



Dirty Arrangement

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Description: He wants to be more than just my boss. When Thomas Volt walked into my world, telling me he was the new owner of the bakery I grew up in, I was determined to hate his guts. No matter how handsome he is, or how much he makes my heart throb, I have one goal— do whatever it takes to win back my family business from his cruel grip. So when he offers me a chance, I take it. All I have to do is sign his contract. But working for this man isn't what I expected. Our arrangement means I have to do what he wants. No matter how wicked, or perverse, I won't shy away. The thing is... I'm starting to like his dirty ideas. I swore I wouldn't lose my bakery to him. What happens if I lose my heart instead?

This is a fun and filthy romance with a guaranteed HEA and also lots of page-turning heat! Please enjoy!

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Chapter One

ALICE

NOTHING SMELLS BETTER than fresh-baked cinnamon rolls.

And, not to toot my own horn, but the ones I make are some of the best in the city. It's not an easy task—I wake up before the crack of dawn, do a few jumping-jacks to pump myself up, then stumble into my shower. I also chug a pot of coffee.

It's not easy, but when you run your own bakery, you do whatever it takes to create delicious food.

Wiping my forearm over my cheeks, I look down at the tray of iced-buns I just set in my display case. The sky is turning orange outside. It's pretty, and as tired as I am, I never get sick of that view. It'd be nice to share this with someone, I think, eyeing all the work I need to finish doing before I open Simply Sweet. Not for the first time, I wish for a second set of hands. Maybe someday I can afford an assistant.

I've been running the bakery for two years. The business is small, but I'm proud of every flour coated counter top. I've worked here my whole life. When my mentor passed away, he left Simply Sweet to me. That memory always brings a sharp spike of sadness. This place is special for a lot of reasons, and I'm determined to make sure it succeeds.

After another hour of prep, I slip behind the cash register, bending low to make sure everything in the glass case looks beautiful. The cookies are stacked, the cake balls are bright and pink, and everything has that glossy freshness that makes for a good instagram photo. I snap a few pictures and post them online. I only started the account a week ago, after some prompting from my friend who understands social media way better than me. It's helped me get some extra foot traffic in my door which is exciting.

At this rate, those past due bills will be a breeze...

I flip the sign to 'open' then spot my coffee machine in the corner. What's one more cup? Or two? Or five? Okay, yeah, I have an addiction. At least it's a socially acceptable one.

Smoothing my dark hair behind my ears, I pour coffee into my zombie-unicorn mug until it's steaming. It smells amazing, but it needs something. Humming, I stir in ribbons of thick cream until my drink is pale gold. I don't need sugar, but I can never go without cream.

I lean behind the counter, sipping and enjoying the silence. The cup is empty when my first customer arrives. She's a regular; an older woman who always orders a box of donuts for her office. After her comes a young man, then a pair of teens, then a school mom with a flock of children. I fall into the flow of a normal day, smiling and offering both pleasantries and pastries.

As I finish wrapping a bag of cookies, I spot something I'm not used to seeing. A candy apple red car—the kind of flashy model I'd never imagine being able to afford—is parked in my front lot. I don't think a car as nice as this has ever been parked at my bakery.

Then the driver exits the vehicle, and I... I just gawk.

Wide shoulders fill out a pale gray suit. The shadow he casts as he strolls is long—he's tall, for sure. I can't see his eyes behind his glossy Ray-Bans, but his skin has a touch of bronze glow, like he just returned from a trip to a tropical island.

A handsome, clearly rich stranger, is walking into my bakery.

Am I about to get punked by some television show?

The tiny bell over my door tinkles as he enters. I go stiff, unable to act casual as I realize I'm alone in my bakery with this intimidating stranger. His long fingers nudge his sunglasses up his forehead, revealing vibrant green eyes that scan my bakery up and down, looking at everything except me.

My unease morphs into irritation. His casual way of ignoring me is getting under my skin.

When he bends at the waist, peering into the glass case in front of me, I set down my empty coffee mug on the top of it hard enough that it goes BANG. It's enough to get him to glance upwards. I shiver under the intensity of his fierce gaze.

He stands to his full height, looming over me, considering me like I'm one of the pastries on display. It makes me feel exposed; no one has ever given me a hungry look like this. Not even my past boyfriends. I never thought of myself as the sultry-sexy-type, I'm more of a girl next door. Which is fine with me, my focus has been my career for as long as I can remember. So this... this is new. I like it, and I hate it, too.

“Can I help you?” I ask, cocking my head.

“Well, that depends.” His voice is thick, like freshly stirred caramel. He slips a hand into the pocket of his expensive jacket, sliding some folded papers onto the counter.

“I assume you're the owner, correct?”

“Uh, yeah. I'm Alice Brighton.” I eye the papers warily. “And you are?”

“Forgive me. I suppose you should know me by name from here on out. I'm Thomas Volt, though you'll just call me Mr. Volt.”

“Uh, excuse me? I'll call you what?” My veins burn with my rising anger. Who does this guy think he is? The paper crinkles under my fingers. With a sense of foreboding, I unfold it. The words inside are crisp black on stark ivory. It has a professional feel to it, and instantly I realize these are legal papers. Scanning the words, my stomach twists. “What is this?”

“I think it's clear. Read the words again, if you have to.”

My grip begins to tremble, the edges of the form wrinkling with my tension. The letter spells out the situation; I missed my last rental payment for the bakery by one day, and as such, the bank has sold it to someone else. Someone who was rich enough to pay for the entire property outright.

Lifting my eyes, I stare at Thomas in a combination of dull pain and sour disbelief. “You bought my bakery?”

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The corner of his mouth lifts; a smirk if I ever saw one. “My bakery, technically.”

“How is this possible?” My heart races. I grip the edge of the display case because I'm seconds away from punching this asshole in his smug face. “I know I was behind on rent, but aren't they supposed to give me some sort of warning?”

“I imagine they did. Perhaps you ignored them? It doesn't really matter, what's done is done.”

A burst of rage crawls up my spine. I crumple the letter into a tight ball, throwing it at the man as hard as I can. It bounces off of his broad chest. He doesn't even flinch, but the way he narrows his eyes chills me. “This is ridiculous!” I shout. “I've worked here since I was a kid! Simply Sweet means everything to me.” My mentor's face flashes through my head, bringing anguish. “It... it's supposed to be mine.”

Thomas dusts off his jacket, watching me like I'm a child throwing a tantrum. His voice smolders like a fire that's on its way to turning everything around it to ash. “These things happen, businesses fail.”

“I wasn't failing,” I hiss, searching his eyes to find an iota of compassion beyond his cool contempt. “If this bakery was failing, why did you buy it? What use is a bankrupt business?”

“No use, obviously.” He shrugs, glancing away from me to study the room. “I haven't decided what I'll do with it yet. Maybe I'll just tear it down.”

My stomach contorts painfully. “Tear it down? But... I...”

He turns, approaching the door as casually as when he first entered. “I’ll figure it out. You should really worry about what you’ll do, Alice.” Pausing, he gives me one last look, his eyes taking me in with a dark sparkle of interest. “Maybe take some baking classes? Perhaps your poor skills are why this place failed.”

My mind buzzes with a million responses; from screaming curses to pleading whines. Words fail me, and Thomas exits before I can speak at all. Through the front window I see his car rumble out of the lot. He’s gone as quickly as he arrived, and it seems impossible that he ruined my whole world in just minutes.

My chin drops as I let out a frustrated sob. How did this happen? What am I going to do?

Making fists on the glass, I blink through my furious tears at the pastries below. Pretty, shiny, freshly baked pastries that I made with love this morning.

“He’s wrong.” My tone is flat, blood pumping as an idea begins to form. “He’s completely fucking wrong. I’ll show him how good my food is. Then, maybe...”

I race into my kitchen to get to work.

Chapter Two

ALICE

I’M HESITANT TO GET out of the taxi. From where I sit, I can crane my neck and gawk out the open window at the towering building we’re parked in front of. Finding Thomas Volt’s company address was easy—a quick Google of his name brought me to the Volt Inc website. It also threw a collection of business articles, gossip columns,

and far-too-sexy candid photos from paparazzi in my face.

Thomas was a looker, I knew that. Seeing him shirtless in some scummy snapshot taken on a beach in Hawaii made my mouth water. I'm not proud of my reaction. What can I say? I'm human.

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I have a mission, I remind myself, popping the door open. The sidewalk with all its cracks and dirt is a contrast to the pristine building in every way. Golden, sculptured letters spell out VOLT right over the glass entrance. I never imagined myself setting foot in a place like this. Maybe I'm crazy, but crazy is all I have.

My apron has been switched out for an emerald green ankle-length dress. It gives my figure soft curves, the color accenting my hazel eyes. With my hair free from its normal bun, curling loose over my shoulders, and my skin clean of sugar and flour, I strike a professional image. Let this Thomas asshole see how presentable I can get. Part of me feels ridiculous for trying to impress a guy I already hate. Just follow the plan, I remind myself.

I give the pink box in my arms a tiny hug. It's full of confections I'd worked incredibly hard to produce. If he tastes my food, maybe he'll agree to let me keep working at the bakery. I doubt he'll give the place back to me, but being allowed to continue running it is enough. For now, anyway.

My shoes click on the pavement, marching me into the building. There's a huge reception area, the windows pouring bright light into the room, highlighting the bubbling fountain with its koi fish statues. I ignore it all and head to the elevator. The plaque next to it says that Thomas's main office is on the 12th floor.

The ride up is too fast, I want more time to think, to plan, but the doors spread to reveal the wide room in front of me. Stepping out onto the glossy marble floor, I gape at the giant space that's been decorated minimally. There's a small waiting area, a curved white table and fancy leather benches. One entire wall is a window, giving a beautiful view of the city below.

My eyes drift to the reception desk. There's a woman there. Like everything else, she's stunning; tall, blonde as vanilla cake, her tan skin flawless. She could be a movie star. These are the kind of girls a guy like Thomas gets to be around all day. It reminds me I don't fit in here.

Easing forward, I approach the desk, trying to sound confident. "Hello, um, I'm Alice Brighton. I was hoping to get a moment with Thomas Volt?"

The secretary looks me up and down, like I'm garbage someone had abandoned in her lobby. Her tone comes out too sweet. "Mr. Volt is very busy, let me see what I can do."

I watch closely as the secretary presses a button, mumbling into a speaker. "Mr. Volt? There's an Alice Brighton here that would like to see you."

