



Phoenix Rising

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Description: Phoenix Aalto had everything he wanted in life.

His own bakery, close friends, and his plants. There was nothing more he could ask for after escaping the life his father wanted for him. Or that's the lie he told himself each time the two men of his dreams walked into his bakery, looking every bit a happy couple. He wasn't delusional enough to believe it was more than a one-sided attraction, but it didn't stop him from daydreaming of something more. Luka Kavka lived with his best friend, and they ran a successful landscaping business together. He'd come out during college, but like his friend, no one lasted more than a date. But a routine meeting in an out of way bakery with a real estate developer changed his fate. Burton Horváth loved life. Working with his best friend while living with him was everything he thought needed.

When he spotted Phoenix behind the counter, everything he knew about his life changed. The younger man wasn't his first crush on a man. If he were honest with himself, that honor would go to Luka. But he was the one who shook up his viewpoint at thirty-one years old and made him want a change.

Luka and Burton agreed they would ease into letting Phoenix know they were interested, which included months of daily visits. But change for all three men came when Luka charged in, giving Luka and Burton the opening they needed.

But as they navigate their newfound relationship, will the obstacles from Phoenix's father allow them to find their happiness?

Phoenix Rising is an M/M/M romance with two best friends who fall in love with the same man. Includes a bisexual awakening, best-friends-to-lovers, a wonderful support system of friends and family, two adorable dogs, hot sexy times, and a definite HEA.

A M/M/M Romance

Total Pages (Source): 68

CHAPTER 1

PHOENIX

Distracted by the last customer of the morning rush as he signed the tablet for his purchase, I sensed the two familiar men as they walked into my bakery and headed toward the display. They kept their heads together, the bulky one with his hand open on his boyfriend's back, whispering back and forth as they decided on their pastry of the day.

The sight of the two men in my bakery was a common occurrence.

But despite both being regulars, and neither of them showing any interest in me, my body flushed hot, and I became lightheaded, craving something that I, in a million years, could never experience.

They came in around the same time every day, ordered either a dessert or a sandwich along with their respective drinks, and would sit in the corner for about an hour, whispering to each other and blocking out the world. And like clockwork, whenever their conversation ebbed, both women and men tried flirting with the couple. They ignored or rejected the advances of men and women who approached, leading to shared disappointment.

The knowledge they were a couple, and a happy one at that, didn't stop the yearning I had for both men. To say I never reacted this way to another man, much less two, was an understatement. My longing for the two complete opposites from body type and what I'd witnessed in disposition were out of the realm of anything I knew to be

possible in my world.

Over time and without realizing it, I'd learned certain aspects about their individual personalities.

The bigger man of the two had a soft-looking beard and messy, dark hair, but he was the one who paid attention to everyone in his immediate area. He towered over my five foot seven height by a wide margin. But he was gentle. He held the door open for his partner and anyone else in the vicinity, observing without being intrusive and offering help whenever needed. Although unnecessary, he'd gather the plates and the mugs they'd used during their visit and placed them in the utility cart used for dirty dishes. And one time, he'd even rocked an exhausted baby to sleep, giving a grateful mother a chance to finish her meal.

The man's partner was gregarious. With a content smile on his face, he wasn't afraid of showing affection while he used his entire body to communicate. Waving his hands around and gesturing whenever he became lost in a topic, which seemed to be all of them. He was quick to laugh, which drew my eyes every time he threw his head back, and seemed as easy-going as his partner. But I'd seen him grow protective. With a flash of his verdant eyes, people backed off, especially when men flirted with his boyfriend.

Their actions confused me because it wasn't as if they didn't notice other people. But when they did, both of them had preferences of different sexes.

The blond one loved women; curvy, petite, tall, short. It didn't matter. He'd offer them all a flirty smile and a wink. But the other noticed men; never overtly flirting with them, but appreciating them all the same. Their actions led me to the conclusion that they were secure in their relationship enough to appreciate the beauty of others from time to time.

On the first day I laid eyes on them, they'd come up to the counter after I'd moved slices of the Death by Chocolate decadent cake with homemade dark chocolate ice cream swirled inside into the refrigerated case. My apron was messy, my hair falling limp and lifeless against my forehead, and my skin flushed. They'd ask about my day or any exciting plans coming up in my life, and I answered with honesty; I worked during the weekdays, so I spent my weekends doing laundry and cleaning.

Exciting, right?

The subjects of our conversation were always pleasant and indirect, without an opportunity to ask about them, much less their names. They always paid in cash, and while I had numerous chances, I'd never strayed into personal territory.

Moving my eyes away from the couple when my chest tightened in yearning, a hand clamped down on my forearm, startling me enough I squeaked in alarm. Whoever had me directed me around the counter as I scrambled away from them. When that hadn't worked, I yanked my arm away before I blinked up at Evan or Easton, some name that started with an E. He'd been a nuisance, insisting on a date when I've told him a considerable number of times I wasn't interested. I was getting annoyed.

"What the hell is wrong with you? You don't grab someone like that, ever!"

Before he answered, one of my crushes stepped closer to us and growled. A literal feral growl, similar to a wolf or a bear, and I swooned.

Get it together, Phoenix!

"Don't touch him."

My mouth dropped open as breathing became difficult. A shiver of pleasure fluttered over my body at the sound of his deep, commanding voice.

A scant 'sorry' was all I heard, since I couldn't take my eyes off the giant of a man, even when I noted movement in my peripheral and the sound of my poor, old-fashioned shopkeeper's bell being abused.

"Woo! That was one of the... nope, the hottest thing I've witnessed in ages. For a second there, I wondered if you were going to rip his arms off, big guy, all because he dared to grab our Phoenix here," Arthur said as he fanned himself.

"It's Luka."

There was a pulse of desire in my lower stomach, and I stifled a gasp when my cock swelled underneath my jeans. Grateful I had the area covered with an apron.

I wanted to join my friend in fanning myself because the temperature climbed in the minute since Luka stepped in to help me.

"And I'm Burton. It's nice to meet you, Phoenix." The blond adonis held out his hand.

Reason fled as the eagerness of the situation presented to me overrode self-preservation. I placed my hand in Burton's stronger, calloused one and sucked on my bottom lip as the tingle from his touch radiated up my arm and spread throughout.

Images of me splayed out on a bed as Burton teased me with his warm hands while Luka's voice washed over me until I erupted in an intense... Fuck!

Okay! Not nice to fantasize about two men who were a couple standing right in front of me.

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“It’s also nice to meet you, Burton. Luka.”

“I’ve never seen you blush that shade of peach before, honey. I’m gonna call Jude and tell him.”

Leave it up to my best friend to embarrass me.

“It’s lovely,” Luka said as he ran the back of his finger down my cheek before he cupped my face.

In that moment, I considered the possibility of my entire body igniting into flames, all from Luka’s tiny gesture that, for the first time in my life, didn’t make me recoil. In a weak moment, I wanted to know the touch of the man cupping my cheek and burrowed into his hand.

Then I remembered he wasn’t available and leaned away.

“Sorry, I should’ve asked you before I touched you,” Luka said.

I shook my head back and forth before I found the words, “No, it’s okay. You can. I’m not used to it.”

“What about me? Can I touch you?” Burton asked.

My eyes widened, and I nodded, staring at the bewitching man, who was even more stunning up close. “If... if you want to?”

Arthur chuckled. “Give it up for Phoenix, ladies and gentlemen. He attracts two specimens of male perfection without a clue they’re flirting with him.”

He mumbled as he moved around the counter to clean the tables, leaving me alone with the two gorgeous men. Or at least I believed no one was around. There was no dragging my attention away from them.

“Uh...” I sounded daft as I looked back and forth between the two, confusion swamping me because I was a mess; the decorated apron with green vines and leaves along with depictions of pastries and the logo of my shop, Phoenix Rising, had chocolate stains and other food items I couldn’t identify. My hair stood up in all directions, and I’m pretty sure my fingers were sticky with frosting.

As my synapses fired back up, I swallowed around the dryness in my throat and said, “Just ignore him. He’s still in the honeymoon phase, despite being married for years, and sees romance everywhere.”

Until this conversation, I hadn’t spoken more than a word or two to either of these men. But now they were in front of me, both holding expressions of faint amusement as they stared at me, and I felt faint. And in order to cover my ineptitude in social situations, out came the verbal onslaught.

“Is it hot in here? It’s hot, right? I mean... um, what were we talking about? Oh, right? My deluded best friend thinks, well, stupid things that are out of the realm of possibility because whatever he’s imagining doesn’t happen in real life and as far as I can tell, I’m awake and working. Are you two together? Shit, I did not mean for that to escape my mouth because nosy much, Phoenix? It’s not my business. Over the past several months, I couldn’t miss observing that you two make an exquisite couple. And on that note, I’ll stop talking now,” ending on a groan.

Burton glanced at Luka, who kept his eyes on me the entire time, and beamed at the

taller man.

Despite my previous declaration, I needed to explain.

“I ramble to myself when I’m alone, but also when I’m trying not to embarrass myself, but can’t turn it off. I expect it’s because... You know what, that’s not important, so never mind.”

Rather than fleeing out the front door, screaming in fear, Burton gave me a dazzling smile, and Luka’s eyes softened as he stepped closer and rubbed his hand up and down my back.

“We never meant to overwhelm you, Phoenix. It’s why we haven’t approached you before today. At first, we weren’t sure you were interested in men, but the more we observed you, we noticed no one grabbed your attention,” Luka said.

There was a loud guffaw, because, of course, Arthur was eavesdropping on this surreal conversation.

All thoughts skidded to a halt and for a half a second, the blank white void of my brain was silent as I replayed Luka’s words.

They observed me?

Forgetting about my friend and his shameful determination to get me laid and ‘end my isolated existence,’ I studied both men as they stared back at me.

Unsure of what he was saying, I croaked out, “So... what Arthur said was?—”

“Spot on,” Burton confirmed.

Arthur, with the tray full of dirty dishes, strode by and said, “This queen isn’t blind, honey. How else did you think I got Jude?”

Without hesitation, I said, “You waited for him to come to our table and before he uttered a word, you offered to suck him off in the bathroom.”

Both men hid their chuckles by ducking their heads down, but it was then I noticed they’d gotten closer to me.

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“You’re such a bitch.”

A sigh escaped. “We’ve gone over this before. Just because I tell the truth doesn’t mean?—”

“That you’re an asshole? Yes, yes, it does,” Arthur snapped back before he disappeared back into the kitchen.

I shouted back, “He married you, didn’t he?”

My friend stuck his head back through the swinging door with a huge smile on his face.

“Yeah, he did. Why don’t you head out? I’ve got this, and Charlotte texted. She’s free to come in until close. Her professor canceled afternoon class. She’s been dying to try your limoncello cake recipe. Have a good night, and I’ll see you Monday morning,” he finished before disappearing behind the door.

A low chuckle and a boisterous shout of laughter captured my attention, and my cheeks heated when I turned back to see Burton and Luka focused on me. With a gulp, I removed my apron and smoothed back my messy hair, taking a minute to throw the grubby thing in the hamper set inside the blocked off stairs.

“Phoenix?”

“Yeah?” I turned back to both men.

“We’re starving and wanted to know if you wanted to come home with us? Luka’s a tremendous cook and he’d love to cook for us.”

Excitement rushed through me and I only just stopped myself from jumping up and down in agreement. Admittedly, a flood of fantasies ran through my mind in a blur of naked skin and cries of ecstasy shared between the three of us, but with a firm voice, I reminded myself it was lunch, not an orgy.

Rather than shouting my agreement, I sucked my lips into my mouth and nodded.

“Great! Do you need anything?” Luka asked.

I hesitated as I remembered what I was wearing. “No, but should I go home and change?”

Two sets of eyes moved down my face and over my body, clad in a simple tee and jeans with a comfortable pair of white runners, feeling like a heated caress on my tingling skin, before Burton shook his head.

Luka led the way out of my bakery, down the sidewalk about a block, and into a comfortable yet mammoth truck.

Although the practical side of my brain screamed at me to pay attention to where they were taking me, my thoughts scrambled the moment Luka touched me in a possessive manner, which I still sensed despite both of his hands now being on the wheel. If I didn’t get myself under control... well, I didn’t want to think about the consequences.

I never thought about relationships much, knowing I wasn’t the ideal man for anyone. Absentminded was the best description whenever I started working or fussed over a new plant, concentrating on doing what I loved instead of the noise and people around me.

After working every day since I turned fourteen to make enough money to take control of my life, I haven't figured out a way to slow down. Despite owning my business, I enjoyed my place in the background, roaming out from time to time and talking to the regulars, but never taking center stage. I hired the best people I could find for that because even I knew customer service didn't work when you got tongue tied at the simplest interactions.

When I came out of my thoughts, the three of us stood in front of a beautiful property; an array of flowers blooming in flowerbeds and hanging pots on the porch, trees towering over the manicured lawn, but in the center of it all stood a bright blue house with white shutters and a red door. The lot, with the towering maple and oak trees, gave the house a secluded feel, as though you stepped into another time and place.

"It's beautiful."

"Thank you," they said at the same time.

As the men flanked me and escorted me up to the porch, unlocking the door, I heard something on the other side.

After I passed the threshold, my eyes focused on the warm interior of the home Burton and Luka shared, but became distracted when I heard loud and persistent clicking on the hardwood floor and two dogs appeared from a room in the back. I knew I should let the dogs approach me in their own time and investigate me, but I sank to my knees and reached out for them, laughing as the silver dog licked at my face. The smaller one with a brown and white coat whimpered until I sat on the floor, cross-legged. They climbed onto my lap and with a sigh, closed their eyes.

"Oh my, these two are so precious. What are their names?"

Burton slapped Luka on the arm, giving him a glare, but Luka shrugged and answered.

“The little one is Stella. She’s five months old and loves people. Ruby is Stella’s older sister.”

Burton chuckled. “You’re great with them. Did you have one when you were a kid?”

I shook my head and admitted, “My father hated animals of any kind. Well, now that I think about it, he hated everything, including his own son, so he’d never think about getting me something I’d love, like a dog.”

Ruby sensed my anger and stuck her head underneath my neck. With a smile, I ran my hand down her back and relaxed as the two girls showered me with affection.

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Both men gave me a few minutes of loving on the dogs before Luka ordered Stella and Ruby to their beds in the living room. I stood. “Sorry about that?”

“No, Sunshine, there’s no need to apologize,” Luka said, leaning down and pressing a kiss to the corner of my lips.

I sucked in a sharp breath at the action. My eyes widened as I glanced between the two of them, confusion rolling out of me in waves.

The emotions must’ve shown on my face, because Luka stepped forward, cupped my head, and ran both of his thumbs along the side of my neck.

Was that area supposed to be an erogenous zone? Hell, now it was.

Luka’s next words snapped my attention back to the two men.

“Ah, Phoenix, so there’s no doubt of my or Burton’s intentions, we are both absurdly attracted to you.”

“And we would like nothing more than to get to know you,” Burton added.

Luka cleared his throat and when my gaze met his, he finished, “Our end goal is being in a relationship, all three of us.”

My gaze darted from Burton’s bright emerald eyes to Luka’s patient hazel ones, searching for the truth. “So, you’re a couple and you want to bring someone, well, me, into your relationship?”

If I wanted to keep my dangerous attraction and yearning for these two men secret since they came into my bakery eighty-five days ago, I bungled it with that doozy of a question.

“And no, I haven’t counted how many days it’s been since you two strolled into my bakery.”

Luka’s mouth quirked up, and Burton chuckled.

“Shit, I said that aloud.”

Being a gentleman about my entire outburst, Burton clarified.

“Your observations might have led you to believe we’re together, but we’ve been best friends since elementary school. We run a business together and live here. We’re close, but until you, we’ve never thought about a relationship with each other before.”

“Although when I came out the summer before college, we had sex a few times. We stopped when B told me he preferred women, but we stayed close. When we found your bakery and noticed you, everything changed for the two of us.”

Burton’s voice dropped as he leaned in closer. “We want you in every way, Phoenix. Days in bed, naked, as we explore all the ways we can give you pleasure. Being able to kiss and touch you whenever we want. But more than that, we wish to spoil you, worship you, and be there for you whenever you need us.”

They promised me everything I didn’t even know I wanted. A gargantuan part of me wanted to agree, throw myself at them, and thank whatever deity above for this miraculous chance.

But the realistic doubter thought they’d get to know me and change their minds while

I fell harder for both of them and in the end, I'd be the one with the broken heart. It would lead to the rest of my life spent alone.

With a million thoughts whirling in my brain and not one of them a solution to the point-counterpoint rallying back and forth, my world went black.

CHAPTER 2

LUKA

"Oh, fuck!" I grunted before lunging forward and catching the lithe man in my arms.

After B explained what we wanted, I hoped like hell the truth of what B and I asked for would tempt Phoenix. But the worry grew as I watched him become lost in his thoughts for several minutes, as though he needed time to decipher our words.

His eyes unfocused while his breathing became choppy, and his fists clenched and unclenched at his sides. When he moved, for a heart stopping moment, I expected he'd run. Instead, he paced back and forth until, on what seemed a thousandth pass; he stood still.

Then he surprised both of us.

My heart stopped in my chest when Phoenix's eyes rolled up in his head and he went limp. Although I'd been close enough to prevent him from hitting the floor, my arms felt feeble from the shock as I held on tight. I cradled him against me and breathed a sigh of relief at the rapid pulse I spotted on his neck.

B hovered over us as I carried Phoenix toward the couch in the living room. All my instincts screamed at me not to put distance between us, so I lowered myself onto the couch and cradled Phoenix on my lap.

“What happened?” B asked. He sat next to us before he maneuvered his knee on the couch, pressing his leg to my thigh so he could lean close to Phoenix and brush a finger down his cheek.

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I smoothed back the soft hair that fell onto his forehead as I studied the younger man's face.

His features were relaxed; beautiful plush lips were a lovely shade pink, the soft skin along his sharp jawline and elongated neck made me want to nuzzle my beard or my lips against it, but it was the dark circles underneath his eyes that informed me on how hard this man worked.

“Either he had a panic attack or he's worked himself into exhaustion.”

Before I'd laid eyes on Phoenix, I determined B was the perfect man. Athletic build, sandy blond hair he didn't bother to tame on most days, and muscles from our early years of working outside as we built our business into the successful one we had today.

These days, we hired people for the manual labor while B worked with me as we designed landscapes for residential and commercial projects. But he worked out in our home gym at least five days a week, which kept him in peak physical condition.

Not that B lost any appeal since Phoenix came into our lives. My desire for the man had grown with the need to claim Phoenix as ours. The tight lid I put on my hunger for the man; especially with the knowledge of how he felt driving into me, holding me and kissing me as we found release together, broke open when I realized Phoenix captured B's attention.

The morning it all changed for the two of us started with a simple business meeting.

We agreed to join Hale Aalto at a bakery we'd never heard of, Phoenix Rising. It was an odd name for a cafe and bakery, but Hale was an important commercial developer and we were bidding to be the landscape architects of several of his properties, so if he wanted to meet at an out of the way coffee shop, we would accommodate him.

But once we arrived, a sense of comfort washed over me, and I knew I'd found my new favorite place.

As you walked in, the bright white walls brought out the lush oasis inside. Indoor plants were hanging in front of the windows, placed on shelves in between books, baubles, and framed paintings along with sketches and drawings, and in colossal pots in the corners and next to the plush chairs and sofas. Each round table contained a coffee plant or a philodendron in a bright pastel hued pot. There were enormous bay windows on the south and west side of the building, which allowed in ample sunlight, and since the doors were open on one of Boston's beautiful summer days, the ocean breeze drifted in and added to the ambience of the place.

The amazing, one-of-a-kind layout had me glancing around in wonder at the same time B noticed Phoenix.

"Fucking A, Luka. Have you ever seen anyone as perfect as he is?"

My attention snapped to B before I followed his gaze toward the glass bakery display. Unable to see anyone other than a customer who shouldn't have drawn B's attention, I opened my mouth to chastise him when a magnificent creature with bright white hair tied in a bun popped up with a smile as he handed over a bakery bag before disappearing through the swinging doors into the kitchen.

Stunned stupid, I stared at the closed door, willing the man to walk back through. It took a sharp elbow in my side to draw my eyes away and back onto my best friend, who stood with his arms crossed and a raised eyebrow.

“Um.”

B’s face broke into a huge grin as he slugged me in the chest.

I huffed and growled out, “Why B? Don’t your tastes run toward women?”

His face softened and with concern, he asked, “Did I hurt you, Luka?”

“No, B, that’s not it, I understood. I still understand. But...” My eyes darted toward the still kitchen door and said, “your reaction to the man is surprising, isn’t it?”

“Both yes and no, I think. The part of me who has craved a relationship and the possibilities of forever woke up the second that gorgeous man came into view and, based on your reaction to him, the picture only becomes clearer.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, still unable to admit to myself what I hoped he would say.

B shrugged and said, “We do everything together, Luka. For me, it isn’t surprising we’d experience the same attraction toward the same person. And before you start on the argument about my usual preference, I was young and ignorant when I told you I was only interested in women. Being with you scared me because the last thing I wanted was to jeopardize our friendship, so I took the chickenshit way out. However, as I’ve matured and gained wisdom, I’ve realized that what we need is a shakeup. He’s our catalyst for change.”

The white-haired, lithe man exited the kitchen with a massive tray of desserts and maneuvered it with skill into the bakery case before heading back for more.

“We can’t scare him off,” B said.

It was as serious as B's ever sounded.

"I want to make sure we agree. You and I want an exclusive, romantic relationship with that beautiful and shy man. Not just sex, right?"

"Yes?"

"What?" I asked.

"I..." B trailed off and bit his bottom lip, thinking.

Even as I held him in my arms, I still didn't know if Phoenix wanted a relationship with two men, much less if he found us appealing. But whatever answer Phoenix gave us, it would never drive a wedge between me and B.

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Thinking back on that day, what I was unprepared for was B's honest desires coming through, especially without talking to or knowing what Phoenix wanted.

"I want a commitment between all three of us where I get to touch you, too."

A shift in our relationship became clear with his admission, so when I reached out and rubbed his back, a thrill ran through me when he leaned into my side and smiled up at me.

Every morning since, we arrived at our favorite bakery after the rush of people had come and gone.

We noted Phoenix hovered around the front counter when there weren't as many people as he talked and laughed with the man who we learned today was his best friend, Arthur.

We watched on without making a move and I taught myself the meanings behind each smile, and noted the things that made him happy; baking delicious creations and digging his hands into the soil as he repotted a new plant before finding a spot for it.

By the second week, I concluded Phoenix was an introvert; he had abundant energy when working in the kitchen or watering his plants, but he limited himself with social interactions. They seemed to tire him. He didn't leave any space where someone he didn't know could start conversing with him, and despite that, both B and I noticed he studied us whenever we stopped by.

The glances were never overt, and we never caught him, which made me hesitate

whenever B suggested we approach him. We perceived his eyes on us, but when we looked, his gaze focused elsewhere. Despite having no reassurance that he would welcome our attention, we still hoped. And he all but confirmed it this afternoon when he blurted out he thought we were a couple.

I was watching his face, and I noticed when his eyes darted behind his closed lids.

“He’s waking up.”

B hovered closer, his leg shaking up and down as he nibbled on his thumbnail, a nervous habit from as far back as I remembered. When Phoenix blinked, he focused on me and then moved over to B when the man stuck his face against my cheek, and his lips tilted up in a soft smile.

Trying not to scare the man off, I dropped my voice to a whisper, which still rumbled when I spoke. “Are you okay, Sunshine?”

He nodded as his smile grew. “Yeah, why? My usual dreams begin with us already naked, and not sitting anywhere near a couch, but both of you are here, so, yeah, I’m good.”

“Hmmm, Petal, I’m happy to tell you this is real. You’re in Luka’s arms and while we’d love nothing but to get naked with you, all the blinds are open and our neighbors are nosy, yet hate to be scandalized. Hypocrites,” B said.

I growled and said, “No one else besides you and me B will see Phoenix naked. Ever!”

When Phoenix’s long, elegant fingers trailed from the side of my neck and down my clothed chest, a shiver of desire slammed into me, leaving me gasping for breath.

It was the first time he initiated contact.

When he opened his hand over my chest and pressed his ear against me to listen to my heart, I caressed his back as his body sagged against mine.

That was until he gasped and almost fell out of my lap.

“What?” I searched for any danger lurking nearby.

When I determined we were alone, my eyes went back to Phoenix, who was gnawing his lip, hands clenched in his lap. With jerky motions, Phoenix’s eyes jumped from one spot to another in the living room.

“Hey, Sunshine, you’re okay. You are safe. B and I promise we would never hurt you.”

His entire being froze as he held himself rigid on my lap. Then, in a performance that would have given Linda Blair stiff competition for the scariest expression, his head turned with excruciating slowness until his bright blue eyes narrowed on me. I heard the smack on my shoulder, the light sensation not registering because of the fear rushing through me.

“Luka?”

“Yeah, Sunshine?”

“When Burton issued the invite to spend the afternoon with both of you, I shook with anticipation. The last thing I feel, with either of you, is fear. Got it?”

With a stiff nod, I answered, “Loud and clear.”

Before I could ask him if he was okay, B sat as close to me as he could manage and maneuvered Phoenix until his upper body rested against B's chest. I draped my massive hands over his legs, keeping in contact with him while savoring his warmth through the thin fabric.

“Not to sound indelicate, but I will, since I don't have a subtle bone in my body. But why did you pass out?” B asked.

Another growl passed through my lips, but Phoenix reached for my hand and squeezed, making me relax back into the cushions.

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“As unbelievable as it may sometimes seem, I am a capable man. But along with it comes extreme introverted tendencies and the remnants from my childhood growing up with an overbearing, bullying father and a stepmother who wasn’t interested in having children in her life,” he paused, gathering his thoughts before he continued, “my personality and the way I need time to get used to new situations, my mind... well, how do I explain this?”

Brushing a strand of hair away from his face, needing to see his expressions, I savored his soft skin against my work-hardened knuckles. Every inch of this man appealed to me, but along with it came the desire to protect him from the world.

Over the years, I’d worried about B’s reckless ways. He was an act first, thinkwaylater kind of man, and while it worked out on most occasions because he was personable and capable, it still didn’t keep me from being uneasy from time to time.

With these two men in my life, it would be easy to fall for them and have my primal instincts take over. But I needed to bide my time and not scare either of them off with my neediness and protective impulses.

“It hasn’t happened in such a long time. I’d forgotten how fast my reactionary thoughts overwhelm me. On a day-to-day basis, I can prioritize and compartmentalize my thoughts. But when I get excited or upset or I get an influx of information, I have to calm myself down or, according to my doctor, my blood pressure drops, I get dizzy and lightheaded, before I faint.”

He shrugged, as though it wasn’t a big deal.

“What the fuck?” B blurted out.

Rather than taking offense to B’s outburst, Phoenix let out a chuckle, which made me smile.

“Why are you laughing? This is serious.” B demanded.

Phoenix leaned back and said, “When I was younger, I’d stress the day before school started or when there was tension at home, but since I’ve been an adult, it’s happened twice.”

I cleared my throat. “I take it there was always tension at home.”

With a definitive nod of his head, Phoenix said, “My very existence was a disappointment to my masculine, stoic fathersince birth, I suppose. My favorite color was pink or glitter because it contains all the colors. I mean, I still love glitter. Who doesn’t? I use it when I decorate pots at home, which benefits me because he’s disgusted by my choices and would never visit me there.

“Then there are the things he hates about me that are out of my control. My hair is too blond, I’m too skinny, I laugh too loud, and enjoy artistic things. On top of all the other offenses he’s added over the years. You name it, he hated it about me.”

I swallowed the resentment, but didn’t realize I was shaking with rage.

Phoenix fisted my shirt and pulled me closer, and we grew silent as we cocooned him in our arms, offering comfort. But when his stomach rumbled, I lifted Phoenix and placed him on B’s lap, and started for the kitchen.

If I was inadequate with emotional aid and I couldn’t track down his father and beat some sense into him, the least I could do was to feed him.

CHAPTER 3

BURTON

“Where’s he going?”Phoenix asked as he tensed in my arms.

I rubbed my hand up and down his back until he relaxed into me. His essence matched that of his bakery, and all I could detect was cinnamon, vanilla, and sunshine.

“He’s going to start lunch and feed you until you beg him to stop. It’s his way of taking care of you without murdering your father or figuring out a way to invent a time machine to save you from your childhood.”

“Is this why you brought me to your house? Because I’m incapable of taking care of myself?”

Instead of using tact, I chuckled before leaning back and capturing his gaze. I reached up and thumbed his bottom lip away from between his teeth.

“No, Petal, that’s not the reason we want you in our home. While Luka needs to take care of people, the moment I spotted you in a chocolate smeared apron with your hair tied back, looking like the embodiment of temptation, you were it for me. And other than my attraction to Luka over the years, I’ve never wanted someone of my own. Until now.

“For Luka, who I’ve known since we were seven, I’ve never once seen the practical, logical man react to anyone with anything other than polite indifference. But when I noticed you, he became so enthralled, he?—”

“Yes, B? Let’s try not to say anything to embarrass me before we can prove the truth

of our words.”

I shook my head. “Oh, I’m sure I drooled a bit when I noticed Petal here. I may have even stumbled over my words.”

The younger man chuckled and as I heard the melodic sound, my entire being relaxed.

“There’s your gorgeous smile, Sunshine. Are you ready for lunch?”

When he nodded, I stood and lowered him on the floor, forcing myself to let go of him as Luka led the way to the kitchen.

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I was still awed to find the dazzling man in our home, winning over the dogs, and showing more of his true self with each minute that passed.

My reaction toward Phoenix's father wasn't as visceral as my best friend's.

You couldn't change the past, and I learned never to dwell on the impossible. But what I could do was to show Phoenix that caring for someone doesn't come with consequences, limits, or rules, and with me and Luka, he'd only have to be himself.

We settled around the dining room table, and I noticed Luka made a lunch meant to impress. Brisket grilled cheese along with creamy coleslaw and roasted Brussels with cranberries.

"Oh, wow, it smells and looks delicious. But it's a lot of food..."

"Eat what you can, Sunshine."

"Okay," he said as he lifted half his sandwich and took a bite.

Phoenix's eyes closed as he took his first bite and savored the flavors. Based on his expression of pure bliss, I found myself envious. I scooped up a spoonful of sprouts and almost choked at the moan reverberating next to me.

"This is... wow! Luka, it's the best thing I've ever put in my mouth."

Fucking hell!

Luka chuckled, and Phoenix froze with the sandwich near his mouth. His eyes darted toward Luka and then over to me. He shrugged and took another gigantic bite. As he chewed, he gave us a closed smile, his bright eyes shining in delight.

Another appreciative sound escaped as he tried the coleslaw, and before long, we were all eating in silence with me and Luka watching the man as he devoured every morsel on his plate.

“Dessert?” Luka asked.

“Ah, if I’d known there was dessert, I would have... nope, I still would’ve eaten it. How about later? Not that I’m inviting myself to stay longer, because I wouldn’t, that’s rude?—”

“Phoenix?”

His blue eyes widened as he turned toward me. “Yes?”

“It’s too early for more, but can I press my lips to yours?”

Another addictive whine escaped his throat, and before the sound cut off, my lips touched his supple ones and it was my turn to groan, aloud. My cock swelled in my jeans and I pulled away with a gasp before I ravaged his mouth.

On second thought, I slanted my mouth and drifted closer. Maybe another small taste.

“Nope, I know that look in your eyes, B, and we can’t devour him. Yet.”

With a huff, I leaned away and smiled when Phoenix laughed and grabbed Luka, giving him a chaste kiss. The simple move caused a rumble to escape the bigger man’s throat.

A chuckle escaped before I grabbed the empty plates and headed toward the kitchen.

“Dessert is ready whenever you want,” Luka said, sounding gruff.

A chair scraped against the wood floor as Phoenix stood and said, “The least I can do is clean?—”

“Nah, no worries, Petal. There isn’t much. I got it.”

Winking at the younger man, watching him blush, put a smile on my face before I disappeared through the threshold of the kitchen.

In a hurry to get back to Phoenix and Luka, I rinsed the dishes and scrubbed the pans with hurried movements. Dish duty was easy, especially when Luka had all the talent as the cook.

But as I shut off the water, I knocked over a glass I’d forgotten on the side of the sink and gasped as cold water soaked my shirt. With the last glass inside the dishwasher, I reached back and pulled my tee off, stopping by the laundry room and chucked it in the hamper.

When I walked back into the dining room, Luka laughed with heat in his eyes. I loved that look.

“Are you trying to impress him with your six-pack?”

