



# Beak Performance

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**Category:** Romance, M-m Romance

**Description:** ARNE

My job as the captain of the Veitsreuth Pumas is to be there for my team. It's only natural that I want to take my new team mate, Max Gruber, under my wing. The Raven is young but he has bite. I shouldn't notice just how pretty he is with his body covered in black feathers and the glossy curls I long to touch, or how much I want to protect him from harm.

When the mounting tension between us boils over and he kisses me, I find myself in a tough situation. I don't want to jeopardise his or my career, but staying away from him isn't an option for me, either.

Raven is mine and I am his.

It's only for one season that we have to keep our relationship under wraps; we can do this. Once he has his contract extended nothing can stop us. But we didn't take into account how difficult it was to keep our mutual affection under wraps.

MAX

Falling for my hot captain wasn't the plan when I joined the Veitsreuth Pumas. When I snap and kiss him on the last night of our training camp, I think I've blown my chances. Yet I am not the only one who finds it impossible to keep their hands—or shadow tentacles—off the other. Dating and mating Arne Bendixen makes me happier than anything ever before. I should have known it was too good to be true. When shit hits the fan and we find ourselves with our backs to the wall, our mate bond is put to the test. Can we withstand what the world throws at us or will we break?

**Total Pages (Source):** 74

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:41 am*

One

Arne

“Arne?” My teammate’s curly head poked out from behind his hotel room door. “Can you come in here for a second?”

A glance at my watch told me that we had only half an hour before we had to be in the restaurant. I was always early, but as team captain, I had a few minutes to spare for him.

As his captain... Yes, that’s why you’re eager to help. It’s not because Max Gruber lives rent free in your head.

“Yeah, sure.” Taking a sharp turn left, I approached the door.

Maybe he needs help with his tie again.

Max stepped back, half turning away from me.

What’s going on?

He waited until he heard the door click shut, then swivelled back around.

“What do you think?”

For a moment, I didn’t realise what he meant. His presence mesmerised me all over

again: the radiant smile, his bright white teeth on display, and the sparkle in his dark eyes.

God, you are so pretty. And I am so screwed.

“So?” he asked when I said nothing. “What do you think?”

That you are the most beautiful person I have ever seen and that I am disgusting for wanting you the way I do?

“Sorry, I...”What am I supposed to say?How stunning he looks in that blue suit?

Max laughed softly. “The bowtie! I taught myself how to do it. I watched that video about a hundred times. I swear it made no sense to my brain. I had to pause it and rewind, but I think it turned out okay. What do you think?” he repeated.

Oh, right.

My eyes dropped to his throat where a cornflower blue bowtie sat nestled against the glossy feathers. Then my eyes drifted down to where his newly formed muscles stretched his smart shirt almost beyond its limits.

He took me by surprise when he stepped nearer. I had been too busy staring to notice.

“I wanted to make you proud,” he muttered, giving me a slightly nervous smile.

“I’m always—,” I began. My voice trailed off as our gazes collided. Our eyes clung to each other and refused to let go. “Proud of you,” I croaked, words failing me when feather-covered hands palmed my cheeks. His silky thumbs brushed my skin.

Time stood still. And for a heartbeat, we just looked at each other.

His lips were soft on mine, so soft and sweet. Another step brought his body close, enveloping me in his warmth.

It was funny how a person's life could change forever in a matter of a heartbeat.

One second, I was the 'Viking': professional hockey player and straight but a little too picky—or unenthusiastic—to find many women to date. The next, my teammate kissed me, and fuck if I wasn't so sure about my sexuality anymore.

He swallowed my soft gasp down, using the opportunity to slide his tongue between my lips.

Oh my Lord.

His taste made me dizzy and drunk. The feeling only intensified when he invited my tongue between his lips and sucked on it.

I did what I had been itching to do for weeks; I sank my hands into the glossy black curls and pressed my fingertips to his scalp.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:41 am*

It was the best kiss of my life, and I couldn't believe I had to turn thirty-two to get it. Or that it was Max who kissed me like he knew exactly what I needed and how to get me to do what he asked.

I'd never let anyone take the lead. Never until now. And it felt so fucking good.

I urged my hips to his, desperate for some friction. He answered my plea.

Max was a little taller, again a brand new experience—there weren't a lot of women taller than me. Yet, somehow I enjoyed being the shorter one. I enjoyed having to tilt up my face to kiss him. And the way he pressed me into the wall was so hot.

Why is he so strong?

I was sure I had thirty pounds of muscle on him. At least. Yet every touch made me aware of his strength.

Cupping my jaw, he pushed my chin down with a thumb and tilted my head to deepen the kiss. I had loved that first gentle kiss, loved the way he felt, and loved how he tasted. This fierce kiss? It set fire to my soul.

Max's other hand slid down my back and rested on my ass.

I shouldn't like this. It shouldn't make me hard or horny.

His elegant fingers massaged my glute and pressed my body closer to his.

Fuck.

I didn't just like this. I loved it. With a gasp, I broke the kiss, panting like a dog in summer.

"Max," I groaned, not knowing what to say or do. But sure, quite sure, I couldn't leave this room and pretend it never happened.

This kiss changes everything.

I thought he would keep going, and I wanted him to. I needed his mouth back on mine. But we had to be at the feast.

How much time has passed?

It could have been an eternity for all I knew.

"I'll see you down at the restaurant," I told him in a shaky voice. God, you're so far gone. "You look great, by the way."

Max stepped back from me, his eyes roaming over my face. Darkness swirled in their depths. He dug his teeth into his red lips. They were swollen from the scratch of my beard and our kisses. He didn't look 'great'; he was stunningly beautiful. My dick thickened even more, testing the limits of my smart trousers. I spun on the spot, fiddled with the door handle for a moment, and ran from the room.

I slid into a niche near the women's bathrooms on our floor, hiding behind an antique wardrobe. I pressed my back to the wall so that I would be invisible to anyone who walked past and tried to catch my breath.

Max... From the moment I'd laid eyes on him, I had been intrigued in a way I had

never been by anything or anyone before. Except by hockey, maybe.

Damn. His curls had been as soft as I'd imagined. For days, I had wondered how they would feel and had crept on him when we worked out. I had imagined how I'd run into him in an empty gym—no idea how that fantasy had built up. It was my favourite. Just the two of us and the lights dimmed. Max put his hair into a half bun for workouts. Stray curls escaped it every time, making him scowl at his hair and impatiently tuck them back into the hair tie. It was the cutest thing in the world. Yet, in my fantasy I stopped him from fixing his hair. Instead, I freed it from the bun and buried my hands in the curls, springy and glossy with sweat.

That mental image had kept me up at night.

Up and hard. You're still hard, you dick.

The rest of Max intrigued me as much as those pretty curls did—his dark, strangely active eyes, his chiselled profile, the plush lips, and his smiles. They were rare, but when Max smiled, it was like the sun peeking through the clouds on a gloomy day. I still didn't know what kind of creature he was, but good God, he was so beautiful. The gleaming black feathers covering his entire body from the neck down had earned him his nickname from the team.

My raven.

He kissed you.

I am so screwed.

Two

Max

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:41 am*

Holy fucking shit. I must be out of my mind.

It was the only explanation for why I had gone and kissed my captain.

I kissed him. Oh, by the Night Goddess. Why the fuck did I do that?

I rested my back against the wall by the door. Slumping in a suit wasn't something one did. I remembered my mother telling me about a hundred times to behave myself when I wore formal attire to their company parties.

“Maxmilian! Stand up straight; don't slump. You'll get creases in your suit.”

Goddess, I had hated the events they organised for their investors, shareholders, and business partners. The frequent meltdowns I'd had as a child got me out of them. But as soon as I'd been able to play neurotypical long enough to get through the events, it had been on.

The adorable Gruber children were paraded around to show everyone how happy our family was.

Marie, my younger sister, had enjoyed them. Her ADHD had made her the life and soul of every party, a cute, energetic girl with pigtails and pompous frilly dresses to hide the feathers. And then there was me.

Earnest and bored Max, who never fit in and wasn't mad about it.

I smirked into the dim room when I remembered the last time my mother made me



go. It had been their company's Christmas party about ten years ago. Sixteen-year-old me had shown up looking like a character from one of my favourite anime; I had worn a black futuristic overall with combat boots and the sides of my head shaved.

Goddess, Mum had hated that. She had me escorted out of the ballroom and nobody ever said a word about it.

I should get that haircut again. That was a good look.

I'd been so lost in my memories, I'd completely forgotten I should be panicking.

I fucking kissed Arne Bendixen!

I was probably lucky he didn't punch me in the face.

The team hardly ever discussed sexual orientation; you just dated whoever you dated. Yet, I was pretty sure Arne was straight. On the rare occasions I'd seen him get hit on, it had only ever been female-presenting people. And even if he was queer, I was sure he wouldn't be into a pansexual mess like me.

Yet, the look on his face had told a different story. His eyes had dipped to my lips so much, even my autistic ass couldn't have mistaken his intentions for something else.

Pattern recognition on point, Max. It doesn't help that he's just so pretty.

For a minute, I considered calling in sick, but maybe that wasn't the best impression to leave on the last night of my first training camp with the team.

You can't avoid him, anyway. He's your captain. You shower together. And he has such a nice cock.

Which I shouldn't have noticed. At all.

I usually didn't. Contrary to what my ex-boyfriend had accused me of, I never ever lusted over my teammates. For one, getting hard in the shower sucked. It happened occasionally to all of us. No matter how exhausted we were after playing; winning gave you—and your cock—a postgame high. We usually just ignored it. The times in which you'd get teased for a boner were long gone. Thank fuck.

But I also didn't go around sexualising every person I met.

Just your captain.

My smartwatch vibrated with the timer I'd set so that I wouldn't miss the feast.

Time blindness. It's so much fun.

Okay. You are a capable adult. Well, a clueless Night Raven cosplaying as a capable adult. You can do this. It's going to be alright. He kissed you back...

I checked my suit in the full-length mirror and tried to fix my stubborn curls but gave them up as a terrible job. They never did what I wanted.

On my way down to the ground floor, I pulled a hair tie out of my inner pocket and put my hair up in the kind of bun I wore for my workouts.

I hated it when wet hair touched my face. Ugh. The mere idea of it made me shudder. Dry hair wasn't a lot better, but I could at least stand it. Not today, though.

## Page 4

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The gravel crunched under my soles when I crossed the yard. Night wouldn't be falling for another two hours. I breathed in the evening air and let my gaze rest on the land for a moment to ground myself. As much as I enjoyed living in a city, I'd grown up in a quaint Austrian village. The country was where I felt at peace.

Scotland was grittier, flatter, and less lush than Austria or the Fichtel Mountains, but it was no less beautiful.

The restaurant's windows cast their warm glow out into the evening. I steeled myself and entered.

Okay, you can do this.

Most of the other guys had chosen seats over at the long table the staff had put up.

I picked a seat next to Decks and across from Arne, who gave me a small smile. Still, I didn't join the conversation for most of the night.

I absorbed and watched. Mostly Arne. I wanted to memorise him.

As if you'd forget anything about that man.

Arne Bendixen was the stuff of my wet dreams. He had a chiselled jaw covered in dark stubble and a smattering of freckles on his straight nose. Expressive eyebrows overshadowed his beautiful blue eyes.

So gorgeous.

“Don’t you like steak?” Arne asked me in a low voice when Decks, Bo, and the others left to socialise with the other guests.

“No. I don’t know why, but I’ve never been able to eat it.”

My captain cocked his head at me. He had teased Decks for missing his fiancé’s cooking.

Are you going to tease me, too?

I looked back down at my plate, piercing one of the green beans with my fork. I’d always liked those. I’d had a phase at age four when I’d eaten nothing but green beans, sprouts, spinach, and broccoli. Mum never tired of telling the story. That was when my parents realised I wasn’t a typical child.

“Do you want me to get you something else from the kitchen?”

My eyes snapped up.

“Sorry?”

“I’m sure their chef could whip up something else for you. I don’t like the idea of you not eating tonight.”

He wants to feed me?

“Oh, uh. No, it’s fine.”

Arne rose with a ferocity he usually only displayed on the ice, a Viking rising for battle.

“It’s not fine. What food can you eat?”

There’s no arguing with him.

“Chicken or fish is always good,” I told him, admitting defeat.

He returned fifteen minutes later carrying a rectangular plate with a large chicken breast and a piece of salmon. There was more rice and green vegetables on the side.

He brought me a plate of my safe foods.

“Here you go, Raven.” Arne handed me the plate. “Enjoy.”

“Thanks, Captain.”

“You’re welcome.”

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He watched me eat, looking pleased with himself.

“Better?”

I looked up and met his eyes, hanging on them for a moment. Arne’s tongue darted out to swipe across his bottom lip.

Stop looking at me like that, Viking, please.

“Yeah, thanks.”

“Can’t let you go to bed hungry.”

Want to help me fill that other hunger I feel when I look at you?

“I would have been okay.”

“I don’t want you to be just ‘okay’.”

There was that soft smile again. “Want to walk back with me? I’m turning in early.”

“Good idea. I’m exhausted. Better get some sleep before we travel tomorrow. I can’t sleep on planes.”

Why are you telling him this?

He waited until I was next to him. Bumping his elbow against mine, he gave me a

wink.

“Me neither.”

We made our way back to the hotel.

“Are you okay, Raven?” Arne buried his hands in his pockets and looked at me out of the corners of his eyes.

He means because of the kiss.

“I am. You?”

“Me, too.” A dark strand fell over his brow when he nodded. I longed to reach over and brush it back. Wanted to wrap him in a hug and devour his mouth again.

I bet it’s written all over my face. I suck at masking.

He froze, lips parted and eyes glued to mine. We were still out in the hallway.

Run, Max. Run and don’t come out until tomorrow.

“This is my room.” Arne flinched at my words.

“Oh, yeah. Good night, Max.”

“Good night.”

I disappeared into my room and locked the door behind me. I did not trust myself not to do anything dumb.

It was almost eleven when someone knocked on my door. I opened it in a shirt and boxer shorts. I knew exactly who it was.

With his temple leaned against the doorframe, he looked like he'd tried and failed to sleep, so finally came to see me.

“Hey, Raven. Can we talk for a minute?”

“Sure, come in.” I stepped aside and let him pass.



## Page 6

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Let's address the raven in the room.

"We need to talk about what happened earlier," he muttered, taking a step closer to me. "About the kiss." His gaze dropped to my lips then hastily returned to my eyes.

I didn't know what to say.

"I'm not angry or upset or anything, yeah?" Arne reached out and gripped my forearm. "But we can't do this. I'm sorry. We're teammates, and it's better if we stay that way. Fuck, I am your captain. I shouldn't have..."

"No, I'm sorry, Cap. I overstepped. I shouldn't have...Forgive me."

"It's not that I didn't like the kiss," Arne added in a whisper, completely ignoring what I had said. "Fuck no, Max. You know the truth. But we can't."

What the fuck is the truth, Viking? Did you love the kiss?

"Yeah, I understand."

I did not understand a fucking thing.

He nodded, way too close to me, and his eyes searched my face and dipped to my lips every few seconds.

Don't fucking kiss me now, Viking. Don't you fucking dare.

“Good night, Arne.”

He swallowed hard, licking his lips as he nodded. “Yeah, goodnight, Max. Sleep well.”

Three

Arne

I’d been moments away from kissing Max again.

Fuck fuck fuck!

I bumped my forehead against the shower tiles, hoping the hot water would clear my head.

Sweet raven.

I was so sure he’d wanted it, too.

The shower didn’t have the effect I had hoped for. For at least an hour, I tossed and turned in bed but eventually fell asleep. And woke up with a start after what felt like only ten minutes. I sat bolt upright.

A tall figure stood at the foot of my bed. It was darker than the darkness in my room, as if a piece of the night had solidified and come to visit me.

The faint shimmer from the emergency lighting out in the hall cast a glow around the figure.

I should be scared out of my wits; I should scream for help or demand they leave. I

did neither of those things. They didn't scare me. Their presence felt familiar.

"I waited for you." Wait, that was my voice! Why did I say that?

"I know." The creature stepped nearer. Its outline blurred a little, and something smooth brushed over my cheek. It wasn't a hand.

What is that?

"I've been waiting for you, too, Arne." Its voice was velvety and deep, a caress.

The smooth thing trailed over my chin and throat. It followed the line between my pecs down to my navel.

Why aren't you pissing yourself? There is a monster in your room!

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I wasn't scared, though. On the contrary. My rock hard dick leaked into my tight boxers.

What the fuck is wrong with you?

They stepped nearer, bringing their knees to the edge of the bed. In the faint light, I got a glimpse of their face.

"It's you," I breathed, sitting up straighter. The face dissolved into shadows. It was impossible to get a clear look at the creature, but I thought they had a long, sharp beak and beady eyes like a bird's.

Then it was human again. That familiar face I'd seen so often in my dreams.

Never like this.

"Are you scared?" he asked, again in that smooth murmur.

"No."

My rapid answer made him chuckle softly. The thing left my navel. It curled around my waist to touch the small of my back.

How had I not known how sensitive that spot was? The tip tickled the tiny hairs growing there and made me fidget on the bed.

The creature's touch woke a bone-deep hunger in me. I was restless and

desperate—no,starving. I had eaten dinner.

What's going on?

No food I could think of would satiate the aching emptiness in my body, either.

“You are mine,” the creature snarled in such a low, dangerous tone it made the bed under me tremble.

Or maybe it's me.

I moved over to where he stood, forcing him to back away when I slid to the floor at his feet. Without another word, I gripped the waistband of his joggers.

“Give me your dick!” The voice was barely recognisable as my own.

“Wait.” His hands took hold of mine. I still couldn't see his face, but I would have recognised him anywhere. His eyes scrutinised me and looked straight into my soul.

He let go of me, his breathing harsh and laboured.

I pulled his trousers down, taking his boxers off at the same time.

Oh fuuuck.

The faint outline of his hard length made me whimper. Lured in by his scent, I palmed his feather-covered hips. They were silky under my hands.

I raised myself up and took his dick into my mouth.

It should have felt weird and unfamiliar, but I loved the weight of him on my tongue.

Bumps covered the entire length. I'd seen them in the showers but had never dared to look too closely.

In no scenario could I have imagined feeling them inside my mouth.

He let me set the pace, a firm hand cupping my nape but never once trying to take over.

"You're doing so well," he purred, brushing my hair back from my brow and the tears off my cheeks. "So well for me."

I doubled down on his dick. I took him so deep, I gagged. I sucked and slurped. I was about to perish from this ravenous craving clawing at my insides when his hand tightened around the back of my neck, sharp claws pricking my skin.

Glancing up, I caught sight of that long, dangerous beak again.

"Oh, fuck!" His moan hitched in his throat as he spilled himself. I choked on it for a moment but drank it down. His warm seed soothed my burning hunger. It sated me.

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Blissfully happy, I pulled off, only now realising that I had come, too. Sticky cum drenched my boxers.

Without a word, he helped me to my feet. Feathery hands took my underwear off, then tucked me back into bed.

“Gute Nacht,” he whispered, brushing a kiss onto my brow. I fell into a dreamless sleep.

Four

Max - Five weeks later

Back in Veitsreuth neither Arne nor I mentioned the dream or the kiss. We went straight into our routine. Training and games. Games and training.

Jerke introduced us to our new physical therapist, Søren. He was a good-looking guy with a physique that would make any hockey player jealous.

He and Arne bonded immediately over being Danish. I despised Søren a little for that. But mostly, I hated that Arne avoided me.

I knew why he did it. As my captain, he couldn't show favouritism. And he behaved amicably towards me. He was always on his best behaviour and had my back when I needed it.

It's not his fault you want to break his.

When I scored in my second game with the team, he met me behind the net and hugged me. For a moment that hug sat like a talisman in my chest, warming my heart. Off of the ice, he pretended I didn't exist.

It hurts.

And there was more... The memories of our last night in Scotland haunted me.

Even five weeks later, I wasn't sure what had happened that night. I knew as a Nachtkrapp, a Night Raven, I could dreamwalk.

Technically, at least.

Nobody's dreams had ever lured me. Ever. Had I crossed that one boundary I never wanted to break and entered his mind?

You could ask.

Another low huff escaped me, the movement making my lip smart.

'Hey Arne, did you have that dream about blowing me, too? Or was it just me? Any chance you want to repeat it?'

I snorted at my joke, then embarrassment flooded me. I'd always found myself funny but others found me 'too much'. My last boyfriend—an exceptionally messy breakup when I found out through his ArgoS that he'd cheated on me—had always rolled his eyes at me. 'You're not funny, Max. Stop trying'.

Well, perhaps that new guy of his was funnier than me.

Fat chance.



“Here you go, Max. Are you okay?” Søren looked at me with anxious eyes—grey like a stormy sky.

He’s gorgeous. Not my type. But maybe Arne’s?

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I snapped, grabbing the ice pack from him and pressing it to my smarting lip. I’d taken a puck to the face, and it was sheer luck I still had all my teeth.

You let yourself be distracted.

I knew that perfectly well, and I was still beating myself up about it. But how was I supposed to keep my cool when the Viking sped up the rink, bent over his stick, his eagle eyes narrowed on the puck?

I knew that look. It was the same one he had given me when he had sucked—

With a groan, I let my head fall back, trying to find something on the recently painted ceiling above me. What was I looking for? I snorted. My head? My self-control?

“I need to go see Jerke for a minute. Will you be alright?”

## Page 9

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“Yeah, I’m fine. Bruised lip, bruised ego, that’s all.”

His sigh sounded exasperated. This wasn’t his first job with a hockey team; he knew how we were. Just a bunch of guys who loved to hang out on the ice and fight over a rubber puck. None of us minded a bit of pain.

“Be right back. Don’t faint on me, Max.”

I rolled my eyes at Søren before slapping the ice pack on my lip.

Ah, that’s better.

Five

Arne

I’d become a pro at glossing over Max the past five weeks. I was always aware of his presence, but I cancelled him out.

The yoga routine Søren had established for us was a particular test of my self control.

Watching sweaty Max in tight shorts arching his back in a downward dog position turned me on like crazy.

The number of times I recalled our yoga routines when I was alone in bed at night should have concerned me.

I fucking hated having to pretend he didn't exist so I didn't walk around with a hard-on twenty-four-seven, or make these horny little gasps when I remembered how his dick had felt in my mouth. And how good he tasted.

You didn't even blow him! It was just a wet dream.

I knew that on a conscious level, but it was so real... and I'd found my boxers on the floor the next morning, a dried cum stain in the front.

You woke up to take them off and went back to sleep. You're about to break your own rules. That's becoming the norm where Max is concerned.

I hurried down the tunnel to the locker rooms to check on him. I caught myself running on my blades, but I didn't give a fuck.

Max had gotten injured at practice. He'd taken a puck to the lip. My mind was in overdrive. I'd always been calm and composed but right now? All of me raged. Breaking my stick on the concrete wall sounded like an excellent idea.

What if he is badly hurt? I'm his captain. I need to see him.

I met Søren, our new PT, out in the hall.

"Where is he? How bad is it?" I asked him in Danish.

"Max is fine. A bloody lip, that's all. I'm going to get a fresh ice pack and check in with Jerke real quick. Be right back. Will you keep an eye on him?"

"Ja."

Without another word, I pushed on. He sat with his head resting against the lockers in

our dressing room.

Damn.

That gorgeous man looked edible in his white undershirt and black trousers. Blood splattered the front of the shirt, giving him a reckless look. Max had his eyes closed and used the bloodstained fabric to wipe his brow as I approached. He was unaware I was in the room with him.

The sweaty, slightly ruffled feathers covering his abs had me hard again. The sight of them triggered a memory: a bumpy, hard cock pushing past my lips, his length heavy on my tongue, and me gagging around his head...

He's so fucking gorgeous.

"Hey, Raven, are you alright?"

Max flinched and sat up straighter, his eyes flying open. He let his shirt fall back down to cover his body and glared at me over the ice pack pressed to his mouth.

Six

Max

“Hey, Raven,” a concerned voice interrupted my thoughts. “Are you alright?”

Without opening my eyes, I knew who stood before me. I usually felt his presence near, but I’d been too occupied with my dumb sense of humour.

“I’m okay,” I snapped, wanting to apologise for my tone almost immediately when I opened my eyes and they fell on his face.

My gaze roamed his dark brown hair, a little wavy from the sweat, his crinkled eyes, and then followed his straight nose down to the symmetrical lips.

Oh Viking, you are so stunning.

“You scared me out there,” he muttered, giving me a small smile.