We watch each other as we wait for his reply. I see her eyes dart to my hair, my dress, then to her nails. She's bored of me already. Suddenly a deep, familiar voice asks, "Is that so? Send her in, Violet."

It's impossible not to smirk at the receptionist as she blinks. When she gestures to the door behind her, though, my smugness evaporates. I almost forgot that I'm about to be face to face with the man in charge of my future. "Thanks," I say, taking a deep breath. You've gone this far. You just have to convince him.

The doors spread apart when I lean on them. Instantly the scent of bitter coffee and oranges hits me. The pleasant smell permeates the circular office as I walk over the pliant, marshmallow-like carpet. The far wall is made entirely of a single, curving window, and it gives a better view of the city skyline than the one in the waiting room. This place is gorgeous, and in any other circumstance, I might appreciate it.

Thomas Volt—my target—stands by a laquered brown desk. His hands are folded

behind his back. He's wearing gray trousers and a light blue dress shirt. Just like the first time we met, the intensity of his green eyes makes my heart thud.

“Hello, Alice,” he says, tilting his head. “I see you've come to pay me a visit. Whatever for?”

“Thomas—”

“Mr. Volt,” he interrupts me, one fine eyebrow arching in disapproval. “You'll call me Mr. Volt.”

I stutter, my prepared speech vanishing in my mind at his demand. “Mr. Volt, I came by because...” I search for the words I'd carefully practiced but they don't come. Thomas moves closer, looking me up and down in that way of his. It thrills me, which makes it harder to focus on my speech. What the hell is he thinking? Why is he looking at me like that?

He stands a foot away, looking from my frowning face to the pink box crushed in my arms. “You brought me a gift?”

“Uh, what? Oh!” Shaking my head to find some clarity, I offer the container with a hesitant smile. “Sort of, yes. This is why I'm here.”

“You didn't need to do that. You could have mailed it, though I appreciate the personal touch.”

“No, no. Mr. Volt, you told me that you suspected my baking wasn't very good. I wanted to show you that you're wrong, and that the reason my bakery is...”

“Failing,” he suggests, crossing his arms with a sly smile.

My skin heats up. “The point is, I wanted you to see what I'm capable of.”

Thomas reaches out expectantly. I hand him the box, and when our fingers get close, a new flash of heat burns through my belly. He walks to his desk, setting the box down gently and speaking without looking at me. “You came here to try and bribe me.”

“Bribe? What? No, I...”

“Because,” he goes on, lifting the box's lid with deft fingers. “I do have a sweet tooth.” His eyes run over the contents, taking in the cupcakes and eclairs with what I hope is appreciation. The heavy silence stretches until my anxiety makes my ears ring. Finally, he nods his head towards a small table where a coffee maker sits. “Grab me a cup, please. And one for yourself.”

Elated, I hurry to pour two mugs of the scalding drink, glancing at the bowl of sugar and other extras. “Do you like cream, Mr. Volt?”

“Do you?” he murmurs softly.

I dribble some of the dairy into my coffee. “Sure. I like it a lot, in fact.”

“Interesting,” he chuckles. “I'll take mine black.”

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Shrugging, I carry the drinks to the other side of the desk. Thomas takes his mug, gesturing to the pink box as he sips. “This is what you thought I'd like.”

“I tried to give a little variety since I don't know your personal favorites.”

Thomas levels a look at me, his eyes half-lidded; bedroom eyes. “The things I like to eat aren't in this box, Alice.”

Frustrated, I huff, “You might like them, you won't know until you try!”

His chuckle is insulting. “Is that how you live your life, believing you should try everything to see if you like it?”

I open my mouth, then shut it. What the hell is he talking about? “I don't know. I guess so?” Without waiting for his permission, I sit in one of the plush chairs. When I push my hair behind my ears nervously, it thrusts my chest out. Thomas's eyes move there—a fast motion, but I see it.

Well, well. Maybe I'd been convincing myself that all the intense stares were meant to intimidate me. Did Thomas actually feel the same pull towards me that I did to him?

Tapping my toe anxiously, I grip my coffee mug and take a long, slow sip. When I'm done, I sigh. The sound comes out close to a moan. Thomas's eyes flash—I blush furiously. Are you flirting or doing impressions of a bad porno? Get it together, Alice, I think angrily.

Thomas braces his hands on his desk, studying me with sudden interest. “Alice,” he

starts carefully, “you're not here to prove me wrong about your baking. You're worried about your career. Your future.”

His bluntness takes the wind out of me. Setting my mug down, I narrow my eyes. “Of course I'm worried. I don't want to lose the bakery I love.”

“Then let's make a deal.” He shuts the box of pastries, sliding them towards me. “If all you want is your job, you can have it.” I start grinning wide as the moon, but he isn't done. “There will be some conditions.”

“Like what?” I ask warily.

Thomas strolls around the desk until he's behind me. “I'll become your boss, Alice. That means whatever I say goes.”

Twisting to make sure I can see him, I wrinkle my nose. “Isn't that normally how employees behave with their bosses?”

His tone shifts, almost imperceptibly, becoming hot smoke and honey. “You're not just my employee, oh no.” He's watching me intently. I have the sensation of being trapped and I don't know why it's so exciting.

Calm down, I instruct myself. You were flirting with him to save your bakery! You don't actually like him. He's not your type! I'd always dated bland, safe men before. There was something about Thomas, something so intriguing and dangerous, that when combined with his handsome features, I was finding myself drawn into his sensual vibe. I've never had someone so commanding, so domineering, in arms reach.

His hands move down; I inhale sharply, audibly, when he clutches the chair on either side of my shoulders. He's so near I can smell his scent. Unlike the coffee-citrus of the room, he's musky. It reminds me of rosemary and olive soaked bread.

“You're going to be whatever I want, Alice,” he whispers. “Think about what I am saying, and decide if your other options are better. You can lose your bakery, watch it be torn to shreds and sold for scrap.” He tilts his head, dark hair glinting in the sunlight that streams through the wide window. “Or you can agree to do whatever I ask.”

I forgot to breathe. I was focusing on his moving lips, the angle of his grin, those pearly teeth. When I find my voice, it's hushed. “If I agree to this, how far will it go? What if I... What if it's too much, what you're asking?”

“Oh, Alice.” His chuckle is black as poison, but his voice is oh so sweet. “Didn't you advocate trying things before deciding you don't like them?”

My fingers knot up on my thighs, knuckles white as bone. Is he serious or is this a joke? I'm unsure, but far too tempted by what he's suggesting to back out. I want my job. That's why I'm here. Was I ready to do anything to get my way?

Thomas has a charm that's hard to deny.

What could he ask me to do that I might rebel against?

“Alright,” I say softly. “I'll... I'll do it.”

He leans away, graceful as a dancer as he slips behind the desk. Removing some forms from a drawer, he slides them my way along with a fancy pen. “Look over that contract, then sign it if you really agree. Think about this carefully, Alice.” His tone is deeper than the core of the earth. “This is no game.”

My fingers hover over the papers before I slide them close. I flip through them; it's all legalize, tiny print I can barely make sense of. A few minutes of browsing and I can tell it's a water-tight contract that states I can be terminated by Mr. Volt at any time,

and in doing so I'll lose my job, benefits, then something about restitution.

Bracing myself, I scribble my name. I can't find a reason not to sign.

What could matter more than keeping my bakery?

Thomas pulls the forms away, signing them himself before ducking the papers out of sight. "Good, now that that's settled, let's discuss the rules of your position under me." The way he phrases that makes me shift in my chair. He lifts a hand, counting off on each finger. "One, you will always call me Mr. Volt, or you will call me Sir. Nothing less than those." His look is pointed.

Unsticking my tongue from the roof of my mouth, I say, "Yes, Mr. Volt." I can't imagine the humiliation of calling him Sir.

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“Next, you'll remain the baker at Simply Sweet, but your uniform will be up to me.”

“My uniform?” Thinking about the heavy, shapeless white chef jacket, I blink.

“Yes. I'll be redesigning what you'll be wearing at work. On top of that, as you represent me now, I'll be picking out your outfits for every day wear as well.”

“Wait, what?” Shaking my head, I let out a nervous laugh. “Hold on. My work uniform makes sense, but you can't tell me what to wear the rest of the time!”

“Did you listen to me at all? You represent me. What you do, how you look, that is all in my hands. You are in my hands, Alice.”

I pull a grimace. “You don't own me.”

The hard glint in his emerald eyes turns my legs to jelly. He rises in a quick movement, looming over me. He reaches out, cupping my jaw in his fingers. His touch sends sparks from my heart to my pussy, leaving me stunned. I never realized I have such an attraction to powerful men. My body is going wild. “According to that contract, you're my investment. I'm sinking money into that bakery, for you. If you displease me, I can fire you and take every cent out of your hide. You don't have that kind of money to lose, do you?”

I lick my lips. “No.”

His thumb caresses my cheek, feeling my sizzling skin. It wanders close to the corner of my mouth. “I'll give you one more chance. If you don't want to play my game, I'll

tear that contract up before my lawyers see it. It's your choice, Alice.” He strokes my skin and I whimper. I can see he's breathing faster now; as fast as I am. This situation is fucked but we're both into it. I don't know what to do... I'm not sure I can walk away. I can barely stand.

My words come from far away, everything in my head rolled up in cotton. “I'll play.”

He moves his mouth towards mine. I'm sure he's going to kiss me. His smirk is a promise of pleasure and torture... but only his whisper brushes me intimately. “Good.”

When he pulls away, I have to resist grabbing his shirt to yank him back for the kiss he teased me with. My inner thighs are soaked; I feel achingly empty. What is wrong with me? What have I gotten myself into?

“As I was saying,” he says, adjusting his navy tie, “I'll decide your outfits. Next, if I want you to meet me somewhere or to simply attend something at my request, you will do so. You must always be available at my word.”

It's not like I have a social life to worry about, but I still squirm at this rule. I copy his cynical smirk. “Basically, you're saying I'm your slave now.” I expect him to argue.

“Yes,” he nods. “That about sums it up. Questions?”

I don't know if it's the anger, the desire to push him, or something more, but I jump to my feet and square off with him. “Just one. How much do you get off on acting like you own me?”

A growl-like sigh leaves him as he leans closer. His face is all hard lines, but his mouth looks soft... inviting. He's pissed off that I'm standing up to him but I swear he loves it, too. He likes that I'm not weak. The energy between us is hot as hell—I see

the outline of his hard-on, and his eyes dart to the front of my dress. I know my nipples are firm bullets that my bra can't hide.