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Phoenix turned toward me and I watched his eyes widen and his mouth drop open. Rather than look away, his cheeks brightened with a peach blush as his gaze, which felt like a caress as his eyes moved over my neck, down my chest, and over my abs until he landed on my crotch and blinked. Torn between my naked skin on display and my dick trapped behind the tight denim, those blue eyes darted around, never focusing on one part of my anatomy.

Then, without looking, the younger man reached out, grabbed Luka's tee and dragged the amused man closer.

"Yeah, I got nothing. Let's stare at Burton. Unless..."

"Unless, what?" Luka asked.

He unclenched his hand from Luka's shirt, but didn't let go.

"Do you want to join him? But, if you do, take it off with excruciating slowness."

My head dropped back, and I groaned. "And now I'm hard."

The younger man's eyes snapped to where the outline of my dick was dangerously close to the zipper and back to Luka, where I noticed my friend wasn't immune to the younger man's curiosity. His nipples were taut and the white tee did nothing to hide his arousal. At that sight, again, my dick jumped in my pants.

Phoenix gulped. "Are you going commando?"

I nodded before we both peered at Luka.

“Sometimes, but not today,” he replied.

Phoenix grunted while Luka laughed.

“There is nothing more that I want than getting naked with you and exploring every inch of you and Luka. But I’m going to be the responsible one here, put on a shirt, and we’re going to talk about our relationship and a lot of what that entails.”

A whimper slash whine sounded from Phoenix’s throat and the sound did nothing to calm my raging hard on, so I shuffled toward the closet near the bathroom and snagged a shirt from the last time I did laundry but didn’t bother to carry any of it upstairs.

When I got back to the dining room, Phoenix’s face was a shade darker. He blinked up through his eyelashes at me.

“What?”

Exhaling a considerable sigh, he leaned back in his chair and lifted his gaze to meet mine.

“There’s more to you than your sensual, muscled, ripped body and the significant bulge I wanted to reveal inch by delicious inch... but that’s beside the point. You’re a person, not a sexual being in your prime who knows how to please several men, me and Luka in particular, and I shouldn’t objectify you. Sorry?”

The silence grew between the three of us, only broken when Luka laughed. The sound rumbled through me, along with Phoenix’s lighter giggle, and I settled into a chair with a smile on my face.

“Why, thank you, Petal. I appreciate the compliment. But compared to you; all pale skin, bright white hair, pouty lips that have fueled more than one wet dream since I laid eyes on you, next to Luka, who’s your physical opposite in every way with his scruffy beard?—”

“Hey!”

I continued, despite the obvious objections.

“And his dark, messy hair, towering over both of us, and that’s on top of his wide shoulders and perfect bubble butt... yeah, now I forgot my point. Oh, I remember. At least for me, I’m tempted by both of you, but there’s the possibility of so much more than our simmering physical attraction, despite three opposing personalities.

“Luka is purposeful with everything he does, takes responsibility for things in and out of his influence, and is a grump on the best of days. You, Phoenix, work harder than the both of us, but you don’t see the beautiful and positive things about yourself that Luka and I do. And I take fuck-all with the seriousness the issues deserve. Well, at least that’s the image I project. I’ve been dismissive, harsh without meaning to, and an outright shit when I was too lazy or uncaring to find it in myself to understand another person’s point of view.”

Luka cleared his throat. “I think what B is trying to say is that despite all our flaws, which are in abundance, we crave a relationship with you. We’ll take it at your pace. But the important question we want to know is if you want to try being with us?”

“So, what does it entail? I’m not... experienced with relationships, so I’m not versed in what you expect.”

“What?” I asked, surprised.

Phoenix's eyebrows furrowed for a second, as if debating with himself.

“For the longest time, I believed I might have been ace. But thinking back, I was too busy to notice anyone. Arthur pointed out, on various occasions, men to me whenever he found one attractive. I'd examine the man with an unbiased lens, but soon my thoughts wandered to a new recipe or which plant I should propagate next. Until you two came into my bakery.”

His statement caught my attention. “What do you mean, you were too busy?”

Phoenix, without an ounce of artifice, confessed.

“I’ve worked since I was fourteen. After school and during the summer, I interned in my father’s real estate office doing everything but selling properties. At eighteen, I earned my license, which I didn’t want. But after forty hours of courses, passing an exam, filing for approval from the board, passing another exam to become a salesperson, and then having my father, who tried to teach me everything he knew about being a sleaze bag, sponsor me, I was a certified realtor. I have no issues with the profession, just my father.

“Anyway, from my last name alone, I snagged high-paying clients. All I focused on was my dream of owning my bakery and didn’t think about the other agents who dealt with the cheaper properties, making meager commissions in comparison, but I did as soon as I quit.”

He sounded miserable as he took on guilt that wasn’t his to carry. Finding no words to express that opinion, I sat there, feeling helpless to combat Phoenix’s distress. I squeezed his hand as Luka pulled him against his chest. Phoenix buried his face against Luka’s solid form and stroked his thumb against my sensitive palm before he continued.

“To save everything I earned, I worked nights and weekends. It didn’t matter. Of course, my father thought I inherited my talent and drive from him, but it was desperation, not a great work ethic on my part. By the time I was twenty, I bordered on collapse from exhaustion from both working myself to death and the constant criticism day in and day out, so I used my years of stable employment along with the down payment I scraped together and asked for a business loan. With the last name of

Aalto, it was another advantage for no other reason than reputation. Guilt swamped me for five-seconds after they approved the loan until I realized I'd own my business to shape and decorate and build up my way. And it had nothing to do with Hale fucking Aalto."

Luka met my eyes, and by his expression, the revelation startled him, too. I'd wondered why Hale chose an out of the way bakery for their contract negotiations, but the reason didn't matter the moment we spotted Phoenix. During the meeting, we bristled each time Hale denigrated the welcoming and unique bakery, but thought nothing more about the man once he left with the signed contracts.

"Why did you both freeze? Is it because of my father?"

I nodded.

The younger man shrugged and asked, "Remember I said I sensed you each time you came in for a visit?"

"Yeah?"

"I spotted you sitting with him that day. It's a passive aggressive move on his part to do business in the corner of my bakery while ordering nothing and making snarky, hurtful comments to my staff. They all know who he is and ignore him. Or try to. Arthur takes great pride when he gets to wait on him, but instead of the passive-aggressive shit, he makes direct comments about what a terrible father he is until the man huffs out in a snit."

Phoenix was ours now, and we'd do whatever it took to keep our man happy. Yes, I knew it was too early to declare ourselves in a relationship after we started getting to know him only hours before, but I shrugged off the technicality.

Luka said, “We’re the only landscaping business he hires. But with every new commercial property he wants to sell, he’ll make us jump through hoops in order to get the contract. The less said about the man, the better.”

“True. So. You were telling me about our relationship? Burton mentioned naked times, so... this will lead to sex eventually, right?”

“Fuck!”

CHAPTER 4

PHOENIX

During the week, my alarm, which tried hard in the mornings to wake me with annoying reminders at five-minute increments, was silent when I blinked my eyes open at four something in the morning. I was guessing at the time because when I woke, almost complete darkness surrounded me despite blinking several times.

And I had no clue where I was.

Not quite awake, I sucked in a sharp breath and noticed the scent surrounding me wasn’t unfamiliar, but also not my own. Then came the realization that the bed was far more comfortable than the double I slept in most nights. But it was the blackness of the room that was a dead giveaway. When I slept at home, I lifted my blinds and left my semi-sheer floral curtains closed, letting in the moonlight.

When I lifted my head off the luxurious pillow, my eyes searched around the space. I found and then squinted at the dim white numbers. When they registered in my groggy brain, I remembered the clock on a nightstand when they tucked me into bed the night before. I groaned at the confirmation of my estimation of the early hour before flopping back down and sinking into the lush mattress.

Unsurprised by how comfortable I felt in a strange place, I rolled onto my side and closed my eyes with every intention of falling back to sleep, but the bed shifted and my bladder made itself known.

Fuck a duck sideways on a pogo stick!

I sat up, squinting as I glanced around the room, the light from the clock providing no proper direction. A huff escaped as I struggled, searching for a way out of the blankets and the warmth encompassing me, which doubled my irritation.

As soon as I succeeded in my escape, a muscled, hairy arm wrapped around my torso and hauled me back against a solid, fuzzy chest.

Then I heard a whisper, which made my dick perk up.

“Where are you going, Sunshine?”

“Cheese and crackers! You can’t use that deep rumble of a sleep-laden voice on me when my... never you mind. Can you point me toward the bathroom? Or better yet, push me in the right direction and with a bit of luck, I’ll stumble into the actual door,” I whisper yelled.

“It’s not that dark.”

“How many fingers are in front of your face?” I paused for a moment. “The answer is none because it takes effort to wave my hand around and I’m concentrating on not peeing myself! Besides, you couldn’t see them anyway because of the inherent absence of any light in this room! So, can you point out the bathroom, please?”

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Luka opened his hand over my chest and the sudden need evaporated, leaving in its wake a shiver of anticipation. Then Burton ran his fingers along my jawline and I gasped.

Shit! Morning breath!

I bolted out of Luka's hold and fell off the end of the bed onto the floor.

"Fuck!"

I clucked my tongue at Burton. "That seems the only word you know."

"It's because you've made it a habit of saying outrageous things or somehow hurting yourself."

"Nah, it didn't hurt. I'm clumsy and when I have my mind on something else, everything around me falls by the wayside."

Without standing, I crawled my way straight and found a door. I opened it and stood, reaching out, and searching for the light. I slammed my eyes shut when the space brightened.

"Score!" I said, "Okay! Be right back."

I shut the door behind me and stumbled closer to my goal, letting out a sigh of relief. After I washed my hands, I noticed a toothbrush laying in the plastic mold on the counter. Hoping it wasn't Burton's, I scrubbed my teeth and tongue before rinsing

with the mouthwash. By the time I finished, my body sagged with the need for more sleep.

When I shut off the light, I blinked, getting adjusted to the darkness before opening the door and running straight into a solid chest. Burton's this time; it was less hairy.

"I didn't mean to curse."

"Oh, Burton, I didn't mean it as a criticism."

It was then I realized something.

"Wait, whose room did we sleep in?"

Luka grunted, before a lamp from the nightstand brightened. "Mine."

"Again, not helping with the seductive voice there, Luka. Okay, and for the sake of clarification, we, meaning Burton and I, slept in your bed, with you, and I don't remember any of it?"

My eyes took in the elegant room. A fuzzy rug spanned the floor under both nightstands and the bed, taking up most of the space. There was a beige loveseat next to the bay window. But the centerpiece in the room was the king-sized plush cloud of softness covered with a steel blue duvet and underneath, crisp white sheets where Luka; the shirtless, tempting man sat.

Another grunt, followed by, "Well, you stayed awake long enough for a movie and dinner, but soon after, you sagged against B and fell asleep. I carried you up to bed since B insisted my bed was the one spacious enough to hold all of us, which is funny considered we slept sandwiched next to each other the entire night. We joined you after I finished up some accounting and B worked out and showered."

It all came flooding back. After I asked, on impulse, about the chance of the three of us having sex, both of them expressing concern, wondering if they pressured me into asking that question.

“No, I want to know because if the two of you don’t want me to suck your dicks or have both of you inside me... one at a time unless I’m outright prepared for it, or other sexually explicit scenarios I could come up with, then I would like to know. Not about the double penetration part, but about the not wanting to have sex with me part.”

Luka’s jaw dropped, and Burton doubled over and held his stomach, moaning in pain. When I went to check on him, he had tears streaming down his face before he fell over onto the floor, laughing.

“Why are you looking at me like that, Petal?”

With narrowed eyes, I glared at a sleep ruffled Burton. I crossed my arms and tapped my foot, forgetting I was wearing low-rise green trunks and nothing else. I still managed a pout. “You laughed at me.”

“No, I wasn’t laughing at you, Petal. What I am is immature and obstinate. So when you said ‘double penetration’ without pause, I didn’t know whether to laugh or try it. I sure as fuck knew I didn’t have near enough lube in my room and before I could ask Luka if his supply was stocked, laughter won out. You startled me and what you said turned me on. My dick was confused.”

Luka snarled, “B, please stop saying dick when we’re all but naked. I going to brush my teeth and after?—”

“Naked fun times?” I asked.

“Kissing, I was going to say kissing.”

“Andthen naked fun times?”

“What if I say yes?” Luka shot back.

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“Yay for me.”

“And for me,” Burton agreed. “I’ll be back.”

Watching Burton’s backside as he left the room was an experience I’ll not soon forget.

But when Luka stood with his back to me, rummaging through his dresser, holy hotness, who knew that little dip at his lower back was so sexy. I wanted to run my tongue over it and trail down...

Luka turned toward me and my eyes met his amused gaze until they dropped toward my pulsing cock, outlining my already tight trunks.

When my eyes moved for evidence of his reaction to my near nakedness, I became mesmerized by his belly. I’d never thought about whether I liked hairy or smooth men, but everything about Luka called for me to touch and caress. Also, his stomach wasn’t as flat as Burton’s, yet my hands tingled in anticipation.

Fuck!

As I wondered whether he was salty or sweet, I licked my lips.

“Sunshine,” he started walking backward toward the bathroom, “hold that thought.”

My mouth turned down, and I crossed my arms over my chest, petulant.

“Fine!”

I lunged for the bed and spread out when I landed on the soft comforter. The early fall morning held a chill in the air, so without the heat from both men surrounding me, I shivered. I snuggled under the sheets and closed my eyes, savoring the coziness in my enclosure with the mingled scents of the two men I wanted more than my next breath.

Without realizing it, I'd fallen asleep and dreamed of kisses and rough hands over my soft skin as I arched into the imaginary touch, wanting it to be real.

Never had my fantasies been so vivid.

“Sunshine, can we touch and kiss you?”

Relief and something I couldn't identify unfurled in my chest as I became conscious. At least I hoped I was.

“Yes... please! Need you both.”

Fingers caressed my cheek, brushed along my neck, and a gasp of surprise escaped me as they brushed one of my distended nipples, causing my back to arch into the touch.

Without shame and craving Luka and Burton more than my next breath, I scrambled to remove my trunks, leaving me bare and desperate for their touch.

“Oh, if I'm dreaming, please don't wake me up.”

The two men settled next to me on the bed.

“You're not dreaming, Petal, because my imagination pales compared to you right

here in this bed, all flushed and delectable as you lay naked, wriggling between us.”

Burton skimmed his hand up my thigh before swallowing my gasp into his mouth.

I keened at the delicious sensations from his touch and our kiss.

The pressure on my lips and his teasing, searching tongue caused my cock to pulse and my entire body jerked, ready for release. It was too early; the last thing I wanted was to come.

I ripped my mouth away and panted out, “I’m... can’t... don’t want to come.”

Luka pressed soft kisses along my cheeks, brushing against my swollen, sensitive lips, before burying his face into my neck and nipping at the sensitive skin under my ear.

“Ah, yes!”

Burton made his way down my chest, his lips teasing my nipples with his hot breath and a dart of his tongue as he tasted me there.

It ramped up my desire to come, and I glanced down to see a pool of precome near my belly button.

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“Maybe we should edge him?” Burton asked.

I’ve watched plenty of porn, not bragging or anything, but there isn’t much in stimulation when you’re alone and working most of the time. I understood what edging was, and it hadn’t appealed to me in the past and didn’t now.

“Burton... what’s your full name?”

“Burton Maxwell Horváth.”

I glanced at the other man. “Luka Kavka.”

“And I’m Phoenix Henrik Aalto. If you edge me, I’ll move off this bed, find lube, and kneel on the couch with my ass on display for you, and finger myself until it drives you insane and I come all over myself. All of it without letting you near me.”

Luka’s deep rumble of a laugh, I’m ashamed to admit, almost made me shoot off like a rocket. I strangled my cock in my fist and breathed through my nose.

“You wouldn’t let us touch you?” Burton asked with a mischievous smile on his face.

I beamed back at him. “Not if you’re going to deny me pleasure.”

The bigger man shrugged and tucked himself back against my neck, inhaling before pressing his lips to my skin. “Your taste is nothing I’ve ever experienced before. If all I have throughout my life is touching you like this, I’d die a lucky man.”

“And your voice when you’re turned on... fuck me.”

Instead of taking offense, Burton kissed down my chest, sitting up on his knees before shuffling down until he settled between my legs. My mouth watered as I watched, in those few seconds, Burton’s proud cock on display. I opened my thighs wider, brushing against Luka’s girth, which made me suck in a shocked breath.

“Are you both hung with width enough to make me drool?”

“And now you understand why you shocked us with the double penetration subject.”

I huffed and opened my mouth to comment, but Luka beat me to it.

“It would hurt and we’d never do that to you. Ever, Sunshine, so get that thought out of your head.”

One nod was the only sign I gave to tell him I understood because Burton’s tongue shot out and licked at the near constant precome leaking from me. I sucked in a breath and Luka froze next to me. With deliberate movements, his head rose as he scrutinized every one of Burton’s motions. The licking moved onto taking my sensitive dick into his mouth as he sucked on me like a lollipop.

My hand reached out, and I encased Luka’s... swollen, engorged, thick, throbbing... I couldn’t pick an adjective. Each word described his marvelous cock. With Burton’s mouth on me and Luka leaking against my hip as I grasped him, all rational thought fled, and I let go. If I was coming, I hoped to take the other two with me.

With my free hand, I reached out and grabbed Burton by the hair, lifting his head off my cock. A dazed expression; an unfocused gaze and swollen lips made Burton even more of a temptation.

“Come up here.”

Without wavering, he climbed up my body and fit his hips against mine. When our cocks brushed together, he tipped his head back and cursed.

I locked my legs behind his hips and, with the scant brain cells I had left, I turned to Luka.

“I want to suck you until you come. Please?”

After a long, silent pause, Luka climbed onto his knees and wriggled closer, all without me letting go of his cock. Tilting my head to the side, I cupped his tight ass with one hand and swallowed him down in a swift movement.

Watching me inhale his best friend’s dick had the desired outcome when Burton’s body lurched forward and our cocks slid together, slick with our combined excitement, adding to the immense sensations.

Forgetting to take Luka’s cock out of my mouth before speaking, I mumbled my demand toward Burton, which had the benefit of Luka dribbling into my mouth.

“Burton, you need to rub your cock against mine because when Luka pours down my throat, I want to feel your hot come on my stomach and chest.”

I then lost myself in sensation. My hole clenched, feeling bereft. But listening to both men seeking their pleasure with my cock trapped between Burton’s body as we rubbed together while Luka carded his fingers through my hair, chanting my name over and over, and I soon tensed as my spine tingled with the onslaught of my release.

Luka’s entire length filled my throat, and I whined against his hardness as my orgasm

struck me with breathless violence.

My hand flexed on Luka's firm ass, my pinkie brushing against his crack, and he stiffened before his cock swelled, shooting his hot come down my throat as his body shivered above me. My tongue swiped at the last of his come, but as his body quavered with overstimulation, I drew off of him.

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Burton growled, “Fuck, I want to come inside you.”

“Next time, bah! I want to clench down as both of you fill me, but for now, mark me!”

As he writhed on top of me, he reached for Luka and captured his mouth in a scorching kiss.

My dick jumped and dribbled at the sight.

Luka reached down without breaking the kiss and ran the tip of his finger around the crown of Burton’s pulsing prick, but when his thumb ran over his frenulum, Burton clung to the bigger man and devoured Luka’s mouth.

Hot ropes of come painted my stomach and streaked over one nipple. I reached up, curious, and licked the creamy essence of Burton off my thumb.

“Fuck!”

Both men fell onto the bed next to me as I slow blinked. My body sunk into the bed and because of the heat given off by Luka and Burton’s mere presence, I felt warm and safe.

“Mm nnngg ff,” I mumbled, unable to form words. Exhaustion overwhelmed me. My eyes blinked closed before I drifted off into oblivion.

CHAPTER 5

LUKA

It'd taken me two and a half weeks to get used to Phoenix's schedule despite already being an early riser, by that I mean six-thirty unless it was the weekend, so being conscious at four-thirty was a struggle.

Before our lives intertwined, and on a typical morning, Phoenix woke at five because he lived above his bakery. He'd stumble his way downstairs to create the delicious pastries and breads in distinct flavor combinations he changed up every week, while drinking copious amounts of coffee to wake at his own pace. Then he'd make his own mayo for the various aiolis for the sandwich offerings that day, among a million other tasks which made his bakery and the food he served spectacular.

Curious, I asked him why he opened at seven instead of earlier. His sassy answer made both me and B smile.

"Since there is a certain coffee chain on every corner, sometimes even right across the street from each other and they open at stupid o'clock, the early risers can get their coffee. Plus, people don't eat breakfast right after they wake up. They also choose not to eat food trucked in, made from various vendors with differing results pulled out of packages and displayed as though they were homemade." His growl impressed even me.

But the man's ordinary days changed after the initial weekend we spent together. Friday afternoon exposed our desires and the truths we'd all be hiding for months, along with relieving the pressure of all the what if's we'd had before he came home with B and I.

Saturday morning changed something fundamental in me.

The intimacy we shared, while intense because of it being our initial foray into

revealing our connection to each other, settled those incongruent thoughts about our budding relationship. Phoenix was secure knowing that we wanted whatever was best for him and felt free enough to explore his sensual side.

In the minutes B and I left him alone in my bedroom, now our bedroom, Phoenix crawled under the covers and fell asleep. As if sensing my and then B's presence, he kicked the covers off his striking body and allowed us to study him. His pouty lips pursed, even in sleep, an inducement if there ever was one. The paleness of his skin as it contrasted with the peach of his mouth, bringing his sexy physique into focus. His head turned toward me with his hand near his face, his other opened on his stomach, the picture of temptation incarnate, although I'd known it wasn't on purpose.

The sultry side of the younger man staggered me when he stretched out on the bed, similar to a cat sunning himself. After getting his permission for me and B to touch him, he revealed flawless skin along with his cock, which matched his body type perfectly. The sight of his long, slim, and pale dick pressed alongside B's thicker one sent heat rushing through me.

But what set me off was the direct, demanding side coming from the shy, enchanting man who knew the precise method to command us to do his bidding.

He reined in B, denying him control, and directed him to where and how he wanted him. I'd never seen my best friend so compliant, but the soft expression on his face and the spark in his emerald eyes told me everything I needed to know. B, like me, would go to the ends of the earth for our man.

I heard the back door open and the click of the girls' nails against the wooden floor as they headed out to the backyard. After a moment, arms wrapped around my waist and hands opened over my stomach as he burrowed his face into my back as his unmistakable vanilla scent drifted up to me.

I sighed as a sense of peace washed over me and placed my sizable hand over his, savoring his touch.

“Sleep well?”

He nodded, rubbing his forehead against my back. His words made me chuckle.

“Yeah, I’ve never slept better. Although it took me several minutes to wiggle out of Burton’s hold. He was dreaming and didn’t want to let me go.”

After the weekend where we persuaded the younger man to spend those few days getting to know us and ingratiating himself as Stella and Ruby’s favorite human, Phoenix headed home Sunday afternoon to prepare for the week. As we dropped him off, it was as if I was missing a piece of myself.

That night, B and I barely slept. My king bed was empty without either man by my side, and B complained the entire next day about his ‘uncomfortable as fuck’ bed and no warmth.

But when we walked into Phoenix Rising and spotted our man leaning against the glass display, eyes heavy lidded with bruised smudges underneath, my heart stopped.

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“What happened?” Without waiting another moment, I guided him into my arms and sighed when he burrowed his face against my chest.

Arthur glared at me, turning to B when he reached for a triple chocolate chip ice cream sandwich cookie and slapped his hand away.

“I’m guessing you two, since he’s lost the ability to speak. If you broke his heart, I’m going to find a boning knife and?—”

“I slept three hours last night. It wasn’t their fault.”

“Were you working late?” B asked.

Another shake of his head against me and I shivered at his touch. When I inhaled him in, another part of me melted.

After making a pivotal, split second decision to tell him the truth, I rubbed the younger man’s back in a circular pattern.

“Sunshine, both of us slept horribly last night and we know it’s because you weren’t with us. This isn’t a decision you should make lightly, but I?—”

“And me, too,” B added.

“What do you think about staying overnight with us and then I’ll drive you back here every morning?” I asked.

He leaned back from my chest and my hands froze on his back as he blinked at me. I growled at the sight of his red-rimmed eyes and puffy face. My finger traced over his cheek before I cupped his face, savoring his sigh and his touch when he leaned against my hand.

“I wake up so early, I’d disturb you two.”

“Ah, Petal,” B stepped closer and pressed a kiss to his mouth, lingering when Phoenix didn’t pull back, before he shivered as the younger man licked his bottom lip. “We’d sacrifice just about anything, even sleep, which it’s obvious we aren’t getting, because we weren’t in Luka’s bed together last night.”

“Wait,” Phoenix said. He rose on his tiptoes and tilted his head, giving me a fierce kiss, ending with a brief swipe of his tongue inside my mouth, leaving me panting and clutching him tighter to me.

When I spoke next, my voice rumbled out, “What, Sunshine?”

“You... two didn’t sleep together?”

“This is interesting,” Arthur said, shoving his face near ours.

I turned at the interruption, but Phoenix’s best friend’s face was far closer than I believed and I jerked back, taking Phoenix and B with me.

“Personal space would be great,” I grumbled.

“Yeah, he doesn’t know what that is. He’s seen me naked more times than I’m comfortable admitting and he comments on my grooming techniques. Every single time. It gets old because I’m never going to grow hair down there, only to trim it into a pattern. So stop asking me!”

Arthur winked at me before he patted my cheek, a wicked smirk on his face.

Phoenix stiffened against me as he sucked in a harsh breath, shaking his head. His friend froze when Phoenix exhaled a snarl.

Making no sudden movements, Arthur stepped back and moved his hand away from my face as our man bared his teeth. His eyes, wide and concerned, stayed on our man until he was out of Phoenix's striking range when a wide smile broke the serious expression on his face.

Phoenix yanked on B's shirt, despite the man already standing next to us, and brought his face close as he stared down at his friend.

"These two are off limits for teasing, walking in naked on, or wherever your sexually active imagination leads you, in order to see them in the buff. Which will never happen! I've never asked for anything, but the tenuous hold I have on my sanity at this moment leads me to believe I'll either become murderous or sink down to the floor and weep. So, please?"

"Ah, honey, I wasn't trying to cause you stress. I promise, I'll behave."

Tears formed in Phoenix's eyes, and we wrapped him up close.

"Where can we find the stairs to his apartment?" I asked.

Arthur whispered, "Head through the kitchen. You'll find stairs on your left. The key is in his back left pocket."

Both B and I nodded at the man.

“Love you, Arthur, and I’m sorry.”

“No worries, honey.”

Sensing Phoenix didn’t have the energy to walk, I lifted him and nestled him close with his arms around my shoulders and legs wrapped around my waist as B dug around his pocket for the key and dashed up before us.

B unlocked the door and opened it, but when I tried walking through, B stood frozen just inside the threshold so I bumped into his back. I searched Phoenix to see if the movement jolted him awake, but found him sound asleep against me. Adjusting the limp man in my arms, I lifted my head, searching for his bedroom, and gasped.

Despite the brief way Phoenix described his apartment and the vivid proof of his obsession with anything green, enriching the aesthetics of his bakery, there was no way my imagination could conjure the jungle we walked into. With double-hung windows on three of the four walls, it opened up the space, filling it with light. But what stunned me was the overall representation of a garden eden.

Verdant plants scattered throughout greeted us. Monstera’s close to ten feet tall, devil’s ivy sitting on top of overflowing bookshelves, strung along the crown molding that circled the entire room. Spider plants, English ivy, several types of rubber trees, snake plants, aloe vera, lavender, and many, many others I couldn’t identify placed around the room on stands, shelves, and tables, leaving it feeling like a sanctum.

When I peered closer, each terra cotta pot was hand painted. Unicorns, rainbows,

pastels of blue, yellow, green, and pink, along with glitter, some multicolored and others were rose, gold, hot pink, purple, aqua, all sparkled with the sunlight streaming in.

The cream and brown striped plush couch claimed the center of the room along with a coffee table, which looked to be a multifunctional piece. Empty pots, trowels, painting supplies, and an old-fashioned blue watering can lay next to books on plants and gardening along with an e-reader. The over seventy inch television was a bit of a surprise and so was the table of power tools in the corner near the kitchen, but at that moment my attention dropped away from the apartment when Phoenix shifted in my arms.

B pushed open a door, which contained even more greenery and art, but what drew my eye was the unmade queen bed, along with twisted sheets and a comforter crumpled on the floor.

After B spent the next few minutes making the bed, I lowered Phoenix onto the sheets, but he whimpered and clutched me closer.

“Don’t worry, Sunshine. We’re not going anywhere.”

As I pressed a kiss to his forehead, he turned on his side and brought his knees up to his chest. B covered him and the younger man tugged the thin blanket over his head before he let out a shuddering sigh and fell asleep.

Although exhausted and tempted to get into bed with Phoenix and B, I knew if I took a nap, I wouldn’t sleep later.

B closed the blinds, leaving the sun shining in through the tiny gaps. We left the door open an inch or two and walked into his living area. It also allowed us to hear him if he called for us.

“He never answered you about staying over?”

Concern outweighed the need to know if Phoenix would put us out of our misery. Despite his protests, he needed us as much as we needed him, and we’d compromise on the solution.

“Don’t worry, B. If he doesn’t want to stay with us, we’ll camp out here.”

It took a brief argument to persuade Phoenix to stay over after he woke up from his five-hour nap. That night, he packed most of his clothes and toiletries, which scenting Phoenix every morning during my shower left me hard more than once, along with a few plants, setting them in the windowsills in the kitchen.

“These are poisonous to dogs,” He pointed out.

I leaned closer and snagged a kiss, smiling against his mouth. “I wasn’t even worried, Sunshine.”

It was extraordinarily uncomplicated the way the three of us settled into a routine.

Waking early, eating breakfast that excluded sugar despite B’s heavy whines, and dropping Phoenix off before we headed to work. I’d pick Phoenix up around two and drove him home, heading back to work until five.

But every night as I cooked dinner with both men keeping me company, I found my craving to belong to someone satiated. Without knowing, the sensation that had gnawed at me over the years leaving me hollow fled because Phoenix and B gave me a sense of fulfillment nothing else in life provided.

It wasn’t about the sex, which was hot and astounding each time, but the bond forming between us, making me whole.

The pounding sound of B stumbling down the stairs brought me out of my thoughts as Phoenix tensed behind me. “Burton Maxwell Horváth, donotfall down those stairs! My heart can’t take it.”

When he rounded the corner, rubbing sleep from his eyes, he spotted us and stuck out his bottom lip in a pout. “I wasn’t going to, Petal. But the bed is cold and empty without you two in it.”

For thirty-one years, I’d never dreamed I could live my life with everything I’ve ever wanted.

Back in my early twenties, I’d grown tired of the dating and hook-up game, but after college and when B went back to dating women, there’d been several years where any hard dick would do. That grew old, especially when I found no satisfaction scratching that itch. I’d rather take myself in hand and use the variety of toys I’d purchased over the years.

Despite the countless blowjobs, frotting, and hand jobs we shared over the past few weeks, we hadn’t progressed further, despite our outspoken desire to do so. But with our early morning hours, we crashed soon after sunset. B still hadn’t adjusted all that well, but he made a valiant effort, which was how I ended up with him plastered to my chest when he stumbled over to us.

“This is the last morning we’re going to be getting up at the butt crack of dawn,” Phoenix announced with a yawn.

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B perked up and leaned around me, staring at the younger man. “Oh, thanks to whatever deity who loves sleeping in for this miracle.”

“You love baking in the early hours? Who’s going to take over?”

Phoenix rubbed his forehead against my back before letting go and coming around to my other side so I could see his face. I searched it for any trepidation about his decision, but found a soft smile and a sparkle in his blue eyes.

“Charlotte graduated from culinary school and instead of working as a pastry chef in a high stress environment, she wants to take over the sweet creations at the bakery. She wants to start a line of cookies and chocolate confections, and whatever desserts strike her fancy. I’ll be proving the doughs in the refrigerator from now on. And since I already add the last ingredients in for the final proof, all I need to do is bake when I get in.”

B’s brows drew down. “Will it hurt your business?”

“I’ve been experimenting with the taste of different fermentation times of dough and found if I chilled the dough for forty-eight hours, the pastry and bread taste better. There’s been a lot of research in recent years, but it wasn’t until I needed time outside of work that I felt the need to change it up. But trust me, you’ll love them the next time you have your dark chocolate espresso croissant, Burton.”

I chuckled at B’s widening eyes, knowing how much he loved Phoenix’s creations.