“I’m okay,” I repeated, kinder this time.

“Do you think you can play tonight?” He cocked his head like an inquisitive bird.

Shouldn’t that be my move, Captain?

“One hundred percent. It’s just a nick.”

“Let me see it.” Arne arched an eyebrow, surveying me out of his cornflower blue eyes.

I returned the gesture.

“Come on, Raven. Let me see your lip. Please.” My captain took a step closer and peered down at me.

I lowered the ice pack to reveal my swollen mouth.

“Shit,” Arne muttered, getting to his knees. His fingertips brushed over my chin as if to convince himself I was okay.

My body reacted to him the way it always did. His presence woke a ravenous hunger inside me. And Arne on his knees...

By the Night Goddess!

It catapulted me back to that night when I’d visited him in his dreams. I gasped at the contact, and he did too. He snatched his hand back. Our gazes tangled in the other, and for a moment I was sure he would kiss me again.

Arne made exactly the same sound as when he’d taken me into his mouth, and I reached out to him automatically, cupping his jaw.

“I’m going to kick Chase Harper’s ass tonight.” Nik’s voice made Arne jump out of my personal space and back up to his feet as if he got zapped.

“Leave him to me, Kleiner.” Bo and Nikolai appeared in the doorway, the massive Troll nudging his fellow defenceman with his elbow.

Kleiner.

Nik was a year older than me, about two hundred pounds of pure muscle and spite,

and a head shorter than the Forest Troll.

The ice pack went back on my face. They didn't need to see my blush.

"Nobody's going to kick Harper's ass," Arne informed them with a glance back at me. "Let's just focus on the game tonight."

"I will if he starts shit. You know he will." Nik sniffed haughtily as he took his training jersey off over his head.

"I'll give you my word on it," Guns, our goalie, chimed in. He stopped in front of his locker and took his protective pads off with his usual slow and measured movements. Slow off the ice, that is. On the ice, that man protected his home like a viper. "But we'll kick the Gators' asses, anyway." With a grin at our captain, he, too, stripped, exposing heavily tattooed forearms and a muscular chest.

"I know I should tell you to give it a rest, but will you listen?"

"Nope," Bo answered Arne's rhetorical question, staring down at his phone with a slightly furrowed brow.

“Everything okay?” I enquired.

“What?” He looked over to meet my eyes. “Oh, yeah. My boyfriend just texted me. He arrived last night.” Heat spread over his green cheeks, making him look adorably flustered.

“Your boyfriend?” Decks enquired from Bo’s other side. “Do you plan on introducing us to him?”

Bo blushed an even deeper red. “You already know him, actually.” He rubbed a hand over his sweaty neck.

Decks arched an eyebrow, telling the Troll without words to spill the beans.

“It’s Ollie. I don’t know if you remember him...”

“Oliver Bright?” He gaped at Bo.

Ha! My gut feeling hadn’t fooled me. I had been so sure something was going on between the two of them. Not that I had anyone to discuss my theory with or any interest in being the team gossip.

“Happy for you, Bo.” My heart stopped at the smile Arne gave him from across the room, and the fact that his eyes flickered over at me again. I doubted anyone but me noticed. It was a genuine smile, yes, but to me it also looked wistful—perhaps even a bit jealous?



That's just wishful thinking, Max.

Decks grabbed a towel from the shelf and swaggered into the showers. "If he's up for it, bring him to lunch with you. It would be great to see him again."

"Will do, Nate," Bo mumbled, unable to hide his indulgent grin as he flung his phone back into his locker, grabbed a towel, and followed our centre.

Seven

Arne

For someone whose team had won tonight's game I sure as hell was way too depressed. Perhaps I should let the curvy redhead over by the window help me get my head on straight.

I huffed.

Bad puns since 2007.

If this was school, and I was not a more or less functioning adult, I'd be writing lines on the blackboard.

Kissing your new teammate is never a good idea.

Throwing my beer back, I gestured to the barman for another. I never drank, but tonight I needed to get out of my head if only for a while.

Realising I was at least bi hadn't been a tremendous shock. Finding myself in a dark room with my back to the door and my tongue down my teammate's throat?

Yeah, not my greatest moment. He kissed you first. And you went all in the moment he did.

Things between Max and I had been so fucking awkward since our time at Lone Fox.

I'd felt it, truly felt it, for the first time when he asked me to help him with his tie on our second night of training camp a few weeks before our memorable kiss.

"Can you imagine I've never worn one of these before? We had a game on the night of my graduation. I should've probably practised this."

With a grin, he had run his hand through the glossy black curls, ruffling them.

God, his cheeky little grin.

Then the air between us had changed. Charged. Crackled with static.

When I closed my eyes, I could still see shadows swirling in the depths of his dark eyes, felt his throat bob under my fingertips, his breath brushing against my cheek as I helped him fix his tie.

"Ready," I'd announced, stepping back as if I had burned myself. "I'll see you downstairs." I had fled, hidden in the next dark corner, my head thudding back into the wall as I'd tried to calm my racing mind, my frantic pulse, and shallow breathing. And then that kiss on our last night...

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*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:41 am*

The world as I'd known it had ended. This new existence still confused me. The one where I craved his touch, his approval, and his taste on my tongue again.

He kissed you first. You are his captain! You should be the one to have his back, not think about him breaking yours.

Nobody could ever find out what kind of stuff I'd looked up on Kraken. I had my head full of new information about what we could do with each other: frotting, rimming, docking, and whatever else I had found.

Old dog, new tricks.

Compared to Max, who would turn twenty-six in January, I was ancient.

It's just six years. He didn't seem to mind when he— No.

I wouldn't sit around and sexualise my teammate. Further.

God, that damn blowjob in my dream still haunted me. I couldn't let it go.

Why can't I stop thinking about it?

The room, and his eyes glinting in the darkness, those firm hands sliding up into my hair and guiding my mouth on his. His fucking taste. I took a deep draught of the beer as soon as the bartender placed it in front of me.

“Hi.” The gorgeous redhead finally approached me after eyeing me from the table by

the window for a quarter of an hour.

“Hey.” I gave her a quick nod.

“I’m Val.”

“Arne.”

“Oh, is that Swedish?” she grinned at me before she tried to catch the bartender’s attention. In another life she might have interested me: curvy, sparkling blue eyes, and hair like burnished copper.

All I could think of was that pair of eyes watching me like a hawk. Dark and burning with jealousy, I felt them burrow into my back, trying to take up residence under my skin.

“Danish.”

“I’ve never seen you here before.” She smiled, her gaze travelling up and down the length of my body.

“My partner and I are usually homebodies. Gotta venture out into the world occasionally, though,” I said with a shrug. I had no idea why I lied. That wasn’t usually my style, but I knew I needed to get back to our table. And to navigate the mess Max and I were in somehow.

“Aw, yeah,” Val grinned, a little wistfully perhaps. “I get it. Nothing beats a quiet evening with your favourite person, does it?”

“Nah.” I shook my head, took my beer, and straightened. “Nah, you’re right. Have a great rest of the night.”

Her eyes travelled up the length of my body, a disappointed expression on her face.  
“You, too, Arne. It was nice to meet you.”

“You too.”

Eight

Max

The bar near the rink was where we came to celebrate or commiserate. We’d played a fantastic game against the Gators with Nate and I scoring two goals each.

So why on earth are you sulking?

I tipped back my Lemony Lion. Whoever came up with names like that one should be fired immediately.

“Want another one?” A warm hand palmed my shoulder. It was a friendly gesture from captain to player, but I froze in the middle of putting the glass back down on the table.

“A Demonic Slap?” I handed him the glass and dug in my pockets for money.

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*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:41 am*

“Sure. If you need one.” He winked at me, then waved me off. “Nah, it’s all right. I got you.”

That was precisely what I needed. Maybe a hard hit around the head would help me get it back on straight.

More than one pair of eyes followed him to the bar.

Mine, too, were dragged along by the play of his arm muscles under the thin compression shirt with our sponsor’s logo on the front. Then, I locked in on his magnificent backside in the torn grey jeans.

The way he moved fascinated me. It was as if he didn’t have a care in the world. Dress him in furs and hand him an axe; he could be a Viking warrior wading through a sea of blood and bones.

And don’t get me started on Arne Bendixen on skates.

It ate me alive.

Watching Bo being all cute and funny with his boyfriend didn’t help, either. I wrenched my eyes away when a young woman struck up a conversation with Arne, one hand skimming down his biceps. I supposed she was pretty.

Well, she’ll help him nurse his bruised ego. No need to watch that.

I wasn’t used to feeling jealous. Seriously, did I think I was above it all?

Probably not, but that doesn't make it any better.

A few minutes later, he joined us again, another beer for himself and my drink clutched in his broad hands.

“Here you go, Raven. Can I sit for a moment?” He set the glass in front of me and took a seat without waiting for my response.

“Sure,” I muttered unnecessarily. “Thanks.”

Arne clinked the bottom of his bottle to my glass and took a draught. “You’re welcome. Last one, okay?” He added in an undertone so nobody else could hear him.

I sniffed defiantly. “Trust me, I’m as good as sober.” I was. My metabolism dealt with alcohol so quickly I couldn’t get properly drunk.

Just a little tipsy.

My teammates back in Klagenhofen had found that so funny. I just found it depressing.

But maybe it’s a good thing you can’t use it as a coping mechanism.

I fiddled with the feathers on the inside of my wrist. It was one of my favourite stims, and it was one I could do stealthily whenever I needed to.

“I know you are.” His voice softened and my insides melted, as they always did. Turned to stupid, love-struck sludge.

Our eyes met over the drinks, hanging onto each other for a moment.

Don't be stupid and don't read into it. He's your captain. That's all. Your captain who you kissed. Don't look at his lips.

"Aye, Captain," I said before swallowing the bitter taste down with my rum-and-almond drink. I wrenched my eyes away. I needed to or I would do something fucking stupid, even by my standards.

"That's my boy," he mumbled, bumping his elbow against mine.

Goosebumps raced down my body, raising every feather in their wake.

Keep calm. Just change the subject.

"You gonna take her home?" I inched my chin over to the red-haired woman.

Yup, that went well.

"Nah. I'm good." He drank from his beer again.



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And what is that supposed to mean, Viking?

Nine

Arne

I didn't like the way Max looked at me when I said I wasn't interested in the red-haired woman.

Want me to clarify? No, I will not take her home. I am only interested in one person, and since I can't have him, I will keep my dick in my trousers.

I'd sort of taken a vow of celibacy right after we had returned from Scotland. That was when I realised the depth of feelings I harboured for Max.

His performance impressed both Coach Jerke and me from the start. Max Gruber was a smart kid with bite. Even before I'd fallen head over heels for the Raven, I'd decided I would take him under my wing. He wasn't from Veitsreuth and didn't have any friends or family in the area.

He needed a friend.

A friend isn't what you want to be, though. God, you suck as his captain.

I wish I could say I tried to stop him from kissing me, but I'd always been honest to a fault. I had gone all in: tongue-sucking, and lip biting—the full ride.

Max tensed, hand tightening around his cocktail glass, and a barely audible groan escaped him when I pressed my knee to his. The need to touch him overwhelmed me.

“You okay?” I murmured and got a tiny nod back.

I pulled my leg away, eyes fixed on his hands.

When did they get so sinewy and strong?

I shouldn’t have noticed how much more he worked out and the effects it had on his body. Only from a professional perspective. He’d bulked up since joining our team, and it looked good on him.

Stop thinking about his ass again! Yeah, the way you drool over Max’s ass might have made you guess that you’re bisexual.

Before I could beat myself up some more, Bo and Ollie got up, and then Guns, Nik, and Decks followed suit.

They looked like Arthur’s knights rising for battle. Everyone except Max and I cracked up at their hilarious performance.

“We’re heading home,” Bo chuckled, throwing his arm around Ollie’s shoulders. The latter had arrived a few days ago, but I figured you could never get enough time alone with the person you loved.

Ten

Max

We said goodbye to the others.

“Let’s finish these, yeah?” Arne suggested once they had left. “How about we change to a smaller table so they can use this one for someone else?” Arne got up and walked over to a tiny round table tucked into a corner.

We were both way too tall for it, which meant our legs were all in each other’s spaces.

Lean in; you could kiss him again.

Arne realised this a moment later, when I shifted in my seat and our legs made contact. A hand gripped me just above the knee, strong fingers digging into my quads.

He sank into my eyes as willing prey, ready to drown. Then, Arne emptied his beer in one deep draught and let go of me.

“Drink up, I’ll walk you home.”

I finished the Demonic Slap that hadn’t had the effect I’d hoped for, grabbed my coat, and got up.

Leading the way out of the bar, I took a few steps into the crisp night, then turned back around to face my captain.

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“You don’t have to worry about me, Viking. If anything, I should walk you home.” I gave him a dry smile. Let’s ignore that Veitsreuth is one of the safest cities in Germany.

“You sure about that, Raven?” he returned the smile, inviting me to his side.

Don’t let it show how much you care.

“Dead sure.”

I licked my lips and backed away. The changes were subtle at first. Shadows creeping up the wall behind me like ghostly creatures. A wind tore at my coat, my scarf whipping out behind me as if I stood in a storm Arne wouldn’t be able to feel. Then I grew, morphed into something more, something terrible. My lips formed into a beak, the feathers at my neck ruffling as I spread my wings.

He stood there in the dark street, watching me, mesmerised.

Prey.

Within seconds, I shrank back to my normal, fairly humanoid form, righted my scarf, and gave him a sheepish smile.

“See? Of the two of us, I’m the monster.”

“You are not a monster,” Arne breathed. “You are my Raven.”

His.

“Well, if you insist,” he added in a raspy whisper, and I agreed. The faint buzz of alcohol in my blood blurred the line between right and wrong.

I moved my hand in an exaggerated twist as if I was asking him to dance with me. “After you, Viking.”

It was a lovely night in early November. Few people were around, and we walked in silence, with only the stars for company.

The Viking and I strolled through the streets of Veitsreuth, so close we might as well have been holding hands.

I wasn't sure why I'd revealed myself to him. The only explanation I had was that I trusted Arne.

And you have a crush on him.

With a sigh, I pushed my hands into my coat pockets.

“That was pretty impressive,” he said after a while, kicking a stone out of the way.

Impressive?

I hummed.

“Is that your true form?” He dug deeper.

“Not exactly.”

How much can he handle before he'll abandon me?

"I'm sorry if this is too personal." Arne glanced at me out of the corner of his soulful blue eyes.

"It's not, it's just..." I hesitated. "It is personal, but not 'too' personal, if that makes sense?"

"Mmm, I think it does." He smiled at his feet.

"I have two forms."

What do I have to lose? Let's end his stupid crush right now.

"Two?"

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“The one you saw, that’s the Nachtkrapp. And a...raven,” I muttered, my head dropping between my shoulders.

“Hang on.” Arne stopped, grabbed my forearm and pulled me around, a bold look on his face. “You can turn into an actualraven?”

“Yeah, I can. It’s pretty neat when you’re on a date, and he turns out to be a creep.”

What am I saying?

My captain just threw his head back and laughed.

“That’s an actual life experience you had, is it?”

My God, he’s beautiful.

“I’ll just say it came in handy once or twice.” I shrugged, and we walked on. “Never been on a bad date? Where you see her and know you won’t get on the same page with her?”

“I’ve been on bad dates, yes.” His eyes were on me, and he gave me that stunning smile again. The one that crinkled the corners of his eyes and showed the dimples in his cheeks.

Don’t look too closely. You’ll only hurt yourself.

Perhaps I should turn and fly away from all my sorrows.

“This is it,” Arne told me when we arrived at an old red brick building. “Wanna come up for a beer?”

“You said that cocktail was my last.”

Arne shrugged. “You walked some of it off. And besides, we’ve never hung out together. Come on, do you have anywhere else to be?”

“Nah.” I shook my head.

Nowhere I’d rather be, either.

I followed him to the door. A beautiful marble staircase and high ceilings greeted me. His flat took up the entire top floor. It was an airy space, minimalist and reminiscent of the showroom of an expensive Scandinavian furniture brand.

“Shoes off, please, Raven. Mm.” He grinned at me. “Your nickname just got a whole new meaning.”

“Why did you think they called me that?” I asked him, balancing on each foot as I took off my loafers.

“I never thought about it, to be honest. The feathers, I suppose? It fits you.”

I settled on his couch, accepting a bottle of ice cold beer from him.

We drank in silence, but Arne watched me closely. He waited until I had emptied the bottle and put it on his coffee table.

“Raven?” he whispered, and leaned in.



Oh my God.

The sound of my ringtone made him jump back. I picked it up automatically. “Hello.” My voice shook. I got off the couch and started pacing Arne’s living room.

“Maxi! Why didn’t you reply to my message? Listen, I—”

Fuck fuck fuck. Why the hell did you pick it up?

“No, you listen,” I interrupted the caller. “I told you not to call me again.”

I hated myself for accepting that call. I never learned. It was like muscle memory—or maybe just a sign of how messed up things had been between us—but I knew I had to do it or I’d be sorry.

“Come on, Maxi. You don’t mean this. I miss you so much.”

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“I told you not to call me that. And yes, I mean it. Don’t call me again.” I dropped my voice even lower, painfully aware of Arne’s eyes following me. “It’s over.”

Tobias inhaled sharply, and his energy shifted. Anger bubbled under his gooey surface the way it had always done. Ever since I’d been picked for the Klagenhofener Kojoten, and he had left for his working holiday in New Zealand. He would bug me and say, ‘You hang around all these hot guys all day. How am I supposed to feel about that?’

No matter how many times I said I was only interested in him and too busy with my sports to cheat, Tobias never believed me.

Now I know why.

He had been the one cheating on me. I knew about a guy in Klagenhofen, but there probably had been other guys in New Zealand, too.

“You’ll be crawling back to me, you pathetic loser. You know you will. There is nobody who will love you like I do, Maxi,” he tried to shift the tone one more time.

“And by ‘love’ you mean ‘cheating on me’, right?” I was done. He did this every few weeks. Every time I hoped that this time he’d actually stay away like I told him to, he called, and I answered as if on autopilot.

“Fuck you, Max. I’m the best thing that’s ever happened to you, and you know it. You’ll stay alone forever.”

“Shut up, Tobias!”

Arne got up suddenly from the couch. It snapped me out of my head. He came over to me and gripped my forearm. His blue eyes met mine, so much tenderness and care in them my voice hitched in my throat. Then I remembered what had happened right before I had accepted the call.

He almost kissed you.

I turned away, bracing myself.

“Don’t call me again,” I snarled and hung up.

Eleven

Arne

Watching all the colour drain from his face would have looked comical, but it was the least funny thing I had ever seen. My eyes tracked him closely as he paced my living room.

Being unable to help him sucked. I was used to assisting. It was my job as his captain, his friend, and the dumb guy whoknewthat it was the worst idea but who was still dying to shove his tongue down his throat again.

Max stood with his back to me for a long moment, his shoulders tense. Then he turned his phone off, flung it down on an armchair, and walked us back to the couch. He clasped my hand in his.

He lowered himself on the cushion next to me and, despite my better judgement and despite what I knew I was supposed to do, I rested my forehead against his sharp

cheekbone.

He froze for a few seconds before turning his entire upper body around and wrapping me in a hug.

“What are we doing here?” Raven whispered into my brow.

“I don’t know,” I murmured, my lips moving against his skin with every word.

“Are we drunk?” His breath brushed the shell of my ear, sending shivers down my spine.

“Maybe tipsy, but I don’t think we’ve had enough to use that as an excuse.”

Max exhaled a shuddering breath, rested more of his weight on me, and kissed my temple. “I don’t want an excuse, Arne. I don’t need one, either.”

Neither do I.

My arms slid around his waist, bringing me closer to his chest.

Our hearts hammered as we sank into the other’s embrace, finding the ways our bodies fit together. My brow found the perfect resting spot at the curve of his jaw. His upper body was longer than mine, so he could hug me comfortably around the neck. Max’s strong fingers spanned the entirety of my head, and mine slid into his soft curls.

“Please don’t turn into a bird now, okay?” I mumbled, holding him a little tighter.

Silent laughter shook his body.

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“In terms of dates, this is actually one of the best I’ve ever had.” He crowed with laughter, then cringed away from me, bringing a few inches of space between us.

“Sorry. I know it’s not a date, and the cawing”—he waved his hand in the air as if to shoo away a flock of bothersome birds—“happens every now and again.”

“I don’t know,” I shrugged, trying not to let on how much I hated the distance between us. “It feels like a date to me. We had a pleasant conversation and a couple of beers. We’re cuddling.” Heat spread across my cheeks.

Crap.

“I like the cuddles.” The smile was audible in Max’s voice as he looked at me from under his dark lashes.

“Me too. Can we...”

“Cuddle some more,” he finished my sentence and held his arms out to me.

In my eagerness to get closer, I somehow collapsed and landed on top of him. Our heads bumped together rather violently.

“Oh shit, Max! I’m so sorry,” I rambled, struggling to get up and inspect his forehead to see if I had hurt him. “Are you—”

The hands cupping my cheeks and the warm mouth slanting over mine stopped me in my tracks.

This is a bad idea.

My inner voice tried to reason with my body and my heart.

Screw your morals, they quipped back, as my fingers dug into his hair and pulled his lips closer.

We opened for each other simultaneously, tongues meeting in the middle.

Max tasted of the winter sky, of the first snowflakes tumbling down to earth and blanketing everything in their ethereal beauty, and of something exciting I had never tasted before.

Magic?

It was then that I directed my attention to the body sprawled out under me, our legs tangled, his calf hooked over mine. I could make out the unmistakable sensation of a hard dick pressed to my hip.

Shifting to get our bodies aligned, I rubbed myself on him. I wasn't proud of it, but I was desperate for some friction. A soft sigh escaped me when an unfamiliar taste suddenly burst like bubbles on my tongue.

A waving mass of darkness and feathers cocooned us, it was there one moment and gone the next.

I whimpered against his lips and forced myself to break our kiss. His fingers darted over my forehead.

"Are you okay?" Max palmed my cheeks, scrutinising me intently.

“I am...” My hoarse voice showed how turned on I was, and I hated myself for it.

This is so weird and new, and I only think with my cock!

I tried to sit up, but Max held onto me, keeping me in place on his chest.

“No,” he whispered and kissed my brow. “Stay. Please. I’m sorry, I know the Nachtkrapp can be a bit much.”

Doing as he asked wasn’t my proudest moment.

“The Nachtkrapp. That’s the guy with the beak, right?” I said, distracted by how badly I wanted his kiss again.

“Yeah.” He hummed, brushing the hair off my face. “And the one with the shadow tentacles.”

“The what?” I asked, a soft moan escaping me when he ran a hand up my back and over my shoulder.

No, not a hand. One hand stroked my face while the other splayed across my shoulder. A shadowy limb appeared in my field of vision.

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So that's what it was.

"Do they scare you?" he asked me as it trailed over my throat.

"No."

Another tentacle joined the first. It curled around my earlobe, and I felt a jolt of heat.

"I'm glad they don't," he murmured, as if speaking too loud might scare them off.

It was so fucking good to be touched like that.

I returned to his mouth, conquering him in a slow kiss I hoped he felt in his bones. I'd always prided myself on being a good kisser.

This old dog has some tricks up his sleeve, too, Raven.

Just because he was a guy didn't mean he wouldn't appreciate a proper kiss. Or so I hoped. This was uncharted territory for me.

That's never stopped me.

I nipped his bottom lip and dragged it between my teeth before licking my tongue over it, soothing the sting.

Max groaned when my tongue sneaked into his mouth to stroke his. The kiss turned fiercer and filthier. Feather-covered fingers dug into my back muscles and narrow



hips thrust up against mine.

Fuck yes.

I'd found frotting on a list of sex practices for guys, feeling only a little embarrassed that I, as a thirty-two-year-old dude, needed a freaking list to figure out how to be intimate with someone with a dick. The insert-dick-into-available-holes thing was self-explanatory. I liked anal but had only ever been on the giving end before.

The idea of him inside me intrigued me a little more than I'd expected.

Okay, stop overthinking this shit. Focus on the raven at hand.

I rolled my hips, just to see how it felt.

For science. Oh fuuuck.

Our dicks slid against each other, the hard ridge in his chic black trousers bumpy against mine.

I've been curious about your special features for a while now, Raven.

"Oh, God. Do that again, baby!" His hands followed the curve of my spine, palming my ass and moving my body up.

Yeah, frotting is definitely a win in my book.

"Fuck, Max. That feels fantastic."