Before either of us does anything else, his speaker buzzes. “Mr. Volt,” Violet says, “your 3:30 client is here.”

He glares at the door over my head. I can see him debating if he should lock it and tell his client to go away. I imagine him bending me over the desk, shoving aside the pastries I'd pathetically thought would change my fate, and discovering how wet my pussy is right now.

Christ, what's wrong with me? Have I just not gotten laid in forever or what?

Thomas backs away, his palm stroking over his hair. He closes his eyes, breathes deep enough to make his shirt pull over his chest, then sighs. “You can go, Alice. Return to work tomorrow as usual, I'll have everything ready for you.”

My legs manage not to buckle under me as I reach for the box of pastries. I'm sure he doesn't want them—he told me as much. He places his fingers on the back of my wrist.

“Leave those,” he says flatly.

“But I thought—”

“Leave them.”

When his hand is gone, the skin he touched keeps buzzing. Unsure what else to do, I retreat towards the door. “Okay. Fine. I guess I'll... just go.”

He turns sideways, arms folding tight, as if he's doing his best not to grab for me. The

idea has my heart throbbing all over again. I have to get out of here, whatever is in the air is making me act insane.

But when I leave his office, marching head down so I can avoid his receptionist's curious look, my body keeps pulsing. My desire doesn't fade. Distance does nothing for how much I want to run back into that room and melt under his fiery green eyes again.

I should be relieved he didn't kiss me.

I'm not.

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Chapter Three

ALICE

IGET NO SLEEP.

My dreams are plagued by a cruel smile and stroking fingers, a dark voice that commands my senses, controls my body. I should feel ashamed about fantasizing over my new boss. In the warmth of my own bed, I'm fucking excited. Thomas brings out such a wicked-hotness in my blood that smothers the rational part of my brain warning me to keep my head clear. To stay away from him.

He's wormed himself into my subconscious. No one has ever done that to me.

Why does he have to be such an asshole?

I'd tried getting rid of my pent up arousal by masturbating. Each time I touched myself, Thomas would enter my fantasy. Not even thinking about Chris Hemsworth could keep my new boss out of my head.

Now, exhausted, I glare at my beeping alarm. I take a quick shower, my hair still damp as I jog the short distance to the bakery. The sky is a muted, miserable excuse for blue as I approach my building. It isn't really mine anymore, I remember.

Unlocking the doors, I slide inside and flick on the lights. I'm about to start my

normal routine when I spot a package on the counter. The box is medium in size, not much bigger than the boxes I use to pack up my pastries. I eyeball it like it's a rabid raccoon. I know that Thomas left it here. No one else has keys to the bakery.

Gingerly, I touch the smooth lid, trying to find an excuse to not open it. There's a little note on the top. Peeling it open, I read the simple message in bold, handwritten letters.

Alice

You know what to do.

My teeth clamp on my bottom lip. Snagging a pair of scissors from the counter, I cut a precise slit through the tape. My hands are trembling as I put the scissors aside and pull the box open. "Now way," I whisper. Lifting out the pink chef's coat, I give it a shake, turning it side to side. Thomas was serious when he said he'd be choosing what I wore. But this... this is ridiculous. I have nothing against girly things, but I take pride in the traditional white chef coat. How dare Thomas expect me to put this on.

I'm so pissed off I rip at the jacket in an attempt to destroy it. The stitches don't pop. As goofy as it looks, the material is well made. I resist my urge to grab the scissors. Why did Thomas think this would make the bakery more successful?

Wondering if the jacket will fit, I peek inside at the collar. Why is there no size listed? That's when I notice the interior material is a bright magenta, shiny like melted candy. It feels exquisite under my fingers. Slippery and smooth.

In the bottom of the box, I discover the rest of my outfit; a tiny baker's hat, pink as the coat with a hint of glitter sealed into the cloth, and some black shoes with a short heel.

I sigh mentally. What am I going to do? If I don't wear the new outfit, and Thomas shows up, he might throw my contract in my face. Didn't I say I'd do anything to keep my bakery?

Gritting my teeth, I march into my private restroom. The outfit I threw on after my shower is stripped away in a blur. I have to get this over with—I have so much work to do. As I'm brushing my hair from my eyes, I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror over the sink. My curves aren't just from working around sugar all day every day; I've always had a softness to me that playing soccer as a kid did nothing to put a dent in. But I don't mind, I'm proud of my body. Whatever confidence issues I might have had have been erased with the aid of loud and proud women all over the media, each of them helping to remind me I'm beautiful.

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But when I tug the pink chef coat on over my breasts, squeezing them inside with a grunt, I feel... less certain about my image. The outfit istight.It clings to my middle, my hips, and flares out around my rear in a way that's not indecent, but noticeable.

However, the material inside is wonderful. The luxurious silk rubs over my bare skin, waking me up so fast I forget I haven't had my morning coffee. My skin is electric; I give a little gasp.

Did Thomas know this would happen?

My face is flushed in the mirror. I don't feel in control anymore. Smoothing my hair, I place the stupid hat on. It's so dumb. I look like a cartoon character—except my breasts are way too enhanced to fit into a kid's show, that's for sure.

Focus. Who cares how you look, you have to get baking.

Striding into the kitchen, I begin my usual duties. The new outfit doesn't restrict me. Again, I have to give Thomas some credit. Wherever he had this made, it's well designed. I set out the morning pastries and see myself in the reflection of the front windows. When I saw myself earlier for the first time, I was uneasy. Now, I think the outfit is... cute.

But I refuse to give my new boss any points.

MY REGULARS DON'T HIDEtheir surprise when they see my new ensemble.

“Alice,” gasps Ms. Snip, a sweet woman who always orders the same blueberry muffin each morning. “You look...”

“Stupid?” I suggest with a blush.

She quickly shakes her head. “No! I love it.”

“You do?”

“It's so different and cute,” she insists. “It's great to see a splash of color in here.”

“I guess,” I say, eyeing the rather bland walls. Is it bland? Was I bland? I always focused on the food, not the décor, and certainly not my image. Frowning thoughtfully, I hand her her muffin. I spend the next few hours taking in the comments of my customers. Like Ms. Snip, it's almost all positive, at worse ambivalent.

I'm starting to see that Thomas knows more about business than me. It's irritating, honestly. But also... reassuring. Working with him might not be so bad.

I close the bakery that evening without seeing a hint of my new boss. He doesn't even text me, though I know he has my phone number. I expected him to be more hand-holdy. Controlling. Especially after how he behaved when we were alone in his office.

The memory makes my body tingle.

Rubbing my cheeks, feeling the scalding heat, I hurry home to my apartment. I want to put on some lazy Netflix-binge-watching clothes. Then I see something blocking my front door. There are multiple packages stacked as high as my chest.

Stunned, I walk around them, trying to understand. Are these for me? They have my name on the shipping label, but I'm no less confused. Frowning warily, I nudge them aside so I can unlock my door, then one by one, I carry them in. I'm breathing heavily by the end. Who sent me all these boxes? What's inside? I wonder. Unable to wait, I pull one open. Wrapped in crunchy tissue paper is a gorgeous lavender floor length gown. I stare. Then I blink and stare again. "What the hell?"

One by one I open the packages until I've arranged what seems to be an entirely new wardrobe of expensive outfits around my living room. Cocktail dresses, fitted pants, raw denim jeans, silk blouses... Then it clicks. "He said he'd change my wardrobe," I laugh humorlessly. "He wasn't kidding."

Slumping in shock, I hold my forehead. Does Thomas want to help me, or does he get off on dressing me up the way he likes? I'm too tired to pick it all up so I leave the clothes where they are, slipping into a pair of plain sweatpants and a giant tee-shirt. Reheating some leftover pizza, I start to sit on my couch, but the sight of all the fancy clothing is too distracting.

Retreating to my bedroom, I eat my food and browse my phone while lying in bed. My mind won't shut up—it's obsessed with Thomas and how he's infecting my world. Before I know it I'm Googling his name like I did before. This time, I purposefully click on the multiple candid photos of him tanning in the sun.

His body is cut with muscles. I'm sure he has a personal trainer. He can certainly afford one. I scroll and scroll until my vision blurs. When I fall asleep, Thomas enters my dreams. His mouth tastes like sugar and electricity, and his wicked voice haunts me when I wake from my fitful sleep.

Rolling on my mattress, I groan. My hand is buried between my thighs as I hiss a name I know I shouldn't. "Thomas... fuck me, oh, yes..." Before I can come, my phone rings loudly, startling me.

I grab my cell from where I left it on my pillows. “Hello?”

“Good afternoon.”

Thomas's voice warms me. My body floods with adrenaline, resonating with the sex dream I was having. Wait, did he say afternoon? “Oh god,” I gasp, seeing the time on my phone; it's already past two.

“You aren't at the bakery,” Thomas notes. “Is today a holiday I don't know about?”

“I'm sorry!” Throwing the covers aside, I stumble to my feet. “I've never been late before, I swear. I'll be there in ten minutes.”

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“Alice. This is unacceptable.” Through the phone, I picture his fierce eyes. It sends a thrill down my spine. His intimidating tone is exhilarating. “I’m sending a car for you. Put on one of the outfits I had sent over. I’ll see you soon.”

I fall back onto the bed in surprise. “You want to see me now? But what about work?”

“Forget it. You missed your busiest sales window, the day is wasted. You’ll have to be reprimanded for the money you’ve lost. Mymoney. Be ready.” The phone clicks.

I stare at my phone with growing unease. Reprimanded? What is he going to do to me?

In a daze, I wander into my living room and pick out a pale blouse and white pants from the outfits covering my couch. I feel like I’m walking to the gallows as I head for my apartment door.

If I’m honest, I’m a little excited, too.

The car that arrives is glossy black with tinted windows, the kind that brings celebrities to red carpet events. The driver’s window slides down—I’m disappointed that it’s not Thomas, but an older man with a flat cap. “Ms. Brighton?” he asks. I nod. “I’m here to pick you up. Please, climb inside.”

Looking around my street, I debate not getting in. But angering Thomas would be foolish. Plus, I do want to know what he’s planning. The hot ball in my belly is throbbing with anticipation.

Once I'm in, I notice the divider separating me from the driver. It gives the car a sense of solitude, which I might have liked, if I didn't want to be alone with my thoughts. I'm seriously freaking out.