“Eggs Benedict or latkes, a cheese omelet, and turkey bacon?”

“Ooh, latkes, please. I love how you make the edges crispy and the insides fluffy,” Phoenix said.

As I leaned in for a kiss, my heart leapt in my chest as he tilted his head up to meet my lips without hesitation, and I lingered on the lush softness pressed against my own. He kept his eyes closed and sighed when I stood, and B took advantage, sweeping in and licking around his plumpness.

Watching my two men kiss lit an inferno inside me every time.

B surprised me when he cupped the back of my head and leaned in for a lingering kiss. Although part of me expected him to not be as affectionate with me as he was with Phoenix, he astonished me whenever he sought me out and I savored each moment.

“Feed us,” B groaned against my mouth, making me huff out a laugh.

With my two favorite people in the world sipping coffee as I got to work, contentment washed over me, making my steps light.

CHAPTER 6

BURTON

After callingout and getting no response, I went in search of Phoenix to get watering instructions for the newest additions to our flourishing plant collection. Focused on the task Luka gave me and not paying complete attention to my surroundings, I walked through the threshold into our room and stopped in my tracks.

My mouth dropped open, and my entire body throbbed at the sight before me.

It had been a typical Saturday. We woke early and Phoenix and Luka skipped downstairs for coffee.

Gah, I disliked mornings.

I grumbled aloud about how they were leaving me alone in a bed made for the three of us where I lay warm and comfortable before I cursed at the inevitable, rolled my ass out of bed, and stumbled downstairs.

Phoenix's regular warning about me tripping came as soon as I hit the top of the stairs, which amused me to no end. I had no desire to hurt myself, especially by breaking my neck on the stairs. But it got a rise out of him, showing his concern for my well being, which on top of warming me with the thought of being loved, also amused me to no end, and was why I continued to do it.

This morning, Luka went all out and had two new recipes to try; a croque madam, which was a delicious cheesy, eggy, melt in your mouth experience that when paired with coconut lime crepes filled with whipped cream and mango purée, had me moaning in ecstasy.

Between Phoenix's chocolate creations and Luka's cooking, I was planning on upping my workouts to every other day.

And from the way Phoenix licked the last of the whipped cream off his plate before he crawled on Luka's lap and sucked his soul out through his mouth, I'm sure he thought breakfast was delicious.

But what the fuck did I know?

"Luka! Bedroom!" When there was no response, I yelled, "Now!"

There was a grunt from somewhere below before heavy footfalls ran through the living room and stomped up the stairs.

“What in the ever living fuck are you bellowing?—”

When he was within arm’s reach, I clutched onto the front of his shirt and yanked him into our room.

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I focused back on the sight in front of us and blinked, allowing my eyes to roam over our perfect man splayed out on the bed.

Phoenix propped himself up on a mound of pillows, leaving his luscious, naked body on full, flawless display. His cock pulsed as we continued to gape at him, jumping against his stomach whenever he shifted his hips up. And when a drop of precome landed near his innie belly button, I restrained myself from leaping on him.

It seemed I wasn't the only one.

"Cheese and fucking crackers," Luka ground out.

A wicked smile formed on Phoenix's face as I watched him move in slow motion. The fingers of his right hand slid down his chest as his thighs widened, opening himself to our view. It was then I noticed something stationed between his legs, inside him, and I tightened my grasp on Luka's shirt. My cock throbbed, full, erect and leaking.

"Petal?"

"Yes, handsome?"

Before I could swallow around my parched throat or found my voice to ask him the questions swirling around in my not quite cognizant brain, the younger man's fingers reached the base of whatever was inside his core and pressed down.

The sound; a whimpered squeak followed by a low, throaty keen, locked down my

muscles and somehow, I found Luka's entire hard body pressed against my side as we stared at the one man we both wanted more than our next breaths. I was panting, but a continuous rumble from deep in Luka's chest vibrated through me, not helping with my pulsing cock on the brink.

"Do you do this often, Sunshine?"

A gasp escaped his throat as he threw his head back, wriggling on the bed, before Luka's question registered.

"No!"

His eyes snapped over to us, blazing with frustrated desire.

"Because you two can't take a fucking hint, or a direct request, I'm stretching myself open with this butt plug I found hidden in Luka's bottom dresser drawer and demanding you two put your dicks inside me before I lose my fucking mind! I've begged, printed out my negative test results and taped them to your laptop screens, walked around in a tiny tee and every single one of the boy trunks I own, all in garish colors, and even paraded around, dripping wet from the shower, hoping lust would overtake you two and you'd ravish me. But nothing besides hand jobs, blowies, frotting; all which fuck, feels so good. But it still excludes you two stuffing your impressive dicks inside me!"

"Is that the plug I got you as a gag gift?" I asked.

"Burton!"

I held my hands up to placate our sexually frustrated man, then stopped when Phoenix narrowed his eyes at me. I shrugged, not waiting a minute longer before I leapt to the bed.

Luka followed at a more sedate pace, but with a pained desire evident in his gaze.

When I cupped Phoenix's face and devoured his mouth, his groan vibrated through me, making me question why we waited so long.

Wasting no time, Phoenix snagged my shirt and lifted it up and over my head, breaking the kiss for a moment before his lips sealed back against mine. His delicate fingers trailed down my chest, which caused me to leak in my sweats, before he snagged the waistband and jerked them down over my hips. His legs wrapped around my waist as he shimmied them the rest of the way off with his feet.

The squirming against my throbbing, hard prick caused a series of whimpers to come out of my already dry throat.

When our kiss broke off, Phoenix scrambled to his knees, reaching for Luka, who followed his direction when he tugged the bigger man onto the bed.

With both of us watching, Phoenix reached between his legs and snagged the plug. He removed it with an unhurried air, causing his entire body to tremble and both Luka and I to moan aloud.

Never had a sight affected me as much as watching Phoenix in absolute ecstasy.

He fell onto his hands and knees, depositing the plug on a tissue he placed on the nightstand earlier. With a feral expression on his face, he crawled closer to Luka.

At the sight, I felt torn between examining every inch of his elegant body and light pink pucker or watching the younger man undress Luka and revealing what should have been familiar. Both had excited anticipation flowing through my veins, hot and needy.

The last time I'd seen my best friend naked, we'd been eighteen and lean from our days playing football. But as Phoenix revealed every inch of him, I realized Luka at thirty-one did it for me. When the younger man caressed his chest, tweaking his nipples, running his fingers through his chest hair, my palms landed on Luka's thighs. With a shiver, I thumbed along the crease near his balls before my hands caressed his belly. I couldn't stay away.

"I've been so fucking blind," I murmured.

Phoenix glanced over his shoulder and blinked, a frown marring his face as he studied me. Before long, he said, "The timing wasn't right when you were younger."

"And I had to grow the hell up. Fuck, Luka, you're... stunning."

“So are you, sweetheart.”

The rumble of Luka’s voice spurred both Petal and I into action.

Phoenix pressed his chest to the bed, leaving his legs parted and his ass on display. As Phoenix reached for Luka’s cock, making my mouth water, I no longer wanted to hold back with my men. I needed to touch and experience it all.

My hands moved up Phoenix’s pale thighs, and I couldn’t contain my moan as my palms slid over his rounded globes; leaving him bucking back into my touch. He didn’t hesitate to take his pleasure, which made me bold.

As Phoenix swallowed around the crown of Luka’s cock, stretching his gorgeous lips, I leaned forward, stuck out my tongue, taking a long swipe from the base of his balls and notstopping until I reached his pucker. Despite his lube-slicked skin, I inhaled his scent before licking him again, getting a taste.

He was delectable.

Powerless to control my urges for every part of this man, I held him open as I feasted.

Sticking my tongue inside his pulsating opening, I wondered why I’d never thought of doing this before.

I’d gone down on women, plenty of them, but I’ve never been so in tune with another person’s needs before. Somehow, my instincts told me when to press the tip of my finger along the edge of his entrance, making him flutter around my tongue, which

allowed me to push further inside him. And the sounds he made grew addictive as my body throbbed with unfulfilled desire.

“Oh, fuck, Burton. Harder!”

Incapable of denying this man anything, I scraped my teeth against the sensitive skin around his entrance and, giving him no time to react, shoved my tongue back inside him.

Luka ran his hands along Phoenix’s back, neither demanding nor taking control, but absorbing the pleasure of the moment. His entire form held rigid, but his hands moved to roam over my sensitized skin. When he met my gaze, the fire in his hazel eyes spurred me to touch him.

I reached for his hand and, while staring into his gorgeous hazel eyes; I started sucking on his index finger, enjoying the sharp inhalation at his surprise. When his digit was wet enough not to hurt our man, I guided him inside Phoenix while I lapped around the stretched hole.

It was enough of a sensation that Phoenix pulled off Luka and moaned as he pressed himself down on the thick index finger.

“More... add two more.”

Luka grunted his displeasure.

“I fingered myself open before I placed the plug, and it’s been inside me for hours. Please, Luka.”

Done with not giving Phoenix what he wanted while denying all of us the pleasure we craved, I wiggled my finger in to join Luka’s, sucking in a harsh breath when his

muscles clamped down on us. I imagined what it would be like for my cock to be surrounded by his tight, wet heat. But then a rush of sensations bombarded me as I remembered being inside of Luka all those years ago and I dribbled precome onto the bed.

Shit! I hope I'd last long enough to satisfy him at this rate.

A whimper escaped my throat at the flush of Phoenix's skin, taking on a peach shade all over his body. His white hair was messy and when he glanced back at me, he looked wrecked.

"What do you want, Petal?"

Without saying a word, Phoenix disentangled himself from both of us. He reached for Luka, arranging the man on his back, leaning against the mound of pillows, leaving him splayed on the bed. Luka gripped the younger man's hips and positioned Petal on top of him. When he was comfortable, Petal crooked his finger, beckoning me closer, and I shuffled forward on my knees.

"I want Luka to keep my legs spread open as you sink into me. After you come inside me, then it'll be Luka's turn to mark me."

Luka closed his eyes on a groan and my entire body spasmed at the thought of being inside Phoenix.

Finished with his explanation, he reached for my wrist and dragged me closer, capturing my lips in a kiss, scorching me from the inside out.

Not waiting another minute, Phoenix broke the kiss and lifted his knees up to his shoulders. Luka took over, taking the burden from our man with a look of utter fascination, ducking down and peppering Phoenix's neck with kisses.

The younger man glanced back and asked, “Are you okay, lover?”

A grunt and a nod satisfied him, especially after taking a moment to capture Luka’s lips in a kiss.

Yanked closer, I settled my cock against the crease of his ass, rubbing against Luka’s silky cock for a moment, which was indescribable, before I reached for the lube and stroked my dick. As Luka bent his knees, splaying open Phoenix’s legs, my hunger overtook me and I nudged at his entrance.

“Yes!”

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With patience and a healthy dose of fear that I might hurt Phoenix, I lined up the head of my cock against his pucker and inched my hips forward. His heat surrounded me before I managed a deep breath and closed my eyes to savor the moment.

Impatient to get what he wanted, Phoenix reached for my forearms, bringing me closer at the same time his inner muscles pulsed around me. My eyes shot open at the overwhelming surge of pure heat and my gasps turned into full-blown panting. I plunged deep inside him in one stroke, appreciating the moment while losing my entire mind from the sparks of absolute rapture shivering throughout me.

“Oh, Burton, you are fucking huge. I feel so... full.”

About to ask him if I was too much when he let out an obscene moan as I shifted my hips, slamming my mouth closed and not moving, allowing him to get used to me. It took all my strength not to pull out and plunge inside him, claiming him once and for all. My control almost fell apart when Luka tilted to the side and fingered around his hole, sliding a roughened, calloused finger along the base of my cock.

“It’s the biggest fucking turn on to see you two like this,” Luka sounded ruined.

While he captured Luka’s lips, Phoenix shifted his hips up, reminding me he wanted more.

I leaned back, watching his fluttering hole until only the tip of my cock was still inside him, and slammed back into him, angling my hips to where I brushed against his prostate each time.

Luka swallowed his shout before both of them moaned.

Powerless to stop myself, I rammed in and out of Phoenix, loving the sound of our skin slapping together and watching the play of muscles along Luka's biceps and forearms as he held on to a wriggling, mindless Phoenix.

"Luka," I grunted.

As he leaned up and wedged Phoenix between us, I swept my tongue inside Luka's mouth and felt my cock swell as he sucked on it. One of his hands that wasn't clamped around our man's legs cupped the back of my head as he plundered my mouth.

"You two kissing is such a... ah, fuck, harder Burton!"

My heart swelled. During the hottest sex in my entire life, a surge of a sentiment I never believed I could experience washed over me. I wasn't sure if I loved these men yet, although I suspected I did by the rush of tenderness and intense devotion encompassing my entire being.

The familiar roll of heat licked up my spine, signaling my loss of control, and after three more deep strokes, I stiffened.

"Petal, ah, shit, I'm?—"

As Phoenix cupped my face, giving me a fierce kiss, I let go. My orgasm overwhelmed me and as I swelled inside him, I shot hard. I laced my fingers with Luka's as I plundered Phoenix's mouth, connecting myself to both men.

Sensitive from such a heavy release, I panted as I pulled my hips back, easing out. I groaned at the sight of his fingers circling his hole and playing with my come as it

oozed out of him.

Choked by my feelings and my body on a high I'd never endured, I could not speak.

Luka lifted the smaller man in his arms until they lay nestled on their sides.

I settled down facing them and felt a twitch of my dick coming to life as Luka's hips shifted and his hard, leaking dick slipped inside and stretched Phoenix's hole wider, all the while kissing the back of his neck as I reached out and placed the palm of my hand over my Petal's heart.

There wasn't any control in my best friend's movements as he slammed his hips forward, shoving his bulk inside our man, making me clench and quiver at the thought of being fucked by him.

When a whimper escaped Phoenix, I reached out and wrapped my free hand around his cock and stroked him in time with Luka's thrusts.

My mouth fluttered around his as he both clung to me and Luka, letting us know his delight in being fucked by both of us. Between Luka's grunts, me whispering filthy words hoping to push them over the edge, and Phoenix begging, we were a time bomb waiting to detonate.

"Mark me, Petal. I want your come splashed on my skin, making me yours as Luka coats your insides?—"

"Ah, fuck me, Sunshine! Yes, squeeze me!"

As Phoenix stiffened, his dick spluttered out the first rope of come, landing on my abs, bright white against my tanned skin. When the second one hit, Luka gripped Phoenix's hips and held his ass flush against him as he roared his release.

Witnessing Luka's balls twitch with his dick buried deep inside Phoenix raised my own to half mast, giving it a valiant effort.

He pulled back after a minute, out of breath, as I witnessed Luka's come dribble out of Phoenix's stretched hole.

Phoenix reached for me, breaking my fascination with the sight of our come mingled together inside our man, when he brushed his mouth against mine. He dropped his head onto Luka's arm and, after a gusty sigh, he closed his eyes. A soft snore a bit later let us know we wore him out. But as we sandwiched our man in between us to keep him warm, knowing we'd get up soon and carry him to the shower, I looked up into Luka's soft gaze and smiled.

"Was it as perfect as you imagined?" I asked.

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Luka shook his head. “Everything that happened is so much better than what my imagination could conjure. The strange thing is that instead of being less protective...”

“Yeah, I know. But we knew this would happen. You even warned me.”

With a sigh, he nodded, but said, “I’ve never coveted how anyone lived their lives; how much money they had or who they dated. But I acknowledge somewhere deep inside me that if I ever lost?—”

I cupped his face and stopped the words I couldn’t imagine. “You won’t. We’re not going anywhere.”

The emotional side of us developed with age, me more than Luka, because the man’s empathy knew no bounds.

But sex with Phoenix wasn’t meaningless or temporary.

He was our forever and even if it took the rest of our lives, I’d make sure both of them knew it.

CHAPTER 7

PHOENIX

As I stumbled into the kitchen, euphoric and sore from the activities of the night before, I glared at the two amused faces sitting around the kitchen island, sipping on

coffee as if they didn't have a care in the world. It'd been a week full of sexy times and smiles as I got to know a different side to each of my men.

My ass plopped down on the ground, and I surrounded myself with doggy kisses and hugs. The two doggies loved it as much as I did when I glommed onto them and absorbed as much serotonin as I could get.

"How is it I'm a half a decade younger than you two, and I'm exhausted?" I asked.

"Talent, Petal, and a vigorous workout routine to keep up with your insatiable demands."

A low, defined growl, of which I was proud of myself for being able to make, rumbled out of my mouth until Luka's gaze met mine and he gave me a soft smile which never failed to melt me into a puddle of goo.

"Okay, I can admit, it might not have been the best idea to ride both of you on the same night, after you wore me out from round one. But in my defense, my ideas are by-in-large winners."

After feeding both dogs' breakfast, Luka lifted me up, using his forearm along my upper thighs to balance me, and gave me a slow kiss. When we broke off to breathe, my heart leapt in my chest when I noticed Burton standing next to us, seeking his own.

The act of kissing these two was becoming addictive, and I never wanted all these feelings swirling around inside me to stop.

These men were my safe place, my happiness, my ultimate thrill, and although we'd yet to make declarations aloud, I understood on a fundamental level both were the loves of my life. I wouldn't give them up for anything.

Luka said, “It was our fault for denying you so long. The last thing we wanted was to push you?—”

“I understand why, lover, and like everything else, when I’m denied something, I go overboard because I can’t control myself when I get what I want. Speaking of which...”

I reached for Burton and smiled when he laughed at my manhandling. I loved when I made them laugh, a smile on their faces as they kissed me.

At the start of our relationship, the last thing I wanted to do was to alienate one of them, and so our shared affection was forefront in my mind. But as time passed, my sense of awareness of them developed into a need to have both of them close, tasting them and their distinct flavor; Luka was smoky, Burton spicy.

“So, what are we going to do today? We can?—”

A knock on the door made my eyes widen as Luka’s words died off. It was a rare occasion when we received visitors; other than the few neighbors that lived around our small cul-de-sac dropping by to say hi, but they wouldn’t visit at nine on a Saturday morning.

“Expecting anyone?” Burton asked, with an eyebrow raised.

I shook my head. “Arthur is in California visiting Jude’s family for the rest of the month, and Charlotte is working today.”

“Knock, knock!”

Burton cringed, and Luka groaned. Not his sexy groan, but one of frustration I disliked hearing. My fingers fluttered through his hair, and when he gave me his

mischievous smile, I relaxed.

“Parents,” both men said at the same time.

I shrugged and scrambled out of Luka’s hold. “Good luck! I’m going to inhale some coffee and hide in here, heading outside with the dogs when they’re ready.”

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Eluding both Burton and Luka's attempts to reach for me, I chuckled as they missed and danced out of the way until there was another shout from the front door. This one, a familiar deep male voice that made me freeze in my tracks.

Without my coffee, the elixir of life, I scampered out of the kitchen, then ran full force toward the stairs. Before I reached the second step, Luka lifted me into his arms as I struggled.

Well, not too much. I wouldn't hurt my man by flailing my legs and kicking his cock or something. I had plans for that delicious monster later.

"Phoenix, open this door! It's fucking cold out here!"

As happened whenever I dealt with my father, I collapsed in on myself and hoped the entire experience would be over before it began. Instead of allowing me to hide away until our guests left, Luka and Burton marched, with me still wrapped in Luka's arms, toward the front door, where Burton threw it open and glared at my father.

"Do. Not. Ever! Speak to Phoenix in that manner."

The two pit bull terriers who followed us to the door growled at my father, sitting in front of our feet and staring at the man. I loved all of them.

Hale Aalto was standing on their front porch, stoic as ever, even being yelled at by a man twice his size and dogs who looked at him as though he might be a tasty breakfast. He wore a suit and tie with his arms crossed, tapping his foot, standing next to his pouty plastic wife, looking as put out as I was.

I ignored the two people I disliked the most before I turned my gaze toward the people I assumed to be both Burton and Luka's parents.

I lifted my hand and wiggled my fingers, mustering a smile despite me hanging from Luka's embrace. "Hi. I'm Phoenix. It's nice to meet you."

"Aren't you precious?"

My cheeks heated.

"It's about time our boys found happiness."

My father spluttered, and he glared at Luka and Burton's mothers. "You mean you approve of this... disgusting display?"

An indescribable anger surged inside me, both unfamiliar and warranted in this situation. I leapt from Luka's arms and faced the one person who didn't deserve my respect.

"Let me tell you something, father? Whatever stupid, demeaning, misogynistic, homophobic, and whatever else that is about to spew out of your mouth; those thoughts can stay in your head. Our relationship isn't something you can buy or bully to make you feel more comfortable with the situation. You arrived on our doorstep without an invitation, and you're not allowed to come in and desecrate our home with your bullshit!"

His mouth dropped open, and he stared at me like I was a stranger. And I was. We'd never conversed about me, nor did he ask about my life, much less my dreams. But in his mind, I fit in a mold of his making and other than purchasing the bakery; he became content with me in the background, out of his way.

“You shouldn’t speak to your father that way,” Suzy said.

With a slow head turn, my brows furrowed with my mouth pressed in a straight line as I glared at the woman who’d never spoke to me unless she deemed it absolutely necessary. Which had been, oh, yeah, zero times during the last seven years of my life.

“Uh-oh, The Exorcist, it’s happening again,” Burton mumbled.

I ignored him in favor of getting the two people I disliked most in the world away from me and my life.

“Suzy, since you’re standing on our porch without an invitation, maybe you should let me decide how I speak to my father.” I turned back to the man and asked, “What do you want?”

He shook his head and asked, “What do you mean?”

“You’re a terrible liar, and the innocent act never worked with me because your soul is as black as my soil. So I’ll ask again. What... do... you... want?”

“I want you to persuade the entire block to sell their businesses to me so I can develop... well, never mind. That’s my business.”

“No.”

“Phoenix. Stop being difficult. You know I’ll get what I want. I always do.”

I shook my head and glared.

“Before I have Luka toss you off this porch and ruin that gaudy suit, I would like to

remind you that you groomed me into being a miniature asshole, AKA you, from the age of five. I know all of your tricks, deceptions, and the people who will fall in line when you threaten them. If you decide to go through with this, I'll do everything in my power to ruin you and your business.”

Although the man scoffed, there was genuine fear in his eyes because he knew I was telling the truth. I might not fight for myself, because there was no use using logic with Hale Aalto. He'd put pressure on my insecurities until I broke.

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But I would fight for the people on the block I knew; Mr. and Mrs. Moretti, who owned the fabulous Italian restaurant open for four generations along with their son, Gio, who ran it now and made food to die for.

Lacy Sullivan, who owned the flower shop and taught me all about orchids and African violets when my first few died and understood my obsession with plants.

The bike shop where customers would take a test ride around the neighborhood, and the sandwich shop that made the best roast beef in Boston.

There were other shop proprietors who I'd waved to, but haven't yet visited. But after this, I planned on getting as many owners to fight against my father's horrible gentrification plans.

"I know that look," Luka said.

Burton giggled before he waved everyone inside. Rather than following them, the two men stood at my back and glared at Hale.

"You know I always get what I want," Hale pouted.

"Not this time. I've always understood you hated me and I've accepted it, but to force others out of business because of nothing more than spite is a petty and... well, it's a fucked up thing to do. I'll fight you all the way."

And he chose this moment to shake me to the core.

“All the contracts I have with the two gentlemen behind you will be void if you decide on this course of action. It’ll be a loss no business can survive.”

I jolted where I stood as Luka let out a booming laugh. Burton joined him and as they leaned into each other, guffawing the entire time.

Empty threats.

I crossed my arms and glared at my father. Luka cleared his throat before he wrapped his arm around my waist, pulling me against his sculpted chest. Warmth flooded me at his casual, yet possessive touch and I melted against him, my rapid pulse calming.

“All our contracts are iron clad because of the lawyers we’ve involved. Although we’ve done business with you for years, we never trusted you, Aalto. But since you’re threatening our livelihood, consider us no longer available for your projects. Good luck coming in under budget or getting the job done at all.”

To a certain extent, the mature adult I hid behind the bright decorations, millions of plants, decadent sugar and dough creations identified the hole my father had dug himself into and didn’t take pride in the fact he was destroying his career on the petty and disgusting grudge he held against me for being alive. But the other side of me, the one who buried every hurtful comment and aggressive snipe my father had become an expert in, celebrated with glee.

His eyes flashed to me, his usual punching bag. “What are you smiling at, you fucking waste of space?”

“Your downfall, and it’s funny as hell because you believe you’re right. By the way, you’re still an asshole and getting worse with age, so get the fuck off this property and don’t come back. Ever. Also, you’re banned from Phoenix Rising for the rest of your life.”

“You—”

“I’ve held Arthur back for years. He’s a vicious bitch who will humiliate you with a wave of his hand. I predict your reputation is going to take a hit over the next few months, so a word of advice about my best friend. He won’t stop until he destroys you and Jude will do anything to protect his husband, so don’t start a war you can’t finish,” I snarled.

Without waiting for an answer, I stepped back. Luka and Burton stood tall next to me the entire time without jumping in, and I appreciated their support. We moved as one until we were past the threshold. Once inside, I gave Hale a bitter smile and slammed the door in his face, locking it, knowing he needed the last word.

After a typical confrontation, I’d shake for several minutes afterward and replay the conversation, coming up with all the things I would have said to him if I’d found the right words. But as I stared at the door, determination washed over me.

“I’m going to bury that motherfucker with his contrivances.”

“And we’ll help.”

I squealed and turned toward the voice, forgetting we had visitors, only to be blocked by Luka’s frame. I clamped my hands on the back of the tee he wore and peeked around him, making another sound when I noticed four sets of eyes on me.

“Hi, honey, I’m Naomie and this is my husband, Vani. We’re Burton’s parents.”

Not wanting to seem rude by hiding behind my two men, I popped out and shook both of their hands. As I studied them, I noticed the familiarity between Burton and his parents. His father was the same height as his son. Although the hair around his temples was a gorgeous silver, the rest was the same shade of familiar light brown.

His mother was the epitome of a gorgeous blonde, but her kind green eyes matched Burton's as she studied me.

"It's nice to meet you both."

Luka's mom stepped forward and enveloped me in a hug, which brought tears to my eyes. I inhaled and fell in love since she smelled like the earth and greenery.

"Oh, zaja, you are the sweetest. No wonder they fell for you."

"Um, yeah, what did you call me?"

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She laughed and said, “Not even going to deny it, huh? Anyway, I called you bunny. You are so cute and sweet. I’m Mileena, but you can call me Mi. And my husband, Lew.”

Since I was still in Mi’s arms, I waved at Lew, but he stepped close and wrapped both of us in a hug. Despite his taller frame, he didn’t have as much muscle as his son. But both Luka’s and Burton’s parents accepted me, even after watching the scene between me and Hale. I savored the parental love until Luka cleared his throat.

“Breakfast?”

I buried my face in Lew’s shoulder and mumbled, “Coffee, for the love of all that is good and holy, coffee, please.”

“Mom, you can let him go now. We’ve done our best not to scare him off and suffocating him isn’t helping,” Luka said.

Burton detached me from Mi’s warmth and wrapped me in his arms, resting his head on my shoulder before burying his face against my neck.

Taking advantage of the situation, I asked, “How do eggs Benedict sound?” Burton laughed against my skin, leaving me shivering.

Luka pulled me closer and kissed me. With his lips pressed against mine, he said, “Anything for you, Sunshine.”

He leaned down and pressed his lips to Burton’s, smiling when both sets of parents

let out a sigh of appreciation.

With a room full of people that brought out the happiness inside me, I followed everyone toward the kitchen with a smile on my face and, for the first time in a long while, lightness in my heart.

CHAPTER 8

LUKA

After an entire day being ignored by the people who raised you, because come on, B's parents were as involved in my life growing up as they were his, was... relaxing.

They doted on Phoenix and he absorbed all the love and affection he never received during his own childhood, while B and I sat in the living room and watched them with contentment. Other than the occasional meal I cooked, the parents banned us from the kitchen as Phoenix shared baking recipes with our moms while our dads repotted several plants after getting tips from the green thumb himself.

When they called it a night, B was asleep on the couch and I was five episodes into a mafia documentary I found fascinating.

"I'm heading upstairs for a bath," Phoenix said before shooting up the stairs and slamming the door to the bedroom, waking B.

I leaned closer and stole a kiss, loving when the man pressed his lips to my own and hummed.

"Are they gone?"

I nodded, sitting upright.

“Yeah, it’s about time. I thought your mom was going to propose they stay the night based on her disappointed look when Lew mentioned it was time to leave.”

B shrugged. “I’m pretty sure she loves Phoenix more than me, which isn’t surprising. But I loved seeing him open up to parental affection, especially with our dads.”

Phoenix called from upstairs. “Can you two draw all the curtains and lock up for the night?”

It was a testament to our man that we both stood right after his request and did as he asked. I tackled the kitchen and the side patio while B headed for the main door and the living room curtains. We never bothered closing everything at night before Phoenix moved in. But now, we walked around less than dressed on most mornings after sleeping together naked, so it became our nighttime routine.

Within a few minutes of us settling back on the couch, Phoenix’s soft footfalls alerted us he was heading downstairs.

I choked as the younger man strolled into the room, beautiful and naked.

The man was stunning.

As was the growing confidence in himself and the glow as he blossomed into the man he wanted to be. It turned me the fuck on. And B too, based on the whimper that escaped his throat.

Without a word, he sat on the coffee table in front of us, his gorgeous legs splayed open as he leaned back and rested one hand on the coffee table. The devious smile widened at the sight of the two of us sitting dumbfounded on the couch with our mouths open.

“It turns me on when you two look at me like that.”

His deep, rumbling voice shivered over me before I froze, becoming mesmerized as his hand moved down his chest, brushing over his belly and hips, before he wrapped a hand around his hard, leaking prick, stroking up from base to tip.

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As a moan escaped Phoenix, followed by an echo from B, both men pushed me closer to the edge, driving me insane even though neither of them had touched me yet.

“Sunshine! What?”

When his mouth opened and a rush of hot breath escaped him as he pleased himself, a shaft of need pulsed deep in my balls and my dick twitched.

“Do you know what I’ve been fantasizing about?” Phoenix asked.

My voice disappeared, so I shook my head.

B squeaked, but didn’t say a word.

“Although I’m a good... boy, most of the time, my naughty thoughts, well, they keep coming back to the two of you.”

B asked, “Do we get to touch you and make you come?”

Both of us cursed when Sunshine leaned his elegant neck back, closed his eyes, and let out a filthy moan when his cock jumped in his hand. I licked my lips as a bead of precome dripped onto his fingers.

“After,” he panted.

“What do you want us to do?” B asked.

At the glint in Phoenix's gaze, my body locked down when I grasped that his fantasy had everything to do with me and B making love. But a part of me, the irrational one who replayed the casual way B ended our friends with benefits situation all those years before in an unhelpful and painful way, dug itself out of the cavernous pit I shoved it into all those years ago. Before I could dwell on my swirling thoughts of panic, B stood.

The sensible side of me understood all three of us were in an exclusive relationship. While I savored being able to touch him, kiss him, and sleep with him, I hadn't realized until that moment I held my emotions back. When I found myself alone with my thoughts, I wished nothing more for our relationship to be forever and... real. I was falling hard for both B and Phoenix, but still wondered if B could love me back as more than a friend.

Jerked out of my depressive thoughts by B when he reached behind him and pulled off his tee. My mouth watered as I took in each defined muscle of his chest and stomach. I stood in awe when he unbuttoned his jeans and shucked both them and his underwear off, leaving him as naked and throbbing.

He straddled my legs, emphasizing the press of his hardness against my covered belly when B draped his arms over my shoulders and slanted his mouth over mine.

Incapable of resisting, I splayed my hands over the sweltering skin of his muscled back and hauled him closer until our chests plastered together. Then I devoured his mouth. Shafts of longing pierced me with each swipe of his tongue or nip of my lip, and I growled as his dick pulsed against me.

"Better than any vision I've come up with in my feeble imagination," Phoenix purred.

Standing with B locked in my embrace, I lowered him to his feet, needing to get naked as fast as possible while sending positive thoughts to all the deities above that

B wanted to slide inside me and fuck me until I forgot my name.

Shucking my clothes somewhere behind me, I snagged B's waist and drew him into a scorching kiss as I savored the taste I've grown addicted to. The two men I cared for were both distinct, yet delicious. But as we broke off, I turned toward Phoenix, wanting my mouth on him too. But he waved his finger at me.

"Nope, I'm here to observe. I just hope I don't come before you two do."

B pushed me onto the couch and snagged the lube on the coffee table next to Phoenix, his chest flushed with a delectable peach hue. He was temptation incarnate, sitting there with his addictive fingers wrapped around his gorgeous dick, panting as he surveyed us with half-lidded eyes.