Our eyes met, his bottomless eyes brimming with swirling shadows.

“Mm, you like that, Viking? Getting yourself off on my body?”

Do I?

“Yes,” I gasped before my brain was done thinking.

Max hummed again, taking a firmer hold of my ass, and ground our dicks together.

Oh shit, he’s going to make me come in my boxers.

“Yes, I am, Viking. You’ll cream those sexy white boxers for me.”

“Oh, fuck!”

He guided me through it, catching my moans and swallowing them down, his tongue in my mouth and those tentacles adding a layer of pleasure I had not foreseen.

“I—”

“Yes, come for me, Arne!” he commanded.

“Oh my God, Max!” I whimpered, drenching my boxers in my cum. The force of my orgasm blinded me for a moment, and I buried myself in his body, needing an anchor.

“Shh, Arne.” Max pulled me closer to his chest, pecking a hundred kisses on my forehead. “So gorgeous, Viking. Such a good boy for me.”

I shuddered, in part because coming in my boxers wasn’t the best thing, but mostly because... fuck me. Him calling me ‘a good boy’ was so hot.

Twelve

Max

Ifloated home through the night, dizzy and confused but fucking elated.

Arne had stayed put and kissed me back. His enthusiasm made up for his lack of experience. God, he’d made me so horny with his hips grinding against mine.

Let's hope he felt that his first make-out session with a guy was a success. Maybe he even wants to repeat it. I'll volunteer for a rerun.

I stumbled upstairs, undressing inside my apartment door. The next minute, I was naked on my bed, legs spread, and fisting my aching dick.

Shit.

I'd been close to coming in my trousers but had held out.

Not a moment longer.

Throwing my head back, I gave myself a slow jerk, imagining it was Arne's hand stroking me.

My mind went back to that night at training camp. To my captain on his knees at my feet, tears trickling out of his eyes and into the scruff on his cheeks as he'd choked on me. Toes curling, I clenched my ass.

Hold on for a bit. You know you want to drag this out a little bit.

It was no good. My body tensed and arched until I hovered, supported by the shadows moving on the edges of my consciousness. Remembering the look in his eyes, I blew, unable to stop until I slumped back on the bed, covered in cum and gasping for breath.

If the memory of him blowing me in a dream gets me off in two seconds, how fantastic will the real thing feel?

'You're damn sure of yourself, Maxi,' Tobias's voice echoed in my head. 'You'll stay alone forever.' But fuck, I wouldn't. I had the Viking. I had the other guys on my

team. With every passing week, playing with them felt more like being part of a cool and attractive-as-fuck family.

I could see a future for myself here in Veitsreuth. And then? Who knew where life would lead me next?

...Wherever Arne will go?

I geared up for the popular annual Kerwa celebration after training the next day. Every tiny hamlet and village had their own. Jerke was particular about us attending the one in Veitsreuth, even those of us who hated crowds. It was always crazy busy, but that came with the deal of playing for the Pumas.

The team got lederhosen from a local maker, and I'd gone with traditional knee-length trousers made of stag hide. I loved the feel of the buttery soft leather on my plumage, and how it showed off my calves, and the way the suspenders hugged my newly enhanced pecs.

Søren and Jerke had us on a strict training and nutrition regime. Bulking up was a given.

I turned in front of the mirror, admiring my ass in these trousers. I'd played professionally in Klagenhofen for two years, but I had never been at the height of my fitness.

You look hot.

I felt fucking good, too.

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It wasn't far from my flat to the fairground, and I enjoyed the walk. It helped calm my nerves.

Training with him was okay. As soon as I was on the ice, stick in hand, everything else ceased to exist. At the fair, I'd have no buffer or other focus but him. I bet Arne in Lederhosen was atleast as sexy as him in a suit. Throw in the overstimulation that came with the bright lights, the smells, the music, and the crowd, and it was bound to get difficult.

I was glad for my medication. That, at least, took a bit of the edge off.

Trying to keep my eyes on the tent, I pushed through the crowd, only stopping for two teenagers who asked for an autograph. Someone called, 'Hey, Raven!' from one of the beer stalls; I raised a hand in their direction but pressed on.

"Hey, Decks!" I called when I spotted my American colleague with his giant bird fiancé.

We went into the tent together and found our table in a private booth. I hated not being in control, but Arne robbing me of what little power I had over myself was weirdly exhilarating. I snagged the seat next to him.

Let's put this down as exposure therapy.

"I'll never get over you in Lederhosen," Arne muttered so only I could hear him, one corner of his mouth tipping up in a smile.

“They fit you surprisingly well for a Dane, too.” I winked at him.

After the official part in the tent was finished, things got more rowdy.

“Want to have a look around? It’s getting a little too loud for me in here.”

“Oh, sure.” Arne shot me a slight smile and got up. We told the others where we were going and took off.

Outside wasn’t a lot quieter, but it brought some relief, at least.

Strolling through the fairground with my Viking was fantastic. I loved talking to him, loved his calm composure and the witty jokes.

Seriously, how is he so hot?

Thirteen

Arne

Max and I left the tent. Once we’d grabbed bottles of alcohol-free beer, we let the crowd pull us along. I loved fairs. The smells and lights had fascinated me since childhood. Sharing this with my raven was even better.

He relaxed with every step we took away from the tent. I’d spent my evenings without him reading everything I could find on autism.

I bet he finds it overwhelming. Poor baby.

I’d come here today with the intention of being his anchor. Help him cope; it was the least I could do as his boyfriend.

Oh my God. I nearly choked on my drink. We hadn't even discussed what we were. I mean, yeah we'd fooled around...

And it was a life changing experience. I can't just assume that makes us boyfriends though, can I?

"Hey Cap, wanna ride the Ferris wheel with me?" When I turned, Max was looking at me, all fierce and excited. He hadn't noticed my inner turmoil. I schooled my features to keep it that way.

"Yes," I said without hesitation.

I'll do anything for you.

"Good. Come on."

There wasn't much room for the two of us in that little cabin. Our thighs were practically touching. I put my hand on the bench between us, wanting to be even closer.

"Nervous, Cap?" he asked.

Cheeky.



“Nope, you?”

“Always when you’re near me,” Max admitted.

The Ferris wheel moved, elevating us over the crowd.

Max scanned the area, then laced his fingers through mine. Even though no one below could see, my heart threatened to burst out of my chest.

“Lovely view, right?” Our eyes met, holding onto the other’s for a moment.

“Yeah, lovely,” I affirmed, briefly closing my hand around his. Max bit his lip and smiled ahead, the wind tousling the feathers at his neck.

We held hands right to the end, and I didn’t want to let go.

“Want to see where the others are?” Max asked.

“We should... But I want to buy something for us first.”

I led the way to a stall where they sold brightly coloured sweets, decorated gingerbread hearts, and candy floss.

Is it weird to get him one of those heart things?

I was clueless about what they said.

“Anything you fancy?”

His head snapped around, the dark eyes swirling with shadows. ‘You’, his eyes said.

I know, Raven.

“I suppose it would be weird to buy two of these hearts,” I muttered.

“Yeah.” Max looked upset. “I never even liked them but... I guess I’ll have one of these bananas dipped in chocolate.”

I got us two bananas and two hearts and asked for a bag. I was so tempted to take his hand and walk around the fair with him, like Ollie and Bo or Nate and Vee, who were just a few metres in front of us. With his arms around the giant chicken man, Nate looked up, completely awestruck.

I heaved a sigh. “This sucks.”

“It does. It’ll be better when...” Max broke off, so I checked what distracted him. He held his phone; its screen kept lighting up.

Fuck, is that his ex again?

I didn’t even have to ask. I knew from the way his shoulders tensed and how his hand gripped the phone. He told the guy never to call him again. Why the fuck wasn’t he listening?

I have to find out why he keeps harassing Max.

“Want me to walk you home, Raven?” I asked him when the guy had hung up.

“Yeah, thanks.”

We walked in silence, hands in pockets to avoid touching.

We arrived at his apartment much sooner than expected. I really didn't like it. But I couldn't stay, and I didn't want to be alone with him. He was still stuck in that mess with his ex.

And I am straight. Well, more or less.

“Do you wanna come apple picking with me tomorrow? We could go on a hike and then to the orchard?” I blurted out. The idea had been brewing in my mind since he'd taken my hand on the Ferris wheel. Apple picking sounded like a cute and romantic date Max might enjoy.

So straight.

“That sounds great, yeah. When?”

“I’ll pick you up at half past two?”

Max nodded, teeth digging into his plush bottom lip again. I longed to pull it free and kiss him again.

“Me, too, Cap, me too,” he muttered. Shit. My thoughts had shown on my face. “I’ll see you tomorrow, yeah?”

“Yes. Don’t forget this. It’s yours.” I held the gingerbread heart out to him.

“Do you know what it says?” Max pursed his lips as he took it from me. “Thank you.”

“No, I don’t.” My German was only good enough to order drinks and do my shopping. I should practice more, but hockey always got in the way.

“It says ‘Fescher Bua’. That’s ‘hot guy’ in English.”

My cheeks heated. I’d asked the guy to surprise me with two of the hearts.

“And the other one?” I asked to gloss over my embarrassment.

The bag crinkled when Max pulled it out.

“Herzerl. The Bavarian version of darling,” he explained.

“So you should have them both,” I told him, making him laugh.

“You take this.” He gave me the one that read ‘hot guy’, picking the other for himself.

My brain went haywire. I thought I was having an aneurysm.

No. You’re just hopelessly in love.

I walked home through the balmy night air and found a message from Max on my phone when I arrived at my place.

Max: I wanted to kiss you so badly

Max: Will have to make it up to you tomorrow

Max: Sweet dreams, Cap x

For a moment, I felt sick to my stomach about what I was doing. I’d taken Max under my wing.

I’m his captain. What the fuck am I doing?

But, my God, I just had to be near him.

He doesn’t want you to stay away.

As always Max was the last thing on my mind before I fell asleep.

I would take care of my raven and relieve him of whatever weight he carried on his shoulders. And that ex of his—that asshole—would learn his lesson.

You don't mess with what's mine.

Fourteen

Max

Arne picked me up early the next day, as if he, too, couldn't stay away.

His smile was a little wistful.

Did he miss me?

Because fuck, I'd missed him so much.

"Want to turn on some music for us?"

"Yes, sure." I pulled out my phone and paired with his car, choosing a playlist with all my dopamine hits. These were songs I had gotten stuck in my head at some point, ranging from horny to manic.

"Oh, I like this one." Arne shot me a sideways glance, then focused back on the street.

"Yeah, me too." See? Maybe we can do this without me wanting to jump your bones at every moment.

Could we just be cool with each other and not act wild like horny teens?

I lost all hope as soon as we parked. I really shouldn't have found his functional hiking outfit so sexy, but those cargo trousers hugged his thighs and butt in a way that got me all hot and bothered.

He wore a creamy white knit jumper with a zipper turtleneck. It exposed a sliver of his broad chest, and a tight navy blue compression shirt that emphasised the ridge between his pecs. His dark hair fell into his eyes, framing those blue eyes that

crinkled at the corners. He looked like he belonged in an upscale outdoor magazine. He was the type of guy from the Pine Peak Outfitters catalogue who teenage Max used to fantasise about.

A catalogue or one of my wet dreams. Damn you, Viking. Why do you have to be so pretty?

“Ready to go?”

You lead. I’ll follow you anywhere.

“Yeah, I’m ready.”

We shouldered our small backpacks and set off.

I kept my eyes fixed on my hiking boots. They were black, same as most of my stuff. Black had always been my favourite colour. It might have been because of my feathers. The Night Raven loved the dark; he excelled at blending in.

“This is the path that leads to the orchard. I’m so excited. I came here with Nate, Vee, and Bo last year. We had so much fun. There’s nothing like four grown men getting excited about picking apples.”

“You don’t say.” The idea of Arne getting giggly in the apple orchard was the cutest.

“So, Raven.” Arne gripped the straps of his backpack, biceps bulging under the knit jumper. “There’s something I wanted to talk to you about.”

Are you breaking up with me before we even started dating?

“The other day when you were at my place.”



“Yeah?”

“Who was that on the phone?”

Oh.

“Uh.” I ran a hand over my nape, straightening out the feathers there.

“Come on through here. I want to show you something.” Arne led me off the path, and it came out on a little platform. The land fell down before it, and we took a seat on the wooden bench and got out our water bottles. “Protein bar?”

“Yes, thanks.”

He pulled bars from my favourite brand out of his pocket, gave me the strawberry and cream and waited until I’d taken a bite.

How does he know that’s the best flavour?

“You know I’m not judging you, right?”

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“Yeah, I know.” I bit off some more, chewing it slowly. “It was my ex-boyfriend, Tobias.”

Arne didn’t press the matter, but his eyes rested on me, giving me the strength I needed to keep talking.

“He cheated on me with a guy from our village. I found out through his ArgoS and broke up with him.”

“But he won’t leave you alone?”

“Nope. No matter how often I tell him to stop calling. And I pick up every time. It’s like muscle memory. Dumb, huh?”

“No.” He took hold of my forearm, squeezing me. “I’m so sorry. You know I’m always here if you need someone to talk to, right?”

“Thank you, Arne.”

“Thankyoufor telling me. And you’re not dumb. You’re fantastic, Raven. Come on, let’s go pick some apples.”

We went back to the main path and walked for a couple of minutes until we arrived at a closed gate.

“Aw, no.” Arne turned around, his upset palpable. “Damn, why didn’t I check their website?”

“I’m one hundred percent sure a place like this doesn’t have a website.” I bumped my elbow against his, trying to lighten the mood. “It’s okay, though. We had a lovely hike.”

“Yeah, I suppose. I was really looking forward to going apple picking with you, though.”

The sad little pout he sported was the cutest fucking thing I had ever seen.

“Do you trust me?” I asked him, tilting my head.

“Yes,” he said without hesitation, making my insides soar.

“Okay, don’t panic.” I glanced over my shoulder to make sure we were alone, hugged him, and then we dissolved into shadows.

“Holy shit!” Gasping for breath, he stumbled, taking a moment to find his feet again.

“Breathe, Viking. I know it takes some getting used to. But you are safe with me. I’d never put you in danger.” I leaned my forehead against his. “Breathe with me, that’s it. In and out and in again, like we do in yoga.”

He needed another minute to calm down enough to speak.

“What was that?” Arne swallowed hard.

“I took you into the shadow realm, but only for a few seconds. Look.” I inched my head over my shoulder.

“Oh my God, Raven!” He turned away, gaping at the apple trees around us. “Youteleportedus? Holy crap, we’re breaking and entering!”

You sweet little princess.

“It’s okay. There’s no one but us here. Well, except for a small group of deer in the forest behind us, and a fox snoozing in its den.”

“How the hell do you know that?” Arne surveyed me for a moment, then mirrored my smile.

“I can feel their presence. It’s a bit difficult to explain. And we didn’t teleport. We just...travelled here through another dimension.”

“Oh, okay, then.” He huffed, his voice dripping with so much sarcasm even I could taste it. “You took me to another dimension and broke into the orchard.”

“Yep.” I reached up with one of my shadow tentacles and plucked an apple off the tree. “You wanted to go apple picking, didn’t you?”

Teeth digging into his bottom lip, he hesitated for a moment, then took the offered fruit. “That’s pretty biblical, isn’t it?”

“Mm,” I hummed. The tentacle reached out to glide up his neck and over his Adam’s apple. “The question is... are you Eve or Adam in this metaphor?”

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“Not Eve,” he whispered, tilting his head up ever so slightly to give me better access. “If anything, I’m the one tempting you.”

“You are tempting me,” I affirmed. Denting his skin a little, I slid the tip up to stroke the spot where his pulse hammered under his skin. “But I never understood what was wrong with that.” My shadowy limb dissolved, and I took a step back. “Let’s have a look around, Viking.”

“Okay, let’s.” He kept by my side, sighing a little. “I want to have my own farm when I retire,” he told me in a quiet voice.

Okay, where did that come from?

“Really? I love that. I don’t know what I want to do with my life when I’m not playing anymore.”

“You have a lot of time before that day comes, Raven. You’ll figure it out.” Arne threaded his arm through mine and pulled me down a row between the apple trees.

Most of them had already been plucked, but we found enough fruit to entertain ourselves with. Arne kept the touches to a minimum as he led me away from the gate with purpose in his step.

It was only when we were at the far end of the orchard that he seemed to feel secure enough to stop and turn around to face me.

Is this when I’m finally getting my kiss, Viking?

Arne hesitated, uncertainty dancing in his blue eyes.

“Oh, fuck it.” I wasn’t proud of the needy little sigh I uttered before I closed the gap between us and crashed my mouth into his. Fists tangling in his functional jumper, I moved him off the path and behind one of the old apple trees.

My big strong viking groaned into the kiss when I wedged my thigh between his, lining up our cocks.

“I’ve been dreaming of this,” I gasped out between frantic kisses.

“Me, too.” His fingers splayed on my cheeks, tilting my face ever so slightly to align our mouths better.

I trailed my hands down his body, mapping his back, and gripped his hips. He bucked them against mine, and his kiss turned more frantic.

How about this, Viking?

I brought my left hand between us, running it over his bulge.

“Oh, God, Max.” Hearing him moan my name like that almost brought me to my knees.

I pulled away and kissed his temple. “Do you want me to take my hand away?”

“No?” he whined.

Fuck yes.

I stroked him again, more firmly this time, and kissed down his temple and his cheek

until I reached his neck.

“God, I’d love to get on my knees for you right now,” I told him between nipping kisses.

“Fuck, Raven. We can’t. Not here.”

Let’s go somewhere private then?

“I know.” He shuddered when I licked his neck. God, I’m way too into this. “I still remember that dream, Cap. Please tell me you had it, too.”

Arne froze.

Shit.

“Sorry, I...” My voice trailed off and next thing I knew, that gorgeous man devoured my mouth.

“Oh, fuck, Max. That dream was...holy shit, I didn’t know you...I—” He swallowed hard. “I blew you in that dream,” he added in a whisper.

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I hummed, gripping his chin and bringing his lips back on mine.

“Best dream ever.”

“Want to come back to my place for a bit?” Arne blurted out.

I let my guard down for a moment so he would see the shadows swirling in my eyes.

“You sure?”

“Oh yeah, Raven. Never been more certain of anything in my life.”

Fifteen

Arne

This time I braced myself for the uncomfortable moments of travelling the shadow realm. I suppose time passed differently there. I blinked and was on the orchardside of the high fence; I blinked again and found myself back outside of the orchard.

Breaking rules wasn't my style—not even on the ice. I loved to break them for my gorgeous raven. The feeling of his shadowy limb stroking me was addictive.

That twenty-minute walk felt like forever, but we finally got to my car. Walking with a hard-on that wouldn't budge because my raven said he wanted to blow me wasn't fun.



I wanted to be back behind that tree, brave enough to get head from my teammate. My dick loved the idea.

What if he changes his mind by the time we get to my place?

I'd understand, of course. Always. Max's safety and wellbeing were my top concern.

Yet cheating myself out of a blowjob when I'd been dreaming about this for weeks didn't sound like a good time.

"Still want to come back to my place?" I asked when we'd settled into the seats.

Max's hand sneaked over the middle console and gripped my thigh. Way too high up.

A fresh surge of blood rushed into my cock when he held my eyes and squeezed my bulge next.

"Oh yeah." With one last kneading stroke, he let go and busied himself with the sound system.

I had no idea how I got us back to Veitsreuth and my parking spot, or how we made it up to my apartment. I let us in the door, and we took our coats and boots off. When I turned, Max was all up in my space. He gripped my chin and brought his mouth close. Only a tiny peck landed on my lips.

"Take me to your bedroom."

I led him into the bright, airy space. My beautiful Raven. It looked like I had invited a piece of the night into my life.

I returned to his side once I'd closed the curtains.

“Your trousers are dirty. Better take them off before you lie down.”

I checked and sure enough, mud splattered my trouser legs.

“Yes.” I hurried to obey, feeling only a little awkward to strip for him.

You should be used to this! You do that almost every day.

But being in a dressing room full of other guys felt different. His eyes took me in hungrily, roaming my body from head to toe. With a little emphasis on my hard dick.

“God, Viking. I’ve seen you a hundred times, but it never gets old.” Max gave me a bashful grin. “Lie on the bed for me.”

It was the encouragement I needed.

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I sat down on the mattress and reclined on the cushions, stretching out my body for him.

His throat bobbed.

“Can I join you?”

“Yeah,” I rasped, my voice at least as hoarse as his.

Holy shit.

He took his trousers off, too. Dried mud dotted them almost up to the knees. That didn't mean I was prepared for Max getting half naked in my bedroom. Or for his bumpy dick bulging in his black boxers.

It never gets old? Damn right, it doesn't.

Without speaking and because I had no fucking idea how to say aloud the things I wanted him to do, I gripped my shirt and struggled it up over my head.

This is a point of no return.

But I knew I wanted everything he was prepared to give me. Max's eyes darkened with lust, shadows swirling in them.

“You are so beautiful,” he whispered. Leaning in, he pressed a kiss over my heart, then another and another, mapping the curve of my pec until he reached my nipple.

I groaned when he gently sucked it between his lips before using his teeth on me.

“Good?” Max murmured, shooting me a glance from under his long, dark lashes.

“You have no idea, Raven.”

“Perhaps you want to show me later.” His teasing smirk should be illegal. “Now hush and let me give my mouth something to do.”

I cursed when he worked his way lower, nuzzling the hair on my chest. “Is this okay?”

“Yes,” I gulped, my dick so hard I feared for my ability to hold out.

“How about this?” Max rubbed his cheek over my happy trail.

“Uh-huh. That’s great, actually.”

“Viking?”

“Raven?”

“It’s time for me to show you something else.” He paused with both hands on my hips.

“Like what?” I asked stupidly, as if I didn’t have a clue what he meant.

“Like how good it feels to have my mouth around your cock.”

“Oh fuck.” I closed my eyes, sending a silent prayer to the heavens. “I should say no but, God, Max.” Cupping the side of his head in my palm, I brushed his curls off his

elegant brow. “How can I possibly say no?” My voice dropped to a whisper.

Max’s fingers dug into my flesh, and I let out a little whimper. So embarrassing.

Without another word, he dragged my boxers down my legs.

Holy fucking shit.

My rock hard dick slapped my skin, making us both groan.

“Still sure, Viking?”

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“One hundred percent.”

Max fisted my length and surveyed me for a heartbeat, not even giving my head enough time to wrap itself around the fact that Max Gruber had his hand on my cock, then fucking deep-throated me.

I whimpered again and felt him moan around me.

Pulling off, he let me feel the flat of his tongue all the way up to the head. “God, Viking, I don’t know what’s hotter: your taste or the little sounds you make.” He lapped at my slit, licking the pooling drops of my precum away. “I love it when you whimper for me, Princess.”

Okay.

I had not expected that nickname to affect me so much. Thighs trembling, I bucked my hips up, needing his mouth back on my cock.

Max hummed. “You want to fuck my face, Princess?”

“God, yes.”

“Do your worst, then. And don’t hold back. I can take it.” He shot me a little wink while licking another drop of precum off my leaking dick. It took all my self-control and mental strength not to come straight away. “And let me hear you whimper for me.”

With that, he sank down on my cock until his nose pressed into my groin. I let loose.

He gagged and slurped and choked on my cock as I fucked his mouth like a man possessed.

Just like he'd told me to, I held nothing back. It took me about five seconds to get over the little whining sobs and moans that escaped me every time he swallowed and his throat closed around my head.

"Oh my God, Max," I whimpered as the climax that had been building at the base of my spine crashed into me. Gripping fistfuls of his glossy black curls, I held his head in place and thrust once, twice, up into his mouth's warm embrace. I came with an almost inhuman growl, feeling so filthy and depraved when hearing him choke on my cum prolonged my orgasm.

Then my hands fell off and back onto the mattress as all the pent-up tension left my body.

"Oh my Lord," I whispered.

"Damn it, Princess." Max chuckled softly and sat up. "That was really fucking hot." He half covered my body with his and brought his mouth down on mine. "I hope you liked it," he breathed before thrusting his tongue between my lips in a kiss that made my dick twitch with interest again.

"It was great," I sighed when he backed out of the kiss and smiled softly down at me. "So good, Raven. Thank you."

Fully expecting him to wriggle away, I pulled him on top of me, shocked when he stayed put. Fucking elated, really, when he rested his head on my shoulder, with his face pressed into my neck.

He breathed me in.

“Max, uh, can I ask you something?”

“Sure.” He kissed my pulse point.