The car carries me silently down the streets for some time. Suddenly we roll down a dip—through my window I see we entered an underground garage. The divider slides down an inch. “Here we are,” the man says. “There's an elevator straight ahead.”

“Which floor do I get off on?”

“Mr. Volt just said for you to go into the elevator.”

My fingers shake on the handle as I step out of the car. I scan side to side—there's a few other vehicles parked here. I don't know the makes or models, but I can still tell they're pricey.

I walk into the elevator, wondering what I should do next. I'm about to start pushing random buttons when a voice floats from the speaker box. “Hello Alice.” It's Thomas. “Just press the button for the basement, I'll be waiting.”

A new rush of anxiousness hits my core. I tap the button, the elevator sinking as fast as my stomach. There's a 'ding' before the doors spread to reveal a long hallway. My shoes click on the polished wood floor, taking me towards the single door that's waiting for me. Lifting my fist, I hover there, debating if I should knock. Unless you plan on getting back in the elevator and abandoning this when you've gone this far...My knuckles tap.

The door opens inwards. I'd imagined some dank dungeon after all my nervous fretting, but I can see in the low lights that it's a quaint room with a shaggy yellow rug. The walls are the same color, just darker. I can see a large television and a few couches, a single bookshelf, but otherwise it's sparse.

“Glad to see you made it,” Thomas says from beside me. He was the one who opened the door. He shuts it gently, sipping from a glass. His eyes never leave me.

“Hello, Mr. Volt.” Maybe I should apologize about not waking up in time this morning. “I just want to say—”

“Have a seat on the couch,” he cuts me off.

His briskness leaves me quiet. I eyeball the couch—a large red leather chaise—and swallow. I carefully sit myself on the cushions, perching like I'm ready to jump and run.

Thomas folds himself gracefully a foot away from me, his long legs crossing, dark brown loafers glistening in the lights. He takes one more sip from his glass—whiskey, I think, when I sniff the air—then places it on the nearby coffee table. “Do you know why I asked you here?”

I swallow audibly. “You mentioned something on the phone about... reprimanding me. Again, I want to emphasize how sorry I am! I've never been late to work!”

He lifts his hand, ending my plea as easily as if he had covered my mouth. “You begged for a chance to prove yourself to me. I trusted you to keep that place running.”

“I know,” I whisper. I'm struggling to look him in the eye. I've never felt so miserable.

“You failed,” he purrs. “It's my job as your boss to make sure you don't again.”

Lifting my eyes, I see that his lips are curled in a smirk. That confusing, alluring thrill rumbles through me again. His dominance makes me hot—so hot, I push my knees

together. “You're right, I messed up. What are you going to do to me?”

Thomas sits back, getting comfortable. Spreading his knees, he sets his palms on his thighs, tapping them. “I know exactly what you need, Alice.”

I stare in disbelief.

His smile grows. “I'm going to spank you,” he says.

An awkward laugh explodes out of me. “You're joking.”

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“Not even a little bit.”

“This is crazy.”

Thomas moves his hands up and down his thighs in a languid, enticing motion. I'm drawn to it. Especially when he gets close to his zipper... to where his cock is hidden away. “I noticed something about you when we were in my office, Alice.”

My breathing quickens. “What?”

“You have a dark side. You like having someone conquering you, telling you what to do.” His fingers curl, my pussy twitches. “You're not going to walk away from this. I see it in your eyes. Now get in my lap.”

The moment stretches between us. We stare into each others eyes, a tense game of chicken. I can hear my heart, feel my pulse. A deep, shaky breath rolls through my chest as I realize what I'm about to do.

Thomas has me figured out in a way even I don't understand. This twisted, hot, needy part of me is too hungry to let me turn away from this situation.

I want to know what he's going to do next.

I lie my body across my boss's lap. Over my head I hear him let out a gritty moan—so quiet I nearly miss it. He's in control of himself, but I'm making him struggle to keep it together. Knowing that makes my clit throb.

His palm traces over my spine through my silky blouse. He keeps going, stroking the swell of my ass, lifting goosebumps and bolts of electricity with his touch. My belly ripples with searing arousal—I'm wriggling in place and he hasn't even traced his way back up my body. Trembling, I bury my face into the arm of the couch. I wonder if my skin is as red as the leather.

Thomas groans. “Your body is astounding.”

A flush of pride hits me.

Then the first slap arrives.

It's sharp and sudden; I squeal in shock. I'm not prepared, why did I think I would be?

He brushes the spot where he spanked me. “We all make mistakes. Being punished is how we learn. Trust me, you'll thank me for this.”

“I doubt that,” I mumble into the couch. Both of us freeze. Shit. I didn't mean to say that out loud. The situation has my brain scrambled.

His fingers roll up my back until they're tangled in my hair. It's a gentle grip, but I'm hyper aware of it. My scalp tingles—my pussy squeezes—I'm falling apart the more he does. “What an attitude you have,” he says softly. His grip tightens. “I think you like testing me. Do you like getting a reaction out of me, Alice? I love getting them out of you.”

Thomas spanks my ass harder than before. Again and again, his palm claims my flesh, not holding back. The thin material of my pants gives me no protection.

I moan—once—before trying to hold my breath. I don't want him to know how much I love this. He can't win, I won't let him! But when I think he's nearly done he keeps

going.

The idea of him dominating my body, controlling me so easily, is making my panties wet. His hand squeezes my ass. I wiggle my hips and cry out in defeat. “Enough, stop!”

“Beg me,” he growls.

I suck in a mouthful of shocked air. Beg him? I want to be angry but I'm too turned on to get there. His palms spread my ass cheeks, mauling them, and I give up and just moan like an animal in heat. “Please! I won't be bad, I won't misbehave! I swear, Mr. Volt! Oh, god...” I start panting. “I can't take it, I can't, I need... I need more, ah...”

My body is shaking. Thomas caresses my tender ass, playing with the top of my pants. “Fuck. You beg so pretty. I won't spank you anymore, but I don't think you hated it. I think you loved it, Alice.”

Abruptly he reaches beneath me, unhooking my button and zipper. One fluid yank pulls my pants down my thighs. Having my ass exposed to his seeking eyes leaves me frozen. I've never been so vulnerable. His other hand presses on my lower back, holding me steady, like he thinks I'll try and escape. I won't. My desire won't let me.

Groping the roundness of my ass, he forces my legs open enough to give access between. His fingertips graze my soaked panties—I whimper. “You're so wet,” he moans, husky with his own need. I can feel his erection under my belly where I'm lying.

Expertly, he traces the outline of my vulva, toying with my panties, tugging at the waistband and snapping them into place. He rolls a thumb backwards, grazing between my ass cheeks. “You're so ready to come. Maybe I should tease you more, hm?”

“No, please, no.” My hips rub firmly against his hand. “I can't take it, Mr. Volt, please, I...”

His chuckle fills me with lust. “Please let you come? Maybe.” He pulls the cotton into my crack. It makes me gasp, his response is an appreciative grunt. “The way these dig right into that hungry ass of yours is so beautiful.”

I twist around to see what he's doing. Thomas is staring at how my panties are being pulled upwards, ready to snap. He's fascinated by what he sees. So am I. His free hand curls around the wet fabric of the crotch of my panties and yanks. I shudder as the material breaks and cool air whispers over my snatch.

“How badly do you want me to finger you?” he demands.

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“Yes, do it,” I pant. I rock my ass upwards, trying to coerce him to slide his fingers inside of me. His hand pulls away cruelly. “Thomas, please, I'm going crazy.”

“Mr. Volt.”

“Mr. Volt,” I sob wantonly. “I need something, anything, please.”

“I didn't think you were a greedy girl.” His fingertips slide along my left ass-cheek, then down to my inner thigh, making tiny circles, always out of reach of my clit. “You'd do anything to come right now.”

“Yes.”

Wordlessly he slips his fingers over my slit; I twitch violently. Thomas rubs my clit back and forth, and I make it easy for him by arching my back so my hips rise off his body. He has all the room he needs to rub me towards an orgasm. Heat rules my skin. I clench my thighs, humping his hand to drive myself over the edge. He summoned me to this place to punish me but all of that vanishes from my brain as my body melts. I just want to come. Nothing else matters.

He plunges one finger inside my pussy. That's all I need—I moan loudly, biting the couch as I orgasm on his lap. Thomas strokes me inside and out through my climax. “Yes, yes, fuck yes,” I ramble.

I'm close to coming again when his finger slips free. “Good girl.” Looking back, I watch him lick my juices from his finger. My cunt squeezes helplessly at the hot visual.

Carefully, he rolls me off his lap and guides me to the soft rug at his feet. Baffled, I stare up at him, catching a glimpse of his cock where it struggles to bust free of his pants. He looks down at me expectantly. I know what he wants, because I want it, too.

We haven't even kissed yet... and here I am, kneeling and undoing his zipper to get to his dick.

My hands shake as I tug his trousers lower. His hard-on pushes his boxers out so far I have to lean away. I breath in, hand resting at the base of his cock. Lifting my eyes, I watch him through my eyelashes. Thomas is fixated on me, his mouth a hard line. “Fucking hell,” he whispers.

His control is fracturing on the edges. It pushes me onward—I want to see if he'll break like I did. Probably not, but even a little is exciting. Running my tongue over my lips to wet them, I peel his underwear down until his hard cock bounces into the light. It's thick enough that my fingers can't quite wrap around, his skin warm, his musk making me dizzy.

His shaft slides over my tongue easily; down my throat less so. I work to give him the best blowjob I can, but I've never handled a cock that thick. Saliva drips down my chin. Over my head my boss hisses through clenched teeth.

I nearly blackout from my rabid need to taste his cum. When he works his fingers into my hair, holding me steady, I reach down and start masturbating. It doesn't matter which of us climaxes first—or again, in my case—because they overlap. Warm jizz flows down my throat. Thomas keeps his grip on the back of my head, as if I'd dare to not swallow.

He tastes delicious; I keep sucking, tongue circling his cock-head, until he pulls away. My face is wet from my chin to my throat. Breathing heavily, I wipe my mouth

with my forearm. I can't believe we just did all of that. I want to see his expression, but he turns away before I can.

“Where are you going?” I ask.