"Do you want me to get on my hands and knees?" I glanced up and asked B.

The man shook his head and once again straddled me, popping open the lube with one hand.

"This time, I'm going to feel your thick cock sliding deep inside me, driving me insane until I come all over you. And fuck, I want to feel your cock expand as you come inside me. It turned me on to see your seed dripping out of Phoenix."

Before either I or B reached back to prepare him, Phoenix grumbled, "Fuck my stupid rules! I'm going to touch you."

Phoenix pushed B closer to my chest and dropped onto the floor, kneeling behind B. I wasn't able to see what was happening, but B's shiver as he slammed his mouth down on mine and moaned, leaking onto my hairy stomach as he wriggled his ass back toward the younger man, told me everything I needed to know.

When our kiss broke, I leaned to the side and curses burst from my mouth as I stared at Phoenix's tongue licking wide stripes up B's ass, pausing every other stroke to compress his tongue and propel it inside him.

“Yes, Petal, fuck me. Add a finger and stretch me open. I need Luka's dick inside me as soon as I can get it.”

With a loud snarl, I cupped the back of B's neck and brought him close. “Did I ever tell you that every time you talk dirty, it almost sends me over the edge?”

A whimpered moan escaped his throat as he thrust his hard dick against my skin. I reached down with my free hand and stilled his hips.

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“If you don’t want me to throw you on this couch and thrust inside you, pegging your prostate until you come all over yourself, and then keep going until you’ve had at least two orgasms, stop talking. Just the idea of being inside you and you accepting my body into your own has me on edge.”

B nodded, pursing his lips closed, before he turned and let out a high pitched keen as he surveyed Phoenix feast on his ass as he fingered him. As he moved to drive himself down on the younger man’s digits, my hold on him drew a louder whine from his throat and a demand.

“I need another finger, Petal. Stretch me wide.”

“Yeah, I love this side of you, handsome. The one who says everything filthy in order to seek your own pleasure. Are you stretched enough to take Luka’s massive?—”

The younger man giggled behind my palm held against his mouth, distracting me to the point I had failed to perceive B scooting forward and holding my dick up. I opened my mouth, hoping for the wise words advising him to take me without hurrying to burst forth, but when the head of my dick brushed his entrance, time stood still and my vocal cords seized up.

“That’s fucking hot,” Phoenix mumbled as he ran his hands up my shins to the inside of my thighs.

Before I realized he moved, the head of my cock pushed past the first ring of muscles as B fluttered around me, his eyelids repeating the movement as his head dropped back and he moaned at the intrusion.

Phoenix's moans joined with B's as B allowed gravity to accept me the rest of the way.

Unable to stay away while distracting myself from coming at the feel of his tight heat surrounding me, I ran my hands up his back and tilted my head forward enough to find his nipple. Not being at all gentle, I opened my mouth, baring my teeth, and slid my bottom ones from his lower pec until they caught on his engorged nipple. Scraping across it, loving the texture as my tongue darted out, teasing his hard nub, I wasn't aware of my movements until B barked at me.

"For the love of fuck, suck it already. Get it swollen and red as I wring every ounce of pleasure?—"

My hips surged up at the same instant I bit down, pinching his other nipple with my thumb and forefinger. B rewarded me with the lewd choke-scream, taking all of me, as I soothed the bite with my lips and tongue. He clenched his hole, making me bark out a curse against his skin.

Realizing we were in our own world and missing Phoenix, I lifted B off my cock and flipped him around until he lay sprawled against my chest with my arms banded around him. When the tip of my cock disappeared inside him, I lifted his legs up to his chest and lowered him down, drawing a long, low moan from him. Several curses burst from Phoenix as he clenched his eyes shut.

"Sunshine, please? You're part of this. We need you with us."

At my plea, he sat up before he assessed the situation. He pulled the coffee table closer and sat back down on it, then he leaned forward and kissed B breathless, before capturing my lips in the sweetest of caresses. After breaking the kiss, he dropped to his knees and centered his attention on B's dick. A drawn out lick from base to tip had B fluttering against me.

There was a flick of a cap opening, but as I drove my hips up, pressing my face against B's neck as I savored the reverberations from his vocalized rapture, I didn't pay attention to why Phoenix coated his fingers until a few moments later.

“Oh, Luka, hmnnn, watching Burton all flushed and dazed as he fucks himself on your dick is... there are no words. And Burton, you taking your pleasure from Luka is an instant fucking turn-on.”

As Phoenix leaned closer to swallow B to the hilt, a wet finger brushed against my hole, causing my hips to jolt up, brushing against B's prostate and making the man cry out in ecstasy.

When a long, skinny finger stretched me, giving me added stimulation that sent me to the precipice, I tightened my grip on B's waist and propelled my ass up and down, pushing Phoenix deeper into me before I canted my hips and skimmed against B's gland with each fervent movement.

I moved my mouth toward B's ear, sensing him getting close to losing it, and whispered, “Stretching you open as you take your pleasure from my cock being deep inside you?—”

“Can't...” B took several stuttering breaths before continuing, “With Petal's mouth working me over... and you swelling inside me, I can't take... much more.”

I kissed along his jaw, brushing my mouth against the corner of his lips, and needing a taste of his heated, sweaty flesh, I worked my way down to his neck where I licked a swath, savoring the rumbling moan from B's chest, before I sucked the skin of his neck into my mouth.

“Look down at our man, sweetheart.”

As the flushed and panting man wriggled around and glanced down, B's eyes widened as he watched Phoenix feast on his cock before catching the sight of his hands. The lewd moan that escaped his throat as his chest flushed red and he clamped down on my cock was a beautiful sight to behold.

“Is he fucking you...”

Unable to hold back, I captured B's lips in a fierce kiss. “Yes, he's four fingers in, flicking my gland as I'm trying to wrap my head around me being inside you, hoping like fuck?—”

Phoenix pulled off both B and me. When he turned to face away, B latched onto his hips and rubbed a thumb against his wet hole. I moaned, hoping like fuck I'd survive the next intense minutes without losing my mind or fainting.

As B spread Phoenix open and directed his body closer, I lifted one knee on the coffee table, changing the angle of my thrusts. Watching B's throbbing, leaking cock disappear inside our man's ready hole had me on the cliff's edge.

“Ah, fuck, I'm not gonna last. Not with seeing you two locked together and Sunshine's entrance...nngnng. Fuck!”

Within a few seconds, we developed a rhythm that had us all moaning and panting for release.

“B?”

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“Yes, fucking do it, Luka! Come in me, now!”

At finding all my control decimated at his words, I held onto his hips after one last thrust and emptied myself inside of him.

My orgasm triggered B’s and with two more strokes, he wrapped his arms around Phoenix and filled him with his milky, hot come.

The two of us relaxed back onto the couch, B falling to the side with my semi-hard dick still inside him, and I found my voice after clearing my throat.

“Sunshine, come here.”

When he stood on shaky legs and moved within arm’s reach, I wrapped my huge hands around his waist and guided him until his dribbling dick was right in front of my face. Without a word, I swallowed him down and bobbed my head as though he was my last meal, while exploring his stretched hole where B’s come was leaking out of him. My fingers squelched, the sound making me even more determined to make Phoenix come.

“I’m spent. Otherwise, I’d get hard at this sight,” B slurred.

As I pulled off a bit, I flicked my tongue along the head, paying attention to his glans, before I stuck the tip of my tongue in his slit, lapping up his essence. Swallowing around him, he rewarded me with a shout of rapture as rope after rope slid down my throat. I savored every bit of him as I could get as I pulled off of him and sat him on my lap.

With the three of us in a heap sharing kisses and subtle caresses, satisfied beyond anything I'd experienced before, I observed the two men I loved more than my life, content in the understanding that we made sense together.

And nothing or no one would take that from us.

CHAPTER 9

BURTON

It was funny how time passed when you were in love and untroubled.

Two weeks after Hale Aalto threatened Phoenix's livelihood and those of the neighbors surrounding Phoenix Rising, our man called a meeting to discuss their game plan and get other's opinions on how to fight their looming evictions. Phoenix became more determined when Aalto sent him and the rest of the business owners an official letter of intent.

As Luka and I passed through the doors of the bakery, a sense of pride encompassed me as I spotted Phoenix, who was an introvert, laugh with Arthur, his husband, Charlotte, and several customers, as though it was an everyday occurrence.

As Luka reached him, the bright smile on his face was brilliant, only dimmed when he sensed I wasn't next to them. But as he caught my eye from across the room, the sparkle was back. He wrapped himself around Luka, burying his face against the man's neck, and relaxed against him.

Helpless to stay away from both of my men, I turned toward them. Before I could take a step, a hand clamped onto my arm and spun me around. I groaned when a familiar, yet unwelcome, woman popped up in front of me.

“Still hanging out with Luka? You’ll never find a woman to stick with you if he’s always around.”

I chuckled at Cindi’s assumption I’ve wanted a relationship with a woman, especially because I’ve turned her down more times than I could count. I’d been clear, telling her in direct terms I wasn’t and would never be interested in dating her, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer.

Sighing, I opened my mouth to reply, but Phoenix walked up to me hand-in-hand with Luka. Without hesitation, he reached up and ran his fingers through my hair before he kissed me. Deeply.

As the kiss broke, I growled, “Fuck, Petal, I missed this. I missed you.”

The happiness dancing in his eyes as he relaxed against me, bringing Luka with him, settled me like nothing ever had. Although I’d seen him hours before, taking advantage of waking early with the three of us showering together, I understood with certainty after the surge of feelings whenever we were together, I’d grow old and my desire for these two men would never wane.

After our experience in the living room, we no longer held back from giving each other affection.

So when Luka’s smiling face leaned closer, I captured his lips in a searing kiss. Growing hard as I inhaled their mingled scents, I groaned as I thought about pulling both of them upstairs and —

A screech jerked me back to reality. “What the fuck?”

In a daze, I opened my eyes and blinked at both men after the interruption. It was then I noticed Luka’s stormy frown and Phoenix’s mischievous smile.

Phoenix turned to Cindi and asked, “Yes, honey? Can we help you?”

There was a bit of spluttering, but I couldn’t tell if it was from Phoenix’s sassy question or because of the three of us embraced. Either way, I couldn’t care less.

“Since when are you gay, Burton?”

The devious sparkle in Phoenix’s gaze caused the words to die in my throat as his eyes traveled down my face until they stayed on my lips. I licked them, savoring the taste of both men, and gave Phoenix a wicked smile when he whimpered.

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“Are you gay, handsome?” Petal asked.

Luka grunted in dissatisfaction.

I answered. “Labels aren’t important to me. I’m with both of you, so I’d say you and Luka are my boyfriends, but I don’t feel the need to define my sexuality.”

Understanding Phoenix’s protectiveness, I wrapped an arm around his waist. When he leaned back against me, I snuggled my shoulder against Luka’s wide chest and sighed when his arms enveloped both of us.

“Well, there you go,” Phoenix said.

Cindi’s face flushed a frightening red. I predicted she was about to go apoplectic when a gigantic, striking man stepped forward with a beaming, accepting expression.

“Congratulations, Phoenix! I’m happy you found not one, but two men to take care of you and keep you from working yourself to death.”

Phoenix scoffed, “You should talk, Gio. I’ve all but begged you to get yourself a partner. After all these years, both men and women pine for you and yet you never notice them.”

The adonis with black hair, scruff on his face that made him look debonair instead of disheveled, and a muscled, hard body accepted Phoenix’s move for a hug, wrapping our man in his arms, giving him a firm squeeze, before stepping back.

“Oh, you’re single?” Cindi’s voice piped up, making all of us turn to her with confused expressions.

Gio stepped behind me as I glared at the woman who, not even a minute before, had a fit when she learned I was with Luka and Phoenix.

“Mi dispiace, donna, I am very much gay. But thank you for your inquiry.”

Arthur came out of nowhere and grabbed onto Gio’s wrist. “And that’s why I invited Fergus here tonight.”

“Oh, no, Arthur, there’s no need...”

The man’s voice faded away as Arthur pointed out a cute copper-haired man with striking green eyes behind the cutest pair of blue rectangular glasses. The smattering of freckles along his cheeks stood out as he blushed, but I noticed his uncomfortable stance as he backed away from several men vying for his attention. And Jude, who did his best to protect him from the sudden onslaught of admirers.

Without a word, Gio started toward him, drawn by a gravitational force which was familiar to me because I experienced it when I laid eyes on Phoenix.

“Who’s he?” Phoenix asked.

“Fergus Regan, isn’t he cute? He opened the pottery shop two doors down and creates everything he sells, even teaching classes every Thursday night.”

We watched on as Fergus spotted Gio’s tall form as he strode across the bakery as if he owned the place. The younger man excused himself without taking his eyes off his target. As he walked around Jude, he tripped and fell right into Gio’s arms. The seriousness on Gio’s face as they spoke sparked a flame in Fergus. After a minor

exchange of words and a nod, Gio turned back to us.

“I’ll get the plan from you later, Phoenix. But whatever you decide, we’re in.”

Fergus gave us a little wave before Gio draped his arm around the younger man’s back as they headed for the exit, disappointing all the other men in attendance.

“Now that my job is done,” Arthur grinned at us.

“Yes, now comes the simple part of coming up with several brilliant ideas to save our businesses from a ruthless real estate tyrant with a dead heart. But I can see how you’re exhausted from pointing out Fergus to Gio. You didn’t have to be a psychic to see chemistry between the two,” Phoenix retorted before he rolled his eyes and sashayed away. He changed directions when our parents arrived, and he fell into my mom’s arms as Luka’s mom rubbed his back.

“He’s such a bitch. I’m blaming you two,” Arthur growled. “He was cordial, timid even before he met you. But look what you’ve done! You turned him into a sassy warrior. What the actual fuck?”

Opening my mouth to answer, Jude swept in and rushed Arthur away.

Luka turned to me, his face a mask of pride, and I couldn’t stop myself from kissing his irresistible mouth.

“How is this our life now? It’s so much better. Hell, he makes us better.”

A booming laugh shook my entire form as the big man, who never showed emotion, held onto me and buried his face against my neck.

“Yeah, he does. We better help him bring out the trays before Arthur threatens to

scratch his eyes out again.”

Various business owners and their families crowded the bakery, also people around the neighborhood who didn't want the area changed. There was history surrounding them, including several generations with businesses passed down and who all lived in the same area. They told stories about the past and loved to show pride in the successes of their community.

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Throughout the meeting, Phoenix listened and got to know the people who worked as hard as he did. They were proud of the lives they built, and with each person's narrative, the determination grew in all of us to save what we had built with love and passion.

The room grew silent as we all contemplated how we'd go about fending off Hale Aalto and his threat. It was then Phoenix gasped and sat up in his chair.

"What about a series of street fairs in the neighborhood? We could set up food stands, put tables out for the stores, raffle off prizes, and even invite the historical society down and show them we're vital to the economy of the city. We'll get tons of people if we advertise and post on social media."

A sudden excitement encompassed the room and before long, they had a list of ideas, raffle prizes, and the permits we would need in order to close the street for several weekend days.

Luka said, "The permits will be easy. I know a guy in the transportation department, so that won't be a problem."

"We'll get our neighbors and friends to come and support you, Phoenix. You aren't alone in this," Lew said.

"You're ours now, zaja, and we'll always back you and your dreams," Mi agreed.

"And we'll offer a complete backyard landscape makeover for the raffle," I threw in.

Phoenix moved to sit on my lap, reaching for Luka and linking their hands together. “Thank you,” he whispered.

I squeezed him closer as Luka said in his gruff voice, “Anything for you, Sunshine.”

“Aren’t we in this position in the first place because of you, Phoenix?” Cindi sneered.

A snarl traveled up my throat, but before it escaped, Phoenix sighed.

“As I explained in the letter you all received, my father is doing this because he doesn’t approve of our relationship. Well, it’s because he’s a petty shithead. The one way he knows how to assert control in any situation is to either throw money at it or take over. He doesn’t care about our businesses or the families trying to survive.

“I understand it’s a bit much to take, especially because he’s my father, but I’m working on saving this block and I’ll fight until the very end in order to do just that. If you want to blame me, that’s fine, but we’re in this together and if you don’t want your beautiful jewelry boutique closed permanently, this is the best way to succeed.”

Silence met his impassioned speech until Arthur chuckled. “Your little green monster is showing, honey. Burton is happy with his men. It’s time to move on.”

“I, for one, can see how happy you three are and love this for all of you,” Angela from the knitting store on the opposite corner from the bakery spoke up.

“Thank you,” Phoenix said.

“And it shouldn’t matter. We live in a diverse neighborhood and we accept everyone,” Michael from the hardware store said.

The atmosphere relaxed as more and more people agreed that our relationship wasn’t

the issue.

The meeting lasted another hour, and by that time, Phoenix's energy was waning. Despite him changing his working hours, he still grew tired at night after years of the same early morning schedule. Adding to the fact his father was a constant source of pain for him, his emotions drained him.

"Petal, how about we head home? Arthur and Matthew can close."

He turned in my arms and whimpered. "Why do I let him get to me? Why does he hate me so much?"

"Ah, Sunshine, please don't cry. There's nothing about this situation with your father that's your fault. And of course his opinion matters to you. He was your only parent after your mother passed, but there's no trying to understand why he's an asshole to you. You are perfect."

My heart broke as Phoenix worked to hold back his tears. I rubbed his back and whispered into his ear.

"There is nothing about you that's not ideal. You're hardworking, caring, sweet, and the most dedicated friend and boyfriend ever. We will be here anytime you forget how sensational you are and will do everything in our power to make sure you know how much you're needed."

Everything inside me screamed for me to tell him.

Moving from loving Luka as a friend to falling in love with him had been a simple transition, because we'd known each other for so long. But with Phoenix, he captured my heart when he gave me permission to touch him. The moment our lips met, my life righted, and I understood why I existed.

But it wasn't the right time to make confessions. His emotions overwhelmed him with his heart hurting because the one person who was supposed to love him either didn't show it at all or he had no heart.

I glanced at Luka as he pulled me and Phoenix close.

“You're not alone, Sunshine. You have us, our parents, friends, and even the entire community. And B's right, we'll show you every day how essential you are to us.”

“Sorry—”

“No, Petal, it’s not your fault. It wasn’t healthy for you to keep all this anxiety inside. I’m glad you told us. But there is nothing that can drive us away. We’re in this together with you for the rest of our lives.”

When he lifted his head and a tear broke off from his lashes and rolled down his cheek, I lifted my thumb and caught it. I lowered my head and captured his lips in a soft, chaste kiss before Luka did the same.

Phoenix centered himself before taking a deep inhale, letting out a long breath, and blinking up at us. “Let’s go home.”

I nodded at Luka, who scooped Phoenix into his arms and cradled him close to his chest as we walked out.

Determination washed over me and I started planning a night with just the three of us together. And it’d be a night where Phoenix would come away with no doubt how much we both loved him.

CHAPTER 10

PHOENIX

Although unusual, I dismissed the little detail when Luka called and asked me to catch a ride home with Arthur after I finished at the bakery for the day.

For the past couple of weeks, I'd been busy creating holiday treats while taking speciality orders, because between Thanksgiving and New Year's, orders grew over two hundred percent.

I waved toward my snarky best friend as he pulled away, who was heading home to his loving husband, as worry balled up in my chest as I dragged my feet walking up the pavement to the seven steps that stood between me and the front door.

When I answered earlier, I wasn't concentrating on the conversation as I was busy weighing the dried fruit for the spiced panettone, a new recipe I was testing out. But it hit me hard when it was time to leave, and I realized how strange it was that Burton and Luka hadn't picked me up. They both drove me to work and brought me home during the week, so we'd have a few more minutes of our day together and I'd missed them.

On top of the rush, we were completing the details for the street fair the following Saturday. I'd fallen into bed exhausted more than once and realized we hadn't made love since our night together on the couch. Unable to keep them at bay, the more time we spent apart, the doubts nudged me, feeding off my insecurities.

My heart stalled in my chest when I imagined the happiness I shared with the two men disappearing in a blink.

Did they not want me any more? Was I too much trouble?

My lashes fluttered, keeping the tears at bay, as a dim light turned on inside and I realized I'd been standing there for several minutes without moving. The cold air nipped at my fingers, but it was a random thought that froze me to the spot. That one worst-case scenario turned into another, and another, as several minutes of mind-numbing disasters made my heart hurt with each beat, and I shook my head, trying to rid myself of all the negativity.

Taking several deep breaths and lecturing myself on not jumping to conclusions, I opened the door.

Silence met me and after taking a shaky inhale, I walked inside and shut the door behind me. I dropped my bag and keys before I flipped the lock, hesitating.

As I turned back to the room, I called out, “Hello?”

I faltered when I heard a song start in the background. Then the light in the room brightened, revealing both Luka and Burton, dressed in elegant black suits, hair styled, along with matching ties.

It was a testament to how fucked up I was that instead of marveling at both men, masculine perfection in their custom evening wear, negative thoughts flooded me at the proof of how perfectly matched the two men were for each other and how I didn’t belong.

And then came the sudden realization they wouldn’t need me, because I wasn’t worth it —

“No! Nuh-uh! Those thoughts that made you grow pale and shake is not what’s happening here,” Burton said as he pulled me close, allowing me time to inhale his scent and relax against him. But despite all my efforts to hold back the surge of thoughts overwhelming me, I grew lightheaded and without my permission, I fainted.

When I blinked my eyes open, nothing in my immediate vicinity would focus, and my breathing sawed in and out of my chest with a rasping noise.

Am I alone?

A hand caressed my face as I came to, and at the touch, I realized a familiar chest was

against my back.

For all the evidence I was okay, my whirlwind of thoughts refused to cease and along with it, the sense of flight took over and I darted to my feet.

Or I tried.

But Luka's muscular arms banded around me and his soft voice against my ear kept repeating words until they sunk in.

“You're safe and loved, Sunshine. You're safe and loved.”

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Reason, or at least reality, came back with a painful snap, along with the sense of worry exuding from the two men.

“I’m... sorry,” I hiccuped.

“We waited too long,” Luka grumbled.

Burton scoffed, his hand moving up and down my back. “Yeah, I figured that much out for myself when Petal about fainted when he spotted us.”

“What,” another hiccup, before I continued, “what are you talking about?”

Both men’s eyes turned my way and their expressions matched. Concern, fear, and a devoted fierceness I loved.

“What triggered you, Petal? When you walked in and spotted us, what about the situation made...”

I reached out and cupped his face, shaking my head at the hurt I’d caused, mirrored in his green eyes.

“I thought, and have from the beginning, that you two are perfect. A contrast, yes, but... I guess I’m still working on my insecurities. Sometimes the negative thoughts push in and tell me I’m not worthy of, well, anything.”

Luka settled me on the couch next to him, but cupped his hand around my waist, never severing our connection. He glanced back and forth between us until a sudden

determination came over him.

“We’re going out on a date.”

There was no tamping down the thrill that ran through me at his words, which was surprising. But being out with both of them on a date sounded as close as I would get to a fairy tale.

Especially when Luka continued, “There’s a suit upstairs on the bed for you, but the rest will be a surprise. Is that okay?”

Choked up, I nodded before I kissed them both on the lips.

“Um,” I started.

“Go, Petal. We’ll be here.”

Nodding, I darted upstairs, curious about the night ahead of us.

Why the date?

How we became us wasn’t usual, but then again, I wasn’t missing out because there weren’t formal dates as we got to know each other.

We melded our lives together with little fuss.

Burton and Luka showed me every day how integral I’d become in their lives, despite my self-destructive tendencies and thinking the worst. But if they wanted a night out with me, I would not say no.

I jumped in the shower, needing to be clean for the night ahead, and by the time I

dried off and dressed, that's when excitement fluttered in my belly. There was nothing I wanted more than to spend the entire night without distractions, only the three of us.

Halfway down the stairs, a wolf whistle broke the silence and, without my permission, my cheeks heated. They flared into an inferno as Luka growled, circling around me in a predatory way and Burton stepped closer to finger my tie.

“Wow, Petal. Just... wow.”

“You look devastating, Sunshine. Are you ready?”

On the drive to the restaurant, the car was silent as my mind wondered, thinking about what was to come. I settled in my seat as I thought back on my reaction to seeing both of them decked out for a special night they planned with me, maybe even for me. Guilt swamped me, but also a determination to move past my damaging childhood.

When I purchased Phoenix Rising, I didn't immediately quit my job as a realtor. I worked for a few months, selling nothing, but putting in the appearance so my father wouldn't get suspicious. Arthur oversaw the renovation; who was I kidding? I gave him detailed instructions and sketches, and by the end, it looked how I wanted it.

Until the moment these two men walked in and captured my attention, I thought my life was complete. A whole man who ran his own business, happy with his place in the world.

Burton and Luka had both shown me how happiness had nothing to do with sacrifice or pain. I wasn't selfish when I pursued my dreams by opening my bakery. I did not tie my dreams to my father, and that was more than fine. At that moment, I realized I needed to come to terms with my past, once and for all.

When we sat on the patio, Burton asked, “What are you thinking about?”

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A smile lifted the side of my mouth. Not wanting to ruin the rest of the night, I paused, hoping we could have this conversation later. But I should have known better. My men wouldn't let my reaction to our date pass without comment.

So when Luka cleared his throat, I admitted the truth.

“About my act of rebellion, which turned out to be more than I could've ever hoped. And how happy I am, despite the occasional fainting spell.”

Rather than lightening the mood, Burton's brow furrowed and Luka frowned.

Ever the insightful man, Luka said, “You took one look at us, despite the romantic music in the background and how we waited in anticipation for you to come home so we could surprise you, and thought we were going to break up with you.”

It wasn't a question.

“Yes,” I choked out, clearing my throat before continuing, “both of you, standing side-by-side, the image of perfection and?—”

Thankful for the rise in volume which cut off my hurtful words; the loud voices, clanging cutlery, a corner table with a group of people laughing, and the pianist hitting a crescendo on a piece I haven't heard before.

It also drowned out Burton's loud curse. The nearest table noticed his outburst, but they went back to their food with a passing look at the easy-going man. Luka squeezed his shoulder and as Burton closed his eyes and breathed deep, my entire

being froze.

I've seen Burton tired, hungry, and angry on my behalf, but it gutted me that my insecurities caused him torment.

“Sorry—”

My words died in my throat as Burton's green eyes flashed. My teeth clicked shut, and I swallowed at the serious expression on his face.

“Do you want to know the truth, Petal?”

A shaky breath sighed out of me at his usual endearment, and I nodded.

Burton reached for my hand and linked our fingers together while Luka rubbed a hand along my shoulders.

“The suits, the date, and everything we planned tonight came about because I realized not too long ago that I can't keep my emotions locked away any longer. I'm thrilled about how open we are in our relationship and that others can see how happy we are together. But I also realized that I've held myself back, all because I hadn't yet told you two what was in my heart.”

Luka nodded. “I'm nothing but practical, and I realized holding back was detrimental to all three of us. But this is no way a signal or pressure for you to fall for us at the same time. B and I talked about it, and we realized it was time to let you know.”

My next question rushed out on a breath. “What?”

“I'm in love with you, Phoenix,” Burton's voice was steady, unflinching.

Luka nodded, his eyes welling with unshed tears. “Yes, Sunshine, I love you, too, and I can’t believe I kept it inside this long.”

For the rest of my life, I can never describe the sheer joy rushing through me at their words. But instead of beaming at them like I wanted, tears poured from my eyes and I launched myself at Burton’s chest and held on as the emotions washed over me.

Luka covered both of us with his bigger form. I felt his warmth surrounding us, and for several minutes, I poured out my happiness through tears.

“Ah, Sunshine.”

“I...” I hoped I wasn’t ruining Burton’s suit as I cried into it.

I opened my mouth, hoping words formed, but as I tried to express them, I hiccuped.

Luka pressed a napkin into my hand and as I tried to catch my breath, I wiped my face and disregarded how blotchy and red it would be from my outburst.

“Happy...” I hiccuped again. “Happy tears, I promise.”

“Oh, okay,” Burton said.

“You’re okay with this?” I asked in disbelief.

“No! You’re crying and that’s never okay. Even if you try to justify it.”

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Inhaling a deep breath, I relaxed into Burton's hold, giving both of my men a watery smile.

"If I were being honest, I fell a little in love with you both when you walked into my bakery. Although what I feel for both of you now is incandescent compared to those days, when you two were a fantasy to me. It's because I love both of you, with everything I am."

There was a sniffle next to the table and the three of us turned to see a cute auburn-haired woman in a crisp, white shirt, a maroon apron, and black pants holding a notepad in one hand and a napkin in the other, wiping her eyes.

"You three are so sweet. I didn't mean to interrupt."

Burton buried his face against my neck and hugged me as Luka pressed close to my side.

I huffed out a tearful laugh and said, "It's for the best. The last thing I need is to get dehydrated from crying."

"Perfect timing. I brought water. Would you like anything else to drink?"

Luka asked, "How's the sangria? I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name."

"Ingrid, and if you enjoy tart cherries and apples with an undertone of citrus, I'd recommend it."

“Perfect.”

She gave us a warm smile and said, “I’ll give you a few more minutes to decide what’s for dinner.”

“Thank you,” Burton spoke up.

When we were alone, I asked, “Not that I’m complaining, because this date has been lovely so far, but why did you guys go to elaborate lengths to confess your love?”

“Because you’re worth all of this and more.”

Luka added, “We spend most of our time at home or at work. Tonight, we wanted to make a memory together.”

Nodding, I agreed, but I gasped with a realization.

“What about you two? Do you?—”

The softness in their gazes told me everything as I trailed off.

“Yes, we love each other. But it wasn’t until we realized how much we were holding back, both with our feelings and how we lived our lives. We were pretending to live, but you were our missing piece, our purpose, and the happiness we’d been searching for,” Luka said.

Burton cleared his throat until I turned my attention toward him. He reached for my hand and squeezed.

“It might take us the rest of our lives and beyond, but we will show you every day, with every gesture, word, and caress, how much we need you, Petal.”

I've been a bit of a closet romantic, loving the run-of-the-mill gestures of affection as much as the HEAs. But as much as I watched and read about love, I never pictured myself in the character's place.

It wasn't until the morning I woke up, enveloped between the two sleeping men, that a spark of hope ignited in my chest. Hope that one day I would be free to express my love and sense it in return.

"I'd know without the words. You take care of me, worry if I get enough sleep, and pay attention when a panic attack is inevitable, but you two also get angry on my behalf. On top of all that, your touch sets me alight, and I know I'm safe and wanted. There is nothing in this world that would make me stop feeling this supernova of emotions inside whenever you both are near."

CHAPTER 11

PHOENIX

We had a magical night.

After dinner, Burton and Luka surprised me with a specialized tour of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

I loved the paintings and the architecture of the building, but it was the courtyard and greenery that captured my attention. We wandered around for an hour, alone in the beautiful place.

We arrived home and Burton rushed upstairs while Luka kept me occupied with a shoulder rub on the couch.

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“If you keep making those sounds, Sunshine, I won’t be responsible for my actions.”

Absolute contentment grew in the weeks since I’d moved in, but in instances like our date tonight, I realized the near constant happiness wasn’t a fluke. There were no ulterior motives, nothing I needed to do in order to have these two men love me. I wasn’t anxious, wondering if a fundamental part of myself would set them off, turn them away from me, or if they would punish me for some indiscriminate thing.

For once in my life, I felt loved.

As I laughed at Luka’s growled sexy voice, I turned in his arms and threw myself at him.

“Thank you for loving me.”

A choked sound made me jerk back, and Luka looked to be in pain.

“What?”

Burton started down the stairs as Luka cupped my cheek and searched my face.

“Everything okay?” Burton asked.

Rather than answering, Luka kissed me, leaving me breathless.

“You never have to thank us for loving you. It disgusts me how anyone, much less a parent, would deny you love and affection. And if we take the rest of our lives, you’ll

know how vital you are to us.”

“Petal, you are worthy of love. I’m thrilled you feel the same way about us, and I promise we’ll cherish you the rest of our days.”

The seriousness etched on their faces added to the love enveloping my heart, causing it to beat faster in my chest. Without realizing I’d teared up, one escaped and Luka caught it on his finger.

I huffed out a laugh and said, “You two are good for my heart. Good for me.”

When Luka stood, lifting me up with him, I gasped and scrabbled for a hold around his shoulders.

Burton led the way upstairs and when we entered the bedroom, my eyes widened at the sight before me.

There were fairy lights along the ceiling, giving the room a soft glow. I gasped as I spotted the rose petals sprinkled on the bed, giving off a fragrance that mingled with the lit grapefruit candles on the dresser.

“Is this for me?”