“Without trying to hint at anything, would you like to stay here? Tonight? With me?”  
I cringed at my own words. Way to make things awkward.

“Fall asleep together, you mean?”

“Yeah,” I murmured, burying my face in his hair.

“Listen, Princess... I’d love to stay with you. Just one thing though: we will not sleep with each other tonight.”

Wow, okay.

“I’m not ruling it out at all, God no.” He palmed my hip. “No need to rush things. We have to discuss this and make sure we’re good.”

“Okay.”

“Believe me, it’s better that way. I want to do this right, yeah?” Max raised himself up and kissed me softly on the lips.

Sixteen



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Max

Watching my needy little princess' face fall when I told him I wouldn't fuck him tonight was all the proof I needed.

He's as far gone for you as you are for him.

"I'll stay the night, though, if you want me to. I've been dreaming of falling asleep with you for weeks."

Arne's face flushed, and I had a visual of how he might look freshly fucked. "You did?"

"Every night, with my hand on my dick and my bed cold and empty." I nuzzled my nose into his cheek. "Thank you, Princess."

"I'll have a quick shower..." His voice trailed off.

"Want me to join you?"

"Yeah." He grinned and pulled my head down so he could reach my mouth.

For as long as I lived, Arne sucking me off kneeling in the shower was a memory I would never forget.

Every water drop that clung to his lashes, every rivulet that ran down his hairy chest and his bulging pecs and hard nipples, every flex of his muscles as he moved on my

length, every fucking moan echoing in the steamy air... they were imprinted on my heart.

Back in his bedroom, he opened a drawer on his dresser, glancing over his shoulder to look at me.

“Do you need something to wear tonight, Yndling?”

“A shirt would be great, thanks. What’s ‘yndling’?”

Arne scrunched his nose and winked. “It’s...uh...‘favourite’ in Danish. Don’t tell the others,” he added in a whisper.

He has a pet name for me? God, he’s the cutest.

“Not a word.” I zipped up my mouth but was way past the point of trying to keep my face in check.

Arne didn’t return my grin but leaned in and pecked the side of my neck. “You’re okay?” He asked again, his mouth moving against my skin.

“If you ask me again, I’ll let the Nachtkrapp out or turn into a raven.”

“Not complaining. You turning into this powerful creature is quite the turn-on. An actual raven, not so much, but...” Arne groaned softly, now licking down my throat.

Cursing under my breath, I tilted my head back to give him better access.

“I love the way you taste,” he murmured, running his nose down my chest and nuzzling the ridge between my pecs. I was weirdly proud of it. Even more so when he cupped me, plumping the muscle in his hand. “God, you’re so gorgeous. I’ve wanted

to touch you for so long.”

“You did?”

“Yes,” he breathed, kneading my pec. “Ever since you kissed me in Scotland. I don’t know what you’re doing to me, Raven. My brain just gives out when I’m near you.” Arne huffed a little laugh that tickled the feathers at my chest. “Sorry, I have to make use of the fact that I can touch you.”

“Viking?”

“Yeah?” Those startlingly blue eyes met mine from between my pecs.

“You can always touch me.”

With a soft gasp, he pushed up to his fists, looking down at me. Then my huge, strong Viking urged me back to the bed. As soon as I laid down, he straddled my hips. Uttering a little whimpering sob, Arne kissed me hard.

“That’s it. Take what you need from me. You can have anything you want.”

“Don’t say that.” His beard scratched the soft skin on my jaw as he sucked and licked me there. “I might just take you up on it.”

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“God, please do.” Gripping his ass, I ground him down on my aching dick. I needed him.

“I’ve never been with a guy before, though.”

“So? Just do what feels right. Experiment. I volunteer as your guinea pig.”

“The hottest guinea pig in existence, but shit, Raven. You smell so good, I just want to crawl inside you.”

With a snort, I turned us around, pushing his thighs wide and pressing my dick between his legs.

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, Viking.” I let my guard down, loving how he shivered when my voice dropped dangerously low. Kissing along his collarbone, I searched for the right spot to mark him and found it near his shoulder. “I said guinea pig, not bottom, Liebling. If you want me to, I’ll gladly be under your skin,” I murmured into his muscle. “I’ll get so deep inside you that you’ll feel me for days.” He moaned, throwing his head around when I sucked his skin into my mouth. I didn’t stop until a deep purple bruise bloomed on his otherwise unblemished body.

“Oh, you look pretty wearing my mark, Viking.” My fingertips whispered over the hickey. “So pretty and debauched. So perfect.”

“I want to feel your mouth on me, Raven.” He ended on a soft gasp, his hips bucking up against mine.

“Mmm, you do?” My voice was still a low rasp. “Where?”

“I want you to suck me again.” His throaty voice got me so goddamn close to coming in my boxers.

Humming, I kissed down his naked chest, rubbing my face over his hair.

“Needy little princess,” I tutted, pulling the waistband of his boxers away from his body and letting it snap back.

“Yes, Raven. You do this to me. I want you so much, baby.”

“Call me that again, and you can have anything from me, Arne.”

“Suck my dick, baby, please,” he begged.

Two of my tentacles slid up his legs, hitching in the waistband and dragging his boxers over his hard cock. I let them curl around his thighs, opening them up for me.

“So pretty, Princess. So fucking pretty how you’re leaking for me already.”

One tip brushed over his exposed hole.

“So gorgeous.”

The shadow tendril stroked up his taint, winding around his nuts to squeeze them carefully.

“Holy shit, Raven!” My big, composed Viking sobbed under my touches.

“Yes,” I snarled. “Whimper for me, Princess.”

He blew the moment I took him into my mouth, thighs quivering and grunting as if in pain.

“Max, baby.” My eyes shot up when I heard the breath hitching in his throat. Tears glistened on his cheeks.

“Arne?” I pulled off and cocooned him in my arms, peppering his brow with kisses. “Did I push you too much? I’m so sorry.”

He snuggled into my embrace, pressing his face into my chest.

“You are so sweet and beautiful,” I cooed. “The most precious little princess ever.”

“It was so good,” he murmured. “A bit overwhelming, though.”

“Forgive me. I should have paid more attention to what you needed from me.”

“I’d forgive you for everything, Max. And it’s all good. My emotions just got the better of me for a moment. It’s all so new, and...”

“And?”

“I’m sad because sex was never this good before, and it’s taken me thirty-two years to get here.” His voice sounded wistful. “But every time I get sad I remember that it’s this good because it’s you.”

I love you, Arne.

He nudged me to turn on my side.

“Sleep well, Raven,” he murmured into my nape. “And sweet dreams.”

“You too, Princess.” With one last kiss on the bicep under my cheek, I closed my eyes and was out.

“Good morning,” I whispered into the Viking’s ear, pressing a gentle kiss on the pulse point behind it. We had switched positions in the night, and I had woken up with my body spooning his.

And my morning wood wedged between his ass cheeks.

Oops.

I stood by my decision not to sleep with him on our first night, but that didn’t mean I liked it.

God, I was desperate to tease him open, to make him come on my cock, and to hear

those soft whimpers coming from this burly man. A perfect juxtaposition.

“Did you sleep well?” I rasped, so fucking horny for my viking I was losing my mind.

“No naughty dreams.” He heaved a deep sigh. “But I loved falling asleep with you in my arms.”

“Me, too, Princess.”

“That’s here to stay, huh?”

“The name? Oh, yeah.” Pushing him to lie on his stomach, I kissed his nape, and shoulders. “I love calling you ‘my Princess.’ Because you are,” I muttered, licking a hot strip down his spine. “You are sweet and precious, and so hot.” I nuzzled the small of his back, then moved to his ass, biting the hard curve of his glute.

“Oh God, Raven.” Arne’s leg pulled up, spreading his ass.

How am I supposed to keep my head on when you flash your tight hole at me?

It was clear enough what he wanted. Without further ado, I pressed my mouth into his crack.

Seventeen

Arne

Max eating my ass was the ultimate proof I needed.

I am so bi.



He speared his tongue inside me, alternating between fucking and licking my hole. What should have felt weird was anything but. I was made to have my ass eaten by him.

Perhaps I'm not bi.

I didn't want just any dude in me, only him.

I'm Maxsexual.

"Baby," I groaned, fisting the sheets. He stilled and pulled his face out of my ass.

"Keep calling me that, and I'll change my mind."

"About what?"

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“Fucking you right now,” he said and pressed his mouth back to my hole.

I shivered and trembled, putty under his lips.

“You’re making me come, Max.” He had me close to sobbing, and my dick was leaking profusely onto the bedsheet under me. The slide of the smooth fabric on the sensitive underside of my head got me even closer.

“Good,” he hummed, and then redoubled his efforts.

I wasn’t proud of how fast I came. Or of the sounds I made when I did. They were desperate and throaty as I humped the mattress, riding his face through my orgasm.

“Fuck, Princess.” Max rested his smooth cheek on my glute, sighing as if I had just presented him with a puppy. “You almost made me come, too.”

His hand skimmed over my sweaty hip, and I felt like I did on blades: invincible and on top of the world.

“I hope that made up for not visiting you in your dreams.” The words brushed over the tiny hairs at the small of my back, sending a gentle shiver up my spine.

“Mmm, yeah. As much as I like that, I prefer the real you.”

“Want to come shower with me? I’ll make you breakfast afterwards.”

His silky feathers brushed against my skin as he slid up my body to hug me. Max

kissed my neck.

“This is better than breakfast.”

He huffed, but pressed his lips to my skin again and again.

“I’m hopeless,” Max murmured and moved up to my ear, his warm breath tickling me.

“Hopeless?” I gasped when he sucked my earlobe into his mouth.

“Hopelessly in love with you, Liebling.”

The ability to speak abandoned me when he pulled me back into his body, and his hard dick pressed between my cheeks. His other hand cupped my pec, raising my nipple into a tight peak with his thumb.

Shit. I hadn’t ever wondered if my nipples were sensitive—an oversight on my part. My dick throbbed and twitched as if trying to draw attention to himself with every swipe of Max’s finger.

To be fair, my entire body felt like one big erogenous zone when Max touched me. It was like I had rediscovered my sexuality all over again.

“Max, oh my God, don’t stop.” I didn’t care how whiny I sounded. It was that fucking good.

“Don’t worry, I won’t.” His cocky grin was audible. “Will you blow for me again, Viking?” he asked me in his deep, grumbling Nachtkrapp voice. The hand that wasn’t driving me wild slid up to my throat and squeezed my windpipe.

“Probably,” I moaned, not giving a flying fuck anymore. I had to, and so did he.  
“What about you? Can you come just from what you are doing to me, baby?”

Max’s curse ended in a hoarse chuckle. He gripped my chin, dragged my head around and devoured my mouth, sending me spiralling into pure bliss.

The second orgasm wrecked me. My raven groaned, rubbing his cock up and down my crack. His warm cum hit my lower back and his tongue thrust into my mouth as he rode out his climax. Cum ran down between my arse cheeks, making it a slippery slide.

God, it’s so filthy. I love it.

“I wish I never had to shower again,” I sighed into the sloppy kiss.

Max gave a weak chuckle and rested his forehead against my shoulder.

“My little princess wants to walk around reeking of me and dripping with my cum?”

I shivered.

Fuck, yes.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“Hopeless,” he repeated and hugged me tighter to his chest.

Eighteen

Max

I had the worst fucking game of my career.

Maybe they’ll send you straight back home.

I somehow managed to hit my own teammate with my stick—twice!—and had hit him so hard Bo blacked out for a second. Jerke immediately pulled him off the ice.

And that fucking asshole of a Fox man, Jarno Lipponen, kept taunting and mocking me. Until he snapped. I had never seen Arne lose his composure before.

One minute Lipponen called me a fucking loser, and the next my Viking had him up against the boards, stick caging him by the neck.

It took Nikolai and me to pry him off the Polar Fox hybrid. Arne breathed like an angry Dragon, and I wouldn’t have been surprised to see smoke curling from his nostrils.

“Game misconduct,” the confused, but angry, referee snapped, daring Arne to argue. He didn’t.

All the fight had gone out of him. He glanced at me, then down, and skated towards

the Pumas' bench. His substitute, one of our rookies, entered the penalty box.

We lost spectacularly without our two main defencemen. They gave their best, but Nik wasn't in his usual form. Luis tried, too, but it was his first game with the team.

The poor thing.

Arne had showered and changed, and a tired Jerke led him away for a talk in his office when we approached the locker room.

Nobody spoke much.

"Sorry, kid. Your first game with us should have been a better one." Our blond defenceman clapped a hand on the rookie's shoulder.

Luis gave him a wide smile, clearly high on postgame dopamine. "It's okay. I got an assist. Not a bad turnout for my first game with you guys."

Nik huffed a laugh. "True dat, kiddo."

We all showered and changed, and because it would have looked weird to hang around and wait for Arne, I left the rink.

I had barely entered my flat when my phone chimed with a message.

Arne: Can I drop by?

Arne: I want to see you

Shit.

Arne was never one to use excessive emojis, but this level of neutrality was unusual even for him. Maybe he had confided in Jerke...

Is he going to end this between us?

Max: Sure.

He arrived in under fifteen minutes, coming straight to my place from the rink. He was still in his functional gear, his dark hair soft and gleaming in the overhead lights and an unreadable expression in his startling blue eyes.

Damn, why is he so beautiful?

“Hey, can I come in?” No smile, no wink, just careful neutrality.

We’re over.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“Yes, of course.” I stepped aside to let him pass, trying to brace myself for the inevitable.

Arne pushed the door shut and hugged me so hard my feet lifted off the ground. His lips slammed on my mouth, his slick tongue thrusting inside. With a groan, he pressed me against the wall and urged his thigh between mine. I was sure if he could have crawled under my skin, he would have.

“Oh my God, Raven, I’m so sorry. Tell me you don’t hate me. Do you hate me?” He moaned into my mouth, his broad hands roaming my body. My sweet princess redoubled his efforts, clearly having a moment and sweeping me right along with him.

“Why do you say that, Princess? Why would I hate you?”

“Because I fucking messed up. I suck, and we lost.”

“Arne, look at me.” With both hands on his broad chest I pushed him back to give me some breathing room. “We’ve lost before. I can’t count the times Bo or Nik got penalties. I’ve been worrying about you. I thought you might...”

“What?” he asked softly, stroking my cheek. His inquisitive eyes pierced me. It felt like he could see to the bottom of my soul.

Whatever you will find there, it’s all yours.

“I wondered if you had enough.”



“Enough of what exactly, Max?”

Oh no, not stern Arne. Please.

“I don’t know,” I hedged, but maybe coming clean would help. This level of anxiety isn’t healthy. “That you told Jerke why you lost your temper and decided you didn’t want to see me anymore. I thought that when you took me apple picking, too. And it drives me crazy.”

Arne’s jaw dropped. “What the actual fuck, Max?”

He pushed back from me, grappling with my hands.

“Let me fucking kiss you, baby,” I snapped. He stopped struggling and surrendered to my mouth.

His needy little whines will be my downfall. “I still don’t know what someone as handsome as you would want with me, Arne.” I turned us around, bringing his back to my front door. Kissing down his chin and his throat, I inhaled his cologne. “God, Viking, you make me so hard.”

“Max!” His head thudded back into the wood, his hands finding my shoulders as if to hold me in place. “I’m not handsome,” he added as an afterthought.

“No,” I agreed with him, “you’re not handsome. I nuzzled my face into the thick pecs. “You are the prettiest little princess I’ve ever seen. Let’s go somewhere more comfortable. I don’t want to blow you against my front door.”

“Okay.” He followed me into my bedroom. It was smaller and darker than his, with navy blue walls and dark grey sheets. I gave him a little push that made him topple back onto my bed.

Arne giggled that boyish laugh I loved so much, but he moaned when I dragged his slim dark sweatpants and the usual white athletic boxers he preferred down his legs. I trailed soft kisses up his thighs, breathing into his warm skin and inhaling his scent.

“So pretty,” I crooned, then fisted his dick and brought my mouth down on him.

“Oh my God, Raven. Your mouth feels so fucking good.” Tangling his hands in my hair, he tilted my face up. “Let me see you, please,” he whispered, brushing the tears off my cheeks. When I hollowed them under his touch, his length twitched. I thought for a moment he would lose control and comewaybefore I was ready to give up this thick, veiny cock in my mouth.

It turned me on like crazy that I was more experienced than him. At least in this territory. And seeing Arne gaze down at me with lust.Fuck!It did my head in.

Pulling off his cock for a moment, I ran my hands up his thighs.

“Anything you want to try, Captain? Nothing is off limits.” I deep-throated him again, loving to hear him hiss when his cockhead bumped into my throat.

“I’ll tell you if something doesn’t work for me. But—” He cursed, his hips bucking up. “I doubt we’ll have to worry about that today.”

My breath was ragged with the fucking pleasure of my lips working his leaking dick.

“Today or ever,” he groaned. “If anything, I worry about how long I can hold back.” I grinned around his cock before sucking him down once more. My hands wandered, brushing his tight nuts and delving further.

“Oh my God! Are you sure you want to do this?” My precious big viking palmed my cheeks, uncertainty etched in his face.

I pulled off his cock, tears blurring my vision. I wouldn't let him do anything he wasn't comfortable with.

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“I want to explore every inch of your body, Princess. If you want me to...” It was his own insecurity showing here, not mine.

He pulled me up for a kiss. “I want nothing more than you.”

Keeping my eyes on his, I pushed two fingers into his mouth. He got the memo and slicked them so obscenely he gave me a full-body flush. Then I brought them between his spread thighs, heading straight for his hole.

I had no idea if I was trembling or him, only that I made sure there was no discomfort. My pretty little princess needed to be handled with the greatest care and attention. He gripped my biceps, holding on tight as I brushed his saliva over his sensitive skin, teasing his ass open for me.

He let me in, breathing through his mouth to get his muscles to relax.

“This isn’t your first time, is it, Princess?”

He blinked as if he found it difficult to keep his eyes open to meet mine. Then the hottest fucking smirk ever appeared on his face and my viking leaned in, bringing his mouth to my ear. “You got me, Raven. I admit I practised a little. I’m quite flexible, you know.”

Oh. Fuck. Me.

I groaned when I imagined Arne finger fucking himself, and even more so when he softened and my index slipped into him.

“Let me get the lube.” I breathed, keeping my hand unmoving.

“Okay.”

I pulled out, stroking my other hand over his chest to get him to relax, and slid the drawer open.

I’d barely returned to his side when he gripped a fistful of my hair and brought our lips together, his scruffy beard scraping my skin as he devoured me.

When my brain came back online, I opened the bottle and squelched the lube out.

He groaned when my cool, slick fingers were back between his ass cheeks. I softened him up with gentle pressure before I entered him again.

“Max, you need to, oh fucking hell, what are you doing to me?” he whined, desperate like an animal.

His voice cracked and I...lost it. The shadows rising around us hid us in a cocoon of darkness. The safety in which he could let go for me.

“There?” I pressed my fingers against his prostate again, his heart pounding under my ear as I stroked deeper.

“Yes. Fuck, yes. Exactly there.” I focused on the spot like I focused on the puck in the game, with fluidity and adaptability, ever changing to match the energy of my opponents.

“Does that feel good for you?” I rasped.

“Yes,” he whimpered into the void as I pushed him to the brink of madness.

“Shh, just feel me, Princess. Breathe for me and trust me, okay? I wouldn’t ever hurt you.”

“It doesn’t hurt, baby. It’s...fuck! There’s no practice for what you do to me.”

Arne moved his hips, fucking himself on my hand. He was clearly desperate to come.

“Max, please!” he whined.

“Please what?” I asked, making my voice stay soft and unperturbed. I was so fucking close; I couldn’t hold out much longer. He was too tight, too hot around me.

“Make me come already,” Arne snapped.

I chuckled darkly, pulling my hand out an inch.

“No, Raven! Please, oh fuck fuck fuck.” He was close to tears. He was close to falling. He teetered on the edge of the platform, ready for a deep dive. Sweet little princess. My fingers plunged back into his body.

“Fall for me, my Viking,” I whispered in his ear. He fell and so did I, forgetting that I had never learned how to fall. I could fly.

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Air rushed past me as the ground came too close, way too fast, until I soared. My cum painted the prettiest picture on his skin, adding to the mess he made of himself. But I didn't let up. I milked him dry and jerked my cock with my other hand until we slumped back on the bed, struggling for breath and our hearts hammering against our rib cages.

"Wow," I gasped when I found my head again. He caught my eye, and we both broke down in laughter. Pulling out, I snuggled up to him. I had to kiss this beautiful man.

"Thank you," I muttered, my forehead resting on his, hand curled around his nape.

"Thank you? Damn, Raven. This was the hottest thing ever. You are..." A grin stretched across his face, and he turned his head to find my lips in a kiss. "You are the hottest thing ever."

"So, Princess." I snuggled my face into his neck, kissing his sweaty skin. "Now that we've explored this..."

"Yes?"

"What do you say? Are you okay with bottoming? We haven't talked about it yet. We should before we go on."

"I thought about it at length, and I don't think I want to top. Correction: I am sure I don't want to top after what you just did to me."

His grin fucking floored me.

“Good, because I don’t want to bottom.” I winked. “Damn, I can’t wait to fuck you, but I want you to feel safe.”

“I always feel safe with you, Max.”

He groaned desperately when I turned us around, gripped his glutes and spread them.

“What are you waiting for, Raven?”

Nineteen

Arne

“What do you mean?” Max stared at me.

I gulped. “I want to sleep with you.”

“Now?”

“What’s stopping you? I’ve done enough waiting and holding out and exploring. I’m sure I want you. Only you, Raven.” With gentle pressure, I tilted up his chin so I could kiss him again. “Unless you don’t want to—that’s fine, too.”

“God, Princess, you don’t know how much I want you.”

I nudged him to lie on his back and slid a leg over his hips, raising myself up to straddle him. Then I remembered that he’d just come about five minutes ago.

“Do you need a bit more time to recuperate? We can wait.”

“Oh no.” Max gave me a sheepish grin. “I’m perfect.”



“Yes, you are,” I agreed, loving the gentle blush spreading across his sharp cheekbones.

Bending down, I kissed his neck.

“We’re both tested, right?”

“We are,” he agreed. “Are you suggesting we...”

“Forgo the condoms, yes.”

Max cursed, his hand coming up to cup my nape.

“It’s okay for me, but only if you’re sure. I have no...fuck, Princess!” I ground my hips against his, sliding our dicks together, already so riled up I was scared I would come the minute he was in me.

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“I need you, Raven.” He didn’t argue after that but kept his eyes on mine as he reached for the lube.

“I know, baby.” His gaze dropped to my lips, and he nudged my head forward, bringing them to his mouth. “If anything changes for you, you tell me straight away, yeah?”

“Uh-huh.” My voice was whiny and desperate—exactly how I felt.

Max hummed, bringing my face even closer so he could nip my bottom lip.

“Any discomfort you feel I need to know about, but I promise I’ll be careful with you, Princess.” I heard him squeeze some lube out of the bottle, only briefly wondering how he could with one hand still palming my nape. Then his cool fingertips trailed softly over my hole.

Everything was new and exciting, as if this was the first time we played.

“My precious princess.” His lips brushed against mine with every word he spoke. “I can’t wait to see how pretty you’ll look all needy and sobbing on my cock.”

“Fuck, Max,” I moaned and closed my eyes to focus on the pleasure he sparked in me.

“Let’s get you nice and open for me first.” He slipped a finger inside me. “God, Princess. You’re so tight. Being in you’s going to end me. Try to relax for me. That’s it,” he praised when I exhaled and my ass softened around his fingers.

Twenty

Max

“Max, please. Give me more,” Arne groaned into our half kiss. I added another finger, watching his face like a hawk. Nothing but pleasure showed on it.

Lips open a bit, his breath rasping in and out of him, cheeks flushed, and hips timidly moving with my careful thrusts. I scissored my fingers, stretching him open. The need to be in him drove me out of my mind, but there was no way I’d forget myself and risk him being hurt.

Arne searched around for the lube.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m going to lube you up, for fuck’s sake. I can’t wait a minute longer.”

“Oh yes, you will.” I took the bottle before he could.

“Maaax,” he drawled, lips in a pout.

“I didn’t know my big, strong viking was such a brat,” I tutted. I squeezed lube straight on my dick, slathering it all over the aching length.

“Careful,” I warned him when he took hold of me, brought me to his hole and bore down. He whined again, struggling against my hold.

“Princess!”

Arne’s eyes snapped open, hazy with lust, making me suddenly aware of how fucking

tight a grip he had on my cock.