He zips his pants shut, saying nothing as I stare at the back of his head. I'm sure he's debating something and I'm anxious to know what. He must come to some decision because he walks towards a fridge in the corner. “I have a gift for you.” Seconds later he returns with a small paper bag. His expression is calm, all evidence of his wild lust erased. How can someone have that much control? I'm still kneeling there, shivering with aftershocks, and he's acting like we didn't just make each other orgasm.

“Take this home with you,” he says sternly. “And don't be late for work tomorrow.”

I take the package numbly. “What is it?”

Thomas smirks sharply. “You'll love it. I know you will. Put it in your fridge and don't peek until I tell you to.” He helps me to my unstable feet. We're face to face; his eyes dart to my mouth. He's thinking the same thing I am.

Clutching the bag, I close the distance and push my lips on his. He doesn't stop me. How can a kiss be more intimate than being spanked by your boss? More intense than giving him a BJ? I can't explain what I'm thinking, I just know I want to keep our lips pressed together because here, like this, I don't need to wonder if my life is coming apart at the seams.

My tongue grazes the sharp edges of his teeth—he groans, then rips away from me. His dark eyes burn with lust. He wants me and he isn't quick enough to hide it. “Thomas,” I whisper.

He motions for me to pull up my pants. “You need to leave.”

A tiny part of my heart cracks. I bend down and tug my pants over my naked pussy. I don't waste time looking for my panties, I know they were destroyed during the spanking. "Why are you doing this?" I ask him.

He's dead silent.

"Thomas—"

"It's Mr. Volt," he reminds me coldly. His shoulders hunch, like he's pissed off or brooding over something. "I told you to go. My driver will take you home. Bye, Alice."

I don't understand, but it's clear he's done with me. Tightening my grip on the paper bag, I enter the elevator. Thomas doesn't look my way as the doors pinch together.

He'd called the spanking my punishment.

This rejection hurts so much more.

Chapter Four

ALICE

AFTER EVERYTHING THAT happened last night, I expect work to be boring in comparison.

But when I walk in, I discover a box on the counter and a note. Setting my jacket aside, I read the words with growing curiosity.

Alice,

Please replicate this recipe, then create your own twist on it. It's the start of a new range of desserts I want on our menu.

—Thomas

There's a lot to unpack here but a funny little word sticks with me. He called it 'our' menu. I would have hated that a few days ago, but now, it makes my heart thud. I open the box and find a few items inside, as well as a recipe with a photo of something called a cake-bomb. It's like a cake-pop, but when you cut it open, sprinkles pour out.

It's been a long time since I baked something different than what my mentor taught me. Too long, actually. Inspired by the challenge of recreating this treat, then making

my own spin on it, I throw my new pink chef coat on and get to work.

Once I have the normal morning routine squared away, I begin arranging my space for the cake-bomb. I don't notice it's time to open until the first tray of bombs is cooling. There's not enough time in the day to practice new recipes and run the bakery, but I'm too excited in the new desserts to ignore them. Chewing my lip, I make a decision.

I carry out my tray of chocolate bombs and place it on the far right section of the front counter. I'll just decorate until a customer comes. I've always done my baking in the back kitchen, like it was some secret ritual. I start to regret being so exposed. Before I can retreat back into the kitchen, the door bell jingles.

"Morning!" Ms. Snip chirps. Her eyes light up at the sight of me piping frosting onto a cake bomb. "Oooh, what are those?"

"Cake-bombs. I'm working on perfecting them." I hesitate as she comes closer for a better look. "Be kind, they're a mess."

"Oh, no, they look amazing." She inhales with a sigh. "If you need a taste tester..."

"Are you sure? I can't promise they're good. Like I said, it's my first time."

"I've never eaten anything you made that I didn't like."

I turn pink with pride. "Okay, but I did warn you." I finish decorating the one I'm working on, then set it on a plate. "I hope you like it."

She takes it over to the tiny corner table in the bakery. I watch her anxiously from the corner of my eye as I start coating another cake-bomb with pink frosting. Ms. Snip takes her time, I can't read her face, either.

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Then my door opens again and another customer enters. Suddenly I'm swept up in a rush of orders that keep me from working on the cake-bombs. I'm ringing someone up when Ms. Snip clears her throat politely. "Alice?" she asks. I glance at her. "That cake-bomb was the best thing I've eaten in a long time. Please tell me they'll be a permanent addition to your menu."

My heart thrums with joy. The other customers are staring at us, some of them eyeing the cake bombs on the tray to one side. "Thank you so much," I say. "They'll be on the menu officially as soon as possible."

She beams. "Fantastic. I'll get my usual order, then... and maybe one more cake-bomb? If it's no too much trouble?"

Giggling, I hand her what she asked for. "Have a great day, Ms. Snip."

I'M STUNNED TO SEE that it's closing time. The day flew by as I experimented with the cake-bomb recipe. Customers took pictures of me with their phones as I decorated. I was sure I had more foot traffic than normal. Was it all because of the cake-bombs?

I stay an extra hour to do a few more trials. I'm confident enough to adjust the recipe, making it my own, and adding a rainbow colored cream to the middle of the bombs that looks beautiful when a bite is taken.

Proud of my success, I clean up and head home. My brain needs a vacation after so

much effort. I'm stoked, though—it felt great to embrace my creativity. It really has been too long.

I cross into my apartment just as my cellphone rings. I recognize the number—Thomas—and answer. “Hello?”

“Alice,” he says, “thank you for being at work on time.”

My neck hairs bristle. “You're welcome,” I spit, unable to keep the razors off my tongue.

He chuckles at my reaction. “Let's have dinner tonight. I can pick you up in an hour.”

“What? It's such short notice,” I stutter.

“Did you have other plans?”

I glance around my messy apartment. Of course I had no plans. A bath, maybe. “Okay, if you're offering, I won't turn down a free meal.”

“Perfect. One more thing—take the package I gave you out of the fridge. There's instructions inside. I'll see you soon, Alice.” The line goes dead; I don't have time to say goodbye or even argue. My eyes drift to the fridge. I'd stashed the paper bag there and forgotten about it.

Approaching my fridge nervously, I pull out the bag. I set it gently on my kitchen table, as if it might explode. Thomas must love this game of giving me mystery packages. Unfurling the top, I squint inside at the two items; one is a slip of paper, the other looks white, round, glossy. At first I think it's a vanilla frosted cake-bomb. I quickly open the note for answers.

Alice,

I've made you a special present. Can you guess? That's right, it's my cum wrapped safely in a special condom. Slide it inside of you. It's cold, but it'll warm up very fast... enjoy.

—Thomas

I'm trembling as I realize I'm not holding a dessert. He gave me his cum, and he wants me to put it inside of me? My lower belly tingles at the idea of following his instructions. It's a perverted request... but it's turning me on. Thomas has a twisted mind, and yet, his creative perversion is enticing. It makes me want to know what he'll do next. Still, I'm not sure I'm ready to stuff this cold ball inside of me.

Get ready for dinner, then worry about this after. I blink. Is this a date? Oh, god. It definitely is. It's a bit of a relief. I'd suspected he was mad at me after our last meet-up, especially after I kissed him. He'd acted so cold. A dinner-date means he doesn't hate me.

I shake myself, walking over to look at the piles of fancy clothes. I still haven't hung any of them; my closet isn't big enough. Fingering the dresses, I stop when I come across a knee-length one that looks blue as the sea and feels like butter.

Holding it to my chest, I study myself in my bedroom mirror. The color makes the flecks of gold in my eyes glow. Stripping down, I slip into the dress, zipping it tight. It clings to me in a way that I'm positive Thomas will love. I grip my hips, shifting them, satisfied with the idea of driving him crazy. He deserves a little torture.

Speaking of... I drag my feet as I enter my kitchen. The cum-ball sits on my table, taunting me with the filthiness of it. I give it a squeeze; the latex surface yields, like it's dough that's unthawing. And he wants this inside of me? Shivering, I run my palm

down my belly over the smooth dress until I'm underneath the ruffles, brushing the elastic of my panties.

My clit is throbbing as I stroke the cold sphere over the front of my panties. I slide it under the lace, lubing it up with my excited juices.

Leaning over my table, I let out a soft moan. If I wasn't already turned on by following his instructions, it would have taken some work to get the ball inside my pussy. I pull it inside of my walls hungrily.

It's still cold; I rock my hips, squeezing, gasping in delight. Have I always been so depraved, or did I just need an opportunity to indulge? I take a few experimental steps. Each one makes the object inside of me feel bigger. Sweat collects under my breasts. I worry I might come before I leave my apartment, how will I survive a whole dinner?

Take a breath and relax. Strapping on a pair of heels, I snatch my purse and walk in short steps out my door. I'm red faced at the bottom when I see the headlights of the black car waiting for me. The driver door opens—it's Thomas and not his chauffeur.

“Evening,” he says, looking me up and down. He's wearing a stylish suit the color of freshly poured tar. His knowing smile lights up his face in a charming way.

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My whole being tightens in a split second. My pussy convulses on the sphere.

“You look nice,” he whispers.

“So do you.”

He offers a hand; I take it without a second thought. His thumb caresses my sensitive wrist, sending ripples down my spine. “Let's get going,” he says, helping me into the car. I let him guide me, and when I stumble on a patch of loose gravel, he cradles my elbow. The motion buries the ball deeper in my cunt and I cry out in pleasure.

Thomas groans in my ear. “Someone is good at following instructions.”

I blush furiously as I sit gently in the passenger seat.

We drive in heavy silence. I'm unsure how to make conversation. Everything about this is bizarre—do I talk to him like he's my boss, my lover, my enemy? I don't know what our relationship is anymore and that's terrifying. One thing is clear; he's burrowed his way into the dirty part of my psyche... and I love it.

Pushing my knees together, I notice the ball isn't cold anymore. My inner warmth has made it softer, less invasive, and my pussy throbs angrily at this. It wants something thick and hard.

“Are you alright?” he asks.

Maybe he noticed I was fidgeting. I smile weakly. “Oh, uh, sure, fine.”

He drums his nails on the wheel. "Is it distracting?"

I stare, mouth agape. "Excuse me?"

Thomas turns the wheel sharply, guiding us into a full parking lot in front of the Hyatt hotel. His eyes lock on mine as he kills the engine. "The gift I left with you. I imagine you can't help but notice it."

Flames dance up my neck. "It's getting less cold, so that's better," I admit.

He chuckles thickly. "You might not think that later." He doesn't explain what he means, he just climbs out of the car, opening my door to let me out. When he bends close, I'm hit by his delicious scent. It leaves me foggy. I want to get closer to him and fill my lungs.