Burton chuckled and, with me still in Luka’s arms, my body shook as Luka’s laugh rumbled through him. He set me on my feet and as Burton’s hands settled on my chest before stroking up, taking my jacket with him, and my breath caught in my throat, anticipating what was to come.

Luka’s fingers flicked open the buttons of my dress shirt, stopping every-so-often to caress my skin with his roughed thumbs, causing me to throw my head back and gasp.

“So responsive,” Burton purred.

Before I had a mind to speak, Luka dropped to his knees in front of me and caressed his cheek against my obvious and straining hard on.

Burton’s hands swept my shirt off my shoulders, and it fluttered onto the floor.

The dual sensations of his palms brushing my peaked nipples and Luka mouthing my cock made my knees weak and left me gasping for breath.

Another sound escaped my tight throat, and it spurred Luka on. He reached for my pants, almost ripping them off in his haste, but unhooked the button before sliding down the zipper. As the back of his finger brushed against my straining erection, my hips jerked forward as I clamped onto Burton’s forearm braced across my chest, crying out at the torrent of sensations they drew out of me.

“Fuck me, please. I need both of you, so much,” I crooned.

But the more I begged, the slower their movements became. Luka concentrated on getting the rest of my clothes off while Burton found a spot on my neck, right below my ear, fascinating. He licked and sucked at it, but when his teeth scraped against the sensitive area, I cried out and held on harder.

Luka caressed my quivering thighs, missing the one place that required his direct attention, before he opened a hand on my stomach and kissed skin I hadn’t realized, until that moment, was an erogenous zone. His mouth created its own path and as he neared my dick, Burton took my distended nipple between his finger and thumb, adding pressure in slight increments, driving me batty.

“B, do that again. His beautiful cock twitched against his stomach and leaked a bit. Hmmm, I’m going to have to...”

As though every nerve in my body all fired at once, I stiffened against Burton as Luka pursed his lips and drew the head of my cock into his mouth before his tongue flicked out and teased more precome from me.

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Desire to be filled and used within an inch of my life warred with the continued onslaught of caresses by the two men. Because it was a perfect night, I vowed to enjoy everything they threw my way and not rush.

“No demands for more, faster?” Burton asked.

I shook my head. “Both exquisite... touches make me want to hold out for as long as I can.”

With one last flick of his tongue, which caused me to gasp, Luka stood and both he and Burton stripped. When I moved forward to help, both of them shook their head to ward me off.

“We can’t help ourselves around you, Sunshine. The minute you touch us with intent, it’ll be over.”

There was no ounce of shyness on my part as I studied each inch of skin both men revealed. Still in awe of the magnificence in front of me, my fingers itched to touch, but my curiosity about what they had in store for me won out and stayed my movements.

Burton, naked and throbbing, lifted me in his arms, and I released a sigh as I snuggled my face against his neck. I closed my eyes as his scent overwhelmed me, making me feel protected and wanted, and smiled as he placed me on the bed, my back nestled against a mound of pillows.

I blinked and focused on both men, kneeling at the end of the bed, tracing me with

hooded eyes.

They shared an extended glance before Luka nodded. He settled against my side as Burton leaned closer and pressed a lingering kiss on the inside of my thighs. My head pushed back against the softness behind me as his mouth drifted.

Luka's soft beard skimmed along the sensitive part of my neck, adding to the mounting sensations.

As if they planned their movements, Burton sucked one of my balls into his mouth and Luka bit down on my earlobe, a bit of pain along with the overwhelming pleasure.

A slicked finger moved from my taint and circled the one spot I wanted him, making my hole flutter. But instead of pushing inside as I expected, Burton lifted my hips and darted licks around my entrance, causing me to cry out and grip Luka.

"Where would you like my mouth, Sunshine? Your nipples, around your cock, or sucking on your neck until I mark you, bruising your skin for days?"

"All of it, lover, please."

My last word came out strangled because Burton chose that moment to wriggle his finger inside me, giving me a small sense of relief before rocketing up the tension in my body. My cock twitched and leaked copious amounts of precome onto my stomach.

"Fuck!"

Watching as Luka flattened his tongue and swiped the dripping liquid from my dick before he cleaned off my stomach caused more of it to dribble down my cock. Taking

short, choppy breaths, I braced myself as Luka tongued my slit.

It was then I realized his position left his cock near my mouth and, without thinking it through, I swallowed him down to the hilt.

“Ah, shit!” Luka punctuated his curse by fucking into my mouth.

His full, leaking prick muffled the dirty, indecent moan. In the next moment, it became louder when Burton slid two fingers deep in my ass, brushing against my prostate with each pass before widening his fingers, stretching me and leaving me swallowing hard around Luka’s cock.

Lost in the pleasure and savoring the moans from the two men I loved, I whimpered when Burton slid three fingers from inside me and caressed my thighs. With reluctance, I pulled off Luka’s cock and noticed him sharing another silent conversation with Burton before he reached beside me and snagged a pillow. Burton lifted me and settled my hips on the pillow before he crawled toward me, his angry, throbbing cock on full display.

Luka moved behind Burton and caressed his chest, around his hips, until his hand disappeared behind him, leaving me wondering if he was prepping our man.

Burton’s hips jerked as he let out a groan of pleasure, dropping his head back against Luka’s shoulder as the man revealed the same butt plug I’d made use of weeks before.

“That is sexy as fuck. How long have you had that in you, handsome?”

Burton’s sexy bedroom eyes opened as a wicked smile lifted the side of his mouth. “Since before we left for dinner.”

I reached for him and devoured his mouth at the thought of him filled when our position dawned on me. Clutching Burton closer to me as I lifted my legs, I sucked in a breath as the tip of his dick caught against my wet hole.

“Fuck me, please, Burton. I want you inside me before Luka slides deep into you.”

His tight control snapped, and he reached for my legs, draping my calves over his shoulders before he leaned in close, capturing my lips and plunging inside me. I gasped, fingers digging into his back, savoring the swipe of his tongue inside my mouth, and relished the moan he released as he bottomed out. Clenching my muscles, he ripped his mouth away and shouted before his hips punched in and out of me in quick strokes, making me pant for more.

When Burton once again pressed deep inside me, I watched as Luka gripped his hip with one hand and held onto his cock with the other. Closing his eyes, expressing the ecstasy on his face, he slipped inside Burton and both men groaned. The sound and sensations left me shaking with passion.

“Oh, fuck... not gonna last,” I breathed out.

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“You? I’m getting nailed at the same time you’re clenched around me and if Luka?—”

We both shouted as Luka tilted his hips back and thrust inside. His movements jolted Burton, and the man plunged inside me, brushing my prostate with each stroke in and out. Doubling my pleasure, Luka reached for my cock and the glide of his roughened palm on my dick caused me to clench around Burton. The stream ‘fuck, oh fuck,’ erupting from his mouth along with the immense sensation of his cock stretching me, the head scraping against my bundle of nerves, and Luka fisting me had my entire body vibrate in anticipation.

By this time, Burton fisted the pillows near my head as he powered into me after he bent me in half, driving me out of my mind.

The rhythm they built as Burton fucked himself on Luka’s enormous shaft before driving into me, along with the cacophony of grunts, moans, and curses, drove me crazy.

“I’m—”

Burton’s turbulent breaths brushed against my lips as he silenced my declaration.

“There’s no way I’m going to last if you say anything naughty. I’m hanging on by a thread here, Petal.”

He screamed out when Luka angled his hips with a wicked smile and fucked into him, caressing his thighs, before he caught my gaze and winked.

I leaned closer to Burton's face, nuzzling my cheek against his, before I said, "I'm thinking I want both of you to kneel over me and when your orgasm strikes, paint my chest and face with your ropes of come, debauching me. You'd claim me, like your slut."

He panted, his green eyes sparking, but his only response was a loud groan.

"Or, and I like this idea better, you come inside me, coating my insides with your jizz before Luka jams his monster cock inside me, mixing your seed with his, before I turn onto my hands and knees, wiggling my ass as it drips from me, over my taint and balls, marking me as yours."

My words had their desired effect when, after two more strokes, Burton held himself deep inside and I screamed as he filled me up. When my entrance fluttered against his hardness, I recognized how strong this release was going to be for me.

Luka's fingers clamped around Burton's waist and drove into him, leaving him whimpering as his dick continued to leak inside me as the bigger man fucked him hard.

Burton pulled out and Luka's hands froze on his waist, despite him still being deep inside the man.

"You heard him. I want to see our mingled come leaking out of his perfect hole," Burton panted.

He gave Luka a dirty kiss, swiping his tongue inside the man's mouth. The sight sexy as fuck, leaving me moaning, before he dropped onto the bed and lay beside me. One hand cradled his head as the other caressed my chest, teasing my nipples.

Without waiting another moment, Luka surrounded me with his fucking sexy, furry

form, and I opened my legs, wrapping them around his hips. It jolted me, the easy way I took his girth, but once he was inside of me, I closed my eyes and savored the stretch.

Burton's cock wasn't as thick, but what he had was a curve that struck my prostate with every stroke.

"Oh, lover, I'm so full. And the thought of Burton's come pushing out of my fluttering hole as you... fuck!"

Luka tucked his arms underneath my back, sliding them until he cupped the back of my head. It was then he plunged inside.

My eyes rolled back, while my mouth opened on a filthy moan.

Burton inhaled my nipple in his mouth before scraping his teeth around the sensitive nub.

My release steamrolled through me, and I shouted indecipherable words as come erupted from me. Luka coming deep inside me registered as my forceful orgasm waned, leaving a lingering tingle that added to the euphoria of the moment.

Burton moved to join Luka at the end of the bed as they watched in fascination as their come dribbled out of my opening. I wheezed when a finger entered me to the first knuckle, encouraging the rest of the come out of me.

"Shower?" Luka asked.

Right before I fell asleep, I heard, "Maybe in the morning, but if you lift him, I'll change out the bedding."

CHAPTER 12

LUKA

I scanned the last stack of invoices I needed to get through before our three-week holiday break. Determined to push through the paperwork and forget everything business related until the new year, I ignored the raised voices outside our shared office.

Of course, my partner wouldn't stay out of anything and stood, opening our office door, distracting me.

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It wasn't as though I wanted to be at work on a Friday afternoon when both me and Burton should be naked with our man. At my suggestion we skip work, Phoenix raised an eyebrow and shook his head, so I'd given up on the idea. I'd bitched enough about the paperwork I put off for weeks, so both of us understood it couldn't wait any longer.

Making the mistake of glancing at the clock, fuck, it was only three. I sighed and started reviewing the numbers, matching them with the materials list for each job. If they did, I'd approve it for payment. I knew I had talented accountants on my payroll, but some things I would never let out of my control.

"What the fuck?" Burton growled.

It was the tone of voice which B used whenever Phoenix was under threat which made me surge to my feet and stride to the door. My steps faltered when I noticed Hale Aalto standing at our PA's desk, pounding his fist against the surface, his face red and splotchy.

Before I stepped in and threw the fucking man out on his ass, Drew stood and leaned forward, not at all intimidated by the last asshole we expected to see.

"If you would lower your voice, you'll notice both Mr. Horváth and Mr. Kavka are standing to your right. They have a free moment until three-thirty, so if you'd ask in a civilized tone, I'm sure they would make time for you."

B scoffed. "The fuck we will!"

Then, as shocking as the man showing up at our offices, which until that moment, I would've bet money he thought we worked out of our garage without staff, was the smile plastered on his face as he noticed both of us standing there.

"Just the men I was looking for," Aalto said.

B and I shared a look before I crossed my arms and stared down at the slimy man.

How Phoenix became the beautiful, giving, and sweet man he was today was a testament to the man himself, and had nothing to do with his father. Hale had an angle, wanting to find some way to hurt Phoenix, and until I understood his plan and figured out a way to dismantle it, I would not say shit. B didn't have that problem.

"It's rude to drop in without an appointment, isn't it, Aalto? And then yelling at Drew when you didn't get your way," he shook his head and scoffed. "Then taking advantage of the situation because you made enough of a scene we stepped out of our office makes me want to say no."

The desperation etched on his face made me suspicious instead of feeling any sympathy for the conniving bastard.

"Five minutes of your time is all I ask," he said.

"Ask us with the courtesy we deserve, then," B demanded.

Ignoring the back and forth, I pulled out my phone and sent a quick text message.

How's your day going, Sunshine?

For several seconds, I held my breath before he replied.

I'm ass-deep in a new croissant recipe and it's not going well. The fruits are too wet, which I thought about making a jam, but once heated, oozes everywhere. And now I'm getting hard.

Unable to hide my smile, I glanced up to see the standoff still going on. B gave me a side-eye, but I nodded, letting him know our man was okay.

We'll be over after an impromptu meeting with Hale. And I promise tonight we'll act out every dirty thought you had today. We both love you, Sunshine.

There was a long pause. I held the weight of the world on my shoulders as I waited with bated breath for a response.

A minute later, the reply came.

I love you two more than the world. Tell Burton not to hit him. He's not worth it. And Luka, lover, I'm not freaking out. The news was surprising, that's all. I'll see you soon. Back to the runny pastry!

The confidence our Phoenix gained over the months was awe-inspiring. Especially after both B and I admitted whenever we were together how much we loved him. There were moments of self-doubt and internal struggles, but we encouraged him to talk about whatever bothered him and when he voiced his worries, his insecurities disappeared.

On top of his breakthrough, the weekend of the street fair went off without a hitch.

It seemed half the population of Boston dropped by and we received over a hundred thousand signatures on a petition to stop gentrification in the neighborhood.

The restaurants did steady business while shops like Fergus' and even Cindi's jewelry

shop were a hit.

And Phoenix and his team handed out so many samples, so he recruited us to bake. Well, mix batter as Phoenix directed us what to do before taking over when we were too slow. But despite that, it was a successful day.

Even better news came yesterday. The historical society had determined they will investigate if several of the buildings on the street qualify for historical status. If so, then Hale's plans would fail before he started.

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“Can you please give me five minutes of your time?” Hale sneered.

Finished with his fucking attitude, but needing to know what he wanted, I said, “Enough of this shit. Get in the fucking office.”

Not giving a fuck if he followed, I turned and strode to my desk, sitting down and swiping the pile of invoices off my desk and into my drawer before closing it. I also shut off my monitor.

B followed suit. He didn’t trust the man any more than I did.

The silence grew as he took a seat in front of my desk and stared.

“You’ve wasted five minutes of our time. Get on with it,” B demanded.

Not enjoying being told what to do, Hale glared at B before he cleared his throat and started the spiel he came here for.

“I’ve talked to several real estate developers who will sign a multi-year deal with your company, with the option of prosperous bonuses for jobs completed before the deadline.”

I scoffed before I asked, “In exchange for what?”

“Two conditions.”

I glared at the man and knew the precise first condition he’d demand.

“I’ll say this one time before we address your offer,” I growled, but made sure Hale Aalto met my eyes before I continued. “Phoenix is a grown man. He’s creative, intelligent, independent, and protective of those he counts as his friends and family. Despite you doing your best to tear him down and shape him into something he most definitely is not, he’s grown into a lovely and caring man who we love more than life itself.”

“Your point?” he sneered.

“His fight is our fight. For a reason I can never fathom, you want to destroy him and everything he’s worked for. Even after he became a successful real estate agent, when you told him time and time again he would fail at it. But you underestimate him, and us, for that matter. People are loyal to you because they benefit from the business relationship. But loyalty only reaches so far, as you’ll soon find out. So lay out your stipulations.”

I knew it was coming, but nothing could prevent my heart from leaping in my throat.

“I want the both of you to leave Phoenix alone. Make it a clean break where you never see him again.”

Fuck that!

“No,” I growled, “and since we don’t agree, you can see yourself the fuck out.”

Tired of this absolute fuckwad, I stood and opened the top drawer for my wallet, phone, and keys. I pocketed the first two and glanced at B, who had his backpack ready to go. As I rounded the desk, Hale blocked me and leaned his face close to mine.

“That fucking catastrophe has ruined my entire life. I want his fairy business to

disappear and here's hoping he'll leave Boston and go somewhere no one knows me or can associate him with me."

"You have three fucking seconds to get the fuck out of my face before I beat you down in my office and then call the cops and tell them you threatened not only me, but my business partner and our PA."

The man had some nerve.

"So, that's a no to my offer?"

"That does it?—"

As I stepped forward, ready to leave Aalto in a bloody mess on our office floor, B jumped on my back and held my arms down.

There was no need.

Once that asshole saw my eyes flash, he started backing away from me. At my growl; he turned and ran.

Stunned when the door slammed as he exited the building, I glanced back to see B's hilarious expression. His mouth was open, his eyes wide, blinking every few seconds as he processed the speed at which the older man sprinted out of the building.

"Does it say something bad about me since I'm torn between laughing and chasing after him? I wanted you to pummel him, but watching him scurry out the door was hilarious," B said.

"Nah, it doesn't. If you hadn't stopped me, my fist would've found his nose or his gut."

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Taking advantage of our closeness, I snagged a kiss and growled when B moaned into my mouth.

Drew giggled, and when we glanced at him, he gave us a thumbs up.

“That was great, but you should go see if Phoenix is okay. Knowing that ass, he’d ambush his son after trying to rattle you.”

The moment I heard Phoenix’s name, I started forward, taking B with me until he loosened his hold and dropped to his feet, sliding up next to me.

Remembering our upcoming break, I called back at Drew, “Enjoy your time off and if anyone has a question?—”

“We won’t call you, but you can think I will. Happy holidays to both of you and tell Phoenix hi for me.”

Drew, our right-hand man who handled emergencies for both of us more times than we could count, met Phoenix one day when our man brought us lunch.

Well, Arthur suggested it and drove our man because he wanted to nose around the office.

While Arthur pulled open drawers and questioned the employees in the office, Phoenix hit it off with Drew, who became a constant figure in the bakery where Phoenix and the crew welcomed him with open arms.

“We will. Thanks for everything, Drew. And don’t forget the party on Christmas Eve. We’re having it at our house instead of the bakery. Bring a date,” I suggested.

“Date? Who’s our Drew interested in?” B asked.

“Never you mind, Burton.”

We laughed as we headed toward the truck and drove away.

In our self-interest, the three of us spent Thanksgiving weekend holed up in the house, taking the girls for walks around the neighborhood, and spending the rest of our time naked and in bed. But we discovered the Monday after, Phoenix loved the Christmas season. He took the day off and raided his apartment for his decorations before buying out the local thrift and dollar stores of fairy lights, wreaths, and ornaments.

When we arrived home, it was like walking into a winter wonderland.

The eight foot tall tree sparkling with silver garland, cute ornaments, and enough fairy lights to land a plane on our roof. I worried for a minute it might be a fire hazard.

“Isn’t it great? I couldn’t bring myself to buy a tree I couldn’t replant, so I found this monstrosity and added the pine scent.”

“Oh, thank fuck! I thought for a moment the house was going to burn to the ground.”

For that, Phoenix narrowed his eyes at me before he sent me out to put up the outdoor lights, dragging B along with me after both of us kissed Phoenix breathless and promising more later.

Both of us scanned the block to see if Aalto beat us there, but I hadn't spotted him.

As we entered the bakery, Arthur nodded toward the kitchen.

"Did he nail the croissant recipe?"

A loud groan escaped Arthur as he dropped his head down and shook it. "Now you did it."

That's when we heard Phoenix's shout, "Who's fucking idea was this?"

Chuckling, we entered the kitchen to see a mess everywhere. Flour, butter, and the scent of sweet fruit struck me before I noticed the bowls of chopped, sliced, and whole fruit.

"What about dried fruit? It still has a bit of moisture, but not enough to wreck the dough." B asked.

A mound of dough sailed across the steel utility table, and I ducked out of the way. The throw still hit its mark when it struck B in the shoulder.

"What?"

Phoenix growled, making me laugh. I ignored the dirty apron and lifted him into my arms. He glared at B while I closed my eyes and inhaled his scent.

"Fuck, I could have just turned the dried fruit into paste and then added it! You couldn't tell me this three hours ago?"

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B shrugged. “I wasn’t aware of what you were doing.”

He reached for B and kissed him, cupping his cock and running his thumb across the denim. B groaned as he pulled away. Then Phoenix brushed a kiss on my lips for not long enough.

“Hey!”

“I promise to suck your cock until you come down my throat when we get home.”

My cock, as usual whenever Phoenix took control, pulsed in my jeans.

And like that, the three of us forgot about the outside world, including the horrible example of a father and human being.

CHAPTER 13

BURTON

I layin bed and watched my two men sleeping. Excitement bubbled in my chest when I remembered what day it was.

The three of us spent the past week shopping for presents, which I did online because there was no way I’d drag myself to a mall during the holiday season, settling on a menu for Christmas dinner; which meant I thought something sounded good, but deferred back to Phoenix and Luka on most major decisions. When the other two forgot something from the grocery store, I went to fetch it.

It was crazy, yet delirious fun.

There were also quiet moments where Luka read *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* in his deep voice, or when Phoenix decided for an entire day, we would watch nothing but Christmas movies while cuddled up under a flannel blanket he'd bought to go with the holiday decor along with the dogs, who loved using the younger man as their own personal pillow.

We ignored our phones, spent time with friends and family, explored our neighborhood with daily walks, and had our parents along with Arthur, Jude, Gio, and Fergus over for dinner several times.

It wasn't something I noticed or worried about before, but the years previous to Phoenix integrating into our lives, our year-end breaks composed of us lazing at home until our parents guilted one of us, most times it would be me, into dropping by for dinner. We didn't exchange presents, but it was nice to catch up with them for the one night.

And at home, it was always quiet with minimal decorating, lots of naps, and ignoring the season all together.

But Phoenix loved any holiday. Christmas and Halloween were his favorites, and his enjoyment of it all led me to be awake at such an early hour, imagining how both men would react to the gifts I bought them.

"Why are you up so early, handsome?"

His hand slid over my chest as he nuzzled his face against my neck, sending a surge of emotions through me.

"Thinking, but enjoying being close to you two on Christmas morning. It's a thrill to

experience it all over again as an adult,” I whispered.

“I took over and made the house look like all the elves at the North Pole threw up in here, but I was excited to celebrate without judgment. Besides, I see the way you and Luka stare at the tree.”

“It’s a fire hazard,” Luka groaned.

I reached out and slapped Luka on the arm. A warm glow inside my chest grew at the sound of his deep laugh.

“It’s beautiful, like all the decorations, fairy lights, stockings, wreaths, and the little bows on all the plants pots, even though it took three days and a lot of coffee to get through them all. Along with the peach buttercream cake, the dark chocolate brioche, the tart cherry cream cheese danish, and the pecan-apricot cinnamon rolls with cream cheese icing... and now, I’m hungry. But also horny, which is a constant state because both of you are naked and warm.”

At my words, Phoenix moved under the covers to sit astride my hips, but Luka ruined my fun as I reached for the younger man at the same time Luka yanked him away from me.

“Nope, we have to get up and start baking and cooking. Our guests will arrive at ten-thirty for the game and we’re eating at one. Maybe closer to two o’clock, depending on the sides I decide to make,” Luka said.

“Says the man who had his entire body pressed against Petal the entire night. And don’t act innocent. I know you nestled your swollen cock against his ass. Besides, I was only going to give him a blowjob, but no, you stole him and rubbed your sexy fucking body against him. What about me?”

Luka leaned over and kissed me.

By now, I knew which buttons to push, and whimpered into his mouth before I nibbled on his bottom lip. I savored the loud groan as he pulled back, his plump lip still caught between my teeth. His gaze softened as he looked at me, and I had a feeling he'd give in to my whining.

“Fine, we have time.”

Phoenix, still slick from the night before, climbed onto my lap. As he sunk down, taking my cock all the way to the hilt, Luka moved himself behind Phoenix and lifted my ass, positioning his cock near my entrance. He drove deep inside me as Phoenix fell forward and buried his face against my neck.

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I moaned as I curled my hips up, brushing against Phoenix's prostate over and over, clutching him close to my chest as he cried out with each stroke.

We didn't last long.

Phoenix clenched hard with my dick deep inside him, his entire body shaking as his release marked my stomach and chest, which set me off.

"Fuck! Luka! Oh fuck, Petal!"

Apparently, I'm eloquent when pleasure overtakes reason and as Luka filled me with his hot come, complete contentment washed over me.

I groaned in complaint when Luka pulled out of me several minutes later, but I sucked in a sharp breath of delight as his fingers played around the rim of my hole.

"You're insatiable," Luka murmured.

I winked at Phoenix, who giggled as he wrapped his arms around my shoulders and leaned down for a scorching kiss.

"With you two, I'll always be."

We lazed in bed for a few more minutes until my stomach rumbled.

"Hey, Sunshine, we should make B get up and remove the turkey from the brine, butter it and stuff it with citrus, before putting it in the oven."

Phoenix laughed. “And then you can peel the ten pounds of potatoes before sautéing the onions and celery for the stuffing.”

“Or, and hear me out, one of you goes downstairs and brings me one of Petal’s famous baked apple pies. No one will miss it. I’ll scarf half of it before I pass out until our guests arrive, and then I’ll get up for a shower.”

Luka huffed. “You’re filled with my come with some of Sunshine’s smeared all over you. It’ll get sticky and uncomfortable in about five minutes.”

My dick twitched, and I pushed the bigger man, groaning. “Please don’t say come, because my prick likes the idea of coming inside you this time, Luka. And?—”

“Leave my dick out of this, handsome. He’s just as interested.”

With a big, exaggerated exhalation, I brushed a kiss against Phoenix’s lips, and then Luka’s, before I rolled to the edge of the bed and stood.

“This once, I will be the mature one, take a shower, help you two with Christmas lunch, and then nap during the Detroit Lion’s game.”

“It’s all we ask, sweetheart,” Luka said.

My heart warmed at the endearments and as I walked away, I glanced over my shoulder and said, “Leave Petal’s dick alone, love. We’ll take turns driving him insane tonight.”

The pout on the bigger man’s face was priceless.

But instead of what I’d been dreading as we readied lunch, I found I enjoyed helping throughout the day.

Luka kissed me whenever I volunteered to chop or peel something and when they hadn't assigned me a task, I'd leaned my chin against Petal's shoulder and watched his elegant fingers shape the pie dough.

Right on time, the doorbell rang before Arthur called out, "We're here. The party can start!"

Petal shook his head and shouted back, "It's Christmas, not a rave."

Arthur appeared in the kitchen with his husband after blowing Phoenix a raspberry and booted me away from his best friend. He hugged Phoenix tight from behind.

Jude moved to the sink to wash his hands before he picked up a knife and diced the celery.

"With you three, it's just as fun."

"Where's Gio and Fergus?" I asked.

When Arthur, busy teasing Phoenix with whispered words I couldn't hear, didn't answer, Jude said, "They're outside with your parents, helping bring in presents."

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I nodded and headed toward the front, pulling on my peacoat before opening the door. I met mom halfway up the sidewalk and grabbed the mountain of gifts she carried.

“Some of these are for me, right?”

Mom, of course, blushed. But because she was honest to a fault, shook her head. “These are for Phoenix.”

“If we bribe him with thoughtful gifts and direct all our love to him, he’ll decide to stay with you and my son for the rest of your lives,” Mi added.

I huffed, “You don’t think Luka and I can hold on to our man?”

As she walked by, mom’s hands were free and she patted my cheek, “No, but don’t let that discourage you from doing your utmost to woo your man.”

“She’s kidding, son,” Dad said.

“Is she? Because her expression implies I’m a moron who wouldn’t know how to love someone without flashcards.”

Dad laughed and said, “Well, look at you and Luka. All these years later, you can admit it took you a while, son.”

“I’m ignoring both of you for the rest of the day. And when I tell Luka, he will, too. Hi, Gio, Fergus, you two are looking well.”

Fergus, with his face buried against his Italian boyfriend's chest, lifted a hand as he continued to shake with laughter.

"Ah, buongiorno amico, it's good to see you. And your relationship with Phoenix and Luka is good, no?"

A snort from Fergus had me glaring at the big man before I turned and sighed.

"Yes, everything is great. Let's head inside."

Tired of being ganged up on, I followed the parents into the house and dropped the pile of presents in my arms near the tree.

Still feeling tetchy, I walked into the kitchen, right up to Luka, and whipped him around for a dirty kiss. It calmed me, which had been my goal, but Luka's eyebrow raised in question. I told him about the conversation outside, and he smiled and cupped the back of my neck.

"Oh, B, they don't mean it like we're going to lose him. It's a sign of their love for us, a little push from them because they want to see a sign of commitment.

It's because of all the emotional upheaval Aalto has put Phoenix through. Along with confessing our feelings later than we wanted, you're obsessive about not losing either of us and resentful of anyone who dares to hurt us. But we're not going anywhere and with every moment spent together, he lets go of his past because he knows he is safe with us."

Arms wrapped around my waist from the side, and I glanced down to see worry etched on Petal's face before he asked, "What's wrong?"

Unable to stay away, I pulled him closer and brushed a light kiss to his mouth, before

I said, “You know I love you with all my heart, right, Petal?”

A bright smile lit up his face, and all the uncertainty and anger at the earlier conversation vanished when he said, “I love you, too, Burton.”

Luka, always a protector, surrounded us and pulled us close.

Phoenix continued. “Both of you are the best part of my life, and I treasure you two every day. And I’ve been thinking about my anxiety and realized my doubts stem from past hurts. So from now on, I’m determined not to take anything for granted. I acknowledge all the good things and people in my life, and disregard all the negative in order to protect my sanity.”

Taking me by surprise, Luka said, “We should look into a commitment ceremony.”

Before either Phoenix or I could agree to it or consider what it might mean, a kitchen timer beeped.

Luka basted the turkey while Phoenix greeted our guests. I glanced at the time before I placed the prepared scalloped potatoes and broccoli au gratin in the second oven.

The game was about to start, but before I turned toward the living room, Luka snagged me around the waist and nuzzled the back of my neck. Phoenix’s eyes sparkled as he watched the two of us, giving me a smile before turning back to answer Fergus.

“Love you,” I whispered.

He smiled against my skin and for only me, he said, “I love you, B.”

We spent the day with excellent food, great company, and conversation.

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The protective feelings Phoenix stirred in me were a surprise. Yet as I remembered the pain in my chest when Luka, who admitted years after our first sexual foray, I'd hurt him by telling him I wanted to go back to being friends, and I realized my feelings weren't a new revelation.

What I never admitted aloud was when I was younger, and I could admit to in the recesses of my brain, was that I correlated sex with impermanence.

The women that flitted in and out of my life were temporary. Either I attracted women who didn't want a long-term relationship or they disappeared from my life as quickly as they entered.

Luka, the one constant in my life, never encouraged my attraction to him after we went back to being friends. I'd locked down the feelings I had toward him for years, not because of any type of embarrassment, but because I hated change. The threat of losing the most important person in my life caused me to panic.

"What are you thinking about?" Phoenix said next to me as I washed the dinner dishes.

After eating their weight in a turkey dinner with all the fixings and more dessert than any one group of humans should have in their lifetime, most of our party crashed in the livingroom, but the parents retreated to their own rooms, to take a nap.

"I never realized over the years how much I worried about losing Luka because of my selfish decisions."

“How so?”

I snagged a kiss from him, loving the peach rise on his cheeks, before he leaned against the sink. His gaze searched my face, waiting for my answer.

“In college, and after Luka came out to me and his parents, I kept wondering how his lips would taste or the feel of his body pressed against mine. I agonized about asking Luka to put me out of my misery and kiss me, but never drummed up the courage until he went out on his first date with a guy.

“It was abysmal, the date, I mean. I don’t know the details, but dejection poured off him when he arrived home. At a loss to contain my attraction to the man, I blurted out he was the sexiest man I ever laid eyes on and admitted I’d been daydreaming about how his lips felt against mine.”

Drying my hands on a towel, I stepped close to Petal, whose smile made my heart beat faster each time he aimed it my way, and cupped his face.

“I wasn’t scared about being with a guy, but every relationship I’d had fizzled into nothing.”

His eyes widened as he realized what I meant. “You chose Luka as your friend instead because you were afraid of losing him if you two shared everything?”

I nodded and stiffened when I heard Luka clear his throat. As we turned to find the man leaning against the counter, watching both of us with a smile on his face, I relaxed with the realization he wasn’t mad.

“I was afraid, too, B. But I worked out over the past few weeks that we weren’t ready yet.”

Phoenix held out his hand. Of course, Luka was powerless to stay away from either of us. As that realization dawned, I blurted, “We needed Petal with us to make us feel whole. We were so entrenched in being friends, neither of us could be brave without a good reason.”

Luka nodded.