“Don’t hurt yourself,” I murmured, pulling him in for a slow kiss and letting him sink down an inch. His dick twitched against my abs.

“God, Raven, you feel so fucking good.”

“You, too, Princess.” I stroked his tongue with mine, drinking down his moans. He moved on me, raising his ass up a bit and sinking down until his ass was flush with my groin.

He ground it against my hips, trying to find a rhythm that worked for him. I’d never had sex with another hockey player before. This beautiful man’s pure strength and stamina completely fucking blew my mind. Taking hold of my pecs, he rode me like a stubborn bull, inhuman snarls escaping both of us when my cock bumped into his spot and his ass clenched around me.

“God, I’m so bi, baby,” he moaned, throwing his head back and changing the angle.

Holy. Fucking. Shiiit.

“And I’m so close. Princess,” I hissed, my head digging into the pillow, trying to hold on somehow. “You look so pretty. Fuck!”

“Yes, Raven, breed my hole!” His own dirty talk took him over the edge. His body clenched around me, and he came all over my abs in long spurts. Shit! It was so much, as if he’d been holding out for weeks.

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I plummeted for a moment before I followed him. Grinding his ass down, I filled him up.

Letting go of his hips, I held my arms open.

“Get down here, Princess. I need to hold you.”

“Wow,” he sighed and nuzzled his nose into my neck. “So bi.”

I huffed, making us both hiss when my limp dick slipped out of his ass.

“Thank you.” Arne said softly.

I turned my head and kissed his brow.

“For letting you ride me? ...That was sarcasm,” I clarified.

“I know, baby.” Arne’s lips pressed to the side of my throat. “For how good it felt. I was a bit nervous.” He added the last words in a whisper.

“You were?” I tilted his face up so I could see his eyes. “Why?” I stroked his scruffy cheek.

God, Viking. You are glorious.

“I love the way you look at me, Max,” Arne confessed, biting his lip.

“How do I look at you, Princess?”

“Like,” he began, but broke off, the skin over his cheeks flushing pink.

Say it.

“Like you...” My viking broke off again.

I hummed. Maybe I don't need to hear it now. “Why were you nervous?”

“I was a bit scared it might hurt, or that I wouldn't like it.”

“Oh, Princess. I would never have hurt you. You know that, don't you?”

“Yes, I do.” He added a little nod to drive the point home and pressed his lips to mine. It was a sensual kiss, close-mouthed, and almost chaste. I moaned when he licked the seam of my lips, nudging me open for him.

“Baby,” he whimpered, broad hands digging into my curls. Arne slicked his tongue over mine, deepening our connection.

They say ravens mated for life. I never thought that would be something I wanted but when he kissed me like that I wasn't so sure anymore.

Twenty-one

Arne

Max spent more and more evenings at my place. It was easier to keep my cool at the rink because I got all of him when we arrived home.

Before Max, I'd been okay with being abstinent for months between hookups. With him around, I was a desperate mess.

We both loved it when I was on top. It made me train like a berserk in the gym, improving my stamina and strength even more. If Jerke knew why I suddenly skated better than before, he'd probably have a minor breakdown.

“Want to hang out at my place?” I asked him as we left the rink. “I have a new game I want to try. How about it? We could order something?” Hopefully none of the others heard it and wanted in on the fun.

There's no way they're playing that kind of game with us.

“Sounds good, Viking. Can I just tag along now? I don't want to go halfway across town twice if I don't have to.”

“Sure.”

I’ll take any minute I can get with you, Raven.

“How about we head to the supermarket, though?” He checked our surroundings for our teammates. “I want to cook for us.”

“You spoil me, Max.”

His crooked smile slid down my throat like a hot drop of liquid. Taking a glance at his surroundings to make sure none of the others could hear, he lowered his voice. “Forever.”

It should have scared me to hear him talk like that. It definitely shouldn’t make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

“Viking?”

“Yes?” I muttered, letting my body sink deeper into Max’s embrace.

I had just bounced on his cock and come so hard that bright lights still popped in my field of vision whenever I blinked. He held me in his arms and drew lazy circles on my sweaty back.

“I want to go somewhere with you where no one knows who we are.”

Raising myself up a few inches, I touched his cheek and tilted my face up for a kiss.



“What’s wrong, Raven?”

“Nothing,” he whispered. His lie was so obvious my heart squeezed a little in my chest.

“Max?” I prompted him again. “You can tell me. I won’t be mad or anything.”

“Not mad,” he shook his glossy black curls. “But I’m scared you will laugh at me.”

“What? When was the last time I made fun of you, Raven? Tell me.”

His next word was barely audible. “Never.”

“That’s right. I would never do that, I—”

Oh my God, don’t be stupid, Arne! You can’t tell him now.

His mouth fell open as if he knew exactly what I had been about to say.

“I want to be somewhere with you where I can hold your hand in public, and where I can kiss you without being afraid anyone will see us,” he went on, emboldened by my almost declaration. “And with Christmas coming up, I…”

He wants to spend the holidays with me? Damn, baby. I’ll give you the full ‘Danish boyfriend spoiling you for your first Jul’ experience.

I slipped my hand around the back of his neck and bumped my nose to his. “Let me organise something for us.”

To be completely honest, the idea had hovered in the back of my mind for weeks. Spending our first Christmas as a secret couple away from each other wasn’t a

prospect I liked. I'd imagined myself—sad and lonely—sitting in my parents' holiday home by the coast that they reserved for me every year and texting him all day.

“Are you serious?” His doubtful look might have offended me, but I had an inkling it had nothing to do with me, but rather his ex-boyfriend. From what he'd told me on our hike, that guy had never followed through on his promises.

It was up to me to help him make new experiences. I'd promised myself the moment he'd told me that I would prove him wrong. He didn't deserve to be treated like this. He deserved everything.

“Max, listen to me.” I sat up, straddling his hips and trying to ignore how beautiful he looked all drenched in my cum. “Unfortunately, I can't guarantee that I'll never break a promise. But please know that I intend to keep them all. If I can't it's because...I don't know, I'm bedridden in the hospital, or the world has ended. I want to make you happy.”

“I know,” he breathed. “And you do. So much.”

“My parents have a holiday home, a cabin by the sea. I stay in it every Christmas because my mum and dad moved out of my childhood home after I was scouted to play hockey in Germany. Why don't you come with me so we can spend our time off there? Just you and me.”

He sat up and opened his mouth as if to speak, then closed it again.

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“I usually spend Christmas with my parents. We eat an obscene amount of food. But we can spend it alone if you prefer that.” The words kept tumbling out of my mouth, and I couldn’t stop them. “They’re super nice, though, and I bet they would love to meet you. I told them so much about you.”

Stop rambling, Arne!

“You told your parents about me?”

Is that all you heard?

“Uh, yes, of course I did. They’ll tell no one about us. I promise, it’s—”

Max tackled me, which was weird because I sat on his lap one moment and the next my back was on the bed, and he was kissing me.

“I want to celebrate with you. I’ll tell my family we’re going to Denmark,” he said against my lips when at long last he backed away, grinning widely. “This is going to be the best Christmas ever.”

Twenty-two

Max

“You’ll spend Christmas with whom?” Marie’s shrill voice made me almost drop my phone. I’d called her as soon as I knew for sure our Christmas in Denmark would work out.

“Shit, keep it down a bit, will you? Ouch, that hurt my ear.”

“Sorry, Max, but you are doing what for Christmas this year?” she asked again.

“I’m going to a friend’s place in Denmark.” The lie stung, but she’d never been great at keeping secrets from our parents. “His family owns a beach house there.”

“Ugh, I’m jealous. I bet he’s hot. Is he single?” My sister giggled.

“Nah, he’s seeing someone,” I said evasively.

“Mum and Dad will hate that you won’t be home for the holidays. And your birthday!”

“I know, but this might be a once in a lifetime opportunity. I’ve heard Jul in Denmark is pretty fantastic.”

And it’s our first Christmas as a couple. Okay, secret couple, but who cares?

“You’ve got to send me pictures! Also of the hunk.”

“Not going to happen.” I snorted. “Go on the website and look at his official pictures. I’m not taking photos of him on holiday.”

Well, I might... but those are only for me.

“Okay, okay.” She laughed. “I’ll check him out. Oh hang on, is this your hot captain we’re talking about? The Viking? He’s Danish, isn’t he?”

“Yeah, that’s him. How are things at home?” I asked to steer the conversation away from Arne. I had no problem bending the truth a bit. Flat out lying to Marie wasn’t

something I wanted to do.

“Oh, same old. Our parents are working. I’m spending all my time in the lab. I met Tobias the other day. He said he tried calling you, but you didn’t pick up the phone. He was pretty upset.”

I rolled my eyes, anger rising in my chest.

“For the last time, I broke up with him because he fucked some other guy and then lied to me about it for weeks!” I was beyond sugar coating anything. “I found out through ArgoS, if you want to know. Why the fuck would I pick up? So he can cry and when that doesn’t soften me up, insult me? I want nothing to do with that asshole.”

“Holy shit. That’s what he did?” Marie whispered.

“Yeah.” I sniffed. I wasn’t upset about it anymore, just so freaking angry. I wanted to be with Arne in peace, without worrying if Tobias might call me again while we had dinner or were in bed together.

“Shit, Max. I’m so sorry. I had no idea.”

“I bet he didn’t tell you that, did he?”

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“Nope. He came to our house and cried. Said you had split up with him because he didn’t fit into your successful life in Germany anymore.”

“What the actual fuck? The audacity!”

“We all felt sorry for him, of course. I told them you would have had your reasons.”

I huffed. “Yeah, I did.”

“What an asshole. I’m glad you’re rid of him. You deserve better.”

My thoughts strayed back to my princess.

“Yeah, I do. I’ll call Mum later. Gotta get ready for work now.”

“You go hit some pucks. I need to be in the lab, anyway.”

My sister was in the last leg of her psychology studies.

“Love you, little sis.”

“Love you, big bro.”

After our morning training session and yoga class, I called my mother.

She, too, brought up Tobias, but quickly changed the subject when I told her the same thing I had told Marie.

It hurt that she didn't want to hear me, but it made me feel less guilty about what I told her next.

"You won't be coming home for the holidays? And your birthday? Maximilian, you cannot be serious!"

"I am, Mum." I wouldn't say I was sorry. I wasn't.

"And you're spending Christmas in Denmark with a colleague?"

"A friend." The love of my life. Perhaps she heard I wasn't going to let her challenge that.

"All right." She sighed like a woman who had lived a thousand years of misery.

Well, parenting two neurodivergent children—one obsessed with hockey and the other with a special interest in serial killers—and running a business probably came close enough in her mind. "Have a good time with your friend in Denmark. We'll miss you, Max."

"I'll miss you, too, Mum. Have a great Christmas, yeah? And give my love to Dad."

"I will. We'll be sending your presents to Veitsreuth. Perhaps we can come see you in March for your Dad's birthday?"

"Yeah, that would be nice."

"Good. Let's do that. I love you."

"Love you, too, Mum."

I hung up, feeling only a bit guilty but giddy with excitement.

I'd go to a beach house with Arne. Ten days of great food, not having to hide, and all the sex. Fuck yes.

Twenty-three

Arne

Christmas fell on a Sunday this year, which was fantastic for us because Coach Jerke gave us Friday off as well.



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We were all so fucking ready for a break. Ollie and Bo would spend Christmas in Sweden this year, then head to Scotland for Hogmanay. Nate and Vee flew back to the States to celebrate with Nate's family.

I'd already picked up Max's bag the night before, and we said goodbye to the guys after training on Thursday, not exactly letting on that we'd be heading north together.

Traffic was surprisingly light for a few days before Christmas, and the roads were clear.

I drove us all the way past Leipzig and Hannover, where Max fell asleep, through Hamburg, until we reached the Danish border.

Hjem.

We drove further north to my family's beach house half an hour outside of Kolding, a seaport town on the Baltic Sea coast.

"Baby?" I stroked Max's cheek, trying to rouse him gently. "We're here. Come inside."

He followed me, probably still half asleep, and stood patiently until I'd undressed him and then slipped under the covers with me.

I woke up in my love's arms in the huge, comfortable bed facing the massive glass fronts and the Baltic Sea before us.

I missed this.

“Good morning, Princess.” Sleepy Max slurring his words was the cutest. He kissed my neck.

God, I love him so fucking much.

“I think it’s past noon, actually.”

“Same difference. I love waking up with you, whenever that is.”

Another kiss landed on my neck, open-mouthed and licking. The hand under my head slipped around my chest, pulling me back into his body.

“Tell me if you want me to leave you alone,” he murmured before sucking a bruise into my shoulder. Just out of sight.

“I’m always raven-ous when you are around,” he murmured, nipping my skin for good measure.

“How long have you been waiting for this pun to hit?” I giggled.

Max gripped my dick, squeezing me. He freed me from my boxers, dragging them down my legs with my help.

“You love my bad puns, don’t you, Princess?”

He nudged me to lie on my front and used his shadowy limb to grab the lube from his bag.

“Handy,” I groaned, spreading my legs. “I love everything about you, Raven.” He

sank two slick, elegant fingers inside me, only stretching me for a few moments before he replaced them with his dick.

I breathed through the stretch, just a moment of discomfort before he hit my spot. And those bumps. They felt so good.

“Raven,” I drawled, the pleasure almost too much to bear.

“God, you are so beautiful, Princess.” He watched himself fucking me with his forehead against my shoulder.

Grunting and groaning, we moved together and drove each other over the edge. I drenched the sheets under me when I felt him breed my hole, filling me up to the brim with his hot cum.

“Holy shit, baby,” I sighed when he sank down on my back, pressing me into the mattress. “Thank you.”

Max chuckled, moving his softening length in me.

“Don’t thank me for that, Princess. I was trying my best to hold out a bit longer, but you’re so fucking hot.” He shook his head and pressed a soft kiss on my nape. “Thank you for bringing me with you. Feels like a dream.”

“It was a bit selfish of me, Raven. I can’t wait to show you everything and have you all to myself for ten days.”

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Max moved up my body a few inches and brought my head around so he could kiss me.

“I like selfish Arne.” His dark eyes were full of love. “You always take care of everyone else. You deserve to have good things, too.”

“I have you, and if that isn’t the best thing then I don’t know what is,” I muttered, pursing my lips to get him to kiss me.

“Sweet Princess.” Soft lips pressed on my mouth, my nose, my eyelids. “I—”

A loud knock on the door made us both flinch.

Twenty-four

Max

“Fuck!” Arne angled for his phone on the nightstand. “My parents are here. Mum texted me an hour ago.

I pulled out and Arne scrambled out from under me, giggling like a schoolboy. He was about to get up but stopped. My sweetest princess cupped my cheeks and gave me a slow kiss that made me swoon so hard it was embarrassing.

“Come out if you want. I’m sure they would love to meet you as soon as possible.” Arne took his discarded shirt and cleaned himself haphazardly before pulling out a pair of boxers and some Pumas merch—shorts and one of the blue shirts with

the fierce yellow wildcat on the chest. “See you in a few minutes, okay?”

I nodded.

Oh my God, what am I saying?

He dashed back across the room to bend over the bed and kiss me again.

“Come on, meet the in-laws.” With one last peck and a cheeky wink he left.

I lay there for long minutes, staring up at the ceiling and letting his words sink in.

Holy. Fucking. Shit.

The happy Danish voices from outside the bedroom door made me get up.

I used the same shirt he had to wipe my dick clean and dropped it with the rest of our discarded clothes in a heap on the floor. Then I grabbed fresh clothes from my bag.

Giving myself a last once-over in the mirror on the wardrobe and trying in vain to fix my stubborn curls, I grimaced at myself.

What would his parents say when I came out of the bedroom looking like I had just rearranged their son’s guts?

Well, there is only one way to find out.

The voices stopped abruptly at the sound of the bedroom door opening, and I entered the living room with my heart hammering in my throat.

Damn it, I hated meeting strangers. But maybe it was a good thing that I had little

time to get nervous.

“Hello,” I greeted them, fiddling with my hands.

Where are they supposed to go?

Arne’s mother had short blonde hair, and everything about her looked effortlessly elegant. His father wasn’t as tall as him but was equally broad. I knew he worked for the local rescue team that retrieved lost hikers. He, too, had dark hair and those blue eyes.

His mum got up when she saw me coming over, a wide smile on her kind face.

“Oh, you must be Max.” Taking my outstretched hand into both of hers, she squeezed it without sparing my feathers a glance.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mrs Bendixen.”

She gasped and gave me a stern look that reminded me of Arne. “Absolutely not. My name is Ida, and this is my husband, Aksel.” Ida gave my hand another squeeze. “We are so happy to meet you. Arne has told us so much about you.”

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The idea still baffled me.

I met his eyes and a wave of love and affection swept through me and into every corner of my being. Its intensity made my heart flutter like a frantic bird.

Mine.

“Welcome to the family, son.” Arne’s father had joined his wife, extending a large hand to me.

“Thank you,” I squeaked, taking the offered hand and shaking it.

Arne invited me to his side, taking my hand as soon as I sat next to him.

Okay, that’s settled, then.

“We’re sorry to barge in like this,” Ida said, giving me an apologetic shrug. “We wanted to wait for tomorrow, but we were just too excited to see you two. I hope we didn’t wake you up.”

My cheeks heated.

“It’s okay, uh...”

Arne said something in Danish, and both his parents chuckled good-naturedly.

“We’ll be leaving soon. We will see you tomorrow, Max? Will you be joining us for

lunch?”

“I forgot to tell Max,” Arne explained, rubbing circles on my knuckles. “We haven’t talked about our plans.” His hopeful smile confused me. Did he want me to come or stay away?

“I don’t have plans yet.” All the plans I have involved Arne anyway. “Lunch with you sounds good.”

“I can show you the town where I grew up, Yndling. How about it?”

He short-circuited my brain.

Yndling?! He calls me his favourite in front of his parents?

“Yeah,” I told him, “if you want me to.”

“Rhetorical question.” Aksel Bendixen smirked over at us, looking so much like his son it was like looking into the future.

Looks good.

Arne squeezed my hand, giving me the cutest smile ever. For a moment, his feelings overwhelmed me. I hovered between this form and the raven, wanting to transform and fly away. Be free of all worldly sins.

But then Arne laced our fingers together. He brought them up to his mouth, kissing them. And I knew I would follow this man anywhere. Even to lunch with his parents.

“We should be on our way, Aksel,” his mother breathed. “We need to pick up a few things at the shop.” When I looked around, she gave us a warm smile. The corners of



her eyes crinkled like Arne's did when he smiled.

The Viking gave my hand a little squeeze and got up to hug his parents goodbye.

"We'll see you tomorrow, Max." His father shook hands with me.

Twenty-five

Arne

It had still been dark when we arrived the night before. Seeing Max take the house in for the first time once my parents had left, awe on his ethereal face, was a highlight of my year.

Before they retired, my mother had worked as the CEO of Dwarfoods, one of Denmark's largest food suppliers. My dad still volunteered for the rescue team he had led for most of his working life. They had bought this house decades ago and had it restored a few years back. It was gorgeous. I had very vague plans to move here eventually, or at least spend a chunk of my time here.

I got lost in my daydreams of Max and me having coffee here, both with greying hair and still as gone for the other as we were now.

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“Oh my God, it’s so beautiful. Can I check it out?” Max’s body vibrated with excitement.

“Go ahead.” With a small peck on the lips, I sent him exploring and opened the cupboard above the sink. My heart squeezed in my chest again. My mum and dad had stocked the fridge and cupboards for us.

They are the freaking best.

“I can’t believe we get to stay here for the next ten days.”

Max strolled over to me and pulled me into a hug.

“Let’s have a shower and then grab a bite, okay? My parents left us enough food that we could survive the ten days without ever setting foot outside.”

“Yes, Captain,” he hummed, kissing my cheek. “And don’t threaten me with a good time. Thank you for bringing me here. I love it,” he added, his voice low, serious.

I love you.

“You’re welcome, Raven. I’m so glad we’re here together.” We walked hand in hand to the bathroom in the back with the massive shower that I adored even more now.

In silence, we undressed. His gaze locked on mine. Suddenly desperate. We found ourselves under the blissfully warm spray, getting lost in a hungry kiss.

I loved the feel of his body against mine, his roaming hands, the gasp when I brushed his hole, the whimper when I shoved him face-first against the shower wall. I sank to my knees. The water hadn't yet washed the lingering scent of his musk away. His hole clenched when I ran my tongue over it, probing him. I needed to see him lose control.

"Oh God," he groaned as I speared my tongue inside him. Palms clapping against the tile. Ass pressing back. He fucked himself on my mouth. His thick cock jerked when I grabbed him. A hand slid into my hair, holding on for dear life as he drove his dick through my fist, my tongue in his ass.

Max came so beautifully for me. Ropes of cum pulsed out over my fingers and were washed away by the water almost immediately.

He always topped, but he loved it when I ate him. And so did I.

"Arne." Nobody I had been with before him had ever driven me to the edge with just my name. My name on his lips. "Get up." His voice was calm, and I rose, as he sank down.

He swallowed my cock, choking around my head in his throat.

Don't be the depraved asshole who comes from hearing their partner choke but... Fuck. Me. That sound. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard.

Forehead pressing to the tiles, I watched him blow me.

"So gorgeous. You...are...so...pretty, Raven." I panted and huffed the words into the steamy air.

Twenty-six

Max

Showered and changed, I grabbed the coffee Arne had brewed while we'd taken our naughty shower. He whipped up a plate overflowing with all my favourite foods, and then we curled up under the same blanket on the couch.

"Did you tell your parents what to buy?" I asked, spearing a piece of creamy sheep milk cheese on my fork. I rarely indulged in it, keeping to my diet, but it was one of the best things in the world.

"I might have given them a list of your safe foods." He scrunched up his nose in an uncharacteristically embarrassed smile. "There should be a few bags of sour worms in the cupboards." My stomach fluttered like a soaring raven.

"You know them?" I doubted even my mother could have given such an accurate list of my safe foods.

He shrugged, popping half a fresh fig into his mouth. "They're important for you, so I figured it made sense if I learned them, too."

I waited until he'd swallowed his fig, then put the plate on the coffee table and slid to the floor between his feet.

"Holy shit, Raven. What are you doing?" he groaned, stroking my temple as if he couldn't help touching me.

Me neither, Princess.

I didn't reply, but dragged his joggers and tight white boxers down his legs. It took his body a few moments to catch on, and his cock hardened in my mouth.

“God, Raven. That feels so good.”

I wanted Arne to lose control for me. Raising my eyes to his, I gripped his cock and pulled off.

“Oh fuuuck.” His heavily hooded gaze roamed over my face, my hand, and clung to my irises before he fixated on my mouth. I tongued his head, hungrily lapping up the first drops of precum.

“I love how you taste, Viking,” I groaned, my voice throaty. “Give me more!”

With a whimper, he stroked my curls back. His thick, furry thighs trembled around me. More drops leaked out of him. I licked them away and dipped my tongue into the slit at his cockhead.

“Raven!” It was barely a whimper, lewd and needy.

Yep, hard again.

“Come in my mouth,” I commanded. “And then I will bend you over the table.” I inched my head back at the dining space behind us.

“Oh fuck, baby.” Strong hands gripped my face, and he bucked his hips, sliding his dick between my lips. A handful of shallow thrusts—and my hand fondling his nuts—was all he needed. His warm cum flooded my mouth.

I didn’t swallow, but rose to my feet. I dragged him into my arms and slammed my

lips on his.

Arne's tongue thrust into my mouth, greedily lapping at his own release.

With a groan, I took hold of his sculpted ass, kneading the hard globes of muscle and grinding my dick to his body.

"Get your ass over there," I told him in my deep, slightly distorted voice, which signalled the Night Raven had come out to play. He'd been lurking under the surface all morning.

My gorgeous viking shivered, and I surveyed him, knowing full well that darkness swirled in my eyes. He looked out of it already. His face was slack, a dribble of his own cum clung at the corner of his mouth, and his pupils were blown wide.

My mouth curled up in a half smile, and I took a step back. "Be a good boy and do what I tell you." Arne moaned under his breath as his dick twitched visibly.

My heart.

My bulky, capable captain, always in control of everything, loved being told what to do.

"Go," I growled, giving him a wolfish grin. He gasped, turning on his heel, whipping off his shirt as he went.

Maybe this was why it worked so well between us. He held the reins on the ice, and I took them in bed.

I sauntered into the bedroom to grab the lube, taking my time. He would be even more of a mess if I kept him waiting, bent over a table. He always got so needy when

I did—begging for my dick.