Thomas places his hand on the small of my back, just above my ass, like he's trying to remind me of what we did last time we were alone. My ass still has a few red marks from the spanking.

The hotel lobby is brightly lit, a beautiful crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling. He leads us to the side towards a restaurant contained in the building, a shiny silver sign stamped with the name Rodeo. Unlike the lobby, the restaurant is dimly lit. Everything is ebony and gold. I've never dined in a place like this, I'm more of a home cook or 'whatever is about to go bad so it's on sale at the grocery store' girl.

The waiter takes one look at Thomas before ushering us to a booth in the corner. All of this screams romance. My heart beats faster. The waiter is waiting for me to sit; I do so as gingerly as I can, the condom shifting in my slippery pants. Thomas meets my eyes across the table. His wicked smile reminds me that I'm his entertainment tonight.

The waiter brings us menus. "Good evening," he says, indicating the wooden-backed

drink menu. "Can I get you two something, or do you need more time?"

I definitely need some alcohol. "The Vanilla Cream," I say. "With whiskey in it, please."

Thomas doesn't look at the menu. "A scotch on the rocks. Top shelf." Once we're alone, I bury my face in the entree choices, unable to handle his fierce stare.

"Have the salmon," he says. "Trust me, it's wonderful here."

"I would prefer to make my own choices."

"That isn't what you agreed to."

Squinting at him over the top of the menu, I make a face. "I know what I like."

"I'm pretty excellent at figuring out what you like, too, Alice." He winks, and I bite the corner of my lip. Something nudges my ankle under the table; his foot. He strokes up my bare leg, sending bolts of pleasure to my clit.

I'm smoldering with need for him. I can't even pretend to be mad anymore. My pussy quivers, and I notice the object inside of me is losing its shape.

His foot keeps rubbing casually. "I saw photos of you on instagram today."

"You did?" I perk up.

"Yes, a few influencers were very excited by the cake-bombs you were making. It was a great idea to do that out in the open."

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“Well, it was your idea,” I say carefully. “Honestly, your ideas for the bakery seemed strange at first. I can't pretend they aren't helping the business, though.”

Thomas shrugs with a small laugh. “Thanks for the vote of confidence.”

“I still don't love the pink chef jacket.”

He props his sharp chin on his fist. “It's an inviting color.”

“It's not my favorite. I'm more of a purple girl. Or aqua, or even orange.”

“You like those better than white?”

He drawls that word out—white—and I know he's reminding me about the ball inside of my pussy. I rock side to side, whispering, “When I first saw it, I thought it was a vanilla cake-bomb.”

His eyebrows arch up. “You think I gave you a dessert to put in your cute little pussy?”

A new rush of arousal floods me. I love his dirty mouth. “No one would have guessed what it was without your note.”

His voice is a whisper of silk and thorny barbs. “If I hadn't told you...” He pulls my leg it into his lap. “I think you'd have obeyed and slid it inside anyway. Or maybe knowing it's my cum made you want it stuffed inside you even more.”

I lean back into the booth and whimper as he massages my calf muscle. His fingers move from firm to light. The tension in my belly grows, my clit swelling helplessly.

“I know you love it,” he chuckles. “You drank it up eagerly when we were in my basement.”

My brain feels swaddled by clouds, making it hard to focus. The dampness between my thighs grows rapidly. My pussy hugs around the softened condom. The fact I have his sperm inside of me is turning me on like crazy. I should be furious, but I'm just sweaty with arousal.

Reaching out, he slides his palm up my inner thigh under the table until he reaches my soaked panties. He inhales sharply at the discovery. “Holy hell, you're dripping. You love knowing my cum is inside of you, don't you?”

I try to pull my leg away, but he holds tight. “Wait, I could get pregnant!”

Thomas grinds his thumb over my clitoris through my panties until I'm covering my mouth to muffle my moans. I have to remember, even if we're secluded, we're in a public restaurant. “I'm not that risky. The condom is sealed, nothing will slip out. Though...” He rubs my clit, then dips his fingers inside my panties, fingering me. “I suspect you'd love to have my cum pouring out of you for real.”

The booth below my thighs is soaked. “My dress,” I whimper. “I can't stand up and leave here, everyone will see the mess.”

“I'll give you my jacket,” he says. “It'll cover you. In exchange, I want something.”

“What?”

“Rub yourself off, right here. If you're careful, no one will even notice.” He lets my

knee go, linking his fingers casually on top of the table. “I want to see you come in public with all my sperm inside of you, Alice.”

My ribs could crack from how violently my heart is beating. I take a sip of water to calm myself. What he's asking me to do is crazy... and incredibly sexy. I never imagined such an erotic scene, not even in my wildest fantasies.

Slowly, I slip a hand under the table. I'm panting with exertion. Thomas watches me closely. Being the center of his attention is overwhelming. I start to shut my eyes, but his sharp words stop me. “No, look at me.”

I do as he asks.

Trailing my fingers low, I explore my drenched panties. Arousal coats my inner thighs. I shouldn't be so damn turned on... I should be panicked, but instead, I'm eager to play his dirty game. This man has opened up a dark part of my soul and I love it.

Trying to be subtle, I massage my clit. Soon, though, I'm stroking myself frantically. My hips gyrate into my own palm; Thomas eats up the show. I'm seconds away from orgasm.

“Your drinks,” the waiter announces.

I lock up on the seat, mouth wide open, eyes straining in my head. The waiter is grinning as he sets my cocktail in front of me, clearly oblivious to the erotic scene he's walked in on. “Thank you,” Thomas says, holding his scotch high. “We're ready to order. We'll both have the salmon, please.”

Unable to argue, I give a tiny nod. The waiter flashes his teeth then hurries off. I breathe out loudly, eyeing Thomas in disbelief, but he doesn't look concerned, only amused. His pupils are dilated with lust. “Keep going,” he commands me.

Licking my lips, I dip my fingers into my pussy. My muscles clench tight, making me hiss. Soon I'm chasing the sensation. Quicker and quicker I grind my clit with my thumb, stuffing my fingers inside my pussy to the knuckles. Beads of sweat glisten down my cleavage. Thomas looks at my hard nipples through my dress, making me squirm in the booth. Another wickedly hot tingle assaults me.

My pussy hugs tight to the sperm-filled condom inside of me... and I'm done for.

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Every muscle ripples with pleasure. The climax is rough, I cover my mouth to muffle my groan. A new rush of juice drenches my fingers, my panties, and I give my sensitive clit a few more helpless strokes. Shivering in disbelief, I pull my hand free and wipe it on a napkin. “Holy fuck,” I whisper hoarsely, grabbing my drink, taking a huge gulp.

“That was incredible,” Thomas says, his shoe stroking my ankle again. “You’re already beautiful, but when you come, you’re a goddess.”

Blushing from throat to scalp, I take another deep drink. Ice clinks on my teeth—I drained my glass. Gasping for air, I study his tense expression. “How hard are you?” I whisper.

Thomas arches his eyebrows in surprise. “Dirty girl. How hard do you think?”

Casting a glance around the restaurant, I reach under the table. He shifts himself closer to me, forcing his bulge into my hand. His cock is rock-solid in his trousers, and that makes my heart race anew. “Wow.”

His chuckle is warm, but strained. “Look out. The waiter is back.”

I yank my hand away just as the waiter arrives with our food. I don’t think he saw anything, but if he did, he says nothing as he places hot food and new drinks on our table. “If you need anything else, let me know.” Then he bows his head and walks away.

Thomas laughs as I bite my tongue. “I need to go freshen up,” I say. “You promised

me your jacket.”

True to his word, he offers it to me. “Hurry back before your food gets cold.”

I'm sure he doesn't care about the food, his appetite is all about me. And I can't think about filling my stomach when my damn pussy is screaming to be stuffed. Wrapping the coat around my bare shoulders, I hurry to the restroom.

Stumbling inside, I look around to make sure I'm alone. Good. Gripping one of the many sinks, I gaze at my red face in the mirror. The jacket can hide the stain on the bottom of my dress, but my expression... my energy... is screaming that I need sex.

“Fuck,” I groan, running my hands through my hair. “What should I do?” My body wants Thomas Volt. My mind knows getting close to him—or staying close, at this point—is too dangerous. He's my boss, we're supposed to have a professional relationship.

But I want more, I realize with a start. Running cold water, I cup my hands and rinse my face, then dampen a few paper towels and wipe down my cleavage. Feeling a little less hot, I enter a stall and quickly peel down my panties. They're useless, the lace one big wet knot. Frowning, I throw them in the trash.

I have one last thing to do.

Inhaling, I steady myself, then fish out the semen filled condom. I can't believe I put this inside of me. I'm not upset, though—the sight of it makes me horny. Before I do something dumb, I flush it.

As I leave the restroom I see myself in the mirror once more. I look the same, but somehow, I know Thomas has changed me. Or maybe not changed.. Maybe he stripped away my layers to reveal who I was all along.

Chapter Five

ALICE

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THOMAS WATCHES ME ASI cross the restaurant back to our booth. He didn't touch his food yet, he waited for me. "Hi," I say, sitting down.

He gives a half-smile, pointedly looking at his jacket on me. "Hi."

I notice I'm clutching the sleeves. Easing my grip, I clear my throat and lift my fork. "You didn't have to wait for me."

"It's only polite."

"I never took you for a polite guy."

His eyes narrow. "Maybe you don't know me as well as you think."

"How could I? We're strangers." I stab the salmon almost angrily. I just reminded myself that I know nothing about the man I'm falling for. Shoving a forkful of salmon into my mouth, I gasp. It's tangy and spicy and a little sweet. "Oh, that's good." I crinkle my nose. "You were right, I love it."

"I'm glad." Thomas sips his drink thoughtfully. "You make a good point, Alice. We're essentially strangers. But..." he hesitates, something I'm not used to seeing. "We seem to understand each other very well."

"In some areas," I mumble. I chew my food slowly so I can think of how to explain myself. "How do you know so much about making my bakery succeed? Your ideas about the colorful chef coat, the cake-bombs, you came up with those so fast and they're working."

“I'm a business man.”

“It's more than that,” I argue. “You figured it out so fast!”

Thomas pushes his spine into the back of the booth. His gorgeous face is full of sharp shadows because of how far he is from the candles on the table. “I didn't buy the bakery on a whim. I researched it for a few weeks before deciding to buy it. My ideas... I'd been evolving them, tweaking, thinking.” He shakes his head. “When you brought me that pink box of pastries you'd baked, it helped solidify the concepts.”