“We’ve had some bumps in the road because of outside forces. But as long as we’re honest with each other and what we want, we’ll grow stronger. I’m not saying we won’t have disagreements in the future, but we’ll get through it. I’ve committed myself to both of you, heart and soul. So B, stop worrying about the past. It made us who we are today, and we’re stronger because of it.”

I sank against Luka, and Phoenix cuddled close to both of us. Luka was right. Things happened for a reason and whatever I did in my past life or this one, I lucked out with the two men I loved more than life itself.

CHAPTER 14

PHOENIX

An unfamiliar ringtone interrupted my exquisite dream involving spreading mango whipped cream on Luka’s cock before fighting off Burton to get a taste.

I assigned both of my men with their own ring tone, and thinking about it as the fog of sleep dissipated, I’d done the same with Arthur, Jude, Charlotte, Drew, Luka’s parents, Burton’s too, along with Gio, and now Fergus, so I didn’t think it was my phone ringing, interrupting my delicious dream.

B grunted and rolled over. Of course, he was no help at all, but Luka’s arm squeezed my waist and I smiled as I felt his entire body pressed against the back of mine before

he dropped the bad news.

“The ringing is coming from your phone, Sunshine.”

With painful slowness, I opened my eyes and lifted my head off the pillow to see the time, and gasped.

“Who the fuck is calling me at one in the morning?”

Luka, sensing my panic, rolled over and snagged the offending device from the nightstand and handed it to me. Not recognizing the number, I swiped before I answered with a croak.

“Hello?”

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“Is this Mr. Phoenix Aalto, owner of Phoenix Rising?”

The authority in the voice shot fear down my spine, and I sat up and cleared my throat.

“Yes, I’m Phoenix. Is anyone hurt?”

There was a pause, enough to make my heart squeeze hard in my chest, making my fingers numb and tingly. Wondering who would be at the bakery on New Year’s Eve, picturing each of my friends and my employees, sent a panic through me.

The authoritative voice brought my focus back to the man on the other end of the line until he dropped the news that sent me off kilter.

“Well, Mr. Aalto. I’m Detective Sandoval, and I can assure you no injuries are associated with this crime. Someone set off your silent alarm and when we arrived, we found most of your windows broken out and the place ransacked, but no one at the scene. We need you to come down here and speak with us.”

Without waiting for him to finish, I crawled off the bed and went to the closet, searching for my clothes. My breaths were sawing in and out of my chest, making my vision blurry, but I pushed down as much of the panic threatening to surface.

Or at least I tried.

Warm, familiar hands clamped down on my shoulders and squeezed, pulling me back against a wide, hairy chest, allowing me to inhale a deep breath.

“Yes, Detective Sandoval, we’ll be there in fifteen minutes.”

I hung up, and I turned into Luka’s hold and gasped out a sob, unable to hold my emotions together any longer.

“He couldn’t leave things alone. That motherfucker trashed my bakery. He couldn’t just leave me alone and live his fucking life! Well, if he wanted a war, he’s going to get one now.”

Burton, who was leaning against the doorjamb, smiled and said, “Is it wrong I find an angry Phoenix a tremendous turn on?”

Surprised, I laughed through my tears as I wiped them away.

“No matter what happened, we can fix it. We’ll save what we can, but it’s all restorable,” Luka promised.

I nodded, tears welling in my eyes and spilling over, “I know, but it’s a shock, getting the call early in the morning. I’m grateful no one was there.”

Burton wiped at my tears as Luka kept an arm around my waist. Both men kissed me, comforting me, allowing me several minutes to breathe and get my equilibrium back before we separated in order to dress.

For the life of me, I didn’t remember walking downstairs or getting into the truck, much less the drive to my bakery, but when the red and blue lights flashed against the broken glass on the sidewalk, anger welled inside me and my mind snapped into sharp focus.

Stepping out of the truck, I walked up to the man dressed in a suit, looking tired yet determined, and I asked, “Detective Sandoval?”

When he nodded, I held out my hand, and he shook it.

“I’m Phoenix Aalto and this is my bakery. These two men are Luka Kavka and Burton Horváth, my partners.”

Although all our friends knew about our relationship, pride surged through me as I introduced them as mine to a complete stranger for the first time. And I already liked the detective when this information didn’t even cause an eyebrow raise or a follow up question asking to clarify our relationship.

It was a thrilling realization.

Luka and Burton kept a hand on my back, protecting me and sending me a silent message that I wasn’t alone.

“Follow me,” Detective Sandoval said.

I blinked away the tears that formed when I walked into a disaster.

While the sizable plants remained untouched, the potted ones on the tables lay broken on the floor. But the prime target was the counter.

Every afternoon, I removed the cash and made a deposit, but it didn’t stop whoever did this from pushing the heavy antique off the counter and denting the wooden floor. My heart skipped a beat when I turned and found the entire bakery case smashed, including the stands inside. All the lights lay in shards, but with a quick assessment of the damage, the glass and lights were the only things that needed replaced.

But my kitchen was the center of the damage.

The ovens were intact, but my heart dropped to see the thick glass shattered. Bowls

were strewn about, the glass ones broken and anything plastic dropped in the oven or on top of my gas stove, which melted, and the stench in the kitchen made my eyes water. My three industrial mixers, the refrigerators, and everything stainless steel tagged with spray paint, adding to the lovely scent, making me want to retch.

“He’s outdone himself this time.”

“Who?” Detective Sandoval inquired.

“That would be my father, Hale Aalto.” I watched the man’s eyes widened. “Yes, the real estate developer, with his stupid, ugly face plastered on every advertising surface he could find in the city.”

“Why would he do that?”

For the next half hour, I explained Hale’s every intention to shut down the block and his plans for a strip mall or whatever neighborhood wrecking idea he’d drummed up. I didn’t forget about his confrontation with Burton and Luka at their place of business. All to break us up and ruin my life.

Luka cleared his throat and when the detective glanced up, he said, “I installed security cameras covering all angles of the bakery and most of the block because I was worried about this exact thing. They include audio.”

“What? When did you do this?” I asked.

By the look on his face, I realized I snapped at him, and I relaxed. No one was to blame other than my father.

“Sorry, lover, I?—”

“No, nothing about this is fair. I know you feel out of control, but we are here and

we'll figure it out.”

He looped his arm around my waist. I sagged against him, all the tension leaving my body with his touch. I reached over and gripped Burton's hand, needing both men next to me.

The detective glanced between us, and the corner of his mouth tilted up. “You were saying, Mr. Kavka?”

“Please, call me Luka. Mr. Aalto, Phoenix's father, has made it known to the businesses on this block that he's out to destroy them, all because his son is a successful entrepreneur despite him. Mr. Aalto made his plan known to us, Phoenix's employees, both my and Burton's parents, all the business owners on the block, and our personal assistant, Drew. After he visited our landscaping offices on December Seventeenth, demanding we break up with Phoenix and help him destroy the bakery and his son, I bought the surveillance equipment and installed in the same day.”

I lifted my hands and cupped his face, pressing a soft kiss to his lips. “Thank you.”

“Can we go review it?” Detective Sandoval asked.

“Yep.”

We all followed Luka to the office Arthur used, and I couldn't remember how long it'd been since I stepped inside the bright pink office with the aloe vera plant I'd raised since I was sixteen sitting on the windowsill, healthy and thriving.

Before I moved in with my two men, I used to sit cross-legged on the floor upstairs in my apartment and worked on the accounting and inventory on my coffee table, hating the bland office I'd never gotten around to decorating.

But now, on top of the colorful walls which brightened the space, there were six monitors taking up the entire back wall with Arthur's desk tucked closer to the window.

"Where are the filing cabinets?"

"We moved them across the hall to the storage room after we cleaned it out," Burton said.

Luka sat at the monitors and asked, "What time do you think this happened?"

"According to the patrol officers, everything was normal at eleven when they drove by, so I'm thinking we start there," Detective Sandoval said.

The video was surprisingly sharp. I could read the plates of the cars that drove by.

There was no movement or sound for a few moments, so Luka forwarded the video until a shadow appeared across the street. As Luka slowed it to normal speed, three men walked into view. Two of them held baseball bats, and the other held a tire iron.

"You think we'll be lucky enough that the little faggot will be home? We can take turns with the boss' son. A little treat on top of the generous paycheck."

Three distinct curses erupted from the men around me and I shivered at the thought of what they would've done to me had I been home. In the end, I was absolutely furious knowing that my dad had sent them. I may not have been in physical danger, but there are so many what if's that if Hale stood in front of me, rage led me to believe I could kill him with my bare hands.

"Shut the fuck up, Tommy. You're such a fucking idiot."

“What? It’s fucking New Year’s Eve, Sammy, and since I’m doing this and not getting some pussy, I might as well take advantage. He’s gay. A dick is a dick. He’d enjoy it.”

“Don’t say my fucking name, you stupid motherfucker.”

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“Would you two shut the fuck up? Let’s get this over with!”

“Jesus, Lance, chill the fuck out. It’s a smash and smash. Nobody’s around. It’ll be fucking easy.”

A giggle escaped me when a fist found the man’s face, and he screeched at the crack of his nose.

The three of them froze at the loud outburst before they scurried across to my bakery and stood under the awning for a long moment, glancing around, seeing if they attracted any attention.

“For fuck’s sake, the fucking Three Stooges’ dumber than shit cousins bashed up my place. If the fucker ever comes by again, I have a boning knife I’ve been dying to try out.”

“Ignoring that,” Detective Sandoval said, “but if I heard it, I’d say you don’t want to be in the same room with that slimy fuck. When he goes to prison, I’ll start a rumor he’s a predator and likes it rough and see how he fucking likes it. But again, I didn’t hear or say anything.”

We smiled at the detective.

“Well, someone is getting a dozen gingerbread cookies, along with Snickerdoodles, and my mango cheesecake, and?—”

“Are you trying to make me fat?”

“It’s how he shows his appreciation,” Burton said.

Luka laughed and said, “And I’m sure he’ll invite you over for dinner after this is all over and claim you as a friend from now on.”

“You cook, too?” the detective asked.

“Nope, that’s Luka. I only bake.”

For the next fifteen minutes, we watched as they trashed the entire place, making me flinch when my rolling pin splintered and burned. But I shot out several expletives when they found my stash of international spices and dumped them or broke the jars.

“How do you think they know your father?”

I blinked at the detective before answering, “Hale Aalto is best at exploiting a weakness, and he sees nothing but in people. If I were to guess, they work at a construction company where Hale’s employed them or they’ve either done business with my father in the past as thugs for hire, which doesn’t seem likely considering we know all their first names, or he offered them a lot of money and has leverage on them. I’m guessing the latter.”

“So you’ve never seen them before? They haven’t been in your bakery?”

Luka grunted, and I shook my head.

“Our customers are older folks from the neighborhood, college kids, or corporate types. We’re a queer safe space. Trust me, I would remember if they came in.”

The criminals seemed to tire out after they smashed the remaining glass bowls and fell into step without a word, exiting out of the obliterated front window and took off

into the night.

Suddenly tired from the ongoing pushback from my father and knowing how much work we had ahead of us, I sagged against Burton as we finished with the detective. I wanted to go home, bury myself in our darkened bedroom and throw my mobile out the window, ignoring the world for as long as I could get away with it.

Instead, a plan started forming in my mind.

“The three won’t be too hard to find. But I’m not going after Hale Aalto yet, because I’ll get a confession from each of the three before I confront your father. The security footage will be a great help.”

I rubbed my metaphorical hands together, thrilled at the thought of the destruction of my father.

CHAPTER 15

LUKA

A quiet,reserved Phoenix scared me. A missing one who was supposed to be in bed sandwiched in between me and B made my heart stop as panic set in.

I understood why he was working so hard getting in contact with his father’s past associates and making allies with those who would share any negative experiences they had with Hale Aalto, but I drew the line at the constant dark splotches under his eyes and his obvious weight loss over the past few weeks.

So waking up and finding B in bed with me and Phoenix missing scared the shit out of me. I cursed as I threw the covers back and went searching for him.

I stomped down the stairs, ready for a confrontation, only to find him wrapped in a blanket on the couch, watching a baking show with the volume lowered. The dogs were curled up next to him, fast asleep, as Sunshine ran his fingers through Ruby's coat.

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When he heard me, he glanced up and smiled, loosening the tension in my body. I hadn't realized how much I missed him until that instant.

Carried by my momentum, I scooped Phoenix into my arms and sat, holding him tight against my chest.

The dogs huffed, but headed toward their respective beds.

I could breathe, especially after B joined us a few minutes later and snuggled against us.

"My actions regarding my father have worried both of you, and for that, I'm sorry. But it's done now. Last night, Detective Sandoval released the surveillance on the evening news and announced that they were aware of the person who hired them, but they would not reveal his name until the end of the investigation.

"I'm going to give an interview in the next couple of days, not so much to implicate him, but for viewers and jurors to correlate my face and name with Hale's. Detective Sandoval wants the information about Hale hiring them to stay a secret until he can prove it. When he does, I'm done with him."

I nodded, but B asked, "Did they arrest the assholes who broke into your bakery?"

"Yeah, but despite evidence against them, they've remained tightlipped about the entire thing. The detective and his team are looking into tracing the money they received. Yesterday, Detective Sandoval got a warrant for all of Hale's financial affairs, including overseas accounts, and their financial crimes unit is picking over

it.”

Despite the overwhelming sight of the bakery trashed in the early morning at the start of a new year, it'd been rather easy to set it back to rights. Word got around the neighborhood and while we were there, making lists of everything we needed to replace, people came in droves to help clean up the glass, repot plants, and show Phoenix their support.

Before long, the windows arrived to replace the broken ones. An order of utensils and the heavy-duty equipment such as the bakery display were on order and ready to be shipped, and Arthur purchased a cash register from an antique store he frequented.

We replaced the doors and windows with stronger, shatter-proof materials, and we made the alarm system, along with a panic button, operational on the day we received them from the manufacturer.

“Are you doing okay, Petal?”

I wasn't sure what to expect, but when he laughed, I held him tighter, wondering if this was the one moment in time that broke him.

He wiped at his eyes and said, “Yeah, I'm fine because I understood, deep down, it was coming.”

Making room between us, I searched his face and asked, “What?”

A flash of hatred marred his beautiful face before it passed.

“He knows my weaknesses; who and what I love. At first, he gave us what he considers a warning; finding out where I lived and popping up here and then at your landscaping business to make his threats. But it was his underhanded ways, not his

straightforward ones I was worried about. He's a snake and will take any opportunity to get his way. I wasn't sure in the direction he would take his revenge, but I should've known it was my bakery. He despises it and me."

Neither of us could dispute how Hale felt about him, but I couldn't keep silent.

"I should've said something earlier, but I loathe the way Hale has affected you. I recognize you have every right to fight back, but I..."

Phoenix cupped my cheek and gave me a tight smile.

"I know, lover. The depths of which I want Hale to suffer overtook my reason since I walked in on the catastrophe he caused. I want justice, but wishing bad things to happen to him makes me just like him, and that thought woke me out of a dead sleep. I'm nothing like him. And I am finished with letting his issues consume me. It's affecting our relationship and I won't allow it to continue any longer."

His mouth brushed against mine, and when he sighed, relaxing against me, I devoured him.

When I pulled back to suck in a deep breath, Phoenix turned toward B and moaned into their caress as my heart swelled at the sight.

As the younger man leaned back against my shoulder, head tucked against my neck, I glanced at B and noticed his tranquil expression. He snagged a kiss from me, moaning when I was cheeky and sucked on his bottom lip, and smiled at him when he looked about ready to pounce on me.

"I want to change my surname," Phoenix mumbled.

Not going to lie, my eyes almost boggled out of my head as my gaze shot up and I

noticed B's matching expression. Joy, hopefulness, along with a dreamlike quality I identified with. I tamped down my excitement until I heard what he had to say.

"To what, Sunshine?"

He gripped my shirt, and I knew his thoughts ran along the same lines, but it took him a few minutes to get it out.

"I know we can't get married, which I don't mind because I'd never pictured it for myself. But it would be nice, having our relationship defined, all without being the center of attention for an afternoon."

Because he'd been up for a few hours before us, it wasn't surprising to find him sagging against me, listening to my heartbeat, gripping B's hand as though we were going to walk out of his life.

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Yeah, there was no chance of that.

B pulled out his phone, which surprised me, because I was the one who researched our crazy ideas.

“Would you like Kavka-Horváth or the other way around?”

Sunshine mumbled, “Phoenix Kavka-Horváth. I like it. Do you sign it with that little mark each time?”

I chuckled at that. “You can’t even make out his given name most times. Forget about figuring out whether he has an umlaut over the letter. He missed his calling as a doctor with how terrible his handwriting turns out.”

Coming back with sass he learned from our Sunshine, B responded, “It’s all part of the plan. Besides, I text or type. Why do I need to learn how to sign my name?”

“So people can recognize our commitment that binds us together when we get a joint bank account or when I draw up the papers for you two to be co-owners of the bakery.”

That bit of news made both of us pause.

“How long have you wanted this, Sunshine?”

He shrugged his shoulders and turned onto his back in order to see both of us.

“Since the night of our first date, but it’s been rolling around in my brain more and more since Christmas. I recognize it’s been several months since the start of us, but who else, apart from the two of you, knows me so well? I realize you want to say Arthur, and you’re right in a way. He’s my best friend, but you two are my future and I want to share everything I have with the both of you.”

Before either of us could utter a word, he continued.

“But unlike my friendships, you two are the only ones I need close to me, whether in good times or bad. I love the thrill I get when Luka barges into the bakery, searching for me as though I might go missing at any moment. And after you scoop me in your arms, I smile when Burton makes a B-Line for the hazelnut and dark chocolate croissants, the recipe I perfected because of his suggestions. I make sure there are at least two every afternoon, despite them being the most popular pastry in the bakery.

“But the little things are the moments I remember and crave the most. Nights cuddled on the couch, watching another movie one of us hasn’t seen yet. I mean, come on, who hasn’t seen *The Goonies*.”

Luka shrugged and said, “Hey, stop picking on me. I was five when it released. And when did you see it, B? I don’t remember you talking about it.”

B shrugged. “It was a college party and my date decided her ex-boyfriend was preferable to me, so I went home and it was on TV. Why? Did you wonder if it was under nefarious circumstances?”

“Ah, it sucks she dumped you at the party... you know what? Never mind, these jealous feelings can go fuck themselves. She didn’t deserve you.” Phoenix crossed his arms over his chest and pouted.

Both of us laughed at his cute skulk.

“So there’s no chance you want to hear?—”

A hand came up and covered my mouth, making the laugh come out as a huff as I took in Phoenix’s disgruntled expression. I moved his hand away from my mouth, slid my fingers through his hair, and brought him into a kiss that left me aching. As he panted, B buried his face against my neck, nipping a path until he reached my mouth.

My dick was throbbing, making Phoenix moan as he shifted his hips, rubbing our dicks together. I hauled B closer until our mouths fused.

“Why is being hard and aching a constant around you two? I forgot what we were talking about.”

“Because I’m a touch gremlin who needs constant reassurance from our connection that you want me and will continue to want me,” Phoenix said.

“That will never change,” B reassured.

“What will both of your parents say if I hyphenate your names and take them as my own?”

I scoffed. “If our parents haven’t proven time and time again you’re their favorite, then their words ‘oh, there’s our son,’ as they greet and hug you first, watch them rush you downtown to figure out the fastest way to make your idea a reality. But you aren’t alone in this. I’m planning on making the change, too.”

B nodded. “Yep, I’m in. I suggest we don’t tell the parents until after, as a surprise.”

“Yeah, no, that’s not happening, because this affects them too and they should get to express their opinion,” Phoenix said.

I said my thoughts aloud, “If we’re integrating our lives, then we need to meet with our accountant and fiduciary to see how to combine everything. Retirement, our businesses, the house, since we are sharing everything.”

“Ugh, you two work that out. It seems so adult and I’m not dealing with any of that. Tell me where to sign and I’ll do it, but count me out for those meetings. I love you two, but adulting sucks, so no thanks,” B sighed, slumping against the couch and leaning his head against my shoulder.

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“You’re in more meetings than me.”

“Yeah, but do I pay attention? Sometimes. Do I want to be there? No.”

Phoenix kissed B, and when he leaned back, he cuddled his head against my shoulder. We soon fell asleep, and I dreamt about the certain future with Phoenix and Burton.

When I woke three hours later, I found Phoenix curled in my lap with his head nestled into B’s stomach. Both of them sound asleep.

For several minutes, I basked in the closeness we shared, until my stomach rumbled. It occurred to me we’d eaten nothing since dinner the night before and slept most of the morning. The idea of a full English breakfast with a few substitutions sounded good, and I knew Sunshine loved to try new foods.

As I stood with Phoenix in my arms, B blinked open his eyes and looked at the sweet bundle in my arms and laid out on the couch. I settled the younger man in front of him, who snuggled in close to B, before I covered them with the blanket.

Satisfied when their breathing deepened, I headed toward the kitchen after a quick detour and started the kettle boiling for the coffee before raiding the refrigerator.

A dozen eggs; B preferred sunny-side, while Phoenix liked a soft scramble. I then laid out smoked bacon, opened a can of baked beans, set out whole cherry tomatoes

and mushrooms to roast, forming the breakfast sausage, and slicing the honey-oatmeal bread to round out the buffet. As the bacon and the vegetables roasted in the oven, I started cracking the eggs, leaving four behind for B, as I added heavy cream and whisked the remaining eight.

Other than the setback on New Year's, I'd succeeded with putting weight on our younger lover, who, before we'd moved him in, had horrible eating habits.

Rather than make himself a proper meal, he ate sweets and often skipped lunch. After work, he napped before busying himself with his plants.

Which was why during the work week B and I would bring him lunch as we spent an hour together with Phoenix, making sure he ate his fill. On the weekends, I found the familiar desire to find new recipes for us to try while having plenty of food on hand to satisfy any cravings.

It wasn't unknown for a visitor to drop by, especially to see Phoenix, and for the first time in his young life, affection wasn't something he needed to earn.

Familiar skinny arms wrapped around my waist as he pressed his cheek to the middle of my back, and I inhaled. I loved him and his scent of cinnamon and sunshine.

A smile bloomed on my face, which I found familiar in the last several months. I wouldn't have described myself as stoic as B had, but before the three of us made it official, there weren't a lot of bright moments in my day where I'd experienced a surge of happiness knowing I was right where I needed to be. But with Phoenix in our lives, the glowing feeling never left.

"I'm sorry I woke you up so early," the younger man whispered in deference to B, still sacked out on the couch. But I knew he wouldn't last long asleep without Phoenix plastered against him.

I turned in his arms and cupped his face, pressing a soft kiss to his lips and indulging in his taste. The soft sigh that washed over my lips when we broke off to catch our breaths brought contentment and desire rushing to the surface.

My voice was gruff when I spoke.

“You never have to be sorry. B and I, without fail, will worry about you and your mental health. And I know, although you’ve had Arthur in your life to fight for you when you needed it, B and I have your back, no matter what.”

There was a loud groan followed by a clipped curse and both of us laughed at the sound, signaling B was awake, but he wasn’t happy about it.

I slid my tongue over Phoenix’s bottom lip and swallowed his moan, loving the way his body became lax in my arms as he trusted me with his entire being. Soon both of us were breathless, and I was aching as the timer rang.

“Is the bacon burning?” B croaked.

“Shit!”

But I checked the oven to find perfectly cooked, crispy bacon. Ready to rebuke B’s claim, I turned and glared over my shoulder to see B picking Phoenix up and taking his mouth with a deep kiss.

I shook my head, but joy surged through me.

Although we should have stepped in and helped Phoenix with his plan against his father, I held back with my offer because it was something we knew he might want to handle on his own, forgetting we were together and a three-man team.

From this moment on, I vowed to open up to both of them and step in when either of my men had a problem.

CHAPTER 16

BURTON

The moment we stepped into our bedroom, we shed our clothes and shut the outside world away.

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“On your hands and knees, please, lover,” Phoenix whispered.

Luka gave him a kiss before he gripped the base of his cock hard as he positioned himself in the middle of the bed, not knowing what our man wanted, but willing to give him everything.

We’d taken the day off, filing the paperwork with the courts for all three of us to change our surnames. We’d decided on Phoenix’s original idea of Kavka-Horváth.

Until we handed over the paperwork and were told the court clerk would contact us if we needed to be in attendance in court where a judge would review and approve the change, the early morning discussion seemed interchangeable with a distant fantasy in my mind.

Although the commitment we made strengthened with each passing day, there was something about meeting with our attorney and accountant, filling out legal forms; well, not me so much as Luka and Phoenix, and submitting it to the state which made the reality of our relationship solidify that much more.

When Phoenix moved into the house and allowed both of us to care about his well-being, Luka let down his guard. Not enough to let go of all his worry, but enough to take a breath once in a while. It took bringing Phoenix into our lives to admit that I lost my heart to my best friend ages ago.

And Phoenix, the minute I spotted him in the bakery with his shy smile, rushing about with happiness radiating from him, changed my life for the better. But all three of us, even steadfast at the thought of forever, couldn’t keep the thrill of the day from

pouring out the moment we locked the front door behind us.

Luka's low, deep groan shook me out of my thoughts and when I glanced up, I choked on my tongue as my entire body throbbed. But instead of worrying about me, Phoenix kneeled on the bed behind Luka, and without fanfare, swept his tongue along his taint and up toward his pulsing hole, swirling the tip along his entrance, before puckering up and giving it a tiny kiss.

It never occurred to me before I fantasized about Phoenix and all the ways Luka and I could take him apart, how much I would come to enjoy sex with a man. Not only sex, but everything we've experienced since we became a threesome.

For the two short months where Luka and I fucked in college, it was only that. There was no real intimacy, but because we were horny young adults with an insatiable need to fuck, whenever the mood would strike, Luka prepared himself and I sank into him, both of us getting into the sensations.

There wasn't foreplay or even kissing between us. So I blew long before he claimed satisfaction from me. I watched as he stroked himself off, but I never touched his cock.

Hell, I never even offered.

When I thought about that time in our lives, my stomach churned in discomfort at how I treated him back then.

But in the months we observed Phoenix, waiting for the right time to approach him, I dreamt up all the ways we could pleasure the man.

I imagined Petal naked and what his cock would look like, how both men would look as they gave themselves over to ecstasy. It was then I tried to remember what Luka's

dick looked like, growing angry at myself for the gap in my memory and being so fucking selfish during our short stint together.

And through it all, Luka never judged me for being a shitty friend and a lousy lover. He supported me, came up with the idea of our landscaping business, and even found this house and invited me to buy it with him.

What I never told him or Phoenix was that space in time meant the world to me. The trust of Luka to confide in me about his sexuality, allowing me inside his body and still maintaining the status quo while both of our emotions were all over the place, was a treasured time in my life.

Throughout the years, I'd contemplated how to have more with Luka without hurting him again. And until Phoenix came into our lives, I thought I missed my chance. Although I may act as though inconsequential moments such as watching a cooking show or falling asleep with the younger man sandwiched between Luka and I were commonplace, the emotion that being with the two of them brought to the surface was new. There was nothing more I wanted than to commit myself to them for the rest of our days.

Phoenix reached out and grabbed my biceps, jerking me forward as he rolled to his side, giving me space to continue loosening Luka for whatever the younger man had planned.

"B! Fuck!" Luka shouted as I brushed my finger along his taint.

Moving closer, I smiled against his skin as I jabbed my stiffened tongue inside his already slick hole, savoring the musk of the man as his thighs quivered as I continued my onslaught.

The next few minutes I spent appreciating the sounds coming from him, closing my

eyes when he shouted my name, panting as his chest heaved with exertion.

Luka's legs gave out, and he melted into the bed. I gave him a wistful smile as I guided him onto his back and captured his lips in a searing kiss. When we broke the kiss, Phoenix straddled Luka's stomach, and my cock throbbed as Luka gripped his waist.

I admired the contrast of Phoenix's pale, soft skin as Luka's tanned and rough hand wrapped around him. Unable to take my eyes off them, I reached for the lube and coated my fingers, teasing Luka's hole again as I lifted my head and swiped circles over Phoenix's entrance.

It took me a while, but I figured out what Phoenix wanted. I stretched Luka's hole, starting with one finger. Before long, and with some begging and vivid curses from the man lying prone on the bed, I added another. I wriggled my fingers inside him, brushing against his prostate at random times, and his shouts became a balm to my soul. At the same time I stretched Luka, the fingers of my non-dominant hand opened Phoenix up.

“Handsome, fuck! I... need Luka inside me now. I'm good.”

Withdrawing my fingers from both of them with a slowness that tortured all of us, I enveloped Petal in a hug as I reached down and stroked his cock with my lubed hand. I thumbed at the precome dribbling down his pink head and brought it up to my mouth as Luka growled.

Not wanting to rush, but knowing all of us needed more, I gripped the base of Luka's cock and held our man aloft before he lowered himself down, absorbing the beautiful cock as I thoughtback to the stretch of the same phallus inside me as my dick leaked in anticipation.

“Tight... so fucking hot and tight,” Luka grunted, flexing his fingers.

As he sat flush with Luka’s thighs, Petal leaned forward and balanced his hands on Luka’s wide and hairy chest, curling his fingers. He glanced over his shoulder and when he met my gaze, a light flashed in his spectacular blue eyes and I leaned closer, taking his mouth and swallowing his long, loud moan.

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When the kiss broke, Luka set his feet flat on the bed and tilted his hips up, making both of the men groan at the change of position. Before I had looked my fill; because let's be honest, the two men were opposites in every single way while they made an arresting sight together. A choked moan brought me out of my trance.

“B,” Luka sounded pained.

The time stretching him worked a charm because when I slotted my knees beneath Luka's thighs and crawled into position, the head of my dick slid inside and I bit off a curse as he clenched me tight.

Phoenix shifted his hips up and down, taking his pleasure, and the sight drove me out of my mind. My hips jerked forward, and I was halfway inside Luka when I realized I hadn't meant to go that fast. I pulled back, but stopped when Luka's hand gripped my wrist, holding me still.

“No,” he panted, “Need more of you. Please, B.”

I kissed his wrist and nodded, loving the trust reflected in his eyes.

It was the first time in close to a decade where I was inside Luka. Realizing how much I missed this closeness with him stole my breath and made my eyes sting with unshed tears. Although it should have meant more to me back then, I appreciated how powerful second chances were and would do my best to make it up to Luka.

Without an ounce of control, I let out a groan of pure hunger as Luka gripped my forearm while using his other hand to caress Petal from his chest to his hip. I canted

my pelvis forward until Luka's hot channel squeezed me and I watched his face for any signs of discomfort.

"How does he feel, handsome?" Phoenix asked.

Banding one arm around his chest and pressing my own to his back, I leaned Petal back into my arms and caught Luka's gaze, unable to be anything but truthful.

"This, being with both of you, is the closest I've come to experiencing true happiness."

It was the truth. Never in my life had I'd come close to both ecstasy and serenity of having the closeness we shared.

At my words, Petal arched his back and Luka's hips shot up, moaning at my cock driving even deeper inside of him. With shallow thrusts, I watched as my two men, both flushed with their eyes closed, allowed pleasure to take over. I reached for Phoenix's pink, leaking dick and stroked it in the same rhythm as Luka's thrusts and when he reached back and cupped my ass, his pinky brushed against my hole and I shouted as my entire body clenched in anticipation.

"Not... gonna last," I huffed out.

Phoenix turned his head and captured my lips. I moaned against him as Luka squeezed me tight.

The whimpers coming from Luka drove me insane.

I bent forward, flattening Petal against Luka's chest as I pounded into him, leaving me breathless and shaking with the need to come.

“Love, please,” I begged.

I wanted to feel Luka let go as Petal’s cock pulsed with his release in my hand.

To help matters along, my fingers traced over Luka’s skin stretched around my cock, both enamored with the image of me inside the man, but also the sensations causing him to shudder and tighten in order to keep me inside.

His hips punched up, causing Phoenix to call out as our man shook with the force of his orgasm. Petal’s shouts caused a chain reaction and Luka clamped down on my cock as his own pulsed out his release.

Then it was my turn.

The release felt so... fucking... good.

My breaths stuck in my chest and the band of pure euphoria choked me, heightening the sensations as I released deep inside Luka.

“Fuck!”

As I toppled on top of Phoenix, my entire body limp and fucked out, I’d relished the sensations I never experienced until I fell in love with these two men. I basked in the weightlessness of my body as I sank down on the side of Phoenix, who already cuddled up on Luka’s chest.

Surprised, I blinked my eyes open when Luka’s lips sipped at my own. I then cupped his face and gave my all to the kiss.

“I love you, B,” he paused before he glanced down at a smiling, yet exhausted Phoenix, “and you too, Sunshine.”