The Nachtkrapp urged me on. If only my sweet viking knew I was at least as desperate as him.

Good Lord.

The sight of Arne stopped me in my tracks.

His upper body was draped over the tabletop, hands gripping the edges so tightly his knuckles turned white.

I marvelled at his ass, fuzzed with dark hair, nuts nestled deep into the apex of his thick legs.

I strolled over to him, loving how he watched me like a hawk, the breath rasping in and out of him.

I plopped the bottle down on the table beside his arm, his muscles straining as if he feared dropping off the face of the earth.

“Sweet Princess,” I muttered, trailing my fingertips down his spine and raising goosebumps in my wake. “You look so gorgeous bent over like that. With that pretty pink hole on display for me.”

He whimpered softly, the tip of his tongue coming out to wet his lips.

“I love it when you are so hungry for me. So desperate.” My voice broke, dropping down a couple of octaves when my other form forced himself to the front of my consciousness.

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“Tell me how desperate you are, Viking.”

The shadows reached out for him, solidifying as they met his legs, denting his skin. They curled around his thighs, trailing over his hole and diving between his legs to reach his balls.

“Oh my God, Raven,” he whimpered, eyes squeezed shut but shuffling his stance to make room for me.

“Let me hear you,” the Nachtkrapp hummed, tugging on his balls. My lips curled up in an indulgent smile at his shuddering breath. He knew the drill. I wouldn’t touch him any further until he told me.

“I want you to take me, Raven.” His voice shook. “Wreck my hole and fucking use me. Please,” Arne added, ending on a sobbing moan.

With a snarl, I grabbed the lube and wrenched the lid open. I didn’t even bother to warm it up for him, but squeezed it out on his clenching ass.

I went straight to two fingers. He tensed for a moment when I pulled my fingers out and notched my slick cock at his entrance.

“Let me in, Princess. I promise I’ll make you feel great.”

“I know you will.” He exhaled, urging his ass against my groin, bearing down on my dick. “You always do, my love.”



Wrapping my hand around his throat, I pulled his back to my chest.

“Max!” His eyes flew open at the change of angle, his mouth coming around in search of my lips.

I upped the speed, my thighs slapping against his ass, fingers curled in his hair. Arne moaned and sobbed on my cock, his hole fluttering around me.

“No!” I snapped, swatting his hand away from taking hold of his hard length.

“Please, baby, I need to come.”

“I’m not stopping you. But you are not touching yourself. Be a good slut and get yourself off on my dick.”

Tilting my hips, I bumped my head against his prostate.

“Right there, baby. Please, oh God.”

I bit down on my lip so hard I tasted blood so I wouldn’t come from the way he sobbed.

That I was the reason this tall, successful man made these noises was mind blowing.

“Harder, baby. Please. Wreck me!”

Oh shiit!

I squeezed his throat the way he loved and dragged his hot mouth to mine as I pushed him over the edge with hard thrusts.

“Be. A. Good. Slut. And. Come. Now.” I grunted with the effort of holding back until he climaxed.

And he did. Fucking finally. Crying out my name, he came all over the floor, his hole squeezing my dick like a vise.

“Tell me who you belong to,” I snarled, sinking my teeth into his hard shoulder muscle, my release slamming into me. I flooded his ass with my cum, grunting with pleasure.

“Fuck, baby!” Arne gasped, tears spilling out from under his thick lashes. “Only you. I’m all yours,” he added, ending with a soft sigh. He collapsed on the table with me on top of him, and I released his flesh.

“My sweet little Princess.” Stroking his hair and caressing his cheek, he sighed again, a blissful expression on his face. “You own me. I hope you know that.”

Raising myself up, I pulled out of his ass, enjoying the view for a few moments: the bite mark on his shoulder, the expanse of his sweaty back, the skin dotted with a few lonely freckles, and his stretched hole with my cum leaking out of him.

“Come on. Let’s clean you up and get you back to bed.”

A shudder travelled down his spine. “Not like that,” I chuckled, brushing my lips on his skin. “But if you need me to fuck you again, I gladly will.” Kissing up his back, I nuzzled my face into his neck. “God, I love you so much, Arne.”

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A soft gasp escaped him, causing me to draw back. Our eyes met.

“I love you,” he replied, giving me a gooey grin. Like a fly in a sticky trap, I got stuck on it. This man owned me. Forever was a fucking long time when you were twenty-five, but I knew there would be nobody else for me.

Twenty-seven

Arne

Max helped me get my cum-covered self into the shower again. With gentle hands he washed me, from my neck down to my feet. And—I blushed so hard when he did—also my backside. He kept his touches light in case I was sore and spread the foam around and between my cheeks, humming softly under his breath.

I’d never felt so loved and cherished before. I never knew how much I craved being taken care of, either.

When I was all clean, he dried me off and led me into the bedroom at the end of the house. The bed was an enormous mattress with soft grey sheets and a view of the sea stretching out before us.

I love this place.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” I breathed.

“You are beautiful,” Max murmured, hugging me tightly. His fingers slid into my

hair, tilting my face to give him better access to my mouth. “Let’s lie down,” he rasped when he backed out of the kiss. He kept hold of me, though, and his dark, swirling eyes searched my face. “I don’t know how to be around you and not want you.”

I couldn’t have stopped myself from giving him the most lovesick smile ever if I had tried.

“You like that?” Max asked, scrunching his nose so adorably my smile widened even more.

“Yeah, I like that, Raven. All I think about is you. I love that it’s the same for you.”

He tackled me to the bed, scrambling to straddle my hips, and devoured my mouth with vigorous energy.

By the time he was done with me, my ass was sore, my dick limp, and my body relaxed. We fell asleep with our legs entangled and in each other’s arms.

Twenty-eight

Max

We took brief showers and got dressed. Arne waited for me by the front door, wearing slacks and a smart shirt. Together with his dark stubble and the intense blue eyes, he looked like a million bucks.

“You look great,” I mumbled, feeling a little self conscious about my own outfit. I’d always liked my clothes a little edgier. ‘Extravagant’ some had called them. Tobias, for example.

‘You’ll stay alone forever, Maxi.’ Arne can have anyone. Why me?

“You, too.” He bit his lip, his gaze travelling up and down my body. “You were always gorgeous, Raven. But now you are breathtakingly beautiful.” Brushing a stray curl off my forehead, he leaned in to kiss me.

“I’m not.” The words slipped out before I could stop them.

One thick eyebrow arched up.

“Excuse me?” Then powerful arms turned me around so I faced a full-length mirror behind the door. I hadn’t even noticed it before.

Arne cupped my chin, turning my head to the side and kissing my cheek. “You are delicious, Max. I am always craving your taste, your touch, and your attention.” He brushed the words over my skin like a soft caress. “I’d make a fool of myself if it meant you would notice me.”

“How could I not notice you? I’m at your mercy.” Turning to face him, I slipped my arms around his neck and pulled him in for a kiss. “If anything, we’re both fools.”

He gave me a pouty smile as he leaned in again.

At your feet, Viking.

“Come on, Raven. I want to take my boyfriend out for dinner now.”

The grin I gave him was so fucking embarrassing.

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Hand in hand we made our way up to the car and drove into the next town in search of a restaurant.

I loved having the freedom to hold, hug, and kiss him whenever I wanted. But it hurt me to think how much I craved that at home.

“Arne?” A woman’s voice made us both turn around.

“Johanne!” My viking beamed and hurried to hug her, babbling away in rapid, musical Danish. I loved hearing the language, but a pang of jealousy laced through me.

“Max, meet Johanne,” Arne introduced her in English. “We went to school together. Johanne, this is my partner, Max.”

I only just stopped my jaw from dropping on my chest.

“Hej, it’s so nice to meet you.” Taking me by surprise, she hugged me, too.

“Hey, the pleasure is mine.”

“Are you here to spend Christmas with Ida and Aksel?” Johanne enquired when she’d let go of me.

“Yes. We wanted a quiet holiday this year. I thought Max would enjoy the beach house.”

“Oh, I hope you do.” The woman grinned at me. “I designed it. I’m an interior designer,” she explained.

“It’s beautiful. You’ve done a great job.”

“Thank you, Max.” Her smile turned radiant.

“Well, merry Christmas to you. I hope you have a wonderful time together. It was lovely seeing you, Arne.” She hugged first me, then him, and excused herself.

“Ready for dinner, baby?” He turned to me with a smile on his face.

“You just told your friend that I am your partner.” I still felt a little numb and confused.

“I did. Johanne won’t blab about us online.”

“Did you date her in school?”

Arne cocked a heavy eyebrow at me. “Maximilian Gruber,” he muttered, stepping nearer and hugging me around the waist. “Are you jealous of a woman I might have dated fifteen years ago?”

“No,” I croaked.

“God, Baby. You are so cute.” He nuzzled his nose into my hair. “Johanne and I went to a school dance together and then had one date at the cinema. It was as awkward as only a date between two sixteen-year-old kids can be.” He brushed the shell of my ear with his lips. “It’s one of my best achievements in life that we just went back to being friends after that.”

“I’ve never stayed friends with anyone I dated.”

“Let me take you out for dinner now, okay?” Arne kissed my neck.

We entered a sleek place that offered a variety of dishes. A risotto with mushrooms caught my eye, and I ordered it from a nice waiter with a tail.

“What’s wrong, baby?” he whispered, scooting up the bench so he was right next to me. His hand found my leg under the table, squeezing me gently.

“Nothing,” I brushed him off, avoiding his gaze and pretending to focus on my food. It was delicious, but I barely noticed.

“Hey.” Arne snatched my hand out of the air and brought it to his mouth. A soft, slightly scratchy kiss landed on my palm. “Tell me what’s wrong, my love.”

“Fuck.” A tear spilled from my eye, and I impatiently brushed it away.

“Baby, hey.” He scooted even closer, pressing the length of his thigh against mine. He kept my fingers in his and slipped his other arm around my back. “Tell me what’s wrong. Please.” His scruffy cheek rubbed against my shoulder.

“It’s nothing,” I bit out, my voice cracking, and then the words tumbled out of my mouth. “I hate that we can just be ourselves here but that we have to hide from others when we’re at home.”



“Oh my sweet Raven.”

Arne kissed my cheek. “It’s something to work on. I don’t want to hide you forever. Let’s make it through your first year and wait until you get a new contract. Okay?”

I knew he was right. We had discussed this at length before.

“It still sucks,” I muttered, knowing full well that I was being childish.

“It does,” Arne agreed. He pressed his cheek to my shoulder again, and his other hand dipped under the table, gently squeezing my cock. “But we will still have this holiday, and the time when we are alone. It’s not for long.”

“Okay.”

“As soon as you have signed your contract, I will barge into the room and sweep you into a kiss.”

I snorted, imagining Jerke’s confused expression. “That would be pretty epic.”

“I’m glad you think so.” Arne kept his hand on my dick, but sat up straight and took his fork again. “Finish your risotto. We need to leave before we get thrown out because I can’t keep my hands off you.”

We fell through the door of the cabin, kicking it shut behind us before we collapsed in a heap on the fluffy carpet.

The food had done nothing to soothe our appetites.

“God, I’ll be so sore after this holiday,” my boyfriend giggled as he raised himself up into a sitting position, straddling my hips, and started to take off his smart shirt. His hands moved slowly from button to button.

My boyfriend!

“Are you edging me?” I smirked up at him, grinding my hips up against his groin.

Arne ground back, a teasing smirk on his lips. “Maybe I will. I bet you would love that.”

“You’d love it, too.”

“Oh yes.” His smirk turned indulgent. “I would love to hear you beg for release.”

My breathing sped up as he unbuttoned his shirt at last, exposing his deep chest fuzzed with dark hair, the tiny buds of his nipples, and the lines of his abs.

“You look so lewd,” I told him in awe.

He’s so hot with his open shirt and dark slacks.

Without a word he threw me a teasing, pouting smile. My focus stayed on his face until it slipped away to follow his fingers. They trailed down his chest to his belt.

I gaped as if I had never seen him undress before. Screw me. Stripping your hockey gear or day clothes was different from this. My proper, well-mannered Viking, hard length tenting the fabric, was struggling with his zipper until... He finally freed himself from the confines of the trousers, his thick cock hard and already leaking

precum over the head.

“Take your clothes off and then mine,” I told him. Arne’s immediate reaction was everything I wanted.

He hurried to strip, then undressed me with tender, shaking hands.

“You’re even more beautiful than when I first met you.” His voice was raspy and reverent.

“You think so?”

“God, Raven.” He gasped as he pushed my shirt up, his fingers moving across my stomach, mapping the newly formed washboard abs. He slid the shirt higher, cupping my pecs, and plumping them with a low groan. “You are so fucking hot, baby.”

I stared up at him, darkness at the edges of my consciousness. The Nachtkrapp had never reacted this strongly to anyone. Arousal had been tied to my human side, not to him. With Arne, everything was different. He turned me feral.

Sitting up, I dragged his mouth on mine, and fished around for the bottle of lube. He gasped at the slight creaking of the cap and tried to look around.

No.

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My grip on the back of his neck tightened. He wasn't a small man, but his strength was no match for mine.

His tongue licked into my mouth, feverish and slick. God, he loved it when I manhandled him like that.

It didn't take long for him to soften up around my fingers, rolling his hips so he was fucking himself on my hand.

"Yndling," he moaned into the kiss, then added a string of Danish words I couldn't translate but understood perfectly.

"Yesss," I hissed as the shadows broke out of me to wrap around my beautiful man. "Yes, I am right here, Viking. Be a good slut and take my dick into that sweet ass of yours."

Arne cursed, again in Danish, gathered some of the lube from between his cheeks and spread it on my dick. Then he tilted my length and let me slip into his hot body.

Twenty-nine

Arne

I growled at the earth shattering feeling of Max inside me.

I will never get used to how fucking good he feels.

Raven's hand moved away from my neck to grip my ass, spreading my hole and grinding me down on his lap. The silky feathers covering nearly every inch of his body from the neck down whispered over my body hairs, sending goosebumps down my spine.

"Being in you is my favourite thing in the entire universe." Max's voice was a low rasp, his eyes alive with shadows. His strong fingers gripped my hair, drawing me closer to his face. "Nothing will ever change my feelings for you. I hope you knowthat, Viking." He stressed every other word with a sharp buck of his hips.

"Good," I grunted under his onslaught on my sore ass. "Because fucking same, Raven."

The corner of his mouth lifted in a half smile. I should have wanted to back away from the dangerous glint in his black eyes, but I didn't. Where Max was concerned, I was Icarus, and he was my sun.

I would gladly take the fall if only I got to be close to him.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked softly, stopping to cup my cheek and bring our foreheads together.

"That you are stupid for risking your career to be with me." Anger flared up in the dark eyes, his face revealing his feelings as if they were written across a billboard. "But," I pressed on, needing to tell him now. "I'm so glad you are because I love you so fucking much, Raven."

He inhaled sharply, his grip on my face tightening.

"You make me so happy." My voice was barely a whisper in the semi-darkness of our room.

“You make me happy, too, Princess.” Max kissed the tip of my nose. “Remember that.”

“I’ll do my best but I can’t guarantee it if you keep screwing my brains out.”

He huffed at my words.

“You don’t agree?”

“I’m fairly confident your brain stays put.” His lazy smirk made my stomach swoop with excitement.

“Doesn’t feel like it,” I muttered, biting my lip to stop me from kissing him.

“I can’t understand why you allow me to keep doing it, then.”

“Who needs a brain when you can get fucked down by a hot bird dude?” I quipped. Max held my gaze for a moment, before cackling like a teenager over a dirty joke.

“Oh my God, Viking.” He rolled us around, urging his hips to mine. “Is that how you see me?” The voice dropped lower with each word and shadows broke out of his back, wrapping themselves around me. Hungry, that is what they were, and they hungrily touched every inch of my body.

“Fuck, Raven.” My whimpering drawl had nothing human to it either. It felt so good how they stroked my thighs, curled around my nuts, my dick, and my nipples. They were everywhere; they teased my hole, desperate to get inside me.

He took hold of my jaw, forcing my eyes on him, and my lips open. “Is that how you see me?” he repeated his question. The earth shook with that terrifyingly deep, snarling growl.

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“Yeah, no,” I whined, so close to coming from those shadowy tentacles jerking me and flicking at my frenulum. Another tugged gently on my sack, and a third played with my nipples.

How is that even possible?

“Mmm, that’s right. Come for me, my strong viking. What a big, beautiful man you are. And such a little slut for me.”

Five months ago, I might have punched him in the face for calling me this. Now I pulled him down on my chest, needing him closer.

“Yes!” I groaned, shifting my legs to make more room for him. “Fuck, yes, I’m a dirty little slut for my raven. Fucking let me come. Please.” I whined like a fox in heat.

So fucking close.

Max hummed and leaned in to kiss me. “I know,” he breathed into my mouth, dipping his tongue inside as if to retrieve his words from it again. “I know you need to paint your beautiful body with your cum. Come on, make a mess of us, my love.”

My stiff cock was wedged between our bodies, and the steady drooling of precum made his feathers all slippery.

I had no means of holding out a moment longer.

With a curse on my lips, I dug my head into the mattress, my body arching up as cum erupted from my cock, pulsing between us and making for an even slicker slide. The shift of my hips brought our cocks together, the bumps rubbing on my skin and prolonging my orgasm. His body bucked on mine.

“Arne!” Surprise tightened his features. With a sigh he came too, his cum sticky and hot.

“Hot bird dude?” Max grinned at me, then kissed me on the lips.

“Yeah,” I sighed. “The shadow guy didn’t seem to be into it.”

“You are so fucking cute, my sweet little Danish.”

“I’m not little. I’m six five.”

His damp curls brushed my cheek as he buried his face in my neck. “You hang out with Decks too much.”

“Why? Just because we bonded over being the same height and into bird dudes?—Ouch!”

He bit my neck again, more gently this time, and licked over my stinging skin.

“Ich liebe dich,” Max mumbled, as if he needed to try the words again in his native language, to taste them on his tongue. They seeped into my skin, travelling through my veins until they reached my heart from where they spread out into the most remote parts of me. Every beat of that treacherous muscle just for him.

Ich liebe dich.



“We should probably sleep.” Max ran his nose down to the hollow of my throat, inhaling my scent. “I love it when you smell of sex and of me.” He trailed deeper, nuzzling my chest hair before moving on to my pec. “I’m sorry, baby. I can’t keep my hands off you. Or my mouth,” he added as a mumbled afterthought. Then he wrapped his lips around my nipple. His gentle sucking had me half hard again in seconds.

“If you’re too tired, I’ll leave you be.”

“No, Raven. We will squeeze every single wonderful moment out of this holiday. Eight months...”

Thirty

Max

I knew exactly what Arne meant. In eight months, I would hopefully have signed my contract with the Pumas. That’s when we wanted to tell the team, Jerke, and our fans.

Damn. What will Marie say?

My sister is three years younger than me and has always been my best friend. It sucked to lie to her. But I wasn’t ready to share Arne with the rest of the world, especially since my ex-boyfriend lived in the same tiny village on the border between Germany and Austria as my parents. They had always loved Tobias. He came from a wealthy family, and they had liked the idea of me being with the son of someone influential.

They had never stopped me from playing hockey, but in their opinion, it wasn’t a proper career. Almost twenty years ago, when I’d gotten hooked on the game, nobody could have foreseen the popularity hockey would gain in Central Europe.

For the last two years of my career, I had played an hour southeast of where I'd grown up. Being scouted by Jerke, and getting the chance to play in Veitsreuth, had been an enormous accomplishment in my career.

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The Pumas were one of the country's top teams. It had been a no-brainer.

Hockey still wasn't as popular in Germany as it was in other countries, yet I earned three times more than I had before. Games sold out quickly, merchandise was popular, and our fans were great.

Let's not forget that they have the hottest captain in the league.

Just like Austrians, Danes celebrated Christmas on the 24th of December.

Christmas hadn't bothered me much in past years. But somehow spending this time with Arne made me giddy with excitement.

"Good morning, Yndling." My gorgeous viking woke me with a soft kiss." I have a surprise for you. Is that all right?"

"Good morning, Princess." I yawned and cuddled him closer to my chest. I loved to feel his naked skin on my feathers. If I could, I'd crawl inside him. "Why wouldn't that be okay?"

He shuddered when my lips found his neck.

"Well, I read a lot about autism. One article said that neurodivergent people often struggle with surprises."

"You read articles on autism?"

“Yes?” He sounded uncertain.

“Princess.” I pulled him around and took his mouth in a deep kiss. “You actually read stuff about autism?”

“I did.” Arne gasped for breath. “I thought I could find some things that would help me be a better partner for you...”

Tears blurred my vision but I managed to find him.

“I love you, Arne,” I sobbed into the kiss.

“I love you, too, Max. Shh, baby. You are important to me. If there’s anything I can do to make life easier for you, I will.”

Fresh tears spilled down my cheeks. I buried my face in his chest and cried for way longer than my partner trying to accommodate me should require.

Nobody ever had. Not to this extent.

“Okay, let’s go.” I freed myself from his embrace and sat up.

“Are you sure, baby?” Arne sat up, too. He tilted his head at me, a soft smile on his lips, and reached out to brush the curls off my sweaty face.

His chest hair was plastered to his skin.

“Yes! Is it a good surprise?”

His smile widened, crinkling the corners of his eyes. “I hope so. Put on warm clothes, yeah?”

We got dressed and got into the car. My boyfriend—Goddess, I loved calling him that—kept his hand on my thigh the entire time.

“Oh, is that what I think it is?”

“It’s a Christmas tree farm. I thought you’d like to pick our juletræet.”

“Say that again.”

“What? Juletræet?” He grinned at me.

“Yep, that sounds so cute.”

“What is that in German?”

“Christbaum,” I told him.

He contemplated me for a moment.

“What?”

“I don’t know... it’s hot when you speak German.”

“Don’t even think about it.” I snorted and unbuckled my seat belt. “German dirty talk makes my skin crawl. It’s not happening.”

We got out of the car, laughing our asses off. We got a saw from the guy at the entrance who recognised that Arne had grown up nearby, and then we looked for our Christbaum.

Snow crunched under our boots and dusted our heads. It was perfect.

“Princess?” My voice made him halt and turn around. His soft lips were cold under mine. Not for long, though. Arne opened, inviting my tongue into his mouth, our hot breaths mingling in the frosty air.

“This is the most romantic surprise I’ve ever had,” I told him, caressing his cheekbones with my thumbs. “Thank you.”

“Anything for you, Raven.” He smiled and leaned in for another kiss. “I have another surprise for you, but only if you want.”

“What is it?”

“You seem excited, baby. Can I take it that the first surprise was a success?”

“It was.” I grinned widely.

“There’s an ice rink behind the barn. Want to go ice skating with me?”

“Oh my God, Viking! Rhetorical question.” I poked him in the ribs and sneaked my arm around his waist.

We borrowed skates and put them on in musty lockers between a bunch of families and older couples, then set out.

“I can’t remember the last time I skated just for fun,” I told him, skating backwards so I could keep looking at him.

A few kids gaped at me, and I shot them a wink.

“I mean, it’s always fun to skate but...”

“It’s our job. I get it.” Arne sped up, forcing me to transition forward. By the Night Goddess, watching this man move on the ice was so hot. He blocked my path, ever a defenceman. “But you’re right, this is fun.” His cheeky grin made my heart flutter.

I feigned left and overtook him again. I then found myself with my back pressed to the boards a moment later.

His bright white teeth dug into his bottom lip. The smile won. “That’s the best date I ever had, baby. Don’t turn into a raven now, okay?”

The laughter burst out of me, and I freed myself.

“Come on, catch me, Viking!”

I sped around the rink that was surprisingly large for one in the middle of nowhere in Denmark.

Some people whooped when they watched us play. Two or three had smartphones in their hands. Damn. Drawing attention to us hadn't been my plan.

But all we had done was talk and chase each other.

An hour later, we had to leave to be on time for lunch with Arne's parents.

“That was great, Raven. We should do that more often.”

“Oh, you can try to catch me every day at training.” I grinned and leaned across the middle console to steal a kiss before he started the car.



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“Does that count as primal play?” Arne returned my grin.

“Mm, I don’t know, Princess. Did chasing me make you hard?” My hand dropped to his dick.

“Maybe a little.” Arne hummed. “You are so hot on skates. I love to watch you move.”

We took our Christmas tree to his parents’ house.

“Happy Lillejuleaften!” Ida greeted me with a hug. “Get in here, boys. You can set the tree up straight away. Your father is in the shed getting the ornaments.”

