

Package Day

The first day of the month was Package Day. She never figured out how her parents always managed to time it exactly right, but each time, without fail, they would send her two perishable packages. They were so startlingly on time that she could hear the gossip of the apartment staff filter through her door, and it only escalated when her ex-roommate left on a Package Day.

She didn't care. With her roommate gone, she didn't have to suffer the weight of the perfume she doused herself in, nor the cologne that lingered about her clothes. She'd forgotten both their names not long after they met, so in her mind, she called them Dior and Calvin. They were both surprisingly normal.

But it was Package Day, and after work ended, she went to pick up her mail. The shamelessly cursive, neon-coloured words of "Pastelería de Sueños" brought a smile to her face while her feet tried to outrun one another. Slamming the door shut behind her, she immediately put one of the packages in her tiny freezer and the other on her dining table, causing the set of tall candles to shudder precariously. Then, she rifled through the mess in her drawer for the First Aid kit, grabbing the matchbox that was always placed next to the syringes. If she stopped to think about it, she would have understood why her roommate left; why Dior thought she was more than a little crazy.

With specialised dexterity, she struck a single match and lit all five candles before the wood could completely vaporise. Judging by the lonely rattling of the matchbox, she made a mental note to remember to sneak another matchbox from the nearby Hyatt sometime soon. She eyed the window, and made another note to herself. She didn't want the apartment owner to come knocking on her door again, and no, she didn't care if she set the building on fire. She'd be the first one to die anyway. She turned her attention to the package and took a box cutter from her desk, opening it carefully. If cardboard wasn't so soft, it would have creaked, but she wasn't listening anymore.

The smell of a rich, banana-chocolate bundt cake leaked into the air, and she breathed deeply.

The first time she did this, Dior had joked about how it wasn't her birthday yet, and had eyed the cakes with veiled self-flattery. When she realised that they weren't for her, and saw what she did with the cakes, she had given her a very strange look. After that day, they didn't talk with each other ever again.

She sighed and let the smell of burning wax mingle with cake, staring at ten flickering ancient lights. When an hour passed, she ripped off the cardboard lid and used it to cut the bundt cake into thirteen pieces, and went around the room placing each slice at thirteen predetermined locations. Then, after making sure that all of last month's cake slices were in the bin, she blew out the candles, leaving her surrounded by a night that smelled like a silent birthday.