The younger man reached for my hand and linked his fingers through mine as he placed our hands cuddled against his chest. Luka's hand wrapped around both of ours and we settled in for a few minutes of post-orgasmic bliss.

Several minutes later, Luka roused us for a shower. Whether it was the moment of shared gratification or solidifying our commitment, I didn't understand why my emotions were all over the place. But when they got up, or rather when Luka lifted Petal in his arms, I rolled off the bed and followed close behind.

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Luka must have sensed something was off, because he reached for my hand, holding our man against his chest as he searched my face.

“You okay, sweetheart?”

The endearment brought a tear to my eye, and I nodded as I reached out to cup the back of his head and pressed a soft kiss to his lips.

“Yeah. My instincts are screaming at me to be close to you both. And you know me, I’m never one to brush off what my gut is telling me.”

Petal kissed my cheek and said, “It’s okay, handsome. I’ve never known a time where I haven’t wanted to be close to both of you, but then you invited me into your home and shared not only your space but your life, and I wish with all my heart this contentment never goes away.

“It’s like we are in a bubble of our own and when the outside world impedes, we grow closer together. I’m happy both of your parents agreed with our plan. It means there is something tangible that links us together.”

I scoffed. “They would have accepted nothing less than you being part of our family.” I glanced up at Luka. Sorrow filled my chest, “But you might not know, and I never want there to be doubts?—”

Luka cupped my cheek. “Sweetheart, Phoenix nailed it on the head. It wasn’t the right time for us and I know you think that you’d hurt me back in college, but I remember the time we spent together after. You continued to be my roommate and

my best friend. I hadn't realized until a short time ago, but we built this life together so when the time was right and we met Sunshine, our lives would stitch together to become seamless. You're here now, and have been since the beginning, and I wouldn't change it for the world. You and Phoenix are my life."

Phoenix gave me a gentle kiss as he cupped my cheek. "We're destined. Never doubt that, handsome."

And just like that, the rioting sentiment settled, and I let go of the last of the guilt that plagued me for years.

CHAPTER 17

PHOENIX

Valentine's day at the bakery was a madhouse.

We'd predicted the heightened volume and special orders after we had our grand re-opening, but by noon, I knew it would be the most successful holiday in years. I loved baking and sharing food with my customers, but special occasions were a rush from the time we opened until the end of the day, and the smiles and camaraderie made me grateful I was a part of this community.

The bestsellers were the heart-shaped red velvet macaroons, the brownie bites with the dark chocolate chunks dusted with red icing sugar, and the red velvet cakes with a white chocolate ganache and red glitter hearts for decoration.

I even made a special batch of chili chocolate croissants for Burton and a lemon tart for Luka after we decided we'd rather have a quiet date at home.

With a quick glance at the clock, I blew out a relieved breath as I checked on my last

bake, the final products to replenish what we sold out of earlier in the day.

Days where I could experiment with design and taste while keeping the classics for returning customers, and holidays provided ample opportunity to spread my wings, were two of the many reasons I opened the bakery.

Charlotte was perfecting her chocolate creations; and, of course, they were gorgeous. Arthur, who also worked miracles on social media, featured her exquisite creations, which brought in even more business.

With the timer buzzing, I removed the last batch of molten chocolate lava cakes before setting them aside to cool. The decorations lay completed on the stainless steel counter.

Aware of the bakery phone ringing, I ignored it since it was late in the day. Arthur or another employee in the front would answer it. I disliked phone interactions as much as face-to-face ones, so I never answered.

I continued working, pouring heavy cream into the chilled, stand mixing bowl, adding both vanilla and lemon zest until my best friend's worried face popped through the crack of the swinging door, a frown etched on his face, and my heart stopped.

"Is it Luka and Burton? Are they hurt?" I demanded.

He burst through the door with his hands up in a placating gesture as he nodded. "Whoa, yeah, no. It has nothing to do with your men, but Suzy is on the phone."

My brows furrowed as I thought about who that might be; a potential new client, or a friend I couldn't remember making, a bride who wanted to talk about her wedding cake? I don't think I've met a Suzy before.

“Who?”

Arthur let out a short bark of laughter before shaking his head at me, as if I were a child.

“No, it’s the fucking piece of shit who I hope falls into a volcano and feels himself roast alive for several minutes before the inevitable happens and he screams while he dies... well, his wife wants to talk to you.”

I tilted my head as I interpreted everything he said, when my eyes widened and I choked out, “What?”

“Your fuck-of-a-father’s wife is on the phone. For you. And she wouldn’t tell me why she was calling, despite me asking her about a million-gazillion times.”

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“And you wonder where I get all my verbal prowess from? Well, fuck! Might as well get this over with.”

In order to calm my nerves, I took one deep breath and let it out before I picked up the phone in the kitchen, knowing Arthur and whoever else was near the front counter would overhear the conversation I didn’t want to have.

“Hello?”

“Phoenix?”

“Yes, Suzy, it’s me. What do you need?”

There was a long pause and shuffling of something in the background before she cleared her throat. The wait seemed interminable as I held in a sigh, not speaking as she gathered her thoughts. Or at least I hope she would get to the point sooner rather than later.

“Your father is in the hospital.”

The bored, monotone way in which she relayed what she most likely suspected might be bad news for me led me to the conclusion that she was holding something back. If my father, who supported her through their entire marriage so she didn’t have to work a day in her life, was close to death’s door, she would be in hysterics.

The reason; there was no way Hale Aalto would leave his fortune to her. If there was any sympathy in my body for her or for my father, I would have conveyed my

knowledge of what the man planned to do with his money. But since I didn't, I hung up the phone and pulled my mobile from my pocket.

After fifteen minutes of searching, I found out the best hospital in the city that dealt with heart problems and was about to call when Luka and Burton burst through the kitchen doors, their frantic eyes searching my face.

I held up my hands and said, "She's lying. There's something going on and I'm about to find out what, but it's not as serious as she made it seem."

When I started working at Hale's real estate company, the man listed me as his emergency contact despite being remarried for close to twelve years. I knew he hadn't taken me off since the man burned bridges wherever he worked and despite our distance; I was still his son. Suzy calling me was a ploy, and since I hadn't heard from a medical professional, it was all bullshit.

I dialed the main number for Massachusetts General. Two sets of arms wrapped around me and I chuckled, patting both of them on the arm.

"Yes, I'm Hale Aalto's son, Phoenix Kavka-Horváth, and I'm checking on his condition."

"One moment, please."

"Dr. Bradeem," came an unfamiliar voice on the line.

"Yes, Dr. Bradeem, my name is Phoenix. My father is a patient at your hospital and I wanted to check his condition."

"Ah, yes, Hale Aalto. Your father arrived and checked into the ER at a quarter till ten this morning with complaints of chest pains and numbness in his extremities. We

monitored his condition for the next three hours and detected no anomalies in his EKG, blood pressure, or blood tests. After ruling out all possibilities, there is no diagnosis, and I found nothing physically wrong with your father. I wanted to discharge him to rest at home, but Mr. Aalto refuses. He's insisting you will be there to discharge him and take him home to care for him."

I inhaled a deep breath to hold in all my frustration at the situation, because the doctor wasn't to blame, so I pinched my nose and reveled when both men tightened their hold on me.

"For clarification, Dr. Bradeem. There is nothing medically wrong with Hale, nor is there any reason he needs to be in the hospital. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"And based on the tests you've run and the bloodwork that has come back, is Hale healthy and at this time in no danger of dying?"

I heard the smile in the doctor's voice when he replied, "No, he is in perfect health and the tests do not show any characteristics of heart problems that would require him to be hospitalized. My professional opinion is that Mr. Hale Aalto is in good shape for a man of his age."

With a determination that was becoming all too familiar, I said, "Well, Dr. Bradeem, I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. I will not be making my way to your hospital and discharging Hale Aalto. He's capable of making it home on his own. But a word of advice, I would get your billing department to charge him double for every single test you and your staff performed, account for all the equipment used, and hell, even bill him per hour for use of the bed he's in right now because trust me he can afford it, and then kick him out. I'm sorry he wasted your time."

“Well, that’s a first, but thank you for calling me and giving me the story. This was certainly entertaining.”

With a few more words exchanged, I hung up and sighed out in exasperation.

“Arthur?” I shouted.

I snagged a kiss from both of my men before I strode toward the refrigerator and removed the wrapped sandwiches we would have set out for the lunch rush. But since it was a romantic holiday, customers purchased sweets rather than savory dishes and we had leftovers, a lot of them.

“Yes,” my best friend elongated his answer as the swinging door creaked open.

“I’m making a platter for the staff in the emergency department at Massachusetts General. Can you send Matthew over with the delivery?”

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He disappeared through the door and brought back a platter of brownies and the strawberry rhubarb jam filled cookies and started piling them on the tray next to the sandwiches since they were pre-wrapped.

“Oh, and two coffees?—”

“Already on it, boss,” Charlotte said as she set the two boxes filled with our house blend next to the platter.

Matthew, the man who was a ray of sunshine whenever he entered the room and made an out-of-this-world lemon drizzle cake to die for, beamed when he brought out the box of extra chips I’d put aside for staff whenever I fried up batches. “Anything else?”

“Oh, the donuts with the pastry cream and the fruit, please?”

As the group loaded the delivery into the back of Matthew’s hatchback, I jotted down a quick thank you to the doctor and his staff and invited him to the bakery for free food and coffee anytime they were in the area.

I handed the note over and asked, “Can you ask for Dr. Bradeem when you arrive at the emergency department and give him this note?”

Surprising me, Matthew wrapped his arms around me in a tight hug, which I returned with a smile.

“Sure thing!” He said as he pulled back and skipped to the driver’s side door.

After my staff scattered, going back to work, Luka asked, “What did you write?”

With a smile on my face, I turned and launched myself at Luka, loving the fact he caught me with a little grunt, but held me against his chest despite wanting an answer to his question.

“It was an apology for my father and a short bit about the food. He and the nurses and other staff have been waiting on Hale and Suzy hand and foot as though the hospital was a fucking luxury hotel, so I thought they might want a treat for dealing with people like my father.”

“Why would he fake a heart attack? I mean, that is... sinister, isn’t it? Fuck, I’ve never liked that man,” Burton snarled.

Rather than disagreeing with him, I laughed and brought him in for a hug.

“I know, handsome, but have you noticed one thing about the situation?”

He shook his head, blowing out a frustrated breath.

“Well, he no longer has any effect on me or my mental health. Rather than panicking when Suzy called, I thought the situation through and listened to my instincts when I realized nothing was as it seemed. The doctor verified what I already knew, and now, I can sue him over the damage to the bakery and trying to ruin my reputation, not to mention his actions came after he told the entire neighborhood he had planned to destroy it. Even if there are no criminal charges against him, I was going to take him to civil court and have him pay where it hurts the most.”

Burton’s lips crashed down on mine and, for a long moment, I indulged in his taste, snagging one from Luka before I reveled in the noises both of my men made when they became intimate.

The door crashed opened and Arthur came through with an eye roll, but giving us the same wide smile whenever he saw us wrapped up in each other.

“Why don’t you take off for the night? Jude is coming soon to take me to dinner and Fergus was our last customer for the night.”

“Oh, what did he get for him and Gio?”

“He wanted the chocolate lava cakes, but I couldn’t help but sneak in those suggestive cookies we couldn’t keep stocked. I made up a couple for him and snuck them in before I taped up the box. They’ll thank me for them later,” Arthur winked.

I leaned forward and kissed my friend on the cheek, earning another growl from Luka, which turned me on to no end. I stripped out of my apron and headed for the front.

“Coming?” Giving both of them a cheeky smile before I sashayed out of the kitchen and past the counter.

When Luka swept me into his arms, I laughed with a lightness that I never found before I’d met these two. After living a life with a tension I carried like a weight around my neck, bogging down my happiness until I couldn’t breathe, I appreciated both men because they accepted me, flaws, quirks, and all.

Despite the cold front moving in the week before, the sun shone as we walked out of the bakery and I lifted my face, absorbing the warmth both inside and out.

“I think you carry me more than I walk on my own, and I’m okay with that.”

Luka jiggled me as he laughed and Burton gave me a tap on my butt, making me anticipate what was to come.

“Was that I groan I heard, Petal? Is spanking going to be on the list of many, many sexual things we have yet to experience?”

I laughed and shook my head. “Nah, spanking isn’t my thing, but you and Luka touching me anywhere and everywhere is an appealing thought. Do you think we’re going to last through dinner without rushing upstairs?”

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“No, because I see you’re wearing something bright pink underneath your jeans there, Petal. And if I’m right, we won’t get past the foyer before you’re coming down my throat.”

A whine left my mouth. “But I wanted both of you inside me before I come.”

Luka’s laugh echoed around us as we reached the truck.

“You two do realize we are in public, right? We can’t be sporting boners, much less talk about blowjobs and anal sex.”

“But... bright pink panties, Luka!” Burton all but shouted.

Luka yanked open the passenger side door before sitting me in the center and belting me in. His movements were choppy, which meant he was getting turned on, and I didn’t help when I leaned closer to his ear and whispered, “Lacy, pink, boy panties, holding my throbbing?—”

He jerked back and straightened before he practically shouted, “Okay! If you’re both done tormenting me, why don’t we go home and I’ll show you both what I planned for our first Valentine’s day together.”

The man kissed me breathless, then turned to Burton and, without giving him time, cupped the back of the man’s head and devoured him as if Burton’s mouth was life, and Luka needed to be revived.

I slipped my phone from my pocket and snapped a picture.

“Home?” Luka said, his chest rising and falling with giant breaths.

“Yes, please,” Burton and I said at the same time.

“About time!”

Once Luka and Burton buckled in and we started home, I lay my head against Luka’s shoulder and sighed as Burton’s hand rubbed up and down my thigh.

It was then my cell started ringing with the obnoxious ringtone I assigned for my father’s number. Giving the device a smirk, I dismissed the call before I blocked him, then deleted his contact information.

“That was bold,” Burton sounded pleased.

“Yeah, but I’m done with him. I should’ve cut him out of my life when he went to your business and threatened both of you, but it took him trying to destroy my bakery before I made this decision. Mateo said the evidence is piling up against my father and when he spoke to people who’ve done business with Hale, most of them agreed to submit to a deposition where they’ll tell their experiences of Hale’s bullying business practices. But it’s the money trail that is going to be his downfall. He’s paid off the wrong people.”

“Who’s Mateo?” Burton asked.

“Detective Sandoval.”

“Oh, and you’re on a first name basis with the police detective?” Luka demanded.

“Yes. He’s been by the bakery a few times and despite Charlotte being oblivious to the Detective’s interest in her, I’ve gotten to know the man and like you said that

night, we've become friends. His schedule hasn't allowed him time to come over for dinner, but we talk."

As we pulled into the garage and Luka shut off the engine, Burton leaned around me and laughed at Luka's disgruntled expression. I swatted his stomach with the back of my hand and smiled when he grunted.

"What?"

I shook my head and leaned over to Luka, capturing his lips in a kiss that reassured, but turned into something deeper. When I pulled back and caught my breath, I cupped his face.

"You will never have to worry about me straying from you or Burton. I'd never jeopardize what we share, lover. I'm not wired that way. The moment you brought me home and accepted me and all my flaws was the day my heart secured you two inside, forever."

CHAPTER 18

LUKA

Phoenix handled the news about his father faking a heart attack with grace and generosity, but exhaustion was clear on his face by the time we all clambered out of the truck and made our way inside the house.

I'd dropped him off at five thirty in the morning because he'd planned for the rush for Valentine's day on anything chocolate and he needed to help Charlotte with her creations, as well as his normal duties.

B and I hadn't been able to reach him at anytime during the day; the bakery's phone

was busy each time we called and B remembered Sunshine put his mobile on silent the night before and probably hadn't remembered to turn the ringer back on.

Arthur, being the crafty man he was and knew we would want to be there for our man, called and told B of Sunshine's trouble coming from his father. The day and the drama from his father drained what little energy he had by the time his phone calls ended.

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The clicking of the dogs' nails on the floor brought a smile to my face, especially when I noticed the joy radiating from their favorite human.

“My babies!”

He sat down on the floor and both girls gave him kisses. They acted as though they hadn't seen him today.

Although B and I took turns with letting them out during the week, sometimes even taking them to work so Drew could spoil the girls rotten, Phoenix gave them the attention they craved and they put him first.

When it looked like the girls and Phoenix might curl up on the hardwood floor and fall asleep, I lifted him into my arms and gave his mouth a gentle kiss.

“Why don't you go up and take a nap?”

“But... it's Valentine's day. Shit! I forgot the desserts I made you in the refrigerator at work. I'll go back?—”

B wrapped his arms around the younger man's waist from behind as I pulled both of them closer until Sunshine rested his chin on my chest, slow blinking up at me.

“Today is like any other day, Petal. You show us with every look and every kind gesture how much you love us. But today has been insane, even I can see it, and I'd rather spend a romantic night sitting in front of the TV watching whatever, talking with both of you, than going all out and exhausting you more.”

Sunshine contemplated B's words and nodded. "Staying in sounds lovely."

"Good, that's settled. For dinner tonight, do you want a steak salad with garlic croutons and honey wheat bread, or a mushroom risotto with lots of parmesan cheese?" I asked.

"Oh, um, the salad, please. That sounds delicious."

"B?" I asked.

He nodded, but my focus was back on the man in my arms since he slurred his answer. Not liking what I saw, I glanced up and B nodded, understanding my expression. I lifted the smaller man into my arms and marched up the stairs. B followed us and when I set him on his feet to undress him for a quick shower, B started the water.

My hand twitched with the need to touch, but I only allowed myself to skim along the skin on his shoulders and down to his back. There'd be plenty of time for the rest, later.

"Sunshine, are you ready for a shower?"

"Yeah."

It was moments like these where we had the chance to take care of our man, where a sense of fulfillment crowded in with the other overwhelming emotions always present.

B and I worked together; I squeezed body soap onto a washcloth and soaped his entire body as B massaged his head with both the shampoo and then the conditioner. Once rinsed, we dried him off and tucked him in the middle of the bed, his favorite

spot, and covered him.

“I’m gonna go workout before showering. You wanna wait for me?” B asked.

I stepped forward and snagged B around the waist. The groan he let out warmed my body as I captured the sound the moment my lips met his. It grew out of control and my dick inflated with a suddenness that left me both lightheaded and throbbing.

“Fuck, you are a temptation,” I whispered.

This time, I whimpered when he nipped my bottom lip and sucked at it.

“But we need Petal, I know. Fine, I’ll be a good boy and go workout. Then I’ll help you with dinner after I shower, okay?”

Without waiting for my answer, he pushed me against the wall, pressed his tight, muscled body against mine from chest to thighs with his hard cock throbbing against my leg, and attacked my mouth. I groaned as he slid his fingers into my hair and slanted his mouth, deepening the kiss and leaving me a desperate mess. My hands gripped onto his hips as I rolled mine into his and savored the sound erupting from his throat.

I thought he’d continue, but his tongue brushed against mine one last time before he pinned me to the wall with a hand on my chest, bending over and sucking in deep breaths.

“Fucking hell. It’s a near thing to come in my pants from a kiss, love. I’m heading downstairs now.”

I stood still as B gathered his wits, and even then, it took several minutes before he stood to face me. He gasped before he turned and headed toward the stairs. When he

paused at the top and turned back, focusing on my face, he gave me his megawatt smile and danced the rest of the way down.

Shaking my head, I chuckled as I went into the bathroom and started the shower.

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“Burton told me you two humped each other against the wall while I was out cold in the bed right next to you. Did one of you think to record it for me?”

Sunshine’s hands slid along my hips, up my stomach, which twitched under his touch, before they settled on my chest. He buried his forehead in the middle of my back and his hot breath struck all the right nerves, making me desperate to get my hands on the man.

On top of the searing kiss I shared with B and the innocent ask of naked fun in the shower, I was almost at my wit’s end, leaking in my tented sweats.

“What was the question?” I choked out as his fingers danced down my hips before he stroked up and down my ready cock.

He huffed a choked laugh against my back and gave me one last squeeze before he lifted himself onto the counter next to me and leaned in for a kiss. I breathed out, more to get my equilibrium back than relieved he released me, and leaned my forehead against his.

B came into the kitchen, showered and with damp hair, with a smile on his face as though he knew what we’d been up to and he approved.

“Is this how you guys predicted our first Valentine’s day would go?”

Both Sunshine and I laughed.

“With how chaotic your lives became since you brought me home, I wasn’t expecting

anything. I only want to be with you two, even if we're eating our romantic dinner on the couch with the girls in their beds near us. Sex isn't a requirement, although I enjoy every bit of what we do together.

"I've heard stories of couples who, on their wedding day, becoming too overwhelmed by the day. At the end of the night, people expect the best sex of their lives. The same assumption happens on days like today. As long as I'm with you two, I'm good."

B gasped out, "The ultimate disrespect thinking that I, Burton Kavka-Horváth, do not have the energy to fuck you both into oblivion tonight, and have the energy left over to drag you both into the shower for another round."

Sunshine snagged B and cuddled him in between his legs, giggling as B pressed his face against his neck and breathed out.

"Nope, I wasn't questioning that. I was trying to admit even after the four-hour nap I took when we arrived home, I'm still beat from getting up at an early hour that somehow used to be normal, but is contemptible at my old age of twenty-six."

B lifted his head and glared at me.

"The last thing I would ever say is that you don't have stamina," I agreed. "But you have to admit, with the way Sunshine crashed after we tucked him in earlier, we should give him time to recuperate before we fuck his brains out."

Of course, concern for our man had B relenting, going back to cuddling against him after he blew out a long breath.

"Okay. But tomorrow morning, since we all have the day off, and I mean all morning, we fuck like bunnies!"

I chuckled out a laugh and finished chopping grape tomatoes, adding them to the diced cucumber, red onions, avocado, and white mushrooms that were on a bed of spinach and arugula. I removed the homemade buttermilk ranch dressing and the blue cheese crumbles from the refrigerator, setting them on the side. The marinated steak in the ziplock was the last step, set aside for me to sear, and then dinner was ready.

The oven beeped. “Oh, B, can you grab the croutons and the bread from the oven?”

With his everlasting energy, he bounced over and pulled out the trays, taking the time to shut off the oven after putting both of them on trivets, before moving back into Sunshine’s embrace. The younger man smiled at me as I reached out and traced my knuckles down his cheek, returning his smile.

With the cast-iron skillet on high heat, I flipped the switch above the stove, grateful for the vent, which had an air filter to remove cooking smells from the house, and placed the steaks on the hot pan. I discarded the marinade down the sink before I cleaned the bag for its next use, and it gave me enough time to flip the steak.

Another three minutes and I pressed a finger onto it, and happy it was medium rare, removed it from the pan and onto a cutting board to rest.

B and Sunshine were both looking at me as I set the pan aside to cool and blinked at them.

“What?”

“I love capable men making things like cooking look easy. Can I please have your babies, lover?”

Sunshine blinked at me with innocent eyes, and I shook my head at the silliness, especially when B fluttered his eyelashes and fanned himself.

When I leaned in and caught the look of pure desire on the younger man's face, I pressed my lips to his with a sigh. B caught my lips as I pulled back from the kiss and then he tilted Sunshine back and nibbled on his neck, making him giggle and squirm.

"I love how you two are mine, as improbable as all of this is to me," I said. "Come on, let's go find something to watch and eat dinner. What do you want to drink?"

"I'll get it. Petal?"

"Water is fine. I'm afraid if I have anything alcoholic, I'll pass out on the couch before long."

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I nodded, agreeing to have the same and B fetched three glasses with ice and water, taking them out to the living room before we each grabbed our plates, mixed the amount of dressing we wanted before I sliced the warm bread.

We settled on the couch, and before long, were watching an obscure game playthrough about a diver who fishes during the day and helps run a sushi place at night. Immersed in the storyline, we smiled when Sunshine gushed as he spotted a cat in the game. Both Stella and Ruby glanced up from their spots on the bed and looked put out.

“You girls know I love you the most. I can coo at an animated kitty if I want to.”

His answer brought a smile to my face as B laughed.

The contentment I felt after we finished dinner and settled on the couch took me a little by surprise. While I wasn't able to remember a time without B in my life, since we were so young when our lives intertwined with friendship, I enjoyed thinking back to the start of our genuine relationship with Phoenix.

The temperature dropped, and I grabbed a throw to drape over all of us.

“I like this,” Sunshine said.

B lifted his head from the younger man's neck and asked, “What? Sitting on the couch after gorging ourselves on Luka's delicious salad... wait, I said that aloud, and it sounds so dirty. Okay, I made myself shiver, but I'm sticking with it. Is that what you mean, Petal?”

He nodded as he giggled at B's outrageous words.

"That, and how sometimes fate works when you least expect it. Or maybe it's not fate, but enormous luck. The probability all three of us were going to meet, and fall for each other, is astronomical.

"I guess there is one thing in my life I can thank Hale for. When he demanded you have your meeting at the bakery, you spotted me and waited until I was ready. Although it wasn't his intention. But him inviting you to the bakery for that meeting is the greatest gift he could have given me. All of us, to be honest."

B found that sentiment hilarious because he cackled as he held his stomach, shaking his head at the irony.

"I'd forgotten Hale was the one who suggested your bakery. But in all honesty, while I'm grateful that he pointed us in your direction, I'm proud of us for recognizing the fact there was an overwhelming attraction we shared instead of continuing to ignore it for three more months," B said as he wiped the moisture from his eyes.

I shook my head. "Yeah, I was thinking the same thing. We can sit and talk, or have the hottest sex I've ever experienced in my life, and there's still this palpable connection I have to both of you. And since we've integrated our lives together with ease, I also want to experience the world with both of you. We're all older and established, so we don't have to work ourselves into a coma because we've put in so much to get to where we are in life."

Sunshine perked up and beamed at me. "Travel with both of you? That would be a dream come true. Poppy fields in the Netherlands or South Korea in the winter; anywhere sounds perfect."

"B and I have scheduled all our projects for the next few years at least, and we could

promote Drew and train him on how to run the business, so when the time comes, he'd be the go-to person. He already understands the business inside and out. And you, Sunshine, now have Charlotte and Matthew, and Arthur is the perfect manager. Just don't tell him I said that."

Both Sunshine and I glanced at B, and he smiled. "New Zealand would be my dream vacation. I've heard how gorgeous the country is, but you have to see it to believe it. Also, I would love it if we rented a lakeside house in Finland, alone in the middle of the forest."

Sunshine sat up in stunned wonder. "We're... making plans for our future."

B and I exchanged a confused look before he said, "Yes. When you find yourself in a committed relationship?—"

Tears formed and tumbled down our man's cheeks and we both leapt into action, cuddling him in between us.

"Whatever it is, Sunshine, we can fix it." I promised as I rubbed my hand up and down his back as he leaned his forehead against my chest and sobbed.

B begged while running his fingers through the soft blond hair, "Oh, no, Petal, don't cry. It breaks my heart. I need to fix this. Tell me what to do so I can fix it. Please?"

"No..." Sunshine gasped out. "These aren't sad tears, I swear. I spent so long. So, so long, being alone and thinking I would always be. But you two, who I love with a fierceness I can't explain, are thinking about what will come next, and it felt as though I stepped off a cliff. It's an exhilarating feeling knowing we have a future full of adventures and promises."

"Happy tears still suck," B pouted.

As I glanced back and forth between the two men who held my heart, I vowed to protect our love with the fierceness it deserved and bask in the contentment of being loved by these two men.

CHAPTER 19

BURTON

As I woke, I let out a contented sigh when a flutter of lips moved along my shoulders and up to nibble on my ear.

“Oh, I think he’s awake,” Luka grumbled.

Happy to have both of them in bed with me instead of their normal ritual of leaving me behind to inhale their coffee at the break of dawn, I encouraged whoever was exploring me with a grateful moan as I worked to get my eyelids to cooperate and open.

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Petal giggled against the side of my neck as his hands traveled up and down the sides of my torso, leaving behind nerve endings that sparked to life.

“Yes, touch me. More, please.”

Contentment washed over me as his soft lips traveled down my spine, taking little nips at my skin and sending shivers of pure want down to my cock. Half hard, I moaned as Petal reached my ass and scraped his teeth against the skin.

“Can I?—”

I cut off Petal’s request with a demand of my own. “Anything, anytime you want. You have my permission for the rest of our days to do whatever?—”

I choked on my words. I spread my legs for him at the slight pressure on the inside of my thighs and without warning, his tongue licked a swath from my taint toward my entrance, stopping at the sensitive pucker of skin, before blowing a breath against the one spot I needed filled. Several long licks followed, and I found myself unable to form any words, but I bucked back against Petal’s tongue and reached out for Luka.

“What do you need, sweetheart?” Luka asked.

Again, those pesky words were nowhere to be found, and I blinked open my eyes long enough to locate what I needed. I reached for Luka’s stiff and leaking prick, wrapping my hand around his thigh before swallowing the head and thrashing my tongue along his slit.

The filthiest groan I'd ever heard from Luka escaped his throat and his hand reached for the base of his cock. The sizable hand choked off the base as he dribbled a little precome into my mouth and I savored him on my tongue. Wanting more of Luka, I lowered my head and swallowed, loving the clipped curse escaping his lips.

It was my turn to moan as Petal retrieved the lube from where Luka stashed it and slid a slim finger inside me. Not able to contain my moan and hoping to stave off my impending orgasm, I reached up and pressed my thumb against Luka's taint, distracting myself with the weight of him on my tongue, stretching my mouth. Petal added another finger inside me, followed by a third one soon after.

The night I asked Luka to fuck me had been a revelation. I'd been nervous as I headed into a territory altogether unfamiliar to me. Yet from the moment Luka realized what I wanted, he'd cradled me and accepted it as a gift. Over the past few months, I'd begged Luka to fuck me more times than I could count.

Petal was an exclusive bottom. He'd never once wanted to fuck one of us, and we didn't mind. But both Luka and I werevers, especially since I discovered the utter perfection of Luka inside me, and we found creative ways for all of us to get as much pleasure out of the experience as possible.

With reluctance, I lifted my mouth off Luka's dick and asked him, "Are you going to fuck me?"

"Yes! I want to be inside you, sweetheart."

Stretched enough to take Luka, I surged up to my knees and reached for Petal, smiling at the squeal he made as I snatched him and draped him back over the pillows. Without giving him any warning, I lowered my mouth to his dick, swallowing it in one gulp.

“Handsome!”

I swallowed, tightening my throat around his perfect pink cock, and moved my mouth up and down until he cried out. My hand shot out for the lube on the nightstand, moaning against his hot skin as I triumphed. I coated my fingers before I popped off his cock with an audible sound.

“Ready?” I asked the younger man, panting and flush with need.

“Anything, yes, please.”

Veering from my original plan, I wrapped my hand around his hot cock and lowered my mouth to his hole, spearing him with my tongue. The heavy scent of cinnamon and vanilla drew a loud moan out of my chest and I feasted on him as if he were my last meal.

Luka leaned over and took Petal’s mouth. Between the breathless sounds coming from deep in his throat and the way he was clutching at our man, I sensed he was close to needing us both.

I added another finger and was concentrating on Petal’s desire when Luka slapped my ass before rubbing it in a soothing way. A moan escaped at the tiny sting on my skin and I wiggled it, hoping for another one.

The vibration from my vocalizations shivered through Petal and he shouted, a burble of precome leaking out. My tongue darted out, licking off his sweetness as I added a third finger. Luka noticed and ran his thick thumb over my pucker and teased the tip in and out of my hole.

Although sex was a frequent activity in our house and foreplay was an added layer of enticement to move things along, I found the act of preparing my partners as intimate

as the act itself, and all three of us enjoyed it. But no matter what we shared; blowjobs or a quickie in the shower. My body was so tuned into both of them, it vibrated with desire.

“That’s hot. You want to make Sunshine come with your fingers inside as I fuck you, sweetheart?”

I nodded, keeping my mouth around the tip of Petal’s cock, and then moaned as Luka slapped his cock against my hole, sending red hot pleasure through me.

Petal leaned up on his elbows and glanced down, his form shivering as Luka’s cock disappeared inside me, and we both groaned when he pressed his hips flush with my ass. My fingers twitched inside Phoenix and I brushed against his prostate. I sucked harder, wanting to taste him and give him the same pleasure I felt. His next words took me by surprise.

“Fuck! Handsome, I’m coming!”

I finger fucked him through his orgasm and swallowed every drop he gave me. When his body went lax and the last spurt hit my tongue, my mouth popped off as I licked my lips, savoring his taste.

Luka, still inside me and pulsing with every beat of his heart, pulled out by inches before he drove inside me, setting off a full body shiver. Another two strokes, and I reached for Petal, who was blinking back into a state of consciousness, and wrapped my arm under his waist. I pulled him beneath me and devoured his mouth, overwhelmed in the best kind of way as my cock brushed against his thigh.

