue both within their heads and without. She thought back to the amazing experiences she’d enjoyed, what Fiona had dished out and what she secretly craved.

“Ah. It was… it was nice,” she said finally, cracking a small, yet genuine smile.

She would never notice the brief look of shock and concern flashing across Anya’s face. In her current state of blissful reminiscence, though, it mattered little. If this was the game Fiona was willing to play, then Yor was all too happy to humor her. Who knew when she could enjoy getting tickled once again?

That being said, though… The mention of “stealing Loid from [Fiona]” was already setting off alarm bells in her brain. The rush from being tickled soon gave way to disbelief, then indignant, petty anger. What was this woman planning to do with her beloved hubby if she wanted him so badly? Could that explain why Anya was always scared of her? Worse yet… Could *Fiona* be trying to steal Loid from *Yor?*

“Um, honey? That look on your face…” Loid asked suddenly, startling her out of her murderous reverie. “Is everything alright?”

Her eyes widened, a bead of sweat running down her forehead as she looked at him with a forced smile. “Oh, no no! I’m fine, really!” she stammered. But then an idea occurred to her, unknowingly making Anya glance up at her with an even more distraught expression. “That being said, though… Do you have any plans with Anya for tomorrow?”

“Hmm, not that I know of, but if you want me to take her for a day out again, I wouldn’t be opposed to it. What about you?”

Yor had to suppress a devilish smirk. “Oh, thank you! It’s just… I may have to take an extra weekend work shift tomorrow — and another trip to the store, while I’m at it.”

*One with a certain someone special in mind,* she added in her head. *Be ready, Fiona, because I’m coming for you!*

The look on Anya’s face was as though she had just walked in on someone about to commit a crime worthy of the national news. She loved her mommy for sure, but she had a feeling that she should stay far, *far* away from her right now. Maybe it’d be safest to just retreat to her room with Bond and batten down the hatches until this mess was over…

*~ The day after ~*

Fiona was fuming. Fuming, *seething,* ***burning*** with a desire to utterly break that damn woman. She knew it was irrational, and that it would obviously interfere with her responsibilities to W.I.S.E., but she didn’t care. She’d had the perfect chance to get Yor to admit that she was inferior to herself as a potential choice for Loid’s partner, and she’d wasted it. *Wasted* it!

She was taking a walk at the park to try and clear the air and calm her nerves, her mask so effective that not a soul even gave her a passing glance. Nobody could tell that she was full of fury for the woman who’d unwittingly bested her the previous evening. But she wouldn’t let it stand. She *couldn’t*.

Was she doing things wrong? Had her torture been so cruelly effective that it had rendered poor Yor unable to speak coherently, let alone recount anything that could incriminate her? Or… was it simply that there was no actual plan on her part to take Loid for herself, and that they were in genuine love with one another?

A terrible rage boiled over within her at the thought. Her mind became laser-focused at that point, hell-bent on one motivation: finding Yor again, and making sure she suffered for the mistake of even associating with the man whom Fiona loved more than anything. She’d break into the Forgers’ apartment and drag her kicking and screaming out the front door if she had to. But no matter. She’d make that bimbo *pay*.

So caught up with her grim intentions was she that the platinum-blonde never noticed a figure stealing up behind her. The footsteps were too faint for her to notice until far too late — and as a dainty yet powerful arm wrapped around her neck, her struggles quickly became too weak for any significant resistance. Her vision quickly fading around the edges, her swearing of vengeance was the last thing that crossed her mind before she blacked out completely.

“Wha… what happ…***?!?!?!***”

Fiona let out a yelp of shock as she sat bolt upright, her arms tied behind her back. She looked around, her eyes adjusting to the light, to find herself in a very familiar place. It was then that she noticed that her feet were not moving, and bereft of any covering whatsoever. She tried to flex her toes, only to realize that they were held back by a very familiar padded board, secured by wingnuts to four familiar bolts rising from the concrete dais…

A figure cleared her throat in front of her, and stepped into the light. She squinted, and then her eyes widened in alarm as she recognized that black dress, the golden headband with decorative metallic roses and narrow blades on either side, those thigh-high boots the color of slick, shining petroleum.

She was wearing a black domino mask, her piercing scarlet eyes visible through it. Fiona couldn’t quite place it, but even with the mask on, *something about her was familiar*…

“Hello there, Ms. Frost. I take it you enjoyed your nap?” the Thorn Princess said in a cool, calm voice, soft as silk yet with deadly venom concealed behind it.

Fiona started to struggle, remembering the last time someone had been in the predicament she was currently facing. “W-what… W-what have you *done* to me?!”

The Thorn Princess merely chuckled. “Oh, that? It’s nothing to worry about. I just felt it best to keep you from struggling too much during this little interrogation. Any resistance-induced injury upon my person would undoubtedly be… *unbecoming*. Wouldn’t you agree, Ms. Frost?”

At the word *interrogation*, Fiona felt her blood run cold. She thought back to everything that happened yesterday, putting two and two together. Looking up at her detainer with a bead of sweat running down her forehead, the agent gave the most forced smile she could manage. “Who… sent… you…?” she all but hissed through her teeth.

“Mrs. Forger sends her regards,” the Thorn Princess lied as naturally as she breathed. “She wanted you to know that she felt rather… *traumatized* by yesterday’s events, and called for me as soon as she could.”

“And that relates to me being tied up like this… *how?*” Fiona said in indignant confusion.

The Thorn Princess’ smile was as cold as ice. “Be that as it may, I do have a couple of questions for you. But first, I figured I’d ‘soften you up’, if you know what I mean.”

She waved her hand towards a nearby table. Her victim looked towards where she’d indicated, and let out a small scream. There, sitting on the table, was the exact same assortment of hairbrushes, feathers, cleaning products, and itching powder that Fiona herself had used on Yor the previous day. Even the chocolate syrup bottle was identical, down to the brand and label, though it was easy to tell that this was a new one, full of sweet goodness ready to be enjoyed at her expense.

Blinking tears from the corners of her eyes, Fiona glanced back at her captor with a flicker of panic, seriously doubting she could take what she could dish out. From her standpoint, it was clear from the look on her face that the Thorn Princess had *not* been happy to hear of what her friend had gone through yesterday, and she was now all too eager to pay back said friend’s erstwhile tormentor for what she’d been put through… with *interest*.

“Oh, and don’t worry if you can’t remember anything off the top of your head,” Yor Forger said with a smirk, fingers wiggling as she closed in on the thoroughly trapped soles of her terrified captive. “My schedule is open for pretty much the rest of tonight. I’ve got all the time in the world to find out whatever answers you may have. Answers you will *give*.”