We took off our boots and coats. I followed Arne into the living room. It was a clean and minimalist place and looked a bit like a showroom for a Scandinavian home. It was so freaking cosy, though, and not just because of the fire burning in the wood burner.

“Ah, Max, hello. It’s good to see you again.”

Arne’s dad entered the room, two large plastic containers in his arms.

Everyone sounded genuinely happy to see me, even...

Arne plopped to his knees to greet a wriggling short-haired dog. The animal yipped and licked his ears, then it noticed me.

“Baby, this is my parents’ dog, Lasse.” Aksel Bendixen shot me a glance when his son addressed me thus.

“Hi.” I extended my hand to the animal, and it sniffed it cautiously. His tail resumed its wagging until the entire dog shook with excitement. Lasse licked my hands and jumped up to get closer to my face.

“He likes you.” Arne squeezed my shoulder. “Want to help me deck the tree?”

“Oh, yes.” I didn’t know why it made me happy that the family dog liked me, but it did.

We had a lovely lunch with his family. I thought it couldn’t get any better.

Thirty-one

Arne

It was the most magical Christmas ever, yet time passed way too fast.

We had all the food and went for a long walk with my parents and Lasse. We stood around the tree holding hands and ate some more.

At least I get to share it with the love of my life.

Max had shared his wishlist with me, yet he seemed shocked when my parents gave him a bunch of books, mostly manga.

“Wow, thank you, I...” His voice trailed off, and I thought he would start to cry.

Aw, Raven. Get used to the Bendixen family treatment.

He gave them a box of traditional Austrian sweets and a woven blanket made from sheep's wool. It looked expensive and fit their decor perfectly.

How did he know what to buy for them?

I wanted Max to have a token of my love.

“Thank you, Arne,” he muttered as he accepted the small box from me. Before he opened it he pulled a small, flat present from his pocket.

“You bought a present for me?” I asked him incredulously.

“It reminded me of you and I—yeah, I did. You got something for me, too, didn't you?”

“I did. Can I open it?”

“Yes, it’s yours.”

It was a plain silver necklace with a charm.

“P for princess?” I didn’t even try to hide my grin.

Max hugged me and pressed a kiss on my ear. “And pretty and perfect. And partner,” he added.

I put it on and waited for him to open my present.

A tear splashed onto the little velvet cushion when he picked up the solid silver bracelet.

“The M isn’t for Max, though,” I murmured, loving how he shuddered when my breath brushed the shell of his ear. “It’s M for mine.”

“Thank you, Princess. It’s the best present ever. I love it.”

“I love you.”

Max kissing me in front of the Christmas tree was a memory I would never forget.

Our holiday was the best time of my life. When we didn’t sleep, we fucked or made out. We only left the house to get food or explore the area. Followed by more sex.

We spent almost the entire New Year’s Eve in bed, both horny and starving for each

other.

He'd just come in my ass when his phone rang. Out of habit, I thought, Max reached for it. Damn it, baby!

I let him slide out of me.

Maybe it's his family.

He stared at the display with a stony face, then threw his phone across the room so hard I feared for its life. It landed on a pile of laundry.

Thirty-two

Max

"Was thathimagain?" He sat up, straddling my hips, my hard dick wedged between his ass cheeks.

"Yes." I bit my lip hard to stop myself from crying.

"Oh, baby. I'm so sorry." He shifted his body, causing my length to slide up and down his crack.

Fuuuck.

With my hands on his waist, I steadied him. I needed to or I would come just from the feel of his skin slick with lube and cum.

Arne let me slide back into his ass, groaning and exhaling as I breached his clenching hole. Holding him in place, I fuckedmy cum back into his body, watching him like a

hawk. His head tilted back, exposing his throat to me, lips open as he moaned and whimpered with every plunge of my dick into his tight body.

That fucking flush on his neck would be the end of me. The skin underneath the dark stubble was a beautiful shade of red, and his thick pecs jiggled from the impact of my thrusts.

“If he calls you again,” my viking grunted, head tipping forward so he could meet my eyes. Fighting against my hold, he met my strokes with equal force, slamming his ass down on my dick. “You. Pick. Up. Let him listen to me bouncing on your cock. He needs to understand that You. Are. Mine.” Arne growled the last words, accentuating each with a sharp slap. My feral princess.

“You are mine!” He repeated, his ass tightening around me. I let go of his hips to grip his dick. I gave him a languid stroke. With a whimpering groan, he twitched in my hold and warm cum pulsed all over my fingers.

Arne collapsed on my chest, his swollen lips searching desperately for mine. I didn’t need much more than his tongue in my mouth. With one deep thrust, I joined him, breeding his hole. I kept moving during my climax, needing to be deep inside him. I needed to know he would be dripping with my cum for days.

Mine. He is right. I am his, and he is mine.

“I’m so glad I gave in to my feelings for you,” he sighed, snuggling closer and kissing my cheek before he rested his head against my collarbone.

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“I’m so glad I kissed you in Scotland. I beat myself up over it, but I’m so happy I did.”

“Mmm, me too,” he slurred. “Why did you beat yourself up?”

God, sleepy Arne is so fucking adorable.

“Because you are my captain, and I wasn’t sure if I had read the signs right. You were shocked.”

“Yeah, I was. First time a guy kissed me. I was shocked how much I loved it.” His voice didn’t sound sleepy anymore. “And I felt bad, too.”

“Why?”

“Damn it, Raven. You are so young, and I am—”

“Hot,” I interrupted him.

His snort ruffled my feathers. “Not.”

“You are still young. You’re only thirty-two. That’s not old.”

“Ancient compared to you.”

“You forget what I am. I don’t think I age like a human. And thanks to my autism I always felt older than I was.” I trailed my fingernails over his sweaty back. “I never

fit in anywhere. Never until I met you.”

“I guess you aren’t just talking about how perfect you feel when you are inside me.”

“I’m not sure if you’re being sarcastic or not,” I told him truthfully, only to have him scramble to his hands and knees to gaze into my eyes.

“It was a joke, but a bad one. I’m sorry. I feel the same way about you. You and I, we fit together.” Arne’s muscles bunched when he lowered himself to kiss me, drawing my eyes to his thick biceps. “I never felt this way about anyone before, Max. No idea how I’ll ever stop wanting you. Not even when I’m eighty.”

His eyes flew open when he realised what he’d said.

He wants to grow old with me?

“Sorry, I...”

Bringing his forehead against mine, I shook my head to shut him up.

“Me neither, Arne.”

From the moment we left Denmark until he parked outside, Arne never let go of my hand or leg.

He let go with a gentle squeeze and half turned around at me. His wistful smile made my stomach drop.

“I hate that I can’t kiss you goodbye, Raven.”

“Yeah, me, too. I love you.”



“Fuck, I love you so much.”

His eyes dropped to my lips, hanging on them as if he wanted to make quite sure he remembered their shape forever.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Max.”

“Tomorrow.” I nodded. “Thank you for taking me with you. It was...”

“Yeah.” A smile lit up his face. “It was.”

Thirty-three

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Arne

Going after Max wasn't an option. We'd talked about it and decided we'd spend the night in our own homes. I hated it and texted him as soon as I got home.

Arne: Tell me, my sweet raven

Arne: Can you fly in your other form?

The three little dots indicating that he was typing appeared almost immediately.

Max: I can

Max: Want me to record myself?

Arne: don't give me ideas, baby

Arne: I want to fall asleep with you...

Max typed for an age. Then only one brief message came through.

Max: Turn off the lights and leave the terrace door open.

I waited with bated breath, eventually walking around the room to get rid of my pent up energy.

A flapping sound behind me made me spin on the spot.

He was halfway through transforming into the terrifyingly beautiful shadowy creature but didn't stop there. His swirling outline solidified as he strode across the room to where I stood, turning into the man I knew with each step.

The man with the equally terrifying face, way too perfect to be human, glossy curls, and feathers as dark as the night sky covering almost every inch from his neck down to his scaly feet.

All this registered with me in a fraction of a second, but time slowed down. I had no idea if it was his magic or my infatuation with him that made me watch him move in slow motion towards me. His eyes were alight with lust and his cock hard as nails.

Oh my God, he's so hot.

Then he was before me, taking hold of my face and slamming his mouth onto mine.

Without letting go of my lips, he ripped my sweatpants and boxers off.

Within mere moments after he'd arrived, Max had me on the bed, desperate for his cock. I was still sore. I thought my ass would forever feel the imprint of him, but he always had me craving more.

"Raven, get the fucking lube now," I groaned, tossing my head from left to right on the mattress.

"You want me in that sweet ass of yours again?" he asked me in a silky voice, enveloping my earlobe with his tongue. He knew it drove me wild when he sucked on it.

"Baby, yes! Don't make me beg, please," I whimpered, fully aware that I was, in fact, already begging for his cock.

“I won’t.”

His breath brushed against my wet skin, making me shudder under him. Max hummed, the sound travelling through my body and my mind. This man, he didn’t just turn me on physically, but good Lord, my brain wanted under his skin, inside his head.

He opened the drawer and fumbled with the lube bottle before he was back. Max squeezed the lube on his fingers, warming it up for me.

Within seconds, he had me whimpering under his touch. His fingers slicked my hole, teasing me open.

“You’re so fucking tight, Viking,” he growled into the side of my neck, as he started to fingerfuck me.

The lewd wet sounds did my head in.

“Oh my God, Max!” I groaned, not caring that I sounded like a whiny bitch. “I need you in me, please.”

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Something in him snapped. He dropped the lube on my stomach in his haste to get some on his cock.

“Sorry! Shit.” His hands shook so much that he couldn’t get it.

“Baby? Are you okay? We don’t have to if you—”

His gaze snapped up so abruptly that I flinched.

Holy shit.

Darkness swirled in his eyes, the shadows spilling over and curling around him like a cocoon. Through the hazy swirls, his face morphed into a terrifying bird-like beak and feathers sprouted all over his smooth skin.

“Fuck—I,” he groaned as if in pain.

“Max! It’s okay, don’t fight it.” I didn’t know what made me say it, but he stilled, head turned so his beady eye could see me. I sat up, reaching out a hand to stroke his cheek. His face twitched, making me freeze for a moment.

He won’t hurt me.

“Hey, Raven,” I whispered, letting my fingertips trail over the smooth feathers. “God, you’re stunning.”

He inhaled, the shadows intensifying and sneaking around my neck, my back, my

limbs.

“That’s it, touch me. Do you still want to fuck me?”

A desperate whining growl sounded in his chest, his clawed hands flexing and unflexing.

“Because I still want you.”

His true form didn’t repulse me.

It’s him I want. However he may look.

Max shifted his knees wider. His hard, drooling cock left a trail of wetness on my thigh.

Damn, he was massive in this form, the bumps on his length popping.

I wanted him in me so badly—knew it would feel so fucking good to bounce on this ribbed length.

“Come on, Raven.” I took the bottle of lube, squeezed some out, and spread it over him. “Don’t make me wait.”

Taking a deep breath, he gripped me and impaled me on his cock.

I cursed when my ass slapped on his thighs, feeling every inch of him in my body. With one hand under my ass, he lifted me up and let me sink back down. The other hand gripped the longer strands of hair at the top of my head, dragging me back.

My survival instincts abandoned ship. I moaned with need when he exposed my neck

to his sharp beak.

I have no iota of self preservation in my body.

Holding on for dear life, I let him use me as a cocksleeve.

Max didn't speak. He snarled and grunted in that deep voice that got me so close to falling as he pounded into me, eventually pulling me to his chest by the hair.

He wants to kiss me.

I covered his beak in a thousand tiny pecks, suddenly overcome with emotions.

“Oh fuck!” Crying out, I dug my hands into his shoulders, taking fistfuls of his feathers as the barrier in my head fell, and I felt... everything. Myself, my body, but also his. Muscles screamed in pain and blinding pleasure carried me to heights unknown.

“Max, Yndling!” I cried out, the endearment coming out on a sob. “Do you feel it, too? What is that?”

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*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Max growled, holding me in place as he plunged his cock inside me as if in a frenzy.

“You belong to me now.” Tears suddenly burst from his eyes, trickling down his feathered cheeks and splashing onto my chest. “You are mine.”

Without fully understanding what was happening, the depth of his feelings enveloped me like his shadows, dragging me under.

“I feel it all.” Halfway through the sentence his voice changed, and so did his face. The beak turned back into his elegant nose and the symmetrical lips. Only his eyes stayed the same, black and beady like that of a bird.

I hadn’t fully realised how close I was, but the moment his mouth was on mine, tongue licking between my lips, my whole body curled in on itself, like matter drawing into a black hole.

Teeth clashing and tongues tangling around our sharp breaths, I came all over his abs in long and pulsing spurts, painting his feathers with my cum.

Max joined me a frantic heartbeat later, his cock thickening impossibly hard inside me before his release began. Copious amounts of his warm cum filled me up as he bred my hole. I felt the climax in my bones.

He lowered himself on the bed, taking me with him until I lay stretched out on top of him. He spread his hands protectively over my back.

I pressed my ear against Max’s sweaty chest, listening to his hammering heart. It was



the most beautiful sound I had ever heard.

“What happened?” I asked him after a long silence.

I rose and fell with his deep sigh, the heaviness dropping over me like a cloud.

“Baby, it’s okay. Don’t be sad, yeah?”

I raised myself up to a sitting position, his dick still inside me.

“Max!” He flinched, jostling his cock. We both hissed. “Damn, don’t move for a minute, okay?” My ass hurt.

Damn, I’ll feel his enormous dick for days.

“Poor thing,” he crooned, hands palming my ass and squeezing me. “I’m sorry you’re sore. Move around so I can kiss it better?”

It took me a moment to get what he meant.

“Are you suggesting what I think?”

He cocked a sleek black eyebrow at me, then lifted me off his chest and easily moved me around, arranging my limbs until I knelt on the bed, head resting on my crossed arms.

Max hummed. “Mm, still desperate after having your ass pounded. That’s why I love you.” His hands spread my cheeks, and a soft groan sounded from both of us when more of his release left my body. It slid down my taint and over my nuts. “My sweet little slut. Damn, that hole looks pretty when it’s leaking my cum.”

Fuck! My dick gave a little throb.

“You’re perfect, Arne.”

God, he’s either delusional or just being kind.

“Neither. I’m in love.” With that, he buried his face in my ass. The feel of his warm mouth over my hole robbed me of the ability to speak or think. All I could do was hold on and enjoy the ride.

By the time he was finished with me, Max had wrung a whole-body orgasm from me. Cum ran down my abs and drenched the sheets under me, and I collapsed into the wet spot.

Don’t give a fuck.

“What was that?” I asked him again in a whisper when he finally lay down next to me, pulling me closer.

I didn’t need to see his face to know he was upset.

“Baby, it’s okay. We’re good. So good.” I pressed my lips to his sweaty feathers.

“The mate bond.” Max’s voice sounded grave, as if he had prepared for me to run away at his words.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“Oh my God!” My limbs felt like lead, but somehow I dragged my slack body off the bed to look at him properly. “Are you serious?” I probed at the tender spot inside me where this new feeling sat.

“I am,” he told me in a stilted tone.

“Do you hate it?” Damn, I sounded wobbly and upset. I felt like it, too.

“What?” my Raven sat up, too, hands gripping my shoulders. “I don’t hate the bond or you. Never. I just...I’m sorry. I should have been more careful, this...”

“Baby, look at me.”

His dark eyes met mine. It cost him more than I expected.

“I promise you, I didn’t know how to establish a bond. I’m sorry.”

“I’m not. Damn it, Raven. You are mine, with or without the mate bond. And I’m not sad about it. It feels great, and I love this. I love you.”

You’re rambling, Arne!

“Guess you’re stuck with me now.”

There was no turning back if Nate was right. He’d told me about his and Vee’s mate bond—in painful detail—while out drinking one time. Once forged, the mate bond stayed in place until you died.

This is forever. Damn, does he have second thoughts?

“Oh, no, Princess. Don’t even think that.” Max gave me a stern look. “I regret nothing, ever, where you are concerned.” He stroked my cheek, trailing his fingers down to cup my jaw.

“What is it, then?” I whispered, not trusting my voice as the confused feelings swirled through my mind unfiltered.

Is this how he feels?

I focused on the one I recognised. It was fluid and warm, like a warm shower. Like his kisses. I imagined taking hold of it so we’d be connected.

“Thank you, Princess,” he whispered. “Yes, you are right. This is the most important feeling. You are human, though, not like me. I was just thinking about what would happen if you didn’t want the bond anymore.”

“Oh, Raven. You aren’t getting out of this one. And you know me. Whatever I do, I do with all of my heart, and my heart wants you.”

Parting ways with him after this was hard. I yearned for him as soon as he’d left.

Max: I miss you, too

Max: let’s be strong together

Max: the next months will fly by and we won’t have to hide anymore

Max: we can do this

He's telling himself as much as me.

Arne: I love you so much

Arne: we can do this and it'll all be worth it

Arne: I'd wait eighty years to be with you

Thirty-four

Max

It sucked to wake up in my own bed without a warm Viking in my arms. I still contemplated if the need to pee was urgent enough to get up when my phone made a little blip. Only one person's messages got past my sleep focus.Princess.I picked up the phone and unlocked it.

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*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Arne: I'm going to the spa

Arne: Wanna come with me?

Max: Always, Princess

Arne: I'll pick you up in twenty minutes

Arne: Love you

Max: I love you, too

I flung my phone on my bed, grinning up at the ceiling for a moment before I got up to grab my stuff.

It took us almost an hour in the car. Just sitting there in our little bubble, holding hands and listening to my dopamine hits, was the best.

At the spa he insisted on paying for us and led the way to the dressing rooms.

He watched me closely as I undressed and pulled on my swimming trunks.

"With how often I see you in very little clothes, you'd think I'd get used to it." He chuckled hoarsely.

"Stop it." I followed him into the showers.

He chose the stall across from me. He spun in a circle to get evenly wet, presenting me with his broad and muscular back, then his even broader chest and the hair I loved to nuzzle my face into.

Good God.

I would never get used to seeing him in all his wet glory.

“Where do you want to start?” he asked me when we entered the actual spa, the tang of salt in the air.

“Don’t ask me this, Raven.” He nudged me with his elbow. “I might give you an answer inappropriate for being in public.”

I choked on my spit, coughing, as I stared at him, my face flushed. “Let’s go outside to the whirlpools first,” I suggested, trying to keep a cool head and surveying the map over his shoulder.

He followed me around the large indoor pool, where mainly older folks were swimming or chatting with each other, and out of a door. I shivered in the cool January air, thankful for my feathers.

“Are you cold?” I half turned to him before passing by one whirlpool and choosing the empty one a level below it.

“No,” he hummed. “I’m used to it, and my thoughts keep me warm.” Arne leaned in and brought his mouth nearer to my ear. “Love the trunks, by the way.”

I stepped out of my flip flops and hurled myself into the water.

“Sorry,” he muttered softly when he’d taken a seat next to me. The jets were off so

we had a few quiet moments to ourselves.

“Don’t apologise. You just make me nervous—and hard,” I whispered back.

Thankfully the bubbles started up again before he could reply. But under the cover of the billowing water, a strong hand found my thigh.

“Me, too,” my captain groaned. “So hard, Raven.”

I sneaked my hand up to his cock, palming the hard ridge through the swimming shorts. We couldn’t do much here, but God, I needed to touch him. It was torture to be this close to almost naked Arne and not be able to touch him.

Arne traced my bracelet.

“I love to see you wearing this, baby,” he muttered so quietly I could barely hear him over the bubbles.

“Mm, same, Princess.” I couldn’t wait to see him shower with it when we were back at work. A naked Viking wearing nothing but a token of my love.



*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

We stayed in the whirlpool for twenty minutes, eventually managing to get our cocks to behave long enough for us to move to the next pool.

This one formed a sort of canal and a cave with water raining down. It created a curtain for us to disappear behind. I hadn't expected the spa to be this empty. We were almost alone.

"Come on, Raven, let's go around the canal."

We tried to swim, but the walls were so close to each other that our fingertips brushed against them. So we floated around and then slipped into the cave.

Before I could get a good look at it, arms closed around me and strong fingers slipped into my shorts and gripped my ass. Then a solid body was on mine, urging me against the rough stone wall. We were bulge to bulge, and his tongue begged for entry.

My hands found his back, holding onto him as he devoured my mouth, fingers leaving my ass to dig into my hair.

"Arne!" I gasped eventually, when he let me come up for air. "What if anyone recognises us?"

"Don't care," he groaned, plunging his tongue back into my mouth and stealing my breath from me. "I'll go crazy if I don't get to taste you."

I let it go on for way too long, always desperate for his touches, his taste.

My beautiful mate.

Once we'd released the pent-up tension between us, we frolicked in the water for another couple of hours.

Arne took me back to my place afterwards.

"I'm sorry for losing control like that," he muttered, head thudding back against the headrest.

"It's okay, Princess. It's not like I wasn't two seconds away from groping you. I hate this." I exhaled a deep breath.

"Yeah, me, too. I got so used to touching and kissing you whenever I wanted in Denmark. Not having that anymore sucks."

"I know." Reaching over, I squeezed his hand. "We'll get through this, okay? Only a few more months."

"I'll see you at the rink tomorrow, baby. Pretend I kissed you goodbye."

I bit my lip and willed myself to get out of the car. "See you tomorrow. Thanks for taking me with you, Arne."

"Anytime." With one last wistful smile, my beautiful princess drove away, and I made my way upstairs to my flat.

Thirty-five

Arne

I had barely made it inside when my phone chimed. Smiling to myself, I dropped my bag on the bathroom floor and took my phone with me to the living room.

I miss you, too, baby.

Max: Fuck. Someone filmed us at the spa.

Max: It's all over social media

My body went numb, and I had to take a seat, my phone slipping out of my fingers onto the couch cushion.

It chimed with another message, but it took me a few moments to unfreeze.

Coach: Meeting in my office in an hour. Be on time.

Oh fuck fuck fuck.

I had fifty minutes to get to the meeting. Fifty agonising minutes before Max's and my doom. There was no way I could drive. But I couldn't just sit around.

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*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Pulling a neutral grey beanie deep into my face, I put my coat and boots back on and walked to the rink.

Max already waited in the deserted corridor outside our coach's office when I arrived.

Neither of us said a word as I leaned against the wall next to him. My Raven took a steadying breath and reached out, interlacing his fingers with mine.

We'll be fine. Somehow.

The door flung open after a couple of minutes. It hit the wall with a bang. Oh shit, Jerke looked close to exploding with rage.

"Bendixen. Gruber. Come in."

His eyes dipped to our entwined fingers, but he didn't acknowledge them. Spinning on his heels, he stormed back inside and clutched his desk for support.

We took seats in the visitors' chairs opposite him. Max still hadn't let go of my hand.

Jerke took another deep breath.

"I'm sure you know why I told you to meet me here," he said in a voice of forced calm.

"Yes." Max raised his eyes and looked straight at him.

Our coach pressed a button on the keyboard of his computer and turned his screen around.

A video started playing. Someone had filmed us from inside the spa. It was an awkward angle, but it was us. No denying it. Not that I wanted to lie to our coach.

Jerke inhaled when my hands dipped down below the water level to grip Max's ass and press his cock against mine.

Fuck. This is bad.

Reassurance flooded my mind through the mate bond.

It's going to be okay.

We kissed for another few moments before the video broke off.

"Explain," Jerke snapped.

"Someone thought it was okay to film us at the spa." Max sounded so angry I feared the Nachtkrapp would burst forth.

It's okay, baby.

They hurt you. I want to end them.

Okay, this shouldn't be as hot as it was.

It should be me protecting Max. Me, his captain, the older of us two.

This time I felt his deep, snarling voice in my bones.

I'd raze this city to the ground for you, Princess.

"You are lucky you weren't kicked out for public indecency, Gruber!" If this were a comic, smoke would curl from Jerke's nostrils. "Do you think I want my players being torn apart by some boulevard magazine?"

"We just kissed."

"You had your hands in his shorts, Bendixen," our coach growled. He pushed away from his desk and pulled the door open. "Meeting room. Now!"

We followed him down the corridor. Behind his back, Max brought our hands up to his mouth and kissed mine.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Nate sat at the conference table, looking confused as his gaze moved from our coach to Max and me, one eyebrow raised. His eyes, too, hung on our hands for a moment.