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“Can I fuck your tight little hole, Petal? Draw more out of you as Luka pounds my ass?”

He threw his arms around me as he bent his legs, knees resting on his shoulders. Petal nodded, unable to answer because he was panting.

“Shit, love, he’s already hard. He wants my dick stretching his hole until his cock erupts again. Wanna try to make him come again?”

Luka nipped my shoulder as he reached between us and tweaked at Petal’s nipple. In a silent answer, he pulled almost all the way out of my hole, but I clenched around the head in order to keep him inside me, but I worried for nothing. He plunged inside, having me cry out.

“Get inside him, sweetheart. I need to see his hole stretched over your hot, throbbing dick,” Luka growled.

He paused as I lowered my hips, Petal’s body opening for me, accepting me until I bottomed out. Mindless with lust, my hips kept darting up and back as I stretched Petal before impaling myself on Luka.

Luka and I found our rhythm; me fucking into our man before shifting backward, impaling Luka all the way inside me. Petal’s hands slapped against my chest, drawing a deep moan from me, before he bent his fingers. The bite from his nails against my chest as he clawed at me, thrashing his head back and forth, drew an animalistic reaction from me.

“Fuck, yes! Mark me, Petal,” I groaned.

I fucked back onto Luka, and the pain-pleasure of the bite from Petal’s nails doubled as Luka leaned forward and opened his mouth along where my shoulder and neck met. He scraped his teeth against my skin, the only warning I received, before he clamped down on the corded muscle.

Sensations overwhelmed me at the same time shouts of pleasure echoed throughout the room. Blackness edged into my vision as Luka filled me with his hot come and I willed my hand closer to Petal’s cock. The back of my hand brushed against the recent release on his stomach, and I grunted, the one sound I could get out. Words were no longer available.

When awareness came back to me, half of my body draped over Petal as Luka lay on his side next to me, cradling us both.

I gathered enough energy and left the bed. When I stood, I caught the moan in my throat as Luka’s come dribbled out of me and down my balls. The sensation of being marked slotted into place in my heart as the experience changed me.

With shaky arms, I warmed up two washcloths under the hot running water before heading back to clean up both Luka and Phoenix. After draping them over the hamper, I cleaned myself up and snuggled back into bed, looking at both men with awe.

“Wow.”

Luka tapped on my hip and said, “Shhh, we’re sleepy.”

Sleep sounded good.

Warmth woke me from a deep slumber and I blinked my eyes open to see Petal cuddling against my chest, his skin cold to the touch. I reached down and snagged the comforter, and brought it up. When I glanced back, Luka also lay uncovered, still asleep, so I covered all three of us.

All that moving jolted me into needing to use the bathroom. As I scooted to the end of the bed, I groaned aloud at the sensation of soreness, but it was in the best, most delicious ways.

Fuck, that was sexy.

A grumble came from the bed. “Where are you going?”

I leaned down and kissed Luka, mumbling against his lips and unable to keep the smile off my face.

“I need to pee. And my body tells me I’m up, so I’ll go downstairs and make coffee for you two.”

His firm hand cupped the back of my neck and brought me closer to take my mouth in a heated kiss. I groaned aloud and tilted my head, deepening the kiss. I loved kissing this man and a thrill shot through me when I realized I had the freedom, for the rest of my life, to take advantage of it.

When I broke off to breathe, I gave Luka another peck and stood, heading toward the bathroom as Luka reached across the wide mattress for Phoenix and cuddled him close.

Reluctant to do so after our morning, I showered and dressed, heading downstairs for

a peek at what Petal might have left behind that he'd baked. But when I entered the kitchen, an unfamiliar light was blinking and when I drew closer, it was an answering machine I'd no clue about. With a quick glance at the caller ID, all the calls were from Hale.

The night before, and because of the commotion Petal's dick of a father would be sure to stir up because of being ignored, we all turned our cell phones to silent and stuck them in a kitchen drawer. I wasn't too keen on getting any of them out because we three had the day off, and I wasn't about to fucking ruin it by getting yelled at for no justifiable reason.

Curious, I scrolled through the number of missed calls to see if any were friends or family, needing to get a hold of us for any reason.

The thirty calls, yes, thirty, were all from Hale's work number.

I examined the phone and smiled when I realized Luka must've turned off the ringer to the landline. Then, I snagged my and Luka's phone, and sure enough, Hale called and texted close to two hundred times. Wondering if he got past Petal's block on him, but even his cell, with the battery close to dead, blinked with several messages.

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The man was fucking delusional.

I placed all the phones back in the drawer and started the coffeemaker.

“Why is there a frown on your face?” Petal asked.

The younger man slipped in front of me as I boxed him in against the counter and kissed him.

“I love you, Petal. So much more than I can ever say.”

His expression softened and in that moment with the morning light, all the white-blond hair mussed and gorgeous with his full pink lips and the peach hue to his skin, thrilled me to my core.

“As much as I love you, handsome.”

Luka stuck his face in between ours, and with a laugh asked, “What about me?”

If you were to see Luka and me before Phoenix came into our lives, it would have been drab grey with the occasional spark. But with this man in our lives, Luka smiled more, and he laughed more. His protective instincts would never change, and neither would mine, but the lightness echoed in each of us. All because of Phoenix.

I kissed Luka and nipped at his lip. “Of course we love you, too.”

Petal nodded with a beaming smile. “Always.”

“Good to know,” Luka nodded. “What were you talking about before I came in?”

“Oh, handsome was frowning, and I wondered why.”

I huffed out, “You won’t like what I found.”

Rather than release my hold on Petal, I reached over and picked up a random phone, holding it up so the both of them could read the screen.

“What the fuck?” Luka said, astonished.

“He can’t let it go. But over two hundred attempts to contact us, that’s... hell, I don’t know, but it’s bordering on obsessive,” Petal said.

“Hale found out our landline number. The answering machine is full.”

Both Luka and I turned to Petal as he processed the information. As I studied him, there wasn’t any stress or anxiety that stiffened his body or marred his face, and I blew out a relieved breath.

He was over his father’s bullshit.

“I’m no longer playing his game. I’m done with him.”

“You wanna us to call the parents and have them come over for lunch?”

There was a knock on the door before Mi called out, “We’re here and we brought breakfast.”

“It’s a good thing I brewed an entire pot of coffee, then,” I mumbled.

Petal gave both of us a kiss, beaming as he skipped to let our parents in the door, giving them a recap of the events of the night before when they demanded to know what happened.

“How did you find out?” Phoenix asked.

“Oh, honey,” my mom said, “When you three made it official, I made Arthur promise to call me if anything happened to you. He texted me after you three left the bakery.”

Phoenix laughed, and I relaxed against the counter.

I glanced up at Luka and asked, “Happy?”

He shrugged and started pouring the coffee in mugs. “With the three of us, yes, no doubt. But you know Hale won’t give up. He thinks he’ll get what he wants.”

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“Fuck him. Hell, we might even have to take out a restraining order to keep him away from us. And we might figure out how to cancel the contracts we have with him. I know our lawyers wrote in a loophole. Do you think it’ll work?”

“I’ll call Devin on Thursday when we’re back in the office. There might be. I know he wouldn’t let us sign one without a termination clause. Good idea, love,” Luka smiled and snagged a kiss.

“Good, we have a plan. Now let’s enjoy the rest of our time off.”

CHAPTER 20

LUKA

The three of us went back to work for the remaining two days of the week; both B and I worked with our lawyer to cancel the contracts we had with Hale Aalto while Sunshine dealt with the rush of anti-Valentine’s day themed pastries and cookies, and muffins and cakes on Thursday and Friday to celebrate those who were single. It became the talk of the town, and the rush was busier than the romantic day itself.

To relax after a hectic week, I made reservations at a famous Boston steakhouse and we indulged in delicious steak dinners and then a decadent coconut cake.

The executive pastry chef even spared a few moments of her time to speak with Phoenix after he made the offer for her to drop by the bakery anytime, and it would be on him.

The night was exquisite where my two men relaxed, ate their fill, and we left our worries behind.

But my plan for the rest of the night spent naked, in bed, making love to my two men, flew out the window the moment we pulled into the driveway and I spotted a black sports car in the rearview mirror, parking on the street. I'd wondered how Hale would go about forcing his way into a conversation, and it was now apparent a sneak attack would be it.

My first instinct was to get out of the truck before beating Hale until he would need a hospital.

Then I viewed the situation from Phoenix's perspective.

If I showed anger, then he would win. The entire reason for Hale Aalto's existence was to get his way, at the very least, to get under people's skin for his benefit alone, and in the end, make a ton of money from exploiting any weakness he could find. Or what the rest of us call preying on normal human empathy.

I glanced over at both my men and Phoenix gave me the softest smile, melting my heart into a puddle of goo when he realized I wouldn't lose my temper.

"Don't get me wrong. I still believe the guy deserves a fist in his face, several times in a row, and then maybe once in the throat for good measure. But showing him any emotion at all is like giving a junkie his next fix. So, like the mature thirty-something I pretend I am on days ending in y, I will get out of the truck, refrain from following through with my knee-jerk reactions, and ignore the man. Are we all in agreement?"

"Yep. Well, until he says something out of this world stupid and then it's a free for all, and I reserve the right to... well, I'll think of something horrible to inflict on the man. He's invading our space after all, without an invitation and express orders from

Petal here never to step foot on our property again,” B growled.

Phoenix shrugged, and he said, “Sounds good. But for the record, if anything happens to Hale because you two defended yourselves, I won’t be mad.”

“And you, Sunshine. If he gets close to you, he’s going down.”

“Fuck yeah, he will,” B added.

We piled out of the truck, only to have a seething Hale surge closer with his fists clenched at his sides, chest heaving.

“You fucking left me there?”

I glanced at Phoenix. His posture was relaxed, and there was a tiny smile curving up the side of his mouth. It seemed to me he’d let go of all the abusive shit his father pulled in the past and refused to take anymore.

He scoffed and said, “Yes, it was such a hardship for you to be laid out in a hospital room for VIP’s with all the care on hand to figure out what was wrong with you, only to understand that you faked your symptoms for attention. Munchausen’s much, father?”

“What are you talking about? I had a fucking heart attack?”

“Yeah, if you did, you wouldn’t be standing here yelling at me. According to Dr. Bradeem, the attending doctor on your case, nothing showed up on the tests, and your blood work came back normal, and there was no stress on your heart whatsoever. I mean, it’s pretty fucking cold, but it’s still pumping.”

Hale huffed and said, “I’m going to sue him for everything he has!”

All of us laughed, and it stopped the furious man dead in his tracks.

“What?”

From one second to the next, Phoenix stood straighter. His expression scared me, even though he directed it at the one man who deserved his ire.

“You can’t sue the doctor who treated you because, after all these years, you have listed as your emergency contact, which makes me the next of kin. Because of your oversight, he’s allowed to give me your medical status. Isn’t that weird, Suzy?”

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He turned to face his stepmother, who looked unsure of being addressed.

“You’ve been married to this man for almost two decades and he still doesn’t have you on any of his paperwork, other than covering you on his health insurance. And I know for a fact that he plans on spending all of his money before he dies, but not on you. He even has a life insurance policy out on you in case you die before he does.”

“What?” Suzy spluttered. “Why would you do that to me, Hale? Do you think it’s a picnic being married to you, you fucking misogynistic dickhead? You spend all your time thinking about revenge against your own son, who wants nothing to do with you, even hiring men to destroy the bakery because you think it’s too, oh, what were the specific words, ‘fucking fruity,’ to be a sound investment.”

“Shut the fuck up, Suzy!” Hale shouted.

“Hey!” All three of us shouted our ire at Hale as Suzy looked as though she would burst into tears at any second.

“Have some respect for the woman you married, you fucking asshat!” Burton growled.

Then Phoenix laughed. “Ignore him, handsome. The gods know the world would be better if everyone did.”

He turned toward Suzy. “Yeah, my bakery is rather gay and fabulous. Thank you for pointing that out. You know what, for confirming what I’ve known all along, which is doing me quite the favor, by the way, I’ll return one of my own.”

The conversation stalled as Phoenix patted his jeans before he pulled out a scrap of envelope and a pen from his back pocket. After he wrote out quite a few details, filling the entire envelope with his tiny handwriting, he put the pen back in his pocket and stepped forward.

Leaning close, he whispered into Suzy's ear before, with a smile, he handed her the same piece of envelope. She glanced down, and I saw her eyes widen before she blinked up at Phoenix, gave him a genuine smile, kissed him on the cheek, and walked off, calling for a taxi.

"Where are you going?" Hale called after her.

She turned, gave the man a confident smile, before she flipped him off and walked away.

Phoenix chuckled, and the sound relaxed the tension in my chest since our man was smiling.

But I kept my eyes on Hale, waiting for him to do something stupid. I wouldn't put anything past him at this point.

"What did you tell her?" Hale demanded.

"Oh, are you talking to me? The one man who you consider a waste of space, who you believe couldn't do anything right since I was in diapers, and who sent goons after me and my business to destroy, one of whom wanted to rape me if he found me anywhere in the bakery. Me?"

Phoenix let the last part sit as both B and I growled out our disgust for the man.

I somehow understood right at that moment, the only person Hale Aalto cared about

was himself. There was no reaction in his expression, other than a shimmer in his eyes as he garnered plans to continue his war against his son. Suzy helped his image, but Phoenix wouldn't fall into line with him, so he made his own son his enemy. The one conflict in his life he couldn't move past.

"I'll—" Hale shouted.

"Get you for this, my pretty," Phoenix cackled the famous line from *The Wizard of Oz* before he shook his head and glared at the pathetic waste of space.

"Let me get this out before the stupidity of always having the last word gets to you and you interrupt me again. I... don't... give... a... fuck about you!"

The shout lingered in the air for a long moment. Phoenix continued.

"You've killed any affection I might once have had for you long ago through sheer judgmental ignorance and smug disinterest. Oh, and hatred. I didn't ask to be born, father, and I sure as shit wasn't supposed to be your punching bag as a child! What I did for Suzy was to get her out of your toxic world and despite you dying to know what I wrote, I won't give you the satisfaction. But it was a doozy, and I'd say within a year, your loss will be excruciating."

He whistled for emphasis, a gigantic smile on his face.

In the next second, I acted because Hale gave me the opening I'd been waiting for. The older man swung for Phoenix, who stood there like he might take the hit. There was no fucking way I'd ever let him lay another finger on Sunshine.

With a darting step forward, I grabbed a hold of Hale's wrist with my left hand, squeezing the bone and yanking his arm down as my right came up in an uppercut and nailed the older man right square in the jaw, lifting him on his toes before he

crumpled in on himself. The snap of bone wasn't a surprise, but I wasn't sure whether I snapped his wrist or broke his jaw. I found myself not caring much either way.

“Yes, I need an ambulance and someone to contact Detective Mateo Sandoval to come out to 27 Richfield Street. He's assigned as lead detective. Hale Aalto was trespassing on our property, tried to assault me, and my partner landed a blow which knocked him unconscious. Yes, we'll be waiting in the front yard. I can stay on the line until the police arrive.”

Sunshine covered the receiver with his hand and asked, “Are you injured, lover?”

“No, Sunshine. But why did you stand there?”

He shrugged, as unbothered by the entire situation as a bystander who had no stakes in the game.

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“Because I know for certain that both of you would never let him near me, much less allow him to hurt me.”

I glanced over to see B with a smug expression on his face and when he noticed the ire still sparking from my entire form, he reached over and squeezed my shoulder.

“You worry too much, love. I was prepared to sweep his legs out from under him if you hadn’t grabbed him when you did. And Petal is right, we will always have his back.”

Sunshine’s attention snapped back to the phone. “Yes, ma’am. The man is my father, and he was upset when I didn’t fall for his lies about having a heart attack and rush to the hospital to take care of him,” there was a pause before he said, “I called his doctor on the day he checked himself into the emergency room and he confirmed Hale’s tests all came back negative. I’m listed as his next of kin and emergency contact, and it’s why I could speak to the hospital staff about his condition.”

The next few minutes were a whirlwind of activity. Detective Sandoval beat the ambulance to the scene. He screeched up and threw the car in park before he was trudging up the driveway and glaring at Hale, passed out with his dark mustard cashmere coat spread out around him.

“What the actual fuck?”

Phoenix hung up with the dispatcher after thanking them and hugged the detective hello. I caught B’s gaze, and he laughed, shaking his head, which gained him a smile from me. The detective laughed and leaned back after returning the hug for a

moment.

For the next fifteen minutes, Sunshine explained everything that had happened from the time he received the call from Suzy Aalto up to Hale Aalto being knocked out in our front yard. He gave him all the pertinent information and then Sandoval glanced my way before raising his eyes to search for something around the perimeter.

“Yes, I also installed security cameras and will provide the footage, along with clear audio, for your investigation. His wife confirmed Hale sent the thugs to Phoenix’s bakery to destroy it. You can see Hale swing at his own son before I intervened,” I said.

B sidled up to the detective and asked, “Charlotte, huh?” B continued to tease by wriggling his eyebrows at the blushing detective.

“Why, Detective Sandoval, do I detect a slight blush on your cheeks?” I asked.

Before he could answer the question, Hale groaned and caught our attention. He worked his jaw, and I heard it pop. So the hit I landed wasn’t as hard as I wanted. He confirmed it a moment later when he screeched and held his wrist against his chest.

“You assaulted me, you asshole. Officer, I want him arrested!”

Hale gulped as Detective Sandoval leaned toward him, waiting for recognition.

The detective interviewed him several times over the past two months, and I hoped the loudmouth would incriminate himself. Rather than stop, he continued on with his belligerent outrage.

“Stop standing around and do something! He broke my fucking wrist without provocation.”

Sunshine laughed and shook his head. “You wouldn’t know this because you’ve only loved yourself your entire life, but Luka and Burton are protective of me. They care that I’m fed, make sure I’m happy with our relationship and my career, and keep me away from the abusive shit I dealt with my entire life from you. So when you moved to punch me in the face, Luka took exception to the fact and defended me. Besides, I told you, with witnesses present who will testify in a court of law, you are no longer allowed on this property.”

I flinched as Hale’s voice rose. “Well, you can’t order me off the property. You don’t have your name on the title!”

We all froze and stared down at the man, who didn’t seem to realize how life worked.

“He’s... dumb. Cheese and fucking crackers, the man who runs a multimillion dollar real estate empire is a fucking idiot,” B mumbled, shaking his head as he stared at a still protesting Hale.

Phoenix’s bark of laughter made all of us jump. But as he steadied his hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath as his laughter grew out of control, Hale once again lunged for the younger man. With a speed I didn’t know he possessed, Sunshine grabbed the wrist I broke and squeezed, leaving Hale to flail and scream with the pressure.

Disgusted, Sunshine threw his arm down and glared at the man.

“Despite whatever bigoted mindset you have, I’m free to live my life with the two men I love. For instance, we all have matching surnames. An actual judge granted our request. I’m part owner of their business and they are co-owners of our successful bakery. And the claim that I don’t have legal footing since my name isn’t on the title? Well, sorry to say it pops, but you’re wrong again.

“How does that feel? To fail at gentrifying a neighborhood you never wanted, and running like a weasel when you threatened Luka and Burton at their place of business? Oh, you didn’t think I knew that? Drew, my friend, sent me the footage of you running like a scared rabbit. I didn’t think you could run that fast, but what do I know?”

Phoenix shrugged.

As Hale opened his mouth, our younger lover cut him off with quite an impressive growl.

“All of this hatred and anger. For what? Your associates have left in droves and people treat you like a pariah. Based on Detective Sandoval’s expression, he will arrest you as soon as I’m done lecturing you. Your wife left you and trust me, with the information I passed along, she’s not coming back, not even to bail you out of jail. You’ve done nothing but burn bridges, and at fifty-five, you no longer have a single friendship or relationship you can rely on. And because you paid three thugs over tenthousand dollars and wired the money from your own bank account, there’s no escape for you.”

I watched in amazement as Hale understood how desperate his life just became. The scowl faded from his face and he looked up with pleading eyes at his only family.

Sunshine shook his head and stepped back, looking at the Detective and said, “He’s all yours.”

“What? I’m your father. You can tell him to drop the charges, no hard feelings.”

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B danced around, laughing as though he were insane. I narrowed my eyes at the man who caused our Phoenix more pain and doubt than any human should ever have to deal with, much less aim that hatred toward a defenseless child. The one man who traumatized Sunshine for no other reason than his own misplaced hatred.

“Fuck off,” I growled.

Sunshine laughed and said, “Enjoy your stint in prison, old man. And when you get out, needing a leg up, don’t call me. You are nothing to me.”

Detective Sandoval nodded over two uniformed officers and they lifted Hale off the ground and marched him off, kicking and screaming, into the back of a police car.

“Well, that was...”

A happy trill came from Sunshine as he bumped shoulders with the Detective, giving him a warm smile.

“How about dinner here on Friday? I’ll invite Arthur and Jude, and I’m sure Gio and Fergus will be available. Maybe you can ask Charlotte to accompany you when you drop in tomorrow?”

The hardened cop blushed to the tips of his ears, yet he nodded. “Yeah, let’s see how it goes.”

B draped his arms around Sunshine’s waist and blew out a relieved breath. “Thank fuck, because I was a little worried Charlotte was going to give up on you,

Detective.”

“Mateo, please, since you’re encouraging me to ask out Charlotte. I need all the courage I can get.” But when B’s words sunk in, he blushed harder and asked, “She knows I’m interested?”

I grunted. “More like she finds you attractive, but believes you’re out of her league.”

“No fucking way!” He shook his head, amazed. And with that, Mateo retreated with a groan, lost in thought as he got into his car, waved at us, and drove away. After several minutes, and reassuring neighbors there will no longer be any commotion, we made it inside to privacy and quiet.

CHAPTER 21

EPILOGUE

BURTON/LUKA/PHOENIX

Six Months Later

Burton

I stomped my way toward the top of the stairs before I paused, waiting for Petal’s reaction before I even touched the step. He didn’t disappoint.

“Burton Maxwell Kavka-Horváth, do... not?—”

I pounded down the stairs and laughed the entire way down, and like clockwork, Petal met me at the bottom with his eyes narrowed and fists at his hips.

“Stop it.”

Acting innocent, or at least I tried to with my pout and my puppy dog eyes.

“What?” I shrugged and acted guileless, despite the act working zero times. But I had hope, one day, it might.

Luka came out of the kitchen, shaking his head, but with a smile on his face. He kissed Petal, making the younger man melt, before he turned toward me. I was expecting a kiss, but he walked on by.

“Consequences, sweetheart.”

I stood straighter. “But... no kisses. From either of you? What about nooky? Petal promised we’d have all weekend naked. Then it changed to naked times in bed tonight after the barbecue and everyone left because there was no time this morning. There are no take backs, Petal.”

He tapped his finger on his chin and said, “Well, shouldn’t the punishment carry on all weekend? Luka can touch me, and fuck me all he wants. And in between, I can put my mouth all over his body, sucking his dick until he feeds me his come. All the while, you’ll be sitting on the chair, watching, yet unable to take part.”

“Oh, and I can suck your dick too, right Sunshine?” Luka asked as he lounged on the couch without a care in the world.

“Anything you want, lover?—”

“I’m sorry! Will it help if I promise to never do it again? We can pinky swear and I’ll cross my heart, but not hope to die because you’ll kill me if I do. But I do it to get a rise out of you, because I’m an attention whore who doesn’t know any other way,

because you don't have pigtails and pulling the chair out from under you when you sit is immature and never in a million years would I ever hurt you."

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Dragging a deep breath in, I waited on pins and needles for him to say... something. With a soft expression, he drew closer to me and pulled me down for a scorching kiss.

Luka stood to snag another kiss from both of us when the doorbell rang and I groaned.

A whine escaped my throat as Petal pulled away to go answer the door, but Luka was there the next second, cupping the back of my head and drawing a loud groan from my throat as he consumed me. When he pulled back, the hazel in his eyes was faint, and he growled as he nipped at my bottom lip.

“Tonight. I promise,” Luka said, before studying my face. “Can you wait that long?”

I let out a breath and huffed out a curse under my breath. “I... you know what, let’s say, sure. And if the three of us get locked in any bathroom, upstairs or down, at any point in the day, I was productive and stored a bottle of lube away in each, just in case.”

Luka laughed and pecked at my lips. “I love you, you crazy man.”

“Love you, too. So very much. High five on being brave enough to tell Phoenix how we felt.”

He slapped his hand against mine and we both walked toward the entrance to see who had arrived.

Luka

The gathering was in full swing in the backyard several hours later. It was a mild summer day, punctuated by clouds drifting in and out with a high in the low seventies.

Back in May, I splurged on an entire grill center with a smoker, a rotisserie, a burner, and a prep area. Sunshine, B, and I spent most of our days off and summer evenings outside, taking advantage of the grill, and our place was where friends and family congregated when they wanted to relax.

Mateo sidled up as I was basting the ribs and whistled. “That is quite a grill. You guys went all out today.”

“It’s a pleasure to see my men so happy, and we’re grateful all of you could come.”

I glanced over to see Phoenix sharing a lounge chair with B’s mom, with my mom seated close to Charlotte, all of them in a serious discussion.

“So, how’s it been going since... well, you know?” Mateo asked.

Sunshine became fast friends with the man who’d arrested his father and helped ensure a permanent restraining order against Hale Aalto.

The man had tried countless times to call our company, yet Drew noted it and hung up on the man each time. He hadn’t dared to go near the bakery, knowing I’d do more than break his wrist if I caught him.

The irony of the entire situation, Sunshine taking back control of his life and cutting

out the toxicity he'd experienced throughout his younger years, had a negative effect on his father's entire life.

He'd left a nasty message on the home messaging machine where Hale threatened to take everything monetary from the three of us because of the information Sunshine gave Suzy. It allowed her to escape the toxic marriage. Another mark on Hale's pristine image.

It turned out, since he turned fifteen, Phoenix squirreled away all of his money and cashed out stocks his father gifted him when he started as a real estate agent. That added up to close to two million dollars. He explained getting the loan felt like standing on his own two feet, so he kept the money growing interest until he passed on the account to her.

She rushed the divorce, which was granted when we testified for her, giving testimony about Hale's ways of revenge by using money and influence. And Hale's arrest and his upcoming prosecution, for hiring the men who broke into the bakery, helped speed up the divorce. She now lives in California.

Hale was also being sued by several clients for embezzlement and for not paying his staff the salary they'd negotiated. To add to his pain, Sunshine also added to the number of civil suits that will keep Hale busy for years.

Unfortunately, Hale made bail on the trespassing and attempted assault charges despite having the aggravated property damage charge already on his record.

Not trusting the man, I'd put motion sensor lights on the house and around the bakery.

Hale's business associates quit and when his arrest and subsequent mugshot hit the local news, people knew to avoid him.

I blew out a breath as I remembered the last confrontation.

We hadn't heard from Hale in four months, only speaking through his lawyer, who'd made the request for a loan from Phoenix. Our lawyer shot down the request and told them under no uncertain terms they would never help Hale out of the situation he found himself in.

The no contact had been blissful.

Until we left for work one morning. I'd gone to the truck to put my bag in the back and as I headed back to the house, I found Hale on our porch, screeching at Sunshine and for a moment, it appeared he might turn violent.

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“You owe me, you little shit!” Hale kept shouting.

Rather than take part, Sunshine stood his ground and shook his head. B stood right next to him, and I realized he waited until he thought I left for work before confronting his son.

There wasn't anything either Sunshine or his lawyer could say that would convince Hale he wasn't right. He was adamant his son ruined his life. As though he had no part in his own downfall.

Such a delusional asshole!

Without hesitation, I grabbed Hale by the scruffy hoodie he had on and threw him off the porch, where he landed in a heap on the grass. Following him down, I must've looked homicidal because he scrambled to his feet and ran away.

I sent the video evidence of him breaking the restraining order to our lawyer and Mateo to add to his building case, and since then, we haven't heard from the man.

“So far, so good. I'm not sure if it's because he's smartened up, which I doubt, or we haven't given him an opening to come near Phoenix. Besides, I'm sure his lawyer explained to him the dire consequences he's facing and confronting us will only make it worse.”

Mateo nodded to Phoenix and said, “Does he miss the man?”

“He was never a father, even going as far as blaming him for his mother's passing.

Hale then ignored him until he could use him, but he never stopped telling him what a disappointment he was. There's nothing to miss."

I paused as I stared at the man Sunshine has become. "And we try to make up for all that he's lost. Both B's and my parents tell him how proud they are of him all the time and when he changed our surnames, they were enthusiastic."

I basted the ribs and checked on the rotisserie chickens, and they were browning well. After searing the steaks, we'd be ready to eat.

"You and Charlotte, huh? How's that going?"

The man gave me a smile I associated with being in love.

"Good. Great, in fact. She was worried about my job and while I'm not in danger, I have crazy hours. But we've been working on spending as much time together as possible, and she's thinking about moving in with me since my house is closer to the bakery than her apartment."

With a smile, I squeezed his shoulder before I dropped my hand. "I'm happy for you two."

"Despite the circumstances of how we met, it's the best relationship I've ever had."

I laughed and agreed. "It's not how it happened, but that it happened at all."

Familiar arms came around my side and I glanced down, smiling at Sunshine, whose skin was a dusky peach and his smile was as big as his face.

"Food almost ready?"

“B sent you over here to ask that, didn’t he?”

He shrugged. “I missed you, so it wasn’t an imposition. You doing okay, lover?”

“You’re here. B’s making mischief, like always,” I glanced up to see B with Fergus over his shoulder, both men laughing as B ran. Gio let out a curse in Italian and chased them around the yard.

“So yeah, all is good, Sunshine. And food’s ready.”

Phoenix

As the crickets chirped in the moonlight, I found myself slouched against Luka’s chest, my legs draped over Burton’s lap, as he rubbed my shins in a soothing, rhythmic manner.

The last guest left about an hour before, and after we cleaned up and stored the grill away, we gravitated toward the bench swing and I cuddled with both of my men.

“Thank you,” I whispered. “Both of you have given me a life I never thought I could have, so I wanted to thank you.”

Luka tightened his hold on me while Burton laid his head on my chest, listening to my heart beat as I rubbed up and down his back. The three of us, along with our genuine friends and family, were who I treasured.

I’d never given up on the idea my father would look at me and be proud I was his son. That was until he unraveled.

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“You know, Hale is trying to plead insanity to all his charges, including embezzlement. His defense is that I’m a troublemaker, and he spent years fixing problem after problem, which put a strain on his mental health until he broke and committed the crimes he did.”

Luka chuckled and Burton became outraged on my behalf.

“Can you even file for insanity if most of his crimes are blue collar ones?” Burton asked.

I shrugged.

“If he couldn’t convince the emergency doctor he was having a heart attack, although his lawyers are trying to incorporate that into his defense, there’s no way a psychiatrist would diagnose him as insane.”

We all chuckled at the thought of Hale convincing a doctor his gay son drove him to criminal lengths. It would be funny to hear while the man was under oath. But unless called by the court, I choose to never see him ever again.

“We should take a trip during Christmas vacation?”

I perked up at Luka’s words, and so did Burton, as he rested his chin on my shoulder.

“Oh, and where would you like to go?” I asked.

“Maybe Prague, or Vienna, somewhere we haven’t even dreamt of going before. But

first...” Luka trailed off before he pulled a box out of his front pocket. When he opened it, there were three white gold rings with a script design and three inlaid diamonds spaced apart, representing... well, us.

“Oh, wow, they are beautiful,” I whispered.

Burton sniffed and between staring between the box and Luka’s face, he teared up and brushed them away. “They are perfect. Do they fit?”

Luka lifted one and held out his hand. “Let’s try it out, B.”

Eager, Burton held out his hand and Luka, with careful precision, slid the ring on his finger with ease. He was overwhelmed, and after kissing Luka; he buried his face against my neck.

I beamed at Luka as the ring he chose for me gave me a shiver when the cool metal touched my skin. But as soon as it was in place, it warmed, and I stared at it in awe. A symbol of our connection to each other.

“It’s gorgeous.”

Not wanting Luka to slide on his own band, I gripped it and held it out until Luka’s hand held steady and I slipped it on.

“It feels as though I’ve had it on forever. Thank you, lover. It’s perfect.”

Burton smiled through tears as Luka kissed him. Luka then kissed me. And of course, Burton dipped me and made loud kissing noises up my neck until he pressed our lips together, leaving me breathless.

In the middle of a warm August night, as peace settled around us, I relaxed with the two men who held my entire heart and soul.

“I love you, both of you, with everything I am.”

And I always would.

THE END