“I don't understand,” I say quietly. “I brought you those pastries, then you had the chef coat ready for me the very next morning. That's impossibly fast.”

“Yes,” he agrees. “It took me most of the night to finalize the fit of the jacket for you.”

My eyes fly open as wide as they can. “You mean you made that yourself? How?”

Thomas finishes his drink, setting the empty glass down gently. “You want to know more about me, so I'll tell you a little fact. My mother was a seamstress. She worked for a very big name brand before my father married her. Even though she didn't need to work after that—my dad was quite rich—she kept sewing. When I was old enough, she took me under her wing. It's thanks to her I'm as good as I am, though she's still leagues ahead of my skills.” He stares into his empty glass. “We spent a lot of time together. Especially after she got hurt and could barely leave the house.”

“What happened to her?”

“A car accident. She's lucky to be alive.” He hesitates. “I'm lucky she's alive.”

I'm blown away. Thomas has cracked open a door to his heart, and even if it's just a

sliver, I'm seeing something I never pictured. "My mom taught me how to bake," I say, compelled to share my own background. "She worked for my mentor, John Bird, who owned Simply Sweet. After she passed away, he kept teaching me, and he left me the building in his will." I smiled sadly, stirring my food on my plate absently. "I didn't know he still owed money to the bank until later. Guess he never did well enough to pay the loan down after all those years."

Thomas tightens his lips into a firm line. He tilts his glass back and forth, as if wishing it would refill itself. He's in deep thought and I wish I could read his mind. We finish our dinner in smothering silence. When the waiter walks up, we both look at him. "Dessert?" he asks sweetly.

I go to answer, but Thomas cuts me off. "Just the check."

"You don't want dessert?" I ask when we're alone.

He leans towards me, his lips curling at the corners. My heart begins to pound. "I do, but what I want isn't something they serve here. Come with me, Alice."

THE NIGHT AIR IS CHILLY outside the restaurant. We slide into the car together, the parking lot dark and growing empty. "Did you have a nice night?" he asks.

In the bubble of the car, my voice sounds shaky and loud. "Yes."

"Good." I see the centers of his black eyes a second before he crosses the middle cup holders to kiss me. The back of my head pushes on the cool glass of the passenger window, his weight holding me there. He tastes like scotch... like brown sugar... like every bad idea known to this world.

His fingers wind in my hair. My cells sparkle, waking up to his delicious assault. I want him. I need him. We kiss so roughly I know I'll have bruises on my swollen lips tomorrow, and it still isn't enough. I'm starving for this man.

Thomas turns my cheek to the window as he breathes in my ear. I can't see him, can't predict him. His nature is predatory and I'm worried, somewhere beneath my excitement, that this will go beyond my limits. Where is my breaking point, and will he find it?

His tongue is soft and hot on my throat. He kisses my pulse, moving down until he's nibbling my collar bone. When I run my hands over the back of his neck, he growls like a bear.

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His grips leaves me; I keep myself still, unsure if he wants me to move. The car is cramped with his existence. I feel him on my tongue, in my nose, waiting anxiously for him to do something.

Thomas claws at the jacket—his jacket he'd given to me—tearing it away. I face him as he scoops his fingertips into the top of my blue dress and yanks it down the middle, the threads popping loudly until my lacy white bra is exposed to his eager eyes.

Trailing a nail down my sternum, he makes a strained sound. I copy him and he chuckles, kissing my shoulder, then the dip of my collar bone. He shoves the dress ruffles further down until he can trace the top of my bare hip. He doesn't know I'm not wearing panties until his hand brushes the top of my shaved mound. “Fuck,” he hisses.

“They were ruined,” I explain breathlessly.

“I bet they were.” He runs two fingers on either side of my vulva until I'm moaning desperately. My hips lift, trying to get closer to him, but he dodges me easily. I'm about to get angry when he slips his thumb over my pulsing clit, sending shocks of heat between my thighs.

I'm dizzy with desire. “More, please, more,” I whisper. His other hand presses on my left thigh, spreading me wide so he has better access. I'm moaning on the brink of madness. I ache for him, but he's not ready to let me have my way.

Thomas let's go of me; my sob is obscene. “You want me to fuck you, don't you?” he

asks.

“Yes,” I insist.

He sits back, adjusting his driver's seat until it's horizontal. Spreading his knees, he raises an eyebrow at me expectantly. The shape of his cock is obvious through his pants. I know what he wants me to do.

I climb on top of him; the steering wheel digs into my ass but I don't care. I quickly tug down his pants, releasing his engorged cock into the air. At the sight of it, I purse my lips and breathe out slowly. Warm and thick, the tip glistens with a drop of his sticky precum. The reminder of his cum locked away inside of me earlier makes my pussy clench.

Bending down, I wrap my lips on his plush head, tongue pressing the groove beneath. I begin to slide down, tasting his salty skin and exploring his texture.

Thomas rolls his hands along the nape of my neck, guiding me as he whispers, “You give head like a pro.”

I blush, feeling an odd sense of pride. I take him to the root, gagging as he hits the back of my throat. As I lift up to deep-throat him again, he squeezes my hair. I can't get more than his cock-head between my lips; my whine is pitiful. His laugh is a thrill. “Relax, we're not done.”

He lifts me up and grips me by my waist. In this position I'm straddling him, his member pressed firmly in the groove of my naked ass.

“Do you want to have my cock inside of you, Alice?”

I hug him with my knees. “Yes, oh god, yes.” I reach for his shaft, trying to slide it

inside of me. I don't even care that there's no condom. His hold on me prevents me from doing anything but wriggle. "Please, I need this."

"I know." His smirk can cut glass. "First, I want you to tell me you're mine, that you'll do everything I say."

"I... I already agreed to that in the contract."

"I want to hear it from your lips."

My chest rises like I've sprinted a mile. I try to read his expression—his furrowed eyebrows, his black as night stare. He doesn't care about the paperwork, I realize with a start. He wants to hear it from my lips because he wants it to mean something. "I need you," I moan. Chewing my lip, I add, "Sir." Thomas exhales loudly. I rock against his hard erection. "I'm yours in every way. All of me." I'm shivering, but I don't look away from him. "Isn't it obvious by now?"

"Fuck!" he groans. His arms flex as he lifts my ass higher, poising my cunt right over his angry-red cock. My head touches the ceiling of the car. "Are you ready?" he asks, but it isn't really a question.

The tip of his prick rubs over my slippery vulva. My walls spread over his expanding length, making me shout, then moan, with each inch he gives me. I'm flooding with relief as he finally impales me all the way.

Thomas stretches me until I squeal. I can't speak or breathe as he begins the first stroke, his palms clenching onto my soft hips to control the pace. He traces my flat belly. His thumb grazes over my clit between us. This perfect man is intentional in every thing he does.

When I come down on his pelvis, he pets the delicate surface of my clit. It fills my

brain with vivid color. “More,” I say, raw with passion. “More, more, more!”

He's happy to oblige. His pace increases, growling at how my pussy chokes his thick cock. I'm tumbling towards the edge of climax. He senses it, rubbing my clitoris deliberately. His dominance is complete—he controls my orgasm.

Crying out, I go weak from the climax. It vibrates my insides, my walls rippling over his prick. Before I'm done twitching, my brain mushy from delight, Thomas swells in me.

Knowing he's going to fill me with his seed, this time from the source, sends me into a new, sharper orgasm. The first spurt of his warm milk hits me deep inside. He coats my walls, our juices mixing on my inner thighs and his lap.

He wraps his arms around me, guiding my face to his, kissing me with his eyes screwed shut. Our tongues battle, but my fight is gone. He runs his over mine, showing me what he can do. “Alice,” he breathes.

“Thomas...” I tense, expecting him to tell me to call him Mr. Volt. He doesn't, he just holds me tighter. I can still feel the occasional beat of his cock. It connects us like the thumping of our hearts. The car is hot from what we've done. Steam has made the windows opaque. This is our private world and in here, no one matters but us. Not money, or time, or contracts. The contract. Instantly I remember how I've broken down for him in every sense of the word.

Thomas runs his fingertips up and down my naked spine. “What are you doing to me?” he whispers softly.

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I sit up in surprise. “That's what I'm supposed to say.”

His fingers capture my chin, stroking my lower lip. “Alice...” He stops himself, then he reaches down to pull my dress up my body. Our little bubble becomes cold. Thomas nudges me until I'm sitting in the passenger's seat again. “It's late. I'll get you home.”

“Why? So I'm not late for work in the morning?”

He glances at me, frowning. “That's a good enough reason.”

I don't know how to respond. Feeling reprimanded, I hold my dress close and stare out the window. There's still steam on it. I wipe it away, not wanting to see the proof of what we've done.

Chapter Six

ALICE

THREE DAYS GO BY. I don't hear from Thomas once.

I send a number of texts, checking my phone every hour anxiously. Nothing. What did I do wrong? Our last words to each other were... uneasy. He was brutal, the same way he was that day in his basement. Was I disappointing him each time we kissed? Giving him too much, or not enough?

What else do I have left to offer him?

Trying not to dwell, I dive into my work. The cake-bomb experiment has gone swimmingly. My version is sweet, pretty, and colorful. People come and go in the shop, taking pictures of me as I work, ordering samples and sharing them.

I'm excited to launch the new dessert officially. I put up a small sign, going to sleep that night with a hopeful heart. It doesn't prepare me for the sight the next morning.

There's a line outside of Simply Sweet.

Overnight I became an instagram sensation.

Customer after customer orders cake-bombs by the dozen. I'm frantically baking new ones to keep up with the demand. "Alice!" Ms. Snip says, waving to me as she gets to the counter. "It's so busy in here!"

"I know," I laugh. "Want your usual?"

"Oh, no." Her eyes gleam. "I'll have a half dozen of those cake-bombs."

"You've been coming here for years, ordering the same blueberry muffin," I point out as I pack up the treats. "It's kind of strange to sell you something different."

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“Change can be good,” she says.

I startle. “I guess it can.” Change... my whole life has changed ever since...

“Delivery!” a man in a brown uniform brushes around the crowd to set a long box in front of me. “Alice Bright?” I nod curiously. “Sign here.”

“What's that?” Ms. Snip asks after I scribble my name.

“I don't have a clue.”