“I know you are angry that Max and I—”

“I don’t care who you fuck, Bendixen!” he barked, wheezing. “What I do care about is my captain groping one of his teammates at a public spa!” He stalked around the room, pulling at his thinning hair. “I don’t want any of the bullshit like what Chase Harper gets up to.” Jerke spat out the name of the Gators’ right winger as if it tasted bitter on his tongue.

“You are benched—no. I don’t even want to see you anywhere near the ice for the next three games. Suit and tie, in the stands on your best behaviour. Am I making myself clear?”

“Yes, sir,” I muttered, staring at my knees, my body tightly coiled, ready to jump to Max’s aid when he let loose on him.

“Decker, you will take over from Bendixen.”

“What?” Nate stared at him, then met my eyes with a horror-struck expression on his face. “No, I—I didn’t know that’s why you wanted me here,” he stammered, wringing his hands.

“Yeah, it makes sense. It should be Decker.” I gave him a small half smile I hoped reached my eyes. He deserved it, and he had everything he needed to be an excellent captain for the Pumas.

Our coach acknowledged me with an almost imperceptible nod, as if against his will.

I can accept defeat, Coach. You should know that.

“While he’s benched. Don’t freak out on me, men. I’m mad, but I’m not that mad.”

“Oh, okay.” Nate exhaled. “Yeah, I can do that, of course.” I caught his eye, giving him a small lift of the lips I hoped he interpreted as a smile.

I’d meant it. If anyone took over from me, I’d want it to be Nate.

“Decker, would you mind leaving us alone for a moment? You too Bendixen. You can wait outside.”

“No, Arne needs to stay. Please,” Max said royally.

Oh, Raven. I’m so fucking sorry.

“Well, if he must.”

He waited until Decks had closed the door behind him, then settled down in the chair opposite of my raven.

“Wir kriegen das wieder hin, Max, okay? Finn wartet auf dich im Social Media Büro. Wir lassen dich in der Situation nicht allein. Keine Sorge, in ein paar Tagen kräht kein Hahn mehr danach.”

“Coach, can we talk about this in English? This concerns Arne and me.” I could have kissed him for saying that.

Yeah, maybe you shouldn’t do that in front of Jerke.



Coach Jerke huffed. “Apologies, Bendixen. So as I was saying, it’s going to be okay. You’ll meet Finn to discuss how you want to handle this. We can’t just ignore it, there will have to be an official statement.”

His eyes fell on Max. “What?” Jerke narrowed his eyes at him.

“Sorry, Coach.” He chuckled. “I thought you were going to tell me to pack my things and go. And I would. Anything to protect—”

“I’m not amused,” Jerke interrupted him. “We won’t let one of our best newcomers or one of my best enforcers go over something like this. I take it that things between you and Bendixen are consensual?”

I choked on a sip of water from one of the small bottles on the table.

Max smirked at my coughing self. “It’s definitely consensual, Mister Jerke.”

“See? You will keep Bendixen company in the stands but absolutely no touching. Understood?”

“Yes, sir,” we replied.

Fat chance.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“And I meant what I said; I don’t care. But I won’t have you arrested for public indecency. And I’m, uh, happy for you,” he added awkwardly and in a gruff tone. “You can go. Meet Finn and discuss a social media strategy for this mess. See you tomorrow morning.”

Thirty-six

Max

We waited for Jerke to leave. Arne said nothing and looked so thoroughly downcast that I held him back without a word.

I shut the door after our coach and turned around. Before he could get out the first of the hundred apologies I knew he wanted to give me, I slung my arms around him and gave him a chaste kiss instead. Then I brushed the tears off his bearded cheeks.

“What? I’m not crying because I lost my captaincy. I’m crying because I am a horrible person. I don’t even deserve to have you look at me.”

“Shut up,” I chuckled. “Baby, listen. It’s not you who is horrible. They took a video of us without permission and plastered it on their ArgoS. I want to see if we can connect them with any ticket accounts. I don’t want them at the rink when they invade our privacy and hurt you like that.” The last words came out in a low, distorted snarl.

Arne gaped at me.

“What?”

“God, it’s so hot when you get all protective.” He huffed, rubbing a hand over his neck.

My face slipped into a smirk, the shadows dancing around me. “Well, I protect what’s mine.” A shadowy tendril reached out to brush his throat and up to his lips.

Cheeky little fucker.

“Let’s go see Finn, and then let me take you home,” he rasped, Adam’s apple bobbing under my touch. Then Arne stepped nearer, palming my face. He opened his mouth to speak, but seemed to think better of it, and kissed me gently on the lips.

We left the room hand in hand, his thumb rubbing circles over my knuckles.

“Shit, Arne!” Decks waited outside for us, looking pale and uncomfortable. “I—”

“I know you didn’t ask for this, Nate. But I’m glad you got it, Captain.” He offered him his free hand and Decks shook it.

“Shit. I’m still sorry.”

“We’ll be okay,” I assured him, squeezing my man’s hand.

Thirty-seven

Arne

Our usually so chipper social media guy waited for us in his office, a solemn expression on his face.

“Who died?” Max asked him, one silky black eyebrow raised.

Finn folded his arms tightly before his chest. It looked like he was in a straight jacket as he perused us over his nerdy glasses. “Your reputation?”

With a sigh, he snatched the glasses off his face, and dug thumb and forefinger into his eyes. “Do you have any idea how massive the pile of shit is that we’re dealing with? Either of you?”

“Nope.” Raven leaned his backside against Finn’s desk, then slipped his arm around my back. Pulling me into his body, his hand came to rest on my hip. “All I know is that I am pissed at whoever did it. If I ever find out, I’ll give them a taste of the Night Raven.” Max’s voice had dropped dangerously low so it resembled a growl more than a human voice.

“Like hell you will,” our Gnoll social media manager shut him down with an incredulous stare. “You have the moral high ground here. You will not lower yourself to their level.”

He sat down at his computer, entered his password, and then turned his screen around so we could see.

Two windows filled the screen side by side. All the time, new messages popped up on the screen.

“This,” Finn pointed to the left window, “is your hashtag that I’m monitoring. The other is the team’s.”

“Sorry?” Max huffed. “Our hashtag?”

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

Our social media manager shot him a close lipped grin. “Someone made a hashtag for you. Their first try was #ravengate, but our loyal fans shut them down pretty quickly.”

“Oh God.” I hid my face in my hand.

“What are they using now?” My boyfriend leaned in, only to laugh so hard tears spilled out of his eyes. “Oh fuck, that’s genius.”

“Do I want to know?”

The smile on Finn’s face widened. “#thewingertakesitall. Pretty brilliant, if you ask me.”

“Oh yes, he does.” Max slipped his arm around my shoulders, pulled me close, and kissed me squarely on the lips.

I had to admit it was pretty funny.

“The fans are outraged that this person filmed you. A few insist they knew it all along.”

“What about the people who are being dicks?”

“Not too many, but you always get a few.” Finn shrugged. “A few commented on your age gap, and on the whole captain/new player dynamic. And, uh.” He scratched the back of his neck.

“What?”

“Well, if you go on ArgoS you will see it, anyway. Uh, someone posted a video of you at an outdoor rink in Denmark. It’s grainy but it’s pretty obvious that it’s the two of you. There’s not much happening, but Arne, you have Max caged to the boards and look like you’re about to kiss him.”

Someone filmed us in Denmark? Shit.

“Oh damn.” Max chuckled weakly. “Well, the raven’s out of the cage now.” He caught my eye, then giggled. “I don’t give a flying fuck, Viking. Do you hear me?” His voice dropped for a moment, darkness rising in his eyes. Then Max winked, and it was gone.

“I hear you. You’re enjoying this a bit too much, though, Raven.”

Pursing his lips, he leaned in. “Nope. What I’m enjoying, Viking, is that I won’t have to hide my feelings anymore.”

Strong fingers cupped the back of my neck, then his lips were on mine, kissing me so deep my dick got hard.

Finn clearing his throat made him back out of the kiss, but not away from me. “I love you,” he breathed, then pecked my mouth again, before straightening up and focusing on Finn.

“What do we do?”

Our social media guy looked slightly flustered at Max’s PDA, and it took him a moment to get a grip on himself.

“Uh, so you should decide if you want to post a statement on our account, or if you just want to ignore it and pretend it never happened.”

“A statement.” Max took my hand. “But no excuses.” My head snapped around and our eyes met, clinging to each other. And I remembered our conversation from a few months ago. ‘I don’t want an excuse,’ I had said. ‘Same. Don’t need one either.’ I squeezed his fingers.

“Deal.” Finn gave us a gooey look, then grabbed his phone. “Stay like that for a moment.”

He unlocked it, pointed it at us, and took about a hundred pictures.

Then he pulled his screen around, opened a fresh note, and typed.

Thirty-eight

Ma

Without speaking, I palmed Arne’s face and guided his mouth on mine for a slow kiss. My brain slowly caught onto what this mess meant for us.

No more hiding.

“God, I love you so much,” I whispered into the kiss.

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:42 am*

“Damn, you two are so adorable together you make me jealous.”

I narrowed my eyes on Finn.

“Oh God, not at you, sorry.” He laughed out loud. “I meant in general. Seeing you together makes my sad little heart happy.”

“Okay,” Arne chimed in. “Let’s see what you got.”

#thewingertakesitall

Hi everyone!

We’re Max (‘Raven’) and Arne (‘Viking’) of the @VeitsreuthPumas.

An unknown person filmed us at the Bad Fichtelstein Spa today and uploaded the video to ArgoS. In the video we’re kissing, because yes, we are in a committed relationship.

We are sure you understand how this breach of our privacy affects us and our work. Arne and I will pull out of the next three games.

We would like to thank everyone for respecting our privacy as we navigate this situation together.

We promise to be back on the ice soon and will give you our beak performance.



We love you!

Max & Arne

“Is that all right?” Finn cocked a furry eyebrow at us.

“I like it. What do you say, baby?” Arne’s eyes sought mine. I hugged him to my side again.

“I think it’s good. No excuse, no finger pointing, but being clear in our statement.” My lip curled up in a smirk. “I like that ‘committed relationship’ bit.”

“Thought you might.” Finn pulled up his picture app and perused the photos he had taken of us. “How about this? I like how lovey-dovey you look at each other.”

Arne snorted, but Finn had a point. In the picture we were both trying to focus on what he said but side-eyed the other as if we were going to kiss any minute.

“Use that,” I told him, dropping my hand to the viking’s butt and giving it a squeeze that made him jump.

God, I can’t wait to get him home.

We waited until he had put the post together and published it after we’d given our okay once more.

It took only a few moments before Finn’s computer went batshit with notifications.

Omg you are so cute together

Congrats Max and Arne!

I'd do him too. He's hot af

Viking and Raven 4-ever

Veitsreuth Cougar

He could ruffle my feathers any day

Devastated that the Raven is taken ugh

So happy for you!

*Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 8:43 am*

Whoever posted that video sucks. I hope they'll be banned from the rink in the future!

It went on like that for ages.

"Wow," Arne breathed, tears sparkling in his eyes. "Veitsreuth Cougar, though." He cringed.

"Well, they're not wrong. Ouch! Misconduct!" I cried when he poked me in the ribs.

"I need to make the most of it. I'm already benched." With a wide grin, he leaned in and kissed me. "Let's go home, baby."

"We should go tell the team." I checked my watch. "They're bound to be in the locker room now."

"You're right. They should hear it from us. Thanks, Finn."

We both shook hands with our social media manager.

Hand in hand, we entered the locker room, facing all our teammates in various states of getting dressed after showering.

"Oh, are they finally admitting that they are fucking?" Bo asked Decks conversationally as his face appeared from the depths of his hoodie.

What?

“Oh come on, Raven,” the massive green Troll chuckled. “Everyone realised what was going on. Right?” Bo waved his hand around the locker room. Most of them nodded or shrugged apologetically.

“Seriously?” Arne’s voice came out as a squeak.

“Yeah. Decks and I had a bet on how long it would take you to tell us.” His face faltered, and he palmed my shoulder. “I’m sorry they took the choice from you, though.”

“It’s okay,” Arne answered in my stead. “Keeping this a secret sucked so much.”

“I know. Ollie’s and my situation was a bit different, but it was good not having to hide anymore.” Bo gave us a soft smile. “Happy for you.”

“Don’t get sentimental, old man,” Guns quipped and pulled a functional shirt down over his ribbed stomach, hiding his countless tattoos from view. “Come on, let’s get going.”

“Where to?”

“We’re going to have dinner together and then go to the Pink Chicken.”

“What the heck is the Pink Chicken?”

“A new club. We’re all going, even Guns.”

Our goalie shrugged. “I think we all need a drink or two.”

“Probably just one for you, Guns.” Nik grinned. We all knew our goalie was a lightweight. Give him a second beer and he was tipsy as fuck.

Dinner passed in a haze and before I knew it we were at that new club in central Veitsreuth. Our group of huge ass hunky guys—except for Ollie, who was positively tiny compared to the rest of us—drew the eyes of everyone. I didn't care. It was finally over. Or only just beginning for Arne and me.

“Be right back.” Squeezing my hand, he left for the bathroom. My eyes lingered on him as he walked away.

Mine.

An anthem-like song started playing. It had been a while since I had a tune stuck in my head, but I knew this was one I would hunt down and listen to until I sucked every bit of serotonin out of it.

There was a wave of euphoria rising in me until I wanted to shout my happiness to the world. A grin tugged on my face. Then muscular arms wrapped around my neck. Arne's blazing eyes met mine for a moment before he slammed his lips on mine and kissed me hard.

The world went silent for a heartbeat before the deafening music hit my ears again. I grinned into the kiss, hugging my man back. He broke our connection and brought his forehead to mine. His love flooded through the mate bond, and the rising wave boiled over. I lifted him up, spinning on the spot until we were both dizzy.

‘I love you,’ he mouthed, beaming at me.

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‘So much!’ I mouthed back, needing his lips back on my mouth.

Epilogue

Max - Spring

“We have the last ones,” Nate huffed as he and Guns filed through the front door.

“Where do you want these?”

“In the hall. Thank you.”

Guns put the cardboard box down and punched my shoulder.

“Sure thing, Raven. It’s been ages since I helped anyone move. Where’s Vee, by the way?” he asked Nate, and looked around as if he expected the giant chicken guy to hide behind a pile of boxes.

“He had a guided tour this morning.” Our centre dragged his shirt up and used it to wipe his face.

Damn. I’m still jealous of those abs.

“He should be here in a few minutes, though. He’s picking up some food on the way.”

“Bless him.” Arne poked his head out of the living room where he and Nik were building bookshelves for my book collection. “I’m starving.” His eyes flickered over

to me for a heartbeat.

Me too, Viking. Can't wait to bend you over our new kitchen table.

As if he had heard me, his face heated. He choked on air, then hastily pulled his head out of sight.

Fuck, I love our mate bond.

"Did you hear about the new guy, by the way? He moved here a few days ago. Jerke told me," Nate explained.

One of our left wingers had retired spontaneously at the end of the last season. He'd been in recovery from a bicep injury but hadn't seen the results he needed to keep playing professionally.

"I think he's a good kid." Guns crossed his arms before his broad chest and leaned against the doorframe. His tattooed biceps bulged and strained against his T-shirt sleeves.

"Have you met him before?" I asked, taking out a few of my coats and hanging them up on the rack in the hall.

"Nah, he played for the Füchse for a season, and I know their goalie. They were sad to see McCoy go, but..." He trailed off and shrugged.

"That's what happens when you don't give someone a spot on your roster. That guy is too good to be benched for most of the season. He's young and hungry," Nate explained as he collapsed the box I had just emptied.

"Speaking of hungry." A deep, silky voice from behind us chuckled. "Food's here."

“Baby!” Nate’s eyes lit up with excitement as he hurried over to his fiancé. “I missed you,” he cooed, getting up on tiptoes to kiss Vee.

A year ago, I would have been sad and jealous of them. But that was just before I kissed the Viking at training camp and before we fell in love. My heart squeezed in my chest, and my man reciprocated the emotion.

Nate and Vitus would tie the knot a couple of days before Christmas. Their wedding invitation had come in the mail only a couple of days ago. Arne had stuck it on our fridge, and I intended to keep it forever.

It’s the first document with both our names on it.

“Come in, Vee. Let’s have some lunch.”

“I’m starving. Thanks for saving me, man.” Guns bumped his fist to Vitus’ as we all made our way to the living room.

At the sight of the dozen pizza boxes, Nik and Arne abandoned the bookshelf. I grabbed bottles of shandy from the fridge for everyone, then walked over to the Viking and plopped down on his lap.

He immediately wrapped his arm around my waist, dragging me closer to his chest.

“Hey Raven,” he muttered, nuzzling his face into my neck and pretending to fall asleep.



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I brushed the hair off his face and kissed him gently on the temple.

“Are you exhausted?”

“Exhausted and happy to have a new roommate.”

Nate took one look at my face and snorted with laughter. “Damn, Viking. You are so in trouble. Didn’t know you were such a brat.” He giggled and inched closer as Vitus slipped an arm around him.

I pursed my lips. “Oh you have no idea, Decks.”

Arne almost cried with suppressed laughter and buried his face in my neck.

You won’t be able to sit tomorrow, Liebling.

He gulped and fidgeted under me, a soft gasp coming from his lips.

Okay, this is fun. Can you feel that, I wonder? That I will bend you over and spank you for calling me that? Can you tell how horny that makes me?

“I’m sorry,” Arne giggled, his dick hardening against my thighs.

“You’re lucky I love you, Viking.” Cupping his chin, I pulled his face up for a kiss.

Nik’s features tightened. Nikolai had always been grumpy and not exactly sociable. But after he’d opened up about his depression, he’d withdrawn even from us. We all

worried about him.

A knock from the front door made all of us look around.

“Hey guys, sorry I’m late. I spent all day with Weston, taking pictures and a million videos for our ArgoS. I forgot the time, but I brought this.” Finn brandished a bottle of whisky. “It’s a little housewarming gift.”

“Awesome. Thanks, Finn.” I moved my love off my lap. “Let’s drink to my new roommate.”

Arne giggled, tears trickling out of his eyes and into his beard.

“What’s the joke?” Finn looked from my viking to me.

“Never mind. Arne just showed everyone how much of a brat he is.” Nate grinned over at our social media manager. “How’s McCoy settling in?”

Finn took the way out Nate offered. “Oh, I think he’s fine. Just a bit of logistics with his family.” He brushed his floppy hair off his brow before accepting a glass of amber liquid from me.

“Is that a Lone Fox whisky?” Vee asked. “Nate brought a bottle back last time. It was fantastic.”

“Yeah, that’s one of the last bottles I ordered. I have to stock up next month.”

Jerke had decided to hold this year’s training camp in Scotland again.

“Thank you, Finn.” Arne smiled at him and accepted the glass I held out. “Come here, baby.”

I sat down. His arm slipped around my waist. “Hottest roommate ever. I love you,” he murmured in my ear.

Turning my head around, I stole a kiss from his lips. “I love you, Princess. To us.”

“And the rest of our lives.”

Bonus Epilogue

Max - Eight Months Later

Lazy snowflakes drifted from steel grey skies as we got out of Arne’s car the Saturday before Christmas.

He took my hand as we strolled up the long, cobbled market square. People in fancy dress, all beaming and chattering happily, climbed out of the cars lining the street. My grandmother used to say there were two things that brought people together: weddings and funerals.

Glad this is a joyous occasion.

A kind-looking woman in a burgundy red dress and a tall, dark-haired man entered the registrar's office ahead of us.

"Nathaniel was so nervous last night, the poor thing," the woman cooed, weaving her arm around her husband's elbow.

"I remember the night before our wedding. I didn't sleep at all." He smiled, sporting the same dimple Nate had in his cheek, as he kissed her temple, the highest point he could easily reach.

"Mr and Mrs Decker?" Arne addressed them and let go of my hand to shake theirs. "Arne Bendixen, I'm Nate's captain. And this is Max Gruber."

"The Raven," his mother beamed, taking my hand in both of hers and shaking it. "Nathaniel's told us so much about you."

The bridge of my nose heated. What exactly had he told them?

"Only good things." She smiled kindly and patted my hand. A real mum. "Joseph and I were very sorry for what happened to you two."

"Thank you."

Arne slipped his arm around my waist. "We appreciate it. It's great not having to hide our feelings anymore, so in a way I'm thankful for what they did."

“Aw, you two are so sweet. Stop it or you’ll make me cry before the ceremony starts.”

An elegant car pulled up to the town hall before I could say anything to that. The driver got out, rounded the car, and opened the door to the back seat.

A beaming Nate climbed out, clad in a mossy green tweed suit that would have been a bit too much on anyone but this gorgeous man.

Arne pulled me closer to his chest, a wistful kind of love flooding through our mate bond.

Oh, baby. Say the word, and it’ll be us one day.

The kiss he pressed to my ear was a resounding yes, and it made my stomach flutter with happiness.

Vee followed his soon-to-be husband, tiny snowflakes sitting on his gleaming green plumage for a moment before they melted. He wore a matching suit with a different waistcoat. He glowed with happiness.

Nate’s mother sighed and snuggled into her husband’s side. “Our boy.” His dad sniffed, pulling out a pocket handkerchief and dabbing at his face.

Holding each other’s hands, Nate and Vee approached us, beaming and greeting their guests as they passed. They led the way to the elegant room on the top floor where the ceremony would be held.

Their excitement was infectious. It radiated off them in waves, making me fidget with giddy energy. We chose seats next to Ollie and Guns. Bo served as Nate’s best man. He stood next to the happy couple, repeatedly checking the inner pocket of his jacket.

“He keeps checking if he still has the rings,” Ollie whispered. “That’s the fiftieth time he’s done that.” He gave his partner a look fit for a newborn puppy. “And they’re still there,” he said in his slight Scottish accent. On cue, Bo nodded to himself, then glanced around at Ollie, pursing his lips a little, fangs digging into his skin. He looked dashing in his grey suit and white buttoned shirt, ash blond hair in a bun.

Vee’s best man was another Elvertritsch, nearly as tall as Vitus: Frederik. We’d met him at parties at Nate and Vee’s place. A slight smile looked good on him, as did a grey suit identical to the one Bo wore. It made his burnt orange and blue feathers pop.

Same size, too.

They were both enormous.

Everybody took their seats when the mayor entered. He was a blustery man in a slightly too tight suit and held the ceremony in a broad German accent. I saw Nate flinch every time the mayor confused the v and w, a common mistake for native German speakers.

Thankfully, it only took about ten minutes for him to get to the point.

“Do you, Nathaniel Joseph Decker, take Vitus Kolb as your lawfully wedded husband?”

“I do!” Nate blurted out, then blushed a little when most of us chuckled. Vee squeezed his hands, making his almost husband focus on him rather than the guests.

His calm in the storm. I knew that feeling so well.

Nate took the ring from the velvet box Bo offered and slipped it on Vee’s finger, biting his lip when he saw the white gold band against the dark green feathers.

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“And do you, Vitus Kolb, take Nathaniel Joseph Decker as your lawfully wedded husband?”

“I do.” He smiled at Nate, then accepted the second ring from Bo.

“I hereby pronounce you husband and husband. You may now...”

Vee had already palmed Nate’s cheeks and pulled him into a kiss, tears sliding out from under his closed eyelids.

‘I love you,’ he mouthed when they backed out of the kiss and turned to face us, hand in hand and glowing with happiness.

Applause broke out, and an arm slid around my shoulders. Arne buried his face in my neck, crying.

“Aw, baby. Shh, it’s all right.” I hugged him back, kissing his brow. “That was fucking beautiful.”

Ollie beamed at the newlyweds and sidled out of our row of chairs. Bo met him with open arms, cuddling his fiancé to his enormous chest and whispering something in his ear. Perhaps that it would be them next. Bo had hinted at a date in the late summer of next year.

We got out of the town hall and into our cars. An entire fire brigade expected Nate and Vee at the restaurant where the celebrations were held.

Like every single person who grew up in the country, Vee, too, was deeply rooted in his community. I knew he rarely ever joined them in their operations because he was so busy with his job and lived in the middle of the forest, but the roots ran deep.

Arne interlaced his fingers with mine, handed me a glass of champagne and together we listened to the speech and watched the silly little games Nate and Vee had to do before the party could start.

It was difficult not to believe in the magic of the mate bond and in true love when the two lovebirds laughed their asses off. They stole kisses between having to cut a heart out of a bedsheet with the world's tiniest scissors, and then Vee carried Nate through the opening they had cut.

"I love you," Arne whispered, his breath tickling my ear.

"I love you, too."

My viking, the one who brought me out of the darkness, saw my shadows, and loved me all the more for them. My forever.

THE END