“Hm.” Shrugging, she reaches for the cake-bombs I've wrapped, then passes me a ten dollar bill. “Open it up!”

Shooting her a nervous look, I carefully open the package. Inside, folded cleanly, are three new chef jackets like the one I have on, but instead of pink, there's a aqua-green, a purple, and a sunset orange one. Thomas must have sent them.

“Wow,” she sighs. “How pretty. I like the pink, but it's nice to see other colors.” She backs away. “I need to get going. See you tomorrow, Alice!”

My mind is buzzing. Thomas sent me new chef coats. Here I remembered what I said about my favorite color. I want to sit back and absorb this but the rush of customers consumes everything I have. I'm dancing around, baking, decorating, selling, until my display case is bare and I'm locking the front doors.

Wiping my forehead, I take a long, calming breath. What a day. Finally, I can focus on

the box of chef coats. I take them out one by one, marveling that Thomas sewed these just for me. He really is very talented. I'd love to meet his mother someday. The idea twists my heart into a tortured knot. Why would I ever get that opportunity? He won't even talk to me anymore.

When I hold the orange one against my body, I notice some papers in the bottom of the box. A letter? I hope it's from Thomas. I'm desperate for any word from him. Lifting the paperwork, I read the familiar words, see my old signature, and my confusion blooms. It's the contract I have with Thomas. Or had, because I see he's added a newly printed and signed piece at the end.

The contract has been voided by him.

On top of that, it says he's given the bakery... to me.

I sit down heavily at the tiny table. "What the hell?" I ask the air. Why would Thomas void our contract, why give me the bakery after everything he put me through? He's ghosting me, that's clear, but this... this was the one thing tying us together. And now he's ended it.

Endedus.

Shaking so hard the contract falls from my fingers, I stare at it on the table. I'm cold from anguish. Thomas doesn't want anything to do with me. What happened? I cover my mouth, doing my best not to cry. I'm getting upset at how much this is bothering me. The guy was my boss, that was all!

No. He was more.

I can't pretend what we had was just a business arrangement. Rubbing my wet eyes, I look around the bakery, thinking about everything he changed here. Change. Ms.

Snip's words flow through my subconscious.

Change can be good.

That's what she said to me.

Frowning sharply, I jump to my feet with determination. Thomas thinks he can vanish without saying goodbye?

He's dead wrong.

“EXCUSE ME!” VIOLET sputters, rising to her feet as I march out of the elevator with purpose. “You can't just walk in here! Hey!”

Once upon a time she was intimidating to me. “Is he in there?” I point.

“Yes, but—excuse me ma'am I said stop!”

Her voice gets louder when I push Thomas's office door wide open. He's sitting behind his desk in his wing-backed leather chair. Normally his eyes are piercing, but when he sees me, his eyebrows fly up. I surprised him. Good.

The secretary tries to block me, looking flustered. “I'm so sorry, Mr. Volt! She just busted inside before I could do anything! I'll call security right away!”

“No.” His hand rises to stop her. “It's fine. Leave us alone.”

“But, sir...”

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His eyes grow stormy. The woman gulps, then she retreats with one final, curious look at me. The door closes, sealing us in. “Alice,” he starts.

“Tell me what I did wrong.”

“What?”

“Tell me what I did wrong!” I repeat, throwing my arms out to the sides in frustration. “Didn't I do every single thing you asked, no matter how perverse it was? I signed your contract, I wore your uniforms, I baked the things you asked, designed them, perfected them! I let you punish me for being late to work, I even went on a date with you!”

“You're angry,” he says softly.

“Of course I'm angry! I'm angry as hell, Thomas!” Breathing heavily, I take a step towards him. I'm on a roll and I won't let him interrupt me until I'm done. “Was I so awful that night in your car that I didn't deserve a proper goodbye?”

“It wasn't that.”

“Then tell me what I did wrong!”

“Nothing!” he snaps, his voice scalding like fire. “You did nothing wrong, Alice.” He looks anguished, his shoulders scrunching upwards.

All the air leaves my lungs. “I don't understand...”

“You were perfect,” he says softly, no longer looking at me. “In every sense of the word, you were flawless. That was the problem. I never meant to let our game go so far but everything you did... it drew me closer to you.”

“Thomas...”

“The night in my car,” he says, bracing himself on the desk. “You thought you messed up, but it was me. That was the moment I realized what was going on.” He tilts his head and looks at me through strands of his dark hair. “I was falling in love with you.”

My temples thrum. A single word rebounds in my skull.

Love.

Love.

Love...

“That's why I voided the contract,” he says, standing straight. He grabs his forehead like he's in pain. “I can't forgive myself for torturing you so much. Who would do that to someone they care about?” He sees the doubt in my face, I think, because he tightens his jaw and says, “I told you about my mother, but not my father. After her accident, she was stuck in a wheelchair. My father was terrible to her. Cruel. I hated him for that, hated watching her never divorce him.” He searches my face with raw anguish. “The shame of acting as cruel as him is burning me up, Alice. Get out of here. You're free from my fucked up mess.”

So much suddenly makes sense. My heart splits all over again, hurting for him... aching at the idea he thought he was as bad as his own father.

“Are you blind?” I ask. “Do you think I hate what you've done to me?” Thomas watches in disbelief as I round on him. Putting my palms on his desk I push my body towards his. “You've changed me too much for me to go back to a life without you in it.”

“Alice,” he whispers, before I kiss him and take his words away.

I pull back, looking at him through hooded eyes. “I told you. I belong to you, heart and soul. I meant it.”

Gripping my upper arms he draws me back to his mouth for a firm kiss. He's panting when he speaks around our lips. “You're making a mistake.”

“I'm not.”

I feel his warm lips curl into a smirk. “Why do you always want to fight with me?”

“What's the point of living if you don't fight for what you want?”

Thomas growls huskily in his throat, kissing me on my jaw, my temple, then my mouth again. I'm buzzing with pleasure.

He moves behind me, ripping the hem of my tee-shirt up my back, deftly unclasping my jeans to pull them over my round ass. His erection nudges against my crease forcefully. This is what I hoped he would do the first time we met in his office. We'd come so close to kissing back then. It feels like years ago, but it hasn't been two weeks since Thomas Volt has entered my life.

“Thomas,” I whimper. “What are we now? You're not my boss anymore, so then...”

His teeth graze my earlobe—I see flecks of light. “I love you, Alice. And to be loved

by me means you're mine. What's happened so far is only the start. There's no contract to slip out of. This... us... means forever.”

“Forever,” I moan happily.

“Is that okay with you?”

“God, yes.” I twist so I can lock my plump lips on his, fingers winding in his hair. “I love you too, Thomas. I want you with every fiber of my body, in every sense of the word. Nothing will change that.”

The speed of his pulse mimics mine. He searches my eyes and whatever he sees, it makes him smile. His hard arms embrace me until we're wound tight as a bird's nest.

I belong to him.

And I don't need a contract to tell me that.

Chapter Seven

THOMAS

ICAN SEE HER DARTING around inside the bakery. She moves back and forth in her teal chef coat, always in a hurry, never resting because she's determined to handle all of the work herself. That's something I admire about Alice. It's rare to find someone as business-focused as me. I hope she won't reject the assistant I've hired to start working at the bakery next week.

Maybe I should tell her.

But... I like the way her eyes widen when she's surprised.

Smiling at the memory of how shocked she was when I spanked her way back when, I adjust my growing erection in my expensive trousers. I've been hovering by the front door, under the awning, waiting for the bakery to close for the evening. Now, when Alice walks into the kitchen and out of view, I make my move.

Entering, I reach up to grab the bell to stop it from jingling. Then I gently lock the door behind me so we won't be interrupted. I have to shuffle the items in my hands to do it all, but I manage.

It smells like cinnamon in here. I inhale deeply, remembering the first time I entered Alice's bakery. She'd hated me back then. I'd wanted to hate her, but it had been impossible. From the outset, after laying eyes on her pink mouth and thick hips, I'd been fascinated. I never imagined we'd go as far as we have. I couldn't have predicted our chemistry...

Or how we'd fall in love.

“Oh!” Alice gasps, spotting me when I push the kitchen door open. Her arms are wrapped around a huge bag of sugar. Behind her, lying on a counter, is a bowl of frosting; she was getting prep done ahead for tomorrow's inventory. “Thomas! What are you doing here?”

“Can't a boss check on his employee?”

She makes a face. “You aren't my boss anymore. You know that.”

“I forget sometimes,” I tease.

“I don't know how. It was forever ago.”

“Forever,” I repeat thoughtfully. Chuckling, I reveal the dozen white roses I'd hidden behind my back. Her eyes light up exactly how I adore. I resist the urge to kiss her puckered, soft lips. “Happy anniversary.”

“What is all this?” she whispers.

“Six months ago you began working for me,” I say, stepping closer. I can smell her now—a sweetness that stands out from all of the sugar in the kitchen. “That's when you entered my world and changed everything.”

Alice looks at the roses, then the sugar bag in her arms; she hugs it. “I don't understand, you came here to celebrate the first time we met?” Her cheeks turn red. “That memory is weird for me. I couldn't stand you back then, Thomas. You were so...”

“I know,” I cut her off. “I seemed cruel. Maybe I was.” Taking a deep breath, I clutch the flowers, then fall to one knee. Alice's jaw drops as she realizes what I'm about to do. “We should remember that time even if it was ugly. Actually, especially because it was ugly. I want to change the memory of that day... to the joy of this moment. I want to look back and celebrate it, Alice.” The words are easy to say because I mean them.

I never want to be like my father.

I slip the small box out of my pocket.

“Thomas,” she gasps.

My heart thuds faster when I open the box, revealing the dark velvet inside, the massive diamond glittering on the white gold band. “Will you marry me?”

She drops the bag. It explodes on the floor, scattering sugar like snow all over us both. I shield my face, and when I look up, Alice has her fingers over her mouth, tears running down her cheeks. “Yes!” she says, laughing, wiping at her eyes. “Of course I'll marry you!”

Jumping up, I kiss her lips, tasting sugar. Alice is sweeter. She hugs me close, the white roses rustling in my other hand. “I love you, Alice. I love you so, so much.”

“I love you too,” she snuffles. Her hand shakes as I take it in mine, slipping the ring on. The diamond is bright but it pales next to her beauty, no matter how it sparkles.

This woman... this amazing, wild, hot-blooded angel...

She's mine.

Now and forever.